

TANZFABRIK
BERLIN

SEASON
2022 – 23



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*Memories
and
Reflections*

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«Editorial Note»

FELICITAS ZEEDEN

In February 2022, we celebrated «The last Open Spaces?» edition to turn to something else: Within the newly composed Tanzfabrik team, we decided to implement a more continuous programme instead of the previous «Open Spaces» format. By having shorter programme focuses spread across one season, we aimed to offer better individual support to artists, provide stronger production support for each stage performance and implement a more sustainable management of resources within our team. This new form of the season's programme, we hoped, would also give us the opportunity to address the diverse and specific needs of the artistic teams early on. With this, we wished to allow ourselves and the audience the opportunity to immerse thematically and aesthetically in a programme that accommodates different attention spans and physical conditions.

To give space to these and further realignments, we took a four-week break in May 2022: With «Pause as Resistance» our team took a month to together reflect upon learnings from the past to shape the institution's future. We dedicated this time to have exchanges about the values we share, to examine all that we stand for personally and institutionally, and inspired by being part of the European network project *apap-Feminist Futures*, to imagine what a feminist future could look like. The part-manifestation part-residency «Pause as Resistance» was also a statement against the ever-growing pressure to produce, to constantly create and present something new. This month was a caesura, a reconsideration and the kick-off for our new team. Suitably, this publication too opens with a reflective text about «Pause as Resistance».

Since the 2022 – 23 Season, our stage programme now spans from September to June with two to four pieces being shown on select weekends. During these focussed programmes, certain themes may be consolidated or deepen further. Sometimes connections that lie in the shadows may be revealed. To convey this image of being interwoven—in the figurative sense and in the literal sense in relation to textiles—we decided to name these programme-focuses «Folds». The performance works that fell under one «Fold» were all created independently of each other and were only wrinkled into a fold through our curatorial pinch.

If one folds a swath of fabric, new connections are forged: Parts of the fabric that were previously located on opposite sides suddenly lie next to each other, thereby creating new points of contact, juxtapositions, and condensations. Further, the process of folding withdraws certain parts within the fold. Though hidden from view, the fold still contains everything else. Through the act of *unfolding*, in turn, hidden parts become visible and otherwise overlooked pathways emerge.

Any arbitrary point is potentially connected to any other point of a fold and both can be drawn together by folding. Herein lies the reason for the fundamental cohesion of a fold, as the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze states in his work *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*: «a flexible or an elastic body stills has cohering parts that form a fold, such that they are not separated into parts but are rather divided to infinity in smaller and smaller folds that always retain a certain cohesion.» With the metaphor of the fold for our seasonal

programme, we want to allude to this play of concealing and showing, create temporary juxtapositions and point to a fundamental connections between the individual programme parts: «the fold always refers to other folds».

In addition to the programme of «Folds», there are formats which stand outside the folds or perhaps rather add something to the folds: In the 2022 – 23 Season, for instance, we staged the «Feminist Futures Festival» with *apap* and the accompanying discourse format «Feminist School Berlin» (Part 1 and Part 2) as additional programmes. Both parts of the «Feminist School Berlin» contained workshops and dance performances as well as discursive, poetic, and cinematic events, all aiming to address feminist topics from an intersectional perspective. The corresponding festival was curated in collaboration with our two *apap* partner institutions from Warsaw and Salzburg and three artists from the *apap* network. Together, we curated a programme that focussed on feminist topics but more importantly, aimed to follow feminist principles in all its considerations. Our underlying aim in this international cooperation was to challenge conventions in the arts regarding institutional decision-making, equity, payment terms and hierarchies.

The 2022 – 23 Season stands completed by three projects beyond the programme of «Folds». «LOVE»—our collaboration with Radialsystem allowed the showcase of three pieces this season at this venue on the Spree-front. Further, «Facing Nature» (Part 1 and Part 2) addressed the interconnectedness of art and nature in profound artist dialogues, film screenings and readings. As the season's finale, «Emerging Change Prologue» brought together workshops, artistic encounters and pieces by Queer Black people, Indigenous people and People of Colour.

Today, we look back on this first season of folds that began with a break. Although this break and interruption of «Pause as Resistance» was intended to slow things down and urge us to do less, in the end we did present a dense, intensive, and sometimes, overloaded programme. Nevertheless, we continued to stand true to the foundational principles that we formulated together as Tanzfabrik's team last year. These seem to be well reflected in the term «Feminist Futures» which allows trial and error to be a part of this vast unfurling fabric.

If you peruse through this publication, you will find a text for each «Fold» and every additional project. The texts attempt to trace the small, temporary neighbourhoods, and the newly created connections between the different parts of the folded and unfolded fabric. For the forthcoming time, we are excited to see how the programme develops, how we can continue to follow our guidelines and what will *unfold*.

When they ask if you're a feminist, will your hand shoot up?
will you be a supporting act or a qualifier for the cause?
will you be a prop for the main show,
or a question mark when the curtains rise?
will you be mere spice garnishing the main dish?
or the main course that's too bland, or too much, or not enough?
will you be a sophisticated dessert that makes an appearance
on the menu according to the size of our purse?
will you be sucked in or gurgled or whispered or spat out?

When they ask if you're a feminist, will your hand stay up?

— Ama Asantewa Diaka: «*That-which-must-not-be-named*» (excerpt)

All quotes from Deleuze are taken from Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, London 1993.

The poem «That-which-must-not-be-named» is published in *Woman Eat Me Whole* by Ama Asantewa Diaka, New York 2022. The author was part of the *Poetry Meets Dance* event within the frame of «Tanznacht Forum: Feminist School Berlin».



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«Resisting the Rest»

On Pausing a Cultural Institution

JACOPO LANTERI & FELICITAS ZEEDEN

Disclaimer This text comes from a privileged position. It is written from an organisation in Germany, where structural funding enables supporting, producing, and presenting the art. The project we initiated and the questions behind it emerge from these circumstances, as we are experiencing them. We acknowledge that this reality is not shared by many.

«I WOULD PREFER NOT TO.»

It started with Bartleby's polite yet resolute refusal to work.

Together we read some pages of Melville's book on the first day of the pause: We were ten employees from the stage department at Tanzfabrik Berlin, joined by four artists who have been invited to pause with us. We were about to embark on a month-long pause: no schedules, mails, meetings, productions, events. Only time filled with reflection, emptiness and silence. This project—conceived as a manifestation against our working patterns as the team of Tanzfabrik Berlin and as a residency for the artists—that evolved throughout May 2022, was called «Pause as Resistance».

1 These headings are based on short phrases that were shown on our homepage during our «Pause as Resistance» residency/manifestation.

2 In their article published in *Nature Ecology & Evolution* in September 2020, authors Christian Rutz et al. refer to the this «global slowing of modern human activities, notably travel» as the *Anthropause*. The decrease in activity has led to a measurable reduction in seismic noise—the Great Seismic Quiet Period. See: Rutz, C., Loretto, M.C., Bates, A.E. et al. *COVID-19 lockdown allows researchers to quantify the effects of human activity on wildlife*, *Nature Ecology & Evolution* 4, 1156–1159 (2020). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-020-1237-z>

LISTEN.¹

The silence resonated with us. It echoed the effects and sensations of a recent, global slowing-down—the result of the first wave of the COVID19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown—when cities turned eerily quiet, and seismic noise levels normally caused by the ceaseless human activity demonstrably reduced worldwide.² But the absence of people and vehicles from the streets and city squares, the grounding of airplanes and the cessation of industry and commerce across the globe, did not simply create a vacuum rather, they created a silent space to be filled by new things, quieter things, moods and beings. One only had to try to listen more carefully.

A year later, in the spring of 2021, our small team—like many others in the field of cultural work—was exhausted by the second pandemic year. Yes, theatres were closed to the audience but that didn't mean less work inside the organisation. We kept on working: postponing event after event, cancelling many performances and re-imagining others; often starting over from scratch and re-designing them for streaming online, or adapting indoor programmes to stage them outdoors. All of this was, of course, on top of the ordinary, day-to-day work, which includes hosting artists and rehearsals in our studios, each and every day.

It felt like we were ineffectively chasing our own tails. We wanted to support our artist community. We wished to continue to provide them with a home and a place to create and exhibit their work. Faced with a situation in which nothing seemed to make sense, we were determined to carve out an island of normalcy, find a little bit of logic in a world clearly turned upside down.

One morning in early 2021, we sat together at Jacopo's kitchen table to conceptualise and put together the annual programme for the following year. A simple question guided us that morning: «What if we were to cease our day-to-day activity for some time in order to recover, rethink, and reimagine what we are doing? And HOW would we go about it?»

We found the idea of slowing down—in keeping with a *radical reduction of urban noise*—immediately appealing. Not just as a political stance but at a personal level as well, having realised how we too had been feeling overworked. We felt that we could strongly identify with the notion of consciously

and mindfully slowing down, of earnestly exploring the possibility of noise reduction in our own lives and seeking a more sustainable working rhythm. But could we allow ourselves that: applications piling up unanswered? Suspending the never-ending zoom meetings and simply become still? Here we saw the opportunity to look differently at our world, our environment and ourselves, to try to scratch the surface and see what was underneath.

The morning light was shining through the window, casting a calm and peaceful atmosphere in the room. For a moment we stood there in silence, imagining how beautiful it would be. We glanced at each other and thought how foolish it would be not to see this idea through; and how foolish it would be if indeed we do.

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Although the idea was born out of contingency, the concept of pausing was shaped by the propositions of many artists and authors before.³ Similar subversive strategies have been proposed as a reaction to the predominant system of «capitalist realism», as Mark Fischer has called it. For Fischer, we live in a society in which profit, private property, and exploitation have become so deeply ingrained in every aspect of our lives—and bodies—that we can no longer imagine other forms of social organisation. The «pause» precisely means to acknowledge this condition and heed the fact that art, like any other form of human activity and productivity, is historically conditioned to be governed by the logic of exchange values. Art too, like other forms of human activity, tends toward (self-) exhaustion, (self-) exploitation, and often brutal, potentially dehumanising competition.

Moreover, in the context of a society that is essentially «performance» driven (e.g., «improving performance») and which understands performance as a mode of being (i.e., self-making as self-representation), the refusal of a cultural institute of the performing arts to perform its duty, i.e., to «perform», must be understood as a gesture of self-criticism and as a critical intervention into what we understand as the art world's compliance with economic programmes and dictates in the age of relentless (self-) optimisation.

Finally, in affinity with existing ecological strategies, resisting production, artistic production included, is consonant with environmentalists' subversive calling for strategic de-growth,⁴ and with feminist calls for «doing less»—both powerful forms of resistance designed to challenge patriarchal and capitalist expectations (e.g., free household labour, eternal growth, the value of progress, etc.)⁵.

The theoretical background alluded to above was compounded by our and our team's experience of distress surrounding the failure of a project. The project, which was initiated by the previous artistic director in collaboration with an external curator, sought to address questions regarding the impact of colonialism in dance and dance institutions. Among the causes for its failure was an (overworked) organisation that had been unprepared to deal head-on with the consequences of structural racism, white privilege, and decolonial work.

During this intense period, it became clear to us that we were unable to tackle these issues in an honest and profound manner without creating the capacity (in terms of time and space, to say nothing of funding at this point) to read and learn, and importantly, the capacity to implement change inside and outside the institution. To initiate and try to sustain a serious learning process, with all the entailed consequences of learning, especially concerning such complex and consequential topics, on top of our normal tasks and commitments as workers in a cultural institution, was bound inevitably to fail. Moreover, it was fundamentally disingenuous, and incompatible with the spirit of this undertaking.

To our mind, the idea of pausing would allow us to scratch the surface and uncover what lies beneath it; to find the necessary peace of mind for real (self-)reflection, by turning away from, and turning down, the noise; to discard,

3 Among others: Ariella Aisha Azoulay *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*; Verso Books, 2019; Jane Odell, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*, Melville House, 2020; Emma Bigé, *Nap-ins. Politiques de la sieste*, in *www.pourunatlasdesfigures.net*, dir. Mathieu Bouvier; *La Manufacture*, Lausanne (He.so) 2018; Avery F. Gordon in Interview with Krystian Woznicki, *Unshrinking the World: An Interview with Avery F. Gordon about The Hawthorn Archive: Letters from the Utopian Margins*, 2019; Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, Duke University Press, 2011; Tricia Hearsay, *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto*; Little, Brown, 2022; Lecture at Museum of Modern Art by Fred Moten, *Blackness and Nonperformance*; 2015. <https://www.moma.org/calendar/events/1364>

4 See: Bruno Latour; *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*. Cambridge: Polity, 2018

5 Among the enormous bibliography that explain the connection of unpaid women's labour and capital we suggest: Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*. New York, NY: Autonomedia, 2004

6 <https://www.tanzfabrik-berlin.de/en/pause-as-resistance-742a8eff-eb60-42b7-91da-fa678005d411#FAQ>

7 During our pause, users of the webpage came across these phrases before they could access the actual content of the homepage. These phrases correspond to the headings of the paragraphs in this article.

