

A Portrait of a Photograph that doesn't look like a Picture: Photography and Identity as Image and Material in the Work of Edward Krasinski.

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ABSTRACT

Edward Krasinski's gesture of assimilating people, objects and walls using blue masking tape remained esoteric throughout the past decades. The practice was often described by methods that offered symbolic political readings. This article aims to understand Krasinski's tape as a material, as well as its formal effect as a separator and assimilator. The work is investigated in relationship to Krasinski's interests in photography and with a perspective of the work's relevance to the crisis of the photograph as an object today. The photograph shares with the masking tape the mechanism of assimilation and separation as well as mechanical repetition. An effort is made to understand the blue tape as a portrait of the photograph written in by subtraction. This paper examines Krasinski's blue tape as a liminal organ, a recording device and a warning sign. The gesture of applying the tape over people is finally investigated in relationship to Ohad Naharin's gesture of taping in *Last Show*.

KEY WORDS

Edward Krasinski, Ohad Naharin, Blue Stripe, Blue Tape, Photography

INTRODUCTION

In Rembrandt's *Belshazzar's Feast*, Belshazzar stands at the center of the composition and glares at the hand of god as it writes a message intended for him on the wall. At the feast, Belshazzar serves his guests food and drinks from the sacred dishes his father, Nebuchadnezzar, looted from the Jewish Temple. When god's hand suddenly appears on the wall, Belshazzar and his wise advisors are stunned: they can't decrypt the message. They are familiar with the letters, but they are unable to make out the words.

Inspired by *Belshazzar's Feast*, Voltairine de Cleyre's *Written in Red* exchanges the hand of god for the hand of the protester.

(To Our Living Dead in Mexico's Struggle)

“Written in red their protest stands,
 For the Gods of the World to see;
 On the dooming wall their bodiless hands
 Have blazoned "Upharsin," and flaring brands
 Illumine the message: "Seize the lands!
 Open the prisons and make men free!"
 Flame out the living words of the dead
 Written—in—red.”

Much of contemporary artistic practice appears to have something to do with the story of Belshazzar's Feast. The viewer often mimics Belshazzar's stunned posture as he encounters the familiar in an unfamiliar way: he understands that the message is intended for him. It is composed of objects or letters that are familiar to him, yet he is often unable to grasp any meaning from them. The beneficiary of the crime is entrenched in the sphere where the crime remains unknown to him. As for the artist, he often embraces the role of the protester against the burden of material history and its movement which Nebuchadnezzar's looted artifacts represent. He seeks to offer refuge from the past, freeing men and things from the limitations of their own biographies.

A TAPE ON THE WALL

Edward Krasinski became interested in (art as) photography in the second half of the last century. His critique of the image produced a new account on the role of the wall in contemporary art. His work offers an insight into the wall being written. Krasinski displayed pictures of paintings and sculptures, representations emptied of perspective and scale as objects during the late 1960s. By the 1970s he became best known for the blue line, a strip of blue painter's tape he began taping across people, walls

and objects, stretching the barrier of the image. The strip, forming a blue stripe once activated, was discussed in the past in terms of its symbolic relationships to photographic practices and political identities.

In 1968 Krasinski first used Scotch Blue Tape to encircle two little girls, a house, some objects and a couple of trees in the village of Zalesie, outside of Warsaw, Poland. Krasinski's tape refers back to art practice and has long been a tool for artist painters and commercial painters. His tape is made, literally, in order to trace existing forms and define two-dimensional borders as formal dividers, and as a side effect, they also act as indexical doublers of existing structures. Installed against a hard wall surface, Krasinski's blue tape feels almost like a skin to the passing hand. It is an object of mass production that replicates an intimate sensation.

In his essay "The Rhetoric of the Blue Stripe," Pawel Polit suggests that Krasinski's tape behaves in a manner that is analogous with the photographic image. Polit closely follows Craig Owens's analysis of the rhetoric of the photograph in *'Photography En Abyme'* and concludes that like the photograph, the blue stripe, in the case of Krasinski's work, has a unique rhetoric that relates to the way it interacts with reality through doubling.

