

Special Issue 1 (2025)

White Roses, Pink Glitter. Learning about Embodied Knowledge from Queer Performance Artists

Rena Onat (renaonat@posteo.de) 

Abstract: Queerness is a body practice. Through the practice of Yoggaton, the dancer Maque Pereyra reflects on embodied knowledge that is interconnected with other forms of knowledge and believes that traces of colonial and other traumas are physically imprinted into and onto our bodies. The author argues that accessing embodied knowledge is difficult as it can be overwhelming or too painful. In addition to Pereyra, this article focuses on Leman Seveda Darıcioğlu's performance "White Roses, Pink Glitter" exploring their performance work as an artistic approach to researching trauma, queer death and queer connection. The work addresses mourning for Zak Kostopoulus (aka Zackie Oh), a drag queen and HIV activist from Athens who fell victim to an anti-queer hatecrime, as well as the German resistance group White Rose. Thereby, Darıcioğlu connects themselves with queer history and queer emotions.

Keywords: Art, Body, Knowledge, Performativity, Queer Theory

Submitted: 15 August 2024

Accepted: 07 July 2025

Published: 07 November 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17169/ogj.2025.308>

This article is part of Special Issue "membra(I)nes - Technologies, Theories and Aesthetics of Im/Permeability", edited by Muriel González-Athenas, Susanne Huber, Katrin Köppert and Friederike Nastold, was edited by Katrin Köppert, Friederike Nastold and Muriel González-Athenas.

White Roses, Pink Glitter. Learning about Embodied Knowledge from Queer Performance Artists

“Our bodies don’t understand these binaries” (Pereyra 2020, n.p.) explains Berlin-based dancer and performer Maque Pereyra¹ during a Yoggaton workshop. She blows my mind... Yoggaton is a dance and body practice developed by her that combines asanas from yoga with perreo, a way of dancing to reggaeton, and at the same time a social movement with Afro-diasporic roots (Pereyra 2021, 2024).

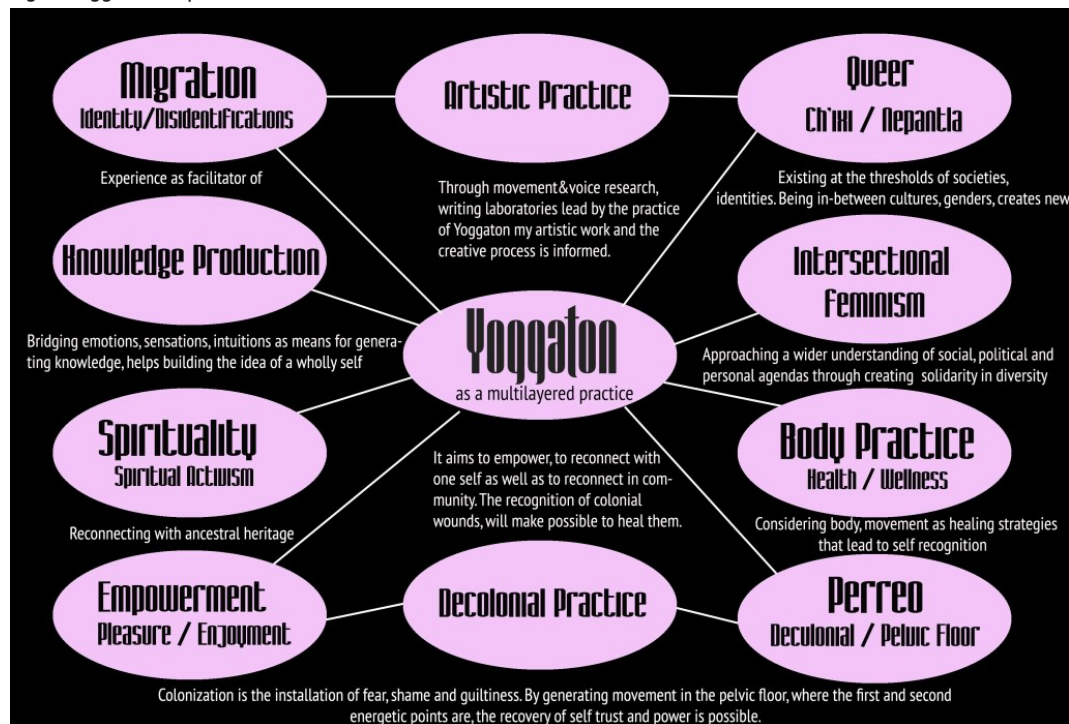
I understand Pereyra’s words to mean that the dichotomies and binaries constructed by colonial and patriarchal demarcations – such as mind/body, rationality/intuition, masculinity/femininity, saint/whore – do not exist and are already overcome inside our bodies. Queerness is in our queer bodies; we experience and practice queerness again and again. Queerness is a body practice. In her book “Borderlands”, Gloria Anzaldúa formulates a critique of binaries, borders, dichotomies and objectifications as part of colonial violence. Based on her own experiences of growing up as a Chicana in the borderlands of the US-Mexican border, she theorizes the border as a wound that runs not only between states, but also through her Chicana body. She explains that the construction of European superiority is based on a splitting of body and mind and a privileging of rationality over spirituality, nature and physical experience.

