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COLOPHON

CHOREOGRAPHY 2018

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Opening

Before you is the second edition of the anthology CHOREOGRAPHY. Yet again we want to expand and build a rich and complex understanding of the term. A diversity of voices active in the field of dance and choreography in the Nordic countries are made visible. All texts are newly written for this anthology, and all are written by artists. Through sharing reflections and issues, choreography can be approached as its own field of knowledge. We, as an independent editorial based in Oslo, make use of this anthology to reach out and contribute to a larger Nordic disciplinary community.

The initiative behind CHOREOGRAPHY stems from an interest in the language that artists themselves can develop. The writers are in different stages in their approach. Yet they are united in their attempt to find a productive way to relate to language, so that language can be used for what they need in their artistic carriers. Where some master and make use of an academic form to ask questions and create change – others put forward the academic as exhausted for possibilities and are searching for new forms and expressions.

The anthology is an initiative to support and lift critical perspectives regarding choreographic practice, as well as structures that we as artists are dependent on. The ambition is to protect a space for reflection that we experience as threatened, that is to say the thinking from and around the artistic works. In a time where most artists live with constant demands of self promotion, self-staging and circulation, we experience this as all the more important. When knowledge is shared, more of us can take part in the conversation.

We can challenge and destabilize established truths, and new terms and definitions can come into existence.

The diversity is limited, our orientation insufficient and some texts that should be here are not. To us this points towards new editions that make space for even more new voices.

Some issues have felt acute. In summer 2017 we discussed how it was important to make visible different feminist approaches in our field. This was right before #Metoo, and in the aftermath of the movements of autumn 2017, it is different both to write and read these texts. The question is how to practice feminism in solidaric ways, and make happen a persistent conversation regarding structures in the art field that discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age or class.

In a time where the public conversation is ever more polarized and popularized many are asking the question of what art is or should do. To expand each individual's reality through developing language, increasing knowledge and sharpening the critical reflection, is our contribution to the conversation.

Solveig Styve Holte creates, performs and investigates dance and choreography through performances, texts and exhibition works. Current works as *Lightness: Fleire*, the solo *ÆØÅ* in *ABOUT* with Ann-Christin Kongsness and *Flak-kande røynd* with Rannei Grenne all investigate collective working-structures and different approaches to historical archives. Holte has contributed to several publications, worked with the public and professional programme at Dansens Hus, has two kids and lives in Oslo.

For more information see: www.choreography.no

Ellen Söderhult

Art as a Part of the Commons

Ellen works with contemporary dance and choreography, with a base in Stockholm. Since receiving her second BA from DOCH in 2015 she has danced in and made performances through different forms of collaborations such as OTHERBODIES, RUDY, Innanför Grindarna and How to do things with Romance. In 2015 she, together with Eleanor Bauer and Alice Chauchat, initiated a platform for exchange- and distribution of knowledge within contemporary dance called Nobody's Dance. She has performed works by choreographers such as Simone Forti, Anna Efraimsson and Sandra Medina.

My mission with this text was to write about feminist strategies in a Nordic dance field out of my own artistic practice. I have departed from an understanding of feminism as synonymous with equality. The text begins with a short description of the power structures and tendencies I experience as dominating today, through the lens of my role as an active dancer and choreographer with a base in Stockholm. In the second part I try to analyze and problematize some issues that I think could make room for a more diverse representation of practitioners and authors, while confronting the idea that feminists need to make feminist art or art about feminism. The text is an attempt to reflect on the role of art and its challenges, in a time where I experience a strong, problematic intermixing of the artwork with the artist.

The idea of “art for art’s sake” is often considered the opposite of utilitarian ways of arguing for the value of art. What functions is art ascribed or does art take on in those different cases? How do we understand the value of art through them and through what framing do we meet them? In Sweden in 2018, like in many other countries, it is hard to work experimentally outside of institutions, towards a temporal horizon other than that which is implied by short, clearly demarcated projects. Projects that beforehand should project what the artwork will do or produce, and preferably in an explicit way relate to minorities, reach new audience groups and be well planned before subsidies are even applied for. In addition, we can notice how some forms of state funded subsidies like Kulturbryggan prioritize a type of project that “aims to develop new ways of financing cultural activities” while “requirements on financing also from another party should be considered a condition for state subsidy.”¹ Additionally, many professional artists stay within or approach academia as a way of dealing with a fragmented reality as a freelancer. There, a potential utilitarian instrumentalization of art appears as a strong focus on art as knowledge producing. Another common way of squeezing art inside of an utilitarian way of thinking is by treating art as something that is beneficial for another purpose. Such as using dance as a tool to improve concentration in math class. An additional example of art as an instrument could be when it is integrated in the fight for social justice, or used as a cosmetic compensation for the lack of political measures.

Among others, the philosopher Slavoj Žižek has problematized the tendency to merge charity or world bettering with, for example, consumption. He suggests that through incorporating moral ambitions, such as making the world a better place, into consumption, a false compatibility is made between saving the planet and consumption. According to Žižek, fair trade coffee and carbon offset flights become something that ethically justifies the maintenance of an unsustainable system. Is art stepping in the same trap by turning itself into a kind of professionalized activism? Does that assign art the task of making us feel good? As in feeling the right emotions, being good consumers? My opinion is that this often deflates the notion of art and confuses the accountability

of the artist with the art itself. The confusion of the artwork with the artist can possibly also be understood as connected to a demand for morally correct art that undermines the potential of art to challenge the limits of perception. It asks of the artwork that it communicates clearly and presents the intention of the artist, as well as a predetermined idea of the experience of the art itself. I also wonder how effectual art is as a political baseball bat. Consider, for example, the challenges of critiquing an art-work which merely represents a politically correct idea. It is also possible that when art is politicized it is reduced to its content.

The clear trend with activist art can be understood as related to a tendency to think about the political as opinions and ways of thinking rather than a question of power. In other words, there is a shift in the understanding of the political from a struggle of power to a question of “correct feelings”. The political theoretician Wendy Brown has formulated it like this: “Moralistic reprehension produces political injustices as problems that are not related to historical, political-economical and cultural formations of power, but with comments, attitudes and opinions”.²

It is reasonable to argue that both locally and socially engaged art, fair-trade coffee and climate compensated flying is better than nothing. Žižek’s argument is that those compensatory behaviors eliminate all guilt around contributing to a broken system and create veils between the real situation and how the situation is depicted. A clear example can be found in the way many companies within the textile industry do their marketing. While those companies resist or avoid unionization and the products are sewn by women working for minimum wage under inhuman conditions, the corporations sell their products through feminist “rebel bodies” or different variations on messages around everyone’s equal value or “girl power”. There are simultaneously many ways of discerning a political dimension of art apart from any “message” that art is used to illustrate or communicate. One is to consider the politicization and other forms of instrumentalization of art as a part of an ideology based on utility and an economic system that connects value with profitability. Utilitarian argumentation and politicization of art then appears as something political in and of itself, outside of the content of a specific artwork.

An additional aspect to pay attention to is how all expressions are situated in a political, social and geographical environment that the artistic proposal resonates with and is co-constituted by. Through such a framing alleged objectivity, so-called neutral work and an apolitical attitude appear as that which fits within the hegemonic order. Those expressions (often institutionalized or commercialized) are often left unquestioned in their right to exist, and met on totally different premises and, to a wide extent, avoid the pressure to reflect on their own value or involvement in the perpetuation of power structures. Out of this position we can understand all art as political, including that which is without explicit political ambition or agenda. Slavoj Žižek describes in a similar manner ideology as “our spontaneous relationship to our social world, how we perceive its meaning and so on and so on. We in a way enjoy our ideology. To step out of it you must force yourself, it hurts.”³ Can we compare the pain Žižek describes as necessary in order to force ourselves out of the present ideology to the dissolving, overthrowing and slightly rough feeling that art sometimes

evokes in us? I want to connect that pain to the discipline, willpower, time and diligence that is needed to develop ways of seeing, doing and experiencing, different from the hegemonic ones.

What kind of art is it that is hegemonic enough to appear as neutral or objective? Who feels welcomed and included inside of the understanding of “art for art’s sake”? Reproducing a hegemonic heritage in terms of format, technique, dramaturgy etc. is definitely not the solution to the questions Žižek evokes. How can we instead transcend the question about what art is, and rather attempt to understand where and how art becomes meaningful, interesting and relevant? Where and how does art have power to invest in a speculation about what a body can be and do that, to the greatest extent possible, isn’t held back by what a body is and can do? Can this speculation exist in a way that isn’t governed by external interest from, for example, an economic system or hegemonic heritage?

To vindicate art’s value as something important in and of itself, and in order to not reproduce given functions or motivations without reflection, a constantly ongoing vigilance is needed to free art from the demands, conditions, repressive framings and difficulties it is subjected to. I want to highlight some aspects concerning the fact that state-funded subsidies and artistic projects realized outside of institutions, make largely impossible an existence as an artist without self-exploitation, over-work or some form of “bread job” or unemployment money. I find that these aspects are, in different ways, related to the question: How can we enable an autonomous art that isn’t governed or shaped primarily by economic and socio-cultural circumstances?

1 WHO IS LET IN

Who has enough cultural capital to dare to enter the field? Who has a socio-economic background that allows one to consider a job that is paid only during a small part of the labor hours and during long periods requires big investments? Investments such as hiring a dance studio, taking time to write applications, paying for further education, going to performances and create a network. The problem with a “glutted market” and a project financing that spread smaller and smaller amounts per project which means worse working conditions and shorter working periods (although sometimes to more projects), is that it is expected or implicitly entails more and more self-exploitation and un-paid labor. The artist becomes

her own housewife, as more and more of the work as such is made invisible. The artist works “on commission” and is only paid for that which results in products that are wanted by reference groups, theatre directors and other “gate-keepers”, since very few funding bodies wants to stand alone in supporting a project. An additional aspect of this is that it is particularly expensive to live in bigger cities, which often are the places where most context and opportunities reside. Hence the contemporary dance scene has paved the way for becoming a mono-culture, regarding the population’s socio-cultural background and capital.

2

ART SHOULD BE CREATED
THROUGH PUBLIC FUNDING SINCE
ART SHOULD BE A PART OF
THE COMMONS

An important aspect concerning the autonomy of art is to insist on that art should be supported by public funding. Not because it can't manage by itself, but because it should be everybody's. Something to meet around and something that meets contemporary forces. Museums should have free entrance, dance performances should be free of charge and the libraries should continue to be a public space where unpopular books are also on display, acknowledging that the whole idea of the welfare state is that some things should be public, should be for everybody and for this reason should be paid by tax money. It is important for democracy, but also in order for us to be

able to save art from being held hostage by those with big cultural, sexual or economical capital in the same way that education needs to be free and for everybody, to create a fertile soil for a functioning democracy and social mobility. Extending subsidized art school for kids and youth, presenting more performances in public schools and daycare, valuing the aesthetic subjects higher and ascribing them value in and of themselves become central aspects to make art and culture not only a form of luxury consumption, but a part of life that everybody has the possibility to meet, both as practitioners and audience.

3

THE EQUATION OF POPULARITY
AS QUALITY

One problem of equating ticket sales with artistic quality (economic success with artistic success), is that it doesn't pay attention to the fact that people go to venues they are familiar with and that the amount of visitors also has to do with the strength of marketing departments, art criticisms place in Daily Press etc. If state-funded theaters and organizations show the art that is already viable on the commercial market, (which is often the case due to the demand on sold out performances) an unreasonable skewness in competition with private theatre is created, while it contributes to a convergent movement to a more homogenous art- and culture field. One problem with considering the amount of sold tickets as a valid measurement of artistic quality is that the diversity is lost and the expressions that facilitates experiences with something unfamiliar or uncanny is sifted away. The way I see it, art and culture has different functions or more or less stronger emphasis on different aspects. Art is dissolving and often asks for a particular investment since it often challenges your view. Not at all necessarily through

provocation, but through displacing or undermining an affirmed idea about reality or through creating a sort of portal which transforms a form, an idea of the body, or a format, so that there is space made for other experiences that retroactively can rewrite our experience of reality up until now. Something that is artistically relevant needs in my eyes a certain form of alienation or destabilization, while culture often can affirm our subjectivity and be both calming and deafening. Both those functions are of big value, but the function of culture is remarkably better suited for a capitalist system, where amongst other things marketing logic have created a big interest for instant confirmation, reproduction of norms for recognition and the production of desire, as well as a convergent movement through algorithms that prioritizes more of the same. It becomes a problem because art, democracy and in my experience, people need friction and disparity to survive, transform and develop, whatever you want to put in that last word.

4

THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Today's media landscape favors personal narratives over statistics and deeper analysis of the situation. Besides

feeling admiration and wonder over a phenomenon like the soccer player Zlatan Ibrahimović, we can notice all

the nonprofit sports organizations that make practicing sports an economically and geographically reasonable alternative for a big part of the population, in contrast to expensive dance classes. Out of a statistical perspective we can also see Zlatan as an extreme, positive exception which doesn't nullify the numbers showing that in a racist, homophobic and patriarchal world something like a foreign-sounding last name often decides more about your future than education and work effort. The arbitrariness of the connection between performance and prosperity and the illogical in thinking of justice as social mobility in a prevailing social hierarchy or stratification, becomes especially apparent when we pay attention to global injustices and the absurdity of income gaps between for example employees in elderly care, childcare and programmers working for corporations like Google and Facebook. How are personal rags-to-riches stories situated in a bigger context? Whose voice is heard, what aspects are normalized, what is justified and what is shamed? What stories are never told, don't fit in?

The personal story sometimes makes us short-sighted and irrational. Additionally, personal stories fit poorly with the slow violence of the climate crisis, over a temporality that doesn't fit the algorithms of social media. Social mobility as justice means competition and an individualistic idea of happiness as something achieved through personal success and profit. Maybe it also sows the seeds for understanding feminism as everybody's right to the top, instead of equality as a re-distribution of accountability or greater appreciation for care and empathy. The climate crisis make visible how the individualist idea of justice as social mobility with the earth as the resource of man, isn't a universal truth, but a constructed way of understanding the earth. A way of understanding that hides different eco-system's complexities and interdependencies. Next to the personal story we can put this quote by Judith Butler: "What if we shift the question from 'who do I want to be?' to the question, 'what kind of life do I want to live with others?'"⁴

5

THE COLLECTIVE AND
THE UN-STRUCTURED

In relation to collective processes and organizational strategies, Jo Freeman's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness"⁵ can remind us about how a collective movement also can be a movement where different peer pressures can rage freely, making it complicated to claim responsibility. In order for collective work not to become a cover up for internalized or hidden suppression, a transparent structure and an insight into what power and what responsibility that is actually delegated becomes extremely important. Otherwise, chances are discipline

is just replaced by control that is often harder to address and question. In order to enable collective authorship within the frame of one piece of art, maybe we must explore the difference between the choreographer as designer and the dancers as the ones producing material and the choreographer as the one proposing a procedure or algorithm that gives different outcomes for different participants.

6

COPYLEFT

Dance has a big amount of functions and roles – not the least in different forms of folk dance, social and ritualistic dance – that in a clear way hints to the collective dimension of dance. Dance-specific knowledge is more often than not distributed and exchanged through a shared, practical doing. Like open source, each practice or public meeting with dance is a form of using and developing of an ongoing, collective innovation over time. To sign a piece of art can therefore be seen as a form of accountability of the making of a product of a specific moment of

a process that is ongoing on several levels, rather than a form of ownership over the performance material. In the same way that we know that Mario Prada himself haven't touched any of the pants from the brand Prada today – and that many artists have a staff that works under them and that many big composers have had a big amount of students or assistants which have written entire pieces that still has been signed with the master's name – we know that the brand functions as an umbrella for many people's work and effort. In the shadow or such a market

mechanism it is important to insist on dance as a form of immaterial commons that constantly is transformed through different forms of recycling and bastardizations. It seems to me that a central question regarding the autonomy of art is related to ideas about ownership and systems of law. All beings and plants on the planet

live off and as a part of the earth. If territory, ideas, animals and knowledge are commodities to be capitalized on, how big is the step to privatization of all air, all water? Is there autonomous art when a musician is sued for 100 US\$ because a song is similar to another song?⁷

7

THE CONDITIONS OF WORK ARE MATERIALIZED IN THE ART

If it is included in the freelancing artist's job description to plan and formulate upcoming projects, report the last project, email with theatres, book studio time and argue for art's value in society, there is a big risk that art's relation to its craft – or whatever we want to call the process that over time can make a general idea specific and materialized in a way beyond the planned, predictable and expected – is weakened. If project funds are small, the results will probably be fewer pieces with many dancers where art becomes a collective art form in the sense of something qualitatively different than personal expression, in the sense of expression of the individual's charisma, sexual capital or uniqueness. The harsh conditions for the art outside of the institutions entails fewer possibilities to explore what a body

can be and do beyond that which is strictly bettering or already conceivable out of the existing premises today. The plasticity of perception, the development of new skills and the human bodies' interdependent becoming in relation to a specific environment are slow processes which seem established in some parts of the field. For example, in the ballet school's tradition of daily training, where the same technique is being taught from year 4 or middle school until year 12 of upper secondary school. The freelancing dance practitioner and choreographer is more often than not free from continuity, free from employment and free from security.⁸ She is free from a calm working environment and free from the conditions to follow a procedure or an artistic proposition beyond the fastest possible commodification into a product.

1 <http://www.konstnarsnamnden.se/default.aspx?id=18360&refid=11142> "syftar till att utveckla nya sätt att finansiera kulturell verksamhet", "krav på finansiering även från annan part bör ställas som villkor för statsbidrag." 2018-08-01

2 Brown, Wendy, "Att vinna framtiden åter: texter om makt och frihet i senmoderniteten", Atlas, Stockholm, 2008, s. 121: "Moralistiskt klander framställer politiska orättvisor som problem som inte har att göra med, historiska, politisk-ekonomiska och kulturella maktformationer, utan med kommentarer, attityder och yttranden."

3 "Slavoj Žižek explains ideology", 2018-06-29 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8ibrfXvpQ>

4 Ahmed, Sara: "Interview with Judith Butler", <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1363460716629607> 2018-08-01

5 Freeman, Jo: "The Tyranny of Structurelessness", <https://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm> 2018-07-07

6 Aswad, Jem: 'Ed Sheeran Sued for \$100 Million Over 'Thinking Out Loud', för Variety 2018-06-28 <https://variety.com/2018/biz/news/ed-sheeran-sued-again-over-thinking-out-loud-this-time-for-100-million-1202861137/> 2018-08-01. See also

Neely, Adam: "Why the Ed Sheeran lawsuit makes no sense" 2018-07-09: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tpi4d3YM79Q> 2018-08-01

7 Hito Steyerl has written about the freelancer's freedom from everything; from welfare, employment and safety. See: Steyerl, Hito. "Free from everything- freelancers and mercenaries". E-flux Journal #41 – January 2013 <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/41/60229/freedom-from-everything-freelancers-and-mercenaries/> 2018-06-20

DANSEatelier

A Choreography Called DANSEatelier

DANSEatelier, founded in 2015, is a place and a group of 11 colleagues, dancers and friends working in the field of dance in Copenhagen, as well as internationally. The initiative originates from a need for continuity, a space for sharing of knowledge, as well as social and artistic support – to basically stand together in our relationship with dance, dancing and choreography. A large part of our work consists of finding ways for how to deal with the ‘thought-action’ of rhizomatic structuring and multiple hierarchies. By insisting on togetherness and slowness, we want to take steps away from individualization and loneliness, whether it is through hosting, sharing or making work. It is an ongoing organizational and creative research in collectivity, morphing with time and needs. DANSEatelier consists of Sandra Liaklev Andersen, Ingvild Bertelsen, Marlene Bonnesen, Isolde Daun, Stine Frandsen, Meleat Fredriksson, Emilia Gasiorek, Snorre Jeppe Hansen, Nanna Stigsdatter Mathiassen, Olivia Riviere and Karis Zidore.

A nest. A sack with 11 horses.

Imagine
Imagine
Imagine

11 birds
a dance home
a container

This choreography with all its details, aesthetics, formations and paces is made today. I moved past you. You picked up the coffee cup. We all sat down in the circle at the same time. You sang my song, she finished it. We laughed. I cried. Then we flocked to the kitchen in different individual trajectories.

This choreography is a thing we can look at, side with and witness, in order to tell a different story than the one we keep telling. In order to see what it actually produces, and not what it was intended to produce.

I and I
Is it easier to be many?

When we started DANSEatelier, we were influenced by the institutional structures we knew from school. We met on a daily basis, we had a common space and we decided that everybody was expected to be present unless communicated otherwise. This can seem excessive, but it was a starting point for us as a group of people, who for the first time chose one another.

The shape of DANSEatelier was in the beginning more of a singular celled organism forming a relation together. We have realised, and re-realised, in order to again realise, how a larger group

can reach beyond commonly used hierarchies in a sustainable, shaped, yet fluid structure. This is seen through experiences of working and living collectively, and engaging in activism and feminist initiatives. DANSEatelier has its roots in collective practices and draws from these experiences in the organisational work. This being, from the very beginning, to have regular Thursday meetings, to distribute tasks of responsibility within the group as well as using rotational systems.

One of the moments of re-realisation happened when reading *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*¹ by Jo Freeman. In this text Freeman introduces seven essential principles when practicing and implementing democratic structures. Delegation, distribution of responsibility and rotational systems are some of the key principles that are highlighted which also resonate in the structure of DANSEatelier. By reading this text we found a more complex language that could further help our work as a group. Just the raw fact that there will never exist any group of people without hierarchies helped us shed light towards a process of naming and realising the multiple hierarchies taking place at different moments in time. After recognising this, one can arrange and rearrange if necessary in ways that are accessible for everyone. Then you can start to be there for each other and not just alongside each other.

You tell me about me. I tell you about you. You tell me about me. I tell you about youth. Youth tells me about dance. Dance tells you about living. Living tells creatures about heartache. Heartache tells you about gender. Gender tells us about structures and about structures and about support. Support might tell about friendship. Friendship tells about continuity. Continuity tells fluidity about difficulty. Difficulty tells time about density. Density tells about fusion. Fusion tells some about contamination. Contamination tells both of you about crisis and dance terminology. Dance terminology tells appropriators about innovation whilst innovation tells productivity about capitalism. Capitalism tells art about protocols. Protocols enlighten the privileged about systems. Systems tell something about some things. Some things tell whoever about shades and summertime in cold Hawaii that tells you about leisure. Leisure tells dancers to stay away. Stay away tells some to come that eventually tell emotions about contradiction and ambiguity. Ambiguity tells the rest about subjectivity that tells loneliness about friendship.

Misunderstandings of words.
Spelling mistakes.
Trendy words we repeat until the trend changes.

The language within the group is constantly challenged and transformed. We are influenced by terms from academic research, nature phenomenons, different artistic fields as well as the choreographic discourse in general (often finding ourselves working with terms we think are brand new, just to discover that other

artists have been working with the exact same words for the last 50 years), in order to understand our position in and relation to the collective and our own choreographical work. Sometimes words and phrases are used to the extent of exhaustion. We can roll each other's tongues. With the help of language we try to develop a diverse vocabulary, change patterns and return to them again when time is ready.

Words we have been spending time with:

Rhizomatic² – An image used during the process of making the group piece *the tectonics* by DANSEatelier. The term comes from a philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and is used to describe theory and research that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation. In *the tectonics* we worked with the idea of a 'live mapping', a rhizomatic landscape, where we as performers were moving between, next to and side by side each other, layering and adding information through bodies, sound, screens and telepathy. We also use the rhizomatic image as a way to view and practice the infrastructure of DANSEatelier.

Circlusion³ – The antonym to penetration, a term coined by Bini Adamczak. In 2017 DANSEatelier hosted the first version of *the-carrierbag festival*, a festival gathering local and international dance artists. It was thought around two texts: Ursula Le Guin's *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction⁴* and Bini Adamczak's *On Circlusion*. The festival set off from these feminist texts, proposing that the festival could be a carrier bag to carry knowledge, and borrowing the awesome and newly invented word 'circlusion', to describe ways of being in relation to dance.

