



HZT-Research Week & Online Conference: *Shielding* January, 10 – January 15, 2022

The pilot edition of the HZT-Research Week focuses on the idea of *Shielding*: practices and conceptual approaches in which bodies, intentionally or involuntarily, become shields. Bodies take on an ambivalent and controversial status in the process: on the one hand, they serve as protection or as a buffer against others – other people or symbolic sites – and express resistance. On the other, they become weapons as well as shields when they intervene, on the ground as well as politically, in wars and conflict but also activism. Situated in a broader intellectual context, the focus on shielding connects to various debates in which corporeality and embodiment in current socio-political contexts are re-evaluated. It also follows the question of how body-based research from the performative arts can enter into dialogue with other fields of knowledge and application to help understand the aesthetic, sociopolitical, ethical and legal dimension of the body.

HZT's *Shielding* is made up of various public and non-public programs and combines a variety of modes of encounter, including practical training sessions, workshops, lectures and other formats, to address the question of the body as shield on multiple levels: From an aesthetic and dramaturgical perspective: how is shielding trained, rehearsed, embodied and performed? How does it address and create both audience and witness? From a necropolitical perspective: How do practices and concepts of shielding contribute to producing, maintaining or critically reflecting power structures? How are different hierarchies of embodiment, unequally distributed privileges, and different concepts of accountability and responsibility expressed? On an ethical level: how are the value and worthiness of bodies negotiated in shielding? How can we do justice to our own position between fascination, voyeurism and disturbance?

Curated and organized by Sandra Noeth and Janez Janša,
with the support of Bella Ruhl, Anna Mohrdiek and the team of the HZT.

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Schedule Online Conference January 14 + 15, 2022

Shielding. Body-based explorations on notions of integrity and protection

Friday, January 14

15.00 – 15.30 Welcome and Introduction

15.30 – 17.00 Two lectures & a dialogue

Isabell Lorey: *Immunised Bodies and Logistifications Just in Time. Transformations through the Pandemic*

Nicola Perugini: *Human Shields as Human Screens*

18.00 – 19.30 Two lectures & a dialogue

Banu Bargu: *Human Shielding as Embodied Critique*

Sandra Noeth: *Disposable Bodies and Performative Strategies of Protection: On the Controversial Status of the Body in Shielding*

Saturday, January 15

15.00 – 15.15 Welcome

15.30 – 17.00 Two lectures & a dialogue

Frédéric Pouillaude: *On Aesthetic Shielding: Walls, Windows and Screens*

Žiga Divjak: *The Body and Systemic Violence*

18.00 – 19.30 Two lectures & a dialogue

Rana Issa: *Chronicles of a Mothalovin' Penslayer &*

Sophie Utikal: *Soft Skin Shielding*

19.30 – 20.00 Wrap Up

Zoom Link for all events: 

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86334738834?pwd=a0pNOU5jSktkYmh3c0RiQ0dwcHdXU>

[T09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86334738834?pwd=a0pNOU5jSktkYmh3c0RiQ0dwcHdXU) 

Meeting-ID: 863 3473 8834 

Kenncode: 447079

Abstracts and Biographies

Friday, January 14 // 15:30 – 17:00

Nicola Perugini

Human Shields as Human Screens

From phalanx-fighting, through the use of multiple distance weapons, to the development of airpower and drone warfare in the last century, the history of armed conflicts is one of increasing distance from which people are killed, but also one of increasing weaponization of the human body. Starting from World War I, innocent civilians who were used as human shields to protect military targets in violation of the laws of war were often defined as 'human screens.' The notion of human screen, I argue, is not merely a synonym for human shield. In fact, the human screen is not only a human weapon. As I show in this archaeological exploration, the process of transformation of the human body into a screen translates also into the development of a new media technology that both allows to modulate the use of lethal force and shape the perception and political meaning of violence in the battlefield.

