

**A Fictional Choreographic Encounter  
within a Fictional Choreographic  
Encounter: Hauer with Rainer**

Adeena Mey

It might be said that Hauer’s practice rests on the presupposition that choreography is everywhere and hence consists in identifying choreographic situations where there are seemingly none. Yet her work does not suggest that everything is choreographed; it rather looks at the condition under which choreography might emerge. If many dancers and choreographers have asked what might constitute dance, a choreographed movement, or movement itself, Hauer, instead, might lean towards and shift that question to “when is there choreography”?

This questioning of the possibility of movement and performance, in Hauer’s case, takes place within the field of the visual arts, through the use of an array of mediums ranging from writing, video, photography, and graphic work, most of which stage or are based on performances, constellated around what she calls “choreographic encounters”. If this is not formalised or explicitly thematised in her work, one such encounter might be with Yvonne Rainer—a highly important figure for Hauer’s work—and the secularising and objectifying of dance<sup>1</sup> that she initiated: an encounter in the form of choreographic movement, bringing Hauer close to Rainer.

In 1965, Rainer wrote: “NO to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make-believe no to the glamour and transcendence of the star image no to the heroic no to the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of performer or spectator no to style no to camp no to seduction of spectator by the wives of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved.”<sup>2</sup> From her early days with the Judson Dance Theatre and her engagement with Minimalism to her

turn to filmmaking with *Lives of performers* (1972)—marking the integration of narrative elements in her work—a certain radical agnosticism runs through Rainer’s work. As such, her oeuvre appears to produce a catalogue of the body’s skills and possibilities, while at the same time seeming to test that body against its social and political conditions. Thereby Rainer conducts a quasi-physiological analysis of its somatic qualities and functions, in their entanglement within linguistic and communication systems.

In this regard, we may wonder about the nature of the encounter between Hauer and Rainer and to what extent we might be able to make sense of it. Do Rainer’s strategies and attitudes towards the body, the stripping bare of dance from all traces of the ego and conventions, constitute a model to think about Hauer’s practice? Let us turn to two video works by Hauer: *Semaphore Dance* (2014) and *speech is to be looked at* (2015). The first also exists as a graphic work (*Semaphore Dance*, 2015), which rendered on photographic paper spatialises parts of the performance text of its video equivalent: *speech is to be looked at*—the second video work. Hence, all three pieces operate through such dynamics of intertextuality—the content of one work reproduced in another by way of a game of associations—and intermediality, as well as through a process of translation that produces its own system of equivalence: one piece existing as moving-image work and in printed matter. Etymologically “semaphore”—from *sema* and *phoros*—means “bearer of sign or signal”; Hauer thus “anatomises the game of communication”.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, her body acts as the very physical bearer of these signs, “dancing” them into a sentence,



**Andreas Heller**

*Objects*, 2015  
HD-Video, colour, 10 min

(...) This object is the finial of the hand rail that is alongside the trail. It’s made of cast iron. What struck me most is how attentive-ly this kind of finials were designed. It is an end piece, a knob, as well as a stylized head. Actually it has a very universal shape. I cast the finial in silicone. I now use the negative form during the casting process to collect surplus plaster, as not to waste anything. As a result I have duplicated the end piece and produced classic plaster copies *en passant*. They remind me of the pawn in the game of chess.

attesting to the fact that language is never disembodied but is a technology, inscribed in material apparatuses.

While *Semaphore Dance* uses semaphore language, in *speech is to be looked at* Hauer produces her own idiosyncratic visual dialect. Still photographs show plates of canvas bearing graphic depictions of a skull, a pipe, an egg, or a chicken, as well as sign-language letters. The title of the piece unfolds as the visual sequence nears completion. While each plate appears in a linear order, the combination of sign language and pictures emphasises the former’s pictoriality, with language being redefined as a visual question. This very structured mode of display is contrasted by Hauer’s feet holding the plates, suggesting that this well-ordered scene hides an off-screen situation in which the artist performs an improbable contorted dance.

In writing about aesthetics, anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan has noted that signs and symbols result from a gradual process of “intellectualization of sensations”. A process which “has stripped the real forms of their contents and kept only the signs. Writing comes after visual aesthetics, its images being purely intellectual and its symbol completely interiorized”.<sup>4</sup> From this perspective, it could be said that Hauer’s constellations of linguistic, bodily, and material objects contest and reorder this relationship between sign, symbol, writing, and aesthetics, extracting it from its historicity. This is not without reminding us of Rainer pondering on the formation of the subject through language: “She knows that thought is not something privileged, autonomous, origina-tive, and that the formulation ‘Cogito ergo sum’ is, to say the least, inaccurate. ... Yet all the same magical, seductive, narrative properties of ‘Yes I was talking ...’ draw her with an inevitability that makes her slightly dizzy. She stands trembling between fascination and skepticism. She moves obstinately between the two.”<sup>5</sup>

Moving between the two poles of language, concrete and expressive, between sign and object, might be what defines the “common notion” shared by both Hauer and Rainer, “common to all minds [...] to the extent that they are first the idea of something which is common to all bodies”.<sup>6</sup>