8 Interview with Barbara Greiner; Jacopo Lanteri und Felicitas Zeeden; *Pausiert Euch!*; Elena Phillip; *Tanzraum Berlin Magazine*; May–June 2022; <https://www.tanzraum-berlin.de/magazin/artikel/pausiert-euch/>; Jacopo Lanteri & Felicitas Zeeden are directing, together with Barbara Greiner, the Stage department of Tanzfabrik Berlin, since January 2022.

if only momentarily, our commitment to external appearances in order to look ourselves in the eyes and ask: What are the mechanisms that drive us? What are some of the underlying privileges, presuppositions, motivations and self-deceptions underneath our day-to-day work in a cultural institution? To what extent are we complacent in feeding (ourselves) to the ever-turning wheels of production? Are we workaholics? What would be of us, had we suddenly stopped working?

PAUSE AS RESISTANCE

It took us little over a year to realise and to materialise the idea of the pause. Our project now was to pause; to put other projects on hold so as to keep the pausing period completely free.

Next, we decided to promote a whole month of pausing. Partly as a political statement, partly a subversive action: we composed a text explaining our reasons for pausing and posted it on our website⁶; we created posters to be hung around the city; we generated slogans or manual instructions for pausing our website⁷, contacted journalists and offered to give interviews.⁸ By early May, our idea had become a reality, sealed by an auto-responder installed in all of our emails. The auto-response read:

During the month of May 2022 the team of Tanzfabrik Bühne will practice a pause. By this, we mean a radical reduction, or a complete interruption of the everyday activities of Tanzfabrik's stage department, at all levels. E-mails / phones / social media are not used, meetings are not held, planning and production stand still (...) For these reasons we will not read you email! (...) If your message can wait, please write us again beginning of June.

Since pausing was effectively defined as work-time, it meant keeping to «strict» pausing schedule. Two daily sessions of three hours each, were scheduled, in which the participating artists and employees paused, before going home to rest.

Full-time workers had five days of pause per week; part-time workers paused in proportion to their contracts.

Tuesdays and Thursdays were collectively decided upon as days in which everyone was present. Mondays and Fridays allowed for more singular activities—including actual work, if one so desired.

Offices, studios and all spaces of the institution were strictly dedicated to the pause.

Obviously, the withdrawal from productivity was met with various reactions. Most were indeed highly charged and passionate, only few neutral or indifferent. Two criticisms that were repeatedly levelled at us were:

«It is a luxury project! It's a privilege to pause!»

«You are too busy with yourself, art institutions should be available!»

Indeed, from the very moment of the idea's conception, we were very aware that the pause we are imagining will be a child of privilege, the product of *our* privileged positions.

As valid as the criticism may be, we still felt confident about our cause—about the pause. And we believed that the good that will come out of our action shall outweigh the bad. Knowing full-well that most, if not all, freelance artists could not afford to pause at will, especially those who are new to Berlin and the German bureaucracy, and who don't enjoy any form of state support, we decided to share our limited resources with as many individuals as possible, so they could join us in pausing. To that end, we published a call for applications, inviting artists to send us CVs and a short text detailing their reasons for wanting to pause. On a lottery basis, we were able to offer four grants of €2500 each.

Granted, we were indeed busy with ourselves. But it was also a necessary step if we were to try to do—try to be—better. For that, we needed to reflect, to learn, to listen, to share our thoughts and knowledge with one



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another, to evaluate, and if necessary, to rethink our habits, work practices, and ways of doing. Shouldn't art institutions be able to do precisely that?

Open does not mean always available. We wanted to stay open, and we invited anyone from the public who wanted to join us to our open pause sessions, every Tuesday afternoon.

There were, also, very supportive, positive and enthusiastic reactions.⁹ We soon discovered that we were not alone in imaging institutional pausing. An article titled *The Jello, the Nothing, the Something and the Rest(s)* by Agnès Quackels and Barbara Van Lindt¹⁰ which appeared as we were preparing for the pause, resonated with us. It delighted and encouraged us to see the project to fruition.

WIDE AWAKE IN SLOW-MOTION.

Reading Melville on the first day of the Pause, we then turned to discuss what it would, or could, actually mean for us, and for an institution like ours, «to pause». In order to define «pause», we felt it was necessary to first clarify for ourselves how we understand «work»: understanding the nature of work was an important step on the way to realising the nature of pausing. As a number of critics of capitalism have pointed out, what one sells when one works for a wage, is neither actual labour nor the working body, but time. Time is a commodity, utilised by the owners of the means of production to generate profit.¹¹

As a cultural organisation, we may not produce a monetisable profit directly, but we produce symbolic profit for ourselves and the artists involved in our projects. Moreover, cultural institutions nowadays are an integral part of a thriving economy that—especially in a city like Berlin—is effectively transforming social relations starting at the level of local neighbourhoods, and far beyond.

The stakes of the pause thus became somewhat clearer to us: by stating our refusal to work, we were actually reclaiming time; by deconstructing our relationship to (work) time, we were reclaiming time as a medium for self-determination.

In the course of the following four weeks, we engaged as a collective and as an institution. We decided to cook and eat together outdoors, feeling happy and relaxed for the first time in months. Whether intensely focused or lax in nature, performed together or alone, the month of pause was a profound learning experience.

⁹ A precious conversation partner and ally has been Alix Eynaudi.

¹⁰ Agnès Quackels, in dialogue with Barbara Van Lindt; *The Jello, The Nothing, The Something and the Rest(s)*; ontra/Productief, Issue #165; 3 September 2021. <https://e-tcetera.be/the-jello-the-nothing-the-something-and-the-rests/Thanks-to-Barbara-Greinner-who-brought-this-article-to-our-attention>.

¹¹ See, for example, Eva von Redecker, *Revolution für das Leben*, S.Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 2020

¹² Here, «We» refers to the group of people who took part in *Pause as Resistance*.

We brought in books and shared them with one another.¹²

We read together.

We discussed what Feminism means for each of us and what it could mean for us collectively and institutionally.

We took time to write down and reflect on our policies.

We shared meals.

We danced.

We repurposed old wood to create additional storage space.

We invited experts to lead sensitisation workshops, focusing on accessibility.

We hosted a spontaneous get-together of people doing decolonial work.

We watched a movie.

We openly discussed possible changes to our working structures.

We travelled.

We hosted sessions of Alexander Technique.

We took the time to *talk* with artists we support, instead of the so-called «meeting».

We listened.

We spent time outside.

We were delighted to be joined by so many artists, colleagues and audience members in our open sessions.

We created a space where one could simply be without having to consume (not even culture) or be consumed.

We created a space to reconnect with each other after two long years of social distancing.

We wrote a new mission statement.

We talked about quotas in cultural institutions.

We imagined how to carry the pause with us in the upcoming months.

Let’s be honest: we didn’t quite manage to pause the institution. The institution kept running—obviously and fortunately; and we kept running, too, but at a different pace. And more mindfully, to be sure. At the end of the first week, many of us were already checking our emails again. We told ourselves that we wanted to do so, in order to not be flooded by a torrent of emails when the pause is over. In reality, we were all a little stressed that something might land on our table requiring our immediate attention. We didn’t acknowledge this feeling until later on, but it was our brain conditioned so thoroughly to resist the pause as well. It became clear that this internal resistance to pause, which we kept fighting until the end was a physical symptom of a society that simply can’t tolerate the notion of being unproductive.

But the fact that it is nearly impossible to halt an institution doesn’t mean it’s not worth trying. It was precisely the attempt that became so conducive to learning. Under the aegis of «Pause as Resistance», there was a livelier, more open and honest exchange. We discovered exciting forms of growth under the guise of the de-growth and maybe we succeeded in inspiring others to try pausing as well.

COME AND SIT WITH ME.

A few days into the pause, we were sitting in a park in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art at Belgrade, surrounded by dry grass and trees.¹³ It was noon, the sun was shining and it was quite hot for this time of year. We were reading out loud a short text called *Thinking with the Swamp* by Ingrid Vranken, Sepideh Ardalani and Mihaela Brebenel.¹⁴

The authors invite us to reflect on the characteristics of a swamp, asking what it would look like if we were to align our thinking with the nature of the swamp. To the authors, adopting a swamp-way of thinking means first of all, abandoning binary thought: the swamp has no clear beginning nor end. It «doesn’t allow for a Cartesian way of mapping it». Instead, swamps are transient zones, composed of water and land; they are indeterminate beings.

When a human being wants to move through a swamp, they must acknowledge and adapt their gait, tempo, orientation, and navigational dispositions to its unique character—the intercourse of soil and water—and the boggy thick liquid that they form. «The swamp invites us to find alternative temporalities and evaluate our ideas of progress. A stable ground founds our contemporary world and allows us to rush forward, giving resistance to push ourselves at speed through space/time.» Far from being solid and stable terrain, the swamp forces us to think *with it, rather than to take it for granted*. The swamp urges us to give up our (unconscious) neo-capitalist habits, the familiar mind-set and habitual speed, our sense of purpose and direction. Due to its acidity, but also its own internal nature, the swamp remains preserved. It does not decompose or decay organic matter at all or—depending on various factors such as geographic location, water composition—does so only very slowly. It remembers, so to speak. We can learn from the swamp.

Was our pause swamp-like? By pausing in the middle of life, were we simulating passage through a swampy terrain, practising an art of thinking-with-the-swamp? Can we learn from the swamp how to embrace disorientation, and allow ourselves to simply drift? To relish the purposelessness and amidst that be able to discover something unexpected, to stumble upon something unforeseen?

Throughout the Anthropocene, humans have regarded swamps as hostile environments and as abject, draining and transforming them into fertile lands for agricultural purposes. As with many other natural spaces, we have prioritised economic benefit over preservation of unique characteristics ultimately spelled out their destruction. Only in recent times, an awareness of the extraordinary significance of wetlands has been emerging and growing.¹⁵ It is urgent to preserve these indeterminate beings both in the literal and the metaphorical senses. This means also to stay with their strange

consistency and indefinable viscosity, to *think-with* and *navigate-through* the swamp, as well as the pause. Allow ourselves to give in to their temporality and be ready to learn from them.

The text resonated with what we were trying to do in Berlin, and thinking of it now, it mixes with the specific sensual impressions of that noon in May: In retrospect, we are imagining our pause as a swamp, as a multi-layered marshland. Instead of sitting in the dry, almost arid grass in Belgrade, we now see ourselves sitting in the wetlands, surrounded by swamps and foggy fields of peat.

TODAY¹⁶

Today I’m flying low and I’m
not saying a word
I’m letting all the voodooos
of ambition sleep.

The world goes on as it must,
the bees in the garden rumbling a little,
the fish leaping, the gnats getting eaten.
And so forth.

But I’m taking the day off.
Quiet as a feather.
I hardly move though really I’m traveling
a terrific distance.

Stillness. One of the doors
into the temple.

— Mary Oliver

¹⁶ This Poem by Mary Oliver was sent to us by Milla Koistinen as an inspiration for our act of pausing.

¹³ In May, we joined for few days a «retreat» of the European Network apap – FEMINIST FUTURES. A get-together with colleagues and artists from all over Europe imagined as spare time for sharing, exchange and connecting. The retreat didn’t include any presentations, workshops or networking pressure.

¹⁴ Ingrid Vranken, Sepideh Ardalani & Mihaela Brebenel; *Thinking with The Swamp*, 2018. <https://fo.am/publications/thinking-swamp/>. With thanks to Harun Morrison who brought this text to our attention.

¹⁵ Intact swamps and other wetlands hold an extraordinary significance for our biodiversity and climate; bogs can reduce the consequences of global warming, as they act as reservoirs for greenhouse gases; they provide habitats for a variety of insects, fish, plants, and other organisms. See: <https://www.bfn.de/moorschutzstrategien-europa/>; <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/wiederbewaessung-von-moorgebieten-nasse-moore-echte-100.html>; <https://www.dw.com/de/rettet-die-moore-als-treibhausgas-speicher/a-51199311>

TANZNACHT FORUM: THIS IS STILL NOT NORMAL

Parallel to the «Feminist School Berlin», the performance *This Is Still Not Normal* by Arantxa Martínez and Juan Domínguez took place as part of Tanznacht Forum.

8 – 11 SEPTEMBER 2022



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«THIS IS STILL NOT NORMAL»
ARANTXA MARTÍNEZ + JUAN DOMÍNGUEZ

PERFORMANCE



«The Politics of Arousal»

ANDREJ MIRČEV

The rise of militant, right-wing forces happening across the globe in such diverse geographical and cultural contexts as Europe, the US, Latin America and states like Iran or Turkey, is an urgent reminder that corporeality and questions of sexuality are (still) the ultimate battleground of contemporary politics. As if all the emancipation and achievements of the sexual, feminist, and LGBTQ+ revolution of the 60s and 70s are not only commodified, but jeopardised by the conservative backlash. This particularly concerns the visibility and presence of bodies in public spaces, fluid bodies celebrating the joy of unrepressed carnality, and the energies of liberated desire. However, for the system to function and to keep accumulating profits, bodies have to be controlled and regulated. Issues of efficiency and performativity serve as the imperative of the capitalist machine. They are deeply embedded in its architecture. The flow of production, in other words, has to move ceaselessly. Bodies, tools, networks, and fluxes of desire must never stop circulating. Even at the expense of total exhaustion and self-destruction. The *suicidal state* in our neoliberal age—to echo the words of Brazilian scholar Vladimir Safatle—is a power driven forward by the kinetics of extractivism and carless (self-) exploitation.

