The 13th Chronicle

by

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Abstract

A butoh-inspired performance, *The 13th Chronicle* is a response to the twelve chronicles presented in *Sabes Algo de Mariana?* (*Do You Know Anything About Mariana?* 2011), a play by Mexican scholar and dramaturg Andres Castuera-Micher about the current and ongoing problem of gender violence in Mexico. In responding to Castuera-Micher's work through a site-specific performance that incorporates dance, installation, song, ritual, puppetry and moving sculpture, and that seeks to involve the audience as active witnesses to its processual unfolding, a significant aspect of my work attends to how we are all implicated in the normalized violence happening next door, across the street, and in our homes and places of work. We mainly choose not to hear, see, or speak about this matter, but we are both complicit in and victims of the political systems of normalization that have historically subdued women's bodies under the systems of patriarchy and colonialism. Asking how performance might be used as a tool for personal and political change, I draw on Victor Turner's concept of "social drama" to consider how the performative dimensions of ritual might be mobilized to transform individual and collective consciousness. In this way, I posit *The 13th Chronicle* as a poetic offering to reimagine the world, and specifically the social processes that must be implemented to break the painful and horrible cycle of gender violence that is endemic not just to Mexico, but to all parts of the globe.

Keywords: Butoh, ritual; alchemy; performativity; embodied knowledge; transformation; collective consciousness

I dedicate my work to my children Juan Salvador, Eloisa Maria, and Rodrigo for inspiring me and being my driving force. Thank you for proofing my course work with patience and kindness. Thank you for always coming to my performances!

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To my parents, my sisters Margarita, Lulu, Jesus, my brothers Rafael, Lorenzo and Benjamin.

To Fernando and Salito.

Thank you all for your endless support and love!

For

Violeta

Lidia

Lolita

For my mother, sisters, daughter, nieces

my aunties

my abuelas,

and their sisters…and mothers…and aunties and their abuelas …

and their sisters… and mothers…and their aunties…. and their abuelas.. and their mothers… and sisters… and aunties…….and their abuelas… and their mothers… and sisters…aunties and their …

be it into the past and so into the future.

Acknowledgements

I respectfully acknowledge the sovereignty of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxw.7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓.Iwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations on whose traditional, unceded and occupied territories I live and work. As a guest in this land, I empathise profoundly with indigenous peoples because I come from a lineage that shares the same stories of a violent acculturation. What is means for me to be Mexican is that I carry in my blood five hundred years of stories of colonization. As such, I am committed to building respectful relationships and to dedicating time and resources to stand and work in solidarity with Indigenous artists and communities. I am inspired by the resilience of indigenous peoples in Canada and across the Americas, and as I witness the resurgence of traditional knowledge and values, relationality, practices of care and embodied knowledge, I am hopeful for the future.

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Defence Statement

Introduction

My artistic inquiry reckons with the significance of ritual and ceremony in contemporary dance, and how I can bring these into my practice as I interrogate Eurocentric notions of performance. I ponder the alchemic potential of performance to reimagine the world, as a device to engage in political dialogue, to shift individual and collective consciousness, and from a feminist perspective, to symbolically reclaim the autonomies of our bodies. These autonomies have been subdued under the patriarchal systems that shape our social, economic, cultural, and even spiritual structures (Guzman and Paredes 2014), the same structures that with their institutional silence are responsible for the systemic micro and macro violences against women (Lagarde 2008).

I believe that beyond the mere representation of who we are, performance has the potential to show us who we can be. In this way, I see performance as presence and provocation; it is an act of seduction that can shift collective consciousness. Thus, I look to bring the shamanic power and magic of the ritual into my work as a means for transformation and interconnectedness as WE work to become a more compassionate and inclusive society. My practice considers performance as a way of working and looking at the world through a metaphysical lens, as an act of transgression that bridges the natural and the esoteric worlds through the performativity of the ritual. I choose to examine this phenomenon in performance because the process of the ritual can activate those liminal spaces that can allow us to inhabit new territories of the psyche (Eliade, Trask, and Eliade 1987).

My artistic practice is informed by my experience with butoh and my Mexican contexts and traditions. My sense of identity embraces a fascination with the interchange between the mystical and natural realms, and my creative process is guided by a strong sense of intuition, embodied knowledge, and a deep connection to my ancestral lineage.

Butoh and my ancestral lineage provide the metaphysical[1] lens to understand primordial aspects of the complexity of human existence. In this journey, I have experienced incredible moments of transformation that made me realize the power of performance to shift not only individual, but also collective consciousness. Since my artistic inquiry is concerned with social issues, gender violence in Mexico being one of them, I consider performativity a device to engage in meaningful dialogue and healing.

Weaving together the theoretical, conceptual, and aesthetic threads that underline my artistic practice, I assume my work to be an inquiry that challenges our social structures, and as an offering to reimagine the world. Thus, I imagine my final project, *The 13th Chronicle*, as a space to consider what rituals and processes need to be implemented to break the painful and horrible cycle of gender violence. This work is not just for now but for the past and the future as well. It is an attempt to offer a glimpse of hope (Moraga and Anzaldua 2002) after metaphorically baring our wounds and scars to heal as a collective and to reimagine a utopic body.

[1] In his essay titled “Asian Theatre and Grotowski,” Donald Richie writes: “Grotowski says: ‘I think the essential thing is that the actor must not act for his audience, he must act in confrontation with the spectators, in their presence.’” “This is right, but he might have added that the confrontation be more than physical--that it also be, and more importantly, psychological, metaphysical, philosophical and religious” (Wolford and Schechner 1997, p. 149).

Figure 1. **The 13th Chronicle.**
Credit: Alberto Renteria Ibarra

The 13th Chronicle: A Description of the Work

A butoh-inspired performance, *The 13th Chronicle* is a response to the twelve chronicles presented in *Sabes Algo de Mariana?* (*Do You Know Anything About Mariana?*), a play by Mexican scholar and dramaturg Andres Castuera-Micher. Each chronicle in Castuera-Micher's text narrates a gut-wrenching story of violence endured by women. All the characters in the stories are named Mariana — girl, teenager, middle-aged woman, transgender, unborn child. For allegorical purposes, Mariana is all of us. In building upon and responding to Castuera-Micher's play in my own performance, I wanted to investigate the means by which audiences and performers could gather to perform ways to mend the wounds and scars documented in his texts; to give voice to those that have been silenced and killed by this violence; and, most importantly, to ensure that their names and lives remain in our collective memory.

The 13th Chronicle is a multidimensional and multifaceted performance that intertwines political, spiritual, aesthetic, and feminist perspectives to address a problem that needs visibility and political will. Conceived as site-specific, this work is meant to be adaptable and responsive to each temporal and spatial context of its staging. Thus, it

lives in each of us; it exists in each moment and place where it is performed. It feeds from the energy, experience, and memories of those present in the act; the work breathes with the performers and the witnesses.

Figure 2. **Lobby installation. Performer Salome Nieto.**
Credit: Carl Craig

Outside of the context of my MFA graduating project, this work would ideally appear in any given space to an unsuspecting audience with no publicity or ticket sales. More specifically, the performance was conceived as an intervention and transgression into the institutional space. That is, the work intends to bring audiences and performers together as a community to reflect and symbolically hold space for those still mourning as WE acknowledge the lives of those women who have been victims of feminicide, creating awareness on this global issue and, first and foremost, assuming responsibility to act towards social change.

A vital aspect of the work is its multidisciplinary collaborations that integrated ritual, installation, video, sound, performance, costume, lighting, moving sculpture and

puppetry, all intertwined in the intervention of the space. Central to this intervention is the procession led by Mazatecan knowledge keeper and healer, Leonor Martinez Garcia. The procession was imagined as the link that held the performance together and it is a fundamental aspect of what I am interrogating in my research and practice: what is the significance of ritual and ceremony in contemporary performance? I chose to build the experience upon a procession because this historically is linked to the sacred, and in many cases the procession constitutes the ritual itself. Linking my theoretical research with my practice, the procession along the hallways of the Goldcorp building became the liminal space between a harsh reality and the possibility to reimagine the world (Belausteguigoitia 2009). The performance itself was liminal, if we consider that, according to Turner (1987), part of the liminality in the ritual is to remove the individual (in this case the audience member) from their natural context to enter into a process/experience of transformation. In the case of *The 13th Chronicle*, this was conceived through the design and use of the space: by starting and ending in the same physical space, but with a transformed atmosphere, the performance foregrounds the journey of experiencing and witnessing that the audience has undertaken through the procession.

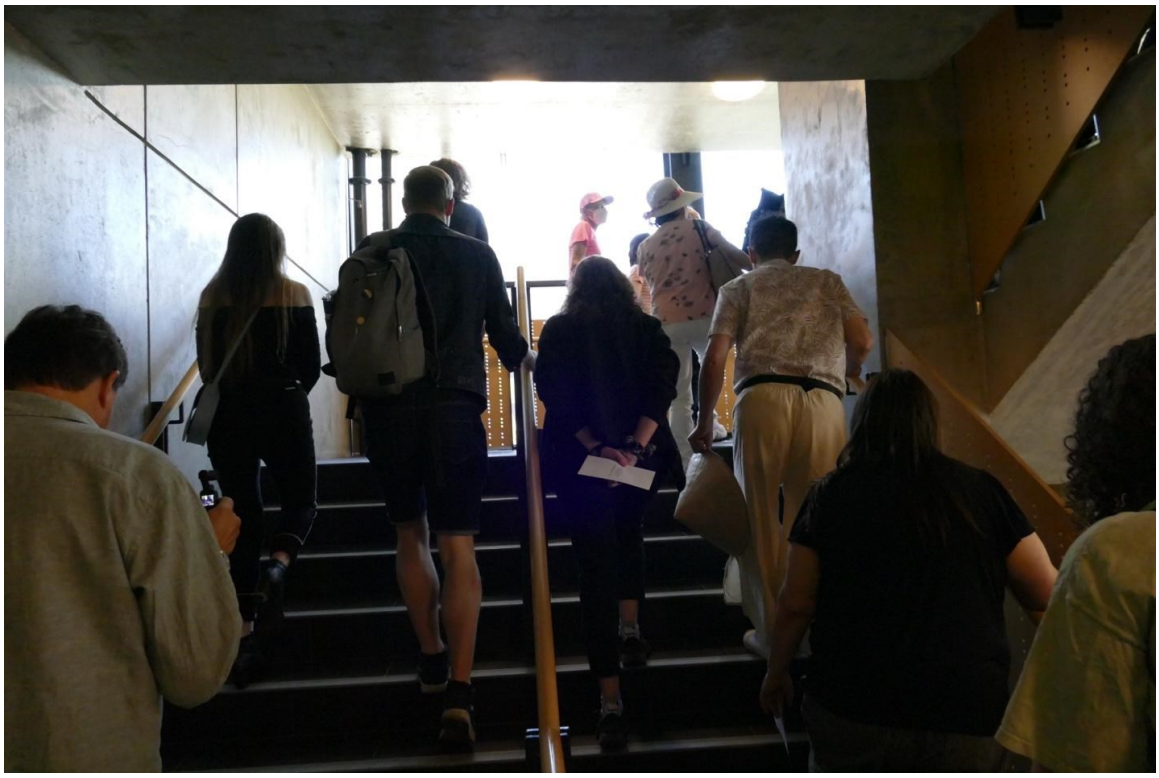

Figure 3. **Procession to second floor.**
Credit: Yvonne Chew

Furthermore, a key element of my work is the deconstruction of female archetypes and in the context of my MFA project, the snake has a fundamental meaning: a symbol of fertility, fecundity, harmony, and connection with the earth. With this ancestral archetype of the snake, I reconnect with my cultural lineage, rejecting the ideas imposed by colonialism, patriarchy and Catholicism associated with women as a source of sin. As Anzaldua suggests in the third chapter of her book *Borderlands/ Las Frontera*, renewing her relationship with this ancestral archetype and embracing its power is a source of knowledge and new awareness, which Anzaldua calls La Facultad (Anzaldua 2012). If we change our consciousness and dress in the snake's skin, we rediscover ourselves with all the potential that femininity houses. Skin change is healing. We peel our skin to leave the past and renew ourselves. If you tell me I am a snake, then, yes, I am. I carry the sign of the serpent in my blood and on my skin. Like the snake, with this work I wanted to find a way to wriggle my way into a space in which I was on some levels not meant to be, or in which I could not always imagine myself.

Another key component of the work both in research and performance is the symbology of the circle as a space for communion. This was especially present in Studio

D as the audience and performers came together for the first time, and about which I will have more to say below.

The Installations and Video

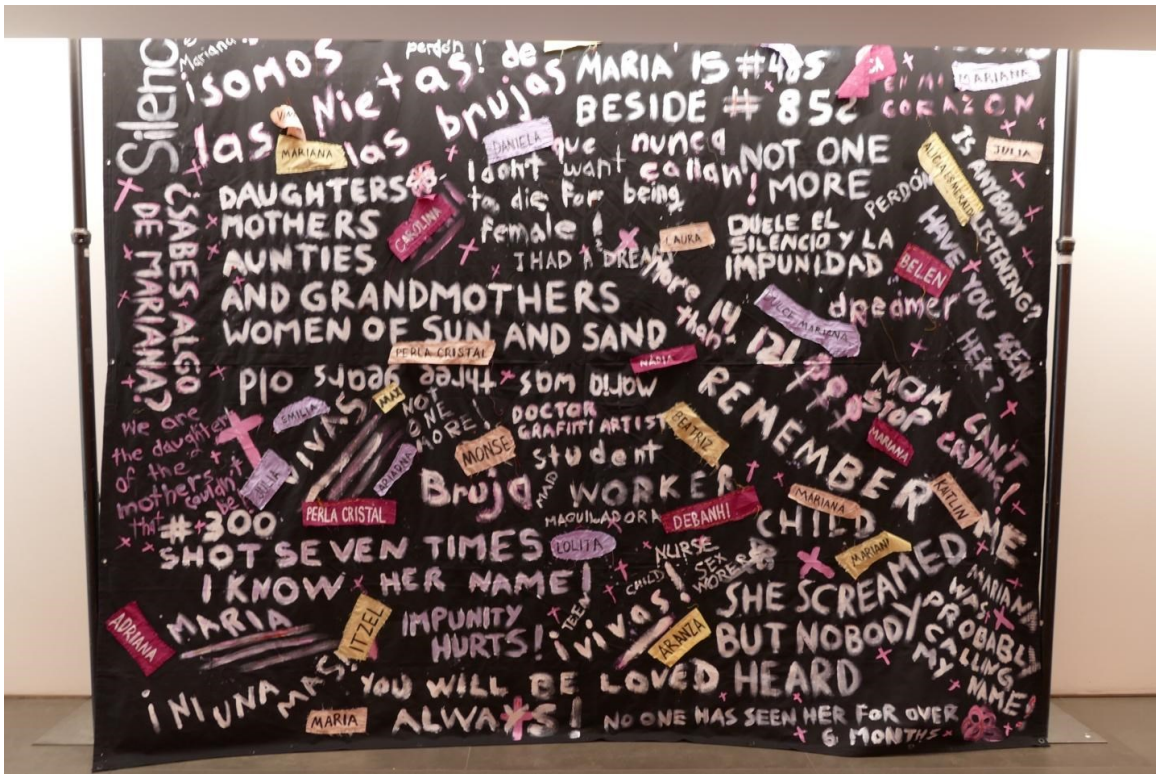

Figure 4. **South entrance banner installation.**
Credit: Yvonne Chew

The intervention of the space began with installation work hung in the south entrance to the Goldcorp building and in the Lobby. When the public entered the building, they encountered a black banner with slogans and names of victims of feminicide created by the dancers and me. Their names were stitched by hand to mend and to remember them. The writing saturated the banner as if spilling out of it to capture the urgency of this situation. To accompany this, graphic designer Carl Craig created a series of posters that hung beside the banner and on the entranceway pillars, usually overflowing with publicity posters. Each poster deconstructed images of different women to then reassemble them randomly, multiplying each woman's presence. Mixed with other photos, some of the posters (which were also repeated on the second floor) contain a part of Mariana's photo: a shoulder, a piece of her dress, her smile, hair or shirt.

