

GIULIA LOI is currently doing her PhD in Medical Humanities at Birkbeck University after a Fine Art BA at Goldsmiths College. As an artist and researcher, she is interested in the exploration of alienating environments and expressions of autonomy through text, voice, performance, and moving image, with the shifts of power these movements entail. She is also active in the field of alternative mental health, transcultural psychiatry and ritual theatre. Currently experimenting with workshops now called *Social Auto-Healing Circles* where she explores links between stress, mental and physical pain and socio-economic strife with different participants. This is a blog she curates on the socio-political determination of mental well-being:

<http://ourcranium.wordpress.com>

Short Circuit

## Artist's Statement: Mars

Giulia Loi



---

HAVING LIVED FOR LONG YEARS WITH SEVERE MENTAL HEALTH DISTRESS and an extremely weak self-esteem, I know how toxic that lack can be. In my teaching and research work, I try to identify crucial components of a group's weakness, to delineate together its systemic components and see how it affects us, our decisions and our well-being.

Cognitive Capital is inherent to the West's economic survival and it is time we as artists, *affective labourers*, teachers, carers, cleaners, recyclers and *transitioners* of this wasteful wasteland, reclaim what is ours and exit a system that has been cashing in on our confusion and incapacity to stop its exploitation.

The following performance is a fictitious recollection of cosmic conversations I had with the Brazilian poet, ritual theatre actor, and '80's anti-psychiatry activist Milton Freire. We shared our love of Artaud, Mars, and the missing feminine on benches, alleys, corridors and armchairs of the Institute Nise da Silveira, hospital Don Pedro II, in Rio this September. The text of it was published by Pale Journal for their 1<sup>st</sup> issue.

Performing the dialogical form allows me to explore different dynamics of power and relation, playing with moments of connection, miscomprehension, co-creation, subjugation, emancipation and empowerment. It also seeks to explore territories of delirium, where actors and voices become

blurred and rationality loses ground. It taps into folk figures and blues sonorities, subverted female and male archetypes, and the lure of vocal uncanniness.

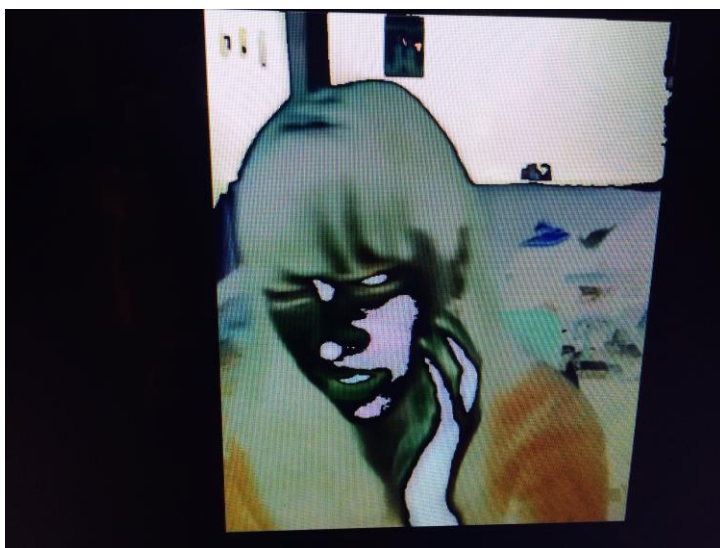


Image taken from filmed performance Mars, recorded for Dandelion:

<https://vimeo.com/giulialoi>

## MARS

N: Shall we sit on this bench?

M: Yes, here's good.

N: The wind has risen a little.

M: It's strange to make you speak English.

N: I know it's a bit unnatural...

M: Can anything ever be unnatural?

N: Of course...

M: Yes but anything that *is*, is of nature right? Nothing more natural than death, so even a dead thing, something that isn't, is natural.

N: What about when we fiddle with life?

M: Like making a bag out of a cow?

N: No, but I guess that answers my question.

M: So, natural just means that which is encompassed in our limits, always different and often shifting.

N: They don't shift enough tbh

M: Well, we're here today.

N: On this bench.. It's good to be here.

M: Thank you, I think so too. It's good to meet you.

N: Maybe I can describe you...

M: Physically?

N: I don't know, I'm just wondering what's best, what will do less damage.

M: More good?

N: Yaha.

