CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

ISSUES ARISING IN ONE-TO-ONE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Close Encounters: Issues Arising in One-to-One Performance
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In this dissertation I present my proposal that Bert States' *'binocular vision'* of semiotics and phenomenology may be a useful strategy for the analysis of live performance, but that it is insufficient for application to One-to-One Performance. In the One-to-One, one audience member meets with one performer to witness a performed act or to carry out a collaborative action. These encounters may be repeated a number of times with different audience members, although always with only one audience member at any time.

The One-to-One format carries with it a specific set of implications not found in other forms of performance work. It often asks an intense and physically close encounter between artist and audience member, which disallows the objective disconnect possible when watching a more conventional play or performance. For this reason I present the *Haptic Criticism* of Laura Marks as a strategy for the negotiation and analysis of the One-to-One. Marks proposes Haptic Criticism as an integrated theory of looking that takes into account a more embodied and emotional application of semiotics and phenomenology to artwork. I suggest that Haptic Criticism may provide a more suitable strategy for theorising the merging of these competing methodologies that takes into account the more embodied nature of One-to-One Performance.

At the time of writing the number of artists making One-to-One performances in the UK appears to be rising. In this thesis I offer insight into One-to-One performance from my perspective as a practitioner making One-to-One performances and also as an audience of the performances of others. The dissertation takes into account a range of issues pertinent to the One-to-One which include Therapy, Confession, Emotional Disclosure, Trust, Risk, Intimacy, Structure, Etiquette, Repetition, Reality and Authenticity. Due to the range of issues covered the writing also takes into account a number of methodological sources, such as Queer Theory and the writings of Baudrillard on Simulacra.

This dissertation presents a dialogue between performance methodology and the author's own Live Art practice and for this reason a DVD containing documentary extracts of this performance practice is included with the writing.

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Thank You.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

SIGNED: Michael David Jones
DATE: 15th April 2010

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PREFACE

Between 2007 and 2009 I created a series of performances that explored the relationship between performer and audience member, using the format of the One-to-One encounter. My investigations into One-to-One performance have led me to formulate this document, which is a reflection upon the issues that arose from my own work and from my experiences of encounters created by others. My own work is discussed in relation to historical works and to the contemporary performances of others. For this reason I have provided a brief synopsis of each of my own works in Appendix A of this document. Short DVD extracts of these performances are available on the attached DVD to be found in Appendix B. As these performances are referred to in the document it may be helpful (but not essential) for readers to consider the appendices before commencing reading of the main document.

INTRODUCTION

> One body to an-other. Spanning time, sharing space, marking place, blending breath, sensing touch. An emerging inter-face addresses both parties in this mise-en-scene of togetherness. The function and development of the encounter is reliant upon shared economies of exchange, identification and understanding (Zerihan, 2006).

In this thesis I discuss issues arising in One-to-One performance discovered through my own performance practice. For the purposes of this document, "One-to-One performance" will be understood to refer to "any organised encounter between artist and lone audience member within the frameworks of the art gallery or theatre" (Artist's own definition). As Zerihan states:

> “One to One” or “One on One” or “Audience of One” are all terms used to describe a performance that invites one audience member to experience the piece on their own. Such performance interactions generally last for around five or ten minutes, though they have been known to take any time from one minute to one hour. Generally they are site specific/based performances that can be described as drawing on Live Art aesthetics (2009: 3).

The quote that opens this introduction comes from Zerihan's 2006 article *Intimate Inter-actions: Returning to the body in One-to-One performance.* This document has recently been reworked into a study guide on One-to-One performance for The Live Art Development Agency which contains interviews with a number of Live Art practitioners. In my search for writing about the One-to-One I have found that very little writing is available on the genre. This thesis is an attempt to begin to bridge the gap in literature on the One-to-One.

Zerihan's writing provided a useful first step in theorising issues that arise in the One-to-One and as such this document often presents an elaboration upon and at times an argument against some of the points raised by Zerihan. The interviews with artists in Zerihan's One-to-One guide are *snapshots* of performance practice that do not attempt to present methodological analysis of the One-to-One. These interviews have been useful as source material and have informed my thoughts on One-to-One performance. Zerihan offers her writing from the perspective of an audience member whilst I write chiefly from my perspective as a practitioner *as well as* an audience member. This is an approach not widely taken in the developing field of writing on the One-to-One.

The section titles are derived from issues directly encountered in my own practice and from Zerihan's articles. In her One-to-One guide Zerihan asks each interviewed artist: "Could you comment on one of the following in your One to One work - intimacy, risk, consent, confession, therapy, uneasiness? Or feel free to suggest one of your own" (Ibid: 6). Zerihan's imposition of deductive categories upon her research potentially limits the scope of comments in her interviews. The suggested categories are overtly psycho-analytical/ therapeutic and evidence a leaning towards a view of the One-to-One as a social function rather than a creative or cultural expression.

My writing aims to redress this imbalance, taking into account a wider range of issues germaine to One-to-One performance. I have suggested additional categories, however I make no claim that these issues are inherent in every One-to-One performance. Zerihan's *consent* and *uneasiness* are covered in the trust and risk section and *confession* is explicitly covered in the section on therapy. I have added comment on identity, etiquette, structure, repetition and authenticity.

In *A History of Live Art and One-to-One performance* I discuss the ways in which One-to-One performance practice can be seen to emerge from Live Art and performance history as a unique discipline and suggest reasons for the rise in popularity of this performance format. I will suggest what I believe are the beginnings of the One-to-One performance format and also offer the context within which my own practice is located and the implications of performing in my own work.

In *Phenomenology, Semiotics and Haptic Criticism,* I introduce States' notion that phenomenology and semiotics may act as complementary methodologies for the discussion of performance when applied in 'binocular vision' (States, 1985: 8). As Zerihan rightly states, One-to-One performance can cultivate "an especially intensive relationship in which an intimate exchange of dialogue between performer and spectator can take place" (Zerihan, 2006). I argue that the intensive relationship between audience and performer in the One-to-One disallows the detached critical position required by 'binocular vision': In a One-to-One the participant is unable to oscillate between the contradictory methodologies of semiotics and phenomenology and must find a strategy which allows a direct, embodied and emotional approach to understanding and negotiating the experience.

I propose that the "Haptic Criticism" and more specifically the "Haptic Visuality" of Laura Marks (2002) may offer a strategy for this merge. Haptic criticism is a theory of looking which attempts to merge the emotional, phenomenological and semiotic in response to visual art. My application of this strategy to One-to-One performance is an acknowledgement that the One-to-One performance requires a negotiation between distanced *semiotic* looking and direct *phenomenological* touch. The range of issues arising from my investigations has required that I draw from a number of other methodological and theoretical sources. I employ these sources only where relevant to the issue under discussion and no theory has dominant status within the writing.

In my position as the creator, facilitator and performer in the work under discussion I reject the concept of critical distance as both unobtainable and unrealistic and instead I employ a reflexive stance of practice and understanding through participation. I work within the post-critical paradigm, where the embodied perspective is a widely employed methodology in both the arts and within contemporary journalism. As the creator, facilitator and performer in my work I subjectively confront the physical relationship between body and artwork: an immediate and embodied experience that disallows the binaries of subject and object, asking the audience member to be complicit in the making of meaning in the moment: as Goldberg suggests "our *live*, immediate responses to an art work are essential to the completion of the work" (Goldberg 2004: 9).

Also discussed in this section is the subject of identity, which Zerihan touches upon when she discusses *Reflection (n.d)* by *Random Scream*. (Zerihan: 2006). In my discussion of Identity I draw upon the queer theory of Judith Butler and her work around the construction of identities. I discuss the way in which the physicality of the performer can be manipulated in One-to-One performance using costumes, prosthetics and make-up and suggest that ultimately in performances which often involve direct bodily relations, the performer may be bound by the restrictions placed upon them by their physicality.

In *Therapy and Confession: Emotional disclosure in a One-to-One* I consider Zerihan's assertion that in One-to-One performances "consumerist formal anxieties are shot through with therapy culture's promise of a talking cure as the politics of power between one and other are tangled and tugged upon [...]" (Ibid). Zerihan appears to allow her notion of the One-to-One to be completely defined by the structures of therapy. Drawing upon the work of Adrian Howells I will suggest ways in which One-to-One performance may mimic the structures of psychological therapy and why this may be a dangerous comparison for the analysis of One-to-One performance.

In *Trust and Risk: Building a relationship between artist and audience* I discuss the risks taken by audience member and performer in the One-to-One. I highlight artists who take risks in their work and outline the risks that audiences may take when entering a One-to-One performance. Zerihan suggests that the One-to-One may provide opportunity for overcoming and accepting risk, allowing exploration of challenging scenes or subjects in an environment conducive to trust. I argue that the One-to-One may not necessarily provide such an environment and to expect it could be risky for the audience member.

In *Intimacy and Proximity: What do we mean by intimate?* I argue that the One-to-One may not be any more intimate than any other form of performance, as identified by Zerihan who contextualises this with the suggestion that "the temptation to romanticise or imagine the presence of intimacy when face to face with another can potentially reinstate its presence and re-empower its affect" (Ibid). I explore Zerihan's notion that the One-to-One comes with an explicit sense of responsibility for both parties involved and that this responsibility may cultivate a more intense relationship between performer and audience.

Zerihan suggests that in the One-to-One: "Personal belief systems structured around cultural, psychological, social, sexual and ethical ideologies might be reconfigured and reconsidered" (Ibid). In the section titled *Structuring the One-to-One: Expected and Unexpected Etiquette* I discuss the way in which social etiquette may inform the way an audience member approaches a One-to-One encounter. I highlight performances which work within *expected* and *unexpected* social etiquette and suggest the effect that etiquette might have on audience ability to reconfigure/reconsider beliefs.

In *Repetition, Reality and Authenticity* I discuss the issue of repetition in One-to-One performance and theorise the One-to-One as an antidote to ever-developing simulation technology. I also discuss issues of the *public* and *private* divide, where the One-to-One encounter may have an *audience*.

I conclude the thesis with suggestions about ways in which the discussion on these issues might be developed and elaborated upon and identify further gaps in the literature on One-to-One performance. I reflect upon the limits of my One-to-One practice and conclude with a discussion of the new direction my work has taken and how this dissertation may inspire my future work in Live Art and performance.

My writing is a response to issues that arose through my performance practice, however these performances were not conceived as "practice as research" projects. The issues presented here are largely theorised in retrospect as a reflection upon my own One-to-One performances and those of others. Documentation of my practice is offered in order to give a clearer idea of the performances I created and to illustrate some of the descriptions I give of my own work but for the purposes of this document it is not offered as research in its own right.

A History of Live Art and One-to-One Performance

The One-to-One is swiftly becoming an established and increasingly popular performance device, and can be simply defined as any performance where the artist/performer meets and or performs to a single audience member. The boom in artists performing One-to-One "exists as part of the trajectory of Live Art and theatre practice - it evolved [...]" (Zerihan, R. 2009: 6) and as a result One-to-One performance is "gradually being recognised as an exciting and important development in the ever-changing score/s of contemporary performance practice" (ibid: 4).

In the 21st Century there has been a significant rise in the popularity of the One-to-One encounter within the Live Art scene. As Zerihan points out, the number of One-to-One pieces programmed at festivals and events such as *The National Review of Live Art*, *Sensitive Skin* (2006), *Intimacy: Across Visceral and Digital Performance* (2007), *Visions of Excess* (2009) I *Am Your Worst Nightmare* (2007) and *I Am Still Your Worst Nightmare* (2008) has risen considerably. This is an interesting occurrence, particularly as the One-to-One encounter by its very nature can only attract a small paying audience and must be heavily subsidised in its production costs.

The rise in popularity of the One-to-One may be theorised in relation to the increasing popularity of immersive media and *augmented* or *mediated* reality technology in popular culture and the developments that have come with *Web 2.0* which have made the Internet a much more interactive environment. Such technology has made it possible for users to enhance their experience of the world in real-time through applications that, for example, amplify and add to existing sounds experienced to create augmented reality soundscapes (*RJDJ)* or which enhance live real-time footage of the world as it is captured with elements of computer generated graphical content (*ARQuake*). The way in which we communicate has been transformed through Internet based social networking websites and online alternate realities such as *Second Life*, or *Habbo Hotel* which allow users to create avatar versions of the themselves in online environments.

The Live Art One-to-One encounter may offer a response to the blurring of reality found in such technology, in that it often offers a direct bodily encounter with a real person. This is not to say that the One-to-One can not explore augmented or mediated realities, but that it can offer a real embodied encounter with other real human beings in an environment where actions may have real implications. (Further discussion of this can be found in the section titled: *Repetition, Reality and Authenticity*).

In recent years Live Art and performance has become more integrated into the contemporary gallery and accepted as a diverse and important art form. Live Art has existed in various guises throughout history, although it has not always been documented as thoroughly as traditional theatre or fine-art history. This may be because the arguably disparate collection of practices that form Live Art may resist definition "beyond the simple declaration that it is Live Art by artists [...]" (Goldberg, 2004: 12).

The term Live Art encompasses many diverse disciplines, traceable back to the surrealist cabaret of the Dadaists, the *intermedia* of Fluxus, the Happenings of the late 1950s and 60s and the performance art of the 70s and 80s. Today Live Art is accepted as an enormously rich and varied field of works which retain "a tentativeness that allows the obsessions of our cultural moment to seep from its edges" (Ibid: 11). Performance art tends to respond directly and politically to and comment upon culture much faster than many other form of art.

The slippery nature of Live Art makes it very hard to describe in written language:

> Being live indicates an existence in the moment: an endurance that takes place both in time strangely, also outside of time. This is liveness' wonderful contradiction: how it gestures to occasions that can never be fully known, disrupting the recorded and disfiguring all the representational apparatuses that would appear to order our present cultural condition (Quick, 2003: 43).

Live Art is a language of its own, beyond spoken or written word. Performance is able to communicate that which language cannot. A gesture, a look or a particular stance can often say as much if not more than words. As Marks asks:

> How can the experience of a sound, a color, a gesture, of the feelings of arousal, anxiety, nausea, or bereavement that they provoke, be communicated in words? (2002: ix).

To put into words the feeling of witnessing live performance would limit the experience of live work. Live Artist Kira O'Reilly tells us her desire is "...to make work about things that i didn't have words for... like language failed me... or words are failing me" (Zerihan, 2006). Similarly, Laura Marks suggests that "...a work of art is rich in sense if it cannot be contained in a description" (2002: xv). Words alone cannot describe the live event.

The encounter with the performing body carries with it an unpredictability and risk that the fine-art encounter does not. The body cannot be commodified, reproduced or polished to a high sheen. Performance has historically existed at the edges of the art world, to question

the conventional and offer new perspectives. Some saw it as a rejection of 1950's/60's Modernism, acting as:

> [...] a critique of the very aesthetics of immanence, distance, and eschewal of the (female) body that were underpinned by modernist critics at the time; performance artists protested bodily - by putting the body in all its sexual and racial difference, blood, guts and glory centre stage (Clapham, 2009: 4).

Bodies are living objects that breathe, sweat, excrete and undergo constant transformation from one moment to the next. Live Art is a medium which can offer an insight into the way our bodies function, to scrutinise the thing which we all possess but rarely engage with and celebrate. Performance “insistently begs the question of bodily 'presence', materiality, unpredictability, sweat, and stench. Performance is, by definition, polluted by irrationality – the threat of potential disaster [...]” (Jones, 2006: 176).

