

# TANJA OSTOJIĆ

## Mis(s)placed Women?

2009-2022

A Collaborative Art Project



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**Dagmara Bilon** Ines Borovac **Mia Bradić** Amy Bryzgel David Caines Nati Canto Hiuwai Chan  
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**Sabbi Senior** Alejandra Robles Sosa Evdoxia Stafylaraki **Tan Tan** Mare Tralla  
**Tanya Ury Katja Vaghi** Bojana Videkanić Anastasio William Hyla Willis Jiachen Xu  
**Arzu Yayintaş** Gülhatun Yıldırım **Gizem Yılmaz** aka Epifani and **Suzy van Zehlendorf**  
among others.

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Exhibition participants:

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## ABOUT TANJA OSTOJIĆ

*Mis(s)placed Women?* is a collaborative, multi-layered art project that I have been developing since 2009, consisting of solo and group performances, delegated performances, performance art workshops, and an online platform that includes contributions by over 170 individuals from six continents. Many of them are artists who identify as women from diverse backgrounds.

The project’s participants embody and enact some of everyday-life’s activities that thematise the displacement known to migrants, refugees, and itinerant artists traveling the world to earn their living. The performances deal with migration issues, gender equality, climate change, feminism, queerness, gentrification, inclusion, accessibility, power relations, and vulnerability, particularly as they relate to women and nonbinary people, an aspect that figured prominently in the past almost three decades of my artistic practice. While investigating privilege by distinguishing between working mobility, forced or desired migration, and how arbitrary laws apply to moving bodies, *Mis(s)placed Women?* also explores diverse public spaces and the invisibility of certain groups within them, using feminist emancipatory methodologies and artistic community-building practices.

I have conducted numerous workshops across the world where the participants are selected by open call. Individual and group artworks and interventions are developed and produced in this frame. We highly value collaboration within the group, the forming of a community, the further communication with the random audiences that we meet on the streets and with the targeted audiences at presentations, exhibitions, and discussions.

*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshops apply the principles of Art as Social Practice and explore a variety of public spaces and the possibilities for temporary interventions in them, empowering

participants via a kind of master-class block seminar—a laboratory outside of official educational institution, so to say—and developing new collective and individual works.

A sixty-eight minute documentary is a new production that follows the collective and individual performances and reflections of the participants in the *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop over three days in three different neighbourhoods of Istanbul, and showcases the final presentation and discussion at the Beykoz Kundura Cinema (September 2021). Massive police presence and oppression was the main flavour of working in the public spaces of Istanbul, although the response from the public was tremendous and appreciative, and the participants were delightfully supportive of each other and highly motivated.

Arzu Yayıntaş and myself have chosen some of the most relevant contributions from the rich project archive for the *Mis(s)placed Women?* exhibition, displayed at Depo as a two-floor multimedia installation consisting of photos, videos, and drawings of performances, along with signs, textile works, artefacts, performance scores, stories, and maps collected globally in the thirteen years of the project’s development. Depo’s distinguished political profile and engagement with civil society makes it an ideal venue to host this socially engaged project interested in interweaving artistic and activist practices.

A part of the exhibition space has been arranged as a gathering place that invites the visitor to be an explorer and participant rather than just a viewer, while the six performance scores are there to be readapted and tried out.

As part of the exhibition, an international community gathering of *Mis(s)placed Women?* participants and a public programme consisting of guided tours, discussions, and performances will take place September 20-22, 2022 at Depo and across the city of Istanbul.

TANJA OSTOJIC

## Score #1: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own

More/less than an hour, with/without preparation, one/more performers, migration-specific locations

### About:

*Misplaced Women?* is an art project that welcomes contributions by people from diverse backgrounds that embody and enact everyday-life activities that touch upon forms of displacement. Participants are invited to perform and reflect upon different notions of travelling, identity, illegality, homelessness, security, private/public space, and to share their experiences on the project blog.

### Instructions:

1. Select a migration-specific place that resonates with you (such as public transportation, central bus station, airport, border, areas affected by gentrification).
2. Get there and unpack a bag of your own (such as your own purse or backpack, or a bag with empty plastic bags, or packaging from consumer articles).
3. Take every single item out and turn it inside out. Take everything out of your pockets. Turn your pockets inside out. Take your shoes off. Once you've unpacked everything, search to see if you've discovered something else.
4. For those more advanced and highly motivated: You can repeat the same action in various places and times, and see how it is perceived by those around you. If you choose this option, draw on the map the places where you performed each unpacking performance.

### Note:

Reflect upon how it felt to do this in public. Did you feel exposed? How did it resonate with your life experience, and did it bring you closer to the people on the move, people on the street, etc? Be open to talk to the passers-by about what you're actually doing and why. Let this performance last for at least half an hour. If you have unpacked your things in a hectic way, after a break, try to pack items back with appreciation and care (or the other way around).

### Attention:

Places that are generally understood as public spaces might appear not to be such. That means that with your performance you might challenge the notion of public space, and see where it is (not) possible to do your action. A security guy might push you one metre away from the entrance (in a shopping mall, or what many train stations have become nowadays, right?). A policeman might ask you, "What are you doing?". I can only advise you to bring one person with you to try to talk to any security personnel you encounter, so that you can finish your performance. You may also say that you are searching for an item of your own that you really need but you are not sure if you took it with you (Whatever that might be, right?). This is to avoid being kicked out or arrested, given that performing and filming is usually not allowed in some "public" places.

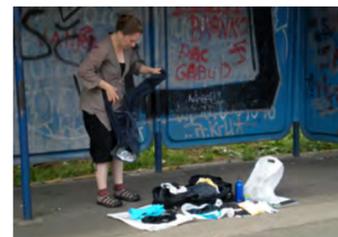
Tanja Ostojic, "Score #1: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own", 2009.



David Caines  
Illustration depicting Sophie Cero's "Unpacking a Bag of Your Own" performance in Hackney Wick in the frame of the *Misplaced Women?* workshop by Tanja Ostojic, Live Art Development Agency, London, 2016.

HYLA WILLIS

## Misplaced Women?: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own



Hyla Willis  
"Misplaced Women?: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own", delegated performance, Central train station, Zagreb, Croatia, June 25, 2009, PSI conference. Photo: subRosa.

On the way from Pittsburgh to Zagreb, my luggage was misplaced for several days. I bought some PSI Conference T-shirts and a few other cheap things to wear in the complex of underground shops at the train station. I changed clothes, combed my hair, and repacked the old and new items in the backpack I had carried on board the plane. This was performed behind the train station, a place that seemed to host an entirely different demographic of people and businesses than the "front" of the station did. It gave me strange recollections of a very itinerant period in my childhood when a sturdy cardboard box for furniture or a bit of privacy for grooming were cherished luxuries. At the same time, I was fully aware of the Kunas in my pocket and the cosy hotel room I was sharing a few blocks away.

Hyla Willis, written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2009.

## TANYA URY Fury

"Fury" is a delegated video-performance, as part of Tanja Ostojic's project *Misplaced Women?*, about the loss of the Ury/Unger family archive with the collapse of the Historical Archives in Cologne, on March 3, 2009. It was filmed on October 3, 2009, German Reunification Day, the twentieth anniversary of the reunification. With "Fury" Tanya Ury takes on the role of one of the Three Furies, also known as the Erinnyes, or Eumenides, the so-called Avenging Goddesses of Antiquity who avenged extreme crimes and cruelties. She carries a suitcase full of scripts and articles written by her grandfather, Alfred H. Unger, which had been mistakenly delivered to her home address and not the City Archives ten years previously, and which she had kept. At the "hole", the location where the Cologne City Archives once stood, she reads one of these articles about Cologne, from 1948.

(Source: *Mis(s)placed Women?* blog, 2009.)



Tanya Ury  
"Fury", video-performance, 2009, 2 hours 05 min video, Historical City Archives, Cologne, Germany.

TANJA OSTOJIĆ

**Misplaced Women?: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own**

I landed in Bergen's well of mist and fog, after a connecting flight from Berlin over Copenhagen. The purpose of my visit here was to take part in the "Migration, Globalisation, and New Social Formations" conference by the Bergen International Migration and Ethnic Relations Research Unit.

On Tuesday November 8, 2011, starting at 1:40pm I performed my *Misplaced Women?* score at the arrivals and departures terminal of Bergen's international airport. In approximately 30 minutes I took out the entire contents of my two suitcases, my handbag, as well as my cosmetics and make-up bags. I took out each single item one by one, turning them inside out, and placing them all on the floor of the terminal, on a red SAS blanket that I had borrowed from the aeroplane a couple of minutes earlier. A Bergen airport security guy let me finish my performance, and then he asked if I needed any help. I said "No".

- "So, what are you doing here?" he asked.

- "I'm looking for something that I need for my presentation at the University on Thursday. I hope I did not forget it" was my answer, while I continued to take out every single item from my cosmetics bag which I turned inside out, as well as all my tights, socks, underwear, pullovers...

Tanja Ostojić, written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2011.



Tanja Ostojić  
"Misplaced Women?: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own", one hour performance at the Bergen International Airport, Norway, November 8, 2011. Organised by Stiftelsen 3,14. Photo: Jannicke Olsen.

TANJA OSTOJIĆ

**Misplaced Women?: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own**

Tanja Ostojić  
"Misplaced Women?: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own", a group performance, 2013, le Grand Escalier de la Gare du Saint Charles, Train station, Marseille, France. Performed by: Jane Kay Park, Emma-Edvige Ungaro, Alix Denambride, Kim Mc Cafferty, Robyn Hambrook, Helen Averley, Patricia Verity and Tanja Ostojić, Préavis de Désordre Urbain, Marseille, France. Photo: Anne Charles.

1 - It is normal for me to have my bags searched. I am always being searched in Belfast when I go to the shops.

2 - The only time I went to Moscow was in 1986, when I was twenty years old. When they wanted to check inside one of my bags I said "No!" and to my surprise, they didn't. It contained seven kilograms of all types of Kenyan fruits wrapped in newspaper. The bag was a basket made of natural fibres and was sewn together with string. I took the fruit back to my family in Northern Ireland.

3 - In 2006 my seven-year-old daughter was forced to bin her toy snake at Sydney airport, just in case someone overreacted to it on the plane in the same way that the woman who was checking the bag had hysterically overreacted! The child did not allow herself to cry. But she also has not forgotten.

Helen Averley, written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2013.

TANJA OSTOJIĆ

**Misplaced Women? Dedicated to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada**

When I arrive at Dundas and McCaul Street, a crowd has already gathered, creating a semi circle around a woman who was holding a sign, on which "MISPLACED WOMEN?" was hand-written... Meanwhile, I scan the area looking for Tanja Ostojić. I had met her before and so I know that she is not the woman holding the sign...



Tanja Ostojić  
"Misplaced Women? Dedicated to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada", 60 minutes performance; performance video, 30 min 30 sec, Performed by Tanja Ostojić, on Sunday, October 16, 2016, in front of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada, in the frame of 7a\*11d international performance festival. Performance assistance: Eszter Jagica. Photo: Henry Chan.

Eventually Ostojić exits the glass cubicle of the bus stop nearby, rolling a suitcase behind her, and positions herself between us and the "MISPLACED WOMEN?" performer. She... begins to empty her pockets, then her bag, then the bags contained in her bag, until all of the contents, reduced to their smallest parts, litter the ground... The last item she removes is a large black garbage bag. She explores this object more curiously than the rest, eventually stepping into it, crouching and pulling it over her body. It fits. She then steps into the suitcase... She pulls the suitcase flap closed. She squirms, reaches out an arm and struggles to close the zipper. An audience member steps in to help. Seemingly concerned, an elderly man hovers around while Ostojić is stuffed in her suitcase, which has now been transformed into a tomb. I notice her body relax.

To me, this part of the action, a pause of sorts, is the most evocative, striking and difficult moment in the work. As black plastic gently rustles over Ostojić's contorted limbs, I think about the people whose bodies are found like this, in suitcases and in garbage bags: Guang Hua Liu, Melonie Biddersingh, Lin Jun, Tina Fontaine, and countless others who I am sure exist, but who I either can't recall or do not know about. Most of these bodies are women, most of these women are Indigenous or racially marginalised.

Michelle Lacombe, from the review first published on 7a\*11d blog

TAN TAN

**A Pink River**

Tan Tan  
"A Pink River", delegated performance, Stadshal, Gent, Belgium, March 8, 2018. Photos: Okky Oki, Sara De Vuyst, Sallisa Rosa.

*The International Women's Day contribution by Tan Tan is a story (as she says) about a "misplaced woman" who comes from China and currently lives in Belgium, who attempts to find her place as a foreign woman despite all the stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings.* (Tanja Ostojić)

I'm a woman  
Made in China  
But I'm not cheap

I'm a woman  
I like shopping  
But I'm not a commodity

I'm a woman  
I work like a man  
But I don't get the same

I'm a woman  
I sleep with a man  
But I deserve a place of my own

Tan Tan, from the written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2018.

# CHAPTER 2: HOLDING THE "MISPLACED WOMEN?" SIGN

TANJA OSTOJIĆ

## Score #2: Holding the "Misplaced Women?" Sign

*Less than an hour, with/without preparations, one performer*

### Instructions:

1. Select a migration-specific place that resonates with you.
2. Make your own "MISPLACED WOMEN?" (or "MISPLACED MAN?") sign or banner (on a cardboard, on a piece of paper, on some cloth. It can be a drawing or an embroidery or even a collage).
3. Stand there and hold it for at least half an hour.
4. Ask someone to take a photo of you standing there.
5. You can repeat the same action in various places and times, and see how it is being perceived by those around you. If you choose this option, draw on the map the places where you performed each action.

### Note:

Reflect upon how it felt to hold the sign, how it resonated with you, with your life experience, how the location you chose affected you. Be open to talk to the people that are passing by about the sign you are holding and related issues, and hear what they have to say about it.

### Crediting and Publishing:

It is important to credit everyone properly. With the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project we pay special attention to that. Please be sure to fully credit your action as: (your name) *Mis(s)placed Women?* delegated performance by Tanja Ostojić, whenever you publish it. We will do the same with your contribution. Send a photo or a drawing of yourself performing, a description about how it went (include your name, date, time, duration, location(s) name(s) of everyone involved, photographer and notes). Please let us know if you would like your contribution to be published on the project's blog. We would greatly appreciate your permission to do so.

Tanja Ostojić, "Score #2: Holding the 'Misplaced Women?' Sign", 2012



David Caines

Illustration depicting Elena Marchevska "Holding the 'Misplaced Women?' Sign" at Heathrow Airport, London in the frame of the *Misplaced Women?* workshop by Tanja Ostojić, Live Art Development Agency, London, 2016.



CONTACTZONE, Jan Stolze  
"Holding the 'Misplaced Women?' Sign", at Zürich International Airport, in the frame of *Misplaced Women?* workshop by Tanja Ostojić, ZhDK, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, April, 2019.  
Photo: contactzone.



CONTACTZONE, Severin Hallauer  
"Holding the 'Misplaced Human' Sign", at Zürich International Airport, in the frame of *Misplaced Women?* workshop by Tanja Ostojić, ZhDK, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, April, 2019.  
Photo: contactzone.



Monika Janulevičiūtė  
"Holding the 'Misplaced Women?' Sign", work on textile, Vilnius International Airport, Lithuania, November 2016.  
Photo: T. Ostojić.

## Missing Women: Some Thoughts As to Why I Became Missing While Waiting for Tanja Ostojić

### Contribution by Bojana Videkanić

Last year, I invited Tanja Ostojić to present her work at the 7A\*11D International Festival of Performance in Toronto. She generously accepted and came in October 2016. In our conversations prior to her arrival, she asked me to create a "Misplaced Women(??)" sign and hold it while waiting for her at the Pearson International Airport. I was happy to do this, made the sign, and decided to include a question mark at the end.

While standing there at the international arrivals gate, I had some time to reflect on the action I was performing (standing in the middle of the great airport hall with an ambiguous sign in my hands) and what its ramifications might be. First, I realized that I was initiating Tanja's performance, as it became obvious that my interactions with the accidental audiences were catalysts for a discussion around national borders and the policing of bodies. Secondly, I realized the echoes of her work in our "local" Canadian context, in relation to the missing and murdered indigenous women, as well as the impact it had in light of the Syrian crisis and the inability of global leaders to see the refugees as human beings. What I did not expect was my own physical reaction to the sign and the moment I found myself missing in it.

It became obvious at that moment that the sign "Missing Women" was not about some other missing women (although of course it is about many thousands if not millions of them) but that it was also about my own experiences with borders and their violence. It brought me some twenty years back to 1992, and my fifteen-year-old self, a confused, frightened child who, in a matter of a few weeks between April 6 and April 20, 1992, became a refugee. At the time I did not know what that meant, but I learned quickly. When my hometown of Sarajevo came under siege and the first grenades fell, my desperate, naïve parents wanted to save me, to protect me, so they found a way to put me on one of the last planes leaving the city to go to Belgrade and then on to London. I will never forget the scene of desperation at the Sarajevo Airport as hundreds and hundreds of people gathered to try to get their small children, parents, and other family members onto the Kikash military planes. They were all pleading with important-looking military officers, with their long lists of names, to let them through—crying, begging, consoling. Through some miracle, my parents managed to get me on one of those lists and on one of the planes. They gave me a few of our family

photos (so that I would not forget them and where I come from), and my mom lovingly packed my sinus medication and some clothes. She told me that I would be back at the end of the summer when the war was over, and with my English much improved. And so I went, with my grey, Yugoslav child passport (which in fact was no longer valid, as we were living through the breakup of the country), 500 deutsche marks, my photos, and a book. As the Kikash plane lifted off (in fact, this was my very first time being on a plane) I sat on the floor of its enormous belly with a couple of hundred other people, not really knowing where I was going and what will happen to me when I get there. I was all alone, a child who had never travelled without her parents, en route to some unknown future.

