

everybodys publications

Everybody's
Group
Self Interviews

everybodys publications
www.everybodystoolbox.net

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Printed and bound by Lulu.com.

Supported by the Danish Arts Council



KUNSTRÅDET
Danish Arts Council

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2009

ISBN 978-1-4452-5212-4

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EVERYBODYS

(<http://www.everybodystoolbox.net>)

BERLIN, November 2009

Protocol for this interview:

- 1) Open a collective Skype chat.
- 2) Everyone in the chat can ask a question and everybody answers the questions they want to answer.
- 3) Only send (press ENTER) once your question or answer is clear in order to avoid parasitic discussions.
- 4) In your answers, always copy the question you are answering first to avoid confusion in the editing process, where the answers will be collected under the questions they belong to.

Alice Chauchat

QUESTION: What are everybodys' activities?

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: Everybodys invents and collects games that are supportive of artists' articulation of work, of their own or of a general understanding of art practices. Everybodys plays these games and distributes their outcome. The outcome of the games is mostly text material that can be circulated to broaden the understanding of performance from the artists' perspective. Everybodys develops these games as tools for discursive exchange and other tools as well. For example, in collaboration with the Mime Centrum in Berlin, an online video archive allowing artists to upload and thereby share videos of their work.

Ambra Pittoni

ANSWER: Everybodys is a platform to develop discussions, theory, and methods within performing art and, I would say, art in general. Everybodys activities welcome every person engaged in a creation path whose interested in sharing methods, inspiration material, self-analysis.

Mette Ingvarsten

ANSWER: Everybodys' main concern is to produce a platform for artists to exchange knowledge about artistic practices. everybodys' activities vary; from developing games and tools in order to facilitate these exchanges, to creating performances that can be performed by whoever would like to use them, to publishing books, etc.

Conrad Noack

ANSWER: Everybodys produces discursive games and collects knowledge produced in those games. It has adopted an open-source (i.e., no individual authorship) approach to these activities, a position that can be used and that functions as a disruption to the "ordinary" proceedings within the cultural sector. I have so far mainly participated in *Générique* and the *Impersonation Game*.

Petra Sabisch

ANSWER: Sharing knowledge about ways of doing things, everybodys becomes an evolving and always growing platform, which articulates methods and renders their "sources" open.

This is extremely important in a world where knowledge and, even more, know-how become increasingly regulated by educational institutions and a capitalist market which disallows independent, qualitative research and non-licensed exchange.

Conrad Noack

QUESTION: *What are the intentions of everybodys in producing discourse(s) about dance/performance?*

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: Everybodys exists as a response to a felt need from the international (European) dance and performance community to exchange and dialogue beyond smaller circles of friends and colleagues. This is in order to expand and circulate knowledge or possibilities for each, to be inspired and critically stimulated rather than stuck in a defensive/possessive attitude.

everybodys

It is also a counterbalance to the general lack of artists writing in dance/performance.

Ambra Pittoni

ANSWER: Intentions are to widen the way we think about dance/performance and to open and share part of one's own creation process/methodology, to take away the mystical view that many people still have about words as creation, inspiration, composition.

Mette Ingvartsen

ANSWER: Verbal articulation and discursive practice is not the most evident mode of expression in relation to dance as an art form that is primarily physical, corporal, and non-verbal. What everybody's tries to do is to create a space for articulation and questioning that could lead dance beyond the expressions of the body, and in a certain way give space for performing artists to have a voice. Encouraging people to write within certain formats—a self-interview, for instance—is about removing the pressure from the form of the text, focusing rather on producing content, and in this way letting people in on the thoughts behind works, on the procedures, the motivations, and the experiences that are usually hidden behind the final artwork.

Petra Sabisch

ANSWER: My intentions in “doing” everybody's are to articulate thoughts according to our practices, develop networks through a work-in-process, play with frames, tools, and formats by allowing for playful deviations, creating new formats of exchange through the exchange. Briefly: to share the idea that exchange about tools increases the heterogeneity of our practices rather than reduces it.

Mette Ingvartsen

QUESTION: How do you use everybody's?

Conrad Noack

ANSWER: I don't use everybody's; I participate in everybody's. The collaborative aspect to me is the central aspect that determines both the group and its activities.

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: I use everybody's by being active in its development. Every time I play a game, read a transcript, or develop a new game, I get stimulated to

formulate and therefore think further about dance in general and about my own practice in particular.

Ambra Pittoni

ANSWER: I use everybody's as part of my thinking-tool. I use everybody's to promote a new way to think about performing arts and dance in places where a romantic idea of art and especially of dance remains.

Petra Sabisch

ANSWER: Some of everybody's' activities have become a way of thinking.

Krõõt Juurak

ANSWER: I use everybody's to resist isolation, to come out of my individual artistic processes and encapsulated projects.

Alice Chauchat

QUESTION: Who is everybody's? How does one become part of everybody's?

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: Everybody's is whoever takes part in at least one of everybody's' activities.

Conrad Noack

ANSWER: Formally, everybody's is everybody who wants to participate and who shares the belief that collaboration in discourse and in practice is needed for the further development of the European dance scene.

Practically, everybody's grows through personal contacts and shared interests beyond the formal goals, and is therefore also a community with a common history and similar backgrounds. However, its inherent openness allows for more surprises—such as new members and new projects—than do other, more traditional forms of artistic collaboration.

Ambra Pittoni

ANSWER: Everybody's is ME, YOU, THEM, SHE, HE . . . it is every individual interested in everybody's' activities. It is possible to meet everybody's under several forms. Everybody's is an organism in constant evolution.

Ambra Pittoni

Krõõt Juurak

QUESTION: How did it get the name everybody's?

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: Everybodys obviously means that it belongs to everyone. But there are no rights on everybodys, only the chance to contribute, so that everybodys is also nobody's, while everyone can be part of everybodys. This came from the initial inspiration from the open-source movement, the idea of making tools and knowledge available to a non-restricted community.

Mette Ingvartsen

ANSWER: Everybodys started as a website for the sharing of text material. It was at first about making information available and about compressing information in one certain place, creating links on the net to already existing texts, etc. After a while of not reaching so many people, everybodys became more active in terms of trying to create a platform not only for circulating knowledge but also for creating knowledge. At that moment, a new webpage was started, where the focus was put on creating a workshop kit and a toolbox that people could use for their specific purposes.

Alice Chauchat

QUESTION: Everybodys has existed for a few years now, and everybodys is now starting to receive invitations. How do you deal with this? Does someone represent everybodys?

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: This is a tricky part of the project. It exists only through individuals engaging, and yet it can never be reduced to some individuals, even when people are more active than others because this can change any moment and to avoid petrifying positions. What mostly happens is that active people provoke invitations and then redistribute those by inviting others to respond together to these invitations. So that subgroups are forming but are also porous to each other, as invitations are also an opportunity to transfer people from other places, for example.

Krööt Juurak

ANSWER: The doers decide. Since everybodys is not a specific group of people, everyone can represent it. Invitations and activities are organized by the ones who choose to do it.

Mette Ingvartsen

ANSWER: This is a question that still needs to be answered and resolved. In the beginning, there was an idea that people could do whatever they wanted

with the tools, games, performances, but following the open source ideology of all changes and progressions being traceable and credited. . . . Now I don't know. Non-profit is clearly one of the issues at hand. At the same time, it is clear that when people use days to play the game *Générique*, for instance, they can get paid for this. In my opinion, the only thing that is really important to insist on is that the project is not claimed by anyone. The people doing things within everybodys are not anonymous—we have names, like mine is Mette—but I do not own the project or the work that I do for everybodys. In that sense, the authorship position within everybodys is important to keep clear. Once you donate something to everybodys, you disown it, in a way, or allow it to transform, change, and be dismantled. This is important to insist on because we know that the tendencies from the outside (the market) is that NAMES and AUTHORS are needed for program booklets, promotion, etc. This is important to stay out of in order for everybodys to remain autonomous and an alternative site for production.

Petra Sabisch

There is something still remaining to be thought about: everybodys is done by people; it is an open network. It is not anonymous because it has a name: everybodys. But at the same time, it is anonymous in the sense that beneath the name *everybodys* there are several names, which change according to commitment, time, and intensity.

This double situation is intriguing since it raises questions: How can somebody encounter a dynamic open system? How can dynamic open networks that allow for encounters be created? How is openness to be maintained? How can personal invitations for presenting everybodys be nevertheless accepted? everybodys is also about particular choices at certain moments. . . .

Ambra Pittoni

QUESTION: In how many countries is everybodys now active?

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: Oh, this is hard to say, as there is no survey. . . . I know about people using everybodys in Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, the USA, Romania, Serbia, Croatia. . . . There is no procedure obliging people to inform the general platform about their activities, only encouragement to update the calendar on the website.

Krööt Juurak

ANSWER: This is difficult to tell because everybodys doesn't have a complete

overview of what everybodys are doing. Only a part of the activities are represented on the website calendar.

Conrad Noack

QUESTIONS: What are your next planned activities within the context of everybodys?

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: Workshops for the MA students of choreography at Stockholm university and TkH (walking theory) (Belgrade), *Générique* performances in Ausland (Berlin), the setting up of above-mentioned online video server with the Mime Centrum (Berlin), another book with performance scores and descriptions.

Conrad Noack

ANSWER: Next up is a game of *Générique* at Ausland on November 22. Later this year a meeting of the active everybodys of the Berlin area will take place that will hopefully plan further activities. I personally am really excited about everybodys and want to add to the collection of games in the toolbox as well as play some of those I haven't played yet.

Mette Ingvartsen

ANSWER: I am thinking about how to create a self-education system. . . . I think that everybodys already works as an open independent platform for the production of knowledge, and I like the openness of the participation. I am wondering how to create a protocol for self-learning, which of course is a total paradox. Maybe it is simply about continuing to expand the collection of games and search for new ways of exchanging, but I could also be interested in being involved in a new writing project. As Alice wrote, we are doing two workshops next year to find a way to spend more time developing the strategies of everybodys with new and different people.

Krōōt Juurak

QUESTION: Can there also be problems—for example, if somebody proposed something for everybodys which someone else didn't agree with. Where are the limits to openness?

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: Participating in everybodys doesn't mean signing up for all everybodys' activities. If you disagree, you can either ignore it or stop your

involvement in the project. Of course you can also always address your issue and see what the response is.

Conrad Noack

ANSWER: In my opinion, there should be no limit other than an ethics of sharing and of course the usual limits of free speech. When somebody proposes something others don't like, then that proposal will not get discussed as widely as others and thereby will become less important. Since the interest others take in a proposal determines its value, basically anything goes.

Ambra Pittoni

ANSWER: This is an issue I've been thinking about. . . . I think that somehow everybody's has a self-regulation/organization *dispositif*, which makes sure that everybody's contents always fit in "everybody's' box," but I think it would be interesting to check the openness limits, for example, in the case of a presentation of everybody's in contexts where the idea of dance is still attached to a point of view very far away from everybody's' concepts. It's possible that would create some disagreement. It would be interesting.

Mette Ingvarsten

ANSWER: For me, it is possible to have disagreement and that people use everybody's in ways I would not use it. I come to think of a moment, a problem that has actually already occurred: I was invited to TQW to do something in relation to games as an individual artist. Because my personal work has nothing to do with games, I proposed to come with everybody's to play *Générique*. I thought I communicated well about what the project was in terms of not naming it as my project, but nevertheless in the program it showed up as a Mette Ingvarsten performance. This was a big mistake and a big problem, which was also addressed by several people within the group (including myself). However, there are many people using the games without crediting everybody's, and for me this is not a big problem. I am more interested in the circulation and exchange the project creates than in keeping the project correct and intact in relation to its foundations. But obviously there are certain ethics that are hard to escape!

Conrad Noack

May I break the rules here for a moment and answer Mette to stress the importance of collective crediting of everybody's? Every game and every activity of everybody's should be credited to everybody's, and it is somewhat important to pay attention to this detail if the group wants to retain the collective

ownership of its products.

Alice Chauchat

Of course. That's what she says too.

Mette Ingvarstsen

Yes, I agree that it is important, but I know of many cases where it is not credited, and I don't think we can make a police force to control this.

Alice Chauchat

It's more a problem to credit on one person's name than not to credit at all.

Mette Ingvarstsen

Yes, I think this is the point.

It can never become someone's; it has to remain open.

Conrad Noack

No, policing is not possible and not necessary. I think insisting is enough, and that's what I was trying to do.

Mette Ingvarstsen

YES, it's good.

I would always credit the things I do in relation to everybodys.

Krõõt Juurak

ANSWER: All problems are not dealt with beforehand by creating rules or limitation, but only as they arise. And dealing with problems, issues, questions of limitation of our own functioning is an integral part of everybodys' work, which helps it develop and continue. Maybe there are no limits to openness?

Conrad Noack

QUESTION: Should there be games in the toolbox about the relationship between everybodys and the market? What could they look like?

Alice Chauchat

ANSWER: Interesting, then everybodys would turn on itself for a little while in a self-reflexive approach and become an artistic entity as any artist or group using the toolbox. . . . The problem is always that the players, however numerous they may be, can only ever partially represent everybodys. This is the strength and the weakness of such a group.

Conrad Noack

ANSWER: I think this is a necessary step in order to help clarify what people think about this relationship, not so much in order to give a final answer to this question. Maybe such games could involve proposals to curators along the lines of what Paul Gazzola (I think?) once proposed in a different context: different people handing in the same proposal to different curators in order to make the value of authorship and names visible. (This is not yet ready, just a thought.)

Alice Chauchat

QUESTION: Can you contextualize briefly: why are the five of you now writing this self-interview in the name of everybody's?

Conrad Noack

ANSWER: That's the community aspect I mentioned earlier. Not everybody in everybody's is connected equally—neither to the internet nor to each other. And everybody's is therefore not free of hierarchies. Just as proposals by some will get more feedback than proposals by others, some are more likely to speak “for” the group than are others. This hierarchy is hopefully based more on the input the individual gives to the group and not so much on their name. In my case, I was asked, and since I like the idea of this self-interview process (which is somewhat of a misnomer, since we are not only answering our own questions), I participated.

Krõõt Juurak

ANSWER: Of course, it could just as well be someone else writing this interview, and sure it could be fifty or one hundred everybody's, but since it is we who gathered here and it is more practical to write with a group of five than of 500, we are everybody's now.

Petra Sabisch:

Why five? Can't you count? I'm kidding: I joined the writing process twenty-three hours later, since I was unavailable for the Skype discussion. So I got everything per email and quickly added some of my thoughts before having a meeting with Carlos, who actually wants to know more about everybody's.

BUSY ROCKS

(www.busyrocks.org)

BRUSSELS, November 2008

How did you begin?

Busy Rocks: For *Dominos and Butterflies* we took Peter Fischli and David Weiss's video *Der Lauf Der Dinge* (The Way Things Go) as a starting point for creating a choreography. The fundamental rule of the performance became the law of inertia: a dancer may only move if he or she has received an impulse from another dancer. The piece explores the possibilities of the "action–reaction" couple for creating an evolving serial choreography.

What kind of cause and effect chain are you proposing?

BR: It is a causal chain that travels through entities and animates them in the very act of traveling. That may seem pretty obvious if we picture a long line of domino pieces that tumble one into the other, setting the next one in motion with the help of a starting impulse and gravity. But in thinking about the representation of that domino image, two problems immediately arise: if there are only five domino pieces, how can they go on after the fifth movement? If the domino piece started upright and ended its first motion down on the floor, how can it ever come up again?

In this piece, both questions meet in one answer. We cannot act like domino pieces which can only react by falling flat when receiving an impulse. We need to explore the physical and aesthetic potential of these configurations of bodies to create fictional reactions that can lead us to different results than the domino game. The reactive movements in *Dominos and Butterflies* are not entirely reactive, even if they propose being read as such. Every reactive movement is also a movement of choice and therefore is an active movement even if this fictional reaction, paradoxically, needs to seem necessary. For example, if a body bumps another and the latter does not react in a logical manner, the

cause and effect principle will not be graspable. The fiction, therefore, needs to create the illusion of necessity, as if every reaction were the only available one, a natural reaction.

This fictional moment of reaction is also what opens up space for innovative movements. If the bodies were to react as dead meat, they would have to react in one certain, exclusive way, like domino pieces. On the other hand, the fictional reaction can go in many directions as long as it remains plausible. For this reason, every new reactive movement needs to be a combination of something predictable (it has to be plausible and create a cause and effect logic) and something unpredictable (as every reaction is chosen out of multiple possibilities). This combination of the expected and the unexpected creates a wish for more and an ongoing curiosity for “what will be next.”

What kind of bodies do you present on stage?

BR: Reminiscent of the physical comedy of silent films, the performers of *Dominos and Butterflies* lack common sense. They are neither conscious of their acts nor of the consequences of those acts. Their materiality is deliberately cartoon-like. It is reformulated when the effect of a dynamic force acts upon them. The bodies are found in unexpected situations by exaggerating or minimizing impact, changing physical states, or by assembling or decomposing. The relationships become unfamiliar. Their interactions seem to be totally absurd because they are purposeless and meaningless. They only make sense as part of the piece, since they are the result of all the impulses that come before and that will be decisive for the next impulse to appear.

We pursue the creation of a fictional world with a deliberate misuse of the dancers as “objects.” They could be substances in a series of chemical reactions, purposeless automatons, precariously balanced objects in the moment before their collapse, or gears in a factory of unidentified products.

When its turn arrives, each “object/dancer” acts as a single piece of a complex device. Its task is unique. Though some movements might be repeated and certain reactions might seem of a similar kind, each task has a unique place in the chain of events and will never be repeated in the same manner nor have the same consequences.

The material qualities you embody transform during the whole performance.

BR: Yes, the bodies do not stay the same and are capable of changing and acquiring different qualities. These qualities determine how the body reacts

to impulses and how it affects the rest. The bodies need to change for the external force to travel and for the choreography to continue. We could say that any movement that appears on stage makes an impulse visible that would otherwise remain hidden; they are the actualization of a potential to affect the material reality of the “objects.” The bodies are totally dependent on an external force to be moved. But the external force, in turn, is totally dependent on the bodies to become visible. The illusion of a passing force gives significance to all the constellations, dynamics, and situations created inside the choreography.

What’s the specificity of the kind of movement you are set to produce?

BR: “Mechanics” appears as a key concept. We deal mostly with making the mechanical causes of each movement visible by trying to produce a chain of actions and reactions. Since we aim to be bodies without a will—without an inherent capacity to act or to choose—the interactions we stage are largely destined to represent mechanical laws.

Even though we wanted to produce a continuous chain of actions and reactions, we were prevented from truly playing according to the laws of gravity and mechanics. Had we been entirely faithful to our premise, we would have ended up lying flat on the floor after five or ten movements. In order to keep the machinery going, we needed to act against gravity while producing the impression that we were being moved primarily because of it. The core of our task, then, became an operation in the realm of fiction and theatricality. Our task became not so much about producing truthful reactions (a hit on the head truly causes the head to fall this way) but plausible ones; although our actions may appear to be convincing or believable on the surface, they may not be so upon closer examination.

Do the movements have a metaphorical dimension?

BR: Although there is a minimal metaphorical dimension in the movements we create (the human body on stage at times can be read as a ball, a lever, or an electric conductor), the possibility of signification of the movements we are proposing should be sought elsewhere. We do not believe that an interpretation is necessary or that it is our task at hand. We would like to think that the meaning of the movements we have produced can be born out of the interactions they establish with several other elements: thoughts, procedures, references, histories. . . .

We try to establish the common notion that the focus of the piece is in

movements *an sich*, in “pure” movements. These movements *an sich* are the kind of restrictive, “purifying” principles that have often been used by modernist avant-garde artists.

Nevertheless, in *Dominos and Butterflies* the whole piece is almost a reversal of the “purity principle”—especially as we only use the “pure” body as our working tool and point of attention. From the very beginning of the performance it is clear that none of our body-reactions could ever conform to the basic rule of “inert matter that is activated by an impulse.” That is where *Dominos and Butterflies* turns into a (re)animated minimal dance. . . .

How did you develop the movement material?

BR: Broadly speaking, the development of the piece draws on a crucial principle of the avant garde, which is equally operative in the performing arts, visual arts, and literature: the productivity of self-imposed constraints that force the artist to devise unlikely connections and invent novel combinations.

In the case of *Dominos and Butterflies*, the choreography is driven by interactions between dancers who trigger new movements and arrangements in a quasi-mechanical fashion, conforming to a cause-and-effect logic.

We make use of this rigid framework of what can and cannot be done within the choreography (bodies are dealt with as inert matter that is activated by an impulse) as a motor to heighten our desire for the creation and positioning of movements within this grid:

–Can we work on this movement to make it fit the frame?

–Can we stretch the frame slightly, without breaking it, to make this movement fit into it?

Our attention during the creation of the choreography shifts from considering movements in terms of good or bad to seeing them in terms of “they work or they don’t work” or of “this chain of movements makes sense or it doesn’t.”

You spend a lot of time together in the studio. How do you manage your time?

BR: The five of us in combination have developed a practice of working together built upon two principles.

Principle one:

We work in an accumulative manner, creating on day one, minute one, and on day forty-eight, minute forty-eight. Each movement creates specific conditions and positions that allow for the next movement to happen, which, in turn, predetermines the movement after that.

This principle is the starting point for principle two.

Principle two:

We do not preplan, or only do so to a certain extent. The material that was made the previous day constitutes the starting point for the next day, and these situations are taken as given and necessary.

Some days we tried to preplan, to introduce new logics, and to think about dramaturgical elements, but those intentions had to meet and match the reality of the specific constellation in which the five of us found ourselves. Some days this constellation was in favor of the preplanning, and other days it was not, when the making of choreography seemed to be more an action of problem solving (“How do we deal with this situation?”) than of anything else.

We like to think about the principle of no-preplanning as trading in your healthy eyes for myopic ones.

There is a shared responsibility proposed to the audience. While the actions on stage need to create the fiction, the audience needs to be willing to join the game. How did you set up this game of acceptance?

BR: The first moments of *Dominos and Butterflies* set up a simple contract with the audience on what is going to happen on stage: every single movement—whether it is performed by a limb, a body in its entirety, by an assemblage of bodies, or by some immaterial force—will be the result of a previous movement and the initiator of a movement that follows. Motion will always be caused by motion. The principle of cause and effect was there for the creation of choreographic material as well as in the end product as something recognizable for the viewer.

In this choreography, there are no changes of scene, no chapters, no illogical change of rules. A break in the causal logic would immediately disturb the dialogue between stage and audience. This does not mean that the choreography does not evolve. It means that it does not evolve by making use of breaks but by constantly expanding the potential choreographic complexity. The curiosity aroused by “what will follow next?” combined with the innovative potential opened up by every single fictional reaction permits a constant stretching of the limits of what can be accepted as a result of this cause-and-effect chain. This constant potential expansion is not something added from an overall structure, but rather it belongs to the choreographic principle itself. The constant twists and turns that every reaction embodies are something immanent to the creation and performance of this choreography.

The choreography starts with a very basic idea of what cause and effect is. As it slowly develops, the logic of what causes what slightly shifts by making use

of those fictional reactions. The many slight shifts that those fictional reactions imprint on the causal logic makes a movement that would have seemed absurd in the first minutes of the choreography seem perfectly plausible, let's say, in the middle of the performance. Logically, then, if the performance were to stretch forever in time, every imaginable movement could be made to be "as if" pertaining to a cause-and-effect logic. In other words, if you haven't seen a grand-jeté, a ninety-minute pause or some hip hop moves, that is only because there was not enough time for it.

Why did you decide to integrate the sped-up film of the rehearsals at the end of the performance?

BR: The sped-up film material takes a tongue-in-cheek look at the sometimes tedious process of making this piece. It

WALKING THEORY

(www.tkh-generator.net)

BELGRADE, 2009

TkH: What does “Walking Theory” mean? What is theory that walks?

TkH: One thing is certain—walking theory is not us, collaborators of the walking theory, that is, we are not a (walking) personification of theory. Right? I don't know if there is that kind of implication in English, but I think it can be confusing in Serbian.

