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ODTIS - UVID - PROJEKCIJA (GENSKO PROFILIRANJE, GENOTIPIZACIJA)

PRINT - INSIGHT - PROJECTION (GENETIC PROFILING, GENOTYPING)

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POLONA TRATNIK

PREVOD / TRANSLATED BY
EVA ERJAVEC

POVZETEK

Gensko profiliranje ali t. i. genski »prstni odtis« v družbi prek forenzične znanosti uživa veliko zaupanje in se ga, rečeno s peircovsko terminologijo, razume kot indeksikalni znak, tj. kot znak, ki je neposrednem vzročno-posledičnem odnosu s svojim objektom (telesom), kot njegov odtis, zato lahko služi kot neizpodbitni dokaz za njegov obstoj in kvaliteto. Sodobni umetnik, Paul Vanouse v svojem delu izpodjeda avtoriteto DNK profiliranja s tem, ko dekonstuiira genske znamke. Avtorica v prispevku v tej navezavi analizira dva nasprotujoča si režima, perspicere in proicere, s čimer pokaže, da genskega profiliranja ne moremo preprosto razumeti kot režim perspicere (režim prosojnosti, uvida v resnico), temveč prej kot režim proicere (režim projekcije), pri katerem je možna manipulabilnost znamka in celo njegovo konstruiranje. Konstruktivni potencial poudarja in celo presega golo komunikabilnost znamka ter odpira prostor za poljubno poseganje v kodifikacijo. Na ta način se genski znamek vzpostavlja kot simbol, s čimer koncepta pristnosti in verodostojnosti DNK profiliranja povsem izgubita smisel. Avtorica z vidika perspicere in proicere razmišlja tudi o postopku genotipizacije, ki se izkazuje kot sodobna, s tehnologijo podprta različica prerokovanja prihodnosti.

Ključne besede: GENOTIPIZACIJA, GENSKO PROFILIRANJE, GENETSKA UMETNOST, MEDIJ, DIFERENCIRANI ZNAMEK, PERSPICERE, PROICERE

ABSTRACT

Genetic profiling, or so-called genetic "finger printing", enjoys a high level of confidence in society through forensic science and is, using Peirce's terminology, understood as an indexical sign, that is, as a sign which is in direct causal-consequent relationship with its object (body), as its print, therefore it can serve as an indisputable evidence for its existence and quality. Contemporary artist Paul Vanouse in his work undermines the authority of DNA profiling by deconstructing genetic marks. The author in her paper in this connection analyses two contradicting regimes, perspicere and proicere, by which she shows that genetic profiling cannot simply be understood as a regime perspicere (the regime of transparency, the insight into the truth) but rather as a regime proicere (the regime of projection) where the manipulability of the mark and even constructing it is possible. The constructive potential stresses and even exceeds the sole communicability of the mark and opens space for arbitrary interference into codification. In such way, the genetic mark is reestablished as a symbol and by that the concept of genuineness and the credibility of DNA profiling completely lose their meaning. The author is, from the aspects of perspicere and proicere, also considering about the process of genotyping which turns out to be the contemporary, technologically supported version of clairvoyant fortunetelling.

Key words: GENOTYPING, GENETIC PROFILING, GENETIC ART, MEDIUM, DIFFERENTIATED MARK, PERSPICERE, PROICERE

Spela Petrič, CTCAG - recognition
Foto: Miha Fras



PRINT - INSIGHT - PROJECTION (GENETIC PROFILING, GENOTYPING)

