

WHAT CAN
WE TALK
about?

MFA IN PERFORMING ARTS AT THE ICELAND UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS 2017-2018

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION
WITH WHALES, TREES, TRASH,
JOKES, AND TRUTHS, AMONG
OTHER THINGS

WHAT CAN
WE TALK
about?

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FOREWORD

MFA PERFORMING ARTS AT THE ICELAND UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS 2017-2018

Here in this book live five conversations with five artists, each of whom graduated from the Performing Arts MFA at the Iceland University of the Arts in September 2018.

The conversations – put together by the artists themselves – don't so much set out to explain their work as artists, but rather invite the readers of these texts to join in on each artist's doing, making and thinking.

Sometimes these are conversations they are having with themselves, sometimes conversations they are having with significant collaborators. Some are conversations that take the shape of dialogues, others interviews, letters or even performances. All of the texts are written during a process of making – not before, not after – but right in the thickness of the experiment. The reader – in each case – lured into a significant encounter with the language and thinking of each artist and their work.

ALEXANDER
ROBERTS

THEIR WORK

MFA IN PERFORMING ARTS AT THE ICELAND UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS 2017-2018

TENTA

Waa

attempt #8 - emaranhado. reykjavík april 2018

ISABELLA
RODRIGUES
GONÇALVES

MFA IN PERFORMING ARTS AT THE ICELAND UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS 2017-2018

dear friend,
what a joy to hear from you. i was feeling my body dissolving
when your thoughts occupied me and as a hug your words gave
me my contours back.
as if i was there or you were here.

the sky today was blue
the sun surprisingly warm. and there was
a delightful maresia [sea air] smell in the air
a mix of sea salt and fresh fish

for the eight months that i've been here i feel that my body was
constantly reinvented. there is a common phrase here that says
something like if you don't like the weather, wait five minutes, and
it is related to the constant not so subtle changes of the weather
conditions.

as the changes occur around me they occur inside me. here is
always somewhere else.

everything is cloudy now

each gust of wind makes me something else. by blowing away
what is superficial, iansã [queen of the winds and storms] leaves
me with an entanglement of traces. a knot of experiences. a
weave of thoughts. i once read something about us being deserts
inhabited by various tribes.

ii am the vestiges of the paths crossed by these tribes
iii am the hands that swipe the sand
ij am the feet that wander
iii am the scattered bones
ii am the eyes that look to the desert seeking for the stars
ii am time
ii am impermanence
ii am populated solitude

i wanted to share my knots with you.

when i turn inwards i see the infinite and i can hear stars tinkling
-- what do you hear when you submerge in the dark? --
i always admire those whom with words create life. those
who can allow words to exist as living beings with their
own fissures, voids, their own deserts crossed by histo-
ries| meanings| connotations| intentions. creating unique uni-
verses that disrupt the idea of linear time-space. expanding
our realities. inviting us to dive into imagination. just as the
lyrics of a chico buarque song can transport me to a parallel
world, and make me experience every inch of that world
even if for only three minutes. or when listening to krish-
namurti talking and his preciseness of choosing the words
that are just right, that fits perfectly to the subject discussed.
there is no waste. no hyperbole. just the necessary.

WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

actually, *justeza* [righteousness] is something i've been concerned with these days. and i'm wondering what it means to think with the work and letting it find sua forma justa [its right form]. and right here isn't opposite to wrong but it goes along side of what the work needs to exist in its fullness. -- how do you listen to your work? -- this letter is an attempt to find the possibilities to give form to my fragmented thoughts.

when i decided to come here i gave myself the problem of how to think of writing as a part of my practice. over time, in an anthropophagic attempt, ruminating this question, letting it become my own body, i'm posed with the questions: how to write with the work? what is necessary to be written about it? how to allow words to be? and so, to erode?

the more i chew the deeper the hole gets. -- how do you embody writing? --

i wanted to write a manifesto or an artist statement. but i could never find space for my doubts in it. and i realized that what i am interested in looking at is too slippery to be fixed in a mani-festo. its something that is in movement, in a constant state of transformation. something that words can't grasp entirely. it is like trying to take a picture of the moment when water evaporates. its not the liquid nor the gas state but the in between moment. the impossibility of the present moment. the expansion of time. and the uncertainties. that is what has been moving me.

in this process i begin to understand that i can only write if my body is involved. i need to be connected to my heart so that the words can emerge. -- what organs do you bring to your text? --

and through my attempts i write holes. empty spaces where maybe others can occupy it. there is a limit to where i'm able to go with these words and i'm beginning to see it as a request for help, an invitation to fill the blanks, a necessity to (try to) allow autonomy, an attempt to create together(ness). how can the relation between writer and reader be fluid? the work doesn't end with me but it goes on endlessly. at least that is my ongoing effort. how to write a porous text? how can this work outlive me? how to make it a rhizome? how to erode the identity of authorship? how can the artist be absent?

there is a shy sunbeam reminding me that
summer has arrived

i am fascinated with the concept of erosion. an invisible action, a small rupture that through time creates enormous changes. like rocks, we are in a constant state of erosion. constantly fleeting. there is something freeing about it, don't you think?

THEIR WORK

the report of a fisherman in a documentary about bas jan ader, analyzing the falls is stuck with me. the moment when he talks about the falling not being what's important but the one-tenth of a second when he let goes, that's what affect us. how to let go of the fear of letting go? how to jump into the void without knowing if there is a soft surface to absorb our fall?

i keep on trying to let go of my self. to abandon my identity. trying to decompose the individual in me. how to stay with this trouble?

i was watching a donna haraway interview and she said something that made me think of you. she was playing with the thought of us not being humans but humus. compost. in that thought, we are at the same time dissolving and being fertilizer for new life. not only in an individual life-death spectrum, this made me think of the living and dying aspect of everything that we are together.

we animals, we dirt, we moon. we knowledge. we thought. constantly changing. becoming-with.

this reminds me of an interview with ailton krenak where he talks about affective alliances in the indigenous culture. an alliance where the exchange doesn't assume immediate interests. that is not based on saqueamento [looting]. that needs time. a dilatation of time. so that things can be constructed. affects that doesn't search an immediate objective. that can prosper. in his words: "to dilate this ordinary time of our relations and to allow the creation of voids for the visions, for people's feelings, for the elaborations that a collective can have on what is to dream. that which is dreaming."

for ailton, when one reaches this type of understanding there is an expansion of one's perception, that could be called a *cosmovisão* [worldview], an open view of life. an opening of possibilities. and this opening allows "alliances with many potencies that are given, that are possible. the lightning, the rain, the wind, the sun, the breeze, the landscapes. alliance is exchange with all possibilities, without any limitation." he tells a beautiful story of someone that because of their affective alliances could ask for the rain to come when a friend needed, and she came. (i like to think of the rain as female). for me that is what i think about when i hear donna haraway talking about becoming-with. an attempt to dilate time. to allow affective alliances. to live the magic thinking. an impossible action for our mundo dos brancos [western world] to engage with.

in the video donna also talked about a lot of shit that is happening around us due to this looter way of thinking|being. but what amazed me was the "lightness" in which she talked about it. like she was asking me: how can we laugh with the trouble? there is trouble but there is joy. and it reminded me that in the tai chi classes i used to go, the teacher wittily suggested that if we felt pain while doing the exercises, to smile

WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

with it. by taking away the burden of the pain we could move on and enjoy what we were doing.isn't that so simple and so wise?

the air smells gently green

i don't remember if i told you about it, but my practice over here has been a series of attempts.
attempts to put my self in erosion.
attempts to let go.
attempts to listen.

the almost naked mountain covers
herself with a white shawl

in one attempt, i wander with the wind.
and by listening to the wind i encountered some destroços [wreckage]. things that were thrown away. that are useless (in the eyes of the efficient-productive world of work). that are broken. in decomposition. i collected them. and we are trying to become-with.

i wonder what happens in between my body and theirs.
an attempt to tune in with their frequencies. to listen.
how can life emerge from decomposition?

in search of creating alliances and through a channeling state, i am trying to listen to this bodies with my heart.

the fog slowly swallows the sea

i was reading a text by tim ingold the other day that discussed the intrinsic relation in between the evolution of human anatomy from quadruped to biped (distancing itself from the ground) and the hierarchical development of rational thought. the text points out how we consider our feet as a walking machine and start prioritizing the intellect over it, ending with the separation of body and mind. which makes me think of donna haraway talking about the etymology of the anthropos in anthropocene, that is the one that looks to the sky. which is connected to the aristotelian allusion that the man is biped that is, walk under two feet therefore has the head free to look to the sky. while other animals that are quadruped, look to the ground. concluding that humans have a high destination and so are superior from other animals.

for the traditional chinese medicine, the heart shelter the sheng, the mind, the consciousness.

i like to believe that we became bipeds so that our hearts were exposed and that way, available to be connected to other hearts| minds. how can we bring our hearts back to love?

i write you this letter in an attempt to interweave affec-

THEIR WORK

tive alliances through our hearts. and if you don't mind i wanted to invite others to join us.

for that this letter will be dispersed in three actions:

attempt #8 - para iansã
in this attempt i will whisper this letter in the seashore
an attempt to let the wind erode my words
to find alliances in the sky

attempt #8 - emaranhado
in this attempt this letter will be published among other texts
an attempt to compost my words
to create alliances with humus

attempt #8 - para aline e pablo
in this attempt this letter will be buried in the ground
an attempt to allow my words to dissolve through time
to search for alliances with dirt
with magma
to create alliances with the past
to search for your words underneath my feet

the moon is now majestically full

saudade is an untranslatable word.
with love,
i

COMEDY IS A SAFE *Space*



REBECCA SCOTT LORD

Subtitle: A conversation between the artists, Rebecca Scott Lord, Salka Gullbrá Þórarinsdóttir, and Lóa Björk Björnsdóttir.
 Preface: Salka, Lóa and I have spent several weeks collaborating on a performance piece, set to premiere in June 2018.
 It's a standup show, but not just any old hour long comedy special. We are working with the the format of re-performing pre-existing rape jokes as told by popular comedians, then reflecting on that with their own stand up material. Setting: The three performers meet one Sunday afternoon at the cafe in the Kjarvalsstaðir Art Museum to talk.]

