

# SEXUALITY AND EMBODIMENT ON STAGE ACROSS GEOPOLITICAL BORDERS

STAGING GENDER

1–3  
June  
2022



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



NICA

*Netherlands Institute  
for Cultural Analysis*

**Staging Gender**

# Sexuality and Embodiment on Stage Across Geopolitical Borders

Amsterdam School for  
Cultural Analysis

International Workshop

1-3 June 2022

University of Amsterdam

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# About this event

The stage is never a neutral space, it is not an innocent ground of representation and entertainment. When sexuality, gender, or race enter the stage, the political and the personal meet with far-reaching implications. After all, who is being represented and how? By whom? And for what audience? Two decades ago, José Esteban Muñoz (1999) argued for a personal/political staging that moves beyond mere oppositions.

With the notion of disidentification, Muñoz addressed forms of staging and performing that cannot be collapsed into simplistic understandings of oppression and resistance. Muñoz's work hinted at the increasing multiplication of staged bodies, of staged understandings of sexuality and race that in the last decades have depoliticized and commodified once radical forms of entering the stage.

But what does it mean to put these sociocultural markers on stage nowadays? How have the political and personal changed positions in the last twenty years? Moreover, how can the stage itself, from that of a play or a film to that of a smartphone or the street, affect that which is being staged? After all, to speak of bodies, of sexuality, and violence from a stage and to an audience from the Netherlands, Iran, or Argentina entails different ways of relating to and interacting with the world. How do the personal and the political change in the movement across these contexts? And how is that which is represented transformed, misunderstood, and/or reconceptualized?

All these questions aim to open a critical reflection and dialogue on the personal/political role of the stage; they intend to reflect on the ways that the stage (re)shapes gender, sexuality, and race across geopolitical borders in the contemporary moment.

We want to rethink what the stage is according to its location, as well as its implications for the way in which we understand the world. We call for a dialogue that problematizes simplistic understandings of simulation and resistance; we want to move beyond taking a film, or a play, or a street performance as either revolutionary or oppressive. In short, just like Muñoz, we aim at addressing the multiplicity of bodily, political, and social implications of the stage when it gets caught in the asymmetries binding different sociopolitical contexts.

<b>Program schedule/Timetable</b>	<b>6</b>
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## **Keynotes**

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<b>Dr. Eliza Steinbock</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Dr. Tina Gharavi + Screening of <i>Mother/Country</i> (2002)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Buhlebezwe Siwani</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Dr. Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra</b>	<b>13</b>

## **Panels**

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<b>Staging Gender in the Media</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Khurram Saleem, Karen Sztajnberg, Elena Sarno</i>	
<b>Acting on the Politicized Stage</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Lucy Spoliar, Emma Bakker, Ine Beljaars</i>	
<b>Performing Merging Identities</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>Dr. Lekan Balogun, Joe van der Eerden, George Rallis</i>	
<b>Disrupted Spaces, Unexpected Stages</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>Paniz Moayeri, Lélia Tavakoli Farsooni, Panos Tsitsanoudis</i>	
<b>Material/Temporal Performances Through the Body</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Dr. Stefania Lodi Rizzini, Juan Montoya-Alzate, Mori Plaschinski</i>	
<b>Embodied Violence</b>	<b>35</b>
<i>Mina Hunt, Nisrine Chaer, Sarah Trottier</i>	
<b>Visuality and the Literary On Stage</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>Josh Weeks, Simone Stergioula, Dr. Simon Ferdinand</i>	
<b>Mariku Wayward Aesthetics: Popular Theatre Performances from Curaçao and Queer Violence</b>	<b>41</b>
<i>Finishing Talk/Intervention by Julian Isenia</i>	

## Film Screenings

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**Bo Wang: *The Revolution Will Not Be Air-Conditioned* (2022)**

*Followed by a roundtable discussion—Cinematic Staging: Reflections on Film Across Geopolitical Borders* with Bo Wang, Dr. Eliza Steinbock, Dr. Sara Janssen and Dr. Tina Gharavi / **Moderated by** Dr. Domitilla Olivieri **43**

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**Domiziano Cristopharo: *La Perdición* (2021)**

*Followed by a roundtable discussion with Domiziano Cristopharo, Dr. Jaap Kooijman, Dr. Diego Semerene* / **Moderated by** Alvaro Lopez **45**

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## Performances and Workshops

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**Re-visiting *Autopsy* (2019) by Saman Arastoo + Reflections**

(Shekoufeh Behbehani and Alvaro Lopez) **48**

*Followed by a roundtable discussion—The Body, Performance, and Violence on the Theatrical Stage* with Dr. Lekan Balogun, Dr. Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra, Mori Plaschinski and Prof. Kati Röttger / **Moderated by** Martina Flores Mendeville **49**

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**Physical Theatre Laboratory: Re-Authoring the Body on Stage**

*a workshop by Mori Plaschinski* **51**

# Wednesday June 1, 2022

Location (until lunch): Doelenzaal, University Library (Singel 425)

- 09:00–09:30** Registration and Coffee  
**09:30–09:45** Opening Remarks  
**09:45–10:00** Welcome by Prof. Esther Peeren

**10:00–11:00** **Seeking Affective Justice in Trans Media Objects: Archival Activations and Re-enactment as Political Redress** – Keynote by Dr. Eliza Steinbock

**11:00–12:15** **Panel 1: Staging Gender in the Media**

Chair: Dr. Domitilla Olivieri

Airing Resistance: Aangan Terha and Pakistani Military Masculinity by Khurram Saleem

Monetizing the Sectioned Body by Karen Sztajnberg

Of (gender) nonsense in the Body of a Film by Elena Sarno

**12:15–13:30** **Panel 2: Acting on the Politicized Stage**

Chair: Dr. Irene Villaescusa Illán

Staging Incongruity Humor: Enacting and Contesting Cultural Scripts in Self-Representations of Jewish and Muslim Women in British Stand-up Comedy by Lucy Spoliar

Body Potencia During Las Tesis' Performance of the Protest Dance: Un Violador en Tu Camino by Emma Baker

Choreographing Race in the Netherlands: Staging Dutchness and Dis/Identification by Ine Beljaars

**13:30–14:30** **Lunch**

**Location (15:00–18:15): P.C. Hoofthuis Room 1.05 (Spuistraat 134)**

**15:00–16:00** **Who Speaks for Whom... Documentary Truth and the Storytelling Cannibals + Screening of *Mother/Country* (2002)** – Keynote by Dr. Tina Gharavi

**16:00–17:00** **Screening of *The Revolution Will Not Be Air-Conditioned* (2022) + Q&A** with filmmaker Bo Wang

**17:15–18:15** **Roundtable Discussion – Cinematic Staging: Reflections on Film Across Geopolitical Borders** with Bo Wang, Prof. Patricia Pisters, Dr. Eliza Steinbock, Dr. Sara Janssen, Dr. Tina Gharavi / Moderated by Dr. Domitilla Olivieri

**18:15–19:15** **Opening drinks**

# Thursday June 2, 2022

Location (until 11:00): University Theater, Room 3.01 (Nieuwe Doelenstraat 16)

**09:00–09:15** Registration and Coffee

**09:15–10:00** **Gender As a Construct** – Keynote by Buhlebezwe Siwani

**10:00–11:00** **Panel 3: Performing Merging Identities**

Chair: Dr. Sruti Bala

Staging Gender in the Postcolony: Local Skirmishes, Global Concerns and the example of J.P. Clark's *The Wives Revolt* by Dr. Lekan Balogun

Staging Psychiatric Diagnosis: the Concept of Performativity and its Relevance to the Diagnosis of Psychopathology by Joe van der Eerden

Cypriot Memory Embodiment: from Shoushoukos to Shakira by George Rallis

**Location (11:00-15:00): P.C. Hoofthuis, Room 1.04 (Spuistraat 134)**

**11:00–12:15** Lunch

**12:15–13:30** **Panel 4: Panel 4: Disrupted Spaces, Unexpected Stages**

Chair: Dr. Pedram Dibazar

Your Passport Doesn't Work Here: Asylum, Space, and Iranian Queer Heritage by Paniz Moayeri

Beyond the Pastoral Paradise: Muslim Bodies in British Rural Space by Lélia Tavakoli Farsooni Tavakoli

Affective Necropolitics: Queer Refugees at the 'Gates' of Europe by Ine Beljaars

**13:30–14:45** **Panel 5: Material/Temporal Performances Through the Body**

Chair: Martina Flores Mendeville

Trans Representation: Axes of Research of an Invisible Body on Theatre Stage by Dr. Stefania Lodi Rizzini

Rearranging the Modern Temporal Stage: Music, Race, and Gender in the Seventeen Century Caribbean by Juan Montoya-Alzate

'Los Pájaros del Yokubo': Research-creation in Body Narratives, Physical Theatre and Sexuality by Mori Plaschinski

**15:00–18:00** **Location:** P.C. Hoofthuis Room 115

**Workshop – Physical Theatre Laboratory:  
Re-Authoring the Body on Stage**  
by Mori Plaschinski

**15:00–19:00** **Location:** P.C. Hoofthuis Room 1.04

**Screening of *La Perdición* (2021) + roundtable**  
with filmmaker Domiziano Cristopharo, Dr. Jaap Kooijman,  
Dr. Diego Semerene / Moderated by Alvaro Lopez

