

**RHETORIC OF  
SHOWN TRUTH  
PERFORMANCE  
ART**

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It needs to be acknowledged that art never appears differently than from the tension between two concepts of art: one of them is close to technology, the other to sublimity; and the tension itself remains non-conceptualized<sup>1</sup> – says Jean-Luc Nancy in the study *The Muses*. In the same volume Nancy recalls another definition of art, taken from *Addendum* by Heidegger (publ. 1956) to *O źródle dzieła sztuki*, where the philosopher defines art as not belonging to the territory of cultural achievements or manifestations of spirit; it belongs to – in his opinion – a sphere of disclosing appropriation through which the sense of Being may be defined<sup>2</sup>. That process takes place through visualization, displaying in the light clearance, pursuing obviousness and transparency, opening through a sudden and unexpected event (*Ereignis*) of being, opening to discursiveness and performativeness. The beginning of art relates to the source tension, a sudden burst which finds its continuation among others, in Nancy's opinion, in self-overcoming of art. Referring to Hegel's aesthetics he considers that tension in the light of dialectic of unity, unification of art and its spread-in-time degradation in multiplicity of forms, corresponding to the differences between senses. Also a certain moment of externality remains a significant element for the essence of art. In Kant's aesthetics, as notices Nancy, 'a bit of 'sublimity'' eludes multiplicity of art, omits it, 'disregards' and dilutes, or, what is more, 'goes beyond art as it is'<sup>3</sup>.

This sublime dilution and disregard of the division between tight disciplines of art occurred in particular thanks to performance art. Sublimity in art, therefore, was connected with risk. Risk that an artist had to undertake to be able to define himself as such, risk of crossing limits between arts, risk of rejecting the historical burden of art, risk of losing recipients, addressees of his actions and communicativeness of the message, and finally – risk of disregarding the differentiation between art itself and the very life. A certain positively considered disregard of those limits, a weight of tradition, recipients' expectations and habits, often artist's own body and its habits, was inherently connected with the art of performance. This art is a field among other fields, purposefully oscillating at the border between seriousness and disregard, and due to that it is close to the life attitude of Greek cynics, and in particular Diogenes.

A response to the challenge was a courage to face the paradox and risk of being publicly ridiculed – as a significant factor for both performative actions of artists and the style of living of cynics was their open, transparent, far from private character. In this way disregard, inseparably connected with courage, led to another key-word: exposure; exposing the nonsense of attachment to labour-intensive practices of both everyday life, thinking and art which through it appear to be purposeless forms of habituality, covering emptiness and mental, emotional and often physical exposure of the artist or philosopher themselves. The naked body of the artist or the thinker (I mean perpetuated and transmitted by tradition convictions about the provocative and obscene behaviour of Diogenes) was unambiguous evidence for his honesty, courage, engagement and cynicism at the same time. Nudity means pursuing the truth but also to certain innocence; an expression of longing for the innocence of a child or maybe a lost paradise (where bashfulness of a naked body has not yet been discovered). Pursuing the truth permeates performers' actions. The figure

of Heraclitus' playing child seems to combine actions of both the artists of the twentieth century, like, e.g., Marina Abramović, and ancient cynics. In this way, paradoxically, nudity of a body, this time not of a model but of the artist himself, again has become a sign of art and wisdom, as it was in ancient Greece. Nudity meant also a lack of attachment to any purposefulness of activities that could bring identifiable results in the form of a completed artwork as an object.

Nudity in art – its puzzling role – is also the subject of Jacques Derrida's considerations in his famous *Prawda w malarstwie*. Why are statues naked? Do we, by surrounding them with scholarly aesthetic theory, affect the very artworks, do we transform them? Both clothing and the concept formula that we wrap around the artwork, is *parergon* in the opinion of Kant and Derrida, an alien matter, secondary, although dependent on the original. This matter reflects the shape of the artwork. The original, however – the naked artwork, the naked body – must remain untouched, independent. Philosophical discourse must find the difference between *ergon* and *parergon* and definitely reject, disregard *parergon* for the benefit of *ergon*. However, this differentiation is not that obvious, which is proven by the beautiful bodies of *parergon* covering the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Kant's naked thing is described by Derrida as follows: '*Naked*' (bloss) means, however, depriving (Entblössung) of the useful character (*Dienlichkeit*) and of being prepared. [...] Then being a thing includes what is still left (was noch übrigbleibt). Since whatever is left (Rest) is not specifically (*eigens*) defined<sup>4</sup>.