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CHAPTER 1: ON PRODUCTIVITY

R: So, welcome guys. I wanted us to talk today about what we're doing, questions we have, either for the work, or that we feel the work is asking, like what contexts it's in dialogue with... like, what the fuck are we doing with this work?

L: This is what I've been thinking throughout... from first hearing about it, and then doing it, and then afterwards. And I think I could only have answered the question after doing it. I'm just gonna start, if that's ok. So we're telling rape jokes, and the question rises, is it productive to be amplifying that kind of stuff?

[COFFEE COMES]

L: And from that question, this worry that art needs to be geared towards proposing solutions for problems, I was asking myself, art means that you have to be super productive. You can never say anything that's difficult or negative or hard and, that just made me rethink, like, a reason to do stuff with art isn't that it's actually nice or productive or easy. And I feel like that's not a restriction you should put on yourself as an artist. I think it comes very easily to you when you're a woman. To make things that are productive and helpful and caring. And I just really really love that. I still have this belief that it's time for artists that

are political, to work towards creating alternatives and a better community and change the things they can change with their work. I think guys should focus more on that too with their art, that often seems to be about nothing.

R: Do you feel this piece is about that, or is not about that?

L: Being productive?

R: Yeah. Because it's not a very caring work.

L: No. And if you think about the responses we might get from people who can't handle the performance. I think almost every woman in the world could sit there and endured it. Because that's what we do on a daily basis. And if you don't, you basically check yourself out of every situation you're in. You check yourself out from having guy friends or watching a sitcom.

That was what I was thinking.

S: I'm thinking about this productive thing. If this is a tendency to make it productive, we still have done everything that we could to make it productive. Do you know what I mean? Because the material is very anti-productive. First of all, it's not ours. And it's super negative and hard to hear.

R: And super unfunny.

S: Yeah, and super unfunny. I forgot for a moment that it should be funny.

CHAPTER 2: ON FEELING THE ANGER

L: I just remembered something coming up. The idea

of allowing the anger that comes with this topic without trying to fix it. It's hard to just be allowing anger. I guess this critique or desire to jump right away to fixing could be from someone who might only see the first part [of us just telling straight up rape jokes], and who doesn't see the later part, which was very much, we see a problem, and here's a solution, which many pieces don't do. So we were allowing the anger and not trying to fix it, but we were also sort of trying to fix it.

R: I think it's a natural reaction to want to just fix a problem as soon as you see it. But it's really important to just allow us to be angry first, and not rush to the fixing.

S: I think it's also really important to have this moment where you put the spotlight on shit like this. Because I was watching Scary Movie yesterday, and I watched it countless times when I was 13 or 14 and all the jokes are so sexist and so rapey. There's rape joke after rape joke, endlessly. And so, if people might feel uncomfortable because it makes them feel really bad to listen to us do this, it makes me think, what is it about this context that makes it so different? Because watching Scary Movie is like watching our standup, but the context is a Hollywood film, rather than a stage with three women on it. I'm serious, that's the only difference.

R: All of these things we take in every single day and don't realize that we have internalized and normalized, until it's three women on stage retelling it to you, and then you realize how fucked up it is. Yeah, I'm super interested in this blindness, and then sudden opening of the eyes. I think it's really related to metoo, this revolution where it's like, almost no woman I know was shocked at all by any of these stories coming out. And then that's what made me so fucking furious, was that seeing how shocked all these guys were. And I was like, how is it possible for you to be shocked? This is something that's happening all the time. And it's exactly like Scary Movie. It's like, how can you not see this?

S: And so that's what was interesting for me as a performer. Being a little annoyed, it's a stupid feeling, but being annoyed by people who are made uncomfortable by it. Because I get it, I am also uncomfortable, and I feel bad when I am saying these jokes. But still I am a little pissed off that it's such big news.

R: It's such a struggle for me. I do get really angry and frustrated.

S: I'm wondering if the audience that sees it is gonna recognize it. You open this door and it's open from then on. Or you come to this and watch it and go out of it and you're like, back to..you know, because of the context. You're coming into the work and being like, here are three women on stage.

And you always have their perspective on it. You're really watching women experiencing the jokes. But then you might go to, because they're still making these Scary Movies kind of movies, and I'm wondering if it will change anything.

CHAPTER 3: ON VICTIMHOOD

L: And I have one thing that's very problematic for me. The fact that it's difficult because you see three women, and are you then imagining them as the victims of this? We always need victims to be personified to feel sorry for them. And I don't want the drive behind you fucking waking up and changing your attitude to be that you felt sorry for me or you felt sorry for people who have been victims of sexual abuse. It's the same thing I hate about when we do aid work in Africa, that we put photos of children or young girls and we're like: "she's going to end up in prostitution if you don't help." And then you start crying because you don't want a girl to fall into prostitution, and it's just so much bullshit. It just makes me really angry that this is what you need to wake up, to feel sorry for a person. This is what essentially bugs me. Because being raised as a girl is being told throughout your entire life that there's a 25% chance that you're going to get assaulted. And then you grow up and this person in your life gets assaulted, and this person, and you're like "Am I next? Am I next? Am I supposed to be scared here?" Being a girl is also being a victim. It's fucking annoying. And being non-white

in a mainly white society is being a victim too, of something else. And it just takes the humanity out of you to be reduced to that. And that then a white man has to save you with his money.

R: But that's the thing. It's like, nothing about this is going to change unless the fucking straight white men of the world want to change it. Because, you know, every oppressed group has been trying to change things for a long long long long time. And it doesn't change until the people in power change it. So in some ways, I'm wondering, do we have to accept that the way to do this is to manipulate, in this way of being like....which I reject, I don't want to be like, "you need to feel sorry for me and this is why you change." Because you can't force people to change. But it's this frustrating feeling like, are we being educators? Are we in primary school teaching the alphabet and the colors? In a way it feels like that. And do we have to then give guys this "permission to act"? Are they waiting for that?

S: How does this work, the permission to act?

R: I don't know.

S: And could it do that, somehow? Because I think it's also true. After metoo, I think a lot of guys were like "now it's our job just to listen." I saw a lot of statuses that were saying that. And I was like já, definitely, for some time. But they have

information at this point.

R: Now they think just listening is enough.

S: Já, because it really isn't. It's just the first step, if I am talking about my experiences as a woman, in this world, of course you shouldn't be talking over me and being like, "Yeah yeah yeah, I get it." But there should be a step after that. And I feel like metoo brought us to that step. But I don't know if it brought us to the activation step.

R: Which is what we kind of have to be thinking of.

L: But you guys, I am still so sceptical that just telling or re-telling trauma... I remember when I started reading rape stories, stories that are being told in the context of "listen to this so you know what we go through," and you start crying and you feel really bad and you get depressed. I'm not saying people don't have the right to tell their stories. But if that's our tool, I feel like social media is calling for this tool, the papers really want to make it front page, so people can just look at your life and see all the dirty details and feel awful. I don't know if that's a productive feeling at all.

R: I think maybe we are rushing ourselves to be productive. And I don't think that we need to be like "what's the most effective way to do this?" I think at this point it's something we've known our whole lives, how shitty things are, but I think it's only very recently that we're truly just looking at it and being like "this is actually really shitty." So I think that we don't have

to jump into being productive yet. I think it's ok to just be fucking angry.

L: But I think that feminism has talked about this, I don't remember specifically who, maybe bell hooks, when we constantly reaffirm the woman as a victim.

R: Do you feel like we're doing that?

L: Just saying this because it freaks me completely out that being female = being a sexual assault victim when you bring up the topic.

R: That's something to address when we work on this more. Us taking another person's story is us actually telling our own story. Which is not necessarily what we wanted to do. Hopefully people can see that we're performing and not saying "this is my story and it's a tell all."

S: And it's so annoying because it comes up so much. I remember when I was one of the organizers for the slutwalk and at one point my dad was like "why do you do this so much?" It was kind of like my dad asking me if I was raped. It's annoying on so many levels because it's just like, why does the difference between me and him, me doing this and him not doing this, and him specifically not doing anything pro-actively to fight sexual violence... why is there a difference between me, a woman who has statistically been a lucky person, not to have been raped. Still we have the difference of this possibility. Like the awareness of it. It was annoying to me that he was like, you know, you must have experienced that to...