**Trigger Warning:** The film to be screened contains explicit depictions of violence, sex, and sexual assault

# Thursday June 3, 2022

Location (until 13:00): Bushuis, VOC Zaal (Kloveniersburgwal 48)

**09:00–09:30** Registration and Coffee

**09:30–10:30** **Performance Beyond the (Human) Body or the Search for Life Itself**

Keynote by Dr. Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra

**10:30–11:45** **Panel 6: Embodied Violence**

Chair: Murat Aydemir

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Embodying Ghosts by Mina Hunt

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Public Morality, Privacy, Security: The Case of Transmasculine Refugees in Lebanon by Nisrine Chaer

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I'm the Main Character, You're Just an NPC: Roleplaying the Human in Digital Alterreality by Sarah Trottier

**11:45–13:00** **Panel 7: Visuality and the Literary On Stage**

Chair: Ben Moore

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Staging the Crime Scene: Femicide and Performativity in Ciudad Juárez by Josh Weeks

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Reflections on Illegibility: Miaojin's *Crocodile, Bus 74*, from Paphos to Lefkoşa and back by Simone Stergioula

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Gendering Geopower: Representing the Earth in Colonial Potosí by Dr. Simon Ferdinand

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**13:00–14:00** **Lunch**

**Location (14:00-18:00): Oudemanhuispoort, Room D1.08 (Oudemanhuispoort 4-6)**

**14:00–15:00** **Re-visiting *Autopsy* (2019) by Saman Arastoo + Reflections** (Shekoufeh Behbehani and Alvaro Lopez)

**15:00–16:30** **Roundtable Discussion – The Body, Performance, and Violence on the Theatrical Stage** with Prof. Kati Röttger, Dr. Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra, Dr. Lekan Balogun, Mori Plaschinski / Moderated by Martina Flores Mendeville

**16:30–17:30** **Finishing Talk/Intervention – Mariku Wayward Aesthetics: Popular Theatre Performances from Curaçao and Queer Violence** by Julian Isenia

**17:30–19:30** **Closing and ASCA Borrel**



# **Keynote Abstracts**

## Seeking Affective Justice in Trans Media Objects: Archival Activations and Re-enactment as Political Redress by

Dr. Eliza Steinbock

This talk will center its analysis of media that activates archival materials on the new feature film by director Chase Joynt *Framing Agnes* (2022) that takes the talk show and the clinical interview as two modes of staging “transsexuality”. *Framing Agnes* takes on the burdened story of Agnes Torres (b. 1939, d. unknown) who sought hormonal and surgical gender transition treatment. She approached a clinic at UCLA in the late 1950s headed by Dr. Harold Garfinkle, who was conducting a sex study as a sociologist and referring on some participants for treatment. He made a multi-year study of Agnes, who crafted a story that fulfilled their criteria for genital surgery and years after she achieved her aim she informed them that certain elements were not true. Most expressly that she had self-administered ‘female hormones’ by taking her mother’s estrogen pills, and therefore her physical feminization since the age of twelve was induced, and not a result of an intersex condition as she had suggested. Unlike any other patient, Agnes impacted transsexual treatment protocols for decades, and yet sixty years after her first interview with Garfinkle, *Framing Agnes* retells the story of how Agnes negotiated her position vis-à-vis being a study within the wider context of the other interlocutors that Garfinkle interviewed, but whose stories were buried. The fact that Agnes was a part of a much larger cohort than previously known changes everything about the dominant narrative framing of the lone and lonely trans woman.

Documentation of transgender subjects appears mainly in medical and legal archives that subsume trans life under deviance and disorder while erasing other understandings. Scholars recognize such archives are incomplete and propagate stigma (Gill-Peterson 2018; Rawson 2021; Steinbock 2022; Ware 2017). What other kinds of archives refute “cultural amnesia” by telling a fuller story, authored by trans people, of their social worlds, lives and feelings? My filmic analysis will seek to answer the question: How do acts of transgender worldmaking and unmaking transform archives of harm and create a sense of affective justice with regard to erasure in the past?

**Eliza Steinbock** is an Associate Professor of Gender and Diversity Studies at Maastricht University. They are author of the award-winning book *Shimmering Images: Trans Cinema, Embodiment, and the Aesthetics of Change* (Duke, 2019), and co-editor of *Art and Activism in the Age of Systemic Crisis: Aesthetic Resilience* (Routledge, 2020). Currently Eliza is project leader of “The Critical Visitor” consortium, developing intersectional approaches for inclusive heritage (NWO 2020-2025). Together with Susan Stryker and Jian Neo Chen, Eliza co-edits the new Duke book series for critical trans studies, ASTERISK.

## **Who Speaks for Whom... Documentary Truth and the Storytelling Cannibals + Screening of *Mother/Country***

by Dr. Tina Gharavi

*Mother/Country & Closer*—The framework demonstrates to the viewer who has the power to tell stories. Gender and sexuality are arguably performative constructions, and the languages of documentary storytelling themselves culturally coded (perhaps even a man made language)... But how does a filmmaker engage with informed audiences to create shared sensemaking around issues of representation and strategies of power? How can stories themselves be liberated from tyranny?

Gharavi will, in this talk, look back at her early documentaries *Closer* (2001) and *Mother/Country* (2002) to reflect on the two decades that have elapsed since their initial release. Gharavi will explore context, on the how the films changed according to who engages with them, and on the changes in the sociopolitical and historical lenses through which they can be seen,

*Closer* is a film about Annelise, a young 17 year old girl from Newcastle who comes out to her mother in a remarkable film that Shari Frilot of Sundance Festival said “it takes documentary to the next level”... and *Mother/Country* which aired on Channel Four TV was acclaimed for “justifying the Alt-TV strand”... is about Gharavi returning to her mother’s house and meeting her again for the first time after 23 years. Gharavi has a bombshell of her own to drop... However, how the story unfolds is both unique and about the very act of telling the story itself... Self-reflexive, visceral and tender all at the same time.

Born in Tehran, **Gharavi** is the swiss-army-knife of director-writer-showrunner-producers focused on delivering authentic stories lensed with an impeccably wrought perspective. Having worked in war zones and in guerrilla filmmaking, Gharavi marries her indomitable spirit with a distinct talent to deliver performances and manage beautifully observed stories.

Her debut feature, *I Am Nasrine*, was nominated for a BAFTA, she has recently completed principle photography on her second feature, *A Beirut Love Story*. Her next film, a feature documentary, *Tribalism is Killing Us* resulted from visiting Angola State Prison, a film about difference and othering is due out in 2021 and she's a showrunner, engaged on developing her first TV series, *Refurinn/The Fox*, an Icelandic/British detective noir with an intriguing twist.

Gharavi is also an academic, teaching filmmaking around the world, and was awarded an MIT Fellowship. She was elected into the BAFTA Academy in 2017, is represented by Independent Talent in the UK and Gersh in Los Angeles, her two home bases.

## **Gender As a Construct** by Buhlebezwe Siwani

The hegemony of the English language, in my view, does not universalize communication but functions to silence and disable different ways of communicating. Language is part of the process of social reproduction. Paul Ricœur points out that “the meaning of the text is not behind the text, but in front of it. It is not something hidden but disclosed.” (*The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur, 1978*). In my language, isiXhosa and many other languages, which are indigenous to South Africa, there is no gender, objects and people are not gendered when referred to as bodies. In considering the power and oppressive structures linked to the gendered body the presentation will be focused on the works of artists, Nicholas Hlobo, Nelisiwe Xaba, Athi Patra Ruga and Buhlebezwe Siwani whose use of the body and interplay between the racialised, feminised and or masculinised body problematizes fixed ideas about gender.

**Buhlebezwe Siwani** was raised in Johannesburg, due to the nomadic nature of her upbringing she has also lived in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal. Siwani works predominantly in the medium of performance and installations, she includes photographic stills and videos of some performances. She uses the videos and the stills as a stand in for her body, which is physically absent from the space. Siwani completed her BAFA(Hons) at the Wits School of Arts in Johannesburg in 2011 and her MFA at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts in 2015. She has exhibited at the Michaelis Galleries in Cape Town, a site-specific exhibition in collaboration with APEX Art, New York City, in 13th Avenue, Alexandra township, Commune 1, and Stevenson in Cape Town. She is represented in the in multiple private collection and institutional collections around the world. She lives and works between Amsterdam and Cape Town.

## **Performance Beyond the (Human) Body or the Search for Life Itself** by Dr. Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra

In this talk, I will elaborate on recent feminist philosophers' return to nature and "life itself" to explore the possibilities and limits of a non-anthropocentric approach to live performance. In doing so I will develop in-depth readings of a series of works by Argentine artist Marta Minujín (b. 1943) where the focus is not so much on presence, finitude or vulnerability – notions on which previous theorizations of performance have focused – but on the relationships between the organic and the inorganic, art and nature, the living and the non-living, chaos and territory. Minujín developed these pieces in the late 1970s, upon returning to Argentina after living in NY and at the moment when a military junta seized power in the country. They are, in turn, intrinsically linked with Minujín's own interrogation of what Latin American art might be. In proposing a more-than-human approach to Latin American performance, this talk seeks to move beyond the anthropocentrism that has permeated the scholarship on life art, while paying close attention to the forms of corporeality, materiality and sensation that allow for "life itself" to become the object of analysis.

