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**MASTER'S THESIS**

**BEYOND JUST ACTING**

**TOWARDS EXPANDED ACTING AND DEVISING**

**PERFORMANCE**

**MAI OGAWA**

Supervisor: Ewan McLaren

Opponent: Cristina Maldonado

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**DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE**

**VÍC NEŽ HERECTVÍ**

**VSTŘÍC EXPANDED ACTING A DEVISING PERFORMANCE**

**MAI OGAWA**

Vedoucí práce: Ewan McLaren

Oponent práce: Cristina Maldonado

Datum obhajoby: June 2022

Přidělovaný akademický titul: M.A.

Podáno 16.5.2022, Praha

## Declaration

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

**Exploring performing beyond just acting and *expand acting*  
through devised performance**

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

Prague, date: .....

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## **Abstract**

This M.A. thesis is based on author Sai (Mai Ogawa)'s research from creating the performance "HSWD" (How to Suicide Without Dying). This paper aims to describe findings from personal, practical research into getting away from simple acting technique and performing dramatic characters toward employing personal emotional experience to devise one's own performance. The author mostly focusses on her own findings on use of space, objects, dramaturgy and personal emotional experience in devising meaningful performance. The author also details several other experiences as co-creator and performer in other performances to enhance her findings in this thesis. The thesis also shows how exploration of these devising approaches can inform acting technique, towards an awareness the author calls "expanded acting". Towards the end she makes some conclusions on the elements that need to be in place to create a meaningful devised performance work.

## **Abstrakt**

Tato magisterská práce je založena na výzkumu autorky Sai (Mai Ogawy), vzniklého při tvorbě inscenace "JZAZ" (Jak se zabít, aniž bych zemřel). Cílem tohoto textu je popsat poznatky osobního praktického výzkumu od vzdalování se prostým hereckým technikám a ztvárňování postav k aplikování vlastní emoční zkušenosti pro stvoření autorské inscenace. Autorka se zaměřuje převážně na vlastní poznatky o použití prostoru, objektů, dramaturgie a osobní emoční zkušenosti při tvorbě smysluplného díla. Aby tyto poznatky podpořila, rozvádí několik dalších svých zkušeností z jiných děl, kterých se účastnila jako spoluvůrkyně či jako performerka. Práce také ukazuje, jak prozkoumávání přístupů sdíleného autorského divadla (devising) může obohatit hereckou techniku na úroveň informovanosti, kterou autorka nazývá "rozšířeným herectvím". Ke konci dochází autorka k několika závěrům ohledně prvků, které musí být přítomné, aby vznikla smysluplná sdíleně autorská (devised) inscenace.



## **Acknowledgements**

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## Introduction

I have written this paper for people who have thought about suicide and also for those who have never thought about suicide.

In Japan, where I come from, since a long time, suicide is the leading cause of death for people between the age of 15 and 39.<sup>1</sup>

Not only in Japan there are many young people who commit suicide. After exposing their “private” life in reality TV shows, they get cyberbullied through social networking services by anonymous people.

*Jesse Bering* says that the sense of “shame” is strongly connected to triggering suicide in his book *Suicidal*.<sup>2</sup> Introspection which may provoke self-denial and shame can bring suicidal ideations. As Ruth Benedict called the Japanese culture, my culture a “*shame culture*”<sup>3</sup>, we have a traditional suicide ritual<sup>4</sup> to get rid of shame and bad reputations.

It’s important to me to begin this paper and this introduction with an explanation of my personal emotional experience that has led me to learn about acting and devising. In my life generally, I noticed that I sometimes try to kill myself subconsciously. I noticed that I am really uncomfortable with my name. Many friends ask me why I try not to use my full e.g in the credits of performances I

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in Japan

<sup>2</sup> Jesse, B. *Suicidal*. 1st ed. Japan: Kagakudojin, 2021. 56p ISBN 978-4-7598-2057-7

<sup>3</sup> Ruth, B. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. United States. Houghton Mifflin. 1946. ISBN 978-0-395-50075-0

<sup>4</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seppuku>

contributed to. But I couldn't explain it. I also feel really uneasy to be regarded as a female. I don't feel comfortable when I am called an "actress". I don't feel comfortable celebrating my birthday so I used to keep my birthday secret and joined other friend's birthday parties, when their birthday was the same as mine. This is just how I am and usually I wouldn't reveal this to people. And I think this strong shame and hatred towards myself is a base for creation for me.

Usually, I am not thinking about suicide and avoid this kind of pessimistic thinking. It is obviously not comfortable to be close with a person who always thinks about disappearing. And to be happy, I want people to come closer to me. Yes, I want to live happily. But sometimes I cannot control the version of myself which wants to commit suicide, and I try to hide this part of myself from other people.

When my MA project started, it wasn't aimed at the topic of suicide although its title was *How to Suicide Without Dying* from the beginning. The topic was supposed to be about organizing and mapping one's life through working with personal stuff like Marie Kondo<sup>5</sup>. Why did the theme change? There are 2 reasons. One is I only had a very short term to work on this whole project so I needed to change many things. Another reason is that I am an actor; I am so used to using my traumatic experiences and emotions to work. So, my secret suicidal impulse came out.

When I think about my final thesis project *HSWD* at DAMU, it is always connected to a lot of problems and difficulties. My studies at DAMU were

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<sup>5</sup> <https://konmari.com/>

interrupted for 2 years, because of difficulties with my *nostrifikace*<sup>6</sup> and COVID19, difficulties I didn't have any handle on.

This also made my final year in school busy and rushed. Right after I came back to the school, I was required to make this whole project in 3 months (2 months and 17 days). This time limit definitely influenced the outcome of my project a lot. I will not complain nor excuse anything here, but it really mattered strongly to my final piece, whether I like it or not.

I spent a great regular year of studying in 2018 just like the other students, then I was forced to go back to Japan for 2 years. Those were very complicated years. Sometimes I had some classes or projects online, otherwise I just couldn't do any performative or creative work. I felt it was such a tightrope walking that it always seemed like I could go back in a few months but it kept being postponed again and again for more than 2 years.

I started thinking about my final thesis project in 2020 during these 2 years so that I could start working immediately when I would manage to go back to school. It was supposed to be one big project and it was going to be my big challenge after surviving long-suffering. But when I finally went back to DAMU, it turned out I only had less than 3 months. During this time I needed to find new collaborators (I had already asked some people to join my project while I was in Japan, but most of them had already left the school by the time I returned). I needed to find a venue which I had never done before in the Czech context. And finally, after a 2 years gap, I was forgetting how I can practically ask the school for help or how to run a project itself, etc. Therefore, my only option was

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<sup>6</sup> Please see the glossary for explanation of this term, often translated simply as *diploma nostrification*.

to change my plan for the whole project. The only thing which stayed until the end was the title, first it was even just a working title but then I kept it: *HSWD (How to Suicide Without Dying)*. One very lucky thing is that Levin Eichert, who was one of the students I spent the longest time with as classmates in my first year, joined me as a dramaturg. This really helped me a lot.

In this thesis I will reflect on the realisation of my MA Project. I very much struggled to realise my final project, but in the end I managed to. I will analyse the different stages of development and explain the difficulties I was facing during the process. I will try to analyse how they influenced the results. I hope I will understand more about myself and show how I generally develop my work or in what ways to continue in my creative work through writing this thesis.

Formally, I will describe each of the 3 showings of my project *HSWD* as I kept developing it, involving the final version which premiered on 11st Feb 2022. I start with a description of my starting point and then the final outcome, then look back at the 1st feedback session on 20th Jan 2022, and continue with the following showing at the *Proces* school showcase event on 31st Jan 2022. After each description of what the audience saw in the respective showing, I will look back and analyse what worked and what didn't in this particular showing and its process. To do this, I will focus on the function and use of space, objects, personal emotional experiences and dramaturgy in those reflections.

