

TANZFABRIK
BERLIN

SEASON
2023–24



2023
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*Memories
and
Reflections*

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«Editorial Note»

FELICITAS ZEEDEN

Dear Reader,

When it comes to memories and reflections on our 23/24 season, several snippets come to mind: a programme with many performances, open studios, residencies, an anniversary festival, moments of exchange and being together. Recalling these months at Tanzfabrik, I find myself facing ecstatic, dancing, sweating bodies—bodies intertwining and holding each other; I remember myself sitting in front of large canvases, losing myself in their quiet landscape shots. I am thrown back to a completely dark performance space, that encourages the audience to reflect on their perceptual habits and the privilege of a non-disabled body; I feel as if I've been drawn back to our pieces in the urban landscape: an audio walk that leads us along waterways through Wedding and another one that begins precisely at sunset, in a garden school in Neukölln.

Other performances took us with images, words, and dances all the way to the bustling hotspots of Mallorca or to the Tagliamento in northern Italy, one of the last wild rivers in Europe. In the dark winter, ghosts and avatars were conjured in our studios, and the spirit of the Shiraz Arts Festival was temporarily revived. I remember a queer-erotic auction in western style being held in Studio 14, and I have a particularly fond memory of a set of burning candles placed on stage. The candles are shaped like alphabetical letters and just like a sparkling promise, they form the word «Forever».

In terms of thematic focuses and curatorial emphases, we continued with the system of «Folds» throughout this season. Each «Fold» contained two or more performance works shown on selected weekends. In being assembled together, the fabric of each of the pieces is metaphorically folded, layered, condensed, or unfolded.

In addition to the Folds, other programmes and collaborations were retained. Both our RED residency programme and our love affair with Radialsystem continued to flourish: In the framework of the LOVE cooperation, Tanzfabrik and Radialsystem host four resident artists (or duos) each year, and present works by jointly supported artists.

With the presentation of two Feminist Futures Weekends, the thread of the European network «apap FEMINIST FUTURES» was further extended. Inspired by this feminist network, we also developed an accessible format at Tanzfabrik this Season: «Family Friendly Environment—All families welcome». These performances were scheduled earlier in the afternoon, and incorporated various measures to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and care. This format—one we intend to continue with—especially aimed to enable parents to continue participating actively in the cultural field.

Despite a full programme and many Folds, we also endeavoured to temporarily revive the spirit of pause—in reference to the month-long «Pause as Resistance» in 2022: March was dedicated to the «(Im)mobility Salon», an open studio that aimed at exploring ways to interrupt productivity through dance and rethink its community-creating potential.

Preceding all of this was one of the highlights and our season opener: The 25th anniversary of Tanznacht, celebrated in September with a 25-hour dance marathon featured, 80 performing artists.

Finally, traces of all these works are brought together in this publication: Each Fold and additional format are captured in one article. These articles are written by freelance authors from Berlin's dance scene, many of who are members of the writing collective STREAM. Through their writings, the authors revive the works, recount memories, and shed light on the unique aspects or shared themes encapsulated within each Fold.

Our 2023–2024 season was indeed intense, in the sense of consolidation by folding, layering and connecting. While we consider ourselves fortunate to present so many rich projects and to collaborate with the artists of this incredible scene, these past months have also shown that political circumstances are changing, and that the independent dance scene is facing cuts. Institutions will lose parts of their funding, and many artists are worried about project grants, not to mention structural support. We too are somewhat at a loss when envisioning the near future of cultural funding in Berlin.

At a broader scale, the past months have been marked by crises, wars, and populism and at times, it seemed unbearable to keep going. Of course, we also question what art can still offer the world or how we can uphold the vision of a feminist future when reality seems to contradict it so profoundly. We don't have a solution to this. But we continue with our work because to stop would be to give up. We hope for peace and strive to provide space for different voices, to stay engaged in dialogue, to be empathetic, to maintain peace in small ways, and to embrace ambiguities.

In the face of all these difficulties, a poem was shared among our European partner organizations. It was written by an artist who prefers not to be named or claim authorship. They simply suggest sharing these 15 words as an antidote to polarisation. In this vein:

no
soft
smart
fragile
tender
human
tissue
should
ever
be
ripped
apart
because
we
differ

25 JAHRE TANZNACHT

8 – 9 SEPTEMBER 2023

«Slices of Pie: memories of Tanznacht 2023»

LOUISE TRUEHEART

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Tanznacht, a 25-hour dance marathon was organised, featuring 80 performing artists.



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«TANZNACHT»
JACOPO LANTERI & JULY WEBER
FESTIVAL / DANCE MARATHON

The sekt-softened crowd that populated the yard of the Uferstudios hof felt ebullient, if somewhat defiant. The numbers that described this year's Tanznacht—25 year anniversary celebrated for 25 hours with performances by 80 artists—must have had something to do with it. They gave off a grandeur that paired well with the adrenaline rush of the incumbent era in cultural funding, highlighting the size of the scene and its tenacity. The political climate may be unsympathetic, but when I looked at all the people laughing, greeting each other, I felt the pull of jubilation and I could not help but feel that the curatorial concept underlined the urgency of state support. Dancers in conversation gesticulated their hands the way dancers do when they are not dancing. Children ran wild, waving old «#danceformillions» flags that had been dug up from the office. We were a loose group of friends and colleagues, roughly described as a community, and we had a shared immediate future.

Curated and conceptualised by Jacopo Lanteri and July Weber, Tanznacht rewrote the traditional festival format in scope and ambition. Rather than peruse a programme, book tickets to a few shows, and note the times in my calendar, I neither checked who was in it nor scheduled my arrival and departure. I simply dove into Studio 14, which was quadrisected by walls in the shape of an X. In each slice, the artists would perform works that began and ended asynchronously and lasted a non-obligatory 70 minutes. They could bring in props and set pieces, as long as they didn't leave indelible traces. Light was off/on/bring your own. The fee was 800 euros, brutto.

The audience was given headphones, and invited to walk around the perimeter of the pie, visiting a different artist in each quarter. When you pressed a button on the headphones, it switched their track and changed the colour of their light—red, blue, green, or yellow—according to the colour indicated in each quadrant. In the first hour, Marga Alfeirão gyrated on a car seat with the ghost of Biggie Smalls, Maria F. Scaroni danced a yin yoga duet with a duvet, Claire Vivianne Sobbotke played with prosthetics, Djibril Saal looked slowly to the heavens, masked and grave. I headed outside for some air.

As is common practice in a foyer, I enjoyed a beverage and chatted with friends while scanning the dense network of relationships—people I wanted to talk to and people I wanted to avoid, people I know well and people I hope know me. Due to an unexpectedly long line, I narrowly caught the end of Martin Hansen's work. He moved as if in a time warp. His limbs seemed disembodied, and while he gazed upon them he moved his spine in horror, then turned to the horizon in rue of the day. A recording of his voice reading Mary Shelley's Frankenstein played in my headphones. It was the part when the creature escapes and tastes the world for the first time—the dew, the warmth of fire, the screams when he approaches villages in search of food and shelter.

Although I had missed Liz Rosenfeld's slot, I got some Liz action later on when they spoke up during Jen Rosenblit's sharing. Liz asked Jen to describe a perfect date. Jen said no one else would be there; Jen would eat oysters and drink a dirty martini. Jen improvised a candid dance, refreshing, playful, and charismatic, the likes of which I hadn't seen since New York in 2012. Jen asked for requests and someone said, «do more dancing!» An elderly Icelandic man got chatty. Jen indulged him with attention and expertly channeled his energy.

Perel was next to Jen, and sometimes Jen would peek over at the lap dances Perel solicited from their chair. One of Perel's suggestions to their audience was, «you can always go watch Jen for some inspiration.» It was engaging to see the two artists, despite their being separated by the wall, connect and transgress their frame. Independently from the artist's intention, the audience could cross-pollinate the works as well because, if you sat far enough away, you could see a whole half of pie, or two adjacent shows at once. You could watch one artist while listening to another's soundtrack, creating an experience intended by neither. Over the walls and around them, the curatorial format generated access points that highlighted the different ways of watching, making, and in which we are connected.



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Layton Lachman danced adjacent to Alice Chauchat at 9:15 in the morning. I was no longer present, but Lachman reported that Chauchat wandered around the audience a lot, leaving her slice, wholly uncontained by the frame. Lachman felt that their proximity to one another was supportive, a playful engagement akin to Perel and Rosenblit. Pairs were also interesting in their differences: Peter Pleyer and Agata Siniarska are as dissimilar as I can imagine two artists being. Pleyer, clad in tie dye and his signature crocheted mohawked balaclava, danced his signature improvisation, while Siniarska, dressed in black and deep-throating a microphone, danced more vocally than spatially. Seeing them side by side was like watching reality television (is this really happening?).

Sometimes, sitting on the border between two works made me nervous, because the coloured light of my headphones revealed—to the artist—the choice I had made. Wearing this choice wasn't a big deal when there was enough audience on either side, but it felt rude when there was a disparity. At the same time, the audience could take care of the performers with their attention. Before Camila Malenchini started dancing a reconstruction of Ninjinsky's *L'Après Midi d'un Faune*, her friends stole bean bags from around the room, inadvertently pulling a crowd. Around dawn, someone offered Hermann Heisig a croissant. Some audience members stayed awake all night, and some were fast asleep for hours.

This proposal was colossal and brought the audience together to witness the scene's breadth and wealth. Ambitious proposals are necessary and important—we will need them in order to survive the next 25 years. With great ambition comes greater responsibility, and over the course of the evening I saw how that responsibility was shared between the curators, work-exchangers, artists, technicians, friends, helpers, and everyone else in the audience. Is that how it always works? I don't know. But when you took the headphones off, the silence you heard was a devoted one, peppered with the occasional chuckle, panting breath, skin against marley.

