

Matilde Tomat
ARTIST'S PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITY

before nothing
Concept, Research and Residency



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about my practice

I am an artist, writer and existential psychotherapist. My practice is based in Blackburn, Lancashire, but I have previously created and worked in Italy. I have mainly produced work (whether in written or visual form) which has explored the ideas of identity, memory, legacy, all from a macro-perspective and in full awareness. As of now, I have created 9 solo exhibitions, both in Italy and the UK. I have collaborated with and volunteered for Toni Zanussi, Gabriella Musetti, Mary de Rachewiltz, Paolo Maurensig, Anthony Schrag, Dan Edwards and Jamie Holman. Most of my work stems from self-reflection, backed by academic research, substantiated by experimental practice, developed by *critique* and then presented with the support of diverse resources, including presentations and workshops.

In September 2018 I decided to enrol in the FAD / UAL course at Blackburn College as a part-time mature student. During these past 2 years, I have seen my practice deepen, develop, expand and find its own rightful shape and direction. This is not a finished journey by all means: the practice is in evolution.

At the moment I am working on my Final Major Project (thereafter FMP), which is the scope of this Concept Brief. This opportunity will then inform the final piece as part of my practice-based research on the concepts of seeing and being seen.

My FMP stems from my 6th book (for now in draft version), which is a detailed observation in first person and stream of consciousness of the main character who goes through loss and grieving, via self-isolation and through feeling existentially invisible. The FMP, titled "Do you see me?" aims to be a translation in visual form of the literary emotional journey. Copy of the Project Proposal will be attached to this document, together with a brief extract of the book.

As mentioned above, I have seen my practice evolve from the enquiry on personal loss and memory of CONSERVATION by creating 111 ethereal plaster pieces, to the discernment of past events and the idea of posterity in LEGACY while trying to make sense of chaos. Now, with BEFORE NOTHING I am interested in my identity as an artist as seen by "the others" while in the act of creating.

an interesting opportunity

This project comes as a sum of various aspects I am interested in exploring in-depth. I am thinking about the concepts of:

- observing vs gazing, especially when gazing is explained by Lacan in connection with shame and *invidia*;
- the reader as potential voyeur as transposed in the spectator / viewer watching the artist creating a piece;
- the reaction of the viewer to the movement of the artist when compared to the stillness of the final piece;
- artistic pleasure: both the viewer watching, and the artist being watched;
- the Hawthorne Effect: will I, and if so to what extent, change my mark-making knowing that I am being watched?
- book is fictional vs drawing which is real;

- drawing (as writing) is normally a solitary experience / psychic retreat (the creation of an emotionally safe place) while this is a public act;
- human / anthropogenic zoo : I am there, as “The Artist” / “The Writer” to be seen, watched, prodded, perceived as “The Other” (especially when this “Other” is contextualised in this historical period - see Brexit, identity labelling, etc);
- a real creative live experience amongst these *created ad hoc* lives on social media.

My interest, also from a psychotherapeutic perspective, is in the reactions felt by the viewers. In this sense, I have explored essays and articles about Marina Abramovic and PJ Harvey re. their performances, including the potential moments of boredom, annoyance, envy, frustration and the possibility that no one shows up to see the artist at work.

engaging with the other

This will form part of the personal research, starting as the Maker / Performer in a detailed self-reflective activity pre- and post-experiment.

During the performance, I will not interact with the viewers and they will not be allowed to interact with me, nor to come closer to the drawing or me writing. There will be a questionnaire available for them to fill about their experience (and of course I am also interested in collecting data re. the demographic).

The data collected will also allow me to create a conversation with the viewers at the end of the performance(s) and to interact with whoever will be there at the end of the exhibition.

From a safeguarding perspective, I will be supported during the event by a trained colleague who will monitor the emotional reactions both of myself and the viewers, whether in person or over the phone. Should the colleague not be present, I will take extra care and extra breaks to make sure I am always in a safe emotional place.

In order to underline the idea of separateness between Maker and Viewer, music will be played during the whole event. This will stress, on purpose, the boundaries and the level of Otherness outside of the performative world and will inform the artist emotional involvement.

before nothing

From an academic perspective, of course, I am interested in confronting my experience starting with the works of Pollocks as *action artist* up to Marina Abramovic as pure fine art performer, via performance drawings such as Ram Samocha's, but also the ethnological expositions of the human zoos, observing where scopophilia merges into voyeurism and the Pleasure of Watching which theatre-goers experience, and where the opportunity of a clear white large sheet of paper evolves from the status of allowing the Maker all possibilities, into a “nothing” before the Viewer until the piece is finished; and the Maker potentially considered Nothing as a human exhibited in a

cage, to be prodded to play her tricks.

details

A 4-hour performance, with the possibility to stretch it to a 6-hour performance.