Biography: Nicola Perugini's research focuses mainly on international law, human rights, and violence. He is the co-author of *The Human Right to Dominate* (Oxford University Press 2015) and *Human Shields. A History of People in the Line of Fire* (University of California Press 2020). Nicola has published articles on war and the ethics of violence; the politics of human rights, humanitarianism, and international law; humanitarianism's visual cultures; war and embedded anthropology; refugees and asylum seekers; law, space and colonialism; settler-colonialism and trauma in Israel/Palestine. Nicola's current research is funded by the Leverhulme Trust and examines decolonization wars and international law. He has been a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton (2012/2013), a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at Brown University (2014-2016), and a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow (2017-2019). He has served as a consultant for UNESCO and UN Women. His opinion pieces have appeared in Al Jazeera English, LRB Blog, Newseek, Internazionale, The Nation, the Huffington Post, the Conversation, Just Security, Open Democracy, the Herald.

Isabell Lorey

Immunised Bodies and Logistifications Just in Time. Transformations through the Pandemic

Neoliberal prevention reached its limits with the Corona pandemic – no one was prepared. Isabell Lorey shows that lack of prevention is not an oversight: In the Covid 19 pandemic, behaviour and desires for a new capitalist phase are just being rehearsed in an enormous condensation and speed, which essentially depends on each*individual learning to deal with extreme unplannability and increasing uncertainty. Logistics and digitalization continue to drive the normalisation of extremely precarious just-in-time

jobs. And in the home office, the entire person, including the social environment, is immunised and capitalised without at least redistributing care work. The immunising limitation of contacts corresponds with renationalizations not only in Europe. What fundamental social and economic transformations, based on old domination relations of immunisation, are taking place with the help of various desires for immunised bodies?

Biography: Isabell Lorey is a political theorist, and Professor for Queer Studies at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. She also works for transversal (transversal.at), the publication platform of the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (eipcp). Current publications in English: *State of Insecurity. Government of the Precarious*, London: Verso 2015, *Democracy in the Political Present. A Queer-Feminist Theory Present*, forthcoming with Verso 2022; "Precarization and Care-Citizenship," *Griffith Law Review*, 2020:27(4), 426-438; „The Constituent Power of the Multitude,” *Journal of International Political Theory*, 2019:15(1), 119-133; „Preserving Precariousness, queering debt,” *Recerca. Revista de Pensament y Anàlisi*, 2019:24(1), 155-167; "Withdrawal as Exodus and Strike. Political Strategies for a Presentist Democracy," in Pepita Hesselberth, Joost De Bloois (Eds.), *Politics of Withdrawal. Media, Arts, Theory*, Lanham/Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield 2020, 133-146; "The Power of the Presentist-Performative. On Current Democracy Movements," in Ana Vujanovic, Livia Andrea Piazza (eds.): *A Live Gathering: Performance and Politics in Contemporary Europe*, Berlin: b_books 2019, 26-38.

Friday, January 14 // 18:00 – 19:30

Sandra Noeth

Disposable Bodies and Performative Strategies of Protection: On the Controversial Status of the Body in Shielding

Holding your breath while walking down the street, evaluating the risk posed by a passing body; performing subtle gestures of touch on your own body while experiencing discrimination or neglect; rehearsing how to appear at a border, where the individual body is always already part of real or imagined collectives. The talk takes, as its starting point, different experiences of shielding ranging from the small-scale to the everyday and the structural. It raises the question: how can body-based aesthetic and performative strategies and practises, on a micro-political level, produce knowledge about the unequal recognition of bodies and their respective protective needs? In the context of the HZT research week, I will focus on the ambivalences that emerge when a body becomes a shield: when protecting and valuing some bodies exposes others in political, legal or ethical states of vulnerability. The presentation provides insight into an

ongoing research project on the idea of bodily integrity which I am developing in dialogue with artists, activists and theorists from different fields.

Biography: Since 2018, Dr. Sandra Noeth is a Professor at the HZT-Inter-University Centre for Dance, and a curator internationally active in independent and institutional contexts (2009 – 2014, Head of Dramaturgy and Research at Tanzquartier Wien). She specialises in ethical and political perspectives toward body-practice and theory (e.g. bodies under structural violence, bodies in the experience of borders). Selected publications: *Bodies of Evidence: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Politics of Movement* (2018, with G. Ertem) or *Resilient Bodies, Residual Effects: Artistic Articulations of Borders and Collectivity in Lebanon and Palestine* (2019).

