

WUK performing arts

four

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I believe in crossing the line.

Del LaGrace Volcano

My name is Del LaGrace Volcano. I am mostly known as a visual artist, a photographer. An intersectional intersex activist and X list 'personality'. I also give talks with a bit of spoken word thrown in, constantly populated by the norm busting images I have made, of myself and others for the past few decades.

But all my life people have told me that I am a performer. My stock response is to say that I am not a performer, but *performative*. But since being asked to write this text I am asking myself why does this minor semantic difference matter to me? Could it be that if I billed myself as a 'performer' I would be judged and found lacking? I am not an actor. I burnt that bridge decades ago in 1977 when I spat on the director at an audition for acting school at the PCPA (Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts) reciting a passage from *Antigone*.

"Happiness? What kind of happiness do you foresee for me? Paint me a picture of your happy *Antigone*. I spit on your happiness!"

The truth was that I considered everyone to be worthy of respect and attention except myself. I was surrounded by odd, creative and stunningly gorgeous people, including those I was closely related to. I felt like the ugly duckling and was literally called "Cinder-della" and "The Bad Seed". I believed it when I was told

that considering how ugly I was I had best work on developing my personality. Which I did. I regret the missing decades spent believing in my own abject monstrosity but at least my sense of self got a chance to develop outside the usual parameters allocated to those of us assigned female at birth.

“Queer bodies (are bodies) that cannot belong, to families that hate us or just make us feel wrong.”

Instead of becoming a drama student I was hired to shoot their dress rehearsals, for exhibition and publicity. After a six month darkroom slog developing thousands of 35mm negatives I became the official PCPA Theatre photographer. I discovered that I would much rather focus my lens on the performances of others than perform myself. I was also relieved to be saved from the drudgery of performing the words of someone else night after night. It was safe in my darkroom lair at the top of the theatre. I had my own private door to the night sky.

I grew up in, Santa Maria, California a small coastal town 80 miles north of Santa Barbara. It was an uncool town*, except for the theatre people and some of the teachers at the community college I studied at. My step father, Walter J Torrence, The Duke, was a true working class hero. An ironworker and impossible dreamer, amateur actor and set designer. My mother, born Della Jeannine Grace 1939, died 2007, Jeannine Della-Grace, 2007, was an actor on what I would call a socio-political-unmanagable stage. Civil Rights, Women's Rights, Farm Worker's Rights and the right to be yourself. My bio dad became a Mormon with his second wife. He is a Republican who lives in the suburbs of Tulsa, Oklahoma, with his third wife. One of the best things I can say about him is that he is very liberal for a Mormon and shockingly confessed to me that he voted for Obama the first time around. Romney and Trump were next. Need I say more?

In the house of my mother (and step-father) I grew up around people who were literally hippies and painters, sculptors, actors,

singers, activists and politicians. In the house of my father, we went to church on Sundays. You could think of it as a kind of bi-polar upbringing if you are so inclined. I think it has given me an edge.

My first memory of making a public spectacle of myself was when I was 4 years old and I was food shopping with my mother who was heavily pregnant with Pattea, my sister to be. Parked in the middle of our newly built local supermarket was a shiny new silver VW Beetle a sad looking man in a silver tuxedo stood beside it. He was holding a sign that said: MAKE ME LAUGH AND WIN THIS CAR! I read it and said, “Let's do it!”

We rushed home, put the groceries away and got out the silver spray paint, found our matching leotards and tights and sprayed them till they dripped. We rubbed our faces with silver makeup and rosy red hearts, made long antennae from aluminium foil. And then we went back to make that man laugh. Mom started by climbing on top of the VW Beetle and rubbing her belly and I got behind the steering wheel making what I thought were alien kid sounds. We stayed at it a long time but we didn't win the car but instead got the consolation prize of \$100 of groceries for making him smile.

Looking back I can see that my 21 year old mother and I were unknowingly making a feminist intervention by taking up a lot of space and doing it while she was 8 months pregnant in skin tight silver garments. In the early 60s pregnant women wore huge moo moo dresses and did all they could to hide the fact of their pregnancy. I could tell you lots of stories like this and how I started to go out on the streets by myself when I was 10 years old in a shimmering black velvet cape and watch people pass by, wondering what I was. About how once I caused a car to crash into a tree when I suddenly jumped off my street corner perch. I could tell you a lot of stories like this but as I am already over my allocated number of 'characters with spaces' I will stop here with the blasts from the past.

