

*a portrait between two : while the performer performs the writer watches and writes*

writer : karen elaine spencer  
performer : adriana disman  
title : dying continually (part of intimacy with fear)  
date : march 28 2015  
duration : 6 hours  
location : rats9

adriana : bare feet. black knee-length skirt. black and white striped shirt. black hair cropped neck length.

performance space : thin slats of hardwood flooring, scratched, stained. white walls lit with ten spots, five spots on one wall, five on the other. floor length black curtain separating performance space from studios in back. brown wooden chair with paint stains in the centre of the performance space. metronome.

adriana : “o.k. i think i’m just gonna start.”  
places metronome on floor in centre of room  
starts metronome  
walks to chair  
sits on chair  
feet on floor, hands on lap  
closes eyes

stands up from chair  
walks to metronome  
adjusts metronome  
walks back to chair  
sits down  
feet on floor, hands on lap  
closes eyes

places hand on heart  
gets up from chair  
adjusts metronome

writer : *i feel my pulse. much slower than the metronome. the sound of the metronome reminds me of my brother. piano lessons. i sucked. he rocked. i pour coffee from my thermos into a cup. the coffee is too hot to drink.*

adriana : breathes lightly in and out in unison with the metronome  
breath is faster than normal in and out breath

writer : *i can't decide if adriana is leading the metronome, or if the metronome is leading adriana. i know adriana is teaching, no not teaching, singing songs, with a guy who hired her for voice lessons. they just sing one song she says. they don't do vocal exercises, he doesn't want to.*

*you have to keep winding the metronome so it continues to work. like a wind-up bird.*

*i adjust my breath to the metronome with adriana. i start breathing in unison when i see adriana start. stop when i see her stop. i, however, do not place my hand on my heart, i do not lower my head into my lap, i do not get up and walk over to the metronome, adjust its rhythm, turn and go back to sit in the chair.*

adriana : places glass of water under chair  
puts red sweater overtop her shirt  
puts socks on feet  
(looking at the writer) "how old are you?"

writer : "55."

adriana : adjusts weight on the metronome

writer : *the tempo slows. this is the beat. slow. consistent. the metronome tempo is adjusted again and again. fast now. like a baby's heartbeat. stressed. slower and off. metronome needs winding up again. wind-up bird. makes me think of murakami. "the wind-up bird chronicle." going into the hole. sitting. waiting till something happens. cuz something always does.*

13h39

writer : *i wonder if things will shift. this may be the performance... the repetitions. the breath. the metronome. (is the metronome the tool, the structuring element, the time-keeper who keeps things going?)*

three empty mason jars with lids. a box.

adriana : leaves performance space and walks behind black curtain  
enters performance space with three mason jars, a box  
places jars in front of chair  
slides box under chair  
sits on chair  
picks up water glass from under chair  
holds water glass in both hands  
drinks

writer : *the window is open. sounds from a march of protest. horns honk, people whistle.*

box of wooden matches.

adriana : lights match  
holds match upright between fingers  
puts cigarette between lips  
drops burnt wooden match into mason jar  
lights match  
holds match upright between fingers  
lights cigarette  
inhales smoke  
blows smoke into mason jar  
puts lid on jar  
traps smoke inside jar

writer : *cigarette smoke. mason jars. inside each jar smoke swirls. through the smoke i see the black charcoal of the burnt wooden match.*

adriana : places foot on top of mason jar  
places other foot on top of other jar  
stands on jars  
pushes foot forward on jar  
attempts to step forward  
fails

writer : *am i witnessing an artist in their studio? one thing leads to another. or not. things are tested, tried out. maybe they work, maybe not. try again. try something else. adjust. follow where the things themselves lead you.*

adriana : (addressing the audience) “does it smell... in here? smoke? no?”  
exits behind black curtain  
enters carrying big roll of blue paper

writer : *sometimes the cool thing about performance is you get to see things you wouldn't normally see. like a huge roll of blue paper pulled out the length of a wall and held up. then you get to hear the sound of paper moving. then you are transported back to the work of vida simon. vida unraveling crinkled paper. ever so slowly. and you think of maria hupfield and her holding a length of cloth on one end and you on the other (was it you or another, you do not remember) undulating the cloth. one performance remembers another. it is like that.*