Made in 1971 as a work that mixes documentary material and fiction, the film *WR: Mysteries of Organism* by the Yugoslav director Dušan Makavejev focuses on the ambivalent and paradoxical relationship between the state

and the practices/discourses of sexuality. Using the life of Wilhelm Reich as a dramaturgical framework to generate his narrative, Makavejev displays the radicality of aroused bodies perceived as enemies of both right and left-wing politics. One monologue performed by the actress Milena Dravić in *WR: Mysteries of Organism* brings it elegantly to a point: «Our journey to the future must be positive about life. Comrades, socialism and physical love must not be confronted and in opposition! Socialism cannot cancel out human desire from its programme. The October revolution failed because it disregarded the issue of free love.»

Any (revolutionary) attempt to reorganise the dissipating socio-political structures will also necessitate a rethinking of the role and function of libidinous energies. At the same time, it will require arriving at the point in which sexuality can regain its subversive force from which it has been stripped of in the historical and economic processes of commodification and alienation.

Arguing that the body has remained a conceptual blind spot in both Western philosophy and contemporary feminist theory, the philosopher Elizabeth Grosz demonstrates that this has led to a proliferation of *somatophobia*, and corporeality being regarded as a danger and obstacle in the operations of reasoning.¹ At the same time, the fear of the body is the consequence of the dominance of Christian tradition, which was founded on the separation of mind and body, and which has served the dichotomisation of the world as well as the sexes. According to such a binary organisation of reality, concepts like sexuality, corporeality, space, and femininity are subordinate to the principles of masculine reasoning. From a political perspective, this division implies that the figure of the state is aligned with hierarchically organised power. Everything related to the realm of the body, desire, and affectivity has to be controlled and classified by the masculine sovereign.

The power of art and performance lies in the potentiality to disrupt these hierarchies and binaries by staging *unruly bodies* whose energetic flows defy the gravity of the patriarchal power apparatuses. Once these unruly bodies occupy galleries, museums, theatres or streets, and squares, what becomes visible is the explicit body as a «site of social markings, physical parts and gestural signatures of gender, race, class, age, sexuality—all of which bear ghosts of historical meaning, markings delineating social hierarchies of privilege and disprivilege.»² (Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, 1997) Relating Schneider's notion of the explicit body with the idea of a *politics of arousal*, I want to assess the affective and active force of performance to bring forth scenarios of disobedient corporeality. What is at stake is the urgency to practice and think other modes of existence organised not around the death drive immanent to the suicidal machine, but rather in shared practices of conviviality, care and lived desire.

In their work *This is still not normal*, Arantxa Martínez and Juan Domínguez utilise the stage to engender situations in which questions of sexuality and intimacy are directly experienced and reflected. Bodies of various shapes, gender, age, and race perform incarnated landscapes of togetherness. Their touches, tenderness, and joys unfold perceptions and imaginations of a different regime of collectivity, a regime of uninhibited affection and care for «the Other». At times, the naked bodies fuse and intertwine, creating a Dionysian multitude whose territories are haptic, sensual and inviting. Although the performers keep their distance, the audiences easily become part of the intimate atmosphere of shared viscosity. Therein lies the power of the performance: to mobilise affectivity as an emancipatory tool to break the spell of necropolitics by instigating and expressing the vitality of living flesh. The politics of arousal here is synonymous with the capacity of performance to put in motion forces of encounter and swells of intensities circulating between humans and non-humans. Warm bodies moving and sweating together against the suicidal coldness of capital.

1 Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994

2 Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, New York/London: Routledge, 1997 p. 2.

TANZNACHT FORUM: FEMINIST SCHOOL PART 1

The *Tanznacht Forum: Feminist School Berlin*, part of the *apap FEMINIST FUTURES*, was a discursive format that included physical practice and dance alongside film screenings and literary formats. The aim of the Feminist School was to bring feminist issues—focused on equality, anti-discrimination and intersectionality—into the public sphere.

8 – 11 SEPTEMBER 2022



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«Freely, fancifully, uh... feministically in la-la land!»

ANUYA RANE

Disclaimer Translate at your
own risk, if at all you must.

Wer hat gesagt, I am not
lebendig...
Nein bitte, many a task are
still pending.
I must clear off, maintenir
tout clean und sauber.
Proving my calibre, montrer
que je suis un vainqueur.
Untimely schlafen is not
mein Ding.
Je n'ai toujours pas fais
l'experience of all that bling.
Fehler, kenne ich gar nicht,
ni souffrir, ni guerir,
Bring it on all at once, je suis
hungrig, ungeduldig.
Le temps is a gift jusqu'à ce
qu'on l'utilise
Otherwise tot or alive, es
macht keinen Sinn.



© DIETER HARTWIG

Feminist School Berlin, hearing the name of this programmed event, this poem of mine echoed in my mind. The title for sure was intriguing if not scary. What will it be all about...? Will a sermon be delivered...the same old feminist rhetoric?

The experience, in effect, encapsulated the lines of the poem, that I had written in a frenzy, while I once pondered over the point of my existence.

Most spoke not one language, but many. The encounters were as personal and emotional as they could get. Questions tossed in the space, some answered, some to be taken back home. An event of supreme solidarity, with space being carved for solitude to look within. Confusion, conflicts, debates, agreements and disagreements were all present in spades. The School—they named it right—a place for everyone and a place for enrichment, it happened to be indeed.

Tanzfabrik opened the 2022 – 23 season with this three-day event. Despite carrying the term ‘feminist’ in its name, it comprised of much more than that. Queer is the word of the hour. Strange and unusual, but delightfully, the nature of it is all-encompassing and beyond specificities. The event did celebrate queer and consequently hinted at the queerness in all others—the non-queer.

The entire programme managed to be a feast with plates full of poetry, dance, music, film and talks, enabling active participation from those present. Additionally, workshops incorporated in the frame of Tanznacht also engaged with the over-arching theme. For instance, Carolin Hartmann’s body-mind-praxis/workshop, insisted that ‘feminism starts from within’. In her workshop on Baladi dance, Nora Amin fragmented this utterly feminine form with a feminist perspective and layered it with an academic foundation. The Afro Fusion workshop with Luana Madikera added boundless zest!

The library and care space SichtBar 2018 was a common thread that ran through all three days. What on earth could care space mean? Here was Care space very carefully defined. A cosy little corner adjacent to the studio, where most events took place, was designed as a mobile library. Books on feminism, queer and gender issues, immigration, racism and related themes were on display and available to be read. There was FrauHerr Meko, sitting patiently and waiting to welcome your questions, doubts or reflections.

A particularly striking and unsettling moment was the seminar ‘Islamic Feminism(s): Challenges, Contestations and Decoloniality’ facilitated by Lana Sirri and Saboura Naqshband. The title itself suggests a multitude of concepts. Islamic Feminism, a subject seldom discussed, opened a dialogue not only on feminism related to Islam but also on social conditioning, religious fanaticism and racism, to name a few. Book excerpts from relevant writers were read aloud and discourses by prominent Islamic feminist activists were projected. It was clear that there is a dearth of books related to this theme in many languages, including German. Text excerpts and testimonies narrating the plight of women, in different contexts were distributed among those gathered. Further, they were asked to share their impressions on what they read and also on how they read what they read. What came was akin to a wave that is hurrying to touch the shore as the audience opened up about their personal experiences and stories—painful, hopeless, however, to be narrated unapologetically.

This was, nonetheless, only the beginning. It intensified further the next evening with the ‘Short Film Movie Night’ and the ‘Poetry meets Dance’ sessions. With a particularly apt selection of short movies for a gathering of this kind, each film stood out in how it tackled a shared concern.

The ‘Poetry meets Dance’ session created a festive, atmosphere with music, dance, poetry and performance, all coming together in a crescendo. Three wonderful women poets took the stage, their words figuratively setting it on fire! Luana Madikera reciting, rather singing, her poems in French mesmerised the audience. Accompanied by a live band, she swayed to the rhythm of the music, as she gently let the words roll out of her mouth. Next, Tanasgol Sabbagh with her penetrating German-Turkish poetry, recited in her poised and impassioned manner, made the heart long for more. The special

guest from Ghana, Poetra Asantewa, reading her poetry written in English in a modulated voice, soothed the pain that her words expressed. The poets talked about their past. They talked about their future. They talked their families. They talked about their lives. They talked about themselves. They talked about us. Feminist or not, it cannot be denied that the female energy is infectious.

And finally, we welcomed Mandhla. Exuberance, extravagance; any superlatives would fall short in epitomising this phenomenon—an amalgamation of pain and pleasure, misery and wonder, existence and non-existence. I found Mandhla to be a complete artist, her passion for art and desire to keep creating shining through. Her act changed the fragrance of the entire event for me.

Artists, activists, writers, authors, curators,
graced the space with their presence,
their multicolour presence.

Voices their own, language their own
and feelings too, their own.

Unaware, armed they arrived with
invisible-see-it-all-as-it-is-spectacles,
saw and showed the known, albeit unknown.

FOLD #1: DIE ERSTE FALTE

«AEON III – RECALL»
SANDRA MAN

14 – 18 SEPTEMBER 2022

«ROOM #3»
MIRJAM SÖGNER

«COPERNICUS DRIFT»
EMMILOU RÖSSLING

«Between the Branches of Soil and Bone»

SASHA AMAYA

A ring of studios encircles the big and social courtyard of Uferstudios. I move through three of these spaces that are part of «Die Erste Falte», a framework in which artists Sandra Man, Mirjam Sögner and Angela Schubot, and Emmilou Rößling present new works that reciprocate between movement and visual art. While each of the three works take a different approach to the focus on interdisciplinarity, it is a vivacity of material texture, a care for detail, and the stretching of perception that unites these three slices of space-time. In watching these works, I fly between encounters in the space and the unspooling of memory.

ROOM 1: SANDRA MAN'S AEON III – RECALL

I enter darkness. Inside the room, a blaze of projected light commands my attention from above. I gaze up at the hard concrete of a parking lot strewn with cracks, small plants, and one slowly moving body with white-blond hair, clothed in white coveralls which reference the industrial, yet in a shade resolutely susceptible to every trace. I perceive a body that alternately fuses with and differentiates from this dry and wild landscape. *Brachen*. Everywhere. I have experienced this maker's work in my own bones before¹, in my limbs, in the slowness of a gaze melted to stillness. And here it strikes again: a blurring between forms of life and forms of being.

In the darkened room, in this studio-made-gallery, I sit on the heavy beanbags, fabricated earth lumps, balancing between recall and pre-call, what could have been. I commune in the darkness with this image that stretches me vertically between grounded limbs and wisping fingertips, hair, tentacles streaming upward. *Brache!* Behind me sits poetry, traced into rock, but it is the three orbs of colour—painted thickly onto that paper—that really hold my attention. These thick daubs of earth colour, thick daubs of essence, hum warmly at us from out of the dark.

Sunday morning showers visit Berlin, and the live performance—the second and embodied half of this installation—is cancelled.

This image floats like a snapshot from my memory.

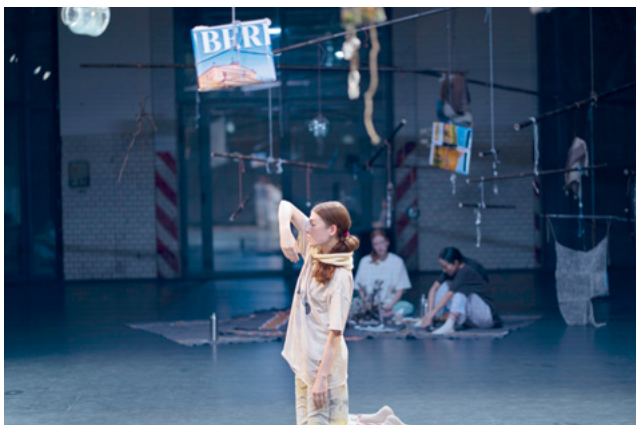
1 I performed in Sandra Man and Moritz Majce's NARKOSIS at Tanzfabrik's Open Spaces #3 in November 2017.



© SANDRA MAN



«AEON III – RECALL»
SANDRA MAN
PERFORMANCE



© DAIVA TUBUTYTE



«COPERNICUS DRIFT»
EMMILOU RÖSSLING

PERFORMANCE

ROOM 2: MIRJAM SÖGNER AND ANGELA SCHUBOT'S ROOM #3

The next room is big and vacant, save for piles of dark brown earth on a slippery dance studio floor. We assemble and scatter ourselves in twos, in threes, or by our single selves. We are gathered to hear about a week of shared practice between Sögner and Schubot, a week of research and experimentation. The question is: how to help a room speak without performers? I ask myself: Without performers or without *performance*? For these are two different things. While we have no bodies performing for us in this room, it is the constant devised performance of a voice that guides and accompanies us through an hour of slow motion.

