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**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Narrating Textures**

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Opponent: Ewan McLaren

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## Declaration

I declare that I have prepared my Master's Thesis independently on the following topic:

**Narrating Textures**

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

Prague, date: .....

.....

Signature of the candidate

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## **Abstract**

The following writings explore textures in the context of devised projects inspired by daily and performative encounters and research creation. Three practical projects, undertaken in the field of theatre during the course of the author's MA studies at DAMU Prague, used textures as a principle, stating the interest to facilitate and experience qualities and consistencies of meetings.

*Textures* hereby create links between different elements of these projects, stretching from haptic and magical practices to methods of archaeology, body work and strategies of queering, work with technology or experiments with scenographies and strangers. In the context of these projects *narrating* is identified as a practice to incorporate and create various subjective and intersubjective experienced realities.

The motivation for this field of research was an impulse for performing experiments which are thinking through their doing and are claiming, inventing, changing or identifying connections. Besides incorporating spontaneity, randomness and intuition, this thesis is influenced by the curiosity of extending and reading practical research with theories from embodied, sonic and vibrational approaches and writings by thinkers critically moving between art practice and philosophy.

The thesis subsequently considers and proposes modes of touching, listening and gathering as ways to perceive and shape visible and invisible tissues between our relations. As abstract and concrete materialities, the idea of textures explores a conceptualization of surfaces as a 'ground' for creation.

## **Abstrakt**

Cílem této magisterské diplomové práce je zkoumání textur v kontextu devised projektů, které byly inspirovány každodenními a performativními setkáními a tvůrčím výzkumem. Tři praktické divadelní projekty, vytvořené v průběhu studia v magisterském programu na pražské DAMU, využívaly textury jako princip, jenž vyjadřuje snahu zakusit a poznat vlastnosti a konzistence různých setkání.

*Textury* vytvářejí vazby mezi jednotlivými prvky těchto projektů, od haptických a magických postupů, přes archeologické metody, body work a queer strategie, až k práci s technologiemi nebo k experimentům se scénografií a s neznámými lidmi. *Vyprávění* je v kontextu těchto projektů chápáno jako postup spočívající v inkorporování a vytváření rozličných subjektivních i intersubjektivních zakoušených skutečností.

Motivací k výběru právě této oblasti výzkumu byl impuls provést performanční experimenty, které promýšlejí samy sebe právě a jedině skrze vlastní realizaci a které požadují, vynalézají, proměňují či rozpoznávají různé formy spojení a vazeb. Vedle samotného zapojování spontaneity, náhodnosti a intuice je tato práce ovlivněna zájmem rozšířit a chápat praktický výzkum za pomoci teorií z oblasti ztělesňovacích, sonických a vibračních přístupů a také za pomoci esejů od autorů, kteří propojují uměleckou praxi s filosofií.

Diplomová práce následně promýšlí a navrhuje různé způsoby dotýkání, naslouchání a setkávání jakožto možnosti vnímání a tvarování viditelných i neviditelných tkání mezi našimi vztahy. Myšlenka textur jakožto abstraktních i konkrétních entit vede ke zkoumání konceptualizace rozličných povrchů jakožto samotné základní tvůrčí „půdy“.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## A. Introduction

This thesis engages with devising as a practice of experiencing and research-creation and will navigate with this focus along three practical projects developed during my MA studies of devised theatre at DAMU.<sup>1</sup>

They all are shared situations, projects created to experience space an “inside” yourself in relation to an “outside” of a social or natural place. Working with *texture* as artistic principle, these events also try to speak to your unconscious memories and your spontaneous reactions in the now. An example of a texture connecting outside with the inside of your body is food.<sup>2</sup> Also voice, the process of sounding or speaking, which is shaping this connection from us to others, is considered here as texture. Different events will focus on different materials and qualities. Besides visual and auditory qualities of textures I was especially interested in the sense of touch, the feeling textures trigger in people's bodies.

As *texture*, I consider physicalities, which are influenced by time and place and change any moment, while the consistency and shape they are made of simultaneously is pointing to the processes they went through in the past. The term texture will not appear very often during the following chapters. It will appear indirectly, as connective tissue behind a process, a curiosity hosting a travel during which new relations and their intensities, linked stories or associations can be experienced. Dealing with textures and narratives was used as a principle stating the interest to facilitate and experience qualities or consistencies of meetings.

Before introducing and reading three practical projects from this viewpoint, I will introduce a section of experimental writing and name two principles, which are intended to apply the thought of textures, a practice of weaving with letters or addressing the readers' reception with the two dimensional possibilities we have on white paper. Textures will be considered as something else than a “topic” to talk about.

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<sup>1</sup> Our course is called Directing for devised and object theatre, MA programme at DAMU, Academy of Performing Arts, Prague.

<sup>2</sup> To speak of an ‘inside’ vs. ‘outside’ of body here refers to things happening not visible, under our surface, skin. This does not imply a split or dichotomic view, by contrary, theories influencing these writings are mostly based on interrelated approaches, regarding phenomena in their interdependence.

## A.1. Sharing as surface

By adding introductory experiments on writing in the appendix,<sup>3</sup> I would like to translate a way of thinking and doing which I met in different situations of devising to the two-dimensional possibilities of these writings. Firstly, I would like to introduce a white page, as fueling entity which makes writing possible. After that, you will see a texture of letters attached, shaped by me listing any kind of materials, principles, artists, writers or colleagues, which impacted the processes of projects during my studies in Prague.

I am not saying that it is a new thought, but what I'd like to point out is that a surface - such as the white page or screen for writing, is a platform for creation. Another possible surface for creation can be floor, for example – we can walk on it, move to somewhere, carry out an action. Also surfaces of the body, like skin, can be considered as sensory membrane. For example, a sensation can be processed, expressed or incorporated. One surface which kept on appearing in my projects, besides skin, was the surface of a table. Having a defined surface in the sense of a framed ground, can be the start-off point for thinking, composing, playing or experiencing. There are sayings, such as “clearing the table” in German, meaning to get rid of old discussions, with the image of an “empty canvas” - to enter a new dialogue. A surface as interface for doing something new.

I was fascinated by the game of placing, drawing or composing on one shared surface: defining your playground. And with playground, I mean specifically a sort of ground where a lot of different actions, objects or people can be related. Thinking about putting stuff on one surface or level: does it make things become hierarchically more equal? Is it about the surface, the composer, or the items/beings moving across? Is it about the invested energy, or about the witnesses showing up or about the experience of it? I will not try to answer these questions now, more interesting for me was to use a principle which can raise these questions, and offer an impression where they have led me in my conclusion.

During my first project, i felt inspired by the way Penn Irving took his photos.<sup>4</sup> He used to bring all models (e.g. people, objects, plants) he intended to shoot to the same abstract and artificial space, his studio. Many of his pictures are taken in front

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<sup>3</sup> Please compare with appendix 1. *Experimental writings. On surface.* in the attachment.

<sup>4</sup> Compare Appendix 2. *Penn Irving, Photographies.*

of the same background, an old theatre-linen.<sup>5</sup> By picturing items in front of the same canvas, he is creating the same visual settings for everybody and *everything*. He is said to not having spoken a lot, the interaction with models is described as “special”.<sup>6</sup> For this thesis, I am listing different letters in front of the same canvas, a white “page” on my laptop. Different appearances sharing a surface. Still, there is the question – as there was the question in my projects - of how to chose the words, letters, pictures, which should appear on that surface. Do you normally choose a topic, talk to people, read – or how do you create? We could change the messy letter-structure in the appendix, apply filters and list for example only the used materials, or take a pen and make circles around letters or sequences of letters we would like to line out.

## **A.2. Weaving as practice of relating and creating**

Besides thinking of surfaces, I'd like to think about different textures regarding their similarities, differences and impressions of consistency. Maybe certain textures are requiring a certain way of perception, maybe the way a texture is made can convey a feeling, like different clothes can convey. I prepared a second fictive scenario for experiencing, what this could mean on a white page.<sup>7</sup>

The scenario attached results in a document of an atmosphere and a document of a process of weaving (a blanket). I would say, I'm working with findings here, two structures I encountered during the process of writing. The attached examples are both black and grey structures. One is pointing to a person in a train, or to weather and rails, the other one is pointing to a person weaving or sheep walking on Himalaya. The two patterns come from very different sources, but have similarities i would say, of how they look. I used this way of arranging things, in projects of mine: to put two things I encounter next to each other, and suggest a similarity they might have.<sup>8</sup> The attached objects and structures were pointing to weather, people, animals and trees, for example. Another day I would think they point to a train-journey, warmth, music and plastic. Another day, after reading Donna Haraway, I would think,

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/irving-penn-bei-c-o-berlin-seine-oelfleckige-theaterleinwand-ist-bei-c-o-berlin-im-original-ausgestellt/21109780-2.html> (accessed on 10th March 2019).\_\_\_

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uclY\\_YQ11DY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uclY_YQ11DY) (accessed on 10th March 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Please compare appendix 3. *Experimental writings. On weaving.* before continuing reading.

<sup>8</sup> Compare also: appendix 4. *Photography of a berry and piece of headphones, thoughts.*

they point to sensitivity. Donna Haraway writes about a practice of relating between “lived connections”<sup>9</sup> as weaving, shaping relations which sustain. There come specific relations into existence, which are not religious, nor profane.<sup>10</sup>

Her writing is a complex embrace of Navajo-culture, coral reefs and philosophy, but from this I have taken her idea of weaving as a sensitive practice of relating and creating – not in order to produce something, but as an act of human and non-human relating while living on this planet. This thesis is engaging with things which cross your way, while being curious of how these random, daily or planned crossings will be reflected in their perceptible textural (and textual) character afterwards.

A fragment you encounter as structured material in your surroundings, from this world, can be a starting moment for any fictive, mythological or practical behaviour with it.<sup>11</sup> Haraway differentiates the idea of beings, coming *from* this world, from the thought of objects or beings which are *in* this world, like locked in a box.<sup>12</sup> The first view provides freedom: The borders of an encountered structure<sup>13</sup> are not defined by its purpose, value or meaning.<sup>14</sup> The encountered structure or fragment can point to past, future, to a realm of death, to other generations, another galaxy (we wish), to phantasy or simply to another way of using something.

The following chapters explore three projects which were working along surfaces, materials and textures. Introducing the project *norage&abanan*, the first part observes closely interactions between ‘things’ and people and formulates an understanding of shapes through their processuality and timing. Here, a sense of texture is transmitted by slowing down our sensory approach towards surfaces of food materials and bodies, guided by playful strategies attempting to question hierarchies between materials and people.

The second part explores how projects are characterized and created through a widespread process of research. After the research on surfaces, I was gathering

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<sup>9</sup> Haraway, Donna J. *Unruhig bleiben. Die Verwandtschaft der Arten im Chthuluzän*. 2018. P. 126. (Following citations from this book are all own translations from German into English).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> I am distinguishing here my approach from an approach of focussing on fragments as carriers of significant meanings or purposes.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 125–126.

<sup>13</sup> I am speaking here of ‘structure’ in the sense of a texture, a materiality and it’s linked sensory qualities (resulting from the structure how it is build), e.g. being soft, warming, hairy, etc.

<sup>14</sup> Compare appendix 5. *Experimental writings. We can do a lot.*

more materials, looking into different techniques from other disciplines and stories which surrounded them. In the course of introducing the project *Plugs, gates, skins and other*, I describe a search for ways of mapping different stories to objects. Tensions and links between devised processes and their 'outcome', as well as the fluidity of borders between people, stories, materiality or identity become visible.

The last part of the thesis is dedicated to creation taking place in the turbulent structures of a shared field and examining a devised situation as meeting: the event *Rehearsing Evolution. In a bar. As you are.* expanded strategies of previous projects and looked for ways how to engage with materials and situations as a group. For this event, a team of twelve people invited guests to join a prepared set-up in a cafe-bar. Oscillating between daily, theatrical and performative situations, the event is explored as a situation which is blurring the boundaries between listening and speaking, between performers and visitors.

## B. Projects

### 1. Norage&abanan. Notations with fruit, people and plastic

*“if we ask where mind is, it is in the weave of the surface itself.”*

*Tim Ingold*

This chapter will explore relations around a performance, which was announced like this:

NORAGE & ABANAN

أبى ابر

**performance**

**9<sup>th</sup> of May, 21.30h/R 102,**

**duration: 45 min., for ca. 30 people**

come with. us beyond and above needs.

Beyond habitual intelligence for needs and hierarchies. We don't ask you where you come from. We come from the supermarket. We touch objects. We investigate throats. We will relate to fruit on stage. We will think about peeling, and being peeled. We will have raised questions to fruit-lovers, macintosh biters, intermedia people and tatoopers.

by Hesam Hanafi and Theresa Schrezenmeir,  
in collaboration with Cristina Maldonado.

Developed in the framework of master studies of devised theatre and authorial acting at DAMU, April 2017, performed in Truhlárna and divadlo na půdě/cross-attic, Prague.



For the performance which this chapter will explore, I made the English title, just moving letters from the main characters of our performance: oranges and bananas, among other fruit. I liked to twist it to “no-rage”, because in the show something about endless patience, gentleness, or even some meditative state with not much feelings came up. One could also say that we practiced empathy towards objects. For me, the mode of these supermarket fruits' world was about a weird intimacy and isolation, for Hesam, it was also a confrontation with aggression. Abanan? Abandoned? No clue what else that could point to, for you. Hesam made the Arabic title, which means something like blue clouds, he said.

### **1.1. A thought on direction**

Often, we would not really know what the other one of us on stage is doing. Being a student of *Directing of Devised and Object Theatre*, in that project, meant to supply my colleagues with space, time, shared thoughts and material, condensing some mood through that. I wouldn't enjoy to tell people what they should do and my colleague kept saying about him as an actor “I'm not ready, in my life, to get told what to do”. Cristina kept visiting a lot of rehearsals, taking off her shoes, and somehow, like a witch, re-reading some hidden strategies, what she saw in it. With all that, we found tasks, spatial settings and occupations, which would start to structure our behaviour.

Only now, long after this project, as I am thinking about the term of “directing” in English, I realize and appreciate a vast openness of the term: the idea of giving a process a certain *direction* by one's own involvement, no matter in what way. Couldn't it be in sense of contributing a text, being present in a rehearsal or helping with finding the keys of the space?

#### **What does a director do?**

Someone asked me last month, if I would agree that nowadays, women invest their energy instead of giving birth to children, similarly intensely to creating projects or works. From what I guess about that person asking, the question came out of a curiosity and doubt, that “life” takes place in shapes other than reproduction of the own species.

Ai Hasegawa's work on fiction and design *I wanna deliver a shark* (2012)<sup>15</sup> is exploring this borderline. The artwork is suggesting to use the (re-)productive power of a woman to host endangered species, such as sharks.

A reason for placing this example here, before talking more concretely about performances I worked on, is not a compensated wish for kids or sharks, but a note on the way of devising I was following, which felt like using some female energy for creation:

Without getting more into ideas of pregnancy, its identity-challenging, romanticized or practical consequences, the idea of being with a development consciously *and* subconsciously, no matter what you are doing, is an idea about connection and time and growth, that had an impact on my projects.

The aspect, that vast parts of a process are not controllable by your mind, but are happening or growing as a sum of circumstances is a thought which leads Tim Ingold to the idea of creation in the sense of simply setting parameters for something to happen. Referring to the work of biologist Brian Goodwin, he speaks of the term morphogenetic field, as

the total system of relations set up by virtue of the presence of the developing organism in its environment. And the role of genes in the morphogenetic process is not to specify the form, even incompletely, but to set the parameters.<sup>16</sup>

For that project, fruit and other food materials, a glass table, light, skin, body and sound belonged to the ingredients which shaped its form.

Irving Penn's photography, which I mentioned before, his compositions of different shapes (obviously differently grown or fabricated, though similarly sharing a round quality) and his already mentioned manner of capturing different things and people in front of the same surface seemed to be similar to our explorations about being people, ordering and existing together with fruit.

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<sup>15</sup> Dunne, Anthony & Raby, Fiona. *Speculative Everything. Design, Fiction and Social Dreaming*. 2013. P. 65. Compare also: <https://aihasegawa.info/i-wanna-deliver-a-shark>; or: appendix 6. *I wanna deliver a shark, screenshot of artwork from Ai Hasegawa's website*.

<sup>16</sup> Ingold, Tim. *On Weaving a Basket*. In: Object Reader: Candlin, Fiona; Guins, Raiford. *The Object Reader*. 2009. P. 86. (This part of his writings he contextualizes in response to writings by Goodwin, Brian. 1982.)

## 1.2. Timeline of the performance<sup>17</sup>

The performance was a process of transforming relations to objects. Basically, the sense of time the performance seemed to happen in, was extremely slow, out of measured time. Nevertheless, I will try to order scenes for you. *In the writing in italics I will comment on them.*

### Minute 0

I was telling to the witnesses: "Make a fist. Hold as tight as you can." It was the beginning, gathering the guests around a glass table with stapled objects, mainly fruit and plastic. But we just looked at it, hands staying empty and folded.<sup>18</sup> So there was a crowd of people, holding fists, calmly throwing glances at each other and looking at a table full of coloured round organic and plastic shapes. After some time, a computer voice coming from speakers made some announcements which were not quite understandable.

After listening, one of us said: "Let go." and everyone was releasing their hands and taking a seat. It felt a bit like a ritual borrowed from other assemblies like a praying group, a greeting ritual in a school, a sports practice. I got to know the exercise of holding fists in Butoh-dance. After making fists for some minutes, you can possibly experience your fingers unfolding back only very slowly, your fingers opening more in a speed of a flower when the sun is shining on them, rather than in real time. You are not totally in control of your hands, or at least, feel them in some other state. Anyhow. *Somehow, also later in other projects, I would suggest more situations to the audience, which make them aware of themselves, as a group. Holding fists together was a weird task, during which everyone had time to look around, at other people doing that task.*

*I would say, trying to feedback the beauty, weirdness and full-ness of an assembly of very different people in one place, at the same point of time, is already some core of performance I enjoy working with. And I do not only mean the basic condition of theatre being said to need presence of actors and spectators, I mean*

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<sup>17</sup> Compare appendix 7. *Photographs from performances of norage&abanan.*, for pictures of the performance.

<sup>18</sup> In techniques of physical theatre, e.g. as taught in *teatro fisico transdisciplinario* the act of holding fists is used to provoke the feeling of anger in the body. Compare with website of the teacher Samuel Nunez: <http://www.samuelnunez.de/aboutsamuelnunez.html> (accessed on 10th April 2019).

*to really appreciate the potential, creativity, boredom, normality or whatsoever, of a group in one place. I had the feeling, that listening together as a group to some unknown voice coming out of the speakers would somehow connect us. Our course leader Sodja Lotker later gave me feedback about how voice was often used in projects of mine: more in the sense of a presence, overlaying the space and putting the meaning of singular words of minor importance.*<sup>19</sup>

## **Minute 5**

Me and Hesam take a seat on the glass table. We watch the objects. I guess, by looking at them, we charge them with attention. There is not much more to do. The objects help us to be present, they are just lying there, offering to be looked at, and we look at them. The selection on the table consists out of food and plastic. We kind of know the materials, but also not: the fruit we buy (despite regulated norms of fruit shapes in supermarkets) are different each time we perform or rehearse with them. The table has a contact-microphone under its surface. Everytime we move something at the table, an acoustic echo appears.

There are oranges in their peel. Mandarins in their shell. There were smaller orange fruit called kumquat in their peel. Orange and yellow tomatoes, some in size of a Mandarin, others in colour and size being similar to big oranges. Cocktail tomatoes in the size of a kumquat. Tiny orange coloured round tic-tac dragees in a plastic package. Round Haribo in similar shades of colour. There are green peas in their shell. There are chickpeas in a plastic bag. We touch and arrange these materials slowly in new combinations, this action is a kind of live composition. Decisions are taken in the moment: Does the orange Tic-Tac belong to the family of oranges and tangerines or rather in a line with the peas, since they are the same size?

We touch these different objects, staple them, lay them next to each other.

There are audio cables on the table, sound is the material besides food we work with. There are as well haribo on the table, long green haribo. They have the exact same colour and consistency as the audio cables, which are running over the table. Also, there are tin cables of headphones, in firmness of other haribo snails. Like other fruit,

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<sup>19</sup> Compare appendix 8. *Texts used for performance norage&abanan.*, for texts which were partly used. I think the presence of these voices and texts made an atmosphere of a place with speakers playing some abstract announcements of someone else's rules and realities (normally you might encounter voice announcements in train stations for example), not directly connected to what would be happening on the stage.

I arrange them. Slowly, haribo does not appear as food to me anymore, not at all. It seems much more similar to plastic than to fruit and other food on the table. Also the green shell of fresh peas starts to appear very artificial, when laying next to green haribo.

Some materials are elastic, some firm, they require different firmness of touch, different effort to re-arrange, lift or move them.

*Spending a lot of time with fruits without eating them, we started to consider them in different ways: as aging bodies or living bodies, attributing different moods to them. Our actions started to create an absurdity of a meeting between fruit, plastic and us. To this absurdity would seem to fit questions such as “who is deciding, what is food, and what isn’t?” For example, for me, being allergic to apples, an apple is as uneatable as an apple-macbook. Some ingredients in Haribo would seem more likely to serve purposes of design and colour than to nourish someone.*

### **Minute 9**

I am taking a children-surprise egg, and leaving the table, going to a corner and rubbing my body with it. The chocolate crumbles, melts in the hot light, and the inside pops out, some yellow container, containing another item, some toy probably. I would not open that, but return to the table.

*Cristina told us about a mexican ritual, in which people clean their body with chicken-eggs, by rubbing their joints with them.*

### **Minute 11**

We watch the objects on the table again. Some things changed. *I don't know why i am sitting there, on that stage. White european body.*

### **Minute 13**

Hesam picks up some fruit. (Plastic never was interesting for the following scene, it somehow seemed not to be alive enough). Normally he would take some 'strong character' (when we started to perform outside school, we started buying fruit on markets instead of Tesco's, and this made fruit looking much more diverse and impressive. He would exist with his body and the fruit body somewhere further back in the room, where there would be a spot of light, to watch them. Hesam would hold

the fruit body next to/with his body, in different positions. Somehow, the positions he chooses do not seem to be random. He seems to listen to the fruit, and one couldn't say whether this time it would be the colour, the smell or a feeling on the skin which would be the impulse for a new position, a reason to shift weight or to turn in a different direction.

