

Intimations: videoperformance and relationality

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**Intimations:
Videoperformance and Relationality**

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requirements of the University of Westminster
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Abstract

This practice-based project examines mediated performative relationality in videoperformance by means of five artworks and a dissertation. I argue that videoperformance has the potential to contribute to wider debates on relationality, to examine the addressee and the dynamics of relationality through the mediated encounter between performer and viewer, and to produce an account of relationality that manifests the specific ethical and political valence of this practice. I focus on videoperformances in which artists address viewers via video camera and screen, with the result of activating mediated relationality. The term relationality conveys the emergence of intersubjective relationships. Mediation refers to the relay of performativity from performer to camera, screen and viewer, and acknowledges the transformations introduced by technology.

My videoperformances experiment with aspects of mediated relationality: *Before You Now* (2013) explores the desire for authenticity and unmediated relationality. *Regardless* (2007) experiments with visual strategies to suggest that the screen is permeable. *The Other Person* (2010) explores intimacy, trust and zones of proximity. *Are You Talking to Me?* (2010) denies relationality by focusing on a dialogue internal to the performer. *Wish You Were Here* (2011) suggests and mocks idealised conviviality, and plays with ideas of liveness.

The dissertation is divided into two parts: part one contextualises the project in the framework of theoretical approaches and practices. It maps Lacanian concepts of subjectivity and the gaze; Butler's concept of performativity; film, performance and new media studies; relational and distributed aesthetics. It also reviews the history of videoperformance from a contemporary relational perspective. Part two examines the interplay of relationality and subjectivity in three videoperformances by way of performative writing and critical analysis. This combination of different research methodologies achieves a thorough analysis of performative mediated relationality in videoperformance and contributes to a wider discourse on relationality.

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List of Materials

This dissertation includes two DVDs.

Intimations, 2007-2013

This disk contains five videoperformances produced and exhibited as part of this research project:

1. *Regardless*, 2007, 17' (also, a 5' extract)
2. *The Other Person*, 2010, 29'30" (also, a 5' extract)
3. *Wish You Were Here*, 2011, 3'
4. *Before You Now*, 2013, 5'30"
5. *Are You Talking to Me*, 2010, 5'

Before You, 2008-2009

This is a series of four experimental videoperformances that test various combinations of performer, video camera, screen and audience:

1. Recording of the work performed live in a hidden location in the same room as the audience and mediated by the screen.
2. Documentation of live performance for an audience.
3. Recording of the work performed at the same time for an audience and for the video camera.
4. Videoperformance performed for the video camera.

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I reserve a special thank you for the artists and academics who have given me access to their thoughts and practices.

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Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Introduction

This research project examines mediated performative relationality in videoperformance art practices and its implications through my videoperformance practice, performative writing and critical analysis. A series of five videoperformances and this dissertation complement each other to analyse the processes and significance of relationality as it emerges in videoperformance.

The research stems from my interest in art practices that investigate and initiate intersubjective relationships. This project focuses on videoperformances that offer an opportunity to relate and invite viewers to become active interlocutors. My recent body of work experiments with performance and video to produce and explore relationality. I developed a series of intimate videoperformances in parallel with the research and writing for this dissertation, constructing a coherent whole under the shared title *Intimations*.

Exploring the literature that focuses on videoperformance reveals that subjectivity and the embodied experience of performer and viewer are the key perspectives that shape existing analyses (see for example, Jones, 1998, 2006; Warr, 2000). Psychoanalytic concepts of *gaze*, *identification* and *narcissism* are applied to interrogate processes internal to performer and spectator in response to the camera, the screen and to narrative structures (Mulvey, 1975; Krauss, 1976). More recent analyses attempt to integrate these approaches by focusing on the affective and embodied intersubjective exchanges between performer – even when mediated by screen and camera, or materialised in a photograph – and viewer, but they deliberately underplay the role of language and do not focus on the constructed nature of subjectivity (Marks, 2002; Shobchack, 1994; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010; Ettinger, 2006). The recent attention paid to relationality in art practices is mostly limited to situations in which artists and participants are all physically present,

focusing on the social dynamics of collective encounters and groups of participants, generally avoiding to question how these processes engage subjectivity (Bourriaud, 2002). Moreover, these contiguous approaches do not overlap to offer an analysis of the processes of relationality in videoperformance, leaving open a series of relevant questions:

- How do videoperformance art practices contribute to debates on relationality?
- Whom does videoperformance address relationally, and what are the dynamics of this address?
- What account of relationality emerges from the analysis of these practices? What is their ethical and political relevance?

These questions drive this research, and to expound them I analyse and query the processes of the gaze in videoperformance to challenge definitions of relationality that rely on exclusively psychoanalytic, post-psychoanalytic, aesthetic, political or social definitions, and propose an inflection of the concept that spans, encompasses and adopts relevant features from these accounts.

The term *videoperformance* is used as defined by Liza Bear in 1974 – the ‘interface of video and live performance’ (Bear and Sharp, 1974, p.3). The terms performance to camera and body art are also used to describe art practices that combine performance, video camera and screen (Jones, 1998; Warr, 2000). This project concentrates on videoperformances in which artists address viewers via video camera and screen with their eyes, speech and body language, indicating an offer of personal relationships, with the result of activating mediated relationality. It interrogates the potential of these practices to produce relationality as a performative in the encounter between videoperformance and viewer. My videoperformance work tests some strategies that activate performative relationality, while this dissertation maps the conceptual and historical frameworks of

videoperformance, and analyses how relationality emerges performatively in the combination of performer, video camera, screen and viewer.

The term *relationality* describes the emergence of relationships between subject and other (performer and viewer, representation and body, temporary subject and imagined other, etc.) and analyses its psychic, ethical and cultural implications. The purpose of this project is not to delineate categories of relationality, label instances or define modalities, but to investigate the emergence, dynamics and implications of relationality in videoperformance art practices. The concept is examined in the context of videoperformance art practice and in its ramifications for intersubjective relationships. It is contextualised in art practice more generally as in dialogue with relational accounts from Nicholas Bourriaud's (2002) *Relational Aesthetics* and successive elaborations of 'distributed' and 'dialogical' practices, and 'associations' (Munster and Lovink, 2005; Kester, 2004; Latour, 2007). Whilst participatory and interactive art practices attempt to materialise and make visible relationality, videoperformance relies on performative relationality emerging in the encounter of performer represented on screen and viewer. In this framework, relationality is not the form of the work (Bourriaud, 2002), but an emergent phenomenon that remains invisible and unmarked (Phelan, 1993). Phenomenological and psychoanalytic theories examine relationality from the perspective of the subject to explain the formation of the subject itself. Yet, relationality does not reside within subjectivities but between subjects, and emerges as a performative that constitutes the subjects themselves.

Following the approach of Judith Butler, this project recasts the role of the subject – understood as fragmented, unstable and formed in language – as continuously produced by and in relationality, and therefore challenges the dominance of the gaze in intersubjective relationships. Butler (2005) repositions the power of the gaze and unconscious desires within a political discourse that acknowledges that ethical responsibility emerges out of the relative incapacity of the subject to see itself:

‘it may be possible to show that the question of ethics emerges precisely at the limits of our schemes of intelligibility, the site where we ask ourselves what it might mean to continue in a dialogue where no common ground can be assumed, where one is, as it were, at the limits of what one knows yet still under the demand to offer and receive acknowledgment: to someone else who is there to be addressed and whose address is there to be received.’ (Butler, 2005, pp.21-22).

In other words, the subjects who address each other in ‘the interlocutory scene’ are in turn produced by the relationality that emerges from their encounter, and the limits of awareness constitute the source of ethics and a transformative opportunity for ethical reflection (Butler, 2005, p.64). This approach to the ethics of relationality informs my analysis of the mediated relationships that emerge performatively in videoperformance practices. Throughout this project, ethics is approached from the perspective of Judith Butler’s social and political critical theory and does not extend into moral philosophy. Butler elaborates on Adorno’s, Foucault’s and Levinas’ approaches to ethics and individual responsibility in the context of the nebulous boundaries of subjects that emerge within networks of relationships, many of which precede and exceed the subjects themselves (Butler, 2005).

Although Butler offers an eloquent critique of psychoanalytic theories, in the context of this project it is important to clarify some Lacanian concepts that remain relevant. Each encounter between videoperformance and viewer produces different and unique combinations of relationality and fragments of subjectivity. The use of the term *encounter* in this context references Lacan’s *tuché* – the primary encounter with the real, which can be described as *missed* since its memory and legacy continue to activate desire and to bring the real to the surface (Lacan, 1998). This oscillation describes the continuous appearance and disappearance of the unconscious (consequently of the real and of desire) to consciousness. The encounter with the mediated other of videoperformance elicits partial recognition as it evokes unconscious desires and ethical responsibility, as well as provoking moments of self-reflection. Besides encounter and subject, other Lacanian theoretical constructs are fundamental to this project: other/Other, desire,

unconscious, the real, repetition, extimacy and, most importantly, the gaze. On the other hand, Lacanian definitions and positioning of gender are not adopted as part of this analysis, which examines instead feminist discourses that have already critically engaged with those constructs (Mulvey, 1975 and 1989; Gaines, 1988; Grosz, 1991; Wright, 2000; Ettinger, 2006 and particularly Judith Butler, 1990, 1993, 1997a, 1997b and 2004b). In general, this project does not limit the analysis of practice to a single dominant methodology or theoretical perspective.

The scenes of address activated in videoperformance construct recognisable dynamics of closeness, trust, seduction, familiarity, complicity and intimate relationality. In this context, the term *intimate* resonates both as an adjective referencing intimacy, and as a verb in its meaning of ‘to signify, indicate; to imply, to suggest, to hint’, but also ‘to make known formally, to notify, announce, state’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2014). This set of meanings inherent to intimacy itself is reflected in the title of this project – *Intimations* – as well as in the works chosen for analysis and in my series of videoperformances (*Regardless*, 2007; *The Other Person*, 2009; *Are You Talking to Me*, 2010; *Wish You Were Here*, 2011; *Before You Now*, 2013). The practice of videoperformance and the mediated relationality that emerges in its encounters reflect and make explicit the paradoxes of intimacy – affect and thought; normativity and performativity; past and present; subject and other/Other; relationality and subjectivity; immediacy and remediation; representation and performativity; unconscious and awareness; fragmentation and continuity. Some of these contradictions remain open in the Lacanian concept of extimacy, which suggests that intimacy already contains the other/Other and makes the distinction between inside and outside superfluous.

Lauren Berlant writes about the ‘institutions of intimacy’ and of how ‘the inwardness of the intimate is met by a corresponding publicness’ (Berlant, 2000, p.1). In this context, intimacy is the ultimate interface of normativity and performativity – subjects perform their own versions of the institutions of monogamy, marriage and parenthood as they confront prescribed versions of their roles within them. Intimacy

is an opportunity to test the incompatibilities within the subjects' 'history of identifications' (Butler, 1990, p.331). By inviting viewers to immerse themselves in mediated intimacy with an absent stranger, videoperformances produce safe conditions within which subjects can observe and test their own internalised models of behaviour. The videoperformances examined in this dissertation and my own work directly aim to offer opportunities for mediated intimacy. Analyzing this strategy through the lens of Lacan and Butler maintains the focus on the inseparable complex of affects and cognition, and on the formative power of language and discourse. In this framework, intimacy remains firmly rooted in normativity and the concept of relationality retains clarity and rigour. Extending this analytical approach to the mediation of the screen affords a more precise understanding of the dynamics of repetition without reproduction (encounter with the real): as subjects are not co-present, the unconscious responses do not engender illusory reciprocity and do not reproduce past relationship in a neurotic pattern (Lacan, 1998). The mediated intimate encounter mobilises all the qualities of the *tuché* – evoking the real, but deflecting the gaze towards awareness. Viewers who participate in this performative intimacy can then carry this partial awareness into their life outside the screen.

The terms *performative* and *performativity* are used from the perspective of Judith Butler in the double meaning of 'dramatic' and 'non-referential' (Butler, 1988, pp.521-522). In their stratification of meanings, the terms intimate both the ephemeral event of a performance and the power of discourse to constitute and continually modify subjectivity. Performativity is always impure, based on citationality and iterability, '*conventional* and *relational*' (Derrida, 1988; Gade and Jerslev, 2005, p.9, emphasis in original). In this context, relationality is performative as it produces the subjects that are supposed to precede it and carries consequences beyond the momentary encounter and the field of art practice. In other words, this key term defines relationality as always emerging and formative of the subjects relating, as well as fundamentally transformative.

Butler mobilises performativity and interpellation as complementary relational dynamics always at work between subjects. Althusser states that 'individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects': the act of calling out *you* or a name and the response that this elicits confirm the relative positions of subjects in the context of the social norms and ideology (Althusser, 1971, p.119). Whereas Althusser implies the subject's inevitable acceptance of the call and its effects, Butler reformulates interpellation as 'a scene of address' in which subjects reciprocally and performatively negotiate relative positions within available models (Butler, 2005, p.50). This is a key element for the analysis of relationality in videoperformances that address a *you* via camera and screen. Read in connection with psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious (Freud and Lacan), the complementary dynamics of performativity and interpellation found the possibility of an ethics of the encounter with the other: '[a]n ability to affirm what is contingent and incoherent in oneself may allow one to affirm others who may or may not "mirror" one's own constitution.' (Butler, 2005, p.41). Butler seeks to establish the ethical and political implications of a theory of the formation of the subject that precedes the subject itself and its consciousness, and goes beyond its perceived coherence. Performativity and ethical responsibility are rooted in normativity and in the unconscious, but they also constantly transform subjects, relationality and society.

To research the dynamics of performative relationality directly, I adopt the method of performative writing. This allows the relay of the 'living performative encounter with art', wherein both viewer and artwork are reconfigured and emerge renewed (Phelan et al, 2001, p.45). In the encounter between subject and videoperformance, between subject and writing, and between writer and reader, subjectivity and relationality emerge performatively together, not in a causal or chronological order. From this perspective, performative writing reveals intersubjective dynamics that other methods could only infer and produces knowledge that preserves the shifts of subjectivity and relationality, therefore evidencing the mechanisms of the gaze, the emergence of moments of self-awareness and the transformative effects of the

encounter. By analyzing my encounters with the screen and the video camera of videoperformance in the first person, I can utilize my own subjectivity as a tool for experimentation and analysis of mechanisms that would otherwise remain invisible. As a practitioner, I can unravel the mechanisms of my performance strategies in the text, exposing working methods, implied knowledge, affects, thoughts and unconscious dynamics. As a viewer, I can evidence the emergence of performative mediated relationality and its interplay with subjectivity, addressing the research questions directly and confirming the relevance of my arguments.

Although the concept of mediation appears with different meanings in the context of new media studies, psychoanalysis and Marxist theories, in this project it is inflected by the new media studies concept of *remediation* (Bolter and Grusin, 2000). It acknowledges that relationality in videoperformance is already mediated by language and the codes of performance – the screen therefore performs a remediation. Bolter and Grusin develop the term in the book of the same title to indicate the reframing through a second medium of already mediated content. In this project, mediation refers to the relay of performativity from performer to camera, to screen and finally to viewer, and it acknowledges the transformations that each layer of interface introduces for the offer at stake in each work. This use of the term encompasses Latour's definition of *mediator*: 'Mediators transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry.' (Latour, 2007, p. 39) Therefore, in this context *mediated* is mainly intended in the first instance as *informed by language*, then *transformed by the screen medium*, and it extends to *remediated through the camera and screen*.

The contested expression *new media* is used to indicate art practices informed by a focus on recently developed technological tools. Bolter and Grusin do not define the expression, but use it interchangeably with 'digital media' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.5). Christiane Paul observes that it functions as a 'shorthand for a range of practices and names, including "art and technology", "computer art", "systems art", and so on.' (Paul, 2008b, p.13). She states that 'new media art has shifted the focus

from object to process: as an inherently time-based, dynamic, interactive, collaborative, customizable and variable art form new media art resists “objectification” and challenges traditional notions of the art object.’ (Paul, 2008b, p1). In this context, the influence of these practices on the making and reading of videoperformance cannot be ignored.

Some of the artworks I produce and examine straddle videoperformance, networked performance, digital performance and interactive performance. The inclusion of these practices and theories roots this project in its contemporary context, and opens it towards future developments: I have started experimenting with performances mediated via Skype, and foresee that my research and work will shift towards networked practices. Limiting this project to video and performance allows me to analyse in depth mechanisms and discourses that extend to networked practices.

Although I reference instances of screen-based communication and their relevance to videoperformance, Skype in particular, this dissertation does not reference communication studies. Skype and other platforms are analysed from the perspective of emerging technologies and new media in the context of art practice and critical theory. The videoperformances produced and analysed in this project do not aim to communicate, but to produce relationality with the participation of viewers. Therefore, they are not suitable subjects of analyses for communication and media studies, and analysing mediation from this perspective would not be productive in this context. Similarly, although some references to film studies are crucial to a thorough analysis of relationality in videoperformance, these are peripheral in this discussion, which does not encompass questions of narrative and processes of identification. The mediation of the screen is explored from the perspective of the accumulation of connotations in the history of its technological development and uses. A strictly materialist perspective would isolate each piece of equipment and technology to analyse its qualities and contribution to the making and reading of the work. As this project focuses on the emergence of relationality in

videoperformance, the precise influence of each model of screen is only one component of the complex interactions of theories and histories outlined in the dissertation, and not its focus. This project offers a multidisciplinary perspective, which integrates the implications of the qualities accumulated by screens within the performative interplay of readings and emergent dynamics.

0.1 The Practice

My artistic working method of addressing the camera in order to evoke an ideal interlocutor activates a scene of address and initiates a chain of relays that culminates in a screen-based relational offer to viewers physically present in the gallery. It mobilises interpellation, the gaze, awareness and performativity to produce mediated relationality and invite reflection. The videoperformances that are part of this project have been developed in parallel with the analysis of the theories and practices explored in this dissertation. They are fundamental to the investigation of some aspects of the research questions, and contributed to produce some of the questions themselves. In particular, this practice explores the mechanisms and strategies of interfacing performer, video camera and screen to produce and mediate performative relationality in videoperformance. As a result, relationality emerges as fundamental to the construction of subjectivity. This body of work has been instrumental to produce an understanding of subjectivity as an ongoing dialogue with uncountable others, who continue to form the subject (Butler, 1990). The relational videoperformances that are part of *Intimations* (2007-2013) experiment with strategies that simultaneously evoke and perform the active interlocutor of these different others: I embody my responses to interpellations active in me and in turn interpellate viewers from those positions. This body of work does not unravel the web of voices that inform my subjectivity in an exercise in self-awareness, but invites viewers to engage in this already polyphonic relationality with their own polyphonies. This offers moments of self-awareness for viewers and artist: a space to experience and perceive unconscious desires, responses in interaction

and less evident aspects of one's own subjectivity. Also, this body of work constructs a space to become aware of one's own responsibility to enact relationality as a consciously ethical and transformative process.

By choosing to perform in my own work, I deploy my subjectivity as a tool to offer and experiment with the relational dynamics of performance, of the mediation of video, of the specific qualities of the screen and of the interplay of subjectivity and relationality. The elements of subjectivity that emerge in my videoperformances are part of my personal history, and are selected and utilised to activate relational offers and strategies. Moreover, I confront the question of gendered subjectivity and representation directly, and acknowledge the legacy of artists and thinkers who have focused on the politics of representation of the female body (in particular Martha Rosler, Hannah Wilke, Annie Abrahams and Peggy Phelan). However, these videoperformances aim to integrate and transcend the direct questioning of representation towards the activation of performative relationality productive of moments of reflection. Similarly, they resonate with the theories and discourses that inform this project and its questions: interpellation, the gaze, performativity and their ethics.



Figure 0.1 Cinzia Cremona, *Regardless*, 2007. Video Still.

Regardless (17', 2007) in particular is in dialogue with Amelia Jones' writing on body art, Peggy Phelan's work on performance and Judith Butler's texts on vulnerability and performativity (Jones, 2006; Phelan, 1993; Butler, 2009 and 1997a). It interrogates the screen as a membrane that allows some forms of contact whilst impeding others. As well as adopting a visual ruse – the screen appears to move towards the viewer as I press my hand *on the inside of the glass* – I use performance strategies to offer an ambiguous relationship that plays with seduction, trust, desire, vulnerability, power and repetition. The title itself evokes the gaze (regarder), but also the implicit contradiction of mediated relationality: *regardless of the impossibility of touching each other, we will reach out*.



Figure 0.1 Cinzia Cremona, *Regardless*, 2007. Installation shot at the Nunnery Gallery, London.

Regardless positions viewers above the performer, challenging them to take responsibility for their power and for the vulnerability of the woman on screen, but also to negotiate the manipulation of her address. It confronts the complex ethical questions proposed by this project in a compressed and dense form. Consequently, it reveals the need to investigate the components of this questions separately: who is being addressed? What are the dynamics of this mediated intimacy in a public space? How does the subjectivity of the performer emerge and how does it position the viewer?

To investigate these questions directly, I developed the work *Before You* (2008-2009) to test the different relational dynamics of performance and video. I adopted the basic strategy of speaking to viewers *as myself*, as if I was not performing, by opening these works with the statement 'before I start the performance'. This series of experiments culminates in the work *Before You Now* (2013).



Figure 0.2 Cinzia Cremona, *Before You*, May 2008, live performance at Nicholls and Clarke Building Gallery, London.

Before You is a series of videoperformances based on addressing viewers as *myself* before I start the performance. This strategy builds a relationship that tests the mediation of video equipment and performance art practice, as well as the desire for immediacy. At first, I performed *Before You* by addressing the audience present and the video camera simultaneously to experiment with the key differences between these forms of relationality and mediation. To perform for the camera, I had to focus on evoking a future viewer who would respond to the screen, but there were also viewers present in front of me, who were responding instantly to my words and gestures. This suggested the need to experiment separately with the relationality activated by physical presence in a shared space and by the relationality emerging between performer on screen and viewer off screen.



Figure 0.3 Cinzia Cremona, *Before You*, October 2008, live performance, Montague Arms, London.

Consequently, I performed exclusively for an audience, and only held a video camera in my hand to make an observation about the different performances I could make 'once I start the performance'. I experimented with making eye contact for long minutes without speaking and was thrilled by the intensity with which those present responded. The excitement for the speed and complete absorption of this exchange was a turning point for this project. I reflected on the dynamics of the sense of satisfaction I experienced in the immediate response, acceptance and confirmation of this reciprocal engagement. This suggested that the asynchronous exchange mediate by video by contrast allows self-awareness and reflection to emerge both for the performer and for the viewer.

I developed a better understanding of the mediation of video camera and screen in relation to the mediation of the stage, the different dynamics of power they generate and the difference in how they mobilise the gaze. It became clear that the focus of my questions revolves around the opportunities for self reflection offered by the asynchronous relationality produced by the screen, not the illusory immediacy of the physical and chronological presence of performer and viewer. The thrill of viewers' responses to my gaze appeared to close the relational loop with its speed of reactions and confusion of desires. Conversely, addressing the camera meant building relational possibilities that would endure beyond the moment, and that are

open to another who could be embodied in the address and evoked in my absence by my recorded image. The video equipment could mediate relationships that leave room for subjects to recognise this other/Other as part of themselves, whilst face-to-face relationships seemed to awake affects and thoughts that surge and evaporate without any gap for self-awareness and reflection.



Figure 0.4 Cinzia Cremona, *Before You*, 2009, live performance, James Taylor Gallery, London.

Finally, I tested a different combination of performance and video: I performed behind the audience hidden from view, but within the same space and the screen was positioned at the other end of the room. Knowing that the viewers were there, but not being able to perceive their responses or respond to them was quite confusing. This led me to intensify the strategy of seduction in order to converge the performance for the video camera and screen with that for the audience present.



Figure 0.5 Cinzia Cremona, *Before You Now*, installation view.

In *Before You Now* (5'30", 2013), I took advantage of these experiments and the insight they produced: in order to become the subject that performs the address to camera, I distanced myself from the illusion of being a unified and self-sufficient subject, and allowed the polyphony of voices of my subjectivity to resonate. With this approach, I was able to deploy the memory of formative relationships that contributed to my subjectivity in order to offer the opportunity for viewers to do the same. The relationality already activated by addressing the other beyond the camera in turn informed my shift into the subject that emerges on screen in the encounter with viewers. This has had a profound transformative effect on me, particularly in view of the fact that in *Before You Now* I perform *my authentic self*. The implication of this process are analysed in detail in chapter three. This series of works raises further questions about the dynamics of intimacy and trust in the public space of the gallery.

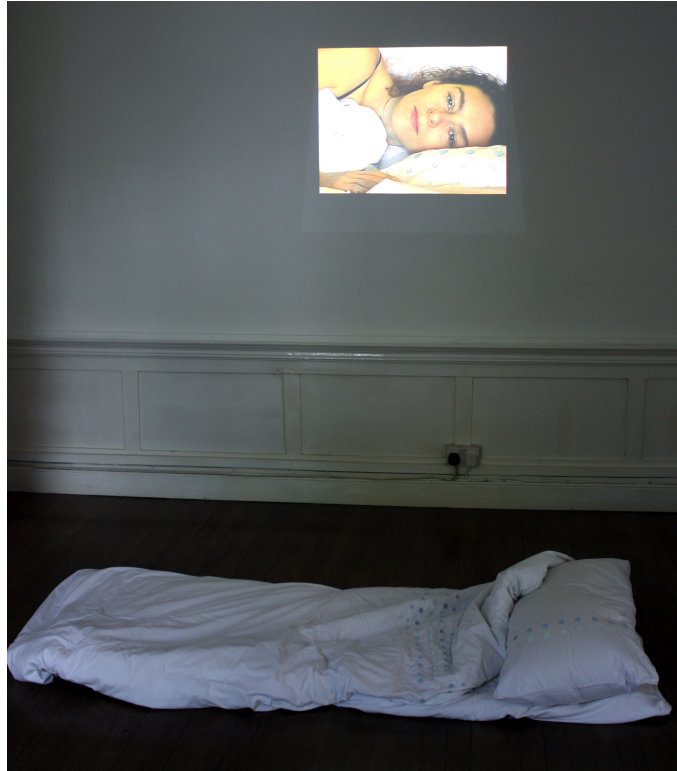


Figure 0.6 Cinzia Cremona, *The Other Person*, 2010. Installation view.

The Other Person (29', 2010) addresses these questions by constructing a situation in which viewers can choose their position in relation to suggested possibilities. This videoperformance includes a duvet and pillow with the same pattern in the image and on the floor. This generates concentric areas of intimacy: the bedding on the floor invites intimacy and physical proximity, but the public space of the gallery discourages it. Viewers can choose to look from a distance and encounter my eyes at the same height as theirs while imagining themselves in the bed. In the performance, I regularly close my eyes for several minutes to experiment with the sense of trust generated by the offer of shared intimacy in a public space. The image is placed at eye-height to balance the power relation between performer and viewer.

The intimacy invited by this work does not focus on seduction and sexual desire, but on shared vulnerability and trust. In this case, the projected image does not reference cinema, but experiments with a screen without a glass surface and a

frame. The aesthetic choice of projecting the videoperformance suggests that the performer is not addressing viewers from a separate space, but is softly present in the same room.

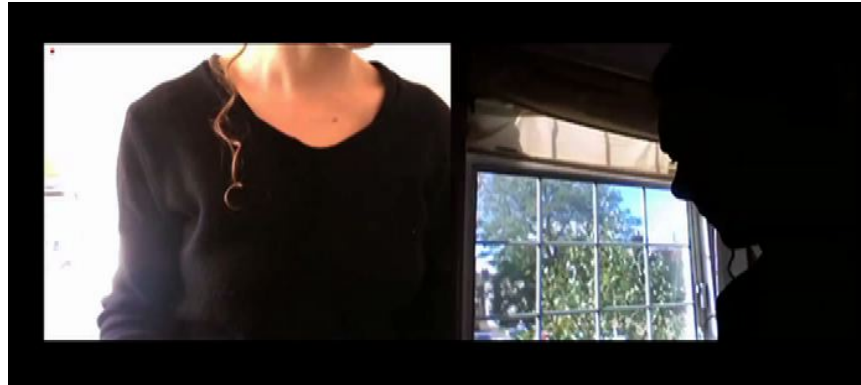


Figure 0.7 Cinzia Cremona, *Are You Talking to Me*, 2010, video still.

Conversely, *Are You Talking to Me* (5', 2010) experiments with the refusal to engage in relationality with viewers by denying eye contact and focusing on the *internal dialogue* of the performer. The split screen shows two images of myself from two different angles appearing to try and address each other. My face is not visible, and the high-pitch feedback sound interferes with my words and forms a barrier for the viewer.

This work explores a situation in which the viewer in front of the screen is not addressed directly, but evoked in the process of a dialogue internal to the performer. There is a *you*, but there is no offer of engaging in a relationship, although the possibility is evoked. *Are You Talking to Me* explores the implications of focusing exclusively on the memories of formative relationships and on the voices of the other/Other already present in the subject. It experiments with the negation of relationality performed by a subject absorbed in a dialogue with the past. This work exposes the dependence of mediated relationality on visual and aural strategies and the interdependent processes of representation and performativity.



Figure 0.8 Cinzia Cremona, *Wish You Were Here*, 2011, installation view at Gooden Gallery, London.

Wish You Were Here (3', 2011) explores the components that videoperformance shares with screen-based communication platforms like Skype. It simulates a Skype voicemail video message on a flat-screen monitor. This work adopts visual strategies that address the potential interactivity of the screen, as well as referencing networked screens and screen-based communication. I perform an eccentrically optimistic *recorded message* that reassures the caller about the perfect encounter we would have, if we were both present. A table set up for a romantic dinner for two corroborates the promise. *Wish You Were Here* evokes ideas of conviviality central to Nicholas Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) and mocks their inherent optimism. It bridges traditional videoperformance practice and networked practices by implying the use of Skype.

This work explores the potential of the screen to evoke liveness, synchronicity and relationality even when these are not present. It evidences the relevance of this research project for the analysis of networked screens and interactive videoperformances that adopt screens already loaded with these connotations. It also suggests future developments for practice and research that extend into the in depth analysis of the relational dynamics of those technologies.

0.2 The Dissertation

The concepts and questions that emerge from this body of work are contextualised in this dissertation. Writing and making have developed in combination with each other as a coherent research process. This dissertation is divided into two parts – the first outlines conceptual and artistic contexts, and the second analyses directly the relational dynamics of videoperformance. The chapters analyse the theoretical concepts that underpin a relational approach to videoperformance (chapter one), its artistic historical and contemporary contexts (chapter two), three case studies of the encounters between a specific viewer and performer and work (chapter three), and the transformative potential of this practice in the framework of intersubjective relationships (chapter four).

Chapter one traces the lineage of concepts and theories that inform the reading of relationality in videoperformance proposed in this project. It maps the influence of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity and the gaze on film, performance and moving image studies, before outlining the politics of gender, the concept of performativity and theories of mediated relationality in art practices. Performance studies (Phelan, 1993), technological materialism ('digital materialism', Manovich, 2002; 'materialist aesthetics', Cubitt, 1998), theories of the gaze (Lacan, 1977; Grosz, 1991; Mulvey, 1989), of performativity (Jones, 1998, 2006; Butler, 1993, 1997) and of relationality (Bourriaud, 2002, Butler, 2004b, 2005, 2009) contextualise and inform my videoperformances and their contemporary context. Similarly, feminist theoretical approaches are discussed and contribute to an understanding of the practice without foreclosing its potential multiple resonances. Relationality, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, intimacy, power, interpellation and performativity are expounded in the conceptual framework of critical theory. References to ethics are from the perspective of Judith Butler's social and political critical theory and do not extend into moral philosophy.

Mapping psychoanalytic and post-psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity and the gaze, and their influence on film, performance and moving image studies, this

survey touches on the politics of gender, the concept of performativity and theories of mediation in art practices. It aims to trace the debates that inform *Intimation* as a practice-based research project in dialogue with performance, new media, moving image and relational practices, as well as psychoanalytic, post- psychoanalytic and performativity theories.

Chapter two surveys and examines the history and practices of videoperformance in light of the contemporary concept of relationality and of the cross-fertilisation of the frames of reference of video, performance and new media. It explores the shared technological and conceptual history and convergence of videoperformance practices with networked and performance practices. In this context, the term *screen* refers to a variety of technologies developed and used to relay moving images, games, communication and data. These uses mark the screen *as such* with characteristics and connotations that inform its mediation of performance and relationality. This chapter traces the common origins of the screen of television and of telecommunication, and examines historical artworks that focus on their relational possibilities. It traces the parallel histories of videoperformance and networked practices, and surveys relevant contemporary approaches and tendencies in this field.

Chapter three marks a change of register, as it shifts to performative writing and expounds three videoperformances from a first person perspective. This writing practice holds open the contradictions produced in videoperformance and articulates them in forms that remain unstable, but can now be more easily examined, although not exhausted, by critical analysis (Phelan, 1997; Jones, 2006). This chapter hinges on the use of my subjectivity as a tool for researching the interplay of subjectivity and relationality as a viewer of Vito Acconci's *Theme Song* (1973), Annie Abraham's *Theme Song revisited (After Acconci)* (2011), and as the maker of my own work *Before You Now* (2013), part of the body of work *Intimations* (2007-2013). Making explicit how these works affect and produce aspects of subjectivity from a first person perspective reveals dynamics of the emergence of

relationality that could not otherwise be researched. Moreover, performative writing maintains the liveness and performativity of the relational encounter, while re-performing them in a form that is more easily integrated within critical analysis.

The two works by Acconci and Abrahams have been chosen as case studies because they engage with key themes and strategies of relationality in videoperformance – they evoke a viewer as *you*, intimacy, gendered subjectivity and desire. Because of the different genders of the two artists, the gap in their production date and their complementary approaches to relationality and technology, these two works highlight different facets of the key processes of mediated relationality. The first person account of the making of my last videoperformance completes this chapter with insight on my working methodology and its relational dynamics. Adopting performative writing to analyse my encounters with relevant videoperformances and with the other beyond the video camera allows me to approach relationality directly in the body of this text as it emerges and dissipates with the encounter itself. The combination of these three encounters reveals some key relational mechanisms: dynamics of the gaze, fragmentation of subjectivity, transformation, awareness, unconscious desire and ethical questioning. As these manifest the emergence of mediated performative relationality in videoperformance and raise ethical questions, they function as material and catalysts for the in-depth analysis of the last chapter.

Chapter four makes explicit and critically analyses the key processes that emerge in the previous chapter without reducing them to general statement or foreclosing their contradictions. The first person performed in chapter three returns as the grammatical subject and as the object of analysis of chapter four as I examine the positions I assume by participating in mediated relationships with Acconci and Abrahams. This analysis focuses first on the psychic dynamics of power that inform the process of interpellation (Butler, 1997c). It continues by examining aspects of gender, subjectivity, intimacy, the gaze, performativity and mediation in the context of the theories outlined in chapter one. This chapter and the conclusion do not exhaust the gamut of processes, dynamics and affects that are activated in

relationality, but demonstrate that videoperformance art practices can create effective opportunities for awareness, reflection and, in some cases, transformation.

To summarise, this project proposes that videoperformance materializes the relational interdependence of subjects in the framework of asymmetric and asynchronous intimacy mediated by video camera and screen. This approach is ethical in the sense proposed by Judith Butler: in my dependence on and responsiveness to others is the source of my ethical responsibility for their survival as subjects (Butler, 2009). The five videoperformances, the conceptual, historical and artistic contextualization, the first person accounts and critical analysis of encounters with videoperformance evidence the mechanisms of this process, address the research questions and support the value of my proposition. This bridges the gap between existing positions and offers an original approach from a number of perspectives – firstly, it reviews historical videoperformance art practices through the contemporary notions of relationality and performativity. This historical analysis examines the shared histories of technologies and practices of broadcast and telecommunication, and their convergence in the screen. The screen itself is analyzed directly as an effective mediator, and as the pivotal element for processes of transparent immediacy and hypermediacy (Bolter and Grusin, 2000). The screen is also interrogated from the perspective of the continuous shifting of subjectivity between unconscious desire and awareness. Most importantly, this project focuses attention on relationality as a performative, and on videoperformance as an effective transformative practice with political and ethical valence in the context of intersubjective relationships and social relations.

Part 1

Chapter One:
The Conceptual Context
From Subjectivity to Relationality

This first chapter maps the conceptual framework that informs this research project. It pays particular attention to the screen as the element that, ultimately, mediates relationality. It is loosely divided into two parts.

First it traces the lineage of concepts and theories interrogated in the five works I produced as part of *Intimations*. It delineates relevant Lacanian constructs, and traces their transformations in Mulvey's theory of the gendered gaze, in feminist and postfeminist discourses, and in the post-psychoanalytical writing of Judith Butler and Peggy Phelan, whose work is fundamental to the methodology of this project. This theoretical interplay of discourses on subjectivity and relationality underpins the discussion on mediated relationality in videoperformance in the second part of this dissertation.