Three days later I was on a plane ride to London with another boy, a son of my parents' friends. The two of us were going to his aunt's house; she had agreed to take me in for a short period until I was to return home to Sarajevo. We landed and I was immediately detained by the UK customs and immigration. I was held in an interrogation room for six hours. I had to take all my clothes out of my bag, they took my family photos and asked me about each person in the photo and where they were, they asked me about my sinus medication, about how much clothes I had, and why I was travelling, do I know what is happening to my country? They even asked me about Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom*

*the Bell Tolls*, the one book that I had managed to take out of my parents' library as I was leaving (the book I cannot bring myself to read again). It is hard to describe that feeling of helplessness, of being at the mercy of people in uniform, and especially being that way as a child. Like a caged animal, my heart pounded, I was shaking, and I cried. I cried, knowing that all those things that the immigration officers were looking through were really the last things that I could say were mine, these were the last remnants of my childhood, of my family life, and of my country, even those darn sinus pills... My entire life on display, my entire life in one suitcase, now an object of conversation for immigration officers, and evidence of my status.

Finally, I was let through—they decided that my friend's aunt who was waiting for us was credible. This was my initiation into the life of a refugee. From that moment on, I moved with my suitcase from family to family, twice in London (during



Bojana Videkanić  
"Holding the 'Misplaced Women?' Sign", at Pearson International Airport in Toronto, Canada, October 12, 2016. Photo: T. Ostojić.

the two-month stay there), and some ten times later on when I lived as a refugee in Croatia. At one point while still in London, I was supposed to be moved for the third time, but when that did not work out the people with whom I was staying decided that I should be given over to Child Services (as having a fifteen-year-old girl in the house was too much for them). I couch-surfed most of the time, slept in peoples’ baby rooms next to their kids’ cribs, in their master bedrooms on the floor, in spare rooms, living rooms, all kinds of rooms. I learned to hold my pee in so that I would not have to go to the bathroom while the owners of the house were around. I learned to take fast showers, I learned to eat when no one was looking (usually late at night). I learned how to walk without making a sound, how to use a hand towel, soap, shampoo, or kitchen utensils so that they would look like no one had used them. I learned to be sparing with creams, food, cookies so that it would not look like someone had eaten them. I learned to be invisible, to not be noticed by police, by men, by security. I learned how to pack my bag quickly so that I could move out fast. I learned that refugees are never welcome, that we are perceived as a burden, not just to the state and all its mechanisms, but often to extended families, friends, and even do-gooders who think that they can take refugees into their homes but cannot deal with someone actually living with them, taking up their space.

However, I also met some amazing people on the way, selfless, caring people like my mom’s friend who took me and my family in with her son for four months. Or like a doctor from Doctors Without Borders who I met on the street—I told him during the course of our conversation that my parents were doctors in Sarajevo, and that I was not sure if they were dead or alive as all the phone lines were down, and I had not spoken to them in two months. He told me that he would find my parents, as he was going back to Sarajevo, and promised to deliver my letter to them. And he did! (That was how my parents found out I was alive and well).

In the end, I also learned that my parents were broken by the war. The strong, independent people I knew before April 1992 were now destroyed physically, mentally, and professionally. When both my parents came out of the besieged Sarajevo (my mom at the end of 1992, and my dad at the end of 1994) and when we lived as refugees in Croatia awaiting papers to immigrate to Canada or Australia, I saw my parents waiting in line for food donations, refugee status, clothes, aid; they were lost, defeated, depressed. My dad developed severe PTSD,

which was never dealt with. The defeat only continued when we came to Canada, when my parents had difficulty learning English, were not able to find a job, and found themselves in limbo, being too old to go to school in their early-to-mid-fifties but also too young to retire. My father would go to a local Food Bank to get food, and toil at a construction site as a construction worker; my mom worked with developmentally disabled adults and was often attacked and bitten by them. Yes, standing there at the arrivals gate at Pearson Airport became an embodied performance of myself missing and my parents missing. I was that fifteen-year-old kid again, trying to find myself.

Many confused passers-by approached me to inquire about what I was doing, including a female security guard. “You know you will get a lot of people asking about the sign,” she said. “They will think you have some answers for them.” Then she added, “You know, I am misplaced too...” These interactions opened up a whole new conversation about the invisibility and visibility of women who are marginalised, who are placed at the mercy of governmental mechanisms, police, immigration, welfare and unemployment services, ministry of Indigenous affairs, lawyers, immigration courts.

I write this as the Syrian refugees are fleeing their country, just like I did over twenty years ago. I write this as Trump has barred people from entering the United States, I write this as frozen refugee claimants are crossing the US/Canada border at negative forty degrees Celsius, I write this as an official Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women is only just taking place over forty years after their deaths, I write this as hundreds of unaccompanied minors are prevented from entering the UK (as the government stopped its program to help them), I write this as women and children are still going missing—no questions asked. Tanja Ostojić’s performance, which dares to ask that question, is therefore more important than ever. Standing in the crowd with a sign “Missing Women?” at this moment becomes an ethical and moral confrontation. And at a time of “alternative” truths, the truth of those who are marginalised is the one that matters.

First published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2017. Bojana Videkanić is a performance artist, curator, art historian and professor at Waterloo University, Ontario, Canada. She is a member of the curatorial board of the 7A\*11D International Festival of Performance and has recently published book *Nonaligned Modernism: socialist postcolonial practices in Yugoslavia, 1945-1985*.

# CHAPTER 3: BECOMING ONE WITH A BAG

DAGMARA BILON

## Score #3: Becoming One With a Bag

Around 30 minutes, with or without preparation, two performers  
Location: busy city bridge



David Caines  
Illustration depicting performance by Dagmara Bilon in Olympic Park in the frame of the *Misplaced Women?* workshop by Tanja Ostojić, Live Art Development Agency, London, 2016.



Dagmara Bilon  
“Misplaced Women?: Becoming One With a Bag”, performance during Refugee Week 2017, Pimlico, London, UK. Photo: Rachel Cherry.



Dagmara Bilon  
“Misplaced, Score #3: Becoming One With a Bag”, 2021, Millennium Bridge, London, performed by: Dagmara Bilon & Dyana Gravina. *Mis(s)placed Women?* Performance Weekend and the Community Gathering in Belgrade, October 17 2021, via Zoom. Photo: Mia Bilon, live streaming: Robin Harvey.

### About:

This score is a sort of combination of the *Mis(s)placed Women?* “Score #1” and “Score #2” by Tanja Ostojić. “Becoming One With a Bag” is a metaphor for displacement, objectification, and detachment from humanity, in which the viewer on their way to work crosses the busy city bridge and unexpectedly spots legs coming out of a bag, without a face, without an identity. Next to the bag on legs, there is a second person (co-performer) holding a “MISPLACED WOMEN?” sign (“Score #2”). The bridge here becomes a symbol of a transient state, in between two different locations, a site of migration, movement, and ambivalence.

### Instructions:

1. Select a busy city bridge.
2. The main action takes place on the pedestrian area toward the middle of the bridge.
3. The performer wears a dress and high heels, and walks over the bridge toward the middle, carrying the “refuge bag” on her shoulder. She stops and steps inside the bag until her upper body disappears inside the bag. The second performer zips the bag and positions herself approximately one metre away.
4. Both of them stand still as a kind of juxtaposed, obscure attraction and provocation at the same time for about half an hour.

**Important:** The co-performer needs also to look after the person in the bag who cannot see her surroundings.

### Note:

It is interesting to find out who this action speaks to and how the people passing by on the bridge respond to it. Reflect on your motivation to perform this score and from which perspective you speak. (For example, as a non-UK citizen based in London, I travelled recently back home to unite with my family after having been away for two weeks. Two days ahead of my flight, I received an email from the Home Office stating that if I am not able to present my Settled Status at the border, I won’t be able to enter the country. After 20 years of living in the UK, I would have never thought that I had to fear being stopped at the borders. This experience made me think about the people who struggle daily with this issue.)

### Crediting and Publishing:

*Mis(s)placed Women?* project by Tanja Ostojić, live action by Dagmara Bilon, performed by: your names...

“Score #3: Becoming One With a Bag”, 2021

# CHAPTER 4: SPREAD AND REFLECT

HOANG TRAN HIEU HANH

## Score #4: Spread and Reflect

*More or less than an hour, several performers*

### About:

"Mirror, Mirror – Spread Your Reflection!" is a collaborative intervention with large mirrors, first performed in Berlin's underground in January 2018 within the framework of Tanja Ostojić's *Misplaced Women?* performance art workshop. The score deriving from it is focused on the phenomenon of manspreading, or men's habit of sitting in public transport with legs wide apart, thereby covering more than their own seat.

### Instructions:

1. Choose a mirror to bring along with you (the larger the better).
2. Select the means of transport you prefer, for example: metro, tram, train.
3. Take your seat in front of a cis man (short for cisgender man: a person who was assigned male at birth and whose gender identity is male).
4. Hold your mirror between your legs with the mirror reflection towards the person sitting opposite to you.
5. You can repeat the same action in a different means of transport and see how different it is being perceived every time.

### Note:

Reflect upon how it feels to hold the mirror, to take up the space, to be made invisible by the mirror, and to become visible with the mirror.

### Crediting and Publishing:

It is very important to credit everyone properly. In the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project we pay special attention to that. Please be sure to fully credit your action as: (Your name:) a performance in response to the delegated performance by Hoang Tran Hieu Hanh, "Score 4: Spread and Reflect", *Misplaced Women?*, project by Tanja Ostojić, performed by: add names of everyone performing with you and the photographer(s) name(s)— wherever you share it or print it, and we will do the same with your contribution. Send a photo or a drawing of yourself performing, the description about how it went (your name, date, time, duration, location(s) and notes about what happened). Please let us know if you would like your contribution to be published on the blog of the project. We would greatly appreciate that!

"Score #4: Spread and Reflect", 2021.



Hoang Tran Hieu Hanh  
"Mirror, Mirror – Spread Your Reflection!",  
performance during the *Misplaced Women?*  
workshop, Berlin. With the participation of: Gaby  
Bila-Günther, Nati Canto, Hoang Tran Hieu Hanh,  
Alice Minervini, Evdoxia Stafylaraki and Jiachen  
Xu. Duration: ca. 2 hours. Locations: public  
transportation U8 and U1, January, 2018.  
Photos: Jiachen Xu and Sajan Mani.

# CHAPTER 5: MISPLACED WOMEN? AND THE TOURIST SUITCASE

TANJA OSTOJIC

## "Misplaced Women?" and the Tourist Suitcase



Tanja Ostojić  
"Misplaced Women? and the Tourist Suitcase",  
performance 30 min, May 11, 2018, Hauptbahnhof/  
main train station, Innsbruck, Austria. *Art in Public  
Space Tyrol*. Photo: Daniel Jarosch.



Tanja Ostojić  
"Misplaced Women? and the Tourist Suitcase", 60  
min performance, May 12, 2018, Goldenes Dach/  
Golden Roof, historical centre, Innsbruck, *Art in  
Public Space Tyrol*. Photo: Daniel Jarosch.

After winning an international competition for my performance art project *Art in Public Space Tyrol*, I published an open call for a three-day-long *Misplaced Women?* performance workshop in which I produced a total of six new performances and site-specific interventions across Innsbruck with three participants, myself included. The process and the results of the workshop were presented on May 13, 2018, in Die Bäckerei. For the realisation of each of the performances we have chosen a specific location and context. I performed "*Misplaced Women? and the Tourist Suitcase*", for the very first time, as a 30 minute performance at the place that was considered the most unwelcoming and dangerous in the city: Innsbruck train station. During the performance, I went through transformations, from a business woman, to a tourist, and finally, to a homeless woman, using as my props hats, caps, a disposable camera, sunglasses, different clothes, fruit yoghurt, sun cream, and miscellaneous items that I took out of one oversized suitcase that had many stickers on it, such as: *Hawaii, Aloha, Jamaica, Holland, Norway, Praha*. It was given to me by my son's grandparents, pensioners based in Innsbruck, who travelled to all these places, and who had previously fled, in 1969, as refugees from Czechoslovakia, via Yugoslavia, to Austria. The performance attracted a lot of attention at the very busy platform in front of the main entrance of the train station. The reactions of the audience were fascinating—they quite literally took care of me throughout the performance. People came to check if I was okay, to help me lock myself inside the suitcase, to unzip the suitcase and let me out... Two girls patiently and carefully tried to pull out my hair that was stuck in the zipper of the suitcase.

The next day, I performed the 60-minute-long performance "*Misplaced Women? and the Tourist Suitcase*" in a slightly different form, using identical props as the previous day, going through transformations, this time from a businesswoman, to a tourist, to a homeless woman, to an immigrant, in the most popular location in the city, on the square in front of the famous Golden Roof, downtown in the heart of the historical centre. At this location, the performance was received quite differently, because the passers-by that use this public space are also different. It turned out that the performance was very well received among many tourists from Korea and India, who were pleased to chat with the suitcase that walked around on its feet wearing flip flops, and was sometimes gently nudging the crowd. They recorded the performance and posted it on social media. Coincidentally, the performance took place at the same location as the FPÖ (Austria's xenophobic right-wing party). Two church activists scolded me, and one of them slapped me on the face with religious propaganda material, throwing flyers at me, I suppose asking me to re-educate myself.

A stout FPÖ female security guard, dressed in a *dirndl*, a traditional Austrian outfit, and carrying a wooden barrel full of brandy on her belt, pushed me off the scene after a while because she no longer wanted to tolerate a walking suitcase that gently pushed her party fellows and musicians who were getting ready to play at that gathering. I later learned that my performance assistant was also threatened with the police if she didn't collect the "garbage" created during the performance. Of course we intended to clean up our materials at the end, when all the things I originally took out of the suitcase while performing would be placed back.

## TANJA OSTOJIĆ *Missplaced Women?*

*Missplaced Women?* is a day-long performance and migration workshop that took place on October 29, 2015, in the refugee centre Miksalište and at several public spaces in Belgrade, Serbia thematising solidarity with the refugees on the Balkan Route. Organised as part of *From Diaspora to Diversity*, Remont, Belgrade. Workshop led by Tanja Ostojić

Participants: Nela Antonović, Gorana Bačevac, Tatjana Beljinac, Tamara Bijelić, Jelena Dinić, Irena Đukanović, Milica Janković, Marija Jevtić, Nadežda Kirčanski, Irena Mirković, Bojana Radenović, Sanja Solunac, Sunčica Šido.

After giving our modest donations to the refugee help centre, where we talked with several refugees and volunteers, we (a group of about fifteen women of various generations) went to Info Park and the park in front of the Faculty of Economy where we completed two group performances that consisted of emptying all the contents of our bags and pockets and turning every single item inside out. We were taking each item apart, including batteries and cards from our mobile phones and photo-cameras. This was an introspective and communicative setting for us, and for the people watching us perform, including refugees and volunteers gathered on nearby benches. I believe that one can best understand this artistic process and the experience of migration and exposure on one's own skin, so to say... Most of the participants felt during the workshop that this was an initiation of a particular kind, and many experienced a strong flash of traumatic memories from the past.



*Missplaced Women?* workshop, Belgrade, October, 2015.

In the photos: Marija Jevtić, Tanja Ostojić, Sunčica Šido, Nela Antonović and Nazer, Balkan route asylum seeker from Syria, performing "Mis(s) placed Women?" inside Info Park, Central Bus station, as one of the group performances in public spaces in Belgrade.

Photos: Lidija Antonović and Srđan Veljović

Nazer, a young asylum seeker from Syria, joined us and presented to us the contents of his refugee bag. It gave me a feeling of gratitude to find out that the Bordeaux Robe-di-Kappa wool scarf that was part of my father's closet since my school years has now found a place in his bag of necessities...

