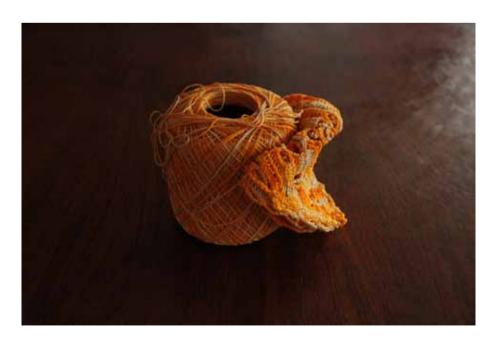






Composed from shards of time, perceptions and speculations, this essay looks back on the processes of the *Ally* collaboration. I am a participant-observer, a researcher, an interlocutor, a curator, a dramaturge, an archivist and creative respondent in different passages of these processes. As an intermediary, then, I can only speak hesitantly from the middle of things. I cannot be the artists' voice. I attempt to write closely, beside the emergent qualities of the artworks. The words that have fallen and have been wrestled onto this page slide out of these distinct practices into a weave. I travel with the process and take in the local air. If it is not caught, can gossamer at least be carried?

Late-April, 2015, Brooklyn, New York. Janine Antoni gives me a loan: an object for contemplation and discussion. I will spend some time with it. Perhaps it will unlock new insights into the ongoing Ally collaboration with which I have become critically embroiled. The object is a multicolored wool yarn on a spool, pinned to a small sample of crochet work. It feels long kept. Antoni tells me that the varn belonged to her grandmother Maria Rosario De Medina: a woman whose interest in craft was matched by her ability to fabricate spellbinding spoken tales. The young Antoni had given the varn to her ailing grandmother, but had later found the attached unfinished crochet work beside the matriarch's deathbed. Compelled to save the thing as a memento, the adult Antoni became aware of its singular force as a "sculptural object." Its incompletion, its carriage of a certain interruption seemed to speak powerfully to Antoni's aesthetics, often concerned with presenting traces of charged actions in everyday materials. Her dilemma: should she exhibit the spool and crochet as a found work, or transform it into another object of her own making? Antoni had kept the thing for some time, wanting to answer its call, but was unable to resolve the conundrum of how to work with it. What would art add to (or subtract from) its force, and was it not already a resonant and complete aesthetic thing? How to draw on the potentials of a lost relation? How to re-weave the singularities of Maria Rosario De Medina and her unfinished labor into a meaningful work in the present?



Granny Maina's yarn. Photo: Holli McEntegart. © Janine Antoni. Courtesy of the artist.

I had heard of De Medina before: as Granny Maina. Antoni had recalled two of her stories in a small catalogue marking the showing of Loving Care (1993) and Butterfly Kisses (1993) at the Wadsworth Atheneum. Each is a work on feminine caress, bodily extremities and arduous labor, Both stories involved Maina in compulsive acts of hair cutting (her own and her husband's while he slept) as assertions of her desires in disputes of love.² And so I was aware of the symbolism of the cutting of threads for Antoni: a sign of male power, or in Granny Maina's case, its contestation. By using the hair on her head (Loving Care) or the blink of her eyelashes (Butterfly Kisses) to create action paintings, Antoni continued Maina's audacity in relation to restrictive convention, but found a space of somatic expression that exceeded her subjection. Likewise the unbroken woven threads, fabrics and ropes that recur throughout Antoni's oeuvre are symbols and valuations of female autonomy, power and labor. So, what to do with Granny Maina's unfinished yarn? An interruption of a braided line is not quite the same as a cut, which is absolute and irreversible. Maina's death was a cut, but her yarn promised a matrilineal continuation of spirited actions. Interruptions simply invite recommencement, restoration or diversion. Where might Antoni take the line that connects her grandmother's desire to her own, and what might this course say about the changed relations between female desire and labor, or the labors of love?

The fate of Granny Maina's varn intrigued me because, holding it, I was aware that it intensified something characteristic of all human subject-object relations. I felt it before I knew the provenance of the object. Its thingness reminded me of what Peter Schwenger has called "the tears of things": a melancholy aspect that underlies relations between lasting material objects and people.³ Things evoke a sense of loss because, while they remain inseparable from our perception of them, they also disclose that they are ultimately inaccessible, fundamentally distant and unpossessable. Their indifference reminds us that they will outlive us. These qualities of objects have long been discussed in key philosophical and psychoanalytical writings, and more recently in the profusion of theories within object studies, new materialism and speculative realism. But what interests me here in relation to the entwining of Antoni's practices with those of Anna Halprin and Stephen Petronio in Ally are certain qualities of thingness that persist through Antoni's work and become vectors of affinity within these current collaborations and makings. I understand thingness as an affective quality of matter that perturbs definition and naming. Some associate thingness with an object's dysfunction, others with its instability, ambiguity, uncanny animation or vitality.⁵ My tendency is to see the thingly as a rupture of objecthood that discloses an anterior amorphous state within the physical world: an emergence of formlessness in form.

Many years before the realization of *Ally*, curators had requested that Antoni consider a retrospective of her body of sculptures and photographs. But she was wary of this exhibition genre whose function is to trace an individual artist's trajectory from the past into the present, accumulating weighted understandings and new perspectives through the act of overviewing an oeuvre. She distrusted its self-consolidations, internal coherence, its narrative and teleological tendencies. Moreover, she was preoccupied with surfacing a dimension of her previous labor: its resource of somatic practices, and its subtle deployment of gesture and choreographic arrangements. Antoni decided that instead of retrospecting she would rather regenerate or transform her existing works, pass them through the bodies or visions of others. In this way, the identitarian, historiographical and scopic traditions of retrospection would be put in question. The past would not be closed, but used as a forge for new works, cast into unknown futures. She began to seek out dance collaborators and took a workshop with the preeminent choreographer, theater maker and community activist Anna Halprin. An elder of American

postmodern dance working since the early 1940s, Halprin is known for her radical experimentation with theatrical form, the use of improvisation in transdisciplinary works, and the melding of actional or task-based activities with choreographic and dramatic materials. Working for much of her career on an elevated outdoor dance deck in a forest in Marin County built by her life-partner landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, her work championed the abandonment of performance enclosures for site-specific movement interventions in city streets and the countryside. With Lawrence Halprin she developed radical redeterminations of the practice of scoring within artistic creation. Her early work in community oriented processes, often concerned with racism and the politics of sexuality and health, in later years has turned toward pedagogic initiatives, large scale public rituals, and practices of conciliation, attunement and acceptance in relation to social division, ecology and mortality.

