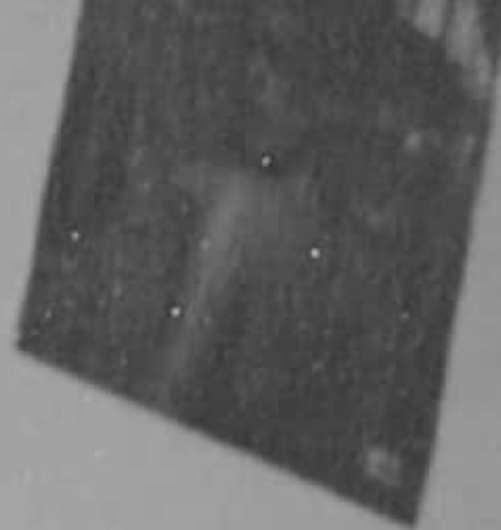


REFLECTIONS ON A
DOMESTIC HAIR SALON:

A (DANCED) DEFINITION OF
WOMEN'S SPHERE.

Ruth Gonzalez Garcia
Rotterdam, 2023



PREFACE: A
LONG PASSAGE ON A
GESTURE

In the ritual of getting a haircut in my house, no organic, fancy, good-smelling shampoo is included, and neither is a good styling or up-do at the end of the cut. Our hair care is not about a beautiful hairstyle but caring for the soul. And it starts by planning a day where everyone in the family gets their hair done. The hands in charge are the healing hands of the women of the house.

We decide to meet one morning to do the session. I sit on the grey skai armchair, and my aunt wraps my body in a towel and a second layer of a polyester cape attached to my neck. She prepares the scene, taking out the box from the second shelf containing the few tools that they -my grandma and my aunt- need to do the job. She starts pulling my hair, spraying it with a bubble-shaped bottle. "Pshhh pshhh". My hair gets wet as her hands get even wetter. "grhht grhht". The fingers do not slip anymore. Once the hair is brushed all the way to the back, she asks me: "What are we doing today?" My usual answer is: "Let 's cut only the tips. All straight."

Depending on my mood and the urgency of the haircut -normally triggered by any life fact accompanied by life changes- the hair gets shortened a bit more. Because this is what hair is about, about letting go. About an embodied transition that needs to be materialized in a way, in this case, in the number of fingers that determine the length in which we are cutting the hair. She starts pulling my hair up and cutting it by layers. She combines a standing-up position with a sited one normally using a rolling stool that travels around my body. The stool adapts to the hair's length, gradually increasing its height as each layer is finished. From sitting to standing, she finishes all the layers of my hair. She is so precise and perfectionist; all the hair tips need to be the same length. She uses her fingers as a measurement unit. One hand holds the scissors and comb, the other the hair. Two fingers slide from root to tip and stop at the cutting point. "shhhick". The strand of hair falls to the ground. It becomes a choreography of gestures she repeats every time: breathing, holding the hair and letting it go. Once finished, she starts pulling my hair in all directions, moving my head around like a joystick making sure that all the tips have the same length in every orientation of the

head. We start performing a choreography of two, both bodies moving along to the rhythm of the hair.

We learned to connect ourselves, our gazes, our gestures, and our bodies strictly speaking silently through the language of the hair: The growth, the loss, the falling, the cutting and the growing again. And we will not stop speaking to each other about concepts we cannot materialize through words. We learned our limitations, similarities and semblances in our bodies. While holding my hair with two hands, we become one body. She is part of mine, like an extension of my hair. It is light but dense, and she starts braiding: one tuft, then the other, one more, reminding ourselves that we only exist together. While braiding our hair, she connects all the women in the house. All from different sizes, shapes, colours, and thicknesses, but all tight in one thick braid. A group performance holding each other's bodies.

After the haircut, my aunt says: "Now, shake it off, say no as hard as you can with your head" and I let go of all the hair I just lost with all the pain, I heal. And now, she adds: "A big yes"; and then I pull my head down to the floor and up again a few times as a dancer when she finishes her dance.

Curtain up.





9 *Fig. 1 My Grandma in her domestic hair salon in 1978. Photo: Family Archive*

INTRODUCTION: HOW MY BODY RELATED TO LIFE

This writing is about the women of my family and the sentiment of the sorority that I have inherited from them. What follows is a series of memoirs from all the women as females, mothers, and housewives conditioned by their roles assigned by a patriarchal society. These moments reveal the connection between all the female components around me and the complicity of sisterhood that they built after a series of experiences, fears and complexities they explored within this gender-oriented environment they were forced to inhabit. I have never reflected on this story as I am explaining here. It came as a mode of reenactment turning an explicitly autobiographical act into an act of criticism around a number of contradictory discourses of women's dis-empowerment and the urgency of finding a space for women's emancipation. Hereafter, I write next to Valentina Curandi's story Mothers of Tongues, Crown of Feathers about a headache that affected her mum and the relation of sisterhood her grandmother and her sister drew with her from their act of caring. (2020) This complicity of sisterhood in Curandi's story was connected to the different interiors of several houses: a dining room, a kitchenette, a bedroom, and a basement. In this writing, the sisterhood experience is triggered by the care assisted in a hair salon that travelled through different interiors of one house.

These spaces speak about some women of my house and other houses, bound to care about each other, the family and the house. The interior of the hairdresser salon and its various transformations brings together the history of the family, its female components and the community they created, establishing a mutual relationship between the interior and its inhabitants. The physical realm of the interior is altered and moved based on its inhabitants' physical conditions but the mutual relation goes beyond their physicalities, the interiors also shaped and impacted its inhabitants' metaphysical realm.

Valentina Curandi introduces her narrative as being starred by "the women of one family and several houses". Unlike Curandi's story, the protagonists in this writing are the women of several families and one house: me, my mum, her sister, my mum's cousin, although I also consider it my other aunt, and my grandma. To some extent, I could



Fig. 2 Montse, my grandma's sister, marking the permanent with rulers to a client. 1970. Photo: Family Archive.

also add and consider all the women from all generations that surround me, but to keep it within the confines of the salon, I am going to start with this list.

SETTING THE SCENE: TO ESTABLISH A GENEALOGICAL ORDER

There was a moment in my grandmother's life when she stopped being a worker in the textile industry and she became a hairdresser against her will.