We are asked to settle in our space: perhaps it is only I who dares to invert my body, my back on the ground and legs up on the wall between two heaters, gazing at the light still coming in from the high window in the early evening. It reminds me of my time as a dance student, pausing between practices, warming my toes. The voice dialogues with itself between English and German, between descriptions of the real and the possible, between encouraged action and the imaginary. The blinds are shuttered at one point; later, the skylight opened. A room, blinking.

We are asked to come to the earth, to feel it. To contextualise ourselves, and to recontextualise our understandings of materiality, vitality, relationality. Beneath my hands, the graininess of the soil is jarring above the slippery laminated flooring. I want all or nothing, not this in-betweenness, but rather to feel everything: more earth, plants, wetness, rocks, that rough drag of concrete, the ground itself.

We end our journey and clear the space.

A woman, kneeling, with her eyes closed, remains for a long time.

ROOM 3: EMMILOU RÖSSLING'S COPERNICUS DRIFT

The third space is intercepted by a foyer, full of greetings, a tube of time-warp that connects the darkening outdoors to a vast inner room with soft lighting. Here, there are blankets spread out for the audience and a large swaying installation at one end, created from branches, yarn, rope, hanging bottles, and small, delicately crafted objects. There are four bodies in oversized t-shirts printed with planets and gauzy pants, all matching, thrillingly, like a science-fair team sleepover.

My heart's memory falls through a chute. The ghostly souvenirs of other and others' memories, of touching the unknown, of my communion with walls, beams, debris, and shafts of light, steams away as I drop through the rooms and their images. The haze sharpens into focus as I snap into myself.

When I was a child, my best friend H and I would spend the best part of our weekends creating dances. Our soundtrack was her parents' music, generally the Cranberries on repeat. Much of the time was spent on furiously improvised solos—a type of dance that vacillated between competition and imitation of one another—and reflections on how we could create in duet, in tandem, or by re-enactment. Her little brother and his neighbourhood friend, called down from upstairs where they would be playing, were regular guests at our showings, and, more often than not, extremely impressed by our offerings.

Our attire was simple—no costumes to speak of except for the occasional favourite shirt mixed with pyjamas. We had no external gaze: while H, a year older than me, always had slight authority (something which I could only ever manage to occasionally subvert during our dancing moments) our choices seem, even now on reflection, incredibly free of the external. We were rooted in fancy, personal taste, and emotional inspiration, creating gestures and turns we carried out with straightforward confidence and a commitment to our craft. Dancing was just one of the ways we communicated and grew, mixed between language, snack breaks, and the simple sharing of time. We worked hard, but we didn't second-guess ourselves. We were just there. Together.

To see so much of what I can identify as my own root in dance unspun onto the floor of Studio 14 was a dazzling experience. Indeed, it was as if they had reached into the earth of our experience and dug out a new, parallel path for dance to grow. Here, somehow, I recognized my own dances—both from childhood, as well as in adulthood, alone in the studio or with select and intimate female colleagues—but given space and time and care to grow into a dance of adult bodies presenting a work.

And what is in this work? Bodies which are balanced simply as themselves: neither reaching out to the audience nor so internally focused as to distance us. Bodies moving in space, in and out of orbit, taking us into and out of singular and pluralised stories, giving both *each* and *all* their time and space. Bodies gesturing, hands and arms going into positions which could be familiar, only for them to slide into something else too smoothly for us to really pedantically interpret: quotes of a whole vocabulary of dance dissolving and regenerating before our eyes. And, of course, the positions, positions which are just bodies being together. Positions which could, with an inch or two more in one direction or the other, with the head positioned differently, with the muscles tensed rather than released, be read so differently—and so often are. But, crafted so precisely yet simply here, are positions which, ultimately, show us a different possibility, shift us into an entirely different perspective. Positions which refresh the mind and the senses, which reset our brains. Positions which heal. Positions that offer new starting points and paths forward.

As I watch these women together, I think of H. I think of what could have been. I think of what, maybe, still can be.

To the future!

FOLD #2: INTO THE CITY

«INTO DWELLING #2»
SABINE ZAHN

16 SEPTEMBER – 9 OCTOBER 2022

«ERDLINGE»
AKSELI AITTO MÄKI &
MASSAVUOTO – MASSESCAPE

«SCHRITTWEISE – CHOREOGRAPHING CITY»
KATJA MÜNKER

«HOME ALTROVE #BERLIN»
DANIELE ALBANESE – COMPAGNIA STALKER

«Close to nature in everytime»

SUSANNA YLIKOSKI

Tanzfabrik's Fold «Into The City» involved four different contemporary performances in outdoor public spaces of Berlin including dense touristic areas, public parks and Uferstudios' Studio 4. I had the joy to either participate in them as an audience member, or to be their witness.

To place a performance in a public space—an open and accessible area to anyone—requires a degree of sensitivity to rally with a subtext, in order for the work to meet with the environment. It invites the participants' acceptance to the potential of any eventualities that may or may not happen, such as sudden rain, snowfall, thunderstorm, a cry, a graze, or an involuntary muscle retention or release. Thus, I always find public space performances empowering as they can charge the lived environment with another understanding of a co-existing being. They have the potentiality to awaken absent and forgotten spaces, to stir ghosts within us and in others into new lived memories to be carried and lived on.

To follow are four short anecdotes, one from each performance work, to give a glimpse of the residues that remain in me.

INTO DWELLING #2 / SABINE ZAHN

LOCATION: ALEXANDERPLATZ
AUDIENCE ROLE: PARTICIPATORY

At the beginning, I look at an open door of a church and the steady flow of people entering it. Daniel Belasco Rogers, one of the performers, invites us participants to float our hands «like clouds» over a miniature model of the city-square we are at. With varying speeds, I watch our hands gliding over the city and towards the open door of the church. This gentle action gradually shifts my perception to my soma, and throughout the performance I notice my imagination spark up. At the end, I watch a fenced area in front of me and read the advertisement posters. To my surprise I don't feel repulsed by this fence burdened with consumerist callings, rather I feel protected. I perceive the fence as a frame like a layer of my skin. I am both inside and outside of myself.



© A. KEIZ

«SCHRITTWEISE – CHOREOGRAPHING CITY»
KATJA MÜNKER

PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE





«ERDLINGE»
AKSELI AITTO MÄKI & MASSAVUOTO – MASSESCAPE

PERFORMANCE

ERDLINGE / AKSELI AITTO MÄKI, MASSAVUOTO – MASSESCAPE

LOCATION: VOLKSPARK SCHÖNHOLZER HEIDE
AUDIENCE ROLE: WITNESSING

I enter a park with the other audience members to find four performers tree-gazing and tree-grazing. Gradually, I am encompassed by the smells and sounds of the forest and with it a shift in my perception. I experience a glitch and see an illusory image of a man hanging upside down from a tree. David Abram's book *The Spell of the Sensuous* talks about shamanism as an art to be in an altered communication with nature. The hanging man lingers with his presence...

...as the archetype of a mediator and communicator between the human and the non-human :: when the performers amplify the sounds of the trees by the aid of strings, bows, and drums;

...as the first Alchemist to teach of the laws of nature ::
as the performers speak to us about the homeopathy of the plants.



© D. REICHENBACH

SCHRITTWEISE – CHOREOGRAPHING CITY / KATJA MÜNKER:

LOCATION: LUSTGARTEN, MUSEUMSINSEL
AUDIENCE ROLE: PARTICIPATORY

I am invited to join a performative walk guided by an audio recording. The instructions are often followed by two questions: What of what you hear can you see? What of what you see can you hear? I shift my location and repeat a gesture, and my perception of it has changed. In fact, the gestures start to change by themselves, without me actively interfering. I find myself aimless, and the art that rests in waiting. As then, at a certain moment, inspiration arrives. I wait in the in-between spaces of instructions until I make a choice—how do I participate in the togetherness of taking a walk?

HOME ALTROVE #BERLIN / DANIELE ALBANESE – COMPAGNIA STALKER

LOCATION: PANKE AND UFERSTUDIO 4
AUDIENCE ROLE: WITNESSING

The performance begins at the Panke river neighbouring Uferstudios. Where the performer Daniel Albanese shares an anecdote of his grandmother's tactics under a fascist regime. Moments later, I am seated at Uferstudios' Studio 4 watching as Albanese dances—his eyes covered with a black cap—while shifting through postures, never still, never remaining. He describes what he is himself doing and how he needs to stop.

A video-letter from two years ago from Eva Karsczag is projected on the rear wall, where she is answering the question: What will happen to dance due to the uncertainty and regulations of Covid-19? It is a funny feeling to be present in the future addressed in the video message. I see different public spaces of Berlin, where Albanese dances and passersby walk along—no one stopping to rest nor to look at Albanese. I remember my own experience of the first lockdown in Berlin when no live performances were allowed. I shifted in my perception then to treat public spaces as theatre venues, which created curious pathways for what it means to co-create when the artist is not present.

The first three works contained a sense of a co-authorship via audience-participation or spectatorship, with me as an audience member contributing to the meaning and actualization of the performances somatically or imaginatively. Albanese's solo concludes the second fold of Tanzfabrik's season with an autobiographical work where the artist is present. I notice, I have shifted in my perception from being encompassed in nature and in others, to being a compass in nature.

FOLD #3: NEW WORKS

«TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE»
CHRISTINA CIUPKE + DARKO DRAGIČEVIĆ

13 – 16 OCTOBER 2022

«OMNIVORE»
JULY WEBER

«The Question of one's place in the World»

ELISABETH LEOPOLD

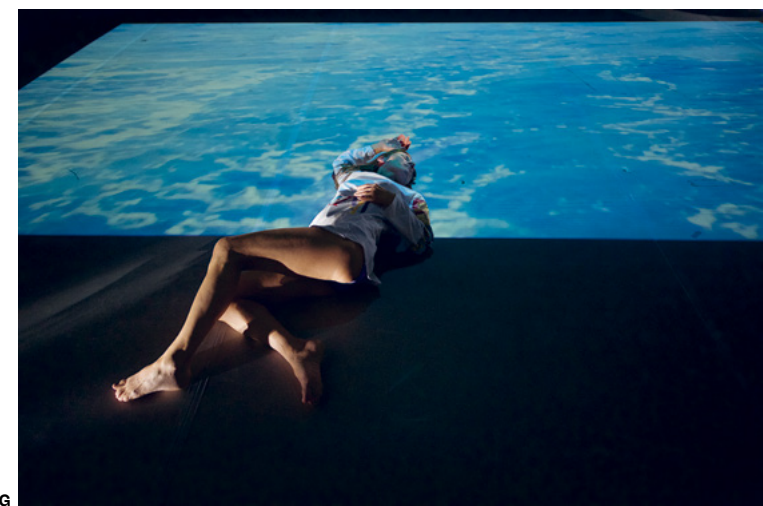
WHERE DO WE BELONG?

