

Live Collaborative Essay #1
(La mesa de los Ausentes)

Saturday 18th May 2019

Performed by:

Erola Arcalís
Ramona Guntert
Joshua Leon
Steff Jamieson
Emma Bäcklund

on the occasion of

'Rehearsing the Real'

Peckham24, Copeland Park, Peckham, London
17 - 19 May 2019

Instructions for reading

1. The reading will last exactly 1 hour.
2. Text striked through means it is an offering, but the intention is that it is not read.
Like this: ~~tracing the limit formed by the end of metaphysics entails repeating the movements by which philosophy exhausted its possibilities—this, in order to release what philosophy has closed upon in its effort to secure an ideal order of meaning.~~
3. Actions will be indicated in Parentheses like this [Joshua reads from Maggie Nelson The Argonauts page 12 paragraph 3 -----]. These actions will work to different formatting to the read text as means for differentiation.
4. Moments of silence will last for a period time decided by the next action or voice.
5. Each person's voices and references are inserted in a font assigned by themselves as means for differentiation.
6. At any point, should Steff make a clear and precise action, a moment of silence will follow.

Time and scene: 1:30pm, a room with 8 chairs, one framed photograph, an incomplete tiled floor, a library of books placed in a disorganised manner, a table with two printed texts atop, an assortment of camouflage prints. The performers enter the room assuming positions of their own accord.

[Joshua begins reading a text from Mahmoud Darwish's epic *Memory for Forgetfulness*, p6 paragraph 2]

"I want the aroma of coffee. I want nothing more than the aroma of coffee. And I want nothing more from the passing days than the aroma of coffee. The aroma of coffee so I can hold myself together, stand on my feet, and be transformed from something that crawls, into a human being. The aroma of coffee so I can stand my share of this dawn up on its feet. So that we can go together, this day and I, down into the street in search of another place."

[a short pause]

"How can I diffuse the aroma of coffee into my cells, while shells from the sea rain down on the sea-facing kitchen, spreading the stink of [...] and the taste of nothingness? I measure the period between two shells. One second. One second: shorter than the time between breathing in and breathing out, to stand before the stove by the glass facade that overlooks the sea. One second is not long enough to open the water bottle or pour the water into the coffee pot. One second is not long enough to light a match. But one second is long enough for me to burn."

...

I want the aroma of coffee. I need five minutes. I want a five-minute truce for the sake of coffee. I have no personal wish other than to make a cup of coffee. With this madness I define my task and my aim.

All my sense are on their mark, ready to call to propel
my thirst in the direction of the one and only goal:
coffee.

Coffee, for an addict like, is the key to the day.
And coffee, for one who knows it as I do, means
making it with your own hands and not having it come
to you on a tray, because the bringer of the tray is also
the bearer of talk, and the first coffee, the virgin of the
silent morning, is spoiled by the first words.

[a long silence -----]

Coffee is the morning silence, early and
unhurried, the only silence in which you can be at peace
with self and things, creative, standing alone with some
water that you reach for in lazy solitude and pour

[Joshua stops, stands, finds nelly sach's *glowing enigmas* and turns to page 52 -----

]

In the sea of minutes
each one demands destruction
rescue-help high as houses interlaced with words
no longer air
spaceless
only destruction
Hope became no butterfly
to create death with so much effort
Dissolve in sand
that which veils the God
this first word that rushes into night
beyond rescuing

Earth
Tear among planets–
I go down in your plenty–

There is also the element that we spoke of in the meeting,
concerning Steff's notion of understanding the unsaid. I
found this incredibly powerful, and as a lot of my work
studies notions of silence and the untranslatable,
I would very much like to insert durational silences into
our scripts. (please let me know how you feel about this) -

there are ways to do this, one which I think will speak to Emma in particular, the act of a choreographed movement i.e

‘we pick up a book, stand up, move to another space in the room, place the book down and return to where we were’

[he does this action-----]

or

‘Joshua stops halfway through a sentence but continues to read the book, turning the pages’ these are two quick examples. We could make loads of small actions like this.

[a silence-----]

First, it feels important to me to underline the idea of the temporality of the space. Therefore, the work or the actions that occur within the dodecagon should exist too only within the parameters of that physical and temporal space. That time being 3 or 3.5 days. Once that space disappears, so it will the work that inhabits it.

Second, the space and the work exist only in constant transformation - it is a space that is still becoming. Perhaps here we should think about how we want to change that space or how would it be activated. We will have the collective live readings/essay that Josh proposed, but more things may happen with the rest of the objects/images in the room.

Third, company. Since the beginning we have imagined sharing an intimate space with others, as a place for thought and discussion. As Ramona said, it could be our living room or yours, a table in a cafe, the studio, a library... Wherever one would feel closer to. In this instance, we are all readers, including the audience.

Fourth, I think about the inner circle as a stage. The objects, images and text that appear all exist as props for that specific occasion. We together are building that stage and somehow the play.

That is the most exciting bit to me. Here is where all our practices can come together, as all of them identify with a strong theatrical/performative component.