<https://www.udk-berlin.de/personen/detailansicht/person/show/sandra-noeth/>

<https://udk-berlin.academia.edu/SandraNoeth>

Banu Bargu

Human Shielding as Embodied Critique

My presentation will revisit voluntary human shielding as an embodied form of resistance, drawing on examples from the Middle East and North America. I will discuss how shielding as the public performance of self-endangerment for the protection of others can be considered a subset of the political technique of disembodiment. Considering human shielding alongside other forms of self-harm and self-destruction, which I also gather under the umbrella of political disembodiment, I will centre my reflections on the role of the body as the vehicle of critique.

Biography: Banu Bargu is associate professor in History of Consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her research brings together political theory, anthropology, philosophy, global history, and Middle East studies around questions of the body, power, violence, and resistance practises. As a political theorist, her main areas of focus are modern and contemporary political thought, poststructuralist and critical theory. She is the author of *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons* (Columbia UP, 2014), which received the First Book Prize given by APSA's Foundations of Political Theory section and was named an Outstanding Academic Title by Choice. She is the editor of *Turkey's Necropolitical Laboratory: Democracy, Violence, and Resistance* (Edinburgh UP, 2019) and co-editor of *Feminism, Capitalism, and Critique* (Palgrave, 2017). She has previously taught at The New School for Social Research in New York City and SOAS (University of London). Her new book, *Corporeal Counterpolitics*, is forthcoming from Oxford University Press in 2022.

Saturday, January 15 // 15:30 – 17:00

Žiga Divjak

The Body and Systemic Violence

In my documentary theatre projects I try to look at political and social issues through the optic of their manifestation in our everyday lives. The emphasis is the spectator's political co-responsibility and the fostering of solidarity with and among the oppressed, precarious and often atomised citizens of this world. In this context bodies play different roles, both concrete and metaphorical: from violence, exhaustion, closeness, distance to performing and acting. I will use specific examples from my recent performances to show concrete consequences of the political problems we have dealt with while attempting to embody them and bring them on stage. I will be addressing the problem of staging the Other while questioning the boundaries of our responsibility.

SERVANT JERNEJ AND HIS RIGHT is a performance exploring the brutal exploitation of outsourced workers working over 300 hours per month only to get paid the bare minimum.

THE GAME is a performance that problematizes the systemic violence against people on the move passing through the Balkan migrant route. Slovenia systematically denies people on the move the right to apply for asylum and returns them back to Croatia avoiding the lawful procedures.

Numerous reports of brutal violence of the Croatian police against the people on the move that extend to chain pushbacks at the Croatian-Bosnian border did not change the common migration policies of Slovenia and the entire EU.

FEVER places the question of the environmental catastrophe in the perspective of inequality and class struggle. The people most responsible for the state we are in suffer the least consequences. The show calls for the necessity of resistance and questions the relativity of violence in this most existential crises of all.

Biography: Žiga Divjak (1992, Slovenia) is a theatre director. In his pieces, he uses stripped-down documentary theatre and a strong focus on text to address social and political reality. His works are clear-eyed, recognizably engaged artistic statements with robust ethics that tend to emotionally challenge and yet strongly intellectually affect their viewers. Divjak has directed with the City Theatre of Ljubljana, the SNG Drama Ljubljana, and the Slovenian Youth Theatre, where his production *The Game* won 7 awards at Borštnikovo srečanje (Slovene national theatre festival) including Grand prix and Award for Directing. He lives in Ljubljana.

Frédéric Pouillaude

On Aesthetic Shielding: Walls, Windows and Screens

A wall is an anchored shield.

A window is a transparent wall: a transparent anchored shield.

A screen is a mobile window: a mobile transparent anchored shield.

Through this accumulation of fuzzy equations, I will explore the relations between aesthetic experience and protection devices, and so, the structural need of art for safe places. Then, considering the global inequality in which we live, I will ask why art is over-shielded here and over-exposed there, assuming that in these two excesses art is not far from dying.

