

On Performance Art

*Conceptual Approaches, Creation and Research
Methodologies, and an Encyclopedia of Artistic
Practices*

By

Telma João Santos

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This book is dedicated to my mum, Esmeralda Santos, who was the responsible person for my love for knowledge as a way to escape sadness and especially loneliness.

I would like also to dedicate it to my dad, Manuel João Santos, one of the most stubborn people I know, a true reference for never giving up on my dreams.

My grandmother Adélia Rosa is the only person in my life who never judged me for who I am and how I present myself. This book is also dedicated to her long life and endless love.

Finally, I dedicate this book to Diana Reis Cardoso, my life partner, the person who has the ability to calm me down and to believe in my sense of worth and who is always with me, no matter what happens. I love her deeply.

Some Introductory Notes on the Book

I'm afraid to write. It's so dangerous. Anyone who's tried, knows. The danger of stirring up hidden things – and the world is not on the surface, it's hidden in its roots submerged in the depths of the sea. In order to write I must place myself in the void. In this void is where I exist intuitively.

But it's a terribly dangerous void: it's where I wring out blood. I'm a writer who fears the snare of words: the words I say hide others – Which? maybe I'll say them. Writing is a stone cast down a deep well.

Clarice Lispector

Some years ago, I came up with the idea of being able to freeze one moment and dissect it through dimensional layers in performance art (movement based) context. I didn't even know how to explain it, but somehow I got the courage to write an email to José Gil, a very well-known Portuguese philosopher who has been writing for many years about visual arts, movement, cultural and political identity, identifying the problematics of lack of inscription in public space in Portugal, as well as the construction of "monsters" who are considered the owners of what is right or intellectually elevated or pertinent – asking for some literature on finding ways to research on "present moments". He emailed me back with a book reference, *The Present Moment in Everyday Life*, by Daniel N. Stern, that became the beginning of a no-end journey for me, especially due to the introduction of the concept of *intersubjective matrix* as the way we empathically can communicate with others, and with ourselves, not only verbally.

I realized that I was searching to dissect moments as one-dimensional points through continuous two and three-dimensional universes, which didn't make sense. It's not possible to study two different dimensional spaces with the same tools, and this led me to find a new concept: *in betweenness*, which, together with an encyclopedia of mathematical concepts, helped me to understand what could be created within the possible connections and interferences between movement improvisation/present moments and theoretical concepts/narratives.

The concept of *in betweenness* is used when we cannot define some circumstance or object through classical or established concepts. So, in between spaces are new landscapes that are continually changing to adapt to new ways of being in between pre-established spaces, known ones and already settled. The main feature of *in betweenness* is that it has to be described within each case study, that is, it has general properties, but it can only be well-defined contextually.

I introduce and use in this book (in Chapter 2) an encyclopedia of mathematical concepts to help map artistic creation; it was created to convey a specific goal: to help me map dance and performance art through case studies, considering new approaches in anthropology that do not methodologically separate subject and object, observer and observed, the *self* and the *other*. This encyclopedia led me to propose a relational model to help me along my journey of trying to understand performance art processes that are movement-based and that, together with *in betweenness*, allows me to open possibilities and cross barriers through the concept of intersectionality. It is the adequate concept to describe the way I perceive my work and also my research, as well as contemporary artistic creation: *in between intersectional spaces* that are made of countless factors, features, and dynamical connections. Intersectionality is a process of understanding the world around, and it needs to be shared in order to construct new ways of dealing with difference and diversity. I don't believe that performance art can be taught, unless students already have a sense of being performers themselves, already manufacturing their own self-questioning journeys. In this case, it can be "sharable". If this is the case, we can organize material to be shared and discussed in laboratories. In fact, performance art laboratories are essential to build communities and create new landscapes.

This book is centered on mapping performance art through three different directions that also name the three main chapters:

- 1) What is performance art?
- 2) Performance art as an in between intersectional landscape
- 3) Performance art practice/pedagogy

This book doesn't use chronology as a way to introduce or present concepts and authors. Instead, it aims to intersect them in a not necessarily linear way. This book is for students, artists and teachers in performing arts context who want to engage within performance art practice. It assumes that readers already have some background on the subject. This book is intersectional in the way it is presented: it has three main chapters containing information about the respective subjects, but the content is not presented in a linear way; instead, it is presented in several sub-sections related to concepts or questions that I rise within a horizontal landscape full of possible characterizations.