This colonial legacy has led to the fact that access to embodied knowledge is still difficult today – at least within the European context. In contrast to a colonial mindset that privileges the mind over the body and constructs thinking and feeling as opposite entities, Anzaldúa explains that the body is intelligent (Anzaldúa 1987). This insight in turn makes it possible to envision that overcoming the separation of body, mind and spirituality would be an important step towards decolonization. Like Anzaldúa, the dancer Pereyra reflects on embodied knowledge that is interconnected with other forms of knowledge (Fig. 1) and believes that traces of colonial and other traumas are physically imprinted into and onto our bodies.²

1 Pereyra studied psychology in La Paz, Bolivia and completed the MA Solo Dance Authorship at the Inter-University Center for Dance (HZT) in Berlin. She is a dancer, performer, singer and DJ. She was a member of the Berlin queer Latinx performance group The Culonizers. In her performances, she works with indigenous-futurist perspectives and has performed at Sophien-säle, Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin and many other venues. She has also developed her Yoggaton practice, which she teaches in workshops and via Masterclasses on YouTube.

2 I first considered this topic as part of my research for my doctoral thesis on artwork by queer artists of color, a revised version of which has since been published by transcript Verlag (Onat 2023).

Fig. 1: Yoggaton Mapa



Source: Maque Pereyra (2020), digital graphic, <https://yoggaton.com/> (08/15/2024)

In their performances, Leman Sevda Daricioğlu³ works with the element of time and pushes themselves to the limits of their physical and mental stamina. This makes Leman's work particularly interesting for the question of embodied knowledge and can be connected furthermore to investigations of artistic research and reparative practices in the face of queerphobia and heteronormativity. What happens in the body during endurance performances lasting several hours? What does the artist learn? How does it affect us to experience or witness such a performance and to be in the space with a person who remains almost motionless for many hours? For the performance "White Roses, Pink Glitter" Daricioğlu remains naked on a table for five hours straight. Daricioğlu's body is completely covered in pink glitter, white roses lie in front of them (Fig. 2). The work addresses mourning for Zak Kostopoulos (aka Zackie Oh), a drag queen and HIV activist from Athens who fell victim to an anti-queer hatecrime.

3 Daricioğlu (based in Berlin and İstanbul) is a multidisciplinary artist who specializes in long-duration live performances. "With a focus on chronopolitics and necropolitics, Leman's work centres on the vulnerability and resilience of marginalised bodies. They are interested in queer re-appropriation methodologies of the past and the present from a Southwest Asian perspective within a deal with violence and privilege dynamics referring to the past and current hegemonies, totalitarian regimes and dictatorships in some parts of the world and rising fascism and conservatism all over." Daricioğlu is currently completing their master's degree in the "Live art forms" program at AdBK Nuremberg and also studied sociology at the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in İstanbul. Apart from performing internationally and being a member of the platform Performistanbul, Daricioğlu has translated queertheoretical texts into Turkish (Daricioğlu 2024a).

It also refers to the German resistance group White Rose. What transnational and transhistorical connections are drawn here between anti-fascist and queer struggles? These questions are relevant also from the perspectives of marginalized communities and social movements.

Fig. 2: Leman Sevda Daricioğlu, *White Roses, Pink Glitter*, Live performance 5 hours, with the curatorial support of Performistanbul, 6. October. 2020 16:30–21:30, Haus der Statistik Berlin.



Source: Photography/Documentation of the Performance: Derin Cankaya; <http://lemandaricioglu.com/white-roses-pink-glitter/> (08/15/2024)

Both Pereyra and Daricioğlu live in Berlin, but did not grow up in Germany, having migrated from Bolivia and Turkey respectively. They did not go through socialization in Germany which makes a difference regarding experiences of structural racism compared to BIPoCs⁴ born in Germany. Their work can be considered against the backdrop of a transnational queer community in Berlin, where different migration movements coexist and overlap. However, there is a lack of transfer of intergenerational knowledge between queer migrant and/or BIPoC movements. We quickly forget what the political and artistic strategies that shaped struggles for queer liberation and decolonization were. (How) do they still inform contemporary practice? Some performative practices that are carriers of queer transnational histories endure – such as the drag performances at the Gayhane parties at SO36. This needs to be explored further in the future. But for now, I am interested in turning to embodied knowledge within queer performance art, also as a way of opening up other approaches to

4 BIPoC refers to Black, Indigenous, People of Color and is a commonly used self-definition to unite people negatively affected by racism.

knowledge for art and media studies research and queer theory building. What insights does the embodied knowledge of queer performance artists and practitioners who use bodywork for empowerment in anti-racist, queer and intersectional settings have to offer? I am seeking answers in queer performances and through exchange with artists and other people who practice bodywork with a queer perspective (Onat/Pereyra/Müller 2022). In this article I focus on the performance “White Roses, Pink Glitter” by Darıcioğlu and explore how their performance work is an artistic approach to researching trauma, queer death and queer connection. I start with my theoretical framework bringing approaches from visual culture studies and embodied knowledge together. Then I will introduce the performance “White Roses, Pink Glitter” in depth and work towards highlighting central themes and finish by discussing the way performance is used as an analytical tool here.

