

BODY ON THE RUN: MEMBRANE AND TRANSITION

17.02–28.05.2023



NAUZET MAYOR

NAUZET MAYOR. BODY ON THE RUN: MEMBRANE AND TRANSITION

Martí Manen

If anything defines the concept of identity in the contemporary moment, it would be its instability. The construction of group identity ran into the crisis of national structures, opening up first to post-colonial and later to decolonial revision. Furthermore, the need to approach the writing of history from a critical position also implies a certain decline of ideological myths related to a stagnated national identity. If we focus on gender identity, this too ran up against the fluctuation and performative capacity found in the idea of gender as a context of permanent change, or possibility of change. Identity is executed through action and decision; it is taken up as an unstable, mutant feature, as well as a continuous battlefield. Identity, whether understood in group or individual terms, is thus found in permanent crisis, out of which the context is negotiated. This context is also—obviously— in permanent crisis. Still, in the relationship of this double crisis, countless combinations arise, as it becomes an open field.

Bodies and objects are affected by this mutation of the idea of identity. If definitions are fluctuating, what then happens with bodies? The definition of a body is thus found in action, and in the body's "dismantling"; bodies are no longer something unitary, becoming instead a framework of possibilities. A framework of fragmented, related possibilities. Bodies are undone and upgraded, gestures are reinvented, and gazes become forms of ongoing exploration where nothing is necessarily pre-established. Bodies, once dismembered, turn into action or action's possibility. Action that emerges in dialogue and in relation, in activation and temporality. In this way, bodies are able to mutate, grow, expand, shrink, rethink themselves and rediscover who they are.

Nauzet Mayor, *Untitled*, 2022.
Mixed media, dimensions variable.
Courtesy of the artist

In this historical moment, in this context, we find in the work of Nauzet Mayor dismantled bodies—moments of emotional alteration, pauses charged with desire, everything right up close. Nauzet Mayor works out of the realm of sculpture to offer emotional intensity by means of textures and tactility, gesturality and presence. His sculptural work seeks a place of proximity from where to perceive fissures, ruptures, blending and overlaying. His physical work is charged with convulsive moments, as they are converted into choreographic situations. The works exist in a present tense, latent, activating themselves. They seek to be close up, in touch, as distances are reduced. What is real is microscopic and enlarged, and this is no contradiction. Details are important, but no doubt what is even more vital is the will to create a present tense. Further, the emotional charge that implies working in a context of crisis enables an ongoing series of leaps between possibilities, attempts and failures.

We are speaking of works that are also objects. If identity and bodies are found in an unstable condition, objects as well are a melange of moments and possibilities. The object is multiplicity, an alteration, it is a moment that will not find stability either. And Nauzet Mayor fabricates unstable objects, objects whose fragility is something to be emphasised. Objects with a dual character, balancing between artificiality and truth. His objects are reality, while at the same time they are fragments, physicality and action too. They are a present moment, but also exist as potential; they are a yesterday, a memory, an invention. A potentiality of realities and multiple tenses. Realities and tenses in ongoing dialogue between what is fabricated and the facts themselves. What is fabricated becomes a feature that defines reality, where the narration of facts involves conscious voices. In this context, fabricated objects become a vocabulary that previously did not exist. Or, just as well, they are subtleties, gestures, distortion. Nelson Goodman spoke of the fabrication of facts through gestures that bring with them changes in perceptive or phenomenonic terms, quite beyond terms of a

physical quality.¹ It is in closeness and in friction that objects are encountered.

Objects in multiplicity, as well as an idea of plural reality. In this moment of exchange, the relationship with multiple realities is activated, in many cases, through desire. Desire as a driving force of research; desire as a non-linguistic moment when everything can still happen. Desire as something close to a pause or latent state, from where surveillance and a mental and tactile relationship with the world might define a possible reality. The relationship between identity, bodies and objects is thus mediated through the idea of desire. Desire becomes the pulsion that makes it possible for there to be an approach, a reading, dialogue, contact. And in desire the need for proof is found, trying to encounter margins and borders.