In the first chapter, I will introduce several definitions, perspectives and ways of mapping performance art practices and performance studies. This means that I will begin with the origin of the word performance and the use of the expression performance art, and then I jump to contemporary practices and I will sketch several perspectives on performance art definitions and features. The notion of performance art is approached from different perspectives; first, three main notions: performativeness of everyday life, audience's (virtual and/or real) presence and technique. Then, I approach performance art through its connection with neoliberal age we live in, which somehow means a contradiction (an artistic practice that affirms the importance of collective speech, but mainly uses solo discourses and the promotion of authorship as well as the idea of individualized genius personalities as tokens and representatives of collectives), but it is also an argument for performance art existence due to the importance of political perspectives and, at some specific moments in history, being the only possible act of resistance. Observe that it is also paradoxical that performance artists are also business people – entrepreneurs – that need to sell themselves as products, their image, in order to be curated and programmed in festivals and, so, they need to create a selling product. Also, it is absolutely necessary to approach performance art pieces, mainly the ones that are movement-based, as having a political body within, even if thematic is far from a classical political perspective in life and the world.

In performance art context, when the body is present, it is always a polit-

ical body. In the same first chapter, we continue approaching performance art through academic lens, since performance studies has been developed along the development of performance art; it is important to note that, especially in USA setting, where universities are mainly private companies and not public schools that have programs and goals to achieve beyond money, concerned mainly with people's education, performance art owes a lot to the academy since many festivals and private initiatives happen in academic context: it can also be connected with the neoliberal system we live in. Another perspective presented in first chapter is the relationship of performance art with anthropology, since performance art also connects with the idea of ritual, an appropriation of cultural contextual traditions that communicate with actual social, political contexts and revindications. Finally in this first chapter, I will introduce a personal perspective on performance art, introducing a self-presentation and a personal manifest in performance art context, as well as a performance art portfolio.

In second chapter, I will introduce the concept of intersectionality to convey the idea of contamination from horizontal interconnections, mapping how I found this concept within my research and how I perceive what I call *in between intersectional spaces*. In this chapter, I will also introduce and describe a Relational Model in Artistic Creation, RMAC and I also introduce the concepts of almost convergence, turbulent flow and *intersubjective matrix*, which will help navigating the artistic processes that I present case studies. In the case studies, I present an application of RMAC and of these previous concepts: some of these cases are from a performer-maker perspective and the others form a researcher-observer perspective. The case studies where this relational model is applied are all solo pieces where, in most cases, the performer is also the choreographer/creator. I also introduce in this chapter a Methodology in Group Artistic Creation, MGAC, and a case study where it is applied is presented, *Peace Parade*.

In third and last chapter, I introduce first some thoughts and perspectives on the possibility of performance art being taught, since it is a very political and authorial artistic practice and not necessarily so

technically-dependent that we sense that it is only proposed by people who have the guts and the will to do it, not necessarily who learnt it in school. But, as with every artistic practice, it can be pedagogically shared, it can be practiced, even if not in a classical normative setting. Then, I will propose an encyclopedia of thirty-five exercises, divided in five parts, with seven exercises each: Breathing, Being Together, Watching and Being Watched, Object-Based Exercises, Site-Specific Exercises and Performance-Based Exercises. This encyclopedia is based on many exercises I developed from others with whom I had the chance to participate in several different workshops/labs/classes with, from different artistic practices and from people with different backgrounds. Also, some of the exercises are from known artists and books that I use in the workshops/labs/classes I teach that I find useful within my own artistic practices as well as a tool to teach. This encyclopedia aims to be a collection of exercises to be used by everyone that has the curiosity and wants to develop an artistic professional practice in performance art context.

In the same chapter, I propose a performance laboratory designed for a lab with 20 hours total: five meetings of four hours each one – ideally, 4 hours per day, along five days. This performance laboratory is a collection of individual and group exercises that can be used in a graduation level course and also as a handbook for performance artists when searching for new vocabulary or new ideas. This lab is not some fixed or stable one, it was chosen to be a specific collection of exercises and inputs that allow a group of people to get together and create collectively or individually but sharing the same space. It aims to be reformulated and recontextualized along time and circumstances, as well as it may be a more thematic-dependent lab, with some exercises adapted accordingly.

I can never read all the books I want; I can never be all the people I want and live all the lives I want. I can never train myself in all the skills I want. And why do I want? I want to live and feel all the shades, tones and variations of mental and physical experience possible in my life. And I am horribly limited.

Sylvia Plath

Chapter 1

What is Performance Art?

Performance art is very often the least understood mode of artistic production. It requires a performer and an audience, but the artist has explicit control in determining how that interaction is mediated. There are no rules in performance – there is no need for dialogue, repetition, recordings, props, lights. The inclusion (or absence) of each is entirely up to the artist and is what makes the performance.

Lucas Iberico Lozada

Performance is not a strange word for most of us, despite its different meanings, depending on the context. It is, in fact, a paradoxical word, since it can be interpreted as some action, or set of actions, to be judged, or as some action, or set of actions, to be shared as an artistic outcome of a research process. So, on one side, it can be seen as the outcome of a rigorous set of rules as a way of excelling some technique or some behavior in a normative setting and, on the other side, performance (art) is an artistic way of questioning the establishment and its politics, the latter being the focus of this book.

