

Durational Performance and Queer Refrain

By Raegan Truax

Abstract

What histories, aesthetics, and political tactics are revealed by tracing durational performance at its limits? This essay offers queer refrain as a new theoretical framework for thinking with and through durational performance. Drawing on my own practice, I offer a close reading of Gina Pane's *Work in Progress: Modification Constante du Sol* (1969), tracing its queer feminist attributes to make historical, political, and aesthetic claims about durational performance. My analysis reveals the stakes in understanding how limits are deployed by durational performance artists to point us to something beyond excess and exhaustion, something untimely and unruly, something capable of queerly refraining from enduring at all costs. Without the mastery and cultivation of queer refrain, durational performance would risk its untimeliness and become operational for 24/7/365 existence. Instead, queer refrain as an embodied tactic cultivated by durational performance artists offers a prolonged and sustained break from exploitative social, cultural, and economic structures that demand and control time at the expense of bodies. Theorising as a durational performance artist and critical-creative researcher, I offer an artistic and embodied theory about the durational performance medium that provides a sense of a world where the body's capacity for working and progressing differently is valued, celebrated, and struggled for.

Whereas the "body" (its gestuality) is in itself a form of writing, an arrangement of signs that perform, that translate the endless search for the OTHER, its fantasies, its subconscious desires, its relations with time taken as an entity having neither origin, nor end, that must be decoded through one's "body" (Pane 35).

Time does not pass in vain... those who were seen as extremists for the freedom to express oneself in contemporary art by any means or technique available, are today seen as the founders of a contemporaneity that still refuses to let itself be locked into a simple historical definition (Dehò 13).

When a work of art appears to be exceptional or inassimilable, has a limit been crossed – or was it less a boundary than a yet-unseen path to be taken? (Johnson 5).

Paris. 1969. A woman folded. Clearly able-bodied and bent at her waist—she is not falling. She is ambling around a garden with knee joints askew. Her arms taut from shoulder sockets to wrists. Her armpits caress her thighs. Her hands parallel her ankles. Gazing downward, her fingers cradle an opaque ruler aligned to the curved edge of her black loafer pump. Concentrating on her feet and something more. Measuring the stride of every single step she takes, and something more. Measuring the ground. Hinged, contorted. Tension and flexion palpable. All of her joints slightly askew. Paris. 1969. An opaque ruler. A woman folded.

Gina Pane's *Work in Progress; Modification Constante du Sol* was performed in 1969 at the sixth Biennale de Paris. For the durational performance, Pane walks in a significantly toppled manner around the garden of the American Center taking one precisely measured step after another. Over eight consecutive hours, the artist will take 10,578 steps in this manner. As evoked by the title, the performance is ostensibly about work and progress. Yet Pane's toppled-over walk and her use of the durational medium disidentifies with many of the capitalist structures that measure bodily work and regulate senses of progress.

The site of the performance, The American Center, was initially a community and student centre frequented by expatriate artists and writers. Founded in 1931, by the 1960s it was a formative center of avant-garde creation and a meeting place for socialist organising. With the dust from May '68 still very much in the Parisian air,¹ Pane's action

1 Multiple revolts against authoritarianism, racism, war, sexism, and class occurred around the globe in 1968. In France, what began as student revolts during this time rapidly evolved into a mass movement against capitalism and the largest worker's strike in French history. As Kristin Ross writes, 'France, for some five to six weeks, was brought to a complete paralysis' (4). Notably, Ross attributes the monumental power of the collective political agency that emerged in May '68 France to a 'shattering of social identity that allowed politics to take place' (3). The shattering Ross describes is inherently produced by a departure from the familiar time structures of work and capital that validate relationships, identities, and progress. Such a break is incredibly difficult to sustain: many historians and political philosophers (including Ross) have written about the ways in which the most radical ideas and practices from the '68 revolts were subsequently deployed in the service of capital in ways formative to depoliticised subjectivity, individualism, and neoliberalism. Pane's 1969 durational performance therefore calls the public toward the paralysed (nation) state formed in a shattering or a break from normative social identity and (as this article examines) shifts the energy and temporality of revolt from resistance to queer refrain.

step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step
step

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politically recalls one prominent slogan chanted repeatedly during the student led uprising, ‘Métro, boulot, dodo’ (Metro, work, bed). The line references the poem ‘Couleurs d’Usine’ (Factory Colors) written by Pierre Béarn in 1951. The poem’s rhythmic monotony underlines the choreographic monotony of a life structured for work. Both the poem and the slogan fundamentally critique a utilitarian demand on the body that lubricates —not a greater good—but values of capitalism and consumerism. Pane’s performance extends the constative statement to a performative investigation: how to work and progress differently?

step ‘WHERE IS THE FIRE THAT RESONATES? THE SOUND OF THE BODY? OF HYSTERICAL LAUGHTER? OF PAIN?’(Pane 35) step step step

step
step
step
step
step

hands
grazing the
ground for
balance.
slowly
shift some
weight to
the front
leg and
foot. exhale
into the
belly and
subtly
wiggle the
hips to
stretch into
the lower
back and
spine.