Figure 5. **Do you know anything about Mariana? Part of the hallway's installation.**
Credit: Carl Craig

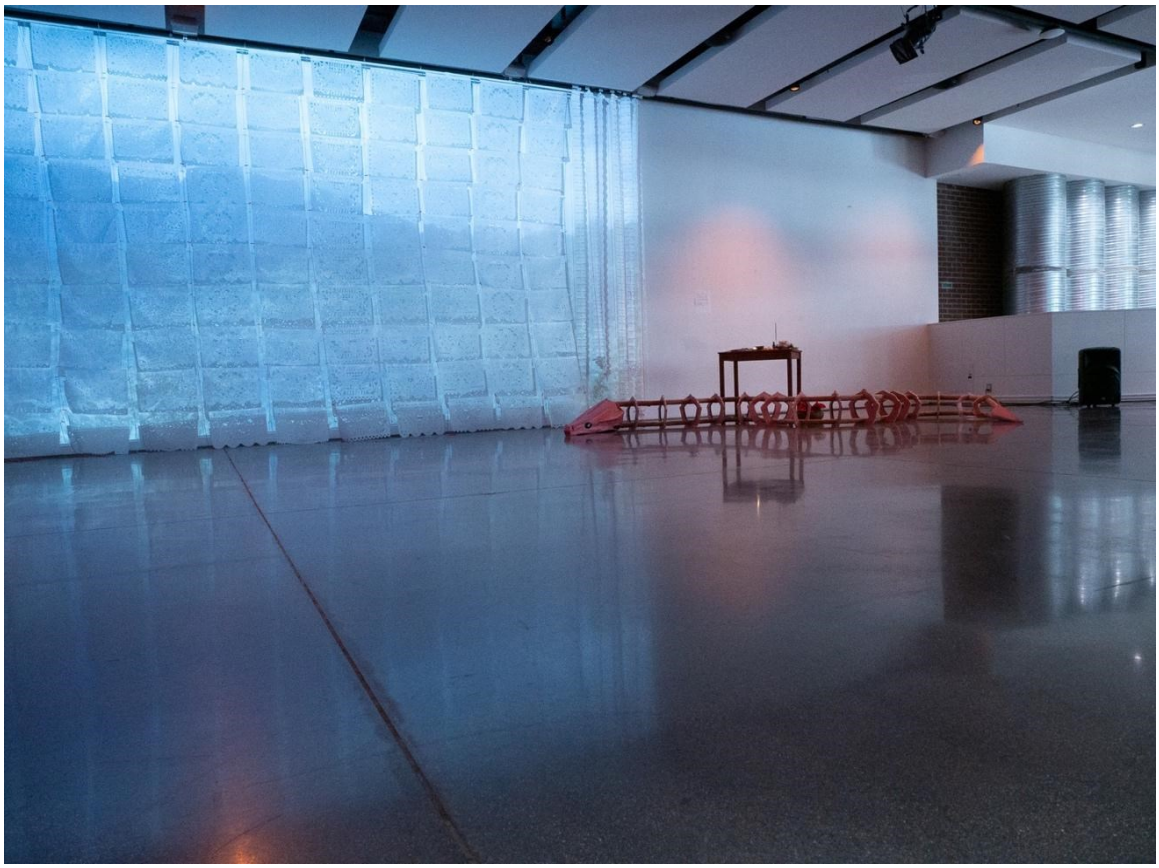

Figure 6 **Installation view: video, snake puppet, ritual table and sound in lobby.**
Credit: Carl Craig

Figure 7. **Ritual Table, detail.**
Credit: Yvonne Chew

In the Lobby, a white screen made out of white paper hung from one of the walls of the building. The screen was made by hand knitting together twelve long rows of white garlands made of *papel picado* (a traditional Mexican paper craft) to create a screen with an area measuring twenty-four by twelve feet. Projected onto this screen was a looping video, a composition of rotating images of places in Mexico and Vancouver with an accompanying soundtrack of field recordings taken in Mexico City, to evoke the relation between memory and place. Additional components of the Lobby installation included a twenty-foot-long snake puppet/sculpture laid beside a table with candles, herbs, feathers and incense, and a dancer who moved slowly along the length of the screen as a welcome—or maybe a warning? —to the audience. As the audience assembled, the knowledge keeper, Leonor Martinez Garcia, initiated the performance with a Mazatecan ritual that signaled the start of the performance. With the choice of elements found in the installations in the Lobby and entrance to the building I wanted to create an atmosphere that would help the audience enter my world and, with the ritual, prepare them for the performance they were about to experience.

Figure 8. The pink crosses, second floor installation.
Credit: Alberto Renteria Ibarra

An iteration of the installation elements of the work continues on the second floor, where a projected image of pink crosses along the road provides an initial backdrop for a woman dressed in red. The pink crosses have become a symbol of remembrance and inquiry. Initially these marked the place where disappeared women and girls in Mexico were last seen alive; they were painted starting in 1998 by the organization “Voces sin Eco,” which was the first group made up of relatives of the victims demanding political action from the authorities. This symbol likewise inspired the choice of using pink light to activate the spaces for the performance along the hallways on the second floor of the Goldcorp building, as well as the color of the snake puppet and some of the stitching in the costumes.

The Ritual and Performance

Figure 9. **Opening prayer. Leonor Martínez García.**
Credit: Yvonne Chew

After a pre-show intervention into the space by the ancient archetype of the snake-woman performed by me, Leonor Martinez Garcia welcomed the audience in the Lobby with a traditional Mazatecan ritual and invited them to join her and the performers in this experience with open minds and hearts. Leonor then led the audience with song and ritual through the staircase leading to the second floor, where they encountered a haunting of the building that initiates with a performer (Barbara Bourget) dressed in red ascending the stairs to the third floor, as if looking for redemption. Symbolically dragging the blood of all that is female with her long train, she is the archetype of the mother eternally mourning.

Figure 10. The woman in red, performer Barbara Bourget.
Credit: Yvonne Chew

The ghosts of young women ceaselessly running and violently slamming doors behind them are a disruption to the space and time, as a reminder to us of the brutality of their stories. Overlapping with these images and sounds, the snake woman (myself again) reappears. The audience, whose attention and invitation to keep vigil with the women in the performance is now divided between the woman in red on the stairs and the snake woman advancing and then receding along the north-facing hallway, witnesses the snake woman shedding her skin to renew the fresh flesh of the transient young women whom we have just seen crisscrossing the space.

Figure 11. Ghostly figure running. Performer Lauren Han.
Credit: Yvonne Chew

Reinforcing this idea, the young women—having shed their own outer skins of conventional female gender conformity—reappear at the end of the hallway just as the snake woman is about to disappear again. The young women (Nicole Dreher, Lauren Han, Kaitlyn La Vigne, Krystal Tsai, Anna Wang-Albini) dance with the body of the twenty-foot-long snake puppet we first encountered in the Lobby, transforming it into a moving sculpture and advancing along the length of the hallway and making a spiral intervention into the audience's assembly, before leading the audience into a darkened room to symbolically mourn and grieve together.

Led by the serpent and Leonor, the audience enters Studio D in darkness. Disoriented and confused, they see in the distance the serpent's shadow surrounding a beam of light on the south side of the room—and, in the centre of the light, the woman in red.

Figure 12. Snake dance. Ensemble dance by cast.
Credit: Carl Craig

Figure 13. Woman in red. Studio D. Performer Barbara Bourget.
Credit: Carl Craig

Studio D is metaphorically the space where we come together in the circle. This scene is performed by all five young women, the woman in red and the snake woman. It is choreographed as a traditional butoh ensemble, coming in and out of phase, with five rotating solos and a quartet. This is the dance that helps us transition into a different state of mind. It is here where the alchemical and metamorphic process of butoh revitalizes our relationship with the serpent's skin, and where the spirits of the young women restore their peace, finding solace and redemption. Under the watchful eye of the two older characters (the woman in red and the snake woman), the young women reconnect with their archetypal animal to dress as beasts. They crawl on their knees, herding the audience into the circle as the light becomes brighter, and as the audience and performers slowly unite in the circle.

Figure 14. Ensemble work by cast. Studio D.
Credit: Carl Craig

WE are ONE. This coming together in the circle is of particular importance because of the meaning of the circle as an essential part of the ritual space, representing the completion of a cycle, communion, and a symbol of unity. This action to me is a way to implicate everyone into the issue of gender violence that I am addressing in this work, both as victims and witnesses. My intention in bringing everyone into Studio D was to co-produce an environment that would embody the physical and psychic space of the ritual.

Entering the circle, for me, is a powerful symbol of community. Hence the importance of designing a dance to be performed in the round using lighting design to define the performance space in a very specific way. To this end, I wanted the audience to stand or sit around the circle; however, partly because we are predisposed to experience a performance frontally and partly because the audience walked into a dark room, their instinct was to stay on the north side of the room. Despite this happening, the

audience demonstrated a willingness to be part of the experience, to follow in the procession, and to enter the circle when prompted.

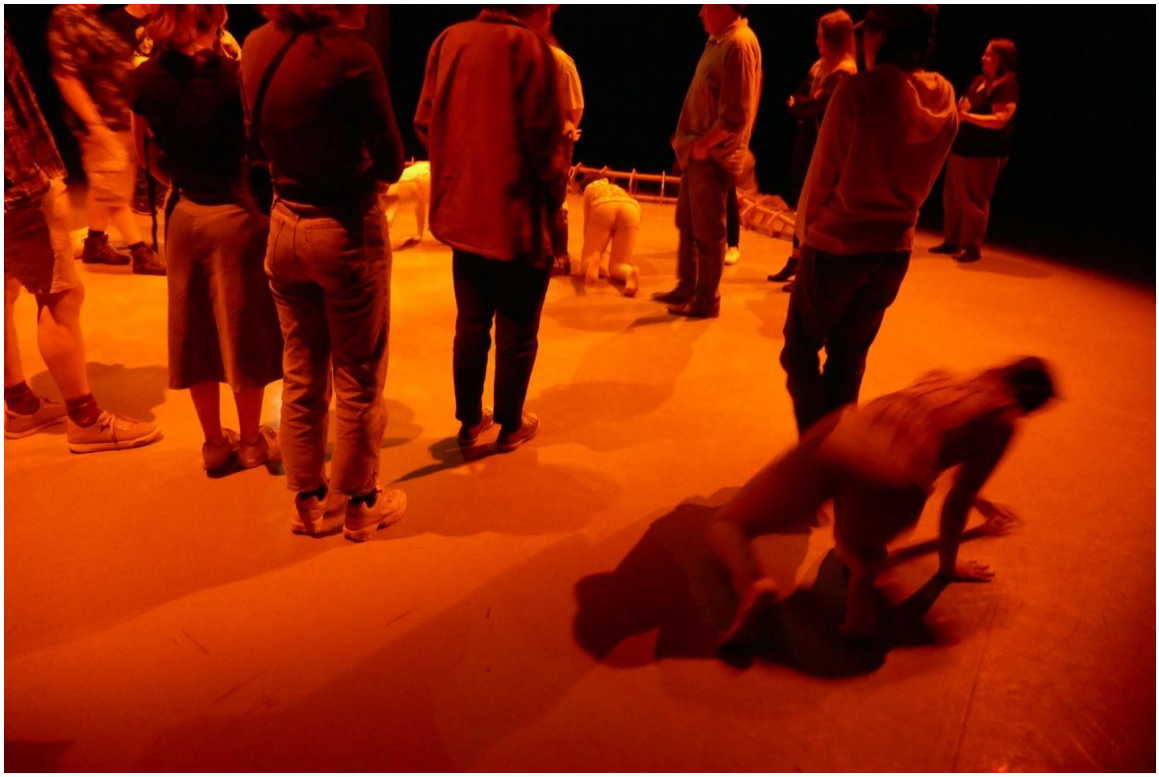

Figure 15. Audience entering circle. Studio D.
Credit: Yvonne Chew

Figure 16. Beginning of funeral march by ensemble cast. Studio D.
Credit: Carl Craig

After this event, as the snake-woman leads everyone into the light, she opens the doors to encounter the voice we have thus far heard throughout the space in recording, now embodied live by a woman dressed in white (Jami Reimer). This is the archetypal figure of light. Playing accordion, this woman leads a funeral procession back into the Lobby, where everything started. In the last scene of the performance the audience encounters a space changed by the light and a video of blossoms: WE encounter a transformed space where two archetypal female figures, one representing light and the other mourning, meet in a beautiful duet between Barbara Bourget's movement and Jami Reimer's vocals.

Figure 17. **Snake woman, performer Salome Nieto.**
Credit: Yvonne Chew

Figure 18. **Funeral march. Leonor Martinez Garcia and performer Salome Nieto.**
Credit: Yvonne Chew

Figure 19. Performers Jami Reimer and Salome Nieto.
Credit: Jay Hirabayashi

The young women, the snake, the audience, and the knowledge keeper are joined together, surrounding the performers, to close out the shared ritual experienced during the performance. We walked through and then back along the same path, like a snake chasing its tail, to congregate at the point of departure at the end of the performance. Literally and metaphorically, we were transformed.

Figure 20. Final scene back in the lobby. All cast.
Credit: Yvonne Chew

Context

The inception of my work is highly ethnographic, and my cultural identity influences it. Attuning to my embodied knowledge and cultural memory as part of my methodology has led me to the field of performance studies and the work of Diana Taylor in *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Her work on the performance of cultural memory in the Americas has led me to examine how knowledge is stored and shared through traditions and how these play a crucial role in constructing a cultural identity, gender, race, and class (Taylor 2003).

