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BODY AND PAIN IN CONTEMPORARY ART  
(ON THE PHENOMENON OF PETR PAVLENSKY)  
Master Thesis

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Tartu  
2017

I have written the Master Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

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## Introduction

Despite a large number of materials dedicated to the development and establishment of performance art, the problem of experiencing body found less attention. Especially in the phenomenon of self-torturing and pain in performance art, which is my primary interest.

In my research, I will find the place of a body experiencing practice in the performance art, which exists on the border of the body art phenomena, values of body modifications, the notion of pain in art and its function.

Performance art includes many conditions such as following: time, form, visual and audial aspect, place, senses, clear narrative, human behaviour and other notions, that forms a perception of its social and individual features. The basis of the performance art is interdisciplinary. Also, it is possible to say, that the central process of the performance art is the live presence of the artist through his/her body practices. The body is the primary medium and artistic material on which performance art is based.

Many studies in the field of philosophy and sociology are devoted to the problem of embodiment and also influenced on the conceptual development of contemporary art. Among them the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1945), the concepts of perception by Bakhtin (1986 [1979]), the body without the organs by Deleuze (1969), as well as the concept of representatives of postmodernism by Michel Foucault (2004 [1976]), Jean-Luc Nancy (1992) and Derrida (1961), who took a new look at the concept of the body in modern philosophy. The most extensive theoretical study relating to the phenomenon of pain is made by Gulnara Hajdarova (2013) in her book *Fenomen Boli v Kul'ture* (Phenomenon of pain in culture), the analytical work of Elaine Scarry (1985) *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking Of the World*, Lucy Bending (2000) *The Representation of Bodily Pain in Late Nineteenth-Century English Culture* and the study on the sensory perception of pain by David B. Morris (1991) in *The culture of pain*.

Works in the field of contemporary art, in particular, performance art sphere, are not numerous, but it is worthwhile to highlight the book by RoseLee Goldberg (1987), which is full of necessary historical data, as well as an analytical work dedicated to the body art movement by Amelia Jones (1998) *Body Art / Performing the Subject*. Unfortunately, in most works devoted to the value of the body in contemporary art, there is practically no deep and more

analytical coverage of the significance of pain in contemporary art.

The phenomenon of Pavlensky has not been studied, but his performances are covered from the position of political significance. In my thesis, I consider his work from the side of the body in pain and the importance of self-torturing within the framework of corporality, which in a certain way influence on the spectator's and art critics' perception of contemporary art, and form a new category in performance art. The analysis of my work lies within the framework of various concepts that help to define the change in the concept of body, embodiment and pain within the framework of contemporary art, cultural perception, and define more limit definition of performance art and its species. To determine the patterns and the difference between certain types of body art, I use the concepts of artist's body by Amelia Jones (2012), as well as definitions by Fisher-Lichte (2015). An aspect of pain in performance art is mainly covered by the phenomenological concepts of Merleau-Ponty (1945) and the "self" and "other" theory by Bakhtin (1986 [1979]). The concept of carnival by Bakhtin (1990 [1965]), as well as the values of the "eternal image" in culture by J. Lotman (2000) are considered in the framework of the analysis of the peculiarities of Russian performance and the perception of Pavlensky's works. Along with this, I also conduct a comparative analysis of the features of holy fool's phenomena and Pavlensky's performances based on the work of Panchenko (1999, 1984) and historical sources.

My work consists of two complementary parts. In the first part, I consider the notion of body and embodiment, the interaction and development of these concepts within the framework of art, reveal the position and changed the value of pain bodily practices in plastic arts, determine the differences and similarities between different types of art, establish the value of pain in and bodily practices in performance art. In the second part, I will analyze the case of Russian performance art, particularly, the phenomenon of Petr Pavlensky. I will identify the distinctive features that correspond to his works and will try to determinate more the direction of this type of performance. Furthermore, I am going to consider the specificity of the cultural perception of Pavlensky's performances within the framework of the holy fools phenomenon in Russia. Pavlensky is a Russian performance artist, known for his provocative works and was announced as the most significant artist in Russia in 2013. He uses his own body as artistic material and in most cases hurts himself in front of an unprepared audience. Pavlensky does not simply makes performance art based on his own life experience but connects his works with

strong social and political context. Public works by him cause conflicting evaluations in the society and among some art critics.

The questions I want to answer in my work:

1. How to define the place of body in the performance art?
2. What is the place and function of pain in the performance art?
3. How to distinguish bodily performance art and what does it mean?
4. What is the significance of the cultural context in the process of perception of body in pain?

Also, I will try to define a clearer structure of concepts related to the body art movement, to understand the patterns of development of contemporary art forms that interact with the concept of embodiment and pain, to pay attention to the features of the development of the Russian performance art and to justify the uniqueness of Petr Pavlensky as an artist of modern times.

## **1. Body and pain in Art**

In this chapter, I draw attention to a change in the understanding and definition of the phenomenon of body, the significance of embodiment and pain, both from the perspective of philosophy and modern art. In subchapter 1.1, I discern the difference between the concept of body and embodiment through the prism of the definitions of these concepts in a philosophical context. In subchapter 1.2, I consider the prerequisites for the development of performance art by the example of plastic art. In the next subchapter 1.3, boundaries for the body art and the characteristics of the bodily performance art defined more precise. The final subchapter 1.4 directly addresses to the identification of the significance of pain in the bodily performance art.

### **1.1 Philosophical approaches to body and embodiment**

History of art and history of understanding the concept of human body are inseparable from each other. Philosophy and art are two different ways of knowing the world and human self-consciousness. Despite the fact that they have two different research tools and principles, they also complement each other. Logic and reflection in one case, intuition and power of perception in the other.

The image of the body has always been an important object of art of any era and culture. The study of lines, boundaries and images of the human body corresponded to both religious and social norms of a particular time. Its importance was contested also during the development of European philosophy. If art tries to explain human nature through metaphors, feelings and intuition, constantly changing its attitudes of perception of the human body, then philosophy also tries to find specific answers to the main questions. These questions mostly concern the ways and mechanisms of understanding the perception of the world and the Self by using the body, the body's role and connection with self-awareness. In this chapter, I am going to give an overview of the most important approaches to the human body and embodiment in modern philosophy. It will help to gain better understanding of the notions of the body and their influence on the Performance Art.

The defining moment for the conception of body in modern philosophy was the explication of the so-called mind-body problem with the clear separation of the body from the soul by Rene Descartes. The medieval philosophy was based on the idea of creation of the world by God, considered the natural bodies as the embodiment of the divine plan, as the compound of form and matter. The body was seen as comprised of the sensual and intelligible body. (Gurevich 1999) It was Descartes who saw in the base of world two initial substances: matter and God and on his basis defined body and mind as two distinct phenomena. This led to the treatment of the human body as an automatic machine. (Descartes 1989, 1997) Many philosophers disputed Cartesian dualistic approach. For example, Spinoza saw body and soul as one substance. Leibniz, in turn, rejected both the dualism of Descartes and the pantheistic monism of Spinoza, taking the position of the plurality of substances. He outlined his doctrine of “monads” in his treatise *The Monadology* (1867 [1714]) – tiny, and active spiritual life units, which are the basis of all things and phenomena of sense-perceived world. Regardless, the Cartesian separation between the body as object and the mind as subject remained dominant in many fields of inquiry.

German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel provided one of the most notable alternatives to Cartesian dualist approach. That included a movement from the study of body as matter, corpus to living body (*Leib*) which, in turn, required a redefinition of relations between the body and soul. For him, it is the soul that makes the human body (*Leib*) different from other bodies (*Körper*). Yet despite the general spiritual component of man, human corporeality determines its finitude, limitations and brokenness, that is, humans are, after all, *bodies*. Accordingly, an important aspect in Hegel’s approach to the relations between the body and the soul was the understanding that the soul is always a soul of a body; it is embodied, and thus affected by the body (Wood 2014: 37). Here it is possible to define the change of notions from the body as the only physical structure that necessarily forms a person or animal to *embodiment*, which now have not only anatomical sense, but more semiotic and socio-cultural meanings. Gail Weiss and Honi Fern Haber have noticed this difference in the introduction to *Perspectives on Embodiment: The Intersections of Nature and Culture*:

The expression ‘the body’ has become problematized and replaced with term ‘embodiment’. The move from one expression to another corresponds directly to a shift from viewing the body as a nongendered, prediscursive phenomenon that plays a central role in perception, cognition, action and



nature to a way of living or inhabiting the world through ones acculturated body. (Weiss and Haber 1999: xiii)

This new perspective on human body as lived body was elaborated by the founder of the school of phenomenology, Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In the phenomenology of Husserl, the fundamental thesis is the doctrine of the intentionality of consciousness and transcendental subjectivity. The activity of consciousness underlies any form of culture and the initial experience of self-determination. (Husserl 1999[1913]) If Husserl claimed that the human body helps in determining the human existence through consciousness, then Merleau-Ponty shifts the focus explicitly on the body. Namely, the living human body (*le corps propre*) defines a way of being in the world; the body is not a thing, it is an attitude towards the world. Clear separation of the object and the subject gets lost, providing a new understanding of the body:

The psycho-physical event can no longer be conceived after the model of Cartesian physiology and as the juxtaposition of a process in itself [the body] and a cogitatio [the mind]. The union of soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary degree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence. (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 88–89)

The body appears as a complete system with all the functions that relate and interact with each other and with the outside world. This means for Merleau-Ponty that the body is not only experiencing but also performing body, it does not only perceive or cognize but also acts:

We said earlier that it is the body which “understands” in the acquisition of habit. This way of putting it will appear absurd, if understanding is subsuming a sense-datum under an idea, and if the body is an object. But the phenomenon of habit is just what prompts us to revise our notion of “understand” and our notion of the body. To understand is to experience the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance – and the body is our anchorage in the world. (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 144)

Thus, phenomenological approach shifted the attention from body as object to body as subject and emphasized the significance of body as lived body for human existence. Humans are embodied subjects, existing in the world as embodied, perceiving, cognizing and performing agents. This phenomenological point of view was also taken into account by G. Bataille, A. Artaud, A., S. Beckett, G. Deleuze, J.-P. Sartre, M. Heidegger, M. Bakhtin, V. Podoroga and others.

On this phenomenological basis, Mikhail Bakhtin also differentiated between the “inner” and “outer” body:

My own body is, at its very foundation, is inner body, while the other’s body, at its very foundation, an outward body. The inner body – my body as a moment in my self-consciousness – represents the sum total of inner organic sensations, needs and desires that are unified around an inner center. The outward aspect, as we saw, is fragmented and fails to attain independence and completeness. Moreover, since it always has an inner equivalent, it belongs – through the mediation of that equivalent – to my inner unity. (Bakhtin 1998: 48)

From this emerges a clear separation of the perception concept of Self and Other is also reflected in the philosophy of the body. According to Bakhtin, the love of Self and love of Others are very different. We can evaluate and identify the body of Other through contemplation, and thus bring to completion of Self internal and external body.

Only the other is *embodied* for me axiologically and aesthetically. In this respect, the body is not something self-sufficient: it needs the *other*, needs his recognition and his form-giving activity. Only the inner body (the body experienced as heavy) is *given* to a human being himself; the outer body is given for the other to be actively created by him”. (Bakhtin 1998: 51)

In developing the concept of the carnival in *Rabelais and His World* (1968 [1965]), Bakhtin also introduces the concept of the classic and the grotesque body. The interaction of these types shows development of culture and establishment traditions of a particular era through embodiment.

A full-fledged study of the embodiment and the disintegrated body occurred during the postmodern era. The XX century was marked by new interest in the internal state of human at different levels of perception his/her emotions, sexuality, language and mentality. As noted by Michel Foucault in his most famous work *The History of Sexuality* the concept of “embodiment” emerged in postmodernism as a kind of antithesis of the concept of spirituality. The body is an essential component of being and consciousness of man and main mediator between human and the surrounding world (Foucault 2004 [1976]: 211). In addition to the issues of phenomenological body, the issues of body politics – the discursive regulation and control of the body, – and semiotic body – symbolic and representational uses of the body – have emerged (Scheper-Huges and Lock 1987). At this stage, many embodiment researchers appeal to the fact that the ideas of postmodernist philosophers have moved to a new stage, the

so-called information age. Behind the wall of advertising, the latest technologies and the constant propagation of the “right” way of life, the body plays one of the primary roles. The body-centrism of our days is radically different from the ideas of the 20th century, even though they lie at the basis of the current perception of the human body.

Postmodern thinkers have tried to push the boundaries of these issues to their limits. The human body has become a new baseline for studying consciousness, exploring sensuality space, expanding and going beyond the boundaries of the known phenomenological approach. G. Tulchinskiy in his article *Word and body of postmodernism. From phenomenology of insanity to the metaphysical freedom* (1999), argues that embodiment paradigm has opened an opportunity to consider the boundaries of the body ontology, opening the border for understanding the female body, the philosophy of holiness and corporeality, understanding of the real and the inaccessible.

On the other hand, there are approaches that try to move beyond the traditional discussions of phenomenological body and transform the human body yet again into an empty vessel. Turning to the ideas of J. Deleuze, V. Kutyrev (2010) asserts that the increased emphasis of attention on embodiment turns it back into the notion of *corpus*, an ordinary receptacle. If everything is a body, then there is no special body, a living body in its specific identity. Describing the problem of the emptiness of the present body, V. Kutyrev (2010) recalls the concept of a “body without organs” elaborated by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* (1969). This idea is taken from Antonin Artaud, the representative of the European avant-garde and the author of the “cruel theater”. As a man of art, Artaud saw in the body (primarily the actor’s) a pure burst of energy, passion, dance and theatrical performance. His “cruelty” called for destroying individuality and helping to understand the energy of art through his embodiment at the limit of acting opportunities. However, the idea of such a body is lost, and appears in a different light:

A body without organs is a somatic body. This is a formless, structureless formation, a sort of “cleared space” for putting up signs or implanting chips. “Protoplasmic substance”, “medium of intensity”, “kinesthetic amoeba” - these are its typical definitions in postmodernism. (Kutyrev 2010: 16)

Foucault himself made a considerable contribution to the study of the body politics and the hegemonic discourse about the possibilities, norms and revealing of direct link between social

and bodily practices. Showing in his works the historical development of notions about sexuality and the body, Foucault identifies interrelation between these processes and the emergence of the phenomenon of “disciplinary power”. Embodiment allows inserting the body itself in one or another discourse. Exploring the work of various social institutions, analyzing the history of art and power, Foucault defines the human body as a carrier of meaning. In his book *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (1991: 83), he gives small but full understanding of the importance of body: “The body is the inscribed surface of events (traces by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a disassociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration”.