FEMINIST FUTURES WEEKEND

21 – 24 SEPTEMBER 2023

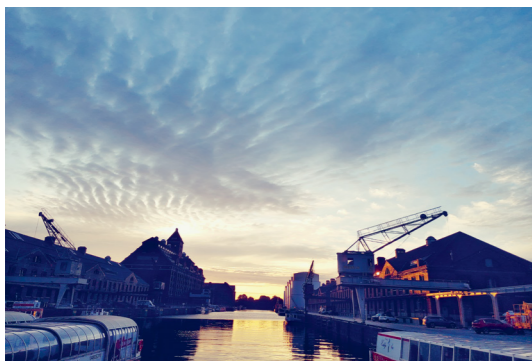
«*Liquid Grounds. A Journey through Past, Present & Infinity*»

FELICITAS MARIA ZEEDEN

The Tanzfabrik Bühne team invited two artists associated with the European network *apap-FEMINIST FUTURES* to present works set in outdoor spaces, as part of the «Feminist Futures Weekend» from 21 to 24 September 2023. The two works presented were:

Terra Nullius by Paula Dioge

Zero to Infinity by Agata Maszkiewicz / Superamas



© FMZ



«TERRA NULLIUS»
PAULA DIOGO

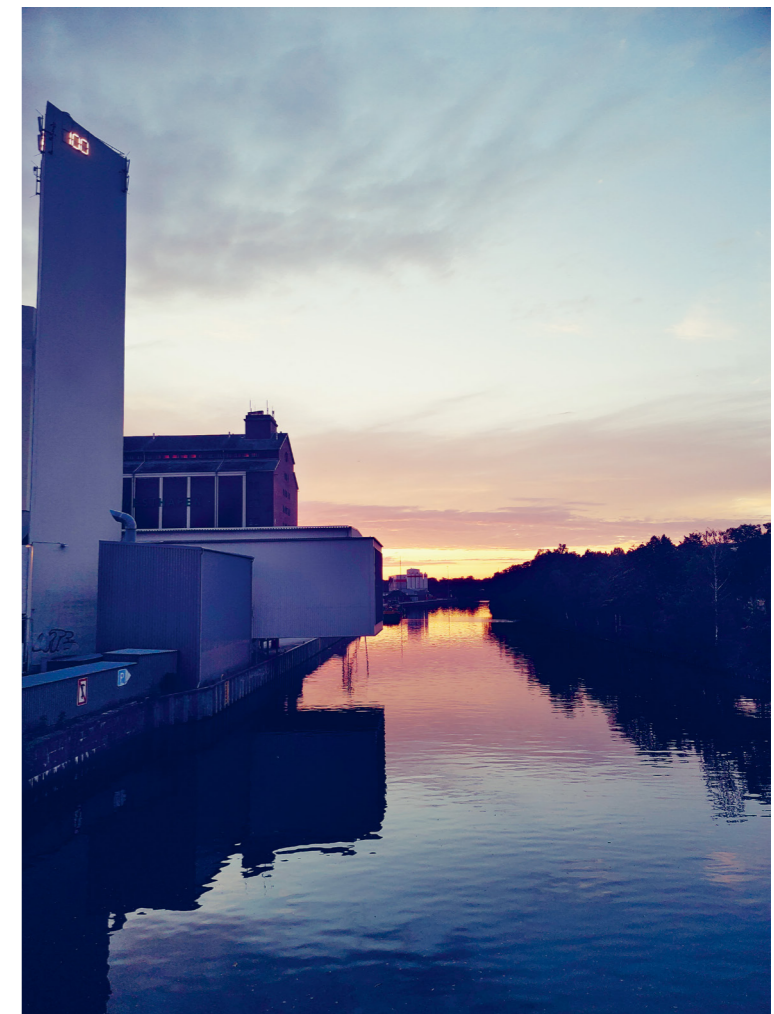
AUDIO WALK

It was raining during the day, but as I make my way to Wedding in the bustling evening, the sky begins to clear up gradually. When I arrive on Pulitzer Brücke, the clouds have completely dispersed, offering a wide view towards the west. In the evening sun, Westhafen unfolds before me, an industrial beauty adorned with historic warehouses and brick buildings.

Down by the harbour basin, the participants of the audio walk *Terra Nullius* created by Portuguese artist Paula Diogo, receive headphones and begin their walk across the Föhrer Bridge, along the riverbank of Berlin-Spandau Ship Canal.

In the evening sun, I notice the canal's gentle flow interrupted by choppy waves caused by small container ships. On the audio track heard through the headphones, Diogo's voice begins to be heard. She speaks about her time in Reykjavik, where she had been part of an artist residency in 2020; she speaks about her encounter with the water there; and her exploration of Ökjökull—the Icelandic volcano that lost its status as a glacier in 2019 due to global warming. She shares further about her encounter with María, Irís, Elsa, Ellen, Nora, and Zofia—women she met in Iceland—who deeply informed her sojourn there. She talks about smaller personal crises, times of retreat, feeling lost, and finding herself again. Diogo talks about the Self as fluid territory that alters its borders and its permeability. As if to embrace the search for the self, she says: «Hey, myself, can I invite you for a dance?»

Her descriptions revolve around water, the text trickles on, releases associations, creates connections and counterpoints between itself and the actual surroundings. Occasionally, the words carry me away so that I suddenly find myself no longer at the Berlin-Spandau Ship Canal, but walking



along the rugged Atlantic coast of Iceland, hearing the waves of the ocean in the background. «Geography is liquid», I hear Diogo say.

But abruptly, the narration brings the listeners back to the geographically specific ground they are walking on right now: Diogo addresses the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885—where European colonial powers regulated trade laws in the Congo and Niger regions and signed the concluding General Act—which went on to define numerous European colonies on the African continent. Accordingly, «terra nullius» as a historical and legal term, refers to the idea of a stateless piece of land that can be occupied and annexed. While the title of the performance plays with this naïve and megalomaniacal notion of a «no man's land», the specific ground we are walking on, is historically highly charged and informed by obsessions of ownership.

Diogo's composition of text and walking route reminds us of the matrix of the colonial mindset that has shaped the history of this continent, of this city. The beautiful industrial buildings from the Wilhelminian era at Westhafen, loom behind us like witnesses to the fact that coloniality formed a stable basis for industrial wealth in the late 19th century.

As we walk along the canal in the late summer evening, the surroundings bathed in warm orange light, the trees on the shore still green from summer, the water glittering, one could almost fall prey to a romantic or idealised idea of a «no man's land», a wild, natural piece of earth. However, the ground on which we walk is obviously not stateless, not at all a «terra nullius», but a highly charged state territory. As if to emphasize this once more, a facade appears on the other side of the canal, partly hidden behind the lush tree canopies but still visible, bearing the large letters

«Landesamt für Einwanderung» (State Office for Migration). Before one could sink in to the seemingly jolly relaxed atmosphere by the river, we are reminded of the state territory we are in and that the question of who is allowed to move freely here—who can walk, stay, and work, who enjoys protection and who does not, is subject to strict bureaucratic regulations.

Conscious of my privilege to be able to reside here, to be able to walk without constant proof and justification, I consciously put foot before foot, placing my feet gently on the ground. At Fenn Bridge, we leave the canal bank and now follow the broad Fennstraße towards the northeast. Traffic lights glow in the twilight, tall construction cranes loom ahead of us, their huge arms marked by red lights high up in the now darkened sky.

«For a certain period of time I was in love with a construction site downtown,» says Diogo's voice as I stare at the reflection of the red lights on the canal under the bridge, diffracted with the waves.

The images of the urban space overlay the memories and stories we hear from Diogo, the layers of time interweave, and even the chronology seems to liquefy. The levels complement each other, sometimes congruent, sometimes contrapuntal: As we walk along Fennstraße, under the corridor of the huge Bayer complex and across the four-lane Müllerstraße, it is loud. Cars honk and the police rushes past us with sirens. Into the din, Paula's voice resounds: «We are in the middle of nothing.»

We turn from Pankstraße into a small footpath and Diogo talks about her encounters with demonstrators singing peace songs in front of the Reykjavik City Hall in 2019, in solidarity with local refugees. The recording of these songs sounds joyous and hopeful, but beneath it lies the reality of crises and displacement, refugee movements, migration journeys made often via dangerous waterways.

When we return to the Uferstudios courtyard, each guest receives a chair, freshly brewed tea and a book with further material on Diogo's artistic research. While I sit down and leaf through the book, I listen to the sound of the water boiling and bubbling in the kettles not far from me.

The following evening, the map of the Feminist Future Weekend expands southwards as I make my way to Dammweg in Neukölln. There, in a former garden school, currently operated as Campus Dammweg by Berlin Mondiale, the second artistic work within the «Feminist Futures Weekend» is being presented: *Zero to Infinity* by Agata Maszkiewicz & the Superamas.

It was a bright day, and the beginning of the piece is timed precisely with the sunset. Accordingly, I take a seat in a deck chair in the fading light of late summer, under a ginkgo tree, whose lush green leaves gleam in the evening light.

The chairs are arranged in a semicircle around a lawn, which now serves as the stage for the piece. The moment of sunset arrives, and the four performers begin to introduce the microcosm of the piece as they raise questions about the terrestrial atmosphere and what place a (human) body occupies in this world. *Zero to Infinity* is designed for both, children and adults, and aims to captivate audiences with facts about physical principles as well as a poetic approach to the infinity of the universe.

While lighting a small campfire on the lawn, the performers talk about the universe, stars and other celestial bodies. They share some fascinating information about the minuteness of molecules and about the Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation. Throughout the performance they conduct playful experiments that pop, puff, steam, burn, and glow.



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«ZERO TO INFINITY»
AGATA MASZKIEWICZ, SUPERAMAS
OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE

Almost unnoticed, it gets dark, and the first stars are visible in the twilight, so that the connection to outer space seems a bit more graspable. The dancers Agata Maszkiewicz and Teresa Acevedo put on headlamps, moving through the surrounding bushes, casting their spotlight on trees, branches, and small plants. In this way, details in the space emerge that were previously hidden. One catches a glimpse of the tiny things—almost as if at anatomic level—before the narration shifts back to planet Earth, the stars, and the vastness of outer space. Thus, this piece moves from the smallest to the largest, from zero to infinity. Even as the performers dance, their movement language seems to grow from minimal physical strain to larger sweeping arm movements, marking the immense expansiveness.

While *Terra Nullius* referred to its specific historic-geographic location and from there created poetic connections to other places, watercourses and ecosystems of planet Earth, *Zero to Infinity* alludes to the physical functions of this world, generating associative connections to outer space. Towards the end of the performance, Maszkiewicz and Acevedo stand on the lawn, facing the audience, arms and legs slightly extended, tilting their heads forward and then backward, almost resignedly. They have finished dancing, are tired, and it seems that muscle strength can no longer contend with gravity.

«FEAST OF FUTURES»

ON THE MONTAG MODUS EASTERNFUTURIST PERFORMATIVE DINNER

KASIA WOLINSKA

Montag Modus is an interdisciplinary event series organized by the MMpraxis curatorial platform. The series centers around performance art, choreography and time-based media. Based in Berlin, the Montag Modus programme involves artists and cultural workers both from the city and from Central and Eastern Europe.



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«MONTAG MODUS»
KASIA WOLINSKA, LÉNA SZIRMAY-KALOS,
PETRE MOGOŞ & LAURA NAUM
PERFORMATIVE DINNER

The last edition of the Montag Modus «archives of the future» in 2023, and the last event under the curation of the format's founder Léna Szirmay-Kalos, took place in Tanzfabrik Berlin in the form of a performative dinner. Such a radical change of the series' orientation was decided upon together with the invited co-curator Kasia Wolińska, a Polish dancer and choreographer researching the notion of postcommunism and its futures, and also an author of this text. The dinner itself was founded in the notion of «Easternfuturisms» which gives a name to a broad scope of artistic and philosophical practices that accommodate multiple tensions and paradoxes of the postcommunist condition in Eastern and Central Europe. The «Easternfuturisms» also stood for the topic of the latest edition of Kajet Journal, whose editors and founders—Laura Neum and Petre Mogoş, were invited to contribute to the event by assembling a small publication as well as engaging with a conceptual development of the dinner format. Furthermore, the dinner was conceived in collaboration with Otucha Collective, Ben Mohai, Mark Fridvalszki and Montag Modus Team: Magda Garlińska, Beatrice Zanesco, Bator Tóth and Adrienn Császár.

