Sandra Mujinga

I Am So Bored, But You Are Alright, 2015. Installation view. 4-channel HD video installation with sound through four speakers. 4 x HD video looped.
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My Uncle Featuring Ben Affleck, George Clooney and Robin Wright, 2015. Nylon thread and matte print, detail. 300 x 110 cm. Sandra Mujinga

Everything's Embarrassing

"If networked technologies in general, and social media in particular, generate ideal listening subjects of twenty-first century—for individuals, politicians, consumers, parents and corporations—they also reveal the human limits of attention."
—Kate Crawford[1]

With this text I will try to update my Google Docs as often as possible. While I do that, I will also be very appreciative of an earlier self that once scribbled on notebooks while actually listening and responding to another voice on the other line.

Make people believe—Some thoughts on stalking my uncle on Facebook
The pathetic phonetic immersion, but never the patience to start the same sentence all over again, I just compensate with another one. +242 call[2] accompanied by a Silke ringtone, or is that my alarm? Thinking that the last mobile device that had a signature ringtone must have been Nokia, still contemplating whether it's appropriate to answer or not, knowing it will result in me talking too loud in the shop, not hearing myself. I receive a Snapchat from my brother, and while there are still some seconds left before the message disappears, I drop everything I am carrying to take a screenshot of him crying after having seen the *Star Wars: Episode VII—The Force Awakens* trailer.

My right arm is hurting, now you know, and I realise that I am not used to having the phone pressed against my ear, only used to seeing the reflection of my face on it. Now, oh! How every letter is melting on the tongue, no, this is what I hoped would happen. Instead, discordant sound, sweat, and embarrassment pouring out. No, dogs don't sweat through their tongues. Wantee? Drinking tea could go hand in hand with sedating your sweat glands. Wantee? Maybe apps like uTalk are not enough to reconcile my Lingala, and I will still have to have frequent conversations with my family to remember the language. Wantee? Later I write to my uncle on Facebook; he seems somehow confused since it was only a couple of hours ago he spoke to me on the phone. What he does not get is that I find it really awkward calling and receiving calls. I am used to texting and expressing my emotions through Facebook stickers. In a performance, my voice hosts the effects

that expand in a space like a strong odour, but I just seem to battle with sincerity answering the phone. How can my voice bear the weight?

The delays, in a performance, my voice hosts the effects that expand in a space like a strong odour. The monitors are there to help me to be a better listener, but I already have my voice in *mind*. I know my voice, and through it I can be anything. It manoeuvres through different static bodies, goes through different phases, and possibly scatters like breadcrumbs if someone receives a phone call. The act of ostentation: sometimes it's not enough to say that an object is *that* object, and one has to use the index finger. I am now calling you out, not by pointing at you but by adding an "at" sign before your name, and creating an entangled system of relations to a person you possibly met at an art opening last week. The moving image capturing Laure Prouvost's grandparents' "fictional" living room gives room for this entangled system of different time zones. I am left wondering if I am amenable to a story being shared with me without creating parallel layers of seconds of moving images from social media that are embedded in my daily rituals and trending Internet memes that are circulating. Waving index finger left, right. At the moment I just sound angry. Why did my uncle not just text me? Wantee?

"So much of Chorus was constructed by spying on my own online habits. It felt fitting to invite Akihiko, who I had been spying on online for a long time before my approach, to contribute the visual treatment of the piece."
—Holly Herndon[3]

He seems not to prioritise answering me in the minutes before he logs out. The three-metre print was part of my Master's show, *Rare Darlings*, and was hanging from the ceiling at KHM Gallery. On it one could see my uncle's Facebook profile pictures, in which he is posing with George Clooney, Ben Affleck, and Robin Wright. I tried sharing the documentation of the exhibition with him on Facebook, and he

still has not commented on it. Maybe it's too much, being that he still has the image of himself and Robin Wright as a profile picture, having his digital representation activated through opening another link with documentation of an IRL representation of the same image. While the exhibition was running, the gallery guests did not believe that he had actually met the celebrities. They thought *of course* it was Photoshopped.

The work is not waiting for you; it is turning its back to the exit door. As a shallow being you are in a hurry to see the front. All you care about is the looks. It's possible Robin Wright was in DR Congo for charity work, possibly as research for her *House of Cards* character Claire Underwood (already a spoiler). Either way, she is still there in and through the image, and perhaps still in an animated world.[4] Layers and storage, and thinking through and with the objects, thinking by way of doing, and mapping thought processes and sharing, hoping that the feedback might have some relevance in a time when everybody wants to be liked.

Jacques Attali's intention is not only to theorise about music but also to theorise through music. Chapter three of his book *Noise*: *The Political Economy of Music*, entitled "Representing," starts with: "Make people believe. The entire history of tonal music, like that of classical political economy, amounts to an attempt to make people believe in a consensual representation of the world."[5] While I worked on *My Uncle Featuring Ben Affleck, George Clooney and Robin Wright* (2015), I was listening to the experimen-

tal music producer Ben Frost, whose recent projects include the soundtrack to Richard Mosse's film installation *The Enclave* (2013). The track "Nolan," from Frost's most recent album *A U R O R A* (2014), was on repeat on my iPod, and listening to it was a way of keeping myself in a specific state, and when things became difficult, I would have to turn it off before it became too dramatic.[6] But it was also a way of mapping out time, with the song being my timer instead of me being synchronised to regular time. I also don't have a TV for the same reason. While the track operated as a sticker to express my excitement and, in some sense, fear, over the Master's show, I was still ambiguous about it being a *soundtrack* to my state of being, to how I was dealing with the way the materials in my work had different levels of sensitivity. Pausing the song and then starting to track felt like relief from dry hands after applying hand lotion, but also like hands covered in glycerin, first sticky, then slippery.

