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VISION AND PERFORMANCE.  
A HIEROTOPIC APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY ART

Performance moves now to the centre of hermeneutical attention, dominating the presentation of self in everyday life, stage drama or social drama. Language, life, the self, and any human activity are all perceived as potentially performative acts. "Performativity" has become indeed very fashionable these days. But as Victor Turner, the anthropologist of performance, has noticed: "Performance is no longer easy to define or locate: the concept and structure has spread all over the place. It is ethic and intercultural, historical and ahistorical, aesthetic and ritual, sociological and political"<sup>1</sup>. There is a proliferation of theories of performance in contemporary discourse, and they all point out to a "postmodern turn"<sup>2</sup>. This turn is a change of direction, a reversal of the former way of thinking performance as a "cleansing" process, a segregation of utterances and gestures in ritual performance. What was once perceived as "impure" is now the focus of postmodern attention. The post-human subject is a *Homo performans* par excellence, but he/she moves away from traditional ritual structure to fluidity, from ritual to anti-ritual of the very opposites: "the very flaws, hesitations, personal factors, incomplete, elliptical situations" become clues for genuine novelty and creativity of the subject as able to emerge from the freedom of the performance<sup>3</sup>.

This paper tries to oppose this generalized view concerning the collapse of the ritual in contemporary performance, and "the collapse of the metaphysics of presence"<sup>4</sup>. It aims to put forth those creative forces in contemporary art that seem to have resisted the dissolution of meaning and the tran-

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<sup>1</sup> Turner V. *The Anthropology of Performance // The Anthropology of Performance*. Hushion House, 1988, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> Derrida J. *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences // Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge&Kegan Paul, 1978, esp. p. 280–281.

scendental signifier. Such attitude was characteristic of the avant-garde theatre in its search for the revitalisation of theatre through ritual. Performance theorists and theatre directors, such as Peter Brook, Grotowsky advocated the regeneration of theatre by restoring its lost original ritual dimension. Significant is Peter Brook's notion of "holy theatre" and the Theatre-of-the-Invisible-Made-Visible (1968) and the idea that theatre had its origins in rituals that made the invisible incarnate. Visual arts went through a similar process of transformation as ritual forms and structures started to inform the work of art, making impossible to classify the art medium within the framework of traditional art forms. This process of revival of ritual patterns in art changed once for all the configuration of contemporary space of representation. The stage and the art gallery displayed on various occasions a ritualistic look, but the transformative process was far more complex. This paper aims to open up a field of research of these phenomena, and identify those particular performances in which the ritual structure moved beyond the formal and explicit import of ritual forms, like in Herman Nitsch's '*Orgien-Mysterien-Theater*' from 1957, toward more sophisticated and hidden forms, but nevertheless with impact of transformation of the nature and the status of performance.

I must say that I am guided in my studies — and intrigued, at the same time — by Mircea Eliade's claim of the presence of the sacred in the contemporary art. Eliade suggested that the sacred might still be present in the world, and that the artists might still be able to express it, although no longer in a conventional language, and in traditional forms. According to him, the sacred is disguised in forms apparently "profane," and thus difficult to be recognized immediately. My point of departure is based on the premise of the return of the sacred in performance art, and the necessity of studying the old cultural paradigms inherited and transformed by contemporary culture in new visual events. I believe that for such difficult task, *Hierotopy*, the study of sacred space (from the Greek '*hieros*', sacred, and *topos*, space) — the new discipline founded by the Russian scholar Alexei Lidov — could be absolutely instrumental as a tool, as well as a theoretical frame. I will call it *Contemporary Hierotopy*, the study of phenomena of contemporary ritual performances. The specific task of *Contemporary Hierotopy* is to inquire whether the formal vocabulary inspired by rites and used in contemporary performances has the effect and the power to embody the sacred and bring it to presence, or to construct new recognitions and contemporary understandings of the sacred. In this paper, I will look into the work of some contemporary artists from different fields, although I must insist on the fluidity of borders between various artistic genres, which characterizes the contemporary phenomena of performance art. My examples run from experimental theatre (Antero Alli, Jerzy Grotowski), to body art (Marina Abramovic), and video

performance (Bill Viola), as well as urban space and street art (Jan Hatt-Olsen), trying to analyse the hierotopic dimension of the space, stage, body, and image or architectural forms in which performances unfold, as well as the status of the audience in terms of its participation to performances.

#### EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE:

##### *ANTERO ALLI'S PARATHEATRICAL RESEARCH LABS — A LIVING RITUAL OF PARTICIPATION*

One of the most fascinating phenomena of revitalization of performance by ritual in contemporary experimental theatre is the *ParaTheatrical Research Labs* of Antero Alli, an American filmmaker and playwright of Finnish origin based in Berkeley, CA. Since 1977, he has conducted workshops inspired by the laboratory theatre approach of Jerzy Grotowski, yet he is not a Grotowski's follower. His view of the relation between theatre and ritual is clear: theatre, culture, and ritual are not separate entities, but organic elements of a cultural body. Theatre is a ritual that sustains cultural vitality: "Any culture achieves longevity by the success of its sustaining rituals and theatre is one of these rituals". Therefore, theatre must grow organically with its originating culture, and become a "vital sustaining ritual". If this condition is not achieved, theatre dies, says Antero. Alli is quite explicit in that which concerns the power of revitalisation of theatre by rituals. In his *Paratheatrical Manifesto* he writes:

When the ritual of theatre has died it's time to return to the vital sources underlying the creation of culture itself and, with the stealth of devoted ninjas, start inciting a series of benevolent attacks to expose the oppression, decadence and corruption that has crucified and buried the poetic Imagination.

(*Antero Alli's "Paratheatrical Manifesto"*)

Paratheatre is essentially a non-performative dramatic event, with no audience attending, but everyone participating. What Antero Alli challenges here is the attitude manifested in the traditional theatre in which performance has lost its ritual vein in which the audience is an intimate part of the play. The relation between the audience and the acting, traditionally depending on the audience for energy, is turned inside out and around in Alli's hierotopic paratheatre. The space shifts from external dependence on the audience to a more internal dependence on sources within the body itself by a "redirection of consciousness towards internal, vertical sources."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Where theatre depends on an audience to energize and validate itself (with applause and ticket sales), paratheatre requires a kind of social poverty to realize its agenda of restoring the

”Effective paratheatrical techniques can help us disconnect from previous external motivations, such as pleasing an audience or drawing energy or support from others, and replacing these social agendas with a growing internal dependence on sources *within the body itself*”.

Antero Alli sets out however a non-dogmatic approach to sacred ritual in theatre, where ritual is defined in contrast to dogma, that is, to the rigidity of ritual structures. Antero Alli describes his view of ritual: “The work we do here is unrelated to any traditional ritual legacy of any culture beyond the subculture and microcultures created and sustained by the work itself. And this work has undergone many stages of metamorphosis since its inception in 1977”<sup>6</sup>. “Preconceptions and paradigms, no matter how developed or sophisticated, can impede the comprehension of any process that exists and even thrives well beyond their parameters”<sup>7</sup>. Antero Alli’s strategy is radical, and provocative in the terminology used, which stands in polemics with theatre and religion as consummated institutions.

### Via Negativa: *No-Form* or the Intimacy with Void

Throughout his workshops, Antero Alli develops a series of tools and techniques of the body in order to discard and embody the archetypal forces within the self (fig. 1). Deep down, he thinks and acts as a mystic of the source. The technology of paratheatrical is about self-discipline: it “must be a highly visceral discipline to challenge the performer’s existing commitment to his direct experiences, responses and perceptions”. Alli’s self-discipline implies the annihilation of the self, what he calls *No-Form* — an “iconoclastic” attitude in intend and concept<sup>8</sup>, a term which has nothing to do with the historical Iconoclasm, but used in a polemical way with anything that might divert the artist’s focus on the recollection of being. Technically speaking,

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performer’s connection with the internal landscape of source relations. Traditionally this shift has been instigated and maintained by various methods of sense deprivation resulting in the intentional disidentification with external stimuli and the redirection of consciousness towards internal, vertical sources”. “Rather than depend on the audience for energy we must learn the art of sourcing ourselves, of regenerating and reinventing ourselves as sources of energy, power and guidance” (Antero).

<sup>6</sup> My correspondence with the artist.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> I’ve selected the iconoclastic term of *No-Form* for referring to the concept-free process of intimacy with formless void. The meditation of *No-Form* tends to function most effectively before and after each and every ritual. In context to ritual process we can bypass the traditional Buddhist sitting postures, and instead, locate the personal *No-Form* stance — thus setting the stage for *No-Form* as a catalyst to physical motion, rather than a passive end unto itself.

*No-Form* consists in a standing *zazen*, which helps the actor to reach the state *off stage/the absence of self*.

Alli's *No-Form* reminds one Grotowski's *via negativa*, and they both resemble the mystics engaged in the technology of the body (I use here the term derived from Mauss's anthropology). Antero Alli's withdrawal of the self has the effect of "the redirection of consciousness towards internal, vertical sources". Grotowski calls such attitude *via negativa* — a negative (or apophatic) path which is a process of humility and self-annihilation through which the actor goes in order to make himself a total gift. The actor does not mere exhibit his body but "annihilates it, burns it, frees it... he does not sell his body but sacrifices it". In Grotowski's words, "He (i. e., the "holy actor") repeats the atonement; he is close to holiness" (Grotowski). Likewise, the reason to become a source unto oneself is for Alli to finally return to the audience, and, in an act of profound generosity, to offer the restored poetic Imagination<sup>9</sup>. Grotowski and Alli follow an old pattern of thought in which creation is perceived as a gift, more exactly, as an offering — a sacrifice, which is the condition of all creation, and which makes their performances hierotopic in inspiration and intent.

But the return to the audience is possible only after a personal clarification, a testing and personal renunciation, which is always imprevisible. Therefore *No-Form* is an open form, a gate of the body towards the archetypes, those elements responsible for transforming consciousness<sup>10</sup>. Paratheatre is a ritual, but as Alli says, its *No-Form* cannot be taught, neither can it be repeated. It is each time born anew, all over again. Unlike the traditional ritual mechanism based upon repetition, Alli's paratheatrical labs do not repeat ritual patterns but create them, make them appear/reveal by themselves in the catalyzing process of forces manifested around the sources of energy. In the space of the Paratheatre one can expect that "new forms, new rituals and new traditions *emerge* and *mutate*" permanently.