TkH: In the sense of a group of people walking around and preaching the theory? No. No. No. At least it would imply a kind of absolute theory believer, like an apostle of theory. Impossible. For walking theory, theory is problematic, and, on the other hand, walking theory is all about problematizing. Thus it can be something like a risky zone between cognitive platforms and body practices, located in the middle of the social realm. A discourse I would say. And with this, I open the space for thinking about material practices in/of society and art.

TkH: Not personifications. Walking theory might be a kind of toolbox for possible interactions between theory and art, cultural policies, other practices. . . . Or an example. When we did that *Tits* performance (*TkH: Last Theoretical Performance—générique*) last month, I thought: oh, this can be so provocative and useful for someone in the audience. S/he can see everything, process, challenge, (un)security(ies). . . . It was like an open demonstration. Like: I can work with this this way, or another, I can discuss/perform biopolitics or theory of text or political theories in the way they did. . . . It is useful, but you need a powerful imagination :-)! A lucid viewer can have a really great time. It is important to recognize the connection . . . which is not always easy. The perception is important. Connect the dots! As an artist, I would also quote Ivana Sajko, a writer from Croatia, from her *Prema ludilu (i revoluciji)* (Towards Madness [and Revolution]) book, where she says: “I am working with theory / using it as a subjective experience, I choose it randomly and passionately, and I am not pretending on theory's field of discourse, but only on its triggers and

bombs that open the new ways in my own writing.”

TkH: Do you think we have changed a lot since 2001? Our working processes? Our position on the local/international (art) scene? It's been almost ten years since we started working and collaborating? Sometimes, it's so strong for me, the fact I've been working and learning with/from some people for ten years. It is a longer period than any official educational program. . . .

TkH: I think we have all changed a lot, both TkH as a platform has changed and we as its actors have.

Firstly, our context has changed. We began at an exceptional moment in recent Serbian history, just at the moment of our “October the 5th revolution.” The old, nationalist, quasi-socialist regime of Slobodan Milosevic was replaced with a new, democratic and pro-Western one. We were quite enthusiastic about the new open possibilities for Serbian society, to be honest. Meanwhile, the new regime has shown itself in the light of daily life to also be nationalist and brutally neo-liberally capitalist. This shifted us strongly toward a clear leftist position, and my impression is that our position and TkH’s general position is becoming more and more leftist every day. What also changed is the general approach to theory in the local art world or, to be precise, the performing arts world. We began in a “theory-phobic” atmosphere, and at the beginning, we had strong fights for the relevance and even necessity of theory in contemporary art. Now, it’s one of the strongest elements of the scene. It is not (only) our achievement; a big role has been played by the opening of the borders and international influences and the establishment of a post-graduate department for theory of art at the University of Arts in Belgrade. We didn’t sleep through these processes. . . . These two contextual changes affect our programs and approaches fundamentally on many levels.

Secondly, the group of people comprising TkH has also changed, some of them have stepped out, some left the country, some found better jobs, and of course many new people have joined. Besides, we, who started with TkH are much older than in 2000/01. And now we have certain experience, personal experience of work in a collective, in Belgrade, and on the independent scene, and it pushes us in a position of constant self-reflection and also helps us be more systematic and to try to articulate methodologies available to the others. For example, we started with independent education and the collective self-education of artists and theorists. But we did it only at a primary level, by doing it, as it was our need—and at the beginning, TkH was a research theoretical-artistic group. Later on, we started to think more systematically about these problematic and even the methods we applied (more or less unconsciously). Now we are fully engaged in the issue through several projects and programs, both local and international. And now we produce a discourse of

self-education, together with methodologies, tools, broader contextualization, etc., and it's not only a means for us any more. A similar thing has happened with our practices and discourses of self-organization, free licensing, collaboration, and in many other aspects of the work. . . .

TkH: Do activities inside TkH influence your/our work alongside TkH projects and works?

TkH: Oh, yes. My diploma piece premiered three days before the first TkH performance, so I'm never quite sure what influences what . . . but definitely approaching theory as something intervening proved highly practical and productive in my artistic practice, in theater-making. Theory often produces an algorithm that uses issues I'm dealing with in a particular piece as input and that comes out with a piece itself as output. Also, experiences from theater-making prove very handy in exploring performative aspects of contemporary theory. On the other hand, being active in the independent scene through the TkH platform activities positions you in a certain way in your institutional work. Sometimes it is a disadvantage, more often it is an advantage, but it certainly is significant, right?

TkH: Right. TkH experience showed me how important it is to be critical toward your own work, local working context, and conventions of the medium and field you are working in. And how to articulate your work statement, and how that is important for the work itself and the mind as well! Also, when I'm working in some other teamwork, on institutional theater projects usually, these experiences help me a lot, in the sense of reading/contextualizing the drama play, discussing, problematizing, and changing concepts, and in not using and not supporting or reproducing the strict hierarchy that often appears in the institutional collaborations. That (effort) is also one of those advantage/disadvantage things. However, it tries one's patience.

TkH: I can only say that what I do within TkH, I do elsewhere. I cannot separate these things, or don't make so many compromises, I would say. Within TkH, together with other colleagues—both theorists and artists—I have developed a sharp and clear theoretical platform, which is aware of its praxis as well as of the specificities of artistic practice. . . . When I'm invited to write, to lecture, or to work as a dramaturge in an institution or in other contexts, I simply do the same. And those who invite me can only take it or leave it. I personally don't care too much about the consequences, as my "mission" is not to sell myself as a theoretical talking-head thanks to good calculations, but to take part in changing this world by introducing critical discourses into it or by challenging it with those discourses. . . .

TkH: I am thinking now, how do we avoid the large scale conflicts or clashes?

We have known each other for a long time, but does it have to do with the fact that we are all maintaining our professional development and careers not directly connected to TkH, but at the same time strongly connected through those discourses, methodologies, mentioned above? I heard (from Milena Dragičević-Šešić) at a conference on problems in/about cultural institutions in Serbia that the main problem and failure in the institutional art system actually is/may be “party-crazy” (rule of the political parties over all state activities) combined with personal vanity. In January this year, a journalist from the local TV station asked if our *Last Theoretical Performance* meant that we were not going to collaborate any more, and she had heard we had had a fight because of money. Although we modified the performance because of the minimal budget (and that’s how we decided to make a version of *générique*), we didn’t have any fights, we wanted to say that the next performance will not be theoretical, or not only a theoretical performance.

TkH: I don’t know how. . . . Maybe because we are used to discussing things, most often . . . and also maybe because there is something (some space, discourse, discussions, mutual appreciation, fair play, common experience of living and working here with all the impossibilities and hard moments . . .) of/ within TkH that is more important for any of us who still collaborate than any personal relation . . . and maybe somehow it remains quite often above the personal relations that can become clashes and protects us from them. Sometimes I don’t like you personally too much, sometimes you really make me nervous, or angry . . . it’s true. But at the same time, it’s far from a clash, as I know you are my comrades, and we did and still have a lot of things to do together. And it’s always more important for me. And if I didn’t think so and if I didn’t believe in your engagement and commitment, I would stop working with you; it has also happened few times. . . .

TkH: I’m not sure, but it is an interesting thing to think about. Especially as it is not such a common phenomenon in the turbulent Balkan or ex-Yugoslavian context.

TkH: Talking about the contextual framing, it is notable that you have established or taken part in collaborative networks with platforms and initiatives from ex-Yugoslavian countries, like Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia, but you also relate frequently to a broader European context. How do you deal with the situation of working in local as well as regional and international contexts?

TkH: We were born in the former Yugoslavia, and we recognize it as a more or less unique cultural space. Yet, we are aware we all live in “small cultures” and need international and regional connections. We are not autistic and we don’t want to uncritically immerse ourselves in the international context but to engage in a dialogue of equals, putting forward our post-socialist discourse.

TkH: But what is also important for us is to make local connections. A few years ago, we initiated, together with a few other colleagues, the Other Scene (Druga scena), a platform for the independent cultural-artistic scene in Belgrade. It is the first time something like this exists here. It is not coherent and even maybe not so articulated, but it exists. By its very existence, the Other Scene assures (us) that competition is not the only way of living together in a limited space, although the market machine would like to persuade us of this. No, collaboration is also a way of living, as it broadens the space we share.

TkH: Can you imagine/project TkH in some twenty years? Will it still exist? How? Who? Where? Why? Or if not, how about you?

TkH: OK . . . let's say it's 2020. And yes, TkH exists. Look. It's not a formal platform which comprises a certain number of actors. It is more like a virtual cluster of cultural workers producing temporary autonomous zones of political action. . . .

TkH: Or, maybe, it is like a historical concept that addresses an unusual self-organized cultural phenomenon that emerged at the beginning of the twenty-first century in post-socialist Serbia . . . trying to make performing arts a relevant social practice. . . .

TkH: I propose finishing with a tag cloud of our references.

TkH: OK, Doc :-)

Ranci re, self-organization, copyleft, Ulmer, Illich, Virno, Ar-
endt, digital_paradigm, feminism, postpedagogy,
affective_knowledge, knowledge_production, queer, hack, post-fordism,
post-structuralism, benjamin, multitude, cyber_feminism,
self-education, politics_of_gender, education,
workers self-management, ready-made_theater, open_source,
Althusser, activism, biopolitics, Negri, body, Derrida,
methodology, capital, Debord, Situationism, communism,
critical_theory, contemporary_art,
performance_studies, performance, performance_art, cyberfor-
mance, contemporary_dance, collaboration, Frakcija,
independent_scene, eastern_europe,
postdramatic_theatre, other_scene, independent, discussion,
theoretical_performance, contemporary_opera, rhizome, Artaud,
Barthes, Kristeva, Maska, Deleuze, Guattari, Brecht, Boal, bottom_up, do-it-
yourself, interdisciplinary_dramaturgy, Belgrade,
Yugoslavia

PRATICABLE

(www.praticable.info)

BERLIN, October 2008 – May 2009

AC: So, can you present yourselves? Who is Praticable?

IS: At the moment, Praticable is five people: Alice Chauchat, Frédéric Gies, Frédéric de Carlo, Odile Seitz, and Isabelle Schad. We're working on body practices as a source for choreographic work.

AC: Does this mean that it's always the five of you working together?

FG: It's always at least the five of us when we share the practice. Then, when we make pieces, it's not the case; it can be one person signing the piece or two together or more, but it's not about making collective pieces. We're not a collective on the level of authorship. The collective part is on the sharing of body practices and the sharing of distribution.

IS: How does it work, to share distribution?

OS: When a piece is to be performed somewhere, we always propose a first part with another work from another one of us.

IS: And the important thing is that we decide ourselves which piece is shown; this is not done through the production house or festival inviting us.

OS: It's a short piece,

IS: up to twenty minutes.

FG: So we also curate ourselves and share this task together. I specify that the first parts can be a short piece, an excerpt of a long one, or a work in progress.

IS: How does this function? How do you do it?

AC: Well, it depends. The first question is who is available on that date; that makes the first preselection, and then we try to make sure that all pieces available as first parts get shown. So it's also a matter of distributing the chances evenly for each work to be presented.

IS: It's a way to share visibility. Sometimes it's restricted as well by other factors such as money, which makes it only possible for a solo to be shown and not a duet or a group thing.

FG: Also, now that we have more choices, because more pieces have been created in this frame than at the beginning, we also try to see which pieces make sense to present together.

FG: Why did you decide to create this system of first parts?

OS: We decided on it in order to give a chance to the others to show their own work and in order to be our own curators, not to be dependent on others.

AC: There's also the idea of making a group, organizing ourselves as a group that is not the author of a piece but which is organized around the sharing of something that is used to make pieces, and this thing is practice, various practices that are done together. This is a way of putting in common knowledge, experiences, and ideas from all of us, which can then be used by everybody on their own. And then we thought it also makes sense to share the visibility of the outcome of this. Knowing that we don't want to become a collective author, i.e., a traditional collective, we decided on sharing something crucial to the artistic work. Therefore it makes sense to present the context in which this work is being done. And we think that by showing two works that can have quite different artistic and aesthetic proposals, yet still be grounded in a similar approach to choreography, we could make visible what this thing in common is that is not a style, for example.

IS: Is your idea of curatorship a political response towards certain structures you are surrounded by?

IS: For me, yes, it's a response to how festivals are constructed or put together, with certain people being visible all over the place, versus us saying "one part of this evening is going to be proposed by us." This puts visibility into question, which is, for me, very political, and I'm happy about that aspect.

FG: For me, and this is also political, it's a way of not showing a piece as just a piece or a product that you get to see but of giving the context with it. It invites the audience to look at it in another way. It can bring up questions that you might not immediately have just looking at one piece.

IS: What kind of reactions to this proposal have you had from curators?

AC: Surprisingly, it's been very easy. We thought it might be complicated, and in fact it's very rare that people clearly express problems with that.

FG: And mostly when there's a problem, once we explain, it's accepted.

AC: Surprisingly, that it's been easy doesn't necessarily mean that everyone loves it, but it has never made somebody refuse a show. That's already a nice thing to realize that programmers tend to trust the proposal, and then another nice thing is that it's also mostly very supported in the communication, where the venues themselves ask for a lot of information so that they can advertise it. So they actually take it as a chance to show more work, because they can understand this idea of double program and they can stand for it.

IS: It's important that this should be well contextualized and made clear for the audience to understand it also. When this is not done, we sometimes just do it ourselves, verbally.

AC: In fact, we should do it all the time. Because even when it's super clearly announced, there's always one or two people completely confused.

FG: Yes, this should become a rule, something that must be done before each show.

AC: I also wanted to ask you, you've been working for three and a half years. How has the project changed or developed over time, in the structure or in the work? Has something changed?

OS: For me, it really gave me a structure to have the possibility to make my own work. It was a very secure structure, and I really felt it as a support.

AC: For me, also, there's clearly this sense of support and continuity, even when we've done nothing together for several months, still, knowing that there is that umbrella that can intensify is a very securing thing. And, also, to do a lot of BMC® was especially an opportunity to come close to and experience another relation to the body that then could really make me think of other proposals. And the practice I'm working on now, since last year, could never happen outside of this project; the ongoing practice together with the process of thinking in artistic and choreographic terms about this practice, also in a continuous frame, makes it possible to just start working on something without knowing if it will ever become a show. And if it does, it can still be a practice outside of the show.

IS: For me, the practice and, specifically, the BMC® practice have been a really supportive continuous line in my work and in my life as well, as something that stays stable, that is very present, and that I also experience in other

contexts now than Practicable, which just stays with me—when I’m working on a theater piece, for example. I have this approach (of working with BMC® as a body practice) because it touches an essential aspect of reconsidering working within theater. It has also saved me from getting completely confused because lately I have received so many different kinds of proposals for “smaller” projects and I am very happy to have a continuous thread and line, to not be split into many different things and products, even though each project became a thing in itself.

FG: For me, I think it has totally changed my way of working. As there is this principle of starting from a practice and then coming to representation, I now have a cooler way of working because I just practice something and then I look at what it produces. I’m way less into the goal, but am stepping back more, looking at what is produced, and then doing something with it, having fewer preconceived ideas about what I’m going to do, so that it opens up possibilities for me. It also makes me freer in my own work.

FDC: I think it makes me more confident, during the process, but even in the act of performing; I can feel stronger in the body and connected to all the people in the project. I can feel that it’s easier. I’m freer to go on stage.

FG: I also see another development of the project, on the level of the sharing of distribution: it creates an alternative way of creating pieces, in another frame than the one of a regular production. For instance, it makes it possible to make a piece by making proposals for these first parts. Presenting first parts makes it economically possible to make work even if you don’t get into coproduction and funding. Of course, it is nothing like a creation budget, but the fee you get for presenting a first part can also be seen as a way to make a work possible. So there is also an economic sharing. At the moment, I am happy to see, for example, that Odile and Fred (DC) did proposals for first parts, and now they have been invited to show this work independently. In my case, also, it was great to use the first part system to start *Album*, before getting my production budget. This way, I could try my idea, and see if I was interested in it before going for the whole full program.

IS: For me, it has been a discovery as well how TIME becomes relative within creation. As I have been working continuously on ideas within practice sessions or workshops and as there has been a continuity in exchange with certain people, it has allowed me to make a short piece as a first part in a very short timeframe. Like now, I have made a short piece *Intervall (Practicable)* that is some sort of part or study of a larger project *Musik (Intervall)* I’m starting to work on. And I “made” it in three days, but one could say as well that I made it in one year, if one counts all the time I’ve been busy with the essence of the work. Or three years . . . or more. . .

AC: Do you think this is because of the structure of practicable or because of the practice-based work?

FDC: I think it's both . . . and the work together.

AC: It's interesting when you say that you carry with you things from Practicable also in projects that are outside of Practicable. Also because I know that in the practice sessions, there are also a lot of other people than the five of you coming and joining, sometimes often and sometimes only once. It sounds a bit like Practicable is a kind of sponge where you live but also in and out of which you move and through which other people pass too.

IS: Yes, this is because we're not a five-person community but actually a very large one. I can't separate them by saying "this I'm only doing with the five of us and this I'm doing outside the Practicable frame." What I carry around with me from Practicable is a certain way of thinking about how to make work. This doesn't stop within a frame, and thus the frame becomes much larger.

FG: The first pieces that were made in the frame of Practicable were mostly involving the people from Practicable; they were solos or duets. And now several projects within Practicable concern many more people than the five of us, and I think it will also be more and more the case now.

AC: And it's also that some people share the practice without performing in pieces, which gives fluidity between practicing and producing pieces, where they are connected but also remain independent.

AC: This makes me wonder: why is then Practicable just the five of you? Since other people also practice with you a lot, why are they not Practicable? What is this dependent on? Could you imagine being more, and what would be the conditions for it?

FG: It would be great if people would ask to join practicable! Saying, "I have this piece based on that practice and I would love to join Practicable." Someone with a project based on a practice who would propose to do it in this frame.

IS: For me, I agree. It would be great if people would use this approach on practice to do Practicable work, but even then, for me, it's not so much about joining or being member, but rather the idea of a platform.

AC: But you need to be a member in order to be programmed as a first part.

IS: No, I'm wondering if someone, either by inviting someone you already share practice with in the frame of Practicable and who expressed the wish to do it, or someone coming with a proposal, if we couldn't invite people or if

people could invite themselves by also proposing to just show a small thing in the first part. Or a bigger one, it doesn't matter of course. My feeling is that it's not about membership because what I like about a platform is that it's not about possessing something. And as we are dealing with the notion of circulation . . . of ideas and of practices. . . .

AC: I think this is a nice idea, but not a very practical one. For me, there is something there which is not totally clear yet, but that has to do with engagement; on the one hand, there's this sponginess about the project that makes it necessary to think that it has to be extendable and possible for more people to come in, so that the elasticity that we have in our involvement depending on periods in our lives or schedule, being sometimes a lot there and sometimes not, is part of how the project functions. On the other hand, engagement also seems necessary. "Membership" makes it sound like an exclusive club, and I don't like this notion of exclusivity; at the same time, without engagement it might become too vague. It has to be cared for.

IS: I think in the case of a person who's already accepting an invitation or proposing, the engagement has to be in the sharing of the practice concerned, in proposing a frame for its sharing. It should be connected and not just suddenly a platform for pieces.

AC: So I would say that Praticable works have to be based on a practice, and someone can join Praticable on the condition of sharing this practice too, be it one's own or other people's.

FG: Yes, and also sharing the distribution. These basic things have to be there.

IS: Yes, this is the way I explained it to the group of people in Zagreb, where I'm working on a Praticable piece and where I started to propose the idea of making a first part to the people in this group. I'm curious what is going to happen. . . .

AC: Do you have plans for the future?

IS: I have lots of small projects coming, but in the frame of Praticable, I want to continue the work on body practice in relation to the prolongation of the body, whether through clothes, objects, anything in this idea of prosthesis or prolongation, on this relationship between you and yourself and then what is not yourself anymore, what is outside. So I would be curious to make different studies in different constellations to continue this research.

I'm also planning a new Praticable project called *Music (Praticable)* that can be created anew and with a new group of people in different cities/countries. Each time the title *Music* will be translated into the respective language of the country where it is created and presented. Within this project, I want to

compare expressions from the field of music to body language and physiological processes, considering the body as an instrument.

AC: I want to continue working on imagination as part of the physical body, with this practice that it does and will also continue doing apart from next year's creation.

FG: In relation to my project *album*, I'm interested in sharing a practice which is . . . we started working a lot with BMC, and at least for my part, it was very much oriented on the "body" aspect. And with *album* I'm going more from the mind towards the body. And now I have to find ways of sharing the practice I started and I don't know yet how to do it. I have to figure it out.

AC: This is an important thing about that project: it obliges us to also think what we do separately from a particular artistic product. Because we have to share it with the others, we have to consider the activity in itself.

FG: It also makes us think about what the frames for sharing are and how we share, possibly forcing us to find ways that we maybe never tried before, or to invent new ones. And this then influences the practice in itself.

OS: For me, it's difficult to imagine the possibility; when we worked in April (2008 on *The beloved*) it was so short that we had to work only to make the piece. For me, the time we had one year ago in Potsdam was a great time. The practices we did with you in the summer before were very nice too; it was a great time for exchange, but I have a feeling that it's not so easy, during creation periods, to find the possibility to share and invite the others. That's what you wrote in your mail, Fred, a few weeks ago: there's a time when it's necessary to find a concentration either with the group or alone. . . .

FDC: Yes, it would maybe be great to find another residency out of creation, time just for exchange.

OS: Yes, but I think it would be a necessity to find one or two times each year.

. . .

FG: . . . that would be only about this.

OS: Yes.

AC: But you have space where you can work. Do you need to have a residency somewhere?

FG: Well, it's great to have a residency because then it's also money!

IS: I think in general we can also organize it here in Berlin in our spaces; the situation is a little different for you, Fred (DC), because we're all in Berlin, but then it's a lot about availability, I think. I wrote three mails during the process of *Ohne Worte* to invite you into the practice and no one came. This is fine with me. It was super for me that I then wrote to a big mailing list and ten or more people showed up every day, and for me this is also part of Praticable.

There's the question of availability even when we're in Berlin, because of family or something else. Sometimes maybe a desire also. Some days one doesn't feel like doing something on top of all the other things. I think we should be honest enough to say that this comes how it falls. We're just engaged in setting it up anyway (the open practice sessions), and maybe this can happen through this big network which each of us has: to invite people and then whoever comes, comes. I find this a nice possibility. Also related to when you can have a space, because for now I can only have temporary spaces in Berlin, which are related to creation or renting. It's great that we can just propose it wherever and whenever we can.

FG: It's true that it would be great to have a kind of annual gathering, even if it's one week, to update on what we've done throughout the year and to try things for the future—even one week is already enormous.

AC: . . . a Practicable intensive. Yes, let's do it in my *atelier* and check out the calendars when we find a week.

FG: Ah, I want to say another thing regarding a previous question about what Practicable changed. What is great is that I can work more at my rhythm, i.e., it gives me more time to conceive a piece. As there's this sharing of practice and time spent on it, it actually adds more time to the process of creation. And as I can share the practice in the frame of other projects, the time elongates, more time to spend on the ground of the piece than on what the piece will be.

AC: Another question was: has Practicable changed as a structure since you founded it?

IS: No, not as a structure. We're talking now about possibilities for the future, but until now it hasn't changed.

AC: Well, I remember that at first we had said that everyone would share the practice for all the creations; it started from this very radical thing.

FG: . . . and now we've made it fit to reality

FDC: But it can change, it's possible, I would love to.

IS: For me, it can't be possible to be there all the time, but in this time I will be somewhere else and share practice with people. This is why I said that Practicable is potentially much larger . . . if we consider Practicable as representing certain ideas about how we are dealing with the making of work. the modalities of thinking and working and their effect(s) on (re)presentation.

AC: Well, we don't have the money for it, and it would mean having no desire for projects outside of Practicable. For me, not only can I not be there all the time, but I also don't want to because there are other things I want to do. But it would also be great if it were sometimes possible to share someone else's

practice throughout their whole creation without being in the piece.

FG: I observe that even if it is difficult to find time to meet all together, the sharing of practices happens within smaller units. For example, two of us meet and practice together or simply exchange verbally on our latest experiences, and then it circulates within the group because each of these two people meet with other members. It takes more time than if we all met together at the same time, but it happens, in a slower way, and that is not bad.

AC: What does this principle of starting from a body practice change in your choreographic practice?