**Dr. Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra** is a Lecturer in Contemporary Art at Birkbeck, University of London. Her research focuses on Latin American Art, with an emphasis on the politics of aesthetics, the body, experimental art and technoscience and dimensions of agency and 'liveness' in ecological and feminist artistic practice. She joined Birkbeck after completing doctoral and postdoctoral research at the University of Cambridge and is the recipient of the 2019 Art Journal award and of a Leverhulme Research Fellowship (2020-2022). Her publications include *Touched Bodies: The Performative Turn in Latin American Art* (2019, shortlisted for the 2020 Book Prize of the Association for the Study of the Art of the Present) and the edited volumes *Sabotage Art: Politics and Iconoclasm in Contemporary Latin America* (2016), *Eugenio Polgovsky: Poetics of the Real/La poética de lo real* (2020) and *Re-Public: The New Public Art in Mexico* (forthcoming).

# **Panel Abstracts**

# Staging Gender in the Media

CHAIR: DR. DOMITILLA OLIVIERI

## Airing Resistance: *Aangan Terha* and Pakistani Military Masculinity by Khurram Saleem

*Aangan Terha* (1984), translatable as Crooked Courtyard, is an immensely popular satirical Pakistani Urdu TV drama serial. It was written by Anwar Maqsood and broadcasted by Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV), which is a state-owned and managed corporation. Thus, it was during the time of General Zia-ul-Haq's blanket censorship codes that *Aangan Terha*, a show that challenged and poked fun at socio-political norms, ethnic-class relations, and gender roles of the time, was aired by the State Television to the immense joy and surprise of many. Therefore, my paper uses literary and visual analysis to take note of the show's *weather*, as conceptualized by feminists such as Christina Sharpe, as an all encompassing bio-necropolitical sphere of existence within which we all (cannot) breathe. I do so by paying attention to how the airheaded character of Akbar, who is anything but stupid, challenges the ideals of a militarized cisnormative masculinity by performing a subversive masculinity throughout the show. Due to his background as a retired classical dancer, a background that is never fully and openly aired for the retirement is a forced one due to General Zia-ul-Haq's ban on arts and TV censorship laws, Akbar's frivolous yet elegant antics bring a breath of fresh air that is filled with laughter giving us a moment of respite. In conclusion then, I argue that by attending to the airy figure of Akbar within *Aangan Terha* we can learn not only about the weather of the show's narrative arc or the weather that produced such a show, but also how to weather the climate within which such a show was aired as we work for the revolution, at the risk of being jailed, with bated breath.

**KEYWORDS:** Aangan Terha, weather, military rule, masculinity, Pakistan.

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As an Aries Sun with Mercury in Taurus, **Khurram** has a deep and lasting sense of loyalty once developed. He's also a graduate student of

Gender Studies at University of Łódź, Poland, and University of Utrecht, Netherlands. His research interests are informed by, and grounded in, Cultural Studies, Literary Studies, and New Materialism, all with a pinch of Psychosomatic therapy.

## **Monetizing the Sectioned Body** by Karen Sztajnberg

If separating a body into parts can be seen as the violence of de-subjectivizing a person, how might we think of a woman monetizing and capitalizing on a trope not set forth by her kind, but existing as currency in a world where she must circulate? How does it complicate matters when this body is situated in a disenfranchised favela, and this media is reaching out to have this whole, rich subculture acknowledged?

The masquerade of partializing the body is turned on its head by Brazilian pop-star phenomena Anitta, in her music video “Vai, Malandra,” which opens with a close up shot of her ass. Purportedly, the singer stopped the post-production team from photoshopping her cellulite away. This lead Brazilian scholar Ivana Bentes to state that, in so doing, Anitta moves from the position of object to subject and affirms a virile feminism, which appropriates and transforms masculinity.

I will use this much covered mediatic event as a starting point from which to examine possible responses to the pile up of violences inflicted on female bodies: the violence of male objectification and, the violence of untenable beauty standards that devalue and rank women, the violence of being sentenced into poverty, the violence of systemic male privilege in film/media production. If Ivana Bentes sees this bold music video and its startling images as a necessary flipside to docile femininity I want to work towards a conception of how phallic pursuits reinstate the same problems with new players, and draw attention to the fact that stopping at claiming agency to disidentify can be counter-productive and disarm new projects of gender utopias. Kaja Silverman’s notion of phallic divestiture will be explored as an alternative to the masquerade/denial dualism.

**KEYWORDS:** Self-commodification, “poverty-porn,” phallic divestiture and Favela culture.

Karen Sztajnberg is a Brazilian scholar and working artist who first graduated from Bard College (Film, B.A, 1997), then Columbia University (Film M.F.A, 2006) and recently joined the Amsterdam School for Cultural Research as a PhD candidate. Her research topic is how the South American tradition of subversive art intersects with spectatorship in a transnational production context.

Conference appearances include New York University's *Windows, Frames, Mirrors* Conference where she spoke of Lucio Castro's *End of the Century* (2019), and *Visible Evidence* (2021).

Credited as director, editor, screenwriter, and video artist, her work has been screened at the Rotterdam Film Festival, Lincoln Center Film Society, DocFeed, HotDocs, Visions du Reel, and in many art galleries, culminating in her solo exhibition at Appleton Square in Lisbon, Portugal.

## **Of (Gender) Nonsense in the Body of a Film** by Elena Sarno

This presentation intends to illustrate and discuss the filmmaking process, focused on body play, of a fiction short being shot at the end of March 2022. The film, titled '*Catalina meets the pope*', written and directed by me, recounts an episode in Catalina de Erauso's life, a woman who lived as a man in the Spanish colonies for most of her life (XVII century) known as the lieutenant nun. In the short she meets the pope (Urban VIII) who grants her his blessing to dress as a man. The focus is not on the historical 'facts' but on the persons (bodies) in the story: Catalina, Urban VIII, Dr Bisturi (a plastic surgeon) and Cardinal B. (the pope's secretary)—interpreted by two cisgender women and a trans man (double role). The two latter characters are completely invented, but also the two historical ones are mostly made up. All characters play physically and aesthetically around genders, being more concerned with their looks and actions as humans. The challenge is to apply, in the making of this film, modes of narrative and cinematic play, that is, amongst others, invention for the sake (fun) of invention, outside of logics of sense-making.

We work, particularly in the construction of the characters, not with their psychology but manipulating their bodies: voice, rhythms, gestures—and

importantly by attaching impermanent external devices: clothing, wigs, props... play tools, which make the body apt for shapeshifting at any moment. This way the possibility of a material change is always visible—and desirable—and the characters' bodies are then able to perform queer and playful transformations, incarnating a socio-cultural critique to gender norms.

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**Elena Sarno**: Currently making various artifacts mixing audiovisual and performative arts, a research practice around communal play and joy as vital forms of resistance to conformity and discrimination—and writing a PhD (ASCA, Amsterdam) about forms of free play in filmmaking.

Geographically unstable, I have lived the longest in Italy, Spain and Australia. My main, but not sole, area of work is and has been in filmmaking with its multiple and shapeshifting worlds.

# Acting on the Politicized Stage

CHAIR: DR. IRENE VILLAESCUSA ILLÁN

## **Staging Incongruity Humor: Enacting and Contesting Cultural Scripts in Self-Representations of Jewish and Muslim Women in British Stand-up Comedy** by Lucy Spoliar

Performing comedy and sharing laughter with an audience can create powerful moments of mutual understanding and belonging (Davis, 1995), and offer opportunities to challenge structures and asymmetries of power (Billig, 2005). At the same time, what engenders laughter is inevitably informed by social relations and cultural norms (Golozubov, 2014). This begs the question: what happens when members of group that have been historically framed as “humorless” (Kuipers, 2011; Gilman, 2012) perform comedy? In this paper, I discuss this question both theoretically and via a feminist critical discourse analysis of self-representations of British Jewish and Muslim women stand-up comedians. Both Jewish and Muslim women, in British public discourse, are often framed in terms of particular “Othering” narratives along (intersecting) lines of race, gender and religion. This sometimes results in an expectation to perform a particular racialized, gendered subjectivity on-stage. Indeed, Jewish and Muslim women often enjoy career advancement as stand-up comedians when they are willing to fit a particular “compulsory staging” of their identity (for example, Muslim women performing comedy about radicalization or oppression).