Exposing has also first of all mental and psychological dimension. Performers believe that their behaviour is closer to the truth of being than life itself. Performance is the clearance and the moment of the truth, pursuing the obviousness and transparency of what could have been omitted and disguised by immersion in the stream of life. The structure of the language or theoretical thinking were

also perceived as too stiff and limiting, therefore, one had to expose their artificiality and subordination to pure activity. Günter Brus, an actionist from Vienna, the author of shocking, filled with nudity and tormented bodies, performances, which had political and social aspects besides aesthetic ones, declares: *Activity takes place to a large extent beyond the ordinary use of a language as such. Descriptions, explanations, theories, etc., are like poor crutches for the disabled. Activity turns against the terror of psychology*<sup>5</sup>.

In another place he describes the role of physicality in this way: *My body is an intention, my body is an event, my body is a result. During a performance I behave like pre-human. I believe art is always a declaration that denies self-satisfaction of the world. Scandal is honesty when it is not planned. Honesty is scandal when the wise world officially turns against it*<sup>6</sup>.

Honesty, if it is to prove and certify one's truthfulness, must fall back on non-cultural, primitive and brutal forms, if this is what Günter Brus had in mind when he used the term 'pre-human', which refers to Nietzsche's Overman. Pre-human is also close to the concept of parrhesia artist by Foucault's *Fearless Speech*. Parrhesia artist is someone who says openly everything what he thinks, without resorting to any concealment, insinuations or unnecessary rhetoric. He speaks from himself, in line with his conviction, in a convincing and clear manner. A clear evidence that we deal with a parrhesia artist and not with a fraud, is the courage he performs with. As emphasized by Foucault, the recognition and status of a parrhesia artist was extremely important in the Greek and Roman culture, which was reflected in writings by Plutarch, Galen and other thinkers<sup>7</sup>. Practicing parrhesia was and is inseparable with exposing oneself to a risk which in the case of performers means the risk of not being understood, disgrace or ridicule. Parrhesia is a full of criticism game with the interlocutor or the spectator, where the tactics includes acting

by surprise and ridicule – both of the audience and the very player. Scandal is honesty, when it is not planned, as said Günter Brus.

Art as scandal, art as honesty is a concept compliant with the cynics' concept of life devoted to truth, provocation, freedom from the binding moral norms. Undertaking an offensive form of dialogue, named by Foucault as one of the forms of cynics' parrhesia, was equivalent to the strategy of performer's behaviour, in particular of those connected with the actionists from Vienna who, similarly to cynics, taught a critical attitude towards public institutions, law, customs, culture and politics.

It is an interesting conclusion of Foucault's analysis of the dialogue between Alexander the Great and Diogenes – the diagnosis of a necessity to internalize self-reflection of a parrhesia duel in the mind of the parrhesia discussor (spectator). Similarly, the purpose of artistic interventions into everydayness of time, called performance, is, or may be, realization of the commonness of the creative potential. *Everyone can be an artist. Everyone should. Everyone will be, as specialized, precisely directed work is taken over by machines. Everyone is already an artist anyway*<sup>8</sup>, as states a performance artist Robert Filliou. *Stroke the table. Break the chair. Take a mug from the cupboard. Look into the microscope. Write one word on the typewriter. Cut a slice of bread. Take an apple. Call a friend. Take a sip of water. And for a longer time look out of an open window straight into the night*<sup>9</sup>, advises in his *Dziesięć lekcji* a Czech performance artist Milan Knížák.

