

Displacement and Educational Potentials in Ellen Kobe's

FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE BLUMEN

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Abstract:

Artist Ellen Kobe's video artwork *FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE BLUMEN* (2012) refers directly to Botticelli's *Primavera*, which in turn dialogues with Ovid's *Fasti*. While this will be looked at in this article, the focus will be on Kobe's use of *displacement*, an "aesthetic strategy of a move of significance"¹ in which an artwork is "displaced" into a new context. In Kobe's *FLORA*, displacement is especially significant in the aspects of time, space and gender. Due to these displacements, different possibilities emerge for the mythological spring goddess Flora and her surroundings, thus encouraging the viewer to engage in a reflexive and exploratory dialogue.

Keywords:

Ellen Kobe's *FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE BLUMEN*, Botticelli's *Primavera*, Ovid's *Fasti*, displacement, time, space, gender.

In nova fert animus mutates dicere formas / corpora

(Of bodies chang'd to various forms, I sing)

--- Ovid, "Metamorphosis". Translation by John Dryden, Sir Samuel Garth, et al.

1. Introduction

The Artist and the Strategy of Displacement

Ellen Kobe (born 1968) is a Berlin-based artist whose artworks often involve performance and video in public spaces. According to her website, these works tend to explore history reception, contemporary art exhibitions that are held in historic sites, and gender identity questions. Her artistic method is *the principle of displacement*. Kobe writes, "By the principle of displacement in a performance situation, a certain aspect of the exhibition at hand can be

¹ See Christiane Brohl's *Displacement als kunstpädagogische Strategie* (Books on Demand, 2003) 7.

decontextualized and by this, the unity of perception of words, images and spaces is questioned.”²

Displacement, according to the Oxford Dictionaries, is in simple words, “the action of moving something from its place or position.” This term has been used in various contexts: In postcolonial or migrant literature, it often refers to enforced, physical displacement that may lead to other displacements which may be emotional, psychological or cultural, to give some examples. Displacement is also a theme in contemporary, especially conceptual, art. “The Art of Displacement” (*The UN News* 2013) highlights, among others, the works *Fairytales* (2007) by Ai Weiwei, who coordinated and documented the displacement of 1001 Chinese citizens from China to Germany, and *Paradox of Praxis I (Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing)* (1997) by Francis Alÿs, who Atlas-like pushed a large block of ice for seven hours through the streets of Mexico to make a statement about the futility of both manual labor and art.

Displacement activates the involvement of the spectator, who observes something familiar in an unfamiliar-to-it setting. Martin Seel, in *Aesthetics of Appearing* (originally published in 2000), speaks of a heightened attentiveness to what is “appearing” as defining the aesthetic experience. He therefore calls attention to the role of the spectator in art mediation, stating that “the perception of artworks necessarily incorporates interpretive and epistemic attentiveness” (16). Moreover, according to Seel, “[i]n the sensuous presence of an object, we become aware of a moment in our own presence” (33). In this way, the perceiver’s dialogue with an artwork allows her or him to reflect on what keeps her or his attention on the work, and thus, on “what life possibility . . . is opened up by aesthetic behavior” (36). In like manner, Umberto Eco considers an artwork to be an “open product” or “work in movement” that is open to multiple possible interventions and interpretations. Eco, in *The Open Work* (originally published in 1962), asserts that “every reception of a work of art is both an *interpretation* and a *performance* of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself” (4).

Displacement has also been formulated as a didactic strategy for art education by pedagogue Christiane Brohl, who leans on Foucault’s ideas on heterotopias and Robert Smithson’s theory of non-sites. Brohl (trans. and qtd. by Anja Kraus 2014; 130) writes: “Displacement at first describes a spatial relocation of art situated in the institution of the

² See: Kobe, Ellen. “PEOPLE IN MUSEUMS, MENSCH IM MUSEUM.” https://lnu.se/contentassets/4e919269520e4e60a93db327dce6d5d7/kobe_-abstract.pdf. Last accessed on 15 May 2017.

museum and then moved to public spaces. Displacement signifies a change in the understanding of art . . . [It] is the special artistic work of the reading of a location by another location, the intuitive relating of materials, information and associations.” Kraus, referring to Brohl’s approach, states that “Fundamentally, the principle of displacement is based on the reciprocal interpretation of an art work and its situational context” (130). Relating this principle to learning, Kraus further writes: “By being relocated, the fact or “thing” changes its meaning and significance. . . . Displacement can be described as explorative learning in the situational context of locations, things and discourses” (131).

