

Pre-study #2 CLAIRE'S Director



First presented: 7.10.2022

CIRCUMSTANCE / FACT SHEET / #2

Place: Brussels, Belgium

Time: 2 weeks in November 2021

Collaborators: Claire Vivianne Sobottke (Performauthor)

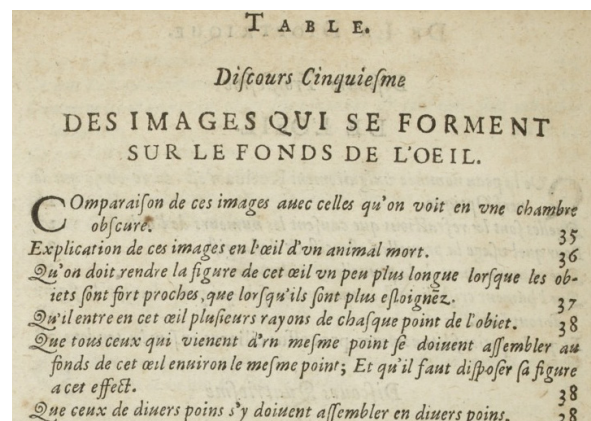
Mary Szydłowska (Camera and Montage)

Materials: *The Wheel of Consent* by Betty Martin,
"Je, tu, il, elle" by Chantal Akerman (1974)

SCORE

In an attempt to radicalize the sensorial division between actor and director – the split between touch and seeing that structures their relation – the set-up of “Pre-study #2” referred to a situation I had first experienced during a film shoot in 2019.

Because of time pressure on set and in order to “get the things we needed”, I would frequently be encouraged by the producer to “live direct” the final take. This meant telling the director of photography and the actors *what* to do *when*, based on what I saw on my monitor.



In these situations, I had to be maximally efficient with my instructions, insofar as my voice could be heard on the recording; and the risk of cutting into the original sound, especially into dialogue, would create problems during the editing process.

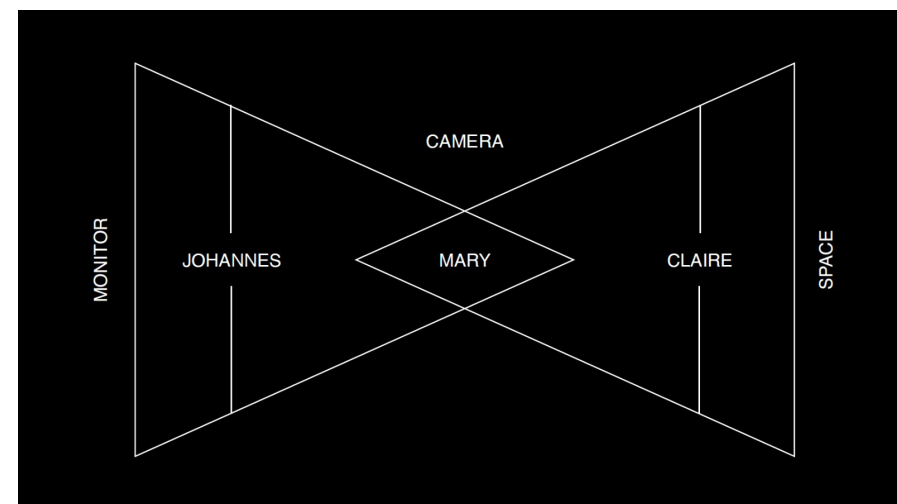
However stressful, I enjoyed these moments of live-directing a lot, as they were inserting me into the dance of actor and camera in a concrete way. Working with film for the first time, I experienced them as a theatrical rehearsal situation with heightened stakes; defamiliarized – *verfremdet*, as it were – by the presence of the camera.

When I finally saw the raw material in the editing room – with my voice not yet edited out – it felt very much like the *documentation of a relation in rehearsals* that could be used for the purpose of the artistic research at hand.

*

Wanting to re-visit this specific “économie scopique” (Irigaray 1977, 144)) of a film shoot, I thus re-created the described set-up for the Pre-study in its most condensed form. Actor, director of photography, director; or, in terms of the technical *dispositives* at work: space, camera, monitor.