AC: I think there's a shift from thinking the body and the dance that is presented as a representation (as an image symbolizing human beings, culture, social interaction, or whatever can be projected onto bodies) towards bringing the focus onto a person in an activity, a person doing something. And this is what you're looking at: what the person you're looking at is doing calls in associations, ideas about how bodies are represented—not only in terms of images but also of how they're thought about. So that instead of showing symptoms of culture, we give the opportunity to look at a person and what that person does, to not just watch something but to acknowledge how culture informs our ways of watching and of doing, and to observe the activity itself rather than the formal result of this activity.

FG: Also, for me, the fact of starting from a practice makes it impossible to start from a vision, you can't have a vision of the piece you want to make. So that you really have to look at what's happening. The only thing you can do is really look at what's happening when this person is doing this, and then organize it in a certain way.

IS: It's very important that the practice is not only the starting point, but that it continues on the stage. What does this change? I think it has to do with being more in the present time and with the body being somehow more real. . . . It has to do with not being in the past: if you're practicing on stage, you're not reproducing choreographic shapes and you're not in the past, so you're really practicing in front of an audience, in the present, your activity is less representative and more essentially real.

FG: For me, it makes this funny thing that, somehow, I don't work so much with representation and I don't think so much about representation while making a piece. And then I wonder what we are doing, when at some point we make a show. . . .

AC: Fred G, you say you don't work with representation, but in Dance, you

worked with dance styles, and in The Breast Piece, we worked with images of femininity, which I think are representations, ways of representing the body in dance or in visual culture. . . .

FG: . . . but what we do on stage is not work on representing these things. We're doing something else, and representation is a side effect.

AC: Yes, but it is part of the choreographic practice.

FG: Yes, because as soon as we see that what we're doing produces these kinds of images, then of course we look at it and acknowledge it.

IS: In any case, we're not escaping representation, because we're working on stage or with other kinds of public visibility; this makes it representation. It's not like just watching the street. But still I think that the thing of avoiding being representational or being on the level of the cliché comes very close to what you say about not dealing with representation as an issue.

AC: This is an important distinction to make; it's not that we're ignoring issues of representation while making a piece, but rather that the way of making the piece, by choreographing practices, means that we don't need to deal with representation while performing, but instead we can deal with the activity itself. Since, during the process, we have acknowledged and dealt with representations produced by our activity and others that might be referred to or associated with it. But the moment of performing is not a moment delivering images.

OS: Yes, when dancing, it's another sensation. It doesn't matter if a movement is not perfect, because it has no model; its quality and how it is produced is more important. And about the choreographic work, for me it has more sense because it allows more openness. . . . It's not giving one movement and one form, not giving form but one theme, and to interpret this and to receive it gives a lot of openness.

IS: it's true, there's quite a lot of space for the audience to find themselves and their own experience inside what they see or what is given to be seen. What also comes to mind is that it's a practice in itself to be able to keep practicing while the audience is watching, and not to have something changing at this very moment. It's not so easy and it needs to be cleverly conceived so you can carry on practicing. For example, in *Dance* we're involved with the score and the places where we initiate our movements, and we practiced in order to be able to do that while we share it with an audience.

FDC: Yes, I think the deal with the audience is that we are sharing the practice. When performing, I don't think that I'm doing my thing and there's the audience, but it helps me a lot to think that I'm sharing what I'm doing, my activity.

AC: Yes, it's very simple in a way, but it is about allowing people to watch what we're doing.

FDC: We can invite people into this practice, to feel, to share, to expose our sensations, our feelings, and to expand.

FG: I think it produces something for the audience in that it changes the way of looking, because of what the pieces are made of. Because we're just being there with our activity, it's not so much about "taking the audience," and the audience understands that they're not going to be taken. I hear that people can sometimes get bored, getting out of what's happening in front of them, but without identifying it as a problem. Rather, on the contrary: because this is possible, they can look at other things, and in another way. It gives space to the spectator to experience the piece on different levels. I see this in all the Practicable pieces. I also have it as a spectator of the other ones.

AC: When you say that you're not fixing movements, does this mean you're working with improvisation?

FG: No, for me it's not improvisation, but it can come close to automatic movement, letting come whatever comes, which is not improvisation for me.

IS: I think it depends on how you define the term "improvisation," because I face this question a lot with other collaborators, not necessarily within this group, who talk a lot about improvisation, and I always say that I don't work with improvisation, but then it's really a question of how you define the word.

AC: I think that what we don't do is composition in real time. We don't build interesting constructs of time and space, rhythms and shapes, and so on. That might be why we keep on calling it "activity". . . .

IS: . . . or in the process exploration rather than improvisation.

FG: Yes, it's more the exploration of a certain movement quality, for example.

AC: Because I feel that it's extremely precise. Until now, you take any piece that we've done, every section is very precisely choreographed: this activity and not any other one. All the Practicable pieces have a clear, constructed dramaturgy. The real-time exploration is as much a choreographic material as movement phrases could be, and we don't use it to add the value of an "unknown," "in the moment" quality. We use it so that we can show activity rather than form.

IS: Yet Steve Paxton, for example, is working with improvisation, using that term, and he is also very precise. . . .

AC: It's not being judgmental, but trying to understand what words could

mean, and then where we place ourselves in relation to them.

IS: But if we say we're doing something extremely precise, I agree. Still it doesn't mean that improvisation can't be precise.

AC: Then it might be a matter of where you associate yourself, where you project yourself. I'm totally not from an improvisation culture, so I don't think in those terms, but at the same time that the movements are open, which movement should be done is not specified, still they are very defined. They are choreographed through other parameters than the formal time/space ones.

OS: And we don't do instant composition, but in *Dance*, for example, we always have to manage and organize the space with the others.

AC: I think it's interesting to see what it does to the idea of choreography, to claim this as choreography. Because it states that choreography doesn't need to work with the outline of the body evolving through time and space, that it can be a choreography of focus, that defining where the performers put their mind on and how they can integrate this physically can also be a way of choreographing a dance, for example.

IS: Yes, you want it to be looked at as a choreography and not as improvisation. And I agree with your discourse and, personally, I think my work as choreography as well.

AC: I'm wondering now, but I think, also for the audience, that by inviting them to focus on what we're doing rather than on the image produced by what we're doing, we invite them to witness and also to empathize in a different way, so that we can never become—even when Isabelle is painted blue in *Ohne Worte*, with her costume appearing much like a character—even then we can't look at her as a character, it is a person in the activity of doing those things, and the empathy is physical as well as mental. We're driven to think about what she's doing and why she does what she does, that person here who we're watching right now, and what is created with us watching in that moment. It avoids stopping at the level of the text, recognizing what we see and understanding it and how it functions as a text, but also bringing to the forefront the live aspect of a person in the process of doing something.

6M1L/EX.E.R.CE.08

(www.6M1L.com)

MONTPELLIER, December 2008

From July to December 2008, nine artists lived and worked together at the National Choreographic Center in Montpellier, France, brought together by an invitation pyramid starting with the project initiators, Xavier Le Roy and Bojana Cvejic, extending to Eszter Salamon, Juan Dominguez, Mette Ingvarsen, Jefta van Dintther, Gerald Kurdian, Chrysa Parkinson, and Eleanor Bauer. This group, under the project title 6M1L (Six Months One Location), worked with and alongside the students of the center's educational program ex.e.r.ce. (Sasa Asentic, Younès Atbane, Kelly Bond, Inès Lopez Carrasco, Neto Machado, Luis Miguel Félix, Nicolas Quinn, and Thiago Granato). Each participant in 6M1L and ex.e.r.ce. led one project and participated in at least two others. The working model was designed to challenge the known paradigms in artistic production and education simultaneously. The usual mobility and time efficiency of a performance-making process in the international coproduction scheme was altered by working on several projects at once over an extended period of time in one place. The usual position of the student as a disciple of masters was replaced by common research, collaboration, and shared practices.

Compiled by Eleanor Bauer four weeks before the end of the residency, the following text is a combination of several participants' written answers to four questions:

1. How has the economy of space and time in 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce. changed your artistic desires and/or processes?
2. If you were not in 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce.08 what would you want to know about it?
3. From inside 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce.08 what do you want other people to know about it?
4. How would you characterize the overall situation?

Each person's answers below are cited with her or his initials and the corresponding number of the above question. Following the process of thinking

out loud together that pervades the 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce.08 experience, the answers that follow are arranged in a pseudo-conversation. As it is not a transcript of a real conversation, responses to questions below did not, in fact, arise in response to each other.

What do you do [in 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce.08], why and how? (JD 2)

It's a social choreography with a certain portion of speculative improvisation. I realize that what we work for is to overcome research in performance as a technology of the self. (BC 4) Each individual is responsible for not disappearing in a unified voice, and yet all efforts towards discovering one's own voice provoke collectivity. One cannot refer to the others in order to find their own way, but through navigating so many ideas all are obliged to consider their relation to other stances, and strengthen their own. (IL 3) We are looking for different ways to share our knowledge through artistic works. It's an exercise against egotism and towards progress. (TG 3)

How do the two groups relate? How does an education become an artistic project or how does an artistic project become an education? (MI 2)

The fullest potential of the situation is reached through reciprocity. (KB 3) This is a great education and learning platform that allows research in an exceptional way. (XLR 3) It's a laboratory on how collective work and interests influence individual work and interests and vice versa. It's about the limits and possibilities for changing the relationship between individual activities and collective activities. (XLR 4) I work collectively here on steps of a working process that usually take place as a solitary activity. (XLR 2)

I feel people's solitude a lot here. They feel like they have mysterious and separate activities, interests, imaginative spaces that I don't have access to. I like that feeling. There's something colorful and private nearby, but it's hidden. (CP 3)

This project enabled a production of expression and thought which belongs neither to individuals nor to a group or collective. It belongs to a situation. Practicing this situation for six months develops another politics of work, where responsibility cannot be reduced to personal ethics, interests, or desire, but forms a third-ness to be constructed together. It's a tricky business of sensing, affecting, acting, and thinking together, where the content of togetherness cannot be objectified into something alienable, like in the alienation of the work when it becomes a commodity. Even if we regard this situation as a luxury, it could be endorsed as a necessary condition for all professional activities in the society I envisage. (BC 3) It's socially and artistically experimental and experiential. (KB 4)

We have created a model of work that could be offered to institutions of education and culture. A model based on the idea of making the artist responsible and giving the artist the opportunity to be involved with how culture should be developed. (JD 3) Time and space alone do not make better work. The people who push themselves to make better work make better work, and the people who have taken the responsibility and effort to specify and define the structures in which they work, in any circumstances, work better. Time and space provide the opportunity to experiment, but they do not necessarily make people more predisposed to produce. On the contrary, pressure to produce is the most efficient way to force production. But by removing the pressure, you also remove, let's say "unnecessary production." More time and space *with the option not to produce* creates a kind of natural selection whereby the not-urgent-enough ideas are disqualified instead of pushed through as good-enough-for-a-show. So in a very extended fashion, time and space possibly do make better work by making less work: manifesting in more trials and more rigorous auto-selection. If production alone is the goal, then the capitalist more-faster-sooner is a sufficient artistic model, but when the standards of production include process, extensibility of thought, and immaterial gains such as knowledge, positioning, speculative reasoning, understanding, analysis, exploration, and discovery, then a slower and more spacious model must be conceived. (EB 3)

What is created that is NOT in material form as documentation, dances, texts, or performances? (JVD 2)

The most important thing is to understand what we are doing as a form of production that does not lead to a conventional result like a performance. I think of it like practicing making performance without actually making one, while information is being produced that could be the starting point for many performances to come. Research is understood as laying out a field, a landscape where topics, ways of working, strategies of performing, spectatorship, and framing can be reconsidered and reconfigured. But the project is not only to question performance as an object that is presented on stage, but also the structures that underlie all production within the performing arts, education, or production. (MI 3) As an experiment 6M1L brought me the opportunity to test the different dimensions of aspects within dance that are not related to the production of a piece. (JD 1) I have become more interested in *how as a means to what*, rather than *how in the what*. Meaning that the specificity of this time-space, all-inclusive situation, where we practice making art rather than just making it, has led me to question more my methodology rather than my outcome. I'm not saying that outcome is not important; I have just not been propelled toward thinking to that end. (KB 1)

What do you do every day? Can we see something? (XLR 2)

I disperse my attention. By dispersing my attention I end up in a situation where I can no longer concentrate on what I want for myself, so I have to concentrate on what I want in relation to others. Concentration is replaced by a field of possibilities. By being on this field I work on what I would like to make by tricking myself into working on things I think are disconnected from what I want to make. I observe the situation. I find out that I can by no means integrate the entirety of the situation, and I learn to make a selection. I select what I think would be useful for me, and the rest of the time I discipline myself to invest in the work of others. While investing in the work of others, I realize that what I could be interested in working on is not the same as what I am working on, so I change. I readapt what I am doing to what I am thinking, which changes my practice. I arrive at questions about practice that I have not had before; I realize that I am working on developing my practice in as many ways as possible, including thinking practice, writing practice, training practice, piece-making practice. (MI 1)

Are there any new formats of working together that you have invented? Will you continue working after this project as you did before? (BC 2)

I can recognize some patterns we have established that allow for the flux of information, but now my question is how I will apply this knowledge outside of this frame. (TR 4) The hyperstimulation, activation, and frustration of being part of two research projects plus my own and of having many other kinds of exchanges, conversations, showings, talks, sharing living time as well, I get many ideas and thoughts that I can't develop fully here. I learn to develop a technique of turning distraction into concentration, creating a consistency transversal to the variety of my daily activities. After 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce. I imagine being able to shift gears with more awareness and precision. Time not spent working on something concrete will be framed even more as continuing duration of thought. (BC 1)

I'd like to know the behavioral characteristics of the group—the things people do or the ways people think that would let you know you're in 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce.08 even if you developed aphasia and were unable to recognize any of the people by their faces or smells or how they move. (CP 2)

Some characteristics of the group include: dislike of assuming authority, dislike of authority being enforced, conscious ambition, strongly and joyfully held opinions, desire to prove an existing hypothesis but/and interest in pushing an idea past its known limit, mistrust of self-doubt, lack of jealousy, big pleasure in clarity of any kind, close observation and curiosity about The Marketplace, desire to control the audience's perceptions, use of theory/philosophy as an inspiration for work, unspoken standards of politeness rarely enforced, ability to be purposefully funny, complex personal history in dance, tendency to wear

clothes that are either clashing in color or don't fit, foreign born, or expatriates. (CP 4)

It's chaotic, overwhelming, tiring, exciting, stimulating, and productive in its ineffectiveness. (MI 4) When my mother read the booklet about 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce.08, she said, "I don't understand what you plan to do, but I understand that you will work all the time." (XLR)

What concrete changes can you already identify in your work being here in 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce.? (NM 2)

I have separated my self, my ideas, and my drives a little more. I sense that my interests are the same but sharper, more consolidated, more crystalized, less reactionary or constructed in terms of influence and circumstances. When the normal environmental factors that tend to overdetermine my work are removed, I am in a strange kind of no-place that allows me to experience thinking and moving, the movement of thought, the appearance of desires in a more isolated fashion. Ideas emerge more like beacons than shooting stars, and the longer they hold my interest, the more I know I have to investigate them. And yet I feel unequipped to investigate them because I am dissatisfied with the methods I know, am familiar with, or have tried before. I recognize the need to invent new modes of analysis and development. In part because of the fact that we repeat, reaffirm, or recirculate what we among us can claim as knowledge, I feel pushed harder NOT to use it in fact, but to let it rest as history, as tried-and-true. By exhausting what modes I have at my disposal to think through something, or by avoiding them all together, I have the feeling that clearer, subtler, perhaps even more arbitrary desires emerge. (EB 1) 6M1L/ex.e.r.ce. has made me more critical of criticality, and as a consequence driven me to suspend the development of a theoretically informed personal practice. (NQ 1)

What do you consider the potential of what we are doing to be? Do you think it makes a difference beyond the experience itself? (MI 2)

Group dynamics are complex and tricky, so they have to be refreshed often, but it is a good way to be in the world, to receive information, and to get the sensation that there are many realities, that no one of them is the good one, but that they can coexist and generate further possibilities. Something very important for me right now is the concept of accessibility, openness, sharing. I think that small group dynamics are closed, dangerous, and can create a micro-reality with a small impact for the idea of change. To work in advance on how education can influence the future context in which we will be able to inscribe and make accessible our work made me think about a responsible attitude towards the future in relation to a community. (JD 1)

WISP

(www.wisp.se)

STOCKHOLM, June 2009

ANNA EFRAIMSSON

Works at the Swedish Arts Grants Committee. Responsible for the international dance programme.

WISP initiator and project manager 2008

WHAT IS WISP?

WISP is exclusively for women working in the performing arts field in Sweden. WISP is what you want it to be. With WISP at your back, you can reach far and crash through the famous glass roof. You become stronger as an individual knowing there is a collective of powerful Swedish women standing behind you.

WHERE IS WISP?

In Sweden. The rest of the world hardly doesn't even acknowledge that gender and power-related problems exist. Women are still portrayed as objects and passive creatures and even the smartest women can utter, "Oh, really? Are you still busy with that?" That saying reveals an ignorance concerning the prevailing heavy male structures our society was built on, which are also highly present today although dressed in more sophisticated costumes. WISP says we are all players in this game—women as well as men, but we'll get nowhere if we don't admit it. We have to acknowledge the facts to start with and then find constructive happy solutions.

HOW IS WISP?

Witty as hell, optimistic, inclusive, wanting to be rock 'n' roll, but sometimes pedagogic too.

everybodys group self interviews

WHEN IS WISP?

When arguments are needed, feel free to use the WISP name.

WHAT CAN WISP DO?

The notion of a network which always produces empowering members, new reflections, strength within the group and towards power such as policy-makers, etc.

WHAT IS STHA PROBLEM?

Fear of change.

WHERE IS THE PEACH?

On the beach.

WHO IS WISP?

WISP has 400 members across the long country of Sweden.

SANDRA LINNELL

Gender studies student. WISP collaborator 2009

WHAT IS WISP?

An assortment of methods, an assortment of means and sort of arty feminist politics.

WHERE IS WISP?

Pep up, cool down, and to the extent of the green in the rainbow.

HOW IS WISP?

Fine, thank you.

WHEN IS WISP?

Both in general and specific, but always in the moment of renegotiation.

WHAT CAN WISP DO?

Gather, greet, and great!

WHAT IS STHA PROBLEM?

A policing of boundaries: artistic, organizational, and political.

WHERE IS THE PEACH?

Not sure, I saw it on a T-shirt once.

WHO IS WISP?

Someone with balloons.

LISEN ROSELL

Actor, performance-maker, and producer

WISP project manager 2009

WHAT IS WISP?

WISP is a creative platform for 1.) fresh performing arts and a network for women who like 1; 2.) a meeting point for art discussions and an arena for the development of work processes and arguing skills. WISP is humor and activism in symbiosis.

WHERE IS WISP?

Geographically—in Sweden mostly, but we are planning to take WISP everywhere and make it international.

Mentally—in the minds of those who want to support the remapping of the performing arts world.

HOW IS WISP?

WISP is like getting access to a fun park in the middle of the night—when the park manager is away, you can speed things up as much as you like. WISP is also a reminder of how slow changes in the performing arts are. WISP is a curious cat.

WHEN IS WISP?

Now!

WHAT CAN WISP DO?

WISP can gather people and let/make them talk to each other. WISP can be like an engine that, with fuel from its members, strongly highlights things that need to be changed. One way of doing this are the Open Space meetings, which focus on the “how” instead of the “why.” WISP can support genius artists and ideas.

WHAT IS STHA PROBLEM?

Worshipping the heterosexual agenda. The belief that equality is something that has nothing to do with everybody.

WHERE IS THE PEACH?

Ah, the peach party! Well this is a good example of what WISP is: working for equality is fun. And parties that ask “Where IS the Peach” and make people dance the night away are one way of getting the groove back into feminism.

TOVE SAHLIN

Actor, dancer, and performance-maker.

WISP initiator and project manager 2008–2009

WHAT IS WISP?

WISP is an artist initiated platform and network. WISP is Women In Swedish Performing Arts, but there is nothing especially female or Swedish about us.

WHERE IS WISP?

WISP is based in Stockholm, sharing an office with sixty artists, designers, journalists, and other fabulous freaks who want to make something special happen.

WISP is constantly moving and changing. We infiltrate and penetrate the performing arts through both knowledge production and production of public events, installation and dialogical forums.

HOW IS WISP?

Sometimes generous, fun, and dynamic. Sometimes slow, meditative, and reflective. Lazy, crazy, and optimistic. With a furious dedication to spreading the word of “come together.”

WHEN IS WISP?

WISP started in May 2008 and has been in the air since then.

WHAT CAN WISP DO?

WISP is a kick off that energizes others to make a difference. We put the highlights on politics and turn it into another party. WISP can rewrite the map of power and construct another center. Here is where it happens!

WHAT IS STHA PROBLEM? (Preferably with a French or German accent)

Well, the problem is slow and stiff structures wanting to live forever without changing. But the problem is nothing to move out of the way for—we are here now!

WHERE IS THE PEACH?

Where theory meets practice and ends up in a strong and beautiful dance action. You find peaches everywhere. Some examples are:

<http://ofakollektivet.blogspot.com>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/Diggaponys>

<http://www.rorelsen.com/>

<http://www.dansbyran.se/#/om-oss/moa-matilda-sahlin/>

And many, many more. . . .

WHO IS WISP?

WISP is a members' organization with over 400 members. WISP is anyone who wants to join the caravan with passion and knowledge in a happy mix. WISP is a feminist person not wanting to join the pessimistic choir of "Why can't I?" WISP is raising a voice of "Let's go," and we are all recommending each other to that big grant in a modest melody to the winds of change.

JOHANNA SKOBE

Actor and performance maker.

WISP initiator and project manager 2008–2009.

WHAT IS WISP?

WISP is Women In Swedish Performing Arts.

Wonderful Interesting Supersexy People.

We Integrate Social Politics.

What Is Stha Problem?!

Where Is Stha Party?

A feminist network for the act of rewriting the map of power.

WHERE IS WISP?

In the possibility of having fun during the process of deconstructing the norms.

HOW IS WISP?

Very well indeed.

WHEN IS WISP?

Until we won't be needed anymore.

WHAT CAN WISP DO?

Rewrite the map of power.

WHAT IS STHA PROBLEM?!

That is my question too. Why do things not change faster with all this knowledge available?

WHERE IS THE PEACH?

It is ripe and ready to be wolfed!

WHO IS WISP?

Wisp is Wonderful Interesting Super sexy People Who Integrate Social Politics like Why Is Sexism Possible?

LE CLUBDES5

PARIS, spring 2009

We, ex-members of the Clubdes5, hereby respond to everybody's invitation to write a self-interview based on the notion of the "collective."

In order to do so, we have given priority to a single expression through an assemblage of four self-interviews from as many perspectives.

We started working, as the name indicates, as five people in October 2001. Typhaine Heissat, dancer (among other activities), was then part of the collective. Then Carine Hily, administrator and production manager (among other activities), joined us. Then we went on as four.

After seven years of activity, the Clubdes5 stopped collaborating in September 2008.

We therefore write from a post-collective position.

This self-interview is an opportunity to sum up what was, what is, and what may be. The hindsight is still new and fragile, but we assert our position.

Maeva Cunci, Maud Le Pladec, Mickaël Phelippeau, and Virginie Thomas

Hello.

Hello.

The Clubdes5?

Part of it. . .

I propose to interview you under this name. . . .

It's OK, the others are not far I guess.

So, member, ex-member, of the Clubdes5 . . .

Member . . . yes, we have often said this, member, a very poetic way of identifying with a group . . . to make language easier I guess, member of the Clubdes5 . . . like a large body that would be dividable in autonomous and functional parts. We couldn't say that division was our credo, nor was functionality. To de-functionalize functions certainly was one of our first playgrounds.

Were there anyhow different functions for each of you within the collective?

Not until we decided for it, with the creation of *Fidelinka* and *2bandes* in 2005 and 2007. Very concretely, the roles of choreographer and performer were brought into play in their traditional conception, which was not the case in the collective's other proposals. But it is clear that in the beginning the aim of this collective was not to distribute fixed roles. We got together a bit by chance; we were there in the same moment, with the desire to work with one another, but without any particular project, although with similar desires: to gather and share in an empirical way.

