

Tuva on the choreography research "always becoming, never arriving", presented in November 2017.

Jan 2018.

Hi Tuva.

Hello.

So, before we start I want to suggest that we start from a blank page, assuming that I wasn't present at your presentation, and that I might not be experienced in dance practices. I also want to encourage you to dare to not know and be personal, as I see you have a pattern of escaping into theory, which you actually have less experience with than actual practical experience.

Is that ok?

Yes..

So, would you like to explain to me what you were doing during your presentation?

Ehm... yes. For some reason I am finding it quite difficult to articulate what happened in a concrete way. However, I do like the challenge you're giving me. In some way you do not really know what it is you are doing until you experience the friction of your action becoming something new by it being perceived and recognized by others. At the moment of performing the performance is not mine anymore. I was going to state that as the practice I was presenting is not a performance and is something which does not need a witness, but exists mainly as a personal practice, the former statement is not true in this case. On the other hand I chose to use language in the presentation which was not there to serve me only, and something changes in nervous system, consciousness when be witnessed, no matter how much I try to avoid it through a specific score. By presenting my practice as a choreography I think I was giving myself an impossible task, and that is interesting to me. Perhaps this is a big thing that I was negotiating, how to keep the practice being mine, how to feel that my body is still mine, and perhaps that the event taking place is everyones, on mutual terms and with consent, even within an "audience-performer" setup. To develop a score within which I would not give myself, my body away in order to please the viewer – or to please the expectations on myself as a choreographer, mover, somatic practitioner and performer. Where there was no end-gaining. I have been wondering to which extent dancers and performers let go of their volition, needs or desires to please the assumed expectations of the viewer. Is it possible to have a will of ones own even when being seen? I was investigating whether I could stay in the physical material of my body, the sensation of it, and experience my body in it's intrinsic value, not as a means to an end. Whether I could avoid attempting to be recognized and understood by the viewer through normative movement language. In a utopic sense I was curious whether we all could enter a state of being unrecognizable, enter a state of a collective body as well as having autonomous bodies... Whether I could be experienced as a subject and not an object, and if it was possible to erase the power-structures in the room...

*Sorry to interrupt you, but would you first like to describe **WHAT** you were doing (you're going into tangents very quickly...)?*

Oh yes... I am avoiding to answer your question. I... I was presenting a practice of mine, which I have been practicing and developing a relationship with for the last couple of years. By studying somatic movement practices and therapies such as Alexander Technique, Skinner Releasing Technique, BMC, Feldenkrais, and closely with Eva Karczag who has a background in Alexander, BMC, SRT, Ideokinesis and Tai Chi, as well as improvising with some pioneering female improvisers in the NY downtown scene - I have merged ideas and language from the practices into

my own scores to desexualize, degender and subjectify the body. I was reluctant to present something I had already developed for this course, that felt like cheating, so I wanted to do something new but still acknowledging something I am passionate about. I'm not sure how daring I was in the end... I realized on the way that to expose the most basic part of my practice, the fundamentals of it, simply, and how I relate to it philosophically, spiritually, politically would be completely new to me. Before I always felt the need to expand or transform my practice beyond what I know, listening to what kind of work the community and society seemed to need at that moment in time, when making performance work. The practice seems personal and that is also why I have never felt the right to present it in a simple concrete form in a performance or choreography format before.

Why?

I have had questions around power and what a spectator/witness would get out of watching me having an experience or enter a specific state. I have felt that it is self-masturbatory and patriarchal. If I do not have a clear intention around what I want the audience to experience I do not have the right to force them to watch me. To have access to a somatic practice is a privilege, for me also a necessity to survive, a tool I use to live the way I want to survive. Before this presentation I was only clear with what a "doer" of the score would experience, but I did not want to offer a "workshop" as the choreography. I try to see art as activism, and that brings a lot of pressure on the function of the work I make for the public. Which is a little funny, as I can also agree to the whole philosophical discourse around "art has no function". Then, I was thinking of the slogan "the personal is political", and realized that to dance in front of someone without dancing for them, without intending to satisfy them or myself, would have a function in itself.