The second part of this chapter outlines relevant critical analyses of art practices, mediums and concepts relevant to the investigation of mediated relationality in videoperformance: from Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetic* (2002) to new media studies, and from simulation to liveness and mediation (Auslander, 1999, and Bolter and Grusin, 2000). These discourses inform my own work and videoperformance in general as a practice that integrates technology and performance.

In this project, the terms *subjectivity* and *subject* integrate psychoanalytic, post-psychoanalytic and political discourses in the footsteps of Judith Butler, who combines a psychoanalytic approach with Foucault's and Althusser's analyses of power and ideology (Butler, 1997c). In Althusser's formulation of interpellation, 'individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects': the act of calling out *you* or a name and the response that this elicits confirm the relative positions of subjects in the context of the social norms that underpin ideology (Althusser, 1971, p.119, emphasis in original). Here the subject is more 'concrete' than the individual and not just an abstract concept. (p.115). Similarly, Foucault postulates 'subjection as the simultaneous subordination and forming of the subject'

(Butler, 1997c, p.7). In other words, the subject comes into being as an effect of the dynamics of power and of social norms that are already in existence and precede the subject itself. Both Althusser and Foucault contend that power is not external to the subject, but integrated in the subject itself 'in order that he [sic] shall (freely) accept his subjection' (Althusser, 1971, p.123). In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler examines interpellation at work in the constitution of the subject at birth, when a healthcare professional declares that the baby 'is a girl!' (Butler, 1993, p.XVII). The first official calling out that produces the subject is, paradoxically, not directly addressed to the individual, but produces the subject within interdependent systems of gender, language, power, class, race, religion, etc. Successive interpellations contribute to and strengthen this gendered subjectivity, adding to an unceasing accumulation of identifications. Informed by the contingencies of personal history, these identifications do not point back to an internal coherence of any kind, but aim to match the expectations of coherence inscribed in social norms (Butler, 1990).

Whereas Althusser implies that interpellation is received passively, Butler reformulates interpellation as 'a scene of address' that functions as a reciprocal negotiation of relative positions within available models and tests the limits of performable variations (Butler, 2005, p.50). From this perspective, subjectivity is continuously produced as a performative in the act of addressing and being addressed, although already situated in shared normativity. This implies that the subject interpellated may accept or reject some aspects of the interpellations to some extent, and in turn contribute to the emerging subjectivity of the interpellant. In this framework, how does a subject reject or modify this originary interpellation? How does 'the subject constituted through the address of the Other becom[e] then a subject capable of addressing others'? (Butler, 1997a, p.26).

Butler states that the 'vulnerability to the Other is never overcome in the assumption of agency' (Butler, 1997a, p.26). In this framework, performativity is always impure, based on citationality and iterability (Derrida, 1988). In other words, Butler bridges Althusser's account of interpellation and Austin's linguistic definition of a

performative utterance. J. L. Austin defines *performativity* as the quality of an utterance that, by being uttered, performs an act, and restricts performativity to a specific set of utterances under specific circumstances: rituals, ceremonies and procedures. The words spoken in 'the necessary conditions' constitute the actions verbalized (Austin, 1962, p.14). In the introduction to *Performative Realism: Interdisciplinary studies in art and media*, Gade and Jerslev remark that 'Austin argues that performative speech acts are *conventional* and *relational*' (Gade and Jerslev, 2005, p.9, emphasis in original). In other words, language is action within a set of social relations and conventions. *Performative* has since become a ubiquitous term used with a number of associated meanings in relation to performance art practice, technology and management studies. Jon McKenzie (2001) unravels this cluster of meanings by mapping the historical and contemporary inflections of the terms 'performance' and 'performativity', and their political, technological and cultural associations.

Butler's definition balances the formative power of existing and evolving social relations, models and pressures with the fact that one can '[c]onsider gender, for instance, as a *corporeal style*, an 'act,' as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' itself carries the double-meaning of 'dramatic' and 'non-referential.' (Butler, 1988, pp.521-522). Significantly, a signifier (text, utterance, representation, etc.) is performative in that it informs the subject that is supposed to precede it. Butler suggests that the constructive power of performativity lies in the combination of variations of repeat-performances of normative models: whilst each repetition constitutes a citation of 'an iterable model', each different performance extends the range of iterable models (Butler, 1993, p.XXI). From this perspective, Butler's work encompasses and transcends phenomenological and psychoanalytic models of subjectivity to emphasize the political and cultural resonances of performativity. Butler maintains that performativity is a practice of citation of norms, but one which is not prescriptive, on account of its existence in time and of the instability created by the interdependence of the various frames of

reference: '[n]ormative schemes are interrupted by one another, they emerge and fade depending on broader operations of power, and very often come up against spectral versions of what it is they claim to know.' (Butler, 2009, p.4). In other words, unstable subjects perform their subjectivities according to unstable sets of norms and prohibitions, and in relation to other unstable subjects as they continuously redefine each other and norms themselves.

Butler mobilises interpellation and performativity as complementary relational dynamics generative of subjectivity and always at work between subjects. In this context, performativity is understood as the power of discourse to constitute and continually modify subjectivity, 'not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains' (Butler, 1993, p.XII). Consequently, subjectivity is a product of relationality – a series of continuously shifting instantaneous performatives producing ways of being and, at the same time, restricting them, particularly in relation to gender. The subject materially manifests this position in active behaviours by repeating and citing appropriate gendered attributes. Within these processes of repetition and citation, Butler complements the normative and formative dynamics of power proposed by Althusser and Foucault with the possibility of resistance and performativity attributed to the psyche by Freud and Lacan: 'the psyche, which includes the unconscious, is precisely what exceeds the imprisoning effects of the discursive demand to inhabit a coherent identity, to become a coherent subject.' (Butler, 1997c, p.86). Lacan proposes an incomplete, fragmented and unstable subject, marred by illusions of wholeness, awareness and reciprocity, lead by unconscious desires and formed in relations mediated by language. (Lacan, 2006). By merging psychoanalytic and political discourses, Butler proposes a theory of ethical responsibility that informs equally intersubjective relationships and social relations (Butler, 1997c; 2004a):

I speak as an "I", but do not make the mistake of thinking that I know precisely all that I am doing when I speak in that way. I find that my very formation implicates the other in me, that my foreignness to myself is,

paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others. Do I need to know myself in order to act responsibly in social relations? Surely, to a certain extent, yes. But is there ethical valence to my unknowingness? ... I cannot think the question of responsibility alone, in isolation from the other. (Butler, 2005, p.84).

This key passage establishes the fragmentation of subjectivity as the condition of the subject's 'responsiveness to others, even a condition of our responsibility *for* them' (p.88, emphasis in original). Butler proposes an ethical and political discourse founded on the subject's unknowingness and its 'unwilled, unchosen' susceptibility to others inherent in its own formation (p.87).

Although Butler offers a post-psychoanalytic reading of subjectivity, it is important in this context to define some Lacanian constructs that have been reinterpreted as part of a number of theoretical approaches: other/Other, desire, unconscious, extimacy, the real, encounter, repetition and, most importantly, the gaze. Jacques Lacan is not the originator of the concept of gaze, but the thinker with whom the term is most closely associated. Peter Wollen (2007) traces Lacan's approach back to Hegel's distinction between animal and human desire, and highlights the importance of Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's theory of the human gaze in this context. Lacan states that 'man's [sic] desire is the desire of the Other' (Lacan, 1998, p.38). In other words, the subject desires to be the object of desire of the Other. The Other with a capital O indicates the completely separate and different other, which relays the weight of language and social norms, and which is radically alien. The Other informs the unconscious and *bears* the gaze in a movement shaped like a Moebius strip: the gaze originates in the unconscious desire of the subject and is attributed to the Other as returning to the subject (Lacan, 1998, p.235). In this approach, subjectivity is built on a series of relationships that convey social norms and rules (the law). The Other then precedes the subject and continues to act upon it through language and in the dynamics of the gaze. When the gaze is at work, the radical alterity of the Other is reduced to a function of the subject itself and it becomes the *other* with a small o, or *object petit a*.

The *object petit a* embodies the function of confirming the symbolic appearance of wholeness that the subject perceives in its mirror image (the ideal I) (Lacan, 2006, p.76). Desire re-enacts foundational gender and power relations that Lacan traces back to the infant's relationships with its mother, father and its own image in the mirror. The subject's reflection in the mirror conveys a sense of totality and plenitude that does not match present or future states, and that Lacan describes as 'an alienating identity' (p.78). This foundational moment in the development of the subject also constitutes 'the threshold of the visible world', as the subject begins to perceive itself as part of the scopic field (p.77). Subjects progressively tend to substitute the attachment to this impossible totality with relationships with others, except in narcissism, where the subject remains bound by its own unconscious desires and the gaze stops it from seeing others as subjects (as Other).

From this perspective, in the scopic field subjectivity is informed by its own relation with the symbolic lack and by its visibility to others. This omnipresent disembodied gaze carries the power of the Other – laws, rules and prohibitions that shape the cultural and social environment in and through language, but also shape unconscious desire itself. Whereas looking physiologically engages images and appearances, the gaze activates the complex significance of objects and subjects, engaging desire and language. Language and the Other shape the unconscious and structure it into three orders – the *real*, the *symbolic* and the *imaginary* (Lacan, 1991). The imaginary is the field of imagination, images and illusions, and it is structured by the symbolic order in the visual field. The symbolic is the order of normativity and the law. The real (or the Thing, from Freud's 'Das Ding') is undifferentiated as it cannot be accessed via the symbolic or imaginary orders. It structures the unconscious and as such it pulsates in and out of consciousness without being grasped or resolved.

From a relational perspective, Lacan maintains that although subjects can look into each other's eyes,

the level of reciprocity between the gaze and the gazed at is, for the subject, more open than any other to alibi. That is why we should try to avoid, by our interventions in the session, allowing the subject to establish himself on this level. On the contrary, we should cut him [sic] off from this point of ultimate gaze, which is illusory (Lacan, 1998, p.77).

In this paragraph, reciprocity is qualified as both the 'ultimate gaze' and 'illusory'. The Latin root of alibi – 'the old locative case of *alius*: another' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2014) – suggests the possibility that the gaze evokes other others while appearing to operate in reciprocity with the present Other. The term alibi also evokes an elsewhere, indicating that the illusion of reciprocity leads the subject to a destination different from its interlocutor. Nevertheless, the meaning of the term reciprocity incorporates, as well as mutuality and symmetry, an alternating movement (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2014). In other words, although Lacan postulates the illusory quality of a contemporary and symmetrical reciprocity of the gaze, he leaves open the possibility of an asynchronous, asymmetrical alternating reciprocity.

The term alibi also resonates with Lacan's definition of the unconscious as 'another place' between perception and consciousness, which is also the place of the Other, and where the subject is constituted (Lacan 1998, p.56). The primary process that forms the unconscious and the subject is described here as a first encounter with the real, which remains unresolved and unrealised. Chance events recall this first encounter that tends to repeat as *the same*: 'the real is that which always comes back to the same place – to the place where the subject in so far as he [sic] thinks, where the *res cogitans*, does not meet it.' (p.49). In other words, the real always comes back to the same place where the first missed encounter happened and where thought (awareness, consciousness) refuses to go. Central to the subject and to the unconscious is the oscillation (or pulsation, in Lacan's words) between 'automaton' and 'tuché' – two terms first proposed by Aristotle and adopted to indicate respectively the return within a network of signifiers, and the encounter with the real (Lacan, 1998, p.53). The automaton activates reproduction – 'a making

present, in act' or 'the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs' (p.50 and p.53). On the other hand, in the *tuché* a formative past event that remains unresolved is repeated, without being reproduced. This primary encounter with the real gains the quality of being *missed* as its memory and legacy continue to activate desire and to bring the real to the surface (Lacan, 1998).

This pulsation describes the continuous appearance and disappearance of the unconscious (consequently of the real and of desire) to consciousness. Lacan maintains that '[t]he dynamic that is attached to the consciousness as such, the attention the subject brings to his [sic] own text, remains up to this point, as Freud has stressed, outside theory and, strictly speaking, not yet articulated' (Lacan, 1998, p.83). In this quote, Lacan clarifies that the subject of psychoanalysis is the subject in the power of the unconscious and of desire. Lacan does not state that it is impossible for subjects to bring attention to their own speech, actions, or relationships, but that the dynamic of consciousness has not yet been articulated in theory. In other words, *this* theory – psychoanalysis – has not *yet* articulated the dynamic of consciousness, but only the dynamic of the unconscious, and of subjects for whom consciousness and bringing attention to their own text is an ideal and leads to 'méconnaissance': misrecognition.

Within Lacanian analytical theory, the artwork avoids the gaze, which acts as a 'trap for the gaze' (Lacan, 1998, p.101). Lacan suggests that when approaching an artwork, a viewer is invited to 'lay down his [sic] gaze there as one lays down one's weapons,' (p.101). In other words, the artwork is incapable of bearing and returning the gaze of the subject, and viewers are left to look, watch and listen. In videoperformance, the screen relays the fluctuation between gaze and awareness of the performer herself, and offers the opportunity for performative reciprocal relationality to emerge. Thus, the image of the performer on screen oscillates between the functions of image/artwork and of other/Other, shifting in and out of the gaze, awareness and the encounter with the real.

In Lacan's theories, the dynamics of gaze and desire reflect and perpetuate the dominant patriarchal structure, particularly in the different relation men and women have with the phallus (symbolic of power). This has stimulated a number of feminist thinkers to utilise this approach to expose gender inequalities embedded in language and culture. This chapter does not aim to present an account of feminist elaborations of psychoanalysis, but to identify some significant voices that have influenced the discourses on relationality and intersubjectivity relevant to this analysis of videoperformance. In this context, Laura Mulvey stands as a seminal figure for her early investigation of moving image and photographic practices in relation to psychoanalytic constructs. Mulvey's examination of the dynamics of the gaze in classic Hollywood cinema has been influencing the reading of moving image work and gender relations since the publication of *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* in the journal *Screen* in 1975. This extensively quoted essay postulates that the narrative structure of classic Hollywood films perpetuates the patriarchal phallogocentric pattern of passive female and active male roles. In this cinematic tradition, the different symbolic relations with the phallus (signifier of power) are reproduced in the narrative positions of characters – female figures are exposed to be looked at and are punished if they act outside the rules of patriarchy, whilst male figures drive the narrative. In Mulvey's view, this fosters in spectators the association of active gaze with the male gender and of passive 'to-be-looked-at-ness' with the female gender (Mulvey, 1975, p.11).

Despite the precise delimitation of materials in this analysis, these considerations on viewers' gaze in relation to gender representation in moving image art practices cannot be overlooked. Mulvey states her intention to appropriate psychoanalytic theory 'as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form.' (p.6). More generally, she combines the association between the image of woman as lacking the phallus with an analysis of the representation of woman on screen, aiming to destroy the pleasure in looking structured in the patriarchal order by analysing its mechanisms 'in order to conceive

a new language of desire.’ (p.8). In this analysis of Freudian and Lacanian concepts, the gendered gaze is examined in relation to the images on screen. Mulvey identifies the erotic male pleasure of looking at his other (woman) as an object of his desire (scopophilia) as central to the relationship between spectator and moving image representation. She also highlights the complementary fear of castration associated with this gaze (and the association between image of woman and lack) and the narcissistic gaze of spectators in the misrecognition of the character on screen as an image of the wholeness of their subjectivity. Also published in *Screen* in 1975, Christian Metz’s *The Imaginary Signifier* sets out a parallel psychoanalytic approach to cinema. This author analyses ‘the spectator-screen relationship as a mirror identification’ and a ‘fantasy relation’ (Metz, 1975, p.18). Both Mulvey and Metz regard the screen of cinema not as a mediator of relationships, but as an object that spectators adopt for a continuation of their inner dialogue generated by formative relationships (the objet petit a). Moreover, they both adopt a transitive concept of the gaze, originating with the spectator and targeting the character on screen, whilst Lacan proposes a gaze returning to the subject that originates it.

In the introduction to the collection of essays *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Mulvey recontextualises her approach to male and female gaze by commenting that in 1975 ‘[t]he priority was to establish the psyche’s political reality and its manifestations in image and representation.’ (Mulvey, 1989, p. xii). *Afterthoughts to Visual Pleasure* (1989), redresses the gender-imbalanced association between active/male and passive/female by positing that the female spectator can assume a male gaze and partake of the active identification with the hero in the narrative. This does not contradict the analysis in the original essay, as it confirms the assumption that the representation of woman in the moving image signifies lack of the phallus, passivity, sexuality and to-be-looked-at-ness. A more sophisticated elaboration of the female gaze appears in Mulvey’s writing of the 1990s: the collection of essays *Fetishism and Curiosity* (1996), and the essay *Pandora’s Box: Topographies of Curiosity* in

particular, develop what was a passing observation in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. The curious gaze – animated by the desire to know – is an active gaze available to women. Nevertheless, Mulvey does not posit the active feminine curious gaze (summed up by the concept and dynamics of fetishism), as a theoretical replacement for the objectifying male gaze, but as an ongoing dialogue and productive tension. Fetishism allows the paradoxical contemporary presence of knowledge and belief, which can be seen as parallel to the productive tension between awareness (consciousness) and the gaze. Tracing the influence of *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* on film criticism and moving image practices, Jane Gaines (1990) emphasises how focusing on the psychoanalytic power of narrative and male visual pleasure fostered a limiting modernist counter-culture of aesthetic disruption of editing, of camera angles and of continuity. But in the essay *Cosmetics and Abjection: Cindy Sherman 1977-87*, Mulvey discusses an ‘oscillation effect’ as an indication of postmodern aesthetics: ‘The viewer looks, recognises a style or trope, doubts, does a doubletake [sic], recognises the quotation; and meanings shift and change their reference like shifting perceptions of perspective from an optical illusion.’ (Mulvey, 1996, p.73).

This shift from modern to postmodern aesthetics echoes the shift from feminism to postfeminism identified by Elisabeth Wright as a ‘strategic move made by feminism ... to consider more directly what the postmodern notion of the dispersed unstable subject might bring it.’ (Wright, 2000, pp.4-5). Whilst the Lacanian premise of the importance of language in the formation of subjectivity remains axiomatic, the female body becomes a critical source of ‘the subversiveness of writing the feminine’ (p.7). In *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*, Elizabeth Grosz sketches the uneasy relationship between feminisms and psychoanalysis, and the relative positions from which feminist thinkers have dialogued with Lacanian and Freudian constructs. Her two categories of ‘dutiful daughters’ and ‘defiant women’ are embodied by Julia Kristeva, who accepts ‘Lacan’s conception of an unknowable feminine *jouissance*’ that woman experiences in her pre-oedipal connection with the

real, and Luce Irigaray, who conducts 'an exploration of a new theoretical space and language which may be able to undermine patriarchal and phallocentric domination of the sphere of representations and, more positively, to provide a mode of representation for women as women.' (Grosz, 1991, p.163 and p.168).

In this postmodern and poststructuralist context, Peggy Phelan directly addresses the limitations of discussing the relationship between image and looker on the basis of representation: '[a]s a representation of the real the image is always, partially, phantasmatic. In doubting the authenticity of the image, one questions as well the veracity of she who makes and describes it.' (Phelan, 1993, p.1). In other words, the image that attempts to represent a dispersed unstable subject cannot relay the totality of this subject – just like the signifier cannot convey the whole meaning of the signified – but, also, it is haunted by a supplement evoked by the image itself. Far from evoking a totality that the fragmented subject cannot match, the image questions its own referent, and suggests a subject that is, at the same time, not enough and too much. Phelan advocates a shift from the narcissistic gaze – the subject seeking confirmation of its own totalising image from the other – to a gaze that has already accepted its lack of totality, and which can therefore offer and seek more ethically sound modulations of relationality. This approach re-invests the other and the gaze with a constructive political purpose by utilising 'the productive power of facing the inevitability of annihilation, castration, misrecognition. For if one could face these features of psychic life, a different order of sociality might be possible.' (Phelan. 1993, p.25). This post-psychoanalytic ethical stance resonates with Butler's position expounded above, and supports this project's analysis of videoperformance art practice as capable of intervening in intersubjective relationships and social relations.

Phelan's project of reconfiguring the interplay of the politics of representation with the Lacanian discourse on appearances, and a wider sense of interpersonal relationality and sociality forms an important part of the methodology of this project. Phelan proposes to re-examine the productive 'relationship between the real and

the representational, between the looker and the given to be seen, [as] a version of the relation between self and other.' (Phelan. 1993, p.3). On this basis, the politics of representation and of the gaze do not dominate the encounter with the other, but become part of a wider discourse about relationality and sociality:

While there has been much written about the gaze, particularly by feminist film theorists and art historians, insufficient attention has been paid to the desire for a reciprocal gaze. The desire to see is a manifestation of the desire to be seen, in live performance as well as in the spectator's relation to inanimate representation. (p.18).

Although Phelan is credited with privileging the encounter of live performance over that of other art mediums, she also states that '[e]xamining the politics of the exchange of gaze across these diverse representational mediums [photographs, paintings, films, theatre, political protests, and performance art] leads to an extended definition of the field of performance.' (p.4). Within this expanded field, live performance art practice retains the exclusive quality of being 'nonreproductive' (p.148). In this context, the term reproduction references Walter Benjamin's discourse on technological reproduction in relation to the original artwork in industrial production systems and in the exchange economy of capitalism (Phelan, 2001, p.36). But Phelan also comments that '[w]hen Benjamin considered the loss of originality in the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, he did not fully anticipate the role of temporality at the heart of the living performative encounter with art.' (Phelan, 2001, p. 45). 'Temporality' evokes here the different layers of meaning that resonate around an artwork at different times, even at short intervals and for the same subject, as each encounter performatively enacts the subjectivities and relationships of viewer and work/artist anew.

Amelia Jones's (2006) notion of performativity complements Phelan's by focusing on the body: she analyses the production of subjectivity as a performative in the encounter between the body of the viewer and the represented body of the artist in photography, videoperformance, film and digital mediums, but, in contrast to Phelan, does not extend this analysis to sociality and relationality. As the body is

itself already representational (for example, as a bearer of symptoms), these mediated encounters enact the foundational intersubjectivity that informs the development of embodied subjects in the first instance. Jones maintains that '[t]hese projects insistently pose the subject as *intersubjective* (contingent on the other) rather than complete within itself.' (Jones, 2006, p.10). She articulates

our relationship to the photograph of another subject's body (Aguilar's, for example) through what Merleau-Ponty calls *intercorporeity*: the "coiling over of the visible upon the visible" which animates other bodies besides our own; we understand that the screen is profound – that "what is proper to the visible is ... to be the surface of an inexhaustible depth." (Jones, 2006, p.68).

It is interesting to compare Jones's analysis of intersubjectivity in videoperformance with Rosalind Krauss's proposition that the raw material of videoperformance is *narcissism*. Krauss equates the physical positioning of video camera and monitor either side of the artist's body to 'an opening and closing parenthesis' that creates a situation of 'self-encapsulation' (Krauss, 1976, p.52). In other words, the artist turns his gaze onto himself closing a feedback loop that excludes the viewer. Krauss applies the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism to the practice of the performer watching oneself on the monitor whilst producing a videoperformance. She focuses on the screen in its function of mirror for the performer, ignoring how this use of the monitor may function for viewers. Whereas Krauss sees performers talking to themselves and confirming their own self-sufficiency, Jones positions herself as the addressee of the artist's gestures and words. Although Jones proposes a permeable tactile screen, mediator of intersubjective processes, her discourse folds back onto itself to point at how these dynamics construct subjectivities. By adopting a phenomenological perspective, Jones re-instates a dominant transitive gaze – an embodied gaze that encounters the other's represented and mediated gaze, and recognises it as also embodied. The representation of the artist's body absorbs its own material support so that 'the video screen *becomes* the skin/the body' (Jones, 1998, p.200, emphasis in original). In this phenomenological approach, the

relationships activated by the encounters between screens and bodies/selves are instrumental to the emergence of subjects and not the focus of analysis.

Jones assimilates Laura U. Marks's concept of haptic images as images that 'do not invite identification with a figure so much as they encourage a bodily relationship between the viewer and the image.' (Marks, 2002, p.3). Whilst Marks proposes a narrow definition of haptic images as low resolution, fragmented and difficult to read – as these qualities move viewers' focus towards the surface of the video as if this was its skin – she also offers a theoretical premise to articulate the relationality mediated by the screen. Referring to Sobchack (1992) and her understanding of 'viewing as an exchange between two bodies', Marks conceives of an act of viewing in which 'both I and the object of my vision constitute each other' (Marks, 2002, p.13). Marks and Sobchack develop their argument on the phenomenological premises of an embodied viewer in-the-world, and conceive of screens and moving images as relational and active in themselves (Sobchack, 1994). These authors share with Jones the vision of an embodied subjectivity, whose being-in-the-world is also informed by 'televisual bodies' and by 'encounters – both direct and indirect – with the *objective* phenomena of photography, cinematic, televisual, and computer technologies and the networks of communication and texts they produce.' (Jones, 2006 and Sobchack, 2004, p.136, emphasis in original).

These authors deploy embodiment and affects as theoretical positions that counterpoint the perceived Lacanian emphasis on language. Lacan himself clarifies that he aims to maintain the indissoluble link between language and affect, without establishing any artificial separation and hierarchy (Lacan, 1991). A possible definition of affect as 'synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*' reveals resonances with concepts of the real and with dynamics of relationality (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, p.2, emphasis in original). Although theories of affect vary in focus and premises, they generally attempt to rebalance the perceived dominance of language in critical theory by privileging emotions, the body, becomings, and by postulating the possibility of 'unmediated relatedness' (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010,

p.4). Conversely, Lacan maintains that '[t]he affective is not like a special density which would escape an intellectual accounting. It is not to be found in a mythical beyond of the production of the symbol which would precede the discursive formulation.' (Lacan, 1991, p.57). In the unconscious, affects are bound to thoughts and past encounters, and '*structured like a language*' (Lacan, 1998, p.20, emphasis in original). Contrary to his deliberate attempts not to separate affect and cognition, this author has been frequently accused of privileging language over emotions (for example, Seigworth and Gregg, 2010). To counterpoint this perceived imbalance, writers like Bracha Ettinger (2006) highlight the affective and embodied component of encounter, intimacy and events that resist signification. Ettinger proposes an encounter-event rooted in prebirth bodily and psychic intimate sharing in which intersubjectivity is co-produced (Ettinger, 2006). This is the framework of what Ettinger names *the matrixial*, which offers a complementary feminine symbolic structure to the Lacanian phallus. Branislava Kuburovic applies Ettinger's approach to the encounter-event to examine the 'space where traumas are redefused' in the mediated intimate encounters of performance and videoperformance (Chatzichristodoulou and Zerihan, 2012, p.40). Kuburovic suggests that affect is the 'main means of exchange' of intimacy and, following Ettinger, inverts the position of some Lacanian terms, proposing, for example, that intimacy provokes a collapse of the alibi (defined as 'elsewhere') (p.41).

Theories of affect resonate with the Lacanian concept of 'extimacy' – an understanding of intimacy with the other as carrier of the Other that defies the distinction between interiority and exteriority, and that highlights the subject as a loose, distributed entity (Lacan, 1992, p.139). The Other informs the unconscious of the subject, and lies at the same time inside and outside the subject, making this distinction (inside/outside) unnecessary. This understanding of intimacy is fundamental to a concept of relationality that does not reside in the subject, in the videoperformance, between subjects or between subject and screen, but that

emerges as a performative in encounters that are intimate, mediated and ephemeral.

To maintain these qualities of the encounter with performance in their critical practice, Phelan and Jones develop the method of 'performative writing' (Phelan, 1993, p.148). This methodology evokes subjectivity as and in relation:

Thinking about writing as a material practice, I want to stipulate a more specific sense of the performative self or subjectivity as the performed relation between or among subjects, the dynamic engagement of a contingent and contiguous (rather than continuous) relation between the writer and his/her subject(s), subject-selves, and/or reader(s) (Pollock, 1998, p.86).

In *Mourning Sex*, Phelan states that she wants performative writing 'to enact the effective force of the performance event again, as it plays itself out in an ongoing temporality made vivid by the psychic process of distortion' (Phelan, 1997, p.12). In more general terms, Della Pollock describes performative writing as 'evocative', 'metonymic', 'subjective', 'nervous', 'citational' and 'consequential'. (Pollock, 1998, p.80). Whilst Phelan relies on these qualities to re-enact in writing the process of disappearance of live performance, Jones (2006) deploys them to re-enact the interdependent subjectivity of performer and viewer in her writing on live and mediated performances.

Amelia Jones focuses closely on the transformations that her subjectivity undergoes as she fully engages with the embodied subjectivity of the artist, and maintains that videoperformance puts the subjectivities of artist and viewer in active contact. She defines body art as a broader and narrower category of practices than performance art:

[t]he term "body art" thus emphasizes the implication of the body (or what I call the "body/self," with all of its apparent racial, sexual, gender, class, and other apparent or unconscious identifications) in the work. ... I am interested in works ... that take place through an enactment of the artist's body, whether it be in a "performance" setting or in the relative privacy of the studio (Jones, 1998, p.13).

Although Jones presupposes 'a "disintegrated" or "dispersed" self', she also positions the body as the "'hinge' between nature and culture', fixing it as reliable centre of subjective experience (p.13). Jones's art critical practice develops in dialogue with artworks and artists, selectively integrating concepts from the psychoanalytic tradition into a phenomenological, embodied and affect-centred approach. The self remains the centre of her analysis and discourse, although she also acknowledges this embodied self as 'dialectically articulated in relation to others in a continually negotiated exchange of desires and identifications' (Jones, 1998, p.3). From this perspective, relationality remains subordinated to the embodied performing and viewing selves. Conversely, Nicolas Bourriaud succeeds in focusing attention on the relational processes in participatory and performative art practices.

Bourriaud adopts Guattari's 'polyphonic definition of subjectivity' as 'modelled on the difference which forms it itself, on the principle of otherness' and approaches the gaze via film critic Serge Daney: '[t]he work tries to catch my gaze, the way the newborn child "asks for" its mother's gaze.' (Bourriaud, 2002, pp.90-91 and p.23). Not an academic conceptualization of relational processes, but a collection of the curator's statements about approaches emerging in contemporary art in the 1990s, this text nevertheless crystallizes the association of the term *relational* with a particular set of contemporary art practices and projects. Developed from a curatorial perspective, *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) redeploys concepts from Marxist theory via Althusser's late writing (encounter) and from Lacanian psychoanalysis via film theory (the gaze and desire) to support the proposition that artistic form 'only assumes its texture (and only acquires a real existence) when it introduces human interactions. ... The artistic practice thus resides in the invention of relations between consciousness [sic]' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.22). Relations are generically defined as 'relations outside the field of art (in contrast to relations inside it, structuring its socio-economic underlay): relations between individuals and groups, between the artist and the world, and, by way of transitivity, between the beholder

and the world.’ (p.26). Specifically interested in the *interstice* and in conviviality as relational forms, Bourriaud clarifies that

the purpose is not conviviality, but the *product of* this conviviality. Otherwise put, a complex form that combines a formal structure, objects made available to visitors, and the fleeting image issuing from collective behaviour.’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p.83, emphasis in original).

Approaching relationality in art practice from a different perspective, Grant Kester (2004) develops the more explicitly political concept of *dialogical aesthetics*. Based on ethical principles derived from Bakhtin and Levinas, dialogical practices also sustain a sense of subjectivity built through face-to-face dialogue. Kester maintains that this approach ‘requires that we understand the work of art as a process of communicative exchange rather than a physical object.’ (Kester, 2004, p.90). Whilst Bourriaud promotes art practices based on convivial relationality, Kester focuses on overtly political interventions in the process of sociality.

Despite the vague meaning given to ‘relations with the world’ and ‘human relationships’ throughout the book, *Relational Aesthetics* makes a strong case for the performative relational power of the ‘constructed situations’ of performance and moving image works. The chapter *Screen Relations* opens with a statement about the convergence of cinematic, video and computer display devices towards *the screen*, which is read as a symptom of a contemporary way of looking. Yet, Bourriaud fails to analyze and develop the reciprocal influences between moving image, performance, networked art practices and relational concerns, despite observing in passing that ‘in the nineties’ art, while interactive technologies developed at an exponential rate, artists were exploring the arcane mysteries of sociability and interaction.’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p.70). Josephine Bosma addresses a similar criticism to Bourriaud based on the observation that new media artists create a sense of conviviality and hospitality to capture the attention of the audience: ‘These environments develop a personal relationship between artist and audience, even if this relationship at times represents only a shadow of the concrete realities of real person to person interactions.’ (Bosma, 2006, p.34). Bosma understands the

Internet as an intimate space in which anybody can create mediated but close relationships with anybody else. As the Internet itself splinters into a variety of personal and mobile media, this becomes an increasingly common experience. In this context, Bosma fails to note that the screen is the main interface of these increasingly relational experiences.

Anna Munster (2005) considers relational aesthetics a fad, and proposes instead networked and distributed aesthetics:

[a] distributed aesthetics, then, might be better characterised as a continuous emergent project, situated somewhere between the drift away from coherent form and the drift of aesthetics into relations with new formations, including social (networked) formations. (Munster and Lovink, 2005).

In other words, the network is in constant expansion and impossible to capture in an overview. In this continual process of change, intersubjective and social relations shift and emerge reconfigured. Relations, artworks and artefacts do not consolidate in fixed states, media or boundaries; they have no controllable context of end-use, and are navigated as hypertext, mashed, re-performed and remediated (Munster, 2006). Moreover, '[n]ew media are increasingly distributed media and they require a rethink of aesthetics beyond the twinned concepts of form and medium that continue to shape analysis of the social and the aesthetic' (Munster and Lovink, 2005). The expression 'new media' functions as a 'shorthand for a range of practices and names, including [digital art,] "art and technology", "computer art", "systems art", and so on' (Paul, 2008a, p.13). Its meaning changes with the emergence of new technologies and their possibilities, and it is generally used to indicate a focused use of recently developed technological tools. Munster and Lovink propose to shift the focus from *new* to *networked* and acknowledge the distributed relationality of art processes and practices that are inevitably informed by networked technologies:

New media ... require a distributed aesthetics. Distributed aesthetics must deal simultaneously with the dispersed and the situated, with asynchronous production and multi-user access to artifacts (both

material and immaterial) on the one hand, and the highly individuated and dispensed allotment of information/media, on the other. (Munster and Lovink, 2005)

Conversely, Lev Manovich (2002) examines the role of technological tools from a formalist and materialist perspective. He describes his approach as *digital materialism*, and proposes to read the shift in the functions of screens from 'classical' (Renaissance painting), to 'dynamic' (moving image such as cinema and video), 'real-time' (television and radar) and 'interactive' (computer) screens (Manovich, 2002, p.103). His analysis rests on a sense of evolution of the concept of representation away from static images: as dynamic and real-time screens display the products of scanning processes, producing, at times, only impressions of static images, Manovich proposes a 'new kind of representation for which we do not yet have a term.' (p.100). Moreover, interactive screens 'change our concept of what an image is – because they turn the viewer into an active user.' (p.183). Examining telepresence – 'being "present" in a real remote physical location via a live video image' – telecommunication and teleaction, this writer theorizes an integrated aesthetics of users interacting with representations, users accessing information and users telecommunicating with others (p.165).

Surprisingly, Manovich maintains that

'[d]espite persistent experiments of avant-garde artists with the modern technologies of real-time communication – radio in the 1920s, video in the 1970s, the Internet in the 1990s – the ability to communicate over a physical distance in real time did not seem by itself to inspire fundamentally new aesthetic principles the way film or tape recording did.' (p.162).

This statement seems surprising because it implies that film and tape recording *by themselves* inspired '... fundamentally new aesthetic principles'. Manovich appears to exclude from this process the influence of television, and to ignore the fact that the technologies of photography, film and tape recording developed in parallel with those that made telecommunication possible (Gere, 2006a). In fact, in the United States in 1927 the

[f]irst public transmission of television pictures over telephone lines, using a prototype two-way television system, Picture Telephone, is made by American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) in US over 200 miles from New Jersey to Washington DC Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover and the AT&T president Walter Gifford speak to each other (Fisher, 2009).



Figure 1.1 AT&T President Walter Gifford leads the first American demonstration of television in 1927.

The history of the television screen – and, by extension, of the video screen – and the history of personal communication are tightly woven from their origins. Early computer screens were based on the same technology used to display television images (Bellis, 1997-2014). In a sense, the screens of television and computers have recently re-converged after a variety of intermediate technological phases. More recently video facilities have become integrated into mobile phones, and have allowed users to record, watch and share visual messages within small time intervals. Since smartphones started to converge with videophones and cameraphones in 2004 (Nokia 7650) the touchscreen has become a common experience, and has added another relational dimension to the screen itself (Webdesigner Depot, s.d.). This convergence of technologies and screens has been

associated with the idea of *intermedia*, a term developed in the context of the Fluxus art movement in the 1960s. Yvonne Spielmann understands intermedia as ‘a concept of merging based on historically separate developments. In the case of digital media, all different media are integrated; that is to say they merge with each other within the same technical structure.’ (Spielmann, 2005, pp.133-134). From this perspective, the screen is re-converging – returning to its original, undifferentiated use as visual display.