Kobe uses displacement in various ways, a few of which will briefly be presented in this article. In *GOYA TO GO* (2005, part of her “PEOPLE IN MUSEUMS” series), she uses video, as it was initially used in the art world, to record her performance as a curator in a museum, an employment she currently holds. Instead of focusing on the paintings, attention is paid to the queuing of visitors, to the distribution of headsets, to the purchase of tickets, and to the visitors’ interaction with the museum staff. In Kobe’s performance, she enthusiastically describes masterpieces by Goya, which in fact are not present, as she gestures towards bare walls. In *RASTSTÄTTE* (“REST STOP”, video, 2007), two horses are displaced into a park space in the center of Dresden. The artist takes into account the sensitive hearing of horses as she films their reactions to their new environment – a temporary, constructed nature in the middle of the city – where sounds of traffic abound.

Kobe’s 2012 video artwork *FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE BLUMEN* (or ‘FLORA PICKS WILD FLOWERS’), which is this article’s focal point, is a type of *tableau vivant* or living picture, which departs directly from Italian Renaissance master Sandro Botticelli’s well-known painting *Primavera* (ca. 1482), which in turn draws from fragments of Ovid’s 6-book poem *Fasti* (8 A.D.), whose texts appear in Kobe’s video. The title explicitly references Flora, a Roman goddess associated with spring, flowers, youth and fertility.

The rediscovery of mythological themes and figures was a characteristic of Renaissance art. Art historian Richard Stemp in *The Secret Language of the Renaissance* (2006) comments on the dual purpose this could imply: The patrons could show off their knowledge while the artists could display their narrative and descriptive skills (152). *Primavera*, also known as *Allegory of Spring*, is certainly one of Botticelli’s most widely-known works and is believed to have been commissioned by the influential Medici family for the wedding of one of its members. The painting is set in what appears to be an orange orchard, which is fruitful and flowerful. According to the most popular interpretations (also

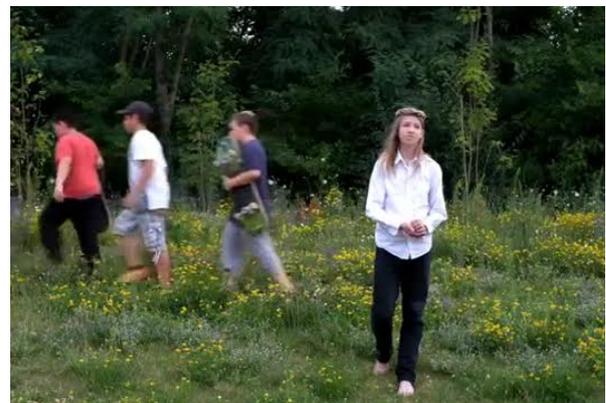
chosen by Stemp³) the mythological figures that grace this orchard / forest / garden are (from left to right) Mercury, The Three Graces, Venus and above her Cupid, Flora (or future Chloris), Chloris and Zephyrus. According to Stemp, the painting “can be read as a meditation on the nature of love and marriage” (156): The goddess of love, Venus, stands in the center of the scene while Cupid, her son and the god of desire, directs an arrow towards one of the three Graces, figures that represent beauty, grace and joy, among other qualities. In the rightmost part of the painting, the blowing, glowering wind god Zephyrus attempts to sweep the nymph Chloris into his arms. And between Venus and Chloris is Flora, Chloris’ future self, now a goddess of spring and the wife of Zephyrus. On the leftmost side of the painting, messenger god Mercury appears to push away wispy clouds that may threaten the springtime scene.

Figure 1: Botticelli's Primavera



³ See: Stemp, Richard. *The Secret Language of the Renaissance* (Duncan Baird Publishers, 2006) 156-157.