<sup>9</sup> "The reason for becoming as "sources unto ourselves" is to return to our audiences inside the poetic Imagination, a chief inlet for Soul in this era (of emotional plague). "Our immediate aim is to perform these rituals with enough commitment to incite our most visceral and spiritual resonances".

<sup>10</sup> "No-Form functions as if it were a kind of gateway to and from the realm of the archetypes, the dynamic elements responsible for animating and transforming consciousness. The term "archetype" refers to those autonomous forces residing within our psyche and also sharing outer correspondences in the world around us; they are universal symbols capable of eliciting personal response. Examples include: Dream, Death, Creation, Destruction, Order, Chaos, The Four Elements, Growth, Decay, Shadow, Angels, Demons, and all other terms symbolic of transformative process. One odd and wonderful thing about No-Form is that, generally speaking, it cannot be taught. All words fall short to describe it, and all descriptions are subjective responses at best" (Alli, Iconoclastic Ritual).

Paratheatrical rituals bring shots of presence into theatre by a dynamic and constant process of opening toward the vertical “sources”:

“With enough discipline, talent, and emotional honesty, — writes Alli, — one can begin extracting from internal source material universal symbols, myths, and characters towards artwork and performances that elicit visceral and spiritual resonances in the audience. This is the experiment, the process and the goal”.

(Alli)

### Theatre of Presence

Paratheatre is about life in theatre, the living ritual, presence not representation. Grotowski's Poor Theatre is too a space of ‘live’ communion, in which one must open to the other person in a kind of common growth, which must ultimately become “revelation”, “translumination”. What matters is the fight for one's own consciousness within a maelstrom of chaos, says Alli<sup>11</sup>. In Grotowski's words, “Awareness means the consciousness which is not linked to language (the machine for thinking), but to Presence”<sup>12</sup>. This is true also for Antero Alli, who has much in common with Grotowski's theatre of the source, and they both privilege the participatory process of actors and audience, rather than the performative dimension of the play in traditional sense. Yet Antero Alli remains a unique voice in the contemporary experimental theatre. His Paratheatrical lab is the voice and the presence of a cultural body that chose to remain so far outside the mainstream and the dogma in order to remain alive, in order to save the *presence* of the hierotopic dimension of theatre — a *Theatre of Presence* par excellence. On the paradigmatic and hierotopic nature of his paratheatrical *No-Form*, Alli comments: “Mystical systems worldwide refer to this void state with a plethora of exotic names: kether, samadhi, ain sof, the fool, cloud of unknowing, potentia, great spirit, the illuminated gate, and so forth” (Alli, *Iconoclastic Ritual*).

<sup>11</sup> “To me, what matters is the fight itself, the fight for one's consciousness within a maelstrom of chaos; a drama reflecting, for me, the heroic struggle of any person maintaining their individual voice through society's deafening cacophony of conformity”.

<sup>12</sup> “With verticality the point is not to renounce part of our nature; all should retain its natural place: the body, the heart, the head, something that is ‘under our feet’ and something that is ‘over the head’. All like a vertical line, and this verticality should be held taut between organicity and the awareness. Awareness means the consciousness which is not linked to language (the machine for thinking), but to Presence” (Jerzy Grotowski).

## PERFORMATIVE BODY ART:

MARINA ABRAMOVIC'S ANTHROPOLOGICAL BODY —  
BALKAN EROTIC EPIC

In an interview given some sixteen years ago, Abramovic describes her hierotopic vision of space as a non-objective world, that is, a world in which the object of representation is completely abolished, and the relation between the audience and the art is radically redefined. This is a space in which the human agents exchange mutually energy, pure presence:

I believe the 21<sup>st</sup> c. will be a world without art in the sense we have it now. It will be a world without objects, where the human being can be on such a high level of consciousness and such a strong mental state that he or she can transmit thoughts and energy to other people, without needing objects in between. ... There will be just the artist standing in front of a public, which is developed enough to receive a message or energy. They will just sit and stand, like the Samurai in old Japan, looking at each other and transmitting energy. This is the future world I see as an artist: a non-objective world<sup>13</sup>.

The inspiration comes from the East, and the artist perceives herself as a bridge between East and West<sup>14</sup> (fig. 2). The strategy is, like in experimental theatre, to recuperate the relation with the audience in which they are supposed to participate together. Questioning the nature of her performance, and the status of her art in general, Marina Abramovic is specifically concerned with the status of her audience and the relationship between her performance and the public. Commenting on this matter, Abramovic points out that the public must go through a process of transformation as well, the public must participate actively. "Everybody must make their own contribution. I don't even know whether this is still art. I don't know what it is"<sup>15</sup>.

More recently, after having tested the limits of her own body throughout various performances, reaching what we may call her *via negativa*, a non-objective world, Marina Abramovic returns now to body, although from a new angle. *Balkan Erotic Epic* is her most recent multi-channel in-

<sup>13</sup> *Abramovic M.* Art meets Science and Spirituality. Interview with Louwrien Wijers and Johan Pijnappel. Art and Design, Academy Group, London, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> "My function as an artist is the bridging of West and East... I always go to the East and to nature, to extreme situations like living in the desert, or I spend time with Tibetans or Aborigines... And there I get the energy and ideas for art. Then I come back to Western society and serve as a bridge. There I receive and here I give. That goes on in circles all the time". Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

stallation produced in 2005, in which the body is valued culturally and erotically through Balkan folk culture. Like Grotowski, although on her specific performative understanding, Abramovic aims of rediscovering primitive “roots” corresponded to the “rites of passage” described by the anthropologists like Van Gennep. Her series of performances are overlaid by ritualistic structures of action with orgiastic emphasis on nudity and sexual fulfilment in intimate acts with the Mother Earth. Ritual is defined as an action in which the male and female members of the community participate in ceremonial practices of cosmic regeneration repeating old folk practices. Their acts have something divine in their manifestation, according to Abramovic, because it is through eroticism that the humans try to make themselves equal with the gods:

In folklore, the woman marrying the sun or the man marrying the moon is to preserve the secret of the creative energy and to get in touch through eroticism with indestructible cosmic forces. People believed that in the erotic there was something superhuman that doesn't come from him but from the gods. Obscene objects and male and female genitals have a very important function in the fertility and agricultural rites of Balkan peasants. They were used very explicitly for a variety of purposes. Women would show in the rituals openly their vaginas, bottoms, breasts and menstrual blood. Men would show openly in the rituals their bottoms and penises in acts of masturbation and ejaculation.

'Balkan Erotic Epic' belongs to series of works that reflect Abramovic's Serbian origins<sup>16</sup>.

Mythological and anthropological relations between body and earth are also explored by Ana Mendieta in her performances, in which religion, myth and ritual meet each other. *Arbol de la Vida* (Tree of Life) Series, 1977 is based on Rituals of Santeria, invested with her Cuban tradition, the presence of spirits (*orisha*), as well as incarnating the tree of life, the archetypal pattern of imagination in various cultures. The fusion between body and tree, the body as a matrix and its power of regeneration is a powerful *leit motiv* in Mendieta's work, the performance of the circle of eternal return and regeneration through ritual.

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<sup>16</sup> See “Women in the Rain” [http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/art\\_play.php?id=9539/](http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/art_play.php?id=9539/)



VIDEO PERFORMANCE:  
THE *UNSPOKEN* —  
VIOLA'S HIEROTOPIC VISION

I never know what I'm going to say...  
When I'm outside the saying of it,  
I get very quiet and rarely speak at all  
(Rumi, 'Who says words with my mouth?')<sup>17</sup>

For Bill Viola it seems to be in the nature of human beings to aspire to eternity, for *to be* is to keep one's eyes to eternity, which is possible solely through ritual and repetition. It is only by placing oneself inside ritual acts, and by repeating them, by connecting oneself with "the larger field of time" that eternity could be retrieved<sup>18</sup>. One is struck by the intensity of Bill Viola's gaze in his work *Nine Attempts to Achieve Immortality*<sup>19</sup> — a gaze staring, as it were, at eternity itself beyond the gulf that separates him from this world where absolute and transcendental foundations seem impossible. Concepts like metaphysics of presence and humanism are compromised.

Viola, the "postmodern humanist" (David A. Ross), is no doubt at odds with the cynicism of our time. For him, being and creation overlap, images are ideas, and art is a philosophical endeavour<sup>20</sup>. Metaphysical questions are deeply engrained in the texture of his mind and creation, which comes out of urgent necessity: it is not art<sup>21</sup>, but ontological clarification.

The Ontology of Image: "Inner Image", Imagination

Viola's view of the image meets Hans Belting's anthropology of the image<sup>22</sup>, and they both take as a point of departure the idea that we live in bod-

<sup>17</sup> Jalaluddin Rumi (1207–1273), the mystical Persian poet.

<sup>18</sup> In his conversation with H. Belting Viola says: "The only possibility that we human beings have for eternal life is through repetition and ritual. We all aspire to touch eternity. We attempt to do this by continually repeating actions, whether it is of the divine beings such as the Holy Family, or of our ancestors, or through special ritual acts that acknowledge the cycles of nature and our place within them. The biological act of reproduction also falls into this category. This is how we connect with the larger field of time" (*Bill Viola. A Conversation // The Passions* / Ed. John Walsh. The J. Paul Getty Museum. Los Angeles in association with The National Gallery. London, 2003, p. 214).

<sup>19</sup> Detroit Institute of Art, 2000.09.15 until 2000.12.07.

<sup>20</sup> "For me, the beauty of making this kind of work and working in this medium is that you find yourself continuously drawn to philosophy, because the video camera/recorder is itself a philosophical system... The images, like ideas, begin to take on a life of their own" (*A Conversation // The Passions*, p. 208).

<sup>21</sup> "I made *The Passing*, said Viola, out of an urgent necessity — it did not feel like I was making art at all" (*A Conversation // The Passions*, p. 191).