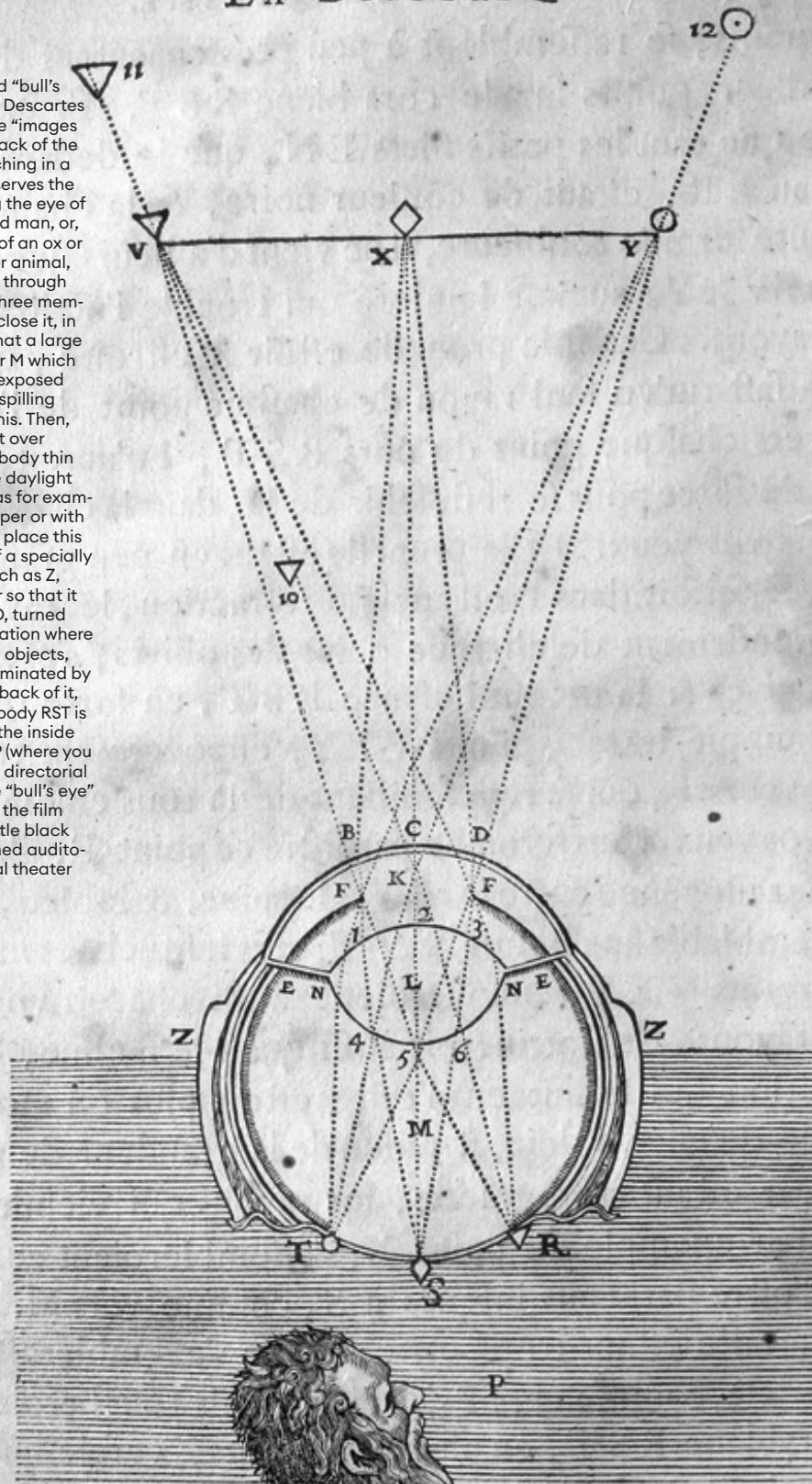
An equation represented in this sketch, light-heartedly alluding to Lacan's optical schemas:



My ambition here was to put the Wheel of Consent's “économie des flux” [economy of flows] (Irigaray 1977, 144, again) - as based on contact, proximity and tactility - in the most extreme continuum with a dis-embodied ocular practice. To tickle the director in Descartes's black box, as it were - and to make him express his supposed desire.

Riffing on Lacan's schemas of the *Eye and the Gaze* presented in Seminar XI (1964)
Design: Mary Szydlowska
after a sketch by Johannes M. Schmit

With his so-called “bull’s eye experiment”, Descartes demonstrates the “images forming on the back of the eye”. While crouching in a black box he observes the world: “(...) taking the eye of a newly deceased man, or, for want of that, of an ox or some other larger animal, you carefully cut through to the back the three membranes which enclose it, in such a manner that a large part of the humor M which is there remains exposed without any of it spilling out because of this. Then, having covered it over with some white body thin enough to let the daylight pass through it, as for example a piece of paper or with an eggshell, RST, place this eye in the hole of a specially made window such as Z, in such a manner so that it has its front, BCD, turned toward some location where there are various objects, such as V,X,Y, illuminated by the sun; and the back of it, where the white body RST is located, toward the inside of the chamber P (where you will be)” – From a directorial point of view, the “bull’s eye” is the monitor on the film shoot, and the little black box is the darkened auditorium in a classical theater rehearsal set-up.



