marks are given for participation

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the day is sunday, december 15, 2013. the starting time is 14h, the place is hub 14, the event is *link & pin*. the title given to this event is, *participation*.

*participation* is a performance event created, produced and hosted by the curator adriana disman. the photographer henri chan and the videographer (whose name i do not know,) hired by the artists, document the performances. the volunteer intern, veronica abrenica, takes care of the door. food is provided by the baker, natalie boustaid who receives a small sum of $15. the performers and the writers are *invited* by adriana disman. no performance fee is forthcoming, no writer fee is allotted, although monies obtained through the suggested entry fee of $10 are divided equally between the performers and the writers ($20 each.) adriana, also non-remunerated, *welcomes* us all.

so here we have a date, a time, and a place. we are *invited, welcomed, and received* at this place on this day at this hour by a host. food and *entertainment* are provided. monies are exchanged, although, for the most part, labour relations are surpassed by an economy of generosity and hospitality.

hospitality creates structure. roles are assigned. here, at hub 14, we are either the invited guest or the passer-by guest or the guest assigned a special function. within this structure of hierarchy we find the insistence on this word : participation. the word participation announces the *flavour* of the event, and yet, for those who attend the event, participation is already performed.

participate.

a word. a word with a moral dimension — as though to participate is generous, open, good and to not participate is selfish, closed, bad. this is a word used by those in power towards those they wish to control. a word slanted towards the side of authority — pay your taxes, join the army, vote.

participation is about codes of conduct, boundaries. knowing when and how to enter and when and how to exit. it is a word which calls towards a loss of self as we go towards the community, the group, to take part. but who sets the boundaries? and who decides the parameters? and why? why participate? why answer the call?

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darren o’donnell

adriana has a phone to her ear, she addresses us, anybody - would you like the phone?

darren o’donnell wishes to speak to someone. will anyone take the phone?

and so, one by one, people talk into the phone and the rest of us hear one side of a two sided conversation:

hello? yeah absolutely yeah — she holds her arm out and points her finger at someone across the room.
yeah. o.k. i can do that.
she hands the phone to another person.
our eyes follow the phone, our ears follow the voice.

i can’t repeat the question. i see.

people point to other people. people hand the phone to other people.

the inside and the outside? the included and the excluded. those who hear the voice on the other end of the phone, those who do not. those who know what the pointing is about and those who do not.

i am not handed the phone. i am grateful for this. i don’t like being the centre of attention, i don’t like talking on the phone. but i am curious. i want to be handed the phone so i can ask the person on the other end, where are you? who are you? are you saying the same thing to every person you talk to? are you going to talk to everyone? but before i am handed the phone, before i can ask my questions there is a difference in the conversation. this time the person does not speak into the phone, rather, this time the person speaks out to everyone in the room. relays instructions. each person who has spoken on the phone thus far has been given a word, and a number. the number refers to the location of the word in the yet-to-be-discovered sentence. number one = the first word, number two = the second word, etc. we are to arrange each word according to the number. there are two sentences. the game, if played according to the instructions, yields a preconceived outcome.

someone says, i forgot my word.

darren is the guest who doesn’t show. the performer who conducts the scene from afar. through speech. speech relayed by a device held in the hand. a performer who wants to play a game. a game where the audience is the manipulated apparatus and darren is the director. a game with an intended outcome requiring each participant to remember a word, a number. the words placed in sequence will reveal a sentence if we follow the rules of the game. the final outcome is contingent upon each person obeying the rules. but of course, there is always the transgressor, the saboteur. that is the risk of relying on participation.
that’s me. i don’t have the word. sorry.

problem solving. take charge. and someone does. take charge and the problem is solved. we have our sentences. sorry, i do not remember the sentences. this loss of memory might be due to the fact i did not play the game. i was not the ‘co-producer,’ the ‘stand-in.’ i was not the present body mouthing the absent artist’s speech.

afterwards, before the next performance begins, i hear someone say, he got us all to participate. to talk to each other. this is a good thing.

the phone rings. the ring is signal, the call, the call of the other. you answer, you engage. marks are given for participation. you are not paid to answer. if i hire you, i have bought your labour. you will answer my call. you will obey me. it is a contract of sorts. participation appears to resemble an act of labour freely given. if i do not pay you/hire you — then is participation another word for unpaid labour? a warm fuzzy word for volunteer? or is participation akin to the guest/host relationship? you have knocked upon my door, i answer. you are the awaited, the guest. i am the host, i welcome you.

