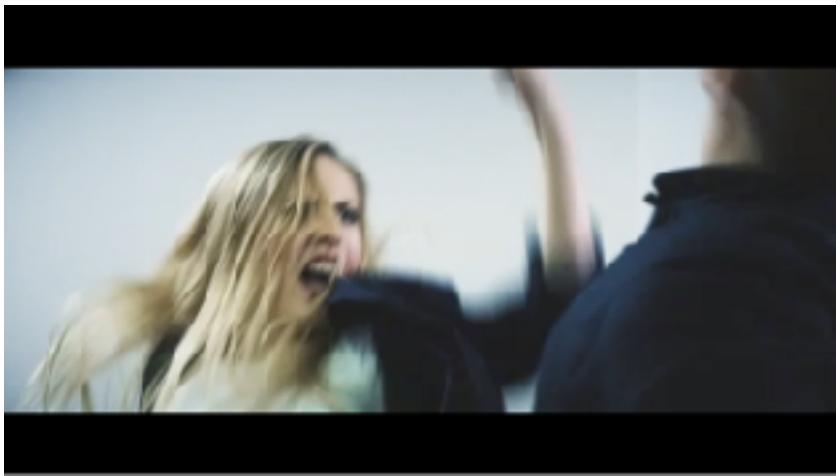


**Helga Wretman**

**Portfolio**

## “Trope of Struggles”

Video loop, Helga Wretman.



*Trope of Struggle* is a cinematic fight that pits artist and professional stuntwoman Helga Wretman against a male antagonist, played by curator Nadim Samman. Through a looped sequence of pulp violence which seems to escalate interminably, driving towards a concluding blow that never actually comes, each protagonist pursues a triumph deferred. Lacking a background narrative, the viewer comes to the scene without a clear view of the rationale for the pair's conflict. As questions and tensions mount, the film provokes a desire to ascribe responsibility and identification – such as interpreting the scene through the familiar lens of gendered violence. Perhaps, however, the scenario dramatizes professional relationship dynamics? Whatever the frame, or the story, it seems that the ultimate struggle is between the viewer and the film, when it comes to the question of sense making. Is it possible to look at the action without positing an explanation? Or to look away without picking a side? Marshalling the contemporary taste for violence as entertainment, toying with subconscious sympathies, playing with role-play, and the attraction of illusion, *Trope of Struggle* is commands our attention.

## “In Group Photo”

*Performance, Helga Wretman.*





The human brain is wired to produce strong behaviour as a result of what is considered an 'in-group' – people the individual already has an emotional relationship to or are familiar with – and 'out-group' – people with which the individual does not already identify. The sensation experienced through the familiarity of an 'in-group' is traditionally essential to a sense of belonging and safety. Body experiences and perceptions within a group setting generate a major data resource through this behaviour. The data gives access to the interior world of the subjects and their personal understanding of what constitutes their social context.

The instability of our contemporary economic and political system has increased a need for individuals to strengthen self-construction and identity, which helps facilitate a better sense of belonging. This construction is most easily done via external means, supported by the equation that once someone has succeeded in obtaining an external aspect that defines their belonging to a group, there is an equal chance that someone has not. This fuels an already present economic disparity as well as an intense fear of failure in regards to things like physical appearance or even what someone does for a living. One common coping mechanism has manifested itself in what we call 'the group photo', which is used to strengthen both in-group and out-group sensations. These images of people grouped together have become ever-present in our daily visual encounters, seemingly increasing as tensions that challenge notions of identity, race, religion, and safety continue to rise.

## “Falling Over on Purpose Only Hurts a Little Bit in Some Places”

*Video loop, Helga Wretman.*



It all begins with the decision. Then there is time to calculate and imagine the motion and the details of it in my mind. I visualize the body in action, and in the moment, I let go, clearing my head of all inner instruction and allowing it to happen, a moment of total trust. Letting gravity pull my body down until it covers the largest area possible, none of my force is struggling to work against it anymore. I stand up and repeat.

## “Anti Depressive Massage for Artists”

*Performance and interview. Helga Wretman.*



In *Anti Depressive Massage for Artists* artists are given a relaxing massage while a guided conversation is conducted about their personal perceptions on art and life. A physical format is established and repeated for each session: Wretman's hands on the artist's upper torso, skin to skin, their head framed and reorientated from the action by the massage table's hole facing downward. These two conditions create a circumstance that is both embodied and disembodied, a unique interplay between mind and body that disrupts accepted expectations of 'an artist's talk'.