It is important to comment that desire does not need to be objectified as a characteristic with hermetic specificities. Once again, desire is in a fluctuation process as well, with layers of complexity that connect past and future moments. The desire to know, to be, to explore, to recognise. The desire to perceive and to feel. In Nauzet Mayor's work there is a connection with desire, a tactile and conceptual connection that is shared with all those individuals who approach his exhibited works. In his work, as well, distances are short, making it possible to make the leap to desire. Yet it is not only desire that has the work of Nauzet Mayor exist in proximity. Mayor blends the poetic possibility of desire with a clinical gaze, shifting between the psychological approach to bodies and the acceptance of their physicality, quite beyond the logic of meaning. Corporeal fragments are observed from two points of view: on the one hand, in clinical study of their materiality; on the other, where desire is a tool enabling the execution of an observational process. The scalpel's frigidity, the warmth of fingers. Karen Barad approached quantum physics from queer thinking, offering with her position a reading of the world where what is physical

1. Goodman, Nelson. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978.

and what is ideological share the scene: what is physical takes place at the same time as the possibility of desire, and in both perceptions, there is also multiplicity.²

The exhibition “Body on the Run: Membrane and Transition” is presented as a dialogue amidst fragmentary bodies, along with the bodies of all those who enter the new exhibition space created inside the gallery itself: with a stretched membrane, a site for process is created, a place for ambiguity, an altered moment, an impasse allowing for proximity and engaged observation. The sculpture, and the exhibition, feature a performative layer where any incisive gaze might approximate microscopic detail, raw gesture and constant flow connecting each piece in the show with each other. The membrane works as a component creating both an interior and an exterior. A fragile, permeable interior and exterior, which are also found in a state of negotiation. The membrane implies positioning, a visible action to define a place and a moment; a context of its own. Further to this, the membrane approximates a specific kind of physicality: the definition of space is tactile, it is conceptual, an idea that is visible and recognisable. The membrane does not hide, but rather gathers and facilitates the recognition of an “other side” and an “inside” that we might decide to accept and enter into. The membrane is also fragile, something that could easily disappear or become undone. The membrane can be stretched to a greater or lesser degree, and does not require straight lines or solid structures. It is a feature that is also a moment of negotiation: in its fragility it finds the will to approach a mutant definition of the place, and with its existence other possible performative contracts and modes of acting emerge. Leaving the museum space behind, while still being inside of it. These layers once again imply a complexity of identity that works on the basis of accumulation. Rather than negation, what we have is overlaying. The membrane,

2. Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

in fact, once again creates a context in crisis. Deleuze observed that meaning is the membrane that facilitates the relationship between thought and other aspects of reality.³ Here, then, the membrane is also the reality.

A context in crisis is a mutant reality. Crisis would here be understood as a moment of change and repositioning, where crisis is a term that gives margin to some sort of beyond, to an unknown possibility. The context for the presentation of Nauzet Mayor’s work includes this desire for crisis and through crisis. The objects are fragmented; they are ideas, they are process. But they are also gestures, strength and weightiness. They are meat, stone, sand; they are fluid, tension systems, growing vocabulary. In fact, Nauzet Mayor’s work is our time. His works are our time, which is here a defined time, as Nicolas Bourriaud observes, due to their lack of continuity, their intermittency, “a kaleidoscope where pasts, presents, and futures scintillate in furtive flashes”.⁴

The exhibition as context finds in the fragment a gesture that escapes from what is hermetic. If the membrane questions the definition of what an exhibition space is, turning it into a negotiated duality, the material exhibited presents itself as an interrogation on limits: the objects presented are developed in relation to each other; the objects—the sculptures—are independent items, yet also constitute a linguistic network in process, created in situ. In a way, these fragments (and bodies in action) are aware of their condition as elements in process as well. What is unfinished shifts into an extended moment that makes exploration possible, and desire too. We thus see a context that has process, desire, fragment and fragmentation as starting points. A fluctuating context, a context in dispersion. An imploding universe with layers and layers criss-crossing each other. Temporal layers, physical layers, emotional layers.

