



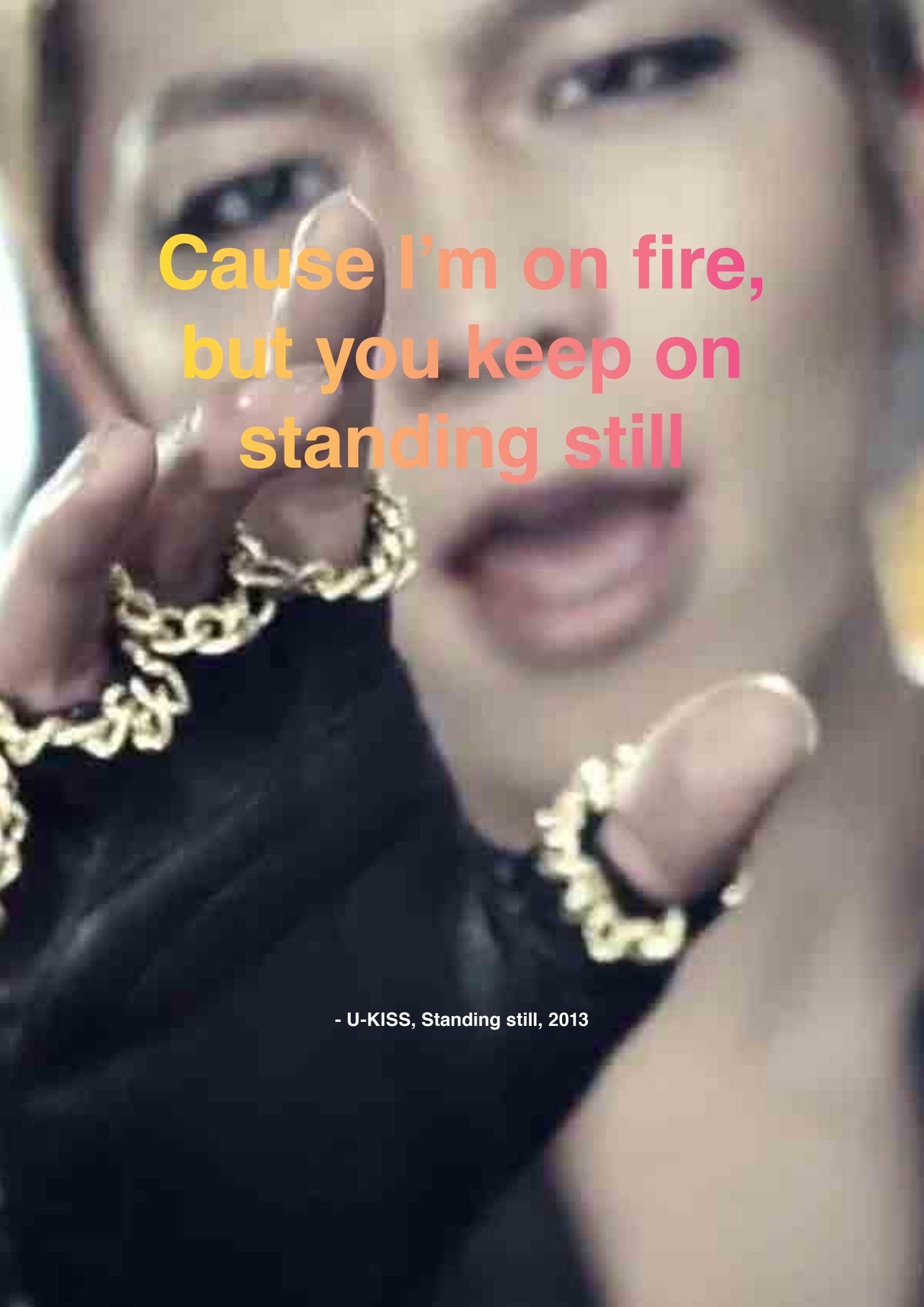
THEY TOUCHED BEYONCÉ

Pop culture
told me how to feel,
now real life has no appeal

Thesis submitted as writing component to the
Master Media Design & Communication Programme,
Piet Zwart Institute, Willem de Kooning Academy, 2013
Writing support: Steve Rushton
Tutorial support: David Haines and Michael Murtaugh
with guest tutors: Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead
Course Director: Simon Pummell

**I'm not myself lately
I'm foolish,
I don't do this**

- Beyoncé, Crazy in Love, 2003



**Cause I'm on fire,
but you keep on
standing still**

- U-KISS, Standing still, 2013

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Abstract

This piece of writing represents a process of research and functions as a report for the graduation project of mine at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam. It is a visual and textual journey of references and connecting the dots within my artistic practice. The experiments and work I have created this year will be analyzed in this thesis and be given their larger context both in art and pop culture. To show and articulate the full process of the project.

