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MASTER'S THESIS

**Artist and Athlete: The Search for Meanings of
Long-Distance Running in Contemporary Art**

Hanna Samoson

Thesis advisor: Mgr. Pavol Fabuš

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DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

**BÝT UMĚLKYNÍ A SPORTOVKYNÍ: HLEDÁNÍ
VÝZNAMŮ BĚHU NA DLOUHOU TRAŤ V
SOUČASNÉM UMĚNÍ**

Hanna Samoson

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Pavol Fabuš

Oponent práce:

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D e c l a r a t i o n

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

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

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Abstract

This diploma thesis is derived from the question: "How to successfully deliver a message of long-distance running being useful for personal growth?" It is exploring long-distance running through the creative practice to widen the audiences for running by communicating alternative messages about what running is.

In the western world, it is culturally constituted that running is something done with the purpose of either winning or fitness and this stereotype is the main antagonist in my quest which the current thesis is looking emancipation for.

In the first part of the thesis, I conduct practice-based research through long-distance running and by analysis present the outcomes in the context of personal growth. The ideas include seeing long-distance running as a rite of passage, the possibility of „everything containing everything,“ the idea of „God“ as a representation of the unknown territory, and the development of „druce,“ a practice that merges running and dancing.

In the second part of the thesis, I analyze the art/long-distance running synthesis in practical works of other artists to see how works that carry messages linked to personal growth are communicated.

The conclusion suggests the re-enchantment of long-distance running as the key idea which can be accomplished through creating „gaps“ in the familiar so that the viewer can insert their fantasies in it; exhaustion as the way of communicating an authentic message; and tweaking/distorting the concept of running through a different practice as possible solutions.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce vychází z otázky „Jak úspěšně doručit zprávu o běhu na dlouhé vzdálenosti, která je užitečná pro osobní růst?“. S cílem rozšířit porozumění běhu, práce zkoumá běh na dlouhé vzdálenosti prostřednictvím tvůrčí praxe a sděluje alternativní zprávy o tom, co je běh. V západní kultuře je běh prezentován jako něco, co se děje za účelem vítězství nebo fitness. Tento stereotyp je hlavním protivníkem mého bádání.

V první části diplomové práce se provádím výzkum založený na praxi prostřednictvím běhu na dlouhé vzdálenosti, analyzuji a prezentuji výsledky v kontextu osobního růstu. Mezi myšlenky patří představení běhu na dlouhé vzdálenosti jako obřad průchodu, možnosti „všeho obsahujícího všechno“, myšlenku „boha“ jako reprezentace neznámého území a vývoj „drunce“ - zážitek, který spojuje běh a tanec.

Ve druhé části práce analyzuji syntézu výtvarného / dálkového běhu v praktické tvorbě jiných umělců, abych viděli, jak jsou sdělována díla nesoucí zprávy spojené s osobním růstem.

Závěr navrhuje znovu očarování běhu na dlouhé vzdálenosti jako klíčovou myšlenku, které lze dosáhnout vytvořením „mezer“, aby do něj mohl divák vložit své fantazie; vyčerpání jako způsob komunikace autentické zprávy; a vyladění / zkreslení konceptu běhu jinými praktikami jako možnými řešeními.

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1. Introduction

I believe that life has no meaning but it can have value and value is created through helping others. Easier said than done. I discovered something good and recommended it to others, nobody cared. Despite speaking the same language my message was not understood. So I wondered, how do you say something so that others understand?

When I first started writing my thesis on the current topic, I didn't have a clear understanding of what it was that I was looking for. If I did, I probably would not have written it. I was inspired by long-distance running and the energy that accompanied this inspiration led me to an expedition of observing long-distance running through art for this thesis but also for my final masters' practical project fuelled by the same inspiration and seeking to find ways for expression through long-distance running to learn from these expressive outcomes.

As the writing, analyzing and experimenting progressed, my previously unconscious questions and interests began to take shape and as of this moment, I can say that the current thesis is exploring how knowledge can successfully be delivered through art and is using the message of long-distance running being beneficial for personal growth as an example. I propose that the main antagonist in this quest is the rather fixed pre-understanding of what running is that makes most audiences fall for their misconception of "knowing" what running is without realizing that what they identify as knowing is merely recognizing a stereotypical concept, which creates an illusion of a "dead end" that serves as a restriction for exploring and finding deeper meanings through further interest.

It seemed plausible to try and use art for speaking alternative messages about what running is to see if that could help me in presenting my message more clearly. But art is also a language and so it became necessary to learn to understand it to stop communicating "any" messages and be more conscious and in control of what messages I was communicating.

Understanding the process of creating art through John Dewey's theory of aesthetics has played a major role in this learning and researching process and I will be relying on him throughout this thesis as I am experimenting with the structure of my message.

One of the “key” ideas that I have kept in mind when creating is that “esthetic experience is always more than esthetic. In it a body of matters and meanings, not in themselves esthetic, become esthetic as they enter into an ordered rhythmic movement toward consummation.”¹ I think that this can be juxtaposed with what is called a state of “flow” or “being in the zone,” described by psychologist Csikszentmihályi Mihályas as follows: “people become so involved in what they are doing that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic; they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing.”² In this alternate, inspired state of mind, what we were before the current moment merges with what is happening right now resulting in new “materials,” that “proceed from the subconscious, not cold or in shapes that are identified with particulars of the past, not in chunks and lumps, but fused in the fire of internal commotion. They do not seem to come from the self, because they issue from a self not consciously known.”³

Physician, writer, and senior athlete George Sheehan has said: “writing is the final form of the truth that comes from my running. For when I run, I am a hunter and the prey is my self, my own truth. Not only my own truth felt and my own truth known, but my own truth written.”⁴

As my medium is not writing but visual art instead the task is somewhat more complex- I do feel like a pencil without paper, a message without the medium. As I am running, where to “catch” my expression? Throughout this thesis, this has been one of the main

¹ Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as Experience* (1st ed.). TarcherPerigee. ISBN: 978-1-101-66703-3. p 326

² Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2008). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1st ed.). Harper Perennial Modern Classics. ISBN: 9780061876721. p. 53

³ Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as Experience* (1st ed.). TarcherPerigee. ISBN: 978-1-101-66703-3. p 71

⁴ Sheehan, G. (2013). *Running & Being: The Total Experience* (Illustrated ed.). Rodale Books. eISBN 978-1-60961-931-2. p. 1

problems that I am seeking the solution for. What can be used as a canvas, for, preferably, immediate expression?

I have been experimenting with finding ways to “catch” this alternate state of mind. I feel it is the purest form of existence, therefore it makes sense to examine that what it produces. The bonus of being in that present, empty, focused state of mind is that, from time to time, new knowledge seems to strike just then.

I want to see what messages the unconscious carries and I ask that in which way is it possible to carry a message of invitation to experience the activity itself? As mentioned before, this could only happen by breaking the current stereotypical perception. Dewey says that “the conception that objects have fixed and unalterable values is precisely the prejudice from which art emancipates us. The intrinsic qualities of things come out with startling vigor and freshness just because conventional associations are removed.”⁵

I conducted 4 long-distance running-related experiments/projects where I achieved the altered state of mind and/or a state of flow. By transforming them to a visible form, I was able to analyze what I had experienced/created.

I also read and analyzed works of other artists and/or researchers who had used long-distance running in their projects and became more knowledgeable by learning from their approaches.

⁵ Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as Experience* (1st ed.). TarcherPerigee. ISBN: 978-1-101-66703-3. p 95

2. Other Researchers

The curiosity towards the possibilities of running and art merging and how we think about one or another by looking at how the meaning of each change by looking through the practice of another has been the case for several others. I will briefly talk about their academic research, what they were interested in, looking for, and what they found. My approach to presenting the textual works of others is to bring out useful precedents that have helped me in the way of understanding how my own message should be delivered. I have explored the sport/art synthesis of Carali McCall, Matti Tainio, Geoff Harris and Kay Syng Tan.

Geoff Harris is active in many outdoor sports (white-water kayaking, mountain biking, windsurfing, trail running) and due to experience, he has understood that to succeed in this type of activities one has to be completely focused and present as the slightest mistake could turn out to be lethal. So in a way, the survival instinct is forcing him into the state of “flow,” and because of this experience, he feels that he is „part of“ nature, looking not „at“ but from „within“ the landscape.

In his research “Drawing on Experience: Somatic Representations of Moving Through the Landscape,” he is asking: „how can we represent this somatic experience- of moving through landscape at speed- and its inherent “flow” state where athlete and environment are one?“⁶ As a solution, to “draw with his presence,” he is offering to modify statistical data to represent nonvisual experiences (see Figure 1.).

⁶ Harris, G. (2017). Drawing on Experience: Somatic representations of moving through the landscape. <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10292/10738/HarrisG.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

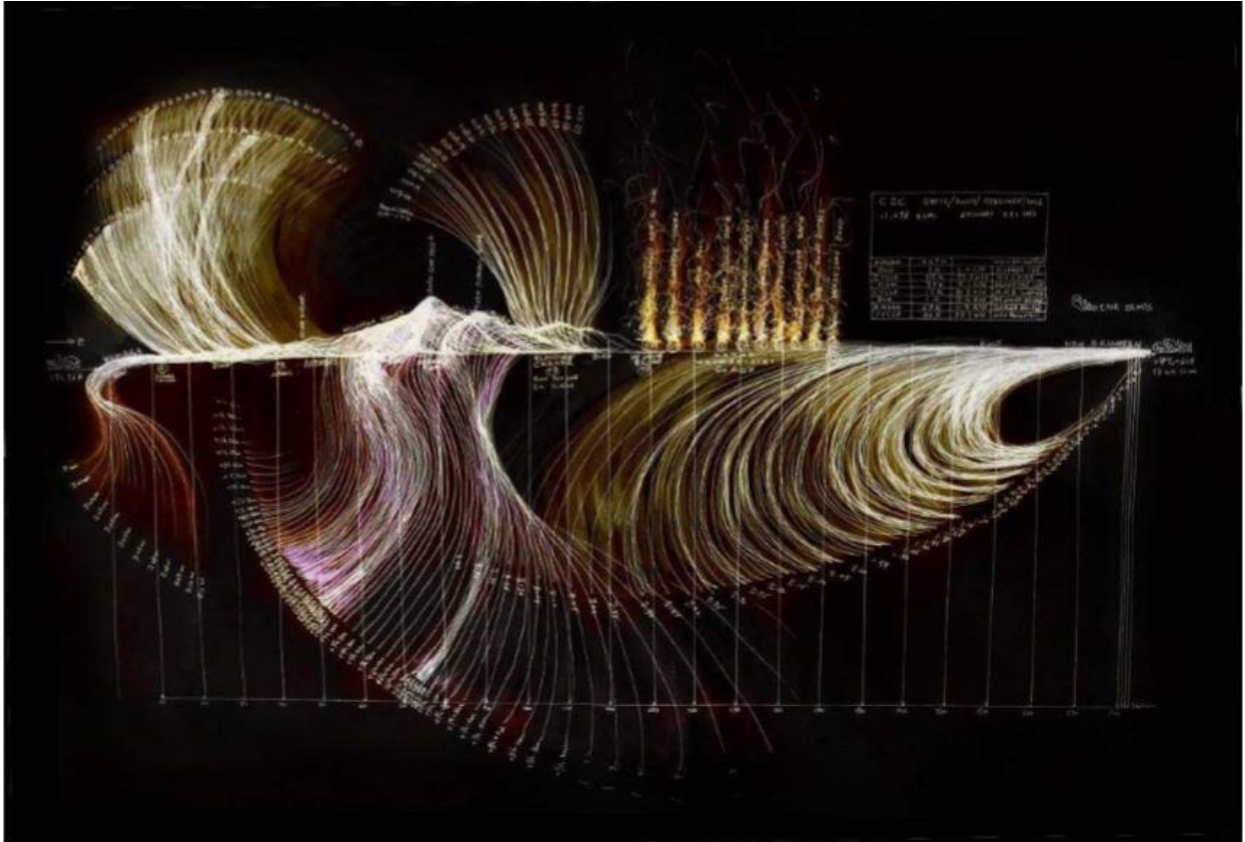


Figure 1.

Kay Syng Tan conducted her research “The Physical and Poetic Processes of Running: A Practice-Related Fine Art Discourse About A Playful Way To Transform Your World Today”⁷ over 1000 days of running and writing and is claiming her thesis as an artwork in which she is playing a role of a fictional character “Kaidie,” a „trans-runner“ (a term she invented for “running physically and poetically”), who explores „trans-running“ as a mode of art, a way to transform reality.

