

Anna Raimondo
Ephemera as Evidence

Daniel Blanga Gubbay

In 1996, Cuban-American queer activist José Esteban Muñoz published the article “Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts” in *Women and Performance: a Journal of Feminist Theory*. With it, Muñoz elaborates on the idea of queer as a “resistance to count as a proper proof” and for the first time, articulates a contrast between the *evidence* – the violence implicit in its belonging to legal jargon – and the idea of *ephemera*, taken as a performative and political tool. If the *evidence* is certain and monolithic, the *ephemera* suggests, on the contrary, a constant escape of the body from being imprisoned by the gaze in a preassigned identity. The idea of *ephemera* in this article is an entrance into navigating the practice and work of Anna Raimondo.

In “Q(ee)R Codes,” a project developed in various geographies, Anna Raimondo researches and maps the subjective experience of a city from the perspective of several self-identified women living in them. Each selects a specific point or part of their city, and adopts storytelling in connection to it: memories and affirmations of identities, giving voice to narratives that are often made invisible by a dominant one. This is the first force of *ephemera* in the work. If the *evidence*, as part of the performativity of the law, implies to be judged from the outside, the *ephemera* proposes a counter-performativity in which the body defines itself from the inside. Here it echoes the voice of Muñoz, describing *ephemera* as “alternate modes of textuality and narrativity; [...] always about specificity, and resisting systems of aesthetic and institutional classification, without abstracting them outside of social experience and a larger notion of sociality”.

In the work of Anna Raimondo, voices and perspectives are returned to the city through the installation of a series of QR-codes in the mentioned spots of a city that can be listened to by passersby. By doing so and tracing this new map, the artist challenges the dominant topography of the city and with it, the very practice of cartography as a male and colonial science as appropriating territory. Universality is fought through the subjective; the normative *evidence* of the map as a single image is challenged by the kaleidoscopic refraction of its voices.

While encountering the QR-codes in the city, the passerby is invited to listen. If listening has been largely at the core of feminist practices, here it appears in a peculiar way. Displaced at several points, *Q(ee)R Codes* invites one to listen to a polyphonic and polyrhythmic experience that refuses linearity. It seems to acknowledge what scholar Vanessa Sheared defines as the “intersecting polyrhythmic realities based upon the Afrocentric feminist deconstruction of an individual's world view”. Listening is not a linear experience, but a network of intertwined voices that, while affirming singular experiences, refuse the impermeability of autonomy and recognizes the interdependence of lives.

In the space of Centrale, Anna Raimondo exhibits a series of sculptures based on gestures and bodily positions, embodying some of the attitudes of the people whose voice and experience are present in the sound project. Like the voice, the gesture is what is often considered ephemeral which is not yet a sign or a code. In the exhibition space, in their unanticipated appearance, they might eventually clarify what the *ephemera* might be. They remind how *ephemera* has nothing to do with something that is disappearing, but on the contrary, has a form of life that appears, yet resists being completely captured.

This double movement of emergence and subtraction from being codified is what lies at the core of the project, and in its title. First, it alludes to the tool of the QR code, to immediately queer its pronunciation and use. The same idea of technological tool, usually associated with data and *evidence*, is suddenly transported into the realm of the *ephemera*, revealing access to a subjective experience. Then, the title seems to contain an ambivalence: how can a code (*evidence*) be queer (*ephemera*)? Yet, by looking at it now, it appears how this new map of voices and this queer code is not intended as a “code of the queer”, but rather “a code *that is* queer,” in and of itself. Here it is: something that appears in order to refuse to be captured. A code emerges to permanently refuse codification; an *ephemera* that challenges the *evidence*, or eventually in the words of Muñoz: an introductory note to queer acts.

1 José Esteban Muñoz, *Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts, Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, online, 1996

2 Vanessa Sheared, *Giving Voice: Inclusion of African American Students' Polyrhythmic Realities in Adult Basic Education*, 2002

Daniel Blanga Gubbay is a Brussels-based curator and researcher. He is currently the artistic co-director of the Kunstenfestivaldesarts. He has worked as an educator and an independent curator for public programs, among which: *Four Rooms* (2020); *Can Nature Revolt?* for Manifesta, Palermo 2018; *Black Market*, Brussels 2016; *The School of Exceptions*, Santarcangelo, 2016. He has worked as co-curator for LiveWorks, and was head of the Department of Arts and Choreography (ISAC) of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Brussels. He graduated with Giorgio Agamben at Università Luav di Venezia and he holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from Palermo and Berlin. Recent articles appeared in *South as a State of Mind* (Athens), *Mada Masr* مدي مصر (Cairo) and *Performance Journal* (New York).