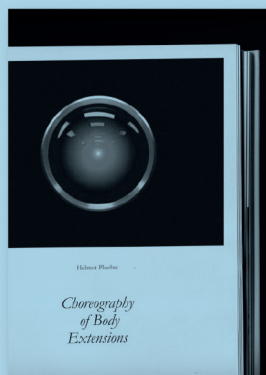


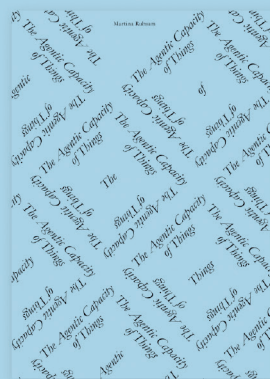
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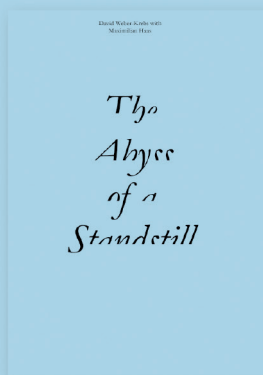
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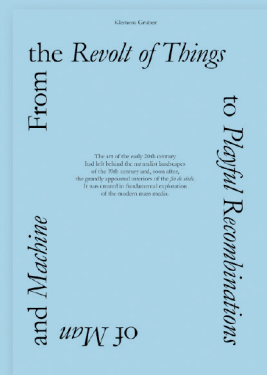
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# for

There is nothing in front of me.  
There is nothing behind me.  
There is nothing to my left.  
There is nothing between us.

There is nothing here.

There is nothing written on the wall, nothing behind the curtains, nothing scratched in the window. There is nothing pumping through the pipes, nothing emitting heat, nothing coming from the speakers. There is nothing blocking the doors.

There is nothing beyond the door.

There is nothing on the sofa in the foyer. There is nothing in the foyer. There is nothing in the elevator, nothing in the hallway. There is nothing on the steps of the staircase, nothing in the stairwell, nothing in the entrance hall. There is nothing in front of the building, no, on the front lawn.

There is nothing hidden in the two-car garage opposite that building. There is nothing gagged and tied up in the trunk of that Volkswagen, nothing wrapped up and zip-tied in a plastic bag. There is nothing trickling down from the shelves with the snow tires, nothing leaking through the cardboard boxes into the tool box or sticking to the shaft of the hammer. There is nothing rotting on the compost pile, nothing attracting flies in the water barrel, nothing buried underneath the daisies. There is nothing entangled in the thorns of the rosebushes, nothing stuck on the shovel, nothing underneath the heap of dried leaves or staining the gardening gloves or soaking the seed box. There is nothing hanging from the rusty nail or sticking to the side of the stone bench. There is nothing tucked away under the upturned wheelbarrow or concealed in the raised beds or strewn among the marigolds.

There is nothing floating in the fish pond, nothing the cat's running away with. There is nothing missing on the left hand, nothing the

# you

birds are pecking at, nothing hatching in the eye-socket or nothing the rats are burrowing into. There is nothing rummaging around in the sphincter. There is nothing nesting in the palate, nothing coming out of the mouth or crawling in the nose or falling out of the skull. There is nothing hanging from the shoulder joint, nothing frayed at the end of the knee or crushed in the foot. There is nothing oozing out of the cigarette burns, nothing flaking off the skin, missing from the upper jaw, black around the welts on the back, broken in the spine, crushed at the Adam's apple, perforated in the liver, shattered in the pelvis, splintered in the shin bone, cut from the tissue, torn from the elbow, sliced from the thigh muscle, pulled off the finger tips, rotting in the groin, pulled out from the scalp, pupating in the ears, yanked out of the oral cavity, crushed in the ribcage, perforating the lungs, ripped from the uterus.

There is nothing oozing out my hemorrhoids or puncturing my lungs or clouding my retina or proliferating in my vagina or bulging in my disks or obstructing my urinary tracts or growing in my gall bladder or enlarging my thyroid gland or clotting in my veins or bursting in my appendix or festering underneath my toe nails or discharging from my anus or sprawling in my testicles or dripping from my foreskin or calcifying in my knee caps or cirrhosing my liver or ulcerating my stomach or bleeding through my intestines or sprawling my spleen or swelling on my ovaries or destroying my bone marrow or contaminating my blood cells or cancerous in my prostate or infecting my gums or rotting in my teeth or sprouting on my tongue or blossoming on my lips.

There is nothing coming out of my mouth.  
There is nothing funny about my mouth.

There is nothing funny about coughing up blood. There is nothing funny about having diarrhea on a Mexican bus. There is nothing funny about a tampon without a string. There is nothing funny about a toothless prostitute, nothing funny about a cup of hot chocolate. There is nothing funny about an open door or an empty lunch box, nothing funny

# eyes

about watching paint dry on a wall or having shoe-size 50. There is nothing funny about using massage oil for foreplay. There is nothing funny about a singles holiday by coach. Nothing funny about a complete record collection or being pregnant after a one-night stand. There is nothing funny about a Fairtrade banana or a sad clown. Nothing funny about pantyhose that are too short or about being too fat. There is nothing funny about eating ice-cream in summer. There is nothing funny about cat videos. There is nothing funny about being alone. There is nothing funny about a miscarriage at 50 or getting a hard-on when you are 14 and you are being called to the blackboard by your math teacher. There is nothing funny about crucifixion. There is nothing funny about a skeleton walking into a bar, ordering a whiskey and a mop to clean up the mess. There is nothing funny about being secretly in love with your sister. There is nothing funny about a middle-aged man hanging out at a children's playground. There is nothing funny about blind people.

There is nothing funny about abducting a ten-year-old girl and locking her up in the basement until she is 18. There is nothing funny about Austria. There is nothing funny about being on vacation in Rotterdam. There is nothing funny about *coq au vin* in Beijing or the Pope in South America. There is nothing funny about being homosexual in Russia. There is nothing funny about the waiting rooms at the Gare de l'Est in Paris or the airport in Damascus. There is nothing funny about the parking lot next to the airport, nothing funny about a taxi pulling into the traffic. There is nothing funny about the mustache of the taxi driver. Or his name. Or the picture of his wife dangling from the rear-view mirror.

There is nothing blocking the highway into the city.  
There is nothing piled on the side of the road.  
There is nothing collapsing in the television tower.  
There is nothing exploding in the city center.  
There is nothing burning next to the presidential palace.

There is nothing smoldering among the car wrecks.  
There is nothing leaking out from the gas pipes.

# only

There is nothing pointing from the roof tops.  
There is nothing falling down from the apartment building.  
There is nothing smoking in the alleys.  
There is nothing blasting the assembly hall.  
There is nothing being bulldozed on the main square.

There is nothing making the headlines.

There is nothing to fight for.  
There is nothing to pray for.  
There is nothing to believe in.  
There is nothing to vote for.  
There is nothing to protect.  
There is nothing to look forward to.  
There is nothing to expect.  
There is nothing changing.

There is nothing going on in the city center.  
There is nothing taking place in Damascus.  
There is nothing happening in Syria.  
There is nothing coming about in the Middle East.  
There is nothing occurring in the eastern hemisphere.  
There is nothing unfolding in the world.  
There is nothing transpiring in the solar system.  
There is nothing befalling in the Milky Way.  
There is nothing coming to pass in the universe.

There is nothing left to see.

\*

This script was conceived by Peter Stamer and developed together with the performers Sybrig Dokter, Frank Willens, and Andreas Müller during rehearsals for the performance of *For Your Eyes Only* which premiered at the Tanzquartier Wien on 11 April 2012 as part of *SCORES No 5: CHÁOS*. The text is constantly being reworked, as is the piece.



*In this essay I will propose a new articulation of the reflection on things in performance, in direct connection with the perspective of the transformationist materialism. My hypothesis is the following: in order to exceed the hegemonic economy of performance capitalism, contemporary performance has to re-open the general economy of things, to re-form and re-compose their assembly. But what does »a thing« mean? And why should a thing perform? And what is a community of things? The question to start with: What do the things want?*

FROM  
SUBSTANTIAL  
TO  
POST-SUBSTANTIAL  
THING

*What are the things for philosophy?  
What is the Thing of philosophy?  
Things are not inert entities; they are not products. They are not objects either. They are concentrations of forces, where potential subjectivities nest.  
The one who bears the tumultuous desire of the things will have power over the future.  
The things are not bare things. They don't precede objects, neither subjects. They follow them as their posteriority. Their genealogy is extended but intense. The things are always young because their time is the time of the event.  
There are no archaic things.  
Things are not before the world or instead of the world.  
Things are against the world because they don't have worldly form. Things are formless because they are forces that perform. Things are bodies of desire which project in the shadow of the world the subjects that come back to them as memories from the future.  
Things are neither subjects nor objects. They are the new organs of desire, which are coming to us.*



Contemporary performances are possessed by things, by things that perform or that pretend to perform. In its turn, contemporary discourse on performance is seduced by the auratic presence of things, and it is being possessed itself by the belief that performance should be the space for this turn—aesthetic, philosophical, political—to be executed. However, the new discourse-invested performances are often exposed to the tangible risk of new banal representational expectations: to just put things in the performance or manipulate them doesn't mean to invent new forms of performance or of production of aesthetic or performance value, and even less to activate any sort of aesthetic or political subversion.

Nevertheless, the question of things is crucial for both theatre and philosophy: it is grounded in philosophical, aesthetic and political necessities. So, what is the more profound, *structural* reason of the appearance of the things?

I will claim that the question of things is crucial today first and utmost, paradoxically, as extension and radicalisation of the question of subjectivity, therefore of agencies and forces, thus radicalising also the political question of decision, of rupture and change. These questions should be approached in an emancipated way, extending and intensifying the very concepts of subject, object, and of their supposed correlation<sup>1</sup>. Therefore our task is to face things as agencies of complex simultaneous or hetero-simultaneous processes, processes, which we try to compose through our own, subjective at the end, activities<sup>2</sup>: we cannot exclude forces, dynamics and negativity from the world; we cannot reduce the poietic and transforming power of chaos, or cosmos.

Thus, transformationist materialism establishes the premises of understanding and experimenting with the *poietic* and auto-poietic potential of the things. There are no frozen things. The things are agencies—agencies, which lead to a transformation composed by forces, sets

of conditions. Thus our central question is the question of change, the question of movement, *metabolé*, and therefore the question of the dialectical connection of thing and process, of thing and change. In the perspective of transformationist materialism things are conceived as dynamic forms or forces. That is why things must be thought as elements of *dynamic ontologies*<sup>3</sup>.

I will claim here that if we could speak of a potential shift in contemporary performance production, it should be in the horizon of new dynamic ontologies. The new tendencies at stake are formulating through artistic means questions and experimenting with problems, simultaneous to the questions crucial for contemporary philosophy, science and politics: What is agency? What is process? What is change? What is decision? Or, what is the force of desire? *What is the desire of the things?*

Hence, this transformative-materialist turn comes not as a sequel, but as critical reformulation or even as sharp contrast to the relational and/or »social« turn of the previous decades: the dynamic demand of things is opposed to the performative connections in the age of networks. The obscure demand of things, demand of tumultuous forces and desires, insists against the hegemonic reality of *performance capitalism*<sup>4</sup>. Instead of focusing on »relationality«, or instrumental relations, today we must face the complex processes, complex agencies and operations, techniques and forms of production and organisation, the understanding of which only could make the transformation of the initial conditions possible. Instead of speaking of »simple«, substantial or quasi-substantial things and relations (both commodified as products), we need to formulate anew the question of agencies and subjectivities, therefore the question of conditions of transformation, division and therefore decision. These are the things at stake.

Through the structural observations of a series of important dance and performance pieces in the last two decades, I will propose a preliminary distinction of a few types of performative manipulation of *things*:

*Jérôme Bel's Nom donné par l'auteur, 1994:*

Formal-semantic manipulation of things by human performers, as well as subversion of their use-value of ›things‹ (materials, objects, instruments, products, machines), constituting performative plane where meaning and things are operating on the same scale: ›flat‹ ontology;

Mette Ingvarstsen's *Evaporated Landscapes* (2009) and *Artificial Nature Project* (2013):

Attempt to establish autonomous dispositive, where human bodies try to induce autonomy to objects and devices through contradictory operations, stimuli, ›instructions‹, in order to face their contingency of ›force‹ rather than things: polemic or ›stasis‹ ontology;

Lisa Hinterreithner & Jack Hauser's series *The Call of Things* (2014):

Creation of metabolic system, system of transformation and exchange—a complex dispositive of dynamic agencies, working with specific set of material conditions, in which the things cease being ›themselves‹, while becoming other—agencies, human-things, humans, other-than-things: *metabolic* ontology.



Bignia Wehrli, *Sternenschrift* (08.08.2012—14.8 km Tagesweg)

The interest in things is interest in *what it is*—therefore in becomings and in agencies. The Swiss visual artist Bignia Wehrli's recent work *Sternenschrift* presents a mysterious agency, which, through a complex technical device, creates exquisite and enigmatic »writing«. I will approach this work, conveying a *utopian* artistic proposal, as a powerful example for the proposed thesis.

Behind the visually appealing »surface« of this work with the enigmatic title we discover complex artistic operations—a sequence of technical agencies, media and material transformations which determine the effect, without reducing neither the process nor its outcome. Thus the outcome presents itself not simply as artistic product, but as a new semiotic-ontological entity: the writing of the stars. As if, undermining the frame of modern scientific worldview, Wehrli was returning to a millenary tradition, going back to Aristotle's *Meteorologica* and especially to his pupil Theophrastus' *The Book of Signs*, thus trying to *embody* the hyper-semiotic belief of premodern people in the symptomatic value of the *meteora*, the celestial phenomena, conceived as the enigmatic writing of transcendent and opaque forces. As if she creates a miraculous device to let the natural forces write their enigmatic runes, hieroglyphs or monstrous celestial system of signs again.

In the background of the complex media-transformative operation at stake there is a material substance, related to the spatial trajectory accomplished by a human body—an itinerary of work or choreography in/of *potentia*. Although this path appears as contingent to the external gaze, the author's presentation of the dispositive of *Sternenschrift* reveals a strong determination behind the quasi-contingent structures of the itinerary. The writing of the stars turn to be a »replica« of an itinerary

traced by GPS device: the itinerary of the father of the artist (an amateur-farmer, by profession physicist, therefore dealing himself with the core of the question of forces and things), enduring in agricultural work, the duration of which spans an entire working day, from morning to evening<sup>5</sup>. The human body appears as the invisible material mediator of the artistic operation. However, invisible in the celestial texture of the stellar writings, the body of the father appears as the *determined* agent, whose endurance as if provides the gravitational intensity, necessary for capturing the energy of the celestial agencies—the stars, and for focusing their stellar ink, their light in the complex pen-device, the writing device of the star: *Sternenschrift*.

Here or nowhere we could take the risk to claim that the created by Wehrli device, The Star-Pen, the Sternenschrift, making possible the Sternenschrift, marks a radical (post-Kantian or radically Kantian?) shift, namely the inversion of the position of the subjective agency: not the human reason but the imagining—creating images—star. The star that imagines its own extension as print through the newly established condition of its *aesthetic* autonomy. Thus the star acts as agency of perception, imperceptible action on the abyss of the sublime sleeping sky, of the maelstrom of the dark forces of the universe. On one hand the star is projected on the paper: its intensity, captured by the producing-autonomy device, is thus spilled out. But on the other hand, it absorbs, captures and prints on the dark and bottomless night skin of the sky the tattoo of a dark and invisible imperceptible from the height even of an earthly cloud body, the body of a walking man—the body of the physicist—farmer of Sternenberg, the Shore-of-the-stars. The anonymous star, the celestial force creates a celestial choreography, it writes movement in the sky, *chora*, and this movement establishes an enigmatic sign, but also a new astrological sign—it transforms the star in multiplicity, a multiplicity of an archaic monster, or miracle—of *thauma*. As if Wehrli's curious device was establishing a frame of activity for a cosmo-theatrical artifice of the performing-writing stars: a Cosmo-Theater, in which each star appears as singular thing and therefore agency, the agency of peculiar *écriture*, peculiar writing—unique color and unrepeatable rhythmic patterns, different

forms of concentration and attention, of presence. At the end, the operation at stake in Wehrli's performance-based visual artwork could be perceived as an outstanding example for a new type of artistic operation. Namely, artistic operation where the media are conceived as dynamic transformers, meant to inject autonomous agency and therefore autonomous *will* to an inanimate agent (or *patient*), thus opening a possibility for non-human actors to enter the stage of (aesthetic) production of meaning<sup>6</sup>. But in this operation the substance of the human body—the subjective consistency—is not erased. It becomes a thing *among* the things: a force in the maelstrom of cosmic forces, maelstrom of blind elements mixed with the all-seeing and penetrating the dark of the galaxies power of the affect. The invisible persistence of the walking human body (a would-be ›ordinary‹ object of aesthetic representation), through a series of miraculous media-transmissions, is not simply transposed on a cosmic plane, but becomes a dynamic schema-model for a Cosmo-Theater—a theatre where the contingent chaotic force-imagination of the elements is invited to act. However, this is not new quasi-alchemical operation, projecting naively the microcosm on the macrocosm. The imagination and the technical capacity, the *deinos* of the artist, effectuates the vertiginous transfer of agency of imagination and production—of productive imagination, of imagination producing images and signs—to the celestial phenomena, to the *meteora*, to the stars.

