Images of Violence from Mexico:
A performance art based enquiry

Veronica Cordova De La Rosa

Degree awarded by Oxford Brookes University
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy
October 2016

Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	5
List of Illustrations	6
1 Introduction	7
2 Empathy and impact	16
3 The production of new subjectivities	31
4 Subjectivity and performance in the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’	47
5 Performance and daily events in the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’	57
6 Meanings and ‘Capitalismo Gore’	66
7 Conclusions	73
Bibliography	76
List of works	80
Appendices (A, B, C, D and E)	82

Abstract

The aims of this research have been:

- To create images and sculptures and explore their use in performative actions;

- To conduct a practice-based research project that examines how representations of human violence are explored through performance, while maintaining ethical value in aesthetic perception; and

- To develop a methodology in performance art through which I express my work as practice and the use of myself as a participant.

These aims have been informed by the blurring of perceptions of space, authenticity, and notions of the global and local; by designing a theoretical framework informed by the concept of 'Capitalismo Gore'*;* by traversing a methodology that juxtaposes the performer with images of violence from Mexico, situates the performer as a locus of tension between two different communities (Mexican and British), and engulfs the performer in affective responses to Mexican victims of violence.

This art-practice based research is supported by a theoretical framework that refers to the term 'Capitalismo Gore' as the most relevant philosophical reference to address the narrative of extreme violence happening in Mexico during the war on drugs (Valencia, 2008).

This art practice invites the readers to traverse a self-narrative constructed with feedback gathered from the audience and dialogues with artists and curators of a set of performance art methodologies. These performance art methodologies juxtapose the artist-scholar with images of violence from Mexico. Moreover, the affects produced by these performances have been transformed into visual documentation, some of them in the form of zines. Booklets are a simple way to show images and to distribute them among a wider audience. They are easy to transport and can be displayed in galleries, libraries, art fairs, book fairs.

They demonstrate an important testimony for this research, situated as it is between two cultures, Mexican and British.

The overall methodology not only appropriates performance methods such as Ewa Partum's active poetry, but it also introduces them into an academic context and regenerates them by replacing Partum's performance symbols with different symbols.

The development of art practice-based research emphasises the need to avoid situating the performer in the place of the victims. It seeks at some moments to place the performer next to them, sharing part of their distress and hope through performance artistic practices and its documentation.

The research has generated exploratory insights through the spatial aspect of my artistic practice, the spaces in which the performances occurred and the spaces generated by these performances.

Acknowledgements

To the missing.

Special thanks to: the Mexican National Council for Culture and Arts, Santander Scholarships and Awards, Oxford Brookes University, Common Book(s), my tutors Dr Tracey Warr and Proffesor Ray Lee, my mother Consuelo de la Rosa Sanchez, my grandmother Gregoria Sanchez, my aunt Piedad de la Rosa and Evangelina de la Rosa, Professor Paul Whitty, Professor Brian Catling, Janice Howard, Dr Joanna Walker, Dr Sayak Valencia, Dr Tero Nauha, the Oxford Brookes University School of Arts practice-based PhD group, composer Alejandro Isamu Ito, Stu Allsopp, Liza Perrett, Roos Geraedts, Dario Utreras, Dr Joe Gerlach, Sarah Maria Dolores Thorne, Dr Nicholas Marquez-Grant, Annette Honeywell, Robert Ridley-Shackleton, Daniela Ortiz, Emma Williams, Mark Wilkins, Harold Offeh, Maribel Tlalmis de la Rosa, David Tait, Pille Bunnell, Rosalía Guerrero, Michael Dudeck, Monica Meyer, Dr Andrew Lapworth, Ryszard Auksztulewicz, Andres Orjuela, Hassina Sakhri, Alexandra Nachescu and Dr Malcolm Atkins.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1 Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, *Level of Confidence*, 2015. 23

Figure 2 Lorena Wolffer, *Evidencias*, 2010. 32

Figure 3 Andres Orjuela, *Heart I* 37
from the series Taxonomia Postmortem*,* 2014.

Figure 4 Sir Anthony van Dyck, *The Deposition of Christ*, 1615. 41

Figure 5 Doris Salcedo, *Untitled*, 1992. 42

Figure 6 Doris Salcedo, *Shibboleth*, 2008. 50

Figure 7 Teresa Margolles, *What Else Could We Talk About?* 52
2009.

Figure 8 Jeremy Deller, *We're Here Because We're Here, 2016*. 60

1 Introduction

This art practice-based research project started in Oxford in 2013. It uses a set of my developing artworks to interrogate the following five research questions, which are dealt with individually in Chapters 2–6:

- To what extent can this art practice-based research transform images of violence into performances with a positive impact that create empathy towards victims of violence?

- To what extent can this art practice-based research create a shift in the experience of the viewer regarding their immediate reality in relationship to another subjective view, and identify the ethical stakes of this new aesthetic perception in terms of the production of new subjectivities?

- How can this art practice-based research explore the concept of subjectivity through performance in the context of 'Capitalismo Gore'?

- How do performance art and daily events function in the context of 'Capitalismo Gore'?

- To what extent can this art practice-based research embody the practice of art performance that avoids singular meaning, a script to perform, and predictable emotions during the performance in the context of 'Capitalismo Gore'?

'Capitalismo Gore' is a concept named and discussed by the Mexican philosopher, Sayak Valencia (2010). Her text is an academic and philosophical attempt to explain the current violence happening in contemporary Mexico. 'Capitalismo Gore' is a symbolic and economic machinery that generates further codes, grammars, narratives, and social interactions; it is a tool to analyse the economic, socio-political, symbolic, and cultural landscape of Mexico as it is shaped and re-written by drug-trafficking. 'Capitalismo Gore' is part of a discursive taxonomy that seeks to shed light on the complexity of the criminal framework in the Mexican context: its connections with an exacerbated neo-liberalism and globalisation; the binary construction of gender as a political performance; the creation of capitalistic

subjectivities, re-colonised by the economy and represented by Mexican criminals and drug-traffickers, who are denominated ‘monstrous subjects’ in Capitalismo Gore’s taxonomy (Valencia, 2010).

The concept of ‘Capitalismo Gore’ underpins the written commentary behind this art practice-based research. This research re-appropriates this concept to give a theoretical framework closer to the reality back in Mexico.

This art practice-based research includes images of violence from Mexico encountered and gathered from the Internet or in the public space of Ciudad Juarez. It uses this material to examine the reactions and register the emotional impact on the artist-scholar and on a limited audience in the United Kingdom. It uses dialogues with some Mexican artists and curators as feedback to reflect on the development of the research. The dialogues are a source of information, a way of examining reactions, emotional impact and ethical aspects in my inquiry. The artistic practices involve a manipulation of the images through the media of drawing, sculpture and performative action (discussed below on pp. 8–9 and pp. 11–12). This commentary will include narratives of how artists live on a daily basis in contemporary Mexico as to provide more personal and informal accounts of the violent situation.

This art practice-based research aims

1. To create images and sculptures and explore their use in performative actions;

2. To conduct a practice-based research project that examines representations of human violence through performance without traumatising the viewer, and maintaining ethical value in the aesthetic perception; and

3. To develop a methodology in performance art through which I express my work as practice and the use of myself as a participant, contextualised in a 20,000-word reflective commentary or exegesis.

The contributions of this research to knowledge are as follows.

It is clear that the contribution of this art-practice research differs from the philosophical concept of ‘Capitalismo Gore’ in form and content. However, the art

practice blurs the perception of space and invites the readers to traverse a self-narrative constructed with feedback gathered from the audience and dialogues with artists and curators of a set of performance art methodologies. These performance art methodologies juxtapose the artist-scholar with images of violence from Mexico. The affects produced by these performances have been transformed into visual documentation, some of them in the form of zines. They demonstrate an important testimony for this research, situated as it is between two cultures: Mexican and British.

The overall methodology not only appropriates performance methods such as Ewa Partum's active poetry, but also introduces them into the academic context and regenerates them by replacing the symbols she uses in her performances. For example, in this research, Partum's use of the western alphabet employed in the active poetry performance is altered and replaced with numbers. This research acknowledges her use of symbols in the art sector for communication and recognises her approach as a useful method. The approach adopted here incorporates the use of numbers; this new method highlights the differences and contrast between art-practice based research and the quantitative research methods traditionally used in the social sciences in the context of conflict and its representation. This can be seen in the performances *How many corpses are enough for good quality research?* (p. 66) and *27,000 Mexicans to be found* (p. 67).

Geraldine Pilgrim's 'A world of my own' performance approach informs a different aspect of the tragedy of war. I dressed as my grandmother who suffered from Alzheimers. As an artist-scholar, I stepped into another's shoes and inhabited what people in distress may experience by not being able to go back to what they remember of their homes. This research approach determinates the differences between acting and becoming someone else, and shows an integral approach to the difference between empathy and sympathy. Pilgrim's method enables artists to create a self-made world that is more concerned with aesthetics. In contrast, this approach enables others to see through the eyes of the artist impersonating others in distress (see p. 57). '*On becoming my grandmother'* enlarges the use of performance as a living experience and sheds new light on the studies of empathy in performance art. I argue that we need visual documentation when becoming someone else, because this will be useful for future generations to make sense of the world. Such documentation eventually will become an instrument of self-knowledge, and others' self-knowledge, that traverses time and space.

I also argue that performance art practices do not need to be visible to the public eye while they are taking place. I argue that artists have the power to decide how they want to be documented.

Nando Messias' approach to walking in performance art has been developed here into a new method of walking in which the artist-scholar looks for specific elements in the public space of Mexico City.

Tero Nauha's *schizoanalytic performance* practice[1] (2013) was probably the most challenging approach to develop, because I use it in the specific context of images of extreme violence. The method was enlarged and used as a tool to record speech and body movements.

During the three performances '*The structure of war'* (p. 34), '*Captalismo Gore'* (p. 68), and '*If flowers could talk they would not be flowers anymore'* (p. 63), the technique of improvisation is used in very specific ways that respond to traditional representations of violence and trauma. During these performances, the body and its exploration of movements and sounds function as a way to restructure the image of one's own body in comparison with the mutilated bodies depicted in the pictures or the language used to describe testimonies of torture.

These performances are providing systematic insights about a return to vitality, beauty and transversality.

> Transversality in the group is a dimension opposite and complementary to the structures that generate pyramidal hierarchization and sterile ways of transforming messages. Transversality is the unconscious source of action in the group, going beyond the objective laws on which it is based, carrying the group's desire […] it is my hypothesis that there is nothing inevitable about the bureaucratic self-mutilation of a subject group, or its unconscious resort to

[1] I have appropriated Tero Nauha's *schizoanalytic performance* practice.
In 2015, I attended the workshop/lecture 'Schizoproduction/Knowledge is not knowing' in Theatre Discounter, Berlin, Germany. According to Nauha, practice is about intensify, affects, repetitions, rhythms, and refrains. Three aspects of plasticity are taking place (of giving form, taking form and annihilating form), and yet the only material is the body of the performer. The audience is often silently involved as sympathisers. The audience affects the performer in his or her journey, and he or she experiences the panic of being on stage and being in the position of an object. See Noha (2013a), *Schizoanalysis as A Method in Artistic Research*.

> mechanisms that militate against its potential transversality. They depend, from the first moment, on an acceptance of the risk – which accompanies the emergence of any phenomenon of real meaning – of having to control irrationality, death, and the otherness of the other (Guattari, 1984, pp. 22–23).

The methodology used in this project transformed sensations, feelings and emotions towards victims and criminals of violence from Mexico and the immediate audience inside and outside the academic context, into images, objects and performance art, and analysed this process based on embodied physical encounters out of interactions.

A set of artworks were contextualised in a reflective commentary that provides distinctive insights into the practice of performance art and ethical representations of violence.

My methods included:

- Careful observation of images, my immediate environment and the people living in it;
- Research dialogues with other artists and curators, using their responses to my artwork as part of the research;
- A critical engagement with the work of other performers and visual artists dealing with related topics, including Tero Nauha, Ewa Partum, Geraldine Pilgrim, Nando Messias, Doris Salcedo, Teresa Margolles and Andres Orjuela;
- Engaging with the work of relevant theorists such as Sayak Valencia, Elaine Scarry, Melissa W. Wright, Felix Guattari, Giorgio Agamben and Nigel Thrift;
- Reflecting on the work as it developed;
- Reflecting on the feedback received on my work from the doctoral students at Oxford Brookes University and incorporating their responses into the current research;
- Engaging in free writing, contextualising the lives of missing women and juxtaposing the lives of missing women prior to their disappearance from the subjective viewpoint of life in Oxford; and
- Using improvisation as a mode of enquiry, building on Tero Nauha's *schizoanalytic performance practice* (2013).

This research started from a need to create an artistic response to the violence happening in my homeland, contemporary Mexico.

The concept of 'Capitalismo Gore' underpins this written commentary on my art practice-based research. I re-appropriate this concept to give my research a theoretical framework closer to the reality back in Mexico. The space in which I explore performance art is the space of 'Capitalismo Gore'.

The work in progress was constantly concerned with the ethical representation of violence. Some of the findings are traces of these spaces of conflict between the use of images and posters depicting tortured bodies or missing people, eliciting a personal reaction, and how to document the affects[2] happening in the artist-scholar's body. The sense of affect[3] I want to discuss in this commentary foregrounds the 'body' as a site of intensive transformation, and it allows the audience to think beyond representations of violence. The reader will attempt to approach a performance artwork not through what it means, but through what it does: the new modes of perception it gives rise to, the new lines of thought it traces, and the new forms of subjectivity it ushers into being.

This art practice-based research evolved from working on drawings and sculptures, and moved towards making performance art. It produced prompts for performances and reflected on the actions and the feedback of the audience.