Time after the performance for the artist to converse with the viewers and for them to get closer to the “finished piece”.

White sheet of paper : 5 m long x 1.5 m wide hanging on the wall.

The space where the artist is performing is cordoned off, leaving enough space for the artist to move, observe, etc.

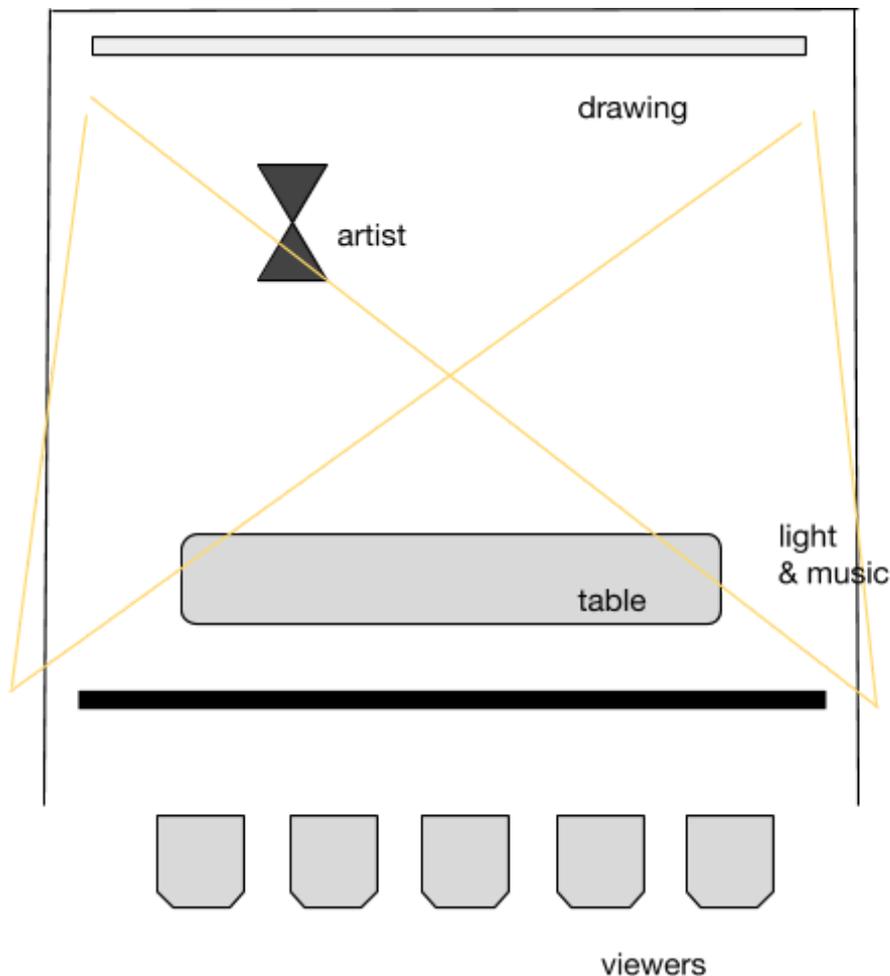
A long table where the artist will lay tools, drawing material, paint, ink, laptop, etc.

Sound system which will allow music to be played at all time during the performance.

Chairs for the viewers to sit should they desire to do so.

[Invigilator with] printed questionnaire, pens, etc.

Ideal setting as in the sketch below:



Details can be discussed and different options could be taken into consideration.

Extensive bibliography and references available on request. Expenses and/or availability of funds can be discussed and agreed depending on location and duration.

FMP project proposal rationale and concept as of Nov 2019.

I am approaching this FMP as an evolution from the beginning of this course, which I have done over two years. I am taking into consideration the techniques learned, the experimenting with different media, the deepening of academical reference, and the exhibition CONSERVATION. I am reflecting on the journey as a learning-to-creatively-express-myself course and emotionally finding my voice: I have been learning words, then sentences and how to put them together into paragraphs. Now it is time to write the book, metaphorically and not. Now I am using a different kind of language as a medium of expression.

In this way, I find the knowledge acquired liberating albeit not exhaustive, knowing that this is just part of a longer process which I hope will see me going to University and take my practice further.

The choice of 3D underlines the exploration into the concept of identity and “being seen” as in finding my own rightful tri-dimensional space.

I have thoroughly explored the reasoning that led me to “Do you see me?” in my presentation and blog.

