



*Improvisation.
Of thoughts. In motion.*

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PRE-CURTAIN

To introduce

[LIGHTS STILL ON.
CURTAINS STILL DOWN.]

Sound of voices in the parterre.

[LIGHTS DIM.]

(offstage voice) Welcome.

We now kindly ask you to silence your phone, for your own courtesy. During the intermissions, we recommend to leave your seat and take a walk. You are allowed to move freely here. Before proceeding, please pay attention to this short announcement.

[PERFORMER APPEARS ON THE PROSCENIUM]

This text is a body. A body of work, the work of a body.
This work is a body and therefore is not perfect.
This text is fine with its imperfections.

This text was written in motion, meaning that its concepts were embodied before having been written.
This text, sometimes, enjoys to feel exhausted.

This text is both too long and too short. It is too personal and too general. It is too exuberant and too shy.
Surely, this text is too moody.

This text is fragile in its structure, full of holes and cracks and apertures. This is how the text can breathe.
This text is fragile in its structure and it is fine with being so.

This text is not touchy, sensitive but not sensible.
If you don't finish it, it will not be mad at you.

This text is not linear, not ordered and not cyclical.
This text loves to jump.

This text has an urge to follow the rhythm.
This text wants to make your brain dance. Wildly.

NOTES:

¹In this text the term "flesh-body" refers to the phenomenological concept of the flesh expressed by M. Merleau-Ponty. Through this term, he tries to overcome traditional metaphysical dualisms, describing the ability of the body to both perceive and be the object of perception.

This text aims to present a practice, a mode of looking; the search for a balance between a hyperactive mind and a flesh-body¹, through movement. Movement is seen as the translator, the medium and the method I use in order to make things clearer. To recall memories which are stored in the muscles. To learn. To process what surrounds me.

The structure of the text wants to echo the concepts presented in it. It is divided in acts as a traditional dance performance would be and it merges thoughts and concepts with autobiographical memories which have been previously stored, and now recalled, in motion.

In the prologue, I will shortly present my background and contextualize my interests, or as they are called in the academic context, "research questions":
- How to use motion as a different way of thinking?
- On which levels does movement occur in our daily life, and by what is this movement influenced?

In the first act I will explore the affects of movement on memory by describing an artwork I have developed at the beginning of the Master's programme.
The second act will focus on language and how it enters and influences the movement's realm.
In the third act, I will discuss the connections between language, movement and memory. In order to do so, I will present the script of the performance *○ (white cube, bouncy ball)*, which is part of my Master Project, and I'll unfold the ideas behind it.

[PERFORMER LEAVES THE PROSCENIUM.]

(offstage voice) Enjoy.

[CURTAINS UP.]

A couple of additional hints for the reader before diving into the dance:

1. Read with pauses and punctuation.
2. While reading, close your eyes frequently (it helps to imagine).

PROLOGUE

Your eyes are moving now, while going through this text. From left to right, and down again, jumping to the next line. Sitting, or maybe laying down, you keep adjusting your position. To remain still is so unnatural. And uncomfortable. You scratch your nose, wiggle on your seatbones, take a sip of water. Further away, the curtain oscillates. Maybe, outside the window, the snow falls, a truck passes by, a dog runs.

"Get out of my Mind. Get out of this room."¹

I have been trapped inside my brain for so long. Too long. An overworking, overworked mind detached from the body. How to criticise control while keep controlling? How to escape the predominance of the mind without exiting it? Easy answer: it is not really possible. This overabundance of cerebral thinking slowly became the problem, an impediment to any action. How to find relief, to feel suspended, to escape this pure cerebral way of working? I have found (or re-found), while searching, that feeling of suspension in motion. I therefore chose to physically engage in art making. To move made me stop. To stop allowed me to move. Freely.

[PAUSE. REWIND.]

I have spent 13 years of my life in close contact with my body. My body and its movement. I was a dancer. However, when spending too much time in symbiosis with something or someone, I start to see all its flaws. I get easily annoyed by imperfections. My body made me tired.

Tired of my body, I have tried to live without it, exhaust it and erase all its memories. To achieve a complete control over your own bodily sensations, to resist them, gives a feeling of empowerment and pureness. It is as magical as scary.

I thought my brain could impress a force on my body. Impress and suppress. *If something is not perfect, change it or discard it.* (An old silly belief I am slowly getting rid of).

[FAST FORWARD.]

Which place does my physical body hold now, in the digital world?
How to engage with the surrounding through the flesh-body?

How to stimulate awareness in motion?

I am worried about the future of this body, its memories and its present. How to fully use its potentialities?

I have learned that to bodily engage with something facilitates a deeper connection (attention and time spent) to it. This happens when involving all the different senses, kinesthetic included, to connect with this something, for instance an artwork.

How to create a frame for *the attender* (I will avoid during the essay to refer to them as *the viewer*), a portion of time and space, in which to experience, or feel suspended from the *everyday*?

A frame in which to become aware of the fact that we are bodily presences in space?

These became my questions.

NOTE: Analysis of "the everyday".

Quality: Percussive and vibratory

Speed: Fast. Too fast.

Shape: The daily is liquid. It does not want to hold a shape.²

Impulse: Pushed by the society to be flexible, be new, be productive.

Sound: Loud and noisy (mainly).

Sometimes even imperceptible.

[TAKE TIME.]

Let's take some time to think about time. Three layers coexist in motion:

- the memory of the known
- the knowledge produced in the now
- the echos of a possible future.

[MAKE SPACE.]

The body is an entity that shapes the space while moving. Starting from the breath.³

The space as material.

In motion, the body shapes ephemeral sculptures evolving over time. Movement does not just shape, but maps. It maps the space. It maps the body. Both geographical maps and body maps are created through movement. Movement defines relationships. Proximity and distance. Movement produces knowledge. A practice of discovery.

..space becomes a co-production between body and surrounding. It is not something through which you move, but something that you define in the act of moving. Each body becomes a duet with space.⁴

Introducing the volume *Dance. Documents on contemporary art*, Andrea Lepecki claims that dance could be used as curatorial practice. (Dance is seen here as a series of movements in space, unlinked from its legacy and techniques). How to move in this space? How are you expected to move in it? And how to do so in an exhibition space?
New questions.

I can not help but wonder what freedom really means, then. Andrea Lepecki argues in his article *Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or, the task of the dancer* for the present need of the individual to learn how to move politically - meaning freely - inside the society's frame. How are the structures, tangible and intangible, influencing our motion? Are our paths constantly been choreographed by the situation we find ourselves in?
Structures. Expectations. Social choreography.⁵
The outside. And then there is us, many "self", with agency and wishes.

I want to propose an exercise of imagination. Let's abolish what I have framed as the outside, no more overimposed constraints. Are we really free now? I have my answer, the one that resonate for me. It is a negative one. What do I allow myself to do/feel/imagine? Freedom is then a matter of self-permission and imagination.