<sup>22</sup> See more in: *Belting H. Bild-Anthropologie. Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft*. München, 2001; *The Passions*, p. 208; *Belting H. Toward an Anthropology of the Image. // A Clark lecture*. Clark Art Institute. Williamstown, April 25–26, 2003.

ies in which we generate images of our own. “We each have an extensive visual world inside us. ... We are living databases of images — collectors of images — and these images do not stop transforming and growing once they get inside us”<sup>23</sup>. Our brain is the site of internal representation (*endogene* images). At the same time, we play them out against images in the visible world, and we are ourselves continuously exposed to outside imagery (*exogene* images) (Belting). The Image (to be distinguished from simple picture) is the outcome of this complex, performative process, the result of interaction between *image*, *body* and *medium*<sup>24</sup>. An image is by definition one and *only when seen* (B. Stiegler). The gaze is the force, which turns a picture into an image (R. Debray).

Viola’s phenomenology of the image is however more complicated, and metaphysically implicated, not only at the level of its conceptual frame, but on the level of its very making, of the source of inspiration: “the real source of the image is within”. “The origination of the world within the self is the landscape I am interested in. I think of building images from the inside out rather than from the outside in”<sup>25</sup>. “True inner perception is not derived from any outer perception ... limited as the senses. Rather it is seeing the inner image directly through the inner eye, or *basirah*”. *Basirah* is, in Sufi mystic tradition, a sort of gift given to man to see deeper than what meets the eye — an inner eye to see the inner man.

Some knowledge on the subject of “inner image” one may gain by looking into the archetypal imagination, for which the source of all images is to be found inside oneself. Image is the activity of the soul itself, which is primarily an imaginative activity (Hillman). It is the psyche, according to Jung. Images don’t have referent beyond themselves, they don’t stand for anything: they are the psyche itself in its imaginative visibility<sup>26</sup>. Yet their visibility does not mean that they must be visually seen, but perceived as distinct events presented to the senses. In “archetypal imagination”, Image is not only ‘*that which*’ one sees but also ‘*that by means of which*’ one sees by an act of imagining. An image is given by the imagining perspective and can only be perceived by an act of imagining<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> A Conversation // *The Passions*, p. 210.

<sup>24</sup> *Belting H.* Bild-Anthropologie, p. 7–9 and 11–18.

<sup>25</sup> *Youngblood G.* Metaphysical Structuralism: The Videotapes of Bill Viola. *Millennium Film Journal*, № 20–2, 1989, p. 88.

<sup>26</sup> *Hillman J.* Image and Soul: The Poetic Basis of Mind // *Archetypal Psychology A Brief Account*. 1983, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Casey E. S.* Toward an Archetypal Imagination. Spring 1974, p. 1–32, quoted by: *Hillman J.* Image and Soul: The Poetic Basis of Mind // *Archetypal Psychology A Brief Account*. 1983, p. 7.

Imagination and the imaginative possibilities in our nature is the key-note in Viola's work. It is deeply rooted in Viola's view of the making of the image, and this paper tries to unveil some aspects of his vision. For Viola, video installation is body and mind — to define it briefly — where the mind is the image itself. Image becomes like thinking on the screen, like a thought, a sort of outward projection of the inner image, to which he grants exceeding power. Image is for Viola an open form, an experience in which one fills in his own vision, and where dreams, memories play a crucial role.

### "Plasma Images"

Memories are channels to access eternity for Viola, a kind of inward looking, "felt more than seen"<sup>28</sup> by which "death is overcome"<sup>29</sup>. Time becomes a superfluous concept because memory is "as much about the future as it is about the past"<sup>30</sup>. Viola's *Memoria* (2000) is an image projected on silk, a face, which strangely reminds one of the other Face (*The Mandy-lion*). Vision irrupting in the visible yet still engrained in the invisible, "at the threshold of visibility". *Memoria* — a plasma screen — is truly an incarnated image<sup>31</sup>, light incarnated, where image has a soft, satin-like quality because unlike the television monitor (CRT) there is no glass in front of the picture. It has a texture, describes Viola, a unique physical appearance more like the page of a book than an electronic screen<sup>32</sup>. With its high-resolution image of infinitely variable information field, LCD can even take flesh. "Plasma screen" invites the previously disembodied projected media image to inhabit flesh<sup>33</sup>. "Plasma screen," says Viola, is "a visceral thing, a backbone that comes into being anytime you create moving images"<sup>34</sup>.

One is unable to ponder so far the whole meaning of the word "plasma" when comes to Viola's image making. One thing may be however worth

<sup>28</sup> A Conversation // *The Passions*, p. 199.

<sup>29</sup> "When a life ends, when someone exhales their last breath, they literary, physically, become stillness — they become eternity itself" (*The Passions*, p. 196–197).

<sup>30</sup> *Bellour R.* An Interview with Bill Viola. October, 34 (Fall 1985), p. 101, apud. *London B.* Bill Viola: The Poetics of Light and Time // *Bill Viola Installations and Videotapes* / Ed. Barbara London. The Museum of Modern Art. New York, 1988, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> In histology, the science of connective tissue, plasma is composed of serum (ground substance, like water and solutes) and protein fiber matrix.

<sup>32</sup> A Conversation // *The Passions*, p. 203.

<sup>33</sup> *Sellars P.* Bodies of Light // *The Passions*, p. 162.

<sup>34</sup> A Conversation // *The Passions*, p. 199.

considering, and this is, the scientists<sup>35</sup> tell us, that the universe at large is made out of plasma, of fire and heat, which is the ground of creation and the living, the opposite of frost. Viola shows us the very “breath of life” in images “intangible,” yet “real”. Plato would be intrigued by such kind of image “since he only knew static or frozed images, which lost the movement that is characteristic of life — living time”<sup>36</sup> (Belting).

The “reality” of virtual images yet not their “actuality”<sup>37</sup> is a most complex subject, difficult to describe. Bernard Stiegler calls this type of imagery *images discrètes* and insists that the process of interaction between *endogene* and *exogene* images continues in the era of digital images. According to him, “there have never existed physical images (*image objet*) without the participation of mental images, since an image by definition is one that is seen (is only one when seen). Reciprocally also mental images rely on objective images in the sense that they are the *retour* or the *rémanence* of the latter. The question of the image always concerns that of the trace and of the inscription”<sup>38</sup>. Mental images are inscribed in external ones and viceversa.

To summ up the question of Viola’s ontology of image one may say that *Memoria* could be interpreted as a living image, where the Image is both the image object on the screen and the trace or the *rémanence* of the inner visceral image, both inseparably inscribed one into the other one.

But what if, the ground of the image is not silky-satin, like in *Memoria*, but gold — gold leaf and silver leaf? The reaction of such light-sensitive materials (silver and gold) to the manipulation of the light source was long before investigated, first by daguerreotype, and by Moholy-Nagy in his photograph, in which all one could see was light and its disposition<sup>39</sup>. The effect of the impact of light on golden ground is now tested by Viola in the *Unspoken (Silver & Gold)* (2001). The stream motion of light turns his experiment into an eventful experience.

<sup>35</sup> I am grateful to my brother, Dr. Aurelian Isar from the Institute for Nuclear Physics in Bucharest, for opening up to me the taste for Quantum physics, for his patience to listen to my innocent non-scientific questions, and for finding a common language for most fascinating talks about being, creation, and the cosmos.

<sup>36</sup> A Conversation // *The Passions*, p. 195.

<sup>37</sup> For more about the virtual as real but not actual, see the inciting book by Shields R. *The Virtual*. Routledge, London and New York, 2003, particularly p. 18–44.

<sup>38</sup> Stiegler B. *L’image discrète* // Jaques Derrida, Bernard Stiegler. *Échographies de la télévision*. Paris: Ed. Galilée, 1996, p. 165–182, apud. Belting H. *Toward an Anthropology of the Image* // A Clark lecture. Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, April 25–26, 2003.

<sup>39</sup> In 1922 Moholy-Nagy writes: ‘If we desire a revaluation of this field (i. e. photography) ... we must exploit the light-sensitivity of the silver bromide plate to receive and to have fixed upon it light phenomena’. *Hight E. M.* *Picturing Modernism: Moholy-Nagy and Photography in Weimar Germany*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, apud. Lock C. *A Returning of Shadows* // *Literary Research/Recherche Littéraire*, № 29 (1998), p. 21.

### The *Unspoken* — a *Chôra* Space In-Between

The subject of the *Unspoken (Silver & Gold)* (fig. 3) is the face: a man and a woman, projected side by side on a golden, and respectively, on a silver panel. They are seen in close-up but at the threshold of visibility. What brings their faces into visible is movement, and there is even a momentum when the face starts to come into being. There is something cosmogonic about this instant when the ground makes room, as it were, “gives way from beneath”<sup>40</sup>.

The features become visible, yet never fully visible, in the traces left behind by the movement of light, shadow, and facial emotion. This kind of image is, above all, time, “time-form”, since its “reality” is “change and transience”<sup>41</sup>. The face is the epitome of this kind of transitory image. It comes and goes, self-erasing its traces from the golden/silverish field, and it returns again in unrelenting motion with no apparent end. There is something Heraclitean<sup>42</sup> in the continuous flux, which crosses over the faces. Waves of emotion wash up the faces as in a dream, as in the *chôra*<sup>43</sup>. There is anguish on the woman’s face, and an intense yet mute inner wrestling on man’s face, as if holding at bay the waters of chaos.

What is remarkable about these portraits, and all others from Viola’s series *The Passions* is that he has the courage to bring to the forefront of his art the very messy reality of human emotions, *the passions*. The use of slow motion is highly effective in portraying the physicality and temporal shading of the emotions we all experience. His video installation makes it very clear how erroneous it is to speak of an emotion like anger or joy as one emotion, somehow discrete and packaged. Instead one sees through Viola’s work the temporality of emotion, such that it may be more accurate to say, “anguishing” rather than just “anguish”<sup>44</sup>. But in the *Unspoken*, “the archetypal nature of his image”<sup>45</sup> goes beyond individual passions, making strife, chaos, and lighting become closely tied together, which suggests that existence can only arise as a gift of strife. Strife is a “coming to presence”, says Heidegger echoing Heraclitus. It allows light to

<sup>40</sup> Like in a Homeric Hymn “To Demeter” 429f.

