

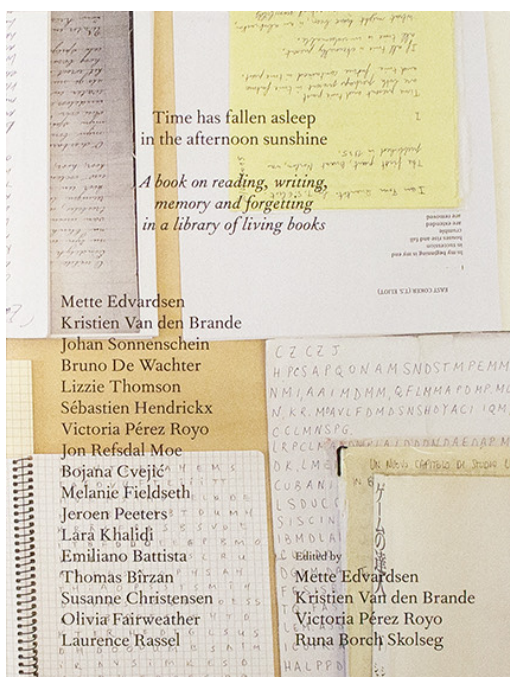


**Box 1**—The Library of gestures is made up of a motion-choir with no less than 20 dancers, with a percussionist (Jennifer Torrence) and a flutist (Bjørnar Habberstad).

Writing *without* partaking of a production-milieu requires its own performance: it calls for a writing which is *not* part of the stage-production, but operates from its margins. It is the harvester of *contingencies*: i.e., things that become important because they *happen* (and *not* such that happen because they are important). Perambulating the floors in the performing arts edifice in the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHIO) we move from the 7<sup>th</sup> floor to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor: starting dance and choreography on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor (MOVE), opera on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor (SING) and theatre on the 5<sup>th</sup> (ACT).

As we are moving on a *walkabout* through the KHIO production-village, we are not producing anything, but engaging in an ancient communicative behaviour: we circle in that which we—up to a degree—seek to command. If we were marching we would claim territory. As we are strolling and chatting, KHIO may shift more softly into a *commons*. We do *not* spread fear as we move, but to forge a congenial atmosphere where territorial claims give way to exchange, and some form of commerce between the National Library of Norway (NLN) and the Six dpts. that make up KHIO.

April 11-14th 2024, Janne-Camilla Lyster choreographed a [Library of Gestures](#). A performance at the [House of Dance](#) involving movers of all ages—a bit like our walkabout—within and beyond the Dance & choreography dpt.: Anne-Linn Akselsen, Lisa Colette Bysheim, Even Eileraas, Ingrid Haakstad, Torunn Helene Robstad, Orfee Schuijt, Terje Tjøme Mossige, Sudesh Adhana, Edith Askeland, Mette Edvardsen, Synne Erichsen, Ilse Ghekiere, Gry Kipperberg, Emilie Marie Karlsen, Putli Hellesen, Pia Elton, Ingunn Rimestad, Sindre Sten Vik, Ole Kristian Tangen, Line Tørmoen.



**Box 2.** *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine*. Book-title from Mette Edvardsen's living books project. Cf. [ARW 2021](#).

It was pitched as a 20-person movement choir. The thrust of this gestural corps unto voice and song, is not unlike the push the music theatre unto opera, and the push of theatre unto ways of living and working together. A push of boundaries—moving beyond previously established border—is not motivated by the desire of conquest, but rather by the urge to harvest from the contingency of minor practices and [minor literatures](#), hatching a fresh and keener attention to the art-form and its [matters of care](#). This framework is less assumed than it is assigned.

By assuming less and assigning more, the performing arts are evolving to become less forbidding in exploring their substantial concerns, without loss of the *core*: or, to be more precise, moving more deeply into it. I will shortly mention two projects: (1) In the Library of Gestures [choreographed by Janne-Camille Lyster] and (2) *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* [choreographed by Mette Edvardsen]. In the first project (1) the contingency of language was explored in relation to a mathematically structured layer of gestures, by letting the gestures connect across the floor as though they were

sentences, and by Janne-Camilla Lyster performing a text as an historically informed poetic piece.

The second project (2) had a book-launch during the pandemic, from an [artistic proposition on books and people](#): “The project Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine starts as a group of people who dedicate themselves to memorising a book of their choice. Together they form a library collection consisting of living books. The ‘books’ pass their time in libraries reading, memorising, talking to each other, going for walks outside, prepared to be read by a visitor. The readings take place as intimate one-to-one encounters where the ‘book’ recites its content to the reader.

Over time the project grew into a library collection of more than eighty living books in twelve different languages across Europe and beyond. The project developed into a bookshop, a publishing house and an exhibition format, and hosted workshops, lectures and talks and, eventually, a book. The publication brings together eighteen text contributions from artists and theoreticians with a varying degree of proximity to the project.” In preparation of a book-talk on this anthology (Box 2) for [ARW 2021](#) the convenor walked 32km with a copy of the book lugged in his knapsack.

The exploration of alternatives to conquest in our errands with contingency, possibly reflects a desire to hatch viable environmental *bids*: wether in human commerce, or earthbound forays and foraging. That is, errands with what is precisely *not* our habitat, but where we are temporary residents, or simply passing through. Gleaning what is there for the take, and leaving something behind. It is this kind of shift in awareness which the project choreographed by Edwardsen brings into the commerce of living books: which is *discrete* of the traceless readers and inanimate books.

Thus, the decision to take *one step off* makes a landscape of human beings and artefacts (books) *suddenly* appear. It brings to mind the verb *reverberation*. Whether it writes re-verbiage as in project (2), or it is in reverberation as the persistence of sound and gesture after it is produced (1). I remember watching the *Library of gestures* wondering how the gesture one dancer would set off a response in the next, the next and the next across the floor and six different dancers. While my mind was busy with this, I remember noticing something I recorded as non-trivial in retrospect.

What I noticed is that a gesture appeared to be initiated *before* it was performed—which was particularly interceptible in some of the dancers—and to be cut short *before* it had come to an end. In this way, gestures could take over where others had come to a halt. I have come to think about it as a shift in the rooting from the legs to the torso, with a turnout on the arms as the principal attractor and emitter of identifiable gesture. What is striking is the human capacity to learn directly from such displays: they can prompt our take on truth and impact, in day to day exchange.

So, these two aspects of language in performance—discussed from the project (1) and (2)—are pursuits of artistic research project with rather different takes, but both contributing to a contingent *model* of language in performance, in different walks of life: whether in the archive, or in other subject areas taught at art school. In its relation to theoretical understandings, dance and choreography could be seen to take on the role of “non-theory”: that is, delving into areas where theory cannot (or, only poorly), as a counter-point similar to what François Laruelle proposes to philosophy in his essays on [non-philosophy](#).



Box 3—Mette Edwardsen. Performance during opening hours at Newtown Library, March 15-19, 2016 for the 20th Biennale of Sydney. Courtesy the artist. Photo Document.

Whether/not dance & choreography presently has a place as a *first science* (Laruelle) is obviously a matter of debate/contestation. I think at more viable position is that the first science—which is art before science and philosophy—is something we are scouting for *across* the subjects taught at art school.