## “Wellness in a Box”

*Video installation. Helga Wretman, 2015.*



*Wellness in a Box* is a reversal of the scenario proposed in *Anti-Depressive Massage...* in which we see the artist's face, each reaction to touch as the mind contracts and de-contracts through the session. Set in a glass vitrine filled with a soothing, pulsating light typically found in Bio-Saunas the work is not immune to the humour of its circumstance: the often exaggerated culture of wellness.

## “Window Leaks”

*Installation. Helga Wretman In Collaboration with Felix Mathias Ott.*



Window Leaks breaches a different kind of physicality, creating a mundane ecosystem that serves a stand in for the body's own systematic pressures and failures. Amplifying the premise of a leaky skylight that alternates unpredictably between drizzle and torrent, the performative installation transitions from pleasantly sedative to a veritable nightmare. The impending flood that collects is then swept away, a release that allows for this quasi-psychological cycle to begin again.

## “Fitness for Artists” (in Variations)

*Performance lesson. Helga Wretman.*



*Video Installation Diagram. Helga Wretman 2012.*



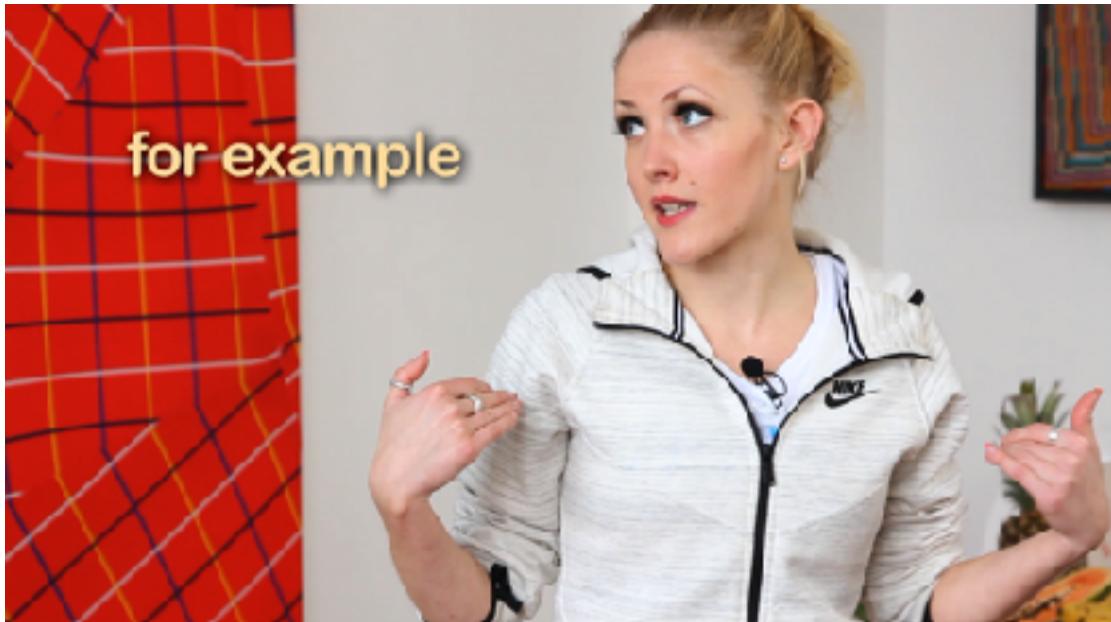
*Online tiny chat performance. Helga Wretman, 2011.*



The internet has introduced new ways of seeing the self in which physical attributes and self representation are more present than ever. *Fitness for Artists* is an attempt to challenge artists to be at their best and channel their creativity through physical movement while undoing the cliché of the lazy artist, a compliment to the increase of fastidiously developed artist websites and installation images. Not giving away to cynicism, it also creates a release of endorphins and avenues to focus on the physical self, the choice of representation or nonrepresentation in the public space. Held in numerous settings often livestreamed to increase participation, FFA has challenged this idea of public space both online and off.