Thus far, my artistic inquiry has been centered on the interchanges between artistic processes and social rituals, and between social and cultural dramas, interrogating Eurocentric notions of performance to explore, discover and create other ways of being and knowing from a stance of interconnectedness. I am reflecting on Victor Turner's theory of "social drama" (Turner 1987), along with Gloria Anzaldua's

concept of liminality as an epistemological space (Epistemology of Nepantla[2]), and butoh as the aesthetic and practice whose metamorphic methodologies will allow me to access the spaces for the ritual as a process.

As I draw the parallels and intersections between butoh, the surrealism in my ancestral lineage, and my interest in social drama, I lean into the metaphysical theory of Gloria Anzaldua and her epistemology of Nepantla (from the Nahuatl; a state between life and death, neither here nor there) (Anzaldua 2012), as well as Sondra Fraleigh's work on the philosophy and alchemy in butoh (Fraleigh 2010). Butoh's introspective and somatic work opens a gateway to explore embodied knowledge, ancestral lineage, and cultural memory.[3] In this way, my work considers a range of intersections between my identity as a Mexican woman and the foundational tenets of butoh aesthetics. Additionally, I am exploring the construction of gender in Mexico from a historical, conceptual, and feminist perspective; my research suggests gendered violence in Mexico is deeply rooted in colonial values and structures, which can only be dismantled when and if we work towards the emancipation of our individual bodies. I turn to the principles guiding the Feminist movement lead by Indigenous women from Mexico and Central America,[4] and to Mercedes Lagarde (Lagarde 2003) and Juliana Streva (Streva 2022), to examine how the project of colonialism, modernization and capitalist neoliberalism perpetuates this violence. The normalization of gender violence worldwide has similar roots: racism and colonization and their economic and traumatic legacies. This constellation of feminist, Indigenous, and Latina voices provides a myriad of perspectives on the discourse of decolonization, and specifically decolonization of the body. What does this mean, and what would it take to achieve such a feat?

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[2] See Joysmith (2015).

[3] In her book *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Diana Taylor examines the archive and the repertoire as individual and collective memories, which through performative acts, referred to as cultural practices, play a crucial role in constructing a cultural identity, gender, race, and class. Both the collation of histories recorded in text, images, and the vestiges of physical sites that remind us of what happened, where and when, and the performed repertoire, or stories shared through song, dance, and behaviour, constitute our cultural memory.

[4] Principal figures: Lorena Cabdal, Aida Hernandez Castillo, Julieta Paredes and Ochy Curiel.

The magnitude of the social crisis of feminicide[5] in Mexico has been constantly overlooked, and the government and judicial systems have been recognizable by their silence and lack of action. According to the Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional de Feminicidio in Mexico (National Citizen Observatory of Femicide), in a recent communication, violence against women has impregnated every corner of the country. The CONAVIM, National Commission to Eradicate Gender Violence in Mexico, published the statement that "during the year 2022, 3170 women have been killed and only 792 cases (up to the month of October) have been treated as feminicide (murder because of gender)" (www.observatoriofeminicidiomexico.org). To address this incommensurability between the magnitude of the crisis and the lack of social and political will to address it in any meaningful way, in this project I turn to Victor Turner's symbolic anthropology, situating gender violence as "social drama" and considering his analysis as a point of departure to investigate the larger cultural breach that the crisis of feminicide represents in Mexico and the Global South. I am particularly interested in the presence of ritual during the production of cultural performance, and its symbiosis with social drama (Turner 1987), because it suggests a potential to shift individual and collective consciousness through the final two phases of Turner's social drama: redressive action and reintegration.[6]

I approach performance as a device to understand social interactions and to challenge traditional notions of cultural performances, striving to initiate a dialogue that can lead to new understandings. Ideas such as the construction of cultural identities and gender, the theory of social dramas, and the performativity of the ritual as presented in the field of performance studies provide a framework to examine the social drama arising from the long-standing history of gender violence and to consider emancipation from it (even if that is for one moment within the performance itself). In the context of

[5] "Building on the conceptualization of Russell, the Mexican anthropologist Marcela Lagarde proposed the word 'feminicidio' (feminicide) in 1992. According to Lagarde, feminicidio is the most extreme form of gender-based violence, which includes a set of misogynistic aggressions. Additionally, this notion also brings attention to the articulation of gender with respect to race, class, sexuality, and religion. Feminicidio is situated at the last stage of the spectrum of violence, also named as the 'cycle of violence' or the 'continuum of violence' (ibidem). Thus, the terms 'continuum' and 'cycle' acknowledge how violence is a continual process and not an event" (Streva 2022).

[6] Turner (1987) delineates four stages in a social drama: breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration or schism. Simply explained, the social drama begins when someone of the community breaks a rule, and measures are put in place to remediate and repair the breach/crisis, or establish a new status quo/harmony.

The 13th Chronicle, I could see these principles in action when the audience could not leave the space after the performance, when they were perplexed with what they had just experienced, and when they expressed the ways in which they were moved by this work. Most significantly, however, the social dimensions/applications of the performance ritual were most evident when audience members expressed their realization of the urgency of the issue of feminicide as a global problem.

The Deconstruction of the Female Archetype as Process and Method

A key aspect of my work is the deconstruction of traditional Mexican female archetypes and how women archetypes have been swirling in a liminal space since the Aztec empire (Anzaldua 2012). Anzaldua's deconstruction of such female archetypes as La Malinche, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and La Llorona offers additional perspective; as she notes, these archetypes are coded with layers of symbols, and it has been helpful to see how, as a Mexican woman, I experienced them daily. Through this piece, I was interested to see how my working with these archetypes over the years, and my living outside of México, has rearticulated my relationships to them, and in what ways I might redeploy them, while also finding some form of liberation from them.

To this end, 2011 marked the beginning of a new creative journey investigating the intersections between my butoh practice and my Mexican cultural background. This inquiry led to the integration of the avant-garde aesthetics of butoh with elements of the mysticism and surrealism of Mexico, and to the creation of the performance entitled *Camino al Tepeyac*. This butoh-inspired piece included references from Mexican religious iconography, pre-colonial symbols, and female archetypes. Since then, the deconstruction of the three dominant Mexican female archetypal roles — the mother, the virgin, and the whore — has become a prominent element of my work. My movement and stories are a reflection of how we carry the essence of these archetypes in our bodies and how their ideologies and expectations are passed through and embodied generationally. Importantly, I am exploring the possibilities for repositioning women in society. Looking back at the work of *Camino al Tepeyac*, it became evident to me how patriarchy and the history of Mexico becoming a nation are embedded in its female archetypes, where strict social hierarchies and gender roles and norms have been constructed to service power structures. *Camino al Tepeyac* is an allegory of Mexico's

cultural memory, telling the histories of women in Mexico and addressing the longstanding history of oppression by a gender-based system that favours masculinity and that undervalues, ignores, and subjugates Indigenous peoples and the women of Mexico. Their archetypes illustrate the nation's idiosyncrasies (Enkvist 2008).

Figure 21. The archetype of the snake. Performer Salome Nieto.
CredIt: Jay Hirabayashi

Furthermore, a process that began with the female archetype of the Virgin of Guadalupe led me to explore its enigmas, unveiling its secret symbols and, with them, unearthing the figure of la Cuatlicue, the serpent skirt goddess (Anzaldua 2012). I later incorporated her, along with the archetypes of la Malinche and la Llorona, into my artistic inquiry. Prior to colonisation of Mexico, pre-Columbian cultures worshipped the figure of a snake woman (Cihuacoatl, Cuatlicue, Coatlalepueh) (Anzaldua 2012), with rituals associated within fertility, harvest, and the continuation of life. Later on, in the later Aztec empire, and then with colonization, their figures become monster-like figures, associated with destruction as well; the human king was devoured and reborn symbolically through these deities, who had both dark and light attributes.

símbolo de fertilidad, de fecundidad, de armonía y de conexión con la tierra.

Con este arquetipo ancestral de la serpiente, reconectamos con el linaje cultural, rechazando la idea impuesta por el colonialismo, el patriarcado y el catolicismo asociada a la mujer como fuente de pecado. Si cambiamos nuestra conciencia y nos vestimos con la piel de la serpiente en los reencontramos con todo el potencial que aloja la feminidad.

El cambio de piel es cicatrizar sanar.

Nos pelamos la piel para dejar el pasado y renovarnos.

Si tú me dices que soy una serpiente, pues sí.

Sí lo soy, llevo en la sangre y en la piel el signo de la serpiente.

Figure 22. The archetype of the snake. Studio D.
Credit: Jay Hirabayashi

My studio research in the MFA program that preceded the launch of my investigations on what eventually became *The 13th Chronicle* emerged from my responses to these ideas, along with the texts I was reading by Gloria Anzaldua, Richard Schechner, Victor Turner, and Diana Taylor. During the spring semester of 2022, I created three ten-minute pieces that explored the double meaning of Mexico's iconography, such as the serpent and Coatlicue. I made a video, using its projection as a light source. I also designed sound for each performance. All these inquiries inspired me to reencounter the text *Sabes Algo de Mariana? (Do You Know Anything About Mariana?)*. Castuera-Micher gifted me with the first print of his play to start some research back in 2017, but it wasn't until the spring of 2022 that I was able to work with it in a meaningful way. The first iteration of this work was presented during our Spring Show in April 2022, for which I invited five Mexican women to perform with me, exploring Castuera-Micher's text in a performance/installation piece. On this occasion, I very literally worked with Castuera-Micher's text, printed in various sizes of paper that

covered the floor and hung from a clothes line-like installation. I wanted to bring attention to the issue without revictimizing the protagonists of the stories, so I covered with black any graphic content cited on the printed pages. Since the performance was also outside of a theatrical space, I was researching performance as activism. To take a stand towards social change, the five Mexican dancers dressed in black walked into the space and, as a form of protest, tore down the line and ripped the paper from the floor. All vignettes and texts explored during my first year in the program are the foundation for my final project, *The 13th Chronicle*. The chief take-aways from this process of studio research and performing were the potential of a site-specific performance and the idea of the intervention into a space.

In the Studio

Figure 23. Dancers Anna Wang-Albini, Lauren Han and Krystal Tsai in Butoh class.
Credit: Salome Nieto

My practice is life-informed and guided by principles and processes found in butoh: deep listening and observation, physicality, introspective work, sourcing from sensation and imagery, and improvisation. My vocabulary is created from impulse in response to either text, environment, sound, or images. Whether I am in a dance studio, a park, or walking the streets of my neighborhood, the environment informs my body, and the work emerges as much from/during process as in performance. I am interested in this newness. Following the principles of Somatic Dramaturgy[7] as methodology, my creative process is extremely intuitive and guided by lived experience, embodied knowledge, and memory. From a deconstructionist and feminist perspective, my work explores—as previously stated—traditional female archetypes as a point of departure to investigate ideas of emancipation. Additionally, ideas of repair and mending are intertwined in this process.

[7] Postulated by Mexican writer Gabriel Weisz Carrington (National Autonomous University of Mexico), this methodology has to do with a dramaturgical process that is centred in lived experience, intuition, and embodiment. Professor and researcher of Comparative Literature at Universidad Autónoma de México, Dr. Gabriel Weisz Carrington postulates a theory of *somatic text* and *ethno-drama,* a embodied text written by subjective experience (Weisz 1996).

Figure 24. Cast members Lauren Han and Krystal Tsai. The making of the banner.
Credit: Salome Nieto

As part of the research leading to my MFA graduating project, I worked with students in the dance and theatre programs within the SCA for six months. We trained in butoh regularly, reading, reflecting, sourcing and developing choreographic ideas. Some themes we explored were female archetypes, matriarchal lineage, and cultural memory. Dancers developed their own scores, bringing their ethnography into the process. Additionally, dancers kept a journal and wrote a final reflection on their personal discoveries and how this process impacted them as artists (see Appendix C).

Figure 25. Working with archetype. Nicole Dreher, Lauren Han and Anna Wang- Albini.
Credit: Salome Nieto

As is customary in a butoh-led process, the creative research began with collecting images of female archetypal figures that each performer identified with, such as Eve, Medea, the Mermaid, the Witch, and the Snake. We then created a movement vocabulary that spoke to the dancers' responses to the images. We also explored additional images from surrealist female artists from Mexico—such a Frida Kahlo, Remedios Varo, and Leonora Carrington—to further imagine the world we were trying to create. In the same way we deconstructed each archetype analytically, we began to deconstruct the movement phrases that each dancer had come up with, sharing, teaching each other's movement, and giving it our own interpretation. This process resulted in a beautiful choreography with organic and sculptural qualities. At one point

the dancers were water; at another time they were a scorpion, a wolf, a beast, a flower, a child, a pack of wolves in heat, and a woman giving birth in the wild — lurking so no predator could take her by surprise.... I was incredibly grateful and happy to witness the dancers grow stronger in their understanding of performance and in their embodiment of the metamorphic butoh process. Also joining the process was senior artist and long-time collaborator Barbara Bourget, who as a dance artist has life-long experience performing and choreographing. Her presence added a not surprising but unintended layer of strength and beauty to this multigenerational performance, as she took on the role of the mourning mother archetype. Later in the process, Jami Reimer joined the cast as performer organically after we realized that her voice, which we hear in some of the recorded soundscape, needed to evolve into an embodiment of the archetype of the healing spirit.

Figure 26. Field recording at Mexico City's Sound Library. Salome Nieto and Jami Reimer.
Credit: Salome Nieto

Jami's collaboration on the soundscape began after one of our studio seminars with Professor Mauricio Pauly. We travelled together to Mexico City to capture the sounds and vibrancy of the city in a field recording journey. We met with other artists whose work also addresses gender violence, and with my sister and nieces. Jami guided us and facilitated the field recordings, using techniques grounded/inspired by feminist perspectives from sound-walking practitioners. Our process also included a listening session at the Fonoteca Nacional de Mexico (Mexico's National Sound Library), where we took advantage of the old squeaky floors to record my steps; this later became one of the prominent threads of the soundscape. To our sounds collected during the field recording trip, I added a recording of Leonor beginning her work, as well as an old recording of a woman singing a mourning song that I wanted to incorporate into the work. At one point Jami sings this song in the soundscape, and I felt that dramaturgically we needed to have some continuity with her embodied presence—that after listening to her voice we needed to see her. This is when Jami became part of the cast.

Equally integral to the work were the collaborations of artists Katherine Soucie, in the design of the costumes, and Liz Oakley, in designing the large-scale snake. Katherine Soucie and I have known each other for over ten years and during this time we have collaborated on numerous occasions. Katherine works with found and waste material, particularly with waste hosiery, developing her own construction techniques to reuse these materials; I find her techniques very appropriate to support my work as a commentary on the position of women. Katherine's work is organic, it moves with the person, it shapes and changes with movement. For this piece, Katherine was inspired by two basic ideas: bleeding and scarring. Using a rusting dying technique and stitching in a pallet of colour that moved from rust to pinks and reds, she created a second skin for each young woman's dress, using patches in the form of scars to reflect on the mending we all need to do as we overcome these losses of our sisters.