It is this threat that draws me to performance: the potential for disaster alongside the potential for a meeting of minds. The medium can offer a spotlight on our own humanity and the humanity of others. As Jones puts it: "to engage with live culture actively and with attention is to embrace the conditions of embodied existence, including the inevitability of pain, pleasure, and death" (2003: 42). Performance can appeal to but also threaten the emotions and bodies of performers and audience members: codes of social etiquette and cultural behavioural norms exist within societies to attempt to control the functions of the body. Performance can explore the tensions between the living, breathing, transforming body and the codes put in place to control it: as Garner suggests, "to interact with a world of objects on a phenomenal level is to engage oneself with a potential vulnerability and to discover the instabilities of self and body within the world" (1994: 115). A further discussion of the ways in which One-to-One performance can question social etiquette is contained within the section titled *Structuring the One-to-One: Expected and Unexpected Etiquette.*

Like any art form, performance exists within physical space and duration. It is composed of layers of images each building upon the last and merging into each other, transforming before the audience. This same transformation of images can be seen in video art or film, yet performance offers more than video art in that these images are created live, the unpredictability of the human body offering a more unstable experience.

Goldberg argues that "...live work by artists unites the psychological with the perceptual, the conceptual with the practical, thought with action" (Goldberg, 2004: 9). She suggests that performance is more than mere concept, it is physical, radical, and real. The density of images and sounds that performance can offer may form a barrage of sensory output that makes it unique from the experience of the fine art object, and less predictable than an encounter with video art.

This density is heightened in the One-to-One, which may also require the audience member to interact with the performer physically, vocally, or to observe as an audience of one. Even in performances where the audience is required simply to watch, the One-to-One is collaborative: the participant is "lifted out of the passive role of audience member and re-

positioned into an activated state of witness [...]" (Zerihan, 2006). As the only audience member in the performance you possess a higher level of responsibility to the success of that performance. Action you do or do not take matters in a way that it may not when part of a crowd.

In *Intimate Interactions* Zerihan suggests Chris Burden's *Five Day Locker Piece* (1971) as: "the first recorded piece of One to One performance" (Ibid). This is a suggestion I contest. Zerihan tells us that whilst Burden had not intended to speak to audience members during his imprisonment, visitors to his locker spoke to him and often became confessional with him. In a latter section I argue that the notion of confession is only a small component of the One-to-One experience, which Zerihan gives more weight to than is necessary. For me, the most significant factor that defines a One-to-One experience is that it is an organised encounter between only two people, which Burden's *Five Day Locker Piece* is not. I can find no evidence that supports Zerihan's claim on the basis that any number of people could visit Burden at any time, alone or in groups.

The rise in the popularity of One-to-One encounters can be more likely traced back to the mid 1990's when Franko B tells us that "Nobody was doing one to one. When I say nobody [I mean] nobody in performance or theatre" (In Zerihan, 2009: 10). Franko proposes One-to-One has its beginnings in the encounters of fetish clubs such as Torture Garden "where people would be queueing up to be spanked by someone [...]" (Ibid) in a private space.

Zerihan describes the One-to-One's refusal to grant the audience members anonymity. Instead she suggests that it may activate the audience member into playing witness, collaborator or voyeur. She talks of the One-to-One as "stripping bare and simultaneously problematizing the relation between one and other"(2006). This direct relationship between one and other is what marks One-to-One performance as different from other forms of theatre or performance-based practice although parallels may be drawn with the art of striptease or some forms of burlesque/cabaret; where private performances between only two individuals often feature.

The history of the One-to-One is disputable, although the origins of the format may be traced back to the Victorian "Peep Show" where viewers could peer at erotic nudes through viewing machines. Accounts of live, private striptease can also be found throughout history, ranging from ancient Babylonia to twentieth century America. Striptease may offer the foundations for the One-to-One format, although Franko B may legitimately claim to be the first to bring the One-to-One performance to the contemporary art world.

Speaking on why the One-to-One may now be so popular in the UK, Adrian Howells suggests that:

> [...] as we become more technologically and medically sophisticated, we actually seem to become more and more isolated. I think that the reason I'm very committed to the mode of One-to-One performance is because it is absolutely about prioritising a very meaningful engagement and interaction with another human being' (Sulaiman, 2009).

This potentially meaningful encounter by nature requires a raised level of interaction and therefore a raised level of responsibility on behalf of both audience member and performer in the collaboration of the encounter, something I was very interested in exploring in my work. The One-to-One encounter can offer a more authentic and embodied experience for both artist and audience member.

In creating One-to-One performances I wanted to consider the ways in which a performer could create intimacy with a stranger. I devised a series of practical investigations that were based around simple romantic interactions such as kissing and holding hands. I wanted to explore what it would feel like to *be myself* in a performance and to try to connect with another person in a direct manner. I sought to discover what it would mean to be in a present and direct relationship with an audience member and to offer myself as authentically and emotionally honestly as I was able to.

Zerihan considers the self in her description of *Reflection (n.d)* by *Random Scream*. In the performance Zerihan witnessed a performer wearing a mask of her own face performing suggestive sexual movements. Her experience is an extreme example of consideration of the self in performance, but in order to understand the implications of using my own body and to attempt to be myself in my performances, a discussion of what the self might be is pertinent; my body is a problem that must be discussed.

My thoughts on the self are informed by queer theory, a developing field of studies which took root in the early nineties in response to early feminism and gay and lesbian studies. Born from earlier post-structuralist ideas, queer theory was introduced as a key-term in 1990s by its most prominent theorists, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich and Diana Fuss, all of whom were working on theories rooted in the ideas of Foucault. Foucault suggested that identity may be fluid and that we present versions of ourselves that depend upon situational factors, both social and environmental. He argued that there could be no fixed self under the skin; our identities are constant re-creations of self in relation to negotiation with other.

Queer theory expands upon Foucault's notions of self and also seeks to question the assumed naturalness of gender. The queer theorist seeks to problematise the means by which sexuality is reduced to the definitions and inter-relations of gender. As a constantly evolving theory, "queer theory is characterized by a variety of methods of interrogating desire and its relationship to identity" (Watson, 2005: 67).

An important aspect of queer theory is the suggestion that our gender is performed, rather than inherent within our identity. It may be limiting to think of only having one identity, we may all possess and perform many identities dependent upon situational and relational factors. Echoing and elaborating upon De Beauvoir's now iconic statement "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (1973: 301). Butler suggests that:

> There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; [...] identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results (1990: 25).

Queer theory applies this same argument to challenge what appear to be the stable categories of sexuality, for example heterosexual, homosexual, bi-sexual, gay and lesbian. These categories are revealed as "fragile constructs, constantly reliant on the successful performance of gender" (Watson, 2005: 68). It is noted that these sex category constructions are in some ways useful, and that "we are not only culturally constructed, but in some sense we construct ourselves" (Butler, 1985: 505). Butler suggests that we may wish to deliberately construct our identities in a way which posits us within a category, perhaps to fit in to a specific scene, or for the sake of being comfortable within a specific environment. As a caveat, Butler is keen to point out that these constructions can also be negative and asserts that even when we self-select categories of identity, this is not a self-conscious process. Butler argues that free choice is an illusion, we are culturally predisposed towards specific choices. In addition to this, she argues that:

> Identity categories tend to be the instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression (Butler in O'Driscoll, 1997: 31).

It is only through recognising and questioning the categories which are assigned to us and which in some cases we assign to ourselves can we begin to free ourselves from these categories and imagine new ways of discussing our identities. In perhaps the same way that characters are established in the theatre through rehearsal and repeated behaviour, Identities are created and developed through repetition of specific behaviours and through interaction with others. It is in the act of constructing and re-constructing our identities that we begin to find identities that we are comfortable inhabiting and which we know how to perform within given situations. By having an awareness of the way in which we construct and perform our identities, we may be able to discover "new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms" (Butler,1990: 198). This is not to say that I can escape the reality of my own (male) body: it is an acknowledgement that I may find ways of constructing my own identities that are not defined by the physicality I possess.

In my own performance I had decided to work with the physicality and aesthetics of my own body, a body "ridden with semiotic, political, ethnographic, cartographic and mythical implications" (Gomez-Pena, 2004: 78). My body displays a history, it is scarred, tattooed and pierced. It appears outwardly gendered and coded with signifiers: clothing, a hair style, a beard. These items suggest my gender and in many ways my cultural identity. This is not to suggest that this cannot be overcome, As Gomez-Pena highlights

> Our repertoire of multiple identities is in fact an intrinsic part of our survival kit. We know very well that with the use of props, make-up, accessories and costumes, we can actually reinvent our identity in the eyes of other [...] (Ibid: 79).

I may use any array of tricks to alter my physical and vocal identity such as costume, prosthetics or vocal tricks as other artists have to great effect: Cindy Sherman has made her art career from creating images of herself as other, Oreet Ashery has used cross-dressing to transform herself into an orthodox Jewish male character. Although aware of my ability to

alter my physical and vocal identity, I felt that doing so would be to create a character to carry out the encounter.

Performance with a queer sensibility has typically appeared radical and confrontational to its audiences in its desire to contest heteronormative assumptions within the social sciences and some aspects of society. I wanted to find ways of directly connecting with audience members with a queer sensibility that was able to open a space for intimacy regardless of sex, sexuality and gender categories. I wanted to create a sense of ease within my performances that would enable audience members to explore intimacy with me. I felt that this was possible if I was to present myself as honestly as I could within my performances and that to deliberately manipulate my identity could destabilise the potential for Intimacy within the encounters.

As discussion of intimacy and authenticity is present in the section on Intimacy and in my conclusion, I will not elaborate further as to what these terms might mean here. In taking the decision to make Live Art encounters as myself I had to accept that in making work that was intentionally close or intimate with other audience members my physicality may be off-putting to some, and that this may affect the direction the encounters would take.

The encounters I created often involved active collaboration with audience members and sometimes required direct vocal communication in the negotiation of the experience: other works focussed on the phenomenal relationship between silent bodies through touch, or close proximity. The performance was considered a collaborative encounter and the resultant experience was dependent on the way in which both/either person(s) acted and reacted to the other. The differentiation between the speaking and silent encounter is an acknowledgement that humans need not necessarily speak to each other to communicate, as evidenced by Adrian Howells in his work *Held* (2007). The outcome of Howells' performance research in *Held* suggests that

> the structures of confession may be about bodily conversations or exchanges as much as the oral/aural: the place of exchange may matter less than the form of exchange (Howells, n.d).

It was this notion of exchange that I was interested in when creating my own work, an exchange which I imagined to be intimacy. As creator, performer and collaborator within these encounters I was implicated in the creation of meaning that occurred. The encounter became the potential for experience: a meeting point of desires, fears, memories and pleasures. The artwork is understood less as an object and more as a series of negotiated "becomings". As the boundaries of each encounter were negotiated between artist and audience member, the potential was always present for direct haptic (both touch and haptic visuality) experience, to stimulate a sensory and phenomenal understanding of the body in relation to other. It is for this reason that phenomenology presented itself as a useful methodology for thinking about my One-to-One work.

Phenomenology, Semiotics and Haptic Criticism

In *Performance Studies* Schechner describes performance as "underlin[ing] an action for those who are watching" (2002: 22). He suggests that performance can be "understood in relation to: Being, Doing, Showing Doing, Explaining Showing Doing" (Ibid: 22). This is a useful description of the more traditional theatrical experience and perhaps of the process an artist might undertake when making performance. However, it only offers the perspective of the maker of the work. Adrian Heathfield suggests that live performance can "[. . .] 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" (2004: 8). In its acknowledgment of sensory relations this statement appears *phenomenological* in nature, and the sensory nature of phenomenology offers the beginnings of an understanding of *haptic criticism*.

Early phenomenology was an attempt to return the body and consciousness to an understanding of the world as it is directly perceived by the senses. It offered an alternate stance to psychological methodologies where the world was understood through theory and concept. Phenomenology did not deny the role of theories and concepts in our understanding of the world, but favoured an embodied combination of conception and perception. The phenomenologist acknowledged that one cannot have ideas without experiences and that experiences are informed by ideas: there has to be a concept to every percept.

Due to its focus on sensation phenomenology offers a useful investigative methodology for discussing the art encounter as an embodied experience that engages the senses. It appears logical to apply phenomenology as a methodology which focuses on experiences through space and duration to Live Art: a medium that can often be more concerned with process than product. Many theorists have developed their own phenomenologies although most will be familiar with the work of Edmund Husserl. Husserl developed an early version of phenomenology which was concerned with the structures of consciousness and the phenomena which appear in acts of consciousness as objects of systematic reflection and analysis.

Husserl's early phenomenology was developed by his student and assistant Martin Heidegger along with existential phenomenologists Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty's key text Phenomenology of Perception (1945) applies Husserl's phenomenology more directly to the whole human body as a sensory device and for this reason Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has been utilised as a methodology for writing about performance and art that engages the body.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology asks for an embodied account of sensory experience that pre-supposes existing philosophies and methodologies for encountering the world. His phenomenology sought a description of the sensations and bodily feelings experienced by the viewer/reader/sensor in order to understand what an experience may mean or stand for which was rooted in reality rather than theory. Phenomenology can be described as

> [...] a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins – as an inalienable presence: and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status
> (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: vii).

Merleau-Ponty claims that this way of thinking about the world existed as a movement before it developed into a practiced philosophy. Phenomenology challenges the structuralist notion (which can be partly attributed to Saussure's early work in linguistics) that every system has a clear underlying structure and instead empowers the individual in their own sensory construction of reality, a post-structuralist approach to understanding how we construct the world around us. This may appear a similar stance to that of Butler, who places power with the individual but suggests that our identities are imposed through interaction with others. For Merleau-Ponty, the imposition runs in the other direction, the individual bringing their self into being:

> I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead it moves out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on [...] (Ibid: ix).

On encountering any art-work the viewer must inevitably encounter the phenomenological sensations of their own body in negotiation with that art-work. These sensations have been theorised by Merleau-Ponty as "the experience of an un-differentiated 'impact', instantaneous, an atom of feeling" (Ibid: 3).

Sensation in the reception of artworks may be understood to describe the instantaneous feelings within the body of the viewer, before these are processed by consciousness, intellect or emotion. Any encounter with any artwork, be it a human body or art object is always also an encounter with your own body: the effect of the sensations of the object upon your perception of your state of self.

This mode of viewing that reflects not on the artwork itself but on the feelings created within the viewer by the artwork is directly highlighted in Antony Gormley's installation *Blind Light (2007 - 2009)*. The light of the title is literally that, a bright white light transmitted through a thick fog. The participants are welcome to enter and explore the fog, which has a curious effect upon those who experience it. Gormley himself writes:

> You enter this interior space that is the equivalent of being on top of a mountain or at the bottom of the sea. It is very important for me that inside it you find the outside. Also you become the immersed figure in an endless ground, literally the subject of the work (n.d.).

This experience differs vastly from walking in darkness, in that whilst you can still see, there is nothing at all to see. This allows an unusual reversal of focus, asking the viewer to concentrate completely upon their experience of their own body moving through space rather than the space they are moving through.

Many of the artworks of Anish Kapoor also appeal directly to the body as a living, sensory unit. Kapoor created large scale sculptures which extend beyond the viewer's field of vision and use strong colours to assault the visual senses. Kapoor often invokes a sense of immersion in his artworks, as seen in the sheer scale and claustrophobia of works such as *Hive (2009)* or *Memory (2008)*. The artist uses bold colours or visual trickery to heighten this optical immersion, as invoked in the sensory purity of primary colours in *Yellow (1999)* or in the mirrored finish of steel works such as *Vertigo (2008)*. Kapoor in an illusionist, who understands the experience of colour and scale on the human body. As noted in *The Guardian*, "It is exactly what one hopes for from Kapoor: a strong physical sensation as well as the active revelation of one's own cognitive phenomena" (Cumming, 2009).