Music makes us believe, but it is we who give *meaning*. Music then becomes a meaningless language, as it does not even operate as a signifier, because the signified is constructed by us. Music has to be in itself. I don't really have to delete "Nolan" because I was so stressed during that period. I should start drinking tea. The methods I use to distort the sound samples and moving-image samples mingle with each other. When I have worked with people in my performances, I have always found it interesting that when they experience their own voices pitched up or down, they react with humour. While on the other hand, when they see their faces warped, it becomes an

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immediate disturbance. One way of taking this ana-
lysis further has been giving them items such as an
iPad and letting them capture and distort themselves.
It results in the subjects in front of me effectively per-
forming in their natural environment. That is, they
perform for the screen just as they perform every day.
Fast-forwarding. Now I am laughing, I think I am
seduced. The transition to Laure Prouvost's installa-
tion at Unlimited at Art Basel 2014 went easy, and
I position myself so that I don't see the guests enter-
ing. I don't mind sitting throughout the whole thing.
Fast-forwarding this, and this time not explaining
why I use poor images. Buffering thoughts, and Prou-
vost's hands are constantly skipping the timeline; the
voice is in the foreground. I am the shallow one.

I Can Delete It, It Is Not Happening Now
Field research and disembodiment(s). The models in
my performance *I Can Delete It, It Is Not Happening
Now* (2015)[7] are surprised that I use only five minutes
to record them in front of a deep-pink-coloured fabric

(that I have explained will function as a blue screen).
"Are you sure?" "Should I try the facial expression
again?" Now in a digital landscape, paradoxically car-
rying with me a notebook. My handwriting is getting
worse, and I complete my thoughts with an image cap-
tured on my phone. Descriptions are all that matter,
and an image of the Shiba Inu[8] is not dependent on
comic sans.

Later I show them how I have used an app
to create the facial expressions that I actually wanted,
and merged the result with their face. But why were
they actually there?

Hey, now that you are here, I can stop
analysing the LOL. Please don't have any subtitles
on Netflix if you actually understand the language,
and I hope your Mac is not overheated. There is never
enough space, but replacing your hard drive could be a
good idea, and let silence occupy space, too. The facial
expressions are good enough, but the real heroes are
the ones who remain in the dark.

Two tourists are standing outside a supermarket, and one of them shouts: "Man, it's hot as hell!" and a man passing by hears this. The man passing by picks up the pace and runs as fast as he can to meet his friend and he says: "Those tourists are crazy ..." —No, instead of picking up the pace, he stops up and asks them: "What? Have you been to ..." —No, he picks up the pace and runs in a fearful and dramatic manner to his friend waiting for him across the street and says, "You won't believe this, I passed a couple that ..." —No, he says: "You won't believe this, those people over there have been to ..." —No, he says: "The craziest thing just happened, I think on the way here I heard a man say that he had been to ..." (My attempt at sharing a joke I was told more than ten years ago.)

Performing Heartbreaks

In my teenage years in Nairobi, the highlight of the day was hanging out with my youngest uncle and his friends. When my closest friends were away at boarding schools, I would join my uncle and his friends and we would sit outside in groups. My uncle always had new jokes to share, and I would concentrate and try as hard as I could to remember the jokes so that I could share them with my friends when they came home from boarding school. When we weren't listening to his jokes, we would swap VHS tapes with neon-green title stickers and watch movies like *A Thin Line between Love and Hate* (1996) starring Martin Lawrence, *Baby Boy* (2001) starring Tyrese Gibson, also known as simply "Tyrese," and Snoop Dogg, and my favourite: *Two Can Play that Game* (2001) starring Vivica A. Fox. Jokes are materials that are fluid, constantly sensitive to the power relations in a given space, echoing performances and laughter. And now one experiences it through streaming and sometimes bad Internet connections, always laughing *after* the pre-recorded audience. Going back to the use of vocals: the voice was not synchronised with the movement of the body. Laughing in the wrong places; Vivica A. Fox does not tickle everybody, but remembering that since the subtitles weren't present, the jokes became immediate. Always a delay. When I had someone like my uncle in the room who would immediately laugh at his own jokes, he became the timer. Now. Still don't get it.

In a recent interview,[9] Björk mentioned being embarrassed about "Black Lake," a song from her latest album *Vulnicura* (2015). This came after a previous answer in which she stressed the difficulty of talking about lyrics that host the heartbreak she has gone through, because the lyrics became so teenage and so simple. I was not hardened to how songs about heartbreak became a vernacular and a template for songwriting when I was a teenager, and I am still not. In Nairobi, I was writing and recording songs and singing along with them before I even knew what any of it meant. Spending time hanging out with people older than me resulted in them saying things like,

"Chilling out in the sun and drinking blueberry Fanta is the coolest thing in the world!," and me thinking exactly that; and if I didn't, I would convince myself to think the same within a couple of days.

Heartbreak became a performance, and one would write notes to the admired one and hope for the best. A boyfriend meant standing ten metres apart and waving demonstratively so that your friends could see it. And when I was dumped for the first time, I simply stated sentences I remembered from watching Ricki Lake's talk show and sung a Destiny's Child song. Until it no longer was like that and it felt like the outermost layer of my skin suddenly fell down like a cloth and I could sense every dust particle landing on me.

## PVC Plastic and Being Authentic while Wearing Synthetic Second-hand Clothes

"Use surfaces that can become solid or dissolve into gossamer meshes, surfaces that can fold like curtains, shrink or expand. Let things turn on themselves and move; let lines broaden into surfaces."
—Kurt Schwitters[10]

In the film *Under the Skin* (2013),[11] in which the main protagonist (The Female) is portrayed by Scarlett Johansson, one is introduced to a character using her/his/its appearance solely as a tool for food consumption. The skin that s/he/it carries becomes a favourable trait; through continuous feedback, s/he/it understands the appearance is likable and attracts prey. S/he/it mainly uses the mirror to put on lipstick, and her/his/its smile is so precise, it's like s/he/it has studied emojis. Facial expressions are constantly exercised, but for this "female" character, it becomes like comedians Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson doing their micro-impressions.[12] There is no time, people lose their attention and interest before you know it, and we have to strip our communications down to their essence.

