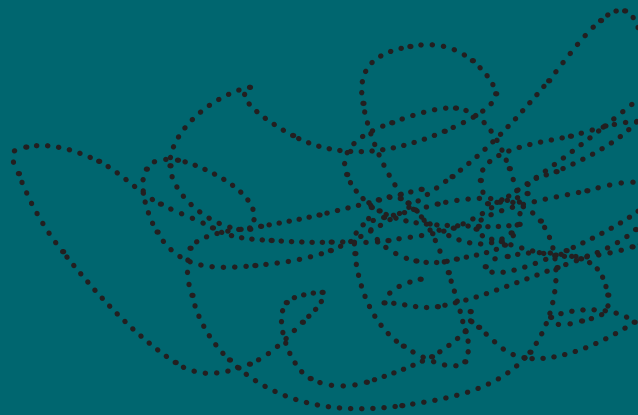


# Affective Choreographies



Ingri Midgard Fiksdal





# **Affective Choreographies**

By  
Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

This publication is a part of the outcome of Ingri Midgard Fiksdal's artistic PhD project "*Affective Choreographies*" (2013–2018). The project started within the framework of The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, and was, in 2018, transferred to the new PhD programme in artistic research at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts. Artistic practice is at the core of this programme. At the same time, the artistic practice is to be accompanied by an explicit reflection, which grants others access into methods and insights that emerge from the artistic research.

The artistic PhD project "*Affective Choreographies*" resulted in the six performances: "*HOODS*" (2014), "*Cosmic Body*" (2015), "*Shadows of Tomorrow*" (2016), "*STATE*" (2016), "*Diorama*" (2017) and "*Deep Field*" (2018), as well as the publication "*Affective Choreographies*" written by Fiksdal.

This publication is designed by Aurora Bratli Brunvoll in dialogue with Signe Becker and Ingri Midgard Fiksdal.

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## 2. INTRODUCTION

The background of this research is a belief in art as a vehicle for change, through taking the role as “utterly useless” in a society where most other things have a given and known purpose. When confronted with something that does not perform as expected or resists classification we have to look for new approaches, and in these moments of liminality there is the potentiality for the unpredictable and unforeseen to emerge.

The core of this research has been to develop choreographic principles that can create the potentiality for affect to occur. There are two main directions within affect theory, one where philosopher Brian Massumi sees affect as “*a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act*”.<sup>1</sup> The Silvan Tomkins’ psychobiology of differential affects (1962), on the other hand, understands affect as discursive, and something which is closer to feelings and emotions.<sup>2</sup> My own approach to affect includes both of these perspectives (more on this in the chapter entitled The Mesh).

The point of departure for all my work is the perspective of the audience. This is inherent to my first research question: “How can particular choreographic principles employed in the performances create potentiality for affect to occur *amongst the audience*?” The follow-up question is; “How can this affect generate new or altered states, experiences, thoughts and ideas?” This question specifies what I want affect “to do” with the audience.

On one level, all choreography can be understood as affective, in the sense that *anything at all* can be understood as affective. This is different to working explicitly with producing the potentiality for affect to occur through the development of specific choreographic principles, as well as specifying the type of affect I’m looking for.

In the following chapters, I will discuss the choreographic principles I have developed as well as five out of six performances created within the research period (the sixth premiered simultaneously with me finishing this text). Following this, in the chapter I have chosen to call The Mesh, I will share some of the theories I have engaged with to further diffract my research questions.

It is important for me to point out that the processes of making performances and reading and thinking are entangled within this research to the degree where I started to refer to them as the doing of *movement-thought* and *thought-movement*. I understand these as producing one another, rather than seeing either as an anterior from which the other springs.

## TWO META PERSPECTIVES

### Audience

The point of departure for all my work is the perspective of the audience. I'm concerned with the audiences' embodied cognition of the work, as well as creating affective, liminal spaces where there is potential for change to take place within or amongst them and the world. This point of departure is formative to the choreographic principles developed, and the performances in themselves. Hence, my choreographer's perspective is a constant speculation or negotiation with an audience perspective.

An approach has been to think of the audience as attenders of a ritual. What is performed happens *on behalf of* them, and they are ideally *willing* the performance as much as the performers are. (More on ritual in the chapters on HOODS and STATE) This suggests that the audience is somewhat *part of* the performance. I relate to how choreographer Anna Halprin frames the audience as witnesses. She shies the distant-watching *spectator* as the term implies, i.e. a *spectacle*; something one can sit back and judge and see if it lives up to preconceived ideas on art and quality. To be a witness for Halprin instead suggests an understanding of the dance, what it is trying to do, as well as a support of the dancers who have undertaken the challenge of performing.<sup>3</sup>

I believe a similar investment is necessary when attending one of my performances; one has to put oneself *in there* and be part of the ad-hoc grouping in order to get anything from it. The audience becomes a part of the choreographic assemblage of human and non-human bodies within a performance (more on this in the chapter on Choreography as Assemblage). However, *how* they participate in the assemblage, I believe, depends on how the choreographic principles work on them, so there is always a double bind.

### Potentiality

As "the *potentiality* for affect to occur" is a central phrase in this text, I would like to include a note on the term potentiality. As I will return to in the chapter on Affect Theory: The Massumi Direction, there is no way of producing affect explicitly as it exists outside of cognition and language. Therefore, I aim to produce the *potentiality* for affect to occur through specific choreographic principles, which are developed throughout my research to do exactly this. (More in the chapter on Choreographic Principles)

Giorgio Agamben considers potentiality to be "*the existence of a non-Being, a presence of an absence*"<sup>4</sup>; consequently everything that can and cannot be actualised. Graham Harman, the philosopher behind Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) offers a perspective where "*The claim to have potential is the claim to be more than what one currently is, without admitting that one must haggle and borrow to change one's current state.*"<sup>5</sup> Harman sees potentiality as dependent on relation, rather than existing on its own. For something to be actualised, there is a necessary interaction between a number of different objects and forces. Hence, potentiality is a capacity to negotiate or to be affected in order to change as part of a constellation.

To paraphrase Harman paraphrasing Aristotle: Does a sleeping choreographer stop being a choreographer? Of course not, says Aristotle, because the ability to choreograph exists as a potentiality with the choreographer. But why put it like that, says Harman. Why not say that a choreographer is only a choreographer at the moment she has access to, for instance, performers, collaborators,

a workspace, as well as the physical and mental abilities she had before going to bed? Unless these different objects are present, the choreographer ceases to be a choreographer, both in actuality and potentiality.<sup>6</sup>

Harman's take on potentiality corresponds well with both how I see my own co-constitution (more on this in the chapter entitled A Note on the Approach to Writing), as well as how I believe that the potentiality for affect to occur is situated within the choreographic assemblages through the co-presence of vibrant matters and application of specific choreographic principles.

## A NOTE ON THE APPROACH TO WRITING

When looking through the collection of source material I have read throughout the research project, I was slightly horrified to discover that more than two thirds of it was written by men. I have been raised as a feminist, and have always been concerned with equality, which I see as inherent, but not explicit, to my work. I started to look at reading lists provided by various teachers or workshop-holders, as well as the bibliographies of books I have been reading, and found that a lot of these lists hardly included women at all.

In "*The Argonauts*", the American writer Maggie Nelson describes how her mother prefers to watch a weather forecast that features a male weatherman. "*They usually have the more accurate forecast, she'd say*". "*The weather people are reading a script, I would say, rolling my eyes. It's all the same forecast*". "*It's just a feeling, she would shrug.*" Later, upon the arrival of her son, Nelson finds herself reading a number of childcare books, all written by men. She asks: "*Why don't I myself seek out child-care books by women? Am I unconsciously channel-surfing for the male weatherman?*"<sup>7</sup> Understanding Nelson as a highly conscious feminist, whose auto-theory's bibliography favours feminist writers, I believe this shows the proactive work necessary in order to reach gender equality within art/academia/the world. The unconscious channel surfing is so embedded in us, it makes feminism a *doing* that needs to be practised actively.

Motivated by this, I have been looking for an approach to writing where the feminism becomes inherent through the disruption of hierarchies of meaning and a foregrounding of multiple ways of doing and knowing. I do not come from any particular academic background and do not feel particularly subjugated by (academic) authority. I have tried to move freely between different academic schools, traditions and concepts, finding my own links and logics through the merging of practical work, personal life and theory. I would like the (inevitable) personal approach to the material to be visible in the text, and let the practice of choreography, embodied cognition, absorbing, processing, echoing philosophy, theory and art come together as thought-movement.

As a consequence of this approach, the interweaving of other voices into my narrative is an attempt to perform my co-constitution; my emergence within my encounters with others. Being introduced to political theorist Jane Bennett's vital materialism, I have been inspired to also look beyond the human and consider how agents such as blood sugar, the floor of the studio space, the ocean, sleep deprivation, gut bacteria, coffee cups, running shoes, post-it notes and the low-frequency buzzing of the ventilation system all participate in the creation of thought-movement and movement-thought. There is no autonomous *I*. *I am* an assemblage of vibrant matters *making* assemblages of vibrant matters.<sup>8</sup> In this research, they take shape as performances and texts.

## RESEARCH FORMATS

My research has primarily taken shape through the following four formats. Thought-movement and movement-thought have flowed between the formats.

### **Choreographic Work (2013-2018)**

This includes the making of the six performances “*HOODS*” (2014), “*Cosmic Body*” (2015), “*Shadows of Tomorrow*” (2016), “*STATE*” (2016), “*Diorama*” (2017) and “*Deep Field*” (2018), which are discussed in the chapter The Performances: A Cartography.

### **The National Research School in Choreography (2015-2018)**

After some time in the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, I started to notice the lack of a *programme*. Being used to always working with others, I wanted to structure and frame the research, outside the making of performances. I initiated the National Research School in Choreography, and invited colleagues Camilla Vatne Barratt-Due, Rosalind Goldberg, Pernille Holden and Venke Sortland to join. From 2015 to 2018 we conducted seven week-long sessions where we would read together, reflect, discuss, write and question topics of relevance to my research. The name of the initiative was chosen to address the lack of research schools within the programme. It also commented on how language can provide authority or legitimise something.

### **Stipendiatforum (2013-2015)**

Stipendiatforum (Research Fellow Forum) was initiated in collaboration with research fellows and visual artists Jesper Alvær and Liv Bugge. Throughout 2013-2015, we conducted a series of workshops where we invited an artist or academic to engage with our three projects. The guest gave feedback to our individual projects, and addressed topics that were of relevance to all of us. The aim was to inform our projects from a variety of angles, and to create an artistic research community amongst ourselves. Our guests included Bojana Cvejić, Matthias Danbolt, Elizabeth Povinelli, Goran Sergej Pristaš, Aron Schuster, Mårten Spångberg and Stephen Wright.

### **Arranging seminars**

In collaboration with performer and theatre scholar Valborg Frøysnes, I arranged two seminars at Oslo International Theatre Festival. In 2016 the seminar examined the evolving role of the performer. In 2017, the seminar focused on the political within performing arts, and the contributions were further made into a publication through Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift.<sup>9</sup> I have also arranged separate lectures with Bojana Cvejić and Daniel Blanga Gubbay, as well as a workshop with Arkadi Zaidis. All of these activities were open to a general audience.

### 3. CHOREOGRAPHIC PRINCIPLES

The objective behind the choreographic principles is to produce the potentiality for the performances within my research to be affective. Although primarily practised in the choreographic work, the principles have been developed through the entanglement of thought-movement and movement-thought taking place in all the aforementioned research formats. Within each of the performances, the choreographic principles are weighted differently.

This chapter discusses the different choreographic principles and what I see as their affective potentiality. It positions the principles in relevant contexts and illustrates them with examples of how they have been practised in the choreographic work. But first a quick note on what I call *Choreography as Assemblage*.

Choreography as Assemblage must be seen as an approach to situating the potentiality for affect to occur, rather than something that in itself creates this potentiality. Choreography as Assemblage can therefore be perceived as a lens through which to see the following four principles; *Minimal Composition: Slowness and Repetition*, *Multi-Referencing*, *Performer as Object* and *Kinaesthetic Transference*.

My performances are created and structured in a way where the light design, sound, dance, movement, costume, scenography, performers, props, audience, audience set-up<sup>10</sup> and site are equally important, although weighted differently from one piece to another.<sup>11</sup> The performances could be seen as systems of interaction between both human and non-human lifeforms. The performer is connected to her costume, the costume is connected to the air of the space, the air of the space is connected to the stage lamps, the stage lamps are connected to the grid, the grid is connected to the ceiling, etc. This goes on forever, and is what philosopher Timothy Morton calls a *context explosion*. With this potentially infinite “web of life” we can never reduce something formed by its interconnections to the sum of its parts. And similarly we cannot reduce the whole to its parts either.<sup>12</sup> I see this as a way to describe how I attempt to create choreographies of *all elements* within my work. Everything is interconnected and interdependent.

An assemblage, following Deleuze and Guattari, is an ad-hoc grouping of vibrant matters of all sorts, where humans are included as beings among other beings. Assemblages have uneven topographies because some crossing points of the various bodies and affects are more heavily trafficked than others. This implies that power is not distributed equally across the surface of the assemblage.<sup>13</sup> I see this as parallel to how a piece of mine would dramaturgically move between a part “heavily trafficked” by sound, to a part where the movement seems to dominate, whilst still being a total system of interaction between *beings*.



In “*Diorama*”, the co-existence of performers, costumes, rocks, snow, seagulls, waves, boats, sunlight, speakers, beach and wind is what constitutes the choreographic assemblage. This suggests that the potential for affect in the choreographic becomes “*distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field, rather than being a capacity localized in a human body or in a collective produced (only) by human efforts.*”<sup>14</sup> Hence, the potentiality for affect lies with all vibrant matter present in the choreography; human and non-human alike. I see this as a *doing* as much as a horizon of thought. One can always apply this set of thinking to a given performance; however, I believe that in order for the audience to have the experience of distribution of affective potentiality within a piece, one has to work with this explicitly through giving the different bodies time and space. This is done according to the following choreographic principles:

#### MINIMAL COMPOSITION: SLOWNESS AND REPETITION

Most of my performances consist of rather few movement themes executed by the different performers. The most recent piece, “*Deep Field*”, has only one movement theme; running, that goes on for the duration of the performance. “*Diorama*” has only two; a slow crawl on the ground, and a slow standing up with the hands above the head. “*HOODS*” has about five different movement themes through which the performers transform. Each of these has an extended duration. Some of them are very slow, whilst others consist of repetition. Often, the movement themes are close to quotidian movement; crawling, swaying, rocking, rolling and running. They are composed in similar manners to what Steve Reich called a “gradual process”:

*“Performing and listening to a gradual musical process resembles: pulling back a swing, releasing it, and observing it gradually come to rest; turning over an hour glass and watching the sand slowly run through to the bottom; placing your feet in the sand by the ocean’s edge and watching, feeling, and listening to the waves gradually bury them.”*<sup>15</sup>



Photo: Antero Hein

In “*Cosmic Body*”, the piece starts with the four performers walking calmly to a row of pendulum sculptures hung in the middle of the space. They lift two sculptures each, and drop them simultaneously to put the pendulums into motion. The performers disappear to the outskirts of the space, and the audience is left watching the developing movement and patterns of the pendulums, almost until they are still again. Similarly, with “*Diorama*”, which is often staged by the seaside, the piece is so minimal that the audience (feet in sand, or sometimes snow) will spend time looking at how the waves hit the shore and feeling the wind on their faces, as much as looking at the performers. These pieces were made prior to me coming across Reich’s famous quote and I was struck by how literally it matched. This is just one out of many examples I have considered, which I think plays its part in performing our common imaginaries (more in the chapter on Multi-Referencing).

Experience is subjective and contextual, and strongly knit to expectation and the *willing* of a given situation. An audience that has come to see a performance generally expects something to happen. Approaching these expectations with very slow, minimal, repetitive and/or monotonous movement themes is an attempt to attune the audience. My experience is often that the approach makes people give up on expectation, and at best, find another mode of watching/hearing/feeling new details or small variations within what was at first glance just *one* thing. I believe that there is potentiality for affect to occur within this slight alteration of temporality and the consequential shift of attention.

Repetition can also have a suggestive or trance-inducing effect. This is explained physiologically through how given frequencies can synchronise with wavelengths in the brain and produce certain states. When working with “*Cosmic Body*”, we performed tests where light and sound was synced at the frequency of 10Hz; the frequency of the flickering light of the Dream Machine (more in the chapter on Cosmic Body). This frequency is supposed to resonate with your alpha brainwaves and induce a hypnagogic (sleep-like) state.

#### MULTI-REFERENCING

I believe that an original or new idea is a rare thing. The circulation of memes, information and imagery in our time constitutes different, common imaginaries, which to some extent suggests that one cannot *not* work multi-referentially; there is no outside of reference. Yet, this doesn’t indicate that one cannot have new experiences, as no one has “seen it all”.

In my work, I employ Multi-Referencing as a choreographic principle through actively referring to a multiplicity of different things and contexts simultaneously within a piece. The attempt is, through overload, to empty out the different references’ content and meaning in order for new experiences to occur. When these experiences become sufficiently opaque, not bound or domesticated by understanding, I believe that the potentiality for affect occurs. I see Multi-Referencing as a principle that primarily produces *opacity*, and if one doesn’t know how to categorise or think of something, there is potentiality for the unpredictable and unforeseen to emerge.

When using opacity in this text, I refer to writer Édouard Glissant’s use of the word. According to Glissant, one has to allow for opacity in the meeting with something or someone, as the quest to *understand* always implies a simplification, reduction and domestication limited by our capacity



to understand. I would like my work to encourage ways to watch and be-with that don't immediately involve judgement and categorisation, but instead letting the other be (more on opacity in the chapter entitled The Mesh).

Dance, as an expression, deals specifically with the fact that the human body has a limited movement vocabulary. It cannot do *anything*. With “*Mnemosyne Atlas*”<sup>16</sup>, German art historian Aby Warburg traced “bewegtes Leben” (life in motion or animated life) from antiquity onwards. He was concerned with how images of important intellectual, emotional and symbolic power emerge in Western antiquity and then reappear in the art and cosmology of later times and places, from Alexandrian Greece to Weimar Germany.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that the history of culture is one of recurrences, and that a given contemporary culture is always a sum of many ancient cultures. It also discards the idea of ownership in regard to movement.



Mnemosyne Atlas. Screenshot, Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

In “*Shadows of Tomorrow*”, I collaborated with Elena Becker on the costume design. The initial idea was to try to blur the individual bodies of the performers and create a mesh or a large collective body. As inspiration, I was looking to the music genre of psychedelic hip-hop, where the aesthetic of album covers, posters and clothes bear reminiscence to the multi-coloured, complex, and often kaleidoscopic patterns of the acid trip aesthetics of the 1960s. In order to blur the transition from one body to the next, we came up with the idea of using multiple layers of wide clothes in a range of different colours and patterns, and started doing a few tests with jackets, shirts and long skirts.

Several immediate connotations came up. One was of women's fashion within Roma communities, where a common feature is that of mixing patterns and using several layers of clothes on top of each other. A second connotation was the costumes worn by the Egungun spirits in vodun ceremonies in Benin and Nigeria, which had caught my interest through research into ritual dance (see the chapter on STATE) as well as the work of photographer Phyllis Galembo.<sup>18</sup> A third association was the 2013 spring/summer collection by Kenzo (which was later made popular in the mainstream through their similar-looking 2016 collaboration with H&M). The Kenzo collections were also already clearly multi-referential in themselves (see a further elaboration of this in the chapter on *Shadows of Tomorrow*).



Photo: Ingri Midgard Fiksdal



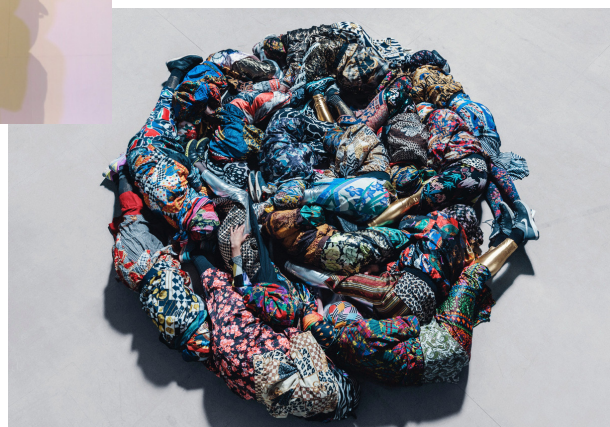
*Shadows of Tomorrow*. Photo: Anders Lindén

For us, it became important not to stay strictly within one of these references, but to blend them all together in order to create a multiplicity of different connotations, or ideally an overload that emptied out previous, potential readings. My impression is that if an element of a piece points too strongly to a given context, the whole piece is understood or interpreted through that context, and this often becomes reductive. Instead, we tried to fuse sufficient connotations into the costumes in order for the audience to understand that it isn't primarily about decoding these references, but rather to see what the costumes *do* in the context of the performance.

#### PERFORMER AS OBJECT

Seeing the performances as choreographic assemblages suggests thinking of the performers as objects amongst other objects. This does not imply a diminution of the performers' value, but displays my sympathies with OOO. Here, the primary concern is to give all objects equal attention, whether they are human, non-human, natural, cultural, real or fictional. An object within OOO is anything that cannot be entirely reduced to either the components from which it is made or to the effect it has on other things. OOO is a realist philosophy, which implies that it sees the external world as something which exists independently from human awareness.<sup>19</sup> But as with *Choreography as Assemblage*, it is necessary to separate the approach to Performer as Object as horizon of thinking and as *doing* within my work:





Top left: *HOODS*. Photo: Signe Becker  
 Right: *Shadows of Tomorrow*. Photo: Anders Lindén  
 Bottom left: *Diorama*. Photo: Briony Campbell

Having a performer look like a glittery rock is not what makes her an object. She could also just look like herself, and be as much an object in the eyes of OOO. But for my pieces to perform as assemblages where human and non-human performers exist equally in the eyes of a possibly anthropocentric audience, I use two different approaches, which can help shift the focus and align the different materialities present in the performances.