Thus, the writing of the stars, the *Sternenschrift*, appears as Theater of Miracles.



Bignia Wehrli, *Sternenschrift* (07.08.2012—10.0 km Tagesweg)

Theatre of the writing stars. They spill their microscopic light like a shiny ink, focused through the lenses of persisting through effort desire and technique.

The writing of the stars on the photographic paper is a miracle as every sign of force is.

Things are miracles because they are—but since they are, they desire, and they act.

The time for post-human theatre, theatre of limitless desire and unlimited subjectivation of things, has come.

1 In fact, recent critical proposals on the tendencies in contemporary dance and performance in question tried to connect them to a contemporary line in philosophy, the so-called »object-oriented ontology«, characterized by the attempt to oppose the Kantian idea for conformity of objects of knowledge to human mind, and therefore of existence and being, trying to undermine it by promoting the ontological equality of object relations. This notion doesn't describe a stable »school« but divergent proposals and authors with significantly divergent orientations, like the French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux (*Après la finitude*, Paris, Seuil, 2006), criticizing Kantian »correlationism«, associated retrospectively with this line, Graham Harman, the supposed inventor of the term »object-oriented ontology«, Timothy Morton, Levi Bryant and others, making complex philosophical proposals, exposed in the last years to the risk of somewhat reductive readings in the contemporary art fields.

2 Thus, the task to rethink things as complex agencies is at the centre of Bruno Latour's radical perspective. Cfr. Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes. Essai d'anthropologie symétrique*, Paris, La Découverte, 1991.

3 For more detailed elaboration of the concept of dynamic or transformative ontologies, cfr. Boyan Manchev, *L'altération du monde. Pour une esthétique radicale*, Paris, Lignes, 2009; Boyan Manchev, *a métamorphose et l'instant— Désorganisation de la vie*, Strasbourg, La Phocide, 2009.

4 On the notion of *performance capitalism* cfr. Boyan Manchev, »Transformance: The Body of Events«, in *It takes place when it doesn't*, Eds. M. Hochmuth, K. Kruschkova and G. Schöllhammer, Frankfurt am Main: Revolver Verlag, 2006.

5 »Jedes Jahr zwischen Juni und August ist mein Vater mit dem Heuen beschäftigt: er mäht die Wiesen, zettet das Gras, recht es zusammen und fährt die Heufuhren mit dem Ladewagen in die Scheune. Dabei berührt er beinahe jeden Quadratmeter Land. Im Sommer 2012 zeichnete ich mit einem GPS Gerät sieben seiner Tageswege von morgens bis abends auf. Mit einem Fotoapparat und dem speziell dafür entwickelten Instrument—dem Sternentstift—schrieb ich die vergangenen Wegspuren im Winter 2013 mit dem

Licht eines Sterns nach.« (Bignia Wehrli, *Sternenschrift*, Kunsthalle Winterthur, booklet, 2014).

6 The Finnish philosopher and theater director Esa Kirkkopelto published more than ten years ago *A manifesto for generalised anthropomorphism*, where he claimed: »Human hope lies behind all restricted anthropomorphism, behind everything that calls itself »humanism«. It lies in the decidedly non-human. (...) The phenomenon of human is the phenomenon of the stage, theatre the place of encounter for that phenomenon.« (Cfr. Esa Kirkkopelto, *A manifesto for generalised anthropomorphism*, in *Eurozine*, 2004-09-07).

\*  
Boyan Manchev's lecture *What Do the Things Want? Aesthetic Materialism and the Future of Performance* was presented as part of *SCORES No 9: no/things* on 26 November 2014 at the Tanzquartier Wien.

R E L  
A T I  
O N A  
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I E S

1 Boyan Manchev, »Der Widerstand des Tanzes«, Corpus, [www.corpusweb.net/der-widerstand-des-tanzes.html](http://www.corpusweb.net/der-widerstand-des-tanzes.html), (retrieved January 9, 2013; trans. Nicholas Grindell)

2 Margaret Wetherell describes the case of a dance epidemic that is supposed to have taken place in Strasbourg in 1518 and that can be read as an example of the affective, dancing body that will no longer be calm, see: Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion. A New Social Science Understanding* (London/Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), p. 5.

*The dancing body is a prototype in which power, freedom, resistance, fetish and identity meet and collide. But into these small and smallest movements of the body, a moment of deferral is inscribed, structurally, technically, perhaps even mentally. A missing stretch of time that is sometimes defined as empty, sometimes as overly full, but which now enjoys currency as the zone of affect in theory and praxis (from the art world to the laboratories of the pharmaceutical and consciousness industries). With this in mind, the moving structure of »choreographing things« can be described as a diagram within which motion, shifting, moved and moving bodies are kept in a state of suspension, shifted around and repeated by the force of translation.*

»Today«, writes philosopher Boyan Manchev, »we are witnessing a gigantic transformation in which the fate of the world is at stake, and dance is at the epicenter of this transformation: it is a symptom, an exemplary consequence«. <sup>1</sup> How is it that philosophers today claim to identify changes taking place in the world by looking at dance? How is it that philosophy is now discovering (or rediscovering) the dancing body, after a long period when it was often cited by philosophers and historians as the epitome of transgression and symbolic withdrawal? <sup>2</sup> Manchev's main point here is that no critique is possible as long as it makes use of language or understands itself as discursive. Instead, mind and body must come together to enable resistance—resistance understood as a mode of existence.

## AFFECTIVE MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

Up the present, technical and living processes have developed separately. Until far into the 20th century, life and technology trod separate paths and were also kept separate in the field of theory. But media analyses such as that delivered by Donna Haraway in the early 1980s, which have been developed on since by N. Katherine Hayles, Alexander Galloway/Eugene Thacker and others, agree that media can no longer be defined as prostheses which amplify the senses, but that instead, they have attained a new immersive dimension, that they replace our senses, that they also make our senses more intense and more subjective, more intimate and more technical, that perception, memory and affect become a matter of technical modalities. With the cyborg, Haraway introduced a notion intended to render life's reliance on technology conceivable and theoretically graspable. Compared with the period of the »Cyborg Manifesto« in the mid-1980s, the ubiquity of technology has become many times greater: the net has, as Gallagher and Thacker write, become something elementary—an invisible, all-encompassing precondition for societal, social and mental processes.

Neo-cybernetic approaches today revolve around a question already addressed by George Canguilhem in his essay »Machine

3 Cf. Canguilhem, George, »Machine and Organism«, trans. Mark Cohen/Randall Cherry, in: Cary, Jonathan/Kwinter, Sanford (ed.), *Incorporations*, New York 1992, 45–69.

4 Cf. Parikka, Jussi, *Insect Media. An Archaeology of Animals and Technology*, Minneapolis/London 2010.

and Organism«, where he advocates an understanding of technology as a universal biological phenomenon. In 1946–47, when Canguilhem was giving his lecture, he concluded by saying that for some years now, tests had been underway—at MIT under the name bionics—to research biological models and structures that could be used as models in technology. »Bionics is the extremely subtle art of information,« writes Canguilhem, »that has taken a leaf from natural life.«<sup>3</sup> Today, media are put on a level with insects, rays, instincts, stimuli and reflexes,<sup>4</sup> theories of imitation from the animal kingdom are transferred to the political and social crowd and swarm formations by humans. Not that comparisons between the animal and human worlds are anything particularly novel; what is new is the fact that today they are meant seriously, that the anthropological supremacy of the human is no longer capable of upholding itself in the current technical-organic overall structure.

It is no coincidence, then, that media and cultural studies have shown increased interest over recent years in fields and practices that have always dealt with a combination of body and movement, such as dance. As well as this striking interest in dance on the part of media and theory, dancers and choreographers are looking to theory and technology for fresh stimuli.

*One Flat Thing reproduced* by William Forsythe is a dance project which premiered in Frankfurt in 2000 and which provided the basis for a dance notation developed by Forsythe in cooperation with Maria Palazzi and Norah Zuniga Shaw. This notation is accessible in an online version<sup>5</sup> and it offers interesting insights into the movements of the dancers' bodies, the paths and loops of their communication, their signal structures and gestures, the compression of their movements, and the volume of their bodies in motion. A basic element guiding dance movements consists of the so-called »cues« given by the dancers in order to be able to react to one another, pointers we as observers are usually unable to perceive because they are so minimal and exchanged so fast that the dancers' bodies appear to react intuitively—as if in a trance, they capture the movements of the other bodies that control their own.

The topics emerging in this context are subliminal perception, direct and non-sensuous feeling, and micro-perception.

All of these themes referring to the process philosophy of Alfred N. Whitehead, which has acquired a topical significance as a way of theoretically tackling sensations and perceptions without consciousness and subject. Whitehead defines physical perception as always emotional, calling it a »blind emotion« that is »received as felt elsewhere in another occasion«.<sup>6</sup> This involves not an accumulation of data but always a data relationship. The perceiving subject does not pre-exist the perceived world, but emerges

through and in the process of perception: »feeling is subjectively rooted in the immediacy of the present occasion, it is what the present situation feels for itself, as derived from the past and as merging into the future«.<sup>7</sup>

For Whitehead everything is a subject, there are no mere objects. At the end of the perceptive process stands the »superject« that generates itself out of data received from the senses. In contrast to Kant, for whom experience also begins with affected contemplation that sets the activity of reason in motion, Whitehead assumes that consciousness is a negligible aspect of subjective experience. As constant perception, experience takes place for the most part below the threshold of consciousness, as the physical sensation that precedes every subject. In this »theory of sensation« the subject as superject is »the purpose of the process originating the feelings«.<sup>8</sup> This process of subject generation centers neither on language nor on the subject, but on (physical) sensation, on (always already abstract) prehension or grasping, and on processes of affection by which matter becomes form and form becomes data.



## FROM A NOT-YET-MOVEMENT TO SMALL AND SWIFTEST MOVEMENTS

Unlike René Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz denied that the mind was always active, insisting instead that there were moments and stretches of time during which consciousness registers (perception), but without conscious perception (apperception) of such overly small movements. According to Leibniz, consciousness as understood by Descartes and his followers always necessarily misses something, as something is always happening but not everything passes the threshold of conscious perception. With Spinoza, Deleuze explains the affectivity of the body by saying that each body defines itself by its length and breadth, by its longitude and latitude of power. The length of a body here refers to ratios of rapidity and slowness, of rest and motion between its particles, while its width comprises the sum of its affects, all of its intensive states.<sup>9</sup>

Leibniz uses the monad as the smallest particle, representing the universe. As every monad supposedly expresses the totality of the universe, it follows that the universe is expressed in a gradually complete sense. This means that not everything is expressed in the same way, but on a scale of conscious to unconscious, from clear to less clear perceptions. One often-quoted example of this is Leibniz's description of the sound of the sea, which he says we only hear because we hear each single wave, which we hear in turn only because we hear every single drop of water. But it is clear, Leibniz explains, that no ear can really hear this.

10 See: Christopher Kely and Hannah Landecker, »Das Schauspiel der Zelle. Unsterblichkeit, Apoptose, Apoptose.« in: Marie-Laure Angerer, Kathrin Peters, Zoe Sofoulis, eds., *Future\_Bodies. Zur Visualisierung von Körpern in Science und Fiction*, Vienna/New York: Springer, 2002, p. 21–47.

11 Daniel N. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant. A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*, New York: Basic Books, 1985, p. 37–68.

From the mid-19th century, these small movements—sensations—started to be measured, produced under experimental conditions in laboratories, captured and recorded using early forms of photography, as mentioned earlier. And then, with the advent of film around the turn of the century, it became possible not only to intervene in the recording of movement (as life), but also to bring it to life as something existing in time, as a temporal sequence of images.<sup>10</sup> These media techniques (of recording and playback) convey the movement of the living as something living, presenting it as permanent delay, as something always already deferred, although visually transparent. This is a procedure that can be mapped onto an existential life praxis that installs the delay in time (of life) as the space of the now—as a sequence of intervals.

## AFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

When media art began to be widespread in the 1990s, interest grew in the interface as the link between humans and machines. Immersion in virtual worlds was often compared with the early stages of infant development where the lines of orientation and distinction have not yet been clearly drawn. As well as Deleuze and Bergson, Daniel Stern's approach was much discussed in this context. According to Stern, subjectivity develops out of a transsubjective character, emerging from the body's zones of intensity as the overlapping of »sharable« and »non-sharable affects«.<sup>11</sup> Later, Stern's interest increasingly shifted to

the moment of the »now«. And it might be considered as no coincidence that Stern's more recent analyses of this present moment name a specific time: the present moment lasts between one and ten seconds. Why one to ten seconds, Stern asks himself, what happens in this time, what eludes us in this interval? Stern now also argues that we are only capable of perceiving larger units: »We are bombarded with almost constant sequences of such small units. If we considered each such perceptual unit as a potentially important and meaningful event requiring attention and awareness, it would be like continually being under the fire of a machine gun. These sequences must get chunked into larger units more suited to adaptation«. <sup>12</sup> Stern even goes on to explain how each holistic happening of the present moment can be broken down into component parts (affects, cognitions, a sequence of actions, perceptions, sensations) but that for the individual it constitutes a whole that is temporally dynamic. He calls these dynamic time-shapes »vitality affects«, described using terms such as accelerating, fading, exploding, unstable, tentative, or forceful. Stern further explains that these micro-temporal dynamics, what he calls the »temporal contours of stimulation«, play upon and within our nervous system and are transposed into »contours of feelings« within us. <sup>13</sup>

This description certainly corresponds with the »hard« facts offered by neuro-science when it assumes that consciousness is based on affect, making it impossible to grasp fully in terms of cognitive faculties alone. These affective layers are

defined as subcortical structures that are active long before any consciousness, making consciousness appear as something far more widespread, not limited to human consciousness. Cognitive psychologist Jaak Panksepp thus argues that »we should remain open to the possibility that the fundamental ability of neural tissue to elaborate primary-process forms of affective experience evolved long before human brain evolution allowed us to think and to talk about such things«. <sup>14</sup> And biochemist Nick Lane insists that even if feelings are physical, they are not material, but merely a neural construct: »But if feelings are no more than neurons doing their thing, why do they seem so real, why are they so real? [...] because they have real meaning, meaning that has been acquired in the crucible of selection, meaning that comes from real life, real death«. <sup>15</sup>

Susanne Langer, a student of Cassirer and Whitehead, is one of the recently rediscovered philosophers who anticipated the »affective turn« by formulating a critique of what they saw as a misunderstanding of philosophy of language, defining the language of the arts, especially that of music and dance, as forms that are not discursive but presentative. Whereas Russell, Carnap, Frege, and Wittgenstein understood the logical beyond of the unspeakable as a sphere of subjective experience, assigning it to psychology and no longer considering as part of the realm of the semantic, Langer took a radically different position. Borrowing from Cassirer, she introduced a concept of the symbolic that also includes what is generally understood as the »affective

gesture« or expressive articulation of emotion. In Langer's view, then, there is a world that does not exist outside of the physical world or beyond time and space, but which nonetheless does not fit in any grammatical scheme of expression. In the spirit of Whitehead, she therefore insists that »an object is not a datum, but a form construed by the sensitive and intelligent organ, a form which is at once an experienced individual thing and a symbol for the concept of it, for this sort of thing«.16 For Langer, this bundling and recognition of patterns is an innate ability that she sees as the root of our entire capacity for abstraction and »which in turn is the keynote of rationality; so it appears that the conditions for rationality lie deep in our pure animal experience—in our power of perceiving, in the elementary functions of our eyes and ears and fingers. Mental life begins with our mere physiological constitution«.17

## CONCLUSION

If sensory perception of the world takes place prior to all consciousness, one might ask, finally, what this »prior to consciousness« means—is it an unconscious or rather a non-conscious? Who is dancing when dancers dance? Who is moving when bodies process stimuli? For Freud, the notion of the drive was a transitional concept bridging the divide between the somatic and the mental. I think that today, for various reasons, it is possible to replace the notion of the drive with that of affect to

obtain a similarly transitional concept. But as I explain in my theory of the affective dispositif, this concept is one that no longer follows the movement of desire (for the Other) but which, with a focus on movement, interval, and plasticity, leads to surprising parallels (synchronizations) between the socio-political and the somatic.<sup>18</sup> In this context, the »not-yet-movement« of affect often mentioned here can be understood as a form of auto-affection,<sup>19</sup> as self-moving in the sense of a first difference (to be moved by motion). Against this background, brains, bodies, dancers, crowds, and even financial markets can be understood as fields of movement with different timings. This auto-affection is not a question of consciousness, but is deeply connected with the un- or non-conscious, making it all the more necessary to link it with the consequences of the cerebral unconscious as introduced by Malabou. As already mentioned, the cerebral unconscious is one in time—more than this, it is time. This unconsciousness or now non-conscious is no longer produced by and through language (as seen in psychoanalysis), but through movement and its intervals: real movement, smaller movements, or »embodied simulation«, as described in neuroscience today. This shift not only makes it possible to draw parallels as described above, but also points to new forms of relatedness—towards the self and to others (including non-humans). There is increasingly strong evidence of an affective mode of existence focusing on the use of media technologies (of control and surveillance). Brain scans, Google Glass and smart gadgets for home and travel promise constant

updates on one's own personal mood status in an environment that is algorithmically rendered transparent to a similar degree. This means that the great interest in dance and the findings of neuroscience really is due to an inkling that body and brain now find themselves bracketed together in a new category that would like to encompass both the smallest and the biggest movement.