3. Deleuze, Gilles. *Différence et répétition*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968.

4. Bourriaud, Nicolas. *The Exform*. New York-London: Verso, 2016.

A series of moments inside the membrane, a series of fluids in contact. Contact is an important feature of Mayor's work. Contact implies closeness, and there is another aspect related to desire in his work: sexuality. The objects are revealed as sexual exploration, as a charged gaze, an exploratory field. Once again, we encounter a double-sided exploration where clinical practice and physical intuition are in dialogue. Bodies and their fragments, their attributes, take on meaning in a universe that is created in this "interior" that the membrane so fragily presents. Furthermore, the rules of sexual interaction inside the membrane have not been written, the relationships are neither written nor predetermined. Sexual attributes become independent objects, observed microscopically in their now-enlarged size. The attributes leave the bodies, moving directly into being bodies, centre, action.

Nauzet Mayor's relationship with sculpture involves significant repositioning. In this repositioning process for the sculptural phenomenon, its distances and proximities and its presentation too, it is interesting to observe some of the characteristics of Mayor's work. His sculptural work does not conceal materials or techniques. The brusqueness of the gesturality also allows for the pieces in themselves to have a degree of "freedom". They take place live, they uphold their time and reveal themselves. The works do not need to represent beyond what is there before our gazes, our hands, our touch and smell. Besides the physical work of the artist, we observe the combination of materials that have been processes and their combination with "clean" objects, which come with a symbolic charge. Confronted with Mayor's work, it is not necessary to know the symbolic charge of these objects in themselves, but the fact that some of them might point to a non-present (a charge that depends on certain stones, on the para-religious tradition, on the desire for other worlds and beliefs) means that other fragments are doubly charged with physicality, which is where one of the in-process dialogues derives from. Bones and minerals, constructed bones and minerals, with that other kind of material that enables a leap to occur. In a parallel gesture, we see in

Mayor's work a field of action where the objects are stretched or marked through their extension. Objects that extend themselves beyond what they refer to, with forced heights and stretched bodies. Layered bodies perceived as fragments: bones, torsos, genitalia. Nerves, tension, presence. Channels, weight, gesture. Reality takes place in sculpture and, once again, the habitual rules are not necessarily the point of reference.

Nauzet Mayor's sculptures also experience a relationship with the place through a force field. Hanging objects, objects spanning their own field of action from the ceiling to the floor. In his work, these extension systems become agents of action, making it possible to broaden the field towards the mutilation, control and clinical observation we referred to earlier. In this control and mutilation, the sculptures grow and expand. Language booms and fragmentation implodes: the universe created within the membrane is full of creation moments in the present tense. Yet, abruptly, a question arises: what if this universe is a ruin? And what if we were to find ourselves in a different time? The objects do not follow normal exhibition codes and are not bound to norms of presentation: the membrane is definition of a space, but it is also protection. In this surpassing of time, gazing at an archaeological ruin, we find a particular *modus operandi*: the ruin opens up to an attempt to decipher codes by means of objects that are lost, objects that are forms. In *On the Museum's Ruins*,⁵ through the work of photographer Louise Lawler, Douglas Crimp observed museum storage spaces where artistic aura had vanished. The marble bodies of certain classical sculptures—now separated from their plinths—became sexual flesh, history having been abandoned.

The storeroom of the archaeological museum and the buried ruin are two moments for concern, two latent moments. On the one hand, we find objects that need to be activated in their presentation (though which, precisely for their

5. Crimp, Douglas. *On the Museum's Ruins*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1993.

“deactivated” aspect, stand out for their corporeality); on the other hand, there is the possibility of a failed revision, of a posteriori construction on the basis of cuttings and fragments. Layers, once again. Times as well. In both cases an image appears that is associated with the membrane: in the Queens Museum storeroom photographed by Louise Lawler, transparent plastic tarps cover the sculptures. In some cases, as unique pieces; in others, they are spaces in chaotic dialogue amongst various fragments. Archaeological space needs tarps as well for time to be terminated.

In Nauzet Mayor’s exhibition, protective materials take up another role as they become definitory. If the membrane creates its own space, the ropes create sculptural tension. What was functional in the storeroom and in archaeological research, ends up existing on the same plane as everything else. Indeed, there is no characterisation beyond what is recognizable and thinkable, beyond attraction and repulsion.