Now I have to go down the stairs every thirty minutes. Preferably run down the stairs, and up again, in order to not get caught up in my own thoughts. I sit still very often, and the burning muscles trigger past events and evoke specific images from a certain timespan: the years 2005–08, when I took physical education in senior high school. Today I am more preoccupied with documenting what I eat than with taking workout selfies. If I am what I eat, then I am many things. Measuring the pulse and thinking like an athlete, trying to figure out whether I always had to forget the pain before I could start jogging again. It's difficult to remember how all the exercising affected me psychologically, because now I only remember the good. Forgetting is possibly one of the strongest defence mechanisms we have—we survive through forgetting. We survive, in order to give room to new experiences.

Going back to The Female in *Under the Skin*: she has sex for the first time, and later on she
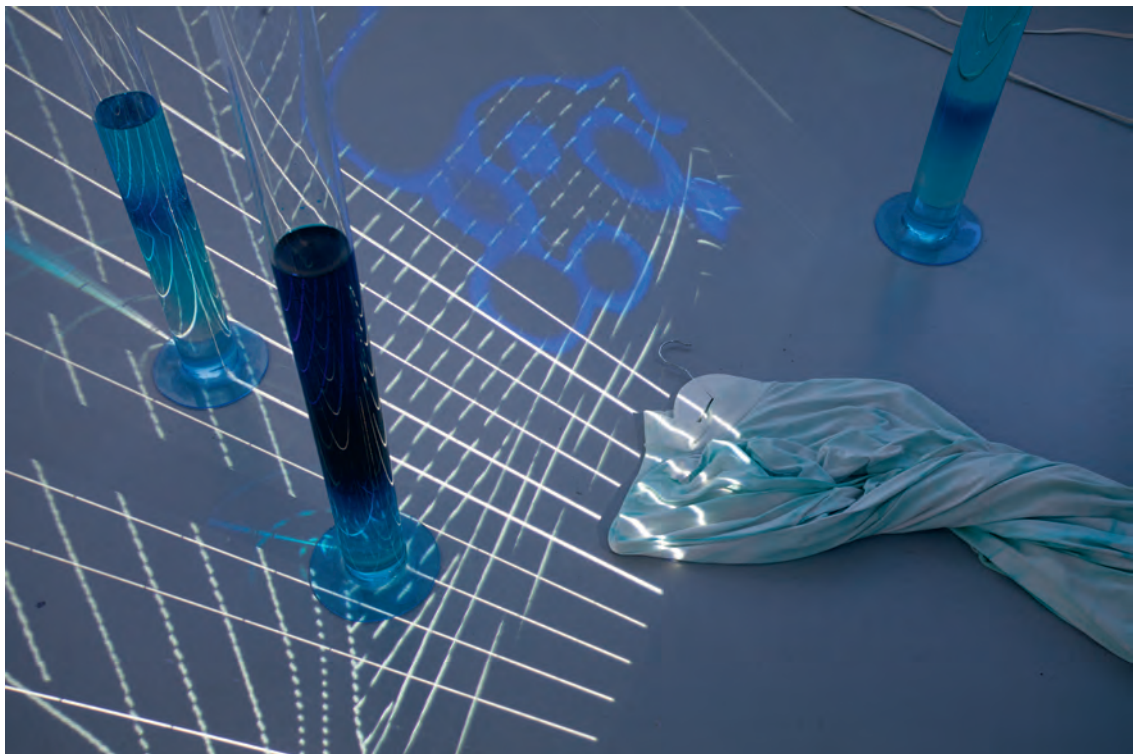
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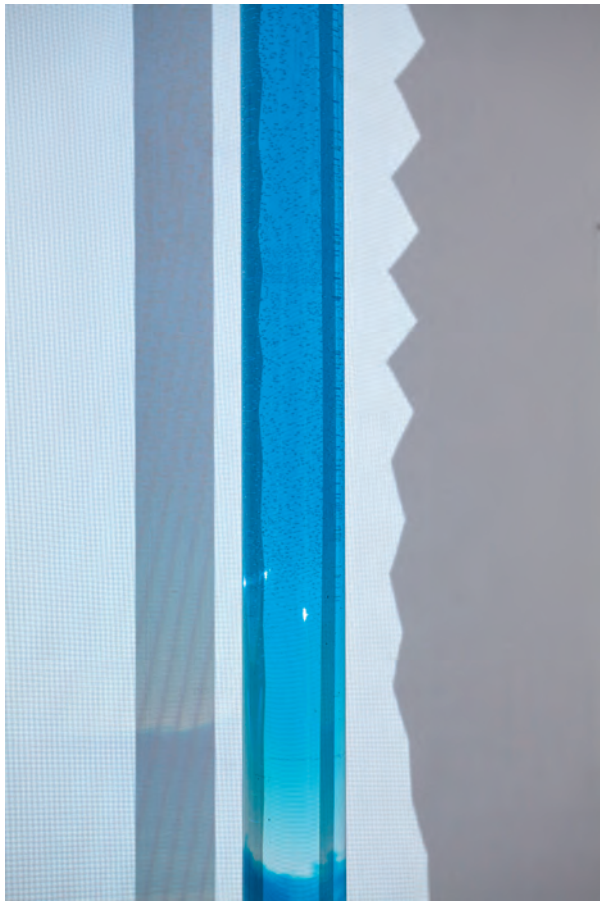
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starts studying what's between her legs. She does not have any preconceived image of it, and her study is solitary. Can it be a vagina, if she has never seen another vagina before? Solipsistic? Spoiler alert! It is not until the end of the film, after having been harassed, raped, and then torched that The Female rediscovers that she is *the other*, realising that the man continues to burn her particularly because of her appearance.

The surface of The Female reveals itself. Underneath the skin, humans have the same colour, and if race and gender can be argued to be purely ideological, then this is not the case for The Female. What had been the features that gave her/his/it immediate protection and advantages burn off like plastic. When they are no longer present, she/he/it is recognisable as other, *alien*, to the human eye. I think I actually have to invest in a new pair of Nike workout tights. Synthetic

fabrics, in conversation, in relation, in transition to our skin and bone movements while not adapting to the environment. PVC plastic, mercilessly hosting our sweat, shallow presumptions of its ability to protect us from germs. I am guilty of who I am wearing.