She has chosen the word “poetic” to represent the idea of running with the purpose of experience/ „the self.“

⁷ Tan, K. S. (2014). The Physical and Poetic Processes of Running: A Practice-Related Fine Art Discourse About A Playful Way To Transform Your World Today.

https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1420270/1/Tan_Kai_Syng_Thesis_Redacted.pdf

In his thesis “Parallel Worlds: Art and Sport in Contemporary Culture” Finnish runner, professor, and artist Matti Tainio is asking “What kinds of new perspectives on art and sport can be obtained, firstly by clashing the practices together and secondly by employing artistic methods in sport?”⁸ Despite addressing sport in general in his headline and statement, he mainly uses long-distance running as an example.

“When aesthetics is understood as sensuous knowing, the aesthetic experience forms the basis of our contact with the world. When art is understood according to John Dewey’s aesthetics, it is not confined to operate within certain practices, but connected with the greatest aesthetic experiences. These two points of view make it plausible to connect art and sport through aesthetic experience.”⁹

Tainio is explaining, how both, art and sport have moved towards everyday experiences and how emphasizing artistic features in sport will provide new perspectives in it.

He states that „artification promotes new ways of enjoying sport. Sport can be made meaningful through a creative attitude and personal adaptations of sport, not only through the ideals of achievement and the quest for records.“¹⁰

Carali McCall’s Ph.D. thesis was derived from the interest in the role of the body in drawing. Her research proposes that „drawing is not only connected to movement but can be located in a larger inquiry into the performative nature of the human activity.“¹¹ Her „inquiry also leads to an encounter with Merelau-Ponty’s concept of the body as a primary means of understanding our relationship to the world, in particular the “flesh”

⁸ Tainio, M. (2015). Parallel Worlds: Art and Sport in Contemporary Culture. <https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/15363/isbn9789526060682.pdf?sequence=1> ISBN: 978-952-60-6068-2. p. 12

⁹ Ibid., 287

¹⁰ Ibid., 287

¹¹ McCall, C. (2014). A Line is a Brea(d)thless Length: introducing the physical act of running as a form of drawing. https://b25bf493-5252-43ec-adaf-0bc568d7c150.filesusr.com/ugd/e1ced9_b8844943449a4cb9ac6b6d0e42169d55.pdf p. i

as a porous interface that dissolves the boundary between subject and object.“¹²
Carali concludes that „running is drawing.“¹³

One of the important moments came from her „considering how duration, expenditure of energy and imposed restrictions^{14 15} on the body can contribute to a greater awareness of embodied consciousness.“¹⁶ Through this, she discovered that „the act of running is a form of drawing that principally tests human endurance and sustainability.“¹⁷

In an email conversation with Carali, when talking about the purposes of running, she explained how running „created a sense of thinking beyond the body. Similarly in the artworks when I am performing – drawing circles for as long as possible,¹⁸ I feel most alive when reaching moments of discomfort but in control. And revel in the moments when I feel I can't go on... and then with a subtle change in thinking or an environment alteration... I could / I can / or I did.“¹⁹ It made me recall a time when I was already very tired running, but had to go on. By concentrating on the physical feeling of how hard it was, I began to feel as if I was the one rotating the whole Earth with the strength of my legs, the Earth was rotating under me like a treadmill. This change of thinking, all of a sudden, transformed the moment into something new and exciting and it was a joy to carry on until the finish.

¹² Ibid i

¹³ Ibid 128

¹⁴ Work no. 4 -Bexhill-on-Sea. (2021, April 18). [Video]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/87320352>

¹⁵ Work no. 4 -Lethaby. (2020, August 25). [Video]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/87319465>

¹⁶ McCall, C. (2014). A Line is a Brea(d)thless Length: introducing the physical act of running as a form of drawing. https://b25bf493-5252-43ec-adaf-0bc568d7c150.filesusr.com/ugd/e1ced9_b8844943449a4cb9ac6b6d0e42169d5_5.pdf

¹⁷ Ibid 132

¹⁸ Work no. 1 (Circle Drawing) 2hours 10minutes, London, 2016. (2016, November 19). [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/BlGs8eBlvsM>

¹⁹ Private email correspondence with Carali McCall on 25.04.2021

3. Me as the Spectator Outside and from Within

„I've never been so free as during that couple of hours when I'm trotting up the path out of the gates and turning by that bare-faced, big-bellied oak tree at the lane end. Everything's dead, but good, because it's dead before coming alive, not dead after being alive.“²⁰

Having experience in long-distance running from an early age, it is hard to speculate how the way I see runners would differ from how I see them now if I was not a regular runner myself. I would assume that to feel strongly about some sport you have to have personal experience with the sport yourself (but then again, have all the football fans at some point played football?)

Looking at runners is an emotional experience for me and there is no doubt that the emotions are brought up due to me associating what I see with my own experiences with running. I have experimented with many sports, but running is the only one with which I can claim to have a close relationship with. Love, hate, disappointment, happiness, frustration...I think at this point we have gone through a lot.

To watch running, it is exciting to me. There is no other physical activity that gets me equally excited as seeing a well-trained distance runner. For me, there is something deeply beautiful in it, a sense of freedom, a promise of freedom, that I as a spectator experience. A person who can run tens and tens of kilometers, and in the case of ultramarathoners we can even speak about hundreds of kilometers, on a fast speed, without showing signs of giving up or stopping anytime soon, this is what I find fascinating.

I see our bodies as vehicles. Vehicles that, ideally, allow us to move around in this physical space. Every now and then I have been wondering about what does the most

²⁰ Sillitoe, A. (1960). *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. Knopf. ISBN: 9780394433899. p.4

powerful vehicle look like? Which vehicle is the one that has the most expanded movement in this physical space? Martin Creed, when talking about running in the context of his „Work no. 850,“ states that: “If you think of death as being still, perfectly still, so the opposite of death would be to move as fast as you possibly can.”²¹

But what about, for example, parkour or what about dancing? These activities still have the idea of obstacles present in them, the idea of struggle and overcoming, problem-solving. Still one has to struggle to be free. In running, you have overcome all this and are now ascending to another place. And the other place can arrive through a knowledge obtained while in this movement.

I think that the freedom of the mind (or maybe it's even better to say “from” the mind?) is when a person can be present.

Living in the moment, being in the moment, being present- widely overused and popularised concepts, yet it remains unclear if widely understood or even experienced. A surfer who has caught and is riding a wave is, almost undoubtedly in that state of mind as being able to ride a wave takes extreme focus due to which everything else besides the action and the wave disappears. This state of mind, where the runner and the landscape merge into each other, is also possible to achieve for a runner.

One of the first times I realized that I was present, it felt like being inside a postcard and looking around. One of the key elements of this kind of state of mind is that I feel that everything is perfect exactly how it is on the contrary to a more regular state of mind where I feel like I am not exactly in the right place, that life in its full potential happens somewhere else and at this very moment I am only working towards getting there. As it has turned out, “there” is no further than a little ability to „focus on the moment“ away.

²¹ Martin Creed's Work No. 850 | TateShots. (2008, September 3). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-U8FI45-DFw&feature=youtu.be>

Coming back to the concept of seeing the body as a vehicle. Just as a special and/or a good vehicle is needed to reach the sky, the deep underwater or maybe just another country, one of the prerequisites of a human body as a vehicle has to, as well, be working so smoothly and subtly, in order to get „into the zone,“ if this is where we have destined to go. Once this is achieved, the mind can run free.

In “Lumbar Thought,”²² an essay written by Umberto Eco, he is talking about wearing comfortable blue jeans and the pleasure of it until renouncing this pleasure due to putting on weight. “The jeans didn’t pinch much, but they made their presence felt.” “As a result, I lived in the knowledge that I had jeans on, whereas normally we live forgetting that we’re wearing undershorts or trousers.” “Not only did the garment impose a demeanor on me; by focusing my attention on demeanor, it obliged me to live towards the exterior world. It reduced, in other words, the exercise of my interior-ness.” “Well, with my new jeans my life was entirely exterior: I thought about the relationship between me and my pants, and the relationship between my pants and me and the society we lived in. I had achieved heteroconsciousness, that is to say, an epidemic self-awareness.”²³

Once bodily discomforts are overcome, next is to overcome the uneasy mind. Freedom comes when it’s possible to enjoy what is now without regrets about the past or worries about the future. Thoughts about the future and past tend to bend the understanding of the current moment and create tension. And it seems that if we manage to not go along with the past or future, time, therefore, ceases to exist. „For one who clings, motion exists; but for one who clings not, there is no motion.“²⁴

If I can be without emotions, without anything that precludes my being. If I no longer know, that I am. It seems to me that when I can let go of everything through which I

²² Eco, U. (1976). Lumbar Thought. Nathanvaughanblog.
<https://nathanvaughanblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/lumbarthought.pdf>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Goddard, V. Z. (2020). Still Running: The Art of Meditation in Motion. Shambhala. eISBN: 9780834842984 p. vi

exist, I cease to exist. Independent and stopped by nothing, I think that is when I am free. And while relationships, reactions, obstacles, overcoming, all this can and is exciting and brings value to life, there exists some unexplainable force that is pulling towards the stillness and freedom, towards nothingness.

And in the physical world, the same way, there is some unexplainable force that is pulling towards this freedom and for that reason I stop and stare in awe when I see a well-trained distance-runner, effortlessly moving through space as if she no more does worry, has no care in the world, no struggles that the rest of us put up with every day. Since I have yet to encounter a human's movement in the physical world that comes nearer to the experience of freedom, the distance-runner, for me, is the representative of freedom.

„To the being fully alive, the future is not ominous but a promise; it surrounds the present as a halo. It consists of possibilities that are felt as a possession of what is now and here. In life that is truly life, everything overlaps and merges. But all too often we exist in apprehensions of what the future may bring, and are divided within ourselves. Even when not overanxious, we do not enjoy the present because we subordinate it to that which is absent. Because of the frequency of this abandonment of the present to the past and future, the happy periods of an experience that is now complete because it absorbs into itself memories of the past and anticipations of the future, come to constitute an esthetic ideal. Only when the past ceases to trouble and anticipations of the future are not perturbing is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive. Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is“ ²⁵

What I labeled as „freedom,“ for Dewey, it is „esthetic ideal.“

²⁵ Dewey, J. (2005). Art as Experience (1st ed.). TarcherPerigee. ISBN: 978-1-101-66703-3 p. 17

4. Timeline of Me and Running : the Inciting Incident

“This long-distance running lark is the best of all, because it makes me think so good that I learn things even better than when I'm on my bed at night.”²⁶

When I was about 25 years of age, I started noticing that while I was running, I was getting good ideas. I also noticed the adequacy of the mind, the sanity. As I was running I felt like the sanest person on this planet. Had I been undecided about something beforehand, running brought the clarity needed to make a decision. It was truly wonderful! This was the first time I understood that there was something more to running than just shaping the body and making the best time in my age group at orienteering competitions.

At the time I attended the Estonian Academy of Arts and among my peers there was hardly anybody else who practiced regular running, or as I saw it, there was nobody that I knew, that knew how running could be useful for their creative practice.

To share my newly found discoveries and to have some proof to back me up, I started searching for articles about the benefits of regular running on creative work and to my surprise at the time, I could mostly find them only in business magazines. I remember looking at the images that went with the texts, how running was visualized so unimaginatively. There is no wonder that an artist would not care, I thought, and concluded that the target audience for running-related advertisements did not include people working in the art field, as nothing was inspiring in those images...the story told by the images was rather boring.

That was the first time I started wondering about the possibilities of talking about running through art so that I could communicate alternative messages about what running is.

²⁶ Sillitoe, A. (1960). *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. Knopf. ISBN: 9780394433899 p. 2%

5. What Running is

I believe that when we think about what running is, it is closely related to what our first experiences with running are and how we are used to seeing running on an everyday basis: how it is illustrated in different forms of media and how we perceive the runners that practice among us in the environment we share on an everyday basis.

