

Cally Spooner
Deadtime, an anatomy study

Graham Foundation, Chicago
Feb 17 - Jun 29, 2024

Curated by Sarah Herda and Hendrik Folkerts

Deadtime, an anatomy study begins somewhere deep and unfathomable between the kidneys and the hips, in a large muscle attached to the bottom of the thoracic spine, just along the lumbar. This muscle is called the psoas. Unlike surface muscles—a quad, a bicep, pecs—which pop out and publicize their presence, you cannot flex or release the psoas. It is buried deep inside. The psoas is regarded as an “emotional muscle,” as it quietly supports gut feelings, and activates desires to handle and hold basic psychological and social needs. Yet, the psoas is widely understood to be the most abused muscle in the human anatomy. Only when it is weakened or stagnant, is the psoas easy to locate, via negative symptoms that present themselves elsewhere: stiff hips, reduced circulation in the legs, locking in the lower back, feelings of sadness, and unwillingness to move.

The doctrine of “performance” creates a society that becomes stratified by how we perform—economically, socially, digitally. We become ripe for consumption, caught in an economy of perpetual readiness. Performance begins in the individual body, leaks into the social body, and then—like a stagnated psoas—creates negative symptoms, elsewhere: measurement, imaged and tracked selves, divisive comparisons, the creation of human currency and capital, self-management, and exploitation. In this climate, ultimately governed by the chrononormative clock that is Western time, basic needs remain unmet and it is increasingly difficult to tell the difference between what is alive and what is dead.

“How can one study the emotional development of society?” asked the pediatrician Donald Winnicott in 1956, adding that simultaneously “[s]uch a study must be closely related to the study of the individual.” At the Graham Foundation, seventeen artworks—including sound, film, sculpture, painting, and installation—that make up *Deadtime* echo this question over the three floors of the historic building. Throughout the exhibition the independent works overlap and collide, synchronized to a duration of 43 minutes and 59 seconds. Each floor draws out the tension field between the destructiveness of performance, and the possibility of resistance and repair. The works are attached to an inflamed, red psoas muscle, staged as an anatomical, architectural intervention that sweeps through the building’s internal walls and then, ostensibly, recedes. When a psoas is vibrant, it disappears. It vanishes into a dead time, a condition and temporality that presents no symptoms elsewhere, and, in doing so, restitutes life.

Deadtime was first composed by Cally Spooner in 2018 as a 63-page performance score. The project was subsequently conceived as a performance and installation for the *Iterations* performance program at the Art Institute of Chicago in 2019, curated by Hendrik Folkerts. Parts of *Deadtime* have been shown at Swiss Institute, New York (2019); Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Sint-Martens-Latem (2021); Parrhesiades, London (2021); gb agency, Paris (2021); ZERO..., Milan (2022); Pinacoteca Agnelli Foundation, Turin (2022); MOVE Festival, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2022); O-Overgaden, Copenhagen (2023); and Cukrarna, Ljubljana (2023). *Deadtime* now returns to Chicago, half a decade later, as the most comprehensive presentation, cocurated by Graham Foundation director, Sarah Herda and Hendrik Folkerts, curator of international contemporary art and head of exhibitions, Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