emma waltraud howes

a voice — female. a female voice fills the room. a text is read. a proposition. from afar. the voice addresses me, i am looking up directions to you. words recorded in a land far away, berlin. played here, toronto.

i hear.

and in my absence ... so long ago ... i need you to be my eyes.

i need you to be my eyes. these are the words, this is the moment. my eyes close. a refusal? i cannot be her eyes. or, i cannot meet her need. i cannot meet her need with my eyes open. my lids close so my other eyes, my inner eyes, can open. can i be the “you” whose eyes this voice needs?

sightless i visualize this room, this room with a whole opened wide by she who speaks, in absence, these propositions. i join her through our mutual sightlessness. my eyes no longer see this room where my body now is and her body once was. neither she nor i can see this room where my body now is and where her voice now envelopes me.

i need you to be my eyes.

the absent other voicing, needing, my eyes. sight bestowed, transmitted through me. as though she is sightless. a body without eyes? a body that can speak, but cannot see. or... a body that is not a body, but rather a voice. only a voice? or a spectre? a ghost who speaks and needs my eyes? my sight?
i hear the voice say, proposition three - line up side by side ... one line across the western wall.

why is the voice/ghost asking me to move my body and assume a position in the room? why is this voice/ghost haunting this geographical location, this particular moment of time, requesting, no, needing my eyes to be their eyes, my body to move to their command?

i open my eyes, i see a group of people standing in a line side by side.

i wonder what do these standing people have to do with my eyes? with the voice/ghost needing my eyes? who are these people and what are they doing here? here in this room walking towards me. don’t these people know i am listening to the voice of a ghost? a ghost who speaks to me, the singular isolated individual me. it is me who is loved, me who is missed, me who is mourned.

i do not move my body. this is after all an intimate request. this voice calls to the second person singular - “you.” i am not resisting the call to engage my body in the choreography because the voice does not seduce me, no, i am resisting because the voice is speaking to me, only me. if i place my body amongst the others, the “you” that is “me” is lost in the “we.” and if i become a “we,” then who is the “you” the voice/ghost is speaking to? if the singular second person becomes many in one (the many bodies making up the plural “you”) then the subjective singular unique relation to the voice/ghost is lost.

the words i hear are the already spoken words from the past — a pre-recorded voice projected here. a pre-recorded voice that can be activated over and over again, in various ‘places’ and at various ‘times.’ i cannot, now, participate in the already past of the speaking voice, or the as-of-yet to be replayed voice. nor can i participate in the over-there, where the ghost/voice is speaking from, neither i nor the voice have the directions to move between our two locations : berlin, toronto. i can, however, open to this voice from the already past, allow my present to move in time with — i can choose to play out the directives from the past, within my present. my body can move to the desire articulated long ago. the past participates in my present.

the ghost tells me, we all need to fuckin dance — her voice assures me she is dancing right here. with me.

but how can a ghost be with me? dance with me? unless my eyes are closed. is this then why the ghost needs my eyes, my sight? to join with me through sight so we both see the same world before us, the same moving, dancing bodies surrounding us as we too move, across time, across oceans. in this way, we can then dance. as though we are one. enveloped in this one skin. this one voice. the voice covers us - all of the singular individual eyes/i’s that go into the we.
how to join when this ocean separates? this body of water keeps us apart and we can’t close the gap. we can’t find the directions. directionless.

just dance babe, just fucking dance.

_andréa de keijzer_

it’s not how you enter the room — it’s how the hands spread, fingers wide and open, smoothing cloth.

besides, she arrived before you. blue hospital gown tied together at the nape of her neck.

she stands, asking, how do you hold your body while you wait. wait to begin. to move. leaning or not, weight supported or not, crutches, or not?

she leans in, looks away. stands. waits. hole in white stocking. pink flesh pushing through white fabric. she speaks. tells her story. acupuncture. needles. surgery. doctors.

following the line — follow the line.

of objects, i mean, narrative following the line of objects laid out on the floor, following the line of life — _andréa_ tells us, _i was born in mexico — to this man — my father... my parents were both doctors, both acupuncturists my mom said the way my dad practiced acupuncture was pointless... my sister and me made up games... before i left home they taught me how to stick the needles in._

what does it do? to tell a story of a life? to the stranger, in the presence of the father.

for _andréa_ is not my unique irreplaceable singular beloved. but she is his. she, _andréa de keijzer_, the performer, smiles at the man who has now been transformed into the father. and this, here, is where it pounds, in the ears, in the blood, in the breath. this joining of lives, of kin, of flesh pierced by needles.

bodies cut open - things taken out - skin brought together again.