Is it coincidence where you land and get stranded? Destiny? Anchored and connected to one or more places where one has lived, crossed or never been. The pressing and always open question: where do we belong? Temporary affiliations to people, objects, spaces and places, self-chosen or given by circumstances. Acquired, intuitive ties, loosely or tightly tied ends. Stories we carry with us in our bodies. At predictable intervals, peppered with active choices. Seeking and finding intentional and incidental connections with people and the world. Sometimes guided by interests and desires, most of the time we hardly know. We create a web of relationships. At best, communities. A balancing act between longing and belonging. Between the greed and the desire for change, for the excitement of the unknown and being able to let go in a warm, embracing feeling of trust and knowing. Between lost and found in time and space. How do we succeed and why?

~~~~~ Stepping out of the studio and into the darkness of the yard of Uferstudios, I feel the different, even contrasting, atmospheres of the two pieces I have just seen, reverberating within me—two «New Works» of long-time collaborators of Tanzfabrik as part of the third fold. To some extent, one felt like home in the distance and a faraway haven. The other one like a longing for the yet unknown—an intangible force that simultaneously attracts and repels due to its incomprehensibility.

I start to ponder how these diverse experiences, which seem so separate in this moment, can come into dialogue with each other.

The evening began with the performative situation and spatial composition *Take me somewhere nice* by Christina Ciupke & Darko Dragičević. The evenness of the ocean, the rhythmic and continuous recurrence of the waves in the sound, and in the projections of the basins of water on the walls and studio ceiling immediately transported and re-located me, and probably some other audience members, in time and space. Together with photographs and later on descriptions and memories in the form of letters read out loud we were transported into «a summer vacation», as a mixture of real memories and pop-cultural imaginations. I immediately smelled sun cream, tasted



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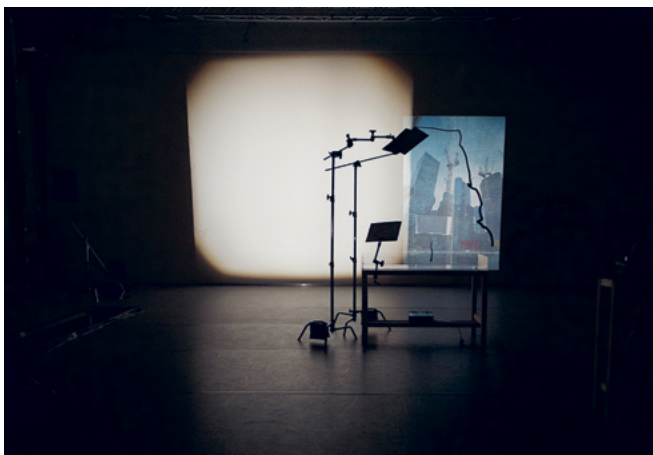
«TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE»  
CHRISTINA CIUPKE + DARKO DRAGIČEVIĆ

### PERFORMANCE

watermelon and had this sensation of a stretched sense of time in my hands. A feeling associated with summer that has been with me since childhood, but has expanded across my life through various images, especially from films like *Swimming Pool* or *Call Me by Your Name*. The sensation of stretched time was intensified by the slow-moving bodies of the two performers, who rested in poses for very long periods of time—co-existing in the/a space but seemingly with a difference in time.

I wonder to what extent could immediate and vivid connection to personal summer memories be a collective experience? Perhaps slightly modified according to location-specific smells, tastes, experiences, but basically with the same sense of stretched time and heightened awareness of being somewhere else, somewhere nice? I am reminded that these kinds of memories are a privilege and are very much linked to elements such as the seasons in the western hemisphere, a carefree childhood, safety... Who has the opportunity to escape everyday life and go on a journey? Who is among those who are allowed to live the longing? Do we belong?





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**«TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE»  
CHRISTINA CIUPKE + DARKO DRAGIČEVIĆ**

**PERFORMANCE**



**«OMNIVORE»  
JULY WEBER**

**PERFORMANCE**

The next performance, *Omnivore* by July Weber, on the other hand, hurls me out of the quiet uniformity and reverie into a contrasting world. Darkness, although the room is all light. Destruction, although so much new is created. Representation that also slips in between/away from time to time.

Like observers, we, the audience, sit on raised, well-lit tiers and are looking either down to the stage or straight into the audience on the opposite side. On one side of the stage, on a temple-like elevation, we see and hear the DJ collective Fifi x Abortion, wearing platform boots and red bathrobes. With a wandering gaze up into the rows of spectators, July Weber's body begins to cross the stage. The «figure»—as a voice coming from off-stage is referring to July Weber—moves through the space, curious about the forms that have been in this space before. The voice gives me an impression of omniscience and tranquillity. With this resonance, I follow the figure, trying to capture, feel, sense the movement and its seemingly intrinsic desire to go beyond, the eagerness to find out: what else? I have to keep looking for the previously named curiosity in the movement, as I perceive it as rather uncertain searching, interrupted, somehow unable to break through, to break open and transform into something else. Unable, within this only body.

Trapped, but only until the body finds its extensions through the objects at hand: the white horn strapped to the head, like a unicorn with leather stripes. The bust, second face, watching in different directions all at once. The metal plates, two of them leaning against ladders on each sides of the stage, like a stencil of teeth stamped out. And further, some round metal plates in the centre that will be spinning later in the performance. The pedestals opposite the DJs will be soon disassembled by a series of lurid movements and repeated falling, to apparent near-escape from physical injury. The tearing apart of the pedestals creates a forest of naked cold metal legs covering the stage floor. Actions at dangerous heights. Only in one moment, it seems, a brief sigh of relief is found in calm movements of the hands and arms.

It makes me hold my breath. On the one hand, I feel the limited possibilities of physical transformation. But on the other hand—with the help of the objects and spatial elements—the body (and with it, reality) stretches like a clothesline into something that is yet to come. Something that is not yet tangible—where humanity and materiality blurs.

Is it the darkness that frightens, attracts and repels me at the same time? Do we have to accept a certain irreverent brashness when we want to surrender to the binary resolution?

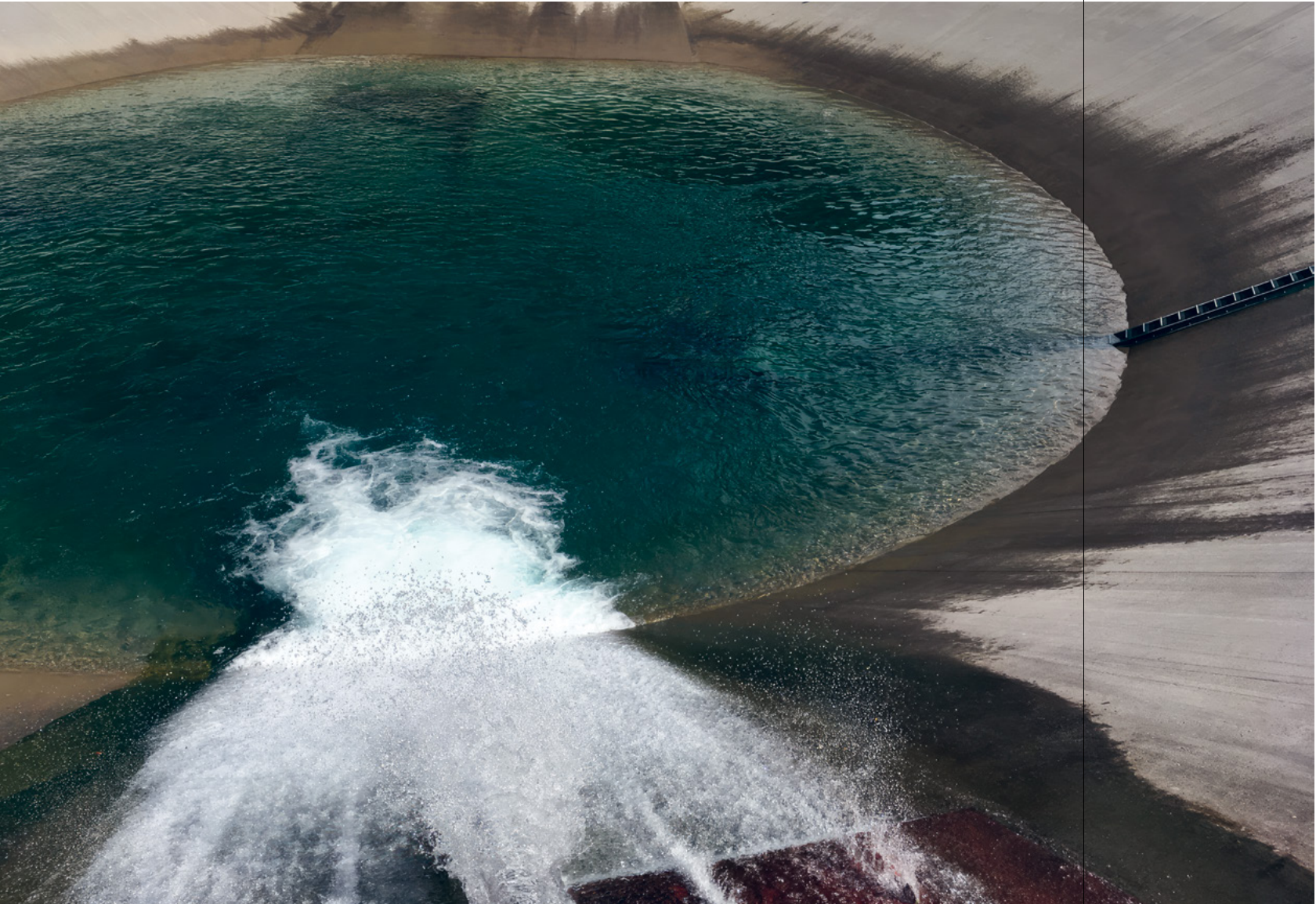
The supposed contradictions between the protected sentimental retreat into the sound of the sea and the emotionless frigid fusion of human and more-than-human materiality, dissolve in the inseparability of their co-existence. Here is the intersection of feeling-like-belonging and longing-for, all at once.

I am realising that the dialogue already took place.



«Facing Nature» was an symposium devoted to exploring the status nature holds in society from the perspective of dance and performance art. It contained conversations, live readings and film screenings.

21 – 23 OCTOBER 2022 (PART 1)  
11 – 12 FEBRUARY 2023 (PART 2)



«A GENTLE INSIST» BY SANDRA MAN

# «Leaky Landscapes»

MICHA TSOULOUKIDSE

PART I: EXCITEMENT

During the penultimate conversation of the event, between artist and writer Harun Morrison and artist Luiza Prado de O. Martins, I suddenly became overwhelmed with excitement. They asked us—the listeners, who were spread through Studio 5 of Uferstudios Berlin on beanbags, cushions, and chairs—to try to recall our first encounter with the sea. It was a plain proposal, but the outcome was multilayered—like «Facing Nature» itself. A three-day symposium curated by multimedia artist Sandra Man and dramaturg Felicitas Zeeden, the main purpose of «Facing Nature» was to invite artists to be in 1:1 conversations about the role nature plays in their artistic practice. As people in the audience started sharing their stories, I found myself slowly drifting away until I was fully immersed in old but vivid memories of my encounters with nature.

PART II: EXTRACTION (ANIMALS)

During a talk between performance artist Antonia Baehr and choreographer Sergiu Matis, we learn that Sergiu has a cat who is named both after American science fiction writer Octavia E. Butler and the fact that she was born eighth. Based on a traditional understanding of nature in opposition to culture, or the human, maybe people’s most common relationship with nature in western societies is through pets. But what is actually at the core of the interspecies relationship between humans and pets? Donna Haraway’s recent work has been increasingly characterised by the inherent ambivalences of the subject of domestication of pets: «A partisan in the world of dog evolutionary stories, I look for ways of getting coevolution and co-constitution without stripping the story of its brutalities as well as multiform beauties.»<sup>1</sup> Other scholars of animal studies like Jack Halberstam, however, are less interested in the ambivalences of the topic—for Halberstam, the idea of the co-evolution of species is rather a romantic fantasy.

Animals and humans don’t co-evolve—the former are being trained and owned by the latter.<sup>2</sup> In other words, pets might just be on the same trajectory of the capitalist exploitation of nature through humans, and maybe we love them so much because we could train them to tell us that what we want is what they want, too. This leads to a general question: When humans take care of plants, animals, and the earth—what do they take care of? Do they primarily take care of living beings, or do they rather ensure that the value that can be extracted from them is secured for the people?<sup>3</sup>

PART III: AMBIVALENCES (LANDSCAPES)

One trope was regularly being floated around throughout the symposium: «Facing Nature» as a *landscape* of words; *landscape* as a dramaturgical construct or model; the symposium as a *landscape* of bodies; scenography as *landscape* and vice versa. A conceptual inflation of *landscapes*?

1 Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, Chicago (Prickly Paradigm Press) 2003, p. 27.  
2 Jack Halberstam, *Wild Things. the disorder of desire*, Durham (Duke University Press) 2020, p. 115–124.  
3 I am paraphrasing here from a 2021 private interview with choreographer Karol Tymiński.



For Gertrude Stein, who is considered the originator of the idea of «landscape plays», conceptualising a performance as a landscape implies a fundamental shift in the structure of narration—departing from the traditional storytelling, abandoning the linear plot line for a «certain textual spacing out of imaginary situations, where relationships between the characters, actions and objects are first of all visual [...] [and where time stands] almost still and spread[s] synchronically over the textual space.»<sup>4</sup> Dramaturg Ana Vujanović examines the change in meaning that landscape as an aesthetic category has undergone up to the present: While Stein was interested in landscape as a concept that «challenged [the] communicative dimension of language and its logic» as a way of dealing with the traumas of the world wars, a recent trend of the term rather refers to a «late capitalist world of hyper-production of signs [...] [and its omnipresence of] mass media, marketing and advertising.»<sup>5</sup> In doing so, she explores the different, and often ambivalent, aspects of this aesthetic and dramaturgical category in the context of European dance and performance. The source of ambivalence that Vujanović grapples with has to do with what she identifies as the inspiration for «landscape dramaturgy», namely slow cinema and post-internet art. Since the introduction of the internet and social media into our lives, also our cultural landscape has lost even more of its already diminishing aesthetic innocence. Spacing out, meandering on the internet is usually not connected to experiencing pleasure anymore, but rather leads to the total opposite—numbing. Similar ambiguities can be found in the political dimension of landscapes: Sandra Man, whose artistic work deals with landscapes and precisely those ambivalences, indicates that landscapes in nature also should be approached sceptically due to their long history of political instrumentalisation, most prominently during the Third Reich.

#### PART IV: EXTINCTION (FEELINGS)

Next to the recurring motif of *landscape*, the theme of *extinction* was also brought up frequently, leaving me with a similar, slightly uneasy feeling. Over the course of the symposium, several concrete examples of extinction were mentioned, including the «World Extinct Wildlife Cemetery» in Nanhaizi Milu Park, Beijing, established in 1999 to commemorate extinct or endangered animals. Also the fire of the National Museum of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro in 2018 is brought up, in which more than 90% of its archive of 20 million items was irreparably destroyed. The incident was described as «a lobotomy of the Brazilian memory».<sup>6</sup>

In one of the conversations between artist Myriam Van Imschoot and choreographer Jefta van Dinther, both say that their artistic connection to the topic of nature happened rather late. «I got closer to it when I realised a certain sadness regarding that term,» says Van Imschoot and quotes a passage from Walter Benjamin, in which he points out that once you notice a feeling of sorrow attached to a word, it means that the subject it indicates will soon disappear. Since then, I have been unsuccessfully looking for this in Benjamin's writings, and I like the idea that it has disappeared or gone extinct. More than sadness though, I always feel a slight discomfort being in those recurring situations: Talking about climate grief, extinction, and the end of the world as if it would literally end—and as if we western Europeans were the first to experience climate change. Global warming with all its frightening side effects has also become a reality in Europe, but in other parts of the world, namely the ones that had been colonised, extinction happened long ago. For the colonised, specifically for Black and Indigenous people, extinction is a reality they have lived with for centuries. Shouldn't rather that be the starting point for every conversation about the topic—without dismissing the validity of everyone's grief?

4 Ana Vujanović, *Meandering together: New problems in landscape dramaturgy*, 2017, p2; [https://www.hzt-berlin.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Dokumente/Diverse\\_pdf/Meandering\\_together\\_New\\_problems\\_in\\_land.pdf](https://www.hzt-berlin.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Dokumente/Diverse_pdf/Meandering_together_New_problems_in_land.pdf)

5 Ibid.

6 See: Dom Phillips, *Brazil museum fire: incalculable loss as 200-year-old Rio institution gutted*, The Guardian, 3 September 2018; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/03/fire-engulfs-brazil-national-museum-rio>