The work revolves around the affect of pop culture. How we, in general, or I, myself, interact with pop culture's stimuli. It is in the behavior that I see fascinating things happening. These 'things' I am here to explore. What happens to the audience in a concert, what happens to the performer when they are about to perform. How does one commence performing and what happens after the performance is done? And lastly, can I, as the artist, direct these situations so I can create the desirable environment? An environment that came about in previous work where boundaries of gender and sexuality fade. To provide a space that can open a door for the visitor. These are some of the basic questions that started off the project's experiments.

My artistic process is heavily influenced by personal fascinations and themes and although those themes can clash I have been pushing myself to see the commonalities amongst them. I am stating this now so that the confusion will be limited once I start talking about WOI, Korean Pop music and Beyoncé.

The final product of the project will be an installation that will be ongoingly changed (during its exhibited time) in its setup using symbolic elements that reference to staging (lights, fans platform etcetera). During the exhibition I will be presently changing these elements and showing videos as well as live performances I directed. This entire process is shown to the visitor as well as knowingly making them part of the show.

On the next page you can see some of the installation set ups that will be present during the exhibition. On the opening night there is a performance together with most of the performers (around 4 out of 6 in total). They will each have their own platform with a fan on top. The beginning of the performance is initiated when I move each of the performer's platform in their correct place and connecting each fan to a power source. There will also be 4 bright lights present in each corner of the space. The performers walk into the space and get on the platform where a wig is waiting to be put on. Each performer will put on their wig and turn their fan on. Every performer will do a slightly different action with the fan and wig (further explained in Performance Rehearsals).

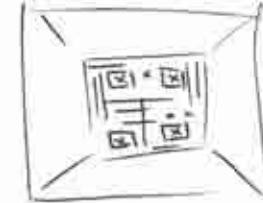
Throughout the rest of the week (in absence of performers) there will be monitors resting on the platforms with performance rehearsals being shown as well as the performances that have taken place in the space.

OPENING:



Performers
"Debut"
- lights
- speakers
- windblowers
- platforms

THROUGHOUT:



Floor is
mapped
with dance
floor tape

THROUGHOUT:



Projections
are mapped
in space
(in absence of
performance)

ONE WEEK:



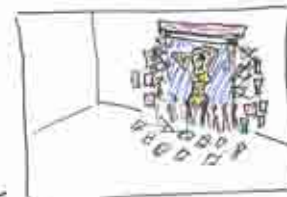
lipsync
projection
photo background
(A4 paper sticks)

OPENING:



Speakers
on 2 opposite
corners of
the space
Speakers
will have
wreath
during exhibition

ONE WEEK:



Build a shrine
- kitsch

ONE WEEK:



Ritual fan
performance
Debut performers
return in full
black makeup
losing themselves

ONE WEEK:



Kwest Piece
- low platform
- lights
- possibly fan?

The first week, for example, features rehearsal videos with Lesley and revolves around the theme of re-enactment. It has videos of him putting on drag make-up as well as videos of him repeatedly practicing hair flips in a fan. Friday would result in a live performance together with edited audio of Beyoncé singing she's a "Grown Woman" on repeat.

The following week I am building up a wall-sized portrait (sliced up out of A4s) of Lesley in full drag but with his mouth cut out. Onto that portrait I will project a video of the lower part of his face with him repeatedly lip-syncing "Survivor", inspired by the Destiny's Child song. Destiny's Child was the former group Beyoncé was a part of.

After that there will be a week with a Beyoncé shrine, the destruction of that shrine and following ritual performances.

Previous practice

Recurring themes in my work have been identity, gender, the body, pop culture and escapism. Each project always begins with a certain fascination for certain behavioural patterns people have.

I have been interested in the stage. The affect of it. The stage gives the opportunity to transform and it is that short transformative moment that fascinates me. The work I did last year is an example of that.

The Wonderful Media Design Technicolor Experience and ビヨンセ! Bionse are two interactive installations. Both the installations The Wonderful Media Design Technicolor Experience and ビヨンセ! Bionse had the same setup, but were different in topic. They were set up with a projection and a Kinect underneath it. They also both had music and a center spot facing the projection where the 'user' gets in the Kinects radius.

The installations used the Kinect to recognize the users skeletons and movement. The user enters the room not really knowing what will happen. As soon as they approach the center spots laid out in front of the projection the Kinect immediately reads the user and either Beyoncé (ビヨンセ! Bionse) or Dorothy (TWMDTE) pops up in the screen and reacts to every movement of the user. The techniques that were used in the animation and Kinect were Processing and Animata. TWMDTE was developed to coincide with the Musical Symposium that took place during the Open Day at the Piet Zwart Institute to represent the Media Design department. Bionse was a follow up installation to see it in a gallery space and watch the response. There is something quite fascinating to see people react when all of a sudden whatever they do is reinterpreted by technology and acted out into a superstar.

Bionse turned the gallery into a stage. Creating a center spot was mostly to send the visitor into the radius of the Kinect, but also functioned like the infamous 'Idols' spot where contestants were supposed to show their talents.