In this chapter, I will map some insights on possible mappings of performance art field. These insights are not given on a deductive way, since there are multiple and complexified networks of concepts, performance art pieces and contexts. I will not divide them chronologically nor by themes nor by authors or their research origins (anthropology, visual arts, sociology, music, etc). Instead, I will depart from different questions and use different directions of thought in order to obtain different possibilities of thinking about performance art as an artistic practice.

I ask the reader – student, artist or teacher – to choose which ideas and thoughts are more appealing and write them down, in order to obtain her/his/their ways of defining or mapping performance art as a chosen perspective from the ones to be presented here, or even a new one.

#1 Three main notions

I want to find in between my fingers environments which allow me to communicate. I don't want to communicate something specific, concrete or already defined. I want to communicate what I cannot understand myself. I want to find abstraction in between concreteness.

(From my diaries)

Performance art. What is performance art? The eternal question of defining what cannot be defined in classical ways is an interesting point to depart from. Following Erving Goffman, the word *performance* means “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on observers” (1956, p. 13). Our daily actions are performative and most of the times we are conscient of their performativeness: “While in the presence of others, the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts which might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure” (p. 19).

In the context of any work-life-research, Erving Goffman gives the validity of everyday life human performativeness as an artistic tool, as a natural feature that can be turned on in order to create meaning through performing arts. Also, the presence of some kind of audience is necessary to consider a performance art piece. Of course, the audience can be virtual. Even if it is known that the audience energy can change the course of the action's energy, or even it can be the reason of its existence, the acknowledgement that some action, movement or state is being shared with someone else, even if in a virtual setting, brings a specific type of energy, especially when you interact with audience's reactions and behaviors. So, two notions associated with performance art are performativeness of everyday life and audience's (virtual or real) presence. These two notions are part of the origins and of the outlet, respectively, of a performance art piece. Nevertheless, the performance art piece itself needs something more in order to claim existence: technique. Technique is a difficult word in this context, it is

hard to claim technique for some non-defined artistic practice, or to claim some technique to define that artistic practice. So, to introduce the notion of technique, we need first to (re)define it. Technique, in the context of performance art, is the set of body, presence/absence and/or theatre/circus techniques carefully chosen in order to form an individual encyclopedia of exercises used to convey meaning within the piece. In performance art context, when we use the word “technique”, we are referring to the specific performance artist’s encyclopedia of exercises that helps him create his/her artwork. We have then the three main notions regarding performance art: performativeness of everyday life, audience’s presence and individual encyclopedia.

#2 Neoliberal Age

Creativity is not artistic creation. To create art is to propose new meanings, new landscapes without caring about understanding, marketing or even broadening audiences. It is about self. Self-commitment, self-awareness, self-research, and hope others will relate somehow and be touched by what is being seen, perceived or felt. The entrepreneur is no artist. He/she/they is an entrepreneur, caring about making money, carrying a business, developing ideas that can bring more money. But that is not art. That does not necessarily touch someone. It is the fallacy of modern times.

(From my diaries)

One of the main features of this neoliberal era we live in is the desire to transform artists into entrepreneurs. As André Lepecki writes,

through performance, neoliberalism reifies the very purpose of life as nothing more than (...) an ongoing process where the subject can only find self-realization, emotional self-assurance, and social integration through endless re-presentations of self-performances. (...) Neoliberal creativity has as its perfor-

mance model not the artist but the entrepreneur". (Lepecki 2016, pp. 8-9)

We are led to question the relationship between the role of performance art as a political and marginal place, and its role as an artistic object presented at institutional spaces, bounded and confined to normative rules, processes and procedures. We can, then, affirm that performance art is engaged in a bigger question: how to develop, if that is possible, performance art pieces inside and outside this context of the artist as a seller, where self-empowerment, self-expression, self-presentation, self-representation and self-marketing are essential tools to "succeed"?

An effort to generate a cartography regarding dance and performance art have been made by many authors: André Lepeckiⁱ, Amelia Jonesⁱⁱ, Mark Frankoⁱⁱⁱ, Roselee Goldberg^{iv}, Guillermo Gomez-Peña^v, Dominic Johnson^{vi}, among many others. This cartography has been made through different approaches, divided mainly in two directions: case studies and contextualization of groups of performance artists and/or performance art pieces into a more general cartography through new concepts. As contemporaneity is dynamical, it is metamorphosing continuously along time, and so every contribute is an important piece within the bigger puzzle, especially since it is important to map performance art actuality, which is a field inhabited by many non-institutional, non-commercialized and non-publicized pieces. So, there will be always a part of what performance art is that is not known in institutionalized spaces and made through funding, which means that, locally, the job of a performance artists and of a performance studies researcher is also to search for the de-centralized and marginalized bodies. The problematics of inscribing (or not) those bodies go back to the central question of doing performance art in a neoliberal age: do we allow these performance art pieces to be almost invisible from the perspective of funding, and being "successful" or we give them visibility and they become institutional and lose the possibility of being performance art pieces to be dance or theater entertaining pieces?