After I go through analyzing all the performances I made for the project, I will talk about some context of myself as an artist and what I learned at DAMU before I made this project. I will also investigate how practising devising performance has expanded understanding of performance beyond just acting.

Then finally I will make a conclusion where I evaluate the thesis project development and performance to make clear what I learned and how I want to develop my work after graduation.

In the next part I will describe the final thesis performance from the point of view of the audience and then I will show what I think worked, what didn't, and what I learned from it. Then I will discuss earlier versions of the performance and show what I learned at those stages

## Thesis Performance: Description

### a) General setup



The performance took place in *Jedna, Dva, Tri Gallery* in *Petrohradská* (Petrohradská 438/13, Vrsovice 101 00, Praha10) starting at 20:00 on 11th February 2022. The gallery had all-white walls and a bare concrete floor. We hung cassette tape strings around the whole space like a spider web, which was an obstacle to the invited audience when they came into the space. In the space, there were 3 tables. Throughout the performance, I and the audience moved from one table to another. The performance started at the table closest to the entrance. One cassette tape was played at each table, and I performed activities at each table while the tape was playing.





### **b) First table**

At the first table, the audience was invited to come closer, each of them receiving a small paper cup which had some pomegranate seeds inside. When I saw that the audience started to eat, I told them that “In Japan, it is said that pomegranate tastes like human’s flesh.” Then I started to play an audio cassette. The recording is about a personal story about insects<sup>7</sup>. While the cassette tape played, I took one seed of pomegranate, held it in front of my face to show it to the audience and stabbed it with a needle. Then I made specimens from pomegranate seeds and peels like some people do with insects. When I finished the specimens, I turned off the audio cassette, rewinded it, and took it out of the player. Then I invited the people to the next table.

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<sup>7</sup> Please see the whole text in the appendix

c) Second table



The second table was covered with a white table cloth. Just like at the first table, I started playing another cassette tape. The recording was about my family histories, several stories were recorded on top of each other, so the audience might pick up some words and sentences but not understand the exact stories.<sup>8</sup> The family histories are about my fathers abuse and the violence I was exposed to and directed at others, his mother's - my grandmother's hard life and the shameful feelings I suffered through as a teenager.

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<sup>8</sup> Please see the appendix for the whole text.



While the cassette was playing, I broke open another pomegranate with my hands and formed a line from pomegranate seeds. After I finished lining them up, I picked one seed with my fingers and held it in front of my face like I did at the first table. When the audience approached the table, I crushed it with my fingers. Then I started to crush the lined seeds with my thumb one by one from the right to the left. But some of them I let survive. When I finished the line, I invited some of the audience members to crush some seeds with their thumb.

At the end of the cassette tape my voice told an anecdote about the American actress Judy Garland. She was born in the same year as my grandfather, who died at the very end of 2021. I informed the audience that both of them were found dead in their bathtub. This was the end of the second audio tape.

I rewinded the recording and took it out as I did at the first table. But then I pulled out the tape from the cassette and put it in my mouth. I took a bite from the rest of

the opened pomegranate to have some juice to help me try to swallow the tape. But in the end I spitted it out on the table.

#### **d) Third table**

The third and last table was also covered with a white table cloth. I played an audio cassette like before, and waited, standing until the recording ended:



“Sometimes I really want to die.

But if I commit suicide, this only happens in other people’s life.

Because I am dead and cannot experience it.

If other people die, this doesn’t happen in their own lives, but it is real for me.

You never know how much time you have left with the people you love.

Time is running out.

I decided to survive to share the very short and precious time left.

So what about suicide without dying?

This way we can experience it together. Let’s try.”

Then the cassette continued playing me whistling and humming the song *Over the Rainbow*<sup>9</sup>, with a distorted sound effect in the beginning and then slowly becoming clearer. I started to ask some audience members to come and stay around the table, I handed them the edge of a plastic cover foil for construction. I went to the table, inside the circle of the helping audience, and asked them to cover me and the table completely with the foil. After they covered me and the table completely, I took a pomegranate from under the table, put it on the table, and smashed it. Then I continued smashing with 4 more pomegranates.

Finally, after I finished, I opened the bubble of plastic foil cover and emerged with a messed up face, painted red by the juice of pomegranates. There was a battlefield of smashed pomegranates and their juice. I invited the audience to eat the seeds.



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<sup>9</sup> Harold, A., E.Y.Harburg. Song by Judy Garland. Over the Rainbow. United States. Leo Feist, Inc. 1939

I said:

*“Now I want to stay with you for a while, to share our precious life times.*

*We can talk about the weather, your family, or the odd haircut of random person, anything.*

*Come outside and join me.”*

Finally, I invited the audience to come outside, where there was a fire which wasn't there when they came in at the beginning. They could stay around the fire or leave as they wanted.

### e) Fire outside



As the audience went out of the gallery, there was a fire outside in front of the entrance, which wasn't there when the audience came to the gallery before the performance started.

The audience was recommended to take a seat around the fire and recieved hot tea. They could stay in the space chatting or whatever else they liked to do around the fire. They also could leave if they wanted to.

## **Thesis Performance: What worked and what didn't.**

Looking back at my final thesis performance on 11th February 2022, I want to investigate what worked and what didn't.

### **a) General set up**

Here are some thoughts about my use of space and its division into three tables and the audience's movement restricted by strings of cassette tapes.

The tape hanging I described in the chapters before was supposed to be a metaphor for how many memories I have and my habit of overthinking them is an obstacle to living a simple, happy life.

And those hanging tapes physically obstructed the audience when they came in and moved around the space. Much like I feel that my memories and thoughts bother other people when I try to open myself up to them for communication. This overthinking often hinders me from communicating with other people.

I guess these hanging tapes worked rather as a device for the audience to move around the space. When I look back I'm sceptical if they could understand those tapes as an image for my memories and thoughts. So I think I would have needed to hang more of them. I was worried that if there had been more tape, it could have been dangerous: it could have been burned by the lighting or made somebody fall down. But maybe I could have found a way to visually increase the amount of tape while keeping the space safe at the same time. Earlier in the process, we used the tapes that were playing live and hung them during the performance to create the image of the hanging tape. Since we lost this action for logistic reasons, it would be



interesting to look for other strategies for creating stronger connections between the hanging tape and the tape played on the recorder.

Also in this performance, I decided to have 3 tables for the audience to move between to create rhythm and repetition, emphasising the different ways of killing pomegranates. These ways of killing are getting bigger from beginning to the end: stabbing with a needle, crushing with fingers, and smashing with a hammer. I think it worked for making the structure simple and helping the audience to follow. But I also wanted to try to construct one continuous story using one long table, but I gave up this ambition for this time because I couldn't generate that brilliant story for spectators to follow. I gave up the first idea to use objects connected to personal memories completely, too. I couldn't connect each object to a different story to create an overall flow.

## **b) First table**

Here, I wanted the pomegranates to metaphorize myself: opening up with blood(juice) dripping, and making specimens of myself to show to the people by tearing off small parts and fixing them with needles. Furthermore, the images of the insects symbolize strong self-hatred. To perform only with object was new status of performing for me. These pomegranates were substitution of me, and my body was less than pomegranate to be myself in a way of performing. This could be an form of expanding acting.

It is a famous idea from *the Metamorphosis* by *Franz Kafka* for a person to become an insect or a creature<sup>10</sup>, but I think that for me the image of (eating) insects and self-harming is rather influenced by a music video, *Tourniquet*(1996), by *Marilyn Manson*<sup>11</sup>. This strong visual image of self-hatred: eating insects was really impressive for me when I was a teenager.