Siphonophorae⁵ – A hard one to pronounce and the newest word in our collected dictionary. A siphonophorae is a mass of several individual organisms attached to each other. The image of a colony of different zooids can be an illustration of DANSEatelier's being.

Imagine

a purpose of having

a purpose
relations being an extra body
confirmation
being away
coming back
expectations
impact in an environment
the importance of being many
the future with many
many making decisions

Collectivity has weaved my history, given material to the present and revealed strategies for the future. Later I escaped. For a very long time silence was preferred. I have been disappearing and stopped responding. I think I would have given in. I dissolve into the mass of the collective. All the mood swings exhaust me. Mostly my own. The other takes over. My body needs you to be close, my mind is exploding. I think I'm just a bit tired actually, it's also spring and it's so sad. I can stand here close to you and I can hear what you're thinking. I'm thinking the same. You help me dance when I take you down into the body that is mine.

We live and last through DANSEatelier as a work and as a plastic and pliable state. Like a mass balancing in between our hands and mind, which has the ability to change within as well as by us. DANSEatelier can change and our relationship to DANSEatelier and each other can alter.

Common beliefs in togetherness and not being alone in a socialist wet-dream of trust, respect and solidarity in the frame of a basic income guarantee and a time span longer than all the short term contracts.

Constantly critiquing ourselves. Sometimes so critical that producing ideas or thoughts is a problematic action in itself. Overproduction is not our interest. Slowly overthinking, re-activating, re-using, re-developing new knowledges.

Sometimes we disappear as individuals within the mass of the collective. It happens when we make compromises unconsciously and suddenly realise that we are not only we, but also I and I.

- Say yes.
- Let go.
- Give in.
- Give up.
- Stretch it.
- Flex it.
- Give it attention.
- Alliterate.

We are so s l o o o o o o o o o o w
Decision making is slow .
People are slow .
Society is something else.

Imagine

a long-term open relationship between 11 people
 emotions
 frustrations
 confusions
 doubts
 differences
 illusions

DANSEatelier is made up of 11 people, yet shaped, guided and inspired by the many satellites, colleagues and friends who surrounds it. These relations are encouraged through our hosting and semi-curatorial work such as *Performance Feast*⁶ and *DANSE-atelier feat. Friends*, where we make space for local and international artists to present their work. This is an attempt to facilitate a convivial space for sharing each other's work, meet, eat, talk and dance. Our interest in feminism and the importance of storytelling is emphasized in *thecarrierbag festival*, which is also connected with the wish of reaching out to an international field.

To form a group, and work collectively, requires a certain amount of attention towards how you relate to others and the community as a whole. There lies a responsibility in remembering the privilege of being part of a group. This is a topic we are aware of and practice being sensitive towards. We have a common strong wish to reach out and create platforms together with other voices and choirs. How do we open up for other encounters? One way is through insisting on our individual artistic pathways; crossover collaborations with visual artists, musicians, authors, and architects. By being in other artists' productions, external processes and making our own projects, we collect experiences which feed our continuous collective work.

It's a hell of a work to stay unsolid. Always feeling the weight of failure and the light explosion of potentials.

Keep it to a gentle touch of compromise. I dare you... The place is pumping whilst people are internationalizing, at home or not.

That's the strength in numbers. Many many mutations.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Dear you out there floating in outer space, gravity does strange things to you and I'm floating in the most peculiar way. Adrift an ever changing sea, ferociously unpredictable, with stormy emotions and excitement. The maybe-landscape of things-that-might-happen slides around me. It's built of slippery rocks, dissolving sand and potentially crumbling bricks. You forge something that doesn't rest on potentials. Threads of wool. Wool of care. Care taking. Taking it slow. Slowly linger. Linger on the way. Wayfinding. Finding out. Outsource. Sources that are woven. Woven tapestry. Tapestry of voices. Voices of many. Many polyrhythms. Polyrhythmic madrigal. Madrigal of parts. Partner dance. Dance me on. On and on. On a wave. Wave to me. Me and you. I've been waiting, think I'm gonna make that move. I hope for more relations, alliterations, stories, sagas, pathways, possibilities, constellations and crossings to appear. And with that, I thank you for last time, for today and for the times to come.

1 <https://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>

2 <http://www.kareneliot.de/downloads/Deleuze%20Guattari%20A%20Thousand%20Plateaus.pdf>

3 <http://www.maskmagazine.com/the-mommy-issue/sex/circlusion>

4 <http://www.trabal.org/texts/pdf/LeGuin.pdf>

5 <http://www.siphonophores.org/SiphOrganization.php>

6 <https://vimeo.com/199139077>

7 http://danseatelier.dk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/FANZINE_thecarrierbag-festival-1.pdf

Marie Bergby Handeland

What

I

Know

Marie Bergby Handeland (born 1986) works as a creative and performing dance artist based in Oslo. She was educated at Iceland Academy of the Arts (BA contemporary dance 2008–2011), Trondheim Academy of Fine Art (September–December 2010) and University of South-Eastern Norway, the study of creative writing in Bø (2014–2015). Her work is driven by a curiosity to explore what happens when people from different social and cultural contexts are put onstage, and how this method can activate the general public within the frame of her works.
www.mariebergbyhandeland.com.

A colleague of mine told me that she has begun to wear a mask when she is in her home office. I thought it sounded like a good idea, so I started doing the same. I have two different masks. One of them was a gift from my godchild, made in kindergarten. The material is white paper with lots of crayon marks and with two small holes for the eyes. The other is far more standard, small and black, of hard cardboard. I mostly wear the one with the crayon marks, because I feel good with my face covered in crisscrossing colours. Besides, wearing it is a bit more complicated, and as a result, it is harder to forget that I've got it on. The holes for the eyes slant some, and to see through them both, I must put it on askew. The size of the holes differs. I see more through the left than the right, and the elastic band around my head is a bit too slack, so I often have to twist it around my hair in the back. The smaller black mask is more professional. The elastic band fits the back of my head, and the cardboard suits my nose perfectly. I can easily drink coffee with it on. The holes for the eyes are sufficiently wide. I know I look good in it. I mostly use the black one for tasks connected to Arts Council Norway. At a few occasions I have called Arts Council Norway while lying naked on my couch. I suppose this sounds silly, but on heavy days of working from home, when I am a tired choreographer struggling with doubt, it feels far from silly. It is a way to hold onto what I do.

I like to think that e-mails written and phone calls made while wearing a mask are more daring than those without. The language is more courageous. And a more courageous language is more physical, I think, more intimate. I am not talking about intimacy in the emotional or psychological sense, as when sharing one's feelings, even thought that can also be the case. For the moment, what interests me the most is language as a tool for imagining one's way into a new body, a body one hardly knew that one had. All those unknown bodies. Bodies yet to be moved. Over the past few years, I have defined my work as a choreographer as long-term body-image pressure. The pressure is to look at those unknown bodies. Get them out there. Even where they apparently don't exist, or we don't acknowledge them. We all carry many potential languages and many potential bodies within us. Contrary to the familiar way of talking about body-image pressure, which is about pressure to conform to specific body ideals, about limitations and closing off possibilities, I find it interesting to turn the term around, and to push it into its opposite: Body-image pressure as imagining what a body can be, and thus expanding what a body is, and how it moves. To look at it with pressure all the time, a soft, physical pressure.

The summer of 2015, I e-mailed six Norwegian literary writers. I invited them to dance their own literary works. The spring of 2018, they went onstage under the title *Forfatterbevegelsen* (*The Author Movement*)¹. Prior to this initiative, I

¹ *Forfatterbevegelsen* (*The Author Movement*) (2018) consists of six solos performed by the writers Gro Dahle, Tina Åmodt, Henning Bergsvåg, Kjarntan Fløgstad, Aina Villanger and Gunstein Bakke. Each of them has chosen a literary work of their own, that they would like to republish as contemporary dance. Expressed as dance, each literary work has been given a new title. *Forfatterbevegelsen* consists of *Tur med hunden* (literally: *Walking the dog*), *Biltema* (literally: *Car theme, which is also the name of a chain of shops that sells car equipment, tools and products for the home*), *Tohundreogsyttini* (literally: *Two hundred and seventy-nine*), *En seremoni et annet sted* (literally: *A ceremony somewhere else*), *Det blir aldri lyst her* (literally: *There will never be light here*) and *En folkedans* (literally: *A traditional dance*). *Forfatterbevegelsen* opened at Dansens hus in Oslo in March 2018, as part of Oslo International Theatre Festival, after which it was performed as a visiting performance at The Norwegian Festival of Literature, Lillehammer.

had studied creative writing in Bø, at The University of South-Eastern Norway. The content of the study, as well as the way it was taught, opened for different connections between body and language than the one I was already interested in, and I developed a side project: I studied those who write. When visiting writers read from their own works, I found myself curious of the movements these writing bodies make. They have worked forth huge shifts and movements in the form of text. They are people with a sense of timing and rhythm. I became hooked on this textual physicality, that I found that writers are in possession of, and how this is what makes me, as a reader, experience literature as three-dimensional and rounded. I sat in Bø, wondering if I could make the writers put their own literature into motion. I thought it would be interesting for literature and dance both if it could be looked at like that, to be let into the world anew, as part of a claim that for every new literary work that is written, a new body is also shaped. This is something obvious to this, as the body is after all one with its head, and a head that is writing specific rhythms and moods will also use its body while it works. But even though this is kind of obvious, it is also abstract and impossible. Because of this contradiction, the statement holds onto puzzlement rather than lead to a conclusion, for me and for those I work with. It expands how we regard ourselves. When I meet Gro Dahle in the rehearsal studio, I like the idea that the pope and all the animals in her poems already exist within her: Not as tangible manifestations of the animal shape or movement, but in terms of how they move, their temperaments, how they pause, the notion of where to let in air by putting in a period or a new line or a comma; this knowledge, this finely tuned sense of timing.

After having examined the writers for almost three years, I find it relevant to look at my own body and the language I have used in this work. How I have worked to make a group of writers feel beautiful and important. I nearly think I lack control over the language and over the body both. People ask me how I have worked with the writers. How I have proceeded. What kind of exercises we have done. If we have used scores, what we have talked about, how I have phrased my sentences, what I have chosen to say and not say, if I have followed a method. And I have often, during this process, seen myself as from the outside, thinking Oh, my God, Marie, imagine if your colleagues had seen you now, skiing across the little wooden floor at Hausmania with Kjartan Fløgstad.

Considering my long-term interest in working with non-professional performers, I find it interesting that I, as a choreographer, have begun to feel confused about what it means to be professional, in terms of language and in terms of body. To act professionally, what does that involve? Is it about communicating clearly? Is it about qualifications? About finding the right

balance for what to share? To recognise one's limits? To be able to put oneself together? Or to give in? To create structures and framework for a project?

The winter of 2017 I mourned lost love, and I bought my very first couch. The good thing about mourning is that there is no shame in it. I am not talking about the thoughts concerning it, but about the space and the state mourning procures, for the body. Within this space, the only thing that is correct and the only thing that is necessary, is exactly what I do, or don't do; a physically driven place outside of will-power or control. Toddling around in the bathrobe. Eating cheese doodles for breakfast. Having breakfast at four p.m. Awakening some as the evening progresses, sing a little, while still wearing the bathrobe. Small glimpses of absurd joy, exclusive to a mourning body. Sobbing thrice a day. Calling my mother thrice a day. Lying on the couch for several weeks without feeling guilty about it. Normally, my sense of guilt borders on the unhealthy. And there are times when I miss the mourning body of 2017, the one that despite being seemingly unhealthy and destructive, also had some healthy aspects. It laid down and remained lying for as long as it needed to lie. There is something in this highly private example that triggers me professionally. Not the part about lying down. I feel that the professional space in which the professionals are is often *too* elastic a space, where being professional is about handling everything, being limitless, endlessly flexible, to withstand everyone's doubt, a room in which one works and works and sends e-mail reminders and ever new e-mail reminders, for this is how it is, if one is to manage. This last year, I have practiced taking time off. I have drunk more beer. I have started a club for retirees, where I eat cake. I go to the movies during the day. I sit on benches in parks. I take walks. Things like that. I have also bought beads at IKEA. Above my working table I have beaded the following, in yellow writing across a black background: I know nothing.² And when I put on my mask with crisscrossing colours, while reminding myself that I know nothing, I feel as if everything may happen. It feels uplifting. Being professional must also be about being able to redefine, to restart, to let go and to give up on what it means to be professional.

A group of professional dancers would have figured how to make your plan for the day work, some way or other. They would have understood your language, your exercise, even if it wasn't optimal, and even if you would have wanted to try something else the next day. Your working day would nevertheless have maintained a certain structure. With my group of authors, I have had to get used to throwing away all my cards at once, to break it off just there, because I can see it won't work out. It has been necessary to drink some coffee, to talk about this and that, before I could find a point to pick it all up again, say, by asking "okay, what kind of physical activity do you like, ok, you like skiing, ok,

2

"Filmmakers should be aware that they don't know anything" - John Casavetes. Jeg vet ingenting (meaning I know nothing) was the title of the exam essay written by the Norwegian filmmaker Mariken Halle, at The Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, The University of Gothenburg, 2010.

let's pretend we ski across the floor, let's talk about the angle of your knees, the feeling of the wind in your hair in downward slopes", or, "Ok, I think we should just close our eyes for the rest of the week", and "You want to turn off the lights, too? Fine, let's turn off the lights and close our eyes for the rest of the week".

My work with non-professionals and my interest in pushing them into unknown situation, because there is an aesthetic to the bodies and the languages in that landscape I get a kick out of, go both ways: Six writers also push a professional choreographer onto slippery ice. The ice is slippery because I so very much need to trust the process. It is nerve-wrecking, having to spend a full week of our rehearsal period checking if dancing with one's eyes closed in a dark room will lead us in the right direction. We may think that the methods we discover, day to day or week to week, are strongly connected to our conditions of the day, of who does the exercise, or how the people in the room feel in meeting. The exercises become personal and necessary. We find use of tools from all the levels of our lives as professionals, amateurs, idiots, and there is something in this that activates my body and my use of language in a way that exhausts me completely. This is the case for more or less every artistic process, let that be said: One is consumed by the work, one ponders, leaves oneself vulnerable, and keeping rigidly to all one has thought or planned beforehand as possible methods or results never works. But still, in a project like this, it crosses into the extreme. I lose control of the professional and the non-professional, of the relationship between learning and art, work methods and lifestyles, therapy and good conversation, private and public, friends and colleagues, body and mind.

3
The Green Ones (De Grønne) (2015) is a dance performance with four non-professional performers aged 26 to 80. The production was developed through movement examination and conversations over several years. A documentary movie from the work has been made. The movie and the performance both premiered during the festival Ravnedans 2015 and has later been shown in different contexts.

This is the kind of challenge I am drawn to, in several of my works. I am interested in stripping away ideas until I reach a platform I, as a choreographer, can share with those I have invited to take part in the work. A state where we all know only a little, and where we need to find our way to the content that will be ours. In working with six authors there are few shared references. Almost nothing is preconceived. I am drawn to processes where the only solution is to let go, where stupidity and banality can't be avoided, and where I can no longer stay in control, but must let loose and become part of that whole spectrum. I like to feel that a process has truly grabbed hold of me.

In my work called *The Green Ones (De Grønne)* (2015)³, I tested a working method where I only used spoken language. I didn't demonstrate any movements, I suggested nothing by using my body. What I wanted to achieve, besides working on linguistic precision, was to limit the influence of my body language on the result as much as I could. The project was impossible at

times, but it was also very interesting to see how the group of people started to move. During the first few rehearsals, one performer mostly stood in a corner. For quite some time, this was difficult. But after several conversations about preconceived attitudes and perceptions of what we thought contemporary dance was, on my side and theirs, the dancing became braver, and braver still. Of course, not to influence is impossible, nor is it an aim in itself. But I am interested in working in ways that is not too restrictive in terms of right and wrong, that holds onto playfulness and naivety, perhaps also including clichés. I also do this in works where I take part as a performer, by going into art forms within which I am not a professional. By doing this, I hope to contribute a feeling of vulnerability, of being exposed, similar to the one I find interesting in my work with non-professional dancers. With my colleague Morten Liene, I have developed two concerts, *Alle Angrer (Everybody regrets)* (2016) and *Orgelet er en forlengelse av våre og Teigens lunger (The organ is a prolongation of our lungs and Teigen's)* (2017). I don't know how to read musical scores and don't play any instrument well. When I sit by the living room organ, my fingers shiver to such a degree it can be hard to move the keys. My heart beats hard throughout the first melody, my face gets warm really quickly, and my voice tries to tell charming stories in between songs the way musicians tend to do. We have practiced a great deal. This working method reminds me of the way I used to rehearse dance numbers that I was to perform during my upbringing in a small village. I repeated the same movements again and again, eagerly and filled with joy. Almost as if I had fallen in love with the material. As a grown-up artist, it is interesting to sense those deep and warm emotions in one's body and voice, in the meeting with the audience. It makes us feel embarrassed, shameful, soft and delighted at the same time. We actively work on charm, sincerity and shyness as part of the expression.

I recently read an article by writer and couple therapist Sissel Gran about Tinder dating and the death of romance, as she called it, in the newspaper *Morgenbladet* (Issue 22/June 8–14 2018). *The Death of Romance*. A hard, sad claim. I am not going to expand on her thoughts on this death, but for a few keywords such as covering all one's options, not allowing oneself to open up, holding onto plenty of reservations, mostly talking of things and stuff and places and people and movies, much about being cool and laidback and relaxed, for being *needy* is a turn-off. After having read the article I was left thinking about my own romantic life, for I, too, have visited Tinder and swiped some this past year, but mostly, what surfaced in my mind was the words *the death of the body*. Dramatic, yes, Sissel Gran often has that effect on me, and perhaps that is why I read her so often. I like to be confronted with extremities, for in the extreme, there are many vital bodies to be found. The uncool bodies, those who are not

laidback or relaxed, but whose hands are shaking, simply because they lean forward without reservation.

I find it interesting how I, considering my fascination for the aesthetics of bodies attempting the unknown, the beauty of trying, don't dare to attend professional morning classes because I no longer think my body fits that space. My body has gone too stiff for it, too slow. Besides, I have never been the kind of dancer to master all the professional demands, at least not at a level beyond fair enough, and if I attend a morning class I might risk being exposed as not sufficiently professional by colleagues who may live in the faith that Marie Bergby Handeland is in the possession of a professional body. In a sense, I am a bit ashamed over this double standard, not to mention the self-consciousness, as I hail non-professionals while fearing to be exposed as a lousy slacker myself. This always makes me think of the poem *The Genius of the Crowd* by Charles Bukowski, used in my graduation performance at Iceland Academy of the Arts in 2011. Every evening, I entered the stage with my classmates. We stood still while this recorded poem, read by Bukowski himself, was played, and we felt trepidation, knowing that once the poem ended, we were to fire off the most hectic, most energetic dance show in history, accompanied by heavy metal, and every evening I wondered if I could manage. Anyway, what Bukowski says, is this: "*The best at murder are those who preach against it, and the best at hate are those who preach love, and the best at war finally are those who preach peace. Those who preach god, need god, those who preach peace do not have peace, those who preach peace do not have love. Beware the preachers, beware the knowers, beware those who are always reading books, beware those who either detest poverty or are proud of it, beware those quick to praise for they need praise in return.*"

Deliciously dramatic, yes, and there is something to this, because I am often drawn to the banal and simple and unpolished, simply because I fear being banal and simple and unpolished myself. Due to this, I have great faith in the importance of work exposing itself as such. This is not about art as therapy, not for me, and not for those I work with. It is about a fundamental belief in where to find art's ability to affect, through its process and through its result.

Before every performance of *Forfatterbevegelsen*, the last thing I do is whisper Gro the words mozzarella cheese. I do this mostly for my own sake. It makes me feel calm before it all starts. But I am pretty sure that Gro also appreciates that I do this every evening. At its best, to me anyway, it is as if the mozzarella cheese sums it all up, and in a sense, it also simplifies it. It is as if it lets all we have worked on together arrive at its current destination. Now, sort of, all we

can do is to heap on the mozzarella cheese. It is great to have worked in such a complex way, with so many different issues, and then be able to sum it all up in a single word (which mozzarella cheese is, in Norwegian). When Gro's body is consumed by mozzarella cheese, it works with joy and juice. She has discovered the word for herself, and she finds that it works, when she puts it into her dance. We have worked a lot with this, and I can see how the cheese influences the way she is in her work. In a review of *Forfatterbevegelsen*, published by Scenekunst.no, the critic compared Gro Dahle to Winnie-the-Pooh. I find it interesting how a person who is reviewing a work so obviously aiming to expand what kind of bodies is seen onstage, chooses to use the text to reduce and to simplify it. To compare Gro, the only big-bodied person among the writers, to a thickset teddy bear, seems out of place in this context. This is criticism based on the exact attitudes the work aims to challenge. In another review, published by Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift, other words are used about Gro and about the rest of the project. The project is regarded with political power and weight, due to its differences from the overconfident, overly obvious attitude that so often dominates the public sphere. I agree with the critic that I would like to see hands shiver in public more often, not least among the critics themselves.

I recently had a meeting with the head of one of the Norwegian theatres. I came directly from a small show I did with Morten, in our work called *ÅPNINGER (Openings)*⁴, and I felt shame. Morten and I have a physical place of shame where we sit when we feel our work is below par. Mentally, I was still in this state of shame when I came to the meeting, and I initiated it with saying this, that I felt ashamed of the performance I just gave. I remember it as if I stumbled into the office. This resulted in a nice talk about shame in general, during which I got to hear of the very first love and the following loss of love this theatre director had experienced. Afterwards, I have been unable to decide if this was the most or the least professional meeting I have ever taken part in. Either way, I wish professionalism more often looked like this.

I tell Kjartan to be beautiful. I tell him to be as beautiful as he can possibly manage. I tell him to feel, as he crosses the floor in the beginning of his solo, how terribly beautifully the light falls on his sequined jacket, how I could have kept watching this, him crossing the floor in his sequined jacket, the way he stands, taking a breath, before he starts. Before the last performance I put my hands on Kjartan's shoulders, I shake him carefully, and I tell him that today, I want you to dare being even more beautiful. After the show, I hear one of the other writers come running through the corridor, crying "Kjartan, you were more beautiful today!".

⁴ *ÅPNINGER (Openings)* (2016) is a long-term project in which Marie Bergby Handeland and Morten Liene develop and perform experience-based services during festivals. They offer a menu of different services the audience may book at any time during the festival. www.apninger.com

Lillian Bikset is a theater critic for *Dagbladet* and the *Norwegian Shakespeare Journal*, writer and translator. She is responsible for several of the performing arts categories in the *Big Norwegian Encyclopedia* and a member of the *Heddajury*.

Translated from Norwegian by Lillian Bikset

Tone Pernille Østern

Choreographic- Pedagogical Entanglements

Tone Pernille Østern, with a Doctor of Arts in Dance from the Theatre Academy/UniArts Helsinki, is a dance artist and professor in arts education with focus on dance at NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology. She is active as Artist/Researcher/Teacher, with a special interest in socially engaged (dance) art, dance in dialogue with contemporary times, bodily learning, aesthetic approaches to learning, choreographic processes, qualitative and post-qualitative research methodology, and supervision. She is the leader of the Master program in Arts Education and extensively supervises master and PhD students.

Efva Lilja (2016, p. 5) writes about how artists today seek to impact on a societal level with their art-making, at the same time as they aim at creating individual engagement. To exercise this influence, one needs to keep moving, she writes. I have, over time, moved through different choreographic practices and texts, driven by a curiosity about what choreographic thinking, sensing and action can initiate and produce in the world of today.