"The model of space designed for the intervention of the stripe emerged in Krasinski's practice from intensive experimentation conducted in collaboration with the photographer Eustachy Kossakowski in 1969, with regard to modes of photographic documentation of the horizontal operation of the blue stripe in architectural contexts. In a quasi-tautological mode of typical photography, Krasinski's stripe simply doubles the contours of shapes encountered in its path."

This reading seems consistent with the realities and the potentialities that Krasinski's work bears and the possibilities that the tape might offer. If a specific rhetoric can be attributed to the blue stripe, then perhaps what is left in order to better understand the relationships between ideas of reality, the idea of the image and identity in Krasinski's work, is to further investigate the material analogy between the roll of tape and the roll of film.

Polit argues that the "qualities of the blue tape, its concurrent transparency and opacity, seem to stand in relation to the structural properties of the photographic image, the transparency of the stripe corresponding to the photograph's illusory depth, and its opacity emphasizing the photograph's physical flatness." Krasinski became interested in photography around the same time that he came upon a roll of Scotch Blue tape. At the time it was perhaps somewhat foreign or at least not yet common object, like the film roll itself. Polit continues:

"...the operation of the blue tape establishing a kind of visual narrative connecting two heterogeneous realms: a real space, subject to the contingencies of passing time, and the ideal and timeless space of geometry."

TAPE AND PROTEST

In “Kraśiński and Totality”, Blake Stimson offers a theory that views Edward Kraśiński’s stripe as a political agent. Reading his work symbolically, Stimson argues that the blue stripe is connected directly to leftist agenda and Eastern European artistic strategies of his time. Stimson claims that the blue line is “Antecedent to Solidarity’s (*Solidarność*) red line or an after-effect of El Lissitzky’s red square”. According to her method, it needs to be considered in relation to “form of associating people and things - that is the capitalist marketplace.” This approach situates Kraśiński’s work in a highly specific context that assumes his interest to be in the realm of culture and politics or within an intimate artistic milieu. Further, it assumes that the work takes a moral position according to which *Solidarność* was a positive political movement. In “Cat out of the bag”, Theodor Adorno offers a principled view of solidarity as an idea within socialist politics. His critique of total identity in the text can offer an insight into how an artistic practice such as Stimson describes would prove counterproductive to the basic artistic instincts that promise to offer men a way to move past his conditions, but rather further enforce those conditions on him.

[Solidarity] “was manifested by groups of people who together put their lives at stake, counting their own concerns as less important in face of a tangible possibility, so that, without being possessed by an abstract idea, but also without individual hope, they were ready to sacrifice themselves for each other. The prerequisites for this waiving of self-preservation were knowledge and freedom of decision: if they are lacking, blind particular interest immediately reasserts itself. In the course of time, however, solidarity has turned into confidence that the Party has a thousand eyes.”

Stimson’s association of the blue line with solidarity’s red line sheds light on the traditional acceptance of ideas about forms of semblance and identity in relationship to artistic production. If the blue line is somehow related to *Solidarność*’s red line, then Adorno’s optical metaphor might offer us a more insightful clue about Kraśiński’s formality that can help us in our thinking about the relationship between the blue stripe and the photograph: the very promise of identity embodies optical modes of surveillance that preceded the security camera. The point of Kraśiński’s work is not to echo and enforce upon the mind preexisting social mores. It doesn’t seek identification, but rather a warning against identification.

This text aims to look at Kraśiński’s message on the wall by exploring possible links between his practice and contemporary practices in the field of photography, focusing on how the blue tape, in the hands of Kraśiński, might be considered as a portrait of a photograph. It will consider how the artist treated forms of associations as optical instruments and how Kraśiński’s work with the tape embodied strategies that are now often capitalized in contemporary critique of photography.