All the above sounds great and has a lot of potential for interesting situations within the space, and as a space itself. Not seeing the space as a fixed image, but changeable depending on time of day, who enters, exits, and the situations we create there.

[Joshua finds Marc Augé's Non Spaces, turns to a page ... and reads an extended portion-----]

We have to now think of how we can transcend these thoughts and emotion, vibes into the space itself. And the ideas so far I agree with, activating discourses, exchanges in thoughts, practices overlapping etc., over something to drink, somewhere to sit, listen, read, take part bodily, mentally etc. In this way, audience somehow becomes 'performers' or participants and it can become a very rich space, in terms of 'non-images' (as everyone who enters bring in their own perspective and ideas) and perhaps our goal is also to evoke a certain belongingness, community feeling, with focus on questions rather than statements.

[Joshua reads an extract from his poem The Same Tendency-----]

“after forgetting, comes rituals of space. people pass in and out of the arena of actions. personalities passage by, held under light, for a moment. if they deemed it time to strip, then strip down. born as bruise. the intimacy of milk and coffee suspended for the foreseeable time. we attempted to improvise. inventing fundamental tradeoffs, before the blowback. stripped in public or stripped in private, our pains, our passions, can you take them both, for their silence, for their silence, for my conflicts. liquid assets, liquid in the stomach, heartship and health prized over purchases. bring soup. Mother. bring soup. Father. while we wait to return to any kind of promise that might come. like the promise of a re-run, or the rediscovery of classic folk songs. my

sweater harbours a field of families. we throw dirt into the empty hole. and hold hands. there are tears so salted they burn the earth. but I haven't been back since. truth is that I did not cry on that day, nor any other day. but I did squeeze your hand until it turned numb. and watched as a robin stopped flying mid-flight."

Another concern is how relevant to you or to the audience does the research I mentioned sound?

[Ramona brings two books chosen at will to the table - places them open on a page and leaves. Joshua chooses one and reads until, Steff decides to stand up.]

[Silence..... -----]

[Erola reads poem-----]

[Josh reads from Jacques Derrida's Sovereignties in Question page 79 paragraph 2]

"Someone bears witness in front of others, because he is speaking, because he is addressing others; but he takes the others as witnesses to what he first of all takes *himself* as witness to, the fact that he is sufficiently conscious, self-present, to bear witness in front of other, of what he bears witness to, *of the fact that* he bears witness, and *of that to which* he bears witness, in front of others.

Why this translation? Why this example? Because in it we encounter one of the irreducible folds of bearing witness and presence, of being present as witness....

[Emma stands up, walks across the room, and sits on the table, opens a text of her choosing and reads. When she finishes she returns to another space in the room.]

I am away from Sunday for at least 10 days so will miss the meeting at the space. Please take photos for me. I'll be thinking, reading and sending thoughts as I go.

I was thinking as an idea as well what I talked a lot with Emma about is a foldable letter or book. How as a viewer or audience you can make your own order or context. But I also think the pasting is a cost effective and actually suitable for the ideas and space.

Just wondering, what we all need to prepare in advance for this? Book buying/loaning/bringing of course. But are we using the dodecagon as a space to write the performance in too?

As in the performance on Saturday is a gathering of texts looked at and thoughts from that day, and the Sunday will change? So that we are occupying the space and making across the duration of the festival? OR is this doubling our workload and would be stressful?

[Steff stands up, leans against the wall-----]

[Silence....-----]

[Steff sits down-----]

“Music is wounded kinship’s last resort” Nathaniel Mackey

The performative body, mimicry and repetition of gesture are some of the core interests in my own practice and relate very much to my interest in dance. For me, choreography and photography are hand in hand. In my research into Aby Warburg’s image atlas, I have been considering the Nymph’s metamorphic quality, as the Nymph is both a cause and the object of transformation. For me, this symbolises how Ramona, Steff, Josh, Erola and I want to treat the image: as a fluxuous thing that is not confined to a static or flat space.

What does it mean to construct a space together? Where would you start? What does the space say about you, or what do you want to say to the space? An empty room could transform your day faster than you can imagine. A person walks across the space and the space begins. Any space can become the theatre for our actions. Details do not deter from the whole. Definitions are always on the move. We are transient in our relationships, but defined by our desire to stay. And stay. And stay.

[Ramona tidies 5 books into a pile and leaves them, Steff walks over to the them, takes the middle one out brings it to the table, letting the others fall-----]

[a silence-----]

“Since 1977, Michael had earned a large portion of his income teaching at CalArts. In a school that prided itself on experimentation, his post-studio critique class became arguably its most famous innovation.