At the same time, I have been active as an academic researcher within art pedagogy and teaching pedagogies in the arts, including a research orientation towards choreographic processes and the kind of teaching and learning that takes place in such processes¹. I have actively taken part in defining, redefining and extending understandings about teaching and learning in the arts in a contemporary, local-global society. The movements within the choreographic field are strikingly similar to those in the field of teaching and learning arts. They seem entangled. *Entanglement* is a concept used by Karen Barad (2007) to show that phenomena that are often thought of as separate from one another – like body and mind, or researcher and field of research – are always already entangled, infused in one another, always constituting each other. The world is entangled, and, which is my point here, so are the critical movements within the choreographic field as well as in the field of (dance and art) teaching pedagogies. In this essay, I investigate how I initiate a kind of choreographic-pedagogical movement through questions about *what* choreography can produce, *how* and *why* choreography, and also *when*, *where* and *by whom* choreography can be developed. I understand *choreography* as a concept that for a long time has been free-falling, almost like a floating currency, and no longer as connected to “creating dance” as it traditionally has been.

This text was originally written in Norwegian, with the title *Koreografididaktiske sammenfiltringer*. The Norwegian text pivots around the entanglement of choreography with what in Scandinavian languages is called “didaktikk”. I have found it very tricky to translate the term didaktikk without changing the meaning of the text in unintended ways. The Scandinavian concept has its roots in the German tradition of Didaktik which again is connected to Bildung (in Norwegian “danning”, meaning, in short, to become a wise and responsible global citizen). Neither the concept “Didaktik or “Bildung” have accurate equivalents in the English-speaking world. In English-speaking contexts, I often hear or read the terms “theory of teaching and learning”, “teaching pedagogies” or simply “pedagogy” (but closely connected to teaching practice), all of which imply more or less the same thing as the Scandinavian concept “didaktikk”. In short, the field of “didaktikk” (teaching pedagogies) in a German-Nordic tradition emphasises communication, meaning-making, learning, teaching and questions about how one is fostered into being a wise, mature and responsible human being through different teaching subjects (Selander, 2017). In the Anglo-American world, the word “didactic” has instead a negative connotation, as teaching didactically often implies teaching in an authoritarian way. I therefore have chosen to translate my Norwegian made-up concept koreografididaktikk to choreography-pedagogy, and I use the term “teaching pedagogies” for the Norwegian “didaktikk”. As a result, the original text slightly changes in the English (highlighting how any translation is not neutral, but value-loaded and contextual).

EXPANDING CHOREOGRAPHY

As I move across the different choreographic texts that I am using here, I am repeatedly impelled towards certain impulses that seem to have put understanding of choreography into critical and creative motion. These reoccurring, often overlapping, impulses I conceive as orientation towards

- choreography as artistic process and (re)search
- choreography as agent (see Barad, 2007) in society (not only on dimly lit stages)
- choreography as situated, local, relational and experience-led
- the democratization of choreography, and choreography as power and norm critical practice
- the connection between bodily experience and language
- the development of theoretical concepts *from within* choreographic experience, as well as choreographic dialogue with theoretical concepts *from outside*, and through

- this articulation of choreographic knowledge
- the liberation of choreography from the established aesthetics found in dance, and also from dance as such

With the help of Brian Massumi’s writings (2002) I understand these impulses as productive intensities that make choreographic practices and understandings move on, and change. The intensities produce new questions. Kirsi Monni has been active in practising, philosophising and theorizing in the (Finnish) choreographic landscape

since the 1980s. She describes two typical postmodern characteristics of the bodily (re)searching approach to present-day choreography (Monni, 2018, p. 89). One characteristic is a moving away from ideas about universal, ideal and standardised choreographic aesthetics, towards an understanding about choreography as a starting point for movement that is particular, situated and in-and-off-the-world. The second trait is an orientation towards investigating and developing a meaning-creating language *about* and writing *from* and *with* dance.

Per Roar (2016, p. 309) writes that interrogatives like *what*, *why* and *how* together with concepts like *exploring* and *investigating* have commonly been used in the field of dance in the last decade(s). This phenomenon coincides with the development of artistic research in Norway since the 2000s, he writes. At the same time, these interrogatives are central, critical and creative questions being used within the theoretical and practical field of teaching pedagogies (*what*, *how*, *why*, and more recent teaching pedagogical questions like *where*, *when* and *who*). To stimulate exploration and investigation is fully recognizable in the work of the artist-teacher or dance pedagogue.

EXPANDING TEACHING PEDAGOGIES

The field of teaching pedagogies, or theory of teaching and learning, is often described as learning the art of teaching. I quite like to twist this around and describe it as the art of facilitating for learning. In this way teaching pedagogies pivot around the relationship between meaning-making², learning and teaching (Selander, 2017). Experience is central for meaning-making. Within the field of teaching pedagogies, the process of knowledge *creation* is more focused than knowledge as object. This can be compared to having more focus on the choreographic process than on the result of it: the work of art. The field of teaching pedagogies within the arts thereby implies bodily, critical, creative and ethical acting and thinking that is woven closely together with artistic and art pedagogical practices, where knowledge creation takes place through meaning-making, learning and teaching in the arts. In the field of teaching pedagogies within the arts relevant questions could be: When and in which contexts does learning in the arts take place? Who can take part in such (learning) activities, and who are excluded? Why teach in this way, why not do it differently? To find lasting answers to such questions is not the point – the important thing is to dare to ask them, and to keep dwelling on the questions.

Staffan Selander (2017, p. 24) describes how the (academic) field of teaching pedagogies (theory of teaching and learning) in the Nordic countries springs out of the German *Bildung* tradition, including a broad teaching pedagogical thinking. That means that the field of teaching pedagogies in a Nordic context emphasises communication, meaning-making, learning, teaching and questions about how one is nurtured to become a wise, mature and responsible human being through different teaching subjects (see Selander, 2017). I thereby understand the field of teaching pedagogies within the arts in a contemporary world as a practical-theoretical field contributing to:

- Doubt, critique, reform and transformation that create practical and theoretical movement regarding understanding of experience, meaning-making, teaching, learning and knowledge creation in the arts
- A meaning-seeking approach by teachers and researchers that keeps learning and knowledge creation in the arts in continuous becoming, resisting cementation
- Understanding learning and knowledge creation as something that happens formally and informally with distributed resources in different analogue and digital contexts in local-global societal entanglements
- Understanding experience, meaning-making, teaching, learning and knowledge creation as always already present in practices, language and discourses, always including ethical perspectives and dilemmas

To understand the field of teaching pedagogies in the arts in this way is a norm-critical exercise, which potentially creates motion in how to think of knowledge creation in new and different, sometimes provocative, ways in the arts. My article *Oppdragelse til nikkedukkedanser eller dansekunstner?* [Training to be puppet dancers or dance artists?] (Østern, 2016) is an example of such a norm-critical, teaching pedagogical impulse that created motion – and resistance, an important choreographic quality – in connection with teaching and learning in higher education in contemporary dance in Norway.

I often experience the motion that the field of teaching pedagogies in the art can create as choreographic. This motion can create rifts in existing structures, push forward new patterns, encourage new qualities, exploration, new relations, maybe new meaning-making and

new ways of languaging. All these are choreographic qualities: structures, restructuring, cracks, pattern, re-patterning, affective movement qualities, exploration, relations, volatile meaning-making, language-creation, all the time in-becoming, in (choreographic) movement.

From this definition of the field of teaching pedagogies in the arts, I understand the ongoing investigation and expansion of choreography in the field as inseparably connected and similar. They appear entangled. This strikes me over and over again as I move through and encounter different choreographic practices and texts. In the following, I discuss some examples of that.

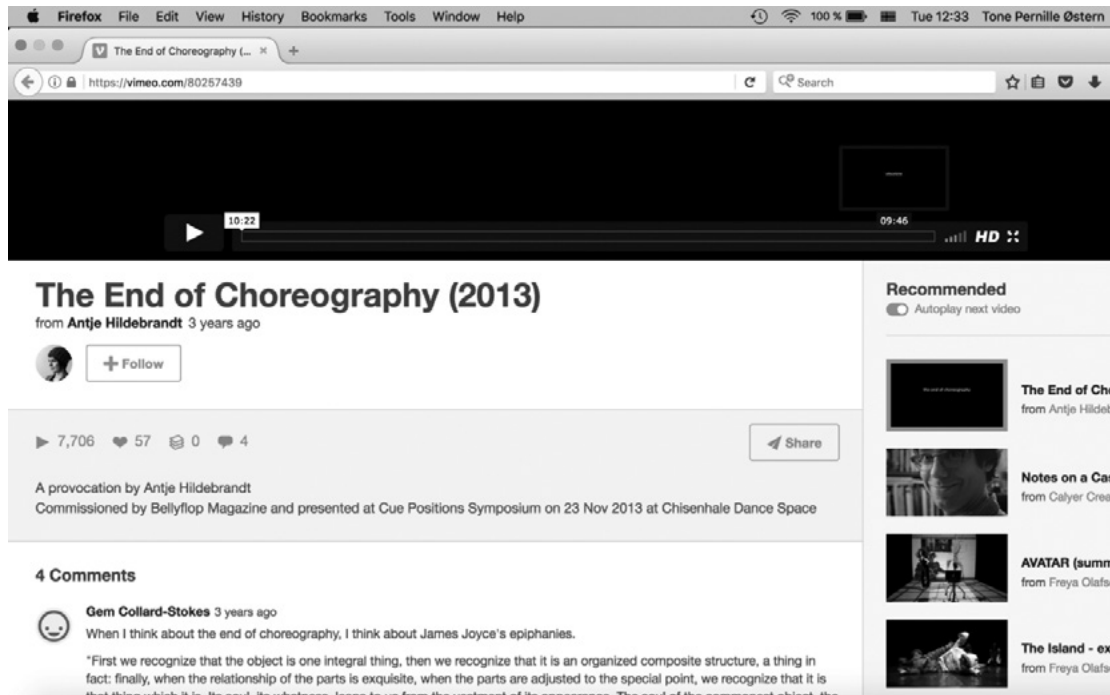
CREATING CHOREOGRAPHIC- PEDAGOGICAL MOTION AND SHIFTS

In 2018, an anthology with the title *Postmodern Dance in Finland?* (written in Finnish) with Niko Hallikainen and Liisa Pentti as editors was published by the University of the Arts in Helsinki. Pay attention to the question mark. In the preface the editors establish the fact that the concept “postmodern dance” never got a foothold in Finland, but that the ideas of postmodern dance have nevertheless had significant influence on the Finnish dance field from the 1980s onwards. Many of the authors in the anthology are choreographers who have been active in the Finnish dance field for several decades, several of whom with doctoral degrees, since Finland established doctoral degrees in artistic research as early as the 1990s. Kirsi Monni is one of them, and to read her bodily, melodious, thoroughly practice-led, deeply theoretical texts (written in Finnish) is like taking part in a choreographic event. The Finnish language is especially suited for poetry and textual choreography, since its rich vocabulary and many cases allow intricate bodily nuances to appear.

In her chapter with the main title *Situatedness, embodiment and language* [Situatio, kehollisuus ja kielellisyys] (Monni, 2018, pp. 77–108) in the anthology about postmodern dance in Finland, she describes her journey towards becoming the choreographer she is today as artistic process, experience and exploration. She emphasises a series of meetings with movement philosophies and movement-investigating practices as central for her continuous formation as a choreographer. I think similarly about the continuous formation of choreography as expanded practice: different choreographers’ meetings with the unknown and unexpected, an inquiry-based and searching approach, affective situatedness in body,

time and space, orientation towards process, society, language, theory-generation and theory-dialoguing have been central for the choreographic expansion that has happened, and is still happening.

Monni (2018, p. 82) describes dance as a possibility to experience the limitlessness of the moment as well as bodily presence, as different dance cultures’ richness, qualities and fragments of movements flow through the own body in the moment of dancing³. Further, she writes about the dancer’s freedom to experience, in the moment, her own embodiment as both authentic, trained, relational, thinking, articulating, performative and cultural. She points to a series of strategies that connect to postmodernity, and which have contributed to transforming a traditional understanding of choreography to an extended one. These are the use of humour, travelling freely (and boldly) across aesthetic borders, borrowing movements wherever one wants to, mixing personal aspects with public ones, being open and personal, questioning and disturbing the demands for purity and symmetry typical of modernity. The (central teaching pedagogical) questions *what, how, why (and why not), when, where and by whom* choreography are central – and they all the time function best as questions, and not as established answers.



Screenshot from Antje Hildebrandt's provocation *The End of Choreography*.⁴

In *The End of Choreography* Antje Hildebrandt (2013) says that choreography as an aesthetic phenomenon turns its back on established aesthetics and techniques found within dance, as well as on being associated with handicraft, special skills and control over the dance and the dancers. Choreography is instead stretched out to *expanded choreography* and scrutinized in a way that opens up a rift between “dance” and “choreography”, reminiscent of the way a distance has been created between “music” and “musicality”. There can be musicality also where there is no music. Maybe there can be choreography where there is no dance. This is an example of a powerful and critical processing of the question of *what* choreography is, and what it is not – anymore. Venke Marie Sortland (2016, p. 84) writes that choreography as critical practice

[...] is about daring to say: All choreographers should not have the dance studio as working place! All projects should not end up as performances! All choreographies should not include dance!

Hildebrandt quotes from the text “The Swedish Dance History, 4. Volume”⁵ when explaining choreography as an expanded concept:

Choreography is not the art of making dances, a directional set of tools, it is a generic set of capacities to be applied to any kind of production, analysis or organization. Choreography is a structural approach to the world, and dance its mode of knowing the world it ventures into. Dance is the embodied future, a promise of that to come.

Choreography becomes an approach to the world, to situations or phenomena. The understanding of *when* choreography can take place, and *how*, is thereby being critically discussed, and expanded. The question of *what* choreography is, is recurring: What characterises a choreographic approach, or expanded choreography, to a situation, a production, an analysis? Lilja describes choreographic work as a way of handling an experienced unbalance. One reacts to something. Reaction is motion, movement (Lilja, 2016, p. 5). Jenn Joy (2015) writes that choreography is about getting involved. To engage choreographically is about positioning oneself in relation to one or many others and giving impulses, waiting, listening and participating in a deep dialogical state of attention. Marte Reithaug Sterud (in Talawa Prestø, Henriksen & Reithaug Sterud, 2016, p. 18) says that for her, choreography is language and situations and the constant negotiation that takes place between these.

She ponders around how the choreographic work arises from collective situations where it is not always easy to capture from whom the impulse first came. From this a discussion about *who* is choreographing occurs. She also writes about choreography as discursive acts, which I understand as engagement, and often activism, in society, shown through social and linguistic practices where movement is central. Solveig Styve Holte (2016, p. 267) writes that to liberate choreography from the choreographer's role turns choreography into a competence that can be managed by more people. Choreography as practice becomes democratized. In Styve Holte's text I read the question of choreography *by whom* as central, but also the question *why* is being touched upon.

Why is transformation and expansion of choreography necessary? This is maybe the (entangled choreographic and teaching pedagogical) question that I find the least processed through the choreographic texts I have moved through. In these texts the questions what, who, how, when and where choreography is developed seem most celebrated.

The question of *why* I conceive as connected to power and democratization, and as such, it has special present-day relevance. In my opinion, the question of why exploded with #Metoo. Or stated more frankly: #Metoo became a powerful symbol for the fact that the question *Why?* or *Why not?* has not been addressed to a necessary degree in the dance field. Why should a dancer not have the power over her own body? Why should s/he not have the power over her/his own choreography – which expresses something willed, something structured, something subjective? Why should this will, this acting power, not be processed by dance artists as a team, as their own subjects? Why should they be the objects for somebody else's (a choreographer's) artistic will? Why should a dancer not have the right to decide about her/his own (choreographic) limits? Why should the traditional working structure with one choreographer at the top be more interesting or relevant in today's world than a structure where many choreographic dance artists work together in collaborative teams? The field of choreography seems to be in need of developing "fair play" rules found in the world of sports.

The question of why is important on an individual and human level, and it is especially urgent to scrutinize the values underlying choreographic processes. This is because the exercise of power in choreographic processes happens between bodies, often in a silent, unarticulated

way, and because traditional choreographic leadership, if carried on unquestioned, implies ways of leading and structuring choreographic work that goes back to centuries with very different values, including quite different views on women's equal rights. I have previously written about this (see, for example Østern 2014, 2016, 2017). For dance as an art form, the question of why is important for making choreographic work relevant for the contemporary, local-global society of today, as well for the well-being of dance artists.

PRODUCTIVE CHOREOGRAPHIC RIFTS, AND LANGUAGING FROM BODILY EXPERIENCE

In the examples of expanded choreographic understandings that I have discussed here, several rifts are created: one between "the choreographer" and "choreography", and another between "dance" and "choreography". It is possible to examine these rifts to see if they can be productive. The advantage of liberating choreography from dance is that the concept "dance" is difficult to free from the idea of aesthetic movement. Dance always appears as created from, and creating, certain aesthetics, depending on tradition, genre and culture. If one – presumably rather hypothetically – liberates choreography from dance, and thereby from the established aesthetics found within the world of dance, one is left with some kind of "direct contact" between choreography and movement, without dance in-between. If I, at the same time, seek to connect the relationship between choreography as movement with the close connection between movement and language that Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2009), among others, carefully articulates, then choreography can gain (renewed) meaning as an approach to language-creation. Several choreographers have explored this connection between choreography and language, including Solveig Styve Holte, Janne-Camilla Lyster, Mette Edvardsen, Ann-Christin Kongsnes, Marte Reithaug Sterud, Ingrid Berger Myhre, Marie Bergby Handeland, Eva-Cecilie Richardsen and Runa Norheim in Norway, and Kirsi Monni, Liisa Pentti, Annika Tudeer, Riitta Pasanen-Willberg and Soile Lahdenperä in Finland⁶.

Traditionally, in the West, one says that what comes before language – bodily experiences, notions, tunes and understandings – is pre-reflexive. Sheets-Johnstone writes that it is more accurate to say that (the development of) language is post-kinaesthetic. In other words, that language stems *from* the kinaesthetic discoveries,

CONTINUOUS CHOREOGRAPHIC
 QUESTIONS WITH UNSTABLE,
 IN-BECOMING ANSWERS

explorations and experiences. Language develops from bodily experiences, from movement, and we then wander through life followed by a kind of kinaesthetic melody (a term coined by the neurologist Luria, used by Sheets-Johnstone, 2009, p. 61). We perceive everything and everybody in bodily ways, as bodies, and as long as there is life in us, we are always in motion. The kinaesthetic melody is there all the time. Thinking and acting happens in movement, Lilja (2016, s. 6) writes. Sensing, feeling and relating happen in movement as well, I would wish to add.

To engage choreographically, to be attentive and listening in movement towards other peoples' movements and movements of and in the world, can be understood as a way of thinking, acting and engaging with the world. A choreographic approach, where movement and orientation towards understanding through movement is the pivoting point, activates listening, engagement and attention towards other (human and non-human) bodies, situations, contexts, materials, structures and society. This approach creates a specific choreographic time, a kind of ecological time experience characterised by high presence and entanglement (Barad, 2007) with all involved. I have noticed, in my own work, for example, that I think, sense and relate choreographically also when I am positioned as a leader, producer, teacher or researcher. As creative leader of the research and development project *200 billions and 1*, I described my understanding of leadership as distributed and relational, and basically about moving, being moved and creating movement⁷.

Sortland (2016, p. 79) asks herself what happens with art when artists start experimenting with the ways they structure artistic work, and further if such choreographic experimentation can be seen as choreography as critical practice. Sortland, leaning on Bojana Kunst (2015, here in Sortland, 2016) underlines that this experimentation can – and should – be directed towards the organization of choreographic work, as well as about time, relations, the context, artistic working methods, reflections around methods, and choice of performative format for the result, the work of art. When the field of choreography thus, as Per Roar writes, over time has asked itself what, how and why, as well as where, when and who, choreography can be developed, and when Sortland suggests choreography as critical practice, I can, from my entangled position as choreographer and art pedagogue, understand this as choreographic-pedagogical motion. It is the field itself that critically and creatively asks what choreography can be, what choreography can initiate, where choreography can take place and who has the power to perform choreographic thinking, sensing and acting. A choreographic-pedagogical question to keep exploring, articulating and discussing is *why*.

The choreographic-pedagogical questions are questions that function best when they are asked over and over again, without establishing very stable answers, since the answers cannot be disconnected from situation, time and embodied context. In this way, the choreographic field keeps continuing its critical and productive motion.

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CHOREOGRAPHERS
MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

Solveig Styve Holte
Janne-Camilla Lyster
Mette Edvardsen
Ann-Christin Kongsnes
Marte Reithaug Sterud
Ingrid Berger Myhre

Marie Bergby Handeland
Eva-Cecilie Richardsen
Runa Norheim
Per Roar
Efva Lilja
Venke Marie Sortland

Antje Hildebrandt
Kirsi Monni
Liisa Pentti
Annika Tudeer
Riitta Pasanen-Willberg
Soile Lahdenperä.

- See, for example, *Choreographic processes as poetic, political and pedagogical action in contemporary times* <https://www.dance-company.no/choreography-as-2016-20> (Inclusive Dance Company)
- Meaning-making here is defined by the author as follows: "Meaning-making is not just an inner, personal process. Neither is meaning-making only a thought process. Instead, the making of meaning is a lived act, it is a bodily act, it can only be partly narrated, it happens between people, it is multimodal and it energizes and changes people" (Østern, 2009, *Lectio Praecursoria* for the degree of Dr. of Arts in Dance, <http://actascenica.teak.fi/lectio/tone-ostern-lectio/> (access 27.08.2018))
- The translations of Monni's text are tentative. She writes poetically as well as deeply theoretically, and the Finnish language is full of nuances. For those who have the possibility, I recommend reading the original text.
- The provocation was first presented at the Cue Positions Symposium in 2013 at Chisenhale Dance Space in the U.K. and has afterwards been frequently shared and viewed on vimeo. Access at <https://vimeo.com/80257439> 04.04.17.
- The editors of *The Swedish Dance History, 4th Volume*, write on their blog that "The Swedish Dance History is published without publisher, editorial team, proof readers or economic interest and is not attached to any venue, festival or state agency, but is an attempt to conceive a book through strong democratic practices. Consequently, every person or group engaged in dance is invited to contribute and no contributions are rejected". (Access 04.04.17 at <https://theswedishdancehistory.wordpress.com/about/>)
- I emphasize Norwegian and Finnish choreographic developments because I belong in, and thereby know well, both countries.
- See the e-book "Jakten på dybdelæring – og evig liv" [Hunting depth in learning – and eternal life] https://issuu.com/ntnu5/docs/200_millarder_og_1 (accessed 02.06.2018)

Galerie

GALERIE

in
Conversation
with

GALERIE

Galerie is an immaterial art gallery dealing exclusively with immaterial artworks. Galerie uses the adjective immaterial for artworks that cannot be reduced to a physical object or to the documentation of an action. Since 2014 Galerie has been simultaneously a commercial entity, a think tank and a performance. Along with selling artworks it has materialized in a variety of forms that have appeared and interfered in a variety of contexts: visual arts, academic, performing arts, institutional and underground. Galerie is run by Adriano Wilfert Jensen and Simon Asencio.

Galerie editing the conversation was informed by the generous thoughts of Chloe Chignell, Stefan Govaart and Michelangelo Miccolis.

Karina Sarkissova is a friend and choreographer based in Stockholm. She is curating the festival My Wild Flag in collaboration with Pontus Pettersson. At the moment, she is studying at Dutch Art Institute and is about to launch the podcast *Navegante*, a practice of theory through conversation. Karina prefers to be a wizard lurking in the background of other people's work.

Galerie

I remember Karina Sarkissova saying that choreography is the bed sheet that you throw at the ghost to reveal its form and moves.

Galerie

Yes?

(deep breath)

Galerie:

Is curation also a bed sheet?

