

Thoughts on recording light and actions
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For many performance artists, the question of using a camera to record a live performance has, simply, been the need to have an archival record of the work; for others it can become an integral and decisive act of creating a live work to camera. Then there are artists for whom documenting the work goes entirely against the ephemerality of live practice.

Perhaps all of these three choices can plague an artist once in a while, or conversely make them happy with a new approach.

There are many ways to consider 'liveness' after all. With COVID-19 preventing groups of people amassing together in venues, all kinds of artists working with live practices, such as musicians, have grappled, with some degree of success, with virtual platforms, discovering that whilst it might not be the same, there is still merit in mediated liveness. The joy of doing, and then sharing that joy.

Documentation, of certain well known Western-based performance artists from the 1960s and 70s, such as Vito Acconci, Abramovic/Ulay or Ana Mendieta, has become the only way we might know of, and experience, their work. Unless we happen to be over a certain age, and present at a precise performance – a privileged few. Some early documentation might be on celluloid film, some only via stills, now transferred to digital media, but whichever way, I am glad that they did document their work so that it can be shared across generations. Now, documentation of less well known, or artists from around the world, made with

current technology, also offer the wonderful possibility for audiences to experience their work. Of course, again, it's not the same as seeing the work in real life, but it's still valuable to be able to get a sense of the work, the ideas at play, and this can certainly have an impact on one's thinking and understanding.

In the early 2000s, in the UK, there was a raging debate about documentation and what it does to a live performance, and I have included a very brief reading list at the end of this article, which confirms this fervour if you look at the publishing dates. Out of this debate came a flurry of new ways of working, where the consideration of the live was explored more consciously in relation to the photograph, such as in the work of photographer, Manuel Vason. Vason has worked with many performance/live artists to create a single image or several that become the work itself, without sacrificing the sensibilities of the artists' liveness. I worked with him on two occasions and it was exciting, but also challenging, to distil my ideas into still images. I was quite resistant at first, as my sense was that the live was the only time of the work becoming the work, and feeling that everything else was just a publicity shot, and certainly not an artwork, with all its complexity and layers of meaning. However, once we had gone on the journey I realised there was something else at play. The still image could indeed engender discourse, and hold onto a sense of its live moment. Perhaps because of the thoroughness of Vason's approach, the depth of questions and discussions he insisted upon, and perhaps therefore challenging me to really consider how I could reach an image that I would be happy to say was representative of my practice.

Light is the key to the relationship between the live moment and its recording as a photograph or video. It is the light and the dark that creates the recorded image. So how fitting it is that Homar's 4th Festival invited a diversity of artists to use light to express their concepts. The photo works capture an instant, illuminating the celebratory, questioning our torrid or loving relationship to nature, the human impact on the natural world, or our visibility or invisibility. There are flames – candles, fires – and embers, neon lights, light bulbs, many colours, or a more two-tone palette making more meditative and spiritual questions come to the fore. Even the stillness reveals movements and transformation.

In Homar's 4th Festival, because we can't all be together in 2020, and because I couldn't be there in Lorestan to do a live work, I made my first performance-to-camera video. Much like the photos I had made with Vason, I thought about the close-up. This after all is not possible in the live moment - I cannot direct your gaze exactly where I want it to go. But in video I can frame your gaze and my world together in the same place. Otherwise, I treated this like a live performance – I did it once, I didn't change anything, I didn't edit lots of sections or add extraneous sound and so on. I tried to offer something at close quarters, something intimate, as though I were with the viewer.

These recorded methods, of course, do not replace the momentous exchange that happens in the live experience – that exchange of energy between performer and audience/ participant, and the immediacy of communication in a shared space, that

is so necessary for the work to exist. But the positive side is that I can see performative work from all over the world whilst remaining in my home city. This is the major achievement of Homar's 4th Festival – bringing together artists all concerned with the body, how the light in the world shines a focus on our concerns, especially hopeful during a time when we are forced apart.

UK-based Reading List:

GEORGE, Adrian, ed. (2003) *Art, Lies and Videotape: Exposing Performance*, Liverpool: Tate

JONES, Amelia and HEATHFIELD, Adrian, eds. (2012) *Perform Repeat Record: Live Art in History*, London: Intellect/Live Art Development Agency

KAYE, Nick (2000) *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*, Routledge

MAUDE-ROXBY, Alice (2007) *Live Art on Camera: Performance and Photography*, Southampton: John Hansard Gallery

VASON, Manuel, (2007) *Encounters: Performance, photography, collaboration*, Bristol: Arnolfini Gallery

VASON Manuel, KEIDAN Lois, BRINE Daniel and ATHEY Ron (2002) *Exposures*, London: Black Dog