The film set where I first experienced the radicalized partition of the senses within the actor-director relation. In the photo, the director of photography, the production designer and me, are discussing whether the cup in her hands should be in the upcoming shot or not. The grave expression on our exhausted faces reminded me of a photo of 25-year-old Rainer Maria Rilke in Russia; the famous poet who formulated an ontology of artistic creation rooted in the idiosyncrasy of *Einsamkeit* [solitude]. The little montage proposes the director as an “impossible poet”: a *solitary figure*, operating in the most collaborative setting imaginable, i.e. a film shoot. (From left to right: Minh Duc Pham, Smina Bluth, Maja Avnat, Svea Immel)

INDEXICAL TRACES/ RELATIONAL ARTEFACTS

For this second Pre-study, I invited dancer, choreographer and actress Claire Vivianne Sobottke as my collaborator.

When we started speaking, I was eager to pick up the “transference” track I discovered after the work with Sarah.

However, my first idea to initiate Claire’s and my collaboration – by spending a week together reading psychoanalytic theory on transference – never happened. (With life circumstances being only one of the reasons.)

Meeting a little later in Berlin – the reading week was meant to take place online – Claire and I re-constructed, in a shared effort, the resistance she had felt towards entering into the collaboration through theory.

(In this regard it is important to mention that Claire is not opposed to theory *per se*; but the specific *psychoanalytic* theory, with its patriarchal lineage/baggage, did not extend a good enough invitation.)



Montage of "A Clinical Lesson at the Salpêtrière" (1887) by André Brouillet. The "patriarchal lineage of psychoanalysis" looking at itself; with the "hysterical woman" slipping away in the fold.

In our conversation, my collaborator-to-be also stressed that for her the question of how director and actor reach consent cannot be abstracted to the discrete limit of a moment in rehearsals. As a *performa-
thor* (see her letter and text below for an explanation of the concept), the process of consenting already starts with *jointly setting the frame* of the future undertaking.

*

In response to my interest in the transference and its actualization in the actor-director relation, Claire suggested two methods for us to explore: one was the “Wheel of Consent” as developed by American intimacy trainer Betty Martin, and the other, “Emotional CPR (eCPR)”, which can be traced back to an initiative by community psychiatrist Daniel Fisher.

Both methods/practices come from a therapeutic realm, that is to say: a context of which the goals do not necessarily align with artistic ambitions (aiming for example for “imbalance”, “fetishization” or “becoming the symptom”). And while the try-outs with “eCPR” in fact did not lead beyond the scope of the therapeutic – i.e. *attending exclusively to the relational situation* within rehearsals – the “Wheel of Consent” proved to have potential for being – simultaneously! – a means of artistic creation through play.

*

The other factor Claire made me aware of – in terms of artistic research methodology – was the extent to which the choice of material *will* affect our relation as collaborators; in the sense that the relation between actor and director that unfolds during our rehearsal simulation cannot be abstracted from the aesthetic resonance the specific material we work with will produce.

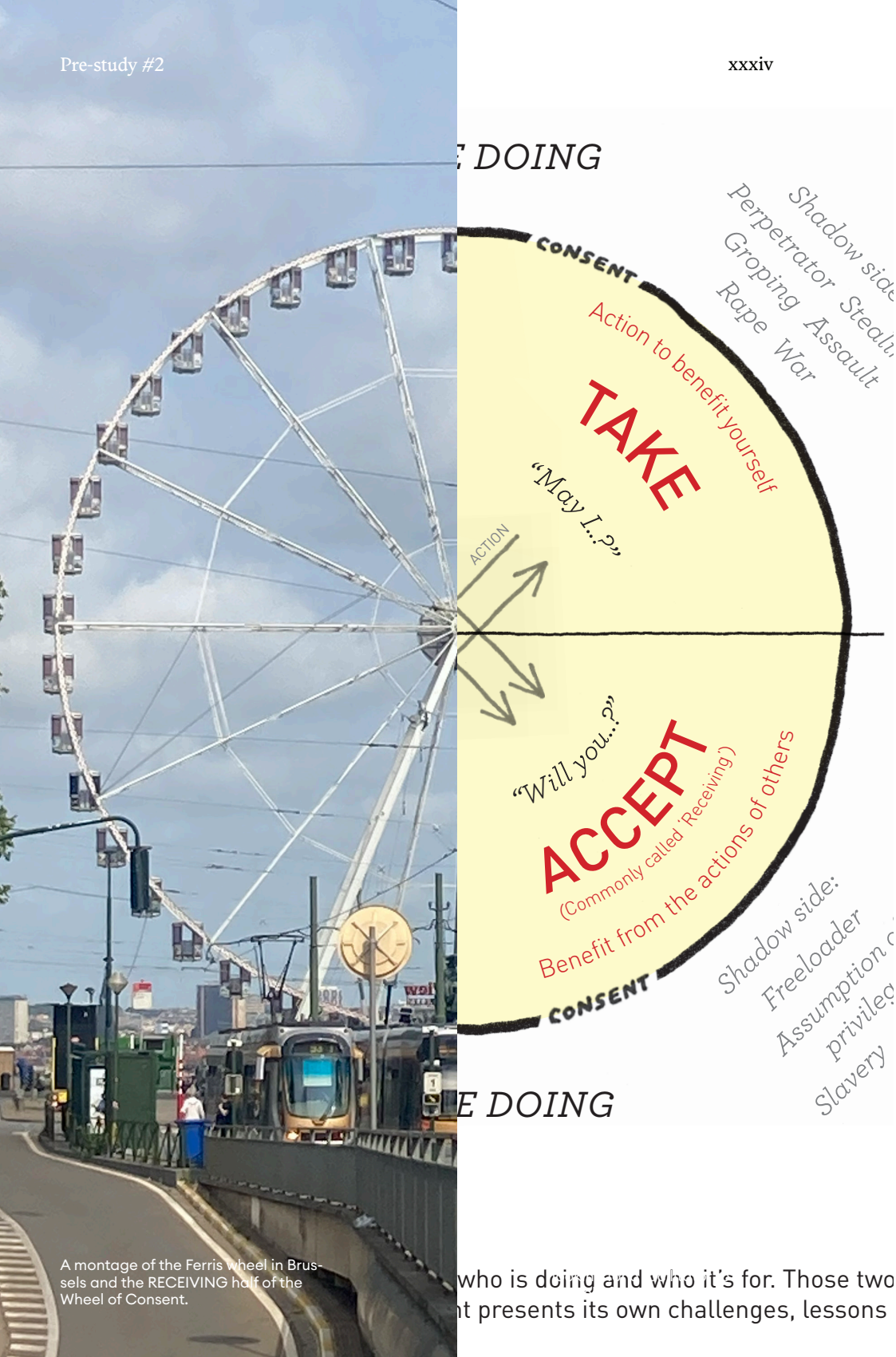
In Claire’s spoken words: “Don’t underestimate the importance of an exciting material for the quality of the relation.” (Rehearsal on the 26.11.2021)