In the early 20th century Catalonia, and especially Barcelona, developed a vast textile industry. The tertiary sector offered women new opportunities for salaried work, and they represented the largest workload in the sector. Eighty-five per cent of the workforce within the cotton industry in Barcelona was made up of women. There is no doubt that the contribution of female labour was crucial for the industrialization of Catalonia. (Balcells, 2014, pp. 71) "Women's work outside the home was indispensable for the survival of the working-class family" and it was the male workers themselves, "who had to send their wives and daughters to work to ensure the family's subsistence. [...] Female work was associated with mere need, and women were asked to also shoulder all the unpaid household chores after a full day at the factory." (Balcells, 2014, pp. 71) At the age of 14, my grandma is sent to the factory to work as a spinner to ensure the family's subsistence.

It was in the 1960s when my grandma moved to Bonavista, our current neighbourhood to start her marital life. At that time, the whole country was ruled by the Franco dictatorship and the only role that was recognized for women was marriage and motherhood, and their subordination to men was established through discriminatory legislation. The Francoist regime exercised strong and continuous economic repression against women, limiting their access to paid work under the promiscuous labour law *Fuero del Trabajo* (1938): "El Estado liberará a la mujer casada del taller y de la fábrica" [the State will free the married woman from the workshop and the factory]. Women were forced to abandon work after marriage and were placed within the confines of domesticity and in the roles of mother and wife. "The education provided at that time insisted on domestic training for girls and vocational training for boys." (Segura, 2010, pp. 71) The public sphere was established as masculine, reserved for work and politics, and the private sphere, destined for housework and motherhood, was the space that women had to occupy. Nevertheless, women also worked legally under

the Franco regime and even after they had contracted marriage, but they remained subordinate “to the power of their husbands, who authorized them to work or not and to the right of the husband to collect the salary.” (Castán, 2018) This concept worked in conjunction with the idea of the “family wage” that enabled men to earn enough to support a wife and children and conspired to keep the new ‘model’ woman isolated firmly within the home. (Matrix, 2022 pp.37)

The uncle of my grandma had a small factory in the city centre, so she starts to work there. No surprise that after following the labour law legislation her uncle had to close the shop -most of the salaried workers were married women. My grandma decides to buy him the looms, she places them in the small garage and she starts weaving at home. She refuses to conform only to the conventions imposed on her being a married woman: the isolation of the housewife and the constraining quality of housework. The local establishments are not sufficient for the activity she is performing at home. The bakery, the small supermarket, the butcher and the pharmacy, which support all the housewife consumptions from all the women in the neighbourhood, do not provide her with the materials she needs, so she goes to the city centre every now and then to get the supplies. In her attempts to leave the confines of the neighbourhood, she experiences physical restrictions in man-made surroundings since her mobility is limited to public transport that doesn't consider women carrying heavy loads of shopping. The arrangement of space precludes alternatives other than housewife and mother: “The physical patterning of space and activities supports, perpetuates and ‘naturalizes’ the difficulty of getting beyond the local neighbourhood.” (Matrix, 2022 pp.40) On each trip, she is dependent on a male driver to carry all the supplies. Taxi drivers refuse to carry this amount of material. Acknowledging her mobility restrictions in a men/public, women/private environment, she decides to get a driving license and started to experience her physical surroundings for working men, as a woman. Men in the family believed it wasn't a women's duty, ultimately reinforcing their attempts to maintain their position in society. And possibly scared of her emancipation.

In the 1970s her younger sister decides to take hairdressing studies. Soon after she started, her sister moved away and left my grandmother in charge of the hairdressing salon although she wasn't interested at all. In order to carefully avoid a personal disclaimer with the family, who already invested money in the salon's equipment, and the clients that were already frequent, she started to build up her own career caring for the hair/women around her. So, the looms were substituted by dryers, head washers and seats, and the thread and fabrics, for combs, scissors and rollers.

My grandmother always found ways of achieving economic independence to fight against “women's oppression as caused by their exclusion from capitalist relations.” (Federici, 2012, pp.29) When women abandoned the factory, they were never freed from work but instead enslaved in the most perverse manipulation of capitalism. Confined at home they were tasked with performing domestic activities that were considered non-productive and therefore unpaid. “Housework was transformed into a natural attribute, rather than being recognized as work” marginalizing women by treating them as an “external” element of the capitalist economy and preventing them from struggling against it. (Federici, 2012, pp.16) Whether the car, the looms or the hair salon, her strategy was to enter these relations because the last thing she wanted was to identify herself as “just a housewife”.

Today, after almost 60 years and five different locations, the hairdresser still occupies a space within the house, although its shape has kept fluctuating and adapting always trying to accommodate the bodies it served and to integrate itself with the surrounding spaces of the house. Through the hairdresser salon, my grandma found a way to unlock the doors of her house and “enter the struggle to produce a revolution in our lives and in our social power as women” (Federici, 2012, pp. 16). Yet, remaining in the domestic, familiar and martial realm and performing the fatiguing tasks of the household. As Silvia Federici notes, “Women have always found ways of fighting back or getting back at them, but always in an isolated and privatized way. The problem, then, becomes how to bring this struggle out of the kitchen and bedroom and into the

streets.” (2012, pp.18) The salon became a threshold between productive work and domestic labour. The visible waged work and all the hidden unwaged labour that went into profit “making [her] work more visible, which is the most indispensable condition to begin to struggle against it” (2012, pp.19)