---

[2] This commentary will use the term 'affect', drawing on the definitions and usage of this terminology by Nigel Thrift, Antonio Damasio and Gilles Deleuze.
For Thrift, there is no stable definition of affect'. The word can mean a lot of different things, and is usually associated with emotional or feeling words and a consequent repertoire of terms such as hatred, shame, envy, jealousy, fear, disgust, anger, embarrassment, sorrow, grief, anguish, pride, love, happiness, joy, hope, wonder (although he does not think that these words work well as simple translations of the term affect': 2004, p. 59).
Emotion involves physical states (heat and an increased heartbeat in anger; trembling in terror). Feelings are complex string of ideas traversing emotions as they remap them (Damasio, 2004, p. 28).
Effect is 'transitive', in constant variation, not so much a state as the ongoing passage from one state to another (Deleuze, 1998, cited in Bertelen, L. and Murphy, A., 2010, p. 140).

[3] The sense of emotions and affects I want to discuss in this commentary is that of emotions as personal experiences and affects as the forces that precede, produce and inform those experiences (Shaviro, 2016). I turn to the concept of affect in this commentary because it allows me to theorise my artistic practice in a way that can communicate the transverse of sensations, feelings and emotions felt during the process of this practice-based research project. The documentation and printed material function as illustrations of this thesis; the reader will notice that the performances have been captured by visual and written representations.

The construction of the language used in writing these research questions was very much inspired by Tero Nauha's PhD, *Schizoproduction: artistic research and performance in the context of immanent capitalism* (2016), and Mexican philosopher Sayak Valencia's PhD, 'Capitalismo Gore' (2010).

This text describes this art practice-based research methods and findings, and is a discussion regarding its evolution. The thesis is divided into the following chapters.

Chapter 2 asks to what extent this art practice-based research can transform images of violence into performances that create empathy towards victims of violence and have a positive impact.

This chapter reflects on how the art projects are not about informing people in England about the situation of missing women or reproducing the images of missing people so that they can be found. Rather, they are used to depict how this research came to be about working with the images and measuring their impact on a limited audience (including myself as audience and as an artist scholar), and what implications are involved in talking about a foreign issue in another country.

In the context of the war on drugs in Mexico, when a picture is taken it can detonate more symbolic violence. This second chapter discusses how the interventions of this art practice-based research are aware of that secondary violence, and how they are an attempt to interrupt that spiral by distracting the viewer's attention onto something else.

Chapter 3 focuses on the extent to which this art practice-based research can create a shift in the experience of the viewer regarding their immediate reality in relation to another subjective view, and identify the ethical stakes of this aesthetic perception in terms of the production of new subjectivities.

The development of this art practice-based research sought to evade crafting a spectacle of violence and enlarging terror campaigns by redistributing graphic images of violence. At the same time, it sought to understand the role of ethics in this research. This research employed images of both missing people and men who are presumably part of the drug trade. Within this chapter, the reader will find comments on a series of works that *embody physical encounters* and the acknowledgement of other important members of 'Capitalismo Gore'.

Chapter 4 discusses how this art practice-based research can embrace and explore the concept of subjectivity through performance in the context of 'Capitalismo Gore'.

In this chapter, the reader will find a narrative describing the research journey through the awareness of the artist scholar's feelings and emotions during the performances. The artist scholar traverses emotions such as guilt, shame, repulsion, despair, and sadness.

I became very distressed at some moments of the research, because I experienced a heaviness in dealing with this topic and a rejection from some of the people around me in Oxford. I adopted some advice given to parents of missing people, after discovering that their stress might lead them to lose their jobs, break up with their partners and cause other unfortunate events to unfold as a consequence of their loss. I learnt that the disappearance of a loved one can have the potential for destruction.

In this fourth chapter, the reader will become familiar with a method of free writing which juxtaposes some passages of the life of Monica Janeth Alanis Esparza before her disappearance in Ciudad Juarez with her life as a student in Oxford.

Chapter 5 asks how performance art and daily events function in the context of 'Capitalismo Gore'.

This chapter describes the acknowledgment and expectation of a feeling of dislocation. This research states that Oxford is also a place associated with 'Capitalismo Gore'. People in first world countries enjoy watching TV programmes such as *Breaking Bad* or the Netflix series *Narcos,* and can romanticise the violence instigated by drug wars in places such as Mexico, Colombia or Afghanistan. The work of this research does not idealise violence; it is not a product that could be seen as entertainment, and it does not use the pain of others to achieve academic success.

In this chapter, the reader will see how the methods of other live art and performance artists were adapted to this research. Methods such as Ewa Partum's *active poetry* (1971–73), *schizoanalytic performance* practice by Tero Nauha (2013), *becoming someone else* by Geraldine Pilgrim (Live Art Development Agency, 2014a) and

walking approaches in performance by Nando Messias (Live Art Development Agency, 2014b) are further detailed and discussed on pp. 57–63.

Chapter 6 investigates the extent to which this art practice-based research can embody a practice of art performance that avoids singular meaning, a script to perform, and predictable emotions during the performance in the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’.

Throughout the chapter, the reader will notice the awareness of the type of existence the performer was embodying. The comments on the performances informed how improvisation was used as an inquiry method allowing the performer to create a space and a time of difference, as well as unexpected, unrecognisable and undefined movements or actions. There was no clear start or end to the performances, but rather a timeless exploration of the affects.

This chapter describes the use of the artist scholar’s body as a tool for research and outlines the outcomes of these experiments.

The key findings of this research are presented in Chapter 7 (Conclusions).

2 Empathy and impact

This chapter includes a brief definition of the words ‘feelings’, ‘sensations’ and ‘emotions’. It also includes commentary on some drawings and photocopies that I created in response to my first research question.

Feeling a sensation is what we commonly describe as ‘butterflies in the stomach’. This describes something pleasant and expectant, but feelings can also cause much more unpleasant visceral reactions. They can make us feel nauseous, make our hair stand on end, and cause pains in the gut. This has been disputed by Lapworth (2016).

In feeling an emotion, we direct our sensations onto objects. The object is not necessarily physical; I can feel sad about someone’s death or happy about petting a dog. We can feel angry and express it with our facial expressions, or with what we say or what we do. The representation of emotions is visible and it can include the expelling of substances. For example, sadness is usually expressed through tears.

When an artist attempts to embody the feelings of an encounter with an object or subject through their body in an act of expression, then the artwork becomes an exploration of that artist’s own feelings.

Francis Bacon’s paintings are good examples of artworks that embody feelings.[4] Although some people tend to express their emotions through human language, geographer Nigel Thrift argues that ‘human language is no longer assumed to offer the only meaningful form of communication’ (2004, p. 59). This research will explore affects as forms of communication in Performance Art in response to images of violence.

As a viewer, when we encounter a Bacon painting, we observe the thickness of the oil on the canvas and the parts of the bodies that have been deformed. Bacon’s paintings offer us a vivid experience bridging audience, painter and model, which could be described as an atmosphere or an affect.

[4] See Deleuze’s book on Francis Bacon, which explores his work in terms of the violence of sensation (2005).

In an interview, Bacon described how he asked himself in the act of painting: ‘How do I feel? How can I make this image more immediately real to myself?’ (Sylvester, 1966). Bacon said that when he was painting, he painted not only the model but also himself as the object he was trying to record. For him, painting was a dual performance (1966). From this interview and his actual work, we could say that what Bacon embodied in his act of painting was affect in process, because he portrayed his own feelings and sensations in a way that almost approaches a self-portrait.

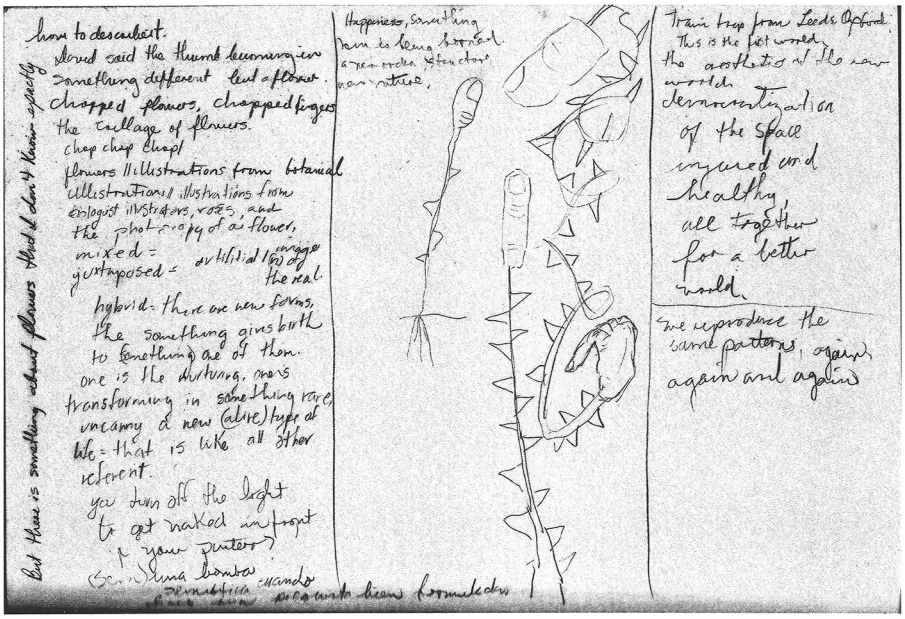
From this example we can infer that art allows artists to express their making of affects more freely, while allowing them to experience what physiologist Alice Miller calls ‘vitality’ or the experience of spontaneous feelings (1981, p. 51). This is similar to what Thrift calls the politics of emotional liberty (2004, p. 72). For Thrift, an example of an artist who successfully engages with the depiction of affects, whose exhibits are popular and whose work regularly produces emotional responses in the audience is the video artist Bill Viola. An example of Viola’s affective work is *Martyrs (Earth, Air, Fire Water)*, two large-scale permanent video installations commissioned for St. Paul’s Cathedral (Viola, 2014).

In this research, there is also an attempt to use drawings to express very private sensations, feelings and emotions such as despair and mourning in response to the subject of this research and to the immediate environment.

Works and Commentary

- This art practice-based research created and reflected on the following series of works to explore the first research question: To what extent can this art practice-based research transform images of violence into performances with a positive impact that create empathy towards victims of violence?

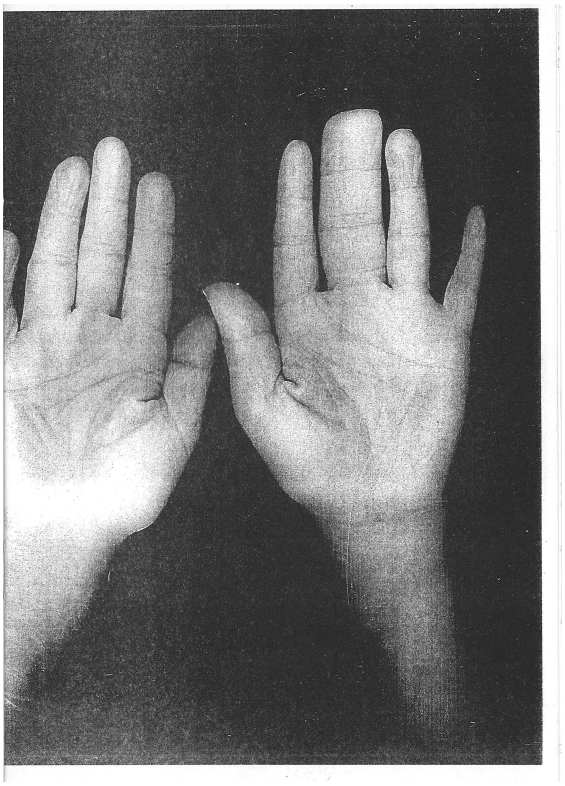
1. *Feelings*, May 2013, pencil on paper, 22 x 30 cm. Art Journal notes.



This drawing was created on a train journey between Oxford and London. At that time this research was focused on reading about the structure of torture in wartime and some testimonies of the parents of missing women in Mexico. At this point I was experiencing a recurring experience of hand sensation. While the hand sensations might have been prompted by the immediate context, they became clearer during certain times, such as when travelling from one city to another.

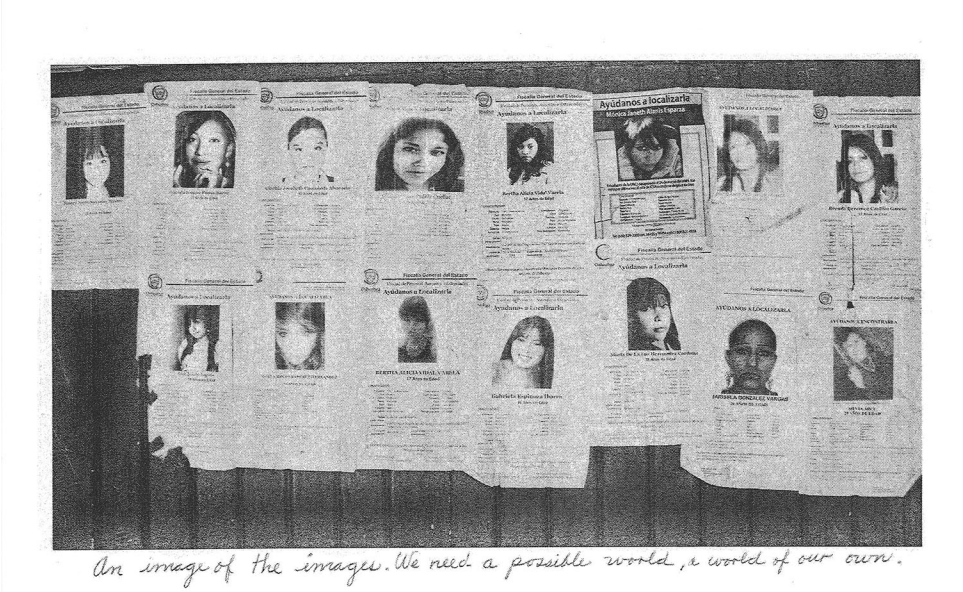
The act of drawing was an immediate response to those sensations when being in public, as a way of making them visible and 'objectified'. Drawing became a tool to bridge the gap between 'Capitalismo Gore' and my physical and mental location in the United Kingdom.