THE PHOTOGRAPH AS TIME

In recent decades the artist's wall as a concrete place has been increasingly replaced by the photographic image as an idea of a place. Instagram replaced Belshazzar's wall. The photographic image gained elasticity and a sense of temporality that was unfamiliar before. Art as photography enjoys a new wave of development now that photography is no longer limited to familiar techniques of material reproduction or to the production of long lasting impressions. In our time the photograph no longer claims to be a description of a specific time and place by default. At the same time, a temporal attitude increasingly develops regarding the presentation of the photograph, whether by the act of publishing it on an app like Snapchat or by printing photographs for exhibitions using an ink that disappears within a given period of time. The photograph becomes increasingly temporary: a unit in time rather than a description of time. As such, the photograph increasingly represents a present experience. Establishing a formal sense of temporality arouses the instinct among some practitioners to offer multiplicity of moments within the photograph, whether by juxtaposition, doubling, barrage or collage techniques. The formal change in temporality altered the content's plane in the image. The photograph is no longer an enclosed container of time, not even inside our screens, but rather a surface on which semblance appears to be floating over. Everything can be photographed but nothing at all can be captured anymore.

In "A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad" Freud analyzed the inner mechanics of the image that was produced on what used to be a revolutionary wax tablet. To Freud, the tablet's mechanics echoed our own mental apparatus. The Mystic Writing Pad allowed users to write on it using a pointed stylus that deposited no material and deleted the writing by lifting the top layer of the pad. It produced an image of a record without leaving any material deposit, and yet it left a permanent undecipherable impression lacking in semblance on one of the surfaces that formed the multilayered pad. That tension between image, history and material reality is at the heart of our investigation into Krasieński's work.

THE BLUE STRIPE AND CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES

Contemporary artistic practices are often informed by the critique of the mythological aspects of the modern world, and specifically the investigation of the relationships between image, object, subjectivity and the notion of reality, both in the forms of possibilities and alternatives. Photography, commonly used by political bodies in sedimentation of possible virtual connections between society and the individual is often a model for such investigation by artists.

In America, during the past six years, the question of what is a photograph has become a central theme of contemporary artistic discourse. Major exhibitions have been dedicated to the subject by institutions ranging from the International Center of Photography to MoMA. The setup is almost typical: different forms of installation split between focusing on technical processes and/or conceptual practices, neither of which are traditionally associated with photography, are put on show to stress the

question: are these photographs, or not? Underlying all these is the unnecessary insistence in understanding photography either as a technical reality or as conceptual process. Practitioners of both approaches, artists and curators alike, either miss the understanding of photography as literary metaphor or miss that the metaphor aims to express a form.

If Benjamin suggested that photography allows an insight into the optical unconscious, then present photographic practices enable an insight into the material mechanics of the medium itself. Krasíński's oeuvre, I argue, marks a turning point in the critique of photography. It precedes much of today's critiques in its ability to provide insight into the metaphorical and the formal qualities of the photograph by a way of allegory. The blue tape offers a translation of the roll of film that sheds light on photography's mechanics of identity production.

As examples for current practices that aim at gaining insight into photography either as form or as a metaphor, we can think of Chris McCaw who uses a gigantic camera that allows photosensitive paper to be burned as if under a magnifying glass. Marco Breaur, who explores the physicality and the shallowness of photographic paper by etching, folding and scratching it, creating pieces where physical actions are represented by chemical reactions without even traces of light. Penelope Umberico prints photographs in overly dense ink on paper so the photographic image rubs into the hands of the viewer who goes through her books. All deal with the duality of the photograph as part of material reality as well as a record of reality de-voided of material. They treat the photograph as an object removed from its previous role as tool in the service of describing optical consciousness, as an object and material that produces new associations and forms of identification. Yet none of these practitioners seem to be able to reach the same level of tension between form and metaphor in the critique of photography that Krasíński reached.

PHOTOGRAPHY, TRANSLATION AND SEMBLANCE

“When inventors of a new instrument,’ says Arago, ‘apply it to the observation of nature, what they expect of it always turns out to be a trifle compared with the succession of subsequent discoveries of which the instrument was the origin.’ In a great arc Arago's speech spans the field of new technologies, from astrophysics to philology: alongside the prospects for photographing the stars and planets we find the idea of establishing a photographic record of the Egyptian hieroglyphs.”