_you can leave the hospital if you have a place to go._ speech recorded by _andréa_ unknown to the speaker, activated again here, in this space at this time. the speaking body unmoored, between locations. not yet secured to place. a hospital is not a home.

_andréa_ speaks to us, _i want to try something. think of a song from when you where little - sing one syllable per breath. i will start this off, and then you can join in._

i hear intonations. many voices — i am receding — the listener. i close my eyes. i see the ghost afterimage of _andréa_ in a blue hospital gown standing before me. i hear a
word. another word. another word. another word following another word. spoken as a mantra. quiet voice. young voice. female voice.

i open my eyes and locate the sound coming from the back corner of the room. andreá moving away from centre stage, from the straight line of the narrative, she takes to the corner, closing ranks with the audience in the periphery. again i close my eyes. listen.

in the split one hard thing shatters as it hits another hard thing. shards of ceramic on the floor.

the bowl blue and white — blue and white, broken.

i see again, the image of a girl lying on the floor, her head posed upon a folded blanket, a white square of cloth covering one hand — a stand-in for a hand puppet which speaks the words of a doctor — no, it was not gold.

**michelle lacombe**

michelle lacombe is standing, back to the wall. center stage, back to the wall. the white wall lit. michelle lit. she

unties the laces on her boots. takes em off. here. socks off. here. pants off. here. underpants off. here. pants back on. socks back on. boots back on. in advance i know this will happen. one thing leads to the other. it is the proper order of things. what is not proper is the omission, what is left out.

she walks away from the wall, cuts a diagonal across the room. i think she is going to pee. she exits. i hear the sound of running water. she re-enters. avoids centre stage, chooses the periphery, stands in the doorway. red emergency exit sign above her head. red glass in hand. glass in hand raised up to mouth. water spills down. the sound of water. the sound of running water comes from the bathroom.

what does it ‘do’ when a performer walks away? refuses visibility? chooses the margin? it is remarked upon. it irritates. the expected. order. of things. opens the way, cuts the path. heralds other acts. the guest refuses to entertain, exists the stage, but leaves the water running. the sound of running water fills the room. a faux-pas. a transgression. the guest refuses the conditions of hospitality. insists upon dis order, another ‘law.’ overflows. spills.

the guest who hovers under the exit sign – at the threshold. between exiting and entering.

there are many ghosts this afternoon at hub 14.
under the red emergency exit sign. is she drinking water? is water going into her mouth? spilt water stains her grey shirt — a dark grey line leaks down. (i remember the drooling man in the hospital — something about his medication — something about the production of saliva — his bibs stained and wet — i want to retch, from the memory of it, i don’t want this memory of the other time, other place to infect this time this place, i push the memory away, too late.)

here. again. still here. she walks back to the bathroom. i hear the click of glass meeting a hard surface. the running water sound stops. michelle returns to the doorframe under the red emergency exit sign with paper towel in hand. she bends down, wipes up the small pool of water. goes back to washroom. then

back to center stage, back to the wall. boots off, socks off, underwear back on, pants back on, socks back on, boots back on. i write this before it happens. i know in advance what will happen. i watch. watch the inevitable. the already ordained. this return. the omitted picked up.

again standing back to the wall, centre stage. she holds her hands out to us, says, that’s it, smiles, walks away.

this is a performance. the running water is turned off, the spill is wiped up, the underpants are put back on, the body speaks again. rejoining us. here.

and, it is this, this turning away to then return. this tension between the doing — as opposed to showing — to then undo — to come back to centre stage, to the position of performer, to return to the commonality of convention. being the witness to this passage leaves me utterly alone. alone because, in the witnessing, this being beside, to the side, of michelle as she un performs, requires i acknowledge her as the stranger, as the unknowable — she who has crossed over. and yet, when she retraces her path to rejoin again performance, to join us, here, again, we, i, have to betray the act, the doing. i can only re-welcome michelle. here. speak words. make sense. and so, the radical unknowable stranger remains wholly solitary, secret, mute.

all i can do is be in the presence of. i cannot join her there. and when she returns to where the “we” are, i cannot, at the same time, stand before her and speak. words do not cross the threshold. words obey, they have submitted already to the agreed upon.

untranslatable. the two do not join, do not come together. the connection is not made, the bowl is broken, the waters divide. all we have is

here.