In our case, this “third thing” that was going to mediate our encounter was Chantal Akerman’s debut film, “Je, tu, il, elle” from 1974. Claire had suggested I watch it after our meeting in Berlin; and with Brussels slowly crystallizing as the pragmatic location of our work, it became obvious that Akerman’s “turf” was going to align generously with our ambition.

Montage: Claire taking a photo of Mary Szydlowska preparing the camera while the artistic researcher familiarizes himself with the director’s monitor.

On a cold November day in 2021, Claire and I thus started out with a tour on the local Ferris wheel; overlooking the city while gliding gently through the quadrants of SERVE, ACCEPT, TAKE and ALLOW, that we had yet to understand in their inter-relatedness.



A montage of the Ferris wheel in Brussels and the RECEIVING half of the Wheel of Consent.

who is doing and who it's for. Those two
 t presents its own challenges, lessons

After a first try out of Betty Martin's practice of "Waking Up the Hands" (touching a chosen object for your own pleasure), we read out two letters that we had written to each other independently; formulations of our expectations and projections regarding our collaboration.

We read *prima vista*, that is to say, I read Claire's letter out to her, and she read mine out to me.

The letters are artefacts of our relation as well as of our relations to others. Anders, for example, who is mentioned in the beginning of Claire's letter, is a common friend and colleague. (As a result, the fact that Anders and I became collaborators in my Pre-study #3 is based on Claire's curatorial intuition.)

The two letters work very much like a two-channel video; even though they cannot be played back simultaneously, their ignorance of each other's content produces the desired montage effect. Similar to Sarah's and my independent interview-edits, they theatricalize the limits of my authorial reach as an artistic researcher; thereby aligning with the overall methodological ambition of "re-staging *both* transferences".

You have invited me to deconstruct the role of the director with you.

speculative suspicions (full of fear and trauma)

I want to tell you about our common friend Anders, the beachbum. Anders has, just like you, started a PHD recently in a wealthy Scandinavian country. His questionary circles around the idea of parasites. Recently he wrote me, asking if I could imagine to collaborate with him in the context of this research. One of his main desires in this endeavour was to 'give up control', he wrote. He has been professor, thus in leading positions in the academic context for some years now.

I responded to him by saying quite some things and then also mentioned that I think a good way of giving up control in a collaborative context with me, would be that I direct him. After working with him many years ago in a project investigating the mechanisms of Hysteria, I found it healthy to imagine a shift of roles. No answer to that proposition from Anders.

Anders has worked as performer before. He has been directed by Markus Öhrn as part of an exclusively male team. Maybe it is necessary to say that I appreciated the work. In this process I remember a lot of questions came up about authorship, for Anders. To whom does a work belong? Who will be recognized for making it? And who will profit from the support that an artist can receive after producing a so called successful work.

Anders was never directed by a woman. He has never been part of a project or context initiated by a woman or female defining x-multiplicity.

You told me recently that you enjoy it to work reflected by, put in motion through - the feminine gaze. Has it ever happened? If not: How come? Why have you never played & performed & worked in service of a woman?

How do you relate to inviting women to take the role of performers in a research, in which you're busy undoing the classical roles: director - interpreter / genius - muse / rational - emotional / controlled - chaotic etc.