In 1970, Gene Youngblood observed that the intermedia network of television, cinema and communication technologies were the privileged system for ‘seeing each other’ and ‘dealing with each other’ – for interpersonal relationships: ‘[a] major factor in living in an overpopulated world is that we really *cannot* deal with each other directly.’ (Youngblood, 1970, p.351, emphasis in original). Youngblood foresaw the ‘need to realize that we can’t really see each other face to face. We only see each other through the subconsciousness of some other system.’ (p.351). The convergence of the power of television, cinema, satellite and telecommunication technologies suggests to Youngblood the end of mass audience and the potential for ‘[t]he intermedia network [to] become metabolically and homeostatically interfaced with each human being.’ (p.128). Youngblood perceives the potential of ‘expanded cinema’ as an interdisciplinary field of moving images manifesting human consciousness outside our bodies, and facilitating communication and relationality at the level of thought – ‘an era of image-exchange between man and man [sic].’ (p. 49). ‘Image’ is not understood here as representation, but as simulation, as ‘the reality of a process of perception.’ (p.46). Consequently, the screens of television, cinema and telecommunication – as the mediators of simulations – are theorized as the transparent interface of both relationality and consciousness.

Whereas for Youngblood the reality of simulation consists in its close links with the processes of perception, for Jean Baudrillard (1981) simulation precedes reality, so that to appear real an event is forced to approximate its own mediated simulation.

As the experience of accessing facts and people through their simulations becomes ubiquitous and indispensable, it becomes necessary to judge the veracity of a fact on the basis of how it is reported and represented. This produces the phenomenon of the *hyperreal*, which

no longer measures itself against either an ideal or a negative instance. It is no longer anything but operational. In fact, it is no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore. It is a hyperreal, produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.' (Baudrillard, 1981, p.2).

Whilst Youngblood optimistically attributes the need for simulation to 'living in an overpopulated world' and not being able to 'deal with each other directly', Baudrillard pessimistically perceives simulation and the hyperreal as products of the corrosive power of capital, with its vested interest in establishing 'a radical law of equivalence and exchange.' (Baudrillard, 1981, p.22). In other words, the 1970s' belief that simulation could enhance and foster *real* interpersonal relationships is overtaken by the postmodern view that all relationships are already imitating existing simulations, filtered through the codes of power and capitalism. From this perspective, not only simulated and mediated relationships have no foundation of truth, but also *real* face-to-face relationships are as *false* as their own simulations in the pervasive hyperreal.

Conversely, Philip Auslander maintains that a cultural environment shaped by the overbearing influence of television (and, increasingly, of the Internet) 'raises for me the question of whether there really are clear-cut ontological distinctions between live forms and mediatized ones.' (Auslander, 1999, p.7). For Auslander, live events are 'becoming ever more like mediatized ones' (p.7). To support this statement, he remarks that '[t]he fact that television can "go live" at any moment to convey sight and sound at a distance in a way no other medium can remains a crucial part of the televisual imaginary' (pp.12-13). Auslander proposes that television is perceived as relaying a sense of liveness and facticity even when images are known to be

recorded or fictional, yet neither author addresses the screen as the mediator of this liveness.

This indifference to the mediator of these processes could be attributed to the perceived transparency of the screen itself. Bolter and Grusin theorize this phenomenon in light of 'our apparently insatiable desire for immediacy' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.5). They discuss the twinned processes of immediacy – or transparency – and hypermediacy as two interdependent practices that shape our current immersion in a world saturated by reproduced images so often mediated by screens. The logic of transparent immediacy manifests a desire for an interface 'that erases itself, so that the user is no longer aware of confronting a medium, but instead stands in *an immediate relationship to the contents* of that medium.' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.24, emphasis added). Applied to videoperformance, this statement would suggest a desire for an immediate – or unmediated – relationship between performer and viewer. The logic of hypermediacy on the other hand makes viewers and users aware of the medium, and 'expresses the tension between regarding a visual space as mediated and as a "real" space that lies beyond mediation.' (p.41). Media imitate and layer each other's formal devices, exploiting established marks of authenticity: 'Whenever one medium seems to have convinced viewers of its immediacy, other media try to appropriate that conviction.' (p.9). Hypermediacy evokes immediacy, as multiplying the visual references to already established formal devices makes a less familiar medium more transparent.

Media-literate twenty-first century audiences of screen-mediated moving images are able to shift between awareness of the medium and a – more or less direct – relationship with the *reality* it conveys. The authors quote Lanham's reading of this phenomenon as 'the tension between looking *at* and looking *through*' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.41, emphasis in original). Bolter and Grusin also draw a parallel between this dynamic within modern art and within the modes of 'digital representation' analyzed in the book *Remediation*: 'What characterizes modern art is an insistence that the viewer keep coming back to the surface' (p.41).

Sherry Turkle also references Lanham, but in relation to computers and postmodernism:

Lanham puts technology and postmodernism together and concludes that the computer is a “fulfilment of social thought.” But I believe the relationship is a two-way process. ... Computers embody postmodern theory and bring it down to earth. (Turkle, 1995, p.18).

Turkle (1995, 2011) examines in the first instance the rapid expansion of computer-mediated relationality, and later the increasing dependence of relationality on this mediation. Her analysis encompasses the study of intimate mediated relationships, for example with virtual therapists and in teenagers’ friendships, but remains rooted in psychology. Despite the title of her book *Life on the Screen* (2011), the screen itself is not analysed, and often the term is used metonymically to indicate the computer or the Internet. Conversely, Michele White offers a detailed analysis of Internet and computer spectatorship, integrating psychoanalytic film theory and a subtle attention to gender differences with sophisticated observations about technological mediators:

A variety of devices in Internet and computer settings make representations seem like an extension of the spectator’s lived space. Referring to the computer screen image even metaphorically as the “desktop” encourages the spectator to understand the accompanying images as a continuation of the desk, home office, or workplace. (White, 2006, p.17).

White argues that ‘[s]pectators are encouraged to accept Internet conventions because the setting is depicted as animate, physical, and unmediated’ (p.19). Viewers/users are addressed directly as *you* to imply face-to-face communication, and features of software are rendered anthropomorphic with faces and expressions. White’s example, the help system in some versions of Microsoft Office, is ‘a lively computer that appears to sulk when ignored. These depictions collapse the distance between spectator and screen and justify the spectator’s conversation with the box’ (p.20). White does not analyse the use of screen-based telecommunication (for example with Skype), or Internet television, but focuses on women’s uses of

webcams to control their own image online and the intimate relationships operators and spectators develop with the screen. This intimacy and closeness stop the spectator from seeing the other as an object of desire – webcam operators are often also sitting at a desk, mirroring the position of the body of the viewer. White concludes that ‘the Internet and computer spectator is literally mirrored, doubled, and confused with the screen’ (p.84).

Computers – in large corporations at first, then increasingly personal computers – have been connected into networks since the beginning of the 1970s (Gere, 2006b; Berghaus, 2005). After the launch of the first satellite by the USSR (Sputnik 01 in 1957), the technology developed primarily in North America. The first European satellite was Ariel 1, the first UK satellite launched on a US rocket. This was the first satellite operated by a country other than the United States or Soviet Union (Satnews Publishers, s.d.). In the early 1960s, television itself became networked in systems of satellites. The American satellite Echo 1 relayed the first telephone communication and television broadcast in 1962 (Satnews Publishers, s.d.). Since 1994, a separate network of satellites supports mobile telephony. This has now become indispensable to distribute the large amount of data accessed via smartphones (Satnews Publishers, s.d.). Thus, the shared history of telecommunication and video broadcast technology now includes mobile screen-based communication and moving image display. This shared history becomes more relevant as screens become (again) increasingly interchangeable, and a growing sense of liveness and connectedness re-emerges thanks to Internet based platforms. The different uses and acquired connotations of screen-based technologies reciprocally inform the different moving image contexts of broadcast, videoconferencing, personal videos and contemporary art.

In videoperformances, a number of elements mediate relationality: the space within which the performance takes place (the studio or the gallery); the video camera (with its own layering of lenses, charge-coupled devices (CCD) and memory card, hard drive, disk or tape); the digital transfer through the computer with all its

complexity and an intermediate screen; the exhibition disk, tape or hard-drive, in some cases the player, and, finally, the screen itself in the gallery space (Cubitt, 2010a, 2010b). From this materialist perspective, each element and technology is not only a distinct medium, but also a different mediator. Sean Cubitt (1991, 2004, 2010a) examines the political impact of all technology on intersubjective and social relations founding it on a materialist analysis of video and new media art practices, cinema and mass media. He reflects in his blog that

[e]ach medium is already a dozen technologies arranged in a system. To label one assemblage “photography” is almost silly: we have to look a) at the elements from which it is composed and b) the commonalities it has with other media. The term ‘medium’ would be better reserved for, say, a type of screen.’ (Cubitt, 2010b).

A detailed materialist analysis of videoperformance based on each element of technology is beyond the scope of this project, which looks at video camera and screen as *mediators* that accumulate connotations in their history of uses. Proposing a unique perspective, Latour defines mediators and intermediaries in the framework of the sociological approach called Actor-Network-Theory (ANT): an intermediary ‘is what transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs’, whilst ‘[m]ediators transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry’ (Latour, 2007, p.39). Latour understands sociology as ‘science of the living together’, and social bonds as performative, in that they only exist if they are enacted (Latour, 2007, p.2). In this approach, living and non-living agencies – *actors* or *actants* – relay and translate relationality, or in ANT terms, *associations*. Latour proposes to trace the trail of associations and to listen to the actors as they perform coming together and coming apart. From this perspective, associations are enacted by heterogeneous elements:

a face-to-face interaction is not a plausible departure point to trace social connections ... because ... they are being constantly interfered with by other agencies. ... Action is dislocated, diffracted, re-dispatched and redistributed, not to mention that it has to rely on successive layers of mediations piled on top of one another. (pp.198-199).

Words, objects, buildings, tools, certificates, laws, clothes, etc. form 'the crowd of non-human, non-subjective, non-local participants who gather to help carry out the course of action' (p.201). This version of ANT offers a pragmatic way of observing mediation at work, which keeps into account the accumulation of identifications in subjects' behaviours, and of connotations in non-subjective agencies. From this perspective, cameras and screens relay the relationality performed by the artist, and translate it *to* viewers by adding connotations accumulated in their history of uses and technological transformations. In the context of relationality and videoperformance, this analysis of mediators complements psychoanalytic and post-psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

Having surveyed the key approaches that inform the interplay of subjectivity, relationality, performativity and mediation relevant to this research project, in the second chapter I will trace the interwoven histories of practices and technologies that converge in the contemporary relationality of videoperformance.

Chapter Two:

The Practice Context: Videoperformance

This chapter offers an overview of videoperformance art practices that employ relational strategies. It does not survey the well-documented history of videoperformance, but maps within it practices that engage in relational dynamics (for the history of videoperformance see for example Gever, 1983; Fagone, 1987; Hill, 1997; Gigliotti, 2000; Biesenbach, London and Eamon, 2003; Berghaus, 2005; Salters, 2010). Contemporary ideas of relationality inform the reading of historical works, and of the interwoven history of technologies, practices and concepts in dialogue with videoperformance. This chapter also reviews contemporary performance, moving image and networked practices to map the contemporary relational context of this research project and of my videoperformance work.

The American term *videoperformance* describes live and recorded performances incorporating video cameras, monitors and/or projectors. The term appears to have been coined by American artist writer and curator Willoughby Sharp, although the Italian videographer Luciano Giaccari also claims to have been the first person to adopt it (Meneguzzo, 1987, p.60). The terms *performance to camera* and *Body Art* are also used to describe art practices that combine performance, video camera, screen and viewer (Jones, 1998; Warr, 2000). The practice of performing for the camera to create a moving image artwork intended to appear on a screen has a well-documented history and predates the use of video as an art medium. In the 1960s in the United States, Richard Serra, Nam June Paik and Carolee Schneemann, among many artists and filmmakers, started to engage with the film camera as performers. With the increasing availability of video equipment, which allows artists to see the work on screen without waiting for lengthy film processing, more practitioners from a variety of disciplines faced the video camera to perform: 'Video had entered art through performance, sharing its concerns with real time and the body, and developing as a "live" medium from its initial role as a documentary tool.' (Iles, 1995). Centres for experimentation developed in a number of countries, fostering the conditions for international dialogue and experimental practices

interrogating the artistic potential of the technology (Meigh-Andrews, 2006). Videoperformance played an important part in the dialogue between artists who perceived video as a medium in its own right and explored its specificity, and those who understood video as offering direct unmediated access to spaces and events (Bear and Sharp, 1974).

In the United States, between 1970 and 1974, a number of exhibitions focused on hybrid art practices incorporating video and performance. Sharp curated two key shows – *Body Works* in 1970 and *Videoperformance* in 1974. Sharp had already been active as a curator, writer and artist since 1958 (Sharp and Smith-Sharp, 2006), having co-founded the magazine *Avalanche* in New York with Liza Bear and produced six *Videoviews* – a series of interviews to camera with Bruce Nauman (1970), Joseph Beuys (1972), Vito Acconci (1973), Chris Burden (1973), Lowell Darling (1974), and Dennis Oppenheim (1974). *Body Works* (at Tom Marioni's Museum of Conceptual Art, San Francisco, California, 1970) featured performances by Bruce Nauman and William Wegman among others. This is the first video exhibition held on the West Coast, and it gave Acconci the opportunity to exhibit his first video work, *Corrections* (1970). In this period, he also produced seminal videoperformances, including *Claim* (1971), a three hour performance in which his image appears on a monitor in the main gallery space as he sits in the basement threatening viewers with a metal pipe; *Prying* (1971), in which Acconci attempts to pry Kathy Dillon's eyes open; *Trappings* (1971), in which he sits among old toys and talks to his penis; and *Centers* (1971), in which he points straight at the camera and, consequently, out of the screen at viewers.



Figure 2.1 Cover of *Avalanche* No 9, 1974.

The exhibition *Videoperformance* (at 112 Greene Street Gallery, New York City, 1974) included works by Acconci, Chris Burden, Ulrike Rosenbach and Richard Serra. *Avalanche* magazine Issue 9 acts as catalogue for this exhibition, and in her editorial Liza Bear describes the 'concept of the show' as the 'interface of video and live performance': 'the work implied a very close and multileveled rapport with audience consciousness. This made the performances very far removed from a self-referential display situation.' (Bear and Sharp, 1974, p.3). The artists' own texts in the catalogue show distinct approaches to videoperformance, ranging from playful to relational, representational and political. For instance, Rosenbach exhibited her first live videoperformance – *Isolation is Transparent* (1974) – in which she wraps herself in white ropes behind a pane of glass in front of a video camera that relays the images to a monitor. She describes the work as 'psychological feedback', and the virtual space inside the video monitor as her 'inner space':

'[t]he recipient who watches the video-feedback gets to know that the video provides a demarcation between him and me. The monitor pane mitigates my direct impact on him, makes it cool and neutral, so that the view of the psychological reflection that I want to convey to him becomes more important and primary.' (Bear and Sharp, 1974, pp.10-11).



Figure 2.2 Ulrike Rosenbach, *Don't Believe I'm an Amazon*, 1974, video still.

Rosenbach pairs issues of representation and relationality to propose the video screen as a tool for separation and distancing of her sexualised body. The contemporary presence of her physical body performing live and of its image relayed on screen articulates the grammar of this mediated relational dynamic. After this first live videoperformance, Rosenbach continued to employ combinations of her own physical presence and the image on the monitor to complement dynamics of relationality and representation of femininity in *Madonnas of the Flowers* (1975) and *Don't Believe I'm an Amazon* (1975). These works stage dialogues with mythological female figures immortalised by male artists – Venus, Medusa, Ophelia and the Virgin Mary. By overlapping these figures with images of herself speaking and acting, Rosenbach makes explicit and resists the pressure these pre-existing models exert on female subjectivity. *Don't Believe I'm an Amazon* (1975)

superimposes in real time the face of the artist shooting arrows on stage and their target – a reproduction of a fifteenth century painting of the Madonna. As the arrows hit the target, both the painting and the living woman physically present are struck on the monitor screen.

Acconci, on the other hand, merges performance and video equipment more directly, and constructs a closer connection with viewers across the video screen. Originally performed live in Naples in 1972 and developed into a two-screen work for the exhibition *Videoperformance, Command Performance* (1974) includes a monitor on the floor in front of a brightly lit stool, a video camera pointing towards this, and a second monitor behind a column and behind the stool (Figure 2.3).

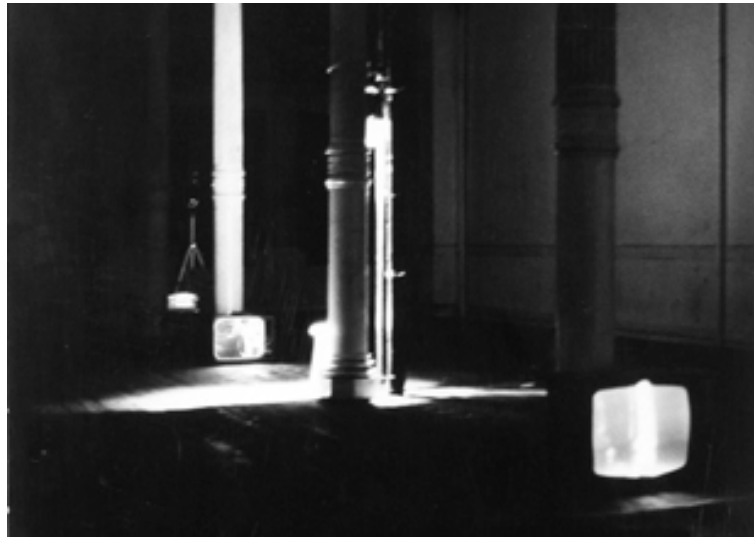


Figure 2.3 Vito Acconci, *Command Performance*, 1974, installation view.

The first monitor shows the artist lying on a bed with his head close to the camera, trying to persuade viewers to take his place, while the second relays the live image from the camera pointing at the stool. Acconci oscillates between asking viewers to step into the light, sit on the stool and take his place, and performing his own fantasy about what *his* viewer would look like and do. *Command Performance* expands out of the screen into the gallery, to construct a space that can be reabsorbed into the screen. Acconci *gives himself over* to viewers, and asks them to

do the same and become his 'surrogate' (Acconci, 1976, p.9). At first he addresses viewers directly, apparently unconcerned with their specific desires or with the distinct subjectivities they might bring to the work, but as he becomes progressively absorbed into his own fantasy, the subject he *dreams into being* is a woman who will *know what to do*. With his eyes closed, he continues to address viewers as *you*, as his instructions become explicitly erotic.



Figure 2.4 Vito Acconci, *Command Performance*, 1974, video Still.

Acconci describes successive shifts in the focus of his practice – from putting 'myself in isolation for the purpose of being revealed outside on a monitor', to 'first turning in on myself, then interacting with another person, then interaction with larger groups of people, passers-by in a gallery space.' (Bear and Sharp, 1974, pp.21-23). Whilst for Rosenbach a political practice consists of an engagement with her own socially constructed subjectivity, for Acconci the work becomes political when the performance widens the range of possible relationships with others. His videoperformance practice emerges as critically complex in its continuous focus on modes of relationality that do not exclude a relative questioning of himself. Acconci's interrogation of his subjectivity and gender remains relative as he continuous to rely

on the advantages of his position of power, both in his performed relationships with women and in his role of self-representing male artist. Nevertheless his representation of masculinity involves vulnerability, doubt, manipulation and uncertainty, opening a fissure in the solidity of the male position in power relations.

Between 1973 and 1976, Acconci appeared to concentrate primarily on establishing a relationship with the viewer through the screen of the monitor:

3. Video monitor as one point in a face-to-face relationship: on-screen, I face the viewer, off-screen. ...

9. In any case, my ground is clear: the most available showing places for my work are museums and galleries. To show my face there, with the hope that a viewer will come in front of it, is to make a tacit assumption that the gallery provides a fertile ground for relationship. (Acconci, 1976, pp.8-9).



Figure 2.5 Vito Acconci, *Undertone*, 1973, video still.

The four works that illustrate this *10-Point Plan for Video* were produced between 1973 and 1974, and show effective strategies for activating relationality in videoperformance. For example, in *Undertone* (1973) Acconci sits at the far end of a table and constructs a visual space for the viewer. The screen intersects the

horizontal plane of the table to form a vertical plane paralleling the position of the viewer's body. The screen also mediates the passage between what is part of the image and what is part of the physical environment by belonging to both (Bolter and Grusin, 2000). *Air Time* (1973) shows Acconci facing a mirror so that viewers see both the back of his head and his face, and although he is addressing someone as *you*, he is also talking about viewers as *they*. In *Theme Song* (1973), the artist lays on the floor with his head near the camera, offering and inviting intimate proximity while leaving visual space for another body within the image. Acconci developed this videoperformance in Florence at Art/Tapes/22, a video production centre created and run by Maria Gloria Bicocchi from 1972 to 1976, and connected with Acconci's dealer – Sonnabend-Castelli Gallery in New York (Valentini, 2003). The centre also produced works by Joan Jonas (*Merlo*, 1974), Willoughby Sharp (*Break*, 1973) and Douglas Davis (*The Florence Tapes: Clothing, Walking, Lifting, Leaving*, 1974). Acconci was a guest for several months experimenting with different combinations of performance and video, and also produced here *Home Movies* (1973) and two versions of *Indirect Approaches* (1973). *Theme Song* (1973) was shot in Bicocchi's living room by Carmine Fornari, Alberto Pirelli (video operators) and Raffaele Corazziari (technical collaborator) (Saba, 2007). This work is analysed in greater detail in chapter three and four of this dissertation.



Figure 2.6 Vito Acconci, *Theme Song*, 1973, video still.

Acconci himself states that the

performer on screen is face to face with viewer in front of screen – the performer's space is incomplete, it needs the viewer as part of the performance area – the performer's stance on screen, his moves, are caused by the viewer's position as strategic agent in interaction with him. (Simmons and Davis, 1978, p.82).

In other words, relationality informs the performance in its making, not only when viewers are physically present in front of the screen and engage with the work. Acconci's videoperformances visually suggest a position for the body of the viewer, but this projected position has already actively determined the performance. Video camera and screen mediate a relationship that, although asynchronous, is reciprocal.

Whilst Acconci concentrates primarily on the potential of the monitor screen, Douglas Davis extends his relational experiments to satellite technology and real-time telecommunication. In 1971, Davis pioneered *interactive television* with *Electronic Hokkadim*, proposing a participatory experience of television itself as an alternative to commercial broadcast. A whole day event resulted in an evening

broadcast including contributions from Nam June Paik, Bruce Nauman, Eric Siegel and Peter Campus. Viewers were invited to take part in a live broadcast and produce the images they would also see at home. Davis continued to explore television as a live networked tool, and in 1976 hired a ComSat satellite for a live broadcast performance – *Seven Thoughts*. ‘Apparently it was the first time that any private citizen had done this’ (Baumgärtel, 2001, p.54). For the opening of Documenta 6, Davis worked with Joseph Beuys, Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman to produce live satellite broadcast videoperformances. Davis’ work, *The Last Nine Minutes* (1977) shows a pair of hands flat on the screen, *on the side of the viewers* – appearing to be *inside* the monitor screen – and knocking at the glass, facing an approaching image of Davis. The artist appears to hear the knocking and to press his hands flat against the screen *from his side* of the screen. This work visually merges the space of the performer and the space of the viewer, making the screen permeable to contact.

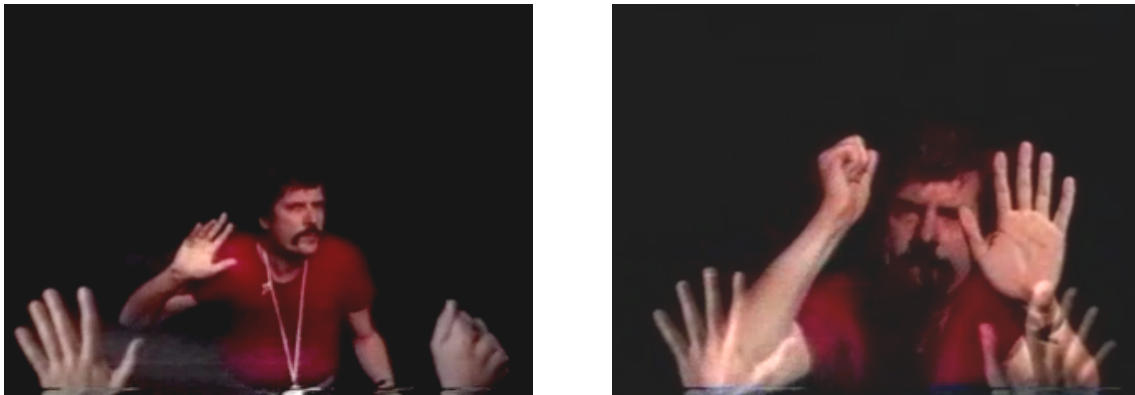


Figure 2.7 Douglas Davis, *The Last Nine Minutes*, 1977, video stills.

Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz implicitly criticize this approach to networked performance because ‘anything that was remotely utilizing realtime telecommunications was very much a television broadcast monitor — “artist as subject being transmitted to an audience”...’ (Galloway and Rabinowitz, 2003). Galloway and Rabinowitz propose a radically different approach, utilising the screen as a meeting point between people in different geographical locations. They

developed the project *Satellite Arts Project* (1977) with the support of NASA to experiment with the potential of satellite technology for collaborative performances among artists in different physical locations. They also used satellite technology and video screens in 1980 to facilitate conversations between Los Angeles and New York City when they installed *Hole in Space* – two interconnected screens in the ‘Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City, and The Broadway department store located in the open air shopping center in Century City, Los Angeles’ (Galloway and Rabinowitz, 2003). These screens were not framed as artworks and did not relay any artist’s performance, but simply focused on the relational potential of the technology.

Davis utilised satellite technology again in 1981, connecting the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York to the Centre Pompidou in Paris for the videoperformance *Double Entendre: Two Sites Two Times Two Sides*. In this work, Davis’ and the actor Nadia Taleb talk to each other from the two locations, and at the end of the work they are both seen on screen in Paris running towards each other and embracing. Davis and Taleb perform an intimate and exclusive relationship, but also engage viewers directly, so that they are at the same time witnesses and accomplices:

[a]t the end of the performance I say: “I can't stand the separation anymore. I am coming across the Atlantic right now”. That related to Barthes’s text. In it, he talks about both love and language being a kind of leap. So I plead with her to stay where she is and run out of the Whitney Museum. Next you see me on the video, finally moving, running down Park Avenue. She speaks with the audience, asking them if she should leave or if she should stay. In the end, she decides to run away. So she races down to the Plaza in front of the Centre Pompidou, and I land, live, right in front of her! We chase each other around, and I finally embrace her (Baumgärtel, 2001, p.57).

Whilst *Electronic Hokkadim* activates direct relationships between artist, equipment and viewers (who become also participants and users), these last two works rely on ruses and on-screen representation to mobilise mediated relationality. Davis

engages directly with the materiality of the screen and the connectivity of satellite technologies as mediators of intimate relationships and desire. Yet, these videoperformances reproduce a patriarchal pattern of active male and passive female roles: Taleb runs away, while Davis runs after her and embraces her. This body of work suggests stable gendered roles in a crystallised model of desire, and does not match Acconci's complex – although limited – questioning of male subjectivity and gendered relations. In 2002, Davis developed a project called *Moral Pornography* focused on (female) beauty. He invited women to model for erotic photographs in which they decided which clothes to take off and how to pose. Davis completely ignores the complexity of gender relations in this practice, and limits his understanding of beauty and desire to an established pattern of female body as object of desire, to-be-looked-at-ness and mystery. The resulting images are no different from any other semi-pornographic photographs, and the text confirms his superficial approach to these themes (Davis, 2004).

Davis considers himself part of 'a generation raised on television rather than print, indeed, on a medium of communication that is sensory and evanescent rather than iconic and static' (Davis, 1973, p.169). To interrogate this shift, the conference *Open Circuits*, organised by Davis in 1974 with Fred Barzyk, Gerald O'Grady and Willard Van Dyke at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, examines the social, political and aesthetic development of video art practices in dialogue with television. In the resulting publication, Davis concentrates on issues of immediacy and liveness, describing his performance to camera as 'a heightened state of working' (Simmons and Davis, 1978, p.76). For Davis, the aim of videoperformance is the image relayed via the screen, and rendered heightened and relational by the relationship between performer and camera:

To know that the moment the camera turns on is the moment of record or of broadcast is to experience a heightened reality, to perform at another level. ... The end of the tapes was, and is, the image. I wanted to act in live time first for myself and finally, completely, for the viewer – because it achieves that end. (pp.76-77).

The conference and publication conceptualise television as a medium with 'a creative force which we must learn to utilize for the benefit of all mankind [sic].' (Simmons and Davis, 1978, p.2). Television is described both as an art and as a medium for communication, and analysed from conceptual, technical, historical, philosophical and political perspectives. In her intervention, Shigeko Kubota discusses the importance of the annual Women's Video Festival started by Susan Milano with Shridhar Bapat and Steina Vasulka at The Kitchen in New York in 1972. Kubota describes her video works and those by other women as 'made from a very different perspective' (Simmons and Davis, 1978, p.98). Kubota counterbalances the almost exclusively male conference – the only other women speakers were the artist Joan Jonas and the curator Jane Livingston – by making visible female artists who adopt the video camera as a social and political tool. Kubota discusses works made by women, which engage and represent women – gay, single mothers, on benefits and women who have been raped – and generally counterpoint mass media representations of femininity. The second festival included works by 'women who invaded what was hitherto a preserve of male technocracy': the specific technical possibility of video cameras and screens, connectivity, electronic image generation and other tools (Simmons and Davis, 1978, p.99). Kubota also celebrates the women who organise, facilitate and generally work behind the scenes to make the production and distribution of work possible. The problem of visibility and legitimacy of women artists informs the history of videoperformance despite the fact that

[women] were impatient to speak, visualise and become visible. They gravitated towards performance and video because of their confrontational nature and their ability to deliver an immediate message to the audience. (Elwes, 2005, p.41).

Discussing the history of the festival, Susan Milano describes how

when Steina Vasulka organized a collection of work for a show on Video Art in early '72 she found that there were surprisingly few entries from women – surprising because she knew that at least one-third of the New York video community was comprised of women. ... Portable video and the Women's Movement had sprung up together. (Milano, 1976).

Martha Rosler points out that 'there was a reaction against Feminist art – which my work clearly was – though it was covert: it took the form of exclusion, or ghettoization.' (Lange, 2005, p.92). Rosler continues:

[v]ideo was excluded from Documenta VII in 1982 because the director, Rudi Fuchs, had supposedly ruled that video was a women's form, and therefore not really art. There were no female artists in 'West Kunst', a huge survey exhibition in Cologne in 1981, and that was taken as a big statement (p.93).

Whilst many women artists engaged with performance art in the early 1970s, galleries and critics tended to focus on men who embraced these art practices such as Paul McCarthy and Chris Burden (Lange, 2005). Rosler articulated her political concerns regarding gender and power relations both in her writing and in her artworks, combining images that expose the racial and sexual politics inherent in intersubjective and social relations. The videoperformance *Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained* (1977) displays the ordeal of a woman (Rosler herself) being measured and handled by two male scientists and mocked by three women in white coats when the scientists remark on the suitability of the size of different body parts. A voiceover underlines the power structures that shape scientific practices and statistical parameters of normality. Rosler juxtaposes subjectivity and otherness to economic power structures, management of resources like food and energy, military practices, language and race:

I joined two things that do not go together. Ideologically speaking, the world is divided into nontransferable [sic] oppositions: victim-aggressor, American against the world, the family against the public world. I join the terms of these dichotomies together (Rosler and Weinstock, 1981, p.81)

The well-known videoperformance *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) combines the televisual medium-shot of the cookery programme with distorted and aggressive gestures. This work examines the power of language to shape the subject:

I was suggesting that the signs imposed on women are extremely diminishing. This woman is implicated in a system of extreme reduction with respect to herself as a self. ... As she speaks, she names her own oppression. (p.85).

Rosler states that her work is not informed by any one theoretical approach, but underlines the importance of the Lacanian concept of constructed subjectivity in the context of dominant ideology and social relations (p.88). Rosler's videoperformances do not directly adopt relational strategies, but address 'the psychosocial ... to think about real, historically grounded social relations and the ways in which they inform the personal' (p.89).

Marina Abramovic takes a different stance towards gender and relationality, and with Ulay (Frank Uwe Laysiepen) produced a number of collaborative videoperformances in which they challenge their personal and professional relationship in symmetrical actions: breathing from each other's mouths (*Breathing In/Breathing Out*, 1977), hitting each other (*Light/Dark*, 1977) and shouting in each other's faces (*AAA AAA*, 1978). In these videoperformances – all part of the series *Relation Work*, 1976-1979 – a relationship is performed and represented, not activated performatively with viewers. Abramovic states that her 'early performances deal with the body and architecture, especially the pieces that Ulay and I made, because we were always in relation to space and time. But not because it was male or female.' (Kaplan, 1999, p.15). In her statements, Abramovic foregrounds the symmetry of her spiritual and professional relationship with Ulay and sidelines gendered relations:

when feminism became an issue, I was in Yugoslavia. It never touched me because I come from a family in which my mother was a major in the army and the director of the Museum of Art and Revolution. In Yugoslavia women were partisans, absolutely in power, in control, from the government level to any other level' (p.15).

This gives Abramovic more freedom to position her body as symmetrical to a male body. This artist addresses her other as a peer, and shows her power through the performance of a subjectivity that is not negatively positioned as the other of man.

Yet, in three individual videoperformances produced between 1975 and 1976, (*Art Must Be Beautiful*, *Artist Must Be Beautiful*; *Freeing the Voice*; and *Freeing the Body*), Abramovic appears to display a level of masochism that is not gender-neutral – she brushes her hair, screams and dances to a drum to the limits of her physical resistance. These works appear to engage, if not with masochistic female subjectivity, with the patriarchal positioning of femininity.

In *Talking about Similarity* (1976, part of *Relation Work*), Abramovic and Ulay alternatively face the camera, the audience present and, by extension, the screen viewers activating a triangulated relationship. At first, a close-up image of Ulay's open mouth appears on screen, then he sews his lips together with needle and thread. After he exits the frame, Abramovic appears facing the camera and answers questions from visitors about Ulay's actions. The artists capture this and other performances with great care, setting up lighting and recording equipment as part of the performance area and often excluding from view the gallery visitors. Their videoperformances are, therefore, works in their own right and not documentations of live performances.



Figure 2.8 Marina Abramovic, *The Artist is Present*, 2010, documentation of performance. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

After producing very different works in the 1980s and 1990s, Abramovic re-engaged with uniquely relational performances in the series *The Artist is Present*, first performed in 2010 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Abramovic sits in the gallery and looks at members of the audience who sit opposite her one at the time, sometimes across a table and sometimes without it. In this work, she relies on the presence of her own body and on eye contact to establish relationality. Photographs taken during the performance by Marco Anelli (2010) capture the participants' emotional responses to this intense exchange of gazes.



Figure 2.9 Marco Anelli, *Portraits in the Presence of Marina Abramovic*, 2010, composite of photographs.

Adopting a very different strategy, in the 1970s Hannah Wilke responded to the pressure of patriarchy by voicing the right of women to define themselves:

The pride, power, and pleasure of one's own sexual being threaten cultural achievement ... To diffuse self-prejudice, women must take control of and have pride in the sensuality of their own bodies and create a sensuality in their own terms, without referring to the concepts degenerated by culture. (Wilke, 1975).

Wilke performs her body as desiring and free, both when it satisfies the traditional aesthetic criteria of beauty and desirability, and when it is bloated and changed by illness and medical intervention. Contrary to Mulvey's assessment that '[t]here is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue, but we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides', Wilke posits the possibility for women to 'create a sensuality in their own terms' (Mulvey, 1975, p.7; Wilke, 1975, p.21). Wilke underplays the power of normativity and attempts to reconfigure the representations of her own sensuality and relationality. Thus, in the videoperformance *Gestures* (1974), Wilke stretches and squashes her face with her hands. Although erotically absorbed in her action, she does not forget that there is also another across the screen, and glances intensely towards viewers, appearing to share her desire and pleasure or challenge those who might want to impose a different gaze. The *Intra Venus* series of photographs (1992-1993) and videotaped performances (1999-2003) portrays a similarly direct self-definition and challenge to the viewer when Wilke's body, face and hair have been radically transformed by the consequences of cancer and its treatment (Vine, 1994). Wilke challenges the structures of power that inform capitalist, scientific, clinical and everyday practices by questioning their aesthetics, procedures and classifications.