## “Fitness for Artists TV”

TV Series. Helga Wretman Produced by Baby Darwin

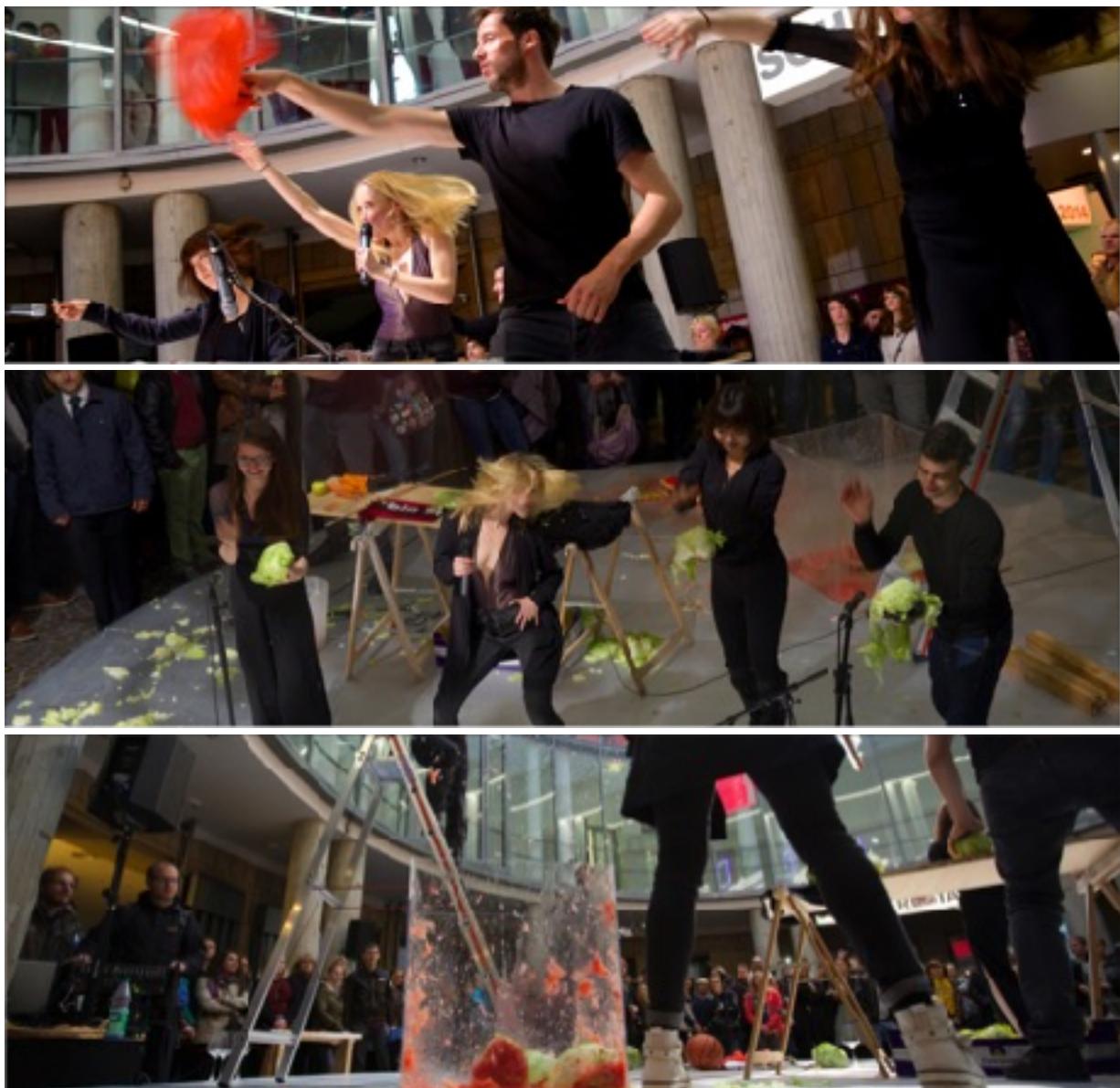


Fitness for Artist TV (FFATV), commissioned by the channel Arte, is a televised version of FFA that attempts to understand the world of contemporary art through the world of fitness. Following a fictionalised version of Helga Wretman it invites artists compete through their bodies rather than through their art. Each episode, Wretman visits a different artist's studio to talk and train them. Balancing both the gravity and the banal of an artist's everyday life, this sometimes hilarious scene blends art historical research and fitness instructions bordering on self-help and reality TV. Trying to talk about one's practice is hard enough, Wretman athletically cuts through professionalised composure to give the viewer a more raw and out of breath portrait of the artist on screen.