These examples in some ways illustrate Merleau-Ponty's descriptive psychology by allowing (or perhaps forcing) the viewer to contemplate the feelings of their own bodies in relation to the artworks and thus it may appear that phenomenology can offer a powerful method for analysing art and performance. However, critics of phenomenology argue that it is too essentialist a theory, "positing basic truths about human existence that come before the social conventions that critics of phenomenology argue - are the real source of understanding and values [...]" (Fortier, 1997: 45). As Butler suggests, we construct ourselves through our relations with others. We do not construct ourselves just through our phenomenal experience of other, but also through codified signs, vocalisations and language.

A set of social etiquettes apply when encountering bodies as artwork. This experience of the other body marks a more fragile and complicated encounter which must be negotiated through the societal rules of human (or animal) engagement. A body presented for viewing (or interaction with) as an art object may be restricted within similar codes to the fine art object, although it may be less appropriate to appreciate the sensory aspects of a body presented as an artwork than a fine art object. The body may be moving, speaking and/ or asking for response. A moving, speaking body must not only be negotiated spatially but through extra sets of etiquette's such as an understanding of body language, cultural codes of appropriate behaviour and through language/sound. These etiquette's exist for good reason, as outlined in the section entitled *Structuring the One-to-One: Expected and Unexpected Etiquette*. It may not be appropriate to explore a body as artwork phenomenologically.

Critics of phenomenology dismissed it as "a form of methodological idealism, seeking to explore an abstraction called 'human consciousness' and a world of pure possibilities" (Eagleton, 1983: 56). Eagleton argues that with its focus on reality *as* experienced phenomenology rejects human history, ignoring understanding through gained human knowledge and "withdrawing into a speculative sphere where eternal certainty lay in wait: as such, it because a symptom, in its solitary, alienated brooding, of the very crisis it offered to overcome" (Ibid: 61). Eagleton counters the very foundation of phenomenological study by suggesting that "perhaps all we find, when we inspect the contents of our minds, is no

more than a random flux of phenomena, a chaotic stream of consciousness, and we can hardly found certainty upon this" (Ibid: 55). If we do not attempt to formulate sense data into a coherent understanding we are left in a state of constant sensory flux.

With its focus on the embodied experience, phenomenology does not deny the notion of signs and concepts, but rather emphasises the link between conception and perception and places its focus on the bodily understanding of the world. This is problematic when it comes to performance, which relies upon symbolism as a short cut to infer meaning to its audience; Performance must straddle the boundaries of reality and rely upon its audience being able to suspend their disbelief of the reality of the situation presented in order to portray that reality. By closing down their individual focuses, semiotics and phenomenology alone cannot describe performance.

In 1985, Bert O. States suggested that applying a 'binocular vision' of both could potentially offer a useful method for the analysis of the Live Arts:

> If we think of semiotics and phenomenology as modes of seeing, we might say that they constitute a kind of binocular vision: one eye enables us to see the world phenomenally; the other eye enables us to see it significatively. These are abnormal extremes of our normal vision. Lose the sight of your phenomenal eye and you become Don Quixote (everything is something else); lose the sight of your significative eye and you become Sartre's Roquentin (everything is nothing but itself) (1985: 8).

In his book *Bodied Spaces* (1994) Garner elaborates that States' 'binocular vision' offers "complementary ways of seeing that disclose the object in two ways at once" (1994: 15). He presents an argument that the blind spots of phenomenology and semiotics as individual methodologies are "usefully symmetrical", balancing each other in their disparity and overlap. This validates States assertion of a 'binocular vision' that offers an "approach to performance that would pursue both the signs in phenomena and the phenomena in signs". 'Binocular vision' can offer "an emphasis with particular relevance to theater - that most bodied of all mediums - phenomenology complements the "always already" of signification with the "always also" of the subject's corporeal fields" (1994: 39).

This dual application stands at odds with traditional phenomenology, which argues that a pure phenomenological experience must always be "asymbolic" (Scheler, 1973: 202). States is correct when he describes phenomenology as "an attempt to forestall the retreat of the object into signification" (In Scheler, 1973: 378) but suggests that by accepting this retreat, phenomenology can find its place as the oppositional other to signification "as the inescapable other face of signification, as the fields (subjective, perceptual, and corporeal) that condition, and infiltrate, the sign" (Garner, 1994: 15).

Semiotics and phenomenology both offer distinct and useful methods of exploring performance, however neither can offer a complete comprehensive analysis of performance. States' and Garners idea of methodologies used in parallel may prove a useful method for the reading of artworks and certain types of performance. The problem with States' 'binocular vision' is the notion of applying these methodologies *together*.

A set of binoculars takes two lenses and merges them to create one image. Semiotics and phenomenology are fundamentally different methodologies that do not merge; they may only be applied in parallel to each other. States argues that his 'binocular vision' should disclose the object in two ways at once, I suggest that in our immediate reaction to performance we can only draw upon phenomenology *or* semiotics at any time. Whilst we may oscillate between the two, we cannot merge both to form a coherent strategy for application to performance.

In performances that happen on a stage or in spaces where a clear distinction is drawn between performer and audience, the audience exists as a separate entity to the performance, physically disconnected from the action. Whilst the audience may be placed proximally close to the action, they are fundamentally disconnected from it in order to play their role as an audience viewing that performance. A metaphysical barrier exists between audience and performer which allows the viewer to slip in and out of attention to the performance and to consider it through any number of means. The audience member may find themselves caught up in their visceral and emotional experience of the performance, or may choose to analyse the action through a range of methodologies and concepts. In such a performance the audience is able to oscillate between semiotic and phenomenal viewpoints at any time.

'Binocular vision' may work as a strategy for analysis both during and after performance which asks a more traditional audience/performer relationship. It may however prove a limited metaphor when it comes to approaching the more directly embodied experiences explored by some contemporary theatre companies and Live Artists. The notion of two lenses viewing one performance is clear, but in the process of viewing the performance the methodologies disclose that performance in two separate and incompatible manners. 'Binocular vision' is unable to offer a strategy for the merge of emotional, phenomenal and semiotic responses to performance. It is this merge that is essential to the complicated close encounter that is the One-to-One.

In the One-to-One, the viewer has a shorter and more intensive encounter in which they play an active role. In the heat of this moment the audience member may not clearly occupy the critical positions of semiotics and phenomenology and must find a strategy for dealing with both simultaneously. This is what Laura Marks may be suggesting in her book *Touch* (2002) where she outlines a theory of haptic criticism. I would like to suggest haptic criticism not as an integrated lens of phenomenology and semiotics but as a strategy that metaphorically moves along the experience of One-to-One performance allowing an embodied emotional response to inform a semiotic response.

Laura Marks applies her theory of haptic criticism to video-art and installation in order to develop an embodied approach to artworks which allows an acknowledgment of the way in which the artwork provokes the senses. Marks' development of the haptic builds upon the critical tradition of phenomenology and sensory theory stemming from Riegl, Deleuze and Guattari and also a range of phenomenological works including Maurice Merleau-Ponty's key text.

Haptic criticism argues for the validity of a close up experience of an artwork , but does not deny the validity of a distanced experience either. Haptic visuality (a close encounter) and optic visuality (a distance viewpoint) are seen as existing on the same spectrum and objects may invite either or both:

> In the sliding relationship between haptic and optical, distant vision gives way to touch, and touch reconceives the object to be seen from a distance. Optical visuality requires distance and a center, the viewer acting like a pinhole camera. In a haptic relationship our self rushes up to the surface to interact with another surface. When this happens there is a concomitant loss of depth – we become amoebalike, lacking a centre, changing as the surface to which we cling changes. We cannot help but be changed in the process of interacting (Marks, 2002: xvi).

Marks tends to use her notion of haptic visuality to describe grainy or distorted images in video art, in which the viewer cannot clearly identify spaces and figures. In using the term haptic visuality to describe “a kind of seeing that uses the eye like an organ of touch” (Ibid: 105) it appears that Marks is proposing a way of seeing in which we may view artworks with a visual fluidity, merging the optical (and therefore potentially semiotic) experience with the more sensuous (phenomenal) experience.

The term may be easily confused with haptic perception (the way we physically experience touch) however Marks uses it to refer instead to a mode of viewing which more directly involves the viewer’s body, employing other forms of sense experience in its conception of the act of seeing. Marks describes a tactile way of viewing in which the eyes are metaphorically being used as organs of touch.

In *Touch*, Marks refers to earlier theories of Deleuze and Guattari when she suggests that her notion of the haptic refers to a: description of “smooth space,” a space that must be moved through by constant reference to the immediate environment, as when navigating an expanse of snow or sand" (Ibid: xii). She suggests a more immediate emotional, bodily response to artworks which at first appears to mimic States' 'binocular vision'. On closer inspection it appears that Marks is putting forward a suggestion for a more integrated approach to the phenomenological and semiotic when she suggests that:

> The haptic critic, rather than place herself within the “striated space” of predetermined critical frameworks, navigates the smooth space by engaging immediately with objects and ideas and teasing out the connections immanent to them (Ibid: xiii).

Marks highlights the relationship between phenomenology and haptic criticism when she speaks of the impressionistic nature of phenomenological criticism. She notes that phenomenology "does not seek to impose a philosophical view on the object" but suggests an attempt "to move along the surface of the object, rather than attempting to penetrate of “interpret” it, as criticism is usually supposed to do" (Ibid: xiii). Here she confirms her alliance with phenomenology but also expands upon the ways in which haptic criticism might differ from 'binocular vision', by allowing emotional responses to artwork to inform reading of that

work organically, through an integrated process of sensory input, emotional process and semiotic reading.

Marks appears to be attempting to model the merging of semiotics and phenomenology to create a theory of looking that allows her bodily, sensory understanding of an artwork to inform her eventual interpretation of the work. Rather than separating the semiotic and phenomenological, Marks' haptic visuality is suggestive of a methodology which allows for the emotional and phenomenal to inform the viewers reading of an artwork in a way that is somehow more honest than what she refers to as "our cultural tendency to take a distance" (Ibid: xiii). For Marks "haptic criticism cannot achieve the distance from its object required for disinterested, cool-headed assessment, nor does it want to" (Ibid: xv).

In this closeness Marks suggests a blurred or obscured sense of vision, where the viewer is not party to 'the whole picture.' This loss of critical distance is titled the *erotic* by Marks, which she describes as "The ability to oscillate between near and far [...]". For Marks "what is erotic is the ability to move between control and relinquishing, between being giver and receiver. It's the ability to have your sense of self, your self-control, taken away and restored - and to do the same for another person" (Ibid: xvi).

Whilst Marks' use of the term erotic may sound misleading when used in relation to One-to-One performance, the intercourse metaphor appears in other literature relating to the One-to-One:

> I want to try a different type of intimacy with someone I don't know. The nearest I could explain was to an encounter where possibly - although [it] never really happened - some kind of sex happens (Franko B in Zerihan, 2009: 11).

Such a view may be similar to the kind of view a viewer/participant may have in One-to-One performance encounter, which may directly engage the body in relation to another. This control and relinquishing, or intercourse works particularly well when discussing the One-to-One, where the participant is unable to take a critical distance in their interpretation and analysis of the work. Marks' sensory understanding of the act of seeing may provide a route into developing an understanding of the relationship between audience and performer, as an exchange of energy that may stimulate bodily sensation without direct touch.

To demonstrate the way in which haptic criticism may be applied to One-to-One, I begin with the example of the conventional theatrical experience. In a typical theatrical performance the audience is given a view of a scene which mimics the way we would see such a scene in real life. The proscenium arch and its fourth wall viewing device allows the audience to 'look inside' a room or space, offering a viewpoint which the audience are able to identify as a representation of three-dimensional reality.

The fourth wall set up assists the audience in their ability to suspend their disbelief that the characters or scenarios presented are real by allowing them to be outside of (but able to see into) the scene. The viewer is given critical distance and thus is able to oscillate freely between semiotic analysis or embodied phenomenological response. It is the decision of the

viewer which position they occupy and they may switch between either in their reading of the work.

An audience member employing haptic criticism to a theatrical performance presented upon a stage does not have a direct bodily relationship with the performers. Rather, they are part of the sea of bodies that compose the audience. Thus the haptic critic watching a play upon a stage will experience their body in relation to other audience bodies, which may present a range of sense stimulus such as smells, noises and varying temperatures. The haptic critic will also experience the sense stimulus of the theatre: the comfort of the seat, the temperature of the auditorium. In the theatre audience the haptic critic is experiencing embodiment in relation to audience and environment as well as relation to performers. The critic must attempt to ignore the experience of their surroundings in order to attempt to review the performance on the stage. The haptic experience of the audience in relation to the performers is heightened in the theatrical device of theatre in the round or in performances where the audience are invited to be present on the stage with the performers. In some performances the audience are able to move freely around the space and perhaps even touch the performers.

Recent theatrical experiences such as offered by *Shunt, DreamThinkSpeak* and *Punchdrunk* have further attempted to break down the fourth wall experience and directly involve their audiences in their performances by creating elaborate sets which the audience are free to explore at their will. Audience members encounter performers within these sets which are more akin to art installations or film sets than typically staged performances. Audiences are often able to follow a particular performer in order to understand how they might fit into the narrative of the piece. This requires the audience member to take a much more active role in experiencing the performance, as Gardner notes "Watching and listening used to be enough. The audience knew their place: silent and passive in their seats. Not any more" (2007b).

The haptic relationship between audience and performance or media is considered positive. Contemporary cinema is increasingly striving to offer its audiences a more haptic experience. 3D technology attempts to offer a more sensory view *into* the world of the film and the sound-systems used in modern cinemas employ deep bass effects to physically impact upon the bodies of audiences. It appears that theatre, cinema and Live Art performance is attempting more than ever to directly engage the audiences in a bodily fashion.

The world of theatre is more than ever exploring direct touch, such as seen in recent performance *Six Women Standing In Front Of A White Wall* (2007) by Little Dove Theatre Art. In this performance, six women perform slow movements of unhappiness and despair, transforming these into movements of joy and happiness when touched by audience members. Such performances begin to explore what I am trying to provoke with my application of haptic criticism to One-to-One performance. In these performances the audience has less opportunity to process what is happening to them from an objective position. However, in all of these performances there is still a sense that the audience member a member of the audience and not a performer or collaborator. Should the audience choose to they may often be able to step out of the performance and observe and process the scene and their feelings about it.

Theatre company Punchdrunk explore audience involvement in *It Felt Like A Kiss* (2009). In this performance the audience is split into groups and in the final act are chased through a series of corridors by a masked man wielding a chainsaw. I argue that rather than merge the phenomenal and semiotic, *It Felt Like A Kiss* tears apart the two methodologies. In the first two acts of the performance the audience is given a highly semiotic experience. There are large presentations of text to read, a video documentary and filmic sets to explore that contain letters and factual clues to the content of the performance. The final act of the performance is purely phenomenal, in that the audience member is pursued by an actor with a chainsaw, giving no time to notice the details that make the experience theatrical. The semiotic beginnings of the performance give context to the phenomenal ending; if the audience has not read the signs (sometimes subconsciously) from the beginning then the third act does not make sense. The third act is nothing more than a haunted house technique, designed to exhilarate and thus is very distinct from the real, meaningful and possibly risks decisions made in the collaborative One-to-One.