2. *Hands as organs of perception*, April 2013, A5 zine, front page, 16 pages, black and white risograph printing. Artist book fair, University of Leeds.



In this work, I photocopied my hands with a photocopying machine after experiencing unpleasant sensations when watching images of violence. The aim of this work was to leave a testimony of how my hands behaved after those private encounters with images of violence.

3. *Plant, care and repair: A second life*, April 2013, A5 zine, page 4 of 10, black and white photocopy printing. Photo by Edgar Martinez Contreras. Presented at the Fringe Arts Bath Festival.



Plant, care and repair: A second life includes images of missing women from the border between Mexico and the United States and captions added to each image. The captions were refrains of a better future and went on to direct the progress of my work: *People as Precious Work of Art. What can we do to symbolically cure what has happened? People as fragile as seasonal flowers. People as precious treasures that must be respected. An image of the images. We need a possible world, a world of our own.* I gave away the zines to people who attended the opening of the annual Fringe Arts Bath Festival in 2013.

4. *It can happen to anyone*, April 2013, A4, black and white reprographic. Presented at the Fringe Bath Arts Festival.

Here an image of my face was overlaid with the face of a missing lady as a means of obscuring and merging two different images into one, while attempting to avoid the possibility of the viewer associating the image with something familiar. This project resulted in a realisation that in Mexico this is not something that happens only to a certain population within the country; it is a reality that could reach more people.

All information about our physical features was deleted, leaving the audience with no references or anything to see. Contrary to this approach, Elaine Scarry argues that the absence of beauty is a profound form of deprivation and that there are two ways to create beauty: perpetuating beauty that already exists, or originating beauty that does not exist. Both are equivalent within the realm of justice (2006, p. 79).

In time, the images of missing women were superimposed with flowers; thus the viewer reified the flower and not the girl in the poster. Passages of memories of one missing girl recounted by her loved ones prior to her disappearance were appropriated to write a story including experiences of my personal life as a student in Oxford. This method was an attempt to fill in with words the void the missing girl left after her disappearance, and to imagine how the world was perceived before the protagonist of the story (the missing lady) vanished.

Images of mutilated bodies were also superimposed with flowers, as a way of concealing the content but also to create something different with them.

Scarry mentions ‘lateral disregard’ (2006, p. 55), the worry that inevitably follows in the wake of observing something beautiful: ‘something’s receiving attention’ seems to involve ‘something else’s not receiving attention’. Thus, the artistic practice of superimposing different elements requires the attention of the viewer; the viewer can look at the flowers and the missing women’s faces, listen to the story of a missing woman and at the same time listen to my story in Oxford as a student and see flowers printed in the paper next to mutilated bodies.

In contrast to my work, Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s work focuses on face recognition to evoke empathy. His project *Level of Confidence* commemorates the mass kidnapping of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa Normalista School in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico. The artwork was released in March 26, 2015, exactly six months after the kidnapping took place. The project consists of a face-recognition camera trained to look for the faces of the disappeared students. As you stand in front of the camera, the system uses algorithms to find which student's facial features look most like yours and gives a ‘level of confidence’ percentage of how accurate the match is (Lozano-Hemmer, 2015). Like mine, Lozano-Hemmer’s work prompts the viewers to cease standing in the centre of their world by standing in front of an image depicting another human being. According to David Howe, empathy has its origins in the philosophy of aesthetics (2013, p. 6). We as an audience find our way into the work of art; we could try to step into the artist’s feelings and the situation he or she is addressing.

Figure 1 (Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, *Level of Confidence*, 2015)

Colombian artist Doris Salcedo declares that 'when the spectator gives the work a moment of silent contemplation, in that moment and only in that moment, is when the emotional connection happens' (Postofficecowboys, 2013). In Lozano-Hemmer's work, the moment of encounter between the viewer and the image can create some sort of emotional connection. Related to Salcedo's observation, Scarry states: 'Beauty is associated with a life compact or contract, where the perceiver abstains from harming or even actively enters into the protection of this fragment of the world' (2006, p. 50).

For Salcedo, the crafting of her work and interventions in public spaces and art museums and galleries return humans to beauty. For Lozano-Hemmer, *Level of Confidence* serves as commemoration of the mass kidnapping of 43 students. For the research carried out here, the artistic practices return the artist-scholar to vitality; for a moment she shifts her attention onto something different to herself and the audience and the reality around them.

This research is about working with the images and measuring their impact on a limited audience, including myself. Britain is a secular country, where the majority of viewers are not inclined to see images in the same way as Catholic communities in Mexico. This was discussed in my unpublished conversation with Harold Offeh

(2015). I would also add that the experience of feelings and communication of emotions differed too, but this research will not expand on this since this is not an anthropological or sociological research on affect theory. At this point of the research we can infer that empathy could be triggered by experiencing cheerful emotions that can be perceived as beautiful and good instead of those considered bad or ugly, such as disgust or fear.

5. Missing people, 2013, A4 zine, red and white reprographic. Presented at Üsin, Small Press Fair in the Karussell gallery, Zurich, Switzerland.

Following ideas about the link between experiencing beautiful feelings such as pleasure and negative feelings such as fear or disgust, I superimposed flowers on the images published online by journalist Judith Correa about mothers looking for their daughters (2016). The flowers act as elements to attract the viewers' attention and prevent them getting distracted by judging the beauty or ugliness of the missing people or their families. This research proposes that in this process, the viewer's gaze is redistributed.

To introduce the following set of images, we would like to bring into consideration that taking the picture of a mutilated person can detonate more symbolic violence in a visual violent spiral. This will depend on how the picture is displayed, the captions accompanying it, who sees it, and where it is exhibited.

6. *Disintegration*, April 2013, A5 zine, Page 5 of 12, black and white risograph. Presented during a talk-performance at the conference *Representations of Violence*

and Ethics in Ibero-American Countries, University of Manchester, and the *Art and Conflict Symposium*, Wolfson College, Oxford University.

This booklet contains images of women about to be tortured by drug dealers in Mexico. The image is drawn from a video circulated on Facebook. I took a screenshot because the structure of the women's bodies looked like my body: big breasts and broad shoulders. I decided to delete the image through the process of photocopying it several times until it disappeared. Similarly, in his artwork *Psicophonia Goliath 1*, Andres Orjuela downloaded a video of an execution from YouTube and edited it in various ways. He deleted the images and added subtitles in Spanish and English. The sound and the subtitles describe what is happening but the viewer cannot see the images (Orjuela, 2012). He leaves an element of humanity in the video in the voice (rather than the image) of the executed man. Both Orjuela and I use material found on the Internet as part of our artistic practice, to transform it into something perhaps less brutal and shocking.

According to artist David Barton, when artists draw, they fight against something, and have something against those images. Artists work against those images until we can cope with them (2103).

This research constantly questioned whether or not I as the performer might be creating a secondary trauma in the audience. I was not sure if I was making a spectacle of violence by re-appropriating the images. I had no experience of being close to dead bodies, and I am not from Ciudad Juarez (as Mexican philosopher

Sayak Valencia is), but I had the images. In my process, I was not claiming innocence when I displayed the images to research if I could embody, from a distance, empathic responses to other people's tragedies. Cuauhtémoc Medina quotes Susan Sontag: 'Victims suggest innocence. And innocence, by the inexorable logic that governs all relational terms, suggests guilt' (Sontag, 2001, cited in Margolles, 2009, p. 21).

Displaying the images were accompanied by an experience of uneasiness and ambiguity due to the realisation that I was using images of others to explore a return to vitality to avoid depression or the absence of pain.

I wrote a manifesto as a way of addressing the resistance and ambivalence of being exposed as an artist working with these images. This manifesto denied and challenged expressing myself as a criminal.

7. *Red Zine*, April 2013, A5 zine, 6 pages, risograph printing. Bristol Artist Book event, Arnolfini, Bristol. (See Appendix A)

This research involves an ethical debate about displaying images of victims in the making of new performances. I thus find a similarity between my project and the debate over whether or not the shrunken heads at the Pitt Rivers Museum should be on display. The public find them horrific, but they are often the first objects that they want to see. They act as if they were expecting to experience disgust. What people do not seem to notice is that the plaits of the shrunken heads are decorated with beetles' wings. They quickly dismiss the experience of amazement and wonder when seeing the shiny ornaments that are so well-crafted. I see the trade in shrunken heads and transactions for guns and metal as a glamorisation of violence and a beautification of horror by Europeans, based on their economic interests and aesthetic perceptions of beauty and horror regarding indigenous populations from the Upper Amazon. The way audiences perceive South American cultures in the Pitt Rivers Museum is very complex, since it still springs from a colonial mindset.

In addition to this colonial mindset Medina quotes Sayak writing about men in Mexico:

> We must leave behind the idealised notion of the Third World masses of peasants as a necessary force of resistance. On the contrary, the sudden

> economic changes in the countryside have converted this force into the cradle of a new peasant culture in which misery and humiliation transform traditional machismo into a kind of consumerist violence. This leads to a situation where individuals who have been stripped of their ways of life and their dignity join the mafia as a way to restore a threatened masculinity, 'turning the position of parodic subalternity historically assigned to them'. As a consequence, Valencia concludes, 'they search for their dignity and identity affirmation… through a kamikaze logic. Those subjects will no longer die or kill for a religion or for political statement but for power and money (2010 cited in Medina, 2014, p. 142).

I thus decided to go beyond interweaving flowers over images of violence. I built a sculpture, covered in paper decorated with photocopied images of violence and shaped into origami beetles. The shrunken heads and the graphic images of violence found on the internet are part of a spectacle of violence that illustrates the treatment of enemies in times of colonisation and 'Capitalismo Gore' respectively. The transformation of the images is a response to that spectacle of violence.

8. *Dung Beetles*. Twenty-four images of mutilated bodies folded into the shape of origami beetles, 2014. Glass Tank Gallery.

At moments I felt exhausted and uncomfortable when sharing my work within my academic group. The dynamics of this exposure and reading the testimonies of the families of missing people haunted me at night, and perhaps my work in progress also haunted my audience.

Interim Reflections

The relationship between Mexico and Oxford was mediated through the images I was gathering. At this point of the research, I started to integrate my body as a tool to work with the images. I had thus far overexposed and over-identified with the subjects, but my work was not about communication with the family victims or the immediate audience in Oxford; it was about the possibility of experiencing feelings

while acknowledging their images and testimonies and embodying this process in an artwork.

Thrift reflects on Spinoza's *Ethics,* commenting that, for Spinoza, knowing proceeded out of interactions in parallel with the body's physical encounters (2004, p. 61). My research is about knowing the impact of images of violence through my body and through the physical interactions between the images and my current context, the academic milieu of Oxford Brookes University.

The works are continuous performances that do not intend to embody or represent the lives destroyed during the conflict in Mexico. Rather, their purpose is to research how affects can be associated with empathy to create performance art or art objects.

The question of this chapter is whether this research created a positive impact on the audience. There was evidence of a positive impact on the audience during the final exhibition, which drew positive comments about the process of the work and the crafting of the final product. However, a member of the audience questioned why the methodologies did not include working with the families of the missing in Mexico. During a guided tour, it was verbally communicated that the methodologies were not designed to work with the victims.

Empathy for some researchers means making a conscious effort to step into other people's shoes – including those of our enemies – and to acknowledge their humanity, individuality and perspective (Krznaric, 2014, p. 15). This research proposes that empathy is shaped differently in performance art. By stepping into the shoes of others, we can over-identify and spuriously identify with strong emotions that we have already seen or learnt, leaving little space to understand our process in experiencing affect, which will hopefully help us situate ourselves next to the sufferers rather than instead of them or despite them.[5]

At this moment of the research, a range of interactions during the performances built constructed a space in which people and objects became part of the construction of

[5] See the arguments concerning participatory art in Clare Bishop (2012), Suzanne Lacy's *Mapping the Terrain* (1995), Grant Kestner's *Conversation Pieces* (2004) and Lucy Lippard's *The Lure of the Local* (1997).

new subjectivities. Sensations were objectified into drawings and sculptures. Eventually they would be intensified and recognised as sadness, fear, and anger.

Next, the reader will find comments on works that responded to the second question about the production of new subjectivities and a more specific approach to the encounters in between images and the immediate environment.

3 The production of new subjectivities

I wanted to be like the others but that would have meant being untrue to myself.
Alice Miller

To what extent can this art practice-based research create a shift in the experience of the viewer regarding their immediate reality in relationship to another subjective view? How can it help identify the ethical stakes of this new aesthetic perception in terms of the production of new subjectivities?

To answer this question, this research will analyse *physical encounters*, which spring from the feeling that the researcher could empathise with the victims and the criminals.

In 2013, I introduced the Oxford Brookes University School of Arts practice-based PhD group to a booklet of photocopies that depicted my hands disintegrating into dry roses. I placed chairs in a circle. Some of the group looked impatient; they expressed their dislike of being observed when holding the booklet that was given to them. Some of them said that the book contains a secret. They seemed to think emotionally, and characterised the specific moment as fearful.

In this research, the photocopy machine is used as a tool to record the movements and transformation of my own hands. The hands are the parts of the body that can move and behave in many ways, using tools to destroy or to create.