Just as the concept of artist's actions as separated, autonomic, differentiated profession was questioned in this movement, the autonomous place and idea of art was significantly extended, until the moment the purpose of art's existence was undermined by questioning the border between art and life. In other words, the very action and life became the essence and the matter of artists' actions. Where should the essence of art be looked for?

Heidegger, noticing that the element of the matter is necessary in the artwork, claims at the same time that [...] *work of art, going beyond the matter element, is still something else. [...] It is the Other that rests inside that makes the artwork. The artwork is a produced thing but it expresses something else beyond whatever a naked thing is – ‘allo agoreyei’*<sup>10</sup>. Thus modus/mode of difference opens the road towards new, future, still unknown forms of art. Matter is the material element in an artwork, as stated by Heidegger, and is formed by the artist. A given artwork is composed from matter. In the case of performance, that matter of an artwork would be the very being that the artist subjects to creative modifications. In another place Heidegger notices that artwork transforms the being<sup>11</sup>. In artwork the being enters the unhiddenness of its being, what Heidegger defines as the occurrence of the truth. In other words, in the artwork *the being is discovered in what it is and how it is*.<sup>12</sup> It seems that a certain aspect of this primitive simplicity of self-exposure of the being is revealed in actions of Marina Abramović and Ulaya. They describe their actions as follows: *All our statements have a certain aspect of physical nature, they are very simple, they never explain anything, they are not theoretical, they are statements when I can say that I go to the wall, touch the wall, hit my body against the wall, that is my part. The part of Ulaya is to run towards the wall, touch it, hit it ...*<sup>13</sup>

Heidegger emphasizes also inseparable mutual permeation of art and poetry. As he writes, *the poetising essence of art results in an uncovered place opening in the being, in the openness of which everything is different than usually*<sup>14</sup>. The art of performance is indeed the method of dialectics of drawing close to life and distancing from it, as well as the method of traditional recognition of artworks as aesthetic products, which has been dominant since Renaissance. Thus, one may diagnose an unexpected closeness of the matter of art to the matter of language by saying that art is not a ready object, but it

is a process, a becoming; it has the aspect of time and unexpectedness and, just like language and poetry, is based on unexpectedness of moves and associations. What is more, Heidegger emphasizes the dimension of the occurrence of an event; the occurrence of the truth in the artwork. He stresses also clearly the importance of the creation process – he writes: *the artwork's "being created" may be understood clearly only from the perspective of the process of creation. So under a pressure of things (Sache) we must agree to look at the actions of the artist to meet the source of the artwork*<sup>15</sup>.

From this perspective, the essence of a happening was getting close to the source of the artwork through exposing the artist's actions, just as in the famous performance *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* in the Reuben Gallery in New York, where the audience and the reception method became very important elements of the artwork itself; the spectators received 'instructions' as to their own participation in the work. Chairs were on purpose placed at different angles so that the audience could contemplate various aspects and phases of the artwork at the same time. The audience's active participation in the happening of the artwork was here an extremely important, innovative element. The performers were naked and wearing winter coats, an artist was blowing lighted matches or painting a wall, whereas the lighting was changing colours to green, blue, white and a girl painted white crossed the stage in order to lie down on a red-and-white bench next to an elderly man playing with cans, and then to go back. Here the audience changed places in line with the numbers printed on their tickets. In this way the first part of the happening ended. Observation of the very action, which was senseless, without a clear metaphor or unambiguous plot, the dramatic action addressing the expectations of the audience, was becoming a separated particle of living and time, just like the action itself. Not the composition, harmony, aesthetic experiences, but the very happening, observation



of the action, were the essence of the happening, in line with what Heidegger claimed: *In this way it becomes clear what happens: If we continue to ask so zealously about the artwork remaining in itself, we miss its reality at the same time, until we do not agree to treat the artwork as something 'that happened'*.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, art may and should permeate people's actions and everyday existence. One should take a second look and discover unknown areas of their own existence, such as – as Allan Kaprow proposes – e.g. brushing teeth. The mentioned Kaprow asks: *Why would not an artist plan a happening lasting several days, months or years, permeating the inside and the outside of the private life of performers? There is nothing esoteric there, and it may have a significant attribute of emphasizing things and actions that are performed automatically – like brushing teeth*<sup>17</sup>.