<http://creative.arte.tv/de/series/fitness-artists-tv>

## "Bosom Act"

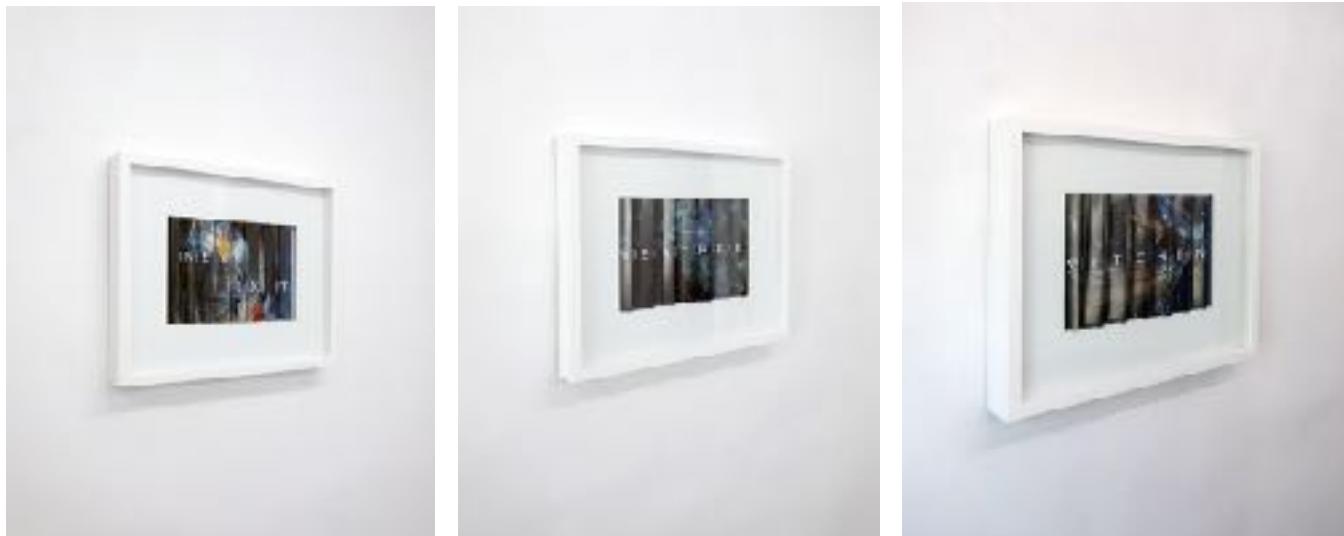
Performance concert. Helga Wretman, 2014.



Using Foley, the cinematic art of human made sound effects *Bosom Act* channels the super-reality felt while watching movies. Proposing the pounding heartbeat as a referee to whether or not something is 'real' the frenetically choreographed performance becomes a tool for Wretman to imagine turning the machines of popular cinema and song inside out. In collaboration with composer Steffen Martin, the score fulfils the structural mechanisms of a good musical moment to contrast with the visceral sound effects made by human bodies, resulting in liberating act that unbinds the audiences from the manipulative expectations of a commercial context

## “Dys Works”

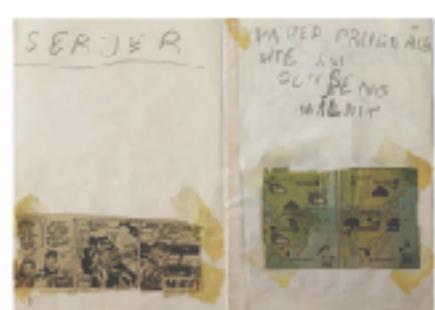
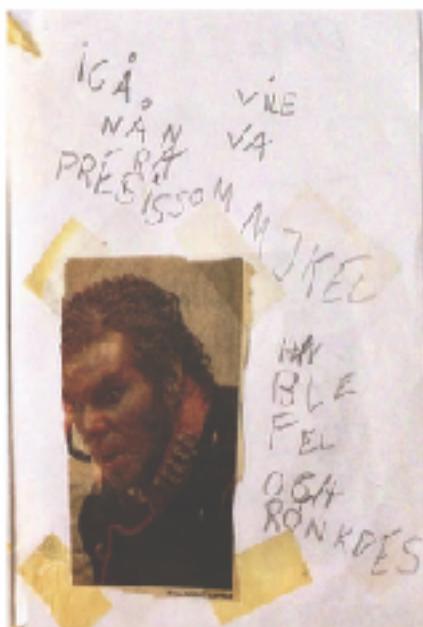
4 Framed Lenticular wall works. Helga Wretman.