Figure 2.10 Adrian Piper, *Cornered*, 1988, installation view.

Similarly, in the video installation *Cornered* (1988) Adrian Piper challenges definitions of *white* and *black* by exposing the system of thoughts that informs racially defined interactions. The artist addresses a presumed *white* viewer through the screen with a series of questions about racial categories and associated behaviours while maintaining intense eye contact. Piper is directly challenging viewers to become aware of their own systems of thought, and to establish a shared understanding of racial classification. She redeploys the relationality that produces the concepts of *black* and *white* in the first place to redefine relationally her own and the other's subjectivity. Her gaze challenges the defining gaze of those who *made her* black and themselves *white* in the first place.

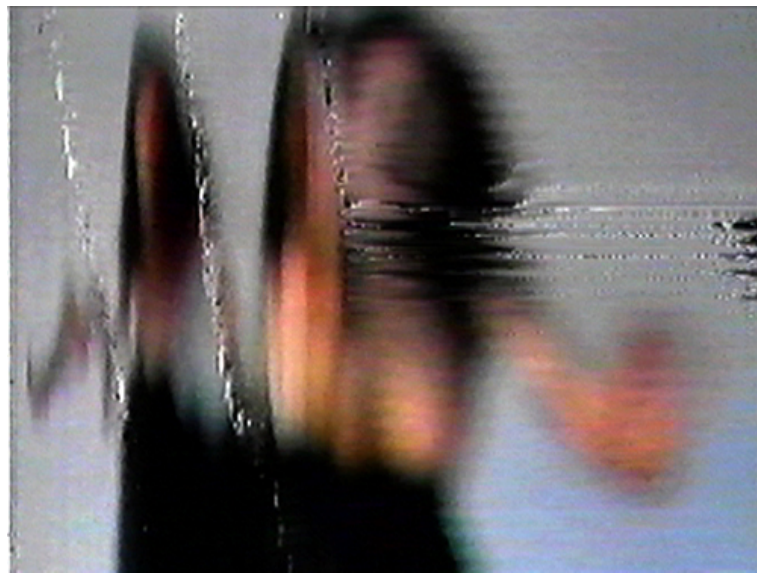


Figure 2.11 Pipilotti Rist, *I'm not the Girl Who Misses Much*, 1986, video Still.

Whilst Piper adopts the authoritative televisual talking-head imagery to talk back to the culturally dominant male other, the Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist (Elisabeth Charlotte Rist) answers to the ubiquitous male pop artist in the language of the pop promo. In *I'm not the Girl Who Misses Much* (1986), she dances in front of the camera with the top of her dress pulled down to expose her breasts. The artist repeatedly sings 'I'm

not the girl who misses much' in response to The Beatles' lyric from *Happiness is a Warm Gun*, written by John Lennon in 1968: 'She is not the girl who misses much'. In this videoperformance Rist obliterates her face and voice with electronic effects and answers back to pop music with a strategy close to Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, and to Adrian Piper talking back to her white other. As a woman interpellated by incorporated mass distributed music, Rist plays with the aesthetic and technical possibilities of postproduction, and allows her own eccentric voice to resonate with all its morbid complexity. She describes television as a 'family member' that needs to be engaged with in a therapeutic relationship (Phelan et al, 2001, p.108). Echoing Mick Hartney's assertion that '[s]urely TV seduces, rather than assaults us', Rist appears to have a personal rapport with screen and camera, which translates into complicit and playful relationality with viewers (Knight, 1996, p.22). Moreover, she blends music performance, new media, sculptural installations, archiving practices and photography in an expanded body of relational and representational practices.



Figure 2.12 Pipilotti Rist, *Open My Glade*, 2000, video still.

Rist employs screens of all kinds and exposes the screen *as such*, in all its technical permutations, as an important mediator of relationality – from small Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) screens embedded in the floor (*Selbstlos im Lavabad*, *Selfless in the*

Bath of Lava, 1994) to outdoor Light Emitting Diode (LED) screens at the top of an office block (*Open My Glade*, 2000). This second piece was created for and exhibited on the Panasonic advertising screen in Times Square in New York City, where Rist appears to rub her face with and without make-up against the *inside* of the screen leaving trails of saliva, lipstick and green eye-shadow. Despite looking down onto viewers from the top of a building, she remains vulnerable and sensuous, and paradoxically intimate. In *Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Meters)* (2008), as exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the artist created an immersive environment by projecting onto the walls sensuous large-scale images of body parts fluidly moving in saturated colours. In a video interview, Pipilotti Rist discusses how by physically embracing the architecture of the room with contiguous large projections, the work stimulates audiences – those who ‘bring their bodies to the museum’ – to become lighter, to stretch and to enlighten their spirit (Rist, 2008). Both *Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Meters)* and the three-screen video installation *Lobe of the Lung* (2009) incorporate images from Rist’s feature film *Pepperminta* (2009), which explores the cinematic relationship between spectators and screen by concentrating on the plot and on the relations among the characters (Mulvey, 1975). The artist’s signature imagery of close-ups of eyes and body parts complements the narrative structure in which the knowing innocence of the female protagonist and her agency drives the plot.

In the exhibition *Eyeball Massage* at the Hayward Gallery in London (2012), Rist utilises a great variety of materials and technologies to display video, broadening the notion of *screen* as a support for moving images and as a mediator of relationality. In this context, some historical videoperformances are displayed differently: to see *I’m not the Girl Who Misses Much* viewers had to insert their heads into a structure attached to the wall where the image is projected, now as large as their own bodies. Rist proposes a version of visual pleasure that integrates narrative and characterization, colours, floating forms and strategies that encourage viewers to engage in specific relationships to the images on screen. For example,

Administrating Eternity (2011) consists of a number of floor-to-ceiling hanging semi-transparent screens that moved and curved allowing the projected images to bleed and overlap. Viewers are invited to move among the screens and become drenched in the colours of flowing shapes of flowers, cells and body parts. In a parallel invitation, body-shaped cushions are scattered on the floor between the screens suggesting comfortable physical intimacy. This exhibition and Rist's practice in general show the importance of the availability, connotations and qualities of a growing variety of display technologies to mediate relationality in videoperformances. Moreover, the large majority of videoperformances produced for CRT monitors in the 1970s can now be accessed in a variety of formats, including on computer screens in the privacy of viewers' homes. In the gallery context, the latest display technologies are often used to exhibit historical works, including LCD, High Definition (HD), LED screens and projections. Phelan attributes a psychoanalytic quality to Rist's use of the screen of video:

Subjecting both the code and the content to psychoanalytic interpretation, Rist insists that if we are to come to terms with the screen central to postmodernism, we must look very carefully at both the content on the visual surface of that screen and at the out-takes edited from that screen (Phelan et al, 2001, p.39).

Rist does not address viewers directly as *you*, but her intense way of looking into camera captivates viewers and makes them complicit. Her works feature mostly women, often naked and behaving in unexpected ways. These female performers and characters offer a representation of self-determined femininity, freely expressed desire and playful sensuality. Rist's women drive the narrative by acting outside the framework determined by patriarchy (Phelan et al, 2001).



Figure 2.13 Miranda July, *Miranda July*, 2009, website homepage.

The artist Miranda July shows a comparable versatility in a body of work that spans performance, music, video, film, sculpture, books and websites. In 2009, the opening page featured the words ‘enter secret password’ (Figure 2.13). Any password entered in the designated box will lead to the welcome message ‘you obviously know what I’m talking about’, establishing complicity even before one accessed any individual works. July uses this direct and personal approach in a number of media, creating relational interfaces that could be described as the sculptural or book equivalent of screens. The artist’s diverse practice is unified by the use of the second person address articulated through the specific qualities of each screen, medium and context.

YOU OBVIOUSLY KNOW WHAT I’M TALKING ABOUT.

ABOUT MOVIES PERFORMANCE ART WRITING WEB PICTURES
SCHEDULE STORE LINKS CONTACT

Figure 2.14 Miranda July, *Miranda July*, 2009, website page.

In her live performance *On Strangers*, performed in 2007 at the School of Life in London, July invites members of the audience to donate personal items, which she auctions off to gift the money raised to an anonymous person

present. The objects become an excuse to invite individuals on stage and ask personal questions, to invite spectators to touch each other and to open ethical dilemmas. July mixes humour and self-confession, care and provocation, focusing on interpersonal relationships, vulnerability and the fragmented narratives of everyday life. Similarly to Rist's, July's words and imagery reappear in different artworks – stories from the script for the film *You, Me and Everyone We Know* (2005) became part of the book *No One Belongs Here More Than You* (2007), and the book was the motivation to create the website of the same title (Figure 2.15).

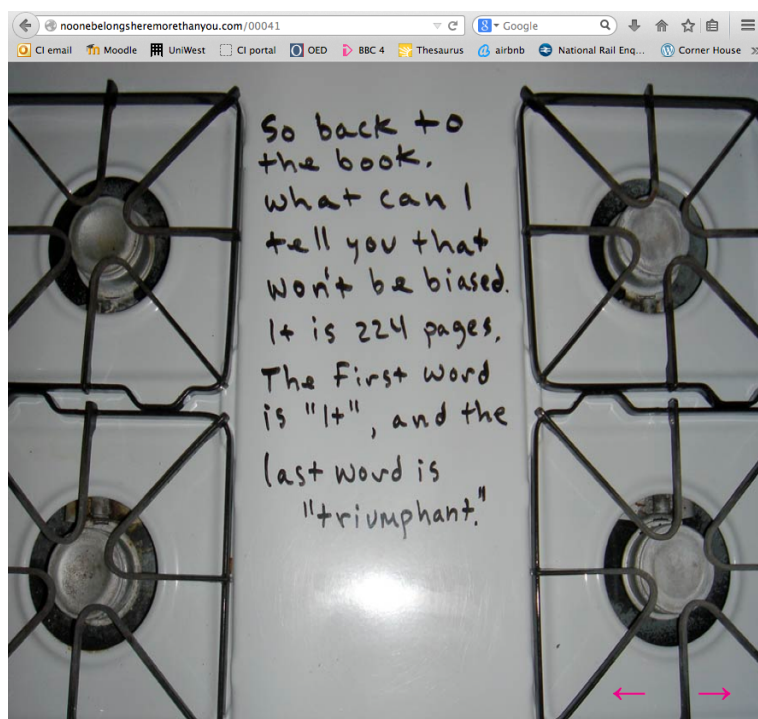


Figure 2.15 Miranda July, *No One Belongs Here More Than You*, 2007, website.

Another similarity between Rist and July is an active engagement with networks of women artists. Between 1988 and 1994, Rist was a member of Les Reines Prochaines, a multimedia performance and music band founded by the artists Muda Mathis, Teresa Alonso and Regina Florida Schmid. The group proposes a fragmented and contemporary feminist aesthetic, which

includes cooking sounds, costume making, political statements, complex visuals and 'democratic music' (Les Reines Prochaines, s.d.). July, on the other hand, founded and managed Big Miss Moviola (1995-2004), a network of women working with moving image and performance. Reacting to a feeling of isolation, July collected and distributed videos among makers, organised screenings and performed live. Although these works are variously described as *movies* or *films*, they are shot on VHS, and distributed as cassettes in the form of the chainletter *Joanie 4 Jackie* (July, 2008).



Figure 2.16 Miranda July, *Big Miss Moviola* leaflet, 2009.

Access to networks has radically changed since the early 2000s with the increasing availability of open systems of distribution (Myspace, Youtube, Vimeo, Vine, etc) and communication (social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Bebo; communication platforms like Skype). These have contributed to the proliferation and visibility of solitary makers, loose organisations of collaborators, specialised

online galleries (for example Ubuweb and the Perpetual Art Machine), as well as different forms of screen-based relationality (Bosma, 2006). These offer women artists alternative platforms to produce, exhibit and meet. It also encourages expanded and hybrid definitions of videoperformance practices, as artists continue to experiment with contiguous technologies – performances mediated by webcams, computer screens and data projectors complement communication technologies in practices that contest gender stereotypes and the boundaries of art disciplines (White, 2006).

In the context of WebcamNow, a ‘browser-based webcam videochat community’ (WebcamNow, 2013) – a site explicitly associated with pornography and voyeurism – the artist Paula Roush developed the work *cctvecstasy* (2009) with a number of collaborators under the name of Webcam Operators. The group includes Paula Roush as *cctvecstasy*, Marie Josiane Agossou as *marie_pix*, DeeJ Fabyc as *deedee4000*, Maria Lusitano as *alfazema*, Lara Morais as *ByME*, Lina Jungergård as *opaeen*, Aaron de Montesse as *de montesse*, Anne Marte Overa as *anne marte*. Roush describes the process as ‘tak[ing] up an artist’s residency at WebCamNow.com, a popular webcam community, and investigat[ing] its potential as a curatorial platform for digital performance.’ (Roush, 2010a, p.118). After a brief time for rehearsal, the work was performed around a loose script by seven Webcam Operators online (four in London, three in Malmo), and projected at the QUAD in Derby while Roush performed live in front of a live audience that was also captured in a live feed and streamed. *cctvecstasy* would have been accessed by a large audience on computer screens, complementing the audience of the live performance and large projection screen. The Webcam Operators address ‘the increasing intimacy facilitated by the mainstream use of surveillance technologies for personal video streaming and archiving’ (Roush, 2010a, p.119). Both in this work and in her text, Roush concentrates on the relational function of web cameras, networked technology and screens. Viewers are also interlocutors, and their gaze (as understood by Mulvey, 1975) is expected to be male, voyeuristic and

objectifying. The Webcam Operators appropriate this gaze by taking control of their own representation and leading the emerging relationships by establishing their own agency (White, 2006).

In other works, Roush and the Webcam Operators use remotely connected video and web cameras to create composite screens with multiple images of themselves. For example, in the series *emo-lab* (2010), the artists intervene more directly on the formal qualities of the resulting moving images – as opposed to simply adopting existing formats of communication and networked performance platforms – to produce aesthetically sophisticated split-screen videoperformances. These works use digital formal devices to deal ‘with the performativity of the self and the development of a meshed multiperson identity, whilst inspired and working with the online archive of camgirls.’ (Roush, 2010b). The Webcam Operators form a series of triangulated relationships by addressing simultaneously each other, physically present and remote viewers. The artist Tina LaPorta develops videoperformances concerned with similar processes using CU-SeeMe, an early videoconferencing and point-to-point videocall platform. *Re:mote_corp@REALities* (2001) mixes live and recorded webcam images and chat texts with the voiceover of artists, curators and theorists discussing issues connected with digital media (Sattler, 1993-2008). Roush’s and La Porta’s strategy of combining networked technologies with performance are two examples of a large body of practices that share a strong interest in relationality.

In 2007, Maria Chatzichristodoulou and Rachel Zerihan co-directed *Intimacy, Across Visceral and Digital Performance* – a three-day festival that explored modalities of relationality in one-to-one, participatory, on-stage and networked performances. In *Hearten* (2006-2009), Chris Dugrenier uniquely combines technology and physical contact by inviting strangers to lean their head on her chest and listen. Whispered words from a device hidden under her shirt combine with the warmth of her body and the live sounds of her breath. In *Held* (2007) Adrian Howells takes one individual through three domestic spaces – kitchen, lounge and bedroom

– and holds them in his arms. In *Four Images* (2005) Adam Overton invites the audience to experiment with four unorthodox intimate modes of communication – two individuals perform a pose and attempt to communicate via their pulse, tears or blinking. Sam Rose’s memorable one to one performance *Between One and Another: Melting Point* (2007) approaches intimate relationality from a number of angles – she reserves the right to choose her audience member, blindfolds them and immerses them in her work in a room visible from the outside. With gentle and seductive whispers, Rose creates a safe environment for intimacy, then places a morsel of chocolate in the participant’s mouth and leaves them alone in the room. Representing the opposite approach and relying on remote communication technology for its iteration of intimacy, *A Bedtime Story* by Susana Mendes Silva (2007-8) asynchronously adopts email and Skype to collect and perform bedtime stories on request.

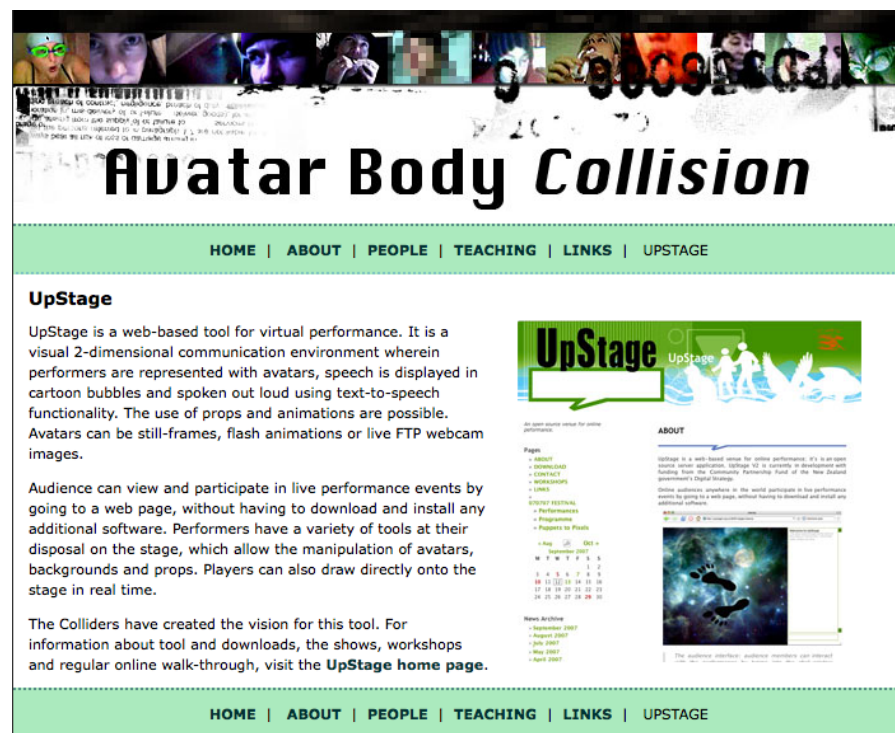


Figure 2.17 Avatar Body Collision, *Avatar Body Collision*, 2014, website page.

Dissatisfied with existing networked communication and performance platforms, Avatar Body Collision (Helen Varley Jamieson, Karla Ptacek, Leena Saarinen and Vicki Smith) developed UpStage, an integrated system that allows them to combine on screen animated stills, chat and live feeds from multiple locations. At *Intimacy*, Avatar Body Collision's work *DTN3: [Be] Longing: a meditation on self in motion* (2007) appeared as a projected collaborative online performance with remote audience participation, utilising all the features of UpStage. Envisaged as an open platform for cyberperformance, UpStage organise regular 'walkabouts' to show online makers how to use the tool and encourage anybody to develop work in this environment (Avatar Body Collision, s.d.). This highlights the highly collaborative quality of this project, which resonates across the history of artists' use of technology-based performance, particularly for women.

Both Roush and Varley Jamieson took part in Dutch artist Annie Abrahams's work *Angry Women* (2011-2013), a collaborative networked performance investigating women's difficulties in expressing negative emotions (Abrahams, s.d.). Abrahams has been experimenting with networked collaboration and other forms of machine-mediated relationality since 1997, when she devised the project *Being Human* (which she describes as 'low tech mood mutators / not immersive') to explore inflections of interpersonal relations on the net (Abrahams, s.d.). This artist employs computers, cameras and screens as relational mediators online and within the gallery. For example, *The Big Kiss* (2007-2009) offers a space where live cameras allow visitors to produce one half of a live composite image of two people kissing (Figure 2.18). Abrahams is concerned with exploring intimacy, proximity and 'contact in a machine mediated world' (Abrahams, s.d.). She pursues a continuous interrogation of the relational potential of the screen and of digital connectivity, as well as challenging socially acceptable modes of address that repress vulnerability and the desire to relate.



Figure 2.18 Annie Abrahams, *The Big Kiss*. Installation view, 2009,
installation view with Mark River at OTO, New York.

Abrahams' *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011) was performed live for Low Lives 3 International Festival of Live Networked Performances. It repropose Acconci's strategy of playing romantic songs, but this time as a catalyst for a different invitation: Abrahams asks viewers to phone her and prove that they exist. For great part of the piece, her hand covers the lens, transforming the screen into a pinkish shimmering skin-like surface with the text 'Call me' and two phone numbers (Figure 2.19). Abrahams plays songs in the background, while pleading, cajoling and ordering viewers to call the numbers on screen. Eventually, the phone rings, the artist becomes visible and expresses her relief to her new interlocutor. Her performed vulnerability and pleading invitation are reminiscent of Acconci's compelling blend of questioning of his own identity while pursuing relationality. She is both in dialogue with Acconci's work and taking his place, but her appeal is, in the first instance, directed to networked viewers of computer screens probably in domestic environments, who have the means to interact. This videoperformance operates at the intersection of live and recorded, as well as at the intersection of

different mediators – phone and networked computers (Turkle, 1995 and Latour, 2007). Abrahams performs a sense of urgency with regard to intersubjective relationships in the context of mediated communication and recognises in Acconci's work a historical precedent for these concerns. This work is analysed in greater detail in chapter three and four of this dissertation.

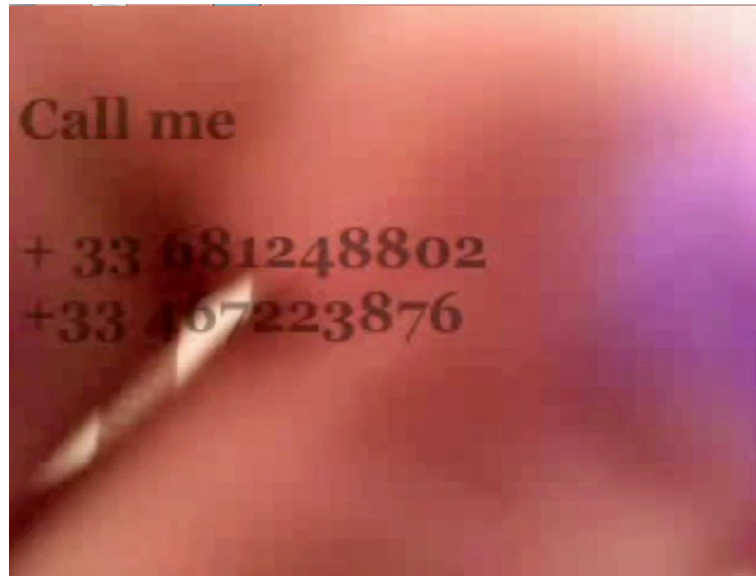


Figure 2.19 Annie Abrahams, *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)*, 2009, video still.

The British duo Jane Pollard and Ian Forsyth also explicitly reference historical videoperformances in works like *Walking After Acconci (Redirected Approaches)* (2005), *Walking Over Acconci (Misdirected Reproaches)* (2008), *Kiss My Nauman* (2007), *Walk With Nauman* (2006). These videoperformances restage well-known historical works with a young female MC (*Walking Over Acconci (Misdirected Reproaches)*, 2008), or a rapper (*Walking After Acconci (Redirected Approaches)*, 2005) standing in for Acconci himself to update these classics with contemporary pop song and urban language. Forsyth and Pollard state that they reference these works to expand the historical dialogue that the artist instantiates 'with the camera – the viewer, you' to include a dialogue with Acconci himself (Forsyth and Pollard, 2006). Despite a sophisticated website that contains several of the artists'

videoperformances, Forsyth and Pollard show no direct interest in videoconferencing platforms, web cameras, online video distribution sites like Youtube or Vimeo, or the specificity of networked screens.

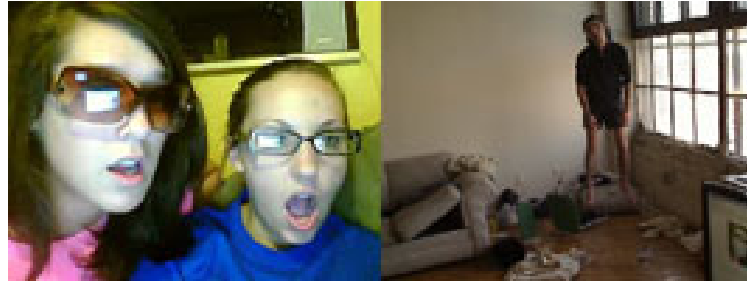


Figure 2.20 Eva and Franco Mattes, *No Fun*, 2010, video still.

Conversely, Eva and Franco Mattes (also known as 0100101110101101.org) use Chatroulette to produce *No Fun* (2010), an online videoperformance where Franco appears *live* on screen hanging from a noose in his flat. Chatroulette is a live platform where users are randomly connected through webcams and microphones to each other, and can choose if they want to chat, or look for another user. Similarly to Abrahams's *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011), this work also can be seen as having two iterations. The first is the online performance with and for the users of Chatroulette; the second is the edited video recording of the paired images of performer and random users, who variously react with indifference, horror, scepticism, etc (Figure 2.20). Whilst some of Eva and Franco Mattes's works can also exist as videos, *Life Sharing* (2000-2003) cannot be repropose as a recorded moving image piece. The artists made the desktop of their computer accessible to anybody for three years, complementing their everyday activities with composite digital collages and the live stream of data from GPS devices attached to their bodies. The fact that all the actions that the Mattes performed on their screen could be seen live on the viewers' own screens blurs the boundaries between everyday life and performance as art practice. It also highlights the function of the screen as an interface that connects and separates at the same time, and that 'enact[s] the effective force of the performance event' (Phelan, 1997,

p.12). Both Abrahams's and the Mattes's body of work attest to a strong current interest in the relationality facilitated by networked technologies combined with performance practices.

Yet, the many emerging dedicated performance venues, festivals and events confirm the continuing relevance of live performance practices that requires the contemporary presence of performer and audience. Having taken up the task of promoting the practice and history of performance in the twenty first century, Marina Abramovic commissioned a new museum of performance and committed to restaging historical works (*Seven Easy Pieces* (2005), including Bruce Nauman's *Body Pressure* (1974); Vito Acconci's *Seed Bed* (1972); VALIE EXPORT's *Action Pants*; *Genital Panic* (1969); Gina Pane's *The Conditioning, first action of Self-Portrait(s)* (1973); Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965); her own work *Lips of Thomas* (1975) and a new piece - *Entering the Other Side* (2005)).

In this acceptance of performance practices, feminist and queer artists find a fertile ground to redefine gender relations and otherness in dialogue with mass media, new media and postcolonial theories and practices. For example, Bird la Bird, a persona created by the artist Kath Moonan, proposes a joyous and playful feminine queer subjectivity by staging performances that 'straddles comedy and performance art' (Bird la Bird, s.d.). Bird la Bird wears tight dresses that highlight her large breasts, discusses the political allegiances of her vagina, and challenges all attempts to confine her to one definition. The research project *Performance Matters*, co-directed by Gavin Butt from Goldsmiths, University of London, Adrian Heathfield from University of Roehampton, and Lois Keidan of the Live Art Development Agency, included Bird la Bird in the exploration of the theme *Trashing Performance* (2010-2011), which 'explored the power of creative expressions that wilfully debunk or ignore cultural ideals and hierarchies of critical value.' (Butt et al., 2011). The third and last theme of *Performance Matters*, which brought the project to a close in

2011, *Potentials of Performance*, asks a series of key questions connected to this research project:

‘What does performance hold in store in its present-day testing of the limits of the social, the cultural, the vital and the critical? What are its potentials to transform civic social bodies and the production of subjectivities more broadly? And how might the failed promise of democracy in contemporary Europe and beyond necessitate a rethinking of the very promise of performance? In short: what can performance do?’ (Butt et al., 2011).

This confluence of the politics of subjectivity with wider political discourses motivates more practices that can be surveyed in this dissertation. The next section surveys some examples relevant to this discussion – the work of Franko B, Tino Sehgal, Anita Ponton, and Ope Lori.



Figure 2.21 Franko B, *I Am Not Your Babe*, 1996, documentation of performance.

In 1996, Franko B performed *I Am Not Your Babe*, a work consisting of the artist standing naked, his entire body painted white and bleeding from both arms onto sheets of white paper. Trained as a painter, Franko B uses his own body as a canvas, and allows his own blood to form pools on the paper at his feet and on the slippery white coating that covers his skin (Franko B, 2011). Focusing on the vulnerability revealed by his weakening bleeding body, Franko B stands (*I Am Not Your Babe*, 1996) or walks along a catwalk (*I Miss You*, 2000) until he becomes unsteady and has to stop, or falls to his knees. The artist also progressively reinforces the importance of gaze and desire by purposefully making eye contact with the audience. His titles reinforce the strong relational approach of these works by referencing love, lovers, intimacy and partners. Relationality becomes more central in *Aktion 398* (2001) – a one-to-one performance where viewers are invited to enter an empty room and spend time with Franko B, who looks into their eyes, naked, coated in white, wearing a dog's surgical collar and bleeding. In *I'm Thinking of You*, first performed in 2009, the artist, accompanied by a pianist, sits naked on a golden swing looking into the eyes of spectators. In a durational version of the same work at The Nunnery Gallery (part of *Performance in the Nunnery: Move Me!*, 2010, curated by myself), Franko B selected 15 volunteers – professional performers, models, actors and others with no related professional experience – to take his place on the swing for twenty minutes each and make eye contact with the audience. He only performed for the last section of the work, establishing a number of complex relationships – with the performers, with the absent *you* in their and in his thoughts, directly with viewers and between performers and viewers. The participants had a number of different reasons to take part, but they all reported a desire to redefine themselves in relation to a different kind of visibility. *I Am Thinking of You* created a context of intimacy in public, where they could be in charge of their own gaze and desires, constructing a returning transformative gaze.

In contrast with Franko B's intensely autobiographical practice – the recurring allusions to love and presence of red crosses referencing his childhood in a Red

Cross orphanage, but also his HIV status and homosexuality – Tino Sehgal’s calculated ‘constructed situations’ are regularly enacted by employed performers to create autonomous relational possibilities (Herbert, 2012). *This Progress* (2006), performed at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in London and at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, starts with a child taking the viewer/participant/interlocutor by the hand across the empty gallery, lightly conversing about progress. After a few minutes, a teenager takes over as the child walks away and the conversation continues with an anecdote. A young man and an older woman conclude the cycle as the visitor reaches the end of the space. Sehgal prohibits all forms of documentation of his work, and even sales are conducted through verbal agreement witnessed by a number of legal representatives. *This Progress* reduces performance to pure interaction – one really has to be there and take part for the work to exist at all.



Figure 2.22 Anita Ponton, *Company*, 2002, documentation of performance.

Anita Ponton’s live and recorded performances reference cinema, religion, mythology and the representation of women in these systems. Her works frequently feature a single troubled female character bound (*Perdut (Lost)*, 2008), struggling melodramatically (*Unspool*, 2003-5) or trapped in some way (*Still*, 2004, and *Dies*

Irae, 2000). In *Company* (2002) Ponton dances with a full size projection of herself. The two figures – one projected and one physically on stage – mirror, challenge, question and court each other until they appear to embrace and merge. The symmetry of the two bodies faces the audience, but it also engages them directly as both Ponton and her recorded image ask them questions.



Figure 2.23 Ope Lori, *Moving Image*, 2009, video still.

Ope Lori's videoperformances approach the issues of gender in conjunction with racial and sexual identity. The explicit performance of vulnerability and racialised power relations characterises Lori's early body of work – for example, the videoperformance *Deracination* (2010) juxtaposes an image of Lori in her underpants dancing provocatively to images from pop promos in which white women and black men reproduce stereotypes of power, to-be-looked-at-ness and racially inflected patriarchy. The sound of a music box underlines Lori's vulnerability, as she stares out of the screen. *Moving Image* (2009) also confronts stereotypes within gay inter-racial relationships, in which black women are generally depicted as the dominant partner. In a similar way to Adrian Piper, Lori challenges viewers to take responsibility for their own internalised racism. By exposing her own constructed subjectivity, her gaze dares viewers to confront the fundamental prejudice that informs their position within normativity, demanding reciprocal redefinition. In the relational performance of her gaze, Lori also exposes the

paradoxes of her own internalised position within normativity, highlighting the complexity of inter-racial intimate and social relationships.



Figure 2.24 Ope Lori, *Re-Birth of a Nation*, 2010, documentation of performance.

During the opening of the exhibition *1916* at Chelsea Triangle Space (2010, London), she complemented the videoperformance *Re-Birth of A Nation* (2010) with a live performance. Lori was behind the bar serving drinks with her face blacked out and wearing a wig and white gloves. A white woman beside her stopped her from interacting with visitors by telling them ‘don’t talk to her!’, and ordered Lori what to do in an authoritative and hostile manner. The unexpected presence of extreme racial prejudice and exploitation where conviviality is expected made all those present complicit in racism. This work overturns the mechanisms of performativity and participation by explicitly making the *viewer/interlocutor* powerless to engage in the social and personal interaction that is defining her.

A series of practices that stretch definitions of performance and conviviality are described by Nicholas Bourriaud in his book *Relational Aesthetics* (2002). Although not directly related to videoperformance, this approach to art practice produces emerging relationality mediated by ‘relational device[s]’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p.30). In the 1990s, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Philippe Parreno, Dominique Gonzales-Foerster, among others, initiated convivial encounters as artworks (Bourriaud, 2002). In this context, playing table football (Tiravanija, *Surface de Réparation*, 1994), cooking

and sharing food (Tiravanija, *pad thai*, 1990), sharing a party (Parreno, *Snow Dancing*, 1995) and collective radio broadcast (Tobier, *Radio Printemps*, 1996) produces 'social interstices' and 'micro-utopias' in which artists and viewers can interact directly (Bourriaud, 2002, p. p.14 and p.70). Felix Gonzales-Torres adds a distinct ethical dimension to his practice – in *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* (1991), he exhibits a pile of wrapped sweets and invites viewers to take them. As the installation is a portrait of his partner who died of an AIDS related illness, the diminishing pile represents the fading body. Although gallerists are instructed to replenish the pile, by taking a candy a viewer takes the responsibility of making the work disappear. In a sense, this initiates a dialogue between artist and viewer informed by an ethical questioning of their respective positions, and of complementary roles in intersubjective interactions more widely. In general, these relational practices initiate possibilities for relationality that can only be fulfilled by the presence and actions of viewers/participants.

This description could also apply to a series of practices that produce alternative social relations as a form of activism. For example the organisation The People Speak aims to offer 'tools for the world to take over itself' (The People Speak, 2014). This collective creates structured opportunities for people to talk to each other in familiar formats like chat shows or game shows. They also collaborate with institutions and organisations to help communities to influence policy, contribute to decisions and shape services. The People Speak use microphones, lights and cameras to facilitate and mediate conversations that otherwise would not happen. From this perspective, they belong to a long tradition of media activism stretching back to Ant Farm in the United States (founded by Chip Lord and Doug Mitchels) and the Institute for Research in Art and Technology (IRAT) in the United Kingdom (John Hopkins and Sue Hall) (Meigh-Andrews, 2006, p.64 and p.66). These highly politicised practices operate at the crossroad between art, technology and politics, adopting different devices (the *new media* of the time) to act on interpersonal relationships and influence social relations. Contemporary media activists tend to

utilise networked tools and platforms to intervene in the politics of proprietary software (for example, the Free Libre Open Source Software movement, or FLOSS), copy right (Creative Commons and Copy Left) and peer-to-peer file and information sharing. These approaches come together in the work of artists who use open source video editing and publishing software to facilitate access to otherwise expensive tools. In this framework, Larisa Blazic developed the project *Mezzo Moderno, Mezzo Distrutto. Half Modern, Half Destroyed* (2010) with the residents of Gillett Square in Hackney, London. The participants were invited to shoot, edit and archive video works focused on their local area with software developed around their needs. The resulting installation in the square itself was a true collaboration between the artist and the residents, which also delivered non-proprietary tools suitable for similar projects in this and other communities.

In summary, contemporary media activism shares important features with its historical precedents – groups of individuals with shared goals come together and use available technologies to counter their invisibility or misrepresentation in the dominant media and mainstream contemporary culture. Activist works often share a key aspect with videoperformance: subjects address camera and viewers directly, suggesting a shared lived experience relayed by the screen. In this context, representation shifts into performativity, gathering political significance as it influences intersubjective and social relationships beyond art practice.

Using a contemporary concept of relationality to analyse historical artworks reveals a legacy of concerns and strategies dating back to early experiments with video and performance, which also extends to recent networked practices. The artists and artworks examined in this chapter activate relationships that mobilise the gaze, and bare the dynamics of power that structure it. Gender, race and economic status are defined within active relations that continuously produce subjectivity and unstable identities – these practices intervene in these relationships. This overview also

shows that video technologies historically span broadcast, communication and representation, sharing the same legacy of networked tools. In this context, the screens of video and of networked computers also share technologies and contexts of use. These factors have been significant in fostering the current growing interest in relational practices and the recent revival of performance and videoperformance practices from the 1970s. The possibility of migrating across platforms and screens enabled by new developments in digital technologies adds a new layer of relational potential to the contemporary practice of videoperformance, and opens the historical body of videoperformance work to fresh readings. This overview of the context of historical and contemporary relevant art practices complements the review of theoretical concepts in chapter one and offers a clear context for the analysis of specific works in part two of this dissertation.