Figure 2: Stills from Kobe's *FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE BLUMEN*



Primavera is featured at the very beginning of Kobe's 3-minute video, which begins with a still image of said painting. Then, a new "Flora" is superimposed over the painting's "Flora", as the painting dissolves to a "real" park, which the video description identifies as Gleisdreieck Park in Berlin. Flora, now an effeminate young man with long blond hair, smiles, and stretches and then leisurely yet deliberately casts seeds to the ground. The crown of flowers on his head dissipates any doubts about his identity; also, his sowing of seeds mirrors Botticelli's Flora's casting of flowers. The other characters that walk in and out of the frame, seemingly oblivious to Flora, are of immigrant background (also specified in the video description). They are: a group of young boys holding skateboards, a veiled woman, and a park ranger. They make no contact with each other or with the blond protagonist. Intertitles – fragments of Ovid's text narrating Zephyrus' rape of Flora, their subsequent marriage and her transformation into a spring goddess – are interspersed between the short scenes.

2. The Context of the Artwork: Flora Pflückt Wilde Blumen and the New Gleisdreieck Park

Metamorphosis has also been a major theme in the park's history: Gleisdreieck Park was formerly a railway junction (the name 'Gleisdreieck' in fact signifies 'triangle of rails') which then became a waste ground after the Second World War until "this unhoped-for refuge [was] reclaimed by flora and fauna . . ." (*Visit Berlin*). After having been a central area of intersection and traffic and then becoming a wasteland, Gleisdreieck Park, which officially opened in 2011, was once again being turned into a point of meeting, envisioned to bring together people of different age groups and interests, and to connect the districts of Kreuzberg, Schöneberg and Mitte through its location. Another unique factor in the creation of this park is that the public was highly encouraged to participate in its construction. Several focus groups⁴ were asked what they expected or desired from the new park, and what type of activities they wanted to engage in. Interestingly, the groups questioned were divided in a very particular way that focused on gender and ethnicity divisions such as: male and female youngsters with a "migration background", "German women", women with a "migration background", men with a "migration background", and senior citizens. It is clear that the intention of the park's new design was to be integrative and to be at the service of the current social reality, although strangely enough, "German men" (as opposed to "German women" and all that this broad term may connote) were not included in the focus groups. This, as well as the abovementioned transformation that Gleisdreieck experienced, and the consequent dialogue between past and present and natural and manmade, were a source of inspiration for the 23 artists commissioned for the open air exhibition "Gleisdreieck Berlin 2012 – Art in Public Space" (*Kunst im öffentlichen Raum*), which was organized by two Swiss curators, Francine Eggs and Andreas Bitschin. Kobe's work *FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE BLUMEN* was part of this exhibition.

German newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*'s review on the exhibition comments on the interplay between the visible and the hidden, noting that it was no simple task to find all the artworks, many of which blended into the park surroundings. Several of the artists were inspired by the traces of the old railway that were left over. For instance, in *Zwei Schienen* ('Two Rails'), Christine Berndt fastened copper foil to the rails, where she engraved

⁴ See a report (2005) on these focus group surveys here: http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/aktuell/wettbewerbe/ergebnisse/2006/gleisdreieck/zebralog/site/pictures/Fokusgruppen_Gleisdreieck_Endbericht.pdf

fragments of literary works by Rose Auslaender and Hertha Müller. Many of these quotations recalled the period in which Jews were deported to concentration camps from this location; some of the words disappeared under the proliferating vegetation. Fabiana de Barros and Anna Schmid's installation *Kultur Kiosk/Letzte Tage!* (Cultural Kiosk/Last Days!) transformed a recognizable and commonplace part of city life into something that was at once old, and totally new: The kiosk became a red-orange cube-like structure that appeared half-sunken into the ground, as an old ruin half taken over by time. It was inside this small kiosk-ruin, which could accommodate around 5 to 10 people, that Kobe's film installation was played.

Kobe's artwork in this location encouraged a special dialogue between spaces: the park space, in which visitors were invited to walk through, observe, and listen to the newly-created park and the installations; the space inside the kiosk, which was part of the new park but where the sounds and light did not affect it; and the space in Kobe's video, where the park's atmosphere and sounds were in a way, relived. The interplay between past and present is succinctly expressed in the dialogue between Botticelli's painting and Kobe's video, and as we shall see, many current discussions come to light as a result of this exchange.