### Selection of the reflections by some of the workshop participants:

1. My motivation to apply for this workshop was the fact that during the course of my life I have developed strong friendships with people who found themselves in very unfortunate situations, and who had been forced to leave their homes behind during the wars in former Yugoslavia. I've witnessed scenes of verbal and physical violence against refugees by seemingly ordinary people, as well as by those who should be in charge of order—the police. Participation in the *Missplaced Women?* project overwhelmed me

with feelings of revolt and sadness. The shift of perspective, produced by the artists' intelligent performance pieces, evoked memories of the scenes I had witnessed on the Bar—Belgrade train a number of years ago. A policeman was brutally searching a woman travelling with two of her kids, while baby stuff was flying all over the train car. By getting involved in the performance *Missplaced Women?* I found myself suddenly transformed from an observer to a victim. I felt naked, attacked, exposed to any

passer-by who might get an idea to approach me. I thought at once about all the possible complications in case my documents, bank cards, or mobile phone went missing. All those paper and plastic objects that enable our communication and consumption, and without which, it seems, I would not be considered a human being but rather an alien. The word which could best describe the experience I had with regards to the luggage searching that I witnessed, and the one I performed myself, would be "violence". I think this performance workshop should be an obligatory educational tool for those in the position of power. At the end, I was left with more questions than answers, which, as our artist claims, is the role of art. (Jelena Dinić, medical worker from Belgrade)

2. Despite the fact that we had only one day for this workshop, I have many different feelings about the experience that we went through. First, when we came to Miksalište, I wasn't confident in my approach to the migrants, because I have never been in this situation before and didn't know what would be the right way to greet them. I wanted to approach them in a very friendly manner and I didn't want them to get the impression that I felt sorry for them. Then I met a guy from Afghanistan and started talking with him bluntly. He was also open for conversation, with a positive attitude. It looked like he really felt safe and calm here, and he told me so. He was glad that people here had empathy and they did not hesitate to help if they could. He told me about his journey and the bad experiences he went through, but he still kept his hope for the future. He gave me his Facebook contact, so we are still in touch. He is now in Düsseldorf, Germany, settled down and thinking about his plans for the future. I talked with two more people and what left a big impression on me was how well they handled their difficult situations. I am aware that not all of them are as strong or as lucky, but talking to these guys made me feel a little more optimistic. We all need more compassion. We need to be open and brave to

talk about the issues and problems of our world. (Irena Mirković, Master's student of New Media, Academy of Arts, Novi Sad)

3. After the experience of volunteering for two weeks in a refugee centre in Belgium, I was surprised by the energy and enthusiasm of some of the refugees I met here in Belgrade. The facts they shared with me in such a brief period of time, I found to be precious. The children's drawings in Miksalište left the strongest impression on me. They drew their experience of the trip and the struggles they were going through.

When I removed all of my personal things from my backpack and placed them where everybody could see them, I felt exposed and vulnerable. That came as a surprise to me. I thought the second unpacking at the next location would be easier than the first one, but it was even more difficult. At one moment, I felt very insecure, and quickly returned everything back into the backpack. I think this experience was valuable because I got a chance to see this situation from a different point of view, and to exchange thoughts and attitudes with other participants of the workshop. (Gorana Bačevac, graduate student of Sculpture, Faculty of Fine Arts, Belgrade)

## ABERDEEN

### MARTA NITECKA BARCHE *Missplaced Women? Banner*



Kirsty Russell and Marta Nitecka Barche "*Missplaced Women?*", delegated performance in front of the public library in Torry, Aberdeen, as part of *Missplaced Women?* workshop, 2016. Photo: T. Ostojić

Marta Nitecka Barche and Tanja Ostojić "*Missplaced Women? Sign*", banner, 49,5 X 181,5 cm, 2016, canvas, marker, embroidery, used during Ostojić's, *Missplaced Women?* workshop in the public spaces of the Torry neighbourhood in Aberdeen, organised as a part of the 2016 Festival of Politics. Photo: Amy Bryzgel

Marta Nitecka Barche, PhD candidate at the University of Aberdeen, has been a *Mis(s) placed Women?* (MW) community member since 2015. She has taken part in a number of performances, and organised the workshop at the Festival of Politics for which she created the banner. Marta was previously subject to border control procedures in the USA, due to the expiration of her student visa in her Polish passport. She spent over three weeks in a regular jail, a so-called "migration prison", together with people who had criminal records. Even though her case was administrative, she was handcuffed and ankle-cuffed and has experienced a deep trauma... (T. Ostojić)

...To me, *Missplaced Women?* is a very peculiar performance. It has many meanings linked to my academic interests and to my individual experience. It recalls the everyday reality of migrants and refugees, of people who more or less willingly move between countries and cities. Their personal stories happen every day on the streets, in shops, at bus stations, and airports... The idea is that anyone can enact the performance in ordinary settings, among strangers passing by; just like anyone can become a migrant who needs to pack a part of their life into a suitcase and move to an unknown place. *MW* does not ask about nationality or political status. It performs and reaffirms the right of individual people to exist and to occupy space as human beings, whatever their identity is. It calls attention to their presence, to their present existence, an existence often unrecognised or denied by political and national modes of identification (especially in the case of the undocumented). *MW* lets individuals be present without asking about their place of belonging...

Marta Nitecka Barche, from the written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2015.



## LONDON

TERESA ALBOR

*The things we leave behind*

Teresa Albor  
"Misplaced Women?", Hackney Wick, London, 2016, video 2 min 39 sec.



Teresa Albor  
"Misplaced Women?", Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2021, video, 4 min 29 sec.  
Photo: K.M. Asad, video still: T. Albor.



David Caines  
Illustration depicting performance by Teresa Albor in Westfield Mall, London, in the frame of the *Misplaced Women?* workshop by Tanja Ostojic, Live Art Development Agency, London, 2016.

"The things we leave behind" is a research-based project begun in 2015 that uses objects left behind by those who are seeking a better life and/or must continue moving to survive. Ever since the *Misplaced Women?* workshop in London in December 2016, the *Mis(s)placed Women? "Score #1"* has become one of the ways to frame the work—given that the conceptual underpinnings of the two projects are the same. The initial objects used in the project were left behind on the Greek island of Lesbos and at a transition centre in Serbia by people leaving Syria and Afghanistan. They have been "borrowed" by people living in London, used to start conversations with young people in installations and as part of performances. A limited-edition zine has been produced with images and writing that emerged from the project. Many of the objects were contributed by an organization called the Dirty Girls of Lesbos Island, which collects, cleans, and redistributes clothes and blankets to those in need. Proceeds from this project have been donated to this organisation. Over the last four years, the project has evolved to focus on climate migration particularly in Bangladesh.

"Misplaced Women?", Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2021, video, 4 min 29 sec

This video mirrors the core premise of the *Mis(s)placed Women?* Project: "...to enact everyday life that signifies displacement... and [consider] relations of power and vulnerability". In this case, the focus is the displacement of women who internally migrate due to the climate catastrophe. Climate change is taking a toll on Bangladesh, most of which is in the low-lying, densely populated delta of south Asia's major river systems. Hundreds of hectares erode annually rendering thousands of people homeless. According to the Environmental Justice Foundation, one in seven people here will be displaced due to rising sea levels by 2050. The video is composed of images by a Bangladeshi photographer who has been documenting climate migration (K M Asad), a Bengali voiceover (Taiara Farhana Tareque) based on interviews with climate migrant women, juxtaposed with footage of a live performance in Dhaka, Bangladesh (unpacking a backpack, scattering personal items).

"Misplaced Women?", Hackney Wick, London, 2016, video 2 min 39 sec

Rather than unpack a personal bag, in this case a suitcase full of objects left behind on the Greek island of Lesbos and at a transition centre in Serbia, by people leaving Syria and Afghanistan, was opened and the contents gently placed on a table outside a theatre in East London. One item was a fragile necklace which was hopelessly tangled. The performance involved the unpacking and the unsuccessful attempt to sort out the necklace.

"Misplaced Women?", Westfield Mall, London, 2016, performance

This performance involved unpacking a woven plastic bag, often used by people who are migrating, in the largest shopping mall in London. Like the previous performance, the objects in the bag were left behind on the Greek island of Lesbos and at a transition centre in Serbia, by people leaving Syria and Afghanistan. A sound piece was played from a mobile phone—a recitation of the names of some of those who are missing or died during their journey. As it was less than ten days before Christmas, the bag also contained gift wrap and ribbons, a nod to the many people who were at the shopping mall, purchasing new objects to give as gifts to family and friends. A private security guard respectfully monitored the performance and was asked (as overheard on his walkie talkie) to let it proceed as long as there was no attempt to promote a product.

## BERLIN

RHEA RAMJOHN

*Which colonial comfort would you like to consume today?*

Rhea Ramjohn  
"Which colonial comfort would you like to consume today?", performance during the *Misplaced Women?* workshop, Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, January 2018. Photo: T. Ostojic.

My suitcase was packed with the following objects: a beach mat, a white tarp, a red Chinese robe, a Boston Red Sox baseball cap, a map of Trinidad, two sarongs from the Bahamas, one red and one blue, a bag with a whale design, two straw placemats, a wok, a wooden spatula, a stuffed toy lobster, pairs of chopsticks, star-themed napkins, a purple Chinese fan, a bar of Trinidadian chocolate, a bag of Trinidadian coffee, two mangoes, one cassava, a bag of brown cane sugar, plantains, potatoes, lemons, chilli peppers, rice, ginger, garlic, amchar massala, madras curry powder, three Bahamian seashells, the Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage, Black Berlin, a Trinidadian passport, an American flag postcard, and my writing notebook from fifth grade.

With the presentation of these objects, I am attempting to represent my fragmentally determined ethnic/racial/national/personal misplacement through the narrative of colonialism and post colonialism. Because colonies are exploited for their resources, each of these objects serves as a symbol of that exploitation and subsequent misplacement or displacement.

I challenge the public to recognise the connection these products have to colonialism, slavery, and immigration. How does un-/forced migration contribute to the Diaspora in terms of the re-framing of identity, displacement of people, cultures, and commodities? How are the effects of colonialism still felt/manifested today? The title question of this performance, "Which colonial comfort would you like to consume today?", confronts my own search for a connection to an ancestral and cultural heritage which is inextricably linked with misplacement...

Rea Ramjohn, from the written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2018.

LADY GABY

*Misplaced Women?*

Lady Gaby  
"Misplaced Women?", interventions in Berlin-Weißensee, during the *Misplaced Women?* workshop hosted by Kunsthalle am Hamburger Platz Berlin. January, 2018. Photo: Sajan Mani.

...During the *Misplaced Women?* interventions realised as a part of the Berlin workshop led by Tanja Ostojic, I chose to walk around the area of Weißensee, as I felt misplaced inside the village-like atmosphere of that neighbourhood. However, the streets, the houses, and that environment felt familiar to me, as they reminded me of communist Romania where I grew up and of the old post-Wall East Berlin. So I looked for places I felt were displaced and marked them with a strand of pink wool, and did a whole range of public interventions at those places. Old communist statues, old bike wheels, an old fountain in the middle of a busy round-about, the gallery and boat sculpture outside the Brotfabrik. During our walk, some of us from the workshop, including Mad Kate, Sajan Mani, and Tatiana Bogacheva, recorded sounds that we detected as misplaced on the streets of the neighbourhood, such as those of a construction site on a quiet small street. The whole time I carried a suitcase with me, containing objects misplaced for no reason, and I would open the suitcase and display the objects during the interventions. I transformed into several misplaced FEMALE and FEMINIST characters besides myself: The ARTIST, The CLEANING MAID and The STATUE OF LIBERTY, these all being identities I can relate to as a woman, undocumented worker, migrant, and refugee...

Lady Gaby, from the written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2018.

## MAD KATE

*Wymyn who travel with me even when they are not here*



Mad Kate  
“Wymyn who travel with me even when they are not here”, Görlitzer Park on January 24, 2018, and in transit from Görlitzer Park, Berlin, Germany to Den Haag, Netherlands on January 25, 2018, performance during the *Misplaced Women?* Workshop Berlin. Photo: Mad Kate.

## LUCIANA DAMIANI

*The Safe Circle*



Luciana Damiani  
“The Safe Circle”, performance at the *Misplaced Women?* workshop, Park am Nordbahnhof, Berlin, 2019. Photo: T. Ostojić

...It made me think a lot about how my gender is already “queered” as an independent, migrating body...and makes me stand out from other cunt-bearing bodies—“wymyn\*”—even within my own US-American culture, who face strict gender expectations of their femininity and heteronormativity. The female migrating body already has a relative independence compared to women who are limited by their own communities in terms of freedom of movement. \*The word wymyn is purposely “genderf\*cked” to disentangle the word “man” from the word “woman”, and with the intention of being inclusive to trans women, non-binary, intersex, and other genderqueer people. The migrating body already has access to the privilege of movement, even when they encounter borders, even when that movement is made illegal.

As a response to this question I decided to dress up all in purple (as a ritual and a symbol of the womb) and take the large purple suitcase my mother had given me, and walk into the park. I decorated a large purple hat with photographs of the women who used to live within close proximity to me, whom I moved far away from fourteen years previously, when I left the United States. I know that some of the women on that hat have never had the privilege of leaving the country. I have thought of many of them as the women I write to in “letters back home”, telling them of my challenges and adventures moving away on my own...

Kathryn Fischer aka Mad Kate, from the written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2018.

I am a body and I am a statement.  
I am a witness and I am evidence of manipulation.  
I don't want to ask for permission to be.  
I don't have to ask for permission to be.  
I don't want to be defined by you, or anybody, or anywhere, or anything.  
I don't want to be from here or there.  
If my existence threatens you, that is because you are afraid to lose your privileges.  
If your walls surround me, my words will be the weapon to make them fall.  
If you hurt me, I will heal.  
And I will repeat this all over again.  
Because I have a pact with all of my kind.  
Because that's my duty and my only way to resist.

Luciana Damiani, from the written contribution published on the *Mi(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2019.

on the catwalk from the outset.

As a site of oscillation between theory and practice, the Innrain Campus was particularly suitable for demonstrating the iterative process of construction-deconstruction-reconstruction-deconstruction. The space was divided into two areas: the fictional private back area with a glass ceiling that provided a view of the library, a window front that was converted into a mirror, and seating that framed and thus delimited the “private area”, but could at the same time be used as a place of interaction with the outside and the public area at the front, where a long, dark grey metal grid was converted into a catwalk. On the threshold between the public and private spheres, a feature (symbolically represented by nail polish) is removed, like a painful act of liberation from the predefined categories of gender. The nail polish lies on the body like a second skin and can only be gradually removed with repetitive movements and external aid (nail polish remover). In the private sphere, items from the suitcase are then used purposefully to represent “masculinity”. Gestures are practised in the mirror and specific items of clothing and accessories help the construction. “Masculinity” is enacted by exaggerated “typical” ways of behaviour (acting aggressively in social space, carelessly knocking over the garbage bin) as well as with posture, walking style, facial expressions, and gestures. This socially anchored behaviour that is carried out in the virtual or actual presence of others who we assume are habituated to it<sup>3</sup> makes the elements that construct gender visible.

In the private sphere the subject now deals with what has just been produced, layer by layer, and practices “silence imposed by masculinity”.

The subject is then offered an alternative action and attribution from outside, through performance assistant Pippa Chase. This is done using socially recognisable images, which also inspire a certain sense of belonging and solidarity.

A “woman/girlfriend” paints the nails for another “woman/girlfriend” and selects a “suitable” piece of clothing for her from the suitcase.

<sup>3</sup> West/Zimmermann 1987, p. 14, quoted based on the translation in Gildemeister/Wetterer 1992, p. 237.

The “woman” shaves her legs and applies lotion. The performative act is carried out layer by layer. The construction of “femininity” appears distorted in the mirror image. This is the staging of “femininity”.



In the private sphere, the subject now deals with what has just been produced, layer by layer, and practices “female outbursts”: crying loudly and lamenting “hysterically”. “Who am I?” echoes in the private space of the performance.



Layer by layer an “in-between” is constructed and raises its voice in public space for the first time.

“It is not a HE. It is not a SHE. There also exists an ‘in-between’. Those who are not willing to admit it can just go to hell. I'm not bothered by the lack of empathy, but rather, by transphobia that prevails in so many countries.”<sup>4</sup>



Preparation phase: about an hour the evening before.

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### About the person: a case of a dilettante<sup>5</sup>

Li Fu is interested in the politics of everyday life and social development tendencies of the present. The focus here is particularly on the construction of everyday life and the consideration of the building blocks which are used to construct realities. With various performances, the artist makes DIY-like attempts to transfer theoretical concepts into everyday life.

Edited and first published in German by Tanja Ostojić on the *Misplaced Women?* blog 2018/19. This Performance has been released in the framework of the *Misplaced Women?* workshop by Tanja Ostojić in the course of *Art in Public Space Tyrol*, May 2018 in Innsbruck, Austria.

<sup>4</sup> In: Gildemeister 2004, p. 132 Auszug aus einem Hip Hop Text by Li Fu.  
<sup>5</sup> See: Weber 2011.

## INNSBRUCK

### LI FU

## *Doing Gender 8102.50.3\**

### Description and conceptual embedding

“The aim of *Doing Gender* is not to view gender or gender affiliation as a property or characteristic of individuals, but to look at the social processes in which ‘gender’ is produced and reproduced as a socially significant distinction.”<sup>1</sup>

The body will be exposed and attempts will be made in various stages to break down the construction of gender into individual building blocks and to build it back up, thus making

<sup>1</sup> Gildemeister 2004, p. 132.

it understandable. Since the production of gender “comprises a bundled variety of socially controlled activities on the level of perception, interaction and everyday politics, which allow specific actions to be seen as an expression of female or male ‘nature’”,<sup>2</sup> the person first enters the space wearing a poncho. The cut of the poncho does not emphasise any parts of the body and thus does not seek to generate a specific gender construction for the audience present. Therefore, it becomes possible to see the internal process through which the viewers of the performance ascribe categories of gender to the subject

<sup>2</sup> West/Zimmermann 1987, p. 14.

## ZURICH

AZAD COLEMÊRG  
*Misplaced Women?*

Azad Colemêrg  
“*Misplaced Women?*”, performance intervention,  
Main train station Zurich, April 2019, *Misplaced  
Women?* workshop by Tanja Ostojić.  
Video still: contact zone.

My name is Azad. I am a political refugee. I had to come to Switzerland from Kurdistan, with everything left behind. In the land where I was born, everything is prohibited. Our language, culture, literature, and art are all forbidden. After living through all these bans, I met Tanja Ostojić one day.

