

Reviving the Collective Body:
Gina Pane's *Escalade Non Anesthésiée*

Frédérique Baumgartner

the context of historic preservation where it has not been examined. First formulated in the eighteenth-century aesthetic writings of Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the Pygmalion impulse may be traced in the debates, practices and publications related to the Zwinger's history of destructions, restorations and reconstructions, following the destructions in the Seven Years War and World War II and German Reunification in 1990. Invocations of Pygmalion's creative and re-creative identification with sculpture and sculpturally perceived architecture fold in subjects as diverse as the overlapping private and public spheres of viewing art, an ethics of living up to a sculptural model or failing to do so, tactile memory, modern intervention, and art's therapeutic power. This essay uses recent scholarship on sculptural imagination and historic preservation to interpret the Pygmalion impulse in the Zwinger and its rich documentary evidence from the eighteenth through twenty-first centuries in Dresden's archives, libraries and museums.

The Tragic Image: Action Painting Refigured

Robert Slifkin

Have we lost the capacity to perceive Abstract Expressionist painting in the manner its creators envisioned? This paper examines this question through an analysis of Harold Rosenberg's concept of Action Painting. While typically understood as the dynamic application of paint, Action Painting was originally meant to suggest a dramatic understanding of the work of art (i.e. action as acting) in which the blurred passages and half-erased forms produced emotional effects upon the audience of viewers. By depicting imagery in a decidedly unresolved condition, Action Paintings forged a temporal matrix in which both past and future conditions of morphological possibility could be represented. This hovering state of allusive imagery invested the works with their oft-cited but rarely explored tragic ethos. Like dramatic tragedy, the purpose of Action Painting was to make the audience more sensitive to their own status as actors caught in the middle of events in everyday life, and spur them to act more decisively in their own lives.

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This article focuses on Gina Pane's performance *Escalade non anesthésiée* (1971), which consisted of the artist mounting a ladder studded with sharp metallic shards, causing injury to herself in the process. Previous art historians have read Pane's performances through a psychoanalytic lens, emphasizing the place of Lacanian thought in the nascent French feminist movement of the 1970s. This article posits that psychoanalytic accounts of Pane's work have neglected the political context of the work's execution and reception. Pane specifically referenced the Vietnam War when she described her intention with *Escalade non anesthésiée*. Accordingly, this article links her performance to *art sociologique* – a term applied to a range of politicized works produced in Paris in the wake of the May 68 events – and thereby to the politics of the *Internationale Situationniste*. Stressing the importance of the concept of alienation in the discourse of the 1970s and in Pane's writings, this article argues that the masochistic elements of her performance were an attempt to end collective passivity. This collective de-anesthetization was carried out by

Pane through the photo-documentation of her performance, in which she staged the image of a non-specific rather than individual body.

Fans of Feminism: Re-writing Histories of Second-wave Feminism in Contemporary Art

Catherine Grant

In recent years, there has been a reappraisal of interest in feminist art and activism, centring on second-wave feminism from the 1970s. This article uses the figure of the fan to explore the appeal of second-wave feminism in the contemporary moment, considering the different ways artworks re-write, re-imagine and re-activate second-wave feminist art and politics. The generational tension found in artworks that revisit this historical moment is discussed in relation to fandom as a way into the desiring and devouring interest that complicates familial models of feminist generations. Considering a range of contemporary artworks, the central examples are Mary Kelly's recent project *Love Songs*, 2005–7, which includes fragments of interviews from women who were involved in feminism in the 1970s, contrasted with a younger generation, and the zines of the Brooklyn-based collective LTTR which recreate a space of feminist collectivity within a queer art context.

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1. Gina Pane was born in Biarritz, France, in 1939, of an Italian father and an Austrian mother fleeing Nazism. Pane spent her youth in Italy and moved to Paris in 1961 to attend École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts. She remained in Paris, but also travelled throughout Europe, returning often to Italy until her death in 1990 after a long illness. 'Unanesthetized Escalation' is how Jennifer Blessing translated the title of Pane's *action*. See Jennifer Blessing, 'Gina Pane's Witnesses: The Audience and Photography', *Performance Research*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2002, p. 14. All the other translations in this article (performance titles, essay titles, and quotes) are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

2. *Pierres déplacées* (*Displaced Stones*) involved the artist moving a pile of small stones from the dark into a space where they were warmed by the sun. *Little Journey 3* took place in a dark room where the artist had placed a series of colourful objects which she used to create a dreamlike narrative.

3. Pane's subsequent *actions* involved multiple sequences (usually a series of three).

4. Pane maintained a lasting collaboration with Françoise Masson. On this issue, see Julia Hountou, 'Gina Pane et Françoise Masson: L'accord de deux sensibilités ou la connivence des regards', *Art Présence*, no. 58, April–June 2002, pp. 20–9.

5. See Blandine Chavanne and Anne Marchand (eds), Gina Pane, 'La cuisine d'une action', *Lettre à un(e) inconnu(e)* (École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts: Paris, 2003), p. 19. Originally published in *Artitudes International*, no. 39–40, April–November 1977, p. 38.

6. For example, on the verso of an assemblage of contact prints documenting Pane's ascent, kept in the archives of François Pluchart, Pane indicated the words 'Escalade sanglante'. Similarly, François Pluchart referred to *Escalade non anesthésiée* as 'Escalade sanglante' in 'Notes sur les actions de Gina Pane', Sylvie Mokhtari (ed.), *L'Art: un acte de participation au monde* (Éditions Jacqueline Chambon: Nîmes, 2002), p. 232. Originally published in the exhibition catalogue *Regarder ailleurs*, Musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux, 1973, no page number. For a full account of the correspondence between Pane and Pluchart regarding *Escalade non anesthésiée*, see Janig Bégoc and Nathalie Boulouch, 'Dossier: Gina Pane, Escalade non anesthésiée, 1971', Janig Bégoc,

In the spring of 1971, the Italian-Austrian artist Gina Pane performed *Escalade non anesthésiée* (*Unanesthetized Escalation*) in her Parisian studio.¹ According to her, this work should be designated as an *action*. For this is how Pane, a member of the Body Art movement, defined all her performances, that is, all her works whose meaning materialised through her bodily engagement. These span an eleven-year period, from her revelatory experience while making *Pierres déplacées*, her first spontaneous *action* outdoors in July 1968, through *Little Journey 3* in 1979, her last public performance.²

The single-sequence *action Escalade non anesthésiée* consisted of the artist climbing, barefoot, and bare-handed, a ladder-like structure with rungs studded with sharp metallic shards.³ Seemingly masochistic, the performance lasted for half an hour when the artist, bleeding profusely, reached a state of total exhaustion.

Although performative in nature, *Escalade non anesthésiée* took place without an audience. However, as with Pane's other *actions*, it did involve what she called a *constat*, that is, photo-documentation, executed in collaboration with the photographer Françoise Masson.⁴ For Pane, photo-documentation was an integral part of the work, by no means secondary to the performance itself. She explained that a performance included three parts of equal importance: the groundwork, consisting of preparatory drawings, photographs, and texts; the actual performance; and the selection of photographs taken during the performance, which constituted the *constat*.⁵ In this context, the presence of an audience did not appear as essential, as the *constat*, in Pane's view, transmitted the performance most efficiently. In fact, she made clear that the *constat* was not separate from the performance; instead, it was part of her performative language, as it allowed her to guide more closely the viewer's gaze in his/her encounter with the performance.

In the case of *Escalade non anesthésiée*, the *constat* took the form of sixty-nine black-and-white enlarged contact prints, recording every detail of Pane's painful ascension. The selected prints were affixed to a vertical wooden panel the exact size of the ladder, 323 × 160 cm. The ladder, placed next to the panel a few centimetres apart, completed the *constat* of *Escalade non anesthésiée* (Fig. 1). If no viewer attended Pane's *Escalade Sanglante* (*Bloody Climb*), as the artist and some critics occasionally dubbed this violent performance, the *constat* attested to the highly disturbing nature of her gesture.⁶

The *constat* of *Escalade non anesthésiée* is kept today at the Musée national d'art moderne-Centre Pompidou in Paris. However, some of the photographs also circulated in magazines. In particular, the creation in the autumn of 1971 of the French critical journal *Artitudes* (renamed *Artitudes International* the