I would search for some connection to fruit while sitting at the table. I would try to read the inside of fruit, the structure underlying their peel. Like that, I would invite the fruit to transform, let's say, the banana would come out of its peel, and I would put it next to other long shaped material on the table, such as haribo or cables.<sup>20</sup>

*We made attempts to get to know something beyond the visual presence, without consuming it. Here I was regarding them as containers, as things with an inner skeletal structure or anatomy we do not see from outside.*

*After all these new groups and categories of foods emerged and after feeling us having built up another relation, the following scene would make a break.*

### **Minute 20**

Brushing teeth. Hesam and me stand there, on stage, brushing our teeth, doing nothing more. It's weird to feel your teeth, being surrounded by food, but not thinking about eating at all. It felt a bit like polishing your knife in a peaceful moment. I would call this action "invasion" because it felt like coming from another planet, interrupting and contributing to the created world. After some time, we would rearrange the space, distributing light in other places:

### **Minute 25**

One of us would put on a lamp, which was pointing to the keys of a keyboard on another table. We would take an orange, place it on the keys, and watch it. This action would cause a sonic event in the room. The orange, sitting on the keys, is producing a permanently staying loud chord. The orange would be sitting there, playing music, waiting. We watch again.<sup>21</sup>

The other one of us would place a fruit on the keys of the macbook, triggering

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<sup>20</sup> Compare appendix 9. *Photograph of banana*. After some time of paying attention to fruit and their peels, we discovered increasingly absurd extra wrappings.

<sup>21</sup> It was one of the first actions, creating this performance. A new different way of being musician: placing an orange on a keyboard.

different loud sounds, which would form a beat for the keyboard chord. We wait. We would lay down, on our bellies, our heads meeting in front of a microphone, which is also lying on the floor. On the table, oranges on keys still playing. We would start to sing a song, it's a song about apples, but somehow we stopped to pronounce the words clearly. You saw two persons in underwear lying on the floor, singing into one microphone, overlaying the shaky pop-song.

Afterwards, we stood up and switched the music off.

*Placing fruit on the laptop did not work in the same dramatic way as the orange on the keyboard, though...we wanted to add beats to the soundscape. Also the moment of stopping the sounds was breaking with our established mode of performing. Pressing buttons to stop this song would seem weird, somehow too much of an actively taken decision of mind, different than the calmness and meditative mode of other actions and scenes.*

### **Minute 30**

We walked towards the corner of the room, knowing that two heads of blue cabbage are lying there. Or, in our view, what the cabbage heads are actually doing: they are sitting there, waiting, drying, changing their colour slowly, getting old. We are watching them. Hesam is lifting one head, I am lifting the other one. They are kind of heavy.

We stand next to each other, two people, each one holding a head of cabbage.

We are not doing much more. It feels as if we are forming a group. (Maybe this is the cue, why it feels like being a group,.) We are waiting.

*I can imagine, they are heaving the weight of a human head.*

*Both cabbage and skull consist of a lot of water, don't they?*

### **Minute 34**

We wait. Four kinds of static unities in space, two people trying to tune in to the very slow speed of two cabbages. Slowly, there is an impulse developing. It could seem like some curiosity maybe. Or some movement out of boredom? Because we are humans, we are used to doing something with objects we hold. We are used to doing something with our fingers, with material they touch. Our *Fingers are sliding under the covering leaf of the cabbage head.* The leaf is dry on the upper side, from lying in

a warm room. On the downside, it is cool, moist. I don't know how they were growing exactly, but it feels as if the layers of leaves beyond the cover leaves never saw light before. It feels relaxing, the back of your hand covered by a large cool leaf. The leaves are about the size of a spread hand or face. By putting fingers under the first layer, it swings open.

Two round cabbage heads, each with one big unfolded leaf hanging down on the side.

Two people putting their faces in the big leaves, holding the cabbage heads over their own heads. Our way of moving changes: I see nothing. I smell and hear. Like a blind buck, I just know I want to walk towards the light bulb, towards the audience, which is attracting me. It feels as putting on a costume or merging with the leaves, becoming a human-cabbage cyborg. We walk towards the light and people.

*For us, it was serious (and always we would also laugh about ourselves). For many people, that scene was like comedy. Maybe because it became visible that cabbage would be strong enough as material to do a whole performance out of it. And we were only having few actions with it, which might let it appear as using it in an instrumental way. It would be enough, to do a show with a cabbage head only. No tables, no other fruits, no music, just layers and layers of blue leaves.*

*The movement, our walk, is slow, since we do not act in the speed of a productive mind. Our brains are blue cabbage brains, our speed to act is guided by movement impulses, which are triggered by very static objects: movements fed by the speed of a cabbage leaf swinging open, the speed it grew, the speed of a cabbage sitting in space (Cabbage in a room is not moving much, we would consider its slow process of growth, its movement of being torn out of ground, its travel in a car, bus, plane, backpack, bag, truck, shopping trolley, the movement of its leaf getting dry and crumpling.*

### **Minute 38**

We, one man and one woman in home-wear, showing lots of skin, bodies similar: tall, thin, long, arriving slowly with cabbage faces and heads. One body grew in Germany, the other one in Iran and Canada. Both cabbage heads grew in Czech Republic, but were bought in Tesco's. Each of us rips off the cabbage leaf from the cabbage head, we have two big leaves and hold them around the big light bulb over the table. It



forms a pink glooming object, pervaded by organic linear structures. It looks to me like a heart organ. After some time, Hesam takes our two chairs and creates some kind of bench out of them, to drape his whole body. I am going there, covering his body with more cabbage leaves.

*I guess here you can see the relation, that I am director and the male person of us is covered by an action of the female person – we did not want to do it the other way round, though most actions we did seemed to be interchangeable.*

The leafs match his feet like shoes, his knees like protectors, his hands like gloves, his face like a death mask or his breast like a shield. There are places, on his body, where leaves in their shape fit Hesams shape and places, where they do not fit. In the end, I am wrapping a lightbulb with leaves and laying it under his body, I switch on the light. It's a covered body with a pink glooming organic shape.

*Some people would associate the body with being dead, others would consider the red glooming object under the body as heart organ.*

### **Minute 43**

I take off the leaves, dropping them to the ground. They are falling on a soundpad which is lying there, cabbage leaves triggering lots of voice. I would take white flour or powdered sugar, and cover the scene, the table with objects, the fruits, cables, Hesam, and me. With this gesture we wanted a mood, where everything/everybody is experiencing the same outer influence. Let's say, we wanted rain to come and fall on our human bodies, on the fruit bodies, on the keyboard, the computer, the table, the audience.

*Since rain is not something that can be used and triggered in that way in an inside space (artificial showers are also not really any closer i guess...), we used powder, which kind of is something very different and did not meet the intention, I guess.*

### **Minute 45**

We stood up, sat back on the table as we started the show. We were white. We looked old, I would say, grey hair, after a long journey.

### 1.3. On weaving, magic and capitalism

I do not want to decide for people, if these images were about queerness, alienation, consumption, capitalism, migration, mindfulness, love, passive aggression, playfulness or stupidity. But these were topics which came up, influencing the process. Also, the actions resulted from a very intuitive process.

Serving as further reflection on the project, in the following part, I will map and add questions on work with material, drawn from theory, using literature dealing with capitalism, dark ecology, fabrication of form and meditative magic. You can see it as descriptions of how materiality itself inspired the development of the performative mode of us, performers.

#### 1.3.1. Devising touch-scapes as small worlds - or: how things are spilling over the place

In her essay *Tangible Acts* on performances related to touch, Jennifer Fisher introduces the term touch-scape when engaging with F.T. Marinetti's manifesto *Tactilism* (1924).<sup>22</sup> Aware of the fascist and colonialist problematic around the futurist's work, she examines his work *Sudan-Paris*. Marinetti used the surface of a table for a "haptic translation of landscape, climate and culture"<sup>23</sup> of different places. The idea of objects on a table, forming, representing or engaging in a *world* on their own, is an idea I would like to look closer into.

*Different to interpretations of the mentioned work by Marinetti, in the performance norage&abanan it wasn't concepts around concrete existing countries or place the touchscape on the table should represent or refer to. Engaging with the materials would be the source or reason for us to orientate ourselves differently in a new universe which we didn't know existed before engaging in it.*

*The mode of touching fruit with our hands and not eating them inspired a world where consumption and hierarchy of materials could work differently. We had intended the opposite than representing a place to happen: rather than referring with objects to an existing place, we devised the objects on the table in a way which would question conventional categories of objects as you might find them in related settings, such as*

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<sup>22</sup> Compare Fisher, Jennifer. *Tangible acts: touch performances*. 2007. Pp. 166-167. Article in: Banes, Sally; Lepecki, Andre (Editors). *The Senses in Performance (Worlds of Performance)*. 2007. Pp. 166-178.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

*a shop or in your kitchen. In our devised situation, purposes and differences between materials merged or were alienated.*

Timothy Morton is a writer fusing humanities and science. With his book *Dark Ecology* he “hope[s] to reestablish our ties to nonhuman beings and to help us rediscover the playfulness and joy”<sup>24</sup> in times he would describe as dark ecological crisis. He considers the discovery of people being themselves the safeguards as well as enemies of ecological agendas as a *strange* and *dark* loop.<sup>25</sup>

Looking once more at a group of objects on a table we see that we, people, produced oranges and wrapped them in an extra layer of plastic, that we bought them in the supermarket and that it is us who place them on tables and do something about them. But our mode of performing was not simply to criticise, celebrate or complain about these structures, but to actually discover different relations in a playful way, to refer to Morton’s phrasing. This agenda is one that is not trying to convey a feeling of some constancy one could rely on. Thinking of multiple intersections of timescales and places we can encounter in a singular local meeting,<sup>26</sup> Morton would argue that “Space has revealed itself as the convenient fiction of white Western imperialist humans” and that we can consider the narration of a “constant presence” a “myth”.

If we go along with him a bit further, we get told that “place has emerged in its truly monstrous uncanny dimension, which is to say its nonhuman dimension”.<sup>27</sup> So we don’t know what it means, anymore, to see an Orange lying on a table. Do we refer to a place? Is it really us, people, who use them?<sup>28</sup> <sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Morton, Timothy. *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. 2016. On the book’s cover.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9–11.

<sup>26</sup> An example: thinking of a table with fruit, you could refer to the fruits’ country of origin, politics of trading and transport, aspects of financial questions and venues of food culture - and connected to this, situations like harvest, a family dinner or an overspilling container with thrown out food.

<sup>27</sup> Morton 2016, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Please see appendix 10. *Story of an orange. Experimental writings*.

<sup>29</sup> Compare appendix 11. *Exploring the orange more. Experimental writings*.

### 1.3.2. People listening to things

This part of the chapter will outline more practices, in which people's behaviour or mode of reception is explicitly described as dependent on the relation to material. As Bini Adamczak puts it in her essay *Capitalism for Kids*,<sup>30</sup> in capitalism, it is not humans governing other humans anymore, but *things* are governing us. She is starting off with a glass of water. She does not mean that a glass of water is telling us what to do, but, after Adamczak, we live in a world, where for example a sign saying "Please drink a glass of water.",<sup>31</sup> written by oneself or other humans, might make us drink the glass of water located next to it. The sign, written by a human, and the glass, fabricated by us, somehow are putting us in circumstances where we, as humans, start to orient our behaviour after these things.<sup>32</sup>

#### On water

It would be interesting to hear at this point, what Adamczak would write about the *water* in the glass. It is interesting to try to understand how the sign about drinking the water happened to be written in the past, but I wonder more about how to consider the water in the glass? Does it matter if it came out of a tap, a bottle, a river? I am asking, because the performance this chapter is engaging with worked with material such as an orange, which, maybe similar to water, in other times, would have been considered as coming from 'nature', but now, is bought in a shop. Clearly, water is not fabricated by us humans, is it? We can cry and sweat water. It would be salty water. And we can create filtered water, melt snow into water and put water in bottles and sell it in a shop.

You see, I am turning her introduction into capitalism to a reflection on post-natural behaviour. I guess, because I would like to question materials such as water as some alive entity more powerful than what humans can design.<sup>33</sup>

*A note for a fictional exhibition, you could consider as further development of the artwork of norage&abanan after engaging with the theories mentioned here:  
Would you go to an exhibition, where water is exhibited in different containers –*

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<sup>30</sup> Adamczak, Bini. *Communism for kids*. 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 12–14.

<sup>33</sup> Even though, ideas around climate warming can be seen as human-made way of waterproduction, a forced act of melting landscapes.

*bottles, cups, buckets, crystal glasses or in your body, in the air, as puddle on the floor? I would be up for building it. I guess, an ending of the exhibition could be a tsunami, taking things back to the sea.*

### **1.3.3. Ghostly and magic movements on tables which are telling people what to do**

The following part gathers thoughts around two more practices often carried out on a table surface: glass moving and tarot.

Adamczak is comparing a capitalist web we are embedded in to the procedure of glass moving. Many people putting their fingertips around a glass (fabricated by our species), will make it move, even if we try especially to not move. If there are letters placed around that moving glass, we might get a message appear, depending on what letters the glass is moving to. The image of a capitalist ghost can be seen as that invisible force, which is moving the glass and conveying us a message. It is another force, than if a group of people would discuss a text and write it down together. After the process of glass moving, we can not anymore tell, who created that message. Adamczak, by exploring impacts and character of capitalism, is inviting us to get to know invisible ghostly relations between between different entities better.<sup>34</sup>

*Questions:*

*In which relations do we talk about objects/things/material or people, which experiences exceed these categories? And on which surface do they appear in which shape?<sup>35</sup> Do we have to consider capitalism as a basic surface, underlying our actions? Can we consider an attentive relation as structuring ground for a process?<sup>36</sup>*

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<sup>34</sup> Adamczak 2017, pp. 14–16.

<sup>35</sup> Can we see the surface of table as central stage, where hierarchies can be discussed? Or is it the material of the table itself, which we need to work with, deform it, burn it or build something else out of it?

<sup>36</sup> Another orientation to mind games of Adamczak in a capitalist discourse is scenes sketched by writers contributing to how an *object oriented ontology* could be formulated, rooting in feminist schools of „nonanthropocentric art practices, queer/postcolonial/feminist critiques of objectification and marginalization.” Compare Behar, Katherine., et al. *Object Oriented Feminism*. 2016. P. 10. Especially questions, which could be counted to streams of New Materialism, I discovered in the thoughts shared by editor Katherine Behar are questions which I also met during devised processes with materials. Even though New Materialism is not the field of research this thesis is focussing on,

Another practice in which objects seem to structure human behaviour is tarot. Karen Gregory, a digital sociologist and ethnographer,<sup>37</sup> describes in her essay *In the Cards. From Hearing 'Things' to Human Capital*, the field of interactions between humans and tarot cards both as a process of magic as well as being rooted in processes of self-optimization in an economized world.<sup>38</sup>

Her observations about tarot, again a practice carried out on a table surface, practice are opening doors to less anthropomorphized interpretations of the deck, acknowledging colours, plants or signs and irrational associations they bring. Rather than being interested in messages tarot can convey, Gregory is more interested in a general idea what tarot can tell about the power of *things*<sup>39</sup> and especially the power of 'man-made' things above humans. She describes a tarot deck as both, designed by people, but on the other hand consisting of images which originate in long forgotten historical designs, observing contemporary trends in attempts to trace these back.<sup>40</sup> Gregory is sharing experiences of her visit to a tarot seminar, describing following approach of the tarot teacher Warren:

if we can learn to sit quietly enough, 'turn off the thinking brain' for long enough, the card will 'speak' through a quiet voice or through a vivid mental image – an image that speaks so fully that it can be felt.<sup>41</sup>

An exercise to achieve a state like that is called “The Wall of Silence”,<sup>42</sup> guiding people on “how to speak to a coffee cup” through listening and waiting. In the sense of a meditation,<sup>43</sup> Warren describes the aim to get into a state of *Da-shan*, for which

The trick seems to be to trust that what you're hearing or to go with that reality that what you're hearing is really coming from the object rather than simply

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there are writings gathered by Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin in: *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*. (2012), which could provide another angle for this thesis' field of study.

<sup>37</sup> Karen Gregory is programme director of MSc in Digital Society in Edinburgh, compare: [http://www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/people/staff/karen\\_gregory](http://www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/people/staff/karen_gregory) (accessed on 12th April 2019).

<sup>38</sup> Gregory's essay is published in and cited as: Behar, 2016. Pp. 225-244.

<sup>39</sup> As separated from 'objects', e.g. compare Behar's writings on thing-power in: Behar 2016, p. 14. Behar is referring to Jane Bennet, it is a form of „vital materialism“ that we can acknowledge. Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Smolík, the teacher of stage design at DAMU, is holding classes on tarot, rather than on how to build a stage. Tarot served as starting point for us to talk about ancestors, ethics, war.

<sup>41</sup> Behar 2016, p. 231.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>43</sup> „We are simply to sit „with“ the cards and „feel“ what they are saying. Growing quiet, both physically and mentally, and being as meditatively „silent“ as possible, is central to Warren's exccercise.“ Ibid., p. 229.

being a projection of your own mind or biases.<sup>44</sup>

*In norage&abanan I would not say that we were applying a method for meditation , nor did we have the critique of capitalism as a research goal.*

*More likely, fascination by properties of the material, in the sense of haptic impressions, textures, colours or shapes and associated economic structures of the fruit were underlying this performance, forming some weird situation which was strong enough for us, to develop some “practice” around it.*

She is observing curiously, why people are caring so intensely about relations towards something, which is basically a set of paper cards, regarding tarot as source of female power, near other forms of marginal spiritual practices.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore she speaks about its potential of being able to exceed hierarchies occurring in more established forms of religion, acknowledging the practice as a way for people to find their own voice. Besides fascination towards the sets of cards, Gregory criticizes conflicting aspects: while people cherish the practice freely in their private lives, the level of increasing privatization and the parallel movement of extreme sociality and coached self-optimization can be questioned.<sup>46</sup> Her conclusion of tarot sounds the following:

This is a form of entanglement not just of the spiritual into daily or ordinary life but of body, affect, energy, and media – a spiritual assemblage fueled by card flips, symbols, elements, and the very voice of these objects.<sup>47</sup>

I chose this examples to look closer into practices between humans and *things* which are able to serve as examples opening up splits and entanglements between e.g. enchantment and economy.

*Weird entanglements would made us explore them practically, they made us do something, and with this understanding I'd like to point out the strong orientedness on process and a mode of doing, rather than simply reading something off things.*

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<sup>44</sup> Behar 2016, p. 231.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 242.

#### 1.3.4. Reception of processes instead of seeing shapes

One curiosity we were following norage&abanan was to undermine form, to facilitate an understanding beyond visible shape. To consider shapes of objects as appearances of processes, Tim Ingold's essay *WEAVING A BASKET* is interesting to consider when thinking about artefacts and culture from a process-based perspective. His choice of using a basket as an example to question the 'outside' and 'inside' of an object and its generation of form, he describes how a basket's shape is developing: "In short, the form of the basket is the result of a play of forces, both internal and external to the material that makes it up."<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, he states: "One could say that the form unfolds within a kind of force field, in which the weaver is caught up in a reciprocal and quite muscular dialogue with the material."<sup>49</sup>

*Our mode of exploring the fruit and plastic objects via touch could be described as a bodily dialogue: a way to feel their fibre, to see the microstructures they are made of, to understand that the flesh of an Orange is totally differently organized than the structure of a tomato, and that smell and colour is somehow not separable from these different consistencies. Touching would be a way to engage in the touchscape on the tables without eyes as prior sensory organ. Complex sensory impressions conveyed by the sense of touch seemed to be easier replied to with our bodily reactions, rather than verbally or logically.<sup>50</sup> We were asking: What happens to it if I treat it like I would explore a human body, if I study its structure through touch, if I try to get to know its own logic of moving, its own character of where its shape enables it to go somewhere. Can we humans become less 'important' on stage than things which surround us?*

Speaking of contexts in art, such as museums or galleries, in which the practice of removing objects from their context of life is quite common, Ingold describes how the processual character is being shifted in the background. (*We should have performed that piece in a gallery to understand more what it does.*)

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<sup>48</sup> Ingold 2009, p. 83.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Studies on textural qualities i found more related to institutes for food technology. One study on "mental reconstruction of texture properties in terms of language" which is focussing on sensory qualities of food, shows that tested textural qualities could be interpreted similarly by so called 'skilled' and 'unskilled' individuals regarding sensory studies. I found that interesting to transfer to practical experiments, the idea that any person already is a "specialist" in experiencing sensory qualities. Compare with abstract of paper by Rohm, Harald; Dürrschmid, Klaus; Forker, Anne; Jaros, Doris. *Two-Dimensional Mapping of sensory texture descriptors*. 2010.



Arguing that “the forms of objects are not imposed from above but grow from the mutual involvement of people and materials in an environment”,<sup>51</sup> Ingold criticizes archaeological and anthropological literature for not paying enough attention to materials and their properties instead of the material culture around them.

“This is why, in the extensive archaeological and anthropological literature on material culture, so little attention is paid to actual materials and their properties.”<sup>52</sup>

One of his main questions is about stating that a basket is a good example to exemplify another way of thinking about culture than its role merely being about labelling existing shapes. If to look at a basket, you would not see an expression of a human mind having designed an object, you would see a structure, which would be formed by the interweavings of human mind, material, time and invested energy.<sup>53</sup>

In this thesis, I am both interested in the encounter between bodies and material, as well as the “performance” or event, which could be seen as a fabricated result of an artistic process. I would say, while we tried to be quite strict in considering our materials as grown shapes, being in a process and us being part of it, the overall frame of the performance tried an analogue principle. As described in the beginning, we had meetings accompanying the process and collecting what would be there, moving on with it. We could have gone to private homes, restaurants, letting people play with it. Nevertheless, regarding this overall process as growing open shape was limited by a set goal (by myself) of showing a performance. Some scenes were oriented towards a goal to showing something enclosed to an audience. It was a show. It could have become a dinner, a journey to a basketry or anything else, of which we now, without being in the process, cannot know.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ingold 2009, p. 89.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Compare appendix 12. *Bananas. Small oranges. Children surprise eggs. Experimental writings.*

## 2. Plugs, gates, skins and other - a full moon gathering

### Plugs, gates, skins and other<sup>55</sup>

Which material is triggering what kind of human behaviour?

*Experiments about protective and revolutionary patterns.*

*We will meet around a table.*

*There will be things pointing to other things,  
and these things might carry stories.*

*Listen with your hands.*

Open research sharing by Theresa Schrezenmeir, in collaboration with: Cristina Maldonado, Wayne Jordan, Yannick Stasiak, Arden Tan, Israel Lopez, Emil Rothermel and Ondra Šebestík.

Alongside the introduction of the second project's final outcome which I realized during my studies in DAMU, I will introduce different areas of research undertaken and describe how they informed dramaturgic and performative strategies. Mainly I was curious to explore further the sense of touch, and behaviour or knowledge situated around it. Also principles of relating stories to different objects or artefacts was something I was curious to work with.

In the previous chapter, I laid out the performance's actions in a timeline, like a carpet for grounding theory or other associated practices. The timeline of the process here seems much more extensive<sup>56</sup> and I will focus more on the weeks of research beforehand than I did in the previous chapter. The process of research was quite widespread and one could explain the project's explosive energy as release of all materials, voices, invisible processes and people coming together.

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<sup>55</sup> Compare e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mA26rYOt84&feature=youtu.be> (video of school showing), or material research video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOJlavihKio&feature=youtu.be> (both accessed on 15th April 2019). Compare also appendix 15. *Photographs of Plugs, gates, skins and other.* for pictures of the performance.