Figure 27. Dancers wearing Katherine Soucie's second skin customed designed outfit for performance.
Credit: Carl Craig

Lastly, I knew that incorporating the archetypal figure of the snake was going to be a very important aspect of the work. Initially I considered using video or sound, even shadow. Eventually I realized that the answer was in the work I had already been making outside of my MFA, which is influenced by my Mexican traditions and by the Marvelous Reality and Surrealism of Mexico. Therefore, I invited visual artist and puppeteer Liz Oakley to explore the idea of creating a twenty-foot-long serpent to be part the performance. This collaboration was shorter: over a period of two weeks, Liz came into the studio with what would become the skeleton of the serpent to teach the performers how to be one with it. We wanted to continue with our colour pallet, so we decided that the serpent would be pink. The serpent was made of very simple and easy to use materials, with a face and tail made of papier-mâché techniques. We used some of the waste and cut off the costumes to tie it all together. (Additional artistic statements from Jami Reimer, Katherine Soucie, and Liz Oakley can be found in Appendix B.)

Figure 28. The costume cut-offs that became part of the snake.
Credit: Salome Nieto

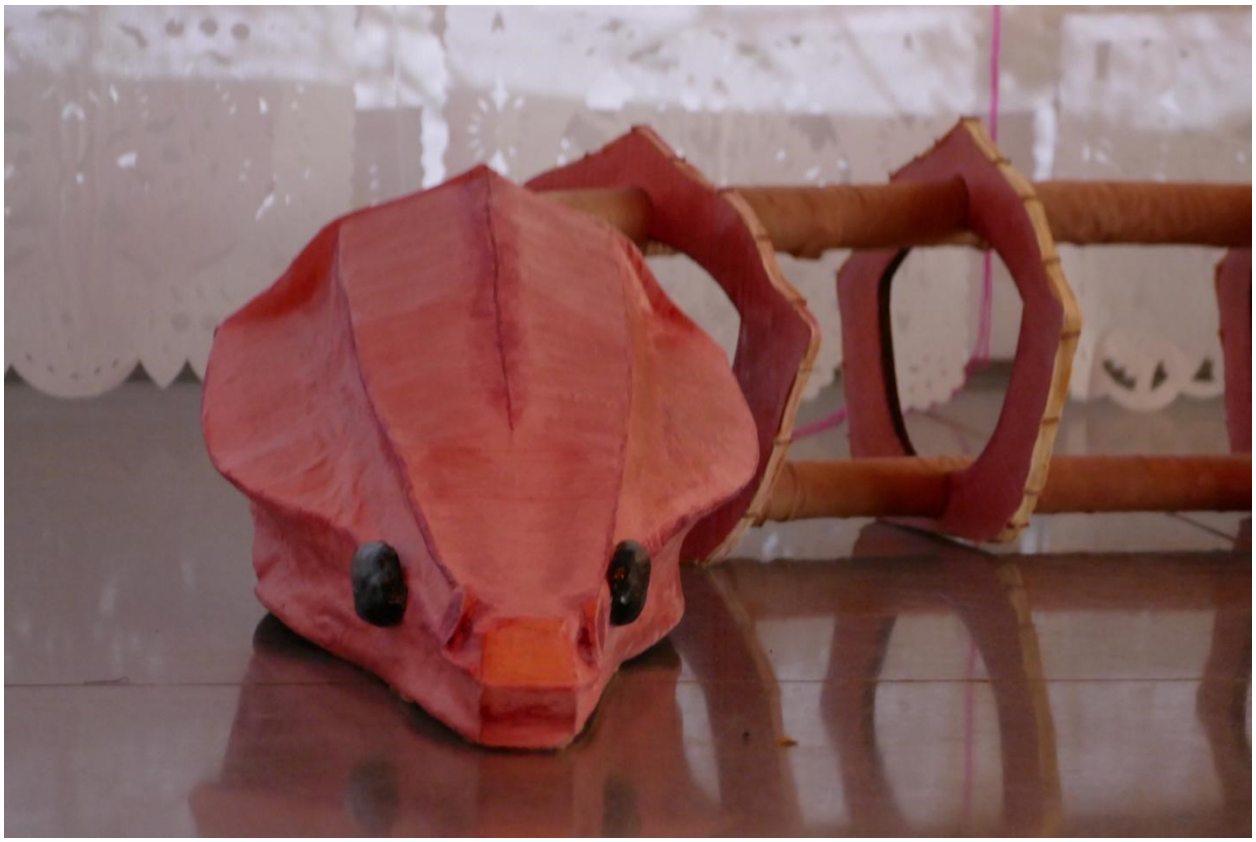

Figure 29. The snake created by Liz Oakley.
Credit: Yvonne Chew

Actioning the Ritual

Over the past thirteen years I have been creating and performing as a solo artist. When I started the MFA program, I knew I needed to challenge myself, but I was not sure how. The answer was in expanding my vision and my work to lead other performers and to truly craft a piece with more components than I had previously worked with. I took on the task of training and choreographing five emerging artists and directing a full ensemble that included my mentor Barbara Bourget and my peer Jami Reimer. This process revitalized my relationship to my practice and solidified the theoretical framework behind my work. The ritual was real: in this work the lines between the magical and the real were blurred by something called performance. Seeing how the experience was indeed transformative for the performers, as well as the audience, who could not leave the space after the performance had ended, strengthened my desire to continue this path; it proved to me that performance is a powerful device for social change. Something has

changed in my body; something did shift after this journey. In this regard, I take my cue from Jerzy Grotowski:

> "The Performer is a man [sic] of action […] He is the dancer, the shaman, the priest, the warrior: he is outside of any aesthetic genre. […] Ritual is performance. A fulfilled action. A degraded ritual is spectacle." (quoted in S. M. Pere 2015, p.27)

In thinking about my role as a "woman of action" in the creation of this performance, and in fulfilling a ritual that was attentive to its site, but that also did not risk descending into spectacle, I am very conscious of how gender violence in Mexico is part of a larger epidemic of feminicide in the Americas that includes the crisis of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls in Vancouver's Downtown East Side. Given the proximity of the School for the Contemporary Arts and the Goldcorp Centre to the localized site of much of this violence, the stories of these women cannot help but be a part of the shared ritual the performers and audience were enacting in *The 13th Chronicle*. At the same time, as a Mexican-born artist who is a guest on these Coast Salish lands, I do not feel it is my place to speak on behalf of these women. Instead, what I hoped to do was to create a sense of adjacency through the performance: materially and spatially through such elements as the hanging of the banner near the Hastings Street entrance and the juxtaposition of images of Mexico City and Vancouver in the video; conceptually through the intergenerational and cross-cultural proliferation of Marianas in the work; and performatively in asking the audience to continue their own processual performance of remembering as they exited the building.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the research, creative process, and the experiences of the performances, I would say that, on the one hand, *The 13th Chronicle* articulates a body of theory to ask a fundamental question: what is the significance of ritual and ceremony in contemporary performance? On the other hand, it articulates an artistic practice that is perplexed by and grappling with a defiant reality, namely the phenomenon of feminicide. The work is multifaceted and multidimensional, intertwining four fundamental components. The first component is the political, bringing to the forefront the problematic of feminicide in Mexico, and the lack of political will and accountability in dealing with the problem. Second, I am interested in performance as a DOING, as an ideological and artistic act of

resistance that breaks the conventions of the theatrical space so that the audience stops being such (in a traditional sense) and begins to conspire with the artist. Fundamental to this is the notion of performance as activism, in which the third principal component of this work, butoh as process and aesthetic, is integral. Its metamorphic process makes this a cathartic experience. In butoh, as in performance, we find a territory of profound contradiction and paradigms where the space and roles between the audience and performer are blurred and interchangeable. Lastly, the fourth component of this process is a personal view unique to my history of traditions, which permeate through the diverse imaginaries of the mainstays mentioned above.

The *13th Chronicle* is an encounter, a coming together to witness, share and experience the performativity of the ritual. We entered the space as strangers: “audience” and “performers.” WE experienced the transformative power of the ritual, gathering as a community, and leaving the space with a new understanding in a new state of consciousness.

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Appendix A.

The Ritual Dimension of Performativity as a Practical Epistemology

Figure A.1. **Soy Mariana - MFA Spring Show. Performer: Salome Nieto. Credit: Mena El Shazly**

Introduction

> "For me, writing is a gesture of the body, a gesture of creativity, a working from the inside out. My feminism is grounded not on incorporeal abstraction but on corporeal realities. The material body is center, and central. The body is the ground of thought…" - Gloria Anzaldúa

This paper examines the origins of performativity from an epistemological perspective, postulating the body as the site of knowledge. I understand performativity as the set of actions that function to lead those experiencing it to a new stage (Schechner 2013). From its ritual side, I look at performativity as a device that can shift/transform individual and collective consciousness, as evidenced since prehistoric times. Similarly, I consider the performativity of butoh's metamorphic process, the "image-making process" (Fraleigh 2010, 44), as a ritual that alters our state of consciousness, contributing to butoh's alchemic qualities. Further, from the standpoint of the body as a site of knowledge and butoh as an aesthetic symbolically related to the alchemical process, this paper articulates the ritual and alchemic intersections between butoh and Mexico's cultural memories. Finally, from a feminist perspective, it examines the history of the three main Mexican female archetypes to illustrate how these symbols are social constructs linked to gender violence.

In response to these four avenues of inquiry, I will articulate a somatic epistemology in which ritual behavior signifies the potential to transform individual and collective consciousness as I address social crisis issues in my work. Fundamental to this process is the consideration of the body as a dimension of knowledge and butoh as an alchemic art that operates at spiritual and material levels to expand our psyche. My intent is to transgress and transcend the boundaries of the dominant structures that, for centuries, have posited the female body as a site of colonization.

Origins of Performativity

Since the dawn of civilization dance and ritual have been connected, intertwined with the sacred (Turner 1986). The traces of hunter-gatherer societies of the Paleolithic period have shown us how dance and painting were intricately connected to the sacred. Their ritual practices functioned as a gate to the spiritual world, and earliest cultural activity indicates ritual practices of significance and careful ceremonial burial. Some sites

suggest that performance originated in caves at least 30 to 40 000 years ago (Schechner 2013).

Early cave art demonstrates the mythical harmony between humans and their spiritual and natural worlds. A beautiful example of this behaviour is on the Cave of the Trois-Frères at Ariège, France, with its famous rupestrian picture called The Sorcerer. An enigmatic cave painting in the cavern known as The Sanctuary that dates to 13,000 BCE, the ancient image on a stone shows an anthropomorphic figure dressed as a mythical character wearing an animal skin over its shoulder and a mask with antlers. The figure appears to be a duality between man and beast. It can be interpreted as the primigenial image of the horned deity, ubiquitous in many cultures' traditional dances.

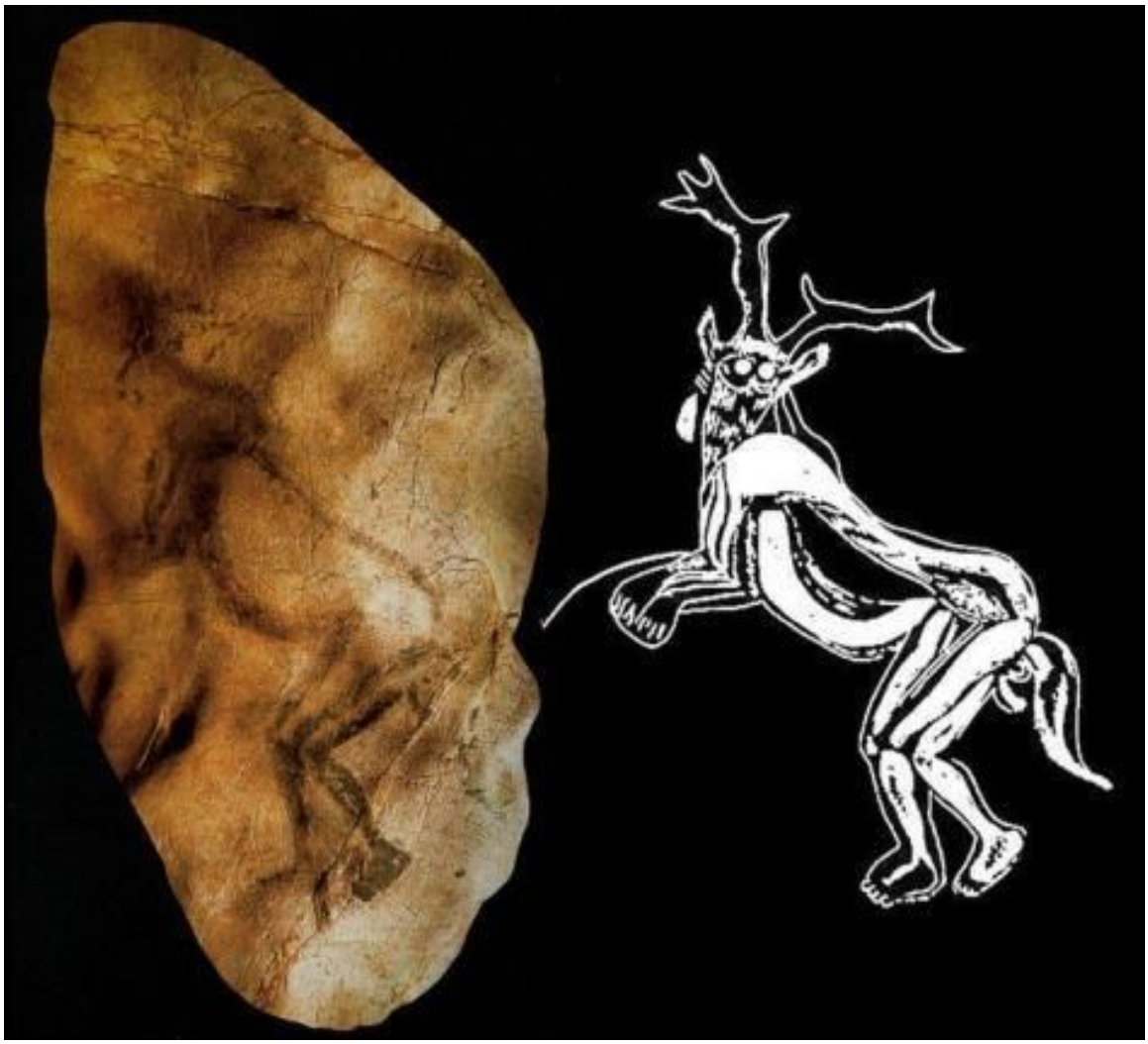

Figure A.2. The Sorcerer/13,000 BCE

The corporality of the creature in the image and its relation to space are altered and filled with ritual symbology that reveals a shamanic presence; one can interpret this as a form of documentation of activities that attributed the body to a place for the imagination with a metaphysical function. This consideration also demonstrates the expansion of an aesthetic and ethical conscience, from magical thinking that induced a different level of consciousness through ritual dance. The transformative aspect of performativity emerges from a poetic[8] dimension, a creative dimension pregnant with possibilities to revitalize interconnectedness.

