

On Artisans and (their) Presences

By Marialena Marouda

1. Storytelling Making

For “Duet #3”, the performance maker Elpida Orfanidou chose to collaborate with a Pontic lyra, a traditional musical instrument from the region of Pontos on the south coast of the black sea, where Greeks lived up until the early 20th century. Elpida’s family comes from this region, and her grandfather was both an instrument maker and player who was living in the region of Kars/Göle, modern day Turkey. He played the lyra at local weddings and celebrations. As part of her research for this duet, Elpida made her own Pontic lyra. The instrument she built is also the one she performs the duet with. The manufacturing of the lyra took place in Athens at the Simon Karas Music School in the framework of a course in traditional instrument making, taught by Prof. Manolis Giannoulakis.

If the focus of each duet in *The Manufactured Series* is to reveal and instigate human-object entanglements, in the case of the third duet, those entanglements appear as multiple processes of making. In other words, different artisans are present in the duet, each one deepening Elpida’s relation to her Pontic lyra.

By constructing the lyra herself, Elpida becomes a craftswoman creating a joint history between her and the object. She addresses this history of crafting by including the materials she used for the lyra, the tools, and the movements that were inherent in the process of construction in the public performance of the duet. In other words, she is storytelling a past entanglement that lasts into the present of the duet’s performance.

Elpida’s relation with the lyra and its materials link her to another craftsman and storyteller: her teacher, Prof. Manolis Giannoulakis, a lyra maker and player himself, from the Greek island of Crete. As Elpida also mentions later on, while working with him in the workshop she discovered that he was often referring to his wife Patricia, who is Belgian, and apparently quite direct in her manner. During the duet’s performance Elpida recalls how Patricia was very present in the workshop without ever actually stepping foot inside, solely from the stories her husband told of her.

Furthermore, a look at both Elpida and the lyra's biographies includes yet another craftsman: Elpida's grandfather. The grandfather's lyra, now a family heirloom, is about 100 years old and was also present in the performance of the duet as it played a defining role in the construction process of the new lyra.

Beyond addressing personal history, the relation between Elpida and her lyra also summons collective histories and traditions of the Pontic peoples. Even though every object is embedded in the social context in which it exists, this is especially true of an instrument of traditional music. Indeed the Pontic lyra is the main instrument that accompanies traditional song and dance. One of those canonical songs, for example, is "The Bridge of Tricha", a song that Elpida refers to throughout the third duet and which she sings in collaboration with the lyra at the end. The song tells the story of a master artisan who is trying to build a bridge in the town of Tricha. Even though a large team of accomplished craftsmen and apprentices are working on the project, they are not able to 'persuade' the bridge to stand: the structure that is being built by day collapses at night. The master is at a loss of what to do until he hears the voice of the bridge itself challenging him to sacrifice what he holds most dear: his wife. Appallingly, he agrees to this bid and so, following the sacrifice, the bridge remains standing until today (see translated song lyrics in the text "Tools, Tales and Other Matters").

By summoning the different craftsmen and their stories, "Duet #3" addresses the intertwinement of Elpida with her lyra on multiple levels. On the one hand, it is a physical relation between the instrument and its maker. On the other hand, the relation to the lyra becomes historical, both on a personal and on a collective level. In other words, the linear relation of Elpida to her lyra that is built by handcrafting is multiplied and projected in time – and is thus deepened. The making of the instrument extends to other kinds of making, like the making of a story, the making of family and the making of community, all somehow held together by the figure of the artisan. The performance becomes the folding and unfolding of those different stories of making into each other.

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2. (An)archiving Making

Another making that is taking place is, indeed, the making of the duet. Elpida also crafted this “object”, which can also be called a dance, in collaboration with Fabrice Mazliah and myself. Indeed, while we were crafting this duet, we asked ourselves about the relation of this process of making to the ones that had taken place before it, and which it somehow included. Is the duet simply a reconstruction of the previous crafting processes? Or can we experience it as a creation process that is generative in and of itself, independently of what came before it?

Were we to accurately reconstruct the process of the making of the lyra, with all its steps towards completion, we would be presenting an archive; instrument making is (mostly) linear and includes specific steps of which the lyra is the final outcome and culmination. The “raw” materials, the tools used, the movements and interactions that made up this operational sequence are also its traces, they can be catalogued and documented and will always refer to and underline this past event. But how could we make a performance in which, instead, there was no hierarchy between past and present, between, for example, the tools or materials used and the finished, completed instrument?

When asking these questions, we were inspired by the concept of the “Anarchive”, as set forth by philosophers Erin Manning and Brian Massumi. Their proposition is to understand traces of a previous process of production, not only as remnants of a past event (i.e. the making of the lyra), but also as agents for the reorganization and restructuring of the archive towards a new event.

In their own words (Go-to, How-to Book of Anarchiving, 2016, p.6):

1. The anarchieve is best defined [...] as a *repertory of traces* of collaborative research-creation events. The traces are not inert, but are carriers of potential. They are reactivatable, and their reactivation helps trigger a new event which continues the creative process from which they came, but in a new iteration.