One approach used in *“Diorama”*, *“HOODS”* and *“Shadows of Tomorrow”* is to mask the performers. There is an anthropocentric tendency to favour the human when watching something, and I believe we are especially drawn to faces where we look for expressions of what the other person thinks and feels. The faces of the performers provide access to social and psychological space. When masked, my experience is that attention shifts towards the movement of the assemblage that the human and non-human performers constitute, as opposed to towards the performers executing the movement, and as such a collective impersonality is activated.

Another approach developed through *“Cosmic Body”* and *“Deep Field”* where the performers’ faces are visible, is to place no emphasis on individual identities with regards to style and quality of movement material and how it is composed. The performers will often move in unison, there is little change of dynamics within a given sequence and there is often a lot of repetition. In *“Deep Field”*, the performers keep running in patterns, which after a while become more visible to me than the runner. Also, the performers remain expression-less throughout, and make no intended eye contact with the audience. To move as an object amongst other moving objects *“suspends the human as emblem of absolute, authorial sovereignty.”*<sup>20</sup>

The choreographic work with objects, or work that sees the performer as an object, has, according to performance scholar André Lepecki, become a way for contemporary choreography to resist anthropocentric performances of the self, which are such a large part of the current neoliberal condition.<sup>21</sup> This approach to performance in dance where the personal is removed can be traced back to the Judson Dance Theatre. Here, the expressive mode of performing one’s individualism known from modern dance of the time (e.g. in the work of Martha Graham), was replaced by performers with blank faces. In the performance *“English”* (1963) by Steve Paxton, performers Yvonne Rainer and Paxton used beige face-paint that covered eyebrows and lips as a tool to try to erase their differences.<sup>22</sup>

When the human performers of the pieces are framed as objects, I believe they become less available for interpretation. This opens for new or different approaches to being-with, from which the potential for affect can occur.

## KINAESTHETIC TRANSFERENCE

According to Lepecki

*“dancers and audiences all produce, and are produced by, a shared bio- and necropolitical “nervous system”<sup>23</sup> that assaults the putative autonomy of choreographic representation at the moment of its performance and informs the very physical and affective conditions of contemporary spectatorship and performing.”<sup>24</sup>*

The physical and affective condition of kinaesthetic transference suggests that an audience member can experience the movement of a performer in her own body when sat (still) watching. This potential lies in the fact that audience members are bodies with kinaesthetic knowledge, and that watching, hearing and feeling empathy for another person’s movement are both a visual and a physical experience.<sup>25</sup> When experiencing someone sway in front of you, there is a good chance you will start to *feel* this swaying motion in yourself as well as seeing it.

One could claim kinaesthetic transference potential within all movement and on behalf of all dance performances. I believe, however, that it exists to a larger extent within quotidian movement that most people use and recognise physically, such as running, jumping, swaying, shaking, rocking, etc. Therefore, most of my performances consist of movement material developed from these types of action. The material often repeats over a long period, in order for the audience to have time to perceive and tune in (more in the chapter on Minimal Composition: Slowness and Repetition).

The idea of kinaesthetic transference also extends to the transference between non-human and human bodies. In *“Cosmic Body”*, a row of eight lumpy sculptures swing as pendulums, and a large fan spins around in the air. My experience is that these bodies’ movements also affect the audience, perhaps in manners related to that of a pendulum used in hypnosis or a bus whooshing past. There also seems to be something in movement *in itself* producing kinaesthetic transference, beyond empathising human bodies.

Whilst most of my performances use kinaesthetic transference as a choreographic principle, it is particularly foregrounded in *“Shadows of Tomorrow”* where it also doubles as the meta-theme of the piece. Here, we try to create an experience of listening to music, only in silence. Most people would agree that (rhythmic) music is something that affects us physically. We’ll often start moving our bodies to the beat without thinking about it. A similar thing happens in *“Shadows of Tomorrow”*. As the performers shake, sway and curve their way around the space, it is common to see audience members rocking in their seats. There is a transmission of motion taking place from the bodies of the performers to the bodies of the audience, in which there is potential for affect to occur.

## 4. THE PERFORMANCES: A CARTOGRAPHY

The largest part of my research has taken place in the making of the six performances “*HOODS*” (2014), “*Cosmic Body*” (2015), “*Shadows of Tomorrow*” (2016), “*STATE*” (2016), “*Diorama*” (2017) and “*Deep Field*” (2018). Each of these pieces has been made within rehearsal periods of 6-12 weeks’ duration, with both overlapping and different teams of people (see Performance Credits and Touring). The following chapters contain descriptions of what happen in the pieces, ideas, and research material that was constitutional to the different works, as well as notes on the processes. The final chapter, Recurrent Challenges, describes some of the issues or struggles which seem to be common to the performances.

In most productions, the core team spends time together in rehearsal researching material that I have prepared. This can be writings or films on relevant topics, as well as works by artists with related concerns or expressions we find relevant or inspirational. Sometimes we use these materials as a basis for tasks or improvisations to generate physical movement as well as movement of thought. To echo the Introduction chapter, I’m concerned with performing and sharing how these different influences take part in and shape the works. They are therefore emphasised in the following discussions of the performances.

To put it in a somewhat simplified manner, I could say that the multiplicities of research materials described in this chapter are specific to the performances, which are again generative to the thought-movement I have tried to articulate in the chapter entitled The Mesh. But surely, within the 5-year duration of my research, this hasn’t been taking place neatly or orderly. Movement-thoughts and thought-movements have intermingled and followed one another in a turbulent flow (and sometimes not flowing at all). The purpose of this text is to attempt to make this available to others through a cartographical structuring, which makes visible the manifold contradictions in the research, but at the same time unavoidably omits some aspects of the works. The map I have chosen to draw here delimits the analysis and discussions of the performances to those aspects that relate the most to my choreographic principles and the themes considered in The Mesh.

**HOODS**  
(2014)















# HOODS

(2014)

## DRY DESCRIPTION: WHAT HAPPENS?

*“HOODS” is created in collaboration with scenographer Signe Becker, and is between 75 and 90 minutes long. It starts when a performer, Eivind Seljeseth, welcomes the audience in the foyer of the theatre by hitting a small gong. Eivind is dressed in a colourful cape-like dress and a cap. He explains that we will let the audience into the performance space in small groups, and that they will get similar costumes to his upon entering, including a cap and veils that cover their faces.*



Photo: Ingvild Langård / Signe Becker

*Five by five, the costumed audience members enter the black box space. It is dark apart from a few red led lights hanging in wires from the ceiling alongside yellow fluorescent strips of fabric. Natural ambient sounds (birds, a creek) are heard panning between 12 speakers placed all around the space. There is a smell of sandalwood and the room seems to be filled with veiled people dressed in similar-looking costumes. Some of them are moving or standing around, others lie or sit on the floor. Ten human-sized puppets are placed in the space, also dressed like the audience and the performers. Another three puppets are hung from the ceiling in a manner whereby they seem to be standing up. There is no designated audience area. Everyone shares the same space. On one of the sides, Tilo Hahn and Camilla Vatne Barratt-Due are seated on the floor from where they run light and sound. They are also in costume. Gradually, more and more people enter the space until we are about 40 people in total.*





Photo: Ingvild Langård / Signe Becker

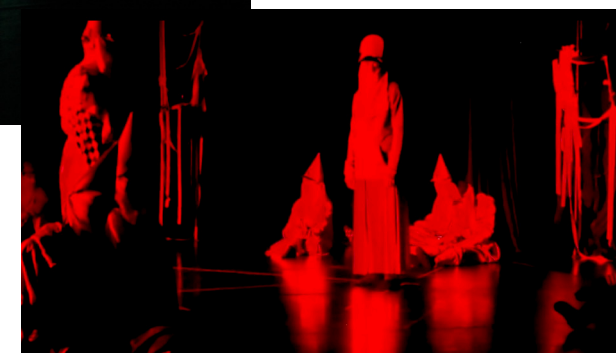
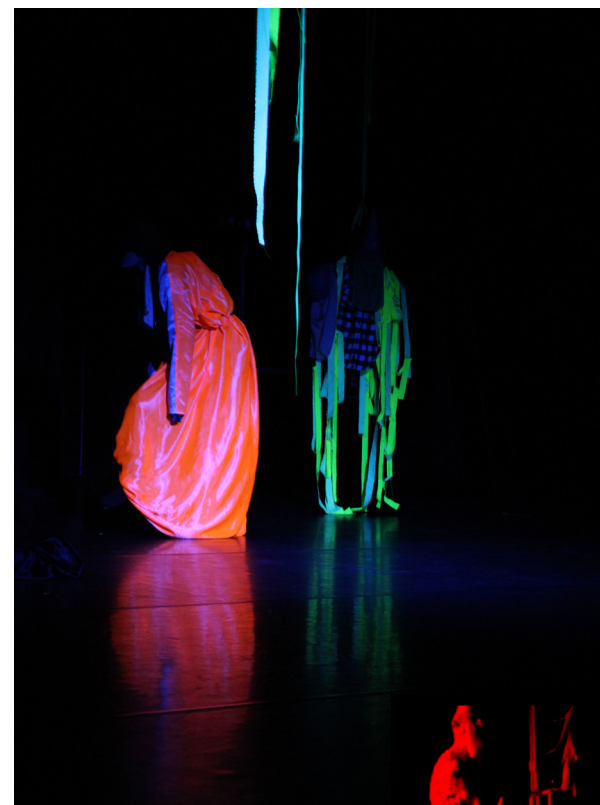
*Slowly, performer Pernille Holden, starts a rolling dance on the floor where she carefully holds on to and manipulates a puppet whilst moving. Her movement is overlapped by a sitting, rocking movement executed by performer Ingeleiv Berstad, also holding on to a puppet. By now, most of the audience members have come closer to what is happening. But as it is hard to separate who is a performer, an audience member or a puppet, any movement in space draws the attention of everyone present.*



Photos: Ingvild Langård / Signe Becker

*Pernille and Ingeleiv's movement stops, and nothing happens for quite a while. One can detect singing. Does it come from the speakers? Or is it people amongst the audience singing? The fourth performer, Kristin Helgebostad, starts moving slowly along the floor manipulating two puppets. Together with Pernille she gets into a rolling pile-dance involving all three puppets. Arms, legs, and caps/hats are sticking out of the pile. It is hard to detect the human from the puppet.*

*Suddenly the light flashes from red to blue and back again. In the blue light, several of the fabrics we are wearing become fluorescent. Some of us notice a creature more than two meters high (Eivind with a puppet on his shoulders) that has started to move from the other side of the space and towards us. It starts increasing its speed, and roams around the space making most of us change our positions. The light keeps flashing to blue. A few times, the creature falls over onto the floor.*





Photos: Ingvild Langård / Signe Becker



Photo: Tom Øverlie

*Another creature composed of Ingeleiv with two puppets tied to her torso crawls slowly across the space before starting a spinning-dance on its knees. The movement and music build towards a high intensity, but has an irregularity to it. Suddenly it goes completely dark. The music, which has become quite loud by now, transforms into a landscape between noise and techno. Once in a while, there are flashes of light, where one notices that people in the space have moved. In one flash, someone is just next to you, in the next they have disappeared.*

*Then, it quietens down and a white light is turned on. The four people we by now have recognised as the performers are gathered in a pile together with eight puppets. They perform a slow, wavy motion in order for the whole pile to sway. We notice that the large grid in the ceiling sways including the hanging puppets, lamps hung in wires as well as yellow fluorescent strips of fabric. The wavy motion starts to transport the performers to four spread-out positions in the space, carrying two puppets each. They continue the individual repetitive waves, which gradually transform and change the relation between them and the puppets as they develop. The sound has begun to pan circularly around the space, and becomes reminiscent of noise from a helicopter. This circular motion spreads to the performers who gather together and create a whirlwind-like dance with the puppets. Once the dance has reached a peak in intensity, one after another moves away from the whirlwind and transforms their movement back to a wavy quality until it completely fades out. The music continues to play, and we can once again hear birds and a creek.*

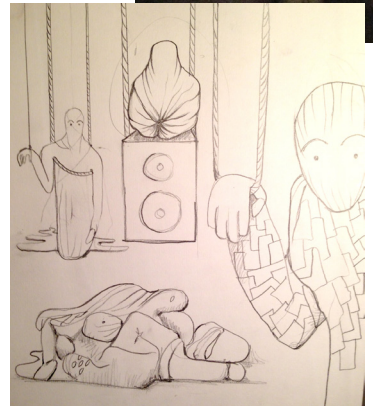
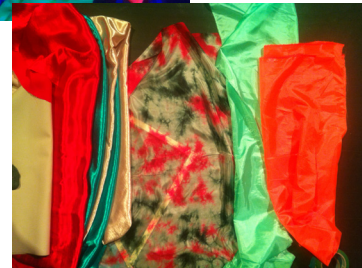
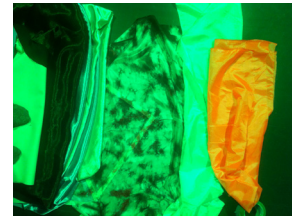
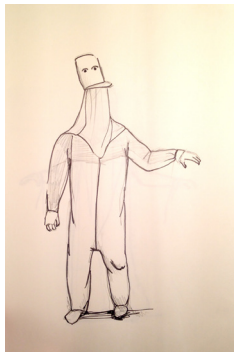
*A technician opens the door back out from the space, to signal that the piece is over. Often, people linger for quite a while before leaving.*

**Video documentation:**  
<https://vimeo.com/88628404>

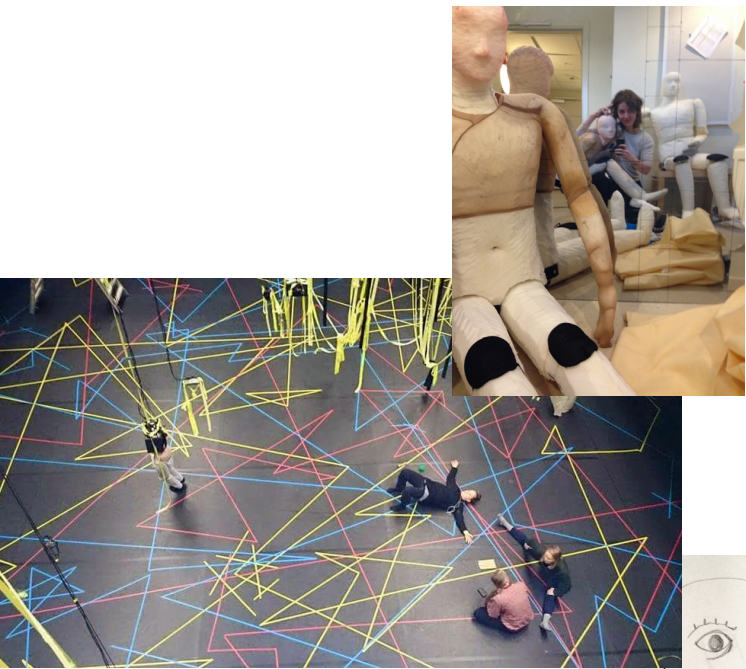




Photos: Signe Becker







Photos: Signe Becker

## IDEA

“HOODS” was initiated with scenographer and long-time collaborator Signe Becker. We wanted to create a performance situation where the scenography, choreography, performers and audience members would be inseparable, or at least difficult to distinguish from one another. We aimed to create an immersive space where the audience would feel mentally and physically embraced by the work, through being in the middle of it and constituting it together with the performers. This was approached through having the performers and audience members wear the same costumes, hats and veils, and the scenography consisting of ten human-sized puppets dressed the same way. People could move freely about the space.

An aim was to create waves of uncanniness amongst the audience through a sceno-choreographic set-up where sensory confusion and opacity would occur. Who is alive, who is a puppet? Who is an audience member and who is a performer? Where is the limit between human and non-human? The piece tried to challenge people’s interpretations of their own sensory experiences through producing categorical disarray between performers, audience and scenography; categories which are often easy to identify and separate when watching a performance. Within this categorical disarray, there would be moments of enchantment and I believe also altered states, where people would let themselves slip into the liminal spaces between performers, audience and scenography.

## RESEARCH MATERIAL

### The über-marionette

One of our references was Edward Gordon Craig’s über-marionette. Living performers were in Craig’s opinion not suitable material for the art of theatre, in the sense that they were stuck in representation of life, and not real creators. “*The über-marionette will not compete with Life—but will rather go beyond it. Its ideal will not be the flesh and blood but rather the body in Trance—it will aim to clothe itself with a deathlike Beauty while exhaling a living spirit.*”<sup>26</sup>

The über-marionette relates to my work on Performer as Object in regards to the attempt to move away from anthropocentrism. With “HOODS”, we didn’t try to replace the performers though, but instead to create a choreographic assemblage of performers consisting of puppets, audience members as well as dancers. Could all of these become bodies in trance?

Other references from the performing arts field were Gisèle Vienne’s “*kindertotlieden*” and Xavier LeRoy’s “*Untitled*”, where similar approaches to the use of human-sized puppets are employed, although with different purposes.

### The Uncanny Valley

We took inspiration from the theory of The Uncanny Valley, developed by Japanese robotics professor Masahiro Mori in 1970. The theory suggests that humans generally empathise with human-looking things (a teddy bear, a mug with a face painted on it, etc.), and the more human-like something looks, the higher the empathy level. However, once something becomes almost-but-not-quite-human, an uncanny or eerie feeling arises in us. The feeling increases if the almost-human moves like a human. The gap where empathy is replaced with eeriness is called The Uncanny Valley:

“One might say that the prosthetic hand has achieved a degree of resemblance to the human form, perhaps on par with false teeth. However, once we realize that the hand that looked real at first sight is actually artificial, we experience an eerie sensation. For example, we could be startled during a handshake by its limp boneless grip together with its texture and coldness. When this happens, we lose our sense of affinity, and the hand becomes uncanny.”<sup>27</sup>

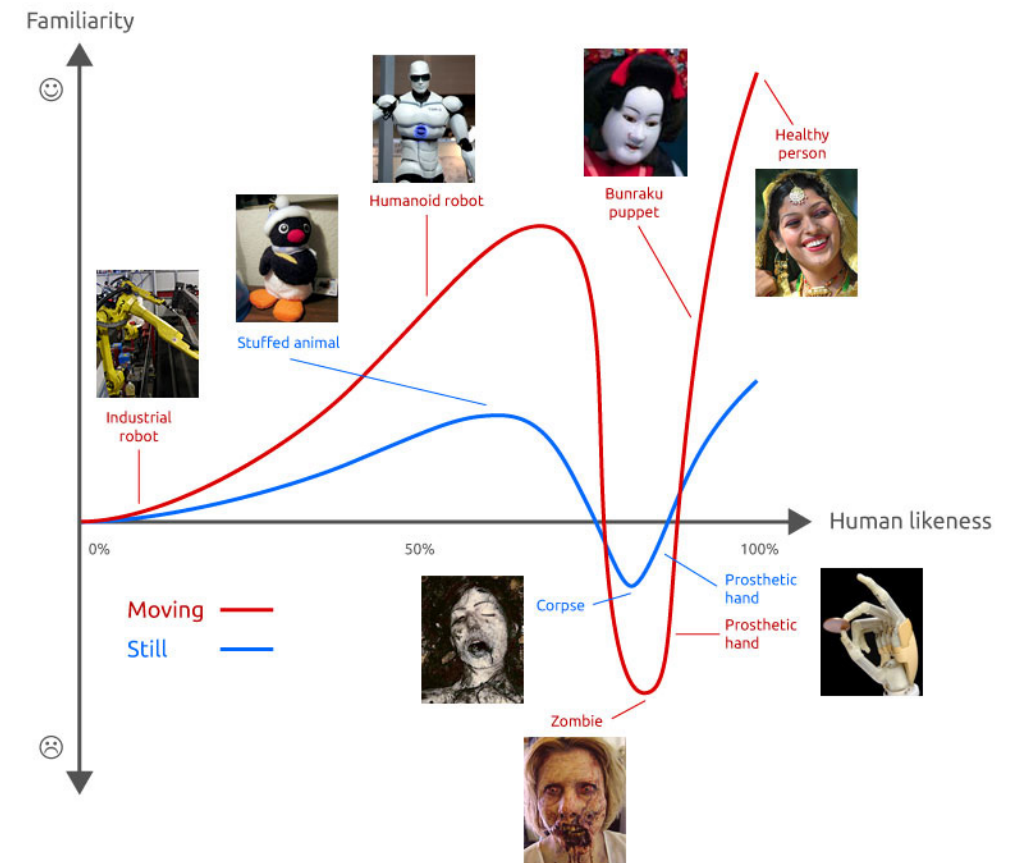


Illustration: heinakroon.com.  
Screenshot, Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

Mori suggests that the underlying cognitive mechanism causing this phenomenon has to do with an instinct for self-preservation. We shouldn’t touch a corpse, as we could be infected by harmful bacteria. And although fictional, the living dead (the zombie) is what marks the lowest point of The Uncanny Valley, being the most terrifying manifestation of the almost-human creature.<sup>28</sup> Another theory is that The Uncanny Valley effect is a consequence of conflicting cognitive impressions. Perceptual tension occurs when we don’t understand what category something belongs to (e.g. human, or puppet?).<sup>29</sup> However, in the relative safe-space of a theatre, I believe the conflicting cognitive impression is also what may produce an exciting liminal space, and where the potential affect isn’t necessarily negative.