POLONA TRATNIK

TRANSLATED BY EVA ERJAVEC

In the work of Paul Vanouse the continuous interest for genetics and DNA human profile is shown, which the artist tries to criticize. In the project *Relative Velocity Inscription Device* (2002) he uses DNA profiling through which he directs himself into the critique of racism. But although the project, so explains the author of Jamaican origin who comes from multi-ethnic family, puts under question the genotyping, which supports racial genetic differences, the sole critique here, above all, derives from the word-game "race" which in the installation becomes a competition between the family members in which winning is measured in velocity, namely by speed of plotting the profile in the gel of electrophoresis apparatus. With his projects Vanouse tries to systematically degrade the authority of DNA profiling. With the project *Latent Figure Protocol* (2007) he creates visual "images" by using known DNA patterns - with known visual outcomes which are formed in electrophoresis gel by DNA's of bacteria, the author puts together new visual compositions, which in simple digital visual design (with lightened and dark spots of this as-if-pixel surface), represent motives as: chicken and egg, the pirate sign of a skull with bones, ID, O1 and a symbol ©. "The representation", the final visual outcome, which on the basis of similarity represents something (for example a chicken) has here nothing in common with the sole material, that is, with biological samples, whose DNA profiles form the visual representation. Material here is used in the same principle as a painter is using colors, that is, for building the visual surface which is not motivated after its constituents, material elements, but after the optical similarity of the painted with the portrayed. If the picture was motivated by its material, then red wouldn't become the color of the precious cardinal's garment and painting would not be the art of trans-substantiation, but the painting made out of organic pigment would become a field of massacre, and to paint would mean to massacre; similar as today when organic pigments become rare and here opened question became almost superfluous because of "inauthentic origin" of materials, which are too many times mediated or chemically hybridized

for the demand for substantial transparency, Jan Fabre suggests perverse new guidelines of glamour (for *Heaven of Delight* he embellished the ceiling and other elements of Royal Palace in Brussels with 1,6 million bugs of unprotected species Buprestidae). The sculpture is closer to the principle of motivated handling with substance which is one of the foundations for closeness of statuary art and conceptualism, for the David is with Michelangelo *David-in-marble*, it is an image of David and it is marble, it is alive and always dead, cold, organic and inorganic, homely and alienated, it is simultaneity, not a deception; in ready-mades the origin doesn't transform, the artifact ready-made does not represent anything else but itself, it stands exactly and just instead of itself or *it is itself alone*, it is what it is supposed to represent – the removal of the principles of substitution and of referring and equalizing the sign with the referee, assure the conditions for instant transition from the art of transforming to the art of thought conceptualization (Duchamp's urinal, despite putting into force the demand for artistic artifactivity and standing as a candidate for the change into a fountain, has not changed its shape therefore, formally, it is still a urinal however in its essence not anymore – because of that what Duchamp's artistic gesture does conceptually the *trans-essentiation* of urinal into a work of art and into a fountain takes place; and not a *trans-formation* or *trans-substantiation* of something into something else than itself¹).

1 However here the signifier is not equalized with the signified, which would become the referee itself; the semiologic system is in this case more complicated – in the place of the signified “urinal” are interpolating at least two other signified: 1. the fountain as an architectonically designed and plastically decorated well and 2. the work of art. Besides, the functions of substitution and referring which are forming the conditions for semiologic order are here in indirect connection with materiality – materiality is subordinated to a greater totality which is thing-ness of the urinal, it is the ceramic in its extensiveness, in its form, and it is also a ceramics with a function. Therefore this *reality as thingness* also includes tool-being (as Heidegger analyzed in: Martin Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes”, 1935). But just the tool-being is in this case subverted as a urinal here in its essence is not a urinal anymore, therefore the major event of this work of art is the process of trans-essentiation, while the process of transformation that would mean the changing of the form is not taking place, as well as the process of trans-substantiation, which would mean that the changing of the substance is not happening either.