14h03

writer : *again the metronome, again the breathing. this time the chair is set on the blue paper unfurled the length of the room. resting on the blue paper, pink flesh of feet. contrasting colours.*

adriana : gets up from chair  
adjusts metronome

(addresses michelle lacombe) “aren’t you supposed to be somewhere else?”

michelle : “no, i am supposed to be right here.”

adriana : returns to chair

writer : *back to sitting, to the breath. here the audience is not spoken to. the audience does not speak. no one addresses any other person. here the audience is witness.*

*adriana is walking over here to do this, she is moving the chair over there to do that, she is talking to the audience to ask this. but that is not the thing. the thing is the back and forth. the in and out. the space-in-between.*

14h32

adriana : (looking at an audience member) “how old are you dee? can you set the meter for me?”

14h46

writer : *blue paper crumpled into ball, then thrown down from top of ladder. mason jars dropped from top of ladder. after holding sound. sound mouthed into open mason jar, lid placed back on. first mason jar dropped. does not break. second mason jar dropped. breaks. glass breaks.*

adriana : “sorry, did that get you?”  
climbs down ladder  
puts shoes on  
sweeps up broken glass

more people enter. many more. some standing, some sitting. the room fills up.

adriana : (addresses an audience member) “how old are you?”

audience member : (says something i can’t hear)

adriana : “really?”

“47?”

slides metronome weight

winds up metronome

writer : *the blue paper becomes a night sky. stars painted on the paper with melted ice. ice melted in the mouth, spit into a can, loaded onto a brush, brushed onto blue paper transforming blue paper into night sky.*

*i wonder why the blue paper? why the ice? why the paint brush? why the can? things do not accumulate. objects appear, are manipulated and disappear. paper. ladder. matches. chair. ice.*

*i hear the click of the camera.*

*the gallery door is always open. people come in and people go out. there is now a new centre of the room. the doorway is the vantage point. people in the doorway can see the lighting of a match. match stick girl.*

15h02

adriana : holds burning match between fingers  
holds match till flame burns down matchstick  
flicks wrist, flame goes out  
drops match to ground  
repeats

15h05

silver fan. blades held inside a silver cage.

writer : *in painting a portrait the painter looks at the sitter. the sitter, like the painter, does not move. much. the less the sitter moves, the better the painter likes it (old school here.) the painter mixes paint, and applies paint to a support. but mostly the painter looks at the sitter. a lot. if the painter gets a likeness of the sitter we say it is a good portrait.*

15h17

writer : *baking soda. a big box. a fist-full of baking soda spread over floor. one fistful at a time. crouching on floor spreading baking soda. two small girls, invited to help. one girl invited then the other.*

15h21

barbara : (barbara disman, mother of adriana) calls on cell. sound amplified. voice garbled.

adriana : (speaking into phone) "tell me about my fourth birthday and seventh" (the ages of the girls who are spreading baking soda over the floor)  
talks into phone  
puts phone on floor  
walks away from phone  
continues talking to mother

writer : *maybe this moment, this performance as a whole, stages a particular kind of being in relation to the beloved? the being in relation where the quality of attention given to the beloved arises because the beloved is not performing a role, but rather undertakes a series of actions in the presence of the loved –for example making coffee, baking cookies, reading the mail. the beloved is occupied in something other than relating but their attention is not closed of, yet neither is their attention directed towards the other. presence is open, but does not ask anything in return. a deep beauty resides in this trust where the beloved allows herself to be seen in being.*

15h38

adriana : walks onto and into spread baking soda  
holds ice in hands, one piece of ice in one hand, another piece of ice in  
the other hand  
raises hands up and places hands just below the corners of eyes  
ice melts and drips down face

writer : *adriana stands on a chair, the audience watches. adriana lights a match. the  
audience watches. adriana kneels on the ground. the audience watches. adriana is  
constructing her world. we are with her. she is here, before us, now.*

15h55

fan. mason jars. smoke. this time only two mason jars cuz one got broke.