In The Sorcerer of Cave of the Trois-Frères, the actor in that scene is the Shaman, the performance specialist. He possesses an innate capacity to work directly with the energetic fabric of the universe (Grinberg-Zylberbaum 1997), entering that ineffable state of consciousness that activates this intricate network. Like the shaman, the performer can transgress liminal spaces and social constructs through their aesthetic performativity and access new ways of knowing, leading to an expansion of consciousness. To quote Jerzy Grotowski,

> "The Performer is a man of action […] He is the dancer, the shaman, the priest, the warrior: he is outside of any aesthetic genre. […] Ritual is performance. A fulfilled action. A degraded ritual is spectacle." (quoted in Sais Martínez 2015, p. 27).

Ritual as Epistemology

Traditionally, ancestral knowledge is shared and accessed through ritual[9] practices (Turner 1986). In ritual, we learn behaviors, assimilate culture, strengthen ties, and build new relations. The ritual is a cyclical event and process that helps us transition from one moment of significance to another, providing a sense of certainty and security. Considering this, the symbolic effect of a ritual can operate at various levels of consciousness (Schechner and Appel 1990). After the experience of a ritual, whether

[8] Poetry is from the Greek poiein, "to make": a poem is something made, or in English we would more naturally say crafted

[9] "Rituals are collective memories encoded into actions. Ritual processes help people and animals deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies, and desires that trouble, exceed, or violate the norms of daily life. Play allows people to temporarily experience the taboo, the excessive, and the risky. Play and ritual lead people into a second reality, transforming them temporarily or permanently, such as in rites of passage." (Schechner 2013, 52)

spiritual, secular, or in performance, we may experience a shift in our body, in our life, or in the way we perceive things.

Building upon its function in spiritual and traditional practices, I consider the ritual in everyday life and in my butoh practice to be instrumental in accessing those liminal spaces for creative and transformative possibilities. Situated from the perspective of practical epistemology (centering the body as site of knowledge), the process of the ritual functions to prepare the body to arrive at a performance state with full presence, to access the empty body that butoh practice sees necessary to transcend the self. This practice is guided by a process that initiates with contemplation and reflexivity, followed by a slow metamorphic process of changing images. The butoh process is a journey that leads one to rediscover the self and the other in process and performance to transcend the boundaries of our own imaginaries, sometimes temporarily and at other times permanently. As Fraleigh states in her book Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy, “phenomenologically (in essence), the butoh dancer often undergoes a metamorphosis that leads to transformation” (2010, 42), one that affects the witness in a similar way.

Therefore, if as performer or spectator we experience these moments of transcendence/ transportation (Schechner 2013) consecutively in the ritual, I would like to imagine that perhaps, with the accumulation of these experiences, we can reach a long-lasting, if not permanent, state of transformation of the psyche. Butoh’s transformation occurs as an effect of meticulous metamorphosis that leads to a sense of expansion of the self.

I would like to suggest that there is much we can gain from the performativity of the ritual in performance. In the case of my practice, the butoh process, if we intentionally engage the world's difficulties,[10] we could bridge the space between and be transformed along with a spectator. I use the word spectator now because I am assuming an audience that is expectant, attentive, and imagining with me in the ritual process. My job as the performer is to engage them by means of the aforementioned

[10] Symbolic Anthropologist Victor Turner maintained that ritual emerges from "social processes" as part of what he called "social dramas” (Turner 1986). The performativity of the ritual functions to repair, restore or establish a new agreement within the group. Art naturally often responds to the world around us. This is a liminal period during which the ritual takes place. Hence the significance of ritual in performance for my practice.

symbolic act of alteration and make them participants in the experience (Ranciere 2019), thus achieving lato sensu, an act of common union.

Context and Influences

Butoh, A Brief History

Initially known as the Dance of Darkness (Ankoku Butoh), Butoh emerged in the midst of a complex time in post-war Japan, during the political, economic and artistic transformations of the 1950s and 60s. Its emergence was part of a larger cultural movement in which Japanese artists re-embraced aesthetic traditions such as Kabuki Theatre, Noh Theatre and Asian spiritual schools of thought (Vangeline 2021). Two main figures, Tatsumi Hijikata (1928 –1986) and Kazuo Ohno (1906 – 2010), sought to find a new expressive form that, while influenced by, Dadaism and the surrealist movement of the late 1930s brought to Japan by choreographer Hironobu Oikawa in the mid 50s (Vangeline 2021, xxviii), could speak to the unique cultural context of Japan while defying traditional notions of the self and the body and/in performance. Artists such as Andre Breton, Jean Genet, the Marquis de Sade, the Comte de Lau Tremont, Decroux, Marcel Marceau, as well as the German expressionist dance of Mary Wigman brought to Japan by modern dance pioneers Baku Ishii and Takayav Eguchi, were influential to the development of this new aesthetic.

Figure A.3. Kazuo Ohno during a butoh workshop, 1986; with Revolt of the Body by Tatsumi Hijikata, photographed by Roku Hasegawa, 1968.

Since its inception, Butoh's central focus has been the consideration of the abject body, or the body in a state of crisis. This notion emerged from Hijikata's memories of his childhood from rural Japan and the realities of class differentials. His aesthetics are characterized by the grotesque and the absurd, with bowed-legged dancers with sickled feet. "Hijikata sought a way to embody the painful confinement of infants kept inside warmers while their parents worked in the fields, the hunched over posture of old people in farming villages…" (Fraleigh 2010, p. 83). By contrast, Kazuo Ohno's aesthetics focused on the mind/soul. This dichotomy is still prevalent in butoh performances to date and are the essence of the form (Baird and Candelario 2019).

Figure A.4. Kazuo Ohno, Yoshito Ohno & Tatsumi Hijikata. William Klein, 1960

Butoh's initial performances were a form of street theatre, as shown in figure 5 above. Performed in 1959, Kinjiki or Forbidden Colors is often considered the first butoh performance. Inspired by Mishima Yukio's novel with the same title, the work dealt with of homosexuality, sodomy and animal sacrifice, causing uproar among the Japanese Dance Association and receiving much criticism (Baird 2012). Hijikata's later work took a more personal and almost autobiographical, multilayered direction. Similarly, Ohno's later work focused on nurturing individual self-discovery. Ohno's most famous performance and life's work, directed by Hijikata, paid tribute to the famous flamenco dancer Antonia Merce, known as la Argentina (Collini Sartori 1995).

Butoh defies a singular definition. Infused with the creative dimension of the post-modern world, with its condition of hybridity and liminality, and the fluctuating tensions between the emancipation of the body from its complex socio-political and psychological constructs, butoh rejects exacted coherence, calling to the chaos of our imaginaries, where animals, demons, ghosts, the good and the bad, and eros coexist.

Intersections Between Butoh and Mexico's Cultural Memory

> Under Mexico's cultural prism, Butoh expands its artistic density: in its aesthetic flow- in contact with the dimensions of paradox, magic and everyday absurdities that largely constitute that entelechy we might term the Mexican- this contemporary form of dance integrates philosophical and poetic aspects that transform it into a great sensorial power, which survives, defiantly, the continual deaths of art in the post-apocalyptic ages. It is a sun of the sunset; a sun that faints, but in the process of dying becomes all the more alive.
>
> - Gustavo Emilio Rosales (cited in Baird et al 2019, p. 303).

Mexico's cultural memory and butoh share many tenets, beginning with the traits of oral tradition, alchemic metaphysics (Fraleigh 2010), and strong imagery and symbolism; the identity of the Mexican is connected to the mysticism and surrealism, products of the syncretism of Christianity and Indigenous knowledge. A hybrid form of Catholic worship–paganism emerged when Spaniards indoctrinated Indigenous peoples into Christianity and these continued to practice and honour their Gods alongside the rituals of Catholicism (Harrington 1988). Unique to Mexico, this religion blends many symbols and rituals from the natural world with a mythology that endowed Mexican people a double consciousness[11] (Anzaldua 2012). A prominent contemporary example of Mexico's idiosyncrasy is the figure of Maria Sabina, a woman, healer, and knowledge keeper of Mazatecan lineage born in Huautla de Jimenez Oaxaca Mexico in 1894. According to her and as per Mazatecan tradition, the knowledge she possessed came from dreams, and the voices of the *saint children* (as she called the small mushrooms). Reaching a higher state of consciousness would allow her to attune to sensibilities not ordinary present in the day-to-day, and only with disposition and due respect for the trance provoked by the magic mushrooms, one could achieve deeper knowledge and healing. Sabina became well-known in the Western world for opening her work to foreigners during the mid-1960s. After American author and researcher Gordon Wasson first discovered and made her known to the Western world and soon, hippies, artists, and influential personalities travelled to the *Sierra Mazateca* to participate in her ritual

[11] Anzanldua's double consciousness of the Mexican refers to the fact that Indigenous knowledge was secretly woven into Catholicism, a form of resistance to the obliteration of their belief systems as the two cultures clashed. Mexicans hold knowledge that makes them stronger, one that the conquistadores would never understand. (It's worth mentioning that Anzaldua is almost certainly also referencing W.E.B. Dubois's idea of "double consciousness," as articulated in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*.

ceremonies seeking to experience a higher state of consciousness by ingesting magic mushrooms under her care and guidance. Sabina would ingest along with those participating in the night-long ceremony. After she died in the mid-'80s, Maria Sabina or Santa Sabina, as many know her, continues to be a Mexican icon, possibly the highest Mazatecan shaman of our era (Estrada 1989).

Mexico is a melting pot of cultures, some of which keep alive the traditions of magical thinking: the more than seventy indigenous groups based in the country; the Afro-Caribbean communities, who practice the Yoruba religion and voodoo; the Asian groups that provide holistic therapies; and the esoteric groups from Europe, based in the Mexican republic since the middle of the last century, such as the disciples of Master George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (Fourth Way) and Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière (Great Universal Fraternity), among others. This multiple force of mystical and magical thinking expands the conventional boundaries of the real.

The famous painter Diego Rivera said that in his 1938 visit to Mexico, André Breton declared this country as "surrealism in its purest state", when he perceived the power of this cultural broth of non-ordinary visions. It should be recalled that two years before Breton's statement, Antonin Artaud had visited Mexico in search of the psychotropic experience provoked by the ritual ingestion of peyote. His visit was recorded in his book "Viaje al país de los Tarahumaras" (Journey to the country of the Tarahumaras).

In addition to these multiple dimensions of extraordinary perception, we must keep in mind that Mexico's democratic history, which began with the Revolution of 1910, has been marked by alternating corrupt governments, which opens spaces for illegal, illogical, and deeply contradictory social behaviors.

Concerning the footprint of Butoh in Mexico, in addition to Artaud's visit, we must keep in mind the visit of Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre Laboratorium, in 1968. In the same year, while the Mexican army, commanded by then President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, massacred hundreds of students in the center of the Capital (the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, in Tlatelolco), Jerzy Grotowsky and his group presented performances of his legendary play: The Constant Prince. In this work, the main actor of Grotowski's group, Ryszard Cieślak, proved to have reached the maximum expressiveness which, in the

words of the Polish director, meant "The Total Act", something absolutely in accordance with Tatsumi Hijikata's artistic quests.

In the 1980s, Sankai Juku, the Butoh company founded and directed by Ushio Amagatsu, performed at the Festival Internacional Cervantino, opening a prosperous path for Butoh groups and soloists to perform later, such as Kazuo Ohno, Ko Murobushi, and the legendary Byakko-Sha grouping. It is said that this international festival also arose from a political absurdity, as it would have been one of the gifts or concessions that President José López Portillo had granted to his wife, Carmen Romano, in exchange for her letting go of the continuous and extravagant infidelities of her husband.

Today, the strong presence of Butoh in Mexico continues to be marked by a paradox, since current artists of this genre assiduously seek to work there, apparently having very few job opportunities in Japan. The following sections illustrate the intersection between butoh and México's cultural memory in ways that can help explain the integration of both aesthetics in my work.

Surrealism

The encounter between the aesthetics of butoh and Mexico began with the influence of the surrealist movement, and specifically with the arrival of exiled French artists and writers Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) and Andre Breton (1896-1966) to Mexico from Europe as World War II gathered force in the 1930s (Cull and Lagaay 2020). It was a migration that started extraordinarily creative collaborations and influences between European surrealists and Mexican artists such as Frida Kahlo. To the founder of the Surrealist movement, Andre Breton, Mexico was already an otherworldly place and the influences he found there impacted the Surrealist movement.[12] Antonin Artaud had dreamed Mexico in his work even before he journeyed with the shamans of the Tarahumara people (Cull and Lagaay 2020, 90). Thus, when Butoh arrived in Mexico in the 80s, with the company Sankai Juku performing at the International Cervantine

[12] "More than simply to escape political ideologies, many of these artists found Mexico to be a country offering a great deal of inspiration. Both the country's luscious landscape and the mystical traditions that are woven into everyday life help to transform the Surrealism of Europe to a movement that became more inclusive and innovative. Not even Breton could have imagined how transformation living in Mexico was, when visiting in 1938, he was amazed that modern ideologies co-exist in perfect harmony with the surrounding magical atmosphere." ("The Rise of Surrealism in Mexico")

Festival in Guanajuato (as mentioned above), there was an immediate connection to this form (Baird and Candelario 2019). At the end of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, Mexico was the scene of film and literary works that prolonged and strengthened the surreal condition of everyday life.

I am referring especially to the saga of books by Carlos Castaneda, an enigmatic anthropologist and writer of Peruvian origin who places Mexico as his field of shamanic initiation, guided by a master sorcerer who called himself Don Juan; and two films by Chilean director and writer Alejandro Jodorowsky: El Topo (1970) and La Montaña Sagrada (1973). Both Castaneda's books and Jodorowsky's films reinforce the projection of Mexico as a magical dimension, where there are various places where paranormal energy exchanges take place, which can contribute to the spiritual transformation of existence; search linked to the aesthetic and subjective investigations of Butoh.

Figure A.5. Frida Kahlo and Andre Breton, about 1938. Photographer: Unknown.

Notions of Time and Space

Two central tenets of butoh that make this art form trance-like and alchemic are the concepts of time/space. Time seems to stop in butoh: it slows down as the seemingly transparent space between the performer and the spectator becomes dense and alive; past, present, and future fuse in one moment as the performer activates the space between, the Ma, in a process layered with imagery and charged with presence. The

concept of Ma is beautifully defined by Sondra Fraleigh: “Ma, the space between becomes the connective tissue of butoh, allowing the permeable passage of images in butoh alchemy […] it is an expansive state of mind.” (2010, 6-7). Similarly, the Mexican Shaman opens the liminal space,[13] activating the intricate energy fibres[14] that connect the universe through a ritual trance that also seems to stop time. In particular, the butoh performer activates the Ma working from within/without (Fraleigh 2010), heightening their sensorial field through introspective work and visualization.