Visual Culture Studies and Embodied Knowledge

Questions of embodied knowledge have long been discussed in the discourses of New Materialism and also play an important role in the context of affect theory and queer theory. Sara Ahmed, for example, uses the different connotations of the word “impression” to undo the separation of emotion and sensation, arguing, that the contact with an object generates feeling. Impressions can be acts of perception and cognition, “but forming an impression also depends on how objects impress upon us” (Ahmed 2004, 6). She asks how activities and history (/ies) leave traces on the skin thus inscribing themselves into our bodies. Objects, but also bodies, are shaped by contact, by work, by activities and above all by repeated activities that leave their mark, for example in the form of imprints, traces, bumps, the formation of calluses or tensions. Or with Ahmed: “what we ‘do do’ affects what we ‘can do’” (Ahmed 2006, 59). She turns to phenomenology because it emphasizes the importance of lived experience and argues that the body literally provides us with a perspective, a starting point from which our perception of the world unfolds (Ahmed 2006, 8; Merleau-Ponty 1945). Ahmed builds on this from a queer, intersectional and decolonial perspective and suggest an approach of queer phenomenology that already allows us to not think of body/mind, thinking/feeling as binary oppositions. Another vantage point from which to think about embodied knowledge are current trauma therapy approaches that assume that traumas are stored in the body (van der Kolk 2015). If these traumas can be not only individual but also collective based on queer, postcolonial and racism-critical perspectives there is the implication that the embodied knowledge within people who are affected by these forms of structural violence

is significant for resistance, healing and transformation. What other stories are stored, how do they become accessible and (where) can “reparative” practices be found (Sedgwick 1997)? Thus the body functions to a certain extent as an archive, which has potentially stored transhistorical knowledge as well as intergenerational traumas and stories of resistance – but this archive, like many archives, is hardly accessible. Can knowledge be “unarchived” from a body (Ifekoya et al. 2016; Micossé-Aikins/Onat/Rage 2017; Afonu/Haritaworn/Rage 2018)? Where in the body is it even stored? As impressions on the skin as Ahmed suggests? Or in the muscles? And how do we open the boxes inside the archive? Maybe I am being too literal here... yet I wonder. I want to note, that to turn to knowledge as embodied generally involves at least two lines of thinking – first to think about knowledge of and in the body and the idea of embodiment, but also secondly to critically challenge academic knowledge production that privileges constructions of rationality and objectivity and to dismantle hierarchies between different forms of knowledge production where the mind is considered to be above the body or superior to it. Critical thinkers from the Americas have created the term *sentipensando* (feeling-thinking) to acknowledge the insights of rural and indigenous people as valuable and suggest *sentipensar* as an approach to practice scholarly work in ways that aim to resist colonial and hegemonic forms of knowledge production (Rodríguez Castro 2020, among others). Interestingly but not surprisingly, there are already quite a few publications from the field of dance theory, that consider dance and movement as forms of knowledge production (Gehm/Husemann/von Wilcke 2007), for example by engaging questions of embodied philosophy in dance (Katan 2016).

Generally speaking, embodied knowledge still plays a subordinate role within German academic discourse – mostly the body remains the object of research. However, the theoretical work that has been framed as the “body turn” in the humanities, should not be left out here (for example Merleau-Ponty 1945; Foucault 1976; Butler 1993; Grosz 1994; Massumi 2002). The body as a discursive construct, as shaped itself by political, social and cultural norms and practices and not just as a mere biological reality has been an important part of the theoretical and methodological approaches within visual culture studies, art and media studies that have shaped my thinking and research. Body images and visual constructions of differences of and on bodies are an important field of analyses to understand hegemonial power and regimes of representation. Until recently, however, I have not made any connection between body images and embodied knowledge. In this line of study, the body remained more of a sign, a carrier of codes that are connected to gendered and racialized power structures that I

want to understand and change. But the body itself slips away in the process, so do the questions whether or not the body has its own knowledge, its own perspective or what a body actually is. (How) Can I talk *with* an intelligent body instead of *about* it? What would it say about all this? I assume that queer performance artists have a very different approach on this.

White Roses, Pink Glitter

The performance “White Roses, Pink Glitter” (Fig. 3) took place at the Haus der Statistik in Berlin in 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has begun, and the room is very cold. The cold affects the performance. Daricioğlu is lying on a large table covered with a white cloth and with striking triangular legs. The table stands in front of a huge window front through which daylight shines on Daricioğlu’s glistening body. The whole body is covered in pink glitter, with white roses lying in front of Daricioğlu. The pink glitter gives the impression of flesh and changes the perception of the skin’s surface, so that it seems as if the flesh can be seen under the skin. Both glitter and the color pink are very strongly present in aesthetic practices of queer culture. The pose and the motionlessness of the body give the impression of death. A heartbeat could only be seen through the aorta. The white roses in front of Daricioğlu look like flowers at a funeral. They are intended to commemorate the German anti-fascist resistance group “White Rose” and in this context the color pink can also be interpreted as a reference to the pink triangle with which queer people were marked in concentration camps under National Socialism and which was appropriated and reinterpreted as a queer symbol by the queer movement. Especially in the course of queer HIV/AIDS activism in the 1980s in the USA and a poster by the group Act Up, on which the words “Silence=Death” can be seen in conjunction with the pink triangle (Fig. 4), it became very widespread and associated with radical queer activism. In Daricioğlu’s performance, the triangle is repeated several times as a geometric shape in the legs of the table. Ahmed reminds us that “stories of queer kinship are full of tables” (Ahmed 2006, 167) and continues to explain “[...] queer tables and other queer objects support proximity between those who are supposed to live on parallel lines, as points that should not meet. A queer object hence makes such contact possible. Or, to be more precise, a queer object would have a surface that supports such contact” (Ahmed 2006, 169). I will further discuss the kind of contact, that is made possible by this queer object later. The performance, which was realized with the curatorial support of Performistanbul⁵, the-

5 Performistanbul is an international performance art platform founded in 2016 with an initial aim to unite performance artists under one roof and is based in İstanbul (Performistanbul 2024).