Heidegger quotes a statement by Albrecht Dürer: [...] *art indeed is in nature, he who is able to rip it out, has it*<sup>18</sup>. Can art not be ripped out from nature through performative actions, and not only through *drawing (reißen) with a stylus (Reißfeder) of the plan (Riß) in the drawing board (Reißbrett)*?<sup>19</sup> Maybe the plan could be outlined on the ephemeral matter of time. Reading Kaprow further we find considerations about outlining or self-outlining of the happening plan: *A totally unpredictable action plan could emerge not only in the course of preparations, but also the main performance in connection with disregarding the role of taste and relying only on casual operations, simultaneously presented moments or totally nothing*<sup>20</sup>.

That emptiness – nothing – could have key meaning for performance art. It can be found both in the performances by John Cage, in the leap to nothingness by Ives Klein, Kaprow's playing with the absurd, and stillness by Burden. The analysis of dying and self-mutilation by Chris Burden requires, however, a separate critical instrument. Noticeable pressure is put in his actions to emphasize the universal essence of experience, almost a mystic state of operating in

self-destruction and self-torture, detachment from the directness of reason, effect, meaning. Burden seeks, maybe, a clear act of internal perception, temporary capturing of elusive eternity, detached from the colours of experiences, movement, habits, intelligence, events, reality, finally – indispensability of forms and beauty in art. In his diploma dissertation presented at the University of California in Irvine Chris Burden spent five days (from 26 April to 30 April 1971) closed in a locker in that university, at least he claims it. The description of this event remains cool and precise, deprived of redundant descriptions or considerations. As declared in his *Untitled Statement*, published in 'Arts 49' no. 7 of March 1975:

*I was closed in locker number 5 for five consecutive days and did not leave it for the whole time. The closet was two feet high, two feet wide and three feet deep. I stopped eating several days before getting locked. The locker above me contained five gallons of bottled water; and the locker below be included an empty five-gallon bottle. [...] at 10.30 at night doors were closed and nobody could enter the building anymore. It was the scariest time. I imagined that I can always kick the doors out. For some nights my wife slept outside on the floor, in case I really lost control or something similar happened. It was really strange. One night a janitor walking by could not believe his eyes what she was doing there. [...] I think that a part of this [...] is repeating to yourself that you must just wait, because the time will take care of what is inevitable, and that this moment is not more terrifying than those already passed. The first part of the action is always the most difficult. When I get to the middle, I am already home, and I am sure that I can survive the second half. The beginning is shocking. When all kinds of doubts come, but the moment I go deeper in it and I am half way there, the rest is easy<sup>21</sup>.*

The need for this kind of extreme experiences may be explained by a reaction to excessive emotions and comfort offered by the world today. It is a peculiar, modern form of asceticism, facing the passing

time and the time dimension of existence, as well as the limitations of one's own body and psyche. Looking from another perspective, it is, maybe, a return to the situation of being safe, and alienated at the same time, in the mother's womb. Separation and darkness allow, maybe, to discover and see being as not hidden. Hiding, escaping paradoxically lead to authenticity, taking the being out of its secretiveness. The dialectic of hiding and un-hidden-ness of being permeates Burden's actions from their basis, leading maybe towards the beginning of the formation of religion and communities; presenting endless variations of the myth of a hero who brushes against extreme experiences in a lonely pursue through the contemporary land of death. On the other hand – it created a live sacrifice of self-martyrdom at the altar of the twentieth-century art. According to theology of the middle ages it will be the reality of purgatory, being closed in expectation for final catharsis and transformation, separation from the Absolute, imprisonment in one-direction movement of time, static transitionality and insanity of penance.