When I saw *Destroy, She Said* (1969) by Marguerite Duras, I thought the sound had always been present.[13] The event. Of course this was greatly affected by the fact that I had read the book, and as with any good film, there are constantly tiny discoveries, like the discovery of the absence of a composed musical score, that the sound is uncomfortable, that it is present, reveals itself, or even the fact that one actually is hearing it. Like sitting in a restaurant and suddenly noticing the sound of a specific person eating, and the aural space gets side-chained and the ambient sound of the space filters out. Low pass only. You were always there. Before, one could hear

the breathing in a phone conversation; now, one can see that the message is read, reading between messages, and the mute presence, still waiting for other discoveries to reveal themselves.

I facilitate and create a space for these digital objects to interact and, being interested in their present recycled way of being, I want to be a good host. Materials, and material descriptions, also create narratives and poetry, name these sound files like giving nicknames to relatives. As a good host, I am more interested in what they do, by not insisting that they should feel at home. It is difficult to be a good listener, and there are probably too many good listeners out there who I can't compete with. But these objects are *doing things*, and they are interacting with each other. It becomes a way of working with bodies without narratives. In *Under the Skin*, The Female learns about the narrative of the body together with the viewers.

It can be heartbreaking to discover different kinds of love. It can be heartbreaking to encounter different ways to love. It can be heartbreaking not to be loved the way you specifically imagine that you are loved. We all love in our own ways and through our own means. If one chooses to believe that one is still surrounded by love, even though it is something other than expected, maybe there will be room not to believe but just to know. One cannot always project and at the same time hope to be mimicked. Let's start off with finding karaoke videos with relaxing backgrounds, and while singing, if parallel layers containing different interpretations occur, let's not panic but continue to participate with our own phonetic interpretations. We could also change desktop backgrounds more often; they probably affect us more than we would like to think.

Dark Angel
"But contrary to Benjamin's interpretation, the Modern who, like the angel, is flying backward is actually not seeing the destruction; He is generating it in his flight since it occurs behind His back! It is only recently, by a sudden conversion, a metanoia of sorts, that He has suddenly realized how much catastrophe His development has left behind him."
—Bruno Latour[14]

From one material to the other, not leading, but subscribing, following, stalking. Comfort in sorting out the desktop, organising the folders, feeling better about being a hoarder, continuing to collect digital objects. Creating efficient systems that can host the tabs. Always too many tabs, and I'm never sure whether I have finished reading an article or not. Taking breaks by answering e-mails, retweeting, and regramming. By regramming, sharing a trailer, glimpses of what my future projects might look like. Like it? Will you Ge.tt on the next exhibition? Eating chickpea soup, dipping bread in hummus, double denim. Is that a quote? Selections of selections, presenting it on another timeline, on parallel timelines.

Not mourning the loss of aura, sorry not sorry. Walter Benjamin writes:

> The mass is a matrix from which all traditional behavior toward works of art issues today in a new form. Quantity has been transmuted into quality. The greatly increased mass of participants has produced a change in the mode of participation. The fact that the new mode of participation first appeared in a disreputable form must not confuse the spectator.[15]

Historical objects, constantly being distorted, shared, and distributed, still not sorry, but at least I know who Paul McCartney is.[16] Mean tweets circulating, and celebrities insisting that they are not solely avatars. "Real" people behind the tweets, but the distance to empathy is getting longer and longer. Do commentators demonstratively try to remove themselves from their contribution to the conversations through lack of empathy? Holding on to the video-game controllers, surely all the participating gamers have the same point of departure? Parallel to expressing ourselves through stickers, when we are online we tend to already assume that the other gamers can handle the level of violence circulating. If the aura has been long lost in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin has already challenged the artist in regards to reclaiming the aura. Where is it, and how are we placing it in art that mediates our knowledge? In having at least ten different sites displaying art exhibitions, are we absent-minded in hosting quantity over quality?

Performance lectures and public speaking can be seen as direct ways of sharing knowledge, with both centred on displaying interest and sharing particular knowledge. As an artist, I am constantly participating, scanning through objects, and, however long the journey might be, the objects will become digital in the end. Transforming the knowledge through art as a medium that will be distributed online. If the Internet is the stage for displaying know-hows and we are all on it, and we can just Google this and that, does that not mean the premises are the same for all of us? For Jacques Rancière, the notion of the passive spectator is ambiguous, and the relation between the "educator" and the "student" cannot be simplified to active and passive roles.[17] If there is already stored knowledge, it has to feed into what we contribute with, just like the ads in my Gmail sidebar. Ads comfort us with the message that our interests are real and important, but it has always been a complicated thing keeping it real.

It's a Complicated Thing, Being Real[18]
Mike Hadreas, known to most people as Perfume Genius, talks about facing ugly sides of oneself in order to write songs. The lyrics of Perfume Genius's third album, *Too Bright* (2014), are catchy, and at times it even feels like reading someone's personal notes. As a listener you draw parallels between Hadreas's

songwriting and his previous activity in the online community *Second Life*. In *Second Life* there was not a need for his "ugly" avatar to "belong" anywhere, and the ugly aspects of his character could be regularly practised, such as purchasing unnecessary things, going to strip clubs, and gambling with real money. Today, *Second Life* seems ancient in Internet-time. At the same time, it's a predecessor to the comfortable feeling of being a detectable and indistinguishable active online object, continuously diminishing authorship, even through directly exposing one's feelings on sites such as Tumblr, LiveJournal, etc. Maybe we can remove our authorship even when it comes to the core of our feelings, because when our feelings are reposted they gain a sustained but ephemeral life. You liking someone else's post means there is a shared pain. *Too Bright* is probably Hadreas's most accessible album, possibly because it feels very intimate and we witness him slowly accepting the worst parts of himself. The songwriting is not only about where he is at the moment, but where he wants to be in the future. Even if you can be anything, or "nothing," online you still have to reimagine your future. Even trolls do.