matizes mourning for the queer and HIV activist and drag queen Kostopoulus (aka Zackie Oh), who was murdered in Athens in 2018. Kostopoulus was brutally beaten up in broad daylight and on the street and then further beaten up by four police officers who were called to help him. Kostopoulus eventually succumbed to his injuries (Hucal 2022). Two of the perpetrators have since been convicted, but all of the police officers have been acquitted. Attacks against queer people are not individual acts, but an expression of queer-hostile violence directed against queer people and especially against trans* people and our/their existence in this world. Daricioğlu locates themselves as part of a queer community and connects with these collective queer feelings of shame, grief, resilience and resistance in their own performances. Leman has spent some time in Athens themselves. Zackie Oh was friends with friends of Daricioğlu, so someone from the extended friendship circle. Daricioğlu says: "I was in Athens, and I had very beautiful time. The city that gave me so much took another queer person's life" (Daricioğlu 2023, n.p.). Their experience in Athens – on the one hand the empowerment through a vibrant queer community and queer activism and on the other hand the harsh reality of queer-hostile violence and the ongoing threat to queer life – was the starting point for the performance. Daricioğlu was born and raised in Turkey and explains "I come from a country where we have a lot of queer murders" (2023, n.p.). In Turkey, there are many cases of queer hate-crimes and violence which particularly affects trans* women. The queer movement in Turkey has never been assimilated, commercialized or pink-washed and thus remains a radical oppositional force. The struggle against hatecrimes and for better protection of trans* and queer lives in Turkey has been a big topic within the queer and especially the trans* movement in Turkey.⁶ This movement, in turn, stands in the context of a global struggle against anti-trans violence, which is commemorated annually on November 20th as the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

6 Özen Sarioğlu from the 20 November Trans+ Initiative explains in an interview with Kaos GL, a magazine of the queer association of the same name from Ankara, that laws are often not applied in cases of hate crimes against trans* people, no appropriate prosecution is carried out and, for example, in the recent case of an assault on a trans* woman in Izmir, the police and emergency services did not arrive at the scene until late – not an isolated incident (Özgenç 2024). In Germany, the discourse on hate crime is also viewed very critically by some queer and trans activists and scholars, because it also feeds into a racist construction of (male) people of color as perpetrators (Haritaworn 2015).

Fig. 3: Leman Sevda Daricioğlu, White Roses, Pink Glitter, Live performance 5 hours, with the curatorial support of Performistanbul, 6. October. 2020 16:30 – 21:30, Haus der Statistik Berlin.



Source: Photography/Documentation of the Performance: Esra Gültekin; <http://lemandaricioglu.com/white-roses-pink-glitter/> (08/15/2024)

Fig. 4: Silence=Death



Source: Silence=Death Project (1987, Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Oliver Johnston, Charles Kreloff, Chris Lione, and Jorge Soccarás). Lithography/Poster; <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/d2mxjdkb?wellcomeImageUrl=/indexplus/image/L0052822.html> (08/15/2024).

Visual Politics around Queer Death

Anti-queer and trans-phobic violence in Turkey has been a theme in Darıcioğlu's artistic work before. In 2016, in the performance "Kimler geldi kimler geçti", Darıcioğlu read out a text for two hours at a time over six days, consisting of news reports and witness statements on the murders and suicides of queer and trans* people. The material came from the archive of the Turkish queer association Pembe Hayat⁷ and the lawyers working with/in the queer movement in Turkey.⁸ The title of the performance refers to a song by the famous queer singer Ajda Pekkan⁹ and means "who has come, who has gone". The performance took place at an art fair in a very conservative neighbourhood and was not so much meant to be seen by the community but by the heteronormative audience local to that district (Beylikdüzü). Generally speaking, I perceived a difference in the way images and stories depicting and retelling violent crimes are handled within queer activism in Turkey compared to the German context. While in the German context there is usually a strong emphasis on trigger warnings or an avoidance of sharing certain shocking images of victims of trans-phobic and queer-phobic attacks and murders, in Turkey, these are often shown explicitly and in their brutality. This practice not only has the effect of potentially (re-)traumatizing other queers, but can also testify to collective solidarity, identification, anger and resistance. Christopher Nixon's reflections in his text "Working to Transform the Image" allow a nuanced examination of the ambivalence of showing violent images – here from a Black queer perspective. Using the history of photography, historical examples and current media coverage of the murder of George Floyd, he explains that violence against Black people is part of a collective visual memory. Photography has also played a powerful role in colonialism and in the objectification, othering and dehumanization of Black people. It can be a form of spectacle or death spectacle. On the other hand, there were also moments in which images that showed unbearable violence became moments for resistance and sparked a movement (Nixon 2023). I do not mean to carelessly conflate anti-Black racism and queerphobia here, but I do think it worthwhile to consider different approaches to the effects of showing or not-showing images of brutal violence and hatecrimes and what it does to see or to not see these images. Darıcioğlu told me in a personal conversation: "I chose glitter to erase the sur-

7 Pembe Hayat is a Turkish queer association that has been founded in 2006 in Ankara (Pembe Hayat 2024).

8 Thanks to Darıcioğlu for this information.

9 "Kimler Geldi, Kimler Geçti" is a song from 1973 by the famous Turkish queer singer and icon Ajda Pekkan.

face, to unmake it, to create something else. I became kind of like flesh. I wanted to create something where not looking would not be an option" (Darıcioğlu 2023, n.p.). This statement, to create something where not looking would not be an option, stuck with me. Especially in the face of queer-phobic and racist violence, looking away is an act that can lead to a perpetuation and continuation of violence and a lack of support for its victims.