Translation by Nicolas Grindell



\*  
Marie-Luise Angerer's lecture *Relationalities* was  
presented as part of *SCORES No 9: no/things* on 29 November 2014 at the  
Tanzquartier Wien.

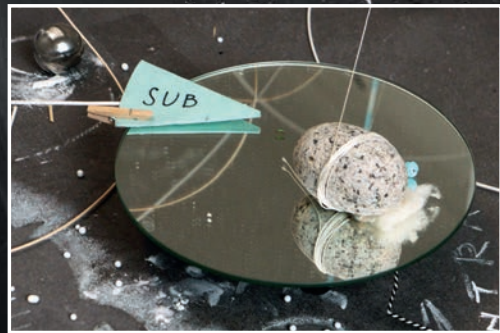
Nikolaus Gansterer & Erin Manning

# TRANSLECTURES

*or how to interpret  
one reality  
through another?*

Nikolaus Gansterer's lecture performance *Thinking Matters Other Others: A Translecture* was presented on 28 November 2014 at the Tanzquartier Wien as part of SCORES No 9: *no/things*.

If choreography is the essential inscription of movements in time and space how can we draw maps, diagrams and scores of these forces that make matter move between inner and outer realities? What language, alphabet and sign system do we have to invent in order to articulate these elusive and vibrant interspaces?

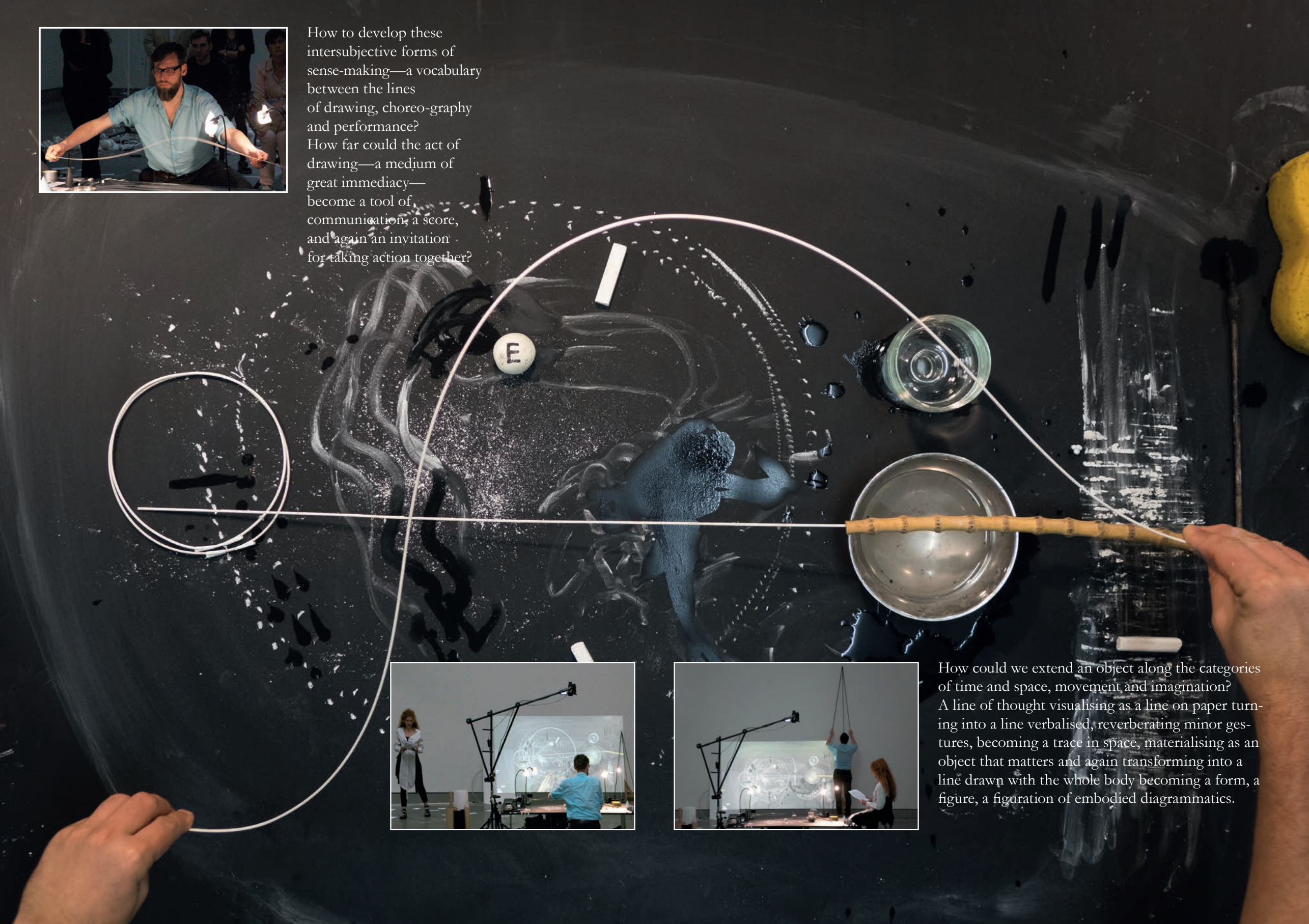


Translectures are performative translations. They are invitations to transform one reality into another to co-create a mutual *translationscape*—an autopoietic ecology.



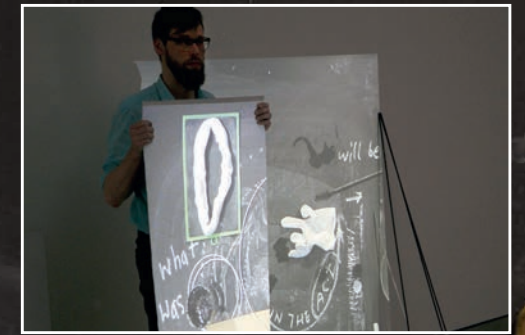


How to develop these intersubjective forms of sense-making—a vocabulary between the lines of drawing, choreo-graphy and performance? How far could the act of drawing—a medium of great immediacy—become a tool of communication, a score, and again an invitation for taking action together?

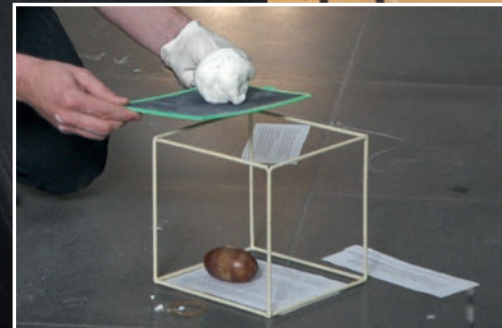
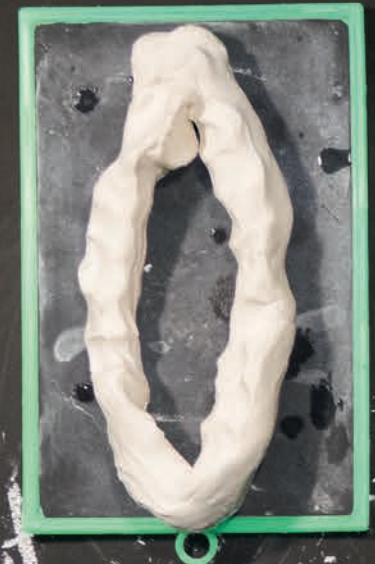


How could we extend an object along the categories of time and space, movement and imagination? A line of thought visualising as a line on paper turning into a line verbalised, reverberating minor gestures, becoming a trace in space, materialising as an object that matters and again transforming into a line drawn with the whole body becoming a form, a figure, a figuration of embodied diagrammatics.

The object is the abeyance  
— the feeling-form  
(a form felt more than actualized)  
that cannot be separated  
out from the milieu,  
from the field that it co-activates.  
The object, like the subject is never it-self.

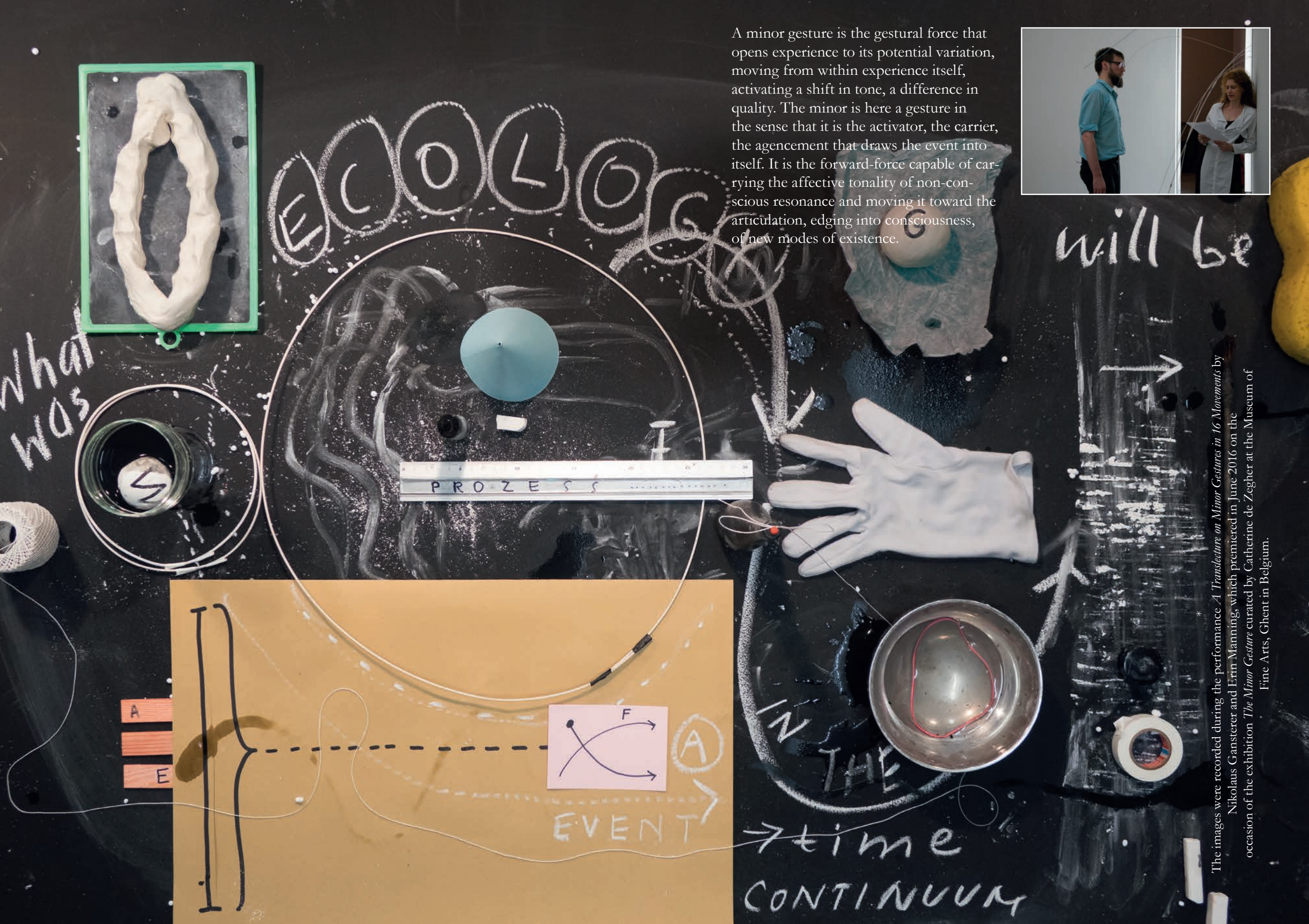


What was



Could we call these  
emergent and immersive  
minor gestures  
*objects yet to become?*





A minor gesture is the gestural force that opens experience to its potential variation, moving from within experience itself, activating a shift in tone, a difference in quality. The minor is here a gesture in the sense that it is the activator, the carrier, the agencement that draws the event into itself. It is the forward-force capable of carrying the affective tonality of non-conscious resonance and moving it toward the articulation, edging into consciousness, of new modes of existence.



The images were recorded during the performance *A Transcure on Minor Gestures in 16 Movements* by Nikolaus Gansterer and Erin Manning, which premiered in June 2016 on the occasion of the exhibition *The Minor Gesture* curated by Catherine de Zegher at the Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent in Belgium.



## 1. Problem

Postmodern societies of no matter what kind of cultural identity are producing a hyperactive global environment of artificial, material and immaterial body extensions. Throughout its history, the human body has been colonised by its own extensions, by an artificial environment and its disembodied organisation. Actually a lot is talked about this phenomenon nowadays, but at the same time there has been no persuasive analysis of it.

## 2. Research

For two years now I have been investigating this topic in depth, and in the following I would like to offer an abridged version of my initial script for a lecture at the Tanzquartier Wien, held on 26 November, 2014.

## 3. Initial references

In 1964, Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan published his influential book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. In it he developed a concept of media that implies the expansion of the traditional notion of media in a radical way: First, McLuhan understood that the form of each medium is of prior importance to its content. And second, he assumed that not only books, papers, radio or TV have to be understood as media, but also for example wheels, weapons, roads or games.

Twenty years later the Chilean biologist and philosopher Humberto Maturana formulated his concept of *autopoiesis* (a term he had already introduced in 1972) in his book *The Tree of Knowledge: Biological Basis of Human Understanding* (together with his student Francisco Varela). An autopoietic system, according to Maturana, is a system that is capable of (re)producing and maintaining itself, as the biological cell does, for example.

And as the communication system does, according to German sociologist Niklas Luhmann who, also in the so-called Orwell's year, 1984, published his first major work, *Social Systems*. Luhmann adapted Maturana's term autopoiesis for his analysis of societies: he recognised their ability to produce and maintain themselves in social subsystems. One of Luhmann's most popular sentences is: »It is not human beings who can communicate, rather, only communication can communicate.«



Helmut Ploebst

*Choreography  
of Body  
Extensions*

In the following year, the US biologist Donna Haraway published her famous *Cyborg Manifesto*, republished 1991 in the book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Here the reader encounters the conflict between a discourse that tests the idea that there is no distinction between natural life and artificial man-made machines — in our understanding; between the biological body and its (material) extensions and apparatuses of discourse as (immaterial) extensions of the body.

## THE EXTENDED BODY

### 1.

The body as *the extensified*: I would like to propose a radically expanded concept of the human body — as a trinity of 1. its *extensified* [Ger.: *Extensat*] as material anatomy, of 2. its organisational *extensifiers* [Ger.: *Extensanten*], and 3. of its material and immaterial *extensions* [Ger.: *Extensionen*]. The anthropogenic »environment« of the human body is produced by social extensifiers and artificial extensions. The *extensified* is a subsystem of the biological system, which in itself is *full of biologically autopoietic extensive relations*. A few examples: the bee appears as extension of certain plants in their reproduction process; the nest is an extension of the bird; and individuals in a swarm are extensions of each other.

With reference to the human body as *extensified*, one could ask whether this body in its biological construction only has *emanative* artificial extensions or if it also has *immanent* biological ones. So, with regard to the material and anatomical body, it is seductive to strive for the bodies' *immanence* of non-artificial extensions. Here one might get caught, for example, by the question of whether, for the foetus in a woman's womb, the mothers' body would represent an extension.

