

No Blood Included

Petra Serhal

Drama

No Blood Included was first performed as a work-in-progress at the Laban Centre, London in 2015. The premiere was in 2016 in Beirut at the Zoukak Sidewalks Festival. This performance piece is being published now in 2025, after a global pandemic, a massive explosion in the port of Beirut, a year and a half of genocide in Gaza, an Israeli war on Lebanon, and the liberation of Syria from the Assad regime among other political events in the region. However, I decided to remain true and sincere to the intent of the original performance text, written between 2015 and 2016, as a documentation of this past as a way to possibly mourn what remains of history and establish an active connection with our present. I also remain sincere to the structure of the live performance in relation to the content and actions; the subject is always a body, and a one-minute silence for a recent incident always precedes the performance.

The performance is for twenty-five audience members, each sitting on a unique chair. Each audience member has a set of headphones so that they can listen to the amplified sounds of the room, their bodies, other audience members, and the audio instructions given to them by the performer. The performer uses a phone to set the time and uses its camera to show the audience members their live images. There is also a camera on a tripod facing the audience that the performer sets up at the beginning of the piece. By the end of the performance, the footage of the audience members performing their minutes of silence are projected on a wall facing the audience.

In silence, there is an attempt to listen to the sound of pain.

In silence, there is an attempt to be as close as possible to death.

In silence, there is an attempt to move.

In silence, we are present.

Here is some time for you to listen to silence.

You can set a timer.

Before you start reading these pages, you can set up a camera facing you and start filming your body.

These words are for me and **these words** are for you, but they can all be yours. You can do whatever you want with them.

When you finish reading, you can watch yourselves in your recordings.

You can put the sound on mute.

You can ignore my directions.

— Petra

Before I start, can we please have a one-minute silence for the 5000 IVF embryos killed with one shell by the Israeli Forces during their genocidal war on Gaza in April 2024.

I am standing in front of you but not looking at you

Thank you.

I take off my jacket and prepare to start the performance

Can we please have a one-minute
silence for the physically and mentally
disabled and homosexuals killed with
Zyklon B in gas chambers by the Nazis
during the Second World War.

I am looking in your eyes

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip who were massacred by the Israeli army's white phosphorus shelling in the summer of 2014. Their bodies were dismantled in houses and shelters.

I am looking at the floor and checking the timer

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for Mohammad Abu-Khdeir, the 16-year-old Palestinian who was burnt alive by three Israeli settlers in Jerusalem after being forced to drink fuel on the second of July, 2014.

My head is sinking into my hand and I am looking sideways

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for Shireen Taher, the twenty-one-year-old Kurdish female fighter beheaded in Kobani by ISIS members in September 2014. Shireen's mother was informed of her death when ISIS called inviting her to come collect her daughter's head.

My eyes are closed

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the body of Taha Samir Kayyal, the Lebanese suicide bomber from Tripoli who turned his body into pieces in the bombing of Jabal Mohsen in January 2015 that killed nine people and was later claimed by the Nusra Front.

My hands are tied together behind my back and I am looking upward

Take a deep breath and let out a sigh

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for Khasem Hatoum who died hugging a suicide bomber in Syria in 2015, whilst trying to push him out of the bus to save the other passengers including his wife and son.
Kassem's body turned into pieces.

You

yes you

cover your eyes with your right hand

I am crossing my hands and looking off into the horizon

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the unnamed Syrian girl who froze to death in her tent in a refugee camp in the Beqaa- Lebanon, the day the world was collectively mourning France's Freedom of Speech in 2015.

Look at yourself on your phone camera

I am looking at you through the camera

Thank you.

Can we all please stand and have a
one-minute applause for my future
death.

Thank you. Please have a seat.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the bodies of Andrei Karlov, Russian ambassador to Turkey, and his assassin, the 22-year-old Turkish police officer Mevlut Mert Atlintas, who were both murdered with a gun in Ankara's Center of Contemporary Art in December 2016. One shot on-camera, the other off-camera.

Take a deep breath and look up at the ceiling

I am looking at your body

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the body of the former Lebanese prime minister Rafik El Hariri which was burnt in a car bomb

or an underground bomb

or an Israeli air strike

or a suicide bomber

on Valentine's Day 2005.

I am standing behind you so you can't see me

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for Fatima Bakkour, a twenty-one-year-old from Zgharta, Lebanon. The seven-month pregnant woman was murdered by her husband, who stabbed her with a cooking knife in August 2013.

Bend your upper body over your lap with the support of your arms

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the Saudi woman whose name was kept anonymous, who was sentenced by a Saudi court to six months in prison and 200 lashes in 2015. Her crime was being the victim of a gang rape and then speaking about it publicly.

Cover your lips with the fingers of your left hand

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the twenty Palestinians killed in their mothers' wombs by the sonic boom of Israeli air raids in 2005.

I am standing next to you and looking at your hands

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the body turned into carnage left unidentified in Yemen following a Saudi airstrike that targeted a funeral in Sanaa in October 2016 killing 140 people.

Let your head sink and look downward

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the 100,000 books and manuscripts burnt in the Mosul Library in Iraq by ISIS in February 2015.

I am looking at my nails

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the American government.

Thank you.

Can we please have a one-minute silence for the one-minute silence.

If you filmed yourself, you can watch your sincere and/or insincere performance.

Thank you.

Let's have another minute of silence for silence.

(End)

Petra Serhal is a multidisciplinary artist creating multi-sensorial work. Her work revolves around the experiential aspects of performative experiences while using choreography as her main tool for research and practice. Her work examines the body, language, and sound in relation to movement and space, addressing themes like memory, fragmentation, and embodiment. Recently, Serhal's work focuses on olfactory art, exploring the power of scent and nature as a means of identity, rootedness, and spatial creation.
