

RaRa: Unnamed Manifestations
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The works of *Heraklion: Un Ka Un* (translated as Heraklion: One on One) utilize dance performance as a means to engage—or expand—the use of the individual body. The works employ abstracted/extracted voice, language, and sound just as much as they utilize the carnal properties of the body through physical dance. The body exceeds its position as a singular physical individual in time and space and begins to enact its power as a placeholder for ideas which may extend beyond the self. Often the works act as an analyzation of “I”, examining the physical attributes and histories my body carries with it (the tangible and the made up). In the end, the body begins to extend beyond its singular form, fulfilling the “I”, and invokes the cultural realm it exists in to generate material. The Heraklion begins to question experiences which are easily identifiable as his and those which extend beyond himself into aspects of culture and language at large, which may not belong to his “I”. The work aesthetically appropriates the visual language of Athleticism (muscles, sweat, grunting, and the reveal of skin) as a way of framing multiple disassociations in the work. Athleticism requires one to dedicate hours to the “I” while it simultaneously hinges on distinction from other bodies, from the weak, from the “Non-Beaut” (the unbeautiful). It is an aesthetic which subtly implies the Us vs. Them. In a similar way, the work utilizes the image of the “man” or the “male” “I”. The genesis of all character development in the work is the “masc” body. In tactics, logistically, the works distance the viewer— leaving the Heraklion to deal only with himself. The investigations operate as masturbation in a corner or speaking to thyself in tongues. They are dually a festering tantrum and a stunt.

To inform the work I’m observing artists such as Okwui Okpokwasili, Ragnar

Kjartansson, Rashaad Newsome, Trajal Harrell, Nora Chipaumire , and Ed Atkins. I'm examining these artists for their abilities to develop narratives with a specific cultural minimalism (raw cultural material) but with methods which generate spectacle or move the work into the realm of the sublime. Primarily I'm observing their use of repetition and "nonsense" to develop content which becomes complex and greasy. The question for me as a viewer watching Okpokwasili's work is, at which point am I now purely a witness? At what point in the repetition is she no longer speaking to me? This is not to say the work enters the internal, instead the work brings the conversation to and through the room allowing the viewer to stew rather than dissect. These artists force the viewer to recognize their viewership simply by getting them to realize that they may or may not swallow what they see—the viewer is simultaneously enticed and gently externalized.

Un Ka Un's most poignant use of bare material to generate spectacular claptrap comes in the form of sound and language. Typically these two have very specific sources and lineages for an "I". In the work they range from high culture references (theory and criticism) to colloquial epithets and phrases from the streets of the layman. It is this duality which begins to trouble the "I" and its roots/origins. Aurally the works invade the viewer and the performer, forcing recollection or the feeling of knowing a thing but forgetting where one knows it from—and why. The sound operates as a steadily building cesspool of the personalized, and the common. An example of this can be found in most of the opening "Invocation Periods" periods within the tantrums where the performer calls forth for support or power or setting. An example of how this manifests in the works could be the appropriation of "Thundercats! Ho!" (from the Thundercats television series) and the use of text from the American essayist Elaine Scarry's

writings on beauty vs justice— The Heraklion combines these sources to display simple duality and age-based recall. Both of these sonic sources are hyper-specific and “minimal” and yet they depict the “highbrow and lowbrow” dynamic of the work as well as abstractions’ ability to revitalize a source with recontextulization in the unknownness of now. The goal isn’t to dissect these two sources in their coexistence but rather to bathe in them—this is where repetition enters. Scent plays a similar role in the construction of the works. Scent and sound generate setting and instantly destabilize the present moment through memory. These are two senses which immediately allow/force a body to recall the last time it was in a setting where it experienced the same smell or sound. They act as loop holes or worm holes or black holes.

Aesthetically, and possibly ideologically, I’ve been interested in the Baroque and Rococo alongside Classism and Neoclassicism. These periods have within them elements of Perversion, Decadence, and of course, Beauty—milestones in my investigations. The Baroque and Rococo additionally bring in the previously mentioned element of the absurd and/or the nonsensical. I’m looking at the way bodies are treated in these periods. In Classicism and Neoclassicism, the bodies reach a point of physical “perfection” in line with contemporary aesthetics in terms of musculature and athleticism. In the Baroque, the body becomes a device to hyper-dramatize compositional decisions. In the Rococo, gesticulation and expression become extremely important in addition to the atmosphere around the bodies. Most importantly, these periods deal with myth and creation spliced with realism, whether it stems from classical tales or their contemporary political issues.