<sup>41</sup> A Conversation // *The Passions*, p. 199.

<sup>42</sup> Heraclitus of Efess teaches that the flux of all things is a perpetual becoming: *panta chorei kai ouden menei*, that is, “all things give way: nothing remains”.

<sup>43</sup> In his creation myth, the *Timaeus*, Plato calls the *chôra* a space in cosmogonic generation and formation, a space-in-the-making. The *chôra* is amorphous and invisible; it can only be apprehended in the crossing of being and becoming. *Timaeus* refers however to the appearing of the *chôra*, how the nurse of generation ‘appears manifoldly to sight’ (52d-e). It appears only in the traces. It appears in the movement since only the things that move are visible things and leave their traces in the visible.

<sup>44</sup> I am grateful to Jennifer Duy Quan Huynh for our discussion around *The Passions*, and Sufi mysticism.

<sup>45</sup> I use here Youngblood’s fitted expression, p. 84.

stream into the clearing — it is *Dasein*. Viola's man is the impersonation of strife — the father of all things (*polemos pater panton*)<sup>46</sup>; it is “the weeping *Heraclitus*”, the reversed face of Rembrandt's laughing *Democritus*.

### “Seeing” the *Unspoken*: Vision Liquified

About the true effect of this experience one is not completely aware before coming close to the images. After staring long time with a forceful gaze, trying to grasp the image, one must finally admit that the full visibility of the image is denied. Holding one's eye too long on the images provokes irritating sparks in the eye. What's happen is that the projected light on the golden plate meets light, because the eye itself is light according to Viola: light is constitutive of the eye<sup>47</sup>. At the same time, the gold of the panel, on which light is projected, stands also for light (and so does the silver), and so figure and ground do not reject each other, but exalt mutually. The result of this triple encounter of light (*body, medium, image*) leads to an intensification of vision, which results in a boundless “space-image”, a “stream-event” of light spanning out in the space created “in-between”. The *chôra* space in-between, as described by Plato in *Timaeus* (48e–52d), receives anything that comes and goes, but like in a mirror it undermines and effaces everything, clearing the space for the new coming fleeting traces, for a new becoming. One feels as if caught up in that kind of dream-image, image-space, but the image is everywhere. The effect of such vision is extreme. But testing the limits of the image is Viola's speciality.

One such example of testing the limits of the image, which has relevance for the discussion of the *Unspoken*, is *The Portrait in Light and Heat* (1979) shot by Viola in the Tunisian desert. The experience of the desert is by definition a mystical experience. “The power that one feels in the desert from its vastness”, says Viola, “is the power the Desert Fathers experienced in the fourth century; it's the knowledge that existence continues over the horizon, in a *place* (my emphasis) we cannot possibly see or know”<sup>48</sup>. Viola is completely aware of the challenge of the desert. He describes his experience as a dramatic vision: “When you stand alone out there, it feels like infinite space is stretching all the way to the horizon. But the horizon is not indicated on any map. It is not part of the land. The horizon line is simply the limit of your vision from this specific position”<sup>49</sup>. From this “simplest, most

<sup>46</sup> Heraclitus.

<sup>47</sup> “The eye presumes the world of light, and in a way is produced by it” (Ross D. A. Bill Viola / Curated by David A. Ross and Peter Sellars. Whitney Museum of American Art. New York, 1997, p. 149).

<sup>48</sup> A Conversation // *The Passions*, p. 215.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

static scene”, “from this *nothingness* (my emphasis)” Viola still can extract “a sense of development”<sup>50</sup>.

The idea of “nothingness”, of “nothing” as something (“There is nothing”), as the last state in video (“I see nothing”)<sup>51</sup>, occurred more than once in Viola’s texts. Viola’s use of the term “nothingness” in conjunction with the experience of the desert allows me to ascribe to him a mystical thinking. In mystical terms, such vision at the limits of perception can be properly described neither by image nor by any words. Indeed, like a mystical vision, Viola’s vision of the desert is an “enormous standing wave that’s moving and not moving”. The paradoxical attribute of the space derives from the very nature of this space beyond geographical location and any topographic specification. And it is from this line of horizon that starts to unfold, what I call, Viola’s Hierotopy. Viola’s Hierotopy would be defined, in his own words, as a kind of space at the limit of vision, a place “we cannot possibly see or know”. To me, *The Portrait in Light and Heat*, a “liquefied” vision<sup>52</sup>, where “heat turns light to liquid”, is a fore-portrait of the *Unspoken* (*Silver & Gold*).

Vision of some similar liquid substance is, in my knowledge, common for viewers like the Byzantine beholder. In his poem-*ekphrasis* dedicated to Hagia Sophia, Paulus the Silentiary (6<sup>th</sup> c.), describes the “glittering stream of gold rays”, which “pours abundantly” from the vaulting space compacted of gilded tesserae, and “strikes men’s eyes with such irresistible force” as they can scarcely bear to look (*Poem to Hagia Sophia*, verses 668–671). The collision between the eye and the refulgence of gold makes the moisture of the eye appear in the gold which “drips down” (*katastazein*), flowing in a molten stream, which makes the author of another *ekphrasis* of the same sacred space exclaim: “How its countenance flashes forth like liquid (*os hygrotēs*) through the gold which is everywhere!”<sup>53</sup> Vision of this kind is termed extramission<sup>54</sup>, and is specific to Eastern cultures. It is based on the idea that the viewer (*theoros*) sends out a ray that touches the object seen and returns to the eye. The pun on *theon* (god) and *theasthe* (see) underlines the problematics of contemplation (*theasthai*) in mystical vision, what can and cannot be seen by the viewer of such vision, which is more tactile, and ends in a

<sup>50</sup> Youngblood G. *Metaphysical Structuralism...*, p. 97.

<sup>51</sup> Particularly relevant is the last part of his article “Video Black — The Mortality of the Image”, p. 485–486.

<sup>52</sup> Youngblood G. *Metaphysical Structuralism...*, p. 102.

<sup>53</sup> Mango C., Parker J. A Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia’ // DOP 14 (1960), p. 237.

<sup>54</sup> Unlike extramission, common for Eastern cultures, intromission is a more passive sense of seeing, which became a norm in the West with the perspectival, optical and physiological studies of vision during the early modern period. Light rays reflect off the object seen, enter the eye, and pass to the brain. For more about these theories, see: Nelson R. *To Say and To See: Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium // Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 143–168.

visual stream. The golden “stream” is a *topos* in mystical vision, a means by which seer and seen are bound together, unified.

### Vision of the Whole

With this kind of mystical vision Viola seems quite familiar through Sufi mysticism and Rumi, the 13<sup>th</sup> c. mystical Persian poet, who is in Viola’s own words “one of my all-time heroes”<sup>55</sup>, and known to his disciples as “Our Master, the Byzantine” because of his Byzantine roots<sup>56</sup>. This allows me to see a connection between Sufi mysticism and Byzantine mysticism and apply them both to Viola’s vision. This is once more emphasized by Viola’s interest in visionary experience, described by Victor Stoichita in his book *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art*. All this imagery constitutes an important source of inspiration for Viola in his use of a visual medium to represent, what he calls, “invisible things”.

Entering Viola’s installation should therefore consider Viola’s view of the image as a potential mystical path; by approaching his space one must prepare for a special kind of experience. The utmost one can get from experiencing his visual events is by crossing the space where the images are displayed, by coming in their most close proximity. One should let oneself be inhabited by the image, and inhabit it, “digest it” like one digests the food<sup>57</sup>, says Viola. But most important is what happens “when the food is digested” rather than “the taste” itself. It is the incorporation of the image and its transformation inside the body that finally matters, which has to do with some “other property” of the image. This property of the image is conveyed through bodily experience, but is similar to visionary experience, where the experience “takes over the body of the seer”<sup>58</sup>. To experience Viola’s video installation would then be to perform a sort of “experiential passage” (M. Morse), and eventually to restore the whole. The golden ground of Viola’s the *Unspoken ((Silver & Gold))* points out rhetorically to such whole.

The golden ground is specific to sacred icons, ‘timeless images’<sup>59</sup>, as Viola describes them. But at the same time, gold stands for presence, as the gold

<sup>55</sup> Ross D. A. Bill Viola / Curated by David A. Ross and Peter Sellars, Whitney Museum of American Art. New York, 1997, p. 144.

<sup>56</sup> Rumi is an Afghan who fled the Mongol invasion and settled down with his parents in Konya (the old Iconium) in the Roman (Byzantine) Anatolia, later the Sultanate of Rum, from where he takes his name (“a man from Rum”).

<sup>57</sup> “The act of perception is, for me, only the first step in the artwork, the position of the outside observer”. “Nutrition ultimately becomes the most important thing about images, not the taste” (A Conversation // The Passions, p. 210).

<sup>58</sup> A Conversation // The Passions, p. 219.

<sup>59</sup> Viola B. Video Black — The Mortality of the Image. Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art / Ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer. New York: Aperture, San Francisco: Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990, p. 479.



is not pigment or colour of any kind, but pure presence, it stands for anything else but itself. By making the ground of his image all gold Viola turns it into presence. What was expelled at the margins of the tableau as a frame in Modernity becomes now ground again<sup>60</sup>. Presence is again grounded in the *Unspoken*. Viola's work is of this world, says Gene Youngblood, but in reality "it aspires to revelation". He invites his viewer to partake into his revelation. He puts us on a level with ordinary experience, yet "we experience it as a miracle, as an ecstasy"<sup>61</sup>. It promises a revelation that is about to happen, yet which must remain "unspoken", because it is mystical.