MY EXPERIENCES AS A WOMAN, IN THIS *world*

L: To want to do this.
S: He didn't say that specifically. But that was his worry. And I get it. But as a woman, you're just involved with it and it doesn't matter what's happened. If you've had sex with anyone, it's kind of like, you're involved with it. Just being in relations with men.

L: It's also just having friends that--

S: Yeah, but I mean, he has friends who have been assaulted. Everyone has friends who have been--

L: Yeah, but do you think he personally took care of them?

S: No, but that's what I'm getting at. My role as a woman is always going to be involved with victims of sexual violence. It's just annoying to me that he doesn't have to get involved.

R: Exactly. Exactly. And this reminds me of two specific times where I've said to dudes I've dated that "I don't want to hear any more rape jokes, it's not funny to me." And I felt like they only took it seriously after I opened up to them about my own experiences with sexual violence. And it's like, it's only legitimate to them when it felt like I had to be like...

L: That's fucking bullshit.

R: I KNOW. But it's like, it's so, you think that now that I've told you this, now you know somebody, so now you have a connection with someone who's--

L: Like now you have a reason to be angry.

R: But it's like, no, you know so many people who have

experienced this, and they don't tell you because it's none of your business. It's not that people should just assume that a third of their friends have been raped, but it shouldn't take someone traumatizing themselves to get you to take it seriously.

S: I have felt this feeling of explicitly, first of all, it's nobody's fucking business.

L: Plus one to this, it's soooo fucked up.

S: But then also, I have found myself being like, it's better if they think it's for personal reasons, in some context where I'm trying to get someone to stop doing something. It becomes a kind of a tool.

R: It's like a manipulation tool.

S: Yeah, and it's super fucked up. And I'm just wondering you know, how can we...

L: I hate these loud guys.

[THE TABLE OF OLDER MIDDLE AGED MEN WHO HAVE BEEN SITTING AT THE TABLE RIGHT NEXT TO US IN AN OTHERWISE EMPTY CAFE HAVE BEEN GETTING LOUDER AND LOUDER, TALKING ABOUT UNITED STATES POLITICS AND FOOTBALL. IT HAS REACHED AN UNBEARABLY LOUD LEVEL.]

R: Should we move somewhere?

L: I need to move, because they just sat next to us and there is no one else here.

[WE ALL THREE MOVE TO THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE CAFE.]

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R: Ok, what were we talking about before we were sent away?

L: We were talking about victim stuff.

R: Yeah, being seen as a victim and how it gives you cred to say, "Um actually, I was a victim, soo.." where it's like, no, that's bullshit.

[HERE WE TALK A LOT ABOUT STRUGGLING WITH FEELING SUPERIOR TO MEN WHO DON'T THINK ABOUT FEMINISM AND SEXISM. THEN WE TALK ABOUT HOW WOMEN ARE REINFORCING THIS SHIT TOO.]

[THE MEN AT THE TABLE CONTINUE TO BE REALLY LOUD]

L: I'm so close to going over to the table and telling those guys to shut up. I'm so close to my period so I don't have any tolerance for these guys. We are almost alone in the cafe and they are taking up ALL the space.

S: But I would be doing this with my friends. If I were with eight of my friends at a table, yeah it would be this loud. To be honest.

L: Yeah, but you have loud friends.

R: Yeah, but like, we like you.

L: I mean, I would tell you and your friends to shut up too. It's not just that they're guys.

CHAPTER 4: ON BEING COMPLICIT

[WE DISCUSS THE TWO PARTS OF THE SHOW: THE RE-PERFORMANCE OF THE RAPE JOKES AND THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR OWN MATERIAL.]

R: But the thing that made the second part work was us talking about our imperfections and vulnerabilities, and not preaching from above about this.

S: And also admitting that we are in this heteronormative sexist society.

L: Benefiting from it, complicit in it.

S: I think it's maybe a separate part when you're like, "I have sex with guys." Because then you're like, you're not this person coming here and saying, "I would never..."

R: Never dirty myself with a disgusting dick.

S: Yeah.

L: Penises are so gross.

R: They just give you yeast infections and UTIs.

L: And put cum everywhere.

[LÓA MAKES A REALLY GREAT JOKE ABOUT GUYS CUMMING.]

CHAPTER 5: THE SYSTEM VS. THE INDIVIDUAL

R: I've been thinking about this impossible task: to find the beauty in the straight white man. And thinking about how to lay bare the system. Yes, these comedian guys are disgusting individuals, saying really disgusting shit. But really what needs to be attacked here is the system that allows for this.

L: Yeah, it's like, you can't really get angry at comedians. There's a full fucking auditorium of laughing people. Aren't they the ones we should hate? If I could just quickly mention my Mið-Ísland standup, it's not that they're not funny. It's that

everyone is telling them constantly that they're fucking funny. It's the society that celebrates white male mediocrity, and sexism. They never do anything subversive ever in their life.

R: Because everyone is just clapping for them, everything they do.

L: Yeah, and what is this thing with the comedian being edgy? But never subversive. He's edgy in telling us the fucking things that are uncomfortable and we would rather not talk about. Do you know what I mean?

R: Yeah, he's not subverting, he's just being very straight about it.

S: And just reaffirming.

R: Yeah, that's it exactly. The comedian is being encouraged by everyone else telling him, yes, continue.

L: "This makes me happy, I'm laughing." Because we talked a little bit about the role of the audience in a stand up. The role of the audience is to sit there and laugh. But I don't think you can go up there and say whatever. But then what they are just doing is telling stuff with some tone of voice. And then you're just programmed to laugh.

S: There's also this, when we're watching youtube videos of these jokes, you could see, they're telling rape jokes, and then there's a shot of the audience and you could definitely see that some women were like, [cringing face] and like, "Ha ha..." Having an uncomfortable looking face. But because it's at the height of the stand up, and they've

been laughing so far, and maybe this is someone that they really love. Like if I were to go and see a comedian I really love, he probably could tell pretty bad jokes and I would still laugh. Just because of my expectation and like, what I was there to do. It would be hard for me to go and not laugh at all if I'm pumped to do it.

L: But isn't this exactly the center of the problem with patriarchy? We just, um, listen and uncritically accept everything guys do, and let them be central. Even, gonna talk about the band [name redacted]. It literally doesn't matter what they're doing. It doesn't really matter what he's saying. It's just that they applied the aesthetics of power, they're standing there, dominating the audience, and that is very pleasing for the audience because they just expect a man to assume power and that makes them feel good, and they don't criticize it because it's actually satisfying. It's what a comedian does.

R: I want to bring up Lauren Barri Holstein. She is working with this thing of forcing the audience to leave. In a way, forcing the audience to be responsible for saying, "Hey, I don't accept this."

[THE MEN LAUGH VERY LOUDLY.]

R: Let the record show that Lóa just gave two middle fingers to the old men over there.

L: Who are being loud.

R: But there's something about, I guess that is something she's

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BUT ISN'T THIS
EXACTLY THE
CENTER OF THE
PROBLEM WITH
PATRIARCHY?
WE JUST, UM,
LISTEN AND
UNCRITICALLY
ACCEPT EVERY-
THING GUYS DO,
AND LET THEM
be central



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doing, challenging the audience to, well and it's not just her, this is also what Ann Liv Young is doing too. But there is something about this, the audience can't be this passive thing. That's important, something about that. I guess most people don't have the confidence to perform if they think the audience doesn't like it. Like [this band] wouldn't continue to be a band, I imagine, if people were just like, "This is boring." Or just not even coming.

L: I'm just continually shocked at what people find interesting in the work of male artists. Like you can literally go to an art gallery and see a guy put three rocks and a photo of his dick and people are gonna be buying the work for all their money, and you're like, really? This does it for you?

S: Agree, but I'm personally afraid to say this because of my own fear that people think my art is bullshit. Or that if I say a guy's art is bullshit someone will say that it's because I don't get art or I'm just jealous.

R: YES. Or that you just don't like it because you're a man hater. I am afraid that that's how I'm viewed when I have these opinions.

L: Yep, on the manhater thing, or this other fear I have is that maybe I decide to disregard stuff beforehand because I think it's by an unoriginal guy, I could be missing out on stuff. Then I'm just creating a bubble for myself to exist in which is so counterproductive.

R: I agree. But I also think it's true men have this

privilege to just make shit because they want to. And then they get the reinforcement to be able to do that because people are like "this is great." And when women make work, it's like "so what's the feminist angle of this?" Even if a woman makes a work that's like, her vagina and three rocks in a gallery. Or even if a woman makes a work that's a picture of a penis and three rocks in a gallery, that a woman is making it, so it must be some sort of...

L: As a side note, I realize I'm being really binary when I say these things, and I wish I could say them differently.

R: Yeah, this male/female binary. I feel stuck in it too, and would like to be able to speak about it differently.

S: But back to before, I think our work does make the audience complicit in a different way than the original standup. What is this feeling of when you're laughing at something you're not supposed to laugh at? What is that appeal? Like somebody making fun of a vulnerable person. Again, thinking about the Scary Movie.

R: I guess it makes the person telling the joke feel more secure in their place? And this thing like "oh well I would only tell this joke around my friends... I wouldn't tell this joke around people who I know would be offended." Then why? If you can consciously think, "I know I shouldn't tell this joke

around certain people,” then why do you tell the joke at all?

