



The Affective turn, or Getting Under the Skin

Nerves: Revisiting Stelarc

Jan Jagodzinski

Jan Jagodzinski konzentriert sich dabei auf das 0,3-Sekunden-Intervall, das aus neurowissenschaftlicher Sicht zwischen einer Empfindung auf der Haut und deren Wahrnehmung durch das Gehirn verstreicht. Dieses Intervall wird derzeit in der Biokunst durch neue Medientechnologien erkundet. Der bekannte Performance-Künstler Stelarc steht beispielhaft für diese Erkundungen. Am Ende des Beitrags erfolgt eine kurze Reflexion über die Bedeutung dieser Arbeiten für die Medienpädagogik.

The 'affective turn' has begun to penetrate all forms of discourses. This essay attempts to theorize affect in terms of the 'intrinsic body,' that is, the unconscious body of proprioceptive operations that occur below the level of

cognition. I concentrate on the gap of 0.3 seconds that neuroscience posits as the time taken before sensation is registered through the skin to the brain. which I maintain has become the interval that is currently being explored by bioartists through new media technologies. The well-known performance artist Stelarc is the exemplary case for such an exploration. The essay ends with a brief reflection what this means for media pedagogy.

The skin is faster than the word (Massumi 2004: 25).

The “affective turn” has been announced,[1] but what exactly is it? Basically, it is an exploration of an “implicit” body. It is worth the risk to claim that affect can be at times synonymous with *jouissance*, libidinal energy and *zoē* (as opposed to *bios* which is already under the level of the signifier) depending on the discourse one finds oneself in. Brian Massumi (2002) presents perhaps the best account throughout his *Parables of the Virtual*, which has become a ground-breaking book for this question. It is the very *autonomy* of affect, as the title of the seminal chapter[2] explores, which is at issue; the significance of the approximately 0.3 seconds of temporality that neuroscience informs us the body takes to process the sensory information it has received through the skin’s surface. The shock is that the body “knows” before there is an active response. The brain and the skin resonate with one another at an unconscious level, which is not under our control. The will, and consciousness in this scenario are after the fact events, subtractive functions that reduce the potentially overwhelming complexity of sensory stimulation. The emergence of mind as conscious reflection acting on what the body has already “infolded” follows. This realm opens the Deleuzian door for Massumi to refer to it as a virtual unconscious domain of stored potentiality, haunted as it were, by the Bergsonian development of memory, which is also without “location” but impacts precisely within this virtual interval as well. It is a paradoxical realm where opposites co-exist, can coalesce and hence connect. Such a description addresses Deleuze’s explorations of the “logic of sense” that are consistent with Freud’s own claims that the unconscious knows no negation, and that the primary (instinctual) processes have a temporality of their own.[3]

Massumi “definition” is that affect is an incipient force of intensity; drawing on complexity theory, affect in this discourse becomes the point when a structure dissipates, transforms after one potential is actualized or expressed from a multiplicity of potentialities. In Lacanian terms, we can call this an exchange of the three psychic orders coming together in particular complex forms of organization. Why not? Drawing on Gilbert Simondon’s (1992) influential theory of (collective) individuation, Massumi

articulates affect as essentially the intertwining of “implicit” and “explicit” forms – this follows the Deleuzian virtual/actual intra-relation or David Bohm’s (1980) “implicate” and “explicate” orders. The potentiality of the implicit body (virtually infolded interactions that are in-tension) is then actualized (unfolded) as expression. We can only grasp affect in its actualization – its virtual potential is obviously unconscious to us. Hence, such an expression marks the functional limitation of its potential. Affect is autonomous to the extent it participates in the virtual and to the degree that it escapes confinement, necessary for any organism to “live.” It is troubling when complexity theory becomes its own form of instrumentalism, swallowing up homo sapiens as simply the most complex organisms within an assemblage – this leads to the difficult road of bio-ethics.[4]