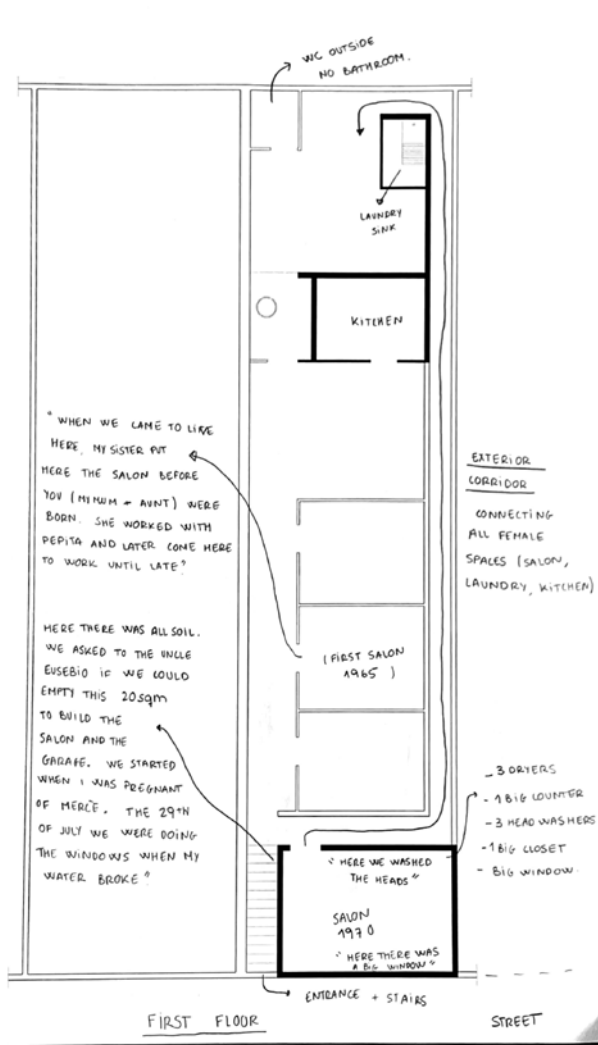
The following chapters unfold the different locations of the salon and the choreography between the bodies, the salon and the house, all three mutually connected to hold each other.





21 *Fig. 3 First location of the hairdresser when opened in 1970. Photo: Family Archive.*

#LOCATION.01 IN THE PERIPHERY



It was 1965 when the family bought a piece of land on the main street of the neighbourhood. It follows a typical Mediterranean house structure with an uncovered staircase from the street to the entrance. The whole house is surrounded by an exterior corridor that goes around the perimeter and delineates the space with the adjacent houses. The interior contained a collective area, a kitchen, and private bedrooms for each family unit. The toilet was outside of the building, on the back patio in a small enclosure beside a large stone sink that worked as the laundry room.

When her sister decides to open the hairdresser there was no other available space for a women's labour, apart from the small room in the belly of the house that she also used as a bedroom. As the volume of clients increased, the salon demanded more space to host those bodies and more room for all the equipment she needed to assist them. The family decided to build an extension of the house in the front part of the building. A two-story addition would feature a garage on the bottom floor where my grandma could store her looms, and a hairdresser on the top floor directly facing the rest of the house.

Pier Vittorio Aureli & Maria Shéhérazade analysed David Wen-grow's diagram illustrating domestic realms internally segregated by gender "Two separate poles of domestic space: the female space for food processing, weaving and nurturing infants and the male space for storing goods and administering the house." (2016, pp.107) The spaces for women within the house (hairdresser salon, looms, kitchen and, laundry room) were located in the periphery of the building and connected via the external corridor. This perimetral architecture distributed and connected all the female spaces surrounding the core of the household. Meaning their working day didn't begin and end at the salon's doors, but was extended to the rest of the house. The women of the house shouldered the double burden of paid work and unpaid domestic labour. The spatial configuration would allow them to access directly to the kitchen without traversing the interior of the house, and potentially leaving traces of hair or dirt from the working area. While one woman would be in the dryer waiting for the permanent to sit,

the women of the house would carry out other tasks such as cooking, laundry and taking care of the children. They would perform this domestic choreography on a daily basis, and the household chores would become a powerful tool to organize bodies in space and time. After working full-time at home, they had to “put hours reproducing her own labour power” in the private bedroom as part of her domestic work, by “servicing the wage earners physically, emotionally, sexually.” (Federici, 2012, pp.31)

When her sister decided to open the hairdresser, the doors of the house would often remain open to the street allowing the women immediate access to the salon just after climbing the stairs from the ground floor. The hairdresser started to host all the women in the neighbourhood; the same women whose domestic responsibilities left them little time for outside activities. They -the women in my family- opened the doors of their house to the women of other houses. Her sister starts to feel dizzy. Dizziness is becoming increasingly frequent, which makes her incapable to work so many hours on her feet. The physical conditions of this body couldn't hold what the space demanded from her: a body that needs rest versus a space that demands action. My grandmother renounces her job triggered by the action of caring for a body that needs healing. Sooner after, her sister started her marital life and moved away deciding to stop indefinitely performing as a hairdresser. My grandma takes over from now on, and the salon is no longer just a hairdresser, but something closer to a space of caring. While her sister opened the salon moved by her passion for hair aesthetics, my grandma's contribution came from the act of love, care and holding but also, of service and survival. She continued to operate the salon with this sentiment at its core.

Being a woman, she was given this socially imposed condition of femininity, and love and care became “a natural attribute of [her] female physique and personality”. (Federici, 2012, pp.34) Patriarchal societies made sure that all forms of labour linked with care were widely identified with women and their supposed innate desire to facilitate care for their families and communities. (Fokianaki, 2020) She carried this

identity on her road to the waged labour market.

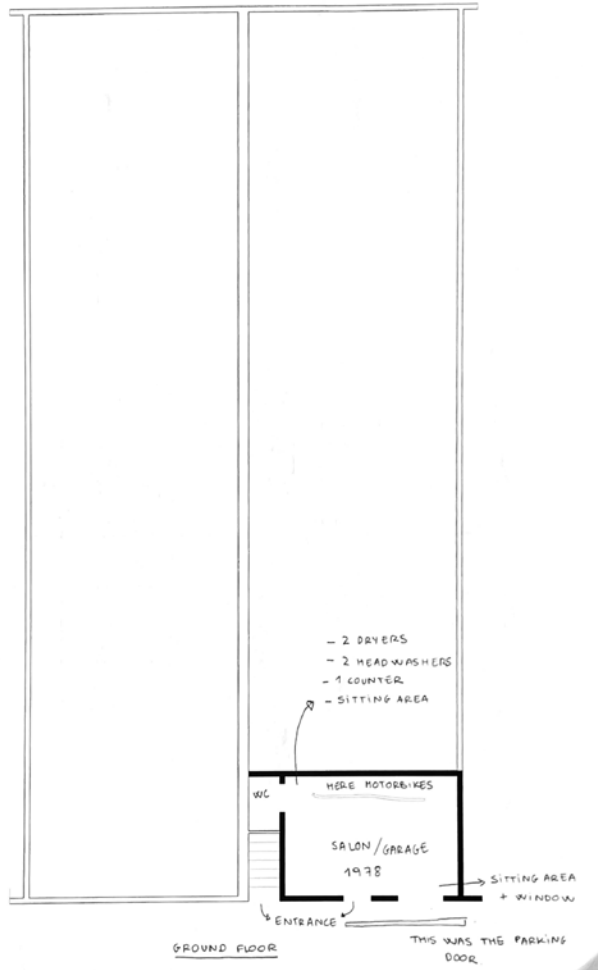
The women of my family held many things in their hands and their houses. Many heads and hairs. Throughout the days there was as much occupation with the aesthetics of the head, as it was with its mental state. The hair worked as a medium to heal and listen to the other, and the salon became a space to organize the bodies physically to enact a new form of caring. A space of collective caring for all those isolated women working in separate homes resisting intensified capitalist exploitation. They practised a mode of “care with” others as opposed to the forms of “care for” from the dependent realm of domesticity. (The Care Collective et al., 2020, pp. 21)