Bionse explicitly invited the visitor to assume over the top poses to make the virtual Beyoncé respond to their movements in unnatural ways. A small movement is of course not of interest, but the Kinect requires some extremity in the skeleton to see a response. TWMDTE version was used in a more extreme way. Since Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz are such classics they were interesting to take to extreme movements that physically aren't possible. To make Dorothy as glitchy as possible. Since the programme I used does not use a 3D model of Dorothy, the moment you



Exhibition May 11th - June 17th
by Dennis van Veen
at Rooftopje Rotterdam

ビヨンセ! biyonse

Opening 11th of May
9pm - 12am

An interactive Beyoncé installation will land from the clouds

turn around for example it remains a flat image and becomes stretched out. Beyoncé being a music artist therefore asks the visitor to actually dance. As if you are choreographing Beyoncé to do your bidding. Fucking her up also happens, but not like the Dorothy version. Of course the music acts as a huge catalyst for dancing. Beyoncé's being very up tempo. Dorothy's being quite slow (with music from the original soundtrack).

When I created these works I found out that I was interested in making immersive works and would like to continue refining it. In both installations it is clear to me that I want to let the viewer/participant to get swallowed up into a world I present them and give a few short experiences. The moment the viewer walks in the radius and forgets everything around them, and the short moment when the viewer rejoins their friends or the crowd is an interesting part of this that I will continue exploiting by making new works.

Another project of mine that is related to what I am doing now is Musicaloke. I created it during the Factory Reset trimester with Florian Cramer. Musicaloke is an interactive virtual product allowing the user to choose a character/celebrity/moviestar they want to become in their own virtual reality. This product works with the Kinect to recognize the users movement. It's functions are based on a Karaoke machine. You choose a song and the character you want to become. You take a spot in front of the machine and start moving to the music and basically live your own fantasy life for a minute. Musicaloke is there to envision your fantasies in a musical way. Creating your own virtual reality as well as experiencing it in reality. It is originally designed as a machine for companies to use during breaks, but was presented in the Factory Reset exhibition as a nomadic kit that encases a laptop and lets you run the program wherever you want.

This project resonates to the photo experiments I did mentioned in the plan. Basically bringing fantasy realities into the workspace and creating a relationship with the perform state of mind to the work state of mind. An awareness of the moment when you start performing or assuming a role. being quite slow (with music from the original soundtrack).

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Musicaloke

The stage

The first aspect of performance I took on was the stage. What would happen if I took the tools that create the performance out of their regular habitat (the stage, theater environment) and put them into the everyday life. It started out with a series of photos where I took Artist Portraits in the studio at the Piet Zwart Institute with lights and wind blowers. Relating the artistic process of the performer with the process of sitting behind the computer. From doing that experiment I found out that I wanted to continue putting these lights and wind blowers into the workspace, but making it more clear what the person is doing. Since an artist is not very recognizable sitting behind a laptop. What interests me about these that through using the symbols of the stage, the lights and the fans, a sense of reality is lost. The lights function as a surreal element that transform the space. This surrealism is what I want to achieve. To create a visual distorting language that came out of the deconstruction of the stage.



Artist Portrait #1, Petra Mllicki



Artist Portrait #2, Marie Woher



Artist Portrait #3, Eleanor Greenhalgh



Artist Portrait #4, David Young



Hair Salon Portrait #1, Daniek



Hair Salon Portrait #2, Sjoerd



Hair Salon Portrait #3, Sai

Next I took the lights and fans into the hair salon. There are a couple of interesting reasons behind these photos. The obvious one being that the people working in the salon as well as their clients are in a glamorous state of mind. Everything has to be shiny and beautiful while in the salon. Another factor in these photos is that it is the process that becomes the performance here. Not the final product. Where as hair commercials would light up the beautiful flowing hair here I am presenting the hair while being cut and torn apart, it turns the messy part of it into a glamorous show. At least in the photos it does. In reality during the shooting of these photos it was too much wind and too much light and it was extremely uncomfortable to cut hair that would then blow into your face. Even though Daniek in Portrait #1 was quite enjoying herself as I was telling her to feel like Beyoncé for a second.

The next step was to bring the lights into a recording of a social interaction around a dinner table, bringing the performance into the everyday life. These were also recorded on video. In this situation the lights and fans gained a new role. The lights were forcing the subjects to reflect on what they were actually doing in this setting. They could not just sit there doing nothing, they had to at least perform something. So they started playing boardgames. The lights summoned a board game to be played.

In the Hair Salon Portraits the lights and fans blend in with the scenery of the photo. Though in live action it was an extremely exaggerated set up with the lights being too bright and the fans heavily blowing hair in the subjects face. Even though this is also an interesting factor in the Home Portrait as well as in the Artist Portraits, the lights are pushed out of their context more in the Home and Artist Portraits.



Home Portrait #1. Rosanna Mulder, Kick Vogel, Steffi Pisa

Surrealism in the Music Video

What has always fascinated me about surreal environments are the ones used in music videos. Surrealism here has obtained a normalcy which is interesting to me. The mind blowing happiness that is communicated through the Korean music videos that are popular at this moment.