S: Would that apply to us making fun of guys?

R: No. I mean, ok, so I was having this discussion once with some friends, and someone was talking about racism against white people and I’m like “that’s just not possible!”

[LÓA AND SALKA HERE MAKE GASPS AND GO, “WHAAAAAAAAA”]

R: And like, discrimination and racism are not the same thing. And making a joke about a guy is like...you know, maybe it’s reinforcing a cycle of negativity, it’s not like...making a joke about guys is like...

L: I would say it gives my life meaning to do that, so don’t let anyone take that away from me.

R: But it’s that there’s not the power imbalance.

L: Exactly. You’re always punching up.

R: It’s like, I cannot be hurt by jokes about white girls or white people.

L and S: Yeah, exactly.

[WE GO ON A DIGRESSION ABOUT RACISM AND “ETHNIC FOOD.”]

L: Can I say one thing about racism against white people. I think it’s just this mismatch where we, because of patriarchy, assume that guys have power and then they feel discrimination against themselves or

they feel like they’re being attacked for their skin color and their gender. Because they have low self esteem, so their low self esteem and their insecurity and their like, it doesn’t like match our idea of the white men in power. And their idea of themselves has nothing to do with it. Like, it’s not the same thing. They don’t feel privileged. They feel angry and sexually frustrated and they’re ugly. And when they get attacked for being ugly and stupid and eating shitty food, they’re like “I’m being discriminated against! You’re being racist against white people!” Because they feel like it’s punching down and maybe it is a bit punching down, because they are weak. So for them it’s very real.

R: And I think they’re seeing it as an individual thing rather than a systematic thing. Because racism is not an individual thing.

S: But doesn’t that have something to do with masculinity as well? Because masculinity puts this pressure on men to be strong individuals. I think it’s a strange position to be in where you’re made fun of or, like, as a teenager, maybe you’re being bullied because you’re not masculine enough or not strong enough. But at the same time, you’re a part of this group that’s super strong in the world, but you still don’t feel like you belong in it. So that makes you angry at every group that you feel is... I mean, so you feel angry at men, and also yourself, and you’re angry with women because they reject you. And it is a place of being an individual, but you don’t realize that you are also a part of a group. It’s a

strange position.

R: It makes sense. And that’s what causes these guys to become radical.

S: Because they feel like they should be a part of this powerful group, but they don’t feel like they belong. Because it’s not like everyone gets to belong in this group. Because you have to be this and that. And that makes them angry and they don’t know where to point that anger. You just feel like you should have something, you were promised something as a man. You were promised that you would just have the power and girls would fuck you, and get to be rich. And then that doesn’t come true for you and that leaves you...

R: Just angry.

S: Já. And these guys who are standup comedians, they don’t really fit the image of this masculine..

L: Yeah, they’re all somehow kind of off. But then when you’re saying this thing about insecurity and not fitting the image, men also get way more easily away with not fulfilling 100% the idea of masculinity and typically masculine traits. You can always cash in on humor and personality. Which is way harder for girls to do. They get something else instead. I guess what’s worse is to be an unfunny, ugly, weak, white man. Because then you just, you got nothing going for you! And dumb. You can be ugly as fuck, but if you’re smart, you’ve got it going. People

will praise you. People will always find some way to praise you.

R: Who is the most unappealing man then? Ugly, dumb, unfunny, weak.

L: Guys on the internet.

S: I’m actually feeling less angry with men these days.

R: Yeah, I’ve been having a breakthrough.

S: I’m feeling more and more sorry for them. I just feel like they are stuck in a rut.

L: Not all guys.

S: No, but they’re kinda like...

L: Do you mean the guys on the internet who say stupid stuff who are victimizing themselves? Do you feel sorry for them now? Or do you feel sorry for male comedians?

S: No, mainly men on the internet with this #karlmennskan (“masculinity”) or something, where this guy was saying “I didn’t cry for half a year after our daughter died, and then I broke down at the summerhouse with my guy friends, and then I apologized for being such a baby the next day.” I was like, shit, this is so fucked up. You’re so stuck in a rut just by being a guy, and I’m just wondering about all these guys I know that never cry.

Not that they have to cry, if that’s not how they deal with it. But are they just dealing with it in some other way? Or is it just so powerful, this toxic masculinity, that they are just like programmed. It’s so fucked up that you can’t even just deal with

feelings, just talk to your friends about shit. You guys are even worse off than we are. At least we know what we want. We can say “stop raping, stop harassing.”

R: But at least we can deal with it when it happens.

L: It's really dangerous to go down the road of who has it worse.

S: Yeah, I'm not saying that, I'm just saying I just recently started realizing how fucked up it is.

L: I don't know man. I feel like, they all have the same responsibility that I have in life, cause when I start to grow up and I'm going over my self image, what I was raised to do and who I wanna be, like they have that same responsibility. They're not just victims of circumstance. I don't know.

R: But we all are under this patriarchal system. And we're all enforcing it. And they don't realize. I feel like we realize that it exists and that it's harmful to us and to them. They maybe don't realize that it exists and that it's harmful to them.

L: Or maybe they know it exists and think it's just harmful to women. I think a lot of guys are in that place. And they don't know why they feel bad all the time.

[THIS IS THE END OF THE CONVERSATION AT THIS POINT, BUT IT IS ONGOING.]

JULY 25, 2018

The previous document is a record

of a conversation I had with my artistic collaborators on Comedy is a Safe Space, which I invited them into last spring. We had just performed a test run, and were about to make our public debut in the basement space at the National Theater of Iceland. Since then, we've had another show at Gaukurinn, a bar that frequently hosts stand up shows. As I write this, we (minus Lóa because she moved out of the country) will be performing again at my graduation show at the end of August 2018.

This project has been evolving since its beginnings in October of 2017, when something broke open and people (primarily women) began to openly share their experiences with rape and sexual assault. It made me very angry, these revelations, because to me, they were not revelations. It made me very angry that at the same time that (primarily) men were expressing shock and outrage and solidarity, there was still this culture of minimizing and belittling rape and sexual assault, especially, as I saw it, in the comedy world. I was so furious that men could finally open their eyes to the reality of rape and at the same time see no connection between the rapey media they and we have been suffused with.

I had this idea to just stand on stage for an hour telling rape joke after rape joke, until every man in the audience had left. What fueled me even more was male friends

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of mine questioning the existence of rape jokes in this day and age, asking me, “Do you really think you'll be able to find enough material for an hour long show?” But with the inclusion of Lóa and Salka, we began to shape this piece together until it led to a slightly different direction.

There is a lot of power being on a stage and talking to an audience who is there to listen to you. Not to be cheesy, but I've got something to say. It's a feminist act to take a format so dominated by men, so rife with misogyny, homophobia, racism, transphobia, and to infiltrate and subvert it and use it as a place to say my piece. And unlike a lot of comedians out there, we'd actually like to start a dialogue to see if we can start to figure this shit out together.

I have not let go of my anger, not yet. It's still very much there, but the target of it has shifted. Systems are what allow for injustice, inequality, violations. Systems are what must be dismantled. Can a comedy show do that? Yeah, maybe. (Seriously Netflix, we are open to talking about a standup special. You have my email.) We'll just have to see where this goes.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GAZE, ABOUT THE GAZE, ABOUT *the gaze*

SILJA HAUKSDÓTTIR

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At the beginning of this process, there was a desire on my behalf to explore what the theatre as a place and medium could bring to my work as an artist, and vice-versa what my work as an artist working mostly in film could bring to this artistic context. What emerged through the twelve months was an experience and process that was much more life-affecting, personal and challenging than this formal departure point might suggest it would have been.

My process for creating this work has been an important personal journey. Looking back, the process seems simple and logical although it didn't feel that way to begin with. In September, I began researching and thinking about the very simple elements the theatre has to offer as a space and a medium. It was mainly a visual introduction between myself and the possibilities of a theatre space. I worked with the performers Álfrún Helga Örnólfsdóttir and Hrefna Lind Lárusdóttir, in a studio space where we experimented with elements of a musical, karaoke and choreography through a dialogue on representation and form. In the past, I've thought a lot about the role of the director in the creative process and the importance of creating an atmosphere of inclusion and honesty, where the director is not a dictator, but a co-creator. These thoughts were in the back of my mind while

workshopping during this period.]

START WHERE YOU ARE.
USE WHAT YOU HAVE.
DO WHAT YOU CAN.
ARTHUR ASHE

The #metoo movement quickly became a big part of my research through a simultaneously hostile and friendly takeover of my personal and professional life. I quickly became a part of a tight community of women working within the film and performing arts in Iceland and I co-directed an event in Borgarleikhúsið where women from different disciplines shared anonymous stories of gender based harassment and violence to an audience. Through this process I soon came to realize how the stories, experiences and this specific moment in time, were becoming both my inspiration and reason for making performance work at this point. Everything somehow became personal; which was a painful, empowering and refreshing journey. Due to the nature of this source material, I felt a need for the research and practice to maintain a certain rawness, for a lack of a better word. It soon became strongly apparent that the process had to be regarded as a work in progress, where the performer has and maintains the power on her own terms.