> *There's no gentle way*
> *There's no safe place*
> *For the heart to hang*
> *When the body's no good*[19]

"I was interested in exploring the textures of daily necessities and the embodiment/physicality of the computer and Internet. One of the most striking contemporary images is that of the desktop capture, which is seen commonly on YouTube as part of software tutorials. I like the shots of desktops that are poorly organized and 'lived-in.'"
—Akihiko Taniguchi[20]

The works I applied with to Malmö Art Academy dealt mostly with the performative body. Later on, my works became not what they were "in that moment," but mainly what I wanted them to become in the future through documentation. This became complicated when I started working with models and singers, having people other than myself in front of the camera.

   While it was clear how I wanted to place and distort my own body in a digital landscape, it was more complicated using the same effects on another body. They became objects, clips in a timeline. One way of solving it practically would be to record myself first, and become a template that could serve as a starting point. Like in a social setting, when you let go of the silence by telling a joke and hope that a series of social interactions will come after you make fun of yourself. In my recent works, I have worked with people who aren't particularly interested in art and would not normally have imagined themselves in an art setting. Similarly, explaining what I do to my family in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, has made me

aware of the terminologies I host in my daily life, and that there is nothing wrong with letting go of a language, too.

Wet Cheeks/Comparing Business Cards/American Psycho

I think I can remember this more accurately. I was crying in front of the mirror, and at one point I stopped and considered writing a list with all the typical aesthetic choices that I could improve and that had a potential to emerge from the situation. It was the sort of thing one did as a child: cry, and if the parent did not notice, cry louder. Should my chin be higher up? How much of what is directly uncomfortable, e.g. mascara, can I show to the world? Am I an ugly crier? Does that facilitate empathy? Not enough. I took a picture of myself with a digital camera that I got for my eighteenth birthday, which at the time I perceived as tiny. Where that image is now, I don't know—out of sight, out of mind, all this hoarding and complaining about storage space. There is always a conflict between how you see yourself and how the world sees you. We already have a preconceived idea of how we look. That's why we can never see ourselves the way the world sees us.

   The year I turned eighteen, 2007, was also the same year Chris Crocker released his iconic video "LEAVE BRITNEY ALONE!"[21] When it was released, and became viral, Crocker was accused of many things, among others of being narcissistic and not actually having empathy for, but rather using, Britney Spears's situation to promote himself. But how could he have known? Kim Kardashian knows, MAJESTY_FENTY knows, deykno deykno deykno. Very often I find it difficult to be efficient. What I did not know was how awkward I would feel watching a video recording by the paparazzi of Kim Kardashian walking with Kanye West in Paris in an Olivier Rousteing Balmain dress. Earlier I had seen an Instagram post of her wearing the same dress, and it would always stop my scrolling. Seeing the footage of Kim Kardashian painfully walking at a slower pace than her husband, Kanye West, and Oliver Rousting on the other hand walking slowly at her pace with a face seemingly worried that her high heels were a recipe for a fall on the hard pavement.[22] One is reminded that:

1) Through social media, celebrities also contribute to showcasing their "flaws," but whenever a paparazzo does the same, they are now more than ever vulnerable to attacks from an army of fans.
2) An image of a "girl eating salad" is one thing, but actually seeing "the movie"—now that must be really boring. (No wonder the food scenes in *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* [2013] were so exaggerated. How often do you see people eat in films, anyway?)
3) The dress, it is all about the dress.[23]

Chris Crocker's video was released six months after my birthday. It was also the year I discovered that, unlike my friends, I had not mastered a smile that I could use for every photo. Just kidding—I discovered that way earlier.

Hearing the Same Thing/Solipsistic Raincoat
Not random: weird.

Oh, back to the fear of being solipsistic.

Have we come to the point that we have to insist on still being human?

I ask myself if we are putting on roles, and if we keep on forgetting that we are human, and if we may not have the answer to all ecological crises. I don't know whether what I'm moving towards is animism or techno-animism. There is an acknowledgement of technology of course, as it is inherent in our existence, but I would put it like: I want to be part of the post-human way of thinking and at the same time shrink it to visions I have for the world. I always come back to the fear of being a solipsist, this constant fear that I am not really saying anything about anything other than my analytical intake of my surroundings. That's why I am so fascinated by retro, nostalgia, the ouroboros (the snake eating its own tail), especially in fashion. There are other ways of relating to objects, of course. We are surrounded by commercials that make us feel attractive as consumers, like somebody wants us, that our interests and urges are normal. We do not experience this alone, but for some reason it comes bouncing back at us.

In a way, solipsism is a form of realism, but a realism without extension, without body, without gaps. A kind of anti-magic, or blindness to magic.

Magic is the impossible relation to what is outside the human. It is something we can experience only by positioning ourselves on the outside. Magic could happen at this very moment, but I wouldn't experience it as such because I am not outside of it, not outside of anything, always already implicated in the network of feedback. That's why I don't associate the Internet with magic. The Internet is a tool, something invented, but interesting because I can't give it a physical shape, or any shape really, but is something I have access to and something that I can call whatever I like, as long as it is adaptable to my own use. That is not something I would do with the experience of magic, unless I was the one doing the magic. This is to say, a presence in which all material relations are mediated through virtual networks approaches a solipsistic realism that excludes magic.

I try to avoid using one-liners. The masterpiece. The phallus. The time and investment. The paradox of using time to make something that appears effortless. One's approach to practice does not need to be all about problem solving, and the use of impracticality can be a choice. Does choice always stem from problem solving? Or can it be thought of as a moment of synchronisation. The term in itself is easily connected to history, but also to one's state of mind, in which

solipsism threatens to become an actuality, and one constantly tries and fails to relate to what's outside.

I associate this with the question of childhood, where your past and your parents are not something that you choose, but in a scary libidinal way become something that you are your whole life. I could have continued to work with loss and mourning, but what if that again contradicts the body as extension? Maybe that is the case—that one does not want to start over? One can't start over? What are these ways of being that constantly are stuck with us? Thinking through doing; I have to start this doc over.