**What Is a Character Capable Of?**  
Margit Neuhold

Some figures developed over centuries have been shaped by history, legends, incidents, and all other kinds of records. The prizewinners and the losers are two possible ends, yet within societal structures there are many more positions to choose from. A figure which has been around since the middle ages—always standing a bit outside of society and pointing towards shortcomings—is called a “cuckoo”. Having arrived in the twenty-first century, the cuckoo hides in the everyday world and conveys myriads of ideas drawn from different arenas: art fairs, protests, reality shows, pilgrimages to sport events, stand-up comedy, but also the internet and social media—these intangible spheres and stages where such great parts of our lives become increasingly mediated. The cuckoo’s behaviour is geared to mobilise attention, and its ephemeral appearance is to be considered politically subversive—both visually and performatively. Yet the cuckoo seems also categorically condemned to the domain of foolishness, absurdity, insanity, and nonsense. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary states for the word “cuckoo”, besides mentioning the bird, the definition “a silly or slightly crackbrained person”, and the Oxford Dictionary quotes the informal definition of cuckoo as being “a mad person”. However, the approach here should be a slightly different one, turning away from categories and definitions, but rather orientated towards processes in which the cuckoo is entangled. What acts do such characters perform? Or to put it differently: Where do we locate someone knocking on the table, waving, shouting: Cuckoo!

Looking back at the art-historical canon, the beginning of the twentieth century and its sociopolitical conditions provided an excellent framework for such intentions. Modernity with its faith towards technological progress, rationalisation, and professionalisation, its questioning of traditions and putting forward of the individual, shaped the matrix for the emergence of the avant-garde. Protagonists in their own rights are to be found within all of the emerging –ism movements: Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism, Abstractionism ... There are numerous powerful examples of radicalism against political conditions and aesthetic norms, yet the avant-garde’s intentions are to be considered more than a public outcry. Their activities could even be thought of as gestures of slipping away from the so-called authorities unfolding the potentiality of art: to point towards continued and hardened conditions, which themselves created the framework for the arts. Times have indeed changed, but have the conditions changed as well?

In her workgroup *Cuckoo* (2012–15), Veronika Hauer addresses such questions with different means and investigates the modes of communication between the body, with its poses on different stages always keeping a spectator’s presence in mind. Her text-image poster work *Cuckoo#1* (2012) builds on a photo of a group of moresca dancers, two wooden figures, caught in unusual dancing postures and dressed in splendid red-golden-green costumes. In correspondence with the snapshot stands a photo of two children with black elastic therapeutic tape, wearing leggings and white shirts, who seem to mirror the figurines’ poses. Yet as the text goes along, the reader—who can, by contemplating the poster, choose to fall into the position of the beholder—grasps an idea of the precariousness of the working conditions, of a non-standard (jester) employment. The text sketches a scene of a jester company in precarious late-neoliberal times, which loses their female front figure because



she accepts the offer of a city government to become the court jester as part of a sustainability programme. In the business world, “artistic creativity” and its related networks and working structures have become a miracle drug very much welcomed by city developers and city marketing managers for regeneration towards a “creative district”. Inherent to the figures of the moresca dancers is a potential, due to their folk characters, which serves such marketing strategies. Here, the ambiguous position of the figures comes into play: being within the centre of the spectacle but at the same time standing outside the crowd since having a job to fulfil.

Three white figurines sprayed in different shades of white are subsumed under the title *Cuckoo#3* (2015). Each figure takes up a very particular pose frozen from a moving choreography, which could have originated in everyday movement, professional performers’ poses, and in traditional depictions of the cuckoo. Moulding these precise moments into a figurine made from clay translates the cuckoo back into a commodity appreciated by its burgeoning art scene—from which performance art tried to escape. By its very nature, performance is ephemeral and was meant to slip through the art world’s complexities of displaying, collecting, preserving, and explaining materials. Yet the figurines are even rounded off towards a conceptual sculpture by their perfectly balanced plinth, serving the museum’s needs. Moreover, the plinth gives each figurine a polished platform, inviting the limelight to be ideally reflected. Herewith the work is very light-footed—taking the “living sculpture” in reverse—and enters the discourse on institutional critique: museums that were once the target of artists’ performative protests have now established performance art departments which fully embrace “the live” as an artistic medium.

The element of the stage was already introduced in the poster work *Cuckoo#2* (2013) placarded outside the fluc, a Viennese club located at the traffic hub Praterstern. Photographed in an artist’s studio and standing on one leg, the other leg angled holding her knee, Veronika Hauer freakily smirks out of the poster addressing the spectator directly. The cuckoo takes centre stage in this prominent public place, also in the accompanying header titled “Cuckoo. A jester always needs a stage”: the figure left the atelier to occupy the billboard—this commoditised space which plasters exurbs and suburbia—and to irritate the audience for a moment: travellers, passers-by, party guests .... The text goes on: “She does not exist outside her performance. Her humour is anarchic, dedicated only to an end in itself. A jester is amoral. Her pose always on the go.” It becomes evident here that the staged photograph does not embody an autobiographical approach, yet that taking on a jester identity is part of Hauer’s artistic strategy. The scrutiny of a variety of fleeting “cuckooish” appearances, correlating the body and its identity, not caring about right or wrong, as well as analytical investigations of the space between ephemeral and capitalist production, are put forward in this consistent group of works. What is a character capable of? This is a question that a jester never fails to ask.

