



Thesis

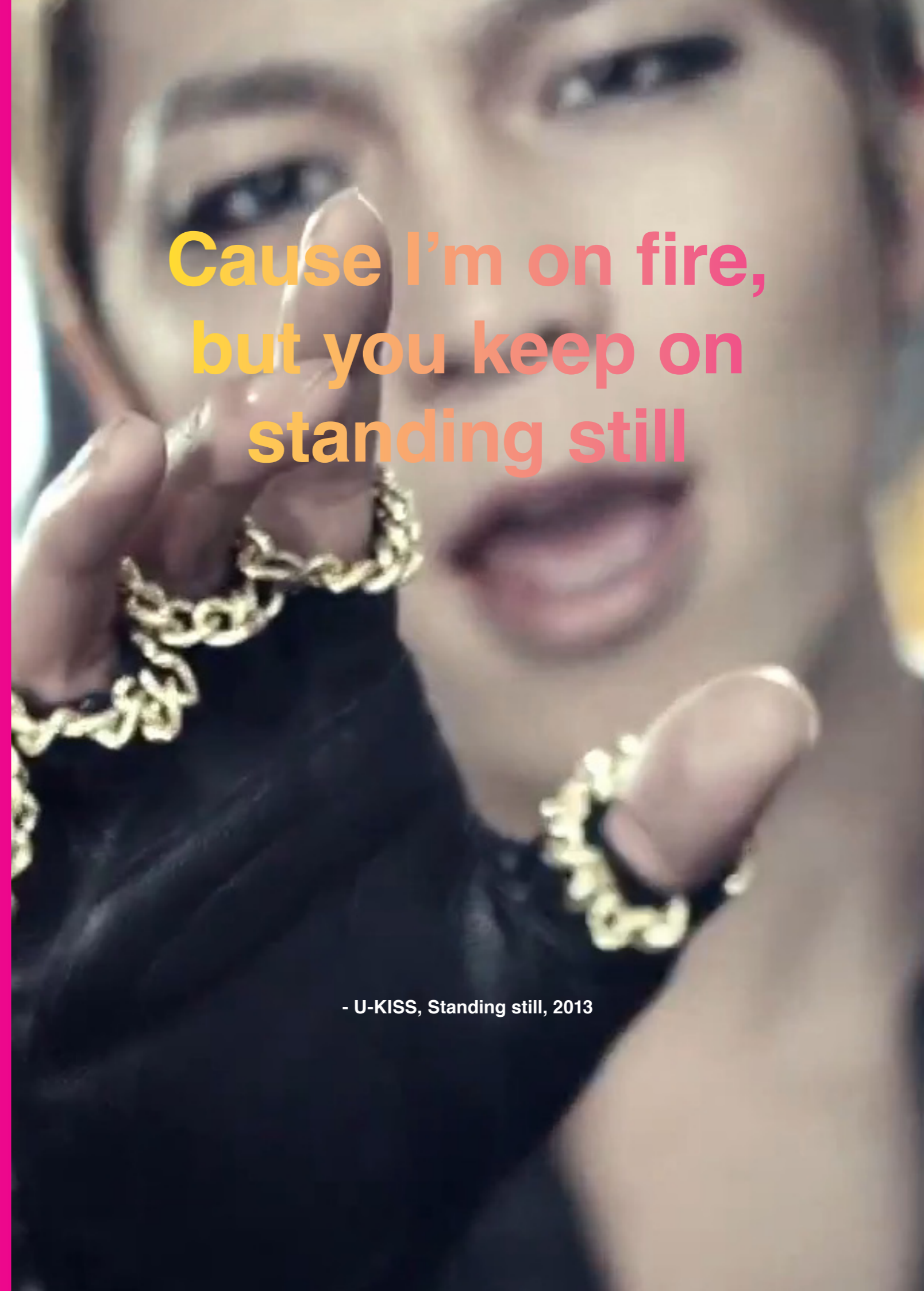
Pop culture
told me how to feel,
now real life has no appeal

**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



Project Abstract

(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. During the exhibition I will be presently changing these elements and showing videos as well as live performances I created. This entire process is shown to the visitor as well as knowingly making them part of the show.



Artist Portrait #1, Eleanor Greenhalgh

Artist Portraits

I took Artist Portraits in the studio at the Piet Zwart Institute with lights and windblowers. 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 windblowers 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 refers to Korean Music video's where artificial landscapes are built, in which the music artists perform in.