In the *Unspoken*, Viola's *via negativa*<sup>62</sup> is exalted. The negative feature is twice emphasized in the work. First, pointed out in the title: the "unspoken" could be read as "that which is not spoken", or which is "speechless" — a discourse beyond words that in mystical theology is called *apophatic* (from Greek "to deny" or "to say no"). And second, in the complete obliteration of sound, which is unusual in Viola's installations. Instead, the discourse of the image is the discourse of light, more exactly the conflict between light and shadow. And this is perhaps the ultimate message of the *Unspoken*: to ban speech there, where light alone is allowed to carry out the discourse, in order to come close to presence. Through Rumi, and in fact, through Rumi's Byzantine Anatolian roots, Viola meets Pseudo-Dionysius<sup>63</sup>, another poet of the unspoken things: "we approach the ray (*aktina*) which transcends being. Here, in a manner no words can describe... it is a kind that neither intelligence nor speech can lay hold of it..." (*De Divinis Nominibus* I. 4).

### The Leap: Circular Vision

Perhaps no other artist in contemporary art was able to bring back the metaphysics of the image with such poetical distinction and nobility. At the turn of the millennia, almost ritually, Viola calls upon his angels — paradigmatic beings — to perform a sort of leap of life.

"Why are there beings?" Heidegger asks himself rhetorically in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. This question, he answers, "has its ground in a

<sup>60</sup> See my article: The Broken Image Of Splits and Cuttings: Modern Representation and its Beginnings // Signs of Change Transformations of Christian Traditions and their Representation in the Arts, 1000-2000. Rodopi, Amsterdam, New York, 2004, particularly p. 124–125.

<sup>61</sup> Youngblood G. Metaphysical Structuralism..., p. 88.

<sup>62</sup> Viola, quoted in: Zutter J. Interview with Bill Viola // Bill Viola: Unseen Images, exhibition catalogue. Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle, 1993, p. 104, apud. Donald Kuspit, "Deep TV Bill Viola's Via Negativa", Artforum, May 1995, p. 88.

<sup>63</sup> On Pseudo-Dionysius and *via negativa* as a path for union with God, Viola speaks in his interview with Lewis Hyde, in: Ross D. A. Bill Viola / Curated by David A. Ross and Peter Sellars. Whitney Museum of American Art. New York, 1997, p. 144.

leap". The leap is both primordial and ecstatic; it is "a way of moving in relation to the ground". Time and again, for Viola the fluidity of the ground is a challenge for gravitation, which makes his bodies levitate, pondering the ground like dancers. At odds with the physics of this world, Viola's angels are in more sympathy with the mystical body, of which Kirkegaard's knight of infinity stands out as a paradigmatic figure.<sup>64</sup>

The knights of infinity (i. e., the knights of infinite resignation) are dancers and possess elevation. They make the movements upward, and fall down again; and this too is no mean pastime, nor ungraceful to behold. But whenever they fall down they are not able at once to assume the posture, they vacillate an instant, and this vacillation shows that after all they are strangers in the world.

(*Kirkegaard, Fear and Trembling*, 51–52)

Viola's angels (fig. 4) are, too, strangers in this world, creature of the threshold between visibility and invisibility; they levitate downward and upward again until they perform the final leap. In the round space of the Gasometer at Ruhr Triennale, they carry a sort of cosmic dance, Shiva<sup>65</sup> or *chorós*<sup>66</sup>, it matters so little how you call it, as long as it reflects the same paradigm of imagination of circular motion which is sacred. In the words of Gene Youngblood: "This circularity is the essence of Viola's vision of being in the world. It's a vision of transcendent unity in which the medium, the witness, and the world constitute an autonomous closure, mutually implying and constructing each other. This vision is as contemporary as cognitive science, as ancient as the Tao, as universal as the silence at the centre of the circle. Viola touches that silence in each of us, and we feel it resonate. This, more than image or sound, is the power of his art"<sup>67</sup>. As light is constitutive of the eye, so is the sacred an intimate part of consciousness, thinks Viola. In his thinking, which seems to underline his entire creation, Viola meets Eliade and his view of the "sacred" which is not a stage in the history of consciousness, but a constitutive part of it<sup>68</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> This goes back to Plato's Law and the origins of man, and the theme of fly.

<sup>65</sup> "We are drawn into a cosmic dance" (*Sellars P. // The Passions*, p. 184).

<sup>66</sup> The dance of the celestial beings in Pseudo-Dionysius' vision. For more, see my article: *The Dance of Adam: Reconstructing the Byzantine Chorós // Byzantinoslavica LXI* (2003), p. 179–204.

<sup>67</sup> *Youngblood G. Metaphysical Structuralism...*, p. 114.

<sup>68</sup> *Eliade M. "Forward" to Douglas Allen. Structure and Creativity in Religion Hermeneutics // Mircea Eliade's Phenomenology and New Directions. Mouton Publishers The Hague. Paris, New York, 1978, p. vii. The quotation is to be found on the first page of Viola's article "The Mortality of the Image", see note 42.*

### Images of Bliss, Bodies of Immortality

*The Wound is the place where the light enters you*  
(Rumi)

With these poetical lines from Rumi again, Viola opens up his commentary note on *Tristan and Isolde*, the latest video-opera production under the direction of Peter Sellars, presented in première at Opera Bastille Paris in April 2005. The wound is a gate through which light enters the body, which makes us thinking that light can only occur as an experience of pain. This idea is present in other works of Viola, where strife, chaos, and lighting are closely tied together, which suggests that existence can only arise as a gift of strife. But life, death, birth and rebirth, and love are all one single great poem for Viola, the poem of immortality. There is truly no death or ultimate pain in his vision, but a stage or a threshold that one must cross, a path to purification. For Viola, the wound is a gate to let light enter the body, and come out again as a wreath of light, a vision projected onto the screen, which is his poetical ground, a gift offered to the audience as an open wound to those who can see it.

Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* — says Viola — “is the story of a love so intense and profound that it cannot be contained in the material bodies of the lovers”. “I knew from the start that I did not want the images to illustrate or represent the story directly. Instead, I wanted to create an image world that existed parallel to the action on the stage, in the same way that a more subtle poetic narrative narrates the hidden dimension of our inner lives”<sup>69</sup>. “In order to fully realize their love,” says Viola, “Tristan and Isolde must ultimately transcend life itself”. Viola’s vision, which is also Peter Sellars’ (the director) concept, is a visual expression of the original Wagnerian idea of *Liebestod*. Wagner’s original title for the piece we know now as the *Liebestod* was *Verklärung* (“Transfiguration”). Viola’s final image of Tristan slowly dissolving in the final aria, explains Sellars, should not be called “love-death” but transcendence.

But the visual solution that Viola gives to the end of *Tristan und Isolde* is most extraordinary. If in his preceding installation, *The Crossing*, the two stages of matter (water and fire) appear as disparate images, Tristan creates here a third stage of the image in which both elements collapse into each other, and the result Image is an “image in-between”, where the bodies are metamorphosed. Let us enter into the technicality of this paradoxical image. “What we’re looking at is this woman standing in front of the fire, but in reality, she was standing at the edge of a 90-foot pool of water we built out in front of the

<sup>69</sup> Moving Image World. A note from Bill Viola for LA performances

camera — and instead of shooting her directly, the camera is shooting her reflection in the water's surface", says Viola. "So when she falls and hits the water, she is actually falling into her own reflection. And that's the result — those are the flames and the blue background on the disturbed surface of the water" (Viola). The result of this magic alchemy achieved by Viola is pure transcendence, a transcendent body, transparent and oxymoronic in its consistency ("hot-cold body" or "golden fire and cool blue water") (fig. 5), whose true materiality is video plasma. Video plasma is a means to go beyond the surface world, which is not what it seems, says Viola; "... if all the pieces come together in the right way, it is transcendent, and it lifts off", continues Sellars dreamily — "which is of course what love does". "When the flames of passion and fever finally engulf the mind's eye, and desire's body can never be met, the reflecting surface is shattered and collapses into undulating wave patterns of pure light" (Viola's note, Act III). Viola's vision of the spiritual nature of human love is archetypal.

Viola's thinking illustrates in a most exemplary way a phenomenon manifested in contemporary performance art, shared by some other artists, which shows a return to the metaphysical properties of the image and presence, which I call 'contemporary hierotopy', after Lidov's concept. 'Contemporary hierotopy' opens up a territory as yet insufficiently explored, which may provide an alternative to the latest generalized view in the humanities concerning the collapse of the "metaphysics of presence"<sup>70</sup>. Viola, "a postmodern humanist" is in David A. Ross' words "a postmodern completely uninterested in the collapse of meaning"<sup>71</sup>. Yet as I tried to show in this paper, Viola's hierotopy goes beyond the simple and external replication of traditional religious phenomena, which he embodies in new visual events and poetical discourses. As it became clear by now, Viola's creation and his concept of image are spiritually implicated, a dimension which is made explicit by the artist himself: "it (the art process) became about the spiritual dimensions, not the visual form"; "the act of painting... can be a kind of physically enacted ritual of praise and contemplation"<sup>72</sup>.

Viola is no doubt a visionary, a seer, indeed. His hierotopy introduces us to images that cannot be seen with the naked eye, but with the inner eye, *basirah*, or like the Byzantine *theoros*, both viewers of the mystical vision. Viola wants to reveal images that refer to something deeper, below or beyond the line of normal sight which resist ordinary discourse. The discourse of the

<sup>70</sup> Derrida J. *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* // *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge&Kegan Paul, 1978, esp. p. 280–281.

<sup>71</sup> Ross D. A. *Bill Viola* / Curated by David A. Ross and Peter Sellars. Whitney Museum of American Art. New York, 1997, p. 27.

<sup>72</sup> *A Conversation* // *The Passions*, p. 194.

*Unspoken* is the mystical (mute) discourse of light. But he takes up important issues of consciousness and experience, issues which post-modern thought has only glossed in a most sophistic manner. Viola shows us that video performance is not only a visual-acoustic event, a mere system of signs, but it could become an experience to develop the consciousness and the imagination. And this is perhaps what *the Passions* try to tell us, to teach us of our passions which we must acknowledge, and then cross over and transform, and this is also a spiritual teaching, a path to make the “whole man”<sup>73</sup>.