Neoliberalism makes citizens into consumers. The freedom of the citizen yields to the passivity of the consumer. As consumers, today's voters have no real interest in politics –in actively shaping the community. They possess neither the will nor the ability to participate in communal, political action. They react only passively to politics: grumbling and complaining, as consumers do about a commodity or service they do not like. Politicians and parties follow this logic of consumption too. They have to 'deliver'. In the process, they become nothing more than suppliers; their task is to satisfy voters who are consumers or customers. Byung-Chul Han (2017, pp. 11–12)

#3 Political Body

Complex. Mapping human complexity. I use myself as a complex entity, as a tool to map divergence and diversity. Fragility, uniqueness, and finite are some of our features.

I use them within my body and within myself as a presentation of a mutilated

body, as a suffering body, as a caged soul. Be with me. Be with you.

Be myself. Be yourself. Be be be be. To exist and to be here are amazing and powerful. Let us continue this path of not giving up.

(From my diaries)

Performance art may be shaped in innumerable ways and may be inspired in and created through dance, theatre, visual arts, circus, or even mathematics^{vii}, to engage in performative discourses and landscape creations on subjects as race, gender, sex, illness, politics, research, presence, sense of (not) belonging; or, *marginal* subjects. Many performance artists use themselves as objects/subjects and develop their work from their *biographical experiences*. This term is understood in the context of this book as the subjective interconnections between autobiography and radar/focused ways of seeing and connecting with the world.

Autobiography, or sets of autobiographies, are naturally embedded in artistic creation, even if only because they are part of the obvious *luggage* of the performer(s) involved. However, in performance art setting, the use of autobiography as subject is common, in particular within artists who understand themselves and their radical existences as sites for exploring and questioning social and political contexts. As Deidre Heddon writes in *Autobiography and Performance*,

The relationship between marginalized subjects and the appeal of autobiographical performance is not co-incidental. Autobiographical performances can capitalize on theatre's unique temporality, its' here and nowness, and on its ability to respond to and engage with the present, while always keeping an eye on the future. In particular, autobiographical performance can engage with the pressing matters of the present which relate to equality, to justice, to citizenship, to human rights. (2007, p. 2)

Performance art pieces focused on biographical experiences are not autobiographical performances per se; nevertheless, they recover some features of autobiographical performances, where performance art pieces can be seen as "possible performances of possibility; even that possibility cannot be taken for granted" (Heddon, 2007, p. 2) and as sites of resistance and intervention, uncovering the political potentials and limits that accompany the use of the personal in performance art. They aren't also just about the world where the artist radars and focuses on. A performance art piece based on *biographical experiences* considers an embodied self (re)acting in perception, within several possibilities of presence, rebounding between radar and focused ways of perceiving. Perception, in the context of this book, "is not something that happens to us, or in us. It is something we do" (Noë 2004, p. 1).

In performance art context, and in the subset of performance art pieces based on *biographical experiences*, perception is essential as a skillful exploration, since it allows performance artists to be open to engage with the world in permeable ways. As Alva Noë claims in *Action in Perception*,

Perceiving how things are is a mode of exploring how things appear. How they appear is, however, an aspect of how they are. To explore appearance is thus to explore the environment, the world. To discover how things are, from how they appear, is to discover an order or pattern in their appearance. The process of perceiving, of finding out how things are, is a process of meeting the world; it is an activity of skillful exploration. (2004, p. 162)

So, we may say that performance art pieces based on *biographical experiences* can be characterized through the connections among four directions:

- 1) performance as possibility;
- 2) performance as a site of resistance;
- 3) action in perception as an essential tool;
- 4) performance as a skillful exploration between radar and focus.

In the last years, the economic crisis, refugee crisis, war zones, religious radicalisms, leading to intolerance, racism, xenophobia, the rise of radical nationalist ideologies, as well as the problematics around minorities as lesbian, gay, transgender, asexual, transsexual, queer, non-binary, intersex people, led to the increase of explicit political bodies in performance. It is almost impossible to run away from the political, contextual and violent setting in which our bodies are placed. As Bojana Kunst formulates in *The Troubles with Temporality: Micropolitics of Performance*,

performance has profound problems with politics exactly because it seems to be so inherently political—so inherently characterized to be a political act, an act of liberation, or at least an act of critique. That is why, when thinking about performance and its relation to politics today, one is often unpleasantly caught in the awkward need to differentiate between conservative performance works and progressive ones, between culturally commodified kitsch and radical cultural gestures, between performance celebrities and performance workers, between moralistic testing of politics and complexity of antag-

onism, between spectacle of participation and autonomy of the spectating. (2015, par. 12)

#4 Academic Pose

I boycott myself all the time. I do a graduation in Maths to prove myself that I can be a smart girl. I do a PhD since I want to be the smart girl I could be. I do a post-graduation since I am angry and I want to video record myself improvising movement and to create performance art pieces showing my discontentment. I do a second PhD so that no one tells me I have no professional experience in performance art. I do performance art pieces without stopping because I want to prove that I can also be an artist. In the middle of all of this, I write. And I never stop boycotting myself, I never decide. I don't need to prove anything to anyone. Now I stopped. I am not showing, I am trying to be.

