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Ruth Buchanan
24 Hour Body
Hopkinson Mossman
Frieze London
14 - 17 October 2015





As the essay continues to unfold, the body becomes more than a metaphor for describing a process and instead Acker insists on an actualised recalibration of both the power of language – when literally pushed, pulled or squeezed – at the same time as subjecting the body to the point of obliteration through repetition in relation to that language. That is to say, what would it be if one actively subjects

the subject to a process, structure, or context and rather than the body (or language) being subsumed by that structure it interferes with, distorts or breaks it? What is encouraged here is encounter to transformation, where both the body and the situation in which it finds itself, whether linguistic, spatial or some amalgamation of the two, cuts into, carves out, or demands a specific position. A



structuring of material that attunes itself to a language that breaks the body, or a body that breaks a language: breaking into or breaking off of.

Extending this logic, both writing and spatial organisation are used as if they were a readable code, in the same way as multiple organisational systems are, where the objective 'thing' and the abstract structures

of organisation confront one another through and with the subject. This logic of code → through objectivity → to subject → to interference sets into motion the process of recalibration that Acker points too, where a set of implicated bodies and objects act through and against each other. The thought of power per se therefore, and the mechanisms that produce and re-produce it, are or could be re-



routed. Such re-routing could happen in the form of a ripped body, a flexed bicep, at the same time as happening by replacing a warm light with a cool one, a window with a screen, an entrance with an exit. What is delineated here then is “a field of self-awareness through objects whether things, system spaces or people), and the conversion of this objectivity into the conditions for one’s experience

(subjectivity).”** Subjecting the subject too, dot, dot dot, disortion of subjectivity, dot, dot dot, as in movement.

* Kathy Acker: “Against Ordinary Language: The Language of the Body” in *The Last Sex: Feminism and Outlaw Bodies*, ed. Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker, London, 1993, pg. 21

** Marina Vishmidt in notes to the author, 2014

Ruth Buchanan's work explores language as a powerful system of social organisation. Her works find physical formats for language –as spatial structures, prints, texts, collections of objects, sculptures, weavings, films and audio recordings– but also develops a semantic that is in itself organised like a language.

Buchanan interrogates systems that appear repeatedly in the production of culture such as formats of display (for example a book or vitrine), structures for grouping material (for example a private collection or library), or spaces where the processing of material takes place (such as a studio or gallery). Buchanan considers the design of these systems of organization in its most expanded form; design as a form of devising and implementing power structures, of rationalising information, or of strategically staging the parameters of encounter.

In recent work the artist has considered art collections as a figure in the construction of culture. For Buchanan collections are a site of spatial and temporal disjuncture where the objective 'thing' and the abstract structures of organisation confront one another. This confrontation is further complicated by the non-negotiable presence of the subjective body (the viewer, artist, collector etc) and, more specifically, its capacity to interpret and to interrupt. Following her durational encounter with a seminal collection of Conceptual Art held at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Buchanan considered further occasions of the body acting as both authoritarian and disruptive figure; including the violent demonstrations that led to the evacuation of the server room at the IBM Highrise in Berlin, known as the 'electronic brain behind glass'. For *24 Hour Body*, this content is paired with an extended reading of Kathy Acker's essay *Against Ordinary Language: The Language of the Body*. Material associated with each site of encounter is used as both form and content; sensations recast as spatial and semantic propositions.

24 Hour Body comprises five new works: two tables each supporting a hand-latchhooked rug, and three large printed banners each presenting a 'poem' or etymology flow-chart. The works present structures used in the categorisation and ordering of information. The metal mesh of the tabletop recalls materials used in museum storage systems, or suspended pathways that carry you through utility areas of buildings, while the form itself recalls a vitrine. The flow-charts resemble typical instructional or pedagogical forms, abstracted and re-presented as diagrams of thought.

In *24 Hour Body*, Buchanan treats both language and the body as material that can be structured and manipulated through shared processes of repetition and interruption. Viewed frontally, the screen-like forms enact a drastic compression of content, however walking amongst the elements activates a spatial expansion, creating space to consider the specificity of each lexeme. Taken together *24 Hour Body* can be seen as an abstract diagram for the process of negotiating space that is taking place at that very same moment, directing the viewer's attention to the conditions of one's own experience.

Ruth Buchanan is a New Zealand artist who lives in Berlin. She gained her BFA from the Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland in 2002 and her MA (Fine Art) from the Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam in 2007. From 2008-2009 she was a researcher in fine art at the Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht. Recent projects include a co-commission by the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, and Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg, realised over the course of 2015. She has had solo presentations at, amongst others, the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2014), Grazer Kunstverein (2011), Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht (2010) and The Showroom, London (2009). She has realised performances in numerous contexts including Tate Modern, London, Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz, Frascati Theatre in the framework of *If I Can't Dance...*, Amsterdam and the Rietveld Schröder Huis, Utrecht. Buchanan initiates and contributes to various forms of publishing, including releasing an artists record *Or, a camera Or, a building Or, a screen* (Apparent Extent and Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, 2015), and two artist books *The weather, a building* (Sternberg Press, 2012) and *Lying Freely* (Casco Office for Art, Design, Theory and Jan van Eyck Academie, 2010).

Text: Ruth Buchanan, Sarah Hopkinson & Danae Mossman

Design: Ruth Buchanan

Installation views: Ruth Buchanan, *Or, a building*, 2015
Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, photo: Hubert Distel

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