To go back, what do you mean by the practice being personal?

I did not come to the practice to be a better performer or dancer. On the other hand I came to it on full-time at a point where I did not identify myself as a dancer professionally anymore, but as an actor. It became more like a daily meditation, an invisible practice. It was not meant to satisfy a desire, it wasn't meant to be viewed. It allowed me to experience the physical reality and not the concept of reality. It allowed me to change. The practice allowed me to experience myself and my environment in its intrinsic value and not as a means to an end. Practicing would bring up philosophical, spiritual and political ideas which would change the way I related to myself, the environment and other humans. It allowed me to move for pleasure and not as a means to satisfy a virtuosic desire. It allowed me to not perform identity, to not conform or constitute. To not have to be recognized through language. This was very empowering as it relates to how one is conditioned to use their body and identity to be recognized in all different kinds of relationships, and all relationships have power-orders. How we are conditioned to follow orders with our body in all areas of life. It started to deconstruct how my body obeys power. Ironically, staying with the study of the practice led me to work as a dance artist professionally again, and in moments I do think this made me lost in my purpose of the practice. The field of somatics is not a means to cultivate a specific movement quality or aesthetic that should be commodified within the field of dance performance, I think this is where somatic practices get appropriated in the wrong way and misunderstood. If the aesthetics are satisfying to watch it is an accidental outcome, but one cannot go into the practice with the intention of end-gaining. Therefore, I was curious whether I could choreograph the experience in a way which would make both audience and performer able to exist in a space which is both divided and shared, and go through an experience together as subjects. Whether I could invite the spectator to experience my intimate space, my body and their own body as matter, and perhaps create an opportunity for them to witness or/and experience ideas around bodily agency, physicalism, and sexual subjectivity that comes up in the practice.

*You have still not completed the whole description about *WHAT* happened?*

Oh yes. When I wrote the sound score it felt as the choreography, and that my practice was opposite

to choreography. Order and chaos. Oh, you weren't there.. ugh.. ok. Sorry. So. I had a text, written by me, and recorded by my voice, played out loud. The presentation started with me turning this text on. The text was partially guiding the audience through the "choreography" (suggesting ways to relate to the space, to their body, to me), partially describing some of the somatic scores I was moving from, and partially speaking about the function the practice has for me, the politics and philosophy that I find exist within it. I started improvising in my own pace, using the verbal score as a guide, but also using an internal score, starting with undoing and inhibition, then going into sensing, perceiving different internal systems and anatomical parts (bone, muscular, etc..), then going into non-linearity and "seeing without naming". To do this in 15 minutes is very different than doing it for 2-3 hours. It's a physical and mental process which takes time. The first time I presented I prepared by doing the practice before, but the second time I used the presentation as the entrance into it. It became more "performative" the second time. I pushed myself to follow the score before my body was there, and therefore I contradicted the whole practice. The more you do it the quicker the nervous system responds to the ideas and your thought connects with your body but... you cannot have an idea of where you want to go. If I have conceptualized what I want to get out of it, I am already in the desire, in the fantasy, in an expectation – and whatever I do, I won't get to that desired place. I cannot be present in my body or in the world if I have a goal to fulfill.

So verbalizing your "intention" through the text is quite contradictory?

Yes. I mean, first it might be good to mention that the ideas spoken of in the text is a byproduct of me practicing, something I realized while practicing. I didn't come to the practice by reading philosophy and thinking "now I am going to enter a state of nothingness by improvising!". I was very invested in thinking about capitalism, commodification, what is real or not real, human behavior, sexual objectification... and when improvising I felt that there might be answers... so I wanted to dig deeper... and deeper.

In this presentation I had to trust that revealing the ideas in language had a function in relation to the audience, and that I could be present enough in the anatomical score to not get caught up in "doing it successfully".

