

**Performing the Trans- Body Text:
Strategies for Productive Disruption in Identity-Based Performance**

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Abstract

LGBTQ+¹ identity-based performance has a long history of presenting personal narratives to audiences. These works have been instrumental in making LGBTQ+ subjectivities “visible” in our cultures and have been positioned as some of the most important elements of our cultural production. However, these performances also run the risk of essentializing and normativising identities. Positioning trans as ‘a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored’ (Stone, 1991, para 44), this practice research has asked the question ‘what can the/my trans- body ‘text’ do onstage when it does not explain or define the Trans identity’.

This practice research has taken the form of three performance laboratories in dialogue with post-structuralist, cinematic, transgender and queer theories. The first piece pushed off of Foucault’s writings on ‘confessional culture’ (1989) to disrupt requirements of identity

¹ Common current shorthand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and other non-heteronormative sex and gender identities

truth telling and found itself productively between the states of truth and lie. The in between was further cultivated in the second practice which brought autobiographical materials but neither truth nor lie onto a Deleuzoguattarian 'plane of immanence' (1980). This, while fruitful, did not work with the specificity of the trans- body identity. The third practice returned to the body and moved into productive disruption by creating a tactic of 'identity visuality' to refuse and oscillate with identity visibility.

This project reveals transing as method for creating performance 'planes of immanence' opening spaces of productive disruption. Via the third practice I advance a new dialectical structure of "Identity Visuality" in contrast to "Identity Visibility" and a performance strategy that uses trans- identity to create oscillation between the two. I propose these interlinked and overlapping strategies as original contributions to existing trans- and performance theories with applications for making and thinking trans- (and) performance work.

