



DANSE NEU RALE

BØDY HACKING PERFORMANCE
FOR CONNECTED BODY

LUKAS ZPIRA

« **H** heir of the body art movement and pioneer of an avant garde of the genre, Lukas Zpira, essayist, film director and photographer, began to include in his practice since the late nineties new technologies such as subcutaneous implants.

Founder of body hacktivism, the French artist began to focus on the various problematics of the connected and the alienated body early on in his career. Remotely controlled body, modern flesh puppet dominated by the pressure of information and omnipresence of control technologies and contemporary communications.»

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INTRODUCTION

Danse NeurAle is a live digital body art performance that exposes the intimacy of a challenged body connected through technology and revealed to an audience. A Body Hacking performance using various biodata collected by biometric sensors, its feedback broadcasted to the public.

Danse NeurAle falls into the category of “body Art” which is an ensemble of various disciplines that puts the body at the center of an artistic opus.

his type of work dates back to the sixties and seventies with artists such as Stelarc, Richard Burden, Carolee Schneemann, Marina Abramović or Orlan. During the eighties the term body art designated a more transgressive approach to the original disciplines.

Quite rapidly body art becomes synonymous with body modification which consists of practices such as scarification, piercing or tattooing.

Body artists put their bodies to the test through performances in front of an audience who may passively witness or become more involved psychologically or physically.

Successor of this movement and pioneer of its new genre, **Lukas Zpira**, who is also a writer, photographer and film maker, incorporates new technologies (biodatas, prosthesis, subcutaneous implants) into his practice of body art and thus since the nineties.

Founder of the term *Bødy Hacktivism*, and its movement, he publishes a manifesto early 2000 that explains the philosophy of this artistic guerrilla. The french artist soon becomes quite interested and involved in the questions and problematics regarding the body. Connected, alienated or remotely controlled, modern puppets of flesh, slaves to media pressures, the omnipresence of supervision technology and modern communication, these are recurrent themes tackled in his work.

Lukas Zpira's approach of performances is unique due to his involvement in the field of suspension.

Body suspension is a practice derived from ancient healing rituals performed all over the world (from Islam with sufism to north american indian tribes or some hindu rituals) and is still practiced today in a performative context, personal growth initiation workshops or as pure entertainment.

Many discovered body suspension through the works of Australian artist Stelarc, Fakir Musafar from the U.S. or performance group Traumatic Stress Discipline. Suspension has today integrated the body art genre allowing artists such **Lukas Zpira** to reinterpret and readapt this ritual and project it in the twenty first century.



PRESENTATION

TEXT BY MAXENCE GRUGIER

Danse NeurAle is a *Body Hacking* performance.

The artist's body is connected to various technological apparatus while going through a suspension ritual in front of an audience. The performance was developed to enable each spectator to engage intimately with the artist, a sort of immersion where the audience can "feel" what the artist's body feels.

With **Danse NeurAle**, Lukas Zpira literally embodies in real time the different sensations and physical responses his body goes through as well as how his mind channels the energy.

Lukas is assisted by a colleague who is in charge of the programs used for reading the various datas and thus rendering the experience tangible for the spectator.



In this hygienic era where the body in all its intimacy is subject to inspection and dictated by fashion, anti ageing and high performance, Body hacking according to **Lukas Zpira** is a declaration of the love/hate and fascination/rejection one feels towards the technological invasion humanity is facing and its opportunistic misappropriation or mercantile purposes. It also offers a different perspective of the ritualistic aspect of the relationship we have with our body and its interiority which today is constantly exposed and displayed.

Lukas Zpira is also an advocate of meditation, wishing to shed light on the physical and psychological foundation of his performances while showing a post modern, digital and augmented version of the original ritual of suspension.

Danse NeurAle therefore gives the ability to the non practitioner to apprehend in a tangible manner the invisible physiological effects of suspensions. These bodily responses are to a certain extent perceptible for anyone watching. The artist also addresses the recurrent questions of pain management, trance like state often associated with these practices and all the other sensations he may come across.

With this performance the artist shares the different preparatory stages of his suspension which allows the non initiated to get a glimpse of the various facets involved in such a ritual.

Danse NeurAle is a step toward a better comprehension of this practice through sights and sounds.



SCENOGRAPHY

Lukas Zpira appears on stage bare-chested, a screen behind him shows him in a bath tub. He is shaving. The audience can only hear his breathing and heart beat. The projection on the screen shows in a few minutes the long preparation required before the suspension. The preparation in itself is part of the performance. The audience can become fully aware of the significance and depth of the act.

The performer is equipped with a series of cordless sensors, an EEG headset (this device picks up the electroencephalographic waves), a microphone hooked up underneath a breathing mask and a cardio frequency monitor. All these instruments record biodata emitted by the performer and transmitted to the assistant in charge of operating the computer programs which will enable the interaction between the images, the sounds and the body of the artist.

The preparation comes to an end. Two hooks are placed (by piercing the skin) on the upper back of the performer and linked to an electric hoist system. The generated signals are analyzed and collected in real time then processed through a program which produces the visual and audio effects. It is also with these datas that **Lukas Zpira** controls his ascension during the suspension.

By controlling his heart rate, his breathing and his alpha/beta brain waves, **Lukas Zpira** can trigger and modify the algorithms handled by the technician in order to create a sensory environment.

The involuntary and autonomous responses to the stress inflicted on the artist's body supplies the base material to which the audience is confronted. Meanwhile, the transformation in real time of these images and sounds is the result of his conscious influence over his own vital signs.

The artist transforms the audio and visual substance by going into a meditative state, producing a unique work of art, a metaphor of the physical and psychological experience.

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