

[Follow gnozo](#)[Home](#) [Collection](#) [Footage](#)

Chronical Critical

Sarah Vanhee Interview

Dear Sarah,

I witnessed your performance last saturday at la Ferme du Buisson. More precisely, I came there with the intention of leaving a written trace of the event on the web: I write for this [droguistes.fr](#) website, which is not exactly traditional press. Corinna gave me your address so I could ask you a few questions, which are not very complex and I hope fun to answer.

1-how many time have you performed *oblivion*? what length were the other versions? how different would you say they were?
I performed the performance as it is now (about 2,5 hours) 8 times. We are quite in the beginning of the tour so I'm about to perform it many more times. The length tends to differ between 2h10 and 2h30. When I started working on this project I thought it would be an ongoing installation that people could visit. Then I thought it would be a 4 hour long durational piece where people could walk in and out. And only in the last weeks before the premiere it became clear that it is a "proper" piece for an

audience that stays seated on the same seat for about 2h20 minutes. Since the piece spans over one year, I also thought that conceptually it would make sense for the represented work to also be one year. But I never considered that seriously. So far the versions I have performed since the premiere are very different because:- The space is always different. I never know if and how all the material trash will fit in the space. I don't know how the landscape will evolve- how far or close I should put the objects together- what image it creates. I only have a mindmap and some principles there. Before I came to Paris I was in Lancaster and the space was completely full and I had still 3 box left. So the audience came outside with me to unpack it in the corridor.- Till now the audience has been surprisingly silent and attentive, working through it together with me. Only in Paris a lot of people left (I don't know why, maybe because of the shit?) and a lot of people were taking pictures and filming. That was strange.- Physically and mentally it's a different trip every time. It's really hard work so I'm never really sure whether I will make it. Whether I will manage physically and also if I can retrieve the text. It keeps being a trip for me performing it and for the audience to go through it because it's all so much that it cannot be contained. It's too vast to see and understand what it is.

2-this particular performance involved waste which refers to the story of your pregnancy; was it different from the others in that respect?

It's always exactly the same material, digital and mental "waste" I collected November 2014-November 2015. I gave birth February 2015 so yes that happened to be a year with very little alcohol and a lot of nursing-pads. Did you maybe think I have an ongoing project of collecting waste and always taking with me the waste I've been collecting up to the day of the performance? No, it's very important that it is that waste as this installs a certain dramaturgy and choreography.

3-i would like to describe your performance to the readers and let you comment on my formulation. *Oblivion* is a piece about nothingness, some sort of galactic mind opera based on the methodical recuperation of your own consumerist waste. The action is a series of gestures, consisting in systematic unboxing and displaying of several months' worth of physical waste. Meanwhile, a text is said, which is subtitled in french, an incredibly long, complex and witty text. Junk mails are turned into poetry and the most useless aspects of building an artwork are retained as decisive elements, on a pace that allows the mind to wander in the fantastic display of waste which is spaced at regular padding.

That's beautiful. If that is how you saw the piece, it's very fine with me.

4-you talked about excrements a lot, which I appreciated. Yet, i wonder: do you intentionally add esthetic value to the materials you use? or would you rather say your interest lies in underlining the lack of value of all things in the process of your performance?

Every thing that has a place in *Oblivion* (thoughts, words, objects,...) is part of what tends to go to *Oblivion*. Like junk mail or inspiration sources or dead links or trash or shit or different connections. I devaluate something so I can forget it or throw it away. Now I'm doing the opposite: I re-invest. I appreciate and care for what I would otherwise throw away. Everything has value when I give value to it. There are (political and psychological) reasons why certain things are considered to not have value. I also re-value the things by making their connections appear. In the last part for instance: plastic bottle is not just a plastic bottle. It's a prodigy of science, it's a network generator, it connects people and places, it's what comes out of a culture so absurd that it privatizes water. That bottle is all that.

5-do you think art makes humans overcome pathological behaviours?

Maybe I find the term “pathological behaviour” too normative, so it’s difficult for me to answer this question.

6-some would refer to your use of junk mail material as poetic; others would call your use of physical waste installation. Do you accept or reject those adjectives? (Is your goal to make poetic installation?)

People can say what they want. My goal was never to make something specific, I did not have any end-result in mind. I wanted to understand my relation to waste, something I did not understand before. And I wanted to explore the option of embracing waste, celebrating it, giving it value. Because I’m suspicious of everything that is usually kept in the invisible, I think it’s important to look exactly there and see why it’s invisible, and maybe find a new relation to it. This is always an unexpected relation, that’s maybe why it’s poetic. The piece is an invitation to go on a trip together in an inside-out universe.



Home Collection Footage Archive