Though she had been aware of Halprin's oeuvre for over twenty years, their first physical encounter was in Antoni's late-forties when Halprin was already in her nineties. Antoni's subsequent envelopment in Halprin's practice and ethos has formed a vital axis of Ally. When I asked Antoni what motivated this new phase of her work she replied, "One question: how can we meet each other in the past?" This aspiration to cross over into other histories and forms of expression was also an impetus in Antoni's collaborations with the pioneering New York-based choreographer Stephen Petronio. She was invited to create scenography for his dance work Like Lazarus Did (2013), a choreographic assemblage on sacrifice and transformation. In this piece Antoni inserted a sculptural constellation and her body, prone and suspended, into the theatre architecture. Challenging the proscenium division and its spectatorial regime, she described this work as a meditation and a "living set." The radical polarities of Petronio and Antoni's sensibilities were much in evidence. Petronio's choreography is built from frenetic energy. His early collaborations with Michael Clark were marked by the sliding postures of a punk classicism. However, his individual choreographic language was already composed of rapid propulsions and postural stops, where bodies weave around and over each other and limbs scissor and slice in rotations and immediate counter-pulsions. In Like Lazarus Did the acceleration and dense formality of this movement contrasts with Antoni's investment in simple corporeal presence and stillness. But a shared ground emerged in their testing of physiological limits and their investment in the intense and excessive forces of the passions. For Petronio the next boundary to cross was to step outside of the theater and into a visual arts terrain through further collaborations. Shedding his choreographic language in order to make this journey in Ally, Petronio would also need to return to some older coordinates of his aesthetic development. As a pupil of Steve Paxton, and as a Trisha Brown dancer, he was schooled in the techniques of dance improvisation. In working collaboratively with Halprin, he would engage with a teacher of his teachers and with an ethos, language and environment, which is a root of much contemporary dance experimentation. Antoni had set a complex alliance in motion.

Late-November, 2014, Marin County, California. Antoni, Petronio and I are down on the Kentfield deck. For Petronio and I it is the first time that we have worked in this historic space, and its charms are immediately evident. As we sweep leaves from the boards on to the forest floor, we both speculate on the bodies that have moved through this space, and the acts that have been witnessed here in the sixty years that have passed since its completion. Places remember. Every action, however mundane, feels carried by this virtual accompaniment. A light breeze plays through the surrounding trees and the faint drone of a far-off plane fringes our conversation for a time. Wooded quiet. The space is a secluded opening, a clearing and a private window that lets all manner of others in. In the photographs I had seen of the early days of the deck, three Madrone trees pierced its surface, creating

the sense that the architectural plane had found space within the forest, worked around its existent structures. Such accommodations were part of environmental architect Lawrence Halprin's ethos, where responsiveness to natural forms was prized and human imposition eschewed. Those trees have now gone and the plane is uninterrupted, though no less accommodating of its living companions. Natural growth has also curtained its back line, partially obscuring the vista beyond Mount Tamalpais across the San Francisco Bay. The forest and the deck are still learning to be with each other in their own durations. For Halprin and his collaborator on the project, the theater architect and designer Arch Lauterer, architectural form was a negotiation with shifting environmental facts and, one might add, a conciliation between potential antagonisms. One such clash, as Janice Ross makes clear in her comprehensive book on Anna Halprin, was the insistent social conflict for women at the time, between mothering and working. For the Halprins, the institution of the deck was a means to sidestep a normative cut between life and art that would have traditionally accompanied Anna Halprin's raising of a family. As Lawrence Halprin put it, his intervention on the land was a means "to enrich the living environment of my family," a phrasing that assumes an ecological understanding of family itself. His family is his environment.

Sitting here, watching bodies warm up and be with the elements, it is clear there is something natal about the deck. Perhaps it arises from the deck's infrastructural demand for the co-existence of entities, for symbiosis. As theater architecture all four of its walls are "transparent" (not just "the fourth wall") and so the strict boundary between on and off, micro- and macro-world, one and another, becomes highly porous. The horizontal plane must be with the mountain's fall, and bodies must be with trees and sky. The trapezoid of the main space is extended to the back and left by slightly elevated "wings" giving the plane an irregular many-sided shape suggesting the possibility of multiple places from which to look, the re-orientation of the gaze. Lawrence Halprin, thinking beside Anna Halprin's practice, understood the deck as a non-object that was becoming landscape: it moved around. But it was Anna Halprin who most acutely identified a relational dimension of this architectural intervention that, unbeknownst to her, was to become definitional of the art and performance of the era:

Since there is ever changing form and texture and light around you, a certain drive develops toward constant experimentation and change in dance itself. There develops a certain sense of exchange between oneself and one's environment and movement develops which must be organic or it seems false. Movement within a moving space, I have found, is different than movement within a static cube.¹¹

In a language marked by emergence, Halprin notes that the environmental opening of the deck is simultaneously an opening of the performing body and of performance aesthetics to the complex restlessness of nature itself. An imperative, a kinetic demand, is transmitted in this meeting: to move with the outside in conditions of continuous differentiation. An experimental ethos and the practice of improvisation are inherently linked to a recognition of, and attunement to, the kinetic and autopoetic dimensions of nature. As Halprin comes to take her place beside me on the bleachers, to sit where she has sat for over sixty years watching people perform, it is clear to me that she too is part of the environmental architecture. What if these ghostings of bodies, acts and lives long past, were not counter-posed with the material here and now, but seen as constitutive of them? Spirited matter thus becomes a principle of ecological relations. What if these present natal relations between the immaterial and the substantive, between the organic and the inorganic, were understood as vital infrastructures of art making?



Anna Halprin (left) and Lawrence Halprin (center) on the dance deck, Kentfield, California, 1966. © Lawrence Halprin Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

Five or six days later, November 2014, on the Kentfield deck. Halprin is creating a choreographic experiment with Antoni and Petronio. Her scenario: white ropes are laid somewhat randomly across the boards. They act as an instantaneous scoring device, marking out trajectories in space along which Antoni and then Petronio will move blindfolded. Traversing the rope seems at once ridiculous and impossible. The tightrope act figuration looks redundant since the line is grounded, but the rope's ridging against the floor makes it hard to stay on. Performers move in a constant state of disequilibrium and vulnerability: walking a line becomes a continuous navigation of falling. The ground is ungrounded. Halprin's simple scenario prompts a delicate, found choreography. It is full of narrative tension and potential: two bodies are traveling a course without sight or knowledge of each other. How and when will they meet? The blindfold is an impediment that re-orients the senses, forcing hearing and touch to the foreground and sensualizing movement by alerting the whole skin, attuning it to its environmental outside. This phenomenal reality constantly interferes with the firm symbolism of the blindfold, which marks the subject's incapacity to see, orient, know, judge, to be "fully present" to the other. Halprin has used the rope as a tool to create equivalence between Antoni and Petronio. Both are dance improvisers but Petronio's habituated movement language trusts in formalization and is strongly centered in its torques and swoons, while Antoni's movement tends toward a freestyle viscerality and actional realism. On the rope both stylizations fall away: much of the movement here is found in the attempt to stay upright and on course, to steady and locate oneself, or in the recovery from having slipped or lost your way. In this space of largely involuntary, gravitational movement a different gestural quality is found infused with hesitancy and receptivity. Walking as suspended falling is strangely doubled here on the Halprin deck, where all acts take place in a ground above ground, an architectural suspension between earth and sky. The more the performers practice of course, the more they re-attune to this altered condition of movement, discovering its inner stabilities and possibilities.

An axial moment in the evolving dramaturgy arises when Antoni and Petronio meet: the sensuous "blind" encounter is filled with a tender estrangement. Solitary wanderings re-route into the complex task of traveling together with divergent senses and impulses. Petronio finds ways to burrow his head into Antoni's body, turning their enfolding into precarious lifts. Odd limbs flail out of a fused body. Halprin morphs the performance from this point on: it is conducted without blindfolds, and tumbles into passages of extended play where the ropes are taken up and the performers dance while entangled in multiple lines. The two figures are quickly bound together. Power over and influence upon the other — previously implicit — becomes an active subject. As a performer it is evidently hard to judge the consequences of your actions or movements, which create restraints and dynamics at a distance, at the other ends of ropes. The medium of the rope — a symbolic line of affinity and control — is a material for resistance. Active and passive identifications are in flux. But the performance takes on a formal quality derived from the many lines of rope, an angular graphing of theatrical space. For Halprin, scenography and the kinesthetic meet in this experiment and dancing becomes live choreographing, a way to draw in space. The lines do not literalize energetic connection, but they are fluid vectors, abstractions of inter-subjective dynamisms. Toward the close of this performance, Halprin invites others who have previously only spectated to join in the entanglement, socializing, multiplying and making ever more complex the kinesthetic experiment.