If we look only at the photograph, *Work in Progress* may initially seem to uphold a sense of measured time (see fig. 1). First, the measuring stick appears to contrast with the notion of leaving the regimented standards of capitalist time and progress. Second, Pane is wearing a wristwatch and the duration of the performance is precisely eight hours. Thirdly, the calculation of steps at 10,578 in an eight-hour period ascribes to the normative prescription that a healthy body must take 10,000 steps each day. To the first point, the restraint on the artist indicated by the measuring stick is intentionally paradoxical. Pane’s attempt to measure the distance between each of her steps attends to the temporal variances held in the vacant non-space between a here and an elsewhere—between where Pane/a body just was and where Pane/a body is going. The physicality and bodily effort required to both dedicate one’s attention to the triangular gap formed between steps and to mark that gap—albeit an ephemeral mark—elevates the movement for consideration in the spaciousness allowed by the durational. Instead of wondering where all this measuring and movement leads Pane (and ostensibly all bodies), or what the measurements add up to, the durational aspect of the performance produces a shift in focus and orientation. Between steps, Pane is also measuring the ground (rocky) and the air (energising). In these measurements, she is re-marking (again and again with the body) on the remarkable impossibility of taking the same step twice.

hamstrings. look out. where is the gaze. look out. impossible. look out. empty sky. clank. spilled water puddles. wiggle the hips. still dripping.

curve.
dangle. head
and knees.
move more
quickly. small
shakes and
bends. inhale
exhale inhale
sending the
belly back
toward the
spine. curve.
breath into
the



extrait act 1969: Work in progress -
ce sont les 10587 pas et demi que j'ai
effectués lors d'une modification constante
du sol de 124 à 204 qui ont été l'objet
de l'œuvre -

Fig. 1: Gina Pane, *Work in Progress: Modification Constante du Sol* (1969).
Extrait de l'action réalisée à l'American Center dans le cadre de la 6e Biennale de
Paris, 1969. Archives de l'artiste © Gina Pane, Adagp. Courtesy Anne Marchand
and kamel mennour, Paris.

Where one might seek out uniformity or constancy, limiting the action of the performance to the singular task of measuring offers unique activity and a range of temporal discoveries. Measure fails as a calculation of distance over linear time, instead highlighting variety and discontinuity in the durational.

Discontinuity also surfaces the wristwatch as a tool generally used on time and/or to convey how a body fail the grand project of timeliness. In considering the wristwatch, it is important to note that clock-time plays a role in structuring the event for the artist and audience—clock-time is one kind of time. But no single temporal structure takes precedence in the performance. We see Pane’s watch in plain view, strapped on her left wrist, touching the artist’s body as she performs. As there is no visible clock in the outdoor setting, and hundreds of other photographs of Pane during the late 1960s and early 1970s never show the artist wearing a watch, the scale of clock-time at play during *Work in Progress* is intentional, personal, and intimate. I read in this detail an early indicator that durational performance works to reclaim all temporal possibility with corporeal sense.

sidestep. off-balance. edge of the foot.

I’m in the detail of asked to keep a body to might repeatedly leave In considering

lumbar triangle radiating. sweat lines lips. instinct to stand but pause.

With the use of a pedometer to count each of the artist’s steps,² we encounter how the fit and healthy body (specifically here in 1960s society) is overtly constructed as an upright body. The healthy upright body is able to work without limitation, thereby contributing to capitalist society and progress. A diligent soldier that marches between the metro, work, and home without stalling, crumpling, folding, or

find the strength to navigate this obstacle

2 Art historian Sophie Duplaix describes how Pane’s steps were recorded on a ‘manpo-kei’: a pedometer device invented in Japan in the 1960s and marketed to the general public in 1965 with the social imperative that walking 10,000 steps per day is a necessary part of a healthy daily routine. Yamax, the company that invented the manpo-kei, invented a watch pedometer prototype in 2001. That such devices in their present-day configurations (like the ‘fitbit’) are worn as watches and include digital clockfaces is not coincidental. As the next section of this essay will show, healthy progress in settler colonial heteropatriarchal capitalist societies is progress regulated and measured by standardised time.

being still—the healthy upright body does not sit silently in a garden, nor should it bend and fold for hours studying the ground and its belly.³ Folded exertions do not produce data. Pane’s sweating brow, the collapsing arch of her foot, the small cuts populating her palms as she repeatedly stops herself from falling, these exertions do not count. The pedometer underlines how only erect steps are paramount for productivity. But here again, Pane’s hunched and folded body subverts the systems at work to regulate its activity.