So here, I had planned to unsettle the audience in two ways. One was to tell them that the pomegranates they just started to eat are said to taste like human flesh in Japan. The second one was treating the pomegranates they just ate as if they were insects. The idea to provide pomegranates to the audience for them to eat came from Levin, and I think it could work very well. But while performing I simply forgot to say the part about human flesh at the first table and had to make up for it and say it at the 2nd table.

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<sup>10</sup> Franz, K. *The Metamorphosis*. 8/13/09 ed. United States. Classix Press. 2009. ISBN-10: 1557427666, ISBN-13: 978-1557427663

<sup>11</sup> Marilyn Manson. *Tourniquet*. United States. Nothing rec, Interscope rec. 1997

In this part, the content had not changed much from the first feedback session showing which I describe below. I like the idea as well as the script, and I think it worked. One thing I realize that didn't work too well was that the action of creating specimens was too small and took up too much time for the audience when they saw it in presence at the gallery space.

To resolve the problem of timing, we created some already pre-prepared specimens, and took them out, put them on the table after I pinned and arranged the first few seeds and a piece of peel as specimens.

To resolve the problem of the action being too small, I could have used a live projection for the audience to see it better. I got the equipment and tried to figure it out but I really didn't have enough time to do so. And also if I had projected what happened at this first table, I would have needed to think about what to do with the projection when going on to the other parts.



A bit later after my thesis performance, Arnis Aleinikovas, who also gave me advice when *HSWD* was in progress, collaborated with me on an online version of this first table part. The title was *One dream is over(ODIO)*<sup>12</sup>. My participation in this project was the sound (the insect monologue from *HSWD* and another soundscape), and a live stream of me making the specimens. The latter one was projected onto a big screen on Arnis who was performing, present in the space. And it visually worked quite well. In a situation where there is more time to explore I would like to try using such live projection and make it an organic part of my performance work.

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<sup>12</sup> 26th February 2022, at Kaunas Art Gallery.

### **c) Second table**

I think this was the part where the audience had the most difficulties to understand what I wanted to express. I come to this assumption, because I made my voice recordings overlap each other, so it was difficult to hear what they were about. Furthermore, I didn't actually hang the cassette tape that was played. So I think the audience might have lost the connection between the cassette tapes and my memories and thoughts.

I think is because I wasn't clear enough about what I wanted to do in this part. It was the newest part I generated and fixed at the very last moment.

I called this part "Discipline", or "Audition" when working on it with Levin. I wanted to have the image of violent judgement. This action of crushing the lined pomegranate seeds is a metaphor for the judgement or denial I received from other people, the society I belonged to, and also from myself.

These overlapping stories on the cassette tape recording are about my family history which I will describe briefly here. for full detail, please read these texts in the Appendix.

My grandmother had a hard life, which made my father's childhood hard and his personality complicated, which made the communication in our family tense. My father keeps judging and negating other people without being aware of it. As a result of this, I usually cannot stop judging and negating myself, obsessed that if I am comfortable the people around me are not comfortable. As his child, I felt that I needed to show all of my thoughts and my behavior in front of him to be judged by him if I was right or not until everything was "right".

This feeling also reminds me of other situations in my life, for example the auditions I had as a model and an actor. We went to the place and made lines showing something to be judged.

Other aspects of this part and how I communicated with the audience and used objects worked very well, for example splashing juice by crushing pomegranate seeds and inviting the audience to crush the pomegranate seeds themselves. One of the people I invited told me that she really wanted to crush the seeds already before I invited her and she enjoyed doing it. And the red bloody juice splashed onto the white tablecloths worked as a great material to emphasise the painful and violent mood.

In the end, I pulled out the tape and tried to eat and swallow it, then I spat it out. This is how I feel about my traumatic memories, and also about the harassment and my attempts and failure to cope with them. Besides this metaphoric reading, this action also worked as one event of a continuous process of me getting messier and bloodier throughout the performance.

#### **d) Third table**

I decided to use the song *Over the Rainbow*<sup>13</sup>, after I did an internet search about popular songs to play at a funeral. And I found this song from the movie *The Wizard of Oz*<sup>14</sup>, which I saw on an old videotape when I was a small child, so I decided to use it. My grandfather's death also helped me choose this song: He died after I started to think about using this song, and then I noticed the things he and Judy

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<sup>13</sup> Harold, A., E.Y.Harburg. Song by Judy Garland. Over the Rainbow. United States. Leo Feist, Inc. 1939

<sup>14</sup> Victor, F. *The Wizard of Oz*. United States. 1939

Garland, the singer of this song, have in common: the same birth year and the same death situation.

I wanted to try something like *Clockwork Orange*<sup>15</sup> and *Blue Velvet*<sup>16</sup>, which have violence scenes with calm songs playing (*Singing in the Rain* and *Blue Velvet*). In those movies, these calm songs paradoxically emphasise the violence even more. And I think it is true that the people who are using violence mostly just live their normal life while they are harming other people at the same time. They think that they are doing nothing wrong in being violent and that the victims deserve to get it. A lot of my current self-harm, judging myself and denying myself things, goes back to experiences earlier in my life, when literally any behavior from me could have triggered a violent response, so till today, I am keeping those harmful habits, even though there is no threat of violent punishment from the outside anymore. This self-harming thinking makes me consider to commit suicide although I'm having a quite ordinary, happy life and I'm not displaying any strange behavior. So the song seemed like a good connection between the topic I was working on and the aesthetic principles from the movies mentioned above.

Another thing is that they are old songs, which remind some people of their good old days. Some of them, especially people who would have had more power in the old society, believe that we should live our lives like these "good old days". Often, those old memories are distorted, misremembered, and glorified. And these people can be very violent.

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<sup>15</sup> Stanley, K. *Clockwork Orange*. 1971

<sup>16</sup> David, L. *Blue Velvet*. 1986

So I decided to play this song while extensively smashing pomegranates.



How the objects worked here.

In this part there was the most action of the performance.

I asked the audience to cover me with a big plastic sheet, usually used for renovating and painting. This idea came when trying to smash pomegranates without ruining the wall of gallery space. During the rehearsals, pomegranate seeds and juice flew higher and farther than we expected, so they stained the wall and spoiled it. It was very hard to clean them off. We tried to cover all the walls but this didn't work aesthetically. Then we came up with the idea to cover me when I do the smashing. What I like about this solution is that the audience sees the pomegranate seeds hitting this half-transparent sheet, making a sound and splashing red juice onto it like in a scene from a B horror movie. And when I came out from inside after smashing, I was completely covered in "blood". From this I learned that problems in



rehearsal can be solved with new objects that became an organic part of the performance.

Concerning the space, we disliked all the walls covered with the plastic foils. But we covered the wall partially. We wanted to foreshadow that something interesting might happen later, hoping the audience would speculate about the purpose of the foil already when entering the space. And still it fulfilled its original purpose: protecting the beautiful white wall.

#### **e) Fire outside**

I came up with the idea of using fire when I realised I needed to change the whole plan for my final thesis project. So in the first step of this project, I chose *Jedna, Dva, Tri Gallery* because they provided the possibility of having a fire. There were not many places that allowed the use of fire.

But within the course of rehearsing, I decided against the objects I had planned to burn in the first place, so there was no need of having a fire for the carrying out of the performance anymore.

In the end I decided to keep the fire as a metaphor for life. When the audience saw the fire and were served a cup of tea as they came out of the gallery, they seemed to be confused at first. But some of them decided to stay with me at the fire.

And when the fire was dying out, one member of the audience asked me if there was more wood to make the fire burn longer. I loved this moment because I felt it was like our lives. They start to burn without our awareness, and then disappear just when we want more.

### **Summerize: What I learned from final thesis performance**

In summary, from this Thesis Presentation showing I made several realisations about the use of objects, space, personal experience and dramaturgy in creating this devised performance:

About using objects I found that:

I need more cassette tape strings to get the audience to understand the metaphor.

White table cloth is nice to see the juice of pomegranate, crushing the seeds on it also works.