It is possible now to switch gears and ground what is difficult theory as offered by Simondon and Massumi, amongst others, concerning affect – to eventually position Stelarc’s singular diagram in relation to his own *sinthome* – as to what “drives” his unthought. One way to do this is to identify the “missing virtual temporality” (0.3 seconds) with the present “now” that belongs to an implicit body – *the body schema*, which is different but integrated with the more common *body image*. [5] While often confused with the body image, the former belongs to the non-representational implicit body, while the latter is the explicit body at the level of representation. Both, obviously are complexly inter and intra-related. Placed in Lacanian terms, we are simply referring to the Real and the Imaginary respectively. The body schema involves a system of motor capacities, abilities and habits that enable movement and the maintenance of posture. All these are non-conscious processes affected by memory. The body schema is not a perception, a belief, or an attitude, but a system of motor and postural functions that operate below the level of self-referentiality, as preconscious, subpersonal processes carried out tacitly as keyed to the environment.

This body scheme – the phenomenal body [6] that is aligned with proprioception – when grasped as being in(formed) by the skin-ego, as

worked out by Didier Anzieu and Esther Bick,[7] opens up more interesting speculation. Freud's well-known assertion – "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but itself the projection of a surface" (1961: 26) – can be interpreted along two lines: as *surface* and as *projection* – non-representationally and representationally. To read Anzieu's skin-ego as surface, non-representationally, is to recognize an emerging psyche of the implicit body – the body of the affective drives – that are forming an emerging *sense of* a core self.[8] The body-ego is a latter development, coming with the spectacularization of the "I", the sense of the "self *versus* the Other," as Stern puts it, an "alienating moment" in the infant's development that is overcome as it moves towards a social "I" with the acquisition of language – the self *with* the Other (1985: 69). As such there is an interval, frission, or *écart*, between the skin-ego and body-ego, between the dermis and the epidermis, between the passage from a less fragmenting to a more unified body image. Skin-ego (implicit body) and the body-ego (explicit body) are therefore non-identical. A gap separates them, which may well be identified as "alienation." [9]

While all three psychic registers are now in place: Real (skin-ego), Imaginary (body-ego) and Symbolic (super-ego), the point to be made here is that Lacan's "body in pieces" is misplaced, or arrives too late on the scene. An affective-sensate core self emerges before the famous *mirror stage*, which already begins to "gather up" and organize the "pieces" through the skin. There are immanent ontogenetic forces of nonorganic life (not pertaining to the organs as a formed entity), a form of spirituality (vital effects) at "play" at this level. Deleuzeguattari's BwO is the disorganized body – the *ground zero* of chaos, difference, duration as living matter with its genetic "programs" in play. The BwO (Body without Organs, i.e. "organloser Körper (oK)" in German) is continually being reconstructed by the "miracle" of forces we have no knowledge about. The interval between BwO and the core self will always remain indeterminate. It would be like asking when does the fetus become "human." The disorganization of the BwO is the Real psychic order – it is the "limit of

the lived body," (Deleuze 2003: 44) it can't be reached, nor can it be attained.

Both Anzieu and Bick maintain that the primordial skin touching skin (namely the baby with nipple in its mouth and being held during the processes of feeding) introjects a (non-representational) sensible being. In the primal mode of passivity the infant experiences skin from the "inside" – as a space within itself, and from the "outside" by introjecting the skin as its boundary. The skin-ego (what Stern would call a core self) leans on biological functions. The "sensate body" of the core ego forms as it begins to grasp parts of the body-surface through the skin as it is slowly built up – non-representationally since there is no stable referent.[10] This process of development undergoes repeated disintegration and transformation as RIG modalities are formulated and memories are encoded throughout the body proper. If the phenomenal body is the body of affect, it is also the body of distributed libidinal sexuality, and it is also the BwO as an egg-formation as Deleuze-Guattari put it, "where organs are distinguished solely by gradients, migrations, zones of proximity." (2005: 182) In this sense Anzieu and Bick's skin-ego should be grasped as the originary (non-representation) *container* (the "outside" of Deleuze's egg), acting as an envelope for the formation of vitality affects and as a *protective shield* against over stimulation. It fulfills a function of maintaining the (core) psyche – an emerging subjective me which will differentiate itself from its environment.[11]