Walter Benjamin, *A Short History of Photography*

Since its invention, photography and its applications have moved from supporting political agendas in the reviving of myth and formalization of territorial claims, to being used in modes of surveillance and enforcement of political sovereignty, to, most recently, being used in active military roles. The usage of infrared and sonic radar technologies in the production of synthetic images appears to conform to even more recent trends in contemporary art, where the idea of translating other modes of representation

into photography and vice versa become prevalent. Just think of sound art. In a sense photography became fluid to the point that practically all art is now photography by way of consumption and photography as a field is increasingly occupied with translation. At the same time and for the same reasons, photography is becoming ever more determinative in its political significance, but not photography as we think of it.

Photographic applications are being expanded by artists, but also by governments and other political bodies to enforce the past using newly produced objects of associations. Photogrammetry, for example, is a long established method for an extraction of reliable quantities of data out of photographs based on constant relationship of referentiality between a photograph and a reality that allows the accurate measurement of elements in photographs. It is regularly used for mapping, or geographical translation, not unlike the blue stripe.

In the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, photogrammetry-related technique plays a special military role: in the Iron Dome missile defense system, audio visual technologies are being fused together in order to translate signals in the sky that can calculate the trajectories of Qassam missiles fired from Gaza within milliseconds by overlaying and analyzing sound radar and infrared imagery. Belshazzar couldn't read a message on the wall, but nowadays we are able to convert using photography heat signals into mathematic formulas.

Photogrammetry as a technique expands further into the business of the recreation of historical artifacts and the resurrection of lost cultural heritage. Newly used technology, close-up photogrammetry, allows the creation of 3D models of archeological footprints, replacing earlier technologies like cast making and peeling, a technique of information extraction that bears much conceptual similarity to taping and the removal of the tape. Close up photogrammetry brings texture and surface ever closer together, allowing the recreation of the past as an object of the present. These objects made of photographs can soon offer the recreation of the mythological past with absolute accuracy, feeling our environment with semblance while further emptying it from all symbolic content. Krasinski's work might prove helpful to thinking about the mechanisms of semblance in photography in relation to political systems by offering a record lacking in semblance. The flatness of the photograph is what allows the illusory unity of depicted space as the space of depiction. The blue tape resembles photography in this sense as well. Yet the more dimensions and details photographs might offer us in the future, the more falsely familiar they offer the past to become in our minds.

THE POTENTIAL OF THE TAPE

On the night of January 17th 1991, Saddam Hussein launched the first Scud missile aimed at the center of Israel. The real danger, the TV informed, was not conventional missiles, but rather the potential use of chemical and biological warheads. A vented shelter made of concrete wouldn't do. The government's solution was to direct citizens to buy rolls of packing tape and large sheets of nylon and to use them in order to create a "safe room" in their house by sealing the windows using the tape.

Citizens were also given masks to protect themselves from inhaling gas, but only the tape could prevent a multiplicity of chemicals and viruses from penetrating through the skin. These kinds of non-conventional weapons kill people by destroying the physical barriers that define their autonomy from the outside world, the skin that normally keeps them contained in their identity and separated from others. A wet rug was to be put at the bottom of the door to keep the seal intact after the door closed. A strip of tape two inches wide was attributed with the capacity to stop weapons of mass destruction and it did, psychologically speaking at least, and provided a semblance of safety. It acted as a second skin, the family's skin, between the individual and the world. This suggests the deep mental necessity of semblance for our daily functions.

In Woody Allen's film *Interiors*, a roll of tape is yet again attributed with power over life and death. Eve, an interior decorator who is married to Arthur, the father of her children, seals the windows of her meticulously designed house with black tape before she turns on the gas on the stove and awaits her death. The seal proves incomplete as Eve runs out of black tape. She remains alive for another hour on screen until she kills herself by drowning, the act of filling oneself with an uninhabitable environment, a loss of separation between the physical self and the environment, where Eve became one with something other than herself.