Burden's performances included also a certain undeniable, as it seems, religious element, visible especially in actions such as nailing hands of an artist to the roof of a car – Volkswagen 'Garbus' (*Transfixed*, Venice, California, 1974) or the action *Doorway to Heaven* (1973) coming close to suicide from an electrical shock from two wires, which Burden intentionally brought close to his chest. In California elements of ritual art characterized also the actions of an artist with Indian roots – James Luna. He finds inspiration in Indian practices and ceremonies which appear to be extremely exhausting physically and mentally for the participants. They require active engagement, including patience in suffering from pain, as well as participation of the audience.

Extreme experiences – fear, anxiety – overcoming of which is described by Burden in his artistic notes, could also be shared by the spectators. In his statements Burden at the same time denies accusations

of his intention to become popular and skips the spectacular aspect of his self-destructive actions, allowing for, or even assuming, a very low number of viewers. A certain anti-populist and anti-institutional outline can clearly be seen in the installation *Samson* (1985), composed of a battering ram connected to an engine. Its action was induced each time by a spectator passing by. Potentially, a result of a large number of passers-by, therefore, a significant number of visitors, could have brought about destruction of the whole building and the gallery.

The effect of danger, exposure to a trial of fate, coincidence and own happiness was this time shared and participated by the spectators. At the same time, quite obviously, the installation was a literal visualization of the thesis on the necessity to free art from the shackles of the gallery circulation, imprisonment of the tradition and traditional perception of the artwork, understanding art as institution that encompasses the roles of a gallery owner, a curator, a critic, a historian, the audience, grown on it like parasites. In that case the work by Burden would imply revolutionary theses (vision of art as revolution) on the necessity to immediately destroy the building of prejudice and abandonment of the previous stereotypical thinking about art through undertaking radical, innovative actions whose essence lies in the element of death. The solution proposed by Burden is based on negation taking the root of existence: fear and trepidation, to the surface; on negation of death and time, one through the other. The insanity of his art touches the sense of the sublime in this way.

A later work by Burden *Beam Drop Inhotim* (2008), an installation in the modern art centre and botanical park in Brazil is a game with gravity, laws of nature and seriousness of the profession of a constructor. Like a child playing with dropping sand-molds to a sandbox and observing constellations that are created, the artist supervised dropping from the height of 45 meters one hundred metal vertical poles into a three-meter-deep hole filled with cement. A sculpture formed

in this way resembles a frightening metal forest, trees stripped of leaves by fire or wind. The dynamism of the immensity of the iron forms, captured and saved in this way, fills with unarticulated terror and significantly increases the observer's feeling of how the human form of being is small and fragile.

In Burden's retrospective exhibition in the New Museum in New York, adequately titled *Extreme Measures*, except for the artist's fascination with resilience and power of machinery or metal and concrete constructions, one could also notice, among others, terror perceived from the other side – smallness bordering on ridicule – miniaturized terror – a group of 625 cardboard boat models, titled *All submarines of the United States* (1987); a work resonating with the shape of *Ghost ship* hung just above the entrance to the museum referring to the rescue action after a hurricane. Burden's aesthetics is aesthetics of shock and provocation, aesthetic whose beauty is what Kant defined as negative delight<sup>22</sup>. It expands our imagination, brings our senses and sense of security to extremes, brings to a state of certain reckless and euphoric self-satisfaction, creating such cases *in which mind can feel its own sublimity of its call and [its advantage] even over nature*<sup>23</sup>. Sublime experiences imply certain violence, confrontation with infinity which for our senses is 'a bottomless abyss'<sup>24</sup>; continuous fluctuation of progressing curiosity and will as well as regressed fear, leading to the final peak in the feeling of sublimity. The art of Burden is a constant fight with human's own nature, tracking it and outlining its limitations. As Kant states:

[...] *we indeed found our own limitation, finding, however, at the same time in our rational power another, not sensual, measure, which has even that infinity under itself as a unit [measurement] and compared with which everything in nature is small, stating at the same time that our reason has the advantage over nature even in its immeasurability, The same [also now] inability to repel the power of nature lets us, considered as*

*natural creatures, indeed feel our physical powerlessness, but at the same time discovers in us the power to judge on ourselves, as independent from nature, and that we have the advantage over nature*<sup>25</sup>.