#### URBAN SPACE — STREET ART:

##### TRANSLUCENT VISION OF *ALPHAVILLE* — JAN HATT-OLSEN’S RE-ENCHANTING THE WORLD

“Who does not believe in miracles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” “It is the Time of Miracles”<sup>74</sup>, insists Jan Hatt-Olsen in his poetry hanging on a transparent sheet which adorns his natal city, Værløse in Denmark. My journey through Jan’s street installation (“Lyrik-installation: Værløse Bymidte som en digtsamling”, in translation “A Lyric installations: The city of Værløse as a poem”) starts under the spell of these poetical lines. The magic of that vision of words inscribed on scroll-like transparent sheets and suspended in the tree is unforgettable (fig. 6a–b). I knew, I must prepare myself for a wonder. I soon realized that my eyes must adjust to “see” that wonder. The transparent sheets of poetry were spread everywhere like veils: on the walls, on the pillars, planted in the pots like flowers, vegetal language, naturalized in the landscape of the city, and at the same time, transfiguring everything they touched or anything that came in their proximity. The city of Værløse miraculously became the city of words of poetry — Alphaville — a place of wonder, a hierotopic space, where man poetically dwells.

One must learn from great poems how to live a worthy life and relate authentically to beings and to Being — says Heidegger. “Language is the house of Being”. “In its home man dwells”. Poetry is a mode of revelation of truth (*aletheia*), a path to come close to presence. Jan’s installation, with his poetry clearing out the space of the city, words making space or space made out of poetical words, is first and foremost a provocation to vision, a turn of mind, a

<sup>73</sup> Either viewed in the binom of man and woman as “complementary parts of a unified whole” (A Conversation // The Passions, p. 202) or as ultimate goal of all mystics, like Sufi mysticism or Byzantine asceticism.

<sup>74</sup> “Når rosen  
Bryder gennem  
Sneen  
Er det Miraklernes tid”

“Hvem Tror ikke på mirakler I den 21 årh.?”

true *metanoia* for whoever comes close to it because it is reminded of human condition, that is, that man should poetically dwell in the world. By wrapping out the city with his poems, though in a most discrete manner, Jan makes language communal, and therefore primordial. He makes it a gift to be shared, as well as to be celebrated together by the poet with the peoples.

Poetry is a gift and the gifts to be found in poetry are magnificent. The experience which may arise while reading or listening to poetry is profound. But how could one read this unusual poetry written on transparent grounds, almost invisible, suspended on trees, unless one becomes bird-like, angel flying above? Jan makes the wind sing his poetry for us when it blows through his imponderable groundless sheets of light. The words inscribed on such precarious grounds are echoed in space (acoustically and visually), turned inside out and scattered then away — dematerialized, transfigured matter. This diaphanous poetic imagery is the hidden soul of Alphaville — “*membranens vibrationer*” — a reverberation like cosmic breath; pure expansion of spaces beyond space, a *mise en abîme* of planes. In a most conspicuous way, this vision takes one back to the primordial, translucent language, the adamic speech before the confusion of languages, before opacity. Words gathering light — “*foton efter foton — foton — efter foton*” — this image-poetry builds up lit illusions — “*lys illusioner*,” “visions” (tekst 36).

Jan Hatt-Olsen is no doubt a visionary. His dream and most intimate and intense desire — he tells me — is to ‘enchant’ the world, to bring back that breath of imagination and nobility that once animated the soul of mankind. This installation embodies both in words and images his unbridled vision, a vision which is as much about seeing, as it is about the unseen. I had to adjust my eye, indeed, to clean it from the intruding corrosive imagery, which surrounds us in public spaces, humbling my sight, down below in order to ascent to his diaphanous vision. The transparent scrolls of Jan’s poetry, which pervade the entire city, allow light to stream into the paths of the citizens. Heidegger calls this openness that grants a possible letting-appear and show “opening (*Lichtung*)”, using the metaphor of the “forest clearing”:

“The forest clearing [or opening] is experienced in contrast to dense forest, called *Dickung* in our older language. The substantive *Lichtung* goes back to the verb *lichten*. The adjective *licht* is the same word as “open”. To open something means to make it light, free and open, e. g., to make the forest free of trees at one place”. “Light can stream into the clearing, into its openness, and let brightness play with darkness in it”.

Yet light never first creates openness, but it can only radiate if openness has been already granted. It only traverses the space in which “beings as

such show themselves”<sup>75</sup>. “Clearing” is for Jan’s installation the natural consequence of the diaphaneity of the image. But to be able to see “through” (*dia-*, or *trans-*) it is the very condition to access this “enchanted world”. Diaphaneity is an instrument in physics (optic), as well as a metaphor for contemplation in mystical vision. Diaphaneity, says Aristotle, penetrates the opacity of the world by the agency of the light, which renders the world visible<sup>76</sup>. Ultimately, diaphaneity is the work of light upon things, making them receptacles of light beyond their thick-ness/opacity and thing-ness. Jan’s floating poems like the transparent fruits in the trees of Værløse is a most strange vision, a return to the lost Paradise and its tree of Life, a *ricorso* to the trans-lucid language, lost yet regain from opacity to opalescence.

Jan’s scrolls of light are anti-gravitational, indeed, their physics responds to another law beyond physics. “Everything must float, suspended, then resound elsewhere after the event... for the first time” (Hegel. Derrida, *Glas*, 69). Since Mallarmé, with his free-floating words on ambiguous grounds, there was perhaps no image-poetry so eventful than these limpid screens — thresholds to another world stretched between heaven and earth (a theme that is much dear to Jan learned from W. Blake)<sup>77</sup>. This kind of image is most peculiar as figure and ground are simply reversed, and can be any-time reversed. Traditionally, materiality is associated with ground, representation with figure. But in this case, the total transparency of the image, sheer vacancy, which is optically reversible, it enables one to see both sides at once, and allows everything which crosses it to become part of it, but just the instance of its crossing. It makes ground become at one time the cosmos itself, and another time the letters themselves become the very ground in which the whole cosmos is contained. The effect of such groundlessness due to transparency is that there is only figure<sup>78</sup>, but only a fleeting, transient trace of the figure. Like Plato’s *chôra* space, this mirroring space makes continuously room for a strange becoming — the condition of all beings, and the mediation of Being.

Seeing one’s own image reflected in this image is an awesome moment, a true bewilderment. Yet one should no more wonder once one has become part of that wonder. Vision and beholder coincides because of the reflection of light, which intensifies vision and turns it into a “stream-event” of light span-

<sup>75</sup> Heidegger M. The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking (in: *On Time and Being*. The original German text “Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens” is published in *Zur Sache des Denkens*).

<sup>76</sup> On diaphaneity read: Vasilii A. Le mot et le verre: une définition médiévale du diaphane // *Journal des Savants*. Paris, Janvier–Juin 1994, p. 135–162.

<sup>77</sup> “*The Doors of Perception* er fra William Blakes kosmos”.

<sup>78</sup> On this effect, read more in: Lock C. Read this “nothing”: Lines on Glass. Signs of Klee // *Semiotic Review of Books*. Vol. 6, № 5 (Jan 1995), p. 6–8.

ning around. One feels as if caught up in the middle of the image, in the space in-between. But the space in-between, which receives anything that comes and goes, like a mirror it undermines and effaces everything, clearing up the space for the new fleeting traces, for a new becoming. Like the *chôra* space, indeed, the space in-between makes continuously room for an unrelenting motion of beings toward Being. This is described by Bergson as “the arc of movement”, it is a space for choreographic inscription for Michel Serres:

’nous sommes tous en quête de ce Platon nomme la chôra,  
espace lisse et blanc d’avant le signe, la page blanche, vierge  
cire, où le choréographe écrit<sup>79</sup>.

Alphaville is too, a space for “*koreograferende bevægelser*”, a space when one dances unceasingly, day and night, on streets, in open spaces, as well as in close spaces, inscribing (enchancing!) continuously choreographically this space: “*De danser I gaden I åbne I lukkede rum... I dagen I natten... De danser I tiden...*” “*Se deres vel koreograferende bevægelser*” (“One dances on street in open and in close space day and night On dances See our choreographic movement...”).

This kind of imagery and pattern of thinking brought forth by Jan’s installation in Værløse illustrates the hierotopic phenomenon manifested in contemporary performance art, which shows a return to the metaphysical properties of the image and presence. Jan Hatt-Olsen is completely uninterested in the collapse of meaning. Like his most beloved poet, Blake, or his contemporary video artist and poet, Viola, Jan Hatt-Olsen is a visionary, indeed, his poetry and image-poems are metaphysically implicated. Being and creation overlap, and metaphysical questions are deeply engrained in the texture of his mind. Yet his hierotopy goes beyond the simple and external replication of any traditional religious phenomena, which he embodies in a new visual event and poetical discourse. His hierotopy introduces us to an image-sound event that cannot be seen/heard with naked senses. He wants to make us aware of images and words beyond the line of normal perception, and this is perhaps what his transparent scrolls, choreographically inscribed in the space at Værløse, stand for. The discourse of his evanescent, luminous poetical grounds is the mystical (mute) discourse of light. The clearing vision is, like for Heidegger, a clearing not only free for brightness and darkness but also for resonance and echo, for everything that becomes present and absent. For a moment, for an instant of time — “*miraklernes tid*” (the “time of miracles”), the space of Værløse was transfigured, and shared together in a choraic space, the space in-between when being meets Being. But then it withdraws again self-erasing its image, in order to make room for another return, for another becoming. In

<sup>79</sup> Serres M. *Genèse*. Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1982, p. 79.



Heidegger's vision, this is a moment in which "everything present and absent... have the place which gathers and protects everything" — "pure space", "ecstatic time". "Who does not believe in miracles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?" ("Hvem Tror ikke på mirakler I den 21 årh.?").