Biography: Frédéric Pouillaude is professor of aesthetics at Aix-Marseille University. He wrote two books: *Unworking Choreography: The Notion of Work in Dance* (New York, OUP, 2017), and *Représentations factuelles. Art et pratiques documentaires* (Paris, Cerf, 2020).

Saturday, January 15 // 18.00 – 19.30

Rana Issa

Chronicles of a Mothalovin' Penslayer

Ummiyat is an autobiographical history that constructs feminist legacies of motherhood and language through modes of exposure, confession and exhibitionism. In my family, concealing trauma has been practised across the generations as a way to recuperate the dignity of individuals in my family in the wake of extremely traumatic political and personal events. By labouring to put on display, un-conceal and reveal the sites of trauma, this text attempts to come to terms with how we speak about the unspeakable and why it matters.

Ummiyat is a neologism that captures how Arabic semantically entangles motherhood, slavery, illiteracy and nation into one trilateral lexical root. Through thinking between those concepts, the essay unfolds the story of my grandmother, Izdihar, a bitter woman if ever there was one. Izdihar has a name that signifies the flowering, blossoming, blooming and opening up towards prosperity and progress. Nothing could have been further from the life of this miserable woman. By committing to divulge her tale, I broach the silence of what has happened in my family, and come to learn about the source of Izdihar's consuming misery. The text plays with exposure and concealment as nuances of colour that enliven a portrait, and produce a text that thinks about desire by continuously deflecting it on the shores of its character's life.

Biography: Rana Issa enjoys exploring the histories, theories and practises of translation. Her passion is to find the balancing point between public humanities,

activist engagements and academic curiosity. She writes in a variety of genres and languages and has occupied leadership roles in various aspects of cultural production. She was the previous editor of Arabic and Translation in *Rusted Radishes* and is the artistic director of *Masahat.no*. She makes a living as a member of the faculty at the American University of Beirut and a Sr. Researcher at the University of Oslo. She is the recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts award with Suneela Mubayi for her ongoing translation of 19th century author Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq's travelogue to Europe, *Tickets to Malta, London and Paris* by the Remarkable Ahmad Fares. Her book *The Modern Arabic Bible* is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press.

Sophie Utikal

Soft Skin Shielding

Works by Berlin-based textile artist Sophie Utikal hover through the room: they can be sensed, caressed, set in motion, and hidden behind. Her monumental textile pieces shield a place where surviving does not require cutting away pieces of one's identity—a soft, protected space where shields can be let down and the viewer can be vulnerable. Yet, in taking on themes of gendered and racialized marginalisation, the works themselves reveal the very scars they seek to soothe.

In her presentation, the artist will elaborate on aspects of her practice that connect to shielding, the skin as a shield, and the passage of traumas across generations as it relates to her oeuvre. Appealing to the decolonized gaze and non-rational forms of knowledge, she reproduces her own body through a series of large-scale textile self-portraits. In these works, Utikal reveals the tension between the epigenetic trauma of cultural and identity eradication and the individual process of healing through the surface of the skin. The depicted body, her body, acts to protect, and in doing so also bears the archive of traumatic experiences of displacement, genocide, and racialization handed down across generations. The works are depicted in deep relation with ecological devastation, as in *Holding on* (2021), or with non-human kinships, as in *Healing Parts* (2020), breaking and expanding dichotomous Western definitions of identity.

Biography: Sophie Utikal is a textile artist and workshop facilitator. She was born in Tallahassee, US and grew up in Mainz, Germany. She studied at the academy of fine arts in Vienna, and now lives and works in Berlin. She co-edited of the book *Anti*Colonial Fantasies / Decolonial Strategies* (Vienna 2017), was honoured with the BKA Startstipendium from Austria and received the Neustart Kultur grant from the Federal Republic of Germany. Her artworks have been shown in art institutions throughout Europe such as Kunsthalle Wien, Kristanstads Konsthall, Museion Bolzano, and *Mediterranea Biennale 19* in San Marino among many Others.