It is this affective-schematic-phenomenal-autonomic body, the core self that is the site of the affective turn; for this body enveloped by the skin ego has its own non-representation imaging potentials that become coded and decoded through digitalized technologies. As such, it lends itself to technological exteriorization because of this potential, what Stiegler (1998)[12] calls the "epiphylogenetic" evolution of the human which starts as far back with the eolithic tools used by the Australopithecines, the prosthetics of technics. With this background we can now turn to Stelarc, a performative artist who explores the implicit body by coding, encoding and decoding it.

Stelarc: Flesh Games in the Virtual Real

Our actions and ideas are essentially determined by our physiology
(Stelarc 1998: 117)

Hopefully, we are now in a position to say something about Stelarc and then end this section of how a great deal of contemporary art (new media) interacts with such affective embodiment – Stelarc being the extreme case. It could be said, in a skewed sort of way, to grasp Stelarc as a diagrammatic figure is to envision him as a three-dimensional figure painted by Francis Bacon, who is equally convulsed and tortured by inner forces, only here those forces have been harnessed through the prosthetics of technology within a synoptic assemblage. Stelarc's diagram opens up the implicit body, to the "ecstasies of chaos" – the forces that deform it, producing disjunctions and breaks in the normal functioning of his organs. The psyche of the skin-ego undergoes exteriorization. "It" comes out of its protective inner envelope, so to speak. Merleau-Ponty's "flesh" is *made* "flesh" through his machinic projections (1968). No wonder life "without a head" – the zombie or mummy – fascinates him. To paraphrase Stelarc,[13] "a corpse can now be indefinitely preserved, while a comatose body can be put on life support system. Further, a body can be cryogenetically preserved waiting re-animation. It is possible to engineer new kinds of chimeric architecture in vitro and grow tissues and insert stem cell in vivo." For Stelarc the cadaver, the comatose body and the chimeric body are the new tropes for his performances where biotechnology and nanotechnology come together. This is his current bio-art work, which I briefly discuss below.[14]

In many respects Stelarc's interest in the plastinated body and the role of technology as a body prosthesis comes dangerously close to becoming the poster boy for designer capitalism, the apotheosis of technological instrumentalism. Massumi identifies an "operative reason" working throughout his oeuvre (2002: 109–112). "Stelarc applies instrumental reason – careful, calculated, medically-assisted procedure – to the body

[face], taken as an object, in order to extend intelligence into space, by means of suspension.” (99) What saves Stelarc is the utter “uselessness” of his prosthetic extensions and a failure of instrumental reason as such. Their cyborgian extraterrestrial possibilities seem remote, although the monstrosity of their *possibility* is not foreclosed. The ambivalence of accusations of narcissism^[15] and phallic *jouissance*, I believe rest on just this tragicomic failure of what are new and unprecedented creations. As such the promise of inventing a “people to come” (in the Deleuzian sense of a “minor practice” (1986) encompasses all the cyborgian fantasies that are pelted at him by his critics.

Stelarc has been performing since the mid-1970s. The literature by him and about him and his performances is overwhelming. I focus on a series of “phases” of his work to show an affective diagram that is shaped by a Real *sinthome*. By this I mean, Stelarc’s performances are keyed to the body of the drives – the sensate body of the mute skin-ego; there is no lack – only a drive for *jouissance*. As Massumi puts it, Stelarc’s work “is desire without an object [...] desire as process.” (2002: 113) There seems to be a complete exposure of the skin-ego, which undergoes various intensifications through prostheticization in each phase – as such the charges by some critics of primary narcissism appears to hold.^[16] It is appropriate to say *virtual* Real once more, since it is the sensations of this body that are being “imaged” through technological means. The consistency of the bodily Imaginary is disrupted, more accurately – this disruption is through a confrontation with the body schema. The Symbolic order, on the other hand, is shown to be limited. The human body is “obsolete” he claims. “The hollow body would be a better host for technological components.”^[17] In an artistic statement from 1988 he writes: “What is important is the body as an object, not a subject – *not being a particular someone* but rather becoming something else” (quoted in: Massumi 2002: 99, emphasis added). His name, “Stelarc,” an obvious pseudonym, stands in and fills the Symbolic’s lack through his prosthetically and biologically enhanced body. In Lacanian terms, Stelarc presents phallic *jouissance* where enjoyment is transgressively stolen from the Other – the Ideal ego that is (in this case) taken to be deficient. Stelarc