For example, Mexican artist Lorena Wolffer has an art installation about domestic violence in Mexico, *Evidencias*. She displays the objects used to injure women, such as an iron, a glass bottle or a cable. Next to the image is a narrative that relates how the object is connected to the story and how the objects were used to harm the women by men that abuse them.

Figure 2 (Lorena Wolffer, *Evidencias*, 2010)

With the feedback gathered from my research group, I made the decision to use images of extreme violence to contrast their content with the roses in the booklets and observe their response. My booklets with roses are documentations of an act of destruction and creation.

Curator and art critic, Cuauhtémoc Medina, reflected on this art practice-based research portfolio:

> Some of the work is interesting, although most of it does not reflect the ethical and political commitment to create artwork about the dreadful violence that is happening in Mexico, because it is mostly worried about the politically correctness of the artwork within your context, the academic context of Oxford Brookes University (2015).

The narrative of the reception of my PhD community is thus based on these *physical encounters,* and the atmosphere created in those exchanges that would lead me to create a self-made narrative that highlights feelings arising from these *physical encounters* within and outside the academic realm.

According to Batkhin, a transference of subjectivation operates between the author and the contemplator of a work of art: the consumer becomes co-creator (1990, cited in Guattari, 1995, p. 14). During the first years of my research, my audience was mainly Oxford Brookes University School of Arts practice-based PhD group. From the feedback I received from them, I was able to gather than a sense of fairness was needed. As Scarry states, fairness is ‘a symmetry of everyone’s relation to each other’ (2006, p. 59). This inquiry needed to reclaim fairness by finding a balance between the feedback and my decisions.

Due to Medina’s comments, the meaning of ethics needed to be clarified to continue with the artistic practice. The roots of the word is related to the terms are ‘character’ and ‘tradition’. Hence, taking decisions that lead into actions would ideally challenge traditional representations of violence, build character when analysing subjective feedback and decide how to present the documentation of the work during a final exhibition.

9. *Mourning bad death*, 2013, one image from a set of five self-portraits, documentation of performance, 6x 8 in black and white reprographic. Glass Tank Gallery.

As a response to a critique of using images of people I do not know, I started to place myself in the making of images. I felt a responsibility to expose myself to the audience's gaze, too. In this series of images, I started to over-identify with the missing women previous to their disappearance and experienced negative emotions such as the despair I inferred they had experienced minutes before or during their kidnapping.

For this series of photographs I wore my white shirt, a minimum wage worker's shirt.[6] I dressed specially for the photography session so that I could create an atmosphere in which I felt I was a worker, just like some of the missing women. We both earned minimum wages but in different latitudes in the world: Ciudad Juarez and Oxford.

[6] I was working as an invigilator in the Pitt Rivers Museum.

During the research, the artistic practices constantly looked for links between the missing women and myself to discover what made us similar, apart from nationality. I discovered that I am part of those stories of Mexican women around the world earning minimum wages. In contrast with some of them, however, I do not live in a war zone, I do not work in a 'maquiladora' (factory on the border in between Mexico and the United States) and I am undertaking a PhD at Oxford Brookes University, partly self-funded and partly paid by the Mexican Arts Council. Still, I believe we can share emotional behaviours in different geopolitical frameworks.

This enquiry also intersects with some gender studies research that has exposed how Mexican women are labelled as disposable by the third world factories of global firms (Wright, 2006, p. 81).

10. *The structure of war*, 2016, A4 Booklet, 14 pages, risogrpah printing, Live Art and Performance Art sessions, School of Arts, Oxford Brookes University (see Appendix B).

The performance methodology consisted of 15 minutes of non-stop talking. The prompts for the performance ere cut-outs inspired by words used to describe what Mexican women represent to the factories on the border in between Mexico and the United States of America, and other institutions around the world who see Mexican women in the same way. There is a transcript of the performance.

My artistic practices also looked for more private information about the missing women. There is a feeling that the researcher is an unofficial detective who can navigate between blogs and electronic newspapers. Facebook pages were a source of information which made me conclude that the missing women had no privacy before or after their disappearance.

There was documentation of the names of the missing women depicted in the images I worked with. Except for 29-year-old Silvia Arce, all vanished between 2008 and 2012, when they were between 13 and 19 years of age. According to Kent Paterson, these women went missing during the 'Great Violence', a time when the city was crawling with soldiers, federal police and assorted gunmen. Many of these missing women were born during the years when the disappearance and killing of women in Ciudad Juarez first became an international issue (Paterson, 2013). The violent deaths of missing women in Ciudad Juarez have been public knowledge since 1993.

During this process I found a blog including interviews with some of the parents of the missing women, and this is how my research started to get closer to some of their previous lives. I got to know more about one of them in particular: Monica Janeth Alanis Esparza. Information was gathered about where she came from, who her parents were, and some description of the exact moment of her disappearance based on the testimonies of other people. One resulting art project was creating a short story in which I mixed parts of my experiences in Oxford and her previous life before her disappearance.

A conversation with Orjuela (2014) revealed that to work on this type of topic, one must be very brave and fearless. At the same time he describes that during his period of research, when he watched videos of executions in YouTube, he started to buy flowers very frequently. Later on he made a series of photos entitled *Taxonomia Postmortem*, using the flowers and leaves he collected.

Figure 3 (Andres Orjuela, Heart I from the series Taxonomia Postmortem, 2014)

My photocopies with dry flowers were very much inspired by his work. He was making art to cope with his own trauma.

The sense of insecurity in Mexico in the public space is conveyed by these stories, and what is transferred to the reader is that this can happen to anyone. Later on, the journalists created a narrative in which the victim had no voice and became a character in a story. The victims and their families can then be captured by Foucault's panoptic view: the power of the ones who see over the ones being seen.

The constructed narratives open multiple possibilities of interpretation that form new subjectivities. The death of a person cannot be fixed into a concreteness of language; the memory of their bodies and the narrative around it is not encapsulated in the form of written language.

During the photographic sessions, I felt an immense sadness, because I was alone in a studio space, far from anyone, illuminated just by a bulb. I felt ugly, I felt the research had changed my physical features. I was exposed to the camera. I placed each image on my chest as if by placing the images on my body, I could be closer to

them and could challenge the gaze of the audience, embodied by the camera.[7] The camera became the gaze which scrutinised my body, and worked as the tool inspecting the victims of war.

The camera during my photographic session acted as a destructive way of seeing the victims, not because they have perished or disappeared, but because it looks at the suffering from a privileged position.

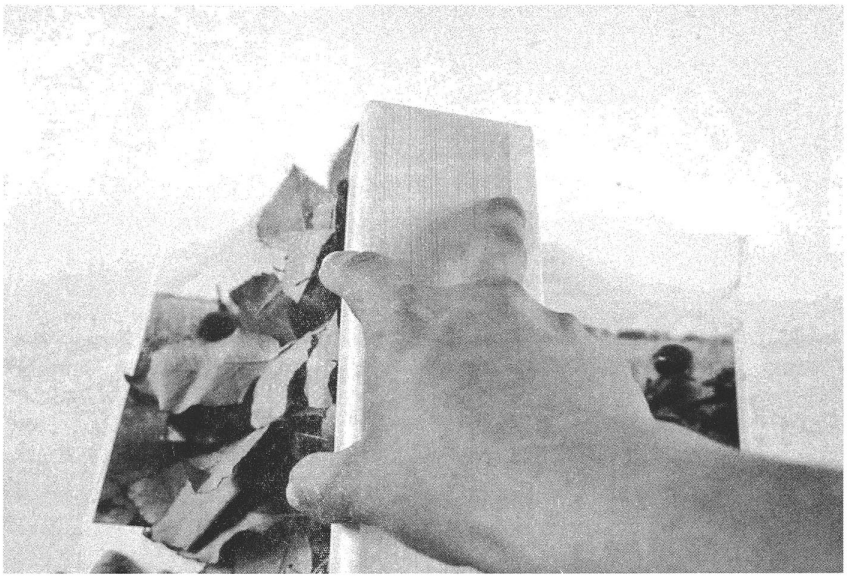
I read that, in Ciudad Juarez, women are advised to vomit when they are about to be sexually attacked. I imagine that the idea behind this thought is that the attacker would feel nauseous and leave the woman alone. With this thought in my mind, the flowers became vomit coming out of my mouth.

During these sessions, my artistic approach intended to create an experience that shifted the memories I collected in my mind while reading the articles in newspapers that describe how women's bodies or remains of bodies have been found. My art practice avoids the double victimisation of women. At this point in the research I attempted to create a fictional mourning body.

Ethics are moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity. Little by little during the photographic session I became ashamed of myself, about how I felt, and how others saw me. I registered all these moments of self-awareness in a series of photos. In this sense I was cultivating the shame that was installed in my face and body. According to Manuel Hernandez (2012, p.45), *la vergüenza* in Spanish and *shame* in English is immoral, because it is experienced in the eyes of others, and by the gaze. He also declares that the only way to coexist with shame is within a community. I felt I had no community in Oxford. I had no community to share the shame with.

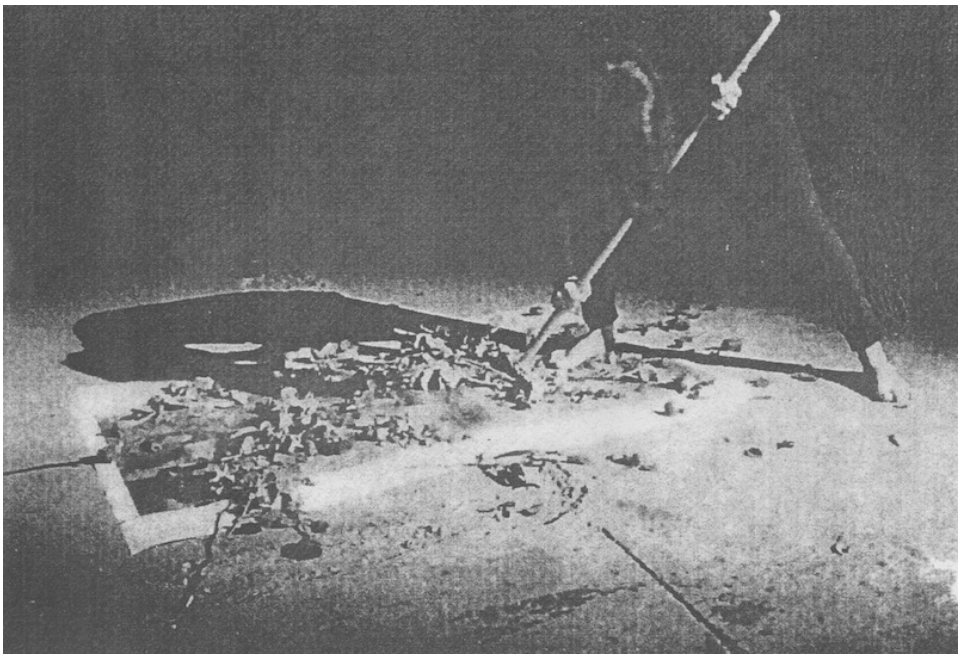
[7] This approach in documenting performance art can be related to performance artists such as Gina Pane. See Tracey Warr, 'Image as Icon: recognising the enigma' (2003).

11. Cleaning an image, 2013, performance for the camera, 30 seconds. Glass Tank Gallery.



The same image was used for a three-minute action consisting of cleaning the image with a brush. The brush had fresh flowers instead of bristles. The artistic method intended to give the impression of cleaning the image, as if the public gaze was covering it with dirt.

12. *Silent witness,* 2013, documentation of Performance, series of four A4 black and white risograph prints. Photo by member of the audience, performance presented at Ovada Art Gallery, Oxford.



In this performance, a long walk around the image of the women about to be executed set the beginning of the performance and delimited the space in which the performer moved around. The image was swept with a broom that had roses instead of bristles. It was swept until the roses were completely destroyed. During the action I felt disgust towards the women's body appearance. During the action the broom transformed into other things; it slowly transformed into a tool to clean and a tool to destroy.

Paola Esposito, a Butoh dancer, asked me who was controlling my actions, what was in my mind when performing this action, and whether it felt that someone else (not me) was controlling what I was doing. I must confess that I lost all sense of self-awareness during the act of smashing the flowers on the floor, and that I experienced strong feelings of disgust for the women's bodies.

Depictions of objects are part of the representation of violence in the history of western art. For example, Van Dyck's *Deposition of Christ* (1615) illustrates the tools of torture, a tortured body and the witnesses' behaviour towards a violent death.

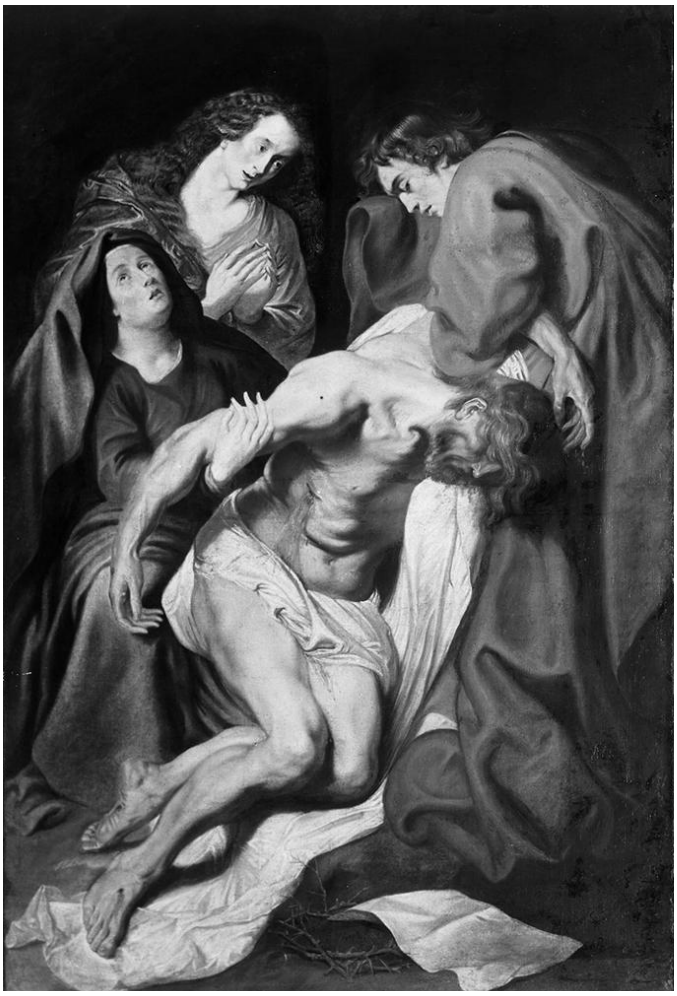


Figure 4 (Sir Anthony van Dyck, *The Deposition of Christ*, 1615)

At first glance, we might notice from this painting that thorns can be used to crown someone's head, or that a hammer and nails can be used to nail someone to a wooden cross. It is not until we see these objects depicted in a painting that we are aware of the potential of objects to inflict pain, and of the representation of dead and suffering bodies. This type of representation of violence illustrates how objects can inflict wounds on the human body and how the witnesses can express their grief.