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Dr. Guy Cools is a dance dramaturg and has been the past years Associate Professor for dance studies at the research institute Arts in Society of the Fontys School of Fine and Performing Arts in Tilburg, Holland and at Ghent University, where he finished a practice based PhD on the relationship between dance and writing. Having previously worked as dance critic, artistic programmer and policy maker for dance in Flanders, he is now dedicating himself to production dramaturgy, contributing to work by choreographers all over Europe and Canada. Most recent publications include the *Body:Language* series (published by Sadler’s Wells, London) and *The Ethics of Art: ecological turns in the performing arts*, co-edited with Pascal Gielen (published by Valiz, Amsterdam). www.rewritingdistance.com

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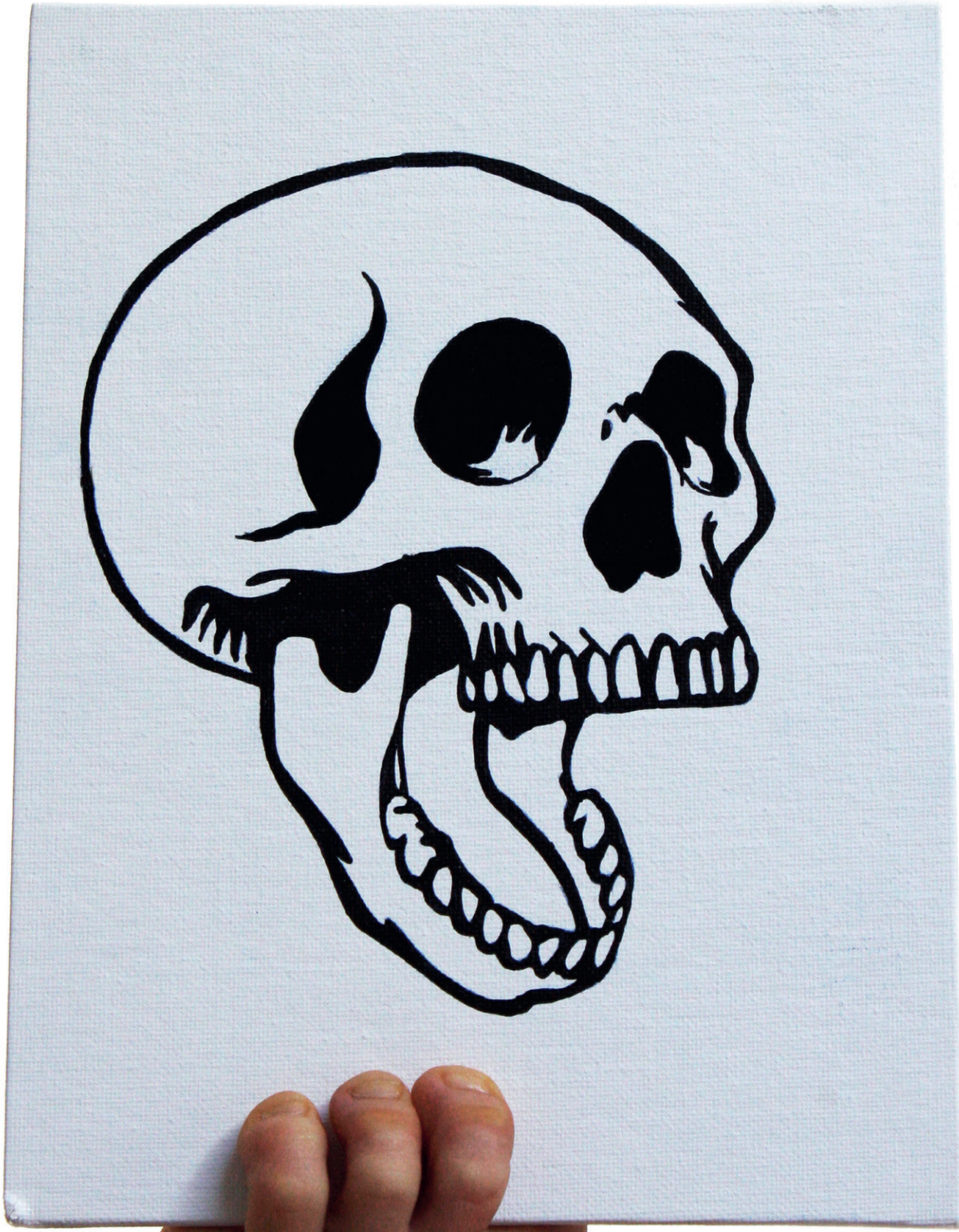
*blueprints for a blackout*, Austrian cultural forum, London 2009; *0°*, Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Studio, Graz 2008. www.andreasheller.at

Barbara Kapusta lives and works in Vienna. Her work is concerned with verbal and non-verbal language and questions communication between persons and things. She works with photography, video and writes poetry. She published her writing in *Jenni Tischer*, *Pin*, Edited by Manuela Ammer, 2014, English/German, Sternberg Press. Her work has been shown at, among others: mumok Vienna, 2015; Kunsthalle Wien, 2015; Kunstraum Niederösterreich, 2015; Museum der Moderne Salzburg, 2014; Galerija Vartai, Vilnius, 2014; The Banff Center, Alberta, 2013; 21er Haus, Vienna, 2013. www.barbarakapusta.net

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austrian cultural forum<sup>™</sup> fig-2 bmtuk  
FORUM STADTPARK



3 As rightly put by Natalie Ferris.

4 André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech* (Cambridge MA, and London: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 271–73.