Another one thinker Jean-Luc Nancy devoted an entire book to the study of the body, appropriately titled as *Corpus* (1992). For Nancy the body is an object, through which occurs the formation of *sense* and understanding. An important role is played by the definition of the body through the touch. Despite the fact modern society has lost the original body experience, it is still important for understanding the sensual part of human and thinking.

“A corpus is not a discourse: however, what we need here is a corpus”. The corpus is and must be needed in many senses, subject to the double bind that Nancy, just a bit later, says must overtake any project of presenting the unrepresentable. There can be no corpus as such, itself, but the corpus can be catalogued, anatomized, and seismographed. (Shapiro 1994: 61)

Nancy is also distinguish body from the concept of “flesh”, “skin”, “muscle” and “face”. Dmitri Mikhel (2006: 77-87) separates these concepts in the reality of modern culture: “flesh” is the property of cultivated sexuality, “skin” the object of cosmetic manipulations, “face” is what remains of the body when it is transferred to the TV screen, “muscle” is the subject of bodybuilding and sports medicine. Here it is possible to see, how “the touch” of the body almost disappears. At the same time, the body appears for Nancy as the basis of meaning and the limit of thought.

Another perspective to the development of the human body approaches it a fundamentally semiotic center. The value of the body goes from traditional culture to modern, but also begins to illuminate new issues related to the understanding of embodiment. The experience of understanding the world, space, self and others, reflecting social attributes, all this gives new and far from negative direction for development.

As a result, it is possible to say that on the level of the presence of the image of the body

as a commodity and a convenient tool, there is also a craving for the knowledge of sensual embodiment. Here, I want to note that almost all views implemented to body in its socio-cultural, spiritual, biological and material aspect are reflected in art. The problems of the human body are oriented not only to the study of natural phenomena (one of which is the human body), but also to the comprehension of a specific world, embodied by man, the world of culture and art, which distinguishes man from the natural world. However, the body is also an inseparable natural link, between man and the world around him. According to I. Bykhovskaya, the body can be considered as a “natural body”, “social body” and “cultural body”. I will single out the concluding stage of the sociocultural body:

“Cultural body” is a product of culturally appropriate formation and use of the human bodily origins. The cultural body sort of “removes” the characteristics of the other two levels of bodily existence; it is a kind of quintessence, the completion of the process of transition from “impersonal”, natural-bodily prerequisites to the actual human, not only socio-functional, but also personal being of embodiment. (Bykhovskaya 1998: 249)

A. Kuzmin (2010: 124) identifies several reasons for the appealing to the living body, despite its imagery and simulacrum imposed by postmodernists.

- (1) Development of bioethics. In a broad sense, addressing the body will allow, in addition to solve ethical, medical, social, legal and legislative problems. It allows to consider the role of “bodily” human impact on its surrounding ecosystem from a new point of view. In this perspective that it is possible to evaluate the results of the development and application of certain technologies in medicine and biology.
- (2) Formation of a human personality through cognition of bodily practices. Comprehension of bodily culture is necessary for the formation of the spiritual and moral foundation of man.
- (3) The human body as the medium of symbolic value. This manifests itself in a large number of subcultures and social groups seeking to assert their status and bodily attributes.
- (4) The human body as the basis of medical humanism.

Art, as a fundamental reflection of reality, also perceived changes in the concepts of body and

embodiment, external and internal, beauty and earthiness, materiality and spirituality. The natural and tangible states of the body, the concepts of “pain” and “suffering”, are combined in biological and cultural-semiotic aspects. The embodiment allows to realize and develop a certain culture, as well as determine its importance within the framework of art. The human body is one of the basic coordinates of any culture, and social changes are reflected nowadays in contemporary art. In the next subchapter, I will look at the types of modern art where the human body becomes the starting point of art development.

## **1.2 Body in the plastic arts**

The human body, residing in a particular culture and involved in social life, becomes not so much a natural as a cultural object and subject. Moreover, the body and a variety of its manifestations (embodiment) is literally permeated with social meaning, the semantics of which is ambiguous and depends on the historical and cultural conditions.

The problem of delimiting the boundaries of body art lies in the understanding of the term and its blurry definitions. Under the body art fall various techniques of body modification, the direction of body painting and the beauty industry. At the same time, body art is also seen as a logical continuation of the avant-garde, which is connected with the concept of performance art and other subspecies that are related to modern art. Historically, the changes in art corresponded to both social and philosophical norms associated with the study of perception, reflection, and aesthetics. According to Robert Atkins, “[...] body art is just what its name implies: an art form in which the artist's body is the medium rather than the more conventional wood, stone, or paint on canvas” (1990: 34). By referring to this concise and general definition, it is difficult to identify all the differences that are concealed in the term of body art.

The term “body art” as defined by Atkins can also include theatrical art and contemporary dance, which directly depends on the performativity of the human body in art. However, for the specific context and way the body is used in these arts these types of art give the necessary tools for the next creation of the concept of performance art has been applied. Next, I will consider the significant aspects in the history of art, which assign to the understanding of problem of embodiment a primary task for the development of modern theater and dance.

Studying the peculiarities of aesthetics of performativity, Erica Fischer-Lichte indicates that from the perspective of the change in the meaning of the myth to a ritual, and the theatrical text to a spectacle, one can say that the “performative turn” happened much earlier than the 20th century, with the establishment of such disciplines as ritual studies and theater studies in the XIX century (Fischer - Lichte 2015: 54-55). In addition to passing from the story to the incarnation of text, a clear interpretation of the assigned role and image, certain relationships between the event on stage and the audience, the theater also addresses a new understanding of embodiment, communication with the public and understanding of the stage action (Fischer-Lichte 2015).

The twentieth century in Russia brought a wave of change to the traditional theater, creating such a thing as a “plastic theater”, which became a separate trend in Russia in the late 1970s. Gegryus Matskyavichyus, the creator of this kind of theatrical art determined that the plastic theater uses certain “expressive means of drama, plastics, dance, pantomime, circus and variety”, however, it excludes the presence of the spoken text, since “the language of plastics is so rich that the need for words disappears” (Yushkova, Matskyavichyus 1987). Elena Yushkova devoted her book *Plastika preodoleniya* (Plastic of overcoming) to the peculiarities of plastic theater and personality of Gegryus Matskyavichyus, and she also indicates a direct impact of people like Isadora Duncan, founder of plastic dance, Vsevolod Meyerhold, director and founder of biomechanics, director Alexander Tairov, teacher of acting, Mikhail Chekhov, as well as well-known theorists who represented by Vyacheslav Ivanov, Andrei Bely, Sergei Volkonsky and Maximilian Voloshin on the development of bodily expressiveness as an art (Yushkova 2016).

However, in order not to retell the history of changes in the theatrical style, I will focus only on some personalities, which, in my opinion, influenced the further development of both body perception and performance art.

The origins of plastic theater can be found long before 1970, for example the theater of cruelty of Antonin Artaud, which was mentioned in the previous subchapter. He opened up new functions of embodiment and the meanings of the visual image.

Body language forms the physical sphere of the theater of cruelty, which, according to its creator, introduces metaphysics into souls through the skin, through extreme cruelty, brought to its logical end. Scream, cry, gesture, a sign of Artaud and Bataille allow to break through on the other side of

the language, speech from the over-real to the sub-materialistic, to the animal, to the primordial of the cosmic elements of vitality, to perform a kind of exorcist rite of spiritual purification. (Manyakovskaya 2005: 73-74)

Artaud's idea of the limitations of words as a means of expression of thought and opposition between the artistic text and the creation of the perfect form (Maksimov 2000), attracted attention and were realized by Vsevolod Meyerhold.

Vsevolod Meyerhold was a Russian and Soviet theatre director, actor and theatrical producer. His provocative experiments dealing with physical being and symbolism made his school one of the general trends in the modern international theatre. Meyerhold declared the necessity of departing from the principle of lifelikeness of Stanislavsky's school, and proposed the concept of "conditional theater". The visual image, one element of which was the plastic expressiveness of the actor, was put in the forefront. He assumed that the gestures, postures, attitudes and silence determine the truth of human relations, and they are the basic material for the actor. For this, he proposed his own system of exercises – *biomechanics*. This system was supposed to allow maximize the productivity of physical movements and conscious approach to the creation of the scenic image by using the transition from the outer to the inner awareness of the character's motives. However, biomechanics is not just a set of known exercises. Biomechanics, invites the audience to become part of the action, identifying not with the hero (as in psychological theater by Stanislavsky) but with the collective community. (Aronson 2007)

According to Fischer – Lichte, Meyerhold contrasted concept of the implementation with his conception of the body as a material, a mechanical subject:

If the concept of implementation implied that the actor can influence the viewer only on the condition that the latter is capable of interpreting the movements made by the actor as signs with definite meanings, then the concept of Meyerhold is based on the idea that the reflexively excited, the actor's body in motion directly affects the body of the viewer [...] the movements of the actor were seen as a stimulus that aroused a response in the viewer and induced him to generate meaning independently. (Fischer – Lichte 2015: 148)

A man who was able to combine the concepts of the great drama schools and to open its own unique concept of the plastic theater was Jerzy Grotowski, - Polish theater director and researcher of the contemporary theater's essence. Grotowski shook the world of the theater in the 1960s and 1970s when the theoretical background of the psychological theater, the theater



of cruelty and the conventional theater was rethought anew. He was able to apply the meaning of ritual, body, image and soul in one concept. (Stepanova 2008)

Grotowski offers a completely new model of the theater, in the center of which is not an artistic text, but the actor himself. The actor is the concentration of all theatrical art, who skillfully uses his body, intellect, and soul to become an expressive medium of the theater, supporting the only important task of communication between the actor and spectator (Stepanova 2008).

By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion. This is an ancient theoretical truth, of course, but when rigorously tested in practice it undermines most of our usual ideas about theatre. It challenges the notion of theatre as a synthesis of disparate creative disciplines - literature, sculpture, painting, architecture, lighting, acting (under the direction of a metteur-enscene). (Grotowski 2002 [1968]: 19)

The body within the meaning of Grotowski's conception is neither material nor a tool for creating certain signs. Spirit and body are united and are not subordinate to the actor, but rather the contrary help him discover and experience their full potential at all levels of awareness (Fischer-Lichte 2015).

To achieve inner freedom and bodily sensual cognition, the actor must be able to control his body. To fulfill this idea, Grotowski partially used the technique of biomechanics, which was expressed in the collection *Acting Training 1959-1962* and describes techniques of personal training for discovering the creative potential of an actor.

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses. (Grotowski 2002 [1968]: 16-17)

Thanks to intensive work on himself, the actor appears in the form of the ideal "holy actor", a man who has overcome all internal and external borders of his personality (Grotowski 2002[1968]).

As in the theater, and in the sphere of modern dance, new types of representation were synthesized as well as new understanding of the bodies through the prism of art. The twentieth

century fully enjoyed changes in all areas and countries, so, for example, Japan was no exception in creating an unusual movement in contemporary dance named as Butoh dance.

The style of Butoh dance became recognizable thanks to the extraordinary appearance of the dancer usually naked and in white paint, as well as for non-classical dance movements with “jerking, twisting movements” (Kasai, Parsons 2003). The founder of this movement in contemporary dance, Tatsumi Hijikata began to create a new understanding of embodiment in the 1960s in Japan. Taking as a basis the knowledge gained by the German Expressionism School, the ideas of Dada school and surrealism, he created a new dance technique based on the body itself, rather than certain movement’s theory (Berezhnaya 2016).

Rejecting the classical aesthetics of the dance, based on the beauty and accuracy of movements, Butoh dance offers movements that emanate from the determination of the essence of the human body. A look inside your Self, a departure from the social and cultural attitudes, the essential feeling of the body – all these principles of Butoh dance.

Butoh dancers explore the impact that 'social time' has on our bodies. As we age, we learn what types of movements are acceptable, expected, even desirable, and we learn to suppress impulses, drives, and desires – especially those considered unacceptable, rude, or taboo. Exploring the confines of 'social time' and the bodily habits that emerge through socialization, Butoh dancers attempt to shift into what Kasai calls 'body time' [...] When the dancer transitions from 'social time' to the slower 'body time', s/he allows passive perception to direct movement, allowing stimuli to 'call' him or her in ways that most of us fail to hear and then respond to. The trifling itch or tic that we ignore in everyday social circumstances becomes a major cue for behavior modification for the Butoh dancer. (Kasai, Parsons 2003: 263)

Having a certain philosophy of the body and the unconscious that appears in the dance movements do not have a well-defined technique and reception, which makes it difficult to find a definition for this style. However, the existing The Butoh Dance Method allows opening the inner barriers and boundaries of the mind-body, giving to dancer to the impact of his true emotions and feelings that fill the body with dancing (Kasai, Parsons 2003).

Individual stories about appearance of different styles show how the significance of embodiment manifests itself in theatrical art and modern dance, synthesizing different theories into new directions of art, expanding the set framework of classical aesthetics and continuity, and change the relationship between the actor and the audience. The body can be a tool, an image, a personality, a point of reference and a center of expressiveness. However, body art is not a theater or dance, rather it points to the important presence of the body in the history of art.