Exerting a formidable amount of energy, Pane diverts from upright walking. With the May ’68 Events undoubtedly reverberating in the psyche of viewers attending the Biennale and the general public passing by, Pane’s bent spine and her attentiveness to the gravelly terrain confronts one’s sense of posture, movement, and measure. The performance is built around the task of measuring and yet distance is indecipherable, direction illegible. In the context of work/progress/unrest, *Work in Progress* invites a nuanced consideration of measure, duration, direction, and bodily orientation. It is the first durational performance Pane undertakes for a live public audience—yet it has never been analysed or given critical attention. Its presence and import is wilfully excluded from the canon of performance art generally and durational performance specifically. This is because the queer feminist attributes in Pane’s work, attributes that I trace throughout this essay, do not conform to—or even remotely align with—the masochistic masculine male body that is stretched to its limits in performance art so that its audience can witness and authorise its ‘heroic’ male endurance. Deeply engaged with duration and

I’m

asked

to leave

3 My understanding of the upright body is indebted to Virginia Woolf’s poetic essay *On Being Ill* (1926). Literally writing from a horizontal position while sick in bed, the novelist describes how illness thrusts the body into a temporal-corporeality where sensorial experience seeds life. Describing the maintenance of ‘healthy’ civilizations as dependent on a make-believe orientation to time, Woolf depicts everyday life as a battleground. The ‘army of the upright’ progresses only in relation to the ways health and self-worth have been externally defined while the ill body deserts this battleground and performs in ways Woolf reverses as ‘irresponsible,’ ‘disinterested,’ and ‘courageous.’ She appears as a ‘public-sky gazer’ who interrupts pedestrians (and normative notions of social and civil ‘health’) by looking at the sky for ‘a length of time’—much as a durational performance artist might (see Truax).

experiences of queerness and femininity in the late 1960s, it is queer women artists who, in tandem with claiming space for and radically reconceptualising their own bodies, also reclaim time as a material. In the realm of performance art, queer women artists are central to the development of durational performance as a cogent medium.

unfurl when the sun is

set in the evening

the rest of the **Durational Performance**

day is for crumbling In this essay and more broadly, I define and deploy ‘durational performance’ in two crucial ways. First, *performance* signals the medium as a subset of the genre of performance art, which most often consists of live events performed by live bodies for live audiences or publics.⁴ Secondly, *durational* signals a set of concepts, techniques, strategies, and tactics bodied forth into an aesthetic realm. Durational should not be confused with ‘duration’ as an indicator of measured time or ‘durationality’ as an indicator of the ways an artwork can transcend a temporal present.⁵ This is crucial for the medium as I construct it. The standard by which a work of art is analysed or considered as a durational performance cannot simply be that it takes a long time to execute. All performances have duration, a set length of time in which an artist performs, and all performances possess the potential for durationality. In durational performance, the durational has to do something. It is performative. It must set something in motion in the performance that we could not otherwise access, see, hear, taste or feel.

cricket
chirping

4 Performance studies includes many rich debates around performance and liveness. My definition of durational performance relies heavily on early art historical frames for performance art. Notably in *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (1998), art historian Amelia Jones distinguishes between body art and performance art by asserting that the former does not require a live audience while the latter does (13). Other important scholars who have helped advance my thinking include RoseLee Goldberg, Adrian Heathfield, Dominic Johnson, Peggy Phelan, Lara Shalson, and Diana Taylor as well as writing by performance artists, mainly Coco Fusco, Tehching Hsieh, Linda Montano, and Adrian Piper.

5 Amelia Jones describes ‘durationality’ in *Seeing Differently* (2012) as ‘linking the interpreting body of the present with the bodies referenced or performed in the past as the work of art’ (174). Durationality is a strategy for interpreting any artwork including photographs, paintings, and sculpture.

My work to dislocate the durational from the regulated measure of clock-time expands upon the colonising history of standardised time, philosophies of time that centre duration, decolonial methodologies articulated in Indigenous feminisms, and more recent work on temporality at the intersection of queer theory, black studies, and disability studies. Indigenous feminist theory in particular has deeply enhanced my understanding of durational performance as it constitutes an aesthetic form of protest and a decolonial act. Specifically, the articulation of ‘radical relationality’ by Melanie Yazzi (Diné/Navajo) and Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa, Yurok, Karuk) has helped me imagine, cite, and site, the decolonising labour durational performance artists do by dismantling time as a system and structure.⁶ Durational performance makes the strenuous process of radically relating to time as a material and resource hypervisible, tactile, and sensible.