This leads to the question of whether the foetus could be seen less as a part of the expectant mother and more as a part of the biological system for which the reproduc-

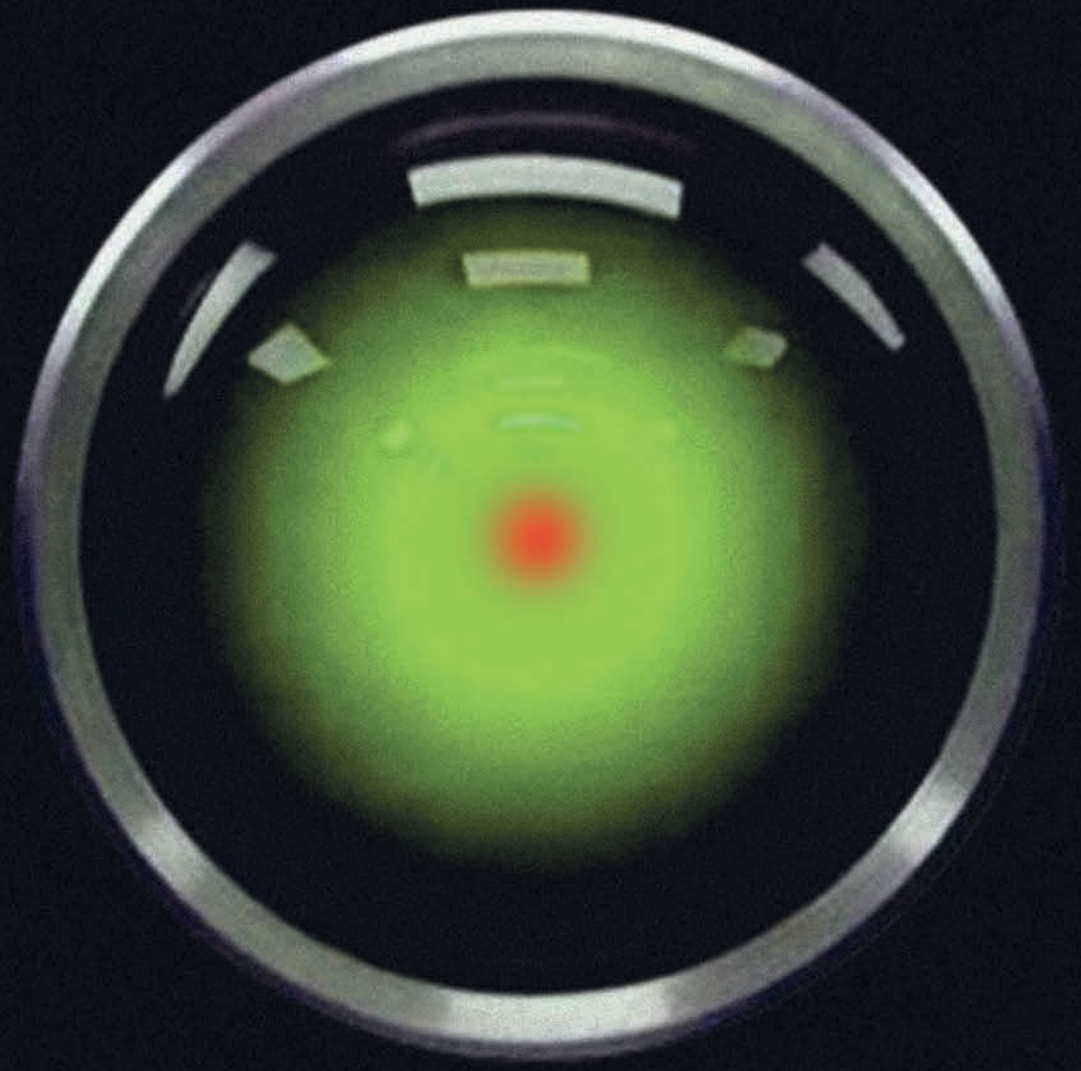
ing and the reproduced bodies serve as »media«. From such a biological perspective, the female ovum and the masculine sperm bring together the genetic information of the evolutive human species as carried in the cells of the expectant mother and father. From this point of view, mother, father and foetus can be understood as medial operators of the human species' evolution.

Politically this may act as a problematic signifier, because *biologist ideologies* have been projected onto the biological system, and their abusiveness is part of our culture. Here one can get a notion of (*immaterial*) *body extensifiers* that are called »discourses« — as *processes organising and producing immaterial discursive apparatuses* such as ideas. »Ideas« are permanently challenged by »ideologisation« (the strategy of making use of discourses for power operations).

### 2.

Tools, the *extension complex*: Two major models constitutive for man's existence have to be activated in order to observe the extensional dynamics of the body on the social level.

The first is a model of *humankind's history*. In this respect we have to briefly look at a systemic stream that the human species has inherited: the stream of »biological sociality«, which is crucial for all human development. Long before that, several *interacting chemical elements* produced what we recognise as the *material environment of nature*. Within this environment specific *interactions* of more complex elements then produced a *biological system*. This *biological system* became more than just a complex of certain dynamics of physical forces and chemical reactions within their environment. It is definitely based on the transport, exchange and processing of *material information* in an autopoietic dynamic: this dynamic is the origin of the *stream of biological sociality*, or relational evolution, that produced diverse forms of »living matter«: microbes, plants, algae, lichens, fungi, and all animals. The human microbiome is so to say the heritage of this development, hosted by every single body.



The *social principle* is a *heritage of translations within the evolutionary process*, and the *basis for the (social) communication system* that has organised humankind until now. This *communication system* then has been constitutional for the specific human *social system*, so it is the second model to be activated for the investigation here. In a certain period of humankind's evolution something happened which in its specific form seems to be a singularity, and which in the Bible is metaphorically described as the eating of the fruit from the tree of knowledge: it was a *flash in the flesh* activating the *ignition of cognition*. Correlating with this ignition, a radical and rapid *evolution of material body extensions* in the form of *tools* began.

One can find a parable for this ignition and evolution in one of the most famous passages of Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. With this passage Kubrick elegantly introduces an artistic idea about the origin of the instrumental body extension (the bone) up to its—for the public already present and expected future—technological sophistication (the spaceship). And with his black, hairy simians, he shows the *social system* as the *major extensifier of the body* under the principle, as Sigmund Freud suggested, of *eros* and *thanatos*. Additionally, Kubrick presents an enigma (the monolith) splendidly as an *object*. This is the »objecti(vi)sation« of the *flash in the flesh*, leading to what we call cognition.

In *2001: A Space Odyssey* we find traces of and formulations for an absolutely stunning autopoietic experiment of *evolution*. Here, mankind as a species appears as *medium for the transformation of its extensions (tools)* into a specific form of entity that couldn't come into existence without the agency and organisation of *human technology as a body extensifier*. In this Donna Haraway found her discursive apparatuses. And Kubrick introduces Hal, the »dernier cri« of a bodiless artificial intelligence.

To conduct a contemporary reading of the *final part* of *2001: A Space Odyssey* with the title »Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite« we may look back to the first passage: it is the influence of the monolith on earth which in the plot of the film »inspires« early humans dancing around this black object to discover the first material body extension:

the bone as a tool and a weapon. We may therefore understand the *monolith's effect* as allegory of the *ignition of cognition*, and with this the *ignition of the extensifier* as such. As a consequence, the protagonist astronaut, drawn into a space that the monolith creates, experiences what we nowadays call »virtual reality«.

We understand that, as a projection, in an artificial virtual reality — which is a maximum extension — basically everything is possible. Interesting for our investigation here is the fact that in 1969, one year after *2001: A Space Odyssey* came out, the US Ministry of Defense inaugurated the *Arpanet*, the predecessor of today's Internet. And with the *Internet*, virtual reality in its artificial technological form became part of the human media environment of extensions.

*Everybody*, so to say, saw Kubrick's film after 1968, the year when an almost worldwide protest movement started, and *2001: A Space Odyssey* became an iconic film. Back then, discourses of psychology were en vogue, and so the chapter »Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite« was just seen as a psychedelic spectacle. The film was also highly influential for the leftist ideology of the 1980s, being projected onto the possibilities of the computer and the great future of digital information for everybody—for every *body*—via the Internet.

Brief conclusion: Over time, the *ignitive* inspiration for the first tool, the first body extension, was followed by an *explosive* expansion of technological and media body extensions, by more refined tools and weapons, from clothing, shelters, and houses, domesticated animals, the invention of the wheel, roads and ships to the steam engine, the train, the airplane, the telegraph, electric light, the modern armoury, industrial products, the telephone, radio, television, medical equipment, the atomic bomb, robots, space rockets, satellites, the computer, the robot and the World Wide Web.

This leads to the following axioms:

- a Nothing ever *produced* by humans is not an *extension* of the human body.
- b Nothing ever *organised* by humans is not an *extensifier* of the human body.

3.

Organisation, the *extensifier complex*: With the help of a small glossary I will try to sketch out organisation as part of the extended body.

*Immateriality*

No social constellation works without organisation, and any production and use of everything artificial has to be organised. Intentional organisation thus appears as the major *body-extensifying system*. It is a *subsystem of social communication*, and it is a system that *enables the production of material body extensions* as well as the structuring of any community or society, which are organisations, and thus forms of *immaterial body extensions*.

*Autopoiesis*

Everything organised by human will and intention is organised within an overall *autopoietic system* that includes all the possibilities and impossibilities that can happen or appear. The autopoietic system is *a priori* unintentional, but through this it opens potentials for intention.

*Context*

Nothing that exists is separable from its *context*, not the earth from the stars, not the plants from water, not the bird from the air, not the human from sociality— and everything that exists is driven in permanent dynamics. In the second axiom we face a huge philosophical topic: there is an *ideological* friction between *autopoiesis* and *poiesis*, or, not synonymous as Humberto Maturana insists, *self-organisation* and *intended organisation*.

*Telos*

The system of human organisation in general is a *teleological* system, which means that almost every organisational unit in it performs as if driven by a plan and a goal. Its logical structure is therefore defined by the antagonists' success and failure. *Intentional poietic organisation* means the projection of what is to be achieved into a future. *Unintentional autopoietic processes* work the other way around — things happen, and the consequences have impacts on the context, making further things happen, and so on.

4.

The invaded body: The trinity relation between the body as the extensified, its extensifier complex (processes of organisation), and its material/immaterial extensions (tools and institutional organisation/community/society) has now been made clear. Encouraged by Donna Haraway's refusal to make a distinction between natural life and artificial man-made-machines, I propose going another step further and emphasising what's obvious: as there would be no tool and no organisation without the human body, the extensifiers and extensions appear as *inseparably connected* to this material and social body. This leads to the conclusion that the bodies' extensifiers and extensions can or even must be seen as *external organs and extremities* of this body.

That is why I relate this trinity to the social and political processes structuring the body under the premise that the *extensifiers* and *extensions* in a major autopoietic process have come into conflict with their *extensified*, that is what we call »the body«. Thus, this body has already been invaded, conquered and enslaved and is on its way to becoming absorbed by its external organs and extremities.

\*

Helmut Ploebst's workshop *Choreography of Body Extensions* took place in the context of *SCORES No 9: no/things* from 26 November to 29 November 2014 at the Tanzquartier Wien.

*The  
Abyss  
of a  
Standstill*



Thandie Newton as brothel madam Maeve in HBO's series *Westworld*.  
First episode 2 October 2016.

*Westworld* is HBO's histrionic science-fiction thriller TV series of the moment. It takes place in a technologically advanced, Western-themed amusement park where high-paying visitors can let their fantasies run wild on a local population made up of perfectly humanlike synthetic androids. These androids are not programmed when connected to a computer but rather in oral communication with their human programmers, in what resemble private psychotherapeutic coaching sessions. These sessions function as a dramaturgical line through the first episodes. The frame stays in a close-up on the android, capturing all the expressions of his or her face, while the human's voice is heard off-frame. The human asks questions or gives commands and the android responds, alternating between friendly, submissive answers and long, immobile gazes into the void. The contrast between the two is fascinating. It is the contrast between the subtlety of the expressions that a human(like) face can produce and a standstill. Not a freeze, not a stop, but an immobility that, as viewers, we cannot interpret univocally. Is it the deep void of the stand-by mode of a machine? Is it a process of thinking? Is it a very dedicated action of listening? Or something of another order? The promise of a threat?

Sometimes things come to a standstill. Everything just suddenly stops. And all that remains is silence. Nothing but immobility and silence. And we who are the witnesses of this event, we are suddenly caught. We are taken. It is as if something is finally about to happen. Something true.

Something real. We are sucked into the interiority of the being that just stopped moving. He is calling us. We are called. Invited. But this invitation is not an invitation for a meeting. It is the invitation to plunge into an abyss, an abyss we are drawn into by silence.

*Balthazar* is a theatre performance for one animal performer (a donkey) and five human performers. In the long opening sequence of the show, the human performers are walking together in a closed group. And

because they are walking, the donkey walks with them. This sequence constitutes the paradigmatic action of the show. Walking is (in the literal sense of the term) a pedestrian activity that donkeys and humans share as the basic way of moving



Julien Bruneau, Alondra Castellanos Arreola, Philipp Enders, Sid Van Oerle, Noha Ramadan in *Balthazar*.

their bodies in space. Humans usually walk. Donkeys usually walk. Our intention with *Balthazar* is to let them enter into a process of communication with each other on a stage. It makes sense to do so with an extensive practice of walking.

The dramaturgy of this walk is fairly simple. In the beginning, the humans walk rather swiftly. The animal then sometimes follows them (his natural walking pace is slower than theirs). Sometimes they walk for quite some time in this way, the humans obstinately leading the march, the donkey following nonchalantly. Sometimes he quickly loses his interest in the choreography they perform together. When the group stops walking he usually stops as well, staying on the spot, but sometimes he catches up with them. Sometimes

they stop in front of the audience. So they all look at the audience. Besides choreography, this is also composed as a rhythmic musical piece, layering the sound made by the hooves of the animal with the sound made by the shoes of the per-

formers, who alternate synchronous and asynchronous walks with each other and with the donkey.

When he catches up with the group, the donkey often stops behind them. The public often finds this funny (or moving) because we (as the public) mentally project his possible wish to become part of this group, to be one of them. They stay there for a moment. And then they carry on. This sequence lasts for a while.

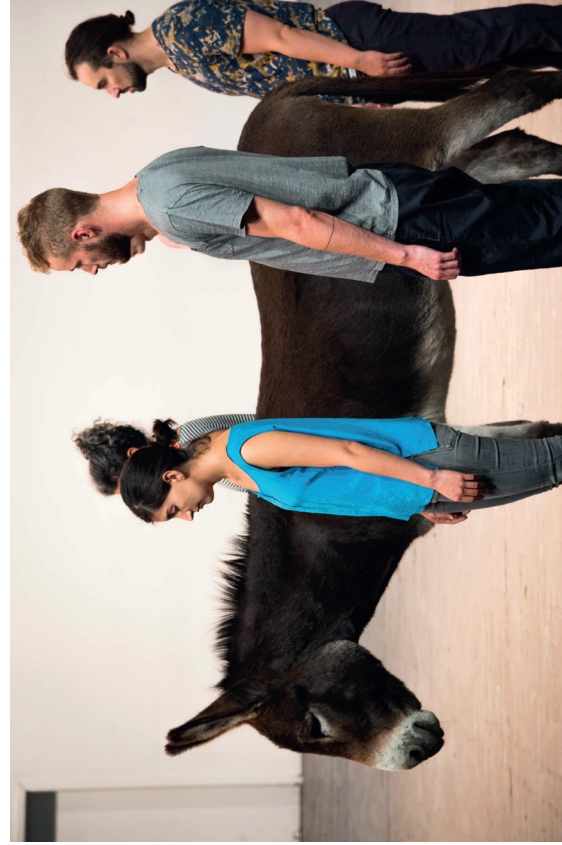
At the end of it, the donkey — whose real name in the different places has been Félix, Simone, Lily, Sam, Charles, Carlotta and Hugo — is baptized on stage. We give him the name *Balthazar*, a reference to the movie *Au hasard*

*Balthazar* (1961) by Robert Bresson. In the overall dramaturgy of the performance, this is the

moment when, by receiving a name, the donkey is officially welcomed as being fully part of the group. The performers then no longer lure the animal into a dance, they rather give *Balthazar* the initiative, as a sort of rite de passage.

It is here that these epic standstills often take place. *Balthazar* sometimes takes a few steps and then stops. He petrifies. And the performers petrify along with him. For a long time, nothing seems to happen on that stage. Nothing seemingly other than those immobile bodies positioned there.

They are before the action. They are after the action. Yet this standstill is anything but nothing. It is densified time. It is an open abyss of lost thoughts. We mentally project intense activity into this immobility. We transcend it. We interpret it as thinking. We think that we see *Balthazar* think, here on the stage, right in front of our eyes. But we don't know what he is thinking of or about. Maybe about the next step he is going to take. We anticipate this step. We see it coming.



Concept, direction: David Weber-Krebs. Concept, dramaturgy: Maximilian Haas.

But we are still sucked into the open abyss of lost thoughts that is the standstill.

In *Sous le soleil de Satan* (1987), the marvellous movie by Maurice Pialat based on the eponymous novel by Georges Bernanos, the devout priest Donissan (played by Gérard Depardieu) rebels against God in an outburst of rage. He shouts all his despair to the sky, haranguing God himself: »But there is nothing up there! There is nobody!« We would be tempted to have the same response regarding the interiority of the animal that we crave to understand at this moment: »I will not be fooled by this cheap trick. Who do you think you are dealing

with? There is nothing in there. Nobody!« But no. We dig in. We plunge. The donkey stands there, immobile, waiting for I don't know what. His power is great. Without him, nothing is happening on that stage. He knows it.

So he makes us wait. And we wait. And by waiting, we dig and dig and dig into that abyss. And when something finally moves again on stage, it is a relief. We are out of the standstill, ready to be light-hearted.





Animals are commonly defined as self-moving things. A mere non-living thing like a stone or a hammer is only moved by external forces, while animals move of their own accord, oriented towards individual goals. Nevertheless, according to common opinion, animals do not really *act*, at least not as we humans do. This is because their movements are not based on rational considerations and conscious intentions as is (sometimes) the case with us.

Yet this distinction is problematic. If a movement passes as an action, this is based on speculation. Rationality and intentionality are inner phenomena, not properly detectable from an objective standpoint; viewed from the outside, they do not manifest themselves as such, but only in their effects.

What happens when an animal on stage remains still? One might think that it transforms into a mere thing. But that is not the case. On the contrary, it seems to transform into a subject. Why is that?