In a One-to-One performance where the emphasis is placed upon the participant to collaborate with the artist this ability to opt out is denied. By forcing the participant to be an active collaborator in the work, those involved cannot take a distanced semiotic or phenomenal view. The participant is forced to make decisions often in a short timescale and thus a haptic reading of the work allows for the emotional reading of the situation as well as the semiotic reading to inform the decision. The haptic reading is not so much a binocular view, suggestive of two views side by side, but a merged view that incorporates both methodologies. The One-to-One experience often occurs within a smaller space/time frame than theatrical experience and often asks for a much more active engagement. Marks haptic visuality appears to take into account this "zoomed" in or "focused" experience and offers a way of analysing what occurs in intense encounters.

The haptic approach proves a useful strategy for the negotiation and combination of emotional, phenomenal and semiotic responses required in the intensity of the One-to-One Performance. In the following section I will directly consider issues that arose in relation to my own One-to-One performance work and how the notion of haptic criticism may inform these issues.

ISSUES ARISING

Therapy and Confession: Emotional Disclosure in a One-to-One

A number of One-to-One performances I have encountered have appeared to mimic the language and structure of psychological therapy, or asked me to give a confession. These include Blast Theory's *Rider Spoke* (1999), Jo Bannon's *Claim to Fame* (2009) or Ontroerend Goed's *The Smile Off Your Face* (2009). Zerihan suggests that in One-to-One performance "consumerist formal anxieties are shot through with therapy culture's promise of a talking cure as the politics of power between one and other are tangled and tugged upon [...]" (2006). It is evident that the relationship between artist and audience in the One-to-One may at times appear similar to the patient/therapist relationship and I suggest that this may be limiting and perhaps even harmful for both the performer and the audience member.

In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1* (1976) Michel Foucault outlined the way in which in the 19th century the act of religious confession was combined with scientific discourse for the production of discourse about sex and the human subject. Foucault suggests that in the 19th century sexuality was seen as a latent force within the body that needed to be drawn out. He argues that the introduction of codified methods for extracting confessions gave an aura of medical procedure and thus an air of authority to the practice. The confessional was seen to fix or release something within the subject. Foucault opposed the notion of sexuality as a latent force. As one of the first constructivists, Foucault opposed to the essentialist position that sexual categories are fixed. He argued that sexual categories are human constructions.

In the 19th century science was seen to produce empirical knowledge and truth, a claim countered by phenomenology in its acknowledgment of the limits of science. The combination of confession and science enabled analysts to discuss the impact of sexual acts which were seen to be the cause and explanation of a range of behaviours. Confession was considered a method of extracting information from subjects in order to explain their behaviour and the association of confession with science formed the beginnings of what we now understand as *psycho-analytic therapy*. In the act of confession the listener is in the position of authority, in the same way that the artist is often in the position of authority in the One-to-One. This may explain, at least in part, the comparison between One-to-One performance and therapy.

The notion of the One-to-One performance as therapy is potentially harmful to both participant and performer, who may not be trained to deal with the intimate confessions of audience members. Nevertheless, the comparison exists throughout One-to-One performances and literature relating to the One-to-One. In *Intimate Interactions*, Zerihan frequently uses therapy based terms such as "the potentially purifying meeting" (Zerihan: 2006) or "...the tone and syntax of her voice like that of a counsellor's (sic) as she calmed me [...]" (Ibid). Zerihan's liberal use of therapeutic language is perhaps more symptomatic of what each viewer might bring to the performance, rather than that which the performance intended

to offer the viewer. There may be an expectation in the One-to-One for the viewer to have a more active role in their experience in comparison to a conventional theatre performance. This does not mean that the viewer can always *expect* interaction from a One-to-One nor expect a pleasant or therapeutic experience.

In Blast Theory performance *Rider-Spoke* (2009) I found myself cycling through Bristol on a rickety old bicycle. I was asked to wear a GPS pack and headphones, through which I was asked recorded questions about my memories and secret. I was not asked to tell secrets but to tell how it would feel to be free from them. I was surprised that anyone might actually answer these questions, which in my view felt too personal to be asked with so little context. I felt loathed to release my personal responses knowing that they would be heard by other cyclists taking part in this piece, a protracted sharing of intimacies that left me with little return.

I was also able to listen to secrets left by other riders, however hearing the disembodied responses of others cycling through the city did little to make me want to leave my own. In a way this was an anti One-to-One, where the lack of another body made the encounter feel slightly purposeless and empty. The piece required intimate revelation in an impersonal scenario. Without the physical presence of another body I could not feel the trust and intimacy required for sharing.

This experience was similar to a confessional performance at Bristol's Arnolfini, where I was beckoned into a toilet cubicle by a masked performer, who simply and directly asked me "What's your secret?". I was so unprepared for this that I replied "I don't have one and if I did I wouldn't tell you!" before being ejected from the toilet by the confused performer. The anonymity of the masked performer made it difficult for me to establish a relationship with him and therefore I found no compelling reason to share my secrets. I later heard that he had amended the performance to incorporate a softer and more friendly greeting, evidence that eliciting disclosure can be a difficult and sensitive issue to tackle.

A performance at the Bristol Old Vic in 2009 attempted to encourage disclosure by taking away the sense of sight. Gardner described *The Smile Off Your Face* by Ontroerend Goed (2007) as "20 minutes of One-to-One therapy" (2007a). In this performance I was blindfolded and ricocheted around an empty theatre in a wheelchair, where I was directly touched by performers and my senses assaulted with smells such as burning and cinnamon. My sense of taste was stimulated when a chocolate bean is placed into my mouth and my body was lifted, manipulated, moved around and placed onto a bed. At this point a female performer joined me and pressed her body against mine whilst asking me to answer intimate questions about myself. Snippets of information were solicited from me which I freely gave but with little sense of this being a two way process; I did not feel that the performers really cared for my answers. The performers themselves assert that they *do* care for my answers and suggest that (on their performance of *Internal*)

> If it’s too cosy and a bit superficial, then you have to ask, “Why make a performance like this?” So we really try to make people feel comfortable, but on the other hand we go a little deeper so that it becomes uncomfortable and actually starts to offer a more profound experience (Ontroerend Goed in Sulaiman, 2009).

Whether or not *The Smile Off Your Face* was intended to be a profound experience is questionable. Public reaction to the performance was generally positive, perhaps as it offered a pleasantly passive but fully embodied experience quite different from that of everyday life. Having experienced a lot of work like this before I felt it was too passive an experience, which meant I did not connect with it as strongly as others. This passivity proved to be the problem in my experience of the work, and is something Adrian Howells addresses in the same article when he speaks about his relationship with his audience:

> "It's very important to make people feel empowered," Howells explains. "That's a particular danger in One-to-One work. You really have to make it clear that there is not some agenda that the audience has to stick to. I don't want people to feel in any way coerced into something that they're not a willing participant in" (In Sulaiman, 2009).

I believe there is a clear distinction here between an artist who is seeking a meaningful connection with an audience and a theatre company with an interactive edge. Howells takes responsibility for the relationship he creates with his audience and demonstrates a sensitivity to the potential issues that may arise if the audience take his work as therapy. It is not just the success of the work that is at stake in One-to-One performance where emotional disclosure is requested. Artists may not be equipped to deal with the potential ramifications of asking an audience member to divulge personal stories or feelings. As Franko B suggests, in the One-to-One there will always be the danger of "people projecting things onto you and coming with baggage [...]" (Franko B in Zerihan, 2009).

In *The Guardian* article *How Intimate Theatre Won Our Hearts*, Gardner quotes Battersea Arts Centre's David Jubb who suggests that participatory performance "requires artists to think diligently about every show and what rules they are playing by, otherwise the situation can get muddy: both audience and performers can end up exposed" (Jubb in Gardner, 2009). Here Jubb highlights the sense of risk both for the audience member and the performer, something which is illustrated clearly in the performances of Adrian Howells.

The evidence of therapy in the work of Howells is particularly clear in work such as *The 14 Stations of the Life and History of Adrian Howells* (2007). In this performance Howells used the religious context of the Fourteen Stations of The Cross to create 14 One-to-One scenes in which the participant was implicated in causing suffering to the artist. Describing his devising process, Howells tells us:

> I deeply contemplated the meaning and significance of each of the original stations and how they related to my life-equivalents, and revisited this in-depth, internal work on a daily basis. This necessitated me being brutally honest with myself and to have painful realisations about, for example, my addiction to self-punishment or my obsessive, unrequited infatuations with younger men (n.d).

In this performance Howells was exploring deeply personal issues within his own life and thus it may appear unclear how he justifies his assertion that "... I always make it clear that what I'm doing is art, not therapy" (In Gardner, 2009). I argue that Howells is drawing a line

in acknowledging that whilst some of his work may function as therapy for *him*, he is unable to profess that his work is therapy for others, which might prove dangerous for an artist not equipped to deal with the problems of others. Howells directly explores communication with his audiences and by doing so he shares an experience with an audience rather than offering a solution, as is often the difference between art and theatre. I am not suggesting that art does not sometimes have a therapeutic effect on its audience, rather that this effect should not be expected.

In the same article of 2009 we are told that in his role as creative fellow at Glasgow University, all of Howells' work is vetted by an ethics committee. This may appear a wise decision when Howells himself tells us "I'm trying to test the boundaries and see how much risk I and the participant can take [...]" (Ibid). The artist making the One-to-One must have an awareness of the dangers of conducting performances which are potentially emotionally affecting to an audience and should to a certain degree, be able to take responsibility for issues that may arise.

The ethics committee may be able to offer strategies for dealing with this, but ultimately the encounter must be negotiated by the vision of the artist. Howells makes it clear there are pitfalls here when he tells us: "There have been times when I've bent over so far to comply with the ethics committee that it has made me overly cautious, and the work hasn't been as challenging as it should be" (Ibid). I argue that the role of such a committee should not extend beyond offering Howells advice on how best to avoid his work causing trauma to his audience. The committee should ensure that his work does not seriously upset or distress its audience and is within the boundaries of human rights and equality and diversity laws but should allow for work that is challenging or explores risk to the audience member. A further discussion of risk in the One-to-One is the subject of the chapter entitled *Trust and Risk: Building a relationship between artist an audience.*

The responsibility of One-to-One performance belongs equally to the performer, the programmer and the venue putting on the show. It may seem overly cautious to need to consider the risks taken by artists whose work appears therapeutic, however it may appear more pertinent in light of "stories of artists being stalked by audience members who believed there was real intimacy, and of theatre-goers being left genuinely distressed by their experience" (Gardner, 2009).

Two of the works mentioned above *(Rider Spoke* and *The Smile Off Your Face)* directly ask for confession or secret sharing, whereas others share secrets (*The 14 Stations of the Life and History of Adrian Howells*.) Gardner addresses both forms of performance in her review of the Edinburgh Festival 2009 when she states that "At their best, these plays can be exhilarating: at worst, they are emotional porn" (Ibid: 2009). A thoughtless, superficial encounter or ill-equipped performer can certainly make these encounters frustrating and potentially dangerous to the well-being of their audiences. Similarly the performer who indulges themselves in their own suffering may be equally frustrating.

Some work intentionally alludes to therapy, or may elicit an audience response that makes the work appear therapeutic. A danger of haptic criticism is the possibility of giving an over-

emotional reading of the work which is entirely subjective and not particularly relevant to the actual content of the performance. Gardner can at times lapse into an indulgent haptic criticism, such as in her review of *Six Women Standing In Front Of A White Wall* (2007) by Little Dove Theatre Art in which she suggests that:

> Six Women doesn't allow you to be passive. It gives the audience a responsibility, and while some may simply dismiss it as therapy rather than theatre, this intriguing performance-installation offers another example of how all our definitions of theatre are changing (Gardner, 2007b).

Gardner asserts that the show *does not allow an audience to be passive*. She tells us that she could not stand by and watch as other audience members let the performers "wilt in front of you, their mouths opening in silent screams" (Ibid). Gardner felt she has to step in and touch the performer so as to ensure that they continued to perform the *happy* version of her character.

Gardner was allowing herself to experience this work as a haptic critic, evident from her descriptive but emotionally influenced semiotic reading of the performance: "The women writhe and start scratching themselves, reminding you of small children deprived of love and affection" (Ibid). By allowing herself to experience the work haptically she felt able to interact with the performers in a phenomenal, bodily fashion: "simply standing there as the red figure suffered - was so unbearable to watch that I found myself obliged to intervene in what seemed like an act of terrible cruelty" (Ibid). Gardner's response was cathartic, her sense of having helped is illusory, the work is a performance of intimacy and co-dependency but it remains an enactment - not a reality.

Gardner's experience of *Six Women* illustrates how the haptic critic can allow him/herself to be seduced by and drawn into the experience of the work, not attempting to disconnect and critically review the piece from a distance but remain implicated within it. It is only in the time after the event can the haptic critic attempt to separate their experience into the semiotic, phenomenal, objective and the subjective for the sake of giving a review. *Six Women* is an example of the way in which some of the issues of Live Art and One-to-One performance are being explored in contemporary theatre, however it is not an example of a work that forces this kind of haptic criticism. The audience member viewing the work may choose to stand back from the performance and view it critically.

I cannot comment on how effective this work is in eliciting this response from other audience members, however it seems to me that the performance does not rely on its audience at all; it is enhanced or changed with audience interaction, but without this interaction the performance can still occur. The performers are not taking any discernible risks in performing the work.

In my experience One-to-One performance offers the most affecting experience when the artist allows themselves to share the risk of the encounter. In *The Mirror Pool* (2007) by Traci Kelly the artist offers to share a glass of red wine with each participant. Kelly takes the wine in her mouth, which is then passed back and forth between the artist and participant until it

has all been consumed. The artist takes equal responsibility for the encounter, sharing the risks of giving and receiving saliva: it is clear that the collaboration runs both ways.

Kelly's work is a clear example of a collaborative encounter which forces the participant to take a haptic approach, something which Kelly acknowledges when she tells us that "The Mirror Pool seeks to displace the visual with a blurring of vision and also replace it with a tactile gathering of knowledge" (2009: 77). It is an example of a performance which asks a great deal of its audience through its terms and conditions but intimately and sensitively highlights the ability of the One-to-One format to offer a close, bodily encounter that blurs the distance between and roles of artist and audience.

One-to-One performances that rely on audiences taking risks may falter, if an audience member finds themself unwilling to accept the terms of the encounter. If the work relies purely on emotional disclosure or secret sharing and the artist is unable to create the climate in which the audience member is willing to share the information, then the performance may fail completely. This may be one of the flaws of One-to-One performance: the format may insist so fervently on an emotionally-informed *haptic* response, that if this fails to manifest then the work may be seen as unsuccessful. Performances that deny the participant the ability to take a critical distance risk highly subjective responses and this should be a consideration when reading accounts of reviews of such work.

The critic taking a haptic approach to the encounter must be aware that their experience may not tally with the experiences of others. The artist who has created this encounter must also accept that in creating a personal experience, they risk a subjective review. My experience of *The Smile Off Your Face* was negative because I had experienced such work before and was looking out for specific markers within it (a sense of shared intimacy). If I were to review my experience fairly I would need to acknowledge my position and the context within which I experienced the work. Marks' haptic criticism is aligned with the growing trend for haptic journalism visible in the media, where news and events may be blogged in real-time by the people experiencing them live as they occur. (A discussion of which is not pertinent to my thesis, but nonetheless very interesting.)