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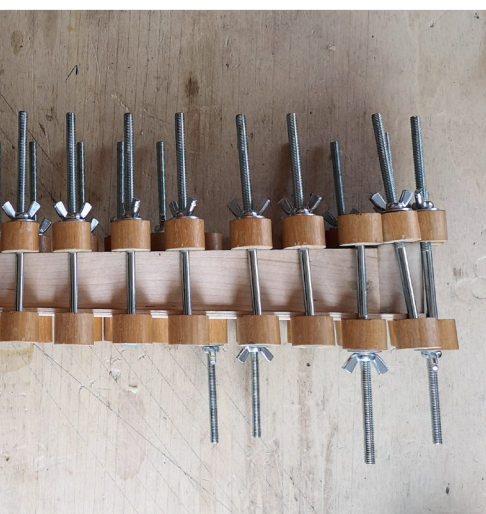
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2. Thus the anarchiving is not documentation of a past activity. Rather, it is a *feed-forward mechanism* for lines of creative process, under continuing variation.

The anarchiving essentially becomes an “excess energy of the archive”, as they write. In the framework of the third duet, the question therefore becomes: how can the many processes of making that are addressed in the work – and each of their traces – become agents for making something new appear, i.e. the duet? In other words, how could we thematize and share the processes of making the lyra with an audience, making possible new interactions between Elpida and her instrument?

Listening was our choreographic proposition of how to deal with this question, which was a guiding question in our development of the third duet and of the series in general. Using listening as methodology for anarchiving, Elpida as a human performer engages with and is engaged by the different making processes and their elements individually – physically or mentally. Listening challenges her to enter an interaction and follow its development without necessarily knowing where it will ultimately lead her/them. So, the third duet starts out as an archive, by referring quite directly to the process of making the lyra in the workshop in Athens, tracing its different elements and steps. Some of the tools used are on the table, the material of the table itself is exactly the wood used to make the lyra, the lyra and the bow are present. Also present are the different lyra makers-players, Elpida herself narrating the stories of the workshop and its teacher, his wife, the grandfather, his lyra, and also the traditional song of the master craftsman with his wife.

As the duet proceeds by listening, the dance with the different elements and stories of making becomes an open-ended entanglement, one that – ultimately – allows for the lyra, the materials and the tools to also story tell themselves.



Meet the Maker

The Becoming of a CraftsWoman

By Fabrice Mazliah

An artisan is a person that utilises (in most cases) her/his hands to create unique, functional and/or decorative items using traditional techniques. Artisans are usually masters of their craft.

An artisan has empirical and theoretical knowledge about how to expertly create a specific object and is able to transfer that working craftsmanship to future generations. While conducting research for “Duet #3”, I noticed that in the tradition of making European folkloric musical instruments, the task was mainly performed by men positioned as masters in their field. Because of their positions, they guarded the authority of the know-how and trend-setting in the evolution of the craft – in our case Pontic lyra making. This left very little space for women to be involved, as is the case with many other fields of expertise historically.

In following Elpida and her beautiful journey in becoming an artisan, the gender disparity became apparent quite quickly. We came across numerous dedicated and passionate artisans, teachers and musicians, that told us all sorts of stories who were willing to share knowledge openly – all of them men.

As Elpida mentions during the performance (see page 10), her grandfather was a lyra maker and the craftsman of his village, back in 1919. One of his 100-year old lyras served as a model to craft her own – the non-human partner with whom she will dance with in “Duet #3”. There already, imbedded within, the reference is a masculine artisan – a grandfather. As if because of a son that failed to take his place as the next in line, his granddaughter took on the responsibility, carrying on the precious family tradition. Watching Elpida work on her lyra, it seems a powerful gesture for her to adopt the position of the artisan, and to emancipate herself within this practice. What would it take for a woman to become one of those traditional teachers or musicians and pass on her knowledge one day? Is there really an openness/resilience for that to take place and become common and respected?

In the piece, Elpida quotes a very well known and popular Pontic traditional song. As you can read on page 11/12, the lyrics refer to “the wife of the chief carpenter who needs to be sacrificed by being placed inside the wall of the



bridge...” How is this not a metaphor for the position of women in this society? It shows how culturally embedded the gender disparity is. The sexual division of labour is one of the key aspects having lead to the exploitation and oppression of women in capitalist society that continues today. How could the foundation of our society today rely on non-gender specific expertise? I should rather question my own position towards that dilemma and within this work. As a male choreographer and director reflecting on gender disparity, how is my voice legitimate? Would the collaborative dynamic we cultivated in the process of the work and Elpida’s own choice of “inserting” herself in such a patriarchal domain dissolve the potential inequality that is normalised in the patriarchal society in which we live? I am not claiming in any way that we have solved these issues, I only wonder how the work “The Artisan is Present” we made together deals with this emancipation?

I see this gender equality issue as an aspect of the fundamental focus the piece deals with, the non-hierarchical relation between an object and a human, how they can both share a moment on stage – equally. This work crafted a place for a woman and a young girl (the lyra is considered a feminine object) to stand together, perform, construct and exist in a field usually dominated by men. Should I at least change the title to “The Womanufactured Series”?