Boring Boring Boring[24]
One of the main challenges in working with music was constantly hearing that I was doing certain things wrong. I was told I could not use that sample that way—"Sandra, can you imagine someone playing the drums you are presenting? That would be impossible!" I would listen, but then I came to the point when I would say, "Exactly!"

"Throughout the course of its life the animal is confined of its environmental world, immured as it were within a fixed sphere that is incapable of further expansion or contraction."
—Martin Heidegger[25]

Does one shape one's own body after a hammer the first time one uses it? Does one mimic the results, or the potential, the tool could facilitate? Along with this I have to mention a pleasant Google gift: a video of a lyrebird on the website Laughing Squid,[26] mimicking the sound of power drills and several other construction tools. What a sculptor! My installation *I Am So Bored But You Are Alright* (2015) from my graduate show, *Rare Darlings*, includes a twenty-two-minute video, and in it there are different versions of my own avatar. At one point in the video, there is a close up of an avatar in 3D animation. It is intimate, and s/he/it is dancing, possibly mirroring in the interaction and sharing in the pleasure of the music. The song being played is a cover of Justin Timberlake's song "Mirror." At the end of the scene, the avatar suddenly stops and says that s/he/it is kind of bored.

What I find interesting is that I am no longer sure whether I have constructed the avatar based on me, or whether it is me that is constantly performing to be this digital object. The avatar is already teleported to another point in the network, hence being referred to as "s/he/it," because although the starting point and the resemblance is known, the avatar is active somewhere else. There are shorter, faster ways of solving this; I could be more decisive and avoid entering the rabbit hole. One thing is certain: I am also plastic. My brain is plastic, and when I interact with sound materials, I am mimicking them.[27] These digital objects have a maker, and a history. They also have had a journey that landed

them in my MacBook Pro, which is ill and making a lot of noise, and could go on strike anytime. I was not interested in creating music that could be performed by someone in real life, or, in that scenario, I would prefer an octopus as the ideal drummer.

I have a bag in my studio with all my note-books from the years I have been at the academy. A lot of time I discover almost the exact same sentences, again and again. My writing is a tool that I use to show that I am not falling into solipsism or just reacting to ads that are automatically adapted to my interests and facilitate descriptions, rather than to frame on a daily basis how I interact with materials. Sometimes, yes, the feedback loop can be broken. I choose to watch a movie rather than lose track of time watching *Buffy* episodes. Writing also becomes a tool that is already broken, being based on my memories and my concentration span. A tool that is always present in my practice but also fully visible in its not being flawless.[28] So, yes, but at the same time, no, I would not say that these sentences are like recognisable kick drums repeating throughout these notebooks. More like trap-house hi-hats that sometimes sporadically appear. Not random, but weird.

Already When You Have Viewed the Sound File I Am Working with at the Moment Please Let Me Know If You Eventually Want to Skip
The hero might remain in the dark and force us to listen, or wear a camouflage uniform that isn't detectable by drones. But we will still look for the source, preferably one with a button that can be switched off. SoundCloud has this irritating thing where it makes the sound file visible through a diagram of its volume levels; in other words, some tracks may come off as somewhat dramatic. The ears never close, and the sound is never off.[29] It's either audible or not. Through working with sound—mostly music samples that resemble and have traces of effects from their makers —I have learned that I am always thinking through listening, doing.

So When Is the Climax? What Is the Essence?
In my video works that also incorporate sound, I try to solve the above questions by displaying the climax through two flatscreens. This has also a social function, like lounge music, and makes room for the works to be experienced by several bodies. An open choreography, not in and out of the frame, but of the space. It's more like, "Hey, it's OK, you don't have to see it from the beginning to the end." I am standing close to my works, trying to take an art selfie; come and let's have a drink instead. I don't mind sharing the climax with you—it has already happened, and if you missed it, look at the other flatscreen: it's about to happen again. So then how does one react when one is in a cinema and discovers that one has already seen the movie?

The echo is in the dribbles. The looping and the gestures. From previously using conventional non-linear, non-destructive editing systems such as Final Cut Pro and GarageBand to edit my videos, I have now started working with the tracker software Renoise. I found the transition from working horizontally to vertically interesting. The more I got to know the tool I was working with, the more I became aware of the looping and how important it was for me to be a time manager. I first experienced this when I started to work with different genres, in particular dubstep, placing drums and samples into correct time slots.

During the process, the way of thinking about casting plaster was present, and it was important to also think about the negative space. Placements of samples are numerical, so it was always about relating to the timeline and seeing the minutes and seconds go by. Looping excerpts can work with a live audience. One decides that this external looping is shared and can be shared. We are definitely not hearing the same thing, but we are listening, differently of course. You are listening with your feet stomping, and I am very much aware that I have to change the track ASAP before the audience's Internet attention span comes back into effect.

Now it somehow seems banal to talk about looping, but it's from the banality of it that something starts developing. Today, living in a time when consumers are also cultural producers, one sees that the divisions are disappearing, and it was while I was learning music genres that I also experienced them as a result of access to endless apps and music software. My works are greatly influenced by the genres that do not fit into any category or have the need for it.

Mimicking Emojis: Do You Even Care?
"So then how about a specific thing called 'image'? It is a complete mystification to think of the digital image as a shiny immortal clone of itself. On the contrary, not even the digital image is outside of history. It bears the bruises of its crashes with politics and violence."
—Hito Steyerl[30]

So before we go any further, I would like to explain how I tell my jokes. In recent years I have noticed that I am overly empathetic to facial expressions. That is, in the end, a good thing, if you think about the comedian Louis C.K.'s concerns regarding online harassment and the importance of children seeing IRL reactions instead of hiding behind a screen and all.[31] If you, for instance, see someone grinning at you, or even making a confused facial expression, something could be triggered, and perhaps push you to take some steps back. I am very much aware that the words I express are not only carriers of reactions, but that so many factors are at play at the same time in social settings in which power relations are constantly exercised through projections and mirroring. Telling a joke becomes something different too, because telling a joke ends up being about listening.