4 The term “post-studio” was originally coined by John Baldessari, who employed it as an alternative to “conceptual” (and

who, coincidentally, first brought Michael to CalArts), but it is Asher who is indelibly associated with it. In my mind, post-studio is scarcely associated with conceptual art, but involves, rather, applying a set of non-formalist criteria to the evaluation of artworks. Beginning Fridays at 10:00 a.m., two students presented their work consecutively, with discussion continuing until mutual consensus deemed it time to stop. Ignoring all scheduling and durational considerations, the class sometimes lasted long into the night—an exhaustive and exhausting approach to critique. (His *Los Angeles Times* obituary quotes Asher from a 2006 interview: “I throw away the clock. There is never enough time to get everything said.”⁵). It demands time, the thing, but it demands a delimited time, neither an instant nor an infinite time, but a time determined by a term, in other words, a rhythm, a cadence. The thing is not *in* time; it is or it has time, or rather it demands to have, to give, or to take time—and time as rhythm, that does not befall a homogenous time but that structures it originarily.” (Thanks to Christine Würmell for pointing out this passage.) Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 41.) The end result of these sessions was invariably the establishment of, to quote Michael, “the disparity between what a person says their work is about and what is actually being observed”: where a work’s internal logic broke down; where it relegated to a representational schema what the artist wished to produce as a function; where the often vaguely framed or incoherent intentions of the artist were in themselves contradictory. If, as Lacan said, the unconscious is structured like a language, it is also a tongue that marshals speech, without our cognizance or agency, to its own inscrutable ends. The process of submitting to critique, of observing it or participating in it, felt not only revelatory of how ideology becomes physically embodied in reification, but also discomfiting, for it demonstrated without fail the inevitability with which one’s neurotic mentations penetrated the structural and conceptual schemes of one’s art practice.”

I too am seeing everything we make as site specific; responding directly to the space, the duration of the festival and the company in which we keep (ourselves). I like the idea of images changing, being swapped out, moving closer and changing direction - much like the process of making.

Beautiful images - I do like the idea of this image changing or moving places throughout the weekend. This brings in a unique experience for the viewers according to which day/what time they arrive, or how long they stay in the space.

Hello all

There is a spelling mistake in Steff's name
I am trying to get this changed
So if you could hold off from circulating
No worries if this has already been done

The lack of speech and articulation and the unsayable are very close to my practice too and would very much like for this to be incorporated/acknowledged in the performance - I can see this as my main contribution to the performance in some way. Perhaps bringing in strategies of silence, or avoiding direct questions, answerings with questions etc. In the Argonauts there is a passage discussing Anne Carson's refusal to answer personal interview questions by using empty brackets [[]] - this is playing on my mind a lot... (pg60/61)

[Steff switches the light on and off -----]

[a silence -----]

[Joshua reads from Maggie Nelson, The Argonauts page 60 paragraph 3 to page 63 paragraph 2-----]

"What exactly is lost to us when words are wasted? Can it be that words comprise one of the few economies left on earth in which plentitude –surfeit, even– comes at no cost?

Recently I received in the mail a literary magazine featured an interview with Anne Carson in which she answers certain questions–the boring ones? the too personal ones? – empty brackets [[]].

There is something to learn here; I probably would have written a dissertation on each query, prompting the reply I've heard countless times in my life: "Really, it's

terrific– it’s just the people upstairs who say we’ve got to trim it back a little.”

The sight of Carson’s brackets made me feel instantly ashamed of my compulsion to put my cards more decidedly on the table. But the more I thought about the brackets, the more they bugged me. They seemed to make a fetish of the unsaid, rather than simply letting it be contained in the sayable.

Many years ago, Carson gave a lecture at Teachers & Writers in New York City, at which she introduced (to me) the concept of leaving a space empty so that God could rush in. I knew a bit about this concept from my boyfriend at the time, who was big into bonsai. In bonsai you often plant the tree off-center in the pot to make space for the divine. But that night Carson made the concept literary. (Act so that there is no use in a centre: a piece of Steinian wisdom Carson says she tries to impart to her students.) I had never heard of Carson before that night, but the room was packed and everyone else there clearly had. She gave a real lecture, with a Xeroxed slide list of Edward Hopper paintings and everything. She made being a professional writer seem like the coolest thing you could ever be. I went home fastened to the concept of leaving the center empty for God. It was like stumbling into a tarot reading or AA meeting and hearing one thing that will keep you going, in heart or art, for years.

Sitting now at my desk in my windowless office, its back wall painted pale blue in commemoration of the sky, I stare at the brackets in the Carson interview and try to enjoy them as markers of that evening from so long ago. But some revelations do not stand.

[Joshua stops reading abruptly. Erola stands up. Ramona stands up. Emma brings a new book to the table. Joshua (dependant on where he is) collects the book and opens it at a random page, he reads for at least two minutes from this book.]

~~A student came to my office the other day and showed me an op-ed piece his mother had published in the L.A Times, in which she describes her turbulent feelings about his transgender identity.~~

~~“I want to love the man my daughter has become” the mother announces at the outset, “but floundering in the~~

~~torrent of her change and my resistance to it, I fear I'll never make it across my river of anger and sorrow."~~

Our conversations last night reminded me of the back and forth between Jesse Wine and Quinn Latimer published in Camden Arts Centre's File Notes - October 2013-June 2014 (File Note #89).