My performative art practice is based upon a principal of making work with people as opposed to taking from them. Our dynamics of desire are shaped by our capacity to engage in an exchange that does not submit or dominate but instead provides a steady source of energy and inspiration. The people I photograph are active agents, as opposed to objects or even subjects of any creative endeavor. When I make images with people they enter a space where it is safe for them to perform their selves, whatever that means in that moment. For example throughout the 80s and the 90s I worked with the queer dyke subcultures I inhabited and was part of creating. In resistance or reaction we gave ourselves "Permission to Play" as we enacted our fantasies for each other and my camera. LOVEBITES, 1991, GMP (my first book) was a product of those times.

By the mid 90s my work was much more literally involved with creating images of gendered performances, including my own. Female masculinity had always been something I longed to have (in my bed) but not something I thought I could be. As a performer who was required to perform I was a bit half-hearted, but as a body that was finally able to embrace the masculine sex characteristics I had been hiding-- I was and continue to be, absolutely committed. The Drag King Book, Serpent's Tail, 1999, was the result of that exploration, along with inspiration from all the amazing drag king performers and academic minds I have been privileged to work with.

Whatever device technical device I use to create these visual document and temporal interruptions of the norm is somewhat immaterial because they are all simply conduits for connection. It is through the products of these connections that they travel into the world as photographs, public interventions, films, documentaries, news items, essays, and exhibitions.

I've said it before and I'll say it again. "I believe in crossing the line. Not just once but as many times as it takes to build a bridge we can all cross together."

Del LaGrace Volcano is an American photographer and performance artist. This text was created especially for issue „four“ of the WUK performing arts brochure.

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Enter City – Walk Paradise.

Claudia Tondl

In der Stadt unterwegs zu sein bedeutet für uns im Alltag oft ein notwendiges Muss, um von einem Punkt A nach Punkt B zu kommen. Egal, ob wir diesen Weg zu Fuß, mit dem Auto, dem Fahrrad oder den öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln zurücklegen, unsere Aufmerksamkeit bekommt er kaum. Wir lenken uns ab. Und werden abgelenkt. So nehmen wir die Stadt, unsere Umwelt, andere Menschen auf unseren Wegen nur peripher wahr, hauptsächlich dann, wenn sie uns stören. Aber allein schon aufgrund aktueller (gesellschafts)politischer Entwicklungen ist es notwendig, einen Blick nach draußen zu riskieren und das Geschehen um uns wahrzunehmen. Dabei können die Stadt und ihre Bewohner_innen selbst zum Spiel- und Experimentierfeld werden, das ist der Vorteil – und der Mehrwert – ortsspezifischer Stückentwicklungen: durch eine ehrliche Auseinandersetzung und interessierte Beobachtung lassen sich viele Erzählebenen erschließen und die Grenzen zwischen Spiel und Wirklichkeit flirren, verschwimmen, lösen sich auf. Dazu braucht es auch nicht viel. Bloß ein wenig Zeit.

Setzen wir uns (gerne auch mit Bleistift) für ein paar Minuten an einen beliebigen Ort in der Stadt und beobachten die sich darbietende Szenerie aufmerksam:

Was ist geschehen? Wer ist vorbeigegangen? Wer ist stehengeblieben? War jemand besonders auffällig? Warum? Und schon stellt sich die Frage: Was ist eigentlich performativ? Was bedeutet denn Performance überhaupt? Reicht es zum Beispiel, auf meinem Weg kurz stehen zu bleiben und einen Blick in den Himmel zu werfen, um von Beobachter_innen als Performer_in wahrgenommen zu werden? Wie mache ich auf mich aufmerksam? Und: Wie gehe ich letztlich mit dieser Aufmerksamkeit um? In der Stadt finden sich Antworten allein aufgrund der je ortsspezifischen Eigenschaften und Besonderheiten eines Spots. Wie funktioniert er? Wie wird er verwendet? Nach welchen Regeln? Und welchem Rhythmus? Wie muss ich als Performer_in damit umgehen, um als Performer_in sichtbar zu werden und präsent zu sein? Die Umgebung gibt vor. Sie ist unumgängliche Dialogpartnerin im Entwicklungsprozess. Und die unmittelbaren Reaktionen der Passant_innen sind es ebenso. Auch sie sind bereits Teil des Probenprozesses. Den konventionellen Bühnenraum zu verlassen bedeutet nicht nur, den Schutzraum zu verlassen: nichts ist fix. Die Stadt wird nicht nur Spielplatz, sie spielt auch mit, ja, gibt sogar vor.