Due to their development towards embodiment, such movements as body art and performance art have been formed. These notions often mix with each other because of the lack of clear boundaries that are often overcome in contemporary styles of classical performative art, but still present there.

In the next subchapter, I will try to distribute various types of art that are relevant to the concept of body art, as well as determine the characteristics of the bodily performance art.

### 1.3 The body art and its boundaries

To better understand and identify differences and relationships in body art, I will divide this concept into two categories. The first one will consider everything related to body modifications, and maybe it is better to use the term *corporeal art* for this category. The second category will consider the synthesis of body art and performance art as *bodily performance art*.

Corporal art occurs in almost all cultures. The body is a cloth for signs of belonging to a particular community, religion, sex, fashion and other. It appears as an instrument of freedom and limitation. Next, I will consider some of the types of *corporeal art*.

First of all, it is necessary to differentiate *body painting* practices as something separate from *body modifications*. Fighting coloring of soldiers before battle and colorful images applied to the body before religious rituals were preserved in some places and migrated to the European modern culture with the term body painting. In his book *A World on the Wane* (1961 [1955]), Levi-Strauss explores the traditions and customs of the Indian population Mbaya-Guaiani, paying attention to their tradition of body painting:

Painting was a part of manhood: not to be painted was to be one with the brutes. It is pretty well certain that if the custom still persists among Caduveo women it is mostly for erotic reasons. The reputation of these women is solidly established on both banks of the Rio Paraguay; many half-castes and Indians from other tribes have settled and married in Nalike. The painting of face and body may explain this attraction; certainly, they reinforce and symbolize it. (Levi-Strauss 1961: 164)

Use of body painting in modern society can be found in body art therapy, in everyday make-up and as a distinctive sign of various subcultures. The meaning and goals of body painting have not changed much since its first appearance.

Now it is possible to go to the next kind of corporeal art - *body modifications*. However, even here are several subspecies. The most famous of them is tattooing and piercing, but this includes also the scarification with implantation. Different types of body modification have a centuries-old history, which is constantly being transformed in connection with social and cultural norms. On the example of a tattoo, a traumatic placement of a pigment under the skin, it is possible to trace the tendency of popularity of body modification. Virilio (2001) in one of his interviews claimed that tattooing is one of the first things in the formation of art.

Art began with the cave and the tattooed body. Then there was the fresco and the mosaic, which are still inscribed in architecture. Then we have the portable work, the missal or easel painting, which is housed in a gallery such as the Uffizi, itself a passageway, a kind of dromos. This delocalization has increased and has played a not inconsiderable role in modern art and its dislocation of the fixed image, from perspective and then photography to today's virtual space, CD-Roms and clones – those specters which are not a double, the copy of an original, but active figures that refer to who knows what, and which are much more than specters. (Virilio, Sterckx 2001<sup>1</sup>)

Nevertheless, according to research done in 2016<sup>1</sup>, the tattooed body not in the past and three Americans out of ten out of ten has at least one tattoo. Tattooing (as well as other body modifications) is a kind of marking, it can mean both adherence to a certain subculture (also criminal, for example in Soviet times), ritual practice (Maori), and also as a part of the fashion trends that we can observe today. (Mescheryakov 2003)

Nevertheless, in the category of body modification, which is a way for self-identification, is so-called *extreme* body modifications. This definition includes such types of body modifications as eyeball tattooing, the insertion of implants into different parts of the body, genital modification and mutilation (both in men and women), nipple and tongue cutting, scarification, suspensions and other types of extreme body modification. Such kinds of corporeal art cause disgust and horror in many people, and most often, this is due to the fact that the outsider perceives extreme body modifications as cruel torture. However, adherents of such bodily expression are not so few; therefore, they can be defined as a special subculture. The representative and creator of the first online magazine, for people interested in different body modifications, Body Modification Ezine, Shannon Larratt, gives a little explanation for the most widely spread out questions in his book *ModCon: The Secret World of Extreme Body*

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<sup>1</sup>Available on [http://www.theharrispoll.com/health-and-life/Tattoo\\_Takeover.html](http://www.theharrispoll.com/health-and-life/Tattoo_Takeover.html)

*Modification* (2008):

In part it's pushing through a barrier. In part it's moving past your body, and in part it's moving more deeply into and exploring your body. In part it's exercising complete control over one's nervous system, and in part it's surrendering to it. Or perhaps it's as simple as pinching yourself to wake up from a dream. Until you actually wake up though, it's not so easy to be convinced it's a dream, is it? (Larrat 2008 :10)

According to Shannon Larratt – the main cause and task of extreme body modifications is the presence of bodily ritual practices. Interestingly, this subculture is not based on historical, religious and European cultural traditions of the body, but rather transforms the practices of various nations of Africa, Asia and America. Creation of personal rites and rituals, allows not only to expand social norms, but also to determine the boundaries of the own body and sensations (Larrat 2008).

To define the concept of *bodily performance art*, it is necessary to understand the constant questions: what performance art is and what its distinctive features are. The variety of definitions for this direction in art, which has become the main one in our days, confuses and discourages. In my opinion, Marvin Carlson provides the most understandable and complete definition of it in his work *Performance: A Critical Introduction*.

Performance art, a complex and constantly shifting field in its own right, becomes much more so when one tries to take into account, as any thoughtful consideration of it must do, the dense web of interconnections that exist between it and ideas of performance developed in other field and between it and the many intellectual, cultural, and social currents that condition any performance project today. These include what it means to be postmodern, the quest for a contemporary subjectivity and identity, the relation of art to structures of power, the varying challenges of gender, race, and ethnicity, to name only some of the most visible. (Carlson 1996[2004]: 4)

Proceeding from this definition, it can be revealed that the formation of performance art was influenced both by cultural, political and social processes of becoming in postmodern society. This direction in contemporary art appeared not so long ago, and received its wide spread since the 1960s. However, there is no one true work on the study of the concept of performance art.

The most popular and accessible book on this research question is *Performance Art: From Futurism to Present* (1988) by RoseLee Goldberg. The author is a curator of various exhibitions of contemporary art, as well as a professional art historian. The history of the performance art according to Goldberg began in 1896 in France with the play *Ubu the King* by Alfred Jarry and

proceeded to Futurism in Europe and Russia, Dada, Bauhaus, Actionism and modern performance art is of the sixties and in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> (Goldberg 1988). Despite the detailed and colorful selection, the book mostly covers a cut of certain cultural formation, but does not give a precise definition of performance art notion and body value in these practices.

To understand how widespread the notion of performance art is, it also possible to distinguish such areas as *actionism* and *happening*. Actionism is often equated with the very notion of performance art, or is singled out as the primary source of the latter. However, it is difficult to say what the specific differences are with similar definitions of these concepts. To avoid confusion, I will refrain from using the concept of actionism in favor of performance art. Happening, in turn, is one of the forms of performance, a distinctive feature of which is the lack of a clear script. The founder of this area is John Cage, who implemented his idea with elements of unpredictability of events in 1951 in his student works (Bernatskaya 1993).

Therefore, I will take as a basis for the existing notions of bodily performance art the works of one more art historian, Amelia Jones. In her book *Body Art / Performing the Subject* she gives more concrete definition, which explains the connection and importance of the body in the performance art (despite the fact that she uses the term *body art*).

The “unique” body of the artist in the body art work only has meaning by virtue of its contextualization within the codes of identity that accrue to the artist's name/body. Thus, this body is not self-contained in its meaningfulness; it is a body/self, regluing not only on an authorial context of “signature” but also on a receptive context is precisely the point (always already in place) at which the body becomes a “subject”. (Jones 1998:34)

In the book *The Artist's Body* she wrote a brief history of the development of body art and performance art, based on the idea of the body by Merleau-Ponty, Bakhtin, Martin Heidegger's and Baudrillard's notion of simulacra. Overcoming the era of Modernism and enters a new era of Postmodernism the artist's body acquires new concepts and meanings:

The artist's body becomes a gesturing, expressive body, sometimes an aggressively activist body (in tune with the protest movements of the 1960s and early 1970s), or perhaps a parodic, self-commodified body. (Jones 2012:22-23)

I will try to describe in a general manner the categories of the artist's body that Amelia Jones offers, to identify certain distinctions within the bodily art performance (Jones 2012: 23-43).

(1) *The existentialist, gesturing artist's body*

As a significant premise for the emergence of the 'gesturing body', Jones examines the appearance of the 'active painting' body by Jackson Pollock. His work could mark the transition from intimate and chamber process of the creation of works of art into a public act. This has opened the door for a completely new perception of the artist and his work. Then followed works of George Mathieu, Kazuo Shiraga, Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni. Various transformations of the Pollock idea were embodied in the works of artists of the mid-1960s; Carolee Scheemann and Lygia Clark interacted in their work with both: viewers and the female body, which was the gesturing artist's body. It is possible to say that the influence of Pollock gave impetus to the development of bodily performance art, social and cultural norms.

(2) *The 'everyday' artist's body*

Active emergence of the interest in social aspects, surrounding things and the notion of everyday life has allowed artists of the late sixties to reflect the individual and public moments in the performance art practices. Along with the artists who started to rethink the object of art through the body, new directions arose in dance, allowing "experimental dance of the 1960s insistently unveiled the laboring body of the dancer" (Jones 2012: 27). The development of bodily performance art trends rapidly succeeded each other, again breaking into several areas:

Body art's impulse to democratize leads in two directions from this period: the production of mundane actions (primarily among artists associated with Fluxus and Happenings); and what art historian Helen Molesworth has referred to as the registering of the body- in our case the everyday (desiring, fleshy) body-within the work of art. (Jones 2012: 27)

As an example, Jones brings the work by Carolee Scheemann, *Meat Joy* (1964), which contains both an erotic ritual, a tempted wild body, as well as references to the carnivalesque body by Bakhtin. Also arose bodily performances by Linda Montano, Janine Antoni and other "artists of the everyday mark the historical and social dimension of living with their performative bodies" (Jones 2012: 29).

(3) *The 'authentic' activist artist's body*

This category was formed in the early 1970s, at the peak of the protection of rights

movements. The use of artist's body as a form of actionism and protest involves virtually all topics, from racial discrimination and war, to the rights and protection of women. The most recognizable artists, in addition to the various activists groups, are Suzanne Lacy, Ana Mendieta and Mery Beth. According to Jones, this category of bodily performance art is directly related to the resistance of “endemic to the postmodern condition” (Jones 2012: 31) – the problems of commodity culture and the reality of simulacra by Jean Baudrillard.

(4) *The simulacral, self-reflexive body*

Enhanced technological development, as well as the culture of consumerism, mentioned in the previous category, was embraced by many artists from the late 1970s into the 1980s. Rethinking and popularizing the ideas of postmodernist thinkers exerted influence on forms and trend of contemporary art.

Paralleling the surface emphasis of popular culture's body beautiful cult, when the artist's body did mark its own appearance in the 1980s, it was produced as *simulacral*, as performative, as open to interpretive intervention. In the postmodern regime of what we are calling pancapitalism, as Jean Baudrillard famously pointed out in 1983, 'simulations' ('the generation by models of a real without origin or reality') begins to replace 'representation'. (Jones 2012:36)

This category includes works of such artists as Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, Claude Cahun, Urs Lüthi, Cindy Sherman, Hannah Wilke and others.

(5) *Technologized, dispersed artist's body*

The process of active technological development is reflected in the works of contemporary art since the 1960s. However, cybernetic and robotic body began to appear in 1980, along with the works of Vito Acconci, Rebecca Horn, Joseph Santarromana. Video installations, photographs and various visual art tools create a completely new category of artist's body. There is a shift from a natural and a living body to something mechanized and cybernetic. Artists in their works makes “re-articulations of their bodies as 'in pieces' or networked across cyberspace produce and relate to new kinds of 'enfleshed' and embodied social space” (Jones 2012: 42). Since the 1990s, the body has ceased to be a specific repository of various social and political issues, but has shifted attention of the self "inside out".

(6) *The body in pain/The personal is political*



I have approached to the category of body art that interests me most, which will also be present in the further analysis of my topic. Creation of a performative work through physical pain, suffering and injury is often associated with such classics of bodily performance as a duo Ulay / Abramovich, Jean Payne and Chris Burden. Personal feelings become common and the body goes into social, causing a strong empathy of the viewer and revealing the possibilities of the artist's body. Jones also points to a transition from personal to political issues depending on the topic and attachment to the normative subjectivity by the artist.

After this short review of the concepts and types of the corporeal art and bodily performance art, it is necessary to clarify their distinctive and similar characteristics. I will use and elaborate some general concepts, and features, that Erica Fischer-Lichte used to determine the performance art in her book *The aesthetics of performativeness* (2015).

#### (1) *Symbolism*

Active symbolization of corporeal art and bodily art performance is a fundamental and integral part of them. According to Lotman, each epoch has its own symbols that reflect the ideology of the world as a set of ideas and views, people's attitude to the world: to the surrounding nature, to each other. Symbols are serve for stabilization or change of social relations. (Lotman 1992) Therefore, as for corporeal art, especially the category of body modifications, the human body, the form and manner of movement, its visual attributes, reflect both the psychological content of the personality and the cultural environment, which promotes the development of specific, ethnic, national and social characteristics. Here it is possible to single out the definition of *dress* by Joanne B. Eicher, which can be correlated to the concept of body modifications:

A system of nonverbal communication that enhances human beings interactions as they move in space and time. As coded sensory system, dressing the body occurs when human beings modify their bodies visually or through other sensory measures by manipulating color, scent, sounds and taste or by supplementing their bodies with articles of clothing and accessories, and jewelry. (Eicher 2000: 422)

Self-expression and self-representation through ritual bodily practices and a clear symbolism of these practices expand social norms and determine the needs of the

individual. According to D. Marshall, ritual practice has two consequences – belief and involvement. Both the first and second, can correlate with self-identification and involvement in this knowledge. (Marshall 2002)

Myth-ritual practices are expressed in almost all the works of performance art. The increased symbolization of the body and embodiment together with a definite narrative transforms a person through a transformed art. In contemporary art, the ambiguity of symbols, the lack of priorities in comparison, contributes to the fact that the interpretation varies from the concept of presentation, the idea of the author and the perception of this idea by the public. The body in bodily performance art can combine a hybrid of folklore notions and ritual practices with “enigmatic symbolism” (O’Reilly 2015 [2009]: 114).