This can result in a kind of “hypervisibility” which becomes particularly obvious in media reviews of these stand-up shows. However, as various scholars have noted (Gilbert, 2004; Aidi, 2021), incongruity humor in particular is implicitly about challenging assumptions about a target group and problematizing simplistic binary models (e.g. assimilation/resistance). Here, Muñoz’s notion of the “disidentificatory subject” who ‘simultaneously works on, with, and against a cultural form’ (Muñoz, 1999, 12) is invaluable. Through incongruity humor, Jewish and Muslim comedians at the same time reference the cultural contexts in which they are “Othered” (thus revealing commonalities and shared knowledge), and denaturalize these

cultural codes and stereotypes, allowing their bodies to become visible on their own terms.

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**Lucy Spoliar** is a PhD Candidate at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen. Her research project, entitled *What's So Funny? (Self)Representations of Jewish and Muslim Women in British Comedy Entertainment and Humor in Everyday Life (2021-2025)*, explores the role of humor in public and private (self)representations of Jewish and Muslim women, and how they are positioned (and position themselves) in terms of gender, race and religion in contemporary Britain. Her research interests include religion and gender, cultural theories of representation and emotion, feminist methodologies, and queer approaches to religion and humor.

## **Body Potencia During Las Tesis' Performance of the Protest Dance: *Un Violador en Tu Camino* by Emma Bakker**

I would like to organize a talk in which we can rethink the role of the body in performances of resistance with a special focus on protests in the street. I am especially curious to include peoples lived experience in the protest into a discussion as to how we can rethink the ways we resist. Are protests a relevant form of resistance? Does it incite change? What role does the body play when we resist? Does it impact how we resist? These questions are relevant in gaining an understanding of what it means to inhabit a specific body and it helps to grapple with the feelings and sentiments that we experience when we perform a protest.

In the last year, I performed an intersectional analysis in which I discussed the intimacies of power struggles that take place in and on bodies during moments of resistance in the form of protests. The protests that I have focussed on were the Black Lives Matter protests (especially moments of grief and memorial performances), the slut walks that are part of the women's movement (especially whether or not there is space to resist for disabled bodies), and the feminist anti-rape/anti-capitalist protests (especially the performance of the dance and song "el violador eres tú") in Latin-America. The approach that I have used is intersectional and

uses historico-racial schema's, feminist disability studies, and the believe that the body is not only vulnerable but can also incite power, at its core (especially the work of Veronica Gago).

From this analysis, a conclusion has been drawn showing that all bodies are interconnected, intersectional, ever-changing and always in need of a support system. The analysis has moreover illustrated that the current form of protests on the street is designed for healthy able and masculine bodies. I would like to argue that we should rethink the performance of protests in the street towards an understanding of protests that supports structural accessibility. To do so, the scope of protests should be widened towards a broader network of resistance in the form of protest as assemblages.

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**Emma Bakker:** Last summer, I have finished my master of Philosophy at the UvA in Amsterdam. In the past years, I have specialized in the field of protest and resistance. I have previously finished a MA in conflict studies and Human Rights in Utrecht and I take this interdisciplinary perspective along in my work. The main disciplines that I draw from are critical theory and more specifically, gender, race, postcolonial and disability studies. In 2018, I have been conducting research in Abuja, Nigeria towards lived experiences from people in Abuja towards the increasing role of China in Nigerian infrastructure projects. After this project, I have continued to investigate power structures. My primary focus is on resistance and protests such as the Umbrella movement in Hong Kong and the protests in Chile. Last year, I have taught a research course at the UvA for which I developed a curriculum together with Sylvia Pauw focussing on the relation between space and gender. Moreover, I will be giving a talk on the relation between bodies and resistance in May at the 'Bodies in the Street' conference in Paderborn Germany.

## **Choreographing Race in the Netherlands: Staging Dutchness and Dis/Identification by Ine Beljaars**

Within the transnational circuit of Afro-diasporic partner dance, there has been a dramatic increase in the popularity of urban kiz since 2015. Urban kiz is derived from the Angolan partner dance kizomba and is fused with elements

of ghettouzouk, hip-hop, rap, dance, and R&B. Originated in Paris, it quickly disseminated across other European cities and now spans various localities across the globe. In the Netherlands, urban kiz was once part of the Afro-Latin partner dance scene. However, it soon developed into a parallel scene with different musical substyles, subsequent movement repertoires, and a distinct subculture that promotes a staging of identities structured around cis-gendered, patriarchal, and heteronormative masculinity. Contemporary masculine and feminine beauty standards, scripted by youthfulness, able-bodiedness, and athleticism, are complicated by racialized fantasies, made most apparent by the exotification of black masculinity, which further contour the staging of identities. The constellation of these structures, influences, and elements contributed to an architecture of power that enabled sexual violence against women in the Dutch urban kiz scene. This talk draws on interview data with three Dutch women of color dancers to highlight how practices and discourses of sexual violence are enabled, upheld, and simultaneously resisted through elaborate strategies involving complex negotiations around gender and sexual dis/identification. The case studies are complemented by vignettes from male dancers in the scene to interrogate how colonial desire, misogynoir, and male exceptionalism further contribute to sexual violence against women.

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**Ine Beljaars** is a PhD Candidate in Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice at the University of British Columbia. She holds a MA (cum laude) in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology from Leiden University. She is the author of *Body Politics*, a book about the social reproduction of gender and racial difference in the Dutch kizomba dance scene. Her PhD research historicizes the developments of the Afro-Latin partner dance scene in the Netherlands (1975-2020) through oral histories and archival research, and examines themes of dis/identification and un/belonging among differently situated embodied subjectivities through in-depth interviews with Afro-Latin social dancers in the Netherlands.

# Performing Merging Identities

CHAIR: DR. SRUTI BALA

## Staging Gender in the Postcolony: Local Skirmishes, Global Concerns and the example of J.P. Clark's *The Wives Revolt* by Dr. Lekan Balogun

Responding to questions at an interview by the Al-Jazeera Network, President Muhammad Buhari of Nigeria made the curious statement about the role being played by his wife who openly condemned some national policies by her husband's administration, saying on air that her place is in "the other room" (i.e. the bedroom). The critical opprobrium that his remark generated affirmed the general attitude towards the complexity of gender issues and the continued problem that patriarchy poses to the public as well as the urgent need to stamp it out completely. Studies have shown that in the Nigerian context of our concern, women have challenged such mental and political perception and laws that the type of Buhari's remark supports. Through purposeful, organized social actions such as the traditional "Nakeding" of Yoruba women and *uwa umu-nwanyi* among Igbo women and/or in contemporary time, the Aba Women's Riot in which women traders in eastern Nigeria rose against the imposition of obnoxious taxation on the people by the colonial authority in 1929, Nigerian women continue to show awareness about gender roles, women's action against (sexual and gender-based) violence, and changed situations globally even when they act within their local provenance. Such actions are often performance-based and, as the feminist scholar, Judith Butler opines, "gender reality is performative" or simply that gender is "real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler "Performative" 1990:270). In this paper, I will discuss the type of performativity that is involved in the Erhuawen women's response to male chauvinism, ingrained patriarchy, and perpetual gender discrimination in J.P. Clark's play, *The Wives' Revolt*, set in the late 1970s Nigeria but with issues which continue to resonate. The presentation will be in two parts: a performance of an abridged version of the play (45 minutes long) followed by the paper presentation which will discuss in particular, the social action by the women of Erhuawen, the oil-rich riverine area of Delta State of Nigeria, where these women resist their domestic

assault, social discrimination and economic marginalization by the men. The presentation will also highlight the local/global implications of the social reactions by the women in their relation to other documented forms of women action against male dominance.

**KEYWORDS:** culture, discrimination, embodiments, performing gender & sexuality, sexual and gender-based violence.

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**Dr. Lekan Balogun** is a theatre director, award-winning playwright and scholar. He received his PhD in Global Shakespeare (Theatre & Filmic Adaptation/Appropriation) and Intercultural Performance, from the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He was awarded a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts (Distinction) in Theatre Arts, by the University of Lagos Akoka, Department of Creative Arts, Nigeria, where he has taught Postcolonial Dramaturgies, Creative Writing and Performance Aesthetics, Gender and Cultural Studies, before joining the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies (CTDPS), University of Cape Town, South Africa as an Andrew W Mellon Fellow on the project, “Reimagining Tragedy from Africa and the Global South” (ReTAGS), from where he will take up from May 2022, the Bayreuth Advanced African Studies (BA) Fellowship of the University of Bayreuth, Germany.

## **Staging Psychiatric Diagnosis: the Concept of Performativity and its Relevance to the Diagnosis of Psychopathology** by Joe van der Eerden

In her analysis of the discursive construction of the categories of gender, sex, and sexuality, Judith Butler uses the term ‘performativity’ to conceptualize how performance continuously functions to both reify and subvert the content of these categories. This concept, however, can be much more broadly applied to interrogate the categories we use to describe our world—and in particular, the categories of human identity. In my contribution to the workshop, I want to highlight how performativity could be a valuable concept through which to consider the diagnostic categories of psychopathological disorders. The phenomenon of psychiatric diagnosis involves many performative reiterations, which have the potential to reify

as well as challenge the current ruling ontology – both in the epistemology of psychopathological diagnoses, as well as in the procedure of diagnosing an individual.