To -Give up control- what does it mean in the context surrounding Anders? What would that mean to you? What could it mean in the relation ship between men and women? What could it mean in the context of our work relationship, of our friendship? Mine and Anders? Yours and mine? How does patriarchy fuck around with our curiosity for each other in our creative work?

How are men trying to give up their positions of being in control? Is a new awareness reflected in men critically investigating century - old - systems in universities all over the world, while being paid more or less well?

Now that you are trying to deconstruct the role of the director in your PHD in Stockholm are you not making it about that same old director once again? - Meaning, are you not dedicating time and space once again, giving importance once more, to a very specific dusty old apparatus, which we could as well leave aside? And is an academic attempt to deconstruct something ever threatening to anything?

And then also: Why not make it about the work itself?

Why not stop retelling each other who we are, reaffirming our history?

Why not make a great movie instead?

Why not try sth new?

(I guess academia doesn't accept researchers who wanna make great movies)

(Though recently Antonia Baer told me that she received funding to make a work simply by describing a dream that she had dreamt)

(Do i despise academia?)

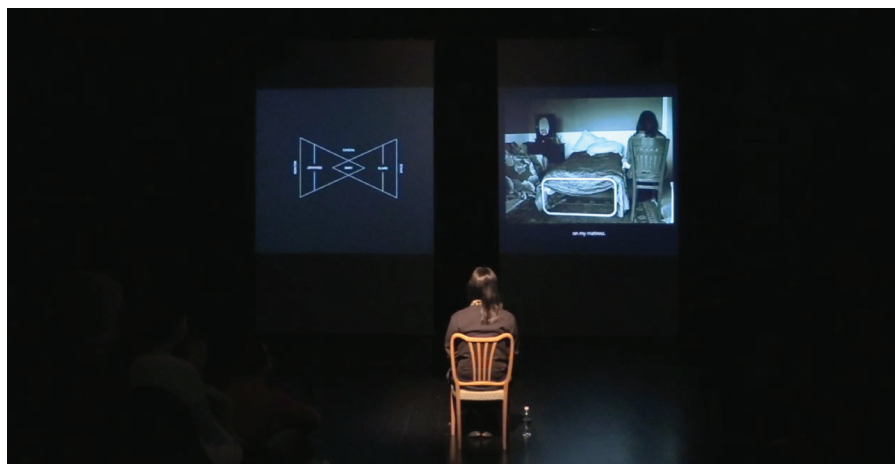
(Do i think they are all cowards)

First page of Claire's letter.
For the full length version,
see the online resources.

Liese Claire, Lieke Claassen, chère Claire,
here comes my letter to you about
our upcoming workshop/collaboration.
I will start by saying that it is a big ~~pleasure~~ ^{pleasure}
to prepare this with you. The voice walks
we send back and forth, the places
you chose to record them from, the
depth of reflection - it all tastes like
really good bread, with both our bacteria
in the dough. It's such a pleasure in
the sense, that it already gives a
sense of what I'm after / what I actually
mean / what I might mean with ~~TRANS-~~
FERENCE: this notion of energetic
connectedness of two agents; in the
case of rehearsals director/actor, in

First page of Johannes' letter.
For the full length version,
see the online resources.

REFLECTIONS/ SENSE-ABLE TRANSLATIONS/ PLAY



Score for the Voice Over during the projection
of the two-channel film "A Study in Transference"

Live performance of the score
on the 7th of October 2022 at
SKH, Stockholm

Stills from Chantal Akerman's
movie "Je, tu, il, elle" (1974) by
courtesy of "Collections CINE-
MATEK - © Fondation Chantal
Akerman"

To see the entire two-channel
film, please send
a brief statement of your re-
search interest
to registrator@uniarts.se.

