



**This is a Leeds Arts University Repository copy of:
Urinary Leash**

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Abstract

The output is a collaborative participatory public performance of Paula Chambers' Urinary Leash. The piece was performed by six women including Chambers herself. Other performers include: Tanja Ostojić, Mad Kate, Hieu Hanh Hoanh Tran, Jelena Dinić, Lidija Antonović.

Research Process: Urinary Leash is a performance work about access to women's public toilets. The research process included extensive primary research into the accessibility of public toilets across the UK and in Belgrade during the performance project including documentation of all women's public toilet facilities accessed during the project.

Research Insights: As an older woman, Paula Chambers is currently researching how the material culture of femininity is accessed through a range of embodied performance and sculptural strategies, and how these change in relation to the aging female body.

Dissemination: this public performance of Chambers' Urinary Leash took place in Pioneer's Park, Belgrade as part of a two-day workshop project led by Tanja Ostojić as part of the Mis(s)placed Women? exhibition. The whole Belgrade iteration of the Mis(s)placed Women? project including documentation of Urinary Leash is available in the form of a catalogue which is available in a paper-based format as a book, and as an open access free downloadable document on Academia.edu.

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Paula Chambers, *Urinary Leash*
and participation in *Mis(s)placed
Women?* Belgrade, with
performance work *Urinary Leash*.
16th and 17th October 2021

Mis(s)placed Women?

Mis(s)placed Women? is an ongoing collaborative community based public art project that developed out of a performance work first undertaken by lead artist Tanja Ostojić in 2009 in which she unpacked, then repacked a bag of clothes and other personal items in a public space, the art work Score #1: *Unpacking a Bag of Your Own*.

In the following years this project evolved to include contributions from over 170 individuals from six continents whom Ostojić describes as a global community. Many of the participants are artists, they come from diverse backgrounds and mainly identify as women. In the publication produced subsequent to the 2021 Belgrade iteration of Mis(s)placed Women? Ostojić (2021) writes that Mis(s)placed Women? embodies and enacts activities that thematise displacement through performances that deal with migration issues, gentrification, power relations and vulnerability, particularly concerning female and transgender bodies. She explains her collaborative ethos as one in which participants perform and reflect upon different notions of travelling, homelessness, security, and the dichotomy of private/public space. Undertaken in airports, train and bus stations, public parks and squares, the performance works of Mis(s)placed Women? challenge the notion of what constitutes public space, and addresses the sensitivity of the body in public spaces, especially the female body, to reveal the discomfort and vulnerability encountered when the body is under surveillance, and in particular during security inspections, when women are often forced to unpack and expose their physical (and it could be seen to be also emotional) luggage (or baggage) to strangers.



My participation in Mis(s)placed Women?

In the summer of 2020, during the height of the Covid 19 pandemic, I made an artwork in response to escalating domestic violence incidents triggered by the confinement required by the pandemic restrictions. I made fifty metres crime scene tape out of applied blue and white satin ribbon. I performed with this tape walking in and around my home, climbing out of the living room window and returning through the front door (which is a ground floor flat). This work exists as a film of the initial performance and as the tape as sculptural object.

When I saw Tanja Ostojić's call for participants for Mis(s)placed Women? in Belgrade, my initial response was in relation to my Crossing the Line work. This existed as a film but I very much wanted to perform it live in another context, I was interested to see how this might change the reading of the work by potential viewers. As I researched Mis(s)placed Women? In all it's iterations, across sites and enactments, I realised that there were more interesting connections to be made, and that performing the score Unpacking a Bag of Your Own exposed many of the gendered vulnerabilities that I had been thinking about when I made Crossing the Line.



Tanja Ostojić, (2009) *Score #1: Unpacking a Bag of Your Own*

Instructions:

1. Select a migration specific place that resonates with you (public transportation, central bus station, airport, border, areas affected by gentrification...)
2. Get there and unpack a bag of your own (such as your own purse or backpack, or a bag with empty plastic bags, or packaging from consumer articles...)
3. Take every single item out and turn it inside out. Take everything out of your pockets. Turn your pockets inside out. Take your shoes off. Once you've unpacked everything, search to see if you'd discovered something else.
4. For those advanced and additionally motivated: You can repeat the same action in various places and see how it is being perceived at different times and locations. In such case, draw on the map the places where you performed the action.



Urinary Leash, A Public Toilet Performance by Paula Chambers, in collaboration with Tanja Ostojic, Mad Kate, Hoang Tran Hieu Hanh (Hani), Jelena Dinic and Boyana Videkanic, for Mis(s)placed Women?, Belgrade

Paragraph for Mis(s)placed Women? Catalogue

I, like many other older women, often find myself in need of a pee yet nowhere near a toilet. I have become in recent years, fascinated with the wide variety of women's public toilet facilities, their cleanliness, their accessibility, their nearness or distance from other similar facilities, the labelling, text, fonts and symbols used in these very specific spaces. Public toilets are vital spaces for other women also, for migrants, sex workers, homeless people and those who find themselves in vulnerable bodily situations. Public toilet facilities offer not only a toilet to empty one's bladder into, but also sinks, hot water and sometimes even soap with which these women can wash their bodies, and sometimes small items of clothing. Public toilets are highly political, they are spaces within which certain bodies, the misplaced bodies of misplaced women, the women who find themselves out of place, or in the wrong place at the wrong time, can find momentary relief. The performance in Belgrade materialised many of these concerns through the unfurling of golden ribbon. The performance involved the participation of six women, myself, Tanja, Mad Kate, Hani, Jelena, and Boyana. I gave each participant a roll of gold ribbon, 5cm wide and 100 meters long. As a group we entered the self-cleaning public toilet situated on Nikola Pasic Square. Shutting ourselves inside, we tied the ends of our ribbons to the cubicle bars and handles, pushed the open button then dramatically exited the cubicle as group, proceeding to walk across and around the park and surrounding area unfurling our ribbon as we went, until it finally ran out. We circuited trees and street furniture, negotiated pedestrians and dog walkers. We walked across path, pavements and grassy areas, around benches, bushes and bins, it was surprising how far our 100 meters of golden ribbon allowed us to go, not very far at all it turned out.



Urinary Leash, a public art performance by Paula Chambers, Nikola Pasic Square, Belgrade, Saturday 16th October 2021



Urinary Leash, a public art performance by Paula Chambers, Nikola Pasic Square, Belgrade, Saturday 16th October 2021



Online panel discussion and live stream performances, Centre for Cultural Decontamination, Belgrade. Sunday 17th October 2021

The Catalogue, free pdf download from Academia.edu Mis(s)placed Women?
Tanja Ostojić: Mis(s)placed Women?, 2009-2021, Collaborative art project /
Kolaborativni umetnički projekat
https://www.academia.edu/63723010/Tanja_Ostoji%C487_Mis_s_placed_Women_2009_2021

Tanja Ostojić

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