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**Rehearsal The Perils of Obedience – Itziar Barrio, July 2014,
Abrons Art Center, New York**

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Reviews (I)

Rehearsal *The Perils of Obedience* – Itziar Barrio, July 2014, Abrons Art Center, New York

A group of actors is rehearsing a scene led by a director. All follow a script of exercises, where physical movements are combined with interviews, improvisations, and the reading of texts. Different contexts interlay in a large chain of events. Over the course of four days, the actors work until exhaustion, searching for nuances of the performing act, which reverberate in their own lives. For the final two days, the rehearsal opens to an audience. The entire process is recorded by a set of cameras, under the guidance of the artist.



Figure 1. Rehearsal The Perils of Obedience – Itziar Barrio, New York. ©

The above recounts the process used by artist Itziar Barrio to create a situation. Akin to work in a lab, the object of study is isolated. Its components are set apart and dissected to analyze its specificities. In this case the artist centers her work on the dynamics of power given in a situation where seduction and a sense of belonging are the driving feelings. Actors, director, artist, and audience form a square, which is sometimes unstable and often taut. The situation unfolds through variations and repetitions of a scene altered by the introduction of textual sampling and exercises, which compose fluctuating rhythms that become interwoven, allowing for subtle changes. These variations allow diverse approaches on the same conceptual motifs, and alter the emotional landscape of the room.



Figure 2. *Rehearsal The Perils of Obedience* – Itziar Barrio, New York. ©

Sharon Stone's famous leg-crossing scene from *Basic Instinct* sets in motion the dramatic action driven by the seduction of power. The dynamics unleashed provoke emotional reactions and the characters feel threatened. Their boundaries disappear forming a temporary social unit. *Rehearsal* plays with the logic of social formations to show how leadership and the

administration of power can act as generators of conflicts. Barrio's research takes into account the emotional side of power, and underlines the need to own a situation and the need to belong to a group. Both reactions are analyzed, explored through repetitions and captured by the close-ups of the cameras. The inclusion of a text summarizing the New York Draft Riots of 1863 and some passages of the Accelerationist Manifesto of 2013, expand the context in play, we escape the realm of fiction and we are position in a larger historical perspective. Legitimacy of authority and obedience appear as key concepts as the project unveils the relations between desire and power. In light of current global crises we are pushed to think about the ways conflicts are generated and resolved, and although the audience draws connections and conclusions, the project is more suggestive than definitive.



Figure 3. Rehearsal The Perils of Obedience – Itziar Barrio, New York. ©

The four actors develop their characters regarding their personal stories. This exercise of identification with the character is loosely inspired by the Stanislavski method that became influential in America through the Actor's

Studio. Using this method, actors fully embody the character allowing them to know what the character wants, what the character had for breakfast that day, and what the character is hiding. The theater director, Nigel Smith interviews both the characters and the actors separately. Through this exercise we are



Figure 4. *Rehearsal The Perils of Obedience* – Itziar Barrio, New York. ©

aware of the person behind the character, and it is this exposure of the actor that motivates the audience to form an opinion. The audience is drawn into the situation, through the tensions generated by the cast and the direction. The oscillation between the spontaneous and the scripted creates an unpredictable, live situation—a strategy not commonly encountered in the theater. *Rehearsal* is a new development of the larger project, *The Perils of Obedience*, and Itziar Barrio is promising sequels that will most likely combine and intensify this experiment on power and desire.

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