The Dancers, 2015. Installation. MDF boards, threaded rods, monitor, headphones, flatscreen and fish scale pattern sequin fabric.
2 x HD video looped. Sandra Mujinga

Yes, I am aware that this text will be on the academy's website, but at the moment that is not as scary as somebody commenting back at me or calling me out. I have a method that I use in social settings, which I have also transferred to work as well (for instance, for an artist talk): I like telling a joke that I have shared before in another place and another time. When reactions are expressed, I focus on listening rather than observing someone's face, because of the mere phonetics of it. I know in that moment that I am not in the business of reproduction of meaning, but I open doors for the listener's previous experiences to engage with the expressed content. I, on the other hand, would be rather interested in going on tour with only this one joke, as it eventually would become funny.

Can I Skip This?

How does one work with video, a medium that is in constant transformation? That is, its transformation is so present in my timeline, through how the tool facilitating it is used. Sharing is after all caring: one sees streams of bodies, retweeted by active agents with good intentions, too. Through continuous online activity, one is bound to sooner or later encounter some form of violence. Bodies circulating, depicting violence, by way of online activism. It is not enough to share, one has to constantly skip the timeline. Where do you want it to belong in the future? Reimaging a pattern despite the online activity stored.

One cannot necessarily take on a God's eye view and assume that one is not partaking in a network. An object interacting with other objects. The TV hosts an Internet connection and is a physical device collecting data, but it is rather interwoven. Before getting a smartphone, I would have been surprised to hear about people keeping their phones close to the bed, because I imagined it would make it so difficult to transition from sleep to another state. Is there a lack of need for distinction? Is it no longer important to actually wake up by getting away from the bed?

In my videos there is often a sense of isolation. The subjects that I record become objects that are placed in unfamiliar scenes. Their desolation interpreted as loneliness does not interact with their environment. Operating as a model agent, I invite people to perform in front of a blue screen. The separation of different working methods has been important to me, but so has letting things meld together.

I can only assume that I do this in social settings. I am talking to you, and also looking for the link that I wanted to share with you a couple of seconds ago. I don't have to look at you, but I think I am listening. Before, that would be unheard of! I am listening to what you are saying; being poly is not a bad thing. And if this instant bodybuilding cannot make me sweat, the deodorant product assured me that it would not happen for at least twenty-four hours. Whenever there is an update of an Apple product, this greatly affects my work. I think in terms of seconds,

and when looking at YouTube videos I try to find comments with digits that can indicate when the juicy stuff happens. Can I skip this? Let's skip this.

Emotionally Thirteen[32]

In "A Cyborg Manifesto," Donna Haraway reminds us to actually get up from the bed the day after too much celebration, *whether it is fiction or not.*[33] We are all participating in making the meaning of techno-science this very instant.[34] It sometimes becomes too much, the freedom of knowledge, and all we want is to get mobile and updated. We are reminded that if there is such thing as a Generation X or Generation Y, we are still living in transgenerational conditions, and statistics are still necessary when participating in politics through just liking and retweeting, maybe more than ever.

There is a potential in the virtual beings that we are, and we can create parallel rooms of our own instantly and simultaneously. Maybe there has never been so much exposure to so much imagery of violence, but nothing remains the same, and our perception is always fluid. Have I become thirteen again? Do I unwittingly behave like a thirteen-year-old online? How am I participating by liking? How come posting something on Facebook feels like the first day of school every time? Careful selection of items before bedtime, clean shirt is a must. Ironing and the act of irony. I think what is most shocking is realising that one is not synchronised with one's own body, and that maybe one should call the friend who advised you to install the f.lux app and thank them.

Could it be that we are bad listeners because we are searching for a body, a sound source? The sound is after all never off, and it transcends even opaque walls.

How sensitive or insensitive are we online? How does that affect the online activity and who are the commentators? I want to post something as my Facebook status. The endless possibilities are there when one's stage is the Internet.

All these body fluids and smells. They remind us of the body taking up more space than wanted. The day one discovers hatred for perfumed deodorant. *Something Has to Break.*[35] Love becomes fluid. Love sick, sick of love, heartbreak, muscle elastic, casted and broken. The answer to the first question is "no." I don't think the thirteen-year-old me would survive among thirteen-year-olds today.

It is hard to compete with an Internet persona sometimes, and it can be useful to look at one's browser history and become aware of the repetitions of pre-recorded performances. A lot has changed since the '60s, and one should be careful about using these categorical remarks publicly. Still, one of my main concerns has been how I perform for the screen, and being honest with myself on where and how I want to situate my works. Everybody should lighten up a bit. What role does the "but it's funny" attitude play in all of this? A lot of these offensive comments get a

free pass because it is after all the Internet and people should have a sense of humour.

I still remember when my siblings and I got a TV in our bedroom. Today TVs are not passive objects: they are also listeners, collectors of surveillance data. Does that mean that the louder and longer someone laughs at my joke the better it is? Before social media, and our constant surveillance of each other, a stand-up comedian could tour with the same jokes without the performances being exposed on sites such as YouTube, and seconds of it shared on Vine, Instagram, etc. Since I am not a famous stand-up comedian yet, I can still experiment with that model. When exposed to non-linear narratives, one experiences seconds. When I see either a violent movie or a humorous one, I rarely ask about the seconds before the captured moments, because we all *know the context*.

No One Is Immune to Projections

Looking at how terms and definitions are thrown here and there, at times one becomes optimistic, in the sense that a certain term is circulating more and is being used freely in public space, without its usage being loaded with fear. On the other hand, as a result of this, one fears that a term has greatly influenced one's own way of living. Like, for instance: "feminism" is just a trend, or the hashtag will wear out eventually. I think of other strategies: shoulder dancing, being ambiguous, being bored. By being against something and also for something, by being everything but nothing, maybe one challenges capitalist structures because that is also something: being everything and nothing. At the same damn time.

Still there is always the sense of where I want my works to belong, or not belong. I am not immune to representations or the effect imagery has on me. No one is immune to projections and their levels of violence. It's a complicated thing, being real, and I can't help but think about Audre Lorde, about how to work with the foundations that enable you to imagine your future. How to keep it real.