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Joe van der Eerden is a PhD candidate at ASCA who investigates the politics of depression. He looks at processes of meaning-making in discourse—in scientific and therapeutic writing on psychopathology, autobiographical literature, and meme culture – to make sense of the prevalence of depressive experiences and disorders in contemporary (Western) societies.

## **Cypriot Memory Embodiment: from Shoushoukos to Shakira** by George Rallis

Cyprus is an island of heavy oppositions and of radical positionalities, both in terms of culture but also in terms of political upheavals. The most identifiable part of the Cypriot past, would undeniably be the Turkish invasion of 1974. However, minorities (such as the queer one) realize that the institutionalization of specific narratives, does not allow the realization of the complexity of the Cypriot cultural identity, which goes beyond the mere opposition of Cypriot/Turkish.

My main axis of analysis would be inspired from one saying which is constitutionally handed down to us within Cypriot society, “To not forget and to fight.” (Δεν ξεχνώ και αγωνίζομαι). This quote is written on every notebook that is given to us in grade school by the state, and is engraved within our cultural memory as it usually accompanies a picture of the Mountain of Pentadaktilos (which now functions as a symbol of the invasion and the now Turkish part of the island). The way I would approach this analysis of Cypriot collective memory, is through a personal approach of a performance I did, called “From Shoushoukos to Shakira: a coming out story”. This essay will attempt to situate within the present, the Cypriot problem of memory and provide an alternative approach to the agency of remembrance by performing the traumatic cultural identity in a queer manner. With the use of my own performance, I will suggest an alternative

embodiment of memory, beyond cultural hegemony, in order to unveil the way, the Cypriot identity is implicated within a cultural genealogical arbitrariness and potentially show alternative ways of dealing with trauma.

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My name is George Rallis and I am a Cypriot cultural practitioner. I have graduated the RMA of Cultural Analysis from UvA, with specified research on metaphysics and ontology based on queer politics and visual culture. Starting from a philosophical and socially conscious methodological research, my artistic direction focuses on alternative knowledge production and its application to varying mediums from performance to music. I curate my blog Quintessentially Queer which took the form of a radio show with Slim Radio and Reform Radio while also curating different events such as Dam'd Queer Night and HISDarkElements. At the moment, I am based in Cyprus where I will host and manage a series of critical thinking workshops called "Book Club".

# Disrupted Spaces, Unexpected Stages

CHAIR: DR. PEDRAM DIBAZAR

## Your Passport Doesn't Work Here: Asylum, Space, and Iranian Queer Heritage by Paniz Moayeri

For as long as society has marginalized queer individuals, spaces formed around their isolated social existences have acted as classrooms and battlegrounds for the passing down of a heritage founded on lessons of survival, struggle, and resilience. Queer spaces have allowed for pockets in which the private and the personal can be showcased in public: stages historically hidden in the privacy of immediate communities, but also public grounds for rights movements. At once apart from and yet mirroring the realities of the societies they belong to, these Foucauldian *heterotopias* have put queer identities on the map.

The challenge in defining relationships between the stages formed by queering space and the sociopolitical is heightened in the Iranian LGBTQ+ diaspora. Legal, cultural, and political conditions of recent decades have resulted in a growing number of Iranians seeking asylum in the West on account of their sexual orientations and gender identities. These exiled individuals are now the custodians of a heritage they build on while scattered around the world.

Spaces queered by members of the Iranian LGBTQ+ through their journeys from Iran, in transitional countries like Turkey, and in Western destinations like Canada reflect what Iranian queer heritage and its relationship to the public realm can be. The changing relationships between the personal and the public throughout this journey speak to how the political affects the stage, and how the stage facilitates a subversion of the political in various contexts and spatial scales. By looking at case studies of some of these spaces, *Your Passport Doesn't Work Here* examines queer spaces as stages that reflect how the personal and political change for Iranian LGBTQ+ asylum seekers across Iran, Turkey, and Canada.

Based in Canada, [Paniz Moayeri](#) (she/her) is an intern architect (architect-in-training) with the Ontario Association of Architects and a sessional instructor at Laurentian University McEwen School of Architecture. Her 2019 graduate thesis—entitled *Your Passport Doesn't Work Here: Asylum, Space, and Iranian Queer Heritage*—looks at the connection between space and queer heritage in the Iranian LGBTQ+ refugee community of Toronto. This research was awarded the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's honour-roll, the Architectural Research Center Consortium's King Student Medal, and the Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies' graduate prize.

As one of the three founders of the initiative [Treaty Lands, Global Stories](#), Moayeri has advocated for acknowledging Canada's Indigenous heritage and for looking beyond the Western world in the study of history and precedents in architectural pedagogy since 2016. She currently serves as an advisory board member to the [Waterloo Architecture's Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Task Force](#), where her contributions have included working on the Cultural History report.

## **Beyond the Pastoral Paradise: Muslim Bodies in British Rural Space** by Lélia Tavakoli Farsooni

While there is an increasing number of Muslim stories in urban settings, cultural imaginations of the English rural linked to whiteness are pervasive. Despite there being a long-established presence of Muslims in English rural areas, their bodies are excluded or made to disappear to make the rural and by extension the nation (supposedly) safe. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's notion of white habit worlds, I close read Christopher Morris' film *Four Lions* (2010) to explore how the film configures English rural space through its orientation of Muslim bodies and to analyze how the film contests or reinforces the (lack of) belonging of bodies considered 'non-white'/'non-Christian' in rural spaces. I argue that whiteness as the racialization of the pastoral form is closely imbricated with the Christian pastoral notion of Eden and acts as a form of pastoral bordering which positions the bodies of British Muslims beyond the rural and the nation.

Lélia Tavakoli Farsooni is a PhD researcher at the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam. Her research is part of the ERC-funded Rural Imaginations project and explores how cultural imaginations of the countryside in the UK engage in the politics of the nation by merging specific landscapes with certain bodies and values. She is particularly interested in the typologies that govern who and what belongs to the 'British' countryside and the ways in which this impacts how the rural is politically mobilized and affectively mediated.

## **Affective Necropolitics: Queer refugees at the 'gates' of Europe** by Panos Tsitsanoudis

In this research paper, I am focusing on the texts, textures, mobilities and intensities, which constitute the European border regime, at the Greek island of Lesbos. Following the questions of postcolonial critique against the west-centric structure of "human rights", I am interested in the ways which LGBTQ rights and SOGI (Sexual Orientation Gender Identity) asylum claims, deploy themselves, as a "murderous inclusion" (Haritaworn, Kuntsman, & Posocco, 2013) of the queer bodies arriving at the coasts of the island. Based on my ethnographic research with a Lesbos-based, queer refugee solidarity group, and as I am following the stories of its participants, I am trying to navigate the ways, that multiple affective forces are constituting a necropolitical infrastructure, which captures queer refugees in its "deadly" vibration: from the "vulnerability contest" (Howden & Kodalak, 2018) of the asylum claims based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity, until the "slow death" (Berlant, 2007) within the refugee camp and the "righteous murders" (Shakshari, 2014) at the European borders.

I conclude that this politically and historically specified manifestation of queer Necropolitics (Haritaworn, Kuntsman & Posocco, 2014) at the eastern European borders is emerging as an affective attunement and "death" becomes an affective frequency, which produces new forms of lives "into death" (Mbembe, 2019). More extensively, I am focusing on i) restriction of movement, ii) fear, and iii) suspicion, as major areas of what I call "affective Necropolitics": the affective articulation of queer lives as "protected" and exposed to "death", at the same time. Finally, this paper, aims to stand as

an affective gesture, which can challenge the normative assumptions of westernized rights and activate a crucial reflection on the ways in which politics are emerging today as a “death-world” (Mbembe, 2019: 92).

**KEYWORDS:** affect, necropolitics, queer, refugees, Lesbos.

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**Panos Tsitsanoudis** holds a degree in Psychology (BA) from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and a Master's degree (MA) in Gender studies, from the Department of Social Anthropology and History of the University of Aegean, in Lesbos. He worked closely with issues concerning masculinities, affect, queerness and necropolitics in the context of the European refugee regime in Greece. His research methods and fields, are varying between psychoanalysis, affect theory, critical psychology and critical discourse analysis. At the moment, he is working in the intersections of gendered sexualized violence from an abolitionist/transformative perspective.

# Material/Temporal Performances Through the Body

CHAIR: MARTINA FLORES MENDEVILLE

## Trans Representation: Axes of Research of an Invisible Body on Theatre Stage by Dr. Stefania Lodi Rizzini

My paper aims to investigate how theatre and performance, mainly in France and Italy, are representing transgender bodies today on stage. If historically cross-dressing and drag practices have been considered the privileged practices to perform gender, in contemporary times transgender and non-binary artists are questioning the use of drag and at the same time they are reshaping the narrative and artistic language related to the representation of their bodies and their lives. Against the invisibility of the past and social resistance of the contemporary, transgender artists are reappropriating their own stories and their own narratives, claiming to be subject and not object. In doing so these artists have engaged, from their sight and a site, as per Haraway notion, into a frontal dialogue with society questioning the historical cultural foundation and the colonial, ultraliberal white patriarchal society itself. Therefore, transgender subject is a strictly political subject because it destabilizes the core notion of sex taxonomies, and sexual binarities of our society and at the same time it creates new maps of desire and corporalities.