#### PART V: EXCITEMENT, AGAIN

«What are the holes in your landscapes?» asks visual and performance artist Liz Rosenfeld, indicating that they perceive leakiness as a site of excitement. As I conclude this text, I would like to ask the same question with respect to «Facing Nature» and, more broadly, in dealing with the topic of nature in performing arts: Where are the holes, and where does it get exciting?

Tobias Rees, a philosopher and neurobiologist, studies nature as a concept that has undergone many transmutations in the history of western thought. According to Rees, throughout most of European history, nature was understood as a part of the human. Only since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, nature and the human have become categorically separated. This can be exemplified in the history of landscape painting. The reason that landscape painting as we know it today emerged relatively late as an art form is because «for most of human history, humans were too close to nature to actually recognise it as a separate field.»<sup>7</sup> This raises a question: Is the kind of art that is explicitly about nature, as a genre that emerged rather recently in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, just another expression of the violent relationship between humans and nature? Does this too, in the end, enable exhaustive cultivation and species extermination?

At the end of the symposium, one thing seems clear: the field where performance art and nature meet is covered with holes. So perhaps this is one meaning that «Facing Nature» could have: a meticulous investigation of this condition of leakiness. If we can't avoid plunging into these holes, we should at least do it enthusiastically—and this is precisely what happened during these days. Artists often regret these days that they are not activists, or that art can't change the world as activism can. But while activism can certainly do more in terms of protecting nature, it often reproduces the same division between humans and nature that is at the very core of our environmental disaster. Whereas art, in all its perceived uselessness, has the potential to change our entire, deeply toxic relationship with nature. And isn't that exciting?

7 Tobias Rees at the 2nd Riga International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Notes on Nature (Thinking the Human in Terms of the Non-Human), YouTube video, 28 May 2020. [https://youtu.be/\\_AeXDunnvIw?t=1680](https://youtu.be/_AeXDunnvIw?t=1680).

# FEMINIST FUTURES FESTIVAL & FEMINIST SCHOOL 2

The «Feminist Futures Festival» was curated around intersectional feminist guidelines. The programme included an exhibition, a library, and several performances. In parallel, Tanzfabrik Berlin hosted the «Feminist School (Part 2)» as a follow-up from the first edition previous September.

«ANTI-FRAGILE BODY»  
SELMA SELMAN

«SICHTBAR 2018»  
FRAUHERR MEKO

«UNREST»  
SERGIU MATIS

«ONE NEXT TO ME»  
MILLA KOISTINEN

«CAMOUFLAGE»  
SONYA LINDFORS

«DANCE FLOOR 2022»  
ANA DUBLJEVIĆ

«DIE HÖRPOSAUNE»  
ISABELL SPENGLER,  
ANTONIA BAEHR &  
JULE FLIERL

2 – 6 NOVEMBER 2022



«UNREST»  
SERGIU MATIS  
PERFORMANCE



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# «The Future is in Five Seconds»

PARVATHI RAMANATHAN

The Feminist Futures Festival. The name of the festival alludes to having its eye on the future. The «s» that is casually dropped into this plural imagination suggests multiple realities, parallel and all viable at once. It holds the allure of the speculative, the sexy infinite potential of that which is yet to come. However, the workshops and performances at the festival looked resolutely at the present and even the past. They pored over the discomfort of looking into the mirror and within oneself. Perhaps there is much to address before we step into a fantastic future.

*Camouflage* by Cameroonian-Finnish choreographer Sonya Lindfors jumps right into the question of intersectionality. In a sarcastic humorous mock game show, Lindfors reveals the politics of the different gazes that fall upon that very stage. In unpacking «How the stage works», there is also a revelation of how the audience works, and how society works. It feeds and teases the audience with aspects of Black and African cultural memory that may be read as unidimensional and monolithic by some audience members or as revealing hidden layers by others. Lindfors «dreams of the right to opacity», the programme notes mention, even within this intersectional dialogue.

For me, the highlight of the performance was the BIPOC discussion space *after* the performance. In Studio 5 of Ufer Studios, BIPOC audience members gathered to share and reflect on the performance in this «aftercare» space. Here, among the books thoughtfully curated by Frauherr Meko as part of *SichtBar 2018*, the room is already simmering with the themes, values, and experiences that were reflected upon in *Camouflage*. The session opened the possibility to speak about the performance with the makers, specifically and unabashedly keeping the Black audience at the centre. I sensed an environment of kindred warmth and excitement, and a feeling of being understood and seen. Instead of doubting one's own reading or experience of a performance that often gets dissolved in discussions open for all (read: predominantly white) audiences, here I hear quips of «You saw that? OMG, I felt that too!» In my position as a non-Black Person of Colour, I felt privileged to listen to the conversation and be informed of relatable contexts in the semantics of performance. I also was reminded that listening is an important way of participating in a conversation and a huge part of intersectional ecosystems.

Many of the themes from Sonya Lindfors's performance continued to echo in her workshop *Working with F(r)ictions-Towards Decolonial, Speculative and Feminist Stages*. In a nod to Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe, the workshop embarked on a participatory dream of decolonising through resistance and imagination, asking how to practice decolonising as an artist and as an institution. It demands an acknowledgment of friction. It demands loving acceptance of the fact that we do not understand what we assume to understand. Lindfors reminded us that the future of which we speak with such temerity doesn't have to be far. «The





«ANTI-FRAGILE BODY»  
SELMA SELMAN

PERFORMANCE



«ZUSAMMEN MIT IRAN»

PERFORMANCE & DISCUSSION

Future is in five seconds, in five minutes. Can you do something right now?» In the end, we laid on our backs and spoke aloud into the room, supported by a shared ground. Our questions with many «what if's» floated up like balloons full of dreams. What if there was no concept of money? What if the world was designed by children? What if we read all the books in this library?

Could intersectionality be negotiated in and through a specific site?

The stage creatures of *Dance Floor 2022* gather at Haludovo Palace Hotel, located on the island of Krk, part of present-day Croatia. The socialist luxury hotel peels off its former glory from 1960s Yugoslavia to reveal a dilapidated but fascinating present. A video projected on a large screen transports us squarely to one of the dance floors of the hotel. Most of the wooden floor tiles are intact and the ceiling above exposes its innards, wires and metal smiling down at our stage creatures. The creatures—performers Ana Dubljević, Kasia Kania and Marja Christians—are also present in person and inflect the on-screen dance floor with their bodies and voices. They speak about Haludovo hotel's history—a capitalist space in a socialist space, a space in which sexualised female bodies replace those of powerful men in suits who made absurd decisions. Through a witty and incisive description of the polarities that form the space, the performers redefine the narrative. They lounge, gyrate, play, lie, groove on the dance floor. They inhabit and own the floor in a way the women from the heydays of the space did not. They burst into pulsations that travel through one's limb to another's waist, with a dynamic of easy collaborative authorship. The live bodies of the performers enter, exit, and interact with the video with ease, forging new relationships with the site.

Haludovo's beige walls, labyrinthine halls, and vast atrium from five decades ago still cast a spell on those who remember it by reputation when it wasn't accessible to them. Now, sensually playing with the myths of this space that symbolizes the social and emotional remains of another time, the stage creatures ask: What is growing in the ruins?

Ruins of «heroic» mythological tales are also excavated in Sergiu Matis's *Unrest*. Voices of all genders mouth the words of male protagonists from Sumerian, Greek, and Roman stories. All of them, without exception, lead to plunder, devastation, and suffering. Eventually, we return to the female voices from the living world, to the recent past and present. We hear stories of feminist efforts that sing a different tune, more in sync with the natural ecosystem. It isn't just the society of humans that needs intersectional dialogue, but the entire living world. Now that we have heard them, what futures shall we carry them to?

Such questions resounding with speculative and decolonial dreaming were encountered at the second Feminist Futures Festival. From our past selves, we drew courage, humour, and insights to step into the future, even if only five seconds at a time.

# FOLD #4: INTERSECTING MEMORIES

«MUT»  
JEE CHAN

17 – 20 NOVEMBER 2022

«FLOATING ROOTS»  
INKY LEE

## «Unfold Unfurl Uncurl: Meandering Memories and their Recollections»

JETTE BÜCHSENSCHÜTZ

Our bodies are carrier bags of memories—some noticed, some repressed, some tucked anew and others long forgotten. Unpacking personal hauntings comes with pain, with grief, eventually relief. Unpacking means gazing in the mirror and entering a process of recognizing the traces of memories that became a part of my body. For some it needs a madeleine cookie à la Marcel Proust. For some, like Sinthujan Varatharajah in their book *an alle orte, die hinter uns liegen* (English translation of the title: to all the places that lie behind us) it is a photo that triggers a stream of memories and interwoven stories. A photo that Varatharajah dissects for how white history of violence is still present in German everyday life—about the history of Western logic of oppression and domination and about constructing history in the first place.

When I think about family memories I think about all the places that were abandoned and of those that have been whitewashed. I think about all the places carefully archived in more than a hundred photo albums getting mouldy in my parents' Gartenhaus. When I think about archives, I think about my body—my greedy, voracious yet ephemeral storage place—and what it carries. To all the places that I already carry with me. To all the places that are inscribed in my body that is not an individual one but always in transgression.

However, while reading Varatharajah's book on the U-Bahn to Tanzfabrik, I think about all the places that are not being stored in those and many similar photo albums. *History* is what appears when intersecting memories become transmitted and traceable. *History* is what appears when chapters are skipped. For a long time, memories were not exclusively transmitted via visual documents but shared in personal anecdotes, passed down orally from generation to generation. This was until the moment when, with the gradual access to cameras (for some privileged), having an image became synonymous with the ability and idea of having a memory at all. A chasm was opened, Varatharajah continues in their book, between those with access to images and pictures and therefore creating *histories*, and those who remained image-less.

It is the oral sharing of intersecting memories that Tanzfabrik's fourth curated fold is dedicated to, presenting two works that both chart a cyclical journey through diverse experiences of migration and belonging, traversing past and present, reflecting the burden and release of family memories.

At the showing of *Floating Roots* choreographed by Inky Lee, Studio 5 is filled with different voices and their stories, with some being simultaneously translated into International Sign Language. While someone is tirelessly jogging in circles, the stories I listen to tell us about having roots that are not rooted, about isolation and daily racism, about the discrepancy between their parents' home and the society they are situated in, about the collision of two cultures unable to communicate with each other. The stories talk about the ambiguity of belonging experienced by the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of queer Asian-read individuals and their intersectional struggles growing up in Germany or Austria being half-German, half-Vietnamese or Korean, Chinese, Malaysian, Mongolian. They elucidate intergenerational strife and the inability of parents and children to fully understanding the other's experiences, for instance, when one is brought up by a single mother that came to Germany as a temporary guest worker. Merely a single story among these entails enough potential for conflict and grief. Together, they create a multi-layered web of deprivation, oppression and loss, and of the traces they left. «Oftentimes, the first generation immigrants choose to remain quiet, whether their reasons to do so are trying to hide, to integrate, or simply to survive. Their bodies move carefully and quietly like shadows of the society. Their physical and emotional memories of internal and external turmoil, as well as their silence, carry through onto the next generations, who live in between multiple cultures and identities.»<sup>1</sup>, performance artist, musician and writer Inky Lee writes in an essay *The seeds planted in us*, about their and others' experiences of growing up with working migrant mothers. Acknowledging, showing and integrating those stories might be a way of dealing with those shadows and spectres, and moving towards healing the individual and collective bodies, and their dispersed but intersecting narratives.

Six of the seventeen interviewees, who are neither professional performers nor dancers, appear onstage as performers, who, except during the sign language interpretation, stay in silence. Yet it is their mute presence that allows for a visceral web of a new belonging to arise. «Don't ask me where I'm from. Ask where I'm local, sagt Taiye Selasi», I read in Enis Maci's *Eiscafé Europa*.