In my criticism of performances that rely on emotional disclosure or strong emotional response, I have drawn attention to the risk that the haptic critic may also be the overly subjective critic, which Marks counters with her statement "I base haptic visuality on a phenomenological understanding of embodied spectatorship, which is fundamentally distinct from the Lacanian psychoanalytic model that castigates the "over-close" viewer for being stuck in an illusion" (2002: 18).

Marks' haptic criticism allows for a spectatorship aligned with critical analysis but which allows the critic to achieve this from an embodied and emotionally informed perspective. For this reason haptic criticism may prove a useful strategy for negotiation of the One-to-One encounter.

Trust and Risk: Building a relationship between Artist and Audience

What is at risk in Live Art and Performance? Is there a higher risk in a One-to-One Encounter? In this section I will discuss the differing types of risks taken in performance on behalf of both the audience member and performer. Zerihan suggests that the One-to-One may provide opportunity for overcoming and accepting risk, allowing exploration of challenging scenes or subjects considered taboo in a trusting environment. I will discuss both physical and emotional risks in the One-to-One encounter and ask whether Zerihan is correct in offering the One-to-One as a potential framework for exploring risk in a trusting environment.

The history of Live Art has often seen artists put their bodies at physical risk. Body art (a subset of Live Art) is primarily known for its exploration of the body and its relationship to pain. The kind of risks taken in body art range from piercing or suspension (Stelarc, *Sitting / Swaying event for rock suspension*, 1980), scarring and tattooing (Orlan, *The Reincarnation of Saint-Orlan*, 1990 onwards), cutting (Kira O'Reilly, *Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter*, 2003), bloodletting (Franko B, *I Miss You*, 2002 & Ron Athey *Incorruptible Flesh, Inner Pig,* 2006) and the deliberate causing of physical damage through various other means (Chris Burden, *Shoot,* 1971. Marina Abramović, *Rhythm 10*, 1973. *Rhythm 0, 1974).*

In Kira O'Reilly's *Untitled Action For Bomb Shelter* (2003) the artist invited audience members to meet with her One-to-One to make a cut (or not make a cut) into her skin. O'Reilly provided each participant with a sterile scalpel and presented her naked body to them as a canvas to be marked. O'Reilly's work can be seen in relation to prominent body artists such as Marina Abramović, Gina Pane and Stellarc as well as more contemporary bedfellows Franko B and Ron Athey. Her 2003 performance offers a clear example of the physical risks body artists choose to take. In this particular work O'Reilly has control over the encounter and thus is able to consider her own safety as the encounter occurs. Even so, by allowing an audience to cut into her skin the artist risks blood loss, infection and all of the other potential implications of putting a scalpel in the hands of a stranger.

In One-to-One performance the role of artist and audience can become blurred. In *Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter* (2003) there is no external audience' or indeed any other audience member: this is a private encounter in which the participant is forced to take an active role. In interviews, O'Reilly talks about the conversations that occur when participants in her work are considering cutting her skin. These conversations appear pivotal in building trust and intimacy: the audience member encounters O'Reilly as a person before they are offered the opportunity to treat her body as an object. Duggan suggests that O'Reilly's work

> Re-negotiates the relationship between performer and audience, recognizing it as a dynamic exchange where meaning is constructed. This investigation collapses the distance between artist and audience bringing them into immediate and intimate dialogue (Duggan, 2009: 307).

O'Reilly's presentation of her body as both person and object illustrates her focus on the ethical questioning of the act rather than as a cathartic experience, often attributed to the

more demonstrative work of Franko B. Through conversation O'Reilly aids the participant in their negotiation of the encounter she offers, which carries real implications both to her body and to the participant making the cut. O'Reilly takes responsibility for and places importance upon managing risk.

Physical risk on the behalf of the performer may typify body art. In the age of adherence to strict health and safety rules there is little Live Art that can feasibly put its audience at physical risk. The same cannot be said of the radical performance work of the 1970s which occurred before the current health and safety regulations were put in place and may have at times been risky for its audience as well as the performers. Other than physical risk, artists may also risk embarrassment, humiliation, ridicule or failure. Emotional risk on the behalf of the performer appears at the forefront of work like that of Howells discussed previously, or in performances like *Cut Piece* (1965) by Yoko Ono, who invited audience members to cut away and remove items of her clothing until she was naked and exposed.

Some forms of interactive theatre may be considered risky to attend by the audience for fear of humiliation through participation, yet in an interactive performance the audience may feel less responsibility to comply with the request: the performance/performer needs to set up an interaction that compels the audience to interact. This is a different kind of risk to that found in the One-to-One encounter where an audience member might find themselves in a position where they have to make a difficult decision or act responsively to the performer in order to collaborate. This can amplify the sense of personal emotional risk the One-to-One participant is taking but can also offer a safe space to make a decision or explore difficult subjects without being judged by other audience members.

The effect of other audience members on our decisions is explicitly explored by O'Reilly in *Untitled Action For Bomb Shelter (2003)*. The boldest example of this kind of performance that highlights audience responsibility can be seen in the iconic *Rhythm 0* (1974) by Marina Abramović. In this performance Abramović invited a group of audience members to use any of 72 potentially dangerous objects on her body, including a loaded pistol.

Abramović was subjected to physical abuse from whips, scissors and thorns before the piece was cut short: an audience member had placed the loaded gun to her head. It was not Abramović herself who ended the work, but the tensions between the audience. Reports describe how the audience split into two groups, one urging to pull the trigger and another calling security to end the performance. As a result of being given this freedom the audience members became direct collaborators, unable to stand back from the work. Each audience member was implicated within the performance and *any* action taken or not taken was political: by choosing to act impassively or by leaving the performance every audience member played a role in the outcome.

Duggan offers a similar situation in his description a number of O'Reilly performances, where "the audience is at once made to feel part of the performance and, because of this, responsible for it, which in turn creates an uneasy tension between a desire to watch, and compulsion to look away" (Duggan, 2009: 313). This impassive yet political role of the audience as *implicated voyeur* is an important distinction between Live Art and Theatre when

seen in comparison to the risk an audience member takes in work such as Punchdrunk's *It Felt Like A Kiss* (2009).

Increasingly theatre is exploring interaction and the suggestion of risk, as evidenced in a recent article in *The Guardian*, the author of which tells us she has been "spat on, sweat on, doused with water, groped – many times – and even, once, had axes thrown at me" (Soloski, 2010). The examples of risk Soloski offers appear insignificant in response to those found in the Live Art work discussed. Even the axes she mentions are in the context of a magic show, in which the risk is carefully managed to *appear* risky without actual risk.

The audience in the Abramović work are aware that the artist's safety and perhaps even their own safety is in real jeopardy. In the Punchdrunk work, the audience choose (or are persuaded) to suspend disbelief to the extent of colluding in their own discomfort/terror. There is no such negotiation in the Abramović piece. The terror and jeopardy, through focused on the other rather than the self, is entirely authentic.

Such experiences require the viewer to adopt a strategy for confronting emotions whilst simultaneously making decisions *and* considering implications as they occur. The responsibility an audience member is allocated in Live Art and particularly in this form of One-to-One is heightened by the reality of the encounter. The haptic approach may prove a useful tool for an audience member to adopt in order to respond emotionally and hopefully responsibly to the reality of the situation. As Heathfield suggests, in this kind of encounter the audience is "engaged in a vibrant relay between experience and thought, struggling in a charged present to accommodate and resolve the imperative to make meanings from what we see" (Heathfield, 2004: 9).

In addition to the heightened responsibility of the audience member in the One-to-One, the artist must also allow for irresponsible or unexpected responses in order to protect themselves from serious harm, something which Abramović was clearly exploring by giving the entirety of this responsibility to her audience. Live Art must straddle the line between art and theatre: performance that feels too safe may feel fake and theatrical, however an audience may not want to be involved in work that carries extreme risk to artist and/or audience.

In my own work *Define Me* I lay naked upon a white cloth slab and invited audience members One-to-One to write their thoughts about my image directly onto my body. I felt quite safe; although I had exposed my body and had my eyes closed I knew that the audience was composed of visitors to the Arnolfini gallery and that the ticketed and ushered appointments would attract audience member unlikely to act in a threatening manner. Although I had not specified that the audience member could not hurt or damage my body, neither had I made it explicit that they could. Audience members directly touched and in some cases manipulated my body and I was surprised that participants felt comfortable laying their hands upon me. This was unexpected and was perhaps indicative of the way in which the audience had seen my body as an object rather than a person, however I felt sure that I still had agency in the encounter and that I was in no danger.

Had I placed this work in a context such as a shopping mall or a nightclub then the behaviour of the participants may have been more erratic and perhaps I would have felt I was in a more risky position. Such risk became apparent to me in an early version of *The Moment Before We Kiss* which was shown at a Live Art party event, with music and alcohol. The availability of inhibition-reducing alcohol meant that participants took more risks in the encounter, diverting conversations onto other topics such as sex (a reasonable topic for a work about kissing) and some even trying to actually kiss me. As the sober performer in the kiss encounter I felt that I had a fair degree of control over this. Had I been naked on a slab at the same event I would have felt quite different.

The discussion of haptic criticism becomes particularly interesting when the judgement of the audience is altered by alcohol. Alcohol is known to heighten emotional awareness yet decrease the phenomenal awareness and inhibition of the participant. When dealing with participants who may have consumed alcohol before a One-to-One the artist must be particularly aware of risk. In a situation where the participant is less inhibited but more emotional their haptic response may be heightened and they may be more emotionally vulnerable. Users of alcohol before the One-to-One carry extra risk of uninhibited, dangerous or provocative behaviour.

In a more recent version of the *Define Me* piece performed at a nightclub event I amended the encounter so it would run as thus:

1. The artist and participant will meet privately (One-to-One).
2. The artist and participant will undress.
3. The artist will write directly onto the participant's skin in marker pen.
4. The participant will write upon the artist's body.
5. Both will dress.
6. The participant will leave.

In reconfiguring the encounter in this way, I gave myself significantly more agency in facilitating the encounter by taking a more active, collaborative role but also presenting more of a challenge to the participant. I was able to consider the behaviour of each participant and act appropriately in response. By adjusting the encounter in this way I addressed the power imbalance of the previous incarnation, where I had been in a more passive position. My encounter felt more equal and more like a negotiation with each participant.

This negotiation is a key factor in defining the One-to-One performance, along with a heightened sense of the reality of risk. Tracy Kelly's performance with wine, O'Reilly's *Untitled Action For Bomb Shelter* or Franko B's *Aktion 398* are all examples of work in which the audience and artist must respond to each other in order to collaborate. Audiences being chased through corridors by a man wielding a chainsaw in *It Felt Like A Kiss (2009)* may allow themselves to be frightened, but fundamentally they will be aware that they are in no *real* danger. In the climate of health and safety we are aware that a performer would not *really* risk physically hurting an audience member for the sake of giving a realistic performance and the audience member is at liberty at any point to simply stop running and ask the performer to stop.

This sort of experience requires the same intense level of focus that haptic criticism may lend itself to and can invoke strong phenomenal feelings in its viewer. What is does not offer is the emotional weight found in the One-to-One work of O'Reilly described above, nor the Live Art of Abramović where the artist is at genuine risk. When Kira O'Reilly offers you the chance to make a cut in her skin and you have sunk the blade into her flesh, or Ron Athey has cut his forehead open and is bleeding openly from his wound, the audience member cannot easily stop the encounter. Other than leaving the performance, the participant or viewer must accept that the blood is real and in some cases that *they* have made the decision to cause that blood to flow.

The difficult decisions that some One-to-One performances ask their audiences to make may not be decisions a participant will want to repeat. One-to-One performances that ask participants to cut or hurt another might be limited in their ability to surprise, shock or interest that same participant twice. This is a limitation of One-to-One performance; there are only be a certain number of subjects that the One-to-One can tackle (sex, the body, pain) before it no longer has the interest or impact it once did on a seasoned participant. This may not be such a flaw: these experiences and questions will always be new to each generation and in its limited capacity nature, One-to-One performance will not have difficulty finding new audiences.

The One-to-One performance which explores pain may also have a threshold for the artist creating it, as seen in a recent issue raised by Franko B. When an artist such as Franko B makes a work in which he is expected to bleed such as *I Miss You* (2000) or *I'm not your babe 1* (1996) his audience expect his body to comply with his request for the blood to pour. In recent history, Franko has decided that he will no longer bleed in his performances. In a symposium for Manuel Vason's *Encounters* at the Arnofini in 2007, he told us of a performance in which his veins were opened yet no blood came forth. His body literally refused to bleed and as such his performance was considered void and he was not paid. This is not the story he gives the press, whom he tells

> I bled walking, I bled on my knees, I bled lying down. That in itself was no longer interesting. Because of the nature of the work, it would always look emotive, but I didn't want to be known as the man who bled for 40 years (Boss, 2008).

Nonetheless, there are interesting points raised by both tales. The first suggests that the One-to-One which relies on extreme bodily action may only be able to be performed a certain number of times before the body can no longer perform the action. Bodies wear and tear and age. Muscles ache through repeat use, skin bruises or tears through friction. Franko also raises the issue of reputation, he had become *the man who bled*. His performances therefore came with a certain degree of expectation which could take away the power of the act. The haptic critic approaching his performance could no longer rely on the surprise of what might occur and would approach the performance with pre-conceived sets of expectations, making it hard to disconnect the act from the knowledge of the history of the act.

As instigators of One-to-One encounters, performers, programmers and venues have a much bigger responsibility for the well-being of their audience in contrast to the responsibility carried with other forms of performance. The One-to-One format often carries a greater sense of risk for the audience and performer, not only in the physical sense (a cut is a cut) but in the heightened emotional relationship between artist and performer.

There are examples of audience members becoming distressed by encounters that have not been thoughtfully orchestrated, or where audience members have felt that the intimacy experienced was real and personal to them and sought to find the performers after the performance had finished. There are even examples of times when audience members have experienced physical and verbal abuse following a performance for not *following the rules* as evidenced in the article *Edinburgh festival: Holocaust show's theatre of violence spills offstage (*Wilkinson, 2008). Wilkinson claims he was abused verbally in a bar more than a week after the performance he supposedly disrupted by not doing what he was told by the performers (who were apparently giving conflicting advice) and again in the street two days following.

One-to-One performance can be powerful, risky, dangerous, sexy and/or uncomfortable. Such encounters require high levels of trust from both the artist and the audience member, but also from the programmer/venue in hiring the artist. Whilst the actual content of the One-to-One is not inherently more risky than any other form of performance, more often than not the form will ask for a deeper level of engagement between audience and performer. This is an engagement that is inherently more real than that which is found in other art-forms and it is from this that the heightened sense of risk may arise.

Intimacy and Proximity: What do we mean by Intimate?

> I have had several intimate encounters with strange men over the last year. There was Alex, who held my face and cried as if his heart was breaking; there was Adrian, who lay with me on a bed, our bodies touching; there was Yuri, who encouraged me to confess my most intimate secrets, including whether I had ever wanted to kill someone. Then, last week, there was Nicholas, who showed me naked pictures of himself and asked me which one I liked the best. At least I think they were of him. I didn't have my glasses on, and everything was a bit blurry (Gardner, 1999).