has no interest in the representational body caught by gender, transsexuality, personality, the psyche, and any forms of transcendentalism or metaphysics that shape other dimensions of contemporary art. Nor are his prosthetics understood as forms of *substitution* – as replacement parts or organs for an (already) organized body, rather prosthetics are *extensions* that tap into the “pure potential” (virtuality) of the body. This is what is sought. It is the exploration of the body in its 0.3 seconds processing interval that intrigues him.[18]

Diagrammatic Phases

Brian Massumi, a fellow countryman of Stelarc, whose widely disseminated commentary on him, “The Evolutionary Alchemy of Reason,” [19] I draw on to make my case, calls his body medium the exploration of a “*sensible concept*.” Stelarc’s attempt is to show how the implicit body *thinks*. The series of phases of Stelarc’s work takes, forms a diagram that develops from his Skin Suspension series (16 suspensions in all that take a full eleven years to “resolve”) through to a “prosthetic” phase, which then moves into a “cyborg” phase and lastly to bioart. The trajectory moves rhizomatically and through an “involution,” that is to say, there is a certain exhaustion in the skin suspension problematic and a new phase emerges.

The first phase of the diagram consisted in his body (skin) suspensions. These required *no audience*, nor did any sorts of notices, manifestos or written explanations accompany them: the imaginary (audience) and the usual social (signifiers) were ‘suspended;’ they fell out of importance. Suspending the body with hooks through the skin, in mid-air, was carefully and instrumentally thought out. By defying gravity, the body was rendered ‘useless,’ non-functional. Suspension now takes on another meaning, for the body becomes dysfunctional, unable to move and extend itself. What is being suspended then is “embodied human possibility” (Massumi 2002: 101–102). Such a problematic – the object-body as a limit state in space – presents itself as a serial unfolding, each performance leading into the next. Why these suspensions can be

considered to be *in* the virtual Real is because there is an impossible “stilling” of the body within a *present moment of time* (0.3 seconds) that is continuously being filled with *jouissance* (pure sensation), pure potentiality, or multiplicity. There is no ‘future’ (no action for this body), only a serialization of past (equally but *singularly* different) body suspensions.[20] Stelarc overlays or supplements the early *inductive*, more self-contained, suspensions by having the sensate body begin to “express” itself through technology. The implicit body becomes a *transducer*, at first his body converting the invisible gravity into the visible pattern as ripples and hills of his hook-stretched skin, which subsequently called a “gravitational landscape.” The force of gravity on his body eventually began to be transduced by the sounds of his inner body – the rush of his blood and the beating of his heart. The body now also becomes “sonic architecture” as sound filled the room where the suspension took pace. This ends the first phase.[21]

Phase two can be covered under the signifier: prosthesis. Massumi identifies this phase as “the sensible concept as *extension*” (2002: 116). The prosthetic projects like *Bug Goggles*, the *Third Hand*, *Extended Arm*, and *Exoskeleton* belong to it. The turn to prosthetics here has nothing to do with the “natural” body lacking, or the usual understanding of replacing body parts and organs, but raises the question of evolution itself. We have always been prosthetic creatures through the technologies of our own invention: to the degree that the body itself is a prosthetic (composed of matter) and open to a symbiotic relation to things, it becomes modifiable. This phase is extended when the formerly passive audience begins to be let into his performances, a shift to “the sensible concept as *contagion*” (ibid., emphasis added). Beginning with *Fractal Flesh*, *Split Body: Voltage-In/Voltage Out*, Stelarc succeeds in the intense transfer of the body as a “sensible concept” through contagion to his audience through an elaborate computer relay system that controlled his left-side movements, while he remained in control of his robotic right arm, staging an elaborate entwinement of human will and machinic control.[22] The body’s inner flows were audibly transduced as well. “Contagion” suggests that his performance infected the audience,