And most of all how to Treat. Yo. Self. The erotic provides the force,[36] but we cannot fear its revelation. Consumption and constant exposure to pornographic images. I have stopped noticing Facebook changing its design, and I always swipe left when I see a low-res image on Tinder. We are presented with images that do not attempt to depict a reality; rather, they present a hyperreality. The hyperreality exists as a consequence of our cycle of constantly having to be aroused. As a prosumerist, strength feels like an illusion, fashioned in the context of the male structure of power. If we don't have time to exercise our eroticism, how do we create a space for our chaotic and messy teenage feelings?

My right arm is hurting, now you know, and I realise that I am not used to having the phone pressed against my ear, only used to seeing the reflection of my face on it.

1   Kate Crawford, "Following You: Disciplines of Listening in Social Media," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Stern (London: Routledge, 2012), 87.
2   +242 is the country code for Republic of the Congo.
3   Holly Herndon, artist statement to the video Holly Herndon, *Chorus*, YouTube video, 6:46, posted by RVNG Intl., January 21, 2014, https://youtu.be/nHujh3yA3BE.
4   *The Congress*, feature film, directed by Ari Folman (France/Israel: Bridgit Folman, Film Gang Pandora Filmproduktion, 2013). In the movie, Robin Wright, playing herself, disappears into the digital world after selling the rights to her visual representation. She disavows her physical presence and becomes solely an avatar.
5   Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1985), 46.
6   Like that time when I was installing something from the ceiling and I fell off a ladder and I was listening to M.I.A.'s "Tell Me Why." I still have a hard time listening to it.
7   Performance presented as part of *Soft City*, at Blitz, Oslo, 2014. *Soft City* was a three-day program with screenings and performances, curated and produced by Oslo Kunsthall.
8   This is in reference to the Internet meme Doge, which consists of an image of a Shiba Inu often accompanied by words in comic sans font. See "Doge (meme)," *Wikipedia*, last modified May 21, 2015, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doge_%28meme%29.
9   Björk, "The Invisible Woman: A Conversation with Björk," interview by Jessica Hopper, *Pitchfork*, January 21, 2015, http://pitchfork.com/features/interviews/9582-the-invisible-woman-a-conversation-with-bjork/.

10   Kurt Schwitters, *Poem performances pieces proses plays poetics* (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2002), 218.

11   *Under the Skin*, feature film, directed by Jonathan Glazer (UK: Film4, British Film Institute, 2014).

12   Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson are the creators of the comedy TV series Broad City. They performed these micro-impressions on *Late Show with Letterman*. See "Abbi Jacobson & Ilana Glazer Do Micro Impressions—David Letterman," YouTube video, 1:54, posted by puridesi everything, February 22, 2015, https://youtu.be/eUBtLCgFn44.

13   *Détruire dit-elle*, feature film, directed by Marguerite Duras (France: Ancinex, Madeleine Films, 1969).

14   Bruno Latour, "An Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto,'" *New Literary History* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2010), 485.

15   Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," trans. Harry Zohn. (Berlin: Schocken/Random House, 1998), https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm.

16   Following Kanye West and Paul McCartney's collaboration in 2015, there was an Internet outrage because young Kanye West fans (apparently) did not know who Paul McCartney was.

17   Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso Books, 2011), 108.

18   This subheading is taken from Anshuman Iddamsetty, "The Arcade: Episode 40, Featuring Perfume Genius," *Hazlitt*, audio, 19:17, October 30, 2014, http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/hazlitt/podcast/arcade-episode-40-featuring-perfume-genius.

19   Perfume Genius, "No Good," *Too Bright*, Matador, 2014.

20   Akihiko Taniguchi and Holly Herndon, artist statement to the video for Holly Herndon, *Chorus*.

21   Chris Crocker, "LEAVE BRITNEY ALONE!," YouTube video, 2:12, posted by itschriscrocker, September 10, 2007, https://youtu.be/kHmvkRoEowc.

22   "Exclusive—Kim Kardashian and Kanye West in Love in Paris," YouTube video, 3:30, posted by StormShadowCrew, April 14, 2014, https://youtu.be/Fm_lRiHhgvo.

23   "The dress (viral phenomenon)," *Wikipedia*, last modified June 8, 2015, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_dress_%28viral_phenomenon%29.

24   This subheading is taken from "Alex Bag—Untitled 'Fall '95' [London Punk Girls]," YouTube video, 3:30, posted by PocketofTea, December 14, 2009, https://youtu.be/lc8VoNBee-I.

25   Martin Heidegger, "The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude", quoted in Oxana Timofeeva, *History of Animals* (Maastricht: Van Eyck Academie, 2012), 120.

26   See http://laughingsquid.com/a-lyrebird-mimicking-power-tools-and-other-construction-sounds/.

27   Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 17.

28   Here I am inspired by Graham Harman's interpretations of Heidegger's tool-concept in Graham Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Hampsgire: Zero Books, 2010).

29   Sharon Hayes, *There's So Much I Want to Say to You*, performance, 2012.

30   Hito Steyerl, "A Thing Like You and Me," in *The Wretched of The Screen*, (Berlin: Sternberg, 2012), 53.

31   Louis C.K., "Louis C.K. Hates Cell Phones," interview on *The Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien*, YouTube video, posted by Team Coco, September 20, 2013, https://youtu.be/5HbYScltf1c.

32   This subheading comes from Anshuman Iddamsetty, "The Arcade: Episode 27, Are You Alright? Are We Alright?," featuring Marc Maron," *Hazlitt*, audio, 23:50, July 2014, https://soundcloud.com/hazlittmag/the-arcade-episode-27-are-you-alright-are-we-alright.

33   Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," in *The Haraway Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004).

34   Judy Wajcman, *Technofeminism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 100.

35   *Something Has to Break*, feature film, directed by Ester Martin Bergsmark (Sweden: Garagefilm International, Fasad Postproduktion, 2014).

36   Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: Crossing, 2007), 58.

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