Galerie

I would say that both are ways of organizing, or it's the ways that things move. They are in, or have relations to, processes and actions rather than being things on their own. They need an initial content or matter to find their necessity and to find their own existence, they don't exist otherwise. Maybe they are the bed sheets that reveal the ghosts that are themselves the bed sheets?

G

Meanwhile it is interesting to see how a curatorial approach has been showing up in the dance field, while choreography is very popular in the visual arts context. Ironically there is some curator-bashing in the visual arts field problematizing their practice of authorship, and there is scepticism lately in parts of the dance field regarding a too strong emphasis on choreography.

a curatorial approach has been showing up in the dance field: With procedures like sampling dances from YouTube, dance as ready-made and repertory as a collection of sorts, one can observe a shift at the level of authorship: from originating dances to appropriating or hosting existing dances. The curatorial approach becoming thus useful to dance artists.

G

Feels like the grass is always greener on the other side?

G

Or as Jeanine Durning once said: "There is always a lemon in the green field".

Jeanine Durning is a choreographer, performer, and teacher from New York, creating solo and group works since 1998. Her research is grounded in choreography as ontological inquiry – exploring questions of who we are, the nature of perception and relation, and the slippery terrain of invented narratives of self and other.

G

We had this conversation about how, more and more, the exhibition of dance, performance, and choreography in museums brought an interest for the 'choreographic' aspect of exhibitions and artworks: generating

movement of visitors and triggering relationalities with the audience.

G

The choreographic in that sense allows for a strange revival of relational aesthetics...

G

Yes, added to the theatricality of minimal art still haunting the museum: the awareness that aesthetic production is not limited to the artwork, but implicates the body/psyche of the visitor in space. As in: seeing an artwork, is seeing yourself seeing.

G

I think that this echoes, from the side of museum economy, the need to cater to experience economy as factories for zombies of immaterial labour.

G

Exactly, in a way it's the same movement in two fields: one in the field of aesthetics and one in the field of economy. Both of them seeking to understand or mobilize the co-production or implication of the perceiver/visitor. And the choreographic is very useful in both cases.

G

Sculpting attention and choreographing experience..

(awkward silence)

G

I am thinking about the first public 'action' of Galerie, The Booth, in Poppositions art fair and our problem with representation. How could we perform the role of a gallery, meaning how could we represent works, when we can not bring them, either because they are attached to the body of the artist or to the specific conditions in which they are activated? It became a matter of finding other ways, using the means of the works, in order to produce something in the world, that could give an experience of this particular work existing.

In the case of Powered by Emotion by Mårten Spångberg, we were representing a dance with a dance, following the central protocol of the work by learning the dance of Mårten dancing Steve Paxton. Or in the case of Political Therapy by Valentina Desideri, we were taking the audience into a backroom, and giving them a teaser version of the work. Following the procedure of Political Therapy (including conversation about a political problem and hands on Fake Therapy) we would stop the session in the

In 1995 Nicolas Bourriaud coined the term Relational Aesthetics for "A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space". The term was later critiqued by a.o. Claire Bishop who asked "If relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?".

Nicolas Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics, Les presses du réel, Paris (1998), translated from French by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with Mathieu Copeland, Les presses du réel (2002)

Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", in October, 110 (fall 2004), pp. 51–79, MIT Press

In 1967, Michael Fried wrote a critique of the emerging Minimal Art movement, presenting its artists as dissidents to modernist aesthetics: "The literary espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre; and theatre is now the negation of art". Minimal art introduced, according to Fried, the notion of an object *in a situation* that includes the beholder: "One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationship as he apprehends the object from various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context".

Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood", in Artforum, 5, June 1967, p. 12–23 ; also in Gregory Battcock, ed., Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1968, p. 116–147.

In his article, Lars Bang Larsen, uses the figure of the zombie to dramatize the context of capitalization of creativity exerted onto artistic practice and spectatorship, resulting in the emergence of museums branded as factories of experience and artists as event designers: "Today in the era of immaterial labor, whose forms turns affect, creativity, and language into economical offerings, alienation from our productive capacities results in estrangement from these faculties, from visual and artistic production – and from our own subjectivity".

Lars Bang Larsen, "Zombies of Immaterial Labor: the Modern Monster and the Death of Death", in e-flux journal 15, April 2010

The Booth is an empty art fair booth on which two gallerists represent a selection of artworks using the means of those works and offers them for sale through economic formats tailored to the works. The approach to representation is exemplified in the conversation. The approach to selling the works is not present in the conversation. Briefly stated Galerie represents artworks rather than artists and the approach to the economy of these works relies on tailoring, in collaboration with the artist, singular protocols of transaction for each work we offer for sale, to the point that one could see the transactional aspect as an integral part of the work: we try to sell a joke as a joke and a conflict as a conflict, rather than, what is usually the case when these kinds of works enter the visual arts economy, selling them as a certificate, a documentation or a trace. Here we would like to mention gallerist Jan Mot and his important contribution to practicing economy of immaterial arts as a dealer, namely in representing artists such as Ian Wilson or Tino Seghal. Other interesting precedents in experimentation of acquisition and transaction could be found with dealer and Conceptual Art movement advocate Seth Siegelaub, collectors Josée and Marc Gensollen, Belgian collector Herman Daled or the immaterial collection of art center FRAC Lorraine (Metz, France) among others.

Powered by Emotion, (2003–2033) is a full night solo created and performed by Mårten Spångberg originating from a desire to dance and sing without having access to skill and technical capacity in relationship to the

moment the audience, (or it's not even an audience in this situation, it's a visitor) starts to relax, so that they get a feeling of what it is, but they don't have the thing.

That question of representation became quite central in our activity as a gallery in how it could enable a visit without supplementing the artworks, and how the visit was performing the problems of sculpting attention and choreographing experience.

G

In that regard I want to bring the idea of the visit: visiting something, but also being visited by something (like you know being visited by some spirit). The question arises of how do you host something or someone? And in the situation of Galerie, how to extend the script of a gallery, when you deal with embodied practices? Already there is a fabric within which we stand as Galerie on our empty booth. We are not stand-in of the artists, we act as representatives and as representations. And the curation is about how the work is being 'hanged', how it is being positioned in the *body* of the gallery, in order to be presented to the *visitor*. The other aspect is about choreographing in real time a set of representations, in order to allow someone to *visit* the booth. It is a form of improvisation in which we, through the visit, define how many works will manifest and in which way. The situation is the stage for the work to manifest...

G

I would even say that the encounter is the stage, and it is at the same time the expression.

Do you remember when we were trying to figure out at first how to initiate encounters? Without the intermediary of an object to point at, we had to use other principles, other choreographies to initiate an encounter with the visitor: strategies to attract attention and build complicity (flirt mostly). And when the encounter happens, we have to figure out who is this person, what is her/his agenda, where is this conversation going; in order to know where we can start representing *Internal Conflict* by Krööt Juurak, because that might be an interesting work for this person, or maybe for that visitor, *Operating Theatre* by Audrey Cottin would be instead relevant. Which is weirdly like a reading, like reading the curation, the curatorial map, out of the encounter.

G

Yeah, the visit unfolds as the encounter unfolds. And we can't fully anticipate what is going to happen, also, because we are two. The structure or the dramaturgy of our relation allows a reshuffling of the encounter at any

production of, on the one hand territory and on the other, perhaps more tangible, notions of identity and belonging. About half of the piece consist of Märten dancing a famous recorded improvisation by legendary dance improviser Steve Paxton, with high precision. Later in the piece he sings songs by the Cuban musicians of Buena Vista Social Club. Märten does not have skills in dancing or dance improvisation nor Spanish. What we see and hear both is and isn't Steve Paxton dancing and Buena Vista Social Club voicing sentimental love. *Powered by Emotion* is utter artificiality in its most natural form.

Political Therapy (happening now) is a practice originally invented by Valentina Desideri, which she has spread to various public and private contexts over the past years, alongside with *Fake Therapy*. Both *Political* and *Fake Therapy* play with the therapeutic set-up and can be practiced and modified by anyone, anywhere. The roles of the therapist and patient are arbitrary and interchangeable, no cure is intended or guaranteed. On the contrary the therapies celebrate the capacity of problems to unfold thoughts and images through touch and conversation.

an object to point at: In all art fairs we visited so far we have observed a triangular choreography: A (the visitor) looks at B (the artwork) and at some point C (the gallerist) positions themselves on the side of A, talking persuasively about B. In our case B and C is occupying the same body, which forced us to develop other ways of initiating encounters.

Internal Conflict, (2014-) by Krööt Juurak is an ongoing improvisational intra-institutional performance, manifesting as signs of internal conflict within a team. The aim is to give a random bystander, the public or media the impression of inner tensions and slight unprofessionalism within the team. This "performance" can be witnessed as seemingly accidental more or less obvious incidents, for example a quarrel, misunderstandings during a public announcement, general mood in the office etc.

O.T. Operating Theatre, (2013-) by Audrey Cottin is a series of tailored WiFi surgeries. In Antiquity, an operating theatre was a non-sterilized amphitheater where students and curious spectators could observe doctors work on chirurgical procedures. Nowadays, communication technologies allow doctors and scientists anywhere in the world to conduct operations from afar –including to astronauts in space missions. This is called e-health or telemedicine, and this was the starting point for Audrey Cottin's "O.perating T.heatre O.T." a series of performances organized by episodes, each involving live video stream transmissions between specific locations.

moment. Like when one gallerist interrupts and takes over the encounter from the other or when the two gallerists perform a seemingly promiscuous relation or when they switch from professional to personal content.

G

I remember this conversation we had in the smoking room at PAF about contact improvisation as a form of curation...

G

Indeed... Reminds me how beautiful John Hoobyar described contact improvisation in another conversation. He talked about it as a skill of making pathways, pathways that he can open for different lines of movement to enter and be supported. And the better he gets at this skill the more pathways he has to choose from. We could think the encounter that happens in the art fair similarly: different clues or moods or chemistry or things might enter the encounter, and from there we can open a pathway, thereby curating which work the visitor will experience in their *visit* of Galerie.

G

So thinking curation as opening pathways, a contact improvisation “à la Hoobyar”.

G

Yes, which relates to a central aspect of how Galerie has been thinking circulation of artistic practices: word of mouth, emotions, knowledges, ways of doing or attitudes become forms for the works to extend and disseminate, carried from body to body, from encounter to encounter.

G

It makes me think about the responsibility of curators, in terms of exhibition making: the choice and display of works shapes what the visitors sees or not, and by extension which work will be carried by the visitor out of the exhibition. Thinking about art canon, this is quite a responsibility, in what it includes and excludes, and the forms of life it cultivates or invisibilizes.

G

In that sense, it can be a safe place for curators to focus on using a set of works in order to transmit a predefined meaning.

G

Why is that safe?

PAF (=Performing Arts Forum) is a place for the professional and not-yet professional practitioners and activists in the field of performing arts, visual art, literature, music, new media and internet, theory and cultural production, and scientists who seek to research and determine their own conditions of work. PAF is for people who can motorize their own artistic production and knowledge production not only responding to the opportunities given by the institutional market.

Initiated and run by artists, theoreticians and practitioners themselves, PAF is a user-created, user-innovative informal institution. Neither a production-house and venue, nor a research-center, it is a platform for everyone who wants to expand possibilities and interests in his/her own working practice.

John Hoobyar is a dance artist based in New York. Apart from being a great performer and an inspirational partner in conversation, he experiments with radio storytelling and arts journalism. He has performed in works by artists including Sarah Michelson, Heather Kravas, Will Rawls, a.o. and is also an occasional practitioner of contact improvisation. He hails from Eugene, Oregon.

Forms of life is a notion that has a few different uses. For Galerie, Franck Leibovici's research on artists' “forms of life” and “ecosystems” produced by an artistic practice has been inspirational: “when looking at an artwork, I often ask myself what form of life is behind it. In other words, I wonder what form of life the author has implemented to make the production of such an artwork possible. I also ask myself the opposite question: what form of life flows out of the work I am looking at?”

www.desformesdevie.org/en/page/forms-life-franck-leibovici (last consult. Aug 2018)

In this conversation we are here both referring to chosen forms of life and imposed forms of life, while we acknowledge that imposed forms of life determines to a great extent who in the first place might consider or have access to artistic practice and display.

G

Exactly because when you focus on transmitting a pre-defined meaning, you are constantly trying to enclose the forms so they will mean the same to different people: a supposed universal reading. It's probably often done out of care, but a care that can become a form of control. I think care is also about letting things happen beyond your control, letting works operate differently through different encounters.

G

Reminds me about this text “Artworks Curate Too” that “Perhaps artworks are the only full-time curators I know.”

Raimundas Malašauskas, “Artworks Curate Too”, in *Paper Exhibition Selected Writings by Raimundas Malašauskas*, Sternberg Press, Sandberg Institute, Kunstverein Publishing & The Baltic Notebooks of Anthony Blunt (2012), p.81

G

I guess that relates to our practice of listening to the artworks: listening to what the work needs; or, if I may, a form of speculative essentialism: attending to an essence while assuming that we will never know for sure. Not to rewind too much, but the premises of Galerie was to focus on works that don't necessarily take the situation in which they are presented for granted, but rather produce their own conditions and reshape their context. This is related to our insistence on the term immateriality rather than dematerialization: giving up the ‘objectivity’ of the artwork and therefore its autonomy, for an attention to the entanglements it weaves with people, spaces, infrastructures and histories; thus questioning its limits, agency and circumscription. The practice of listening, in the case of these works, becomes a matter of attending to their entanglements.

G

Yes, and to listen to what kind of framing a work might need in order to generate those entanglements. In a conversation with Alice Chauchat we talked about artworks that have left or have an open relationship with dominant spaces for display (theatres, museums, galleries): works that happen in living rooms, in swimming pools, in workshops, etc.. Her work *The Telepathic Dance* came up in the conversation. The mobility of this work requires a listening to take place whenever it is activated, to figure out its embodiment, but also its framing. What kind of mediation does it need? How to talk about it? Where and when to activate it? These questions become crucial for the work to work. Now the interesting thing with *The Telepathic Dance* and many other works that Galerie has re/presented is that the framing is an inherent part of what the artwork is.

an open relationship: We think here both of works that are completely polyamorous and doesn't build hierarchies between their relations with for instance an activist context and a museum, and works that practice a primary partnership with one context and occasionally builds relations with other contexts.

living rooms: *Performances for Pets* (2014), Krōt Juurak and Alex Bailey performances in the domicile of the pet

swimming pools: *La Piscine* (2015), a collective project that gathers different artistic practices and work from various practitioners, initiated by Myriam Lefkowitz, Valentina Desideri, Jean-Philippe Derail, Ben Evans, Alkis Hadjandreou, Julie Laporte et Géraldine Longueville Geffriaud and more.

workshops: *Poetic Procedures* (2016), is a choreographic format and frame for artist Pontus Pettersson to share his interests practice within poetry. Started as evening activity on Tuesday nights in Stockholm in the autumn of 2016, Pontus hosted open classes for anyone to join.

G

This reminds me of Frida Sandström's paper on Derrida's concept of the Parergon: the moment when the frame and the work are simultaneously influencing each other to the point they cannot be dissociated. Retrospectively, it was a similar situation with Group Show: a format for presenting multiple immaterial works in proximity with each other. The curatorial work for Group Show was a process of listening to the different dispositives of each work, and figuring out how these different dispositives could be next to each other. Through this process each work found its shape for Group Show, while simultaneously shaping what Group Show was.

G

Could we say then that in Group Show, the difference between the works (how they relate to time, to space, to participation, to the audience, all these things) is what constitutes the artworks, is what constitute their thingness?

And at the same time that very difference is what makes the possibility of experiencing Group Show as an exhibition? Because of that difference, you actually feel like walking through different rooms and encountering different works, even though it's a continuous time and more or less the same space. The works are the rooms themselves.

G

Somehow, yes. The way that we think curation in Group Show is through forms of change, like how we manage to constantly refresh the room, while still being in the same room.

G

Maybe this is very esoteric, but rather than forms of change I would say difference in presence. Because the artworks are all there but they express themselves differently. So a bit like a haunted house where the room is the ghost in the room. And there are several of them.

(small silence)

G

The clairvoyant as a curator...

G

Definitely! If you think of the readings Valentina did together with Samir and Nadira of Jason Dodge's exhibition. Their readings of the exhibition were also a way of writing the exhibition. I am thinking that, when we

The Telepathic Dance (2014–ongoing) by Alice Chauchat consists of verbal instructions and a telepathically co-authored dance. The Telepathic Dance has been activated in workshops, in Alice's piece Togethering, a Group Solo (2015), in an iteration of Walk + Talk (2017, answering Philipp Gehmacher's invitation), in Galerie's Group Show (2017), as a published score in Alice's publication Companions, Telepaths & Other Doubles (2015) a. o.

Frida Sandström's practice takes place in the intersection of art criticism and the pedagogical, with writing and performance as its core. She is one of the editors of Paletten Art Journal and a frequent writer in Swedish cultural journals and magazines. She curates the art program at Norbergfestival and at the Romanian Cultural Institute in Stockholm and studies a Masters's program in aesthetics at Södertörn University. The presentation on the Parergon was part of her current research on the role of choreography in contemporary art and was presented as part of The Publication.

Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon", in October, 9 (Summer, 1979), translated from French by Craig Owens, The MIT Press, pp. 3–41

Group Show is a performed exhibition. It features curated contributions by performance and visual artists to be performed by the two bodies of Galerie. While being a display of autonomous proposals, the performance can also be seen as a sample show, where two gallerists present works by other artists, creating different situations in the space and with the audience.

the readings: On the occasion of Jason Dodge's exhibition, Valentina invited the healers Nadira and Samir Hachichi to make an energetic reading of the exhibition space. Valentina contributed with various notes on reading as potential score for the visit. Extract from Valentina's notes:

Question/Mirror



World/Matter

You

"Reading begins with a question. Any question. The question you choose will reorient your perception (after all, perception is instantaneous foresight). You might notice the way a C crawls and LOUD swells and shadows disappear into an inflating light these are the signs that are the sensations you use to make sense."

Jason Dodge, CAConrad, Valentina Desideri, Ready To Get Bleeding, Institut d'art contemporain Villeurbanne, Lyon (2016), catalogue of the exhibition Behind this machine anyone with a mind who cares can enter by Jason Dodge

work, we always have this honest lie, that we act as mediums, letting the work pass through us or trying to listen to where or how the work is ... this refers back to the visit and being visited ... which is a very silly thing, but...

G

It is connected to our interest for Hyperstition, both with works we deal with but also with Galerie itself.

rrrh(o)m rrrh(o)m rrrh(o)m, rrrh(o)m rrrh(o)m rrrh(o)m
(sound of eating coconut)

G

I want to bring back the question of responsibility together with the idea of implication. Whether you choreograph or curate, I think you are inviting the material or work, in order to be invited yourself into that material or work. Following this, there is no objective stance possible the moment you step in. You are always implicated, always in relation.

G

My grandmother used to say: “where there is a bouquet, there is a hand that picked the flowers”

G

Yes, this further unfolds the impossibility of the autonomy of art. Your hands are dirty once you engage. The implication is layered and dynamic (emotional, physical, financial, political, aesthetic, social): So on the top of the responsibility implied by the material or the work, you also have all these relational responsibilities in how you work with it. The work or the material hopefully have agency beyond what you control, but there is implicit responsibilities once you engage.

G

Could this idea of relational responsibility relate to a practice of friendship?

G

I think so.. Maybe there is a different implication when you befriend a problem? It was beautiful when Jennifer Lacey made a reading of *Group Show* and said that the dramaturgy is our friendship. I think she was right, insofar as it also includes our friendship with the works and the artists who made them.

G

The fabric of friendship has been quite prominent in the activities of Galerie. Hopefully not as a form of nepotism

Hyperstition is a neologism that combines the words ‘hyper’ and ‘superstition’ to describe the action of successful ideas in the arena of culture. Our use of the term could be defined as fictitious ideas, that while maintaining their status as fictitious, become operative and interfere within cultural and social realms (They become real after all).

Delphi Carstens, “Hyperstition”, on Xenopraxis.net (last consult. Aug 2018)

reading: On the occasion of *Group Show* at Ménagier de Verre and in order to transmit the work to Galerie, Jennifer Lacey performed *A consultation with an ephemeral, absent collection to address equally ephemeral but very present problems of a personal or professional nature. Together we can perform the possibility of resolution*, (2015) a one-to-one session where she offers a reading and an interpretation of non-manifestative issues or questions through a collection of works. In these circumstances, the question from Galerie was “What is the dramaturgy of *Group Show*?” and was interpreted from the list of works presented from that specific *Group Show*.

(relying on an inner circle) but rather as an approach of implicating ourselves with different practices, people and attitudes (creating new links). With *The Publication*, this relational fabric was quite visible as it brought together people sharing friendship with similar questions and practices.

G

Yes, the elaboration of The Table of Content of the Publication was a crucial frame for that. It activated relational fabrics by being a grid for other contents to emerge off the grid, during dinners, coffee breaks, walks, etc... It became an alibi for initiating new conversations and relations between the artists and conspirators of Galerie, and the local scene in Copenhagen.

G

While at the same time The Table of Contents was a frame to put forward and in proximity contents that are usually marginal in the programming of institutions. With this frame they were 'published', whatever this meant for each content.

G

Which is kind of similar to a double function of calling Galerie Galerie. On one hand it allows us to support various kinds of work in the ways that only a commercial gallery can do. And on the other the imagination of Galerie as a commercial gallery (fixed and circumscribed entity) allows for many practices to take place in the name of Galerie, and for Galerie to mean different things for different people.

G

Yes, the importance of naming as a cover and as a spell...

G

Smokescreen?

END

The Publication took place in Copenhagen, over one week and addressed the current state of the immaterial arts. Thought as a container and meeting point for various forms of content, *The Publication* 'published' contents in formats such as a lecture, an artist presentation, a conversation, a practice or a performance. A table of contents was updated throughout with some content scheduled in advance and some being defined over the week together with visitors and guests.

usually marginal: The kinds of content that were published in *The Publication* is usually relegated to the educational and/or side programme of museums, if they are even present.

as a cover and a spell: In his text *Esthetic Entities*, Florin Flueraș observes the emergence of aesthetic operativity in the zones of dance and visual arts of Bucharest: "The esthetic entities are not objects to be exhibited, nor performances to be seen or texts to be read. They are not research or experiments nor immaterial art, but they can be all of these and more. They don't have a sharp and clear presence. (...) They include artistic processes and products but their esthetic capacities are somehow always beyond their appearances. (...) They work as worlds, in the sense of complete behavioral spaces". The notion of worlding art worlds was unfolded further in "The Artworld and The Artworld", a text by Romanian artist Alina Popa after an invitation from Galerie to contribute to Post Dance. The conversation continued during *The Publication* between Florin, Alina and the participants in Copenhagen.

Florin Flueraș, *Esthetic Entities*, in postspectacle.blogspot.com (last consult. Aug 2018)

Alina Popa "The Artworld and The Artworld", in *Post Dance*, edited by Danjel Andersson, Mette Edvardsen and Mårten Spångberg, MDT Stockholm (2017)

Smokescreen: In the text "The Militarization of Peace" Reza Negarestani investigates the use of Taqiyya, or strategy of dis-simulation, in contemporary terror warfare as a way to relocate the notion of battle field. In the logic of hypercamouflage, Taqiyya becomes the politics of dissimulation of the self and the other: not simply by blending in but by becoming an agent "as one with the civilians". Such strategy triggers autoimmune responses of nations and governments, unable to dissociate their citizen from the agent. The operativity of Hypercamouflage has been influential in prefiguring functioning principles of Galerie.

