

**SUPERVISOR ´S RECOMMENDATION FOR THE MASTER ´S THESIS:**

Attachment to the state magister ´s examination report.

**STUDENT: DILLARD Alyssa**

**Branch of study: MA in Directing of Devised and Object Theatre**

**Supervisor: Branislava Kuburović**

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Alyssa Dillard's Master Thesis successfully describes, depicts, re-examines and furthers her practical explorations over the course of her MA study at DOT KALD into questions of race and identity, and of the position of the artist as both a witness and ghost, relaying stories past and present but also one who can refuse to speak, who can deny easy access to these very painful histories and injustices. She learns by doing and through a dialogue with others and her thesis – like her performances – very much reflects this. Its form is close to a diary, in which we are able to follow some of the processes and the variety of forms and methods that these conflicting positions and questions necessitated and brought about, almost forced into being.

How to make work that is not about a distant struggle, a traumatic history of an 'Other', and avoid what Alyssa referred to in the past as 'pity viewing' and 'poverty porn'. How to deal with the question of visibility, and its fickle promise of acceptance and caring? How to tap into the powerful potential of removing oneself from a majority context without losing voice and disappearing altogether in that position of marginality? The issue of distance and distancing is an interesting added perspective. It is clear that the physical removal from a very tense situation brought about by studying in Prague strongly influenced Alyssa's work and approach to performance making, and the thesis reflects this well.

Some of these questions become even clearer in the dramaturgical decisions made in her performances, where working from a distant place made relating issues that are elsewhere even more urgent, and perhaps impossible to resolve. But what we follow in the thesis and what happened over time and through making the work is that this distant place can become a place of healing, where the initial strong emotions slowly gave way to playful work, unafraid to work with appropriation and difference, and entirely open to what others can and are prepared to bring into this shared space. Her final performance, "Marie Antoinette Walks Down an Elegant Hallway Knowing Everyone Hates Her" in its many iterations is a very good example of creating such a shared space of unknowing, of joining together in an excess of fantasy of an Other, multiplied, distanced yet easily available – through dress-up, gesture,

behaviour – through very theatrical means, yet stripped down to their (ghostly) bones.

Alyssa struggled a little with the writing, with integrating theory with her maker’s knowledge that comes through doing and rehearsal process but the writing has clearly helped her integrate and articulate her thinking and approach to performance and dramaturgy and I have very much enjoyed our conversations and following her process and the development of the writing itself. The thesis feels well rounded and complete, but there is still a lot of potential in using the writing more consistently, and with confidence, to further her dramaturgical strategies and her work, and I encourage her to make it an even more integral part of her creative process in the future.

I recommend the thesis for the defense without reservations.

Date: 16th of September, 2020

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