"The possibility of imagining a movement towards freedom is foreclosed from the start by a kind of impoverishment of choreographic imagination; movements can only take

place in spaces preassigned for "proper" circulation. Choreography is introjected as a policed dance of quotidian consensus." (Lepecki, 2013)

Every work developed during these two years has been a learning process and came from an improvisation of thoughts in motion. Following a need to move my body, I was driven to new discoveries. But every discovery brings new needs, and new questions. The drive for a new work lives already in the previous one. It builds as a rolling snowball. Actually, while mentioning snowballs, I should try to write an unpretentious snowball poem.⁶

Body
in motion
a frame around
playing free inside the
box. black box white cube
improvisation. take a swim in my
thoughts. You can also run with them.

I will try to write this text with my body. I will dance all the concepts. I'll let them resonate in me. My wish is to move freely into an exploration, which takes the shape of this text. And I invite you to freely move with me. Let's improvise, using the present limits as opportunities to find unexpected motions. It will be great fun.

NOTES:

¹ *Get out of my Mind. Get out of this room.* is an artwork by Bruce Naumann from 1968. The work is a sound recording which is played in the room: when the audience member enters the space, he finds himself immersed in these words, an experience on the edge between claustrophobia and freedom. The author, who has often correlate the body to an architectural space, wishes to bring attention to behaviours and promote an awareness of the body, as well as the mind.

² Zygmunt Bauman in *Liquid modernity* widely investigates the characteristics of the contemporary society, the overwhelming sense of uncertainty or the privatization of ambivalence, and defines the necessary flexibility of the person to shift between different status and social positions as a liquid would do.

³ Giuseppe Penone's idea of the breath as "automatic, involuntary sculpture" deeply influenced my vision of space and the affect of our motion in it at the beginning of this research.

⁴ Susan Leigh Foster. *Move Choreographing you*. Hayward Publishing, Southbank Centre 2011, p. 37

⁵ Social choreography can be associated, or perhaps consider a branch of what J.J. Rouseau has defined as *social theatre*. Rouseau believed in the natural human condition of freedom, which has been constrained by chains and constructions overimposed by the society. Among these, for instance, roles or attitudes that needs to be performed, modes of speaking as well as gestuality.

⁶ These poems were composed according to the Oulipean form of Snowball poetry: each progressive section is one character/letter longer than the preceding one.

ACT I

On memory

Cavalese, 31st December 2018

Dear D,

I am writing you this letter even if you are sitting right in front of me. Working on your computer.

Last time we saw each other was 6 months ago. Time makes details appear as big changes. I look at you and I feel worried. Worried because you are starting to forget.

You have always been good at it, unconsciously. You don't remember anything from your painful childhood or from your heart surgery. You had decided to erase all those images and move forward. Sometimes it is the only way we can survive. I know, however, that the scars on your chest and chin still hurt when the weather changes.

You also have been extremely good at remembering, though. You knew the exact placement of all your business cards, their color, format and the names on them. It was incredible. When a child, I thought you were a wizard. Who had eaten a compass. But this is an other story.

I look at you now, immersed in your work. A job that is exhausted. A job that is exhausting you.

I wish you could just quit it.

I look at you now, after 5 days spent together. I sense your memory evaporating, I see it. I can really picture it. Memories evading your brain. I would like to grasp them, keep them and put them in a jar. Hermetic, like those you use for flour and sugar. Maybe I could bake a cake with them and ask you to eat it, eat it until the memories get back in place.

I believe your muscles still have this memory. I mean, you were a bodybuilder. Your muscles have been trained to keep a memory. I am sure it is still there, in those now deflated muscles. I want to pinch or punch them to make the memories arise again. Come back! I'll scream. Come back!

Dear D, I have this thing with memory. I remember things in pieces. Sentences that people said became the mantras of my life. Many of your utterances are in the pile as well. Memory is such an obscure thing. Memory of past actions, emotions, and places. It's fascinating. Always with a phone in your hand, I think you are losing memory. Or maybe, it is just getting lazy. Inside the daily rush, we look for something new. Memories feel just too heavy for the speed of this society.

I would like to ask you: Can you cultivate sensations and impressions inside yourself? If I plant them, can you promise me to water them?

I would like to play *memory* with you. Flip. Flip. To help you train your brain.

What if the mind would be a muscle.¹

I would like to teach you how to dance. And dance next to you. I am sure, when in motion, you would remember more. I am sure, when in motion, we could write new memories in you. In us. In our muscles.

Yours, me.

I am interested in the relationship between memory and movement. Their connections and differences.

I am interested in finding the residues in the memory of a movement, seen, performed, imagined. How do they sink in. Stay and spread. Memory is so fascinating. Something I will never completely understand.

Memory as remembering. Memory as forgetting. Memory as learning. Memory as recalling.

Memories and memory.

I have so many memories connected to memory.

I can still recall a poem I have learned by heart in primary school. It starts like this:

*Ei fu, siccome immobile
dato il mortal sospiro,
stette la spoglia immemore
orba di tanto spiro,
[.]²*

I remember poems because they have a rhythm. They easily stick in my head. Also silly summer hits easily stick in my head. I've thought for many years that memory was just an ability of the brain.

[LOOK BACK.]

Memory is one of the biggest gift a dancer could have. If you are not gifted, you simply have to work harder.

When I started my professional dance training, I could not remember any dance score. This made my teacher really angry, repeatedly. In order to improve my memory, I had to play the card game "memory" constantly and to practice techniques of memorization.

One day somehow, to memorize with my body became extremely easy. While moving, the notions seemed to write themselves in my muscles. This is how I still learn concepts, I can not remember without embodying them.

I am thinking about a night, trying to memorize a large amount of dates for an history test. I was sharing a room with five people in the boarding school back then. Frustrated and very tired, we decided to animate the learning by playing a game, which consisted in jumping on a different bed whenever stating an important event. The fastest "jumper" was going to win some cookies. Memorizing by spatially distributing all the concepts revealed itself as the most efficient way of memorizing. To create a path where to place items in order to remember them is not an invention of mine, neither of my roommates. Plato had beat us on time. The *method of loci* is a memorizing technique in which the information that needs to be remembered are visually placed along an imaginative path, or in a familiar building. While "walking" through the space, it becomes easy to recall what is placed where, in the right order. Even if the application of

the spatial distribution of thoughts I adopted was pretty different from the ancient Greeks' one, the idea remains the same. Move inside a space in order to remember, and recall.

Now I know that memory is not just an ability of the brain.

To remember

To recall

To memorize

To learn by heart

To learn by heart means to memorize thoroughly, to understand and learn something so well that it can be written or recited without thinking. Literally, it means that our memories are stored not in our brain, but in our heart, in our body. The ancient Greeks believed that the heart, the most noticeable internal organ, was the place where intelligence and memory, as well as emotions, were placed. Their mistaken assumption does not seem so wrong to me, by now.