Returning to matters of the carnal, dance/movement holds the most weight in the live performance works as movement is almost singularly the only visual element in the physical

present-space (excluding costume and memory or images that may be described through language). The work takes its chance to examine how the body operates in the world alongside the self-perceived “I” by stealing physical archetypes which can be traced back to body (the masculine, the beautiful, the strong, the dangerous). Perhaps here we insert canonical figures such as Michelangelo and his *David*. Examining gesticulation, Dance—forever and always being a social practice—foregrounds these cultural archetypes and uses them as the basis for movement (alongside emotional aspirations). Ballet, being the western world’s prime example of this use of archetypes, begins to emerge in the work as one of the fundamental technical wells from which movement is built or reckons with. After all, Classical Ballet is an artistic cannon that will seemingly never find its death. It is a quest for sustained beauty which keeps Ballet alive. In the Heraklion’s physical exploration, beauty becomes the mechanism through which all movement is passed. “How does one make this more beautiful?” It becomes a question of the cultural notions of beauty up against the “I”. Of course “nonsense” enters this conversation as well and forces the movement to stutter in beauty from accent to accent, involving forms from western line dances, baroque ballet, and classical Indian dances of the East (with slippages between). This introduces inconsistency as a technique to build performance form.

Lastly, I briefly steal from Futurism its brash absurdity. The Heraklion’s movement has an extreme drive to accelerate and push into the unknown future at any cost. This mindset pairs well with my intended use of repetition—drilling until something implodes/explodes.

Additionally, Futurism may act as an interesting counterpoint for the Rococo. One deals with the languid, pastoral, and emotional, while the other delves into truths of the material world. It is the

aesthetic notion that there is grand delicacy within brutality which anchors the work. *Heraklion: Un Ka Un* approaches barbarity and allure.

Replica, Twin, Companion:

Territory and Domain begin and end with the body. Directly dealing with where a body may traverse, what a body can be/have, and how a body can behave in physical space, territory presents itself as totalitarian. The idea of territory addresses nothing more and nothing less than *mastery* and *access*. Mastery present here in the sense of negotiation, of assertion, of domination and subordination. I think I've always been drawn to the ideas of domain and ownership—how slimy and juicy that space can be. In contemporary society signifiers of specific territories are somewhat muted. Muted in the sense that they aren't always explicit but their existence and the internal feeling of their existence still rings loudly. Everyone knows a space where they aren't welcome. Everyone knows a space where they must tread lightly or renegotiate their physical existence. Everyone knows a space that feels like *home*.

Returning to body, I find myself constantly reckoning with pure truth that I possess a body which wreaks havoc on space—social space. I possess the body of a young, Black, male. The Young Black Male (YBM) feels like the sunspot you get after staring into the sun for too long—a beautiful obstruction of space and equally a self-obtained stain. My body intrudes on space. My body never really **asks** for permission to stay. It never asks whether it should take its shoes off before entering, or whether it should come over at 1pm or 2pm depending on what works best for you. At its worst, it's boisterous and loud and clunky. The YBM exists as a living, breathing terrain of its own, slicing into the space of others without choice.

I come to this *Un Ka Un* thinking about the amount of space an individual body can cover with varying degrees of effort. Asking myself if physical presence, being seen, is the only way to take up space, I wonder if being known to exist is enough. How does a body operate as myth? How much must this body do to be present? I'm continually asking myself if scent, if text, if name, if sound, if self inflicted seclusion can be equally as imposing or monumental as the physically present body. What are the things that stand in for body, which speak for the body when it electively dismisses itself? Of course as stated earlier, despite this interest, my performance work heavily depends on presence and movement language to press the viewer. The work demands its own body in addition to having a very specific list of body related demands. It's demanding that it be called by name. It's demanding that it be recognized by scent. It's demanding that it's absence is announced.

I'm troubled by the stage. The stage existing as a simple (and archaic) elevation device elicits a notion of grandeur and untrue space. There is an experience where the viewer often feels the stage is a space that has very little to do with them—a space which has its own rules and its own logic ignoring the logic of the viewing realm. The relationship between the viewer and the stage is quite magical in the pure sense that anything is possible, any world can exist on the stage **simply because it's on a stage**. My work, largely existing on the flat ground in the viewer's realm automatically begins the conversation of fiction and truth and life. Often testing the barrier between you and I through gaze, speech, and costume (or lack thereof), my aim could be to reassess the viewer—who is the true viewer?. The Heraklion often experiences himself as viewer within his own work. The workspace becomes a collateral (co-lateral?) plane where truth is augmented, yet skewed.

