Persona and practiced vulnerability: *"And By the Way the Cat is Dead"*

This practice based research examines how it is possible to create a space of 'compassionate hospitality' (Ettinger, 2005: 707) through the staging of practiced vulnerability in performance that deals with loss, and what dramaturgical approaches might facilitate this?

At the centre of this enquiry is an exploration of the tension between the textual or writing voice, and the performing voice in a stage persona. The traces of personal grief are present in the writing voice but through the dramaturgical work upon them become practiced 'strategic surrendering[s] into a space of risk' (Spry, 2011: 67). This includes dramaturgical work on the act of voicing as taking responsibility for or 'bearing' the text on stage (Barnett, 2008); and the use of interruptions and caesura, moving between contrasting discourses (anthropology, music and performed poetry, autobiography).

The performance premiered at Theatre de Menilmontant in Paris in 2017 and is situated within solo performance traditions defined by the use of the personal to explore wider issues which include artists such as Bobby Baker, Stacy Makishi and Brian Lobel. It also draws on the auto-ethnographic approach discussed in Spry's *Body, Paper, Stage* (2011). The critical framing uses Bracha Ettinger's work on transsubjectivity in which 'compassionate hospitality' is offered through a practiced and intentional fragility and partiality, opening up the possibility of a relationship of 'co-poeisie' (2005: 704) with the spectator. The artist takes the role of creating a hospitable space where the audience are offered space to respond to the performance.

Feedback and the accounts offered within the performance suggest that this approach sustains the balance between the intimacy and risk of vulnerability and the need to partially defuse it to create a safe and hospitable environment for the spectator. The performance persona needs a certain distance from the traces of the artist's personal experience.