Explicitly confronting us with death and the dead has always been part of radical queer activist strategy. I can't help but think of the iconic pictures of Candy Darling on her deathbed, taken in 1973 by Peter Hujar, who himself fell victim to the AIDS epidemic in 1987. Candy Darling lies in a hospital surrounded by lots of flowers and is wearing make-up, a diva to the very end. The power of the images, the self-representation in combination with the medium of photography work to inscribe her into a queer collective memory. It should be noted that loss, memory, grief and anger in the face of queer hostility and injustice all are interconnected. During the HIV/AIDS movement in the USA in the 1980s, activists organized public funerals and other high-profile actions. Many queer people who contracted AIDS documented themselves dying. Performance, photography and audiovisual media played a central role in this. In the present, there are also examples from the African continent, among others, of how queer (photo) activists such as Collen Mfawze or Zanele Muholi make queer death and homophobic violence a political issue by documenting funerals of the victims of hatecrimes, for example. Queer-hostile violence is something that can and does potentially affect "all of us" queers and is therefore something that may unite queer people. I understand Darıcioğlu's engagement with anti-queer hatecrime in Turkey and in Athens in this sense of being affected too as a member of the queer community. However, this also means making the experience of discrimination and violence a unifying moment and even a part of queer identity, which of course entails a certain problematic aspect. At the same time, there are major global differences in terms of safety for queer and trans* people but also between different members of the LGBTQIA++ communities. I find the work of Jin Haritaworn and Riley Snorton on Trans Necropolitics especially insightful in understanding these differences, as they elaborate how trans* people of color often only become included in queer institutions after their death, but are not properly integrated into the structures and given access to its resources while being alive (Haritaworn/Snorton 2012). However, understanding and perceiving the death of queer and trans* people as a political effect of structural violence, heteronormativity and unjust regimes still opens up a collective dimension. Trauma as a result of queer-hostile violence can therefore also be collective (for

example Cvetkovich 2015). This also involves feelings, emotions and affects that are not merely individual, but collective from a queer perspective. Queer grief is an affect that Leman explores through performance as a medium. Daricioğlu assumes the pose of the victim with their own body, in a sense putting themselves in his position or in his place. They used videos of the forensic evidence to find the pose. Daricioğlu explains to me: "In the beginning of the performance I took the shape of Zak's body when he was found" (Daricioğlu 2023, n.p.). Daricioğlu remains very still and appears to be dead themselves, apart from the visible pulse of the carotid artery. In order to circulate the blood and not endanger themselves, they have to make very subtle movements during the five-hour performance. In addition to the pose, the impression of death is invoked by the white roses that are reminiscent of flowers on a grave. In popular symbolism, white roses stand for pure, innocent love, but also for farewells and are often used at weddings as well as funerals. In Germany, the hit song "Weiße Rosen aus Athen" topped the charts in 1961. In it, Nana Mouskouri sings in German: "Weiße Rosen aus Athen, sagen dir, komm recht bald wieder, sagen dir auf Wiederseh'n." ("White roses from Athens, tell you, come back soon, tell you goodbye."). Despite the reference to Athens and the theme of saying goodbye, this reference does not seem to be intended by Leman but is interesting to consider nonetheless as it invokes the history of migrant "guestworkers" from Greece in Germany. For Daricioğlu, the white roses are meant to be an allusion to the White Rose resistance group. This opens up another historical dimension as well as a reminder of the continuity of, among other things, queerphobic persecution but also resistance against oppressive regimes. Daricioğlu explains: "With the reference to the German antifascist resistance group white rose I wanted to express that nowadays resistance is carried out by queer people" (2023, n.p.). As German memory culture is highly political, we need to be very careful here to assume a critical and intersectional and potentially disidentificatory perspective (Muñoz 1999) in order to commemorate the many queer victims of nationalsocialism without forgetting that (white German) queer people were not in opposition to nationalsocialism by default. Jin Haritaworn analyses the example of the so-called Homo Memorial in Berlin that was designed by the contemporary gay artists Ingar Dragset and Michael Elmgreen, and fought for by mainstream German Gay and Lesbian organizations such as the *Lesben- und Schwulenverband Deutschland* (LSVD, Lesbian and Gay Union Germany) explaining how queer nostalgia informs memories of the Nazi past (Haritaworn 2015, 142pp.). "In the practices of memorialization examined here, fascist terror is mobilized as a transtemporal affect that characterizes the homophobia of a present

that forebodes a return of past terror.” (Haritaworn 2015, 153) However, this in turn is used to mobilize racist constructs of (muslim) men of color as potential perpetrators and suspects (Haritaworn 2015, 153). With this warning in mind, I still see the reference to the White Rose as an attempt to connect with struggles that have taken place before us and within which people have opposed state violence and injustice. In fact, inspiration and strength for the future can be drawn from such stories of past resistance, which – with José Esteban Muñoz – can be understood as a moment of queer hope and “queer futurity” (Muñoz 2009). In Muñoz’ definition, queerness is not yet here. But there were and are many moments – especially in art – in which flashes of queerness as a horizon can be glimpsed. Queer utopia is therefore not something that will come in the distant future, after the era of heteronormativity, so to speak, but something that can be found in the here and now – and in the no-longer-consciousness of the past – at least incidentally and temporarily.