3. The Effects of Displacement in Terms of Space, Time and Gender

3.1. Space and Time

The desire to connect or disconnect an artwork to or from its traditional context – usually considered to be the museum – is not new. Marcel Duchamp, with “Fountain” (1917), famously transformed a urinal into a work of art by changing its context. Robert Smithson in “Some Void Thoughts on Museums” (1967) likens museums to tombs, claiming that “[t]he museum spreads itself everywhere and becomes an untitled collection of generalizations that immobilize the eye” (42). While many of Smithson's works are exhibited in museums, he was known for creating often temporary art in outdoor settings, where the artwork is subjected to change and decay. Similarly, in Brian O'Dougherty's *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1986), art is seen as existing “in a kind of eternity of display. . . . This eternity gives the gallery a limbolike status; one has to have died to already be there” (15).

What happens to *Primavera*? In the first hand, Kobe plucks Flora from Botticelli's lush *Primavera* forest and sets her onto a flowering city park. With this action, she not only

transforms the context within the artwork but without: The artwork is taken from the confines of the museum, and given a whole different form, for how shall *Primavera* survive in and harmonize with its new surroundings if not by taking a new shape?

Focusing on *Primavera* for a moment, Charles Burroughs (2012) studies it in relation to the *Fasti*, drawing special attention to the painter's construction of space and movement. According to him, "Botticelli uses space to represent time", depicting "a movement from early to late spring." Burroughs also points out how in the painting, only Venus and Flora look directly at the viewer. He particularly indicates the boldness that is expressed in Flora's figure: in her direct gaze, her chainmail-like sleeves, and in the way in which she appears to step almost onto the edge of the canvas, as if just about to step out of the painting. In relation to this, different variations of the contrapposto and S-curve stances in the figures help endow the painting with dynamism; however, as noted, the positioning of Flora's feet is special with regard to its closeness to the border. As Burroughs puts it, Botticelli's Flora "challenges the separation of pictorial space and the viewers' space." And as if in response to this 'nearly stepping out', Kobe, through her video, gives her Flora an invisible helping hand, pulling her into another time and space. Returning to how the painter uses space to represent time, similarly, Maggie Kilgour in her article "The Poetics of Time: *Fasti* in the Renaissance" (2014) speaks of the artist's attempt to capture "the movement of time in a medium that is primarily spatial" (226).

Botticelli's painting, whose most popular thematic interpretations, as mentioned above, are on love and marriage, masterfully encapsulates layers of movement, transition, and even violence. Levels of time coexist in one plane, and events that are just about to happen are combined with what has already passed and what might occur in the future: Again, observe how a blindfolded Cupid is poised to shoot a loving arrow at one of the Graces, menacing their hand-clasped harmony, or how Mercury attempts to prod away the clouds that are about to encroach on spring. Also, the wind god and messenger of spring Zephyrus is just about to blow his breezes; but more importantly, he is about to seize a startled and near-naked Chloris, whose mouth begins to sprout dark blossoms at his touch. Right beside Chloris is her future self, Flora, who has metamorphosed from rape victim to married woman and goddess. She casts blossoms to the ground, perhaps expecting them to fill the forest with new life, foreshadowing transformation. Her metamorphosis from nymph-maiden to goddess-wife is captured by the painter *in media res*. This undertone of violence coexists with an idyllic springtime space, framed by flowers and orange trees, and blessed by a gentle, Madonna-like Venus at the center of the composition. However, for Maggie Kilgour, Flora's narrative is the

true heart of the painting, which “focuses on the moment of metamorphosis, when Chloris becomes Flora” (226).

Temporally, there have been several layers of transfer: from a mythological time to Ovid’s description of its cycles and traditions, to Botticelli’s reflection of the Renaissance’s revival of mythology, and finally, to Kobe’s transfer to a “modern” time, indicated by the clothes the characters are wearing and the sounds of cars in the background, which also suggest another space that may at any given time intrude on the deceptively peaceful park. As with *Primavera*, the soft, spring-like atmosphere appears to be a temporary façade. The presence of Kobe’s Flora, this gentle young man with flowers in his hair, transforms this park into a heterotopy⁵ or a space of otherness: Kobe’s Flora, the long-haired and androgynous young man, transforms the park with his unexpected presence, even actively sowing seeds and in this action endeavoring to transform nature. The strangeness that is apparent in this young man and in the characters that do not react to each other are difficult to clearly make out.