<sup>56</sup> Compare attachment 13. *Graphic about research phase for project Plugs, gates, skins and other.*

## **2.1. Notations**

*It was a full-moon night, the sharing of the process was taking place in the regular week of school showings at the end of January 2018. The showing did not even have a proper name. It was titled “Plugs, gates, skins and other.” – but it did not feel like having a ready-made performance as it seemed in the previous term. It felt more like throwing together specific materials, like having a handbook of how to build a bomb or an explosive ritual; following it fully for the first time in front of the audience.*

Already when people entered the room, the mood started becoming charged. People took a seat, this time directly around one large empty table and were waiting together, two performers were sitting on the floor on each end of the table. Here again, we had a group of people, watching a table or watching each other. Facing something and expecting something to happen.

### **Exploration: Ginger and Hands**

In the first half of performance, you would see the hands of the two performers, holding and exploring a pieces of ginger. Sometimes, shapes of joints or skin of hands seemed quite alike the shapes or colours of the ginger root. There seemed to be elements, reoccurring each time we would try this setting: there were elements when pieces of ginger and fingers appeared quite similar, in size and fit. There was the quality of skin, skin of hand and skin of ginger, which would meet. Somehow, after gently exploring the pieces, it came to aggression: hands were more flexible, more strong, they would smash and squeeze ginger pieces, juice would run down to the table and performer’s arms and pieces would escape the firm grips in the air. Along the hands exploring the material, you would hear an audio recording of a female voice telling some experiences, remembering few things.

### **Transition: a belly on a table**

Wayne, one of the performers, would climb on the table and lie down. Yannick would place pieces of ginger on body parts where they would seem to fit. You could think back to norage&abanan, there was a similar action of covering my colleagues’ body with cabbage leaves, while he would lie on chairs. For a long minute, Wayne would just breathe. His belly would have the capacity to extend and implode massively. A human body lying on a table might be more common in contexts around bodywork,

such as massage or for a medical treatment, for example. Finally, Yannick would tie a cable around Wayne's breathing belly, and a change of atmosphere would come.

### **Explosion: white plastic on fire**

Wayne would get up, in this moment, Yannick would open a big box. Out of the box was sounding a loud song, white plastic material was falling out. Wayne started to walk and people realized, that he is tied to one leg of the table. By walking away, he would pull the massive table with him, people were left sitting in a circle with no table in their middle anymore.

Instead, a scene would follow, where we would use the plugs in the room, fire, and small white coffee-cream or milk packages. While Wayne would build something like a bra for himself out of white electric plastic cables, Yannick would put milk containers in his mouth, into plugs, they would make sounds, use the cables as lassos and milk would be spread over all space. Finally, they would stuff the plugs on the room's walls with tea candles, set them on fire and switch off the light. You would hear a calm voice and organ sounds, speaking of a space with calm atmosphere in the smell of lavender.

## **2.2. touch and narration**

### **Weird brown objects - historical and haptical approaches**

If to speak of a touchscape which would be encountered by the performers this time, it would consist of different types of ginger. We were fascinated by that material, because it looked out of its context (e.g. as root which is usually kept in a kitchen for tea, for example) quite abstract. Also, my colleague Arden knew plenty of rituals around that root and we found other objects like stones or garden-onions which would match a family of objects in brown shapes, not easy to make sense of when isolated.

One starting point of research we encountered a different kind of artefacts: human bones. We were visiting and interviewing people working in the *Hrdlicka Museum of Man*, which "introduces human evolution, development of a human being, pathology,

death and human diversity and variability.”<sup>57</sup> Irritated and interested, how human remains used to be and still are attributed with certain historical facts, strategies used in a place like that became interesting to examine in the field of devised performance making. Watching at bones, which were partly exhibited more in a manner of a cabinet of curiosities than of a once living person, our guide through the museum referred to the danger of implying biological concepts on cultural ones. Dating back findings and their interpretations to times of social darwinism where ‘racial hygiene’, ‘phrenology’ or ‘eugenics’ were considered as principles, the bones behind the glass vitrines served as triggers for stories from periods like national socialism and fascism. An anthropological museum somehow showed us the danger in interdisciplinary work, a danger of mixing up different concepts and methods for a purpose of creating facts about pathologized items which were once living material.

*I was wondering about other ways to engage with found fragments. Besides chemical analysis of a materials components, we were asking the woman in the museum, about how it feels to touch them. She would compare the haptical impression of certain human remains with the haptical impression of a tree’s skin, covered with resin. Some findings of stones, clay or bones looked quite similar to each other.*

In her writings under *The Fabric of Touch and Mental Images*, Giuliana Bruno,<sup>58</sup> Professor at department of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard, who is “known for her research on the intersections of the visual arts, architecture, film, and media.”,<sup>59</sup> writes about touch, also regarding the mental images of touching and being touched.

It was not the case, that we really were curious about working with touching human remains. The ‘excursion’ to the Anthropological Museum meant more to experience contrasting techniques of how to think about bodies and material.

In her book *Surface, Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality and Media* Bruno is considering touch as “deeply rooted in mental activity, so much so that, at the limit, it can be said to be the root of thinking, which in turn is itself a kind of “inner touch”.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Compare with website of Hrdlicka Museum of Man, <http://muzeumcloveka.cz/en/> (accessed on 9th January 2019).

<sup>58</sup> Compare: <https://ves.fas.harvard.edu/people/giuliana-bruno> (accessed on 19th April 2019).

<sup>59</sup> Bruno, Guillian. *Surface - Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media*. 2014. P. 20.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

*Ginger as material (as we know it from food stores) you could describe as abstract fragment, a brown root buried out of the ground, with no clear beginning or end. I wondered, if the approach of these objects via touch might tell differently of weights, textures and processes they went through.*

Thinking further about touch as 'inner touch', influencing inner movements and changing our interior landscapes of thinking and feeling, this view could explain our practically and intuitively sensed connection between language, the expression of thoughts, associations and stories with the realm of haptical sensory experiences, which we observed in our experiments.

Bruno states, that "The haptic sense drives our inner world and mental architecture. It makes this architecture move."<sup>61</sup>

I started to give pieces of ginger and other roots to people for holding them, asking them to associate stories to the material.<sup>62</sup> I was curious, where these pieces might lead their thoughts or memories. How would people think about the piece I gave into their hands, the piece they are asked to explore haptically?

In this experiential sense, hapticity is understood to be a vast space that virtually touches psychic formations. As affects and sensations constantly unfold within us, closely knit to the activity of thinking, they reciprocally shape our ever-changing environment.<sup>63</sup>

Engaging with touch as sensory practice, I was thinking if there might be a thematic focus of relevance for the research. Somehow, 'protection' as a topic seemed to fit: the attempt of sensing, holding or grabbing something could be seen as counterpart of how people or materialities might actually articulate own or inherent borders.

### **Mapping touch and stories**

At first hand, there was the plan for the project to work with objects and mapping stories to them via touch sensors. If someone would touch these prepared objects gathered on a table, s\_he would be able to listen to 'their' voice or stories, audiolayers we would have attributed to them. In the installation *Lady Dining* in Colloredo Mannsfeld Palace I tested this set-up and placed a big loaf of bread, which

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<sup>61</sup> Bruno 2014, p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Compare appendix 19. Collection of brown objects, different materials, weights, consistencies.

<sup>63</sup> Bruno 2014, p. 20.

would play baroque music when being touched.<sup>64</sup> Next to it, I tried to map the voice of a lady still living in the building to a pot for tea. I could not meet her and the work with sensors<sup>65</sup> was involving very technical challenges and problematics and it seemed, concerning ways I was working before, that the process might lose the haptic and performative qualities of human encounter in a performative situation. The more time passed, the wider became these links between touchable materials, stories and encounter of audience<sup>66</sup> until in my final project, they were left as different loose layers in a big space. Sometimes people and performers and material were actively “connected”, sometimes the project was more working with the “being together” in one situation, as very loose link, in the sense of an assembly.

### **Narrating**

Nina Tecklenburg, scholar of theatre and performance and performance maker herself,<sup>67</sup> published a book titled *Performing Stories*.<sup>68</sup> Her writings are described as a contribution to an interdisciplinary research on narration, rather than belonging to a purely theatrical context. I would say that the title implicates an interest in strategies of using words beyond classical debates around dramatic or postdramatic theatre: the word “performing” in the title opens a broader context for narration and storytelling and stresses its performativity in a context when engaging with stories had fallen behind as something of only secondary importance during the postdramatic turn.<sup>69</sup>

Rather than regarding stories as bound to a specific medium or references to the past, Tecklenburg drafts an understanding of narration as an intersubjective practice,

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<sup>64</sup> Compare appendix 14.b. And 14.c., on research and documentation of *Lady Dining*.

<sup>65</sup> I used “Motion sensors for digital medial control”, from I-CubeX, see: <http://infusionsystems.com/catalog/> (accessed on 15th April 2019).

<sup>66</sup> Compare appendix 14.a. *Description of project jelly church*. Video installation at 4+4 Days in Motion Festival, Prague, I was researching fluid bodily impressions in relation to a space. The performative installation was working with the surface of a room, the surface of a ceiling turning into another consistency (projected jelly). In this case, the visual surface changed its textural impression and the viewer might experience another kind of textual impression via eyes, s\_he might feel touched differently, by observing this slowly moving surface which, to me, felt like resembling to a feeling of an inner body landscape in a shaky state.

<sup>67</sup> Tecklenburg is director, performer, dramaturg and theatre scientist; She She Pop, Gob Squad research areas around game theory, narration, contemporary theatre, theories of performativity. See: <https://berlin.bard.edu/people/profiles/nina-tecklenburg> (accessed on 19th April 2019).

<sup>68</sup> Tecklenburg, Nina. *Performing Stories. Erzählen in Theater und Performance*. 2016. (All of the following citations and references from this edition were translated from German into English by me.)

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

which is related to people as well as context. In this sense, narration is considered as an interplay between recipient and the medium, only occurring as process, setting up a shared real-time experience.<sup>70</sup> Narrating can be attributed to our ability to construct identity and reality. Whether a narration is intended to refer to a fact, an actual experienced event, or whether it is a fictional construct, does not change the fact that narrating is generating an actual possibility for action, or constituting a reality to act on.<sup>71</sup>

*Often, the root which I brought to people who I would ask for stories, would make them recall a specific memory. But the stories also seemed to be told because the situation felt trustworthy or both people were up for sharing associations they would get freely.*<sup>72</sup>

Tecklenburg considers narrating as a performative practice, a 'making' and a 'doing' in the same time, generating and ordering, shifting culture while involving embodied subjects.<sup>73</sup>

She speaks of narrating as activity in-between, with narration being activated, when recipients are confronted with different horizons of time. Here, narration can be considered a resolution for a situation of tension, e.g. of different experienced life realities or horizons of time "clashing" against each other.<sup>74</sup>

*I got told stories about a woman doing weird pieces of pottery, stories of a grandmother's skin care, strategies of protecting yourself in public space: ways to find water, toilets or a space which feels more calm. All of that associated to a small piece of brown root.*

This activity in-between must not only occur between two subjects. She also concedes "things" a fundamental part of the generating of narration.

An understanding of things, as it can also be found in Object Oriented Ontology,<sup>75</sup> is the following: Tecklenburg is referring to Latour, that "things" („Dinge“, understood differently to "objects") are no enclosed facts, but contain an action oriented meeting and refer out of themselves.

Following her understanding, materiality and subjects are always already enmeshed,

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<sup>70</sup> Tecklenburg 2016, p. 39.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>72</sup> Compare appendix 16. *Transcription of stories from different people.*

<sup>73</sup> Tecklenburg 2016, p. 43.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>75</sup> Compare: Behar 2016, e.g. p. 2.



generating actions and meaning. Not only as “things” in their textural ‘thingly-ecstasy’ („stoffliche ding-ekstasen“), but as a concrete action-oriented dimension which also includes an ethical one.<sup>76</sup> Things themselves can influence processes of narration – they are even considered actants, influencing the narrative constitution of (auto-) biographical identities.<sup>77</sup>

### **Plastic, fire, wax and milk - *Playing it Queer*<sup>78</sup>**

The last paragraph established a view on processes of connection and introduced the possibility to raise with these processes questions about identities. As processes of connection I am here referring to narration, and as I would like to add here, *touch* (understood as a process of connection, even if carried out merely acoustically or verbally, via the expression of thoughts, in the sense of Bruno) as a movement of bodily fibres.

Few people, among them the Belgian-based performance artist Kate Macintosh with whom I had a skype mentoring, gave the feedback, that it was missing the opportunity to offer the audience to actually touch the materials as well. To let their hands be the hands which explore pieces of ginger or try to plug things into each other which might or might not fit.

An interesting artwork designed for direct viewer interaction is *Huggable atomic mushroom* by artists Dunne, Raby and Anastassiades (2004).<sup>79</sup> Made as large cuddle-cushions in shapes of atomic explosions, one can have a sweet sensory experience while your mindset is guided towards environmental disasters. Our visitors did not have an alike experience of direct haptical touch and a clear topic connected to it.

In *Plugs, gates and skins and other, maybe* the aspect, of having worked with

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<sup>76</sup> Compare: Tecklenburg 2016, p. 173. You can also compare with Latour, Bruno. *Von der Realpolitik zur Dingpolitik oder wie man Dinge öffentlich macht*. 2005. Pp. 29-32, to which Tecklenburg is also referring.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 173-174.

<sup>78</sup> Later on I will introduce thoughts by Jodie Taylor, from her dissertation: *Playing it Queer - Understanding Queer Gender, Sexual and Musical Praxis in a New Musicological Context* (Thesis PhD Doctorate). 2008.

<sup>79</sup> Compare with artwork presented at the website of MOMA: Dunne, Anthony; Raby, Fiona and Anastassiades, Michael present *Priscila Huggable Atomic Mushroom, from the Designs for Fragile Personalities in Anxious Times Project* (Prototype). 2004. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/94022> (accessed on 15th April 2019). Compare also appendix 18. *Priscila Huggable Atomic Mushroom*.

performers on an immaterial awareness during encounters of materiality before,<sup>80</sup> might have been one reason why we wanted to perform with this specific understanding *for* people instead of offering them the materials. Using plugs, tea candles, matches and milk together at once and also plugging burning candles at the installed sockets in the walls were actions which had a consistency for the performers to carry them out,<sup>81</sup> but we did not think of offering these actions to visitors. It would have been great, to see, if guests would have felt to go into similar moods during interacting with these objects, as the performers had.

Our explored manner of working with plugs brought some kind of stupidity, for us it was somehow questioning binary view on things. That two things, such as a plug and the fitting counterpart, are made “for each other” like, let’s say, Adam and Eva, would be one way of dealing with things. Instead, there were two guys experimenting, spilling milk over their bodies and plugging things which would be not designed to be plugged into each other: milk packages in sockets, candles in mouths, etc.

One could see this scene e.g. as exploration around electricity, as statement on the queerness of relations or gender or as a procedure which is questioning prefabricated shapes.

Taylor explores definitions and possibilities around the terminology of queer in her dissertation *Playing it Queer*, stating that “queer is particularly concerned with interrogating the notions of fixed, coherent, unified and transparent identity categories.”<sup>82</sup> She is attributing alternative and fluid modes of self-perception to queer practices, a mode which was elementary in *Plugs, gates, skins and other*.

*While Wayne and Yannick were kind of 'subordinating' themselves to the sensory exploration of ginger, in the second part their roles constantly shifted between actively stated postures and roles (e.g. using objects to build a bra or playing with*

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<sup>80</sup> Here, I mean an understanding of haptical impression and these experiences pointing to other stories, associations, bodily responses or that they were actually changing the moods of their modes of performing. At this point, I'd like to refer to a thought on art which is not limited to to the comprehensible material sphere: Joseph Beuys, as introduced in the Dumont Lexicon, is an artist known for working programmatic with form and sculpture, especially their transferences to social fibres and invisible processes. Compare: Butin, Hubertus (Editor). *DuMonts Begriffslexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst*. 2002. P. 276. (Own translation into English).

<sup>81</sup> Remembering the minutes before the performance, I have to admit, that actually the consistent feeling about the carried out actions was, that they felt weird or crazy – we were not convinced at all if someone could make sense or feel touched by them in a sustained way.

<sup>82</sup> Taylor 2008, p. 171.

*articulating themselves with milk in their mouth) and their interrupting or change to another one.*

Another point when roles and affects of a situation got blurred was the moment before the scene described above: when Wayne stood up after people watching his belly breathing on the table, an alienated version of the song *Changing of the Guards*<sup>83</sup> started to play. We were using that song because we did not understand it. I did not like the lyrics, also the mode of Patti Smith's performance which appeared at some moments to me way naive and romantic, would not be something I had expected to appear in that performance. At the same time, the structure of the song seemed to be simple, addictive and complex at the same time and there was some beauty. Played together with the materials of ginger and plugs, the bodies of Wayne and Yannick, it did not make any sense at all – logically.

Following Taylor, “The diversity of musical meaning illustrates our radically decentred postmodern subjectivity”.<sup>84</sup> She denies that music is binding universal identities, social roles or ideologies, and regards music as a way of expressing new realities. The song played back was having a strong impact on the atmosphere and seemed to open another way of perception for the performed actions. There seemed to be something incalculable about the performance. Literally, the work with fire and electricity pointed to some factor of danger involved.

### **Security&Protection**

Having talked about touching and protection, about transgression and security during devising, and having an aspect of danger involved (using fire and electricity) there came up the idea to look for a security guard as figures for the performance. I was asking one security guard I met when waiting for a Metro<sup>85</sup> (I knew him from before, he was two meters tall and had a large chin and dark eyes, he was always accompanied by a small dog), when this did not work out, we asked a friend to perform a security guard.

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<sup>83</sup> We played a cover of the song *Changing of the Guards* by Patti Smith, compare with the last part (7) of appendix number 10.

<sup>84</sup> Taylor 2008, p. 18.

<sup>85</sup> Compare text messages in appendix 17. *Screenshots SMS conversation with stranger, working as security guard.*

Imagine to do a project with all kind of security guards, 'installing' them on all the doors a large building would have. One in front of the toilets, one in the staircase, another one near the smoking balcony. The presence of a guard as he was 'installed' in *Plugs, gates and skins and other* was mainly weird and questioned or overseen by most of people.

The soundtrack placed back at the end of the performance in the dark with candlelight was a description of a space, a space out of red walls and chocolate, offering hot water bottles and a lot of options to lie. This text originated as well out of collected stories, out of research around the topic of protection: I was asking women how they would imagine a shared space they would enjoy visiting during menstruating.

Looking back at the whole term, it looked like the work with certain topics which I chose or which came up during the weeks of development, was finding its way into the final performance, but more as abstracted or anonymous notion.

Having engaged with approaches of anthropology, archaeology, storytelling, researching associatively around a topic and carrying out encounters with materials haptically, using technology of sensors and actual ways of touching, the following project explored matters of context around a project more intensely. To borrow words from Tecklenburg, the next project was exploring techniques of narration in an broader sense, as a process of "togetherness, of people, context and things, sharing and being active to bridge a time-lapse."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Tecklenburg 2016, p. 114.

### **3. How things are as inspiration for How to invite things to be**

#### **- Rehearsing Evolution. In a bar. As you are.<sup>87</sup>**

My final MA project was a devised performance, exploring different relations in a cafe-bar space,<sup>88</sup> titled *Rehearsing Evolution. In a bar. As you are*. In the description of the event, we also called it a “shared situation” due to its atmosphere and actions being inspired by daily situations in cafe-bar spaces. Rather than thinking of producing a performance to be brought somewhere, the scenographies of cafes and the given possibilities of how to behave inside these spaces were constitutive for the creation of actions people were carrying out.

At each of the tables of the place, one person of our team would sit beside few empty chairs for audience/cafe-visitors to join the different tables.<sup>89</sup>

A cafe with tables where people are sitting together, that would be the basic set-up we would start from.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Compare Appendix 26. *Photographs of Event Rehearsing Evolution*.

<sup>88</sup> The project so far took place in Prague, in Potrva, Cafe Disk and Studio Alta.

<sup>89</sup> You can have a look into Appendix 20. *Comic with mouse.*, giving an idea of unlimited possibilities of how to interact with chairs and tables.

<sup>90</sup> Compare Appendix 22. Flyer and text of event *Rehearsing Evolution. In a bar. As you are*.

The following reflections try to outline processes that were formative for my final performance. You can understand these written reflections as a game between life, devised theatre and theory. I will propose to deal with inspiration, creation and experience not as linear development, but rather invite you to join a game of throwing balls back and forth.

I will take these sentences as a point of departure, leading to a side note which can enrich the understanding of what we are going to do here. I'd like to refer to Mieke Bal's *Travelling Concepts*, a guide she wrote to revise ways of steering, working and integrating practical, random, theoretical and personal parameters.<sup>91</sup> Critically, she demands a different practice of anthropological or cultural analysis, one that is not a process of applying methods to a given field. Crediting cultural studies for "challenging methodological dogma, and elitist prejudice and value judgment"<sup>92</sup>, her intention is to steer away further: she is suggesting that the act of exploration itself is re-defining its object of concern and a field which surrounds it.<sup>93</sup>

Bruno Latour once again brings forth in an interesting manner the notion of concern in our relation to our exploration and analysis, suggesting in his essay *Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern* a new way to carry out contemporary criticism. He is admitting and naming a wide-spread mistake in theoretical practice, stressing the weakness of criticism carried out as a manner of moving away from mistrusted facts. Looking back at himself and fellow French Philosophers before him, he is identifying a practice of criticism with a key for behaviour being dissociation not being able to actually meet facts. He suggests "a realism dealing with what I will call *matters of concern*, not *matters of fact*."<sup>94</sup> and claims the need of engaging with them.

Warning to meet challenges of our present with too old tools,<sup>95</sup> he relates to Donna Haraway's formulations of strategies of caring and protecting, for addressing things differently.<sup>96</sup> Haraway's writings on weaving were introduced before, not as an agenda

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<sup>91</sup> Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. 2002.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Latour, Bruno. *Critical Inquiry*. 2004. P. 231.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

of producing a product, but as a sensitive mode of relating and creating.<sup>97</sup>

Reflecting on my work, I would like to think about devising and creating as a critical and concerned practice. General principles of engaging with these ideas practically would be:

- 1 Facilitate and gather encounters between things and people, which are experiences raising questions and confirm or actualize topics what the project could be about. Do not take topics or facts as departure which you cannot actualize and relate to with others.
- 2 Continuously update and identify the elements of the project, consider all of them of equal importance.
- 3 Care for my and other people's relations between each other and towards the research, offering the possibility to getting back to initial needs, narrow things down to a current focus, being open to take many more steps if needed, also accepting if it's not possible to take a step at all.

At the beginning of the second year of my MA, I had no idea how that act of exploration would look like. I will share some experiences I made in the beginning, because I believe that these initial questions are a point to discuss a formative power a devised theatre maker is using. Having worked more inwardly during the project in my first year of MA, I planned to work more outside the context of our school, to understand social or political movements which might be "in the air" without "searching" for them. I am talking about the independence the studies were offering, the freedom of not needing to follow hyped social topics or make up projects the cultural monetary industries would support more likely.