Entering Studio 4 two days later, Evelina Pente sweeps up countless seeds from plums and apricots, which, I was told later, her son Stefan Pente had eaten during the past five years. The atmosphere is subdued and meditative and Evelina is taking her time, undistracted by whoever is entering and leaving the studio. I find a seat at the edge of the many terrains that are now being unfolded in front of me: countless round-shaped mirrors that are being placed on the floor like fish scales and then picked up again; blankets forming waves at first, then islands and paths to roam through; and other mosaics that are spread out and removed again. A seemingly never-ending cycle of slowly unfolding and folding, of composing and letting go, of life and death. Despite the obvious ephemerality of being, no one is in a rush. There is no attachment, but only recognition of the inseparable act of composing and decomposing.

1 Inky Lee, *The seeds planted in us*, *Conversational Essay*, published in the context of DOCK 11 EXPANDED; <https://expanded.dock11-berlin.de/Lesen23>



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«FLOATING ROOTS»  
INKY LEE  
PERFORMANCE

In their durational performance-installation *mut*—choreographer and dancer jee chan and artist stefan pente together with his 84-year-old mother Evelina Pente, a former social worker and gardener according to the programme notes—have opened a moment in space and time for intergenerational memories to meet and interlace. Through the acts of re-calling, re-telling and re-composing, mosaics of encounters emerge that each explore and embody all that remains in a multitude of ways: Evelina's own memories, along with that of her parents' generation, that of her children, and the intermingling of them all. As we go along they are reimagined, re-conjured, rearranged.

In autumn 2021, jee chan had shown their research *harbor*, a work-in-progress and intimate encounter with their maternal grandmother who had died in 2018. And it was those stories of jee's grandmother who escaped from Japanese invasion in Guangzhou to Singapore that served as a kind of Madeleine for Evelina Pente evoking reminiscences of her own experience of escape and loss at the end of the Second «World» War. Memories are passed on, oscillating between individual and collective, between oral and visual. Thus, official and alternative historiographies emerge.

How do we detect the traumas we inherit, I wonder? How do we access the wounds passed to us by our previous generations? How to trace the scars that turn others' wounds into our own? I tend to understand trauma as a memory of what has happened, as something linked to the past. Memory may have its roots in the past, but ultimately, it is trauma that expresses itself in the present.



«Love» is a collaboration between Tanzfabrik and Radialsystem initiated in 2019, aiming to improve the labour and presentation conditions of dance professionals in Berlin. This year, three performances were presented in the frame of «Love» in Radialsystem:

«RHYTHM IS THE PLACE»  
JUAN DOMINGUEZ

«MAGENTA HAZE»  
MILLA KOISTINEN

«BLAZING WORLDS»  
SERGIU MATIS

16 – 19 FEBRUARY 2023

2 – 4 MARCH 2023

20 – 23 APRIL 2023

# «time to LOVE»

DOMINIQUE TEGHO

## SPACE POP PARK

*Rhythm is the Place* is a solo performance by Juan Dominguez that experiments with the perception of time and space, taking the audience on a journey away from gravity.

The piece opens with the sounds of rainfall, bellowing wind and incessant clicks, echoing within an empty white dancefloor, facing a frontal audience. With the space around the stage engulfed in endless darkness, it feels as though one is levitating in space.

The audience is momentarily immersed in a soft palette of shifting neon lights, while the clicking sound develops into a soft drone. Dominguez appears on stage, moving his hands and feet in minimal gestures to a rhythm we can't hear. He introduces soft claps and clicks in synchronization with his feet, moving around the edges and corners of the square dancefloor, until he crosses the centre of the space in complete silence. The soft claps return through the speakers at the pace of a heartbeat, sustaining the effervescent atmosphere. Dominguez grabs a vast shiny dark purple fabric from a corner and pull it along, only to disappear in the endless darkness surrounding the stage, leaving the fabric on the floor looking like a sea of stars. We have travelled above the night skies and now gravity hangs upside down. I feel suspended in time.

The whole room shines softly as the dancer reappears with a costume made of the shimmering fabric. He goes into a subtle rhythmical dance, synchronising breath and body. We hear him counting in whispers, «1 2 3 4 5 6 7» on loop, ending with «you you you you, all of you». He leaves the stage and the audience remains in the shimmering darkness.

In a warm colour palette that evokes dreams, sitting through this hour felt like being in a space-park. A weightless meditation on time and space, Dominguez manages to create a soft atmosphere through the subtle rhythm of the dance, sound, and light.

## BREATHING SPACE

In *Magenta Haze*, Milla Koistinen and seven performers dance in an inflatable stage design, created by visual artist Sandra E. Blatterer.

In the beginning, the performers are already spread out across the performance space, standing next to colourful fabrics. Their casual costumes blur the separation between performers and the audience members who are gradually gathering around them. The atmosphere is relaxed, with people chatting under the bright lights. Across different corners of the space,



© DIETER HARTWIG

«MAGENTA HAZE»  
MILLA KOISTINEN

PERFORMANCE

colourful fabrics are now pumped with air and begin to grow in size, instantly transforming the room. The performers sweep these inflatable objects through the space, disrupting the audience's swarm-like organisation. They engage in a series of gestures that mirror the growing and collapsing movement of the giant-breathing objects. The sounds of the large moving fabrics blend with the ambient electronic sound score. The entire high-vaulted room of Radialsystem looks as if it were breathing. The manipulation of the inflatable objects constantly changes the audience constellations in the room, along with a change of perspective. With every sweep, a rush of wind dances through the room. The gestures of the performers grow into a dance oscillating between flow and tension—as if they are manipulating energy and being moved by it—moving in space and moving space. To me, it feels like time is breathing and the entire space is pulsating. The dancers settle at the edges of the space, almost blending with the audience, to find each other again through a pulse of the chest. The music escalates into a techno beat and the light transforms into a deep magenta-red as the dancers groove together, having their own little rave on stage. When the music slows down and the mellow light returns, the dancers revisit the gestures from the beginning.

The dance disappears. But the space is still breathing and pulsating.

## LANDING UNDER TWO SUNS

What happens when the framework of space and time constructs are distorted? In *Blazing Worlds* by Sergiu Matis, six performers explore dancing utopias of the past and present.

In a room annexed to the Saal (where the other two performances of «Love» took place) the audience is gathered, ordering drinks, walking around, and chatting. A big screen is hanging in the middle of the room showing strongly saturated footage of natural landscapes. As I wander around trying to at once look at the screen and also greet friends, I notice a projection of computer-generated graphics on the back wall of the room showing what looks like a giant 3D bone swimming in melting ice caps. The dancers make their appearance shortly after, walking one after the other into the room in an erratic rhythm. There's something urgent in their quality, as if their bodies are



«RHYTHM IS THE PLACE»  
JUAN DOMINGUEZ

PERFORMANCE

animated by a bugged software. Their entrance is accompanied by a glitchy ambient drone music that progressively gets louder. With a quality similar to the music and the movement of the dancers, the screen shows glitch-y camera movement and graphics set in a dystopian future. I feel like we are in a video game. When did the performance begin? My perception of time is already distorted. I don't know if we are being projected into distant pasts or to near futures. The audience is guided by the performers, to walk through a small door that leads to a vast space, and seated frontally towards the stage.

As we find our seats, the performers burst into bird-like sounds. Giant bones spread around the stage on a white dancefloor, as if we have arrived into the world of the computer-generated graphics. Moving through sounds and songs, through dance and conversations, with glitch-y movement quality, in duets and groups—for two hours the performers tell stories of the past and tales of return. They sing about wanting to be trees and manipulate the bones on stage. As their bodies slide through histories, fantasies, and fictions with the ongoing glitch-like movement quality, they bend time constructs, constantly projecting us into the future and a thousand years back at once. Deviating from the linearity of time, I am taken through a journey of the earth, and spiralling through references of the ongoing ecological crisis.

From rhythm, to breathing space and utopian fantasies, the three «Love» performances embark on a journey away from earth and back, transforming constructs of time on the way. In Juan Dominguez's *Rhythm Is The Place* we are suspended in time with soft shimmers and minimal repetitive rhythms, whereas in Milla Koistinen's *Magenta Haze* we are transported in a monumental haze of breathing time with large inflatable objects. Sergiu Matis' *Blazing Worlds* deviates notions of time, bending linearity to spiral us back to the present.



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«BLAZING WORLDS»  
SERGIU MATIS

PERFORMANCE



«HARBOR»  
JEE CHAN

«PHYSIS»  
MORITZ MAJCE

«THE RIVER II»  
JASNA L. VINOVRŠKI / PUBLIC IN PRIVATE

23 – 26 FEBRUARY 2023



© ALICJA HOPPEL



«THE RIVER II»  
JASNA L. VINOVRŠKI / PUBLIC IN PRIVATE

PERFORMANCE

# «altars of the dead and the living»

PARVATHI RAMANATHAN



Winter was dying and I had begun to make an altar for her. An early departure, it may have seemed to many. A false one, it turned out. For she returned again to Berlin. This is when I met her.

We meet outside Uferstudios' Studio 1 on a windy evening with the artist jee chan, a bucket of smouldering fire keeping them company. jee drops sheets of paper into the fire, watching each sheet incinerate. On them, the words 這里 (ze lei meaning 'here' in Cantonese) are calligraphically emblazoned. I sense this to be a deeply personal, sombre moment. *harbor* by jee chan strings together gestures and rituals, bringing the artist in communion with their grandmother who passed on in 2018. We witness their meeting on the harbour, across time, across generations, across journeys. A journey from Guangzhou to Singapore, a journey from experience to memory, from this cold listless evening in Berlin to a tranquil tropical afternoon, from today to the recent and the distant past.

This manifested reunion on the harbour shores up into altars of materials and gestures. A circular mirror spun around its axis by the artist. It reflects jee, it reflects me and other audience members, it reflects the white-tiled walls of this vast clinical room. It reflects the fine mesh of threads hovering over our heads. The mesh forms a comforting ceiling and presents itself as another altar in itself. Present in the space is also an altar of food offerings to ancestors and a mechanized altar that carries the voice of chan's grandmother. Another altar of their communion is found in chan's body which is constantly displaced from their erect central axis—being shaken into sparks and vibrations—bringing to mind sound waves that jolt out of its median path in every direction. chan's programme notes reveal that after



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«HARBOR»  
JEE CHAN

PERFORMANCE



their grandmother's passing, their choreographic position shifted from one of dancing to being danced. «Being danced». I wonder, how does one rehearse something of this nature? Does it become processed over time—the fact of death fully absorbed and understood—its grief transformed? Does each rehearsal or performance of a work such as *harbor*, dilute the possibility of the next performance, or of the next communion?

In relation to this question, *Physis* by Moritz Majce seems to be enabled precisely by way of rehearsal, by the act of presentation in the presence of other bodies. The work harnesses «Relational Flow», a movement practice coined by Majce which acknowledges and engages with the physical presence of the visiting audience. The five performers in *Physis* are found swarming in the gaps among the audience members, spreading around the room. They swarm, linger and rest at different distances from the visitors. Some make eye contact. Some tenuously test the possibility of physical contact. Their white outfits are made up of parts—removable zips that can part hands, and a portable patchwork of legs and shoulders. When one dancer folds into a serpentine slither on the floor between me and another visitor, I sense us becoming momentary altars. When the dancer leaves, I continue to sense the patch of cloth from her elbow on the floor. It is still part of our altar until I too decide to leave for another corner of the room. The audience visitors of *Physis* are welcome to roam around the space and settle in any spot that calls to them. The performers tune into these connections with space and body. I am struck throughout by how evenly the audience is spaced out across the room. Even in rearranging themselves, my Indian eyes note that European standards of personal space are maintained. This arouses a curiosity: what would interconnectedness in Relational Flow look like in spaces defined by different boundaries of personal space? Would the erected altars also be different? Can the performers influence the visitors' tendencies to scatter and cluster?

In *River II* by Jasna L. Vinovrški / Public in Private, the voice of the performer directs and herds the visitors around the space. Reaching the



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«PHYSIS»  
MORITZ MAJCE

PERFORMANCE

audience through headphones and speakers, she invites us to explore a cosy living space set up in part of the studio. We surmise that she has recently passed and it is her room we are in. We discover the altars that made up the fabric of her life—a little forest of house plants, a collection of essential oils, a box of postcards, an array of carefully selected fabrics and sewing kits. While she doesn't tell us about who she was, the altars do. What is it like for a body to be inanimate? On questions such as this, we find ourselves contemplating in this warm living room of a stranger, with other strangers sitting next to us. Together, we sense absence and presence.