29 *Fig. 5 From right to left: My mum, my aunt, their cousin washing her hair, and her mum, in the domestic hair salon in 1970s. Photo: Family Archive.*

#LOCATION.02 IN THE SMALL GARAGE



Back in the time, most houses did not contain bathrooms equipped with showers, so women visited my grandma every week to get their hair washed. She indulged the women in the most vernacular action of hair washing, and the session would conclude with a classic hair marking with curlers, half an hour of blow-drying and enough hairspray to last until the next visit a week later.

It got to the point where most clients could not sustain the inclined flight of stairs they had to cross every week to get to the salon. Especially considering that the vast majority of women disposed of their time and energy confined at home to the overwhelming wageless work. A sense of disruption between the fatigued bodies and the fatiguing building manifested through the relocation of the salon to the ground floor, in the small parking lot. The unavailability of any other space in the house forced my grandma to squeeze the salon in between the automobiles and combine the two uses in one space both active at the same time. The infrastructure of the salon was reconfigured, reducing all the equipment to half and leaving some space for a waiting area with chairs for the women to rest. My grandma kept repeating the same operation- each time, on every woman.

The relocation of the salon left the women of the house with twofold consequences. Moving the salon far from the burden of the house did not guarantee liberation from the latter, but only meant for the women having less time and energy to do both. However, the axial position of the room and the double use as a garage now would work as a mediated transition between the publicity of the street (locus of production and place of men) and the intimacy of the domestic space (locus of reproduction and feminine comfort). The dominant position of the salon left the domestic realm to resemble the tablinum, the anteroom in the ancient Roman house, and “the most important room of the house, becoming an office where the paterfamilias preserved the family records and received the guests.” (Aureli, and Giudici, 2016 p. 114) The central position of the salon formalized and celebrated the female authority in the house -every time an inch closer to the street. The salon never released them from the struggle of the house but allowed them to bring the struggle outside and into the streets of the capitalist relations to

“gain the power to break with (their) imposed social identity” (Federici, 2012, pp. 34)

The workload in the salon nearly equated to the time spent cooking, cleaning, and child care. The spatial configuration of the salon within the household challenged my grandma with “the impossibility to see where [her] work begins and ends, where [her] work ends and [her] desires begin” (Federici, 2012, pp.20). She buys a folding wall and places it in the salon separating labour and passion. Unlike many women in the neighbourhood, she owns a car and keeps her vehicle inside. She is very much interested in automobiles, and cares about every detail of her possessions. Proud of them, she participates in fairs, exhibitions, and rallies. During working hours, she keeps the vehicles outside, and when the shift is finished, she moves away all the furniture to turn the salon again into a parking lot. The daily choreography within the space allowed my grandmother to maintain the women’s sphere of the salon and cater to her desires to leave the confines of the house, using one of her vehicles and stepping into the public sphere of working men.



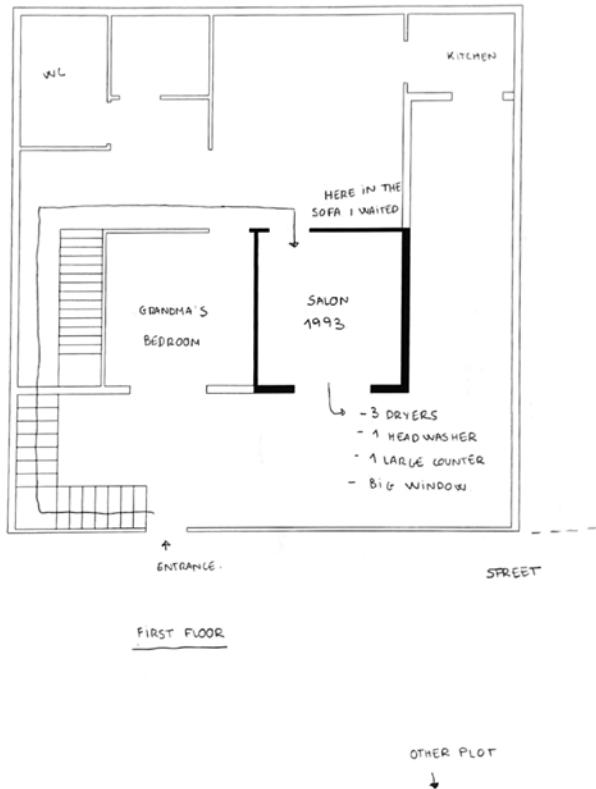


Fig. 7 Waiting area in the small garage for the women to sit, 1975. Photo: Family Archive.

Fig. 8 Image from the book "El Método llonguera", 1979.



#LOCATION.03 IN MY MUM'S AND HER SISTER'S BEDROOM.



In the 1970s, it was not uncommon for houses to span multiple plots and to annex other properties by piercing the party walls. The further partitioning and functional engineering of the home was not only the product of familiar reform but also consequence of the strategies of social reproduction. (Aureli, and Giudici, 2016 pp.126) The ideology of the “domestic” as the familiar realm reinforced the formation of the nuclear family as the centre of reproduction of labour power and as basic unit of care. The notion of kinship represented a burden of care for reproductive labour (nurturing future workers, to regenerate the current labour force and to maintain those unable to work). (Hester, 2017) As the family grew, they bought the piece of land in the opposite side of the street. Parallel to hairdressing, a legacy of builders, electricians and carpenters among the men of the family developed. They -both men and women- built the houses where we currently live. The building was each time reconfigured in order to accommodate the generational replacement of workers as builders, electricians and carpenters.