The original post-scriptum to the tradition of art of trans-substantiation, which in fact accompanies the whole painting of modern era, contributes contemporary advocacy of painting as alchemy, as with Sigmar Polke. The magical practice of trans-substantiation represents the peak of the tradition of transforming of materials, as well as the return to pre-beginning of painting, in the time before art, in Middle ages and even back into Greek Antiquity when *chymeia* denoted occupation with alloyed materials, technological blending of metallurgy and color techniques and into non-European cultures, especially Arab-Islamic golden age, when *al-kimyá* meant coexistence of experiment and treatise (theoretical discussions). At the vanishing point of European medieval program of alchemy, which was searching for a way from physical (sensual) experience towards the metaphysical gaze, the contemporary archeologist Siegfried Zielinski recognizes the idea of projection.² Zielinski is thinking about the concept of projection after Vilém Flusser who understood it as an activity of thinking and was connecting it with the gesture of a sketch. In the essence this is about a magical tradition to which we find its genealogical roots in pre-Socratic philosophy. *Projection* stands in opposite to *transparency*; Lat. *proicere* (Ger. Aufsicht), from Lat. *proicio* (Lat. pro – from, for, instead; Lat. iacio – to throw) is the opposite from Lat. *perspicere* (Ger. Durchsicht) from Lat. *perspicio* (to see through something and also: to perceive, to distinguish clearly). Between two scopic regimes in modernity the prior regime was *perspicere* – the regime of transparency or visibility, which supported the logic of penetrating view through surfaces and which was established by the beginners of modern sciences: Johann Kepler (*Dioptrics*), Galileo Galilei, René Descartes, Isaac Newton with his big natural sciences accomplishment of “physics of visibility” of the 17th century, that was very interested in the problem of transparency (seeing through), while catoptrics were mostly interested in *proicere* (Ger. Aufsicht – control, view from above) or in the optics of mirrors and reflections. *Perspicere*, seeing through

2 Siegfried Zielinski, *Entwerfen und Entbergen. Aspekte einer Genealogie der Projektion*, Köln: Walther König Verlag, 2010, p. 19.

In his project Vanouse thematises unreliability of the method with DNA analysis into which the forensic science is laying a great deal of hope and trust; but Vanouse's doubts about the method and the medium are not referring to the work of investigators and also not to the possibility of contamination of biological samples which can as just this case shows completely undermine the credibility of DNA profiling, which is in the end, Vanouse's intention.

Paul Vanouse, *Suspect Inversion Center*
Foto: Axel Heise
Courtesy: Schering Foundation



reality, as an enlightenment, was in science supported by the development of optical technologies, microscope and telescope, in the art by studying of the perspective, in researching of the body the regime was supported by anatomy as the technology of uncovering invisible membranes or also all the science of medicine originating from it, which is the “medicine of invisible visibility” where knowledge is developing by the principle of “the game of membranes”, as was established by Xavier Bichat in the 19th century and is still working in the contemporary medical discourse (a distinctive project that supports this principle is contemporary anatomical project *Visible Human Project*).³

Already the *Latent Figure Protocol* project opens the old semiologic question of the relationship of the sign towards its object and interpretant with which was dealing Charles Sanders Pierce in

the beginning of the 20th century and is even more directly re-questioned by the last Vanouse's project *Suspect Inversion Center* (2011). By it, as it is evaluated by the curator Jens Hauser and the author himself,⁴ the author has reached unique culmination of the critique of the DNA profiling, as he intertwined the method that he was developing before with the actual affair concerning O. J. Simpson.⁵ In his project Vanouse thematises unreliability of the method with

4 The exhibition of all three projects with joint title *Fingerprints ...* was opened to public between 27th of January and 26th of March in Schering Stiftung, Unter den Linden 32-34, Berlin.

5 5 Famous coloured athlete supposedly murdered his wife and her lover; the main proof was provided by the results of the DNA analysis of the biological samples which would put the murderer on the place of the crime. In the room where the double murder happened and in the hallway the investigators found biological material and its DNA analyses showed proof of identity with the biological sample of O. J. Simpson. However against the celebrity all the criminal charges were dropped when the group of his legal representatives showed a reasonable doubt that the material on the scene was present at the time of the crime, above all on the basis of finding that the same material contained an additional substance, as an expedient against the coagulation of blood, which was not present in the blood sample taken from the celebrity and that created doubt about when the sample was brought to the crime scene.

3 I have written a lot about this in my book *In vitro. Živo onstran telesa in umetnosti*, “Odprimo telo, da ohranimo življenje. K transživljenju in transtelesnosti” (*In Vitro. Live beyond the Body and Art*. Chapter “Open the Body to Preserve Life. To Trans-life and Trans-corporeality”), Ljubljana: Horizonti, 2010, pp. 104–148.