In the examples of both Woody Allen and the Gulf War, the tape is used as a skin, something that separates between internal and external environments, between psychological certainty and real uncertainty, in the same sense that the photograph as semblance separates between reality and memory. Both have an inherent, almost magical power to convince in their abilities to create an identifiable space of safety and a border between different mental states and notions of reality. They define, protect and empower psychologically, offering autonomy as safety.

THE BLUE STRIPE AS A DOUBLER

As an optical instrument, the blue stripe frames and doubles reality by tracing it. It can only be expressed through the obstruction of prior conditions, a strategy of direct engagement, differently than the photograph. At the same time, the tape itself also functions as a recorder, a lot like the photograph. If a thing in a photograph is being expressed by the demarcation, the blue stripe is expressed and becomes pronounced through delimitation. The photograph marks the line from which we can't see past, while the blue stripe is a limiter that doesn't let us see through.

Krasiński's practice viewed in relationship to photography brings to mind a work by Francis Alÿs. In Alÿs's work shoot in Afghanistan, *REEL – UNREEL*, a camera follows Afghan children as they unreel a roll of film in the streets. By pursuing this action, Alÿs confronts the film as the image material that holds all power over our knowledge of Afghanistan with the place itself. It intends to position photography as an image and reality. By "using the material wrong," Francis Alÿs produces a strong sense of foreignness between the place, the material in which a memory of it can be stored and the video itself that the viewers watch. Like Naharin's tape, Francis Alÿs film shines on the luster of the

sand and stones. Afghanistan becomes separated and contrasted with the space in which it is depicted, the film roll once it appears in reality.

Krasiński's blue stripe and the photograph are both affirmative objects bearing indexical claims not only to describe, but also to enforce the past. Like the photograph, every line of tape claims that it contains an objective historical condition. But where is it being contained? The photograph and the tape offer no memory but the rhetoric of the machine.

KRASINSKI'S BLUE TAPE

The masking tape, once taped, might literally belong to the world of painting as a tool, but it is important to stress the unique properties of the blue tape prior to the intervention and realize that only from the point of its failure to fulfill its basic goal can we realize how its qualities did in fact function in Krasiński's work.

Krasiński's blue tape is solid in color yet easily penetrable by light. It is firm but also somewhat elastic. Its top surface has a finely granulated plastic texture. It brings to life a waxy luster sensation if touched. This sensation, produced by the installation of the tape against a hard surface of the wall, generates a feeling of skin to the passing hand. It is an intimate sensation being mass-produced.

The blue tape installed on the wall suggests an imminent event of painting, as well as its own removal. This removal also bears a quality that is unique to the Scotch Blue Tape and reminds us of Freud's 'Mystic Writing Pad': it leaves no evidence, no mark or sign on the wall. It's magical. It is these qualities of temporality and disappearance without an obvious trace that best endow the installation with a sense of death. As such, when operating on the metaphoric level, in Krasiński's earlier work, the blue line can be heard as the constant sound of a heart monitor in a hospital, announcing death before the patient even arrives. Perhaps it is interesting then that in Krasiński's later works, the blue line is composed into a form that, if it were to resemble anything, it would be the short signs of life produced by the machine.

Krasiński made the Scotch Blue Tape, the tool of the painter, into a subject, not of painting, but of photography. While the tape leaves no mark on the wall, the wall always leaves multiple traces on Krasiński's tape. The tape is a subversive recording device. Not only does it produce a composition that associates people and things like photographs do, the blue stripe also records a vast amount of information about everything that it encounters, defines, and contains. Information that only the machine can decipher.

Because of the tape's surprising presence and visual impact, its basic function as masking tape is easily forgotten. Something, not nothing, is hidden underneath it. In any constellation the tape is used, it separates a layer of perceived reality and positions it beyond reach. It presents itself by discrimination. Only the rare discontinuities of the line remind the viewer of an existing present that is removed from cognition. It denies similarities between all other things by offering the primacy of its own repetition.