#### (2) *Space and Time*

These two concepts – space and time – are key to performance art in general. Many factors can enter into these concepts, since the duration of the action and its representation in space are part of the performative practice. Fischer-Lichte believes that the most important achievement of the “performative turning” in aesthetics is appearance of the notion of “event”, which led to the basis of performance art. “Here and now” become the main criterion of the process, as well as all the accompanying concepts. (Fischer-Lichte 2015)

The representation, and presentation, of the body are made complex by factors beyond mere appearance: the subject’s self-consciousness, the influence of the medium being used, and the cultural and socio-political context in which the artist is working. (O’Reilly 2015 [2009]: 49)

If in performance art, time and space allow you not only to express your creative idea, but also to erase the boundaries between personal and public, then in the case of corporeal art remains the relationship issues between camera and intimacy. Taking into account the strong influence of the ritual, space and time can be modified depending on the goal. In body modification practices, these criteria are also necessary, fulfilling the function of isolation from the external society and the creation of a certain psychological atmosphere.

#### (4) *Interaction*

Unlike the theater, the boundaries between the artist of performance art and the audience are absent, and boundaries between the object and the subject of art are blurred. Absence of certain rules of conduct for spectators during the performance separates contemplation

and action. The presence and interaction with the public and inside the public permeates the performative action. Fischer-Lichte also notes the importance of actualizing the body and the body-material aspect, which correspond to the bodily performance art. (Fischer-Lichte: 2015)

In corporeal art, interaction occurs within the society of a certain subculture and as an opportunity to communicate with the outside world, and first of all with oneself.

Here I will add to Fischer-Lichte's list a new category of the "body in pain", which has an important value both in the corporeal art and bodily performance art.

(4) *Body in pain*

Pain is a strong link between the practices of body modifications and bodily performance art. Its meaning and perception of it are always different. The evocation of a feeling of empathy in the viewer, the pursuit of adrenaline, a sense of superiority over his body shell, a way of accepting himself, a revival of sensuality and emotion. Pain entails self-transformation and liberation from stigma. Pain is familiar to everyone, but it causes some difference according to particular qualities of our body. (Larrat 2002)

The pain either isn't an issue, or it's an important part of the process (the concept of "playing through the pain"). Many people would argue that the pain brings with it some level of value or honor, but even then, it's clear that the pain is not the purpose. Even for pain rituals, the physical discomfort simply opens a doorway. Pain is not really the goal. It certainly isn't for body modification. (Larrat 2002[2008]: 47)

Pain is also not the main goal for bodily performance art, however, as in body modification practices, it is the strong vehicle and medium for expression of embodiment.

Despite its clarity and obviousness, the pain raises questions. How does it work in the case of bodily performance art, I am going to find out in my next subchapter.

#### **1.4 Pain as a medium of bodily performance art**

Pain is one of the strong feelings, which is directly connected with a human embodiment. It is also difficult to express a concept of pain, as well as to describe it. The understanding of the value and mechanisms of physical pain has been developed in medicine, studying its properties and influence on a body and how the perceptions of the person is reflected in culture. Our social and cultural norms set parameters for understanding of this phenomenon. Pain is understood in opposition “I – Other”, but at the same time can not be understood by other person up to the end:

For the person whose pain it is , it is “effortlessly” grasped (that is, even with the most heroic effort it cannot be grasped); while for the person outside the suffers’s body , what is “effortless” is not grasping it (it is easy to remain wholly unaware of its existence; even with effort, one may remain in doubt about its existence or may retain the astonishing freedom of denying its existence; and, finally, if with the best effort of sustained attention one successfully apprehends it, the aversiveness of the “it” one apprehends will only be shadowy fraction of the actual “it”) (Scarry 1985: 4)

The subject of pain is not new in art, as well as a subject of embodiment. Nevertheless, at the same time, its development and change is also connected with medical and philosophical representations, many of which have been described in the first part and are not separable from a concept of a body. Pain, as well as a body, is a culture conductor, the medium who connects experience, practices and understanding together. Understanding of external and internal borders begins with a pain problem.

One of the first philosophical elaborations of pain by Descartes became a starting point in studying of understanding of division of consciousness and physical feelings.

[T]here is nothing which this nature teaches me more expressly (nor more sensibly) than that I have a body which is adversely affected when I feel pain [ . . . ]. Nature also teaches me by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst, etc., that I am not only lodged in my body as a pilot in a vessel, but that I am very closely united to it, and so to speak so intermingled with it that I seem to compose with it one whole. For if that were not the case, when my body is hurt, I, who am merely a thinking thing, should not feel pain, for I should perceive this wound by the understanding only, just as the sailor perceives by sight when something is damaged in his vessel. (Descartes 1997: 183)

It is possible to observe that by the end of the age of Enlightenment, the subject of pain has

been replaced with the image of suffering. The suffering taught people through pain, created ideological norms on such concepts as beauty, justice, the truth and a sin. Pain did not exist separately from these concepts and merged with something more tangible – suffering. (Hajdarova 2013)

The religious aspect of pain and suffering is greatly contributed to the niche of art that depicts pain based on sacred scripture, as well as a variety of myths as opposed to holy martyrdom. The sufferings of Christ are the highest point of punishment, the canonical and transitional image of depicting torture and violence. (Hajdarova 2013)

A variety of studies in the fields of culture and history show a change in attitude towards pain and body, through art. Kurth Silke (2009), who studies the era of the 16th and 17th centuries, he identifies interesting changes when comparing art images of four mythological plots of Medusa, Titius, Prometheus and Mars and the holy martyrs. It is interesting that in the first case the concept of suffering is depicted so that the viewer literally hears the cries of pain. Author believes that due to the emphasis on the emphatic side, this marked the first change in the attitude of the human body and its emotions. However, in the depiction of the martyrs, despite the presence of both tools for torture and bodily harm, the emotional expression of suffering is absolutely not visible. The explanation is simple: the more cruel torments, the more elevated the soul of the martyr and deeper his faith. The more cruel existence on this side portends the more enlightened life on the other side. Torture does not give a suffering look to the martyr; on the contrary, it enlightens his face, which refers to the sky. Damaged flesh in this case is not a call to emotional empathy, rather to admiration and awareness of the strength of a religious impulse.

The historian of art Karen Van den Bergh in his works tried to find out why the theme of suffering and violence has so widespread throughout the history of art. Starting from the Christian postulates, it turns out that the theme of suffering and anguish is the main one. The author believes that the depicted scenes should cause empathy, which will contribute to “self-construction and a challenge for meaning formation” (Bergh 2007: 175 – cited through Hajdarova 2013: 116). A person experiencing pain - even if it happens by force - in a specific way “understands” himself in his attitude to the world and this understanding is always culturally conditioned.

The interpretation of the concept of pain during the era of the European modern

philosophy was given initially by Charles Baudelaire, Friedrich Nietzsche and, of course, by the work of Sigmund Freud. The emphasis shifted to corporeality, which reveals also vague concepts related to pain and suffering. Nietzsche pointed to the fundamental nature of the experience of pain and drew attention to its deficiency in modern man. Deprivation and bodily agony in the past centuries of fear were a “good school” and “voluntary exercises in pain” are the means necessary for self-preservation of a person. (Hajdarova 2013) Pain also manifests itself in its binary opposition, especially in relations between people and understanding of self through the concept of compassion:

The joy of the damage caused to the other, is something other than cruelty; The latter is / pleasure /, caused by compassion, and reaches its climax at the culmination of compassion itself (in the case when we love the one we torture). If someone else hurt someone we love, then we would be furious, and compassion would be extremely painful. Nevertheless, we love him, and we hurt him. That is why compassion is made monstrously sweet: it is a contradiction of two contrasting and strong instincts acting here / extremely exciting. Self-injuring and lust, get along, and are one with each other the same. (Nietzsche 1996: 734)

The appeal to a subject of corporality in a postmodernism, generally thanks to Foucault's works, is about reconsideration of concepts of sexuality, violence in society, emergence of various discourses, has opened new opportunities in understanding and reproduction of questions of a body and pain.

Pain is inseparable from the body and concepts of embodiment, which also contain an understanding of physical and spiritual suffering through pain. The embodiment of pain in art now does not entail neither catharsis nor even sympathy for the sufferer on the part of the recipient. But it is important to notice, that contemporary art uses this theme, not only out of a desire to shake the moral sense of the viewer, but only as a way of manifesting new forms and contents of art. It is here that you can take into account bodily performance art, which uses various tools related to body in pain practice.

For Ernst Jünger, the culture itself is determined by its relation to pain. Arguing about the peculiarities of modern civilization, he defines pain as something falling into the sphere of chance, linking pain to the dominant value system. The modern world, the “world of sensitivity”, or, in other words, the “civilization of comfort”, excludes the pain of life, while the heroic and cultic worlds discipline the body and therefore “include pain and arrange life so that it is ready at any moment to meet with pain” (Jünger 2000 [1934]: 482-508).

Despite the claims that the importance of empathy and the initial concepts of pain and perception have stayed in the past, I can take a reverse position. Ideals and values return to the “earthly”, the body is the proof of life, and pain is a specific language for life and death. Despite the fact that one of the main problems of pain is poverty of its language (Wittgenstein 1984), pain is the direct medium of communication between culture and art. On the example of bodily performance art, pain is the catalyst of the public and individual, conveying the truth and clarity of perception of the internal and external. In attempts to create a world that excludes the presence of pain, contemporary art tries to return the public to the realization of their own corporeality.

Returning to the principles of phenomenological perception and analysis of embodiment, pain allows us to distinguish it between the subject and the object. Rethinking the philosophy of the phenomenological body by Merleau-Ponty, where he devotes almost all his research to the search for the truth of self-determination and sensation of being, pain is a definite indicator of this unstable structure of the transition from the outer to the inner, from the finite to the long and from the union of the Self with Other. The sensation of pain is the transitional phenomenon between own body and the flesh of the world, where it works from the analysis of feelings.

The flesh (of the world or my own) is not contingency, chaos, but a texture that returns to itself and conforms to itself. I will never see my own retinas, but if one thing is certain for me it is that one would find at the bottom of my eyeballs those dull and secret membranes. And finally, I believe it—I believe that I have a man’s senses, a human body— because the spectacle of the world that is my own, and which, to judge by our confrontations, does not notably differ from that of die others, with me as with them refers with evidence to typical dimensions of visibility, and finally to a virtual focus of vision, to a detector also typical, so that at the joints of the opaque body and the opaque world there is a ray of generality and of light.( Merleau-Ponty 1968 [1964]: 146)

Bakhtin offers a more interesting approach to understanding the aesthetic body, where the body of another person is an outer body, and its value is given to me directly. Only in the body of other, I can contemplate beauty, and beauty is both an ethical and aesthetic category of my relationship to other. (Bakhtin 1986: 13) That is possible to say that through the analysis of the boundaries of the body and the sensations of the Other, we can perceive ourselves. In this case, to beauty and other experience, I can add compassion in relation to other. The pain seen in the other can be transformed into an understanding of pain and the definition of its boundaries in self, especially if art is used for this transfer of meanings. Understanding is a necessary

Bakhtin's method of cognition, and is inseparable from the Other. Constant awareness of the presence of the Other creates the need for a dialogue that leads to the discovery of understanding. It is interesting that another well-known concept of dialogue and carnival by Bakhtin, which are often used for analysis of performance art, can not be applied to body in real pain within the framework of bodily performance art. The abolition of norms, the appeal to bodily, constant development, the shifting of social roles and other indicative qualities of carnival corresponds to the concept of bodily performance art, until form of laughter meets the concept of pain. Pain, especially inflicted on oneself, destroys the fine line between illusion and reality, revealing other principles of communication, based not on laughter, but on compassion.

By perceiving pain as a medium of transitivity from one state to another, it is possible to see how different the concepts of pain exist because of one or other historical and cultural overtones. The absence of pain and the possibility of its perception can erase the boundary between the inner and outer, the other and me; its absence in a person's life can erase such concepts as compassion and help. For analyzing the difference and connection between the understanding of pain and a certain culture, it is necessary to turn to its language. Semiotic analysis allows not only to reveal the attitude to pain, but also to understand the principles and mechanisms of its interaction with the personality and others, revealing the difference between in the perception of this phenomenon.

Art offers in this case its own language for expressing emotions, but its understanding also depends on certain cultural attitudes. Changing its attention from representations of body, the history of art, like philosophy, goes into the era of the experiencing body, where bodily performance art fully uses not only the concepts of postmodern thought, but also combines the entire accumulated experience of views on this topic. Pain occupies one of the most significant positions in bodily performance practices, fulfills the role not only of the medium between culture and man, but also the necessary experience of understanding of the Self and Other.

[...] the experience of pain remains the last outpost of the genuine, due to which it becomes popular with modern action art, focused on criticizing simulations and searching for islets of real, authentic contact with the world and with self. Pain removes the possibility of forgetting. It awakens us in our existence, breaking the forgetting of the "natural attitude" and rejecting to the beginnings of the constitutive mechanisms of subjectness. (Lehtsier 2007: 560)



Pain in the bodily performance art does not occupy only one of the philosophical representations, but is a conductor and a connecting substance between anthropological understanding, phenomenological, existential as well as aesthetic and historical, cultural and social understanding of this phenomenon.

Various artists who addressed the topic of pain as a vehicle for searching of certain meanings and levers of influence on the public are well known in the European and American history of bodily performance art during the 60s, 70s and 80s. Moreover, if the body in pain was replaced by a discourse on cybernation, then in the space of Russia it is still relevant and effective.