To make the audience feel the pomegranates, taste them, be splashed by their juice etc. works very well and has a lot of potential to play with.

To perform with pomegranates as a substitution of my body was new expanded form of performing for me. It was also good to concentrate physical doing instead of getting too emotional.

About using space, I found that:

To have three tables gave good structure and rhythm to the performance. It made the audience expect that at least 3 things will happen. And there is potential to play with the audience's expectation.

About personal emotions, I found that:

I learned that time and practice are needed to communicate a personal emotional experience to an audience. I would have needed more try and error to bluish up the

text. By layering too many personal emotional experiences on the second voice recording, I might have confused the audience.

About dramaturgy, I found that:

The connection of an experience, clearly marked as part of a performance (all the actions happening at the tables) and an experience that seems like something happening after the performance (the gathering around the fire at the end) is hard to make and can confuse the audience. They didn't know when to clap or when to turn from an audience into themselves again. At the same time, this was a great way to connect the themes and topics of the performances to our everyday lives. I tried to create a real live experience with the people who were in the audience: I tried to have a chat with them, about just anything, as I told them at the third table. I would be interested to investigate this interweaving of performance and real life further as a dramaturgical device.

In the next sections I would like to return to earlier showings of the project to make clear what I learned at each stage.

## **Performance: Development of the project**

### **Description of the performance. first feedback session**

The feedback sessions are showings of work in progress to teachers and other students to receive feedback to improve the project further. Usually students have several feedback sessions before the final performance.

My performance for this first feedback session took place in R102 at DAMU, on 20th Jan 2022.

When the audience came to the space, each of them was handed a piece of black ribbon with stickers on it. They could stick it on their clothes. They were invited to have a seat in front of the stage. I started to play the cassette tape of the insect script (I'm including the whole insect script in appendix at the end of this thesis), while making the pomegranate specimens. After the tape repeated the insect text for the third time, I took the cassette tape out from the player and started to pull out the tape from within. After I pulled it out, I put the tape into my mouth and tried to swallow it until I ended up spitting it out. Then I started to play the song *Over the Rainbow* sung by Judy Garland from my phone and tried to start dancing to it but instead of dancing I told the audience that "I really want to dance but I can't since I'm not good at it."

Then suddenly I told a story about my grandfather who had just died 20 days before the presentation. I placed objects I bought at the flea market right in front of me, creating a map of my grandparents house. All of the objects looked old and used, as

if they were connected to many personal memories. My grandfather was found dead in the bathtub on the night of the 31st of December 2022, the police came into the house to investigate, while the warm New Year's feast my aunt cooked stood ready on the kitchen table.

### **What worked, what didn't work. What I learned from the First Presentation**

As I started with some ideas that I came up with each step in the working process, the work changed a lot during the practical rehearsals with actual objects. My ideas often didn't work out as I expected them to do and I also made some surprising findings during rehearsals that I included while going further into the process.

As I mentioned in the introduction, I needed to develop and realise the project in 2 months and 17 days. First, I decided to do it just by myself. In the initial idea, I wanted to create a situation imitating a mixture of a court and a funeral ceremony. I had to give up this idea to perform the show alone. I was thinking of using personal objects connected to my personal memories of being judged and giving them a funeral ceremony. Then I thought about burning some personal stuff I strongly connect memories to. I was strongly attracted by the great power of fire, but looking back I now think this was not too realistic.

I was trying to collect my own personal objects. And there were 3 problems. Firstly, there is a similar religious ritual in Japan called *Otakiage*<sup>17</sup>, and I didn't want the performance to be too religious. In my country, animism is very pervasive. We take for granted that inorganic objects, especially when they are aged with humans,

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<sup>17</sup>Please see the glossary for an explanation.

have souls. So my idea of a funeral for personal objects related to already existing practices in *Otakiage*.

Secondly, I noticed that it is very difficult to let spectators think that the objects deserved to be destroyed. I was struggling to make the audience follow my analogy about the personal stuff, representing a person itself, deserving to be destroyed. Generally people don't have suicidal tendencies and therefore might not understand this need of destroying.

The third problem was that the collection I made from my personal stuff didn't aesthetically look good. I wanted to send the materials from Japan, but it takes more than 1 month for them to arrive. So I needed to use something else that already is here in Prague. I decided to get some substitute materials from a flea market in Prague. It is so paradoxical that I aimed to reduce my personal stuff in Japan and concluded to gain more stuff which is even just substitution of my trash without the connection to personal memories.

I started working with 3 things:

1. Making some scripts and memos to figure out what I wanted to express in this project.
2. I made some internet research about key words I dealt with at the moment, like funeral, fire, death, suicide and abuse, etc.
3. Collecting objects which I was going to perform with.

And these strategies also influenced each other.

Concerning the script, at the very beginning, I came up with an insect script<sup>18</sup> which was part of the project from the very first rehearsal to the final performance.

And I got the idea to make specimens with pomegranates which are said to taste like human flesh, in Japan. I imagined it would be great that the juice looks like blood. And in the second shopping at the flea market I found a shop which was only selling pomegranates. Then I decided to start working with them.

Every weekend I went to the flea market, which is only open on weekends. And I started to collect the objects. Actually I didn't have a very concrete shopping list, so it was very spontaneous and intuitive shopping. And it was too cold and sometimes rainy or snowy to stay there longer and also the shops closed early when the weather was bad. I think if I had taken more time to figure out the shopping list, or it wasn't in the winter, the project could have been very different: All these situations made me choose poor substitutions of very precious things that they could never reach up to.

At the very end of the year, just after the first rehearsal of this project, my grandfather suddenly passed away. I had just said goodbye to him in a very good mood less than one month ago. Nobody expected it because he was very healthy. The black ribbons I gave to the audience were meant as an invitation for a funeral and for me connected very much to my grandfather's death, even though they were already part of the initial idea.

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<sup>18</sup>Please see this text in the appendix

It cost me a lot of energy, both emotionally and physically. There were many practical things to be managed by me concerning the funeral. My brain was occupied and paralyzed with the incident.

So in the first feedback session on 19th of January, I showed the first part with the pomegranate specimens and playing the audio cassette of the insect's monologue and the second part was just telling my grandfather's story in the end of the year with the fake personal stuff I was collecting from the flea market, placed into the shape of my grandparent's house.

After the performance, I received feedback and comments and a great dramaturg. Levin Eichert joined the project. He was one of my schoolmates from when I first came to Prague.

There was a lot of feedback on the project. People seemed interested in the topic and encouraged me to develop it further.

They were confused about why I used the specific objects when I told the story about my grandfather's death. They asked about the history of the objects, and the stores behind them.

The topic of my grandfather's death seemed to get the spectators confused because it just very recently happened and was too heavy and sensitive, too difficult to comment on. I was afraid of violating the audience by exposing them to my unfiltered emotions and thoughts connected to his death, so I needed to be more careful.

#### Summary : What I learned from first feedback session

What I learned about using objects:



Pomegranates were very fascinating objects as a metaphor of a vulnerable human being, they bleed when they get hurt, they “taste like human’s flesh”, and their size and shape is like a baby's head. Pomegranate’s seeds were fascinating too.

They look like small creatures, they also bleed when they are “killed”.

Concerning the objects I wanted to create connections to personal memories with, I came to the conclusion that when they look new, it's hard for the audience to associate them with the topic of memories and the past, it just looks dull.

What I learned about using space:

It didn't work to the actions in this first showing session on a stage, separated from the audience. Especially the pomegranate specimens were too small to be seen from where the audience was seated. I tried to make a live projection to magnify them, but I technically failed.

What I learn about using personal emotional experiences;

It takes time to generate idea and figure out how I want to realise it. Thoughts also needs break to refresh my brain.