What does this mean, "in an empirical way?"

Let's say, we worked on the job. . . . Our encounters took place at first over weekends, two to three days, no more, and a few times a year. They usually began with "going around the table," whether around a table or in a studio. It was our first round of ideas that got expressed verbally or physically. And those ideas were taken over by each of us, modified or not, or forgotten, left aside for lack of time. The selection happened, in fact, through the context. We never said no to proposals; everything was valid. Our yes-yes period.

What mattered was to activate together ideas, fantasies, ready-mades, histories among a group of confidants.

The context where this took place was another determining factor: we were hosted in structures, mostly in Rennes, Montpellier, Paris, in their empty slots. It had something of a ghostly activity, especially when we used the spaces at night. At first we were camping.

Having said this, it was important to us that these empirical encounters were shared with witnesses. We were in a reduced visibility, and the witness gave us the chance to widen our relation to the group, a half-public club, we probably called it. And so right from the start, in these spaces protected by the Sunday alarms, it was good to sometimes leave the door open. It was also a means to gather people around experiences, to tell, or to give something to be seen.

Moreover, we of course archived a lot at first, as if to work against these very short periods. Then, when the work sessions got longer, this archiving became

less essential. And, of course, more visible forms took over from the archiving. Today this question comes up again.

In what sense?

As you may know, the Clubdes5 decided in September 2008 to stop its activity as a collective. What should we do with our furniture then, which amounted to our archives? Find it a hut, a site. . . . This is in process. Dance archives have this rareness. In fact, we're not so interested in the problematics of conservation, but more in the potential to be a document to create fiction, or something like "it might have been a bit this or a bit that," like reading a book again from which some parts are missing, have been erased . . . and to read it several times with these gaps, holding several versions, all of which are approximately valuable.

Two years ago, we initiated what we called the practical seminars, a practical reflection about things like publishing, fiction, or the infiltration of half-private, half-public spaces.

For the first seminar, the one about publishing, we invited Nicolas Couturier and Mathias Poisson (both designers) to think with us about publishing, dance publishing, publishing and movement, archives, what types of archives we want to set up. . . .

And in fact what happened was the realization that each of us, individually or collectively, had produced things that hadn't found their space for being shared. We all had objects that derived from our works. In the end, from these three or four days, a sound catalogue of these "derived objects" was produced on a CD. Each "object" had its sound, its description, its use, and its fiction.

Fiction was very present within the collective: what do you think about this?

It's true that, right from the start, when we chose this collective name "le Clubdes5," we couldn't escape this youth literature identity, and we actually worked with this in the sense of the name being already a fragment of a narration, a brand. Having said that, we really did not desire to be only a fictional identity, and this obviously went through our activities and projects within the Clubdes5.

And by the way, it seems to me that the fiction of the collective became more present than the collective itself, which is one reason why I left it, as our activity was getting drowned in its conservation. We were maintaining a collective, or rather a structure, that didn't have a collective desire anymore.

But it's true that when we thought about stopping the collective's activity, we wondered about how to die. The life and death of the Clubdes5, this has all the attributes of fiction, of the end of episode *n*.

That's when Maeva mentioned the archive again (which echoed for me: publishing and all the traces we were more or less meticulously conserving). Our

hybrid documents as the reformulation of an “it has been”: recorded round-tables, reports, manifestos, tracks, photos, sounds, videos. . . .

It doesn't seem absurd yet to constitute an amount of stories, to make them accessible.

Has your discourse on the collective changed because it is finishing?

I don't know if I've had a discourse about the Clubdes5, maybe yes, a discourse that permanently changed depending on what we were doing together.

Did you all have the same discourse on the collective?

Not all the time, but during our yes-yes period, our various discourses were like different interpretations of the same. For the creations we did have a common discourse, a consensus around the author(s). For our yes-no periods, it was more complex how we should reconcile each voice. It remained a building site.

And this building site certainly made us tired. From being a peripheral issue it became a central one. Self-suffocation.

In this moment (yes-no period), the Rennes CCNRB offered us a *compagnonnage*. It was the opportunity to try out other arrangements.

We could think about things over a longer period than we usually could. Spread out a bit. We hadn't worked as the collective for a while, and we were missing these practical reflections of the collective, because without shared activities, we were no more than an empty receptacle.

We set up the practical seminars I mentioned a bit earlier. . . . We also set up the “poof and doing,” which came out of a shared reflection with other artists on the question and attempt at mutualizing work spaces, practices, on the displacement of role between programmed artist and programmer. For its first edition in Rennes, the performance initiated the beginning of exchange: sharing practices, processes, interpretations.

But the end of this residency in the CCNRB also marked the end of the collective.

Why did the collective dissolve?

Diverging individual desires!?! And without the common desire to share, it became vain to continue in this configuration, which had become obsolete. The collective seemed to move away from the individuals it was made of. The maintenance of a lively collective was taking over our personal desires. Arrgghhh!

It was not stupid to turn it off.

And it was good.

See you soon?

See you soon.

SELF-INTERVIEW

March 2009

Hello, Mickaël.¹

Hello, Dagobert.

You're part of the Clubdes5, can you tell me about the genesis of this group?

We were five dancers (interpreters) and we had a real desire to get to work together, to open (start) building sites. In October 2001, we gathered for the first time and started projecting trails (tracks). We had artistic affinities, a miniature common background,² and most of all, we felt like testing some axes and doing so as a group indeed, but we will talk more about a collective. We wanted to bring forwards (emphasize) the fact that it was a performers' (interpreters') collective, which we would write some years later as the first point of the Clubdes5 Manifesto.³

A performers' (interpreters') collective. What does this mean?

As far as I'm concerned, putting something into words already and partly induces its actualization. What I mean is that to position oneself as an interpreter posits a way of doing something right from the start. When five performers (interpreters) gather in a studio, without even talking about signing performances or dance pieces—which we would later do—what perspective do they hold towards what they're doing? It's a way of organizing, defining ourselves, and of working.

Among other things, we put the position of the choreographer to the test, individually and collectively, then put on different hats depending on the contexts. We practiced and shared our experiences, invented ways of making things, We wondered about what kind of economy, taking into consideration that we were mostly working in France, etc. Being a performer/interpreter means asking oneself these questions, confronting them, and going further with it.

And now for something completely different. I'll ask you the question that brought me to contact you for this interview: I heard the Clubdes5 doesn't exist anymore.

It's true. But it's still fresh. That's why I didn't correct you when you asked me

the first question in present tense, although I wanted to.

So why the separation?

For the same reasons I've been invoking now. I mean that our desires had once been at this same place of defending a collective of interpreters, then we moved away from it. We were not a priori busy with these sort of concerns. I say a priori because there were still traces of that, reminiscences, but much less pregnant than before. And this is a very good thing, that it changes, the major concern being that we didn't reformulate the direction we were moving in. Although I'm in favor of things moving on and evolving, in this case I favor clarity, that of our gathering and in what way it transforms.

As for our involvement, our interests lacked re-refining for each of us, I think. Maybe it was only the above-water part of what we didn't want to continue anymore. The time for working together became less and less as we went along; we got caught up by a revealing urgency. We had to be "efficient" when we got together. Each member⁴ was beginning or continuing a personal work, other collaborations, and this gave less support to the Clubdes5, especially as a projection space that was different for each of us. This could have been fruitful. We didn't take time to take the time, some necessary times, or maybe we shrugged them off more knowingly than this. I think my worst anxiety in life is connected to time, but in this case I think it was a collective one.

You didn't have time anymore, or you didn't take it?

Second option I think, which I just referred to, because to some extent one can always find time. But the Clubdes5 became at some point an almost-out-of-control object, as a place of fantasy, but not as much out of choice as in a fit of pique.

As for me, I didn't want to maintain a sort of permanent utopia anymore, and that's why I announced my withdrawal last September.

I think that the collective had the possibility to transform and become:

- a place for production and distribution,
- a place for discussion,
- a re-inventor of stories in the green series,⁵
- a place for scientific or gastronomic try-outs,
- a funnel for resources and permanent exchanges, protean and with multiple entries.

But it preferred to dissolve, as an *n*th and last posture. Indeed, to dissolve is not to die, it is to regenerate and search in other ways.

How about you? If the collective still existed, would one of these options have tempted you?

This is hard to say because this end is part of the mentioned possibilities, and I partly chose it. But if I play the game and dive into what is not anymore, but could have been, then I think that I would have liked to have seen the collective evolve into the evoked funnel. Especially during the two-year residency in the CCNRB⁶ we went through and tried out different kinds of experiences. Among these, the “practical seminars” gathered all or part of the Clubdes5 members as well as guests mostly coming from other arts fields in order to look into specific lines of reflection. Yes, I think that we could have found the coherence of that collective in a form of sharing, of encounter in order to go through and across together. In this way, the fact of being an interpreter could have kept coming to the fore.

But I want to add one thing nevertheless, which is not the least important one, and there I come full circle by picking up again a term that was evoked at the beginning, the question of desire. This was a fundamental and constitutive element of our being together from the start. It got somewhat encroached on at the expense of an almost blind self-conviction and self-hammering. Realizing this made us take a turn.

What did the split from the members of the collective bring you?

Our interests diverged, and after seven years of “living together,” we preferred to split to be able to reinvent better, find our center better, take some distance on this story, and, who knows, maybe get together again. We’ve started collaborating, for example, with Maeva Cunci and to discuss from a distance work with Virginie Thomas, who’s at the moment on the other side of the Atlantic. I think now what this brought me was a will to make my artistic choices clearer and, as I said, my desires. I don’t collaborate less for all that; I do it differently.

I think I always had an absolute understanding of the collective, I mean a desire to share every choice, every decision, a common word. This seems totally utopian, but I believe so, as this is what we were tending towards, at least in the beginning. Because this sharing changed into a negotiation mixed with a dividing up, and from that moment on, it became a way of functioning.

Now I think about work in a collective in more specific ways. I liked the munificence of the Clubdes5 and the openness of its range, but I think that if there should be a new collective, it would be lighter on a structural level, though more precise in its outlines, then questioned again along the way. In any case, I would name my place and try to always redefine it.

The nonstop 48 hours⁷ for example had their purpose. They nourished us, made us work on the place we were looking for at the time when we did it. I keep more the way we were searching than what we were precisely searching for, a sort of merry jumble of all the possibilities which stimulated me a lot at that time. I’m thinking more about the times of experimentation than about the times of creation. But we indeed focused a lot on types of organization, on

ways of working, on protocols to say it coarsely. I'm still as willing to work in this way, but with more definition as to content.

The place of the individual seems important for you.

Indeed it is, in the sense that if you don't define these things for yourself, it gets complex to be part of a group. It's an essential premise.

Any regrets?

It would be a lie to say there are none. On the other hand, these regrets are very thin compared to what I keep, what goes on. If there is any regret, it is more in terms of aborted tools and momentum. But the tool has changed; it is developing in another way. I feel that we are stronger in this clarification.

Thank you, Mickaël. I go back to work with François, Mick, Annie, and Claude.

Thank you and good work!
See you very soon!

Notes:

1. I allow myself, for this self-interview, to change my name as an interviewer into Dagobert, as a reference to one of the protagonists of the children's books written by Enid Blyton (the dog, in this case).
2. At the moment we started this collaboration, three of us were participating in the education at ex.e.r.ce in the Centre Chorégraphique National de Montpellier. Two of us started it the following year together with Typhaine Heissat, who left the collective in 2005.
3. The manifesto begins "We, Clubdes5, claim the term 'collective.' We are a collective of interpreters. . ."
4. "Member," as we called ourselves individually, like the five fingers of a hand, and the previous member specifies in her self-interview.
5. The French *bibliothèque verte*, i.e., "green library," is a classic book collection for children and young adults. The "Club des 5" is "The famous 5," a well-known series telling the adventures of five children.
6. The Centre Chorégraphique National de Rennes et de Bretagne supported the Clubdes5 in 2006 and 2007 with a residency and artistic and logistical accompaniment in order to help them get a structure and develop their approach.
7. The nonstop 48 hours are periods during which we work without interruption, sometimes taking over from each other. We tried this out in the Montpellier CCN and in the MJC du Grand Cordel in Rennes.

Hello.

Hello.

The Clubdes5?

Are you asking me what is Le Clubdes5, or do you want to know if my name is Le Clubdes5?

I don't know. Maybe both questions will do.

All right, in answer to your first question, as to what Le Clubdes5 is, I would say: Le Clubdes5 is a collective of performers/choreographers/visual artists that started in October 2001 and collapsed in September 2008.

During these seven years, for the actors of this group, it was about keeping alive a space for creation and the sharing of experiences, a “place” that could shelter individual and collective projects. It was also about imagining forms of “getting together,” during which the members of the collective and some invited artists tried to identify a common axis or desire and then to get to work in a more or less intuitive and experimental way.

In answer to your second question, “Am I Le Clubdes5,” I would say “yes” and “no.” Yes, since I can speak from my place as a member of the collective, and this singular speech represents, partly at least, what moved the collective thinking of the group for seven years. On the other hand, I would answer “No, I’m not Le Clubdes5,” because Le Clubdes5 is a fiction, a myth, maybe a figure in the sense that what Le Clubdes5 represents includes several levels of signification.

What is Le Clubdes5 then? Who is it? Who are they?

Le Clubdes5 was Maeva Cunci, Maud Le Pladec, Mickaël Phelippeau, and Virginie Thomas.

But it was also a place where these people met. The whole imagination of the collective was supported on the following idea: Le Clubdes5 is an excuse for giving ourselves the means to do something, to think in another way, a frame in which to experiment outside of what already exists. This is also the reason why this project was sometimes so complex to maintain, as we invented it and used it at the same time. It thus had to meet the needs of each member. But these needs were not necessarily the same in the same moment.

How was this wish to work in a collective born? Which projects came out of it?

In the beginning, what motivated the people in this group to get together

could be called a “work utopia.” In other words, “how can we think and work together and according to the different points of view,” “how can we create something communal?”

Considering this artistic perspective, Le Clubdes5 set up a form of collegial and multi-cephalous direction. The ways of functioning were not a priori defined and were reinvented along the way. The crossings of viewpoints, the plurality of actions, and a permanent back-and-forth movement between individual choices and collective decisions remained the central preoccupations of all the work. In practical terms, this manifested itself through the shaping of collective research periods (the last ones were called “Practical Seminars”), true laboratories for experimentation, in which each one took the time to question their own practices (as dancers, as choreographers, as visual artists), and during which questions of otherness or openness were raised. The Practical Seminars, to name only those, were articulated around “themes.” It was a laboratory time in which other artists were invited to question their particular “know-how,” to share their approach, and through this to question the approach of the Clubdes5.

At the same time, the collective favored and supported the emergence of individual creations, carried out by at least one of its members (cowritten with another member and with or without the other members). Some projects were born among the Club: *Fidelinka*, *Fidelinka-extension*, *2bandes*, *Le Timmy Tour*, *Micro-Wave*, *bi-portrait*. Along the way and after a two-year residency at the Centre Chorégraphique de Rennes et de Bretagne, the collective was asked to share all these questions with other audiences. Within this particular frame, some workshops were organized with the students of the Rennes Arts Academy. Starting from the proposal, “How can an individual proposal be made collective or how does the group collectively reinvest an individual practice,” the students had to reconsider their individual work through the prism of communality for the time of the workshop.

Later, the *Poof and Doing* would show a will to share projects and thoughts with other artists, but also to answer the realization of how difficult it is to distribute works in a complex economic and political network. Initiated by an “intermediate” collective composed of the Clubdes5 members and artists like François Chaignaud, Johann Maheut, Mathias Poisson, and Manolie Soysouvanh, Le Clubdes5 proposed an eight-day event during which the artists present “dissected” existing works signed by themselves—mistreating the question of authorship and thus affirming a desire for sharing our experience around the question of writing. This research laboratory was framed by moments of opening up to the audience, be it as showing or practice.

In another form, the collective took part in the *Exposition Chorégraphiée* at the Ferme du Buisson. Initiated by the curator Mathieu Copeland, this project was already the outcome of a collective work which associated an artistic director and eight artists/authors. Artists, musicians, and choreographers Jonah Bokaer, Philipp Egli, Karl Holmqvist, Jennifer Lacey, Roman Ondak, Mickael

Parsons, Fia Backström, and Mickaël Portnoy were asked to write a piece for three dancers. These scores were gathered by Mathieu Copeland to create a sort of “general unfolding.” Three days a week for a month and a half, six hours a day, the collective Le Clubdes5 occupied the exhibition spaces in the Centre d’art to interpret these works. That’s when things became interesting. The collective was called upon as a “group of interpreters.” The question of the “common” was therefore shifting towards a “being together.” We represented both a work force and an artistic entity in its full right. We seemed to have achieved our challenge to exist at the same time as an “interpreters’ collective,” “projects initiators,” “places for experimentation,” “permanent laboratory,” “self-school,” “imagination to be shared” . . .

Le Clubdes5 has not existed since September 2008. How can you explain the dissolution of the group?

It’s very simple: the divergence of personal paths and opinions (we were each following our respective paths as interpreters and were beginning to develop other personal works) and the lack of time. Also, as far as I’m concerned, I would say that seven years of life is rather very satisfying for a project that developed from a spontaneous initiative. . . .

Moreover, the collective was becoming puffy, getting comfortable, and was also enjoying a desire for “representation” from institutions. This proposed another form of organization and thus claimed the need to be supported as such, but was losing gradually its “organicity,” its spontaneity. Moreover, if the desire to share doesn’t exist anymore, if the stakes and ambitions of such a project are not the same for all of us anymore, then it’s difficult to maintain the frame and everything becomes formal. The collective is first and foremost a jumble of desires, ideas, needs, a common impulse; it has the energy of desire and the temporality of an action. It’s a manifestation. The difficulty for Le Clubdes5 was to maintain this dynamic while trying to inscribe ourselves on a geographic and institutional territory.

And today?

Today I ask myself the following questions: can a collective initiative, as a practice but also as a model of functioning (compared to dance companies and to the more traditional relations between a choreographer and its interpreters), really be perennial? Don’t the strength and energy of such an enterprise reside in the fact that it must first remain a spontaneous, dissenting, or even misplaced approach? Can it be an alternative that would allow us to propose other norms, other “ways of doing?” In a way, a new model ready to be borrowed, re-questioned, diverted, re-invented? Isn’t the affirmation of a difference, through claiming ourselves to be “workers of the collective,” a form of redundancy for dance, if we consider in general the dance worker to be

deploying his/her activity within collective work dynamics? And doing so ever since his/her education?

How can what we tried to carry out, this “work utopia” be still visible and be used today? What traces or tools should we invent for these seven years of artistic collaborations, exchanges, experiments, and research, often conducted on the edges of the visible, that can still be shared?

You speak of sharing, thought, divergences, utopia, gathering. . . . Could the collective Le Clubdes5 be for you a different answer to the question of artistic production? Beneath this desire to work together was there another, more political project?

I don't know. Yes, probably, but if this was the case, we were not aware of it. Nothing was ever discussed in this way. We mostly wanted to work together. Nevertheless, this offered, de facto, an alternative to choreographic creation in the contemporary landscape. Because, even though in dance one always addresses the question of “intellectual community” (the very organization of a company answers principles of “being together”), experiments that really try to be responsible for the question of the collective are rare. Many examples of collectives have punctuated contemporary dance history in France. In the eighties and nineties, other forms of organization emerged, artists' groups that claimed to be a break from the way dance was approached in France at the time. The critics called this emergence “new forms” or “radicality.” In the form of a “temporary coalition” or “collectives,” young choreographers in the nineties were casting into doubt the very notion of the author—a notion that was strongly “anchored” and “sacralized” by a hierarchical thought system between choreographer and interpreters. A new way of thinking about the dance interpreter was becoming manifest and the place held by the choreographer throughout previous decades was put into question. And yet everyone was largely influenced by alternatives and manifestos proposed by the representatives of American “Postmodern Dance,” whose main actors—Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, among others—were “turning up” in France. They gave “performances” or “workshops” and offered an openness that was necessary and so much longed for at the time. This filiation, between “Postmodern Dance” and the young choreographers of the nineties is non-historical and even less geographic, but definitely artistic, and it has had a strong impact on the following generations of dancers. New models could then exist, new ways of thinking about creation were claimed, dissenting forms emerged (such as the collective Les signataires du 20 août). The collective Le Clubdes5 was born in this new reflexive and artistic environment. I think the collective largely profited from all these new movements. But we're also another generation of dancers and the economic and political context has changed.

And now?

As far as I'm concerned, I'm strong with this whole experience and I recycle all I've learnt during these seven years. My desire towards what has been is that it is accessible to all. I very much want to share this adventure, in one way or another. The archive or testimony are among the paths to be considered for possible continuation. To reconsider the sources, to revisit the work, would allow us both to keep on working, precisely, while shifting the objectives. Our capacities to analyze and transform are then at work. If we must work together again, it would be with the concern to accompany this story a bit more, to maintain attention, a benevolence. I'd like to quote what Marie Dupussé said when she spoke of her work with Jean Oury: "If we're here, talking, and if we share something, it's not a knowledge, but an obstinacy, a love. . . . This word needs to be told without margins, without accent, on the quiet. We love to spend our days with the crazy ones." As for me, I would discuss again the Clubdes5 with a definite fancy and a vivid joy. To be continued then.

To be continued then . . .

(Spring 2009. In a cheap café in the suburbs of a provincial town, around 3 p.m., the weather is changeable, between drizzle and sun. Four people sit around their drinks, a few notebooks and pens are scattered on the table.)

– Hello, Clubdes5.

– Hello.

– *Let's start with the present. What are you doing here?*

– We're preparing the last performance of the Clubdes5, or at least the last performance in the manner of Clubdes5.

– *Can you be more precise?*

– During the existence of the Clubdes5, we passed through various modes of activity, more or less collective, more or less defined, more or less conscious. Some of these modes, older in time, slowly formed themselves as history of the Clubdes5, or even as myth(s).

We plan today to revive the myth through action and not only through speech, maybe to revitalize it, maybe to definitely kill it.

– *Mm, we'd like to ask two questions at a time, but . . .*

– Go for it.

– *OK, so on the one hand, if your modes of action varied so much, how do you plan to realize a performance “in the manner of” the Clubdes5? And on the other hand, why would you want to kill the myth, does it burden you?*

– Well precisely, it could encompass two different things; on the one hand, since we spoke of a myth, the fantasy of what *the* Clubdes5 performance could be, and, on another hand, a performance that would assemble all our ways of working into a kind of gigantic collage, which is also, in the end, a principle we’ve used a lot.

– *Then, let’s get even more concrete: can you describe or name some of these modes of action?*

– Well, in general, it always starts the same way: one makes a proposal to several. And after this, that’s where it can diverge. Either one stays in charge, or several of us renegotiate the proposal, or if several ones have made proposals to several severals, it assembles, it accumulates, it gets glued together; but also as one proposed to several, and several have renegotiated, one *b* adds an external element that redefines the whole in a new direction; or one proposes to one *b*, while one *b* proposes to one *c*, etc.

(A member of the collective calls the waiter; a coffee, a decaf, an apricot juice, and a Perrier are ordered.)

– *Yes, it’s interesting, but not very eloquent, if I may say so. How about a concrete example, maybe, or two?*

– No, we’re not “burdened” by our own history. We simply wish to dust it off from the discourse we built around it, and try to see what, in what we went through together, is still current or can still be a motor for each of us.

– *You say “each of us.” Do you think you can speak on your own about the Clubdes5?*

– Of course, we each speak about it on our own and have our own vision of the common history, but the question for us is rather: can we speak and act collectively in a way that would satisfy each individual?

(A debate starts between the two members who are answering this question.)

- We do not believe this! - We could try it again!

– *Can you explain? In what way?*

– In the beginning of our collaboration, this collective was (almost) our only space for cre-
– It might be complicated to leave aside this side of the story, but by being clear as to the interest

- A concrete example: the four for one, i.e., four choreographers for one interpreter. We test it once, we set the stakes anew, we determine, we try again.
- A concrete example: solos and duos. One proposes to several to work on solos, but in the same time-space; all agree about starting points and go through the choreographic field, it was the place where we put all our desires, without making a difference between individual and collective work, so that it was complex to such a project could present for each member, we could maybe . . . no, it's true, it's utopian.