The next working period was focused on working with a selection of #metoo stories as a source of material and inspiration. I worked with Sigurlaug Sara Gunnarsdóttir from Theatre Making,

This text describing my process, and consists of reflections written at different moments in the process of making of the work. Together these four chapters chart the thinking of the work as it developed over time.

Rebecca Lord from MFA Performing Arts and Ebba Katrín Finnsdóttir from acting studies. They produced material through tasks provided by me, based mostly on the anonymous stories but also on their own experiences, when they wanted to. We talked a lot about the male gaze, and how we as an audience are constantly presented with female bodies portrayed differently than male bodies, on stage or in other medium. This was an important topic for the performers, who, throughout their performance studies, had felt that their representation on stage was different than that of their fellow male students. This led us to discussions on the importance of performers' autonomy within the space, and how best to ensure their feeling of control while performing. Throughout the workshop we also shared personal stories with each other and used fragments of those experiences as material. Together we edited the material, tried out different structures, and when we felt overwhelmed with the heaviness of the subject matter, we sang some karaoke.

FROM #METOO PUBLIC EVENT IN BORGARLEIKHÚSIÐ, NOV. 2017.

Next chapter for this work will be focused on preparing for the workshop period during the summer. Currently I'm exploring possibilities

of inviting more artists into the process as well as preparing research on how best to make use of the time we'll have together, through different tasks and various ways of bringing the group together and creating an atmosphere of trust and empowerment.

Through working on this text, I've been contemplating if I actually want to address the fact that the inspiration and reason for this work is the #metoo movement and my involvement with it, when discussing the project outside of its working space. In some ways I fear that if I do so, the work will be pigeonholed and that it might exclude an audience it really wants to reach as a result. Although I'm very clear with myself and my collaborators about the fact that #metoo is a definite starting point for the work, there is a part of me that also wants to give it a life of its own, without pinning it down to a certain moment in time and a specific movement. In my career, my experience has been that my work has been labelled "female" and more for an audience of women than men, only because I, the director, am a woman and my work has women at its center. I haven't seen my male colleagues go through this kind of labelling when they make work with men at the center. I'm very aware that many female artists (if not all) have this same experience, but I guess, ironically, that

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my journey with the #metoo movement has made me realize this even more clearly and that it has brought my frustration to light because of Othering this entails. This work is of course, and should be, very female, -whatever that means. That is the core of it and its reason, power and pride. I still want for it to have its own box, a box it creates for itself, and the freedom to burst that box open, if and when it chooses. And I don't want a future audience to assume or box in or tell the work what it is, before they've actually experienced it. On the other hand, I also see it as a strength to openly speak about #metoo when discussing the work and being honest about where the inspiration comes from, and plainly not giving a fuck about pigeonholes or Othering or possible future assumptions of a possible future audience.

I find these two opposing views somehow close to the questions that are at the core of the work and I know they will be close during the next phase, the actual making of the performance itself. These questions might look something like this and mind you, this list is very open for further development of the work:

How can I make sure when working with traditional and mainstream forms like a musical/cabaret/pop, that these forms do not become a prison for the performer or performance, but are there

to be disrupted when needed, and through some kind of personal recycling, can actually become empowering?

1. HOW CAN I MAKE SURE WHEN WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL AND MAINSTREAM FORMS LIKE A MUSICAL/CABARET/POP, THAT THESE FORMS DO NOT BECOME A PRISON FOR THE PERFORMER OR PERFORMANCE, BUT ARE THERE TO BE DISRUPTED WHEN NEEDED, AND THROUGH SOME KIND OF PERSONAL RECYCLING, CAN ACTUALLY BECOME EMPOWERING?

2. A. HOW CAN WE AS PERFORMERS AND PERFORMANCE MAKE SURE WE DON'T FALL INTO THE VERY TRAP WE WANT TO AVOID, THE TRAP OF WHITE/HETERONORMATIVE PRIVILEGE, AND CAN WE EVEN DO THAT AT ALL, BEING EXACTLY THAT?
B. HOW CAN WE ENSURE THAT WE AS PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMERS ARE CONSCIOUS OF OUR OWN PRIVILEGE?

3. HOW MUCH SHOULD I ALLOW THE FEAR OF BEING PIGEONHOLED TO CONTROL HOW HONEST WE ARE IN THE DISCOURSE AROUND THE WORK?

My feeling is that these questions can only be answered through the practical process ahead, and might not even be answered at all. But for me they are important to bear in mind to keep the core of the work as honest as it can be. What I do know at this point is that it is extremely important to create a working atmosphere that is open,

trusting, honest and allows for each person in the space to have a voice, a voice that should be raised if and how it needs to. If we do that, we might actually have a shot at answering these questions and make work that contributes to our growth as artists and hopefully to something other and bigger than ourselves.

A MEETING BETWEEN ME AND REBECCA LORD, PERFORMANCE ARTIST WHO HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS, WORKSHOPPING AND SHARING OF THE WORK.

S: Thank you for meeting me, Rebecca.

R: You're so welcome.

S: I have some ideas on where it would be interesting to take this conversation, but it can travel wherever it needs to go.

R: I guess my most basic question is how was the process for you, as the director without a set idea of end result?

S: I think what helped a lot was thinking about this as research instead of as something that needs to have a "productive outcome". That this is more for the audience to witness where we are at in the process. Instead of being anxious about their expectations and their judgements about the final product.

R: And what the audience is going to get out of it, specifically?

S: Yeah, exactly. So I think that was maybe the most valuable part of the experience for me, to let go of that

pressure and just focus on the research part, the journey. And deep down inside having the faith that that would give a valuable outcome. There was something very liberating about it, because I remember how we were discussing "it's not about them, it should be about you, how you feel up on the stage throughout the performance", but when I was talking about that, I was also focusing myself and it was really liberating to introduce this idea of "you can come and you can enjoy it or you can be affected by this, but we are not here only to serve you".

R: Yes, it was not like "this is our goal and if the audience doesn't get this then we've failed". And I think that this is such a huge thing, such an important shift in thinking about what it means to be a creator, in my feeling, is the genius who has this one clear idea and everybody else is just there to work on it, let's say his, not like that it's always a man, but in the patriarchal sense, because women do this as well. Making this idea happen, without much room to change or develop or experiment.

S: Yeah, exactly, I think that this is a process that's been very consciously ongoing with me for some years, shifting from being somehow in state of panic while directing, but also not being honest with myself about that feeling. And when I realized this, my focus started to shift from

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BREAKING DOWN.
the boundaries

how a director is supposed to behave and towards, you know, just making. For example, when you as a director is given a question, which you get thousands of every day, that it's perfectly acceptable to just say "I don't know". And when I made that very simple discovery, it somehow changed a lot. And I see this as a starting point for where we are at now, kind of having the power of not knowing and just exploring and actually seeing it as a positive thing.

R: Yeah, it's because otherwise it's, well, exhausting. And also not sustainable. And to be the person who's so confident that you think know everything already, for me, I don't want to be that person.

S: Yeah, and like you say, I think it's really a good word to describe it, it's a sustainable way to do it. If you're open to this kind of way of exploring together, then you're not only tapping into your own core of emotions throughout your creative life, you're also reloading as you go along. It's like this same demand on a director when he or she begins a process, that they need to have this strong and developed vision, and this question, "what's your vision for this project", is a thing, and I want to ask, who the hell knows at the start?

R: Exactly.

S: And what is this word, what does it mean anyway?

Isn't it this the process of discovery, that you're experimenting with and finding out, what the work needs?

R: Exactly, I think that question is very scary because it puts you in this superior position of being the one who has all the answers...

S: ...Of being God! I think it can be a very positive thing to lose yourself in the process and to take the wrong turns. For me this is a method of realizing where the core of the work should be. "Ah, this doesn't work, but why? And then you have to guide people back again, but you don't have anywhere else to go, unless you're willing to take the wrong turns.

R: I guess that also has to do with how you choose your collaborators, trusting that they also are on the same page for the most part.

S: Yeah, because I think this for everyone who's involved, it's so much about trust. And being able to, as performer, to try it out, and without judgement, "oh, this is not going to work out", but just trying it out for the sake of trying it out. Like we all know that we will catch each other, somehow, when we fall.

S: But what would be your ideal next step, Do you think we should open the process up to more people and whom?

R: I think that that would be great, and would be super reflective of how every person is different, every woman's experience is different. I was also the only non-Icelander

and the Icelandic experience is something quite specific but also a part of the worldwide context, so I think there could be more diversity both in discipline and also backgrounds.

S: What about having men?

R: Yeah, that's another...

OH, man!

S: Laughs.

R: I feel two ways about this. Part of me is like, I don't know if I have space to talk with men about this, but still I think that's the future, having these kinds of performances including men, so men can also bring their perspectives of how patriarchy affects them, because it's a structural thing, but on a practical level I'm imagining that every time a man saying something, me just being like... (Rolls eyes)...

S: Rolling your eyes... But we're talking about more diversity, breaking down the barriers of disciplines and I feel that's serving the work a lot, it's about working against those old ideologies on what creating is and what a maker is and a director is and this director/performer relationship: "this is your dancing space and this is mine and we do not cross the line". Having said this, I feel I should and need to be inclusive, also to more genders. Or at least to think really carefully about when I exclude.

R: Yeah, but I struggle a lot, with like, could I be as vulnerable as I was if there was a man there?