The world becomes a computer game, body is no longer materiality, substance, occupying space, weight, firmness, and transitoriness, *res extensa*, mortality and also not a unique subjectivity, but a file in a graphic program, infinite, manipulative, a photoshop drawing, optionally open, a hero with innumerable lives, divisible and reversely constructed non-materiality, the opposition of the entropy, the complete reversibility, multiplicity, avatar for anybody, identity Vanouse-Simpson, whoever and whatever, infinitely changeable something – a human or a worm, human-bacteria, pure evasiveness, escape, exodus of the owner from its own genetic profile – whose, what?

DNA analysis into which the forensic science is laying a great deal of hope and trust; but Vanouse's doubts about the method and the medium are not referring to the work of investigators and also not to the possibility of contamination of biological samples which can as just this case shows completely undermine the credibility of DNA profiling, which is in the end, Vanouse's intention. With chosen articles the author is referring to discovering un-credibility of DNA profiling in the famous case, but he himself is, especially in relation to referential case, carrying it out in an unexpected way. Namely, he carries out a unique deconstruction of the DNA sign: the genetic profile of O. J. Simpson, visualized on the electrophoresis gel, is being constructed from the artist's own biological material, during the time of exhibition, by the author and his assistant. For a laic observer this possibility is surprising as the genetic "fingerprints" are socially understood as body traces, as *indexical sign*, if we resort to Peirce terminology. Index has with an object which it *represents*, for which it stands for, crucial and direct relationship for it cannot exist without it as it is its cause, direct inducer, as fire is the inducer of a smoke or an injury is a cause of pain and a footprint the trace of a foot. In a similar fashion also DNA profile is supposed to be the trace of a body, its representative. Vanouse, as he and his curator claim, doesn't try to say that DNA method of analysis is not efficient and that it was abused in the case of O. J. Simpson, but also tries to point out the interposition between the body and the display of the DNA profile, to the *mediality* of biological material or DNA profile as a sign. Mediality is making space for manipulation and by that rebuts the function of proving the truth. As any medium this as well can be *deconstructed* and it can be shown how it was built and how it functions; we can also *construct* it from constituents of some other disintegrated whole, as if we would disintegrate a painting into colors and, use them for forming a new color composition by our desire. The artist is in this project most fascinated by cognition, that biological material and with it connected DNA profiling is so open to manipulation that in fact there is no difference between this or any other medium, especially digital one where we can extract the components and in-compose them again without damaging them during the manipulation or irreversibly changing them, and by doing so we can create any entreties and repeat the procedure over and over again. The world becomes a computer game, body is no longer materiality, substance, occupying space, weight, firmness, and transitoriness, *res extensa*, mortality and also not a unique subjectivity, but a file in a graphic program, infinite, manipulative, a photoshop drawing, optionally open, a hero with innumerable lives, divisible and reversely constructed non-materiality, the opposition of the entropy, the complete reversibility, multiplicity, avatar for anybody, identity Vanouse-Simpson, whoever and whatever, infinitely changeable something – a human or a worm, human-bacteria, pure evasion evasiveness escape, exodus of the owner from its own genetic profile – whose, what?

Shaking the indexical authority which ties the DNA profile as a sign tightly to its own object, to a human being who is being profiled, to whom biological material belonged, the sign moves to the other pole, where the connection with the object is not essential, the object might not even exist, important is the interpretation of a