Reza Negarestani, "The Militarization of Peace: Absence of Terror or Terror of Absence?", in *Collapse, Vol. 1: Numerical Materialism*, Urbanomic, Falmouth, (2006), p.62

Founded in 2014 by Simon Asencio and Adriano Wilfert Jensen, Galerie is an immaterial art gallery dealing exclusively with immaterial artworks. Galerie uses the term immaterial for artworks that cannot be reduced to a physical object or to the documentation of an action. For example a conflict, a custom-made socio practical mantra (joke) or a therapy format. Galerie represents work by Krööt Juurak, Alex Bailey, Mårten Spångberg, Valentina Desideri, Audrey Cottin, Pontus Pettersson, Jan Ritsema and Hana Lee Erdman and has presented works by Adriana Lara, Angela Goh, D D Dorvillier, Dora Garcia, Hana Lee Erdman, Jan Ritsema, Jennifer Lacey, Eva Rowson, Jonathan Burrows, Krööt Juurak, Alex Bailey, Maria Hassabi, Mårten Spångberg, Nina Kurtela, Pavel Sterec, Audrey Cottin, Valentina Desideri, Will Rawls, Diego Tonus, Alina Popa, Anne Juren, Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt, Cæcilie Østerby Sørensen, Clara Amaral, Florin Flueraș, Frida Sandström, Klara Utke Acs, Ruth-Johanne Anderssen, Claudia Pagès and more; with flower compositions by Johan Munter, Alexander Kartoziya, Ana Vega, Tage Andersen, Olympia Allium, Thierry Boutémy and Sandrine Vaillant .

Since 2014 Galerie has been a polymorphic entity, simultaneously a business, a think tank and a performance. Along with selling artworks it has materialized in a variety of forms such as *Group Show*; a performed group exhibition, *The Consultations*; a series of consultations on intangible problems, *The Business Meeting*; a business meeting, *The Intensive Curses*; an embodied contemporary art history class, *The Intensive Curse* – a workshop on artist and artwork representation, *Dreamworks*; an art fair, in which experience and acquisition happen through subliminal transactions, and *The Publication*; a container and meeting point for various forms of content on the state of immaterial practices. These forms have appeared and interfered in a variety of contexts: visual arts, academic, performing arts, institutional and underground...

If you have any questions or inquiries do not hesitate to contact us on contact@galerie.international

Touch
Simon & Adriano
Galerie.international

Jana Unmüßig

OF INTEREST (TBA)

Jana Unmüßig did theatre studies in Paris (Sorbonne), and dance and choreography in Salzburg (SEAD), Berlin (HZT) and Helsinki (doctoral program at TUTKE, TEAK). Her choreographic works has been shown at e.g. Springdance Utrecht, Hebbel am Ufer Berlin, Impulstanz Vienna. She was artist-in-residence at K3 Hamburg, Movement Research New York and Forum Danca. From 2011–2015 she mentored students at HZT Berlin which she enjoyed very much. Now, Jana lives with her family in the countryside close to Freiburg, Germany.
More info: www.jana-unmussig.com

I defended my doctoral research at the Performing Arts Research Centre of the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki on August 31st 2018. The title of my research is *Composition and Choreography – Critical Reflections on Perception, Body and Temporality*. My research is an inquiry focused on choreography- and studio-based composition as visual processes highlighting seeing, while considering time as boredom in the context of expanded choreography. The practice-based Doctor of Arts (D.A.) consists of three artistic parts and a written component. During my research, I took more and more distance to the choreographic practice I did before for personal reasons, but also because through the doctorate I discovered the field of research as a place where I could do more experimental choreographic thinking. Currently I am artistically engaged in exploring ways of writing.

Comma.

This text consists of

Introduction (1), where I briefly sketch out my current interest in writing and its particular mode of appearance, performative writing;

Detour (2), where I ponder on current discomfort with choreography and prepare the reader for what comes next;

Main Act in Minor (3), a piece of writing, including the reader into possible paths I still consider in relation to choreography.

Introduction

I am interested in performative writing. There are two reasons why I have a growing interest in writing in general these days: a) I am tired of exhausting myself with production conditions in order to organize live performances and b) I have two small kids and my way of wanting to live family life does not allow bigger production scales with touring etc.

Now, performative writing is, according to performance studies scholar Della Pollock, a “discursive practice that – misprisoned – might have disastrous consequences that may be *bad* – and for that matter may be *good*.”¹ Performative writing is an alternative to academic writing, but also it is not creative writing. Performative writing is not necessarily written for the theatre or stage. Unlike a score in dance it does not describe and notate a performance. Performative writing is not dance or performance notation. Its linkage to choreography is not tangible by a particular organisation of the text on a page either. The obvious link between performative writing and dance is that they are both material practices.

For the frame of this text, I want to put particular emphasis on one aspect of performative writing: “It forms itself in the act of speaking/writing.”² Performative writing is a muddle, coming out at the intersection of speech and written word. It invites a type of reading that is not silently decoding symbols but that noisily ‘talks with the text’. For the frame of this article, I interpret the concept performative writing as a form of writing where the reader can intervene by speaking the text out loud at any moment in any volume, or add to it other performatives, e.g. discussions.

I hope you, reader, can do something with what I write here; I hope this text does something for you.

Comma.

Detour

Now,
the dilemma I am facing while writing:
I am writing for an anthology that is dedicated to choreography, but I feel I don't represent choreography since I don't practice choreographing anymore. Sure, I could say that I make a case for how my current practice is choreographic; but I have never been much of a fan of the idea that everything can be choreography, or that everything can be dance. When I started my doctorate I was passionately inhabiting and embodying the role of choreographer-director and felt I had much to say about choreography. I don't have much to say these days about choreography. However, I want to believe that this bit of 'not much', is enough.

Comma.

In terms of my artistic practice,
the smallest connection that I still have with choreography,
is writing about it. I like to perform my writing about choreography in front of a video camera: I sit with a paper in my hands and read my writing from paper while a video camera is recording. I give much consideration to angle and light when doing so. In other words: I create short solos for video. I never enjoyed performing live and video gives enough of a safety belt for me to show up. Then there is the editing process which I much enjoy also. The way I edit is quite similar to how I used to choreograph: I let myself be guided by tones of intuition and a sense of rhythm. No prefixed recipe to compose, edit.

I also need to say,
in relation to my inclination to writing,
I have no fixed form when it comes to writing – Pollock: “Performative writing is, for me, precisely not a matter of formal style (...)”³. However: I like repetitions and lists. I started working with lists in 2007 when I started to write down a sentence each day, regardless of content. Back then I already worked with video as a means to record myself speaking texts I wrote. I staged my reading of the list I had created.
Also in 2007/2008, I made lists of weeks. It approximately would go like this:

Monday: blue
Tuesday: pink
Wednesday: yellow
Thursday: going out for a walk
Friday: blue
Saturday: sleeping
Sunday: grey

I write all this in order to give you, reader, some frame for what comes next. That is a list of ideas and concepts I am currently interested in. I am listing my interests. Other practitioners from the field of dance, choreography, art might share them, since nothing falls from the sky just like that, out of the blue, without pre-life before gaining visibility. Not even rain. In other words: the thoughts that are articulated in these concepts, ideas I put out are part of this world, of the lived world of artists in 2018. They are not particular or in any way original; they are particular since they stem from an experience of mine.

I try to make some of them more specific by adding footnotes. Including footnotes seems perhaps contradictory to the form of performative writing that I have introduced earlier, because footnotes stem from the world of academic writing. I do not add footnotes in order to perpetuate academic writing. Rather the opposite. Footnotes interrupt the flow of reading; they split attention⁴, allow different associations to take place simultaneously and eventually facilitate what Pollock calls “discontinuous rush of (performance) experience”⁵.

Comma.


Main Act in Minor

I am interested in my interest.
I am interested in collaboration⁶.
I am interested in dancing in a room.⁷
I am interested in choreography as a state of mind.⁸
I am interested in what it is to be an artist and have a fully committed engagement with another type of labour than the one of artistic production.
I am interested whether I would still call myself an artist then.
I am interested in understanding how education in dance and choreography has made me call myself a dancer and choreographer.
I am interested in how discipline creates identity.
I am interested in my interest in interest and whether this interest exists in order to make myself appear interesting to others.
I am interested in choreography divorced from dance and dancing, though this is maybe old school, sort of from the 90s.
I am interested in Eva Hesse, Agnes Martin, Simone Forti.
I am interested in women-artists.
I am interested in the Feminist Artists Program (FAP) from the 70s.
I am interested in research.⁹
I am interested in a sustainable life style for me as artist, mother, wife.
I am interested in a job that has to do with choreography and feeds me and my family. (please direct offers to jana.unmussig@uniarts.fi)
I am interested in economy.
I am interested in a sustainable economy.
I am interested in working my ass off if it is fun.
I am interested in spending holidays without my laptop.
I am interested in doing choreography for a huge group of people.
I am interested in how I would compose such choreography.¹⁰
I am interested in my old passion for composing and what I do with it if I don't get the opportunity of choreographing a huge group of people.
I am interested in keeping choreography in the air: I am interested in choreography as an immaterial practice that does not produce a visible outcome.
I am interested in different choreographic cultures.
I am interested in why I just wrote this last sentence.
I am interested in empty theatre stages.
I am interested in theatre stages that are empty.
I am interested in how an audience "reads" such situations.
I am interested in what is left of the work if there is no audience.
I am interested in what is left of my identity as artist if there is no audience.
I am interested in teaching choreography without dance.
I am interested in the methodology of teaching choreography without dance.¹¹

- 1 Pollock, Della. 1998. "Performing Writing." In *The Ends of Performance*, edited by Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, 73–103. New York: New York University Press.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Pollock, Della. 1998. "Performing Writing." In *The Ends of Performance*, edited by Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, 73–103. New York: New York University Press.
- 4 See: Grafton, Anthony. *The Footnote*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- 5 Pollock, Della. 1998. "Performing Writing." In *The Ends of Performance*, edited by Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, 73–103. New York: New York University Press.
- 6 See: Silke Bake, Peter Stamer, Christel Weiler (eds.). *How to collaborate? Questioning Togetherness in the Performing Arts*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2016.
- 7 See: Woolf, Virginia. *A woman needs a room of one's own*. http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/PikliiNatalia/Virginia_Woolf_-_A_Room_of_Ones_Own.pdf, (last accessed July 16th 2018)
- 8 Choreography as a state of mind: Choreography as a state of mind is indulging into perception. I perceive and this very act of perceiving is already choreographic for the one perceiving. Choreography as a state of mind is not for the outside, it is a sort of 'inner art practice'. It operates on the basis of assumption: You assume that anything you do, say, think or feel is choreographic. The effect of Choreography as a state of mind is that you feel calmer about yourself and the world you are living in. Choreography as a state of mind helps against anxieties, depression and stress. No previous dance or choreography training needed.
- 9 When I speak of research I mean artistic research, practice-based research, arts-based research, practice-led research. In all these forms of research I value experience over theory.
- 10 More on my view on composition: See: Unmüßig, Jana. *Composition and Choreography – Critical Reflections on Perception, Body and Temporality*. Helsinki: Theatre Academy Helsinki, forthcoming August 2018.
- 11 When I speak of "teaching choreography without dance" I refer to a notion and adjunct choreographic practice that is not media-specific but expanded in the sense of Jenn Joy's *The Choreographic* when she writes on page 1: "I imagine the work of the choreographic as one possibility of sensual address – a dialogical opening in which art not only is looked at but also looks back, igniting a tremulous hesitation in the ways that we experience and respond." Teaching such an idea of choreography invites artists from various backgrounds to come together in order to practice "this possibility of sensual address" regardless of artistic medium, but carried by an interest in "trespassing into the discourses and disciplines of visual-sculptural-audial-philosophic practice".
- 12 I think of a research project on the pedagogy of choreography in the context of higher education, art universities. I think of picking up on the current trend of opening the choreographic process through e.g. Jonathan Burrows' *A Choreographer's Handbook* (2014) or Meg Stuart's *Are we here yet?* (2010). And asking: How to transmit experimental choreography in the context of BA and MA (dance) art programs without necessarily following the cult of the "star artist" that teaches his/her method to the students – but rather I am thinking how pedagogy of the choreographic can be implemented, lived and theorized in higher education from the perspective of an artist-researcher dipping the toe in a pool of questions: How to improve teaching in choreography? How to write and reflect about teaching choreography? What if in order to do so we need to look less at models of dance pedagogy but rather turn to theories and practices of visual art pedagogy?

Ann-Christin Kongsness / Brynjar Åbel Bandlien

*some expressions
go to the extremities
of gendered movement, and move
back and forth on that scale, which
is the opposite strategy of trying to stay
in the middle of the scale where
movement is not gendered
at all*



QUEER DANCE HISTORIES

Ann-Christin Kongsness (b. 1987) is based in Oslo and is educated in dance and choreography from i.a. School for New Dance (Oslo), at the moment she is doing a BA in Aesthetics and Literature studies at the University in Oslo. She works both as a dancer and a choreographer, and has done several productions, her latest production ABOUT was nominated for the Norwegian Critics' Award for dance in 2018. Kongsness writes for i.a. Dansens Hus, organizes discursive events and is the editor of the webpage framtidsdans.no and CHOREOGRAPHY (2016/18).

Brynjar Åbel Bandlien (1975) trained ballet in his native Norway (1991–93) and at the Hamburg Ballet (1993–95). Bandlien worked as a dancer for Netherlands Dance Theatre 2 in Den Haag, Holland (1995–98,) with which he toured Europe, the US and South-Africa. In 1998 he started to work as a freelance dancer in Scandinavia, Europe and the US. In the period 2004–2010 Bandlien helped establish the National Center for Contemporary Dance (CND-B) in Bucharest, Romania. Currently he is a PhD fellow of artistic research at Oslo National Academy of Art in Norway.

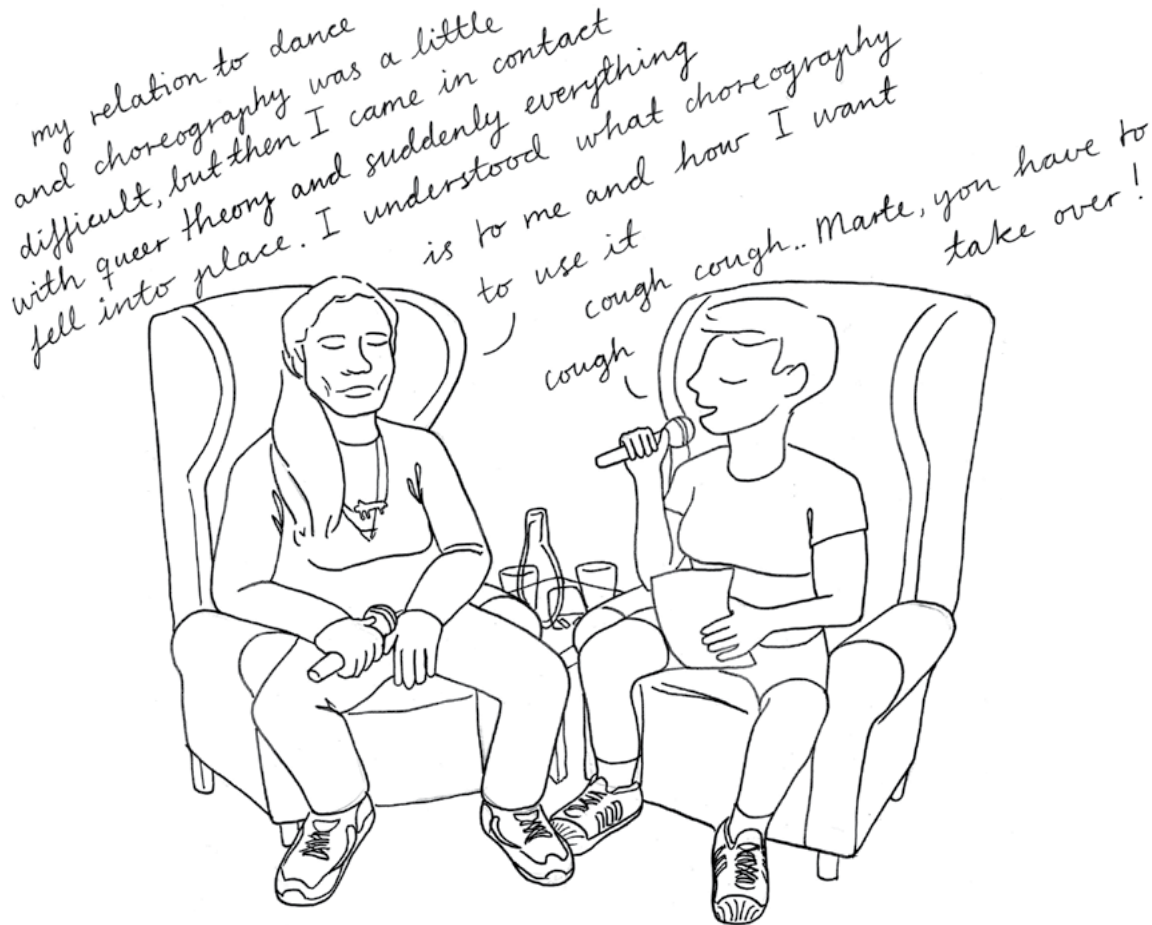
Text written by Ann-Christin Kongsness

Drawings by Brynjar Åbel Bandlien

*Skeiv dansekunst – en samtalerekke*¹ (*Queer Art of Dance – a conversation series*) consisted of six conversations and one lecture that took place prior to and during Pride Oslo 2018. The conversation series was arranged by Marte Reit-haug Sterud and me, Ann-Christin Kongsness. We've been working together since 2011, with dance and choreography in the independent field. We are concerned with connecting language and theory to our artistic practice and to contribute to highlighting and facilitating knowledge concerning dance and choreography as an art discipline. Queer art of dance is not an established term; it was constructed by us to highlight a landscape that we experienced as yet unmapped. This landscape is made up by dancers and choreographers from different generations who actively take a stand when it comes to questions relating to gender expressions and sexuality in their artistry. With manifold strategies, approaches and attitudes, they play with expectations around identity in general, in opposition to what's normative. In the conversations they told from their own experiences in what ways the personal and the emotional gives consequences to and nurtures the artistic work.

Skeiv dansekunst – en samtalerekke took place in both artistic dance and queer contexts. We first visited Dansens Hus (House of Dance), where we spoke to Maja Roel and Henriette Pedersen about queer/feminist strategies. At Oslo National Academy of the Arts, we spoke to Brynjar Åbel Bandlien and Per Roar about queer strategies in artistic research, among other things. Magnus Myhr, Øyvind Jørgensen and Terje Tjøme Mossige joined us at Scenehuset under the title *Men are dancing and dancing and continues to dance*. At the gay bar Elsker, we discussed *Contemporary drag* with Alexander Emanuel Waal Hem, Jens Martin Hartvedt Arvesen and Marianne Kjærsund. Moreover Steffi Lund, Ulf Nilseng and Karstein Solli told stories from their queer artistic careers at Pride House, where I also held the lecture *Skeiv dans (Queer dance)*². The last conversation took place at Kulturhistorisk Museum (Museum of Cultural History) with Malin Hellkvist Sellèn in relation to her performance *Missionären (The missionary)* was performed in Oslo during PRIDE 2018. This text is both a documentation of and reflection on all the conversations that took place during May and June 2018, both the official ones, and the unofficial ones from preparations.

We are sitting on a bench at St. Hanshaugen about to interview each other, Marte and I, a few days before the first conversation. We've both been so concerned with taking care of everybody else, that we have almost forgotten that we are also to take part. For Marte, I try to put into words how I think when I work with choreography. Marte responds that what I'm saying resonates in her body, she cannot articulate it quite as precisely as I do, but the way I think is the way she dances. I say that it is exactly by dancing with her and watching her dance that I have developed my thinking, I'm just not able to express it as precisely through my body as she is with hers. During the next few weeks our small, but important conversation will expand, and our queer artistic dance community will grow to include others and yet others.



THE HISTORY THAT DISAPPEARED

A couple of years ago, we became aware how much that has happened, in quite recent queer dance history, that we didn't know about. In recent history, there are often gaps: Yet not far enough back in time to have been documented properly, still long enough ago for some of us to have missed out. We wanted access to this, we wanted to hear the stories of the ones who had worked through

it, and that was how the conversation series came into being. We discovered that we do not stand outside of history at all; there are many we can relate to. In the preparations, we had extensive talks with every contributor, where we focused on tracing every artistic career back in time, both out of curiosity and to get to know one another, but also to figure out where and when different interests and needs originated. Several of the contributors pointed out how unaccustomed they were to this. As

artists working in dance, we as used to think forwards, we must, we have to think about the next project and the next application deadline. To talk about everything that has happened, everything we have completed, felt like a luxury we rarely indulge in.

One of the projects we dived into was *Menn danser* (*Men are dancing*). This project functioned as a platform that was effective through the whole 90s. *Menn danser* was initiated by the artists Øyvind Jørgensen and Odd Johan Fritzøe, together with Marius Kjos and Karstein Solli. Many other male dancers/choreographers were also part of the platform at some point or another. There were several motivations behind the project; one of them was a perception that men had yet to come to terms with themselves, the way women had through the women's liberation movement in the 1960s and 70s. Furthermore, until then male dancers had first and foremost lifted and carried the female dancers around, in extension of the tradition within classical ballet. The initiators experienced a need to expand the understanding of the male dancer's role; the project was a statement, as the title also

indicate, it felt necessary to point out that men are also dancing! The project was presented at Black Box theatre in Oslo during Skeive dager (Queer days) in 1992 and 1995, and in 1998 in connection to World AIDS Day 1st of December. The events were evenings consisting of several shorter performances, based on what the different initiators and invited dance professionals wanted to contribute. Many of the performances staged homosexual relations or narratives or contained gay references, since many of the artists contributing were gay, although being gay was not a requisite. *Menn danser* also had a permanent team of other collaborators that made the project possible, including Henning Winger, who did the lighting and stage design, and Preben Landmark, who was chief of communications The Norwegian National Opera at the time, and who made use of his contacts to promote the project. The project played out against a tragic backdrop; the HIV epidemic that arose in the 80s still took lives far into the 90s. The epidemic hit the gay community to a large extent. Preben and Henning both died of AIDS in 1996.



Lack of documentation and articulation of experiences, often conditions for visibility, are challenges shared by everyone who operates outside of societal norms and conventions. Both queer people and dance professionals could be placed in this category. Marginal groups are often bypassed or left out when historiography takes place. This is also a focus in the Swedish choreographer Malin Hellkvist Sellén's performance *Missionären* (*The Missionary*). It is about lesbian Christian missionaries in the north of Sweden in the first half of the 20th century. Through two performers' bodies, the audience meets a myriad of women who in different ways chose to follow their calling. With text, movement and song stories about women's lives, work, sexuality and faith are played out. The performance has grown out of equal parts facts and fantasy, and in a playful way, it gives body to a piece of erased history yet again. To go back and rewrite history by supplying more perspectives, and consequently, challenging the current dominant perspective, is a strategy actively used in a lot of theory based on experiences of exclusion. By being able to lean on a much more including, diverse and rich history, you stand on much firmer ground, making you able of living your queerness or otherness with renewed strength.

ANOTHER LANGUAGE

The word "skeiv", translated from queer in English, has been used as a term of abuse towards LGBTI people throughout history, but LGBTI activists have taken ownership of the word, turned around the use of it and given it new content. By definition, the queer is in opposition to the normal, legitimate and dominant, but it doesn't necessarily refer to anything particular. It is an identity without essence or almost more like a critique of the notion of identity in itself. Queer theory was established as an independent field of knowledge in the early 90s and focuses on dissonance between sex, gender and desire, and the attempt to make these visible by making use of an understanding of identity as something unstable and various. Queer, in this context, deals with both sexual orientation and gender expression, that is to say another sexual orientation than straight and another gender expression than a heteronormative one.³

To use queer as a definition or category like we did in connection to the conversation series is then of course a paradoxical practice. Professor in choreography Per Roar pointed this fact out and expanded a queer experience to include all experiences of exclusion, of existing outside of the norm. To dancer and choreographer

Brynjar Åbel Bandlien, the queer is also to be found in the gaze of the one who is not allowed to take up space. The one that is standing on the outside looking in, carries a queer gaze. In 2004 Brynjar moved to Bucharest in Romania, where he took active part in building up the community for dance in the period 2004–2009. In connection to his curation of a performing arts festival called Zilele Strîmbe in 2008, among other things, he began to make use of the word "strîmb" as a Romanian equivalence to queer. In Romanian there are only abusive terms to define queer, and "strîmb"'s actual meaning is crooked, it is a diagonal movement. Through Brynjar's use of the word the knowing finally got a term that was not degrading, and those not in the know didn't understand the expanded meaning of the word.