### Uncanny Valley as Gigantic Plain

In our ecological age, Timothy Morton suggests that The Uncanny Valley is no longer a valley, but instead a “gigantic plain” in the sense that all life exists here. When the life/non-life binary



is collapsed and the human/non-human is relaxed, “all kinds of spectral creatures start to be seen, nightmarish beings that scuttle about. They are not categorizable. Yet they exist. They look like nightmare beings because of the extreme pressure they exert on existing frames of reference, existing categorical boxes.”<sup>30</sup> For Morton, to think ecologically is to think not of dead or alive, but of all beings (in the largest sense) as spectral, and to think a radical, deanthropocentred *being-with*. Can “HOODS” affect our perspectives on life/non-life outside of the performance situation?

### Nupta Cadavera/Corpse Bride

This Etruscan method of torture has stuck with me as an extreme version of Morton’s radical, deanthropocentred being-with. As punishment, a corpse would be tied to a living person, and left to decay. The living person would be fed until “the superficial difference between the corpse and the living body started to rot away through the agency of worms, which bridged the two bodies, establishing a differential continuity between them.”<sup>31</sup> In “HOODS”, our concern was not to portray these horrors, but in regards to The Uncanny Valley as a gigantic plain, I see the corpse bride as a particularly nightmarish collapse of the life/non-life binary, and inspirational to the idea of Performer as Object through becoming new bodies that combine what is traditionally seen as life and non-life.

## NOTES ON PROCESS

### Movement material and dramaturgy

After the initial experimentation with movement roles such as the performers being puppets or audience members, as well as testing to what degree we could make the puppets move like humans (only a little), we started to distillate movement material. What type of material helped to minimise or erase the difference between audience, performers and puppets (scenography) if the puppets didn’t move like humans? And how could it produce opacity in the sense of perceptual tension or conflict? Generally, this would happen when one or several performers moved slowly or repetitively with a bunch of puppets, as that produced flashes in perception when it was unclear what is human and what is puppet due to how a pile was configured. Even late in the process, trusting that *I know how this works*, I’d get these flashes by, for instance, seeing what I had believed to be Pernille’s leg suddenly flop the wrong way and get squashed flat under Kristin’s back.

A continuous negotiation up until today is how much we should “fill” the space and duration of the piece, and how much should be left open to allow for potential actions performed by the audience. If the performers did too much rehearsed material and clearly filled performer roles, the audience would be likely to retreat to sitting alongside the walls and become scenography. On the other hand, if we did too little, we would be dependent on unpredictable audience initiatives for the piece to be a performance rather than an installation-like concert. Based on this predicament, we tried to go for something in-between, making a structure half-filled with rehearsed material, but with gaps in space and time that opened for potential audience initiatives, as well as for the categorical confusion we were after.

“HOODS” became Choreography as Assemblage. Information was released gradually as to who were performers and who were puppets. Depending on the audience members we met in different venues, it would vary how the piece felt. On a few occasions, audience members started to engage with the puppets; rolling with them or swinging the ones hanging from the ceiling, and that’s when we’d wish the piece had had less pre-planned structure. On other occasions, most audience

members would just sit in one spot throughout, which would perhaps suggest a “less successful” performance, and we’d get anxious wishing there was “more dance” to fill the void. However, I do find an interest in not controlling all aspects of the performance, and that it could take on a life of its own. When the performance space is undifferentiated, there is not *one* way to see the performance, but a number of shifting personal views, where the audience members continuously need to look for the performance happening around and in between them<sup>32</sup> and even *by* or *through* them.

### Ritual structure

In rituals, there is often potentiality to create affect, and to transform and transcend the partakers. This is inspirational to all my works, but most explicitly to “HOODS” and “STATE”. In both pieces, overarching dramaturgical structures inspired by rites of transitions as described by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep are employed:

- *Separation*. A detachment from the normative. In “HOODS”, the audience members are led into the changing room in small groups. They are offered anonymity through costumes: capes, hats and veils. They are then let into the performance space, and told that they can move freely about.
- *Liminal stage*. The subject (performer and audience member) is in transition, in a state of ambiguity. Their previous ways of structuring identity, time or community have been de-territorialised, but the re-territorialisation has yet to take place. This stage denotes the part of the performance taking place inside the black box space, where the classic categories of performer, scenography and audience member are attempted to be erased in order for the potentiality for (life-changing) affect to occur, hence the relevance of rites of transition as model.
- *Aggregation/reintegration*. The post-liminal stage where the subject enters a new state or reaches new insight.<sup>33</sup> A technician opens the door back out to the changing room, suggesting that the performance has ended. People can choose to leave or stay. To what degree they have reached new insight or are affected in a changing way is hard to say, but the lingering that often happened here suggested that some digestion of the performance was needed.

### A note on human and non-human performers

A debated topic in the process was the relation between puppet and performer, and to what degree the performer and her movement material had value in-itself; not only as a puppeteer. This discussion often arose when we did process-showings for peers, who seemed unhappy with what they experienced to be a reduction of the importance of the human and human movement. In the current post-anthropocentric climate, this might seem like an inverse problematic, but at the time (this was also prior to conceiving of Performer as Object as an explicit choreographic principle), we pondered how to escape the “misanthropic” ideology people seemed to be finding in the work.

We continued to work to find out exactly where the performers needed to put their focus for the choreography to perform unity between performer and puppet, where the material created a totality where one stopped questioning (or looking for meaning), and instead found a way of being-with the performance. This resonates with the idea of opacity, as finding a way of watching and taking part that doesn’t immediately involve judgement and categorisation, but letting the other be.

**Cosmic Body**  
(2015)













# Cosmic Body

(2015)

## DRY DESCRIPTION: WHAT HAPPENS?

*“Cosmic Body” is a 60-minute-long performance. The audience enters a black box theatre, where the seating defines a triangular space used for the performance. The floor inside the triangle is white, while the surrounding floor is black. Various objects hang from the ceiling: circular mirrors of 50cm in diameter, silver, white and gold photo reflectors, a large fan and several black, lumpy sculptures. During the performance the objects periodically slowly rotate, and the rotations become part of the choreography. Stage lighting pointing towards the mirrors and reflectors cause reflections and shadows that drift through the space. At the centre of the triangle, an even row of eight, black, lumpy sculptures are hung to form a pendulum. This weave of scenography and light design is created by Signe Becker and Tilo Hahn.*







Photo: Antero Hein

*As the audience enters the space, the four performers are already present, waiting by the entrances. They are dressed in black, gold and glittery costumes by Mia Melinder/Signe Becker; shirts, shorts and tights, and they all wear sneakers. Their faces are painted in black, white and gold paint.*

*Once the audience is seated, the performers walk calmly to the row of pendulums, lift two sculptures each, and drop them simultaneously to put the pendulums in motion. The performers disappear to the outskirts of the space, and the audience is left watching the developing movement and patterns of the pendulums. A thin, shimmering tone can be heard over the speakers (the music is composed by Ingvild Langgård). These are mounted from the ceiling and surround the space, and subwoofers are placed below the audience seating. The low frequencies are felt as well as heard, and audience and dancers become immersed in sound. The shimmering tone gradually increases in strength and starts filling the space.*



*One of the performers, Imre Vass, enters the space again and lies down on the floor. Here he starts a horizontal spinning motion, which is being doubled by a turning reflector that casts a moving, orbital shadow on the floor next to him.*

*Next, the three remaining performers start to run through the space in elliptical patterns, and Imre follows. At first the ellipses stay consistent to one another, with the performers crossing each other in the same places every time. The light pans around the space, and the music builds into a repetitive, running note-progression. The performers change running patterns three times during the course of about ten minutes, as the music builds with a gradual addition of “falling” notes. The sequence ends when Imre and Pernille Holden leave the space, and Anne-Mareike Hess and Martin Lervik freeze into a position just off the centre of the triangle, casting long shadows on the opposite wall. It becomes silent.*

Photos: Antero Hein





*Anne-Mareike and Martin start moving in a slow, flowing manner. Gradually one starts to notice simultaneous stops in the flow. This steadily builds to a common rhythm between them. Pernille enters and joins them in the rhythmic movement. Imre enters the space. He sets three of the central pendulums in motion before joining the others who are now in the far corner of the triangle. Together they pick up the rhythm further, letting it transport them through the space following the line of the pendulum. As they move, the speed of the rhythm and the quality of movement transforms from slow to quicker, and then back to slow, where the bodies hold a large muscular tension, as if resisting an external force.*

*The music comes back in, joining the rhythm of the movement. Dancers and music develop together, gradually filling the space, dancers performing one movement per beat. This sequence ends by Pernille changing abruptly to a standing spinning motion, whilst the other three performers set six pendulums in motion and leave the space. In the opposite corner to Pernille, the large fan starts to rotate, and slowly builds up enough momentum to “fly” in a large orbit. As this happens, the music builds in intensity.*

Photos: Antero Hein

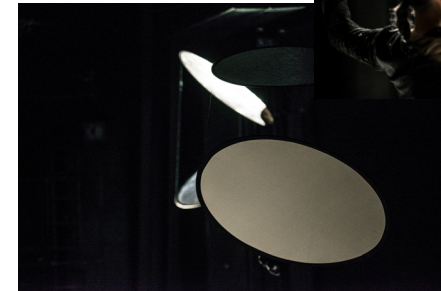
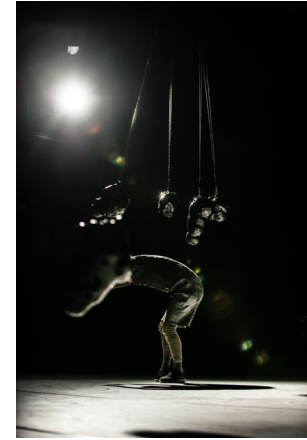
Photos: Antero Hein

*As the fan has spun to its maximum; the chord that it hangs from has become so twisted it can only turn back on itself, the focus changes to the ceiling of the space. All hanging objects have started to turn, and their movements project a multitude of light- and shadow-orbits tracing the space's walls, ceiling and floor creating a choreography of their own. The music builds further, and an increasing number of elements can be heard. All four performers lie on the floor, and roll almost invisibly through the space in various directions. After quite some time, they get up to a kneeling position, and start joining the circular motions of the light and shadows, through a repeated rolling from their knees to a seated position. Their trajectories get larger until eventually encompassing the whole space.*

*The final image of the piece consists of the four performers sat spread out in space. A quiet floating motion is present in their torsos and heads. The light changes quickly between three lamps, which makes the performers' shadows jump around their bodies. A fast drumbeat is heard. Then silence. End.*







Photos: Antero Hein and Ingri Midgard Fiksdal



**Dream Machine: A point of departure**

Dream Machine, an apparatus and work of art created by Brion Gysin and William S. Burroughs in 1961, was the starting point for “Cosmic Body”. Dream Machine is a drug-free hallucination generator that is meant to take users into an intense hypnagogic trance (an altered state where one is between awake and sleeping). But unlike on a drug-induced trip, one only needs to open one’s eyes to get out of it. The machine functions similarly to a stroboscope, and pulsates in frequencies of 8 to 13 flashes per second. These frequencies equal the brain’s alpha waves; the electric fluctuations, which can be measured when in a relaxed state. Dream Machine is experienced through closed eyelids; the pulsating light stimulates the optical nerve and changes the wavelength in the brain. The user experiences complex patterns behind closed eyelids. The patterns become shapes and symbols and the user feels surrounded by colour.<sup>34</sup>



Photo: Charles Gatewood

With “Cosmic Body”, the notion was to create a hypnotic performance that produced a Dream Machine-like affective experience in the audience. This was inspired by theories of altered states of consciousness as well as accounts of psychedelic experience and psychedelic thinking. These accounts (textual, visual, musical or choreographic) can be no more than representations or interpretations, and are therefore in most cases reductive of the experience itself. A description of a trip can rarely convey the trip’s qualitative complexity. In regards to psychedelic visual art, there is a very specific dominant aesthetic that includes the use of vivid colours, complex patterns, and a heightened attention to detail. Generally, the genre only represents psychedelic experience instead of offering the onlooker an immersive experience of her own; in opposition to, for instance, the Dream Machine.

With “Cosmic Body”, the challenge was to develop choreographic principles, which could produce the possibility for a “real” psychedelic experience to occur, an experience that went beyond representation and that had its own aesthetic premises.

NOTES ON PROCESS

**Time Warp: March 2015**

These are notes from research for “Cosmic Body” performed in the studio in collaboration with Signe Becker (scenography), Tilo Hahn (light design), Ingvild Langgård (music/composition), Martin Lervik and Pernille Holden (performers). The notes are included here because they show where the development of thought-movement and movement-thought was at in 2015, especially in regards to Performer as Object, Kinaesthetic Transference as well as Choreography as Assemblage, which were not fully articulated at the time:

*“The first day together was spent discussing the ideas/proposal for the piece. A central question is how to produce something which can generate an experience of altered states amongst the audience, rather than something that looks like or is a representation of altered states (an example of this could be ‘LSD art’, which is easily recognised through its spirally, kaleidoscopic patterns and vivid colours). Signe points out how we cannot avoid producing an aesthetic. But can we produce an aesthetic which opens for a multiplicity of productions amongst the receivers?”*

*We did a few practical tests in the space. Signe hung a variety of objects from the ceiling, amongst them two wooden boards that functioned as pendulums. Tilo programmed a row of lamps where light would move rapidly between them and move the oscillating rectangular shadows cast on the floor by the*

Photo: Signe Becker



*pendulums. As an addition to this, small light sources (phones) were attached under the boards, to create yet another moving light. On the floor, Signe (with help from everyone) arranged pyramids made out of plastic cups, where the moving shadows of the cups became more significant than the see-through cups*



themselves. This generated the idea of creating more see-through scenographic objects to try to develop this idea of something becoming the most present in its shadow-state.

The totality of moving objects, light and shadows created a feeling of spatial and kinaesthetic disorientation. On top of this we tested a variety of music sketches by Ingvild. She worked with different patterns that kept repeating and overlapping to see if/how these could create a trance-like state in the listener. Ingvild and Tilo also worked with syncing light and sound at the frequency of 10Hz (the frequency of the flickering light of the Dream Machine). Through staring at a computer screen flickering in this frequency, both with open and closed eyes, some of us were able to hallucinate (not me).

Martin practised different spinning patterns, and the moving light and shadow enhanced his movement. We discussed ideas of using various folk dance patterns to navigate spatially, but applying a different movement language. How can we move away from the “organically” building movement that has been predominant in my work since “The Orchard Ballads” (2011)?

We made sequences of movement that were without accents; just a steady flow of changing directions. The sequences were executed in unison standing close together (in a small triangle). Can we move away from seeing the individual bodies move to seeing a shape that shifts and changes and where different patterns occur and dissolve (Performer as Object)? We tried colour-block costumes to enhance this effect. For instance, if the arms of the performers are black and the rest of the costume is white (“Beach Birds” by Merce Cunningham), the arms can create patterns, which can be experienced almost separate from the rest of the bodies.

Can the performers in this piece be seen as some out of several moving objects? Various objects are hanging from the ceiling and can be used as pendulums. Maybe there is no hierarchy between moving bodies and moving objects (and moving lights)? Can they all constitute the choreography? Can all components of the performance be connected and of equal-ish importance (Choreography as Assemblage)? The costumes become moving objects through the dancers. The scenography consists of moving objects. Even the pendulum strings could be an explicit part of the scenography through how they make shapes and patterns in space. In addition to this, we can create even more movement through moving light and sound. How can all this different movement work on the audience?

I’m fascinated by how our sensorium (our total sensory apparatus) and brain capacity delineates how we perceive the world (and therefore also science), hence we don’t have access to any objective truths. This also suggests that there is a multiplicity of worlds going on parallel to ours, but which are unavailable to us, at least in our “normal” state. So the attempt with “Cosmic Body” is to set up something where one’s ways of seeing and thinking collapse and one just has to float along, and in this ideally find new ways of seeing and thinking.

On Sunday the 29th March, just after our test days, Jesper Alvær, Liv Bugge and I did Stipendiatforum with art historian and theorist Matthias Danbolt. Matthias points out that talking about altered states necessarily predisposes a “normal” state. Do we (have to) agree on what this is? When using stroboscopic light, one has to put a warning sign at the entrance to the stage. An epileptic attack is an altered state we by law are not allowed to provoke...”

### Manifesting idea in movement task: An example

In what we called The Beat Dance, the performers would work with a given pulse of even movements in regards to speed and tension, with short stops in-between each movement.<sup>35</sup> The attempt was to see if working with a repetitive pulse and performing one movement per pulse for a long time could create some kind of hypnosis, perhaps like watching a pendulum swing back and forth. The sequence lasts for about 15 minutes, and becomes an example of Minimal Composition.

The pulse was both generated by the speed of a pendulum or by music (easy to do) or just by the performers’ bodies (quite difficult, and required a lot of tuning between the performers, especially when changing the speed during the sequence).

With The Beat Dance, we wanted to avoid dynamics within a phrase (rapid changes in intensity and timing) to be able to lull people into an altered state. The material needed to be executed with a precise evenness. This, however, didn’t mean that the movement had to be repetitive in regards to body formation and placement.

So, *what* movement? A set of parameters for improvisation was developed; some of them loosely inspired by Laban (here is an example, several more parameters were included):

Pulse and accent.

- Move between the beats (implies short stops)  
or  
Move on the beat (implies longer stops)
- Stop neutrally  
or  
Accentuate the stops with a tensing of the body or a small contraction

Directions in the body and of body in space.

- One body part moves on each pulse  
or  
Several body parts move on each pulse  
or  
The whole body moves on each pulse
- Short movements in space on each pulse (centimetres)  
or  
Medium movements in space on each pulse (diameters)  
or  
Long movements in space on each pulse (meters)
- Straight lines in the body  
or  
Curves in the body  
or  
Mixing both

Quality of movement.

- High to low tension in movement
- Heavy to light quality of movement
- Directed to non-directed movement

### **Challenges: Choreographic Principles in practice**

With “*Cosmic Body*”, Minimal Composition as well as Choreography as Assemblage and Performer as Object, became more explicit. Quite early on in the rehearsal period, it felt like we weren’t going to need a lot of different movement themes, but that it instead came down to specifying the four different motifs we already had (the Beat Dance, an orbital running material, two slow-motion materials and three different spinning materials), as well as composing them with the whole (light design, scenography and music). These materials were in my experience already working on an affective level, and we needed to figure out exactly how the material was to be executed, phrased, etc. However, it seemed like too early in the process to just tweak already “finished” choreography. I kept coming up with new improvisation tasks as if looking for a missing link, which in retrospect seems like the wrong focus.

After this particular process I started to consider how to communicate to the collaborators about the choreographic principles I was starting to employ more consciously. My interest predominantly lay in slow, monotonous, drony work, consisting of few although multi-referential elements. However, I would often find myself in situations where I’d be worried about boring my collaborators, which felt counterproductive to the research (more on this in the chapter Recurrent Challenges).



