

Does it fail if it is only art? The significance of using live performance art to make visible subjective experiences of women parenting alone within the conditions of neoliberal biopower governance in Ireland

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By drawing on personal experiences of growing up in a one-parent family as the impetus for this research, I was able to look outwards beyond the sphere of art in order to connect my experience with the macro governing structures in Irish society. Making this link allowed me to identify issues I see with these governance structures and the consequences they have for all Irish citizens, especially for those in need of social support, using a neoliberal biopower framework. By drawing on artistic research carried out in designated and non-designated art spaces, I consider the consequences, for the artist (artwork) and the audience, of using performance art to represent issues relating to women parenting alone. By critically reflecting upon two specific performance artworks that I made - *Absent from the State* part iii and *Present in the State* - I outline what I consider generated a substantive position in support of my research question and elements that can not be resolved in this endeavour. Within the context of the neoliberal biopower framework, what has emerged from this research is that performance art is a modest but important human-scale gesture for the constitution of subjectivity for the artist and audience to create possibilities for social awareness. I exemplify key elements within the medium, such as its human form and scale, experiential encounter, temporality and instability, which make it a meaningful and pertinent way to make art within these conditions. In the moment of the encounter, performance art produces temporal and unfixed identities, which take the place of dominant notions for art and living and herein lies the political potential for social awareness for the artist and the audience.