The pamphlet is made up of what I imagine to be email correspondent (although this could be letters, as the passing of time is evident) between the two in the build up to Jesse's show at Camden Arts Centre. Some interesting crossovers, including the vessel, the experience of making alongside a suggested reading lists. Some of the 'chapters' are titled Vessel 1/2/3 etc...

"How often are you offered the close intimacy of potential failure? Not failure as some built-in conceit, but the possibility that what I suggest as a point of departure will lead you nowhere that you can recognise in the first instance. Conceptual intimacy. Sometimes announced, sometimes sensed, sometimes vehicled through vectors of art, rare in any case. Sometimes confused with relationships that override the intentions of reaching the intimacy of concepts. Sometimes too latent to be drawn upon and recognised. Sometimes built into fearfulness, the fear of ridicule in the act of withdrawal, and that clumsiness of disengagement. Sometimes not even requested or highlighted as that specific contact that punctuates apparently aimless communication. So do we need a crisis to bring conceptual intimacy into play?"

How do I imagine the space?

[A silence -----]

How do I imagine the space?

A letter is a vessel. A car is a vessel. A vessel is a vessel. Also a vase. A bowl. A bust. Etc. Often ceramic. Once clay. Shaped- by hand. We hold them, they hold us. Vessels are what are left; they survive. Later they'll describe the attention that created them. That person: their privacy. It's performance. Also society: how a culture shapes and contains its citizens, its makers, their private and public desire. The form their desire takes (and what contains it). Thus

vessels - so corporeal, like the body, and body of the state, embodies, as it were - contain information about the civilizations in which they are shaped, conjured, burned, finally buried. (To be found later). Temporality then. Vessels hold time in them. Relics, letters, cars, bowls, busts, vases, essays, remnants, cultures, bodies. Shaped - by hand. What is time? How do we hold it? How do we name it? Whatever. Let's be vessels, Jesse.'

I hope this finds you well.

Following on from initial conversations with Ramona, I'm super excited about working together on the forthcoming Peckham 24. This year we shall be moving into a larger warehouse space, with different possibilities.

I'm hoping to meet with Ramona early next week to continue talking. And then it would be great to meet with those of you London based in a few weeks. We could meet in Peckham and I can show you the space.

I'm the meantime I would really appreciate it if you kept this to yourselves. This year we have expanded with a larger team working on the festival and the press people are trying to keep things quiet until the official press release goes out in a few weeks. Thanks in advance.

[Ramona reads a german extract from Jean Luc Nancy's *Corpus*-----]

Der Corpus wäre dann die Registrierung dieser langen Diskontinuität von Eingängen oder Ausgängen: Türen, die immer auf und zuschlagen.

Einbruch, Zugänge, Exzesse, Öffnungen, Poren und Pforten aller Häute, Narben, Nabel Wappen, Stücke und Felder, Körper für Körper, Ort für Ort, Eingang für Eingang für Ausgang.

Ein Körper ist schon ans sich, auch sein Verschlingen, sine Erniedrigung bis zur stinkenden Jauche oder bis zur Lähmung. Die Existenz enthält nicht nur die Ausscheidung (zyklisches Element):

sondern ein Körper wird Raum, ein Körper vertreibt sich, auf identische Weise. Er entschreibt sich als Körper.

[Steff moves to sit next to Erola-----]

[a silence -----]

[Joshua reads from Primo Levi, *If This is A Man*, page 191 through to the end of the chapter page 193]

“In the Lager it is useless to think, because events happen for the most part in an unforeseeable manner; and it is harmful, because it keeps alive a sensitivity which is a source of pain, and which some providential natural law dulls when suffering passes a certain limit.

Like joy, fear and pain itself, even expectancy can be tiring. Having reached 25 January, with all relations broken already for eight days with that ferocious world that still remained a world, most of us were too exhausted even to wait.

In the evening, around the stove, Charles, Arthur and I felt ourselves become men once again. We could speak of everything. I grew enthusiastic at Arthur’s account of how one passed the Sunday at Provencheres in the Vosges, and Charles almost cried when I told him the story of the armistice in Italy, of the turbid and desperate beginning of the Partisan resistance, of the man who betrayed us and our capture in the mountains.

In the darkness, behind and above us, the eight invalids did not lose a syllable, even those who did not understand French. Only Somogyi implacably confirmed his dedication to death.

26 January. We lay in a world of death and phantoms. The last trace of civilisation had vanished around and inside us. The work of bestial degradation, begun by the victorious Germans, had been carried to its conclusion by the Germans in defeat. It is man who kills, man who creates or suffers injustice; it is no longer man who, having lost all restraint, shares his bed with a corpse.

Whoever waits for his neighbour to die in order to take his piece of bread is, albeit guiltless, further from the model of thinking man than the most primitive pigmy or the most vicious sadist.

Part of our existence lies in the feelings of those near to us.

This is why the experience of someone who has lived for days during which man was merely a thing in the eyes of man is non-human. We three were for the most part immune from it, and we owe each other mutual gratitude. This is why my friendship with Charles will prove lasting.