Through the work of the few artists, from the main institutional stage, *Cie Non Nova* (France), *Teatri di Vita* (Italy), to other artists, I will show how the transgender representation is highly concerned with the materiality of the body, to its physicality, and how the notion of temporality and transformation are, on a permanent basis, interrogated by the artists in order to share their experience. In addition, drawing from an interdisciplinary approach as well as aesthetic, I will investigate how hybridity and pluralization of creative languages are necessary tool to frame the multiple experiences of transgender representation to return their privileged frontier perspective which can bring relevant discussion to the definition of human being.

**KEYWORDS:** transgender, transformation, temporalities, narratives, pluralization

Dr. Stefania Lodi Rizzini is a Doctor in Theater Studies (PhD) from Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris 3. PhD thesis title: *Performer le genre: Heather Cassils, Alain Platel, Phia Ménard, Motus*. Part of LIRA, research group established at Sorbonne Nouvelle 3 and the French based collective, “*Theatre et Genres*”. Independent researcher, with research focused on contemporary theater, performance, gender studies, queer, transfeminism, myth. She published for the Journal Culture, University of Milano, article about “*Female Identity within contemporary British art: Tracey Emin, Mona Hatoum, Gillian Wearing*”. In 2021 her chapter, *The Undisciplined Body: Phia Ménard and Her Experience of Organic Performance* was published within The Palgrave Handbook of Queer and Trans Feminisms in Contemporary Performance.

## **Rearranging the Modern Temporal Stage: Music, Race, and Gender in the Seventeen Century Caribbean**

by Juan Montoya-Alzate

My intervention examines how musical performance and heritagised practices reorder modern race and gender. I follow the question: How do heritagised musical practices in the Colombian-Caribbean reconstitute Modernity? I dig into gendered and racial musical origins of colonialism in the Caribbean that call for a reconstitution in the present. I draw on decolonial perspectives at odds with these constructions, highlighting conservationist drives and challenging, slowing down and hindering the alleged progressivist pace of modernity. I suggest that handed-down music practices rearrange and reconstitute different temporalities, both past and present, while providing a framework for other modern musical histories to emerge, and to be strategically told. Such is the case for herbalist Paula de Eguiluz, three times prosecuted by the American Inquisition in seventeenth century Cartagena de Indias. Among these emerging pasts, subaltern and embodied accounts undermine colonial gendered and racial premises archetypical of modernity.

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Juan Montoya-Alzate conducts research in the fields of Heritage Studies and Ethnomusicology. He focuses on subaltern, musical and performative interventions in the continental Caribbean aligning with decolonial

approaches. Juan holds a MA in Cultural Studies (KU Leuven) and regularly writes for international media outlets such as Deutsche Welle (Germany), O'Globo (Brazil), The New Herald (USA) and El Espectador (Colombia).

## **“Los Pájaros del Yokubo”: Research-creation in Body Narratives, Physical Theatre and Sexuality**

by Mori Plaschinski

*“Los Pájaros del Yokubo”* is the result of a research-creation process carried out in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, during the year 2019. The dissertation is composed of two theoretical and one narrative-ethnographic sections. The first section presents a socio-historical analysis of different conceptions of the body, and how they have impacted academic research paradigms and the theatrical scene. Secondly, the research presents a series of reflections around LGBTQ+ movements in Latin America and how the body on stage can open spaces of multiple possibilities to reconstruct and re-narrate the histories of sexualities and genders; including the contradictions, clashes and multi-storcity that the staged bodies represent.

The second part of the work describes the research journey with the group *“Los Pájaros del Yokubo”*, comprising the creation process and the presentation of the resulting physical theatre play. Working with a methodology based on physical theatre and applied collective theatre, the LGBTQ + youth group developed a performance using personal stories to write with the body narratives that could express, resignify and question sexuality, love and desire.

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**Mori Plaschinski** is a cultural researcher and theatre practitioner. She specializes in collective theatre practices, such as participatory arts, theatre of the oppressed and devised physical theatre, among others. Her artistic research focuses on the representation of gender and sexuality on the stage, and the role of the body in narrating the multiplicity of stories and possibilities. Mori is also a gender rights and LGBT+ activist, with experience in creative advocacy and activism. She has collaborated with international organizations such as The Kite Trust, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, Aflatoun, Acting now, and UNOY.

# Embodied Violence

CHAIR: DR. MURAT AYDEMIR

How do violence, embodiment, and sexuality cross paths in the different visual landscapes that constitute the present globalized context? How are queer and trans experience violently transformed under the visual focus the Western gaze? And how is the human embodied in contemporary (queering) digital spaces? This panel will address these topics as an open conversation aimed at queering academic settings of discussion on the visual relationship between the self, the body, and the media.

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## Embodying Ghosts by Mina Hunt

**Mina Hunt** is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry (ICON), Utrecht University. She works with trans studies, critical theory, and human rights. She has published papers on transgender and nonbinary biometrics, new gender registration techniques, and hauntology. Mina's dissertation looks at the potentially destabilizing aspects of trans subjectivity, specifically focusing on how it potentially disrupts the institutional narratives that would ensnare it.

## Public Morality, Privacy, Security: The Case of Transmasculine Refugees in Lebanon by Nisrine Chaer

**Nisrine Chaer** is an activist-academic who lives in Lebanon and the Netherlands. His research interests lie at the intersection of queer anthropology, migration, transgender studies, Middle East and cultural studies. He graduated from the Gender & Ethnicity Master's at Utrecht University where he wrote his thesis on queer activism in Beirut. In 2017, he co-founded Sehaq Queer Refugees Group, a refugee-led grassroots leftist organization in Amsterdam that works on creating safer spaces for queer & trans refugees, centering Middle Eastern & North African experiences and politics. Currently, he is working on a PhD project at Utrecht University about geographies of home with a focus on MENA queer & trans migration in the Netherlands and in Lebanon.

## **I'm the Main Character, You're Just an NPC: Roleplaying the Human in Digital Alterreality** by Sarah Trottier

Sarah Trottier is an external PhD researcher in Gender Studies and Critical Theory at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Utrecht University. Sarah's research investigates how playfulness and 'game-logic' in digital cultural phenomena and online social media trends can operate as technologies of control and contribute to the proliferation of dehumanizing alt-right ideologies. This current project, "*'Ludomemetics': Playful Memes and Powers of the 'Real' in Post-Postmodern Alterreality*", foregrounds how structures, systems, and ideologies of colonialism, white supremacy, cisheteropatriarchy, and neoliberal capitalism can be covertly intensified and accelerated through memetic cultural discourse.

# Visuality and the Literary On Stage

CHAIR: DR. BEN MOORE

## Staging the Crime Scene: Femicide and Performativity in Ciudad Juárez by Josh Weeks

What is it, exactly, that defines “the stage”? Is staging limited to a verified performance space (and thus an institutional body)? Or does the presence of an audience provide the spatial and affective conditions in which any material site might be transformed into a stage? Focusing on Roberto Bolaño’s mega-novel, *2666*, which revolves around a decades-long femicide along the Mexican-U.S. border, this paper approaches such questions in relation to the gendered and racialized crime scene. Specifically, it will read the layered framing(s) of the subaltern female body in the novel – mediated by the killers, the police force, and Bolaño himself – as a mode of staging that produces a variety of personal and collective responses to femicide. By approaching femicide through the lens of the stage, we can challenge the myth of the “uncontaminated” crime scene, and begin deconstructing the supposed neutrality of criminal investigation. What is more, we can interrogate the performative function of femicide as it emerges at the intersection of gang-culture and transnational capital, thus offering an embodied perspective of what Rita Laura Segato has described as ‘writing on the bodies of women murdered in Ciudad Juárez’ (2006). And yet, we must not overlook the female reappropriation of the stage – in the form of anti-femicide activism – that works against the femicidal performance of machismo in the region (Staudt and Coronado 2010). In *2666*, the growing protests organized by groups such as the Women of Sonora for Democracy and Peace hint at the potential for resistance (and not just oppression) that staging might offer us.

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**Josh Weeks** is a PhD student and finishing fellow at the University of Amsterdam. His dissertation, which is being undertaken within ASCA (Amsterdam school of Cultural Analysis), is on the Chilean author Roberto Bolaño. His research broadly covers World Literature, Latin American Studies, and cultural responses to neoliberal globalization.

## Reflections on Illegibility: Miaojin's *Crocodile, Bus 74*, from Paphos to Lefkoşa and back by Simone Stergioula

During September 2021 I was invited to write an article for the *Inward Outward Symposium: Emotion in the Archive* (2021), to prepare I started reading last year's publication, *Inward Outward, Critical Archival Engagements with Sounds and Films of Coloniality* (2020), which opens with the text 'Magical Terms: On Defining and Positioning the "Decolonial" and "Queer" in Archival Practices' by Wigbertson Julian Isenia and Eliza Steinbock. Isenia and Steinbock describe how the two concepts are used by researchers, without conducting the necessary work, to stand in for practices, "queering" or "decolonizing", that have not been attended to. The belief in the power of the terms to generate actions in their sheer citing is what Isenia and Steinbock identify as *magical thinking*.