M: That's brave. Just fight.  
N: A sweet fight.  
M: It kills too.  
N: I know, it's the best. It gives me shivers.  
M: How long were you interned here for, Nascimento?  
N: I'm always here. I always come back. To give myself and others a break. It's easier to exist here than outside sometimes. But then, I can leave.  
M: There's a tag on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor that says 'I can be crazy finally here.'  
N: It's a rare space. But there's no mercy in these buildings. We spent forty years dismantling them, it's all still here in other forms. Now humanizing ruins, ourselves, all the struggles.. It's so hard. We missed the point completely and went right to its heart.  
M: Have you ever hurt anyone Nascimento?  
N: I scream sometimes. It's a very loud scream. An animal scream. I'm so ashamed of it. It's terrible. Terrifying.  
M: Why Nascimento? It's just a scream. Why aren't we aloud to scream? Society is atrocious, our planet is dying. As if we were aliens: "Our planet is dying!". We're killing each other, ourselves and the planet. Fratricide, genocide, infanticide, patricide.  
N: Can you hear that?  
M: What? That window?  
N: It's harassed my girl, that's what it is.  
M: What, the window or the air? I think harassed air can be a scream.  
N: *To denounce it is the same people who occupy the whole surface of the Northern and Southern hemispheres that were once free and have been gasping.*  
M: It was never free, it's always been a struggle. This myth of peace and freedom that was lost to curiosity. All the guilt. We've always fought to be alive.  
N: And to be born, to detach, to survive repulsion.  
M: Now even to die. It's so bloody hard to die!  
N: Assassinations and life on a drip and wires everywhere you can't see. Memory too immense because unattended. Stuck in the air, harassed, harassing and growing because it's unattended. It'll explode if we don't evacuate it.  
M: We're so afraid of emptiness. It's great to be here.  
N: Let me read you a bit of this poem...

*That one day  
                  dismembered  
a springtime  
                  of truth*

*I wanted  
                  someone like you  
                                  in my  
                                  childhood.*

*Or even  
                  in this  
                  childhood  
Of mature man.*

*Through me  
                  pass  
                  various  
                  women  
masked for carnival.  
All speak  
                  their names.*

*I'm Andreias, Solanges, Marias*

*And behind masks*

*I always guess with amusement*

*The smile*

*of this other beautiful reality*

*of the Time After.*

N: Is it the time now? I love it. I hear everything. What about Mars? You said you had Mars too?

M: A young Martian writing poems.

N: Did you hear that?

M: Through the window, yes.

N: Fantastic. I love how it melts away. The moment shared, evacuates.

M: *Redeemed by christ living, detaching from his father's cross. By the poet killing his father and loving fate. By people's hyperlove, disregard for dogma, by the charlatan doctor forgiving sin but forgetting the female, by the dreamer finding love despite his father, by the lady playing mother but giving carnival, affection and intellect all at once, the lady being man and allowing men to be women, by the biology of affections, germs, germs, and the emotion of getting along.*

N: We should all sit on this bench.

M: We are.

N: She was lovely you know, the loveliest woman I've ever met. She made me find her. The missing mother.

M: You've made me find her too.

N: That's good. Have you found the mother too? The lover?

M: I'm not sure. Less damage for sure.

N: If he could hear us.

M: He does, Nascimento. He was wearing the blue wig last night. Now maybe he'll dance with you. Or someone else. He's like that, such a woman finally!

N: He's so tender as a woman. The gentlest soul, no need, no control, pure breath and joy, no ego.

M: My turn.. In 1936, A.Artaud was not ready for the traumatic encounter with the rite of Tutuguri. I Giulia Loi, was not ready for the violence of the post 9/11 Western world. In a trip around Canada and the derelict remains of the mortally defunct North American dream, amongst junkies, greyhound travellers, post neo-hippies grunge hungups and other pathetic beloved drags of my generation already lost then (I was 21 in March 2005) and desperate attempts not to give in to depression about the failure of another utopia: the non-corporate global world; I started going crazy.

AND SO A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING POST POST STRUCTURALISM:

## The Spectre of ARTA

The preacher, the mad(wo)man, the lovely androgenie, in pain, cutting, wise, the slash to the eye, ear and psyche. The inpatient, the outpatient, the ohsofuckingpatient no more.

N: Here's more..

*All*

*come to speak*

*With*

*the youth*

*Who*

*confronted*

*The giant*

*in the hospital,  
Through his  
own skin,  
Of this youth  
In flesh and blood,  
To have a normal  
skin,  
With protection  
Of embrace  
and kiss  
of woman.*

*You make me trip.*

M: You make me trip!

N: It's been a delice. Let's go back in. Let our words linger. Like vague stars, of Ursa, of course.

M: Do you mean the Big Dipper?

N: I don't know. Let's go..