Why do we make? I can only speak for myself here, but I use the physical making as a form of getting ideas out of my head and into the world. For progression, a release of energy. Falling into the idea of this temporary and temporal space, the work exists for this specific moment. Beyond this weekend, it translates into a relic of our performance. Speaking last night about our stars aligning with this opportunity to show and work together; the experimental nature of this collaboration has really allowed me to make a piece of work which I've been thinking about for years. A walkable print - although not groundbreaking (pardon the pun) I needed a budget, a shape and a large footfall to test this out. Conceptually I know the floor being stepped on and activated by the viewer makes sense, yet privately I'm still struggling to undo years of teachings of the preciousness of the print. The fetishisation of the print - in particular an analogue print, and the idea of the absolute and the finished...

I really like the idea of making the audience participate within the space, I still believe we can do it in a way that retains some formality. Perhaps that uses some elements of theatricality / props that would build into this atmosphere.

I too imagine a space that is intimate, warm and welcoming. However, with enough breathing space - specially in the middle of the room, not crowded with too many elements. I am fascinated about the images you've uploaded too, Ramona. Do you imagine those on the walls?

About creating a set, and in conversation with Ramona's reference of Heidi Bucher's 'Hautungen', I thought about the simplicity and effectivity of the sets of Bertolt Brecht or Beckett's plays. Or in the film 'Dogville', for example.

[Ramona reads *Hüllen, Häute und Körper* (Abstracts from Heidi Buchers documentation
Räume sind Hüllen, sind Häute in
German-----)]

Die Haut abnehmen. Von allem, fragte sie?

Ja von allem.

Den Böden, Den Wänden. Den Fenstern. Den Türen.

Den Öfen. Den Kästen. Den Nischen. Den Decken.

Nein.

Als Kind hörte ich manchmal das Wort Obermühle.

Ich begriff, dass mein Großvater und meine

Großmutter da gewohnt hatten.

Sie war eine strenge Frau. Und unnahbar. Ein Thema
gefiel mir aber an ihr.

Das mit den Fischen.

Sie sprach immer von Fischen. Fischteich.

Fischbäche. Seen mit Fischen. Und dem Meer oder

dem Fische fischen. Sie kochte meistens Fisch. Das

ganze Hause roch nach Fisch.

Lange getrocknetem und lange gewässertem. Für
das Mahl wurde sie gerühmt. Sie verlor etwas ihrer
Distanz. In diesem Moment liebte ich sie.

Die Häute sind Hüllen.

Ich war das, was mich umgeben hat. Das Abreißen
der Häuten ist ablösen von der Vergangenheit,
Konventionen und anderen Zwängen. Ich werde
umgeben von dem, was mich umgeben hat. Der
gehäutete Raum ist transparent. Die Häute sind
weich, dünn und leicht.

[Joshua stands up and returns a book from the table to the room. He sits in an empty chair if
there is one. Steff pours a glass of water. -----]

[a long silence -----]

[Joshua reads his poem Entrance exams and Sandwiches-----]

waiting for an empty space on a dirty platform. I have a
sandwich for survival. The entry level exam was the last
accomplishment, before today. Today they
make children sweat over an inch, and then
watch as they enter into a field of nothing.

The looks you gave me on Sundays. we ate gelatine sweets in secret. Prawn sandwiches in private. Nowadays what feels private? the green light switches on while my eyes are closed. Another failed coup. Marmite for breakfast. No toast today. The corner store hired singers. The community resists. the bodies that passed in cars sold at half price. The bodies that passed. But at the top of our hill all is green. 8 months of the year. Eight times a month. Habitual behaviour. the young men want to be the iconoclasts but don't know how to resist. The community resists. the child resists. The family supports.

[Emma drinks the water in the glass. -----]

[Joshua reads from Jean Luc-Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, page 8 paragraph 2-----]

“It is the horizons themselves that must be challenged. The ultimate limit of community, or the limit that is formed by community, as such traces an entirely different line.”

verbal images

textual images

read images

performed images

The dialectic of word and image seems to be a constant in the fabric of signs that a culture weaves around itself.

Conceptually I know the floor being stepped on and activated by the viewer makes sense, yet privately I'm still struggling to undo years of teachings of the preciousness of the print. The fetishisation of the print - in particular an analogue print, and the idea of the absolute and the finished...

[Steff pours another glass of water. -----]

[a silence -----]

[Joshua begins reading again-----]

On a personal level I am still a bit lost as to what exactly my intention is. I understand the premise of the space being seen as a collaborative research space, but how is this to come to be. It seems to me that whilst we are not

intending to make finished work we are intending to make work. So then I am left with the question of what is my work? Yes I am happy to bring a table. Yes I am happy to find some chairs. I still want to borrow these from the surrounding Peckham area. And yes I am very interested in building a library. But there remains the question, and perhaps the reason I have a struggle is that I don't or haven't made a fixed image or work for some time - this is of course a personal endeavour and one that is complex. So then there is a necessity for me to find some form of documentation, or description as to how I went about getting these objects, why they are in the space and their story. - this is where I see the tie to my work as a whole, as so much of what I am attempting to do and play with relates to the notion and idea of a kind of Proustian significance to objects and of course to the ready made re-invented.