Tools, Tales and other Matters

by Elpida Orfanidou

The CHISEL looks like a sharp, thick, strong nail. While using the chisel, it felt like an extension of my hand. The chisel sculpts. My grandfather was named Yannis and was the father of my father. He was born and raised in Pontos, the south part of the Black Sea coast; a place of Greek life since ancient times. When he was a young man, he moved to Greece during the famous exchange of populations in 1923 – have you heard of the treaty of Lausanne? His profession was a carpenter but he was also a self-taught lyra player and maker. I never met my grandfather. He died in 1960. My father told me he was a good man. Sometimes I imagine pappou Yanni holding the chisel sculpting in time...

The WORKSHOP is located on the last level of the old Simon Karas Conservatory which exists on Strefi Hill in the center of Athens. Simon Karras is the name of a famous researcher in traditional music who created a large archive with material from all over Greece. Simon Karas passed away a long time ago but his wife Aggeliki still lives in their apartment right underneath the workshop. The workshop is small, maybe five times three meters. Many unfinished instruments have always been lying around in the workshop. Also many tools.

The AWL is an enormous needle. Its use is quite humble: to sculpt a point in wood. The teacher first showed how to use each tool. Then he asked if I felt ok to try. Sometimes when it would be too risky to try certain things, in order to avoid fatal errors, he would not allow me to work on the wood that was for the lyra. In these cases, I worked on other pieces of wood to practice the feeling. Once I shaped a heart. And afterwards I stabbed it with the awl.

The BRUSH is soft and gentle and has the ability to caress while working. Softness is a great thing. I loved the feeling of the soft hair of the brush on my body. I would touch my forearm with the brush and feel my feet and legs softening. They would soften and caress the floor. They say the light in Greece is healing. The workshop has many windows. I could see the Acropolis and Lycabettus Hill. Through the windows, the sun was brushing every single detail.

The teacher told me that almost every carpenter is missing one or two fingers because of a machine that is called “the ribbon” and can cut big chunks of wood. We didn’t have this machine in the workshop because it would be too dangerous, and the focus was on hand tools. We used **the SAW** instead. I had to hold the saw with a steady hand and always cut as straight as possible. My whole body was involved in this straightness. We used different saws. The Japanese saw that cuts on the pull stroke, another cheaper saw from Lidl that cuts on the push stroke, like most European saws, and the fret saw, which is my favorite. The best part about this type of saw is that you may remove its blade, put it into a hole (that you’ve already drilled) and cut the profile you need. I really liked the fret saw, so I improved. For example, I managed to perfectly cut the lines of the nostrils of the lyra. That day the teacher gave me a compliment : Elpida, you are even better than me !

The FILE has many little teeth. The way the teeth meet the wood is very important. The amount of moves of the file is also important. At first, the act felt innocent to me, but I had to be careful not to remove too much wood without realizing. The teacher showed me how to do it. My hands had to dance a very strict choreography. One and two and three, pause;... While in the dance studio I tried to come closer to the sounds of each tool and reproduce them through my voice. I had to listen. No matter how carefully I listened, my voice collaborated best with the sound of the file. During the process I also took Pontic singing classes. In the first class I learned that the purpose of traditional singing is for communicating, and the traditional human doesn’t need to refine their singing. I was also told that the traditional human gives birth to an expressivity that is direct and has nothing to do with interpretation. One of the most famous songs of the Pontic tradition is “The Bridge of Tricha” - *Tis Trichas to Yofir*. The tale of the bridge is an old story that exists in different regions of Greece and the Balkans. The tale goes like this:

*Thousands of craftsmen and thousands of apprentices
were trying to build a bridge (for many days).
Everyday they were building and every night the bridge was collapsing.
The chief builder could not find what the problem was.
Until one day, he heard a voice and he didn't know exactly where it was coming from
What can you offer master craftsman in order for the bridge to stabilize?
And he answered:
If I give you my father I will not have a father any more,
If I give you my mother I will not have a mother any more,
If I give you my brothers, I will not have brothers any more,
If I give you my children, I will not have children any more,
But if I give you my wife, I won't find a better one.
So, he tells his wife to finish all the things she has to do
and come fast to the construction site.
So on Friday she milks the animals, she washes her baby son Johnny and puts him to sleep.
On Saturday she goes to the bath.*

*On Sunday she goes to a marriage.
 And on Monday morning she arrives at the construction site/ bridge.
 So he tells her, my dear, my ring fell into the lake, can you go get it?
 While she is descending, she was singing a lament:
 I don't lament my beauty or my youth but I grieve for my little one
 that I left sleeping in his bed.
 As my knees tremble, this bridge shall tremble
 As my hair shakes, the passers by shall shake,
 As my tears are flowing, the river will flow.
 The master craftsman begged to turn her curses into blessings:
 So she started singing:
 As my knees stand, shall stand the bridge
 As my hair stands, shall stand the passers by,
 As my tears stand, shall stand the river,
 We were three sisters and we were all cursed:
 One build the Aseda,
 The other the Vasiri,
 And myself, three times cursed, built the bridge of Tricha.*

A similar tale also exists about the old bridge (*die Alte Brücke*) on the river Main in Frankfurt, but instead of the wife they had to send an animal to first cross the bridge. In one version the animal was a rooster, in another it was a cat.