Coming back to Burden's performances, growing out from the spirit of rebel against locking oneself in the vicious circle of own limitations, one should notice a certain potential purifying and ennobling role of self-induced pain. If one may seek a biological analogy between nature and the body, the pursue for advantage over it may be mentioned if, e.g., the artist survives a self-planned shooting at his own body (*Shoot* 1971). Burden, having conquered physical helplessness and pain, maybe managed to reach certain independence from the laws of nature and his own body which he totally subordinated to his own mind and will.

Tragedy and asceticism at the same time, getting deep in the darkness of one's being under the influence of the power of fear of the truth about oneself and self-annihilation, make the expression of the already mentioned performance of Chris Burden so strong. *5 Days Locker Piece* is a performative visualization of the statement by Samuel Beckett from his sketch regarding Proust, saying that *Art is the apotheosis of loneliness*<sup>26</sup>. What happened under the armour of the *locker* – will remain the secret of the artist. One may only assume increased stimulation, interweaving the feeling of pain of physical and mental existence and the feeling of fear and pain of the dying (due to obvious associations with being in a coffin). Also, of sharpened perception of monotony of time and torments of hunger, claustrophobia, separation and enslavement. Is that about an attempt to dispose of pain that as a whole is to be reflected in art, as if on Weronika's scarf or rather internally directed ascetic development of spirit detaching from futility of phenomenal reality?

Peter Sloterdijk, considering the topography of thinking and the weight of practices in education and self-improvement towards seeking

wisdom, mentions long moments when Socrates was to remain unavailable for the world, being immersed in contemplation and meditations. This type of paralyses could last even twenty-four hours when the philosopher stood 'frozen', immersed in meditations.

Another example of seeking detachment from excessive impulses and distractions was the concept of Husserl's phenomenology. Husserl's letter, referred to by Sloterdijk, talks about pure aesthetic perception, a clear look, contemplative analysis and abstraction achieved through pursuing the source, taking in brackets the belief about the natural attitude. Detaching and isolating oneself from the conviction of the world's reality for the benefit of one's own awareness became the condition for truthfulness of thinking and looking. Art, in line with this thinking, will similarly aim at extreme reduction and abstraction. In such cases it might, therefore, mean the artist's locking 'in a locker' of his self, which is an articulate and peculiarly adequate image of phenomenological reduction in order to obtain pure aesthetic perception. In the light of that, it is not a coincidence that the *locker* chosen by Burden was located within the area of the university, so where abstract thinking is actively practised.

Many hours of being closed in a tight locker – self-practice being a terrifying work of Burden – remains in the end an insightful metaphor of human existence, sentenced to himself, his body and mind, his own fate, time and place, social subordination and historical rut. Neither brutal reality of being, weighing like a shapeless burden over human life – as writes Levinas – nor internal fights between Me and not-Me destroy the internal integrity of the subject and hamper the possibility of the moment of unity and peace. Levinas, stressing the necessity for heroic attitude in opposing the world, anticipates disturbances of existentialism, close also to the performer's activity of Burden. The figure of being imprisoned in the prison of life, is opposed to an internal tear and escape from pain connected with being,

Ego's escape of itself. The main imperative of a human tells him to pursue getting out of reality: *It is the call of an individual to loosen the choking embrace of external reality but only to ensure full bloom of one's own reality. Heroism of an individual faces only the fight against obstacles, headed towards the strange*<sup>27</sup>, states Levinas. At the same time it includes a paradox of the inability to satisfy the need whose requirements always go beyond what may be offered to it, hence all forms of self-torment, needs such as fasts or mortifications (and therefore also self-imprisonment), revealing an internal call for escape. *They bring us closer to a situation being a fundamental event of our being: the need for escape*<sup>28</sup>, claims Levinas. The attribute of escape is its clear purposelessness and endlessness. That escape is not only a rebellion against frozen, mindless everyday life or an attempt to get rid of the mechanisms of a body – terrifying with its biological structure.