November 22, 2015: the home of Antoni's parents, New York. After discovering the cleansing practice of Vastra Dhauti, one of the six Shatkarmas of Hatha Yoga, Antoni and Petronio took advice and training from Yogi Charu. This physiologically difficult technique involves the swallowing and removal of a long ribbon of cloth. Antoni and Petronio have conceived a performance that will see this usually solitary therapeutic practice transformed into an act of visceral communion between them. They have mostly developed their swallowing in isolation, but today they will perform together — once only — consuming either end of a cloth woven for the occasion by Nami Yamamoto at The Fabric Workshop and Museum. Having swallowed their way along its path, their materially connected bodies will briefly meet and then part. The cloth with its residues of interiors will be retained. The performance is taking place in the privacy of Antoni's family home and a small number of witnesses have been invited from specific walks of life, whose testimonies I will immediately elicit and record. A photographer is one of the witnesses and she will take a single still image of the act, which will form its documentation, alongside the cloth and spoken reports. I will not see the performance in keeping with the concepts of its exposure, which deliberately mirror the limited public conditions and iconic distribution of many downtown loft performances in the late 1950s and 60s. I will be displaced from my now habitual role as participant observer, into a situation more like that of an historian, posed in the exteriority of the aftermath, sifting through multiple versions to read and narrate the event. My absence from the performance creates a confessional and testimonial drive in each relation to a witness: they are eager to say what they saw. I am eager to hear.

Listening to the array of perspectives, it is immediately evident that this short, simple, private act is a scene of contesting visions and experiences, a prodigious narrative generator whose reality will always be in question. Witness is an apt term for the spectators here, since the event remains an "unclaimed experience" in its retelling. ¹² The act returns through language in a condition of unknowable excess. Versions proliferate and while they share a ground of agreement in action, the readings of meanings, consequences, motivating psychology, affective tonalities and material



Swallowing cloth. Photo: Carlos Avendaño, 2016. © Janine Antoni and Stephen Petronio. Courtesy of the artists and FWM.

content often diverge. The telling of the event becomes a scene of projections and of other rich subjective disclosures but also a means for the witnesses to question the nature of their own seeing. Phenomenological detail is clearly consuming and seemingly infinite in these narrations; the flesh of each witness has been enfolded into the performers' entwining. Observation turns granular. A genuine accident within the live performance — the smashing of an opaque glass of water — ricochets through the retellings: within every event there is some other purer event, more vibrant and more real and more urgently told. These micro-events — elevated in perception — seem to suggest that the act of communal swallowing itself was securitized by its occurrence as a privately received ritual. Home sanctions such risks. Rhythm and tempo are recurrent witness' concerns, and the description of the performers' parting seems over too quickly for many. The freight of this separation — for some too much to countenance — is sadness at the withdrawal from a state of interconnectedness and visceral proximity, which has quickly accrued idealization. The affinity between Antoni and Petronio troubles articulation, and cannot be mapped onto familiar dyads of romantic investment or artistic collaboration. In each telling there is always a punctum, a small observed detail that becomes a conduit for a stream of realizations. I ask each witness what they will remember of the act, and here in the very process of the archival capture of that memory lives the most hesitation, doubt and ingenuity of response. In conceiving the act as destined to disappear, the artists have also given it potential, animated its afterlives through a social discourse whose plurality will drive its continued retelling.

One late afternoon in the last week of November 2015, Antoni performs *Paper Dance* for Halprin on the dance deck. It is a year since our last weeklong visit to Kentfield, and over three years since Antoni began to carefully entangle her work with Halprin's. Although she improvises the performance on each occasion, Antoni has accumulated a repertoire of gestural images and sculptural possibilities from her earlier labors with the paper. Physical fragments will be played out, differentiating themselves in the unfolding of the event. Before dusk falls, Hugo Glendinning will shoot the first full video recording of the work, stabilizing it in time in wholly other ways. Since our last visit, Antoni's *Paper Dance* has grown in length and detail through numerous discussions and re-workings. A flexible dramaturgy is emerging where specific image-events are sequenced in relation to the developing state

of the paper around which Antoni's actions are focused. From Halprin's gift of an open score, Antoni is now making an hour-long solo work that substantially departs from the communal use of paper in *Parades and Changes* (1965). We are working in an echo chamber, a site of inaugural rituals, and as Antoni begins the performance, it is impossible not to think of the specific bodies (past and now present) that have performed in this clearing, with this material, under Halprin's vigilant gaze for over fifty years.

In the "original" scene a mixed group of performers slowly peeled off their clothes before laying out numerous large sheets of brown paper.¹³ Quietly lifting, touching, tearing and enfolding themselves into the material, they formed an animate, rustling, skinny, cloud-like assemblage. The sensuousness of Antoni's Paper Dance is not as deliberative as that of the first performers who collectively produced a delicate and reverential affective field. Her solo action does not focus on slow time ripping and listening, but on a driven and sustained manipulation of the material that shapes and exhausts its sculptural potential. The performance begins with Antoni using the paper roll as a "telescope" to spy the environment and its spectators: doubling the scopic frame, letting us know that we are looking at intensified looking. Moving through serial acts in which the paper is unrolled, stressed, scrunched, wrapped, unfolded and remolded, Antoni uses all of her body to play with the plasticity of this material and the potential relations between paper and flesh. She is habituated with the paper and the performance has the air of a public intimacy. Antoni creates a series of gestural-sculptural assemblages of body-paper forms that momentarily hold space as propositions and are visibly thought through by their maker. This is an actional-choreographic test in an experimental laboratory; a questioning of material forms. The paper appears as a second skin, wrapping around and sometimes extending Antoni's body in planes and folds that interrogate the dialogic relation between the two "skins." The theater of material affects found in Parades and Changes is here turned into a singular test of bodymatter relations.

In contrast with the ceremonial undressing of *Parades and Changes*, Antoni's shedding of clothes takes place gradually and often under cover of the paper, without ever seeming deliberately hidden, so that it is barely noted as a subject, or it is noticed only after it happens. Nonetheless we understand that what is taking place is an exposure, a bringing into visibility of things unseen, a play of veils and disclosing surfaces. The baring of Antoni's skin is unforced and de-eroticized; the labor of image making, the transformation of gestures and materials are the main energetic preoccupation. To be bare here seems simply a question of entering affective conditions of equality through which flesh and paper can speak. The dialogue between surfaces, if not mutual, certainly sees the paper displaying "actant" qualities. Its unwieldy scale makes it somewhat uncontrollable: it evidently resists manipulation. The paper's absorption and release of energies as it contracts from pressures and autonomously expands when let go, its occasional animation by the breeze playing across the deck lend it animate qualities. Moreover, every shape the paper finds itself in arises responsively from its previous formings, asking "questions" of the body that makes it.