Throughout writing on the One-to-One encounter the term *intimacy* appears repeatedly. In Zerihan's 2009 article it is used as a keyword when directing the artists interviewed: "Could you comment on one of the following in your one to one work - intimacy, risk, consent, confession, therapy, uneasiness?" (2009: 6). As Gardner boldly claims, "Intimacy is a theme that is currently sweeping British Theatre [...]" (1999). This may be true, however I question its assumed relation to the One-to-One. Is the One-to-One encounter any *more* intimate than other forms of performance?

Discussion of intimacy is evident in the writing of both Zerihan and Gardner. Zerihan suggests that "the temptation to romanticise or imagine the presence of intimacy when face to face with another can potentially reinstate its presence and re-empower its affect" (Zerihan, 2006).

She argues that the shared responsibility of performer and participant can cultivate a more intensive and therefore more intimate encounter. I agree with Zerihan that the One-to-One encounter can invoke an intimacy but argue that this intimacy is not unique to the One-to-One. Franko B offers the suggestion that "a one to one is not necessarily to me this thing about one to one person because actually you can have intimacy in front of 2000 people" (Franko B in Zerihan, 2009: 11).

What Franko is suggesting is that intimacy is unreliant on proxemics. Intimacy is a recognition that something is unique, special or unusual, a *one of a kind* liveness that cannot be documented or stored (or at least has the illusion of this). A live performance might feel intimate because it happens between only you and the artist in a private space. Equally, a performance may feel intimate in a small venue because the experience is limited to fewer people by constraint of space. A large scale concert experience may feel intimate if it doesn't feel commercialised or mass produced or if the artist tells a personal story, makes a mistake or sings an unplanned song. The audience may link a memory of an intimate experience with a specific song which when played *live* can re-invoke those feelings of intimacy (or can feel like a violation). Intimacy may be present in any of the above experiences. For this reason it may be worth looking at the dictionary definition of the word:

> *Intimacy*
> A. adj
> 1. a. Inmost, most inward, deep-seated; hence, Pertaining to or connected with the inmost nature or fundamental character of a thing; essential; intrinsic. Now chiefly in scientific use.
> b. Entering deeply or closely into a matter.
> 2. Pertaining to the inmost thoughts or feelings; proceeding from, concerning, or affecting one's inmost self; closely personal.
> 3. a. Close in acquaintance or association; closely connected by friendship or personal knowledge; characterized by familiarity (with a person or thing); very familiar. Said of persons, and personal relations or attributes. Also transf. of things, Pertaining to or dealing with such close personal relations.
> b. euphem. of sexual intercourse.
> c. Familiarly associated; closely personal.
> d. Used allusively of women's underclothing.
> e. Of a theatrical performance, esp. a revue: that aims at establishing familiar and friendly relations with the audience. Also of a theatre itself.
> 4. Of knowledge or acquaintance: Involving or resulting from close familiarity; close.
> 5. Of a relation between things: Involving very close connexion or union; very close. (Simpson & Weiner, 1989)

It is interesting to note that only one of these definitions is particularly explicit about physical intimacy. It is appears that knowledge and emotion seem to be more significant components of intimacy than physical proximity. Definition 1 and 2 present a description of the relationship between body and self: these applications of the word are useful in giving a sense of the depth of feeling that a description of an intimate experience may infer. Definitions 3, 4 and 5 describe the emotional and social use of the word and in particular relations between people.

These definitions suggest that familiarity may be a key to unlocking what intimacy might be: a recognition of closeness not proxemic but emotional. Perhaps to be intimate is to share emotionally with another and allow yourself to be vulnerable.

Intimacy does not necessarily have to be a two-way process, it can be felt from either direction. However, it might be most affecting when it is a two-way process. If I am to agree with Franko B that in a One-to-One "it's most like you are having sex with somebody, although sex doesn't happen, you have an intimacy - a serious intimacy" (Franko B in Zerihan, 2009: 11) then theatre work like *The Smile Off Your Face* by Ontoerend Goed as discussed earlier is an *assault* as opposed to an "intercourse" (Zerihan, 2009: 12).

The forced physical intimacy between audience member and performer in *The Smile Off Your Face* may result in the participant closing down their responsiveness to the encounter in order to control their physical and emotional reactions, which may be counter intuitive to the aims of the performance The Ontroerend Goed experience feels almost entirely passive and during my experience I never felt that the encounter was mutual. I question the use of intimacy in describing such a work, as does Gardner:

> Such performances are often charged affairs, intense and explosive. This is all part of their appeal. But are they really any more intimate than more traditional shows? In both, it seems to me, the idea of intimacy is an illusion, albeit here one taken to an extreme (Gardner, 2009).

I agree that in this particular performance the idea of intimacy is an illusion: there is something false about the whole affair. Zerihan suggests that intimacy is created through "[...] intimate self-sharing and self-discovering" (2006). It is the act of sharing which makes the encounter intimate. For Franko's "Sex" to occur both parties need to be active in creating the encounter. I argue that whilst there may be potential for the One-to-One to generate intimacy, it is not inherent in the One-to-One encounter and that using the word intimate in the description and marketing of a One-to-One performance may be misleading.

The "alone time" that a One-to-One may offer can feel intimate - but within the performance interaction itself, the notion of empathy makes more sense to me, as suggested by Francesca Steele:

> For me, during performance it becomes more about *empathising* with one and other - connecting on a negotiated level, understanding similarities and differences, making a memory. I am quite possibly talking about a very marginal difference here - but if the intention of the work was to perform *intimacy*, to be *intimate* (where I committed to give all of myself) - I don't think I could (Steele, 2007).

What Steele appears to highlight is that self-sharing or close contact with an artist does not always invoke intimacy. It may be precisely the invocation of (unearned, unfelt) intimacy that will make some some audience members feel uncomfortable. In *Held* (2007) Adrian Howells invited participants to be wrapped in a blanket together with him and held for a period of thirty minutes. Both the artist and the audience member are taking a physical risk in this work,

allowing their bodies to be pressed together and aware of the potential for intimacy but also for discomfort and awkwardness. Howells tells us his research focus was:

> [...] to address specifically the relationship between intimacy and performance space. The research objective was to explore the ways in which contrasting sites fostered more or less intimacy between performer and spectator (Howells, n.d).

The project was intended to explore the effect of the location in which the performance occurred on the intimacy felt within the work. It appears that Howells is measuring this intimacy by quantifying how confessional the audience member appears in interview after the encounter. This seems to be missing the elephant in the room, as suggested by Gardner:

> There does seem to be something slightly strange about a supposedly intimate encounter when, before the performer spoons up against you, he asks you if you would prefer to have a pillow placed in-between, so there is no body contact [...] (Gardner, 2009).

Howells' assumption that to be confessional is to be intimate has limitations. I don't believe that the encounter with Howells or indeed the location would have any effect on the participant's desire to share a confession. The participant's desire to share would depend more on the responsiveness, like-ability or trustworthy appearance of Howells himself. It may also be the case that the direct physical proximity and sexual connotations of the encounter make audience members uncomfortable and *less* likely to share a confessional.

It is exactly this kind of close up encounter that best exemplifies the need for a haptic criticism. Whilst haptic criticism is not explicitly about touch, work such as *Held* where the audience member is in extreme proximity to the artist brings forth many of the issues discussed in the introduction, particularly the inability to step back from the encounter and see it objectively. The thirty minute duration of this encounter allows time for the audience member to negotiate the meaning of, as well as the discomfort or comfort of the encounter. The participant is given more time to experience this work than is usual in a One-to-One, however their body is constantly in contact and negotiation with that of Howells and thus the performance disallows the disconnection of semiotics and phenomenology that 'binocular vision' asks and demands a more physical-emotional haptic response.

Marks' notion of the *erotic* appears pertinent here, particularly the suggestion that: "A lover's promise is to take the beloved to that point where he or she has no distance from the body - and then to let the beloved come back, into possession of language and personhood" (2002: xvi). Howells is explicitly provoking the notion of entangled lovers and mimicking this in his encounter, in what seems like an attempt to re-create the feelings that lovers may feel. This is muddied by issues such as the potential lack of desire between Howells and his participant, or the unfortunate associations with rape or forced sex that may arise. It appears Howells has created an encounter that is not an *intimate* encounter but an encounter that interrogates and pathologises the notion and components of intimacy.

I experienced Howells' *Footwashing for the Sole* in 2008, in which he massaged and moisturised my feet before drying and offering to kiss them . During a previous personal meeting with Howells I had formed an opinion that he may be more emotionally invested in the personal therapy of his work than I was comfortable with. Rather than being able to enjoy the foot massage, I found myself torn between enjoying the sensation of having my feet rubbed and thinking about what it might mean, not only semiotically in reference to the biblical associations he mentioned, but also wondering from my own personal knowledge of him whether he thought I was attractive and whether or not he would be aroused by the act of kissing my feet. Whilst I was initially frustrated that I let this *get in the way* of my enjoyment of having my feet massaged, this real, personal haptic processing of the work was key to my understanding of the piece and the issues it provoked. My response was neither right nor wrong, but personal and real. My experience of the work was arguably intimate even if it was not comfortable.

The encounter with Howells described above was private, but led me to consider the way in which the negotiation of a private encounter between artist and audience member might function when the encounter had some kind of audience. This was a question I explored in my encounter *Close To You* (2008) in which I attempted to create a 'romantic moment' with each participant based on the cultural conventions and shared knowledge of romantic cinema. I created the work to explore the idea that:

> The popular romance, with its familiar fairytale structure, contributes to a cultural construction of love that is woven into the collective imagination [...] (Holmes, 2006: 2).

In *Close To You* I arranged to meet audience members for a short One-to-One encounter on the Bristol Dockside. During the encounter the participant and I stood on the docks together and listened to the Carpenters version of *Close To You* (1970). A minute or so into the song, I took the hand of the participant and held it in mine. Before the end of the song, I let the hand fall and walked away, leaving the participant alone with the music. The abandonment of my participant was inspired by Barthes' idea that loss is only felt by the one who is left behind:

> Amorous absence functions in a single direction, expressed by the one who stays, never by the one who leaves: an always present *I* is constituted only by confrontation with an always absent *you* (1977: 13).

As each encounter occurred, it struck me that what I had initially designed as an encounter between myself and participant was functioning more as a performance of an intimate encounter for an external audience. I was asking each audience member to trust me to lead them through a very public performance of an intimate interaction in which they had little control. In retrospect I feel that these are exactly the circumstances of being left or losing a loved one although there may have been more effective ways of creating an intensity within the encounter before the loss occurred.

This private/public element was something I explored in a later work *(Inter)Action for 21 Carnations (2009)* in which I declined the role of performer for the first time and asked an

Arnolfini steward to perform in the encounter. I took a secret position on the balcony of the space and watched as the encounters occurred (without the knowledge of the participants) in an attempt to see whether I could identify which encounters had been intimate by the way that they looked. The encounter appeared to function purely internally to the participant, the intimacy only in the mind of the participant and not visible to me as an observer. I could gain little insight into the intimacy of the encounter by watching it externally.

My experience of watching *(Inter)Action for 21 Carnations* put me in mind of a work by Marina Abramović and Ulay *Imponderabilia* (1977) in which the two artists stood facing each other, naked, in the doorway of a museum. Members attending the gallery had to pass between them in order to enter the space. It appears to me that there was an inferred intimacy between the two artists in this piece (regardless of whether audiences were aware that Abramović and Ulay were lovers). To pass between them would appear to disrupt or break their intimacy, just as I felt that to reveal myself as voyeur in my Carnation piece would have disrupted the potential for intimacy between the steward playing the role of performer and the audience member. Although an audience in a One-to-One has no real reason to expect privacy, I felt that to break this privacy would be to destroy the potential intimacy of the One-to-One, something which I experienced in Rachel Parry's performance *Baba Yaga's Bastard Child* (2008).

In Parry's work I was led to believe I was to have a private One-to-One encounter with the artist. When I entered the darkened space and sat at the table with her I discovered that my expected One-to-One actually had an audience. Amongst other acts Parry squatted on the table and revealed her vagina to me and blew powdered spice into my lap. I was made acutely aware of my own discomfort but also how this might look to the audience. I felt I had a responsibility to Parry to stay put in my chair and not 'spoil' her work, for fear of upsetting the watching audience, but also that my own boundaries had been compromised by putting me in this difficult and very public situation.

What could have been an *intimate* One-to-One experience became a performance of my own discomfort with the performer. This was an interesting experience in its own right although not something I wish to repeat. I make the case that an audience must not *expect* an encounter to be intimate, or indeed private. This is another risk of performance and Live Art.

Parry's performance was not set within the expected *manners* or *etiquette* of performance, in which it is unusual to humiliate one's audience. This was problematic for me, in that I felt I had been tricked into something that I wouldn't have wanted to be part of. In later conversation with the artist in the bar of the venue it appeared that Parry had not intended me to feel this way, it was an issue with the way he venue had presented the opportunity to me rather than the will of the artist. My experience with Parry highlights the importance of negotiating the audience expectation of the structure of the One-to-One, which is the subject of the following section.

Structuring the One-to-One: Expected and Unexpected Etiquette

> I want you to be ordinary and extraordinary, real and unreal, familiar and wild. I want you to open up the doors between worlds and navigate the gaps inbetween. I want to follow you into the dark and make my imagination fly (Cole, 2008: 125).

Zerihan suggests that in the One-to-One encounter "Personal belief systems structured around cultural, psychological, social, sexual and ethical ideologies might be reconfigured and reconsidered" (2006). In this section I will discuss the way in which etiquette may inform the way an audience member conducts themselves within the Live Art encounter and what it might mean for an encounter to occur within *expected* and *unexpected* etiquette. For the purposes of this section the term *expected etiquette* will be used to refer to performances that occur within expected social behaviours and the term *unexpected etiquette* will refer to performances that break with expected social or moral behaviour, explore surrealism, or appeal to psychological phantasy.

In One-to-One performances that occur within expected etiquette the performer will employ recognisable and culturally *acceptable* behaviours that are universally understood within the culture in which they are performed. Acceptable behaviours vary from culture to culture and may be difficult to identify easily by someone from outside of a specific culture. British culture is composed of a range of merging and transforming cultures, races and religions, yet within this evolving culture (and law) there is an identifiable etiquette involved in meeting new people based around politeness, an understanding of personal space and use of appropriate language. An encounter that works within expected etiquette will conform to this etiquette and create a comfortable environment for an audience member in which they may feel safe to challenge their beliefs or take bigger risks.

In an encounter where the performer acts within unexpected etiquette the audience may find themselves unable to identify with the behaviour of the performer and thus may not allow themselves to explore their own behaviour, or this unexpected behaviour may provoke an unexpected response from the audience member as they haptically negotiate the encounter.

It is common within Live Art for artists to challenge the expected behaviours of social and cultural etiquette. Performance which operates within unexpected etiquette may appear unrecognisable within understood specific cultural behaviours or will push that behaviour to the extremes. Such performances might include bloodletting, excretion or extreme sexual acts. These acts are typically constrained by social etiquettes designed to control and confine the (natural) functions of the body: noises, smells and excretions. These etiquettes exist for a number of reasons but most notably they help to control the spread of viruses and bacteria carried in the human body. By controlling our exposure to excreted substances we help to maintain a clean and safe environment for sharing with others.

A result of this behavioural containment is that talking about or exhibiting these functions has become taboo within society. Such taboo is excellent material for film, art and theatre and has been explored in work such as *The Vagina Monologues* (1996) by Eve Ensler, which

explores the functions of the vagina or in the Live Art of Hermann Nitsch in the 1960s whose performances presented sex, violence and animal mutilation to its audiences. The One-to-One encounter offers an ideal framework for exploring taboo, as it denies the implications of peer opinion affecting the participant's decisions within the encounter.