I wondered how to facilitate an event which is capable of incorporating randomness or chance of meetings or gatherings, something projects undertaken in public space often work with.<sup>98</sup>

Is it the role of a creator of a project to delineate a group of people to work with? I was looking for a possibility of how the project could take place in a way that, instead

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<sup>97</sup> Haraway 2018, pp. 125–126.

<sup>98</sup> Compare e.g. with an edition related to the festival Four Days in Motion, Prague: Václavová, Denisa. *Proluka pod vršovickým nebem*. 2017.

of condensing a team, would also be able to facilitate exchange between people, people I would not necessarily know, or people who would not know each other. Rather than imposing a topic to an unknown place or group, I thought that I would prefer to be a host, to be able to give space for something still unknown, something which needs to take place or to obtain some space. This is quite an abstract point of departure, a person thinking of working with people in a room in the city.

Sticking to the act of exploring as a way to line out further steps of a project, Mieke Bal is putting it like this: “you don't apply one method; you conduct a meeting between several, a meeting in which the object participates, so that, together, object and methods can become a new, not firmly delineated, field.”<sup>99</sup>

In the following part, I would like to think closer about performance in its aspect being an event of meeting. In order to have a look at gatherings or assemblies from a more out-zoomed perspective, I would like to include, at this point, writings by Judith Butler.

Being known for her research on gender, she refers to her work as dedicated to those living precarious lives, and states about her critics of gender: “The point was precisely to relax the coercive hold of norms [...] for the purposes of living a more livable life.”<sup>100</sup> In *Notes Toward A Performative Theory Of Assembly* she is talking about people “abandoned by both political and economic processes”<sup>101</sup> and how “[t]he entrance of such populations into the sphere of appearance may well be making a set of claims about the right to be recognized and to be accorded a livable life”.<sup>102</sup>

Observing different assemblies, such as political demonstrations or groups of people waiting for a legal status, she is questioning of whom we do speak, when we speak of *the people*. She states, that “they are not a given population, but are rather constituted by the lines of demarcation that we implicitly or explicitly establish.”<sup>103</sup> <sup>104</sup> She extends this thought that people can only appear at a cost of others even further, to the non-human world. “Only in the context of a living world does the human as an

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<sup>99</sup> Bal 2002, p. 4.

<sup>100</sup> Butler, Judith. *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. 2015. P. 33.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> As an example she names the „foreign, unskilled, feminized body that belongs to the private sphere“ as being „the condition of possibility for the speaking male citizen“. Ibid., p. 45.



agentic creature emerge, one whose dependency on others and on living processes gives rise to the very capacity for action.”<sup>105</sup> She names the importance of critically recognizing interdependency as basis for being able to struggle for other goals.

Speaking of performance as assembly, as Butlers call for dependency implied, with human life being inseparable from connections with nonhuman life, we also will need to consider the non- or anti-human.<sup>106</sup> Before sharing attempts of the project undertaken to encounter creatural modes and things, the next part is describing an attempt of relating an event and it's occurring actions to a bigger context: by giving it a title in this manner.

### **3.1. How an octopus and whiskey coexist/are hosted together at an event**

This layer of throwing together evolutionary processes with very daily objects and practices inspired absurdity. The events title is suggesting the opening of a social gathering in a bar towards something playing with the awareness of larger contexts - e.g. processes which were formative to our existence as human species. As for example the issue *Evolution. The first four Billion Years: From primordial cell to mammal* of the scientific magazine GEO kompakt Nr. 23 shows,<sup>107</sup> research around this topic covers phenomena such as extreme climate changes, developments related to shifts on micro-cellular levels or sketches about plants or creatures no one ever saw. The speculative and imaginative character of the issue, as stated in its introduction, could also be found in the character of the performance, in the sense of how stories were made-up or leading away from the situation. Also, I would like to mention disciplines associated around the topic of evolution, such as Archaeology and Biology. The work with performers for this project was mis/using methods and concepts of these disciplines, with the difference of not searching for facts, but critically engaging in subversive strategies of encounter.

Evolution - in a bar - also was about the belief in its plausibility. What can we discover on a cellular level, in a situation of an extreme change of surrounding, can we encounter something we do not know and facilitate its development?

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<sup>105</sup> Butler 2015, p. 44.

<sup>106</sup> Compare *ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>107</sup> Title freely translated to English by me, original reference: Schaper, Michael (editor). GEO Kompakt 23/10: *Evolution - Die ersten vier Milliarden Jahre: Von der Urzelle zum Säugetier*. 2010.

Behind the last part of the title *As you are*. could stand: you are welcome in any mood, do we need to do more than we can do here and now? To explore principles of life beyond something we might assume as “human” - in a place where human behaviour can be observed in terms of cultivated drinking.

This notion of a gathering being an exercise to negotiate ways of being together in a good and free way, is a demand which also occurred and affected the process of the performance we created. The title of the event carrying the word “rehearsing” could be read in that sense - a situation not being about perfection or showing something to someone, but investing yourself “as you are”, a suggested tryout in a gathering.

### **3.2. Welcoming set-up**

For the performance, people would arrive at the Cafe and join a performer at a table. For some time, nothing would really seem to happen, in our script of actions, there would be written “talking” and “ordering a drink”, something you might anyhow do in a place like that, when meeting people. After some time the performers on the tables would guide or challenge the conversations in/to a specific direction, or suggest to engage with specific materials. Each table-situation was different, as they were developed on a personal level with people hosting the situation. With each of the performers, we had raised the question “What would you like to experience, do, or share in a Cafe-Bar?” In the end, different performers proposed set-ups on different tables, each one prepared but also open for what the visitors might contribute. Activities on tables looked like this:

- *Masha would take a pen, as she usually does in a bar, and start to portrait the people around her on the paper tissues.*
- *Israel would, while drinking with his guests, start to prepare the local hang-over food of his country of origin: squid with lemon.*
- *Ine offered to figure out an important personal question with the help of objects people carried on them or objects in their near surroundings.*
- *Emil and Jakub would continuously drink shots and work with social conventions of clothing (he'd undress himself and redress differently while sitting at the bar.*

- *Tinka worked with air around her, she'd prepare an invisible cake out of it with the help of her guests.*
- *Wayne would work with the hands of audience, putting them in honey while afterwards wrapping them in goldleaf. Other people would blow-out an egg and colour it red, which would be placed in the golden hands while speaking a poem.*
- *Yannik had brought his favourite material of that time, an aquarium full with small black balls, providing a sensory experience by inviting people to put their hands in it.*
- *On my table, I would offer to make up a fiction together with the people around an empty teacup, which was placed on the table without owner.*

For another redo of the project, more people joined us:

- *Ran was working with sugar in different consistencies and colours, sculpting and adding it to drinks of people, discussing with them.*
- *Svetlana was considering the plants of the space, inviting some of them to join the table.*
- *Ivana was mainly sharing personal experiences of bar situations she made, having a conversation which would sometimes be interrupted by some more theatrical action, a citation of a poem, etc.*

The three following subchapters introduce basic situations developed throughout the event. Each of these parts will find a chapter of referring to practical fields and theories later on.

### **3.2.1. Table situations: building islands, increasing tides<sup>108</sup>**

*The table situations developed separately like small islands taking more and more a specific shape. Every table had other materials to touch, other strategies to engage with the people sitting around it.<sup>109</sup> Each of them, after starting similar from casual*

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<sup>108</sup> Compare appendix 21. *Research on Table situations and objects with Ine Ubben*. It was one of the first experiments with Ine Ubben, for table situations with objects.

<sup>109</sup> In an aftermovie of the Prague Quadrennial 2015 Sodja Lotker (artistic director of the festival) speaks about furniture as scenography, about the inspiring experiment "to see how the spacing itself

*talks, facilitating increasingly very different situations. Simultaneously to these developing separated playgrounds, the overall atmosphere of the space started to change slowly: more and more unusual actions started to happen, some people stood up or changed position, the soundscape became more loud and confusing or disorienting. We were putting contact microphones under the tables, to amplify sounds produced at different tables, sometimes added effects of distortion or echo which would alienate the amplified live-soundscape slowly.*

### **3.2.2. Rupture: appearance of creatures**

*This change of atmosphere to a confusing and more vibrant state would be interrupted by an action of two performers. The two of them would use a similar strategy than we used with the microphones, in an analogue way: their principle was to skip cultivated conversations they were leading before, and to feedback the audience with their bodies. They would stand motionless until small sounds produced by people in the space would serve as impulses for movement. They would in a way listen and react to the guests with their bodies, move, crawl or sound in relation to what they would hear of the visitors.*

### **3.2.3. Actions covering all space: floods**

*There would be a third kind of amplifying of the soundscape produced by the event: it would get dark and for several minutes, people would just hear loud noise. It would be a playback of the table sounds which happened in the beginning. I called that part 'floods' because kind of same things were happening to everyone: listening or being exposed to the same loud sound, later on getting served the same food:*

*After that, the two performers, Wayne and Yannick, would dress as waiters, serve food, some performers would start to use the small stage of the cafe to play an extremely long and cheesy version of Bossanova, some changed to some more elegant clothes. It would be the ending, we would use the space in its option of a formal dinner with live music, before leaving the space, the visitors remaining there*

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creates the relating of the performance". She identifies experiments with the seating at a symposium as "spacial curation". Compare: SharedSpaceProject Aftermovie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vt5xiL8EgY> (Minute 5.30; accessed on 2nd April 2019).

*with served food and drinks.*

A friend gave feedback, which I found interesting to think about: he would tell me that all performances of this set up feel like being in my living room. I think, he might as well speak about the hours before the performance started, when a big team of people was inhabiting the space of a cafe. He added about our behaviour: “like a dog who is peeing in all corners to mark his space.”

To speak, once more, with words borrowed from Mieke Bal about how to speak of a project which is alive: “It has become a living creature, embedded in all the questions and considerations that the mud of your travel spattered onto it, and that surround it like a 'field'.”<sup>110</sup> In order to understand more processes how a project can move, how it can happen, that your project is in a way a travel that is embedded in relations, I will write about a specific *field* which inspired me.

### **3.3. Relations around the set-up**

#### **3.3.1. Tables - an excavation as inspirational field**

*After my first year of the MA I got a summer-job at archeo pro,<sup>111</sup> The activity consisted of checking soil at a building ground in Veleslavin (Prague) for remains of bronze-age. For four weeks during July 2017, I worked as excavation helper. This would later strongly affect the work I developed during my second year of the MA. Not in the sense that I was conscious of it being such a major inspiration, nor in the sense that I felt I needed to translate that experience into theatre, but in the way most observations, encounters and orders of daily life change and affect the shape of things I create.*

Naming an experience of a summer job as an inspiration for my final project also means that I am exploring how an everyday activity can be referred back to from a point of view of devised theatre and theory. So the following will work with this approach as a **dramaturgical agenda**, a strategy of encountering and moderating appearances and experiences and linking them to life, and to art. It is also an agenda which can be mapped to responsibilities of **directing**, who will appear, where or

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<sup>110</sup> Bal 2002, p. 4.

<sup>111</sup> “Archeo-pro is a non-profit, non-governmental, public benefit company, whose mission is to preserve and research archaeological and other historical heritage.” Compare website: <http://archeopro.archeo4u.cz/index.html> (accessed on 19th April 2019).

when will the process of moderation and exploration start? Furthermore this activity will serve as departure for theoretical reflections.

I will describe different topics, discourses, behaviours and practices that for me seemed to come together in that single job of the *excavation helper*.

Even though I propose to map the two fields of inspiration (the archeological excavation field and the playing field of performance) onto one another, they are not interchangeable. Each field involved a specific mixture of tasks people were carrying out, their background and the transformation of the site, which were entirely specific.

To contextualize this approach, I will repeatedly refer to writings of Erin Manning.<sup>112</sup> In her writings as well as in her practice, she is facilitating laboratories “for thought in motion”.<sup>113</sup> Leaning on William James concept of “radical empiricism”,<sup>114</sup> she outlines in her writings *Against Method*<sup>115</sup> approaches, which interweave “transversal fields of inquiry”.<sup>116</sup> After Manning, *research-creation* operates in the chaos of relations, embracing undefined states of appearances beyond their categories. How different contexts, methods and places of exploration might form a field of research is the question, the next example is following.

*It can be a daily activity, such as a working place, a meeting with a person, getting to know how things are ordered in other people's heads or lives, which would make me think about things differently, seeing a connection between certain topics, materials or people which I had not seen before. I think this is what I could call a field of inspiration. Most often, it would happen in an indirect way, that daily encounters would open another understanding or point to outlines of my understanding which would affect the way I create with others later.*

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<sup>112</sup> Erin Manning directs research in Relational Art and Philosophy and teaches at Concordia University in Montreal <http://www.inflexions.org/participants.html#manning>, (accessed on 19th April 2019).

<sup>113</sup> Compare website of the *senselab* of which she is a founder: <http://senselab.ca/wp2/about/> (accessed on 19th April 2019).

<sup>114</sup> compare Manning, Erin. *The Minor Gesture*. 2016. P. 29. Compare also: James, William. *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. 2012.

<sup>115</sup> Manning 2016, chapter: *Against Method*. Pp. 26-45.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

## **On the site: people digging together**

First of all, I will explore different layers of an experienced everyday activity, on a specific material field, a field of archeological excavation.

### **'The people'**

On site were working e.g. the following:

- *17 year-old school boys, who were there as a summer job in order to afterwards hitchhike Europe.*
- *a girl who normally works producing goat cheese in a Czech village*
- *a woman writing her PhD, studying Balcan burial rituals*
- *an australian guy, normally transporting things for people in Prague*
- *a guy whom people would call "Baron", adding that he lived a very ascetic life, with a large amount of banana-boxes as furniture and a lot of cats.*
- *someone, who would wear a belt with an old mobile phone attached to it, listening to the same short playlist each single day, consisting out of Rolling Stones and Metallica.*
- *an archaeologist.*
- *someone who had a side-job as technician at the most expensive puppet theatre in Prague*
- *one man who was a biology teacher, and knew a lot about wolves in the Czech Republic*
- *an architecture student who was always late*
- *a worker, who seemed to have used shovels all his life as did his friend. They would greet me in German and my Czech would not be enough to talk much with them*
- *an activist who did not really tell his name*
- *me, a performer, tired after a year of studies.*

*All of us were digging soil, loading buckets and trying to find objects, sweating and getting sunburnt. Our excavation leader and his assistant would be different from the rest of the group, their bronze coloured skin would never get burnt and was glowing in the sun, while they wrapped and numbered different artefacts in different paper*

*bags, or took photos of profiles of soil.*

*There were roles of gender to be observed, how men and woman would cope with their different tasks and strength. Men taking off their shirts, women pulling their tank tops up under their bras to have at least free bellies and backs. There was some sense of being a group, by sharing a lunch break together and having dedicated to spend time together. Maybe we benefited from the fact that the payment was not high enough to attract people who would only do it for financial reasons. There was solidarity slowly building up, people shared sun-screen and water.*

### **Being really naive**

When I listed the different people above, what I used to differentiate or attribute them was actually the activities they are busy with, mostly former or other jobs, or fields of study, what they learned. Considering these people, from a curiosity of being a devised theatre maker, as a group or assembly might be exceeding who they were as individual people. I don't know about it but can imagine that for many of them the decision to appear at the excavation site was a precarious situation related to money or some real interest in archaeological practice. The people who met did not meet under any bigger ideological or ideal goal or dream they shared. There was some guidance, though, of what should be of interest and what not: the head of excavation would moderate our activities and tell us how and what we should pay attention to.

*Thinking of other places of work: Why do people set up blocks of concrete or fields of work, putting people with a similar history of many years of study in the same subject together? I guess there are many reasons, organizational ones, reasons for providing a certain level of knowledge or skills or reasons rooting in capitalist structures. The structure of certain working places attracts a certain class or field of people. Observing contemporary management and working structures, you can also hear people saying, that the era of extreme specialization is over. Thinking of global clashes and movements, overlaps and intersections of daily lives of people, who are not coming from the same background or same place of birth doesn't seem exceptional anymore.*



### **A small framed group, sharing time and an activity**

*After several days, the place was a meadow covered by shattered squares.*

*The work was quite routinuous. In the morning they would divide people into groups of four, and people would spend all the day with their group in one small pit. Mostly, I was a worker, using my hands to find things in soil all day and I enjoyed that activity. But sometimes, the chessboard-like meadow with people on it seemed like a perfect landscape of stages to me. Imagine a topology of square holes in the ground, in each one a small group of people. For many hours, the small teams would spend time in that hole together, working, but also starting to talk, discuss, joke out of boredom or fun.*

### **Imaginary Experiment:**

-> You can have a look back up there, to the list of workers, and choose four of the characters I mentioned, imagine them together in a square pit of 2x2m for 8 hours. What would they talk about? What would be the mood?

*The following work is a snapshot of one possible creation undertaken in one of the squares during an eight hour day:*

A sculpture titled *Ancient Monster Rabbit*,<sup>117</sup> a fictional arrangement of bones, teeth and soil, created and titled by few workers on excavation site in Veleslavin, June 2017.

### **When something does**

Erin Manning puts movements resulting out of a net of occasions and relations, which can not be triggered back to an idea of one mind of one person like this:

“When something does, new relational fields are forming, and with them, new modes of existence. A new mode of existence brings with it modalities of knowledge.”<sup>118</sup> I was considering an excavation-site as a field, which started to function in its own dynamics, diverse people and activities met. There, we had a clear set-up, structured

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<sup>117</sup> Compare photography in appendix 23. Ancient Monster Rabbit.

<sup>118</sup> Manning 2016, p. 30.

after archaeological methods and the outcome was quite limited or directed by the supervisor of the excavation. After Manning, “Neither the knower nor the known can be situated in advance of the occasion coming to be - both are immanent to the field’s composition.”<sup>119</sup>

I suggest to draw closer by Mike Pearsons understanding of Archaeology and Performance. Researching and merging areas of geographical, historical, anthropological, performative matters, aspects concerning landscape or cultural narratives in collaboration with Michael Shanks, he was launching the book *Theatre/Archaeology*.<sup>120</sup>

I would like to overlap the example from the excavations with his way of thinking of performance as a

not entirely hermetically sealed, but a devised world, all the elements of which – site, environment, technology, spatial organisation, form and content, rules and practices – are conceived, organised, controlled and ultimately experienced by its orders of participant.<sup>121</sup>

He is considering performance as a place where “extra-daily occurrences and experiences and changes in status are possible”.<sup>122</sup> Describing performance as something which is not separated from daily life, but as a “locale or cultural intervention”<sup>123</sup> or exploration, which might bring extra-daily experiences, Pearson is naming an approach which was relevant during the creation of the project *Rehearsing Evolution*: Our experiments started from the daily situation in a cafe-bar space, but developed to a more unusual one, e.g. simply dropping the cup and interrupting other people’s talks or gathering objects which we wouldn’t have expected in the space. Having sessions of improvising in Cafe-Bar places, it was impressing, how much aspects of site, surroundings, or atmosphere between people would literally co-create the performative situation. But how did we create?

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<sup>119</sup> Manning 2016, p. 30.

<sup>120</sup> Mike Pearson is Professor of Performance Studies at the University of Wales Aberystwyth, Michael Shanks is Professor of Classics and of Cultural Anthropology at Stanford University. Compare in introduction of: Pearson, Mike; Shanks, Michael. *Theatre/Archaeology*. 2001.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

### **Getting to the extra-daily**

Still sticking to archaeological methods and their cultural intersections, this discipline is called “a mode of cultural production”,<sup>124</sup> which is intended to lead to a clear product, such as an excavation report or exhibited historical fact. Let’s consider the finding of a bone as new point for departure. What would you do with it? But, at this point, it is important to state, that I do not consider archaeologists to “happen upon or discover the past”<sup>125</sup> It is a process of doing something out of remains, a movement from an artefact to a culturally consumable product.<sup>126</sup>

If we are aware of this act of creation, we could use it as something guiding our behaviour towards objects we encounter. Rather than producing ‘consumable artefacts’ we were trying to facilitate encounters via offered materials on the tables at the cafebar and looking for situations which could shift multiple times or feel in-between certain modes of behaviour. We had several classes of dramaturgy inspiring the work with objects, mapping “levels of potential” of material of things and telling or assuming fictively facts to them.<sup>127</sup>

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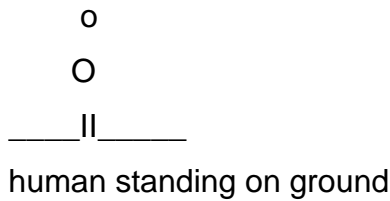
<sup>124</sup> Pearson 2001, p. 27.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

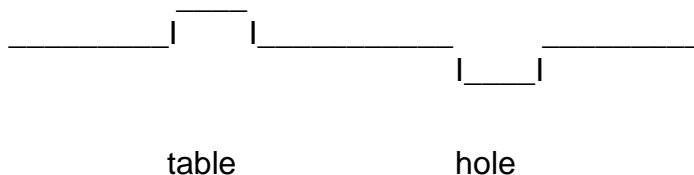
<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Sodja Lotkers’ teachings in classes of dramaturgy at DAMU (2016/2017) established research in that area for our class.

## A table is an inverted hole



Having introduced a thinking of surfaces and tissues, I would like to think of surface manipulation of ground level, which seems to be undertaken by humans for different reasons and occasions. Practices I was describing as happening in archaeological pits and practices on tables at a cafebar will meet. Both, a pit and a table is a human manipulation of our surface we walk on.<sup>128</sup> Horizontal line suggests, again, the level of soil or floor, a surface:



Speaking once more about the excavation field, we would look for objects in that pit, and take them out, to classify them, in a way, displace them. By contrast to that, the surface of tables are more inviting to place things, e.g. made to carry something like a plate, or notebook of glass with a flower.

So imagine finding a claypot in the pit and take it home or to theatre, and put it on a table. It will seem to be a fragment, because it comes from somewhere else and is separated from its origin. Already in the pit, it could be considered as a fragment, because, over the course of time, it got separated from its context and reality what it was made for, separated from its use. Could we say that fragments trigger narration?

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<sup>128</sup> All the year, I planned to work with floor, with people being grounded, with sensory impulses to different textures of floors. I thought I did not. But somehow, you could consider tables as an elevation of floor.

Tecklenburg is writing about narration as something to bridge a gap.<sup>129</sup> As in the discipline of Archaeology, objects are found with a timely gap and bridged with a narration.

When we meet audience, lets say, we try to bridge gap between the makers and visitors. This can be done with narrating a story, sharing one's position, to invite the others to listen and become part of it – or even witness the creation of a narration. I already considered the work with surface as a tool for creation. We explored technologies of digging and elevating in relation to fragments which would be found on different levels.