sign which is based on convention, therefore here the *social codification* is important. On this pole the sign is becoming a *symbol*. The symbolism in DNA profiling is of interest to Vanouse, namely he connects it to racially motivated stereotypes and prejudices. “Controversial criminal cases show that today’s focus on genetic pool opens the door to racially motivated clichés and prejudgments that are mixed together with the suspects’ genetic profile” is written in the foreword of the exhibition *Fingerprints ...* If on one hand, in society is established absolute authority of DNA profiling which shows itself as true transparency, through which we can see the truth, that is the regime *perspicere par excellence*, on the other hand, if we believe Vanouse and Hauser, a diametrically opposite proves to be the case – that the bond of the DNA sign with the suspect is questionable, thus the space opens for proicere, above all for the projections of social ideologies. The *Suspect Inversion Center* so combines two scopic regimes, *perspicere* and *proicere*. As machines for visibility: microscope, telescope and tele-vision, also the genetic inscription helps us to see what is invisible to the naked eye, but is however already here; we can understand it as piercing the surface, penetration into inwardness, here even to the utmost inner essence, to the really substantial of the body. At the same time, the genetic inscription is a typical case of projection under which Zielinski understands machines for creating pictures (Ger. bild maschinen), as are camera obscura, laterna magica, diorama/panorama⁶, cinema.⁷ DNA visual display of the profile is namely a form of transfer, translation, projection on to other carrier, into other material. But the regime of projection does not mean just the technical transfer of the picture, but also the active transfer which is more than inter-vent-ion; it is “throwing onward”, is *constructing*; as drama is constructed and as magic works. Instead of the central perspective the proicere is a breaking point, is a rebound, a reflection. Proicere is therefore also a critique of the Cartesian perspectivalism, of a cold, geometer’s gaze over the world from the outside as at a network of relations between objects, such as it would be seen by a third party, witnessing my vision; in proicere I am at the null point or degree zero of spatiality, the space is starting from me, I live it from the inside, I am immersed in it,⁸ even more, I project into it. Vanouse as well doesn’t want to be the cold observer who through electrophoresis expedient in the genetic diagram sees a piece, even to the eye concealed essence, but here the uncovered truth of the body. His role is active, his intervention constructive, instead of *un-covering* as removing the veils, which are obstructing the object of observation, he uses the technique of creating, not exactly as the creation from nothing, as not even the principle of proicere is, but as a process of breaking and decomposing and then composing, joining, hybridization and even the alchemical technique

of trans-substantiation.

DNA profile as a sign which substitutes its object (body), represents it, stands for it, occurs as its print, this is why it restores the function of *proofability*. This sign is supposed to prove the presence of something that is absent in the sign. The absent is so supposed to become present. Re-present-ativity, *repeated* presentation means to show again, once more; the second time the presentation must be *identical* to the first, the mark must be *genuine* and *credible*. Such a mark expands in the dimension of truth/non-truth that is superfluous,⁹ as the semiotic level (formal, expressive, occurring) which is tying to the semantic level (the level of meaning, content, sense) is not possible to join with the outside-referential level (reality as thingness),¹⁰ as between them is a breakage, a crack, a *différence*. The essential predicate of a mark is iteration¹¹. Every mark is at the same moment when it is constructed, separated from its source and also from the reception, therefore it can never be identical with the source nor with itself, as it is always submitted to interpretation as Nietzsche’s cognition about un-existence of the facts and the necessary submission to interpretation is consolidated by post-structuralist philosophers and contemporary hermeneuticians.¹² In such a manner, the communication is essentially stressed considering

9 When he was thinking about utterances, the British philosopher of language John L. Austin (*How to do Things with Words?*, 1955) in the middle of the 50’s of the 20th century discovered, that the question about truth/non-truth, which was the Old School’s eternal question concerning the language, is meaningless, as the question is not if it really rains outside, when I say: “It rains outside” but why I said it and what have I achieved by that. For Austin the question shifts from constative statements to speech-acts. While Austin supports the cognition that the reality is produced with the sole semiotic level, in the medium and with it, therefore we cannot distinguish between “fictitious” and “actual” referring to the outside reality. After Austin, John R. Searle was explicitly devoted to the question of truth/non-truth by opening the question of the fictional discourse (“The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse”, 1975). If the fiction “pretends”, that to refer to some reality outside itself and so uses the fictional references, also in the “realistic” discourse we don’t see the reality that supposedly exists out there, but we always have to deal just with the one that in front of us. The examples of realistic and fictional discourse show that we actually always have in front of us just the reality of the very discourse and not also of the outside-discourse reality even though some discourse presents itself as credible in the relationship to the reality over there, as its proof, for which we have no guarantee what so ever, except the sole expressing of the medium itself. Thus there is no difference between them – the reality is always established on the level of the discourse.

