

For the eighth biannual program Ritual and Display, the overall trajectory aims at addressing how ritualistic practices and modes of display contribute to discussions on performance and performativity, while resisting traditional forms of visual consumption. In line with rituals, where there are no observers but only participants, the goal is to have the Reading Group operate like a collaborative platform for studying and for expanded activities among the participants.

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May 2019

*Ritual and Display*

The first gathering of the Ritual and Display Reading Group screened the film *The Sibyls* by the feminist group Le Nemesiache. We considered a feminist practice to launch our journey in the theme. As the new fellow, I introduced my doctoral research on Le Nemesiache and their extensive performance activity in Naples. Through translations from Le Nemesiache's archive and the film we began asking what happens to the idiosyncrasies of ritual and display when they serve the purpose of feminisms. *The Sibyls* (1977) engages with rituals and natural phenomena around Naples and shows the entanglements of ritual with landscape, magic, fabulation and practices of evocation and invocation. We found it relevant and contentious to juxtapose Le Nemesiache's situated approach with theorist Richard Schechner's work on the ritual form of performance, which he defined as an 'efficacious' action. We carried forward the following question: how to preserve and rethink the contingent and transformative promise expressed by ritual and display?

Bibliography

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June 2019

*Magic and Spells*

The second gathering focused on magic and spells. The selected readings offered an informal encounter between the work of writer Bhanu Kapil, anthropologist Ernesto de Martino and poet Rebecca Tamás. We started by reading out loud Kapil's poem *1947: Spell to Reverse a Line*. We noticed the gaps and breathing spaces between her lines, each sentence becoming a boundary and communicating a state of being bound, or better spellbound. An original knot in the poet's life, the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan, can begin to be undone by the poet through her use of enchantment and an expansive language. De Martino and Tamás guided us through a conception of magic and rituals not as techniques but as social and political practices in a community's wider ecosystem. What if the figure of the witch returns to trigger decolonial and feminist responses? What's the currency of ritual today as a tool of self-empowerment and a call for solidarity?

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Tamás, Rebecca, 'The Songs of Hecate: Poetry and the Language of the Occult', *White Review*, no. 24, March, 2019, pp.11-25.

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July 2019

### *Prophecies and Oracles*

Third gathering turned to prophecies and oracles. What's the relation of performance and performativity with prophecy? How can the prophetess magnetise the future? How can silence be transformed into language and action? The group coalesced around these questions and a series of images, including a volcanic eruption and a 17th century illustration of underground fire canals. We explored instances where natural elements were used for divining the future and for self-revelation. Volcanic eruptions entered our conversation as reminders of the prophecies of the end of the world, but also as conveyors of the limitations of our rational system of thinking. We celebrated our final coming together before the summer with an Oracle for a Reading Group, offered to us by artist and researcher Hestia Peppe. Each of us became querent and oracle. We thought about the agency of the listener or receiver of the oracle. We played and we let ourselves go.

### Bibliography

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November 2019

### *Land and Display*

Fourth gathering looked at the relationship between land, ritual and display.

We began this session celebrating the work of Indigenous writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. We focused on the chapter 'Land as Pedagogy' from her crucial book *As We Have Always Done* which tells of her work within the Nishnaabeg community. In our attempt to explore ritual today we felt it was essential to acknowledge communities in which rituals are recurring moments for the generation of individual and collective meanings. Simpson's writing brought us closer to an ontological relationship to land in rituals. Her story kept us lingering on the reality of land as pedagogy, as both context and process. Léuli Eshrāghi and Hannah Donnelly's texts continued carrying our conversation on space and context as responsibilities for both makers and viewers. When the connections between objects and their place of origin has been eroded by Western violence and colonialism, can modes of display and curatorial strategies in museum collections help us rebuild these original relationships? Can we rethink display in the tension with ritual and displacement?

Our conversations culminated in the powerful images and thinking of the film *4 Waters: Deep Implicancy* by Arjuna Neuman and Denise Ferreira da Silva and the screening concluded this session.

### Bibliography

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Donnelly, Hannah, 'Indigenous Futures and Sovereign Romanticisms: Belonging to a Place in Time', *Sovereign Words: Indigenous Art, Curation and Criticism* (ed. Katya García-Antón), Amsterdam: Valiz, 2018, pp.259-274.

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Ferreira da Silva, Denise and Arjuna Neuman, *4 Waters: Deep Implicancy*, 2018, 29 min.

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December 2019

### *Rituals of the everyday*

This Reading Group was dedicated to thinking about the spaces for ritual in everyday life. We started with reading together CAConrad's essay in verse on 'Memory, Ritual and Survival'. This poem beautifully untangles the overlap of ritual with an embodied awareness of presence: how ritual can make oneself present to oneself and their body, while connecting with past and future times. CAConrad's artistic practice is a manifestation of how the creative and consistent energy spent in making rituals can transform into a healing force. Staying with a sense of ritual exposing the magic of everyday reality, we looked at photocopies of scores from *Womens Work*. This magazine was published in two issues in the 1970s and it was the first publication of performance scores by women. The scores – such as Pauline Oliveros's instruction to 'KEEP THE NEXT SOUND YOU HEAR IN MIND FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT HALF HOUR' – allowed us to linger on the magic of reality and presence a little longer. Two more texts were discussed during the evening: an extract from Victor Turner's work entitled 'Acting in Everyday Life and Everyday Life in Acting'; and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro on 'Perspectivism'.

### Bibliography

A special thanks to Irene Revell whom advised on the sharing and experimenting with the scores from *Womens Work*.

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January 2020

*Culmination*

Final gathering of the Ritual and Display Reading Group as culmination and celebration.

Our final session was shaped by the contributions of our participants. They were invited to respond to the trajectory of the Reading Group by offering a short text, an object or action to the group. Their responses could be new creations, something already existing or something gifted by someone else. The offerings included: a text fragment offered by Anik, an extract from Adele's dissertation, Tchelet's videos and her practice, a text fragment offered by Yael, Megan's manifesto, Zhana's riddle, Lucy's video suggestion, a book offered by Isobel and finally Sara's ritual. The evening was the culmination of the many references we gathered along the way and a celebration of our gatherings over the year. We ended by sharing a soup and salad as usual; as usual our conversation didn't finish on time and continued much after the Reading Group.

A special thanks to our participants to the Ritual and Display Reading Group: Becket MWN, Frédérique Bergholtz, Giulia Damiani, Yael Davids, Adele Dipasquale, Isobel Dryburgh, Lucy Engelman, Anik Fournier, Sara Giannini, Baha Görkem Yalım, Megan Hoetger, Zhana Ivanova, Annick Kleizen, Helena Lambrechts, Panagiotis Panagiotakopoulos (Taka), Anna Maria Pinaka, Tchelet Pearl Weisstub.