



EUGENIA RASKOPOULOS

FOOTNOTES





CLOSURE AND OPENNESS, AGAIN, ARE ONE ONGOING PROCESS:
WE DO NOT HAVE BODIES, WE ARE OUR BODIES, AND WE ARE OURSELVES
WHILE BEING IN THE WORLD ... WE WRITE – THINK AND FEEL – (WITH)
OUR ENTIRE BODIES RATHER THAN ONLY (WITH) OUR MINDS OR HEARTS.

TRINH T MINH-HA, 1989



Art happens slowly in Eugenia Raskopoulos' installation *footnotes*. Certain letters appear and then fade away. Words are formed with stuttering gestures. Nothing is spoken. A language emerges from the spitting onto and the caressing of a surface. We assume that the limbs which are the focus of this articulation are those of the artist. She performs language. She creates words with her toe as it rubs a fluid onto the floor. The words are in English and Greek. Her gestures make visible familiar words that suggest a complicity between the elements and desire. Nature, sexuality and language are brought into light and then they all evaporate.

It is the tension between the gesture and the languages that makes this performance into an artistic event. What is made visible is the inaudible awkwardness of moving between

languages and not feeling at home in any language. Raskopoulos is using her left foot to write in English. Although English is her preferred language, it is not her first language. The left-footed gesture that makes visible the word 'moist' is at once expressive of the feelings of being 'gauche' with language. It is as if the language does not fit. The words do not cover the gestures. Something is always left out – a kind of screeching silence and nervous laughter that follows or precedes the articulation of every thought



during translation. This could be a typical translation error. Or it could be seen as the abyss that haunts all acts of translation. Through the art of this installation the abyss is what we come to confront. It is symbolically figured through the slow dribble of redness. The redness of the colour that stains the floor between her legs is at once an evocation of the bottomless pit that is contained in every drip of blood. But the bloodiness of the red is so luminous that it also creates a mirror. In this mirror there is no narcissus. There is only the ghostly sense of the gaps between the 'who' I imagine myself to be and the 'what' that appears before me.

Alongside the slowness of the appearance of words on the floor there is the manic speed and rhythmic beat of footsteps echoing on a staircase. Again the object of attention is the interplay of the appearance of letters and the movements of the foot of the artist. Letters appear on the foot. They appear as if they have been captured as still images and then stitched together to create a Muybridge-like motion.

The succession of letters gives forth the utterance of another word. Here the word takes us into the explorations of sexuality and the uncanny that lurk



in the origins of modernism. Duchamp was fascinated with sexual pleasure and was cunning about his provocations of the shame and stigma that is attached to our public perceptions of sexuality. Raskopoulos may have applied each letter on her foot as one would apply lipstick to one's lips before an encounter with a beloved. Again there is the haunting sense of stuttering nervousness. The letters are not seamless in their connection. They come forward in a jump-cut blur. They reveal and they conceal the fact of their being. So crucial for Duchamp, the

word 'onanism' (referring to the capacity to give oneself sexual pleasure) is here taken into a mechanical and spiraling stamping motion. The foot and leg are naked. Only the toenails are dressed in blood red paint. They are startling, seductive but also rather gauche. The allure and shine overreaches like a cocktail dress at a funeral.

The specificity of this work as an installation is worth remarking upon. Raskopoulos is focusing on aspects of thought and feeling that could not be expressed through a narrative. To create a narrative about or on these feelings and thoughts would automatically mean that you are no longer in the space of these ideas and emotions. It would mean that you have already moved on rather than have stayed with this primal feeling and the thought of the abyss



that hovers inside the act of every translation. Hence, this work could not be a poem or a film. It could only be a performance that is both embodied and mediated through multiple gestures and the technology of language, photography and video. The work manifests itself through the slowness of these forms – the subtle coming into and dissolution of its being and the awkwardness, silence and embarrassment of excessive language such as laughter and tears. All these gestures are symbols of language taken to its limit, just as the excretion of blood marks the point at which a body no longer controls and contains all of its functions.

Nikos Papastergiadis and Victoria Lynn

BIOGRAPHY

Eugenia Raskopoulos has exhibited nationally and internationally for 28 years. Her selected solo exhibitions include: *Vestiges*, William Wright // Artists Projects, Sydney (forthcoming 2012); *writing towards disappearance*, Arc One Gallery, Melbourne (2009); *words are not hard*, Intrude 366 Project Zendai MoMA, Shanghai (2008); and *there are no words*, Artspace, Sydney (2005). Group exhibitions in recent years include: *Mute*, 798 Art Bridge Gallery, Beijing (2011); *Nightshifters*, Performance Space, Sydney (2010); *Mirror mirror*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2009), Samstag Gallery, Adelaide and Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney (2010); *Nightcomers project*, 10th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2007); and *Video logic*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2008). Raskopoulos' work is held in significant public collections across Australia and Europe. She recently completed a PhD at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales.

READING.VIEWING.LISTENING LIST

by Eugenia Raskopoulos

- Sara Arrhenius, Magnus Bergh & Cecilia Sjöholm (eds), *Translatability*, Albert Bonniers förlag, Lettland, 2011
- Gato Barbieri, *The third world*, album, Flying Dutchman, 1970
- TJ Demos, *The exiles of Marcel Duchamp*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass & London, 2007
- Gotan Project, *La Revancha Del Tango*, album, ¡Ya Basta!, 2001
- Liz Kotz, *Words to be looked at: language in 1960s art*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass & London, 2007
- Yorgos Lanthimos (dir), *Dogtooth*, film, Boo Productions, Greece, 2009, 96 min
- Catriona MacLeod, Véronique Plesch & Charlotte Schoell (eds), *Elective affinities: testing word and image relationships (Word & Image Interactions 6)*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, The Netherlands & New York, 2009
- Hans Ulrich Obrist, *The China interviews*, Office for Discourse Engineering, Hong Kong & Beijing, 2009
- Arvo Pärt, *Alina*, album, ECM Records, 1999
- Amy Winehouse, *Back to black*, album, Island Records, 2006

LIST OF WORKS

footnotes 2011

3-channel digital video, sound, installation

4.18 min

Courtesy the artist and

William Wright // Artists Projects

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