The space of the salon gave the women economic power to contribute to property expansion. The hairdresser was not the only space where women could actively participate in decision-making. They never feared men intervening, judging and dismissing their ways of making and the power of determination that they had. They practiced many ways of knowledge, diligently proving effective solutions when the house needed a modification. They proposed new spatial configurations that accommodated the growing family without compromising their women’s sphere, always ensuring a space for the salon within the house as their (public) working space as women.

At this point, the disposition of both buildings was as follows:

One of the bedrooms is removed and replaced for a toilet, the uncle comes to live here with his family. The rest of the family moves to the new plot right in front. Two families cohabit in one house. There is a cubical area with the kitchen, living room, and two rooms. The second floor had two additional rooms where the components of one of the families slept. Over time, the second floor expanded and became a second hou-

se, ensuring a complete habitat for each family.

When my mum and aunt moved out, my grandma decides to make a huge renovation in both buildings. The very first house became two for her two daughters, and the old garage expanded to feature the increasing number of automobiles from all three families. The salon moved to the old 6sqm room of my mum and aunt in my grandma's house, which was no longer in use. As my grandma became older her body and thus, her movements, became more fragile, "meeting at a crossroad between a fatigued body and the fatiguing productivity" (Capper, and Schneider, 2018 pp. 10). My aunt, as female offspring, assuming her responsibility of caring for close kin, decides to enrol in the hairdressing academy and help my grandmother.

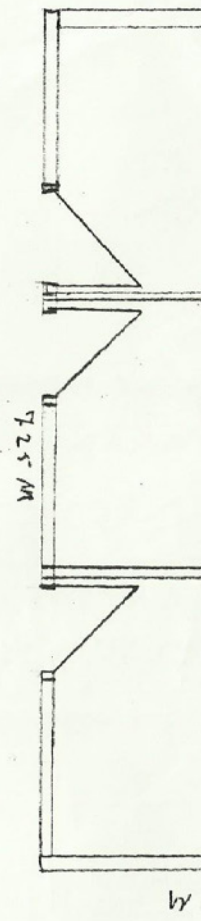
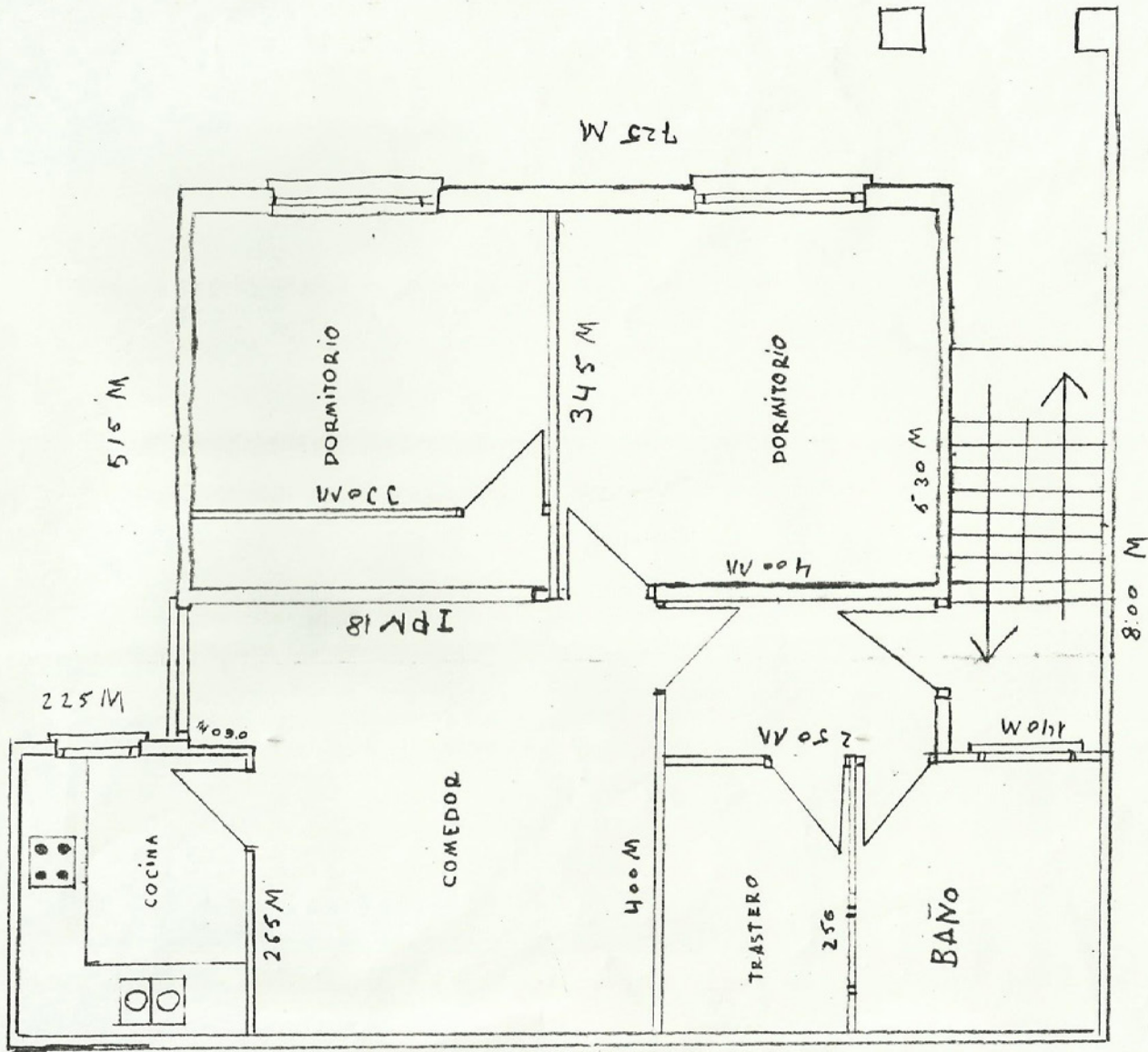
Every summer I would be caught observing by the hinge of the door what was happening inside of the room. They would keep it closed trying to separate the space of the salon from the rest of the house. That door would be opened and closed as many times as the women of the house would have to assist all the unpaid care work that the household and the children demanded from them. The burden of childcare, its devaluation as a practice, and the way it worked constraining women with the obligations of reproductive work, precluded them from participating in public life. (The Care Collective et al., 2020, pp.34)

Moving the salon into the belly of the house resulted in a more advanced struggle for the women to disassociate both jobs. While the "real working class" was leaving out for work, the women who remained in the household found themselves resisting an unequal distribution of power, constantly consumed by the demands of the salon and the house simultaneously. The work in the salon was much more than assisting the women who came. It was taking care of the house, the children and serving the wage earners after a full working day.