Muscles have a memory.

Muscles have a memory and sometimes to remember is painful. I have lost all my muscles one day. I just ate them from the inside. I wonder if I can call myself a cannibal. Maybe I just wanted to erase all my memories by eating them. It is easy to trick your mind and forget what is uncomfortable.

It is much harder to erase memories of sensations and feelings from your body.

I see the body as a storage.

I have heard that the body is an archive, but in my opinion it more closely resembles a storage.

The difference, even if can seem irrelevant, is that an archive is usually extremely well organized. You, the archivist, know exactly where to find a specific folder.

The body functions differently though. The body is a storage, exactly as one of those rooms you stuff things in, forgetting what already lives inside it. One day, looking for a different cardboard box, you find forgotten objects that project you in an other time. This happens when moving mindfully and freely with your body. It is the principle of *somatic awareness*.

[PAUSE. ZOOM IN.]

Somatics refers to movement practices and bodywork which focus more on the internal feelings and sensations of the mover rather than the technique and

performative skills. *Feldenkrais Method* and *Authentic Movement* are just a few among many of the practices that became really popular in the last decade. While attending movement classes of this kind, it is common to feel shaken or to respond emotionally to a simple motion, to which no meaning was previously connected. It is a scary but sensational moment when memories arise. The body is the most complex and precious storage ever owned.

These techniques, which are now being adopted also outside the movement-research sphere, are often used to recall traumatic experiences and to help the mover to process them. However, the therapeutic side is not predominant in my research. I explore the abilities of the body to memorize, learn and recall individual and collective memories, to understand which meanings are projected on specific motions and how free or choreographed our possibilities of moving are.

At the beginning of my second semester of the Master program, precisely on February 2018, I was invited together with my classmates to exhibit in Galleria Alva, located inside the library of the main hospital in Umeå, (SE). The context of the public library appeared to me as the most natural starting point for my project.

Borrowing the concept of the little free libraries, shelves commonly placed outdoors where a book can be taken if one other is donated back, I created a site-specific installation in which instead of books, movements were composed, borrowed and donated. Pick a movement, leave a movement.

A set of instructions had been placed in the middle of the library, together with a bookshelf identical to the ones dedicated to the books. The audience was asked to follow the instructions and create new movements to donate to the library, mixing together simple elements such as basic actions, body parts and spatial information. The work's aim was to investigate the ability of the body to memorize and to remember, as well as trigger new awareness of the choreography of bodies in public spaces.

During the exhibition opening, I activated the tool creating and performing new movements, together with the public which had the will to join me.

NOTES:

¹ This sentence is also the title of one of Yvonne Rainer's well known artworks. Her research has been, and constantly is, extremely influential for my practice.

² Alessandro Manzoni. *Il cinque Maggio*. 1821

³ I am here borrowing the term pedestrian from the Judson Dance Theatre. With this word, I am referring to people who are not technically trained in dance or other movement practices.

In this work, movements occurred on many levels: as idea, as graphic and verbal representations, as mental images based on these representations, as observations of the movements of others and as experienced by the person moving herself. These different forms are never fully separate from one another.

To be honest, the work did not function as I had expected. First at all, not many people during the live performance decided to actively engage in the motion. This, which appeared to me as a failure, also made me understand some dynamics of relational aesthetic's artworks and resized my wills/expectations.

As previously stated, I tend to develop each work from the question the previous one has brought. It is a cause-effect chain. What in this case made the whole (embodied) thinking process start was a comment received from an audience member after the performance.

She explained to me why she did not want to actively participate: she really enjoyed watching other bodies moving and look at the ability of a trained body (my body) to interpret a written score. This feedback made me realize that, as a dancer, I have a very different relationship to the movement of my body and therefore, in order to understand how the so called pedestrians³ can relate to my works/thier moving bodies, I have to distance myself from my training.

I will list here, transcribed directly from my notebook, the questions that were moving inside my head during and after the performance/exhibition.

- How do/can we relate to movement?
Moving, watching, imagining.
- Why do people feel comfortable/uncomfortable when asked to move?
- How does the audience bodily engage when looking at an other body moving?
- Is the act of composing, a movement in itself (the movement appears in the imagination of the audience)?

Because of these points to reflect upon that the performance gave me, I still consider the work very important in the progression of my research.

THE LIBRARY OF MOVEMENTS

- ① COMPOSE A MOVEMENT AND DONATE IT TO THE LIBRARY
ACTION + BODY PART + SPATIAL INFORMATION = NEW MOVEMENT
- ② PICK A MOVEMENT FROM THE SHELF AND PERFORM IT
- ③ TAKE THE CHOSEN MOVEMENT HOME AND PERFORM IT UNTIL IT FEELS COMFORTABLE
- ④ NOW THAT THE MOVEMENT IS LEARNED, IT'S YOURS!
FEEL FREE TO TEACH IT TO OTHERS AND MAKE NEW MOVEMENTS SPREAD.

<u>ACTIONS</u>	<u>BODY PARTS</u>	<u>SPATIAL INFOS</u>
LAY	THE RIGHT LEG	AGAINST THE WALL
STAND WITH	YOUR NOSE	IN THE CORNER
TOUCH	YOUR FEET	ON THE FLOOR
TWIST	TWO FINGERS	TOWARDS THE LIGHT
BEND TOWARDS	THE ELBOW	INSIDE THE ROOM
LOOK AT	YOUR BUTT	NEAR THE SHELF
BALANCE WITH	THE HEAD	ON THE DOOR
ROLL	THE EAR	IN THE AIR
SIT WITH	THE KNEE	HIGH UP
PUSH	THE EYES	FORWARD
SQUEEZE	THE ARM	BEHIND YOUR BACK
STRETCH	YOUR BODY	AGAINST HIM/HER
THINK ABOUT	THE CHIN	UNDER THE CHAIR
RUN WITH	THE LEFT SHOULDER	INSIDE
LEAN	THE BELLY	ON THE WINDOW
LISTEN WITH/TO	THE CHEST	NEAR A PLANT
JUMP ON	THE BACK	NEXT TO A PERSON

#thelibraryofmovements

ACT II

On language

"To the five traditional senses - touch sight hearing taste and smell - we must add the sense of movement, or kinaesthesia¹. Its characteristic feature is that it makes use of many receptors, but remarkably it has been forgotten in the count of the senses. By what twist did language suppress the sense most important to survival?"²

Sometimes, I find myself swinging back and forwards sitting in my chair.

Sometimes, I find myself swinging back and forwards while writing, sitting in a chair.

Swinging is the signal that informs me about the quality of the text I am writing. I never look back at texts that did not "move" me during their appearance. I know they are not worth any extra time.