My view of art and performance has changed because of my experience with her *Misplaced Woman?* performance project. Ostojić broke all the narrow moulds in which women were placed, moving them out of their positions as objects and giving them a completely different perspective. This revealed an important contradiction. She sent a message to the male dominated society which misplaces and marginalizes women in every sphere of life.

We all opened our bags and suitcases that day. Because capitalism first chains people with a bag. Then it squeezes our lives into it. It's like we can't live without that bag. All of our belongings are in there. This created awareness of humanity's dependence on material things...

Azad Colemêrg, from the written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2019.

## SPLIT

MIA BRADIĆ  
*Routine*

Mia Bradić  
“*Routine*”, performance at the Saint Francis Church  
bus stop, Split; video documentation, 6 min 47 sec.  
Mia Bradić performed playful improvisation of the  
“Score #1: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own” in the  
frame of the *Misplaced Women?* workshop by Tanja  
Ostojić in Split, April 6-8, 2021. Photo: T. Ostojić.

...As a young circus artist, I cannot get professional circus education in Croatia and will have to leave my country (but also friends and family, culture, language...) to pursue my dreams. However, I am already living through this kind of scenario on a micro level. The town of some 25,000 citizens where I live, Solin, prides itself on being the town with the most children per capita in Croatia, but at the same time, it has no content for young people—not even a high school exists there. That's why I have to travel every day, spending hours in traffic, because my education, training, and pretty much all activities I need happen in Split. In fact, my everyday backpack looks similar to the one I used in the performance, overflowing with stuff. It was a nice experience to connect my daily routine to a bigger picture of packing and leaving my current life behind, which I will be experiencing in just a few months, and it felt healing to use this performance to express my disappointment with the lack of resources for young people in Croatia and the general under-appreciation of (circus) artists in our society, which both affect my reality and, among other things, my decision to leave...

Mia Bradić, from the written contribution published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project blog, 2021.

TANJA OSTOJIĆ  
*On Rape Attempts*

Tanja Ostojić  
“*On Rape Attempts*”, 20-minute performance,  
video documentation, 12 min 19 sec. Performed  
by Tanja Ostojić, on Peristil, Split, in the frame of  
*Misplaced Women?* workshop, and Voids 2021, Split,  
Croatia, April 6-8, 2021, hosted by Culture Hub  
Croatia. Photo: Neli Ružić

*On Rape Attempts* is a 20-minute performance by Tanja Ostojić at the Peristil, the most public, central, and significant location of the city of Split. In the heart of the historical centre, where the emperor once addressed his subjects, Ostojić performed a testimony regarding four rape attempts that she experienced 25-30 years earlier, and gave an empowering speech with the tips on how to fight back if sexually assaulted, based on her own experience. At the same time, two young artists were performing along. Using improvised movements, Mia Bradić was embodying Ostojić's testimony, while Alejandra Robles Sosa was translating it into embroidery. At the end, Ostojić opened the podium inviting other women who gathered there to give testimonies as well.

(Source: *Mis(s)placed Women?* video channel)

## TANJA OSTOJIĆ

Score #5: *Speaking the Unspeakable*

Around 20 minutes or longer, with or without preparation, three or more participants  
Location: A public space where one can feel protected

**About:** This score is derived from my performance “On Rape Attempts” (Split, 2021) in which I described four cases of fighting back/escaping from rape attempts. The performance had an empowering effect on me, so I created this score as an invitation to others who have been exposed to sexual harassment or sexual violence\*, or have witnessed others in such a situation, to share their personal experiences in a safe circle or in a public space. It is important to share these stories if you feel that it will be an empowering experience for you and others around you, and a part of your healing process. You need to be in control of whether to share and how to share your experience as a survivor. You can choose in what circumstances and at what level of detail you feel comfortable talking about it. Ultimately, what matters most is what has value and meaning for you.

**Instructions:**

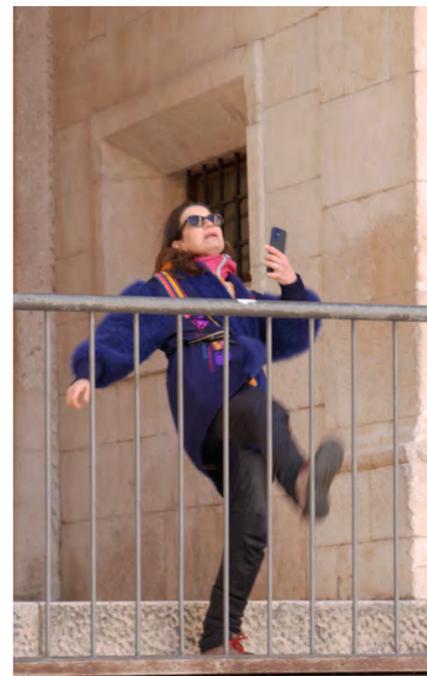
1. Select a location in a public space where you can feel safe and protected (by architecture, greenery, and by a crowd that would gather to support you). You can position yourself on an (imaginary) stage or in a safe circle that you draw on the ground.
2. Describe the situations in which you were sexually harassed. You may start with possible abuse you faced in your childhood or by telling stories that affected you the most in your life.
3. You can instruct two of your friends to co-perform. While you are talking, one of them can try to translate your words into improvised bodily movements and the other perhaps into embroidery or another artistic medium.
4. As you tell your story, in your own way you may try to explain how you tried to escape or fight back, what happened after the attack(s), your emotions during and after, and what kind of support you received or would have liked to have received.
5. Let your friends give you a healing hug when you finish.
6. You can also choose to shake out the stress from your body.
7. You may invite other women present, both participants and viewers, to take your place and to tell their stories as well.

**Notes:**

If you feel anxious, you may postpone and/or perform this score in the safety of a community centre or in a private space. Take your time to drink tea and talk with everyone there to support you after it is completed. Do not forget that speaking publicly has legal implications. Remember that there are ways to share your story while remaining anonymous. If you name the offender publicly or talk about a criminal act, you may need to consider getting a legal consultation to navigate the legal implications of your public testimony.

\*Attention: Please be aware that this score cannot be used as a tool for sexual violence survivors without supervision of a specialised social worker. Perhaps you may use it to speak of gender-based discrimination instead.

Tanja Ostojić: “Score #5: Speaking the Unspeakable”, 2022.



Tanja Ostojić  
“*On Rape Attempts*”, 20-minute performance,  
video documentation, 12 min 19 sec.  
Performed by Tanja Ostojić, on Peristil, Split, in  
the frame of *Misplaced Women?* workshop, and  
Voids 2021, Split, Croatia, April 6-8, 2021, hosted by  
Culture Hub Croatia.  
Photo: Neli Ružić  
Coperformers: Mia Bradić and Alejandra Robles Sosa

## Mis(s)placed Women? — Istanbul Itinerary — A Review of the Tanja Ostojić's Performance Art Workshop in the Public Spaces

By Performistanbul

Do you know the powerful and satisfying feeling you have after protesting in a public space and collectively claiming your rights out loud? This is how Tanja Ostojić's workshop made us all feel. We were re-discovering the strength of gathering and expressing ourselves through our bodies and our words, as well as reclaiming the power of public spaces through the unique, fluid, and non-conformist practice of performance art.

From beginning to end, this project has been a great but rewarding challenge not only for the participants but also for the coordination and documentation team. How can you coordinate a group of women and queer people moving and performing freely in the streets in a country and culture that prohibits social gatherings and public protests? How do you document a series of public performances as they are created and developed organically in the moment?



*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, September 2021. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

### The Open Call

The journey started with an open call. Participants of all backgrounds and genders that could commit to participate for the entire duration of the workshop were invited to apply. After we received around forty applications, along with Performistanbul's team (Simge Burhanoğlu, Azra İşmen, Ayda Bayram), Tanja Ostojić meticulously analysed each application to choose our final participants. The selection process, which involved reading each applicant's deeply intimate stories and struggles, was an emotional one, and moved some of us to tears.

Nine powerful women and queer persons (Nazlı Durak, Gizem Yılmaz, Selma Hekim, Persefoni Myrtsou, Vanessa Ponte, Sabbi Senior, Bahar Seki, Arzu Yayıntaş, Gülhatun Yıldırım — unknown to each other), who were grappling with issues of migration, marginalisation, displacement, (dis)empowerment, feminism, and queerness were ultimately selected, regardless of their experience in the art field.

### The First Part

Tuesday, September 7, 2021 - Performistanbul Building - Galata

The first part of the workshop included getting together and communicating; participants were invited to exchange with each other their personal experiences and their goals for the project. Because the public performances—as well as the whole workshop process—had to be documented by a professional photograph and video team (Burçin Aktan, Gülbin Eriş, Kayhan Kaygusuz, Gün Üçok), the recordings started from the first meeting.

Gülbin Eriş, Kayhan Kaygusuz, Gün Üçok), the recordings started from the first meeting.

At the beginning of the first day of the workshop, the artist and the participants gathered in the garden of Performistanbul's building, which is situated in Galata, one of the oldest neighbourhoods of Istanbul. The purpose of the first meeting was for the participants to get to know each other and discover each other's unique paths in life. Ostojić started by creating a human circle before getting to the exercises. During the session, they all

raised their voices, moved their bodies, discussed the endless definitions of performance art, their personal backgrounds, the reasons why they applied to be a part of this experience, and the relationships they had to public spaces. Before getting to the creative and artistic part, Ostojić was already setting the tone of the workshop: the whole experience was about freeing the mind, voice, and body while developing trust, and, supporting, sharing, and caring for one another "without leaving anyone behind" (to use Ostojić's own words).

Ostojić's unique style prioritised the building of trust relations among the participants and so created a unity within the group. By first providing a safe space for all the participants within the Performistanbul garden, she allowed them to build up their confidence in themselves individually and as a group. Soon, it was time to take to the streets of Istanbul and start the second part of the workshop. Participants selected three neighbourhoods for each day of the workshop: Beyoğlu, Nişantaşı, and Kadıköy.

From the first day, Ostojić formed a circle of love and brought the whole group together. Every participant became each

other's sibling and supporter. A strong group hug was shared before leaving the building—a hug that made us feel like we were preparing for the battle we were about to have on the streets.

### The Second Part

Tuesday, September 7, 2021 - Beyoğlu

During the second part, the participants were encouraged to enact live performances and interventions in the streets, parks, and stations of Istanbul. Thus, the second part of the workshop started on the second half of the first day. On that sunny, late summer afternoon, a group of women, accompanied by our team and the documentation crew, started their walk towards İstiklâl (Independence) Street. It was September 7, marking the anniversary of the anti-Greek pogroms, a series of state-sponsored mob attacks directed primarily at Istanbul's Greek minority on September 6–7, 1955. The dark memory of the historical event affected the spirit of the first collective performance. While walking through the street of Bostan, where the old German High School is located, all the participants started walking backwards, inspired by and referring to Gülhatun Yıldırım's (one of the participants) performance "Just Like the Past" (İstiklal Street, public/video performance, 2015). Sharing one action as a group had a striking and unifying effect on both the group's members and its spectators.

As the group reached İstiklâl Street, a symbolic space for social movements, female and queer bodies walking backwards suddenly became an act of protest, given that it has been forbidden to gather and demonstrate in İstiklâl Street since the Gezi Protests (2013).

Arzu Yayıntaş, one of the participants, grabbed her silk scarf and started waving it with the wind. Other participants followed her by using their own scarves, or borrowed some from Persefoni Myrtsou, who had brought her grandmother's unused dowry to share with others during the whole

workshop as performance props. When they arrived at the Istanbul Bar Association Building and stood in front of the banner that read in Turkish, "The Istanbul Convention saves lives," all the participants stopped and continued waving their beautiful, colourful fabrics. These scarves became like flags that expressed the group's disapproval of Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. They created a kind of "tableau vivant" that drew the attention of the public. Some of the crowd just stopped to contemplate the group and some of them started imitating their reverse walk. This is when we had to face the first police interruption and our first warning. After three distinct patrols checked all the papers and filming permits that we had, and then two other patrols interrupted the walk, we were informed that we could not walk and film through İstiklâl Street and that we could only continue our "activities and actions" in the backstreets. As Performistanbul team, our main role was to constantly deal with the authorities, so that the performance and documentation process were the least affected. It has been made quite clear that we need to re-think our relationship to public spaces and the rights that we have to

make use of them. What is a public space? What is/isn't allowed in a public space? Which groups are tolerated to gather in public spaces? Those questions would keep repeating in our minds till the end of the workshop process.

This is how the whole group decided to settle and occupy a space in a traditional street "tea house," located in Mis Street and mostly populated by men. The group started exploring Persefoni Myrtsou's dowry and spreading it around the space. Each participant selected a piece and

started transforming it with embroidery while Myrtsou was preparing Turkish coffee for fortune telling. The performance established a safe bubble, transforming the space into a place dedicated to womanhood as well as queer-hood. The female presence and aesthetics took over the place. Some



"Protest Scarves Against Turkey's Retreat from the Istanbul Convention", 2021.

İstiklal Street, Istanbul, September 9, 2021. A collective performance and public action with the participation of: Arzu Yayıntaş, Bahar Seki, Gülhatun Yıldırım, Gizem Yılmaz, Nazlı Durak, Persefoni Myrtsou, Vanessa Ponte, Sabbi Senior, Selma Hekim and Tanja Ostojić. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.



*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, a collective performance in a tea house, Mis Street (2021), with the participation of: Arzu Yayıntaş, Bahar Seki, Gülhatun Yıldırım, Gizem Yılmaz, Nazlı Durak, Persefoni Myrtsou, Vanessa Ponte, Sabbi Senior, Selma Hekim and Tanja Ostojić. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

of the passersby took a break and watched the amusing and meditative scene created by the group and asked questions about what was happening. That was the end of the first day.

#### Wednesday, September 8, 2021-Nişantaşı

On the second day of the workshop, all the participants gathered in front of the Teşvikiye Mosque. The first meeting to plan the day was made in the Mosque's garden. After a conversation about what happened the previous day, Ostojić and the participants started discussing the progression of the day, making different propositions and already setting a frame for the upcoming performances. "To be present for the other, listening and communicating. Unity, trust, empowerment, devotion, sincerity" were the main keywords that led the workshop.

The group selected the square in Kadırgalar street, a posh street of Istanbul surrounded by luxury brands and cafes, to serve as their performance space for the day. Before reaching the square, Arzu Yayıntaş made a proposition for the first collective performance: to randomly compliment and catcall men that they came across during the walk. Selma Hekim contributed to this performative piece with the uncommon sound of her traditional erbane/daf, an instrument also known in Syrian, Arab, Kurdish, Armenian, and Persian communities, and one that women often played and that was believed to cure fear and disease. Because it inverted the scripts of patriarchal society, the confusing catcall behaviour of the performers mostly produced positive reactions in the public, putting a smile on the faces of their audience. Even though women experience catcalling as a form of aggression, men seemed to be quite pleased with the attention they received and sometimes even shocked by this unexpected behaviour. The performance was repeated multiple times while the group was walking.

Since the first day, each participant brought some performance objects with them. It was time to start exploring those objects both individually and collectively. Once the group reached the performance space, various group and solo performances

started to pop up. Bahar Seki grabbed her dry shampoo bottle and started performing by making continuous and repetitive movements with her whole body along with Selma Hekim's playing of the erbane.

Nazlı Durak, Gizem Yılmaz, Vanessa Ponte, Arzu Yayıntaş, Selma Hekim and Persefoni Myrtsou started performing simultaneously. Some of the individual performances connected with each other, creating a collective performance, while others drifted apart and performed alone. Persefoni Myrtsou performed while being blindfolded, the *Mis(s)placed Women?* project "Score #1: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own" that included unpacking and repacking of a bag in the public space. The rest of the group started unpacking and interacting with their props and each other. Arzu Yayıntaş explored objects associated with womanhood by society. Combining many clothing objects and wearing them in an unusual way while incorporating yoga poses and moving her body in a displeasing, eccentric way in opposition to what is expected from womanhood. Meanwhile, Vanessa Ponte and Gizem Yılmaz were displaying beautifying actions such as putting on makeup and dressing up in the most absurd ways—an absurdity they accentuated through repetitive movements. Next to this duo, Nazlı Durak explored Yayıntaş' props. By dressing herself up with princess costumes for children, she tried to fit into society with a new unexpected identity. During the whole session Selma Hekim accompanied the group by playing erbane.

After the lunch break, the next stop was the Teşvikiye Mosque. We had legitimate concerns about performing at a mosque courtyard in Turkey. Yet, Ostojić was sure of herself with each step of the process. If things go awry, we will get warned, or kicked out at worst; she nevertheless insisted on defending our right to use this public space. Tanja always encouraged us by moving forward with

a fighting and protesting spirit, as well as an inclusive and empowering female identity, independent of geography and culture. Despite our concerns about being from Istanbul and the traditional values of people around us, we were able to move forward with Tanja's leadership and the safe space she provided for us.



*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, a performance by Bahar Seki (2021). Photo: K. Kaygusuz.



*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, a performance by Arzu Yayıntaş (2021). Photo: K. Kaygusuz.



*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, a performance by Gülhatun Yıldırım (2021). Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

Gülhatun Yıldırım performed next to an empty fountain pool at the Mosque's garden. Sitting by the fountain, Yıldırım placed dozens of ice cubes on her lap and stood still, enduring the burning pain of ice for approximately two hours, until the last ice cube melted and leaked into the empty pool. Water and its various forms is central to Yıldırım's artistic practice. She is in constant search of her bodily limits while simultaneously hungering for new ways of interacting with water. The ephemerality and the transformative potential of the water's frozen form—which resonated with issues of forced nomadism, migration, and displaced communities— attracted the artist, inspiring her to create this durational piece.