In a One-to-One that does not follow expected social behaviour it is more likely that an audience member will find themselves feeling confused or uncomfortable and may not know how to negotiate the encounter. This might result in snap decisions that shock or surprise the artist or audience member or conversely may make the participant unable to participate. Arguably, the performance that occurs within expected etiquette will have to work harder to lure an audience member out of his or her comfort zone, but can do so in a more gentle fashion, allowing a more considered response to the work. Both types of encounter may offer the audience the opportunity to challenge, reconsider and modify beliefs through differing means.

When making my own work *The Moment Before We Kiss*, I had not considered the implications of structure and etiquette upon my encounters. I needed to create an environment in which an audience member could feel comfortable enough to 'nearly kiss' me, however the romance of the first kiss relies on the kiss occurring between two persons who already have some sense of history together or who are at least attracted to each other. To force this encounter to occur between strangers who may not be attracted to each other was problematic. The reality of making this into a One-to-One encounter meant that I had to negotiate the way in which the encounter would continue if I was not the 'other' that the audience member would like to encounter.

Although I knew that my audience had *chosen* to attend the encounter based on the descriptive marketing of the work I did not feel it was fair or true to the sentiment of the work to appear as if I was forcing myself on another. I needed to build a relationship with the participant before we moved our lips together so that they felt able to hold their lips close to mine.

I set the encounter in a softly lit, warm room. I provided a sofa and coffee table, wine and fresh flowers. I had a record player on hand to be able to play a love song. The set up communicated clichéd codes of romance as seen in romantic comedy films. This was intended to quickly signify that this was a recreation of a typical romantic encounter and I had hoped that these recognisable items would help to relax the participant by making them quite comfortable in a familiar environment. Participants were given a card that read:

You will enter the space.
We will look into each other's eyes.
We will move our lips together to kiss.
We will pause just before our lips touch and hold this moment.

My first participant entered. I poured him a glass of wine and mumbled "I haven't done this before". I played the record and looked him in the eyes. Without further conversation, we moved together to kiss. He dodged my kiss and licked my ear. I had expected him to

follow the normal etiquette of such an encounter and was quite surprised that he didn't, so attempted to begin again. Again he avoided my lips. The encounter was awkward, difficult and embarrassing. I had not considered the alternate behaviours that might present themselves and was unprepared for deviating behaviour. In retrospect, I can see that I had put my audience member in quite a threatening environment and foolishly expected him to act *predictably* in response to this.

By failing to set up an appropriate framework and reinforce this beyond the written instructions, I had not created a suitable context for the encounter to occur within, which was quite unsettling for the participant. As the performer orchestrating the encounter I felt that I had allocated myself a stronger agency in the encounter than the audience member and my participant's response to this was to challenge my agency. In my failure to clearly set up the context of the *date* scenario the participant had no reason to follow the conventions of the date. I had relied on the erotic power of the encounter being strong enough to sustain interest in holding the moment. What I hadn't realised was that the power of the encounter lay in the ritualistic construction of the moment, the potential for the creation of the moment itself was the result of the culmination of a period of desire, anxiety, excitement or fear which was made more complex by the *performative* and *time-based* pressure of the encounter.

In the second encounter I poured each participant a glass of wine on entry and asked them to tell me about their first kiss, and told them about mine. This created a dialogue between us that built a level of trust and mimicked the context of the first date. In discussing what may be a universal romantic experience both myself and the participant could identify and possibly recall the familiar emotions involved in the romantic encounter. The familiar construct of the date allowed the participant to posit themselves within the framework of the romantic experience and to reference this with previous experiences or imagined experiences perhaps even as the encounter was occurring, allowing the piece to function even where there was no form of attraction between the participant and myself. In a way, the power of the encounter lay simultaneously in the *present* of the moment, yet also in the imagination (*future*) and memory (*past*) of the audience member. Such a notion is illustrated by Angela Carter in her novel T*he Magic Toyshop*, in which the character of Melanie is simultaneously experiencing a (present) experience of a kiss whilst imagining how it might look from outside of her own body:

> She thought vaguely that they must look very striking, like a shot from a new-wave British film, locked in an embrace beside the broken statue in this dead fun palace, with the November dusk swirling around them and Finn's hair so ginger, hers so black, spun together by the soft little hands of a tiny wand, yellow and black hairs tangled together. She wished someone was watching them, to appreciate them, or that she herself was watching them. Finn kissing this black-haired young girl, from a bush a hundred yards away. Then it would seem romantic (Carter, 1967: 106).

In a sense, the moment I had created had the potential (regardless of gender, sexuality, attraction) to become more than its component parts. Zerihan goes some way to explaining this in *Intimate Interactions:*

> Like the (felt) difference between a briefest encounter and a one-night stand, the temptation to romanticise or imagine the presence of intimacy when face to face with another can potentially reinstate its presence and re-empower its affect (2006).

Here Zerihan highlights the possibility of the creation of intimacy in the One-to-One, as discussed in a previous section. Kissing appears to be a much explored subject in One-to-One performance. In 2008 I experienced *It Sank With The Shape Of Us* (2008) by Victoria Pratt. In this performance each audience member was assigned the role of significant other by the artist in a pre-amble to a video installation.The audience member met with Pratt at a kitchen dresser and dining table lit with fairy lights. She welcomed each participant and offered a cup of tea. Pratt created an immediate sense of familiarity by asking "Do you like it? Its new" and offering her wrist for you to smell, as if the audience member had smelt her perfume many times before. This quickly established an imagined relationship between performer and audience member, which she built upon in the following few minutes of familiar conversation before making an exit to take a phone call (at which point the audience member was directed into a video installation).

The encounter felt intimate and comfortable and followed expected codes of dating etiquette: the audience member was not being asked to commit anything more to Pratt than their attention and complicity in the imagined relationship. Pratt's work was quite different to my own in that it was overtly theatrical and was not asking for a collaboration with its audience. If I had used a similar performance device in my own kiss performance it may have created an awkwardness which would not have been conducive to the negotiation needed to reach the moment before the kiss.

In a similar performance, Eirini Kartsaki's *Kiss, Miss, Piss and Other Stories* (2009) offers audience members the chance to kiss the artist, but with a more surreal edge. Described in Zerihan's One-to-One guide (2009: 42) the audience member is lead into a small booth where a woman in a corset and tutu offers an unidentified drink from a small oriental teacup. Tango music plays and the floor is scattered with feathers. Immediately it is clear that this performance occurs within unexpected etiquette, it would be unusual to drink an unknown liquid offered to you by a stranger unless in the context of an art event. The artist takes the participant's hand and dances with then, whispering a disjointed monologue which asks "Will you kiss me?". She offers anecdotes about drinking broken glass, the smell of her armpits and her ripped tights. She finishes the monologue and, both sitting, she asks once more "will you kiss me?" and waits to be kissed.

Similar to Pratt's performance, the artist assumes an immediate relationship with the audience member by dancing closely with them, although does not assume a romantic/ intimate engagement. She offers the choice to kiss her but this is not a necessity. With its disjointed monologue, curious costume and props and mysterious beckoning of the audience member into the booth the encounter appears to exist within a slightly surreal and phantastical etiquette. The work seems to challenge the haptic critic in its immediate and complex relationship between expected and unexpected etiquette. The performer uses jilted and repetitive language and asks you to dance with her and to drink strange liquid. The semiotic response to the performance appears more difficult to negotiate and thus the

interplay of semiotic and phenomenal understanding that haptic criticism offers may prove very useful in negotiating such a strange encounter.

Some One-to-One work challenges expected etiquette to extremes, such as *Aktion 398* by Franko B in which the artist displays his painted white, naked body with a large gash in the flesh of his stomach and a cone collar around his neck as used by vets. The South London Gallery Website description of this piece reads:

> 'Aktion 398' was a sell out performance which involved a One-to-One confrontation with the artist in a specially constructed room in the centre of the gallery. The audience had to book a time in advance, take a number, sit in a waiting area and then be led into the room by one of Franko B's assistants (South London Gallery Website, n.d).

The use of the word *confrontation* is interesting: I would assume that the artist was offering himself as a vulnerable figure to his audience, yet accounts of the experience suggest otherwise:

> [...] common to nearly all the post-performance reports was a feeling that the spectator, not the artist, was the one under scrutiny. Franko had created a situation that denuded people, stripping us of all points of reference and denying us the safe rules of etiquette (Safe, 2002).

It appears that Safe feels he is not only speaking for himself but for many when he says that the situation denuded and stripped of points of reference. This sense of being denied the safe rules of etiquette may be nothing to do with the perceived *openness* of the performance and more to do with the appearance and reputation of the artist himself. Franko B is a large, shaven headed male, heavily tattooed and with a number of very prominent gold teeth. His outward appearance is bold and powerful. It may be his powerful and authoritative presence that disarms the audience, rather than the actual content of the work.

The setting in which the encounter occurs may also create the experience of the audience *under scrutiny*:

> Obediently, we removed our shoes, muted our uneasy chatter, took a numbered ticket and filed into the waiting room until we were summoned by an unnervingly sterile usher wearing white coat and plastic gloves. There was no going back now (Ibid).

This medical *mise-en-scène* appears evocative of a hospital or doctors surgery, in which the focus is usually on the patient. This context brings with it specific connotations. In the description of the actual performance it may appear that Franko is doing *nothing*, however it is clear that the *something* occurs in the set up to the performance. Crudely, it is as if the patient has visited the doctor only to find that the doctor himself is sick.

When Safe tells us that he was denied the safe rules of etiquette he makes it clear that the artist is confident in his performativity and is attempting to leave the performance open to many possibilities, but also to failure. Whether or not it is Franko's appearance that has this

effect, or his turning of the focus of the performance to the audience member is debatable. What makes this a powerful performance is Franko's decision to set such a strong scene but not have a scripted or planned method for the encounter. By doing so the artist gives his audience complete responsibility for the way in which the encounter will play out. Kartsaki raises this in her discussion of *Kiss, Miss, Piss and Other Stories* when she suggests that "the participant is not only responding to the performance, but is also performing - his or her response is hugely unpredictable and diverse" (Kartsaki in Zerihan, 2009: 42).

For an artist to offer such openness to the possibilities of an encounter may seem a brave feat, however with such a strong framework surrounding the piece Franko himself provides only the punchline to the performance, albeit with the possibility of the kind of extraordinary interaction which Helen Cole asks for in her open letter *Dear Artist ... Love Audience* quoted at the opening to this section.

Both the performances by Franko and Kartsaki occur within a short space of time. It may be the condensed time frame that makes the performances potentially extraordinary, as the audience is forced to swiftly and haptically make decisions or take in a scene knowing that they only have a short time to do so. The haptic critic relies on an integrated phenomenal, emotional and semiotic response to guide them during the encounter and it is only upon reflection of the event that the participant can return to States' 'binocular vision' to tease out meaning and deconstruct the encounter (which may denude the experience in reflection.)

If Franko was to present his performance not as an encounter, but as a durational performance in which the audience member was able to spend as long as they wished with the artist, not only would this remove the sense that the encounter was personal to each audience member, but those audience members may also have more time to take in the scene and perhaps remove some of the intensity, as they realise that the cut in Franko's stomach is merely a shallow scratch surrounded by copious amounts of crusted blood. In this scenario, the focus would be less on the swift haptic criticism that allows for emotion and perhaps the audience member would be able to take States' binocular view, switching easily between phenomenology and semiotics. Arguably, the extraordinary nature of the work comes not from the content of the work, but from the way in which the work is presented and this is why structure and etiquette must be a strong consideration for the artist making the One-to-One.

Repetition, Reality and Authenticity

The issue of repetition in performance has long been a problem for the world of performance, with West End shows regularly changing their casts in order to keep the performances fresh and actors needing to move on from performances where their execution of a role has become tired. Repetition is a particular problem in the One-to-One performance, in which the performer might be required to repeat their performance hundreds of times a day. In *It's Your Film* (1998) by Stans Cafe, each audience member was treated to a three minute encounter in a small booth that functioned as a piece of live cinema. The work is one of Stans Cafe's most popular and according to the company website has been performed around 4,500 times. *It's Your Film* is an extreme example of repetition in a short encounter.

In an essay by a Stans Cafe performer, the performer describes:

> I've taken a ring from my finger 1500 times, I've torn up over 1500 pieces of paper in a heartbreaking way, had drags on a 1000 cigarettes in a noirish way, looked lost around 1500 times [...] (Stans Cafe, n.d.).

Although not on the same scale of repetition in *It's Your Film*, in my performance *The Moment Before We Kiss* I repeated the story of my own first kiss so many times it became like a rehearsed script. I found myself embellishing the tale with new details each time, working from a template of reality but extending truths for comic or emotional effect.

In the same way an actor might rehearse, block and plot a performance, I became more fixed in each encounter: I was no longer responding to each individual but instead carrying out a set of repeated actions. I had imagined myself to attempt to feel the experience with each new audience member, however I found it was easier to re-perform my movements and responses from the first successful encounter (where I felt that the audience member had experienced an emotional response.) This is interesting in light of Winterson's question: "Are real people fictions? We mostly understand ourselves through an endless series of stories told to ourselves and others" (Winterson, 1995: 59). The One-to-One may require the performer to tell an endlessly repeating story which begins to blur the truth of the original tale.

In the same way Butler theorises the creation of identities through repetition, I found myself building identities with which to perform my encounters. In the social sciences, repetition is often theorised as comforting: to deviate from this is to risk uncertainty. In our day-to-day lives the act of repetition allow us to fall into patterns which we no longer have to think about. Having made a cup of tea a number of times the action becomes a learned behaviour: we know the order in which to carry out the actions and the result will be similar each time. If we had to re-learn the method for tea making every time or indeed for any other simple daily action such as brushing our teeth, we would be constantly cognitively challenged and thus exhausted. Conversely, repetition was not comforting in my One-to-One encounters. My repetition of the story and the performance identity I had created became disconnected from the (meaningful) truth of my original story, and as such became limiting rather than comforting.

Whether or not my audience was aware that my performance was becoming less truthful through repeat performance is questionable. I feel there is an audience expectation that a One-to-One will somehow be more *real* or *authentic* than other forms of performance, however the audience will still be aware that they have entered a performance and have an expectation of certain level of suspension of belief. In the One-to-One's dis-allowance of the binary stage/audience relationship of theatre and by its very nature as a close, personal encounter where actions and decisions will often have direct implications the One-to-One may appear more real to its audience.

Another factor that might heighten the sense of realness in the One-to-One is that both performer and audience member are often placed within the phenomenal field of objects that may compose the set of the performance. Placed within this field of objects (and perhaps other bodies) the participant is able to and sometimes expected to interact directly with the environment and the performer, making choices that directly affect the performer and the environment as they do so. Because of the often close proximity of the audience member to the objects of performance (in theatre known as props) there may be an expectation from the audience member that these objects are real (and most often they will be) and not fabricated items or props unless the performance is specifically about prop objects.

In the phenomenal space of the One-to-One, the reality of objects is heightened, as the objects' "very physicality is also an opening into the sensory field where the individual is in continual contact with surrounding objects." (Garner, 1994: 115). To see Ron Athey cutting open his knee on a distant stage in *Incorruptible Flesh, Inner Pig* at The Chelsea Theatre, London (2006) is not the same as holding the scalpel that cuts Kira O'Reilly in *Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter (2003)*. One-to-One performance can ask the audience member to directly experience the physicality and therefore reality of objects, and also the reality of other *bodies,* as Garner suggests:

> The fact that the body makes its own noises, independent of awareness and attention, objectifies this body in a field that is both oneself and not oneself, and it involves and alienation not simply of the self from its surroundings, but of self from body, now revealed in its paradoxical and vulnerable facticity (1994: 117).