Rhythm. Rhythm is the key of writing, I believe. If a text makes me dance, it needs to be a good one.

To read is a movement.
To write is a movement.

Embodied experiences we have learned how to perform early in our lives.

If the medium is the message³, this text needs to move. A text that produces actions is a text that performs. The text acts itself and therefore can be defined as performative.

[IN BRACKETS]

I do not like labels. I believe that what something does is much more important than what something is.

However, the context of a thesis requires definitions and perhaps clarity, it asks for a frame in order to facilitate interpretations.

I need to find a definition for this text. I need to find a box where to put this text in. Which shape does this box have to have? Size? Material? Color (pattern or solid)?

I need to find a box.

It could actually be an excuse to start organizing all my stuff. Thoughts, clothes, memories.

NOTE TO SELF:
Reflect upon the idea of boxes.

Performative writing is the box in which this text can accept to be put in. A box with an open lid, because performative writing is not a style, neither a fixed movement with strict rules and regulations. It needs to breathe. Simply put, performative writing is a writing that performs. In *What to do things with words*, J.L. Austin defines a performative utterance (I transport the definition to performative text as well) as a sentence that does not only describe, but acts. *Writing as doing* displaces *writing as meaning*: writing becomes meaningful in its material.⁴

Della Pollock, in her essay *Performing writing*, investigates in six loose "excursions" the essence of the form, which is proved to be complex, contradictory and full of friction. She defines it as evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational and sequential. All these qualities can be annoying, if the text is approached conservatively. If you find pieces of sentences, repetitions and jumps, be aware that those are not mistakes. It is the text that performs and acts.

*In this struggle at least, performative writing seems one way to not only to make meaning but to make writing meaningful.*⁵

The relationship between writing and moving has always been tight. To choreograph literally means "to write a dance". Here, however, the text is not a score, but a movement in itself.

I am interested in the connection between movement and language, in the gap between them, in the nuances of translation, if translation is even possible. To translate: not to document, not to compare. The text doesn't aim to explain a motion and the motion does not execute a text, neither follows written instructions.⁶

Text is a fundamental portion of my practice. I consider writing and moving as equally vital. They help me to make sense of things.

Physical thinking is not a phenomenon of learning through physical formulas or calculation.

Physical thinking is a phenomenon of thinking through the movement of the body.

Physical thinking happens in motion. Rhythm, speed, coordination, fatigue, focus, tiredness, satiation.

Physical thinking is a way of entering a different zone. A state of deep learning and evolving.

Go out and take a walk. Or swim some laps.

Your thoughts, most likely, will start to fall into place, like pieces of a puzzle. It happens to me, every time. And every time the stubborn me tends to forget it, tempted by the positivist idea that knowledge comes just from cerebral theory.

To think it is also a movement.

To think is a movement of the brain. To think is a movement of the body.⁷

The thinking brain uses language. The thinking body uses movement. I am not willing to explain the thoughts of my body with words or act words with dance. It is a matter of interpreting, not explaining. It is a matter of coexistence, not fight. The relationship between the thinking brain and the thinking body is not hierarchical, I believe. Talking/writing and moving are two ways of thinking. Thinking is a way of knowledge production. Sharing knowledge, recalling knowledge, keeping knowledge alive. Verbal language and movement are two children I love equally. They are different and their beauty reside in their difference. They complement and implement each other, addressing different issues, touching different spots, creating different images.

It is challenging to establish a non hierarchical setting when writing a thesis: the brain is widely seen as predominant during the thinking process. This is something I want to question.

It is challenging to establish a non hierarchical setting when creating an artwork which includes text: words are often considered easier to be understood and interpreted, they may appear explicative. As material, or images, language does not only denote but connotes: different levels of abstraction can be used to avoid flat explanations. Analogies, hints. Figures of speech.

*The metaphor is probably the most fertile power possessed by man.*⁸

I can not avoid, however, to express my concerns about this language. What happens when the language lacks words? When a bodily feeling can not be translated? When the structure does not allow fluidity? (I am referring here, e.g., to the difficulties of language to embrace a different idea of gender).

My love for limitations makes this question at my eyes even more intriguing. How to use these limitations and work against/around them?

M. Merlau-Ponty has stressed the existence of something prior to language and concepts, which are our perception and the body. On the opposite side, M. Foucault argues about the impossibility to think without language.

"Our erstwhile animal bodies were "utterly destroyed" by history. History and language seem utterly to determine what we will perceive, what we will distinguish as touched, seen or heard." (Foucault in Gendlin, 1992)

I will here present the thesis proposed by E.T. Gendlin, which extends the position of Merlau-Ponty and tries to argue for the idea of the body not as pre-condition that is completely transformed when there is language. (Merlau-Ponty in Gendlin, 1992) His position has strongly resonated in me when encountered.

Merlau-Ponty mentions the space between our backs and Gendlin, borrowing this image, describes with a very simple example the ability of the body to sense what is not possible to actually verbalize.

"Suppose you are walking home at night, and you sense a group of men following you. You don't merely perceive them. You don't merely hear them there, in the space in the back of you. Your body-sense instantly includes also your hope that perhaps they aren't following you, also your alarm, and many past experiences — too many to separate out, and surely also the need to do something — walk faster, change your course, escape into a house, get ready to fight, run, shout My "... expresses the fact that your body-sense includes more than we can list, more than you can think by thinking one thing at a time.

Moreover, he presents the limitations and lack of a vocabulary to discuss what is more than language:

[...] Since it includes all this, the ... is not just a perception, although it certainly includes many perceptions. It is then a feeling? It is certainly felt, but "feeling" usually means emotion. The ... includes emotions, but also so much else. Is it then something mysterious and unfamiliar? No, we always have such a bodily sense of our situations. You have it now, or you would be disoriented as to where you are and what you are doing. Isn't it odd that no word or phrase in our language as yet says this?"⁹

All thinking involves for some extent the body. And the pre-linguistic ability of this body to think, sense, and take decisions in situation needs to be acknowledged, as well as considered valuable in scientific and academic context.

This text is an attempt to use words to shape movements of the brain as well as to interpret movements/... of the body. To find language where there is no vocabulary.

This text tries to be a shared and interchanged space for the action of the thinking body and of the thinking brain.

It mirrors my approach to artistic practice.



NOTES:

¹ According to the Oxford dictionaries, kinaesthesia is defined as the awareness of the position and movement of the parts of the body by means of sensory organs (proprioceptors) in the muscles and joints.

² Alain Berthoz in Carol-Lynne Moore. *Beyond words*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2011.

³ "The medium is the message" is a phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan meaning that the form of a medium embeds itself in any message it would transmit.

⁴ J.L. Austin. *How to do things with words*. Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 1962.