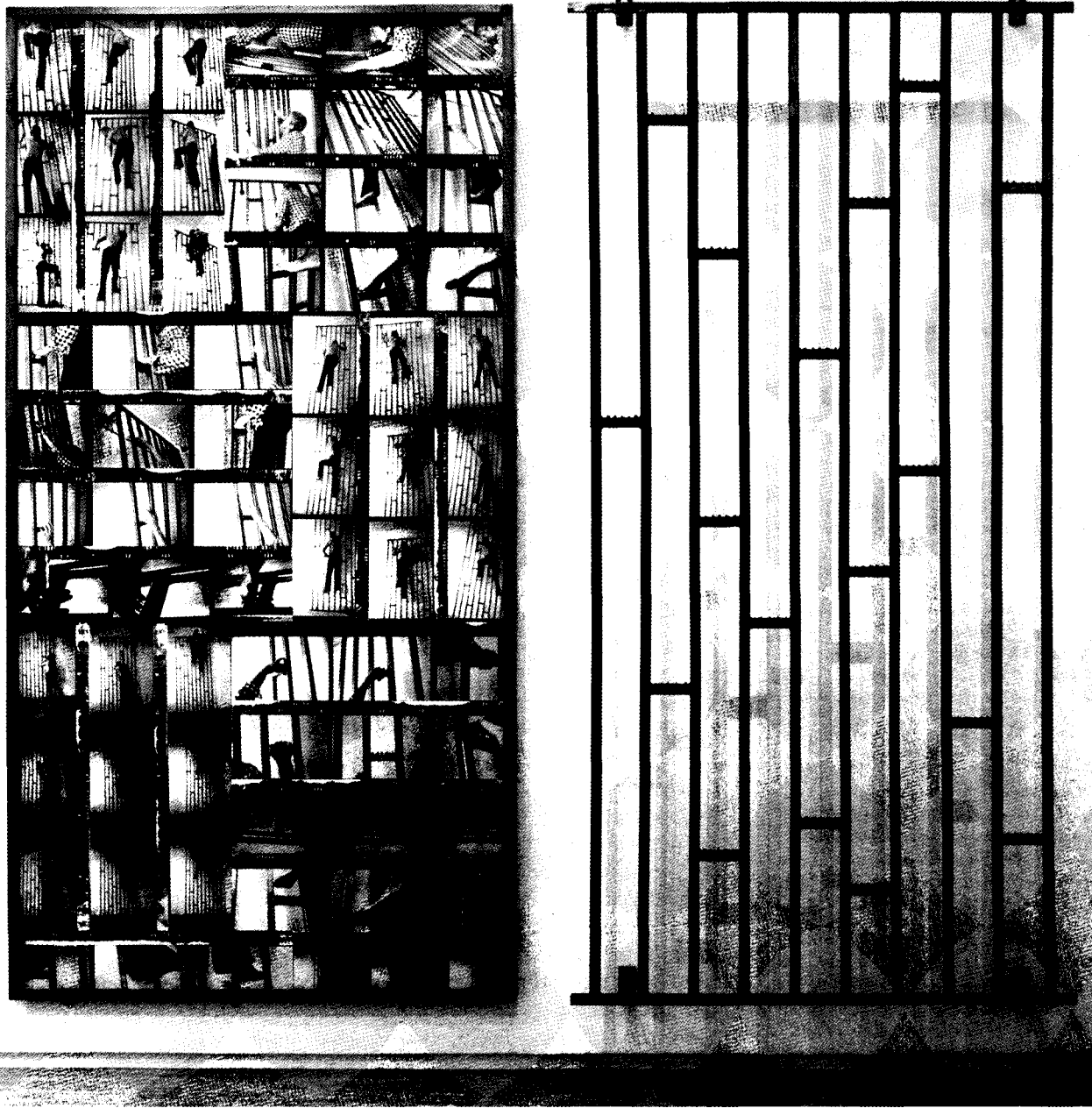


Fig. 1. Gina Pane, *Escalade non anesthésiée*, 1971, black-and-white photographs on wood panel and steel structure, 323 × 320 × 23 cm. Photographs: Françoise Masson. Musée national d'art moderne-Centre Pompidou, Paris. (Photo: © Adagp, Paris 2011.)

following year) provided Pane with an opportunity to disseminate her work. Founded by the art critic François Pluchart and the Body Artist Michel Journiac, the journal successively published in its October 1971 issue and its October–December 1974 issue a selection of photographs from *Escalade non anesthésiée*.⁷

In addition to carefully conceived *constats* of her ephemeral *actions*, Pane occasionally wrote about her work and art in general, publishing essays in

Nathalie Boulouch, Hvan Zabunyan (eds), *La Performance. Entre archives et pratiques contemporaines* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes: Rennes, 2010), p. 143–52. I thank Janig Bégoc for bringing this book to my attention.

7. See *Artitudes*, no. 1, October 1971, p. 5 and *Artitudes International*, no. 15–17, October–December 1974, p. 38.

8. Pane, *Lettre*.

9. See Jennifer Blessing, 'Some Notes on Gina Pane's Wounds', in the exhibition catalogue *Gina Pane*, John Hansard Gallery, Southampton, 2002, pp. 25–39.

10. See for example Kathy O'Dell on *Nourriture Actualités télévisées-feu* (1971) and the oral stage in *Contract with the Skin. Masochism. Performance Art and the 1970s* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis and London, 1998), pp. 59–60.

11. In 'Some Notes on Gina Pane's Wounds', Blessing looks particularly at Pane's *Azione Sentimentale* (1973), which she uses as a case study for demonstrating the relationship between Pane's actions and *Psych et Po*. Hélène Cixous, one of the main representatives of *Psych et Po*, elaborated the theory of *écriture féminine*, a mode of writing directed specifically towards female desire. Blessing uses it as an explanatory model for *Azione Sentimentale*, an action focusing on feminine symbols and using maternal metaphors.

12. 'Après fixation de "l'objet échelle" en métal, hérissé de pointes tranchantes, sur un pan de mur de mon atelier, déchaussée, mains nues, j'ai escaladé de haut en large toute sa surface. Escalade assaut d'une position au moyen d'une échelle – stratégie qui consiste à gravir les "échelons". L'escalade américaine au Vietnam. Artiste – les artistes aussi grimpent. Douleur – douleur physique à un point ou plusieurs points du corps. Douleur interne, profonde, souffrance. Douleur morale'. Quoted in Anne Tronche, *Gina Pane. Actions* (Edition Fall: Paris, 1997), p. 65.

journals such as *Artitudes*, *Opus International*, and *Art Press*. A collection of her many notes published in 2003 offers further insight into her artistic outlook.⁸

The Lacanian inflexion of Pane's writings, as Jennifer Blessing has pointed out, is evident.⁹ Accordingly, psychoanalytic theory has been used recurrently as a lens through which to understand the artist's performative rationale.¹⁰ But Pane's writings, particularly from the 1970s, are also strongly politicised. However, this aspect of her artistic practice seems to have been under-acknowledged, despite its overlap with the psychoanalytic dimension of her work. Blessing demonstrated that the Lacanian discourse within which Pane's practice can be situated was that developed by the group *Psychanalyse et Politique (Psych et Po)*; this pointed to the political intent of Pane's work, considering the feminist foundation of *Psych et Po*.¹¹ Yet, a more tangible shift of emphasis from psychoanalytic theory to the political context of the time seems necessary to place *Escalade non anesthésiée* historically. Indeed, Pane's explanation of her intention with this performance reveals how she conceived it primarily as a political statement:

After fixing the metal 'object-ladder', studded with sharp metallic shards, to a wall of my studio, I climbed/escalated barefoot and bare-handed, up and across its full length.

Escalating-assaulting a position with a ladder – strategy, which consists of climbing the 'steps'.

American escalation in Vietnam.

Artist – artists too escalate/ascend.

Pain – physical pain in one or several parts of the body.

Internal pain, deep, suffering. Moral pain.¹²

Pane's reference to the Vietnam War indicates how her work was then grounded in burning issues of contemporary politics. The reference to the Vietnam War is intensified by her use of military terminology (assault, position, strategy) and reinforced by her play on the word *Escalade* which in French means climbing (ascending) or escalating (in an armed conflict).

Considering specifically this political context – which, in France, was also marked by the student protests of May 68 – this article examines the extent to which Situationist theories, and more particularly Guy Debord's *La Société du spectacle* (1967), framed Pane's political gesture in *Escalade non anesthésiée*. It argues that Debord's theory, which greatly influenced the artistic movement known as *art sociologique*, led Pane to place concepts such as political action and communication at the centre of her work. Moreover, it shows that Pane's use of the notion of anaesthesia emerged in response to the discourse on alienation developed by Debord and his followers. Accordingly, it argues that the viewing of *Escalade non anesthésiée's constat*, thanks to visual strategies highlighting the viewer's connection to the larger social body, produces his/her return to consciousness as far as moral responsibility is concerned in contexts as critical as that of the Vietnam War.