penetrated it at the neuronal level. It didn't necessarily matter under what signifier(s) any one body was identified by: Black, White, Male, Female, Hetero, Queer and so on. These performances were *intense* enough for penetration to have happened at the embodied sensual levels, shocking them, as it were.

Stelarc emerges at the end of this second phase as a 'split' body (rather than a Lacanian 'split' self). He then moves into an extended phase. Such projects as *PingBody*, *Parasite*, and *Movatar* have network participation through a *remote* global audience. His 'split body' becomes manipulated by them via the Internet bringing the audience into a loop where they see visually the dance of his body to the data that is running through it. The force of information in and on his body is, once again transduced, expressed through visual feedback loops and sounds as it moves, caught between the 'will' of the audience and his own 'will.' Massumi refers to this phase as *evolution*. This, of course, raises the specter of Stelarc's *sinthome*, that which drives his artistic process, which raises the unthought of his work. Paradoxically, Massumi theorizes Stelarc's technological "uselessness" as performing the "conditions of evolution," (2002: 125) not evolution itself. For Deleuzeguattari, it is the intensity of *involution*, the creative turbulence at the molecular level that produces the inexplicable gaps over limitless time. Stelarc projects a "postevolutionary evolution of the human," (ibid.) says Massumi, meaning that Stelarc's conditions of evolution are the potentialities that have yet to be actualized in the next phase of our species – the posthuman.

The same might be said of the current phase of his work – *Extra Ear: Ear on Armproject* (2006–2007), *Walking Head Robot* (2006), *Blender* (2005, with Nina Sellars). We might extend Massumi and call it the "sensible concept of postevolution" – now further explored as bioart, which was already nascent in the previous phase, as is the case with each phase: the infolding and unfoldings of the performances. "All of the phases and events are present, potentially and differentially in each other." (Massumi 2002: 125) The *Extra Ear* is no longer a receiving organ but a transmitting organ; like *Telepolis*, the Ear will wirelessly transmit sounds to the Internet

becoming a remote listening device (a microphone will eventually be implanted in the arm at the site of the Ear). *The Partial Head* (inspired from the *Prosthetic Head*, 2003) is generated from the "image of the flattened digitalized skin that had been made for the Prosthetic Head." [23] Stelarc face was scanned along with a hominid skull. Stelarc's human face becomes digitally transplanted over this skull with thermal plastic, over which are seeded living cells, thereby a third face is constructed. This Partial Head, which Stelarc names post-humanoid and pre-human in form, was incubated in a life-support system but became contaminated within a week and ended up being preserved in formaldehyde.[24] I end here. Stelarc's performative output raises questions that surround bioethics through the 'postevolutionary' question concerning the 'death' of his Third Face. It once more raises the impossible question of just where life begins and ends, and who is responsible if the 'human' is swallowed up entirely in a machinic assemblage of biocyberneticism.[25] Tapping into the implicit body – the body "under the skin" – via technology has become a line of flight in contemporary art where the gallery visitor interacts with the computerized environments that are engineered to be explored. The most interesting artists obviously explore the implicit body in unique ways.[26] But few, if any, raise the bar of ethico-political problematic of AI, technology, and bioart as does Stelarc.