It was not good to use the story about my grandfather's death. It was a topic too heavy and new and therefore difficult to comment on for other people. To force the audience to watch something that they don't have a space to react to can be a violent situation for them.

What I learned about dramaturgy;

I didn't learn so much about dramaturgy at this stage of the project. I was more concerned with generating material and planned on reflecting on an overall structure in later stages of the process.

### **Description of the performance. of *Process 021* Version**

After the first feedback, I had a showing for a school festival called *Proces*, where student's works are programmed. It took place at DAMU in R202, on 31st. Jan 2022.



In the version of *Proces*, I used one working table and another long table for displaying the fake personal objects as scenography. The beginning of the performance hadn't changed much since the showing before: I was making pomegranate specimens while the tape played the insect script three times.

But I skipped the story about my grandfather's death. Instead of this, I hung cassette tapes all around the space.



After playing the insect script, I exchanged the cassette for another tape with a recording of stories about my family's history (see appendix), one told after another. While this 2nd tape was playing, I hung the 1st one. When I finished with the first one, I took out the second cassette and hung its tape. At the same time, I spoke a monologue (see appendix) about suicide. After I finished hanging the tape hanging, I continued with some actions:

Squeezing juice from a pomegranate and writing a letter with the juice. I made a small explanation for each fake personal object and hung them into the cassette tape web. I smashed a pomegranate, bit out a big piece of it. Then I cleaned off the juice that had splashed everywhere while the song *Over the Rainbow* sung by *Judy Garland* played.

After this I played a second version of the song, *Somewhere over the rainbow* by *Israel Kamakawiwo'ole*<sup>19</sup>. While moving through the space I need to raise my legs up high and duck down with my head to avoid getting stuck in the web of tape, which made me dance. Then I wrapped my body into the strings of the web but kept dancing until I couldn't move anymore. Finally, I took a pair of scissors to cut the tape off my body and the space, to free myself. I gather all the hung objects and pieces of the cut tape into a wooden box. This was the end of the performance in *Proces*.

### **What worked, what didn't work. What I learned from the Presentation at Process**

I started working with Levin. It made going forward with this project much easier. He helped me to make my idea clear and to organize the material gathered already and helped me figure out how to proceed. He was really patient and never gave up on exactly understanding what was in my mind. He also brought great ideas and inspiration to this project such as hanging the tape etc., and helped with practical stuff such as lighting, sound and transportation. Working with him and the necessity to schedule together also created a working rhythm which I appreciated very much. A constant threat for the joint rehearsal process was the situation of COVID19 in the Czech Republic. Many students caught it and sometimes I and Levin also had slight symptoms like fever, requiring PCR tests and postponing rehearsals although we didn't get it before the final performance.

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<sup>19</sup> [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel\\_Kamakawiwo%27ole](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Kamakawiwo%27ole)

First, I wanted explore more possibilities and expand the content. We wanted to think more about using the cassette tape as a material, so we started to hang it in the room. We attached the cassette tape to different items in the room thus weaving a big net out of it all through the room. This worked great for us visually but we also liked its metaphorical dimension: The memories recorded on the tape created physical obstacles to me as a performer in the room as do the memories in my head to my real life.

We then explored the potential of the space filled with the web made from cassette tapes. I started to move through this restricted space and tried to figure out how to dance in it, since this was an idea I wanted to do from the start of the rehearsal process. When I went through this metaphoric image of my memories I was struggling, had to duck down or step over a string. In some way the web created a choreography for me. The memories force me to dance when I go through them, which is an experience I also have in my life sometimes.

Suicide thoughts come up for me, when I feel too restricted from my memories. I tried out to express this by wrapping myself into the strings and take the whole web down until all of it was wrapped around my body and I couldn't really move anymore. Another approach of working with the web was to cut it with a pair of scissors. When I cut the first string, all the tension would go out from the web. The strings that had been straight in the hair started to sag loose. I continued to cut all the strings until I could move freely through the room again.

We also tried hanging the old objects from the flea market on these strings of tape, experimenting with images and the objects themselves.

### Summary: What I learned from the performance at *Proces 021*

What I learned about using objects:

The tape hanging around the space took too much time, especially if done all by myself and during performance. The same goes for the pomegranate specimens. I couldn't figure out how to make it more tight or overlap it with other things.

The objects connected to personal memory became less connected to the whole structure of the performance. The various forms and textures of the objects themselves were confusing and in disharmony with the other parts of the project.

In the same way the small actions e.g. drawing with juice, hanging objects, cutting the tape, didn't work. There were too many loose ends pointing in different directions, taking away the focus of the aspects I cared about.

In opposition to this, cleaning the space messed with pomegranate juice every time (after creating the specimens, after smashing, ...) was a nice action to metaphorise obsession and nervousness.

What I learned about using space:

I chose to use one big table since I wanted to try one big story: a continuous structure. But this didn't work. I think the structure wasn't coherent enough.

The audience didn't come closer to me to see the small things like the specimens. I think it is difficult for them to decide to stand up and move around once they take a seat in the beginning.

What did you learn about using personal emotional experience?

Some people read this performance as a therapy for myself, which made me sad and confused.

The book *Art Spirits* by Robert Henri<sup>20</sup> encouraged me. He says:

“I cannot interest myself in whether they will pass juries or not. More paintings have been spoiled during the process of their making, through such considerations, than the judgements of juries are worth. [...] The object, which is back of every true work of art, is *the attainment of a state of being*, a state of high functioning, a more than ordinary moment of existence.”

Therefore I noticed that I cannot be interested in making “art” ignoring my truth and just exploring the majority's truth.

Though if they felt that my performance was some kind of therapy then there is a truth to that I should not ignore. I regret that I wasn't brave enough to ask why exactly they felt that way. And I am interested in their work, for when they call my work therapeutic, I am curious to see what non therapeutic art looks like. I'd like to see and research their work to expand my point of view.

What did you learn about dramaturgy?

It is really great to work with a dramaturg, another person who I can trust. It is always great to have eyes and a mind from the outside that are not my own, which I think a dramaturg can be.

On the structural level of dramaturgy, I learned that the recording was too long and personal, which made the performance dull and over-saturated. The monologue I spoke while I was hanging the tape also didn't work. I liked the text but it is better for

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<sup>20</sup> Robert, H. *The Art Spirit*. English ed. United States: Dover Publication, 2019. 159 p. ISBN 0486826732

reading than telling. And also, it was too long after the already long recording from cassette tape. I realised that I need to organise all the information I wanted to get across to the audience in a different way so as not to bore the audience and keep them focused.



## **Context of the artist, why and how DAMU**

I started to study acting through workshops by film directors in Japan. Some of them were quite good advisors, but mostly they were not good or even terrible acting teachers who never studied acting themselves. Later I noticed that those weren't acting workshops even though they clearly stated the opposite, they actually were auditions without the guarantee to pick any of the actors but to gather big amounts of money from every one of the 20-100 participants. They had the students play some scenes and they just told them whatever they felt, whether they liked it, hated it, how they thought the scenario should be understood, or they told the students they are too fat, beautiful, ugly, old, and anything else they felt. This year, in 2022, accusations for sexual assaults and harrasments were made against some famous movie directors and actors.<sup>21</sup> The first accusations were widespread and soon provoked other ones. It finally became recognized as a major issue and is being featured in the news every day now in April 2022 in Japan. Since I started to work as a model and actress, there have always been these kinds of violations everywhere without it being regarded as a serious problem. I even met one of the accused movie directors. I really appreciate that these problems have become apparent and have finally been regarded as problems. These situations made me very frustrated and I decided to change the way of studying acting.