Pane, a Politicised Artist Rallied to *Art Sociologique*

At the time Pane performed *Escalade non anesthésiée*, the USA had been involved in the Vietnamese conflict for over six years. In France, the conflict was brought to the public's attention through articles and photographs of the ravages of the

war published in the recently created and increasingly popular magazines *L'Express* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Within Pane's oeuvre, a total of three works (*Le Riz No. 1*, 1970–1971, *Escalade non anesthésiée* and *Nourriture-Actualités télévisées-Feu*, 1971) refer explicitly to the Vietnam War.¹³ They constitute a unique body of work, as no other artist working in France at the time overtly tackled the Vietnam War in his/her artistic practice. In fact, the background of the politicisation of the avant-garde should be nationally differentiated: radical politics in the USA and in France necessarily developed within separate spheres, with corresponding differences in the way in which the artistic avant-garde responded. In the USA, the new social and political contents which art practices entailed were intertwined not only with the anti-war movements, but also with the feminist and minority empowerment movements. In France, it is in the context of the May 68 events, for which the *Internationale Situationniste* and its leader Guy Debord provided an ideological framework, that a new political and social consciousness emerged, including among visual artists.¹⁴ This political and social artistic drive engendered in France a specific term – *art sociologique* – which somehow did not make it into the narrative of art history, but was in vogue in France in the 1970s, as contemporary articles attest.

In the early 1970s, Pane was considered a representative of *art sociologique*. In 1977, Fred Forest, the instigator of this artistic movement in the late 1960s, member of the *Collectif d'art sociologique* as of 1974 with Hervé Fischer and Jean-Paul Thenot, published a book entitled *Art sociologique*, defining it as 'an agent of contestation and action' and therefore as 'a behaviour directly linked to the transformation of society'.¹⁵ In his own artistic practice, Forest rejected the traditional artistic media which he considered elitist. His works from the 1970s (which, like Pane, he described by the generic term *actions*) were characterised by an attempt to bring to the audience's attention certain socio-economic realities by means of questionnaires, surveys, debates, etc., thus encouraging audience participation.¹⁶ Accordingly, Forest defined the function of his work as exclusively documentary. Similarly, Pane occasionally used documents providing socio-economic facts during her performances.¹⁷

Some critics who associated Pane's work with *art sociologique* were François Pluchart, writing not only for *Artitudes* but also for *Combat*, and Pierre Restany. In 1973, Pluchart claimed in an essay devoted to Pane's *actions*: 'The intention of bodily *action* is to open the individual consciousness to major sociological facts'.¹⁸ Similarly, Restany described her artistic practice from 1970 on as *sociologique*.¹⁹ Moreover, *Artitudes*, the main French journal dedicated to Body Art, simultaneously became a platform for *art sociologique*, which indicates how *art sociologique* and Body Art were perceived as related artistic movements.²⁰

The term *art sociologique* may appear, at first, unspecific. For any artist commenting on social issues – which represented a very large, international spectrum of artistic production in the 1970s – could be potentially called a Sociological Artist. However, it is crucial to note that critics looking at *art sociologique* argued that artists' sociological intentions were historically determined, therefore necessarily linked to the political context of the time. In his article 'L'art sociologique' from 1975, the art historian Bernard Teysseïdre (a subsequent contributor to Forest's book) wrote:

L'art sociologique arises at a specific time in history: the time when many artists, whose artistic endeavours were quite different at first, became conscious of their common goals (is it by chance if, in France, this time arises after May 68?). . . . Instead

13. *Le Riz No. 1* included a fragment of a rice paddy evoking Vietnam, various documents pertaining to rice and a neon sign reading the word *Riz*. The second sequence of *Nourriture-Actualités télévisées-Feu* consisted of Pane watching TV news reporting on the Vietnam War, with a bright light directed towards her face.

14. However, Guy Debord's theories are at times relevant to the American political context of the late 1960s and early 1970s. For instance, the Watts' riots were interpreted in the issue of December 1965 of *Internationale Situationniste* in accordance with the Situationist theories that Debord later synthesised in *La Société du Spectacle*.

15. 'Une conduite directement liée à la transformation de la société. Agent de contestation et d'action'. Fred Forest, *Art sociologique* (Union Générale d'Éditions: Paris, 1977), p. 43. Prior to Forest's publication, the *Collectif d'art sociologique* published 'Manifeste I de l'art sociologique' in *Le Monde*, 10 October 1974. In addition, Forest conducted an international survey, in an attempt to internationalise *art sociologique*. Eighty artists and critics out of the 209 that he contacted in Europe, America, and Asia answered his three questions: (i) Does *art sociologique* exist? (ii) Do you feel you belong to this movement? (iii) What is your own definition of *art sociologique*?

16. For example, in *Interrogation 69* (1969), which involved discussions with the audience, Forest sought to underscore the disengagement of public institutions and private firms from cultural initiatives.

17. This was the case, for example, in *Nourriture-Actualités télévisées-Feu*, where magazines were displayed on a table placed next to a TV broadcasting the news. The magazines included publications from the INSEE (Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques) and economic journals, discussing problems of nutrition in the world. Documents were also included in earlier installations, such as *Le Riz No. 1*.

18. 'L'intention de l'action corporelle est d'ouvrir la conscience individuelle à des faits sociologiques majeurs'. Pluchart, 'Notes sur les actions de Gina Pane', (*L'art: un acte*, p. 231). Pluchart wrote also about the work of Michel Journiac, the other representative of Body Art in France at the time, emphasising more and more the relation between Body Art and *art sociologique* in Journiac's work.

19. See Pierre Restany, 'La réalité sociologique de Gina Pane', *Combat*, 1970, an article mentioned in Tronche's bibliography. In July 1970, Restany went to Turin specifically to attend the opening of Pane's show. On Restany's career as an art critic, see Henry Périer, *Pierre Restany. L'alchimiste de l'art* (Éditions Cercle d'Art: Paris,

of wondering about 'the nature of Art,' about its 'essence', the issue is to re-situate the artistic practice in the context of a social Praxis. The 'questioning' has been altered: from the realm of Art as an Idea it reached back to history.²¹

1998). This book also mentions that Restany, acting as the curator of the French Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1976, organised a debate on *art sociologique* with Forest and Fischer, evidencing the points of contact between Pane and the *Collectif d'art sociologique*.

20. In 1975, the exhibition *L'Art corporel*, curated by Pluchart at the Galerie Stadler, made clear to the French public that Body Art was a major contemporary movement. *L'Art corporel*, considered by its organisers as a manifesto exhibition, included works by Accionci, Brus, Burden, Duchamp, Fox, Jonas, Journiac, Klein, Lüthi, Manzoni, Muchl, Nauman, Nitsch, Oppenheim, Pane, Rainer, Rinke, Samaras, Schwarzkogler, and Sieverding. For a discussion of Pane and Journiac's work in the context of the art produced in France from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, see Hervé Giloaguen and Anne Tronche, *L'Art actuel en France. Du cinématisme à l'hyperréalisme* (Éditions André Balland: Paris, 1973). Pane and Journiac's work is discussed in the section entitled 'Art pauvre et art du geste'.

21. 'L'art sociologique intervient à un moment précis de l'histoire: celui où de nombreuses entreprises artistiques, très différentes à l'origine, ont pris conscience de leur viscé commune (est ce hasard si, en France, ce moment survient *après mai 68*?). . . Au lieu de s'interroger sur 'la nature de l'Art', sur son 'essence', il s'agit de re-situer la pratique artistique dans le contexte d'une Praxis sociale. Le lieu du 'questionnement' a été subverti: du royaume de l'Art comme Idée, il est descendu vers l'histoire' (Bernard Teysseère, 'L'art sociologique', *Opus International*, no. 55, 1975, p. 16).

22. 'Un processus d'action destiné à dénoncer les aliénations de toutes natures' (Forest, *Art sociologique*, p. 34).

23. 'L'art n'est plus un objet de contemplation ou de fétichisme, mais un choix pour le meilleur usage de la vie.' (Pluchart, 'Le coup de Journiac', *L'art: un acte*, p. 174). Originally published in *Combat*, 10 March 1969.

24. 'Combattant, dénonçant et engagée dans un combat contre les déterminismes'. Pluchart, 'Notes sur les actions de Gina Pane', *L'art: un acte*, p. 232.