10 Here it is necessary to mention the Saussure’s contribution (Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, edited posthumously, 1916) with the demand for the implementation of the concept, the signified, which he separated from the external-linguistics referee (the word tree therefore doesn’t refer to the tree in reality, but to the idea of a tree, the signifier therefore blends with the signified and not with the referee, which stands outside the language sign and therefore, to Saussure, is of no interest at all). Precisely on Saussure’s legacy, at the end of 1950’s and in the 1960’s, was the French semiotologist Roland Barthes building a semiotic analyses of medium, which was then in the 1970’s transferred to all kinds of discourses (especially to those connected to mass media) with Birmingham School for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Stuart Hall, *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, 1972–79) and with Media Studies derived from BSCS (John Fiske, *Television Culture*, 1987). Even in more contemporary philosophy of society the authors are fascinated by finding out about the dominance of proicere in places where *perspicere* is supposed to be operating – in 1996 Bourdieu says that “television, which claims to record reality, creates it instead.” (Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television*, New York: The New Press, 1998, p. 22). Otherwise, in the recent years increasingly popular Canadian theoretician Marshall McLuhan already in the middle of 1960’s (*Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964), concisely established: “The medium is the message”.

11 Here I am referring to Derrida who in his critique of Austin (1972) noted, that language or any mark is liable to iteration and that nothing is never identical with anything, not even with itself but there is always a *différence* at work (Jacques Derrida, “Signature Événement Contexte”, in: *Marges de la philosophie*, Paris: Minuit, 1972).

12 In hermeneutics, by recognitions of Hans-Georg Gadamer presented particularly in the work *Truth and Method* (Wahrheit und Methode, 1960).

6 Diorama is a technique of painting large format images on semi-transparent material, so that it is possible to create effects by changing the light; in this technique the day and night changes were most often used. Panorama is a large format of 360 degrees image, the painted surfaces were sometimes expanded with 3D-elements, later photographic. The observer was usually positioned in the centre so that immersion effect in the picture could be achieved. (Explained by S. Zielinski in his letter on 12th of March, 2011.)

7 Siegfried Zielinski, *Entwerfen und Entbergen. Aspekte einer Genealogie der Projektion*, p. 13.

8 I am referring to the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”, in: Galen A. Johnson (ed.), *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader. Philosophy and Painting*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993, p. 138.

Genotyping doesn't reveal the future, it conveys a probability which still only just allows both possibilities (even if a test shows that a person is not subjected to a disease, that doesn't mean that s/he cannot get ill), that were opened even before the test. Genotyping which would assure an insight, *perspicere* into the body and body-future is only fictitious *perspicere* – the truth remains unknowable, as it was before. The information which genotyping brings is no information whatsoever and it doesn't change anything.

the mark. It is not a coincidence that the question of a mark and mediality were discussed exactly on the background of development of digital technologies, in time of digital revolution, on the threshold of digital era. But still, the grounds for that debate were already prepared with the beginning of modernism – the question of a medium has engaged the early modernist's artists, symbolists, poets and painters in the second half of 19th century.¹³ After one hundred years the question of a medium is getting new dimensions with genetics, which strongly marked also the contemporary perception of the body and life, which corresponds to the concept of the body and life, according to the computer paradigm. On this basis has in the field of art restored orientation towards digital or electronic art, sometimes in connection with video art, also called the new media art or media art (this term is tautological, as art has always been related to the medium), which tersely said (as it is written in the motto of *Ars Electronica*, a festival for art, technology and society, founded in 1979) follows the consequences of digital revolution and which begins in the 1960's (in the Yugoslav area early interest for digital culture was shown by the *Nove tendence* (New tendencies) movement), ascended in the 1970's and reaches its peak in 1980's and 1990's of the 20th century (in the year 1988, *Transmediale* was established, first as a video-film festival, today one of the biggest festivals for art and digital culture). Environments which build on this direction have a distinctive interest for contemporaneity and future and even in their beginnings point to the meaning of media intervention and the contemporary phenomena of communication which soon takes them to the main interest in society and social questions (simultaneously with the fall of the Berlin wall, tactical media¹⁴

become actual and are today still strongly represented by *Transmediale*), bio-politics and also bio-technology.