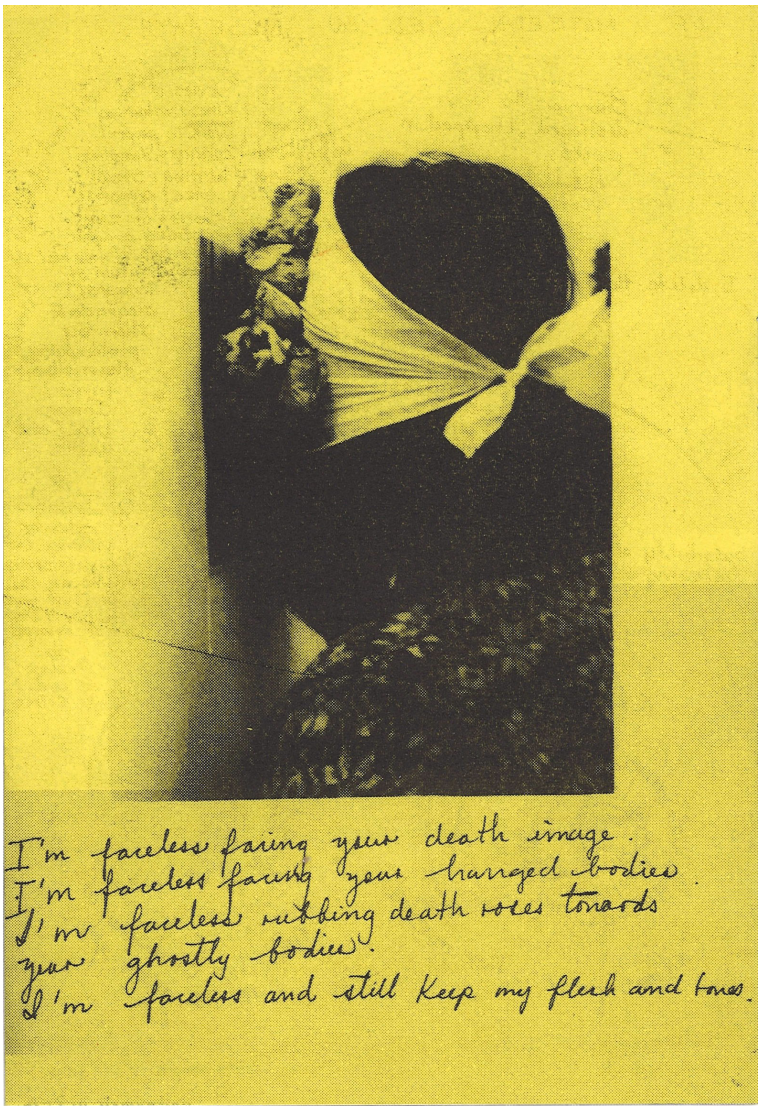
For every testimony of torture that is published, there is a disintegration of the contents of consciousness in torture and the disintegration of the world. In Scarry's words:

> Made to participate in the annihilation of the prisoners, made to demonstrate that everything is a weapon, the objects themselves, and with them the fact of Civilization, are annihilated, there is no wall, no door, no bathtub, no refrigerator, no chair, no bed (2006, p. 41).

This relates to the affect transmitted by Salcedo's artworks with furniture.

Figure 5 (Doris Salcedo, *Untitled*, 1992)

13. *Bad death resonance,* 2014, documentation of performance, A5 zine, 8 pages, risograph printing. Monday's PhD seminar sessions. Photo by PhD colleague (see Appendix C).



In this action, there is an attempt to express some of my research questions about the ethics of working with extreme images of violence. As an initial action in a small studio space, I covered my face with a bandage of dry flowers and rubbed the images with my head until all the flowers crumbled. I spread Vicks VapoRub ointment on the walls, so that my colleagues in the PhD group could barely discern the images. During my action I focused on the sound of the dry flowers crumbling and the smell of the ointment. I was trying to distract the viewers' senses into something less visually visceral.

We can infer from previous experiences that representations of violence illustrate human body behaviour.

14. *Orphans of the real,* performance in basement of a shop in Bath, duration: fifteen minutes. Video by Robert Ridley-Shackleton. Fringe Bath Arts Festival.

In this image there is a body covered by black plastic bags in a basement. The action was not intended to depict a woman trapped in a dirty and degraded room. The movements were slow and careful, since there were needles on the floor.

I was inspired by Finnish artist Tero Nauha's video *Wywrotka*, in which he explores different places in Poland (2013b). His work is documented as a film. During the film he is engaged in a drooling action. He moves his body in different ways, none of which makes sense or conveys a clear narrative of events to the public eye.

In this Bath basement space, the movements could be seen as the repetition of a tradition of some women performers who participate in actions in which they look like objects subjected to their environment (a reproduction of the aesthetics of the violent environments they live in, such as Regina Jose Galindo and her action, *Being born loses us nothing*, in which the artist enters a transparent plastic bag and, like human refuse, she places herself in Guatemala's municipal garbage dump: http://Hemisphericinstitute.Org/Hemi/En/Galindo-No-Perdemos).

What makes Nauha's work different from Galindo's approach to performing in an abandoned space is the way they both perform. Galindo remains still most of the time; Nauha, on the other hand, moves around and behaves very strangely, using the *schizoanalytic practice* as a method to respond to the space around him for a long period of time as a durational performance. During the performance he asks himself: *Where can I find myself?* Galindo's body is passive and Tero's body is not. The audience perceives her passivity in the bag.

Orphans of the real contrasts the flesh and bones of the human body with the space around it. These moments were witnessed by only one person, who remains silent and observed from beginning to end.

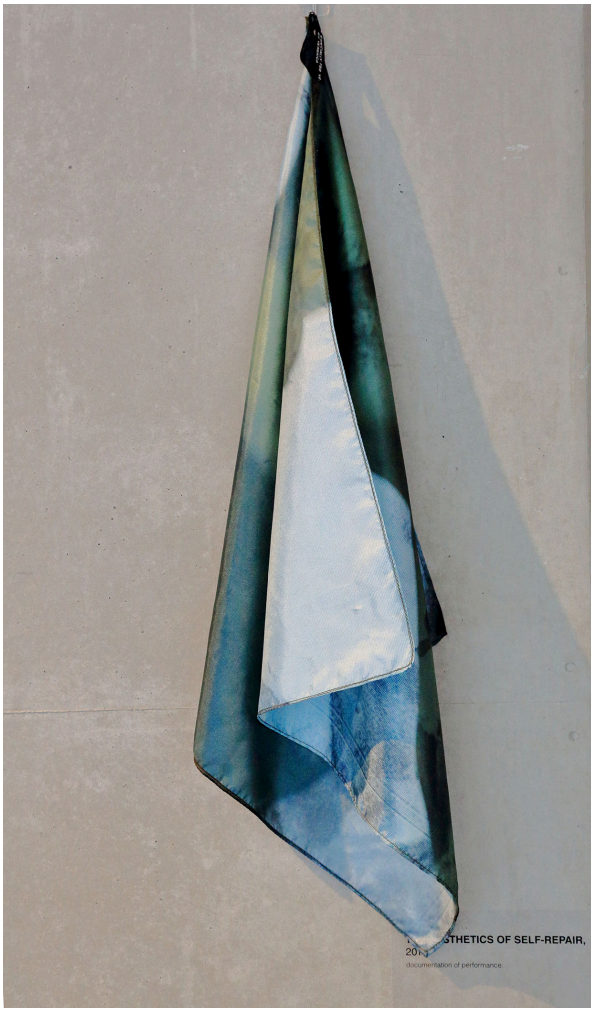
The beginning of an action could be a word, a movement, or someone actually announcing that there is a beginning. It is a moment created just for two people, a woman and a man.

The *physical encounters* in this research are very close to what Nauha identifies as ruptures:

> When rupture is taking place in the form of an accident or disaster, then an unprecedented persona comes to live with the former person, and eventually takes up all the room. An unrecognizable persona who's present from the past (A form born of the accident, born by accident, a kind of accident). (2013a).

This is very similar to what Scarry writes about aesthetic creation: 'One may have no prior vision of what we are creating and may simply entrust oneself to the action of creating' (2016, p. 79). A new form of beauty is born of the accident of not knowing what we are creating. The question *Where can I find myself?* by Nauha, and the title of the performance: *Being born loses us nothing* by Galindo, are the catchphrases that allow the audience's imaginations to envisage what they are becoming and where.

15. *The aesthetics of self-repair*, 2014, documentation of performance. Silk scarf. Glass Tank Gallery.



This is the documentation of a private action in a bedroom. Images of fragmented bodies from Mexico were superimposed with my body. The body is the flesh that gives corporality to the body fragments in the image. Bodies are merged in one image that was printed for the art gallery space and presented on a silk scarf hanging from a wall.

At this point the research was dealing with how to perform within the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’, how to document the performances and identifying the audience. The next chapter discusses why the audience in the United Kingdom is not aware of the realm of the concept ‘Capitalismo Gore’, and how this could be seen as a dislocation of realities from the point of view of the immediate audience in Oxford.

4 Subjectivity and performance in the context of 'Capitalismo Gore'

How can this art practice-based research explore the concept of subjectivity through performance in the context of 'Capitalismo Gore'?

As Valencia rightly suggests, we ought to consider the extreme violence of 'Capitalismo Gore' as an attempt to achieve immediate consumerist satisfaction by means of extermination. This happens within a new subjectivity that understands murder 'as an exchange, extreme violence as a tool for legitimacy, and the torture of bodies as sport and as a very profitable display of power' (Valencia, 2010, cited in Medina, 2014, p. 142). This is the wider context of my research. My research is carried out in Oxford, but the wider context of this research is the context of 'Capitalismo Gore'.

The word *Gore* is usually used to describe the aesthetics of films with extreme images of violence. The origin of the word 'gore' comes from the old English word *gore,* meaning 'dung' or 'dirty'. Sayak uses the term *gore* to describe a particular situation happening in Mexico, but this research uses it in relationship with a wider context that includes the city of Oxford and its dynamics of race, class, gender and privilege.

To support a theoretical framework by referring this research to a non-white feminist from Mexico, Sayak Valencia, it would be convenient to add comments she included in her thesis introduction: 'We do not look for arguments from first world countries to explain what happens in third world countries' (2010, p. 9). During this chapter, the reader will not encounter other philosophers working with the topic of violence unless their theories intersect with Sayak's work, such as Giorgio Agamben and his concept of bare life (1998).

Even though this research does not take place in Mexico, it is important to clarify to whom this research refers, as the research does not have a specific audience in Mexico or the United Kingdom. There is a useful and distinctive perspective on this topic that the researcher gained from her displacement to Oxford: the experience of living in a western context with very specific characteristics. There is a physical distance from the reality in Mexico. The work is not an immediate reaction to the environment; it is different from Teresa Margolles' work. She collects and displaces the remains of violence. The researcher is not an invited artist or a refugee. The

researcher is an economic migrant from Mexico. In Oxford, this research generated a self-created space to reflect on the subjective response to these dynamic images. The space and time to create new subjectivities is in the studio space, the arena space, the art gallery, or the art festival, supported by the theoretical framework of 'Capitalismo Gore'.

In this space there are images of violence, particular ways of life emerging, and also behaviours.

'Capitalismo Gore' shares violent acts like the ones happening in Afghanistan or Syria, places that are located in a zero zone, a zone without law, where anything can happen. This proclamation can be connected to Agamben and his concept of bare life. The bare life of a citizen mingles in a decomposed territory where everything can happen and the repetition of the act of killing is part of everyday activities.

All these phenomena are observed by the panoptic gaze composed by those who live within the context of 'Capitalismo Gore', but from another geopolitical position. According to Nikos Papastergiadis, sensory awareness of the world is fundamental to art and the art world knows it very well (Papastergiadis and Lynn, 2014). An example is a recent photo taken by journalist Christopher Venegas, third prize winner in the category of contemporary topics of the World Press Photo Competition in 2014 with *Victimas del crimen organizado* (Almomento, 2015). He offers reified bodies to the public gaze, the aestheticisation of violence.

A trip from Mexico City in the centre of Mexico to Tamaulipas, to the north, was narrated by artist and curator Said Dokins (2015). In a bus in Mexico, travelling at midnight, he was stopped five times at five checkpoints, two run by the army, two by drug dealers and the last by the local police. According to Dokins, one man was brutally beaten at one of the checkpoints. We had this conversation in a pub near the British Library in London. I responded to his story by telling another story about a man I met at a party in Mexico City in 2013. The man told me he was a soldier from Tamaulipas. He said he had to cut his hair in a different way so as not to be recognised as a soldier; otherwise he could be killed at the checkpoints controlled by the drug dealers. He explained that if the drug dealers recognise a soldier they immediately kill him. For this reason, he camouflaged his appearance. This is extremely relevant for this research, because in all the stories of this war there is a process of transformation and alteration of the human body.