5 Yvonne Rainer, “Looking Myself in the Mouth”, *October* 17 (Summer 1981), pp. 65–66.

6 Gilles Deleuze, “Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza’s Concept of Affect”, *Cours de Vincennes*, 24 January 1978, [http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/deleuze\\_spinoza\\_affect.pdf](http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/deleuze_spinoza_affect.pdf) (accessed August 2015).

Dear Veronika,

In answer to your invitation to participate in a special printed issue of *Nowiswere* on the occasion of your exhibition as part of fig. 2 at the ICA, I like to propose to you to engage in a 'correspondence'. As you know from my previous contribution to *Nowiswere*, a dialogical practice is at the core of my own creative practice as a dance dramaturge and I am more and more convinced that practicing our dialogical skills is essential to reconnect with the larger environment we are part of in order to tune in and to develop ourselves.

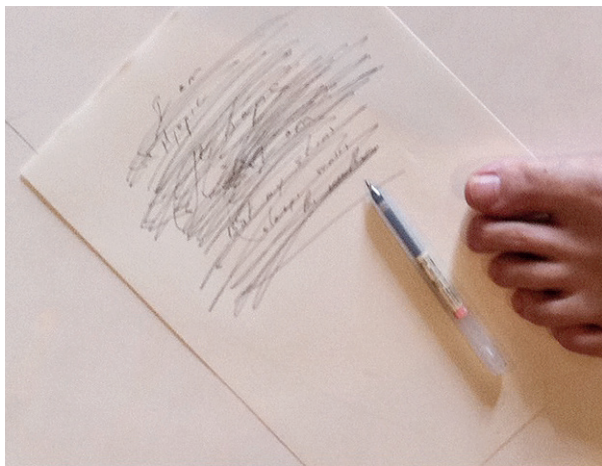
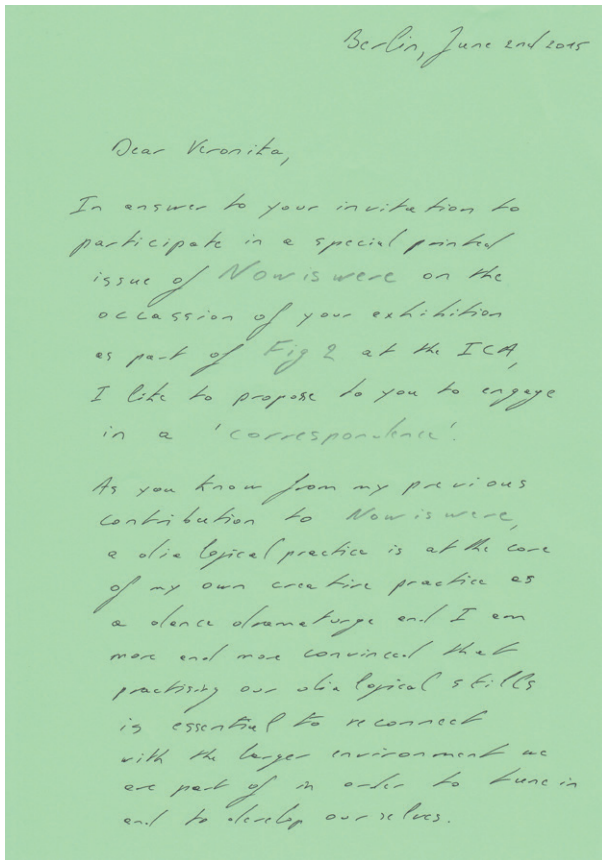
Letter writing is one particular form of dialogue. In *Making, Anthropology, Archeology, Art and Architecture*, the Scottish anthropologist Tim Ingold uses 'correspondence' as an alternative for 'dialogue'. (...) "The lines of correspondence are lines of feeling, of sentence, evinced not – or not only – in the choice of words but in the manual gesture of writing and their traces on the page. To read a letter is not just to read about one's respondent, but to read with him or her. It is as though the writer was speaking from the page, and you – the reader were there listening." (Ingold 2013, p. 105) I like to write letters by hand because it slows me down and it establishes an intimacy between the two of us. It might take you an effort to read me.