The HAMMER is heavy. I liked the feeling of weight when holding it. I also liked to let its weight affect the shape of wood. And its sound. It always gave me a strong feeling of rhythm, this hammer, and I could let its gesture resonate in my body. I hit and it hit me back until my feet start dancing almost by themselves. It is a slow dance. Slow and rhythmical. The dance of Dipat', perhaps. Dipat' (Διπάτ') means two steps (*dio patimata*), and is the dance to the song of "The Bridge of Tricha".

The lyra of my grandfather has traces of **GLUE** on its body. I always wondered what type of glue this is. In the class I learned that there is synthetic glue and there is animal glue. The animal glue is made out of fish bones and salmon gills. The fish glue stinks strongly but is what the most expensive instruments are glued with. The main reason is that when an instrument falls down, if its parts are glued with fish glue, then what breaks is the glue and not the instrument so the instrument stays safe. What a sacrifice. Don't you think?

For the lyra we used 3 different woods:

Sycamore maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), European Spruce (*Picea abie*) and Ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*, *D. crassiflora*, *D. celebica*). Ebony comes from Sri Lanka, India, Western Africa and Indonesia. It is the hardest wood that exists. Ebony made my life difficult while using **the PLANE**. I had to keep its blade very straight and make a smooth move. With this move both my hands were engaged, as well as my whole upper body. My weight would

flow through my hands into the plane and inspire the smooth move into the wood. But with ebony, this smooth move became a high ambition. There are bigger planes and smaller planes. The smaller ones are called finger planes. The teacher told me that the Japanese are masters of the plane technique. They can peel out the finest slices of wood which look like artisanal textiles. Once the teacher said: softly Elpida, the wood doesn't need to suffer.

In Greece there are famous jokes called "Pontic anecdotes" about the Pontic people. While working, **the TEACHER** smoked an electronic cigarette with the flavour of cookies and caramel. It was a recipe he invented himself.

The teacher talked a lot, often telling me jokes about the Pontics, also about the Belgians and stories from his life as an airplane engineer. Quite often too he would refer to his wife Patricia who comes from Belgium and is an excellent cook. Patricia became very present in the workshop but at the end I never saw her, except for one time when I heard her voice – on the phone.

I was collecting all **the SHAVINGS** from each class in a plastic bag. Those curly souvenirs became an entity unto themselves. I was happy to see them produced in different shapes and sizes. Most students did not care about the shavings. The floor was full of them. One day I saw another plastic bag in the room also with shavings. The teacher told me it was from a student that attends the Fine Arts academy. Then he commented – only the artists do those things.

I like the names of the parts of **the LYRA**:

1. **Otia** (Οτία) - Ears - Tuning Pegs
2. **Kifal** (Κιφάλ) - Head - Peg Box
3. **Ghoula** (Γούλα) - Neck - Hand rest
4. **Glossa/Gravat** (Γλώσσα/Γραβάτ)- Tongue/Tie - Fingerboard
5. **Kapaki** (Καπάκι)- Cover - Soundboard
6. **Rothonia** (Ρωθόνια) - Nostrils - Soundholes
7. **Gaidaron** (Γαϊδαρον)- Donkey - Bridge
8. **Palikar** (Παλικάρ) - Strong Man - Tailpiece
9. **Skafee** (Σκαφή) - Trough - Main Body
10. **Stulari** (Στουλάρ) - Post - Sound Post (This part is also called **The Soul**)
11. **Khordes** (Χορδές) - Strings - Chords

I love the lyra I made. I am very proud of her. I was really touched by her birth; but finally I didn't cry when it produced its very first sounds.