### CONCLUSION

I would like to end up this brief and selective view through Contemporary Hierotopy with few thoughts. It is difficult at this stage to conclude whether the efforts to regenerate art through ritual strategies and forms were indeed efficacious or not (to respond to the condition of "efficacy" present in Schechner's scheme). With the help of hierotopy, this presentation has tried at least to put forth those hierotopic elements that might point out to a positive response. One element however appeared consistently in the work of the artists examined: this was the concern of the artists with transformations on the level of consciousness. It might be then interesting to examine Eli Rozik's recent theory presented in his book *The Roots of Theatre. Rethinking Ritual and Other Theories of Origin* (Studies in Theatre History and Culture), and based on the observation of the reflex of nostalgia of man for primeval ritual. In his view, the ritual theory appeals on a metaphorical level to unconscious patterns and longings in our own psyches. Ritual has "a metaphorical aura that, for romantic reasons, people wish to attribute to theatre"<sup>80</sup>. Rozik's theory about the unconscious longings in the human psyche for ritual could be connected with Eliade's view on the sacred as being an intimate part of human consciousness: "Consciousness of a real and meaningful world is intimately connected with the discovery of the sacred... In short, the "sacred" is an element in the structure of consciousness and not a stage in the history of consciousness" (Eliade). Viola opens his article "Video Black: The Mortality of the Image"<sup>81</sup> with a quotation from Eliade, where the historian of religions holds that human existence takes on meaning through the imitation of the paradigmatic models revealed by Supernatural Beings. This is also Viola's artistic *credo* expressed in artistic forms. Viola shows in his installations how the sacred is still present in the world, although camouflaged in most conspicuous forms and media of representation. His awareness of the presence of the sacred in the world becomes the ground of recollection and presencing of Being in the world.

<sup>80</sup> "In my view, the only answer is that it is a matter of a metaphorical aura that, for romantic reasons, people wish to attribute to theatre. This metaphorical aura is supposed to lend theatre a numinous quality that not only does it not always radiate, but that perhaps less than anything else defines its nature. Between this aura and theatre historical reality there is nothing".

<sup>81</sup> Viola B. Video Black: The Mortality of the Image // *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* / Ed. Doug Hall, Sally Jo Fifer. New York: Aperture, San Francisco: Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990, p. 476–486.

The phenomenon of sacred performance in old traditions holds an important lesson for contemporary artists. The proper finale of old performances was an ontological *modus vivendi* of man in which man aimed to encounter God, and finally to be transformed. Likewise, the contemporary artists of hierotopy have shown us a similar *homo performans*. But unlike the performative ritual structures developed in old rites, the contemporary hierotopic performances and the artists themselves had to undergo sometimes through a painful deconstruction of structures and institutions compromised, and devoid of spirituality in order to recharge them with a new energy. *Via negativa* was such an alternative and effective solution for such artists like Grotowski, Antero Alli, and in some respects for Marina Abramovic. Antero Alli's Theatre of the Source was concerned with the rediscovering of ritual paradigms, which eventually proved to be very old in fact, but revealed through a process of intimate communication with the Source. Grotowski's *Living Theatre* and Alli's *Paratheatre Labs* were such revelations, theatres of presence, living performances not representations, in which artists and the audience participated and have been transformed and spiritually recharged with imagination. And this is perhaps "the proper finale" of a ritual performance of which Turner speaks — an experience of completion and transformation<sup>82</sup>.

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ВИДЕНИЕ И ПЕРФОРМАНС.  
ИЕРОТОПИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОД К СОВРЕМЕННОМУ ИСКУССТВУ

Сегодня перформанс передвигается в центр герменевтического внимания, подчиняя себе представление собственного «Я» в повседневной жизни, сценической драме или общественной драме. Язык, жизнь, собственное «Я», любой вид человеческой деятельности воспринимается как потенциально перформативный акт. «Перформативность» действительно вошла в наши дни в моду. Но, как заметил антрополог перформансов Виктор Тёрнер, «перформанс уже не так легко определить или локализовать: его идея и структура распространились повсюду. Это понятие является этическим и межкультурным, историческим и внеисторическим, эс-

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<sup>82</sup> Victor Turner traces the etymology of the word "performance" not to the notion of "form," but to the Old French *parfounir* (*parfournir*), which means "to complete" or "to carry out thoroughly". "A performance", holds Turner, "is the proper finale of an experience" (*Turner V. From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play // Performing Arts Journal Publications. New York, 1982, p. 13*).

тетическим и ритуальным, социологическим и политическим»<sup>83</sup>. В современном дискурсе происходит быстрое распространение теорий изображения, и все они принимают «постмодернистскую направленность». Происходит смена направления, изменение прежнего образа мыслей о представлении как об «очистительном» процессе, об отделении слов и жестов в ритуальном представлении. То, что когда-то воспринималось как «нечистое», сегодня стало центром постмодернистского внимания. «Пост-гуманистический субъект» становится, по преимуществу, *Homo performans*, уходящим, однако, от традиционной ритуальной структуры в сторону текучести, от ритуала — к анти-ритуалу, к некоей противоположности: «сами ошибки, сомнения, личностные факторы, незавершенность, эллиптические ситуации» становятся ключами к истинной новизне и творческому началу субъекта, давая возможность становиться собой в свободе представления.

В этом исследовании я попытаюсь сформулировать точку зрения, отличную от общего взгляда на коллапс ритуала в современном представлении и «коллапс метафизики присутствия» (Деррида). Цель — простимулировать творческие силы современного искусства, которое, кажется, сопротивляется утрате смысла и расплывчатым обозначениям. Подобная установка была характерна для театрального авангарда, находившегося в поисках путей оживления театра посредством ритуала. Теоретики перформативного искусства и театральные режиссеры, такие как Питер Брук, Ежи Гротовский, выступали в защиту регенерации театра через восстановление его утраченного, изначального, ритуального измерения. Крайне важным является замечание Питера Брука о «священном театре» и Театре-делающем-невидимое-видимым (1968), а также его идея, что театр ведет свое происхождение от ритуалов, которые позволяли воплощать невидимое.

Визуальные искусства прошли аналогичный процесс трансформации в качестве ритуальных форм и структур, насыщающих произведения информацией, что сделало невозможным классифицировать арт-носители в рамках традиционных художественных форм. Этот процесс оживления ритуальных моделей в искусстве радикально изменил конфигурацию современного пространства представления. Сцена и художественная галерея по разным поводам стали демонстрировать ритуалистический подход, но процесс трансформации оказался гораздо сложнее. Данное исследование направлено на то, чтобы открыть пространство изучения этого феномена, идентифицировать конкретные представления, в которых ритуальная структура смещается за пределы условности и обретает

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<sup>83</sup> Turner V. The Anthropology of Performance // The Anthropology of Performance. Hushion House, 1988, p. 77.

ритуальные формы, как это было с 1957 г. у Германа Нича в *'Orgien-Mysterien-Theater'* («Оргия — Мистерия — Театр»), продвигаясь к более изощренным и скрытым формам, и, тем не менее, оказывая влияние на преобразование природы и состояния самого представления.

В своей работе я руководствовалась — и в то же время была заинтригована — заявлением Мирча Элиаде о присутствии сакрального в современном искусстве. Элиаде высказывает предположение, что сакральное может все еще присутствовать в мире и что художники могут по-прежнему сохранять способность выражать его, хотя уже и не на общепринятом языке и не в традиционных формах. Согласно его мнению, сакральное скрыто в очевидно «профанных» формах, и потому трудно его быстро распознать. Я исхожу из предпосылки о возвращении сакрального в перформативное искусство и о необходимости изучать старые культурные парадигмы, унаследованные и преобразованные современной культурой в новых визуальных проектах. Я убеждена, что для решения столь сложной задачи *иеротопия*, изучение создания сакральных пространств (от греческого *иерос* — священный, и *топос* — пространство, место) — новая дисциплина, основанная русским ученым Алексеем Лидовым, — могла бы стать идеально подходящим инструментом, равно как и общей теоретической моделью<sup>84</sup>. Я буду называть это *современной иеротопией*, изучением феномена современных сакральных перформансов. Конкретная задача *современной иеротопии* заключается в том, чтобы выяснить, имеет ли формальный язык, выработанный в рамках ритуалов и используемый в современных представлениях, влияние и силу для воплощения сакрального и привнесения его в жизнь, или необходимо выстроить новое, современное понимание сакрального. В данной работе я собираюсь взглянуть на некоторых современных художников, принадлежащих разным областям искусства, хотя я вынуждена настаивать на междисциплинарном характере гуманитарной сферы и условности границ между разными художественными жанрами, что характеризует современный феномен перформативного искусства. Мои примеры включают в себя как экспериментальный театр (Антеро Алли), так и боди-арт (Марина Абрамович), и видео перформанс (Билл Виола), а также освоение городского пространства и уличное искусство (Ян Хатт-Ольсен), поскольку я пытаюсь анализировать иеротопическое измерение пространства, сцены, тела и образа или архитектурных форм, в которых разворачивается представление, равно как и статус аудитории, участвующей в представлении.

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<sup>84</sup> Лидов А. М. Создание сакральных пространств как вид творчества и предмет исторического исследования // Иеротопия. Создание сакральных пространств в Византии и Древней Руси / Ред.-сост. А. М. Лидов. М., 2006, с. 9–31.

На данной стадии исследования трудно решить, являются ли усилия по возрождению искусства посредством ритуальных стратегий и форм действительно эффективными или нет (в соответствии с определением «эффективности», представленном в системе Шехнера). С помощью иеротопии этот текст по крайней мере позволяет продвинуться вперед, так как иеротопические элементы могут указать направление позитивного ответа. Однако в работах всех изучаемых художников последовательно появляется один элемент: их озабоченность преобразованиями на сознательном уровне. Интересно рассмотреть новейшую теорию Эли Розика, изложенную в его книге «Корни театра. Возвращаясь к размышлениям о ритуале и других теориях о происхождении» (Исследования в области истории театра и культуры), основанную на наблюдениях о ностальгии человека по изначальному ритуалу. С его точки зрения, ритуальная теория обращается на метафорическом уровне к моделям бессознательного и к жажде обретения человеком собственной души. Ритуал имел «метафорическую ауру, которую, по романтическим причинам, люди желают присвоить театру»<sup>85</sup>. Теория Розика о бессознательном стремлении к человеческой душе в ритуале может быть соотнесена со взглядом Элиаде на сакральное как бытие глубинной части человеческого сознания: «Осознание реального и полного значения мира на глубинном уровне связано с открытием сакрального... Короче, «сакральное» является элементом структуры сознания, а не этапом в истории сознания» (Элиаде). Ничего удивительного, что в своей статье Виола цитирует Элиаде — то место, где историк религии утверждает, что человеческий опыт обретает смысл через имитацию парадигматических моделей, открытых сверхъестественными существами. Виола выражает свое художественное кредо и в артистической форме. В своих инсталляциях он показывает, как сакральное может все еще присутствовать в мире, несмотря на прикрытие предельно телесных форм и средства изображения. Его озабоченность присутствием в мире сакрального становится основанием для воспоминаний и ощущений присутствия в мире Высшего Существа.