Can we copy/paste the score into this interview so that we have a reference?

Sure.

Today I am going to be simple.

And perhaps,

saying things you have already heard.

Beginning of a continuation that might arrive at something.

(SONG – Le Tigre Deceptacon – 10 sec.)

In your own time,

I suggest

that you find your way to anywhere you'd like to be
in this space.

Perhaps,

sitting,

or standing,

or lying down.

For a moment, take all the space you have.

When you're ready, you may read the note you got when entering the space (- How would you like to be intimate?)

Today, I am not going to dance --
for you.

You may witness, you may move.

We won't really come to anything. Probably, nothing might happen.

I am not going to please you, and I am not asking you to please me. Perhaps, this is a practice, in not satisfying desire.

You might want to experiment with saying yes, or saying no.

Like, for a brief moment, I encourage you to notice where your body is touching the surface of the ground.

Jaw released

Boredom.

**Perhaps, waiting.
For something to happen.**

Wait.

Giving in to your weight.

Lets play with the thought, that at this moment I breathe in, what you breathe out. You breathe in, what I breathe out.

First mouth in my navel. Second mouth in my mouth. Third mouth in my ass.

Heart and lungs on top of diaphragm. Moving up and down with the breath.

All of the cells. Breathing.

Cellular breathing.

Practicing, thought being inside the body.

I'm looking for a moment where the body has an intrinsic value. Where the body has a value in-itself. Experiencing the body in-itself. Not as a means to an end.

Not as a tool for something else to happen.

Movement for movements sake.

To me this is extremely political.

I know, somewhere in there, I already contradicted myself.

Autonomous body.

Collective body.

Anarchist body.

Eye balls falling into it's deep coned sockets. Softening. Seeing from the back of my skull. The outer falling into my vision, without naming, instead of trying to grasp for what I want with my vision; for that which is already familiar.

Shoulder sockets.

Hip sockets.

Falling into. Softening.

Bone. Marrow. Alive. Porous.

I can connect to the idea of my body, the image, form, concept, definition, projection, fiction, fantasy, artifact.

Or I can connect to the material that makes up my body, the object, inside, content, undefined, experience, matter, factual, physical by noticing, sensing, experiencing.

Perception creating movement.

Touching each vertebrae.

With my thought, with my body.

Skull.

Rib basket.

To listen to the inner volitions, the desires of the physical self, might make one say "no, I have to stop, I can't keep going". When feeling pain, or discomfort. As a dancer, as a person. Perhaps, lets play with the thought that dance training and performance conditions the dancer to submit to a higher power, with their body. Choreographer telling someone to raise their leg and they raise it, without thinking twice about whether they feel like having that sensation in their body today. A "no" often leads to punishment. To me, this sounds very similar to other kinds of power relations.

Movement becomes a metaphor for other kinds of behaviors in relation to power.

Encouraging you to experiment with me. Let's for a moment, think of your hand. What do you see in your minds eye? Let us now, instead, notice our hand. Sensing it.

The prostitute obeys the pimp
The dancer obeys the choreographer
The domestic housewife obeys the husband
The laborer obeys the boss
The girlfriend obeys the boyfriend sexually
The student obeys the teacher
The physicality obeys the idea
The person obeys societal ideals
The body obeys the mind

Perhaps, a gross generalization...

Stepping away from the preconceived definition of the body, it desexualizes the relationship to the body, and creates autonomy.

Noticing,
my sacrum
iliac crests
the sit-bones
pelvic hammock
the pubic symphysis
The uterus
ovaries
bladder.

Blood.

Flesh.

Skin.

Cellular breathing.

I also wonder what is beneath the “doing”. What will unfold when I undo. When I don't do anything. Inhibition. Inhibiting reflexes of end-gaining. “Doing” is often related to an expectation for a specific result, form or feeling. To undo, is to move without the intention to satisfy a specific desire, without the expectation of being a fantasy.

Becoming.

Always becoming, never arriving.

Perceiving without naming.