In *Dys Works* and *Dagens Helga* Helga Wretman uses her own dyslexia to explore the mind/body relationship and how discrepancies between the two could potentially forge new connections. In *Dagens Helga* the viewer sees a composition of how young Wretman, in 1991, saw the world in ways that surprise the adult self. *Dys Works* continues this thread, accentuating the tendency dyslexic individuals have to see the 'bigger picture' as a strength through emotional lenticular vignettes. Together, the works echo Wretman's desire to hold onto a vivid interior life that confirms feelings as physical evidence.

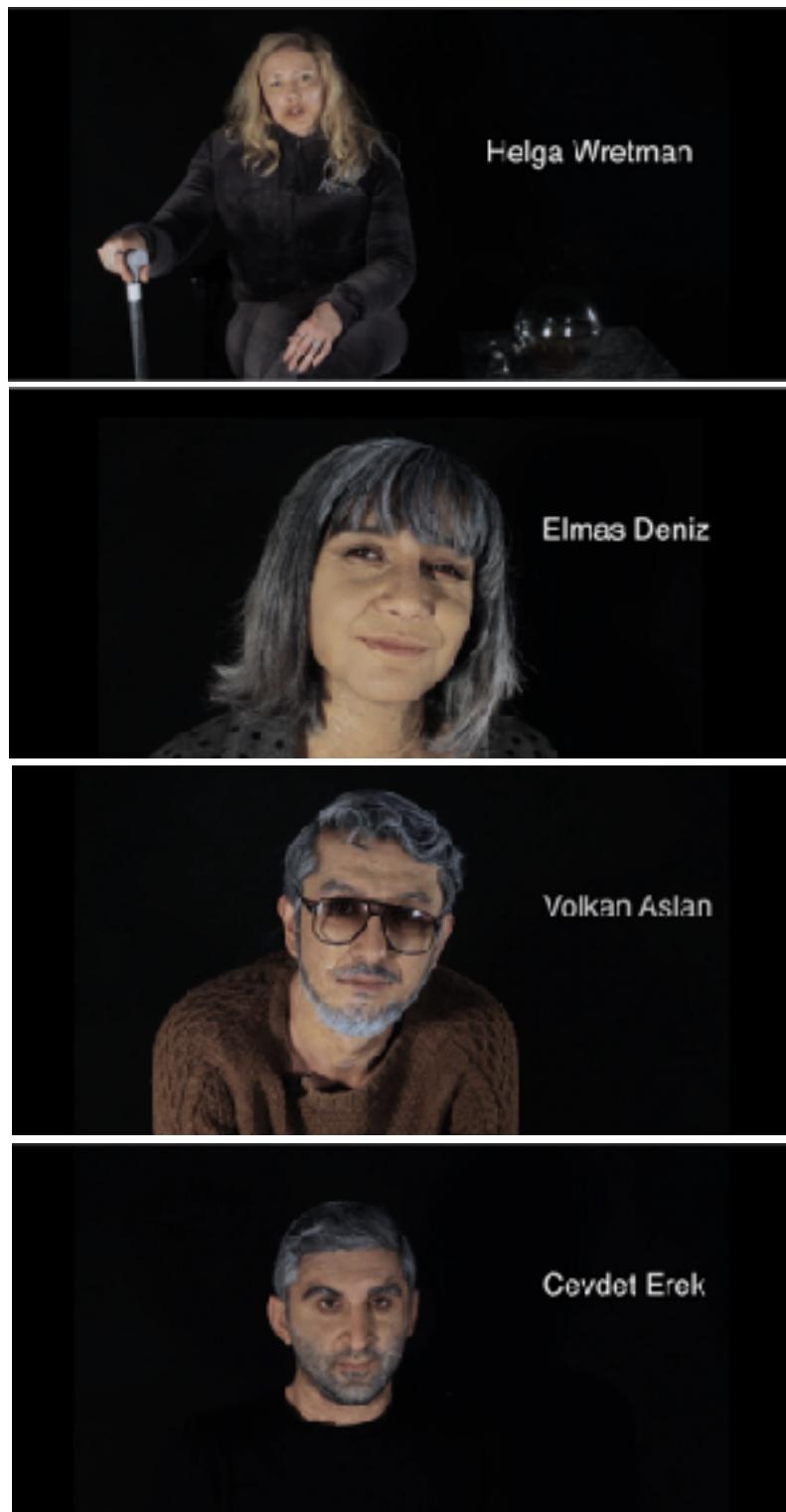
## “Dagens Helga”

News paper. Helga Wretman 1991. Published 2014



## “Helga was Here”

Digital video. Helga Wretman.