S: ...And half of the stuff that we

shared on a personal level throughout this research process, we would never had shared if there had been men involved.

R: Exactly. And I think perhaps that's just a different performance, and there are obviously more genders than female and male and I think it would make more sense to reach out to queer people and trans people before reaching out to men, straight, cisgender men.

S: Maybe there's also a way of including them without having them at the core of it.

R: Exactly, that's another thought I was having.

S: And speaking about the role of men for now, in relation to #metoo, I feel it's most important that men just listen.

R: Listen.

S: For example just like five minutes before our sharing we got this idea of ending up having the closure of the performance include the audience. Which I'm really happy we tried out, because it's something that needs to be a key thing in this, like how can we include? And maybe our answers only there for now, how can we include everyone? Without forcing people, which I don't believe in, but encouraging them to participate, and what would have to happen there for them feeling ready to...

R: Or to feel allowed.

S: To feel allowed, yes. I usually feel super embarrassed myself when I'm "forced" to be included in a performance. So I'm thinking about ways for us to include all of the audience that will avoid what happened with

our performance, where only women came up to join us in the end because some men didn't feel that they were allowed to.

R: It's like in the "Listening Party" [Every Body's Spectacular 2018, Choreographer Ásrún Magnúsdóttir] when we were all invited to come dance and we did.

S: But the only thing that made me go up there in that moment was to show the performers support, because I felt super self-conscious about it... But they were so beautifully honest and open and I felt like turning them down would be a bad thing.

R: Like a rejection.

S: Yeah, and maybe the audience needs to have their own different ways and perspectives on how to do it.

R: In this piece you were directing, but the performers were also directing and so I wonder if there's some way of making that more explicit. Because it seems important, it seems kind of to the core.

That although you are gathering us together and this is your piece, that we've got autonomy in it.

S: And you're creating material...

R: So I think that's another thing to be thinking about.

S: Yeah. How could we do that, what would be the possibilities?

R: Yeah, I don't know, it's an open question. That's just what the work is asking me. Without explicitly stating it. Because we're... Wait. Is that clock accurate?

S: No.

R: Thank god.

S: It's 03:30.

R: Ok. I have to be at work at some time before five.

S: Ok. I need to go in half an hour to pick up Æsa.

R: Ok. But yeah, I think that's important to discuss during the process, because it feels important.

S: Yeah. Do you mean visually?

R: No, I mean it would be important content wise. Because the assumption the audience comes with is because this is the way it's been done for like almost everything we see, is that the director is the one who makes all the decisions and at the end of the day is responsible for everything. So I think it's important to break that in the performance, because it reflects on our ability as performers to bring or not bring whatever we want from our own selves to the table and our ability to direct what we do.

S: I think it might also appear through our work methods, like we've been discussing today, of breaking down the boundaries, dancers acting, actors dancing, different boundary breaking in different ways, behind that is this focus of the work being open and not being created as the clichés tell us they should be. And then everyone needs to be ok with that there is a person who is directing, directing us into a direction, who doesn't tell everybody what to do, no, but kind of focuses it and boils it down to something.

R: Exactly. Who can be on the outside watching in and can be a somewhat objective, like the boiler.

S: Yeah, the boiler.

R: That's the new term.

S: I'm trying to find this, we have this term in Icelandic "eima"... "distill", I guess.

R: Aha. Distiller.



SIGNIFICANT

OTHERS:

a conversation

In this text artist Tim Darbyshire (TD) talks to a Poly-Vocal Entity (PVE) about his current project Significant Encounters. PVE is a fictional voice that amalgamates the many voices that have made comments or raised questions about Tim's work as it has developed over the last twelve months. This text revisits those questions and comments and provides a point of reflection for Tim in regards to his practice.

TIM DARBYSHIRE

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PVE: Tim, What does Significant Encounters mean to you? What could it mean for us?

TD: In my mind Significant Encounters looks at how meanings can be constructed based on the coming-together of things. In this instance these things include people, gymnasium mats, bodies of water, whales, video camera's and different spaces within a swimming pool. The work deals with how these things can be situated, put into dialogue with one another and disrupted through mutual encounter. I've thought of these encounters as situations where each posed a kind of obstacle to the other – either ethical, physical or material.

PVE: Can you say a bit more about these obstacles?

TD: Sure. So taking the example of embarking on an inter-species dialogue between humans and whales – ethical questions come up very quickly: How can I make that dialogue happen? What things do I need to take into account when facilitating that conversation that acknowledges the imbalance of power between us? That acknowledges that I am consenting to that conversation but they are not yet? That acknowledges the history of human beings and whales, our history of hunting them, polluting their environment with chemicals, trash and noise?

An example of a physical or material obstacle might be that two people need to have a conversation whilst they are folded inside a gymnasium mat. Sometimes they are squashed, inverted or put into awkward positions depending how the mat interacts with them. This is an obstacle they need to continually negotiate and reinvent for themselves and one another. Such a space may be associated with other structures or forms.

Early experiments in these terrains have led me to some deceptively simple questions that have been ultimately incredibly tricky to resolve:

CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING?
WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?
HOW CAN WE TALK?

They became tricky because no conversation or encounter is empty of power dynamics, identity politics or ethics. The work became busy with reflecting on how power dynamics can be navigated in order to create significant dialogues between

WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

people and people, between people and things, between things and other things? How body-politics of race, gender, age, and so on, can be acknowledged and ultimately challenged and transformed through these encounters? How these significant encounters can be staged and read, while disrupting and rearranging dominant readings?

PVE: Alright, You've raised some mammoth questions but I have some more:

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THE TERMS
IDENTITIES OR ENTITIES?
HOW ARE THE ENCOUNTERS SIGNIFICANT?
COULD THEY ALSO BE INSIGNIFICANT?

TD: By identities and entities, I mean that the work drifts from relationships between humans, toward relationships with animals, inanimate objects and matter. So in this trajectory it is necessary to think about the identities of beings but at some point this word does not seem to fit. Using the example of a gymnasium mat for instance – I'm not sure a gymnasium mat has a sense of identity – apart from the one us humans have prescribed it.

And to talk a little about significance... Well the title for the work stems from my interests in semiotics and linguistics.

If (bluntly speaking) semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and linguistics is the study of language, this project inhabits the intersections between these related fields. For me significant and (in)significant are interchangeable terms. I try not to place a value judgment on the potency or topicality of the encounters themselves.

PVE: Yes but Tim, there is something troubling about your claim that significant and (in)significant are interchangeable. I don't really understand the motivation in that. If they are interchangeable, I guess it means the encounters are also - they're inconsequential and replaceable. Where is the hope or interest in that?

TD: Yes - I see what you mean. I think I should have put this differently. I believe all encounters are significant - even if deemed insignificant by some. For me all of the encounters (things coming together) in this work are extremely meaningful - but there are countless other possibilities for other things to come together in other ways. For example, a red bucket and a pile of rocks, or a pack of wolves and a river. It is arbitrary in a sense. The weight of these things coming together is so subjective. All potential coming-togethers are rich with nuanced meaning and personal significance and who are we to say otherwise or negatively prescribe them

THEIR WORK

to be insignificant or meaningless? My hope is that this work can amplify the significance of all things that come together.

PVE: And what about the encounters - how do they play out?

TD: In early stages of the process I articulated some principles, which would frame the various experiments and dialogues undertaken throughout the development of the work:

1. TWO OR MORE IDENTITIES OR ENTITIES IN DIALOGUE.
2. CONSIDERED CONTEXT AND SITE (SITUATION) IN WHICH THIS DIALOGUE TAKES PLACE.
3. PHYSICAL ACTION OR OBSTACLE TO BE DEALT WITH IN PARALLEL TO VERBAL DIALOGUE.

I then titled each part of the work, which I began to imagine as a series:

SHIPS AND SHELTERS
SONG FOR WHALE
DANCES WITH WATER
PERSPECTIVES

In Ships and Shelters, fellow choreographer Saga Sigurðardóttir and I initially performed a series of actions and dialogues. We underwent several experiments within the gymnasium mat folded in on itself. Within this structure we spoke to each other whilst reconfiguring the mat from the inside out. We would push, pull, slide, work with and against each other, open the mat up, close the mat down, travel from point A to point B, struggle and rest. The space in which we inhabited informed both our actions and dialogue.

This part of the work started as a dialogue between us (a woman and a man) in a confined space. As a result of this one of the problems we repeatedly came across was that the encounters tended to be centered on readings of hegemonic couplings and power dynamic associations between men and women, despite our efforts to subvert them.

In recent developments of this part of the work, the structure has opened up to include more performers. Ships and Shelters is becoming a work for a group of people of different backgrounds, ages and experiences.

It is hoped that by expanding this structure to include more combinations of voices, bodies and histories, the work will be able to go deeper into the nuances of how different beings come together and negotiate space.

In the next part of the work Song for Whale, a human chorus sings to whales in the tune of The Beatles song I Want to Hold

SIGNIFICANT *encounters*

WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

† The Beatles VEVO. "The Beatles - I Want To Hold Your Hand - Performed Live On The Ed Sullivan Show 2/9/64." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jen-WdyITzs>. YouTube 7 April 2016. Web. 28 April 2018.