25. 'Performance of Concern, Gina Pane Discusses Her Work with Effie Stephano', *Art and Artists*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1973, p. 24. In this interview, published in English, Pane reiterated publicly some views she had previously expressed in her notes: 'The artist, while belonging to a group of individuals among whom exist organized relations, established by institutions and guaranteed by sanctions, can if he/she so wishes extract himself/herself from sociological issues or, on the contrary, become sensitive to,

Teysseère's reference to May 68 is particularly relevant to Forest's *Art sociologique*. Indeed, Forest's emphasis throughout his book on the interventionist quality of *art sociologique*, which he defined as 'an action process dedicated to the denunciation of all types of alienations', hints at the influence of Situationism on his thinking.²² Forest's book is actually a faithful echo of Debord's voice, pointing out capitalist phenomena such as the fetishisation of the object and the power of the mass media as the essential forces against which *art sociologique* stood. Likewise, in 1969, Pluchart wrote that for Journiac 'art was no longer an object of contemplation or fetishism, but a choice for the best possible use of life'.²³ His portrayal of Pane in 1973 as an artist 'fighting, denouncing and engaging in a battle against determinisms', precisely when discussing *Escalade non anesthésiée*, was also close to Forest's viewpoint.²⁴

Pane's work, by revealing an obvious concern with current politics, was received by its closest interpreters as *art sociologique*. However, despite Pluchart's discussion of Pane's work in Debordian terms and the artist's own familiarity with Debord's theory as attested in her dialogue with Forest there is no evidence of a direct engagement on Pane's part with Debord, but they were clearly part of the same intellectual milieu – her position within this network of artists and intellectuals was complex. Indeed, the way in which she described her actual artistic position in the 1970s was very nuanced in regard to *art sociologique*; yet, it was most remarkable in the way she defined the role of the body in her performances within the specific context of the immediate aftermath of May 68.

The Body in Action, or May 68 at Work

In an interview from 1973 with Effie Stephano, Pane stated:

If the artist has a social conscience, he feels his responsibility in the society in which he lives. I believe he can become a catalyst of social and moral change because he has complete liberty of expression. He can, of course, delve into autobiographical narcissism or shut himself up in his tower, but he does have the choice of being responsible on a social level.²⁵

Key here is Pane's emphasis on the artist's responsibility, voiced through a critique of modernism as a denial of socio-political reality. However, she was neither an activist nor belonged to any political party.²⁶ At the same time, in a language reminiscent of Debord, she expressed her desire to challenge, through her work, 'the internal determinism' propped up by 'the regulatory systems'.²⁷ As a result, Pane's provocative performances can be interpreted as metaphorical affirmations of insubordination towards authority. But the artist articulated in more specific terms the relationship between her Body Art practice and the contemporary political state of affairs. In her text 'Before May 68', written in 1977, she recalled:

Before May 68, all living forces in Paris were working intensely to be able to get beyond the 'Social Criticism Theory' in order to be at peace with 'real life'. In this broken, upset environment, creativity was emerging everywhere. The confrontation of mine with the post-1968 public benefited from a relationship that I could define as 'Active' and my work was not only looked at, but lived.²⁸

Pane's emphasis on the word 'Active' is critical. If one agrees with her that subjectivity in May 68 was inseparable from concrete action, then Performance Art, based on the artist's bodily engagement, logically emerged as a highly relevant artistic mode. In other words, *action*, the basis of Pane's work (and, incidentally, the title of a journal then ran by students), was in symbiosis with a central aspect of the May 68 rhetoric.²⁹ In fact, the principle of action kept expanding in the political discourse as events unfolded in reaction to governmental resistance to students' demands. Jean-Paul Sartre declared in March 1969: 'Explanation does not interest the students anymore. . . . They have come to a point where only action matters'.³⁰ Similarly, a group of women workers, after months of unproductive negotiations with their employer, eventually decided to occupy, day and night, the latter's office, declaring 'now, we are in the action', a way to signal their step into true resistance.³¹ Pane also viewed the body in action as the most powerful means through which to express her 'social conscience'. Admittedly, she produced non-performative yet political works prior to her *actions*, such as the installations *La Pêche endeuillée* (1968–1969) and *Venezia-Aqua alta-Pali* (1969–1970).³² But as the body was increasingly being exploited by artists to address social and political issues, Pane's shift to Body Art indicates that May 68 oriented her artistic direction. It is in this sense that her statement 'my language is that of the body since 1968, which is to say that all of my work is materialized directly by my body as the main medium and tool for my concepts' takes on its full meaning.³³

Though she considered herself a member of the Body Art movement in the early 1970s, Pane simultaneously emphasised the importance of the 'sociological body' in her work. As she explained in her essay, 'The Language of the Body':

The systematic study of the body never isolated from others' bodies allows not only to locate but to deduce that the body is the primary and natural instrument of sociology. For these reasons, for my own commitment (68/70: ecological body, 71/74: sociological body), I wish a good journey to companions who are involved in a sociological practice, accompanying them from time to time but remaining fundamentally involved in my artistic practice which is called: Body Language/Body Art/Sociological Body.³⁴

Therefore, Pane felt a kinship with the Sociological Artists, all the while differentiating herself. She drew an explicit line between *art sociologique* and the sociological body: if her work resonated with a form of resistant subjectivity that emerged correlatively to May 68, she somehow rejected the kind of artistic practice that Forest defended. In this context, it seems that the relevance of the body to sociology is what led Pane to engage in a dialogue with the Sociological Artists in the first place. Indeed, for her, the body was in essence sociological, insofar as it did not exist by itself but always in relation to a community. Hence, the relevance of using her own body as the medium through which to address socio-political issues on a collective plane. In this sense, it can be argued that Pane's choice to wound herself during *Escalade non anesthésiée* was motivated by the virtual effect of her wounds on a larger social group.

Communicating Through the Collective Body

Pane's re-focus on her body in the late 1960s first involved a series of outdoor *actions*, revealing a new interest in environmental issues. At the same time, they

concerted on, such issues'. 'L'artiste, tout en appartenant à l'ensemble des individus entre lesquels existent des rapports organisés, établis par des institutions et garantis par des sanctions, peut s'abstraire, s'il le desire, des problèmes sociologiques ou au contraire y être sensibilisé, concerté'. Pane, 'L'artiste et la société', *Lettre*, p. 43. Written on 2 February 1972.

26. On this issue, see 'Art is what makes life more interesting than art. A conversation between Bernard Blistène, Caroline Collier and Stephen Foster', in *Gina Pane* (Southampton and Bristol), p. 21 and following.

27. 'Le déterminisme intérieur' and 'les systèmes régulateurs'. Pane, 'L'artiste et la société', *Lettre*, p. 44. Pane's stance also related to Herbert Marcuse's ideas, which were widely circulated during May 68. Indeed, *One Dimensional Man*, discussing repression, conditioning, and administered freedom, was translated into French in 1968 and received immediate attention, nurturing students' discourse in addition to Debord's writings. An indication of Marcuse's popularity can be appreciated by his portrait featured on the cover of the 8–14 May 1968 issue of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, with the caption 'l'idole des étudiants rebelles' ('The Rebel Students' Idol'). The article discussed Marcuse's reception in the USA, while explaining the central themes of *One Dimensional Man*. Incidentally, the following month, Sartre, in his article 'l'idée neuve de mai 1968', made a reference to Marcuse: 'l'Université ne fabriquera plus des hommes "uni dimensionnels"' ('The University will no longer produce "one dimensional men"'). This positions Sartre as an important link between Marcuse and the French supporters of May 68, considering the former's commitment to the revolt. See Serge Mallet, 'l'idole des étudiants rebelles: Herbert Marcuse', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 8–14 May 1968, pp. 5–11 and Jean Paul Sartre, 'l'idée neuve de mai 1968', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 26 June 1968, pp. 21–4.

28. 'Avant Mai 68, toutes les forces vives de Paris travaillaient intensément pour parvenir à dépasser la "Théorie de la Critique Sociale" afin d'en assumer son "vécu". Dans ce climat éclaté, renversé, la créativité émergeait de toutes parts. La confrontation de la mienne avec le public d'après 1968 bénéficiait donc d'un rapport que je pourrais définir "d'Actif" et mon travail n'était pas seulement regardé mais vécu' (Pane, 'Avant Mai 68', *Lettre*, p. 45). Written on 12 December 1977.

29. The philosopher Paul Ricœur, to whom Pane once referred in her notes, may also have been an important figure for the artist's conceptualisation of the *action*. Ricœur, in the 1950s, elaborated a philosophy of will which became, in the early 1970s, a philosophy of action, examining questions of ethics, passivity, and moral

consciousness. See Pane, 'Notes', *Lettre*, p. 149, date unknown, and Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamley and John B. Thompson (University Press: Evanston, IL, 2007). For a discussion of Ricoeur's theory of action, see François Dosse, 'A Philosophy of Acting: Paul Ricoeur', in *Empire of Meaning. The Humanization of the Social Sciences*, trans. Hassan Melehy (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis and London, 1999), pp. 139–48.

30. 'L'explication, au fond, ne les intéresse plus. . . Ils en sont arrivés à un point où seule l'action compte à leurs yeux' (Jean Paul Sartre, 'La jeunesse piégée', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 17–23 March 1969, p. 8).