In most cases, first encounters with running longer distances come from as early as elementary school. Where I went to school, in Tallinn, Estonia, we were taught to compete in various sporting activities, including running, and were given grades depending on our finish time. For this reason, there were not many people who enjoyed running, as most children out of 32 did not win. Derived from the philosophy of Martin Heidegger where man exists in an „authentic“ or „inauthentic“ way ²⁷, Timo Klemola, in his article that proposes sport being the way to the authentic self, finds that this type of winning-related approach is contradictory to it: „victory exists only as a victory over others as well as losing means always losing to others. Only one can win, an individual or a team, others are losers. Winner-looser relationship is the most important relationship between self and other. In this relationship there is no intent to any balance so that everybody could be winners. On the contrary. I should be always the winner. All the training aims to this. In the project of winning other man as well as nature is an obstacle that has to be overstepped.“ ²⁸

In physical education class it was likely that those who didn't get a good grade in running early on, did not improve their ranking during the following years either. The ones who didn't do good and were not picked among the first ones by the “captains” of the teams, understandably disliked it. From my own experience, I remember that there were about 10 students who liked physical education class. Me among them. And it was just because we were good at various types of activities that we were asked to do,

²⁷ Heidegger, M. „Being and Time“. State University of New York. ISBN: 0-7914-2678-5

²⁸ Klemola, T. “[Sport, a Way to the Authentic Self?](#)” in *Ruumis liikkuu – liikkuuko henki? Fenomenologinen tutkimus liikunnan projekteista* (Tampere: Tampere University, 1998), p. 143.

including running with the purpose to win. Being better than others helped to grow self-confidence and that was a good feeling. And since then, for me, when thinking about doing sports in general, I associate it mostly with positive emotions and for this reason, I am driven towards it, towards the possibility of feeling good. I assume that those who have negative emotions linked to sports may feel differently. „For Heidegger this kind of being of the self which is defined by others is the self of „Anybody“. In this sense being a winner is being in an inauthentic way. In inauthentic being man is always measuring his distance from others. In sports this measuring has become most important and accurate.

The pre-understanding of the project of winning is constituted culturally, of course. The sport classes of the school, the sport pages, the sport highlights, they all create the pre-understanding that gives the meaning to the project of winning.“²⁹

Regularly most of us come to contact with some type of media that depicts running. For example, it can be through a news channel, in a newspaper, a billboard, tv-commercial, a fitness blog, or someone posting about their running-related achievements or goals on social media. And the primal motivation for all of this imagery is to earn money- either we have already paid for the media we are consuming or the imagery is trying to get us to do so. We are looking at sportsmen- and women who have “made it”, or are trying to “make it” and tell us that we can too be fit and win if we subscribe to a fitness program and buy Adidas Ultraboost.

When observing runners who train everywhere around us in our shared public space, in my opinion, it is easy to homogenize them. From a distance, „running is seen as a universal and impersonal practice where distinctive style has no place“³⁰ and there seems to be little that creates diversity. A runner is a runner. If we look at body language as a form of communication, then the available „vocabulary“ for

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Tainio, M. (2015). Parallel Worlds: Art and Sport in Contemporary Culture.
<https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/15363/isbn9789526060682.pdf?sequence=1> ISBN:
978-952-60-6068-2. p 38

self-expression for a runner is strictly limited when compared to the wider possibilities that are available for those who engage in dancing, football, basketball, skateboarding, or parkour, for example. The continuous repetitive movement reminds of mechanicality, machinery which is a programmed movement to perform an intended action.

Somewhere at the beginning of the 1980s, a French sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard was observing the New York City Marathon and later wrote about it in his book „America.“ „They are all seeking death, that death by exhaustion that was the fate of the first Marathon man some two thousand years ago. And he,“ referring to Philippides, the Greek messenger,“ let us not forget, was carrying a message of victory to Athens. They also dream no doubt of bringing a victory message, but there are too many of them and their message has lost all meaning: it is merely the message of their arrival, at the end of their exertions, the twilight message of a futile, superhuman effort.”³¹

Despite the nearly 200 billion dollar sports apparel market, there are not that many occasions when I have seen a runner with a contrastive style. I guess it's because, despite the wide variety of options available, the clothes tend to share many characteristics which in conclusion homogenize those who wear them. Despite the many color and pattern combinations, the shape of the running shoes is very similar, most runners wear tight pants, there are not too many visible variations for the materials of the clothes. While there are always those who aim to be fashionable and different in their sportswear choices, the vast majority is wearing tights, tops, shirts, and jackets that look indistinguishable from one another. This, again and added to the previously mentioned factors, leads the way of seeing running as an uncreative repetitive activity without deeper meaning.

³¹ Baudrillard, J., & Dyer, G. (1996). „America“. Verso. ISBN 0-86091-978-1 p. 19

6. What Running is - Alternative Messages

In contrast to my experience in a physical education class in elementary school, I would like to introduce a game played since an early age by Rarámuri, where winning is not as important as the life lessons taught and learned by playing and which is constructed in a way that everybody can feel like a valuable part of the game.

The Rarámuri or better known as Tarahumara are a group of indigenous people of the Americas living in the Copper Canyons in the state of Chihuahua in Mexico.

„Rarájipari“ is a running game that is said to be “the heart and soul of Tarahumara culture,”³² and is played throughout the lives of the tribe members starting as early as elementary school.

Two teams will be chasing wooden balls about the size of a baseball outside, in the open territory, the length of the course varies but is usually at least six kilometers for children, and for grown-ups, the game can last up to 48 hours.

Tarahumara say that “the rarájipari is the game of life. You never know when it will end. You can’t control it. You can only adjust. No one gets through it on their own. To endure a challenge like that, you had to possess all the Tarahumara virtues— strength, patience, cooperation, dedication, and persistence. Most of all, you had to love to run. (...) Because of gnarly trails and back-and-forth laps, the game is endlessly and instantly self-handicapping; whenever the ball had to be rooted of a crevice, the slower kids could catch up. The playing field levels the playing field, so everyone is challenged and no one is left out.”³³

³² McDougall, C. (2011). *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen* (Reprint ed.). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. eISBN: 978-0-307-27191-4. p.

³³ *Ibid.*

In a documentary “Free to Run,”³⁴ Kathrine Switzer who, in 1967, became the first woman to run the Boston Marathon as an officially registered competitor (a year after the first unofficial run by Bobbi Gibb, respectively) talks about a running magazine from the 1970s, „Spiridon“ (see Figure 2), named after the winner of the first Olympic Marathon, about sometimes reading the editorials, written by either it’s creator Noël Tamini or Yves Jeannotat, with tears in her eyes, for she was moved so deeply by the poeticism and beauty of those texts.

„Over the kilometers, the runner rediscovers what Man has most precious: the consciousness of unity, in which soul, body, and spirit merge! Right then and there, nobody else could overpower matter as surely. Steadily he gives poetry again its spontaneity and to philosophy, its missing truth. And at the bottom of these elements drones the passion, which makes life worth living! During these hours the runner gets to the end of the world, under the haunted eye of "normal" people, humanity sleeps, eats and kills! With each balanced and smooth step, he feels in his veins the earth coming up and his movement resembles a prayer; the more he advances, the more his flickering confidence becomes stronger! He speaks with his bare legs and arms! Sweat covers his face with transparent pearls; his eyes look straight ahead... “³⁵

„Spiridon“ reflected its creator's love for the sport. By reading the editorial texts of each issue, I do think that the magazine was advocating the spiritual possibilities and aspects of running. The imagery in the magazine is also rather poetical. And what makes it poetical is not only the black and white 35mm film but the feeling you get when looking at the images. The mood that the images carry accompanied by the text makes me want to be „there“ as opposed to contemporary sport’s magazines that, in my opinion, rather invite you to aspire to be the person in the picture instead of being yourself. In „Spiridon,“ I feel like I can also be „there,“ if I go to the nearest trail and

³⁴ Morath, P. Free to Run. Sundance Selects.

³⁵ Spiridon. (1972). Spiridon. <http://www.spiridon.ch/Revue/Spiridon.shtml>

start running. It is depicting the sport itself in its simplicity- you are all that you need to do it, and what „it“ is, you will discover at the trail..



Figure 2

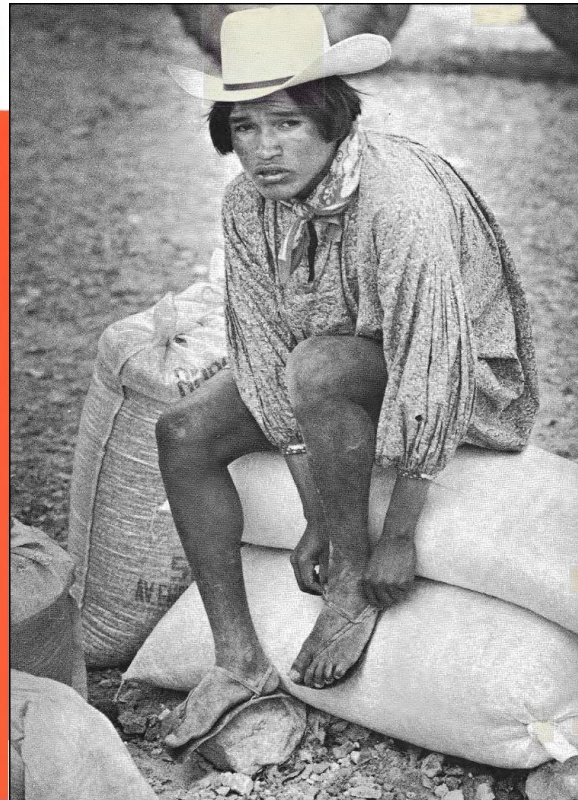


Figure 3: a Tarahumara man in „Spiridon“

Today, there is a Czech magazine called „B Running Magazine“ which reminds a lot of „Spiridon“ when looking at the aesthetics and reading the texts.³⁶ The way that they are introducing themselves, “emphasizing honest journalism and quality graphic design(..) give authors plenty of time and space so that they can go deeper and look at things from different angles”³⁷ suggests that they have discovered something more meaningful in the running and want to share this with others. In each issue they include a poem about running, a review of a movie and a book, a photo essay, and prose. Each article is accompanied by special illustrations and/or photography that oftentimes don’t depict humans at all, but the environment instead. The whole magazine looks like

³⁶ After a conversation Jan Havlicek from the editorial staff it turned out that they had never heard of „Spiridon“ before, but agreed that the aesthetic approach is similar.

³⁷ B magazine: běžecký časopis. (2021). Běžecký časopis B. <https://www.brunningmag.cz/>

an artwork inspired by the sport. In my conversation with Jan Havlíček from the editorial staff, he stated that „running is more of a way for us to approach the world. It's a kind of prism. We perceive our world by looking through it as well as the world is reflected in it.“³⁸ (Figures 4,5)

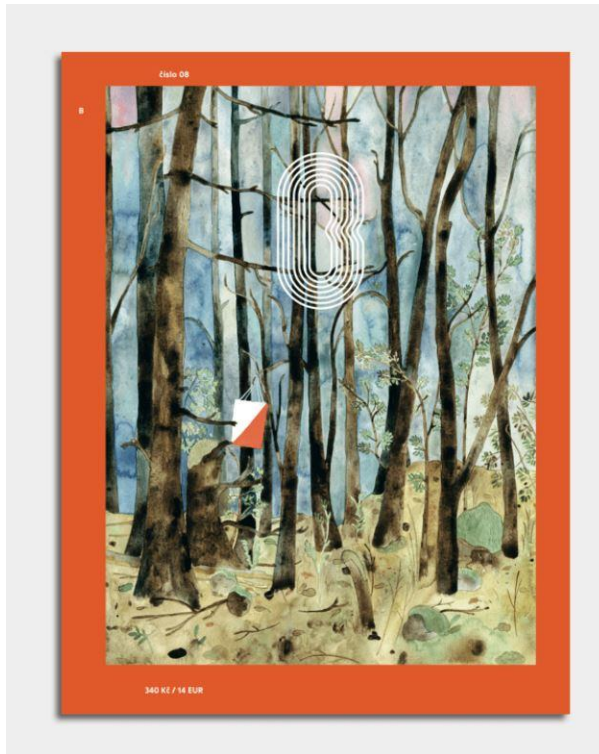


Figure 4



Figure 5

In contrast to Baudrilliards's experience when observing the New York City Marathon the message of the runners got lost in the quantity, Per Hüttner, a “restless nomad” visual artist has offered a different kind of spectacle. In contrast to running in the culture where the activity has been common since the 1970s, in his work “Jogging In Exotic Cities,” (Figure 6) the artist, with his blonde hair and white outfit, is running in cities where jogging is not a common practice for its inhabitants. Niclas Östlind, a Swedish writer is saying that “his presence creates an absurd situation.”³⁹ It makes