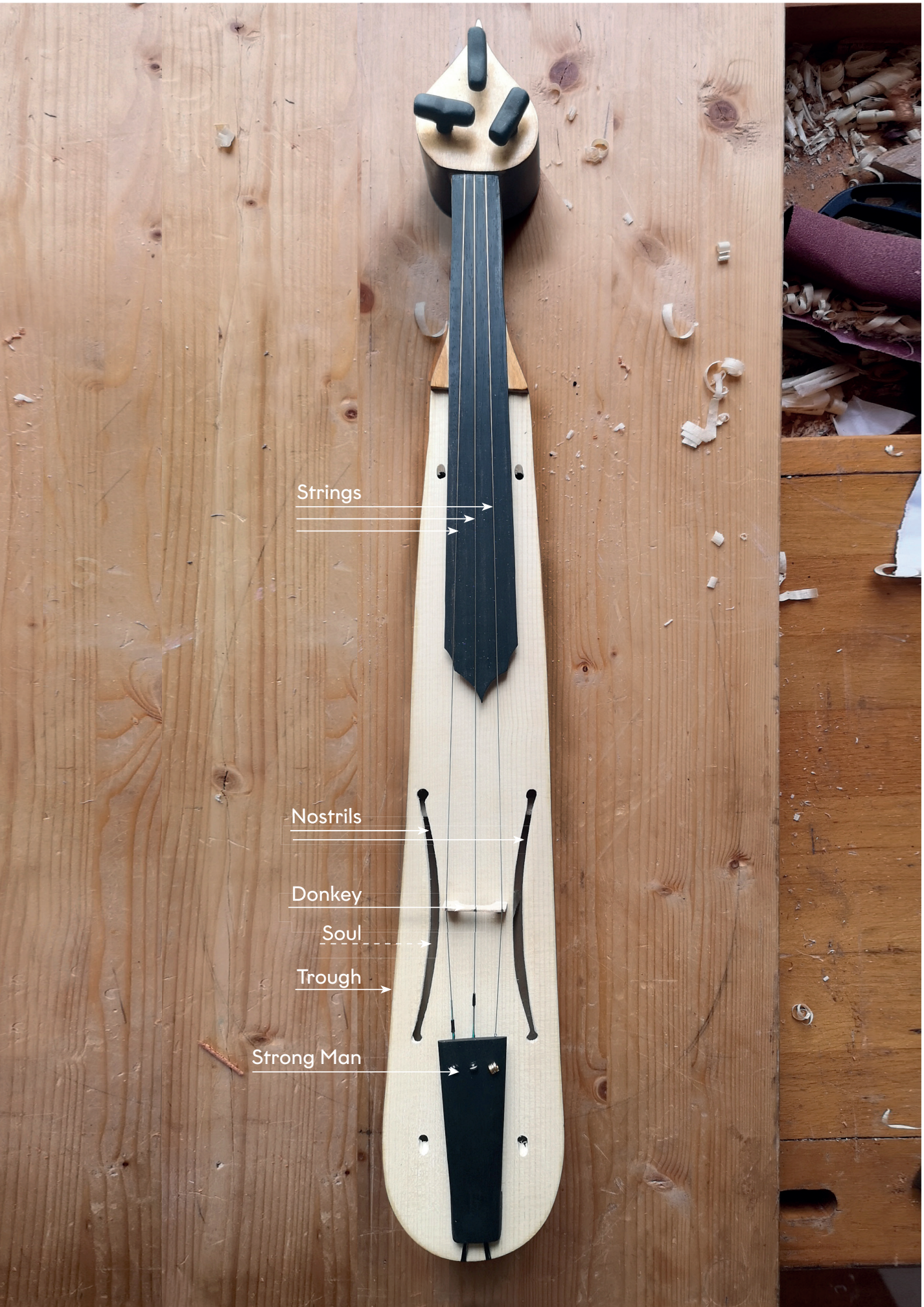
Ears

Head

Neck

Tongue/Tie

Cover



Strings

Nostrils

Donkey

Soul

Trough

Strong Man

On the Role of Listening in *The Manufactured Series* (Among Other Things)

A Discussion between Fabrice Mazliah, Elpida Orfanidou and Marialena Marouda

MM: Hello everyone

FM: Hello

EO: Kalimera

MM: Elpida and Fabrice, a question for both of you: how do you think that listening played a role in the work and its development?

EO: The moment I really started listening, I began to feel the core of this work. Listening gives birth to this specific performance, a performance made of the moment you listen to your companions – in this case the lyra and each tool. The choreography emerges in that moment, or rather, the moment is choreographed, of togetherness.

MM: In what way do you mean this Elpida? How would this listening lead to a (different) kind of choreography?

EO: The difference does not lie in the form, but rather in the feeling or perception of choreography. For me, this is the essence of performance – when one cannot trace anymore a maker and a thing made, where things happen in the air – it is an atmosphere more than a material.

FM: Elpida, how does your voice “work” in this performance? What place does it have?

EO: Well, my *vocal chords* were tensed – or at least I thought they were!! (laughs). Until I started focusing more on ours (the lyra’s and mine)... Voice was, on the one hand, another tool, and on the other, a facilitator. I think... I place this parallel to the function of the instrument that has a body and creates voice – in this case I also have a body and a voice. Seeing the two bodies like this brings the encounter into equality.

MM: So, in this way, the tools, the instrument (lyra) and yourself as a human performer can all be considered in the same way?

EO: Yes, the same way, like equal fragments orbiting in the universe (Kostas Axelos inspiration).

FM: Did you have the impression that you had the ability to have a discussion with your lyra?

EO: Yes, but not from the very beginning. The intention was there but to really feel there is a discussion took much longer. Then those magical moments were arriving where

I was released from any sort of solo decision making. Just “walking” hand in hand with the lyra.

FM: What were you talking about?

EO: What our desire is in every moment, I think...

FM: Could you give an example of how that worked or what it produced?

EO: Do you mean what it produced for the spectator?

FM: Maybe more what it produced in you, or what exactly does it feel like to walk hand in hand and talk about your respective desires with an object that usually produces sound when you play it...

EO: It is like going with the wind but the wind is generated between us and by the two of us. It might sound like a paradox, but it did emerge – this feeling that I am not controlling the instrument anymore nor its sound, but the two voices are generating each other within a system of constant micro feedback. It’s like constantly tuning in a new turn, changing the point of perception like in ping pong: one moment you are yourself, the next moment you are the other and maybe the very next moment you are an external viewer who witnesses this ping ponging. I feel I need to use any kind of skill I can trace within me in order to escape from them at the same time. I am escaping from my own body, while at the same time I am sensing my own body in more and more detail. Well, in the end the desire may

not be mine nor the lyras, but the desire of timespace – of the cosmos in between us.

FM: But is that not the fundamental idea of how one should ultimately be playing an instrument?

EO: Yes, some teachers encourage this way of playing, but I still think there is an extra step further towards this idea by allowing the ego of the performer to be massaged, and not needing to appear as a skillful interpreter.

FM: Could you maybe then describe what was different when you sang a well-known traditional song with the lyra towards the end?