One of the representatives of the direction of bodily performance art is Petr Pavlensky, who, thanks to his works, received not only mass fame, but also constant discussion of critics and the public within the framework of understanding contemporary art and its contact with protest actions. In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at his works through the prism of embodiment and pain.

## **2. Phenomenon of Petr Pavlensky**

In this chapter, I approach the object of my analysis, namely the analysis of the phenomenon of Petr Pavlensky on the stage of contemporary art. This part will elucidate the meaning of such a thing as pain in bodily performance, as well as the peculiarities of its perception in a cultural and historical context. In subchapter 2.1, I briefly review the most significant representatives of Russian performance that influenced to the development of contemporary art and bodily performance art in Russia. In subchapter 2.2, I give a short overview of the Petr Pavlensky works and in the next subchapter 2.3 an analysis of his bodily performances and the notion of body in pain through his performances. In the final subchapter 2.4, I refer to the phenomenon of holy fools in Russia and the characteristics of the perception of Pavlensky's works by public.

### **2.1. History of Russian Bodily Performance**

In order to examine in more detail the works of the popular contemporary artist Petr Pavlensky, it is necessary to turn to the history of Russian performance. Unfortunately, the development and characteristics of performance artists in Russia are not so widely studied by the scientific community. However, in the handbook on the performance by RoseLee Goldberg, whole chapter is dedicated to the prehistory of the Russian performance (Goldberg 2011: 39-59). Also I want point the definition of performance by performance artist and theoretic Guillermo Gómez-Peña, which points to a direct connection between politics and performance art:

Performance is a unique and elliptical form of democracy, a wonderfully clumsy form of democracy. You get dirty, but it works. It involves the active participation of everyone present, the constant fleshing out of our civic, aesthetic, and theoretical muscles. But the rules and dynamics change depending on the composition of every group. Some groups work better than others. (Gómez-Peña 2001: 237)

Of course, the first steps towards avant-garde and futurism were carried out in Russia in 1910-

1920. Walks with painted faces, new manifestos and speeches led by Vladimir Mayakovsky, David Burliuk, Viktor Hlebnikov and Alexander Kruchenykh called for the art of the future, which offers new forms and concepts. Revolutionary changes took place in the theater under the ideas of Nikolai Foregger, and the completely new and unique biomechanics of Vsevolod Meyerhold, in the visual art in works of Kazimir Malevich, as well as in the political arena. It can be said that the rapid changes in art were directly related to the political implication, promising changes not only in the political system, but also in the perception of life itself. Technological progress, mechanization and the creation of new social norms inspired innovators in the field of art to new and unthinkable achievements, setting certain logic in the development of contemporary art. (Goldberg 2011)

However, the most radical personality of that period, experiencing the limits of cultural and social permissiveness, was Vladimir Goltshmidt. Known as the “futurist of life” (Anderson 2010), he fully embodied in his works the structure of the Bakhtin’s concept of carnival. Grotesque and laughter component pierced his strange poems, a walk completely naked under the title of *Doloy stid!* (Down with shame!), the erection of a monument to himself and other works. Thanks to his expressive and provocative style, Goltshmidt can be called the predecessor of “Russian actionism”.

Entering a new era under the name of the USSR, the avant-garde, futurism, cubism and other directions began to develop on their own, but already under close monitoring by the authorities (Golomshtok 1994).

Performance art was present in private apartments and narrow circles of creative people, but it did not have such freedom of expression as artists in Europe and USA had during the 60s and 70s. This trend expresses itself in the works of artists of Moscow conceptualism in the 1970s. The groups *Gnezdo* (Nest), *Kollektivnyye deystviya* (Collective Actions) and artists Rimma and Valery Gerlovins, Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid tried to develop contemporary art in conditions of censorship and prohibition. (Tupitsyn 1996)

The so-called trips outside the city, festivals for the initiated, apartment exhibitions all this existed also in the 1980s with representatives of such groups of artists as *TOTART* (Total Artistic Action), *Muhomor* (Amanita), *SZ* (Victor Skersis and Vadim Zakharov). Despite the conditions of secrecy from the general public, Moscow conceptualism occupies a significant place in the history of Russian contemporary art, showing the freedom of thought and the

personality of each artist involved in this movement. According to Mikhail Epshtein, the works of the Moscow conceptualists were closely connected both with literature and with the texts of European philosophers.

Russian conceptualism embraced such features of Western postmodernism, expressed especially in the philosophy of J. Derrida and J. Baudrillard, as a complete gaming decentralization of all structures, the deconstruction of any cultural meaning to the primary atoms of the invention, the discovery in any original of the features of a clever forgery and substitution, including reality as such - the most thorough and thought out of all fakes, a surrogate of the highest grade. It is also important to point out some similarity of the conceptualism to Buddhist reflection, which consistently isolates imaginary meanings and significant emptiness in the layers of the objective world. (Epshtein 2014: 82)

The real explosion associated with performance art falls to 1990s. Moreover, if other movements gradually replace the bright and shocking works in the West, then in Russia it only started to develop. The body as an instrument of art acquired new meanings and was perceived as the source of limitless possibilities and actions. The appearance of bodily performance art, which disturbed the public, can be attributed to the first works of the “Moscow actionism” movement that along with the Vienna actionists provoked the public with their works. The first such live performance was the work of artists of the group *E.T.I.* (Expropriation of the Territory of Art), which included Anatoly Osmolovsky, Dmitry Pimenov and Grigory Gusarov. Using the very center of Moscow (both in the sacred and political sense) Red Square, artists and their followers formed on its cobblestones with their own bodies an obscene word denoting the male sexual organ. The political component was already an integral part of the period of “Russian actionism”, which is still famous for its radical methods. The action was held after the release of the “law of morality”, and the performance was on the eve of Lenin's birthday, directly opposite the mausoleum. This allowed to interpret the actions of artists as a desecration of the memory of the great leader, which resulted in a criminal case. (Baskova 2015)

The spirit of the carnival culture with its inherent understanding of buffoonery and foolishness developed further in the works of Oleg Kulik, who was remembered as a man-dog, but also used images of other animals in his performances. Having started his media popularity with the performance *Beshennyy pes, ili Posledneye tabu, okhranyayemoye odinokim Tserberom* (Mad Dog, or Last taboo, guarded by a lonely Cerberus) in 1993, Kulik immediately attracted the attention of the public. Naked and tethered to the chain (which was held by the actionist Alexander Brener), Kulik was at the entrance to the art gallery of Marat Guelman,

periodically attacking spectators and passing cars. Among the many other performances that Oleg Kulik denotes as Zoophrenia, it is worth to mention *Ya kusayu Ameriku, Amerika kusayet menya* (I bite America, America bites me) in 1997 and *Sobaka Pavlova* (Pavlov's Dog) in 1996. In the first work, he makes reference to the famous performance of Joseph Beuys *I like America, And America likes me* in 1974. During this performance, the artist spent several days in the company of a living coyote in the René Bloch gallery in New York. Kulik, in turn, rushes, defecates and bites the public in the similitude of the dog. The second performance *Sobaka Pavlova* (Pavlov's dog) was created under the supervision of the scientists of Rotterdam University. The artist for several weeks trying to behave like a Pavlov's dog: lives in a box and walks on a leash within the European biennial *Manifesta 1*. The spectacularity and appearance of previously tabooed embodiment opened up new concepts of communication between contemporary art and the public (Drews-Sylla 2006).

Thus, not all of Kulik's *extravagant* artistic projects relate so much to the Russian context as to the global ethical problems of the modern world. The utopian project of creating the New Man belongs not only to the former Soviet Union, which is gone forever, it is also a project of the future, fraught with the dangers that the Kulik action demonstrates to us. (Drews-Sylla 2006: 178)

Despite the fact that the activity of the "Moscow activists" adopts the practices and techniques of their Western colleagues, the topic of pain and body is perceived differently because of another cultural and social context. One of the first representatives of bodily performance art, where the theme of physical pain is clearly expressed, is Oleg Mavromatti with work *Ne ver' glazam svoim* (Do not believe your eyes) in 2000. The artist was crucified on the cross with a razor cut on his back the phrase "I'm not the son of God"; the action lasted until the artist considered the pain intolerable. After this bodily performance, Mavromatti was accused of insulting the feelings of believers and was forced to leave the country (Baskova 2015). The artist explained the concept of his work as follows: "I do not know of any artist in the world cinema, which naturally played a pain. This scene symbolizes real suffering, a real sacrifice, on which art has speculated long enough" (Vorsobin 2000). According to Andrei Kovalyov (2007: 6-7), an immediate witness of many performances and the author of the most detailed book on Russian actionism, the crucifix of Mavromatti put an end to the immediate feeling of the body, as a tool for shocking the public. Political stability has led bright and shocking performances into a more tranquil and intimate channel of art galleries.

The artist's body no longer seeks the public in open spaces and does not try to use the structure of carnival culture. Now it becomes an intimate object of personal rituals, a medium of communication primarily between the artist and his/her self-consciousness. Reflection becomes the main mode in the works of Russian performance artists.

If the philosopher undergoes with critical work some limits of understanding and conceptualization of life, then the artist-actionist experiences the limits of it experience. The need for a mirror refracting every day in the light of the ideal is as ineradicable, how abnormal is the ideal in everyday life. (Savchuk 2001: 153)

Elena Kovylyna, whose works can be compared with performances by Marina Abramovich, with creating the ritualized body, also provoked in her performances the audience, walked on broken glass, pinned the medals to her own skin, called the spectators on the boxing ring, and invited the audience to knock out a chair under her feet while her head was in a loop. Elements of classical bodily performance represented the body as a sign reflecting a special meaning, most often in the context of social problems. (Machulina 2008)

Art therapist and artist Liza Morozova turned to a purely personal experience, walking naked on broken glass and reading her children's diaries in the work *Homo libero* in 2013. Andrei Kuzkin, in his turn, presented his performance *Vse, chto est' -to moyo* (All that exists is mine) in 2010. The artist was laying for more than four hours in a glass "sarcophagus" covered from head to foot with Latin diagnoses of diseases that threaten a person during his life. The act of adopting not only one's own, but also another's illness, takes the form of universal suffering and causes associations with the painting of the Italian artist Andrea Mantegna the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*<sup>2</sup>.

The approach of determining one's inner and outer body occupies a basic position in the period 2000-2010. Without creating entirely new works, Russian artists change the context, connected with the political component, social and personal. The shift in temporary stability occurred along with the rising wave of socio-political protest. The performance became a definite word against the authorities, and wide distribution in the media has become a new force of performance art. Among the numerous associations in the art of protest, the most famous are the art groups *Voyna* (War) and *Pussy Riot*. Art group *Voyna* is Oleg Vorotnikov, Natalia Sokol,

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<sup>2</sup> Available on <http://www.open-gallery.ru/text/artists?pid=10&version=RU>

Peter Verzilov and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova formed a left-wing group, which includes about sixty people, mostly poets, artists and students, in 2007. In 2008 was held one of the most notorious actions in the hall of the State Biological Museum of K.Timiryzev. On the Internet has spread the video with copulating couples in the museum, some participants of this performance kept insulting slogans in their hands. Such a shocking and “pornographic” action was devoted to the upcoming election of the Russian president. It caused a wide response in the media and a criminal case was initiated against one of the participants of the performance<sup>3</sup>. Critics and commentators noted parody and adherence to archaic rituals, and participants in the art group *Voyna* commented that “the action was not a body practice, but an intellectual one”<sup>4</sup>. The artist Maria Perchikhina<sup>5</sup> suggests using the definition of subversive affirmation formulated by Inke Arns and Sylvia Sasse in relation to conceptual art to determine the type of action of such artists:

Subversive affirmation is an artistic/political tactic that allows artists/activists to take part in certain social, political, or economic discourses and to affirm, appropriate, or consume them while simultaneously und+ermining them. It is characterised precisely by the fact that with affirmation there is simultaneously taking place a distancing from, or revelation of what is being affirmed. In subversive affirmation there is always a surplus which destabilises affirmation and turns it into its opposite. Subversive affirmation and over-identification — as ‘tactics of explicit consent’ — are forms of critique that through techniques of affirmation, involvement and identification put the viewer/listener precisely in such a state or situation which she or he would or will criticise later. What the various tactics and parasitical practices have in common is that they employ the classical aesthetical methods of: imitation, simulation, mimicry and camouflage in the sense of ‘becoming invisible’ by disappearing into the background. (Arns and Sasse 2006: 445)

The possibilities of the Internet made the participants of the art group *Voyna* real stars. Classical communication with the public in one space turned into a reflection of the past event, which was re-transmitted through photographs, comments and sharp discussions. The structure of the carnival and grotesque again appeared on the art scene, ridiculing, insulting and actively rejecting social and primarily political norms.