As such, it should be investigated, like the photograph, as a raw material of forgetting and as a producer of false memories and associations.

Krasiński's blue stripe is able to offer an enlargement of the skin as a territory of identity. It records the folds, cracks, and the textures of the physical bodies it envelops. Yet where the blue stripe passes, all things appear like they are exactly the same, and to the mechanical eye they are, which is why elements outside of the blue stripe in Krasiński's installations appear completely different from each other, even from their own two sides.

Krasiński often activated the tape by installing it going through paintings of romantic landscapes, mythological portraits, art objects and depictions of youth. In this sense the blue stripe again shares mechanics with Francis Alÿs *Green Line* that are borrowed from the grammar of photography. Alÿs walked with a dripping bucket of green color along the *Green Line*, the demarcation line that was set out in armistice agreements between Israel and its neighbors. Francis Alÿs's green line suggests a path where the lands of Israel and Palestine aren't two opposite ideas but rather an actual territory in which they are the same literal place or an object. Both Krasiński and Alÿs embody strategies of validating conceptual categories of the political in concrete realms in a manner that evokes a romantic paradox. Krasiński often used the tape to connect the very assets that nationalistic bodies often aim to appropriate and bring them into geographical unity: youth, objects depicting past cultural heritage, and depictions of domestic nature are usually chained to each other in order to create one continuous and concrete national identity and to reestablish national mythologies. In that sense a principled critique of history always remained central to Krasiński's work. The fact that Krasiński was able to gather these elements that are often understood as nationalistic at a time when Polishness was hardly expressed as a nationalistic identity adds another ghostly dimension to the work. The appearance of Krasiński's work in that sense suggests that questions of national identity might presuppose an active public discourse that views culture in itself as a movement towards the appropriation of individuality.

THE TAPE ROLL AS A FILM ROLL

The roll of tape, like the roll of film, is made of sensitive material, in this case one that is sensitive to texture. Where the photograph conceals scale and dimension, the masking tape can record them in its folds. Like the film roll, it produces a record, but also a temporal reality. Once it is taped to a corner of a room between two walls and then removed, it is an indexical record from that place. Only it is an index of the texture of the wall and its ripples. It is an index of multiple dimensions of space: actual geometry and materiality. The roll of tape indexes not just the shape and texture of the space but also its chemical and biological composition. It does so even while it is still hanging on the wall as well as after it has been removed, in the same manner that the camera film holds an index from the moment the picture is taken, long before it is developed into a picture.

Like erasure, the peeling of the tape condenses the space it recorded into a coded memory unavailable to us. It is full of properties about specific territory, recorded for either a long or short

period of time. Yet the roll of blue tape, as a record, holds a different property when it comes to decrypting its memory.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND GEOGRAPHY

Photography bears a relative relationship to geography, of which photogrammetry clearly takes advantage. In the classic sense it is a condensed record of specific territory, be it a portrait or a landscape photograph, a war picture or a fashion shoot in the studio. If the blue tape acts like an enlarged skin, the photograph acts like veins. Photography's history runs almost parallel to the rise of nationalistic ideas in Europe, and as a political technique it shares with nationalism the desire to separate history from memory by turning it into an object of present knowledge. Photography helped nationalism to channel ideas by establishing recognizable physical and cultural boundaries more efficiently than painting because it was better at mapping, bringing closer the space it depicted to the space of depiction, the film. This is due to promised referentiality and indexicality. Offering a flatter image also meant a more condensed and impenetrable form of evidence. It is the capacity of resolution to become density of information that renders photography to be efficient medium in the transformation of ideologies.

In his photographic endeavors, Krasinski was able to exploit these relationships between photography and geometry by installing the blue stripe in a way that translates differently in the camera than it appears in reality. By understanding the photographic mechanics in depth, Krasinski was often able to produce a straight line by positioning the tape in different heights across different layers of depth.