Ortsspezifisch zu arbeiten heißt, sich von der Umgebung inspirieren zu lassen, sich einzufügen und ihre Bedingungen für sich nutzbar zu machen. Und es bedeutet auch, permanent einen

schützenden Raum für sich selbst und die anderen zu behaupten. Denn auf dem gemeinsamen Weg durch die Stadt findet nicht nur eine Begegnung zwischen den Performer_innen und dem Publikum statt. Die gesamte Gruppe der Flanierenden begegnet dabei immer auch Passant_innen. Und die eine oder der andere schließt sich vielleicht sogar an und kommt ein Stück des Weges mit. Wer bin ich? Wer sind wir? Wer sind die anderen? Diese Fragen bleiben unterwegs implizit, laden aber jede_n über das gemeinsame Spazieren hinaus zur Partizipation ein. Antworten bleiben dabei bloß Vexierbilder.

Die Performer_innen des InsideOut WUK performing arts clubs haben sich auf all diese Abenteuer eingelassen: mit der Stadt und ihren Bewohner_innen in Dialog treten, Plätze und Straßen erforschen, Gegebenheiten erkunden, sich mit ihnen beschäftigen, um für sich selbst, für die Gruppe und letztlich auch das Publikum Denk- und Möglichkeitsräume zu schaffen, temporäre Orte, die für die Dauer der Performance schon allein deshalb zu kleinen Paradiesen werden. Als Inseln umgeben von Alltag, Straßenverkehr, inmitten von Stimm- und Geräuschgewirr trotzen sie unserer Hektik und unseren Gewohnheiten. Diese Momente mit und in der Gruppe zu erleben, lässt ein Miteinander spüren, das Mut macht. Bei jedem Wetter.

Die mehrfach preisgekrönte Dramatikerin **Claudia Tondl** hat den InsideOut WUK performing arts club für seinen performativen City-Walk Enter Paradise dramaturgisch begleitet. Die Wiederaufnahme dieser Eigenproduktion von WUK performing arts ist im September 2018 zu erleben.

An ironic deconstruction of exoticisms.

Elisabeth Tambwé

Identity politics in mass production society lies at the core of my visual and choreographic work. The process is a means to get into current discussions regarding national identity, citizenship and integration and to supersede the phantasm of a static identity that refuses to budge. I try to open thinking spaces for the idea of plural identities.

Ethnic and geographical classifications, ethnographical and cultural approaches – which often constrain the productions of African artists living in Europe – create ambiguous conditions of visibility and recognition. Caught between the global (globalization and its standards) and the local (narrow parochialism and the colonial heritage of a falsified vision of “tradition”), I propose an ironic deconstruction of exoticisms.

In my most recent shows, the performative modus leads the way, allowing voices, music, and the prepared environment to interact with screened videos and a planned occupation of the audience space. The audience is often invited to move or split, encouraging the spectator to requalify its role.

With pieces like “Las Meninas” (2016), “Congo Na Chanel” (2017) or through installations like “Hairy Guns” (2017), the characteristics of the “point of view” are examined with regard to the

post-colonial question. In these, I'm trying to frame a multiplicity of angles, implying different perceptions of a single reality.

Consciousness works rather like the visual field: it's not a framed picture examined from the outside by a third eye, it's approached without distance and, even if limited (we can't see what's behind us), there's no edge – limited but without frontiers. Different apparatuses for the scenography allow us to blur the maps, to reveal (retained) convention, become intimate with the ambiguities and put on stage the incoherent postures we adopt, whether willingly or not.

Elisabeth Tambwé will be a guest of WUK performing arts in September 2018, for the season start, with her lecture/performance "Focus : new perspectives."

That place of painful contradiction.

Teresa Vitucci

Who are you?

If I only had an answer to that question. Last week a friend said to me: "Do you know what? I realized that the most interesting person I've ever met is me." I was a bit startled by this statement at first, but then realized that there's something to it: the person we seem most interested in getting to know is usually ourselves, and the one we never stop trying to understand is also ourselves.