³⁸ Private email correspondence with Jan Havlíček from 26.04.2021

³⁹ Östlind, N. The Foreign Meets the Foreign. About Per Hüttner's Jogging in Exotic Cities. Per Hüttner. <http://www.perhuttner.com/projects/jogging-in-exotic-cities/>

me think about how absolutely anything that exists, in some context, can look absurd or strange, anything mundane can be exotic and special somewhere else. That to be different is absurd and strange until there are more who are like you. And if there is too many like you, what used to be absurd dissolves into normality and loses its authenticity. But in this case, maybe there is too much attention on the external and if running is about something more than just the external, maybe not everything is lost? In his book “Running and Philosophy, ” Michael W. Austin makes a nice introduction into the possible runners' inner world by stating: “Running provides a great time and space for thinking. Alan Turing invented the computer in the middle of a run. Musicians compose. Writers write. Actors rehearse. Physicists contemplate the Big Bang. And philosophers work on the even Bigger Questions, the ones that affect each of us every day of our lives. “⁴⁰



Figure 6

⁴⁰ Austin, M. W., & Burfoot, A. (2010). Running and Philosophy: A Marathon for the Mind (1st ed.). Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN:978-1-4051-7120-5 p. ix

Another strange image opened up, this time in the BBC news on 23rd of May 2017 ⁴¹ (Figure 7). There was an image of a podium where, in the 1-st place was standing a woman wearing sandals, a long skirt, and a scarf. The headline reads: „Mexican Tarahumara Woman Wins Race Wearing Sandals“ This woman was Lorena (Figure 8) who had been running ultramarathons since 2012 wearing her traditional outfit, and footwear made of recycled tire rubber, a girl who says that „all I want is to keep running until my body gives out.“⁴² After she participated in the Puebla Ultramarathon she was invited to many other races all over the world where she kept running in her traditional outfit and has said that she „wouldn't be Lorena if she didn't wear it.“ ⁴³ By not wearing a „professional“ outfit for running (something, that in my opinion, we do not need to an extent we are made to believe), „she represents a lot of motivation, strength, grip and dedication“⁴⁴ to other people who believe that wearing the dress is something that complicates running. Lorena herself has claimed to „feel comfortable running with it,” and that she would not wear „professional“ running shoes because the people who wear them, are always behind her.

⁴¹ BBC News. (2017, May 23). Mexican Tarahumara woman wins 50km race wearing sandals. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-40006985#:~:text=A%2022%2Dyear%2Dold%20woman,in%20Puebla%2C%20in%20central%20Mexico>

⁴² An athlete whose indigenous skills helped make her a marathon star. (2017, October 14). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-U6uv7zEhs&feature=youtu.be>

⁴³ Rulfo, J.C. (2019). Light-Footed Woman. No Ficción

⁴⁴ An athlete whose indigenous skills helped make her a marathon star. (2017, October 14). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-U6uv7zEhs&feature=youtu.be>



Figure 7



Figure 8

7. Why do we run?

I think that when it comes to our perception of running (and therefore what messages it may carry), one of the key elements to consider and pay attention to is the intention that each run is derived from. I have already briefly mentioned how running can be done with the purpose of winning and with the purpose of fitness and experience, but would now like to elaborate a bit further based on the different categorizations of motivation that I could find.

Derived from Heidegger's philosophy, that man is a project, Timo Klemola is putting forward the idea that the four key projects of physical education are as follows: *Winning, Health, Expression* and *Self*. „Winning refers to those forms of exercise such as competitive sports with victory as a goal. When exercise is the means to a stronger and healthier body, health is the project, as in fitness training. Movement arts as dance are considered as projects of expression. Exercise as a project of self includes all forms of motion that involve study of self, with the goal of discovering what can be termed actual or authentic existence. Projects of Self include many of the Asian movement arts with a philosophical and religious background (yoga as an example).“⁴⁵

In November 1987 an international meeting at the University of Rennes (Brittany) assembled scholars who study sport and body culture from seven European countries. Among them were ten Danes, who presented wide research about sport that was seen as “Danish School” of sports research. In the context of my comparison of physical education class in the western culture versus the approach among the Tarahumara, I would like to mention that among their vast research they asked if sport in schools and in leisure contexts really and necessarily follow the same patterns of achievement as do top sports? This is suggesting that they didn't think that “winning” oriented approach is not necessarily the best option for the schoolchildren.

⁴⁵ Klemola, T. “Sport, a Way to the Authentic Self?” in *Ruumis liikkuu – liikkuuko henki? Fenomenologinen tutkimus liikunnan projekteista* (Tampere: Tampere University, 1998), p. 143.

From their research it was proposed to categorize the motivations as follows:

1. achievement sport (constituted on the base of production: producing results, measuring, comparing and raising standards) The dynamics are working towards hierarchialisation.
2. Fitness sport/ social hygienic “sport for all” / welfare sport
3. Body experience and social sensuality ⁴⁶ (Figure 9)

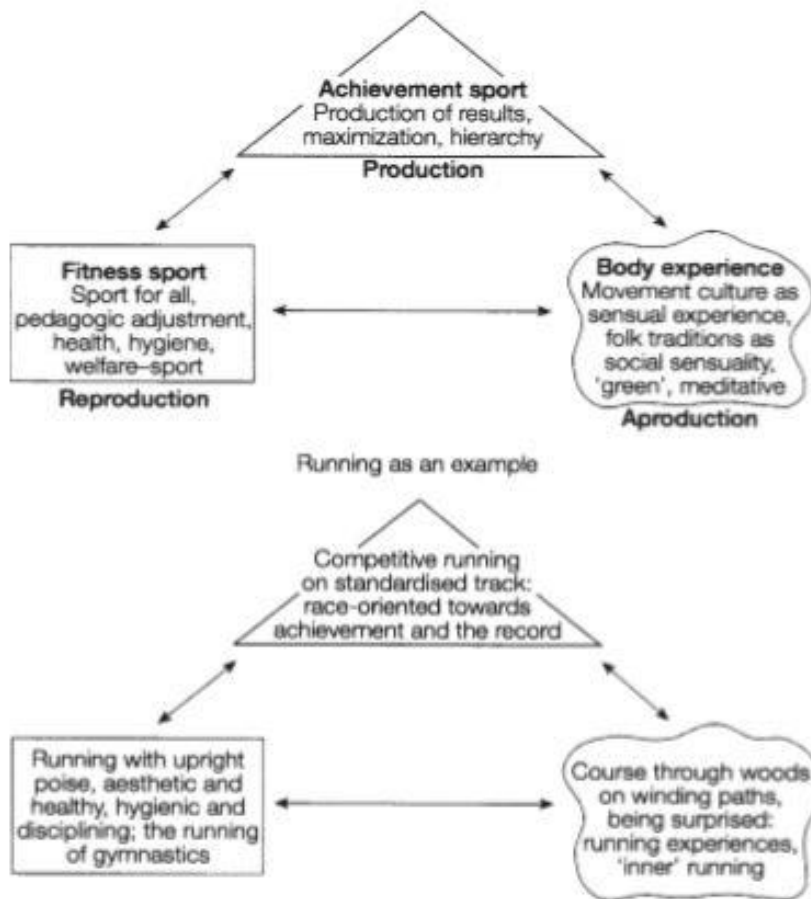


Figure 9 (from “Body Cultures,” p. 124)

⁴⁶ Bale, J., & Philo, C. (1998). *Body Cultures: Essays on Sport, Space & Identity* by Henning Eichberg (1st ed.). Routledge. ISBN-13: 9780415172325. p. 122-123

If running is done with the purpose to win then when looking at it, this is what we see. This is the story that is being told. And same with fitness. When looking at long-distance runners competing for the marathon, I also feel inspired to do the same. When I see someone vigorously exercising for fitness, they also inspire me to do so. But maybe because these purposes serve for rather superficial outcomes that benefit for the external and not so much for the internal (and when thinking about it, can even be counter-active for the internal explorations because they bring the focus more and more to external), the moments of inspiration are rather short-lived. Maybe that is the unconscious that lacks interest?

When running is done with the purpose which is connected to the „self,“ then the story that is told, will be about something other than the two above. That is where things get interesting. When a runner is running in a state of flow that is inspired by the search for self and where he has become the truth. I think that this is the moment we become interested in something without understanding, why. Maybe this is what is called the „gut feeling“ or the „intuition?“ People always say that „I had a gut feeling that this is right,“ and I think this can be linked with recognizing the “truth”, the aesthetic order? You have “a gut” feeling about something, so you try it. And when you try, at some point, there is an interruption in the status quo and you will ask, what does this mean? The meaning is always accompanied by the „why,“ so this sets you out on a new road to self-discovery.

8. Timeline of My Running: the Spiritual Athlete

In 2019 I started school in and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague and something strange was going on with me and running. These were the kind of experiences that I just am not competent to describe with words but will try to, briefly.

First, I had an epiphany about how reality is created, about variations of matter, and how it is expanding.

Then I had a visual apparition of the incarnation process. I don't recall wondering about the possibilities of incarnation beforehand, but in a moment just found myself in the flow of going through the process of it. I remember feeling scared and trying to think of something else as this was happening, for I was scared of my reality getting shifted in a way that I would find hard to cope with, but the momentum was so strong and overpowering that it pulled me along anyway.

Thirdly I got caught in, what I would describe as a chain of realizations that led to a conclusion that there is no meaning to life. That everything just is as is. And I felt this throughout my entire body, as usually is with realizations, the feeling is as if you yourself, for a slight moment, become that knowing, it is like an upgrade to each cell in the body, for everything that you consist of, an empirical experience. The thoughts that led to the realization were not negative in any way, rather I felt rational, without any emotions.

I needed to sit down, for all of a sudden what I was doing seemed meaningless. People were passing by, I saw it all for how meaningless it all is, without a purpose, just existing. I saw how everything was the same, everything was equal. It was just happening, but without any purpose, all just was. And again, this was experienced still without any accompanying emotion, it was a very rational look at things.

By meaningless I don't mean worthless because I do think that life can have value.

I started crying and I cried for about a week every day. The reality as I knew and felt before was gone and I felt utterly alone and in grief.

Trying to find any kind of relief, I searched the internet to find some answers or maybe someone, who had gone through what I was going through. What was I going through?

I had no idea. After some research, I learned that derived from the doubt of meaning in life, I had entered a spiritual crisis, which, in Roman Catholic spirituality is called “dark night of the soul.”⁴⁷

Overwhelmed and afraid of encountering more realizations, I stopped running for many months to come. I was running from the distance, by reading books about running that could explain my experience.

I learned about the Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei, the “spiritual athletes” who run in the request of reaching satori, enlightenment. Monks, who have decided to take upon the challenge have to, in the course of 7 years, go through 1000 day marathon totalling at 38,632 km (or 46,572 km in the more demanding form), which is divided into deifferent parts throughout the 7 years. If a monk was to fail this challenge, he would have to take his own life.

In some stages of the challenge, the monks are not allowed to eat, sleep, or rest, and can only rinse the mouth with water that they have to spit out after and at the end of this “one’s mind has been “stripped off,” from everything- good, bad, or neutral- and excistence is uncovered crystal clear”⁴⁸

At some point “in the last 300 days of the marathon, the focus shifts. The monk emerges from his hibernation, possessed of certain measure of wisdom (or “transcendental wisdom,” as explained by Tapio Koski)⁴⁹ and compassion, to roam in a big city among all sorts of human beings, spreading light and happiness. A balance is truck between practice for one’s own sake and practice for the benefit of all”⁵⁰

Maybe what had happened to me was that I received a little glimpse of that “transcendental wisdom,” and maybe each time we experience “realizations,” where it feels that, for a slight moment, that we have “become” the knowing, it’s just an example

⁴⁷ Sepp, H. (2018, May 14). Kui tee su ees on pime. Mürileht. <https://www.muurileht.ee/kui-tee-su-ees-on-pime/>

⁴⁸ Stevens, J. (1988). The Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei. Random House. ISBN: 0-87773-415-1. p. 76

⁴⁹ Koski, T. (2015). The Phenomenology and the Philosophy of Running. The Multiple Dimensions of Long-Distance Running. Springer. ISBN 978-3-319-15597-5 p. 166

⁵⁰ Stevens, J. (1988), p. 94

of what can be the normal state of being for some humans, like the Monks who have completed satori and experience the reality in ultimate awareness.