If Antoni's *Paper Dance* were understood as re-do, then it would already be a radical re-interpretation of its "source," in which faithfulness to the past is not a matter of appearance but of spirit. But the past and its retrospection return to the piece in other unexpected ways. On seeing an earlier version of the work, Chris Sollars, a friend of Antoni, asked her if she was deliberately reiterating figurations from her previous sculptures. Sifting through photographs of this nascent version Antoni was surprised to see that she had been unconsciously performing many postures that were the gestural basis of earlier "static" works. Unconscious production disclosed somatic realities that were then knowingly put to work. This iteration of figurations became a conscious modality and means of creative investigation within the performance. In previous "static" works Antoni had used an object's









Janine Antoni rehearsing *Paper Dance* in collaboration with Anna Halprin, 2015. Photo: © Hugo Glendinning, 2015. Courtesy of the artists.

formal relation to a resounding event to question its nature and status. In works such as Behold (2014), Umbilical (2000), Cradle (1999), Slumber (1993), Lick and Lather (1993) and Eureka (1993), object indeterminacy arises from an unresolved relation to a time of action; is the object a tool or prop for future use, a trace impression, document or relic of a past activity or event, or perhaps simply its waste residue? In Paper Dance a similar uncertainty is deployed, but realized in the live witnessed relation between Antoni's flesh and the paper thing. The performance moves through a sequence of relations in which the paper's function is itself morphing: from prosthetic to tool, from abstract sculpture to mimetic body-mold, from costume to scenography, from personified object to discarded matter. In the process, Antoni's psychic relations with, and power over, the thing are experienced in states of flux. She is apparently compelled to be with and shape the paper, though her relation with it oscillates between intimacy and distance, scopic evaluation and immersion, care and disregard, affection and violence. In *Paper Dance* the volatile morphology of the performer-thing is both phenomenologically and psychologically charged. But the psyche-soma relation to objects is rather distinct from its formations in Antoni's previous sculpture and performance works. It takes place here — in the space of Halprin's dance deck — through a consciously entwined female genealogy and within environmental conditions that inform and complicate its meanings.

Antoni became renowned for sculptures and actions in a feminist lineage that enacted critiques of patriarchal orders of representation as they were manifested in Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism and realist portraiture. In major works such as *Gnaw* (1992), *Loving Care* (1993) and *Lick and Lather* (1993), she pursued formal dialogues with masculine constructions that humorously marked gender difference through laborious acts of subjection and carnal engagement with mundane materials. These works have been distinguished from those of her 1970s predecessors in this lineage — Carolee Schneemann, Ana Mendieta, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Hannah Wilke — as more paradoxical in their treatment of ideals of female emancipation, embedded in the intimate realities of female subjectivity, and committed to exploring the psychological ramifications of complicity with power through irony and self-disidentification. ¹⁴ If Antoni's early works were dialogically oriented toward male visual power and negotiated spaces of difference in relation with its formal coordinates, her work here with Halprin immerses her in the flows of a female genealogy, in which the labor of dialogue and differentiation

is intensely sustained and collaborative. The matrilineal concerns of works such as *Momme* (1995), *Umbilical* (2000), *If I Die Before I Wake* (2004) and *One Another* (2008) involving Antoni's mother and daughter and testing the nature of fleshly connection have jumped "outside" of her biological family scene, and into a broader feminist artistic sphere. The relational works of *Ally* allow Antoni to explicitly mine what had long been implicit in her use of touch and visceral engagements: sensual relation as a scene of paradoxical *choreographic* forces. Antoni's quest in *Paper Dance* is an evolving improvisational choreography of relations between the female body and sculptural material, navigated through the entwining of her histories and visual languages with those of a living female predecessor.

The sun is fading behind the deck and the darkness that accompanies the surrounding trees creeps into the scene. Antoni separates herself once more from the remnants of the paper she has been sculpting and sits at the side of the deck, looking on from afar. She reinserts herself as a fetal skinstone amidst an array of globular paper deposits: one small further becoming and counterpoint in the tireless movement of the performance between abstract forms and figurations. Relaying the surfaces of skin and paper, involuting, entwining and enfolding them, Antoni becomes the impetus and carriage of radical indeterminations: between a subject and an object, between a living body and inorganic material, between a monadic and dispersed entity. In its thought-filled spacings, its slow-morphologies of lingering actions, its waiting for decision in relation, the performance refuses the stubborn descent of action into meaning, body into identity, material into objecthood. These indeterminations vibrate with environmental co-actants: every human action-event on this deck is qualified by its being in an architectural suspension between earth and sky, its sounding within the sonosphere of plant and animal life, its opening to the contingencies of weather. Anthropomorphism is tested and discarded. Non-human forces abound. The paper is experienced as insubstantial substance — held by airs with prodigious capacities of formation. The sustenance of forms, their remaining here in moments of articulation and resonance, is shown as dependent upon the life of these material aerations. Antoni makes herself otherwise: pressing her flesh into multiple extensions and ecstatic creations, implicit and explicit births of things. 15 She oscillates between connection with, and separation from, her makings. Her performance constantly attunes to immaterial movements — opens itself to their ever-present happenings. It becomes apparent that without this connective and unceasing fabric of existence, no





Janine Antoni rehearsing *Paper Dance* in collaboration with Anna Halprin, 2015. Photo: © Hugo Glendinning, 2015. Courtesy of the artists.

form would form. At stake here is a radical ecological aesthetic of indeterminate entities, where body and material re-enfold to invent new forms of expressive life. The struggle with the matter of things is a making of fresh capacities of relation with materials, a testing of their givenness and its limits, but also an attempt to become more than one with things. In this regard Antoni proceeds in a long line of feminist artists whose goal is self-actualization through differentiation. *Paper Dance* can also be read as an experimental practice of freedom, where freedom is not a property of a subject but an unfolding encounter in the making.¹⁶

January 2016, Sydney, Australia: writing alone, from afar. What is being surfaced and furthered in Antoni and Halprin's relation is a feminist genealogy of art making, enacted through a transgenerational cross-form dialogue. But the nature of this genealogy's emergence in particular ecological conditions and its engagement with materials makes me want to rethink its cultural and historical force. Such a genealogy is composed of the entwined discursive filaments of artists and their works. Affinity here is not just "influence," not a simple identification between present subjects: when thought historically and materially it folds absent figures and immaterial forces into itself. None of the persons or articulations in such genealogies is an originary or unitary influence; rather they are carriers of investments, intensities and expressions. These spirited affinities, of which the Antoni-Halprin relation is just one intensification, cross historical epochs, distinct cultures and belief systems, and come in and out of critical currency and visibility at different times. Nonetheless, they act as sustaining forces in the fostering of new lives and work. What I am calling spirited affinity is not necessarily passing through institutional validation, systems of knowledge or even conscious recognition on the part of participants, though it may have contact with these powers. Above all, it is not a correspondence of likeness, but a kind of empathy across and within different and differentiating situations that generates a habitat of making. In this regard a genealogy of spirited affinity might be thought as constituted by a trans-historical (or in the Antoni-Halprin case a trans-generational) "ecology of practices," to use a term coined by Isabelle Stengers.¹⁷ These are shared habitats of thinking-doing-feeling that foster and challenge their participants, creating new techniques of making. An ecology of practices is an open set

of mobile relations between heterogeneous ways of doing: a manifestation of belonging and communion in divergence that respects the singularity of its inhabitant practices. Interconnectedness, in this context, while attendant to social obligation, is not oriented toward or founded on identities, but is forged through what participants or things may become. In this regard Stengers describes a different ecological relation between subjects and knowledge-making; as in ritual, she says, "it is no longer I, as a subject, as meant to belong to nobody but myself, who thinks and feels." Consequently, such ecologies are hosts of critical social self-transformation: "a decision without a decision-maker ... is making the maker." 19