The conclusion is as follows:

I am writing at the moment my 6th book, which is about loss, transition and forms the basis of the FMP as a sort of self-portraiture in words. It describes, informs and supports the personal emotional journey before and during this creative exploration, as an internal monologue and stream of consciousness.

Joyce, Pound, Woolf; and then Cage, Rothko, and Nicholson form the basis of the academic investigation. Reference is on my blog, including posts regarding artists I have explored before and during this project.

I am not sure what the final piece will be. What I do know for now is:

1. it will have a form of an installation
2. the empty space where it will be exhibited will inform the final piece
3. I will use a first-hand exploration of the subject and the media
4. it will include elements of conceptual and theoretical approaches
5. it will have a very strong personal connection as a translation of the portraiture into bi + tri-dimensionality
6. hopefully, it will be original and fresh in the approach

As of now, I have explored a range of media and various mark-making and layering, pushing creative boundaries. I have been using adding and removing, without feeling constrained by the idea of a finished product. I am exploring and narrowing.

I am trying to find my own “hand” while playing with the idea of creating a personal mythology.

I am aware that not having a finished piece in mind allows me room to have fun, test and create. All processes will be documented online, in sketchbooks, and in a reflective journal.

--- end ---

excerpt from the draft

I don't know what time it is, nor what day it is. I feel I have lost contact with everything and especially I sense have lost control. I am still sitting here, in the kitchen, in my wee. I stand up, hold myself, turn and make my way out.

I head upstairs, very slowly. Halfway the first flight of stairs I feel nauseous. Imperative, impellent, violent wave. And I need to sit. Then, I come back downstairs, back into the kitchen, and I make myself a tea.

I say "I make" but there is no actual coordination between what I think and what I do. I do the right things and in the right order but as if I were drunk, I actually tell myself what I have to do. And then I explain to myself what I have just done, and the reasons why I am doing it. It is a painful and totally pointless running commentary slightly offset, I know, but I can't stop it. But while I am making the tea and I talk to myself about what I am doing, I know I must be doing this because I read ET. I need to stay here, Now. I sardonically chuckle a bit, inquisitively wondering if I am on the threshold of losing my mind, if I can see Logic and Sanity waving good-bye. So I chuckle a bit more, just to myself, in an almost vulture posture, leaning on the counter. Then, I straighten my back and inhale obliging me to stop giggling. If I don't want to lose myself, I need to describe to myself what I am doing. "Wherever you are, be present in the now". I hold the kettle, I fill it with water, I flick the switch, I am waiting, I look at my feet, I am shivering, my bones are cold. I am standing in the kitchen waiting for my kettle to boil. Can you say that the kettle is boiling, or is it the water con... cont... in the kettle that is boiling? I feel I am on the edge on the ver on the verge of a panic attack or I am losing with one "o", remember, I am losing it. I am l"o"sing my mind. No no no, I am not. This is only my mind. This is not the truth. My truth is that my water is boiling now (nausea) Ginger and Orange tea. Warm. Warming. Vata. Think, think. Don't lose. Your pants are l"oo"se. Cup, bag, pour. Cup, bag, pour. Bernard. Bernhard! That was his name! My thinking takes me to Bernhard. German literature. Failed. But I can still remember fucking Bernhard, Kitzmüller! It's not my mind. It's my thinking. Confusion: it was me, Piero, and Mary de Rackewiltz. I was reading from the castle. At the castle. I was in the castle! No, it wasn't Bernhard, it was Pound! Be efficient, be accurate, keep it clear. Yessir! I was standing there, I add sugar, and I was reading Pound looking at Mary and feeling solemn: it was me, Ezra, TS and James. And Piero and we giggled and then he died, too, too soon. Petals on a black bough, ginger and orange tea. And when his brother entered the cathedral, at the funeral, everyone gasped. (I am not mad. I am not mad. I remember. I remember you, your first kiss, Matt. I remember my name. These are my hands. And now I have to lie down. Bernhard: hideous provocateur. My body needs three points of support).

more info can be found

www.matildetomat.com

<https://matildetomatualfadfmp2020.wordpress.com/>

on CONSERVATION : <https://www.matildetomat.com/conservation>

on LEGACY : <https://www.matildetomat.com/legacy>

CV : <https://www.matildetomat.com/cv-details-data>

on YouTube:

CONSERVATION documentary <https://youtu.be/0Po2xQ5FqGA>

UAL FMP pitch <https://youtu.be/2jowZsiqXt0>

experimenting in D major <https://youtu.be/mHCYPwjJYoo>