In terms of composition, Botticelli’s is controlled and his characters are carefully chosen and composed. Kobe’s composition also appears to be attentively put together, even though an interview⁶ with Kobe reveals that several characters in her video were random visitors in the park, free to step in and out of her frame, reflecting the park’s integrative aims. This is no homogeneous space of gods and Graces. When one recalls the park survey’s target groups and the absence of the “German man” (who one might assume to mean the increasingly notorious white, Western male) in them, it is interesting to find the white male in Kobe’s video as being the one who sticks out, appears strange and is other. Or are they all other? Hans Ingvar Roth (1999) uses the park as a metaphor for a multicultural society, where people of different backgrounds visit regularly. Does Flora join the displaced or does she become the other; the traveler; the exiled or the self-exiled? To quote Trin T. Min-ha in “Other Than Myself / My Other Self” (1994), travelling can be described as “a process whereby the self loses its fixed boundaries – a disturbing yet potentially empowering practice of difference” (23). This can be related to the blurring of boundaries that occurs with displacement.

Christiane Brohl, in her 2003 book entitled *Displacement als kunstpädagogische Strategie* (“Displacement as a Strategy for Art Pedagogy”) states that “[w]ith the allegorical

⁵ Of Greek origin, the word heterotopy literally signifies “other place”, deriving from *héteros* (other or different) and *tópos* (place).

⁶ The author interviewed Kobe via telephone on December 7, 2016.

employment of displacement, situations that are ambiguous and open are created by context artists. . . . Their unclear situations provoke a dis-orientation (orientationlessness) on the recipients” (1; my trans.). She goes on to discuss these “other places” or heterotopic spaces that are created by artists and that exist in their relation to “normal” spaces, transforming and questioning their order while deepening our awareness of the existing cultural and social structures (3). Similarly, Eva Sturm (2010), who specializes in art mediation, argues for “a differential art mediation . . . based on difference, on the heterogeneous, the non-final. . . .” Moreover, she states, “Perhaps, as with art, the point is to create spaces in which disagreement and disconnection can be cultivated, in which not everything is fixed and hierarchically ordered. Perhaps it is possible to create rooms in which nothing is as certain as it once seemed”⁷ (my trans.). Kobe indeed creates an atmosphere or “other space” in which much is possible but nothing is certain. On the one hand, Kobe’s Flora appears to be gentle and carefree. He is also a figure that would normally not be expected in such a park: a young man with flowers round his head deliberately and gracefully casting seeds. He thus transforms the park into an “other space”. Curiously, save for one instant with the veiled lady, he does not appear to see the people around him, and they do not appear to see him. It seems to be a space of non-encounters; non-action; perhaps of temporary truce; or of a time between transitions. Is this a haven away from the “real” world? Is it a kind of limbo where nothing ever happens, where no one ever speaks to or touches another? Or is it a provisional rest before something occurs, the infamous calm before the storm? Many more questions arise: Does the park guard embody a threat or a figure of protection? Having in mind Flora’s backstory of rape, is this park one of possible choice encounters as opposed to forced encounters? Unlike *Primavera*, that had a visibly menacing Zephyrus, the threats in *FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE BLUMEN* can only be guessed at. Kobe herself, in the film description, poses the question of whether this space is threatened or protected, or whether the characters will meet or stay separate.

A narrative, imaginary space can also be discussed, for instance, the gap of hidden actions between painting and video. What happens in between, unseen by the viewer? Is the artist a creator/goddess responsible for removing Flora from her previous situation and transferring her into a newly-fashioned world? In which of the worlds is Flora freer? Also, can Flora, a figure of metamorphosis, be seen as an artist or an artwork / subject of art? And

⁷ “Vermittlung – Performance – Widerstreit” by Carmen Mörsch and Eva Sturm, *Art Education Research No. 2/2010*, ZHdK Departement for Cultural Analysis, Institute for Art Education. Quoted in the website of the art association *Kunstverein Schichtwechsel*. Last access: 10 May 2017.

to this, is Flora the agent or the object of transformation? His actions are slow and deliberate and as mentioned, the sowing of seeds is a transformative act. In this way, he seems to be consciously attempting to renew the present reality.