To think these spirited affinities as infrastructural to art and performance making involves a divestment of habitual ways of conceiving infrastructure within the arts. Infrastructure is traditionally thought of as constructed, substantive and instrumental, hence its common understanding as architecture and technology. Notions of social and cultural infrastructure, of the support apparatuses of life and of creativity, have formed through rigid distinctions between culture and nature, between the immaterial and the material. Infrastructure has been seen as furthering human power over things, as an exploitation and forging of natural resources, and as a necessary but somehow neutral foundation or cultivated ground for activity. Matter here is inert, stable, and passive, it is put to work, worked on in order to make things happen. Social and cultural activities — embodied practices — though just as material, are rarely seen as infrastructural in and of themselves. But as with Lawrence Halprin's ecological thought of environmental architecture, and with the practical life of the deck he created, there is another, symbiotic way to think the infrastructural. Like Lawrence's deck, this thinking ungrounds its grounds, animates its stolidity and immaterializes it — not a dematerialization, but an expansion of the terms of its mattering. What if every substantive structure or technology is inseparable from its enmeshment within fleeting or sustained living practices, mobile enfleshings that define and shape its social and aesthetic force? The infrastructural, then, becomes complex living relations between social activity and other material structures and technologies. Such an infrastructure is an agency in and of itself, always in flux (however invisible), always self-generative, and connected to other active material forces and agencies that it channels, resists and transforms.

An infrastructure of spirited affinity is close to what urbanist and ethnographer AbdouMaliq Simone terms "relational infrastructure," though perhaps somewhat more ghosted through its historical and communal dimensions. A relational infrastructure is constituted through practices of inhabitation, exchange and attention that model material engagements for others and foster new ways of being.²⁰ For Simone, "They are vehicles of movement and becoming, ways of mediating the constantly oscillating intersections of various times, spaces, economies, constraints and possibilities,"21 Writing from within the precarious realities of several postcolonial urban contexts in the global South, Simone identifies these infrastructures of relationality, these makings of worlds, in active resistance to the operations of global capital and its governance and regulation of urban space. As such, relational infrastructures are oriented not just toward survival, but also to living well: "the circumvention of domination and the keeping open of many different trajectories of what life could be all at once."22 For these reasons some relational infrastructures must remain deliberately illegible and invisible, in order to prevent their suppression or assimilation, to sustain their minoritarian force. The mnemonic and historical dimension of infrastructures of spirited affinity necessarily involves the carriage in the present of past inhabitations and material relations, as a continued resource for processes of self-transformation within community and for political actions of resistance. I think of the Halprins and the numerous lived enmeshments arising with that plane jutting out of the wooded fall, the lineaments of these inventions across sixty years of dance, art and performance history, passing in and out of visibility and recognition.





Top: Anna Halprin rehearsing *Rope Dance*, 2015. Photo: © Hugo Glendinning, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and FWM. Bottom: Janine Antoni rehearsing *Rope Dance*, 2015. Photo: © Hugo Glendinning, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and FWM.

The enunciation of the word spirit in the phrase spirited affinity may seem odd to some ears, especially those conditioned by specific modes of secular thought, or those who adhere to a strict materialism. Odd too, because the artists I am discussing as bearing such affinities do not hold particular religious systems of belief in common. However, it aptly describes the immaterial and affective forces moving through and between these subjects and their works: passages from, to and with outsides. This outside — encapsulated in the surrealist poet Paul Eluard's proclamation "there is another world, and it is in this one" — is immanent, not purely transcendent. As William E. Connolly succinctly states, in speaking for a range of new materialist and process philosophers: "The outside is multiple, active and real, it is merely not, to us, divine. We also construe transcendence as that which is coming into being rather than a Being beyond being."²³ Here the absolute antithesis between matter and spirit falls into redundancy. If the non-human and inorganic are constitutive exteriorities of material lives then a different space for thinking the relation between the phenomena of matter, the senses and spirit is opened: a materialist sense of spirit emerges. This exteriority for many writers in these traditions is thought in relation to cosmic and non-human forces of creation and destruction that far exceed human powers, metamorphosing in temporalities beyond human perception and cognition. Such volatile forces evidently surpass but are also within the human estate: they are found all around us in what was once called the natural world. Spirited affinity: a communion in differentiation, a mutual inclination toward earthly exteriorities, a being together with singular unknowns.

If collaborations such as those of Antoni and Halprin are instances within a genealogy of spirited affinity, and if those affinities are infrastructural for the historical persistence and rejuvenation of performance, there are implications for the ethos of curatorial practice. What role might the curator play in the sustenance of that genealogy? How might curation be rethought, not just as a way of "constellating relations," but also as a labor of caretaking the passage of such affinities between spirits, people and things? The curator is reimagined, then, as an inheritor, temporary custodian and reanimator of spirited affinities. This definition feels closer to my current material engagements with *Ally*.

Mid-April, 2016: The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia. The personal testimonies of the Swallow witnesses are transformed into a low-level collective whisper as the visitor enters the darkened space of the installation. A human murmur floats above a series of softly lit twin chairs stationed along a carpeted aisle. At the near end of this aisle a large vitrine is bathed in red light, whilst at the other end a glistening object emanates an allure. The sound of each testimony is located above each chair, so that visitors who sit may face each other and listen, perhaps encountering strangers in an unusual intimacy convened by the twinned seats. Visitors compose their own collage of voices depending on their attention within each station: they create a synthetic version of the "absent" event. The environment is church-like, if a strange mixture of Puritan pine and high Catholic glamour, This is a scene of indeterminate faith where the past performance becomes a sought truth. Each station is assigned an archetypal name — for instance the listener, the healer, and the poet — somewhat general categories with a mythic air of authority which cuts against the singularity of the speaker's voice. A congregation is assembled. On close inspection the gleaming object is a perverse monstrance, the vessel used in Catholicism to carry consecrated material or the relics of saints. Clearly visible within its bulbous glass orb, sits the rolled cloth from the Swallow performance. The cloth makes irises and pupils in the glass eyeballs: the thing looks back. Monstrances are usually spectacularly solar, radiating out, but this peculiar form, declarative in its showing, is also strangely interior. Its gold and glass shapes mirror the human internal structures of the diaphragm, two trachea, the lungs and the vocal folds: not just those parts associated with the act of swallowing, but with breath. Organs that remind the visitor

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Stephen Petronio rehearsing Rope Dance, 2015. Photo: © Hugo Glendinning, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and FWM.

of that other connective and binding material that carries testaments into the space. The baroque splendor of these reorganized organs — a twisted physiognomy — recalls the elaborate torques of Petronio's choreography. Looking down through the polished and pearled vocal folds, a magnifying lens gives access to the micro-detail of the rolled cloth. The fabric of things. Organic symmetry is found everywhere in this space, not least in this vessel where the immaculate repetitions of the different-same suggest a glorious and monstrous queer body.