**Shadows of Tomorrow**  
(2016)















## Shadows of Tomorrow (2016)

### DRY DESCRIPTION: WHAT HAPPENS?

*“Shadows of Tomorrow”<sup>36</sup> is between 30 and 45 minutes long, and is performed in a white cube or a space with light-coloured walls. It features about 20 performers, as well as 20 stage lamps placed in four clusters of five on the floor. The core team is light designer Ingeborg S. Olerud and performers Rosalind Goldberg, Pernille Holden, Sigrid Hirsch Kopperdal, Marianne Skjeldal and Venke Sortland. The performers are clad in several layers of clothes; tights, dresses, skirts, shirts, jackets and scarves that cover their faces. All the clothes have multi-coloured patterns. Costume design is by Elena Becker, Mia Melinder, Signe Vasshus and myself. “Shadows of Tomorrow” is performed in silence, but the sound of the moving bodies and the fabrics of the clothes can be heard.*



Photo: Ingri Midgard Fiksdal





*As the audience enters, the performers stand in two tight clusters on each side of the space. Multi-coloured light and shadows hit the walls of the space. The audience members sit down alongside the four walls. The space goes black. As the eyes get used to the darkness, one starts to see the two clusters of performers doing small, shaking movements, and hear the sound of their costumes brushing against each other. This movement increases and decreases in intensity several times, until it stops and is replaced by a slow sway.*



*A few stage lamps have come on, and they create shadows on two of the walls in the space. The shadows sway along with the performers, who gradually increase the range of their movement until starting to travel through space. What was two clusters now instead becomes one large group, where the performers sway and snake around one another. As the speed of the movement increases, more and more lamps are lit, and multi-coloured shadows start to dance on all four walls of the space, above the heads of the audience.*

Photos: Ingri Midgard Fiksdal





*The performers then gradually move to the floor to lie down quietly, and a panning movement begins to take place between the different lamps, as they “take over” the movement from the performers. This light dance goes on for a while, as the performers crawl across the floor in multiple directions.*

*Then they stand up again one by one. Through initiating a pulsating movement in the diaphragm, they find a common rhythm. This movement builds in size, and is syncopated by rhythmic movement of other body parts as well. The rhythm drives the performers around the space, and stirs up the energy. By now, the light has stopped to pan, and stays in a multi-coloured, still light. The piece ends by all the performers coming to a common stand still.*

**Video documentation:**  
<https://vimeo.com/154838914>



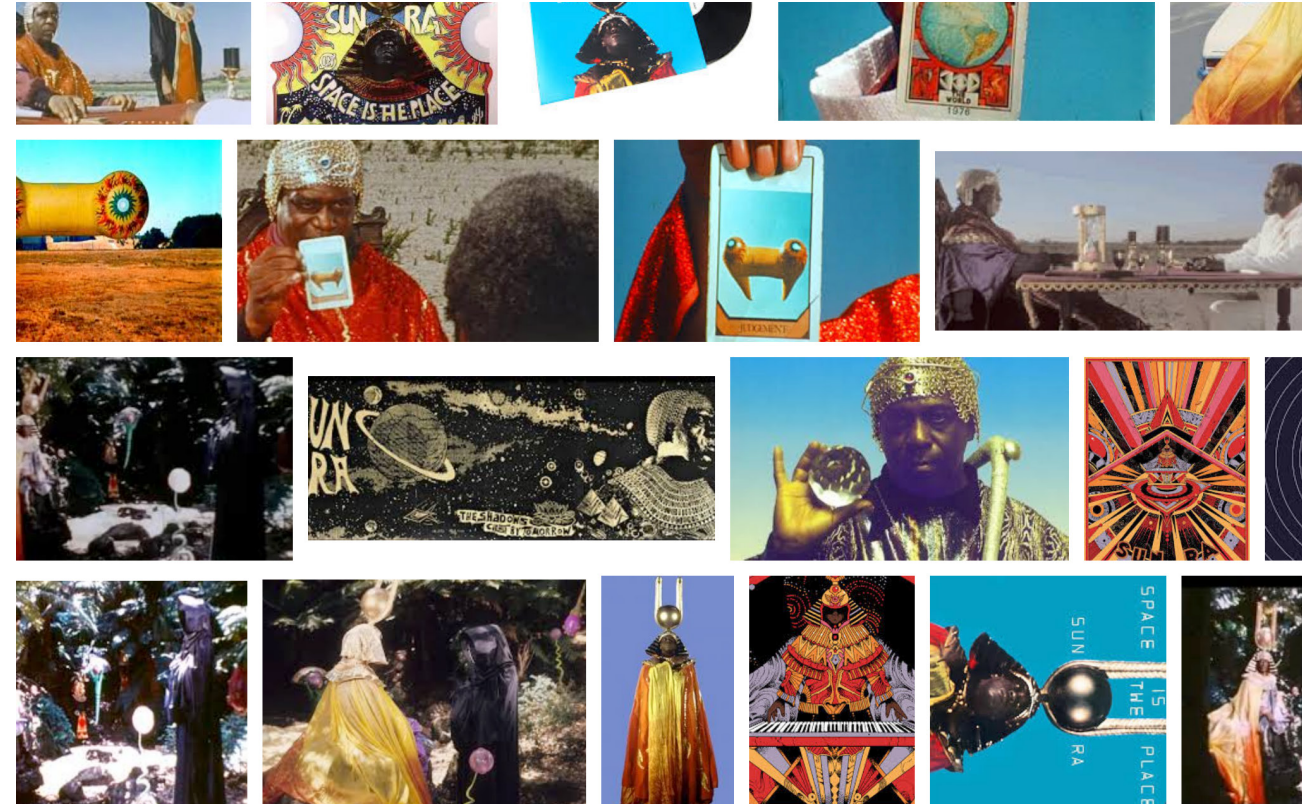
## IDEA AND RESEARCH MATERIAL

In “*Shadows of Tomorrow*” the central notion was to create the immersive experience of hearing music, but through the means of moving bodies and light. There is no music to be heard. According to Lepecki, “*by picking up sound visually, eyes become not only a kind of ear, but also a kind of hand. (...) ears that are in the eyes so that the eyes can pick a sound just as a hand picks up a rotting leaf.*”<sup>37</sup> Through freeing perception from cultural norms, which domesticate the respective sensory organs into sticking to their domain, the attempt with “*Shadows of Tomorrow*” was to open up for a synesthetic experience where stimulus could become sensation that could act directly upon the nervous system. Interestingly enough, sensorial hierarchies vary from culture to culture. In the West, sight is regarded the “highest” sense, whilst in Russia, touch is what mediates all the other senses. Hearing is sound waves touching the ear, taste is something touching the tongue and mouth, etc.<sup>38</sup> Hence, seeing sound might not be all that strange, but more a matter of tuning.

Most of us have experienced the potential immediacy of music; how it quickly moves us and produces certain states in us. This can relate to recognition and nostalgia connected to a particular music piece, and hence being linked to feelings and emotions. But it can also happen when hearing something for the first time and producing affect or an affective experience. With “*Shadows of Tomorrow*”, the exploration was if and how movement could have a similar function. A reference in this work was the piece “*We are not in this together yet*” by Juli Reinartz, which also deals with the concert situation.

“*Shadows of Tomorrow*” draws from the genre of psychedelic hip-hop in regards to aesthetics and movement material, and the attempt was to see if we could produce a psychedelic experience amongst the audience through a hallucinatory experience of music. Multiple beats move through and between the bodies in space to create numerous rhythmic layers. “*Really good music isn’t just to be heard, you know? It’s almost like a hallucination.*” (Iggy Pop)<sup>39</sup>

The performance borrows its title from a track on the album “*Madvillainy*” by Madvillain (Madlib and MF Doom), who are key figures within psychedelic hip-hop. The genre is characterised by complex sample-based beats, often obscure material, and abstract lyrics filled with unconventional references. The Madvillain track samples the psychedelic, afro-futurist Sun Ra movie “*Space is the Place*” from 1974, and “*The Shadow of Tomorrow*” is originally a Sun Ra poem:<sup>40</sup>



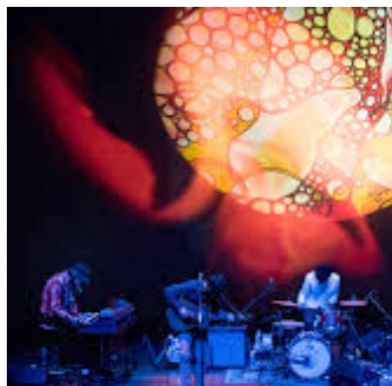
Sun Ra. Screenshot. Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

*Today is the shadow of tomorrow  
 Today is the present future of yesterday  
 Yesterday is the shadow of today  
 The darkness of the past is yesterday  
 And the light of the past is yesterday*

*The past is yesterday. . .  
 Yesterday belongs to the dead,  
 tomorrow belongs to the living*

*The wisdom of the past is the light of the past  
 The light which is to be is the wisdom of the future  
 The light of the future casts the shadows of tomorrow*

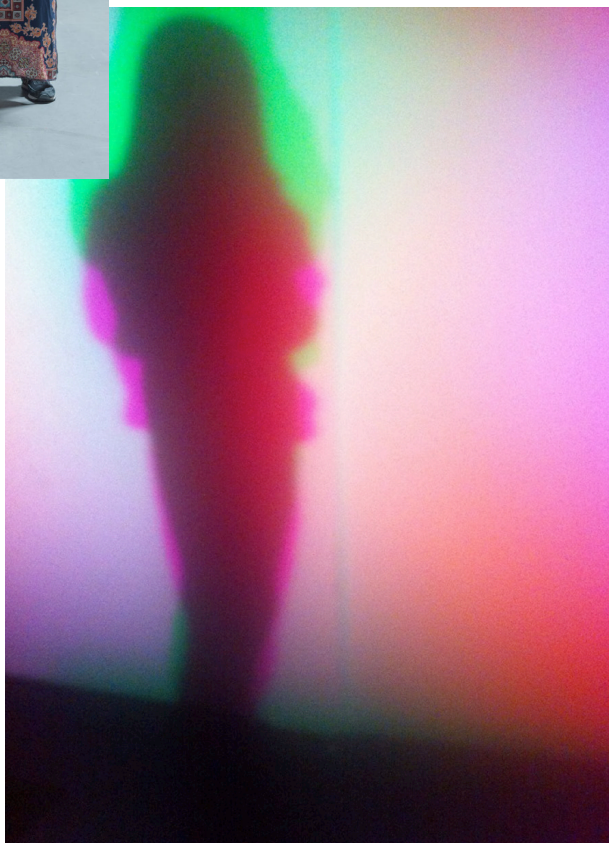




Joshua Light Show. Screenshot, Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

An influence on the light design was the legendary Joshua Light Show, which still does live, analogue(!) backdrops to a number of (psychedelic) acts. In the 60s and 70s, they did backdrops for artists such as Jefferson Airplane and Jimi Hendrix. I experienced them live in Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in 2012, performing with Norwegian improvisers Supersilent. The architecture of the concert hall was very limiting on the immersive, psychedelic experience, and the light show unfortunately felt a lot like a fancy screensaver seen from a distance. However, after the show, the JLS crew came out with the band to receive applause, and they must have been around 20 in number. The labour that goes into these analogue light shows, which now, to some extent, could have been replaced with a computer animation, is still nonetheless astonishing.





Photos: Anders Lindén, Ingri Midgard Fiksdal and Rosalind Goldberg





Photos: Ingri Midgard Fiksdal



From the left: Ingrid Haakstad, Maia Means, Fie Dam Mygind, Håkon Vadstein, Rosalind Goldberg, Nina Skogli, Roza Moshtagi, Linn Ragnarsson, Axel Rudolphi, Maike Fitjar, Charlott Utzig, Linda Wardal, Alma Bø, Magus Sparsaas, Pernille Holden, Åsne Storli, Thjerza Balaj, Sudesh Adhana, Karen Eide Bøen, Aslak Nygård, Irina Lav, Trine Lise Moe, Søren Thøgersen and Asher Lev.



### **Kinaesthetic Transference and Choreography as Assemblage**

“*Shadows of Tomorrow*” investigates the potential for kinaesthetic transference amongst the performers, as well as between performers and audience. It is common to see audience members being affected by the movement of bodies and light to the extent that they are rocking in their seats. The performance is built largely on quotidian movement (shaking, swaying, curving, crawling, rolling), which gradually transforms throughout the performance. I believe that the potential for kinaesthetic transference is larger in movement that most people are likely to have experienced in their own bodies.

The piece has been performed several times in two different versions; one where the performers are trained dancers and one where they are non-dancers. Although the movement material of the piece is always within the range of everyday movement, a group of dancers have better ability to control speed, rhythm and dynamics. A question I had was if audience members would respond more to movement closer to their own daily movement (that of non-dancers), or to that of trained bodies?

Through performing “*Shadows of Tomorrow*” in various contexts and with various casts, the answer to this question is that it doesn’t seem to matter that much. It appears as if the other vibrant matters of the assemblage such as choreography, light and costume “carry” the piece to the extent that it can be danced by very differently abled performers. This was an interesting discovery that became an example of how the potential for affect in a choreographic assemblage becomes “*distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field, rather than being a capacity localized in a human body or in a collective produced (only) by human efforts.*”<sup>41</sup>

### **Thoughts on dramaturgy**

When working on “*Shadows of Tomorrow*” an initial concern was to not refer to a specific music genre but rather to try to create our own “sound” in the sense that the movement and choreography would exist on its own premises. After all, the piece is not music or concert. We started to play with various set-ups, and looked at the relation between the classic pop/rock concert dramaturgy (which would also include the dramaturgy of a psychedelic hip-hop gig), where each song is approximately 4 minutes long, and where the vocalist talks to the audience in between the songs, and dramaturgy of a noise concert, that doesn’t have as strict parameters for how to build a set-list. The ways in which noise-artists structure their concerts are perhaps closer to conventions within choreography. You are supposedly free to do anything, but still, a lot of people tend to do more or less the same thing in regards to space, duration, number of performers, etc. (this is, of course, also a consequence of circumstances of production).

When Beyoncé performs, the fans expect specific tunes at specific moments in the concert, and recognition is queen. With “*Shadows of Tomorrow*”, we tried to (re)produce snippets of movement material that could be recognised as hits, for instance through adding a “*Hexentanz*” sample (Wigman, 1926) or a “*Fase*” sample (De Keersmaeker, 1982) or something equally iconic to our material. But in our context, this became too literal or too much of a joke.

Instead, there was a gradual drift towards a noise-concert dramaturgy where the various physical motifs were organised over long stretches of time. This was not only known territory, but also had to do with wanting to not *represent* a band, or having the performers represent musicians, which

happened quickly within a pop-concert dramaturgy. We instead wanted the movement to *be sound* in the sense of how it performed. The individual bodies in the piece became secondary to the movement of the group as a whole, which refers back to Choreography as Assemblage. With this piece, it doesn’t make that much sense to look at a single performer, as the choreography seems to happen between them. To enhance this notion, the performers are masked as a strategy to move the focus away from them as human, where they could be understood as musicians with different attitudes or positions within the band, and instead make it easier to see them as a moving mass, as performing objects.

“*Shadows of Tomorrow*” is sometimes performed in a white cube setting. This principally relates to how the colour of the walls reflects the light, not with the museum or gallery context where you pass by or choose for yourself how long to stay with the work. The dramaturgy is developed for the piece to be seen as a whole where watching a given stretch of the piece conditions the experience of the next part. This is in accordance with the choreographic principle of Minimal Composition in regards to expectation of what is to come.

### **Light design and space**

The choreographic principle of Performer as Object is enhanced by the costumes (more on this in the chapter on Choreographic Principles; Multi-Referencing) as well as the light design created by Ingeborg S. Olerud. At times we only see fragments of what goes on, and this makes it difficult to separate the bodies from one another. The light design acts as a spectral dancer that creates additional movement and rhythm through the play with multi-coloured shadows on all four walls of the performance space.



### Multi-Referencing

As elaborated in the chapter of choreographic principles, Multi-Referencing was central to developing the costumes. I would like to display this through images we referred to in the process:



Top: MIA "Bad Girls"

Right: Kenzo SS 2014

Bottom: Flying Lotus "You're Dead!"



Screenshots, Ingri Midgard Fiksdal



Also, we were not the only ones picking up on these memes. After having presented the piece, I came across these:



Top: The performance "Sexe symbole" by Jonas Chéreau and Madeleine Fournier

Right: Kenzo for H&M 2016

Bottom: Richard Quinn FW 18

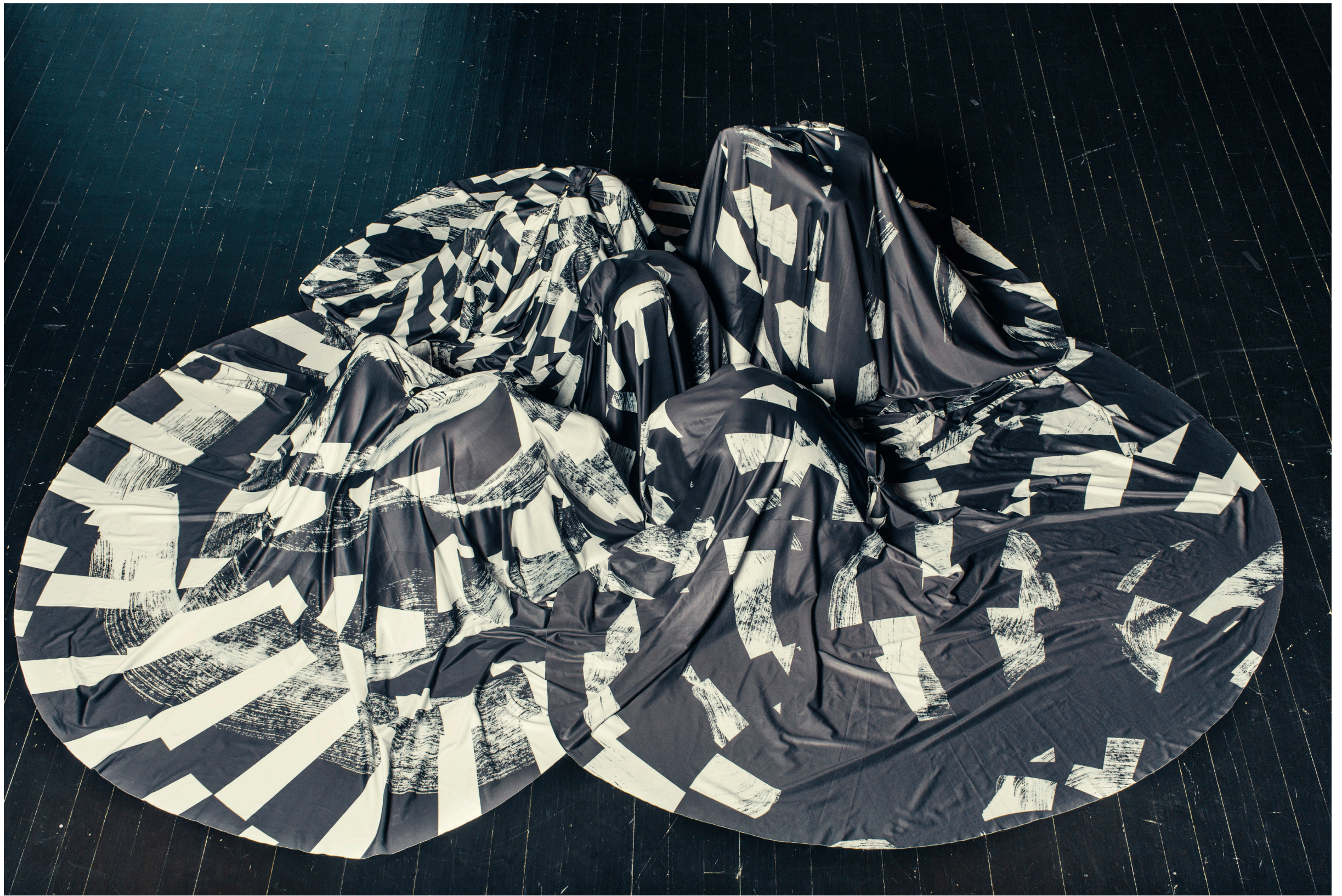


Screenshots, Ingri Midgard Fiksdal



**STATE**  
(2016)

















From the left: Nicole Schuchardt, Rannei Grenne, Eva Grainger, Nuria Guiu Sagarra, Jeffrey Young, Øyvind Wangensteen, Heida Mobeck, Rosalind Goldberg, Louis Schou Hansen, Lasse Marhaug, Anja Lauvdal, Phillip Isaksen, og Jonas Corell Petersen.

STATE  
Photo: Wolf Silveri



# STATE

(2016)

## DRY DESCRIPTION: WHAT HAPPENS?

*“STATE” is a 95-minute piece performed in a black box space. It is created in collaboration with director Jonas Corell Petersen. The seating takes shape as five sides of a hexagon surrounding the performance area. On the sixth side, musicians Anja Lauvdal and Heida Mobeck, as well as light designer Phillip Isaksen stand behind a large table filled with instruments and different electronic effect devices. In front of the table, five large skirts made from a stiff fabric with red, black and blue patterns are lined up. On top of the skirts, a few hats with long, black wigs attached are placed. The costumes are designed by Henrik Vibskov.*



Photo: Ivar Mykland / Signe Becker





Photos: Ivar Mykland / Signe Becker

*When the audience enters, the five dancers: Rosalind Goldberg, Rannei Grenne, Louis Schou-Hansen, Nuria Guiu Sagarra and Jeffrey Young are already in the space warming up, wearing different sweatshirts and jogging pants. As the audience sits down, they start serving them drinks of aquavit, together with involved producers Eva Grainger and Nicole Schuchardt. The producers wear black kimono dresses, similar to those worn by Anja, Heida and Phillip. When everybody has been served, the performers withdraw to an off-stage area to the right of the musicians, and come back in beige, short-legged unitards. They carry large capes that they put over their heads in order to form a turquoise, fabric-clad mountain of people in the centre of the space. Above their heads hangs a circular light truss with a number of lamps on it. A percussive beat starts to play. (The music is composed by Lasse Marhaug) Eva reappears with a handheld smoke machine, and lays down a thick circle of smoke surrounding the human mountain.*

*Over the course of the next 12 minutes, the mountain slowly melts to the ground, and splits into five separate lumps that float in different directions along the floor to the outskirts of the circle. Then the light changes, and a faster, more rhythmic beat is played. The performers, sitting on their knees, begin a swaying, head-banging-like sequence, where their heads gradually emerge from the capes' neck openings. The head-banging builds progressively in intensity and size of movement, but with uneven intervals, some of the performers break out of the pattern, and watch the movement for a while upon returning to it. Two of them go to put on the hats with black wigs. The head-banging develops into a sequence that takes the performers around the space close to the audience. The movement is fast-paced, jittery and spastic, upon suddenly coming to an abrupt standstill.*





*Next, the performers retreat to the off-stage area for a short while to leave their capes and hats, and then return to the skirts placed in front of the musicians' table. They put the skirts on, as well as beige, see-through hoods that cover their faces, and walk to the five corners of the hexagon-shaped performance space.*

*Here, a slow, long-lasting dance begins, that passes through a variety of vaguely recognisable styles from dance history (described in greater detail in the chapter Fictional/Real/Original/Copy). It ends with the five skirts forming a large heap on the floor, which is lifted and carried away by the performers. There is a short break where the audience is offered a refill of aquavit by Eva and Nicole. The performers are back to wearing the beige unitards, and have put on pairs of bright-red socks.*



Photo: Ivar Mykland / Signe Becker





Photo: Ivar Mykland / Signe Becker



*The break is interrupted by a sudden start of a quick movement material. The performers who stand close together in a cluster shift through space by the means of small, fast jumps. Their stretched out, straight, arm positions change on every sixth jump. For a while they move in a unison pattern, but then one, and later another performer, break with the configuration. The two stay with the rhythm of the group, but start moving the arms at gradually faster intervals. Then the group catches up on them again, and they move tightly together until collapsing the formation and forming a mass on the floor. This mass moves as some sort of worms' nest, until two groups, a trio and a duo, break free. The two groups form lines, one performer after the other, and execute two unison materials based on soft, flowing arm movements and careful walking-steps.*

*The trio exits the space, and then the duo exits as well. A tall cape-clad creature enters. It stays still for a while. Three more performers enter again. They all stick their heads underneath the cape of the tall one, which starts to "melt" into a large blob.*





*The blob starts to shake, and out of it emerge all five performers with black and white capes on. They execute small jumps, which has repercussions in the capes. Eva, yet again, circles the space with the smoke machine, and creates a thin smokescreen between the performers and the audience. The movement evolves to a swarm-like dance, where the capes take the space through the performers throwing, shaking and spinning them into various shapes and patterns.*

*In the end, they all gather in a careful swaying dance in the centre of the space, before leaving one by one. The last performer executes one last spinning movement on the spot before also leaving.*

**Video documentation:**

<https://vimeo.com/190566000>

(NB: the choreography has been changed somewhat after filming, please see footnote 42)







Photos: Ingri Midgard Fiksdal



**Approach to movement**

The work with “STATE” represented an attempt to challenge my approach to developing movement material and structure. Rather than working on the slow transformation of quotidian-like movement executed as tasks where the output would vary slightly from performance to performance, “STATE” was an investigation into dance in a more traditional understanding of the word. This meant working with set dance sequences, precise unison movement, counting, and sometimes including material where the virtuosity of the dancers could be easily recognised. As a consequence, “STATE” breaks with the other five performances of my research, and with what has come to be some sort of signature in my work. The performance still makes use of several of my choreographic principles. Multi-Referencing is a very explicit part of the piece, but the work on Kinaesthetic Transference is also highly present, especially in the many spinning-sequences.