I don't have an answer to the question. That's not because I want to make this easy for myself, even if in fact I love to make things easy for myself whenever possible. I guess I could tell you that I am Teresa, I consider myself female* and also I am a performer

- this means that there is something which draws me to the stage. To that exhibitionist and confrontational place that I call performance. I write, I dance, I sing and I use humor as a means to address, confront and abstract. I look at the work I do, which combines itself with and infiltrates itself into several different performative approaches.

Where do you come from artistically?

My first experience of performing was in the frame of a Christian missionary camp for children. It was a camp where we would learn songs and dances that talked about the life of Jesus, and then perform them in different

cities on shopping streets or church steps. I wasn't really so into the content, but I was fascinated by the fact that one can actually use the medium of dance in order to convey content. Also I just loved performing. After that I went down all sorts of paths. I went to the conservatory in Vienna with the steadfast resolution to become a ballerina; I went to the Ailey school to study modern dance, to SEAD to become more contemporary. All of it was on the one hand fascinating for me and at the same time unsatisfactory. There was simply something missing. I later understood that this state of the unsatisfactory is a major drive in my artistic process. In SEAD I did my own work for the first time. I remember it very well. I had built a huge head-dress out of birch tree branches. Naked I walked in slow motion across the stage to the music of Schubert's Winterreise. Looking back now, I see that although I've changed a lot and have been influenced and infiltrated by innumerable experiences since then, there is something very core about that first solo - the work with my body as a projection sur-

face and a space for confrontation has stayed with me ever since. There is a lot of contradiction in what I do on stage. And there is a certain amount of pain that drives that contradiction. A lot of what I do is in some way or another sourced from that place of painful contradiction.

What do you do?

I spend most of my time working. I rehearse, perform, plan and reflect on pieces. One of my biggest tasks at the moment is finding time to not be working. As a choreographer and performer, as an artist I use work to reflect and investigate. Every piece of work I do, whether it's a solo or a collaboration, is an investigation into questions that just won't stop bugging me. I try to investigate what it is that the work wants to become. It's an intuitive practice of listening, rather than a mode of production.

How do you do it?

I work with different aesthetic practices. I work with my body, I work with the space I'm in, I work with my voice, with text, humor and song. I inseminate myself with a

question or idea and let that idea grow and take more space inside of me. I think of the artistic process as a kind of queer magic pregnancy, because I often have the feeling that what is growing has a life of its own. It even has its own cravings. Then suddenly out of nowhere I simply **MUST** read that book, see that film, hear that sound or experience that experience. Those cravings are expressed through me, but are not really mine. Towards mid-term of this queer artistic magic pregnancy I begin to feel the weight of that rapidly growing thing. I begin to experience pain and fear and anticipation. The closer we come to the premiere of the work or the birth of the work, the more painful it becomes. Waves of contractions (also known as **PRESSURE** and **DOUBT**) hit me and once the thing is out of me, I realize just how much it is not mine, even if it came out of me.

Why do you do it?

I strongly believe in the act of creating a space where reflection, imagination and confrontation can happen - individually and collectively.

I believe in these acts - reflection, imagination and confrontation - as powerful personal and political tools for change. For me, Performance has the potentiality to be such a space. I learn continuously through creating and experiencing performance. That's a real gift, because if there is one thing I love doing, it is learning.

Performance artist **Teresa Vitucci** will be a first-time guest of WUK performing arts in September 2018 with the Austrian premiere of her solo piece "All Eyes On".

GenderCrash.

Dutzi Ijsehower

Die Geschichte von GenderCrash begann 2010 mit Vivi und Mokka. Die beiden waren damals die Betreiberinnen des Marea Alta - Wiens einziger lesbisch-queerer Bar - und somit auch irgendwie Schutzpatroninnen der Wiener queeren Szene der 2010er Jahre. Für sie war GenderCrash die Möglichkeit, den beengten Raum des Marea Altas zu verlassen und die Community auf die große Bühne des brut im Künstlerhaus zu bringen. Sie waren die ersten in Wien, die nationale und internationale queere Kunstperformances, DJs, Musikerinnen und Drag Queens in dieser Form zusammen brachten. Raus aus dem verrauchten Keller hinein in die Mitte der Stadt.