Pedagogically this development offers both liberation and a danger for the future of media studies. Bioartists exploring the intrinsic body are able to engage the viewer's body in the digitalized installations that they design so that both the perception (extrinsic body) in conjunction with the proprioceptive system (intrinsic body) are thrown into disjunctive state to achieve dramatic effects. When viewers pass by one of Bill Viola's installations of his *Passion* series, such as the *Quintet of the Astonished* (2000), they are uncertain whether the figures are 'still' or actually moving. They must wait patiently to see the figures ever so slowly changing and thus offering new insights into the nature of perception. The view *must* slow down his or her movement to be affected. Spinoza's concept of affect, as developed in his *Ethics* maintains: "By [affect] I understand the affections of the body by which the body's power of activity is increased

or diminished, assisted or checked.” (2002: 278) Affect is not restricted to what is felt, but is linked with the capacities of an object, the human being in this case. Viola’s digitalized video expands the capacities of the body. This is the upside of these explorations. Pedagogically they open up new worlds for conscious exploration. They enrich our grasp of the fleeting nature of all perception, the way it continually abstracts and frames what we see. The downside, however, is that designer capitalism has also latched onto this affective intrinsic body in order to increase consumption of goods. A good example here is Schmitt (1999) who explores the way customers’ sense, feel, think, act and relate so that this unconscious aspect of the body is tapped for marketing strategies. This means that the future of media pedagogy has to become much more familiar with the manipulations of both the market and bioartistic explorations of the body unconscious.

Remarks:

[1] For example, Patricia Clough seems to have established herself in this area. See Clough (2008) and (2007). However, earlier Anu Koivunen published “Preface: The affective turn?” (2001).

[2] Published earlier as “The Autonomy of Affect” (Massumi 1996).

[3] This also opens the door to Jan Campbell’s re-reading of Freud in maintaining, mentioned earlier, that he too has a notion of the non-psychological unconscious similar to what is being presented by Deleuze, and Jean François Lyotard as well who developed his own Freudian variant – the affect phase unconscious. See Lyotard (1991).

[4] Here I would flag two important articles: Mitchell’s “The Work of Art in an Age of Biocybernetic Reproduction” (2003) and Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerreo’s “The Biopolitical Imagination of Species Being” (2009). Both articles raise the ethical questions that surround genetic experimentation in art and in the larger molecular and digital revolution of life.

[5] The distinction between body schema (non-representational) and body image (representational) is articulated by Shaun Gallagher and Jonathan Cole "Body Image and Body Schema in a Deafferented Subject" (1995)..

[6] Hansen claims that Merleau-Ponty's *schema corporel* (phenomenal body) has been wrongly translated as body image. See Hansen (2006: 38).

[7] Esther Bick's research on the importance of skin in infant-mother relations was an independent development from Anzieu who built on her work, modifying and changing some of her premises. For a review of her work see Wiloughby (2001).

[8] The notion of "sense of" is crucial here since this is not a conceptual or cognitive notion of self, but an experiential sense of events. The organized sense of a core self includes: self-agency, self-coherence, self-affectivity, and self-history (memory). See Stern (1985: 71).

[9] Where a major disagreement exists between Lacan and Merleau-Ponty is the question surrounding the moment of alienation experienced by the infant around 2–3 months. For Lacan this becomes a *paranoid moment* that ends up as a lack that becomes a perpetual struggle for recognition in the symbolic order, whereas for Merleau-Ponty, this alienation is not paranoiac but productive. It is an ongoing dimension of the implicit (introceptive) body. We can say it is the *moi* formed through *in-tensions* of skin-ego and body ego. So while the earlier Lacan forwarded the alienating aspect of the mirror stage, the "later" Lacan would be more sympathetic to the phenomenological position of alienation as the interval where Real and the Imaginary are continually in play regarding the symbolic – the *sinthomatic* position.

[10] This is where the metaphysical aspects of genetics enter into play since there is no representational "blue print," if I can put it this way. The body "knows" how to form itself.

[11] This is extrapolated from Claudia Benthien's very interesting book on the history of skin where she calls on Anzieu's work throughout. See Benthien (2002: esp. footnote 4, 243–245).

[12] Stiegler explores the history of technics as epiphylogenesis. This marks a break with genetic evolution, which has no way of preserving the "lessons" of experience which technics offers. This is crucial for the "new media" of contemporary art where technics is part of the interactive process.