The dialectic of the absurd, dramatic, although not incomprehensible from the point of view of the common observer's need to exceed limitations of own Ego, escaping from one's existence and being – hence, continuous exposure to dangers – opposed with the material, biological, mental and domestic limitations of such escape, stressing, however, the necessity of the very action, shapes the motor aspects of Burden's works. He presents multiple philosophical figures using his own student experiences of communing with the academic environment and maybe that is why it attracts my attention so much. That practice lends an artistic form to the negation of possibilities offered by the reality, reminds of Kierkegaard's fall in despair and the first symptom of the *death disease* that gave taste to the burden of absurd, inherently perceived in further performance creations by Burden. A torture characteristic in that disease is approaching death endlessly and never able to reach it. Self-locking in a claustrophobic place whose size frames the body tightly – one meter high, one meter wide and two meters deep – is a figure for autistic going deep inside



oneself and one's physicality, touching the limit of finality, a gesture of self-sentencing to death. Nancy states that at any moment a live body keeps its dead body under the skin as if a mummy of potential possibility and certain death – we live, carrying our own dead bodies that we will turn into. Through torturing his body Burden extracts the difference between *ego* and the body talked about by Descartes; its externality become the subject of objectification. Burden tried to bury himself alive to find the dead whom he is while living, paraphrasing Nancy's words from *Corpus*<sup>29</sup>. A similar image of a certain physical community closed in the world of tight limiting walls (as if insects in a closed jar) appears in Samuel Beckett's *The Lost Ones*, whose first sentences I would like to quote at the end of my considerations about a body which is acting and static, sublime and in pain, shaking and naked, that belongs to existence but tries or not – to exceed its borders:

*The seat of the bodies which err, each in seeking their own "depoulaters". It is sufficiently vast to seek in vain. Sufficiently tight not to be able to escape. The inside of a flat cylinder, fifty meters in diameter, sixteen meters high, for harmonious proportions. Light. Dimmed. Yellow. Omnipresent, as if each of the twelve million square centimetres of total space illuminated separately. Pulsing like breathing. From time to time dying, as if the breath stopped. Then everyone stands still. As if the end is coming. After a few seconds everything comes back to life. [...] Bodies, touching each other, rustle like withered leaves. [...] A body per square meter, so in total, rounding up, two hundred bodies. Closer or further relatives, befriended more or less, basically do not know each other. However, in the squeeze and darkness it is difficult to recognize each other. Bodies from a certain point view form four types. First, those which are in constant movement Second, those which sometimes stop circulation. Third, those which never move, unless someone chases them away, then they stand still again. [...] Finally, fourth, those which do not seek, so not seeking<sup>30</sup>.*

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Ewa Bobrowska

*Rhetoric of shown truth. Performance art*

**This paper is focused on the phenomenon of the art of performance and happening, in particular by Allan Kaprow, as well as the forms of self-torture in the art of Chris Burden and Günter Brus. In their expression, performance is sincerity, the moment of truth, bringing out to light what, by the immersion in the stream of life, could remain undiscovered and veiled. The rhetoric of truth in this art is presented, *inter alia*, in the context of Heidegger's statements on the essence of art and the function of the process. Performance is a peculiar, modern form of aestheticism, challenging time and the temporary dimension of existence, the limitations of one's body and the psyche. In this way, the madness of this art comes close to the experience, which Kant describes as the sublime. The form of self-torture in this art discloses the need to escape from the suffering inflicted by being and the Self's escape from itself in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas.**

KEYWORDS:

**PERFORMANCE, PROVOCATION, BODY, SELF-TORTURE, SUBLIMACY**



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