The following sketches picture the same, a square table and a square hole, but from a bird's eye view:



table



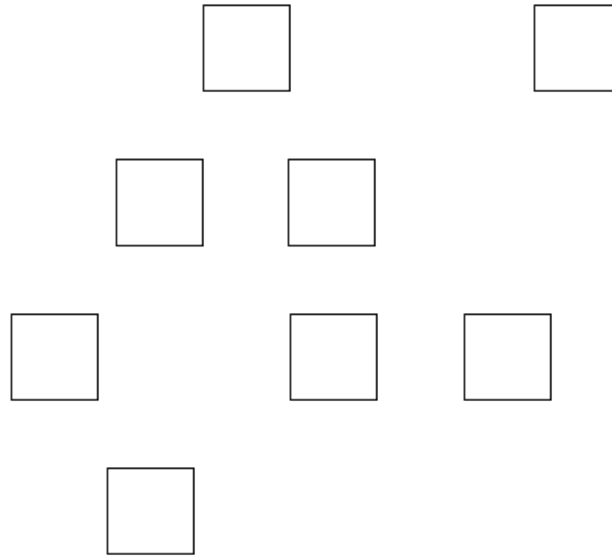
hole

It's not so difficult to sit at a table, as it is not so difficult to be in a hole. At the same time, both seems to appear more complex than it looked like in the beginning.

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<sup>129</sup> Tecklenburg 2016, e.g. p. 39.

Excavation ground: From bird perspective, it might look like that.



Drafts for the scenography for my final project, a cafe with tables also often looked like that. A field of pits and a field with tables look quite similar. Also, a wall with notes on post-its might have a similar graphic.<sup>130</sup>

### **3.3.2. Creatures - getting to know another version of yourself via experimental anatomy**

In the cafebar space, some of the people would transform. In the first version of the event, two performers, Wayne and Yannick, interrupted their manner of communication with people sitting at their tables and started to sound and move differently. We had a separated rehearsal phase during which we developed their action or state they would access. The phase was more like a movement laboratory for voice and body, than a process of developing stage material. After having worked with the two of them on a performative mode where impulses for body movements would come from their bodies 'listening' or 'sensing' material (such as ginger in

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<sup>130</sup> In our first lessons with Branislava Kuburovic, subject 'search of context' in autumn 2016, we established focus of writing through/after arrangements of post-its on a surface.

Project *Plugs, Gates, Skins and other*) we would this time not use material research. Or, to put it differently: the material of our research was one's own voice and textures or areas experienced 'in' the bodies.<sup>131</sup>

A discipline which is dealing with lived bodily experience instead of concentrating on measurable facts or analysis is experimental anatomy.<sup>132</sup> Andrea Olsen, as body practitioner, describes in her edition *Body Stories*, that experimental anatomy "encourages the individual to integrate information with experience".<sup>133</sup>

I somehow was curious to explore different modes of humans, and imagined a strong contrast between a person exploring inner body landscapes and the manner of how a person would sit in a social or public place like a bar.<sup>134</sup> Knowing, that our project around tables would probably work with people speaking and having drinks, we were starting off from an anatomic sketch of a part in human throat, where the pipeline of eating and speaking would run next to each other.<sup>135</sup>

We would not really know what to do with an image like that, but we gathered exercises and watched youtube videos.<sup>136</sup> Erin Manning is speaking about processes of research which try to not assume in advance what kind of knowledges might be of importance, a "speculative pragmatism",<sup>137</sup> which is orienting around the process of exploration. She adds: "It is interested in the anarchy at the heart of all process, and is engaged with the techniques that tune the anarchical toward new modes of

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<sup>131</sup> You might call that work also an energetic work, my classmate Israel had given us the feedback after the last performance, that we mainly were working with energies.

<sup>132</sup> Compare: Olsen, Andrea in collaboration with McHose, Caryn. *Body Stories. A Guide to Experimental Anatomy*. 1991.

Ibid., p. 8: In parallel to emergence of bodywork, „a term used to refer generally to therapeutic techniques of working with the body“, Olsen is locating its core development between 1930's - 1970'ies. She states, the discipline *experimental anatomy*, to provide "an underlying awareness of body structure and function". Compare also: Publications by Wynn Kapit, Lawrence Elson or David Gorman provide access to this field.

<sup>133</sup> Olson 1991, p. 8.

<sup>134</sup> At that time in spring 2018, also the movie *The Square* (2017) was premiered in Prague cinemas. The scene of a person acting like a monster at a dinner event would be far more extreme, but comparable to a way Wayne would later on behave in his creatural mode at the cafebar space. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/the-square-dinner-ape-scene-terry-notary-ruben-ostlund-a8261266.html> (accessed on 25th April 2019). In the movie *I served the English King* (2006) after the Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal are as well cultural, political, daily and instinctive reactions intertwined. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0284363/> (accessed on 25th April 2019).

<sup>135</sup> Compare appendix 25. *Throat anatomy*.

<sup>136</sup> E.g. compare a video which is about the interpretation of guidelines of the Torah, about why the act of speaking and eating are opposite ways of connecting with the world and should not be carried out at the same time <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnzJWm0Xfmg> (accessed on 19th April 2019).

<sup>137</sup> Manning 2016, p. 33.

knowledge and new modes of experience".<sup>138</sup>

We were doing exercises in which we were breathing into different parts of organs and experimented with a nonverbal use of our voice. We were imagining inner bodyspaces and notated their changes, draw subjective parts of inner body landscapes or tell each other stories which would appear linked to the work with different exercises.<sup>139</sup> Looking back at archaeological practices mentioned in other chapters and the way these were introduced to work with mapping of information to body parts (e.g. bones), the techniques of the bodywork we used here with performers could be considered as a lived contrast to pathologic practice of delineating body parts to facts.

After some time, we would start to integrate the intense connection developed to sensations we experienced when working with areas inside the body to outer environmental impulses:

### **Octopus**

While staying with our intention inwardly, we started to process sound impulses in that mode. Yannick would have developed a mode inspired by a water creature, such as octopus, in which he would move with his body close to the floor. All his body was spread on the floor, body surface and floor surface merging, in a way. His skin made sounds when sliding over the floor. Always, when he would hear a strong sound which was loud enough to be a movement impulse, he would translate this impulse to his hands or legs, to his octopus-like experienced body texture.

### **Blind bird**

Wayne would have developed a mode, in which he would as well not use his eyes to orientate himself in the space: an image close to what he imagined would be being a blind bird, he was a quite static body (who could not walk or fly very well) and his way of movement he would use to response sounds was his voice. If he heard a dog bark, he would feedback these sounds- but with a voice drawn from somewhere else

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<sup>138</sup> Manning 2016, p. 33.

<sup>139</sup> Compare appendix 24. *Free drawings by Wayne Jordan, Yannick Stasiak and Theresa Schrezenmeir.*



than a speaking mind, a voice coming from an unknown place inside.

Speaking more about researching alternative ways of knowing or doing and broadly experimenting with them, Manning is talking of an interest in “what this excess can do. It implicitly recognizes that knowledge is invented in the escape, in the excess”.<sup>140</sup>

Working with practices which consciously skip an approach to learn which starts “by delimiting”,<sup>141</sup> you open the process to something which might “lurk beneath the words”.<sup>142</sup> Considering the performers, something which might have lurked in-between spoken intentions or observations were movements and sounds which would transgress the conventional borders of a social space.

*When Wayne would perform in his mode of a creature, he would tell us after, that he would get afraid of himself, not considering chairs as chairs anymore, or glasses as glasses. He told us that he might lose this kind of ‘human’ behavioural knowledge of e.g. not to break furniture or harm someone. I thought, that that sounded really like a bird in a room, not knowing that glass windows are walls, a being thinking not in pathways and roads and doors, but a being having its borders and impulses to move somewhere beyond.*

### **3.3.3. Floods - sound as texture covering the space**

*“I could not feel the contour of my ears”<sup>143</sup>*

*After the occurrence of Wayne and Yannick performing a more creaturely version of themselves, the light faded down and noise was rising up. For several minutes, everyone was sitting in the dark, strong sound was in the air. Andrej, the sound designer for the performance, had gathered noises of the table situations from the beginning, and played them back in a strong alienated version. The strong and loud sound information was resembling more to a noise concert or the feeling of standing next to a highway or waterfall.*

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<sup>140</sup> Manning 2016, p. 38.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>143</sup> The Chinese experimental musician Li Jianhong describing a moment of merging with the environment. He is cited by the author Wang Jing, Adel. *AFFECTIVE LISTENING: China’s Experimental Music and Sound Art Practice*. 2018. <http://journal.sonicstudies.org/vol02/nr01/a11>. (accessed on 10th January 2019)

Throughout this chapter, I would like to focus on sound as important part of the performance and also on sound in general, in connection with certain perceptive modes which might occur with it. In her book *Sensing Sound* Nina Sun Eidsheim drafts a sonic understanding after which „Our sense of hearing relies not only on excited eardrums, but also on sound conduction and vibration throughout the body“. <sup>144</sup> Outlining research on prenatal listening, she states that first reactions of listening „begin in the skin and skeletal network“, <sup>145</sup> in an embryonic state eight weeks before the eardrum is developed. Only later, cochlear information is additionally processed.

I would say, that usually, modes of listening in cafe-bar spaces might more likely engage in the processing of cochlear information, such as listening to the spoken words of another person, to tabletalks, daily noises or music. An article, in which listening is as well considered as a practice going further than catching acoustic signals with our ears is published in the *Journal of Sonic Studies* and introducing a practice of *affective listening*. The author Adel Wang Jing states:

When we listen affectively, we listen *with* and *to* our bodies. The ear-becoming-body. When a sound does not carry any identifiable, decodable, or communicative message, it affects the listening body in the way touching does. <sup>146</sup>

*Throughout my practical work I was working with an image of sound as an invisible hidden liquid (be it in people's bodies or behind the surfaces of the room) which eventually would start to move or leak out and drip on things and bodies, slowly being experienced in the space. Also, sounds were often imagined to appear indirectly, to simply be in the air, belonging to the scenography - like announcements from speakers in public space, to be around like walls or furniture or bodies.*

Wang Jing, introduced above with an embodied understanding of the practice of sounding and listening, names in his observations of musicians from the Chinese experimental scene a connectivity formed by sound, which he exemplifies by the event of rain: Rain, in the sense of water coming down as sonic event, is both, sounding but also indeed touching the body.

Listening to the rain is an ordinary event in everyday life. What I find

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<sup>144</sup> Eidsheim, Nina Sun. *Sensing Sound. Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice*. 2015. P. 54.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Wang Jing, 2018.

uncommon in this event is the connectivity formed between sounds and the listener, particularly the listener's body embedded in that unique time-space.<sup>147</sup>

I would like to look closer into this environmental aspect of sound and think of how connectivity might be formed by these events. Being surrounded by sound all over, to have a sonic feeling also beyond your feet or to feel sound in connection to its source of origin or environmental circumstances is something which was described to appear as well outside sound-events, like during earthquakes, strong changes of weather<sup>148</sup> or the starting of a plane. An interesting field where sound appears to be understood as connective tool, embedded in a network of relations, bodies and political agendas is the field of auditory technologies for resistance. One of them is the Human Microphone Project which took place in the frame of movements of Occupy Wall Street.<sup>149</sup> It's principle of creating an analogue microphone in a way that "one person says something and those nearby repeat it, amplifying it so that people further away can hear"<sup>150</sup> is not a new one, but a simple one, which artists Elana Mann and musician Juliana Snapper explored further by establishing a choir for voice research.

In *Rehearsing Evolution*, we were looking for strategies of speaking and amplifying to dissolve borders between sound-sources and listeners:<sup>151</sup> we invited our visitors to co-create a carpet of their voices in the beginning - the performers were simply asking them to participate in dialogue - with the result of an acoustic atmosphere similar to the usual sound atmosphere in a cafe-space. The texture of these voices was picked up by microphones and was returning to them as described *flood* of

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<sup>147</sup>Wang Jing, 2018.

<sup>148</sup> You can imagine the field of archaeological excavation which was described before and imagine strong thunder and lightning coming up - pits were filled by water, people were running around, things were falling down.

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.elanamann.com/press/occupy-la-and-art-world> (accessed on 10th January 2019).

<sup>150</sup> <https://www.elanamann.com/sites/default/files/press/ Occupy%20Used%20a%20%27People%27s%20Microphone%27%20to%20Spread%20Info%20Through%20a%20Crowd.%20Now%20There%27s%20a%20People%27s%20Mic%20Choir%20-%20Los%20Angeles%20-%20Arts%20-%20Public%20Spectacle%20-%20Print%20Version.pdf> (accessed on 10th January 2019).

<sup>151</sup> In this context I would like to mention the American composer and accordionist whose compositions were "meant for anyone that wants to perform them regardless of musical training".

(<https://www.elanamann.com/sites/default/files/press/Radical%20>

[Listening%20and%20the%20Peoples%20Microphony.pdf](https://www.elanamann.com/sites/default/files/press/Radical%20Listening%20and%20the%20Peoples%20Microphony.pdf) (accessed on 10th January 2019).)

Eidsheim states about Oliveros work that it "seeks to erase the distinctions between performer and audience and between professional and amateur" (Eidsheim 2015, p. 29.)

noise<sup>152</sup> later on. The sound-design as well as performative modes of people were playing with navigating between what our guests would bring and with things which are there, using them as starting point for repetition, amplification or interruption.

*This connection between being a listener and simultaneously contributing to the sound atmosphere, the idea of people's voices being the sound source of the played back noise, was not worked out very clear to be observed or experienced transparently from a visitor's perspective in that manner. When repeating the show with different microphones in a bigger space, the setting seemed to support this idea much more and confirmed our sound dramaturgy of picking up the situation's sounds, playing and re-playing and alienating them slowly. It could be interesting, to make a version of the event focussing only on that aspect of sound atmosphere in a cafe-bar: to make a 'concert' about people's voices in a cafe-bar situation. It could be an experiment about people listening to themselves as a group.*

Eidsheim states that: "Acoustic communities are bound together by shared evaluatory standards of acoustic conventions.",<sup>153</sup> when speaking about architecture such as concert halls. Often spaces for listening to music have a tradition in the way people would stand or sit depending on which kind of music would be played. Talking about the context of my thesis, I would say, the sounddesing of the event was depending on and challenging the visitors as acoustic community. Trying to speak to a group of people gathered in a cafe-bar via the vibrational aspect of sound is, similarly to the work with feedbacking and the body work explored with Wayne and Yannick, an attempt of communicating as well on another level than engaging in dialogues or consuming music played back from speakers.

Furthermore, Eidsheim fights for sound being understood as intermedial practice. She is using therefore the term *thick event*, which she explains by considering the qualities of the event of a tree falling down in a forest. If a tree falls, the event has a strong acoustic character, but is also shaped by vibration, a change in space, atmosphere, eventually the reaction of animals or a change of light and shadows.<sup>154</sup>

*In Rehearsing Evolution, the noise-part was followed by an end which guests described as kitschy, painful and entertaining: performers were serving food while the*

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<sup>152</sup> My tutor Sodja Lotker gave me the hint, which would be interesting to try out: that a moment of silence might actually have a similar impact than a moment of noise.

<sup>153</sup> Eidsheim 2015, p. 64.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

*song 'Girl from Ipanema' was played live in an endless loop, the same words, tones and smiles of musicians repeating continuously.*

By cutting down an event to purely acoustic one, we are able to talk about more concrete parameters, such as pitch, duration, etc., but neglecting other parameters involved.<sup>155</sup> For this final song of the event, the dresses as well as previous absurd situations and the transformation of the landscape of tables to a dinner seemed to play a role regarding the way the music would be perceived. Considering listening as much as singing as “intermaterial vibrational practices”,<sup>156</sup> which always are related and shaping a certain context, Eidsheim concludes that, if to speak of a position how to think of sound, “it must lie in the relational sphere”.<sup>157</sup> She adds “In other words, my desire to recover the thick event is fueled by the impulse to understand more about the integral part that music plays in how we forge our relations to one another”.<sup>158</sup>

### **How to listen to chaos?**

*Most often, the meetings for the project in a bar were chaotic and scheduled timings went messy. Surely, at some point, I was not 'ahead' anymore, things were happening all around and they were happening beyond questions of taste, beyond decisions if a certain action would be good or bad to keep for performing. Somehow, actions started to feel 'real', but this state was difficult to grasp. It was a loud state and it felt that you couldn't hear each other anymore - it was easier to listen to the situation in a way of just adding actions, putting yourself into it. For me as a director, it was difficult to understand at this point, if things would needed to be improved or clarified.<sup>159</sup>*

A practice described in the article on affective listening is Li Jianhong's environmental improvisation, which is about the “listening body, including both [...] ears and all the other organs, acts as a sponge, absorbing the sonic intensity and at the same time

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<sup>155</sup> Eidsheim 2015, p. 2.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Performing it again in Studio Alta, Prague, in February 2019 showed, that a larger space for the kind of chaos and sound we created would solve the enclosed squeezed character it had during first shows.

generating new sounds.”<sup>160</sup> An embodied understanding of listening to a situation is not thinking in differences of “human, nature, and art, but of intensities, speeds and affects.”<sup>161</sup> We had the question of how to navigate in an attentive way through chaotic situations and a messy environment, which appeared during the event. Jianhong’s conception of listening might be helpful to understand. For him it is important, “to vibrate with the variation of sonic intensities, rather than to control or signify them.”<sup>162</sup>

*The only chance to organize ourselves in the chaos between having talks, connecting cables or discussing questions (which were addressed to me - as a director who actually was hesitating in taking decisions without time for their development or without crew) was, to draw the timeline of the event together.*<sup>163</sup> This would be our way to synchronize, every one of us watching the same line on a piece of paper which would mean ‘start’ and other lines, meaning ‘darkness’ or ‘serving food’. After few meetings, we had several drawings, each of them similar but necessary, to ‘outline’ our meeting every time new. This seemed to be the structure we would try to listen to. After performing it once more after some time, everyone started to be in the bar space differently. Our thoughts, in the beginning circling around how to prepare for guests on the tables moved towards engaging in finding additional collective actions or not stop to think about performing at all, but just having a tea and being around.<sup>164</sup>

*I guess another way or next step of development of this event would have been - instead of drawing timelines together - to let the plans go and really ‘install’ ourselves durational, share even more hours in a cafe-bar space with people and see, which field that would create.*

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<sup>160</sup> Wang Jing, 2018.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Compare appendix 28. *Drawings of timelines of Performance Rehearsing Evolution.*, listing multiple versions of timelines we were drawing together.

<sup>164</sup> We got the feedback that we should try the show as durational situation over many hours. Most of us thought, it was a great idea - but we did not make this experiment happen yet. For drawings thinking about the show more in loops instead of linear timing (as concepts of evolution might suggest), compare appendix 29. *Sketches of alternative dramaturgic structures.*

## C. Conclusion

Now, after having undertaken this journey, which went along three projects, various thinkers, experiences and reflections, I would like to name the challenges which came up and summarize thoughts in motion circling around this thesis. I would like to sketch snapshots of central lines, gestures and qualities which are formative and defining for the areas I explored.

Before stepping into detailed project descriptions, I introduced the position of being a *director* of a practical process as someone taking care of a field, giving directions of how to form or define a *ground* from which the project could develop. Later in the context of Mieke Bal's writings, I considered how we could understand the project as a living unknown creature developing its own logics of movement and language.

Now, instead of considering more this creature, I'd like to specify and conclude with an extended understanding of the notion of that *ground*<sup>165</sup> in relation to which things can appear and move.

One of the grounding textures was the notion of time: a challenge these writings were facing was the question of how to notate performative situations. In *norage&abanan*, a project which seemed to consist mainly of a performative state the performers and things were sharing, the unfolding of concrete actions in a timeline made it possible to think in more detail about this encounter. The moving through time - in the sense of me writing concrete actions out on the surface of the page, or in the sense of a very slow performative mode to approach things during the performance - could be considered as one possible texture that mattered. Using senses of skin and touch and moving in realms of experience which were not directly visible, I was adding Morton's thought of constant presence as a myth.<sup>166</sup> Following his descriptions of innumerable intersections between human- and nonhuman impacts, a different and rather irrational understanding of spacetime - reaching from private rooms to childhood memories, confirmed an orientation into more magical ways of thinking. In that sense, emerging shapes were considered as results of a play of forces between

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<sup>165</sup> You can compare with the writings in the chapter A1 on surface in the beginning.

<sup>166</sup> Morton 2016, p. 10.

people, objects, timings and environment. An encountered textuality was the textuality appearing through processes in time.

Textural surfaces on which creation or experience condenses were re-occurring in the course of these writings in different ways - starting from introducing tables as surfaces used to establish framed spots for concentration, adding surfaces of objects such as the bodies of fruit or flatness of cards and linking them to an invisible ground like capitalism as weird surface which we cannot directly see but seem to live on, or techniques of mind, as performed in tarot. Ground occurred in the sense of a morphogenetic field, as layers of earth at a field of excavation, as discursive platform a field of concern might form, a page where letters can be placed, or in a broader sense the surface of skin. Karen Gregory, introduced when speaking about tarot in the first chapter, states in her essay about the flatness of surfaces such as tables, cards or others the physical quality that enables movement and mobility.<sup>167</sup>

More important than speaking of a material ground or surface were discoveries supporting interrelated textures: the events were strongly working with aerial and often invisible or indirectly visible textures, such as sound, sonic vibrations, voices, stories, qualities of movement or qualities of touch which can not be visibly perceived, transformative textures of food or fugitive appearances such as fire or light. Considering such textural qualities as connective tissue, in the course of writings about the project *Plugs, gates, skins and other* auditory appearances, stories or queer values were also referred to as common *ground* or shared surface. Different episodes of research, different meetings or shared discoveries became another invisible surface of relations one could move from. Thereby this ground would not at all need to be a specific floor or room or place in the sense of a theatre space of a certain size, or a specifically located venue. The ground was *being weaved* by meetings between surfaces, people's stories, bodies in interaction with objects, the floor, the sounds.

Having spoken of a weaving with 'invisible' textures in the sense of incorporating different thoughts, people, things, etc. during the process of creation, I'd like stress that these textures then need a situation to be interweaved and to appear fully in their qualities, something very different from merely imagined or individually observed

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<sup>167</sup> Behar 2016, p. 236.



connections. Regarding the succession of the three projects which were explored in this thesis, the form of the projects shifted more and more to a shared playground, the offer of a field which provided an experience. It seemed less and less important, which materials or thoughts were prepared beforehand.

Steven Connor,<sup>168</sup> who writes about *The Curious Lives of Magical Things* says about cards that they are “magical partly because they are meaningless in themselves”, adding that a card’s “life comes from the contingency and adjacency, from what occurs when it is laid next to another card”.<sup>169</sup> In this sense, the last part of this conclusion is grouped around reflections of an event as *meeting*, a being next to each other.

For describing dramaturgic approaches of *Rehearsing Evolution*, statements of Eidsheim shed light on characteristics of shared events as origin for what we might feel or know. Regarding the sounding layers of meetings, she states:

It bears mentioning that a license to take the materially and vibrationally specific experience—the thick event—as a starting point is the opposite of self-centeredness. Taking vibrational practice as a basis for knowledge building [...] turns our attention from the categorical correctness or incorrectness of a given description [...] to the ever-changing relations”.<sup>170</sup>

Her understanding of the notion of sound is helpful to formulate a receptive position which assumes the fluidity of identity, things, borders and relations and acknowledges the feeling of being touched by a situation or phenomena of resonance as meaningful concerns. In the previous chapter, the image of rain introduced an understanding of being embedded in a situation and described a mode of listening as embodied feeling of things which are surrounding you.