(From my diaries)

Performance art arouse from established artistic practices, where known tools associated to those practices are used to question borders through discourses and individual or collaborative proposals. These discourses can be characterized through the dynamics of constructing possibilities of artistic thought, turning performance art into a complex and disperse field, not allowing static or fixed definitions and contextualization: it is necessary to reformulate them continuously. Performance art is a set of artistic practices that generate new objects where established artistic practices are questioned and used to intersect with new approaches. Performance art opens the possibility of these established practices to communicate with everyday life actions, exhibiting their performativity and discursive force. As Erving Goffman affirms,

It does take deep skill, long training and psychological capacity to become a stage actor. But this fact should not blind us to another one: that almost anyone can quickly learn a script well enough to give a charitable audience some sense of realness in

what is being contrived before them... The legitimate performances of everyday life are not 'acted' or 'put on' in the sense that the performer knows in advance just what he is going to do ...But [this] does not mean that [the person] will not express himself...in a way that is dramatized and preformed.... In short, we act better than we know how. (1956, pp. 70–74)

One of the main features of performance practice is to be contextual: we have to consider the context from which the performer comes from. She/He/They has the ability to bring up important contextual themes. Nevertheless, as an embodied practice, it is a universal language that can be shared in different contexts, allowing shared experiences, artistic viewpoints, and mappings, as well as collaborations and contaminations, as a way to search for spaces in between the universal and the contextual.

In a performance art piece, it is possible to find a personal perspective on the actual world surrounding the performer(s) and, so, a contextual perspective. However, not only the languages used are universal, but also some contextual elements, as questioning society, ways of organizing it and, in particular, bringing to center stage gender, race and personal traumas. The integration of ideas, the perceptive work, communication tools, the "here and now", are part of this artistic practice that, in this way, can be seen as a barometer of the way social, economic, political, anthropological, cultural, technologic issues are mapped, as well as their subjective interconnections. As this artistic practice is anchored in the use of diverse tools from diverse practices and fields of study, it can also be shared in less conventional places to connect with, or to reinforce the idea of multiplicity. As Roselee Goldberg writes,

The work may be presented solo or with a group, with lighting, music or visuals made by the performance artist himself or in collaboration, and performed in places ranging from an art gallery or museum to an "alternative" space, a theater, café, bar, or street corner (2011, p. 9).

Also,

its practitioners do not base their work on characters previously created by other artists but on their own bodies, on their autobiographies, on their specific experiences in a given culture or in the world, that become performative in that practitioners are aware of them and exhibit them before an audience. (Carlson, 2011, pp. 4–5)

It is also through the audience that performance takes place. Or, as Peggy Phelan writes,

Performance approaches the real through resisting the metaphorical reduction of the two [representation and real] into the one. But in moving from the aims of metaphor, reproduction, and pleasure to those metonymy, displacement, and pain, performance marks the body itself as loss. Performance is the attempt to value that which is nonreproductive, nonmetaphorical. This is enacted through the staging of the drama of misrecognition (twins, actors within characters enacting other characters, doubles, crimes, secrets, etc) which sometimes produces the recognition of the desire to be seen by (and within) the other. Thus, for the spectator the performance spectacle is itself a projection of the scenario in which her own desire takes place. (1993, p. 152)

The biographical aspect is present on most performance art pieces, where artists perform themselves or someone else's. Performances where performance artists perform themselves are known as autobiographical performances. In these performances the performer(s)'s autobiography(ies) is (are) present as object and subject that, due to their subjective nature, is hard to define or contextualize, generating many critics, because of its personal, evocative, self-centered and many times solitary, side. However, autobiographical performance is not more or less real than any other performance, the difference is the origin of the raw material. As a performance artist who performs herself, and also as a spectator of autobiographical performances. In this direction, Deidre Heddon affirms that:

Autobiographical performance or performances of the 'self' are extremely well placed, then, to mark – or remark – the multiple, non-unitary constitution of the self, and the notion that the 'self', rather than being immutable, fixed, given, deep, essential – or whatever other adjective is usually tied to it – is in fact always a performance of a self (or selves). 1 This is the self as a performative construct, with that very performativity revealed in autobiographical performances that perform the self. This is the performance of performativity. (...) the majority of performers who play themselves display an astute self-consciousness; their representations of themselves are 'knowing'. They are also strategic, and often politically so, using them'selves' as vehicles through which to project particular social perspectives, inflected by positions of race, class, gender and/or sexuality. The 'self' is deliberately and perhaps paradoxically used in order to precisely go beyond the self, or the individual. (2002, para. 4-5)

Performances and their several characterizations are theoretically established and/or questioned in performance studies. Performance studies is a complex, subjective field of study, in constant redefinition, where researchers have been trying to cope with artistic manifestations and their reformulations, shaping new social, cultural, anthropological, political, conceptual and formal territories. Following Richard Schechner,

Performance Studies is 'inter – in between. It is ingeneric, interdisciplinary, intercultural – and therefore inherently unstable. Performance studies resists or rejects definitions. As a discipline, PS cannot be mapped effectively because it transgresses boundaries, it goes where it is not expected to be. It is inherently <in between> and therefore cannot be pinned down or located exactly". (1998, p. 360)

Also, in the context of characterizing performance studies, John MacKenzie introduces the concept of "Liminality":

What is performance? What is performance studies? “Liminality” is perhaps the most concise and accurate response to both of these questions. Paradoxically, the persistent use of this concept within the field has made liminality into something of a norm. That is, we have come to define the efficacy of performance and of our own research, if not exclusively, then very inclusively, in terms of liminality — that is, a mode of activity whose spatial, temporal, and symbolic “in betweenness” allows for social norms to be suspended, challenged, played with, and perhaps even transformed. (2007, p. 27)

Performance studies are mapped through the actualization, reformulation and continuous recontextualization of performance art pieces, the way they inscribe themselves in contextual artistic scenes, and, as Henry Bial writes, “the only definition that is universally applicable is a tautology: performance studies is what performance studies people do” (2004, p. 1). Several mappings have been done inside this field through the description of artistic processes, as well as through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. It is not possible to categorize or stratify concepts and then infer results within performance studies. Authors have to propose several landscapes that allow readers to acquire sufficient tools to construct individually their concept of performance art in their practices and/or research.

One of the important aspects within performance art is documentation in its several directions: video, photography, text and visual documentation – drawings, performative texts, sculpture – of the process and final performance. This documentation can be used within the process and be part of the performance, or it can also only be used to document performance as memory or to produce new objects, as video art and photography. As Alexander Watkins and Christina Manzella write:

Performance creates two main types of evidence, documentary and artifactual. Documentation includes still images, video recordings and/or audio recordings, which often become stand-ins for the performance itself. Artifacts include the props and

products used and produced by a performance along with the ephemera that accompany a performance. All these items should be interconnected through the main work record. (2011, p. 28)

#5 Anthropology and the Senses

Sense of self. Sense of others. Self and other. Who is the other? How can I meet the other in me? Can I be the self and the other? The self is also its counterpart, so the sense of self only exists if it exists the other.

Interconnections. Being interconnected. The subjective within the self and the other. The other as a subjective self. Self as a subjective other. Self. Other. The other. Who is the self? The other.

The other as the self being the other, losing itself in the subjectivisms' of being as a dynamic fluid with turbulent moments.

(From my diaries)

From the beginning of the 21st century on, the accelerated growth of technological and virtual platforms allowing manipulation, management and sharing of multimedia elements, as records of the “real” or with virtual origin, has been one of the motors to change paradigms in human communication within contemporary, globalized and neoliberal societies, where new communication tools arise every day, changing the way we present and represent ourselves. Text as language isn’t anymore the most used possibility to construct memory in artistic ephemeral processes. The technological development brought photography, video, livestream, and many other tools to our daily lives.

In anthropology, in particular within ethnographic works, these visual and multimedia tools provoked changes in the way the work is documented and how emotions started to participate as objects and subjects within the work, and also how artistic creation became a valid possibility. We have, then, two types of interconnected revolutions: sensorial and technological:

The rise of sensory studies at the turn of the twenty-first century draws on each of these prior developments or “turns” but also critiques them by questioning the verb centrism of the linguistic model, the ocular centrism of the visual culture model, and the holism of both the corporeal and material culture models – in which bodies and objects are often treated simply as physical wholes and not as bundles of interconnected experiences and properties. Sensory studies approach themselves emphasize the dynamic, relational (intersensory – or multimodal, multimedia) and often conflicted nature of our everyday engagement with the sensuous world. (Howes, 2006, p. 115).