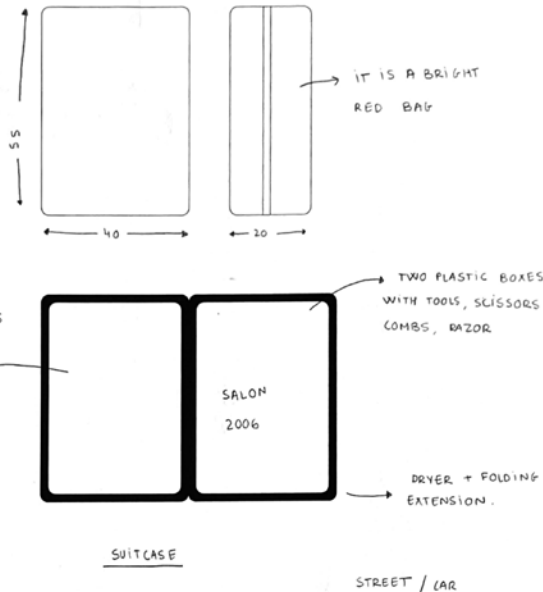
When the working shift was over, I would be allowed to enter, and I spent some time helping them to uncurl the rolls: bigudies in one box, papers in another and rolls in one more. The work in the salon did not conclude with the women's assistance. It continued cleaning the space,

sweeping away all the hair and returning all tools to their respective containers. Everything back in the wardrobe, meaning that the salon was officially closed and the women of other houses had to return back home to continue performing their domestic activities.

280 M



#LOCATION.04 IN A SUITCASE



As the women got older and could no longer visit the salon, my grandma packed the hairdresser in a rolling suitcase. Just with the few tools necessary to get the job done, she visited house by house to style all women's hair. It was 2006 and my grandma was already retired when she redefined the space of the salon proposing a completely new transformation. The salon became portable, packed in a suitcase, and loaded into the car, leaving behind the confines of the house and reaching its most emancipated version. She became a traveller taking the domestic hairdresser with her, and even more than before, a carer of other domesticities. Once more the women of the family cared for the women of other houses, and they were now the ones who would open the doors to the women of my house.

The hair salon was now the size of a cabin suitcase (56 x 45 x 25cm) and it expanded into the size of multiple domesticities. She would carry on it the basic kit that contained a couple of scissors, some combs, a razor, a polyester cape, the bubble-shaped bottle and a foldable head dryer for the permanent, everything perfectly organized in the pockets and departments of the bag. In every house, she would find some space to disassemble all the artefacts turning every room into a version of the hairdresser. "When I arrived at the woman's house, I would put on the robe and we would go to the kitchen where I would wash her hair, and later on we would move to the living room to do what was needed: cutting, dying, putting the rulers and then with the hand dryer and a foldable extension we would dry it. When done, I would fold everything and put it back in the suitcase."

The spatial indeterminacy of the space of the salon became a construction ready to accommodate any unforeseen situation. A free space and a radical manifestation of women revolutionizing against "the role to which women have been confined in capitalist [and patriarchal] society" (Federici, 1975, pp.15)

This story is about the women in my family who struggled against capitalist relations that removed women from (public) life and work. It is only now that I can see the revolutionary implications of the space

We have never been hairdressers; we have never done hairstyles and we have never upgraded. Hairdressing has never been a business to expand and grow, when our women got older, the salon was over.

The salon was more than a space for aesthetics, it became an arena of contention for all the women in the neighbourhood. Once the women of my family couldn't perform anymore as hair carers, the space of the salon was redefined. Unable to gather there any longer, the community of women developed a new form of neighbourhood organization still operative: "El Grup de Dones" (the women's group), which provided a space for women to come together. This feminist space hosts artistic workshops, cooking events, and talks from healthcare professionals about women's bodies. They found a new space within the neighbourhood to carry out these activities, bringing the conversations that once took place in the salon to a public setting. My grandma would organize the schedule ensuring that a different activity would occur each day of the week, allowing women to have daily doses of activities outside the home.

The salon became a space to serve the bodies first physically, and later mentally and emotionally which transcended the physicality of the material confines of the space of the salon.

I take Fulvia Serra's definition of social reproduction to think about the salon as "more than a container with fixed boundaries, it should be considered a process, a continuously changing one, which expands and contracts both in response to its own internal dynamics, and under the pressure of the continuous attempts at enclosing it on the part of the capitalist machine" (Capper, and Schneider, 2018 pp. 10)

Continually evolving and adapting it ensured its resistance. What started in a small room in the belly of the house expanded to the neighbourhood, then the streets, and eventually to adjacent neighbourhoods, providing a means of improving and expanding women's sphere beyond the domestic space.

of the salon. From a space of care, they started a rebellion proposing a complete transformation within the house and the neighbourhood. By claiming their working space as women, they struggled against female oppression by their exclusion from capitalist relations.