Špela Petrič, a postgraduate student of biomedicine, who started to act in the field of art, by the project *CTCAG – recognition* (2011), thematizes ancient Greek imperative from the oracle in Delphi: *Recognise Yourself!*,¹⁵ along with possibilities of contemporary sciences about life, specifically genetics, which enables “facing with yourself” through recognition of personal genetic inscription and consequences which should supposedly derive from it. In such a manner, commercial company *GenePlanet* with which the artist collaborates, defends the individual's right to genetic testing and enables access to personal genotyping, as a promotion also for two visitors of the presentation. Artist's interest is oriented towards knowing etiology of the disease, more concrete into information about probability of her own possibility of having cancer, which happened to her mother. The project is shown to public as a performance taking place in a medical laboratory, where the visitors are not mere visitors, but can also be laboratory assistants who help the author, by instructions of medical staff, to dig up the “truth”. If the performers of the 1960's exposed the interest for the body as a medium of artistic research and experimenting with one's own body as a carrier of socially constructed meanings and personal expressions soon brought to the extremes, the interest for the body in performance art still remains. That is why we can understand the performance of Špela Petrič as an original contribution to the line of body art performances, represented by Carolee Schneemann, Gina Pane, Chris Burden, Marina Abramović with Ulay, and amongst more contemporary ones *Stelarc*, *Franko B*, conditionally *Orlan* (as her surgeries in fact do not happen live in front of the observes), *Ron Athey*, *Kira O'Reilly* and others, and especially carries on with the tradition of expressive body performances. Body performances emerged at the end of the 1960's and in the 1970's as a critique

13 Barthes the first recognition attributes to Mallarmé, who saw and foresaw the necessity of entering the sole language in all its extensiveness (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author”). The early theoretic explanation of modernism, which is almost a century later presented by the influential art critic Clement Greenberg, is given by the symbolist painter Maurice Denis in 1890, when he says: “Remember that a picture, before being a battle horse, a nude, an anecdote or whatnot, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order.”

14 I have presented them in: Polona Tratnik, *Transumetnost. Kultura in umetnost v sodobnih globalnih pogojih*, “Ne plavati s tokom: sodobne taktike odpornosti” (*Trans-art. The Culture and Art in Contemporary Global Conditions*. Chapter: “Not to Swim with the Flow: The Contemporary Tactics of Resistance”), Ljubljana:

Pedagogical Institute, 2010, pp. 99–104. <<http://www.pei.si/Sifranti/StaticPage.aspx?id=78>>, 20. 2. 2011.

15 The original translation into English language is “Know Yourself”, but due to the word play of the author, with words recognize and -cognize, I decided to use the verb recognize instead of the verb know. Translator's note.