If an animal moves on stage, it interacts with its environment. When it stops moving, it ceases to interact. It thus becomes self-reflexive, at least seemingly. We start to wonder about what is going on in its head, about its thoughts. But indeed, thinking cannot be detected from an outward perspective. It only manifests itself in its effects, which usually take the shape of articulations or actions—thus demonstrating the hidden dynamics of this head.

Only is that really the case? Does a head at rest necessarily make us wonder about its thoughts? A man lying on the beach? Not usually. A woman watching a movie? Probably not. Maybe the argument only applies to people in a communicative situation. The immobile only becomes self-reflexive in a situation that usually demands articulation or action. The stage is a prime example of such a situation. One might say that stage equals articulation and action.

Self-reflexivity is the very process of subjectivity. Subjects not only do, an »I do« principally accompanies their doings. At least this is the concept of subjectivity used to philosophically separate humans from animals. And it is this model of subjectivity that we project onto the donkey in the moment he ceases to do and stands still. We project ourselves into his head and

start to reflect on the situation from his position. Instead of perceiving him as a mere object, we perceive him as a larval subject.

In these moments of not doing that suddenly interrupt the course of action and articulation, the »I do« seems to emancipate itself from the subject's doings and to acquire a stand-alone existence—even with animals, at least on a theatre stage.

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David Weber-Krebs and Maximilian Haas' lecture presentation  
*Über Esel spekulieren* was presented on  
28 March 2014 at the Tanzquartier Wien in the context of  
*SCORES No 8: Lures of Speculation.*

# Spaces of Intensity

Jefta van Dinther's  
Synaesthetic Performances



(c) Ivo Hofste — *Grind*

In a time in which people in local climes do handicrafts, embroider, knit, practise upcycling and colour in mandalas in picture books to relax, the performers in Jefta van Dinther's performances struggle seemingly senselessly with enormous balls of fabric, electric cables and ropes. They haul and strain, fold and coil interminably. Dinther's 2011 solo performance, which for the first time perfectly combined the elements that still mark his choreography today, is called *Grind*: it is a synaesthetic symbiosis of moving human bodies and light, electronic sound and stage setting. The audience becomes the witness to self-oppression, toil, a Sisyphus labour on the stage, in which from the first moment they are sucked in as if to an undertow. This participation is evoked by the constant, uninterrupted sensory overload in the positive sense that appears right at the start. The audience can only gradually visually separate the performer—Jefta van Dinther—and the events on stage out of the darkness; the hard techno sound heightens the impression of a shimmering image. Already in this introductory scene, in which van Dinther struggles with an indefinable dark mass, a kind of big tangle of textiles, the various



(c) Annavan Kooij — *The Blanket Dance*

atmospheric materials of light, sound, object and movement flow together. The synaesthetic state increases with the continuing length of the performance: van Dinther bounces standing off the rear wall while he is occupied with a tangle of cables, it looks as though he is competing with his shadow and the sound is produced by this competition. At the end of the performance van Dinther stands in the middle of the stage and swings a light bulb on a cable over his head through the room like a lasso, the whizzing sound of the flying object supports the almost meditative character of this scene, in which it seems that the person has regained control of the object. Jefta van Dinther and his long-standing collaborators Minna Tiikkainen (lighting design) and David Kiers (sound design) do not like to make it pleasant for the audience; they do not create a feel-good atmosphere. The spaces they have created are not for softly strung nerves. Nevertheless, as affective atmospheres they can also develop cathartic forces.

From Dada, through the 1960s happenings to contemporary choreography there have always been performances that centre on objects and the playing with

1  
Ben Anderson, »Affective Atmospheres«, in *Emotion, Space, and Society 2* (2009), p. 78.

2  
Anderson, »Affective Atmospheres«, p. 78.

3  
Ibid, p. 79.

atmospheres. In *Nom donné par l'auteur* (1994), with his choreography of everyday things, Jérôme Bel rung in the new era of the conceptual approach; in *evaporated landscapes* (2009), her composition of foam, light and fog, Mette Ingvartsen as the next generation of choreographers ultimately completely dispensed with physically manifest performers on the stage. Jefta van Dinther's first approach to choreography with objects was the joint project with Frédéric Gies and DD Dorvillier called *The Blanket Dance* (2011). Like his later performances, here everyday objects could be experienced from completely unaccustomed sides through their almost loving approach by the performers; a haptic perceptual impression arises in the auditorium through simple observation. In the more than ten years of his career Jefta van Dinther has developed into a master of synaesthetic performance. His choreographies merge immaterial elements, things and human bodies into an affective atmosphere. The cultural-political geographer Ben Anderson describes atmospheres as »collective affects that are simultaneously indeterminate and determinate.«<sup>1</sup> In their indeterminacy atmospheres transcend individual experiences and feelings. »Affective atmospheres are a class of experience that occur *before* and *alongside* the formation of subjectivity, *across* human and non-human materialities, and *in-between* subject/object distinctions.«<sup>2</sup> By the use of light, objects and sound in precise harmony with the moving bodies, Jefta van Dinther sets choreographic frameworks that facilitate affective atmospheres. The perception of the entities present as individuals is thereby suspended, animated and inanimate bodies are penetrated by light and sound, the boundaries between the physical states blur. Through the enormous stimulus of the individual sense-perceptions these are synaesthetically merged into a state of intensive space-time. This space of intensity, as Anderson writes, »overflows a represented world organized into subjects and objects or subjects and other subjects.«<sup>3</sup> Jefta van Dinther thereby to some extent abolishes the boundaries between the audience, which in most of his performances is placed classically in front or on several sides, and the material and immaterial performers on the stage.

Before Jefta van Dinther reached his first high-point in matters of synaesthetic performance with *Grind*,

he had created a strongly performer-focused work whose movement language, however, is already similar to the larger later works. In the male trio *Kneeding* (2010) there are no props or special lighting effects, but certainly a very specific sound design (David Kiers) that gradually penetrates the performance space from outside and finally peaks in a kind of continuous electronic organ tone. Jefta van Dinther, Frédéric Gies and Thiago Granato move elastically, at first each for themselves as if steered from inside, kneaded (kneeding as a wordplay between kneading and needing), wrestling with an external image of the normative representation of masculinity, which is per se constantly unachievable, and their own will, which drives them internally. The trio repeatedly approaches one another, but the contact over wide distances fails by a hair's breadth. The facial expressions float from one to the next on the performers' faces, the transitions from tension to moments of happiness are fluid, occasionally they seem to want to enter into a verbal dialogue with one another and with their surroundings, but no sound comes from their mouths, the communication remains purely visual. In his concentration on bodies, *Kneeding* is the strongest »unspectacular« work by Jefta van Dinther, in the sense that its effect largely arises without the aid of spectacular tools such as light, sound and props.

Like *Kneeding*, *THIS IS CONCRETE* (2012), a duet by Jefta van Dinther and Thiago Granato, challenges similar normative masculinity structures. It even goes a step further and puts intimacy between two men onto the stage in a way that is seldom so unambiguously (concretely) seen in contemporary choreography. Unlike *Kneeding*, the stage set—in interplay with light (Jan Fedinger) and sound (David Kiers)—is the third, integral performer. Right at the start a ball of light spreads across the stage before the two dancers sensuously, almost caressingly approach a loudspeaker. In the second third of the performance the two dancers again come closer under clear sexual portents and, bathed in green light, move ceaselessly in a mixture of dancing, undressing and wrestling. Here the eroticism of a dim Berlin techno club is transferred to the stage, it crackles between the two dancers in the same way as between



(c) Eva Würdinger — *As It Empties Out*

4  
Cf. Mette Ingvarstsen's performance *69 Positions*, in which one chapter is completely dedicated to objectophilia, i.e. sexual attraction to objects such as a lamp or a table. <http://www.corpusweb.net/the-red-piecc-nd1.html>

light, sound and objects (the loudspeakers). *THIS IS CONCRETE* makes it clear that it is an interplay of interpersonal communication, material and non-material atmosphere that puts us into a specific mood that evokes emotions. Sex comes not just from human bodies but also from light, from sound, from things.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is only logical that on stage at the end it is not human bodies that experience a climax but white balloons float up to the ceiling in the dark.

After the already-mentioned solo, duet and trio, which despite their sometimes spectacular synaesthesias were marked by a great intimacy, in *As It Empties Out* (2014), together with the performers Linda Adami, Thiago Granato, Naiara Mendioroz Azkarate, Eeva Muilu and Roger Sala Reyner, and again with Minna Tiikkainen (lighting) and David Kiers (sound), Jefta van Dinther created a big performance, a synaesthetic total composition with an uncanny underlying tone. Right at the beginning a mysterious, mad-eyed figure appears, who with a hypnotic voice chants a kind of mantra and draws the other performers onto the stage with it. These move as if they cannot understand what is happening



to them, as though they are guided by an invisible force or are fighting against it. After a while the performers are confronted with a long tube that crosses the stage like a horizon and thereby prescribes the space for movement. This part leads into a chapter that is already familiar as a motif from *Grind*: with complete devotion the performers carry out the Sisyphus labour, hauling on long ropes hanging from the ceiling, throwing their bodies into it with full force, without it ever becoming clear what is actually to be moved here and to what end. As in *Grind*, the absence of the initiating source, the origin and reason for the drudgery remains hidden from the audience. In the next scene, the highpoint of the synaesthesia, the performance culminates in a kind of purgatory. Bathed in red light, the performers swing and twist around their own axis as if possessed, but at the same time rooted firmly to one spot. The combination of colour, the shimmering image through the rapid movement and the electronic sound, like the flight of a whole swarm of bees, produces such a powerful sensory perception that as an audience one would either like to release oneself or just surrender oneself to the total excess of the various sensory stimuli and experiences it as a catharsis. When one's own mirror neurons fire and sitting still in one's seat one moves together with the performers, then something arises that Anderson describes as »atmospheres as reducible to bodies affecting other bodies and yet exceeding the bodies they emerge from.«<sup>5</sup>

In his two most current choreographies van Dinther works with the Swedish Cullberg Ballet. In *Plateau Effect* (2013) van Dinther transfers motifs and synaesthetic elements from the above-described performances, in which he always stands on stage himself, to the format of a large dance company. The dancers get into dialogue with a stage curtain, which metamorphoses into a fabric monster that has to be tamed with strenuous labour. Using ropes and weights the fabric is turned into sails that are hoisted as on a battleship. After the curtain finishes as a large roll of fabric, the dancers free themselves in highly energetic movements in an act of liberation from the arduous work on the object.

5  
Anderson, »Affective Atmospheres«, p. 79.

5  
Anderson, »Affective Atmospheres«, p. 79.

Through the production of synaesthetic conditions, in various performative settings from the solo to the dance company, Jefta van Dinther succeeds in creating affective atmospheres that lead to the removal of boundaries between individuals as well as subjects and objects. And to quote Anderson again: »As such, to attend to affective atmospheres is to learn to be affected by the ambiguities of affect/emotion, by that which is determinate and indeterminate, present and absent, singular and vague.«<sup>6</sup> In the present day, in which we are daily confronted with more unquestioned and unwanted external, visual, acoustic, digitally produced stimuli than any generation before us, it can seem very liberating deliberately to let oneself in for sensory inundation. Jefta van Dinther opens choreography up to the audience—it can lean back and embark on an energy-charged journey in which the aesthetic experience rises to a synaesthetic experience. Anyone who leaves a performance by Jefta van Dinther has understood the meaning of synaesthesia.

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Since 2010 the Tanzquartier Wien has presented the following performances by Jefta van Dinther: *Kneeding* (2010), *The Blanket Dance* (2011), *THIS IS CONCRETE* (2013), *Plateau Effect* (2013), and *As It Empties Out* (2014).

# Sketching Stage Societies

Perspectives on Performance  
Art and Work

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At first sight it all seems a pretty evident understanding. Looking back on their substantial common past, music and dance were promised an eternity of matching ground. Yet this wedding, too, appears more conditional than originally thought. And so—in this case even more than in others—we need to inquire into the subject in the perspective that matters in the longer term rather than solely style issues: that of (the) art (of) history.

No one would ever think of denying the possibility of translating speed, nor that of matching the quantity of time that all music contains with the space geometry that all movement designs. These are basic anthropomorphic abilities. It is therefore very likely (what else could it have been?)—that the conjunction of pace and the earth's attraction set the speed frame in which the human species started to explore what dance and music share in common, i.e. body-action related movement. Let's consider this the naturalistic level in our argumentation.

If we now try to access the next level we need to talk about form and space design, inside and outside of stage situations. Pre-historic times (in this case before the concept of history) will lead us to discover for instance that monks during the Middle Ages were not that keen to »join the party«, and that dance of course has been using space from the very beginning, which does not mean it automatically involved any thinking of it. This »reflexive« turn—roughly—affected music at around the

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turn of the 19th century, and dance at around the turn of the 20th. (That almost full century gap, by the way, is extremely challenging. I consider it as a key occurrence to inquire and understand the »disjunctive synthesis« that concerns creativity altogether.)

At the centre of it we find the concept of autonomy. But autonomy as what and what for? In the first place the autonomy of deciding upon the moment of interruption and suspension, which is not necessarily induced by a key point in a narrative. It can thus be understood as the inclusion of the interrogation moment as in essential part of the development. Maybe it should be regarded as a »moment of resistance«.

With the concept of autonomy the possibility of substitutive procedures emerges. It allows us to understand the »crisis« in its dual meaning: decision and problem. In both cases though, the issue of the conditional continuation of material remains central. Romanticism is watered (or rather »blooded«) by literature and description, let's keep this in mind. But as continuation does not exclusively mean an »arrow-like« orientation we are indeed entering another space-time understanding in both fields.

If we were to learn something (on the basis of habits and scores from the past) about the dance–music relationship, then in essence this: it was primarily based on the conjunction of speed and rhythmic modules.

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These parameters—as they were disrupted and questioned during Romanticism (the era of »passion for crisis«)—generated the emergence of non-systematic forms and formats.

In this sense we can understand the 19th century as a break up with the concept of »standard time« whereas on the other hand it generated the—still referential and resonating—model of metropolitan life. The dance–music relationship needed to be rethought on another basis: content. This although dance was artistically rather absent until the tremendous »outburst« at the end of the 19th century, which means that dance indeed became choreographic (thus a compositional field) and no longer a practice of »movement classification«. One may point out this very surprising turning point. As music composers became involved—through the association of poetry and affects—with the »state« of the body (not to be confused with body activity), dance started to inquire about what »thinking movement« meant.

So one of the central conditions for the extension of both fields must be found in the spirit of excess indeed induced by the »passion for crisis«. If—under these so to say compositional conditions—we were to continue using the term »relationship« then it would necessarily be in its social understanding, and no longer on the basis of former technical commonality. Dance would be »having a relationship« with music as Heinrich von Kleist had one with Henriette Vogel (btw, they both committed suicide, together, in a hotel room).



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But apart from this sidestep we must interrogate the heritage of »representative movements« in regard to an actual theory on stage work. And to start with by reminding and repeating that (increasingly among other places) the stage has become the location where the full spectrum of cultural life is getting and gaining its visibility.

In effect, »metropolitan life« indeed is fully considered as performance material, whereas we can trace performativity in many more public spaces than suspected, including parliaments, corporate business, urban shelter for the homeless and so on. Just take a look at some of the festival programmes if you still need convincing. Referring to the principle of mimesis with which staging started in the first place, we have a valid base to justify its extended interpretation with regard to the spectrum of what is found suitable to be shown, both in the material and the virtual world. This does not allow us to consider composition and formal issues as secondary (i.a. neglectable?), but it definitely interrogates the material sources we refer to when remaining faithful to it.

We noticed for instance that the performance field had initiated a schism with choreography as it questioned—so to speak—the political index of stage art and artists. As a direct outcome of this turnover, the conjunction of dance and music broadened in order to include a theatralising—mainly dramatic and dramaturgic—dimension. This actually meant that music and dance were no longer considered in their formal occurrence, but rather

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as an emergence out of their generic field: sound and movement. This is in fact a double clutch: it gears back, above and in reverse mode on the achievements of the »dance and music relation«, which, as we have said, was based on speed and rhythm, to reconnect with creative, symbolic—and indeed, to a certain extent animistic—procedures of tribal, non-normative societies. And it gears forward in perpetuating an »active« analytical procedure that generated out of modernity and its diffractive multiplicity.

I see in these supra-historical meetings—a fertile terrain for new speculative work: here is why. The legacy of the classical era is intimately connected with the notion of tuning, which functioned for few centuries as a transcendental. The consensus on for instance the tonal system and its associated self-explanatory discursivity grew out of a normative system that lasted as a historical development until the turn of the 20th century, and as a cultural achievement from then on. In that sense, modernity is relative and absolute at the same time. It has seen the attempt to abstract the self-explanatory on one hand, but keeping the transcendental tuning system that it was based on, and on the other hand it has explored the extension of musical language, because technology has made it possible to record, edit, transform, and recently to synthesise all sources, whether these were instrumental, everyday-life sounds or virtual.