⁵ Della Pollock. *Performing Writing*, In Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (eds.), *The Ends of Performance*. New York: New York University Press, 1998, p.73

⁶ I have to mention here, when dealing with the use of instructions in movement-based performances, the Judson Dance Theatre, John Cage, experimental composer, and Merce Cunningham, avantgarde dancer and choreographer. In the '60, they widely investigated different techniques to compose: chance methods such as dice rolling, coin flipping, and improvisation.

⁷ According to western philosophy tradition, the human body is not capable of thinking, because thinking happens in the human mind". (Levin in *Beyond Words*, 2011) - The ontological dimension of embodiment. However, in order to make sense of the world we live in, body and mind need to collaborate. "We have become accustomed, through the influence of the cartesian tradition, to disengage from the object.. the object is and object through ad through, and consciousness a consciousness through and through.. Thus experience of one's own body runs counter to the reflective procedure with detaches subject and object from each other, and which gives us only the thought about the body, or the body as an idea, and not the experience of the body or the body in reality." M. Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge, 1962. p.198-199

In reality however "my body is the fabric into each all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived words, the general instrument of my comprehension. It is my body that gives significance not only to the natural object, but also to cultural objects like words. (Ponty, 235)

⁸ Jose Ortega y Gasset in Carol-Lynne Moore, *Beyond words*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2011.

⁹ Eugene T. Gendlin. *The primacy of the body. Not the primacy of perception* (1992), in *Man and World 00*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992. p.346-347

ACT III

To shape

To move is a mode of knowledge production and the reiteration of a movement allows to perpetuate this knowledge, develop it, shape it and share it. Repetition is a precious tool, a tool that serves memory, both implicit and explicit.¹ Memories and knowledge that address both the *know-what* and *know-how* of a situation.

Reiteration makes knowledge sink in. Reiteration allows knowledge to surface, it recalls it.

In order to keep a movement alive, it needs to be repeated. In order to keep a story alive, it needs to be retold. They disappear in the moment they manifest themselves.

The words repeated by other people and the thoughts we keep hearing in our minds create stories. And stories create realities. Utterances shape the way we move and physically interact. What kind of world does language create? Which kind of social choreography does language build over time?

Repetition is what defines meaning. Repetition is what can erase that same meaning. Words gain meaning while repeating them. By strenghtning the relationship between signifier and signified. Words change their meaning while repeating them over and over again, like a game children do. A repeated thought is a thought that develops. A repeated thought, when reaching the point of exhaustion, is a shell without meaning. A box you can fill with something new.

To train means to develop the habits, thoughts, or behavior by teaching and repeating.

In order to train a motion, it needs to be rehearsed, over and over again. Insisting, and persisting, the motion will be perfect, one day. Or maybe just exhausted.

I want to exhaust a serie of motions. When exhausted, the meaning will be lost. Why do we train? Why pushing our bodies to their limits? Is the practice or the product our goal, the task or its completion?

○ (*white cube, bouncy ball*)

○ is a shape. A line. A circle.

○ is a sculpture. ○ is a body.

○ is the exploration of a shape. The exploration of a body.

Because ○ is a form, I would like to look at it from two different points of view, both from the top and walking around it.

From above, ○ resembles a suprematist painting. Like the *Black Circle* of Kazimir Malevich. A squared white canvas with a circle in it (in this case the circle moves). As Malevich, I am looking for a form in which non-objective feelings come to be expressed. For Malevich, the black shape denotes feeling, while the white field expressed the void beyond this feeling.² ○ is my attempt to address subjectivity, to position myself inside a world in which I struggle to fit in. This sphere, which is a circle when seen from a bird-view, is a figure that tries to challenge expectations, outside and inside the museum institution, both through its being, meaning a live installation, and its behavior.

A simple shape: a sphere. A simple material: the flesh-body. Walking around it, ○ could look like a modernist sculpture, but it is not. ○ is actually the opposite of it. A reaction to the ideas of stability and absolutes.

Embracing the idea of perfection and exasperating it, I want to reveal its absurdity. Moving, I want to subvert the traditional idea of the female "passive" body and the "active" masculine one. As observed by Whitney Chadwick ³ *modernism celebrates masculine authority, constructed categories predicated on binary oppositions, where women have occupied the negative relation to creativity and high culture.*

I am both the sculptor and the sculpted. Therefore I have the possibility to choose the canons of a "perfect" body, as an ancient Greek artist would have done and as the society continues to do today. Or how to criticize these canons.

LIVE PERFORMANCE VERSION

O (white cube, bouncy ball)

I am on stage singing (I would like to be...), I put on my shoes.

Welcome the audience while tying shoes and say:

Tape on the floor? to show where to sit?

Welcome, I invite you to sit down where you like in the space. There are some pillows over there.

The performance will last 25 minutes.

Welcome.

Leave the stage when everyone is in the square

OFFSTAGE VOICE

I often find myself listening while looking out from my window. Listening to sentences that someone sometime has said to me. Words seem to have been woven in the fibers of my muscles.

Muscles. Masses and bones. Lines. Sharp edges.

They say: You are a square and you will never be a ball.

Play with space!!

Hands and arms

When keeping my arms to the side I feel empowered. I expand in space.

If staying out for long enough, they start to tickle.

I lose sensibility. They pulverize in space.

Sometimes, it would be nice to disappear inside this space.

Armadillo exercise

From the armadillo start to roll, sideways

Walk and RRRRRRRRRRRR (Steiner alphabet)

Summerasault x1

Spin

Bounce around until very tired

Deflate inflate, not just the face but the whole body, summersaults in between x3

Lay on the floor exhausted

Crunch slowly

I have learned that it's geometrically impossible to square a circle. Or to change a square into a circle.

It's impossible to square a circle. Or to change a square into a circle.

It's impossible to square a circle. Or to change a square into a circle.

My family also agrees. You are a square, and your brother is a ball.

You are a square, and you will never be a ball.

CONTRACTION EXERCISES With laughing

Shape inside the mat

A shape is a container. Outlines of something else. What else? I have forgotten!

RUN OUT

OFFSTAGE VOICE

It is.. a perfectly round figure, 3-dimensional and circular. Geometrically, it is defined as the set of all points equidistant from a single point in space.

and

A particular area of activity or interest.

and

A group of people who are similar in social status or who have the same interests.

An object completely round in shape. This shape is the shape of a ball.

A ball jumps and bounces in.

Go around with the ball

Sit down and hug it.

I finally have the chance to hug a big gym ball. An action I was often asked to imagine in the past. It's easier with closed eyes.

They say: imagine to hug a huge pilates ball. When the sensation sticks, keep your arms where they are, but make the object disappear. The perfect second position. I've always felt empathetic for this ball, used and soon forgotten.

Let the ball roll, grab it again

Someone once told me that the arms are the soul of a dancer.