Membranes and bodies, desire and objects, fragments and time. Dismantled bodies turning into a fractured language, bodies that seek and find in a place, a shelter, that makes it possible to build through fragments and cuttings. Every object in “Body on the Run: Membrane and Transition” is a noteworthy charge, as each encounter is a construction of a potential language. We are speaking of constructing language, although it may not be an exact one: it is more like a sullied language, a language in process that needs to be put into practice so as to distance itself from itself. Nauzet Mayor’s exhibition is thus that moment when what is presumed to be empty space is transformed into a series of temporary exchanges and ongoing construction. For this activation to develop, the presence of bodies is fully necessary: bodies that are works, bodies as connectors. Bodies that are fragments in a mutant universe. Bodies interacting; bodies that understand what contact is, scratched and scarred. And weighty gestures, charged and in dialogue.



Nauzet Mayor, *Untitled*, 2022.
Mixed media, dimensions variable.
Courtesy of the artist



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Courtesy of the artist



Nuzet Mayor, *Untitled*, 2022.
Mixed media, dimensions variable.
Courtesy of the artist

FLESH, BONES AND YOU

Manuel Segade

There are a pair of vertically-morphed feet anchored to the ceiling with extendable metal poles. Perhaps they are podomorphic plinths awaiting the arrival of their statue, or even the bare remains of a disembodied Atlantean. Their colour signals forthcoming flesh, of the type that convention leads us to identify as Caucasian skin, or so-called “skin colour”. There is an arm that, in a certain way, is also a raised platform, or it could be the overlaying of several arms together, of many hands one on top of the other or, potentially, of a movement emerging from the plasticity of a membrane. The limb, of an alien-blue hue, is placed on a technical surface made of rubber flooring tiles, and carries half of a haematite-encrusted geode in the palm of its hand. And there are two tubes, again Caucasian “skin-coloured”, shaped like deformed infinity ribbons, one with intermittent, corrugated red bands and the other blue, of a somewhat plumbing-like nature, but also grotesquely intestinal. Then there are two bones, two crossed thighbones, with stones set in their ends—haematite and blue quartz—which hang from the ceiling attached to a strap, like the type used to absorb the sweat from a hand that holds a racket. There is a torso, also suspended, this time from a rope with elaborate knots. Its cross-shaped arms are amputated at the elbows and amethysts and orange quartz emerge from its decapitated neck. There is what looks like a head—or a protective mask, or even a veined belly—on a carpet made of pebbles, a black sheet of plastic and a protective blanket with which works of art are usually packed. And finally there is a column or wide tube lying on the ground: it seems like the sum of the trunks of six gigantic penises, with formidable veins, but without glands, where the wrinkles of the folds of the prepuce work to fuse them together, ending at both ends in tentacular openings. Two of the sections have iridescent piercings and the whole piece rests again on a blanket of felt and black plastic, atop a

wooden pedestal cut from a tree trunk, rough and rustic, an earthing system, in stark contrast to the industrial appearance of the supporting materials.

Each individual piece shares a heraldic nature, as if each of the organs were destined to be features of a larger body, or of a symbolic structure to be recomposed into its potential sense or transcendent meaning. The entire exhibition is contained within—or *is*—a membrane, another new skin, a chrysalis, or the inner mucosa of an all-encompassing, totalitarian organ.

The exhibition space is pure fiction, a double of the world, an interiority presented to society. In other words: a foreign body, an object of desire subjected to transformation; a dismembered artist's body offered up for any possible form of interpretation; or an institutional metaphorical body, which emerges from a framework that exceeds it. Three—political—bodies for a single exhibition complex, a perverse polymorphous trio, like childhood desire.

“The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives. Stripping naked is the decisive action. Nakedness offers a contrast to self-possession, to discontinuous existence, in other words. It is a state of communication revealing a quest for a possible continuance of being beyond the confines of the self.”

—Georges Bataille, *Erotism*¹

A membrane is a soft seal, a passage: the assertion that the inner has a mandatory relationship with the outer. The threshold makes the exhibition an *in between* space. I once heard an artist say that it is not so much about what you take into an exhibition, what you decide to exhibit in the space, but about what you decide to keep inside.