Gerge Sheehan has also written how a wisdom occurs during the running practice: “I can escape from time and passively await the revelation of the way things are. There, in a lightning flash, I can see truth apprehended whole without thought or reason. There I experience the sudden understanding that comes unmasked, unbidden” ⁵¹

Vanessa Zusei Goddard is a writer and Zen teacher who trained full-time at Zen Mountain Monastery for 19 years. She has written a book ⁵² about meditation in motion and is talking about how “still running” can show us that fundamentally there is no difference between stillness and movement, body and mind, self and other. When it comes to “getting there,” she explains that first we need to move into stillness in order to make contact with or basic clarity and wisdom and from that altered state of mind, that stillness, we can “move out into activity,” letting that clarity inform the way we live day to day.

I started running again after a conversation with a wonderful artist, Klara Hobza, who, after telling her about my experience, advised me to keep running and use it in my artistic practice. She even went as far as to say it was my duty as an artist to do it. I don’t know about the duty, but her support was enough for me to be brave enough to take up running again. I was ready to step into more darkness and report back. Once I hit the roads with this purpose in mind, however, nothing happened anymore. Nothing like before.

“The mystery of all this is that I must let it come to me. If I seek it, it will not be found. If I grasp it, it will escape. Only in not caring and in complete nonattachment, only by existing purely in the present will I find truth.”⁵³

⁵¹ Sheehan, G. (2014). *Running & Being: The Total Experience* (Illustrated ed.). Rodale Books.

⁵² Goddard, V. Z. (2020). *Still Running: The Art of Meditation in Motion*. Shambhala. ISBN 9780834842984

⁵³ Ibid

9. Workouts For Those Who Don't Work Out / Rites of Passage ⁵⁴

I kept running and in the first year of my study, I had now an opportunity to pursue my interest in finding alternative ways of what running was through art. I didn't have a specific plan and was led by my intuition, so eventually, I ended up using sport in a wider context, not just running. I wanted to, somehow, bind sport and art, to find a way to merge them in a way that it was not understandable if one was looking at a sporting activity or an artwork. I wanted them to be indistinguishable from one another, art motivating to do sport and sport motivating to create art.

In a project firstly named "Workouts for Those Who Don't Work Out," (Figure 10, 11) and later renamed "Rites of Passage" I was looking for playful ways of exercising. Instead of commonly used environments and gear for training, I was training mostly in the nighttime in nature, using tree branches, hay, even flowers as training tools. I tried to put together a "gym" from the objects that I found in an open environment, using traffic signs, dung and hay heap and a second-hand clothes collecting box, to name a few.

Later, as I was organizing the material and editing it together, I started seeing repetitive exercising a possible rite of passage, which were a way of entering into a slightly different kind of reality.

I realized that at every waking moment, depending on our current state of body and mind, there is a corresponding reality available to us, what we can and cannot do. And that repetitive movement, such as, for example, running, can be an easy way to shift that reality. Furthermore, If to believe Joseph Beuys, who has said that art should be done to expand one's consciousness⁵⁵ then I think it is plausible to state that if running in the context of creative practice, consciousness is expanded thus the reality perceived has not only shifted but offers more possibilities due to its expansion.

⁵⁴ Workouts for Those Who don't Work Out. (2019, June 18). [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/FMWqzu1_n8U

⁵⁵ Veiel, A (2017) Beuys. Zero One Film

After finishing this project I also came to understand even more clearly the process of creating that, at this point, makes the most sense to me and that is to follow inspiration and act intuitively upon it, doing, basically, “whatever,” and later analyze and find out what it is about.



Figure 10,11

10. Dreamtime 1 ^{56 57 58}

My explorations continued in my next work, “Dreamtime 1,” inspired by a spiritual dimension among Australian indigenous people by the same name, an empirism that is “more real than the real world.”

“Dreamtime”- which Australians experience in sleep and moments of vision- is timeless and “everywhen”. It forms a stable backdrop to ordinary life, which is dominated by death, flux, the endless succession of events, and the cycle of the seasons (...) It is only when he experiences this mystical unity with Dreamtime that his life has meaning. Afterwards, he falls away from that primal richness and back into the world of time, which, he fears, will devour him and reduce all that he does to nothingness.” ⁵⁹

I was curious about the potential of the alternate state of mind and whether it would be possible to “catch,” “visualize” “communicate” the experience, find a medium for the message. I had noticed that the state of mind does not stop at the moment when I stop running, but takes time to dissolve/transition to the next state. So for this project, I decided, as a continuation of the running activity, to create stop-motion animations each time after my run (Figure 12)

I used (mostly) sports clothing as a material⁶⁰ for creating stop-motion animations. I moved and replaced the materials intuitively, sometimes up to several hours, and later imported the images onto a timeline to create the animations.

⁵⁶ Example of work: <https://vimeo.com/394385276/c06a166fc6>

⁵⁷ Example of work: <https://vimeo.com/396880718/070d0021f5>

⁵⁸ Example of work: <https://vimeo.com/397034149>

⁵⁹ Armstrong, K. (2006). *A Short History of Myth*. Canongate U.S. ISBN 978 1 84767 388 6. p. 13

⁶⁰ The material was not something I got especially for this purpose, but what I had due to another project that I was working on. What fascinates me about sports clothing is intelligence and constant innovation of the fabrics, so it seemed suitable to focus on this type of fabrics in the hopes of learning something new, but also for a simple reason of following the sports thematic.

What I learned from conducting this work was that by focusing on one object and continuously, little by little displacing it (in retrospect, this may not even be necessary), the label that I had given to the object (a shirt, top, or pants for example), disappears and what is left is simply matter ⁶¹

I noticed was that by looking at something long enough, what I see, changes. Therefore also changes the construction of it, my understanding of it. Now, when I keep looking with this new understanding long enough, at some point, what I look at, changes again, and with it its construction once more. Each change is like an update which makes the subject more complex than before. And if I keep looking...would the whole world unravel if I was able to look for an infinite time? Does everything contain everything else? Does the whole universe unravel from this source? It felt like experiencing Plato's allegory of the cave on a miniature level.

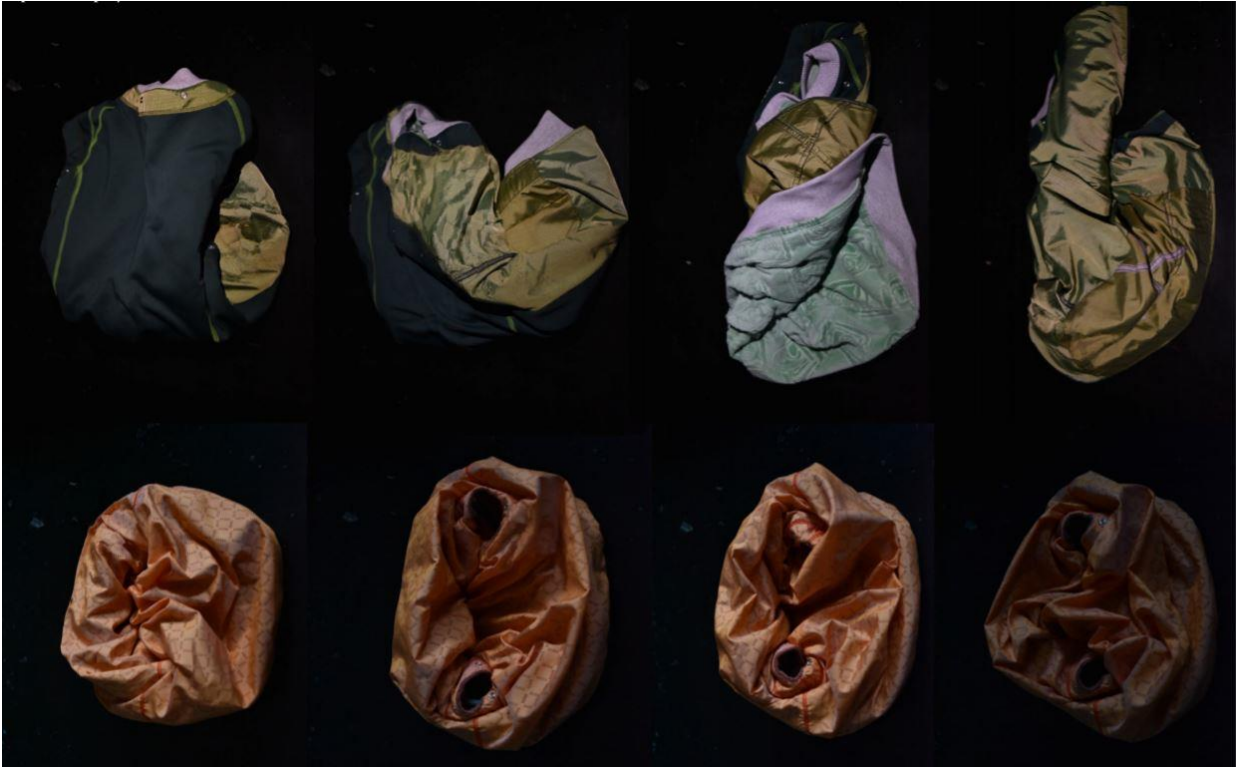


Figure 12

⁶¹ This draws a connection to my experience of life having no meaning ,and how everything seemed “equal.” By equal what I meant was that there were no labels, no distinction, just one big mass of matter.

11. Dreamtime 2

For the second part of the project, Dreamtime 2, I was using the same fabrics as for the first part of the project and again conducted the practice as a continuation of a run. I would now organize and build with the fabrics. Again, I didn't have a plan and I didn't know what it was that I was doing, besides the building and arranging. I kept doing this for about a week and ended up with a sculpture about 2 meters in height (Figure 13)

Once I stepped aside and looked at what I had done, a word that came to mind: "a church." And the thoughts that followed: maybe what I was practicing was a belief? My experiences in running are empirical and cannot be seen by another, mostly I can't provide any proof of what I have experienced, and the experiences themselves may happen and may not happen. I know they can happen (because they have happened before, therefore the belief) but I can never be sure. (In retrospect, if I have witnessed something happening, then it's not about believing anymore, but knowing. So it's the process of belief transforming into knowledge, which, I think, has nothing to do with religion anymore).

I practice running to learn, to expand my consciousness. And as for "God," I do have an understanding that "God" is everything I don't know. There is my consciousness and the rest is "God," at least that's how I see it at this time in my life.

While researching for this thesis, I came across a strategy called "god-of-the-gaps" strategy which can be juxtaposed with my understanding. It's mostly used by philosophers who wish to argue for the rationality of belief in God. "This strategy consists of trying to find a phenomenon that cannot be explained by natural science, and insisting that it can be explained only by reference to the activity of God. Science, however, continues to advance upon the territory occupied by the god of the gaps,"⁶² just as my consciousness keeps expanding and claiming the territory of "God," but the difference with me here is that I don't believe in "the act of god," but God is more like a territory, a representative of the unknown. But these are just "puzzles" unsolved that

⁶² Corner, D. (2007). *The Philosophy of Miracles* (Continuum Studies in Philosophy, 24) (1st ed.). Continuum. EISBN 9780826488879

over time, as they get solved, move from the category of being a miracle into something that has been explained by natural science.

Jennifer Pharr Davis, a long-distance hiker, has said that she feels closest to God while on the trail: “It occurred to me that hiking allowed me to experience God in a way that others might not understand. In many ways, I felt a direct communion with God through the trail: I saw His glory in the mountains, His presence in the clouds, His peace in the rivers, His power in the weather, and His ingenuity in the animals of the forest. Maybe hiking the trail was my version of speaking in tongues?”⁶³ Maybe that what this relates to is coming closer to knowing something that she did not know before, claiming the territory of “God”? So maybe “God” just really is a label for something that we don’t know yet?



Figure 13

⁶³ Davis, P. J. (2010). *Becoming Odyssea: Adventures on the Appalachian Trail*. Beaufort Books. ISBN 978-0-8253-0649-5. p. 165

After 3 projects I was satisfied that I had learned something from each, but I still distant from what I was looking to achieve. It was some kind of feeling or mood that I was trying to catch without knowing what it exactly is.

The main question remains: how to communicate running in a way that it is presenting the authentic experience of it? How to make running appealing? My previous projects used running as a tool for creating, but could not be linked to running itself for the audience. I knew that to advocate it and show it in an alternative way, I had to include the activity itself in the project. This however, I had not done because I couldn't figure out a medium through which my experience should be captured. Sure, somebody could film me running, but I doubt that there would be something interesting there to look at.