Wir teilnehmenden Künstler_innen fühlten uns mit einem mal groß und professionell, der Raum, den wir zu füllen hatten, war eine plötzliche Selbstverständlichkeit. Alles fühlte sich anders an - und neu. Und das nicht nur auf der Bühne. Plötzlich war man auch im Publikum nicht mehr unter 100 Gleichgesinnten, sondern zusammen mit bis zu 700 Menschen. Wir hatten auf diese Party gewartet.

Moderiert wurde von Mara Gheddon (damals noch als Mara Cash) und mir (als Tori Missspelling), Visuals kamen von Neonrost und das DJ-Set von Das_Em und Miss Klang, die bis heute noch als DJ-Team bei jedem regulärem GenderCrash dabei sind.

Als allererster Act beim GenderCrash trat das Performanceduo Pornoterrorista aus Barcelona auf. Sie sorgten gleich für den ersten Eklat: Ihre 20minütige, blutige Performance mit weiblicher Masturbation gipfelte in Ejakulation ins Publikum. Für einige schwule Männer war das wohl zu viel. Man sagt, dass das auch der Grund ist, dass sich bis heute das Publikum des GenderCrash über den Lauf des Abends verändert: Am Anfang des Abends ist das Publikum weiblicher, lesbischer, mit größerem Interesse an Performance und Live-Musik und wird dann gemischt, schlussendlich später aber fast ganz abgelöst von schwulen Männern, die zur DJ-Line zum Tanzen kommen – in einem zeitlichen Squirting-Sicherheitsabstand sozusagen.

Doch nicht nur die internationalen Performer_innen wie Dorian Electra, Jay Boogie, Ste McCabe oder Alexander Geist ließen sich sehen, die Liste der österreichischen Performer_innen liest sich wie eine Geschichtsstunde der queeren Szene Wiens: Heavy Hitters wie Club Grotesque Fatal, Gin Müller, plaided, First Fatal Kiss, p.k.one, Me & Jane Doe, Crazy Bitch in a Cave, aber auch zwischenzeitlich beendete Projekte wie Club Burlesque Brutal, R:U//DEAD.SOULS., Jimmy & die Stricherjungs, Madame Kline & Sister Dicq, Geh Dames Dames, PPÖ - Perverse Partei Österreichs oder Licking Lashes fanden beim GenderCrash ihre Bühne und ihr Publikum. Von Anfang an dabei, präsentierten Pop:sch mehrmals neues Material, unter anderem die Video-Weltpremiere für „Policeman“ im März 2012.

2014 verließen Vivi und Mokka das Marea Alta und Wien, sie vererbten GenderCrash an mich und Mara Gheddon. Nachdem Mara kein Interesse hatte, weiter zu machen, fand ich in Alkis Vlassakakis und Denice Bourbon ein Team, das sich durch queeres Selbstverständnis, politische Sensibilität und Professionalität auszeichnete und auch den Mut hatte, dieses Party-Schlachtschiff zu steuern. Es wurde abspeckt und erneuert, ist aber dem damaligen Geist treu geblieben. So gab es im April 2016 nach fast drei Jahren die Neuauflage: GenderCrash Neu(n) im brut. Die internationale Zusammenarbeit wurde durch die Kooperation mit dem Berliner Yo!Sissy-Festival gestärkt. Organisator_innen

und Moderator_innen Pansy & Scout brachten zwei Mal ihre Party und ihre Headliner (HLLWD, Aérea Negrot, Fritz Helder) nach Wien. Seit 2017 ist nun WUK performing arts unser neues Zuhause und seit diesem Jahr sind wir Teil der offiziellen Pride Night der Vienna Pride.

Wichtig für uns als neues Team ist es, die Gelegenheit zur Sichtbar-Werdung weiter zu geben. Das erreichen wir vor allem durch die Programmierung: Bei den DJs ist es die Mischung aus dem klassischen Team (Das_Em und Miss Klang), neuen Talenten DJ Daaliya (FM4s Dalias Late-Night Lemonade) und Kooperationen mit anderen Partys, zum Beispiel Dacid Goblin von Femme DMC und DJ Yassi von Homoriental.

Vor allem für die Programmierung der Hauptbühne gilt für uns: Wenn man eine Bühne hat, muss man sich auch bewusst sein, wem man diese Bühne gibt und damit die Möglichkeit, zu sprechen und zu repräsentieren. Deswegen achten wir darauf, dass sich vor allem weibliche, trans* und POC Performer_innen ihren Raum nehmen können. Es geht auch im 8. Jahr von GenderCrash immer noch um Sichtbarkeit und Hörbarkeit.