When considering the history of standardised time, it is important to understand this shift also as a process rather than a singular event. Brought into effect at the International Meridian Conference of 1884, standardised time did not simply emerge: it had to be imposed. Time reform was a coordinated military effort by North Atlantic nations that—well into the 20th-century—sought to govern the globe with their externalised and mechanised system of ‘standard time’.⁷ The 26 nations that instituted Greenwich as the prime meridian in 1884 can be linked to the power structure of the current G20—which signals how the new system of standard time was an early step toward securing an inequitable and

‘all
the spaces
between
the notes of
birds’ songs
...
the silence
before’

(Hilberry 74)

⁶ Yazzi and Riley Baldy conceive of ‘radical relationality’ as ‘a vision of relationality and collective political organisation that is deeply intersectional and premised on values of interdependency, reciprocity, equality, and responsibility’ (2). They argue that decolonisation requires embodied methodologies and tactics that interweave ‘materiality, kinship, corporeality, affect, land/body connection, and multidimensional connectivity’ (2). They attribute radical relationality to the cacophonous struggles of Indigenous feminist scholars and practitioners underlining ‘the paradigm has already been created; we just need to enforce it’ (3).

⁷ Two requisite contributions to the historicisation of standardised time are Vanessa Ogle’s *The Global Transformation of Time: 1870-1950* (2015) and Carlene E. Stephens *On Time: How America Has Learned to Live by the Clock* (2002).

scholarship related to durational art and performance) began working out ideas about duration (*durée réelle*) in his dissertation *Time and Free Will* (1889).⁹ But it is Gaston Bachelard's *The Dialectic of Duration* (1936) that argues one of the most important philosophical claims of the 20th-century: lived time is fractured, discontinuous, and irregular. It seems a mystifying way to introduce his concept of duration, a term generally understood to indicate a continuous length of time rather than a rupture in time. Yet, duration as discontinuous and fractured invites the body to (re)claim time as inherently performative; time does not simply unfold, time and the body act on and construct one another.

My extension of Bachelard's philosophy is heavily informed by more recent work in black studies and disability studies. While Fred Moten's *In the Break* (2003) is a landmark text that conceptualises how black aesthetics and black labour resonate in rhythmic breakages from directional, linear, and standard time, it is Moten's theory of *animaterial* actions and anaperformative differences in *Stolen Life* (2018) that a call to attend to blackness everywhere facilitates the radical displacement (but not disappearance) of bodies in time, which is requisite for ushering in a new epoch. As Moten writes:

The experience of subjectivity is the would-be subject's thwarted desire for subjectivity, which we must keep on learning not to want, which we have to keep on practicing not wanting, as if in endless preparation for a recital that, insofar as it never comes, is always surreally present (244).

In this sense, blackness does not make a singular move to sever bodies from the apparatus of standard time—blackness is pluralistically held in the durational as a spacetime of elsewhere that values practice and preparation without script or arrival. Disability studies scholar Alison Kafer also articulates additional power dynamics at play in subjective

9 Bergson distinguishes lived time from mechanised time in this text and theorises duration as a phenomenon of continuity and flow.

to imbalance

quick shifts
more still and I am falling

wait my eyes said wait

dragged

please wait my eyes said wait
my foot heavy

have to lift my
wait weight wait weight wait weight

trying to lift but heavy still

renderings and experiences of duration. In doing so, she defines the phrase ‘crip time’, which is ‘flex time not just expanded but exploded; it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of “how long things take” are based on very particular minds and bodies’ (27).

In evoking Bachelard, Moten, and Kafer to read Pane’s performance, my analysis is anticipated by centuries of embodied BIPOC queer feminist crip knowledges and participates in establishing the durational as vital to the project of restructuring *all* relations of domination. Pane is white, a woman, queer, and was able-bodied in 1969. With and in excess of Pane’s identifiable markers, Pane’s fold can be thought of as instantiating a certain flexibility in bent temporality. As Kafer articulates, ‘in imagining crip futures, I mean more than particular, identifiable bodies. I mean possibility, unpredictability, promise: the promise of recognizing crip where I did not expect to find it, the possibility of watching “crip” change meanings before my eyes’ (46). The crip flex of bent time palpating in *Work in Progress* exposes an extreme gap between what our bodies can do and the white heteropatriarchal systems lubricated by capitalism and implemented over centuries to propel our activities, behaviours, and senses with the speed and senselessness of unlimited measure. Lingering in intersectional feminist queer crip temporalities indebted to BIPOC knowledges and methodologies, the durational becomes flexible and fragmented material. It generates a kind of spaciousness in time, a palpable vibratile discontinuity, that not only welcomes but in fact depends on bodies that interrupt and ‘explode’ normative, curative, and/or linear notions of continuity and flow.

