



Alexandra Bachzetsis

Diego Velázquez, *The Toilet of Venus*, 1647–51

The Toilet of Venus or *The Rokeby Venus* (1647–51) by Diego Velázquez is the inspiration for my piece *From A to B via C* (2014). During a stay in Rome, Velázquez ordered a bronze copy of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *Borghese Hermaphrodite* (1620) — itself a copy of a lost Hellenic sculpture from the 2nd century BCE. The ambiguity of gender seems to have been at the origin of Velázquez's painting, and I also worked along these lines, mixing and confusing gender roles in the performance: a woman holding an LED screen with my face on it; a man reclining on the sofa, looking away from the viewers, contemplating himself (or herself) in my image on the screen. I am fascinated by this procession of tilting and turning poses and gazes, which has been perpetuated in many artworks over the centuries. Venus at her mirror is the axis of this movement. In 1914, 100 years before I made my work, the suffragette Mary Richardson slashed Velázquez's painting with a chopper and was arrested. What interests me in this painting is the duration it contains: the passage of time between the model, the face in the mirror and your gaze.

Alexandra Bachzetsis is based in Basel and Zurich, Switzerland. *A Piece Danced Alone* will be performed at Art Stations Foundation, Poznań, Poland, on 17 October and *From A to B via C* at Centre Pompidou and Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris, France, on 23 and 24 October.

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Diego Velázquez *The Toilet of Venus* (*The Rokeby Venus*) c. 1648–51. Oil on canvas, 1.2 x 1.7 m. Courtesy: National Gallery, London