Then I found an acting studio, UPS Academy, established by Yoko Narahashi. They teach method acting based on Sanford Meisner's<sup>22</sup> technique. Thinking back to this moment, this acting studio was weird as well. Some of the teachers put so much pressure on the students from the very beginning, even in the warming up and

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<sup>21</sup> <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20220406/p2g/00m/0et/061000c>

<sup>22</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanford\\_Meisner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanford_Meisner)

during relaxing exercises. Once a male teacher came to me from behind, grabbed my shoulder, shook me and yelled that I was doing it wrong, that I was the student who had the most serious problem, while I was trying a “relaxation exercise”. I didn’t know anything about acting, so I thought their style of teaching was normal but now I realize it wasn’t. I felt that they were still practicing the old army training way even in teaching acting. (The most popular play produced by this company of the acting studio is the Winds of God, which is about Japanese Kamikaze suicide pilots in WWII.) But I also have to mention that this kind of rigorous education is still practised in many areas of Japanese society.

I was struggling to improve my skills, so I visited many places. I found Ivana Chubbuck<sup>23</sup> method too. I went to a workshop which was held in Japan as well as in the USA. I liked it. Ivana is a film acting coach in Hollywood who I got to know in 2017. In her method, we try to connect each sentence or word of the scenario to a similar experience of our own. This experience should be motivated by a similar object of desire as the character one plays. This object should be connected to fundamental human needs such as love, power, survival, etc. And we need to win said object from the acting partner.<sup>24</sup> I learned how to work with my private emotional history for acting. These emotional experiences also found their way into my first project in DAMU, *Situations*.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.ivanachubbuck.com/>  
<https://www.stagemilk.com/a-guide-to-the-ivana-chubbuck-method/#:~:text=The%20Overall%20Objective%2C%20refers%20to,support%20of%20the%20overall%20objective>.

<sup>24</sup> Ivana, C. *the Power of the Actor*. Reprint ed. USA : Avery, 2005. ISBN-10 : 1592401538 ISBN-13 : 978-1592401536

While wandering around, visiting various workshops, I also met an actor who I would call my acting mentor, Hiro Tsuchiyama. He used to be an assistant of Bobby Nakanishi<sup>25</sup>, an acting coach from Neighbourhood Playhouse in NY. He had also intensively researched method acting, other acting theories and practices, as well as many playwrights and he could provide broader teaching than the school. He taught me about Jacques Lecoq, Peter Brook, Stella Adler, John Patric Shanly, Dario Fo, and many other artists to help me improve my acting. Then finally I started to learn what performing is - something beyond “just acting”.

When I went to a theatre called theater X(cai) to see a performance by Hiro Tsuchiyama, I found out about the upcoming workshop from Yumi Hayashi and Antonin Silar who graduated from DAMU. I have mentioned that I was interested in studying abroad, so Antonin Silar introduced me to the MA DOT program at DAMU.

I wanted to move out of the Japanese context and to other countries in the search of a sense of generosity. Once Hiro Tsuchiyama told me that what I most need to acquire as an actor is “Faith<sup>26</sup>”. I didn’t understand completely what he meant but I think it was about strong and objective will power based on trust for myself and other people. He also told me that to start working as an actor in Japan is very difficult for most actors. The famous actors are strongly privileged as celebrities, but non famous actors are very easily harassed morally and sexually. Generally I am proud of my cultural roots from Japan, but also this society comes with a very high tension of peer pressure. We tend to evaluate ourselves not by ourselves but by the reputation from other people. I wanted to improve my artistic potential somewhere people would

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<sup>25</sup> <https://bobbynact.com/instructor>

<sup>26</sup> Please see the glossary.

treat me with respect and humanity even if I'm not famous or extremely skilled. I needed to be allowed to make more failures to acquire "Faith".

### **Context from studying at DAMU**

I appreciated my experience at DAMU. There were no violence or sexual assaults (in my department, as far as I know). I found an environment which allowed me to concentrate on what I wanted to try. In the classes, there was a nice atmosphere welcoming failure. We were encouraged to make and share practical experiments with our schoolmates, even if these ideas were not very elaborate yet and still just in progress. If someone showed an idea at that stage in Japan, the teacher might get very angry and accuse the student of not completing the task.

It was also great that I could join some projects from other people in DAMU. I joined more than 5 projects and made 1 project by myself in my first year at DAMU.

The first project I experienced was *Ceremony*<sup>27</sup> by Wayne Jordan who was a 2nd year student. His idea of sharing a ritualistic experience as a performance was very new and inspiring for me. The idea of doing some ritualistic actions in *HSWD* is strongly influenced by the experience I had working on this project.

The other influencing performance was *Rockets and Bombs*<sup>28</sup> from Tinka Avramova. Since her project was more about the performers ourselves rather than her as a director, I explored my own performative potential with the help from Tinka in ways I have never tried before, e.g. physical movement. And each of us performers had a

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.kdykde.cz/calendar/kdykde/2245419-the-ceremony-divadlo-disk> , <https://miljanvuletic.tumblr.com/post/627637265508843520>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.divadlodisk.cz/repertoar/rockets-and-bombs-identity-series-18>

part for personal storytelling. Although I couldn't use it in my thesis project, working on *Rockets and Bombs* was an important experience where I learned about dynamic communication with other performers. Body work and physical movement let me forget my self consciousness and helped me concentrate on the things happening outside of my body. In the last two years I forgot about these experiences but I want to revive them for my future work.



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I also made my own project. It was the very first project I directed in my life. The title was *Shitutions*, and it was presented in *Proces 016* on 29th May 2019, at DAMU. Before the show I prepared “edible shit” (e.g. a brown paste made from potatoes and mushrooms) displayed for the audience to see when entering. In the show, I further

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<sup>29</sup> Picture from performance *Shitutions*

processed this edible shit into nice looking dishes (e.g. using the potato mushroom paste as the base for a sauce, cooking it together with other vegetables) while I told a story about a personal shitty experience, and then I provided the audience with the cooked result to eat. I enjoyed that most of the people were excited about the shit as if they were small children. The final title *Situations* was suggested to me by Howard Lotker with an innocent smile and I liked it. Usually I am a stubborn person and want to make everything by myself. But I liked this suggested title very much. Furthermore, the idea to make edible shit was introduced to me by Sodja Lotker. The structures of *Situations* and *HSWD* are actually quite similar. Both of them have 3 parts, and in each part, I tell personal stories while conducting repetitive actions. From these experiences and my own work on my thesis project especially, I think I can say that in addition to learning about devising performance, my possibilities as an actor have expanded a lot. I have gone far beyond “just acting”: using my own personal emotional experience to bring some character to life. Now, I have had the chance to explore my relation to objects, how to use and adapt to available stage space, how to organize time and events during a performance, how to collaborate with others on devising, and how to put personal emotional experience to work as an author, or co-devisor, of performance that is exploring themes that are truly important to me.

### Context of working from Japan during lockdown

I went back to Japan after studying one year at DAMU because of problems with the *nostrifikace*<sup>30</sup> of my past studies. Then the COVID19 pandemic broke out. I was locked into Japan for more than 2 years eventually.

During lockdown in Japan around the years 2020 and 2021, I could join some classes and projects online.

During these years, the person I worked with the most was Arnis Aleinikovas. I joined his performances *PULSE*<sup>31</sup> and *Fragmented Realities*<sup>32</sup>. He was my classmate in 2020 at DAMU. His diverse work impressed me very much: he works with body movement, sound, and visuals. I respect his way of communicating with other creative people. He is very good at making people concentrate and compositing individual contributions into a great joint outcome. In *PULSE* I explored my traumatic experiences and made some videos. I also did a performing part where I interacted with the audience in a ZOOM breakout room. First, I moved my hand in synchrony with the audience, mirroring each other. Then we negotiated to touch a part of our own bodies together. When our hands touched one body part eg. our ears, I told them a very impressive memory of being touched at that part of my body (my mother cleaned my ear when I was small and once she dropped some earwax deep into my ear and it was hard to get it out). It was interesting to be screen to screen and still trying to connect with our bodies. The topic of exploring traumatic experiences also influenced me to work on my suicidal ideation in HSWD.