We originally met at the exhibition you curated at Forum Stadtpark Graz, *A Buddy for A Text* – on the performance of text and speech in visual arts, choreography and dance – to which you invited a number of artists/friends, whom we admire and share, amongst others Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment and my wife, Stephanie Cumming. This exhibition revealed our shared interest in finding ways to embody language, in particular written language. Your video, *speech is to be looked at*, which builds further on *Semaphore Dance*, reminds me of some of my own experiments to physicalize and visualize language; to reconnect the writing to drawing and to reconnect the hand-eye combination – which I am now doing as well, copying as a scribe part of this letter. (...) Your pictograms and my performance practice *Rewriting Distance* are both attempts to rewrite and to reconnect language with an embodied and sensorial experience. To conclude, I include a couple of writings/drawings made inside *Rewriting Distance* and maybe they inspire you to dialogue with. Looking forward to our 'correspondence'.

Warm greetings,  
Guy

PS: Copying part of a text by hand, is also a way to understand and to know if the writing is embodied. Your hand will know.

Berlin, June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015



Dear Veronika,

I found your letter in the mail box when I came home from a short trip to Prague. I read it once before going to bed and a second time this morning before replying. I was touched by the risk you took and the concentration it requires to write the letter directly in one gestural movement including its hesitations and mistakes, so I decide to do the same instead of copying my first draft as I did last time. (...) The first thing which struck me in your letter is the heightened sense of time. The time it takes to write and read. But also the pauses in between the letters or the words.

It was my first yoga teacher, Eric Gomes, who made me aware of the importance of the pauses in between the exercises where the body continues to absorb and transform the information it receives. This has also been one of the most rewarding experiences in the *Repeating/Rewriting Distance* practice I developed with Lin Snelling over more than 10 years. We mostly revisit/ repeat it only a couple of times every year, often during summer when we both have more time. And each time it surprises us that we not only recognize immediately where we left it the last time but also seem to have jumped to a next level of understanding in the time that has passed in between: the pause. I like the pauses between sending and receiving a letter. To give time for our exchange to travel physically and the effort it takes from us and other people involved. (...)

I also want to explore today a bit more our shared fascination with 'manual gestures' as a way to embody language and I will start practicing – copying some of the drawings you sent me of *Music & Movement are my friend*. (...) I didn't attempt an exact copy, but even this approximation made me realize how each of us has a unique way to connect the letters and uses very different distances between them. (...)

There was a sudden pause in both my writing and reflection as I was caught by the visual composition that had formed itself organically on the wooden desk I am sitting at, including the books, your letter and my letters and on the wall some of Anna's drawings, whose apartment I rent. I took a photo – interrupting my writing – which I will send you again by email. (...)

I took a very long pause of a day (...) This time the pause seemed to have interrupted the flow and I look for a starting point to reconnect. (...) It feels I need another pause first: to take a shower, to practice my yoganidra, to find the breath and the right gesture to conclude this letter. (...) During the yoganidra I have an insight to finish this letter with my drawings of the creative process. (...)

I have a sense today of being temporarily lost in our 'correspondence' but I trust you will pick up the thread and weave it together with your labyrinth. (...) The signs we create are invitations to be interpreted. (Charles Sanders Peirce), (which you misread as 'interrupted' and which makes a lot of sense too)

I am looking forward to reading you again.  
Guy

Berlin, June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015, 7.30am



**Veronika Hauer: Who is not a fool?**

By Natalie Ferris

1) Ludwig Wittgenstein always sat in the front row of the cinema. Frequently observed to lose himself at screenings of American films, he expressed a dislike for the intrusive manoeuvres of the camera in European film. It was the calculated movements of Fred Astaire's feet that held him in greatest thrall, submitting to the 'showerbath' of tap, song and high spirits. In the sharp, expressive taps or slow, studied turns, commanding the entire field of vision, Astaire was in conversation with Wittgenstein.

2) What, we may ask, is the nature of a conversation? Let us consider this question by asking, first, another question: what forms of communication permit a conversation?

3) With (1) and (2) in mind, let us consider gesture, graphics, sound, all emitting their own peculiar resonances. Conversations as conducted by the artist Veronika Hauer are not merely from body to body, mind to mind, but take place on placards, motioned in figurines, spoken through flags. She is at the margins of a perceivable discourse.

4) We could say that Hauer is a performer. That would be to suggest that she presents a form of entertainment to an audience. We could say that Hauer is a choreographer. That would be to say that she composes sequences of steps and movements to convey a particular thought, scenario or emotion. I may acknowledge either option, or both, but that would be to sidestep her authorship of narratives, poetic statements and parodic one-liners, to ignore her manipulation of graphic or visual systems of communication, to disregard her fascination for the phenomenal experience of performers and viewers.

5) Astaire had a deceptive light-footedness. Impish in his compulsion to move, he was nevertheless meticulous in his compliance with countless sequences of exacting steps.

6) In *Semaphore Dance* (2014) Hauer anatomises the game of communication. Semaphore is by definition a telegraphy system that delivers messages from a distance by means of visual signals, with hand-held flags, paddles, rods, discs or gloved hands. It is a system typically used at sea. The viewer need not be literate; the message is here deciphered – letter by letter – by an invisible narrator. As is made apparent, each letter corresponds to a particular movement of the arms, a distinct positioning of the large white flags at either side of the body. The assembly of movements signify letters, which build to form words. The aggregate of words forms a poetic scene:

*She runs forward and returns in a curve  
Her tail wagging dance recurs  
This is her message  
I am an insect not an animal  
My body conquers speech  
Speech is to be looked at*

*We walk barefoot over carpets, backgrounds, islands, shipwrecks  
Three women  
Click Click*

7) Now consider this explanation: the dance of the honey-bee is known to impart to other bees information about the direction and distance to sources of nectar and pollen. The waggle is a device in the shape of a figure eight, by which the bee's movements point the way in accordance with the height of the sun in the sky.