The next famous project was the art group *Pussy Riot*, known for its parodic-politicized direction. Former members of the group *Voyna*, united under the project of a punk group and

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<sup>3</sup> Available on [http://www.newsru.co.il/world/26nov2008/plucer\\_102.html](http://www.newsru.co.il/world/26nov2008/plucer_102.html)

<sup>4</sup> Available on <https://esquire.ru/pussy-riot>

<sup>5</sup> Available on <http://plucer.livejournal.com/60121.html#cutid1>

acting on behalf of the “third wave of feminism”. World fame came to this group the action *Bogoroditsa, Putina progoni* (Mother of God, Drive Putin away) in 2012, which turned into a loud criminal case. The action, which the group called a punk-prayer, consisted of two episodes in the Epiphany Cathedral in Elokhov and in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. As a result, the created video with the imposition of the studio recording was published on the Internet, detonated the public, and became the main fact for initiating a criminal case under the second part of Article 213 “Hooliganism” of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. The song contained abusive words and statements against Putin, the Moscow Patriarchate and Patriarch Kirill. The trial was publicized, and the arrested members of Pussy Riot became the impersonation of fighters for freedom of speech, art and thought. Discussion of their sentences spread to the Western media, provoking the support of both the USA government and many artists from Yoko Ono and Madonna, to Stephen Fry and Terry Guillaume. Famous people from Russia, Europe and the USA asked for a fair trial, and the slogan “Free Pussy Riot” became a slogan to denote the period of recognition of the actions of performance art as a necessary reaction of art to public situations (Uzlaner 2012). Opinions on the actions of the Pussy Riot group are divided into pro and con; many argue that this is a modern art, but also many believe that Pussy Riot is just a media dummy that destroys the true goals and values of art, seeking personal gain and fame. As I wrote earlier, the term ‘performance art’ is so broad that it is extremely difficult to judge the authenticity of this art form in this case, as in the case of Peter Pavlensky. In the opinion of the philosopher and theorist of art Boris Groys, the performance by Pussy Riot accurately reflects the function of art in modern society, referring to the statements of Josef Boise about “social sculpture”, which should cause a lot of conflicts and disputes:

It's obvious that Pussy Riot created such a social sculpture, inside of which, by the way, are their opponents and detractors. The action of Pussy Riot shaped the rather shapeless Russian society – revealed its main ideological configuration and articulated new lines of division and confrontation. Thus, this action has made visible what previously remained invisible. And this is the main function of art – by the way, also from the orthodox Christian point of view. (Groys 2012)<sup>6</sup>

Performance art in Russia entering the era of the Internet and universal accessibility, the presence of the public at the time of the action is not as necessary as before and is easily replaced

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<sup>6</sup> Available on <https://openuni.io/course/1/lesson/14/material/150/>



by the social environment that arises in blogs. Interactivity, along with parody and extravagance, are put forward on the foreground, while leaving the urgency of the experienced body along with a deeper understanding of feeling and detachment.

Only the most famous works and artists are indicated in this small excursion on the development of the Russian performance. Nevertheless, it can be said that practically all the activities of contemporary art illuminate problems and political issues, expressing their protest and the civic position of individual artists.

However, if in most cases the topic of discussion is precisely the political side of the issue, I will try to isolate and analyze the meaning and mechanisms of pain and suffering in the experienced artist's body of Petr Pavlensky. Removing from the laughter culture of carnival, he revives a new concept of detachment and ambivalence of his own body, which allows me to recall the concept of Bakhtin's inextricability.

## **2.2. Overview of P. Pavlensky's works**

Despite the fact that Russian performance artists use classical techniques created by Western artists, the development of contemporary art in Russia makes it possible to separate it into a different category of "Russian actionism", which was discussed in the previous subchapter. Next, I will look more closely at the works and phenomenon of Peter Pavlensky, which is strikingly different from other representatives of contemporary art in Russia.

The uniqueness and singularity of this artist lies both in the context of his works and their execution. Using his body and operating with visualizations of self-torture, Pavlensky successfully combines such categories of the artist's body elaborated by Jones (2012) as "the 'authentic' activist artist's body", and "the body in pain / the personal is political". Relying on the classical practices and judgments of postmodernists, Pavlensky presents in his works the combination of both the postmodern idea of corporeality and the phenomenological nature of the perception of pain.

Petr Pavlensky announced himself to the public in his first performance *Stitch* (Annex, Scheme 1) in 2012, which was carried out in support of the release of the art group *Pussy Riot*.

Within the framework of this action, the artist sewed his mouth with a thick thread and stood for about an hour and a half near the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg, holding a poster with the inscription: “Action of Pussy Riot was a replica of the famous action of Jesus Christ”. With this phrase, Pavlensky mentioned the attempt by Jesus to expel the merchants from the temple (Matthew 21: 12-13). The performance ended with Pavlensky’s detention by the authorities for a psychiatric examination.

The sewed up mouth was my personal transgression. The process of Pussy Riot touched me very much. I considered it as a blow to art and expected artists to respond with dignity. But there were only conversations. And I sewed up my mouth because of the trial of Pussy Riot - it was a requirement to shut up ... It was curious to build some kind of construction on the territory of power, which it did not like, but at the same time, the authorities did not know what to do with you. I began to develop this topic; I tried with a minimum of funds, using the body, to create some kind of metaphor. (Pavlensky, Gusarova 2013)

The next artistic action *Carcass* (Annex, Scheme 2) in 2013, was held near the building of the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg. The artist's assistants brought a nude Pavlensky to the entrance of the building. He was wrapped in a “cocoon” of barbed wire, laying in silence and stillness, without reacting in any way to the surrounding situation. Police officers released him from the wire with the help of garden scissors after a while. Later, the artist gave an explanation to his performance:

A series of laws aimed at suppressing civic activity, intimidation of the population, a steadily growing number of political prisoners, laws on NGOs, 18+ laws, censorship laws, Roskomnadzor's (the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies and Mass Communications) activity, laws on propaganda of homosexuality – all that laws not against criminals, but against people. Well, the last law about insulting the feelings of believers. Therefore, I held such an action. The human body is naked, like a carcass, there is nothing on it, around it is a wire invented to protect livestock. These laws, like wire, keep people in separate pens: all the persecution of political activists, “May 6 prisoners”, state repression –all this is the metaphor of this barbed wire fence. All this is done to turn people into a securely protected, weak-willed livestock that can only consume, work and reproduce. (Pavlensky, Volchek 2013)

Oksana Shalygina, a fellow of the artist, noted that the action metaphor was instantly and directly embodied in reality in the form of police officers who, like barbed wire, dug into the defenseless body of a citizen ( Pavlensky, Volchek 2013).

Pavlensky held the action, which again intense reception by Internet users, critics, art historians and state structures, in 2013 on Red Square. In the *Fixation* (Appendix, Scheme 3),

the nude artist nailed his scrotum to the stone pavement. The performance was timed to the Day of Police in Russia. Pavlensky explained his action as follows: “A naked artist, looking at his testicles nailed to the cobblestone is a metaphor of apathy, political indifference, and fatalism of Russian society”.<sup>7</sup>

This performance became a turning point in the perception of Pavlensky's works, having organized around him a conflict of interests, which justifies the artist's work as a “social body”. If his first works caused direct references to the works of Ron Eyti, Ulaya, David Wojnarowicz in the film *Fire in My Belly* (1986-1987) and the shocking works of the Iranian poet Abas Amini, who stitched his mouth, eyes and ears in 2003, then the *Fixation* in turn opened a new contextual meaning within the relationship between art and the concept of body in pain.

Pavlensky's multifaceted position as a bully, an artist, and a madman allowed his works to become the main topic for conversations among both professional critics and general public. The performance, which expressed its position in an active protest called *Freedom* in 2014, was organized on the Little Stabled Bridge in St. Petersburg and reflected the reconstruction of the Kiev Maydan. Pavlensky and his assistants organized the arson of automobile tires, simultaneously tapping on metal sheets with sticks. This sound symbolized the general impression and actions of people during the protests on the Maydan.

Another bodily performance in 2014 by the self-torturing artist called *Segregation* (Annex, Scheme 4) was conducted on the fence of the Serbsky State Scientific Center for Social and Forensic Psychiatry. The naked artist cut off his ear lobe, symbolizing it as a protest against the use of psychiatry for political purposes:

The knife separates the earlobe from the body. The concrete wall of psychiatry separates the sane society from the insane patients. Returning the use of psychiatry for political purposes, the police apparatus regains the power to determine the threshold between mind and insanity. Armed with psychiatric diagnoses, a bureaucrat in a white coat cuts off from society those pieces that prevent him from establishing a monolithic dictate that is uniform for all and binding for everyone<sup>8</sup>. (Pavlensky 2014)

The following performance made in 2015 can be compared with the work of *Mother of God, Drive Putin away* by *Pussy Riot*, which continuation was already within the framework of a

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<sup>7</sup> Available on <https://lenta.ru/news/2013/11/10/hospital/>

<sup>8</sup> Available on <http://flashnord.com/news/opublikovano-video-s-pavlenskim-otrezavshim-sebe-mochku-uha>

direct opposition of the artist and the authorities. The *Lubyanka's burning door* was held by Pavlensky at the entrance to the FSB (The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation) building on Lubyanka Square in Moscow. The artist set fire to the door and stood in front of the burning doors with a canister in his hands, waiting for his own detention. Gallery owner Marat Gelman interestingly expressed his thoughts about a certain symbolism of this performance: “The Lubyanka’s door is the gate of hell, the entrance into the world of absolute evil. And against the backdrop of hellfire is a lonely artist, waiting to be captured ... Pavlensky's figure at the door of the FSB in flames - very important symbol for today's Russia, both political and artistic”<sup>9</sup>.

A criminal case of part 2 of Article 214 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation “Vandalism” has been opened regarding Pavlensky in 2015. This again led to a polemic about what contemporary art is and how it differs from mere hooliganism and protest against the power structure. While the public cannot decide what Pavlensky's actions are, the continuation of avant-garde traditions or malignant outrage over art, the author himself clearly defines his actions as “political art” in opposition to “art about politics”.

So, “art about politics” is interested in compiling external parts of the political facade and uses for this purpose various state attributes and symbols of power; while “political art” is aimed at identifying the mechanisms of power control and seeks to destroy the processes of manipulation of social relations. [...] Staying in the borderline between art and politics and the need for constant tension and balance keeping, allow artistic practices not to remain self-contained in countless succession of meaningless repetitions, and becomes a means and method of overcoming imposed blocs, that control the behavior of the individual and predetermine his role within the social hierarchy. Preventing the objectification of a political subject, this artistic practice is capable to catalyze social processes that turn against those forms of totalitarian terror that this kind of art has spawned. (Pavlensky 2013)

In his works, Pavlensky combines both the classical practices of European and Russian actionism, as well as the new possibilities of media space and the materialization of the visual subjective image, which can be viewed within the framework of Russian culture. The artist's works can be divided into bodily performance art and activist performance art. The combination of personal experience with public reflection and a metaphor for political topics is expressed in the presence of bodily painful practice, which is difficult to derive into a certain category of body in pain. Pavlensky clearly substantiates the importance of the body in political art as the

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<sup>9</sup> Available on <https://openrussia.org/post/view/10465/>

main instrument of power:

Power is focused on the body, because the body carries a temporary resource. Any state, any authority is interested in taking this temporary resource, that is, the only resource that is somehow quantified. It needs to be spent in the way necessary for the state, then the person goes to the elements for the soil, and that is it. (Pavlensky; Medvedev 2016)

Despite the fact that Pavlensky is guided by the principles of living performance art, practically erasing the boundary between life and the action of performance art by making his works in public spaces, the act of action itself is actualized only with the subsequent addition of the context that appears as a specific description of the fixed moment by a photograph or video. A certain visual gesture due to its strength of provocativeness causes in the majority of untrained viewers the rejection of the metaphorical component of the performance. This gap in understanding a certain semantic communication between the artist and the viewer is due to the presence of visualization of the act of self-torture.

In the following subchapters, I will consider a more detailed study and analysis of Pavlensky's body in pain, as well as the perception of his works by the public in the following subsections.

### **2.3. Body in pain in P. Pavlensky's performances**

To evaluate the values of physical pain in the bodily performance art, and also on the perception of works with the presence of the artist's body in pain in a certain cultural context, I will single out only those works of Petr Pavlensky that touch upon the theme of embodiment and pain in its incarnation.

The presence of pain in the performance, which can be expressed through self-torturing, or focusing on violence against the body, frees the artist from the internal and external stigmatization:

The *demonstration* of pain removes the spell, obsession and symbolic pressure of the environment. By making the inner form the outer, the performance collects the person and, by actualizing the feeling Self, gives him the mechanism of self-identification. He, using the formulation of J. Deleuze, speaks of the eternal truth of the event, which "grasps only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh. But every

time we must duplicate this painful implementation of counter-implementation, which limits, plays and modifies the realization of the event itself'. (Savchuk 2001: 178)

The phenomenon of pain, usually taboo in modern society (Ymamoto-Wilson 2016), causes a different reaction when referring directly to the act of self-torture within the framework of bodily performance art. If in European practice the appearance of the fact of pain, what can be comparable with the concept of demonstration of pain, directly affects any action from public (an example of Marina Abramovich works) as some fundamental basis for communication with the outside world and the artist's world. Then, on the example of increased interest to the infliction of pain in the works of Pavlensky, this demonstration of the self-torturing body causes conviction of ineptness and insanity of this event. As mentioned earlier, the understanding of the meaning of pain is strongly associated with certain metaphors, which are most often expressed through language, and thus affect the perception of pain from the public, under conditions of a certain cultural background.

[...] people choose their metaphors not as 'contained', isolated, individual bodies, but in interaction with other bodies and social environments. In the context of pain, it makes a difference whether pain was conceived of as being inflicted by an infuriated deity, due to imbalance in the ebb and flow of humours, emerged after a lifetime of 'bad habits', or resulted from an invasion by a germ. (Bourke 2014: 488)

If language is an integral part for understanding images, determining the meaning and rating of objects and feelings (Wittgenstein 1984), then it is necessary to pay attention to the meaning of the title of each work of art, as in the case of Petr Pavlensky – performance. The titles of Pavlensky's works, without the support of the visual image, imply everyday things known to every person. Stitch, carcass, fixation, segregation – all these words are not associated with the concept of pain or with the human body. However, in conjunction with bodily performances these words – as titles – take a direct indication of the pain and the procedure of self-torturing. The seam can be on a person's face, and not be surgical, but sewing; the human body can be a refreshed carcass, no longer react to external stimuli; you can not only fix the hairstyle or bookshelf, but the genitals to the stone pavement; and the department can be a police station (noun in Russian), as well as the process of segregation (imperfect verb in Russian) of the lobule from the ear. These titles do not explain the performance itself but indicate the variability of the concepts of these values in direct connection with the corporeality and the act of self-torturing; also, they have metaphorical meaning of political issues that Pavlensky implies in his works.

Why in some works the manifestation of a defenseless body in an archaic and primary state of suffering causes rapid empathy, all-encompassing sympathy and involvement in the symbolism of this bodily performance, and in another case, detachment, disgust and an instant desire for “not seeing” the ongoing manipulations with the human body?