Society became instant in the ways it uses images to represent itself and, in research landscapes, access to information opens possibilities within new ways of documenting and sharing knowledge. It became also possible to develop an artistic work within ethnographic work and create new objects resulting from research-artistic creation processes. New technologies let us to assume new directions in cultural studies and anthropological research, allowing us to include new variables in methodologies, in previous conditions, new interpretations and ways of constructing theoretical thought. As David Howes refers, “the society of the image” became a catchphrase and the focus of many academics shifted to the study of visual imagery and its role in the communication of cultural values”. (2006, p. 115).

The importance of mapping the present, of actualizing and remediating^{viii} concepts and theories, have become central in the last decades, and has been the center issue of many research fields. For instance, projects on livestreaming wild nature, by recording and sharing sound and video in real time without much human intervention, and through several ways of documenting ethnographic research, including virtual platforms. These practices generate several questions on how to approach them, and which paradigms will be used, including the possibility of defining new concepts and remediating others. As David MacDougall writes: “as anthropologists discover new subjects – either in established visual cultural forms or in evolving uses of the visual

media – they may well redefine the terrain of anthropology” (2006, p. 285). This author also writes that

The study of collective visual representations itself generates new questions about how anthropology can communicate about them. Do visual systems require certain forms of visual analysis and communication? Do they suggest distinctive patterns of understanding? (p. 286–287)

These new thematic and new fields of study gave rise to visual anthropology, where the dichotomy artistic creation/theoretical research is questioned and boundaries are blurred. New possibilities to generate artistic material based on ethnographic research, as well as new approaches on research allowed by new visual and artistic tools arise. Also, to engage on ethnographic work incorporating emotions became a central question within anthropology. In this direction, also sensorial ethnography has been introduced as a field of study. As Sarah Pink refers,

Doing sensory ethnography entails taking a series of conceptual and practical steps that allow the research to re-think both established and new participatory and collaborative ethnographic research techniques in terms of sensory perception, categories, meanings and values, ways of knowing and practices. It involves the researcher self-consciously and reflexively attending to the senses throughout the research process: that is, during the planning, reviewing, fieldwork, analysis and representational processes of a project. (2009, p. 8)

Autoethnography, as a field of study centered on the self as subject and as object, brings new materials into the table about what is ethnography, how to define it, which are its limits and, in particular with new technological tools, redefining identity. Autoethnography intends to shake and question dichotomies observer/observed, object/subject, reason/emotion, research/artistry. In autoethnographic perspective, autobiography and personal experiences are central tools to generate a multiplicity of possibilities analyzed through the lens of new theoretical frameworks. As Ngunjiri, Hernandez e Chang write, “Autoethnogra-

phy is a qualitative research method that utilizes data about self and its context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between self and others within the same context.” (2009, p. 2). Deborah Reed-Danahay also argues that anthropologists, sociologists and literary critics already had used the word autoethnography since 1970 in two main directions, ethnography and autobiography:

It synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography, in which the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography have been called into question, and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of coherent, individual self has similarly been called into question” (1997, p. 2).

Autoethnography is a field of open possibilities, where characterization of paradigms, boundaries and connections is still being structured. However, technology and communication tools continue to develop and to suggest new questions and new models within artistic creation, as well as in academic research. The way we represent ourselves in social media, the countless materials to analyze and contextualize transform autoethnography into an open set more and more dense along time, and with new and more disperse directions in connected networks and inherent subjectivities.

The introduction of lighter cameras, personal computers, and the enlargement of internet networks introduced new ways of, together with written language, manipulating and ways of collecting and sharing material, mapping autoethnography today. As Catherine Russel defines it regarding daily videos by Jonas Mekas, Kidlat Tahimik and George Kuchar, as well as Sadie Benning videos, “autoethnography is a vehicle and a strategy for challenging imposed forms of identity and exploring the discursive possibilities of inauthentic subjectivities” (1999, p. 275). However, these new ways of recording and mapping ethnographic work transport with them new questions, as the problematics of the real represented through media, intermediated real.

If the image-world has today swallowed the ‘real world’ to produce a mutant state of being which is neither real, nor yet

simply imaginary (at least as those terms have been customarily understood), it is naïve to envisage a political critique which could be located entirely outside the world of images. Moreover, it suggests that transformations of contemporary culture will depend critically – which is not to say wholly -on the success of interventions in and transformations of ‘the media’ . (McQuire, 1998, p. 101)

It also brought a change of paradigm in the way research is made, in the way materials are manipulated, as well as in the way the observer becomes the observed, generating new forms of doing research and artistic processes, as well as their mappings. Autoethnography raises many questions regarding validity, because of the lack of distance between the researcher and the researched and where subjectivity associated to the study of emotions and their connections with academic work is present and raises new questions on used methodologies of scientific validation.