8) In *The Blue and Brown Books* Wittgenstein considered language acquisition 'strictly analogous' to animal training.

9) If we try to decide whether Hauer is a) guided by physical signs, b) guided by visual signs or c) guided by vocal signs, we will be forced to concede that she is captivated by all three. This forms a complex of signals, apparitions and allusions to be relayed between artist and viewer.

10) If we return for a moment to (6), Hauer's body is static, except for the raising and lowering of arms.

11) Here one might point their finger at the fool. Hauer's jesters are of two types: 'natural or artificial fools', as encountered in *Cuckoo*. They are either blessed with the ability to entertain, or blighted by a humorous physical affectation. They carry props, mirrors, bells and clubs, and hopes of civic rights. The audience of *Cuckoo* is unpredictable, both agitated and impassive, while the jesters wheel around their subjects in a blithe dance. The *Cuckoo* figures remain fixed in vague postures, gesticulating to one another in their own performing circuit.

12) In *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein describes a language-game in which a person A gives commands to a person B in a series of dots and dashes. B understands these written signs as a figure in dancing with a particular step, the dot a hop and the dash a tap. There is a limited range: the compass of the game is in the combination of its marks. For Wittgenstein, play is a fundamental aspect of language acquisition. For Hauer, light-footed with language, play itself can be an act of mimicry.

13) Hauer articulates the absurdity of meaning, spelling out her enigmatic lines of verse. There is also silence. The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* famously ends with the claim that what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence. Hauer's silence is never still, presenting forms of visual resistance that challenge the integrity of the page, space or her own body.

14) I should like to make it plain: Fred Astaire held court as something of a jester when backstage. He traded wisecracks, fooled around with his co-star Ginger Rogers and would play practical jokes on crew members.

15) Hauer's *speech is to be looked at* (2015) satirises a limited range. Each of her canvas plates, foisted up by her foot, symbolise either a letter or a concept. The letters are portrayed by images of hands signing the alphabet of international sign language, although this equation is swiftly disrupted by the inclusion of images that have taken on greater import than that registered by the eye. We recognise a pipe, but we also recognise the stylisation of the pipe, the specific rendering of a very particular pipe, and all of the art historical associations that preclude its depiction. This is not what it claims to be. The cards are at an angle.

16) 'Is this foot my foot?' 411. (2) *Philosophical Investigations*.

17) Wittgenstein performs an act of revelation: words are not defined by reference to the objects they identify, nor by the mental processes one may associate with them, but by how they are put to use.

18) My aim is, claimed Wittgenstein, 'to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense'. Hauer performs something quite different, passing through systems of manifest iconography to subvert the insistence of her own body.

19) This is her message.

Dear Guy,

Thank you for your first letter which I received last week. When Adeena Mey, Margit Neuhold and I first spoke about printing an issue of *Nowiswere* in relation and on the occasion of my show at fig - 2 at the ICA this August, I immediately thought of inviting you to talk about and in accordance with my art practice. Your essay in *Nowiswere* 14 on the art of listening and the *Body-Language* talks influenced both my work as an artist and as a teacher. Your argumentation ensured me that listening was as important a part of a dialogical practice as speaking – yet to 'only' listen to the other often remained in the realm of the unnoticed, the calm and maybe unimportant, passive response to speech. Yet the question remains: what makes a dialogue? To me there are many different forms of dialogical practice: involving two persons, a dialogue can be held in its most obvious appearance as a fluid conversation that ends with a full stop. But a dialogue can also be interrupted and strengthened by times of silences, yet picked up again where our words last faded to now focus on a present point of attention. Perceived from such a perspective my life bears uncountable dialogues, depending on the people I encounter and dialogue with. Some on a very regular basis, some only once in a life. I move in a multitude. I speak. I listen. I watch a multitude of dialogues of different durations and depths.