of the representational theatre, of the Cartesian world and with an intent to test the boundaries of endurance of the body as a medium and of endurance of the body by exposing it to pain and risk.¹⁶ Performances are, according to their predicate, oriented against representation and even though in some cases the body appears as a representative of the social body, for example gender (this is specifically present in the feminist engagements), the sole representation is deconstructed namely *a-live*, with which the *facticity* is ensured. When Austin opposed the classical utterance (constative) which announces facts and is therefore either real or unreal, he stressed the utterance which means action. He imposed the concept of performative, which means said-done or which happens when to say something means to do something, or when we do something so that we utter it and by uttering it. By that he shifted the concept of the medium from reporting to communication, from representation, *perspicere* to *proicere*, for performative means *to do* something by uttering it. The performative is not a report, a transparent window through which we gaze over on the truth that is distant, separated, differentiated (spatially and/or temporally) but it is a construction, action, act, facticity. If the dimension truth/non-truth is connected with locution, that is with locutional significance (sense and reference), then illocution, that is illocutional force, is connected to the dimension of felicitous/infelicitous. In the walk on the Wall of China, performed by Abramović-Ulay, their partnership path, harmony and separation, even their divorce, may be represented, but all of that is also a fact, with their separated and synchronous walk on the Wall, and above all their meeting and parting is much more than just acted, represented – it is truly a *facticity*. The partners have transferred their lives into the performance and only through it they achieved the act of their divorce. The effect of a farewell which takes place on the Wall is for their lives actual, the reality cuts into the artistic medium or vice versa – “*the medium cuts into reality*” – , just as Burden’s shot in the arm leaves an indisputable wound on his body and Orlan is from the operation onwards physically transformed. Therefore performance is no longer a medium as its function is no mediation, transmission, representation, it is an *act*; reality is nowhere beyond (in different place or different time), it is always already here and because of that no artistic gesture is fictitious, representational but of life, real. The performance abolishes the difference between the medium and the non-discursive reality; the essence is not in the constructing of reality by the sole discourse, since we cannot reach over and attain the truth beyond, but the discourse itself has already expanded and nothing anymore exists outside of it; the point is now in the force, change, act which as its effect has a per-locution but for all participants – it is not just that *perspicere* became blurred and visible (as a painting in modernism) but the reality, thingness, ideology and future themselves were hit, cut into. We are in the *proicere* regime.

If at Vanouse, the critique of DNA profile as a differentiated mark, as a *perspicere* regime, is performed, Petrič thematizes the divination from the gene, its *proicere* potential. In her performance she in

live, in front of the witnesses, becomes acquainted with her own genetic predisposition to cancer. Thereafter the artist knows if there is a possibility of her getting cancer and if there is, how big is the chance of her getting it. But what does the answer to this question, no matter what it is, tell? If the outcome allows the probability of getting ill the supposed disease will belong in the percentage of probability and the possible non-disease in the remaining percentage. If the outcome will show no genetic probability, something else may cause the disease. “Recognition” therefore changes nothing in knowing. The disease still shows itself as a deposed threat in the future, which *CTCAG – recognition* – pictures as a possible, underlying truth which could be here and now uncovered by genetic technology. The technology of genotyping which is also used in the project confirms the concept the medicine of the “visible invisibility”, which uncovers membranes, that is in this case the uncovering of the gene as the original file – the process of decoding of one’s own body is taking place which means reading the causes for the formation of facticity, decoding of the genotype in order to understand phenotype. In this, Petrič doesn’t even criticize the principle of probability with which the natural sciences operate and at the same time argues that it is engaging with ensuring the truth, nor does she criticize the principle of causality upon which the medical discourse is based. Precisely in the combination of these two principles lies the genotyping promise, but by which the per-locution effect is not much different as in clairvoyant prophecies. Genotyping doesn’t reveal the future, it conveys a probability which still only just allows both possibilities (even if a test shows that a person is not subjected to a disease, that doesn’t mean that he/she cannot get ill), that were opened even before the test. Genotyping which would assure an insight, *perspicere* into the body and body-future is only fictitious *perspicere* – the truth remains unknowable, as it was before. The information which genotyping brings is no information whatsoever and it doesn’t change anything. Therefore also the performance carried out by Petrič is no performance. The performer comes from the event unharmed, “recognition”, that the event brought is no *recognition*, is not a revelation of essential self, but the future stays opened as it was before (even though the sole performance almost doesn’t transmit this, but it just informs the visitors about the results of genotyping). Precisely this undermines the authority of the natural sciences which is supposed to be about assuring solid evidence, indisputable facts, and the truth. It turns out to be a speculative practice that in genotyping is even no different as a clairvoyant fortunetelling. ...

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16 How this criticism is performed is well presented by Maja Murnik in “Body art prakse: nekaj misli” (Body Art Practices: Some Thoughts), in: Polona Tratnik (ed.), *Art: Resistance, Subversion, Madness*, Koper: Monitor ZSA, Annales, 2009, pp. 175–184.