Busby Berkeley

Before I commence exploring the Music Video I would like to introduce Busby Berkeley. For it is my understanding that Busby was the first to choreograph musicals in the kaleidoscopic format. With industry came modernity and the famous photographs of people queueing to go to work. It is those formations of human beings in line that translated into the entertainment musical versions. Busby's visual work starts looking like cogwheels of women, even though they are hardly recognizable as being individual. They get lost in the mass. The interesting part here lies in that the everyday life gets a beauty and choreographed pattern while at the same time it loses a certain factor of individualism and human identity. People function together as a unified machine for the purpose of entertainment.

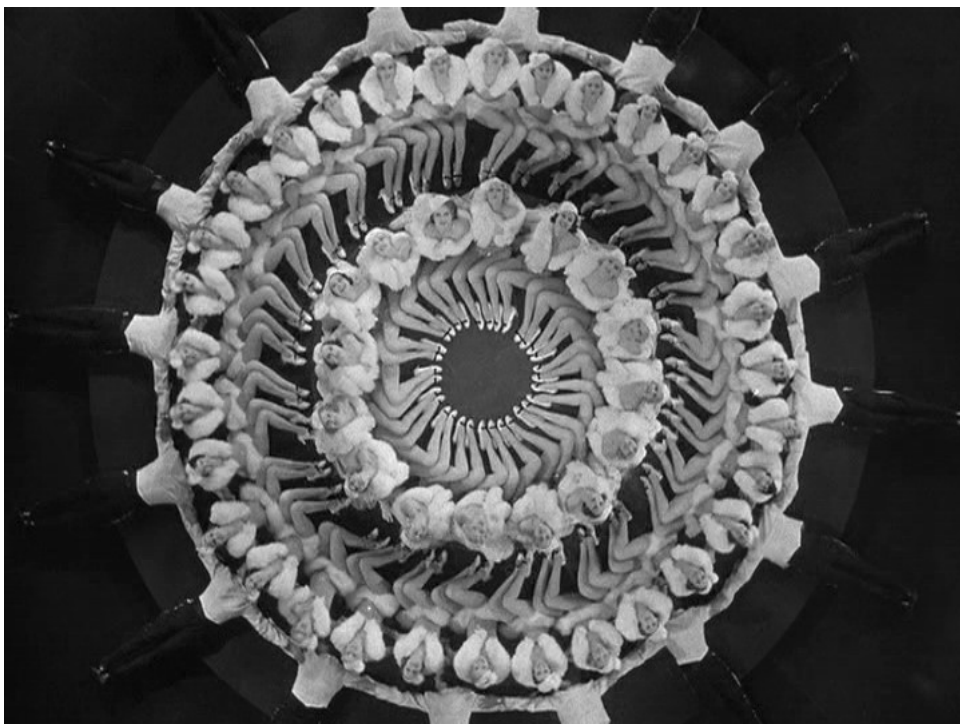
Pop

I see this same phenomenon recurring in Korean Pop music videos nowadays. The Kpop videos to me are the epitome of surreal entertainment. The exotic lyrics that are complete nonsense to me except for the occasional english lyric. The constructed emotions and Berkeley referencing choreographies against contemporary pop music beats are the only things I read and is the language I understand. It is taken to a realm where you do not understand the message, you only see the visual language and the behavior, the symbolism.

The language Korean Pop is using is the language of the constructed pop star. Meaning the artist that is completely turned into a product with almost no individual input of that artist him- or herself.

Where in western pop culture the Britney Spears video on the planet Mars seems like it has happened a hundred years ago. In Korean pop the Oops... I did it again music video is still relevant and referenced to great extent. Prolonging the same act of escapism for years.

Britney Spears was the perfect little pop star that emerged into global success in 1999 after being part of the successful Disney channel which boosted many careers including that of her and Christina Aguilera, both are relevant for this subject. They both symbolize the artist that have been heavily managed/ produced and put into the cute sexy high school girl image which works for the first two studio albums they



42nd Street, Busby Berkeley, 1933

release, but then (either planned or not) they go into heavy personal problems and release new albums that reflect their breakthrough in terms of reshaping their own image to which millions are witnesses of.

The Oops... I did it again music video performed by Britney Spears is a futuristic dance stage set on the planet Mars. An American astronaut comes across this set and we follow him and the team that he is talking to while they discover what is happening on that place. Shortly after they get swept away by Britney and her pop music who is casually singing about playing with a guys heart without any apologies. There is no connection between the lyrics, the performance or the setting. Artificial Pop beauty in its full glory.



Oops... I did it again, Britney Spears, 2000

Korean music videos to its viewers work in the same manner yet it goes a step further by actually having lyrics that the viewer does not understand, nor do they seek out to. It allows you to get swallowed up by the image that is perfected by plastic surgery and cuteness.

The Factory

There are some similarities between Andy Warhol's way of working in his Factory and in a Korean record label (though maybe record labels in general, I believe Korean ones to be the most extreme example at this point in time). Both providing the space for potential superstars to become famous.