Commemorating and Contacting Queer Ancestors

The reasons why queer history(ies) are often no longer conscious are manifold but are mostly related to violence. Ann Cvetkovich writes: “Because trauma can be unspeakable and unrepresentable and because it is marked by forgetting and dissociation, it often seems to leave behind no records at all. Trauma puts pressure on conventional forms of documentation, representation, and commemoration, giving rise to new genres of expression, such as testimony, and new forms of monuments, ritual, and performances that can also call into being collective witnesses and publics” (Cvetkovich 2015, 7). In the first part of the quote Cvetkovich brings up a common trope from trauma theory of trauma as “unrepresentable”. This trope of trauma as unrepresentable has been challenged and discussed by Anna-Lena Werner (2020), who critically interrogates the theoretical discourse and then analyses examples of contemporary artwork engaging with trauma in various forms to look into ways in which in fact artists do find aesthetic ways to represent trauma. She also explains that the trope of trauma as unrepresentable mainly has its origins in post-holocaust studies.¹⁰ Reading Cvetkovich more closely, I understand her to say that trauma – and here she is talking mostly about queer trauma or trauma affecting queer people – is not unrepresentable but leads to forms of representation and expression that challenge conventions and norms. This is especially true when it comes to collective forms of trauma, where documents, knowledge, culture, witnesses were

¹⁰ I want to thank my reviewer for bringing my attention to this research.

destroyed through structural or institutional violence and thus lost to surviving members of the community. Daricioğlu uses their art practice precisely to create alternative forms for commemoration and exploration of trauma and its effects. They find a visual and performative expression for mourning and resistance as collective queer experiences. The white roses as a sign of both mourning and resistance combine with the rigid body, which not only looks as if we are seeing the flesh beneath the surface of the skin due to the glitter, but also appears as if the glitter dust of countless queer parties has accumulated and deposited on the skin. Kostopoulus, according to Daricioğlu, had a post on Instagram saying, “What if we get lost? I just follow the glitter” (Daricioğlu 2020). Thus, the use of glitter in the performance can also be read as a following of a trail of glitter, almost like in the fairytale Hansel and Gretel, or like the iconic campy film “The Wizard of Oz” (Fleming 1939), because Kostopoulus did in fact get lost. In a way, the performance *White Roses, Pink Glitter* functions as a temporary memorial or memorial site for Zacky Oh. In *White Roses, Pink Glitter*, Daricioğlu physically assumes the pose of the victim with their own body. From a marginalized perspective, being in a victim role is not a desirable state – feminists of color in particular have repeatedly criticized the fact that within the women’s movement, white women have often fixed women of color and women from the global south in the status of victims who need to be rescued but who have no voice of their own, thus denying them agency (for example Mohanty 1988). Victimhood is a form of disempowerment, often in conjunction with objectification or dehumanization. The very obvious interpretation of Daricioğlu’s performance is to read it as an attempt to scandalize a queer-phobic hatecrime and to work towards consciousness-raising and commemoration. However, I am wondering if the performance is also creating a form of contact between Zackie Oh and Daricioğlu. As the long duration of the performance suggests that Daricioğlu enters into a meditative state with a potentially spiritual dimension it seems like that some sort of connection between the dead and living is being created. I ask Daricioğlu about this, and they answer: “Zak was of course there, but it turned into something more about me. From there I came up with *My Burden is my Soulmate*” (Daricioğlu 2023, n.p.). During the performance, Zackie Oh was present in a way, even though Zackie Oh is no longer alive. The connecting factor is the queerness and the affective, the way Daricioğlu themselves is affected by the live, activism and murder of Zackie Oh – because of their own experiences in the queer community in the city of Athens and with homophobia in Turkey. This in turn speaks to the capacity of queer people to relate to deceased people as queer ancestors beyond familial or other close relationships that usually make

up ancestry. Queer ancestry is not only an implicit topic in Darıcioğlu's work but together with Yener Bayramoğlu they curated the project *madi ancestors* that was originally planned as a festival in Berlin to remember Turkish queer icons but due to the Covid-pandemic migrated to an online-platform (*Madi Ancestors* 2020) and a podcast (Bayramoğlu 2022). Through remembering idols such as Bülent Ersoy, Zeki Müren and Huysuz Virjin together with members of a Turkish/Turkish-speaking queer diaspora¹¹ in Berlin, an attempt to create bonds and connections between different generations of queer people from Turkey in Berlin is made. However, in "White Rose, Pink Glitter" the contact that is made with Zackie Oh is not only about Kostopoulus, as they explain, but also about Darıcioğlu as a queer person and as an artist themselves. Darıcioğlu ultimately departs from Kostopoulus and explains: "I was happy with the image I created, but felt it was lacking strength" (2022). I see this lack of strength, which Darıcioğlu perceives, in connection with taking on or embodying a victim role. *My Burden is my Soulmate* (2021–2022) is another performance by Darıcioğlu that works visually with very similar images – Darıcioğlu's body covered in pink glitter and the white roses – but creates a performance trilogy in three parts (Anger, Grief, Compassion), in which Leman remains for six hours as a tableaux vivant in various poses, each of which opens up a different reference (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: Leman Sevda Darıcioğlu, *My burden is my soulmate*, 2021–2022, Live performance and video and sound installation 6 hours, various locations.



Source: Photo: Uygur Önder Yılmaz and Erdem Akkaya; <http://lemandaricioglu.com/my-burden-is-my-soulmate/> (08/15/2024)

¹¹ Here it is important to note that Turkey is a multiethnic state within which non-Turkish minorities have been subjected to violence, genocide, assimilation or erasure.