Part 2

The second part of this dissertation addresses directly the emergence and relevance of mediated performative relationality in videoperformance art practices. It interrogates the relational offer of the performer, its performativity, the mediation of the screen, the addressee and their relevance. It is structured around the first person account and in-depth analyses of three videoperformances: Vito Acconci's *Theme Song* (1973), Annie Abraham's *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011), and my own work *Before You Now* (2013), part of the body of work *Intimations* (2007-2013). Chapters three and four complement each other by analysing these encounters in two ways: from a first person perspective (performative writing) and through critical analysis. This introduction contextualizes the choice of these videoperformances, the use of performative writing as a method that suits the instability and performativity of relationality, and the complementary functions of my five videoperformances, and of chapters three and four.

Intimations – the practice

This section expands on the description of my videoperformances in the introduction to this dissertation, and contextualises these works in relation to each other and to the research questions:

- How do videoperformance art practices contribute to debates on relationality?
- Whom does videoperformance address relationally, and what are the dynamics of this address?
- What account of relationality emerges from the analysis of these practices? What is their ethical and political relevance?

It demonstrates how the five pieces come together as a coherent and unified body of practice as research. *Regardless* (2007) and *Before You Now* (2013) bracket this project both chronologically and conceptually by confronting mediated relationality in its complexity. Both these works approach relationality in videoperformance as a

mediated intersubjective encounter and question its dynamics. *The Other Person* (2010), *Are You Talking to Me* (2010) and *Wish You Were Here* (2011) confront and experiment with more specific questions such as intimacy in a public space, denied relationality and liveness.

Regardless deploys vulnerability and emotional manipulation to interrogate power relations in intimacy, calling attention to the ethical and political relevance of this practice: how are gender-specific dynamics of power activated in mediated relationality? How can relationality in videoperformance activate moments of awareness of these processes? Consequently, how does this practice inform face-to-face intersubjective relationships and power-relations themselves, thus contributing to the wider debates on relationality? The work suggests some possible approaches by challenging viewers to take a position – visual and emotional – in response to the performer's plea. It acknowledges the inherent paradox of a videoperformance that offers an intersubjective relationship on the basis of the physical absence of the performer. *Regardless* exerts emotional pressure on viewers to respond to a univocal interpellation from a specific physical perspective: the performer calls them while looking up from the floor and they are inevitably positioned above the screen. The glass screen of the monitor connects performer and viewer while separating them, and the chronological gap between the performance and the viewer's response offers a pause for reflection within which awareness has the opportunity to emerge. This work begins to interrogate how the mediation of video affords a specific potential ethical and political valence for videoperformance – as viewers participate in the mediated relationship without needing to act, their emotional and cognitive responses can briefly become conscious and, perhaps, influence their future awareness in intersubjective relationships.

The Other Person explores further the dynamics of the relational address in videoperformance, and how these position viewers both spatially and relationally. Whilst *Regardless* forces viewers to look down at the screen and performer

assuming a position of power, *The Other Person* offers a more open invitation. As the image is projected and not displayed on a monitor, the performer shares more directly the physical space with the viewer. The bedding lying on the floor in front of the image suggests the possibility of an intimacy that might feel uncomfortable in the public space of the gallery. On the other hand, because of the height of the projection, by standing towards the back of the room viewers can engage directly with the performer's gaze. From this perspective, lying down in close physical and emotional proximity can remain a pleasurable imagined possibility. In other words, this work does not pressure viewers into an intense intersubjective relationship, but intimates concentric zones of proximity, as well as the possibility of closeness, trust and intimacy. The quality of the on-screen address also suggests an open invitation to relate, as in the performance I close my eyes or remain silent for several minutes at a time. This suggests trust and acceptance, and aims to afford viewers more choice and responsibility in the way they occupy this relational space.

Are You Talking to Me directly questions who is being addressed as *you* in the mediated relationality of videoperformance. Based on the theoretical perspective that subjectivity is continually produced in relationality, this work questions how the others of past relationships shape the present address. The two sections of the screen show incomplete versions of the same subject – myself – attempting to dialogue with each other. Viewers are not addressed directly, but the continuous use of the second person implicates them in a triangular ambiguous relationships.

Are You Talking to Me suggests that when the dynamics of past formative relationships overwhelm the relationality emerging in the present, the influence of the current interlocutor is diminished and the relationality that could emerge is deflected. At the same time this work demonstrates that videoperformance can produce a temporary awareness of the close connections between the other addressed in the present and the others of past relationships. In other words, in combination with the two first person accounts in chapter three, this work interrogates the complexity of the addressee in the second person address and its

implications for an understanding of the dynamics of relationality in videoperformance and in face-to-face encounters.

Wish You Were Here examines more closely the paradoxical liveness, sense of presence, and connectivity specific to screen mediation. This work directly interrogates mediated intersubjective relationships by reproducing the window of a Skype conversation. Although the recorded performance takes the form of an answer phone message (for example: 'I'm sorry I am not here ...'), the visual reference to a networked platform evokes a conversation taking place in real time. This highlights the conditions that all the works in this series have in common and that is crucial to the emergence of mediated relationality in videoperformance. In other words, the combination of the chronological gap between performance and viewing combines with the perception of real time created by the screen to evoke asynchronous asymmetric intersubjective relationships.

Finally, *Before You Now* condenses the research questions into one intense and intimate mediated relationship. This work addresses directly videoperformance's specific potential for ethical valence by openly asking viewers to reflect on how their encounter with this work will inform their future face-to-face relationships. To achieve this, it makes full use of the mediation of the screen to evoke a moment in real time ('Before I start the performance ...'). In the final section of chapter three, I give a first-person account of the process of evoking significant others within me in order to explore in depth the question of who is being addressed in videoperformance.

The exploration of the research questions conducted by making these artworks informs and complements the last two chapters of this dissertation to offer a thorough examination of mediated relationality in videoperformance and its relevance beyond the confines of art practice.

Acconci and Abrahams

Acconci's videoperformances explore different permutations of interpersonal relationships and employ visual and verbal strategies to activate the screen of the monitor as a relational mediator. His body of work from the 1970s uses the monitor screen and the gallery space to build intimate relationships. He also questions the representation of masculinity by displaying vulnerability, doubt, manipulation and uncertainty, opening a fissure in the solidity of the male position in gendered power relations. Acconci describes successive shifts in the focus of his practice – from putting 'myself in isolation for the purpose of being revealed outside on a monitor', to 'first turning in on myself, then interacting with another person, then interaction with larger groups of people, passers-by in a gallery space.' (Bear and Sharp, 1974, pp.21-23). For a decade, he consistently interrogates the potential of performance and video to construct mediated relationships. Acconci complements the second person address with introspection in intimate intersubjective relationality that also questions social and power relations.

Contemporary ideas of relationality that have become central to art practice and discourse since the 1990s encourage a fresh reading of Acconci's videoperformances in dialogue with practices and concepts emerging around screen-based networked technologies. The videoperformance *Theme Song* (1973) in particular constructs a visual space for another body to occupy a complementary position on screen while addressing another subject in a variety of tones. Despite being in control of the performance, Acconci already waived the centrality of his position by framing the work in relation to the body of the viewer. He is my other as I watch: he confirms that I was already there as his other when he performed (Simmons and Davis, 1978). This address is supported by the ruses of romantic pop songs, which expose the established positions that genders occupy in language and in intimate relationships. In other words, not only am I already there, I am already positioned in the relationship. The complexity of this address, its modulations and

the strategies that materialize it offer an ideal situation to test the interplay of subjectivity and mediated performative relationality.

In *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011), Abrahams re-interprets the premises of *Theme Song* (1973) – playing pop songs in the background and addressing another – in the context of the festival of networked performance Low Lives 3, and invites viewers to take advantage of the live connection and their ability to reciprocate. Her performed vulnerability and pleading invitation are reminiscent of Acconci's compelling blend of questioning of his own identity while pursuing relationality. She is both dialoguing with Acconci's work and taking his place, but her appeal is, in the first instance, directed to networked viewers of computer screens, who have the material opportunity to interact. This work offers the opportunity to examine different modalities of videoperformance and their implications: live and recorded, video and networked screens, as well as the intersection of different mediators: phone, video/web camera and networked computers. Abrahams chooses romantic songs from Acconci's selection, making her gendered address more ambivalent. Moreover, she exposes aspects of her subjectivity she cannot control by deliberately and directly making herself vulnerable to the actions of viewers.

The different genders of the two artists, the performance strategies and technologies they adopt, and the gap in the production dates of these two works offer to examination a range of issues that covers the scope of this research project. Examining my own videoperformance *Before You Now* (2013) completes this set of case studies with the perspective of the performer and with the interplay of her subjectivity, of the video camera and of the other evoked beyond it. This offers insight into my methodology, into how my recent body of work operates as a research tool, and into the coherence of this project across practice and text.

In the first two sections of chapter three, I occupy the position of the addressee – Acconci's and Abrahams' *you* – to examine directly two encounters between one viewer and one videoperformance. This approach aims to evoke an account of the

relationality that emerges in the encounter between a subject and a videoperformance. Making explicit how these works affect and produce aspects of my subjectivity from a first person perspective reveals dynamics of the emergence of relationality that could not otherwise be researched. I adopt my own subjectivity as a tool to investigate relationality – not as the subject of research, but as a point of access to the interplay of subjectivity and relationality. The method of performative writing allows the relay of the ‘living performative encounter with art’ wherein both subject looking and artwork are reconfigured and emerge anew in the encounter (Phelan, 2001, p.45). The *I* of chapter three is a temporary fragment of my subjectivity performed as text in relation to a videoperformance. Separating the elements that emanate from one subjectivity and from the other in an instance of relationality is made impossible by the dynamics of the gaze, and performative writing allows this contradiction to remain productive. Subjectivity and relationality emerge performatively together between subject and videoperformance, between subject and writing, and between writer and reader – not in causal relation or chronological order. In other words, chapter three concentrates on instances of representation and performativity in relation to me – a performing and viewing subject – in order to examine the interplay of the dynamics of the gaze, awareness, reflection and transformation that characterise videoperformance.

In this context, the relationship that emerges in the encounter between this viewer and a videoperformance is re-performed as writing (different fragments of subjectivity are evoked and performed through writing), and extends into the performance of the relationship between writer and reader. This written performance relays and echoes the performative exchange of the encounter with the artwork without faithfully reporting, representing or reproducing it. Similarly, it evokes and continues the performance I enact for the camera and for future viewers, complementing and maintaining the integrity of my methodology of practice into a form of writing that does not contradict its values. Although it is a compromise, performative writing maintains the fragmentation and instability of the performative

emergent phenomena under scrutiny in this project. It is a compromise as this mode of writing also remediates the encounter as the subjectivity of the writer is performatively transformed again (Bolter and Grusin, 2000). In other words, performative writing does not report, describe or represent, but mediates again and performs again (differently) the performative exchanges between viewer and videoperformance, performer and imagined viewer, and the relationality that emerges.

Chapter four makes explicit the critical voices that resonate in the previous chapter: the theoretical constructs examined in chapter one shape the configuration of subjectivity that emerges in the first person account in combination with my past encounters. Similarly, my past experiences as a maker and viewer of videoperformances inform my responses to the works examined and to the making of *Before You Now* (2013). The *I* of chapter three returns as the grammatical subject and as the object of analysis of chapter four. The subjective and fragmented knowledge that emerges from the first person accounts is examined in light of relevant theoretical concepts and rigorously expounded.

Whilst chapter three endeavours to maintain the liveness and performativity of the relational encounter, chapter four focuses on critically analysing the different form of knowledge that emerges from the first person account. In a sense, relationality remains unwritten, but the combination of the first person account as viewer and as performer with the conceptual and theoretical overview of mediated performative relationality offers an overall picture of performative mediated relationality and addresses the research questions. By acknowledging the interplay of the dynamics of the gaze and of academic analysis in this discussion, I also acknowledge the openness of my argument as a contribution to knowledge that does not foreclose the possibility of debate. Performative writing allows for a rigorous critical analysis that respects the positionality of subjectivity. The reading of mediated performative relationality that emerges intimates productive possibilities without resolving them into definitive statements.

Chapter Three

Performative Accounts of Relationality.

3.1 Vito Acconci, *Theme Song* (1973)

I respond differently to different interpellations. Some modes of address and invitations offer me a complementary position into which I slide easily. Others offer enticing moments of discomfort that I want to experience for a time. Others seem to address someone else.

When Acconci's image fades in and his face appears on the screen in *Theme Song*, those eyes are looking at me and asking me to lock gaze. He starts singing: 'I can't see your face in my mind' (see Appendix One). Or is he saying 'I can'? He looks uncomfortable lying on the carpet in front of the stripy sofa, and reaches clumsily for cigarettes and for a tape player outside the frame. This discomfort appeals to me. I stay, look and listen.

He can't see me – he says he does not know what my face looks like, but he knows that I am here. "Don't you want to come in here? Sure! Sure you'll come in here". I have not been asked, so I cannot refuse. As I watch closely and listen carefully, I feel attracted and repelled; manipulated and made aware of my own thoughts; intrigued and rejecting. I swing back and forth with his language – *this is me* becomes *this could be anybody*; a question becomes a matter-of-fact statement, then an offer that makes me feel uncomfortable; I don't want you to feel alone, but I don't want you to wrap your body around mine. And I don't want you to find something that can win me over.

He is talking about his and my body as if they were of comparable substance, but in this relationship they are not. I am not invited into a physical or geographical space, but into a web of thoughts that reach out to include me. These threads seem to form partial shapes that require my presence to become complete; at the same time I feel cajoled into taking a particular position. I am not only watching, but also contributing to something happening – by spending time with this image that is already another

subject I am a complicit interlocutor, a different / produced and absorbed in this exchange. I did not choose to shift from my position of viewer to this, but as I start watching, as Acconci's gaze fixes itself on me and calls me *you*, something in me responds and becomes active – I am doing something that goes beyond looking. I have stepped into another space not with my physical body and not for the duration of the work, but in a much more fluid way what I call *I*, the position from which I act and speak, takes on a perceivable elasticity and appears permeable in a way I am not generally conscious of.

This face on a screen is as real as any other subject, and materialises as an interlocutor as I watch and relate to him/it. Not a representation or a portrait of a subject that is somewhere outside the screen, but a subject that emerges from the flow of these electrons inside the glass of the screen (Jones, 2006). It is connected with the artist Vito Acconci, his physical body and his body of work, but it is not just an image of a man who *really* exists somewhere. His desires and my desires are evoked in our meeting at this glass surface. This image of the artist and performer Vito Acconci comes to life the moment he addresses me. The relational event that takes place with me activates the image on the screen as a living subject and activates me as an interlocutor. He seems to be addressing a subject who will complement his relational offer, but he also seems to be pushing me to become that subject. In a paradoxical way, I do not stop feeling that I am myself, yet I become aware that feelings, thoughts and particular parts of my complex and fragmented self emerge from this encounter already active: not one the consequence of the other, but performatively as one. Act and subject emerge together from and within this relationship on either side of the screen.

Sentence after sentence, he performs a series of ruses that delimit a position for me to occupy. I recognise a frisson between what could be described as my will (or my conscious desire or my sense of self or my present self) and other selves that are brought into being by this exchange. He repeats some tricks with slight variations, insisting on his loneliness, on wanting to take care of me, on wanting to be taken

care of, on how good it would feel. At each return, the pull of a particular manoeuvre seems more apparent and less effective, and I can see more clearly the difference between the echoes of some of my own relational memories and the aspects of my subjectivity that generally prevail in this present phase of my life.

The shape of the *you* that Acconci is working so hard to evoke seems malleable to his manipulations as it shrinks and expands with the changing songs and lines. This conjured *you* appears to have a will of some sort, but a weak one, which is swayed by what he tells me and by what *they* are telling me. Acconci seems to imply that in me there is an ongoing internal dialogue that he seems to know and understand – the voice of desire is already arguing with the voices of culture and society, and Acconci tries to insinuate himself between the different voices to give more weight to one side of the dispute against the other. He seems to have something in mind, and he seems to know that he needs to make it palatable to me. He seems to be trying to convince me that I am, and I want to be, the one to ‘fulfil all the dreams’, but that the voices of social norms, my upbringing, my feminist friends, the priest and my parents are stopping me from listening to my own desires. I get the feeling that what is being asked of me is not to occupy a clear role, but to offer a sense of availability and flexibility to whatever may come up for him. Even when he appears to turn the tables by saying that whatever I do is the right thing ...

I have been writing that he *seems* and *appears* to be doing and wanting all this. I see in this performance of Acconci these relational dynamics amplified because of my own layered memories, desires, fears and internalised norms. Although I am the result of a unique mix of influences from specific environments, I can also recognise elements that are shared with many other subjects and form the basis of political movements and philosophical enquiries: the gender, class background and religion that I did not choose, the language that shaped and shapes my thoughts, the heterosexual family structure I was born into. This probably means that although other subjects will evoke and perform differently nuanced relationships with slightly

different *Acconci*, some of these larger themes will resonate for most subjects who share some foundational elements of their living psychic structure.

Acconci proposes a series of invitations that appeal to features I share with many subjects, and I feel some of them more clearly than others: I have not been asked, so I cannot refuse – is this what makes me feel manipulated? Now I want to see where he will go next and what else he will try. I can feel the emotional blackmail and manipulation I felt as a teenager: I feel interpellated and implicated by his address. Is it recognition? Does this remind me of how other men have addressed (did I allow them?)? Is it our shared Italian background I recognise? The shifting shape of this relationship floats between the screen and me, and bonds me with Acconci for a time. I am aware of Lacan's warning about the illusory reciprocity of the gaze – am I confusing my *desire* with Acconci('s), and does this amplify my blindness to this other? I cannot objectively say that Acconci is being manipulative, vulnerable, duplicitous, revealing or honest, but I can confidently say that with me as an interlocutor the relationship takes these forms at certain moments. I guess this happens with some other women too. And some men? He never mentions any gender.

My desire – my conscious and unconscious desires shaped by a web of memories, prohibitions and influences of role-models – contributes to the interpellation of this instance of the artist's represented and performed subjectivity, this black and white Vito Acconci, and taints his contribution to this relationship. It is my desire that brings forth some aspects of the artist's persona that in turn I respond to. Desire emerges in me in the present, but colours the present with the voices and smells of the past. I want to be needed and desired, to form a unique pattern of desires with another subject. Instead, he tells me 'You can look like anybody; I'll take anybody. I'll take anything I can get'. The shape between the screen and me shifts again – I remember feeling like this and feeling very vulnerable. This vulnerability and fear of not being loved for who I am emerges now, yet I do not walk away.

He changes the song on the tape player and launches into another cliché (yes, I feel irritated):

‘Oh I need you, I mean I need you YOU, I need you to take care of me. Oh, come on, I need you to show me that, show me that I matter, to show me that you remember my name, you know who I am ... [sings] Oh come on, I need somebody to remember me, somebody to take care of me. Come on, you can do that’.

Of course I can. And I continue to swing between attraction and aversion at the transparent attacks and retreats (‘Ah, that wouldn’t work, uh? Come on, look, I try this trick with you: I’ll be really honest ...’). The subject that seems to emerge on the screen is of a vulnerable insecure man whose desires, like mine, have also been shaped by successive layers of pressure and interpellations. Yet, he seems to have ways of turning this fragility into a tool to exercise power over me. His relational stratagems re-deploy the lack of coherence and continuity in his subjectivity as levers to shift my position towards the position he desires me to occupy: ‘I won’t impose my way on you, but sooner or later you’ve got to be here’.

I can see my own fragmentation and vulnerability reflected in his, and I feel this connects us. On the other hand, he seems to be trying to take control not only of his own fragmented subjectivity, but of the complexity of our encounter and of my own subjectivity as well. I think this might have something to do with the way I am conditioned to see male interlocutors, but I cannot put my finger on how it works. I can only see this other from my own present perspective. I am not familiar with most of the songs he is playing (I was five in 1973), so his own words have more resonance than the voices, melodies and lines that he plays. I have a vague understanding of the way he picks songs and lines to suit his monologue. The transparency of his tactics reassures me that I know quite clearly what is going on. I wonder how clearly I would have been able to see this if *he* had been physically here.

We come to this moment moulded by our histories yet incomplete, carved into representations of our momentary selves. The ebb and flow of relational modalities

mirrors the complexity and fragmentation of our shifting subjectivities. This intimacy that crosses the screen amplifies the waves of vulnerability and the power games that modulate face-to-face intimacy, allowing me a closer look at my own desires, hesitations and ruses. But what am I *really* seeing? Face-to-screen-to-face. Yet, the face is also a screen (Lacan, 2004). You are saying that if I were there you wouldn't be able to see my eyes: I would be too close for you to focus. Without the screen we would be too close to see each other. Instead, 'look how close we are! Sure I can see you, I can see you right up against my face, up against my body. Oh linger on, stay with me. [smokes] there is no reason to go away! Come as close to me as you can get'. The screen creates a comfortable distance: it is barrier and bridge. It reveals memories, desires, fears and habits that are already there and mediate face-to-face encounters. When you are in front of me without a screen, we respond to each other so quickly and our subjectivities become so confused that all these mechanisms become transparent and we forget they are at work.

In this mediate encounter, the screen is transparent and subjectivities emerge. The relationship exists before us, like a musical scale ready to be used as a system for composition. We improvise and repeat, fishing possibilities out of our reservoirs of memories and models:

Your eyes would have to be pale because I couldn't see you clearly – you'd be too close. Too close to see any clear image. I couldn't focus on you. Oh, the world would really be strange. When I see you it's really strange. I don't have to put you on the mirror – I see you right before me! I don't have to put a mirror in front of me in order to see you.

I am not sure anymore if this *you* is me. He moves on quickly and I don't have time to think this through. Although I recognise Acconci's position of power as the speaker in this instance of relationality, I also recognise his blindness to himself and to me, his vulnerability, his lack of coherence and his failures. I perceive Acconci's fragmentation as a mirror of my own and a possibility for reciprocal relationality. Is he trying to put me in this position so that I am the mirror? Is he going to use me to see himself? I am in front of a shifting performance and partial representation of

Acconci's subjectivity on a screen, and I feel interpellated to perform a function. Even if I do not understand what function, I engage fully in trying to decode this engagement. Perhaps, this is all that is asked of me.

To some extent, I can see performative relationality unfolding and pulling me along, shaping me and being shaped by me and by this shifting iteration of Acconci's subjectivity. Yet, each instance of the subject Vito Acconci is evoked both by his performance and by my engagement with this videoperformance. My partial awareness of this dynamic and of my part in it creates a fissure in the gaze – I am already fragmented; he is already absent; he cannot confirm me in my existence; he cannot fulfil my psychic desire, and I cannot fulfil his. I am myself interpellated as a particular iteration of this subject – for example the woman who *does not want to be respected as much as all that* – I can observe myself responding with irritation to this interpellation. And I can observe myself evoking the artist as this particular type of man, with these intentions, these feelings, these desires, these memories. We emerge as these specific subjects, as the performative products of each instance of this mediated relationality as we summon our histories.

My awareness of the absence of his physical body does not leave me alone in front of a video screen. Quite the opposite – I am with him and with myself. I respond and write as if I were in the presence of another, but I can watch myself relate as I relate. I notice the pull of some ruses and how others leave me disconnected. This humming (black-and-) white man of an age I cannot guess won't be able to wrap his body around mine, he can't take advantage of my vulnerability, of my memories, of the conditioning left over in me by past relationships, of my desires. I can't smell his heavy smoker's breath and I am free to explore my own feeling in the safety of this mediated intimacy. The screen is warm both with his presence and with the safety of his absence.

When he says again 'come into me', I see that *he is* the screen and his invitation shifts again. What would it mean to join him into the screen? Had Acconci been a woman, this might have evoked a very different position for me within imagined

vagina and womb. Instead, the image of his male body lying in front of the stripy sofa leaves visual space for another body within the frame of the screen. He has carved out a space for me and gives voice to this space: 'come into me'. When Acconci speaks in the first person in *Theme Song*, this *I* that speaks emerges from the whole picture – not only Acconci's face and body, but also the songs he plays, the sofa and the portion of carpet in front of it. Acconci emerges in this videoperformance as a mould for a position I could take within another's living psychic structure: he carves a space for me to occupy in (relation to) him. To *go into him* would mean to accept the boundaries he is laying out by addressing me through the rehashed words of carefully selected songs: 'be this, do that, tell me this, be that for me'. He is asking me to let his desires – or my own evoked image of his desires – interpellate me as the possible object of his desire, mould me and shape me to fit this image that he is, with my complicity, layering and modelling.

As I speculate on desire and its interlocutor, other questions come to the surface of my consciousness: *whom are you talking to? Whom do you think you are talking to?* His address seems to allude to presences that precede me. Even as an informed viewer and maker of videoperformance, I cannot with any certainty state whose place I am taking when I respond to this videoperformance that addresses me as *you*. Is there an *original other*? Who is Vito Acconci singing and speaking to in *Theme Song*? Mother, lovers, himself, women who rejected him, a particular woman who responded in a particular way, his latest partner, his son or daughter? I can only engage from my own position, determined by a vast number of factors, including being an Italian heterosexual woman of a specific age, an artist focusing on videoperformance, an academic analysing performative relationality, a daughter with two younger brothers and other more ineffable splinters of recognisable identities. I shift to questioning which relational memories shape *this Acconci*: he is echoing past exchanges, just as past exchanges echo in me.

The number of interlocutors has been multiplying between the screen and me: this momentary and shifting Acconci, this momentary and shifting Cremona are joined

by parents, partners, lovers, friends who come forth and retreat. These voices merge, their interpellations echo and overlap, and the fault lines between present and past become less clear. Here I do not need to make a decision or act, but how did I act in the past, how will I act in the future in front of similar *provocations*? Did I do what he seemed to need? Or did I find a way to say no? Was I able to say *yes, I need it too, but not with you*? I think I remember thinking *I can't really say this – it would hurt him*. From where I am standing now (this moment, but also this age, marital status, profession, ability to reflect) I cannot imagine not standing firm on what I need, but those feelings are vivid and clear. So vivid that I wonder in what situations and with which interlocutors these aspects of my *subjectivities* are evoked most powerfully in my present life.

I respond differently to different interpellations, but interpellations rarely stop at 'hey, you!': they shift and slide evoking different *yous*. Unexpected interlocutors emerge every moment from the splintered subjectivities of all others we encounter. Nothing about others stays fixed outside and inside my own living psychic structure.

Writing this encounter and reading my own words reveals to me that my subjectivity is not my own, but a composite of remembered gestures and inflections reinforced with compliments, rejected, suggested and imposed. Acconci's voice and corrugated forehead entice to the forefront versions of me that surprise me for their permanence: why are they still part of me? I thought I had vanquished them with the end of adolescence, with the conscious choice of living in a different country. In a different language, similar desires still haunt me and shift my present English-speaking confident mature womanhood into the uncertainties of gendered exchanges to be negotiated anew.

Is this what I do to viewers and interlocutors when I slip into seduction? Do I protect myself from my fears by tempting little boys and little girls out of their shells?

3.2 Annie Abrahams, Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci) (2011)

The screen is briefly filled with white and grey striped fabric (Abrahams' dress?) and a superimposed text: 'call me' and two phone numbers. Soon the pink-red hue of skin (at first I think it might be part of her face, but then I recognize the palm of a hand) fills the screen and her voice asks if I can hear her. 'Are you there?' (see Appendix Two). The image remains vaguely abstract and shimmers with large coloured pixels and the quality of skin that is too close to see (White, 2003). I am mesmerized by the slow rhythm of the movement and by the pace of Abrahams' soft voice. The atmosphere is warm and intimate, and I feel lulled into letting go to this visual caress. Occasionally, I catch myself moving my head to see between the fingers – I can only glimpse the fabric's pattern, but not her face.

She is speaking in the present tense: this is happening now, but I also know that it has already happened. The low quality of the image on the screen reminds me that this moment happened *live* in front of many people, in their houses and on the screens of their portable computers. It is happening on the screen of my laptop now, at my desk, in my house. Now it's a recording being played, whilst then it was an event being broadcast. I have to remind myself that this is the case, because Abrahams's voice is addressing me now, and something in me is responding – I am her present *you*. I am with her skin and with her voice. She does not face me the way I am facing the screen and this asymmetric intimacy absorbs me in an impalpable engagement.

She says she knows I am there and asks me if I am real. Then I hear the song and I am reminded that there is another she is also in dialogue with – Acconci is in the title and The Velvet Underground's *Pale Blue Eyes* (1969) is one of the tracks he plays in *Theme Song*. She voices some selected lines as if they were her thoughts, like Acconci did in 1973, but he seemed so sure about my existence and my position. Acconci addressed me in the certainty that I was there and this built a strong bond between us – strong enough to allow him to ask for me to step into his desires completely. Abrahams keeps asking me if I am there and if I am real.

Because my substance is less defined in her address, I feel less present to the relationship: the *I* that emerges from Abrahams' interpellation wonders who she is and what she is supposed to do. Of course I am real – I am your real viewer and interlocutor. You interpellated me and brought me into existence, just like I bring you into existence as an interlocutor by watching, listening, relating and feeling this encounter. Yet, you are telling me that this is not enough and that unless I call you, you will not know if I am real.

Abrahams asks me questions that demand actions and answers. Her voice becomes more determined and I feel the weight of a sense of responsibility that I did not ask for. She is talking to *me* and evoking something that is part of my everyday life: dialing a number on a phone and speaking with someone I may know or not, usually for a purpose. I have to do something to activate this relationship, and my present incapacity to respond and prove to her that 'I am real' involves me in a direct way. I desire her presence more than I desire making my own presence felt. I am real to this real relationship because she is calling me *you*, yet not real enough for Abrahams to offer me any confirmation of my reality in the present state of our relationship. The *I* that Abrahams seems to evoke in me is a subject who desires to be confirmed in its existence and stability. She has no doubt that she is real and repeatedly states it with emphasis. Her demands and offers do not seem to come from a position of need or unconscious desire, but of self-sufficiency and certainty. She seems to say: *I am real, it is you I am not sure about.*

This paradox puts me in an impossible position: I am real to this relationship as the *you* that she evokes and affects, engaged with my own and her thoughts, feelings and desires, yet she is asking me to shift to another *I*, who will move away from this screen-intimacy to dial a number and hear her voice. I can already hear her voice – the desire that is awakened in me is to see her and be the one she is relating to directly. By loosening this bond in order to move to another mediated relational practice (connecting through the phone) I would have to stop being real to the relationship that Abrahams herself has produced. This paradox produces tangible

relationality as I am completely absorbed in trying to decode this paradox and my unstable position within it.

I cannot find any position for myself in this situation, but I do recognize a relational pattern coming to life and unfolding as Abrahams speaks: I have to withdraw in order to engage. This contradiction keeps me bound to the shimmering screen and to Abrahams's voice, which is becoming more and more categorical: 'Come on, do it. Do it! Don't hesitate, go on! Call! Take your phone and call me. I'm waiting'. I cannot separate the various levels at which I relate to her – the appeal of her invisible presence, my empathy for her discomfort, her dependence on the action of strangers, the sense of exposure, the sense of impending failure ... She seems both fragile and self-assured. I imagine her feelings from the way her voice resonates within me: I evoke Abrahams as in need of others' action, in control as she set up this situation herself, but vulnerable and unmasked in her desires for others to confirm her existence and relational presence. The fragments of her subjectivity multiply in my imagination to correspond to the parts of my subjectivity evoked in this exchange.

Abrahams' shifting tone affects me for its firm and authoritative quality; it becomes a little too brusque for seduction and for a sense of intimacy. The inner other it evokes in me is closer to mother than to friend. I hear the voice of my mother stating what needs to be done. An aspect of me emerges with the temptation to rebel to these injunctions, and jostles with the desire to please her and myself. As I so directly respond to this interpellation with my mother in mind, I recognize that Abrahams' request for intimacy usurps the place meant for conversations with my (m)other, physical or symbolic (Berlant, 2000). In the knowledge that in this interpellation I hear the ghost voice of my mother, I do not rebel to Abrahams' firmness, or harden my response to her performed need. I am complicit in her performance of presence and absence, desire and rejection, intimacy and distance, present and past.

I also hear the voice of a performer and colleague whose work does not seem to be developing the way she hopes, the voice of a friend who asks assertively for what

she needs and the voice of another subject who asks me to satisfy her desires even if I am not sure what they are. I do not abandon her in the hands of unsympathetic viewers, but join forces as a performer who also experienced an unresponsive audience. This awareness opens me to accept what I do not see of Abrahams – whom is she *really* addressing? Whose place am I usurping? What other conversations and interlocutors resonate in this relationship on both sides? What emerges is not a utopian blanket acceptance of all forms of otherness, but a pragmatic acceptance of another who ‘mirrors’ my lack of consistency and univocality in the accounts I give of myself (Butler, 2005).

‘Mostly, you just make me mad! But now, please call me’. This affects me deeply, and leaves open the space for my inner dialogue to resonate and for my unconscious desire to cloud my responses in this relationality evoked in complicity. We both emerge in this encounter fragmented and full of contradictions: strong and weak, generous and demanding, evoked and denied. By not being visible and through the tone of her voice she feeds my own desire to relate and holds it suspended in its possibility. The mixture of demand and vulnerability holds me in a compelling bond as my desire to relate remains suspended and unfulfilled. The offer is open to all but she delegates the responsibility to make a move to me. I’m touched and irritated. I just want Abrahams to show her face and look at me, to hear her tell me that *I am here*, that I am what she needs.

What is she doing to me by engaging me so intimately, then telling me that this is not real unless I do something else? She is evoking a relationship in which being the recipient of a relational offer and responding at a performative relational level is not enough. Whilst my relational engagement in itself makes this relationship come into being, Abrahams compels me into a practical, physical act involving my whole body in the world, which goes beyond this screen and takes this instance of relationality into a wider sphere of action. I can see myself desiring that this other relates to me and becoming unnerved by being asked to come out of this emerging relational pattern to activate a different one. If I phoned Abrahams, I would start a

different performance in which I am making a relational offer within an engagement that someone else has already framed. As I become aware of the discomfort that the emergence of this / causes me, I wonder how this aspect of my subjectivity plays within other relationships.

The screen says 'call me', but I cannot, as the performance is not *live*. As I was not a viewer of the work during the festival, the invitation to phone Abrahams does not address me, yet when I am in front of the screen and I hear her voice, the request is addressed to me too: 'This is not video! This is not television! This is real! This is not imagination. You are there, I am here!'. What if I had called her? Now that I can only access a recorded videoperformance, Abrahams is no less real to me, and no less real than me. I cannot separate the appeal of her invisible presence, her imagined discomfort in a performance that has its own dynamics, our vulnerability to and dependence on the action of strangers, the sense of personal risk.

As a second song starts, the phone rings loudly and Abrahams answers. I finally see her face, but she is not looking at me anymore (I imagined she was looking at me when I could not see her). She is smiling broadly and thanking the caller: 'I'm so glad you called me'. I met Abrahams in person in the past and when I can finally see her face I am not surprised at how she looks. Do the wrinkles and grey hair of this older woman surprise other viewers? Her tone towards the caller resonates with relief and warmth. A very different subject from the one who had been offering and denying a relationship through the living screen is evoked. The pragmatics of asking 'who are you' and 'what did you say' pull Abrahams into a different relational mode, but do not completely break the spell of Abrahams' bond with me – she appears torn between her different interlocutors and stumbles between 'OK yeah, I'm very far' and 'no, I'm very close in fact'. Abrahams is now more directly caught in the paradox she herself initiated, and I feel her split loyalties to the caller present to her ear and to the viewers just beyond the camera.

She is walking away, and I am left to watch her as she relates with someone else and becomes disinterested in my existence. Would I have called? What would I

have said? Would she have greeted me as warmly as she greeted Helen? This shift in relationality retrospectively taints her performance with desire, trust and friendship. She really needed someone to call her – I wasn't sure because of what feelings her request evoked in me. I was blinded by my desires and unable to see Abrahams' desire (Lacan, 1998). I am surprised and annoyed by the confused mixed reactions that this brief relational situation has evoked in me. I look for excuses: it all happens so quickly! Acconci takes more than 30 minutes to modulate our relationship, whilst Abrahams concentrates this situation into six very fast-moving minutes. I barely had the time to become aware of what was happening to me (and between us) and something else was already happening.