A relatively intimate format—hosting 50 people including the team—worked very well for the foundational aspiration of the proposal which was to create a simulation of at-home-ness. Such a cosy encounter was nevertheless to accommodate the complex subjects of emigration, intergenerational trauma and political transformation to be mobilised in a manner different from the usual panel debates, symposiums or lecture performances. The key curatorial work lay not only in assembling an artistic and discursive programme but in creation of an experience that could evoke memories and reflections by appealing to senses most closely related to neurological



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construction of the remembering human body, namely smell, taste and touch. The menu was composed of regional dishes from Eastern and Central Europe and divided into three parts: appetisers, main course and dessert. The focus on regions rather than nations was dictated by the Easternfuturist aspiration to create a postnational identity¹, but also to demonstrate, even if indirectly, the complexity of the ethnic, national and historic conditioning of the aforementioned territories. Therefore, the served dishes carried in them legacies of people who may have identified themselves as Polish, Romanian, Jewish, Hungarian, German, Kashubian, Silesian, etc. and each dish was accompanied by a brief ethnographic information related to its origins and cultural meaning. The complete menu was included in the publication titled *Feast of Futures: Easternfuturism in Art, Food and Gathering*. Here one could also read texts contextualising key concepts of the performative dinner—such as, pickling or family cookbooks, and about the guiding notion of Easternfuturisms.

The very act of sharing one big table and eating together was supported by the presence of the emcee Ben Mohai who guided people throughout the event and took care of the entertainment aspect of the evening. The Otucha Collective (Dorota Michalak, Agnieszka Bułacik, Ola Zielińska and Julia Legeżyńska) proposed traditional songs from the territories of Eastern Poland which accompanied the ceremonial consumption of the homemade moonshine. They also facilitated practices related to conscious tasting, encouraging the guests to pay attention to the texture of food, its smell and the ways it was interacting with our digestive systems. The entire experience of the dinner was framed by the futurist paintings of the Hungarian born artist Mark Fridvalszki, which were exhibited on the three walls of the pit/pool space of the studio.

While the appetisers and dessert parts were dedicated to a more experiential and artistic programme, the main dish was thought of as a space for bringing some foundational concepts of the event into discursive format. We began with a family story, linking the cooking which was performed for the evening with the symbolic space of the kitchen and feminised labour of generations of our mothers and grandmothers. The space was then open for the voices of others being invited to share their memories, longings and experiences evoked by the act of eating and listening. A small object which belonged to my grandmother was passed around to enhance the process of recollection, and served as a sort of magical token, bringing the distant past into the present moment. I attempted to manifest the teachings of my mother and grandmothers with respect to cooking food as a medium of love. In resonance with me, many guests took up the microphone: By speaking about food, their stories told us about the fates of their families, exile, cultural heritages that were lost and found. Our shared space oscillated between nostalgia and emancipation, opening up the questions of belonging—to the land, national community but also to the future itself.

That emotional and critical exchange was followed by a lighter proposition—the dessert part was bound to a specially prepared bingo game with rewards such as a jar of Polish pickles and a bag of potatoes. All in all, these two and a half hours offered a collective journey across the territories of Eastern and Central Europe proposed both as political and historic formations, as well as fictions and speculations, allowing those of us living in a postcommunist diaspora to articulate struggles and hopes in regard to the future of the region. This felt especially pressing and relevant given the well-articulated² ontological situation of that part of Europe which was rendered belated and devoid of any significant and autonomous political legacy at the moment of entering the processes of the so-called «transition» or «transformation» in the 1990s. And what's even more significant, when considering the current geopolitics of the region and its unstable democratic order, the event served as a platform where the context of performing arts in Berlin could be infused with a serious political engagement with the postcommunist futures and their historic conditioning, while taking into account the complexity and profound inequality of the people that constitute the scene, or more broadly the «European civil society».

1 Although in some instances of Easternfuturism the observed trend is contrary and mobilising nationalistic frameworks.

2 Here I am thinking, for instance, about the writings of Boris Buden (*Zone des Übergangs*, 2009), or in the context of performing arts, Bojana Kunst's writings about the «Eastern Body» (See: www2.arnes.si/~ljintima2/kunst/t-poeb.html)

FOLD: EXPANSIONS OF PERCEPTION

26 – 29 OCTOBER 2023



© MARIARITSCH



INKY LEE

18



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«PURPLE SPHERES»
MIRJAM SÖGNER

PERFORMANCE

«Imagining the Unknown»

INKY LEE

The fold «Expansions of Perception» presented from 26 to 29 October 2023 included the following works:
Into the Dark by Jess Curtis/ Gravity
Purple Spheres by Mirjam Sögner

Jess Curtis died unexpectedly on Monday, March 11, in San Francisco. He was a long-term collaborator of Tanzfabrik, his last Berlin premiere was the work *Into the Dark*, which was presented as part of our season programme.

The unknown can evoke different kinds of feelings: fear, anxiety, excitement... It can feel either frustrating or mysterious, or both. When one is ill, but does not know the cause of the illness, it can deepen one's misery. When one has a crush on a stranger, one may create projections that can be quite amusing. When the feelings caused by not knowing become strong enough, they can lead to actions. Violence of many sorts, for example, starts from discomfort and fear of the unknown that mutates into feelings of unsafety and anger. This right to know and feel «safe» often comes from a place of privilege. Sometimes, one does not even have to think about the unknown until they are forced to, which is also a privileged position.

IMAGINING THE UNKNOWN

IMAGINING THE UNKNOWN

INKY LEE

19



«INTO THE DARK»
JESS CURTIS / GRAVITY († 11.03.2024)

PERFORMANCE



© GERALD PIRNER



In various kinds of scenarios shaped by the unknown, a common factor seems to be that the unknown opens up rooms for imagination. Both of the works presented as part of the fold «Expansions of Perception» explore this unknown; *Purple Spheres* by Mirjam Sögner does it with playfulness and *Into The Dark* by Jess Curtis/Gravity with courage.

Into The Dark, which is built on research about blind and visually impaired culture and experience, shatters the literal definition of light and darkness. While the majority perspective of light and darkness is based on visual perception, for some, other sensations, such as touch, sound and emotions, can be translated into light and darkness. The literal perception of light and darkness is the one that is available only to the privileged who can perceive and benefit from this notion. *Into The Dark* takes the risk to immerse the audience, most of whom are sighted, into the yet unknown dimensions of light and darkness.

Before the performance, clear instructions and information are given to the audience in order to provide grounds for safety: The performance space will be very dark. We can break the glow stick that is given to each of us anytime during the show to be immediately guided out of the space ... At this point, I am confident that I will be fine, as I have always been someone who has felt at home in darkness. However, when I sit in the pitch darkness of the theatre, I realize that my assumption was wrong. I have never experienced this kind of darkness. Darkness that is so complete that it feels like a wall that presses into my body from all sides. I feel panic rising from within my chest. I close my eyes, to retreat to a familiar kind of darkness. It is indeed helpful to know that I am in a relatively safe environment and that I can exit at any time, if I want to. It takes a lot of courage for me to open my eyes. «This is what disability can feel like at times», I think, facing the thick black wall in front of my eyes. Disabilities, even invisible disabilities that can be easily dismissed by others, can feel like this wall.

As the performance begins and the darkness opens into multiple dimensions of life, I am reminded that there are so many layers and depths to this darkness. In parallel, disability has a tendency to define a person entirely, but in fact, there is so much more than just the disability to a person.

Gradually, the dark wall dissolves and transforms into a deep ocean filled with colours, stories, and life. I hear and feel the performers' voices and movements. Sounds travel in space, as well as feelings that are expressed in laughter, sobs and words. At one point, I feel a firm touch from my back that lingers on my shoulders, which causes a ray of bright light to shine inside my body. *Into The Dark* is a patient and generous gift that offers a poignant experience of deeper sensory dimensions that surpasses the immediacy of sight.

Purple Spheres, in contrast, focuses on the world of visual perception. It attempts to distort the habitual anticipations that we construct in relation to objects. This work by Mirjam Sögner seems to question: What if familiar objects suddenly become foreign? Can they gain lives of their own? Throughout the performance, daily objects, such as a hammer, wrench, flower and comb, are handled by the two performers, Sögner and Luan de Lima, with a cool demeanour that resembles that of scientific researchers. Although their actions are playful, their facial expressions remain stoic. They interact with and present the objects in ways that are removed from their usual functions.

In one part, the performers disappear under a big orange plastic tent. A bright spotlight grazes the surface of the tent. The spotlight stops, and inside its shining pool of light, shadows of different objects held up by the performers' hands play with one another. Objects become creatures and offer the audience imaginative perspectives to create one's own narrative.

When the performers position themselves in proximity to one another and carry out repetitive movements that are fast and jerky, I wonder if they are putting themselves in the position of objects. Their repeating movements remind me of the motions of a mechanical object, carried out to fulfill a task. Soon, however, as I hear the performers' breath and see the sweat dripping from their faces, I am reminded that they are humans, not objects. Then, I ask myself: Do humans also sometimes programme themselves to think and act in unchanging patterns as though we were objects? If so, why? Does knowing and repeating create a sense of safety? What pushes us to break the repetitive loop? I contemplate as the stage goes dark to signal the end of the piece.

FOLD: FRAGILE WELTEN

9 – 12 NOVEMBER 2023



© SANDRA MAN

«LETHE»
ADAM (AKA SANDRA) MAN

PERFORMANCE

«Times Folded in Lines»

MICHELA FILZI

The fold «Fragile Welten» presented from 9 to 12 November 2023 included the following works:
COWBODY/Oh wow, it's you! by Hanna Kritten Tangsoo and Sigrid Savi
Lethe by Adam (aka Sandra) Man

The Fold «Fragile Welten» unfolds on a series of biting evenings at the beginning of November 2023. Approaching the theatre, I exhale a steamy cloud of breath; the warmth inside my body condenses in the cold of the ether, a puff of mist quickly dissipates before my eyes. An icy in-breath tickles my nostrils, the outside entering my inside: lungs, veins, heart. We have gone full circle, pondering on the cyclicity of the year, I welcome the winter into my bodily folds. In my personal interpretation, the fold is an uninterrupted convergence of the inside and the outside of that which might seem as separate but is fundamentally one. Like the air enveloped in the body, then dispersed in the atmosphere, repeatedly, in a reciprocal folding and unfolding.

For the theme of this series, the Tanzfabrik curatorial body has been thinking with the Deleuze Leibniz concept of the fold¹, which can be illustrated with the image of a fabric being bent into two, bringing the two sides initially far apart, into contact, and creating a new correlation. In the light of this metaphor, I reflect on the works *Cowbody/oh wow it's you!* by Hanna Kritten Tangsoo and Sigrid Savi and *Lethe* by Adam (aka Sandra) Man, which I attended on 9.11.2023 in Uferstudios.

¹ The concept of the fold allows Deleuze to think creatively about the production of subjectivity, and ultimately about the possibilities for, and production of, «non-human» forms of «subjectivity». In fact on one level the fold is a critique of typical accounts of subjectivity - those that presume a simple interiority and exteriority (appearance and essence, or surface and depth) - for the fold announces that the inside is nothing more than a fold of the outside.



