

besides,

Reflections after the three first performances

besides, dear Body...

Why would two naked women (with white skin, Western) visible online be subversive/critical? There is the terrifying practice of using the web for the purpose of exposing oneself relentlessly, even ones naked body. And there is a whole industry exploiting these acts. There is the problem that one cannot get these images down from the net – once they circulate in its tentacles.

Usually we look into the face of someone but we don't see the body of the person. It is covered with clothes. Especially in online-communication the interface usually frames the head, the face. In *Besides, dear body* there are two bare bodies without a face. It could also be two different bodies. It is not so much about the individuality of these two bodies or the (hi)stories that have sedimented in them. It is about reaching out to one another, to link to one another. It is about disrespecting limitations and boundaries (of the image, the body, the space etc.)

I consider *Besides, dear body* as an experiment and the result as a poetic moving image of holding on to each other in all our vulnerability (I think we succeeded in showing nudity as a fragile costume) – no matter what the physical distance is. Indeed, via virtual/online-communication we are able to create linkages, to induce closeness, the feeling of being interwoven with other people's threads, thoughts...During the online-communication one is „sharing distance“ with someone or some persons and it can be a very intimate experience.

At the same time online-communication emphasizes solitude. At the latest when one closes the interface, or one shuts down the computer one is alone. There is no way of going out to the foyer or to the bar and seeing the persons that were part of the event, watching the performance. There is not even certainty about the fact that there was anyone watching.

When our bodies morph into each other in the end of the video, they have a ghostly quality. They really seem to be shells or phantoms. What I like is that the two bodies disappear in each other, that they dissolve in the interspace or the interstices of the two images in the interface – they do not form a bigger or unified body, some hyper-entity or unity. They are visual appearances. A conglomeration of pixels. Changing costumes.

Nothing authentic about them.

And yet, the tiny movements of these two bodies are clearly not programmed or computer-animated. Too many irregularities, too many imperfections and so called „mistakes“ are visible (for example when the hand reaches for the keyboard of the laptop in the end in order to avoid the crash of the computer or when the body is not perfectly in the frame of the webcam.)

I think that we listened so closely to each others micro-movements – the lowering of the arm – that one can feel as an observer – however far away, via the interface, that we communicated. No way, this would be a computer-animation. The difference is in the rhythm, I think, it is never totally regular in a live-event.

Where do these bodies end, what is their boundary? The skin? Is the interface part of these bodies or are they part of it? The computer-screen? The internet?

Dear body,

These two visual appearances would not exist without the internet, two laptops and two webcams. Or do you have the feeling it is you, dear body? I don't. Besides, anyway, who are you?

besides, moved by some thing...

The only possibility of thematizing death and illness seemed to be sharing the experiences that we had recently made in connection to death and illness. When encountering death or illness all conceptual ideas and prejudices about death and illness collapse and are replaced by a much richer experiential knowledge. I think sharing this experiential knowledge is very valuable. And there are rarely occasions to do that – this is what we have both experienced. So, for me this performance is the creation of an occasion for such an exchange - in public. *Besides, moved by some thing* is a performance about the act of speaking about personal experiences in public via online communication tools. For me, the challenge of the performance was to thematize the mediated and conditioned way of speaking via an interface as much as the content that we spoke about. It was interesting to observe how much the constructed communication-situation (with webcams, the interface highlighting certain body parts, an invisible audience etc.) co-produced the conversation. As the content was so personal, the challenge was to undermine the manner of the reality show, to avoid displaying sentimentality while at the same time acknowledging that there is no unemotional way of sharing these experiences – however true or fictional. It is astonishing how much the quality and taste of the past, of memories change depending on the interlocutor, the one we talk to. How much we construct the past through the present

moment and encounters and how much the past engenders these encounters...

I was curious if it is possible to shake fixed ideas that are linked to death and illness.

Combining the loop of the video of the last moments of our talk (in which we dance while sitting on our chairs in a very joyful way) combined with the talk that had taken place before was one possibility of doing that.

For me, *Besides, moved by some thing*, was very much about listening and about an artificially constructed communication set-up that allowed for a specific exchange – via the transmission of two voices and combined moving images.

besides, the person I am becoming...

was an experimentation-machine. We put ingredients (composed quotations, objects) into it and the interface framed them. The result is a non-improvised real-time composition spiced with a lot of coincidences. We combined a text-layer with the exposition of profane objects from everyday-life. The objects are neither expensive nor aesthetically especially beautiful. Their combination is random. So, the relations between the text and the things emerges in the performance and is different each time. The objects do not represent anything. They do not stand for anything but themselves. So does the text. What do the objects tell and what does the text? I was surprised that the performance was so much about the communication between Annie and me even if we were not visible (just our hands) and even if we were reading a pre-written text while being in two different cities.

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More information : <http://turbulence.org/commissions/besides>