Dutzi Ijsenhower ist Drag Artist, Grafiker, Schauspieler, Performer, Stand-Up Comedian und liebt Wolken.

The heart did a fart it was art.

Denice Bourbon

Making people laugh is hard. Making people laugh and think is even harder.

Still I have been hearing for years that comedy is not art.

It's not arrrrrrrrt! As if us making you laugh would mean we are not taking our work or ourselves seriously. What kind of logic is that?

As soon as entertainment and laughing is involved there is no depth, no substance, no worth. Therefore no art.

It's seen as shallow. It's frowned upon. It's considered easily digestible.

It's marked as cheap cheap cheap. Now flap your arms and say that fast!

Art makes you feel things. Regardless of whether you hate it or love it, you must feel something when exposed to it. It goes inside you. And yes.

So do we. So do our stories.

We go up on that stage and present the absurdity of life in 8 different ways each time. We take pain, frustration and terrifying cynicism and pack it into performance bubbles that we shoot into the audience, so that for once we can laugh about it all together in one room, the sound of it creating a big ball of relief, bouncing off the walls in WUK. And we need that fucking laugh to survive, because in the past week we have already

cried over breakfast 10 times, screamed in the shower 8 times and had daily fantasies about how 20 years in jail totally would be worth the combined assassination of pony boy and prince entitlement.

We are not your show monkeys. We are not your clowns. We are as much performing artists as the rest.

We paint pictures in your heads. We make you relate. We awaken ideas. We inspire. We help you remember. We twist and turn. We politicise. We use metaphors and symbols. We are smart. We bring lightness. We bring heavy guns. We are sometimes accidentally pretentious and can definitely make you cringe as much as you did that time at the Biennale. And that's ok. Not every performance is a hit show.

We will write and risk making fools of ourselves. And you will think "omg! I never thought of it that way!!" and maybe find a new strategy for how to go through life without constantly being on the edge of a nervous breakdown.

Or. We will just tell some funny stories so that you can escape reality for 90 minutes. That is totally okay and beautiful too. And yeah, it's still art.

At PCCC* (the Politically Correct Comedy Club) queer performers take to the stage and prove that you can be funny without being a hurtful asshole. Some are professional performance artists, some are standing on a stage for the first time. 2 hours per show, 4 times a year, PCCC* (together with WUK performing arts) does it's best to create a space for queer collective release of tension by means of laughing together hysterically as an act of political resistance.

PCCC* will be a guest of WUK performing arts with its Issues #7 and #8 in October and December 2018.

A NEW SENSUALISM.

Sandra Man & Moritz Macje

A new sensualism is emerging in this time of globalisation, a time when the world is recreating itself. It is hard to imagine anything more fundamental. It is not only that something is changing while everything else stays the same, rather it is a transformation of everything, including the nature of change itself. Technology is clearly no longer an instrument but a condition – it is becoming our nature. We live in a technonature on a radically changing planet. It is characterised by a technologically triggered climate change that confronts us as natural catastrophe, and a technological environment in which we are losing social bonds, while at the same time everything and everyone is connected. It has become clear that we cannot control and plan what is going on, and that in itself is integral to what is going on. We can feel and sense this new becoming. We live it. We are not detached from this extreme planetary transformation, but are in it and are part of it. The planet is not changing without us. The transformation going on cannot be looked at and studied like an object. What is changing is changing us: what we see and how we see, what we hear and how we listen, what we feel and how we feel – how the senses make sense – is transforming itself, and that is why sensing as such is becoming so surprisingly unfamiliar, new, intense, exciting, disturbing. We are being born into the environment of a transforming planet; we are exposed to the experience of it, to living in it. In our work we aim to let ourselves

be affected by the fundamental change we are going through. Our pieces work with presence and sensuality to feel, hear, see this self-transforming time and space. In doing so, some of them address technology and nature explicitly, others do not. It is not important. When technology becomes natural and nature is technologically transformed, this affects our existence and our senses – always. Not only when we use devices or talk about it. The transformation goes deeper and beyond technology's instrumental function. If a piece is about presence then it is about the elementary nature of this change.