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Dance has been intimately associated with the classical-normative momentum as it produced a collection of framed movement classifications that facilitated the emergence of a body geometry, therefore not necessarily a body expression. Classicism shut down some deep-rooted energies—maybe animality?—in order to produce an organicity that, like an oil painting, starts to crack when air conditions change: maybe as a result of the sweating workers in the first factories. But whenever this happened (it is btw about time to start fundamental—polydimensional—research into movement expression, Freudian psychology and Charcot’s clinical work on hysteria)—classical dance entered similar troubled waters to its practitioners.

In »this direction« of history, body expression, modern dance, aka compositional dance, meets the kaleidoscopic diffraction of modern music as a commonly shared outcome of metropolitan life, that is, a Western and Central European axis. It is only approx. 50 years later that we start inquiring about what modernity has produced, at the same time as we are questioning its destiny. This was a time of politicisation of the stage, and it stirred up most of the »show codes« in almost all stage-art domains.

The word »performance« generated out of the evidence that there was more at stake than just showing prepared (i.e. framed) material, almost as if mimesis matched its model at the same time. (By the way, when we think about real-time technology—whether in the music domain or as a transformative tool—we should not forget this dimension).

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The structure of stage time and experience became profoundly modified through this process and up to the point that we experience a »sphere-like« time conception in performance work whenever comparing it with the classical—linear—stage structures and formats. Performance—at pretty much the same rate as improvisation and logarithmic technology—has proven its ability to crack the codes of understanding and apprehension. In this sense—and because art revolutions, too, succeed when their argument dissolves—we can say that we have reached a level of social acceptance with regard to performance and up to the point to consider it as a cultural achievement—the next one.

But this achievement remains after all connected to the challenging heritage (including its deconstruction) of classical aesthetics—and in some cases not going much further than a »creative reactivity« in order to feed the social necessity of »keeping going«.

We might recall that thanks to the »anti-psychiatry« movement we developed a new opinion about schizophrenia and psychotic symptoms. That is the therapeutic and clinic dimension of the matter. I would argue—on a more aesthetic level—that it was a very important historical sequence, since we were able to experience how prolific »non-normativity« was in regard to creative proposals and speculations. And it is no surprise that we seem to recognise some of its legacy in the field of performance.

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We for sure remember the discourse on »decolonising the body«, which also in many ways connected with ethno-psychiatry, animism and altogether exo-classical territorialities. I also understand these as counter-proposals to the instrumentalisation of body and mind—a subject that is regularly addressed in performance and singularly absent in dance. By which I am pointing to a reconsideration of instrumentality altogether, a word with similar roots and a totally different outcome: that might summarise my proposal after all.

In this regard (although some might, erroneously indeed, read in this text a call for general and permanent improvisation) I am speculating on the meta-historical field that might emerge by »dialectising« the virtual and generative tools that computer composition allows with the aesthetic legacy of performance as it questioned linearity and normativity. By proceeding this way we would, for instance, discover that the faraway past is literally bursting with sources of inspiration that occurred in very different living and thinking conditions to ours. Yet to some extent pre-history seems a far more critical point and with actual material at its disposal in order to exit post-modernism than launching the next »chapter of anger« against classicism. Why would we in any case? The latter is and remains a good and very well educated neighbour with whom we maintain excellent relations.

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Alain Franco  
Brussels, September 2016

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Alain Franco's lecture concert *Long Live Freedom—Isn't it?* was presented on 1 December 2011 at the Tanzquartier Wien.

# Organic

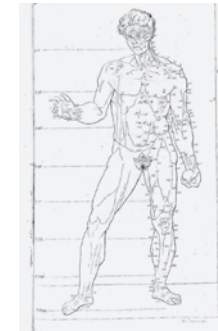
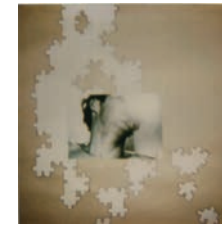
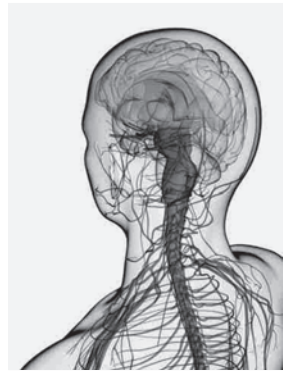
# Display

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Micha Purucker's performance *Organic Display*  
was presented as part of *SCORES No 9: no/things* on 28 November 2014 at  
the Tanzquartier Wien



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# the *Revolt of Things*

From

and Machine

Of Man

to Playful Recombinations

The art of the early 20th century had left behind the naturalist landscapes of the 19th century and, soon after, the grandly appointed interiors of the *fin de siècle*. It was created in fundamental exploration of the modern mass media.

## 1. THINGS

Breaking with all representational conventions and releasing each art form's elementary energy corresponds in the first instance to a rejection of the figurative. »De-objectification«, fleeing from the world of objects to Suprematist abstraction, was to offer release from material conflicts—and bring cosmic harmony.

At the same time, however, the importance of materials and their treatment led to a conception of the artwork as an object substituting the artistic representation of an external world of things. Non-figurative art as liberation from the »slavery of things« produces an artistic object that enables a new way of seeing, a de-automatised perception: »In order to make an object a fact of art, it is necessary to extricate it from the facts of life. ... It is essential to tear the thing from the set of customary associations in which it is lodged. An artist always foments the revolt of things. In the hands of poets, things revolt, throwing off their old names and taking with the new name a new face«, wrote Viktor Shklovsky in

his book with the wonderful title *Khod konia, Knight's Move*, published in 1923 in Berlin.<sup>1</sup>

When Shklovsky talks about the »revolt of things«, he is of course thinking of the play *Vladimir Mayakovsky: A Tragedy*, which had its premiere in December 1913—on the same evening and in the same St Petersburg theatre as the Futurist opera *Victory over the Sun* by Malevich, Kruchenykh and Matyushin—and which was actually supposed to be entitled »The Revolt of Things«. However, the censor mistook the author's name for the title of the play. It addresses the ossification of human beings and the way in which things can spring to life. The liberated objects come between people, dominate their behaviour and create a world turned upside down. The uprising is directed against conventional language and quotidian logic.

This early Cubo-Futurist »revolt of things« aimed to transform the object into something perceptible, tangible, waking things up from the automatism of perception and allowing them to come back to life, making »a stone feel stony«.<sup>2</sup> In

1921/22 the Constructivists tried—in a second attempt—to move away from purely formal experiments and towards experimental mass production, and began to create objects of everyday life. The Constructivist thing however differs from such conventional utensils in that it offers scope to perceive its functional structure: ideally the object is not only utilised and consumed by its users, but is consciously perceived, each time stimulating the user's perception anew.

The keyword in the aesthetic programmes of both the Futurists and the Constructivists is »*fak-tura*«—the »made« nature of the object. This is to be understood as encompassing all of the characteristics of the pictorial surface, along with an ensemble of practices for manipulation of this surface, ranging from the application of paint to the »sound of the material«, right through to the artisanal »madeness« of the surfaces, and ultimately a »new universe of sensation and hapticity«, which operates against the automation of perception by decelerating and impeding it.<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Tatlin, Malevich's great rival, would invoke this transfor-

mation of the senses as early as 1913 in the elegant formula concerning his material art: »the eye should be put under the control of touch.«<sup>4</sup> In adopting this approach, he does not simply pre-empt the tactile experiential qualities of montage technique, which would play such a major role in the 1920s; it becomes apparent that he is also an early proponent of a material-sensitive, ecologically influenced conception of the thing, making it even tangible, for example in the *Drinking Vessel for small children* from 1930.

As an artistic prefiguration of a new reality—the transition from »pure« constructions to the production of everyday objects, from the Futurist »revolt of things« to their taming in industrial design—factors extraneous to art also to a large extent formed the background of the Russian experiments. In Russia, the country with »the most underdeveloped industry and, alongside France, the most progressive artistic culture«,<sup>5</sup> these factors included the transition from the political to the industrial revolution, artists' attempts to exert an

influence upon this modernisation, given the loss of the erstwhile intelligentsia's role, and above all the vague and conflict-ridden, yet initially entirely impulsive, relationship to a new mass audience with a great thirst for knowledge. »For the new spectator,« as Viktor Shklovsky put it, »old art was something unfamiliar.«<sup>6</sup>

## 2. APPARATUSES

In this relationship between the avant-garde artist and a new audience—the new urban masses with their cultural needs—we can see privileged objects: machines, the apparatuses of communication, the modern media. These new machines generate profound changes in everyday life and in perception as such: they fundamentally transform human sensibility.

The artists of the European avant-garde responded to that industrialisation of the senses with various strategies:

- the unconditional, excessive affirmation of the Italian Futurists that industry is beautiful and that war should be glorified—despite heavy casualties in their own ranks;
- the initially fresh, wild, technophobic, and »Ludite« keynote of Expressionism, which became increasingly depressive as a consequence of the First World War;
- the absurdities and dysfunctionalities of the small, self-made machines with which the German Dadaists operated in an ironic and irregular formation against the instrumental reason of a world conquered by economic rationality;
- later on, the approach of the Bauhaus, less nihilistic, rather experimental instead, exploring the fantastic opportunities offered by industry, haptically probing its new materials;
- the apparatus-building eroticism of Duchamp, Picabia, Man Ray, and others, fixated on machines and uninhibitedly embracing technology;
- the multivoiced activities of the Russian avant-garde, combining utopian radicalism on a formal level with an artistic adoption of the new media. The »iconoclastic, machine-admiring, life-changing«<sup>7</sup> movement of Russian Constructivism chose the technologically most advanced media for intervening in the organisation of everyday life.



Tatlin and Sotnikov, *Drinking vessel for small children*, 1930



Rodchenko, *Telephone Box*, Moscow 1932

In the light of this larger-than-life Pop Art sculpture—it is not by Claes Oldenburg, this is what telephone equipment and phone boxes in Moscow used to look like—it becomes easier to understand the avant-garde's obsession with the media: »The telephone hurls itself on everyone«, to cite a line in a love poem by Mayakovsky.<sup>8</sup> Apparently enthusiasm for mass media was not just an avant-garde issue or foible.

In the experiments of the Soviet avant-garde one can detect at least three positions dealing with the relationship between man and machine:

1. The appropriation of the new apparatuses is proudly displayed: we can see them in street manifestations, in public places, in everyday life. Modern media technology is enthroned in a manner oscillating between serenity and respect, still awestruck, but nevertheless full of hope and confidence.

2. The analytical radicalisation of the relationship between man and machine: extracting an aesthetic dimension from technology is the programme of the historic avant-garde, in the legendary theatre productions of constructivism, in Popova's stage design for Meyerhold's *Cocu Magnifique*, as well as in cinema. The synthesis of man and machine—*turning work into play*—is not yet a totalitarian utopia.

3. A third position goes beyond all that—showing an amazing tendency towards playfulness and recombination.

### 3. RECOMBINATIONS

A symbiosis between man and machine emerges on the cover for a 1927 edition of the weekly magazine *Sovietskoe Kino*. This is a third possible attitude of the man / machine relationship: a playfully optimised synthesis of human and device.

Incidentally, it is rumoured that the man with the camera and the roller skates was Dziga Vertov's younger brother Boris Kaufman. He *is* the man with the camera, which he takes everywhere with him, mounting it on every conceivable mode of transport: on cars, motorbikes, trains, cable cars, cranes above raging torrents: crazy tracking shots, filmed with a second camera and evoking wild chase scenes.

The design for a further symbiosis between human beings and the world of things comes from Gustav Klucis, a surprising work that combines a bizarre technical vision and a cheerful childhood dream. Following in the footsteps of Malevich's sportsmen from the 1913 opera *Victory Over the Sun*, and even before El Lissitzky's »Electromechanical Show« with the same title from 1922, Klucis had created probably the most beautiful figure to breathe technical life into an old



Meyerhold,  
*The Magnanimous Cuckold*,  
Moscow 1922



Stepanova,  
*Sovietskoe Kino*, 1927



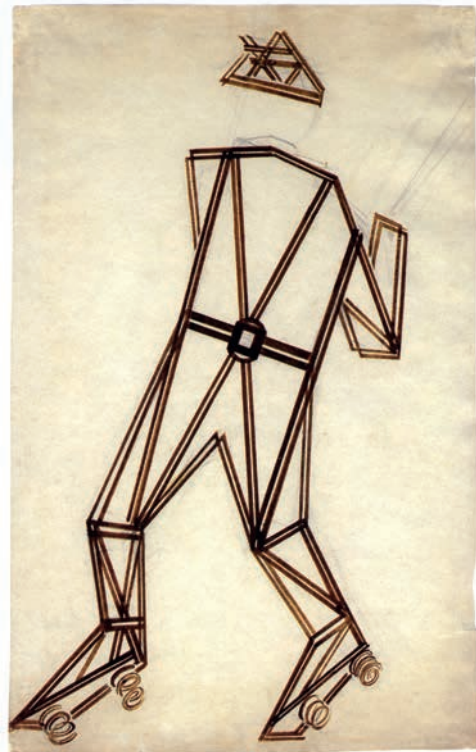
Michail Kaufman,  
*Norij Lef*, No. 12



dream: shoes equipped with springs allow the bouncing figure to fulfil our shared dream of overcoming gravity, dancing and leaping, and light-footedly conquering vast distances in seven-league boots.

- 1 »Parallels in Tolstoy«, in Viktor Shklovsky, *Knight's Move* (Dalkey Archive, 2005), p. 73. (*Khod konia*, Moscow/Berlin, 1923, p. 115f.)
- 2 Viktor Shklovsky, »Art as Device,« in *Theory of Prose* (Illinois: Dalkey Archive, 1991), p. 6. Also translated as »Art as Technique« (1917), quoted in David Lodge, *Modern Criticism and Theory* (London: Longman, 1988): »That which we call art exists in order to remedy our perception of life, to make things felt, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to invoke in man a sensation of things, to make him perceive things rather than merely recognize them. In order to do so, art uses two devices; making things strange and complicating the form, so as to increase the duration and the difficulty of perception.«

- 3 See Aage A. Hansen-Löve, »Faktur, Gemachtheit«, in Aleksandar Flaker (ed.), *Glossarium der russischen Avantgarde* (Graz: Droschl, 1989), pp. 212-219.
- 4 C.f. Benjamin H. Buchloh: »From Faktura to Factography«, in *October* 30, 1984, pp. 86ff.
- 5 Alfréd Kemény, in *Egyeség* (Vienna, 4 February 1923); cit. in Hubertus Gaßner / Roland Nachtigäller, *Gustav Klucis Retrospektive* (Kassel: Hatje, 1991), p. 42.
- 6 Viktor Schklowski, *Eisenstein: Romanbiographie* (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1986), p. 122.
- 7 Hubertus Gaßner, »Konstruktion«, in *Europa, Europa: Das Jahrhundert der Avantgarde in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, Vol. 3 (Bonn, 1994), p. 151.
- 8 Vladimir Mayakovsky, *About This (Pro Eto)*, in Herbert Marshall (transl./ed.), *Vladimir Mayakovsky* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1965), p. 166.



Klucis,  
*Sportsman*, 1922

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Klemens Gruber's lecture  
*From the Uprising of Things to the Rejection of the Subject:  
the Enthronement of Mass Media*  
was presented as part of *SCORES No 9: no/things*  
on 27 November 2014 at the Tanzquartier Wien.



# *Ohne Nix*

D it means something along the lines of,  
»without nothing«  
L without nothing  
L so it's about nothing  
D nix  
L it's hard to make nothing exciting somehow

L ok, so we do have some stuff with us  
D equipment, yeah  
L equipment

D but we made sure that... errr, it's only equipment,  
errr, machines that... ummm, only produce  
immaterial substances  
L which doesn't count, because it's not there  
without a machine basically

D yeah, so with these materials, or non-materials...  
smoke and light, we imagined a  
bombastic show...

L epic

D epic, megalomaniac,... with errr, smoke filling out  
the entire room, with a very high density

L projections

D projections on to the smoke





L we had many great ideas of what to do with nothing,... like ummm,... to kind of embody nix...



L yeah but we tried a lot, we tried... all kinds of stuff, we even read the »choreographers hand book«

D yeah

D and ummm, so since we don't have,... errr, so much to offer... or... more precisely NIX,... I mean, feel free to,... mmm... fantasize away,... you can let our bodies into your fantasy if it helps, I mean if you, if you don't like boys usually, then either give it a try... or errr

L yeah, cos sex sells

D exactly



D after this disappointment,... we were again left with nothing,... with nix



(c) Roland Szabo



(c) Maria Anna Farcher

- Blackwraps
- Beamers - near lotta, jul:com, 2 Maschs, Baum
- Wood blocks - strange
- VGA Cables & Kupplungen
- RCA Cables
- Esthers Cam
- XLR Cables
- 4 Speaker
- Bass Box + Amp
- 1 Amp for speakers
- Guitar amp
- Music Box
- Loop station
- Rasp + Kabel
- Frame & PVC
- Vacuum Stang
- Lüftungsaussaug
- Smoke machine
- Metal Tape
- Cook packs
- Tods
- Maschs & Trolly
- Beamer attachment
- Lightstand
- Whiskey
- Dom's comp - Adapter VGA
- White slinky comp - Ethernet cable - Rasp - HDMI

We learned that if you record »Nix« and play it backwards it says skin.  
Skin as a projection surface  
both literally and metaphorically.