At the other extreme, the conserving vessel does not belong to the institution of the church (however queer) but to that other contemporary place of worship: the art museum. The vitrine holds the single photograph of Antoni and Petronio's bodies, joined by the swallowed cloth and printed on wool with their mingled saliva. Sacrilege here is twofold: the vitrine is filled with active colonies of moths that are slowly consuming the material. They flutter and crawl and get on with their work in the warm bath of an artificial night. The moth is the nemesis of this particular institution dedicated to fabric, but a new species of ally for the artists. Their de-fabrications are simultaneously acts of creation and destruction: the scene is teeming, a complex choreography of life and death. Larvae growing in the wool will feed off the image particularly as they are drawn to human excretions. The contained risk of the moths in the museum is liberated by the unpredictable course and duration of this process. Performance returns otherwise. Antoni and Petronio do not know what will become of their image in aesthetic terms, but what is certain is that it will have passed into other bodies, just as it did in the initial event. This animal metamorphosis sits in dialogue with the meanings and resonances of the murmurs of the human animals, and with the promise of transubstantiation carried in a monstrance. The true

vessel of faith here is of course the human body — the material within which a life subsists. When it is turned inside out, anatomized before our eyes, joined on the material plane with other bodies, a certain animal reality is disclosed. Material bodies exist within cycles of consumption and excretion, life is entwined with death, and the energetic continuance of this process and its utter indifference to us qualifies all human investments.

Late-April, 2016, Philadelphia. The installation of Rope Dance at The Fabric Workshop and Museum — the singular collaboration between Antoni, Halprin and Petronio — is another modulation of relations between the live event of performance and its translation into durable forms in exhibition time. An improvised dance with blindfolds and ropes, on which we worked sporadically for two years, now becomes an absent-presence, inflected through variant live and mediated forms. Visitors are given headphones before entering the gallery, immediately tuning them to an exterior reality — the environs of Halprin's dance deck — preceding the encounter with the work. On their entrance, the gallery appears empty except for a large-scale projection on one side, which is then seen as synchronous with the sound. Facing it: a simple row of chairs. The looped thirty-minute film, a locked-off extreme close-up of Halprin's ninety-four-year-old face, looms over the evacuated space. This is a beautifully weathered, delighted and thoughtful face. It is doing a lot of responsive looking and evaluating: gripped by a quizzical attention to something behind the imagined visual point of the camera. The visitor experiences the sounds of her environment through the intimacy and personalization of the headphones: Halprin's continuous breath, occasional whispered halfthoughts and involuntary articulations are heard in close proximity. In the background, distant sounds punctuate the scene — dogs barking, light planes flying overhead, the screams of children playing, the buzzing of a fly, the caws of crows — but all remain unseen. Mountain song. As the film plays out it becomes evident that in one reality (the time of the film) Halprin is watching a dynamic performance. This artwork (once again) is firmly withdrawn from visibility. But the visitor hears the beats of many footsteps, exclamations, murmurs; they sense the energetics of unfolding acts off-screen.

In fact, Halprin is watching the improvisation-rehearsal in November 2014 I spoke of earlier, with Antoni and Petronio working with blindfolds and ropes; the duration of the film being the exact length of this "original" performance. The empty floor of the gallery offers itself as the new ground of this absent-present event. A virtual-actual, time-space conjunction gives the visitor the sense that although it is nowhere apparent, an intense performance is continuously taking place, with and without bodies. Who or what is performing here? In the visitors' reality (the hybrid past-present time of their watching of the film) Halprin is looking "directly" at them, as if they were dancing. Under the sway of her gaze, the visitor becomes a performing object and is forced to consider their spontaneous actions as the possible source of Halprin's response, as a choreography that she is seeing. At the same time the visitor knows this not to be the case, and marks the disjunction between their own moves and the "absent" performance resonating through Halprin's face. The visitor experiences a disjointed time in their passage through the space, in the simultaneous coincidence and de-synchronization of the virtualactual event. In this continuous overlaying of times, the present time is many times and is infused with kinetic potential. It's as if Halprin is entreating the visitor to dance, compelling them to take up the ropes and make a performance in this space. In this respect the installation of the film succinctly expresses the activist, participatory and communitarian principles that have animated Halprin's work in life. The installation is an open invitation to move without judgment.

Another powerful paradox is in play. Halprin's face is over-scaled (not life-size) and is seen in an intimacy beyond that available to everyday close scrutiny — one might say, following Lacan's

phraseology, an extimacy — a deep inside on the exterior. This is a vision of Halprin that we do not normally have access to, even as close collaborators. It is also an intensely craved projection that every performer seeks: clear evidence of the palpable impact of one's action in others. The surface (screen and face) as boundary dissolves into the coursing relay of affects in and from the "absent" performance — through and from Halprin as a receptor-transmitter — to the receptive visitor. And yet the visitor becomes painfully aware that this extimacy, this unprecedented access to the author-choreographer, cannot identify with any certainty the very objects it discloses: Halprin's thoughts and perceptions remain profoundly inaccessible. An enduring presence, Halprin's face is a fluid micro-choreography of flashes of tangible feelings but invisible thoughts. What is she thinking? The visitor can only guess. Yet the quality of this giving over of her self, so redolent with an open acceptance that comes with aging, speaks to the ethos of hospitality and generosity through which Halprin's creative life is lived.

Staying with the film in its full duration, as many do, reveals further emotive paradoxes. Whatever it is that Halprin is watching, it is a chain of events and it evidently has a narrative structure of sorts: things happen one after the other. But they are only available to us through sonic clues and the unfolding, volatile and flickering emotions of Halprin's face. Together with the visitor, she is in the grip of an implicit but continuing story: one readable only through a sensual accrual. Over thirty minutes, Halprin moves through passages of gentle appreciation, intensive curiosity, tension and anxiety, doubt, mild disapproval, assurance, exasperation, confusion, astonishment, fear, tiredness, consternation, excitement, pride, myriad amusements, trepidation, pain, slight boredom and utter joy. A panoptic procession of life's emotions is registered in the surfaces of her face, its liquid glimmering affects. The visitor comes to recognize that this human trajectory (again a story of sorts) whilst utterly singular and specific to the unseen event is simultaneously general, that it could apply to any happening. The peculiar nature of extimacy becomes clear: it is at once personal and impersonal, singular and common. Is this a story of an artistic life, spent in the thick of collaboration, spent looking at and facing others? Perhaps this face is simply the subject of the work itself — there is no "absent" performance. Rather, a facing — with any face and this face in particular — is the event that the visitor has come to be in. This event of the witnessing of the witness — the means through which performance has an afterlife — is the definitive aspect of its recursive and transitory nature. Echo of echoes, performance crosses times, spaces, bodies and forms, and in so doing lives again.

Antoni and Petronio do perform live within this gallery on several occasions throughout the duration of the exhibition. But on these occasions the film is absent once they begin, and is reinstated when they close. Instead of presenting a completed work, the performance is returned to a nascent state: an open workshop-performance in which the materials and actions that once constituted the *Rope Dance* are explored collectively with participants. Visitors experience the somatic and choreographic potentials of working and moving while dynamically bound with the shifting vectors of the rope. This hybrid format returns the work to its pedagogic and experiential principles, rather than crystallizing it into a resolved form.