“STATE” premiered at the steirischer herbst Festival in Graz, Austria, and Jonas and I discussed the work with dramaturge Flori Gugger. The interview is reproduced below:

**Time Warp: August 2016**

*Flori Gugger (FG): What was the starting point for your new production “STATE”?*

*Jonas Corell Petersen (JCP): The starting point of this project was the relation between rituals and the state. We think of state here as something ambiguous; the nation state is after all a relatively new idea, and in the English language state could also mean to be in a state and to state something. We are interested in figuring out how rituals take part in the creation of the state (broadly speaking) and how states manifest themselves through rituals.*

*FG: In “STATE” you look into various folkloric practices and ritual dances. What were the specific sources of inspiration? And how did you research for the project?*

*Ingri Midgard Fiksdal (IMF): We explored more than fifty contemporary as well as historical ritual dances through video, photographic records and written sources, as well as reading ritual theory from anthropology and performance studies. We also looked into the practices of Odin Teatret, Grotowski, and modern dance pioneers such as Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham and Mary Wigman, amongst others. They have all, in different ways, been inspired by rituals in their work.*

*When researching the performance we also visited two pow-wows in Quebec, Canada, to see how First Nations such as the Kahnawake and Iriquoian integrate their rituals in a contemporary context.*

*FG: Are the rituals you investigated all alive today or are some of them historical and extinct? Would you say, you transfer extinct traditions to the present or do you rather create a new kind of ritual?*

*JCP: What we have found is that rituals often change meaning and transform into new rituals as time passes. So as the historical context and societies that surround them change, the rituals change too. Historical sources have worked as an inspiration for us. We have tried to develop a new, ritual setting to induce*

*various states of mind for the audience.*

*IMF: This idea came partly from our experience in Canada, where the original meaning of a particular First Nation ritual dance has lost ground to the contemporary purpose of the pow-wow as a social gathering and celebration of First Nation culture. So people in this context are of course aware that a given dance is a war dance, and that another dance is performed to cure disease, but this now seems less important than the state of mind and feeling of community created by being together at this type of event.*

*FG: The title is “STATE”. What kind of state do you depict on stage? On what themes and topics do you focus? Did the current political situation influence your work?*

*IMF: We are interested in the micro politics that operate in the relation between rituals and the apparatus of the modern nation state: How are the workings of rituals on the state, and of the state on rituals.*

*JCP: As a backdrop to this performance, as well as in our everyday lives, we are interested in the function and structure of the state and the relation between the individual and the state.*

*IMF: So in that sense, the performance tries to suggest several different relations between state/state/state and ritual, rather than depicting one explicit state or topic.*

*JCP: In our publication “STATE STATE STATE” we have asked different people to explore the theme of state and rituals. We are hoping to expand our point of interest beyond the borders of the performance itself.*

Retrospectively, I would say that the performance in its final version primarily deals with ritual dances and the (altered) states or affects these produce the potentiality for. I believe this has to do with my overarching research into affect and how this came to dominate the project. However, as we wanted to still find an output for *the nation state/to state something/state of being* threefold we had researched, we invited a number of writers to give their takes on the topic. This was published as an anthology and is handed out to the audience when we perform.

*FG: You, Ingri, as a choreographer collaborate with director Jonas Corell Petersen, fashion designer Henrik Vibskov and sound artist Lasse Marhaug. How did you develop the performance in the collective?*

*IMF: Jonas and I initiated the project, and we started to develop the ideas in early 2015. Then, the residency in Quebec in summer 2015 helped articulate it into its current shape. Based on this, we put together a team we thought could challenge our ideas further. We wanted to see what happened if we changed around some of the parameters in regards to our “common” production logistics. So, for instance, we asked Henrik to make the costumes before we had started rehearsals or made a single movement, and this of course impacted the choreography quite a lot. Working with Lasse Marhaug, we had four instruments built, on which he developed almost twenty music sketches, which allowed us to work with these from early on. I would also like to emphasise the collaboration with the five dancers, as they are the ones who are present in rehearsals every day of the production and in that sense become the core team of the collaborative process.*



*When the movement material was more or less developed (we had three or four hours of material), the dancers, Jonas and I discussed and tested different versions of the piece in order to see what experiences and atmospheres different dramaturgical structures could produce. Lasse and musicians Anja and Heida joined in the last part of the rehearsal period, developing the music more specifically to our dramaturgical proposal, and we could adjust the use of the costumes and the movement material to the music too. In this period, we did several showings for groups of peers in order to get feedback, and to get a feeling of what the presence of an audience did to the performance situation (as this is of course crucial in a ritual).*

*FG: Besides the choreography and the costumes, the music is an essential part of "STATE". At first glance, the atmospheric noise compositions by Lasse Marhaug are quite unusual for ritual dances. What made you decide to invite him to the project?*

*JCP: I had worked with Lasse in another context, and as we were looking to find someone who could create sound and music to a contemporary ritual, where the texture of the sounds have a correlation to a contemporary state. Lasse seemed like the right composer.*

*IMF: In this performance, there is a constant play with references, recognition and representation in regards to our ideas of what a ritual can be and look like. This is particularly visible in the dance as well as in the aesthetic of the costumes and how we use them. Therefore, it seemed like a good balance to work with a composer who'd not usually go down this road too.*

*FG: What was the biggest challenge during the production process?*

*IMF: One question for me especially was to figure out what level of fiction the performance should aim for. Are we trying to pull off a "real" ritual in a theatre context? And what would real then mean? I remember reading about trance rituals and speaking in tongues amongst members of the Pentecostal movement in the US, and a central teaching here was that you have to "fake it 'till you make it". You will not just fall into possession trance without first having practised and possibly failed many times. Here, we don't work with possession trance in particular, but the idea is the same; to get into a state, or for immersion to happen, there has to be a will, and I think this will has to come from both performer and audience.*

## RESEARCH MATERIAL

I have an on-going interest in rituals and ritual dances. They have been sources of inspiration in several previous works in regards to dramaturgical structure (see the chapter on "HOODS") and to how the audience is seen as part of the performance in the sense of *willing* it (more on this in the chapter on Real ritual dance). With "STATE", this interest becomes explicit through making ritual dance *the material* of the work. I'm aware that working with existing ritual dances might be seen as a problematic thing to do in the context of cultural appropriation, which will be further discussed in the chapter Appropriation or translation. Therefore, it has been important not to take the references lightly, but treat them respectfully. This has implied a lengthy research, of which the following chapters will include a selection.

A reference for the work with "STATE" was Eszter Salamon's 2014 dance performance "*Monument 0 – Haunted by Wars (1913-2013)*". Here, Salamon uses a bank of videos of war dances as ready-mades, which she and her performers appropriate through processes of embodiment. Salamon was concerned with what types of dances make it into the (Western) canon of dance history, and "to give stage to an invisible world/dance history."<sup>43</sup>

### Ritual, affect and altered states

Ritual has been variously defined; as concept, practice, process, ideology, yearning, experience and function. Rituals are in many cases dynamic performative systems generating new materials and recombining traditional actions in new ways. Many ritual dances originated before the idea of the nation state and later on for political and ideological reasons were appropriated as national dances in order to reinforce ideas of national history, culture and identity. Ritual dances can have a cathartic or therapeutic value, or be organs of social control. The dances can also have competitive elements in order to display boundaries in society, or the opposite; to reaffirm a particular community and draw people together in solidarity.<sup>44</sup> This drawing-together is similar to one of the functions of theatre today.

The repetition, rhythmicity, exaggeration and concentration often employed in ritual dance have been influential to the choreographic principles of Kinaesthetic Transference as well as Minimal Composition. Although specific to culture and region, there seem to be some common points in regards to the overarching choreography of these events, which sensitise the sensorium and nervous system in order for both participants and spectators to be able to reach altered states.

## NOTES ON PROCESS

### The development of a performance-specific choreographic principle

A choreographic principle developed for "STATE" could be seen as subsequent to Multi-Referencing. It was called *Speculative Archaeology*, and was employed for coming up with movement material. This speculation entailed an imagined future where our current, ritual dance tradition (however that is defined) was lost, and where we would have to construct new, ritual dances through digging out descriptions, scores or photos from books alongside various video materials found online. I'm of course aware of the logical paradox of this fiction (how could the tradition be lost, but still exist online), but nonetheless wanted to apply it as a processual dogma in order to see what it could produce.

Within this fiction, a challenge was to identify ritual dance in the myriad of available information. We drew from the vast landscape of folk dance and ritual dances, music video choreographies, parades, routines from dance classes around the world posted online, opening ceremonies from the Olympic Games, rave parties, videos of amateurs performing various styles from their living rooms, etc. In accordance with the principle of Multi-Referencing, we tried to create a type of mash-up, where the referencing ideally exhausted itself and became a "new" dance.

### Real ritual dance?

Many of the ritual dances available online are staged and filmed for an audience, and in that sense removed from their "original" context. This must be seen in relation to how rituals are fluid and



evolve in contemporary culture, and not simply be dismissed as inauthentic dances. Working with “STATE” our aim was for the performance to produce the potential for affect to occur and ideally altered states amongst the audience. Whether “STATE” could be seen as *a real ritual* or not became less of a concern, because this, in my experience, is so connected to the intention of doers and watchers. Echoing the teaching of the US Pentecostal movement where “*fake it ‘till you make it*” is the strategy for achieving possession trance, *the willing* of an experience is central to getting anywhere with it. The experiments where test-persons get “drunk” on non-alcoholic placebo beverages are amusing examples of this. That being said, there has to be something within the performance that allows for or encourages the willing of an experience, and in the case of my work, this would be the playing out of the different choreographic principles.

### Appropriation or translation

In “STATE”, there are traces from about 20 different ritual dances, which we, in most cases, have transformed and mixed in order to create altered expressions. The dances are from all inhabited continents. The references are mostly palpable but held in suspension in a colloidal dance. Whilst making the piece, we kept questioning if and how we could appropriate these materials. Whilst making the piece, we kept questioning if and how we could appropriate these materials. Whose stories are these to tell? What does it mean that we are taking them on? Some examples show how we came to think of these issues:

Working in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2012, I had several chances to witness traditional Ethiopian dances often performed at clubs or restaurants, both for locals and tourists. I was especially taken by the Shoa Oromo dance, which involves an extremely fast spinning motion of the head, often performed by two women. This dance resembles a piece I had previously made in collaboration with Signe Becker and Ingvild Langgård; “*Night Tripper*”, where two women standing back to back perform different swaying motions with their heads, tossing their hair.

In my continued research into Ethiopian dance styles, I came across the Zár ritual; a dance originally believed to exorcise the evil Zár spirits that possessed individuals, particularly women, causing discomfort and illness. The dance resembles a kind of head-banging, where the women are first seated on their knees performing slow, rolling motions of the upper body, only to gradually increase speed and intensity of the movement until they are standing up, head-banging in a manner similar to that which you can see in a heavy metal concert. The dance spread through the Horn of Africa and also to the Middle East. Although technically prohibited by Islam as a pagan practice, Zár has become popular in the contemporary culture of big cities of the Islamic world such as Cairo, where it takes shape as women-only entertainment. The rituals are framed within *zar bori* parties, which can culminate in several nights of ecstatic dancing in a row. Women have frequently reported that they have been completely oblivious of their surroundings, and have felt no pain whatsoever from any bruises they might have suffered during the dancing. A theory is that the contemporary version of Zár provides a unique form of relief to women in strict patriarchal societies.<sup>45</sup>

Zár is also practised by belly dancers around the world. It is difficult to say how close these show practices are to the authentic practice. However, as Zár is a widespread ritual, it is perhaps impossible to talk about it as an authentic practice in the first place. It is interesting how the purpose of the practice can be both the exorcism of spirits, a women-only form of entertainment, a cathartic women’s ritual in cultures which are largely male dominant, as well as something that is performed as entertainment for a general audience by professional belly dancers.

The above influence how the appropriation of the Zár ritual dance can be understood in the context of “STATE”. Zár already has at least four different uses in contemporary culture. It also produces a manifold of associations in popular culture that come to mind amongst audience members, such as the already described head-banging (metal concerts), or the creature from the Japanese horror movie “*The Ring*”, to mention but a few.

*Night Tripper*. Photo: Signe Becker



*The Ring*  
Screenshots, Ingrid Midgard Fiksdal



Head-banging



Zár

I believe in fluidity within culture and cultural expressions, and that culture can be both evolved and preserved at the same time. The problem, in the light of colonial history, arises when a dominant culture appropriates an element of a (suppressed) minority culture in order to make money or gain visibility, but where the appropriator doesn’t have to live any of the hardships experienced by the appropriated. An example here could be a white American (or Norwegian politician Siv Jensen for that matter) using a traditional First Nation headdress for a party, without considering the history and symbolic meaning of the object, as well as the sufferings experienced by First Nation people. The crux here is, to quote writer Anna Holmes:



*“(...) what is cultural appropriation and (what is) exchange? Determining such a distinction is also, as with so many things, dependent on intent. Appropriations are expressions of ignorance or aggression, when objects, ideas, lived experiences or points of view are not so much examined as exploited and performed. Exchanges, conversely, suggest a certain sort of generosity, an openness to discussion and an invitation to reciprocity.”<sup>46</sup>*

Critical theorist Homi Bhabha suggests the word translation as an alternative to describe forms of cultural exchange and intersection. Translation proposes interpretation and relocation of something anterior:

*“Unlike appropriation, translation is a relationship that does not immediately give default value to some kind of original; the anterior is not seen as the “appropriate” or “original” text. By avoiding such false assumptions, you can actually begin to understand whether or not you think the appropriation in any give instance is just or unjust, or inaccurate, or insulting, provocative or problematic, or reductive.”<sup>47</sup>*

Bhabha also proposes that there will be translational and interpretational changes in an anterior text, a work or a dance, through time and displacement, across cultures as well as within one culture (as the different translations of Zár exemplify). Things come from different places, through different forms of media, different histories, and converge in a place/idea/image. This will in itself become a new moment of anteriority from which new translations will emerge. However, as Bhabha points out, to understand the “original” or “authentic” as translational is not to disregard agency or power or conflict. It is important to remember that the tragic history of colonialism and oppression is relational, and that everyone has to take responsibility for that history.<sup>48</sup> According to Franz Fanon (in the words of Bhabha), if there is to be change, the change is not only going to come through the *“justified and courageous resistance of those who are oppressed. It is also going to have to displace the positions of hegemony and oppression”*.<sup>49</sup> In this light one has to consider what Holmes refers to as the intent behind the use of a given material: *“What is facile, self-aggrandizing, narcissistic appropriation? And what is the questing and questioning translation?”*<sup>50</sup>

### **Fictional/Real/Original/Copy**

Approaching the anterior as a translation in itself, I return to Aby Warburg’s *“Mnemosyne Atlas”* (see the chapter on Multi-Referencing), as well as the idea that the body can only do so much. There are limits to human movement. Through the translation of about 20 ritual dances, as an unforeseen consequence, *“STATE”* has become some sort of subjective dance history. Translating a dance performed by the Egungun spirit of Benin and Nigeria creates feelings of reminiscence to the Mexican Jarabe Tapatío dance, the Serpentine Dance by Loie Fuller, as well as the Fancy Shawl dance performed by several tribes of First Nation people in North America. A translation of the dance-meditation Cham from Bhutan seems to contain the *port de bras* and *epaulement* of classical ballet or the Maibi dance of the Manipuri priestesses from India. In rehearsals, different linages of dance history through space and time started to occur. The concepts of the fictional, real, original and copy co-exist in one and the same dance, as a collective reworking. Playwright Charles Mee writes:

*“Sometimes some of us write about our own innermost lives, believing that, then we have written something truly original and unique. But, of course, the culture writes us first, and then we write our stories. (...) Whether we mean to or not, the work we do is both received and created, both an adaptation and an original, at the same time.”*

Photo: Anders Lindén



Photo: Wolf Silveri



**Diorama**

(2017)

















*Photo: Ingri Midgard Fiksdal*



# Diorama

(2017)

## DRY DESCRIPTION: WHAT HAPPENS?

*“Diorama” is a site-specific performance that is reworked in each new place it is performed. It is 50 minutes long. Here is a description of the version made for the beach Huk on Bygdøy in Oslo in March 2018, on a sunny day (we also performed in heavy snowfall).*



Photo: Ingri Midgard Fiksdal



*The audience arrives by a city bus, and walk for five minutes to get to the site. On site, they are offered hot tea and thick blankets, and we have prepared benches for them standing in one long row, stretching through the landscape. From the benches they have a view out over the beach and the Oslo fjord. The city centre is to their far left, Nesodden straight across the fjord, and Fornebu and Sandvika to their right. The site is covered in snow, and the temperature is just below freezing.*



Photos: Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

*The landscape just in front of the audience consists of a field covered in snow. On each side of the field there are small beaches, and in the middle of their vision as well as to the far left side, there are rocky formations sloping down into the water.*







Photo: Istvan Virag

*As part of the landscape, we start to notice a number of blob-like figures. Some are close by, whilst others are as far as a hundred meters away, and are barely seen. Their colours range from black to blue and grey, to gold and silver. The blobs are all made from sequin fabric, which reflects the sun and the colours surrounding them. Inhabiting them are performers Harald Beharie, Pernille Holden, Rannei Grenne, Louis Schou-Hansen and Jeffrey Young, as well as the extras Jens Martin Hartvedt Arvesen, Rosalind Goldberg, Sigrid Hirsch Kopperdal, Julie Moviken, Magdalene Solli and Venke Sortland. The blobs/ costumes are designed by Fredrik Floen.*

*A drone-like sound starts playing from three speakers placed behind the row of benches (Jenny Hval and Lasse Marhaug have composed the music). Gradually we notice small movement in the blobs, as if they are floating slowly through the landscape. Our attention also goes to boats passing by, flocks of birds, how the water washes the shore and the drift of clouds in the sky. Returning our gaze to the blobs, something might have changed in regards to their shape or exact placement without us noticing how it happened.*

*The music changes into a whispering sound. Some of the blobs have gathered into larger blobs that start to rise up in the landscape, forming a small mountain. Later they spread again and start covering more of the field straight in front of us. A helicopter passes by, and a ship that creates large waves. We listen to how the sound of the water hitting the shore blends into the music. The setting sun reappears from behind a cloud, and suddenly all the blobs sparkle. Then the light changes again as the sun disappears behind the new buildings at Fornebu.*

*A high singing noise in the music makes the blobs gradually transform into spear-like ghostly creatures, stretching towards the sky. Then they return to their blob shapes, settling back into the landscape. As the piece finishes (marked by the end of the music), dusk arrives with a large cruise ship approaching from the far right.*

**Video documentation:**<sup>52</sup>

<https://vimeo.com/241304153>

<https://vimeo.com/289464419>

(NB: the choreography has been changed somewhat after filming, please see footnote 52)