THATS IT for now, sorry for my fragmented, long text, it may not make sense at times, there's a lot of perhaps and spontaneous brainstorming with no time to sum up. I will research, think and write more later.. I like the thoughts that has been activated from you so far, ramona erola josh, and think we can work with coming up with a form that can work to transcend our ideas

[Erola and Ramona attempt to sit in a chair, if there is one empty. If not they stand up and sit down, the reading continues-----]

In my recent dances I am still a participant, though hardly muscular, for I have reduced the range of my actions mainly to reading texts. Along the way I have broadened the options of the more youthful dancers not only to doing what I do—that is, reading—but also to include choices that had not occurred to me forty-five years ago.

I am talking about what performance theorists have characterized as mere “presence.” This idea has been amplified and elaborated in numerous ripostes and reactions to Michael Fried’s notorious essay against “the theatrical” in the visual arts,¹ and taken up by writers on performance art to articulate notions of performative “realness,” or, as Claire Bishop has written, “being and doing rather than representing.”²

[Steff pours glasses for water for all-----]

[a silence -----]

~~“From my perspective, however, especially as a spectator of my own work, none of these terms—presence, doing, being—as much as I deployed them in my early writing (“neutral doing”² for instance), adequately describes one of the elements I inadvertently discovered in my current project, *The Concept of Dust, or How do you look when there’s nothing left to move?*”~~

[Joshua reads from Anne Carson. *Variations on the Right to Remain Silent*, from *Float*.]

*On the other hand,
one who is afraid should not go into the wood.
nay rather,
like modern armies,
accompanied by lightly spoken phrases in Czech or German,
fearlessly,
unfortunately,
against myself,
against my own limitations and apathy,
against this very desk and chair I’m sitting in,
the charge is clear: one is condemned to life not to death.*

really interesting how the concept of the vessel is brought in by Quinn in relationship to the process of making the work - it is indeed quite relevant to all what we are working on. It makes me think the dodecagon structure becomes somehow that vessel we are both inhabiting and offering. The chairs are too the vessels of the missing characters.

And so are the glasses in the photograph, the glasses. Or the jug from your image - which could work very well in the space. The images themselves may become too the bearers of the thoughts we have been and will be talking about.

And now that leads me into a new line of thought that of the ‘*pleasure of doubt*’. (which is a notion of doubt)
Here we are, typing our ideas, our thoughts, and asking

someone to answer back. And somehow we seem to have all found our way to answer back. Yes we have direct questions, but there is also the process of indirectness, that is to say that on many occasions it is not only about asking questions but having the sense that there is something bigger surrounding us that needs answering. So then comes this pleasure in doubt. We can enter into a field of doubt and take joy in the act of hearing someone answer back. And that too is in the script. I find it hilarious, maybe others won't but its funny to me. especially as I have started using a few of Tom's correspondances, which are so direct and instructional.

How do I imagine the space?

Looking from two ends in. Walking from two ends in. Being there is in between coming and going. It is like a process. Us, as well as the viewer can be the process. Everyone has in a non hierarchical way or the chance to be part of it. Speak listen or look. That is what an experience can feel like. An experience which can be felt at any stage of the process while making, but also researching.

Interestingly photography is never in the centre of it. It's the image making or taking through language and the process of research. Not the outcome, it is the process. And if there is no end and beginning just a time frame. I am curious where it will start and end. Not knowing is good. But also gives a feeling of loss. While I feel part of it I feel I am losing the control over my work where it starts and ends and if it is even work. Is it about looking at it? Or looking away.

[Steff finds a book, opens it and begins reading quietly -----]
[a long silence -----]

[Joshua reads a quote from Samuel Beckett's Company-----]

“Rare flickers of reasoning of no avail. Hope and despair and suchlike barely felt. How current situation arrived at unclear. No that then to

compare to this now. Only eyelids move. When from relief from darker and inner dark they close and open respectively. Other small local movements eventually within moderation not to be despaired of. But no improvement by means of such achieved so far. Or on a higher plane by such addition to company as a movement of sustained sorrow or desire or remorse or curiosity or anger and so on. Or by some successful act of intellection as were he to think to himself referring to himself, Since he cannot think he will give up trying. Is there anything to add to his esquisse? His unnamability. Even M must go. So W reminds himself of his creature as so far created. W? But W too is creature. Figment.”

I was thinking also about where the images go.
About selling off the tiles over the course of the festival.
A small gesture, like £5-£20 a tile.
Not for the ££ but so they go on to have a life outside of the show.
They are site specific so perhaps should not be shown again.
Also as an alternative to Photo London Art Fair
A relic from the performance
Charging £ so that they have some form of value,
and aren't just taken during the private view, as they
are a small run in relation to how many visitors there
are likely to be.
Let me know your thoughts...

Actually scratch this - I imagine the prints to be too
damaged to feel okay about selling them...