One afternoon in mid-April 2016, Antoni is preparing to perform the first enactment of *Paper Dance* within its completed installation. In curating the work for an interior we have created spatial and temporal divisions in the long gallery of The Fabric Workshop and Museum. On entering the gallery, visitors encounter a slowly growing pile of tattered and discarded brown paper — the by-product of Antoni's previous renditions of the dance — defining this initial space as archival, a holding place of remnants. Ahead of them a wooden dance floor demarcates a larger area and upon it an oval arena of sealed crated artworks. Playing across one of the crates is a projected filmic fragment of Halprin's

Parades and Changes: the "original" scene from which this whole work is partially derived. While gallery lighting picks out the crates as displayed objects — each marked with the name of its contents and shipping restrictions — theatrical lights create a warm wash over this constructed clearing: a hybrid space for present events and display. Beyond the dance floor, a third space sees a series of twenty-two paper rolls leaning and arrayed across an exhibition wall. Each roll is labeled with the date on which it will be used; this area has the qualities of an antechamber, a waiting room for materials. Antoni will perform twenty-two times over the fifteen-week duration of the exhibition, each time altering and rearranging the relation between the Parades and Changes projection, and the visible and invisible sculptures and photographs held within the crates. The gallery appears "unfinished," as if the visitors have walked in to an installation in progress.

Each performance will begin with Antoni unpacking and displaying one or more of the crated pieces and will continue as an improvisation with, for and beside the assembly of the presented and hidden artworks. In the periods between performances the chosen works remain on display until one or more of them is re-packed at the beginning of the next performance and new work is revealed. The aesthetic relations between displayed artworks and their sequencing across the fifteen weeks are carefully curated, making dynamic counterpoints in the development of Antoni's oeuvre that shift from week to week. By showing but largely withdrawing her works from view, Antoni makes a powerful address to the exhibition format of the retrospective. Her previous works form a gathering around her — a council of present but largely invisible things — accompanying and reverberating with her many acts of invention within the space. The installation in progress becomes an occasional workshop and performance arena where display is always subject to a durational morphology. A slowtime retrospective, then, but one in which the subject's artwork is barely visible, intermittent, inflected differently on a weekly basis by repeated performances. For Antoni, the self-seeing and self-evaluation implied in these acts is triggered by, and accessed through, the work of another — Halprin — whose history touches but far exceeds her own. The repeated reinvention of the performance in relation to fresh aspects of Antoni's history, arranged differently in relation to Halprin's "original" work, suggests that disclosure of an oeuvre is a constant renegotiation through and with others. Antoni seats her spectators on top of her crated work with packing blankets. Sedentary forms dialogue with their aerated friends. The assembly here is not just the council of artworks, but also the gathering of individuals, who take their place within and upon them. The installation echoes the circling of trees that surrounds the clearing of Lawrence Halprin's dance deck: the mountain top wood has become a gathering of presences, a human-thing assemblage, visible and invisible historical objects intermingling with a present public.

As the visitors gather to spectate, finding a place to sit amongst the crates, Antoni is already unpacking an artwork. Once the location of artworks and spectators is settled she walks to take up the first paper roll. After three years of working with this material, the improvisation is assured and specific image-actions have solidified into a temporal line within a dramaturgy. Fragments of this temporal structure remain in my memory. The paper is thrown out and rolls along the length of the dance floor. Antoni attempts to draw it back toward her in violent spasms that presage the energetics of the actions to come. Unruly matter. Far from her reach, the paper rucks and contorts in unexpected ways. Antoni closely molds a portion around her legs, then extracts herself and places these limbs in counterpoint with the empty mold, as if the quest of the performance were simply to see a singular body outside of itself, to create a duplicate of the self (in constitutive parts). Antoni rolls the length of the stage, wrapping herself in the entire surface; her torso is bound in a funnel of paper that rises above her head. The makeshift phallus is immediately precarious. She takes this towering tube for a blind walk

across the stage, her bare legs protruding from its bottom. Audience members protect themselves from this advancing comic shape: a semi-human chimera moving "dangerously" without vision or apparent purpose. Later, Antoni is immersed in a tangled swathe of paper, which seems to form one aggregate amorphous body from which odd limbs emerge. This becoming inorganic mass with living human parts — a golem or monstrous figure — is superseded by an image-action which is its chimeric inverse: Antoni, standing bare, scrunches the whole roll of paper up to her head and holds it there. She has a swollen sphere for a face, erasing her identity but not her sex: a female Atlas fused with the world she carries on her shoulders. A cloud-headed woman: weathered being.

Still later, Antoni seems to become the wind itself. Spinning like a dizzy child, she takes up the tattered remnants of the roll, which fly and flail beside her. The body here, simultaneously radiating and veiling itself, becomes material caught in the eye of a tornado, a half-present spectacle of vulnerable acceleration. Antoni's discarded clothing is reincorporated into her sculptural aspirations: she inverts her long-sleeved top using it as pants, and manically begins to stuff the whole volume of paper into a rapidly expanding belly. Paper begins to extrude from the head hole between her legs, which at first she tries to contain, whilst simultaneously continuing to stuff herself. Now, coming onto her back as she struggles with her belly-load, the image of pregnancy shifts into a disturbing and seemingly unending birth of uncontrollable material. Antoni tries to re-gather the extrusion into a graspable whole, making another body, but it is over-scaled, and her rocking and nursing gestures eventually succumb to the grand pile of material in which she is subsumed. Loss morphs into an erotics of immersion. Later, she re-rolls herself along the ragged length of the paper, winding up at the feet of the seated spectators. She is imprisoned in this tight cocoon, and births herself by violently flaying the paper skin, until her bare flesh is released. She lies still for a while in the residue of this frenetic escape, listening to and gently moving with the barely audible expansions of compacted and distressed paper. Marsyas is lying beside her future. This second (animal) birth, in which the performer is "reborn," seems to mark a final escape from the paper as constraint. Still attending to and thinking through her paper strewings across the space as a residual installation, she gathers the ragged remains and takes them off, throwing them into the slow-growing heap at the entrance to the space.

In *Parades and Changes* Halprin brought the outside — the obscene — into the theater through a communal encounter with paper and flesh. Antoni draws from Halprin's architecturally embedded re-attunements of movement practice to elemental conditions: the openness to the flows of air, clouds, the woods, to the sounds of plant and animal life that are found in the clearing of the deck. This incorporation extends beyond her performance action into her sculptural practice itself. She regenerates her own material engagements through these environmental openings, returning the exteriorizations of her sculptural practice to the inside of the gallery space. In comparison to her previous works these temporary sculptures in paper seem insubstantial, but they carry what I would call, after David Abram, the "remembering of air." They hold, move and rustle with that element so sensually encountered on Halprin's elevated deck, that element invisible yet palpable, in which human life and plant life are symbiotically immersed. The unseen common medium through which we co-exist and breathe: the source of *inspiration*. Abram's understanding that an altered awareness of air would lead to new forms of relational creative thought and practice is resonating through Antoni's work:

As we become conscious of the unseen depths that surround us, the inwardness or interiority that we have come to associate with the personal psyche begins to be encountered in the world at large: we feel ourselves enveloped, immersed, caught up *within* the sensuous world. This breathing landscape is no longer just a passive backdrop against which human history

unfolds, but a potentialized field of intelligence in which our actions participate ... as we awaken to the air, and to the multiplicitous Others that are implicated, with us, in its generative depths, the shapes around us seem to awaken, to come alive ...