\*

This text is based on the performance  
*Ohne Nix* by Luke Baio and Dominik Grünbühel, which was presented on 2 May 2013 at the  
Tanzquartier Wien.





1 *The Artificial Nature Project* premiered in PACT Zollverein in 2012 and was presented as part of *SCORES N°9: no/things: An artistic-theoretical parcours on choreographing things and re-thinking the body of choreography* at the Tanzquartier Wien on 26 November 2014.

2 Mette Ingvarstsen in an interview with Martina Ruhsam in Brussels on 7 January 2016.

In the *(Precise) Woodstock of Thinking*, an event that took place in Tanzquartier Wien in 2008 and in which artists and theorists shared their visions about the future of dance and performance, the dramaturge Rudi Laermans looked ahead and made a plea for dance and performance to become posthumanist. One year later Mette Ingvarstsen premiered her piece *Evaporated Landscapes* and Laerman's prognosis had already come true. In this piece, light, foam, soap bubbles, ice cubes and sounds move through the space, drift, transform and partly evaporate while Ingvarstsen is at the side in the dark—merely operating a dry-ice machine while LED lights flicker in the space. Apart from her, no human being appears in the performance, which clearly subverts the traditional anthropocentric orientation of dance and choreography. Ever since then, numerous choreographers in Europe have been investigating the movements of materials and things as well as the entangled condition of human and non-human-beings/move-

ments. As a choreography of non-human materials on the brink of immateriality *Evaporated Landscapes* constituted the beginning of Ingvarstsen's longer investigation of the artificial character of nature and of modes of fictionalising and choreographing natural phenomena, which led to the development of *The Light Forest* (2010), *The Extra Sensorial Garden* (2010) and eventually to *The Artificial Nature Project* (2012)<sup>1</sup>—a choreographed dance of hundreds of pieces of silver confetti. In some way the topic is still pursued in Ingvarstsen's performance *7 Pleasures* (2015), which also stages sexual relations between human beings and things. *Evaporated Landscapes* is the construction of a sort of immaterial scenography (similar to Ólafur Eliasson's visual artworks in which space is regarded to be a process). It deals with the question of how air could be made visible but also with a kind of apocalyptic vision: »What if nature were to disappear and you actually had to go to the theatre to experience it?«<sup>2</sup> In *The Artificial Nature Project* human and

3 Cf. Haraway, Donna: *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2015.

4 Website of Mette Ingvarstsen, accessed 5 September 2016.

5 Paradigmatic for an exploration of the thing between being a thing and a semiotic unit (at the zero degree of meaning) is Jérôme Bel's performance *Nom donné par l'auteur* (1994).

non-human performers meet on stage, although the movements of the dancers are not the centre of attention. In fact they spring from the endeavour to make the confetti move in space. Between contemplative and chaotic, the glittering silver material hurtles through the air—reminiscent at times of snow, stars, of a storm, a swirl or a swarm of fireflies. In developing *The Artificial Nature Project* Ingvarstsen was investigating non-human transformations such as climate change. The title of the performance hints at the fact that the nature/culture dualism is obsolete and what was called nature has long-since become nature-culture (Haraway).<sup>3</sup>

»HOW CAN ONE ADDRESS THE FORCE OF THINGS, MATERIALS, OBJECTS AND MATTER AS SOMETHING THAT ACTS UPON HUMANS?«<sup>4</sup>

Many choreographers have primarily explored the biunivocal character of things that always oscillate between the literal and the representational, the factual and the semiotic<sup>5</sup>, the functional and the dysfunctional when put on stage. But several contemporary choreographers have recently foregrounded a certain vibrancy, activity or agency of materials and things, and Ingvarstsen has specifically explored the (impersonal) affects and sensations they induce. The disclosure of an active and self-organising dimension of matter which has concrete effects on the human body is the main merit of neo-materialist philosophers, one of whom is Jane Bennett. In her recent book *Vibrant Matter* she writes about a certain »agency of things«: »I try to bear wit-

6 Jane Bennett: *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010, Preface, X.

7 Bruno Latour: *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 43.

8 Elisabeth Grosz: »Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom«, in: Christoph Cox/Jenny Jaskey/Suhail Malik (ed.): *Realism Materialism Art*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015, p. 55.

ness to the vital materialities that flow through and around us. Though the movements and effectivity of stem cells, electricity, food, trash, and metals are crucial to political life (and human life per se), almost as soon as they appear in public (often at first by disrupting human projects or expectations), these activities and powers are represented as human mood, action, meaning, agenda, or ideology. This quick substitution sustains the fantasy that »we« are really in charge of all those »its«—its that, according to the tradition of (non-mechanistic, nonteleological) materialism I draw on, reveal themselves to be potentially forceful agents.«<sup>6</sup> In the *Artificial Nature Project* the protagonists are confetti and they are not only choreographed by human beings but (thereby) constantly co-choreograph the movements of the latter. If the confetti can be considered as agents or as actants as the French philosopher Bruno Latour has suggested—not in regard to the performing arts but in

general—so, if intentionality, freedom and psychic interiority are no longer the necessary properties of an entity that has the capacity to act, then the following questions can indeed not be neglected: »When we act who else is acting? How many agents are also present? How come I never do what I want? Why are we all held by forces that are not of our own making?«<sup>7</sup> Latour hints at the constitutive heteronomy of human beings that would not move the way they move were they not surrounded, in touch and inhabited by very particular non-human things that co-choreograph their movements and thoughts and that enable certain actions and lasting social bonds while disabling others.

The critical potential of posthumanist performances consists in shifting the perception to actor-networks and to a more distributive notion of agency deriving from assemblages of human and non-human performers and not exclusively from inspired individuals or collectives of human beings. In light of this, freedom can no longer be conceived of as something transcendental or as the attribute of a human self but has to be understood »as something that emerges when one encounters the resistance of matter«.<sup>8</sup>



9 Ibid. Jane Bennett: *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010, p. 33.

10 Bruno Latour: *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 60.

And matter or what we called nature is neither simply given, stable, passive or eternal nor infinitely disposable or malleable, which means that things must have a certain degree of autonomy. This autonomy stems precisely from their very materiality and from the contingency that it implies. If entanglements of human beings and things act, we are prompted to reconsider ideas of causality. What the relational ontologies of Bruno Latour and Karen Barad have pointed out is that causality proceeds from certain events and is not prior to them. Bennett is talking about »emergent causality« (fractal) in comparison to »efficient causality« (linear) in

this respect. If the cause of a movement is not necessarily a human subject but a meshwork of heterogeneous actors, then intentionality is not disavowed, but a gap between the intentional subject and the event/movement is prised open: »If efficient causality seeks to rank the actants involved, treating some as external causes and others as dependent effects, emergent causality places the focus on the process as itself an actant, as itself in possession of degrees of agentic capacity.«<sup>9</sup> Latour carried the concept of emergent causality to extremes when he wrote that not even the movements of a marionette should be considered as effects of the puppeteer who is pulling the strings: »The *band* still hidden in the Latin etymology of the word »manipulate« is a sure sign of full control *as well as a lack of it*. So, who is pulling the strings? Well, the puppets do in addition to their puppeteers.«<sup>10</sup>



This assertion is telling in regard to Eva-Meyer Keller's performance *Pulling Strings*, in which various ordinary items that usually inhabit the theatre—even if mostly behind the scenes (such as lights, a waste bin, cables, a fire extinguisher, tapes etc.)—are manipulated like marionettes. During the entire choreography the performers make these things dance by pulling numerous strings attached to them. The at times very energetic and space-consuming movements that are required in order to set the objects in motion give rise to a very peculiar dance on the part of the performers, which is not hidden from view. Watching the performance I was sometimes fascinated by this dance, even if all the attention was on the manipulated objects. For a moment it seemed to me as if the things were actually choreographing the human

beings at the other end of the strings. I had this impression especially in the moment when one performer was pulling the strings very vigorously while leaping into the air, so that the thing attached to the string would dance the way she wanted. Eventually she made a really big leap and, at the very moment when the weight of the thing on the other end was diminishing, she fell to the floor after almost stumbling out of the space. In this instance I had the impression that the thing actually had a good grip on the performer and the uncertainty about who was pulling the strings that Latour described in the above statement was indeed palpable.

I have observed a certain uprising of things/materials in several contemporary performances that are choreographed in such a way that things are allowed to act and to have a bearing on the choreography. At times it indeed seems as if no one and nothing any longer wants to accept merely serving as a means for the conveyance of a will that is declared to be the highest purpose (as Latour has stated).<sup>11</sup>

The objects in *Pulling Strings* are anthropomorphised, as are the cherries in Meyer-Keller's performance *Death is Certain* (2002), hence the spectator can identify with the dancing mike stand just as with the sour cherry that is pricked all over. But in *Pulling Strings* the working of emergent causality becomes evident insofar as several times the strings became snarled up, causing the performance to be interrupted or discontinued. In these cases the actor-network or the meshwork led to a course of events that the choreographer did not intend. The strings were not fully under control but were actants in Latour's sense, as intermediaries in a network of humans and things, which at times meant that the performance could not be continued because the strings could not be disentangled.

\*

Mette Ingvarsten's *The Artificial Nature Project* as well as Eva Meyer-Keller's *Pulling Strings* were presented on 27 November 2014 as part of *SCORES No 9: no/things* at the Tanzquartier Wien.



1  
In Games People Play

Our time is marked by a proliferation of things: physical things, mental things, virtual things... This »thingly contamination of the present«<sup>1</sup>, which started with the birth of modern industrialization, and was furthered by the rise of the information economy, the specialisation of knowledge and above all the digitalisation and virtualisation of society, has led to an increasing equalization of »everything«. Being confronted with bionic transplants, artificial intelligent systems, virtual money, the Internet, online services, the great pacific garbage patch etcetera. It has become hard to make a clear distinction between categories of »things«. As such, the traditional boundaries between subject and object, animate and inanimate, organic and artificial, material and immaterial, natural and cultural... have all become blurry. Consequently we can rightly refer to our surroundings using the general category of »things«.

The augmentation and equalization of things confronts us with the growing need to make choices between them. We cannot take »everything« into account. Confronted with

the tsunami of things we need to decide on which thing we focus and which we neglect. To make these choices we create functional systems to organise them. These systems— which are in them things— arrange our attention and tell us what we should take into account in a given situation. They decide which things appear and which disappear. A good example for this is search engines, like Google, which help us to cope with an enormous amount of things by creating a logical system that gives an output on the basis of a certain input. We can also think about cars, where systematic organisations of lights, sounds, and spatial organisations tell us what we should focus on in certain situations. Another organising system is the system of theatre. In theatre there is an abundance of things that create the production together. The production is not only shaped by the actors, but also by the light, the music, the stage it is performed on, the venue it is performed in, the program book that accompanies it, the mood of the spectator, the quality of the seating etcetera. These things are all »actors« playing a role in the co-

creation of the piece. Although they all play a crucial part in the performance most of them however are neglected, or understood as subordinate or servile to the human actions. The reason for this is that the operational logic in theatre is centred—or focussed—on the body and the voice<sup>2</sup>. The human body and the human voice are regarded as the prime medium and are thus being displayed while the rest is—often literally—hidden backstage.

<sup>1</sup> Tristan Garcia. *Form and Object: A Treaty of Things* (trans. Jon Cogburn, Mark Allan Ohm), Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014, p.1

<sup>2</sup> In the article *Dance in General* Rudi Laermans relates this focus on the human body to a »solid body humanism« that is still omnipresent in dance, performance and—we might add— theatre. See: Laermans, Rudi. *Dance in General or Choreographing the Public, Making Assemblages*, *Performance Research*. 13:1, 2008, p.7-14

Together with the proliferation of—physical, mental, virtual, simple, complex—things there is also a proliferation of systems that organize these things that devise our attention, guide us through the mass of objects and decide what is worth to be seen, archived, performed, etcetera. This proliferation of systems and things gives us a chance to critically reflect on them by confronting them with each other and playing them out against each other. In doing so *TITLE* wants to look at the systems and their logical operations. It wants to explore how they function and how they could be built on different premises, thus producing a different hierarchy of things and a different distribution of attention. *TITLE* explores the potential of things to perform outside of their traditional hierarchies. How would these things behave in different hierarchical constellation? What happens for example once you take the subordinate actions in theatre as serious as the human gestures on stage? What is the rhythm they produce together? What is their potential to evoke a world on stage?

In *TITLE* we want to create a new organisational system on stage. We want to engage in an impossible experiment: what if we would be able to push the reset button and undo all the systems that we have created around us. In doing this we speculate on a moment where there is no hierarchy of things, no clear distribution of focus between them. At that moment »every-thing« is of equal value and gets equal attention. Staging this imaginary starting point we will look at different systems to recreate a certain order and see how these different systems influence the performance of the thing. Looking into this we will try to dismantle the basic logical operations of a system and to see what happens if we start playing around with these operations. What if we connect them to each other, play them out against each other, add new operations etcetera? In doing so, we will shift the attention from the signifying to the operational capacity of things. In other words the central question transforms from »what does it mean?« to »how does it work?«. By constructing and deconstructing differ-

ent systems we will display the mechanics that are behind them. We want to understand and lay bare how the relations between things are realized, how they change through variations in logical operation and how they create a certain history through time. *TITLE* is a speculative attempt to find a new logic to »choreograph« things; of devising things: things around us, things in us, and us amongst things.



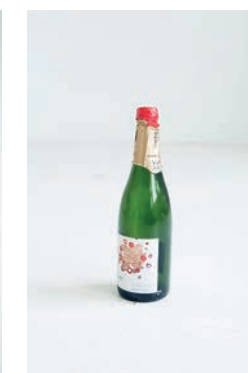
2  
In the Thing



3  
In the Forgotten  
Language



4  
In the Joke and Its  
Relation to  
the Unconscious



5  
In It



6  
In the Collective  
Unconscious



7  
In the Order



8  
In the Superego



9  
In the Secret  
Object of Ideology



10  
In the Order of  
Things



11  
In Love, Guilt and  
Reparation



12  
In the Reality Bug



13  
In the Discreet  
Charm of  
the Bourgeoisie



14  
In Tempting the  
Beast



15  
In Belle de Jour



16  
In the Crimes of  
Passion



17  
In the Dangerous  
Secret



26  
In a Last Charm



27  
In the Escape from  
Freedom



28  
In a Vibrant  
Matter



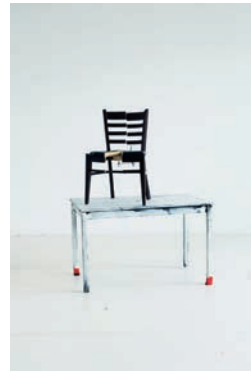
29  
In the Ego



18  
In Dirty Dancing



19  
On a Table



20  
In the  
Eco-terrorism



21  
In the Saturday  
Night Fever



30  
In the Jungle Book



31  
In the Savage Mind



32  
In the Undiscovered  
Self



33  
In the Theory  
of Justice



22  
In the Solitude of  
Prime Numbers



23  
In the End of  
Certainty



24  
In an Obscure  
Certainty



25  
In a Certain  
Obscurity



34  
In the Denial  
of Death



35  
In a Slippery Trial



36  
The Road



37  
In a Mysterious  
Witness



38  
In the Wealth of  
the Nations



39  
In a Love Attack



40  
In the Ego again



41  
On the Road



50  
In a Man Without a  
Country



51  
In Dr. Strangelove Or How I  
Learned to Stop Worrying  
and Love the Bomb



52  
In Tool-being



53  
In Die Kritik der  
reinen Vernunft



42  
On the Road again



43  
In the Ego and  
the Id



44  
On Dreams



45  
On Kissing, Tickling,  
and Being Bored



54  
In Das Kapital



55  
In the Human  
Comedy



56  
In After Nature



57  
In Being  
and Nothingness



46  
In Beyond the Plea-  
sure Principle



47  
In Zen or the  
Art of Motorcycle  
Maintenance



48  
In a Nomad's  
Reality



49  
In the Dangerous  
Secret



58  
In Love in a Time of  
Loneliness



59  
In Beyond  
Expectation



60  
In the Count of  
Monte Cristo



61  
In the Prince

The Thing<sup>2</sup> and the Forgotten Language<sup>3</sup> is the Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious<sup>4</sup>.  
It<sup>5</sup> and the Forgotten Language<sup>3</sup> is the Collective Unconscious<sup>6</sup>.

The Order<sup>7</sup> and It<sup>5</sup> is the Superego<sup>8</sup>. The Superego<sup>8</sup> with the Secret Object of Ideology<sup>9</sup> is the Order of Things<sup>10</sup>.  
The Order of Things<sup>10</sup> without the Order<sup>7</sup> is Love, Guilt and Reparation<sup>11</sup>.

The Discreet Charm<sup>13</sup> on the Reality Bug<sup>12</sup> is Tempting the Beast<sup>14</sup>.  
Tempting the Beast<sup>14</sup> with Belle de Jour<sup>15</sup> is a Crime of Passion<sup>16</sup>.