31. 'Maintenant, nous sommes dans l'action'. (Michèle Mancaux, 'Des employés modèles', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 17–23 March 1970, p. 42). The presence of the workers at the students' side was key to the unfolding of the May 68 events.

32. These two works testify to Pane's ecological concerns. The first one related to an atomic explosion in the Pacific Ocean in March 1954, which spread radioactive ashes that affected the health of some fishermen. The second had to do with the recession of Venice, partially due to industrial pollution.

33. 'Mon langage étant celui du corps depuis 1968, c'est à dire toute ma création est matérialisée directement par mon corps en tant que principal matériau et outil de mes concepts' (Pane, *Lettre*, p. 72). Date unknown).

34. 'L'étude systématique du corps jamais isolé du corps des autres permet non seulement de situer mais de définir que le corps est l'instrument premier et naturel de la sociologie. Pour toutes ces raisons, pour mon engagement personnel (68, 70: le corps écologique, 71/74: le corps sociologique), je souhaite bonne route à des compagnons qui s'engagent dans une démarche sociologique en les accompagnant par moments mais restant fondamentalement engagée dans ma pratique artistique qui se nomme: Langage du Corps/Body Art/Corps Sociologique' (Pane, 'Le langage du corps', *Lettre*, p. 19. Originally published in *Opus International*, no. 55, April 1975, p. 45).

35. *Performance of Concern*, p. 21.

36. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Zone Books: New York, 1994), p. 29.

37. Debord, *Society*, pp. 20–1.

raised the question of communication, which she continued to explore in her in-studio and public performances. Her desire for communication was already tangible in her *action Continuation d'un chemin de bois pour aller d'un lieu à un autre dans le but d'une quelconque communication (Extension of a Wooden Path to Go from One Place to Another for the Purpose of Any Communication)*, performed on 16 November 1970 (Fig. 2). The fact that Pane performed this *action* in a remote environment without an audience, while claiming communication as its purpose, makes it an important antecedent to *Escalade non anesthésiée*. Pane commented on *Continuation d'un chemin de bois*:

This *action* took me a day to complete. In this isolated sand and rock landscape I found the beginning of a road formed by pieces of wood, but it had no continuation. There were many logs laying around in haphazard formations and I had the impulse, in terms of my communication research, to join this broken road with a real road. So, one by one, I carried and laid down the logs until the connection was made.³⁵

This description relates to concepts developed by Debord in *La Société du spectacle*. This book was first and foremost a virulent critique of capitalist consumption, where the term *spectacle* stood for all social relations and modes of exploitation generated by modern societies: 'The spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life. It is not just that the relationship to commodities is now plain to see – commodities are now *all* that there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity'.³⁶ Accordingly, Debord advocated the destruction of both the State and the economy and the abolition of the commodity. But beyond this economic discourse, Debord, in alignment with a humanist Marxism seeking to counteract alienation, decried society for its separation between individuals and its negation of authentic communication. This aspect of Debord's thinking helps to understand the context in which Pane conceived her work. In the chapter titled 'Separation Perfected', which characterised the society of the spectacle as the ultimate form of isolation between workers, Debord wrote:

Separation is the alpha and omega of the spectacle. . . . And it makes no secret of what it is, namely, hierarchical power evolving on its own, in its separateness, thanks to an increasing productivity based on an ever more refined division of labor, an ever greater comminution of machine-governed gestures, and an ever-widening market. . . . The generalized separation of worker and product has spelled the end of any comprehensive view of the job done, as well as the end of direct personal communication between producers.³⁷

Debord primarily blamed the organisation of labour for the separation between individuals. The economic system, he argued, was responsible for the seclusion of the workers, in the sense that the technical process of labour, in separating the workers from the final product, was itself inherently insulating – hence the enunciation of Situationist slogans such as 'Abolition du travail aliéné' ('Abolish Alienated Work'). Moreover, the organisation of labour affected the relation between workers, as it purposely prevented them from interacting with one another. Pane's persistent labour 'until the connection was made' in *Continuation d'un chemin de bois* can be interpreted as materialising the form of production that Debord defended. Indeed, the entire *action* was carried out by the artist with the objective of eventually establishing a form of communication through the construction of a new passage.

Pane investigated further the question of communication on the occasion of her public performance *Hommage à un jeune drogué* (1971), in which she had a

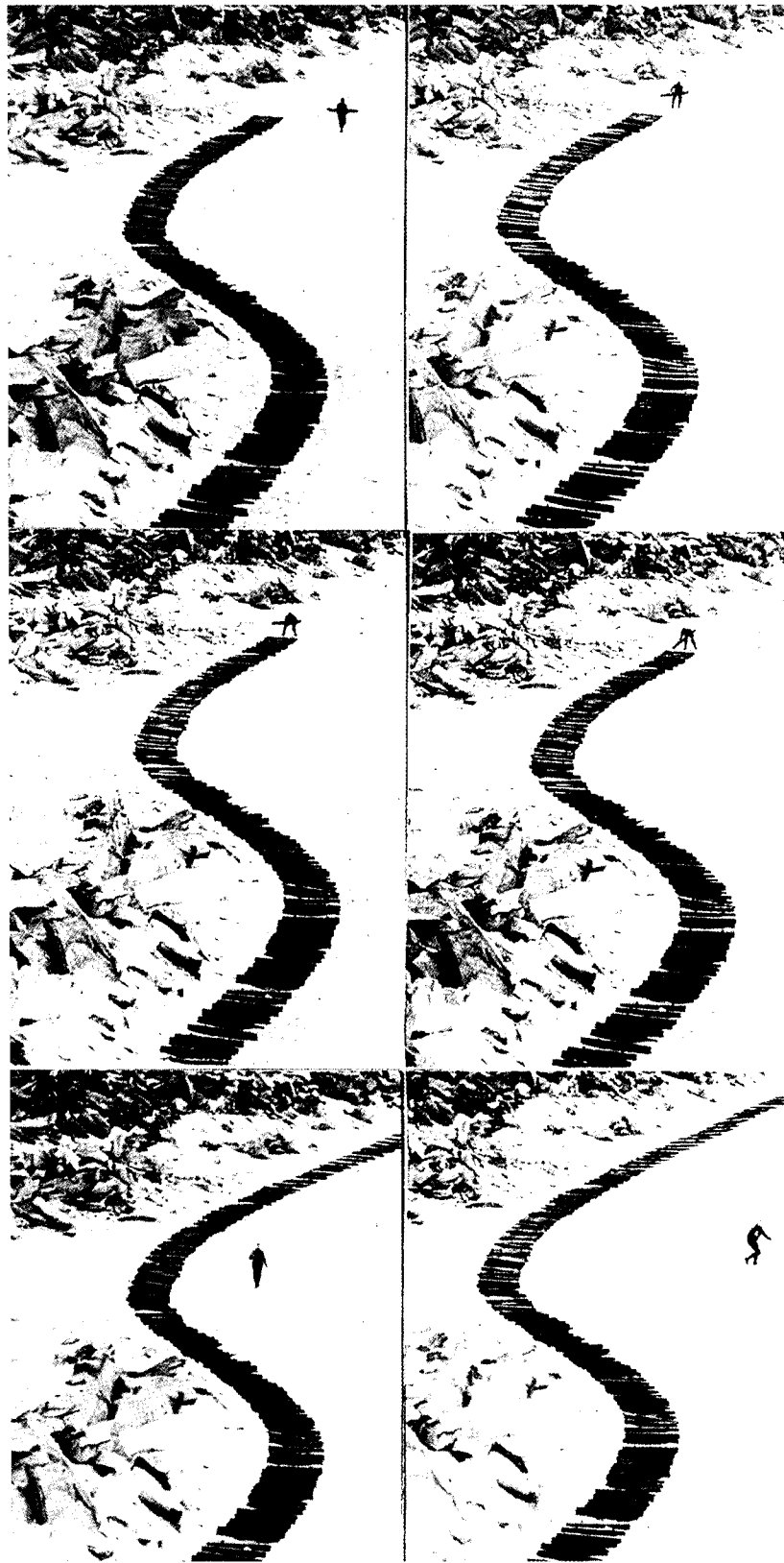


Fig. 2. Gina Pane, *Continuation d'un chemin de bois pour aller d'un lieu à un autre dans le but d'une quelconque communication*, 1970, black and white photographs on plywood. Photographs: Hervé Gloaguen. (Photo: © Adagg, Paris 2011.)



Fig. 3. Jacques-Louis David, *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume*, 1791. pen, wash and chalk, 66 × 101 cm. Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles. (Photo: © RMN (Château de Versailles)/Gérard Blot.)

38. *Performance of Concern*, p. 22.

39. Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic. Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1997). The idea of 'the great body of the citizens' was formulated by the Third Estate spokesperson Emmanuel Sieyès in *Essai sur les privilèges*, 1788.