Феномен сакрального перформанса в исторических религиозных традициях дает важный урок современным художникам. Адекватным финалом старых представлений стал онтологический *modus vivendi* человека, в котором он обращен к разговору с Богом, и именно это, в конце

<sup>85</sup> «На мой взгляд, единственным ответом является то, что это вопрос метафорической ауры, которую, по романтическим причинам, люди желают присвоить театру. Эта метафорическая аура, как предполагается, должна обеспечить театру мистическое качество, которое не только не всегда им излучается, но менее всего другого характеризует его природу. Между этой аурой и исторической реальностью театра нет ничего общего».

концов, подверглось реформированию. Сходным образом, современные иеротопические художники показали нам аналогичного *homo performans*. Но в отличие от перфомативных ритуальных структур, разработанных в старых обрядах, современный иеротопический перформанс и сами художники вынуждены были порой проходить через болезненное разрушение структур и сопутствующих институций, лишенных духовности, с тем чтобы зарядить их новой энергией. *Via negativa* была альтернативой и эффективным решением для таких художников, как Гротовский, Антеро Алли и, в некоторых отношениях, для Марины Абрамович. Театр Источника Антеро Алли был основан на новом обращении к ритуальным парадигмам, которые на самом деле были старыми, но заново открывались в процессе глубинного общения с Источником. В этом смысле *Живой театр* Гротовского и *Лаборатория паратеатра* Алли оказались театрами присутствия, живыми представлениями, а не показами, в которых артисты и зрители становились соучастниками и неизбежно преображались, духовно обогащаясь и получая новую пищу для воображения. Вероятно, это и является адекватным финалом ритуального представления,<sup>86</sup> о котором говорит Тёрнер — опытом обогащения и преобразования.

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<sup>86</sup> Виктор Тёрнер прослеживает этимологию слова «перформанс» (представление) не от слова «форма», а от старо-французского *parfounir* (*parfournir*), что означает «совершать» или «тщательно исполнять». «Перформанс, — утверждает Тёрнер, — является адекватным финалом опыта» (*Turner V. From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982, p. 13).



1. *Antero Alli*. "The Orphans of Delirium", the stills from the paratheatrical performance, 2004

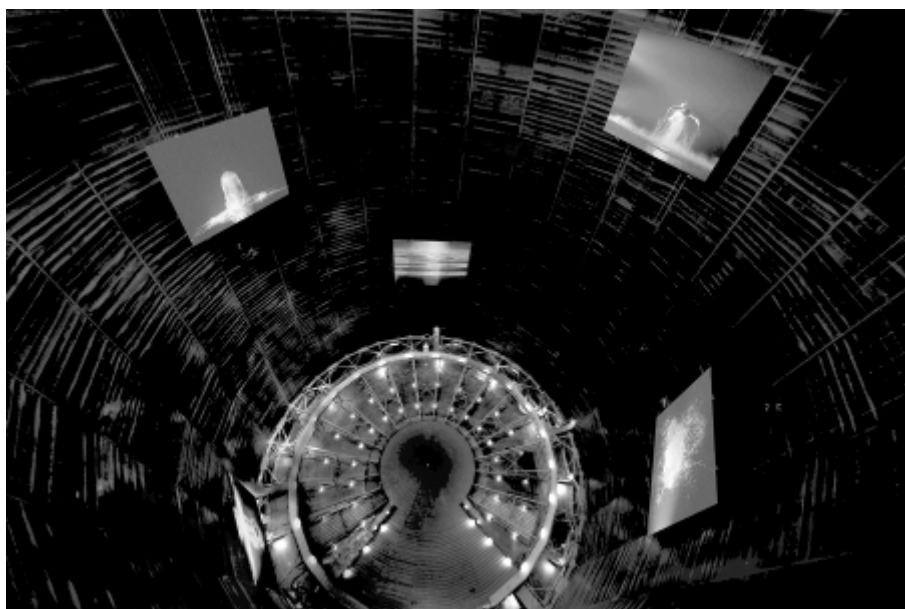


2. *Marina Abramovic*. Ullay, “The Lovers — The Great Wall Walk”, 1988

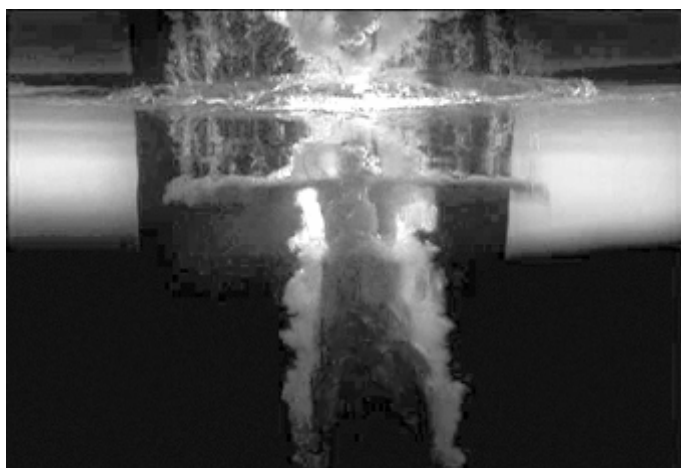


3. *Bill Viola*. “The Unspoken” (“Silver and Gold”), 2001 (Arken Museum, Denmark)





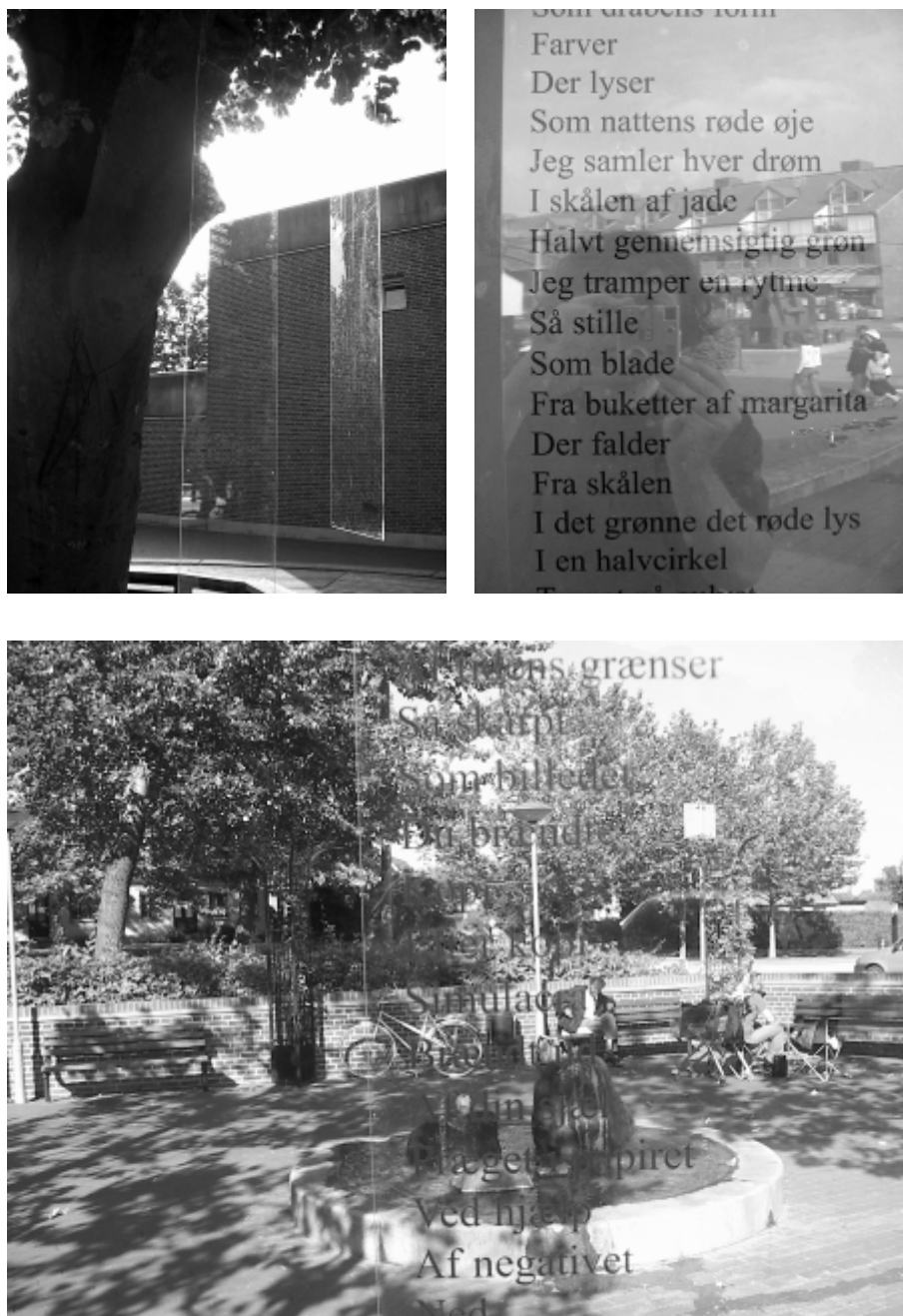
4. *Bill Viola*. "Five Angels for the Millennium". 2001 (Gasometer at Ruhr Triennale)



5. *Bill Viola*. A still ("Fire Angel") from "Five Angels for the Millennium"



6a. *Jan Hatt-Olsen*. "A Lyric installations: The city of Værløse as a poem".  
2004



6b. Jan Hatt-Olsen. "A Lyric installations: The city of Værløse as a poem". 2004