The concept of subjectivity can be linked to the concept of plasticity, which means the capacity of receiving form. The people living in the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’ are receiving new forms every day, and also giving form. ‘Capitalismo Gore’ produces a new form: a new spectacle of the bodies transformed into something different to its previous form.

What this commentary chooses to include from the narration about Dokins’ trip to Tamaulipas, however, is a party hosted by local people on the outskirts of the city. Locals warned Dokins to abandon the party if he was truly worried about his life. Despite the warning, he stayed until late and listened to the stories. He was told that ‘they’ did not care anymore about their lives. Dokins finished his story by declaring that he perceived a current apathy permeating all levels of Mexican society, as if no one cares what is happening, as if people do not value their lives enough to stop doing daily activities and hide in their homes.

As a performer, there are no means to convey the people's pain, since pain is a non-transferable feeling, and the victim is the only one who can feel it. If the performer enacts violence towards himself or herself during a performance, the act of violence will be reproduced and will not be able to create a new form that appears from the rupture with the past, the history of violent reality in arts and its representation. Salcedo's *Shibboleth* art intervention at the Tate Modern in London in 2008 is an artwork that has a relationship with the drug war in Colombia. This intervention in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall's floor can be seen as an invitation, a reminder to see the world from underground.

Figure 6 (Doris Salcedo, *Shibboleth*, 2008)

In Scarry's research, 'The only means to restore to each tortured person his or her voice is to use language to let pain be an accurate account of itself, with voices speaking in the voice of the person silenced' (2016, p. 50).

As part of my exhibition *Images of Violence from Mexico: A performance based enquiry. Tu estas aquí y yo estoy allá,* a performance with the help of five Latin American and one British-Spanish women was organised. We each pronounced the names of 16 missing women out loud, without any announcement of the action, and walked around the gallery pronouncing their names and surnames, as if we were the

extension of their mother's voices calling their names. The participants were asked to wear their favourite clothes for the performance. This work was titled: *Yes! We have names, faces and bodies*. This was previously performed at the conference *Art and Science vs. Conflict in the Global Present* at Oxford Brookes University. Sitting on a chair facing the audience from a desk, the names of missing people were pronounced for 20 minutes.

16. *Yes, we have names, faces and bodies*, 2016, performance, 5 minutes. Photo by Stu Allsopp. Glass Tank Gallery.

Medina comments on Margolles' work *What else could we talk about?* at the Venice Biennale in 2009, a series of interventions in the Rota Ivancich Palace:

> Margolles' art is not confined to an exercise in ethical meditation on trauma, or a psychological mourning of loss. The work declares, makes an attempt to relieve the pain, but it also directs our consciousness back into the hot sensation of violation. (2014, p. 17)

Figure 7 (Teresa Margolles, *What else Could We Talk About?,* 2009)

Margolles confronted people's bodies and sensations from different latitudes and geopolitical contexts. In Margolles' work, audiences are confronted with their own way of feeling and the common interpretation of those feelings and sensations; their perception of bodies that are sacred and cannot be harmed is collapsed, and they may feel their bodies are threatened for a moment, too, as I feel when I research the images of violence or when I am in Mexico. The performance *Yes, we have names, faces and bodies* was intended to extend the voices of the missing women and at the same time to present the bodies of other women that share something in common with them besides gender and language: the absence of the beauty of these women. Artists have developed methods to relieve pain; this art practice-based research found a method to distribute beauty through *Yes, we have names, faces and bodies*, because beauty can shape subjectivities into something more hopeful.

This research agrees with Medina's curatorial text when he mentions that Margolles' work is about an attempt to relieve pain. Pain is not transferable, as Scarry mentions, but people in pain can relieve pain, and that person can be a survivor, the artists themselves, or a relative of the victims.

In the context of 'Capitalismo Gore', it is necessary to look at the artists' work to create links and empathise with the victims or survivors of war. If our gaze inhabits

the artists' gaze, then the disruption in the repetition of violence can be shifted and changed into something new.

One of the photos that this research worked with concerns the missing person flyer of a student called Monica Janeth Alanis Esparza.

Recently, the independent newspaper in Ciudad Juarez, *Juarez Dialoga*, reported that Monica Janeth's remains were found in 2012; her parents were notified almost two years after the discovery. The parents demanded two DNA tests to confirm that this was their daughter. Her father refused to accept that the remains were those of his daughter due to the difficult emotions involved in burying a leg, a bone, something that is not even a body (Organizada, 2014). There is a destruction of civilisation in both war and torture, and in artistic practice there is an urge to battle against the destruction of civilisation.

Mexican women have been stripped of their way of life and of their dignity. Would they seek their dignity and an affirmation of identity through a kamikaze logic as men do in Mexico? Performers such as Galindo inflicts pain on herself and attempts to release pain as a response to a threatened femininity within the context of indigenous genocide in Guatemala.

One can conclude from the above discussion that the fate of women in Mexico, such as Monica Janeth who died under extremely violent circumstances, will never be echoed in the work of any performers, because the violence inflicted on the artists' bodies is moderated and happens in the context of art. The violence embodied is a self-determined act. In some works, the aggression to their bodies is controlled by them; in others, it is controlled by the public. Nevertheless, the artists have succeeded in perplexing the panoptic gaze; they have managed to block or disturb it because they have control over their own bodies and make that control visible.

Galindo, Margolles and Salcedo have managed to enter the global and contemporary western art performance network and mainstream. Margolles integrates the blood of the people from Mexico into her work, and Salcedo uses materials that echo the destruction of Colombian war. Margolles and Salcedo's creative strategies are disruptive in different ways from those of Galindo, yet still they create ruptures that form a new type of beauty.

The artistic practice of this research constructs subjectivities in a different way from theirs. This chapter attempts to reflect on this.

In contrast with Galindo, Margolles and Salcedo's work, this art practice-based research developed in places where there is a deterritorialisation of the notion of borders: a constant flowing of migrants and their supposed assigned physical location, as well as a state of mind.

To return to the research question that I am examining in this chapter, to understand what performance art is in this research is a key factor in enabling me to step into the context of 'Capitalismo Gore'.

The act of killing and the act of transforming the state of corpses are actions performed by criminals. In contrast to this approach, the artistic practice of this research use symbols, images or the researcher's own body (or other bodies) to transform the aesthetic of the human body.

17. *Medea: the solitary bee*, 2014, Documentation of Performance, A4 black and white risograph. Photo by Sophie Frenzel. Studio space at School of Arts, Oxford Brookes University.

The solitary bee insect provided me with a way to reflect upon and conceive of the self-contained space of the studio, where the face is covered with petals. The studio space is where attempts to laugh and move around with a white structure fails. This is an action that does not intend to create meaning and narrative; it just focuses on the random movements of the human body.

Medea symbolises all those women who could not take revenge to save themselves. Like Medea from Greek mythology, some of them were foreigners when they went missing or were found dead.

For Medina, being familiar with a situation, in both senses of the word, does not necessarily mean being immersed in its traps. Instead the artist become a testament to a limited alternative by choosing to observe a social phenomenon rather than exemplifying it (2014, p. 139).

One can reasonably conclude from the above discussion that this research shapes subjectivity through traversing performance art methodologies within the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’. It does not intend to glamorise violence, or apologise for it either.

In the next chapter, the reader will find a narrative with new insights, such as what it means to perform within the theoretical framework of ‘Capitalismo Gore’. The reader will also find an attempt to create a narrative of events during a short period in Mexico City in 2014.

5 Performance and daily events in the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’

How do performance art and daily events function in the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’?

Performativity is part of life. Humans wake up and perform a series of actions that allow them to move towards their goals in their private and public life. Thus, every action we perform affects others’ lives. The affect of performance is visible sometimes straight after the performance, and sometimes much later on. The people who live in Mexico have another way to perform in the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’. As a researcher, I perform with my artwork, and trade my artwork for impact.

For this research, the word ‘glitch’ refers to a temporary malfunction in a system. Glitch art is the aestheticisation of digital analogue errors. This research is not about the aestheticising of violence; it is a tic in the body, an immediate response to an image of violence.

Images of dismembered people are unrecognisable; their bodies do not matter to anyone in particular because they cannot be recognised by their loved ones.

This is a reason why families of missing people keep their images as prompts to find them and remember them. These images are the only remains of their existence, memories of how they looked, the affects they embodied before their disappearance and the last image taken by a camera.

18. On becoming my grandmother, 2014, documentation of a performance, Oxford, A5 zine, 10 pages, risograph printing. (see Appendix D).

A world of my own by Geraldine Pilgrim was a developmental exercise in becoming someone else. The workshop allowed me to become my grandmother, Gregoria Sanchez de la Rosa, who suffered from Alzheimers. She lived through and survived the Mexican Revolution. This exercise helped solve some of these research performance art practice questions, such as what is art performance for.

Different aspects of becoming someone else need to be considered when practicing Live Art and Performance Art. I dressed as my grandmother for three hours in a first phase of the workshop and impersonated her. She suffered from dementia caused by Alzheimers. One of my aunts took care of her for the rest of her life.

I walked for three hours with artist Robert Ridley-Shackleton. I asked him to be my companion, since I could not remember grandmother walking by herself.

By being my grandmother, I experienced anxiety when expressing my need to go home and not having help to achieve my desire. I got tired and proposed to lie on the grass. I needed a moment of calm and rest. I was going to continue our walk, but I was asked by my companion to stop the experiment because he was tired of me being my grandmother.

By acknowledging the request to stop impersonating my grandmother, I realised that there are visible and invisible limits when becoming someone else. There are aspects in the process of becoming someone in performance art that need to be considered before a performance piece happens.

Outside research, we empathise with someone closer to our reality. Consciously or unconsciously, we make their reality our own reality, and vice versa, because for a moment we know we are both vulnerable, like Said Dokins joining the party in Tamaulipas. Other people prefer not to step into this process.

In daily life, these moments of close relationship and physical proximity are invisible tools to engage in an empathetic process. The process of empathy is very complex; to engage into someone's else's life requires different levels of proximity to the person in pain, or the person living in a vulnerable situation. It also requires a space to explore feelings and sensations.

The invisible proximity of bodies is a performance tool that other artists have used in performances to trigger an empathetic response towards victims of violence. In performance art, these empathetic processes need audience and visibility. When working on the project *A world of my own*, Robert was the audience.

In this direction, *A world of my own* offered a self-made reconstruction of a present before it completely vanishes from memory. The context in live art is not a ready-made reality; it is a constructed reality in constant transformation.

The second part of the workshop involved visiting a museum in our personas. I took my grandmother to Manchester Museum. I did not dress as her, but behaved like her. I was someone between her and myself. I had a camera and took pictures of the things I thought my grandmother would feel curious about.

Nevertheless, the process of becoming someone else in the museum exposed that

the documentation and audience would be different this time, because I did not dress as my grandmother and I was alone. This particular artistic practice invented a visual empathy in what the performer looked at and framed in photographs printed in a risograph booklet. It was exhibited in a final exhibition at the Glass Tank Gallery.

During this research, when a performance happened the performer became someone between herself and someone else. When becoming someone else, one aims to have the ability to behave and express how you would act in the other person's shoes or in another reality.

Performance artists who impersonate people in distress, people who suffer from physical pain or people who commit crimes usually reflect on a series of ethical questions. The only way to avoid judging or moralising people is by re-enacting our perception of his or her experience in life. Jeremey Deller recently organised a work that involved 1500 voluntary participants appearing in public spaces across the UK dressed as First World War soldiers.

Figure 8 (Jeremy Deller, *We're Here Because We're Here*, 2016)

We're here because we're here (Deller, 2016) is a travelling memorial that could be seen by more people.

Another important reference is the film *The Act of Killing* (Oppenheimer, 2003) in which the criminals were asked to perform themselves and to direct the scenes and the art of the film.

In my exhibition in the Glass Tank, Oxford, I placed zines on a white round table surrounded by seats. People could sit around the table and look at the zines. This was a repeated dynamic that I had previously used with the PhD group.

During a short residency in Mexico, I proposed creating a safe aesthetic experience that could enhance awareness of the current violence in the country. However, I arrived on 31 October 2014 in Mexico City, very soon after 26 September, when 43 students were kidnapped in the state of Guerrero. There were many protests happening all over the country. Every day I started to write a paragraph in my art diary and, instead of performing, I contacted a group of artists and showed them some of my work.

I talked to the artist Monica Mayer (2014), a pioneer of performance art on the Mexican scene. I showed her some of my work in progress and she asked why I was not working from a more personal point of view – something more closely related to my own life, in relation to my family. I shared that I am the only child of a single mother and that I did not know where my father was. I thought my personal story could be linked to that of the parents searching for their missing daughters in other ways. I did not look for my missing father, but I always wonder where he is. We shared other aspects, such as families where the mother has to work and where the daughters are students, where both sustain each other mutually to achieve their goals.

My mother was with me everywhere because I could not go anywhere by myself. I just felt too vulnerable. In daily life back in Mexico I became like my grandmother, unable to walk by myself. Thus travelling with my mother became a daily activity and I recorded this process through writing.

From being in the studio working by myself, I went back to Mexico and joined the protests with my mother, side by side.