40. It should be noted, however, that in Sieyès' mind, the *Nation* meant the Third Estate only. Moreover, in spite of its allegedly universalist ambitions, the public sphere during the French Revolution was fundamentally male and attempted to set itself up without, and even against, women, as Joan Landes argued in *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1988).

41. David undertook *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume* on his own initiative, but quickly received financial support from the Jacobin Club (then known as the *Société des Amis de la Constitution*).

42. 'l'homme "isolé" est inconcevable; toutes ses manifestations sont propres à la vie sociale' (Paine, 'Le langage du corps', *Lettre*, p. 18).

verbal exchange with the audience. If her other *actions* did not involve such an exchange, Paine still focused on communication without the viewers' active participation: 'Afterwards [i.e., after *Homage to a Young Drug Addict*] I established a communication by using myself as a "medium" factor. The public participated with their bodies but remained immobile. Their organs participated with my organs; there was not a need for physical manifestation'.³⁸ This remark pinpoints another fundamental principle in Paine's work – that of the collective body – a concept with historical ramifications going back to the end of the French Ancien Régime.

In France, the notion of the collective body developed during the French Revolution. As Antoine de Baecque pointed out in his book about the bodily metaphors that invaded the political sphere during the French Revolution, the Jacobins promoted the idea of 'the great body of the citizens'.³⁹ This regenerated body consisted of one large, coherent, organic entity, formed by the multiplicity of the citizens' smaller bodies, now responsible for the political power. At the core of the Jacobins' argument was the notion of universalism, an ideal attainable since all citizens now shared a common interest in the *Nation*, catalyst for equality.⁴⁰ Therefore, when Jacques-Louis David undertook *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume* (1791), a depiction of the oath taken by over 600 Deputies to give France a new Constitution on 20 June 1789, human bodies and politics were the two forces he had to take into account for his composition (Fig. 3).⁴¹ As de Baecque emphasised, David's work shows a dense and compact crowd physically unified through a common political commitment, visually conveying the reality of the collective body at one (brief) moment of the French Revolution; individuals connected with one another and coming together to constitute, literally, a political body.

The notion of 'the great body of the citizens' resonates with Paine's understanding of the body as sociological, that is, as inseparable from the greater entity of society: 'The "isolated" man is inconceivable; all his manifestations are part of social life' she asserted.⁴² Furthermore, the

collective body as represented in David's *Serment du Jeu de Paume* is echoed in Pane's performances, insofar as these relied on an understanding of the human body as a shared entity, pointing up the political impact of her *actions*, which involved effort, exhaustion, and wounds. Pane's self-inflicted wounds, pivotal to *Escalade non anesthésiée* and numerous other *actions*, not only focused the viewer's consciousness by placing him/her in a position of empathy, but also challenged the audience to face its participation in the collective body through the discomfort that the visualisation of the *constats* involved. Exploiting the biological fact that each individual is a body, Pane reflected on the collective implication of our corporal condition evidenced in her query 'is your body mine?' and her declaration 'I am the others'.⁴³ Lucy Lippard's emphasis on the fact that Pane 'used her body as a "conductor"' was, in this sense, insightful.⁴⁴ Moreover, it was consistent with Pane's conception of a wound as 'an establishment of a relationship with the other', for it indicates the link Pane created by the act of wounding herself in her attempt to communicate with others.⁴⁵ In this respect, *Escalade non anesthésiée* departed from *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume*: while in David's composition, the citizens were united through a unanimous political stance which transported them to a near-ecstatic state, Pane shared pain with her audience, simultaneously testing her own bodily limits and symbolically overstepping the viewer's.

Anaesthesia as a Metaphor for Alienation

Pane's efforts to destabilise the collective body, which she indirectly wounded through the pain she inflicted on herself, implied her fight against the anaesthetised state of individuals in modern society. Exposing the vulnerability of the physical body became an almost common gesture in performances of the 1970s. As a result, Performance Art from this period has often been labelled as masochistic, notably by Kathy O'Dell for whom artists' masochistic gestures evidenced the breakdown of the social order. For masochism precisely involves a contractual aspect which places the act of wounding oneself within the social realm.⁴⁶ More generally, Martin Jay interpreted artists' tendencies to harm themselves as a challenge to the Kantian aesthetic experience based on disinterest and contemplation. While emphasising the heterogeneity of the works engaged in this ontological battle, Jay characterised this anti-modernist impetus as a 'mobilization of aesthetics against anaesthesia'.⁴⁷ Again, this issue, a primary element of *Escalade non anesthésiée*, can be placed historically, in relation to Debord's theory on alienation:

The spectator's alienation from and submission to the contemplated object (which is the outcome of his unthinking activity) works like this: the more he contemplates, the less he lives; the more readily he recognizes his own need in the images of need proposed by the dominant system, the less he understands his own existence and his own desires.⁴⁸

The principle of alienation discussed by Debord emphasised how the individual, dispossessed of himself/herself, saw his/her existence submitted to an order in which he/she participated but which ultimately dominated him/her. Pane addressed this in her seminal essay from 1974, 'Letter to an Unknown Person':

Civilization . . . is taking back the body's language . . . in order to transform the threat it contains into an entertaining, ostentatious, perverted, lustful game, giving the

43. 'Ton corps est-il le mien?' and 'Je suis les autres' (Pane, *Lettre*, p. 85. Date unknown).

44. Lucy Lippard, 'The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women's Body Art', *Art in America*, vol. 64, no. 3, May–June 1976, p. 80.

45. Pane, *Lettre*, p. 102. Date unknown.

46. See O'Dell, *Contract*.

47. Martin Jay, 'Somaesthetics and Democracy: Dewey and Contemporary Body Art', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 36, no. 4, winter 2002, p. 62.

48. Debord, *Société*, p. 23.

49. 'Civilisation . . . récupérant la langue du corps . . . pour transformer la menace qu'il contient en un jeu divertissant, ostentatoire, pervers, lubrique, donnant l'illusion à l'individu de le libérer alors qu'en réalité la Société l'aliène, transformant sa psychomotricité en une puissance de rendement: 'corps cybernétique/corps compétitif'. L'un découle des sociétés industrielles, l'autre des sportives, officines du muscle, du mécanique, de l'aliénation et de l'oppressif' (Pane, 'Lettre à un(e) inconnu(e)', *Lettre*, pp. 14–15. Originally published in *Artitudes International*, no. 15–17, October–December 1974, p. 34).

50. 'La douleur contre toute espèce d'anesthésie morale' (Pane, *Lettre*, p. 155. Date unknown).

51. Discussions on alienation proliferated in *Internationale Situationniste*. See for example 'De l'aliénation. Examen de plusieurs aspects concrets', *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 10, March 1969, pp. 56–82.

52. Neil Sheehan, 'Should We Have War Crime Trials?', *New York Times*, 28 March 1971, sec. BR1. Sheehan's article was translated into French and reproduced in its full length in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 19–25 April 1971, pp. 67–82.

53. Quoted in Sheehan's article.

54. This story (including photographs) was reported in the French press. See Emile Guikovsky, 'L'Amérique s'accuse', *L'Express*, 8–14 December 1969, pp. 21–5.

individual the illusion that it gives him/her some freedom, whereas, in truth, Society alienates individuals, transforms their psychomotricity into production power: 'cybernetic body/competitive body'. One results from industrial societies, the other from sport-oriented societies, with the muscle, the mechanical, the alienation and the oppression.⁴⁹

In agreement with Debord, Pane associated man's state of alienation with the functioning of late industrial societies. Civilisation, although potentially allowing people's liberation from the force of production, actually manipulated their minds to the point of numbness, thus securing the perpetuation of society's domination and power. Therefore, Pane's criticism was a follow-up to her statement from 1972 about determinism, as well as a sign of her rallying to the Sociological Artists' political agenda vis-à-vis the society of the spectacle. While contrasting the human body emanating from entertainment with the human body resulting from labour, Pane emphasised their similarly alienated condition. In this context, her deliberate choice in *Escalade non anesthésiée* to climb feet and hands unprotected a ladder studded with shards, indicated her effort to 're-corporalise' the abstracted body-as-image, as its authenticity was annihilated by the society of the spectacle which confined it to the role of an object of representation.

Among Pane's gestures of resistance to society's oppression, *escalade*, in the sense of climbing, was particularly emblematic, as it signified both an effort to overcome an obstacle and an affirmation of free will. Pane's first ascent took place in 1970, when she climbed a sand quarry near Paris. This physically demanding *action*, titled *Deuxième projet du silence*, involved danger as the quarry wall might have collapsed at any moment during Pane's ascension (Fig. 4). This performance denoted an act of individual resistance, reiterated in *Escalade non anesthésiée*, which, additionally, caused her to bleed. Pane's climbing of the ladder was intended to wake her physical self and, consequently, the viewer, from an artificial sleep: 'Pain against any kind of moral anaesthesia', as she wrote.⁵⁰ Pane's introduction of the notion of non-anaesthesia resonated in a particular way with the discourse on alienation.⁵¹ Indeed, anaesthesia as such was a powerful image for expressing the fact that individuals were fundamentally conditioned.