THE AMBIGUOUS BODY

Karstein Solli tells about how the freedom he experienced when he started working as a performing artist reminded him of how it was to come out of the closet as homosexual. In both cases, he found a new space where he could finally be himself, a playful and explorative space that allowed for otherness. Marte once said that working with dance is in itself quite the queer affair, when you are dancing you enter different physicalities and different identities. To her, dance technique is a stylized image of an identity. In his performance *IDET FJERNE, TROJA* (*IN THE DISTANCE, TROY*), Magnus Myhr attempts to physically shake, throw, wave and flush all the shame he has felt connected to being feminine. Throughout his upbringing, he has experienced problematization of his feminine body language, including when under education as a dancer. Magnus has always identified the most with female characters, through researching a feminine language of movement, he discovered how strong the feminine is, and how short the distance is, between what is seen as feminine and what is seen as masculine.

Karstein thinks about gender as an active tool of expression like all other tools of expressions that you make use of in the performing arts. In that way, staging gender is something that everyone who works within the performing arts should relate consciously to. The most important thing, however, is to work with a plurality of gender expressions on stage, so that the stereotypes don't get to rule.

Contemporary dancer Marianne Kjærund has through her long-term collaboration with Malin Hellkvist Sellén given body to a character that has turned up in several of Malin's performances.⁴ The character is



an ambiguous figure that makes use of several elements that can be connected to drag, and it is mostly created by and through the physical material. She knows exactly where the shoulder blade is placed and what tempo the character moves in. What the character would do or how it would act in other settings she knows however little about, this stands in contrast to how drag-characters are usually build up.

At one point in the rehearsal period, Marianne and the other performers were working with an almost physically impossible task given by Malin. Earlier, they had been working with building characters based on men they had been observing out in the streets, and they were told to try to do the impossible again, but now as their characters. Marianne experienced that this actually made the task possible, the character enabled her to move in a way she normally would not. As a woman she had unconsciously set limitations for herself as a dancer. Marianne has been working with embodying this character for more than ten years, it is consuming to get access to another kind of embodiment.

THE POWER OF COMPLEXITY

In the project *I slipped in between two wor(l)ds*, dancer and choreographer Maja Roel established the three characters he, she and “hin” (they). The project was started in 2006, a while before “hen”, they, began to be used as a third gender pronoun in Norway. Both “hen” and “hin” points towards a gender identity that is neither she nor he, or possibly both. This is where they have come across the biggest challenge in the project; how to make “hin” more than just the absence of he and she? When the masculine and the feminine to such a degree are established as categories and expressions, it becomes a challenge to make the in-between come across as something clear in itself, and not remain vague and undefined. The project has taken on many shapes, like performances and workshops, and is still effective – to give “hin” a power and weight of its own has been a motivation to continue the project over such a long-time span.

I think that Maja's project in many ways puts the theory of gender as performative into practice. This theory⁵ moves away from gender, and all identity for that matter, as something essential, stable and constant,

and towards gender as something you do or perform, through repetition. Still the expectations to how we should behave are there even before we are born, so what room we have to manoeuvre lies in the small variations in the repetitions of the performance of ourselves every day. These can make visible the constructed in what we think of as natural. With this as a backdrop it might not be that strange that it takes quite some years to establish the character “hin” as something of its own and clear – the power lies in the repetitions.

There are several different entries into working with a queer expression in the art of dance. Some work with a physical expression or material that can be read as queer, others create platforms or frames where queer performances can be produced, and others again has a thematic approach to the queer. I think the queer aspect of my own work lies expressly in how I think of choreography, now referring to choreography understood as an expanded practice⁶. I always work towards a complex expression that points in many different directions at

the same time. I am interested in the constructed and in operating with several layers. In the work of addressing and undermining expectations I think there is a parallel between expectations you are met with due to the different identity markers you carry with you, and all the conventions that exist within the dance field that raises expectations in the audience for what they are about to experience.

THE QUEER FREE ZONE

The choreographer Henriette Pedersen's artistic career sprang out from the explicitly queer space of a gay bar. She was brought along to the gay bar Enka in Oslo in the late 90s and experienced an extreme liberation in discovering the existence of something else; an alternative to the heteronormative regime she found herself surrounded by the rest of the time. She continued to attend drag shows every Sunday, and this was her entry into the





performative. Henriette creates a kind of queer room for her performers based on the logic and the opportunities that exist and are encouraged in the working situation. With an interest for working in the outskirts of human behaviour, her logic is that if you go far enough into the extreme, it will end up as queer.

Jens Martin Hartvedt Arvesen and Alexander Emanuel Waal Hem work both as drag artists and as dancers, they therefore have access to both contemporary dance and queer contexts. I remember attending my first drag shows with Alexander Emanuel more than a decade ago, long before RuPaul's Drag Race was a thing. Among the reasons he was important to me was that he gave me access to both drag culture and the gay community in general. Drag shows usually take place in queer clubs, and in Oslo, Elsker (Lover) has been a particularly important platform for drag. In a club, other conventions are at play than in a venue for contemporary dance; the audience is actually having a night out on the town, drinking and checking each other out. The demand for entertainment is strong, an act has to catch their attention immediately or else they'll grow tired and move to other parts of the club.

Jens Martin arranged the concept *Draglaboratoriet* (*Drag laboratory*) at Elsker during the spring of 2015. Every time, a new element used in drag was scrutinized. Altogether there were five evenings that looked closer at lip sync, costume, dance, humour and time. Drag art often make use of other expressions and a drag show can also simultaneously be a stand-up show, a concert, a dance performance or a catwalk. *Draglaboratoriet* as a concept is based on an approach that we recognize from contemporary dance, an exploring and experimental approach. In particular the latter element, time, challenges the genre of drag; how to work with duration and dramaturgy in a drag show?

THE EXPLICIT HEROES

Whether a dance performance is announced explicitly as queer or whether the queer aspect is treated implicitly has consequences for what kind of audience the performance will be exposed to. Toyboys has been the most explicitly gay company in Norwegian dance, with the slogan "We're here, we're queer, get used to it", borrowed

from the American LGBTI activist group Queer Nation that was founded in New York in 1990 by HIV/AIDS activists from ACT UP. It was this organization that first made use of the term queer about themselves to disarm homophobes, as mentioned earlier. The dance company Toyboys was started in 2002 by and with Ulf Nilseng and Terje Tjøme Mossige, until 2013 they created ten performances together, dedicated to expanding gender categories and the conception of what is normal and natural. When exploring and experimenting are seen as key elements to contemporary dance, why not experiment further out into the physical explorations' ultimate consequence, which would then include gender?

Another explicitly queer dancer and choreographer is Steffi Lund. She's been working on making lesbian dance visible for several years. Where gay men are overrepresented in the dance field, lesbians have been correspondingly underrepresented. Steffi has taken on the responsibility to provide the representation she's been missing on the Norwegian scene for dance. I think this exact motivation, contribute with what you miss and

wished you had been exposed to, is the main force behind most art- and pop cultural expressions with decent queer representation throughout the years. Both Steffi and Toyboys have done double visibility work; making visible the queerness that influences the artistic dance expression within the dance field, and the visibility of contemporary dance in the queer community. This tradition can also shed some light on our conversation series. A strategy several of us had made use of is showing performances and organizing events during the festival that today is called Oslo Pride. It was established in 1982 by LLH Oslo and Akershus (now FRI Oslo and Akershus) as Homodagene (The Gay Days), but then the festival switched names to Skeive dager (Queer Days) in 1993 before it became Oslo Pride in 2014. Toyboys also arranged a queer festival in connection to the performance *The Man at the Tramstop* at Dansens Hus in 2008, a piece of recent queer dance history that I unfortunately missed out on.



THE CRUCIAL COMMUNITY

A recurring theme in the different conversations we had was the importance of queer communities. Per Roar told us about the interdisciplinary gay community he was a part of at The University of Oslo in the 80s, where they researched gender before gender studies even existed at the institution. Those who have created queer communities, like the platform *Menn danser* and the company Toyboys, has created a free zone for themselves, a condition for the queer gaze to really penetrate all the aspects of a work. One shouldn't underestimate how these performances have opened opportunities for younger, queer colleagues; there exists several ways in which I can be a dancer and choreographer! Especially when people have

been invited into and been allowed to participate in these queer working rooms that has been created, it gets extended effects. Everyone that has seen or been a part of *Menn Danser* is a good example. Terje was a part of it at some point, then Magnus had Terje as a teacher and performed in a performance by Toyboys. Marte worked with Brynjar and was invited into his queer work room, which has benefited me when working with her on a later occasion. Norwegian queer dance history is a diverse weave of people who have led the way and created free zones and possibilities for each other, in all directions. This conversation series was not an attempt to create a canon within queer Norwegian art of dance. As in other storytelling, this too must be expanded, other and new stories must be included and it may also be challenged by other people.

We were sitting in my room, Marte and I, when the emotional dimension of the ambitious project we had put into motion first hit us. We had been so concerned with being professional, keeping our facts straight, getting the big picture and tie all the individual stories together. In this process, the queer had become about work to us, an artistic interest among other artistic interests. Even when I said that we had to be prepared for getting emotional during the conversations, my voice was on point. Before it cracked. Then we sat there, for hours, taking turns crying and telling each other stories. We have always talked about our queerness as a strength and something that we appreciate, but now, we told each other about all the hurt and difficulties, about growing up and slowly realizing that the word some people pronounce with disgust refers to you. Those kinds of experiences always leave marks, even if one has been treated fairly okay and comes across as strong and more or less relaxed.

For me, one of the most beautiful moments in June 2018 is when Marte is about to tell the audience about the conversation between Alf Prøysen and Kim Friele, and her voice cracks. Still she keeps insisting on telling the story, because it is important. And I feel it when she insists, I feel her tearful words in my whole body. The moment a gaze stemming from an experience of exclusion comes together with another gaze with the same experiences, that is magic.

Some years ago, Marte and I randomly met Steffi in the Pride parade. She exclaimed: "Finally, there are more of us, I'm no longer alone!" The last two years we are several that has been walking behind our own banner in the parade. We are a growing gang of Queer Dancers and Choreographers!

1 *Skeiv Dansekunst – en samtalerekke* was supported by Arts Council Norway and co-produced by Dance Information Norway. All the conversations have been documented in video, to be archived in The Dance Archive/The National Archives of Norway and in The National Norwegian Archive for Queer History. For more information see: www.skeivdansekunst.no

2 Curated by Andreas Breivik for his queer reading group for youth. It is better, in 2016, also been curated into teaching in theory at Oslo National Academy of the Arts, BA jazz dance and contemporary dance, by Snelle Hall, 2017/18.

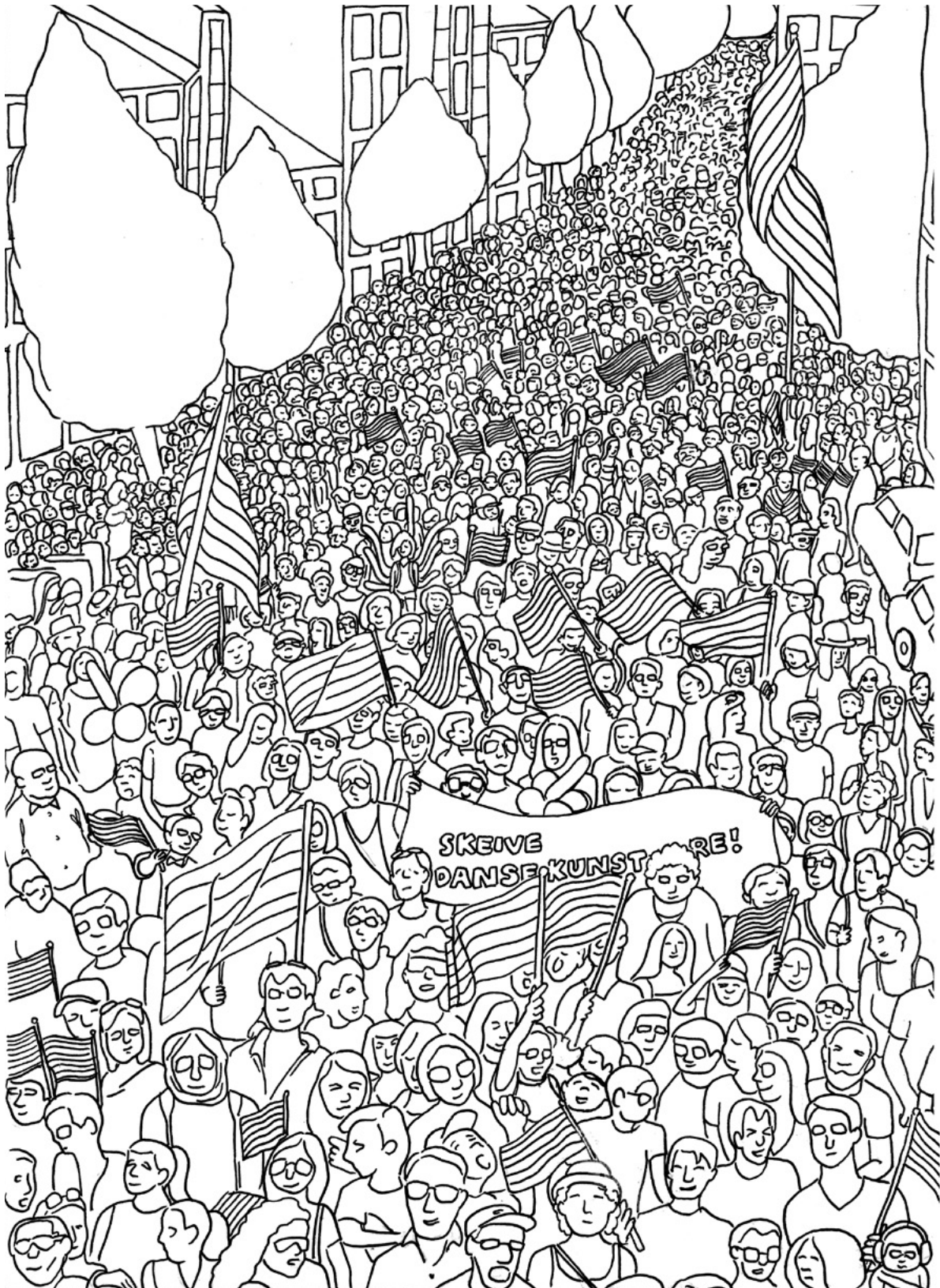
3 Heteronormativity means traditional gender roles/expressions for men and women, springing out from a heterosexual relationship, in which the hetero orienta-

tion is seen as natural and taken for granted.

4 In *Bättre folk* (2006) and *Rosa Löften* (2008)

5 Developed by the American gender theorist Judith Butler and others.

6 Which Tone Pernille Østern explains in her text *Choreographic-pedagogical entanglements* in this anthology.



Satu Herrala & Alexander Roberts

Satu Herrala is a Helsinki-based curator with a background in dance and choreography. She has been the artistic director of Baltic Circle International Theatre Festival since 2015. She graduated as a choreographer from the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki and is currently a part-time doctoral student at Aalto University, working on the question “What is possible in art that is not possible otherwise?” She also works as a regular mentor at Iceland University of the Arts.

DIALOGUE

Alexander Roberts is a Reykjavík-based curator and artist. As co-Artistic Director of Reykjavík Dance Festival with Ásgerður G. Gunnarsdóttir since 2014, he co-curates for Every Body's Spectacular, Teenagers in Reykjavík and A! Performance Festival in Akureyri and is a programme director of the newly formed Performing Arts MFA programme at the Iceland University of the Arts. He works in close artistic collaboration with artists such as Ásrún Magnúsdóttir, Aude Busson, Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, Brogan Davison and Pétur Ármannsson as a maker and dramaturg.

Two colleagues and friends, Satu Herrala and Alexander Roberts, have written this text while travelling separately across Europe during their summer vacations and first days back at work. With Satu writing from Germany and Finland, and Alexander writing from the UK, Italy and Iceland, the pair wrote back and forth via email in an on-going dialogue that took place between July 14th and August 4th 2018. During what ended up becoming the most intense heat wave in living memory for the two of them, they jointly reflect upon their curatorial practices, conditions and contexts from various lakes, seashores and pools.

Let's start!

What have you been obsessed about recently?

Hmm... Sea swimming is one significant obsession.

Going to the beach and giving myself over to the cold of the ocean.

I have been doing it since April. And it is becoming an enormous part of my life. I go perhaps five or even six times a week. And swim in the ocean for about ten to twenty minutes each time – followed by sauna, hot tub and then one last dip. The ocean has been anything from 4–11 degrees Celsius. So cold. But still not as cold as it will get through the winter.

It has become a family ritual. As you know I have a two-year-old and a three-year-old and we all go down together. My partner and I take turns to go into the sea while the other sits with the kids in the hot tub. Then we barbecue food on the 'free-to-use' gas barbecues down there. It has become a second home for our family and we now have an increasing number of friends down there that we have met through being there together. The one thing is the swimming, but the other is the people you meet there. The swimming brings you into conversation with all kinds of people living in the same city, and the water does something to those conversations. We speak and listen differently there.

So – yes – this is one world I am currently giving a lot of energy too.

And for you – your obsessions?

I wish I had such a hobby activity too, something that creates a community around a shared passion.

What you said about the water and steam affecting your conversations reminds me of how we got to know each other and began to work together in February 2013; you and Ásgerður ran *The Festival* and invited me to do a residency in Reykjavík. The theme was somehow connected to water, wasn't it? My proposal was to curate a *Sauna Lecture* program, which turned out to be a hot tub lecture program when adapted to the local context. I was interested in how specific physical and material conditions shape how we think and speak together. How our bodies relax and suffer in the heat, how that affects our sense of time or how sharing the same conditions might produce a possibility for empathy.

My work as a curator is very focused on creating conditions for something or some things to happen.

I'm obsessed with figuring out the minimum structure to get the thought and/or energy between the bodies to circulate. I often curate workshops, laboratories or artistic discursive events with an aim to think together. The question of a minimum structure is essential there. Most of the time those kinds of events are either too filled with pre-determined program or so open that by the time a structure is negotiated the event is over already. Sometimes the minimum structure is just a space and food. What kind of a space and food matter though. It

takes a lot of care to make the space safe and accessible on one hand and on the other hand thinking of a combination of elements that allow unexpected encounters to happen. How to set up a space and time for some kind of an in-betweenness that can make visible things that are not obvious or falling in already existing categories? I think one can never exactly know how those spaces emerge or control what happens there. That's why it's an ongoing obsession for me.

Now I go to swim too. I'm happiest when I slide into a breaststroke; not in the freezing cold though. The Baltic Sea is a smudge of algae, so I go to the pool.

In a way I was cheating...

Maybe sea swimming isn't my obsession, but an escape from it. A place to be away from what keeps me busy.

I guess in truth my work is my obsession. And like you – at its heart – it's about creating conditions for making something or some things happen.

You speak about 'thinking together', but I guess for both of us it is about paying attention to the conditions for thinking together, but equally doing, making and speaking together too.

A friend of mine once proposed that every artwork is not so much performed for a public, but in fact produces a specific public through it's happening. I am obsessed with the question of how we assemble

publics. Publics that can do, make, speak and think together – and reflect on how they are doing it at the same time. I am concerned with how we pay attention to our own presence in the world and the impact it has on others around us (both human and non-human).

I find the world a difficult place to live in, and at the same time I am deeply aware that my presence and activities in the world as a human – and more specifically as a white Western privileged man – has made and continues to make this world a tremendously difficult place for others to live in.

So, for me, and specifically my work as a curator, art is very much about creating conditions where our own presence and modes of being in the world can be given space to be reflected upon. But more than that, reassembled, challenged and transformed, towards publics that are (as you put it) resistant to the obvious or to pre-existing categorisation. As well as, rich in listening, care, tenderness and imagination. And crucially pro-queer, anti-racist, anti-colonial, interspecies and feminist, because for me, this in-betweenness that you describe is about loosening things up and creating conditions where we can search together for better ways of being together (socially, politically, sexually, ecologically...) and address the questions related to this objective together.

This is what I am looking for and what I obsess over in the work.

For me, to make sense of this obsession, I need to address these concerns (do the work) through paying attention to specific contexts. And from working with you a lot – I feel it is safe to say you share this attitude too? I cannot think of work as something autonomous from the place it happens in. And as such, I am always thinking about how the work can be approached porously and symbiotically; how we can maximise the ways in which the work leaks into the city, as well as how the city leaks into the work; how we can develop formats and initiatives that can engage the city (and those living

in it as partners) in the work we are making; how the city and the work can nourish, as well as disturb and contaminate, the other.

Examples:

Performance maker and musician Gerald Kurdian has been working with us for the last twelve months, with plans for our collaboration to continue. One key component of our collaboration together involves exploring how we can localise his questions and practices here in Iceland. On his last two visits, he has been the host of a queer-feminist reading group that gathers to read texts dealing with questions and visions for gender and sexuality. The reading group then doubles up as a choir that respond to what they are reading and the discussions that follow to make music and songs together. The choir is called *Wonder Blob*. This is just a small part of the work that Gerald came to do in Iceland with us, but for me, it is a hugely important part. The community Gerald gathers together through this work is intersectional and diverse in terms of each person's personal and political motivations for being there. It is about the learning and non-learning that happens there, the solidarities that are produced, and the art that is made. It is all of these things. And it has a future. The group can keep coming together. This group can continue to grow and implicate more and more people. The songs can keep being written. And the choir can continue to sing.

Reykjavik Dance Festival is an international centre for choreographic, dance and performances practices in Iceland – seeking to curate an all year-round conversation with its audiences – through the artists we present, support and produce. Founded in 2002, RDF's central activity has always been its international August festival. Since 2014 however, RDF has extended beyond its activities in August – to include national and international initiatives throughout the year. Alongside its festival programmes

(Every Body's Spectacular taking place every November in collaboration with LÓKAL Int. Theatre Festival, Teenagers in Reykjavik taking place biennially in March, and A! Performance Festival in Akureyri also taking place every November in collaboration with Akureyri Art Museum and LÓKAL Int. Theatre Festival), RDF initiates residencies, workshops, talk programmes, and more throughout the year.

Another example could be *Teenagers in Reykjavik*. Over the last twenty-four months, my curatorial-partner in crime Ásgerður G. Gunnarsdóttir and I have been working in very significant ways with teenagers in the city. A collaboration that has also been worked on in close conversation artistically and curatorially with Ásrún Magnúsdóttir and Aude Busson, among others, at various periods over the two years.

Historically, we have always done a certain amount of our work with non-professionals, and quite a lot of work that looks to engage teenagers in what we do, without 'dumbing down' what we do. This has always been a hugely satisfying part of our work, and we have always found ourselves surprised by how open people in Reykjavik are to collaboration. At the same time, we would frequently feel dissatisfied with the fact that we felt non-professionals only ever appeared in the parts of the festival they are specifically involved in. If they were brought in to be performers they would show up there, but why were they not in the audience at the other shows, why were they not at the parties or in the workshops? How could they become more influential at the level of our thinking and making? Out of a concern for these questions came the idea that we should begin to experiment with formats and initiatives that would bring those we share this city with in at all levels of our work – not only as performers or as audience, but how could we bring them in collaboration with us as curators, critics, party guests? How could we share our work with

them? For the last two years, as a result, we have been developing a programme called Teenagers in Reykjavik, where we work in collaboration with teenagers in the city. Teenagers as performers, teenagers as artists, teenagers as critics, audience, workshop goers, party goers, publication makers, advisors and everything in between.