During this workshop I am interested in reading the figure of the crocodile in Qiu Miaojin's novel *Notes of a Crocodile* (2017) as a figure devoted to the creation of a series of inconspicuous tactics that strive to avoid identification, and address. However, despite of the crocodile's attempts within the novel's narrative to maintain an undisclosed gender identity as well as sexuality, and therefore take up this position as its own ambiguous locality, Miaojin's crocodile has been, 'queered', recognized, and installed in narratives (especially in the English Speaking 'West') that specify and narrow down its presence into a queer figure, and cult lesbian icon. I am neither interested in contesting nor affirming such connotations but rather to read Miaojin's crocodile along with Reij Rosello's figure of the infiltrator and in agreement with Isenia's and Steinbock's suggestion of following through practices beyond mentioning or naming. Further questioning the need for instances of physical disclosure, clarity, that—such as in the case of the crocodile—undermine a character's understanding of themselves. In other words, I would like to take the time in this workshop to attend to modes of being that remains illegible, undisclosed, and preserve a refusal to a logic of subject formation, while being susceptible to forms of address.

Along with José Esteban Muñoz I would like to take the figure of the crocodile as a *rehearsal room*, "a spatial and temporal coordinate". The dialogue will be situated somewhere between Taipei, Taiwan, preceding the lifting of

martial law in 1987 and (through some personal examples of illegibility) in contemporary Cyprus—on bus number 74 in Taipei, on the intercity bus from Paphos to Nicosia/Lefkoşa.

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Simone Stergioula is currently a research masters student in Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and a masters student in Critical Studies at Sandberg Institute. Since September 2020 Simone works as a teaching assistant for the bachelor's in Literary and Cultural Analysis at the UvA. Interested in queer theory, forms of address, refusal, and illegibility, hanging out in bars, finding insects, and drawing comics.

## **Gendering Geopower: Representing the Earth in Colonial Potosí** by Dr. Simon Ferdinand

Across diverse periods and places, human societies have imagined the environments they inhabit in ways that reflect their distinct conceptions of gender. In particular, masculinist cultures have pervasively associated the earth with femininity. Natural landscapes, national territories, and the whole earth have all often been personified as women, fulfilling diverse ideological functions.

My talk attends to a uniquely complex instance of the “earth as woman” trope. It appears in *La Virgen del Cerro*, an eighteenth-century painting from colonial Peru. Made by unknown artists, the picture represents an Andean mountain: the Cerro Rico outside Potosí, which colonial elites intensively mined for silver. The mountain is depicted as a woman, her head and hands protruding from its slopes. Although the figure is presented as Mary, mother of Jesus, her alignment with the mountain suggests that she is also Pachamama, an Andean deity whose name translates as “Earth Mother” or “Mother Mountain” and who connotes a vitality suffusing nature. This double identification mirrors the tense syncretism of colonial Andean culture.

To explore the painting's significance in relation to colonial geopower, I read *La Virgen del Cerro* alongside Carolyn Merchant's seminal ecofeminist genealogy of the “earth as woman” trope. By imagining the earth as a nurturing mother demanding respect, Merchant argues, premodern

cultures imposed ethical restraints on ecological exploitation. My analysis, however, stresses that there is nothing inherently limiting about imagining the earth as a woman. In fact, drawing on Miriam Tola's discussion of the painting, I emphasize how it ideologically buttresses resource extraction. By personifying the earth as both the Virgin (whose sacrifice of her son ensured humanity's redemption) and Pachamama (whose endlessly fertility nourishes humanity), La Virgen del Cerro constructs the earth as an inexhaustible maternal body, willingly providing—even sacrificing herself—for human betterment.

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**Dr. Simon Ferdinand** ([www.simonferdinand.com](http://www.simonferdinand.com)) is a Veni postdoctoral researcher in literary and cultural studies at the University of Amsterdam. His work explores the politics and poetics of spatial representation, particularly images of the whole earth. He is the author of *Mapping Beyond Measure: Art, Cartography, and the Space of Global Modernity* (2019) and co-editor of *Heterotopia and Globalisation in the Twenty-First Century* (2020, with Irina Souch & Daan Wesselman) and *Other Globes: Past and Peripheral Imaginations of Globalization* (2019, with Irene Villaescusa-Illán & Esther Peeren). Alongside his scholarship, he runs English Academic Editing ([www.eaediting.nl](http://www.eaediting.nl)).

# Talk/Intervention

## Mariku Wayward Aesthetics: Popular Theatre Performances from Curaçao and Queer Violence by Julian Isenia

According to Judith Butler, a cross-dresser can evoke joy and applause on the stage. In contrast, the same person sitting next to us on the bus can evoke fear, anger and even violence. However, can we also consider a gender non-conforming person on stage as a form of queer violence? In this sense, I understand violence as actions or words that aim to hurt people in the audience's perception. Through interviews with audience members and directors, and using the Super Cut video editing method and photographs of performances, I analyze the figure of the mariku in eight popular theatre performances from Curaçao in the 1990s and 2000s. The mariku can refer to an effeminate homosexual man, a trans\* woman or a cross-dresser in the Creole language of Curaçao, Papiamentu. First, I describe how theatre directors deploy the mariku as a clown, an outsider and something to make fun of. At the same time, I show how we can also recognize emerging acting subjectivities that challenge the general order in this character. I conclude by asking how laughter and humor at the expense of the mariku on stage can be simultaneously violent and liberating through their aesthetics. I argue that the mariku on stage express alternative and non-normative forms of longing and desire through their wayward lives, or refuse to accept the degrading conditions of life.

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Wigbertson Julian Isenia will be defending his PHD at ASCA at the end of June 2022. His project 'Queer Sovereignties' in collaboration with the University of Curaçao, centers on the concepts of gendered and sexual citizenship beyond their legal conceptualization in Curaçao and Bonaire through an analysis of cultural articulations and practices such as archival collections, literature, theatre and cultural performance. He co-curated the exhibition Nos tei (Papiamentu for we are here or we exist) at IHLIA LGBT Heritage in 2019. He co-edited the special issue Sexual Politics between the Netherlands and the Caribbean: Imperial entanglements and archival desires in Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies in 2019.

# Film Screenings



## ***The Revolution Will Not Be Air-Conditioned (2022)***

by Bo Wang | Video Installation | 27min | 2022

Filmmaker Bo Wang will screen a filmic intervention inspired by the social media comments that appeared in the midst of the 2019 Hong Kong anti-extradition protest, which originally references Black civil rights activist Gil Scott-Heron's iconic 1971 poem "*The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*". The images of clashes between protestors and police in Hong Kong have constituted the most sensational memories of global turmoils in the last phase of pre-Covid age, which occurred, peculiarly, often against the backdrop of air-conditioned shopping malls.

Taking this phenomenon as its point of departure, the work traces the architectural evolution of these retail complexes. Drawing from a range of historical references—including the Crystal Palace, built for the 1851 Great Exhibition in London; 19th-century terrarium prototypes used in the British Empire's botanical trade; and 20th-century corporate salesforce training videos—the work reflects on how the mall as a spatial form evolved from its colonial root of conquest, to a machine of consumerism and social control. Yet, *The Revolution Will Not Be Air-Conditioned* also pays close attention to how the intended outcomes of spatial design can be subverted, turning such insulated and sanitized spaces into a ground for political action and dissent.

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**Bo Wang** is an artist, filmmaker and researcher based in the Netherlands. His works have been exhibited internationally, including venues like Guggenheim Museum and Museum of Modern Art (New York), Garage Museum (Moscow), International Film Festival Rotterdam, Image Forum Festival (Tokyo), Visions du Réel (Nyon), Times Museum (Guangzhou), and Para Site (Hong Kong), among others. He received a fellowship from the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar in 2013, and was an artist-in-residency at ACC-Rijksakademie from 2017 to 2018 as well as at NTU CCA in 2016. He is currently a PhD candidate at Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam.

## **Cinematic Staging: Reflections on Film Across Geopolitical Borders** with Prof. Patricia Pisters, Dr. Eliza Steinbock, Dr. Sara Janssen, Dr. Tina Gharavi, and Bo Wang

This roundtable discussion will address the role of cinematic representations of gender, sexuality, and activism in their deployment across different contexts. By taking the screenings of Tina Gharavi's and Bo Wang's works as a point of departure, the participants will address how different films in and from different geopolitical locations can become tools for engagement and contestation of gender and sexual norms—from embodied sexuality to gender spaces, from passive/agentive gazing to revolt and activism.