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



Artist Portrait #2, Marie Woher



Artist Portrait #3, Petra Mllicki



Artist Portrait #4, David Young



Hair Salon Portrait #1, Daniek



Hair Salon Portrait #2, Sjoerd



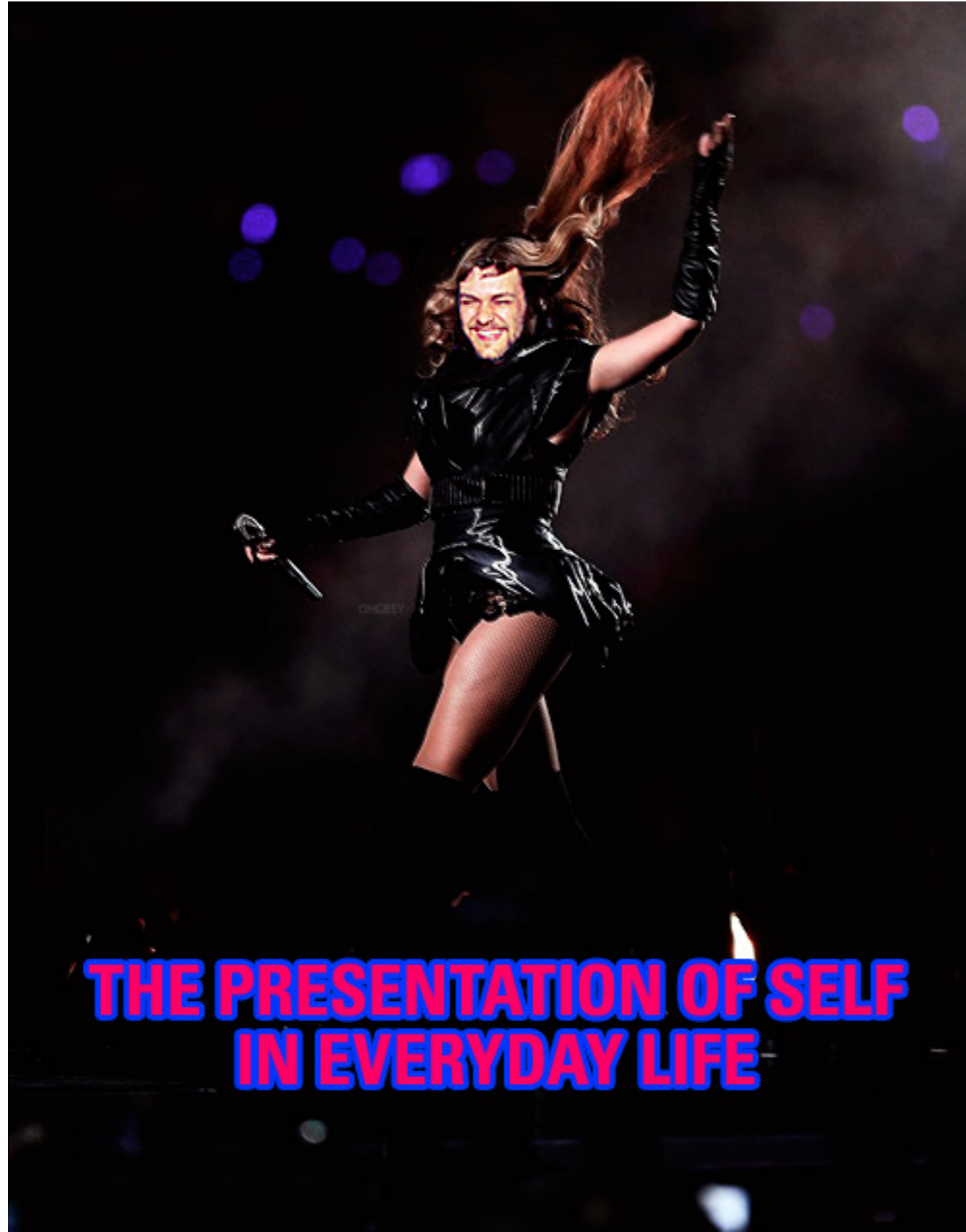
Hair Salon Portrait #3, Sai

The same symbolism was used in the portraits I took in the hair salon as well as a recording of social interaction around a dinner table.

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 put more out of their context more in the Home and Artist.



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



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.

The construction of the pop artist

"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.

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.

[this work is in process of scheduling] 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 Lubeeck 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 though it were just a hand move to the left, the entire body shivers to the left. While oozing sex through every flick of hair.

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 internets most sleazy corners, which are probably written by my fellow members of the infamous Beyoncé fanbase.

“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 Beyoncé.

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.

I once read a text of which I do not even remember the author, nor can I find the text. I believe it was Proust, but it could also have been one of the philosophers I was researching two years ago. The only thing I remember about this text that it spoke about different stages of falling in love and that it spoke of the final state in a way that only a mad men could feel it. Beautifully written of course, though I cannot fully recall. Going above conventional expressive behavior. That is what interests me the most. 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.