The legs show her technique, while the arms show personality. My arms are very pointy, they look like dry branches. They often make cracks noises.

GO ON THE BALL

I have a thing with memory, I remember things in pieces. Sentences that people said have become the mantras of my life. I still don't get how words sink in the body.

You are a Square square square.....

(fast)

Square people are usually not fun. Too serious not to stick in their anglessssssssss.

UNPLUG

Sh!

By talking, We exhale words. By talking, we lose air.

Air.

Necessary substance to survive on earth.

Air.

Necessary substance to inflate armbands.

We need some air to stay afloat.

wait!!

inhale

exhale...

exhale

exist

exceed

extreme

expect

exhaust

excuse

Excuse me? **Listen to the ball** I did not want to hurt you!

Muscles get bigger by dying, and then forming themselves again. It is such a cruel process. That's why you make them rest. They have to process loss.

What if arms muscles would be bubble wrap, protection of the soul.

Too fragile to survive when moved.

Packing foam. Memory foam. Memorizing. Learning to forget.

I forgot to memorize the poem. By heart.

What if we could avoid to wear sleeves of protection.

And erase the stamp that says "fragile" with the shame that sticks with it.

I wonder why when feeling under pressure, we try to adapt to it. It shapes us.

What if we could be liquid, and take all the shapes we can.

MERGING. The desire of merging inside a landscape. And disappear. Melt like chocolate on the stove.

Be carefull not to burn yourself. Out. **JUST BEFORE THE BALL IS OUT**

WAIT UNTIL THE BALL IS OUT. STAY THERE A BIT. DON'T RUSH IT.

To get in shape

To shape my personality

To have a square personality

Be there or be square.

The language we speak daily is full of images we unconsciously use.

Utterances create pictures, and these pictures make us see or act in a pre-determined way.

Expressions can highlight norms that are being placed upon us, such as 'to get in shape', which indicates the necessity to enter a specific form previously defined by society.

The use of language in the private context is full of images we use without thinking about their consequences. Sentences, if reiterated, influence our behavior. Consciously or not.

My family members used to say that I am a square, and I will never be a ball: a very funny way of stating their opinion. Through such a vivid image.

This simple expression, which can appear silly or even incomprehensible, somehow sank in my body, making me unconsciously playing the role of the square.

My twin brother is the ball, soft, flexible and gentle.

The square is not just a plain box, but a box full of connotations. Tonalities. Colors and meanings. When stating my squareness, they also state their will to have me round. Because roundness has better features. Because the spheric shape is the perfect one.

Imagination and visualization are widely-spread techniques often used during motion training.

Ideokinesis ⁴, for instance, is an approach to improve movement quality through structured imagery and metaphors, while remaining still. This practice is often adopted by athletes when injured or unable to train.

When dancing, images and metaphors are used to interpret, not describe, bodily sensation. Imagination helps to understand the body, not to overcome perception.

How to use words to stimulate awareness of our moving body? How can language be used differently, in a connotative way? Can language propose opening for new corporeal experiences?

My voice, which I discovered to be a very polyhedral material, is extremely important in ○.

In *Origin of Geometry*, Edmund Husserl questions how ideal objectives (mathematical and scientific objects) can be both the conceptions of individual minds and original idealities. In the *Introduction* of the text Jacques Deridda

answers by giving to writing and to the voice (in *Speech and Phenomena*) the task of the translator: the subjective intuition would remain in the subject individual thinking brain if not shared, making its universalization impossible. Borrowing this vision, I use the voice as the translator between my subjective experience and the collective one.

Giorgio Agamben writes: "The voice is the point of conjunction between meaning and flesh. The voice is the bodily singularity of the signifying process and cannot be reduced to the operational function of language, notwithstanding the research in protocols and procedures for vocal recognition".⁵

Voice is, therefore, the point where language and body meet; it is the medium to establish exchanges and communication, linguistic and sublinguistic. Voice understood as words. Voice understood as bodily sound.

○ is a choreographed routine composed of eight different motions, developed from a combination of many sources, such as animal life documentaries, physics' experiments and exercising tutorials. The execution of the gestures intentionally wishes to blur the distinction between modern dance (Merce Cunningham's or Martha Graham's choreographies), fitness training (CrossFit, Pilates) and breathing techniques. While the pattern is performed, I try to make the balance shift between awkwardness and precision, strength and vulnerability.

Spinning, rolling and bouncing I challenge my body, which is clearly angular and almost lacking roundnesses, to reach the perfect shape, here intended as the sphere. According to Plato, the sphere is the most perfect and self-consistent (or uniform) of shapes.

Repeating this movement pattern, I try to shape my square body, as well as my square personality. An other sentence reiterated by my family: "*To be softer and rounder would make you a better person.*"

A shape is a container, outline of something else (I say during the performance). Like a costume to wear on stage. Oskar Schlemmer's geometric costumes in his Bauhaus performances have been present images in my head while developing ○: using them, Schlemmer was able to transform natural movements into artificial gestures. However in ○ I avoid to use props or costumes, choosing the materiality of the body as the tool to reach the same purpose.

The space where the performance takes place is a cube. A white and sterile cube. Beautiful and bright. Inside the cube, there is a figure. A moving figure placed in a defined square. Sometimes, this figure exits the lines (as a ball

would do, it never stays still when you ask it to do so). The white cube is the typical image/definition of a contemporary art museum or gallery, a place that tries to erase any connotations that could “disturb” or influence the reading of the artworks exhibit in it. A museum is a place for memory and knowledge. A place to collect objects and materials, preserve and present them. Performances or live installations are still considered challenging artworks inside the institutional context. How to present something that disappears at the moment it manifests? What is going to be collected: a score, the rights to perform the work? I can't stop asking myself: How and why does performance art enter the institutional context? And what do performances, or any other ephemeral work, do in such institutions?

I am thinking about different ways of documenting an action: a text, a video, an image, a sound recording. Does the documentation become a new work? Is the documentation always necessary? I can't avoid mentioning here Tino Seghal and his wish not to document any of his performances, which always happen inside institutional contexts. To be kept alive, they have to be replicated. To keep performing means to repeat, and repetition means change. Differences in the many “now”. It's a process of writing and rewriting, in the body of the performer and in the memory of the attender. To own a movement means to live in it. To rehearse and practice until it becomes part of the movement language. *Do you have it (the motion)?* The choreographer often says.

I ask myself if dance and movement can break existing systems and reveal different possibilities in sites, like a museum, where movement is strictly regulated by a code of what is (or not) permitted. What does a ball do inside this cube, then? How does it enter the space and how can it live in it? ○ is an attempt to answer these questions too.

To construct a square equal in area to a circle using only a straightedge and compass has been one of the three geometric problems of antiquity, and was perhaps first attempted by Anaxagoras. It was finally proved to be an impossible problem by Lindemann in 1882. The expression “squaring the circle” is sometimes used as a metaphor for trying to do the impossible.⁶ This is valid either ways: it is impossible to shape a square into a circle too.