*Helga was Here* is a mockumentary about a group of artists in Istanbul asked to imagine a future vision of themselves 'inside and out'. Set in the future, the artists perform their vision in special effects makeup that accelerates their personal appearance to match Wretman's proposal of where they see themselves in 40 years time. Wretman plays an aged parody of herself, serving as foil to the surprising tone set by the participating artists and their honest responses. The piece was developed while Wretman was on residency in Turkey.

## "DAVE"

*Digital video and performance. Helga Wretman.*



*DAVE* is a young man who feels invisible. He reinvents himself on the internet and falls in love with his own online image. The avatar comes to life and Dave loses control. When his online character meets another, Dave finds himself in despair and his world collapses around him.

*DAVE* is inspired by Shakespeare's tragicomic love triangle plays, a format any modern audience would recognize from sitcoms and red lettered romantic comedies. Set in present tense and played out as a monologue, it addresses the difficulty of comprehending evolving technologies and everything they can offer.

The text is being translated on the internet through the robot, google translate and is thereby somewhat lost in translation, just like dave's attempt to translate himself into cyberspace.

## “Special Agents on a Regular Mission”

Digital Video/ *Fakeing off*. Helga Wretman.



*Special Agents on a Regular Mission* is a video that serves as both social experiment and a fake making of. A professional film team follow the every move of a group of Wretman's peers as they are tasked with recreating scenes from her previous artwork *DAVE*, this time without language or speaking. As Wretman's sentiment that *Words are not my language* become conflict and conduit, the groups struggles with the physically restricted directives highlighting the sometimes ridiculous conditions artists have to fight through. The film crew, restricted in budget and information struggle with them, challenging the conventions of film-making and its own human physicality.

## “The Key”

*Photo and video Installation. Helga Wretman.*



## “Body and Mind Visualization for Artist “

*Performance Lesson. Helga Wretman.*



*Body & Mind Visualization for Artists* is a 'sister' project of *Fitness for Artists*. The aim of this performance is to achieve a mental attitude for creative people in order to reach a more efficient level of productivity.

Helga Wretman will guide the participants through an experience of deep concentration and inner meditation. The starting point of this performance is relaxing the body in deep connection with the mind. A state of individual deep consciousness produces acceptance of reality as it is. Acceptance of the real consistence of the individual presence, context and the space surrounding us, releases our nervous system. Concentration is focused only on the inner world. This is the way to temporarily escape from the outside world.

The body is a door. Breathing and awareness of our breathing is the tool to open and cross this door.

Everything is balanced. Sounds, noises, hitching body, physical pains, mental worries, thoughts, emotions, feelings, memories, dreams, come and go. The connection between body and mind expands our consciousness. This crossing experience enlarges our connectivity with the others, physically and psychologically. The interconnection of everything opens up our awareness and smooths the perception of our individuality. The state of expanded consciousness, produced by a deep concentration of our mind on our body, opens up to a vision: a multicolour and powerful mental painting! The positive upshot of this state of mind is an immediate consequence that lasts for a very long time.

## “Safety is Sexy”

*Photo series, Performance and Installation. Helga Wretman.*



## “Safety Protocol”

*Performance. Helga Wretman.*



VIDEO: <https://vimeo.com/25023149>

*Safety is Sexy* and *Safety Protocol* question a society where danger is synonymous with words like "brave" and "cool". Wretman uses her experience as a professional stunt woman to calculate the relationships between risk and fantasy as well as the real and the possible.

## **“the commerce performance”**

*Performance. Helga Wretman.*



The Commerce Performance looks at the vulnerable individual, overwhelmed with new technologies and resulting trends in product advertising, without judgement as they try to keep up with both physical and mental norms in contemporary consumer society.

## “Sulumwoya Kula”

*Performance. Helga Wretman.*



Ritual love messaging with symbols.

An Eye, a Peace sign, sign for Female, a Penis, a Heart and a Smily.

Drawing on the ground with petrol and sending it of on fire.