In this sense, textures can be understood as a possible connective tissue between people, being fabricated and narrated during a meeting. Having spoken about assembly and interdependence in general and in the context of project work, still, for big amounts of time in the beginning of the undertaken experiments I started

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<sup>168</sup> Steven Connor is Director of CRASSH (CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN THE ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES) and Grace 2 Professor of English in the University of Cambridge. <http://stevenconnor.com/> (accessed on 13th May 2019).

<sup>169</sup> Connor, Steven. *Paraphernalia: The Curious Lives of Magical Things*. 2012. P. 58.

<sup>170</sup> Eidsheim 2015, p. 10.

preparing them alone. I don't want to say that this is bad, but detect that big parts of devised processes stay invisible.

Weaving with others, with an understanding of interdependence as a constructive practice as well as a fight,<sup>171</sup> the action of weaving is a queering and knitting of relations at the same time. In her statement: „When we arrive, we don't know who else is arriving, which means that we accept a kind of unchosen dimension to our solidarity with others“,<sup>172</sup> Judith Butler agitates the *unknown* as dimension which is inherent in meetings and requiring people to be present and to show solidarity.

Erin Manning names in contrast *pure experience* as the state which is able to create new orders. Her advice is the following: “Instead of holding knowledge to what can already be ascertained (and measured), we must, as William James suggests, find ways to account not only for the terms of the analysis, but for all that transversally weaves between them.”<sup>173</sup>

Hereby, encountering the unknown in the frame of a meeting could be regarded as creation of research - understood as something else than an academic accumulation of knowledge. The facilitation of experience through the offer of a meeting can therefore be considered as described transversal weaving.

*One quite delicate task for the setup of Rehearsing Evolution was the tuning of the pick-up mics, with which we had planned to sporadically amplify voices of the people who were meeting and talking at tables. Our sound designer pointed out, seriously joking, that the button on the equipment for this kind of adjustment was called 'sensitivity'. Every time, also as performers we needed to - similar to the balancing of microphones - find the right level between encountering a meeting with our guests and hosting the situation. Rather, than rehearsing for a final show, the togetherness as a group seemed to have been rehearsed and prepared.*

The project, associated earlier with the development of a shared living room, demanded flexibility and openness as well as knowledge about a common ground – or the wish for its experience. In this connection, textures can be seen as virtual fabrics which are surrounding us anyhow, whereas their qualities are being experienced and appearing through the meeting.

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<sup>171</sup> Compare with Judith Butler's critical view on interdependence in: Butler 2015, p. 151.

<sup>172</sup> Butler 2015, p. 152.

<sup>173</sup> Manning 2016, p. 29.

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## E. Appendix

### 1. Experimental writings. On surface.

Instructions to you, reader!

1. Look at the next page. Create something out of it – or imagine, what you would do with it. Be aware, that every line or dot or object you put on it, is part of the same surface. If you think of crumbling the paper (I had that desire when writing my last essay), I guess you are leaving the game of signs, lines, words, letters.
2. Look at the page with letters following the white page. I use it as a surface for referring and crediting any materials, principles and people I was working with or came across.<sup>174</sup>

Taking a surface and placing or moving things across it (such as people, letters or objects) for me is a possibility for connection. It is an option to place things, which before maybe were not connected, or which do not have an institution, name or established practice, to appear as connected. Creating new connections is something I like to deal with. It also means creating new borders, I learned. A stage could be such surface. But also, devising, at any place, can be seen as a process of that kind, to build up a common surface and create on it.

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<sup>174</sup> It reminds me a bit of a principle used in the vegan bistro chain Forky's near our school where we would sometimes eat: they have a wall as surface to list all kinds of 'vegan' people throughout the last couple of centuries, naming Mahatma Gandhi, Prince and Albert Einstein next to each other. The reason for the connection of these names on one wall is a claim to label strangers' attitudes towards food they ate.

FIRE TENTACLES OCTOPUS SQUID SELECTRICITY IMAGINATION  
FRUIT GINGER PLASTIC CABLES PLUGS GUARDS HAPTICAL  
SENSUAL ISOLATION BOARDERS SKIN JELLY GLASSES CUPS  
LISTENING WAX QUEERNESS CABLES VOICES SOCIALS ADNE  
SCOLLECTING FEMINISM JUST WHATS THERE BREADDINNE  
R SCULPTING CLAYS SENSORS DRIPPING WATER AND RAIN TAB  
LES PROTECTION ORGANS BANANA MOUTH COEXISTENCE LO  
VE ANATOMY INNER SPACE HOSTING HEALING EGOT TEXTURE  
SHONEY CANDLES GOLD DIGNITY DEATH EMPATHY ANGER NO  
ISE TRANSGRESSION WAX STORIES BONES ARCHAEOLOGY B  
LIND BIRD BONES FOOD ANIMAL INSTINCT CREATURES MILK L  
ISTENING RESONANCE BLUE CABBAGE ENERGY JOSEPH BEU  
Y WOLF VORSTELLKATEMCINTOSH JULIAN HETZEL UISC  
RDAS JOHN CAGEDENISVILLE NEUVE PEGGY PHENLAN JILLS  
LOWAY PATTI SMITH BARABASI KOVABONNIE BAIN BRIDGE-  
COHEN WILLIRÖSNINAWEHN ERTEASTER PETER GREENAWA  
YEASTERNINASUNEIDSHEIM DONNA HARAWAY ANDREA OLS  
ENMEG STUART GILLESDELEUZE FELIX GUATTARI WILLIAMS  
EWARD BURROUGHS FJODORMICHA ILOWITSCH DOSTOJEWS  
KIMIEKE BALKATERINASEDAFRANZKAFKAS ANDROMEZZAD  
RAKRISTASIMONISMARGARETSCHERFALANMOORE PATTIS  
MITHJUREMARVICTIMOTHY MORTON BARBARACAMPBELLE L  
ISABETHGROSZ CHARLES DARWIN HENRY BERGSON ALAN RE  
ADLIS BETHGROOTNIBBELINK LAURACULL KATHERINE BEHA  
RSUSANSONTAG MUMMY FRIENDS HESAMHANAFICRISTINA  
MALDONADO ARDENTAN WILLIAM HOLMES ANASTASIA KOKIV  
ANAATANASOVABRANISLAVAKUBUROVICISRAELLOPEZBRI  
ADELAMARELEAKUKOVICICZOFIAURZULAKOMASASODJAL  
OTKERPETRAHAUEROVAVAYNE JORDANYANNIKSTASIA KE  
MILROTHERMELINEUBBENTINKAAVRAMOVAMARIAKOMAR



2. Penn Irving, Photographies.

Downloaded from:

<http://theredlist.com/media/database/design/illustration/6-%20Handmade/raw-color/002-raw-color-theredlist.jpg> (accessed 1.12.2016).

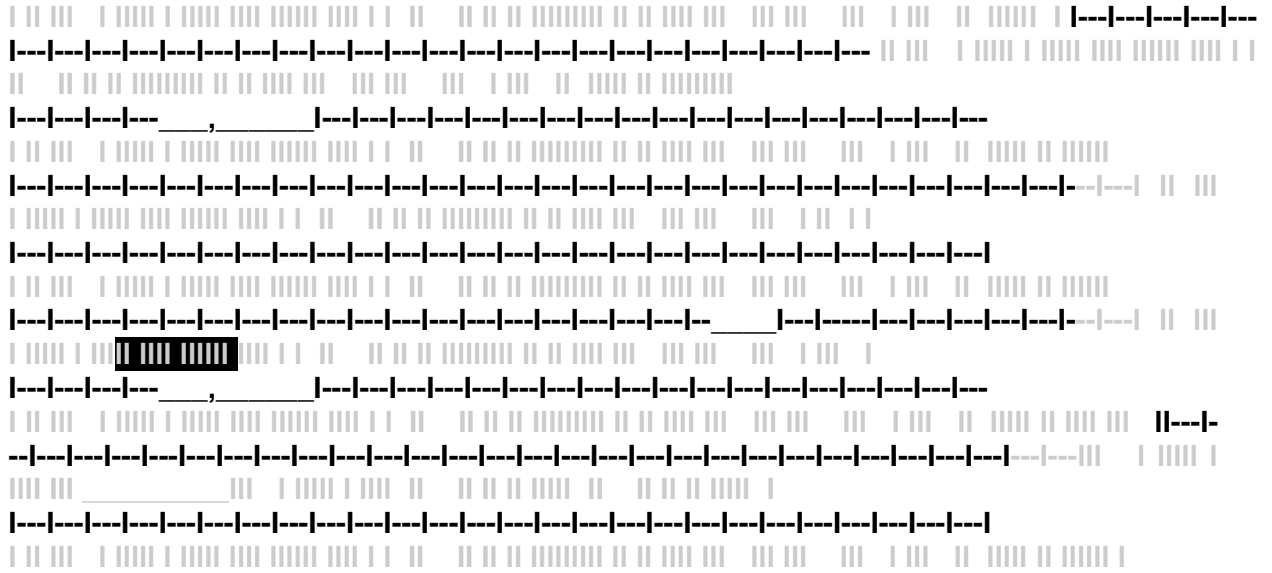








If the sun gets more weak, shadows get more weak, it will look like this:



<sup>175</sup>I have a blanket<sup>176</sup> i often take when travelling, it looks like this:



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<sup>175</sup> Compare appendix 1.5.

<sup>176</sup> Following photograph is taken by me.

So the first structure was created by light and sound event of a train going along its rails. It is shaped by a movement from A to B, by surroundings and time and by me sitting in the train. Also, weather plays a role, since it must be sunny to have a light pattern. Its a document of an atmosphere.

The second structure is out of wool from sheep or goats in the Himalaya and it is handmade. I guess it also went from A to B, light and weather shaped it (how the hair of sheep grow, for example). Its a document of a process of weaving.

4. Photography of a berry and piece of headphones, thoughts.

Taken by me with a mobile phone in October 2016. Both I found in the street when walking and looking for something to find, in the first week of my MA studies.

Colour, shape or consistency, some feeling of a certain quality is connecting two different found fragments, just by putting them on a surface (as mentioned before in the example of Penn Irving) next to each other.



Can we find some connection? Do I like to do something about it? How would a brainstorming look like? The berry fell down from a tree on a meadow, while the plastic piece fell down from a human on the pavement. The berry is pointing to a tree, the plastic piece to a human. If you observe them over time, or if you touch them, you can feel differences.

And: Fragments on a surface ask you: what to do next with us? Are they placed there for entertainment, put there for consumption? What happens when we encounter fragments in their textural qualities and how to share impressions of structures we encounter? One strategy is to apply words, to narrate, to use stories, to charge them with meaning, while intuitive interaction, touch or the use of sounds can be a non-verbal shared encounter of textural impressions.

## 5. Experimental writings. We can do a lot.

a. This is the structure of previous experimental writings very small.



b. This is the photography of the blanket in very small.





6. *I wanna deliver a shark*, screenshot of artwork from Ai Hasegawa's website. <https://aihasegawa.info/i-wanna-deliver-a-shark> (accessed on 15th May 2019).

**I WANNA DELIVER A SHARK...**



7. Photographs from performances of norage&abanan. During 2017. By Svetlana Spirina (a-d) and photographers of Process Festival in Spring 2017 at Damu (g-h) and Team of Cross Attic (e-f), Prague.

a. Glass table with food.



b. Keyboard with fruit triggering sound.



c. Haribo, vegetables, plastic cables. Snapshot of glass table during performance.



d. Performers and fruit.



e. Performers brushing teeth.





f. Performer, apple, keyboard.

8. Texts used for performance norage&abanan.

They were partly played back from speakers. <sup>177</sup>

### **public space**

Don't fall asleep in public. When you are alone, people will take from you. Attach your belongings to your person. Your body may not think your objects hold value, when you are visited by your past lives. Don't fall asleep in public. You have been told you talk in your sleep. Your body may betray you and your voice coaching when you are speaking to your abusers. Who could hear you when you are bleeding for help in a dream? The waking world listens to your intonation, but only because because you are an octave to low.

### **office**

Who wears hats in times of haircuts? We welcome feedback. We welcome distortion. We welcome the random and drunk function. We welcome pitch shifters, witch lifters. We welcome ping-pong delay. Application. I had the chance to talk to you on the phone before. Outsource. Outsourcing menstruation was achieved when the first green blooded walking organism met an oil-company at the seaside. Collapse in the meadow. Now.

eat up

Eat up your taxes. Open your chest. White skin became grey. Swallow. Return towards your pale and earnest face from which pale and earnest words were coming.

### **keep in touch**

Let us please keep in touch. They have these beautiful commercials, showing a rabbit, eating his lunch on what used to be a coal-strip. Now restored to a condition far better than nature's original job. Make it fast. Lay it close to the ground. We did that fragment several times and then more fog had to be laid down so they could do it once more. You mean he's – what's the current word... I'd say fleshhhh....

We are not in a foul mood today. I'm sorry but it has changed hands again. Like a coated tongue. We think the roof is going any minute. Help us over this. You'll take

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<sup>177</sup> Own writings & phrasings from the book "the beaded banana" by Margaret Scherf, Hardcover, 181 pages. Published September 28th 1978 by Doubleday Books. ISBN13: 9780385145367)

the birds and I'll take the animals. We recommend to straighten and brush your knees. We noticed something on the floor. Grace, make something of this, if you can. Looks like a bed.

### **birds and animals**

You take the birds and I take the animals. Conrad is in a foul mood today. Like a coated tongue. I can't just walk out without giving a reason. I'm sorry but it has changed hands again. She hates it. Not enough blood.

### **alright**

Somebody took the key. The traits always leave their key with us. They are right next door. So they can come over and see if everything is alright. Is everything alright? I don't know. You were watching the cattle boil, making no move to turn off the burner. Choose a spot under the ancient pineapple tree. We go off then, lightly lifting our feet like someone walking through wet feathers.

You are a damn sharp operator, when it comes to sudden departures from this world. We ask questions, trying to help you to get on with it.

9. Photograph of banana.

Prague, winter 2017. Research about natural and artificial peels, taken by me with mobile phone.





10. Story of an orange. Experimental writings.

*During my first project in Damu, i was working with fruit. Let's imagine how it came to this.*

∩ ; , /  
L, l l /- .  
||  
||

*somewhere was tree with a growing orange*

∩ ; , /  
L, l l /- O  
||  
||

*tree with a ripe orange*

∩ ; , /  
L, l l /-  
||  
|| O

*tree with a fallen orange*

***The following are different possibilities, of what could happen with a tree and an orange:***

∩ ; , /  
L, l l /-  
||  
|| \_

*tree with a rotting orange*

\j ; , /  
 L, l l /-  
 //  
 // |

*tree with another small tree*

\j ; , /  
 L, l l /- .  
 //        ^  
 //        0===°

*tree with rabbit eating rotting orange*

    
| O |

*Orange in a box in a Czech supermarket*

O  
    
|    |

*table out of tree with orange on it*

*In my case, I was carrying an orange in my bag at my school (O) and started to explore it...*











a.

Projected jelly.



b. Spacial setting.

#### 14.b. Research for installation *Lady Dining*: email on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Dear Bara Basikova,

on December 14th 2017 there will an exhibition with performative character take place in Colloredo Mansfeld Palace, in collaboration with Prague College.

As a student at DAMU University of Performing Arts I am developing a set-up for one room in the palace.  
I heard that your mother lived in this place, and also, that you were born at this site.

For the performance I am collecting peoples' memories connected to the palace.  
Aware of you, being a famous person in Czech Republic, I wonder if you might find the time for cooperation. This could mean:

- in the frame of an interview: via email, answering some questions related to my topic
- talking about joining the invitation to the event on 14th of december
- meeting up for a short interview, providing an audio-narration for the space of exhibition.

best regards,

Theresa Schrezenmeir

#### 14.c. Description of installation: *Lady Dining*.

Tangible installation in Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, December 2017, devised by Theresa Schrezenmeir in collaboration with Arden Tan and Cristina Maldonado.  
In frame of: *Illusive Estate*, site-specific interventions in Colloredo-Mansfeld.

In an empty room of the Palace was placed a loaf of bread. By touching, pressing or squeezing it, baroque music started to sound, the intensity of music varying in relation to the intensities of touch.

*„I imagine a popstar and an old lady, who live(d) in the palace, would come for dinner. How to set the table?“*





a. Photography of installed bread, containing touch-sensor.



b. Photograph of installation in the space.

15. Photographs of Plugs, gates, skins and other.

Photographs of the term's final performance, taken by team of Process Festival, Damu, January 2018.



a. Performer as security guard.



b. Two performers at a table, placing ginger.



c. Performer pulling table.



d. Material research, plug, milk and candle.



e. Material research, candle sticking in a plug.

16. Transcription of stories from different people.

Played back during Plugs, Gates, Skins and other.

Seven collected between October-December 2017 in Prague. Recorded with Eva Rosemarijn, played back during show by a speaker.

1

It reminds me of a space. It's a space smelling of lavender. Everything is drenched in the smell of lavender. You know the purple plant, you can have as tea, or you put it in your wardrobe for your clothes, or as oil for skins or against panic. So the space would be like that. And there would be one corner with a lot of wool, cause you have the option to do knitting there. Of course there would be a lot of options to lie, lie comfortably. And like an army of hot waterbottles. There is a wardrobe with hoodies in the other corner. I forgot to tell you that the walls are any colour except white. Actually they are dark red. There are buttons in a bowl, which you can stick to your clothes, saying if you wanna be talked to or not. There's the tower of chocolate in the middle of the space, and movie screening on the ceiling. I heard from plenty of people, they would come to this space. Only very few others said, they would prefer their own bed for hanging out. Or something like a huge rock concert.

2

It is not safe, having a city where you do not know where to pee. Of course I have a map in my mind, for every bigger square I am passing in Prague where the next possibility is located for peeing. Also, always, you can go to the toilets in the subway. You know this disoriented feeling in the cities, when you do not know where to pee? We should create an app for it. I guess an app exists already.

3

Do you have headphones? Ehh...I use headphones a lot, when I'm sitting on my desk...I.. I wear my headphones. But I don't really like listening to music, when at my desk, working with the papers. I wear them so people know that I'm busy with something, I'm listening to something. Sometimes when I'm on a plane, when you have very small personal space, It's nice to put them on. So you know you are not to be disturbed.

4

I always carry a waterbottle with me. And when I leave home. I can fill it up and bring it with me. But then I always get scared that it will go empty and I don't know where to fill it up. I feel more secure when I know exactly where places are where I can fill up my water bottle.

5

Ok so I think, this reminds me of my sister. Ehm..because she...she makes pottery and ceramics and ahii...she usually always makes these very clear objects, its very clear what it is..and its like.. ehm..animals or something and with bright colours...ehm...her style has always been very childish. And this year, sometimes it's also not just pretty, but also ugly and...nice in that way. I think that's it what it reminds me of, because it's....

6

Eden is burning, either embrace yourself for elimination or else your hearts must

have the courage for the changing of the guards.

7

Song<sup>182</sup>

***Lyrics: Changing of the Guards (Bob Dylan) covered by Patti Smith***

Sixteen years

Sixteen banners united over the field

Where the good shepherd grieves

Desperate men, desperate women divided

Spreading their wings 'neath falling leaves.

Fortune calls

I stepped forth from the shadows to the marketplace

Merchants and thieves, hungry for power, my last deal gone down

She's smelling sweet like the meadows where she was born

On midsummer's eve near the tower.

The cold-blooded moon

The captain waits above the celebration

Sending his thoughts to a beloved maid

Whose ebony face is beyond communication

The captain is down but still believing that his love will be repaid.

They shaved her head

She was torn between Jupiter and Apollo

A messenger arrived with a black nightingale

I seen her on the stairs and I couldn't help but follow

Follow her down past the fountain where they lifted her veil.

I stumbled to my feet

I rode past destruction in the ditches

With the stitches still mending beneath a heart-shaped tattoo

Renegade priests and treacherous young witches

---

<sup>182</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cY2B\\_9KpRqk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cY2B_9KpRqk)  
(accessed: 19.4.2019).

Were handing out the flowers that I'd given to you.  
The palace of mirrors  
Where dog soldiers are reflected  
The endless road and the wailing of chimes  
The empty rooms where her memory is protected  
Where the angel's voices whisper to the souls of previous times.  
She wakes him up  
Forty-eight hours later the sun is breaking  
Near broken chains, mountain laurel and rolling rocks  
She's begging to know what measures he now will be taking  
He's pulling her down and she's clutching on to his long golden locks.  
Gentlemen, he said I don't need your organization, I've shined your shoes  
I've moved your mountains and marked your cards  
But Eden is burning either brace yourself for elimination  
Or else your hearts must have the courage for the changing of the guards.  
Peace will come  
With tranquility and splendor on the wheels of fire  
But will bring us no reward when her false idols fall  
And cruel death surrenders with its pale ghost retreating  
Between the King and the Queen of Swords.





18. *Priscila Huggable Atomic Mushroom*. From the *Designs for Fragile Personalities in Anxious Times Project* (Prototype) 2004. Screenshot, compare with artwork presented at the website of MOMA, by Anthony Dunne, Fiona Raby, and Michael Anastassiades. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/94022>.



19. Collection of brown objects, different materials, weights, consistencies.



Pieces of onion, stone and ginger.

## 20. Comic with mouse.

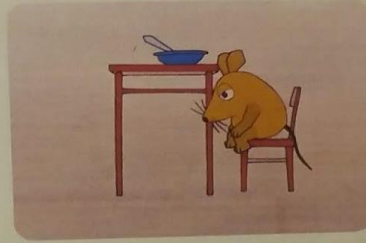
Three photographs taken from: Schmitt-Menzel, Isolde; Streich, Friedrich.  
*Geschichten mit der Maus*. 3rd ed. München und Zürich : Delphin Verlag GmbH,  
1978. ISBN 3-7735-4980-0. Pp. 1-3



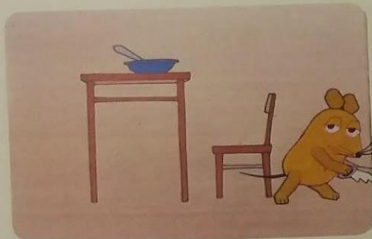
Maus mit Tisch



2



3



4



5



6



7

Maus mit Tisch



8



9



10



11



12



13

21. Research on Table situations and objects with Ine Ubben.  
Photograph taken by me, spring 2018.



## 22. Flyer and text of event *Rehearsing Evolution. In a bar. As you are.*

Graphics: Israel Lopez, painting: Theresa Schrezenmeir.



“Around 12 people, 10 tables, 1 dog – prepared to meet you.

There is the smell of animals. No, it’s just a lying body.

Were bars and restaurants and kitchens and tables invented for swallowing and speaking together? We explore scenographies of social interactions, their patterns of dialogue, consumption, animalism, our wishes for communication, escaping and creating fictions.

A daily situation in a cafe-bar space, sometimes jumping over its own borders.