The impossibility to complete the task I am giving myself reveals the absurdity of it. Humor, which is strongly present in the work, refers to contradictions intrinsic to the neoliberal regime of well-trained and healthy bodies, as well as its attributes: perfection, discipline, and high expectations.⁷

I am thinking about discipline and control. About the external discipline dictated by the society and the internal control we are now subjected to.⁸

I am thinking about practices and products. About movement and achievements. Why are many bodily practices now part of the reproduction of labor force?⁹ Why movement is approached just as a vehicle to reach a goal, more than a practice per se?

I wonder how we could relate to our flesh-body and its movement without demands but openness. Accepting without judging. How to free ourselves from this control, personal and collective. How to find where language sinks in the body, how does it sediment, in which muscle it is stored.

Chameleons change color in order to blend into their surrounding. They transform in order to adapt. While thinking about mimesis and ability to change form and appearance, I encountered the concept of *Legendary Psycastenia*, developed by the social theorist Roger Caillios. It refers to the ability of some animals to alter their appearance in response to their physical environment. Caillios argues that it is incorrect to consider mimicry just as a technique of self-defense: for instance, inedible species are also mimetic, and predators are not fooled by the tactics, ingesting camouflaged insects anyway. He defines the occurrence of this assimilation as *a real temptation by space*¹⁰. The subject feels overwhelmed and unable to place itself, it suffers but finds sensual pleasure in the loss of borders. Callois finds a connection between camouflaged animals and schizophrenic subjects.

I associate mimicry to the process of melting, merging with the surrounding. To exit a shape given to us, or a shape we are asked to obtain. I, however, wonder now what the outcome of the desire of dissolution will be, if liquidity we look for will make us free or just lose every anchor.



NOTES:

- ¹ Explicit memories can be described and reported. They usually highlight the what or content of an experience. Implicit memories, instead, contains all past bodily experiences that imprint on the present situation, highlighting the how or quality of it. (Fuchs, Thomas and Summa, Michela (2014), *Body memory and kinesthetic body feedback: The impact of light versus strong movement qualities on affect and cognition*, in *Memory Studies* 2014, Vol. 7(3) 272–284).
- ² Herschel Browning Chip, *Theories of Modern Art*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968, p.343.
- ³ Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1990, p9.
- ⁴ Irene Dowd (2003) defines Ideokinesis as ‘an approach in which the cerebral cortex (conscious part of the brain) initiates new patterns of muscle activity in order to re-tune skeletal joint position and motion. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170602113806/http://www.ideokinesis.com/introduction/introduction.htm> - 12.02.19)
- ⁵ Giorgio Agamben in Karin Hald, Maarit Mustonen & Anne Naukarinen, *ikkööhäik – I'm ok*, Forlaget Gestus, Copenhagen, 2019, p. 89
- ⁶ <http://mathworld.wolfram.com/CircleSquaring.html>
- ⁷ Egjia Izule, *Reach higher, get stronger, push further*, in *Catalogue MFA Show*, 2019
- ⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Postscript on the society s of control*, October 59, 1992, p 3-7
- ⁹ Ana Vujanovic with Ellen Soderhult, *Movement research as a performance practice*, in *Movement Research*. Mårten Spangberg 2018. p.361
- ¹⁰ Roger Caillios, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*, The MIT Press, October, Vol. 31 (Winter, 1984), pp. 16-32

FINALE

An essay with short legs

Since I was a child, I've always wished to be shorter. Not very short, but of average height. In Scandinavia, my height would be considered average, but not in Italy. Most importantly, not in the ballet context.

When I started to train, I understood that my height was going to give me troubles. I became aware of the problem very early: if I wanted to succeed, I had to work harder. In order to be accepted into a dance company, I would have had to be even better than "the average corps de ballet members", so to make everyone forget about my height. "If you prove yourself extremely good, that will not be an issue."

I have struggled with my height for many years: it was not easy to turn or to jump. It is a question of physical laws. When I had to find a job, the struggle presented itself in its magnificence. My cv still lies, height: 175cm. (Dancers need to state their height and other physical details in their cv.)

I always saw this situation as nonsense. The technique can be improved, but legs cannot be shortened. With time, I have decided to avoid seeing my physicality as a problem. And if I don't fit in a box, I will just buy a bigger one. Or I will skip this box jumping over it with my long and skinny legs.

This text is a body and as my body is not perfect (this has been already stated).

This text was born with long legs and it was going to grow until feeling strong and confident. However, very close to its achievements, it was asked to be shorter. To wear a pair of trousers that do not fit and enter a box which is too little.

After a first negative reaction to the request, this text has decided not to struggle. If its appearance is not accepted, it will not suffer for it. It will just cut itself in pieces for the occasion and then merge again, later on. This text is, therefore, a small excerpt of a bigger text, a text with long and attractive legs which were not welcomed in this context. I and this text accept now to be tall, be angular and perhaps sometimes unwished. Unwished in this artistic context that pretends to appear as free, but it can actually be a constrained box.

This text was structured as a traditional dance performance; however, its finale is quite unusual. No big jumps across the stage or infinite turns of the principal dancer. No faster music, no brighter lights. There won't be

a climax in this closing. Not revelations either.

This text ends as it has started. It aims to present a practice, therefore the conclusions can be anything but a reflection of what this movement has been. Of how it informed my flesh-body as well as my artistic practice.

This text does not have answers and does not strive to reach them, but it raised many questions in its making. This applies both to the essay and the work *O (white cube, bouncy ball)*.

*"[...] as an artist, one does not need to produce theory but rather reflections. No need to produce knowledge, but rather insights."*¹

During the past two years, I have questioned multiple times the position of both written text/spoken-word and movement in the visual art context. I often felt out of place, not understood. Inside a sphere I do not belong to. Am I in the right context? I still ask myself.

I use my body as material. Its movements as the brush strokes. Why am I not considered as valuable as a painter?² I can not see much difference.

To be co-present with the audience gives me a feeling of aliveness: this is the reason why I perform. There is a need to be present, to live the work in the moment. It is a matter of sharing: sharing space, sharing energies.

Why choosing to perform in a museum/gallery, instead of a performance venue? could be then the question. There is a need to address the materiality of the body, its awareness and relevance in this specific context: I have found my moving body (voice included) to be the most efficient material or approach to achieve this.

I strongly believe that movement-based or spoken-word artworks (the so-called ephemeral artworks) need a recognized place in visual art institutions. This statement might appear obsolete today when performances seem to be fully integrated; however, I still perceive a bold distinction based on what is sellable, collectible or ownable.