(Thoughtful silence)

(Some members decide to continue the interview outside in order to smoke a cigarette—they return shortly after, as the rain gets stronger again.)

- A proposal one by many—a test—a redefinition by several.
- planned program of actions. Then one *b* proposes a new task that puts at stake anew these solos as duos and according to rules that have already been experimented with in another way.
- manage the personal desires in a way that would complement other desires, which were sometimes contradictory or just somewhere else.

- *What are your choices for this performance you're preparing?*

- We're thinking about a 48-hour-long performance of and about the daily life of a dancer/interpreter.
- We will make a copy of all the performances the Club has realized in a row and in fast forward.
- The initial idea is to propose four solos "in the manner of," where each takes over the choreography of the others.
- Will there really be a performance?

(A moment passes. Then each takes his/her things, pays for the drinks, and exits.)

KINKALERI

(www.kinkaleri.it)

FLORENCE, February 16, 2009

Who do you think you are now?

MM – What a fucking question!

GM – Yes, who's the author?

MC – Come on, it doesn't matter.

MM – At this moment only love saves me. From an artistic point of view, I think this is a quite awful moment that reflects the situation around me, around us, surrounding quite everything, then. . . .

MC – Do you mean there is a split between the artistic dimension and the individual one?

MM – When I said that only love saves me, it's not to make a statement, but it represents a way out and a very creative moment, too, that soaks me up, and from this point of view, it saves me because I'm feeling that my condition as artist is suffering a sort of stop. Then it is a kind of relief valve, absorbing my energy. I really don't know if it's the cause, of course not; it certainly affects. . . . Then this doesn't mean avoiding a set of thoughts . . . but maybe it looks like priorities have been turned upside down. For many years I've put a lot of energy into this job, and now it's not like I give less . . . it's just different now and I still have to understand.

GM – Today there's a really heavy political and environmental condition, I can't stand experiencing it in isolation, I can only imagine myself always related to the surroundings, so many happenings, moods, or temperatures surely fall back on my existential and creative condition.

MM – Often from times of crisis a lot of energy springs out. Today, now referring to ourselves, we live in a fix, we share a past, a long period of acting together, some emptying moments you are starting to consider, to arrange differently, in comparison with your own life too.

GM – With your own biography.

MM – Sure, the times you decide to grant directly. For instance, for me this job has represented something going after myself. I've always been attracted by matters that concern me directly, I can't buckle down a project in such a

pragmatic way just because I can offer my creativity, or better yet, if I can't see some features that concern me I struggle to because I'm not a specialized person, I always need to start from what belongs to me, from what I know.

MC – This has always been the power of a certain way of working; being specialists wouldn't have worked at all. In fact, this is a condition in which sensibilities instead of competences are at one's disposal, and it was extremely creative and essential.

MM – That's true and I think there were many interpretations inside the group for offering one's own information and sensitivity. I think that each of us had his own way of approaching a project, and the effect was, then and now, a creative balance. The difference from six to three people is relative from an artistic point of view.

GM – Maybe the complexity decreases. . . . The processes become easier.

MC – Concerning the work, you have other outcomes, at the end the effect exists.

GM – Do you mean in the creation?

MC – Yes, I do. The idea that we found ourselves in specific conditions twelve years ago was not a strategy. Today, in three people, dynamics have changed for what everyone brings as artistic skill and as conflict, and the effects are necessarily different.

GM – For me, some terms are easier and maybe much more settled in the individualities. Before, inside the group, dynamics were more multifaceted and complex.

MM – It was assumed that Kinkaleri were always on stage, I mean the authors or part of them, but this is changeable now.

GM – The others always beat the time, before and after, and I can't go through it in this way.

MM – I accept it as a matter of fact: I wake up in the morning and I see something I need to bring inside; this says something about me. I'm not much devoted to what we were, to what we've done, for some people think they recognize you. These thoughts are of no use to me because this job is like this, because I'm definitely like this. The things I do must match me; when they don't anymore, then I'll be elsewhere.

MC – We're sliding into another question I'm going to introduce soon.

How has your group changed in the last years and what has had meaning for you personally?

GM – Everything is linked to an existential status once again. Things are never disconnected.

MM – This really keeps to our work in general; even if I start considering the performances, I find out that the main change is a real transformation of our relationship with the scene, but just before we were a set of three, just in those shows we were off. The ones in which we started to relate with other

performers.

GM – Are you referring to *Nerone*?

MM – Also to *Alcuni giorni sono migliori di altri*; in fact, with more distance, we put on the need of having real speaking subjects in front of the scene; we don't work on a code of our own that you can experience on others. We've currently been working—maybe that was the identity we were talking about—in a corresponding way, in front and behind, and now we feel like this doesn't work anymore, for those looking from outside—I mean the audience. Working with performers changes the method, not the show's possibilities. This is quite new for us, but the world is going on without questioning certain matters, taking them for granted.

GM – Yes, you were talking about the code as something you exchange, a style of you; can it be the language?

MM – That too, but you transfer while also choosing someone, inasmuch as he is the one who turns out into the term to look interesting to you, inasmuch as it has meaning.

GM – But you always work on individuality; that's a feature. None of us have worked on codes, on the definition of a language. Then the end is a code too, some repeating remarks.

MM – When I talk about code, I mean the research you maintain about a form, about a style you evenly apply from time to time.

GM – You work on the approach.

MM – Yes, you put it into forms that become your code, and those are the forms that recur, so that people coming to see your show can recognize your style, so to speak.

GM – In our case, the code is not transferred to the person but to the processing.

MC – I think that the work of any artist meets his own biography, not intended as the tale of his own life but as the story of one's being on earth, from the artistic, social, political, existential, sentimental point of view, etc. . . . Every work contains the sign of what has happened to us, from every point of view. We have nothing to protect, a position, a professional relationship with the outside meant as the accepted business that produces and must produce a certain kind of object. So this fact has led us to create in instability with the instability. We always happen to accept this compromising relation with the other, always avoiding the crystallization of signs; instead, every performance is like a reset, even an illusory one, but anyhow able to disconnect those courses of self-legitimizing and repetition typical of many authors. Of course the remaining sign, as identity, is the schizophrenic process we were subjected.

MM – But now the maturity is to conceive moments that are extremely interesting to this relation: to discussion, to put oneself to the test, to escape from a certain thought about a change you are making, but also to try the opposite. Not necessarily having these collisions causes an improvement. I start from

the premise that things exist and individuals with their own desires too.

MC – Everything you're saying goes into a relationship, when you say "yes" or "no," you relate with yourself: yes, I'm in, I develop other things or I don't, and here it becomes something totally else, and that's one of the reasons for two people deciding to break a relationship.

MM – That depends on what total interest you haven't got anymore.

MC – Total or partial, what's the importance? It's not important to know why, or how much; even only an attitudinal reason, any reason is OK to break a process like this, from the most important to the featureless.

MM – The assumption that anybody can afford regarding his own thoughts is definitely larger than in recent years. Today we can easily share projects and also find new ways, take one direction that's not so clear, from one side or another. One makes other choices, there are two options: the first, from now on I am not in need of questioning anything about myself because I want to prove it personally. Or, I want to call myself into question but at the same time to check some things very personally. This is not like escaping; rather it helps me to further question myself.

MC – This is not the point for me. Or rather, I start from the fact of having solved the point. Everyone could introduce his own idea of agreement to a project. In my opinion, the basis is the existence of an active relationship among people, a relationship that has value—I mean a profit. If this benefit fails from a personal point of view, I say "personal" as if to say "artistic," the need to stay in a group fails too. At the beginning of our story, my excitement came from the benefit I got. I thought that was the best in the eyes of the result; I loved it, it was more complex and articulated than doing it by myself. In this situation I could not for a moment drop myself as an artist. I mean that certain things are possible only when those involved in the project don't abdicate their creative identity, which is simply necessary. Today we must understand what deal we can make again. What more we can earn. What is the intensity that now these people bring into play to continue a certain kind of relationship?

MM – The change resides only in the case these people are strengthening.

GM – Three different answers are possible. Because your change gets through a good balance between the personal and the collective.

MC – At this point there's another question which fits directly into this talk.

How do you consider the every-member-potentiality in the idea of group?

GM – The real change of being a set of "three" is to balance this relationship in a more settled way, because it must be useful to find a new intensity in the work and also another convenience. That is to say, it should deal with pleasure, with more positive sides, not so deep. To feel comfortable in the circumstances.

MC – OK, but please spell it out because it sounds like a strange concept; it

could represent a sort of lying down into some dynamics.

GM – This is somewhat my answer: to redefine the work as something that's not so close to you, but in a comfortable way. That's a direction for me.

MM – Does it mean to have something at one's disposal? The change keeps on giving nothing for expected anymore as compared with a possible relationship. I think that Kinkaleri's big opportunity is to start again from the inside, both in the achievement and in the supply to new works, projects. I'm deeply interested in playing anyone's game without starting necessarily from the beginning, but getting into, starting out on other plans, on other layers. I need to investigate areas that I couldn't explore so deeply within Kinkaleri. If I must stay in a group, I want to work and compete, and if my contribution must be only subtraction, I'm not in! In order to restart a new course, we must accept the other, not only as something to discuss, but as someone with whom to share thoughts on different levels and of different intensity. The courses we carry out should take that direction; otherwise we always happen to work on a perfection that can't exist.

GM – A new start concerns the serious decision to become aware of what Kinkaleri's work is. That must change itself and the whole process too. But at first I need a sign of agreement.

MC – The power you find in other people to accept talk about Kinkaleri again. The question is, why do I keep staying here? What is the power I catch in the other so that it is worth being in?

MM – It's because I see certain facets that I don't have. It's my level of seduction regarding the people I work with. I can see thoughts and things that I can't find in myself, and it's also the element I'm interested in. Often it is the cause of frustration too, when I don't accept change in the course of actions. Yes, there are still many ways of contributing. And I think that Kinkaleri is so because it gives voice to these chances.

MC – How much do you think it's real? And how ideal? I say that because I think I find some contradictions. Because I believe nobody questions other, different partnerships, but the fact remains, a company like this really needs improvement. Or the idea of work improves, so to speak: three people produce some things going after every single world, and I can recognize it as a higher relationship, or not.

MM – This is ideal right now. The idealism that has influenced many speeches in these years.

MC – It's real, with a story behind it. It's not ideal just from the group's point of view. Maybe it is in contrast with your demands. It existed, produced effects, relationships, distinctions, some new groups were formed with similar features.

GM – The connection is based just upon this difference. What you are saying is very democratic: I don't need a higher involvement in the work in order to share it. But it's true that the creative process is not democratic and then the involvement is needed for it to be full.

MC – Let's stop talking straight about ourselves and let's talk about something concerning our work.

What attitude about the scene do you think is expressed?

GM – General question.

MM – The scene is a sort of magic place. The place that lets you turn everything into show without needing to relate so directly to the preset performing form, where the most hidden things, the most sensitive ones, are at stake. Besides, it is also that place that allows me to make statements which are often useless but which can create a comparison test. Kinkaleri's specific work includes this idea of comparison with the one who is currently looking at you. The idea that states little or no extra strong statements but appear in the eyes like a mirror, like matching you ahead, anytime like seeing yourself again. Simply questioning. The work on the perception of things. Now I live a strong contradiction between being the mirror or being the evidence, the presence. Well, I'd like just to tell. The performance, like every form of expression—songs, for example—work mostly when they become the mirror of the eyes looking.

GM – Mirror, that is, when is anyone able to cross it or to recognize oneself in it?

MM – Yes, you get in, you find yourself, it's part of you. Maybe it's just the mirror of a moment going after you. I've never thought—as I am one person facing his own creative act—of being on stage to tell my story, but aim, through it, to talk of something else. My biography is not important for the audience. It is what I can carry out and that can become universal for the public.

MC – It is the relationship that I carry out every time through an arrangement of elements, of objects—like the body, the scene, the time, the duration, the use of the performers—which are always connected to the definition of an attitude to the world, of a processing that tends to give back its own status beyond the meaning, the aesthetics, the mind . . . the metrics, if I think about a poetic language and not about a theater of poetry. We have always searched within a text for an excuse to face things that are important to us: the relation with the body, the wish to show a sense of rebellion, a relation with the waste, for instance, talking about the last works. Therefore, we have always shown an attitude towards things by using a whole system of signs, of connections with the objects, with duration, with a real act, not a metaphorical or, worse, symbolic one. An act that, while happening, gets in and legitimates itself as form for itself. Not because one is interested in the real just because that real relation is necessary within a process. In the case of *Alcuni giorni sono migliori di altri* this is like wasting yourself. It's not like I'm using devices in order to set up scenes, but I concretely find some wits to physically estimate a waste inside the void. Or the almost void because then there are some little clots of vision that operate as a break. Kinkaleri's attitude for the scene is very far from the

idea of a *mise en scène*; but this is also an expected one even if everything's making us repeat it again and again.

MM – But isn't it like the abstract composition, the abstract choreography? Because theater makes use of theatrical texts, but the other performing arts work on invention, and invention, in fact, is always like getting into forms, it seems to me there's a further gap. For example, when you talk about the artist, you use a very wide-opened word. The same artists also work in many different ways. There are the ones who work on representation through the form they paint. . . .

MC – Definitely, it concerns everybody. The scene becomes the displacement place of a world, but for real . . . for example, the relationship with the audience is quite strange. You suggest to the audience some features to be decoded, or even they are used for their total transparency inside a scene, in order to work back to front. That is the process as the *mise en scène* is intended. Every time there's the need to decode a series of events that must necessarily raise new questions, for instance, about the relationship with objects, with time, with space, with body.

MM – I agree. In our work, I like it that the things you see are what they clearly are, the reason I'm there is to make them change into something else. Signs are open, there is a lot of freedom concerning the look and decoding. For me it is necessary and fundamental to succeed in talking about the time I live in because I can't help doing so. Displacement of perception about features is basic to me. It is the work within signs and dynamics I use that lets me go elsewhere, suggest a different perception.

MC – That's why you can't attach a method to things, to their setting-up, except for the one ever open of kicking around and being part of the world, carrying out a personal vision, a difference.

GM – Everything has a double meaning. All that you've said doesn't settle a method but a direction of looking, which then becomes a method too. The staging moves onto the presence.

MC – But that isn't a method. It is your relationship with the things.

GM – Also my connection with the scene. My work is about presence, traces, halo, shade, but also about the ghost (i.e., lack) too.

MM – For example, the ghosts of *Alcuni giorni sono migliori di altri* were the representation of a ghost as such: covered in a sheet with two holes for the eyes. That ghost became something else; it was rather the way to face the ghost form, no longer the form as an end in itself but a form that changes into a body, and not an unspecific one. You started from the ephemeral ghost to reach a body because that sheet turned into a shroud, and the shroud was exactly the essence of that body, of the sweat, of the producing stain.

GM – It is also the shade, the remainder of that body.

MM – It's because you got into a different stage; it's no longer the stage of the sign.

GM – Can you recognize it so clearly? I don't know.

MM – Yes, I can.

GM – I still keep on saying that the meaning is a great question. I didn't get through it yet. For me it's like, and I use this word, the adolescence of the form that still has this implicit little identification. You've answered yourself, I haven't yet.

MM – You reply to yourself because the form is not enough. If you wanted to work on the form again, you would stand still, there you would start to show.

GM – No, I'm saying that the work will be about the form again, and I am not able to understand the direction yet. It seems to be not exhaustive if it is just based upon this warm up, upon this physicality you are talking about.

MM – In fact you got into the waste, a kind of overflow then.

GM – But the waste is interesting as a remainder. Something that's still able to ask me questions. The testing of the scene means, on the whole, we are not solving it but questioning it again; we are still posing questions that concern us and our present age. For me the scene is a place of mystery, a completely masochistic place, a place of shame. It is the one place of shame and this shame is a power. So I feel it in an opposite way than you do when you say it is a place of wonder.

MM – It seems to me much more merciless for the performer than for the things you are carrying out.

GM – Being a performer is certainly a masochistic condition and not an enhanced one, but maybe this is really my relation to vision, which doesn't want to be a goal. Rather a condition. Every time it is a work about presence, about sectioning, about giving up. As presence I mean also a surplus of returning questions, those we ask ourselves, the same as the audience's. In short, concerning the audience, I can't consider it in my process except as a terminal. The one who is in front of me at the same time as I am.

You deal with theater, dance, visual arts, but which is your nature? How do you live with the expectations that are always applied to your new creation? Is the answer always the same?

GM – The expectations are those I have about me, about my work. I don't set them as questions concerning a process, it's because I don't, that they become a question.

What is your real nature then?

GM – It takes a catchphrase. Nothing comes to mind.

MM – A real nature doesn't exist. I imagine myself again and again. I never test myself concerning the placement. Perhaps I think about the forms I want to carry out in one scene, and these forms have many possibilities and many values. Everyone will play the scene as he pleases. Basically, I'm faced with a

whole lot of signs that I'm sure I can speak with. Signs of different natures. I think that expectations are those linked to . . . I think that Kinkaleri's audience understand there are no expectations.

MC – I answer this question with one word: indifference. It's all the same for me to deal with anything. The medium or the support we use is there regardless. We've always been a little interested in this disposal to the signs produced in the world, and by using them to think up something new, in order to reach the hybrids. After all, this is the decoding we were talking about before. Anyone happens to be in front of a scene that has already been seen, but that changes its nature, and then he must set it in a different light. So I am just interested in this indifference, this agility, this jumping from one point to another, in trying to keep balanced this peculiar tower made of different and heterogeneous elements. Then, concerning the expectations, it is indifferent, for me the expectation is like being able to keep on doing and suggesting this relationship and attitude.

Do Kinkaleri feel in tune with the world or close to an end?

GM – Close to an end, always.

MM – You never know what's going to happen.

Are you thinking about leaving Italy?

GM – Yes, I am.

MM – If I stop doing this job. . . .

GM – If I weren't involved in other matters I would, and I'm not a xenophile.

MM – In this moment, the reason that binds me to Italy or, better, to this city is the job.

GM – I suffer from the environment, so I would leave, I would go away for a while. I'm not a xenophile or flexible from that point of view.

MC – I would go away from Italy too, but, like what Marco was saying, more than anything it'd be to sort of get rid of certain courses, so it's also a very childish reason for me. To leave for a chance for a new start somewhere else.

GM – But it's not so secondary; it's a big and real change you make.

MC – It's not secondary, but you happen to think, in a teenage way, that at forty-three years old, you are looking for a chance to start again.

GM – I say that because I think that essential requirements are lacking, now more and more.

MC – From a political and cultural point of view, we are in a very narrow situation, and then I would shake off the responsibility to legitimate a certain state of things. Now I understand why in the twenties everyone was fascist.

GM – The level is lower and lower, and being a witness of it is very demanding, so I really don't know if I'm minded to be.

Is there a contemporary artist you look up to for a way of action?

MM – I'm fascinated by a group because I suppose they have a great freedom of vision, of random nature, power, messages . . . always in crisis: Gelitin. I like them because they exist simultaneously inside and outside of a system. What I see of them is really amazing, because it seems that their acting is really like being practical inside something rather destabilizing. They cut across themselves, they work together, or everyone on his own, everywhere, making different things, and all this doesn't deny the essence of their work, because they built it just on these features. I'm fascinated by their open-minded way of doing things, the multiplication of things.

MC – Yes, it is a really good compliance.

MM – Another artist I think has a great amount of freedom just for the idea of the subject he's chosen for himself, and for his way of analysing it, is Wolfgang Tillmans. He puts his vision before everything; he records what he can see and he notes it with his own sensitivity, which becomes his own expression, and so he has come up with a series of forms that, time after time, release themselves from many duties . . . and his work is all-considering. Just for his being a man in the world, his way of showing himself makes him now able, as a photographer, to become a painter because he doesn't talk just about the object. I like people working at large and for different reasons I find the approaches of the two previous cases very similar. Gelitin work as a group, and I like a lot the idea that they are a group even as a work in itself.

MC – In an interview with Gelitin there was just an answer to a question about what makes one work in a group. The answer was like ours, with a classic example of logic and relation: if I have one apple and you have one apple, together we count two apples, but if I have an idea and you have an idea then I have two ideas and you have two ideas. And the other answer was that being in a group makes sense only if you feel fine; if the other person, or I, we do our best for the well-being of everyone, I mean, not in an ecumenical way. The idea of making the relation with the others pleasant. Otherwise, there's no reason to work as two, three people. Besides the effects, this is one fundamental reason because, after all, we just choose to share an experience.

MM – Like choosing each other.

MC – Like simply choosing each other deeply.

GM – Back to the artists—not as much about the method as about the products—I am very fascinated by things that are very much outside of me. I don't like Gelitin's aesthetic, I don't know them very well, but they attract me. Also Vascellari uses an aesthetic I dislike, but he attracts me a lot. I say Vascellari to refer to artists working that way. I'm fascinated by things that are far away from me. Whereas I recognize myself much more concretely in Cattelan's way, much more similar to me especially in the way of using cleverness for . . .

MM – In his form, I don't think so.

GM – I'm not talking about form, but I can recognize Maurizio Cattelan's

procedure, and it concerns me a lot. That's why I like him, but I like him less

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MC – Also, with Cattelan you can carry out this idea of freedom. Or better, the parody of liberty, of being able to be an artist while disclaiming oneself.

MM – Marco Mazzoni

GM – Gina Monaco

MC – Massimo Conti

Kinkaleri was founded in 1995 as a grouping of formats and means balancing in the attempt. From the outset, the company has worked in a number of different directions and areas: plays, performance pieces, installations, video-making, soundtracks, publications.

The utterly original structure of the group, both from an organizational point of view and in terms of artistic production, provides the essential framework for the underlying impulse and drive of their work: to throw into sharp focus the representative relationship between the object and the field to which it refers (or should refer). Their productions have therefore always been characterized by the transversality of signs, which progressively undermines the use of representation in the contemporary age, with an artistic language that mixes languages, making them foreign to themselves before redefinition elsewhere. In its work, the company has always sought to privilege innovative practices, with the interaction between original languages through experimentation with different modes of expression. Kinkaleri is currently based at the Spazio K in Prato, Italy. Currently Kinkaleri comprises Matteo Bambi, Massimo Conti, Marco Mazzoni, and Gina Monaco.

Among the most important PRODUCTIONS: *Doom* (1996), *1.9cc GLX* (1998), *My love for you will never die* (2001), and also <OTTO> (2002/2003), *WEST* (2003–2007), *I Cenci/Spettacolo* (2004), *pasodoble* (2005), *Nerone* (2006), *Wanted* (2007), *THE HUNGRY MARCH SHOW / Between a carrot and I* (2007), *Yes sir!* (2008), and *Alcuni giorni sono migliori di altri* (2008).

HYBRIS KONSTPRODUKTION

(www.produkt.nu)

STOCKHOLM, November 2009

How would you describe what you do?

Well, the other day Mats Ek called us a “management consultancy firm,” which isn’t completely off the chart, in fact. What we do is we center on structures within the performing arts; how something is produced and distributed, for what reasons and in what conditions. We aim to find and propose structural solutions that correspond to how we work today, post-Fordism, where the separation between work and life has become rather irrelevant. We want to rethink the choreography going on behind, before, and beside the stage.

In your explanation of Hybris you speak of using choreography as an analytic tool? Could you explain that further?

We’ve been discussing different ways of expanding the notion of choreography in order to search for new ways of considering movement in relation to organization. Is what we do choreography? Or are we using choreography as metaphor? At the moment, the “analytic tool” feels like the most productive way of thinking of choreography for us. In its most condensed form, we could say that choreography is the organizing of activity, in other words, the production of movement. In this sense, choreography becomes a way of looking at things rather than a way to produce something that we recognize as dance.

Do you see organizations, businesses as moving structures?

In a way, yes, moving structures in the sense of having the capacity to change or of elasticity, as opposed to rigidity. But also ways to move within and push structures and frames. What ways of producing produce movement that is proactive and that enables many different possible directions and strategies? To think of how we use different economies and to discuss what choices would produce what kind of potential for movement; political, ideological, economic, artistic, etc.