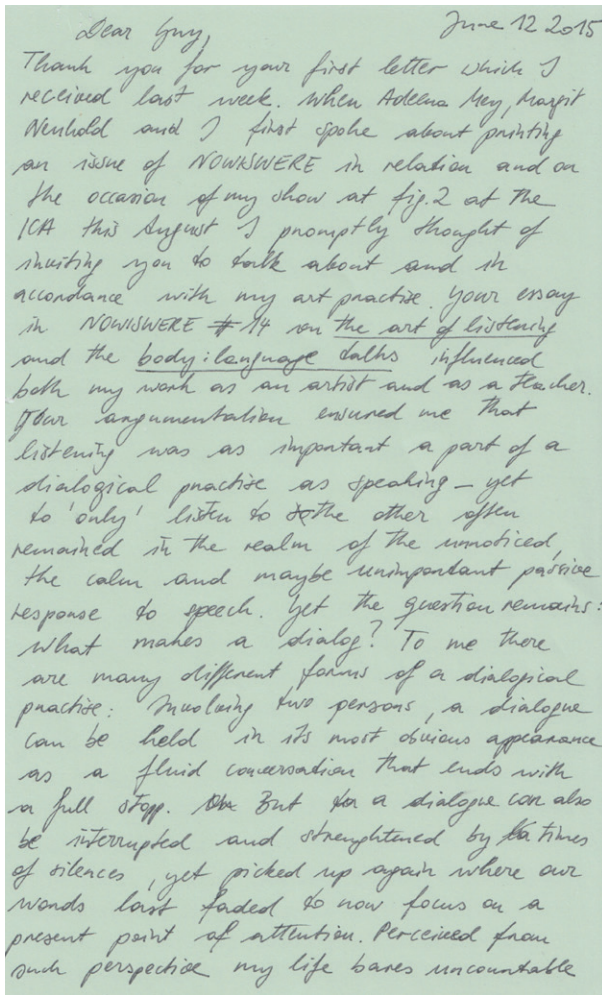
You proposed to start a correspondence between us. An exchange of letters. Handwritten. I am very glad about this idea, in theory. In practice that means I spend hours reading your letter and responding to it. I meanwhile appreciate those hours. Writing a letter reveals both the presence of its reader and its writer. (...) This is pure concentration on just one thing! (...)

I am trying to formulate my thoughts as clearly as possible and to write readably but not too properly. If the written, if writing, if a handwritten text can be thought of as 'manual gestures' this page is surely just a visual representation of what is at stake here – gestural-wise whilst writing this letter. What cannot be tracked from the 'traces on the page' are the (pauses) between words. The gaze that wanders around the room unfocused, the voices outside in the courtyard talking about dinner, the coughing, the children's sing song, my neighbor's steps upstairs, the pauses in between words, thoughts; the silences that inform a 'manual gesture' (Tim Ingold) to take this or that form and expression. Writing this letter – that is me gesturing with a pen on green paper. It is me reading again parts of your letter and responding, stepping into dialogue with your ideas. Therefore I have to imagine my reader listening.

For my video work *speech is to be looked at*, I imagine the spectator watching, reading, listening to the words formed by the different letters and photographs held by me feet into the camera. You sent a photograph of a letter/drawing, lines crossing out words, fragments of meaning. At the side of the image a foot has stepped upon the page. A sensual experience. I will end here for now taking the text of your drawing as an inspiration to send you some drawings from my series *Music & Movement are my friend* from 2009. Looking forward to reading from you.

Warmest greetings to Berlin,  
Veronika

Vienna, June 12<sup>th</sup> 2015



Dear Guy!

I am writing this letter on a train, on a bus, on a bike traveling from one place to the other. I am writing this letter in many different situations. Days have passed since I first read your letter and I have made several attempts to send a response to it. This letter – in contrast to the last one – has not been written in one timely and manual gesture, in one go – it is pieced together from several other letters and idea/lines of thought I want to share with you. It was very inspiring to receive the photo of your Berlin desk, your drawings of the different creative processes, the copying of my drawing. (...)

Reading and writing, two terms too abstract to describe what they trigger: thinking about what you wrote, absorbing the words, matching them with my experiences, selecting from many thoughts running through my head those of interest to you (might be), writing – drawing words on white/green pages.

Pauses are the 'time the body continues to absorb and transform the information received' (Guy Cools). I have paused several days since reading your letter for the first time. These pauses signify or reflect my listening to your remarks and ideas. Pausing/reading/writing. I feel I have become 'temporarily lost in our correspondence' too. As if that feeling had taken over ever since I opened the envelope and first saw your postcard. A photograph of a cat, laying her paws upon an open book, apparently looking into the book. On close inspection I noticed she is actually looking far away from the page. What is in her mind?

I see my thoughts colliding with your thoughts in many aspects, yet you asked me to find the threads and weave them into my labyrinth. I found some anchor points to do so:

\* The pauses within a dialogic practice cannot be heard in a 'correspondence' – hence have to be introduced by textual vehicles or signs such as : / PAUSE : ... or barely an (empty) space!