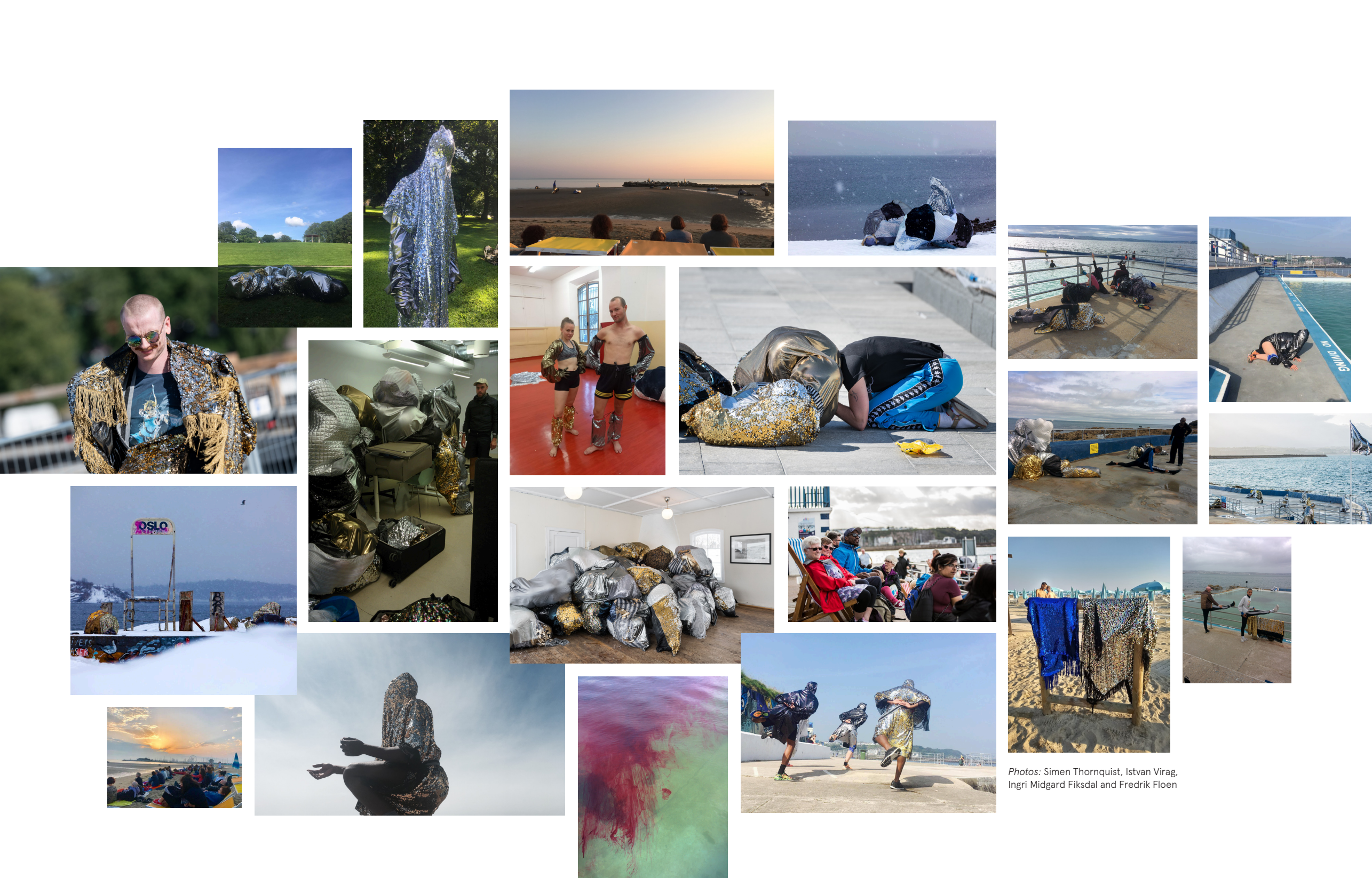


Photo: Istvan Virag



Photo: Simen Thornquist



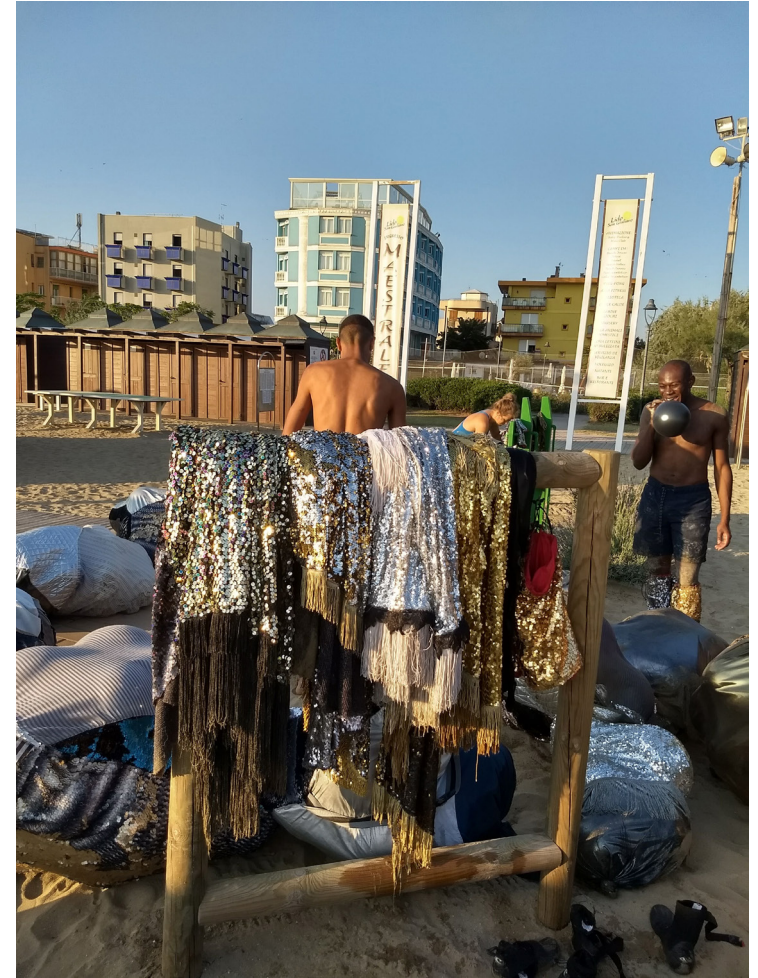


Photos: Simen Thornquist, Istvan Virag, Ingri Midgard Fiksdal and Fredrik Floen





Photos: Ingri Midgard Fiksdal





## IDEA

With the Diorama performance series, particular views of natural and urban landscapes in various cities and contexts are “staged”. The word diorama means *through that which is seen*, from the Greek di- (through) + orama (that which is seen, a sight). Diorama often refers to a three-dimensional model of a landscape, such as those displayed in museums of natural history. Another use of the word is for the French diorama theatre invented by Louis Daguerre in 1822, where the audience were sat watching large landscape paintings transform through skilfully manipulated light. Later, sound effects and live performers were added to the images.<sup>53</sup>

“*Diorama*” invites a meditation on well-established dichotomies such as dead/living, human/non-human and culture/nature through a being-with a given landscape and observing the gradual changes that take place there. As a consequence, the choreography is slow and minimal. It tries to become part of the landscape, whilst simultaneously drawing attention to it. According to theatre scholar Ana Vujanovic, landscape dramaturgy “*is about the slow pace and not exactly the straightforward journey. (...) I also visualize an unstructured, vast panorama where I am surrounded by things or find myself amongst physical objects, living organisms, signs, thoughts, and affects as one of them...*”<sup>54</sup> I’m aware that Vujanovic here refers to a horizon of thinking rather than an explicit landscape, but the way she conceives of landscape dramaturgy still resonates a lot with “*Diorama*”.

On one level, “*Diorama*” could be seen as a reaction to “*STATE*”. With “*STATE*” I attempted an approach, which breaks with the choreographic principles of Minimal Composition and Performer as Object. “*Diorama*” functions as a reorientation towards these principles through employing them extensively.

## RESEARCH MATERIAL

### The Speculative Turn

Anthropocentrism as way-of-life has taken us into the Anthropocene, or the sixth “*Age of Mass Extinction*”.<sup>55</sup> The Anthropocene is the name of the geological epoch we are living in, and has officially been dated as starting in 1945.<sup>56</sup> It is marked by humans becoming a geophysical force changing the environment of the planet through CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, filling the sea with plastic and the earth with fertiliser, using nuclear bombs, and much more besides. Within the Anthropocene, a number of trans-disciplinary discourses have arisen.

Whilst continental philosophy of the last century understands reality as a correlate of human thought, the recent Speculative Turn ponders the nature of reality independently of thought and humanity.<sup>57</sup> Common denominators are either a critique of the humanist ideal of “Man” as the universal representative of the human (Post-humanism), or a critique of species hierarchy and an advancing of bio-centred egalitarianism (Post-anthropocentrism).<sup>58</sup> The thinkers of The Speculative Turn try to meet the ecological crises, developments in neuroscience and physics, as well as the narrowing gap between human and machine.

The *vital materiality* of Jane Bennett is particularly interesting to me, as it offers a stimulating approach to affect within the Post-anthropocentric turn. We have the habit of separating the world into matter (it, things) and vibrant life (us, beings), which Bennett claims hinders us from

recognising the vitality of matter; the capacity of things. She draws on a Spinozist notion of affect, which refers broadly to the capacity of *any body* for activity and responsiveness. Impersonal affect or material vibrancy is not a separate “life force” animating the matter said to house it. Instead, affect is equated with and inherent to materiality.<sup>59</sup> “*Materiality is as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as much intensity as extension.*”<sup>60</sup>

This informs the work with “*Diorama*” and how the relations between human and non-human vibrant matter are formed within the piece. It also suggests new entry points to the performances of my research and the formulation of Choreography as Assemblage, and the subsequent Performer as Object (more in the respective chapters).

## NOTES ON PROCESS

“*Diorama*” was initially a commission by English live-art organisation Situations for a seaside swimming pool in Brixham, a small fishing village on the English Riviera (“*Diorama for Shoalstone Pool*”). I had some previous experience with site-specific work in nature with “*Night Tripper*” (2012)<sup>61</sup>, from which what stood out for me was to not try to compete with the surroundings in regards to the audiences’ attention, but instead try to blend in or be-with.

### Dogmas for creation

A point of interest was to develop the being-with nature. A set of dogmas were created for the performance to stop myself from deviating in rehearsal whenever I started to doubt the idea or feel that we were getting bored with all the slowness it entailed. Where my choreographic principles correspond with the dogmas, they are put in brackets:

- The audience are sat overlooking a panoramic view.
- The performers are placed far away from the audience, and could also be accessible to passers-by.
- The choreographic work is subtle, and close to blending in with the view completely (Minimal Composition).
- The performance is co-constituted by what happens in the surroundings; wind, waves, tide, temperature, birds, boats, helicopters, by-passers, etc. (Choreography as Assemblage).
- The human performer is never directly visible (Performer as Object).

### Developing movement material

Relating to how the total performance was a co-constitution of performers, sound and surroundings, we worked with the elements’ influence on the bodies of the human performers to generate movement material. The landscape becomes a total body, and the bodies become landscapes. This fusion between environment and corporality became new objects that merged aquatic movement with mineral stillness, which connects to “*The Naïve Ambition of Vital Materialism*”. Here, Bennett encourages us to revisit and become temporally infected by superstition, animism, vitalism and anthropomorphism; a childhood sense of the world as filled with all sorts of animate beings, as a tactic to treat non-humans such as animals, plants, and earth as well as commodities more carefully, strategically and ecologically.<sup>62</sup>



This inkling generated a number of movement tasks. Here are examples of three of them, which we ended up using in the performance:

- A. Deep Time stop-motion. Deep Time is the concept of geologic time, the time of the earth. This task was a speculation on the movement of the stone masses surrounding the pool in Brixham, which in ancient times had also been a seawater basin, and then in recent years “improved” by humans and concrete. The performers would develop very slow movement phrases that were the stop-motion “films” of millions of years of that local, geological development. When explaining the tempo of movement to the performers, I used the example of Eszter Salamon’s piece “*NVSBL*” where the dancers move so slowly that there is no movement to be seen, only change. Although in “*Diorama*”, we ended up at a slightly quicker pace. Choreographer Maria Hassabi often refers to her slow-moving work as geology rather than choreography, which also relates to “*Diorama*”.
- B. Wave dance. The performers would simply start off by creating a wavy motion in their bodies. The motion would build from almost invisible to the largest possible and then back down again, whilst transforming to a second wave of a different shape within the body. Then this could keep going, and every time a new wave was initiated, it would be placed differently, in just one or in several body parts at the same time. The performers could also use different levels and planes in space. Whenever involving stretched-out arms in this task, we would refer to them as seaweed. This material is quite similar to the movement in “*Shadows of Tomorrow*”.
- C. Moving Muddle. This task involved creating a fixed shape in space involving two or more bodies. Then this shape started to “melt” and glided across the ground as a muddled mound, until crystallising into a new, fixed shape. This task took (visual) inspiration from Claire Denis’ “*Beau Travail*” as well as Shirin Neshat’s “*Rupture*” as two examples of works that feature people who become almost sculptural shapes in wide landscapes (although the content of the three works are very different).

All of these three materials provided a multiplicity of compositional possibilities, which were tested, and became constitutional to the piece. A lot of tasks are not mentioned here, as the material was never included.

### **The Blobs**

Costume designer Fredrik Floen developed the costumes and props, referred to as the blobs. They participated in the total masking of the performers, transforming them to large, glittery formations in the landscape. The blobs were central to shaping the movement material. Ideally, there wouldn’t be any difference in the movement of the blob-props and the performer-blobs moving them; they would form new entities.

When collecting different writings for this text, I found the following list on how I wanted the costumes to perform in my notes for “*Cosmic Body*”, and was struck by the extent of which it instead describes “*Diorama*”:

- The costume changes the dancer’s body and creates “new bodies”, especially when the dancers move.

- The movement of the costume becomes as important, or more important, than the movement of the body. The choreography becomes of costumes/ objects as much as of humans.
- The costumes become scenographic objects within the performance. The full volume of the costume becomes visible through the movement of the dancers; as something which can fold and unfold.
- Try out compositions where the costumes form large shapes or formations; “new bodies” or objects when the dancers move close together. They can become big piles of fabric that are transformed through movements such as a unison lifting of arms or sinking together on the floor, or moving in particular patterns close together (cosmic bodies...).
- Make the costumes light to wear.

This example shows the circularity of the artistic process, where the return of ideas (or recurrence of confederate matter to speak through Jane Bennett) could be what produces the particularity of expression over time.



## Recurrent Challenges

There are a number of recurrent challenges in production as well as when the performances reach the audience. To avoid repetition, I address them in this summarising chapter, as they tend to be similar for all the productions.

A personal challenge is to navigate between *willing* the performance whilst watching, and at the same time being critical of the material and continuing to develop it in order to elevate the potentiality for affect to occur. When working with relative monotony, an approach I have learnt to use through this project is to try to keep in mind how my early impressions of a given material or the timing of something were, rather than how it feels when I have seen it fifty times and want to change it or speed it up because I'm getting impatient. There is a constant figuring-out of which impulses to follow that will serve my overall intention in regards to the audience, and which stem from other irrelevant places and should be shut down. The development and articulation of my choreographic principles have helped me to navigate in these impulses through providing an overarching framework that reaches beyond, for instance, impatience on a given day in rehearsal.

A consequence of this continuous attempt to empathise with the audience when watching sometimes means letting the performers figure out inside strategies to the movement themselves. I believe this is an area that could benefit from my continued involvement in the development of the work.

Another challenge which partly stems from the above is that the performers get tired with the work or disagree on the direction it is taking. The movement material is monotonous and sometimes strenuous due to slowness and repetition, and there is seldom a chance to display skills in a traditional sense. The performers don't get constant, imaginative input from me in order to help the inside experience, as I'm usually consumed figuring out "the big picture". Often their faces aren't even seen. I realise I could in some cases have been better at communicating what type of performance this would be when asking people to join the team, however, I don't always know in advance. In several cases, I have needed to make dogmas for myself in regard to staying strictly with the choreographic intention and resisting this type of pressured situation occurring when working on something I knew was of descending interest to some of the people involved. However, having had this experience a few times, the performers of "*Deep Field*" (premiered on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018), have upon being asked to join been informed that the piece will consist of nothing but running. Starting from this clear-cut premise has helped to avoid disappointment in how the performers perceive the work.



In some cases, the choreographic principles push members of the audience really far out, rather than drawing them in. The work is too slow and tedious and they are sat slumped in their seat, rolling their eyes or giggling with a friend. They find the situation difficult and uninteresting. The performances are not to everyone's liking.

An unresolved challenge within the research is that it is quite impossible to know if I ever manage to produce autonomous affect amongst the audience, as it is pre-cognitive. I knew this from the beginning, and circumvented the dilemma through making my project one of finding "*choreographic principles that create the potentiality for affect to occur*"; rather than finding "*choreographic principles that create affect*". However, I couldn't help but feel that I should be able to know more about the autonomous affect in itself, and tried to use interview as a method. After each of the performances, I talked to five people who had seen the piece, and who were somewhat informed of my project (other choreographers, artists, musicians, scholars, etc.). But I wasn't able to get them to speak in ways where I'd get a feeling of whether there had been affect in the picture. It could be that I didn't employ the right interview techniques, that the people I talked with hadn't actually been affected, or perhaps this is an example that illustrates exactly how autonomous affect takes place on the outside of language. As a consequence, the interview material has not been used in this text. Instead, I tried to carefully consider the times I believe I have had affective experiences in the meetings with other peoples' performances, in order to let them inspire analogues structures in my own work. In the chapter The Mesh, I will provide some examples of this that inform the discussion on affect that follows there.



## 5. THE MESH

In this final chapter, I would like to share some of the thought-movement of my research. As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, the processes of making performances and reading and thinking are entangled within this research to the degree where I have started to refer to them as the *doing* of movement-thought and thought-movement. I understand these as producing one another, rather than seeing either as an anterior from which the other springs. The movement-thought of the research, I believe might best be disseminated through the performances. The attempt of this text is to share the thought-movement that has been interwoven with the development of my choreographic principles and performances, as well as through The National Research School in Choreography, Stipendiatforum and the work on seminars. The title of this chapter, The Mesh, refers to a mesh as an *interlaced structure*. It also relates to how Timothy Morton employs the term to describe how everything in ecological thought is interconnected.<sup>63</sup>

This 5-year research process has not been a straight, chronological line of progress where things build neatly on top of each other. I move in circles. I repeat myself. I contradict myself. Paradoxical ideas coexist within the work. I don't see my research or myself as some autonomous or unitary subject, but instead as a process of becoming; a series of transitions. Being inclined to see this as a flaw, many things fell into place for me when introduced to the idea of diffraction. Diffraction is Donna Haraway's term for a reading method that is neither negatively critical (dismissive) nor reflexive (identity-political). It is a strategy that, according to Iris van der Tuin, does justice to the cracks in the academic canon. When encountering a performance by Bouchra Ouizguen, or writings by Siri Hustvedt, there is a chance that an interpellation or affect caused by this encounter takes place *prior* to my position as choreographer, my feminist stance or Ouizguen's and Hustvedt's canonical representation. This interpellation or affect is a diffractive moment, which again shapes insight and knowledge production.<sup>64</sup> Sometimes, what can come out are new configurations between seemingly opposite schools of thought.

My engagement with diffraction was initially some form of subconscious approach. To read diffractively isn't necessarily something I actively do, but rather describes how I am affected by the text *and* the act of reading; a transversal connection made in the encounter with something that resonates with me or amplifies something I know. To scribble "*Diorama*" in the margins of a text by Jane Bennett could be seen as a diffractive moment that may have unforeseen consequences in regards to the analysis of this particular performance.<sup>65</sup>

### FROM THE BODY

The background for the initial engagement with affect (theory) was a growing interest in how choreography could move the audience on a sensorial level. I had started to investigate what



choreography could *do* to the audience, and how it could create experiences and meaning, which were outside of language. This was inspired by ideas of embodied cognition:

*"Many features of cognition are embodied in that they are deeply dependent upon characteristics of the physical body of an agent, (...) (which play) a constitutive role, in that agent's cognitive processing."*<sup>66</sup>

This suggests on the one hand that an audience is capable of receiving and cognitively processing choreography through being physical, sensible, thinking bodies; that our physical experience of the world affects how we think, and that the thinking is formed by the specificity of that individual, given body. On the other hand, embodied cognition can also be understood as the "thinking" that happens in the body in itself on a precognitive level. According to Graham Harman:

*"(...) we humans sometimes convince ourselves that knowledge is the only kind of cognitive activity worth pursuing, and thus we place a high value on knowledge (what a thing is) and practical know-how (what a thing does), while ignoring cognitive activities that do not translate as easily into literal prose terms. Among the exceptions to this reign of knowledge, art comes immediately to mind, since the primary role of art is not to communicate knowledge about its subject matter."*<sup>67</sup>

Although I find no interest in claiming a *primary role* for art in general, my primary interest corresponds with Harman and lies particularly in those (embodied) cognitive processes that happen in the outskirts or on the outside of language and knowledge. Yet still, I do believe these processes to be formative in regards to the potentiality for affect as well as for the creation of *new* knowledge.

## AFFECT THEORY: THE MASSUMI DIRECTION

In *The Affective Turn* of the mid-1990s a number of scholars in the humanities started to explore ways of understanding spheres of experience which fall outside of rhetoric and semiotic dominant paradigms of representation. Here, embodied cognition becomes central.

One can identify at least two main strands within affect theory (The Affect Theory Reader operates with eight). The first emphasised here is often ascribed to political philosopher Brian Massumi, and builds on Deleuze's Spinozist ethology of bodily capacities:<sup>68</sup>

*"L'affect (Spinoza's affectus) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. L'affection (Spinoza's affection) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting body..."*<sup>69</sup>

Compared to feelings and emotions, which according to Massumi are seen as respectively personal and social, affects are more abstract as they are prior to or outside of human consciousness and cannot fully be realised through language. Affects are the body's way of preparing for action in a given context by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience. The body has its own grammar, which cannot be fully grasped by language because it experiences on a different level of meaning.<sup>70</sup>

This strand of affect theory and its quest to understand spheres of experience corresponds well with my initial interest in embodied cognition, "choreography-in-itself", and what choreography can *do*. This has to be seen in the context of European contemporary dance and choreography of the 1980s and 1990s, where there was a tendency to think about the components of a performance in semiotic categories as the "texts" of a performance (verbal text, movement, costume, music, etc.). From around 2000, the focus of several contemporary choreographers shifted to how a performance creates affect or the specific experience it produces in a particular context, rather than primarily looking at what its different components *mean*. This implied moving away from symbol, representation and interpretation; to leave behind the notion that the work points to a particular meaning outside of itself. Some examples of artists that I consider to have worked explicitly in this way are Mette Ingvartsen (especially in her Artificial Nature Series, (2009-2012)) and Mårten Spångberg ("*La Substance, but in English*" (2014), "*The Internet*" (2015), "*NATTEN*" (2016) and more). This approach to choreography also relates to older works of the members of the Judson Dance Theatre in the 1960s, who in reaction to the dominant, expressive theatre-dance of the era, started focusing on dance-in-itself; the movement of the body and what this produced.

In a lecture given by Deleuze on Spinoza's concept of affect, he states that

*"Spinoza tells us: above all do not believe that affectus as I conceive it depends on the comparison of ideas. He means that the idea indeed has to be primary in relation to the affect, the idea and the affect are two things which differ in nature, the affect is not reducible to an intellectual comparison of ideas, affect is constituted by the lived transition or lived passage from one degree of perfection to another, insofar as this passage is determined by ideas; but in itself it does not consist in an idea, but rather constitutes affect."*<sup>71</sup>

Following this line of thought in my work on affect, choreographic ideas that exist as principles and practices can be conceived. However, as affect differs in nature and is not reducible to an idea, one can only claim to produce the *affection* (Spinoza) that envelops the affect, or *the potentiality* for affect to occur (which is how this is usually phrased in this text), not affect in itself. Spinoza sees affection as "*the instantaneous effect of an image or a thing on me. For example, perceptions are affections.*"<sup>72</sup> *Affect*, on the other hand, occurs within the change of intensity in the transition from one state to another.