Moreover, in Mexican culture, coming from the Nahuatl language, the space in between is Nepantla. This is a place of no place, one which Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldua (2012), considers within the context of her Aztec/Mexican origins, a geographical space between Mexico and the United States where one can be trapped between their two different socio-political realities; the border, in other words, is also a psychic state. For Anzaldua, the border is a liminal space for the psyche, which can be activated to enhance our consciousness. Thus, she postulates that Nepantla is a place full of potentiality to reconcile and to reach a state of elevated collective consciousness. Nepantla, in Mexican cultural consciousness, and Ma in butoh, are the liminal and mythic places of knowledge that the Shaman and the performer can activate.

Paradox

Butoh and Mexico's traditional cosmogony share a common understanding that the world functions with paradox. The tension between love and horror, care and destruction, is the essence of Butoh, dancing between life/death, moving between

[13] “The most sticking characteristic of space is that it is perceived as a transparent (invisible) extension, even though it contains immense amounts of information in each of its parts. Transparency seems to be more a product of the brain’s incapacity to decode information than a characteristic of space itself” (Grinberg-Zylberbaum 1997, 446).

[14] “The principal postulate of the syntergic theory is that interaction between the neuronal field and the pre-space structure, and the resulting interference pattern is experienced by us as an image. From this point of view, a visual image would, metaphorically speaking, be the interactions between the neuronal field and the pre-space structure” (Grinberg-Zylberbaum 1997, 451).

light/darkness, and consciousness/unconsciousness.[15] In pre-colonial Mexico, a mythic duality maintained the universe's equilibrium; war/rain, death/life, and masculinity/femininity must exist in proper proportion and balance to secure the continual harmony of the cosmos (McKeever Furst 1995). As in butoh, this dichotomy is grounded in the understanding that life, growth, and fertility depend on the powers of death, sacrifice and decay. This flux is maintained by the Shaman and the performer through ritual. A great example is the famous Mesoamerican ball game *El Juego de Pelota; el juego de la vida y la muerte.* A cycle that reflects the movement of the cosmos its movement, the beginning: the cycle between day and night, light and darkness, between life and death. A divine game which goal was/is to keep the balance of the universe. To the cycles moving.

Alchemy

The metamorphic process of Butoh performances often produces a cathartic effect that can be likened to a healing shamanic experience. Kazuo Ohno once said that butoh was "'medicine ...a doctor for the audience and the dancer'" (quoted in Vangeline 2021, 181). Its transformational process makes Butoh an art capable of opening poetic spaces of the imagination to free our metaphoric body, like the priest/shaman in Mexico's traditional medicine. This process makes it an alchemic art. Its alchemy resides in its capacity to transform the body through its metamorphic symbolic means, in the insistence of "a body in constant state of becoming, living, and dying at once in an imagistic process" (Fraleigh 2020, 83).

For his part, as a prologue to his one-person show called Quicksilver, Ko Murobushi sensei (1947-2015), a member of the first generation of Butoh practitioners, writes a few lines about the alchemical symbolism of the performer:

> The first dancer was a blacksmith, and our body is made of metal: one goes alone in the world, wandering, seeking the North attracted by the flare; goes like a migratory bird. Metal is isolated, it is hard but soft at the same time,

[15] "The path to butoh leads to both past and future; like Janus, each dancer most look back to the past yet deliberately look forward. At first glanced, butoh has two faces; two forms of dance-one created by Kazuo Ohno and the other one by Tatsumi Hijikata, butoh is the dance of duality; life and death, lights and darkness, consciousness, and unconsciousness. Yet, at its core, like the roman god, butoh transcends this dichotomy and is also the dance of passage and transition" (Vangeline 2021, xliii).

a structure balanced by nerves rather than muscles. Nerves of steel to go to the moment of truth. (KoMurobushi Archive 1992)

Figure A.6. Ko Murobushi, Quicksilver, Theater Xirgu, Buenos Aires, 2012; Photo by Eugenia Andrealli)

Trance and Ecstasy

Furthermore, a shared vision of a poetic inquiry and a cathartic experience of liminal states related to our mortality unite butoh and Mexico's shamanic world. Primarily, the concept of death is a state of intense life, and dance is a state of ecstasy that maintains this paradox. We can find these concepts in Mexican iconography, such as the figure of Xipetotec, a priest who wears the skin of the scarified warriors in a state of trance. There is also Xochipilli (figure 8), the God of Art and Dance, a seated cross-legged figure with his eyes pushed into their sockets, demonstrating a state of introspective work, inner visions. The symbology that accompanies this figure suggests he is in state of trance. Opposite to what we could conceive as a dancing god, he is almost static, interrupting the flux of time, in a state of ecstasy, like the butoh performer.

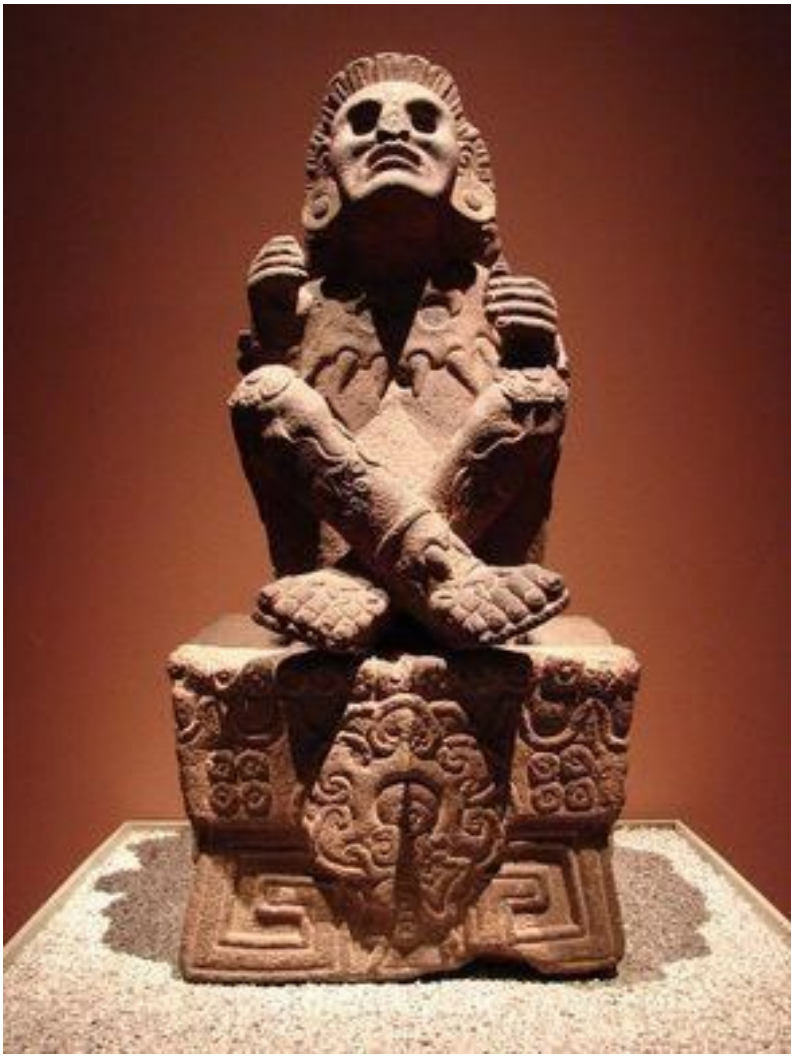

Figure A.7. Xōchipilli. Aztec God of Dance. National Museum of Anthropology. Mexico City.

Notion of an Internal Body

In traditional cultures, the shaman acts from deep knowledge of the body and its relation to the universe, assuming that the body is made from the same strands that weave the fabric of the cosmos (Grinberg-Zylberbaum 1997). This consideration is fundamental to understanding the intricate mechanisms that operate within the cosmos. Similarly, butoh works from the inner landscape of the body through observation, introspective work, and reflexivity. A vivid example of these mutual understandings of an internal body and its connection to the universe can be found in the iconography of Mictlanteculti (Figure 9), the Lord of the Underworld in Aztec mythology, an anthropomorphic being that stands with his internal organs exposed, pulsing and alive. Like this image, in butoh, we often

stand with our organs metaphorically exposed. Additionally, this metaphor is evocative of Hijikata's utterance "butoh is a dead body desperately trying to stand."

Figure A.8. Mictlantecutli. God of the Underworld. Museum del Templo Mayor. Mexico City.

Connecting These Concepts to My Practice: Somatic Dramaturgy

Postulated by Mexican scholar, Dr. Gabriel Weisz Carrington, professor of Comparative Literature at the National University of Mexico, UNAM; somatic dramaturgy has to do with a dramaturgical process that is centered in lived experience, intuition, and embodiment. It derives from philosophy that prioritizes thinking through the body. In the larger scale of my theoretical frame of Practical Epistemology, a somatic dramaturgy places emphasis on lived experience as a road to knowledge, and as Dr. Weisz

suggests, on a somatic text that narrates as story written in our bodies by culture, tradition, and personal experience through what he calls ethno-drama[16] where the elemental unit is centered around the idea that to know is to make/do. The DOING assumes and actuates traditional epistemological elements, such as thinking, sensing, remembering, feeling, seeing, desiring, and projecting into the future. All of these coalesce when we DO (Wolford and Schechner 1997)2023-08-16 11:43:00 AM, because thinking and doing are intricately related and politically strengthened.

My artistic process begins in day-to-day life. I create as I find my way to school or run errands. The making happens anywhere; it can be in a park, close to a tree, in my living room looking out the window, or in the dance studio. My creative process is a form of resistance and transgression in response to my lived experience and the long history of captivity the female body has been subject to (Lagarde 2003). In addition to responding, this process includes tapping into the memories and shared stories passed on by my matriarchal lineage. The somatic practice of butoh facilitates access to ancestral memories and embodied knowledge. Part of this process starts with the recollection of personal memories from childhood, such as sitting in the kitchen with the women in my family preparing food for important celebrations, led by the abuelas (grandmothers). Other memories come from my visits to the small village where my grandma was born: the smell of the nixtamal (the grinding of the corn), the hot coal to cook the beans in a clay pot, and the comal to make tortillas are still sensorially visceral memories for me.

Additionally, my methodology includes the mapping of physical vestiges and traditions embedded in my cultural consciousness (Taylor 2003). This includes taking long walks through Mexico City's streets, visiting ruins, churches, plazas and traditional tianguis (markets), recording sounds, watching the danzantes and the spiritual cleansings in the Zocalo of Mexico City, observing the street's culture in el barrio de Tepito with its abundance of shrines and altars to La Santa Muerte (a ghetto known for its counterfeit market and the shrines to la Santa Muerte, a ritual to the underworld

[16] (Greco et al 2014) Dr. Weisz makes the distinction between the figure of the playwright who originated in Greece and the Shaman; the first a dramaturgy associated to reason and the second, a magical ethno-dramaturgy which text is written on our bodies and is woven into a culture, oral tradition and lived experience. In other words what constitutes the embodied knowledge or what Taylor calls the repertoire.

goddess). The encounter with el barrio de Tepito is always fascinating; such juxtapositions of cultures in the City's hypermodernity reveal the dichotomies and paradoxes of Mexican culture. In this way, my artistic practice re-encounters with and reclaims my Mexicanidad as a woman living in the diaspora.

When I returned to my country after more than eight years, it was as if I watched from the outside my abuelas, the Indias (indigenous women) selling candy outside the metro stations and outside corporate buildings, the working-class women in the busy transportation system late at night with their children still in their school uniforms sleeping in their arms. I also saw my mother and her sisters; they were devoted wives and mothers like their brown-skinned icons. These observations of Mexican women brought forward questions about the construct of cultural identity and the position of women in Mexican society. Some of their roles are engraved in the Mexican female archetypes, such as the Virgen of Guadalupe, the selfless and virtuous mother (Anzaldua 2012).

Mexico's Female Archetypes as a Site of Violence

Looking closely at the female archetypal images that were a referent in my life and whose virtues were modeled by me and most women in my family, it became evident that the history of patriarchy in Mexico is embedded in its female archetypes, where social and class hierarchies, gender roles and norms have been constructed to service power structures. More importantly, the history of these archetypes traces the histories of gender violence and the epidemic of femicide in Latin America and Mexico. The roles of Mexican women in society are embedded in these icons.[17] In her book Women in Mexico: A Past Unveiled, author Julia Tunon speaks of women's roles in society through the history of Mexico as "the historical model of women that has been offered is a mirage telling us what they 'should be'" (1987, xiii). The archetype is the mirror of what men want her to be. With intertwined identities, these archetypes are plagued with ambiguity and are often conflated to disguise institutionalized oppression.

[17] "Guadalupe to make us docile and enduring, La Chingada to make us ashamed of our Indian Heritage, and La Llorona to make us long-suffering people" (Anzaldua 2012, 53).

The Virgen of Guadalupe and Coatlicue

Figure A.9. Virgen of Guadalupe and Coatlicue 4, c. 1500, Mexica (Aztec).

The iconography of the Virgen of Guadalupe depicts an orthodox portrait of the immaculate conception, crowned with twelve stars, the sun on her mantle, and the moon beneath her feet. However, its image contains hidden coded messages for the Indigenous people of Mexico: the color of her turquoise mantle, supposedly indicating her royalty, was a color assigned to the divine duality of Ometecultli and Omecihuatl (God/Goddess of life/death); her sash symbolizes pregnancy (she is “en cinta”); the image below it, in the shape of a cross, signifies the cosmos, in Nahuatl called Nahui-Ollin. Moreover, behind the name Guadalupe resides the name of “she who has dominion over serpents,” Cuatlicue. These are only some of the many symbols embedded in this iconic figure, illustrating the double consciousness of the Mexican people. Their Gods and Goddesses and their ritual traditions remain alive beneath and mixed with Catholicism. The Aztecs explained the cosmos and their relationship to it through an intricate but coherent system of symbols and paradoxes. When these were destroyed, the iconic Virgen gave Indigenous people a new identity (Harrington 1988).