Korean Pop Concert

An experience for me was to share this wonder of Kpop in 2011 with a couple of thousand fellow fans. It was the first big Korean Pop concert in Europe and held in Paris and visited by individuals from every single corner of Europe who flew over just to be a part of this first experience. Probably 75% of them do not know Korean. The concert is a mix of several boy and girl bands all from the same record company called SM Entertainment (SM stands for Star Museum). It is complete utopia except for the fact that the entire hall is undeniably hot. Completely cut off from reality. Not understanding a word of anything except for the tunes and choreographies that most of the audience know by heart. The concert was put into the context of several in-between videos that showed the artists smiling cutely with french subtitles that said SM TOWN will forever be your friend.

It is my goal that all of my work looks as amazing as Korean Music Videos do.



Video still taken from the music video *The Boys* by *Girls Generation* in 2011

Performance #1

As a try out I organized the first live performance event of the project during the Open Day. Not only to get feedback on the work, but also to see how live performance works out. Since me and Claire have been working together so closely it was interesting to bring it to an audience for the first time. It is the excitement that makes the work worthwhile. It is the same performance as in the rehearsals with the addition of the blue screen that frames the platform and the dance floor tape shapes. It was also the first time where I started working with Yoana who documented the event. This was the first piece where I directed. It started to feel quite natural to move away from the camera and solely focus on what is happening in reality, letting go of the camera frames. The gallery (in this case the studio) now is my frame. And I guess this is what I wanted to achieve in the Piet Zwart Institute. To move from photography and video to the actual space and make people move.

The directing aspect of this performance is of the most important. It speaks to the notion of power, power of the audience, power of the performer, power of the director. Both the performance itself and the marks on the floor are communicating a sense of direction. As soon as the performer lets out a roar or starts standing on the table she is demanding attention. She has the control to change the mood of the space. She controls the space.

It was a great first step to further embark in. I feel like I had to start in a abstract way, that was the first step. And after this I am ready to tell the story I want to. It all felt really new and has to be explored further.



Promotional image for the event



Space overview with dancefloor tape



Screenshot of video documentation



They Touched Beyoncé

Beyoncé is an American music artist. She rose to fame being the lead singer in the R&B girl group Destiny's Child and started a solo career in 2003.

The title comes from an experience I had during Beyoncé's Amsterdam show in the middle of doing this project. Even though I still am the fan who was queueing for 12 hours before the actual performance to be able to touch my idol before she goes off to have more children and stops touring altogether, I believe to have a healthy concert experience.



Fan at Mrs. Carter World Tour, 2013

Midway through the concert while hollering out "Survivor" Beyoncé ran from the B stage back to the Main stage, moment me and my fellow fans were very well aware of since this was world tour concert number 4, so most of us had all seen the spots were to stand to be able to touch our idol. While having touched her is and will be quite the milestone in my life, even in my practice as an artist, there was something more interesting happening in these brief 20 seconds. As Beyoncé rushed through a sea of stretched out arms ducking underneath her bodyguard each and every single person that touched her went into a state of complete overload. Like you would see women of faith getting slain by the Holy Spirit. Both magical and alarming at the same time.

Doing this project is not a glorification of the superstar so much as it is a critique on fandom and the loss of reality that comes with that. That tension of glorifying and living the moment and dealing with the reality is what I am looking for in this work.

Crazy in Love

Being well aware of the fact that quoting Wikipedia is not the most intellectually responsible way to go, I think it actually contributes to the way I work and get my information. Which consist of the internet's most sleazy corners, which are probably written by my fellow members of the infamous Beyoncé fan base.

"Crazy in Love" is the debut single by R&B singer-songwriter Beyoncé Knowles, featuring rapper and now-husband Jay-Z. Producer Rich Harrison, Knowles and Jay-Z wrote the song for Knowles' debut solo album, Dangerously in Love. "Crazy in Love" is an R&B love song which incorporates elements of hip hop and 1970s-style funk as well as soul music. The track features a sample from The Chi-Lites' 1970 song "Are You My Woman (Tell Me So)", used as the song's horn hook. The lyrics reference a romantic obsession that causes the protagonist to act out of character.

This last sentence is the catalyst for me to explain my obsession. The simplest way for me to slightly start to apprehend the essence of my fascination for the pop artist that is Beyoncé.

The Self

Beyoncé was my first encounter when thinking about the different selves.

In 2003 an MTV Diary video was broadcasted starring Beyoncé. This television series is about releasing information about the daily life of artists in a behind the scenes kind of way. Usually involving preparations for events like the MTV Video Music Awards or the Grammy's and behind the scenes footage of music video's.

There was a moment in this episode where Beyoncé first mentioned her alter ego Sasha. This short moment of the mind and body when adrenaline takes over and a transformation takes place. The nerves introduce the moment, and the transformation is activated when the music begins. Then the performing beast takes over.

After only a few more mentions of the Sasha persona, in 2008 the studio album "I Am... Sasha Fierce" was released. Making Sasha into the product it was meant to be. The album makes a two disc divide, a Beyoncé and a Sasha side. Sasha being the extravagant performer side, and Beyoncé being the soft, intimate and personal side, naturally.