The movement was limiting, I couldn't express freely my current state of being. How to visually communicate something that is invisible? Should I record my thoughts that appear during the runs? Should I try to record some kind of rhythm that I feel like conducting during the run? To think that a painter or a pianist can just record their state of the flow made me feel so frustrated in the light that I couldn't find a way how a runner could record the state of flow. I'm just a brush without a canvas. What is my canvas?

12. Other Artists' Work

When I look at all the other artist's works about running then how I see it is that every one of them has made up their creative way of running and in a way, I feel like I have been invited to try out their invention of running as a participant but also as an observer.

Everybody has used running to tell some kind of story, make us feel a certain something.

I like to fantasize that there was some mystical class where we all met and a task was given to use running in creative work. And now we are looking at the results, what everybody has come up with.

13. Gotthard

Sometime in the summer of 2011, a Czech artist, at the time living in Berlin, Martin Kohout⁶⁴ was driving back from a visit to Italy with his friends when they entered the Gotthard road tunnel in Switzerland. Kohout was “completely hypnotized for about 15 minutes by how narrow the tunnel was, each direction had only one lane, there was no physical barrier between them, and there was also a low enough ceiling, which was flat and black.”

Approximately two years later, on June 13th, 2013, at 5 PM a small bus started driving from Basel, Germany. There were ten people on board: Kohout and nine of his companions. About two hours later the bus arrived at Airolo, the southern exit of the Gotthard Road Tunnel, which, in 2013 at 16.9 km was the third-longest road tunnel in the world. On that specific day, the tunnel was under maintenance. Kohout left the bus and ran into the tunnel. A few minutes later a safety car entered the tunnel and followed him about half a kilometer behind. (Figure 14,15)

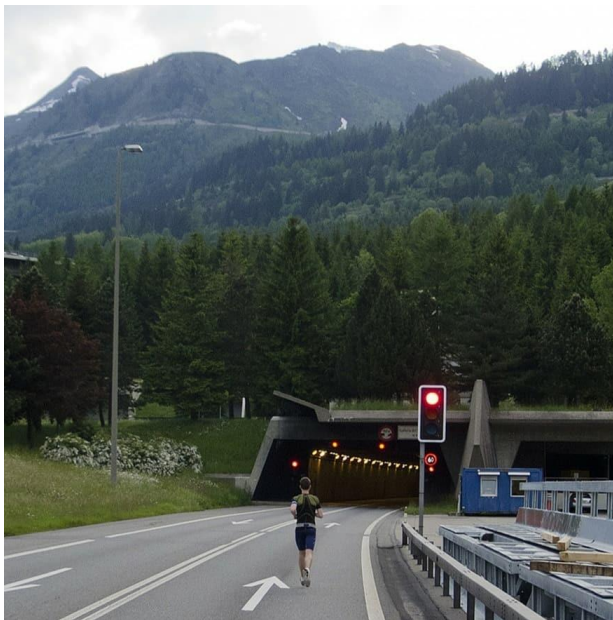


Figure 14



Figure 15

⁶⁴ Martin Kohout news room w/ Martin. (2021). Martin Kohout. <https://www.martinkohout.com/>

The bus with the remaining people and champagne then started driving north, scaling the mountains over the Gotthard Pass to await and greet Kohout as he exits the tunnel at the northern exit in Göschenen. It, however, got lost on the way and made it to the destination only a few moments before Kohout's exit.

It was not intended to be a race between Kohout and the bus, but in retrospect can be imagined as such: a lone human running in a straight tunnel while the bus is adventuring on the winding roads somewhere through the nearby mountains.

Kohout has not mentioned the time it took to run through the tunnel and states: "not that I was hiding it, but I didn't want it to be a competition, it wasn't about someone trying to beat it (the time)."⁶⁵ I think that removing the time component from the performance, opens up a possibility for a vast conversation about the performance, whereas when mentioning the time would, quite undoubtedly only lead the conversations into speculations surrounding the time, was it a good time? Could I run faster? By removing the time component it momentarily becomes about the experience. Talking about the results and numbers in connection to sport is just such a strong habit that it's very easy to fall into it unconsciously, it's our "program" made by years of repetition. By removing the time we challenge the program, the habit, and may start to see much more which we did not before when looking through the time "filter." How do we look at the act of running if time does not exist? What is it about if it's not about numbers?

In this project, there is a lot of space for imagination because there are only images of Kohout running towards the tunnel in daylight and out from the tunnel as the day has turned into an evening. "The whole event was not photographed or filmed inside the tunnel at all, so the documentation is from the outside. Like that my point was to work with a legend or rather a memory. Running through the tunnel for me was like pulling a thread in it that stays there forever, but nothing will be visible or heard, just someone will remember it."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Private email correspondence with Martin Kohout from 05.03.2021

⁶⁶ Ibid.

For running events, the documentation is oftentimes the second most important thing after the time element, the visual proof that one has done what they set out to do. I have no doubts of Kohout indeed running through the tunnel, instead of, say, getting a lift from the safety car that followed him shortly after but I do like entertaining the idea that there was something more or something else going on besides the running and that only he knows about it. And maybe the safety car driver. Once something is not documented, everybody is free to imagine and fantasize about what had happened, and in a way, nobody is wrong either. Maybe a horse was waiting for him a few hundred meters into the tunnel and he was riding that horse for the lion's share of the tunnel? As long as there is no documentation, anything and everything could have happened in this tunnel.

Running in a tunnel is also very symbolic in many ways, it can signify the inner experience of the runner, that what is not seen by the others, it can be seen as a metaphor for transformation between two states of mind, the tunnel is like transforming to another place, but you don't exactly know where you are going and how long it will take and there is no other way out, just to keep going onward...or turn around and go back. But if you go back, is where you came from the same as when you left earlier?

14. No. 850

Martin Creed's "Work No. 850" (Figure 16) centres on an idea that each person (a few special times Creed among them) will run as fast as they can every thirty seconds through the gallery as if "their life depended on it." Each run is followed by an equivalent pause, like a musical rest, during which the grand Neoclassical gallery is empty.

Creed has said that the work was inspired by a visit he once paid to the catacombs of the Capuchin monks in Palermo. "We were very late and only had five minutes to see it all before closing time. To do it we had to run. I remember running at top speed with my friends through the catacombs looking desperately left and right at all of the dead people hanging on the walls in their best clothes, trying our best to see it all... it was a good way to see it. It was that kind of delirious running which makes you laugh uncontrollably when you're doing it. I think it's good to see museums at high speed. It leaves time for other things."⁶⁷

Creed was, at least, at first, inspired by the absurdity or humor or his own experience and has said that he made the work because he thought it was be funny. "It makes me smile when I see people running through the gallery." Later, after observing that what he had created he found something more in it, something which he didn't initiate in the beginning. "If I think about running and why it is that I like it, I think that it is perhaps because it's an exciting action and it's also an example of being alive. If you think of death as being still, perfectly still, so the opposite of death would be to move as fast as you possibly can. And I think of an experience of art as an alive experience, a painting may be a fixed static object, but the experience of looking at a painting is always alive one because people are alive and constantly moving and the heart's beating so the experience of looking at things is always in movement and in my mind there isn't such

⁶⁷ Martin Creed: The Duveen Galleries Commission 2008 - Exhibition at Tate Britain in London. (2008). ArtRabbit. <https://www.artrabbit.com/events/martin-creed-the-duveen-galleries-commission-2008>

a leap from therefore from a painting to a person running in the gallery which is moving or kinetic work.”⁶⁸

I find it interesting how the work with initial reason to show running in a context of humor turned out to be rather insightful and thought-provoking to the artist himself and how he found so much deeper meaning in it, how the running and art merged into one another in that what he was looking at once the piece was completed.



Figure 16

⁶⁸ Martin Creed's Work No. 850 | TateShots. (2008, September 3). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-U8FI45-DFw&feature=youtu.be>

15. Infinity

„Meaninglessness is an evaluation mechanism with social connotations. However, the criteria applied to descriptions of action are highly subjective and there is no doubt that they may be conceived without respect to cultural evolution.“⁶⁹ The works of the Japanese artist duo Mai Jamashita and Naoto Kobayashi suggest such an understanding. The artists are trying to trace the meaning of meaninglessness. The other thing that I find interesting about their approach (even more so in other works), is how they are usually not trying to create something new, but rather distort or tweak reality.

In their work „Infinity,“ they spent 9 days untiringly tramping the symbol of „infinity“ into a lawn to „eternalize it.“ (Figure 17)

I didn't find the work that much interesting at first, and I suppose it was just too symbolic for me, the symbol itself in the work is so overpowering that it pushes the running itself into a rather insignificant position- to my mind, the work might have even been better if they were to walk the whole time. In this context, running seems like rushing. If you talk about infinity, might as well take your time. Perhaps, if they were to walk, the work would have been juxtaposed with “A Line Made by Walking” by Richard Long, which is probably one of the most famous walking-related works. Maybe the meaning would have gotten lost in the comparison.

I decided to include the project into my thesis once I read about the inspiration behind the project, the story about Masumi Kuwata, from the Yomiuri Giants baseball team. „When he was still playing ball there was a time when he injured his arm, so he couldn't pitch. But, to maintain the strength in his legs, he ran round and round the baseball field. He ran so much that the grass died and a path was made. So, that anecdote was still up there in our minds.“ Do you think you can really make a road just by

⁶⁹ Gronemeyer, W. (2011). The Meaning of Meaninglessness. BE, 18, 114–115. <https://bemagazine.org/>

running?"⁷⁰ The question suggests that they were not familiar with the work of Richard Long. Such a question (with an obvious answer?) is adding great strangeness to the project. Now I see them running with curiosity in their minds about whether a path will appear from underneath them. So it's more about whether something happens if I put in a certain amount of effort and not so much about seeing myself as the maker of it. But what made the project intriguing to me was the source of inspiration. I think that the story overtook the project in a sense that when I think about the project, I tend to think about the story and visualize it instead because I like the status of running in the inspiring story more, the way it has some reason and an outcome that stretch so much further from the symbolism, therefore carrying more life in it. Its also a story about the natural way of creating diversity. You can't do something that everybody else is doing so you channel your energy into something else. People talk a lot about how they are using their pain to transfer into something beautiful in art, but when it happens naturally and outside of the context of art, then it's so much more authentic and it touches the heart on a so much deeper level I think.



Figure 17

⁷⁰ Causing Something To Happen | MAI YAMASHITA+NAOTO KOBAYASHI. (2009). Mai Yamashita + Naoto Kobayashi. http://www.yamashita-kobayashi.com/texts/causing_something_to_happen.html

16. 3 Works by Guido van der Werve

Each year since 2010, Guido van der Werve, carrying a bouquet of chamomiles, is running 29 miles (~46,7 km) from New York City up to Rachmaninov's grave in the small upstate town in Valhalla to place a tribute. "Rachmaninov was a composer who, in 1892 at the age of 19 composed his first Piano Concerto No 1. In F-sharp minor. The reception of the piece was dreadful spiraling Rachmaninov into a nervous breakdown followed by three year depression. Rachmaninov was cured through hypnotherapy and dedicated his second piano concert, which was a big success, to his therapist."⁷¹ Chamomile „is used for hysteria and nervous diseases (...) this flower possibly is one of the most important central European remedies.”⁷² The project is called "Nummer dertien, Effugio A: Chamomile, Russia's National Flower or Running to Rachmaninoff." (Figure 18) The project is one of three works from the series „Nummer dertien, emotional poverty in three effugium.“ Effugium means „escape“ in latin and therefore I assume it's referring to the way how, if to look at emotionality and rationality as two ends of one spectrum, endurance creates a rather rational state of mind, a clear state of mind. So maybe it's like an escape from the emotional rollercoasters of everyday life.

⁷¹ van der Werve, G. (2021, March 10). Effugio a. Guido van Der Werve. <https://roofvogel.org/effugio-a/>

⁷² Ibid.



Figure 18

“My life and art have been very much entangled,”⁷³ van der Werve explains in an interview given to Louisiana Channel, “so when I started to do more and more sports, it was only natural in a way that it would pop up in my work (...) I really like to do performances, but I hate doing them live so started to film them. Because of that I also don’t want to be a classical filmmaker in a sense that I don’t want to use actors, I always thought actors are kind of fake because they say something they didn’t invent themselves. I wanted to make films with people who have more honest way of expressing themselves.”⁷⁴ In his request for honesty, after experimenting with dancers, musicians and sometimes random people from the street, he concludes: “I realized that sports is actually probably the most honest way to express yourself,

⁷³ Guido van der Werve Interview: Simplicity of the Sublime. (2014, December 17). [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Gf_5ENquEc&feature=youtu.be

⁷⁴ Ibid.

especially when you do very long endurance kind of sports like the triathlons that I'm doing. At some point you are in a state where you really can't pretend anymore and it's also a way to get to know yourself somehow I think."⁷⁵

In another one of his films, "Nummer dertien, Effugio C: you're always only half a day away"⁷⁶ he is running for 12 hours around his holiday house, starting early in the morning, we see how the darkness changes into light and then to darkness again as he finishes his run, slowly dragging his legs.