[Steff moves from one place to another in the room -----]
[a silence -----]

Now then there is my actual doubts. First i have no clue how
long to make this text, and fear that I may end up over
writing. There is also the fact that somethings I am including
I become attached to and really want to read. This is already
creating a sense of loss for me.

‘The vessel’ is not big enough to contain the weight of all our
material.

One thing that we have also not spoken about that has
become apparent to me, is this precise sentiment of weight. I

am not sure if it was with you all that we spoke about the notion of the meridian, which is the line that passes through the centre of the earth effectively. In Celan's work there is this idea that he is attempting to reach the meridian. What this means is he is attempting to excavate the world, its history and emotions, to write his poems. He gave a speech called the meridian on the award of a prize in Germany. Which is also a strange twist of history since he was Jewish, in exile, with parents who died at the hands of Germans, in Auschwitz, and then writes in German and wins a prize for German language writing, even though he wasn't even German, but Romanian. And this whole sentence explains exactly the sense of the meridian, and then the weight. By weight what I mean is that by offering up all the sources, all the knowledge, emotional, historical, political and social we know, we create a sense of weight and weightlessness.

I see Erola's photograph as something weightless, yet the reality is that it could potentially be the heaviest thing in the room. Why is it weightless to me, because of the absence, because of the flatness of its landscape. But of course these two components are in fact the very essence of its weight. And this essence or play of weight and weightlessness is present everywhere. Steff, your floor, it will be scattered and disconnected, it will become dirty and destroyed to some degree, it should feel weightless as something that seems to be treated as non precious, yet it is fundamental to the room, it carries us, and links us, but most of all it will potentially show how these strange, hopping, skipping, connections can be made. Meanwhile the gestures and propositions Emma wants to include seem to have a thickness that is not apparent at first. And I personally enjoy the kind of slipperiness of Emma's offering, what is there is incredibly liquid and I would praise the contrast between the concreteness of Erola's photograph with Emma's gestures. But then there is of course a connection here too, in that Erola's image has only one item that can be consumed, the wine, which is of course liquid. Now then as for Ramona's work, as ever, you attempt to take an ethereal stance. To make something amorphous come into being. But that is of one of the heaviest presentations you can offer. To say that this is something related not only to the nature of the space but the nature of the things. So I would urge us to think more and more

about how we continue to weight the space and the weight of work, as more than an object or thing, but as offerings. And whether we too are invested in this notion of the meridian. Here is a quote from the opening of Celan's speech:

"Art, you will remember, has the qualities of the marionette and the iambic pentameter. Furthermore – and this characteristic is attested in mythology, in the story of pygmalion and his creature – it is incapable of producing offspring.

In this form art constitutes the subject of a conversation which takes place in a room, and not in the Concierge, a conversation which, as we see, could be indefinitely prolonged if nothing were to intervene.

But something does intervenes.

Art reappears.

[Steff intends to pour a glass of water, if there is still water left in the jug, Ramona, Erola and Emma move to sit next to each other somewhere in the space. -----]

[A silence-----]

It is found in another work by Georg Büchner, in *Wozzek*, where it appears as one of many nameless characters, and "in the more livid light of a thunderstorm" – if I might be permitted to convey a phrase coined by Moritz Heimann in reference to *Danton's Death*. Art makes another appearance, unchanged, although the times are totally different, introduced by a baker.

Here it has no connection with a 'glowing', "surging" and "shining" creation as it did in the conversation above. This time art appears with a member of the animal kingdom and the "nothin' that this creature "has on". This time art appears in the form of a monkey. It is, however, one and the same – we are immediately able to recognize it by the "coat and trousers."

[Emma coughs, Joshua begins reading again for a long stint -----]

perhaps the liquid elements need to be in relation to be understood as liquid, and this in relation feels very important. The in relation also

suggests an in between space.. A zwischenraum, an inhale, a moment just before or just after, a pause, a pulse, a silence, an interval, a tension before release in movement. This in relation to Aby Warburg Pathosformel and his focus on the interval, in-between space of images and on the insignificant or overlooked, and the Mnemosyne atlas with its non-linear arrangement and associative technique and the inevitable nature of it never becoming complete as of his sudden death, and the black boards and photographs that were lost somewhere in Germany during the war.

On another note: I talked to my mom about the script, and we started to talk about the stage workers (as she works in the opera house) and their language, while testing things out on stage, the build up etc. Thought about this in relation to the language of preparation and rehearsal, repeated actions toward completeness and spectacle. Just a thought.

“Through that experience, which is nevertheless managed by the Other, “subject” and object” push each other away, confront each other, collapse, and start again – inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assumable, thinkable: abject.”

An action looks familiar, then it mutates into something else.