Back to the song. When stripped to its core, to the individual with the message. It all comes down to the obsessive desperation of one single feeling that is love.

Going above conventional expressive behavior. That is what interests me here. This same song was once covered in a live performance by Anthony and the Johnsons. Completely stripped down. Solely using the lyrics, with an orchestra of harps and strings behind them. No more heavy beats, nothing catchy. But even more so, sung with a feeling of despair.

Marina Abramovic has a similar feeling when she performs. In a 2009 interview with James Franco she speaks about the lower and higher self. The higher self being the state of mind she has while performing. That higher self allows her to withstand things she could not in her daily life.

Marina Abramovic: The Artist Is Present is a documentary about the show in MoMa named The Artist Is Present. The documentary talks about Marina's past works and how they all link to this retrospective exhibition. The film features the process of creating the exhibition until the ending as well as showing an interesting workshop Marina did with the performers who recreated her most historical performances.

Marina's body of work completely opened up my thoughts on using the body as the medium and especially with this documentary which speaks of the shared experience of the audience and the performer as being core to the work.

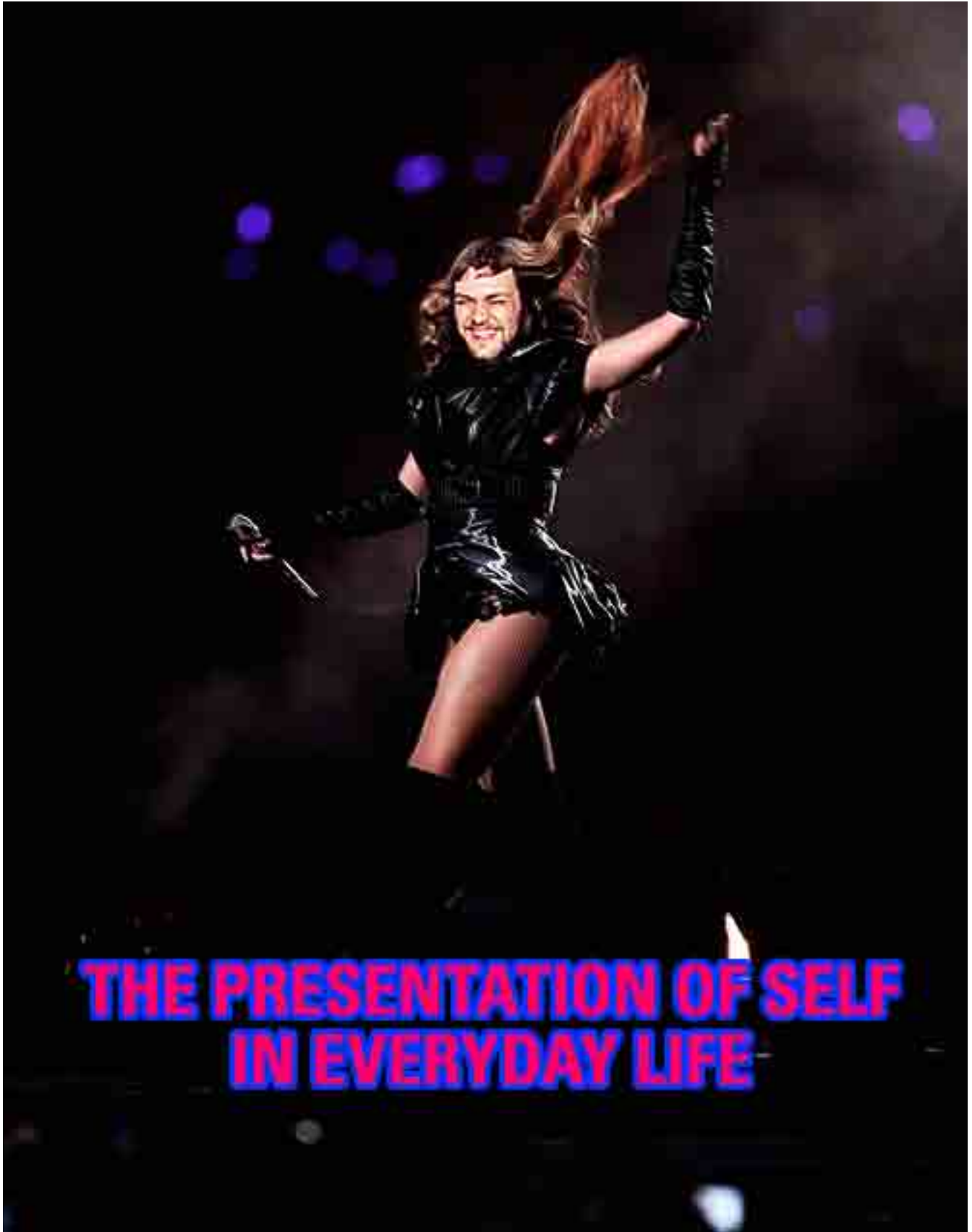
In the workshop Marina did with a group of performers she was propositioning them to empty themselves and create their own charismatic space. To be able to be in present time, with your mind here and now, and that's when something emotional will happen. And that performance is all about state of mind.