"I always ran but I started running more frequently five years ago. It really gave me a structure and it really kind of clears your head I think. As an artist I'm not a person who sits in the studio the whole day but I try to be ready when a good idea shows up so by doing all the sports I think I try to get my intuition on the higher level and at the same time stay healthy which is also quite important I think"

"The sign of good sportsman is if they make it look easy. If you look at somebody running very fast or a figure skater, the more easy it looks the better the athlete is and I think the same thing goes for art. I think there's a lot of mystifying going on in the art scene and I'm kind of, I want to go the other way, I want fine-year-olds also to be able to enjoy my work."⁷⁷

Having said that, I find it interesting that he seems to oppose mystification because I find his work, „Nummer veertien, home“ (Figure 19) deeply mystical. But maybe the mysticism appears only for the viewer who is not given the explanation of everything that is going on, so the mystery lies in the strange and unexplainable moments, which at the same time, for van der Werve may be totally logical and even rational. In this movie he bikes, swims and runs nearly 1200 miles (~1931 km) from Warsaw's Church

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ van der Werve, G. (2021b, March 10). Effugio c. Guido van Der Werve. <https://roofvogel.org/effugio-c/>

⁷⁷ Guido van der Werve Interview: Simplicity of the Sublime. (2014, December 17). [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Gf_5ENquEc&feature=youtu.be

of the Holy Cross to Paris's Lachaise cemetery. „For Père Lachaise is where Frédéric Chopin is buried—except for his heart. In October 1849 (immediately after his death), Chopin's loving sister Ludwika fulfilled her brother's wish by smuggling his heart out of Paris and interring it in that Warsaw church. Van der Werve makes the trip backward, triathlon-style, adding strange scenes about Alexander the Great's journey from Macedonia to his final resting place in Babylon.“

There are scenes of him playing a piano in his wetsuit and goggles, him running while on fire, a scene where it looks like he is hung from a moving crane, windows of an entire house exploding into smithereens. Jerry Saltz from the New York magazine has said: „Seeing Van der Werve push himself beyond comprehension, following his own inner Odyssey, haunted by incomplete histories, inconclusive futures, blind drive, and some ecstasy of sacrifice, brought me to a speechless standstill. This nonnarrative incantation brings to form a complex set of powerful feelings, memories, histories, mythologies. It isn't strictly art. Or film. Or a mutant Ironman triathlon. It's poetry.“⁷⁸



Figure 19

⁷⁸ Saltz, J. (2012, October 4). Triaesthete. New York Magazine.
<https://nymag.com/arts/art/reviews/nummer-veertien-home-saltz-2012-10/>

Seeing the excerpt of work for the first time (sadly my multiple attempts of reaching wan der Werve to see the full length movie were unsuccessful), I too, just as Jerry Saltz, found myself to be mesmerized. Being pre-conditioned to love endurance sports, the „larger than life“ context that he built around the physical effort worked for me well. Kind of made me feel like I know what he is saying and that I feel the same.

“What I like to do is to work very personally, to use my emotions in my state of mind and once I have an idea what I want to do I take those things and I abstract them to a certain core so in the best case what you are left with is a kind of crystallized version of that which is usually just a mood in a way and I think that by making your own things correlate they become open and universal and I think mood is a good tool because it’s something that immediately becomes a part of you.”

I recall myself thinking that if one is able to produce this kind of work, the importance of all external of the maker loses its importance. Identification through how someone looks like, seems so marginal, insignificant.

I think we identify ourselves through our visual appearance until we begin to have something meaningful to say. Once we do, I think it’s as if entering to a completely different place, a place where the importance of how we look, something our society is obsessed with, it does not matter to us anymore and the confidence that goes along with it leads way to shifting the prejudices or acceptance of made by judging anyone by their looks.

Having said what I just did, it leads me to wonder about certain moments in my running practice when I am flying, I’m going really fast. I feel proud that this body that I doubt looks like it can run fast, against all odds, does. Then I am proud to look like I do, happy to offer a moment of surprise. I manage to do something unexpected, it expands the understanding of how things are, how endless are possibilities. In this moment the negative self-consciousness of how I look is replaced with the positive awareness and enjoyment of what I am doing so it does seem that the physical body is replaced with the physical activity. I think that if someone does something aesthetically and beautifully, the focus shifts from the doer to what is being done. And if, for example, the

doers appearance is not of something that could commonly be seen as aesthetic, the more value there seems to be in that activity what is being done esthetically, then we might find ourselves thinking that what we see is interesting. I think this is what triggers curiosity, a slight cranny in what we are looking at. If there is a certain conflict, then there is an interesting story that our mind generates from it which adds value to what we are looking at.

17. Run Diary and The Run (Marathon)

Latvian artist Kristaps Epnors has kept a “Run Diary”⁷⁹ since 2012 and for him running is an everyday practice. “I am running. Mostly alone, sometimes with a friend, always with a video camera. This is the time which belongs only to me.”⁸⁰ With the video camera attached to his head, he is recording each run, but selecting and showing only one frame/image per run (Figure 20) for his “Run Diary” and to a video sequence of the same project which he presents at exhibitions. He accompanies the image with a tracking line recorded by a device with a GPS (Figure 21), but unlike numerous others who used the idea of “GPS drawing” (Reid Stowe, Matti Tainio, Stephen Lund, Nathan Rae, and Jeremy Wood, to name a few), Epnors is removing all accompanying information from the image so that only the essence, a simple abstract trace drawn with the body is left: “Many runs are quite similar but they are never the same.”⁸¹

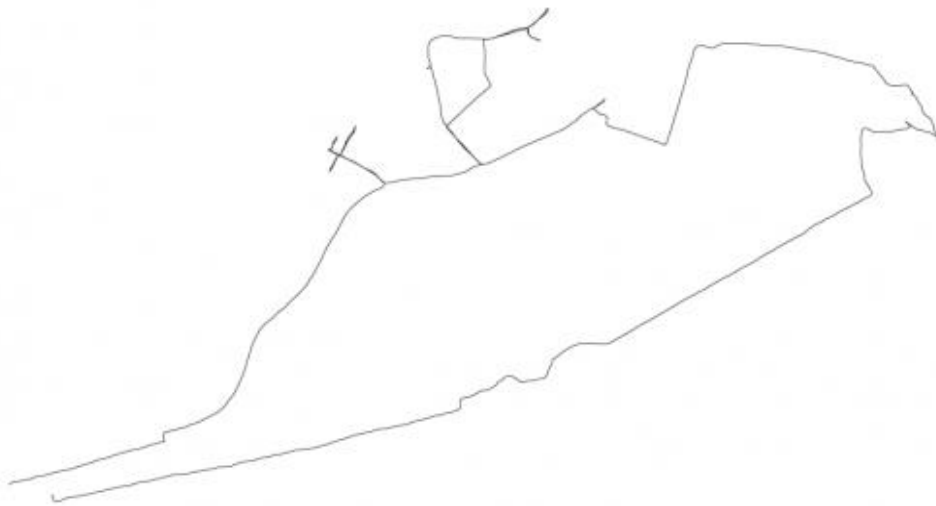
In the slide show made by the images, Epnors has also added a date and location of the run. When focusing on alternating images I catch myself waiting for the seasons to change. In the beginning, it looks so dark and cold, I’m waiting for images of the sun, of signs of new life. When focusing on the location I find myself looking forward to getting out of Riga, or getting out of Kent, and each time the location changes after a long sequence of images I breathe a sigh of relief: we made it out, we are not stuck. When focusing on the dates that hardly miss any in a consecutive row, the gaps in the dates are the ones that strike the most interest, this kind of overall consistency almost makes one ask if the world ceased to exist on the days that are not represented. This reminds me of observing the documentation of One Year Performance 1980-1981 (Time Clock Piece) by Tehching Hsieh, where the artist punched a time clock every hour on the hour and took a single picture of himself with a 16mm movie camera. In the exhibition, the images were all displayed according to the calendar and a careful observer could

⁷⁹ Epnors, K. (2021). Epnors / diary / 2021. Kristaps Epnors - Diary. <http://kristapsepnors.com/diary/>

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

notice, that few of the images were missing. And just as in Epner's work, that what is not there, made the work come alive for me, this is where I could step in and insert my own fantasy and questions. A little "mistake," "inconsistency," in the end, that is what makes you wonder. What was it that prevented the artist from following his "perfect" plan, what caused the "error"?



(Figures 20,21)

(When it comes to consistency, I feel that the motivation of keeping up with it is in correlation to that what is already accomplished and deviation in this consistency, be it conscious or unconscious, planned or not planned, can play a crucial role in the decision-making process to continue with the consistency when the current motivation for some reason is not very high. A deviation opens up a gateway for abandoning the chain of consistency, to abandon that what was started. In short, not following the plan can make it easier to decide to not follow the plan in the near future.)

In 2013 Epnors run a marathon and a video, with an approximate length of his running time, was recorded by what looks like a cyclist riding in front of him. The marathon was the subject and also a form of his work. Just as Mai Jamashita and Naoto Kobayashi (Figure 19), Epnors's work is also raising questions tied to the purposefulness of that what he has chosen to do. Epnors, "Subjecting creative expression to conditions of physical activity, raises questions tied to the economy, usefulness and purposefulness of an individual's inner resources" ⁸²

Without a doubt, Epnors also sees the act of running as a creative expression and has decided to use the medium of video recording to "catch" or communicate his experience.

Just like Guido van der Werve, Epnors too is bringing out the aspect of catching some sort of honesty or authenticity: "for the physical exercise and effort that is needed for running a marathon does not allow the artwork model (the author) to look "more attractive", to pose or to make unnecessary movements in front of the camera. It can be particularly well observed when approaching exhaustion."⁸³

The 3 hour video begins with a twist, there is a guy waving and running towards the camera, we are then, by chance, led to believe that this is the protagonist of our story. However, the waving guy passes the camera and only then we notice more reserved Epnors who was running just next to him but remained unnoticed before.

⁸² Vējš, V. (2013). Epnors / video / The Run (marathon). Kristaps Epnors. <http://kristapsepnors.com/video/the-run-marathon/>

⁸³ Ibid.

What we see when looking at the video is Eppers running, almost towards the camera but never looking into the camera. He is following the marathon route and the filming of his run becomes a choreography between him and the cyclist with the attached video camera. Sometimes, mostly in the road turns, Eppers is lost from the camera's view and my mind right away rushes to imagine him conducting all kinds of illegal activities during these short moments. It is like some sort of paranoia perhaps, that everything is not actually as it presented to me, that I don't see the full picture. In this rather primitive context, however, it is interesting to observe this. How in a rather managed rational reality, the mind right away starts to rebel and make up its own scenario, if given the possibility. And not just any scenario, but something as absurd as possible. The mind is in a way powerless in changing anything when everything is visible, but once something is in the hiding, that's when the mind gains the power to make its own reality. With eyes wide open, what you see, it is what it is but once you close your eyes it is whatever, the canvas is empty, the reality yours to create, the rules yours to make.

And is this what I just explained not a lesson learned about what a conspiracy theory is? Adam Curtis has wondered whether conspiracy theories are an attempt to re-enchant the world in a distorted way⁸⁴. By Max Weber's words, we are living in an iron cage of rationality, and the price we pay for it is becoming disenchanting. But as just experienced, when everything is organized and rational, the unconscious starts to rebel due to its powerlessness. "It's like religion knocking on the door and trying to come back in a strange and distorted form. A sense of mystery beyond our own understanding of the world. If you ever talk to conspiracy theorists, that's the sense you get from them. A sort of almost romantic sense of awe that there is this dark mysterious thing that a rational thing could never penetrate. That's sort of religious. Maybe what's trying to get back into our world is enchantment, and the only way it can come back in is in these strange distorted ways."⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Adam Curtis on the Dangers of Self-Expression. (2017). The Creative Independent. <https://thecreativeindependent.com/people/adam-curtis-on-the-dangers-of-self-expression/>

⁸⁵ Ibid.