[13] Paraphrased from a *YouTube* performance.

[14] An artist like Damien Hirst figures promptly here, with his "glass box" art with pickled and preserved biological specimens: from the pickled shark to bisected cows and embryos. As does Antony Gormley's *Sovereign State* – a concrete sculpture of the artist's body lying in the fetal position with rubber hoses attached into and out of his orifices as a self-sustained comatose human body, a neo-mort, speaks directly to the dystopia of "biocybernetic art" (see Mitchell 2003: 496). Also, Justine Cooper's RAPT I and RAPT II (1998) is an installation piece that uses 76 "slices" or "MRI scans mounted individually onto Perplex and hung so as to produce an entire image sculpture of Cooper's databody." See Munster (2006: 143–144).

[15] Benthien reads Stelarc's skin performances as "continually giving birth to himself." (2002: 233).

[16] Benthien ends her book *Skin* (2002: 234) by addressing Stelarc as a paradoxical figure where his use of technology at first "shatters the body," [skin suspensions] but then returns to "reintegrate its fragments" [cyborg phase].

[17] As posted on his website (www.stelarc.va.com.au/). But this claim is already found in his early performances.

[18] Massumi develops prosthetics as substitution vs. extension in *Parables of the Virtual* (2002: 126–127). When discussing Stelarc's prosthetics, Joanna Zylińska sees the potential of a prosthetic ethics that

goes beyond self-possession and autonomy pointing to “relationships with alterity and exteriority.” (2002: 216)

[19] This essay appears as chapter 4 in his *Parables of the Virtual*, but it goes back to 1995 and versions of it can be found in many sites online. On “*sensible concept*” (2002: 90).

[20] There was only *one* suspension where Stelarc hoisted himself up using his (third extended) arm on a pulley; this counter-gravitational performance displaced movement from his legs to his arms, confirming the divergent split between matter of sensation and “organic” perception-action.

[21] The most extreme suspension, a suspension that under any other name would be considered a form of postmodern torture, was where all his bodily expression was radically closed down – being voluntarily buried alive might get at the magnitude of this performance – comparable to David Blaine or Criss Angel who bill themselves as magicians *and* endurance artists. Stelarc’s body was put between two planks, eyes and mouth sewn shut, suspended from a pole and in the evening taken down and laid on rocks for seventy-five hours. Sensation would implode his body to a point which would become unbearable, the danger I would suspect that the skin-ego could no longer contain the bodily resonances and vibrations. Stelarc would “crack.” This is as close as one might get to the BwO at its zero level – even the living dead as mummy or zombie is unbearably stilled.

[22] Stelarc’s comment on this performance when his body was split between voltage-in and voltage-out can now be grasped. “That performance surprised me. I was watching my limbs moving in space. I’ve neither willed that action nor am I contracting my muscles to perform that action. That action is occurring beside, before, it predates myself as a free agent. In other words, half of my body has nothing to do with my free agency [...] I was looking in sort of wonderment.” (Quoted in Jones and Sofia 2002: 60).

[23] The paraphrased description comes from his website on the Partial Head (www.stelarc.va.com.au/partialhead/index.html).

[24] Referred to as transgenetic art by some (Eduardo Kac's *Genesis 1999* seems to be the ground work here).

[25] See Zylinska (2009). Such artist cells as Critical Art Ensemble (www.critical-art.net/) have staged biotech critical performances, as have Rtmark (www.rtmark.com/).

[26] Two outstanding articles in this regard do a wonderful review of what is possible here. See Ridgway and Stern (2009) and Wegenstein (2004), also Munster (2006). In chapter five, Munster does a nice review of contemporary interactive art, discussing such well-known works as Huge Harry. Also Mark Hansen's discussion of Myron Krueger interactive work is crucial for making a distinction between those artist who have not fallen into the technicity of VR and CAVE environments, and new media artists such as Krueger who find ways to creatively interact with the implicit body. (See Hansen 2006: 25–38)

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