1. Bataille, Georges. *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986, p. 17.

Nauzet Mayor introduces several simultaneous body cultures into the membrane. On the one hand, the technical culture of cultivating the body: the proportions of the torso are those of the slim, sinewy virility of the classic masculine ideal, a measure of strength, but also of ethical serenity. This stereotype—born in the Enlightenment, riding on Winckelmann's homoerotic and paedophilic sensibility—combined a misreading of the somatic repertoire of classical sculpture with the bodily discipline of the era's virility, built by virtue of fencing and gymnastics. As historian of masculinity George L. Mosse wrote: “The masculine ideal, in all its strength and virile beauty, became the very symbol of society and the nation.”²

The obvious reference to the tumescence of an erectile penis reminds us that the construction of virility can only be sustained in its binary opposition to the feminine. The continuing historical need to link masculinity and militarism on the one hand and homosexuality with degeneration on the other—this inescapably intersectional situation, linked to differences of class and also of ethnicity—has come undone in recent years: we live in the assimilation of stereotypes by their countertypes. A homosexual person, previously excluded from convention, is now considered “as they should be”, cancelling the difference between the norm and its supposed opposite. Therefore, the punctuation introduced by the artist in the form of small graphemes is an interesting indication of a vernacular sexuality.

Piercings in the genitals are not only beautification marks and size indicators, but also tools for stimulating erogenous zones within specific switched-on communities. The infinity ribbons, humanised pipes or flaccid hula hoops are like domesticated fluids, the same with the succession of compacted penises, penetrated by each other, reminiscent of what homosexual painter Francis Bacon said about his paintings: that they rose

2. “L'idéal masculin dans sa force et sa beauté devient le symbole même de la société et de la nation”. In: Mosse, George L. *L'image de l'homme: L'invention de la virilité moderne*. Paris: Éditions Abbeville, 1997, p. 29.

from “a river of flesh”. Gilles Deleuze understood that the flesh and bones in the bodies Bacon painted were always in confrontation with each other and not structurally bound together, in something he read as sadomasochistic sensibility.³ The binding of the torso responds directly to this specialisation of desire. *Shibari*, a style of bondage that stems from the samurai tradition of restraining their prisoners with rope, became a sexual practice in the 16th century. Here the artist presents its most sophisticated and aesthetic form, *kotori*: suspended *shibari*. To hang means to exist in waiting, like the part on an assembly line that awaits to join the whole, to be inserted or assembled, even though the possibility or risk of getting carved up always remains.

It is remarkable that, in the face of such an exhaustive proliferation of sexuality, the central part of the body between the groins is a void, an absence. Baudelaire said that he could not have sex: “To fuck is to aspire to enter someone else, and the artist never leaves himself.”⁴ Perhaps the antidote is preceded by the other suspension, the warning of poison or *memento mori* of the crossbones, whether it be a funerary warning or the announcement of the great change.

In the Song of Solomon in the Bible, the prophet-king chants to God that his legs are like the pillars of a temple. That is why the crossbones abound in Masonic iconography. The act of transformation, like sexual intercourse, is a collective process, a necessary construction that takes place through an exchange of social positions, of bodily postures, of common ground.

“What is important is not what is made of us, but what we do with what is made of us.”

—Jean-Paul Sartre. *Saint Genet: Comédien et martyr*⁵

3. Deleuze, Gilles. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. London-New York: Continuum, 2003, p. 22.

4. Baudelaire, Charles. *My Heart Laid Bare & Other Texts*. New York: Contra Mundum Press, 2017, p. 70.

5. Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Saint Genet: Comédien et martyr*. Paris: Gallimard, 1952, p. 63.