A further topic of relevance is how space is perceived by the viewer, who perhaps has been perusing the many park installations on show, markedly different from the sculptures and fountains that are commonly associated with city parks. Then, the spectator takes a break from the “real” park to enter the small kiosk-ruin in which s/he no longer hears the park’s sounds and is once more part of the park, in a different way, through Kobe’s video. The “real” physical park is thus experienced in a new way.

Time is also strange and undefined. The movements are in slow motion: In the first scene, the young man, Flora, seems to awaken gently into the new world, perhaps escaping the nightmare of Zephyrus’ dominance in his previous life. He moves gracefully, stretching and casting seeds. However, save for the first few seconds, his feet remained rooted to the ground, as if wanting to stay in place, fastened in this scene of tranquility. This could intimate on the viewer that this slow impression of unending spring is not quite real. At the same time, the positioning of his feet seems to mimic the traditional contrapposto posture, another wink at Botticelli.

Time in *FLORA* gives an impression of both timelessness and temporariness. The slowness of narration could also point to a time of mid-transformation, a time of gathering or recovering strength, of planting seeds. The viewer is always reminded, via the sounds of birds and traffic, of a life outside of the park’s clasp; thus, as mentioned, this resting place is likely transitory, a standstill between sleep and waking that will inevitably once more be transformed.

The artist’s choice of media is certainly worth noting. The *tableau vivant* form was also often based on paintings. The pictures on this *tableau vivant* are not still, but nevertheless, movement is scarce. Again, there is this in-between and uncertainty between fixedness and fluidity; moreover, we can observe the tension between the pastness that has been attributed to photography as opposed to the presence of cinema. “The implicit photographic past tense is revisited by the implicit cinematic present tense” is how Andrew Shail, who refers to Roland Barthes and André Bazin, summarizes it in his 2012 work *The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism* (89). Returning to the topic of space, in the film studies classic *What Is Cinema?* (1967), Bazin distinguishes between painting and cinema. In his view, the painting, “by its surrounding frame . . . is separated off not only from reality as such but, even more so, from the reality that is represented in it” (165). In contrast

to this, he believes that “what the screen shows us seems to be part of something prolonged indefinitely into the universe. A frame is centripetal, the screen centrifugal” (166). Kobe, in her intertextual engagement with Botticelli’s painting, proposes different characters and meanings, but will they be able to move beyond the pictures and out into the “real” world? The *tableau* fits very much with the atmosphere of awakening and awaiting. Interestingly, for Foucault, in his 1975 “Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison”, *tableaux vivants* are media of transformation, transforming “the confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities” (141).

3.3. Gender

In terms of gender, Flora is androgynous⁸ and is clothed in black jeans and a white shirt, and as noted, the crown of flowers on his hair makes his identity unmistakable, especially when seen in parallel to *Primavera*. Now free of gender confinements, he smiles mysteriously and gives an impression of serenity. How does making Flora a young white man change the story?

Changing Flora’s sex and gender gives birth to several threads of thought. But first, who is Flora and what is associated with her figure? Stemp, in *The Secret Language of the Renaissance* (2006) connects Flora to Venus in *Primavera* in their representation of “the idea of fertility which is embodied by spring and expected in marriage” (156). Silvia Gherardi, in *Gender, Symbolism and Organizational Cultures* (1995) explores the symbolic order of gender, focusing on the relations between gender, power and culture. Within this topic, she outlines and compares the different female archetypes in Greek mythology: Persephone and Flora, goddesses of spring, are part of what Gherardi terms “vulnerable deities,” who “express the need for affiliation. All . . . vulnerable goddesses were raped and dominated by male deities and suffered on account of the love relationship” (73). Persephone, whom Gherardi interprets to be the spring goddess in *Primavera*, is according to the author, a symbol for “the wait for something to happen, for someone to come and give shape to life” (81). Do these associations really change with Flora’s gender, when we observe the vulnerable-looking young man in the video? Does the fact that he is now a man make him less vulnerable to destructive relationships? Does it give him a higher chance of being Zephyrus’ equal? Is he now unencumbered by a history of domination and thus free from being defined by his

⁸ In a survey conducted by the author in December 2016 in Sankt Sigfrids folkhögskola, a preparatory art school in Växjö, Sweden, 13 out of 21 students believed Flora to be a woman upon watching Kobe’s video.

relationships? Also, why are there no young women characters in the park (when compared to *Primavera*, which is dominated by beautiful, noble and well-known young women)?