After a while, the group left Yıldırım's performance to continue their journey. But she was not left on her own—one camera person and a member of the production team stayed with her until the end of the performance. Nobody was left alone during the entire workshop.

For the second part of the day, Ostojić invited participants to rethink their performances and to redo some of them once they had been workshoped and deepened.

In the wake of individual and collective re-performances, Myrtsou continued working with her grandmother's dowry, displaying all its content and sharing it with the group. Then she started hanging the dowry pieces on one side of the square with the help of some of the participants. While Myrtsou finished unpacking, Nazlı Durak installed herself comfortably inside Myrtsou's luggage, creating a safe and cosy space for herself. After building a spinose crown made of knitting needles and yarn with the help of Selma Hekim, Durak started to give herself to a domestic female activity: knitting. Her work brought difficult questions to mind, such as: Where is home? What is home? Can any place turn into a home? How does it feel to be forced to leave your home?

To memorialise the recent police attack (June 22, 2021) on the queer picnic organised in Maçka Park—which was very close to the square—Gizem Yılmaz and Sabbi Senior wanted to revive the surreal queer picnic scenery. They went exploring the construction site next to the square in order to bring together some props for their "Queer Breakfast" piece. A gasoline can, cement, cardboard, and stones became snacks and treats. Enjoying cheerfully that nonsensical breakfast, they slowly transformed the scene into a queer "playing house". The message was simple: to draw attention to the innocence of their act.

Close to Myrtsou, Arzu Yayıntaş and a passerby that joined her began to engage in embroidery. Simultaneously, another

embroidery performance session started with Tanja Ostojić and Bahar Seki on the opposite side of the square. Later on, Persefoni Myrtsou and Selma Hekim joined the duo.

Embroidery became the uniting, therapeutic closing ritual of the day.

The whole square turned into an installation in which various performances popped up. Knitting, embroidering, beautifying, cooking, playing house—all the performances were related to traditional feminine activities largely meant to be practiced indoors, however the act of displaying those activities outdoors in a public space, and deviating from their original domestic aims became a feminist/queer statement itself.

During the performances at this location we were only interrupted once by a policeman that politely asked us to leave towards the end of the workshop. Throughout the day, we had different types of audiences. Some of them were only passersby who stared at the scene very briefly while some of them stayed and watched the performances. Many questions were raised and comments were shared as audience members tried to relate the performances to real life, and tried to analyse them according to their unique backgrounds. And this is how the second day came to an end.



Collective performance actions that took place at Teşvikiye Square, Istanbul, September 8, 2021, *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, with the participation of: Bahar Seki, Gizem Yılmaz, Nazlı Durak, Persefoni Myrtsou, Sabbi Senior, Selma Hekim and Tanja Ostojić. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

#### Thursday, September 9, 2021-Kadıköy

On the third day of the workshop that comprised public interventions, the whole group met in front of the Kadıköy Ferryboat Docks. The day started with "Score #2: Holding the 'Mis(s)placed Women?' Sign". The score was first performed by Vanessa Ponte, who arrived at the meeting point already holding their sign and placed themselves next to the Kadıköy Ferryboat Docks with the historical Haydarpaşa Railway Station and the Bosphorus view in the background. They were holding a sign on which they had written "Misplaced Human" and standing still with their red hoodie worn backwards, covering their face. It was a very strong image. Knowing that there is a human inside that body without being able to identify anything about it had a strong effect on the audience. Many passersby stopped by to watch. Sabbi Senior joined Ponte with their own sign on which one could read "MIS(S)PLACED WYMYN". Dressed in very feminine attire (a crop top and mini skirt), they stood still next to Ponte. Next to them, Persefoni Myrtsou and Gülhatun Yıldırım, who had prepared their own signs in Turkish, joined the performance. Many asked why only "women"—they suggested that it should also include men.

15-20 minutes after Ponte started performing, a police patrol came to interrupt both the filming and the performance and

took one of Performistanbul's team members with them to start an interrogation about "what was happening." A dozen police officers gathered in a prefabricated cabin and they started preparing a police statement informing the team member about the illegal nature of the activities that the



**Score #2: "Holding the 'Mis(s)placed Women? Sign"**, performed by Sabbi Senior, Vanessa Ponte, Persefoni Myrtsou, and Gülhatun Yıldırım at Kadıköy Port, *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, (2021). Photo: K. Kaygusuz.



A collective performance with the participation of: Nazlı Durak, Sabbi Senior, Gizem Yılmaz, and Vanessa Ponte, 2021. *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop Süreyya Opera House, Istanbul, 09.09.2021. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.



A performance by Selma Hekim with the participation of: Arzu Yayıntaş, Nazlı Durak, Persefoni Myrtsou, Sabbi Senior, Selma Hekim and Vanessa Ponte, *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Süreyya Opera House, Istanbul, September 9, 2021. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

The group was led through the small streets of Kadıköy Bazaar. After walking for a while, they gathered in a circle at the small square in front of Surp Takavor Armenian Church where numerous security cameras were installed, and started performing some warm-up exercises. Soon, policemen warned the group that they had to move to another location. It was time for lunch, so on their way to the restaurant, the group started performing with their voices. Words were forbidden but screaming was not. Therefore, the group of ten women and queers raised their voices together through the small streets of Kadıköy. The magical moment happened when senior people started hitting some objects with their canes to

support the "protest" actions of the group.

After the lunch break, the group moved to Bahariye Street in front of the Süreyya Opera. Vanessa Ponte proposed a performance connected to the oppression of the queer

community in Istanbul and tackling the male gaze. Along with Sabbi, Nazlı, and Gizem, Vanessa started to tie up their own hands and legs. Then the music started and they all started to dance depicting the struggles of a queer body in public spaces while freeing it and celebrating its existence.

Following this performance, Ponte continued proposing ideas, and Persefoni Myrtsou and Arzu Yayıntaş joined in on the action. Ponte's body was tied up and pulled in different directions while Ponte was trying to put makeup on her face and wearing a purple moustache. The absurdity and struggle caused by this performance expressed both the oppression and vulnerability of the queer body.

Selma Hekim took over the performance space. Her performance was about "leaving traces" and grappling with issues such as immigration, the sense of belonging, the kinship between past and present, as well as the need to leave a legacy. She lay on the floor and asked Sabbi Senior, Arzu Yayıntaş, Vanessa Ponte, and Persefoni Myrtsou to draw the outline of her body. Each time the group started drawing, Hekim continuously moved her body until the floor was covered by multicolour lines.

The group moved to Kadıköy Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Bishop, where Persefoni Myrtsou presented her solo performance. She started by unpacking her grandmother's dowry that she carried in her suitcase during the entire workshop since day one. It was not a simple piece of luggage full of fabrics; it also contained memories of her grandmother and community as well as their migration story and family history.

It was time to fully engage with them and confront what was embedded in them. Myrtsou started covering herself with each piece of dowry. With the help of Ostojić, other participants and women passing by, she covered her whole body and created a bridal gown made of dozens of dowry pieces. Then she started distributing the rest of the dowry to the passersby. The dowry would continue to live on in different people's lives,

and take part in different stories. Somehow Myrtsou found a way to communicate and reconcile with her past through her grandmother's untouched dowry and share it with others. We could hear her soft sobs through the multiple layers of textiles. At the same moment, it started raining; it was as though the sky was empathising with her and trying to carry away her sadness. It was a visually and emotionally powerful piece that deeply touched each of us. At the end, all the participants gave a huge hug to Myrtsou and helped her get out of this "heavy" dress.

Just before the workshop ended, Gizem Yılmaz sat down in the middle of the street next to a sign on which she wrote in Turkish, "Poor Woman Artist." Covering her face with a veil, she randomly started playing a ukulele while singing a ridiculous song about the situation of the "poor woman artist." Nazlı Durak joined the performance spontaneously, accompanying Gizem with her absurd dance. Looking like a mix of beggars and/or extravagant bohemian street artists, they tried to depict humorously the situations and struggles of artists in our current society. It was the end of an intense, three-day performance on the streets.

### The Third Part

#### Saturday, September 24, 2021 - Beykoz Kundura Cinema

Next time the entire group gathered was at Beykoz Kundura Cinema, to watch together the first edit of the documentary movie depicting the workshop, and to discuss and present the outcomes to the public. All participants of the workshop were invited to take active part in the presentation and the following discussion led by Tanja Ostojić. Each participant discussed their experience, analysing it thoroughly with the input of Ostojić and other participants.

The whole workshop was a (re)discovery of what is and isn't—what can and can't—be performance art. Through her inclusive and pedagogical practice, Tanja Ostojić gave to the nine distinct participants the opportunity to discover, create, explore and develop a performative practice all on their own. By providing a safe space (even in public spaces) and continuous support, Ostojić encouraged self-expression, public presence,

collective creation, and community building. It was a huge experience full of emotions for all the participants as well as the documentation and coordination team.



*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, "Doily Monster-Bride", a performance by Persefoni Myrtsou (2021). Photo: K. Kaygusuz.



"Poor Woman Artist" a performance by Gizem Yılmaz and Nazlı Durak (2021). Photo: K. Kaygusuz.



*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul. Persefoni Myrtsou, Ayda Bayram, Azra İşmen, Simgе Burhanoğlu, Arzu Yayıntaş, Nazlı Durak, Selma Hekim, Tanja Ostojić, Gülhatun Yıldırım, Sabbi Senior, Vanessa Ponte, Gizem Yılmaz, September 2021. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

We were on the edge the entire time on the streets. It felt like we were on a battlefield. A battle we were already having every day; one we wage against the difficult conditions of being a woman or queer person in Turkey, and a struggle on behalf of the performance art practice we produce and try to protect. It was a very inspiring and empowering experience for us at Performistanbul as well. Thanks to Ostojić, we were finally able to come out to the streets and make our voices heard as we always wanted and needed.

We were not direct participants... yet, to be with the participants at all times, to witness them make their voices heard, to coordinate and facilitate the entire process—all of this made us part of the workshop and the community it created. Making public performances possible, supporting the participants and the artists during the process, and ensuring the smooth running of Ostojić's workshop was Performistanbul's true performance in the end. Ostojić's confident yet loving and kind approach, with her openness and embrace of every proposed idea, created a space that encouraged free expression and spontaneous communication. Such a unique experience was created.

Many of the interventions were not completely understood by the diverse audiences, but that did not matter, as it was not a show for others but rather a cathartic and collective display for the participants first and foremost. Performance was not simply an academic discipline within the framework of this workshop. At Performistanbul, since the early days of our founding, we have approached performance art as a communication

tool to bring people together and to heal collectively, and this relationship to performance resonated deeply with Ostojić's own methodology and her efforts to connect with the participants and the public. We prioritised our natural needs over the technical ones throughout the workshop, allowing us to live art rather than simply produce it for the consumption of others.

We are thankful to all the participants and to Tanja Ostojić for revealing and sharing their unique identities, memories, experiences, and sorrows with us. We would like to sincerely thank Ostojić for making us a part of this long adventurous journey that helped us further discover ourselves, and inspired us to reclaim our public spaces and produce art in a collective and participative manner.

Now, remembering our strength as women, we feel together, and we know that we have each other.

By staying a collective, staying whole, we continue transforming our cities, our companions, and ourselves...

### The Writing Part:

At the end of the second part of the workshop, all participants, including the coordination team, have received Ostojić's instructions on how to write reviews and short texts including reflections about our experience of the workshop. First drafts of the texts were due before the screening and the round table at Beykoz Kundura so that participants could prepare for the public presentation. Those short texts and essays are in the process of editing by Tanja Ostojić in order to be published on the project blog.

This review has been written a half year after the workshop took place and includes a chronological description and brief analysis of all the performances and the workshop's process as a whole, comprising reflections on Tanja Ostojić's practice and our own experience as a performance art platform that coordinated the project.

Besides digging through our memories, we went through the 90-minute-long documentary video about the workshop process, the notes that we gathered in September, as well as all the reflections shared by the participants. The reflections were a crucial part of the workshop, as they allowed each

participant to share and analyse their own experiences of both the performance(s) they enacted as well as the one(s) they witnessed. In our review, we tried to include as much as possible their approaches and perspectives, in hopes of avoiding misinterpretations and confusions which can sometimes compromise the original intentions behind the work. The participants' perspectives cannot be extricated from the analysis. Thus, we would like to acknowledge and thank all the participants who indirectly contributed to the creation of this review, especially Persefoni Myrtsou who wrote an extremely meticulous and detailed reflective essay on the whole workshop process.

Review written by: Azra İşmen & Simge Burhanoğlu, Performistanbul  
Edited and first published on the *Mis(s)placed Women?* blog by Tanja Ostojić on June 1, 2022. (Anniversary of the beginning of the Gezi-Park-Protests June 1, 2013.) Updated with the Post Scriptum on June 8, 2022.

**Workshop led by** Tanja Ostojić

**With the group and individual performances by:**

Arzu Yayintaş, Bahar Seki, Gülhatun Yıldırım, Gizem Yılmaz, Nazlı Durak, Persefoni Myrtsou, Sabbi Senior, Selma Hekim, Vanessa Ponte and Tanja Ostojić.

**Documentation Team**

Gülbin Eriş - Camera, Video Editing, Gün Üçok - Camera Assistant, Burçin Aktan - Sound Operator and Kayhan Kaygusuz - Photographer

**Performistanbul Team**

Azra İşmen & Simge Burhanoğlu - Organisers and Ayda Bayram - Coordinator

**Cultural Academy Tarabya**

Çiğdem İkişik - Program Coordinator

**The *Mis(s)placed Women?* production** in cooperation with Cultural Academy Tarabya and Performistanbul in the frame of Ostojić's four-months-long residence in Cultural Academy Tarabya (June-September 2022).

Photo Below  
*Mis(s)placed Women?*, Istanbul Itinerary panel at Beykoz Kundura Cinema, September 2021 Photo: K. Kaygusuz



## ARZU YAYINTAŞ

### *Mis(s)placed Women?* Performance Workshop by Tanja Ostojić

On the first day, I blanked out and got off at the wrong metro station. Running through Taksim Square, I arrived at the workshop late. The group had started the meeting; participants were sitting in a circle and explaining their motivations for taking part in it. Each person had a completely different aura and manner of self-expression. While one of them had outstanding confidence, the other one spoke as if she was singing a sweet song; her speech had a soft rhythm. While listening to them, I thought about how exciting it will be to watch them slowly open up over the next three days and how my first impressions of them will change.

As someone who has taken a break from artistic practice for four years after having children, it was a great opportunity for me to think and act together with this group of creative women.

After lunch, we started walking through Galata, my old neighbourhood that made me contemplate the transformations I've been through in life. I let my colourful scarf wave with the wind. Then I realised that the group had started walking backwards and waving their scarves with me, so I joined them. It was a meaningful experience for me to walk backwards on Istiklal street where I marched for years in feminist protests, and where we haven't been able to do any demonstrations for the past five years due to police intervention. This might even have been the moment in which I discovered the power of performance art. Persefoni took out her embroidered tablecloths (inherited from her Greek grandmother who had to flee Istanbul due to pogroms) and waved them with us, which was the move that truly completed the performance, and that brought us together as a group.

**"Protest Scarfs Against Withdrawal of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention"**, a group performance action involving walking backwards on Istiklal Street and waving colourful fabrics

Protests and demonstrations are no longer permitted today on Istiklal Street, a symbolic location for Turkey's social movements. The police forces disregard the social memory of this place and don't even allow a press briefing to take place there. Us deciding to spread across Istiklal Street and walk backwards on the spur of the moment, in fact, turned out to be an out-of-the-box way of dealing with police oppression and revitalising social memory. It felt as though the colourful scarves above our heads moving in the wind and swaying as we walked were representing the multiplicity of our voices. Moreover, the diversity of the fabrics bound us together despite our distances, forming a visual statement, and making us look bigger. During a century that has been marked by oppression and bans, after Turkey had withdrawn from the Istanbul Convention, walking against the flow on Istiklal

Street where women have been demonstrating for women's rights since the 1980s, chanting "Istanbul Convention Saves Lives", meant a lot to me.

**"Catcalling Men"**, a group performance action involving catcalling and complimenting men while walking along Teşvikiye and Abdi İpekçi Street

I've been subjected to the male gaze and sexual harassment since I was nine years old. My story started with an old man who put his arm around my shoulder and tried to grab my breasts when I was a little girl. Later I had men calling out and flashing me on the street, trying to touch me on the bus, catcalling me on the road, and chasing me. For women, walking in public spaces feels like walking in a wild forest. You often walk looking down or with a scowl. Even though in some of these incidents of catcalling, men are complimenting women, it inevitably reminds them of their bleak, traumatic past experiences and the words they hear strike them as disturbing.