About her Artist is Present piece she was speaking about how the hardest thing to do is close to nothing. How you have nothing to hide behind and it just is your pure presence without any story to tell.

They Touched Beyoncé as a phenomenon works in the same way as Marina's The Artist Is Present, this proven by the infamous website <http://marinaabramovicmademecry.tumblr.com>. Visitors for Marina can queue for hours and hours to spend some time taking the seat in front of her and look at her. Literally just look at her, for she does not move or speak. She functions as a mirror for the viewer. Though frankly I see this in the same way as the concert relation between performer and viewer. Though viewer is not the correct term for these anymore. It is the individual that gets to experience their own emotions and Beyoncé and Marina simply provide the environment for that to take place. The performance reviews.



Example photos taken from <http://marinaabramovicmademecry.tumblr.com>



Selfportrait. Original photo of Beyoncé taken from Superbowl Halftime Show Performance right after she got on the stage. Her face being replaced by mine. This photo was taken during the moment when Crazy In Love's introduction was playing and Beyoncé was strutting to her center stage spot.

Interaction

“However, during the period in which the individual is in the immediate presence of the others, few events may occur which directly provide the others with the conclusive information they will need if they are to direct wisely their own activity.” (Goffman 1959, p.1)

Involuntary expressive behavior is what shows an individual in their true self. With expressive behavior I am thinking of certain types of movements that show a person’s personality. It could also mean the showing of emotions. Through doing conventional and natural signs not directly available to the senses it is difficult to read an individual.

This conventional interaction is interesting. The Apollo interaction, in how Nietzsche describes Apollo and Dionysus in his book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Which happens when an individual offers another a service or product and there seems to be no time and place for expressive behavior.

That’s where the subject of professional behavior comes into this work. The transformation in the state of mind that happens when the individual is shutting down their connection to the senses and focus on providing the product or service to the others. What interests me is when this occurs.

As an example I take the fireman. The largest amount of time is spent waiting around in front of the television amongst colleagues. In what I imagine to be quite an expressive environment. Within this environment it seems very clear that the moment when the alarm goes off there would be an alternate state of mind activated which does not allow for any expressive behavior. Most possibly because there is no time for it, which is an interesting observation and quite relevant in the interactive pieces of work I have made. The alarm goes off, a change of clothing is made, and the performance can begin. Firemen perform security. And though it is not the core, the tension between the emotional self and the rational self is a big part of the work.

Conveying expressive information in a traditional way is done through verbal symbols (Goffman 1959, p. 2).

In *Performance Rehearsals #1* I am extracting the traditional verbal symbols out of a performance done by Beyoncé during the 2013 Superbowl Halftime Show as well as adding some choreography to each verbal symbol. In full black, Claire van Lubbeek performs these symbols in a pattern, pausing between each symbol (the Apollo state). Turning them into a surreal set of symbols. It plays with these ideas of the individual and its expressive behavior.

Now the trick of the Beyoncé performance, in relation to the fireman or the soldier, is that the performance is completely fueled by unconventional behavior. No sign of Apollo, or any other conventional conversational interaction.



Video still taken from *Performance Rehearsals #1*

Where once Busby Berkeley made graphical kaleidoscopic choreographies of smiling happy women, stands now a fully trained individual with facial expressions only matched by the most feral of creatures. She portrays the beast that we are meant to, though cannot, be in interaction with others. An individual in full expressive glory that reaches us through proprioception and timing. Initiated by a loud bass. Putting every fibre of her being into every single movement, even if it were just a hand move to the left, the entire body shivers to the left. While oozing sex through every flick of hair.

Performance Rehearsals

Paris is Burning

Paris is Burning is a documentary by Jennie Livingston about drag culture in New York City. How they created their own families and have competitions in balls where they dress up to see who can for example portray the most believable executive.

From watching the documentary Paris is Burning I became extremely interested in the drag queen culture. The documentary is a seven year project by Jennie Livingston and shows the lives of drag queens during the 80s in New York City and the society they created for themselves. It gives a great perspective on subculture. In my work there are often two layers. The extreme and affective layer, often Beyoncé related, and behind that there's the content. I am interested in how this relates to the drag culture. The flamboyant, extravagant outside is often overlooked as funny and superficial, but behind that facade is some very interesting content and emotion.

With that interesting content I am talking about the desire to create their own selves aside from predetermined formats of identity and sexuality. To discover what makes the single individual as happy as possible. To be as free as possible. Oh, to live in a world as beautiful as that. It is not that unrealistic.

Performance Rehearsals #2

For Performance Rehearsals #2 I am working with Lesley Quist who has been doing drag since this year. I am interested in creating these works that are about how role models are channeled through our actions. Their influences in our bodies. Drag culture is an obvious and fascinating subject for that. At this point I am creating lots of material that will consist of the construction and transformation to an actual piece that links to the age old tradition in drag culture that is lip-syncing or the more recent term faceography. The role of queen goes hand in hand with a taking of power. These are a few things I want to express with these video and installation pieces.