It is the social membrane that sustains the broken body. But there are also traces of metalanguage that give the exhibition rhythm: the pairs—of feet, of tubular structures, of bones—that are repetitions of themselves with slight variations... samenesses. Homosexual aesthetic imagination is based on a love of the same and not of what’s different. As theorist Leo Bersani explains, the homophobic system is one of differences, which forces us to emphasise the individual as opposed to the collective: “Homosexual desire is desire for the same from the perspective of a self already identified as different from itself.”⁶ What we are different from is ourselves, from the first heterosexual construction we received at birth. And the recognition of sameness, the defence of a visible and shared homosexual desire, is a fundamental political exercise for the preservation of life.

Philosopher Didier Eribon wrote: “A gay man learns to speak twice.”⁷ First as heterosexual and then as homosexual, in an ever becoming construction, at first internal and then social. To think oneself twice, to play a game of double identity, to occupy two successive or—at times—even simultaneous positions in life leads to being prepared for metalanguage, for the theatre of representation, for life as fiction, equivalent to the skills attributed to bilingual people in learning new languages. The need for a membrane and then for a code is a symptom of this form of double imagination. Metalepsis, the presence of the author in the story—like when the bad guy in *Funny Games* uses the remote control—is inherent in homosexuality: in recognising one’s self, or recognising the other. In presenting things and then seeing who really *understands*.

Michel Foucault, in “Friendship as a Way of Life”, his famous last interview, said: “The point is not to be homosexual,

6. Bersani, Leo. *Homos*. Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 59.

7. Didier, Eribon. *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*. Durham-London: Duke University Press, 2004, p. 100.

but to be ruthlessly gay.”⁸ He understood the option of sexuality as an agent of change in existence, but also of the possibility of coexistence between bodies that are always new.

“Symptomatology is always a question of art.”
—Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*⁹

There are other ways of reading the subcultures of the body, many ways to interpret their semes. Bondage is linked to submission and to the role of slave in BDSM culture, but *shibari* also highlights the importance of energy zones, of the points that open or close as it flows through the body. It is about abandoning a reading centred on the organism in favour of another that connects it to the world. The imbalance of meaning always comes down to the smallest thing: that is where the most intimate affects usually lie, the forms of intimacy that never strip completely naked.

The gems and stones set in the limbs are also ways of incorporating a different time into the body: a ceramic time, yes, but one that is also geological. In the crossbones there is blue quartz, pyrite and haematite. Pyrite acts as a shield against negative energies. Blue quartz aids relaxation and favours the possibility of communication. On the neck there is amethyst, a healing and defensive stone, as well as orange quartz. The latter is curious: it results from the heating of amethyst, which changes the properties of the iron that gives it its characteristic colour. Through this change of hue, the mineral gains a new power that brings happiness. Finally, the geode held by the right hand is energetic and metamorphic by nature, a vessel for purification in lithotherapy. In its interior, again haematite, called bloodstone by the Greeks, who believed it was formed

8. Foucault, Michel. «De l' amitié comme mode de vie», interview with R. de Ceccaty, J. Danet and J. Le Bitoux. In *Gai Pied*, n° 25, April 1981.

9. Deleuze, Gilles. *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*. New York: Zone Books, 1991, p. 14.

with the vital fluid that dripped from bodies wounded in battle. That is why they crushed and mixed it with wine, to use it for its supposed haemorrhage-stopping properties: according to the overwhelming reason, indicative of the onset of Western thought, coagulated blood obviously coagulates, just like “the pearls of your teeth” or “rubies of your lips” turn teeth into pearls and lips into rubies, in a fictionalised reality that goes beyond metaphor. The tradition that made the body a language also mineralised it for centuries. Its lithosphere is a tectonics still in search of its own seismology.

Born in the Canary Islands and based in the Balearic Islands, Nauzet Mayor enjoys an insular and archipelagic condition: his understanding of mobility and his proximity to geological movements in continuous formation, the powers of the ground and its materials, make his body a syncretic place where the ecologies of sex, desire and territory overlap, in an almost alchemical space of transformation. The fundamental thing about the correspondences between our personal, foreign, institutional and cosmological political bodies is that they make the body of the world the perfect location to seal off the denial of the very possibility of that separation between nature and culture from which we finally seem to be escaping, sheltered in our membranes, in the midst of extinction.



Nauzet Mayor, *Untitled*, 2022.
Mixed media, dimensions variable.
Courtesy of the artist

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