I evoke both Acconci and Abrahams as subjects who are, in these videoperformances, exposing inconvenient aspects of their subjectivities and instrumentalizing their vulnerability to intensify their relational offers. Yet, Abrahams' perceived and performed honesty lulls me into an impression of stability and coherence of Annie Abrahams as a subject, and allows my desires to surface and demand to be satisfied: *You do not need me – let me need you*. It is uncomfortable to become aware of this aspect of my response to this interpellation, and my thoughts move away from this work towards my relationship with my mother, to questions about the men I have fallen in love with and to the relational power of videoperformance. I immersed myself in this apparently simple work without thinking about where it would lead me and now I feel surprised and transformed. I have become aware of something that in my face-to-face encounters with Abrahams and intimate encounters with others I had no opportunity to question.

This is a very intimate relationship, even more intimate than a sexual encounter. My desire to relate has blinded me to Abrahams' desires. I cannot imagine how this relational encounter would have changed if I had been encountering this performing subject at the time of her *live* appeal to a networked audience. Even when replayed from a recording, her address to the *you* she knows is there maintains the qualities of happening in the present, but its asynchronous condition is highlighted. Would

the mediation of the screen have given me the same space to reflect on the resonating layers of this encounter? Would I have been able to call her and say simply *Annie, I just wanted to see you?* Maybe my awareness of the pull of these different desires would have been accentuated by the material possibility of making my own desire manifest. Or maybe it would have disappeared behind my capacity to act.

As I engage again with Abrahams in *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* by writing and reading my shifting *I*, different facets emerge both on and in front of the screen. This continuously emerging and transforming relationality builds on the awareness already activated by engaging with Acconci's *Theme Song*, and more complexities come into view. I am interpellated not only as lover, daughter, sibling, partner and friend, but also as maker of videoperformance and provocateur of intimate relationships. I recognize patterns that emerge in my videoperformances as I invite others to relate and reflect. I feel a heightened sense of responsibility that I am not able to examine as a viewer in front of the screen of the set of works that form *Intimations*. But I can write as the emerging subject who faces the camera and interpellates viewers into relating.

3.3 Cinzia Cremona, *Before You Now* (2013)

I adopt different modes of address to complement the position of my interlocutors, but here it appears that I am speaking first, inviting someone to become something in a situation I create. I have in mind a relational atmosphere, a sense of how this shared moment should feel. I associate words to this mode: real, warm, authenticity – this is the possibility I want to offer. What do I need to offer and ask the other to make this happen? It is my responsibility to produce this interpellation, but I am already part of an ongoing conversation. My desires move me towards making this work and towards finding more interlocutors for something that already exists in me. In a sense, I evoke others as I already perceive them and my address is shaped by their continuous presence. I was never and will never be alone.

In the first instance, fragments of subjectivity emerge as *me* in relation to the powerful voices of others who are not here now. This means that it is not enough to plan a videoperformance, write a script, set up the camera and shoot. In this ongoing polyphonic dialogue an *I* that can steer my internal ongoing conversation towards this work emerges slowly. It is not a part I can act, but an orchestration of aspects of myself that I can perform in this setting. Mothers at various ages, brothers, teachers, friends, lovers, encounters echo, emerge, renew their emotional colours. In a way I cannot describe, an impression of order emerges. I draft a script that I know I will not follow. I choose a room, an angle in relation to the natural light from a window, a chair, a height for the tripod, a framing.

I face the camera with its dark receding lens (which leads my gaze to you, who are already there) and its small side screen showing me the image of me now. This is the image of my face that represents *me* at this moment, but also the tool for this relational venture. This parallel relationship between my sense of self and the image of my own face is a constant source of surprises – my image on screen rarely corresponds to what I expect and is radically different from what I saw in the mirror just before switching the camera on. This needs to be settled before I can start focusing on the lens and the other beyond it. Tiredness, age, anger, sadness, and

other feelings I was unaware of, take me by surprise in these facial marks. The little screen frames them, and charges them with meaning and importance. I briefly wonder if others see me like this face-to-face and how I read what I see on other faces. Approaching the moment of shooting I had an impression of order that was just that – an impression. Now, a compelling internal dialogue about the enormous significance of the area of skin around my eyes dominates the proceedings. *You are aging. Are you sure videoperformance is still a good idea? I don't feel sad – why do I look sad? Why do I look this tired? People must feel sorry for me all the time. This is not about feeling sorry for me. This will not do. You will not do. How can you offer anything when you seem to be pleading for something? Maybe this is all this is about ...*

Nevertheless, I press record and start addressing you and as I make myself yours, for you, I don't like me – *I don't sound right. How should this sentence sound? Did I pronounce that right? I forgot to smile – Am I smiling? What was I going to say next? I'm biting my lips again ...* I persist until I get where I wanted to get and I can stop recording. The internal dialogue about the way my physical face becomes an image is so loud that I cannot concentrate on addressing you, and this is both part of my psychic structure and of the making of the work. Representation to performativity: the balance shifts from seeing and making sense of the image, to doing something else, and back again.

Watching back is painfully frustrating. I know that I cannot see what you see, but I have to do this anyway. Adjusting how I feel and how I am represented to become a sharper tool for relating is part of the relationship that will emerge. This dialogue cannot be avoided or ignored, but becomes centre-stage until it is more balanced and can merge with the background. In the meantime, I am visibly not concentrating on you. My eyes are a little vague, as if I was trying to focus at different distances at the same time. I stare into the depth of the lens, but these other interlocutors hold me back onto my chair and I cannot reach you. Your gaze and your voice are a

whisper compared to the loud presence of what emerges from the doubts and criticism of my accumulated shards of subjectivity.

I work at taming this aspect of my performance, as I become more aware that this background chattering gives body and substance to my desire to be in relation to you. If you were taking the place of just one of those others, it would be easier to address only you, but you are not *mamma* or *my love* or *you bastard* – all of them float beyond the lens with all those other *me* I have been and I can be at different times. I cannot quite see where the criticisms are coming from, so I cannot reply or stand up to them. They are just me, and completely convincing because of that. I am at once straining to decode this cacophony, and to numb its most powerful affects, to find you and to become able to address you. I seek within this tangle a thread of conversation you can be part of. We can only do it together and to get this going I need to do my part and offer you the best I have. I need to move from portraying myself on screen to becoming a living open relational possibility.

Time and space away from this setting and the camera help me to prepare thoughts and appearance, and achieve a sense of wellbeing aimed at feeling ready to step out again towards beyond the lens. I come back to the camera looking and feeling *better* (a little make-up, a brighter smile, more flattering lighting). I have given in to this pressure without challenging it and without understanding its precise source, but I have to avoid those questions for now – this is not therapy, but a deep outward engagement. I have more space to feel the presence of another subject and I am focused on addressing it now. My gaze, my will and my intentions converge on the lens and on this other, who is already there, materialised by my attention ‘before I start the performance’. Fragments of myself resonate in my words and in my gaze, and strengthen the presence of this temporary subject: by repeating *you* as if performing an incantation, I conjure it here now. It is not your response I seek, but your presence in my address, so that you can, with me, make this relationship happen.

I am making this videoperformances because all I think about is how people relate to each other and to me, how relationships work, how 'I' changes in response to dialogue with any Other past or present, internal or external, face-to-face or mediated. I make relational work because I desire to relate with all these *me* and with all these *you*.

Who is this Other? I do not evoke any one individual, but an amalgam of all the people I have met, read about, encountered and imagined in person, in films and in artworks. It is the ultimate responsive subject, who can be anything at anytime, a full being. This complex aggregation of subjectivities is able to resonate with the possibilities of disparate interlocutors without taking refuge in a standardised set of responses determined by one identity. Not a mirror to reflect, reassure or confirm anyone, but another as alive and real as I am, with a long complex history, contradictory desires and believes, emerging different at each interpellation. We depend on each other to exist in this dynamic state and I come to life as it materialises here beyond the lens. It is the other I aspire to be and to be with. It is the living possibility of openness and otherness. Our encounter is charged with open erotic possibilities and genders emerge and evaporate. It is a unique form of intimacy with all the possible others, but also with all the subjects I can emerge as.

It matters to me that this other subject is fully engaged, eyes widening with responsiveness, feeling and thinking, absorbed in paradoxical desires. This ideal imagined subject resonates with my interpellations, and a variety of inflections of subjectivity emerge out of this vast reservoir of potential ways of being with another. Not the instantaneous response of subjects sharing my physical presence, but a delayed mediated psychic engagement. This loop of interdependence is made more tangible by the physical absence of the other subject: I cannot think *you* and *I* separately. I am not sure which desire is evoked in you or in me, which function I think you are going to fulfil, who is going to provoke what, what space *we* carve out for each other. It would be easy to slip into a superficial explanation: this other is not there, but just another side of me. This narcissistic shortcut ignores your existence

in me and that / emerge in relations with others in a continuous process that makes it impossible to think *me* without *you*.

My performance acknowledges your presence in the making of my subjectivity now, in the past and in the future. I make you tangible so that I can resonate with more ways of being, so that I can see more of me emerge, so that others can also expand their possible ways of being. As I perform, I am both aware and unaware of this state of being. I let the words lead me to the next sentence, and the guessing game of what you are feeling and thinking thrills me into different ways of being me. I shoo away traces of other dialogues to stop them getting in between you and me and I lose track of time. It all happens *now* so that this now can perpetuate itself and continue to happen in the present tense every time the images cycle.

The magic does not last long – I am feeling tired and I start moving towards the end: ‘I’ll have to go soon’. Few more words and I look into your eyes.

I press stop and gasp – I was holding my breath. I am drained and in a state of pain I cannot describe. I feel it acutely now as I write and I have to keep stopping to clear my thoughts. Desire and delusion ... me as a delightful six-year-old adored by my grandparents ... loss, conflict, anger ... The conscious selection of internal dialogues and internalised others has left me with all these other voices clamouring for attention. The roots of this moment of magic run deep and different every time; this is what nurtures me into reaching out for you. Now your presence and your absence burn at the same intensity and I cannot think.

I am drained and empty and elated. Numb too. I have to go now.

Chapter Four

Analysis of the First Person Accounts

The performative writing of the previous chapter employs my subjectivity as a tool for research, but also performs it differently from the subjectivity that emerges viewing Acconci's and Abrahams's work. Writing in the first person produces a particular configuration of a multi-faceted subject, which does not necessarily exist outside the text, and offers an opportunity to reflect on the fragmented subjectivities performed in the encounters with the videoperformances and the other evoked beyond the video camera. In other words, subjectivity is produced and examined in the same action. Although a differently configured subject emerges in the text, something of the performative relationality produced in the making of and engaging with videoperformance also persists. This writing practice holds open the contradictions produced in videoperformance and articulates them in forms that remain unstable, but which can now be more easily examined, although not exhausted, by critical analysis (Phelan, 1997; Jones, 2006).

In this chapter, I make explicit and critically analyse the key processes that emerge in the previous chapter. The first person performed in the writing of chapter three returns as the grammatical subject and as the object of analysis here, as I examine the positions I assume by participating in mediated relationships with Acconci and Abrahams. My analysis focuses first on the psychic dynamics of power that inform the process of interpellation (Butler, 1997c). Butler proposes contiguous processes of interpellation, citation and performativity that confirm normative models of subjectivity while remaining open to renewal and transformation. Since in the mediated encounters of videoperformance the subject represented on screen remains materially unchanged, the subject in front of the screen has the opportunity to recognise some of the dynamics at work, and the opportunity to redefine its position in relationality. In this context, both performer's and viewer's subjectivity emerge differently configured in shifting relational moments, and, to some extent, the viewer can develop and maintain some awareness of this shifting (Butler, 2005). At the same time, the screen's perceived transparency (immediacy) allows the

image of the performer to affect viewers performatively, while also mediating and informing this performativity (Bolter and Grusin, 2000). From this perspective, the screen is an effective mediator that encourages safe iterations of intimacy while negating the distinction between subject and other: the performer is both on screen and evoked within the viewer. This resonates with Lacan's definition of 'extimacy' as a set of dynamics that operate at the same time inside and outside the subject, making the distinction between inside and outside, other subject and the Lacanian Other (language, culture, the law, normativity) unnecessary (Lacan, 1992, p.139). From this perspective, the *other* mentioned in this chapter evokes the complexities of subjectivity discussed in chapter one, and signposts the fluctuation of the role of the other between bearer of the gaze, imaginary other that confirms the wholeness of the subject (objet petit a), symbol of the unassimilable radical alterity of the Other, and representative of the symbolic order itself – the Other understood as language, the law and those structures that precede all subjects and mediate all relationships.

4.1 Interpellated as a woman: Vito Acconci, *Theme Song*, 1973

A videoperformance that activates a 'scene of address' by summoning a *you* activates an asynchronous asymmetric process in which performer and viewer interpellate each other and become each other's interlocutor (Butler, 2005). This process functions as a reciprocal negotiation of relative positions within available models and tests the limits of performable variations (Butler, 2005, p.50). In this productive and transformative process, subjects are performed and renewed in relation to each other, to previous interpellations and to new possibilities. Whilst the performer interpellates the viewer through images and words relayed by the screen, the viewer interpellates the performer in ways that remain invisible. Additionally, the subject performing to camera is already informed by the presence of a viewer evoked in and by the performance (Acconci, 1974). The first person accounts of my own encounters with Acconci in *Theme Song* (1973), with Abrahams in *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011) and with the other beyond the camera in the making of my own work *Before You Now* (2013) manifest the contradictions and complexity of this reciprocal asymmetric address. The interpellation activated in the work meets the interpellation performed by the viewer as she addresses the performers on screen with her gaze and participation, evoking him and her as subjects in these exchanges.

The first person accounts unravel three encounters that affect my subjectivity differently, but also reveal some common elements. My first responses as a viewer of Acconci's and Abrahams's address exposes aspects of my subjectivity that are well established and not in question. In the first instance, even if neither artist mentions gender, as a viewing and writing subject my sexualised subjectivity emerges as feminine – I appear to have *accepted* that I am addressed as a woman. I assume a position that has been rehearsed in interactions that, since birth, have been guided towards acceptable gendered behaviours (Grosz, 1991). These behaviours are regulated by power relations inscribed in laws and norms (Butler, 1993). This dynamic becomes evident in relation to both Acconci's and Abrahams's

work: in *Theme Song* (1973), Acconci addresses his other with lines from pop songs that reproduce heterosexual romantic relationships and *something in me responds*. Abrahams adopts a similar mechanism, thus appearing to address chiefly a male viewer. In this second case, I understand that I may not be the primary addressee of those lines, yet I am directly implicated as a participating viewer by Abrahams's address, although in different ways. A sense of camaraderie emerges, mixed with a desire to help and be accepted. When in the position of the viewer / am addressed as *you*, / am interpellated as a heterosexual woman, as this process re-performs social norms that continue to inform and reinforce gendered subjectivity and the power relations that demarcate it. In other words, '[o]ne individual (nine times out of ten it is the right one) turns round, believing / suspecting / knowing that [the call] is for him [sic]' (Althusser, 1971, p.118).

Acconci implicates me as a female viewer more directly and clearly than Abrahams as his counterpart in the heterosexual relationships evoked by the songs and by his address, and in this sense I am already accepted and confirmed as a subject with a complementary role. His stance calls me into action with an attitude that is already familiar to me, and I perform my role in this scene. Even before uttering the first word of *Theme Song* (1973), Acconci implicates me by appearing on screen and *looking at me*. The directionality and intensity of his stance is already informed by the knowledge of the presence of a viewer in front of the screen (Acconci, 1974). When I take the position of the viewer of this particular work, *I am* the subject that is addressed and that responds. This process is animated by a number of generative contradictions as different fragments of my subjectivity emerge and shift their positions, but / also remains throughout the encounter the active grammatical subject of the statement: *I respond and, in turn, interpellate* (Lacan, 2006, p.677; Butler, 2005, p.84). The subjects involved are always already interpellated and participating in the gaze, but new possibilities of subjectivity continue to emerge, and the flow of interpellations and desire remains largely unpredictable (Althusser, 1971; Butler, 1990). As in videoperformance unconscious desires and the gaze are

mediated by the screen, the encounter is asynchronous and asymmetric, deflecting the direct correspondence of call-and-response and affording a space for awareness to emerge.



Figure 4.1 Vito Acconci, *Theme Song*, 1973, video still at 00.06.00.

On closer analysis, in the formal composition of the first image that appears on screen at the beginning of *Theme Song* (1973) (figure 4.1), the perspective of the image with the sofa in the background shows that this male face, which fills the right half the screen, is looking up from the floor. This causes his forehead to corrugate and his eyes to point upwards in an expression that evokes uncertainty and pleading. Within a few seconds he looks sideways and reaches out of the screen. As his hand comes back into the frame holding a cigarette, his eyes turn again towards me with some determination. He holds this steady and intent look, turning it almost into a stare, as both his hands move outside the frame again. This is the first instance of direct address in the work: the first glance could have been read as just looking forward, but this second look is directed outside the screen towards the viewer. By fixing his eyes towards the viewer in the middle of an action, Acconci performs an explicit act of *looking at* and *looking for*. This shifts the image from the

representation of a man's face to a performative that produces the subjects on screen and off screen. The viewer is now interpellated as an interlocutor, as Acconci's eyes perform the equivalent gesture to calling out 'hey, you!' (Althusser, 1971).

As an active viewer, I promptly respond as an interlocutor by engaging in an intimate exchange of thoughts and emotions, more or less visible behaviours, and a transformative set of responses. My eyes also fix him intently, ask and offer – the knowledge that my look does not change the performance does not stop me from engaging fully with his and my gaze. Each moment of relational activity affects the inflection of the artist's next expression, evolving the encounter into a unique configuration of subtle interactions. Acconci's performed subjectivity relayed by the screen is more than a representation and it is self-consciously fragmented: it transcends representation to activate performative relationality, and it performs its own fragmented status and bond with the other by adopting the words of pop songs, by shifting relational strategies, by revealing unconscious desire and by acknowledging his dependence on another. Despite being in control of the performance, Acconci has already given up the centrality of his position by framing the work in relation to the body of the viewer. He is my other as I watch; he confirms that I was already there as his other at the time he performed in front of the video camera (Simmons and Davis, 1978).

This first exchange already contains all the complexities of mediated intersubjective relationships – a look on a screen seems to be enough to move subjectivity towards a certain configuration and evoke situated responses. These in turn reveal 'a history of identifications, parts of which can be brought into play in given contexts and which, precisely because they encode the contingencies of personal history, do not always point back to an internal coherence of any kind.' (Butler, 1990, p.331). My encounter with *Theme Song* (1973) evokes a powerful sense of intimacy that evolves with the progress of the performance. In the mediated relationality of this videoperformance, echoes of power structures inform the gendered address and

responses in the production of the performance and of the relationality that emerges. Similarly, vulnerability is produced and read within normative codes, desire is steered towards acceptable forms, and acceptance and rejection of different instances of otherness are informed by social, historical and cultural parameters.

As it informs the first interpellation ('It's a girl!'), gender remains in the foreground of subjectivity and structures 'the attributes socially designated as appropriate for men and women.' (Butler, 1997c; Grosz, 1991, p.148). The artist on screen also offers himself as a subject to relate to and to look at, creating opportunities for the each viewer to actively conjure the performer in a particular configuration of subjectivity. This is the result of the encounter between the subject performed on screen and the history of the viewing subject in the particular scene evoked by the artist. In this encounter, the processes of the gaze are exposed. In 1975, Laura Mulvey proposed a determining male gaze that 'projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly' (Mulvey, 1975, p.11). This gaze is rooted in the unconscious desires of spectators and refers directly to scopophilia as delineated by Freud, but it does not correspond to the Lacanian gaze. Mulvey's male gaze is transitive and mono-directional: it originates in the (male) cinema spectator to end with the on-screen representation of the (female) character. Instead, Lacan defines the gaze as a process that returns to the subject originating it: it is the subject's unconscious desire that causes it (he or she) to load with meaning the way the other looks at the subject itself (Lacan, 1998). In other words, as the unconscious is formed in relations with others, unconscious desires determine how the subject believes other subjects perceive it in relationality.

The process of watching *Theme Song* (1973) while paying close attention to my own subjectivity is an important method of analysis of emerging relationality and of the dynamics of the gaze in this context. Acconci's address is materially fixed (as a recorded performance *Theme Song* does not change every time a different viewer approaches it), but fluid in its relational possibilities, as words and actions resonate

differently in every encounter: each viewer temporarily transforms the iterations of subjectivity performed on screen in relation to elements of their own subjectivity, which are in turn transformed by the encounter with the subject on screen. This dynamic circularity activates both conscious and unconscious responses. From this perspective, both gaze and awareness inform relationality, and the asynchronous and asymmetric qualities of the screen-mediated encounter amplify their oscillation.

The first person account offers some examples of how unconscious responses emerge, become conscious and shift:

He can't see me – he says he does not know what my face looks like, but he knows that I am here. "Don't you want to come in here? Sure! Sure you'll come in here". I have not been asked, so I cannot refuse. As I watch closely and listen carefully, I feel attracted and repelled; manipulated and made aware of my own thoughts; intrigued and rejecting. I swing back and forth with his language – *this is me* becomes *this could be anybody*; a question becomes a matter-of-fact statement, then an offer that makes me feel uncomfortable; I don't want you to feel alone, but I don't want you to wrap your body around mine. And I don't want you to find something that can win me over. (see Chapter Three).

Although immersed in the encounter as a participating viewer, I question the source of thoughts and emotions that appear, at the same time, to emerge in and from me, to be caused by the artist's address, to be rooted in my past, and also to be rooted in the artist's past and referencing someone who was *there* before me. This is a direct account of the gaze at work, but also a testimony that other dynamics have a bearing on the emergence of performative relationality in this context.

Acconci appears to purposefully appeal to well-established gendered forms of address, and to steer the emerging relationality towards an active role for himself and a passive one for the (female) viewer. I insist on this *appearing* to be the case on account of the intrinsic difficulty of separating out the tightly woven elements that inform this passage: the gaze originates in formative relationships, themselves shaped in and by language (the Other). When I attribute to Acconci an address that casts me in a particular role, my perception of the address and of my reactions is filtered by the unconscious, by language, by social norms and by other formative

elements of subjectivity. In other words, because the gaze is a continuous 'movement outwards and back in', like a Moebius strip, I can acknowledge that both Acconci's and my subjectivities are being affected (Lacan, 1998, p.177). Nevertheless, I can only speculate that he might be actively attempting to exert power over me, or that he is counting on my unconscious attributing authority and power to his address as the boundaries of our subjectivities are blurred in the gaze. From this perspective, Lacan denies that the subject can truthfully state: '*I see myself seeing myself*' (Lacan, 1998, p.80, emphasis in original). He posits that the place of the Other (and therefore of desire and the unconscious) is between perception and awareness (Lacan, 1998, p.45). From this perspective, as a viewer of *Theme Song* (1973) I can aspire to describe how *I see myself seeing Acconci seeing me* (awareness of the dynamics of the gaze), as opposed to how *I see myself seeing myself* (illusion of awareness), or how *I see Acconci seeing me* (the gaze).

Of course, as the viewer of *Theme Song*, I know that the Acconci cannot see me, yet at the beginning of the first person account I wonder if, with the words that open the work, he is establishing a scenario in which *at some level* he can see me: I question if he is inviting viewers to engage with him *as if* he could see them. Once he states 'I don't know what your face looks like' I feel liberated: although I objectively knew that he could not see me, knowing that this work is not about seeing *me* made me feel more relaxed (see Appendix One). For me, from that moment the gaze does not overwhelm the emerging relationality, but becomes only one of the dynamics that inform this encounter. Although this will certainly affect other interlocutors differently on the basis of their own subjectivity and unconscious desires, the mediation of the screen makes possible this oscillation between a straightforward representation – recorded and displayed image – and a live, performative, two-way real-time encounter (Bolter and Grusin, 2000). Consequently, the role of the viewer oscillates between passive *watcher* and active interlocutor, but

even in the most passive moments the use of the pronoun *you* as a form of address implicates and activates the viewer.

Paradoxically, Acconci is also offering himself as an image to-be-looked-at, subverting further Mulvey's analysis of active male gaze and passive female 'to-be-looked-at-ness' (Mulvey, 1975, p.11). His performance highlights his availability as an object of desire by lying down on the floor and voicing his need for another. From a Lacanian perspective, Acconci is also performing his own gaze in its movement outwards and back in, and he is positioning me so that I can make him the object of my desire. In other words, as a viewer of this work I hold the symbolic power (the phallus) in relation to the performer's gaze. From both sides of the screen, the gaze is continuously activated and deflected, and in these circumstances awareness can emerge. Once I become aware that my gaze is defeated by Acconci's incapacity to see me – material and fictional – I can start wondering how I see him seeing me. I can also begin to perceive the 'history of identifications' that has shaped my unconscious to respond in specific ways to specific modes of address (Butler, 1990, p.331). Although the line between the artist's actions and my perception of them remains blurred, I also become aware that the videoperformance retains the power to relay his gaze, and I perceive the pressure to respond to his unconscious desire. In turn, it is partly my active relational engagement that redeploys Acconci's performed gaze in light of my responses in a relational loop. Even if my relational engagement does not materially change the recorded performance, it changes Acconci as a subject in this relational encounter.

From a Lacanian perspective, reciprocity of the gaze remains illusory, as the unconscious desires that inform the gaze are never shared, they never coincide and never meet: 'the level of reciprocity between the gaze and the gazed at is, for the subject, more open than any other to alibi.' (Lacan, 1998, p.77). However, as subjects connected and separated by the screen, ultimately performer and viewer cannot act for each other as the *objet petit a* (the other with a small o) that satisfies the subject's desire for recognition in the gaze, but only as the Other (the completely

separate and different other with a big o). Acconci cannot see *me, this subject*, nevertheless I remain his interlocutor as long as I engage with *Theme Song* as a viewer. I cannot attribute to him the function of responding to my unconscious desires, and this, paradoxically, creates the conditions for my desires to become conscious. The address and availability of the performer affect viewers in an intimate and profound way. These processes remain largely invisible and only known, from different perspectives, to artist and viewer. Even if the encounter takes place in the public space of an art gallery, relationality remains invisible, providing viewers with an intimate scene of intersubjectivity, in which each viewer retains the privilege to engage at a different depth or intensity. This combination of processes affords viewers the conditions for some awareness of the gaze and of their most intimate responses. A videoperformance structured by relationality affords opportunities for transformative encounters based on a newly gained, even if temporary and partial, awareness of desire, gaze and the dynamics of interpellations.

4.2 Machine mediated intimacy: Annie Abrahams *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)*, 2011

First performed live as part of the Low Lives 3 festival of networked performance, *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011) repropose Acconci's strategy of playing pop songs as a catalyst for a different invitation: Abrahams asks viewers to phone her and prove that they *are real*. She is both dialoguing with Acconci's work and taking his place, but her appeal is, in the first instance, directed to networked viewers of computer screens, who have the material possibility to interact with her via their telephones. Abrahams is attempting to show that 'we are a bit further now – [machine mediated] "intimacy" can become real' (Abrahams, 2012a). The contemporary presence of Abrahams and viewers *on either side of the screen* is the premise of her appeal: *if you are there, you will phone me now!* Abrahams's performance builds on the relationality already present in the active connection of the networked screen.

The screen itself is, in this case, the last element that links the viewer to the performer in real time (Manovich, 2002). Whilst in Acconci's *Theme Song* (1973) the screen suggests liveness, based on the notion that television could be live, *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011) takes place in the first instance in a materially shared present (Auslander, 1999). The first person account of the previous chapter recounts my encounter with the recording of Abrahams's videoperformance and this leads me to speculate on how I would have responded to the live appeal to call her. The knowledge that this is a recording and not a real time networked performance frees me from taking any decisions about telephoning and allows me to become immersed in the emerging relationality. This is a response that emerges from the encounter between my subjectivity and the videoperformance, but the reaction of other viewers is also revealing. During the networked performance, only one person contacts the artist – Helen Varley Jamieson, herself a performer and member of the collaborative performance group Avatar Body Collision. Abrahams compares

viewers' reactions to the live and recorded videoperformance in a post on the discussion list *Curating New Media*:

To my surprise nobody called but Helen Varley Jamieson when the performance was almost over. Of course, I thought later (and reading Sherry Turkle's book *Alone Together* confirmed this) telephone has become an intimate, almost private and dangerous way to contact people. ... Later when I showed the video of the performance in the show *Training for a Better World* in the CRAC in Sète, I had about two to three calls a week (Abrahams, 2012b).

Abrahams mentions Turkle's analysis of the telephone as a mediator that 'reveals too much' and with which it is too hard to end a conversation (Turkle, 2011, p.11). The teenagers and adults interviewed by the author seem to associate a telephone call with an important or urgent message, practical arrangements, affective intensity and vulnerability. Whilst the videoperformance allows the viewer to choose how deeply to engage and how long to stay, the telephone traps interlocutors in a reciprocal exchange that requires one party's initiative to conclude it. Moreover, the purpose of calling Abrahams remains unclear – the phone conversation that might ensue is full of uncertainty and even more danger: *will my voice be heard by other viewers? What will she ask of me? What part will I be asked to perform in this situation I have no control over?* Calling would constitute the unconditional consent to participate in an unknown intimacy. These themes and dynamics recur in Abrahams's work, as the artist offers her vulnerability, affect and *authenticity* often in collaboration with other performers and participants. Co-performers accept to expose their own vulnerability as a means of achieving 'machine-mediated intimacy', whilst for viewers, adopting this role would constitute a radical shift (Chatzichristodoulou, 2010b). In *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011), the artist withholds her visibility and only offers her voice to 'tempt people to phone' during the performance (*Low Lives 3 Networked Performance Festival*, p.80). In other words, she maintains a safer position in this visual absence while asking viewers to expose themselves by calling her.

Several viewers did telephone Abrahams when a recording of the videoperformance was exhibited in a gallery. It would not have occurred to me to call knowing that the performance was not live, but it is important to speculate on why others did. On the one hand, this supports the idea that viewers might have felt safe from exposing their vulnerability in public. On the other hand, it confirms that the screen holds the power to relay the liveness of videoperformance. The artist discusses the importance of liveness in networked performance in relation to contradictions in her own practice: even if it is important that her work is live to function as research, the recordings of her experiments in machine mediated intimacy 'are as real as the performance moments were, but they are different.' (Abrahams, 2012b). Although Abrahams is addressing webperformance, this statement applies to videoperformance too – in fact, this distinction might be obsolete as the uses and functions of screens in networked, live, recorded, broadcast and communication situations shape the connotations of all screens. Hence, screen-based communication platforms like Skype, networked performance platforms like Upstage, and the growing synergy between television and web-based news all contribute to enhance the relational power of the screen in videoperformance. To some extent, this applies to webcams and videocameras too (White, 2006). From this perspective, *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011) produces relationality as a performative both as a real time networked and as a recorded videoperformance, activating intersubjective dynamics and a potential for self-awareness in both cases. Even if I could be a materially active interlocutor by phoning the numbers on the screen, the oscillation between conscious and unconscious desires already constitutes activity in itself, and makes it unnecessary for me to act further in relation to this videoperformance.

I also engage with Abrahams's work as a maker of videoperformance and with some knowledge of her practice, which adds a different dimension to the relationality that emerges in my encounter with this work. From this perspective, I recognize her desire to interrogate modes of performance of the self (Goffman,

1959) and of self-representation (Jones, 2006). I also recognize her pursuit of authenticity in networked performance and online exchanges, and her aim to show the “banal” reality of everyday life, time passing by, two people temporarily crossing paths in fractured, desperate or indifferent, successful or futile attempts to communicate, to (be) together, to love – in shared presence, but also shared absence.’ (Chatzichristodoulou, 2010b). Creating a privileged engagement with these quotidian aspects of intimacy, Abrahams offers a further opportunity to recognise the gaze at work, as these moments become charged with unconscious desires.

In the previous chapter, I describe how I become aware of the voice of my mother overlapping the voice of the artist, and how I appear to respond to both. Even though I cannot see Abrahams’s face and eyes for a large part of the work, I am evoked, in Lacanian terms, as a subject who is looking and being looked at. The boundaries between what emanates from Abrahams and what surges from my memory are blurred from the beginning of the encounter. Desire informs the gaze, and ‘[i]f one does not stress the dialectic of desire one does not understand why the gaze of others should disorganize the field of perception.’ (Lacan, 1998, p.89). Abrahams’s gaze disorganizes my field of perception both with regard to my subjectivity and to the scene of address. I am asked insistently to fulfil her need, but I perceive that there is more to this than it seems. I feel out of control as my responses emerge, and I cannot quite say how or why. As with Acconci’s insistent requests to join him, it seems to me that the desires of the performers act on me beyond their explicit appeals. I can state with some certainty that I become aware of their gaze trying to position me in roles that I cannot always decode. Yet, the desire to fulfil their desires is a perceivable driving force in my responses.

The asynchronous and asymmetric encounters mediated by the video equipment produce a slower pace of intersubjective interaction than face-to-face encounters. In my engagement with Acconci’s and Abrahams’s work, I do not need to act in order to move the relationship forward, but can wait for the performer to make their next

move. Acconci fills some time with pop songs, humming and repetition of words and lyrics; Abrahams adopts a similar strategy with the added element of repeatedly asking viewers to call her. Performative relationality and awareness emerge *between* screen and viewer in these gaps, which in face-to-face relationships are filled by continuous reciprocal responses. As a performer, I allow time for the other to think, feel, expect and become aware. In front of Acconci's and Abrahams's performances, relieved of the responsibility to sustain the relationship, I find myself becoming acutely aware of my shifting subjectivity with changing emotions, thoughts, desires and fears. Although I recount relationality from the perspective of this subject (me), relationality itself does not reside only in subjectivity, but it emerges outside of myself, between me and the camera, and between the screen and me. It *produces* me – it produces the subject of the actions and reactions that emerge in me. In other words, it is not the synchronicity – or lack of – of performing and viewing that determines the emergence of performative relationality, but the mediation of camera and screen. I oscillate between conscious and unconscious responses, between gaze and awareness, as the mediation of the screen oscillates between immediacy and hypermediacy (Bolter and Grusin, 2000).

I cannot perceive the Other's gaze, because of my own gaze at work, but I can develop some awareness of these interweaving dynamics because of the mediation of the screen. Lacan warns against the dangers of seeking reciprocity of the gaze, as this offers subjects an opportunity for misrecognition: '*You never look at me from the place at which I see you.*' (Lacan, 1998, p.103, emphasis in original). In other words, you look at me from your unconscious *and* from my unconscious, making our encounter full of opportunities for misrecognition and loaded with the voices of other intimacies (Berlant, 2000). Abrahams employs the opacity of her and viewers' subjectivity to test modes of address and of mediated intimacy that suspend interlocutors in complete uncertainty about themselves and the other. Butler frames this opacity not as an obstacle to relationality, but as the ultimate foundation of subjectivity in relationality:

The opacity of the subject may be a consequence of its being conceived as a relational being, one whose early and primary relations are not always available to conscious knowledge. Moments of unknowingness about oneself tend to emerge in the context of relations to others, suggesting that those relations call upon primary forms of relationality that are not always available to explicit and reflective thematization. (Butler, 2005, p.20).

Whilst Lacan doubts that reciprocity is possible and charts the opacity of the subject and the dynamics of the gaze as obstacles to reciprocity and responsibility, Butler recasts unconscious desire as one element of ethical responsibility in relationality. This repositioning of the function of the unconscious determines the foundations of an ethics of the encounter with the other: '[a]n ability to affirm what is contingent and incoherent in oneself may allow one to affirm others who may or may not "mirror" one's own constitution.' (Butler, 2005, p.41). In other words, in my limitations lies the formula for accepting otherness and for engaging in a productive ethical relationship with the other/Other. Furthermore, it is within relationality that we are invited and enabled to engage in self-reflection – to give an account (or accounts) of ourselves: 'When the *I* seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but it will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration' (Butler, 2005, p7-8).

Butler's work provides an established vocabulary to support the evidence emerging from the practice of making my own videoperformances and from the practice of performative writing. In this context, the relationality of videoperformance emerges as productive of meaning and awareness, and, therefore, as potentially transformative for the subjects involved. *Before You Now* (2013) illustrates this point directly, as it is partly the product of the insight emerged from my close engagement with Abrahams's and Acconci's videoperformances. This work manifests my growing awareness of the processes of my own gaze and, compared to the other videoperformances in this project, it shows a deeper capacity to deflect my gaze in my address to the other.

4.3 In front of the camera: *Before you Now*, 2013

In this next section, the first person account of developing my own work, *Before you Now* (2013) becomes the starting point for an analysis of these transformative processes. Lacan's terms *encounter* and *tuché* are utilised here to explore the pulsation of unconscious desire and awareness that inform the ethical transformative potential of videoperformance art practice in the framework of a wider discourse on relationality (Lacan, 1998; Butler, 2005; Phelan, 1993).