Your Hand', however the original lyrics are substituted with new ones, reflecting some of the big questions mentioned above:

"CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING?
IF SO, WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?
CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING?
IF NOT, WHAT CAN WE THINK ABOUT?
WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?
WHAT CAN WE THINK ABOUT?"

Song for Whale was originally recorded with an audience at Reykjavik Living Art Museum in April, 2018. The frequency range of the song was then modified, to move closer toward typical whale hearing ranges (often much lower frequencies). The idea was then that the recorded song could be transmitted to both the oceans surrounding Iceland and inside a swimming pool in Reykjavik. This part of the work became a call to whales, marine and animal life more broadly on what we can talk and think about together. In both cases the physical action for the human and whale participants was to be submerged in the waters both species inhabit, whilst tuning in to these traces of sound as a form of dialogue.

However through a little further research on the implications of transmitting sound to the ocean, I decided against this scenario. It became quite apparent that the ethical and technical milestones I would need to negotiate would probably not be worth the risks that the act implicates. In any case, this was the beginning of a speculative thought process, which asks how inter-species dialogue could occur in the future. Other artists such as Iceland-based Marina Rees, reflect further on these speculations and attempt to tune-in to marine life through musical compositions and sculptural works.²

Song for Whale has now become an immersive sound and bodywork primarily for humans to experience and reflect upon. By inviting people into the swimming pool, to dive deep in order to experience the song, they are asked to dive a little deeper into their own physicality in relation to water – one step closer to an empathetic physical encounter with marine life, or a tuning in to bodies in water.

Song for Whale led me to ask what other ways certain sensing or tuning dialogues could occur. Since I have been spending so much time in the water this past year practicing as a swimming instructor, it was a natural and intuitive next step to expand on the languages and dialogues of body experience in water. So the next part of the project that has come about is Dances with Water. In this part of the project I will work with the same group of performers mentioned earlier.

The starting point for Dances with Water was to embark on an embodied practice based on how whales, other marine life and

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humans move in water. We have already identified and developed a range of vocabularies, which distinguish our similarities and differences in movement. For example we believe that whales:

STORE THEIR BREATH FOR A VERY LONG TIME
USE UNDERWATER CLICKING AND CRYING NOISES TO
COMMUNICATE AND NAVIGATE
SLAP THE SURFACE OF THE WATER WITH THEIR TAILS TO
COMMUNICATE AND NAVIGATE
BREACH (JUMP OUT OF) WATER IN THE DIRECTION
THEY INTEND TO GO
TRAVEL PRIMARILY THROUGH AN UNDULATING MOVE-
MENT THROUGH THEIR SPINE

We have taken these principles quite literally and are attempting to embody and mimic them to our capacity. However we also realize that we don't have the same bodies and we don't swim under the same conditions. So at some point the swimming techniques that humans have developed come into dialogue with the attempted whale swimming movements.

PVE: Here come a storm of questions:

WHY THIS FASCINATION OR DESIRE TO
SPEAK WITH WHALES?
IS IT BASED ON A PARTICULAR SPECIES?
WHAT ABOUT OTHER MAMMALS?
WHO IS THE WE YOU REFER TO?
HUMANS, THE GROUP OF PERFORMERS, OR?

TD: I'm interested to speak with whales, but I'm not particularly interested in whales per say. Yes it could be other mammals, or animals, other species, other beings. The whale is one symbol, just as a gymnasium mat or a video camera are other symbols. When I say we, in this instance, I'm referring to humans as one kind of species (of which I'm identified) talking to another kind of species. It's all a matter of perspective – which is what I've named the next part of the work.

Perspectives is a video piece, which will be installed in the changing/locker rooms of the swimming pool. In Perspectives two women appear in a white room, equipped with video cameras. They speak about their personal lives, vulnerability, shame, confidence, subjectivity, objectification and Othering.

PVE: Why do they speak about these topics? How was their dialogue constructed? It's important for us, the audience, to know this and the context from which they're speaking.

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TD: I invited film and theatre director's Silja Hauksdóttir and Álfrún Örnólfsdóttir to collaborate on this work. I wanted to work with local artists who have developed visual practices and perspectives. Since I felt I already had a sense of rapport with Silja and Álfrún – they came quickly to mind. The dialogue was developed very quickly. We worked together for just a few hours. I asked them to have a conversation as if they both know and don't know one another. This was the basic instruction. We recorded a few takes, which were all improvised based on this instruction and the coming together of their personalities. I think the subjects which they spoke about reflected some of the challenging work they have both been doing in relation to the #metoo movement and the kind of personal and fervent topics that have been circulating in this context.

The conversation occurred while they pointed the camera at one another's face/the opposing camera – creating a mirroring of surveillance. The cycle was extended to the audience who watch in on this double-film of the two women, their cameras now pointing toward the gaze of the audience.

A OBSERVES B, B OBSERVES A, A AND B OBSERVE
C AND C OBSERVES A AND B.

³ Derrida, Jacques. Wills, David. 2002. *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Winter, 2002). The University of Chicago Press. p: 381.

As their dialogue unfolds, their physical action was to continually circle one another whilst maintaining the fixed-focus of the cameras. As a result Perspectives attempts to highlight complexities around perspective and gaze.³

PVE: And what about the specific choice of site: Sundhöllin. Swimming pools are specific to the surrounding neighborhoods in which they're situated but they are also global and can be found in most contexts right?

TD: Yes probably – except maybe war-torn countries or places where the culture of swimming publicly and revealing the body is frowned upon or even forbidden. So by using this as an example of a (perhaps naïvely conceived) “flexible” presentation context, we are already limiting presentation possibilities due to the accessibility of these works and contexts. I would like to think more on this...

PVE: So it seems to me you are questioning not only (staged) representation and dialogues as problematic material, but also the problem of performance (art) or events as culturally exclusive activities?

TD: Yes – this is part of what I'm working through. If I'm really

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⁴ Kim-Cohen, Seth. 2016. *Against Ambience and Other Essays*. Bloomsbury. p: 20.

dealing with deconstruction I need to be “transparent with regard to status and mechanics in the various structures within which [the work] operates.”⁴ This means being critically engaged with the contexts in which I place the work and consequently being aware of where the work is not being seen. I hope that by continually assessing potential performance contexts, future projects will find their way in between the gaps.

PVE: So why insist on situating the various tangents of this work in the swimming pool?

TD: The whole essence of this project is to create dialogues and the coming-together of things. It is as much about exploring what it means to have an encounter and how to be reflective in those processes, as it is about the specific encounters themselves. At the same time, I want to dismantle the way these things are represented – to illuminate fragilities and slippages in these constructions. The swimming pool is the perfect space to explore these constructions and slippages because pools are so many things – transitional spaces, sites of interaction and exchange. They are spaces, which somehow simulate and empathize with nature, yet paradoxically showcase the potential of human-construction. The swimming pool is a highly complex theatrical and semiotic space.⁵

⁵ Anderson, Axel. Ed. Brown, Christopher and Hirsch, Pam. 2014. *The Artifice of Modernity: Alienation by the Pool Side in the Cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni. The Cinema of the Swimming Pool*. p: 80.

PVE: I feel like we could speak much more about swimming pools and go on various other tangents but maybe it's a better idea to leave some space for the experience to occur. Perhaps following this new encounters will emerge.



WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

REVERSING A TOUCH-AVERSE WORLD: AN UN- FOLDING CHOREO- GRAPHY OF CARE, LISTENING AND *synchronicity*

Reversing a touch-averse world: an unfolding choreography of care, listening and synchronicity by tobias m. Draeger. A burning performance for paper

TOBIAS DRAEGER

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an invitation
free of the demand to do something.

an invitation
to spend time in another way,
in another environment.

a place
for confronting yourself.

where
overwhelmed and desensitized systems
can find a space of retreat.

here
you are allowed to belong to this time,
allowed to belong to this space.

given time
to settle in and down,
to listen
in deeper ways.

here
together and alone.

we each,
all of us,
alone together.

a place
of freedom
around yourself
to connect
to your intuitive thinking of care
and your critical but open being

where
you connect to yourself
to the group
to this moment
and this space.

an invitation to
feel accepted.

centering you
sensitizing you
to your individual needs to
the needs of the group to
the needs of the space to
the needs of our society

an invitation
to an alive space where the perfect amount and combination of tension and
integrity may exist:
tensegrity.

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¹ Coccozza, Paula, 2018. "No Hugging: are we living through a crisis of touch?". <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/mar/07/crisis-touch-hugging-mental-health-strokes-cuddles>. The Guardian. 7 March 2018. Web. 1 July 2018.

² Ibid. The Guardian.

REVERSING A TOUCH-AVERSE WORLD

"We are creating a touch-averse world"¹ argues Neuroscience professor and specialist in affective touch Francis McGlone. Examples of this can be found in all corners of contemporary life – from teachers and doctors hesitant to touch their students and patients, to you or I wary of patting the back of a stranger. According to a report by Age UK published in 2016, half a million people in the UK go five to six days without seeing or touching a soul. Walk through a park or beach today, and observe all the many people sat together alone. Each atomized by their cell phones and iPads. Refraining from touching each other, yet very busy with touching their screens.