On the last day of the research residency, my mother and I recorded a short video in which we said our names, who we are, where we lived and what we do. The video is entitled *You are here and I am there* to situate our locations geographically, to be reassured that I am safe from the real danger of being kidnapped. Before this action, my mother was told that I had been kidnapped over the telephone. This experience traumatised her, even though she knew I was in England, but for a moment she

forgot about it. In Mexico, people call random numbers and tell the people who pick up that their daughters or sons have been kidnapped. Sometimes it is genuine, sometimes it is a hoax. In both cases they ask for money for their return.

19. Rescue, 2014, documentation of a walk with my mother on the streets of Mexico City, A3, black and white risograph. Photo by a stranger in the street (see Appendix E).

On the last day I saw a van outside a florist. There were some men cleaning the floor and putting roses in the van. My mother and I rescued some of the roses. I called this action *Rescue* and documented it through photography. The action is a metaphor for rescuing the remains of what is considered rubbish. The photographs of the rescue became a zine printed in risograph on black and pink.

For the Glass Tank Gallery, the phrase *I am here and you are there* was translated into Spanish: *Tu estas aquí y yo estoy allá* and printed in big letters to welcome the visitors.

20. *Tu estas aquí y yo estoy allá*, 2016, vinyl cut lettering. Glass Tank Gallery.

21. If flowers could talk they would not be flowers anymore, 2016, documentation of a performance. Photo by Stu Allsopp. Performance presented at the Old Fire Station as part of the *Vibrations* launch party.

This artistic practice attempted to build a free writing methodology in which the researcher wrote a story that included extracts of life as a student in Oxford and linked them to other facts drawn from the news regarding life prior to the disappearance of the missing women in Ciudad Juarez. This process started through photography, but it developed into writing stories about the missing women.

This research resulted in a performance called *If flowers could talk they would not be flowers anymore,* in which the stories were shortened to ten randomly chosen sentences. The performance started by reading the sentences aloud and giving them to the audience. Then I sat down in a little chair and placed a bell on my mouth. I responded to both objects as if I had been sexually assaulted, and the chair was a place that could not hold my desperation. I fought with the chair that could not hold my human shape or the motion of my body. I moved like this for about eight minutes. I was also holding the image of one of the missing girls. I finished the performance by opening my laptop and singing a song from YouTube that had been sung by people while marching in the streets of Mexico City. I sang along to the lyrics of the song

Quien dijo que todo está perdido, in English: *Who said everything is lost*? (Páez, 1985).

In the next chapter, the reader will encounter the narrative of how this research tried to avoid the self-victimisation of the performer. As a performer, I noticed that I was enacting very difficult situations relating to victims by performing without scripts and without trying to convey any fixed meanings or emotions to the audience.

6 Meanings and ‘Capitalismo Gore’

To what extent can this art practice-based research embody the practice of art performance that avoids having a singular meaning, a script to perform, and predictable emotions during the performance, in the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’?

Performance art allowed me to respond affectively to information gathered from the Internet and from my immediate environment. It became a tool to transit into spaces and into different realities. The audience was part of this process, and also affected the performer. Some performance work had a clear start and a clear end; some did not build a coherent narrative of events.

In ‘Capitalismo Gore’, people are murdered. The murders that have caused the most impact in the public media have been the multiple executions, public hangings and decapitations. The narrative of these public assassinations can sometimes be shocking, but also predictable, because the methods of killing get refined every time they get attention in the public media. The more attention they receive, the more shocking and gorier they become. The act of killing in the context of ‘Capitalismo Gore’ is an act that transforms in coordination with the public eye, the panoptic gaze.

Private acts as killing have become public. Drug cartels in Mexico use the Internet and make public and viral videos containing acts of torture. Thus drug cartels and the media publish these self-made videos that are created to increase the illusion of danger in the minds of the people who are exposed to these videos.

These videos are uploaded in YouTube, and are usually about someone executed in front of the camera: there is a clear beginning and a clear end. There is nothing in between, and the audience of these videos can infer from the very beginning that strong images of violence are about to be shown. The setting of the scenes that include guns and instruments of torture are also a good clue to what is about to happen. The captions prevent the viewer from watching the video and give a brief description of the content.

22. How many corpses are enough for good quality research? 2015, performance documentation, black and white A4 risograph, *LapSody* 2015, Festival and Conference of Live Art and Performance Studies, University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. Photo: Anti Ahonen.

Numbers in red are cut out and carefully placed on the floor in a circle. The order of the numbers is altered by whistling and crawling on the floor. This work is a response to Ewa Partum's active poetry work (1971–73).

Ewa Partum works with letters instead of numbers. During the action, there was crawling, whistling and thinking of the of numbers not just as numbers. At moments, the numbers became the women and men I had seen in the images of violence from Mexico. They also became a big and changeable spot of blood; the numbers stopped making sense to perform and embrace a creative empathetic process. The meaning of this artistic practice is conveyed by the title of the work, *How many corpses are enough for quality research?* In research and in creating policies, numbers are very important. The documentation is not an accurate account of what is in the performer's mind and her body, but the title is a direct critique of quantitative methods of research and the inability to use information graphics to convey human tragedies, the release of pain and the embodiments of empathetic processes.

23. *27,000 Mexicans to be found*, 2016, documentation of a performance, black and white A4 risograph, Oxford Brookes Human Rights Festival, United Kingdom. Photo: Ian Wallman. Atrium at the Henry Brookes Building, Oxford Brookes University.

This performance was part of the Oxford Human Rights Festival at Oxford Brookes University. The title of this action aimed to be read as a positive phrase, a title that opened possibilities to find the victims, but the number of missing people increases every year and this unexpected change in quantity makes the title of the work obsolete. The performance can be repeated in different places and with a different quantity of numbers and cipher of numbers in the title.

24. 'Capitalismo Gore', feedback as the documentation of a performance, edible charcoal, paper and photocopies of missing women. Performed in a studio space at Oxford Brookes University. The image is the documentation of a performance entitled *The presence of an absence,* in which I use the same methodology as in the 'Capitalismo Gore' performance. *The presence of an absence* was presented outside the academic context. Photo by Julia Maddison. L'Klectik gallery, London, 2015.

Feedback collected to document the ‘Capitalismo Gore’ performance.

Feedback 1. Newton, A. (2016)

‘9 piles of gunpowder on the floor.
You agitated the piles and ingested it – it represented something unpleasant and violent. Blood and dark spit was spread about the space – you tried to remove it from your mouth. A cloud of black spores engulfed you (and us).
The crunch of the charcoal in your mouth. It was a performance that touched on extremes – it wasn’t pleasant to watch and it was concerning to see you eat what appeared to be something dangerous – I did not know it was charcoal.’

Feedback 2. Twycross, J. (2016)

‘I did not enjoy the performance. I stand by this comment and I also recall the fact that others suggested that it was not appropriate to discuss my "lack of enjoyment". I felt that this was hypocritical, as another student stated clearly that they did enjoy it, but apparently this was an acceptable statement as nobody challenged its validity. … It was the realism of the self-abuse that was distressing and disturbing. I thought it had shamanistic qualities, but pushing the body to extreme limits did not actually put forward an argument or message that would have any impact on the viewer. The most impacting example of self-abuse/sacrifice I can think of is the Vietnamese "self-

immolation monk" of 1963. This could be credited to have impacted public opinion and helped to end the Vietnam war. Your work in this piece was short of this mark in many ways and I hope you do not repeat this work or take it to further extremes.'

Feedback 3. Kesia, D. (2016)

'We were a group of more or less 10 people, and we had to squeeze a little to fit in the studio. There was a big sheet of white paper covering part of the floor and going up one of the walls. Some images of women were laid on that paper, as well as some little spots of a black powder. Because I knew the general theme of Veronica's research, I assumed those were missing Mexican women.

I cannot remember precisely the actions that Veronica performed, but I remembered that in some moments she was squatting on the paper and patting it violently, causing the black powder to dust up. The air of the studio got full of black powder, becoming unpleasant to breathe, especially because the space was so small and without windows. There was a sense of claustrophobia. Some people covered their noses, one person left the room. Then I reflected: although it was unpleasant to be enclosed in a room full of black powder in the air, we had that choice of leaving the room. On the other hand, those missing women from the images and their families were trapped in a situation where they could not leave. Their air was heavy, and they had no means of escaping it in any sense. In some moments Veronica licked the black powder and spat it on the paper. My first thought was of concern that Veronica might be eating something dangerous, but I reminded myself that Veronica was an experienced artist, she wouldn't put herself at risk, she knew what she was doing. But then other thoughts came to my mind remembering performance artists that indeed did hurt themselves, sometimes very badly, for the sake of art. It was a mix of feelings – trust in my artist colleague, but also an inevitable concern. … To what extent is it worth putting ourselves at risk for the sake of art, for the sake of the message we want to share through our work? But, on the other hand, why try to be so safe all the time, since we are dealing with a world full of injustice and pain? Is it genuine to talk about heavy social issues, but keep ourselves in our safe zone? As the performance was getting more and more intense, the spat black powder eventually got beyond the white paper and reached the walls, and I thought: "Great! There is no way to keep it clean, to keep the dirt within social/geographic boundaries. … The dirty will reach everywhere and everyone, the social problems of the "Third World" will reach the rich countries, because we are all together.'

25. *Transitions: The Bare Life of a Citizen*, 2016, documentation of a performance, black and white A4 risograph. Photo by Ryszard Auksztulewicz. Music by composer Alejandro Isamu Ito. *Music, creative engagement and violence in contemporary Mexico workshop* at the Senate House, University of London, and presented at the South Community Centre in Oxford and the Glass Tank Gallery.

This performance lasted for nine minutes. The movement of the body was accompanied by a nine-minute composition by Alejandro Isamu Ito. As part of this research, he was asked to compose a series of sounds without a climax or clear narrative, but which would be a constant build-up of sounds with no clear end. During the performance, my hands moved up and down constantly. I was closer to the musicians than the audience. My main focus was my hands and I moved them up and down as if they were shaping the space around me. My movements were very slow, as were the movements of the musicians playing the instruments. At some moments I stretched my arms as if I wanted to reach the ceiling, to stand up straight and accommodate my back in a straighter position. I was conscious I was being observed by all these people around me. I was conscious they had all come to see me perform.

I was nervous, but I remembered my hot yoga practice outside academia in which I was surrounded by mirrors and other people looking at themselves, not really paying attention to anyone else. I thus imagined I was in the yoga class and did some yoga

positions in which I had to stand up on one leg. I moved very slowly and I intended to maintain balance on one leg. Despite the fact that there were people observing me, I tried to find balance so that I could have control over my body.

During some moments, I experienced joy when moving my hands and being aware of the distance in between them and the space they created, as if I had never seen my hands before or in that position. I experienced a pleasant, expectant feeling. As the sound in the gallery faded, I slowly walked in a straight line, directing my steps towards the audience. I walked barefoot in a straight line towards strangers; it was now time to go back to the audience.

My legs were shaking and as I walked I was not sure who I was, whether I was one of the women prior to their disappearance, a friend of these people, a stranger, an entertainer, and artist, or an accurate representation of a Mexican woman. The audience in front of me was silent, aware that I was coming closer. In a more metaphorical way I was walking alone. I remember a postcard by Francis Alÿs in which a woman walks alone in the darkness of Ciudad Juarez. While walking towards the audience I remembered that postcard. I felt as if these people were very distant, and that they could see me in an uninhabited and non-existent place.

From this and previous performances, this research can conclude that there are very private moments when performing in front of an audience, and that sensations and feelings sometimes are expressed through emotions. Neither images, spoken or written language can capture the affects transforming in the audience and the performer.

7 Conclusions

Producing art in countries of conflict and transporting it to other countries like the United Kingdom is an artistic approach this research did not follow. All the research methods and narratives were crafted here in the United Kingdom and informed by different methods and approaches by curators, visual artists, live art and performance artists living in Latin America, the United Kingdom and Finland.

This art practice-based research identified a method of presenting, discussing and analysing work in progress as physical encounters. This methodology is based on juxtaposing concepts and artistic practices, finding common aspects between the lives of missing women in Mexico and the researcher as an immigrant, an artist-scholar and as a performer, to embody an empathetic approach to the lives behind the images of violence and missing people in Mexico.

It can therefore be concluded from the preceding discussion that the positive aspects of this art practice-based research allow the artist-scholar to experience more than simply unpleasant feelings and sensations during the process of this research.

It is very unlikely that this research method can be applied to other contexts in terms of psychological strategies to cope with violence. The methods discussed are artistic methods to approach different states of being for live art and performance artists and people interested in ethical representations of violence, adopting the concept of 'Capitalismo Gore' and *affect* and their implications for theorising artistic practice.

I propose that my developments of these performance methods are contributions to the new field or art-practice research, its documentation and its dissemination.

This art-practice based research indicates that the use of the artist's body in the context of conflict is ethically very important, and its methods give credence to the artist's unique capability to restructure relationships between bodies and objects, memories and new audiences in a more positive, holistic and challenging manner.

Thus, this art-practice based research not only achieved its aims to the benefit of artists-scholars and artists, but will also influence other researchers from different disciplines in the humanities and sciences dealing with the conflict, trauma and representations of violence.

It is widely considered that affect is not a form (Guattari 1996, p. 158), but a transition between states. My performance *Transitions: The Bare Life of a Citizen*, presented during the opening of my exhibition, is an example of these affects transforming in front of an audience and generating a new space and new subjectivities by the performer.

The titles of the final works open possible change through repetition of the elements used in the performance and its constant variations, for example *How many corpses are enough for good quality research?* and *27,000 Mexican missing people to be found.* They are refrains 'which are not just closures but openings to possible changes that allow us to join with the forces of the future' (Bertelen and Murphy, 2010, p. 145).

Opposite to what I envisioned at the beginning of this research in 2013, when it was proposed that the viewer would not be traumatised, I cannot assert that this was achieved. It can therefore be concluded that the audience were sympathisers, not empathisers.

