

Erfahrungsbericht Recherche / Initialförderung

No ideas but the body (reflections on a process), September 2017, Berlin
von Kat Válastur

How did you experience the process and did it work out like planned before?



In the last ten years I try to develop methods for the creation of my works in order to bring the body into special conditions that can be actualized in a choreography. The condition is reflecting the way a body is exposed into a fictional force field. The way a body could encounter

certain forces is translated into a kinetic condition. So the process so far was very much about the way I created a charged space to expose the materiality of the body to this load. My process until now had to do a lot with ways of ritualizing the relation between the specialities of a space-time and bodies that would actualize these specialities into kinetic conditions. The out come of such a research would be later crafted into a choreography. This time in the studio the experience was a bit different because I enter the studio with different questions and demands. I wanted to research a new territory by bringing the field of forces inside the body, so that the body itself would become that space, in which different kind of inputs, coming from outside, would affect it and shape it. Thinking that the way the body would react towards these inputs, could create different performative conditions. The most effective input in the process was the use of language and voice. This new element that was experienced in the process became a tool for further exploration. The voice/ language signified the input and the movement was the signifier on the way its was affecting the body. Different kind of inputs would bring different kind of kinetic identities. This process led me towards a research that revealed the elusive, morphing and mutable qualities of a body and the way these qualities would relate to different identities. To find a new element in order to enrich my personal language and initiate a new circle of exploration was very much what I aimed for when I enter the studio.

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What were the most important activities and results of the process?

After a retrospective of my work at HAU Hebbel am Ufer in March-April 2017 which signified the completion of the circle "The marginal sculptures of Newtopia" I found myself in

the empty space of the studio, setting questions for a new circle of research. Parallel to the studio work I was studying two types of cultural inputs: the Haitian voodoo rituals as they are presented through the films of Maya Deren and the 1995 manga animation "Ghost in the shell". My intentions were not to use these films as references for an upcoming work. I hybridised their subjects and set anthropological questions regarding the body as carrier of cultural inputs and how this ability relates to the past the present and the future of our bodies.



The vessel and the input

The key element of the research was to see and experience the body as a container ready to be filled with substance. Similar to a vessel our bodies are filled up with inputs from the environment natural or constructed that become initiatives for different kind of becomings.

In the Voodoo rituals for example which is a cultural

event, the body needs to fall into a trance in order for a spirit to enter the body. Through that short but epic symbiosis the gods connect with the people. The embodiment of a spirit is for the tahitian people what resets their social life, it has a healing implication. Another kind of input takes place in the "Ghost in the shell" a fiction which narrates the life of a humanoid that has a human brain. The life in this artificial body is given by the spirit-memory of the human capacity. The "Ghost"-Spirit is the input of life inserted in an artificial body. The humanoid is inspirited by the human life-memory-soul. Processing the above through a dance perspective, the crucial question "what is left to be danced" that I set some years ago, gave space to a new formulation turning the question into "What kind of bodies are we?"

What is the effect of the process and its perspective?

Are you my body?

Taking inspiration from the above I started to set the questions of what constitute a body today and specially into the context of the way we relate to technology. Both cultural conditions, the past of the rituals and the future of the AI have something epic. The body carries its reality and a promise of another reality simultaneously. When I brought this condition closer to our contemporary experiences I was thinking about the way we connect with inputs such as information, advertisement, history, the internet. How do we relate to these inputs, how these inputs affect or shape who we are? Our bodies and selves? For example how do we perceive the body of an avatar in video games? Is this also our body? How is this co existence affecting us? This crucial question opens up a space for a discourse in relation to a new approach on the body and its potential narratives. I started to see the body as an open space for encounters of different kind of inputs. My process was to see these inputs through aspects of divination and freedom (becoming a god or demon) as well as problematics of manipulation and control, reaching therefore certain issues regarding

technology and future societies of control.

We are flesh and bones, with a quite old biology and survival needs but at the same time we are hyper-humans in the space of the internet and technology. The complexity of what we are and the multiple projections and abilities of this question brings me to a place of language in which conditions of fiction and reality merge with each other. In the context of performance I ask what kind of body I am and even how many bodies I perform. Elements of artificiality and physicality, fictional and real merge into a multi layered symbiosis of different

becomings. Inputs construct our selves, in a similar way our inputs make avatars feel like us humans. How do I ground these thoughts into a choreographic process is something to continue on working. What it opens up for me as an artist is to see the body today as a space of resistance and try to witness and understand its battles.

– *Which advice would you give other artists for the execution of such a process and its possibilities?*

The process in the studio in the way I experience it opens up the space for exploration and creates the condition for personal discoveries. It is a sacred momentum of personal expansion.

It is like meditation, If you are willing to embrace the 0 before the 1. For me it also works as a way to activate intuition and slowly craft it into a tool for shaping the concept of the work. It is a process of reflection and growth and it can be the place in which each artist can set the context for his/her own artistic ethics.