After a long period in which both works and people feel as if they are the last of a line, burdened by a certain melancholia and the heaviness of closure, of history being over, we experience an atmosphere of something else coming into existence. Indefinite beings, ones who start living and feeling in this new world, who start to be (in) technonature. That is why mere presence becomes so important in many pieces, including ours. What matters in them is the drive to open the senses, to approach our transforming existence as sincerely as possible, even innocently. On this planet which is giving birth to itself – and so to us – we are vulnerable and fragile. We are not dominant. We are not the strongest. We have the power to kill some or even many of us and a lot of life on earth, and we do so every day. But we are not life as such. There are forces in continuous motion within and without us, and we can clearly feel this today in the change and transformation that is happening around us, between us, within us, exceeding and surpassing us. We want to open ourselves to these forces and offer a space where we can get in touch with them. This changes our relationship to those who come to experience our work.

None of our pieces is "interactive" but all of them engage with the audience and establish relationships, offer a kind of participation. The act of being present, of pure being there, happens in and as an environment. It is an environment that includes the audience, and that which appears in-between, consisting of relationships – bodies, feelings, sensations, perceptions. An envi-

ronment of affects and forces to which you are exposed and connected, open to what becomes present right here and now. In this environment, another way of being an audience is emerging. It is not about what you see – neither what nor you – but about the state a piece offers. As an audience you still have to enter that state; being a spectator or visitor here does not mean staying outside, observing. From the outside you will not see. If a piece works, it does not force you into something, it gives you space and time for being. It is an offer, not a product and not a task, and it is not always happening. The pieces we are trying to make ask for a certain way of watching and being in them. A watching that is not triggered by anything interesting on the sidelines of what is being shown, and that is not an understanding on the part of the spectator. It is rather an appearing than a showing, and rather a meditation than an understanding. A watching as a state exceeding what you see and who you are as a spectator. Neither the performers nor the audience can control it, but all of them are involved in exploring a state in which watching becomes being sensually present. Our works follow a belief in presence, in sensuality, in openness. They are not critical, not ironic, not detached, not cool; neither are they personal or emotional. They are at the same time humble and risky, because they follow a drive. It is subtle and it is strong, it is a new experience of being on this planet. It is a sensual affirmation, a yes. This yes is not ignorant of violence, of injustice, of exploitation; it is not an escape from the suffering. It is charged by and opens itself up to what is stronger than any destruction. It echoes that there is something rather than nothing. This yes sounds like it is coming from somewhere else. It is the call of an adventure.

Sandra Man und Moritz Macje combine approaches from visual and performing arts, crossing the borders between exhibition and stage. Their newest production "Choros" will be shown at WUK performing arts in October 2018.

REAL FICTION.

Yosi Wanunu/toxic dreams

Those of you who are familiar with the work of toxic dreams know that we work in cycles. Our new one is titled "Real Fiction." The Bruno Kreisky Lookalike is the main production of the cycle.

One of the first things rejected by the theatrical avant-garde as being part of the oppressive nature of literary or bourgeois realism was dialogue. The side effect was, of course, the demise of the classical story structure. This rejection began in the 60s, and it is true of much of performance art today. The general attitude, not just toward dialogue, but language in general, is exemplified in the early extremism of Roland Barthes' inaugural lecture at the College de France: "But language - the performance of a language system - is neither reactionary nor progressive; it is quite simply fascist; for fascism does not prevent speech, it compels speech."

The distrust of the apparent authoritarian nature of language extended from Artaud to John Cage. If used, language became fragmented, tortured, and generally objectified in a way that rejected any referential sense (except perhaps as an infinite regress of self-reference).

The rejection of articulated language meant, sooner than later, the rejection of storytelling. The story on 'stage' became sporadic, aphasic, autistic, spastic.

Literary or bourgeois realism on stage was a puzzle; one that is slowly being solved. The pieces come together in the end. The picture is complete.

Theatrical avant-garde started by taking the pieces out of, to begin with, an incomplete puzzle, without any concern for the original picture. The pieces were never meant to come together. But performance art could not sustain this stance for long. What gradually developed in performance art, what made it "genre" instead of an ongoing conceptual investigation, to cite Josette Feral, is its culmination as monologue. It seems that now there is almost no performance art that is not essentially monologue. It is stand-up comedy and, usually autobiographical, postmodernized storytelling.

