

Jennifer DeBoer  
4.301  
*Body Extension Project*  
December 6, 2004

### Hanging Up

My intent in doing this project was to address the personal feeling of exasperation and helplessness I feel because I have the tendency to overbook myself. I try to assume myriad roles in a variety of different contexts, and each of these personas vies for my time and my attention.

I decided this project needed to be a performance piece because the body extension is a growth, a process that needs to be observed to be fully understood. It deals with the process of dressing and of outfitting oneself for a particular job. The discomfort of the viewer comes from seeing object after object hung from the performer.

I wanted to give the audience a bit of background so they can more easily enter the realm of the piece, so I lay the various personas out to be first noted as separate entities. The audience can see the personas first before they become extensions of myself. Then, to demarcate the beginning of the piece, I exit behind a wall in the room and come on with a bag filled with my extension implements. They become body extensions

The audio that accompanies the piece is an extension of my body, as well, since it is entirely self-generated. It reflects the sometimes-nonsensical words that flow in an associated stream-of-consciousness manner inside one's head. The words rhyme and come in alliterated pairs; a chanting rhythm unites the piece throughout the different articles of clothing. Periodically, the poem ends in a single statement: "But above all, I am an artist." The statement attempts to find an overarching personality to the performer, but becomes ridiculous as the artist tries to continue performing her role with more and more cumbersome side roles impeding her.

My hope is that the audience will easily relate to the frustration I feel in wanting to take on so many varied personalities and yet being unable to fit them all onto my body which, after all, is only human. If the audience can only personally empathize with one persona, or even if they can't immediately identify with any of them, I hope they can relate to the feelings associated with a self-imposed, masochistic cage that comes from trying to augment one's own life too much. Inside the cage, it is difficult to realize that there are others in similar situations, since the cage is a personal body extension and is isolating and lonely. The piece then serves as a reminder that anyone can fit into this particular extension. It is a reassuring piece as well as a demonstration of a frustrating phenomenon.