I like to think them through what Dolores Hayden identifies as "material feminists" in her text *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1982). Exposing historical examples of feminist home design and community planning, she claims that there are many possible forms of domestic arrangement—both spatial and relational. The women of the house acknowledged what Helen Hester names Domestic realism as "the phenomenon by which the isolated and individualized small dwelling becomes so accepted and commonplace that it is nearly impossible to imagine life being organized in any other way." (Hester, 2017) Taken the home as given, they devised various approaches to rethinking domesticity through recognizing the space of "home as a workplace" that needed to be redefined. (Hayden, 1982, pp. 295)

The salon became a communal space for women to gather publicly. A community that found their way to live differently in the patriarchal world that oppressed them by isolating and confining them within the household. They developed a new form of making space for women to practise alternative forms of collective caring. My grandmother grew older, like all her women. The hairdresser, awaiting this inevitable moment of incapacity, had to stop operating. Once the hairdresser was officially closed to the public, my aunt had to find a job outside the confines of the house. Still, sometimes, after work and in between domestic chores, she picks up the suitcase and visits some of her women:

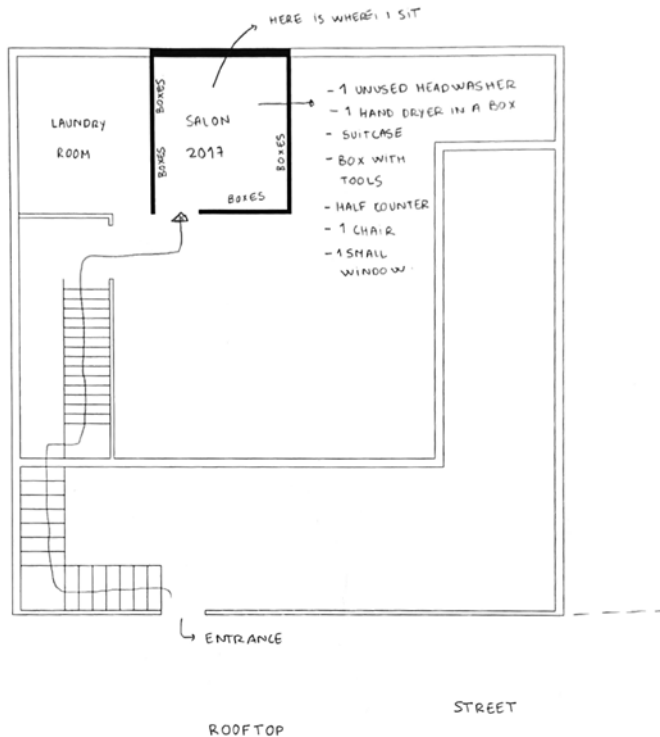
Yesterday I went to Ca l'Elena. She is an 81-year-old woman, very cultured. She is a writer, and we always talk about you, about iaia (grandma), about Victor. Sometimes we meet on a day that works for both of us, and I go to cut her hair. Yesterday she told me that we have always been the ones who have cut her hair, and she doesn't want anyone else to do it. If at some point I can't, she will cut it herself if necessary.

18. The suitcase



Fig. 12 The suitcase. Photo: Ruth Gonzalez.

#LOCATION.05
ON THE ROOFTOP
BETWEEN BOXES AND
MEMORIES.



The physical space of the salon remained unused in its last state for years. It was around 2017 when her older sister, with whom she shared a part of the laundry space on the terrace, passed away and her part became free of use as such, but not of space. The room was primarily used as a storage and filled with various family boxes but my grandmother managed to make space to store the hairdresser salon equipment. Amongst the assortment of boxes containing Christmas decorations, costumes, and an array of machines and tools, there is a small box containing the few necessary utensils my grandma and aunt need to cut our hair. The suitcase is placed on the top shelf still filled with all the “to-go” elements of the salon that my aunt, every now and then, uses to visit her few remaining women.

The salon keeps shrinking but never disappears and it tightens us all together. Its nomadic journey resulted in the loss of some equipment and the retention of others, becoming its current location as the diaspora of all the other locations and as traces of all the bodies it held. This is the space where I get my hair cut, but now it is only functional one morning every four months when all members of the family meet to have our hair cut. Aside from that, the room is mainly used as a storage area and my grandma only steps on it when she needs a haircut from my aunt. Despite not being completely freed from housework, she still climbs the 22 inclined stairs every week to do laundry in the adjacent room.

Growing up, I started to witness the community that the salon would create, but it is only now that I see the hair salon as an arena of contention between those women as sisters, daughters and mothers, and the laws of the hood and the rest of the world. I could see the comforting wisdom and the ruling laws agitating when braiding together into a sisterhood formation. “The seer only sees when called to tell”. (Curandi, 2020)



53 *Fig. 14 Grandma's car participating in a racing, 1973. Photo: Family archive.*

#LOCATION 0:
ANY PLACE

I am writing from the stage. The impossibility of situating myself as a dancer within this house, domicile, address, and residence forces me to write from my position as a performer. “A poetic role of resistance against the stability, surveillance and designation of a place”. (Bell, 2015, pp.3) Whether the theatre, the studio, the bedroom, the house or the salon, the danced body is thought through the mobile, a figure that “changes place and above all changes places”. (Bell, 2015, pp.3) And, it seems that after all this time you were all dancers. A figure that disrupted, escaped, and resigned to stability and the designation of the place that you were given. You never belonged to the house, as the domestic sphere was imposed on you so, you decided to change place and between you all forced the place to change location. “What are the chances a dancer will agree to stay in place?” (Bell, 2015, pp. 3)

From where then should I write to you? My question re-emerges alongside Biba Bell’s construction of dance as a promiscuous dwelling. (2015) Perhaps I have to address you from dancer to dancer and use dance choreography as a powerful tool to organize bodies in space and time. Writing to you from the distance as a generational encounter. And inevitably remember the way your bodies were performing a daily domestic choreography.

The techniques employed in dance classes normally imply a repetition of the same choreography that we have been rehearsing for months, this time changing the space between dancers. The first iteration called for close interaction between the dancers. The result is akin to the sensations of the hair salon. We become one body doing a performance of two moving along the movements of the hair. Or a group performance when coming together in the space of the salon. I can feel the presence of all the other bodies around me, being part of me like an extension of my limbs. All your dancing bodies come together to become multiplicity.

We continued to perform, always repeating the same choreography -the same movements, an inch further apart every time. We reach the edges of the room, as each of you reaches your home. It becomes a solo dance. A solitary role performing the isolated household’s gestures.

From the corner of my eye, I keep looking for signs of belonging in the movements of the other. Even when we are far apart, the soloist body rather than turning sealed and alone, remains porous, more sensitive to the nuances of sounds and phenomenological sensations. Our dancing bodies keep us connected in the distance.