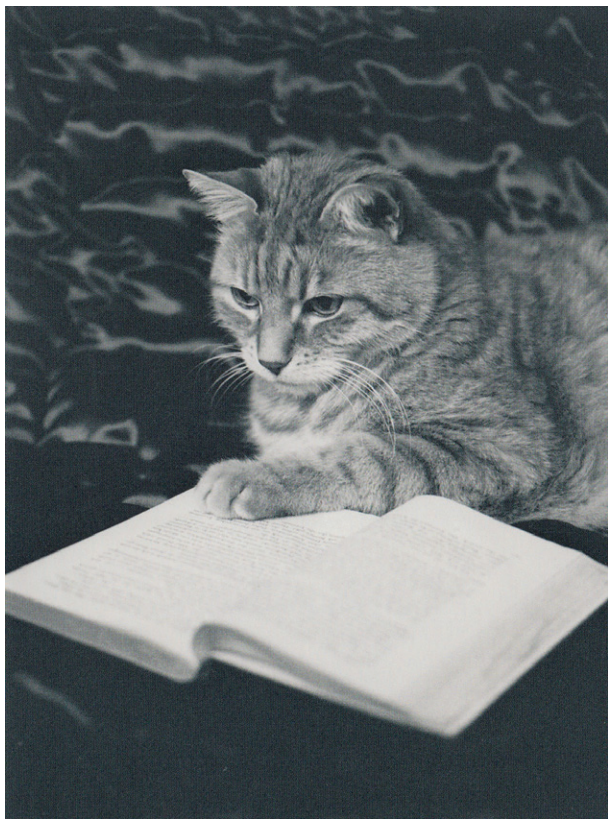
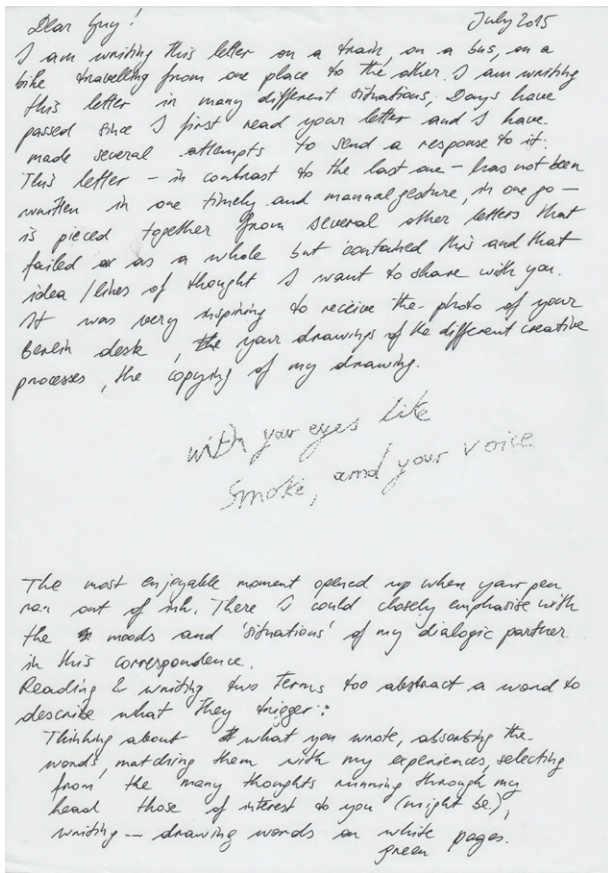
\* Writing as a gesture of drawing. Drawing being a gesture of writing. Drawing being transformed into language whilst writing.

\* (...)

\* Writing as movement. In my work *Semaphore Dance* – which in its title refers to Loie Fuller's wonderful *Serpentine Dance* – I use semaphore signals to wave messages towards the camera. It is a silent, merely visual form of communication and a form of correspondence as it includes writing. The choreography of this performance originates in the necessity to move/wave both flags into the right/readable position. In *Semaphore Dance* artist Lauren Printy Currie, with whom I collaborated on the exhibition *Baldachini* in Glasgow 2014 received the video and decoded my message letter per letter.

I am looking forward to talking to you,  
Veronika

July 2015



**Language Bent**

My body is a speaking body, she says, and her mouth forms an O, forms a circle, her lips rounded.

Her tongue pressed up against her gums, she intonates [o:] as in *roh*, [Ro:], Oh! The sound produced is long, her jaw half closed.

I wonder what I can do with my body? She stretches. She bends, her legs, her arms, her neck. What shapes and sounds can I produce?

I can become soft, she says, and slides back. I could become O, first small, then big. A zero, a shape, a number, a ring.

Her body bends backwards. I shape a letter, she says. I become round, and fixed, an object, a C.

She comes to a standstill and speaks again: my words move slowly from me to you. My voice as a breeze, and my speech as a sound.

Tones cross the border between our bodies. In speech scrolls and bubbles, words roll from my mouth.

She sends sound waves from her lungs to my eardrum. A rhythm emerges, and it breaks loose. Then she says: beat.

My body is a speaking body, she says. My organs are my instruments. She talks faster and points to her mouth, her throat, her jaw, and her lips.

I fantasize: about the communication of others, animals, objects, and things. About a capacity, for speech and for language, for grammar and sound.

I speak now as C and I wonder, she says. Because all is directed at you: do you understand my phrases, my words, my mumbling, my codes.

Can you learn my language? Its abstract units of sound and its gestures, its phrases and symbols.

Her voice lowers and her tongue touches her gums, as she speaks her Aaaaaa, her U ,her Mmmmmmm S Sch [] T

Again, her body bends and she stretches until she is T. Are our bodies flexible, flexed, organic shapes, made of skin and of muscles and joints? I become rigid, she says.

Dark and low words are produced, similar to the vibrations of things. Think of wood, think of metal, think of tssssss rrrrrrrr chhhhhhh.

Think of rhythm again, synchronized movement, the animation of muscles and bones. Bodies are mimicking language and things, trying to move and to bend and to beat.