One could claim that affect happens all the time, and that we are always in some form of large or small transition between states. Most of the time, these states will be known to us (even if the transition in itself is outside of cognition), and we might recognise our different capacities to act. Once in a while though, we transition into *something* which is new to us, and where affect plays a life changing part (if ever so slightly). And it is this *unknowable something* that is my point of interest with respect to affect.

## SCRATCHING ON THINGS

My encounter with an *unknowable something* in the performance "*Scratching on Things I Could Disavow: A History of Art in the Arab World*"<sup>73</sup> by Walid Raad (2011, Kunstenfestivalaal in Brussels) can serve as an illustration. The piece is disguised as a lecture performance, and starts with Raad himself giving a talk on a new pension fund for artists. The fund is based on Warhol's principle



of 15 minutes of fame, and would allow all artist-members to make money from artworks being sold on the international art market.

For the next section of the performance, we move to another part of the space. Raad starts to talk about an exhibition he was to hold in Beirut, where he had shipped his artworks to the gallery for mounting upon his own arrival. When he arrived at the gallery, all his works were there, but they had shrunk into miniatures on the walls. At this point in the performance, I'm puzzled and I don't quite understand if this is something that had actually happened as a prank performed by the gallery, or if the lecture performance suddenly is making a turn to fiction. Moving further into the performance space, we arrive at a wall painted with different blocks of colour. Raad starts talking again, but now it is hard to grasp the coherence of his argument. He ceases to speak in full sentences, and gestures nonsensically towards the different colour blocks. My initial response is confusion. I don't know how to place this experience. It doesn't correspond with any of my pre-acquired knowledge. At that time, I found no words to describe the transition it caused in me, and the new state I found myself in.

### AFFECT THEORY: THE TOMKINS SCHOOL

The other main direction within affect theory is known as the Silvan Tomkins' psychobiology of differential affects (1962).<sup>74</sup> A central discussion between the two directions of affect theory is whether it makes sense to separate affects from feelings and emotions. Whilst Massumi's interest in affect lies in its autonomy from language and culture, the Tomkins School sees a larger value of affect when being discursive; hence not separated from feelings and emotions. Within gender studies, queer- and postcolonial theory, autonomous affect has no use-value, as it doesn't take into consideration how privilege, gender, race and sexuality create difference in society.<sup>75</sup> Maggie Nelson touches upon what I understand as a conflict between the discourses where one side wants to talk about "universals", whilst the other side argues that we need to acknowledge that there are different perspectives with different degrees of privilege:

*"I'd say that the simple fact that she's a lesbian (referring to Judith Butler) is so blinding for some, that whatever words come out of her mouth - whatever words come out of the lesbian's mouth, whatever ideas spout from her head - certain listeners hear only one thing: lesbian, lesbian, lesbian. It's a quick step from there to discounting the lesbian - or, for that matter, anyone who refuses to slip quietly into a "postracial" future that resembles all too closely the racist past and present - as identitarian, when it's actually the listener who cannot get beyond the identity that he has imputed to the speaker. Calling the speaker identitarian then serves as an efficient excuse not to listen to her, in which case the listener can resume his role as speaker. And then we scamper off to yet another conference with a keynote by Jacques Rancière, Alan Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, at which we can mediate on Self and Other, grapple with radical difference, exalt the decisiveness of the Two, and shame the unsophisticated identitarians, all at the feet of yet another great white man pontificating from the podium, just as we've done for centuries."*<sup>76</sup>

Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed sees the separation between the discursive and the non-discursive/autonomous as a construction that needs investigation in itself. She points out how affects are influenced by cultural norms, prejudice and anticipation. If a parent tells a child that she needs

to stay away from a dangerous object, the child will probably experience fear when seeing the object in mention.<sup>77</sup> This affect however, is not prior to language; it stems from already acquired knowledge. Ahmed's concern is to figure out how affects are politicised and inscribed in particular cultural or social contexts. But the child's fear that Ahmed here describes as an affect, would be considered a feeling with Massumi, and not part of his discussion on affect.

With this in mind, I return to my experience of the performance "*Scratching (...)*". Walid Raad's work is often seen as highly intellectual and explicitly political. It deals with the writing of (Lebanese) history, the representation of traumatic events, and the financialisation of the art market, to mention just a few themes. His works are packed with layers of meaning and knowledge, whilst at the same time functioning on an affective level (in my experience). But could my experience of "*Scratching (...)*" be seen as affective in the Massumian sense, or according to the Tomkins School? What caused the affect? Did it have to do with my acquired knowledge of the lecture as a genre, and the following bafflement when it didn't play up to my anticipations? If so, does the affect stay inscribed in knowledge and language and thus fall into the discursive affect category? I'm unsure. Following Ahmed I could also ask, whether the autonomous/discursive-binary is of any use to me at all?

### ESCAPE, MEANING, INTERPRETATION, POETRY

Within my own work, it is useful to operate with both categories of affect, or to work diffractively with the two. Developing my research, my experience is that it is impossible to escape meaning, representation and interpretation completely, although the choreographic principles are set up in order to create potentiality for that escape. One aspect of representation would be how my choreographies in most cases are highly scripted, the consequence being that the performers execute and repeat what we have agreed on when rehearsing and making the piece. This already implies that there is no escaping the material manifestation of the working process within the performance, and that rehearsed choreography always exists within the realm of representation. Moreover, the human body does not have an unlimited vocabulary. There are only so many movements and qualities it can perform (although a few performers seem to possess otherworldly abilities). Lastly, the human brain is highly trained to look for and interpret meaning in the sense of information in everything it encounters, which needs to be considered.

There is inspiration in Franco Berardi's concept of poetry as a tool of resistance. A central aspect of the development of my choreographic principles has been to figure out how they can be used to convey to the audience *to allow for opacity/it isn't about interpretation/it isn't about decoding meaning*. The purpose of this is for the audience to be able to zoom in on the physical experience of watching and being-with the work. In current times, there is a general idea that language should be as efficient and transparent as possible, in order for a given piece of information to get to the receiver quickly and easily. Berardi claims that this stems from the abolishment of the gold standard in 1971, which allowed for a separation of economy and finance. This endorsed a parting of value and sign that has accelerated the idea of efficiency in circulation of information. Everything should be understandable, productive and functional.<sup>78</sup> However, we cannot reduce language to meaning, as we need to also consider the affective potentiality of materiality (*how something is said*), as this touches us even ahead of understanding, and affects how we understand something.<sup>79</sup> This resonates with the notion of a diffractive moment. Berardi proposes poetry as



a way to resist the operationality of language, and to enhance sensitivity to/in the world.

Susan Sontag addresses how “*interpretation, based on the highly dubious theory that a work of art is composed of items of content, violates art. It makes art into an article for use, for arrangement into a mental scheme of categories*”.<sup>80</sup> She describes the conditions of modern life’s material plenitude; a culture of excess and overproduction, where we have lost sharpness in our sensory experience.<sup>81</sup> She urges that “*we must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more*”<sup>82</sup>. Although Sontag speaks explicitly about the interpretation of art, her views connect to Berardi’s critique of the information society of today. I find these sensuous approaches inspiring. Whilst acknowledging that I cannot escape representation completely and that the work always contains a degree of meaning and representation, my main interest and focus still lies within the affective level.

#### DEVOTION STUDIES: AUTONOMOUS OR DISCURSIVE AFFECT

“*Devotion Study #1 – The American Dancer*” (2012) by choreographer Sarah Michelson is a performance that has been formative to my work. “*Devotion (...)*”<sup>83</sup> was the first piece in a series of works (*Studies*). It was performed on the fourth floor of the Whitney Museum in New York as part of the Whitney Biennale in 2012. Three hours before the performance began, one could watch the dancers warm up in the space. I remember thinking that’s a long time for a warm-up, only later realising the hardships of what they were preparing for.

The performance starts by Michelson (sat in the audience) reading a text. I cannot remember what it was about, it was completely overshadowed by the dance that followed. (Retrospectively, this is curious to me as someone who always shies away from language in my own work in fear of it reducing the experience of the choreography to the meaning effect of the words) Then, Michelson sets in motion a metronome that sits next to a microphone amplifying the sound. A dancer enters the space performing triplet-steps backwards to this rhythm. Her arms are held straight out to her sides from her shoulders. As she travels through space, she creates circular patterns; loops and spirals. The performance space is long and narrow, and we in the audience have to keep moving our heads from side to side, as if watching a slow motion tennis match.

This goes on for a considerable period of time before a second dancer enters through a door on the back wall, performing the same triplet movement. Their patterns in space are composed into what looks like set and synchronised relations throughout, moving in and out of unison orbits. There is no improvisation. At times, the performers take “breaks”; that is, pausing in balance in fourth position on demi pointe with their arms still stretched out to the sides, before continuing the triplet motion. Yet later, four more performers join this orbital triplet choreography, one at the time. At one point, the space, which has a large window, is brightly lit by the sunlight reflecting on the glass fronts of a building opposite to the museum. By now, the costume of the dancer entering first, and who is still going, has become dark with sweat. After what must have been about two hours of one movement repeating, the performance ends. I am completely transfixed. Again, I don’t know what this experience is, and much less what to do with this. There is a clear excitement in me, but it feels undirected, beyond my comprehension. It doesn’t belong to a category of feelings I can recognise. At the same time, I have a feeling of *something* somewhat elevated, and that from now on, things could go in any direction.

In “*Problem as a Choreographic and Philosophical Kind of Thought*” Bojana Cvejić explains how Deleuze assigns thought the power to “*bring into being what does not yet exist*”<sup>84</sup> with what he calls a *shock of sensibility*.<sup>85</sup> In order to create a new experience beyond recognition, given agents need to force sensibility to confront its own limits. This shock of sensibility takes place through a *fundamental encounter*. Whilst an object of *re-cognition* is a representation where our knowledge, values and beliefs are confirmed, a fundamental encounter disrupts our systems of knowledge, challenges our ways of being in the world and forces thought in a manner which produces a rupture with habit. But the rupturing encounter also contains a moment of affirmation, the affirmation of a new world, where we see and think this world differently.<sup>86</sup>

Deleuze’s idea of a fundamental encounter that creates a shock of sensibility is descriptive of my meeting with “*Devotion (...)*”. In retrospect, it is easy to see the large impact of this work on my own after the initial shock. It nurtured a new perspective on choreography and made me rethink and further articulate my approaches to movement and time. It was also central to an increasing interest in finding choreographic principles that could produce the potential for affect amongst the audience.

Compared to “*Scratching (...)*” by Walid Raad, I believe “*Devotion (...)*” operates on a different affective level. Whilst Raad’s work overflows with meaning that invites interpretation, Michelson’s work, for me, existed primarily outside of rhetoric and semiotic dominant paradigms of representation. My affective experience of “*Scratching (...)*” had to do with how Raad’s narrative gradually reveals an increased opacity, which was puzzling and thought expanding. Whilst with Michelson, the opacity seems omnipresent, like a surface. “*Ideally, it is possible to elude the interpreters in another way, by making works of art whose surface is so unified and clean, whose momentum is so rapid, whose address is so direct that the work can be... just what it is.*”<sup>87</sup>

It seems to me that “*Devotion (...)*”, in the best possible way, is “*just what it is*”. It deals with the meeting between the specific space, the bodies of the performers and the audience and the time that passes between us. The piece produced a Massumian affect within me, whilst retrospectively, I consider the experience of Raad’s work to be more of a Tomkins School affect. It seems to me that for an artwork to generate the potentiality for Massumian affect to occur, it needs to move beyond meaning, whilst within the Tomkins School, affect can also be produced through dealing with a given meaning-content or discourse.

#### AFFECT AND ALTERED STATES

Given that an autonomous affect could be any type of pre-cognitive change in the capacity to affect and be affected, it is hard to discuss in specific terms. Therefore, I have throughout the research operated with altered states as a stand-in notion. When talking about the work with people not familiar with the affect term, I would say that I’m interested to see if my performances could create altered states, often exemplifying them with dream-like states, states of deep concentration, meditative states and hypnotic states. This also makes specific the types of affect in which I’m interested.

There is no *one* definition of altered states. However, in this context, I approach altered states as something out of the ordinary; outside of language and cognition. Following Deleuze, an altered



state could be the liminal space produced by a fundamental encounter; that shock-of-sensibility, hence corresponding with autonomous affect. But since I'm able to say what types of affect interest me, does it automatically suggest that the affects are discursive and within the domain of feelings and emotions? The affects I'm after are closely connected to opacity in the sense that they negotiate the binary between autonomy and the discursive (see more in the chapter For Opacity).

Since starting the PhD in 2013, I have had two children. They have both been bad sleepers, and I can count probably less than ten whole nights of sleep throughout the research period. Initially, I did not want to write about the kids or the sleeping, believing it was somewhat irrelevant to my project. Or perhaps I was just scared of being confronted with the *“disqualification of anything tied closely to the female animal”*.<sup>88</sup> Anyhow, reading the following passage from *“The Argonauts”* (or the whole book for that matter), I started to consider how both the altered state of pregnancy as well as the altered states derived from an ongoing sleep deprivation must surely have shaped the project.

*“Is there something so inherently queer about pregnancy itself, insofar as it profoundly alters one’s “normal” state, and occasions a radical intimacy with – and radical alienation from – one’s body? How can an experience so profoundly strange and wild and transformative also symbolize or enact the ultimate conformity?”*<sup>89</sup>

It has become evident to me that there is a connection between my interest in such things as slowness, repetition and the drone-like qualities manifested through Minimal Composition, and the altered states I have been in throughout large parts of the research.

## USELESS ART

To echo the introduction, the initial interest in Massumian autonomous affect, in favour of Tomkins School discursive affect, comes from a belief in art as a motor for change, through taking the role as “utterly useless” in a society where most other things have a given and known purpose. My experience is that when confronted with something that doesn't perform as expected or resists classification we have to look for new approaches. I believe that in these moments of liminality, there is potential for the unpredictable and unforeseen to occur.

This idea of “useless” (or functionlessness) art stems from Adorno who writes that

*“art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art. (...) Rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as ‘socially useful’, it criticizes society by merely existing, for which puritans of all stripes condemn it. (...) Insofar as a social function can be predicated for artworks, it is their functionlessness.”*<sup>90</sup>

I don't believe that art can ever be autonomous; it will always exist in some kind of relation to its context. But on an imagined spectre where autonomous art is on one side, instrumental art would be on the opposite side. For art to be affective in the Massumian sense, I believe it needs to *aim* for autonomy. My impression is that the two directions of affect theory are affiliated with different ideas on how art can produce change and play a part in the world. For art to be affective and a catalyst for change in the Deleuzian sense, it is necessary to set up conditions for the unimagined to occur, free from societal or political instrumentalism. The Tomkins School,

on the other hand, could be used to argue for art as social practice and art that could include a much more specific, discursive engagement into a given context.

These directions are, in my opinion, in principle equally valuable, and the question of uselessness might instead be a question of useless-for-whom. However, there is a tendency within art as social practice to encounter artworks with an explicit political content, but where the artworks don't perform politically. These types of work might shed light on a particular topic, but are often attended by an audience that is already both informed of and in agreement with the angle presented. That makes me wonder what purpose these works serve. Do we need them as a way of legitimising art? Or as a way for the artist to feel that she is important or “doing good”?

As a choreography student at age 22, I had a notebook onto which I had glued a cut-out image of the artwork *“It would be nice to do something important”* by Norwegian duo Goksøyr and Martens. At the time, I understood it as a sardonic critique of high-society, which I found cool. Exhibited at the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2007, the work consists of a large, glass-framed poster of the artists themselves (made-up and airbrushed), and the sentences: *“It would be nice to do something important.”*, *“Something political?”*. For eight hours a day, the glass covering the poster was continuously cleaned by a (coloured) window-cleaner. This piece functions on several levels through commenting on or playing a joke on the sometimes superficial, societal engagement of art, as well as *being* an artwork that sheds light on post-colonial inequalities. The question I have is to what degree the work also reproduces the same post-colonial inequalities within the artwork? But then I wonder if that is a valid critique if the work manages to raise enough attention to improve conditions for a large number of people?

In *“Singularities”*, André Lepecki explores how *thingness, darkness, animality, persistence and solidity* in contemporary dance and performance are what I understand as cases of uselessness in the eyes of late capitalism. Together with what Lepecki calls the *performative-corporeal elements* of dance; ephemerality, corporality, precariousness, scoring, performativity, and the performance of affective labour, these singularities create the potential for a dance that is both critical and subversive through refusing *“conformed conducts, recognizable forms, and identifiable performance genres, including recognizable ‘transgressive’ forms and (...) propose, instead, unexpected and improbable practices, extemporaneous modes of dissent, and momentary zones of freedom.”*<sup>91</sup> I adhere very much to this approach, where art can become a catalyst for change in a Deleuzian sense, where the unimagined can occur, free from societal or political instrumentalism. But it might not mean that a given work of art cannot at the same time contain meaning.

In Norway, we have a relatively privileged situation in regards to public art funding. It has simultaneously been possible to both take risk and develop some kind of steady practice. However, with the current neo-liberal political climate, I fear an increased instrumentalisation of art. In this context, I see the creation of useless art as highly political. It becomes imperative to point out the importance of art in itself; that art has value in society just through being art.

## USELESS BODY

Discussing the idea of useless art with a colleague from visual arts, I'm asked how I can apply this to dance and choreography. In her view, art transmitted through human bodies could never be



seen as useless as the body would always be a container of meaning. In my piece “STATE”, five performers execute a number of ritual dances. They are all dressed identically, and most dances are performed in unison. I think it is clear from the context that the piece is not primarily about identity. One of the performers, Jeffrey Young, is a man of colour. I believe Young has the right to opacity beyond how the look of his body is comprehended amongst a largely white, middle-class audience. Here, I would like to paraphrase the previously quoted Maggie Nelson to encourage the audience to get beyond the identity they have imputed to the dancer. Bodies are to some extent containers of meaning, but not *only*, and also, who decides *what* meanings? I think it is important to not be reductive towards the body in question, and to create limits in the sense of prescribed meaning on behalf of the performer. In this context, the imperative towards the audience that *it isn't about decoding meaning* can be seen as a political gesture. As I will return to in the chapter on opacity, interpretation always implies reduction.

I read a quote by George Balanchine (although I can't remember where), where he was asked about the meaning of a piece of his. Annoyed, he answered: “*It's about 47 minutes and 51 seconds!*” In January 2018, I attended a lecture performance by Thomas DeFrantz at the American Realness festival in New York City, where he said that a white artist *experimenting in form* is the epitome of White Privilege. For someone whose body is always imputed with identity (everyone but the white, straight, cis-gendered male?), could uselessness be employed as a subversive strategy? Or is this simply a utopian pretension of “*a “post-racial” future that resembles all too closely the racist past and present*”?<sup>92</sup>

#### FOR OPACITY

In the context of useless art, useless body and affect, I would like to draw on the concept of opacity as described by Édouard Glissant. Glissant employs the term to problematize how we meet and relate to The Other. He argues that a central aspect of Modernity has been the wish to understand and take control over the unknown; to domesticate The Other. In the populism of today, this often implies a severe simplification and reduction of that which can be understood in relation to (Western) parameters of understanding. We try to fit The Other into our already existing ideas of her.

Opacity is instead about being true to someone or something's complexity; that this is more than the totality of its single parts. Opacity challenges the idea that The Other carries content and meaning; a “truth”, which can be discovered and understood. Glissant argues that one cannot identify The Other as such, but instead try to understand *the relation* one has to it. Opacity implies generosity and empathy on behalf of The Other and problematizes what it means to understand.<sup>93</sup>

As mentioned, a central aspect of the development of my choreographic principles has been to figure out how they can be used to convey to the audience to allow for opacity. The aim is to get the audience to realise that it isn't primarily about interpretation or the decoding of meaning in order for them to be able to zoom in on the physical experience of watching and being-with the work. Opaque choreography is not instrumental to conveying information. Instead, it carries an oppositional force through its insistence on being more than its individual parts.

A noteworthy aspect of Glissant's concept of opacity is how it seems to come into play both in regards to Massumian and Tomkins School affect. As Massumian affect takes place outside of cognition, there is nothing to understand, which also implies that there will be no domestication happening. Glissant's philosophy has been affiliated with Deleuze and Guattari, and especially their ideas of the rhizome. On the other hand, Glissant is a central writer within post-colonial literature and criticism, and his claim for the right to opacity is a rejection of the Western, hierarchical, cognitive schema. With “*Philosophy of the Relation*”, he opens for other modes of understanding, where people or ideas are not measured in accordance with a (Western) scale.<sup>94</sup> That suggests, in my understanding, an approach to affect that is relational and that takes place within post-colonial discourse but where it at the same time favours the idea of not reducing something to language, symbol and representation. I'm therefore speculating on whether opacity is a place where affect is unavoidably discursive, but where it simultaneously stays outside of dominant regimes of identification and understanding, and here somewhat keeps its autonomy. This reverberates with how I have come to acknowledge that I will never escape discourse completely, whilst still insisting on emphasising the affective level. Maggie Nelson sums up the paradox:

*“The presumptuousness of it all. On the one hand, the Aristotelian, perhaps evolutionary need to put everything into categories – predator, twilight, edible – on the other, the need to pay homage to the transitive, the flight, the great soup of being in which we actually live. Becoming, Deleuze and Guattari called this flight; becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-molecular.”<sup>95</sup>*

#### CLOSING/OPENING

I was planning to conclude this text something like this:

*“The background of this research was a belief in art as a motor for change, through taking the role as “utterly useless” in a society where most other things have a given and known purpose. The central aspect of the research has been the development of my choreographic principles, and to figure out how they can be used to convey to the audience to allow for opacity/it isn't about interpretation/it isn't about decoding meaning. The purpose of this has been for the audience to be able to zoom in on the embodied experience of watching and being-with the work, and ideally produce the potentiality for affect.*

*Affect, as an autonomous unknowable something, can disrupt our systems of knowledge, challenge our ways of being in the world and force thought in a manner, which produces a rupture with habit; an altered state.*

*The rupturing encounter also contains a moment of affirmation, the affirmation of a new world, where we see and think this world differently.*

*Although imaginably a dream scenario or at least difficult to validate, I find myself pursuing this project again from yet another angle: My current work, the performance “Deep Field”, will premiere on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018 and mark the end of this artistic PhD research. The performance centres on running and its affective qualities. Amongst runners, the much sought-after Runners' High denotes the affective state of euphoria where endorphins are released into the body. Endorphins act a lot like their medically engineered counterpart, morphine. They serve as a painkiller, and have through evolution helped humans survive through providing extra stamina for instance when*



*chasing down animals. Endorphins are produced in the pre-frontal and limbic regions of the brain, which also light up in response to emotions like love. <sup>96</sup> With “Deep Field”, I’m curious to investigate how to generate this altered state of love-like euphoria amongst the running performers, and to what degree it can be contagious on the audience.”*

This wouldn't be an entirely false conclusion.

