

## The Enacting Body as 'Extra Medium' (Florence, 14-15 Sep 26)

Florence, Kunsthistorisches Institut – Max-Planck-Institut, Sep 14–15, 2026

Deadline: Jun 14, 2026

Natalie Arrowsmith

The Enacting Body as 'Extra Medium'. Emancipatory Aesthetics and the Dialectics of Visibility in the 1960s and 1970s.

An exploratory workshop at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut  
Organized by Hana Gründler and Frida Sandström; Research Group "Ethico-Aesthetics of the Visual"

If we think of aesthetics as the theory of the subject's sensible self-reflection that also allows for a more nuanced and pluri-sensuous understanding of the life world, critique can be interpreted as an organic social mediation. In the 1960s and 1970s, existentialist, phenomenological and anti-colonial positions, such as Frantz Fanon's reflections on the racialized subject moving between the "dialectic of the body and of the world" (1965), influenced aesthetic practices and theories which reconfigured concepts of art, subjectivity and politics alike. During this process, the human body was adapted as a site of reflective emancipation and self-critical and subversive contestation.

In Eastern and Western Europe as well as in Northern Africa or the US, techniques formerly used within late Surrealist practices were given new meaning in a highly politicised and ideologised media landscape. Across feminism, anti-colonial and partisan contexts, technically reproduced conversations and desires transformed intellectual publications and formalist artworks into "reproductive bodies" (Young 2012) that made art and theory useful in a new way. For example, in Carla Lonzi's turn from art criticism to female auto-erotic pleasure, transcription was central to her call for resonance across feminist histories and colonized lived experience. Indeed, Lonzi's much-debated use of the term 'authentic' after Simone de Beauvoir allowed for a reconfigured reproductive critique in art history and feminism alike by making "subjectivity and technique coincide" (Roberts 2009) in practice.

The technical reconfiguration of subjectivity, strategies of enactment, and forms of contestation was also central for artists such as Katalin Ladik, Valie Export, Sanja Iveković, or Adrian Piper. During the same period, they explored the multifaceted, sometimes also contradictory and violent relation between technology and the body. Questioning standardized regimes of visibility, their heterogenous engagements with "extra media" (Crispoliti 1978) across surveillance technologies, exhibition value and politicised mass culture (Benjamin 1935) allowed for positions that rethought their own aesthetic practice as a radical (existential) practice. In the conjunction of the written

page, the verbalized sound and the enacting body, artistic labour, sexual liberation and political practice coincided.

Foregrounding what is now known as performance art, social reproduction theories and postcolonial thinking at the same time, these examples allow us to return to the conjunction of these fields today, despite their current institutional division. Reconsidering artistic, critical and political mediation in the current times of global warfare, fragmented welfare and authoritarian turns, what can the legacy of these practices tell us about the escalating co-dependence of technology and subjectivity today? Moreover, what are the aesthetic forms of 'extra media', mediation and enactment amid geopolitical crises? Finally, how are concepts determining art, gender, sexuality and racism interrelated in practice?

For this exploratory workshop, we invite papers that introduce case studies and readings across the fields of art history, aesthetic and political philosophy as well as cultural and gender studies. We envision a program in which presentations and readings take place conjointly, hence enabling an open space for discussion and reflection along the lines of the material introduced by each participant. Papers should not exceed 20 minutes and will be followed by a discussion.

Please send title, abstract (max. 2000 characters) and a short bio summarized in one PDF-document to [ResearchGroup-Gruendler@khi.fi.it](mailto:ResearchGroup-Gruendler@khi.fi.it) by June 14th, 2026.

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