The durational understood as a flexible material and/or a tactic for bending and crippling time rather than a marker of continuous or standard time is crucial. When Bachelard writes ‘the phenomena of duration are constructed by rhythms, rhythms that are by no means necessarily grounded on an entirely uniform and regular time’ (20), he reminds us that rhythm itself does not indicate uniformity but temporal variety. Importantly, in a durational performance like *Work in Progress*,

a breeze ruffling the ears



Fig. 2: Conference delegates on the steps of the State-War-Navy Building. International Meridian Conference, Washington, D.C., 1884. Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, D.C.

temporal variety surfaces because Pane executes a performance score of *limited* activity and ‘animaterial action’—measuring steps and the ground by sustaining an incredibly restricted mode of movement. Only thrust into the durational can the highly constricted score generate new rhythms. In one way, the durational is offering Pane a suspension or escape from capitalism’s mandates around work and progress, the 24/7/365 rhythm and mechanisation of the body that the May ’68 Events of Pane’s present caution are on the horizon: ‘[m]étro, boulot, dodo’. The durational also calls the body to sense and perceive temporal variety. Crumbling, folding, sidestepping, falling, there is an abundance of temporal variety and very little measure in Pane’s work. It is this aspect of Pane’s performance that, as early as 1969, pursues an intersectional queer crip feminist aesthetics (the durational) and finds fleshy folds

in spacetime that erupt in excess of the performative turn to the body that has been intentionally (and misleadingly) canonised via masculine narratives of ejaculatory and masochistic labour. In contrast, the pursuit of new rhythms and temporal variety in labouring that appears in *Work in Progress* searches for something else than the temporally colonised world we currently know. ‘Work’ in the durational requires a strict kind of bodily discipline: a mode/limit that I term queer refrain. ^{Lie flat.} ^{saunter}

Queer Refrain

Queer refrain is less a concept to be defined and more a bodily mode. ^{detour} Where ‘refrain’ suggests a break, a rupture, and a conscious cut, queer refrain is always/already in the break, glimpsing and forming new bodily rhythms in flexed and fractured time. In theory and literature we can see examples of queer refrain in Audre Lorde’s figure of the ‘sister outsider’, Virginia Woolf’s deserter (who is also a ‘public sky-gazer’ [12]), José Esteban Muñoz’s intimates ‘After Jack’, and Saidiya Hartman’s wayward cast of characters. These referents are queer, women, women of colour, poor, ill, disabled, precarious, artist bodies—^{palliate} bodies that know—and theories for the body that understand that standardised time and capitalism are not fixed entities but aspects of daily life that become concretised only if we perform their de facto scores repeatedly. Queer refrain is therefore a phrase I use to signal behaviours that rupture standard and/or capital uses of time and ^{the weight of time.} perform additional untimely transgressions within that rupture. Queer refrain is not singular but intersectional and cacophonous. It involves working within and heightening corporeal limits to unearth dynamic temporal and sensorial worlds. It is not tethered to a more conditional refrain that is always/already bound by capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and whiteness—incapable of imagining ‘work’ as anything other than labour in the service of capitalism (Bartleby’s infamous ‘I would prefer not to’, for example).

In my forthcoming book on durational performance, queer refrain is the intersectional theoretical framework that enables the

s global scope of my study *only as it is also an embodied queer feminist*
w practice refined by minoritarian artists with intersectional identities.
e While the scope of this article focuses on Gina Pane's never before
r analysed *Work in Progress*, and Pane is a queer white woman, queer
v refrain is mobilised by and for durational practitioners who identify
e as queer and femme, queer and black, queer and crip, queer crip and
palliate white crip, exiled and brown, crip and undocumented, Indigenous and
woman, nomadic and dispossessed, genderqueer and asian, two-spirit
and neurodivergent, afroqueer and crip. This heritage is significant
and it calls for an even more expansive theory of intersectionality
the weight that, following José Esteban Muñoz, signals a particular sense and
of time. 'sensing of the world'—intersectionality as it conveys 'convergent
and diverse modes of recognition that are best characterized perhaps
as affective particularities' (149). Aware of and intent on lingering
within the capacities of difference and affect activated in the global
breadth of durational performance, queer refrain underlines
durational performance as an artistic medium that cannot fully be
encountered, theorised, or consumed occularcentrically. Queer refrain
sustains an untimely transgressive stance to cursory glances, tropes
of representation, effortless appropriation, and palatable digestion.
Conjuring refrain as rhythm, vibration, stagnation, suspension,
malfunction, and strategy alongside queer as touch, feeling, desire,
flex, difference, and possibility, queer refrain opens the body up to a
complex polyvalent layering of temporal relationships—or temporal
variety to use Bachelard's term. In queer refrain, the bodily activity
scripted for flow through capital time is halted, stalled, splintered. A
durational portal toward temporal variety opens in excess of the visible,
in excess of heteropatriarchal methods for *making sense*. In durational
performance, slow steps, elongated breaths, recumbent limbs, and
folded torsos perform queer refrain to *make sense* of situations, social
relationships, and life(times).

the tickle of rain against inner nares

Sense is a slippery noun. It references our bodily faculties – the way we perceive the world through touch, sound, sight, taste, and smell. It also indicates a mode of interpretation that adheres to an a priori system of order; does this sentence make sense? Presented with this question, a reader might presume that to ‘make sense’ is to convey an idea and its purpose clearly in a way that others can logically perceive, follow, and understand. What about making sense in relation to sensation and sensuality: a triggering of bodily sensors and synapses that could allow sense to anchor perception and understanding. Hinged with her belly facing her pelvis for the majority of the performance, Pane’s *Work in Progress* renders a sensual and tactile queer refrain. Her intimately folded orientation tediously undoes the upright body. Sense begins to structure temporal experience.