© HARRIET MEYER



«COWBODY / OH WOW IT'S YOU!»
HANNA KRITTEN TANGSOO, SIGRID SAVI

PERFORMANCE

For me, what folds these two works together is their focus on time-perception, material transformation and non-human temporalities. Through different paces, vibrations and resonances the two pieces trace the artists' fascination for a non-human kind of subjectivity.

Furthermore, to illustrate my interpretation of the link between the two pieces, I propose «the paradigm of the origami»². Let's imagine a pristine sheet of paper, skilfully twined, turned and twisted into a shape. Each folding creates a feature by dividing and conjoining, concealing and revealing, to obtain a tiny origami horse.

If one was to unfold the figure back to its outstretched state, all the folds would still be visible on the piece of paper. They would be the traces of the movement of the paper and the hands, the patterns and the rhythms of the folding and unfolding, the dance of time, change and intra-action between human and non-human agencies³.

In *Cowbody/Oh wow it's you!* the stage is an intricate landscape of many objects; some laying inert, others moving and shaking through mechanics or gravity; some hanging on the riggings, others kept suspended

² In his PHD research «Embodied Lines: creating withness through perceived, bodily, and imagined lines», Michael O'Connor, dancer and movement researcher delves into the intricate relationship between the mind, body, and environment. His work offers a fresh perspective on how lines play a fundamental role in our experience, and introduced me to the concept of the origami in relationship to the fold. See O'Connor, Michael Ryan (2023). Embodied Lines: Creating withness through perceived, bodily, and imagined lines. [PhD-Thesis - Research and graduation internal, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam]. www.doi.org/10.5463/thesis.442

³ Intra-action is a Baradian term used to replace «interaction», which necessitates pre-established bodies that then participate in action with each other. Intra-action understands agency as not an inherent property of an individual or human to be exercised, but as a dynamism of forces (Barad, 2007, p. 141) in which all designated «things» are constantly exchanging and diffracting, influencing and working inseparably. Barad, Karen. (2007). Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning. Durham: Duke University Press.

⁴ Text fragments from the performance *Cowbody* as transcribed by myself during the performance.

⁵ Text fragments from the performance *Lethe* as transcribed by myself during the performance.

by human force and yet others leaking, smoking and melting. My curiosity lingers between a lit candle in the shape of letters spelling: «FOREVER», a fluorescent yellow tape spelling «NOW!» and piles of black latex gloves filled with water.

Two performers are dancing and gesturing intimate relationships with these visible and invisible objects: pushing, pulling, displacing, opening, lifting, digging, selecting, discarding and throwing away. On a techno beat accompanied by the lyrics «sehr schnell jetzt kann Mann endlich gehen lassen» (trans: «very fast now one can finally let go»), I attune to the realm of these things: exposed, covered, containing and contained. A white mouthguard in Hanna Kritten Tangsoo's mouth, reminds me of the spaces in-between, her pinkish-latex costume squishy and sweaty, both conceals and reveals her body and its intense physical effort. Sigrid Savi wears blue jeans and a long tail made of fake, brown hair. «Oh wow it's you», I thought to myself. Perhaps this is the horse of the cowbody?

Throughout the piece she holds on to a small plastic bottle, with a little bit of water inside: while lifting, holding and carrying the full weight of her collaborator, she never lets go of the bottle: the object of attachment. Their play seems heavy at times, as they tremble under the full weight of carrying, lifting and holding each other.

Everything hints at something about to happen or at the memory of what just happened, each moment unfolds with a sense of anticipation and release. An altered recorded voice in the soundscape asks us: «Do you have time to talk about god?»⁴

The choreography makes a loop and we are back to the beginning, but obviously transformed. The cyclicity of the piece ends with a long sequence of the two performers bouncing in synchronicity on two trampolines. The music plays a kind of waltz, lulling and hypnotising. The rhythmic ups and downs of the two bodies moved by the jumping mat, transports me on a long horse ride through a strange landscape. My thoughts follow the recorded voice announcing possibilities and certainties, desires and good intentions for the future: «The three-minute walk will clear the thoughts».

The three-minute walk did clear my thoughts as I enter *Lethe*, the second piece of the evening. In the dim lit space, as the audience walks in, a calm and solemn atmosphere welcomes us. We take our shoes off and leave our belongings near the entrance, to find a comfortable spot on a long white carpet stretching across the space. Interspersed with subtle white noise and wind blowing from the speakers, I hear soft laughter and silent whispers of people settling on the carpet.

The amplified voice of performer Lisa Densem describes a remote place: «It's midday and very quiet, no bird no rustling of the wind, I hear my footsteps. The stones of the riverbed move when I step on them, when there is water the stones are its pathways»⁵.

People resettle, lying down and closing their eyes to let themselves be transported to the river by her voice: «I am in the middle of the riverbed». And so are we, on this long carpet that mirrors the elongated pathway of an ancient riverbed where «Every stone here was once covered by water». We gradually become these stones quiet and motionless, directing the flow of Densem's pathway among us, readjusting as she steps between us. «Everybody was once covered in water, I swallow the saliva into my mouth».

I see the belly of a fellow audience member rising and falling, they steady their breath exhaling beauty into chaos. I see the hand reaching the mouth. Then leaving to scratch the eye. I see resettling limbs, thin lines reaching up into the air. I am here and elsewhere, simultaneously.

«The river has many mouths, the water flows like milk, through the white stony land».

As the space darkens, four projections light up, slowly people open their eyes and resettle again. The landscape invoked by the words appears as dancing

light on large screens surrounding us. On the different videos, the sole body of dancer Laura Siegmund is in corporeal dialogue with the white stones of the riverbed, attuned to the temporality of the land dances its strange presence in this desolated and sublime riverscape.

The drone-like music accentuated by subtle melodies, high pitches and subtle vibrations accompanies our journey, the dancer guiding us on the rocks, rolling and resettling, like water being held by a riverbed or bodies being held by a huge carpet.

Lethe is a space poem of language, movement and sound, dedicated to the Tagliamento river, one of the last great untamed waterways in Europe. When a river is untamed by humans and over time its meanders expand so largely that curves might fold back into each other, reshaping the stream in a new course and leaving a residue or a *levee* of the curve.

The two pieces *Cowbody/Oh wow it's you* and *Lethe*, set into motion a personal reflection on the scale of time and transformation, expressed through the phenomena of the body and the land.

These reflections are condensed in the following poem.

Today under
my eyes,
the skin
folded in lines.

Tiny riverbeds
wrinkle in a smile,
tears spilling
for a while.

Tamed ageing
nature primes
the raging
of our times.

FOLD: GHOSTS & DEMONS

30 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2023

«Taking non-things for granted»

MICHA TSOULOUKIDSE

The fold «Ghosts & Demons» presented from 30 November to 2 December 2023 included the following works:

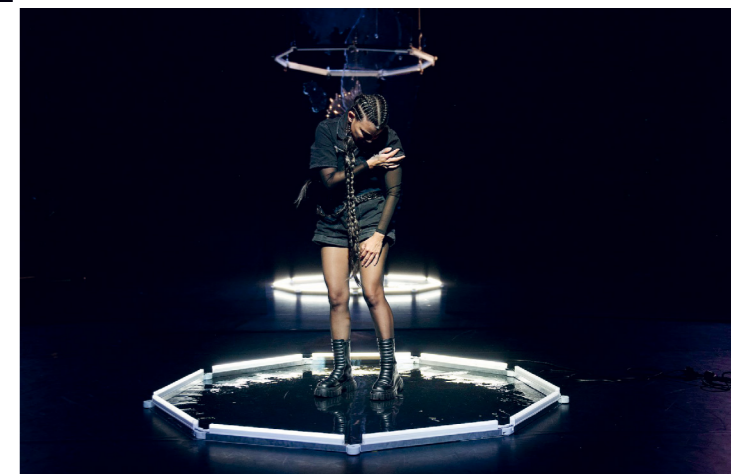
The Multiplicity of the Other by Ixchel Mendoza Hernández
The Devil's Hour by July Weber



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«THE MULTIPLICITY OF THE OTHER»
IXCHEL MENDOZA HERNÁNDEZ

PERFORMANCE



It was only after I gave up looking for ghosts that suddenly one appeared: In the second part of Ixchel Mendoza Hernández's *The Multiplicity of the Other* when the performance slowly starts to dissolve, I run into someone I haven't met for years. While he's conjuring the piece he is currently working on, our encounter also—probably unnoticed by him—conjures the spectre of a person we both knew, but is no longer with us. «For me, it is interesting to think about how these invisible elements come into presence? and as a result of which event?»¹, writes Ixchel about her concept of *Visual Ghost*, which is the very foundation of her artistic research and also informed the performance of this evening. These questions have been haunting me ever since, almost like ghosts themselves—as this text is, like all texts, haunted by many voices other than mine. It is carried by one spectre in particular—Martin Savransky.

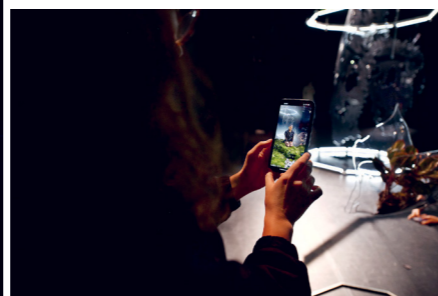
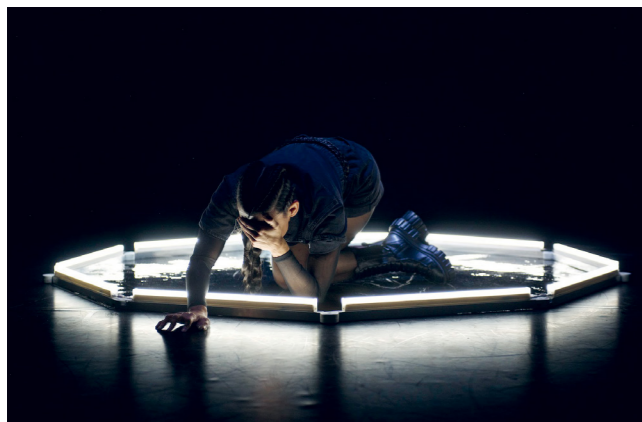
But what was the context for such alleged non-things / non-sense in the first place? It was Tanzfabrik's last Fold of 2023 that was titled «Ghosts & Demons». Presented next to Hernandez's piece was *The Devil's Hour* by July Weber's choreography, scheduled for midnight—a usual time slot for supernatural entities certainly, but not for theatre audiences—that might also reflect the present moment in general, which at times seems to be more spirit-friendly than humanfriendly. While on my way to Uferstudios, I think of all the German ghosts that are currently experiencing a huge revival: the far right party stronger than ever, antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism on the rise, pitted against one another by cops and politicians, countless events canceled and slogans banned, all in the name of Germany's pro-Israel *Staatsräson*. Is talking about those phenomena in terms of hauntology even appropriate? And aren't some events too real to be obscured by aesthetics? Since the early 2000s, a so-called



«THE DEVIL'S HOUR»
JULY WEBER
PERFORMANCE



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spectral turn has emerged in the social sciences and humanities: The depiction of topics or phenomena as *ghostly* or *liminal*, commonly referring «to the seething absences and shadowy remnants of a past that remains present in the wake of modernity's violences and wounds.»² This discourse is also very present in the arts. Both performances of this particular evening, however, seem to be guided by a different approach. As much as they differ, they seem to meet in their specific interest for *ghosts themselves*—not so much as cultural symbols, but rather as natural phenomena.