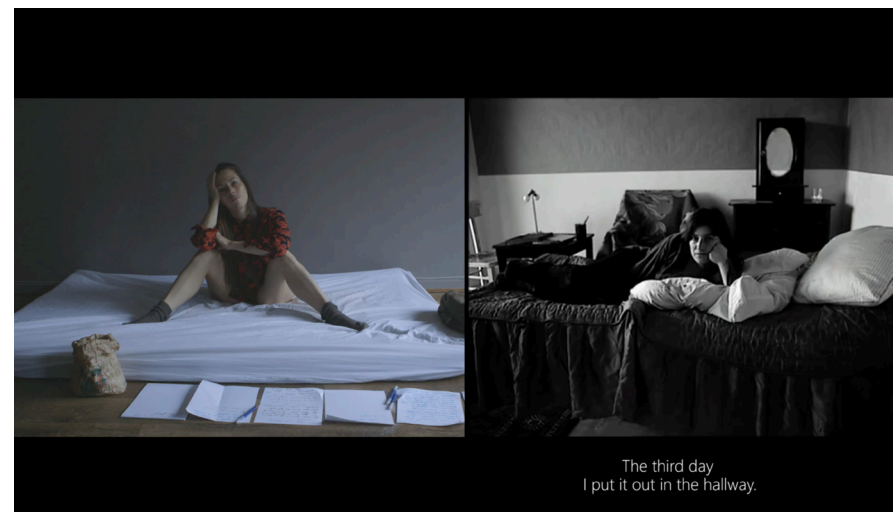
je

tu

il elle

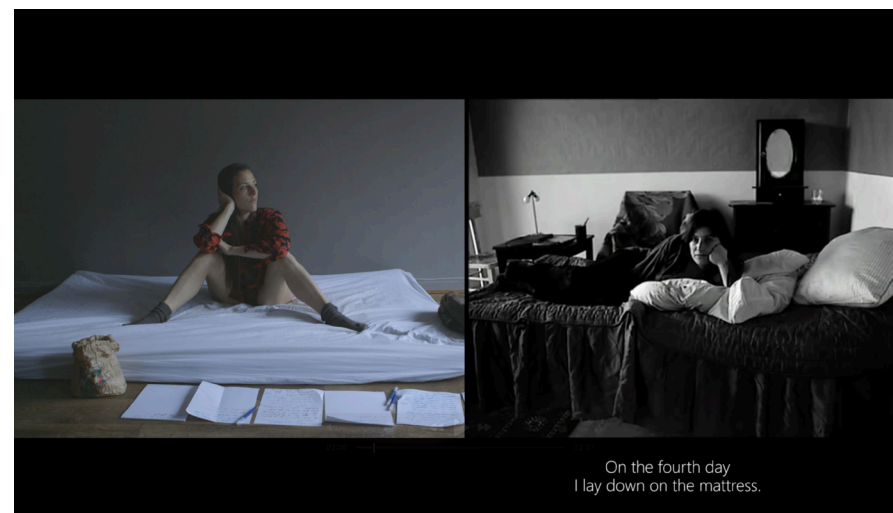
a study in transference

SET UP: BRUSSELS, NOVEMBER 2021



The third day
I put it out in the hallway.

1st spoken Text/
start when Claire turns
her head, looks to Chantal



On the fourth day
I lay down on the mattress.

In November 2021 Claire, Mary and I spend two weeks working in an apartment in Brussels.

Chantal/JULIE: Vide la pièce est grande je trouve.

The project is to explore the present possibilities of the actor-director relation while responding artistically to Chantal Akerman's first feature-length film.

Specifically, to its first 32 minutes, where the main character is trapped in the same location.

We start our work by a visit to the Cinémathèque in Brussels, where we browse through the original script.

With this shared basis, we split up into our different areas of expertise, as we begin shooting. For Mary, that is the camera lens, for Claire, her practice as a dancer and actress.

Le matelat, je l'ai changé de place le cinquième jour.

For me, retreating behind the wireless monitor of the director, the study will turn out to be a quest on how to situate myself in a seemingly self-sufficient universe.

The universe I mean is the universe of what Claire calls the "performauthor".

THE PERFORMAUTHOR

A performer who performs in and simultaneously directs their work.

Someone who makes things by being in them.

As she writes to me in a letter before we begin:
 "[A performauthor is] someone who is inside and outside, knowing and not knowing, being seen and seeing. Someone sexual and vulnerable, sensual and thinking, listening and singing, touching while being touched, moving while creating an image."

2nd spoken Text
 during Chantal's
 rearranging of mattress

*Je l'ai soulevé en suite
 j'ai placé le bout contre la fenêtre
 contre le mur ensuite*



and then against the wall.

The original material offers an exploration of loneliness and intimacy with oneself. It seems like Chantal Akerman is explicitly performing for the camera, trusting the cinematic frame to produce the fictional layer by itself.

At our visit at the Cinémathèque we find out that an actress had actually been cast for the main part. But Akerman decided to replace her (with herself), appalled by the perfection of her acting.

In our study, we undo this fusion of director and actor again, of performer and author; and we ask ourselves: What does the exploration of loneliness and intimacy with oneself become under the gaze of someone else?

Furthermore: What if that other is a man?

We consciously work with this most volatile, emblematic moment.

A male director instructing a female performer in her loneliness and intimacy.



Claire: *How are you feeling over there? In the other room?*

Johannes: *Ehm... I am doing good. I found a water pipe... a warm water pipe that is heating my ... ass. It's good... How are you feeling?*

Claire: *I feel a bit strange, I think... Because I actually don't see you and... I also don't know what to talk about.*

3rd spoken Text
during writing

In the letter I write to Claire (before we begin), I explain that I'm interested in exploring the psychoanalytic notion of transference.

To stay in touch during rehearsals by the means of a sort of psychodynamic hotline.

Claire: *Do you think you can really imagine... like ... how do you imagine it to sit here?*

Johannes: *I imagine it strange because ... clearly Mary is the stronger presence in the space right now.*



Je me suis couchée et je lui ai écrit couchée le sixième jour.