EO: I think I tried to sing it in a way where the song comes from the space in between and not from my own (very tensed!) chords and mouth. I also connect this intention to the state of singing in traditional contexts, where people didn’t care about appearing as good singers or players, the primary goal was to communicate and connect with the community. If you were a very skillful singer, for example, that didn’t necessarily make you good enough to be playing in the community fiesta.

FM: Marialena, what do you think is the relevance of the personal account and story telling that Elpida shares with the audience during the show?

MM: You mean, what is the relevance of language in the work?

FM: Yes, but partly fed from personal anecdotes and stories.

MM: Well, I think those personal stories make clear the relevance of the lyra in Elpida's personal biography, but also in the social context from which her family comes from. For me, this is very important because it becomes clear that an object such as an instrument is already embedded in a whole set of social relations and traditions. To choose to collaborate – and discuss – with a lyra implies to listen to the instrument not only on a physical and musical level, but also explore the identities that it suggests.

FM: But more precisely, how is that part of this listening to each other, moving together, sharing the space together, Lyra-Elpida?

MM: Well, its part of it because this relation between Elpida and the lyra does not exist in a vacuum – its not that Elpida and the lyra meet in an empty space. The space of the relation is multiple: they meet on stage (and during the rehearsals) physically, but their meeting also carries a history that is both biographical and social.

MM: Fabrice, a question for you: I have the feeling that this desire to work with hand-made objects comes from a need to rethink physical improvisation and body work from a non-human perspective. Would you say this is the case? If yes, how do you deal with the contexts and histories that the objects bring with them in the work?

FM: Yes definitely. One of the main desires I had in doing this series was to explore the dynamic between something we (humans) have created and fabricated with our hands, and how that process created us in return. When one has to deal with raw material, one has to first know its potential – by learning everything about it, learning how it reacts, what it needs in order to become something we wish it to become, which tools one needs to create to shape that material into desired forms, what movements and skills one has to develop to work with it and transform its shape, quality and texture and therefore, how in return all those things have shaped us, shaped our bodies, muscles, behaviours – the very state and presence humans have today. I am fascinated by how this process of creation that we habitually imagine as only one sided – humans creating things – is actually reciprocal. This project unveils a little each time with each new object/partner, the nature of our own subsequent construction and human movement vocabulary. It says a lot about us humans. So, of course as a dancer and a choreographer I find this fascinating.

MM: But would you say your focus lies more on the physicality that arises from a more reciprocal interaction with the objects? Or, the social and personal histories that human-object relations bring forth?

FM: I think both: it is like watching animals in their natural habitats, looking at how they behave and move tells us how they think, what

type of relationship is at play while looking at how they interact with their environment, and therefore, see what they had to develop in order to be in-tune and in harmony with their surroundings. The body doesn't lie, it is always mirroring the effect that everything around has on it... So I would say both, but through the bodies...

EO: A question for both of you!: Do you think this type of performativity and this proposition demands a certain way of looking? Does the spectator need to "work" during the performance? Does the spectator need to have experience to watch in a certain way or do you think watching this type of listening is inherent in all of us?

MM: Well, yes, I do think that this kind of performance demands a certain effort from the spectator. Because in a sense, the work is not about representing, but about practicing a certain intimate and reciprocal relation with an object. So the spectator in this work is there to witness this practice of listening and intimacy, and to care for it in the same way we care for it. It's not about presenting the spectator with an "object" that he/she can consume, it is a proposition for a different engagement. In this sense, I feel that the work changes when spectators enter. Because then it is about including more people in the practice. Did you also experience it in this way Elpida? What changed for you when spectators came into the process?

EO: It was a challenge. I think because there is this habit of wanting to satisfy the eye with something that you found and you offer. So automatically there is a fight with yourself how to not go there but rather invite the other to practice this intimacy and reciprocity.

FM: Personally, I believe it doesn't demand any type of preparation or state that the audience should cultivate before or during the performance, but it lies in the ability of the performers to become equal in sharing the space together, with the object, influence each other, lead, and follow each other in a way that while watching we might lose who is responsible for what. The fact that the audience might want to constantly treat the object as an object is in our favour because it allows for them to be somehow confused, and therefore question what they are watching...

FM: Elpida, what is your relationship to the tradition around the lyra and how did that affect the process?

EO: I love it! It speaks to my heart without obstacles. This might sound romantic, but it is like that to begin with. But then I realized that every tradition actually has this power. Because it is not egocentric. It connects to the essence of a community, it is decentralized, and maybe it shares some sort of universal truth.

FM: How do you relate to the actual tradition and history affiliated to the Pontic lyra...?

EO: Actual? You mean how this tradition is practiced in fiestas and marriages?

FM: I mean how you experience the fact that you are Pontic, how Pontic were you before this duet, and how Pontic are you now?

EO: Aah yes. I felt close to the tradition before because of my parents and grandparents that spoke the dialect and I also attended fiestas, etc. During this creation process I learned historical details that I was not aware of that actually made me feel the complexity of the region, and in general, the complexity of tradition. That, in fact, there is no “pure” tradition in the end. With respect to that I think I don’t feel more Pontic, but probably not less after the project. I just feel a bit closer to knowing where all this might have come from.