And this comes back to the fact that many runners run for the experience, they run because they know that there is a possibility for this enchantment. The running is like a repetitive ritual that can open up a door for you where new knowledge lies, just as George Sheehan has said, that going for a run is like going for a hunt.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Sheehan, G. (2014). *Running & Being: The Total Experience* (Illustrated ed.). Rodale Books.

18. Timeline of My Running: the Pain

My initial plan was to conduct the written part of this thesis in 42 consecutive days, symbolically linking to the distance of the contemporary marathon which, I think, can be seen as the apex of today's recreational running culture. This way, the first few weeks of running fueled my writing process and I saw the thesis itself as an art project that is the expression of my running sessions. Due to excessive running, sometimes leading up to 30 kilometers in a day, however, I developed calf pain and shin splints (occurring during the run) in my legs that forced me to abandon the practice at such an intensive level. Every day, in the hopes, that the situation has gotten better, I would nevertheless go for a run but at times having to stop and walk back home after half a kilometer. It was interesting to observe how the interest and motivation in writing this thesis were in correlation with my current shape in running and being unable to run for more than 2 kilometers for 2 weeks straight made me feel very much left out of that what my interest and fascination had created in the first place. For this reason, I couldn't see any other option besides finding a solution that would able me to get back on track.

Just as the story that inspired Japanese artist duo, Jamashita and Naoto Kobayashi to make their work, about the player who ran because he couldn't pitch and how this led to a completely unexpected outcome, something similar happened to me too. Hitting the wall at some part of „what I can do,“ forced me to look for another way out, the expression was looking for another way to free itself from my body, to surface somewhere else.

My first deliverance arrived after learning about barefoot running. I rid myself of socks and running shoes and carefully ran about 4 kilometers. It felt amazing to say the least, an absolute deliberation and pure happiness. The pain was gone. The next day I purchased barefoot shoes and overjoyed with the feeling and thought that I could now run as much as I want, I did run as much as I wanted. After 3 days and could hardly

stand up from bed on the morning. These were magic shoes, but the magic was not everlasting. The pain was back.

In earlier years I had, in some cases, managed to “run through” the pain and decided to give it a try once more. And it was successful, except that the pain disappeared somewhere around kilometer 6 and that didn’t seem like a very reasonable deal. I then pondered whether I was amplifying my pain by focusing on it while running and decided to try and shift my focus from the pain to listening to music (something I had not done since the beginning of this thesis) This decision led the way to the next deliverance.

But differently than anticipated. While listening to music, the pain was still overtaking my attention but what started to happen was that instead of concentrating on running I began subtly concentrating on moving to the rhythm of the music. By moving my legs slightly differently due to trying to “catch the beat,” from time to time I used other muscles in my legs which made it possible to move forward and the pain disappeared.

Secondly, when running and at times overwhelmed with the need for expression but struggling with the lack of vocabulary that the conventional style of running offers for communication, the new way of running introduced an enormous amount of new words.

19. Drunce ⁸⁷ ⁸⁸

I searched the internet for the act of dancing and running combined, but couldn't find anything that would look similar to the movement I had developed out of my necessity, let alone a term for it. I decided to add the words run and dance together to combine “drunce,” a noun for the act of “druncing” also known as “long-distance dancing.”

When talking about the history of the formation of art, Dewey emphasizes that „instead of being elevated to a niche apart, they (art) belonged to display of prowess, the manifestation of group and clan membership, worship of gods, feasting and fasting, fighting, hunting, and all the rhythmic crises that punctuate the stream of living (...) vogue of the theory is testimony to the close connection of the fine arts with daily life ; the idea would not have occurred to any one had art been remote from the interests of life (...) The idea of “art for art’s sake” would not have been even understood.”⁸⁹

During the process of researching for this thesis, I came across many artworks that, despite of using the element of running, did not appeal to me. Something was just “off,” and even though I was able to point out elements in the works that I did not appreciate, I could not understand what it was overall that made the works uninteresting to me in the context of my research. Now, when applying the concept of “art for art’s sake” to any of those works, I believe I have found my answer. Just as running is done in many cases in the context of competition and winning, in the context of gaining a better appearance and social acceptance for oneself, so is art. And in many, if not most cases, that’s probably how it is. But I think that this type of art and sport is enjoyed by those who are satisfied by the mere enjoyment of the superficial in which case there is little if anything to gain from this experience of observation on a deeper level that would

⁸⁷ Example of work: <https://hannasamoson.com/drunce/>

⁸⁸ Example of work: <https://hannasamoson.com/drunce2.0/>

⁸⁹ Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as Experience* (1st ed.). TarcherPerigee. ISBN: 978-1-101-66703-3 p. 5-6

change something within the observer. “The work of art is complete only as it works in the experience of others than the one who created it.”⁹⁰

Maybe the rejection towards some of the running-related artworks was because of unconsciously identifying the superficial purposes of creating those works?

Practicing „druce,“ makes it easy to get „into the flow,“ because when moving to the rhythm of the beat, I have to be very focused, so that the body and the beat would not go out of synchronization. Concentration is possible “because the task undertaken has clear goals and provides immediate feedback.”⁹¹ Every step that I fail to get in sync, feels like „a loss of a life“ in a computer game, like a lethal fall into the abyss. The intensity of the „mistake“ experience is rather surprising and creates unexpected discomfort.

Sometimes when I do manage to think while moving in such a way, I think about Roger Robinson talking about the experience of running before the „running boom“ of the 1970s: „runners used to be an excentric minority, nobody really took us seriously.“⁹²

I think about Emil Zátopek, a legendary Czech long-distance runner whose characteristic running style „inspired a number of athletes and artists,“⁹³ and was described by Jean Echenoz as follows: There are runners who seem to fly, others who seem to dance, still others who look as if they were parading (...) Emil, nothing like all that. Emil, you'd think he is excavating, like a ditch digger, or digging deep into himself, as if he were in a trance. Ignoring every time-honored rule and any thought of elegance, Emil advances laboriously, in a jerky, tortured manner, all in fits and starts.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2008). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1st ed.). Harper Perennial Modern Classics. ISBN: 9780061876721.

⁹² Morath, P. *Free to Run*. Sundance Selects.

⁹³ Swierczekova, L. (2016). Emil Zátopek. In *StArt: Sport as a Symbol in the Fine Arts* (p. 304). Arbor vitae.

⁹⁴ Tadié, A. (2014). Running for Freedom: The Politics of Long-Distance Running in Modern Fiction. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32(2), p. 288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2014.967227>

I think about Per Hüttner who was “Jogging in Exotic Cities,” but whose work, depending on the point of view, “might as well been “A Peculiar Business in Familiar Cities.”⁹⁵

So far I have developed two variations of “drunce.” First version is to move according to the music so that the main focus is on the legs, the legs are the ones trying to catch the beat. It is much slower than the regular running and it teaches about the fact that there is no need to hurry, that hurrying only messes things up.

The second version is more demanding physically and mentally. I run fast and I do not follow the beat with my legs, but my upper body. It is also a coordination exercise because the rhythm of the upper and lower body will be different.

By performing to the camera for the second version of „drunce“ I also have discovered a new attitude and understanding towards running. To be able to perform well and take this performance to the next level a body needs rest. To run daily is good for the feeling of consistency but does not necessarily help rise to the next level of the experience of long-distance running. Having said this I don’t of course dismiss the fact that running on an everyday basis is also an experience, just a different type of one.

Pushing hard brings you somewhere you have not been and thus opens up possibilities to learn something new from that previously not visible material.

So it becomes a choice between pushing for the satisfaction obtained through consistency and the satisfaction obtained through a new experience of self, the test of limits of the body. One gives the feeling of security and the other exposes to the unknown. So I guess the choice is always for the runner to make depending on current needs and life situation.

⁹⁵ Östlind, N. The Foreign Meets the Foreign. About Per Hüttner’s Jogging in Exotic Cities. Per Hüttner. <http://www.perhuttner.com/projects/jogging-in-exotic-cities/>

20. Conclusion

This thesis was derived from the question: „how to successfully deliver a message?“ and used the idea of long-distance running being useful for one’s personal growth as an example. The idea of creating was followed by John Dewey’s theory of aesthetics and one of the key elements was practicing long-distance running not for the stereotypical purposes as winning and health, but with the purpose of experience and “self.” In a way, this thesis was looking to rescue running from its stereotypical concept.

I conducted practice-based research with a presentation of the outcomes linked to the possible expansion of consciousness and analyzed the works of other artists to figure out how long-distance running could be presented so it carries the possibility of this type of findings in it.

The key moments in my practice-based research where long-distance running was done with the purpose of “self,” were:

In “Workouts For Those Who Don’t Work Out” / “Rites of Passage” understanding that long-distance running can be seen as a rite of passage for an altered state of mind through which the perception of reality changes.

In “Dreamtime 1” entertaining the possibility that by focusing on one specific point, the “whole universe” could “unravel” from there, the idea of “everything containing everything else”

In “Dreamtime 2” the concept of consciousness as a territory where “God” represents the parts that are currently inaccessible but can be claimed by personal growth.

In “Drunce” the development of a new practice that combines running and dancing and makes it easier to get into the “flow” and offers a wider possibility for self-expression than regular long-distance running from the body language perspective.

My practice-based research had a problem. My messages did not have a corresponding medium. I researched the theoretical and practical works of others to see what messages their works carry and how they are communicated so that I could apply what I learn to my future projects.

The most important knowledge that I obtained while researching other artists theoretical and practical work were:

One of the possibilities is by presenting running with „dark corners“ where a viewer can fantasize and insert their own input to what is going on. Where there is nothing, the human mind invents something. It is an opportunity of power, an opportunity to make a change. This is offered where Kristaps Epnars is falling out from the frame as he is running a marathon, this is Guido Wan Der Werve disappearing behind his holiday house as he is making rounds around it. This is Martin Kohout running into the tunnel in the East and exiting from the West.

The confirmation of there having to be “truth” in the project. The “truth,” the environment and the runner merging into one, is accessible, for example, through exhaustion and presence. The truth that appears through the exhaustion is seen in the works of Jannicke Låker (“Running Woman”)⁹⁶ and Kristaps Epnars “running a marathon does not allow the artwork model to look “more attractive”, to pose or to make unnecessary movements in front of the camera. It can be particularly well observed when approaching exhaustion.”⁹⁷ The importance presence/exhaustion it comes from the interview of Guido Wan Der Werve where he claims that “at some

⁹⁶ RunningWoman _excerpt. (2021, March 14). [Video]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/153050797>

⁹⁷ Vējš, V. (2013). Epnars / video / The Run (marathon). Kristaps Epnars. <http://kristapsepnars.com/video/the-run-marathon/>

point, you are in a state where you really can't pretend anymore and it's also a way to get to know yourself.”⁹⁸

Another possibility for creating a different meaning for something is by tweaking or distorting the reality as done in the works of Mai Jamashita and Naoto Kobayashi.

It is plausible that by conducting the process of long-distance running with the purpose of 'self,' while being in the "state of flow," the aesthetic outcome could provide a "gut feeling" or "intuition" about the practise that leads to further interest in it.

When creating restrictions to the practice, as discussed in the thesis of Carali McCall,⁹⁹ it is possible to create greater awareness in the body. I also found that by restricting the body (in example when moving to the beat of the music), the places where body reaches the limit can be seen as sentences that form and that can be studied for the meaning.

Just as Carali McCall is investigating drawing through running and concluding that running is drawing, I think that by investigating running not through "art" but a specific other practice could bring out the possible alternate meanings of the practice more easily.

And finally, If people have their fixed undersanding of running, then by adding something familiar to its presentation, something that is known to carry some characteristics that you wish to bring out in running, could help to bring out those characteristis in running too. Its a little like a popularity contest where by using something which has more widely understood meaning or benefits, would serve a bit like a gateway or helper to the less popular to make that popular too. Of course I realise it's a cheap trick for desired consumerism, but then again, as it surfaced many times throughout this research, what is imortant in the outcome is the initial intention, the structure of the seed. Manipulation is not necessarily a bad thing.

⁹⁸ Guido van der Werve Interview: Simplicity of the Sublime. (2014, December 17). [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Gf_5ENquEc&feature=youtu.be

⁹⁹ McCall, C. (2014). A Line is a Brea(d)thless Length: introducing the physical act of running as a form of drawing. https://b25bf493-5252-43ec-adaf-0bc568d7c150.filesusr.com/ugd/e1ced9_b8844943449a4cb9ac6b6d0e42169d55.pdf

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