Anniina Suominen is an author who refers also to the problematics of validity within autoethnographic research, proposing new paradigms:

The pressing issue of validity is even more complicated when talking about images and research based on visuals, because not all of the qualitative methods of validating research practice are suitable for inquiry based on images. (2003, p. 46)

Visual autoethnography is a research area where autobiography and visual documentation are central to the development of research material, which cannot be validated through classical methods centered on “the other” as subject and text as the resulting final object of the associated research process. This means that new research areas as visual anthropology, sensorial ethnography, autoethnography, demand new validation paradigms.

The use of visual tools, mainly photography and video, as well as the way material is shared in real time, bring new environments to research, especially regarding collaboration: different people in different phys-

ical spaces can collaborate in real time using shared tools. This also raises new problems: these materials became also easily manipulated, and the idea of representation of the real falls apart, because we are not sure any more about the “veracity” or “realness” of the material. Also, it is important to argue that this “veracity” should not be criteria, since there is no “reality” separated from its multimedia representations in societies using virtual platforms and connection on a daily basis.

It is now accepted that the separation of personal experiences from academic research is an illusion. Personal experiences are a determinant feature, influencing the way material is produced, treated and shared:

If we now turn back, as is done here, towards perceptual experience, we notice that science succeeds in constructing only a semblance of subjectivity: it introduces sensations which are things, just where experience shows that there are meaningful patterns; it forces the phenomenal universe into categories which make sense only in the universe of science. It requires that two perceived lines, like two real lines, should be equal or unequal, that a perceived crystal should have a definite number of sides,²³ without realizing that the perceived, by its nature, admits of the ambiguous, the shifting, and is shaped by its context. (Merleau-Ponty, 1978, p. 11)

One possible direction within academic research regarding visual autoethnography is the production of new objects that are in between autoethnography and the production of artistry. The development of autoethnographic work, especially multilayered work where video cameras, smartphones, iPhones, pc’s, mac’s, edition techniques, with the possibility of instant real-time sharing allow ethnographers the access to ways of thinking objects, bodies, and the world. Another possible direction is the importance of ethnographic and autoethnographic tools within artists’ works:

Experimentation and creativity ... should be a key part of both visual anthropology practice and training. The focus should be on the potentials of representational practice, rather than on

strict definitions of either anthropology or art. (Wright, 1998, p. 21–22)

These approximations and interconnections also intervened on artistic creation, with an embedded autoethnographic mapping, where art isn't serving ethnography, as well as ethnography isn't serving art, allowing hybrid objects to arise, with features from both fields and practices.

In between artistic practice and autoethnography is possible to find the concept of autoethnographic performance, centered on the person as a performer and a multiple socially contextualized entity. As Tami Spry writes:

For me, performing autoethnography has been a vehicle of emancipation from cultural and familial identity scripts that have structured my identity personally and professionally. Performing autoethnography has encouraged me to dialogically look back upon myself as other, generating critical agency in the stories of my life, as the polyglot facets of self and other engage, interrogate, and embrace. (2001, p. 708)

It is also important to refer that “in auto ethnographic performance self is other. Dialogical engagement in performance encourages the performer to interrogate the political and ideological contexts and power relations between self and other, and self *as* other” (Spry, 2001, p. 716).

The body and the performer's work are part of his/her/their context, being the performative act a consequence of the established connections; however, an autoethnographic performance has as its object that body and that work. The performer is subject and object, and his/her/their performances are part of his/her/their work, where he/she/they is his/her/their own object of analysis and research, sensitive to metamorphosis. This is not about performer's loneliness, it is about a performer looking at himself/herself/themselves as part of a contextualized community within a society, in their multiplicities and perceptions. The consequent questioning and analysis allow the development of artistic

manifestations to be shared in performance art context, embodied in several directions.

Autoethnographic performance has as its center issue autobiography. It is a performance of the *self*, or *selves*, through a present and associated autoethnographic study and research. In the construction of an autoethnographic performance, the validity criteria of the associated ethnographic research have to be stated. These criteria came from the need to create new forms of validation in the context of this type of research within anthropology. In autoethnographic writing context, Laurel Richardson presents, in *Evaluating Ethnography* (2000), some criteria arising from the connection between performative writing and academy, as an editor and reviser, and that I summarize here:

(1) Substantive Contribution: Can I say that the text contributes for the comprehension of social life?

(2) Aesthetic Merit: Can I say that the piece is aesthetically well succeeded? The text is artistically written, it sufficiently complex and it is not boring?

(3) Reflexivity: What made the author to write this text? In which way the subjectivity has been a producer and also a product of this text?

(4) Impact Level: Do this text affects me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does this text generate new questions or drive me to act?

(5) Expresses a Reality: Do this text brings with you a sense of lived experience?

I define autoethnographic performance as a body of work composed by documentation, artistic practice, critical thought and academic production. Despite the fact that the presentation of criteria allows the comprehension of autoethnographic performances in academic context, as well as the consequent research can also intervene on its own construction, it has a subjective nature. As A. Bochner writes in *Criteria against ourselves* (2000), self-narratives