To begin with the more explicit work: Nothing less than the seduction of a non-human audience is the starting point of July's choreography. Four dancers, in suits and with intense white make-up that makes them look at once scary, funny, and earnest, go on a wild virtuous trip that lasts just as long as a *Geisterstunde*. On a white stage with geometrical forms, to the ongoing soundtrack of *Ray of Light* by composer Laure M. Hiendl, they are in a constant process of transformation: One moment they dance like mating animals, the next they moan, hump, and kiss, then they move like puppets, only to suddenly behave like children on a playground. Repeatedly,

1 See www.ixchelmendoza.com/the-visual-ghost.html.
2 See Savransky: «How to Do Social Research with.....? Ghosts» by Martin Savransky. The essay can be read online at research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/34770/9/Savransky,%20Ghosts%20Chapter%20revised%202.pdf.

invisible forces take centre stage—veils, moved by a mini leaf blower, or countless decks of cards, scattered across the entire stage by a giant fan. Is this a wink to the spectres they are performing for—or are they, as it often seems, already possessed by them? As omnipresent as the question gets about the reality of ghosts during *The Devil's Hour* it remains unanswered for me. Still, it would be way too easy to dismiss the claim of the piece as sheer aesthetics. In fact, doesn't dancing for other-than-human entities take the existence of other realities far more seriously than the usual dancing with?

By contrast, Hernandez's solo, which inaugurates the evening, presents itself in a much more eerie, ethereal, unearthly way. Most of the performance happens in the twilight or even the dark, and while *The Devil's Hour* is in many ways characterised by exactitude, diffusion and vagueness prevail in *The Multiplicity of the Other*. An avatar dressed all in black is situated in a small circle of glowing sticks, that evokes associations of beaming devices in sci-fi movies and creates a slight, unmet expectation of an act of disappearance. Judging by her movements, her way of existence seems to switch between human, machine, and animal, thereby fluctuating between full agency over her body and states of possession. While spoken narrations, unidentifiable noise, and bird sounds interweave to the glitches and distortions that interrupt the avatar's voice and movement like false frequencies, the boundaries between nature and technology get increasingly blurry. Throughout the performance, the backstage gets illuminated for brief moments: a second realm behind transparent curtains, the shimmer of another world. Once the dance is over, the audience is invited to the (back)stage to discover the solo's ghostly afterlife—not just the now entirely visible stage design, but also some almost imperceptible, mirage-like transparent acrylic

sculptures hanging from the ceiling. And then there's a layer fully invisible to the not-enhanced eye, only accessible by smartphone through QR codes on the floor: an augmented reality in which the avatar is one with trees and roots. Matter that is not allowed, not ready yet to disappear—isn't that the essence of a ghost? Later though, I started to wonder—are these AR images remains from the performance—or are they images from a future that has not yet materialised? Can announcements, clues, or forecasts also be ghosts—can they be harbingers, cannot only the past but also the future haunt us?

It's almost 2 am when I step out of the spirit sphere. My somatic and emotional openness towards supernatural beings dissolves in exhaustion and frostiness, and rational thinking takes the upper hand again. Did I actually see ghosts tonight, I wonder, well aware of the embarrassing nature of that question, and reformulate it: How does a ghost *materialise*? Do they manifest visually (not sure), emotionally (maybe), physically (certainly) ...? Perhaps the question is much less whether we believe in ghosts, but how to live with ghosts. None of tonight's performances wanted to convince anyone of anything. In their world, the existence of ghosts is unquestioned: an avatar from the future who tries to create the conditions for them to become visible, or figures from the past who engage in a summoning through dance. And perhaps, again, it is not even about the ghosts themselves—they might just help us to remember that there are things, even entire worlds inside of us and around us, that we don't know of—worlds that existed, worlds that exist, and worlds whose existence is yet to come.



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TIME TO MEET

12 – 18 JANUARY 2024

«Solids that Drip, Streets that Dance»

NICOLA VAN STRAATEN

«Time to meet»—held on 12 and 18 January 2024—was an opportunity to view the works-in-progress of two artist duos at the end of their respective R.E.D. residencies at Tanzfabrik Bühne. *Foam* by Olivia Hyunsin Kim & Jones Seitz
Urban Foragers by Thiago Rosa & Johanna Ryyänen

In my hand, I squeeze the cream-coloured liquid. It solidifies, becoming firm, almost powdery. I release my grip and the substance turns liquid again. I watch with awe at how this material responds to pressure, moving between firm and melting. I listen to the people around me experiencing similar feelings of wonder and delight. Gathered in a circle, seated on the floor, the situation is not unlike playtime at a kita and we are all handling a most profound metaphor in the form of tapioca starch powder.

In January 2024, Olivia Hyunsin Kim and Jones Seitz shared their research on rest and community-care in the framework of their R.E.D. residency at Tanzfabrik. The artists began by reminding us that this was not a showing, but a sharing. After inviting us to slow down, explore the space, pour ourselves some tea and simply arrive—nothing proceeded to happen. A briefly awkward moment passed, while the audience managed to shift gear. We slowly transformed ourselves from «audience» into people simply together in a room; some drifted over to the large pile of melting foam in the corner, mysteriously marking the passing of time. Others poured tea or flipped through the various books scattered about the space. I myself became absorbed in the changing images and film projected on the wall, displaying visuals of dripping liquid or offering cryptic directives such



© ALEKSANDRA PETRUSHEVSKA



«URBAN FORAGERS»
THIAGO ROSA, JOHANNA
RYYNÄNEN

WORK-IN-PROGRESS
SHARING



as «Find a blind spot, take a walk». In the middle of the room about twenty empty bowls lay spread out on a plastic sheet, with one large bowl containing white powder and a few jugs of water.

After some time of everyone just ... being?, Olivia stepped forward and explained that the white powder was tapioca starch powder. With a dash of water, the consistency of starch powder changes into liquid that, upon squeezing, changes itself to appear and feel solid. She invited us to get messy as we gathered around in little groups, sharing and distributing bowls, dipping in our hands. Getting lost in this quicksilver material, more time unfolded. Kim and Seitz read out short pieces of texts about their research into structural conditions around community health. Their reading framed not only their work but also the material we were handling, which moved like a tangible thesis, proposing ideas around multi-bodied-ness and transformation within containers. Experiencing and contemplating what changing pressure does to form and content, my body opened to understand more deeply how both institutions and community have impacts on the state of my own contents.

Later during the artist talk I realized that another reason why this sharing touched me so deeply was simply because the practice was the theory. Their sharing was not a discussion of ideas concerning community-care, but an actualisation of the practice. In emptying and opening the space by inviting slowness, providing options and gathering us around a material substance that was itself a teacher, the artists demonstrated the living closeness of their work. I felt the satisfying jolt of how effective artistic knowledge production actually is, the power of knowledge rooted in practice.

A week later, I was able to witness another practice at work, although more filtered through the lens of dance and performance, as Thiago Rosa and Johanna Ryyänen shared their work-in-progress *Urban Foragers* (WT). I entered Studio 4 once more and was happy to slip into the familiar position of audience member this time, taking in the darkened room and image of the ubiquitous Google Maps projected on to the floor. The seating was laid out in a rectangular shape surrounding the projection, echoing the right-angled architecture of a neighbourhood block. Observing the details of the map more closely, I saw it was indeed displaying the neighbourhood that we were in.

Urban sounds of traffic and busy streets began to drift into the space as Ryyänen and Rosa slowly walked in unison across us at a meditative pace. Both dressed in simple pants and puffed denim jackets plastered with various familiar brands and labels (Adidas, McDonalds, Lidl etc.), the hyper specific quality of their unhurried walking brought into sharp contrast the sounds of a big city. Their walking slowly evolved into a duet guided by the eyes. Standing close to each other, feet now planted in the ground, their bodies maintained the swaying resonance of a walking motion. The established rhythm went up into their faces and eyes, their expanding gaze reaching out and beyond, but never directly at each other despite their physical closeness.

In the process of watching this eyedance evolve, my attention was naturally brought to my own gaze, reaching across the space and searching for some meaning, while they slowly removed their branded jackets. Their dance however resisted a recognisable label and instead appeared to grow in size as they built up the speed and scope of their movements. Street sounds merged into ambient noises, as walking morphed into running, their arms

stretching out alongside their eyes. Each in their own dance, but still connected, they slowed back into the familiar walking motif, eventually arriving at stillness, while a voice from someone on a busy street began to reflect on the overwhelming sensorial input one encounters every day.

During their time in residency the artists worked with expanded ideas of urban foraging, asking themselves if immaterial substances too can be gathered, collected and put to use. This work-in-progress felt like a display of their immaterial findings; a performative exhibition of the sensations gathered during their two-weeks of research, walking the streets of Wedding. With unseen imprints of the city's pulse shaping their movements, it dawned on me that their duet was rather a trio with the ambiguous but undoubtedly real entity of Wedding's streetlife as the third dancer. Framed by the theatre, which allows for a particular perspective and temporality, I understood after the sharing, as I walked back out into the icy cold embrace of Badstraße, that I have once again caught abstracted glimpse of the dancer we call «Berlin».

FOLD: FAR, FAR AWAY AND TIME TO MEET

22 FEBRUARY – 3 MARCH 2022

«Time Lingerin»

FOROUGH FAMI



© ELENA POLZER



«FOAM»
OLIVIA HYUNSIN KIM,
JONES SEITZ

WORK-IN-PROGRESS SHARING

The fold «Far, far away» presented from 22 February to 3 March included the works:

Take me somewhere nice—Party without end, without meaning and without purpose by Christina Ciupke & Darko Dragičević,

Shiraz by Armin Hokmi

Elsewhere Rhapsody by Jen Rosenblit.

In addition, two research projects by Liina Magnea and Mohamed-Ali Ltaief were shared in the framework of «Time to Meet»—Live Works.

THE FOLD, «FAR FAR AWAY»

As the title *Take me somewhere nice—Party without end, without meaning and without purpose* suggests, Christina Ciupke and Darko Dragičević plant in their work.

Personally, I find this to register strongest in the way they have named this piece. Their sarcasm is evident not only during their artistic research of embodying mass tourism and its conditions, but also in their choreographic choices for the show to provoke a realization that «what satisfies the tastes of the masses is not without consequences.»

The audience is free to sit or walk on a floor covered by trash, to watch a dance of gradual deformation. In 90 minutes of continuous and non-stop dance, Ciupke and Dragičević represent the stereotype of ignorance that exhausts nature's resources. The piece is mostly in silence. However, occasional repetition of a slow melancholic song prompts video projections of footage showing climate disasters. These video loops are accompanied by long-drawn-out dances by the two figures, representing the ignorant behaviour of mass tourism.

The piece, this exhausting dance, resembles a dystopia in progress. It connects a nostalgia for a certain better past to the gradual eroding image of a future destruction.