Performative Research and Embodied Knowledge

For Daricioğlu, performance is an analytical tool for investigating various topics. Daricioğlu thus has a methodical approach of artistic research that is very body-based. I am interested in what insights Daricioğlu was able to gain through this approach and what kind of body knowledge or access to embodied knowledge Daricioğlu has, based on their experiences from their various performances. Because these are extreme physical experiences that hardly anybody else is familiar with, I spoke to Daricioğlu about this. However, speaking about a bodily experience is already an act of translation and has its limits. In their own long-duration performances, Daricioğlu enters a physical, meditative state and repeatedly finds themselves in situations of reaching physical limits. The audience itself is often not present for the entire duration of the piece, yet the performance itself becomes alive within the audience, the space and Daricioğlu as performer. "I don't make interactive performances or maybe the score doesn't change with their reactions, but actually from my energy to the feelings, everything changes with/in their presence. And this makes live art different from all the other disciplines. If you are there only for a duration of taking an Instagram photo, you actually only catch the visual narrative/sculptural aspect, but if you stay, we live with/in the work and we all change, transform together" (Daricioğlu 2024b, n.p.). Something is happening within the audience while they are watching them. It is an invitation to radically slow down and through the change in time or speed (compared to everyday life), other things become perceptible. Because the body can never remain completely still, it may tremble and it is precisely these micro-movements, such as the pulse in the aorta, that suddenly become noticeable in a completely different way. In this respect, one question is what a body actually is. According to Daricioğlu: "The body is a carrier of all the societal manifestations, fears, that are stored or build up. But it is also something of itself" (2023, n.p.). The question of how the body stores certain things and how an archive functions is something I have encountered more frequently in queer contexts, especially in non-white contexts, in recent years. The histories that we carry inside our bodies, that have been passed on to us may exceed our own lived experience. As queer people or people who experience racism, we are often cut off from our histories and our ancestors. I wonder what stories of resistance might be in us that would be very valuable to learn more about. Generally speaking, it remains very difficult to access embodied knowledge. I believe that we are often afraid to look for it because it can be overwhelming or too painful. There can be many reasons why we don't want to be present in our bodies. This

is why it is interesting to engage with Leman and other performance artists and bodyworkers and ask if and how they are able to access embodied knowledge or body archives. My question of how to access this knowledge remains to be explored further and probably through different methodologies. With “White Roses, Pink Glitter”, Daricioğlu found a way to connect themselves to queer history and be in contact with a queer person who was killed and at the same time confront queer emotions. It is through using performance and ritual as well as visual signifiers that these are also somewhat accessible to an audience. At the same time, it is the performance practice itself that affects Daricioğlu’s body. Daricioğlu explains: “I have to think about how to continue to carry out such a demanding practice. My practice has been a trauma for my body” (2023, n.p.). To make these extreme endurance performances of several hours at a time possible, Daricioğlu sometimes works with physiotherapists. I have a lot of questions: How does it feel to stay naked and freezing in the pose of a victim of anti-queer violence for five hours? Is there a transformation of stored experiences? How do you feel afterwards? Somatic therapy approaches suggest that trauma therapy should not only take place through talk therapy, but also through working with the body to release trauma which is assumed to be manifest inside the body as a form of energy (van der Kolk 2015). That is why I was interested in whether Daricioğlu gains access to stored embodied knowledge in the context of the performances, but also whether they might actually experience a transformation. Daricioğlu: “What happens throughout? Some mystical experiences happen as well. It has transformed how I take feelings of shame, failure, vulnerability. Something will be different, but it doesn’t mean the next time around it is gone. It is something very empowering” (2015). The feeling of shame in particular is one that Daricioğlu works with intensively in their art. The artistic examination of queer shame is linked to a critique of heteronormativity and the way in which this also leads to internalized homophobia. Where in the body do these feelings manifest themselves? And can they be released or at least changed? Can they also be used as a resource for pleasure? To ask these questions can also be considered to be an orientation towards reparative practices, in the sense of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Sedgwick explains that queer theory tends to invest analytical efforts in the unveiling of violence, which she describes with a reference to psychoanalysis as a practice of paranoid reading and as a strong theory of negative affect. What if we turned our attentions to practices, that allow queer people to survive, experience joy and pleasure? She writes about reparative readings: “What we can best learn from such practices are, perhaps, the many ways in which selves and communities succeed in extracting suste-

nance from the objects of a culture – even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them” (Sedgwick 1997, 35). In a heteronormative culture that does not sustain queer people, especially queer migrants and people of color, we need to expand and share our knowledge on how we can extract sustenance for ourselves, heal and transform the world. One small step towards this may be to experience our bodies as whole during a Yoggaton-Workshop and not as fragmented parts that were separated through binaries (like head = thinking and belly = intuition). Or, we may share Daricioğlu’s energy during a performance in which they confront, among many other topics, feelings of queer shame. From what I understand, some change does take place during their performances and also a form of empowerment, but not a complete release from queer feelings of shame. I go on to ask Daricioğlu whether it is conceivable that one day Daricioğlu will no longer need this kind of artistic practice due to healing or change. The answer is very simple: “Then there will be something else” (Sedgwick 1997, 35).

Data availability statement

The research material generated or analysed as part of this study is included in this article.

References

- Afonu, Dzifa/Haritaworn, Jin/Rage, Raju (2018): Von Archiven und alternativen Zukünften. In: Bauche, Manuela/Otoo, Sharon Dodua (Ed.): *Geschichte schreiben*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 133–139.
- Ahmed, Sara (2006): *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, Sara (2004): *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987): *Borderlands/La Frontera. The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute.
- Bayramoğlu, Yener (2022): Shady Ancestors. *Queering Digital Diaspora Research. Global Media Journal – German Edition* 11(2). doi: [10.22032/dbt.51026](https://doi.org/10.22032/dbt.51026)
- Butler, Judith (1993): *Bodies That Matter. On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’*. London: Routledge.
- Cvetkovich, Ann (2015): *An Archive of Feelings. Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.
- Daricioğlu, Leman Sevda (2024a): Home. <https://lemandaricioglu.com> (15.08.2024).