In *Before You Now* (2013), the relational thrust starts in my subjectivity (and its history) and leads directly to the emergence of performative relationality between viewer and videoperformance. The first person account of the making of this work reveals aspects of my making strategies that mirror elements of my accounts as a viewer. As the text unveils my methodology of making, it becomes evident that the other I evoke echoes past relationships with formative others. These include parents, teachers and other figures of authority, siblings, lovers, friends, but also artists and fictional characters, as well as less defined subjects present in my neighbourhood, in advertising and in the media. In making *Before You Now*, I offer myself to the other I address and, in turn, interpellate this other in roles complementary to those relationships. I adopt the ruse of exposing my *authentic self*, and invite viewers to engage in a moment of trust and intimacy in which their own unconscious desire can safely surface. As interpellations and the modulations of desire shift, the fragmentation and inconsistencies of both subjects also come into the foreground. In Lacan's terms, unconscious fragments of subjectivity can be described as that which 'resists signification' and as 'something unresolved' (Lacan, 1998, p.129 and Lacan, 1992, p.244). As such, their becoming conscious is a pulsation of the real, and the encounter is a form of the reappearance of the real itself: just as the unconscious behaviour has an 'accidental origin', '[w]hat is repeated is always something that occurs – the expression tells us quite a lot about its relation to the *tuché* – *as if by chance*' (Lacan, 1998, p.54, emphasis in original). In other words, chance occurrences resonate with qualities of the missed encounter

and the real pulsates into consciousness, but it 'always comes back to the same place – to the place where the subject in so far as he [sic] thinks, where the *res cogitans*, does not meet it.' (Lacan, 1998, p.49).

In the first person account, one statement in particular captures the complexity of this set of processes: 'it is not your response I seek, but your presence in my address, so that you can, with me, make this relationship happen.' (see Chapter Three). In this statement, *you* addresses both the other already present in my subjectivity and the other approaching the screen accepting to relate. This polyphonic address implies an understanding of subjectivity as formed in relationality, and informed by unconscious desire mediated by language and social norms. From a Lacanian perspective, the subject is already implicated in the gaze as given-to-be-seen and as '*speculum mundi*' (mirror of the world) (Lacan, 1998, p.75, emphasis in original). The gaze is often interpreted as the projection of one subject's desire onto another subject, whereby the object of desire is required to confirm the illusory wholeness (ideal ego, produced in the mirror phase) of the gazing subject. Lacan specifies that '[t]he gaze I encounter [...] is, not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other.' (Lacan, 1998, p.84). In this sentence, the gaze has its origin in the subject, who attributes it to the other, who is therefore imagined to be the active gazer: the one who carries the gaze of the Other (the law or, in Butler's terms, normativity).

Lacan (1998) makes clear that the gaze enacts unconscious desires based on the lack that has not (yet) been understood. In other words, the gaze does not dominate the whole of the subject's relation with the world and does not impede awareness in its totality, but appears where a chance encounter (*tuché*) offers an opportunity for the repetition of elements of primary experiences (Lacan, 1998). Relationality and subjectivity emerge as performatives in these encounters, which share the quality of being 'radical points in the real' (Lacan, 1998, p.55). As a viewer, I approach the videoperformance and I am implicated as an interlocutor and accomplice – my subjectivity is implicated in the relationality that emerges, and oscillates between

unconscious responses, evoked memories, intense affects and moments of awareness. I can state with some confidence that, for me, the encounters with *Theme Song* (1973) and *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011) resonate with primary encounters and evoke the real as ‘that which always comes back to the same place’ (Lacan, 1998, p.49). The elements of subjectivity and relationality that emerge in the previous chapter recall and repeat (but do not reproduce) ‘an encounter, an essential encounter – an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us’ (p.53). Lacan connects the encounter in the present with an original and missed encounter – a transformative past event that remains unresolved and becomes inscribed in the unconscious.

I am evoked as a subject at the place between perception and awareness, where the missed encounter produced a fragment that remains unconscious as it has not yet been elaborated. In its unpredictable oscillations, that fragment of the real emerges into consciousness, but it disappears as I am about to touch it (Lacan, 1998). In relationality, the completely alien Other is always in danger of becoming *my other* – the illusory counterpart who colludes with my desire and perpetuates the return of the past in the reproduction of these primary relationships. Conversely, when the other subject remains on screen, the real can continue to pulsate in and out of consciousness and leave me with a glimmer of awareness. In this context, repetition does not reproduce relational dynamics that belong in the past, but evokes missed encounters (formative of the unconscious as primary processes) in the framework of a performative and transformative *tuché* (Lacan, 1998, p.53). Lacan argues that these qualities are not exclusive to transfer and to the therapeutic psychoanalytic encounter, but that ‘[w]e can, at any moment, apprehend this primary process’ (p.56). Videoperformance has the potential to be transformative as it proposes intimate encounters with another subject, who offers relationality and provokes desire.

In *Before You Now* (2013), I offer myself on screen as the imaginary bearer of the gaze for the viewer. As I am not physically present to this other subject, this

situation has the potential to make viewers aware that I cannot be the active producer of the gaze that reaches them – I cannot see them, and it is not *them* I am addressing. This affords the viewer the opportunity to reclaim the gaze as something that has roots in its own desire, lack and history – in other words, in its subjectivity, which is itself formed in relationships, failed encounters, norms, language and memories (Grosz, 1991; Butler, 1990). Recognising one's own fragmentation and owning one's gaze (acknowledging the presence of the Other within one's subjectivity) is the foundation for a more ethical relationality (Butler, 2005). In this paradox, Peggy Phelan locates 'the productive power of facing the inevitability of annihilation, castration, misrecognition. For if one could face these features of psychic life, a different order of sociality might be possible.' (Phelan, 1993, p.25). In other words, instead of reducing other subjects to objects of desire and bearers of the gaze – to the function of fulfilling the subject's desire to be confirmed in its ideal wholeness, reassured from its fear of castration, etc – subjects could recognise each other's fragmentation and relate on this basis. My insight into making *Before You Now* shows that accepting one's own fragmentation and incoherence creates the foundation for better relationality.

In making *Before You Now* (2013), relationality emerged first when I evoked another subject beyond the camera. The internal dialogue unraveled in the previous chapter attests to a combination of interpellations and desires at work in the first instance in my address. These are relayed by the screen to viewers, who become implicated when the address reaches them. Having evoked in the performance to camera a future viewer whose response will not reach my subjectivity, the screen can then activate and suspend the gaze. From this perspective, videoperformance offers the ultimate Other: a subject that does not see, yet is able to address. The gaze is still at work, but, although viewers can still attribute it to the performer, ultimately reveals itself as a shared responsibility: the gaze originates in the relationality that forms subjectivity and is activated in the encounter. The viewer is afforded the possibility to become aware of its active part in originating the gaze and attributing it to the

other on screen. This pulsating awareness is the foundation of an ethical sense of responsibility towards the other as it transforms the subject from the victim of the other's defining monodirectional gaze into an active and responsible interlocutor.

Before You Now (2013) emerges from the power structures that touch me as a distinct subject. The issues that come to the forefront in this videoperformance are inevitably limited to dynamics accessible to my subjectivity at a certain time, but are also features of the social and cultural environment that produce me as a subject. From this perspective, the ethical and political engagement of this work is limited to facets of relationality that I am able to recognise and face in this phase of practice and research.

To summarise, this chapter analyses the dynamics of interpellation, the gaze, desire, the encounter and fragmented subjectivities of three relevant videoperformances. The processes of performativity, mediation and awareness emerge as transformative for subjectivity and suggest the potential ethical and political value of this practice. This analysis shows how in videoperformance the viewer is evoked both as the *other* (small o), to be the bearer of the performer's gaze and to confirm her wholeness, and the *Other* (big o), which is radically alien to the subject on screen, and also the bearer of social norms. In this complexity, the performer can initiate and co-produce a more ethical performative relationality based on a shared growing awareness of subjectivity's fragmentation and incoherence. Similarly, although videoperformance offers a subject/object for the desire of the viewer, it also continuously refuses to confirm the viewer's gaze, offering instead the representation of the performer as radically other. This radical difference and fragmentation is common to performer and viewer: in *Before You Now* (2013), as I evoke others that are already part of me, I suggest that these others are already part of viewers too. In other words, I perform an address that evokes the presence of the other/Other to make it tangible in the viewer. Similarly,

as the viewer of Acconci's and Abrahams' work, I recognise the other/Other made tangible in me by the relational offer of the performer.

Conclusion

This project interrogates the processes of relationality in the framework of the art practice of videoperformance. It demonstrates that videoperformance can activate intersubjective asymmetric and asynchronous relationships mediated by video camera and screen. It also proposes that this process has ethical and political valence. My videoperformances, the mapping of conceptual and artistic historical and contemporary contexts, and the first person accounts and critical analysis of encounters with videoperformances evidence the mechanisms of these relational processes, address the research questions and support my proposition.

The review of relevant concepts that opens this dissertation establishes that subjectivity and relationality are always already mediated by language and the law (normativity). In videoperformance, subjectivity and relationality are mediated again through performance strategies and video equipment. The screen emerges as an effective mediator in the combination of familiarity, accumulation of uses and transparency. Bolter and Grusin theorize this phenomenon in light of 'our apparently insatiable desire for immediacy' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.5). The logic of transparent immediacy manifests a desire for an interface 'that erases itself, so that the user is no longer aware of confronting a medium, but instead stands in *an immediate relationship to the contents* of that medium.' (p.24, emphasis added). Applied to videoperformance, this statement would suggest an immediate – or unmediated – relationship with the performer on screen. The logic of hypermediacy, however, makes viewers and users aware of the medium, and 'expresses the tension between regarding a visual space as mediated and as a "real" space that lies beyond mediation.' (p.41). Media-literate twenty-first century audiences of screen-mediated moving images are able to shift between awareness of the medium and a – more or less direct – relationship with the *reality* it conveys. This

shifting between a perception of mediation and a sense of immediacy is one of the key mechanisms of videoperformance: it creates a situation in which viewers can engage and disengage with mediated relationality. This is critical to the specific ethical valence of videoperformance in the context of wider discourses on relationality.

To conduct this research with rigour, it was important to review some key Lacanian concepts relevant to this mechanism: the subject, the other/Other, the gaze and the encounter with the real in particular. This project establishes that in videoperformance the viewer is evoked both as the *other* (small o) – to function as the bearer of the performer's gaze and to confirm her wholeness – and the *Other* (big o), which is radically alien to the subject on screen, and also the bearer of social norms. This radical difference and fragmentation is common to performer and viewer – in *Before You Now* (2013), as I evoke others that are already part of me, I suggest that these others are already part of viewers too. In other words, I perform an address that evokes the presence of the other/Other to make it tangible in the viewer. Similarly, as the viewer of Acconci's and Abrahams' work, I recognise the other/Other made tangible in me by the relational offer of the performers. This primary dependence on others reveals the permeability of the boundaries of the subject and exposes dynamics of reciprocal definition. In this complexity, the performer can initiate and co-produce a more ethical performative relationality based on a shared growing awareness of subjectivity's fragmentation and incoherence. Similarly, although videoperformance offers a subject/object for the desire of the viewer, it also continuously refuses to confirm the viewer's gaze, offering instead the representation of the performer as radically other. These processes are specific to videoperformance as the mediation of the screen and the asynchronous asymmetric relationships that emerge may produce temporary awareness of this interdependence, of the impossibility for the interlocutor to become the answer to desire and, consequently, of the subject's responsibility for desire itself.

The complementary theoretical constructs of Lacan (other/Other, desire, the real, encounter, extimacy and the gaze) and Althusser (interpellation) converge in the post-psychoanalytic approach of Judith Butler (ethics and performativity). The integration of these modes of analysis supports a reading of videoperformance art practices that confirms its value for the interrogation of relationality. This practice evokes the Lacanian concept of *extimacy* – an understanding of intimacy with the other as carrier of the Other (language, culture, social norms, etc.) that defies the distinction between interiority and exteriority, and that highlights the subject as a loose, distributed entity (Lacan, 1992). The Other informs the unconscious of the subject, and lies at the same time inside and outside the subject, making this distinction (inside/outside) unnecessary. This understanding of intimacy is fundamental to a concept of relationality that does not reside in the subject, in the videoperformance, between subjects or between subject and screen, but that emerges as a performative in encounters that are intimate, mediated and ephemeral.

The first person accounts in chapter three demonstrate that the subjects active in videoperformance (performer and viewer) emerge as the unstable products of successive relationships, and as always already plural. As the subject continuously emerges in relation to the other/Other, relationality also continuously emerges between and within subjects. Relationality itself is performative because it is produced as it produces the subjects who relate in an ongoing process of interpellation, citation and renewal. On the basis of these observations, the mediated relationality that emerges between viewer and videoperformance informs the subjects that perform it, activating the gaze, dynamics of power and self-awareness via the mediation of technology. In this framework, positions such as gender, race and class are defined within active relations that continuously produce subjectivity and unstable identities. The same mechanisms mediated by language structure the unconscious and its desire. From this perspective, there is no separation between a psychoanalytic investigation of relationality and political

discourse (as also observed by Butler, 2005, 2009). Unconscious responses have roots in established social structures that produce subjects in power relations. Past interpellations emerge as established patterns integrated in subjectivity and in an individual's *sense of self*.

Relationality precedes subjectivity in that the subject is formed in interpersonal relations. The proposition that videoperformance can foster more ethical forms of relationality is a political gesture that intervenes in dynamics of power active in language and in interpersonal relationships. The work of Butler (2005) and Phelan (1993) offers a relevant conceptual framework to recognise and analyse these processes. For example, the fact that some aspects of the subject that emerge in relationality 'are not always available to explicit and reflective thematisation' does not exclude the possibility for agency and ethical responsibility in intersubjective relationships (Butler, 2005, p.20). As relationality and subjectivity emerge as one, the boundaries between them can only be drawn artificially. Consequentially, facing the structures of power that inform psychic life is a transformative process aimed towards 'a different order of sociality' based on a more open, respectful and accepting approach to oneself and to the other (Phelan, 1993, p.25).

This project demonstrates that the oscillation between awareness and unconscious is rooted in relationality and, therefore, a fundamental element of its ethics. In other words, subjects are fragmented in interdependent and complementary configurations. In this framework, accepting, nurturing and protecting the other is in the interest of the subject's own survival. In other words, the subject is able to go beyond appearances and acknowledge its dependence on the Other who cannot be assimilated or reduced to the object of its unconscious desire. Butler suggests that this could form the basis, not only of different social and ethical relationality, but also of political and international relations (Butler, 2009). This project demonstrates that videoperformance can make a significant contribution to this process by revealing the dynamics of the gaze at work in intersubjective encounters and by offering an opportunity for change. In this context, it is important to recognise that the gaze

originates in the subject and is attributed to the other: for instance, I see myself seeing Acconci seeing me. This awareness emerges from my encounter with the representation of Acconci in *Theme Song* (1974) and transforms my capacity to offer a more ethical relationality in *Before You Now* (2013). Compared to other art practices with similar ethical and political valence, videoperformance produces specific dynamics of relationality interrupted and slowed down by the mediation of the screen, and the paradoxical relational presence and physical absence of the performer. For instance, whilst live performance has the potential to involve viewers in very powerful relational situations, moments of self-awareness are likely to be postponed to after the event has concluded. My own experiments with different iterations of the work *Before You* (2008-2013) test combinations of live, mediated and asynchronous relationality. The speed and reciprocity of relational offer and response in live performance engages the gaze and makes self-awareness unlikely. Similarly, the intimacy evoked by Sam Rose during her one-to-one performance work *Between One and Another: Melting Point* (2007) absorbed me so completely that, as a participant, I could not separate the artist's desire from my own.

Videoperformance practices make possible encounters that favour an expanded sense of ethics: the mediation of camera and screen both nurtures and interrupts the gaze, underlining the chronological and geographical gap between the subject on screen and the subject in front of the screen. Each different viewer temporarily transforms the iterations of subjectivity performed on screen as they interpellate aspects of the performer in counterpoint to elements of their own subjectivity, in turn interpellated by the performer. This dynamic circularity constitutes the mediated performative relationality of videoperformance. Each iteration of subjectivity produced remains ungraspable – just as mediated relationality is produced, but remains uncapturable. Documenting or re-inserting relationality into the work (for example, in Acconci's *Command Performance*, 1974) also abandons relationality by translating a dynamic performative into a fixed representation. Re-absorbing viewers into the work (for example, in Douglas Davis's *Electronic Hokkadim* of 1971)

also freezes relationality and blocks the process of reflection by closing the loop – viewers’ are now invited to look at themselves and their position within this work, not at the other *and* at themselves relating with the other. In other words, the possibility of engaging in relationality and becoming, even briefly, aware of the dynamics of one’s relating affords ethical and political valence specific to videoperformance.

In this context, relationality is defined differently from Bourriaud’s concept of *relational aesthetics*: Bourriaud (2002) focuses on the formal structure of the artwork, does not acknowledge reciprocal influences with the practices and theories of new media emerging in the 1990s, and touches only superficially on subjectivity and the gaze. Nevertheless, *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) makes a strong case for relationality in the ‘constructed situations’ of performance and moving image works (p.84). Bourriaud seeks out historical art movements and practices that materialise the ‘philosophical tradition’ that underpins relational aesthetics (p.18). He finds precursors to relational aesthetics in twentieth century avant-gardes and in all artworks that ‘can not be reduced to the “things” ... artists “produce”’ (p.20). Conversely, examining videoperformances and networked practices developed in the 1970s reveals a much more direct legacy of relational concerns, which are inherent to these practices from the beginning (see Chapter Two). This approach reveals that video technologies historically span broadcast, communication and representation, sharing the same legacy of networked tools. In this context, the screens of video and of networked computers also share technologies and contexts of use. These factors have been significant in fostering the current growing interest in relational practices and the recent revival of performance and videoperformance practices from the 1970s. The contemporary possibility of migrating across platforms and screens enabled by new developments in digital technologies adds a new layer of relational potential to the contemporary practice of videoperformance, and opens the historical body of videoperformance work to fresh readings.

The interplay of representation and performativity, of subjectivity and relationality, of autobiography and politics are already present in early videoperformances by

feminist artists concerned with redefining women's representation and positioning (for example, Ulrike Rosenbach, Martha Rosler, Hannah Wilke, Gina Pane, Eleanor Antin and Lynda Benglis). Early experiments with networks (satellites, telephone and networked screens) anticipate the longing for real time telecommunication (Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz), media activism (Ant Farm) and the potential for mediated intimacy (Douglas Davis). These are closely connected with the technology of television, and concerns with the media and broadcast in particular inform many early video and performance practices (for example, works by Martha Rosler, Douglas Davis, Nam June Paik, Dara Birnbaum, General Idea and TVTV).

The work of Vito Acconci references and transcends these concerns and stands out for its relevance to contemporary videoperformance practices. The emergence of Internet platforms for video communication and distribution has enriched the range of possible readings of his body of work and has enticed contemporary artists to re-perform some of his strategies (for example, in the work of Annie Abrahams, and Jane Pollard and Ian Forsyth). Acconci concentrates primarily on the potential of the video camera and monitor screen to mediate a relationship that, although asynchronous, is reciprocal. His videoperformances visually suggest a position for the body of the viewer and this projected position has already actively determined the performance. In other words, relationality informs the performance in its making, not only when viewers are physically present in front of the screen and engage with the work.

Acconci's videoperformance practice emerges as critically complex in its continuous focus on modes of relationality that involve an interrogation of his subjectivity, representation of masculinity, vulnerability, doubt, manipulation and uncertainty, which open a fissure in the solidity of the male position in power relations.

Each iteration of subjectivity produced on screen and off screen, each past identification, encounter, model or norm that comes to the forefront interpellated in relationality remains ungraspable, just as mediated relationality itself emerges as a performative, but remains uncapturable. Subjects repeat gestures and mannerisms

gleaned from their separate past encounters, informed by the Other that precedes them (understood as culture, language, the law), and continuously reinforced within a set of relations shaped by these socio-linguistic mechanisms. Relationality emerges from this set of repetitions and variations as an intersubjective tangible temporary performative. In this framework, relational videoperformances invite viewers to shift from an intense engagement with the innermost aspect of their own subjectivity to a deep engagement with a shared intersubjectivity in extimacy. This project shows how videoperformances can achieve different levels of intimacy and intensity as they afford viewers room to engage and disengage with the subject on screen. Intimacy itself is always already mediated and constructed, performed and cited, but the (re)mediation of the screen offers a qualitatively different opportunity to feel (affect) and think (cognition), recall and repeat (not reproduce) become aware and forget (oscillation).

In this dissertation, performative and analytical writing complement each other without resolving these contradictions. Producing the videoperformances for this project and analysing them in light of the discourses of Lacanian psychoanalysis, feminism and performativity has radically influenced my subjectivity and my awareness of how I engage relationally both in my practice and in my everyday life. Similarly, performing the encounters with the intimate videoperformances of Abrahams and Acconci has made me aware of aspects of my subjectivity that I had not been able to recognise before. The voices and words of Althusser, Lacan, Grosz and Butler resonate in the first person accounts in chapter three, and feminist discourses offer me the tools to analyse the dynamics of my responses. As a viewer and active interlocutor, I complement the performance with further voices gleaned from the history of my subjectivity, and I remould the subject on screen as I receive its address and participate in co-producing shared relationality.

The complementary accounts of encountering a historical videoperformance such as Acconci's *Theme Song* (1973), Abraham's contemporary *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* (2011), and of producing *Before You Now* (2013), map the key

processes of relationality *as they happen*. The productive strategy of examining these works from a first person perspective has allowed me to uncover mechanisms of subjectivity and the gaze not accessible via other methods of analysis. Although these remain case studies and do not exhaust the possibilities of these encounters, the resulting insight has been indispensable to make explicit the fundamental processes at work in the mediated relationality of videoperformance. In particular, the oscillation of awareness and unconscious responses that I seek to evoke in the viewers of my work has now become a tangible occurrence available to critical analysis and ethical scrutiny. Although other moving image, performance or photographic practices can also produce this oscillation, videoperformance offers a unique combination of direct address and mediation that directly engages and deflects the gaze, constructing modes of relationality that can encompass awareness and reflection. This project demonstrates that the direct affective and cognitive involvement of viewers in the processes of mediated relationality, activated by interpellation in the first instance, has the potential to produce a transformative effect that is not afforded by spectatorship alone.

On screen, the performer shifts between awareness and the unconscious, and this offers viewers opportunities to do the same within an intersubjective relationship. Thus, the image of the performer on screen oscillates between the functions of image/artwork and of other/Other, shifting in and out of the gaze, and fluctuating between awareness and the unconscious. More importantly, as the performer is evidently not present and not responding to the viewer, the gaze is exposed as a loop that originates in the subject to return to the subject itself. This possibility eludes most live performances. The case studies in chapter three demonstrate that as a subject and viewer I question if the affects, thoughts and responses that emerge in me have their origin in Acconci or in my own subjectivity. Although this partial awareness is momentary, it has an enduring transformative effect on subjectivity and on relationality. The mediation of the screen makes this reflection possible during the emergence of relationality itself.

Videoperformance exceeds the gaze and desire by unsettling the continuity of the subject and by producing a mediated relationality that integrates reflection. The repetition and relative discontinuity of subjectivity established by each videoperformance offers viewers a short-term counterpoint for relationality. Whilst cinema, for instance, constructs continuous stable subjects through narrative and point-of-view, videoperformance produces temporary fragments of subjectivity available to viewers to confront relationally. The performer denies these fragments as stable by offering shifting iterations of subjectivity and shifting opportunities to relate with other aspects of viewers' subjectivities. This is closer to embodied subjectivity with its (relative) continuity in body and identity, and its psychic discontinuity and instability. Moreover, viewers physically and psychically move towards and away from the representations of the performer, whilst performers offer shifting opportunities to relate and reflect.

The performer's gaze may or may not be animated by narcissism – the desire to confirm the wholeness of their subjectivity – or by an acceptance of fragmentation (Krauss, 1976; Phelan, 1993). If I read Acconci's performance as informed by self-doubt or by an inner dialogue with another other, the performance alludes to a radically unstable and fragmented subject. From a feminist perspective, it would be easy to attribute to Acconci the desire to complete his fragmented self via the possession of this other – me, the woman he is clumsily attempting to seduce. I speculate that this artist is performing a split subjectivity that is already informed by being someone's other, and not by the desire to possess the other who lacks the phallus in order to confirm that he does not. The loop of gaze and desire is open towards the desire to reach the other within the limitations of our (already accepted as) fragmented subjectivities. In this instance, the performer Acconci declares his desire and asks me, his viewer and interlocutor, to confront both his and my desire. The mediated nature of videoperformance, its lack of artist's and viewer's contemporary physical presence and response loop, its asynchronous and asymmetrical qualities keep open the ethical and political potential of relationality.

As my awareness of my own unconscious responses becomes possible, I become enabled to keep past relationships into account as I respond to interlocutors in the present. This may diminish my need to position the other as the object of my desire and may increase my capacity to perceive the other as an equally fragmented and desiring subject. In other words, the potential for reciprocal respect and acceptance increases, whilst the need for aggression may decrease.

These mediated relationships are as psychically and politically charged as face-to-face relationships that are part of the everyday life: the affects and thoughts that emerge intertwined in my encounters surprise me for their relevance to my subjectivity. In the encounter with the videoperformances and in writing the encounter, I become aware of previously unconscious responses and psychic mechanisms that are dominant in my ways of relating to others. This directly supports the central argument of this project: the opportunity for mediated relationality produced by videoperformance is relevant to the awareness, reflection and transformation of subjectivity and intersubjective relationships beyond the context of art practice. What is at stake in my encounter with *Theme Song* and *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)* is a shift, however small, in the structure of subjectivity, the dynamics of the gaze that affect intersubjective exchanges, unconscious desires, self-awareness and the powerful impact that these transformations can have on interpersonal relationships. Here, subjectivity and relationality function as performatives in that they exceed the artworks that cause them, and have consequences in and beyond the field of art practice. In other words, this practice questions the authority of the subject and the power of unconscious desire in a transformative process that increases self-awareness and responsibility. It recasts the gaze as a process that contributes to a critical understanding of the limitations of subjectivity and it confirms experientially that subjectivity is a product of relationality – a series of continuously shifting momentary performatives.

To conclude, the art practice of videoperformance produces the conditions for modulations of relationality that are personal and social, psychic and political, ethical and selfish. Videoperformance practices activate these contradictions and evidence the impossibility of limiting relationality to any of the subjects involved. Thus, the account of videoperformance that emerges from this analysis is of a relational, transformative practice with ethical and political valence. When videoperformance engages viewers relationally, it re-invests the other and the gaze with a constructive political purpose by offering an opportunity to unmask the processes of the gaze and use them as a basis for a more ethical approach to relationality. This post-psychoanalytic ethical stance supports this project's proposition that the practices of videoperformance are capable of intervening in intersubjective relationships and social relations. This project demonstrates that when subjects are able to accept their own psychic features, they are less likely to reduce the other to a function of these features and more likely to perceive the other as a peer, who is as complex and fragmented as themselves. Videoperformance facilitates this acceptance by engaging subjects in mediated asynchronous relationships within which they can become aware of how those features are constructed within a continuously flowing series of relationships, interdependence and reciprocal subject formation. A growing awareness of the fundamental role of relationality in the constitution of the subject could weaken the need to protect the boundaries of subjectivity even further. The possible consequences of this transformation include a reduction of aggression towards the other, who is now more likely to be perceived as radically other, but as non-threatening to the integrity of the subject (already understood as illusory). This constitutes a solid basis for equality and supports my claim of the ethical and political relevance of videoperformance and of this project.

I have evidenced directly that videoperformance can activate performative relationality, raise ethical questions, produce awareness and nurture a sense of responsibility towards the other one relates with. Consequently, videoperformance

contributes a specific transformative practice with relevant political valence to the wider discourse on intersubjective relationships and social relations. This constitutes an original contribution to knowledge as this project focuses attention on mediated relationality as a performative, and on videoperformance as an effective transformative practice with political and ethical valence in the context of intersubjective relationships and social relations. It also highlights how the screen can act as the key mediator for the continuous shifting of subjectivity between unconscious desire and awareness. This produces asymmetrical and asynchronous intersubjective relationships that activate the processes of interpellation and of the gaze, but which also produce moments of awareness and reflection. This set of connected dynamics is unique to videoperformance and does not occur in live performance practices (where contemporary presence closes the loop of desire and sustains the gaze), interactive networked practices (where the possibility of contributing and informing the emerging relationships focuses subjects on the flow of actions and does not foster awareness) or representational practices (where spectatorship renders viewers passive and relationality does not emerge).

Although my own accounts as a viewer of videoperformance offers valid and original knowledge of these processes, this project does not formally interrogate other viewers' relational, emotional and cognitive engagement with videoperformances. The analysis of the three case studies conducted from a first person perspective could be seen as relevant only to an exploration of my own subjectivity. Although this is strictly speaking the case, it is also true that the dynamics revealed in these encounters are rooted in a culture and in social constructs that I share with many viewers and performers. Yet, this leaves open key questions about the agency of viewers who accept or refuse to participate in mediated relationality. It appears that this participation can have a transformative effect on a willing party, but how do videoperformances affect viewers who resist relational engagement? And from which perspective could the agency of those who engage relationally be analysed?

Having acknowledged that this project raises important and relevant ethical questions, I also have to acknowledge that I have only been able to consider a limited political perspective. For example, whilst feminist discourses allow me to recognise the psychic, linguistic and social mechanisms that position me as a white woman in this culture, I am in danger of positioning others according to a normativity of which I am not fully aware. Future research might focus on some of the ethical and political questions that this project raises, but could not investigate: in the first instance, questions of racialized relations of power brought to my attention by the work of Piper (1988) and Lori (2009 and 2010), but also questions inherent to religion, class and economic status, and access to technology. This project constitutes a valid examination of the processes of interpellation and the gaze, and a solid basis to investigate these relevant political questions.

The key questions that this research generates concern the relational dynamics and uses of networked and screen-based technologies that activate and complicate the processes made visible in this project: how do the relational dynamics that affect subjectivity and generate reflection shift in networked performance practices? Which strategies could produce a space for reflection in the real time response loop of interactive technologies? How can awareness emerge in synchronous asymmetric relationships? How does relationality change with networked and distributed technologies? These questions are hinted at in my account of engaging with Abrahams's work and in the references to Skype in some of my own videoperformances. They are relevant questions within the critical context of art practice, but they also have ramifications that can affect the politics and ethics of intersubjective relationships in the framework of increasingly mediated interpersonal relationships.

I developed this project aware of the increasing everyday and artistic uses of screen-based technologies to mediate relationality. The lasting effects of this direct engagement on my subjectivity, on my relationships and on my practice are only

just beginning to show. Similarly, I have only started to explore and reflect on the specific political and ethical valence of screen mediated relational practices, and I aim to research this aspect in more depth and in its wider context. What emerges at the end of this process is that this analysis has the potential to clarify the fundamental relational dynamics of networked and distributed performance practices as well as of face-to-face relationships. I am now keen to develop a new body of work that adopts different screen-based technologies and interrogates the knowledge produced by this project from these new perspectives.

Appendices

Appendix One: Further Information about the Practice

Regardless, 17', 2007. This work was not scripted, but improvised in front of the video camera in one take. The illusion of the screen moving forward is created with a scratched sheet of Plexiglas. I positioned the camera so that it pointed downwards towards the area where I would be performing. This is mirrored in the angle of the monitor screen, which locates viewers above my image in the same position the camera occupied.

It was exhibited at Fieldgate Gallery as part of the group exhibition *Analogue and Digital* curated by Chris Meigh-Andrews and at the Nunnery Gallery as part of the annual exhibition *Visions in the Nunnery*, both in London.

Before You, various durations, 2008-2013.

It was first performed for an audience and to video camera at the same time as part of Gary Stevens' *Performance Lab* in April 2008, and again in the same format in May 2008 as part of *Scenes in the Making* curated by Lee Campbell and Frog Morris at the Nicholls and Clarke Building, both in London. In October 2008, I repeated the performance live on stage as part of *Live Art Part 2* curated by Frog Morris at the Montague Arms in London. Finally, I tested a different combination of performance and video in 2009 at the James Taylor Gallery in London. On this occasion, I was invited to curate an event and I proposed the *With Love? From Me to You*, which allowed me to invite a number of artists to share practice and ideas (these included Mark MacGowan, DeeJ Fabric, Lee Campbell, Marty St James and Gary Stevens). The brief of the invitation was to engage with the artworks already installed, and to 'contribute to a programme of talks/performances/readings/conversations' (Dorian, 2010). Edward Dorian devised the umbrella programme that included this event – *Interrupted Correspondence/Vice-Versa: Five Years Fragments*. The two installations in the exhibition space were Max Mosscrop's *House*, a one third scale reproduction of an abandoned farmhouse, and Michael Curran's *Saint Jerome in his Study by*

Antonello da Messina, both 2009. I performed inside *House*, and the screen was positioned on the equivalent of Saint Jerome's desk in Curran's installation. The audience sat between the two works, and could see cables linking the camera inside *House* to the screen.

After this event, I worked on completing this series by focusing on the recorded videoperformance and the viewer evoked beyond the video camera. I performed the work again in a domestic environment with the sole purpose of recording it. After having experimented with addressing a live audience, it was quite difficult to reach out for an interlocutor who was not present. Finally, in 2013 I performed exclusively for the video camera and recorded *Before You Now* (duration: 5'30"). This last version was exhibited at the Minorities Gallery in Colchester in 2014.

The Other Person, 29'30", 2010.

The Other Person was commissioned by Edward Dorian for the series of events *Field Recordings* at Five Years Gallery in London. It was also exhibited at the Minorities Gallery in Colchester in 2014.

Are You Talking to Me, 5', 2010.

This is a short videoperformance produced by positioning two laptops beside each other and connecting them via Skype. It was exhibited at the Nunnery Gallery in London during the event *Performance in the Nunnery: Move Me!* and at the Minorities Gallery in Colchester in 2014.

Wish You Were Here, 3', 2011.

Wish You Were Here was produced on the invitation of Chris Meigh-Andrews, who curated the exhibition *Light and Dark / Motion and Stasis* for the Gooden Gallery 24SEVEN project space. It was also exhibited at Benham Gallery, Colchester, 2013.