The different perception of pain that affects another person depends both on the form of carrying out this process, the behavior of the artist himself, the cultural significance of certain metaphorical actions, and the interaction between the “culture of presence” and the “culture of meaning”, to which Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht refers (2006: 92). Despite the large number of necessary factors that affect the perception of both pain and the human body, social attitudes in a particular culture set a common understanding and a definite reaction to these phenomena. According to Johannes Leiss, who is engaged in research in the field of the sociology of medicine:

Pathological process - this is not an objective process, but a social act [...] That is, the disease should be defined as a state in which formal and informal social roles can no longer be fulfilled or are not fully implemented. The significance of the encountered difficulties, the most important of which is pain, is firmly established by each culture [...] Along with the attitude towards to pain, illness and pain expression, for each culture, the assessment of pain in relation to the norm is characteristic. (Leiss 1983: 173– cited through Hajdarova 2013: 16)

Pain in the Pavlensky’s performances does not have a clear boundary between the perception of human body and artist's body, which causes an ambiguous reaction of the public. Pavlensky's works also allow considering the effect of cultural connotations, which are transformed in modern society by the development of contemporary art in a certain political and socio-cultural space.

According to the most provocation member of Russian actionism of 90s Oleg Kulik, Pavlensky essentially differs not in the political discourse of his works, but in the phenomenon of pain:

He returned the art to the body and its sharp pain-text. However, this body is no longer thirsting for expansion. This new social body, which denies any coercion from the outside. [...] He shows a small gap in the social paradise through a transformed body and a living pain - that unique foundation on which today art can stand (no matter what - American, Russian, any ...). And thanks to this, we can finally take responsibility for what happens to him, with us, with art, what was in the past and is in

the present. (Kulik 2016)

By creating his performances in a symbolic field, in which there are both social / protest body and other types of artist's body, he creates a meaningful value of bodily performance with the aspect of pain. Pavlensky's works can also be perceived along with the concept of torture, which he arranges for himself, without a religious context, directing the whole act of political art to the problem of oppression.

Pain, in this case, is also a link between meaning and action. According to Scarry, “but torture, which contains specific acts of pain infliction, is also itself a demonstration and magnification of the felt-experience of pain” (Scarry 1985:27). By transferring the structure of torture to himself, Pavlensky suggests society to face the greatest fear – physical pain. “The physical pain is so incontestably real that it seems to confer its quality of “incontestable reality” on that power that has brought it into being” (Scarry 1985:27). The form of Pavlensky's works almost completely repeats the structure of torture. However, he himself undertakes the torture, and the second part with interrogation is left to the law enforcement authorities. His detention chamber is an open space among a large audience, his tools for torture: nail in the *Fixation*, barbed wire in the *Carcass*, knife in the *Segregation* and coarse thread in the *Stitch*, help to objectify the presence of pain in the absence of the voice of the suffering artist, his actions are timed to certain days of political significance, and pain is the power of confrontation.

First, pain is inflicted on a person in ever-intensifying ways. Second, the pain, continually amplified within the person's body, is also amplified in the sense that it is objectified, made visible those outside person's body. Third, the objectified pain is denied as pain and read as power, a translation made possible by the obsessive mediation of agency. (Scarry 1985: 28)

Overcoming physical pain is a challenge to the social and cultural value system, overcoming the fear of physical punishment from the outside and controlling seemingly unaffected emotions (Scarry 1985). Having taken the structure of torture by Scarry and applying it to works by Pavlensky, it is possible to see how the value of personal pain does not cease to be so, but it also becomes a social pain that is actualized through the protest artist's body.

If in the understanding of Scarry (1985: 54), physical pain destroys both internally and externally, then in the bodily performance (as in body art practices), pain appeals to the expansion of the boundaries of perception and memory of pain. After all, it is precisely these initial sensations that lead to an understanding of oneself through living in the state of another.



Physical pain is able to obliterate psychological pain because it obliterates all psychological content, painful, pleasurable, and neutral. Our recognition of its power to end madness is one of the ways in which, knowingly or unknowingly, we acknowledge its power to end all aspects of self and world. (Scarry 1985: 34)

The opposite idea of the need for awareness and feeling of pain is also contrasted to the previous concepts by author of *The Representation of Bodily Pain in Late Nineteenth-Century English Culture*, Lucy Bending (2000):

People have consistently chosen to read pain in referential terms as a way of making sense of its inherent lack of meaning. Pain is always what I shall call [...] referential. By this I do not mean that it refers directly to a specific thing, but rather that although pain has no innate meaning, it is given meaning—has meaning imposed on it—when the sufferer, or someone acting either benevolently or malevolently on behalf of the sufferer, draws suffering into association with something else. (Bending 2000: 86)

The pain, here again, come with the importance of cultural semiotic context. Every day the society faces the physical and psychological pain of others, beginning with the person who asks alms, finishing with the artist who nails himself to the cold pavement. Nevertheless, if in the first case, a person can deliberately try to distance himself from the problem of the suffering of another, taking the suffering of the indigent for the social norm. However, in the case of Pavlensky, social norms are destroyed at the sight of the juxtaposition of the self-torturing human body, the artist's work of art, social protest and the presence of a sign of physical pain, inviting the viewer to build his own symbolic meaning of this action.

The complexity and multilevel approach to the works in which the self-torturing body of Pavlensky is represented embodiment of the complex consisting of the various categories that Amelia Jones and Fisher-Lichte offer, and can be considered directly on bodily performances of Petr Pavlensky. I will try to synthesize the previously presented categories into a new structure of bodily performance.

Proceeding from the fact that Pavlensky's works cause a lot of questions and bewilderment about their notion, we come across a mixing of the concepts of “the 'authentic' activist artist's body”, and “the body in pain / the personal is political”. The clash of the presentation in the social, political and artistic reality of the concepts of protest, art, suffering, pain, corporeality, intimacy, taboo and erasing the boundaries between these values makes it possible to combine the style of bodily performance by Pavlensky as *Stitch*, *Carcass*, *Fixation*

and *Segregation* under the category *protest pain art*. In this category, it is possible to identify the important components of the Pavlensky's bodily performance from two sides: the direct action of the performance and its further impact on the perception of the public.

In the first part, which directly relates to the action of bodily performance, it is possible to distinguish:

(1) *Artist's body in time and space*

In his actions, Pavlensky appears in the image of a naked and defenseless man. However, the choice of place and time for bodily performance is of primary importance within the concept of protest and activism. The bright political coloring of his works is directly connected with the "scene" for the performance. Legislative Assembly of Saint Petersburg in the *Carcass*, The Serbsky State Scientific Center for Social and Forensic Psychiatry in the *Segregation*, the brightest historical and political place of Russia - Red Square in *Fixation* and Kazan Cathedral in *Stitch*. Naturally, all these places in themselves have political significance, but the launch of performance articulation is also associated with the chosen time, date and significance of certain events, which bear on themselves both political and social load.

(2) *The semiotic body in pain*

This item includes everything that happens at the level of perception of bodily performances from a naked person, harming himself, right up to the complex work with the humorous body, the unusual body, the demonized body, the grotesque body, the historicized body, the mythological body, the mediatized body, the fetishized body, the queer body, the militant/activist body, the tortured body, which are highlighted by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes in *Exercises for Rebel Artists: Radical Performance Pedagogy* (2011: 237). These categories can also be perceived from the perspective of the body in pain. That is, all the numerous meanings of bodily performances by Pavlensky exist and are implemented together with the necessary symbolic meaning that opens during and after the action. Here, too, is worth noting the inherent value of self-torture of the body, which is the center of the performative practice of the artist. This includes the structure of torture by Scarry (1985), and subjectivization of the body, as well as the concept of pain as an instrument of art.

The next part refers to the period of “after” completion of the bodily performance. This layer allows us to identify the metaphorical sense of the works by Pavlensky and show the previous two components of the performance directly to the public.

(1) *Actualized the body in pain and interaction*

Despite the fact that performance art tries to erase the boundaries between reality and the work of art, by including interaction with the viewer in one or another work, Pavlensky chooses the path of indirect contact with the public. Petr Pavlensky clearly defines the time of completion of his performances. According to him, the work is ending during his arrest by law enforcement agencies (Medvedev, Pavlensky 2016). Later in the press appeared photos, which depicted Pavlensky, as well as his detailed commentary. Also, titles of the works that were mentioned earlier play a role in the actualization of the performances. This kind of mediatization of contemporary art does not involve interaction with the audience directly during the performance, but it is possible to reach a large number of people, thanks to the extraordinary nature of the event in the flow of information. Without this important fact of imprinting and publishing the artist's actions, Pavlensky's whole context and work would not be justified.

(2) *The body in pain and political art*

If the performance has its own definite framework for the beginning and the end, then the political art continues to operate after the artist completes the action (Medvedev, Pavlensky 2016). This process no longer implies an emphasis on the body in pain, developing more thoroughly the thoughts of the artist, revealed during the explanation of the intent of his work. The actions of political art no longer require a well-prepared performance it develops by inertia effect. However, the body in pain still resonates as a continuation of the interaction with the public. It is interesting that the attention of the public is not attracted by the presence of a political or symbolic context, which later is described in detail and explained by the author himself.

The demonstration of pain, the infliction of physical damage in a public place, causes various reactions of the public, allowing it to apply a method of deferred reading, to identify connotations and a causal relationship that can be applied to the analysis of the bodily

performances presented. This “pain-text”, which unfolds in works by Peter Pavlensky, consists of many layers, from the features of the human body, the concept of performance art, to the actual presence of the body in pain in political, social and virtual space. By combining all these categories and concepts into a single whole, the artist breaks the formalities of perception, making the greatest physical weakness of the human body his power and distinctive personality.

According to Lotman (1998: 19-43), the language of art cannot be identified with the traditional concept of form but has a certain structure that is directly expressed in the work of art. However, the perception of any work of art, especially contemporary performance, where the boundary between the notion of art and protest is not so obvious to the viewer and the structure of the work is not always recognizable, it is also based on a certain historical, cultural and aesthetic context. The peculiarities of the cultural perception of Pavlensky's bodily performances will be analyzed with the help of the historical phenomenon of holy fools in Russia in the next subchapter.

#### **2.4. The image of the holy fool in the works of Pavlensky**

As I mentioned earlier, performance art can be considered within the framework of Bakhtin's concept of carnival culture. If we consider some works of Russian actionism, then it is possible to identify the main principles of carnival and the connection with the concept of performance art. However, the presence of pain somewhat broadens the notion of European carnival culture in the Russian context, leading me to define such a phenomenon as a holy fool. This word is often used in relation to Pavlensky's works in a negative sense, despite the fact that this term is multifaceted in its interpretation, especially in Russia.

The phenomenon of holy fools, as the basis of Orthodox Russian culture from XI to XVII, influenced the perception of public asceticism and provocation in contemporary Russian culture. For a better understanding of this phenomenon within the framework of the bodily performance by Pavlensky, I will consider some common components.

Fool in Christ itself is bordered by the concept of madness on the one hand and with the notion of holiness and a deeply religious impulse on the other.

These glorious ascetics, inspired by the ardent zeal and ardent love for God, voluntarily refused not only from all the comforts and benefits of life on earth, from all the benefits of social life; from the kinship with the closest and most blooded, but even renounced, with complete inner self-consciousness – from the most important difference of man in a series of terrestrial beings - from the usual use of mind, voluntarily assuming the appearance of an insane, and sometimes morally fallen man, who knows no decency, nor a sense of shame, sometimes permitting seductive actions. (Kovalevsky 1902: 5)

As in the concept of carnival, holy fools are considered an integral part of the laughter culture, which is interrelated with the religious culture of Russia. The main thing in the laughter rites was a change in the whole structure of life, a system of signs, where the upper changes with the lower, the masculine with the feminine, the clever with the stupid, certain “anti behavior” appears (Uspenskij 1985). Clothes are opposed to a naked body given to a person, wealth to poverty, obedience to a violation of laws and moral principles. The holy fool personified everything forbidden, tabooed and hidden, exposing himself to a mockery. However, if the culture of carnival spreads the atmosphere of laughter to the surrounding reality, the holy fool reflects this exclusively on himself, according to J. Lotman and B. Uspensky (1977: 164).

Actions, gestures, and words of the holy fool are both ridiculous and terrible – they cause fear of their mystery, hidden significance and the fact that the holy fool, unlike those around him, sees and hears something true, real. He sees and hears what others do not know. The world of the holy fool is bi-planar: for the ignorant, it is funny, for those who understand it – especially significant. (Kluchevsky 1993: 572)

This duality of perception can also be attributed to the public, who comments bodily performances by Pavlensky. Artists, art historians and unequivocally see in his works a deep artistic and semantic organization, and publicly only inappropriate behavior, which points to certain mental problems of the person who carries it out.

It is the inner sanctity of the holy fool that creates the conditions for the antithetically opposite to external perception that the holy fool is in sacred micro-space; gives to his behavior an inverted character for an outsider who is in a sinful world. In other words, the holy fool, as it were, is forced to behave in an “inverted” way; his behavior turns out to be didactically opposed to the properties of this world. Characteristics of the anti behaviour are transferred from the actor to the spectators. The behavior of the holy fool turns the game into reality, demonstrating the unreal, ostentatious character of the external environment. (Lotman, Uspensky 1977: 156)

Within the framework of the life of the holy fools, several factors can be identified, which are

also traced in the works of Petr Pavlensky. Below I will consider the common features of one and the other phenomenon.

