

How a polar bear turns into a solar bear



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On the 21st of September, I witnessed at the Blank Check festival produced by the nein9 community and hosted by DockArt Theater Berlin, the premier of solar bear - a solo work from a Berlin dance artist, Lena Klink. The work in question approaches or attempts to reach a utopia through the means of solar- and cyberpunk. For the text I have written, I find it notable to mention that association chains and puns play a considerable part in Klink's creative processes. When I first heard the name, solar bear, I thought I must have misheard. Surely, she meant to say, "polar bear." For Klink, these mishaps are a necessary and positive tool to invite a playful relation to the challenging topic: "What is the world we are going to?"

In "solar bear", Klink performs with transparent plastic square mats that have been recycled from her older works, salvaging past resources into a new use and imagination, just like in the solar punk movement. The choreography takes place as a score of balancing: the body balancing itself, the mats balancing themselves, and the act of balancing together.

This balancing, for Klink, reflects and responds to the potentiality of liminal and marginal grey zones: areas that, by falling out of inclusivity, contain further possibilities, realities, and chances. Throughout the solo, Klink amasses the mats into multiple thought- and image-provoking constellations. I find the work's underlying, inescapable, and creative force in the mat's constant ability to scatter any image. The accumulated images have a built-in feeling of self-destruction. These destructive moments become not accidents but rather gateways for a shifted perspective. The polar bear turns into a solar bear: new meanings, possibilities, and potentialities unfold from reprocessing. Like puns remind us of the joy of other meanings and connections, the solar bear is joyful in its sorrow and a serenely beautiful depiction of world destruction that reaches for a utopia where the endangered polar bears may have their future.

Furthermore, just like puns are a form of scattering (speech; to strew): a breaking of words inducing a shift. Klink's scattered body and the scattered mats on stage break down my imagination into a new remix of sensations, forms of knowledge, and relation to the material world. She shifts my perspective to another angle, to another configuration, to another crease, to another fold:



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Unfold fold cover uncover carry then try to be carried by them put them together pull them apart lift slam drop them and your body.

She stops. She travels. With time, my imagination starts to ripple and unravel icebergs, glaciers, tunnels, buildings, and mountains. She is to me an angel, then a grandmother, oozing power in the most peaceful manner: merciless in her mercifulness.

Watching her, I tilt my head in the opposite direction as her body leans. I am joining her game of the body balancing with objects and with the world. Keeping my head straight becomes challenging when I become aware of this. My spine is curved.

Grasping
Rolling

It could be more pragmatic how she handles the mats most of the time, but what is practical about how humans handle the earth? She slams on the mats as if giving CPR to the associatively “dead” plastic material. She slams the mats on the floor, echoing flatly, like the mats themselves. The soundscape by artist ASA 808 creates a feeling of constancy like in a meditation: engines start, gusts of wind, waves of water, and the pulsating recording of the sun's waves steadfastly wash the space.

fall leap rotate slide lean

The body slides
The mats slide

The body rotates
The mats rotate

With every action that the body can do, so can the mats. She amasses skills by learning to handle (: touch, move, and be moved by) material. This knowledge leads to a specific kind of mastery. She is a creator, but the mats gain an equal standing.



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The mats constantly shift in function but never lose their destructive power: merciful and merciless. The mats become the world egg, skin and its shedding, shell, and the shell of a shelf. The mats build her body and become her skeleton, the bones that support her: flexible, bendable, and sturdy.



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Her hand reaches to the edge of a mat to roll inside its hide. Only for gravity to take hold of it and for a form's destruction to happen again through an unfolding.

Eco Logical Politics

Is any utopian practice a re-imagination and a practice of dismantling? To scatter for a future to unfold. Klink's solo brings me back to the origin of the word apocalypse: the act of uncovering that leads to a revelation. Thus, the depicted angel of the solar bear turns into Walter Benjamin's Angel of Hope, having her gaze on the past while moving toward the future. The solar punk movement also moves forward while looking back to harness sustainable practices of recycling and re-remembering. Punning my way to the end of this text, I join Klink's game of rotations: revelation turns into revolution and again into a re-evaluation. The words become empty, blank like Klink's mats through this shuffling. However, it is not that they cease to mean, and they do not stop their movement. Solar bear shows me that anything that moves us is revolutionary, be it a plastic mat flipping a performing body or the wind blowing my hair to my face in my daily life. Solar bear's utopia is a rotating revolution that changes its landscapes as fluidly as it changes my perception.