Here I address the idea of the host—the idea that “I” as a performing body can “set the stage” to sit back and watch what evolves. I want to gawk at my creation. In a sense what I’m proposing is that I watch the “I” with you as the “I” is being made/explored. I as a performing body am not here to bleach the work into existence, I am merely here to set the stage and gather information. The work becomes a laboratory, a vivarium. Play enters the work. I’m here to see what happens when X. And because of this, and because of my refusal of the stage, the work always moves everyday and any day. In this method the work always conquers continual space, always infects life. The work never bows for its exit. The work maximizes its terrain and dominion by eviscerating daily life and co-opting it as stage hand. I ask the work to loose control and it decisively devours what ever I put in front of it.

What does this mean? What is this? Well I think ultimately it means that I have actually begun to lose control over the work, over the practice. I was wondering two years ago about glossolalia and a year ago about the red beast, and here they are, sneaking up on me with their own tongue and taking chunks whenever they feel it’s necessary. So when it comes time to set the stage, to perform, to exhibit the beast, to have/build a work, to have a thesis, all I can sit back and do is prostrate the practice and see what it has to show me. I’ve found myself only able to feed the Beast and it’s investigations, here it is Space.

Beast, comes in particular handy when confronting notions of space and the body of the YBM. All three parts of the YBM (Youth, Blackness, and Maleness) existing in culture at multiple points in time as bodily signifiers of destruction and wildness. The YBM is the three-headed beast of hell—wreaking havoc on space. To know me, maybe is to know there’s a particular beast which lurks underneath a surface of collected beauty. Maybe this beast is equal

parts Black Wrath, Privileged Male, and Agog Youth, all witted together resulting in a temperament refusing to play nicely with others.

Que my interest in the solo performing body. To quote the Bad Bitch Bey, Me-Myself- and I tend to be the only players in the scene. I'm addicted to multiplicity through the conquest of the singular I—Que Lion-O, que He-Man, que Tarzan, que Adonis, que Narcissus, que Cowboys, que Hercules, que Stags and Stallions, que jovial and brutal male hero figures. Those men that have names, those men that parade around, piss on walls, spit on sidewalks, won't budge because he thinks he was there first. I'm asking myself if all of this is about pity (the ostracized Black) or if it's about brutality (the hubris of Male) or if it's about the promise of hazardous instability and beauty within the Youthful.

The medium of performance in it's own right automatically addresses the above easily without having to do any additional legwork. It contains hubris, it contains curiosity, it contains objectification. I can simply stand on a stage naked and the Beast would find answer to its nagging question.

Constructing movement phrases becomes sort of like a fighter game, sort of like Mortal Kombat or Tekken or Soul Calibur. The Fighter Game genre is one of those previously mentioned histories, one that I had never come to understand as it related to my direct practice of making. The Fighter Game genre hinges on close combat brutality and a wealth of spontaneity as well as mastery. The player chooses a character which already has a predetermined move set (a predetermined movement language) and has to do what they can with whom they have. The player must be resourceful and knowledgeable of the set in order to maximize his potential to win. Mastery of the character and mastery of the mechanics of the game are what determine who

wins and who loses—notice, there’s a winner and a loser. Ultimately though, these games are always about the ability to string together combinations to catch the opponent off guard and leave no room for a counter attack. Movement combinations as a barrage, as a flurry, to garner the victory. The viewer is stunned—que “beaut”. It is also worth mentioning that typically a well executed combination often leads to a special move or a special ability/state in these games. A burst emerges out of the barrage. Here I like to think of this burst in carnal matters as the male cumshot, in the religious matters as enlightenment/ecstaticism (speaking in tongues)—que the Baroque. These bursts become moments of beauty, of pressure, of danger. The screen darkens, flashing bright colors surround the character, and perhaps the music drastically changes—we have entered another dimension. In this, I see my pursuit of repetition to build form, to move the work. Repetition isn’t frivolous and aimless, it’s to **get** somewhere, to level up. Perhaps repetition even moves out of the realm of the performer doing a thing time and time again, into the thing—the movement—telling the performer that it isn’t done yet. The movement, the phrase, can begin to insist and demand further investigation of itself. The performer is then no longer the guide or initiator but now the facilitator, or even the facility. And somehow in this all we find the YBM still rooted in this language. He has control of territory, but when does culture and society and his own reaffirmation begin to sweep his codified language from under him in order to move him into a new lacuna (cavity/gap)?