On the second day, we convened in Teşvikiye, one of the most upper-class neighbourhoods in Istanbul, and decided to address this patriarchal phenomenon that has been part of each of our lives since we were children. Empowered by the fact that we were acting as a group of women, we reversed the course of this familiar act and catcalled men instead. We kept saying things like "wow your eyes are so beautiful and sexy", "are you alone?", "nice ass!", "wow, how strong you are!". It was truly fascinating to observe men as they wrestled with feelings of bewilderment and shame, and then to watch them break out into a smile. At first, they didn't even consider that the words might be addressed to them; they were caught by surprise. Later some of them enjoyed it and smiled, some felt embarrassed, and some were terrified. Since they didn't have any past experiences of harassment, they received our compliments well. (At least most of them; one of them got furious and we immediately walked away from there.) This act of catcalling men during the performance felt quite empowering, and it healed at least some of the wounds that had accumulated in our bodies and minds through years of harassment and humiliating or threatening comments. Through this performance, years of suppressed anger, tension, and shame were replaced by enthusiasm, pleasure, and empowerment. Its impact was so powerful that I want to re-enact this performance regularly with different groups of women to create awareness about the harassment women are subjected to on the streets.

And then, that afternoon, I undertook a solo performance for the very first time...

**“Whose Fantasy Are You?”**, a solo performance, involving transforming accessories associated with the idea of a sexy woman, challenging physical boundaries at the intersection of Abdi İpekçi Street and Kadırgalar Street.



**Arzu Yayıntaş:** “Whose Fantasy Are You?”, a solo performance, *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

There are certain physical traits that are imposed on women so that they can look like women. To become the ideal, patriarchal fantasy of a woman, one must go through a set of challenges. High heels, manicured hands, fishnet stockings, uncomfortable garters, and ridiculous thongs. Some women are happy to wear these things, and others feel obligated to do so. There are certain norms and identities that society and cultural media impose on us. Women tend to accept these things without questioning. This performance was a way for me to question women's accessories and clothes. It was important for me to do this performance in Nişantaşı, where the most stylish women of Istanbul hang out in their heels. By using the clothes in a disturbing and provocative manner, I questioned their functionality and the different ways I engage with them regularly. I slipped the black fishnet stockings on my head and tied my hair up in a ponytail. I put the white garter around my neck like a scarf, and wore my high heels. Then I started putting on red nail polish. Practicing this act in public space itself felt very peculiar. I dried my nails alongside the tunes Selma was playing and put my arms inside my high heel black boots. I took a completely different form. I tried using my hands inside the heels and decided to test my physical boundaries. I tried to walk on all fours, wearing two pairs of high heels all at once, on both my feet and my hands. I tried doing yoga poses such as bakasana, downward-facing dog, plank, reverse tabletop and the sun salutation sequence. Then I tried reaching the ground by leaning backward with my arms in heels. I concluded the performance with a bridge position. Trying out these positions in public with my arms in heels, especially in such a high-class neighbourhood, allowed

me to deconstruct the stereotypes embedded within my subconscious.

It was a truly valuable experience for me. I forgot about time and space while challenging my physical limitations. I was only focused on completing this meaningless act. The nonsensical nature and the difficulty of the action made me want to halt it after a while. I hope that the women passing by and seeing the way I used these accessories in such a provocative manner remembered how reasonable it is to refuse to wear uncomfortable heels that distort their feet or the garters that their boyfriends desire. I hope it made them question the stereotypes about women's appearances. After this performance I feel way more emancipated while making decisions about what to wear and where to wear it.

On the third day of the workshop, we met in Kadıköy, a part of town that had completely different social dynamics. It was fascinating to see the extent of visibility that the dock offered us. “Holding the ‘Misplaced

Women/Wymyn/ Human’ Sign” performance received a lot of attention and was stopped by police. From there, we moved to a small square, and Tanja introduced our group to a number of stretches and warm-up exercises that included pelvic movements that followed the shapes of numbers from zero to ten. The pelvic movements were so impressive that two undercover policemen dressed as civilians immediately began watching our every move. They prohibited us from performing the “Freeing the Voice” score at that square, so we began walking through the narrow streets and performing it as we went.

**“Free My Voice”**, a group performance that involves screaming while walking on the streets as a group of women at Kadıköy

The visibility of women in public spaces is an important indicator of the level of social oppression within a society, especially because it is a threat to the patriarchal order. After the recent regime change in Afghanistan, for example, women were the first to be deprived of their rights in public spaces, and banned from being in such spaces without male company. This performance was conceived in honour of these Afghani woman, although we found it liberating for ourselves, too.

As we performed the “Freeing the Voice” score, we walked along the narrow streets of Kadıköy as a group, screaming together. At the beginning of this action, the police requested that we move out of the square and began following us, but they didn't stop us. Nevertheless, they were utterly disturbed.



**“Free My Voice”**, a group performance that involves screaming while walking on the streets as a group of women at Kadıköy

This was a scream yearning to be emancipated from the oppressions that we, as women, face both in the public and private spheres. Once the voice is emancipated, the body and the soul will follow.

#### Concluding Thoughts:

During this three-day-long process, all of the performances realised by each individual in our group meant a lot to me. Helping Persefoni transform herself through her grandmother's laces and tablecloths was an invaluable,

emotional exchange between us. I feel like I have witnessed and taken part in a very significant moment in Persefoni's life. Pulling Vanessa Ponte's arms with a cord, despite knowing that my actions hurt them, bothered me a lot. But nevertheless, I kept controlling them with the cords to prevent them from putting makeup on. I still have a lot to think about regarding this dilemma: knowing that it was hurting them but doing it at their request. Likewise, trying to preserve the traces of Selma Hekim's body and her movements, drawing the flow of her being, was a poetic experience for me.

My experiences during the *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop has been very rewarding, inspiring and empowering experience that broadened my horizons and I believe that it will be an important turning point both in my professional and personal life. This was made possible by Tanja Ostojić's special, and strong personality and her artistic experiences, which brought out the best in the workshop participants, shooting crew, and Performistanbul members, and created an incredible group dynamic.

**Arzu Yayıntaş** (1977\* Bursa, Turkey) is an artist, feminist activist, and curator who lives and works in Istanbul. Since 2002 she has co-curated and taken part in several international exhibitions in public space and non-profit spaces including *Normalisation* (2022) at Karşı Sanat, *The Village Project* (2019) at Depo, *A Room of Our Own* (2017) at Ark Kültür, among others.

**“Catcalling Men Intervention”** is a performance developed by Arzu Yayıntaş in collaboration with Tanja Ostojić as a part of *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop in Istanbul, 2021.

*It is not by chance that a number of the workshop participants such as Arzu Yayıntaş—artist, curator, single mother of two, and a member of the feminist movement in Istanbul—claimed that this workshop literally changed her perception of the city, and gave her courage to reclaim the public space and to express herself in it. After a three-year break in her career due to the reproductive labour of motherhood, she experienced an immense creative blast in this workshop. One of the performances that she initiated and that we performed twice together in the frame of the workshop—held in four different neighbourhoods of Istanbul in the course of four days—involved catcalling men. This action of returning the gaze to the patriarchy, of transforming the incidents of harassment and shame that women are subjected to on the street, was extremely powerful. Feminist bodies took over the street, and the Persian instrument, the erbane, dominated public space. — Tanja Ostojić*

## ARZU YAYINTAŞ

**Score #6: Catcalling Men**

Around 30 minutes, with or without preparation, minimum two performers  
Location: Busy pedestrian zone

**About:** Catcalling is about returning the male gaze and reclaiming public space. Women of all ages and backgrounds are routinely subjected to catcalling in public spaces, usually in the form of sexually suggestive, threatening, or derisive comments. This aggressive male gaze usually causes women to feel uneasy and makes them walk looking down instead of looking straight ahead. Because of the trauma of harassment culture, women are conditioned to feel threatened even from kind words or compliments. This catcalling performance is a way of transforming the social dynamic by mirroring it, which empowers women in public space and allows them to look at the eyes of the people around them instead of staring at the pavement while walking on the street.

**Instructions:**

1. Select a busy pedestrian zone. It is better if it is a window-shopping area or a place where men hang out.
2. The main action can take place either while you are wandering around the neighbourhood or sitting in a busy city square where there are many pedestrians. Both can also be done in one performance act.
3. It is important to look natural in the act so if there are more than three performers then the performers should be separated into different groups.
4. Performers walk around the neighbourhood, side by side in a natural way, and start catcalling cis men by saying phrases like “What lovely eyes you have”, “I want to melt in those eyes”, “Don’t walk like that, I am getting excited”, “There comes a real man”, and so on.
5. The performer can either look directly at the eyes of the men and comment on how they look or she can pretend as if she is chatting with the other performer while commenting loudly about the man passing by. Be creative but not derisive.
6. If the performers feel the necessity to add a sound during the catcalling they can play a simple instrument like erbane or tambourine.
7. The performance can continue for about half an hour. This performance is also a way of healing the wounds of personal harassment history, so feel free to end the performance at any moment if it causes uncomfortable feelings for you by informing your co-performers of your mental or emotional state.

**Important:** It is crucial not to catcall men who are accompanied by a woman, and if a man reacts aggressively *do not* continue with the dialogue. Remove yourself from the situation by saying “I thought you were someone else, my mistake”.

Arzu Yayintaş: “Score #6: Catcalling Men”, 2022



Arzu Yayintaş  
“Catcalling Men”, a group performance action,  
Teşvikiye and Abdi İpekçi Street, *Mis(s)placed  
Women?* workshop, Istanbul. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

## PERSEFONI MYRTSOU

## Feminist alliance building and practices of intimacy through collaborative performance and textile work: Tanja Ostojić’s *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop in Istanbul

That morning, I opened my eyes at 5:30. I could not sleep from excitement. About two years ago—right after becoming a mother—I moved my sleep-deprived body to Istanbul. I had lived in Istanbul once before, between 2011 and 2012. “The situation was so different then,” everyone says now nostalgically. The city felt like a laboratory of cosmopolitan synergies, all promising a bright future; diverse people from all over the world came to be part of Istanbul’s unique, hybridised cultural scene. The city was becoming the new global arts and culture centre; traditional, mysterious, and capable of satisfying the Orientalist consumerist needs of its visitors, but also very welcoming and more ready than ever to fully embrace Turkey’s erstwhile dream of becoming part of the European map.

For the purposes of the project, Tanja invited women and queer artists to performatively enact everyday life experiences of displacement in public spaces. Some performances were conceptualised by the artists themselves, some were asked to perform Tanja’s so-called “scores” (i.e. become one with a suitcase, hold a sign with the phrase “*Mis(s)placed Women?*”). All performances operated as expressions of the power & vulnerability of the mobile female and queer body in the public space. As a whole, the project challenges the idea of singular artistic authorship, as it encourages the distribution and appropriation of Tanja’s concept by other artists. Different editions of *Mis(s)placed Women?* are extensively documented in a polyphonic manner on the project’s online blog<sup>1</sup>.

The four-day performance workshop (September 7–9 and 25, 2021) in Istanbul was organised and coordinated by Performistanbul in collaboration with Kulturakademie Tarabya. Nine participating artists (Nazlı Durak, Gülhatun Yıldırım, Bahar Seki, Gizem Yılmaz, Selma Hekim, Sabbi Senior, Arzu Yayintaş and myself), the Performistanbul team (Simge Burhanoğlu, Azra İşmen & Ayda Bayram), the documentation team (Burçin Aktan, Gülbin Eriş, Kayhan Kaygusuz & Gün Üçok) and Tanja generated a unique synergy, where different transformative experiences took place in the loaded public spaces of Istanbul.

In this text, I will focus on the use of fabric and textile work in two collaborative performances that took place during the workshop. The relation between the materiality of fabric and the female body captures three central performance-related aspects that arose during the workshop: the ambivalent agency of the performing female body and objects that are assumed as “female” in the public space, the transformational synergy of collaborative performance, and the healing potentials of intimacy, care, and affective solidarity during the performance process.

The first performance, which I like calling “The Dissident Floral Tablecloths” happened on day one of the workshop (September 7, 2021). On our way to the first performance location, we stumbled upon a large banner that was hanging from the Istanbul Bar Association building on İstiklal street in the district of Beyoğlu. The banner opposed the retreat of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021. Arzu started waving her scarf while we were walking. Once Tanja noticed it, she followed by waving her own scarf and asked other participants to join by waving pieces of fabric in the



“Protest Scarves Against Turkey’s Retreat from the Istanbul Convention”, 2021. İstiklal Street, Istanbul, September 9, 2021. A collective performance and public action with the participation of: Arzu Yayintaş, Bahar Seki, Gülhatun Yıldırım, Gizem Yılmaz, Nazlı Durak, Persefoni Myrtsou, Vanessa Ponte, Sabbi Senior, Selma Hekim and Tanja Ostojić. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

In 2021 my experience of Istanbul was far from glorious. I was a stay-at-home mom with undiagnosed baby blues, an isolated artist missing my artistic practice, a struggling PhD student with no funding, a mentally anxious and physically deprived body waiting in a liminal state for a pandemic to be over. Somehow though, that morning, my body found itself running deliriously on the streets of Galata dragging a noisy suitcase and all its insecurities to the space of Performistanbul, where it would be able to perform again after a long time, and become part of the nomadic project *Mis(s)placed Women?* by artist Tanja Ostojić.

<sup>1</sup> Tanja Ostojić’s *Mis(s)placed Women?* performance art project is ongoing since 2019. For more information about the project see: <https://misplacedwomen.wordpress.com/>

air. While we were performing this impromptu action, Arzu shouted fiercely: “İstanbul Sözleşmesi yaşatır”. In no time, the police were there.

We were asked by Tanja to bring some props with us, in order to perform with them at the workshop. My “prop” was a suitcase that contained my grandmother’s dowry; doilies, laces, tablecloths, and quite a few embroidered pieces, all handmade by my grandmother. During our unplanned performative demonstration on İstiklal street, I took out some of the tablecloths from the suitcase and distributed them to the group. Gizem and Sabbi, picked a floral tablecloth and started waving it while walking backwards. The light breeze blowing at this time of the day gave a dynamic movement to the fabrics. An unconventional, improvised protest action was born right there. In this action, the traditional protest flags were replaced by floral scarves and tablecloths.

The scarf carries extra baggage as an ambivalent female object and symbol within a religious context, and specifically within the context of Islam. Traditionally, it has been perceived as a sign of oppression by white feminisms. By contrast, Black feminism embraced it as a matter of women’s choice and a signifier of intersectional feminism. In Turkey, the scarf has played a complex role in creating multiple radical societal schisms since the beginning of the so-called Ottoman modernization project during the 18<sup>th</sup> century up until today.

The colourful floral scarves and tablecloths drew the attention of the authorities, who stopped our documentation team and asked for different legal permissions. After the failed coup attempt in 2016, police control has tightened up considerably, and every physical act in public space that does not align with the apolitical everyday movement routine of civilians may be perceived as an act of dissidence. During most of our actions we were supervised, interrupted, or stopped by the police, so the organisers had to come up with different tactics of negotiation with the authorities. This constant surveillance brought up a question: why is public performance art understood as a possible criminal act?

In my view, it is this very omnipresence of the police that put our civic resilience to the test and automatically rendered our performances political acts of resistance without this being our immediate intention.

The second performance I will analyse involves a series of collaborative actions that revolved around my grandmother’s dowry that I was carrying in my suitcase as a prop. This dowry has a special significance for my life and my family’s biography. My paternal grandparents arrived in Thessaloniki as the result of the 1923 population exchange to the newly found state of Greece from Eastern Thrace. Both their families then settled in Thessaloniki. Some years later my grandfather married my grandmother and he tried to revive the cheese-making business he had in Eastern Thrace before being deported. Having had trauma as a veteran of the Greco-Turkish war and trauma as an uprooted refugee, he was often hospitalised and received electric shock treatments. He thus was unable to be in full control of his business, which eventually went bankrupt. Meanwhile, my grandmother was frantically embroidering. I think it was her way of dealing with the situation. The dowry was passed on to my aunt who never married, and it eventually ended up in my hands. I am now the owner of numerous carefully embroidered pieces that somehow feel like carrying my family’s unresolved multigenerational trauma.

My idea for Tanja’s workshop was to distribute the dowry items to other women and specifically to my co-participants in the workshop. Those who wanted to get involved in this collaborative performance selected an item from the dowry and worked with it throughout the three days of the workshop. Each day, we would set aside some time to sit together, talk, and collectively embroider items from my grandmother’s dowry in different locations in the public space.

I used to hesitate to use the dowry as an art object, let alone distribute it to others. Do I have the right to give dowry pieces away? Was I doing my female ancestors—the makers of this dowry—justice? Watching my fellow participants leave their marks on



*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, a collective performance in a tea house, Mis Street (2021), with the participation of: Arzu Yayıntaş, Bahar Seki, Gülhatun Yıldırım, Gizem Yılmaz, Nazlı Durak, Persefoni Myrtsou, Vanessa Ponte, Sabbi Senior, Selma Hekim and Tanja Ostojić. Photos: K. Kaygusuz and T. Ostojić.

my grandmother’s dowry was a somehow unsettling and at the same time empowering experience. The sight of needles piercing the fine fabrics that were so well taken care of by my grandmother caused me discomfort. At the same time, the practice of embroidering in the public space brought to light an important question: how does a craft such as embroidery fit our needs and desires as feminists today? Embroidery—or any sort of traditionally female practice—can operate as an autodidactic form of feminist emancipation and healing as it transgresses its traditional silence and domesticity.<sup>2</sup> When connected to its loaded and long genealogy of unpaid female domestic labour, this therapeutic aspect of embroidery has the potential to transform into a form of civic resistance.