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<sup>30</sup> Please see the glossary for explanation of this term, often translated simply as *diploma nostrification*.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.divadlodysk.cz/repertoar/pulse-65>

<sup>32</sup> <https://tootoot.fm/en/events/5fc7fa10cc7d4812d06c7fb0>

Furthermore, I worked online with Debora Stysova and Tinka Avramova in 30 *Dni*<sup>33</sup>. This project started in 2019 when I was still in Prague. They kept me in the project even when I had to leave for Japan. It was about the consular problems of foreigners in Czech Republic, so I think my participation did quite make sense. I joined through a small laptop screen on zoom, which made me look even pathetic and miserable. I had a monologue about why I couldn't be in the show live with the audience. My working with people in the Czech Republic was limited to working only online, but it was really nice that I could continue this creative work.

I think I couldn't have come up with the idea of the pomegranate specimens if I hadn't done these online works. After working online for 2 years, I think I got used to working in the frame of a camera or a flat PC screen so I forgot about my body as a creative tool.

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.divadelni-noviny.cz/immigrants-lives-matter>



## Conclusion: What I learned from this project

So after my great starting year at DAMU, two hard years of remote studies from Japan, so far away from my classmates and instructors because of the pandemic, diploma equivalency problems, and this rushed final year to create a thesis performance and write this thesis, what have I learned in sum?

Hereinafter, I will summarize what I learned about using objects, space, personal emotional experience and dramaturgy through the process of creating and analyzing my final performance, but first of all I want to say:

I learned that it takes time to generate an idea or theme and to work with it. I now know that I need time to figure out why and how I want to realise it. And I can only come to a sufficient idea once I start working with it for a while with objects and people, not just in a theoretical way. I also need time to have breaks to refresh my mind to go deeper in the next trial. And it's important not to care too much about comments I receive, especially in the beginning of the project, because neither I nor the spectators doesn't understand enough about what I want at this point. I shouldn't be dependent on the audience. I should not discard my own *highest vision in the process*<sup>34</sup>.

I think I started to understand the "Faith"<sup>35</sup>. I need to affirm myself as a living human body, nothing more, and to accept simply what I feel. The body is an object. To think good or bad about what my body feels as one object fundamentally doesn't make sense, it is simply a fact. And to work with objects helps me feel my simple, clear

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<sup>34</sup> David, B., Ted, O., *ART&FEAR: OBSERVATION ON THE PERILS(AND REWARDS) OF ARTMAKING:1*. 1st ed. United States. 2001. 125p. ISBN 978-0961454739

<sup>35</sup> Please see the glossary for detailed information.

position, free from delusion. Other people are other objects with their own simple, clear positions.

### **What I learned about using objects in devising performance:**

Working with objects helps me to make projects go forward. I will definitely be stuck when I try to find out what I want only in my mind. Objects can be a tool to reflect my thoughts in a visible way and help my imagination to be stronger.

Secondly, they help me to communicate with other people I am working with.

To work with objects and other people sometimes can change the theme and topic which I aimed for through interaction.

It was an interesting experience to perform only with objects and without other performers. Especially in the final thesis performance, the object pomegranates were more alive than me. They were an acting partner for me and at the same time they were an extension of my body. I was performed through an “objectified self” just as an operator. This was a strange status walking at the border between performer and operator. And it was nice because I could actually “kill” the object instead of my real body.

### **What I learned about using space:**

It required a different strategy to perform in the same space with the audience instead of performing online through a screen. I need to consider the size of the objects and actions, and also the time to do it when I perform in front of a physically present audience. When performing on a screen I can neglect these aspects.

I noticed that I can play with the audience through how the space is set up. The layout of the space makes the audience guess what will happen. There was also the possibility to play with the audience's expectations.

**What I learned about using personal emotional experience:**

I want to try to express the dissonant emotions inside of me caused by harmful violent communication I have experienced in my life, which exist invisibly in my very normal appearing life: I feel like dying while I am regarded as a happy person. This project may sometimes have created failure which might have confused people sometimes, but I decided to stick with it and with my "Faith".

**What I learned about dramaturgy:**

It was a very precious experience to work with a dramaturg who I could really trust. This helped me to figure out where to go. We came up with great ideas and made big steps together. It expanded my creativity and made me enjoy the whole project. And this experience itself feeds into my Faith.

# Glossary

## *Otakiage*<sup>36</sup>

These are Japanese cremation rituals for old divine charms, objects such as old dolls which are thought to have developed their own souls as they age based on animistic thoughts, but also belongings of dead people such as an old cursed ring. Such rituals are held in Shinto shrines.

## *Nostrifikace*

Sometimes translated simply as *diploma nostrification*, in this context this Czech academic term means "The process or act of granting recognition to a degree from a foreign university."<sup>37</sup> Another possible translation might be *diploma recognition*.<sup>38</sup>

## *Silkworm*

Silkworms are the caterpillars of the silk moth *Bombyx mori*, cultivated by humans to produce silk fibre. This is the only species of animals which cannot live without human's help. It is completely dependent on humans for its reproduction because of millennia of selective breeding<sup>39</sup>. In the insect text played while I was preparing the

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.iromegane.com/society/otakiage-burning-talisman/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nostrification>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombyx\\_mori#:~:text=The%20silkworm%20is%20the%20larva,and%20even%20the%20osage%20orange.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombyx_mori#:~:text=The%20silkworm%20is%20the%20larva,and%20even%20the%20osage%20orange.)

pomegranate specimens in the performance, I describe how I once ate a silkworm.

Please find the complete text in the appendix.

### *Faith*

Complete trust or confidence in someone or something which is invisible. Hiro

Tsuchiyama, who was my acting mentor in Japan once told me that I need to acquire strong Faith to improve my acting.

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## Appendix

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### Text materials used for the final graduation piece

1. Insect monologue in the first table (used at all the performance)

*Hi, I'm here.*

*Do you know me?*

*I think yes, but actually, sometimes I feel you don't, even if you're one of my best friends.*

*I am here.*

*Do you remember what you collected when you were a small child?*

*Children have their own collections.*

*For example, one of my sisters was collecting stones. Normal stones are like what you can find anywhere, but she had her taste and was committed to find a particular shape or touch or whatever she liked.*

*Another sister was collecting wood sticks.*

*They were crying when our mama suggested to reduce their collections.*

*And, me, I was collecting insects, or some small creatures and plants.*

*It was summer, I was 5 years old, I was trying to collect tadpoles, which are the babies of frogs.*

*My mother was super annoyed because she was scared of frogs.*

*So she set them free secretly when she saw their legs came out.*

*Cicadas, snails, grasshoppers, ladybugs, roly-poly bugs,  
azalea blossoms, morning glory flowers, balloon vine seeds, four o'clock seeds,  
Have you eaten insects?*

*I have.*

*grasshoppers, of course,  
and a scorpion,  
and a silkworm<sup>40</sup>.*

*A silkworm is the baby of a moth. They produce silk fiber when they make a cocoon.*

*I ate one which was sleeping in a cocoon.*

*It was deep-fried.*

*It was sweet and creamy.*

*I am made of insects.*

*All my body, my skin, my voices, tears, blood, I feel they are cockroaches.*

*Cockroaches are everywhere which is disgusting.*

*But not in Prague, I know.*

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<sup>40</sup> For more about the meaning of silkworms, please see the Glossary



*So I'm the only cockroach in Prague maybe.*

*I'm ashamed of continuing to be until today.*

*but I'm here.*

## *2. Family history text 1(used from Proces)*

*When I was 8, one day somebody asked me what I wish for the future, and I still remember there's nothing I truly wished for other than that my families lives and is happy.*

*Especially, my mother.*

*I kept making one wish everyday, " Please, god, please never ever take my mother away from me." Until it became useless.*