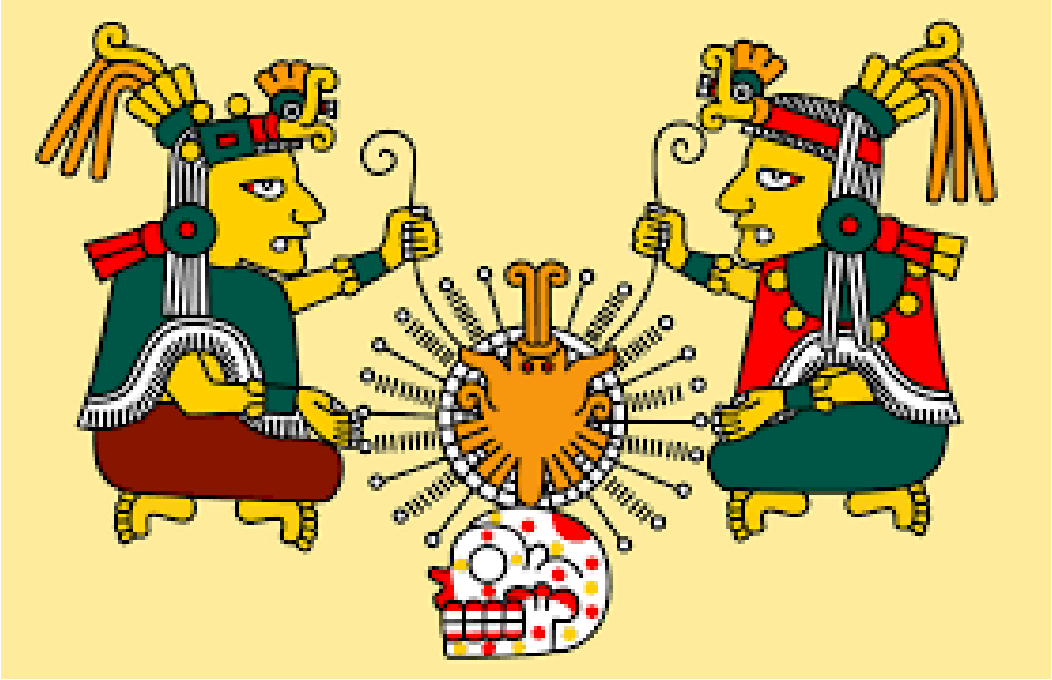

Figure A.10. Ometecultli and Omecihuatl.

Malintzin

The archetype of the Virgen has performed as the mediator between two temporalities, reconciling two idiosyncrasies; her contemporary counterpart, La Malinche or Malintzin, instead operates as an example of shame. An intelligent and polylingual native woman gifted to the conquistador Hernan Cortes, who became his interpreter and the mother of his child, she became the emblem of mentizaje and treason (Anzaldua 2012). In the books of history, she betrayed her Indigenous culture and has been a symbol of shame in the collective consciousness of the Mexican people (Paz 1996). She is known as La Chingada, the whore, blamed for the conquest of Mexico. However, along with many other Indian girls, Malintzin was handed to the conquistadores by their own tribal leaders.

Figure A.11. Doña Marina. Malintzin. Huilotlan (México), c. 1500.

La Llorona

A third archetype prominent in Mexico's mythology is the Wailing Mother, La Llorona. She comes to complete the trilogy. A haunting spirit that shows herself to the Indians at night, dressed in white and wailing for her dead children, her presence is an omen. Popular legend says that she drowned her own children in the river; immediately regretting her actions and unable to save them, she drowned herself with them. The earliest documentation of her apparitions in the New Spain dates to the year 1550. Her identity is connected to the infamous Malinche, and to Chicuacoatl and Cuatlicue (Anzaldua 2012), two female deities connected to fertility but also associated with death and attributed with monster-like qualities.

Conclusion

The consideration of the performativity of the ritual is a way of working within and looking at the world through a metaphysical lens, bridging the natural and mystical spiritual worlds in performance to transgress social constructs. I chose to examine this

phenomenon because I believe in the multiple possibilities to expand our consciousness. The ritual process can activate the liminal spaces, allowing us to inhabit new territories of the psyche (Eliade 1987) and access the knowledge that lives in the body. Butoh and my ancestral lineage provide the metaphysical lens to understand primordial aspects of the complexity of human existence. In this journey, I have experienced incredible moments of transformation that made me realize the power of performance to shift not only individual, but also collective consciousness.

Concerned with social issues, gender violence in Mexico being one of them, performativity can be the device to engage in meaningful dialogue through performance. The alchemy of butoh self-realizes as a practical epistemology through a cathartic experience when we gather in community to re-imagine the world in a complex creative process. We are a multiplicity of bodies constructed by the other and by our associations with the other. Together we can pursue emancipation, collecting and sharing our histories and shaping new individual and collective identities. Our desires together can soften the tensions between social structures and can have a political dimension, in a united inquiry.

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Appendix B.

Artistic Collaborators' Statements

The Costumes: Katherine Soucie

The story of the techniques and methods layered within these costumes begins with the material. Hosiery is a textile and garment that is designed to be a second skin to the body. It takes on the form and shape of the individual, which shifts from wearer to wearer. Given the flexibility and fragility of this material and form, it is exposed to deconstructivist textile methods to further transform this material away from its traditional association with women's legs.

The process begins with using iron fragments collected from the local environment. Over the years, I have learned to observe and collect from environments where these iron fragments are remnants from an industrial past or collected from abandoned urban settings. Iron has a long history of use as a natural dye and mordant within the practice of natural dyeing. It has the ability to sadden colour palettes when mixed with other natural dye resources or can be used on its own, resulting in a warm earthen range of hues that reflects the various depths of iron oxide that exist within us. Our physical being is made of iron and when blood stains occur upon the surface of cloth, it is a gentle reminder of the interconnectedness of all things.

Figure B.1. Illustrating the creation process. Images by Katherine Soucie

For this project, the iron fragments were laid upon and wrapped with the waste textile hosiery fragments using salt and vinegar. These two auxiliaries help transfer the memory of the iron from solid to a liquid state. The alchemic process allows for the iron/dye molecules to bond with the finer molecules. The process was tended to on a regular basis and took approximately four weeks to cure before it was further transformed into material yardage, ready for the costume making process.

The Soundscape: Jami Reimer

Assisting on the *13th Chronicle* alongside Salome Nieto was a highly enriching process for me as a composer and collaborator. Our collaboration began with a series of soundwalks throughout dramatically contrasting districts of Mexico City. Joined at different points by Salome's niece, Mariana, and her sister, Maria Jesus, we walked and talked and interviewed and recorded together in what became a fruitful research method into sound as a shifting barometer of urban gender politics. We drew on sound walk techniques from the writings of Pauline Oliveros, Hildegaard Westerkamp, and Mexican sound-walking practitioner Amanda Gutiérrez, which helped frame our walks with listening and walking prompts rooted in feminist practice.

Learning from the artistic and activist practices of this insightful group of women was illuminating! In our walks and talks, I aimed to offer technical microphone support, introduce some basics of sound walking methodology, and support Salome, Mariana, and Maria Jesus in taking the lead whenever possible in the creation of field recordings. Our walks lead to some fascinating conversations with women that we met on the street as Salome shared her project aims and women generously weighed in with their own reflections, consenting to be audio recorded. Two of these women's voices— artisans Maria de Jesus and Elizabeth, a mother and daughter that we met in the main Coyoacán square— met with us on several occasions and are briefly heard in the final sound score for *The 13th Chronicle.*

Salome and I also spent an afternoon in the *Fonoteca Nacional,* a sound library I happened upon in 2017, which remains one of my favourite places in Mexico City. Between hours listening in this rich sonic archive, and listening "live" on the street, Salome and I visited galleries, homing in on surrealist and feminist exhibitions and

thinking out loud about how these aesthetic practices might infuse the post-fieldwork phase of our collaboration.

Returning to the studio after this trip meant combing through a thick archive of material. Salome and I continued our listening sessions, now from the studio at Woodward's, listening with new intentions and compositional goals. I quite enjoy this phase in the shifting listening process of field recording based work—somewhere between the tasks of discovery and total recontextualization. We listened together, visioning pathways for our sonic material to frame and underscore the work. After this, I took significant time to sculpt some drafts on my own before pitching to Salome, testing in rehearsal, seeking further feedback, and editing the score into what became the version heard in performance.

I also had the opportunity to perform in *The 13th Chronicle*. This phase of the project flexed totally different muscles than building the recorded score! It was a great pleasure to spend time in rehearsal together with Salome and Barbara Bourget. Barbara's movement became a powerful reference point for my own vocal improvisation, and it was exciting to build our performance together under Salome's clear and grounding direction.

Being a part of this project was an encouraging reminder of how reciprocally energizing interdisciplinary collaborations can be. It is a joy to work with Salome, and to discover more about her research into gender politics and her deep practice and experimentation within the Butoh dance tradition. I sincerely hope we have the opportunity to work together again soon!

Figure B.2. Mariana recording inside the Metropolitan Cathedral Mx. Image by Jami Reimer

Figure B.3. Mariana and Salome in Coyoacan. Image by Jami Reimer

The Snake-Puppet: Lizy Oakley

Puppetry, as an art form, is about transformation. There is an alchemy to the inanimate becoming animate. In the performance, the snake puppet teetered between states; at times a sculpture, at times a slithering, living creature. Like a shedded snake skin, it existed ambiguously. The serpent was big enough that it was slightly otherworldly, but not so big that its size was unfathomable. This tension of scale kept us hovering between planes, between the everyday space of the GCA and the transformed realm of Salome's piece.

Figure B.4. In the studio with Liz Oakley. Image by Salome Nieto.

The design process began with conversations about the serpent as a symbol of femininity, regeneration, creativity, and transformation. Salome and I also discussed the puppet's function in the piece, to transition between spaces and stages of the performance; a function that echoes the symbolism of regeneration and shedding. While building the puppet, I saw re-use and re-appropriation of found material as another way to enact a process of transformation. Recycled cardboard boxes became the segments of the snake's body. Pieces of pipe insulation foam, usually hidden within plumbing systems, became the snake's exposed flexible spine. Remnants of the dancers' costumes became the edges of the snake's body, the suggestion of a skin. In this way, the material dramaturgy of the puppet was in conversation with the costume design.

Performatively, the snake puppet was also dramaturgically intertwined with Salome's choreography. I intentionally designed the puppet without any specific handles, rods, or pre-determined mode of operation. I wanted the dancers to discover their own physical relationship to the snake, and I wanted the method of animation and way of holding the puppet to transform during the piece as well. We found ways of touching and animating the puppet that implicated the dancers' bodies, activating them in a way that was serpentine in itself while also maintaining elements of the piece's Butoh-inspired movement.

I made a very intentional choice to omit any representation of the snake's skin, instead imagination.

Figure B.5. Scraps from costumes. Image by Salome Nieto.

Additionally, the skeletal look of the snake's body implied another fluctuating state: between death and life. I also came to see the snake as living in the moment just after it has shed its skin.

Figure B.6. The installation in the Lobby. Image by Carl Craig.

I understand the presence of the snake in the performance to be a reclamation of its colonized image as a symbol of evil. While exploring with the puppet, the dancers and I found that the snake, rather than being fear-inspiring, brought us calm and ease. We moved through the collaborative process, just as the serpent moved through the space, with an easeful, intuitive slither.

Appendix C.

SCA Performers' Reflections

I asked the performers to respond to three questions:

1. What is your understanding of Butoh?
2. How is it relevant to your practice and artistry?
3. What value has it added to your own process?

Lauren Han

As a performer, I sometimes feel that the most important thing about what I do is presence. Even on a bad day, if nothing else, I must be present. I can do everything I need to do if I am present. Presence is hard at the same time as it's simple; at the same time as I feel that I will always be able to count on it, I feel that it is constantly eluding me and that I will be working on it always, and only maybe getting better at it.

Working with butoh for the last few months has taught me a lot about presence. Part of this is in the way it has required me to be constantly in sensation - often unpleasant, uncomfortable sensation that I nevertheless need to feel fully and live in the moment with. It's easy to be present if I just feel what's happening to my body - even if that feeling isn't an easy one to be with. Butoh has also taught me new relationships to time that have allowed me to be present in different ways, by stretching or compressing time, by feeling a hundred years pass in a single step or seeing generations of my ancestors on my shoulders. Now when I feel into the moment, I can feel myself in relation to geological and ancestral timescales and not just the timescale of my small human life.

The concept of "suchness" has also been revelatory for me as a way to articulate what I'm after when I talk about presence, and also as a way to approach finding it. To do something for its own sake is freeing and world-opening. When I'm not thinking about some other end to which I am dancing, the dancing itself becomes so much more interesting to do. It gains its own life. In other areas of my practice, I feel that this idea frees me from needing a reason to explore something - an expectation of what I will gain

from it - before I explore it. I can just do something for itself and let it be what it is. It allows me to play more freely and commit to the work more deeply.

My experience in this class has also shifted my relationship to thinking, knowing, and especially imagining. In a journal entry from after our second rehearsal, I wrote about trying to recount one of the exercises we did - in the moment, I was concentrating very deeply, but afterwards, I had a very difficult time remembering and describing what it had felt like. Experiencing the butoh body became easier to recall and describe with more practice, but I still remember this experience as a reminder that not everything can be fully remembered, held onto, kept - and that there are some things that you can only really know while you're experiencing them.

Of course, the body also knows things that the "brain" doesn't (I'm hesitant to denote the two separately, but I do find I feel these ways of knowing and thinking differently), and of course the body is intelligent. This process has been a constant call to think with my body, and to trust that it's capable of doing that. This is always helpful for me as a performer, especially one who tends to get stuck in the cognitive. Practicing it makes me smarter and more alive to the world around and inside me.

One of my biggest takeaways from this process has been the importance, power, and usefulness of imagery and imagination. I remember imagination being defined as "sensing an image." This connection between imagination and sensation reinforces the point that the imaginary shapes the physical. Changing the image changes the body - it changes how it feels to be in it and how it feels to watch it. This is an incredibly helpful relationship to be aware of not just for performing but for directing, choreographing, and collaborating.

Using images as the beginning of a creation process is an example of something very concrete that I can take elsewhere in my own practice. I remember bringing in images of my archetype early in our rehearsals and having to build a movement sequence from them, being asked to "become Eve." Notably, this didn't just mean taking on the poses that I saw in the pictures, even if I used them as source material to start from; the image is a jumping-off point, a beginning, not an end to fulfill or a model to imitate. The use of an image also doesn't need to be literal or legible. Looking at the images that are in my score now, I would be surprised if someone in the audience could

name a single one of them; still, each one aids me in bringing clarity to my movement, and that helps me to bring the audience into my experience. We may not be seeing or understanding the same thing, but we get closer to feeling the same thing. Clarity doesn't require legibility.

Two final lessons from this process that I will keep close to me: *trust the body* and *trust the work*. I am learning to trust my body enough to knock it off balance and see what it does. To trust it enough to listen to it when it tells me what it wants to do. To trust it enough to let it do the thinking. I am learning to trust the work enough to commit to it fully, even when it's unclear or uncomfortable. To trust it enough to keep doing it and keep doing it and keep doing it.

Krystal Tsai

Over the semester, the definition of butoh shifted for me. I dived into the practice with the mindset of thinking Butoh is just dancing extremely slowly. Since calmer, slower movement quality is my forte, I didn't expect to face too many challenges going into the practice. After the whole semester learning the history, the meaning, and the origin. Many times, I come to rehearsal feeling ready but end up having the hardest time settling into my body and mind. The frustration made me question, how can something I used to have a hard time getting away with become such a hard task. After wrapping my head around the idea of "body in crisis" I slowly found myself making peace with my body and mind screaming while practicing. Now my understanding of butoh has shifted and enriched with more stories, sensations, and images from myself. I'm able to sit in the struggle and re-orient myself to enjoy the sensation butoh work brings to me.