Credits

Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

Horizontal, vertical, and circular movement: Aske Thiberg

Still Life, 2018

Assistant: Cally Spooner

Melody's Warm Up, 2022

Cello tonilization: Melody Giron

Scoring, timing: Cally Spooner

Studio audio recording: Jesse Lewis at Immersive Music Project, Boston

Audio gain staging: Tom Sedgwick with Cally Spooner

Mastering: Stephan Mathieu Schwebung

Produced by Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin

WHAT HAPPENED!? A Conversation With My Mother, 2024

Telephone conversation: Cally Spooner and Angela Spooner

Audio recording: Cally Spooner

Film recording of view from *Hotel du Parc*, Mont Pelerin: Cally Spooner

Transcription: Ava Barrett and AI

Dancing Still Life on a Single Breath, 2023

Selfie Poses: Maggie Segale

Scoring: Cally Spooner

Sound recording with body and boom microphones: Simon Jørgensen

Audio gain staging: Tom Sedgwick

Produced by Cukrarna, Ljubljana, with the support of O-Overgaden, Copenhagen

Maggie's Solo (audio only), 2021

Audio interference: New York City's crowded electromagnetic spectrum

Breathing: Maggie Segale dancing

Scoring and cuing: Cally Spooner

Postproduction audio mixing: Tom Sedgwick

DEAD TIME (Maggie's Solo), 2021

Choreography: Cally Spooner and Maggie Segale

Dancing: Maggie Segale

Steadycam: Charles Billot

Breathing: Maggie Segale dancing

Technical interference: New York City's crowded radio-wave spectrum

Sound mix: Tom Sedgwick

Principles, 2023

Children counting: Rose Wiklund, Margot Haydon, Matilda Haydon and Ella Spooner

Direction, encouragement: Cally Spooner

Sound recording: Philip Spooner

Childcare: Sarah Newey

Editing: Cally Spooner

Mixing and mastering: Stephan Mathieu Schwebung



Toni Smit, 2021



Toni Smit, 2021



DEAD TIME (Melody's Warm Up), 2022 (detail)



DEAD TIME (Melody's Warm Up), 2022 (detail)

—active because it leaks, 2022



Still Life, 2018

Fainted Pear, 2023 [3]

Fainted Pear, 2022 [1]

Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023



Still Life, 2018



Fainted Pear, 2023 [3]

Fainted Pear, 2022 [1]

Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

Fainted Pear, 2023 [3]

Fainted Pear, 2022 [1]



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

DEAD TIME (Melody's Warm Up), 2022 (detail)

Still Life, 2018

Fainted Pear, 2023 [4]



Still Life, 2018



Fainted Pear, 2023 [4]



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

DEAD TIME (Melody's Warm Up), 2022 (detail)

Still Life, 2018

Fainted Pear, 2023 [4]



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

DEAD TIME (Melody's Warm Up), 2022 (detail)

Still Life, 2018



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

DEAD TIME (Melody's Warm Up), 2022 (detail)



DEAD TIME (Melody's Warm Up), 2022 (detail)

Still Life, 2018

Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023



DEAD TIME (Melody's Warm Up), 2022



Principles, 2022

Dancing Still Life on a Single Breath, 2023



Principles, 2022

Dancing Still Life on a Single Breath, 2023



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

DEAD TIME (Maggi's Solo), 2021 (detail)

Still Life, 2018

Fainted Pear, 2022 [2]



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023



DEAD TIME (Maggie's Solo), 2021 (detail)

Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023



DEAD TIME (Maggie's Solo), 2021

Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023



DEAD TIME (Maggie's Solo), 2021 (detail)

Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023



DEAD TIME (Maggie's Solo), 2021 (detail)

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DEAD TIME (Maggie's Solo), 2021 (detail)

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DEAD TIME (Maggie's Solo), 2021 (detail)



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

Still Life, 2018

DEAD TIME (Maggie's Solo), 2021 (detail)

Fainted Pear, 2022 [2]



Still Life, 2018



Still Life, 2018



Fainted Pear, 2022 [2]

DEAD TIME (Maggie's Solo), 2021 (detail)

Principles, 2022



Principles, 2022



Principles, 2022



Principles, 2022



AS30D (Mother), 2023

*Fontaine Publique Meurtrière (Murderous Public Drinking Fountain,
Continental Edition), 2018*



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

Fontaine Publique Meurtrière (Murderous Public Drinking Fountain, Continental Edition), 2018



AS30D (Mother), 2023



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

AS30D (Mother), 2023

*Fontaine Publique Meurtrière (Murderous Public Drinking Fountain,
Continental Edition), 2018*

WHAT HAPPENED!?! A Conversation with my Mother, 2024 (detail)



WHAT HAPPENED!?! A Conversation with my Mother, 2024 (detail)



Screen Test for the Psoas Muscle, 2023

WHAT HAPPENED!?! A Conversation with my Mother, 2024



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