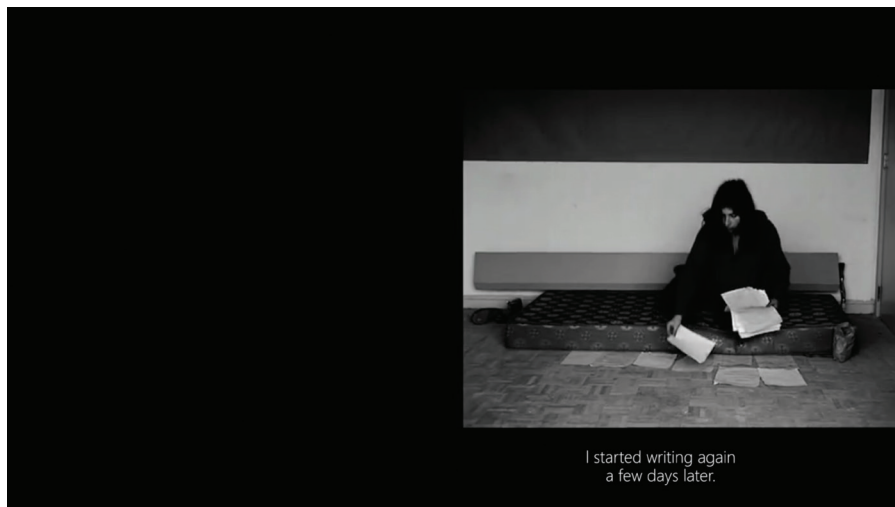
Transferences may occur between all agents within an artistic process, including the fictional, absent agents, such as Chantal Akerman in our case.

For transferences to really kick in and create an intense bond between an actor and a director for example, the relation has to be asymmetric. Therefore, the Lacanian analyst keeps his or her desire in the dark; provoking the analysand to speak out their fundamental fantasy.

As an answer to the question: What do you want from me?

IN OUR STUDY WE WORK
WITH SPEECH
IN AN ATTEMPT TO STAGE
OUR TRANSFERENCES
IN REAL TIME
WRITING A LOVE LETTER
WHILST EATING SUGAR NAKED

4th spoken text



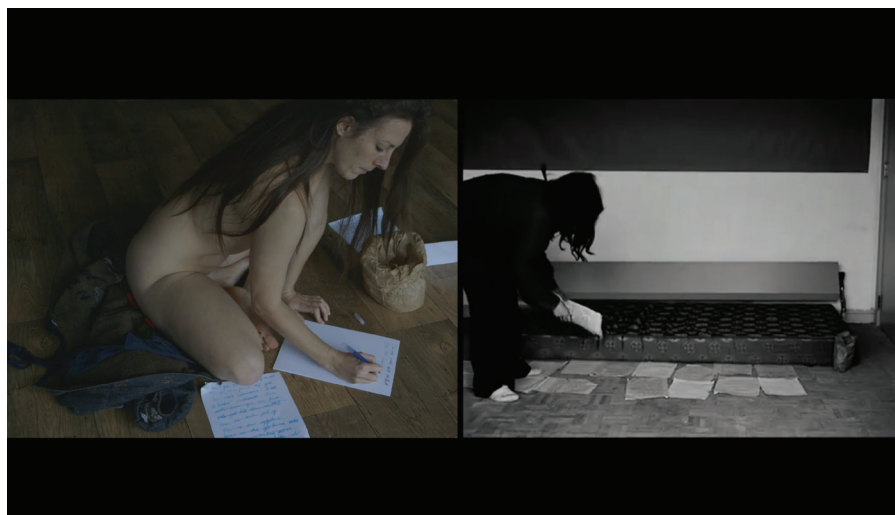
J'ai recommencé à écrire des jours après.

Start to speak right after:

In the psychoanalytic setting (that we're comparing rehearsals to), transference is actively sought. It's of great value.

Because if the analyst fails to adjust to its workings on time, the analysand might end the treatment prematurely.

For lack of effect or affect.



Claire starts writing.
*Continue when she pushes
her hair back:*

In practice, there is also the special case of a transference that is subjectively experienced as love or falling-in-love – by either the analysand or the analyst. Freudian orthodoxy reminds us that this so-called “transference love” is not original – but an effect of the intimacy of the analytic setting itself.

Des jours après, j'ai lu tout ce que je lui avais écrit.

Claire's image disappears

In case “transference love” occurs, there is thus no reason to stop the analysis.

With the full realization of the effect of intimacy in mind, analyst and analysand (actor and director) will continue their work.

5th spoken text
during exercise
“Je me suis écouté respirer”

Mary: *Ok.*

Johannes: *Ok.*



Transferences are unconscious. So the ambition to voice them in real time is doomed for failure...