Elsewhere Rhapsody, a multilayered work by Jen Rosenblit confronts me internally with questions of identity, community and belonging from the very first moment. Upon stepping in, I experience a mixed feeling as if walking my curiosity to a far neighbourhood.

The piece starts and the opening sentence tickles: «You might for a moment see something resembling a fence, it is not intended to keep things out, though I cannot promise inclusivity as an actual thing. Its gesture is of unendingness rather than its overbearing symbolic border.»



© SIMON COURCHEL



The precise choreography challenges the pursuit of synchronicity. It is achieved through a collective, yet autonomous effort by the performers, whose hidden faces, internal mode of attention, gazelessness and isolated movements remind me of the expressive physicality of ancient headless statues. They instill a sense of mystery and fragmentation reminiscent of an imagined past.

Regardless of whether the reappearance of a grand festival within a dance piece is possible or not, Armin's passionate work and artist talk effectively introduce something different from a past of another geography, in relation to the current political climate of Germany's performing art scene in which *Shiraz* is premiered.

The pieces of the fold *«Far, Far Away»*, each in their own particular capacities, all linger in time. Through the presence of their performances, they connect with other temporal spheres, encompassing different modes of the present, past, and future.

With their different artistic means, tastes, stances and intensity, they slide along the continuum between the utopian and dystopian spectra.

Take me somewhere nice—party without ... looks into the dystopian future. It observes, criticises and warns about the future of climate change as a consequence of the promoted capitalistic idea of leisure, manifested in the form of mass tourism.

Shiraz reminisces about the utopian aspects of a past festival which over a ten-year period attempted to «radically rethink its relationship to the audience and modalities of framing artworks.»¹



«ELSEWHERE RHAPSODY»
JEN ROSENBLIT

PERFORMANCE

In search of relation, I cease my attempt to grasp the words that, together with the visual information, are choreographing my affective states. Soon, the flowing pace and depth of the verbal addresses exceed my linguistic capacities. Linguistically unarmed yet sensorially engaged, the more I yield, the more the piece embraces me, till its last moment.

The piece narrates intimacy. It depicts a disorderly stream of erotic experiences in four chapters and arrays the complexity of a permeable poesy. Back and forth, displaced between shades and desires for memory and forgetfulness, it manoeuvres and reveals the multiplicity of its narration through which it grows and makes space with the strength of desire.

Shiraz, as a name, strongly carries a series of cultural, historical and artistic references. Armin Hokmi's choreography reflects, memorialises, and celebrates the existence of a cultural event in the past. Although *Shiraz* as a dance project directly takes its name from the *Shiraz Arts Festival* held between 1967 and 1977 in the south of Iran, the piece itself takes quite an indirect approach, allowing its choreography to distance itself from direct representations.

The piece is established and progresses with a continuous repetition of subtle hip movements by the dancers. This repetitive movement, which is one of the elements of Iranian dance vocabulary, allows for slow traversal in space and sets up multiple spatial relationalities among the dancers.

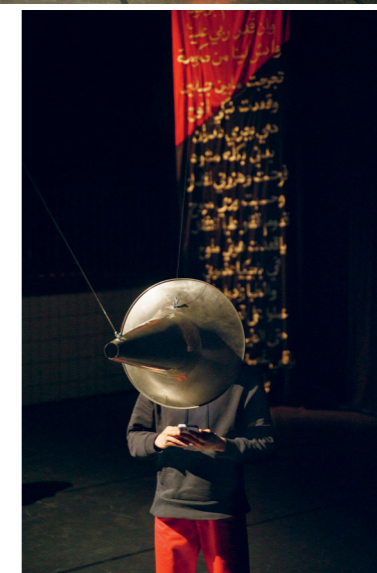
Through the repetition, brief moments of convergence appear and are magnified. These moments coincide with certain musical beats and incorporate momentary upper body gestures that I observe to be mostly from classical Western vocabularies. These are the moments when the vocabularies of different aesthetics, temporalities and geographies tie together.



© HARRIET MEYER

«LIVE WORKS FELLOWS»
LIINA MAGNEA,
MOHAMED-ALI LTAIEF

WORK-IN-PROGRESS
SHARING



¹ From the artistic statements shared in the programme notes of the respective performances.

ElseWhere Rhapsody blurs the temporal lines between the tenses. Through the speculative dissection of a narrative from the past, it underscores the power of the erotic for imagining, creating and envisioning what may seem impossible, both in the present moment and in the future.

In addition to the performances in the fold, two research projects were shared in the framework of «Time to Meet—Live Works» as works-in-progress.

Hand in Hand Toward the Collapse by Liina Magnea delves into the phenomenon of school shootings. It begins with offbeat live music and transitions into Magnea's expressive dance, accompanied by spoken text. Together, these elements embody the various shifting characters of school shooters.

In the other presentation—*Parallel Hands—Co-existence Of Times And A Good Will To Listen* by Mohamed-Ali Ltaief—the choreographer shares a series of recorded archival ethno-musical field recordings as an introduction to his decolonial research project. His investigation of African sonic archival materials aims to form a counter-narrative as a means of resistance.

Magnea's bold expression and Ltaief's patient invitation to listen exist side-by-side. This coexistence undoubtedly enhances the exploration of different historical contexts, domains of concern and agencies.



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«TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE—PARTY WITHOUT END, WITHOUT MEANING & WITHOUT PURPOSE»
CHRISTINA CIUPKE, DARKO DRAGIČEVIĆ

PERFORMANCE



«SHIRAZ»
ARMIN HOKMI

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MÄRZ: PAUSING

12 – 15 MARCH 2024

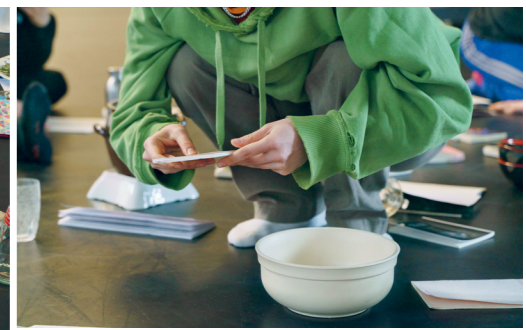
«(Im)mobility Salon #1: Institute of Rest(s) meets Tanzfabrik»

DARIA IURIICHUK

(Im)mobility Salon series, hosted by Vienna-based French choreographer Alix Eynaudi, are a part of the «Institute of Rest(s)» research project aimed to find ways to interrupt productivity through dance and rethink its community-creating spaces. This Salon is the first in a row and accompanied by guests Paula Caspão, Emma Bigé, Ujjwal Kanishka Utkarsh, Yves Mettler, and Clementine Burnley.

Uferstudios Berlin Studio 5. Beanbags, books, tableware. Sounds of snoring and flipping pages. I burst in a little late and immediately admitted the difference in the time tissue. Nothing was happening, which proved the statement I had read in the annotation: «It is not an event». My feeling of the constant alert, which I have been experiencing in the past months, smashed into slow and grounding vibes. This aimlessness felt a bit irritating at first (what am I spending my precious time for?!) but, the discomfort was gone as I dived into an atmosphere of collective research-by-practice. Over four days between 3 – 6 pm the guests of the «(Im)mobility Salon» were invited to rest and learn together, or in other words, to approach rest both as a mode of inquiry and a methodological stance.

To make a better impression of the Salon it would be relevant to mention some textual works that were encountered in these afternoons. That is what many participants did during the sessions: moving from one book to another, flipping through pages, falling asleep and being interrupted



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MEETS TANZFABRIK»
ALIX EYNAUDI

OPEN STUDIO

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to converse. The books created multiple theoretical and activist contexts, presenting diverse approaches to rest as resistance (Tricia Hersey¹), and more precisely as resistance to the attention economy (Jenny Odell²), and rest as an action of being attentive to what is to potentially emerge (Christian Nyampeta³). Apart from the resting setup, practices of resting, reading, and translating together were aimed to interrogate and complicate notions of rest.

Accepting this invitation to read and think together, here are some narratives that I grasped throughout the Salon hours.

REST IN PLURAL

We all need some rest. But yet the rest is not that easy to define. When, how and from what do we rest?

An achievement of the 1920s, the eight-hour working day defined time for work and time for rest, but by the 1950s the leisure industry grew until it accreted into labour. The relentless workers were now obliged to serve capital even in their spare time by consumption. Leisure was condemned to become a new type of free labour. Leisure and labour permeate each other, forming porous structures of labour activity that leave no room for free time. In her essay *Free Labor: Producing Culture For The Digital Economy*, Tiziana Terranova puts forward the notion of free labour as «a trait of the cultural economy at large, and an important, and yet undervalued, force in advanced capitalist societies.»⁴ She critically investigates how leisure practices of the

- 1 Hersey, Tricia. *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto*; 2022
- 2 Odell, Jenny. *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock*. Random House, 2023; and Odell, Jenny. *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*. Melville House, 2019
- 3 Christian Nyampeta and Jonatan Habib Engqvist; *How To Rest Together*; www.on-curating.org/issue-36-reader/how-to-rest-together.html
- 4 Terranova, Tiziana. «Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy.» *Social Text* 18, no. 2 (2000): 33 – 58. muse.jhu.edu/article/31873.



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early Internet such as chatrooms, forums and DIY websites were co-opted by capitalism as free labour that now plays a key role in monetising the web. This example shows that leisure being mobilised in the service of grind culture is no longer at our disposal.

«Grind culture has made us all human machines, willing and ready to donate our lives to a capitalist system that thrives by placing profits over people».

— Tricia Hersey, *Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto*⁵

Rest might be redefined as a rupture in this eternal productivity in both work and leisure—a refusal of both production and consumption. Times of crisis make the idea of pause as a political statement even more urgent. Funding cuts and increased living costs don't make the precarious artists' lives any easier. Problematising self-exploitation as a core condition for the maintenance of the independent dance scene in Berlin has been a hot topic of the past years⁶. In May 2022, Tanzfabrik suspended any productive activity under the fold titled «Pause as Resistance». The team ceased their work «to refuse to perpetuate this constant actionism, constant production and to not accept that there is no way out of capitalism.»⁷ But as the team stressed, this pause was possible from a privileged position of the funded institution.

5 Hersey, Tricia. *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto*; 2022. P.4
6 To name few: «How to (Make) Dance in Berlin – A Toolbox for a Better Work Culture in the Independent Dance Scene» AG Work Culture and Guests (ZTB e.V.), 2022; Future Workshop #4 Money organised by ZTB e.V. and Tanztage Berlin in Sophiesaal, March 20, 2024
7 Pause as resistance 2022 www.tanzfabrik-berlin.de/en/pause-as-resistance-742a8eff-eb60-42b7-91da-fa678005d411

The idea of refusal to work or pause makes me think about the ironic fate of a strike in the neoliberal project-based economy. As self-employed in the attention economics, you only hurt yourself by refusing to work. In her 2015 lecture, Hito Steyerl⁸ mentioned Goran Djordjevic, the former artist from Yugoslavia, who organised the International Artists' Strike in 1979. The story goes quite desperately: the artists invited to join the strike replied that they were already on strike, that is, they were not creating new works, and it did not affect anything.