**Patricia Pisters** is professor of film, media and culture at the Department of Media Studies of the University of Amsterdam. Her books include *The Matrix of Visual Culture* and *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Contemporary Screen Culture*. Her latest book *New Blood in Contemporary Cinema: Women Directors and the Poetics of Horror* came out in 2020. For articles, her blog, audio-visual material, including a series of found footage films on the seven alchemical metals, and other information see also [www.patriciapisters.com](http://www.patriciapisters.com)

**Dr. Domitilla (Domi) Olivieri** is an anthropologist, activist, researcher, and teacher in the field of gender studies, media and society. I am active in academic, artistic, and other political spaces and have been involved for many years in feminist, queer, anti-racist, anti-capitalist militant activism. I work as assistant professor at the department of Media and Culture Studies at Utrecht University. My research and didactics are in the field of feminist, queer, postcolonial and decolonial theory, documentary film, visual anthropology, media, and cultural studies. Committed to bridging the distance between academic and non-academic communities, I collaborate with festivals, community projects, NGOs, arts and activist groups. Example conversations with artistic practices include publication such as: *"On Resisting Paradise"* in the exhibition catalogue *Barbara Hammer: Evidentiary Bodies*, and *"Shattered images and desiring matter. A dialogue between Hito Steyerl and Domitilla Olivieri"* in *Carnal Aesthetics: Transgressive Imagery and Feminist Politics*.

## ***La Perdición* (2021)** by Domiziano Cristopharo

+ ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH DOMIZIANO CRISTOPHARO, DR. JAAP KOOIJMAN, AND DR. DIEGO SEMERENE / MODERATED BY ALVARO LOPEZ

As Linda Williams (1991) underscored over three decades ago, horror, pornography, and melodrama constitute in themselves a body of film genres capable of triggering in their audience bodily affective reactions that surpass the logics of other cinematic forms. The fear, pleasure, and pain provoked by these body genres make of them a site for the (uncomfortable) tackling and questioning of prevalent understandings of sex, violence, and emotion—they become a space for queering endeavors into our most intimate fears and desires. But what happens when the border between these body genres blur? How do they change when queer embodiment and practices take hold of their excessive affects? And, more importantly, what happens when these queer blurrings get caught between the politics of the correct and incorrect representation?

With the screening Domiziano Cristopharo's *La Perdición* (2021), and the following roundtable discussion between the filmmaker, Dr. Jaap Kooijman, and Dr. Diego Semerene, this ASCA-Workshop event will address the cinematic role of queer sexuality and violence in a context of politically correct mainstream representations. The conversation will address, among other topics, what constitutes the limits of the politically correct when it comes to sexuality and violence, queer reversals of expectations and mainstream cinematic logics, and the affective reactions that, from pleasure to fear and loath, constitute the queer potential of the politically (in)correct blended body genres.

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*La Perdición*—Mark is trapped in an unhappy love story with his partner. After a new episode that certifies the distance between the two, the young man meets Robert, a mature stranger who immediately seems to reciprocate his interest. This casual encounter soon develops into a night on a boat in which Mark will explore and experience his own sexual limits and desires. However, what firstly appears as an opportunity for Mark to release his frustrations will soon prove to be the beginning of something much darker and violent...

**Diego Semerene** is an Assistant Professor of Queer and Transgender Media and Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam. Semerene is co-organizer of ASCA's Queer Analysis research group alongside Prof. Misha Kavka, and associated with the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research (CFAR), in London. Most recent publications include "*Creampied to Death: Ejaculative Kinship in the Age of Normative Data Flows*" for the journal *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* (2021) and "*Tailoring the Impenetrable Body All Over Again: Digitality, Muscle, and the Men's Suit*" for *The Routledge Companion to Fashion Studies* (2021). Pronouns: anything but he/him.

**Jaap Kooijman** (he/him) is associate professor Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam and vice director of ASCA. He is the author of *Fabricating the Absolute Fake: America in Contemporary Pop Culture*, and co-editor, with Glyn Davis, of *The Richard Dyer Reader*, soon to be published by BFI. His audiovisual essays have been published in [in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies, NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies, and 16:9.

Please, note *La Perdición* (2021) contains explicit depictions of violence, sex, and sexual assault.

A vertical rectangular area with a bright yellow background and a subtle, grainy texture, resembling torn paper or a textured surface. It is positioned in the upper half of the page, behind the main text.

# **Performances & Workshops**

## Re-visiting *Autopsy* (2019) by Saman Arastoo + Reflections (Shekoufeh Behbehani and Alvaro Lopez)

On November 29th and December 3rd in 2021, Alvaro Lopez and Shekoufeh Behbehani co-organized an event, titled: *Autopsy: Gender and Sexuality On Stage*. This two day event, which started with a Screening of *Autopsy* (2019) + Q&A, followed by a roundtable discussion with Dr.Sruti Bala, Dino Suhonic, and Nisrine Chaer. Our aim was to create a space for reflection and knowledge exchange on trans and queer activism through theatre and dramatherapy in the context of Iran and the Netherlands. The pressing need for such a space was the original idea that sparked the ASCA Workshop 2022. Through this second screening of *Autopsy* (2019), we would like to revisit Saman Arastoo's theatrical practice, which prompted us to ask most of the questions we aim to address during the ASCA Workshop 2022.

Performer and director Saman Arastoo founded the theater group, *Avaye Divanegan*, *The Song of the Crazed* in 1983. His theater and experimental films, marked by their sharp social and political criticism, especially concerning non-normative gender and sexuality, are shaped by both his personal and professional experiences as a trans man in Iran. Arastoo's work can be perceived as critical precisely towards the nexus of performance and violence that is embedded within Iranian society. The group's performances are indeed inspired by Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, and Jerzy Grotowski, especially with respect to features such as the lack of the fourth wall, improvisation, and the minimal use of props. Yet, in spite of these overlapping characteristics, the group creates a theatre form of its own. In Arastoo's theater, violence underlies both the continuity and the disruption of the performance. Embedded in this dual and contradictory role of violence is a critique of (Iranian) socio-political policing of gender and sexuality.

Arastoo's latest play, *Autopsy* (2019) is a script-less play, mostly featuring amateur queer actors, who have participated in Arastoo's 'self-cognition' workshops. *Autopsy* revolves around stories of couples in queer relationships, including the director, Arastoo himself and his partner, Nadia Bavand, an actor and member of *Avaye Divanegan*.

**Please, note *Autopsy* (2019) has moments of explicit physical violence.**

**The Body, Performance, and Violence on the Theatrical Stage** with Prof. Kati Röttger, Dr. Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra, Dr. Lekan Balogun, Mori Plaschinski

José Esteban Muñoz' notion of disidentification addresses forms of staging and performing that cannot be reduced to understandings of oppression and resistance. Through the appropriation of contrasting cultures or opposing symbolic orders, the strategy of disidentification allows to move beyond simplistic dichotomies, which often fail to address the multiplicity of gender, sexuality, and violence. How does this transcendence of the oppression/resistance dichotomy materializes on stage? How to address the multiplicity of gender, sexuality, and violence within a specific context? How to (re)present the entanglements between the political and the personal? Which is the role of the body in these processes?

By taking cultural objects and performative practices as a starting point, this roundtable discussion aims at opening a critical reflection regarding the role of the stage across geopolitical borders, as well as its multiplicity of bodily, political and social implications.

Since March 2007, Prof. Kati Röttger is professor and chair of the Institute of Theatre Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She had completed her doctoral studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, in 1992, on Collective Creation in the New Colombian Theatre, after having spent two years in Colombia for fieldwork. Since then, she has been engaged in the mediation of cultural and academic exchange between performance artists and academics of Latin America and Europe. Between 1995 and 1998 she was postdoc at the Graduiertenkolleg "*Gender-Difference and Literature*" at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Germany), followed by an appointment at the Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz (Germany) as Assistant Professor until 2005. Here, she completed her Habilitation on *Fremdheit und Spektakel. Theater als Medium des Sehens*. Her research activities are currently affiliated to the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis. She is co-founder of the Master of Arts of International Performance

Research that was running in close cooperation with the Universities of Warwick, Helsinki and Belgrade 2008-2013. In 2015 she established the Dual Master International Dramaturgy at the UvA. Since 2021 she is functioning as chair of the department Arts and Culture Studies. Her actual research topics are Technologies of Spectacle (in the 19th century), Image Cultures, and International Dramaturgy with a special focus on concepts of the tragic. She has published extensively on a broad range of topics such like gender, postcolonial critique, and intermediality in the field of Theatre and Performance Studies.

## **Physical Theatre Laboratory: Re-Authoring the Body on Stage** a workshop by Mori Plaschinski

The most recent developments in political and activist theatre have started to question the simplistic oppositions between oppression and resistance that are often portrayed on the stage. Often, the stories presented in forum theatre, physical devised plays, and other socio-political theatre practices; stage individualized problems without presenting the structural dimensions of our societies. This leads to narratives that fall into the victim-oppressor dichotomy, and fail to portray the larger multi-storied scope of conflict.

In this sense, there are some stories that have had more presence than others in society and history, becoming dominant stories, while others have been subjugated or erased. This has real effects in the shaping of life, identity and societies. This erasure and invisibilization has especially impacted the representations of stories around sexuality and gender.

How to stage the multi-storicity of gender, sexuality, violence and conflict? Which is the role of the body in these processes?

Through games, physical theatre techniques and devising exercises; this workshop seeks to explore different approaches to theatre and dramaturgy that question the ways in which we stage narratives around gender and sexuality, testing and practicing possible ways to move beyond the single story.

*(See Mori's bio on page 34)*