Why does society demand us to attend everything, be everywhere? What happens if a performance is missed? How can the audience connect to a performative action and what stays when this motion is exhausted? Is the artifact/documentation a new work?

I wonder what will come next. In which context I will place myself. While moving/writing this text, these questions emerged repetitively. While creating *O (white cube, bouncy ball)*, the same questions echoed in my head. I will keep moving to find an answer. Possibly, I'll just encounter many more interesting questions.

"The light goes off. Don't move for two more counts, otherwise the magic will be destroyed.

The piece is done, the theater is now immersed in the silence. Invisible even if still on stage, you finally allow yourself to breath without pretending.

The stagehand will turn on the lights soon. The public is still not clapping but you feel embraced by the warm lights. The struggle is gone, the air vibrates, the diaphragm is sharply arched. Vulnerable but safe in that same precious instant.

I've always wished that moment could last forever, the moment which made us accept the pain, fatigue, limits and expectations. The climax of any motion lives for me in that while.

Your step to the right is the signal: the theater is now noisy, the sound of clapping hands becomes the soundtrack of your bows. That's why we jump.

*That's the reason why I keep on jumping."*³

[CURTAINS DOWN.]

NOTES:

¹ Jana Unmussig. *Composition and choreography: critical reflections on perception, body and temporality* PhD diss., Acta Scenica, 2018.

² The question of hierarchies existing between different mediums it is extremely interesting and relevant in the context of an institutional exhibition. However, in order to keep this text concise, I have decided not to reflect upon it here. I see this question as the overture of a new essay.

³ Extract from the sound installation's text *"I was a fish. I was a fish. In a pond"*. Galleriet, Umeå, 11/2018

SPECIAL GUESTS

(An address book)

Sometimes, I find artworks that do not just talk to me. They understand me.

And when it happens, I start to itch inside. I have to move. They move me.

It happens to see their authors as my closest friends. Those friends you can call when feeling sad, when in need of a suggestion, when stuck in your work. I used to have the name, address and phone number of these friends written in an address book. I will try to write a new one, a list of artists and artworks that understood me, so to have them here, ready to be called in case I will get lost.

A.

At the beginning of 2018 I attended an exhibition called "Performance!" at the Triposal in Lille, an incredible overview on performative practices from 1967 to 2017.

In the first room, I found a pair of headphones: after having worn them, I was unable to leave the spot. I listened to the deep breathing and the counting of a man. I was with him, running.

One, two, three, four, five.. ten.

One, two, three, four, five.. and so on. Running and getting tired by this continuous running. My body, empathically, started to get tired too. I became aware of my body through its breathing. And embodied experience triggered by sound. It was breathtaking (literally and figuratively). I ran with Vito Acconci side by side, that day.¹

E.

Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine by Mette Edvartsen, Norwegian choreographer, performer and visual artist, is another work that made me itch/move.

For her work, she has asked a group of performers to memorize a book of their choice, in order to create a library collection of living books. The books spend their time in a library, waiting for a visitor to consult them. The visitors of the library choose a book they would like to read, and the book will recite its content (and possibly valid interpretations) to them.

"Books are read to remember and written to forget. To memorize a book, or more poetically 'to learn a book by heart', is in a way a rewriting of that book. In the process of memorizing, the reader for a moment steps into the place of the writer, or rather he/ she is becoming the book. Maybe the ability to learn a whole book by heart is relative to what book you choose, the time you invest, and perhaps your skills. But, however much or well you learn something by heart you have to keep practicing it otherwise you will forget it again. Perhaps by the time you reach the end you will have forgotten the beginning. Learning a book by heart is an ongoing activity and doing. There is nothing final or material to achieve, the practice of learning a book by heart is a continuous process of remembering and forgetting." (<http://www.metteedvartsen.be/projects/thfaitas.html>)

This work has been the biggest reference and inspiration for my performative installation *the library of movements*. I had the privilege to attend an event at INDEX (Stockholm) this January, and read the living book "In the skin of a Lion". The performance lasted around 25 minutes and I read just one chapter of the story (by reading I mean I have listened to the living book reciting by heart). The possibility to experience the work added a layer to it, a different engagement not purely conceptual but physical and embodied. The relationship with one performer, a space shared between us. To listen to a narration with closed eyes, and imagine every word heard. To wait for her memory to come back. To pause. To look at her uncertainty, her being a voice in/outside a body.

N.

During the first school trip in Berlin, which took place in September 2018, I visited the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum for the first time. At the very end of the passage through the Rieckhallen in Halle 5, which somehow felt extremely overwhelming because of its size and number of artworks exhibited in it, I encountered a room. I was alone when I entered. I was alone inside it too. The room has two corridors in it. There is nothing more than them, beside a metal grid in the center where they meet.

For a reason, that back then I could not understand, I started to dance (literally) in that room. And I wept a bit. The work is surely not one of those artworks you would define as emotional: no emotions are projected on it; however emotions arose from it. This is why, I believe, I cried. I was free to think and feel in that specific moment, outside my everyday. I could move and perceive the scale of my body, its sounds, its shadows.

Every time I travel to Berlin now, I visit the Museum. I do it to see the new shows as well, but I never skip the room at the further end. *Dream Passage* by Bruce Nauman is the work I am referring to.

Bruce Naumann's works and practice have been very present in my mind, sometimes more, sometimes less, during these two past years. I am intrigued by the possibility to present a practice, to propose an experience without telling to feel, but be. I am thinking about how much needs to be told and how much can be left open. I want to leave a space for the attendee.

I am intrigued by the use of different mediums, the combination of them: a performance, a sculpture, a video (for instance, the work *Corridor*). How they inform and support each other, how different temporalities (the past of the artist's action, the present of the sculptural installation and the possibilities of the work to be inhabited and experienced by the attendee) can coexist.

NOTES:

¹ I here refer to the artwork "Running tape" by Vito Acconci. 1969

² Yoko Ono. *Grapefruit. A Book of Instructions and Drawings*. 1964

O.

There are fruits that need more time to be appreciated. To be discovered. Let's take a grapefruit, for instance. A rough surface, perhaps not so appealing. Peel it. When open, the inside is simply enchanting. Piece after piece, bite after bite, I taste a mixed flavour, sour here, sweet there. Crunchy and squeeshy. The discovery is so pleasurable that to stop becomes difficult: I eat the fruit carefully, as to extend the time together, I don't want it to reach the end.

There are books exactly like this fruit: I would never want to finish them, to turn their last page. *Grapefruit*² by Yoko Ono is one among these books. During the first reading, its metaphorical language, its vivid pictures transmitted through words made me aware of the possibilities and power of poetic imagination. What is a score? How direct does it need to be? What is that moves?

I call Yoko Ono (meaning, I go back to her book) every time I feel unsure about the possibilities of imagination, the nuances and shades stored in language. I close my eyes frequently, while reading *Grapefruit*.

CAST

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