REST AS CARE

Another perspective on collective action was suggested by Nienke Scholts, whose project *Pausing Partners* was presented next door at Studio 4 of Uferstudios as an open studio day held along with the Salon. Scholts works on forms of facilitating and discussing rest as a part of the work process in a creative team. On the walls, I have found graphs of burnout mechanisms and recovery processes. Scholts shared some handy relaxation tips as I felt anxious and tense in the previous weeks, which, as I learned, means that my parasympathetic system was not switched on.

This very bodily-informed approach to production is no less political than a collective action. Even though it focuses on the body of the individual, this is not just a self-help tactic. As Audre Lorde writes on self-care: «Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.»⁹ Informed by Black feminist and queer poetics, the discourse of rest leads us to a revision of the value of time and being. Instead of considering productivity as the ultimate measure of value and instrumentalising rest for its sake, it brings up the idea that sounds crazy to neoliberal culture, that a non-productive life is valuable by itself.



8 Steyerl, Hito. *The Terror of Total Dasein*. 10.10.2015 www.youtube.com/watch?v=S10Mw7AS13A
9 Lorde, Audre. *A Burst of Light: And Other Essays*. Dover Publications Inc., 2017
10 typography-online.ru/league_of_tenders/



REST AS A SPACE FOR BEING SENSITIVE TO WHAT IS TO COME

In the interview «How to Rest Together», Christian Nyampeta defines rest as an action of being sensitive to what is to come, mentioning that rest is a practice that involves the giving of rest, rather than only taking rest. That perspective opens up the practice of self-care to the scale of a community, implying that rest is a practice of instituting conditions for rest.

I spent the first hours of the Salon in sweet memories of the collectives that I have been lucky to be a part of. Some of these collectives were places of rest, like the League of Tenders¹⁰—an imaginary organisation whose annual congresses looked more like a holiday gathering with the people who became a community for one another. Some of them were places of co-instituting, like the «Radical Reveries» project—a collective analytical and speculative mapping of contemporary art in Russia, the discontents of the artists who are part of it, as well as our fantastical ideas ranging from political utopias to concrete practical suggestions. Among them there were so-called «Sweet Reveries», a kind of answer to how to keep the community alive and caring. As a rhyme to the (Im)mobility Salon series, here I list some ideas gathered at the other dream-like collective spaces:

- Reconsider and recognize the value of labour of reproduction
- Maintain a balance between the value of keeping independent spaces alive and the value of art production: washing cups is just as important as making meanings
- Brag about the amount of rest, not overwork
- Practice hospitality: create friendly environments, share available resources, develop connections and cohesion within the community
- More room for experimentation!

:LOVE:

4 – 7 APRIL 2024

«Singing to make no Song»

PARVATHI RAMANATHAN



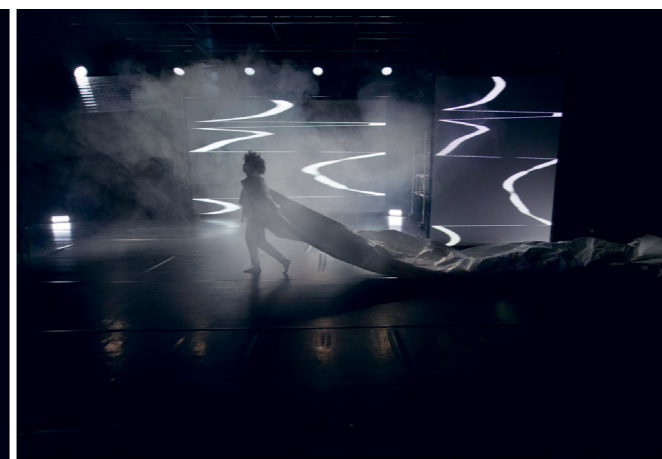
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«SWAY»
TATIANA MEJÍA

PERFORMANCE



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SWAY by Tatiana Mejía was presented at Radialsystem as part of the «LOVE» cooperation from 4 to 7 April 2024. «LOVE»—a collaboration between Tanzfabrik and Radialsystem—aims to improve the labour and presentation conditions of dance professionals in Berlin beyond their individual institutional contexts.

«Bow», she states as she dips one foot behind another, hand held gracefully aloft with her head low—stooping in the manner of a curtain call. Immediately then, she stands up with her hands square on her hips and quips, «Dayyuumn!». She has just euphorically danced a phrase of sonic footwork. I am in the audience watching SWAY by choreographer Tatiana Mejía at Radialsystem, as part of the space's collaboration with Tanzfabrik under the fold «LOVE». Bow.—Damn!—The two words next to each other, accompanied by Mejía's starkly different gestures, motion towards a dichotomy within her. Bow.—Damn!—she exclaims yet again at the end of another section of the performance consisting of a series of exuberant trills of vocal improvisation. The words ring of her experience being within her performer-skin, while also being an audience to herself. Bow.—Damn! The first word uttered softly and humble-sounding followed by the second as a sass-tinged declaration. Bow.—Damn! The bow gesturing towards the culture of European aristocracy and the «damn» uttered with a swagger I associate with Black American speech. Bow.—Damn!

Initially, I perceive Mejía's utterance of these words as an indication of a dichotomy. But as the evening's performance progresses, one realizes that it is more than a dichotomy—rather Mejía moves across many folds of influences that are tacked onto her being. These influences from different cultures, political contexts and generations manifest in her dancing vocalising body. However, SWAY is not Mejía parading her creative talents across Ballet and Mapouka strung together. There is a certain critical self-perception

in her acts, where the focus is not on being virtuosic. Rather the virtuosity is not allowed to be fulfilled, thus allowing for an articulation of failure.

A quintessential moment where this is evident in her gestures is when Mejía executes her interpretation of Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A*. As she rotates her head, extends her arms or stretches her feet apart—there is a precision in showing her imprecision, an intentional disinterest in displaying precision. The entire phrase is nonetheless performed with dedication. But her facial expression and the shrug in her shoulder seems to say with rolling eyes «Do I have to do this?» This duality allows me as an audience in on the performer's state of mind. I think back to Rainer's *No Manifesto* (1964), which she definitively represented through *Trio A*. The manifesto states: «No to spectacle. No to virtuosity. No to transformations and magic and make-believe. No to the glamour and transcendence of the star image. No to the heroic. No to the anti-heroic.» Six decades later, Mejía performs her interpretation of Rainer's work, itself an attempt at rejecting heroic or anti-heroic statements, but takes this articulation to her own body and context. Thus, in a cheeky and humourous way, she encounters and disarms, not just American «contemporary» dance, but also early influences in her life such as Ballet. Mejía further pulls upon threads from Afro-diasporic movement styles such as Mapouka and dembow dance, as she finds them in the context of her roots in the Dominican Republic. She incorporates these movements consciously, such as dembow dance with its subversive origins from the 1990s in the marginalized communities of Santo Domingo.

The programme notes of *SWAY* share Mejía's exploration of navigating «the delicate swing between strength, power, resistance, defiance, vulnerability and failure.» She plays with the figure of the neo-loser, who could be a complimentary avatar of the heroine—a figure she particularly perceives through the archetype of the «Strong Black Woman» marked as resilient, independent and caring. Mejía fashions a cape for herself akin to a superheroine, then makes leaps across the stage trying to take off in flight. «Black girl magic—Loud—talented—magic—sting—angry» she scores this section with these attributes associated with the archetype. Later, in the post-performance talk, Mejía shares about the pressure on the Black individual to double portray—the exhausting demand of upholding heroic virtues in a capital-driven society but also to not be bracketed into negative racialized stereotypes. Thus, with *SWAY* she tries to find the space within the Strong Black Woman archetype to celebrate «the incoherence of moving freely between external attributions and self-perception».

Her free movement across these expectations of successes and failures appears as though she is waking herself from one dream to find herself in another one, switching across dance, song, sound and narration in this unspooling. The transitions are abrupt, like glitches. Her song is also marked by glitches, unambitious in the need to impress or catch a tune. While improvising, she allows her voice to drop like a parabolic stone. The path of her voice and other sonic aspects of the stage are also visible visually through the sound-sensitive animation that is mapped and projected onto the background screen. Thus, in one section, Mejía's every footstep creates a coloured scratch in the projected background. However, just like her footsteps resist developing into a recognisably rhythmic beat, the scratches in the background also do not turn into a full-fledged painting with connected lines.

In this exploration of failure, *SWAY* shows the solo-performer in attributes of excellence via proactively changing the goal. Therefore, «the loser» or failure is also able to find a space for complete articulation within the performance. In movement, it manifests with Mejía giving space for her muscles to celebrate their laziness. In song, her voice finds free flight without the need to make a coherent tone or song. The choreographic work hence feels like an assertion by the choreographer as an artist to give complete validation not just to the successes, but also to the hours spent towards failed attempts, half-tries, discarded ideas and expressions-in-the-making.

While she meets her desire in that act, I wonder if we as an audience this evening (or as a society at large) are also at this level of acceptance. I ask this because of one particular moment: In the middle of the performance, Mejía breaks into a score of dembow dance to fast percussive music. Her movements display high rigour and are visibly demanding upon her energy reserves. She pushes and perseveres, and the music prolongs, keeping her pushing even further. As soon as she ended this phrase, the audience erupted into enthusiastic applause. This spontaneous act of appreciation of Mejía's virtuosity and expertise, appeared to be an honest expression of how we as an audience continue to measure and reward success. Although audiences may still have a way to go with appreciating creative efforts that don't place virtuosic excellence as a sole benchmark, I am glad for Mejía—for with *SWAY*, she appears to have traversed that glass ceiling for herself.

FOLD: WEAVING COLLECTIVITIES

9–12 MAY 2024

«String Figures & Becoming-With»

ELISABETH LEOPOLD



«FLOATING ROOTS»
INKY LEE
PERFORMANCE



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FOLD: «Weaving Collectivities» presented from 9 to 12 May 2024 included the following works:
Floating Roots by Inky Lee
Say, Surrender Stay by Dance Intensive, Milla Koistinen

«String figures [Fadenspiele] are like stories; they propose and enact patterns for participants to inhabit, somehow, on a vulnerable and wounded earth»

—Donna J. Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble*

I am here for picking up the string of a storyline that will soon move on, knot, retreat, move forward and twist until it finds you or misses you. In the end, either culmination is (im)perfectly alright. We must learn how to receive the string, how to become-with; how to, in Haraway's words «become responsible» to the living around us.

A ribbon gets stretched very slowly in space, fingers running along the soft looking fabric. From the air, the ribbon is guided towards the floor, stabilised with two fingers, and then pulled along the floor lines. It passes right by my feet. When the performer's arms seemed to no longer be able to pull any further apart, I instantly place my finger on the ribbon to support the performers mission, following an impulse of my body. Just then, my mind starts to switch on. Straight away, I start asking myself whether it is intended for the audience to pick up the ribbons or not? Whether the piece really wants to invite interaction? Triggered by this spiral of thoughts, I quickly withdraw my finger.