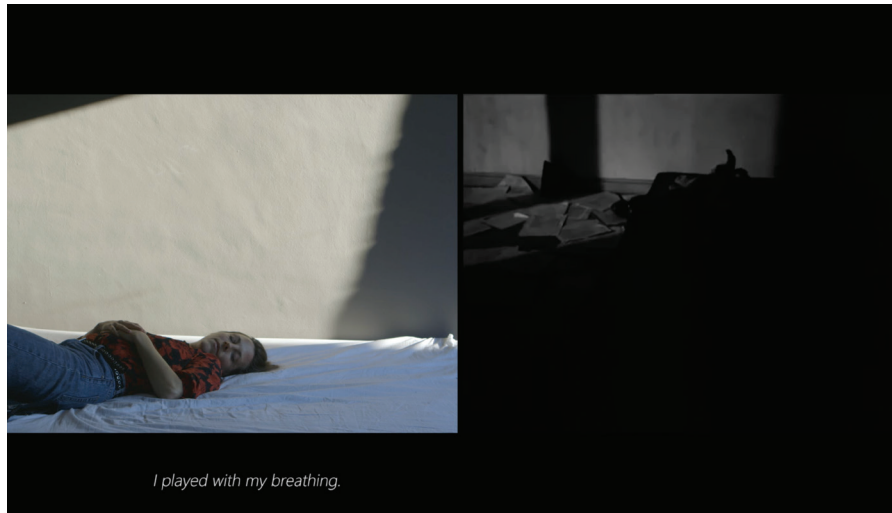
Claire's knee moving:

Claire's laughter.

... but one can always try, of course.

*Et puis j'ai oublié de jouer ce jeu et j'ai attendu.
J'ai su que j'étais là pendant 28 jours.*

Johannes: *J'ai joué avec ma respiration.*



In an attempt to activate our own transference - besides relating to Akerman's movie - we worked with the so-called Wheel of Consent. A model that explores the various dynamics of SERVING and ACCEPTING, TAKING and ALLOWING in relational settings.

Chantal gets up.

Johannes: *I did the same thing, but lying on my belly.*

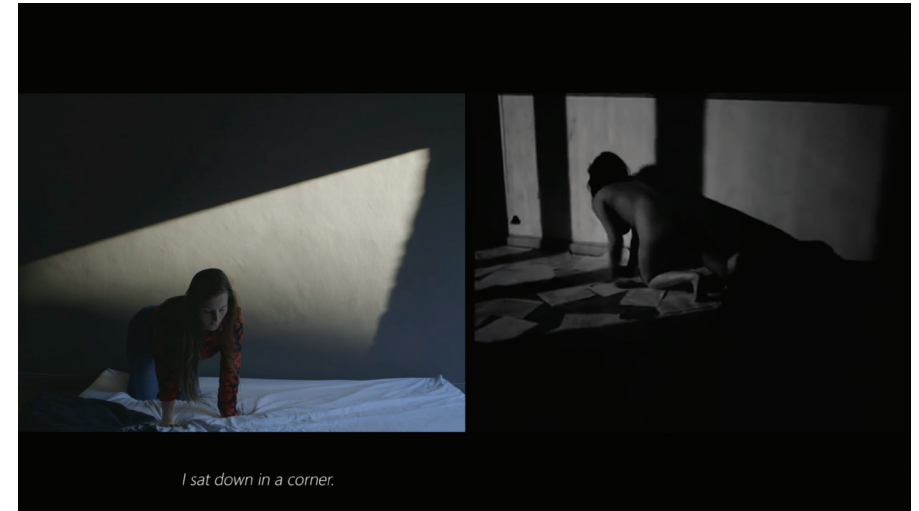
The idea in the Wheel is that in any given intimate interaction you come to an agreement beforehand regarding two questions:

Who is doing ? And: Who is it for?

Sound of washbasin

In this particular exercise, Claire is doing actions "for me". The default setting of the actor-director relation, as is often assumed...

Johannes: *Je me suis assis dans un coin.*



... but only one possibility within the range of the Wheel.

6th spoken Text
during grimassing Count-
down 21,23 after cut



In retrospect, I am not sure if the frameworks combined in our study fed into each other.



Mostly because of their opposite temporal logics.



The Wheel of Consent asks for a desire to be voiced *before* the action.



While the desire active in a transference is only documented *afterwards*.

Usually in the re-staging, that is the classical psychoanalytic case history.

Johannes: "*This is fantastic!*
Your head is completely out of the picture."

For me, as a director, it gets boring rather fast: to get exactly what I ask for.

In fact, we could all feel the difficulty of being truthful to our desire – before the transference was activated..

In the course of our work, we therefore digressed from the Wheel. Formulating exercises where Giving and Receiving are in a more complicated relation.

7th spoken text (last one)



Claire's image disappears
at the same time:

IN THIS EXERCISE

THE PERFORMAUTHOR
ANALYSES THE DESIRE

THE DIRECTOR TRIES TO EXPRESS;

AS A RE-STAGING FROM INSIDE
AND OUTSIDE.



Camera & montage: Mary Szydlowska
Performauthor: Claire Vivianne Sobottke
Artistic Researcher: Johannes Maria Schmit