- Darıcıoğlu, Leman Sevda (2024b): Written feedback to Rena Onat, 11 August 2024.
- Darıcıoğlu, Leman Sevda (2023): In personal conversation with Rena Onat, 11 April 2023 in Berlin-Neukölln.
- Darıcıoğlu, Leman Sevda (2020): White Roses, Pink Glitter. <https://lemandaricioglu.com/white-roses-pink-glitter/> (15.08.2024).
- Foucault, Michel (2003 (1976)): Sexualität und Wahrheit. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Gehm, Sabine/Husemann, Pirkko/von Wilcke, Katharina (Ed.) (2007): Wissen in Bewegung. Perspektiven der künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Forschung im Tanz. Bielefeld: transcript. doi: [10.14361/9783839408087-014](https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839408087-014)
- Grosz, Elizabeth (1994): Volatile Bodies. Toward a Corporeal Feminism. London: Routledge. doi: [10.1215/9780822383574](https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822383574)
- Haritaworn, Jin (2015): Queer Lovers and Hateful Others. Regenerating Violent Times and Places. London: Pluto Press.
- Haritaworn, Jin/Snorton, C. R. (2012): Trans Necropolitics. A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death and the Trans of Color Afterlife. In: Haritaworn, Jin/Adi Kuntsman, Adi/Posocco, Silvia (Ed.): Queer Necropolitics. London: Routledge, 66–76.
- Hucal, Sarah (2022): 'ORFEAS2021' – Griechenlands erste queere Filmoper, Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/de/orfeas2021-hommage-an-den-lgbtq-aktivisten-zackie-oh/a-60581103> (07.06.2023).
- Ifekoya, Evan/Kabir, Raisa/Rage, Raju/Loewe, Rudy (2016): Surviving Art School. An Artist of Colour Tool Kit. Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary.
- Katan, Einav (2016): Embodied Philosophy in Dance. Gaga and Ohad Naharin's Movement Research. London: Palgrave Macmillan. doi: [10.1057/978-1-137-60186-5](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-60186-5)
- van der Kolk, Bessel (2015): The Body Keeps the Score. New York: Penguin.
- Madi Ancestors (2020): Madi Ancestors. Berlin Remembers Turkey's Queer Idols. <http://madiancestors.com/> (15.08.2024).
- Massumi, Brian (2022 [2002]): Parables for the Virtual. Movement, Affect, Sensation. Durham: Duke University Press. doi: [10.1215/9780822383574](https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822383574)
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (2002 [1945]): Phenomenology of Perception. London, New York: Routledge; Kegan Paul.
- Micossé-Aikins, Sandrine/Rage, Raju/Onat, Rena (2017): Queering and Decolonizing Art and Visual Culture. A Roundtable Discussion. In: Paul, Barbara/Hoenes, Josch/Beyer, Atlanta Ina/Frankenber, Natascha/Onat, Rena (Ed.): Perverse Assemblages. Queering Heteronormativity Inter/medially. Berlin: Revolver, 61–76.

- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (1988): Under Western Eyes. Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse. *Feminist Review* (30)1, 61–88. doi: [10.1057/fr.1988.42](https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1988.42)
- Muñoz, José Esteban (2009): *Cruising Utopia. The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press.
- Muñoz, José Esteban (1999): *Disidentifications. Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Nixon, Christopher A. (2023): 'Working to Transform the Image'. *Postkoloniale Bildkritik, Bildpolitik und die zeitgenössische Queer-of-Color-Fotografie*. *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft*, Test 29(2), 124–136. doi: [10.25969/media-rep/20052](https://doi.org/10.25969/media-rep/20052)
- Onat, Rena (2023): *Queere Künstler_innen of Color. Verhandlungen von Disidentifikation, Überleben, und Un-Archiving im deutschen Kontext*. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Onat, Rena/Pereyra, Maque/Müller, Anisha Gupta (2022): *Femmes Talk Embodiment*. In: Beitin, Andreas/Koch, Katharina/Ruhkamp, Uta (Ed.): *Empowerment. Art and Feminisms*. Wolfsburg: Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg.
- Özgenç, Oğulcan (2024): Hate attack in İzmir. 'The attacker was caught thanks to trans women who heard E.Ş.'s cry for help'. <https://kaosgl.org/en/single-news/hate-attack-in-izmir-the-attacker-was-caught-thanks-to-trans-women-who-heard-e-s-s-cry-for-help> (30.07.2024).
- Pembe Hayat (2024): Pembe Hayat. <https://www.pembehayat.org/en/> (30.7.2024).
- Pereyra, Maque (2024): Yoggaton Mappa. <https://yoggaton.com/> (18.07.2024).
- Pereyra, Maque (2021): Email-exchange with Rena Onat, 17 March 2021.
- Pereyra, Maque (2020): Yoggaton-workshop at Bulbul in Berlin, 15 July 2020.
- Performistanbul (2024): Performistanbul. <https://www.performistanbul.org> (07.08.2024).
- Rodríguez Castro, Laura (2020): *Decolonial Feminisms, Power and Place. Senti-pensando with Rural Women in Colombia*. Cham: Palmgrave McMillan. doi: [10.1007/978-3-030-59440-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59440-4)
- Sedgwick, Eve K. (1997): Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading. Or, You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You. In: Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky (Ed.): *Novel Gazing. Queer Readings in Fiction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1–38. doi: [10.1215/9780822382478-001](https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822382478-001)
- Werner, Anna-Lena (2020): *Let Them Haunt Us. How Contemporary Aesthetics Challenge Trauma as the Unrepresentable*. Bielefeld: transcript.