A moment of true surrender to an interaction, over in a flash. I was in the audience watching *Say Surrender, Stay* developed by choreographer Milla Koistinen together with the Dance Intensive programme of Tanzfabrik Berlin. Closing my eyes from time to time, the humming in the soundscore and my heightened awareness from the rhythm and setting of the whole piece, created a tingling feeling and expansion in my body. Decentering the vision gave space to all other senses, I perceived what was behind, beside, and above. Also, my back opened up to the room. Inhaling into expansion, exhaling into surrendering. I was deeply immersed in the work, in a somehow individual and at the same time collective in-between, which invited me to focus not only on things happening around but with me. In quiet concentration, sitting in-between the performers and audience members, I followed the conscious movements sometimes the ones further away and sometimes the ones directly in front of me. The darkened, large studio space was reduced to the absolute essentials, namely the people in it, with performers and audience often mingling imperceptibly. Soft spotlights flooded the room and shrouded it in dim light. Snails of enrolled ribbons got unrolled, in a soft rhythm, gestures of offering and receiving took place, ribbons got stretched in space, forming, reforming networks over the course of the evening. They intersected, interweaved, had their own and shared lives, sometimes rising above the heads of performers and observers, sometimes meandering close to the ground and between us. The lights cast grid-like, elongated shadows on the floor as they met three rectangles of bars reaching up to the ceiling, spread across the space. This created a beautiful geometric reflection, mirroring the connecting lines of the ribbons woven throughout the room.

The bodies moved deliberately, sometimes pausing by leaning against each other, resting on shoulders or laps, only to move through the room more dynamically again. A collective weaving, in a shared flow of becoming together.

I reached out with my gaze for another string, gliding over neon yellow-coloured wool, finding a knot that clung tightly to a waist. The string was going to be cut in the next moment with a pair of scissors held by the very same performer. I was now in the restaged performance of *Floating Roots* by artist and writer Inky Lee¹, observing the repetitive actions of the performers. They paced across the stage in straight lines with deliberate steps. From time to time, their neutral gazes met, connecting for a moment, only to move apart again. Some of the performers held large spools of neon strings which were unwound and stretched taut as they walked through the space. At times, the strings were selectively attached to another performer's hip or wrapped around a body. Visible, but also invisible, inventive lines of connection were drawn between the performers, who sought kinship in each other's stories as they talked about their experiences of isolation, racism, queerphobia and alienation as descendants of Asian immigrants in Germany and Austria. The auto-biographical excerpts were shared via an off-stage soundscape and also via two deaf performers who translated into International Sign Language. Stories were woven together before our eyes, buzzing from the desire to belong, but also from the desire to cut the connection, to slip out of the net and to conquer the power of singularity, which is ambivalently longed for and feared at the same time.

Becoming together without remaining alone? Both pieces in Tanzfabrik Berlin's #11 FOLD under the title «Weaving Collectivities» dealt with sensual forms of integration and social cohesion. In doing so, both works managed to stretch the view, to expand it to include all the stories taking place, to pivot from a central perspective to the periphery. This wide-ranging view encompasses the entire community and makes the lines of connection visible. In the Introduction of her book *Staying with the Trouble* the biologist



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¹ For another insight about Inky Lee's premiere of *Floating Roots* see also the article: *Unfold Unfurl Uncurl: Meandering Memories and their Recollections* by Jette Büchsenschütz in the *Seasonal* magazine 2022 – 23 of Tanzfabrik Berlin. (p.41 – 43)

«SAY SURRENDER, STAY»
MILLA KOISTINEN, DANCE INTENSIVE

PERFORMANCE

and feminist ecologist thinker Donna J. Haraway writes: «Staying with the trouble requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become-with each other or not at all.» She describes the staying with the trouble as a state that allows us to persevere with the unknown and not seek false refuge in security and stability. This also includes surrendering to collectivity, giving up control, building trust and accepting risks. Weaving together and thus visualizing the individual stories and voices that are part of these networks is a way to get moving, to also move history. Staying with the trouble—remaining restless, continuing to be in motion and creating the collective weave in the worldliness of all possible fruitful companions—helps us to break out of the individual stagnation, paralysis and inner resistance that so often overcomes us in the face of social upheavals and crises. At least for me, I walked into that night with blurred boundaries and an open mind.

FEMINIST FUTURES WEEKEND

6 – 8 JUNE 2024

«*Reality... utopia...
maybe just the
urge to be!*»

ANUYA RANE

In the frame of June's FEMINIST FUTURES WEEKEND, Tanzfabrik Berlin presented the works *Warp Renderings* by Sergiu Matis and *Ein Tanz für Valeska Gert* by Fernanda Silva. Matis is an associated artist of the European network apap—FEMINIST FUTURES. Silva is a Brazilian artist who was invited to a one-month residency at Tanzfabrik Berlin through the apap FEMINIST FUTURES network.



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«EIN TANZ FÜR VALESKA GERT»
FERNANDA SILVA

PERFORMANCE

Advaita Vedanta—the philosophical tradition of non-dualism or monism part of Hindu philosophy—lays emphasis on the concept of «Aham Brahmasmi». Translated literally: the individual soul (*Aham*) is the universal consciousness (*Brahman*) itself. The individual self (the loosely translated «I») and the divine consciousness are not different entities, but one and the same, therefore there can be no ego or sense of separation. I am (Me) the Universe, «Aham Brahmasmi». The universe is within me.

Sergiu Matis' *Warp Renderings* unfolded a universe.

As the evening opened, Matis was seen gliding on stage in near darkness. His movements were minimal. The neon paint underneath his shoes became visible as he continued sliding.

Gradually, his movements began expanding vigorously in space, smoothly turning, twisting, warping (as he likes to call it) perhaps hinting at some sort of distortion. Matis' performance investigates the natural environment and the relationship of human society with nature. Going by the understanding that humans are an element of the natural environment, this investigation imposes a critical probe on our inner headspace: the unrest within the human species. The unrest within the human species is reflected in the slow ongoing destruction of our natural surroundings, the outcome of human intelligence and ideologies that often confront the nature of nature itself.

The philosophical concept of «I am the Universe» echoed in my mind while watching the performer personify the environment through his movements—postures and gestures—thus creating a canvas and merging into it.

The multiple objects lying around on stage, that seemingly represent embodied natural elements such as trees, water, clouds, rains, storms, were being manhandled by him in a way to shake up the entire universe. What is this hysteria? If this divide between nature and human is dissolved and we as individuals attempted to reach the state of oneness with the outer sphere, even in a more generic sense than implied in Hindu philosophy, would a certain degree of tolerance be within grasp?

A podium with a laptop and a TV screen was an important part of the stage design. Matis operated the laptop at intervals, swiping through a slide of images that were displayed on the TV screen and also projected on the other side of the stage on a multilayered makeshift screen. The images included old European landscape paintings, photographs and satellite images—ranging from classical paintings to pictures of wars and devastation. However, very interestingly, a particular painting that continued reappearing was the famous *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* by Casper David Friedrich. Towards the end of the performance, Matis recited a poem and talked about art, trying his hand at decoding aesthetics while commenting on some of the paintings. Though this selection did not include Friedrich's canvas, it seemed like a poignant choice. Generally interpreted as a man contemplating nature and its vastness, or finding himself in a moment of self-realization, the painting placed in this composition resonated the dancer's innate desire to feel connected. Matis shared that landscape paintings and art history was the seed that instigated this performance. Undoubtedly, art history does urge us to revisit what was, re-think what is and reconsider what could be. Isn't it?

Assuming the answer to this pseudo-question is a «yes», I indulge in the delicious rendition of Fernanda Silva's *Ein Tanz für Valeska Gert*. For a dance/theatre historian or for a native German, the name Valeska Gert may sound familiar. But perhaps for non-Germans or performers from another part of the world, the name may even be unheard of. That was the case with Fernanda Silva, she confessed while speaking after the show.

Not being acquainted with Valeska Gert, one may first resort to internet searches, before running to a library or a cinematheque to collect material. The first information that pops up online is that she was an avant-gardist, grotesque dancer/actress, cabaret and pantomime artist. She attempted unconventional themes for her performances. Entering on stage in between the reels of cinema and simply standing there, motionless, seemingly inactive, silent, she performed her provocative work *Pause*.

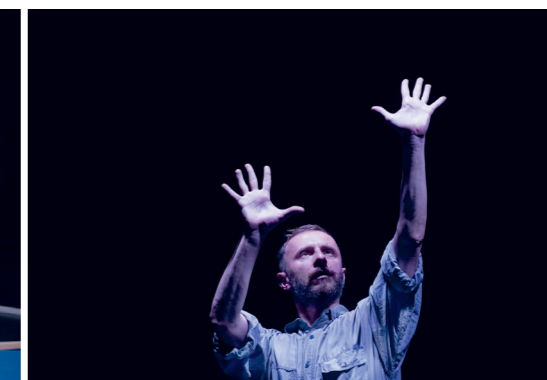
In the 1920s, at a time when prim and proper women, dressed in tutus, danced ballet, Gert chose to look different, look unconventional. In her expressionist manner, she made grimaces evoking lust, disgust, pain, something unusual for a dancer. Another such artist with a very distinct trajectory—Josephine Baker—came to my mind. Both, turning their shortcomings into their strength. And importantly, both engaging in the most outrageous genre, cabaret.

Analysing or giving a lecture on Valeska Gert is neither my area of expertise nor my prerogative. Nonetheless, the superlative adjectives attached to her name were certainly on my mind, while going to watch a performance about her. At least that's what I thought, a performance about Valeska Gert. Throughout the performance, I was but left wondering where Valeska Gert was? No exaggeration, no provocation, no satire, no bodily distortion. Not an overt discourse on female resistance as the artist herself is a trans person. How could this be about Valeska Gert?

I was compelled, at this point, to return my focus to the title *Ein Tanz für Valeska Gert* that translated to «A dance for Valeska Gert», not «of» Valeska or «about» Valeska. This presentation by Silva was an offering to Valeska, who defined the performance space as freedom. Being free of prejudices, societal norms and being free in one's own body.

Silva entered Studio 4 at Uferstudios where the audience members were seated on the floor in random scatterings. She was dressed in a newspaper dress, resembling something like an 18th century gown for women. She also wore fleece gloves, which did not match the dress. Her face and head were covered with a cloth that created the effect of a mask. The face drawn on the mask had an intriguing smiling expression with small painted eyes and red lips. The special attire was completed with black platform ankle boots. Tiptoeing softly, swiftly, keeping with the music beats, she moved in the space, passing in between the seated audience. Rocking the soul gently, it was a sheer treat for the eyes and the ears. In seeing her move to a corner and stay put there, still for a couple of minutes without any movements – I recognised an ode to Valeska Gert. Immobility on stage, that was then provocative, even revolutionary, is now commonplace in art. The likes of Gert, dared and pioneered.

Silva then meticulously took off her boots one by one and began tearing the dress apart. The minimal movements started looking like a dance as she continued freeing her body from that paper dress. The dance became a trance by the time Silva was out of that dress.



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«WARP RENDERINGS»
SERGIU MATIS
PERFORMANCE

She danced, she jumped,
She rejoiced.
She smiled, she laughed,
She cared, she was careless
She was who she was,
She was what she was.

IMPRINT

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