The Music Video

What flips it back to the Busby Berkeley extravaganza ridiculousness is Korean Pop music videos. When I say ridiculousness I mean 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 interesting experience for me was to share this experience of Korean Pop in 2011 with a couple of thousand fellow individuals. 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.

An endless re-appearing of a new female character to sing a lyric.

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.

~ The soldier

Relating the performance of the soldier to that of the live artist.

~ Home video pieces

The video MARLEEN (or DSC0046) and the Home Portraits

About camera behavior

~Written while reading 'Perform... or Else'

(this is kind of a ramble at the moment)

Imagine a person being in a depression.

There is actually no desire or awareness, I believe, for interaction with other people. Therefore the performance self is shut off. Even in the company of others, this person is still alone. There is no more desire to perform, maybe not even a need to. "It evokes that mysterious circle of mist which Nietzsche said envelops any living thing and without which life becomes withered, hard and barren." (McKenzie, p.3) And then it's followed by another Nietzsche quote: "Even every man, who wants to become ripe needs such an enveloping madness, such a protective and veiling cloud."

This reminds me of the mindset that arises around the military.

Soldiers are at a high level of having to perform all the time, at moment's notice. There is no slot of freedom to lose the "mysterious mist".

There's a sense of losing all human aspects, that are considered weak. There's no room to be emotional.

There's a constant requirement to perform.

It is something like 'having your guard up'. And I guess that's why this reminds me of (my impression at least) wartime. And I don't think there are many documentaries or movies about the second world war that I have not seen.

There is a large factor of risk involved in a performance.

Performance reviews

To perform is to do certain actions to reach a goal.

~Written while reading 'The invisible actor'

Noh theatre, subtlety and indirect suggestion of feeling

Kabuki theatre, display the actors' physical, vocal, and emotional prowess.

Programming a performance

~Written while reading 'Another Publication'

"Since one cannot blame a notion for the use that people make of it, Other is innocent." [p. 13]

Identity

Aleksandra Domanovic, Turbo Sculptures

happened because of an identity crisis after the Yugoslav war of the 1990s. After the once functioning multi-ethnic unity collapsed.

that the history of Yugoslavia is being erased and replaced by western pop culture.

Explains Turbo Folk, a music genre originated in ex-Yugoslavia. The term came from pop singer Rambo Amadeus. "Folk is the people, turbo is a system of injecting fuel under pressure in the cylinder of a motor. Turbo Folk is a burning of a nation. Turbo folk is not music. Turbo Folk is the beloved of the masses, a wakening of the lowest human desires. I did not invent Turbo Folk, I gave it its name".

The video explains the term Turbo Folk as being two contradictory concepts, Turbo, an image of modern industrial progress. And Folk, a symbol of tradition and rural conservatism.

Turbo Sculptures is about the Western celebrity monuments placed within former Yugoslavia.

Identifying with celebrities. Looking to them as rolemodels when lack there of. A large amount of the gay subculture thrives on this.

messed up identity seeking

This relates to the self portrait I made during the 4th term. (next page)



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

Blue and Yellow

On the artificial lighting that is used in performances and how I will use these colors in the installation.

Hair

(wiki quote from myself, will work out later after the work has been done)

“The idea is that, after the discussion with Alison, I will be using a wig. Since hair is a recurring object in my work she suggested I would make it a thing. Hence big hair. The stage might even be covered in hair. Claire will be on a platform I will create, with tube lights surrounding her.”



