

Joshua Reinier: Personal Statement

Brooklyn College, Performance & Interactive Media Art

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My work tangles the webs of thought enshrining *sapien*'s separateness from the nonhuman—the animal, the artificial—opening to a cyborg, animistic, animated posthumanity. Performativity and interactivity are integral to my practice: theater as surface that twists its insides out, turning audience into performer. In twisting this surface, I intertwine speech, writing, and technology, and with it the layers of formal, monovocal logic, by extension the mind and body, the Cartesian separate self. I believe in performance as a space of static and noise, of productive difference between mediums (of parasitism, as Michel Serres calls it). Engulf ourselves in a maelstrom and ask us to find a way in.

A collaborative, improvisational logic underpins this aesthetic and has informed much of my development: I began as a jazz singer and improviser, expanding towards literary theory, composition, and code. My musical work smashes genre borders, like the free noise/folk/jazz/rock of “the Self-Prescribing Doctors Union,” or music-theater pieces with my friend and collaborator Jack Hamill, which use heartbeats, eye-trackers, and manifestos to problematize technology. I have activated the art installations of my friends Ivy Fu and Ada Wu with sung, spoken, and projected text, and use music to activate words including poems by John Taggart and Jack Spicer. Even work which I produce “alone” is informed by these collaborations, which have reinforced a skepticism of disciplinary boundaries.

I view performance itself as a collaboration with the audience: my work foregrounds this interpersonal dynamic to self-interrogate and to question assumptions of the self and artist. I break the fourth wall, which separates creative and critical, primary and secondary source. The introduction is the piece in *a max patch i made in 2020*; in *What I've Done*, I speak a monologue that mockingly “theorizes” my performance, the band, and the viewer; my installation *Particularities* invites the audience to step into the role of performer, supplying their voices as material for a generative sonic collage.

I open my work to process, crafting collaborative spaces of loose possibility where participation and improvisation is usually required. The band is participant in *What I've Done*: they are invited to play a graphic score of cartoons, intermediating image, text, and sound. And the filmmakers who edited and directed the video added another layer of images that outstripped what I could have imagined—illustrating the irony that the “composer” or “star” belies the collaborativeness of artmaking. In my hypertexts, such as *rain*, I invite the reader to explore; text responds to user scroll, mouse movement, and clicks, using networked and nonlinear forms. Reading as traversal.

I aim to awaken the medium—that is, technology, noise, static, opening to the space of theater. I find energy in the tension between performed text and increasing, encroaching noise: the voice slowly transforms into a MIDI bass in *a max patch i made in 2020*, or loses the ability to direct the band in *What I've Done*. As participants speak in *Particularities*, a generative Max/MSP patch ripostes with recombinant

inner/outer demons of previous voices. In my hypertext *AM*, poetic fragments flicker questions to a pastiche of ads, sermons, talk shows, and static—the sociotechnical discontents on the air.

These open spaces tend toward Other, nonrational, intelligences—bodily, ghostly, animal, group, cyborg, artificial. ChatGPT supplies the subconscious of my latest hypertext, *Zettelkablooey*, which will be published in *the digital review* this August. I turn the OpenAI API's temperature up to maximum, and it spits out an uncanny gibberish of neologisms, code fragments, and languages; a contemporary Joycean “night-language” à la *Finnegans Wake*. But what is awoken here? A Surrealist “automatic writing” (now actually automatic), a singularity, a multiplicity?

I'm interested in open forms and distribution: the radical accessibility of web-based art, open-access online publications, and interdisciplinary, community-driven collectives. I want to cultivate spaces that foster collaboration across mediums and identities. I began this intention in my work with the Two Groves Review, an online magazine at Oberlin, and in assisting the Oberlin Modern Music Guild, which brings experimental artists to campus. In my work at the Oberlin Communications Office, I developed my promotional skills in organizations through social media, articles, web design, and video production. I moved to New York inspired by its experimental ecosystem, led by organizations like ISSUE Project Room, the School for Poetic Computation, Pioneer Works, and others. In every aspect of my artistic and professional development, I think the PIMA program is a perfect next step.

Finding PIMA feels like finding home. I have been searching for a graduate degree that asks me to integrate and open myself further rather than track myself into one medium, to work and learn in collaboration with the other students and faculty rather than simply develop my individual thesis. I'm excited by the correspondences I see across the wide range of faculty at PIMA: Prof. Grubbs bridging scholarly work, performance, and creative writing, such as collaborations with Susan Howe; Prof. Krauss' stretching improvisations; Prof. McCoy's work with digital distribution and collaborations with generative AI. The postcolonial, interdisciplinary approaches of the faculty inspire me to open myself further, to co-create a theater of cyborgification, confounding the assumptions of anthropocentrism and of the colonial hubris hiding behind humanism. I would be thrilled to find the support at PIMA to engage my peers, the community, and all of my disciplinary bridging and juxtapositions.

Thank you for considering my application.

Joshua Reinier