

New York, May 2014

Dear Ginger,

When does the performance end and when does it begin? Where is the limit between stage and backstage? We would like to share some further thoughts about these questions which we have been discussing a lot, and which we tried to address in the different performances we developed with you in No_Future/No_Past.

Isabelle Alfonsi just made some helpful comments on the notion of the backstage. She wrote: "Without any audience, beyond representation, the backstage--a witness to the transformation of musicians and actors from the city to the stage, and back again--is a space of freedom and resistance where the theatre's fourth wall disappears and where the well-oiled mechanics of the show do not apply. The public comes to meet the artists, and the hierarchy implied by the show slowly dwindles. One can be eccentric with no goal, have no necessity to please the spectator. The backstage can thus be a place of an invention of one's self, an image of the margin as a chosen place for an artistic position."(1)

What happens when the performance takes place in this very margin? As you know, in No Future/No Past, we referenced Ronald Tavel's play The_Life_of_Juanita_Castro (1965), because we liked the fact that the performers were asked to repeat the lines given by an "onstage director," who is also visible in the film. As Tavel wrote, "There was no more intention to have the participants 'act' as acting normally is understood. . . . Everything works for The_Life_of_Juanita_Castro. Including the unforeseen, the mistakes, the last minute or fortuitous error, and it is that, no more, no less."(2) When we decided not to rehearse the film before shooting it, we also wanted to be open to all the unexpected moments of a performance, and to keep it insecure and fragile. We liked that the repetition allowed for a line to be said twice, not only in different voice tones, with mistakes, but also with different accents and different degrees of seriousness or irony. It allowed for bad acting, or for not acting at all. It underlined the unrehearsed, or the process of rehearsing for a future performance.

Unlike Tavel, we didn't want to appear as "onstage directors" ourselves, giving commands and lines to the actors, but preferred to hire the performer Werner Hirsch for this task. Ginger, when you re-speak his lines, something very particular happens, because you add seriousness and lightness to the performance at the same time, embodying the marvelous make-up and clothes of the punk muse and inspirer Jordan. You wear her outfit, but you are addressed by the name of Darby Crash, the gay singer of the band Germs, who committed suicide in 1980 at the age of 22. Your quite specific style of speech produces a kind of "backstage-performance" that we immediately loved. The camera frame also supports this. We were interested in Andy Warhol's idea of shooting the scene not from the front but from the side, so that the performers look at an invisible camera (or audience) in front of them. This means that the performance happens for an audience that has been displaced (the camera made the audience move backstage as well!), and this produces the effect that you and the other performers often move

outside of the frame and that the main parts of the performance remain invisible. It reminded us of the situation when one helps out at the concert of a friend's band from backstage. You must of course be very familiar with this situation, as you were on tour quite a lot with your band Men. Do you remember being neither on stage nor in the audience, but looking from the side, and having this particular position where you can see the performers as long as they are not moving to the front too much?

This 'marginal' or heterotopic space might be the space that affirms difference, and, as Foucault described heterotopias, a space where we arrive at a sort of "absolute break . . . with traditional time"(3): "no future," as the punk-movement uttered.

Yours in fond affection,
Pauline and Renate

(1) Isabelle Alfonsi, invitation to "Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz: Journal Notes from Backstage" at Marcelle Alix, Paris, 2014.

(2) See: Ronald Tavel, "The Life of Juanita Castro: A One Act Play," http://www.ronaldtavel.com/documents/the_life_of_juanita_castro.

(3) Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias" (1986), diacritics 16, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 25