Butoh reviled and humbled my artistry so much. Not only was I humbled by how unexpectedly hard butoh work is. But actually, how simple it can be. A lot of time I think I'm always trying to navigate my sensitivity into movements, giving it so much meaning and story. But Butoh reminded me it could be simple, just carry what comes and learn how to let it go. I think Butoh brought me the strength I need in my practice not only physically but mentally.

I think Butoh taught me how to move in a way of watching myself from the inside. I often struggle with the outsider view of my movements. Butoh centred me to not only

focus on the sensation but let what comes pass. Because of the roundedness and calmness, I maintained I feel the power that I can handle whatever comes next. Having the tool of staying patient with myself and having control over my body/mind brings so much more into my practice. This directed study's rehearsal process continues to help me discover new potential, both within my body and mind. In the next few weeks, I look forward to sharpening my skill and embodying the Butoh mind in movements.

Anna Wang-Albini

Addressing the first question given when being asked to write the reflection, *What is your understanding of Butoh?* I think mentally and conceptually I understand the tenants, or at least the ones covered together or in the reading. Physically, I still have a lot more work to do to feel the empty body, the body in crisis, infinity, and transformation. I think that this doesn't just have to do with being present. I am finding that I understand Butoh in an embodied sense when mental and physical intent, presence, and process meet each other. I understand Butoh in short bursts and glimpses since I often don't have that alignment. When I do, I feel myself being a Butoh performer. This is felt most often when I come across sincere but unexpected struggle, can hold onto opposing forces in multiple directions at once, and can connect to the metamorphosis that allows the dance to continue organically. Some days I can find these things more naturally/can understand what a Butoh experience is. However, the days where this doesn't happen, I am estranged from feeling that understanding since I can only feel my struggle, and sometimes impatience, to find it. This only serves to push me further away from it. Those days I feel more like an outside observer of myself trying to get a grasp on the form. With that said, my understanding of Butoh is largely informed by all those times I don't 'get it'. I can feel the lack of the kind of presence and awareness Butoh demands to find it. To say the least, I understand Butoh to be a demanding form of performance, especially mentally, it's abstract in the sense that you don't dance to become something, but you dance as the thing you've already been, are, and will be. I understand it to be a test of patience, focus, and determination to stay with it.

The second question asked of us was**,** *How is it relevant to your practice and artistry?* Process wise, I think Butoh is relevant to how I think and communicate ideas since it is very tied to the accumulation of visuals and a sense of becoming. I often work with images and the idea of dancing 'as if…'. I like working with the idea that we can be

completely different people, creatures, or things while we dance. In that sense, my choreographic and the Butoh process overlap. However, in my process, I like to work with physical limitations and struggle- I very much enjoy more muscular ways of moving that call for tension rather than release. Its more natural for me to communicate and share who I am through variations of fleshy texture which Butoh does not always entertain. I have noted that Butoh seems to draw on creating tension without that kind of physical muscular tension. Butoh works slowly, much slower than what I am accustomed to. Since starting, Butoh has taught me a thing or two about patience. While I consider myself a very patient person, there were times when sticking to one task felt unbearable and I'd feel nauseated, anxious, and as if all my insides were getting compressed, begging for reprieve of having to do one thing for so long. I felt this when turning my hand with our marrow, standing in the Butoh position (walking is generally ok), sitting and holding hands (we did this twice earlier on in the rehearsal process-and it drove me absolutely, outrageously mad each time), and so on so forth. I have never worked like this before, and I am not sure it is something I will be integrating into my practice. With that said, I think it was so valuable to do, I learned about myself both mechanically (i.e. how I move, where I hold…) and mentally. Artistically speaking, since Butoh moves quite slowly (at least externally – the inside perspective is often very busy), this process allowed me to discover tendencies in ways I express myself and what qualities and textures I associate with meaning. It has shown me that I struggle to show genuine expression when it revolves around desire or longing. If it doesn't look that way, it certainly feels that way. I know that for me to be able to feel something I need to know it inside and out- I need to research it, look at specific case studies, etc. For the archetypes I was able to do this and learn about my figure. I could feel her arch in life, her character, desire, inner self, anger and hatred, fear, and fearlessness, pain, betrayal, and so on so forth. However, I found it very hard to connect to certain parts of the choreography. For example, when reaching up into the sky (you mention how it's like a baby reaching for milk) I have a hard time expressing my desire for nourishment- I don't remember that. I can't read about that experience since no one remembers it to be able to write or speak about it. So artistically, I feel like I struggle with artistry when I don't conceptually understand it or can't connect to it. Ultimately, this has proven to be a limitation for me and has revealed something I need to work on to push myself to be able to do more and become a more well-rounded artist.

I can confidently say that Butoh has enriched my practice. It has taught me about patience and to allow things to take their time and mutate themselves before moving on. While I certainly am not always great at this, I feel that before, and still now- just not as frequently, I would try to go through the movements to get to them/feel them. However, it would be experienced in a more 2-dimensional manner. It feels a bit fuller now. The recent discussion about trying to move and communicate the facial expressions as if they are happening behind me was interesting. It is something I would like to practice moving with more generally since, while doing that is like a Rubik's cube for my mind and body to execute, it certainly brings a different dimension to what it is I am doing. I am not sure yet how it changes it, but I do feel more intent towards the back as a 'front' as if I have a face behind me as well which I think is something very worth exploring.

Being immersed in this practice has been very valuable and I am very grateful to have been able to learn what I have from the experience.

Kaitlyn La Vigne

I believe it is important for me to share and acknowledge that being approached by Salome was a gift and I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity to learn in the studio with her. I feel I have come into this work with Salome with a different understanding compared to the other movers in the work. Considering the circumstances, I jumped right into a process that had already been underway. In a sense it has felt like catch up. However, what this has pushed me to discover is the value of not always knowing. I had to open my mind and body to be adaptable and absorbent. I had to trust my body and my curiosities. I have never taken a Butoh class before, but I am confident in my work ethic and willingness to take on this challenge of beginning to learn this new practice.

While in this physical practice with Salome, I have really appreciated her effort to share the foundation of Butoh's technique, its history, encouraging us to attend performances, and documenting our own personal experience through journaling as we learn Butoh. With this, I have found that the extent to which we as dancers are included in the composition and thought process behind Salome's choices makes the work that much more meaningful and intentional. Learning the relevance of the work inside and outside of the studio makes our role as the dancers' key to how we bring these important issues to the audience's attention in a meaningful way.

The in progress showing at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts on March 11th was a vital and excellent addition to my personal experience in this process. Allowing myself to be seen in a work that is almost unknown challenged me to be in the present with my body and my fellow peers. I found in performance I had a heightened sense of my surroundings which gave me permission to explore. I found moments that felt like a true experience and other things that didn't work so well. This was an important time for me as I proved to myself, I can push this work more.

Furthermore, these skills and tools is I am collecting in Salome's rehearsals have been interesting additions to how I work in my dance technique classes at SFU. As Salome says in rehearsal "The body is a container". This has given me the inspiration to fill and empty my body each day with questions, textures, desires, and imagination. Almost like the idea of putting on new skins, but instead of doing it from the outside in, I am working from the inside out. In addition, I have found the prominent use of imagery in the practice of Butoh has allowed me to activate experiences in parts of my body such as the calves, upper back, space between my head and my shoulders, as well as the sternum that I haven't felt before. In technique class I have been using imagery to further question the concepts we have been exploring in class. I am looking forward to taking these tools with me in my practice as I believe it further connects me to myself and grounds me.

As we get closer to the production it is interesting to feel the habits of my performing body and my rehearsing body step in while working in the studio. I have noticed in the last couple rehearsals that my body has felt too comfortable. I do not feel like I have been pushing my body to find the crisis or struggle that Butoh requires to find the experience. What makes the practice of Butoh is the experience that the performer has. I am currently navigating how to find this again. I think the mix of pressure of performance, feelings of vulnerability with this new practice, and evolving material have all influenced what I am able to access in rehearsal. I am looking forward to what I discover once school comes to an end!

Nicole Dreher

My experience with Butoh dance before working with Salome was very limited and thus, I had no idea what I was walking into. I quickly felt overwhelmed - mostly due

to the fact that I could only attend one of the two weekly rehearsals for the first few months. However, Salome and my fellow dancers helped ease my anxieties so I could settle into the movement.

The visual landscape of the Butoh body was something I struggled with a little bit, but once I realized I could think about the sensations in my body more so than the images provided to create those sensations, I think I had more success. I usually turn to sensation within my movement and move from bone/muscle/organs, but it's always nice to have guided reminders as this can allow me to discover something new. Salome did a great job of describing things in different ways to ensure each of us could grasp the concepts she wanted for the work.

This process and my experience with Butoh supported my personal philosophy of movement: Surrender to the dance. I was able to do that within this work with the support of my fellow dancers, Salome, and the movement itself. I am forever grateful for this experience and hold it close to my heart.

Appendix D.

The 13th Chronicle Evening Program

THE SNAKE

In the context of this work, the snake has a fundamental meaning, a symbol of fertility, fecundity, harmony and connection with the earth.

With this ancestral archetype of the snake, I reconnect with my cultural lineage, rejecting the idea imposed by colonialism, patriarchy and Catholicism associated with women as a source of sin. If we change our consciousness and dress in the snake's skin, we rediscover ourselves with all the potential that femininity houses.

Skin change is healing. We peel our skin to leave the past and renew ourselves.

If you tell me I'm a snake, then yes. I am, I carry the sign of the serpent in my blood and on my skin.

En el contexto de esta pieza, la serpiente tiene un significado fundamental, símbolo de fertilidad, de fecundidad, de armonía y de conexión con la tierra.

Con este arquetipo ancestral de la serpiente, reconectamos con el linaje cultural, rechazando la idea impuesta por el colonialismo, el patriarcado y el catolicismo asociada a la mujer como fuente de pecado. Si cambiamos nuestra conciencia y nos vestimos con la piel de la serpiente nos reencontramos con todo el potencial que aloja la feminidad.

El cambio de piel es cicatrizar sanar.

Nos pelamos la piel para dejar el pasado y renovarnos.

Si tú me dices que soy una serpiente, pues sí.

Sí lo soy, llevo en la sangre y en la piel el signo de la serpiente.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The School for the Contemporary Arts respectfully acknowledges the unceded traditional territories including, the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səl̓ilw̓ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations, on which SFU Vancouver is located.

BIOGRAPHIES

For full biographies, please use the QR code.

SFU SCA SCHOOL FOR THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS

The 13th Chronicle

SALOME NIETO'S MFA PROJECT
JUNE 1 & 2, 2023 | 7:30 PM + 2:00 PM (MATINEE, JUNE 2)
STUDIO D + LOBBY – SFU GOLDCORP CENTRE FOR THE ARTS
149 W. HASTINGS ST, VANCOUVER

THE 13TH CHRONICLE

A butoh-inspired performance, *The 13th Chronicle* is a response to the twelve chronicles presented in *Sabes Algo de Mariana? (Do You Know Anything About Mariana?)*, a play by Mexican scholar and dramaturg Andres Castuera-Micher. Each chronicle in Castuera-Micher's text narrates a gut-wrenching story of violence endured by women. For allegory purposes, each character in this play is named Mariana.

The inspiration for the performance comes from a very personal place and is an offering to reimagine the world. *The 13th Chronicle* is a space to consider what rituals and processes need to be put in place to break the painful and horrible cycle of violence. We will gather to perform ways to mend the wounds and scars; to give voice to those that have been silenced and killed by this violence; and most importantly, to ensure that their names and lives remain in our collective memory.

CREDITS

Concept, choreography, and performance: Salome Nieto
Artistic collaboration and performance: Barbara Bourget, Nicole Dreher, Lauren Han, Kaitlyn La Vigne, Jami Reimer, Krystal Tsai, Anna Wang-Albini
Special guest: Leonor Martinez Garcia
Soundscape and voice: Jami Reimer
Lighting design: Philip Birkby
Video design: Alberto Renteria Ibarra (Mexico)
Puppet Design: Liz Oakley
Graphic design: Carl Craig
Costume design: Katherine Soucie (London)
Technical Director: Anthony Trombetta
Stage Manager: Maddy Woodley
Stage Manager: Bernice Paet
Archival: Mena EL Shazly and Enrique Mohler

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Committee Member: Judith Garay (SCA Dance Faculty and Choreographer)
External Examiner: Alessandra Santos (Associate Professor, Film Studies, UBC)

I want to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor and committee for your endless support, feedback, and inspiration. This has been an experience of growth, challenge, and new connections. I am looking forward to the future!

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE SCA & GCAPES STAFF

Director, GCA Production and Event Services: Miles Lavkulich
SCA Technical Director: Ben Rogalski
SCA Production coordinator: Emily Neumann
Communications: Brady Cranfield
Lead Technician: Kevin Kim
Venue Technician: Zu Liniewski
Resident Technician: Darryl Strohan
Venue Technician/operator: Deborah Koesyonoe

ADDITIONAL CREDITS FOR IMAGES USED IN VIDEOS AND OTHER VISUALS

Opening Video and still: Mexico on road trip, Southeast México. Feet walking, Mayan Archeological zone
Colonia Polanco CDMX, Av Reforma, Mexico City and Burnaby BC, Canada
Source: Salomé Nieto
Rattlesnake source: National Geographic España (Así es el ataque mortal de la serpiente de cascabel más grande del mundo)
Pink crosses source: The Seattle Times (Disappearing Daughters | Mothers search for justice)
Closing video and still: Flower field: pixabay: Ambient_ Nature_Atmosphere • Milan/Italy • Miembro desde July 6, 2019. Flowers, Campo, Prado.
Other images of tombs and flowers: Seattle Times. Video: María tu Rosa

ON FEMICIDE

According to the Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional de Feminicidio in Mexico (National Citizen Observatory of Feminicide), in their most recent communication, violence against women has impregnated every corner of the country. The CONAVIM, National Commission to Eradicate Gender Violence in Mexico, published the statement that "during the year 2022, 3170 women have been killed and only 792 cases (up to the month of October) have been treated as femicide (murder because of gender)" (www.observatoriofeminicidiomexico.org).

Do you want understand more on femicide and gender equality? These are just a few resources to start:

Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Feminicidio | México
www.observatoriofeminicidiomexico.org

Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean
https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/femicide-

Women of the world, unite!
https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/timeline/womenunite/en/index.html#/

Appendix E.

Video documentation

Performers: Barbara Bourget, Nicole Dreher, Lauren Han, Kaitlyn La Vigne, Salome Nieto, Jami Reimer, Krystal Tsai, Anna Wang-Albini. Special guest: Leonor Martinez Garcia

Producer and editor: Enrique Mohler and Mena El Shazly

Description: Archival footage of The 13th Chronicle, Salome Nieto's MFA Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in the School for the Contemporary Arts Faculty of Communication, Art, and Technology. Performance dates June 1 & 2, 2023 at the SFU GOLDCORP CENTRE FOR THE ARTS, 149 W. HASTINGS ST, VANCOUVER

File Name: The 13th Chronicle.mp4