What is a space and how through its emptiness can it still exist? Idea of Friday evening. Us being there in an empty space, also in relationship to an exhibition. Talking of what can happen and how it is activated, not just us but people coming and going. Working with forms and shapes I imagine to inhabit a wall on Friday with an empty cardboard (174 x 143 cm) where I will also (maybe part of the performance) paste images, stitch them on and remove them. It will be a mix of my own images but also archive images. Similar what I have showed you

during our last meeting. I imagine also with other cardboard objects. Circles and found material, growing from the wall. An extension from the space and through its physicality it will be more an experience rather than an image. It is not about the image, through the act of pasting, the structure of the underneath material will come through. The image becomes the environment.

As for how long the script lasts. I think that it could be longer in concept than in action. That is to say that should we perform from 1:30 - 3pm, the moment the clock turns 3 it ends, wherever that may be in the script and the script remains open at that point. I would also very much like to have these scripts printed, and installed on the table (which I am yet to find, but am hopeful). This is kind of my way of nodding towards “La mesa de los ausentes”, in that before the script begins the room is absent, the script happens thereby we are present, and at the moment of 3pm we leave and the space becomes absent again, yet within this timeframe much can happen. To quote Peter Brook’s opening lines of *The Empty Space*

“I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space, whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. A stage space has two rules: (1) Anything can happen and (2) Something must happen.”

We will make the theatre happen, and we will also return the space to a form of emptiness.

Meanwhile i have found 6 of the 8 chairs.

Good job on the 6/8 chairs!

Being intimate is not just accepting the darkness of the unknown

This room could be in a house but it isn't. This room could be a library but it isn't. This room could be a lecture hall but it isn't. There is enough here to suggest, and only suggest that this could be a room, a room which at times is inhabited, and at other times is merely an invitation for inhabitation. The books are marked, so

someone has read them. Or have they been marked for my benefit. Should I read the marked lines? Do these marked lines point somewhere? Why are these chairs all different? Why is there just this one table? What are these instructions on table? If I walk across this space will I be watched? Do I make this space, do we make this space? If I engage, am I a player, or am I a viewer? Nothing is quite fixed, the floor snakes, the walls are unpainted, the photograph is elusive, the context is submerged.

[Emma interrupts with a gesture of unknown nature, Steff tries to pour a glass of water ----]

[a silence -----]

[Joshua reads from one of his poems currently untitled -----]

From inside this cocoon you were safe. From inside this cocoon you were free of responsibility. I remember the fear I felt as my exiting-entrance awaited, for the world that would have me, I was not ready. Near to its edges I flirted with its truths. Did I know my truths?

It is almost forty years ago today, but I can still recall it precisely, in every detail. Or can it be that I only think I recall it, that I'm just imagining?

I do know that it was the twenty-fifth of September 1940, in a narrow garret in Port-Vendres. I had lain down to sleep a couple of hours earlier, and a knock woke me. I saw grey morning light through the high attic window and thought, "That can only be the little girl of the house from downstairs."

The knock came again and I got up drowsily and opened the door. It wasn't the child. I rubbed my eyes – before me stood Walter Benjamin (...)

"Please forgive the intrusion – I hope this is not an inopportune time."

The world is falling to pieces, I thought, but Benjamin's courtesy is unshakeable.

Lets start with the simple things:

I name that table of the disappeared and exiled 'La mesa de los ausentes' ('The table of the absent').

Departing from this idea, I am particularly interested in two Spanish poets that share a humanist approach to speak about the changes in society. Federico García Lorca, who was killed in the beginning of the Civil War, and Antonio Machado who died in exile at the same time.

Are we in the apprehension of our home?

When they ask where I come from I always say here, but also there. Is this the condition of my own reality, or a cause of history? Home, appearing only as an image, a perception, not a place, not yet truth, just an idea –

As to be from somewhere meant to us, those who are the sons and daughters of travellers;

to be an amalgam of all the places we lived before we came here, before we were made, before we could say who we truly are.

"The body`s inside, in that case, shows up in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside. It is as if the skin, a fragile container, no longer guaranteed the integrity of one's "own and clean self" but, scraped or transparent, invisible or taut, gave way before the dejection of its contents. Urine, blood, sperm, excrement then show up in order to reassure a subject that is lacking its "own and clean self." The abjection of those flows from within suddenly become the sole "object" of sexual desire - a true "abject" where man, frightened, crosses over the horrors of maternal bowels and, in an immersion that enables him to avoid coming face to face with another, scares himself the risk or castration"

Approaching the space as a suspension
of our practice, research, bodies, thoughts
and creating an open atmosphere that
can invite others practice, research,
thoughts to merge and ex-change.

So Erola and I had a long phone chat yesterday
about the whole thing. It was productive.

[Emma claps, Ramona clicks her fingers, Erola moves from where she is to somewhere else, Steff
throws a book to the floor -----]

[a long silence -----]

I don't mind reading but I'd prefer reading
very short parts, not long sentences, and
would be even more interested in performing
the small gestures, or sounds that aren't
words, like coughing, or the sound of
clearing my throat, or a small laughter that
doesn't make sense. But are we all reading
the chosen texts from our languages
ourselves right? Sorry I'm a bit confused:)
... and not wordless anymore.

Being intimate is not just accepting
the darkness of the unknown.