In the transplantation of this aerated performance into the gallery, the new environment is the residual material of Antoni and Haplrin's creative histories, encountered within the contiguity of a public assembly. Serial improvised performances act as the entwining of the two histories in the present, subjecting their materials to a persistent morphology. However, this is not a smooth matrilineal continuum, but a continuous cleaving, a gathering and a parting, a continuation without continuity. In Halprin's "original" work both naked bodies and paper are given an essential natural affinity, as they emerge in a reverential atmosphere from a cacophony of mediated human noise. For Antoni the paper is radically malleable, a synthetic processed material used to create a series of body molds, second skins, momentary images and symbolizations destined for discard or recycling. This non-living material has an uncanny life itself, it breathes and moves, and Antoni constantly re-attunes her performance to that thingness, de-naturing her nature, calling into question the distinction between



Janine Antoni rehearsing *Paper Dance* in collaboration with Anna Halprin, 2015. Photo: © Hugo Glendinning, 2015. Courtesy of the artists.

the source and the trace, flesh and paper, body part and its mimetic rendition. The relation between paper and flesh appears autopoetic, one thing leads to another, and it is impossible to decide where the agency of image generation resides.

August 2016. Looking back over the Ally exhibition at its close, it is hard to locate its origins. My engagement began with Antoni's invitation to become (in her words) a "critical witness" in new collaborations. But the work could be drawn back to Antoni's decision to detour retrospection through the lives of others and the medium of dance. Was its seeding in Antoni's initial workshop with Halprin at the Esalen Institute, California, 2011, or her first meeting with Petronio at the Armory, New York, 2012? Or perhaps Ally was inaugurated in some unknowable moments in 1953 when Anna and Lawrence Halprin first dreamed into existence a deck in the woods of Mount Tamalpais? Many beginnings. Nonetheless, the project makes manifest some valuable imperatives of retrospection: for artists it may act as a means to turn outward, articulate their interconnectedness with numerous others and re-branch their paths, and for performance itself it may operate as a lens through which it can be revivified and persist in time. Ally's curatorial frame treats the life and afterlife of performance as an affair of translation and multiplicity. Performance recurs in many forms in the duration of the exhibition: as a secluded and inaccessible object approached through pluralized testimonies, strange reliquaries and transmogrifying documents; as an absent event presenced through the face of its witness or translated back into its own nascent propositions in participatory workshops; as an iterative improvised occasion moving through a long duration of material engagements with objects and histories; or as an occasionally recovered fleeting act glossed through differences of age, sex and sensibility.

These lives and afterlives of performance, in their promiscuous transits, can be distinguished from the more common modalities of performance exhibition in museums over the last fifteen years. In Ally, when a live performance is absent from the gallery at any given time, its withdrawal is marked conceptually and linked to its recurrence in other forms. The "missing" event becomes a film of a face, a relic and monstrance, audio testimonies or a document in the process of re-absorption into other bodies. The default museum modality of documentary video and photographic display — with its attendant archival aesthetic common in performance's first revaluation by visual arts institutions — is circumvented.²⁵ If absolute absence, other than that transformed through documentary realism is challenged in this way, so too is the mode of continuous durational presence within exhibition time that has been widely deployed by artists such as Marina Abramović, Tino Sehgal and Xavier Le Roy.²⁶ In these contexts, an aesthetics of duration tends to conform to institutional scheduling: the work is present while the museum is open and stops once it closes. Such acts of "continuous" visible presence often frame the performer as a museal laborer and deploy modes of delegated action.²⁷ The reliance on the artist's presence in Ally is not, however, a simple return to a "valorized live presence and immediacy," nor a disavowal of performance as labor, but rather an attendance to the singularities of performance's occurrence in many forms and durations.²⁸ Bodies and their actions appear, disappear and reappear: they find translation into different media in accordance with their expressive necessities. Moreover, Ally places the many durations of performance materials and forms into an active dialogue. The performativities of documentary and sculptural materials are carried through occasions of live performance: gatherings within which they may mutually resonate and differentiate. For the visitor, the demand of Ally is to witness performance as transit and transformation, to think and feel the differences of its passages through multiple lives. Retrospection emerges as something other than an individual endeavor. Looking back is a way to turn inside out, to propose once discrete bodies of work as pre- and re-entwined. In so doing futures are remade.

Notes

- 1. Janine Antoni, Matrix 129, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, January 7 April 28, 1996.
- 2. "She told me of the time that my grandfather (Barto) had grown a finely groomed mustache, of which he was very proud. My grandmother, however, thought it looked ridiculous. She begged him to get rid of it, but he paid no attention. One night while he was sleeping, my grandmother shaved off half of the mustache. The next morning my grandfather was horrified when he saw his reflection in the mirror. The second story has a similar theme. Barto told my grandmother that he loved her for her long, beautiful hair. He warned her, however, that if she ever cut her braids he would no longer love her. This enraged my grandmother. After he had left the house that day, she grabbed her two braids which reached down to her hips and snipped them off at the ears. She then tacked them in a crucifix form above their bed." Ibid.
- 3. See Peter Schwenger, *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).
- 4. See Martin Heidegger, "The Thing" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins: 1975 [1971]), 161–184 and Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 1959–1960, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: Norton 1992).
- 5. See Jane Bennett, "The Force of Things" in Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–19.
- 6. See Bill Brown, "Thing Theory" in Critical Inquiry, vol. 28, Autumn, 2001, 1–16.
- 7. See Janice Ross, Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 119–122.
- 8. Lawrence Halprin, "Structure and Garden Spaces Related in Sequence," *Progressive Architecture*, May 1958, 96–104. For an important discussion of this kind of futural, ecological thinking see Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).
- 9. Arch Lauterer, quoted in Ross, 105.
- 10. Lawrence Halprin, quoted in Ross, 104.
- 11. Anna Halprin, quoted in Ross, 106.
- 12. On the voice of the witness see Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma*, *Narrative*, *and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).
- 13. Anna Halprin notes that this scene is itself derived from another improvised performance she gave in a Fritz Perls workshop in which she confronted a suited male participant by taking off all her clothes. See Ross, 175–176.
- 14. See Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "Antoni's Difference," in Janine Antoni (Küsnacht: Ink Tree, 2000), 42–75.
- 15. For a fuller discussion of mothering and birthing focused on Antoni's early work see Amy Cappellazzo, "Mother Lode," in *Janine Antoni* (Küsnacht: Ink Tree, 2000), 102–121.
- 16. For a discussion of the philosophical heritage of such a practice in feminist thought see Elizabeth Grosz, "Feminism, Materialism and Freedom," in *Realism*, *Materialism*, *Art*, eds. C. Cox, J. Jaskey, S. Malik (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015), 47–60.
- 17. See Isabelle Stengers, "An Ecology of Practices" in *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 11 no. 1, March 2005, 183–196. 18. Ibid., 195.
- 19. Ibid., 185.
- 20. See Abdou Maliq Simone "Relational Infrastructures in Postcolonial Urban Worlds" in *Infrastructural Lives*, eds. Steve Graham and Colin McFarlane, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 17–38.
- 21. Ibid., 18.
- 22. Ibid.
- 23. William E. Connolly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes*, *Neoliberal Fantasies and Democratic Activism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 141.
- 24. See David Abram, "The Forgetting and Remembering of the Air," in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 225–260.
- 25. See Boris Groys, "Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation" in *Perform, Repeat, Record*, eds. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, (London: Intellect, 2012), 209–218.
- 26. *Marina Abramović Presents*, Manchester International Festival, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, 3 19 July 2009. Tino Sehgal, *These Associations*, 24 July 28 October 2012. Xavier Le Roy, *Retrospective*, MoMA PS1, 2 October 1 December 2014.
- 27. See Claire Bishop, "Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity" in *October*, Spring 2012, 91–112. 28. Ibid., 91.