But in this sense, the consulting or other “services” you offer organizations (primarily governmental, right?) also produce something. . . . If it isn’t making organization into a dance, then what would you see your interaction as producing?

Consulting can often be about being critical while also proposing ways to make things happen. We believe that the people concerned or affected by a certain decision need to be present within its administration and bureaucracy, and that the responsibility of decision-making should not be left to others. As for labeling what we produce, we could say that we’re aiming for engagement, articulation, and empowerment.

Is there a danger that you will become a tool of the organization in question? Or is this unproblematic for you? Perhaps even a goal?

We are definitely a tool, and by being a tool, we can create change in the way we would like to. Offering yourself as a tool that “knows what it wants” is different from being used as a tool for someone else’s (hidden) agenda. Our experience is that when we regard cultural administrators as colleagues rather than opponents, the potential for progress is much bigger. This relation also widens our understanding of how political processes work and helps us formulate relevant strategies.

So this new form of engagement with funding bodies becomes your practice. Is the goal somehow that the organizations in question will provide a better service for people that want to produce “conventional dance,” i.e., performances? Or would you like your practice to encourage others to become more directly involved in political institutions?

Yes, we think it would be a good thing if more doers were more involved in decision-making and policy production. This doesn’t mean that everyone should change their practice into becoming mainly that, but rather it is important to recognize the need to engage in many different ways and not see political activity as something separate from performance-making. Our practice as a whole has no lower ambition than to rethink our present forms of democracy and how we function within them.

How do you feel about the idea of art as autonomous?

We don’t really believe in autonomy as such, but we do believe in small entities supporting each other, rather than big, unifying structures. One danger in thinking of art as autonomous is that it becomes more isolated or marginalized, and to a certain extent it loses influence. Though, to think of art

as autonomous has been, and sometimes still is, a necessary tool for defining possible functions of art in society. In that sense, fooling yourself that you are autonomous and independent produces a healthy engagement in relation to challenging the existing structures, and it makes us strive for a high degree of self-government. At the moment, we are interested in how new forms of autonomy can enact a sort of independence within the system rather than separated in an imaginary outside. We believe that today it's not really possible to claim "freedom" from the market or the state, since one always depends on and is a part of the other. That's probably how we feel about it at the moment.

Would this eventually lead to a society where art as a category would disappear and instead lead to a world where art and life would be one and the same?

Yes, well the ideas of anarchists like Morris—everyone is an artist—are very important and inspiring. It means challenging concepts of quality, of who has access to making art, of what is considered professional, etc., questions which we constantly need to engage in. At the same time, we believe it's a good thing that we do have art as a category, where people are encouraged to engage in specific practices and are allowed to build some kind of expertise.

Hmm. This is interesting because I think in our generation (used loosely) the idea of the expert is disappearing. Is the expert still relevant to society? Somehow I feel what your practice is suggesting is that it is not.

Yes, the question of expertise as a notion can be discussed from many perspectives. The idea of the expert is definitely being renegotiated. Maybe we could shift the attention to the translation between different knowledge? If we think of an expert in a traditional or educational way, where knowledge is supposed to be transmitted from one person to another without being altered, expertise produces inequality and inaccessibility.

So you're interested in an exchange of knowledge?

We believe that different knowledge can be appreciated because of what happens in the interaction between these areas of knowledge. We don't need to be experts in making a book in order to make a book, but we do have other knowledge that could change the way a book functions.

Maybe we should leave the notion of expertise there because I feel that it could really become a discussion in its own right. And if we instead flip the coin for a moment, what do you think organizational or business models can give choreography or dance?

Choreography, business, etc., simply provide us with paradigms to think along.

They're not that different in nature. Business can basically mean being smart with the resources you have, building an economy that is not completely dependent on one source, knowing (and making) the game rules in order to achieve what we want on an organizational level.

I would suggest that your practice is a symptom, or rather an indication, of a certain urgent need to redefine the field—to assess and articulate our relevance as artistic producers. Do you agree, and if so, why now?

Definitely. Perhaps we are currently in a position where structures and organizations have been built, concepts formed, certain ways of producing have been established and so on, to a point where we want to rethink how we can use and develop them in relation to current and future social changes. Many of the structures we work within today were built in times when society looked different, and many established strategies are not applicable today. You need only look at what impacts new technology, the Internet, the ideas of sharing, creative commons, etc., have had on the way we work, produce, and engage in the last ten years ago. In that sense there is a generation shift going on that is creating super interesting friction and possibilities at the moment.

Hybris Konstproduktion is the label of an artist-run organization that hosts several different initiatives, constellations, and projects, such as Produkt, möte09, Praxis, and Prototyp. The label Hybris is only the legal name for funders. The organization was initiated in 2005 by Anders Jacobson and Johan Thelander, who are still running it, even though many other people are involved and connected to the activities. Produkt is primarily engaged in cultural political activities such as writing and consulting; Praxis is a discussion format; möte09 is a project that took place in Spring 2009 involving some forty artists. Prototyp is the current project that will engage in investigating how dance artists organize, and how the way we organize is connected to artistic practice.

ECHOBASE

(<http://www.echobase.be>)

ANTWERP, November 2009

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Why is this interview running along such an associative line?

We're trying to get all the left-over words out of the way. I think we've almost achieved that. The subject of this interview won't slip out of our grasp anymore from now on.

OK! Where are we?

Let's say we're in Echo.Base. It's a basement in a residential block in the center of Antwerp. It is a place to tell stories. Stories from makers and thinkers about making and thinking and how it is to be a making and thinking being. And a place for making those stories.

Why is it called Echo.Base?

Echo is a character from Greek mythology. She was a great storyteller. But her talents got her into trouble. She was commanded by Zeus to distract his wife, Hera, with stories, so that Zeus himself could roll around with some nymphs without Hera knowing. When Hera discovered this treachery, she cursed Echo, so from then on she could only speak by repeating the words of her interlocutor.

Do you think this interview would make any sense if you continued from now talking like Echo?

No, we tried to produce conversations like that, but it only works if you have highly developed poetical skills, such as Echo and the beings she interacts with. But taken in a less literal sense, the condition of Echo's curse, is actually the nature of human speech, we think. Speech in the sense of the stories we

tell—let's call it narrative.

So the story of Echo is the story of stories?

Yes, or the beginning of a story. The myth is like kitsch, it puts into words what is actually unspeakable. So it comes before these stories, which we all tell without thinking. It's the beginning of narrative.

And we're all cursed?

No, but if stories are to be more than mere distractions, we are bound to repeat, to retell stories we ourselves have heard before.

Then perhaps this interview does run along Echo's speech pattern?

Exactly. I was actually wondering if we could perform this interview, make it performative, in the sense that it produces in the reader the state we aim at for ourselves. So the reader might find himself retelling this interview . . . to himself or to others.

How could one do that? Perhaps you should leave space for interpretation?

That seems kind of unavoidable, doesn't it? How could you not leave space for interpretation?

Yes, but this interview is more than narrative. It's also the construction of an instrument.

So we could try to give some equipment and a map for exploring Echo's cave?

And a map is an open invitation to wander off the beaten path?

More than that. Actually using maps is a complex practice. We live in a world where an overview is impossible. However hard we try to create a personal sphere in which everything we need is at hand and we control our environment—just as the world looks on a map—we're always at risk of this sphere being penetrated by something unknown.

Is that why we tell other people's stories whether we want to or not?

I hadn't thought of it like that before, but I guess that's part of it. Perhaps Echo also stands for an Echo-chamber, where information is repeated, reflected, and reinterpreted so many times that it is no longer possible to find out what it came from and what it is about. You could say the spaces in between the

stories that take on equal importance with the stories themselves. So even if echoes tell us something about the space we're in, noise also makes the space opaque with the mass of echoes as soon as we are many people crowded together. And we cannot step out and draw the map of these stories bouncing back and forth between the walls of this space. We are immersed in them.

We're approaching the subject of foam through Echo, aren't we?

Yes, I didn't expect that. This self-interview is turning out to be a tool producing a tool.

I wonder if we could turn that around? How about reinventing our tools by trying to use them on the group self-interview?

Where were we?

On page 101.

I don't think we can just go ahead and apply our tools to this copy of the interview, this one that the reader has in her hand. . . .

Then let's say we're here trying to figure out how to do a group self-interview.

So what is a group, what is the self, and what is the interview?

The idea of group we adhere to is already introduced in the picture of an Echo-chamber.

Oh, but then we should transform the question: where are we when we are in a group? In the group itself.

In between stories.

Oh, my god, and self, I don't even know where to begin with that. Where is that?

OK, where is the inter in self-interview?

In between.

In between *self* and *view*. The self is usually what we speak of in terms of identity. And identity is an overseeable image. But we believe there is much more to the self than what can be seen or said of it.

In an interview, I picture myself face to face. I mean the self in the space between two faces. But as a group, we can not create a multi-eyed space. The contact wouldn't be intimate enough.

So we have to make it a many-voiced immersion. Voices also create intimacy.

Could we try to reproduce an example of how we make stories performative?

We let them run and perform like independent characters.

– OK, so I remember once telling something like, “I was walking in a park, and as I passed close to a bench, I recognized this girl, called Madonna sitting there. And we started chatting, when she says, let’s go do some shopping . . .” You see, Madonna, she just popped up into my idea, when actually I just started from the image of a place—the park—and I pictured myself in it. I started telling this story with Madonna in it halfway through a concert we gave. My music takes a lot from Pop. The lyrics talk about songs and pop-stars.

We like these inflated egos running around in the stories from the Pop scene.

That was something I'd been wanting to try for some time, to improvise in front of an audience. Because, as a musician, I don't get to tell stories on my own. I improvise with the other performers, and I consider myself a performer when I play music, so together we tell a story. And when we play a song that was written in the studio, of course the moment we perform it, there's still a lot of listening going on, because, for instance, the electronics of the synthesizers always perform in a slightly different way, or the acoustics of the space, or the attention of everybody, just demands another timing. . . . The music is about how you go from one place to another, and that is improvised. Whereas the places on the way are kind of written. But I find performing for an audience always feels very artificial, so I saw a challenge in just telling a story. . . .

. . . like you would tell “with a pint of beer in my hand in a bar.” So that's how you ended up with “Madonna in a department store.” I remember you explaining that, about the bar and a beer.

So you made people picture you shopping with Madonna? That was the story of La Boutique? Is that the meaning of the name you chose to collect the songs you make in and for Echo.Base? La Boutique, a department store of songs?

Yes. It's like an imaginary place where you shelve your songs, to be used in performances.

Yes, that's also the space I imagine I produce with my songs.

OK, another example?

Another quirky story connected to the songs of La Boutique?

...

The one about Snowy, the white deer. The last one of its kind.

Why are we telling this story now?

Some one shot it!

Like a video? I can't remember. Or a picture? The deer was just a picture someone shot?

And then it was hung upside down from a tree and beheaded. It wasn't dismembered. Its head probably ended up on someone's wall.

OK, so here's my brand new understanding of the song that inspired this white deer to turn from a newspaper anecdote into an image for a performance, for a song: you said the song was about a musician. He put his last hopes into a demo tape, and then saw the tape being dropped in the trash. And that song, with that story, was meant by you to be put into future versions of *her still singing limbs*. (*Her Still Singing Limbs* is the title of the founding performance created at and by and about Echo.Base—ed.) So it's a story of unrequited love, just like that of Echo. The deer is an ideal, a beauty that we love, and it is killed by someone with a different ideal of beauty.

Yes, that kind of kitsch describes quite well what Echo.Base wants to create space for. We work inside the wall between what can and cannot be said.

Enough examples. I think we're losing the readers.

Can't they just go back and figure out where they are?

Where are we now?

In the company of one pop star and one animal.

No, no, back to the story of stories and how they are packed together. We were witnessing how Echo would tell the story of Foam.

Okay, so it wasn't an animal, it was just you wearing a latex mask of a deer. And you were moving your chest like you were struggling to breath.

That's what you got inspiration from for singing the song about the demo tape?

You were there with your body, and the air moving in and out high up in your chest, so close to your head, which was hidden in the mask, altogether that was inspiring.

Aren't you speaking for me now?

Yes.

Perhaps you could explain the reason for that?

You could.

It's because the question is not "who's words are these?" but rather "where are these words?"

The question is, "Where are we?"

...

Can you ask a more PRACTICAL question, please?

What are we doing?

We wanted to start investigating the role of this question: "where are we?" So we organized a six month project called *Foam.Lab*. We assembled artists through a call for projects. We organized meetings in our space, the Echo. Basement, where these artists presented their ideas to each other at several moments along the process. There were some performances, exhibitions, and lab-outs along the way. At the end there was a group exhibition. In the exhibition there were some leftovers from the previous events set alongside new work.¹ Everything in the exhibition and all the events leading up to it were somehow connected to *Foam*. In the call and during the meetings, Echo.Base proposed a vocabulary for letting the individual projects contaminate each other. So the projects shared a physical space, and some of them would be shown together in the same space. But we also wanted to share a mental space. It was a way for us to let other people contaminate our space, so we would be obliged to ask the question again and again: where are we? This vocabulary was also investigated through work on a performance of our own.

(Work on that performance is on hold for the moment. It was put on hold so we could be available for the production work of the other artists. It is the focus of our future research to find ways to do both production and creation at the same time and share the work.—ed.)

“Contamination” is part of the vocabulary?

Yes, contamination is an aspect of foam science. Other words and expressions out of the *Foam.Lab* are: in between, fragility, ungraspable, gravity, lack of overview . . . but contamination plays a special role, because the place of a contaminant is where bubbles spontaneously come into existence. Put your finger into a glass of water and you’ll see what I mean. Sparkling water works best.² So even though the forming of foam disturbs bubbles by obliging them to share their walls, contaminants always make new bubbles appear. This is what we wanted to produce from the meeting of our artists and those foam words.

Shouldn’t they participate in this group interview?

Yes, and also the artists who made use of this vocabulary.

How can you ask questions to a word?

How can words answer questions?

End of part one

What are you doing?

Yes! Exactly. Shared wall of parts one and two

Beginning of part two

A group self-interview of Echo.Base.

Right now?

Well, I’m transcribing and organizing. Do you want to participate? Do you have questions?

Questions? What about?

About Echo.Base. Kind of.

What kind? (in French, the question *quelle genre?* can mean “what kind?” but also “what gender?” and, in the second case, the answer is, “Hm! That’s a good question. I would say transgender. Or no! Intergender”—The first meaning is ignored by the interviewee. This translation to English has to follow another path.—ed.)

The in-between kind.

Have we started then? Can I ask a question?

I don’t think one can ask that in a group self-interview. What about you? What are you doing? What did you do in Echo.Base?

We’ll come to that later. Returning to the question of kindness, can you say something about the sense of hospitality in Echo.Base?

I think it’s about more than hospitality. Hospitality operates at the level of a social need. With Echo.Base, we want to answer an intimate need also of both the artist or specialist and the public. Actually, in their intimate meeting, this polarization is questioned. By their meeting, something more is created than the product out of the lab. If you extend the metaphor of the lab, *in casu* the foam lab, you might say we want to use the space between, on the one hand, specialized laboratory invention and, on the other, vulgarization of scientific discovery. We want to create these in-between spaces. They are the walls, packed together, of what used to be bubbles.

We want to investigate models, or what we call “thought figures,” that can provide a basis to construct our world on. For instance, the word *space* can be a thought figure. What if we look at, or listen to, our world as a space, with all the phenomena it involves, on all kinds of levels and in all possible senses of the word *space*? Topology, substance, presence, architecture, sound. Mental space, typographic space, outer space . . . certainly also intimate space. The space created between two faces. We want people to ask the question, “where are we?” instead of, “who are we?” And that implies loss of orientation, which is best bred in an atmosphere that contains an increased level of intimacy. For the overall design of that space, we choose to study foam. So foam is a thought figure for a thought figure. We could say we made foam by mixing our atmosphere with what lies beyond it.

Does that atmosphere produce a particular way of working, a particular kind of process? Or is it just a way of presenting the work to the public?

We look for artists that get inspired by this atmosphere. From there on, it can penetrate anything and anywhere. Or not. And we create a space for the story

of this penetration. We warm both the artist and the audience to it. By making foam, the penetration happens all around us. We're immersed into it.

What is the place of intimacy in a creative process?

To me—as a choreographer in *Lawaai Means Hawaai*—it meant I confronted the intimacy between the people dancing for me and with myself. It concerned the things that could not be said. Or the things that are said just before that point, in order for something to happen with the body and movement instead. (*Lawaai Means Hawaai* is a creation by Sara Manente that was supported by Echo.Base—ed.)

Is it like a threshold, a place before entering?

Mmm, threshold connotes something like a trigger, sensitivity to stimuli, and the question of when they provoke a reaction. When should you say something and when not? I cannot just say anything that passes through my head. Or rather, if I just open my mouth to let words flow out, not everything that I say would be things that really pass through my head. And the word *really* seems to point to what I consider “my own reality.” The question of intimacy throws me back to the worn out question, “Can I be myself?”

So if these words didn't pass through your head, where did they pass?

Perhaps I'm playing a role, voluntarily or not. If I say whatever passes through my head, that doesn't mean the words come out of nowhere. They've been said before. But the intimacy reveals itself in a play on words, a joke, or a mistake, a lapsus.

So you're confronted with yourself?

Yes, with the question, “What am I, myself?” But at the same time, if I get the space to play a role, that lets me see things differently. That's why sometimes I give the role of choreographer to someone else involved in the creation.

Is that also why we roll in Lawaai Means Hawaai?

No.

Can I take the role of choreographer now and answer that question again?

Go ahead.

Yes, that's a way to undermine the authority of words.

But this kind of rhetorical trick—or is it poetics?—that’s not far from what I want to allow space for to the audience. Translated to dance these plays on words, simple homonyms, they dislodge the perspective the spectator tries to fix for himself. So I hope they have a chance to take their perspective with a pinch of humor.

...

Did you change places as well? For Lawaai Means Hawaai, in the time we were guests at Echo.Base, you were both curator and artist, dancer and moderator for the audience. So my question to you is also: did being a dancer in my piece offer you another perspective on your roles in Echo.Base?

The connection between Echo.Base and *Lawaai Means Hawaai* was the concept of noise. You proposed to research noise and how to translate it to movement and choreography or dramaturgy. In Echo.Base, noise is a constitutive element of space. It’s as simple as entering a room with closed eyes: you still get a sense of what kind of room you’re in, because of the background noise, because of the sound of silence in the room. So I had expectations about your thematics, and how I understand the whole piece as it is finished, there is certainly a long way from one to the other. It is funny also to realize how the piece has changed from very site specific to somewhat more stage-oriented, all the time keeping its non-hierarchical relation to the space it is performed in. Some of the roles I play in *Lawaai Means Hawaai* are also similar to the role of foam scientist in Echo.Base. The process was a chance to find out how to take these roles less serious and still engage fully with them. I had to take them less serious, let my grasp on them go, because they were destabilized. These roles were filled with a lot of meaning that inspired Echo.Base, meanings that we share between us in Echo.Base. But when I played them for you, these meanings were no longer common material. They became yours to control. It’s like I lost my immunity to them.

Why do you call it immunity? How can you say that you are immune to a role that you created for yourself?

Because we cannot answer the question of what this “self” is. An immune system is built by the exposures it undergoes to contaminations. But also by sharing immune response tools. Just like roles are constructed in response to other players and also through copying other players. By calling it an immune system, we want to emphasize the fluid and fragile relation between inner space and outer space.

No, it’s not about relation. It’s about the interface. The in between has become more important than the self, or whichever bubble on whatever scale: couple,

family, city, globe, cosmos . . .

And is there a cure?

We don't know yet. We're trying to estimate the gravity of the pandemic first. Is there a cure for space sickness?

That depends which space you're in perhaps? Anyway, foam seems to contradict gravity. It's fluid, but you can still pile it up.

This space: ?

Yes, that's not such a serious space.

. . .

Notes:

1. For an idea of how the *Foam.Lab* events looked watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fpXcVvYn5Q> and associated videos.
2. A *Foam.Science* lecture on bubbles and foam can be found at <http://www.vimeo.com/5348458>

AUSLAND

(<http://www.ausland-berlin.de>)

BERLIN, November 2009

12:12 **Conrad:** OK, everybody online?

12:12 **Rut:** Let's gather questions.

12:13 **Conrad:** Questions: What is ausland?

12:14 **Rut:** All right. Questions: What was your best night at ausland? How do you imagine ausland in ten years? Best case–worst case.

12:14 **Tobias:** What would you do different?

12:15 **Raliza:** How do I imagine ausland in ten years?

12:15 **Rut:** How does ausland function?

12:16 **Raliza:** What was the most horrible night in ausland so far?

12:16 **Rut:** Let's start. First question: What is ausland?

12:17 **Raliza:** It is a venue for experimental art in Berlin.

12:17 **Elisabeth:** ausland can be a very hard job, but I like it!! It's a little universe where I can live out my ideas. It's my most preferred style of life.

12:17 **Conrad:** ausland is a self-organized venue in Berlin Prenzlauer Berg that developed out of the squatters' culture there. In Prenzlauer Berg the squatters' culture had a decidedly more artsy touch than the squats in Friedrichshain (who were considered political). ausland hosts a lot of music (about 80%) in addition to theater, performances, and discussions.

12:18 **Rut:** ausland is fantastic. A nuisance, heaps of work, endless nights, a group of six people organizing it, a group which at the moment tries to find ways to become more open for people who are interested in taking part. The most wonderful pastime in the world.

12:19 **Tobias:** An event and workspace for experimental culture, which is run by a collective and through voluntary work.

12:20 **Gregor:** ausland is an open space (in German: *Freiraum*), which in principle can be used for everything. It's an open space because the building it is located in is outside the real estate market—the house is owned by an association (Dadathomyzil e.V.) and is paying back a loan it got from Ökobank. In

theory, in fifteen years or so it will have paid back the whole debt and there will be no rent to be paid. Theoretically, you can act here forever just for the running costs.

12:21 Conrad: ausland is best known for its *echtzeitmusik* events, which is basically a Berlin variation of free improv music.

12:21 Gregor: ausland caters to a certain niche of the international experimental music scene—and most probably quite outstanding.

12:21 Conrad: In the three years of planning and building ausland, as well as in its seven years of operation, its organizational structure has remained fairly stable, both in regards to what events have taken place as well as who has organized it.

12:22 Currently, ausland is risking this stability in order to gain new dynamics.

12:22 Rut: Not only in order to gain dynamics. It's also a very basic need of the people who have been working here for seven years to have less and different work and more fun at ausland—to be able to enjoy the input we get here, to do research, to develop concepts in spite of taking care of the technical work, selling beer, and cleaning the toilets. The latter three are also fine with me; they should just not eat up the time for the former, which at the moment is very often the case.

12:22 Tobias: ausland is very versatile, which means that the room can look or appear completely different from one night to the next.

12:22 Gregor: ausland is also an open space because there's never talk about money. Or nearly never.

12:24 Conrad: Apart from hosting events, we at ausland have always thought of it as a place to produce our own art or that of our friends. This has led us to organize festivals, to support bands on a long-term basis, to (co-) produce performances and theater shows. And holding a series of workshops, called *Trockenschwimmen*, dedicated to learning by doing—a simple transfer of knowledge about anything related to event technology.

12:25 Rut: Knowledge transfer plays an important role in ausland in general. Probably because we ourselves have done so much learning by doing (and learning by asking friends who know what we need to know) here—when we started ausland, nobody was a professional technician or event-maker or accountant. . . . Some of us had experiences in other artist- and squatter-run venues, like anorak, though. So we invested quite some energy in the output of knowledge—not only technical (*Trockenschwimmen* are mainly, but not exclusively, technical workshops), but also writing applications, organizing events, or just finding shortcuts to good solutions. *Trockenschwimmen* means “swimming on land”—so, learning how to repair a cable before you need it ten

minutes before a show.

12:25 Tobias: It's actually a matter of course, but nonetheless important: despite different opinions within the ausland crew, there is this kind of unspoken claim to run no events that are not fully, or at least partly, of an emancipatory character

12:26 Rut: Question: What about finances? You can also refuse to answer if you think it's a boring question.

