

HAIR PIECE:

The sans of the pure cut

“We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from that which threatens it - on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger.”

Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror

Through the investigation of performance in video, I was interested in processing the mundane task of the haircut into a moment of reflection and absolution. I had this opportunity in June of 2006, while traveling in Belgrade, Serbia, to stage a performance in a defunct Turkish bathhouse. The particular room that I chose had this wonderful slab of rock in it, with some sort of basins ringing the edges of the walls. I found out after my performance that this was the site of the circumcision room when the bath house was occupied.

I met a Serbian hairdresser, Jelena, who offered to cut my hair for the audience. She was given instructions by myself to tie the hair into a high braid, measure the braid, and then snip along the tie. The braid measured 16” in length (its destination would be a non-profit back in the United States that makes wigs for children who lose their hair to disease).

The nature of travel seemed a perfect instance where stripping oneself of extra baggage was appropriate. It is a space ripe for spiritual awareness, but above all I was interested in how to turn such a trivial gesture towards cleanliness – trimming the hair – into a monumental event. The result begs the question: Was the real power in the act, or in the afterimage?