The truth is 'storytelling' never left the stage. But techniques like plot development, storyline, emotional arc, well-made text with beginning-middle-end, were replaced by associative editing, cutting up of various texts, quoting, redistributing, and recontextualizing of accumulated texts. This is texture rather than text; theatre "pieces" rather than play/story. A dramaturgy of the dispersed text.

Today, fragmented speech is a novelty item of avant-garde, used mainly in modern music/opera performances. It seems that the rejection of language/story ran its course and the purpose it served is no longer a necessity of avant-garde strategies. Like abstract painting or conceptual art, fragmented storytelling became just one more strategy in the arsenal of performance art.

So, are we back to stories? Can we use the performance art strategies in the service of a more coherent "play"?

Naomi Klein, one of the most political and prolific writers of recent years, employs the strategy of storytelling as part of her more academic/journalistic research. In order to back up her political stance she tells stories about local communities, personal incidents, anecdotes about people who actually experience the ecological or economical crisis she is writing about. The reality she presents is complex, fragmented, hard to grasp. But the stories are clear; they have a cause and effect, they demonstrate the arc of suffering of real people.

The question that we put forward is simple: is it not time to use stories again in order to achieve a political narrative that we seem to have lost?

In his book "Why Conservatives Tell Stories and Liberals Don't", Davis Ricci describes a gap when it comes to storytelling. Unlike conservatives, Ricci writes, liberals don't tell stories, in the sense of together offering the public a broad vision or overarching narrative. Some liberals may tell small tales (say, anecdotes) but those don't add up to a large and shared narrative. Liberals, according to Ricci, promote wide-ranging discussions of an endless variety of social, political, economic and environmental problems but do not propose solutions that can be linked to a shared story line.

Isn't this what has happened to performance art? We promote wide-ranging discussions of an endless variety of social, political, economic and environmental problems in our shows but we have lost the narrative and the audience. We keep preaching to the converted.

The main aim of our new cycle "Real Fiction" is to examine these questions. Can we bring stories back into fragmented performance art structures? Can we tell 'straight stories'? Can we not see narrative theatre and the theatrical avant-garde as polar but dialectically operating forces within the big picture of political change?

The final ultimate irony is that anyone committed to political change has to believe in truth (as Vaclav Havel put it, to "live in truth"), no matter how much he or she takes on board the relativity of language and the concept of truth as merely an effect of power. To what extent is theatre itself ontologically caught in this very paradox? How is truth arrived at by illusion/constructed stories? How do we, as Polonius proposed, "by indirections find directions out?" What is the story we need to tell?

The **toxic dreams** lable was founded in Vienna in 1997 by Israeli director **Yossi Wanunu** and producer **Kornelia Kilga**. The group has developed over sixty productions since then. Toxic dreams elaborates aesthetically and formally very varied formats in collaborative procedures within the framework of multi-year work cycles. Their current cycle is titled "Real Fiction". They will be appearing in November as a guest of WUK performing arts with the first part of the cycle, "The Bruno Kreisky Lookalike."

A certain degree of naivety.

Ewa Bańkowska

Who are you?

My name is Ewa Bańkowska. I am a performer and author.

Where do you come from artistically?

I studied international relations and choreography. Since my early years I have been involved in theatre as well as other forms of artistic expression. At a certain point I focused on contemporary dance and choreography.

What do you do?

My work sits somewhere between the practices of performance and theatre, all rooted in choreographic strategies and perception. Recently, I have been creating solo text-based performances. In English and German.

How do you do it?

At the moment my primary means of artistic expression is the spoken word. At the same time, I am not ignoring the presence of my body.

While concentrating on a concrete theme, I try to sustain a certain degree of naivety and distance towards my work. I do not always succeed....

How do you work?

In case of "Piccole Conversazioni" the material comes out of observation, memory of personal experience, simulating the rhythm of conversation, its topics and the ways people talk. It is not documentary or mocking. Sometimes it is exaggerative or extracts the essential

quality of conversing. In most cases words are interchangeable, because the core lies not in the meaning, but in what is being avoided. It is like navigating through the sociolinguistic labyrinth with the sensation that the conversation pre-existed.

Why are you doing it?

I try to turn to areas that seem actual, where we might find a key to understanding how we tick. At the moment, I am interested in how we talk to each other and what we talk about. That is why I decided to create a script called "Piccole Conversazioni".

Ewa Bańkowska will premiere her new production "Piccole Conversazioni" in November 2018 in WUK performing arts.