Performance Rehearsals #3

For the third series of rehearsals I am working with Jim van Geel. For these rehearsals I was experimenting with the editing of Beyoncé music and changing the pitch of the song to make her voice sound more androgynous almost masculin. Here I used an acapella version of the "Naughty Girl" song which started to sound like a disturbing ritual with a masculin voice singing how he will be your Naughty Girl. Jim lipsyncs to it while playing with his wig in the fan. We tried out several clothing options and it was turning into an all white set where he would look like he was hospitalised and all he could do was to re-enact Beyoncé hairflips. Like it would have made him insane and repetitious.



Video still from *Paris Is Burning*, 1990



Video still from *Performance Rehearsals #2* with Lesley Quist

Performance Rehearsals #4

In all of the Performance Rehearsals I am taking elements of my interest and changing them to fit the performance. With Performance #4 I was upgrading Performance #1 by giving it some edited audio just like in Rehearsals #3, but with Crazy In Love instead of Naughty Girl. The sound would start off slow and completely distorted as well as Claire beginning slowly. The tempo would gradually go up as well as the pitch though never to the original, it remains masculine. As the tempo of the song progresses so do Claire's moves (moves taken from Rehearsal #1). She ends up being totally out of breath on the platform lying down.

Aesthetics

I have also gotten a large amount of references from my tutorials with Thomson and Craighead including Moriko Mori and Kota Ezawa. Moriko Mori is a Japanese multimedia artist. Works such as Nirvana show her as a goddess, transcending her early roles via technology and image, and abandoning realistic urban scenes for more alien landscapes. She plays with the anime aesthetic. Kota Ezawa makes works that completely flatten and reinvent video footages of famous television moments in a highly stylized pop art way, but keeping the audio. Allowing the viewer to completely reinterpret the content in an almost disturbing way. Though I am trying not too just rely on the aesthetical side, but rather use the aesthetics as inspiration and turn it into something new.



Video still from *Performance Rehearsals #2* with Lesley Quist



Video still of *Performance Rehearsals #3* with Jim van Geel



Video still of *Performance Rehearsals #4* with Claire van Lubeeck

**Inspiration does not
come from a studio,
it comes from life**

- Marina Abramovic, The Artist Is Present, 2012

Role model, Obsessive Compulsive Escapism and Structuralism

Next to writing this thesis I also worked on a thesis that was strictly visual. From doing that I came to several conclusions. The pictures I was putting together all came down to the behavior of the masses.

While doing these visual collages I also came across an internet artist who peaked my interest. PEEKASSO creates digital collages of celebrities and pop culture within the context of the popular image board Tumblr. One in particular is titled "I Should have Tried" and features celebrity Kim Kardashian's face on North Korean leader Kim Jung-Un's body. Kim Kardashian is a celebrity that rose to fame by a reality show named "Keeping up with the Kardashians" and a scandalous sex tape.

This image allows me to further explain parts in the visual thesis I was making when I was putting images of Beyoncé together with similar portraits of Kim Jung-Un and Hitler. As well as matching fan made art of Beyoncé with Hitler Jûgend propaganda.

It's about these singular people who with their performance wield so much power over a mass. That mass behavior is so fascinating. And that there is a connection here between how the mass behaves in front of Beyoncé and how mass behaves in front of a dictator is very interesting and disturbing at the same time.

There's just so much more to discover and explore as an individual in terms of identity and sexuality when we are not repeating our actions or mindlessly re-enacting behaviors.



I Should Have Tried, PEEKASSO, 2013

Pop culture told me how to feel, now real life has no appeal.

When watching musicals, tv shows, movies all throughout my entire life I have built expectations that do not get answered by anything or anyone. This constant disappointment is a daily battle. It is my obligation now to turn this battle into a victory. Babysteps.



Selfportrait. Former couple Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez, whose face I replaced with mine.



Visual Thesis try outs



Visual Thesis try outs

Evaluation

More time is always nice.

Performance was a brand new medium that I only have worked with for 6 months now. Even though it has been the most natural medium for me compared to all the others I have worked with. It is still difficult to let someone else take the camera instead of myself, though someone who has more technical skills than I do is very much appreciated. I have given up developing certain skills in order to focus more on the directing role in this project. It's all about collaborating with people, explaining the concept and creating work with them. I thrive to have a team of people that are as passionate as I am about these topics and exploring them which I believe I am slowly gathering now.

What could've been improved? If I had more time to rehearse and try out with the performance medium I could have created more stories. I really see this as a first step into maybe creating an hourlong piece that I would choreograph myself. Everything is still in its beginning phase of exploration and I quite like that about this project. Just the beginning of what a performance means to me. And from here on I can explore this much much further.

I also learned now that I should apply for funding in advance for next year. This project could've been more with funds, since I did not have any.

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GET YOUR LIFE