The consequences of alienation, so central to the preoccupations of Pane and her peers, received dramatic illustration at the time of her performance, with the accounts of the trial of Lieutenant William Calley on his involvement in the My Lai massacre in March 1968. Calley's defenders pleaded the Lieutenant's 'robot personality' in order to exculpate him.⁵² Therefore, instead of referring to the *Manuel of Military Campaign* which stated that soldiers were 'not expected to evaluate, in the context of the discipline of the war, the legal value of a received order', Calley's defenders emphasised their client's mental inability to question his Captain's orders, regardless of what they entailed.⁵³ In other words, they dismissed the fact that Calley was 'legally' not allowed to exercise a moral choice when he was assigned the My Lai mission, pointing out instead his automaton nature and mental catalepsy. A counter-image also came out of the reporting on My Lai – the story of a soldier who wounded himself deliberately in order not to participate in the massacre.⁵⁴ This gesture was somehow reminiscent of Pane's *action*, which had a military dimension, although the contexts in which the soldier and the artist wounded themselves were obviously very different (on the one hand, a soldier caught in the urgency of the war and on



Fig. 4. Gina Pane, *Deuxième projet du silence*, 1970, black and white photographs on plywood, 106.8 × 180.5 cm. Photographs: Hervé Gioaguen. Musée départemental d'art ancien et contemporain, Épinal. (Photo: © Adagp, Paris 2011.)

the other hand, an artist reflecting in her studio on events unfolding at a distance).

Considering the political significance of Pane's wounds in *Escalade non anesthésiée*, the performance also raised the question of an individual's responsibility. In this respect, it related to such works as Michel Journiac's *Piège pour une exécution capitale* (*Trap for a Capital Punishment*), which consisted of a white full-scale guillotine displayed in the garden of the American Center in Paris in June 1971. As *Escalade non anesthésiée*, Journiac's work was featured in the October 1971 issue of *Artitudes*. François Pluchart wrote about it:

Art... is a critical exercise and its efficacy is even greater when it confronts more overtly the defects of society. Death penalty... is an intolerable phenomenon for anyone who has not given up being human. One needed Journiac's courage to dare show publicly to any being who accepts capital punishment not to be immediately sentenced to death, that at every moment that goes by, he/she is the accomplice in a potential assassination.⁵⁵

Piège pour une exécution capitale and *Escalade non anesthésiée* both sought to challenge passivity, with the purpose of stopping the 'segregation of individual consciousnesses'.⁵⁶ In both cases, the viewer was confronted with ethical questions in which his/her responsibility proved to be involved. At the same time, *Piège pour une exécution capitale* and *Escalade non anesthésiée* offered a major difference: unlike Journiac's purely sculptural work, Pane's *constat* was the result of a painful performance that she subjected herself to, even though no audience witnessed it directly.

55. 'L'art... est un exercice critique et son efficacité est d'autant plus grande qu'il s'affronte plus ouvertement aux tares de la société. La peine de mort... est un phénomène intolérable à qui n'a pas renoncé à être homme. Il fallait le courage de Journiac pour oser montrer publiquement à tout être qui accepte que la peine capitale ne soit pas immédiatement condamnée à mort qu'il se fasse à chaque instant qui passe le complice d'un éventuel assassinat' (François Pluchart, 'L'œuvre la plus belle', *Artitudes*, no. 1, October 1971, no page number). The death penalty still existed in France in 1971. It was abolished in 1981.

56. 'La ségrégation des consciences individuelles' (Pane, 'Blessure/Mort: Corps Collectif', *Lettre*, p. 25). Originally published in Italian in *Controcultura*, no. 1, September 15, 1976, p. 12.

Return to Consciousness: Reading *Escalade Non Anesthésiée's Constat*

Lea Vergine noted about the presence of an audience at a performance: 'The public is needed to complete the event; it must be involved in a collective experience that leads it to reconsider its quotidian existence and the rules of its ordinary behaviour'.⁵⁷ Vergine's remark relates to the conventional understanding of performance as a practice requiring the inclusion of the viewer within its spatial and temporal sphere, thus overlooking the importance Pane placed on photo-documentation in her artistic strategy.⁵⁸ The term photo-documentation should actually not be understood as purely documentary. Rather, it is indicative of Pane's conception of performance as a non-self-sufficient practice, which only photo-documentation could make complete.

The relationship between performance and documentation gave rise to controversy in the 1970s as many artists expressed scepticism towards photo-documentation. As Carl Andre famously put it:

The photograph is a lie. I'm afraid we get a great deal of our exposure to art through magazines and through slides and I think this is dreadful, this is anti-art because art is a direct experience with something in the world and photography is just a rumor, a kind of pornography of art.⁵⁹

If some artists considered photo-documentation a poor evocation of a unique event, others, including Pane, integrated photography into their performance practice, hence the secondary importance of the presence of an audience. Pane wrote about the role of photo-documentation: 'The body, which is at the same time: project/matter/execution of an artistic practice, finds its logical medium in the image, by way of the photograph'.⁶⁰ Thus, Pane and Françoise Masson determined the series of shots to be taken during the performance (Fig. 5), and the making of the *constat* then involved thoughtful editing, resulting in a visually compelling photographic account.

A significant example of Pane's wish to leave a lasting trace of an ephemeral action, *Escalade non anesthésiée's constat* not only includes a carefully selected set of black-and-white photographs, but the ladder itself, adding a sculptural dimension to the work. The ladder against a wall placed next to the photographic panel, forcing a frontal viewing, is a departure from the type of phenomenological experience prompted by Pane's earlier minimalist works.⁶¹ At the same time, this frontal presentation, reproducing the position of the ladder in her studio, facilitates the principle of a re-enactment of the performance triggered by the editing of the photographs.

The performance is re-enacted through the *constat* by means of the large number of prints, a total of sixty-nine displayed on a sizeable panel; as a result, the viewer cannot take in the whole panel at once, but must 'read' the successive sequences of shots. The progression of the viewer's reading therefore implies a temporal unfolding which intensifies his/her experience. Furthermore, the prints are arranged in groups of three, nine, or twelve, most groups composed of different framings of the same motif. This visual rhythm infuses the panel with a dynamism effectively evoking the physical effort of the performance itself. Finally, though no print is the same, their repetitive content stresses the length of the performance in time and, more importantly, the artist's physical suffering. Thus, the *constat* functions as a 'live' narrative of the performance.

As discussed earlier, Pane's actions, including her self-inflicted wounds, were motivated by her ambition to promote an idea of the body as a communal

57. Lea Vergine, 'Body Language. Lea Vergine Looks at the Use of the Body in Art', *Art and Artists*, vol. 9, no. 6, 1974, p. 25.

58. On the question of co presence in performance, see also Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (Routledge: New York, 1993).

59. *Avantgarde*, no. 1, fall 1970, p. 24.

60. 'Le corps qui est à la fois: projet/matériau/exécutant d'une pratique artistique trouve son support logique dans l'image par le moyen photographique' (Pane, 'Le corps et son support image pour une communication non linguistique', *Lettre*, p. 11). Originally published in *Attitudes International*, no. 3, February–March 1973, p. 8.

61. Among Pane's minimalist works are *Hyde Park Gazon* (1966) and *Installation pour un corps lunaire pénétrable* (1966).