Each participant *mended* their autobiographies in different ways onto the dowry items. Arzu embroidered an iconic vulva on an underwear panty that belonged to my grandmother, and used a *nazar boncuğu*<sup>3</sup> to represent the clitoris. Selma picked a small, embroidered cloth and placed it in an old chest that she received as a present from an old Kurdish lady who was her neighbour. In this way, she generated a psychic intergenerational dialogue between women and their objects. Tanja stitched the date September 6–7, 1955 onto another item. This significant date marks the Istanbul pogrom that happened in 1955 against the non-Muslim minorities—predominantly the Greek minority—and it accidentally coincided with the workshop’s date. Nazlı confessed with a breath-taking honesty that the textile work helped her come to terms with her own history and the collective guilt of belonging to the group of presumed perpetrators, i.e. the

<sup>2</sup> Kim, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> An evil-eye bead.

## NAZLI DURAK

I decided to take part in this workshop because of my investment in dance and performance as a feminist methodology—one that highlights the relationship between the body and spatial memory. As an artist, I seek to transform my dance-based performances into a form of activism that generates discussions about the violations of rights—and this is exactly what I was able to do through the *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshops.

On September 7, we commemorated the pogrom in which the Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and other minorities were deported from Istanbul, and their homes and workplaces were looted. Those events took place in Beyoğlu (in 1955), which is why I felt particularly sensitive. I was contemplating how violence was embedded within the history of this place that I walked through on a daily basis. Following Tanja’s suggestion, we started “walking backwards” on İstiklal Street. Arzu was holding her scarf in her hand, and with the wind, it was waving like a “flag”. For centuries, people have fought over a piece of fabric on battlefields, how loaded an object could be... Every flag has its own story, and the way we relate to the flag is also determined by this story. Selma gave me her spare scarf. Once all of us held our scarves and let them flow in the wind, I was comforted by the image of

Turks. Her willingness and bravery to take responsibility for a past which, in my view, she should not feel responsible for, shook me to the core. For *Mis(s)placed Women?*, the fabrics of the dowry offered a shared relational performative platform.<sup>4</sup> As a platform, the dowry transcended its old symbolic function as a measuring tool for a bride-to-be’s value, and became a synergetic tool of feminist agency and shared authorship. The collective textile work that took place during the workshop gave us a chance to connect, to test out memory techniques together, and to re-shape the value of our diverse female materialities. Above all, this experience offered us the possibility to rewrite the story of personal heritage, find some kind of reconciliation with our difficult pasts and intersecting histories, and eventually imagine common futures that are not based on blood kinship but on new types of empowering psychic and corporeal alliances.

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[All links were visited on May 18, 2022]

<sup>4</sup> I am thankful to Fotini Tsibiridou, for her suggestion to understand the dowry as a “feminist platform”.

these women’s flags, with various colours and patterns. Right at that moment, I saw the banner hanging on the Bar Association Building’s facade that read “İstanbul Convention Saves Lives”. I told Tanja that Turkey had withdrawn from this convention and that the lives and rights of women, girls, and LGBTQI+ individuals were at stake. We chanted “Dünya yerinden oynar kadınlar özgür olsa” [The world would move out of its joints if women were free]. A few people asked what our demonstration was about. Police arrived and ordered us to leave.

We decided to head to Mis Street. While we were sitting there, Persefoni who is from Greece made Turkish coffees for us. She opened her luggage filled with beautiful fabrics and spreads embroidered by her grandmother. Clothes pegs, needles, threads, scissors, pieces of cloth, macrame cords, crotchet needles, glittery threads... Whatever you can imagine was in there; Persa opened a chest full of treasures before us. We became just like neighbours sitting on our stoops, hanging out. We had woven a world around us with threads, knitted items, and fabrics in this small, cosy tea shop selling smuggled tea in Beyoğlu. Inspired by how my mother used to embroider our initials on our towels when we were in kindergarten, I



Nazlı Durak  
Series of performance actions, Teşvikiye Square, Istanbul, September, 2021,  
*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

embroidered on a handkerchief my initials as well as a “P” for her grandmother who shared the name Persefoni. I did it so that our names would be permanent.

Persa’s grandmother was a member of the Greek community in Istanbul, one of the many people that were deported and subjected to violence by the overbearing Turks many years ago exactly on this day. Her embroidered handkerchiefs reminded me once again how devastating and polarising history is. It was as if the handkerchiefs had transformed into metaphorical objects with which sometimes you wiped away your tears and at other times “the stains of history”, utilised for coming to terms with the past. It was as if by hanging these fabrics, by adorning

## GİZEM EPIFANI

### *Poor Woman Artist*

*Mis(s)placed Women?* is a workshop consisting of women and queer people, brought to life by Tanja Ostojić. We decided on the topics, the flow, the presentation—all completely together, and with total spontaneity. The following is my reflection on the performance that impacted me the most.

Being an artist in Turkey is very difficult, especially if you are in your early years. It is almost impossible to make money from it. If you come from a traditional family and a small town and are a woman, you may have to beg to be accepted. You may even have to starve to continue being able to do what you love, your art. I’m a vocalist in my own band, and I get very little money for my work. Sometimes it seems impossible to make money from my own art. I wanted to address this situation of the poor woman artist, and to show her transformation into an anonymous beggar on the street.

In this performance, I covered my whole body with black tulle and only took my hands out of the tulle to play the ukulele. The only parts of me that survived the full-body cover—which drew on the symbolism of the religious veil, cloistering, and

them and celebrating them, we were carrying the burden of the past together on our shoulders.

On the next day, September 8, we decided to go towards Teşvikiye-Nişantaşı. It was still windy. The sun was out and warming us. I was still tired from the day before, and didn’t bring any props. Selma had brought her *erbane*, the ancient instrument of Mesopotamian and Iranian women. I thought that I could dance to it. I kept offering to dance the *halay* while walking on the streets, but it seemed the others were not inspired by my proposal... But *halay* and *erbane* could in fact offer a powerful image to represent the memories of immigrant women in “a place” like Teşvikiye...

Once we picked a place to settle, I decided to do a dance performance using the little girl costumes Arzu had brought. Children subjected to forced migration are often the ones who are faced with the most severe forms of violence and whose rights are violated with impunity. At an age when they’re supposed to play on the streets, and dream of beautiful futures, they’re forced to take dangerous and unknown paths. While the *erbane*’s tunes accompanied me, I pondered the long migration routes walked by many small feet, and felt in my heart incomplete and alienated from the world.

Born in 1997, Nazlı Durak graduated from the Department of Contemporary Dance at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. She works at BoMoVu, Association of Sports and Body Movement for Social Empowerment. She has performed in various venues and on the street, and has conducted projects focused on empowering women and girls such as “Hasankeyf” project realised within the scope of the Truth, Justice, and Memory Centre’s *Youth Project*.

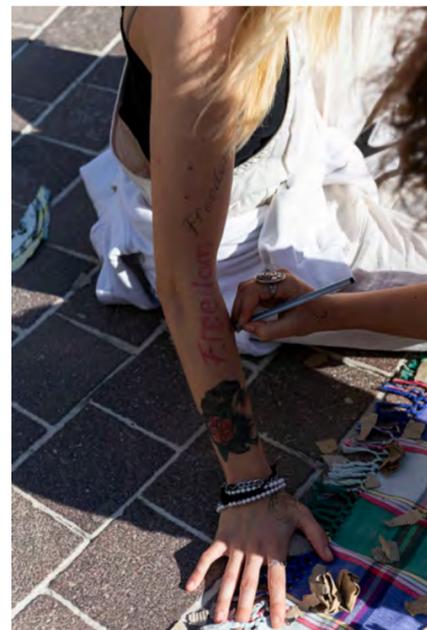
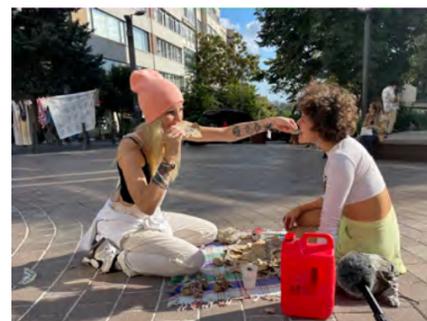


Gizem Epifani  
“Poor Woman Artist”, performance with participation of Nazlı Durak and Gizem Epifani, September 9, 2021 in front of Sureyya Opera, Istanbul. *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

de-identification—were my hands strumming the instrument: that is, hope and creativity. I didn’t know how to play the ukulele. It was clear that I was just learning to make art. Later, Nazlı accompanied me. She herself is a dancer, she danced as if she did not know how to dance. Our voices and dances were enthusiastic, we danced and had fun like children, and this protest against our deprivation as artists transformed into a performance of liberation and empowerment.

## SABBI SENIOR

### *Upon a Blanket in the Square*



**Gizem Yılmaz** (1995\* Adana, Turkey) is a multidisciplinary artist and queer woman based in Istanbul. She studied architecture, and is part of a musical duo named İlk Zamanlar, where she is a vocalist, songwriter, and storyteller. She reads poems and produces improvised songs with experimental electronic sounds and music.

Sabbi Senior: I’m Sabbi. I’m American. My motivation to join this workshop is mostly because, as I’ve travelled from place to place, I’ve had to shape-shift in each place that I go. In each place that I go, the rights that I have as a woman change. As a queer person, they change and change and change. So I think this point about women entering public space is really important.

Tanja Ostojić: I understood also that it could be enriching for you to draw on the experience from this workshop for your queer activism, right? Sabbi and Gizem, you were both doing this incredible “Vegan Breakfast” performance, and the moment I saw it I immediately recognised it as a reconstruction of the breakfast that ended violently in the Maçka Park on June 22, 2021. I really love the way in which you went around, found some garbage, brought it together, and crafted this fantastic dialogue piece. So, I’d like to hear about it from both of you.

Gizem Yılmaz: I just had an idea, because we were in a square, and it was such a fancy square—people liked taking photos of us while sipping their fancy drinks, and then I was inspired. I said, let’s do something like this Sabbi, let’s pretend. I just started mirroring.

Sabbi: Actually, I wrote a little piece about it. In the beginning, this was a completely spontaneous situation, from simply sitting in the square and looking around and feeling and taking it in... All of these materials, we found nearby and, yes, I’d like to read what I wrote:

### Upon a Blanket in the Square

mirroring the façade of Louis Vuitton and the sparkling glasses held in hands  
sitting with the gaze from cafe tables  
refuge and complacency

surrounded to face and from behind Maçka Park  
falling just few metres below the cobblestone street  
a calling echo

Maçka Park being the location of the first part of Pride  
teetering on this point of balance as subjects testing movements and directionality  
of this square as a space where the threshold lay between this public space and  
their private observation

faces obscured by telephones  
habitually documenting the dishes and the moments  
yet they drifted as lenses to meet also our gaze

we searched for the disruption  
adjacent to the square a nylon barrier stood hiding from sight  
the site of construction  
we went to there

lifted from the corner and uncovered rubbish and rubble  
concrete and cardboard  
an empty can of gasoline

we intervened and asked the waiter to give us cups  
cups we then filled over and over from our bottle of gasoline  
each time dousing and increasing the intoxication  
behaviours as childlike mimicry

to sip from the glass  
to salute to the merriment  
to discuss only the most wonderful and fabulous things

with each refill of our glass the dysphoria grew  
as we served each other to taste the consumption  
with only a broken fork

we shredded pieces of cardboard and ate them like decadence  
we picked up crumbled rocks of concrete with our teeth  
we chewed on the cardboard covered in dirt from the ground

we smiled and posed for Instagram posts from our cardboard phones  
cup after cup yet our gasoline never ran out  
and we started to shred the materials

the dystopia setting in  
as gentle music floated through the air  
a perfect peace and undisturbed  
yet our blanket filthy and in plain sight

shredding to pieces we took pens, one blue and one pink  
and began to write words on each fragment  
Maçka Park echoed into our pens phrases unsaid  
each bite that we took of these inorganic materials  
each consumption transform the surreal into this apocalyptic reality

over time as it normalised and settled in the feeling of dehumanisation  
the profound deprivation of experience  
the total blur between picnic to dine, versus picnic to die

as I wrote on these pieces of cardboard  
comes the feeling of what is destroyed  
each rip something slow and careless tossed into the sky  
blown by the breeze, meaningless

FREEDOM, we wrote over and over  
from diminishing canvas to diminishing canvas  
until the pieces became so small that we travelled to the limbs of the body, the arms  
as the pieces became surfaces, imprints, recollections, a shield

as if it to be the escape from humanity  
emanating out of pores disorganised  
scattered like the running people of protest  
like the scars from teargas  
The arms of the police.  
Pouring from an empty cup.



(Photos above and the previous page:)  
**Sabbi Senior** and **Gizem Yılmaz**  
“Upon a Blanket in the Square”, performance,  
Teşvikiye Square, Istanbul, September, 2021, *Mis(s)*  
*placed Women?* workshop.  
Photos: K. Kaygusuz and T. Ostojčić.



**Score #2: “Holding the ‘Mis(s)placed Women?’ Sign”**, performed by Sabbi Senior at Kadıköy Port, *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, (2021).  
Photo: K. Kaygusuz.



**Score #2: “Holding the ‘Mis(s)placed Women?’ Sign”**, performed by Vanessa Ponte at Kadıköy Port, Istanbul, (2021). Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

## VANESSA PONTE



Vanessa Ponte  
performance with the participation of: Sabbi Senior, Gizem Yılmaz, Vanessa Ponte, Arzu Yayintas, Persefoni Myrtsou and Selam Hekim, 2021.  
*Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop Süreyya Opera House, Istanbul. Photo: K. Kaygusuz.



**Gizem, Sabbi and Vanessa**, *Mis(s)placed Women?* Istanbul, (2021). Photo: T. Ostojčić.

After this point was when we began to paint on the can.  
And in this way reclaim what this object and this symbol is.  
Whether it is, you know, for destruction  
or whether it is for fuel.

Participating in this workshop gave me a new perspective on how to create and perform. Before the workshop I didn't have any experience with performance art; however, it was a medium of art that I wanted to try and learn. At first, I was scared and anxious about performing and didn't know if I was doing the right thing, but eventually, I understood that there was no such thing as “doing something wrong”. Everyone respected each other and supported one another in their journey of artistic discovery. It was very interesting to see everyone develop a style of performance art.

While performing on the last day I had three performances on my mind. The first one was to hold the “Misplaced Women/Misplaced Human” sign, the second one was a dance performance where I asked my co-performers to tie their arms or legs in order to explore their bodies in a different way and to feel the pressure of physical constriction and limitation, and the third one was about queer oppression, where participants would tie me and try to stop me from expressing myself. Since I usually express myself with painting, using my body was out of my comfort zone and it taught me a lot of new things about me and about performance art more broadly. I am thrilled that I could have such a valuable experience with everyone who participated in the workshop, and it was a great pleasure to work with Tanja Ostojčić.

The last performance that I did together with my co-performers was the most important to me, especially since it was about the oppression of queer people. Living is hard when you are non-binary and queer. It gets scary when you feel the hate people have for you just because you exist. They try everything in their hands to stop you and to force you to be “normal”. It's sad how people try to change who other people are. In this performance I wanted to represent the oppression that the queer community is under. By asking the participants to tie any place of my body and pull it in order to get in the way of me putting on my makeup, I wanted to show that oppression in physical form. Making this performance in Kadıköy was very important for me too. While Kadıköy was usually a safe space for queer people, recently it has started to change and become a dangerous place to be openly queer. Queer-friendly places in the area started to get conquered by cis white males and hate crimes started to occur.

I'm a half-Polish and half-Portuguese queer person, currently living in İstanbul and trying to become an artist. I am studying architecture at Bilgi University and am a co-founder of Ammonite Gallery.

## SELMA HEKİM



**Selma Hekim**  
 “Leaving a Mark”, 10 min, solo performance.  
 Mis(s)placed Women? workshop, Süreyya Opera House, Istanbul, September 2021.  
 Performance assistance: Arzu Yayıntaş, Vanessa Ponte, Persefoni Myrtsou, Sabbi Senior.  
 Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

I completed my undergraduate education in Guidance and Psychological Counseling and Combined Arts, as well as two years of Art Psychotherapy Training for Mental Disorders at the Art Psychotherapies Association. I am a visual artist, run art workshops for children at Tarlabası Community Center, give Visual Arts Educator Training at KODA, and work as a research assistant at Boğaziçi University's Department of Psychology.

## BAHAR SEKİ



Mis(s)placed Women? workshop, Istanbul, a performance by Bahar Seki (2021).  
 Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

My motivation for taking part in this workshop was to explore my areas of interest, such as immigration and women's rights, and to do so through an artistic process that would be held in a public space. In the end not only did I achieve these initial ambitions for the workshop, I also made new mental connections through my performances that went far beyond my expectations. These connections were shaped by concepts, acts, and objects such as dowry, yarn, knitting, leaving a mark, moving, and bonding.

My participation in performances of others were based on playing daff, while my solo performance that was about leaving a mark took place on the last day of the workshop, inspired by all these thoughts turning in my head. The marks that a woman leaves on the ground, marks that change with her movements, and the support she received from other women while creating her marks—that became my focus. Since I am not a performance artist I was not sure about myself before the performance, but after I started I felt relaxed, and felt completely supported by the women who were drawing my silhouette.

Since the beginning of the workshop, thoughts about Persafoni's grandmother's dowry were running through my mind. I thought about performatively connecting the pieces of cloth, intertwining them, embroidering the fabric, as well as the emotional meaning that lay behind these acts and that exceeded mere functionality. The dowry became a conduit for each of our hopes, dreams, and emotions. Persefoni's grandmother had to emigrate, and her hopes while making her dowry did not unfold the way she had imagined. But in the workshop, every part of the dowry—which contained her marks and traces within it—was taken up by other women, and her marks were reproduced and repurposed by these women in the same land she had to emigrate from.