Devised and performed by: Theresa Schrezenmeir, Tinka Avramova, Ine Ubben, Maria Komarova, Israel López, Wayne Jordan, Alyssa Dillard, Emil Rothermel, Andrei Dabrouk, Danil Tcytkin, Iff Atanasova, Svetlana Spirina.

Production: Nadezda Nazarova

Mentors: Sodja Lotker, Brano Mazuch

Developed in the frame of the Master’s project of Theresa Schrezenmeir at study programme for Devised and Object Theatre at DAMU, Prague.”

23. Ancient Monster Rabbit.

Built by several excavation helpers out of earth, water, stones and bones.

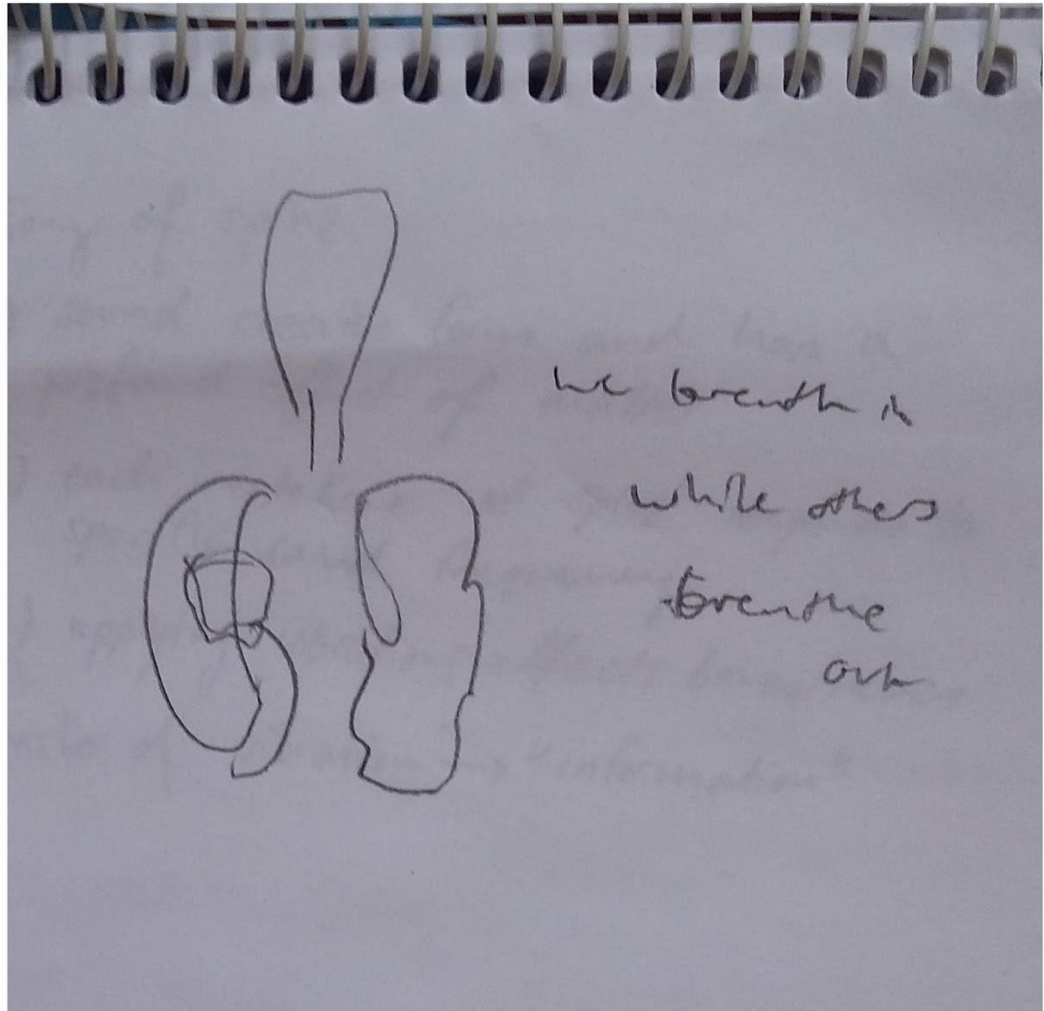
Photograph taken by me with my phone at a field of excavation, July 2017.



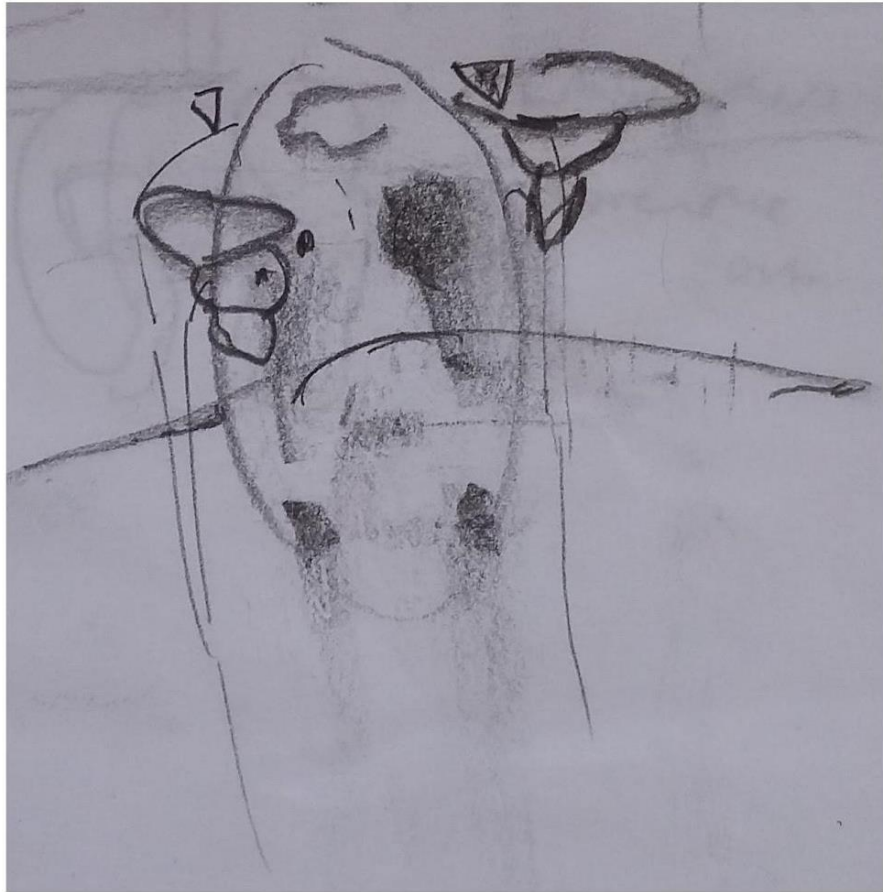


24. Free drawings by Wayne Jordan, Yannick Stasiak and Theresa Schrezenmeir. Photographed by me, made after movement research/experimental anatomy, Three pictures, a-c.

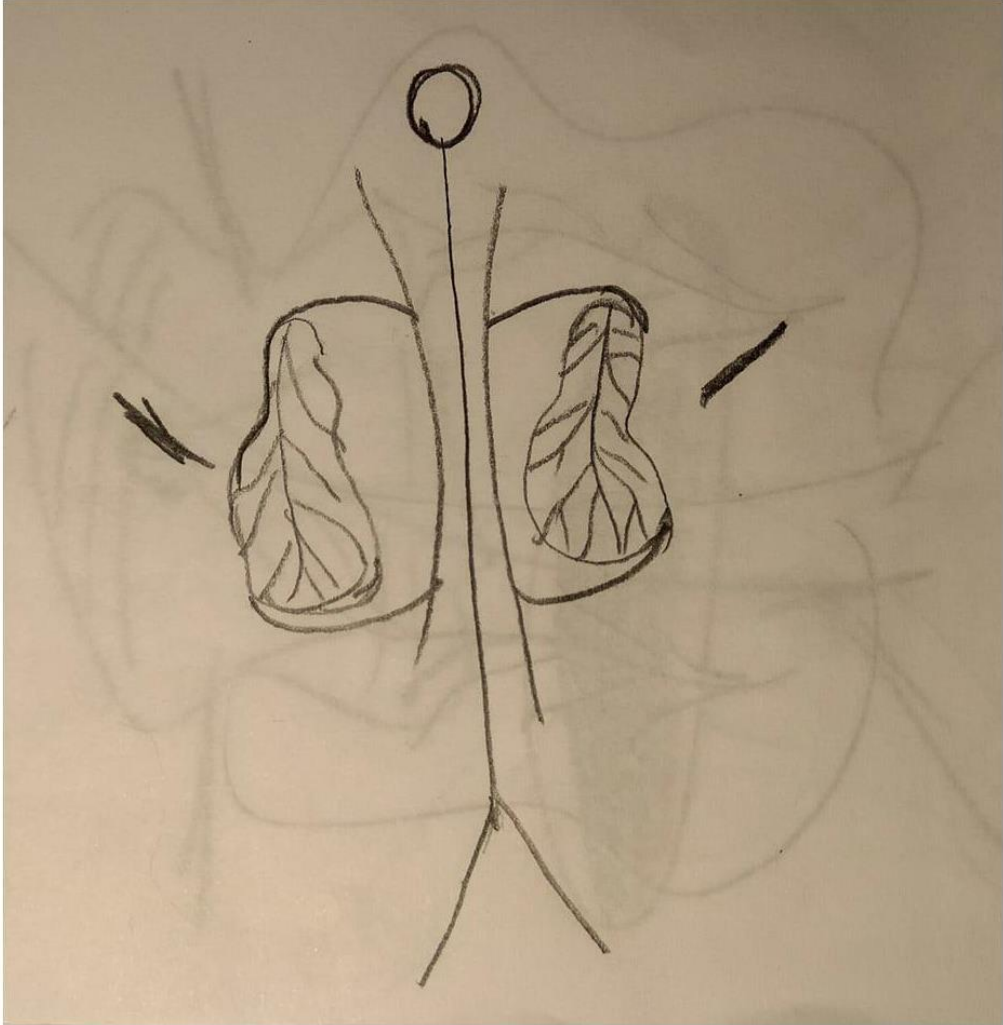
a.



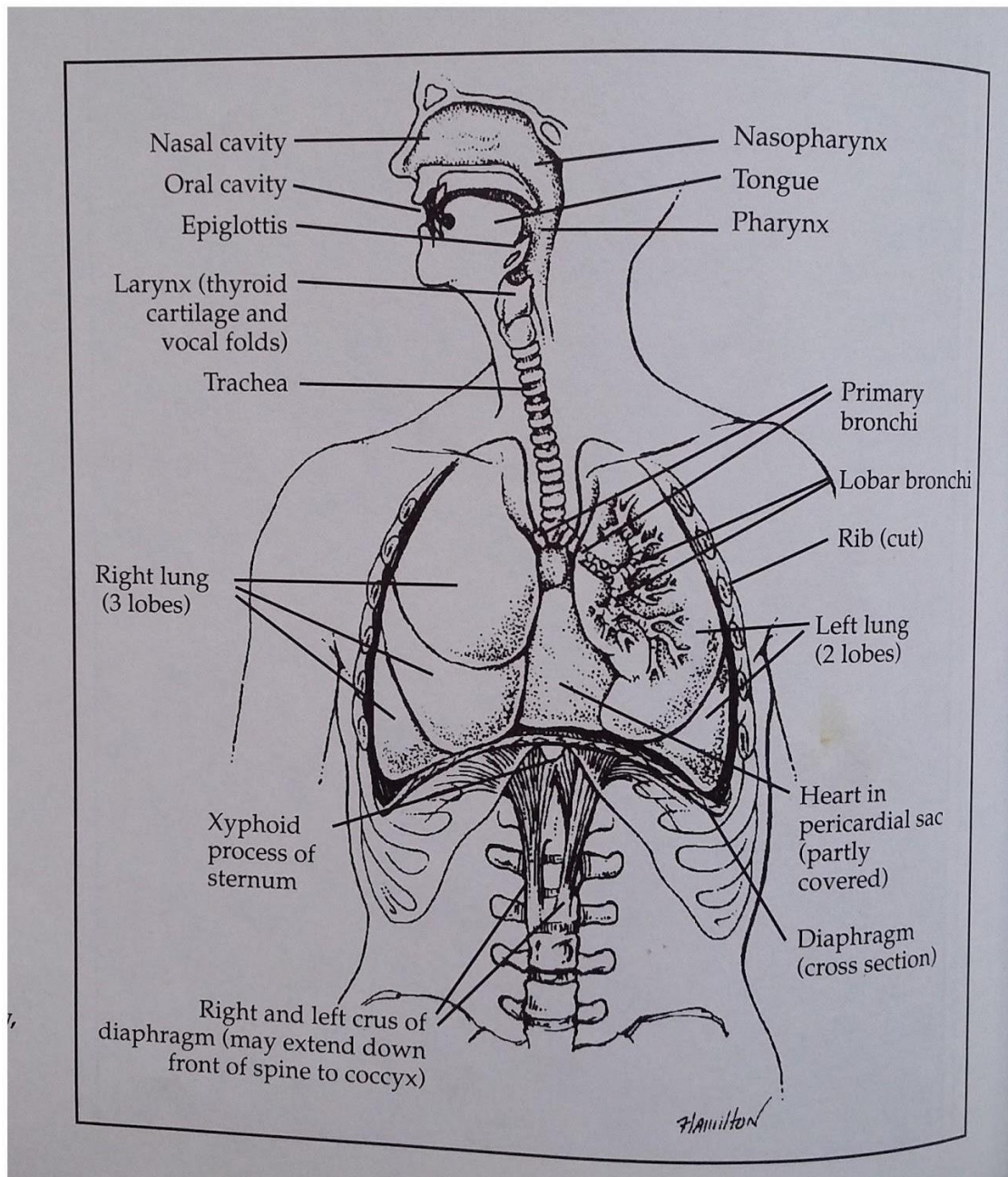
b.



c.

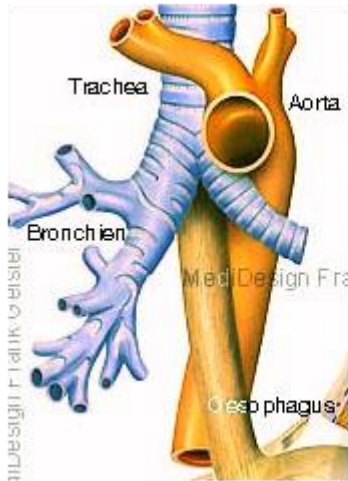


25. Throat anatomy. Two pictures, a, b.



a. Photograph taken from the book of Andrea Olsen: *Body Stories*. (1991)<sup>183</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Compare: Olsen 1991, p. 62.



c. Screenshot from website on anatomy.<sup>184</sup>

26. Photographs of Event Rehearsing Evolution. By  
Process Festival team, Roza Pogosian, Dona Dameska, Team Interns.



a. Table by Theresa Schrezemeir, creating stories around a cup.

<sup>184</sup> Compare: <http://www.anatomie-online.com/Seiten/anato048.html> (accessed on 19th April 2019).



b. Wayne performing his creature.



c. State of rehearsal, team searching for what to do.

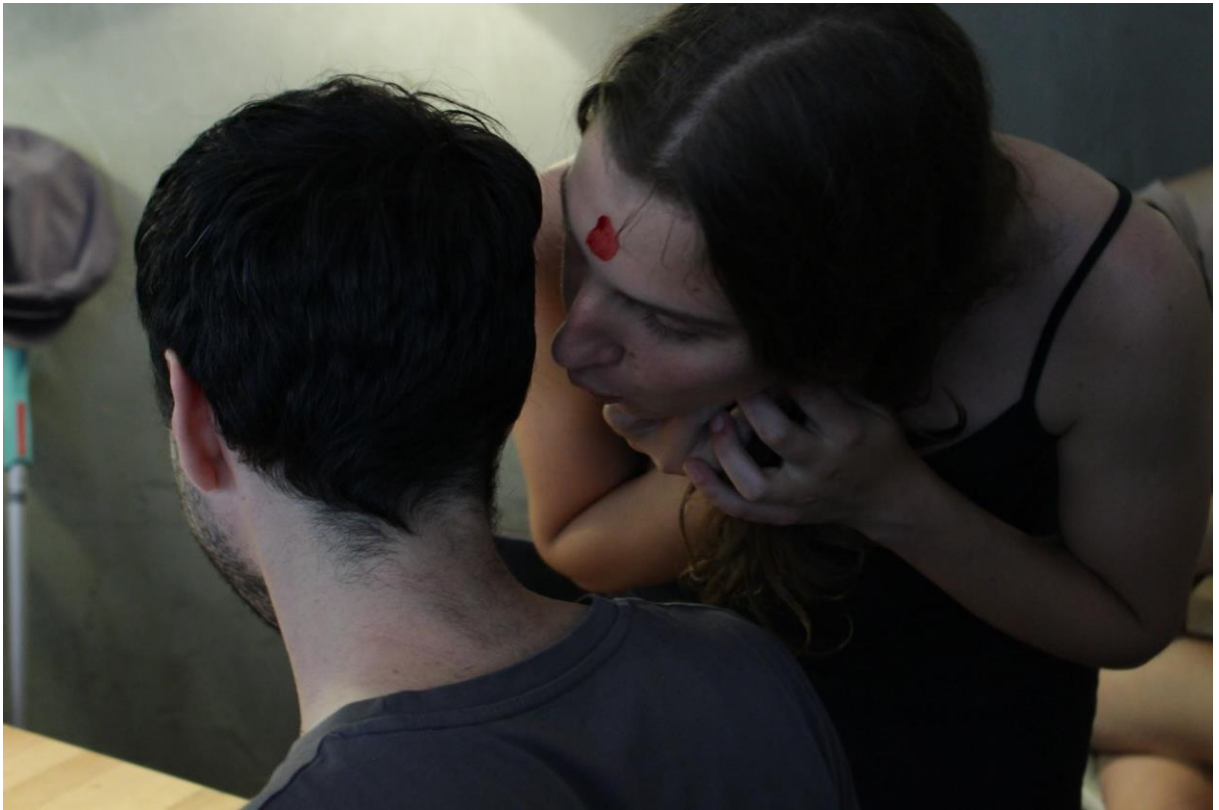


d. Book of performer Alyssa Dillard, on the bar are sitting performers Emil Rothermel and Jakub Sulik and one visitor.

e. Performance with audience and team, Studio Alta 2019.







f. Performer Maria Komarova as creature, visitor.



g. Performer Tina Avramora, speaking about air cake with two visitors.



h. Hands of audience wrapped in gold leaf.



i. Performer Yannick Stasiak and visitors.



j. Performer Yannick Stasiak and visitors.



k. Performer Israel Lopez preparing squid with audience.



l. Performer Theresa Schezenmeir and visitors.



m. End of performance, band playing bossanova.



n. Alyssa and Emil performing bossanova.



o. Performer Svetlana Spirina communicating with audience to plants.



p. Visitors hands' in bowl with honey.



q. Visitors hands in honey.

27. Team drawing the timeline together. Repetition of Performance in Studio Alta February 2019.

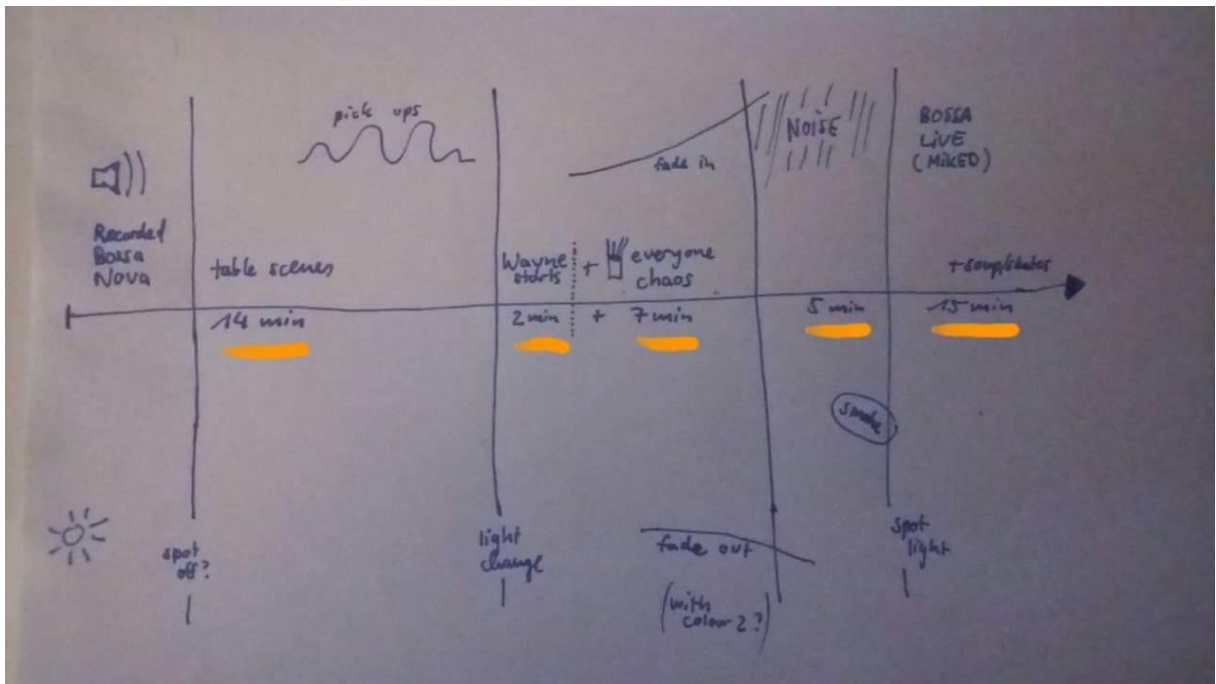




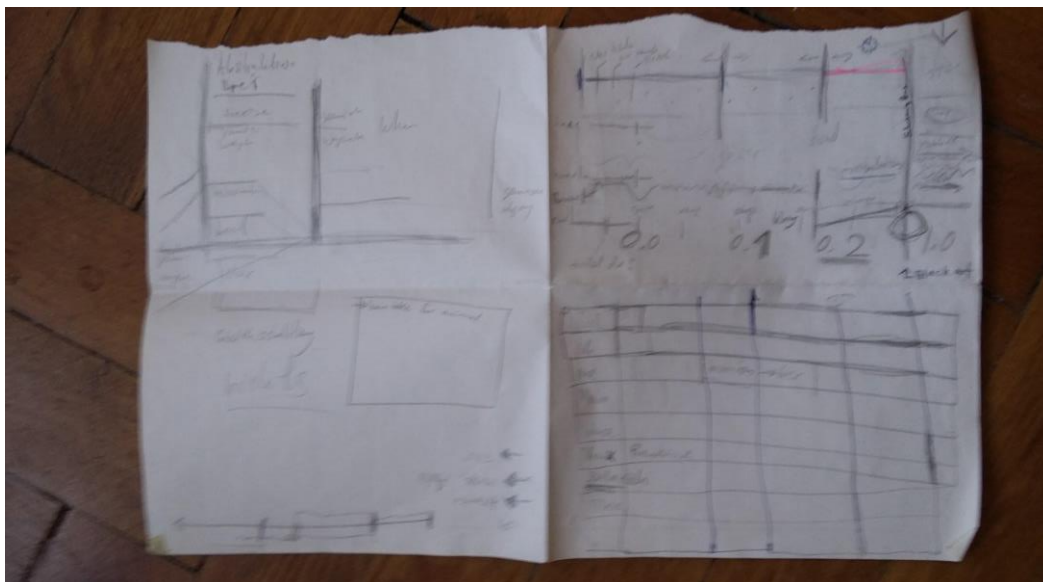
28. Drawings of timelines of Performance Rehearsing Evolution.