It follows then that sensing in queer refrain unlocks the most critical aspects of *Work in Progress*. That Pane’s archive offers us only a single photograph of the eight-hour durational performance, some handwritten ‘data’, and a blueprint of the garden—on which Pane has drawn an arrow and stated her intention—‘Gina Pane se manifesterà le 8/10/69 de 12h à 20h’ (see fig. 3)—is indicative of a further commitment to what I describe as queer refrain. Limiting the ephemeral trace of the performance is a calculated move to exceed heteropatriarchal constructs and legibility that echoes the durational form Pane helped pioneer. But how to draw out the corporeal struggle, temporal variety, and the sensuousness of the performance with these strategically sparse documents? To answer this question, a break.

a quivering cling to the crumble,

disintegrating flesh to wind.

Elsewhere here where else where else where else then here to
hear the

exquisite

collapse of flesh when a foot feels held by
the ground

measure measure step measure
 a breeze ruffling the ears
 sidestep backstep barely step
 measure measure drag the back
 a breeze ruffling the ears ankles knees hips stack the head
 mediate the rush find a focal point
 bend the knees fold forward
 side step fall back catch the ground
 squat down measure duck
 measure front back and both sides
 then suck tastes like nothing like
 up to knees sello hamstrings
 chest into the fold step measure
 hands half a hand both hands
 dangle and breath dangle and

Lie
that

saunter

cricket chirping

cricket chirping

cricket chirping

cricket chirping

my timing is off

wait my eyes said wait

quick shifts

more still and

to imbalance

falling and

dragged

defour

a breeze

ruffle

blings

cricket chirping

e step measure measure
 cricket chirping
 unge measure measure
 my timing is off
 ck foot steady stretch roll feet
 ad quick breath quick breath
 point long step lower the chin
 measure measure small bounce
 round cut suck tastes like ash
 cricket chirping
 o measure waddle measure
 my timing is off
 ides trickle of blood shake
 my timing is off
 ke me salt and air deep breath
 unravel the feet bring the
 re one hand two hands three
 on the ground step backward
 breathing
 breath

trying to lift but heavy still

please wait my eyes said wait
my foot heavy
have to lift my
wait weight wait weight wait weight
can't lift my

my timing is off

to leave

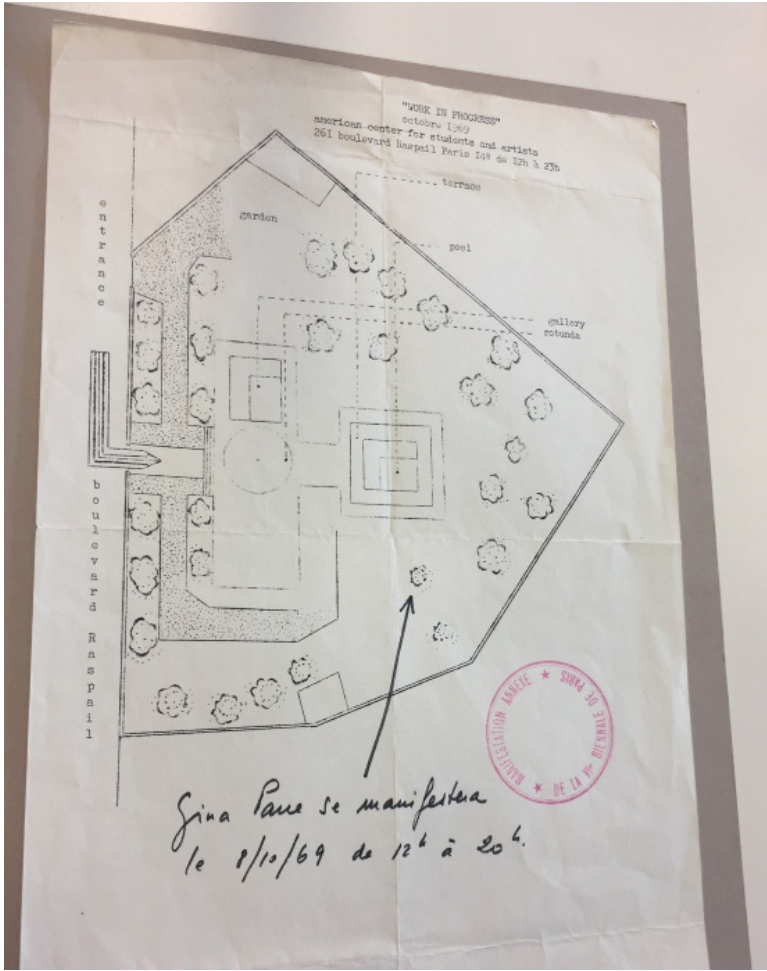


Fig. 3: Plan of *Work in Progress* October, 1969. Centre Pompidou/MNAM-CCI/Bibliothèque Kandinsky, American Center for Students and Artists. Courtesy of the artist and of Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris.