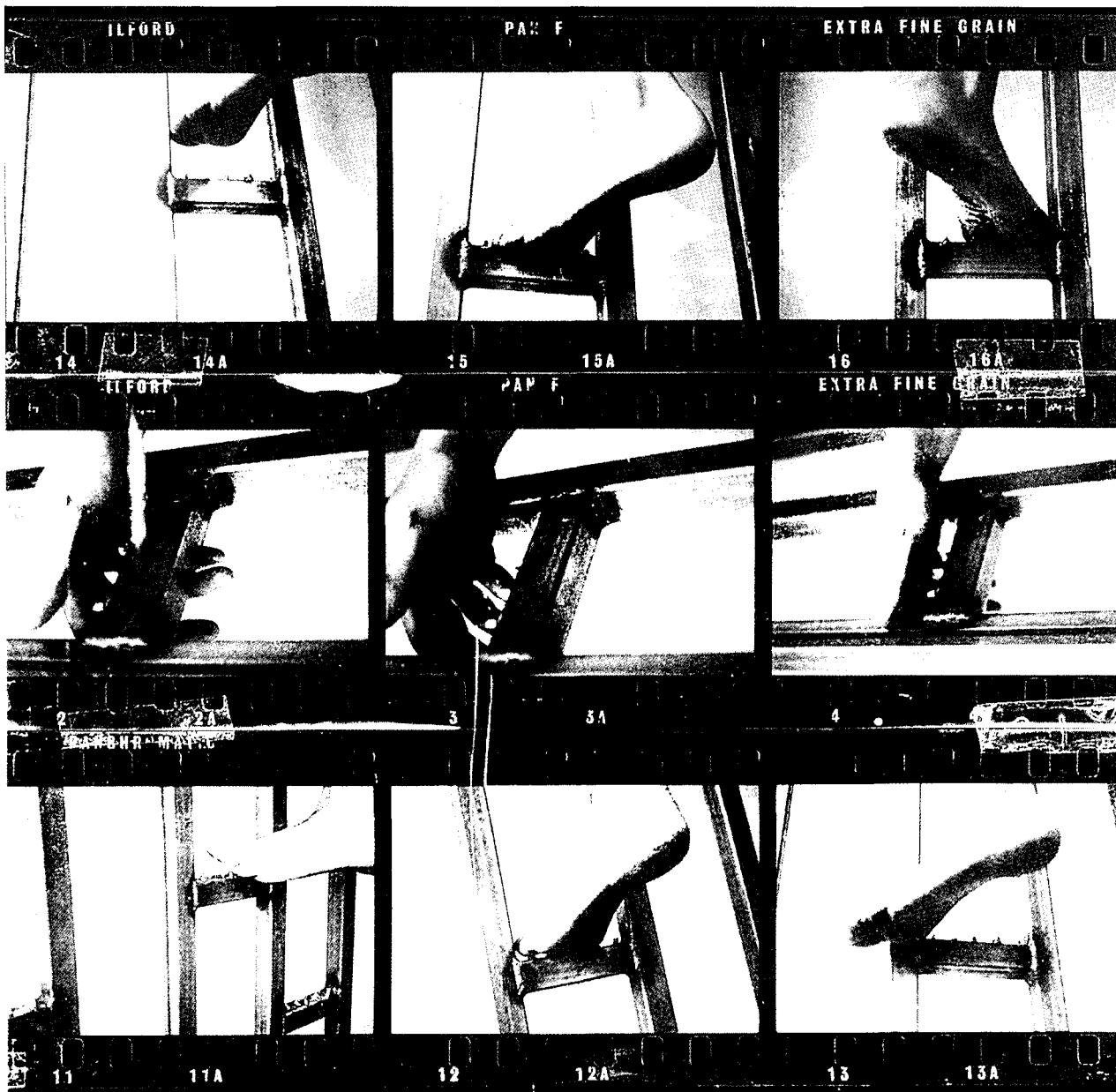


Fig. 5. Gina Pane, *Escalade non anesthésiée*, 1971, black and white contact prints. Photographs: Françoise Masson. (Photo: © Adagp, Paris 2011.)

entity. Indeed, for her, this was the condition for a collective de-anesthetisation. Accordingly, the *constat* sought to encourage an identification of Pane's own body with the viewer's so that the viewer's return to consciousness could occur. Pane described this process as follows: 'Contrary to the happening which tended "to make one participate", performance tends to the assimilation of the other through operations of identifications both by projection of the conjunctival tissue: the membrane, and by energy'.⁶² A psychoanalytic subtext is tangible here and consistent with Pane's use of psychoanalytic terms to define the psychic processes at play when one attended her performances or viewed the *constats*. The process of 'identification' was staged by the artist through the juxtaposition of the ladder and the photo-documentation — two panels of

62. 'Au contraire du happening qui tendait "à faire participer", la performance tend à l'assimilation de l'autre par des opérations d'identification à la fois par projection du tissu conjonctif: la membrane et par l'énergie'. Pane, *Lettre*, p. 96. Date unknown.

63. 'Attitude absolument pas autobiographique' (Pane, 'La douleur', *Lettre*, p. 40). Originally published in *Les Revues parlées* (Centre Georges Pompidou: Paris, 1996), no page number. Pane continued 'I lose my identity to find it again in others, back and forth, balance between the individual and the collective, the transindividual body'. 'Je perds mon identité en la retrouvant chez les autres, va et-vient, équilibre de l'individuel et du collectif, le corps transindividuel'. On the viewer's relationship to the performer and the *constat*, see Kathy O'Dell, 'Displacing the Haptic: Performance Art, the Photographic Document, and the 1970s', *Performance Research*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1997, pp. 73–81.

64. In her subsequent *actions*, Pane often wore an all-white outfit, which she considered to be completely neutral.

65. In addition, very little biographical information is available on Pane.

66. Blessing, 'Gina Pane's Witnesses', pp. 14–26. Regarding Pane's *action* *Autoportraits*, Blessing noted p. 24: 'Perhaps Pane emphasizes the plural in the title (*Autoportraits*) in order to implicate the other women present as well as herself', an allusion to the collective body.

67. 'L'animateur par sa présence trop voyante peut devenir la "chose", au lieu d'animer la "chose" (subjectivité au lieu d'intersubjectivité)' (Forest, *Art sociologique*, p. 23).

68. Pane's *constat* of *Escalade non anesthésiée* shares the memorial function that Blessing attributed to Pane's *La Pêche Endeillée* and *Le Riz No. 1*: 'By metaphorically evoking temporal events harming both the human beings and the environment, these installations act as "somber memorials"' (Blessing, 'Some notes on Gina Pane's wounds', p. 25).

69. Jonathan Crary, 'Spectacle, Attention, Counter Memory', *October*, no. 50, fall 1989, p. 106.

70. 'La mémoire n'est pas nécessairement traitée comme un souvenir mais comme une durée de conscience' (Pane, *Lettre*, p. 152). Date unknown).

identical dimensions whose visual structures, resembling grids, are similar: the rungs of the ladder, placed irregularly between the vertical posts, echo the assemblage of the prints. As a result, the boundary between the actual ladder and the prints is somehow blurred, as though the prints were inscribed within the ladder structure. This allows the viewer to visualise himself/herself climbing the ladder, thus establishing a kind of fluidity of subjectivities between the performer and the viewer. Accordingly, Pane, who asserted that her 'attitude' was 'absolutely not autobiographical', carefully concealed her identity in *Escalade non anesthésiée* in order to facilitate the identification between her body and the viewer's.⁶³ The relatively neutral outfit worn in *Escalade non anesthésiée*—black pants and a sober checked shirt—is a first indication of this effort.⁶⁴ Moreover, most shots avoid showing her facial features beyond the profile. Similarly, the shots showing the ladder in its entirety and documenting different moments of Pane's ascension are taken from a distance, preventing a clear insight into her persona.⁶⁵ Operating as images of a generic, universal suffering body, the photographs are meant to transmit to the viewer's physical self the sensations of the climb. Thus, Pane's performance was not so much about *her* body but rather the image of *a* body. Jennifer Blessing defined Pane as 'a generic actor', recognising the artist's resistance to performing in a narcissistic manner.⁶⁶ In this respect, Pane agreed with Forest's stance against an artistic practice centred primarily around the promotion of the artist's identity. Forest warned that 'through his/her conspicuous presence, the artist can become the "thing" instead of animating the "thing" (subjectivity instead of intersubjectivity)'.⁶⁷ By suggesting an affinity between *art sociologique* and Performance Art, this remark identifies the connection between artist and viewer as an element crucial to the art of the 1970s.

Epilogue

The political content of *Escalade non anesthésiée*—a unique contribution to *art sociologique*, an artistic movement influenced by the discourse of May 68—raises the question of its significance beyond its art historical value. Admittedly, the performance unfolded in a present that cannot be recovered, which was marked by the Vietnam War. However, the *constat* also commemorates the ravages of the war in the name of collective memory.⁶⁸ This shows a correlation between Pane and Debord's thinking. Indeed, as Jonathan Crary wrote, 'Debord sees the core of the spectacle as the annihilation of historical knowledge—in particular the destruction of the recent past. In its place, there is the reign of a perpetual present'.⁶⁹ This observation underscores Pane's view that a performance is inconceivable without a *constat*, for no other temporalities than the present would otherwise be at play in her work. The continuous and repetitive visual de-anesthetisation that the *constat* commands allows for a lasting effectiveness, mediated by the artist's staging of her own body as a generic one. Pane wrote that 'memory is not necessarily treated as a souvenir but as a duration of consciousness'.⁷⁰ The reading of the *constat* of *Escalade non anesthésiée* brings about a duration of consciousness on the viewer's part that reveals the relevance of this work for current and future audiences.

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