12:27 Raliza: Money is of course a topic in ausland. ausland has its own perspective on money—how it should get money and how it should spend money. On the one hand, ausland rejects being a commercial, mainstream venue; on the other hand, it wants to have money at its disposal. At the same time, the method of organizing and programming in ausland does not fit in to the regular cultural funding programs of Berlin. Of course we apply for support and sometimes certain festivals, events, and series get supported. But in general, even if ausland is internationally recognized and known and all artists who have ever performed here point out its importance, most of the time it can only exist because of voluntary work.

12:27 Conrad: We are always told ausland looks quite professional from the outside, but among us, opinions about this differ. Legally, ausland is organized as a nonprofit association. And from the squatters' culture, ausland inherited a contradictory relationship with money. Basically, we consider money and the bureaucracy it involves to be a necessary evil. Nonetheless, (almost) all of us would gladly work for money at ausland, but that has so far not been possible because of lack of funds. Therefore, all of the members of ausland organize their economic livelihood individually. But since last year, there is one paid position at ausland, financed through a new program of the Berlin government called Berliner Kulturarbeit.

12:29 Raliza: ausland gathers some versatile and strong creative potentials—people who like to go off the track, to experiment, to think differently, to turn things upside down. This could also be useful for the money debate in ausland. There are already some interesting ideas about how ausland could be financed independently without going commercial.

12:29 Rut: The non-monetary, or only indirectly monetary part, is that I have a space, technical devices, a lot of entertainment in the form of cultural events, an office, internet, and free drinks. (Plus no time to go out and spend money somewhere else . . .) That makes my life cheaper, but does not pay my rent. It forces me to earn money somewhere else and reduces the time I have for ausland. So maybe it would be an idea to get paid jobs in ausland—on the other side, I am extremely tired of cultural politics in Berlin at the moment and not interested in putting more energy into trying to get money from the city. But

we had a funny idea just recently—why not invite all the people who love, use, and visit ausland to support it monthly with a small amount of cash.

12:29 Elisabeth: I think ausland is doing well. We have the chance to do what we want without any support. But this is very basic. For any bigger projects, we need financing. We try to get this by writing grants, but it's a lot of work and takes a lot of time. It's a shame that in the state-supported cultural places, like theaters or opera houses, some people are paid lots of money, but somehow ausland is not considered important enough to get even small amounts of money. We always have to convince the grant institutions that we actually do important stuff. And we work on a super basic level of income. It's an upside-down society: some earn so much, some so little, and there is no relation to effort.

12:31 Conrad: Next question: How do you imagine ausland in ten years from today?

12:31 Elisabeth: I imagine a space run by different people of different ages, all working together/parallel, all from the heart, some for fame, some for knowledge. It's all still basic, but professionally run. We have done everything, recordings, downloads, a supportive community.

Everybody is free to spend time at ausland or abroad, some work more time at ausland, some less. And it's still changing, and still there are many problems to solve! Maybe we could have turned the space into a radio for some time, or closed it for a year. . . .

12:32 Conrad: In ten years, ausland will have a different structure than today. It will be administered more like a commons, and not by a closed group of members. All the tasks and duties necessary for ausland to function will be well documented and easily transferable. Each task will be the responsibility of a maintainer, who will make sure that everything runs smoothly and who will also make sure that somebody else will take her job once she wants to move on. Continuity will be more a matter of the culture of ausland than of strict curatorship. In other words, there will be something of a community around ausland.

12:33 Tobias: As a space with possibilities of a *Freiraum* (open space), which is used by many people and with a structure that allows new people with new ideas to use it instantly. A space that continues to be "ausland" means one that observes local and social hypes and trends without getting affected by them, but which uses all possibilities to experiment at the same time.

12:34 Rut: Worst case: That exactly the same thing happens with ausland that happened to the stationery shop, the bakery, the blinds store here in this area—that it will be changed into a nice homemade coconutchocolatecoffeeplace or a cocktail bar or—yeah—a kindergarten. BAH!

12:34 Conrad: Worst case scenario would be a wellness clinic. Or another worst case: ausland will finally be closed down because of neighbors sensitive to the slightest noise.

12:36 Rut: Best case: More or less the model the others have described—or that ausland is run by a group pretty much like it is now—just that it's not us and that it is still run according to the ausland principles. By the way, question: How would you describe the ausland principles?

12:37 Raliza: In ten years, ausland could be a place that gives even more people the possibility to create something special and to try out new things. Meanwhile, it could have enlarged its office space and be giving stronger support to the conditions of producing by offering an infrastructure and helping the different processes of creation. It still should be run by a determined crew, which could also change at regular intervals. This crew should give a focus to the space and at the same time allow it to move on and to keep an exchange with all kinds of different directions.

12:37 Rut: ausland's principles: maybe it's stupid, but apart from emancipatory, I would have in mind love for detail (and technical devices!), interest in processes more than in products . . .

12:37 Conrad: Basic principles of ausland are the fun in hosting and producing events (together), taking interest in the artists performing there (and to a somewhat lesser degree also in the guests that come to see the shows). And the basic principle of hosting events at ausland is: anything goes until one of us vetoes it.

12:38 Raliza: Just do it and some helpers will always pop up.

12:40 Elisabeth: Principles = everybody has to do what he or she really wants, and has to find out how it's to be done. Nobody likes to do things he or she is not interested in. Yeah, and it's hard when you realize that people are not interested in what you are doing, luckily this does not happen too often. . . . I think we really care a lot about our things, although some of us would say we do not! I would also say we care about details, but we also like a good quick fix or, let's say, simple fix. Collective work also leads to quick decisions that mostly end up the responsibility of the one who does the job. But yes, principles are sort of changing right now, since important decisions that will change our future at ausland have to be made differently, more discussion, more and deeper talks, and we are opening the group to other people.

12:41 Rut: Question: What was your best and what was your most horrible night at ausland?

12:41 Elisabeth: There were many good nights! Volcano the Bear, Deerhoof!!! Flying Luttenbachers, House Williams, the Understated Brown, many great concerts!!!! Hm, most horrible nights: any night when the band sucks, or the

band is great but nobody comes, or any night I feel displaced at ausland because I don't know what to say or do and what's happening doesn't interest me.

12:42 Conrad: The most dreadful nights were quite regularly those when I didn't feel like going to ausland, but felt obligated to do so nonetheless and was still not able to develop the slightest interest in what was going on on stage.

12:42 Elisabeth: Hmm, I also like the collective maintenance days, when we are all busy working, and I like the nervous atmosphere of the big festivals, stress, fights, but lots of intense moments.

12:42 Tobias: Yes, but there were also really horrible nights—only very few, but one of the most stupid and annoying ones in my memory was the last fundraising party for an antifa group. Afterwards, it was quite clear that this was the last one with this specific group.

12:43 Rut: Oh yeah, the antifa party . . .

12:43 Raliza: The times ausland was not allowed to sell any alcohol felt terrible for me. Most of the people left almost right after the performance had finished. There was no chance to get any impression of the audience, the people and their reactions. . . .

12:44 Rut: The radiator briefings (so called briefings), which always took place at two o'clock at night, after fourteen hours of program, were rather horrible—because we were ineffective, thin-skinned, confused, and most probably not completely sober. And we had to plan another fourteen hours of program which would start the next day at noon. It definitely had a kind of morbid charm—but resulted for Elisabeth in gastritis and for me in slight paranoia. . . .

12:45 Elisabeth: That was hard, but I don't remember it as horrible. . . . radiator was great, so many things happened. Ah, OK, I remember I had a bad vibration with Tetsuo Kogawa because he couldn't decide on what to do and I couldn't decide either, and at the end I was scared or fed up. Yes, that did not feel very pleasing.

12:45 Conrad: The best events were those when I had the feeling of having done everything possible to make the night a success, and it then turned out to be a success both artistically and concerning the size of the audience. And I want to specifically add that I don't like nights when ausland is overcrowded—that's just stressful and lessens the concentration on what's going on on stage.

12:46 Tobias: A really packed event can be lots of fun if everything works out and if the program is good and the air is burning in all imaginable versions.

12:46 Rut: And the best? Hmm . . . a construction site concert with Olaf Rupp

and solo guitar on the scaffolding, and, yes, radioriff (the festival with the horrible briefings)—because the eight days of festival were also eight days full of great program, meeting people, and parties—

12:48 Conrad: Concerning name dropping: there were really nice evening with Tipper Gore (incl. a Kletka Red revival) or, this year, Weird Weapons. Also the theater productions by Formation HO, especially *Qué se jo*.

12:48 Rut: All in all, the social aspect is important for me—I don't give a damn about great art if I find the people doing it uncommunicative and stupid. Which happens once in a while.

12:49 Conrad: I agree with Rut. My interests as a curator shift ever more to persons and personalities and away from “big art.”

12:50 Tobias: For sure also the Astroturf homegrown nights, last time at the opening of Dwigo Festival.

12:50 Conrad: And the Akusmatische Salon with bark mulch as floor covering!

12:51 Tobias: Really wild and euphoric was the night with Bleubird and Otto von Schirach. This was also one of the occasional nights where people not only from Berlin, but also from Cottbus and other places from more far away came especially for this night to ausland.

12:51 Conrad: And (almost) always great: the Schleusen! That's the most important addition to the ausland program of the last two years.

12:52 Tobias: The last dubstep night of the “way of the dub” series was the best one so far I think, everything worked really well.

12:54 Rut: And something we forgot to mention till now: that we've always said that we do in ausland what we want to do—with or without money—and surely this causes complications once in a while—but all in all it gives us the freedom to curate everything we love—as weird, unrepresentative, aloof as it might be.

12:55 Raliza: I remember one time, I was not working here yet, but it was my thirtieth birthday. I just dropped in at two o'clock in the night, a big noise—experimental concert with different bands was just over and all instruments were lying around on stage. Then suddenly the whole thing turned into a massive and crazy improv jam. Everybody in the room got involved, and was playing, singing, screaming, or dancing around. This was definitely one of my wildest nights in ausland.

12:55 Conrad: Talking about wild nights: the Long Night of Primarenergy during the radioriff festival in December 2003. Still available for listening in the ausland archive.

12:56 Tobias: A good point from Rut.

12:56 Conrad: Last question: How does ausland function? Or has this already

been answered?

12:56 Rut: Not exhaustively.

12:57 Tobias: Every single *ausländer* basically has the possibility of running whatever kind of event they like, if they organize and conduct it by themselves.

12:59 Conrad: It is not easy to answer this question because this is an area where a lot of things have started to change. Up until now, the collaboration among the members of *ausland* centered on administering a shared resource, consisting of the physical space of *ausland*. Different people held different administrative responsibilities: technical equipment, finances, janitor, website, newsletter etc. . . .

13:00 Rut: For the rest, it's pretty conventional: Elisabeth and I are responsible for the technical side, Gregor is the janitor, Raliza is the accountant, Conrad is webmaster, Tobi takes care of beverages, Christina does the press work.

13:01 Conrad: Tobi takes care of beverages . . . :)

13:02 Tobias: And I also take care of our *myspace* site.

13:03 Rut: The difference is just that we all curate, and that's a difference I am proud of.

13:04 Conrad: Yes, no artistic directors. But this organizational structure has the disadvantage of sometimes impeding discussions about concepts and content.

13:04 Raliza: There are five bosses and one staffer.

13:04 Rut: No, no, no, I don't feel like a boss.

13:05 Conrad: Well, well, well, you are—whether you feel like it or not. . . .

13:05 Elisabeth: Yes, there are some boss types, but surprisingly it's also changing! Bosses lose their weights, and others dare to contradict. . . .

13:05 Raliza: I also don't really feel like a staffer.

13:06 Rut: But sometimes I'd like to know how it feels to be employed at *ausland*.

13:06 Raliza: Of course there are also bad moments, but in general I feel grateful and happy about my job. . . .

13:07 Tobias: We have weekly meetings or work days and frequent correspondence via e-mail.

13:07 Conrad: Many of our organizational arrangements are done over the Internet, especially reserving the room for events and rehearsals. However, it is quite striking that the group has rarely celebrated itself as a group.

13:08 Tobias: It's snowing . . . aaaah!

13:08 Conrad: We had meant to go to the Tropical Islands for so long, but never managed so far.

13:09 Rut: Oh yes, the park sounds incredible.

13:09 Tobias: So, Tropical Islands it has to be . . .

13:09 Elisabeth: I am no fan of Tropical Islands . . . I am more for the

countryside trips to Gregor's house, or actually any travel we do together, but Tropical Islands sucks.

13:10 Raliza: I believe my job in ausland will stay a unique experience in my whole professional career.

13:10 Conrad: I often have the feeling of suffering from the excessive demands and that I never seem to manage to keep up-to-date with the necessary work.

13:10 Rut: Yes, yesterday night I also thought that chronic overwork is a characteristic of ausländer.

13:11 Conrad: @Rut: what did you mean by park?

13:11 Rut: @Conrad—the sound of the snow I meant.

13:11 Tobias: Then off you go to ausland!

13:11 Rut: OK, then we finish the interview with a great plan for the future.

13:12 Raliza: Right now once again I cannot follow—Tropical Island as an internal Christmas party?

13:12 Elisabeth: No!

13:12 Rut: ausland in ausland—in ten years, ausland returns from a world tour.

13:12 Elisabeth: Yes!

13:12 Conrad: What ever happened to Gregor? Almost no message from him?

13:12 Raliza: On the phone—as always.

13:13 Conrad: :-)

BADCO. / PODROOM

(<http://www.badco.hr>)

ZAGREB, December 2009 / 1980

Thirty years ago an exhibition of twenty artists was displayed in a cellar at Mesnička Street 12 in Zagreb, thus marking the formal opening of the gallery called the Podroom (The Cellar). The date was May 24, 1978. The exhibition gathered an informal group of artists who would soon, in view of their future joint public appearances, use the name Radna Zajednica Umjetnika (RZU—“Working Community of Artists”). Before closing the gallery, RZU Podroom organized a talk—a self-interview—which was published in their first and only issue of a magazine called Prvi broj (The First Issue).

*As a format of self-interviewing, BADco. decided to produce new questions on the basis of RZU Podroom’s discussion and inscribe it into the original text, adding also the stage-directions which suggest formats of an open-discussion in BADco.’s performances.**

Trbuljak: *(Into the microphone standing in the middle of the space)* This conversation concerns this publication, that is, magazine.

Stilinović: No, that was last time around.

Trbuljak: And now, what is the topic now?

Stilinović: Wait, this time we have met so that everyone could say something about the Podroom, and this would sort of serve as a foreword for this magazine—a catalogue.

Sanja: But not for everyone to hold a monologue, but to make it a conversation.

Stilinović: All right then, but someone has to start, right? I’ll ask you what’s your opinion about the Podroom, and this way I state my opinion immediately, and someone will take it from there.

* Except for BADco.’s questions and stage directions, which are free to be used under the same licensing terms as the rest of the collection. all copyrights for the Podroom self-interview are held by the original authors and no rights are waived.

Trbuljak: Of course, so start then.

Stilinović: And this being written for me, it's 'cause I wrote it for myself.
(*Reads text into microphone*)

Why do I work at the Podroom? I work at the Podroom because I'm responsible for what I do. When we work through other galleries or newspapers, they (and not I) think they are responsible for my work. This bothers me and it can't be true. Besides, I like my work to be presented in its entirety, that is, how I conceived it, ranging from the poster, the catalogue, to the duration of the exhibition, and its safeguarding. **Nikolina:** What do we artists daydream about when we desire to be "completely" presented? Why is a presentation of work not completely presented when only the outcome is presented, that is, what completes the presentation of the work? **Together:** Is it necessary to organize to regain control over the responsibility over one's own work? How is the responsibility for the works' reception shared between the artist and the one who organizes the works' presentation?

I truly love a sentence by Aretino: "Life doesn't mean going to the Court." When I make rounds of other institutions, I go to a court, that is how I feel (to get cigarettes). When I go to the Podroom, I go to the Podroom. **Sergej:** Can the artist / Courtier find a space without a Court, a space filled with life?

What I'm going to say now isn't the only impression concerning the Podroom; there are others, but this one is the most striking. Since I tend my own exhibitions, I know who comes to these exhibitions (it's not a matter of the quantity of people). Of these people coming to the exhibitions, it turns out that no one from the galleries, papers, cultural institutions, faculties is interested . . . I won't say in us who work, but in culture, because even if this doesn't constitute good art, or visual art, for someone, it still certainly falls under the heading of culture. People who work in the institutions think that the place where they work is culture, and that culture doesn't exist elsewhere. Each of these people gets bound to their institution and isn't interested in seeing anything else (of course, it's a different story when it's abroad. . . . I can say that all arts critics from Zagreb went to Kassel or to Venice, but none of them were at the Podroom). Credit due to the exceptions. **Tom:** Are institutions that do not create identification (the Podroom without its Podroom-dwellers) possible? And, if so, is secondary practice (critique, theory, or artistic reflection) that is not reflected through the prism of the institution possible? **Zrinka:** Is desirable institutional vision possible?

Based on a single visit to the Podroom, or none at all, critics, and artists as well, wrote and made statements about the Podroom, mostly negative and derisory, while until now there have been thirty-five (35) appearances in the Podroom by twenty-five artists.

Based on a statement by Mr. Depolo that the Neo-avantgarde has withdrawn into isolation, I state the following: we haven't withdrawn into isolation; you put us there (on the one hand very heavy economic isolation, and specifically—I know what the press, radio, and television mean to the public, and for you as well. So far OKO hasn't written on a single exhibition held in the Podroom (of one), *Vjesnik*, *Večernji List*, radio and TV haven't reported on a single one, etc. . . .). But this isolation doesn't interest me. It's a social phenomenon requiring a different and more thorough analysis. . . . What I can say is that if you come to see an exhibition only once and say that we have withdrawn into isolation, then it's obvious that it is you who has withdrawn into isolation. **Tom:** How is critique impacted by the artist's rendering of the context in which his work is reflected? Can we imagine our own artistic practice without this additional work? **Sergej:** How can artistic practice be presented which does not ease one into its representation?

(Martinis rises from his chair and begins to walk in a circle around the gallery with head bowed. Others join him one by one, as in a prison yard walk line up.)

Martinis: It's a negative experience of how the surrounding reacts.

Stilinović: That's positive.

Martinis: All right, however you understand it. The question now is whether it's now a fact with which we should be content, or simply continue to work.

Stilinović: You can't force anyone to visit the Podroom if they don't want to.

Martinis: No, what I want to say is, it's all the same if you exhibit at the Gallery of Contemporary Art, only that, mark this, no one from the Modern gallery is going to visit there.

Stilinović: Look, I'm not interested that nobody is coming here, but everyone will juggle these facts.

Martinis: This is why I tell you this is merely a negative experience, a negative attitude of the surrounding toward this here.

Petercol: *(Looks at his watch.)* Yes, but it is also positive.

Martinis: I mean in such a constellation, it's really obvious that no reaction exists whatsoever, that is . . . I don't know.

Trbuljak: It seems to me that when he said what he got from the Podroom, it was in the sense of what the Podroom meant to him more than what a gallery means to him, and on the one hand he is satisfied, you get it, because initially he said, "I'm satisfied with this and this," and this is just a remark, I mean, in spite of him having control over everything he wants to, this is just a digression about what goes with this system, and the fact is—as you say, Martinis—that this doesn't change in any other gallery, I mean . . .

However, only one question we should talk about is whether you, Stilinović

said for himself meaning he's satisfied. . . . Maybe the question is put to others to say likewise whether they're satisfied, what disappoints them, if they are disappointed, what they think can be changed.

Petercol: (*Looks at his watch.*) I'm writing a text on the Podroom, and I've come upon a problem I'd like to bring up. The basic starting point would be that we're not a group: we don't have a single ideology, I mean, we've gathered around the principle of a particular shift away from the traditional. There is valuation, a mutual choice based on certain trust in the work of the people who are present here. However, there is another thing that seems to me very problematic, that we still act like a gallery for the artists we invite. In fact, I think we're somehow approaching the model of a gallery, only in this case, it's not a single gallerist, but a group of individuals. Each of us has the right to invite someone to hold an exhibition here; we give them space, and through exhibiting here, they support the idea of the Podroom. But then, this happens: when they make an exhibition, we have to wait until someone remembers, that is, to ask them whether they would come back and make another exhibition in a year or two or not. This is a kind of relationship typical of a gallery: what's offered is the space, and the honor, to exhibit, but cooperation isn't on offer. We should treat them on an equal basis. **Zrinka:** Does the new member of the collective necessarily cause a redefinition of relations? I think what happened here is a certain accumulation of power based on the past; that is, on the fact, the merit, that two years, a year and a half ago, we founded the Podroom . . . and in addition to that, we own the space, that is, it so happened that we got the space. This led us to a closed situation in which . . . which should be overcome. It's a question of principle. I think that it's really concealed mistrust of the invited artist. If we accommodated them once, they should be aware that if they so want, they can take the first free slot to present their work, or if they want to, they can invite someone else entirely, I don't know, some other artist.

Stilinović: That's an admission of one's conduct towards whoever they call up. I told Raša, asked him whether he wanted to do something in the Podroom. He doesn't consider himself a member because he's in Belgrade, but he's open to cooperation.

Petercol: (*Looks at his watch.*) We should tell that to people, everyone who's invited, and let them decide for themselves: how, how many, a guest, a member . . . **Zrinka:** Does division of responsibility necessarily lead to a discussion of stakes in responsibility?

Dorogi: This is closely linked to the organization and character of exhibitions at the Podroom. Until now they were mainly solo exhibitions, and in this time we didn't have an action or two that would make some kind of radical move

away from that kind of presentation. Someone coming in from the outside sees one of us sitting here, works by five or six people, perhaps no one there, and thinks it is a gallery.

Dorogi: And this notion that the Podroom is a gallery is tied exclusively to the character of our way of working, and therein lies the problem.

Martinis: (*into the microphone*) Organization and presentation.

Dorogi: If we could find the most ideal form of presenting works, where the author would be involved in a more active way, then it wouldn't be considered a gallery.

Sergej: Can we speak of post-Fordist cultural institutions, those that invite artists to collaborate, communicate, transform the institution itself? Is the division of labor and specialization dissolved in that case? If you invite them and say you've got a slot at a certain time, it doesn't matter whether they do a performance and sleep there for three hours or three days, it's still a solo exhibition as in any other gallery. Obviously the problem lies in the mode of work and presenting to someone coming in here.

Maračić: (*Fights inertia.*) Fuck it, if they don't need space, they won't be asking to come. . . .

Wait, you won't be inventing some new system if you do something specific.

Dorogi: No, I don't think so. (*Everyone sits down.*)

Maračić: Now I won't be using the space in some other way just so that it wouldn't function as . . .

Martinis: It's not just about the way in which you'll present your work, but about the organization and activity of the Podroom, regardless of what's on show inside.

Maračić: But no one was in any way limited and did what they wanted.

Martinis: Okay, but we're talking about the consequences of . . . (*indistinct*) what is the difference between the Forum gallery and the Podroom beside the works . . . but it is a question of time, five years on, it might all become established, and someone might say, "Yeah, I know them, they're the Podroomers," just as we say, "Forumers," and that's a group of people, a space which affirms one type of works and there's no other way inside. . . .

Dorogi: And this is practically linked to criteria.

Sanja: Maybe it would do to go back, since we're talking about the experience we have in this space.

Stilinović: Yes, by the way there's a problem that we might . . .

(*All stop. They recapitulate the experience of past years. Not out loud. On occasion they get up and note on the wall using chalk questions that open a time jump between conditions then and conditions now. They continue the conversation.*)

Sanja: Concerning Marta's [Martinis] and my experience with the Podroom,

it can concern '76, '77, and only partly '78 (Spring), and then again '79 from February on. Although nothing happened here in '76 and '77, meaning doing exhibitions (which is why we only consider 1978 to be the beginning of the Podroom's work), it was a significant time for me because it was then that we started gathering around the idea of the Podroom. We used to talk a lot then, discuss, argue about what should be the purpose and character of such a space, of a working community of artists. Then we made a concept of work and activities that would take place there (we still have written documents), etc. And after that we met again, and talked again, argued. And of course, it turned out it was terribly difficult to balance our attitudes, although we were mostly of the same generation, the nature of our work was the same, but also our experiences with the institutions in this town. So all is in order as long as artists exist and work on their own, but the moment they become members of a collective, the thing becomes wobbly. This is in line with the most traditional opinion of artists, who are supposedly extreme "individualists" and who are in no way capable of cooperating. And it became clear that it was very much alive in our midst. And now, regardless of whether someone might have found it a negative experience, I think that we did well at that moment to insist on trying to first establish some kind of common policy before we started working in this space. For then it didn't seem enough to us that this space exists where we can exhibit our works, create our catalogues, etc. And that this space is in itself different from galleries. And besides, it was also because the character of our work had changed, along with the sense of what constituted the role of the artist today; in a way, we ceased to be merely "artists," and are starting to be something more than that . . .