However.

Throughout this research, I have gradually become biased to the idea of autonomous affect. On one level, I still believe in the potentiality for *art as vehicle for change through being utterly useless*. However, my research into The Speculative Turn, where the idea of the post-anthropocentric necessitates a pluralisation of perspectives, makes me problematize the existence of anything autonomous. How can perspective and privilege not matter?

In the future, I want to continue to research how affect can be diffracted through the post-anthropocentric lens. This can happen through a further development of my choreographic principles as well as in regards to the entwined theoretical discourses. Perhaps altered states could be a place from which to speculate on the nature of reality independently of thought and humanity, and thus a continuation of my current lineage of thought-movement and movement-thought?



## PERFORMANCE CREDITS AND TOURING

### HOODS (2014)

**Concept:** Signe Becker and Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

**Choreography:** Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

**Scenography:** Signe Becker

**Costume:** Signe Becker / Anette Nan Lindrupsen

**Light design:** Tilo Hahn

**Music:** Camilla Vatne Barratt-Due

**Developed and performed by:** Ingeleiv Berstad, Kristin Helgebostad, Pernille Holden and Eivind Seljeseth

**Producers:** Tine Tyldum and Nicole Schuchardt

**Assistant scenographer:** Mie Dinesen

**Co-produced by:** Kedja Wilderness Residency, Black Box Theatre, Oktoberdans/ BIT Teatergarasjen, MDT Stockholm, New Theatre Institute of Latvia and the Oslo National Academy of the Arts/The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme

**Supported by:** The Norwegian Arts Council, Fond for lyd og bilde, Fond for utøvende kunstnere and Det norske komponistfond. Thanks to Muscle Temple The Residency.

**Tour supported by:** PAHN and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and The Norwegian Arts Council

#### **Touring as of November 2018:**

- August 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> 2018 – The Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway
- July 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 2015 – Belluard Bollwerk Festival, Fribourg, Switzerland
- March 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 – Imagetanz, brut-Wien, Austria
- March 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 2015 – Bora-Bora Århus, Denmark
- October 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014 – Oktoberdans, Bergen, Norway
- October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 – MDT Stockholm, Sweden
- September 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 – Bastardfestivalen, Trondheim, Norway
- August 7<sup>th</sup> 2014 – Kedja Wilderness, Mariehamn, Åland
- March 20<sup>th</sup> 2014 – Oslo International Theatre Festival, Oslo, Norway
- February 26<sup>th</sup> – March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014 – Black Box Theatre, Oslo, Norway (premiere)



## Cosmic Body (2015)

**Choreography:** Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

**Scenography and light design:** Signe Becker and Tilo Hahn

**Music:** Ingvild Langgård

**Light technician:** Jan Harald Ovrum

**Developed and performed by:** Anne-Mareike Hess, Pernille Holden, Martin Lervik and Imre Vass.

**Costume:** Mia Melinder and Signe Becker

**Outside-eye:** Rosalind Goldberg and Venke Sortland

**Producer:** Nicole Schuchardt

**Administrator:** Eva Grainger

**Co-produced by:** Black Box Teater, BIT teatergarasjen, Teaterhuset Avant Garden, BUDA Kortrijk, MDT Stockholm and ”apap-Performing Europe 2020 – co-funded by Creative Europe Programme of the European Union”

**Supported by:** The Norwegian Arts Council, Fund for Sound and Vision and The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme

**Tour supported by:** PAHN and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### Touring as of November 2018:

- August 6<sup>th</sup> 2017 – Xixi Dance Festival, Hangzhou, China.
- August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017 – Colourful Guizhou Arts Festival, Guiyang, China.
- July 27<sup>th</sup> 2017 – Beijing Dance Festival, Beijing, China.
- December 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 – Ice Hot Nordic Dance Platform, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016 – MDT Stockholm, Sweden.
- March 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 2016 – BIT Teatergarasjen, Bergen, Norway.
- February 27<sup>th</sup> 2016 – Kunstencentrum BUDA, Kortrijk, Belgium.
- February 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> 2016 – Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, USA.
- November 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 2015 – Teaterhuset Avant Garden, Trondheim, Norway
- October 28<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 – Black Box Theatre, Oslo, Norway (premiere).

## Shadows of Tomorrow (2016)

**Choreography:** Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

**Light design:** Ingeborg Staxrud Olerud

**Costume design:** Elena Becker, Mia Melinder, Signe Vasshus and Ingri Midgard Fiksdal.

**Developed and performed by:** Rosalind Goldberg, Pernille Holden, Sigrid Hirsch Kopperdal, Venke Sortland and Marianne Skjeldal

**Performers in first version:** Students from Skolen for Samtidsdans, Oslo, NO.

Jennie Victoria Bergsli, Veronica Molin Bruce Tora Mølnvik Ellingsgaard, Jaden Healy, Elin Sønvisen Johansen, Sophie Grundt Johns, Christine Fjelde Delgado Lima, Karina Delin Morales, Helle Storvig, Eline Waldeland, Oda Uhre Aasheim, Anne Goro Tronsmo Haugland, Karianne Karlsrud, Maren Drexel, Line Holmvik Remoe and Rosa Steen Eri

**Producer:** Nicole Schuchardt

**Administrator:** Eva Grainger

**Supported by:** The Norwegian Arts Council, Nordic Culture Point and The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme

**Thanks to:** Skolen for Samtidsdans, Det Andre Teatret, Black Box Teater, Dansens Hus and Oslo National Academy of the Arts

### Touring as of November 2018:

- May 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Kunstenfestival, Brussels, Belgium.
- March 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Oslo International Theatre Festival, Norway.
- November 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Black Box Theatre, Oslo, Norway.
- August 25<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Reykjavik Dance Festival, Reykjavik, Island
- June 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Fest en Fest, London, United Kingdom.
- July 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 2017 – Ravnedans, Kristiansand, Norway.
- May 13<sup>th</sup> 2017 – Köttinspektionen / Revolve performance festival, Uppsala, Sweden.
- January 21<sup>st</sup> 2016 – Galleri Seilduken / Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Oslo, Norway (premiere).

## STATE (2016)

**Concept:** Ingri Midgard Fiksdal and Jonas Corell Petersen

**Choreography:** Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

**Dramaturgy:** Jonas Corell Petersen

**Composer:** Lasse Marhaug

**Light design:** Øyvind Wangensteen and Phillip Isaksen

**Costume design:** Henrik Vibskov

**Developed and performed by:** Rosalind Goldberg, Rannei Grenne, Nuria Guiu Sagarra, Louis Schou-Hanssen and Jeffrey Young

**Musicians:** Heida J. Mobeck and Anja Lauvdal

**Producer:** Nicole Schuchardt

**Administrator:** Eva Grainger

**Co-produced by:** steirischer herbst Festival (AT), Black Box Theatre (NO), BIT teatergarasjen (NO), Teaterhuset Avant Garden (NO) and "apap-Performing Europe 2020 – co-funded by Creative Europe Programme of the European Union"

**Supported by:** The Norwegian Arts Council and the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme

### Touring as of November 2018:

- February 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019 – Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, USA.
- February 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, USA.
- November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Georgian International Festival of Arts (GIFT), Tbilisi, Georgia.
- June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017 – Stamsund Theater Festival, Stamsund, Norway.
- November 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016 – Teaterhuset Avant Garden, Trondheim, Norway.
- October 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> 2016 – Oktoberdans, BIT Teatergarasjen, Bergen, Norway
- October 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016 – Black Box Theatre, Oslo, Norway.
- September 30<sup>th</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 – Steirischer Herbst, Graz, Austria (premiere).

## Diorama (2017)

**Concept, choreography:** Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

**Music:** Jenny Hval and Lasse Marhaug

**Costumes and props:** Fredrik Floen

**Developed and performed by:** Rannei Grenne, Pernille Holden, Harald Beharie, Louis Schou-Hansen and Jeffrey Young

**Outside eye:** Venke Sortland

**Producer:** Nicole Schuchardt

**Administrator:** Eva Grainger and Kristin Skiftun

**Originating commissioner:** Situations

**Co-produced by:** Black Box Teater Oslo, BIT Teatergarasjen Bergen, Dansens Hus Oslo, Santarcangelo Festival and "apap-Performing Europe 2020 – co-funded by Creative Europe Programme of the European Union"

**Supported by:** The Norwegian Art Council and the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme.

### Touring as of November 2018:

- October 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> 2019 – brut-wien, Vienna, Austria.
- September 2019 – TBA Festival, Portland (OR), USA.
- June 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Sommerszene Festival, Szene Salzburg, Austria.
- May 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Junieur Festival, The Harbourfront Center, Toronto, Canada.
- April 12<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Do Disturb, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France.
- February 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 2019 - Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, USA.
- February 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 2019 - Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, USA.
- December 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Ice Hot Nordic Dance Platform, Reykjavik, Island.
- October 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Oktoberdans, BIT Teatergarasjen, Bergen, Norway.
- September 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Bodø Biennale, Bodø, Norway.
- July 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Santarcangelo Dance Festival, Santarcangelo, Italy.
- June 16<sup>th</sup> 2018 – The New National Museum, Oslo, Norway.
- March 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Oslo International Theatre Festival, Oslo, Norway.
- September 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> / 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> / 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> 2017 – The Tale, Brixham, United Kingdom (premiere).



## Deep Field (2018)

**Choreography:** Ingri Midgard Fiksdal

**Music:** Jenny Hval and Lasse Marhaug

**Costume:** Signe Becker

**Light design:** Ingeborg Staxrud Olerud

**Developed and performed by:** Sudesh Adhana, Jon Filip Fahlstrøm, Rannei Grenne, Louis Schou-Hansen and Synne Sørum

**Producer:** Nicole Schuchardt

**Administrator:** Eva Grainger and Kristin Skiftun

**Co-produced by:** Black Box Teater, BIT Teatergarasjen and apap-Performing Europe 2020 - a project co-founded by Creative Europe Programme of the European Union

**Supported by:** The Norwegian Arts Council and The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme

### **Touring as of November 2018:**

- September 2019, Bastardfestivalen, Trondheim, Norway.
- June 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> 2019, Heddadagene, Oslo, Norway.
- June 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, Stamsund Festival, Norway.
- March 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019 – BIT Teatergarasjen, Bergen, Norway.
- November 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Black Box Theatre, Oslo, Norway (premiere).

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- <sup>5</sup> Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, Anamnesis (Melbourne: re.press, 2009), 28.
- <sup>6</sup> Sparrow, Tom, [www.plasticbodies.wordpress.com](http://www.plasticbodies.wordpress.com) (2011), 1.10.2016
- <sup>7</sup> Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (Minneapolis, Minn: Graywolf Press, 2015), 47-54.
- <sup>8</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2010).
- <sup>9</sup> Shakespeare-selskap Det norske, "Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift," *Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift* (1998): Nr 2-3, 2017, 138-191.
- <sup>10</sup> I never use the auditorium of the theatre space, but instead put the audience (-seating) on stage. The audience is within metres of the performers, enveloped in light, sound and scenography.
- <sup>11</sup> This type of composition and dramaturgy relates to approaches in what Hans-Thies Lehman would call Post-Dramatic Theatre, or in Norwegian context, Knut Ove Arntzen's "likestilt dramaturgi".
- <sup>12</sup> Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological* (London, United Kingdom: Penguin Random House, 2018), 74-92.
- <sup>13</sup> Bennett.
- <sup>14</sup> . 23
- <sup>15</sup> Steve Reich and Paul Hillier, *Writings on Music, 1965-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 34.



- <sup>16</sup> Mnemosyne derives from the same Greek source as the word meme.
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- <sup>19</sup> Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: United Kingdom: Penguin Random House, 2018).
- <sup>20</sup> André Lepecki, *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance* (London: Routledge, 2016), 111.
- <sup>21</sup> An object according to André Lepecki is that which is “*ontologically linked to instrumentality, utility, usage (...) in a symmetrical relationship to subjectivity.*” (Lepecki 2016: 40) He expands on Massumi’s notion that “*neither potential nor activity is object-like*” (Massumi 2011:6). Instead, he uses the word thing. Harman rejects this division stating that OOO has an unusually wide approach to objects as “*anything that cannot be entirely reduced either to the components of which it’s made or to the effect that it has on other things.*” (Harman, 43)
- <sup>22</sup> Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (London;New York: Routledge, 2006), 74.
- <sup>23</sup> Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-8.
- <sup>24</sup> Lepecki, 2.
- <sup>25</sup> Sondra Horton Fraleigh, *Dance and the Lived Body: A Descriptive Aesthetics* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987).
- <sup>26</sup> Edward Gordon Craig "The Actor and the Über-Marionette," *The Mask No 2* (April 1908): 8.
- <sup>27</sup> Masahiro Mori, "The Uncanny Valley," *Energy* 7 (1970).
- <sup>28</sup> Mori, 2.
- <sup>29</sup> A.P. Saygin, "The Thing That Should Not Be: Predictive Coding and the Uncanny Valley in Perceiving Human and Humanoid Robot Actions," *Social Cognitive Affective Neuroscience* 7 (2011): 413-22.
- <sup>30</sup> Claire Colebrook and Jami Weinstein, *Posthumous Life: Theorizing Beyond the Posthuman* (Columbia University Press, 2017), Morton, 282.
- <sup>31</sup> Reza Negarestani, "The Corpse Bride: Thinking with Nigredo," *Collapse* IV (2008): 131.
- <sup>32</sup> Ana Vujanovic, "Mending Together: New Problems in Landscape Dramaturgy," ([www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu), 2017).
- <sup>33</sup> Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, vol. 1966, The Lewis Henry Morgan Lecture (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), 94-130.
- <sup>34</sup> Axelle Blanc, "Kaleidoscope Eyes: The Art of the 60s Psychedelic Light Show," *Revue* October (2012).
- <sup>35</sup> I was made aware that Swedish choreographer Stina Nyberg works with a similar set-up in her piece “*Tones and Bones*” for the Cullberg Ballet in 2014.

- <sup>36</sup> “*Shadows of Tomorrow*” builds on a previous piece of mine, “*BAND*”, from 2013.
- <sup>37</sup> Lepecki, 108.
- <sup>38</sup> David Howes, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor, Mich: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 12-13.
- <sup>39</sup> Iggy Pop, accessed 18.9.18, <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/629478>.
- <sup>40</sup> John F. Szwed, *Space Is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1998).
- <sup>41</sup> Bennett, 23.
- <sup>42</sup> 15:00 minutes into the video:  
The performers no longer escape from the turquoise capes they are covered in. Instead, a faster, rhythmic beat starts to play whilst they are still under the capes. The performers, scattered in space, sitting on their knees, begin a swaying, head-banging-like sequence, where their heads gradually emerge from the capes’ neck openings. The head-banging builds progressively in intensity and size of movement, but with uneven intervals, some of the performers break out of the pattern, and watch the movement for a while upon returning to it. At one point, two of them go to put the wig-hats on, before continuing the head-banging. Compared to what one can see in the video, this updated version does in my opinion create a more scattered and less unified expression of this given sequence. From 23:15 minutes and onwards, the video is yet again representative of what happens in the piece.
- <sup>43</sup> Salamon, Eszter. "Monument 0", 2014, accessed 19.9.18, <http://www.eszter-salamon.com/WWW/monument-0.htm>.
- <sup>44</sup> Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993).
- <sup>45</sup> G. P. Makris, *Changing Masters: Spirit Possession and Identity Construction among Slave Descendants and Other Subordinates in the Sudan*, Series in Islam and Society in Africa (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2000).
- <sup>46</sup> Anna Holmes, "What Distinguishes Cultural Exchange from Cultural Appropriation?", *The New York Times*, 8.6.2017, with Rivka Galchen.
- <sup>47</sup> Homi Bhaba, "Cultural Appropriation: A Roundtable," *Artforum* 55, no. Summer 2017 (2017): 268a.
- <sup>48</sup> Bhaba, 266-277.
- <sup>49</sup> Bhaba, 269.
- <sup>50</sup> Holmes.
- <sup>51</sup> "The (Re)Making Project," 1996, accessed 21.8.18, <http://www.charlesmee.org/about.shtml>
- <sup>52</sup> The first vimeo link; 34 minutes into the video and until the end:  
At this point in the piece, the performers no longer put their heads into the hoods of their costumes and as such take human shape. Neither do they move in space to gather as a group as seen in this documentation. Instead, they transform the tall, ghostly figures back to blob-like shapes through a gradual swaying motion, and move back to configurations similar to the ones they were in when the piece started. The second vimeo link shows the change of movement

material described here. This video does not however, show the full duration of the piece, but a 23-minute shortened version.

<sup>53</sup> Erkki Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion: Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles*, Leonardo Book Series (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2013), 139-48.

<sup>54</sup> Vujanovic, "Mending Together: New Problems in Landscape Dramaturgy," 6.

<sup>55</sup> Morton, 39.

<sup>56</sup> Morton, 43.

<sup>57</sup> Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, Anamnesis (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 1-18.

<sup>58</sup> Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, *Posthuman Glossary*, Theory Series (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 84.

<sup>59</sup> Bennett. Vii-2

<sup>60</sup> Bennett. 20.

<sup>61</sup> Made in collaboration with Signe Becker and Ingvild Langgård.

<sup>62</sup> Bennett. 17-20

<sup>63</sup> Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>64</sup> Braidotti and Hlavajova, 327-31, chapter by Iris van der Tuin (2018).

<sup>65</sup> .

<sup>66</sup> Zalta, Edward N (ed). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University 1997: Embodied Cognition, 1.

<sup>67</sup> Harman, 44.

<sup>68</sup> Gregg and Seigworth.

<sup>69</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, xvi, introduction by Massumi.

<sup>70</sup> Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect," *M/C Journal* 8 (6) (2005).

<sup>71</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Transcripts on Spinoza's Concept of Affect," ed. l'Université Paris 8-Vincennes-Saint-Denis ( <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html1978>), 3.

<sup>72</sup> "Transcripts on Spinoza's Concept of Affect.," ed. l'Université Paris 8-Vincennes-Saint-Denis ( <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html1981>), 4.

<sup>73</sup> The work is described from memory and might be inaccurate. I do this to stay with the affective experience I have had. I could research the piece in order to describe it accurately, but then I would risk changing the experience, which would be counterproductive in this context.

<sup>74</sup> Gregg and Seigworth.

<sup>75</sup> Mons Bissenbakker Frederiksen, *I Affekt* (Copenhagen: Københavns Universitet, 2012), 7.

<sup>76</sup> Nelson, 67.

<sup>77</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2010), 88.

<sup>78</sup> Franco Berardi, Paal Bjelke Andersen, and poesi Audiatur - festival for ny, *Opprøret: Om Poesi Og Finans* (Oslo: Audiatur & Forlaget Attåt, 2014).

<sup>79</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004).

<sup>80</sup> Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation: And Other Essays* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 10.

<sup>81</sup> . 13

<sup>82</sup> . 14

<sup>83</sup> The work is described from memory and might be inaccurate. I do this to stay with the affective experience I have had. I could research on the piece in order to describe it accurately, but then I would risk changing the experience, which would be counterproductive in this context.

<sup>84</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Paul Patton, *Difference and Repetition*, Différence Et Répétition (London: Continuum, 2004), 147.

<sup>85</sup> Rebekah J. Kowal, Gerald Siegmund, and Randy Martin, *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 205, Cvejic.

<sup>86</sup> Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 80.

<sup>87</sup> Sontag, 11.

<sup>88</sup> Nelson, 16.

<sup>89</sup> . 16.

<sup>90</sup> Theodor W. Adorno et al., *Aesthetic Theory*, Ästhetische Theorie (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 308-09.

<sup>91</sup> Lepecki, 5.

<sup>92</sup> Nelson, 67.

<sup>93</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Philosophy of the Relation* (2009).

<sup>94</sup> Glissant.

<sup>95</sup> Nelson, 66.

<sup>96</sup> Christopher McDougall, *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen* (New York: Knopf, 2009).



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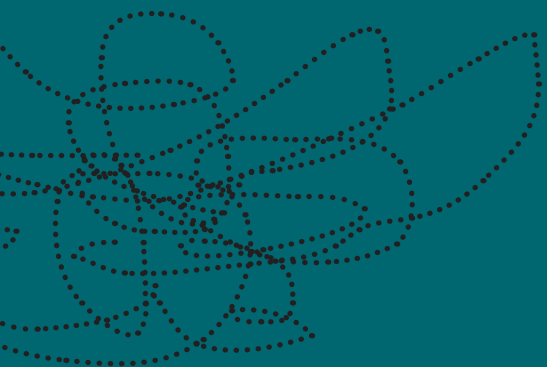
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