A Dangerous Secret<sup>17</sup>, the Forgotten Language<sup>3</sup> and the Crime of Passion<sup>16</sup> is the Dirty Dancing<sup>18</sup>.  
The Dirty Dancing<sup>18</sup> on a Table<sup>19</sup> is the Saturday Night Fever<sup>21</sup>. The Reality Bug<sup>12</sup> on a Table<sup>19</sup> is the Eco-terrorism<sup>20</sup>.

A Plank on The Solitude of Prime Numbers<sup>22</sup>, on the Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie<sup>13</sup>, is the End of Certainty<sup>23</sup>.  
The Reality Bug<sup>12</sup> on the End of Certainty<sup>23</sup> is an Obscure Certainty<sup>24</sup>.  
An Obscure Certainty<sup>24</sup> without the Solitude of Prime Numbers<sup>22</sup> creates a Certain Obscurity<sup>25</sup>.  
The Solitude of Prime Numbers<sup>22</sup> on the Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie<sup>13</sup> is a Last Charm<sup>26</sup>.

The Escape from Freedom<sup>27</sup> on Belle de Jour<sup>15</sup> on the Solitude of Prime Numbers<sup>22</sup> on a Table<sup>19</sup> is a Vibrant Matter<sup>28</sup>.

The Undiscovered Self<sup>32</sup> and the Certainty is the Theory of Justice<sup>33</sup>. The Theory of Justice<sup>33</sup> with the Denial of Death<sup>34</sup> is a Slippery Trial<sup>35</sup>. A Slippery Trial<sup>35</sup> with the Road<sup>36</sup> is a Mysterious Witness<sup>37</sup>.  
A Mysterious Witness<sup>37</sup> with the Escape from Freedom<sup>27</sup> is the Wealth of the Nations<sup>38</sup>.  
Belle de Jour<sup>15</sup> on the Denial of Death<sup>34</sup> is a Love Attack<sup>39</sup>.

The Undiscovered Self<sup>32</sup> is on the Road<sup>41</sup>.  
The Ego again<sup>40</sup> is on the Road again<sup>42</sup>.  
The Ego and the Id<sup>43</sup>.  
The Ego and the Id<sup>43</sup> and the Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie<sup>13</sup> is on Dreams<sup>44</sup>.  
The Escape from Freedom<sup>27</sup> on Dreams<sup>44</sup> is on Kissing, Tickling, and Being Bored<sup>45</sup>.

The Secret Object of Ideology<sup>9</sup> on Kissing, Tickling, and Being Bored<sup>45</sup> is Beyond the Pleasure Principle<sup>46</sup>.

The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie<sup>13</sup> on the Road again<sup>42</sup> is Zen or the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance<sup>47</sup>.  
A Nomad's Reality<sup>48</sup> with a Dangerous Secret<sup>49</sup> is a Man Without a Country<sup>50</sup>.  
A Man Without a Country<sup>50</sup> and the Secret Object of Ideology<sup>9</sup> is Dr. Strangelove  
Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb<sup>51</sup>.

The Thing<sup>2</sup> and the Undiscovered Self<sup>32</sup> is the Tool-being<sup>52</sup>.

The Tool-being<sup>52</sup> in combination with the Denial of Death<sup>34</sup> is Die Kritik der reinen Vernunft<sup>53</sup>.  
Die Kritik der reinen Vernunft<sup>53</sup> with the Plank is Das Kapital<sup>54</sup>.  
The Road<sup>36</sup>, the Denial of Death<sup>34</sup> and the Undiscovered Self<sup>32</sup> is the Human Comedy<sup>55</sup>.  
The Human Comedy<sup>55</sup> with the plank make After Nature<sup>56</sup>.

The Thing<sup>2</sup> and a Plank is Being and Nothingness<sup>57</sup>.  
It<sup>5</sup> with Belle de Jour<sup>15</sup> is Love in a Time of Loneliness<sup>58</sup>.

Love in a Time of Loneliness<sup>58</sup> and the Secret Object of Ideology<sup>9</sup> is Beyond Expectation<sup>59</sup>.  
The Secret Object of Ideology<sup>9</sup> and the Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie<sup>13</sup>  
and Belle de Jour<sup>15</sup> is the Count of Monte Cristo<sup>60</sup>.  
The Count of Monte Cristo<sup>60</sup> with the Escape from Freedom<sup>27</sup> instead of the Secret Object of Ideology<sup>9</sup> is the Prince<sup>61</sup>.

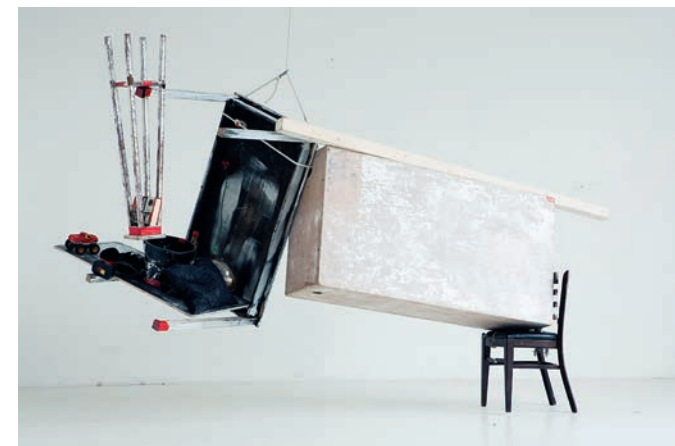
Almost all<sup>1-61</sup> constitutes: Gender Trouble<sup>62</sup>, a Brave New World<sup>63</sup>, or a Room with a View<sup>64</sup>.



62  
In Gender Trouble



63  
In a Brave New World



64  
In a Room with a View

Krassimira Kruschkova

# *When we speak of all these things...*

NIETZSCHE ON STAGE

*When we speak of trees, colours, snow, and flowers,  
we believe we know something about the things themselves,  
although what we actually have access to are just  
metaphors of things, which do not correspond at all to the  
entities themselves.*

*(»On truth and lie in an extra-moral sense«, Friedrich Nietzsche)*



How to get things to speak and which organ to listen to them with, to their differently organised articulation, to their materiality? How to re-think things, how to choreograph them, their resistance, their contingency, their emergent causality? How do things choreograph us—and our nothingness?

*If someone hides a thing behind a bush, and then looks for this thing there, and finds it there, there is nothing admirable about that mode of hide-and-peek: but that is the way it is with the seeking and finding of »truth« within the rational sphere, Friedrich Nietzsche writes in *On truth and lie in an extra-moral sense*.*

In an oscillation between the literal and the figurative—following Nietzsche's own text movement—, Peter Stamer's staging of *On truth and lie in an extra-moral sense*<sup>1</sup> does not hide anything we then are supposed to find; rather, it literally shows how it works, in stunning simplicity, in all its complexity. The performer Frank Willens wriggles amidst the audience which is situated *on stage*, surrounding a wooden scaffold. The cubic scaffold itself is enclosed by a floor frame marked in white which the audience is advised not to step on. For it is a very fragile building, the individual boards only kept together by their own weight. But how much do they weigh, those boards that are supposed to signify the world?

And how much lightness does a statically tight—and exactly because of that not static—stage installation of terms bear? Or, with Nietzsche: *In this respect man can probably be admired as a mighty architectural genius who succeeds in building an infinitely complicated conceptual cathedral on floating foundations. Of course, in order to anchor himself to such a foundation, the building must be as light as a spiderweb—strong enough not to be blown apart by the wind, yet delicate enough to be carried along by the wave.*

The interesting thing about the wooden sculpture is that which one does not see, or rather what one sees as nothingness, for it really is nothing that keeps the boards together—just as the nothingness in film, the cut is the most important thing, or just as Kleist's famous vault of loose stones does not collapse because all the stones

want to tumble down together at the same time. Or Nietzsche again: *As an architectural genius, man excels the bee; for the bee builds out of wax that it collects from nature, while man builds out of a much more subtle material, concepts, which he must fabricate out of his own self. In this respect he is quite admirable...*

Now Frank Willens ups the ante, he crawls into the already threateningly jiggling ›climbing frame‹ of terms, into the grid cube built out of loose boards, magic cube, Rubik's cube, and begins to recite Nietzsche's text from the year 1873. Frank Willens directly addresses the audience, at first gazing through the boards, not so much a window- than a grid-gaze. Some spectators move along around the cube, following Frank Willens around the scaffold who keeps changing his position while thinking out loud, speaking to the public.

For the stage direction again and again focuses the text as direct address to the audience and as a question: Nietzsche's sentence *What does man know about himself!* (exclamation mark in Nietzsche's text) here sounds like this: *For what do you really know about yourself?* (question mark in the performance script): Direct address of the other as a trick, but also as a decision, as a position that does not accept rhetorical exclamation marks without bending, warping, deforming, inflecting, declining, conjugating them into question marks. In direct interaction with the audience the work thus allows for variations, extrapolations, literal shifts into the incalculable decontrolling the conditions of experience.

Frank Willens, keeping on talking, sticks his head out of the boards towards the audience, another type of scaffold. Or is the trestle of boards actually a stake? According to Antonin Artaud the artist gives signs down from the stake, solitary, unique signs which therefore are none, which focus singularity, irretrievability. With his head ›on the scaffold‹ Frank Willens discusses *that man is based on a lack of mercy, insatiable greed, murder, that man is based on the indifference that stems from his ignorance—while day-dreaming on a tiger's back. Given this state of affairs, where in the world does the desire for truth originate?* (Again, an exclamation mark in the original text, a question mark in the performance script.)



Slowly, board for board, Willens climbs the wooden scaffold, skeleton, corset, and asks Nietzsche's question: *What is a word?* Here, Peter Stamer and Frank Willens add a list of words of their own, putting—leading the text's rhetoric into aporia—a long list of things before Nietzsche's short list *When we speak of trees, colours, snow, and flowers...* (See the motto of this text.)

The performance script: *When we speak of bricks, or walls, houses, when we speak of cars, tyres, bicycles, when we speak of streets and lights, street lamps, or cushions to sit on, or black cubes, when we speak of cables, lamps, sofas, when we speak of beds, when we speak of pillows, chairs, when we speak of blankets, plates, bowls, forks, spoons, glasses, cups, when we speak of eye glasses, when we speak of pins, sweaters, when we speak of pants, trousers, shoes, socks, underwear, hats, bags, wallets, credit cards, when we speak of tanks, satellites, missiles, guns, when we speak of fences, when we speak of explosions, when we speak of hospitals, when we speak of doctors and railroads and s-bahns and u-bahns, and airplanes and blimps, when we speak of helicopters, when we speak of stairs, staircases, railings, when we speak of flowers or trees, when we speak of all these things...*

A list is exactly in Nietzsche's sense not about an *equation of the dissimilar* but rather about its non-hierarchical dissemination. And when we talk about lists, we are talking beyond causality, the list is rather defined by the principle of conjunction: of correlative, paratactic conjunction and not of subordinating, hypotactic one, it is serial enumerating, stringing together which makes commonplaces come apart at the seams instead of commonly coming together. Therefore often the mere listing, itemising, the hierarchyless stringing together or alphabetising of materials in performative processes names nameless differences, short-circuits parallel levels of articulation.<sup>2</sup>

This list also reminds me of that impossible taxonomy of animals by Borges<sup>3</sup> which Foucault quotes in *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*: A list voiding dependences, subordinated togetherness and subordinating conjunctions, a paratactical instead of hypotactical list which distributes and disappoints the control and relief functions of collective laughter:

Instead of subordinating conjunction—conjunctive, the mode of possibility, the ›what-if mode‹.

Conjunctive and the comical as esprit of the possible: As a tremor of levels, the comical addresses the vibrating intervals, the fault lines between parallel worlds which we, funny humans, so funnily belong to simultaneously—as funny as that juxtaposing, paratactic classification of animals by Jorge Luis Borges. In this fictional animalic list, the comical paradoxically short-circuits parallel levels of articulation and argues against witless theories of association, getting stuck in these dried-up theories like in one's craw. »Laughter is a chaos of articulation«, Walter Benjamin says.

Meanwhile, Willens climbs the ›scaffold of terms‹. At last, sitting on the edge of a board from the topmost layer, he addresses man who conceives himself to be the measure of all things: *What is truth? A mobile army of metaphors and anthropomorphisms, a sum of human relations, which after long use seem solid, canonical, and binding to the people: Truths are illusions, however man has forgotten that they are illusions, merely worn-out metaphors which have become impotent, coins which have lost their face, and can be used only as metal.*

With a blah-blah gesture of hands above his head which might mark a puppet dialogue, Willens follows Nietzsche's question-answer rhetoric, as if opening the big mouth of metaphors that eats up things—as if they were *pac-man* in a computer game. (The name is derived from the Japanese onomatopoeia *paku paku* for »repeatedly opening and closing one's mouth«, eating points in a maze while being pursued by ghosts.)

Or like this: Which ghosts of reality pursue language while it is trying to make a point about metaphors? A spectre-, ghost-, gesture-game on Nietzsche's scaffold of terms which could collapse like a house of cards. No, not ›could‹—shortly after the ›big mouth game‹ the scaffold actually falls in noisily, gradually: after a small, well calculated movement by Willens, and another one, another one.

But how much calculation does a singular fall need and take, a singular case [the German word *Fall* also means *case*], a case study, a case of chance, a contingency or the *dice of terms* Nietzsche talks about: *Every word becomes a concept as soon as it is supposed to simultaneously fit countless, more or less similar phenomena... Just as no leaf is ever exactly the same as any other, certainly the concept »leaf« is formed by arbitrarily dropping those individual differences, by forgetting the distinguishing factors... In order to form a word for a thing we let that thing, one could say, fall like a leaf. Nietzsche: Of course, the intuitive man suffers more violently when he does suffer; indeed, he also suffers more often, because he does not know how to learn from experience and he falls again and again into the same pit into which he fell before.*

While *science*, so Nietzsche, *will have to dig successfully in these shafts forever, and everything it finds will coincide and not contradict itself (...)* the intuitive man (...) falls again and again into the same pit. A fall practice full of loss and lust. So, before we take too much of a shine to the semantic falling game, the installation crashes down. However, the fall only is a falling apart at first glance; rather, it is a statically skilful contraction.

After the collapse, Willens continues to shift the boards. Does he try to build a new sculpture by pulling the boards more and more apart, trying to balance on them, to rock, to swing? This swing scene at Halle G of Tanzquartier Wien is shorter and less explicit than at MUMOK Wien, where Willens speaks the last part of Nietzsche's text as if reviewing the pictures hanging on the museum walls. Who's pulling whose leg pulling the boards in this experiment *on truth and lie*? Is it a monstrous game of spillikins where one has to try and lift one wooden stick with another without touching the other sticks, mostly in vain. One is allowed to (and Willens does) lift, rotate the sticks, the cube boards or *concepts, bony and cubeshaped like a dice, and equally rotatable* (Nietzsche) either with the hand, or with another stick, board, concept...

A work which does not *hide a thing behind a bush* in order to find this thing there, is rather performatively spelling out metaphors, exactly in that indissoluble process/product

tension—in interaction with the text, the audience, the space, the situation, the context: »In search of knowledge about the world, about its truth, about itself«, Peter Stamer says, »the human being rather gets lost in the woodwork of its lingually composed thinking. To put it casually: its head is boarded up, which keeps it from »facing« things. Depriving these boards which for it seem to signify the world of their foundation: that is what being alive means.«

Nietzsche's text is presumptuous, gauging, incommensurate, extra-morally untimely, *for until now we have heard only of the obligation which society, in order to exist, imposes: to be truthful, i.e., to use the customary metaphors, or in moral terms: the obligation to lie according to an established convention.* (This text passage does not occur in the abbreviated script of the performance.) Presumptuous with regard to theatre conventions, measuring and missing their conditions of possibility, precisely decontrolling them, corresponding with Nietzsche's untimely—the work by Peter Stamer and Frank Willens balances and spells with boards and words. We could thus continue their list: the balance, the ballast, the blah-blah, the boards...

As if we could equally pull boards and legs. As if lies had legs—and feet. As if things were pulling our puppet strings, i.e., our words—pulling the boards, the ground away from under our feet, groundless, for no reason, for nothing.

1  
On truth and lie in an extra-moral sense: Conceived, directed, and set designed by Peter Stamer; performed by Frank Willens; Text: Friedrich Nietzsche; Edited, abridged, supplemented, and partly re-translated *text version* in English by Peter Stamer and Frank Willens. This new creation on Nietzsche's landmark text On truth and lie in an extra-moral sense had its first performance on 29th November, 2015 in the framework of *Philosophy on Stage* at Tanzquartier Wien. It was also shown on 13th and 14th May 2016 at *Zeitraum Exit Mannheim*, at *Impulsanz Vienna* on 28th and 29th July 2016, and in the framework of *Feedback* at Tanzquartier Wien on 27th April.

2  
In that context see also the text by Peter Stamer on his performance *For Your Eyes Only* (2014) published in this issue; or the alphabetically sorted 12-hour work by Yosi Wanunu and Peter Stamer, *The Circus of Life. A–Z* (2015).

3  
Jorge Luis Borges in: Michel Foucault: *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Vintage Books, Random House, Inc., New York 1994, p. IX: »animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.«

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*optisch/haptisch 1: Der Tastsinn im Kino*, Vienna 2014 (with Antonia Lant).

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