The shared sensing of absence and presence takes on a different quality in the cold bureaucracy of the space to which the voice ushers us next—a funeral home. A performer's inanimate body and her disembodied voice animate a mixture of humorous and sombre moments. The obituary note read aloud reveals the many altars she was placed upon—daughter, mother, freelancer, taxpayer. But she is also a performer with a voice, attempting to feel death while being a living thriving body. One that would like the touch of flower petals as her performative dying wish. So, it is us strangers in this cold room, that respectfully make it happen. And with this ritual act, her body finally becomes yet another altar.



# FOLD #6: NARRATIVES & TRANSGRESSIONS

«THE WOLF AND THE SALMON ARE FREE TO KILL»  
MAIKON K

15 – 25 MARCH 2023

«STATELESS SOLO»  
ELVAN TEKIN

«NIGUNIM»  
DAVID BLOOM

## «going beyond what we know»

NICOLA VAN STRAATEN

the three very different solos in the framework of Tanzfabrik’s sixth fold, *Narratives & Transgressions*, brought up various questions around how story shapes the body, and perhaps also how body shapes the story. the origin of the word «narrative» comes from the Proto-Indo-European root *\*gno*—«to know». and «transgressions» is comprised of two root words—«trans» from *\*tra* or *\*tere* meaning «to cross or go beyond», and «grad» from *\*ghredh* meaning «to walk or to go». each in their own way—the works of Maikon K, Elvan Tekin and David Bloom—contained their own poetic resonance of «going beyond what we know».

Maikon K’s sharing of the early stages of his research for the performance *The wolf and the salmon are free to kill* articulated the most «obvious» or direct expression of a transgression. as he walked around the room moving through a variety of acts, some tender, some empowering and others simply problematic, he weaved a fragmented story around themes of criminality and social etiquette. calmly, he moved from a non-consensual hand on an audience member’s knee, to turning his body into a rolling stone travelling across the studio space, to using an egg to perform a healing ritual on a volunteer from the audience, to procuring €60 in cash from the audience and proceeding to (literally) eat some of it, before ceremoniously burning the rest. serene and composed, he managed to provoke us with a strange energy of clear intentionality, that almost felt like care. i felt i was in the presence of an art-con-man and this tension kept me balancing my general sense of discomfort and dislike with my genuine curiosity about what his acts were pointing to. with our current moment so acutely shaped by call-ins, call-outs and cancels, it doesn’t take much to commit a crime. although i was amazed (and slightly repelled) by his composed and professional audacity, it was also refreshing to see someone grappling with what criminality is and taking risks on stage with a certain humility and clarity. still in the fresh stages of development, i’d be curious to see how Maikon continues with such tender topics.

in a totally different universe, Elvan Tekin’s sharing of her work-in-progress brought us to another face of criminality. crimes more diffused



© NELLA AGUESSY

«THE WOLF AND THE SALMON ARE FREE TO KILL»  
MAIKON K

SHOWING / OPEN STUDIO



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«NIGUNIM»  
DAVID BLOOM

PERFORMANCE

and ancient, such as the normalised but endless pressure on female bodies, or a massive cloud hovering on the edges of a disappeared nation. raised as a Kurdish woman, Tekin's *Stateless Solo* was grounded in topics of land and state. she opened the piece unpacking a small pile of stones and placing them around the stage. in each gesture of placement was a tiny echo of displacement. the audience sat intimately around her, witnessing as she slowly began to horizontally climb across the stones, crawling with caution. the delicate but deft movements of her hands and feet carrying her weight over these stones invoked a precariousness and a strength that touched me. in the slow pacing of the work, i felt the dance unfurl into a non-linear journey from mourning to empowerment, back to grief and then towards resistance, acknowledging oppression and reclaiming joy. the chain of keys around her waist struck me as particularly powerful symbol not only of constriction, but also of liberation as they sounded out like bells during her closing dance. with arms raised, her hips swayed and her feet stamped loudly—her movements allowing the earth to speak, yell, resist and demand some kind of transformation through both the joy and the grief of her dance.

in another way, David Bloom's solo *nigunim* also caused me to contemplate the role of joy in resistance. coming directly from his own biography, the piece entangled motifs and ideas around Jewish songs of worship with the potentials for a queer, activist and inclusive expression of Judaism. the charming David Bloom opened with a story about his grandparents moving to the United States, presenting us with a tray containing countless metal balls and then, with a theatrical stumble, everything fell as the balls exploded dramatically onto the floor, immediately pulling us into this sense of sudden collapse. as the voices of various activists and rabbis from the multi-channel speakers entered the space—offering various perspectives on Judaism, spirit and activism—Bloom gathered his body together through gentle dance through the audience and the scattering of balls. the dance seemed to integrate the initial opening collapse with a soft sensation of humour, labour and lightness, as his body ebbed and flowed, very softly, through songs and chanting. later on, he finished the piece off by also gathering the fallen metal balls together, a somewhat tedious and time-consuming task peacefully executed whilst humming a little song. as i watched this mildly boring but oddly calming activity unfold before me, i became aware of how tedious and time-consuming transformational and healing work actually is, especially one that pertains to lineage. i also noticed how strangely pleased i was to witness a male-presenting performer clean up a mess that they've made.

contemplating these three performances that touched on the petty, the personal and the political in deeply different ways, i returned to my thoughts about the dancing body and the ways in which it shapes and co-creates not only the stories we inherit, but also the stories we are yet to tell. for various reasons my own education around choreography and dance-making seemed to hold the idea of narrative in dance with mild contempt, which is strange because story-telling is in many ways knowledge-creation—some sort of shared epistemological editing act. after witnessing these works i feel encouraged to see the power of narrative making its way through and across our shared and shifting choreographic landscapes.

# EMERGING CHANGE PROLOGUE

Under the title «Emerging Change Prologue», curators Makisig Akin & Nara Virgens brought together artistic formats by Queer Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color. Inspired by adrienne maree brown's book *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, the week of events, which began as a double bill in 2022, was a curatorial proposal for more equality and aimed to help actively dismantle structural racism in dance.

20 – 28 MAY 2023

## «Practising Love»

INKY LEE

«Emerging Change Prologue» presented from 20 to 28 May 2023, included a workshop *Power Tower Pishiboro Hair-Crown Making* by Adrian Marie Blount, a work-in-progress showing *hair pulling (WT)* by Virginnia Krämer, and a performance *Long & Wild* by Makisig Akin and Anya Cloud. It was curated by Nara Virgens and Makisig Akin. Inky Lee attended only *hair pulling* and *Long & Wild*, as *Power Tower Pishiboro Hair-Crown Making* was «aimed at people living in the African diaspora», a community which Inky is not a part of.

Towards the end of *Long & Wild*, Makisig Akin facilitates a practice called, «Breaking each other's heart softly». We are asked to break the small tree branches we received upon entering the theatre with love, intention, and emotion. Akin says that we are breaking each other's hearts, but also are letting go of things that we do not want anymore. We break the branches into pieces. My friend, who is sitting on my right, looks at the debris of both of our branches lying on the floor, and arranges them into the shape of a heart.

Seeing the pieces of our broken hearts, gathering them, and transforming them into an experience of collective love—an attempt at this action is what *Emerging Change Prologue* manifests.

*hair pulling (WT)* takes me on an intimate journey of Virginnia Krämer's process of reshaping the source of her self-doubt into self-acceptance, love, and joy. The impulsive habit of pulling one's hair in times of stress, which during the artist talk, is described as a «black femme behaviour», is referred to as «disgusting» by Krämer towards the beginning of the piece. Soon, however, this disgust is replaced by tenderness and pride. On the classical guitar, Krämer sings a poetic song. «My skin deserves rose water», she sings, and then the chorus of «Long time no see» repeats. After this scene, she pulls small clumps of hair out of her heart area from the inside of her t-shirt and places them on the floor. Doing a step-touch in a circular pathway, she holds up some hair in her hands and speaks words of affirmation, such as: «Your hair has been magical from the beginning.» «Everywhere you left this hair, you left your very sparkles.» «I make space to hear and see you.» «And I protect your joy.»

The live performance part of Krämer's research is followed by a video that offers a view into the process of her arriving at this place of joy. During the artist talk, Krämer shares that the first part of the video, *Walking backwards*,





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«LONG & WILD»  
MAKISIG AKIN + ANYA CLOUD

PERFORMANCE

was her remembering the racist memories and walking back through them. Racism, along with being queer and an adopted person, she says, is one of the stress factors that makes her pull her hair.

For BIPOC and queer individuals, who *Emerging Change Prologue* acknowledges and celebrates, creating a sense of safety within our own community is essential, as it is not readily available to us in our day-to-day lives. When I go out for a short walk to take a break from writing this text, a group of seven teenagers shout racist remarks at me. I confront them by telling them that their words are racist and that they hurt people. As I walk away from them, they shout the remarks at me again. I go back and confront them again. Everyone who has an embodied experience knows that violence is a daily experience, and how exhausting and infuriating it is. And because violence does not magically cease to exist at one point, a community where we can continuously heal, recharge our energy, and remember our strength and beauty is necessary. It grounds us to not give up on claiming our space.

*Long & Wild* reaches out for this communion within oneself and with others. It recognises the ones who have lived through violence, cultivates joy and love for the strength and resilience in surviving, and celebrates tender care for ourselves and each other. The three-hour-long piece starts with a dance party, where many of the audience members dance to the energetic music of DJ Rafa Cunha. The temperature in the room rises, and so does the smell of sweat and bodies. I notice that dancing together is a social practice that many of us have ample training in. It is familiar to us; therefore, we can enter it more easily. After the space is warmed up with this communal exertion of energy, the piece unfolds in its «unruly overload», which the artists write in the programme on what «*Long & Wild* aims to be».

The performers—Akin, Cloud, Jesús Muñoz, and Madison Palffy—move through varying solos, duets, and quartets. The through-line of the shifting parts is the search for points of contact. Dancers held hands, their hair tied together, their mouths touching, their bodies sharing weight to support each other into shapes and lifts... These unapologetically long swirls, which are at times extravagant with shiny costumes and props, come to a halt when we exhale into a moment of collective rest. Akin and Cloud spoon each other and rest centre stage. The audience, most of whom are sitting or lying on comfortable bean bags surrounding the performers, also calms into relaxation.

Afterwards, we are led to the smaller back area, bathed in a cosy pink light and decorated with tree branches hanging from the ceiling. Here, «Breaking each other's heart softly» practice takes place, followed by «Holding» practice, where we are encouraged to ask others if we may hold their body parts. Even though I want to ask strangers if I can hold them once I warm up to the task by holding my friend first, I do not have a chance as this part ends so quickly. This makes me realise how much more time and practice is required to explore new possibilities of being together, to be brave.

The piece ends with everyone surrounding the bonfire outside. We throw our broken sticks into it and watch the pieces of our broken hearts burn away, as we appreciate this moment of collective warmth and safety.

# IMPRINT

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# Die Erste Falte

FALTEN FOLDS

15.–18.09.22  
«Copernicus Drift»  
EMILIO ROHLING

15.–18.09.22  
«Aeon III»  
SANDRIAMAN

16.09.22  
«ROOOM #3»  
MIRIAM SOONER

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# Into The City

FALTEN FOLDS

16.–17.+22.–24.09.22  
«Into dwelling #2»  
SABINE ZAHN

22.–25.09.22  
«Endlinge»  
AKSELI AITTO MAKI  
MASSAVUOTO • MASS ESCAPE

29.09.–02.10.22  
«SCHRITTWEISE»  
KATJA MUNKER

06.–09.10.22  
«Home Altrove #Berlin»  
DANIELE ALBANESE • COMPAGNIA STALKER

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# New Works

FALTEN FOLDS

14.–15.09.22  
«The wolf and the salmon are free to kill»  
TIME TO MEET • MAMOK SHOWING / OPENSTUDIO

16.–18.09.22  
«Stateless Solo»  
TIME TO MEET • ELVAN TEKIN SHOWING

23.09.–25.09.22  
«The 10 year»  
PUBLIC PROJECTS • JAMES BLOOM SHOWING / PREMIERE

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# Intersecting Memories

FALTEN FOLDS

17.–20.11.22  
«Floating Roots»  
WERYLEE Performance

19.11.22  
«771UT»  
JEE CHAN & STEFAN PENTE  
MIT EVELINA PENTE

Long durational Performance-Installation  
Im Rahmen von TanzArchiv Berlin: Archiv-Komplex\*innen – Tanzarchive in Bewegung

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# New Works #2

FALTEN FOLDS

29.09.–25.09.23  
«The 10 year»  
PUBLIC PROJECTS • JAMES BLOOM SHOWING / PREMIERE

22.09.–25.09.23  
«Phylos»  
MARTIN HALLER

29.09.–02.10.22  
«The 10 year»  
PUBLIC PROJECTS • JAMES BLOOM SHOWING / PREMIERE

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# Narratives & Transgressions

FALTEN FOLDS

15.09.23  
«The wolf and the salmon are free to kill»  
TIME TO MEET • MAMOK SHOWING / OPENSTUDIO

17.09.23  
«Stateless Solo»  
TIME TO MEET • ELVAN TEKIN SHOWING

23.09.–25.09.23  
«The 10 year»  
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