16h11

adriana : (looking at sylvie cotton) "sylvie... how old are you times 2?"

sylvie : "104"

adriana : breathes in and out with the tempo of the metronome.

writer : *i think to myself, adriana understands the power of off-stage. the not being  
visible, the transmission of sound. noise is in everything she does. the dragging of a  
chair over the wooden floor, the clanging of an aluminum ladder, the crumpling of a  
paper bag, the click clack of the metronome, the whirling of a fan, the smashing of ice.  
sound is here. sound locates.*

16h34

adriana : walks to land of baking soda  
apple between legs  
apple nestled up to crotch  
stands on tip toes  
holds  
loses balance  
regains balance  
loses balance  
(addresses joceline chabot) "how old are you times two?"

joceline : "63"

16h36

adriana : sits on floor  
draws knees up towards chest  
wraps plastic tape around body  
clasps hands together  
crosses feet  
bows head  
sits

breathes to tempo of metronome  
(speaking to an audience member) “would you put the weight on the metronome down, by three or four notches, ... how you feel.”

16h40  
a baby gurgles.

adriana : (addressing baby) “what a jewel in the world. what a jewel in the world.”

16h45  
writer : *roll of blue paper. held up, slowly rolled out the length of the room. paper making waves. noise. baby claps. stars painted on blue paper with a brush wet with saliva. this time other people’s saliva. they wet the brush in their mouth, adriana brushes on the star.*

*the stars disappear almost as soon as they are brushed on.*

*performance in the now is an uncertain thing. yes one movement flows into another movement, sequences rise and fall, frames are made, rules are imposed, then broken, salvaged and discarded. but adriana is doing something different than following a score, however loose that score may be conceived of being. adriana is performing what is. this is the performer bathing in an unfolding now. the performance is what is. as much as a chair is a chair and a match is a match the performance is you and i in this space/time together now.*

*like the stars disappearing, we can not hold on.*

16h59  
writer : *vantage point matters.*

17h13  
writer : *i do not understand the duration. i am suspicious. what is there to understand or not understand? it is what it is. is it?*

*the lights are now off. smell of baking soda. my ass hurts from sitting on the floor. i have a headache. i think of the man panhandling i saw on my way here. the guy with tourette’s on the corner. the bike accident from last night. i wonder why these thoughts now?*

17h16  
lights back on.

writer : *adriana eats strawberries. the room is quiet except for my tapping on these keys, the click of the camera, the noise from outside coming inside. someone whistles in*

*the hallway. instead of watching adriana, i watch the black curtain move ever so lightly, ever so slightly, as the wind blows against the fabric. very slow. very beautiful.*

17h22

writer : *in the land of baking soda adriana steps on an apple. the apple breaks in two.*

*when is the right time to stop a performance? when is that point? what if the time of ending is already arranged? what if it feels right to end, yet the camera person arrives, the room is full of new people? how to stop? adriana asks what time it is. gauging time with the time pieces of her audience.*

17h44

adriana :     stops  
                  stands  
                  stands  
                  breathes out  
                  bends over  
                  picks up blue paper from floor  
                  tears paper into pieces  
                  (looking at victoria stanton) "do you want to tear it up? the paper. do you  
                  want to tear it up?"

victoria :     "i would love to."

adriana :     hands pieces of paper to audience members  
                  (audience members tear paper up)

adriana :     sweeps torn-up paper into pile.

writer : *i think it must be weird to see someone writing while you are performing. seeing someone writing about what you are performing while you are performing.*

*so i stop.*