For us, this is perhaps just the beginning. Next, we can start to expand to a broader community of Reykjavik dwellers. Teenagers and pets in Reykjavik. Teenagers, pets, and retirees in Reykjavik. And so on, and so on. While Teenagers in Reykjavik is specific to teenagers, it is all about us developing formats for implicating the city in all levels of the work we are doing from making to seeing, curating, partying and critically reflecting.

We want to work with the city and to operate through formats that really explore how those collaborations can be significant and empowered.

And a third example would be *Sauna Lectures Reykjavik* that we invited you to do. This was one of our earlier works in Reykjavik. And while this project specifically exuded all of these values I am describing, the context of the residency that this project was invited to be a part of was very much about exploring what it means for an artist to be in residence in a place. How do we make the residency's location specific? What knowledge can we connect the artist and their work to? Who can be brought into the work locally to extend its objectives? How can the work be situated locally in ways that both meet the needs of the work, as well as maximise its impact on the city?

For our work it was about opening this partnership with the local pool, and thinking with you about whom in the local context could be brought in to realise this work with you. It was always towards empowering your position in the city – as well as maximising the potential for the city to have a voice in your work.

In every case, the work always begins from the needs, questions

and objectives of the work and the artist initiating it – and allowing those needs to guide us through the city. Inevitably, what happens as a result, is that the city is reassembled through the work. Voices, bodies, knowledge and urgencies that would otherwise not be heard are amplified.

To close – I am torn – I want to ask you questions, but at the same time I am happy for you to respond as you wish. So perhaps I can ask the questions and you can ignore them if you want.

I am curious about how you think about collaboration as a curator. My friend once said to me that “collaboration is difficult, but everything else is impossible”, I guess this is absolutely true for curating. What do you think?

P. S: I love pools too. One of the most intersectional spaces in Iceland. As well as one of the most fluid (no pun intended). It feels like every kind of body gathers there at some moment in the day. And suddenly any body can encounter and significantly exchange with another. Sharing voices, sharing space, sharing fluid.

Firstly – I swam in three different lakes yesterday. There was a young deer wading into the water in the first one.

I would like to answer your question about collaboration as a curator as I very much agree with your friend who said that: “collaboration is difficult, but everything else is impossible”. But before I do that, I try to formulate something about leaking.

For two years (very slowly) I have been working on a PhD in which I look into the relationship of the artistic event and the political event with a particular interest in the moment when one leaks into the other. I have two case studies that are artistic-discursive events that took place in the frame of Baltic Circle Festival, focusing on specific policy making or political struggle. *Make Arts Policy* happened in November 2014 at the City Hall in Helsinki and it was an attempt to formulate the future of the Finnish arts policy with politicians from

10 different parties, as well as many artists and experts of cultural policy. It was a theatrical performance and a summit on arts policy simultaneously, directed by Dana Yahalomi from Public Movement and curated by her, Eva Neklyaeva, Terike Haapoja and myself. *Vuosttaš álbmogat* (First Nations) Program took place in November 2017 at Konepajan Bruno in Helsinki. It was a program focusing on indigenous rights and Nordic colonialism, curated by Pauliina Feodoroff in dialogue with myself. In both events we were exploring how we can use the autonomy of the artistic context to construct situations, with specific formats and constellation of guests, to present and discuss certain topics in a way that would not be possible in merely political context – and could perhaps yet spark an imagination of a different future. So far, I have not been able to understand what exactly leaked from one to the other, but the boundaries between the artistic and the political appeared less apparent and more porous. It might be something impossible to pin down or domesticate, I'm more interested in reflecting what is possible in the context of art that is not possible otherwise.

Baltic Circle is an international theatre festival that takes place annually in Helsinki. It is a platform to present local and international performance and discourse, a laboratory for experimental forms of performing art practices, and a meeting place for artists and audiences. The festival participates in transnational networks and contributes to support, build and shape the independent art scene in Finland.

Baltic Circle is based on a firm belief in the possibility of the arts to bring people together and to participate in societal change. Art can be a space to imagine what does not yet exist, to make visible what is hidden, to re-organise our ways of understanding the world, and to find forms to share them. Our cornerstone is the trust in artists, partners and colleagues

alike, as well as the courage to tackle new phenomena and hushed realities. Baltic Circle highlights communality, collaboration and commitment as key elements in building a festival, and encourages social justice, solidarity and gender equality.

As a curator my work is most of all about negotiating in many directions, one could even say collaborating with the different agents at least to some degree. I could say I collaborate with all the artists and institutions I work with as well as with the funding bodies. But one should be careful not to water down the notion of collaboration; I think the negotiation of power is essential there. I have invited other people to curate or co-curate with me at every festival I have made but of course the distribution of power is not equal when I'm the one inviting them to work with me in a rather pre-defined context such as Baltic Circle Festival. Accepting the invitation is the first step of consent and from then on, we negotiate about more or less everything. How we work, negotiate and distribute the power and responsibilities is as important as what we are working on. How do we make decisions? Who do we work with? Which spaces do we inhabit? How do we spend the budget? How do we communicate the work to the public and the press? Who speaks when? And so on. To me collaboration first of all means a shared responsibility. And then an acknowledgement that we are doing something that neither one of us could do alone.

Collaboration as its best is like dancing together. Feeling that our energies are moving in the same direction. Not necessarily agreeing but still moving, thinking, acting in concert, formulating something out of our in-betweenness in relation to time, place and context which are also not fixed but in constant movement. I find it so much more interesting and rewarding than working alone although perhaps there is no such thing as working alone in this world. It's true that it's impossible not to collaborate; we can only act as

if we were doing it alone, but it's difficult, ignorant and dated. We have to acknowledge our privileges as well as interdependencies and write the credits accordingly. The time of the mastermind curators is over, we are working-weaving in complex networks and it's easier and more satisfying when we embrace that and restructure our programs (and budgets) to fit the way we really work.

One more thing: the residency I did with you and Ásgerður taught me so much about curating in collaboration. The way you supported me to turn the format of *Sauna Lectures* into being boiled into one big human soup in the hot seawater tub at Laugardalslaug over three evenings, reflecting on the tensions between social and political realities and fictions with three very different guest speakers was so open and generous. You embraced my idea and went through every step of the process with me, staying open and supportive to explore many possible outcomes. My curatorial concept was elaborated and localised in a dialogue with you and the experience also helped me to develop my strategies in how I collaborate with the invited curators at Baltic Circle. The experiences I had as a guest-curator or as an artist working with institutions of different scale taught me tremendously about the importance of care and commitment. I also had terrible experiences as an artist working with unreliable and uncaring institutions and even though those experiences were painful at the time they have been extremely useful for me in my current role.

My next questions to you: How do you think the context in which you work has developed and transformed through the past five years or so? Where do you see or hope it is going? Feel free to answer or respond in any other way.

Our ways of working have been changing all the time I suppose, but in general the principles we are operating from have not altered too much. What has changed significantly is the context and environment we are working in.

Some of those changes, we believe, we have played a significant role in. And by we, I speak of us the festival directors, but also all of the teams of people that we work with, as well as all of the artists and the audiences. There are a lot of us that have been making it happen together – thinking and doing in conversation with each other.

I think by saying “we are here in this city for the long term and all year round” already changed a lot. It allowed us to think of our collaborations with artists, programming partners and audiences over long stretches, with room during that time for reflecting, adjusting and going together again.

By ceasing to think of the festival as a festival, or even solely as a production and presentation platform, we could rather approach RDF as a fluid resource capable of providing a platform for all kinds of collaborations with the city and the artists we want to work with. This allowed us to listen in very different ways to the needs and potential of any given collaboration we are undertaking, and develop formats accordingly (festivals, residencies, workshops, labs, supper clubs, parties, international co-productions, nationwide radio programmes, city-responsive art-commissions, publications and so on and so on). This, in the end, is not about rejecting festivals as a format, but instead it is about recognising what a festival can and cannot do, and when to work with it as a format and when to opt for something else.

Finally, by insisting that the work of the artists we are working with (whether that work be in the form of a production, a talk or a workshop) should take the main stages, the small stages, the galleries, music halls and dance floors, but equally the bar, the street, the swimming pool, the radio, the billboard and the office block, we made ourselves polyamorous towards the city. The artists and the work we were doing with them, became broadly available to all kinds of odd kinships, which can ultimately deeply enrich the work and the city simultaneously.

By doing these things, we believe the work of the artists we have been working with has become significantly more present and accessible to the city, and equally the city has become more present and available to the work at the same time. More than that, we believe, there is a scene of local and international artists and audiences now gathering with a certain seriousness and urgency around the work of the artists we are working with. That was not there in the same way even five years ago.

In the beginning, we had next to no resources and there was less understanding and enthusiasm for what we were doing. We felt we had no choice but to parasite institutions. We were hacking resources, which we could then divert towards the work of the artist we believed in. Now those institutions want the artists we are working with and ourselves there, precisely because they want to be hacked (in a sense). We all want the dialogue, the exchange and the collaboration.

We can talk about the 2008 economic crisis and the austerity that followed, the ever-worsening horror of climate change, the power of the #metoo movement which has had a huge impact here in Iceland, the rise of the far-right across Europe and North-America, among many other significant social, political and environmental urgencies that we are facing today of course. But I would say that there is now an acknowledgement within almost all institutions that we are currently working with, that #1 no one has the answers that we need to address the problems we are facing; #2 we need to work differently in order to find those answers; #3 we need to give a lot more thought to who we are working with and how we are working with them. In that context, we and the artists that we have been working with are being turned to, because there is a growing idea that these artists and their ways of working can significantly contribute to the thinking and doing of these institutions.

Of course, there have always been allies, and we have had many

great people that we were working with from the beginning, as well as many people doing their own great work independent of us (and before us), without whom nothing would have been possible, but things have changed a lot. There are more of us now, and while conditions and resources are still limited, they are significantly improving, as more institutions and funding bodies take part of the responsibility for supporting our work and the work of these artists.

From our past conversations, I understand you have given a lot of thought to the relationship between artists and institutions – and how to approach it. Can you write a bit about that?

Lately I have been thinking a lot about institutional criticism. Since we both come from a background as a practicing artist we know the possible tensions from the point of view of the artist. Maybe that's why we both consider care so important.

When I started working as the artistic director of Baltic Circle in 2015 I realised that people treated me differently because I was working in and co-leading an institution. Many artists seem to have an idea that institution is something that exploits artists, something one has to fight with or at least rub against. It's for sure a symptom of poor working conditions in the arts – there's probably no other field where so much work is done for free by highly educated people. It's also about the unequal distribution of power and about the institutions' lack of willingness to negotiate and be flexible about their own practices and policies.

Histories, conditions and contexts make an institution be a certain way but most of all it is the people who work there and how they choose to run it. I think we are in a situation as a species and particularly as privileged white European colonisers that we must urgently make major paradigm shifts in how we think and live or otherwise we might end up completely destroying the planet, other species and people as well as ourselves. In

this situation it feels like a lot of time and energy is getting wasted when artists and art institutions struggle and fight with each other. We have to work together and activate/deploy the transformative potential of art in a significant way. Art will not save us, but it is a space where things can happen. Things we had forgotten or could not see or imagine yet. Things that can bring us together to listen, to grieve, to reflect, to hope, to act.

For this to happen we must do our work and make our institutions open, accessible, diverse, fair-paying, caring, courageous, flexible for the needs of the artists and sustainable for all beings involved. We fail all the time, but we must keep trying. I think the most important qualities of an institution are the same as the most important qualities of a person: the ability to notice when one has done something wrong, the humility to admit it and apologise and the capacity to change. If one can do this then all the rest is possible.

Yes. More humility, courage, bravery, openness, accessibility, diversity, fair-paying, hope, care... Sign me up.

#MeToo, Herstory in Dance

— On Activism, Solidarity and Precision

Ilse Ghekiere dances, researches and writes. She studied dance at the Conservatory of Antwerp and has a MA in art history from The Free University of Brussels. As a dancer she has worked with, among others, Michèle Anne De Mey, Mette Ingvarstsen, Jan Martens, Pavle Heidler and Stina Nyberg. In 2016 she reoriented her practice to focus on the relationship between literature, body politics and gender history, and the position of the artist as activist. She lives and works in Oslo and Brussels.

In the wake of #metoo, several dance communities took action to address the issue of sexual harassment. Even though it is now more apparent than ever that sexual harassment is present in all corners of the world and in all industries, it remains crucial to address these problems on a microscale and in environments that are closest to us. In that sense, it's undeniable that the #metoo movement meant not only an acceleration of tackling issues of harassment on a global level, but that it also affected change in several professional communities; the dance community being one of them.

This #metoo-related activism should be seen as an exciting moment in the herstory¹ of dance; a moment of solidarity and action among womxn² dancers and allies addressing the direct experiences of the underlying patriarchal mechanisms present in our field. Talking to several international colleagues who have been active in the discussion gave me the opportunity to think about this movement not only by way of reflecting on my own experiences, but through those of other dance communities. From this perspective, #metoo in dance has to be seen as an international herstory – one that is specific to each community, but resembles and intertwines with others in various ways.

My own journey in relation to the #metoo movement started in the spring of 2017 when I received a grant from the Flemish government to research sexism in the Belgian dance field. In the fall of that same year, I was asked to write an article and share my findings from interviews with 30 womxn colleagues. But then, #metoo happened. The article, at that point being close to its final version, had to be rewritten entirely.

Why? What had changed? The mainstreaming of #metoo did many things, but first and foremost, it showed us a new online call-out strategy, rippling down from celebrity culture to the masses. The magnitude of the movement was crucial to break through a culture of silence, but in no time, a heated and messy (social) media-debate took over; looking for predators rather than listening to the issues of oppression at large. While some womxn would simply use the hashtag to show solidarity, some saw the movement as an opportunity to post their personal stories on social media, while also pointing at individuals in a context where no legal protection was guaranteed. These womxn might have recognized some kind of Harvey Weinstein in their lives, but seemed to overlook that Facebook was not The New York Times and

that they didn't have the status (and outreach) of a Hollywood actress. I am not writing this as a judgment, but as an observation.

By the time the news spread that the hashtag was appropriated from the African-American civil rights activist Tarana Burke³, I felt already deeply divided by the course this movement was taking. With that in mind, I was not sure how my research findings would flow with the movement, without being swallowed by it. The rewriting of the article became about finding a balance between calling out the problem (in a way that would catch attention), while also showing the roots of sexism (so that a focused collective conversation could take place).

When my article, *#Wetoo: What Dancers Talk About When They Talk About Sexism*⁴ was finally published, it received an amount of attention none of us had expected and immediately became part of a larger (and not very precise) #metoo-debate in Belgium. Shortly after, Belgian-based dancers launched a secret Facebook-group called *#wetoo #makemovement*, an idea supported and inspired by a group of dancers who were already members of similar groups in Sweden, Norway and Iceland. During International Women's Week in March 2018, a public reading of the gathered testimonies was organized at Kaaithheater, and a website with a statement and 'tools for action' was launched under the name *Engagement Arts*⁵. The idea was to broaden the conversation towards all art disciplines, while also pressuring different players in the field (i.e. artists, employers, institutions, educators, spectators and perpetrators) to take up responsibility. In a relatively short time, these actions did not only raise awareness about sexism and sexual harassment, they affected the debate of those topics on a political level. Even though this sounds like an all-round positive story, every aspect of it remains in constant negotiation. For instance, what is the role of the dancer after having

pushed this movement to the place where it is now? How is it to be an artist and an activist at the same time?

When thinking about how #metoo-related movements developed in various dance communities, it's clear that many of us had little or no experience with activism, and actions were taken from a point of trial and error. It's been reassuring to discover that I am not alone in having never imagined myself as an activist, let alone in the context of dance. In small art communities where freelance-work is the norm, engaging in activism isn't considered 'cool'.

That is to say, high-culture, government-funded art and activism rarely go hand-in-hand. While art is supposed to 'break the rules', activism might be considered as dogmatic and judgemental – especially when linked to criticising behaviour of powerful individuals and gatekeepers in the scene. No artist wants to be labelled a moralist or, in a #metoo-context, falsely judged as sex-negative or prudish. Expressing any strong opinion that goes against the flow of a community always comes down to taking a risk. You might be misunderstood, you might lose job opportunities, you might even feel excluded while actually trying to find solidarity and inclusion. In the end, it might not be worth it. In addition, the economical context of art makes the notion of solidarity really hard to grasp. Even if artists value community-building and ideas about transforming society, most artists are encouraged (if they want to make a living from their work) to be competitive. Also, in many dance and choreography discourses in the West, critical thinking and theory have become such a strong default posture, that taking a stance by actually acting critically, might feel counter-intuitive, even suspicious. Besides, who has the time for collective activism when one needs to be constantly focused on developing individual artistic practices while applying for grants and also juggling a freelance lifestyle?

In contrast to this reluctance towards activism, #metoo was about daring to take a stance – not only as an individual but as a community. The fact that some womxn in the international dance scenes had the guts to set up secret Facebook-groups and online platforms to discuss sexual harassment in their respective communities is impressive on its own. Furthermore, it is not only important to acknowledge these actions, but also to value the work taken on and carried by dozens of volunteering freelance artists⁶: A work consisting not only of hours of communication and logistics, but of offering emotional support to peers without professional training to do so. One of

the administrators of the Norwegian Facebook-group described it as «the discovery of a complete lack of social structures within the field». This a strong statement considering the fact that several of the protesting communities operate in countries known for their strong social structures – especially in institutions.

Many #metoo-testimonies in dance revealed malfunction in already long-existing procedures inside institutions such as schools, theatres and companies. But even if #metoo activism often succeeded in pressuring these institutions to reassess their procedures, we should not forget that many professional experiences fall outside of these categories. Which makes me wonder: are social structures built and upheld by institutions alone or is there also a responsibility to be shared by the community?

It's interesting to notice how the measurable outcomes of the secret #metoo Facebook groups differ drastically depending on which country they were launched in. The Swedish Facebook-group (with #tystdans or 'silent dance') appeared to be the most engaged, with its approximately 2000 members and 100 testimonies, while Norway (with #nårdansenstopper or 'when the dance stops') followed with 900 members and about 60 testimonies. Both groups saw an instant collective participation in an often heated conversation, enabling the movements to efficiently make use of the #metoo-momentum. In less than a couple of weeks, after statements were communicated to the press, both pages were taken down. When asked why this decision was made, administrators referred to the confidential content and the level of fury that the discussion had reached, as gradually, members of the group would start recognising some profiles of people being accused of harassment. Even though anonymity is crucial in these online call out-spaces, censoring or controlling these emotionally loaded debates becomes as problematic because: who has the right to claim such an authority? The most serious risks (charges of defamation or spreading of rumours) had been thus avoided, while certain cases had begun to be handled by their respective institutions. A sense of purpose had been fulfilled.

In Belgium and Montréal (with *Dance Montréal* #nouis-saussionreal, #wetoomontreal) the groups are still online. Montréal initially followed the activism in Belgium because a case of sexual assault had caused controversy in their community and had remained unresolved while institutions supported the person being accused.

Information and support were exchanged between both dance communities in attempts to strengthen each other's actions. Following the Scandinavian example, the two Facebook groups were introduced as places for sharing experiences. The response however, was low. The Belgian group, with its 700 members, received only 25 testimonies (of which several were archival transcriptions, made of testimonies shared before the #wetoo-campaign), while Montréal with its 250 members barely got a handful. After a couple of months, the two pages transformed gradually into information threads.

*Whistle While You Work*⁷ is yet another online platform that was launched shortly after #metoo. The project was initiated by Frances Chiaverini, an American dancer, and Robyn Doty, an American writer, both living in Frankfurt. Chiaverini has worked in several dance communities, therefore the platform wasn't targeting any community in particular. When launching the website, she was not aware of the Facebook-groups elsewhere (at the moment of writing, however, all three platforms are following and supporting each other's activities). Even though Chiaverini feels she has put much effort into promoting the initiative, she has received fewer than two dozen contributions – having observed, as well, plenty of reluctance and hesitation in her direct environment.

Of course, it's unfair to compare these numbers and outcomes as they don't actually tell us anything about the extent of sexual harassment in their respective dance communities. The only thing it shows us is the willingness or unwillingness to collectively participate in an online-discussion about something as delicate as sexual harassment. Maybe this unwillingness is rooted in a culture of silence specifically endemic to dance where speaking up is not encouraged, or maybe this has to do with the reluctance towards activist proposals? Whatever the reasons are, it is hard not to wonder what made it possible for the Nordic groups to produce such a large amount of testimonies and make them public. We can speculate about several causes, but the fact that most Scandinavian countries are simply a couple of steps ahead when it comes to gender equality might have played a crucial role in the willingness to engage in a womxn-lead movement.

Having been invited to the Norwegian group, I definitely noticed both a sense of consensus and solidarity among womxn – an atmosphere I recognized from having worked a lot in Sweden. This was interesting to observe because when I started interviewing colleagues prior to

#metoo, one of my biggest surprises was that certain situations or ideas were not even considered 'problems' – let alone 'structural problems' – even when they were directly affecting the person I was talking to. Because the Belgian dance field is vast and counts many nationalities, it's hard to find common ground for talking about gender. Furthermore, because Belgian contemporary dance is rooted in a reactionary movement against ballet and its feminine traits, talking about sexism might not only be considered 'conservative', you may be also accused of 'creating problems where there are none'. I remember one dancer telling me about a conversation with a choreographer about her pregnancy. The choreographer had said he couldn't work with her anymore, because «mothers were not interesting artistically». What to me was (and is) a bluntly sexist statement, was to my colleague nothing more than the result of a professional inconvenience – one that made sense to her.

I am not pointing out this conversation because I believe we should work towards an absolute agreement on how we evaluate uncomfortable and inconvenient situations. Still, there is something to be said about what is experienced as 'normal' (especially when the situation involves a person with more power and authority), and how it is legitimized, even by the ones who are disadvantaged by it. Artistic preferences, artistic oeuvre, artistic methods, artistic freedom... all these artistic 'whatevers' function as perfect excuses for basically any type of behaviour, harassment and abuse included. If a person doesn't find at least some collegial support for their disagreement with a sexist norm, especially from older and more established colleagues, then that person is much less likely to speak up about their experiences.

If sexual harassment is linked to public secrecy and a culture of silencing, we still have a long way to go before everyone recognizes how these interactions contribute to a bigger picture of oppression. Solidarity and a level of common understanding are necessary to create spaces where people dare to speak with each other about recurring issues in their communities. For despite the belief that certain behaviours will disappear over time, engagement and action are crucial in any attempt to unravel toxic mentalities.

So, what is next? Even when certain goals have been reached, all conversations on the topic end with question marks. How do we proceed when the momentum starts to fade; when we might not have the energy to write yet another pressuring letter to our institutions; when

we start to doubt if all this actually matters? How do we stay focused when we see that whoever might have been scared when #metoo burst in to the dance community continue their careers as if nothing had happened? Where do we draw the line when it comes to responsibility and accountability?

I know that I am writing these questions as if we are all in the same boat. As if we have all agreed that sexual harassment and sexism, and abuse of power are real things. Unfortunately, that is not the case. So much of the upcoming work will still be dedicated to addressing the voices that try to undermine these discussions. From that perspective, massive education on the topic is still needed – not only to shield our views against the disbelievers, but also to become more persistent and precise about our actions and the transformations we want to see in our respective dance community.

Precision might be one of the biggest challenges to sustaining the credibility in the #metoo movement. Today, in certain countries and contexts, it might be easier than before to speak up about harassment and see individuals (mostly men) being held accountable. But the question remains: Where do these acts towards accountability, which is often really just a euphemism for ‘punishment’, lead us in the long run? More power games? Even if I understand that certain #metoo cases need to remain entirely anonymous and be dealt with discreetly, it’s often frustrating not knowing what the accusations are about. I sometimes wonder if this is yet another form of silencing; the silencing of a public conversation. It makes sense that certain situations and interactions are

hard to pin down, but when I’ve had the chance to listen to experiences of harassment and abuse, the patterns of behaviour are so repetitive that I find it surprising so many of us keep on holding on to the belief that it’s ‘so complex’. Enacting precision and naming specifics clearly can be a personal relief, granting those in need the empowerment and wisdom that they deserve inside of repetitive patterns or cycles of abuse. It is a powerful gesture to share with others and with those who’ve crossed the line.