One can conclude from the preceding discussion that, during my performances, my work may have rendered the audience numb to feeling. According to Guattari, 'Either we objectify, reify, "scientifise" subjectivity or, on the contrary, we try to grasp in the dimension of processual creativity' (1995a, cited in Bertelen and Murphy, 2010, p.151).

However, it is debatable whether this is the case. I infer from gathered feedback and artistic practice that this research became immersed in an affective community within academia and outside of it. For Guattari, an affective community is not made up of only the unifed 'we' that needs to be fragmented from within. It is also the 'I', which is always already a multiplicity within itself. Guattari explains: 'It is a matter not only of tolerating another group, another ethnicity, another sex, but also a desire for dissensus, otherness, difference. Accepting otherness is a question not so much of right as of desire'. Guattari suggests that 'we cannot live outside our bodies, our friends, some sort of human cluster' (1996, cited in Bertelen and Murphy, 2010, p.152). This artistic practice successfully shifted the experience of the artist-scholar regarding the immediate reality in relationship to other groups, ethnicities and genders.

Finally, as a performer I experienced the implications of stepping into someone else's shoes, both when we know the communities and when we do not know them. The importance of documenting the process of becoming someone else is widely acknowledged; when a rupture is happening, our bodies transform into something different from what they were before. This idea needs further exploration. As a performer I managed to annihilate what I was before, so as never to situate myself instead of the sufferers, or despite them, but to find myself next to them, sharing their suffering and hope.

More importantly, as a researcher I also learnt that nurturing myself outside the performance space is crucial to this type of research, which deals with constantly upsetting information.

As an academic I am looking forward to sharing my research findings and widening the possibilities of performance art documentation. I would also like to explore further the concept of affect and how it allows artists to theorise the ethical/political potentials of art performance.

As a cultural entrepreneur, I am looking forward to continuing to organise the Live and Performance Art Group;[8] editing the 'Vibrations art journal for creative writing';[9] and arranging further presentations and encouraging researchers and artists who cultivate the desire for otherness, difference, and the return of transversality, vitality and beauty.

[8] Peta Lloyd and Veronica Cordova de la Rosa set up the Live Art and Performance Group in 2016. We invite guest performers, and are supported by the School of Arts at Oxford Brookes University, the head of the research department at the School of Arts, Dr Paul Whitty, and Santander Bank. Local photographer Stu Allsopp records the documentation. The artists represent a broad spectrum of practice. The idea of bringing performing from outside Brookes was born from the need to bring local artistic communities together with artists outside Oxford to bridge the gap between professional performers and audiences interested in this type of artistic practice, and to initiate an open space within the academic context of Oxford Brookes University. The performances provide everybody with the opportunity to explore sensations, feelings and emotions that cannot be expressed or experienced through the delivery and reception of spoken or written language.

[9] VIBRATIONS is an open-access art journal for creative writing. The virtual format aims to include a wide and diverse audience to generate a platform for the online discussion of ideas and encourage networking of artists and those interested in writing as arts practice. The journal aims to be a laboratory of artists' thinking in motion, and invites established artists, emergent artists or researchers who would like to write or offer other forms of expression exploring such issues as *artistic production, subjectivity and collectivity in cultural production. Vibrations* also organises presentations of the issues in different artistic venues. I am the editor of the journal, which was founded in 2013 with the support of Oxford Brookes alumni.

Bibliography

Agamben, G. (1998) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Al momento (2015) *Christopher Vengas, fotografo Mexicano ganad en World Press Photo.* Available at: http://www.almomento.mx/christopher-vanegas-fotografo-mexicano-gana-en-world-press-photo/ (accessed 3 November 2015).

Anzaldua, G. (1987) *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Barton, D. (2013) Unpublished conversation with Veronica Cordova, 23 May.

Bertelsen, L. and Murphie, A. (2010) 'An ethics of everyday infinities and powers Felix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain', in Gregg, M. and Seigworth, G.J. (eds.) *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 138–157.

Best, D. (1992) *The Rationality of Feeling: Understanding the Arts in Education.* London: Falmer Press.

Bishop, C. (2012) *Artificial Hells Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship.* London: Verso.

Bottoms, S. and Goulish, M. (eds.) (2007) *Small Acts of Repair: Performance, Ecology and Goat Island.* London: Routledge.

Correa, J. (2016) *Ciudad Juarez en la sombra del narcotrafico.* Available at: http://juarezenlasombra.blogspot.co.uk/ (accessed 17 October 2016).

Deleuze, G. (2005) *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*. 17th ed. Minnesota: University of Minnesota.

Deller, J. (2016) *we're here because we're here* [performance art]. Available at: https://becausewearehere.co.uk (accessed 16 October 2016).

Dokins, S. (2015) Unpublished Conversation with Veronica Cordova, 4 November.

Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Guattari, F. (1995) *Chaosmosis: An Ethicoaesthetic Paradigm.* Translated by Paul Bains. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Guattari, F. (1984) *Transversality, in Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics,* Translated by Rosemary Sheed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics. N.p., 2016. http://Hemisphericinstitute.Org/Hemi/En/Galindo-No-Perdemos. Accessed: 24 October 2016.

Heddon, D. (2008) *Autobiography and Performance.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Howe, D. (2013) *Empathy: what it is and why it matters.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Kesia, D. (2016) Unpublished email to Veronica Cordova, 13 July 2016.
Kester, G. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
Krznaric, R. (2014) *Empathy: A Handbook for Revolution.* New York: Random House.
Lacy, S. (1995) *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, Seattle: Bay Press.
Lippard, L. (1997) *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society.* New York: New Press.
Lapworth, A. (2016) Unpublished email to Veronica Cordova de la Rosa, 20 October.
Live Art and Development Agency (2014a) *DIY 11: 2014-Geraldine Pilgrim 'A world of your own'.* Available at: http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/opportunities/diy-11-2014-geraldine-pilgrim-a-world-of-your-own (accessed 17 October 2016).
Live Art and Development Agency (2014b) *DIY 11: 2014-Nando Messias 'A walk through performance'.* Available at: http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/opportunities/diy-11-2014-nando-messias-a-walk-through-performance (accessed 17 October 2016).
Lozano-Hemmer, R. (2015) *Level of Confidence*. Available at: http://www.lozano-hemmer.com/level_of_confidence.php (accessed 25 September 2016).
Margolles, T. (2009) *What Else Could We Talk About?* Barcelona: R M Verlag SL.
Mayer, M. (2014) Unpublished Conversation with Veronica Cordova, 15 November.
Medina, C. (2015) Unpublished Skype conversation with Veronica Cordova, 10 September.
Medina, C. (2014) 'Seeing Red', in *Art in the Global Present*. Available at: http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/books/art-global-present (accessed 28 April 2014).
Miller, A. (1981) *The Drama of the gifted child*. New York: Basic books.
Nauha, T. (2013a) *Schizoanalysis as a Method in Artistic Research*. Research Catalogue: An International database for artistic research. Available at: http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/26327/29065 (accessed 1 September 2015).
Nauha, T. (2016) Schizoproduction: artistic research and performance in the context of immanent capitalism. Thesis submitted to the Theatre Academy of The University of Arts Helsinki. https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/159817 (accessed 1 September 2015).
Nauha, T. (2013b) *Wywrotka/Capsizing.* https://vimeo.com/59841142 (accessed 26 August 2016).
Newton, A. (2016). Unpublished email to Veronica Cordova, 15 July.

Offeh, H. (2015) Unpublished conversation with Veronica Cordova, 9 January.
Oppenheimer, J. (dir.) (2003) *The Act of Killing* (2003) [film]. United Kingdom: Dogwoof.
Organizada, S.C. (2014) 'Pronunciamiento por el asesinato de Monica Janeth Alanis Esparza' in Organizada, S.C. (ed.) *Madres y Familias Unidas Por Nuestras Hijas y la Red Mesa de Mujeres de Ciudad Juárez se pronuncian por el asesinato de Mónica Janeth Alanís Esparza.* Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua: Juarez Dialoga Revista Semanal. Available at: http://juarezdialoga.org/boletininformativo/pronunciamiento-por-el-asesinato-de-monica-janetalanisesparza/ (accessed 26 August 2016).
Orjuela, A. (2014) Unpublished conversation with Veronica Cordova, 15 November.
Orjuela, A. (2012) *Psicophonia Goliath 1*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5HKQQCXi8k (accessed 26 August 2016).
Paez, F. (1985) *Yo vengo a ofrecer mi corazón*. Argentina: EMI.
Papastergiadis, N. and Lynn, V. (eds.) (2014) *Art in the Global Present*. Sydney: UTSePress.
Partum, E. (1971–73) Active Poetry. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPBSKOsy8Vs (accessed 26 August 2016).
Paterson, K. (2013) *Juarez Mothers Renew International Campaign*. Available at: http://fnsnews.nmsu.edu/juarez-mothers-renew-international-campaign/ (accessed 22 October 2015).
Postofficecowboys (2013) *Doris Salcedo* Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G68O3DYLM4k (accessed 12 October 2016).
Probyn, E. (2010) 'Writing shame', in Gregg, M. and Seigworth, Gregory J. (eds.) *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
Sayak, V. (2010) *Capitalismo Gore.* Barcelona: Melusina.
Shaviro, S. (2016) *The Pinocchio Theory*. Available at: http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=1366 (accessed 24 October 2016).
Scarry, E. (1985) *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Scarry, E. (2006) *On Beauty and Being Just.* London: Duckworth.
Sylvester, D. (1966) 'Francis Bacon: Fragments Of A Portrait' in Sylvester, D. (1988) *Interviews with Francis Bacon*. London: Thames and Hudson. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoFMH_D6xLk (accessed 24 September 2016).
Thrift, N. (2004) 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect', *Geografiska Annaler,* 86(1), pp. 57–78.
Twycross, J. (2016) Unpublished email to Veronica Cordova, 13 July.

Valencia, S. (2016) 'Capitalismo Gore: Narcomáquina Y Performance De Género'. N.p., 2016. Available at: http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-82/triana. (accessed 10 October 2016).
Viola, B. (2014) *Martyrs (Earth, Air, Fire Water)* [two large-scale permanent video installations]. Available at: http://www.billviola.com (accessed 26 October 2016).
Warr, T. (2003) 'Image as icon', in *Art, Lies and Videotape: Exposing performance*. Liverpool: Tate, pp.30–37.
Wright, M. (2006) *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism.* London: Routledge.

List of works

- *Feelings*, May 2013, pencil on paper, 10 x 22 cm. A4 black and white risograph.
- *Hands as organs of perception*, April 2013, A5 zine, front page, 16 pages, black and white risograph. Artist book fair, University of Leeds.
- *Plant, care and repair: A second life*, April 2013, A4 black and white risograph. Photo by Edgar Martinez Contreras. Presented at the Fringe Arts Bath Festival.
- *It can happen to anyone*, April 2013, A4, black and white reprographic. Presented at the Fringe Bath Arts Festival.
- *Missing people,* 2013, A4, red and white reprographic. Presented at Üsin, Small Press Fair in the Karussell gallery, Zurich, Switzerland.
- *Disintegration*, April 2013, A5 zine, Page 5 of 12, black and white risograph. Presented during a talk-performance presented at the conference *Representations of Violence and Ethics in Ibero-American Countries*, University of Manchester, and at the *Art and Conflict Symposium*, Wolfson College, Oxford University.
- *Red Zine*, April 2013, A5 zine, 6 pages, risograph printing. Bristol Artist Book event, Arnolfini, Bristol.
- *Mourning bad death*, 2013, one image from a set of five self-portraits, documentation of performance, A4 black and white risograph. Glass Tank Gallery.
- *The structure of war*, 2016, A4 Booklet, 14 pages, risograph printing, Live Art and Performance Art sessions, School of Arts, Oxford Brookes University.
- *Cleaning an image*, 2013, performance for the camera, A4 black and white risograph documentation. Glass Tank Gallery.
- *Silent witness,* 2013, documentation of Performance, A4 black and white risograph. Photo by member of the audience, performance presented at Ovada Art Gallery, Oxford.
- *Bad death resonance,* 2014, documentation of performance, A5 zine, 8 pages, risograph printing. Monday's PhD seminar sessions. Photo by a PhD colleague.
- *Orphans of the real,* performance in the basement of a shop in Bath, documentation of performance in a black and white A4 risograph. Fringe Bath Arts Festival.

- *Medea: the solitary bee*, 2014, Documentation of Performance, A4 black and white risograph. Photo by Sophie Frenzel. Studio space at School of Arts, Oxford Brookes University.
- *On becoming my grandmother*, 2014, documentation of performance, Oxford, A5 zine, 10 pages, risograph printing.
- *Rescue*, 2014, documentation of a walk with my mother on the streets of Mexico City, A3, black and white risograph. Photo by a stranger in the street.
- *If flowers could talk they would not be flowers anymore*, 2016, documentation of a performance. Photo by Stu Allsopp. Performance presented at the Old Fire Station as part of the *Vibrations* launch party.
- *How many corpses are enough for good quality research?* 2015, performance documentation black and white A4 risograph, *LapSody* 2015, Festival and Conference of Live Art and Performance Studies, University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. Photo: Anti Ahonen.
- *27,000 Mexicans to be found*, 2016, documentation of performance black and white A4 risograph, Oxford Brookes Human Rights Festival, United Kingdom. Photo: Ian Wallman. Atrium at the Henry Brookes Building, Oxford Brookes University.
- *Transitions: The Bare Life of a Citizen*, 2016, documentation of performance, black and white A4 risograph. Photo by Ryszard Auksztulewicz. Presented at the workshop *Music, Creative Engagement and Violence in Contemporary Mexico* at the Senate House, University of London and presented at the South Community Centre in Oxford and Glass Tank Gallery.