To speak about photography in the most pedestrian sense and introduce an object as a photograph by saying: "this is a photograph", is to suggest that it is a representation of something else. The analogue process had hidden a long semantic truth: that the word photography itself isn't a description or a sign for an object whose sole goal is to represent something else, but rather it's a suggestion. The digital revolution allowed us this insight: a photograph doesn't appear to be drawn or written. In our era digital cameras offer sensitivities to light and to other energies that enable different kinds of indexical records than those we could only imagine seeing with our own capacities just a few years ago. If cameras copy anything, they copy the stamps that were left by the movements of past energies. The rise in technologies of synthetic images, where pictures created by sound radars and other forms of synthetic apertures for example, create a heightened autonomy between the photograph and the optical as a traditional image making technique. An accurate visual semblance can be formed without traditional optical mechanisms being involved.

The image becomes every bit a part of reality as it is a reference when it can be its sole evidence, and the blue stripe makes this reality about the photographic medium noticed by its self-referentiality. The relationship between expression of a memory as an image exists as a code in it. The blue stripe's horizontal setting is often brought up as a pointer to the horizon in landscape painting, especially since

Krasiński arrived to his interest in photography through his practice as a painter. Landscape as a surrogate for space in works of art offers a depiction of memory of a certain time, an idea of a home. If painting before the camera obscura was good at achieving distance between painted space and the space painted, photography and related imagery technologies today offers closer proximity between the depicted and the surface on depiction. This creates a sense of realism that generates every landscape to become identified framed territory, removed from nature in large. When landscape isn't part of nature, it is part of a state or a political agenda. Photography's ability to frame landscape not as semblance of nature but as real particular and catalogued geographic territory, enclosed in itself, is what enables it to be removed from nature and become part of a political body. This mechanism is not foreign to the tape's acts of associating and disassociating objects, places and things.

OHAD NAHARIN'S *LAST WORK*

A gesture by Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin might shed some more light on the relationships between photography, identity and Krasiński's blue tape. In 2016 Naharin presented *Last Work* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The work ends with one dancer wrapping a group of fellow dancers with tape. The show's choreography, like much of Naharin's work, appropriates gestures from folk dances that were common among political, ethnic, and national groups in the turn of the 20th century. Just before the end, the dancers slowly sit on the floor while they are being taped to one another by the last dancer who remains standing. The dancer finishes the task by connecting the dancers to their environment as well, repeatedly wrapping the tape to a couple of wood structures at the edge of the stage. Throughout the show a female dancer on a treadmill keeps running in place on the left back end of the stage, operating like a timer.

Naharin appropriated the tape from the world of plastic arts and brought it into the mode of performance to shed light on questions of selfhood, solidarity and memory. He used packing tape, a material that lends itself to ideas about sealing and the stitching of parts to one another. The dancers wrapped in the tape resemble a broken water vessel that was glued together from the original parts, but no longer retains its shape. The luster of the dancer's skin contrasted with the shininess of the glossy plastic tape, like the breakage lines of the glued vessel. Naharin's tape is made, quite literally, to seal and encapsulate.

The idea of the tape as a tool that defines not only a membership in a movement, like a flag or Solidarity's red line, but also an environment and a specific physical territory, one which can even determine people's faith, seems to be significant to the understanding of the qualities that the tape might offer. As a material and a metaphor, it relates to boundaries and connectivity. At the same time the temporality of the tape suggests that if it is a border or a border mark, it is also a border that is supposed to be broken, destroyed, and forgotten, to become un-functional.

In the work of Ohad Naharin, the roll of tape actually becomes a long roll that records the DNA of all the participant dancers on stage. Its function as a recording device is heightened further. The tape

becomes an indexical storage device that contains vast information about the circled community, its double.

The writing on Belshazzar's wall is a warning anticipating his fall. The hand of god is an image that acts in the Rembrandt's painting like photography acts today: it's a floating image de-voided of material but rich in semblance. It's also the consciousness of the past.

Edward Krasinski's practice confronted us using the blue tape with a fact that photography offers a past without consciousness. By forming an existing record, which is separated from an image, Krasinski left us with frustrating semblance that we cannot recognize.

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