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In the spring of 2018, I accepted a residency in Paris that allowed me to make multiple trips to the museum garden where Pane performed *Work in Progress*.¹⁰ Wondering how my research might develop if I relied more heavily on my durational performance practice, I decided

¹⁰ In 1986 the American Center was demolished and replaced with Fondation Cartier, a museum of contemporary art. The garden was reinvented at this time with respect to the original site ("The American Center").

to investigate *Work in Progress* more palpably. My interest was not in reperformance, and I did not begin with preconceived movement patterns or the two most decipherable elements of Pane's choreography: 1) step 2) measure. I spent most of the earliest weeks being still in different postures (sitting, standing, squatting, flat, curved, bent), attuned to different ways of sensing the environment (through touch, sight, taste, smell, and sound). I would return to my studio after these visits and write down, without censor, ways I could further research Pane's folds, steps, and rhythms. I distilled these lists into different research tasks such as 'stand toppled at the waist for the day', 'count every step', 'smell everything', 'follow Pane's arrow and be still'. Even as I was not permitted to carry a measuring stick into the garden with me, I spent my research period executing tasks from this list.¹¹ This restriction produced many questions about Pane's ruler, particularly as I realised the 'data' transferred with Pane's archive contained a record of duration and movement (8 hours, 10,578 steps) but not distance or direction. As a performance structured around the action of measuring, surely the ruler was more than a prop? Crown of the head facing outward, gaze facing the belly or ground, Pane offers the ruler to her public as a recognisable marker of measure and progress. It enables an initial connection yet distinctively marks a frictive distance between her body (within the durational) and the passer-by who must be willing to leave the rhythm of capital time with Pane in order to sense Pane's work. As I did not need to signal to or invite a public, I abandoned fidelity to this object for my research and focused my experiments on discovering different methods for measuring steps, the ground, and bodily movement. For example, I spent one day trying to capture all the sweat from my body in a jar as I walked. On another eight-hour day I meandered around the garden in a folded manner, using my forearms to measure the ground. I continued with different tasks over three months. So much was opened by the constriction, the queer refrain,

¹¹ The museum security guards monitoring the metal detectors at the museum entrance would either confiscate the object and hold it in their booth for me until I left for the day or escort me to the coat check to make sure I checked the object.

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I filled thirty-two journals with my research. I was not ‘performing’ but each day I navigated relational exchanges and the subsequent feelings that surfaced—my body becoming out of place, anachronistic, *untimely*. I inhabited loneliness interspersed with intimacy, frustration, humour, and play. I drifted between periods of boredom and moments in which all my senses were triggered. I would shake, cry, and laugh uncontrollably. I often lost all sense of clock-time. When my stomach stirred, I would go to the boulangerie and eat. When I felt anxious, I would smoke a cigarette. When the museum guards hovered near me, I knew the museum was closing and I would leave. Underlying my embodied investigation was my recognition of how I was perceived by others at the museum day after day. I stayed too long. I was not doing anything visibly productive. One museum guard felt compelled to remind me there were works of art to see. Researching *Work in Progress* demanded exit from normative senses of time, productivity, visibility, and something more profound was afoot (see fig. 3). To remain arched, folded, hunched, crunched, bent, *and* committed to measuring each step felt paradoxical, untenable, even nauseating. Blood rushes to the head, the tibialis muscles shake, balance is lost and rediscovered, the body often staggers, falling is inevitable, recumbence a brief reprieve, tedium fractured by yellow chéridoine poking up from the earth, the smell of lemons, then ash, breath trapped in the esophagus—how to stand and fold again? What makes sense?

*

Each day I studied this work, upon leaving the museum garden and stepping onto the paved sidewalk of boulevard Raspail, I experienced a sensation I can only describe as dizzying and noisy. Emotionally, I would place the sensation on a continuum between melancholy, mischief, and madness. One observation consistently recurred, it felt increasingly impossible to move among the bustling flock of upright bodies navigating the metro, work, and a social rhythm that was

Stay with me. Feet crimson toes purple. This blood will be our clock. Fold. Still.

be found” (Panc, 31), now burgundy, byzantine, between steps, folded, stay with me still

but rather struggle to expose, to denounce these mechanisms of servitude wherever they may Crumple. Still. Heartbeat breath a gasp, more clocks. Still. The sun dips but does not settle. “we shouldn’t settle for what is reassuring,

A museum guard asks me to stand up. I am covered in rock dust. Scrape and small gashes populate the lower half of my arms. Blood trickles along my ulna bones, felt but visible only upon close inspection