Stilinović: (*into the microphone*) Less.

Sanja: More or less. In my opinion, it's more. When I say more, I mean it doesn't only matter to us how you will produce your work, but you have the awareness of working within a context, and also that artists are certain agents of culture, and accordingly that you have the right to critically reflect upon this, and then also to create this sort of cultural politics, I don't know. . . . So when, in the first drafts for the Podroom, we stated some of the things such as public panel discussions, exhibitions along certain topics, lectures, and also publishing a bulletin-magazine, we had this in mind, an activity which didn't have the character of a traditional exhibition. That's why Martinis and I insisted more on these manifestations such as the interview with the CEAC group of Toronto, Liza Bear's lecture on the alternative use of communications, our Podroom talk about alternative arts centers in Canada and the USA, on the library. This, for example, is why this decision to start this magazine seems significant, it's a good sign.

Dorogi: Look, I wanted to answer something. Say, what you are saying, that we've met here because our work before was outside the flows of cultural politics, that now we meet in this position that besides being artists we still really do open up certain cultural-political issues, because you see what I think as regards this, I think that the very work of an individual artist already contains within it, and should, as I see such work, inherently contain cultural politics, by virtue of the very fact that it demands control, first, over the mode of presentation, second, over the mode of distribution, and third, over how this individual work bears on the cultural situation itself, on the presentation site and all the other things. **Tom:** Can we guarantee the consistency of the work by control over presentation, distribution, and context, or do we need control over those elements to produce that consistency? Why do we need our own space, why control over the process of mediation? Does cultural policy immanently belong to a work or does the work result from the condition of cultural policy? Who functionally determines this? See, from what I understand of these individual works, I think it's all brought together in every single work if it exists in the mind of every artist. That's my take on it. From this position we again have this situation of heterogeneity, because look, this can happen: we have heterogeneous works, and yet an identical attitude towards cultural politics and the presentation of these works. In this sense duplication arises, someone occupied with their own work in one field, while in another field they associate from various positions and make a homogeneous foray into the cultural-political plane. (*Into the microphone*) I think it all comes together in a single author, now it's just an issue of coordinating these heterogeneities, that is, individuals constituting, say, this working community, and in what way are we going to act, right? **Sergej:** Is the group defined by joint ideology, the collective by joint policy, community by coordination (see Goran Petercol and Sanja Iveković above)? Let me underline this again, not that I'm a working artist and, as you say, something more significant happens with these works because I'll act on a cultural (wider) plane, but that this immanently unifies each work. Now notwithstanding the nature or the form of the work—be it a performance, some kind of manifestation, a painting hung on a wall—I think that the works I've seen here carry in them this connotation both of cultural politics, and the artist's awareness of being not merely an "artist" but something more still. **Sergej:** Do curators' policies extrapolate the policy of the artistic work or bring in a new one?

Was that clear?

Martinis: Yes, it is only partly correct. For instance, you can analyze the situation in certain environments that are better developed than ours, you see,

where this whole new or so-called avant-garde art which in every work expressed a new attitude and a new regard for the social role of art, etc. However, with time, and with coordinated effort by various institutions, this work goes through a very pretty and inconspicuous assimilation into an already existing conventional system through which an artwork is launched and thus allowed to communicate with the public. I'd only like to add that just because this is called a Podroom instead of, say, Gallery of Contemporary Art or Modern Gallery, it is still no guarantee that all that won't happen here as well. *Zrinka: Is the need to contextualize a need to identify?* Just because this space doesn't have that typical gallery look and there is no one asking for tickets doesn't mean that it isn't going to happen that in two years it will be injected into the system along with the works and become nicely established, as has happened before.

Dorogi: It's obvious that the space cannot and may not be what connects things. The Podroom should be a form of action. . . . I must admit that outsiders have nevertheless got the impression that the name "Podroom" means the space exclusively, that is, us "Podroom-people." You see, that is still the mirror of our activity. It is obvious then that we must bring forward a form of action, whether we call it Podroom or cucumber or something else.

Sanja: (*Into the microphone.*) It has often occurred to me that this space, I think, was in a way the weak point of the whole thing. . . .

Dorogi: (*Closes his eyes and walks through the space until he reaches a free chair.*) Weak point, yes, actually when you come to think . . .

Sanja: I mean, maybe the fact that this space existed, maybe that made it impossible for people to concentrate more on creating a concept of an action, on the program. Maybe the space should have been cancelled, or it should have been forgotten that it ever existed, and then maybe . . .

Martek: I'd only say that I think, tied to the fate of a work, after it has been exhibited and is beyond the artist's control, (*into the microphone*) that it's important that the artist continues to exist, to work and confirm with new works that which may be becoming less and less visible in the old works.

Martinis: I know what you mean to say, but this is precisely about the fact that the idea of a single form of activity should be capable of overcoming all known negative aspects that stem from the conventional type of presentation, where exhibitions follow one another in a linear fashion, which is how things were more or less done here until now. Because maybe for someone there may be some new value to be found in this, but for someone from outside, this all boils down to the same thing. Because some of these new values don't automatically spring from the fact that these thirty or so exhibitions at the Podroom were, say, very good, this still doesn't make a difference between us

and a conventional gallery, that is, a traditional gallery practice. It may just as well be a question of slightly better gallery program policy. **Tom:** When we work on creating our own production conditions, do we in turn condition our own aesthetic decisions? Can we really work unconditionally, without creating our own production conditions? If not, what is the ratio between work on collaborative practice and work on the aesthetic? What production conditions can an individual create, and what conditions can a group create?

Martek: We shouldn't be too humble. There are some obvious differences. We have realized some kind of shift. **Ana:** In what context is shift in one's work evaluated?

Martinis: Certainly, the fact that we are now discussing it is already plain evidence that something else can happen.

Boris: We've already done some things that are more concrete, and I think that each of us possesses this mechanism that directs them. We also opened this entirely economic issue, for example, this contract that is being prepared. If we agree on that and act consistently, then once more it's going to be a successful coordination in a new sphere. I think that so far there was a romantic outlook on all this—I mean, culture—and in fact it's a matter of penetrating the system of galleries as an economic structure.

Petercol: (*Looks at his watch.*) When someone gave a concrete proposal, it was discussed here, and support was either given or withheld. For instance, we all supported certain actions outside this space, on the street. So it means that the question is to demonstrate in a specific conversation whether an individual view could be attached to a common proposal. So it's about the proposal that can get people interested, from which it immediately follows that it isn't a meeting of artists who only assemble to move away from the traditional. No, I didn't emphasize this because I thought it would be taken for granted; the moment we met the first time and in fact already tacitly chose each other, we actually already involved another circle, which has certain prerequisites for a certain mode of functioning, and further expansion always starts with our inviting new people, which means that the one doing the inviting won't invite someone whose work will undermine these prerequisites.

Martinis: There, this may bring us to a more precise formulation of our relation towards anyone who wishes to approach us, because if someone doing an exhibition here is told, "Here, you created the work and you may exhibit again when you want to," then, I think, this person doesn't share the same responsibilities and doesn't creatively participate in the process and activities of the Podroom. I mean, it's not all right that there is a group actively working on developing the program and such, and others who only perceive the Podroom as an exhibition space. **Tom:** How much unequally shared responsibility is

good? **Sergej:** Does the need for differentiation within a heterogeneous group demand new relations in evaluating activity, labor, responsibility, belonging to . . . ? How does this reflect on ad-hoc collaborations, networks . . . ?

Petercol: (*Looks at his watch.*) No, you didn't get me, I meant complete engagement.

Sanja: . . . Yes, but that's what the discussions are for in which we would analyze some common interest problem, say, the relation between the artist and the institution, current gallery policies in the country, the attitude of the media toward newer developments in art, or something else. And through these discussions, we would gradually create our own position, and then something more, an action strategy, or, as Dorogi said, a form of action. Because although obviously the work expresses someone's personal attitude towards such questions, the work is one person's, an individual's finished structure, and thus merely another new work in a series of "new" works. Therefore, I think that this sort of discussion is even more important . . . **Sergej:** When and why did gallery policies transform into curatorial policies?

Petercol: Come in, come in . . .

Martinis: (*Into the microphone.*) Enter!

Sanja: (*Into the microphone.*) Yes, please?

X: Eeeh . . . no, no, no way.

Dorogi: (*Into the microphone.*) Who was that?

Stilinović: I think this sort of conversation is okay, but, in my mind, we also have important conversations when we meet on the street. Now this is a different dimension, because it's always easier to talk when there are three or four people, than like this. Because there are people who don't like to converse in this way. . . . No, I seriously mean it . . . and then it's, it's something else. . . .

Tom: How many subgroups can a group handle? **Ana:** How many individuals can a group handle?

Sanja: Of course, obviously we've different characters, mentalities, but on the other hand I think it's very important that we create an atmosphere or a situation where it won't be a problem to say something, you understand, but that there will simply be a need to exchange opinions.

ALL: (*Simultaneously*) I agree with you there. . . .

Martinis: Because, look, there's people here who don't know each other that well. I, for one, don't find myself encountering these people on the street or in a coffee shop and discussing these things with them. What do I know, maybe I ride the wrong tram. For example, I meet Stipa on the train. So it is important to me that we create such situations. And besides, it would also be important from the audience's viewpoint. Some new people who would thus get far more directly involved with the work.

Martek: Let me say something. (*Stops speaking every time Martinis looks at him. Continues when Martinis shifts his gaze.*) I didn't arrive at the Podroom from a gallery, but from the street. I mean, I had never before exhibited in a single gallery, so my impression of the Podroom and experience with the Podroom are completely different from those of someone who had already had positive or negative experiences with galleries. For me, entering the Podroom was the natural continuation of my work, just like street exhibitions were. The thing is only, naturally, that this is still a defined space, and when someone asks me about my work . . . it is something different from when someone comes here. . . . He may somehow free himself . . . because he sees that not everything is arranged here as in a gallery, and maybe he provokes and asks more questions and so on. Maybe a greater effort is needed for the people to (*indistinct*). . . . This is the primary thing for me, conversation, because, I don't know, this conversation keeps revolving around this awareness, this is in fact how I recognize it all, I recognize everything as consciousness, which is why talking among us and with the people who come here is so important. I don't know to what extent our works are in harmony with this consciousness, but, in fact, we need to talk. If something is ever resolved, it's going to be done so through dialogue. It's highly unlikely to be done through monologue, which is traditionally a closed structure.

Sanja: Yes, it also seems important to point out that since the first days of working in the Podroom, we have emphasized the need for the author who organizes something in the Podroom to be constantly present in the space. Initially, that was the simplest way to organize tending exhibitions, but with time it became clear that in this way it was possible to have constant dialogue with the audience, a sort of cultural animation.

Martek: . . . It is a new situation, when someone arrives to find the author present, that is, for instance, what we tried to realize this spring in the Nova gallery. Our concept of the exhibition was to stand next to our work. When the gallery was opened, we were in the gallery, everyone standing by his or her work. When a visitor came, we would explain to them that the work functions if they talk to the author (*indistinct*). . . . Nevertheless, the Nova gallery is something else, everything is clean there, and . . . it didn't quite function.

Martinis: Yes, because in a gallery you become only a supplementary exhibit.

(*Everybody speaks simultaneously but so quietly it is barely audible.*)

Stilinović: This is why I find that, say, this wash basin here functions well.

Martinis: Who?

Stilinović: Wash basin.

ALL: (*Simultaneously*) Yeeees, the basin is an excellent element.

(All speaking simultaneously, attempting to describe their moving through the space in verbal improvisation, but as if they were located in other spaces—non-gallery spaces where they have exhibited or performed actions, performance pieces.)

Sanja: . . . Yes, it's obvious that it's a living space, not a gallery space.

(All sitting in the space begin to talk simultaneously and do not stop until they synchronize to a theme.)

Stilinović: I specifically have experiences with my own exhibition, that people came and immediately started to talk. In the Nova gallery, even if you wanted this and said you wanted it to happen, it wouldn't.

Martinis: *(Into the microphone)* Galleries are to keep quiet in, aren't they?

Stilinović: Yes, galleries are to keep quiet in.

Dorogi: For instance, Raša's exhibition is a good example, when they initiated a conversation, firstly on the work of Raša himself, who explained his exhibition and so on, and so the discussion took off until late. Later on, the crowd became slightly too relaxed, so they started having a bit too much fun, but still . . .

Petercol: *(Standing on the wall next to Stilinović, looks at his watch)* No, wait, there always were conversations, specifically about the work . . .

Dorogi: Look, I chose this instance cause I was there, you see, I don't know about the others.

Stilinović: Yes, it is a—how do I put it—part of the activities in the Podroom lies in this (I don't know, that's how I understood it to be).

Because there is a big gap, a big gap between creating a work and exhibiting. And it is an absurdity, a terrible absurdity, in Zagreb, in Belgrade, anywhere. Because you just place the work in a drawer, there is no work experience.

Dorogi: The space between working on a project and exhibiting is too big and completely separated, when the goal should really be not just to narrow this space, but to identify . . .

Stilinović: Well, we have here this work by Demur, no, it even goes back, as we'd say, right, or forward, right?

Dorogi: . . . And what's done in this way is to somehow historicize, classify, etc., a finished product . . . as if you were a man who came to the Nama department store, say, to buy a suit.

Stilinović: This, I think, is the Podroom's advantage: if you yourself decide, then you decide the moment you've got a work to put it there and perhaps even decide not to exhibit, while every other gallery has absolutely no respect

for the artist's person, no respect at all. Concerning this, I gave proposals to galleries, and I can say I've been turned down in two places.

Martinis: (*Joins Stilinović and Petercol. They stand at a distance of two meters.*) What we should develop even further is gradually turning this into a working space. So you being here wouldn't mean that you have an exhibition here now, and so you stand here beside your work with the expectation that whoever comes by would come and talk to you, but that you practically work here.

Stilinović: Yes, yes, that's how it functions. Starting de facto with the didactical, you know? I mean, perhaps like this it looks silly; you have to start even from this level. In fact, in yourself you encompass both the one who informs, the curator and everything, because that is part of your work.

(break)

Dorogi: Perhaps someone who wasn't involved with the functioning of the Podroom should say something, from an outside position. Say, Boro is here, it would be important to have a couple of his remarks.

Demur: So far I have sort of held back a little because I'm not used to frequent discussions. However, I can describe some of my own experiences. Once, several years ago, I was rather preoccupied with classical painting. Therefore, my work was rather informed by traditional methods of channeling the work, by exhibitions, galleries, etc. The work itself kept evolving in a way that made it impossible to classify it thus, and there had been no other way. . . . Thus it simply somehow hindered me so my development wasn't as strong or intense, in work as well as mindset. So I found this alternative with the Podroom very welcome, as I was already prepared for a more radical transformation in my work. So these exhibitions that I held [in the Podroom?] may not be something very much to the surrounding that witnessed them, but I'm convinced that future works will more directly question certain things about which all of us here have spoken. So, it is a step. The Podroom had great importance to me, such that it may still be a year or two before I can grasp perfectly clearly . . . *[tape breaks off]*

Demur: Mainly, I made a turn which would have cost me far more time and which might lead me in a direction for which I would probably later be indisposed.

Dorogi: I have a similar experience. For instance, I had this work, the idea being that the work can only function if it is alone in a space, no other works around it. If I had taken this proposal to any gallery, they'd tell me: "Listen, man, don't be silly, we can't exhibit a single work in three rooms." This is a

bigger problem for them. And that is the empty space that the Podroom was there to fill, to, like, open up possibilities. . . .

Demur: To follow continually on this thought you are developing: that is what we do day in day out, which is why we need to display works. Even when they're not the most mature, at one point it still becomes very significant that they appear, that people see them, because based on these assumptions you can keep developing the work.

Petercol: (*Looks at his watch.*) The gallerist will give you license to display your work if he is aware of what this work is, and, I think, our gallerists' awareness of things isn't particularly high. So there is a danger that they'll judge your work. . . .

Petercol: . . . And it even happens often that the gallerist can't understand the artist's explanation.

Martinis: Yes, so there is another very important thing then: even when someone allows you to exhibit, they will ask for certain works. This is even more visible with buying works. Therefore, it would be important not to sell in one's own interest, because you only get to sell certain kinds of works, which in most cases you don't consider representative of your work. Your activity might be going ninety-nine percent in one direction, but they buy that one percent of your activity because that's what suits them. This is in practice how a totally skewed picture of what you're doing is formed.

Petercol: (*Into the microphone, looks at his watch.*) So, the artist must be very obedient!

Trbuljak: (*Forced yawning.*) I remember that first conversation we had at the Podroom some, I don't know, two years ago, where more or less everybody here was present. What I like is that the thing got a little more, I won't say politicized, but more conscious. Two years ago, seems to me, what was important was only to exhibit, I mean, at any price, and the system and what influences the work wasn't important at all.

ALL: I think that is very important, and that it's very good and that, I think, each of the authors present here have done something in this sense.

Trbuljak: What I'm really afraid of, not only concerning the Podroom, but concerning all our activities, is how far it goes, (*into the microphone*) who are we addressing? But you probably already discussed this.

What's odd actually is that there's only a small number of people who we think understand what we are doing, while in truth very soon each of us saw that not one of the others understands it, and that in fact nobody is interested. I mean, it's a lucky coincidence that at least that small number of people, at least they (that is my impression) understand each other. Now the question is only whether that's enough, that is, what can be done here to make it a bit

broader, to, sort of, make an audience out of it. I know that you cannot dream up an audience. . . .

Sanja: But you can animate it.

Trbuljak: Correct. That's for instance what the *Studentski list* journal has been doing for the past ten issues—or exactly how many issues I don't know. That, for example, is one possible way. Only it's silly, like in all newspapers, that you don't see how it echoes.

Martinis: (*Into the microphone*) How it echoes . . .

Trbuljak: It seems to me that in this Podroom place it is a similar audience. The Contemporary Art Gallery has no other audience either. Perhaps someone should be . . . (*Slouches down as though switched off. After a few seconds con-tinues energetically.*) The fairest thing to do would be to get people interested in this other activity, and they will come and accept what . . . (*Slouches down . . .*)

Sanja: Listen, I'll tell you something, in the specific instances of two or three manifestations in the Podroom, it was visible that there is an audience and that it can be fairly easily animated for a certain exhibition or manifestation. We had the experience that when we invested more time, and, truth be told, money in printing and distributing invitation cards, posters, and the like, the turnout surpassed expectations. We should keep it in mind that we simply didn't have the cash for some of these things that every other institution would normally have.

Sanja: So I think that, for me, it wasn't at all a question of how to get people interested in coming here. There are tried and true methods and means for that, but the question I feel is more important is (*into the microphone*) who these people are and what their real interest is. . . .

Trbuljak: (*Again involved.*) You know what? It's very clear to everyone, and, I mean, it's very good that each of us, maybe not all, but most people who are present here have been through the experience of needing to affirm their work, that is, at least it looks like someone adult, you know, who understands things better, who knows more than they, that they have shown them their work and got some kind of response—either the work was accepted, or they experienced a disappointment because they saw that nobody really got what it was about.

ALL: And I think that is a precious experience.

Trbuljak: In fact, as it turns out: we shouldn't address THEM, I mean those institutions and all the culture-making people. . . . We should address someone else, that is, those who . . . that is, not the "old ones" who were already expected to understand you, but others. . . . **Tom:** Who understands the work? Whom to address? Whom to invite to see the work?

Stilinović: This issue, to me, is terribly tricky, because when you look at it, we are really becoming (what has already been overcome in the West, after a fashion) a society terribly dependent on advertising. It's horrifying. When you look at, say, Bulajić: how much he advertised, then you go to the cinema (I went), watch the film . . . (*into the microphone*) people laugh, whistle, take the mic, clap, but they come! You get it; this horrifies me that people really do succumb to this advertising. And finally, the Podroom had this experience with Jerman, that, say, Jerman announced "Punk-Art," and a mass of people came to this exhibition, to this name, to this advertisement.

Martinis: Look, I think we don't have to stick to these conventions of advertising and say, you know: the Contemporary Gallery spends I don't know how much, a million and a half a year, so if we spend a million and a half we'll get the same, right? But there is another way, especially for a different audience, I mean, this whole system won't bring in, I don't know, the young, students, high school pupils, etc., those who respond to this are people who are already somehow separated from the mainstream, who already receive the invitations anyway.

Trbuljak: This is one difference between this and the discussion we had two years ago, because then we were already in the position that some of us had already exhibited at the Contemporary Art Gallery, some were still aspiring and so on. Now, concerning this, I think, it seems to me that we're all alike now, that we've been through this phase. Now there is no more fight, like. (*Slouches down . . .*)

Martinis: Frustrations.

Trbuljak: (*Again involved*) . . . Frustrations, insecurity and so on. . . . Nowadays everybody knows what they represent and I think there is no need for someone to comfort them and tell them, "Yes, you're a good artist now," and everything should stay at that, no? And so I think that all this is still a big experience and now we only have to see, I mean, where to go on (it's very clever what I just said now, erm . . .). (*Laughter*)

Demur: The question is how is someone going to react now to possible cooperation with other institutions, how will people react to, say, invitations specifically from the Contemporary Art Gallery.

Sanja: Yes, but you get it. It's about one change in our behavior, about what I would call maturing, you see? For instance, everybody accepted this contract, so this means that there already exists a common attitude on what position to take towards the institutions, the system. **Zrinka:** How can a collective work knowing of the different speeds and dynamics of artistic maturing of individuals?

Trbuljak: So this is what really matters here (I mean, that can also change). What is our attitude towards painters? **Sergej:** What is our attitude towards artists? Because, at this moment, going with this contract, you will have to, you'll have to invite people who don't work like you, painters and so forth. And the contract will only function when . . . not only . . . us, you get it?

Sanja: That's right. That's why it was drafted like it was . . .

Martinis: It suits everyone . . . (*murmur*)

Sanja: This is precisely the intention with which the contract was drafted, so it isn't valid only for a small group. I think it suits all who consider themselves independent artists.

Martinis: That's what we said, we insist on a socially/economically fair relationship, not on a relationship based on a certain aesthetic orientation, not like—we have to get this special treatment unlike some painter who as far as we're concerned can remain spinning—nooooo . . . (*murmurs*) **Tom:** How do we perceive what is fair in our work?

Petercol: (*Looks at his watch.*) Yes, when you make that proposition, you have to see in which way to expand it, cause there exists . . .

Martinis: Well of course, we should strive to expand it, but we must start to radically pursue it in order to . . . (*murmur*)

Trbuljak: When you talk like this—I mean, all in all, painters aren't our main adversaries, those who obstruct us in our work. I mean, they never have been.

Stilinović: Yes, never.

Martinis: Because the fact is that most artists aren't ready to take some kind of position, you get it, that will be radical, but, you know, they'll say: well, fine, boys.

ALL: I agree with you completely

(All recapitulate—now out loud. On the differences of one's own experience of artistic practice and others' experiences, experience of one's own group and experience of other groups they've followed. They note questions.)

Martinis: . . . And tomorrow when Zdenko Rus invites them they'll think—fuck it, I'm not crazy to screw around with this in the Modern Gallery . . . (*murmur, laughter*)

(Who is who in this conversation: Goran **Trbuljak**, Mladen **Stilinović**, Sanja **Iveković**, Dalibor **Martinis**, Goran **Petercol**, Ivan **Dorogi**, Antun **Maračić**, Boris **Demur**, Vlado **Martek**)

(Who is who in quotations, in order of appearance: **Nikolina Pristaš**, Goran **Sergej Pristaš**, **Tomislav Medak**, **Zrinka Užbinec**, **Ana Kreitmeyer**)