This dowry reminded me of an article that I wrote a few years ago about my grandmother and the chest of another woman. It was about how I couldn't own my grandma's chest, but instead I inherited the chest of another old woman from Erzincan. There was a photo of this chest with my grandmother's rug on it in the article. In the end of the article I wrote, “it is not known whose grandmother's belongings will stay in whose house. It is never known where the adventure of an item will begin and end.”

Now a piece from Persefoni's grandmother's dowry ended up in this chest, and the stories of those three women from different parts of Anatolia are beautifully connected.

One of main motivations for me to attend the workshop was that it was dealing with issues of displacement, womanhood, and queerness.

It felt like a romantic encounter for me to come together with all these female artists at the *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, especially because I knew they cared for me in the same way I cared for them. I felt that I belonged somewhere, and this feeling is very important in my life. My favourite memory was my performance dedicated to refugee women in front of the Louis Vuitton store in Nişantaşı. Selma Hekim played erbane at the Abdi İpekçi Square, determining the rhythm of my movements. During the performance, passers-by were watching us; they would stop walking and film us, and wonder what we were doing. It was very good for me to watch the surprise of the audience, and to know that we were confusing them. I was carrying a lot of tension inside me as I performed; it made me feel good to raise awareness about refugee women's issues through my performance, but the

knowledge that these audience members did not care about the plight of these women heightened my anger. I wanted to expose their hypocrisy and bring to light the suffering of others that they repress every day.

This act of exposure and confession connects deeply with my interests as a filmmaker. Last year, I directed a mid-length documentary that was focused on issues of displacement and the effects of the place you live on your identity. It focused on people from different generations, mostly women, who had lived in the same neighbourhood all their lives, only to be forced to evacuate their homes due to urban transformation. When I asked them what they regretted most in life, one woman said, “Let me keep it to myself.” I tried to show in my documentary what she couldn't say and why she couldn't say it. I was interested in the act of opening up; of confessing or withholding intimate stories, and the various reasons for that. When I asked another woman about her saddest moment, she replied, “I had a heart attack” while eating a watermelon. Though she was laughing at the same time, she was telling me “I was dying”.

I am an actress and documentary director living in Istanbul.

## GÜLHATUN YILDIRIM



Mis(s)placed Women? workshop, Istanbul, a performance by Gülhatun Yıldırım (2021).  
 Photo: K. Kaygusuz.

I was motivated to take part in the workshop because my artistic practice engages deeply with themes of change, transformation, and groundlessness, and I often perform in public spaces using my body. In total, I participated in five of the collective performances during the workshop, but it was my solo performance that I found most challenging. I undertook my solo performance by the empty pool in the garden of Teşvikiye Mosque, Istanbul, on September 8, 2021, the second day of the *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, between 2-4 pm.

I started by placing an ice cube in everyone's palms, thus including them in the process. Persefoni and Azra sat close to me to support me, while Tanja touched my back and whispered something about the performance in my ear. The ice cubes on my lap kept melting, pouring down my feet into the empty pool. Simge climbed inside the pool, and she placed a glass with a plant inside, right under my feet. I placed a lot of ice cubes on my lap and waited for them to melt, to become liquid, to make me wet and spread across space. I have a lot of childhood memories related to water and ice, both good and bad. Water and ice have the potential to give birth, sustain, and heal, as well as to destroy, kill, and eradicate. Slippery surfaces, wet stairs, huge icicles on the roofs and balconies in winter, floods, deaths in the sea, rainfalls, hails, snow, cold, death by freezing, rivers, large bodies of water..

When I was about ten years old, I lived in a rural town. It was the end of August. Suddenly it got dark during the day and a storm broke out, followed by heavy rainfall. Enormous blocks of ice. Ice blocks as big as walnuts and apples were falling from the sky to the ground, hitting our bodies. I fled inside and watched anxiously from the window, because I had never seen such a thing. There was a huge tree right in front of the house—a willow tree with branches that extended to the sky infinitely. Black stains started appearing. When I looked up into the sky, I saw that pitch-black crows were falling to the ground. It was almost like an act of collective suicide. The ground was covered with a black furry blanket. The moist soil, trees, grass, and ice blocks. I was astonished to witness the role that water and ice plays in the cycles of life and death. I have never forgotten that lesson.

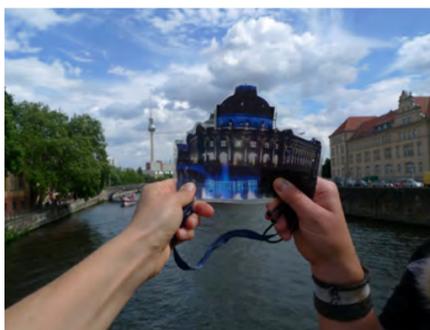
I'm a performance artist living in Istanbul. I also work with painting and photography, and am invested in themes of life, death, nature, essence, and roots.



# CHAPTER 8: INCLUSION

SUZY VAN ZEHLENDORF

## *Misplaced Sculptures*



Suzy van Zehendorf  
“*Misplaced Sculptures*”, 60 min performance,  
2019, Berlin. Photo: T. Ostojić.

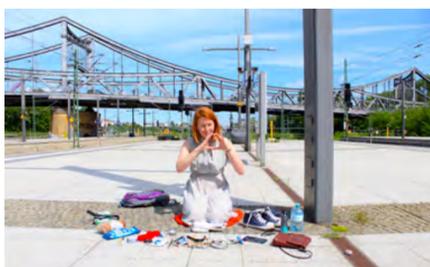
Suzy van Zehendorf (\*1980 in Berlin) is a neurodivergent artist who has worked in the Mosaik Artworkshop since 2005. She takes from her environment what she wants to incorporate into her microcosm with an irrepressible will to create, rework, reshape, and revalue it. She loves materials with traces that she can react to, that trigger something in her. She enjoys finding them on the street and then begins the process of upcycling and engagement: old photographs, books, and objects are painted over, scratched, slit, altered, cut apart, erased, and combined. Her exuberant workplace shows her multifaceted interests.

I worked with Suzy between 2017–2019 trying to extend and develop in the media of performance art her obsession with the “imprisoned” sculptures inside the Bode Museum. This topic resonated with me, as I was also interested in the treasures and human remains trapped in Berlin’s museums, many of which had been acquired during colonial and fascist times. Suzy is very knowledgeable about the Bode Museum’s architecture, history, and collections—at the same time, she has such an incredible fear of it that she cannot even bring herself to look at it.

We realised so far two performances together: “*Misplaced Sculptures*” in front of and around the Bode, and “*Misplaced Women? Score #1: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own*” in front of the Charlottenburg castle, whose architecture—in contrast to the Bode, and like the Potsdam City Hall—signifies safety to her... For the performances, Suzy produced protective objects (as with religious or pagan contexts) that protect her (and me as her co-performer) from these pieces of architecture with which she is so fascinated... (T. Ostojić)

SUSAN MERRICK

## *“Misplaced Women?”, A Translation of a Travel Diary in British Sign Language*



Susan Merrick  
“*Misplaced Women?, A Translation of a Travel Diary in British Sign Language*”, 30 minute performance by Susan Merrick, May, 2019 Berlin-Gesundbrunnen Train Station, Photo: T. Ostojić.

For my 2019 iteration of the “*Misplaced Women? Score#1*”, at Berlin-Gesundbrunnen Train Station, I spent some time thinking about my own feelings of being misplaced, my feeling of “place” while in Berlin, a city I’d only visited once before as a young woman, my feelings of misplacement as a working class woman in the UK art world, and my feelings of “[mis]placement” within my work as a Sign Language Interpreter, working between two cultures, between two languages, being at times “invisible” yet very visible.

In my practice, I try to understand women’s unique voices through the conversations I have with them and through getting to know their different backgrounds. I try to be the “inbetween” or the interpreter between the art world and groups of non-artists. Broadening access to art is an important aspect of my artistic practice, just as broadening access to language is central to my interpreting work.

Susan Merrick is an Artist and Sign Language Interpreter based in the UK. Her work focuses on performance, film, and social engagement methods for making hidden voices visible. Her current project, *Conversations with Aldershot*, has been awarded Arts Council Funding for the past two years.

## ARTISTS AND CONTRIBUTORS

**Teresa Albor** is a multidisciplinary artist and writer based in London and Dhaka who recently co-authored a book about live art, gender, and ageing and is currently making live art, video, and sound work that explores questions of ageing, gender, human nature, identity, and marginalisation.

**Helen Averley** is a circus and visual artist, and has spent most of her life in Kenya, Northern Ireland, and England. She founded Hang Aerial Dance in 2004, Let’s Circus in 2007, and Circus Central in 2009.

**Gaby Bila-Günther aka LADY GABY**, is an Australian performance artist, spoken-word performer, poet, and writer. She is originally from Romania, and currently lives and works in Berlin. Her provocative work tries to capture the nuances of her daily life, her surroundings, and her encounters with others.

**Dagmara Bilon** (1981) is a London-based performance and interdisciplinary artist, creative producer, and activist of Polish/German origins. She has orchestrated various community-led art projects with the goal of engaging young people in discourses of gender, sexuality, and identity.

**Mia Bradić** (2003) is a circus artist, feminist, and climate activist from Solin, Croatia. She has recently moved to pursue her studies in France.

**David Caines** is a graphic designer and visual artist based in London. He creates brand identities, art books, and illustrations for the cultural sector. David is also a painter and regularly exhibits his work.

**Azad Colemêrg** is a political refugee from Kurdistan (Turkey) who is currently studying cinematography at the University of Zurich.

**Luciana Damiani** (1982) is a visual artist and independent researcher based in Montevideo, Uruguay, who received her MA in Barcelona. Since 2009 she has been a member of FAC Collective (Fundación de Arte Contemporáneo, Uruguay).

**Jelena Dinić** works at a nursery in the Women’s House in Belgrade. She is also engaged in activism and practices of contemporary art.

**Kathryn Fischer aka Mad Kate** is an American sound and performance artist based in Berlin. She identifies as polyHOMÉfull, and uses her art to interrogate the politics of borders within and between bodies.

**Li Fu** is interested in the politics of everyday life, in social development trends, and in attempts to transfer theoretical concepts into daily practice using the tools of performance art and a DIY style.

**Hieu Hanh Hoang Tran** is a Berlin-based activist working on migration and displacement in the context of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters. She is also invested in issues of intersectional feminism, the right to reproductive self-determination, and solidarity among communities of colour.

**Monika Janulevičiūtė** is Vilnius based Lithuanian artist and designer of younger generation.

**Persefoni Myrtsou** (1986\* Thessaloniki) is a visual & performance artist, anthropologist, and feminist raised in Thessaloniki, Greece and based in Istanbul, Turkey. She has taken part in numerous international exhibitions and festivals including: Athens Biennale (2016), Jewish Museum Berlin (2018), and Greek Film Archive (2022), among others. Currently she is a doctoral student at the Institute for European Ethnology at Humboldt-University Berlin and researches the condition of being an artist and a migrant. She is engaged in peace and care activism in the Greece-Turkey context.

**Marta Nitecka Barche** is a PhD Candidate in Linguistics at the University of Aberdeen who took part in numerous *Misplaced Women?* performances and organised a workshop at the Festival of Politics in Aberdeen. In the past she was imprisoned in the USA because her student visa in her Polish passport expired.

**Rhea Ramjohn** is a Trinidadian-US American creative writer and poet of colour based in Berlin.

**Sabbi Senior** (1992\* Bryn Mawr, PA, USA) is a multidisciplinary designer, queer woman, nomad, musician, and activist based in Istanbul and Milano. “Before I left the United States I played in a 14 piece band performing African music which my band then used to fundraise for engineers without borders and other environmental causes. While I lived in Milan I participated in street-cast modelling in order to represent alternative gender representation and visibility. I believe in community-building and exploring the ideas of tolerance and universal love.”

**Tan Tan** is a multimedia artist who currently lives and works in China and Belgium. Her oeuvre covers experimental film/video art, performance/theatre, music/sound art installations, and cyber art.

**Tanya Ury** (1951) is a London-born artist, activist, and author based in Cologne. Her video, photographic, and performance output deal with Jewish history in general, often with a focus on her own Jewish familial provenance.

**Bojana Videkanić** is a performance artist, curator, art historian, and professor at Waterloo University, Ontario, Canada, who came to Canada as a child-refugee from Bosnia. She recently published *Nonaligned Modernism: Socialist Postcolonial Practices in Yugoslavia, 1945-1985*.

**Hyla Willis** is the co-founder of subRosa, a feminist art collective. She teaches Media Arts at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh, USA. In her artistic work and her teaching, Willis uses the cultural and political economies of graphic design, creative experimentation, and acoustic ecology.

**Arzu Yayintaş** (1977\* Bursa, Turkey) is an artist, feminist activist, and curator who lives and works in Istanbul. Since 2002 she has co-curated and taken part in several international exhibitions in public spaces and non-profit spaces including Normalisation (2022) at Karşı Sanat, The Village Project (2019) at Depo, A Room of Our Own (2017) at Ark Kültür, among others.

**Tanja Ostojić** (\*1972) is a renowned Berlin-based, Yugoslavian-born performance and interdisciplinary artist who also works in the fields of research and education. She is internationally known as a pioneer of institutional gender critique and for socially and politically engaged feminist art in the public space, especially related to migration and gender issues. Her performance art and exhibition practice has taken her to prominent art venues such as the Venice Biennale, Brooklyn Museum in New York, Busan Biennale in South Korea, among others. Her artworks have been analysed and included in numerous books, journals and anthologies. She received numerous prizes and fellowships and has published several books and essays. The British Guardian recently named Ostojić one of the 25 best artists of the 21st century for her project *Looking for a Husband with EU Passport* (2000-05). Tanja Ostojić was a resident at the Tarabya Cultural Academy from June to September 2021.

**TANJA OSTOJIĆ**  
***Mis(s)placed Women?***  
**2009-2022**  
**A Collaborative Art Project**

**Exhibition at Depo Istanbul, 15 September – 30 October 2022**

**Curated by**  
Tanja Ostojić and Arzu Yayıntaş

**Exhibition participants / Artists**  
Teresa Albor, Lidija Antonović, Marta Nitecka Barche, Gaby Bila-Günther aka LADY GABY, Dagmara Bilon, Ines Borovac, Mia Bradić, Amy Bryzgel, David Caines, Nati Canto, Hiuwai Chan, Anaïs Clercx, Azad Colemêrg, Camilla Conocchi, Luciana Damiani, Nazlı Durak, Kathryn Fischer aka Mad Kate, Li Fu, Mahlet Ogbe Habte, Hieu Hanh Hoang Tran, Selma Hekim, Monika Janulevičiūtė, Karen Kipphoff, Ashley McNaughton, Valentina Medda, Susan Merrick, Branko Milisković, Persefoni Myrtsou, Roberta Weissman Nagy, Tanja Ostojić, Sigrid Pawelke, Vanessa Ponte, Darija S. Radaković, Rhea Ramjohn, Bahar Seki, Sabbi Senior, Alejandra Robles Sosa, Evdoxia Stafylaraki, Tan Tan, Mare Tralla, Tanya Ury, Katja Vaghi, Bojana Videkanić, Anastasio William, Hyla Willis, Jiachen Xu, Arzu Yayıntaş, Gülhatun Yıldırım, Gizem Yılmaz aka Epifani, and Suzy van Zehlendorf, among others.

***Mis(s)placed Women? Community Gathering*** in Istanbul: September 15–22, 2022  
**Live Events** at Depo and across the city: September 20–22, 2022

**Live events participants:** Gaby Bila-Gunther aka LADY GABY, Dagmara Bilon, Nazlı Durak, Hieu Hanh Hoang Tran, Selma Hekim, Kathryn Fischer aka Mad Kate, Susan Merrick, Tanja Ostojić, Vanessa Ponte, Arzu Yayıntaş, Gülhatun Yıldırım and Gizem Yılmaz, among others.

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***Mis(s)placed Women? Istanbul Itinerary, September 2021***

**Workshop led by**  
Tanja Ostojić

**Participants**  
Nazlı Durak, Selma Hekim, Persefoni Myrtsou, Vanessa Ponte, Bahar Seki, Sabbi Senior, Arzu Yayıntaş, Gülhatun Yıldırım, Gizem Yılmaz

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Ayda Bayram, Coordinator

**Tarabya Cultural Academy**  
Çiğdem İkişik, Program Coordinator

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*Mis(s)placed Women?* Blog: <https://misplacedwomen.wordpress.com/>  
*Mis(s)placed Women?* Video Channel: <https://vimeo.com/channels/1482708>

**TANJA OSTOJIĆ**  
***Mis(s)placed Women?***  
**2009-2022**  
**A Collaborative Art Project**

This publication is based on *Mis(s)placed Women?* (2009-2022), a collaborative art project by Tanja Ostojić, published in English and Turkish to accompany the exhibition at Depo Istanbul, September 15–October 30, 2022. Due to constraints of space, only a selection of the artworks and texts have been included.

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Cover photo: Score #2: “Holding the ‘Mis(s)placed Women?’ Sign”, performed by Vanessa Ponte and Sabbi Senior, at Kadıköy Port, *Mis(s)placed Women?* workshop, Istanbul, 2021. Photo: K. Kaygusuz