It is interesting that in this version of the narrative, it is the young white male who sticks out and is vulnerable. The fact that this young man is androgynous also contributes to the atmosphere of uncertainty. Feminists have previously seen androgyny as an ideal. Arleen B. Dallery in her article “The Politics of Writing: *Écriture Féminine*” (1989) refers to the “treasured ideal of androgyny [which is] itself based on fear of otherness” (65). Gherardi touches this topic too, stating: “Defining the female as passive, emotional, irrational and dependent is to deny that the male possesses these characteristics. . . . [T]he problem is how to avoid thought and language based on antithesis and dichotomy . . . on the univocality of the meaning of male or female” (71).

Additionally, another question that could be studied further is: What does it mean that the goddess of spring and renewal is a man, when we think in terms of fertility and motherhood? In *Gender: The Key Concepts* (2013), Mary Evans and Carolyn H. Williams speak of the NRTs, New Reproductive Technologies, and how “the feminist analysis of NRTs has confirmed the extent to which women who are unable to conceive . . . seek out NRTS in order to fulfill normative expectations about marriage, kinship, family, gender and sex. . . .” (161). Evans and Williams also quote anthropologist Marilyn Stathern, “who argued that technological assistance to conception would have a ‘displacing effect’ on normative kinship values . . .” (160).

Finally, Marvin Altner, who interviewed Kobe for *Gleisdreieck Berlin* (2012), the book on the exhibition, saw Kobe’s Flora as a figure who can be seen in a way as echoing in a “subtly subversive” (66; my trans.) manner, the female protagonist in Pippilotti Rist’s 1997 art video *Ever is Over All*: In a flowy blue dress and red shoes, she walks smilingly down the street, smashing car windows with a long-stemmed flower. At one point, she is followed by a friendly female cop.

4. Conclusion

The method of displacement and its relation to art mediation has been investigated in various ways (see for example the works of aforementioned authors like Brohl, Kraus and Sturm), helping to construct a framework for articles such as this one that study and interpret the employment of displacement in specific artworks.

This article has endeavored to explore the many threads of thought that Kobe's use of displacement has opened up, especially in the aspects of space, time and gender. A topic that could be investigated even further is that of metamorphosis, a theme which has given a remarkable cohesion to the relations between Ovid, Botticelli and Kobe, as well as to *FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE BLUMEN*'s relationship to Gleisdreieck Park, itself in a process of metamorphosis. In the act of sowing seeds, in a way, Kobe's Flora is an agent of renewal, making way for new meanings to continue to transform the constantly changing scene.

Through displacement, Kobe in *FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE BLUMEN* creates a situation that is ambivalent: a neither-here-nor-there space between spaces which is neither 'perfect' nature nor manmade structure, male nor female, human nor godlike, new nor old, nowhere nor somewhere, fixed nor free. The situation is disorienting, unfixed, and malleable to transformation.

Kraus (see her forthcoming article "Corporal Linkages Between Ethics and Aesthetics as a Task of Education") states that a central task of pedagogy is "the development of one's ethical sense for diverse approaches and structures of power, hindrances and counter-reactions in an actual context of practices, bodies and things" (8). For Kraus, artworks are a means to this task, as she discusses how "artworks may reveal hierarchical orders of the current images or constructs of a certain 'other'", leading to "new orders [that] might be proposed" (7). Furthermore, she states that "every artistic work is socially dimensioned and is a way of looking for orientation in existential regards. . . ." Thus, the common response of a spectator confronted with an artwork that is disorienting is to attempt to find her or his footing in the situation. This effect may create questions in the spectator, challenging her or his "orders" and perhaps also encouraging her or him to create new meanings, which may tend to be transformable rather than fixed. The spectator, this way, is steered by open-ended questions rather than by answers, thus creating a possibility for valuable and exploratory dialogue.

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List of Figures

Figure 1: Botticelli's *Primavera*; image taken from Wikipedia.org; 17 May 2017;

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Botticelli-primavera.jpg>.

Figure 2: Stills, taken with permission, from Ellen Kobe's video *FLORA PFLÜCKT WILDE*

BLUMEN; ellenkobe.de; 18 May 2017; <http://www.ellenkobe.de/flora-pflueckt-wilde-blumen/>.