FM: ...Closer in your head or in your heart or in your body?

EO: Regarding the tradition specifically, I would say definitely head because I did learn more. Regarding the heart and the body, the answer would relate to a more universal feeling of coming closer to the essence of something. But actually, yes yes yes, heart and body as well. *All* of those, yes.

FM: What does it mean to be from a place and a culture that goes with it? In this process of making your lyra and performing with it you actually did a very active interaction with your tradition – isn’t this a huge difference than just being from a place?

EO: You mean the difference between being Pontic and actually creating a Pontic lyra? Hmm, yes and no. I feel more emotional about the fact that this object was born from a process I was part of. It is like my child, a child that never belongs to me, of course... Also, it is interesting to learn some-thing about yourself that you had no idea about. Like the landscapes and type of houses that my ancestors come from. It is like discovering a completely unknown part of one’s self.

EO: A question for both: how far do you feel, imagine or think this experiment can go? Also taking into consideration that it is a series and there are more objects invited.

FM: It will possibly go until “Duet #10”. Theoretically it is, of course, endless. We could actually have 10 Duets with the lyra and a different person, and they should all turn out to be very different...

EO: But to what extent can this practice be expanded – not only in the variety of objects but in the way of practicing this mode of connection with objects.

FM: For sure that will extend to any type of performativity or interaction with either other people, space etc. This project highlighted and stimulated our ability to connect more deeply to what we touch or work with, to extract and fetch information outside of ourselves, listen to it in order to influence our routine, and organize differently our coordination and physical understanding better to what we interact with... I

think it has already shaped differently my way of thinking about choreography and dance...

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MM: Personally, I would be interested to explore further the different kinds of relationships that the two performers can have. It became clear to me during this third duet that the relations between objects and human beings have multiple contexts. The physical relation, i.e. how the bodies relate to and interact with each other is something we focus a lot on in the studio. But people also pick their objects out of a strong personal bond to another person (who can be a maker or user of the object), or because they belong to a certain culture in which the object plays an important role. How can those contexts become visible and audible in the work is an interesting question to me for the further development of the work.

FM: Elpida please sing for us one more time.

EO: η κooooooooo I kooooooooo I
kooooooooo epigen so parhar, eeeee-
eh poulim pououououlim!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b7B27-_YTY
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb1pE_
JgATQ&t=110s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb1pE_JgATQ&t=110s)

Expanding Technical Gestures

by Ines Moreno

I.

The Manufactured Series can be seen as a project that gathers a series of questions at the crossroads of performance art, craft, material culture and cultural technology. We can observe a common ground of interrogations shared by some performance practices and the *anthropologie de techniques* as a discipline. These convergences appear to be the result of a double movement and of a mutual curiosity. Indeed, while artists are turning to craftsmanship, ethnologists are becoming increasingly interested in creative practices.ⁱ This discipline analyses the way humans produce objects and the interactions that take place between bodies at work and tools: a body holding a tool acts upon a material to produce an object, in an context of specific social and cultural production. Related to the notion “material culture”,ⁱⁱ French anthropology has traditionally focused on technical gestures that accompany the fabrication and manipulation of objects.

“The Artisan is Present”, the third duet, unfolded a conversation between performer Elpida Orfanidou and a Pontic lyra. Unlike the two previous duets, this one included a technical learning process in order to fabricate the instrument, having an old lyra belonging to Elpida’s family as reference. This dimension introduced a major change in the conceptual nature of the project. Thus, the production of this duet involved the process of acquiring a series of skills or *savoir-faire*, related to woodworking and its associated technical gestures. This implied analysing the successive phases of manufacturing of the lyra as an artefact in order to identify the skills involved in its production. In order to articulate the interaction and engage in conversation with the lyra, the performer needed to develop a in-depth knowledge of the instrument.

Beyond historical contextualisation, knowing an object implies taking possession of its materiality, its technical qualities, as well as its manufacturing processes. The aim was for the performer to acquire a profound understanding of the object and to reinforce her connection with it by learning the process of its making. The specific kind of awareness developed during the process allowed Elpida to get a deeper understanding of wood as a core material, but also sharpen her perception of the object and of the presence



and function of every tool implicated in its production. There is a Japanese notion for the embodied know-how called *waza* (わざ), that implies the question of learning and transmission. In this case, the *waza* dimension emerges in the context of a performance. One of the main questions that arose with this project is whether this learning experience, this acquired material consciousness, this newly embodied know-how, could be reactivated and shared on stage.

II.

The boundaries between art and craft have always been unstable. Craft and its associated ethical and political value reemerges periodically in artistic theory and practice. As art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson puts it, “(reflecting on) craft paved the way for investigations about obsolescence, transparency of labour, methods of production, and of what Jane Bennett refers to as the *vibrancy* of matter”ⁱⁱⁱ. Current debates about craft in the field of contemporary art have been influenced by the contribution of certain lines of sociology and anthropology, or the so-called “material turn” since the mid 1980s and 90s. Inspired by social sciences and first developed in the anglo-saxon context, this expression refers to a renewed attention on objects from their concrete and physical dimension, to their production and modes of circulation. This shift has encouraged a reflection on the way objects play an active role in social phenomena and their capacity to affect us.