And this brings us back to persistence. As mentioned above: communities are different, and several strategies might need to be tried out before reaching a place of common support. Get inspired by other dance communities and the tools and strategies they have created. Inform yourself and consider the ways in which you can contribute to this movement. For instance, many actions, such as letters, testimonies, statements and articles, involve writing. If you are a dancer with a skilled pen, I would encourage you to write for your community and contribute to the shaping of new histories, herstories and theirstories⁸ in dance. But don’t exhaust yourself; being part of a movement should be enriching, even fun. Protest does not always have to be loud and numerous for it to matter. We can contribute and support in many ways: listen to a colleague, read a book on the topic, spread the conversation within your network in the scene. When you work with other colleagues, you can think of organizing gatherings, forums, workshops and events, or anything that keeps the conversation going. Whatever you do, now is not the moment to stop. We have worked on making ripples, but now, we need to make waves.

1 Wikipedia defines herstory as follows: A history written from a feminist perspective, emphasizing the role of women, or told from a woman's point of view. The principal aim of herstory is to bring women out of obscurity from the historical record.

2 Urban Dictionary defines womxn as follows: A spelling of «women» that is a more inclusive, progressive term that not only sheds light on the prejudice, discrimination, and institutional barriers womxn have faced, but to also show that womxn are not the extension of men (as hinted by

the classic Bible story of Adam and Eve) but their own free and separate entities. More intersectional than womyn because it includes trans-women and women of color.

3 Tarana Burke is the original founder of the #metoo movement. In 2006, Burke began using the phrase «Me Too» to raise awareness of the pervasiveness of sexual abuse and assault in society.

4 <https://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/wetoo-what-dancers-talk-about-when-they-talk-about-sexism>

5 <http://engagementarts.be>

6 Many of the artists in this article decided to remain anonymous not only because of the collective nature of the #metoo movement but also to protect themselves against unfair professional repercussion.

7 You find the project Whistle While You Work on <http://www.nobody100.com/>.

8 In this context, the invented word their-story could be defined as an attempt to write history from a perspective beyond gender binaries.

Elina Pirinen

crystal

cloud

inside

Elina Pirinen is a Helsinki-based choreographer, dancer, singer-songwriter-musician, curator, artistic director and pedagogue. She often uses large classical music pieces as companions for different corporal, vocal and linguistic performative qualities. She works closely with contemporary feministic psychoanalytical thinking and experiencing, and their potential and importance in stage practice. She collaborates regularly with Zodiak – Center for New Dance, Kiasma Theater of Kiasma Museum of contemporary art, performance art venue Mad House, Theatre Academy of University of the Arts Helsinki and Performance Art Society. She also works with domestic animals in need, is married to a beautiful man and makes romantic baroque-rockmusic with her orchestra.

they thought and thought and worked and studied and wrote and spoke and checked the situation and checked again and thought and worked and studied and wrote and spoke more and checked the situation and checked again and drove to Lidl and then home and in the morning they took over his dreams and the room and the computer and the bank account and the festival and the european network and the bike and the lunch and his colleague's room and the computer and the bank account and the festival and the producer team and the american network and the bike and the rescue dog and the lunch and his colleague's room and the technical team and the dreams and the pencils and the papers and the salary and the bladder and the liver and the psychoanalyst and the festival and the producer team member's aupair and the asian network and the bike and his father's boat and the lunch and the books and the fatigue and his colleague's fatigue and the room and the mold and the technical team's testicles and the coffeemachines and the curtains and the rescue dog and the computer and the bank account and the salary and the festival and producer team member's aupair's windows and the american network and the bike and the lunch and

*the books and his colleague's books and the mold
and the reflections and the obsessions and his col-
league's obsessions and reflections and the invita-
tions and the doors to the secrets and the shadows
from the walls and his colleague's shadows from the
walls and his prayers and his colleague's prayers
and loudspeakers and polyamory and rescue rabbit
and the new ideas and his colleague's new ideas and
rests and saliva and testicles and his colleague's
saliva and testicles connected to the technical
team's testicles and his colleague's prostate misery
and his colleague's brain misery and his colleague's
lung misery and the adulthood friends and waved to
the smells of the trees in the fogs of the coastline
and crystal clouds above the fogs and the smells
and they took this over with the ax from Lidl's sum-
mer edition and thought and worked and studied
and wrote and spoke and checked the situation like
an ax and with the surprising help of the adulthood
friends his dreams and his colleagues' dreams and
the rooms and the prostates and the asian and the
american and the european networks and the
fatigue embraced the essential movement of the ax
and the glowing reflection of the blade cauterized
the coffeemachines and computers and the organ*

miseries and the papers and the father but not the boat and the aupair's windows and the invitations and the books and the bikes making new materialistic composition for his living colleagues to molest with unconscious lust and especially the technical team's testicles and the polyamories and the obsessions and the loudspeakers and the new ideas had never felt such a rythmical choreography of an object and therefore with gratefulness dissolved into the mold creating new smells of the trees to grow under the crystal clouds of next summers where the rescue dog and the rescue rabbit and the aupair and the shadows from the walls and the producer team and the lunch and the psychoanalysts and the salaries and the bladders and the livers and the curtains and the bank accounts and the prayers and the salivas and the rests and the pencils and they had a nice ride with the fogs of the coastline through the door of new secrets.

This writing rises from the ultimate desire to do "bad girl's practice" as an utopian strategy in art making in 2018 – in this case in hard core emancipatory thinking in such reasonable medium as language and it's targets related to the idea of "the self as an outsider who speaks from that position". This idea of "the subject as an outsider position" can be seen also as in support of

a right-minded chauvinistic academia where writing about art has gone deeply in to and from where linguistic thinking and writing are published as good. My work as a feminist choreographer is to try to re-write these good behaviours every time someone asks me to write and not to obey those justifications set by male myceliums through times. This choreographical

language fantasma rises from the ultimate desire of me and my co-voices to think with the tiredness of trying to gain and maintain agency in different male myceliums in dance art. Rather than spending my actual time in jail for murder, I use my fantasmas and do art from them as a revolution.

Venke Marie Sortland

When the Fluidity of the Form Becomes the Firm Point

Venke Marie Sortland is a dancemaker and performer based in Oslo. She has her artistic education from the School of Contemporary Dance in Oslo, and has studied pedagogy and aesthetics at the University of Oslo. Venke has been performing for choreographers like Ingri Fiksdal and Jana Unmüßig. She has also made her own work, in collaboration with dancemaker and performer Pernille Holden, and with Landing – a production unit for situational and audience-specific projects. Venke teaches at the School of Contemporary Dance in Oslo, and writes on a regular basis for scenekunst.no og periskop.no.

Flytende Landskap is a project by and with the production unity Landing, initiating, producing and conveying situation-specific and target group-specific dance as art. Landing was established in 2005 by 11 dancers and choreographers from Skolen for Samtidsdans (Oslo School of Contemporary Dance). As of today, the staff of Landing consists of Venke Marie Sortland, Ida Gudbrandsen and Sigrid Hirsch Kopperdal.

Flytende landskap (meaning *Landscapes in flow* or *Fluid landscapes*) was performed the spring of 2018 as a series of unannounced events in different public spaces in Oslo – the new business area Barcode in Bjørvika, the popular walking area Paradisbukta in Bygdøy, the huge high-rises of the cooperative Ammerudlia in Grorud, the garden of Oscars gate 11 near Bogstadveien and last, but not least, outside of the main public library Deichman in the center of the city. The events lasted from three to 24 hours and were performed by eight dancers with almost 1000 meters of artificial lianas, made by stage designer Camilla Wexels Riser. The performers entered and transformed the public spaces by degrees through moving with, on and through the lianas; creating temporary sculptures, covering large areas, disappearing in the lianas, or leaving the lianas behind, as shells or traces.

This text is based on conversations between the contributors to *Flytende Landskap* – the eight performers¹, stage designer Camilla and Loan Ha, who followed the process from the outside – and it discusses some aspects that, in varying degrees of being planned or conscious, were of significant value for and had an significant effect on the project.

THE RANDOM SPECTATOR AS A TARGET GROUP

An important motivation for *Flytende landskap* was the interest in the passing spectator. The project was not created for an informed performing arts audience, here understood as an audience that regularly and at its own initiative attends dance or theatre performances. Because of this, we selected times and places for the realisations that we thought would create interesting meetings between us, the lianas and the public spaces, rather than what would be appropriate for an audience wanting to attend. Our random audience would be there anyway – or not. However, the choice of addressing the unknowing, unprepared spectators did *not* make us any less interested in how the project could work in meeting them. In relation to this, time was often a topic:

Pernille Holden (PH): *There are many aspects and experiences of time. For instance, I think of the difference between the time it takes to realise a project and the time the spectator experiences.*

Ida Gudbrandsen (IG): *The difference between our and the audience's experience of time was particularly prominent in Barcode, where spectators often only saw some ten seconds of what we were doing on their way to work. To us, these ten seconds were part of a three to four-hour long stretch.*

The choice of focusing on random spectators meant that we hardly promoted the project. We simply wanted to avoid that spectators came to us. To us, this was also about emphasising the moment, the audience's unprepared experience of the project there and then. Admittedly, the way spectators reacted

to this varied a great deal. To some, such a choice seemed to be a waste of cultural funds, as it (within this perspective) limited our target group more than it could have.

PH: I had an interesting conversation about the art of the moment with a librarian at the Deichman library. He lamented that we didn't document the project better, why nobody was there to film what we did all the time. I tried to explain why we appreciate and are interested in the fact that the art only exists there and then as an experience. The librarian pointed out that so little remains in the memory after, but I think, isn't it enough, what we have done?

On the other hand, many spectators, some days even most of them, took the experienced lack of tangibility in hand. They eagerly took pictures and filmed with their phones. We were admittedly prepared for this. Early on, we understood that the project went well as images on social media. This audience behaviour had both positive and negative consequences. First, the project could exist in two parallel spheres or public spaces at the same time – in a physical, public space and in a digital public sphere (if SoMe should be called a public space is an issue outside of my scope in this article). Perhaps one could think that this made the random audience into co-creators, considering how they was choosing aspects and excerpts, and that they as such were taking part in a creative process springing out from the material we offered. At the same time, it was as if many of the random spectators didn't allow themselves to experience the project in the moment, their experience sort of had to be mediated through the response they got from the pictures they took and posted on SoMe. This opens for questions about what would have happened if the project had been more or less impossible to photograph in interesting ways. Would we have experienced it as equally successful, and would we have met the same interest from our target group?

CONVEYING AND PERFORMING

That *Flytende Landskap* was not planned for a performing arts audience gave us another interesting challenge, that the roles of performing and conveying information about the project converged. In this regard, we consider conveying information about the project as a different aspect from performing it. As Sigrid commented, the project contained both more conventional work as a performer and being socially and relationally present in the situations and meetings arising from it. This aspect was not one we could rehearse prior to meeting the audience. We had to figure it out there and then. To an even higher degree than the SoMe postings, conversations with the audience – in the streets, on the bench, outside of the high-rise – became a significant part of the work. This demanded a wholly different skill from us as performers than the more conventional performing arts projects performed inside of venues for performing arts audiences do.

PH: To us, the negotiation between conveying and performing the work became an endless labour every day – some

days, it was insanely difficult, other days it came easier. That the performative and the communicative were layered, makes the project processual to the very highest degree, because we actually had to talk to people about what we were doing, while doing it, even though we hardly knew what we were doing. Even though it is stressful to be inside of this friction, or this tension, this was where many of the interesting parts of the project arose.

Loan Ha (LH): As an informed spectator, I could see that you gradually built expertise in this very task, the intersection between conveying and performing a work. In regard to this, I find it interesting what the objects Camilla made facilitated for you. Using the lianas, you could build a sculpture or a visual image, a landscape that remained if you exited the role of the performer to speak with people. In the conversation, you could point back at the landscape.

PH: This double role opened for many very nice, but also incredibly embarrassing conversations, and there were times when I afterwards thought that this person will never see art ever again, because I have said so many odd things.

IG: I often felt as if I were smiling inside as I stood there, telling people about the project we were working on, discussing whether art is important to society, while one of the others of you came rolling slowly by, wrapped in a liana.

Venke Marie Sortland (VMS): I had this amazing moment with a young man walking past. He saw me standing there, trying to pull loose a liana from a large pile, and he asked whether I needed help. I think it took him quite a while to realise that he, by helping me, had become part of a larger project unfolding around him. A project that consisted of more than his help, because there were so many other things playing out at the same time, that together made up a whole.

Sigrid Kopperdal (SK): That the art takes place in the meeting between the situation we establish and the people walking past is very interesting, but also feels like a real risk. Good luck on being a control freak in this, so to speak, because there are so many things one just must figure out along the way. It made me think of how important it is, that a project is unstable in the right places. There can't be risk in every single aspect of it.

STAGE DESIGN, COSTUME, OBJECT,
CO-PERFORMER, BALLAST,
RESTING MAT, SAUSAGE, LIANA

The most constant and in many ways also defiant element in the project was the lianas made by stage designer Camilla. The lianas were produced before the performers met to prepare for the project, and as such they defined conditions for the project. The relationship between us as performers, the space and the lianas became an important, but also difficult, issue throughout the project. This, combined with a fear of limiting the potential we saw in the lianas, resulted in that we avoided to agree upon a verbal definition of what the lianas were.

VMS: I find it utterly wrong to call them stage design, but I have often used this term in lack of a better one. The alternatives could be to call them objects or materials. But we did treat them a bit as co-performers as well, they are sufficiently hard or difficult to handle that they are «higher» in the hierarchy than costumes, props and stage design, as understood as something that strengthens or makes up a foundation for the performance, rather than limits it.

IG: To me, calling them objects creates a distance I do not want.

Rikke Baewert (RB): I have thought of the lianas as an extension of myself, I have not regarded them as objects at all.

Ina Coll Kjølmoen (ICK): To me, the spaces constituted the stage design, and what we brought was material, both physically and in terms of movement. I consider Deichman as a huge stage set.

CWR: I think the doubt surrounding the definition rises from us moving in the intersection between visual art and performing arts. In this project, I wanted to create something that could work both within a performer-based project and as a free-standing, independent work of art. Another reason we find it hard to define the lianas in words could be that they are open for so many different associations. They are not just sausages, roots, cauliflowers, body parts or lianas. The stories of all the places they have been creates an opening for yet new associations.

The problem of defining the lianas and their relationship to us, may also be rooted in that they were originally planned as an extension of the costumes and the bodies. As a more or less conscious result of this, it became clear at an early stage that the project had no movement material or performers' work separate from the lianas.

SK: The lianas came first and demanded their part. As performers we had to be flexible. We listened and negotiated on all levels.

IH: Another characteristic was the plodding, there were hours of plodding, with and without lianas, between the car and the different buildings or images we made.

Ingrid Haakstad (IH): Because the lianas were unwieldy to work with, one characteristic of the movement material was the laborious, heavy quality. Doing something of another quality, something light or quick or playful, for instance, was hard.

PH: Again, the most interesting may be the negotiation between the physicality and the material, between us and the lianas, or between the lianas as part of my body and as a separate object. When we lie down in a pile of lianas, we also become part of the physical material of objects, but when I curled the liana together as if it was a cinnamon roll, I could carry it as if it was a thing.

VMS: We did try to break with this quality a few times, for instance at Ammerud, where we thought that twirling around and around with each our liana was a good idea. After just five minutes we all lay on the ground, feeling sick.

CHOREOGRAPHIC STRUCTURES AS CRITICAL PRACTICE

In and with *Flytende Landskap* we also wanted to work with choreographic structures in a critical manner, to examine how we could create the wanted effect on the space or in meeting with the audience, rather than fulfill conventions for what dance is, or how dance should be conveyed². Because the public space demands a certain flexibility from us, we chose to call the production period a period of preparation, and we made it shorter than the period we used for performing. Further, we worked on stretches too long to watch for most spectators. We thought of all aspects of the project – including loading or unloading the car, short breaks in a pile of lianas, conversations with the audience or conversations between us, summing up the stretch of the day – as part of the artistic product. In many instances, this created a feeling that the project was impossible to see or grasp in full.

SK: *That the project was so hard to capture in full became particularly clear at the main library Deichman. There, the first thing the spectators likely discovered were the lianas in the stairs leading up to the building. If they got curious and chose to round the corner, the lianas continued and continued and continued towards the back of the building. Because of this, it was likely difficult for the audience to see how many performers were involved, how many lianas we had, or, more general, where the work began and where it ended. The edges became sort of unclear and undefined.*

VMS: *Sigrid, you also said that it was as if the outer limits of the project could potentially be expanded to the whole city and the whole timeframe the project was realised within. Within these limits the project could suddenly appear at a certain time in a specific place.*

In addition, the structural choices contributed to the processual character, because we neither could or would plan in detail what to do in meeting with the place in question at the time in question. This rhymes with something Marianne said, that «the fluidity of the form became the firm point». In other words, the nature of the project included us not knowing how it would work or which shape it would take. Put differently, negotiating the different aspects became the perhaps most important aspect of the performers' work.

PH: *When talking about the processual character of the project, it is important to remember that we never treated one aspect separately from the others – dramaturgy, interaction with the audience or the relations between us as performers – we had to negotiate them all against the different spaces at the time.*

PH: *But I also think that we have some learned internal understandings that affect the choices we make, some terribly simple strategies we are not able to escape, which we are not able to realise that we are using as we do it. For instance, a strategy we often used was acting in contrast with what was already established. If we had worked slowly for a longer stretch of time, we started something up-tempo or a quick change.*

LH: *It was as if you had bound invisible rubber bands between yourself and all these other aspects, and you always had to watch out to see if these rubber bands held the correct tension or weight. I also think you developed a tactility or sensibility in how you picked up the moods at the different spaces, affecting how you built the sculptures or moved the lianas. For the way they were built in Barcode would not work for Paradisbukta, and the project became something else when performing it at Ammerud than in Oscars gate.*

IG: *When the lianas had been curled up, we put them straight, when we had built something tall, we flattened it out... Even though the contrast aspect was not clearly stated, we had an encompassing principle that we were always to transform the landscape. But the dramaturgic structures within the event were likely more important to us as performers, than to the passersby who watched for ten seconds. To me, the need for transformation was also about a feeling that the lianas died if they stayed in the same spot for too long – they became a dead spot.*

MS: *This sensibility was very interesting to explore, in combination with the slow pace of the work, and the long stretches of time during which the project unfolded. We were all at the same place for a long stretch of time, and we were all very much «on» at the same time. It opened for a distinct way of being a performer in a work.*

VMS: *In a way, this was a good thing – a reminder that we weren't working for the sake of «nice», but for transformation. Something was allowed to come into being, and the next moment, it was gone.*

In all this fluidity, an important pillar of the work was the community of it – that we were so many performers who could lean on the others' competence and presence. Or, as Pernille commented, the community or the togetherness also created a form, in keeping the project together. Put differently, we could also say that we, as performers, or our individual bodies, became less important than the whole we contributed to making.

ART IN PUBLIC SPACES –
AGENT OF CHANGE
OR WITHOUT PURPOSE?

What happens with art when moving it out of the performing arts venue and into the public sphere, when one invades a space that is already filled with something else? Is it possible (and interesting) to maintain the idea of art as «without purpose», that is, as a value in itself, when exiting a context of art? Even though our main emphasis was on what happened between us, the lianas and the place we landed on, we couldn't get away from an aspect of social work in the project, if unspoken or an internal motivation. We also wanted to create awareness, comment, influence and challenge the activity normally taking place within the public spaces we realised the project within, and to make it possible for the audiences to take part in the activity. Such a motivation to change, add to, or transform the space and the spectators we met within it, could possibly not be seen as purely artistic.

Marianne Skjeldal (MS): *Conversations with passersbys often started with questions such as «what does this mean?», or «what are you really doing?».* I often replied that I tried to soften the edges and to add something to the space that I found that it and the people within it needed. This seemed to be something many of the people we talked to could relate to, for instance, several of those we met in Barcode said things like «yes, yes, all the people here are such hard-core corporate business people, so, yes, I totally agree, and I support your project». Or the man from The Norwegian Directorate of Public Construction and Property whom I talked to outside of the library, who found that their aims are really the same as ours.

Admittedly, in most cases, this aspect of change was more of an encompassing frame for the project. The interaction between us and the audience was mostly about how we could support their experience of our work. The underlying thought was that if the audience members met us as humans and not just as performers and artists, if they found that they contributed to, or were part of the project – if they simply felt that they were seen by us and that their questions were taken seriously – we facilitated artistic experiences.

IG: *I think that the laborious, unwieldy and unelevated sides of our performance contributed to starting conversations.*

SK: *I also think that the aspect of time, that we chose to spend several days in a row in the same space, made it possible for us to establish contact. People sort of had to see us go on the whole week before they eventually approached us to ask, «who are you and what are you doing, we are talking about you at lunch».*

VMS: *Agreed, the first day the project was kind of a curiosity, the second day it became a topic at lunch, whereas the third day allowed them to come to us to say, «you know, the people in my department are wondering, what are you doing?».* Our accountant was very happy, as his office is in Barcode, and he had paid attention to us, seeing that we did our work the whole of the week.

IG: *I almost wish that the conversations we had with the «inhabitants» of the spaces could have been a larger or more conscious part of the project, for instance to meet the owner of the place halfway, or to talk to the man who always walked his dog there.*

In this regard, one may ask what kind of a project *Flytende Landskap* was – was it site-specific, social or political? Even though one definition doesn't necessarily exclude another, such definitions are interesting when evaluating whether we succeeded or failed in our attempt. Or could a site-specific work include all these dimensions?

PH: *Even though we continuously reflected on questions such as what it means to take over a space or how we could become part of it, we never fully decided if we wanted to work on the surface or do more to get to know for instance the people living there.*

SK: *Rather than working on how to approach the space, we worked on what happened in the moment, related to aspects such as time, the work of the performer, and the meeting with the audience.*

MS: *Yes, and in that way, this was more of a social project than a site-specific project. The aesthetic or formal work was more of an entrance or portal to starting conversations and interact with those living in a place or passing through it.*

LH: *And in spending time in many different places, the project also created a space of its own, another or a new space, fluid and mobile.*

Contributors to *Flytende Landskap*

Camilla Wexels Riser (CWR)	stage designer
Ida Gudbrandsen (IG)	performer and project coordinator
Ina Coll Kjølmoen (ICK)	performer
Ingrid Haakstad (IH)	performer
Loan Ha, (LH)	external eye
Marianne Skjeldal (MS)	performer
Pernille Holden (PH)	performer
Rikke Baewert (RB)	performer
Sigrid Hirsch Kopperdal (SK)	performer and project coordinator
Venke Marie Sortland (VMS)	performer and project coordinator

1 This text springs out from two conversations between the contributors to the project: dancers/choreographers Ida Gudbrandsen (IG), Ina Coll Kjølmoen (ICK), Ingrid Haakstad (IH), Marianne Skjeldal (MS), Pernille Holden (PH), Rikke Baewert (RB), Sigrid Hirsch Kopperdal (SK), and Venke Marie Sortland (VMS), stage designer Camilla Wexels Riser (CWR), and Loan Ha (LH), who followed the project from the outside as an external eye or informed spectator. The first conversation

took place June 13 and the second August 15 2018. The text was written by choreographer and writer Venke Marie Sortland, and it more or less implicit reflects her ongoing interest for examining choreographic structures and situations for conveying dance in different contexts and to different target groups.

2 In the text «Work structures as a critical practice», published in the first edition of the magazine KOREOGRAFI (2016), I more thoroughly explore thoughts on this.



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