Today, according to Paula Coccozza, there is a burgeoning touch industry in Europe, Australia and the US, "where professional cuddlers operate workshops, parties and one-to-one sessions to soothe the touch deprived".² Given this reality, Coccozza asks, is this "what a crisis of touch looks like? And if so, what do humans risk losing, if we lose touch?" My research, in large part, is concerned with how this touch-averse world can be met with practices and attitudes that can reverse it.

Drawing upon osteopathic, choreographic, social, caring and healing strategies, I have been experimenting for more than five years in this work as an artist and an osteopath, working on the role of touch in encounters between audience, performers and their environment. In my work, touch has been approached through the development of specific practices of listening, care and synchronicity, which coalesce to activate and encourage individual and group care, as well as an increased sensitivity, awareness and intimacy between the audience, the performers and the space.

Beyond the context of performance making, I have been equally as interested over the last five years to explore how this research practice, entitled "Quality of Touch", can be applied to different artistic, educational and institutional settings in their daily operations. In my work within these fields, I see a continued need for touch – as well the care, sensitivity, listening and synchronicity that it can bring about between people – to be recovered and actively re-introduced into the ways in which we are working together in these fields.

How can we create a touch rich world while maintaining our commitment to making our working and social environments safe and habitable from violence? It's my longing to create ways to deal with this question. As such my research encompasses a body of practices which each seek to engage and empower human beings to live in a world enriched by touch, while strengthening and maintaining a culture of consent where people have agency over their own bodies and how it is approached.

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THEIR

The word 'THEIR' is written in a large, bold, black serif font. To the right of the letters, there is a decorative, cursive signature in white that overlaps the letters. The signature appears to be a stylized version of the word 'THEIR' or a similar name, with fluid, looping lines.

WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

ISABELLA RODRIGUES GONÇALVES

i: no one

i never existed. when i was in my mother's belly, an extra mitosis occurred and i was made multiple. i was born in nineteen eighty nine, while chinese students protested in the streets of beijing. i was named isabella rodrigues gonçaves. rodrigues made me spanish and gonçaves portuguese. my passport says brazil.

i was already thousands.

this i was named isabella but it was almost nathalia. nathalia andreotti doná, who is said to be italian. i would always wonder who nathalia would be if i's parents hadn't chosen isabella. i likes to imagine her as an astronomer in the middle of atacama's desert, contemplating the stars.

i was isabella and nathalia. at the same time.

we were born and the mitosis never stopped.

we started to dance to became our older sister, and on the way we turned into butterflies. in our living room we performed to be eliana, carla, sheila, and alligator. with the sun we were a bull. from the east, a snake. at the same time, we were the moon. sometimes we were a fairy named bela, at the same time we were britney. at some point we were time and we kept on multiplying.

we were pina, klauss, rudolph, ígor, loie. we were clarice, bas, hsieh, chico and ana. we were sand and ocean. in the dance floor we were sweat and cachaça. at the same time, we were gravity.

we were rigor, boredom, idleness and androgyny. we expanded to be earthworm, wind, rain, spider and magic. we were misery and mystery. we were witchcraft and impossible actions. we were fall.

at the same time. we were love, resilience and contradiction. we were chaos, movement, sound and cosmos.

for a while we became feet, kidneys, saliva, bones, blood, heart, buceta, vulva and balls.

at the same time. we were failure, precariousness, tarot cards, body-mouth, corpo-boca. we were virus, contagion, infection, epidemic.

we were erva daninha, weed.

we were light and darkness. we were dust and void.

and we continue to be.

anything.

nothing.

i and we, at the same time.

THEIR BIOS

REBECCA SCOTT LORD

Rebecca Scott Lord is a mainly performance based artist from the United States, though she currently lives and works in Reykjavík, Iceland.

Rebecca's main interests are unearthing what have been normalized and sedimented by the patriarchy and going from there.

Her working method is to come up with a title first, then create the work around that, as has been the case with Dates with Dudes, Comedy is a Safe Space, and DJ Daddy Issues. Rebecca explores these topics using stand up comedy, live audience interaction, and the spoken word

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WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

SILJA HAUKSDÓTTIR

Silja Hauksdóttir is a writer and director from Reykjavík, Iceland. She has worked extensively in television and film after studying philosophy at the University of Iceland and film making at FAMU, Prague.

Silja directed her first feature film, *Dís*, in 2004. *Dís* was adapted from a best-selling novel, which Silja co-wrote. Silja also directed a well-reviewed documentary, *The Choir*. Silja has written and directed several comedy TV series and shows, among them *Ríkið*, *Stelpurnar* and *Ástríður*, which received the Icelandic Film and Television award.

Silja is currently finishing her MFA in Performing Arts at the Icelandic University of the Arts. Her final project is a collaborative #metoo inspired cabaret. Silja is also in pre-production of her second feature film; the mother/daughter drama, *Íslendingasögur* (working title), to be shot in the fall of 2018. Silja is a great admirer of mundane autobiographies, karaoke singing, and close personal confidential conversations (*trúnó* in Icelandic).

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THEIR BIOS

TIM DARBYSHIRE

Tim Darbyshire creates nuanced and expansive choreography and performance – drawing from visual, aural, spatial and tactile fields, whilst locating the body in the intersections. His work circulates between experimental practice, relational aesthetics, semiotics, architecture, site, body and object specificity. His projects tend to wrestle between deconstructive and subliminal tensions.

From an early age he has submerged himself in the architectures of theatre and the sensations of performance – sacred and transformational spaces.

Tim was introduced to performance as a child – joining his father in a rock musical production about schizophrenia, mimicking Michael Jackson and Elvis videos and attending dance schools such as 'Dancing for Fun'. These activities eventually led to formal dance education at Queensland University of Technology (2003), DanceWEB (Scholarship recipient in 2006 and 2009) and Formation d'artiste Chorégraphique at Centre National de Danse Contemporaine (France 2006-2007). In 2018 he is completing an MFA in Performing Arts at Lista-háskóli Íslands (Iceland University of the Arts).

Tim has worked with choreographers, directors and artists such as Vera Mantero (Portugal), Emmanuelle Huyhn (France), Nuno Bizarro (Portugal/France), Meg Stuart (USA/Germany), David Wampach (France), Marianne Baillot (France), Antonio Julio (Portugal), Christine de Smedt (Belgium), Eszter Salamon (Hungary/Germany) and Australian artists Shelley Lasica, Matthew Day, Belle Bassin, Brian Fuata, Agatha Gothe-Snape, Nicola Gunn and Nana Biluš Abaffy. He is a founding member of the international artistic collective Sweet and Tender Collaborations and has engaged in several associated residencies.

His recent works include *BUCKETS AND OTHER THINGS* (2009), *MORE OR LESS CONCRETE* (2012) and *STAMPEDE THE STAMPEDE* (2015). These works have been presented in Dance Massive Festival in Australia as well and in various contexts in Europe. His current projects are *TAINTED TITLE* and *SIGNIFICANT ENCOUNTERS*.

www.timdarbyshirestudio.com

TOBIAS DRAEGER

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Tobias M. Draeger (1981), originally from Germany, is a nomadic artist practicing across the boundaries of dance, physical theatre and osteopathy. His works often focuses on the physicality of both performer and audience, the manipulation of objects and materials, as well as the development of intuitional relations with and between audience members. His work is at once both playful and highly focused, as he experiments with practices and dramaturgies that invite the audience to pay attention and give focus to the aftermath of perceptions.

Tobias started dancing in his late twenties through collaborations with Quan Bui Ngoc/Les Ballets C de la B (VIE/BE) and Kopergieterey/Kabinet K. Since then, Tobias has also worked with with many directors and choreographers including Markus Schleinzer (AT), Claudia Heu (AT), Helena Waldmann (DE), Circus Company Overheadproject (DE), Mia Lawrence (DE / US), Hyoung Min Kim (Korea) and Kristel van Issum/T.R.A.S.H Dance theatre Company (NL). He has also appeared in various international theatrical and film productions. And in 2008, started his own choreographic work with his working collective company draeger u.Co..His works have been presented internationally in both Europe and South America.

His stage works include the "series of belonging": Daily Madness -Solo (2014), awarded Best German Dance Solo by Euro Scene Leipzig festival 2015; Besetzung - group piece (2016), Unter 4 Augen (2017), and We gonna be outside later (2018).

His outdoor works include Daily Madness - in the Latvian woods (2017); drumonster – duet in the Himalayan mountains (2014); and drumming island - duet at the azores (2015).

Tobias has received important mentorships from Dana Michel, Phillippe Quesne, Satu Herrala and Sodja Lotker during his time on the MFA Performing Arts programme at the Iceland University of the Arts, and initiated significant collaborations with professionals from medical, philosophical and circus backgrounds. These include, Erik Horsten, Mia Lawrence, Eva-Maria Kraft, Thomas Binder-Reisinger, Bauke Lievens and many more.

Beside his artistic practice, Tobias studied osteopathy at the International Academy of Osteopathy (IAO), and now teaches performance practice combined with osteopathic philosophy and methods within various workshop and university contexts. He has also brought this practice into his work as an 'outside eye' through his collaboration with New Circus Company, Agnese Bordjukova, Stefan Lasko and Markus Schneider.

WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT?

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THEIR WORK

SPECIAL *thanks*

More information on the programme can be found at www.masterinperformingarts.com or www.lhi.is/en.

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