Perhaps we do not need to be together, to be part of the other or to be next to each other. I carry you with me, everywhere. You are not within me, you are just there, like my skin. The extension of my hair, remember? (Irigaray, 1980, pp.77) We are a dancer's body, circulating information, generating a symbolic grammar formed by the intuitive gestures of the hair. With our braided hair, we are never dancing alone. And it is from this site that I have been more recently imagining you as my dancerly dwell (Bell, 2015, pp.3).

From here, from the no stage, I collide with you, the women in my family, and imagine a community that goes beyond the walls of the hairdresser salon and becomes an expanded architecture of women's emancipation.

My body needs holding

I'm writing from the studio; the room follows the traditional structure of a dance class: a square room with concrete walls and vinyl flooring. A wooden barre along the perimeter of the room and mirrors at the front. Next to the mirror, hanging on the wall, two posters of anatomical drawings of the human body, that we use to identify how the body moves, what holds each bone and how all the parts are connected. Understanding where the movement comes from is an essential part of the class. We do not mimic the choreographer's movement, but analyse, understand and create the movement ourselves.

Dance classes are not taught in words, there is no language to express the motion of the body, but feelings and sounds. It is not surprising that dance classes are taught with onomatopoeias.

In my acoustic memory, a choreography would sound something like:

sssshhh shhhh
 ahhhh uuuuh
sssshhhh shhshuh shuh. (the sound of bodies slipping on the floor)
aaahhh ahhhh aah

It's all about breathing, holding and letting it go. Which is not far from the space of the hairdresser, where the sound of scissors, dryers and hair washers floods the room with the choreography of haircare: wash, cut, turn, pivot, head up, head down, and the shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh of the dryer.

At the end of the class, we do some jumping exercises or small choreographies. One of the many group performances that we danced, began with a brainstorming of actions. By using quotidian tasks as a dance, we began making a choreography. Reading, showering, sweeping, and combing revealed the beginning of the dance. The piece ended with a series of holdings, a method of lifting and pressing into each other's bodies in endless ways. (Valencia, 2022, pp.60) We would work in groups of two or three people, and we would improvise and experiment with our bodies' weight in multiple combinations of holding into each other.

As I stand on the stage, I think back to the women's community that emanated from the salon and the revolutionary implications it brought to all the women -as mothers, housewives and workers. A space that defined women's work and sphere and evolved into a neighbourhood formation of women holding each other in all possible combinations and forms of holding physically and emotionally. What started as a solo dance reenacting mainly housework, ended as a choreography of care, where we all came together as a reminder that we were not alone, that we have each other and we can hold each other. There is something in the silence of the movement-language that words cannot express -I think as you silently brush my hair. The dance holdings and the pressure of bodies against mine was a reminder that my body needed holding.

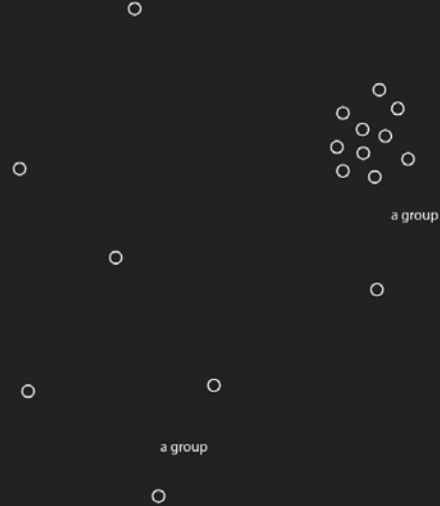
Suspend in time, multiply in space: a step, a cut, a contraction, a holding moves us from the space of the salon to the dance studio. "From sitting to standing to dancing" is how I move from the salon to the studio and how I learned from you how to move and how to feel you holding me even without touching me.

A score for an improvisation: women holding each other
a group

older sister
other aunt
cousin aunt grandma
me mum younger sister



[a group]



one

two

three

four

BRUSHING THE
GROUND

TO MY GRANDMA AND TO
ALL MY WOMEN,

I want to remember the first time that you held my head with your hands, and how many times you have done it since then. While holding our fragile heads with two hands you started carrying our heavy and emotional bodies. For how long? I ask. For my whole live, you answer.

Your body is not the same today. Your body remembers what one day you carried. Your body remembers the so many days that you brushed the ground cleaning the house, swapping away all my hair, our hairs, our loss, and ourselves. And now your body aches for all the weight it had to carry on your back, and now your wrist hurt for all the sweeping, cutting and brushing. Always repeating the same operation -each time, on every woman. You have been altered forever.

Your body is not the same today. Your body has grown stronger. After all the holding, building and carrying, your muscles grew stronger. And it is from here that you have shown us how strong a woman can be. And I have grown stronger, thanks to all of you. All the women in my family.





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IMAGE SOURCE LIST

Fig. 1 My Grandma in her domestic hair salon in 1978. Photo: Family Archive

Fig. 2 Montse, my grandma's sister, marking the permanent with rulers to a client. 1970. Photo: Family Archive.

Fig. 3 First location of the hairdresser when opened in 1970. Photo: Family Archive.

Fig. 4 Location 1 of the hairdresser in 1970. (Scale 1:100)

Fig. 5 From right to left: My mum, my aunt, their cousin washing her hair, and her mum, in the domestic hair salon in 1970s. Photo: Family Archive.

Fig. 6 Location 2 of the hairdresser in 1978. (Scale 1:100)

Fig. 7 Waiting area in the small garage for the women to sit, 1975. Photo: Family Archive.

Fig. 8 Image from the book "El Método llongueras", 1979.

Fig. 9 Location 3 of the hairdresser in 1993. (Scale 1:75)

Fig. 10 Original floor plan drawing for the expansion of the house in the new plot the family bought in 1975. Photo: Family Archive.

Fig. 11 Location 4 of the hairdresser in 2006. (Scale 1:10)

Fig. 12 The suitcase. Photo: Ruth Gonzalez.

Fig. 13 Location 5 of the hairdresser in 2017. (Scale 1:75)

Fig. 14 Grandma's car participating in a racing, 1973. Photo: Family archive.

Fig 15 Diagrama of women holding each other. Graphics: Ruth Gonzalez.

Fig 16 Grandma's portrait, 1970. Photo: Family archive.

Fig 17. Analog photo from the performance "Resisting Solo", 2023. Photo: Isabella Fiorante.