The audience member's experience of real objects and close proximity to performing bodies may function to heighten the sense of authenticity in the One-to-One encounter. As an artist making interactive One-to-One encounters that require the audience member to somehow contribute, I felt a definite sense of giving over some of my responsibility as performer to the audience member and thus a sense that the audience member was bringing something real to the performance. Genuine decisions made by audiences and performers in a direct embodied, haptic state may blur the lines of the authenticity and reality of the performance.

Another consideration pertinent to the sense of heightened reality may be that the One-to-One performance is less likely to employ semiotic shortcuts. In a conventional theatre performance, the audience is able to read staged signifiers that act as shortcuts to inferred meaning: an audience might understand that the revolving table in Ayckbourns's *Time Of My Life (1992)* portrays the passing of time, without the need for time to actually pass. The use of such theatrical devices in the One-to-One may quash the sense of intimacy and authenticity that an audience expects by suggesting a falsity.

As previously suggested, our society is growing more reliant on distanced modes of communication such as mobile phones and social networking sites, as well as developing augmented or mediated reality technology. As these develop, the very nature of communication is changing. It may soon be (or perhaps already is) possible to conduct an entirely online life, communicating through avatars or online personas. The implications of this in relation to Butler's theory of the construction of our identities are both terrifying and

liberating. It may be that we can escape even our very physicality and rely solely on our *avatar*, as proposed by James Cameron's recent film. It seems that more than ever that there is a possibility of creating a new reality. This seems particularly interesting in light of the theories of Jean Baudrillard.

Baudrillard argues that there is no longer a reality and suggests that we live in a simulation of society rather than society itself. In a world constructed through semiotic symbols, these symbols become conflated with the things they stand for to the point where we are no longer able to tell what is real and what is a symbol :

> The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth--it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true (1988: 166).

Baudrillard's complex blurring between what might be reality and what might be fiction provides a good foundation for a discussion of the encounters I created, where myself and another would develop a fictional romantic encounter along the conventions of dating. To re-iterate Zerihan on Intimacy:

> [...] the temptation to romanticise or imagine the presence of intimacy when face to face with another can potentially reinstate its presence and re-empower its affect (2006).

By *re-creating* romantic encounters we are potentially simultaneously creating new *real* romantic encounters. Additionally, a number of my encounters happened in public spaces where passing spectators may not have been aware that they were witnessing a performance. This raised questions of fiction and reality; where public encounters become public spectacles of uncertain authenticity.

To give an example of the above, I would like to suggest my One-to-One work *Encounter For Budapest (2008)* where the audience was composed predominantly of users of the public park that the encounter was set within. In this encounter I invited members of the public to imagine themselves in the role of lover by leaving a letter in an art gallery inviting readers to meet me on a bridge at a specified time and date to hold my hand. On the night of the performance I lit the bridge with candles and waited, looking out into the distance for someone to hold my hand.

To the casual viewer unaware that this was a performance the scene could look contrived and performative or as if I was truly waiting for a lover (which in a way, I was). To the informed audience member who had read the letter left in the gallery, the work may appear to be a performance of a man waiting for a lover, an opportunity for an encounter and/or an opportunity to watch how other unaware audience members encountered the scene. The status of the performance as real or false is questionable.

Some artists deliberately provoke questions around authenticity and reality in their One-to-One performances, as seen in *Silent Sermon* by Juliet Ellis in which the artist asked her audience to think of a moment when they wanted to cry and didn't, whilst grating an onion.

Zerihan tells us that:

> Ellis's invitation to a form of faux catharsis expertly and intimately re-minded her other of the omnipresent states of artificiality and reality in performance (2006).

The offer to grate the onion in Zerihan's words "dirties" the invite to self-share, which conflicts with her desire for the One-to-One to "enable a shared and intense desire to connect, engage and discover another [...]" (Ibid). It may be possible that in the same manner that one may *imagine* intimacy in a One-to-One and thus invoke real intimacy, I believe that the act of grating the onion, making the audience's eyes water may also invoke genuine emotion. Proprioceptive psychology has shown that the physical and emotional states of the body are closely linked and whilst at first the invite appears cynical and superficial, it may hold the power to create genuine emotion in an audience.

The blurring of the false and the real and of intimacy and authenticity in a One-to-One makes it a more complex format to negotiate than in other performance. Adopting a haptic strategy may allow the audience to take the experience as it comes and to negotiate feelings, emotions and meaning in an embodied state. The haptic critic is equipped to deal with close phenomenal bodily relations alongside emotional response and conceptualised meaning. As Zerihan states:

> Bodily presence in terms of embodied corporeality and proximal closeness mark important strategies for continuing to interrogate the politics of the gaze in performance, pressing into individual / cultural / political narratives and their openness to dialogue, fuelling my refusal to allow the corporeal body to "become obsolete" from contemporary performance works (Ibid).

The One-to-One has the ability to put the focus both on the audience and performer simultaneously in the negotiation of a shared encounter. Haptic criticism can offer a strategy for exploration of this closer focus in a close up and embodied fashion that allows the phenomenal and the semiotic to merge into a theory of looking with an embodied, personal focus. Zerihan neatly illustrates this need for a merged focus in her description of Untitled Action for *Bomb Shelter (2003)*:

> When our eyes met, both looking, both surveying, the intimacy was sliced through by my unsettled inability to transcend the cuts' representation of pain and suffering. My response was unable to move beyond the act of marking, stunted by my inability to extrapolate its fixity from the taboo of wounding (Zerihan, 2006).

Zerihan's description highlights the interplay between intimacy and taboo in her encounter and the complex way in which she was unable to move beyond the visceral response to wounding. The haptic critic may be more equipped to deal with this interplay and to negotiate the semiotic and the phenomenal field of performance which explores questions of authenticity and reality.

For Baudrillard the distinction between reality and simulacra is a symptom of the postmodern era, where the rise in the dissemination of popular media (television, film, print, the Internet) are deemed responsible for the blurring of the line between essential/useful goods and goods where the need is created by commercial image. Baudrillard theorises an era where urbanisation has created a divide between humans and the natural world, where capitalism, through manipulations of exchange value, language and ideology have served to mask basic human need.

One-to-One performance may offer an antidote to Baudrillard's simulacrum, the sense of which is heightened in the traditional theatrical experience. The One-to-One may offer a direct encounter with real bodies and objects, where decisions and actions taken may have real implications. I suggest that truth or realness may be found in some One-to-One encounters, but should not be seen as a defining factor of the One-to-One.

CONCLUSIONS

In the introduction to this dissertation I discussed the way in which the 'binocular vision' of States (1985: 8) may function as a useful methodology for the discussion of performances where the viewer is able to take a critical distance from the work that they are viewing. I proposed that this 'binocular vision', which attempts to integrate the competing methodologies of phenomenology and semiotics may not effectively describe the One-to-One encounter. As an embodied and close up encounter directly with a performer the One-to-One requires the successful integration of the phenomenal, emotional and semiotic, which I believe is offered by Laura Marks' haptic criticism. I have demonstrated through a range of issues that arise in the One-to-One the ways in which haptic criticism may be applied to the format and offered haptic criticism as a methodology that allows for both a haptic and optic visuality in the experience of One-to-One performance. It would be interesting to apply this notion to other One-to-One encounters such as in the medical practices or in therapy in future research or to theorise the way in which other performance formats such as interactive theatre or cabaret could benefit from an altered version of the haptic approach.

In writing this thesis I have brought to attention a number of issues that arose in my experience of making and taking part in One-to-One performances. In line with the requirements of a masters dissertation I was only able to briefly outline my ideas in the issue-based sections. I feel that if this project was to be continued these sections could be much elaborated upon. In particular, I feel that the comments on etiquette and also on reality could be developed much further and perhaps provoke new work that challenged behavioural etiquette or explored the effect of Web 2.0 on our perception of reality. The rituals of romance which I employed in my artworks were codified from examples of Hollywood cinema and television, where the rules of the romantic comedy are reinforced repeatedly through culture and media. In retrospect I can see that the work I created did not seek to challenge these rules but to work within them and highlight them, further reinforcing them through my own repetition. I would like to explore challenges to these rules, or to development of *new* romantic experiences unbound by conventions.

When considering making new One-to-One performances, I contemplated ways of taking the notion of intimacy further, such as having a bath with strangers, or elaborating upon Howells' *Held* by exploring shared nudity with audiences, something Franko B explored in *Why Are You Here* (2005). Although not the crux of the work, shared nudity is something I incorporated into the latter version of *Define Me*, but the focus of work was on how we judge each other rather than the enjoyment of shared nudity for intimate purposes. My ideas were all too close to actual sex, which Andrea Fraser very effectively covered in *Untitled* (2003) where she was paid close to $20,000 by an art collector for one hour of sexual contact in a hotel room. The act itself was filmed, "not for sex, according to the artist, but to make an artwork" (Saltz, 2007). I found that I was no longer concerned with how intimacy might be constructed within a One-to-One and instead I was creating performances for the sake of it.

In writing this document I have come to the realisation that the vast majority of the encounters I created were focussed on the testing of relationships between audience and performer rather than on aesthetics. Since I took the decision to stop making One-to-One encounters I have begun to make work that pays more attention to the aesthetic, to test whether or not I can create experiences for myself and my audience that explore more visual means. The condensed time, space and increased personal responsibility in a One-to-One can create an intimacy between audience and performer: I am interested in discovering ways in which to connect with an audience through visual performance in a manner as intimate as a One-to-One can be.

The One-to-One will continue to enthral audiences of each new generation and I will certainly continue to attend One-to-One performances. Having experienced a fair number of these performances I fear that they might no longer be able to offer me the same genuine joy and surprise that my first encounters did. In the same way that the immersive sets of Punchdrunk must become bigger and better each time in order to impress their audiences, the One-to-One needs to become more extreme, emotional or phantastical in order to shock, surprise or challenge me.

In raising the issues discussed in this document I do not claim them to be the only issues inherent in One-to-One work; to do so would limit the scope and flexibility of this kind of performance. As Kira O'Reilly puts it:

> I don't like to be prescriptive as this limited list of words (and any that I might add) could be seen to draw some kind of parameters or create some kind of discourse and that would be a shame - let's keep a little mystery and allow our creative imaginations to continue to flux (O'Reilly in Zerihan 2009: 58).

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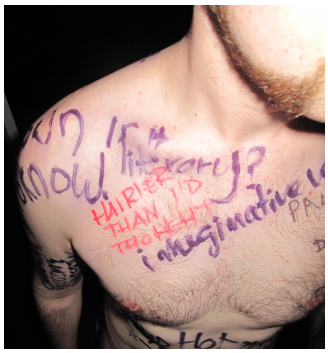
APPENDICES

Appendix A: One-to-One Practice 2007 - 2009



Define Me (2007)
Barbican Theatre, *In The Flesh Festival*,
Plymouth, 17th November 2007
Arnolfini Gallery, *Good Shit From Bristol*,
Bristol, 12th January 2008
Hidden Nightclub, *Act Art 7*,
London, 06th November 2009
Image Credit: Jeremy Horwood
Define Me (2009) Hidden Nightclub, *Act Art 7*.

A One-to-One performance in which audience members were asked to make marks, inscriptions and judgements directly onto my body. The purpose of this work was to provoke questions around identity, visual judgement and the way in which we define ourselves and others. One-to-One appointments were followed by a 30 minute open viewing of my body. In an amended version at Act Art 7 I altered this work so that both myself and my audience member made inscriptions upon each others bodies.

Close To You (2008)
Arnolfini Gallery, *I Am Your Worst Nightmare*,
Bristol 27th April 2008
Image Credit: Carl Newland
Close To You (2008) Arnolfini, *I Am Your Worst Nightmare*.

In a five minute One-to-One encounter I arranged for audience members to meet with me on the Bristol quayside. On a small tape recorder, I played a recording of the Carpenter single *Close To You (1970)*. The music was just audible enough for both of us to hear without creating public spectacle. Before the song ended, I broke the handhold and slowly walked away, leaving the participant alone as the last verses of the song faded away. *Close To You* explored touch, loss, romantic gesture and the boundaries of public/private experience.

The Moment Before We Kiss (2008)
Cube Cinema, *You and Your Work 4*,
Bristol 24th January 2008
Elevator Gallery, *Zero Du Conduite*,
London 14th March 2008
Rented Apartment, *FIERCE Festival*,
Birmingham, 23rd – 26th May 2008
Image Credit: Chris Keenan (Video Still)
The Moment Before We Kiss (2008) *FIERCE Festival*.

A One-to-One in which participants visited me at a private rented flat to experience the moment just before the kiss. In fifteen minute appointments I welcomed each participant with wine and conversation about kissing before inviting them to the bedroom of the flat to kiss. Before our lips touched, we stopped and held the moment. The Moment Before We Kiss explored the anticipation, embarrassment and potential of the first kiss. The encounter was open to participants of all genders and sexualities.

Interaction for 21 Carnations (2009)
Arnolfini Gallery, *Live Art Weekender*,
Bristol, 7th February 2009
Image Credit: Jo Halladay
(Inter)Action for 21 Carnations (2009) Arnolfini, *Live Art Weekender*.

An Arnolfini steward held a small card with the words "Follow Me" which she used to solicit the attention of strangers who strayed from the bar. Those who chose to follow were lead to a private, darkened space containing a suitcase full of 20 pink carnations. Silently, the steward pinned the carnation to the clothing of the audience member. The encounter ended with the presentation of another card which read: “Please don’t tell anybody what happened here”. The audience member was then returned to the gathering. As the event progressed a secret society of Carnation wearers built up in the bar, where I was also present wearing the 21st Carnation.

Encounter For Budapest (2008)
MAMU Gallery, *Crossroads*,
Budapest, 14th November 2008
Image Credit: Mel Shearsmith.

Encounter for Budapest (2008) Budapest, *Crossroads*

A love letter addressed "Dear Stranger" invited readers to imagine themselves in the role of long lost lover, meeting me "at the place where we first met", a bridge in Budapest. The letter and directions were left as part of an installation at the gallery. On the evening of the private view, I waited on the bridge at Vadjahunyad Castle for potential ‘future past lovers’. The audience was composed predominantly of passers by, unaware of the status of the scene (as well as those who discovered the letter left in the gallery space).

Appendix B: DVD Documentation of Artist Practice 2007 - 2009

Provided on the attached DVD are documentary extracts of my One-to-One performance practice as follows

Define Me (2007)
12/01/08 *Good Shit From Bristol*, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol.
Clip Duration: 6m 04s
Filmed by James Sykes.

The Moment Before We Kiss (2008)
26/05/08 *FIERCE Festival*, Birmingham.
Clip Duration: 5m 59s
Filmed by Chris Keenan.

Close To You (2008)
27/04/08 *I Am Your Worst Nightmare*, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol.
Clip Duration: 3m 27s
Filmed by Toby Farrow.

Interaction for 21 Carnations (2009)
07/02/09 *Live Art Weekender,* Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol.
Clip Duration: 4m 24s
Filmed by Michael David Jones.

Encounter For Budapest (2009)
14/11/08 *UWE Showcase*, MAMU Gallery, Budapest.
Clip Duration: 3m 01s
Filmed by Mel Shearsmith.