It is here that I’ve enlisted the symbol of the triangle—expanded into the wedge. The wedge being the thing which thrusts into space, that makes it’s way through. The wedge finds the crack and pries until it is agape. I’m reminded of anal sex. There’s something here about diving in, about ploughing through, about thrashing open which, says everything about interaction with

space but also says everything about the it which performs the action. One wonders if it slips in, if it jams the hole, if there's blood or pleasure. Between the YBM and space I ask who wears the pants in the relationship to make the decision of pleasure and blood. Who actually takes it in the end? This introduces a very compelling relationship with space. Though the YBM has his wealth of aggressive potential energy, does he really want to harm space and time? Can one not poke in with a hot knife and call it care. Falling in love with space and cradling it the, Heraklion enacts his YBM's curiosity. Of course curiosity has the ability to place the YBM and space in peril, but isn't that how they like to fuck? Don't they like choking each other, perhaps they like to bite and cut on monday nights.

Of Context and the Tangible

The space which houses—yet simultaneously **is**—*Heraklion: Un Ka Un* operates as a trilingual vessel. It attempts to act as exhibition space, studio/laboratory, and bedroom for the Heraklion. This is The Roost. Attempting to confuse the lines between those three spatial demarcations, The Roost employs the formalism and sight lines of a gallery/exhibition, the desk lamps and bed sheets of a bedroom, and the visual material /research evidence (documents and photographs/images) of a studio. The aim is to engender a location that generates the feeling that a body is or was present in a multitude of ways. Most of the text is hand written directly on walls, most of the images are tacked up with push pins or masking tape, and faint footprints as well as finger marks litter the dirty white floors and walls. Here again scent plays an important role. The Roost can smell like dinner, piss, axe body spray, or sex depending on the day.

All of the text, images, and objects inside of the space operate as tools/props/anchors for the Heraklion and the viewer. They've been gathered as case studies and explorations of autonomy/singularity (the "I") and of dominion/conquering. The space is littered with experiments which beget new experiments which birth a new generation of explorations. There's an endlessness to the *construction of the idea*. The Roost attempts to house the idea, not give it clean form. It's really an open ended construction site. This construction comes through in the nonlinear, illogical, and truthfully fictional quality of the space (here we can think of Ed Atkins). Advancing through the space, images/texts/objects do not follow a chronological construction or layout. They are placed where they fit, where they are most aesthetically pleasing, or perhaps where they've fallen. Does scale of an image imply greater or lesser importance? Are some words more sacred due to their central locations? Ultimately, The Roost has been constructed with a key element that's important in the bodily performance as well—deep attention to incident and arrival. While every decision isn't mapped, the space is ultimately heavily curated and cultivated so that the Heraklion's hand and mind is visible in every decision. Most clearly The Roost operates as an extension of the body/mind—the essence—of the Heraklion. Perhaps one could conclude that The Roost itself is simply a realization of ideas the visual contents inside of The Roost conjure up. The space becomes reflexive conceptual architecture.

Specific images/objects/texts that deal directly with the "I" are the ones which describe or depict male masturbation, posturing (or *épaulement* in ballet), the singular stallions, and repeated self portraiture. Many of the images frame the subject in center with the subject directly gazing out at the viewer. Somehow this gaze begins to dissolve the singularity of their bodies and allow them to advance into the territory of our existence. The fact that most of the masturbating figures

are YBM's begins to launch back into the conversation of the expansion of a particular body. The images/objects/texts in the Roost that begin to touch on domain typically state it explicitly or show an object/material wrangled into one specific location, or dispersed to claim space. This could be the pile of glitter, the roaming power of a plastic bouncy ball, and/or the wealth of triangular constructions throughout the space—seen and unseen.

Romantically, I suppose I like to think of my entering into The Roost as a kind of implosion and a swallowing of self. As if every time I step into the space, my entire body gets sucked into my mouth until there's nothing left. Bloop *snaps fingers*, just like that I'm everywhere and in the non-here.

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