*Until when I was around 8years old, my father was a rather calm and humorous person, but time after time he became very aggressive and developed a short temper.*

*My father often got angry, yelled at me, my sisters and our mother.*

*Like hours and hours.*

*Once it lasted for 7hours with all of us kneeling on the floor, and in the end he said " All of you took my time for so long in spite of that I have to go to work today in 2hours! You all are parasites!"*

*Well, but that's kind of how Japanese men in his age are!*

*His will is good and he really believes he's doing it for us.*

*When I was 11yrs old, my family had a puppy.*

*We got her on the 26th of January.*

*She was so adorable and charming.*

*She liked to spent her time with her family so when somebody wasn't there, she always waited at the head of the stairs until the wood floor was worn down because of it. She waited so much for all of us.*

*But she was also a bit aggressive and nervous sometimes.*

*Now I think it was not because of her nature, but because of the way we treated her.*

*I thought it was good discipline to punish her sometimes. I even learned from the book, that it is necessary to hit the dog sometimes.*

*But now I know that I abused her.*

### *3. Family history text 2(used from Proses)*

*Grandmother, My father's mother was born in a rich family. She was a doctor. It was very rare for a woman to be a doctor in her generation.*

*She was 12years older than her husband. She had a child with him.*

*They already agreed to divorce, and grandfather went back to his hometown to inherit his family business.*

*But the woman who was supposed to be his new wife had a family who had Leprosy. Then grand father's parents asked grandmother to come to their house to help them to prevent the new marriage. There was still a very strong discrimination against the disease.*

*Then my grandmother threw everything away except her son and went there although everyone around her tried to stop her.*

*But then grandfather went away to his new family.*

*My grand mother worked so hard from the early mornings until late at night for grandfather's family business without being paid despite the fact that her step parents had more than enough money. She and her son were living so poorly and isolated. She was struggling to buy their own food. They even didn't have a bath so they needed to visit the neighbours to ask to bath every few days.*

*My father also told the story from his childhood that one day he found his mother having dinner alone in dark, sitting on the cold dirt floor of the kitchen while all relatives enjoyed a dinner party in the warm dinning room. She wasn't allowed to*

*join. My father felt very guilty since he was also having fun on the lap of his grandfather just a few moments before.*

*When grandmother died grandfather tried to betray his son to get the property and insurance money she tried to inherit to her son.*

#### *4. Family history text 3(Used from proces)*

*I used to want to die at the age of 27.*

*But I can't die until I delete all of the notebooks in which I wrote poems or illustrations or anything embarrassing when I was young.*

*Last year, I had a bit of time to organise my room in my parent's house, so I secretly disposed these " art works" finally.*

*And of course I didn't die at that age.*

*but my mother died in that year.*

*I noticed it recently.*

*I actually don't remember so much about how I passed my 27th year except this loss.*

#### *5. Suicide monologue*

*Sometimes I really want to die.*

*But if I commit suicide, this only happens in other people's life.*

*Because I am dead and cannot experience it.*

*If other people die, this doesn't happen in their own lives, but it is real for me.*

*You never know how much time you have left with the people you love.*

*Time is running out.*

*I decided to survive to share the very short and precious time left.*

*So what about suicide without dying?*

*This way we can experience it together.*

*Let's try.*

*6. In the end: invitation to the fire*

*Now I want to stay with you for a while, to share our precious life times.*

*We can talk about the weather, your family, or the odd haircut of random person, anything.*

*Come outside and join me.*

**Text materials not used in the final graduation piece**

*1. Suicide monologue (used in the Proces)*

*This is real.*

*I think my suicide cannot be my reality.*

*I can never see myself dead.*

*I can never know my own death.*

*I can't ensure my own death.*

*Even if I try to commit suicide, I will never know if I make it or not.*

*I could wake up in the hospital after I survive a suicide attempt.*

*But when I lost somebody who I really wanted to be alive, this reality hit me stronger than my imaginal suicide and destroyed my life physically.*

*Suicide is a fantasy.*

*Suicide is an image.*

*Suicide is an obsession.*

*It will never destroy my life physically because my life is not continuing after my death.*

*These harsh realities are passing by so fast and don't ever wait for me.*

*Realities always come on time but without appointment.*

*I'm so scared.*

*Babies are naturally born to try their best to survive even if they don't have anything than their own lives.*

*Then why do I want to die sometimes.*

*Since I am old enough, I really enjoy some conversations which actually don't have any important information.*

*It is sunny today, it is cold today, which are the flowers of this season, the food somewhere was so delicious, the friend of somebody had a haircut...*

*nobody wants to hear this kind of thing about me.*

*no body cares who I really am.*

*Why am I telling this instead of entertaining them?*

*When I was too young, I couldn't stand it.*

*But actually those are the most beautiful moments in our lives.*

*Especially when somebody was having a hard time.*

*So how are you?*

## *2. Grand father's death(for the first feedback and the Proces)*

*It was very end of the last year, around 9p.m., 31st December, my grandfather, this is my mother's father, suddenly found dead in the bath.*

*My aunt who was taking care of him found him.*

*Let me introduce,*

*His name is Haruyoshi, means good spring. he was 99 years old.*

*He loved listening to music, especially Japanese old songs including military song.*

*He actually went WWII as a military. I've heard that he was in Saipan, but he wouldn't talk so much about his war experience. And he was a police after the war. But we never can believe it since he was very goofy and easygoing guy. He wasn't aggressive.*

*These two years I visited my grand parents once a week.*

*Every time I met him he was counting down for his 100th birthday which he was really longing for the big celebration since he was much younger.*

*And just a month ago, I just said simple goodbye temporary, promising big celebration of his 100.*

*He supposed to see his very first great-grandchild in the first time on the next day of his death.*

*The grand parent's house is in the country side with beautiful nature. I love the house.*

*There is the path,*

*And there's mountain in which birds sings every morning.*

*There is good Japanese style garden.*

*They have vegetable fields, watermelon, kiwi, green pepper, cabbage, eggplant, etc. they even used to had chickens.*

*In the house,*

*Here's toilets.*

*Here was European style drawing room, where I got scolded because I released a lot of insects. Now there is grandfather's bedroom.*

*Here is another Japanese style drawing room with verandas, my grand father used enjoy playing Go board game.*

*Here is Buddhist altar, these room are continuous, so children used to run hard until our grandmother become super angry.*

*Here is the big bathing room.*

*Here is kitchen and dining room. We all big families used to enjoy feasts in every holidays.*

*Here is grand parents's bed room. Now there's grand mother's bed. She has been hospitalised since December.*



*At the night, my aunt was cooking the whole big feast for the new year, which is the biggest event in Japan.*

*In the end of year, we make big clean-up of all our houses, and decorate it. Then we eat soba, buck-wheat noodle, in the late at night, then wait for the moment we hear the temple bells for new year.*

*So he was cleaning himself after his dinner, before the noodle to prepare the new year perfectly.*

*Usually, he took very long time, like 2hours, to take a bath, and he hates to be hurried, so my aunt didn't notice that he's in trouble*

*Of course my aunt got so panicked when she found the situation.*

*She tried to rescue him, call ambulance, and everything, but in the end she cannot find anything to do but keep apologising to her dead father in the hospital.*

*My father, who is the husband of another daughter of Haruyoshi, got phone call and asked to go to the grandparent's house, because the police needs on-site investigations of the mysterious death. And there's nobody.*

*When my father arrived there, there were the police's cars which is nervously blinking its red lights, Japanese police's cars is not with blue lights but red, And they made keep out zone with tapes like we saw in the movie.*

*Then police asked him to cover his shoes as well.*

*He went in, there were 6 polices checking everything, whole house.*

*I imagine, there should be a lot of best fancy dishes for new year, which my aunt put all her best skills, still warm.*