Relation to previous practice

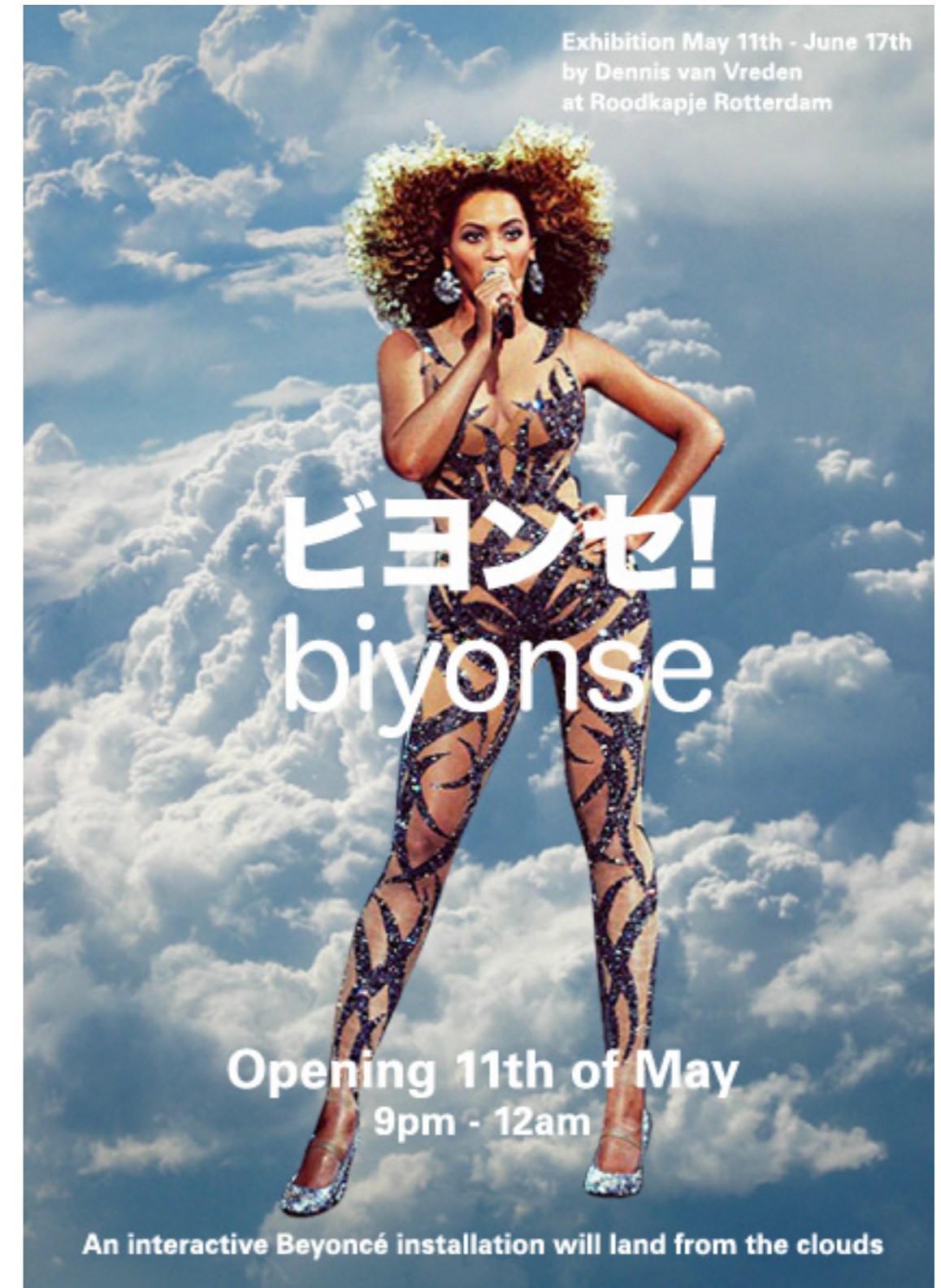
Recurring themes in my work have been identity, gender, the body, pop culture and escapism. Each project always begins with a certain fascination for certain behavioural patterns people have.

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! Biyonse** are two interactive installations. Both the installations The Wonderful Media Design Technicolor Experience and **ビヨンセ! Biyonse** 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! Biyonse**) 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. **Biyonse** 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.

Biyonse 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.



Biyonse 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 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

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

- Marina Abramovic, *The Artist Is Present*, 2012

More context

In Andy Warhol's Screen Tests I am fascinated by his interest in the personality of the person in front of his camera. It is an extensive research of behavior and mimicry. This corresponds with what fuels my work, which are behavioral patterns.

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.



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.



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.

I have gotten a large amount of references from my tutorials with Thomson and Craighead including Moriko Mori and Kota Ezawa. Moriko Mori plays a lot with the aesthetic of anime and manga culture and 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.

References

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Erving Goffman, 1959

Perform Or Else, Jon McKenzie, 2001

Pilvi Takala, The Real Snow White

The absurd logic of the “real character” and the extreme discipline of Disneyland become apparent when a real fan of Disney’s Snow White* is banned from entering the park in a Snow White costume. As visitors are encouraged to dress up and a lot of costume-like merchandise is sold at the park, the full costumes are only sold for children. The Disney slogan “Dreams Come True” of course means dreams produced exclusively by Disney.



Anne Allison, The Cultural Politics of Pokémon Capitalism
About the commodification of intimacy through Pokémon.

Marina Abramovic: The Artist Is Present

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.

Beyoncé

Beyoncé is an American music artist. She rose to fame being the lead singer for the RNB formation named Destiny’s Child and started a solo career in 2003.

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.

Kota Ezawa

Kota Ezawa is a Japanese-German artist currently based in San Francisco. Ezawa meticulously recreates, frame-by-frame, animated sequences from television, cinema, and art history using basic digital drawing and animation software.

Moriko Mori

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.

Thanks to

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