(1) *The presence of a naked body*

The ideal costume of the holy fool is nakedness. By baring, he puts on “the white vestments of imperishable life.” [...] However, nudity is ambiguous. This is the “angelic” symbol of the soul, and the temptation, immorality, the personification of evil will and demons (In the Gothic art the devil is always depicted naked). This “suit” of the actor, like his actions, gave the possibility of choice, for some it was a temptation, for others, it was a salvation. (Panchenko 1999: 396)

Nudity, both in practices of holy fools and in bodily performances is the main attribute of action. Moreover, if in the first case nakedness is part of the penance for the sake of Christ, Pavlensky, using the body as an instrument of art, turns to its archaic symbolic meaning. According to Merleau-Ponty (1968 [1964]), the body as the center of the construction of the world is also a guide for perception, revealing the reciprocal process of cognition between the world and the body. As in the case of the holy fool nudity, in the bodily performances, it not only draws attention to the defenselessness of a person in his original appearance but also reveals social norms associated with the shame of his body, renunciation of weak flesh.

(2) *Provoking the public*

Provocation is the main way to attract public attention. Virtually all of the following items, together with nudity, implement this function. However, the holy fools also provoked people to be beaten: “Desiring to be likened to Christ, who was subjected to bullying and insults of the crowd at Calvary (specific embodiment of the fundamental principle of medieval poetics — *imitatio Christi*), the ascetic consciously brings upon himself insults and beatings” (Rudi 2015).

Mechanisms of provocative are inherent in contemporary art; they determine the current of the avant-garde, with the help of the destruction of aesthetic and social norms. The maximum approach to life is realized with the deconstruction of artistic convention. According to V. Rudnev, the avant-garde can not be carried out without “active artistic “anti behaviour”, without scandal and shocking action” (Rudnev 1997: 384).

Pavlensky also successfully use the mission of provocation, creating around his work a constant conflict, attention, and hence cultural memory.

### (3) *Public protest*

Alienating himself from society, the ascetic receives the right to expose. However, he does not call for social change; his protest has nothing to do with rebellion, radicalism or reformism. [...]A classic holy fool is a protesting loner. This type of expositor is generally characteristic of the Middle Ages, for a conservative, slowly changing society. (Panchenko 1984: 131)

Protest activity is a usually routine for the holy fool's religious feat. The holy fools acted as seers, as well as exposing the vices of power and people. However, their criticism was not always taken seriously, and if it affected high-ranking officials, they were "quietly removed" from the eyes of the rulers (Fletcher 1905).

Pavlensky personifies the expression "one against power", and also tries to expose injustice in the political sphere by using the maximum symbolization of his performances. But if in the first case, the holy fool does not always cause great concern to the authorities, then every performance of the artist ends with interrogation in law enforcement agencies, and the virtuosity of Pavlensky's answers to questions of the investigator is represented as a logical extension of his actions.

### (4) *Importance of spectator value*

Holy fool is "naughty" for the same purpose as the Old Testament prophets: he seeks to "excite" the indifferent public "with a strange and wonderful spectacle". By external signs, this sight is like a buffoonery. However, if a buffoon amuses, then the holy fool teaches. In actions of holy fool, extra-aesthetic function is emphasized and the comic shell hides didactic goals. The holy fool is the mediator between the popular culture and the official culture. It unites the world of laughter and the world of pious seriousness (like laughter and drama in the European theater of the Middle Ages or the Baroque era), balances at the turn of the comic and tragic. Holy fool is a grotesque character. (Panchenko 1984: 82)

Spectator value, namely the interaction of time and space, as well as communication with the public – all these are the necessary components of the performance art. Show and provocations exist hand in hand. Each performance of Petr Pavlensky is thought out in accordance with the significance of the place and context of the performance, starting with the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg to the most important historical place in Russia exist the Red Square. However, if the holy fool requires public attention, as well as its real-time reaction, then Pavlensky, on the contrary, tries not to get in touch with people during the performance. Disclosure of the context appears after the public apprehension

of the artist and the dissemination of information in the media about another shocking action.

(5) *The language of silence*

The ideal language of the holy fool is silence. However, silence does not allow (or makes it difficult) to perform the functions of public service, and this is yet another contradiction. Among those who placed chains of their trust in this feat were convinced, stubborn taciturn, but in general, this was a rarity. Usually, the holy fools somehow communicate with the audience - on very important occasions, denouncing or prophesying. Their statements are either clear or unintelligible, but they are always brief: cries, interjections, aphoristic phrases. (Panchenko 1999: 94)

As in some practices of the holy fools and святых, during the performance Pavlensky confines himself to the language of art, which conveys the message through his corporeality and public self-flagellation. The organic nature of his appearance in the public space is also explained by the imperceptibility and silence of his works. Thanks to this approach, the performance art completely takes its place in the world of everyday reality. Valuable is not the possibility of a real presence during the performance, but the very fact of the accomplishment of a certain action, which later develops with the help of other information sources.

(6) *Self-torture and austerity*

Along with the constant culture of laughter, in the behavior of the holy fool plays an important aspect “mortification of the flesh”. Implementation of various austerities, in order to be linked to the sufferings of Christ, have a wide range. Wearing the chains, freezing in the cold, plucking out a beard, torturing of the flesh with burning coals (Rudi 2015: 462). Physical pain facilitated the purification and adoption of the sufferings of Christ on his own body. Here it is possible to mention silence during the torture of the depicted saints and their humble appearance, described earlier by Kurth Silke (in subchapter 1.4). The connotation between the behavior of the Christian faith followers and the artist can be clearly traced.

As mentioned earlier, pain is a necessary medium in the field of bodily performance art. Self-torturing his body, Pavlensky takes on the suffering of others, turning his body into a sacrifice for the sake of political prisoners, injured by military actions, humiliated and insulted people by the Russian government.



The main difference between the holy fool and the actionist artist is the context. If the first one has any action in support of faith, in order to follow the path of truth and for Christ's sake, then instead of the religious cult Pavlensky stands first of all in protecting the person from the injustice of the authorities. The main tool for protection is “pure” art, which truly should not develop for the sake of political reality, but for the sake of the opportunity to open the public the other side of the world perception.

Avant-garde is the artistic mastering of precisely those areas of being that are invisible, intangible, indisputable, but the specificity of art is that incalculability must be uttered (and not hidden in darkness). This paradox of content is denied by its own form and brings together the avant-garde with holy fools. (Epshtein 1989: 229)

However, the language of the religious ritual is easily read from the works of Pavlensky, even if he denies this. For the public, developing the connotation of the suffering body with Jesus Christ, is lost in the absence of a religious context in bodily performances that are cruel towards oneself.

All of Pavlensky's actions can be refer to the “eternal image” of culture, which was mentioned by J. Lotman (2000). The rich symbolism of the visual image could not contain the added contextual meaning, allowing the visual text to prevail over the linguistic one.

Self-torture, the naked body, and most importantly, humility in suffering and the absence of pronounced emotions that indicate pain, awaken the symbols of cultural memory, which are embodied in the form of “all signs possessing the ability to concentrate in themselves, preserve and reconstruct the memory of their previous contexts” (Lotman 2000: 617).

Instead of empathy, compassion and interest in the context meaning of bodily performance, disgust, aggression, and rejection appear. Self-torture is perceived as unreasonable masochism, and the mental health of the artist is in doubt. Naturally, performance art cannot cause a single opinion (like any visual image); therefore, in relation to Pavlensky, there are reflections as to the legitimacy of his actions, the connection with political discourse and the significance of the component of body. Perception of the visual image depends not only on the logical interpretation of the other in favor of the sign but also on the phenomenological approach to the visual image, from the reaction of the sensory sphere of human consciousness (Elkins 1995). Proceeding from the above, bodily performance art remains in its existence closed for understanding by the public, which is in another information – conceptual space.

Completing this part, I can say that the bodily performance art has not lost its relevance. The works of Petr Pavlensky confirm this and make people turn their attention to themselves, and to the surrounding reality: material, social, cultural and political. Body in pain in this case is not only a medium of bodily performance art, but also the way in which contemporary art expands its boundaries of influence and raises a variety of questions about its perception and values in the general flow of art history.

## Conclusion

In my work, thanks to the use of extensive theoretical material, I was able to make some distinction between the concepts of body and embodiment through the overview of the philosophical concepts and ideas. In a detailed consideration of the body art movement, I introduced the concepts of *corporal art* and *bodily art performance*. I think that this distinction can help in solving problems of more accurate definition of body art and performance art, as well as in structuring the history of the development of types and of movements in contemporary art.

Attention to the pain as a medium of art showed the importance of this phenomenon in bodily performance art and revealed a connection with the problem of perception of Self and the world around us. Perception of the demonstration of pain through the bodily performance art directly depends on the cultural context, which can include language, rituals, religion, social norms and the foundations of that or other society. These concepts influence both the development of contemporary art in a certain direction, and the expansion of framework of the cultural perception. These conclusions can also be developed in further studies on the direct relationship between the art of the psychological, linguistic and visual perception.

Analysis of bodily performances by Petr Pavlensky through features and specificities of Russian performance allowed us to consider the phenomenon of his works from different perspectives, as well as to determine the type of *protest pain art*. The concept of body in pain in Pavlensky's works became the central point in this analysis, which was developed with the help of the theory of torture by Scarry (1985), as well as by considering the phenomenon of ambiguous perception of his work by viewers. In order to derive certain regularities connected with the reaction of both spectators and art historians, I turned to the consideration of the “eternal image” in culture by J. Lotman (2000) through the image of a holy fool in Russia.

I hope that my work will give rise to deeper and more serious studies that can affect not only certain phenomena of perception of corporeality and the significance of pain but also for works that will be devoted to the rapid development of the contemporary art and its new types, that contribute to the question “what is art now?” and identify specific patterns in the development of a culture based on its representatives in contemporary art.

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## Annex

Scheme 1: *Stitch* (2012)



Scheme 2: *Carcass* (2013)



Scheme 3: *Fixation* (2013)



Scheme 4: *Segregation* (2014)



## Keha ja valu kaasaegses kunstis (Pjotr Pavlenski fenomen)

### Resümee

Vaatamata suurele hulgale materjalidele, mis on pühendatud esituskunsti kujunemisele ja arengule, on kogemusliku keha probleem selles pälvinud vähe tähelepanu. Eriti enesepiinamise ja valu fenomen, mis on antud töö peamiseks huviobjektiks. Oma uurimistöös vaatlen ma kogemusliku keha praktikaid, mis eksisteerivad kehakunsti ja kehamoonutuste piirialal, rõhutades eelkõige valu mõistet ja selle funktsioone esituskunstis.

Esituskunst on sõltuvuses tervest reast faktoritest, nagu näiteks: aeg, vorm, visuaalne ja auditiiivne aspekt, koht, meeled, lihtne narratiiv, inimkäitumine ja teised mõisted, mis vormivad selle sotsiaalsete ja individuaalsete tunnusjoonte vastuvõttu. Seega on etenduskunst olemuslikult interdistsiplinaarne nähtus, mille keskseks protsessiks on kunstniku kohalolek läbi oma kehaliste praktikate. Just keha on esmane meedium ja materjal, millel esituskunst põhineb. Töö koosneb kahest põhiosast. Esimeses annan ülevaate keha ja kehastumise mõistetest, nende kontseptide arengust ja vastastikmõjust kunsti raamistikus. Eraldi on vaatluse all keha positsioon ja väärtustatus plastilistes kunstides, sarnasused ja erinevused erinevate kunstitegemise viiside vahel, mis lõppkokkuvõttes viivad valu kui väärtuse põhistamisele esituskunsti kehalistes praktikates. Teises osas analüüsin ma Pjotr Pavlenski fenomeni vene esituskunsti raamistikus, määratlen tema tööde iseloomulikud tunnusjooned, et saada selgust, milles seisneb tema poolt viljeldava esituskunsti eripära.

Tänu ulatuslikule teoreetilisele materjalile, mida ma oma töös kasutasin, sai võimalikuks mõistete keha ja kehastumine vaheliste operatsioonaalsete eristuste loomine. Põhjalik kehakunsti arengu analüüs päädis kontseptide korporaalne kunst (*corporal art*) ja kehaline etenduskunst (*bodily art performance*) sisseviimisega, mis minu arvates aitab lahendada mõningaid kehakunsti ja esituskunsti täpsema määratluse probleeme, samuti võib aidata kaasa kaasaegse kunsti arengu ajaloo struktureerimisele.

Tähelepanu pööramine valule kui kunsti vahendajale toob esile selle nähtuse olulisuse kehalises esituskunstis ja paljastab seose enda (*Self*) ja maailma tajumise probleemiga meie ümber. Kehalises esituskunstis teostuva valu demonstreerimise vastuvõtt sõltub otseselt kultuurilisest kontekstist, mis võib hõlmata keeli, rituaale, religiooni, sotsiaalseid norme ja ühe

või teise ühiskonnagrupi alusväärtusi. Need kontseptid mõjutavad nii kaasaegse kunsti arengut teatud suunas kui ka kultuurilise vastuvõtu raamistiku avardumist. Neid järeldusi on võimalik edasi arendada järgnevates uurimustes, mis on seotud vastuvõtu psühholoogia, keelelise ja visuaalse pertseptsiooniga.

Pjotr Pavlenski kehaetenduste analüüs võimaldas paigutada tema teosed tüüpi “protestiva valu kunst” (*protest pain art*) alla. Piinleva keha (*body in pain*) mõiste Pavlenski teostes on antud töös läbi viidud analüüsi keskseks mõisteks, mis töötati välja, kasutades Scarry (1985) piinamise teooriat (*theory of torture*), samuti Pavlenski teoste vastuvõtu vaatajatepoolset mitmetähenduslikkust. Otsides tavavaatajate ja kunstiajaloolaste vaatepunktide vahelist ühisosa, pöördusin ma Juri Lotmani (2000) jälgedes vene kultuuri „igavese kujutise” – nähtuse “jurodivõi”, püha hullu – poole.

Ma loodan, et mu töö annab tõuke edasistele süvauuringutele, mis rõhutavad mitte ainult kehalisuse fenomeni teatud ilmingute ja valu tähtsust, vaid lahkavad kaasaegse kunsti ja selle uute tüüpide kiirenevat arengut, otsides vastust küsimusele “mis on praegu kunst?” ning määrates nii kindlaks konkreetseid mustreid, mis peegelduvad kultuuris kaasaegse kunsti representatsioonidena.

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