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In recent years, the development of “new materialisms”^{iv} across the social sciences and humanities, and the increasing visibility of the work of authors such as Bruno Latour (*Nous n'avons jamais été modernes : Essais d'anthropologie symétrique*, 1991), Alfred Gell (*Art and agency. An anthropological theory*, 1998) or Tim Ingold (*Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, 2011) have shown the importance given to the agency of non-human entities. More recently, these open perspectives have become valuable theoretical tools in order to think and research contemporary artistic practices. These approaches analyse material and processual accounts linked to artistic production. Perhaps because performance seems to have a less explicit relationship with handwork and its specific dexterity than fine arts, it has been put aside from cultural debates on craftsmanship. Along with many visual art practices and discourses, performance is entering into the realm of craft with a renewed approach.

III.

A technical gesture could be described as the articulation of the body with tools, upon the materials, on a production site. Therefore, to be considered as technical, a gesture must incorporate a dimension related to matter, to action and an intentional thought. A technical gesture is part of an operational regime that goes through its production, reproduction and improvement processes. It cannot be isolated from its production context and it always takes place in the framework of a gestural environment or *milieu*^v. Every gesture, whether technical or not, has an elusive dimension and resists representation or description. It may be analysed and interpreted to a degree, but certain parts remain unattainable. Neither textual or iconographical archives preserve the know-how of technical gestures, their eventual reconstructions or reenactments are never completely precise. Every reconstruction implies a different kind of appropriation. During the workshop phase, a sequence of gestures had to be appropriated by the performer as apprentice, by learning how to adapt them to the constraints of the material, of the tools, and of the environment, with a precise objective: the reproduction of an object. On stage, the aim of the actions was no longer the fabrication of the instrument. The public show didn't include a restitution of the phases of the

manufacturing of the lyra or the literal transfer of gestures from the workshop to the stage. The project avoided the recurrent pitfalls of decontextualised aestheticisation or of an excessive didacticism. Some of the actual technical operations used to make the instrument such as sanding or planing, were evoked and reappeared in a different form. Those tasks were reactivated to mobilise the echoes, the resonances of a specific know-how of the gestural transmission experienced by the performer during the training process. Certain technical operations were transferred from the workshop – their initial production realm – to the stage. The project highlighted the transformation that occurred with these actions during that passage. “The Artisan is Present” unfolded the entanglement of different gestural categories: technical gestures related to woodworking, musical gestures for playing the instrument and, more generally, choreography-related gestures. The performance displayed an array of technical gestures that could be considered as expanded or amplified. Multiple strategies were developed: a preexisting technical gesture could be intensified, transferred, quoted, diverted, doubled or muffled by noise. An intensive and almost compulsive sequence of filing that was applied, not on the lyra but on the table as its extension, amplified the physical implication of the whole body in any manual endeavour. Through its material continuity with the instrument, the table operated as a symbolic enlargement of the workplace and as a room for manoeuvre beyond mere technical efficiency. From the workshop to the stage, the performance showed several levels of technical translations whose entry points remain mobile and unsteady for the audience, setting a dynamic between the frontal dimension of the staging and a certain opacity of a singular technical experience.

Seeing an object as the sum of all gestures needed for its making implies that it has the potential to become a repository of knowledge. From this perspective, the performance became a way to reconstitute the memory of gestures. The project depicted an intensive reconstruction of a cultural and technical transmission that didn't happen: during his lifetime, the grandfather never transferred his woodworking and musical expertise to his granddaughter. The ritual dimension of the piece is situated precisely in the evocation of a symbolic transmission between two distant generations. The biographies of

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the instruments were as different from each other as those of the performer and her grandfather. The old lyra laid silently in the background of the studio while the new one, in the forefront, engaged in an active dialogue with its maker. The co-presence of the two lyras, the original and its reproduction, drew a field of action activated by the performer in which the ritual knowledge transmission took place. Seeking to bring into play other kinds of efficiency of technical gestures besides the production of objects, “The Artisan is Present” offers a reflection on their potential to activate social, historical and cultural implications.^{vi}

ⁱ Francesca Cozzolino and Thomas Golsenne, « An Anthropology of Creation », in *Images Re-vues*, Hors-série 7, |2019

ⁱⁱ Material culture is here understood as not reduced to material objects but including the relationship between subjects and objects, in *La Culture Matérielle*, Marie-Pierre Julien & Céline, Rosselin, La Découverte, 2005, p.7

ⁱⁱⁱ Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Eleven (contradictory) Propositions in Response to the Question: What is contemporary craft?* in Tanya Harrod, *Craft, Documents of Contemporary Art*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2013.

^{iv} See the works of Jane Bennett (2009), Karen Barad (2017), Rossi Braidotti (2013) among many others. The "new materialisms" had a great impact in art-related studies, in this sense, see David Joselit, Carrie Lambert-Beatty and Hal Foster (ed.), *A Questionnaire on Materialisms*, OCTOBER 155, Winter 2016, pp. 3–110.

^v Anne-Françoise Garçon, « Des modes d'existence du geste technique », *e-Phaïstos*, IV-2 | 2015, 84-92.

^{vi} About the notion of biography, social life or trajectory of objects see the works of Igor Kopytoff (1982), Arjun Appadurai (1986) or Thierry Bonnot (2002).