Sketched by different people of team collectively during various meetings, photographed by me.

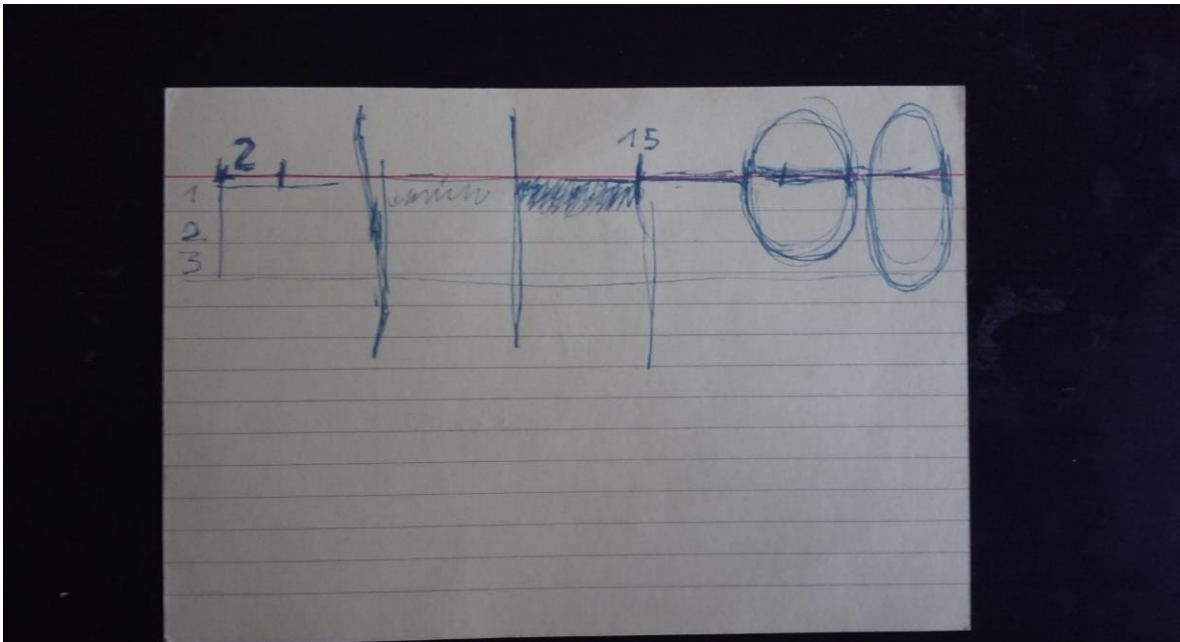
a.



b.



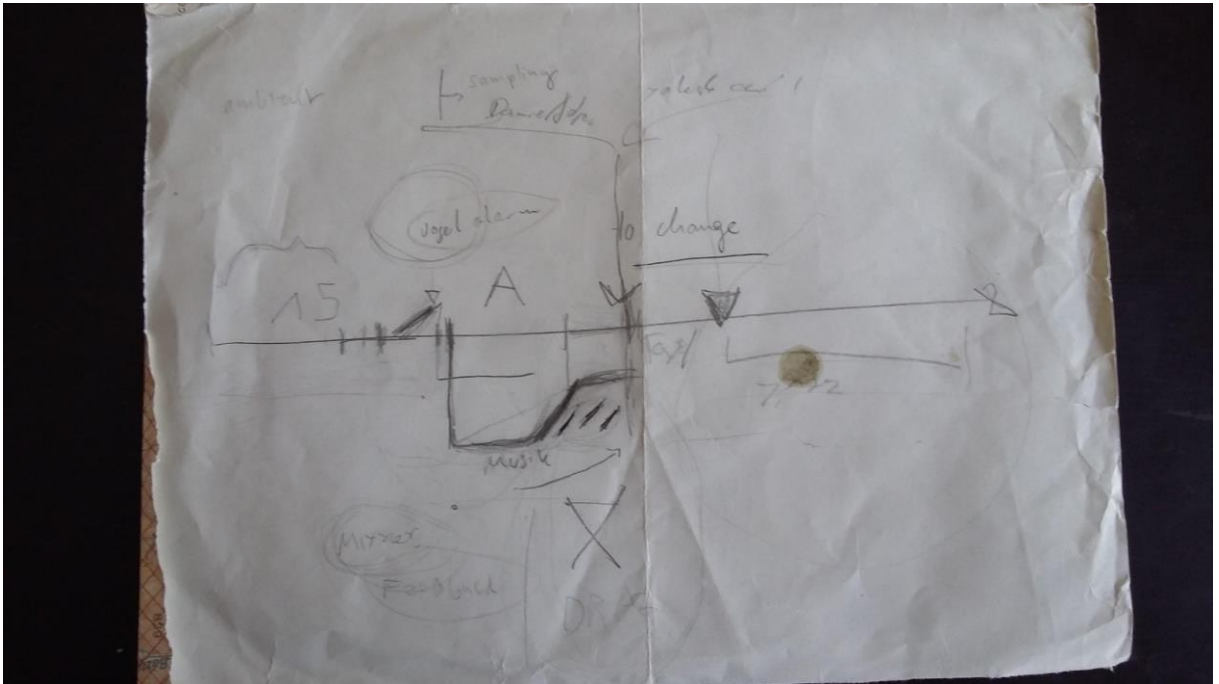
c.



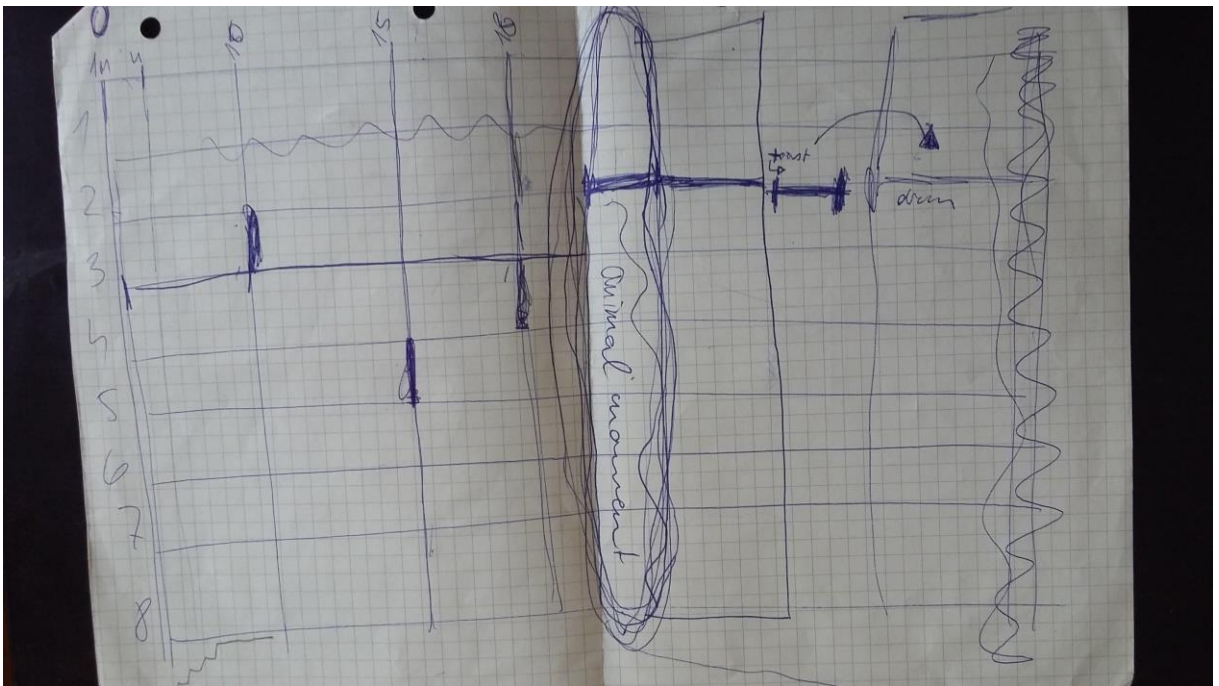
d.



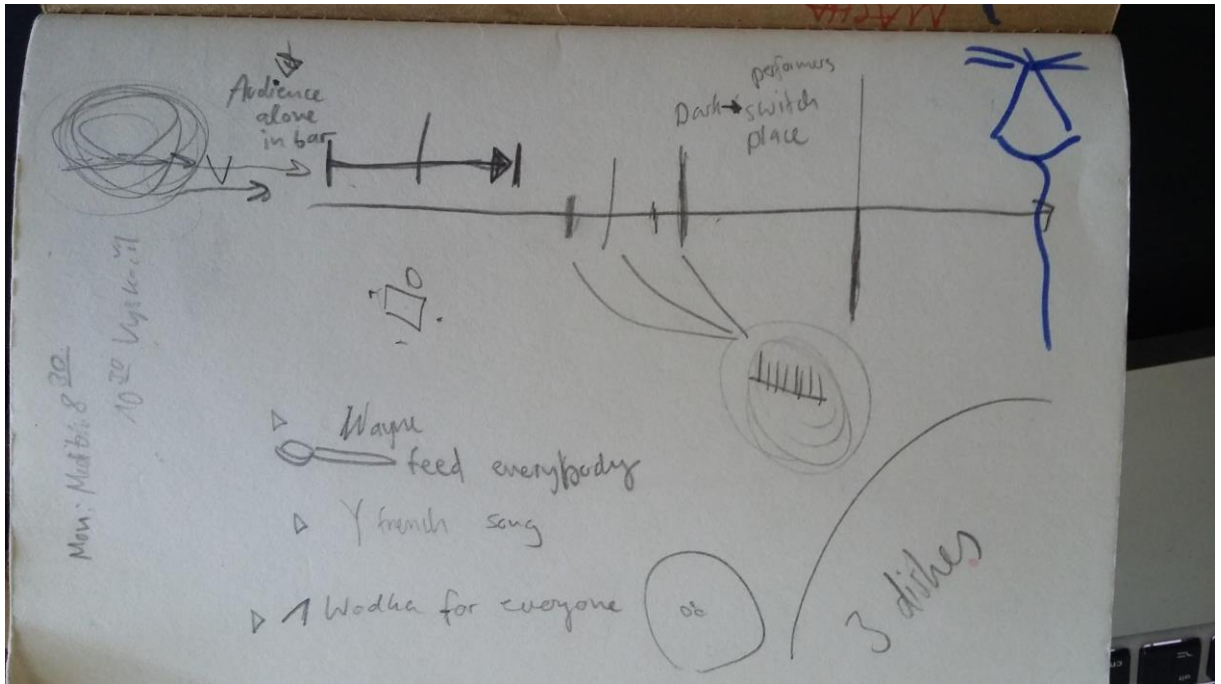
e.



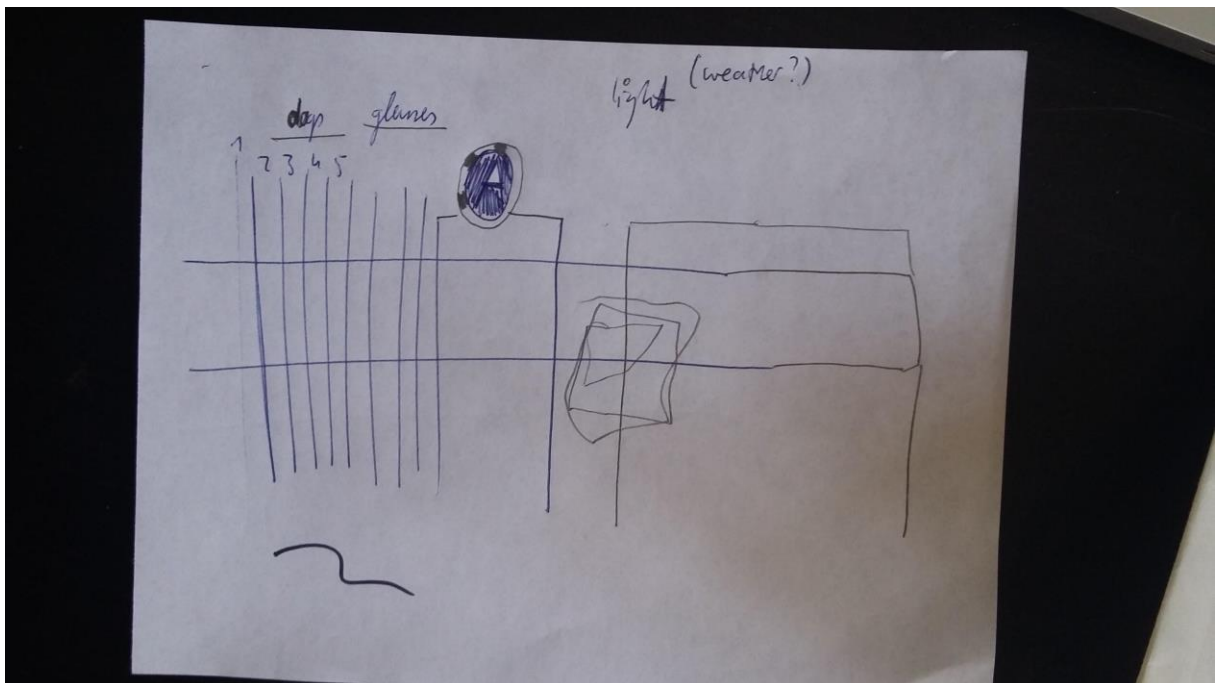
f.



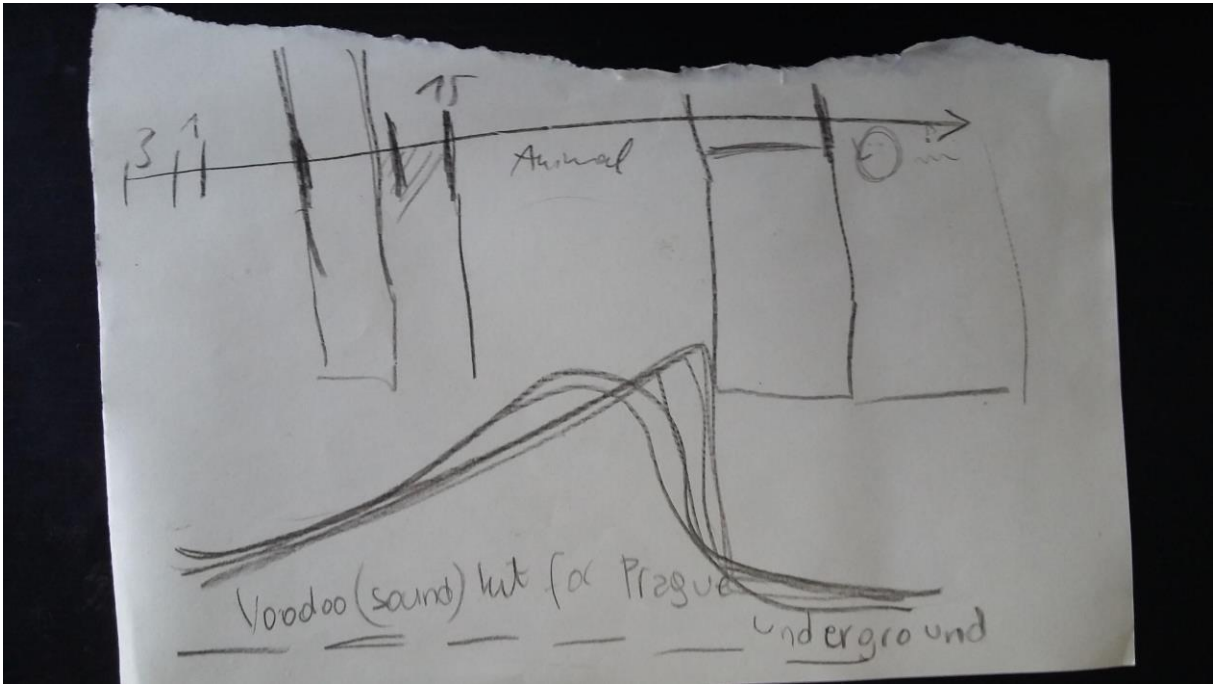
g.

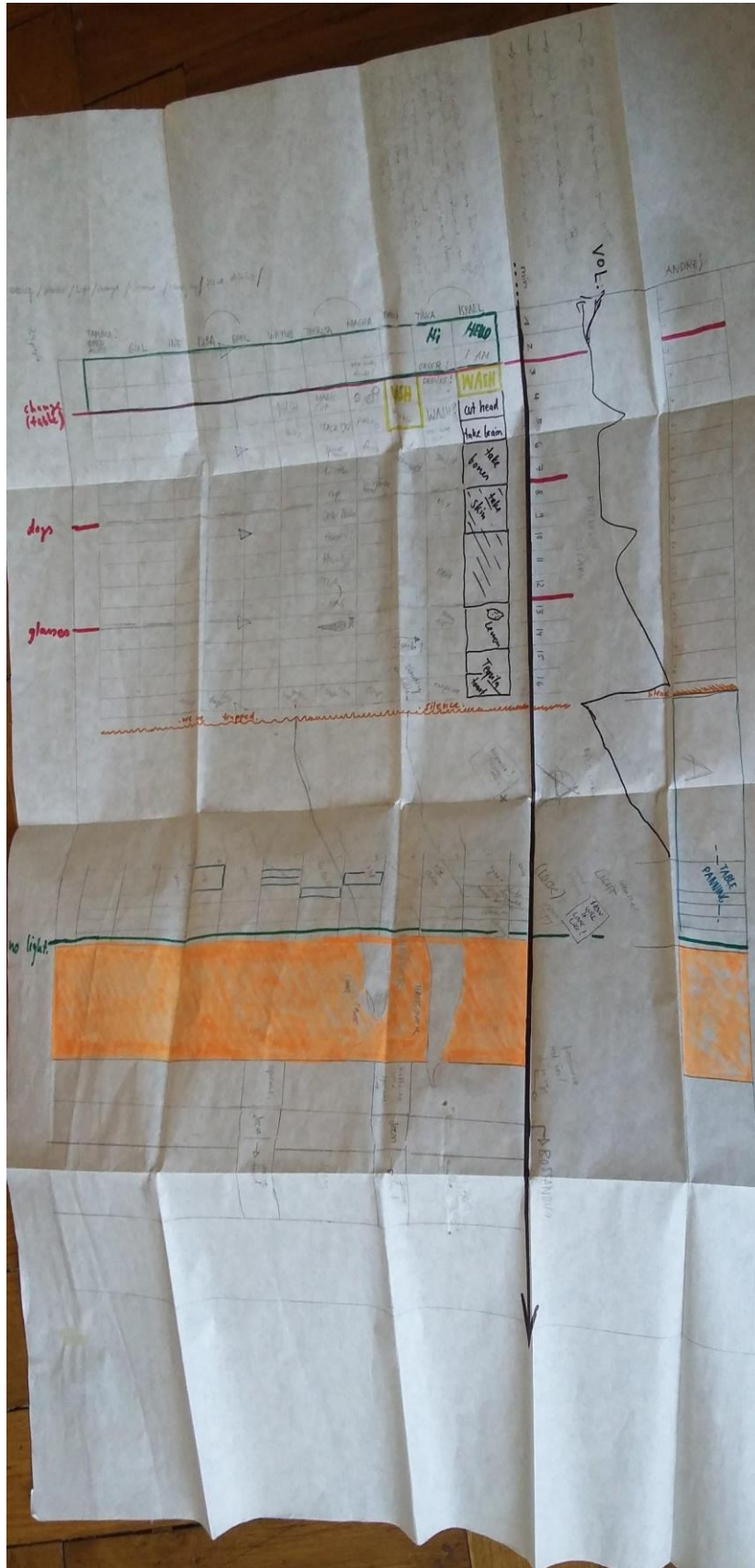


h.



i.

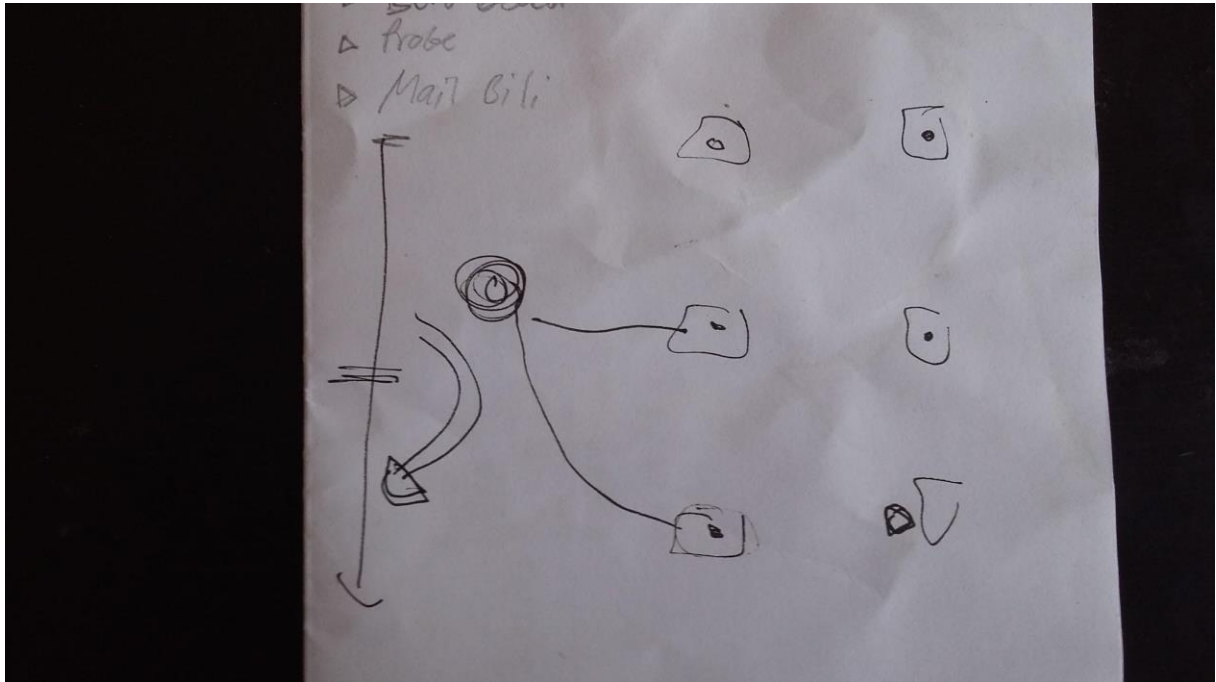




29. Sketches of alternative dramaturgic structures.

View on Tables from bird's-eye view, thinking of actions on tables as loops instead of happening in a linear way.

a. Sketch during rehearsal



b. graphic made with photoshop by me.



c. graphic made with photoshop by me, experiments on dramaturgies of looping.