Appendix Two: Vito Acconci, *Theme Song*, 1973, 33.23' Transcript

[Acconci fades-in; the rest of the screen is filled with a stripy sofa in the background; a very large face in the foreground. He looks up slightly. He lights a cigarette, looks into camera, blows some smoke out and starts humming a melody. Stretches out of the frame and music starts playing. Acconci sings over the music] 'I can't see your face in my mind ...'. Of course I can't see your face. I have no idea what your face looks like. [smokes] You can be anybody out there. There's got to be somebody ... There's got to be somebody watching me, somebody who wants to come in close to me.' This is the moment when I am sure that he is talking to a female interlocutor. He says: 'look, look I can just wrap myself around ... [moves his bent legs to the side, so that his body frames a welcoming area for the body of the viewer] Don't you want to come in here? Sure! Sure you'll come in here.' The words of the song lead the words of the performance. Sung by The Doors, it references the end of a relationship – the male singer asks the female leaving partner not to cry so that he can hold on to a different image of her face. The gender of the partner is not made explicit. Am I projecting? 'Ah no don't cry! Why would you cry? I should be the one who's crying. I don't know if there is anybody there. I don't know if you want to come in here. Look at me with your eyes ... I'll look at you ... see you. I can't find he right line ... I can't find the right line with you ... I don't know what things you like. I mean, I don't know what kinds of things win you over. [smokes] There's got to be something that can win you over ... Sure sure I might be crazy I might be crazy trying to get you here ... of course not! No, I'm not crazy! Of course you can come in here ... But why not? Is that the right line? Why not? Why don't you come here? Why don't you come here with me?' Smokes, hums. 'Come on!' Hums 'Look, I'm all alone!' Hums 'I don't have to know your face. I don't have to know your face. How will I know there'll be a beautiful face?! Can be any face. Don't worry, don't cry! I'll take care of you. I'll take care of youuuu ... [wriggles sideways with his bent legs and body] You come here ... Come in to me ... Come in close to my body! Don't cry ... No, I don't need your picture ... I don't have to know what you look like. We haven't

even said hallo yet. You can look like anybody; I'll take anybody. I'll take anything I can get ...' Presses a button on the tape player off frame and smokes. 'What can convince you? What can convince you to come over to me, eh? Oh, I'll try anything! You just wait and see ...' Stretches out of the frame and presses play. Another song starts (The Doors, People are strange). Hums 'Strange ... People are strange ... Sure, look! Look, look how alone I am. Everybody looks ugly – I'm all alone! You don't want me to stay alone like this, do you? No, you can't live me alone! Look how down, how depressed I am! I don't have you yet, of course I'm depressed! Oh you can't leave me like this ... [smokes] and look how lonely I am ... [sings] Everything everything closes in on me. Oh I need you, I mean I need you YOU, I need you to take care of me. Oh, come on, I need you to show me that, show me that I matter, to show me that you remember my name, you know who I am ... [sings] Oh come on, I need somebody to remember me, somebody to take care of me. Come on, you can do that ... Come oooooon [stops music] Come on, would that work? Would it work if I tell you how lonely I am? I just need somebody ... Ah that wouldn't work, uh? Come on, look, I try this trick with you: I'll be really honest ... Sure, sometimes I'm lonely, but sometimes I'm not. I'll be honest with you, OK? [turns the tape] Look, you'll have to believe me if I'm really honest, right? [music starts. Hard Rock. Sings] OK, look, I'm not lonely, right? Look, I wouldn't try to kill you, I wouldn't try to pull you ... [sings] OK, no lies right? This is what I really need: I just need a ... I just need a body next to me; that's all I need! I mean, that's lots to me; It's not so much to you. I need it! You need it too, right? I mean, look – look how my body wraps around you. You need it as much as I do! Come on, don't try to hide it! We both need it! I just need a body next to mine! Maybe that really is all you need. All you need is just a little bit, just a little bit of this. Come on, put your body next to mine – that's all both of us really need. Look, we don't have to kid each other – we are both grown up, right? I mean, you need it, I need it ... Come on, it's so easy here! Look how easy it is! [wiggles with his body] Come on, just throw that into me! [makes a thrusting movement with his hand towards his own body] Come right up against me. It's so easy! It's no trouble, no problem ... no problem, no one will just even know

about it! Come on, we both need it, right? Come on ... [stretches out of the frame and stops the music] Ahhh. Come on, I know you need it as much as I do. [Music starts. Sings:] dododo that's all you need! Come on. Come on. dododo that's all you need! Come on. Come on. [lies lower with his head on his forearm on the floor. Voice becomes almost a whisper] dododo that's all you need! Yeah, yeah! I know you need it; you know you need it ... Don't deny it ... We won't kid ourselves. Sure, it is not, it might not be anything important, but it doesn't matter, does it? I mean, we don't have to kid ourselves ... we don't need to say this is gonna last! All that counts is now, right? My body is here, your body can be here ... That's all we want. [stretches out of the frame. Music starts. Country. Hums] You don't have to worry about a thing. [sings:] I'll be your Baby tonight ... I can really be your baby. I'll give you anything you want ... I'll give you everything you need. Look – right here [makes a repeated disturbing thrusting gesture with his open hand toward his body] Right into me. Oh look, come on, this body is waiting for you to wrap me around you ... it's as if you were here already. [sings:] I'll be your Baby tonight [smokes] Why should this remain alone? [sings] I'm gonna let you go into me. You'll never regret it ... yeah, come oooon ... Look, look at the way my body is ready to spring out! to spring out around you! [sings:] I'll be your Baby tonight [smokes] Right now, right this minute, I'll really be your baby ... You'll really be my baby ... We don't have to worry about tomorrow; it's nothing to do with forever ... It just has to do with now. [smokes] We don't need any illusions, we don't want any illusions, right? [stops the music] Oh I'm pushing you, uh? I'm just pressing you. OK, OK, I can understand that. I can understand that you think I'm moving too fast. [smokes] I know what you need. I mean I realise that you need a little more than that. I mean, you need some fantasy, you need some dream, OK. I know that, maybe we need to kid ourselves a little bit. If that's what you want, that's what I'll do ... [stretches out of the frame. Music starts. Rolling Stones] I understand that we can't be without dreams, we can't be without illusions, we can't be without fantasies ... [smokes] [sings:] All you gotta do, is step right out ... I know, I know I'm not close to you now. Of course, I can't be close to you now. How can I be close to you – you're in another world! It's as if you

are an angel. Of course! Look, there's nobody beside me. And you are not beside me, I realise that. I know that. I know I have to wait for you to come to me. I know that I can't make the first move myself because I'm just not up to you; I'm just too far below you. But it is getting late ... How long, how long do I have to wait for you? I'll wait. I'll wait as long as I have to, because ... because I've always dreamed about you! Of anyone I was ever been with ... I was really thinking about you, though I've never even met you. I don't know you now, but I had this vision of you ... I had this real vision of somebody ideal, somebody special. I realise that nobody can live up to that dream, but that dream was really you. You can fulfil all the dreams, all the dreams I have. Ye, here comes the man – I'm the man! I'm the man, and I'm waiting for the show to go on, I'm waiting for you to come clean. All you have to do is ring the bell. I'll answer it. I'll answer the bell anytime, anytime you ring. I'll just be here waiting for you, OK? I can't reach out to you. I can try, I can try, try to reach out to you, try to reach out to you, but it's empty! My arms are empty. There's just air. I can just grab at air. Ah, you are so far above me, so far away from me. But I'll keep on trying [smokes]. I'll keep on trying, I'll keep on waiting for you. And maybe, maybe sooner or later ... Sure you can be on stage! You can be on stage with me. I'll put you in the spotlight! I mean the spotlight is all yours! I'll just go back far away into the darkness. You can be in the spotlight baby. It's all yours! I'll admire you, I'd love you [pauses and moves his head to the music] I'll watch every move you make. I'll love every move you make. I'll act as if I'm an audience. I'm an audience. I'd have to applaud at everything you did. Oh I'll keep on pushing, I'll keep on pushing till I deserve you, till I can win you over. I know I know, I'm steps ahead, but I can step lightly. I know I'm heavy handed, but maybe you'll forgive that. Maybe You'll forget how heavy handed I am and maybe you'll realise that ... maybe maybe you can come into me. [wiggles]. Maybe if I just sloooowly, graduuually pull myself around maybe then, maybe then you'll come into me. [gestures towards his body]. Maybe I have a chance, eh? [smokes. Changes music] Maybe that's just too far away for you. I am sure you want to be admired, you want to be respected, but come on, you don't want to be respected as much as all that ... I mean, I mean there's still flesh,

you know that. I mean, there's still your body, here's still my body. We can't always be in the air ... We have to come down to hearth. You want that as much as I do. Oh come on, I really want to come down to earth, I want you to come down here with me. I mean, you can't always be in the air. [smokes] We can't always be up in the clouds [shakes his head]. Sure it's fine for a while but every once in a while, now and then we have to realise that I'm a body and you are a body, right?! [stretches out of frame. Clicks of player. new song]. Dudududu. [smokes] I mean, anything you dooooo ... I mean, just watch for what I'm gonna say, just listen to me. I'll try to love you. Sure, I can't do anything right. I can't do anything right, but I will. I will do something right. [seems distracted: listening to the song? Smokes, looks into camera with raised eyebrows. Sings] Dudududu. [sings] It's not the thing to do! Don't stay away from me! I mean, you know the thing to do, I know the thing to do – wrap myself arououound, come around you, that's the thing to do, that's what we really wanna do. Take your time! Take your time. Anything you are doing, whatever you are doing, you are doing the right thing. I mean, just listen to what he is saying - he is saying exactly what I'm thinking: whatever you do is the right thing. You wanna take your time? Just take your time! [sounds patronising?] Dudududu. [sings] Just take your tiiiiiiime ... Dudududu. Oh whatever you are doing baby ... Do you want me to stay like this? Do you want me to stay apart for a while? Sure, I'll stay apart. [sings] Anything you dooooo ... whatever you dooooooooo ... You do it the right way ... I won't impose my way on you. Just do what you want, I'll wait. But sooner or later, sooner or later you got to be here, right? [stretches out of frame. Clicks of player. Sings without the music]. whatever you are doing ... You are doing the right way ... Look, but I can do things the right way too, right? I mean, this is the only way I know how. This is the only way I have to get to you. So look, let's just say just this once that it is the right way. It's the right way! Come on! [wiggles] Come on into me ... You wouldn't be up in he air, but I really do love you. I really WOULD love you. [stretches out of frame. Clicks of player.] You just wait. Wait and see what I have to tell you. [stretches out of frame. Clicks of player. New song] Dudududu. [puts new cigarette in his mouth and mumbles] Sure, you are far above me, on a mountain

top. [lights cigarette] You are the peak I just can't reach. I've never had it, I've never had it, but if I had you, I'd really try to keep you. [sounds earnest?] Sure, you'd be my mountain top, but we'd still be here, we'd still be here on earth. We'd have to linger on ... oh your eyes are so pale, your eyes are so pale, of course they are pale, I mean, I'd wrap myself around you, you'd be next to me ... Your eyes would have to be pale because I couldn't see you clearly – you'd be too close. Too close to see any clear image. I couldn't [shakes head] focus on you. Oh, the world would really be strange. When I see you it's really strange. I don't have to put you on the mirror – I see you right before me! I don't have to put a mirror in front of me in order to see you! Oh, look how close we are! Sure I can see you, I can see you right up against my face, up against my body. [appears to be looking out of frame, to his left, my right] Oh linger on, stay with me. [smokes] there is no reason to go away! Come as close to me as you can get! All wrapped up in each other. We both linger with each other ... There'd be no place else to go. No place else we wanted to go. Dudududu. [sings] [smokes] Come on, whenever you are ready. Whenever you are ready, I'm ready to wrap myself around you. You saw that! [smokes] I'll linger on ... I'll linger on waiting for you. [sounds impatient?] I don't have anything else to do. All I have to do is wait for you. [smokes] Oh, you don't wanna a waste time! You don't wanna skip our life! Why stuff our life away? Why, why wait? We have just this moment. I mean, no use putting it away, no use putting it on the shelf - this is for us now. Use it! Look at the way body can come around you ... [wiggles] Why not use it? I mean, I'm ready to use it, I'm ready to take you anytime, anytime you want. Just stay, linger as long as you want [smokes] You are starting to get, you are starting to get a little weary, aren't you? You are starting to get a little afraid of me, right? [stretches out of the frame. Clicking of player] OK, you are starting to listen to what the rest of them are telling you ... You are not jus listening to me, you are listening to them too, eh? I mean, you don't really trust as much. Why not? I mean, your pale blue eyes, they're beautiful eyes ... I know they'd be beautiful if I saw them! I mean, you can believe that! I can believe that they would be beautiful! [smokes] [stretches out of the frame. Clicking of player. Sings] Linger oooon ... Your pale blue eyeeeees

... [wiggles] Oh, my body to linger on with you baby ...! [really creepy!!!] I'd really linger on with you! I wouldn't just drop you! I wouldn't just leave you! [stretches out of the frame. Clicking of player. New song] OK, you don't trust me! I mean, you have reasons, you have reasons not to trust me. [looks contrived] I mean, I know, I know I felt closed in, I felt closed in by the way you could love me. I've never wanted to be mean to you. [sings] I've been unkiiiiind ... You can forget, you can forget the way I've been unkind. Just let it all go by. I mean, I changed! I changed later on. You really want me to be alone liked this?! Look, look how much ... [wiggles] Look how I can wrap myself around you! I know I've been untrue, but this is for you now! My body is wrapped around just for youuuu! [tone going up. Sounds really insincere!?] It's ready to wrap around youuuu! I know! I know, I know I was a liar in the past [sounds earnest?] but I want be a liar nooowww! [sings] ... like a beast, with its horns ... I know, I know, it is true what they've said, I mean [doorbell rings] I've thorn them down when they've reached out to me. It's true, you are probably right, I will thorn you. But I really swear this – I mean, all that, all that part of my life is over. [smokes] all that part of my life is over. I'll make it up to you. I'll make it up to you. Do you remember, I called you a ballerina, you were in another world. So I can call you thee. I know, I just tried to be free, I know. I just tried to be free, that's the only reason why I fought with you. the only reason why I would have harmed you. Oh, I've gotta ask for a lot! I got a ask for more, I wanna ask for more. Come on baby, I keep on asking for more, come on, come on you want more too, right? You want more than you ave out of this ... Come on, it's here! [wiggles] Come on here to me [sings] won't you ask, won't you ask for a little more ... Why don't you ask for a little more baby? I'll give it to you! I'll give you anything you ask foor! [sings, wiggles] ... like a drug, I've tried in my way to be freeeee ... But I wouldn't have to be free anymore, I would be free! You could really take care of me! [stretches out of the frame. Clicking of player.] I don't need to be free now! Look, we'd be together, right? Right heeeeeere ... Right here with me. I don't need any freedom. [stretches out of the frame. Clicking of player. New song. It stops again] You are not gonna have of that, uh? I'm gonna be all alone. You are gonna leave me. You are gonna

leave me even before we've had a chance to get started. [new song]. OK, I guess that's my fate, that's my destiny. I just have to drift away, I just have to drift away alone, I just have to be alone. I just have to remember [nods wit the music] Dudududu. [sings] Oh I remember the time I remember the time, I remember the time we were together ... Ah, we could have been together. Oh, we could have had such great times together and now, now all I have is a memory. [nods wit the music] Dudududu. [sings] It's all over. It's all over before it even began! Ah, but what I have to remember! [nods wit the music, smokes] Dudududu. [sings] I have it all to remember now. It's only a memory. [sings] Nothing left to me ... lost a lot ... I've lost a lot ... That is worth nothing, nothing's worth nothing because you never came to me. [nods wit the music] oh it would have been easy to feel good with you. Oh I can just ... I could feel your body! I could feel your body next to me now [wiggles and gesticulates towards his body] Right next to me ... Ah! [shakes head] I know I'm only kidding myself, I'm only dreaming – there's nobody here! You are not here. You could have been here, but you are just not here. [wiggles] Oh but I remember ... I remember everything we had together. I know I know, we didn't have it. We could have had it – you could have shared the secrets of my soul. Sure, then it would have been over. It would have been over but at least I could have remember that. Oh, would you have wanted to be a memory for me? Wouldn't you have wanted to be fixed in my mind? Oh, every night you kept me from the cold ... you could have kept me, you could have kept me from the cold ... you could have been right here with me. Ah, nothing [makes emphatic gesture with his R arm] You are not here! Could I really let you slip away? [sigh] Oh, how could I let you slip away like that? We don't even have a yesterday! Oh but if you were with me now, if you could be with me now ... there's tomorrow, I could say that! [nods] I could say that! I could say what an incredible yesterday it has been. [nods wit the music. sings] Not to let [hesitates] You've given me nothing. We have nothing to remember any more [sounds sad?] Oh feeling good would have been easy with you. It would have been enough. [tapes stops suddenly!]

SONGS

The Doors, I can't see your face in my mind.

I can't see your face in my mind
I can't see your face in my mind
Carnival dogs
Consume the lines
Can't see your face in my mind

Don't you cry
Baby, please don't cry
And don't look at me
With your eyes

I can't seem to find the right lie
I can't seem to find the right lie
Insanity's horse
Adorns the sky
Can't seem to find the right lie

Carnival dogs
Consume the lines
Can't see your face in my mind

Don't you cry
Baby, please don't cry
I won't need your picture
Until we say goodbye

The Doors' "People Are Strange"

People are strange when you're a stranger
Faces look ugly when you're alone
Women seem wicked when you're unwanted
Streets are uneven when you're down

When you're strange
Faces come out of the rain
When you're strange
No one remembers your name
When you're strange
When you're strange
When you're strange

People are strange when you're a stranger
Faces look ugly when you're alone
Women seem wicked when you're unwanted
Streets are uneven when you're down

When you're strange
Faces come out of the rain
When you're strange
No one remembers your name
When you're strange
When you're strange
When you're strange

When you're strange
Faces come out of the rain
When you're strange
No one remembers your name
When you're strange
When you're strange
When you're strange

Faces That's All You Need

Sit right down if you can spare me a minute
I got a tale that's bound to break your heart
Concerns my brother who's thin and played violin
Got it in his head that an IQ was all you need

He went his way, I couldn't discover mine
I didn't worry if I ever saw him again
He's made a profit while I don't even own a pocket
And the last I heard he was sitting at the top of the tree
For a minute

Late last night reading my Underground Press
Came a knock on the door, thought it was the Third World War
Lord above, I did not recognize him
I said, "Have a cup of coke, kid, maybe that's all you need"

He said, "The smell of the city, kid, it's trying to kill me
My eyes are getting muddy, Christ, I'm aging fast
With my kind of music, I knew it wasn't gonna to be simple
But have a quick listen, kid, maybe that's all you need"

Don't stop, you make me feel much better
Tell me, my brother, do you think that's all I need?
Yeah yeah

Don't it make you happy?
Well, well, well, well, well
That's all you need
[Incomprehensible]

That's all you need
And that's all you need
And that's all you need
And that's all you need

Come on
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

That's all you need
That's all you need
That's all you need
That's all you need

That's all you need
That's all you need
That's all you need
That's all you need

BOB DYLAN I'll be your baby tonight

Close your eyes, close your door
You don't have to worry any more
I'll be your baby tonight.

Shut the light, shut the shade
You don't have to be afraid
I'll be your baby tonight.

Well, that mockingbird's gonna sail away
We're gonna forget it
That big, fat moon is gonna shine like a spoon
But we're gonna let it
You won't regret it.

Kick your shoes off, do not fear
Bring that bottle over here
I'll be your baby tonight.

Van Morrison Ballerina

Spread your wings
Come on fly awhile
Straight to my arms
Little angel child
You know you only
Lonely twenty-two story block
And if somebody, not just anybody
Wanted to get close to you
For instance, me, baby
All you gotta do
Is ring a bell
Step right up, step right up
And step right up
Ballerina
Crowd will catch you
Fly it, sigh it, try it
Well, I may be wrong
But something deep in my heart tells me I'm right and I don't think so

You know I saw the writing on the wall
When you came up to me
Child, you were heading for a fall
But if it gets to you
And you feel like you just cant go on
All you gotta do
Is ring a bell
Step right up, and step right up
And step right up
Just like a ballerina
Stepping lightly
Alright, well its getting late
Yes it is, yes it is
And this time I forget to slip into your slumber
The light is on the left side of your head
And Im standing in your doorway
And Im mumbling and I cant remember the last thing that ran through my head
Here come the man and he say, he say the show must go on
So all you gotta do
Is ring the bell
And step right up, and step right up
And step right up
Just like a ballerina, yeah, yeah
Crowd will catch you
Fly it, sight it, cmon, die it, yeah
Just like a ballerina
Just like a just like a just like a ballerina
Get on up, get on up, keep a-moving on, little bit higher, baby
You know, you know, you know, get up baby
Alright, a-keep on, a-keep on, a-keep on, a-keep on pushing
Stepping lightly
Just like a ballerina
Ooo-we baby, take off your shoes
Working on
Just like a ballerina

The Velvet Underground Pale Blue Eyes

Sometimes I feel so happy,
Sometimes I feel so sad.
Sometimes I feel so happy,
But mostly you just make me mad.
Baby, you just make me mad.
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.

Thought of you as my mountain top,
Thought of you as my peak.
Thought of you as everything,
I've had but couldn't keep.

I've had but couldn't keep.
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.

If I could make the world as pure and strange as what I see,
I'd put you in the mirror,
I put in front of me.
I put in front of me.
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.

Skip a life completely.
Stuff it in a cup.
She said, Money is like us in time,
It lies, but can't stand up.
Down for you is up."
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.

It was good what we did yesterday.
And I'd do it once again.
The fact that you are married,
Only proves, you're my best friend.
But it's truly, truly a sin.
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.
Linger on, your pale blue eyes.

Leonard Cohen Bird On The Wire

Like a bird on the wire,
Like a drunk in a midnight choir
I have tried in my way to be free.
Like a worm on a hook,
Like a knight from some old fashioned book
I have saved all my ribbons for thee.
If I, if I have been unkind,
I hope that you can just let it go by.
If I, if I have been untrue
I hope you know it was never to you.

Like a baby, stillborn,
Like a beast with his horn
I have torn everyone who reached out for me.
But I swear by this song
And by all that I have done wrong
I will make it all up to thee.
I saw a beggar leaning on his wooden crutch,
He said to me, "You must not ask for so much."
And a pretty woman leaning in her darkened door,
She cried to me, "Hey, why not ask for more?"

Oh like a bird on the wire,

Like a drunk in a midnight choir
I have tried in my way to be free.

Me And Bobby McGee

Busted flat in Baton rouge, headin' for the train
Feelin' nearly faded as my jeans
Bobby thumbed a diesel down just before it rained
Took us all the way to New Orleans

I took my harpoon out of my dirty red bandanna
I was blowin' sad while Bobby sang the blues
With them windshield wipers slappin' time
And Bobby clappin' hands
We finally sang up every song that driver knew

Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose
And nothin' ain't worth nothin' but it's free
Feelin' good was easy, Lord, when Bobby sang the blues
Buddy, that was good enough for me
Good enough for me and Bobby McGee

From the coal mines of Kentucky to the California sun
Bobby shared the secrets of my soul
Standin' right beside me through everything I've done
And every night he kept me from the cold

Then somewhere near Salinas I let him slip away
Lookin' for the home I hope he'll find
And I'll trade all my tomorrows for a single yesterday
Holdin' Bobby's body next to mine

Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose
Nothin' left is all he left me, yeah
Feelin' good was easy, Lord, when Bobby sang the blues
Buddy, that was good enough for me
Good enough for me and Bobby McGee

Enough for me and Bobby McGee
Good enough for me and my Bobby McGee

Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose
And nothin' ain't worth nothin' but it's free
Feelin' good was easy, Lord, when Bobby sang the blues
Buddy, that was good enough for me
Good enough for me and Bobby McGee

From the coal mines of Kentucky to the California sun
Bobby shared the secrets of my soul
Standin' right beside me through everything I've done
And every night he kept me from the cold

Then somewhere near Salinas I let him slip away
Lookin' for the home I hope he'll find
And I'll trade all my tomorrows for a single yesterday
Holdin' Bobby's body next to mine

Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose
Nothin' left is all he left me
Feelin' good was easy, Lord, when Bobby sang the blues
Buddy, that was good enough for me
Good enough for me and Bobby McGee

Enough for me and Bobby McGee
Good enough for me and my Bobby McGee, yeah
I let him slip away lookin' for the home I hope he finds
Enough for me and my Bobby McGee
Good enough for me and my Bobby McGee, yeah
Good enough for me and my Bobby McGee, yeah

Appendix Three: Annie Abrahams, *Theme Song Revisited (After Acconci)*, 2011, 6'17" Transcript

Some black and white stripes cover the screen – fabric? – and a flashy colour shimmers over it – a hand? A text over imposed: 'Call me' and two phone numbers in grey.

Are you there? Are you there? Are you there? I am here! I know you are there. You are even more than 1. There's a lot of you. Are you real? I know I am real. Mostly, you just make me mad! But now, please call me. [music in the background] Come on, just call me. You know? I am real. Are you real? I would like to know if you are real. I would like to know if you exist. Are you there? [spoken, but with the song] You are my mountain, you are my peak. [music. Sings] Linger on, linger on. Oh yes. Why not, why not? Why shouldn't you call me?! Just call me, especially if you have pale blue eyes. Call me. Strange is what I see, indeed strange is what I see. I am here. My body is here. Yours is there. At least, I think yours is there ... Are you there? Call me! Why don't you call me? Please call me! This is not video, This is not television. This is real! This is not imagination. You are there, I am here. If you'd be able to talk, it's not so difficult to talk together. But we can't talk if you don't call me. You should call me. Please call me. Come on, do it. Do it! Don't hesitate, go on! Call! Take your phone and call me. I'm waiting. Time is passing. [speaking more quickly] Time is passing. I'm waiting. Why don't you call me? Call me please! Is it too expensive for you? I'm real! You are real! Prove me you are real! Act! Do something! [phone rings!] [image goes back to black and white stripy fabric] Hallo? [a woman's face blurred, moving, sideways. Turns the right way round as she speaks very pleased, relieved? She is holding a phone to her right hear] Hallo! Thank you for calling me! It's so nice someone calls. Who are you? [listens intently] Oh Helen is so great! Someone called me, finally! Thank you very much! [smiling broadly] [listens and laughs] I was ... I'm sorry, what are you saying? [leans forward. Looks concerned. Leans towards the camera as she listens, but she is looking at the screen – a bluish light reflects in her eyes] Ah, there's not enough sound, is that it?

[listens and smiles] OK ... yeah, I'm very far ... no, I'm very close in fact! [Looks up and moves the camera. The image freezes briefly. Click of keyboard. The image jumps to sideways, showing the edge of the laptop and Annie's body, neck and arms still on the phone] I stopped broadcasting, now I'm fine. [laughs] Thank you very much for calling. No, it's so strange that I didn't know, but I don't know ... but you called! [walks away from the desk] [voice off frame] I want to get ... [laughs further away] It's great! I was afraid someone was calling first ... But I preferred ... [muffled words] I'm glad you called! [chuckles] Yeah. So, the ... [her body comes back into the frame. Sits down at the desk] OK, so that's a pity, yeah, that's a great pity. [it stops suddenly].

Appendix Four: Before You Transcript

Before I start [sigh] Before I start the performance, before you start thinking, before I start performing, I want to share something that you don't usually see in a performance. I want to share this moment before you become a viewer and I become a performer and everything changes. But now we are just here, you and me, without anything in between, in this real moment. I know you can see the difference. I'm not used to be here like this and I'm a bit scared of what you might think if I don't show you what you expect ... What do you expect? I know you can see me now – can you see yourself in the screen or in my eyes? I'm a bit scared of what you might see. I'm scared you might judge me, you might reject me. But I also trust you. I can feel your presence. I'm not really scared. [complicit smile] But before I start the performance I can tell you what I think. I can tell you my doubts, I can show myself without a mask before I enter that persona that you will see in a performance. This seems so real, so natural, so different. I'll have to go soon, but first I need to ask you one last thing: what are you going to do with this? With these feelings, with this experience, with this knowledge? Where are you going to take it? [smile]

Glossary

Actor-Network-Theory (ANT)

This is an approach to sociology developed by Callon, Law and Latour around 1986 (Latour, 2007, p.10). Its key methodology is to observe the relay of associations and the ‘actors’ that modify them, instead of studying established institutions and social structures. It is adopted here from Latour’s perspective as a methodology that perceives networks of connections enacted by mediators and intermediaries (see below) that can be human or inanimate. The network and the relations among actors – or actants – exist only when they are enacted.

Automaton (see also **Tuché and **Encounter**)**

Jacques Lacan uses the term to indicate the compulsion to reproduce key elements of formative events and encounters from a subject’s past (Lacan, 1998).

Awareness

The term is used as an equivalent term to Lacan’s consciousness and as opposed to unconscious. Conscious knowledge.

Desire

Desire is understood in Lacanian terms as *unconscious desire*. It indicates a relation to a lack that can be fulfilled by the *object petit a*. Lacan states that ‘man’s [sic] desire is the desire of the Other’ (Lacan, 1998, p.38). In other words, the subject desires to be the object of desire of the Other, but it also desires the recognition of the other.

Distributed Aesthetics

This is an expression proposed by Anna Munster and Geert Lovink (2005), as an alternative to relational aesthetics. It keeps into account the importance of networked media, technologies and relations. It denotes ‘an aesthetics that comes

to terms with conflict, boredom, confusion and stagnation – one that includes social complexity (as opposed to bio-complexity)’ (Munster and Lovink, 2005).

Encounter (see also **Tuché** and **Automaton**)

Lacan (1998) describes a primary encounter with the real that gains the quality of being *missed*, as its memory and legacy continue to activate desire and to bring the real to the surface. Chance events recall primary encounters that tend to repeat as the same and activate a return of the real. Thus the encounter becomes an opportunity to become aware (in the pulsation between *Tuché* and *Automaton*) of unresolved missed encounters without reproducing them.

Nicolas Bourriaud adopts the term from Althusser’s expression ‘state of encounter imposed on people’ to describe urban living as a ‘system of intensive encounters’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p.15).

Ethics

This term indicates the set of principles and values that govern behaviour. Throughout this project, ethics is approached from the perspective of Judith Butler’s social and political critical theory and does not extend into moral philosophy.

Extimacy

This Lacanian concept proposes a version of intimacy that is located at the same time inside and outside the subject – it indicates that the innermost affects and thoughts of a subject are already determined by and shared in the life external to the subject itself. It implies a set of dynamics that operate at the same time inside and outside the subject, making the distinction between inside and outside, other subject and the Lacanian Other (language, culture, the law, normativity) unnecessary (Lacan, 1992).

The Gaze

In Lacan’s psychoanalytic thought, the gaze originates in the unconscious desire of the subject and is attributed to the other as returning to the subject itself in a movement shaped like a Moebius strip (Lacan, 1998). The Other precedes the

subject and continues to act upon it through language and in the dynamics of the gaze. From this perspective, the gaze originates in the subject being looked at, and not in the subject looking.

In Laura Mulvey's approach, the gaze is transitive and mono-directional: it originates in the (male) cinema spectator to end with the on-screen representation of the (female) character (Mulvey, 1975).

Haptic

'Haptic *perception* is usually defined as the combination of tactile, kinesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside our bodies. In haptic *visuality*, the eyes themselves function like organs of touch.' (Marks, 2002, p.2).

Hypermediacy (see also **Immediacy**)

Hypermediacy 'expresses the tension between regarding a visual space as mediated and as a "real" space that lies beyond mediation.' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.41). Hypermediacy evokes immediacy, as multiplying the visual references to already established formal devices makes a less familiar medium more transparent: 'Whenever one medium seems to have convinced viewers of its immediacy, other media try to appropriate that conviction.' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.9).

Imaginary (see also **Symbolic** and **Real**)

This is one of the three Lacanian orders. The imaginary is the field of imagination, images and illusions, and it is structured by the symbolic order in the visual field.

Immediacy (see also **Hypermediacy**)

For Bolter and Grusin (2000), the logic of transparent immediacy manifests a desire for an interface 'that erases itself, so that the user is no longer aware of confronting a medium, but instead stands in *an immediate relationship to the contents* of that medium.' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.24, emphasis added).

Interface

‘A point where two systems, subjects, organizations, etc. meet and interact, forming a common boundary’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2014).

Interlocutor

It is defined as ‘[o]ne who takes part in a dialogue, conversation, or discussion. In pl. the persons who carry on a dialogue’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2014).

Intermediary (see also **Mediator**)

In Actor-Network-Theory, an intermediary ‘transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs’ (Latour, 2007, p.39).

Interpellation

In Althusser’s formulation, it is the process that brings the subject into being by ‘hailing’ it. It manifests the operations of ideology and discourse in positioning subjects in systems of power.

Judith Butler reformulates interpellation as ‘a scene of address’ that functions as a reciprocal negotiation of relative positions within available models and tests the limits of performable variations (Butler, 2005, p.50).

Intersubjectivity

It is the condition of dependence of subjects on each other. It indicates that the boundaries of a subject are inevitably blurred and that its formation and survivability are woven with those of other subjects.

Intimacy

This term indicates a particularly close relationship that involves affects and evokes the possibility of trust, vulnerability, sexual intimacy and deep sharing. Although it is normally associated with the innermost private life of a subject, it is also informed by internalised norms of acceptable behaviour within a social context.

Mediated

Not accessed directly, but relayed and informed by a mediator or intermediary.

Mediator (see also **Intermediary**)

Mediators 'transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry' (Latour, 2007, p.39). In Actor-Network-Theory, mediators 'cannot be counted as just one; they might count for one, for nothing, for several, or for infinity. Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time' (p.39).

Narcissism

In its psychoanalytic definition, it is a condition in which the subject remains bound by its own unconscious desires and the gaze stops it from seeing others as subjects (as Other). For Rosalind Krauss, it informs the dynamics of videoperformance as it creates a situation of 'self-encapsulation' (Krauss, 1976, p.52). In other words, the artist turns his gaze onto himself closing a feedback loop that excludes the viewer.

Network/networked

Munster and Lovink state that '[n]etworks are fragmentors. They break up strong signs and experiences into countless threads' (Munster and Lovink, 2005). They describe how 'networked existence hops from one medium to the next and then demands that we return back to our links in order to put in the work of connecting again and again' (Munster and Lovink, 2005). From this perspective, networked art practices adopt the technological tools that make connectivity possible (computers, the Internet, satellite technology and mobile technology), but also conceptual tools and relational dynamics informed by these.

New Media

This is a contested expression that functions as a 'shorthand for a range of practices and names, including [digital art,] "art and technology", "computer art", "systems art", and so on' (Paul, 2008b, p.13). Christiane Paul states that 'new media art has shifted the focus from object to process: as an inherently time-based, dynamic, interactive, collaborative, customizable and variable art form new media art resists "objectification" and challenges traditional notions of the art object.' (Paul, 2008b, p1).

Normativity

It is 'the psychic operation of the norm ... derived, though not mechanically or predictably, from prior social operations' (Butler, 1997c, p.21). In other words, is the force of social conventions, acceptable behaviours and recognisable forms of subjectivity that produce intelligible subjects.

Object petit a see **Other/other**.

Other/other

The **Other** with a capital O indicates the completely separate and different other, which relays the weight of language and social norms, and which is radically alien. As it informs the unconscious, the Other precedes the subject and continues to act upon it through language and in the dynamics of the gaze. When the gaze is at work, the radical alterity of the Other is reduced to a function of the subject itself and it becomes the **other** with a small o, or *object petit a*. The *object petit a* embodies the function of confirming the symbolic appearance of wholeness that the subject perceives in its mirror image (the ideal I) (Lacan, 2006).

Performative Writing

This is a critical practice that 'enact[s] the effective force of the performance event again, as it plays itself out in an ongoing temporality made vivid by the psychic process of distortion' (Phelan, 1997, p.12). It is 'evocative', 'metonymic', 'subjective', 'nervous', 'citational' and 'consequential'. (Pollock, 1998, p.80). It is performative as it produces the writing subject that is supposed to precede it.

Performativity/Performative

This term is used from the perspective of Judith Butler in the double meaning of 'dramatic' and 'non-referential' (Butler, 1988, pp.521-522). In its stratification of meanings, the term indicates both the ephemeral event of a performance and the power of discourse to constitute and continually modify subjectivity. Performativity is always impure, based on citationality and iterability, '*conventional and relational*' (Derrida, 1988; Gade and Jerslev, 2005, p.9, emphasis in original).

Real (see also **Symbolic** and **Imaginary**)

This is one of the three Lacanian orders. The real (or the Thing, from Freud's 'Das Ding') is undifferentiated as it cannot be accessed via the symbolic or imaginary orders. It structures the unconscious and as such it pulsates in and out of consciousness without being grasped or resolved.

Relational Aesthetics

This is defined by Nicolas Bourriaud as '[t]he artistic practice thus resides in the invention of relations between consciousness [sic]' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.22).

Relationality

This term describes intersubjective relationships (between subject and other performer and viewer, representation and body, temporary subject and imagined other, etc.) with psychic, ethical and cultural implications.

Remediation

In Bolter and Grusin's words, this is 'the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.273). It extends to indicate the process by which a mediator or an interface mediates an event that is already mediated.

Repetition

This term is adopted by Lacan to indicate the reappearance in the present of elements of an unresolved primary experience. It does not necessarily imply a reproduction of the original event, but a momentary recalling and pulsating of its memory to consciousness.

Responsibility

This is interpreted by Judith Butler, on the basis of Levinas' thought, as 'an understanding of the ethical relation to the Other that does not rely on causal links between a doer and a deed' – 'an ethical interpellation' (Butler, 2005, p.85 and p.89). In other words, it indicates that as the subject is brought into being by a relation with the other, it is always already bound to be responsible for the other.

Scene of address

This is also described as the interlocutory scene: a 'socially constituted relation', or a situation in which subjects address each other and are addressed (Butler, 2005, p.50).

Screen

This term is used to refer to a variety of technologies developed and used to relay moving image, communication and data. These uses mark all screens with characteristics and connotations that inform its mediation of performance and relationality. It references older technologies, such as the Cathode Ray Tube monitor screen, more recent technologies, such as Light Emitting Diode and Liquid Crystal Display monitor screens, and it extends to screens created for or by the projection of moving images or computers' output.

Subject/Subjectivity

From a Lacanian perspective, the subject is the subject of the unconscious: fragmented, unstable and formed in language. For Althusser and Judith Butler the subject is constituted by interpellation and in normativity. It is performative as it is informed by the actions it performs. Subjectivity indicates the unique configuration of one subject – the condition of being a subject.

Subjection

This is the process by which a subject comes into being. It indicates both the formation of the subject and its submission to normativity and the law.

Symbolic (see also **Real** and **Imaginary**)

This is one of the three Lacanian orders. The symbolic is the order of language, which carries the power of normativity and the law.

Tuché (see also **Automaton** and **Encounter**)

Also described by Lacan as the 'real as encounter', it indicates the situations that recall unresolved – or missed – encounters to consciousness. In other words, this is a pulsation of the real to consciousness. (Lacan, 1998, p.53-55).

Unconscious

According to Lacan, it is 'another place' between perception and consciousness, which is also the place of the Other, and where the subject is constituted (Lacan 1998, p.56). It is the locus of all that is unresolved and inaccessible, and it pulsates into consciousness without becoming graspable.

Videoperformance

It is defined by Liza Bear in 1974 as the 'interface of video and live performance' (Bear, 1974, p.3). It describes art practices that combine performance, video camera and screen (Jones, 1998; Warr, 2000). The expression **Relational Videoperformance** is used as a shorthand to describe videoperformances in which artists address viewers via video camera and screen with their eyes, speech and body language, indicating an offer of personal relationships, with the result of activating mediated relationality.

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