Fig. 4: Raegan Truax conducting research on *Work in Progress* at Foundation Cartier, Paris, 2018. Photograph by Nina Kurtela.

quick, devourous, inattentive. How to stay on the side of the senses? To understand what *Work in Progress* does beyond its initial critique of capitalism requires embracing the kind of sense-making the durational conjures. Halting the flow of a logical analysis, *Work in Progress* generates intricate and interdependent temporal relationships that surface by sensing into the artist's fold.

before the weeds die

I lap at their roots

purple shoes flit in my direction the palm of
 her hand on the small of my
 before the erasure back
 first still then slowly tapping then small circles then
 still again
 the moment after warm then lifted
 gliding away but not
 leaving
 tracing purple shoes across my field of upturned
 vision
 falling I subtly follow her everywhere
 unknowing the garden through her touch

A uniquely queer and feminist medium is emerging as Pane folds and steps in the durational as a vital material for injecting the social landscape with a different sense of untimely values. In 1969, durational performance does not yet exist as a cogent artistic medium. Even today, in art historical discourse and performance studies, ‘durational performance’ remains a slippery term, often used vaguely, inconsistently, and ahistorically. As a durational performance artist, I have affinity for this slipperiness and the particular ways the medium consistently exceeds institutional capture—**handprint** what Valerio Dehò describes in this article’s introductory quote as a refusal to settle or become trapped into a singular origin story. But in praxis, durational performance is not without specific histories, lineages, aesthetics, and politics. The most visible lineage descends from the French Composer Erik Satie’s 1893 composition *Vexations* which John Cage and ten artists, ‘the Pocket Theater Piano Relay Team’, perform for a live audience in New York City in 1963. Cage’s contributions to a durational turn in performance art are often misread alongside masculine and masochistic works by Jackson Pollock, Vito Acconci, and Chris Burden. There is no mention of Pane’s profound intervention in 1969, and yet *Work in Progress* is pivotal for establishing durational performance as a cogent medium. It is arguably Pane’s performance and queer refrain that can help us best make sense of *Vexations* and Cage’s ‘pocket theatre relay’, recharting the lineage of durational performance through its queer and feminist dimensions.¹² **trickle of blood**

Here surfaces Pane’s body, toppled over, experimenting with rhythm and silence. My heritage of durational performance coagulates across the constructs of my senses. My reading of *Work in Progress* reveals the stakes in understanding how queer refrain is deployed by durational performance artists to point us to something beyond a break from standard time, something untimely and unruly, fractured and sensual, nauseating and boring, tedious and titillating. Without the mastery and cultivation of queer refrain, durational performance

¹² See Truax for this recharting and my full account of *Vexations*.

would risk its intersectional queer feminist heritage and operate fully in excess and exhaustion, recuperated back into the service of unlimited capital and white heteropatriarchy—bodies recycled through 24/7/365 existence, trained to endure at all costs. Mastering queer refrain creates entirely new capacities for organising our social world and interactions.

Back folded, knees askew, eyes tracing the texture of the ground, I appear to have written myself into a position best supported by my corporeal senses.

*I fear these rocks and today's wind might swallow me. I should swallow them first
Let the taste help me change my orientation without leaving the fold damp silt salt rind tepid gust
There is an odd inevitable pull (against gravity) to stretch into a more vertical alignment*

I am trying to stay with the rocks and the wind

the
tickle
of rain
against
inner
nares

For a long time I found this position restrictive. After all, that is how queer refrain works. Because if we are in fact, 'works in progress', as Pane's title from her first public durational performance suggests, changing how we measure our steps will help us find new temporal rhythms for existing differently together.

a breeze ruffling

the ears

Such an existence does not abandon all order but queerly refrains from being temporally and therefore sensorially regulated. With stomach clenching as she lifts her back foot, the social body is simultaneously anchored and unhinged as durational performance develops. Pane will waver off-balance. She will lose her footing, fail repeatedly, and there will be no visible point to it all. There will be no clearly altered terrain to validate her work. She will have been slow, repetitive, and silent. Eight hours. 10,578 steps. But what happens and how it is recorded depends on the kind of sense one cares to make within and of the durational. In lieu of conclusion, a refrain: you cannot march in the army of the upright and stay on the side of the senses. More queerly: nose to navel, small gashes along both elbows, no arrival in site—making sense requires mastering queer refrain. This may be the durational performance artist's most bold strategy and most risky tactic. Working in excess of steps off the clock, she is making time.

all the silent spaces

spasms
jolting
all your
limbs

when
the sun
is set
in the
evening

Stay with me. Feet crimson toes purple. This blood will be our clock. Fold. Still. Crumple. Still. Heartbeat breath a gasp, more clocks. Still. The sun dips but does not settle. 'we shouldn't settle for what is reassuring, but rather struggle to expose, to denounce these mechanisms of servitude wherever they may be found' (Pane 31), now burgundy, byzantine, between steps, folded, stay with me still

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