Naming myself, limits my ability to become.

Practicing, thought being inside and outside, as a bridge between the inner and the outer.

Removing myself from what I know that I see.

When I exist in the sensation of content, by not being aware of the form, I might also feel as existing in a void, in nothingness, in the unknown. To exist in the unknown one has to trust the structure of the physical self as it is falling out of control.

In the transition from nothingness to meaning we might have intimacy.

Perception creating movement. Perception creating intimacy.

Practicing, non-linearity.

Let's then propose that non-linearity is a form of anarchism.

A practice in listening to inner volition without obeying to the rules of an authority.
Autonomous, but as a response to listening to ones physical reality, inside and outside.

Having a beginning and an end, a completion through normative narrative, creates a familiar form.

Before I reach the end, redirect into new impulse.

Only moving when I want to move.

Through self-narration and language I become commodity, an object, a product. In that language, there is no room for otherness, or what you may call queerness. What happens if I am in-consumable? If what I display is intangible, in constant fluctuation?

I am not a woman.

The mere recognition of this body means something different than what I am.
The sensation of the body is different than the image it produces.

Perhaps, attempting, to erase what you see. Perhaps, to practice some sort of activism?

Listening to what is there, in itself, not what I think or wish was there.

Would you like to speak a bit about the language you are using?

Yes. I was partially curious whether I could choreograph the space with my words and voice. Whether I could choreograph intimacy, or empathy. Binaries and power-structures are ingrained in the language we use. I was also interested in whether I could erase power-structures through the language I was using. I am very interested in the idea of "invitational language", where the facilitator creates a space for the "client" to sense or move their body, only when they want to, not to please the facilitator. In this language imagery is also excluded as imagery can separate oneself from the body. Opposing, SRT is full of imagery and excludes anatomy as Joan believed that bring us to an analytical state. I did not want to demand the audience, but always give them a choice to say no and to be in power over their own bodies in the space. The language is quite manipulative, because even if the audience and the practitioner feel as if they have a choice, the voice is still in power. I am still in power, as I am the author of the experience.

Do you think you can erase power-structures through language? Isn't contradutive to use language within a practice which is about erasing the language we know and inventing a new one?

No, to your first question. I am not sure. And yes, to your second question. I am astounded that it is through language I reach a physical state where I can let go of language, the science of this is a knot I want to untie. Language can (and is always) command(ing) my body to do certain things. It can guide my mind and body into extremely specific experiences and investigations. It can separate the mind and the body, and it can guide them to integrate. The language used in somatic practices is therefore extremely specific, one has to be conscious of the affect each word has on the body and the mind. The meaning and associations of the word said, the sound of the word, the order, command or suggestion... Because our being is governed by language through the way we have been constituted and raised it follows it constantly. Every time we think the thinking changes us on a cellular level. Our thinking is developed through a pre-determined compartmentalized language, and in the west especially, we have not been taught/raised to have agency or autonomy beyond it, to have solely physical agency. We are ruled by language. So, if this language is based on the past, binary and patriarchal, my whole being is ruled by that. I have made myself up through a language which is not mine. Is it possible to experience what I was before language was written onto me? If, that would demand us experiencing ourselves not through "thinking" as in thinking with language, words, symbols and meaning – but thinking as in only sensing, experiencing, perceiving physically. Is this possible? Some say so. Of course the brain still registers the experience, but not into a compartmentalized defined articulation in the form of language. Language can be remembered, recognized. The experience in itself is something undefined and temporal. It is remembered in our body, its nervous system, fascia and flesh. But as soon as the experience has been put into language, it has become something else – a fantasy, a narrative, an artificial concept. Language separates us from "reality", and perhaps what Deleuze would call the "real", who uses the word reality to refer to the matrix of codes, symbols and language... .

I do think that being extremely conscious of in which way I decide to be ruled by language, becoming aware of what affect it has on my body and psyche, or taking advantage of language by using it consciously and selectively to create space for someone to feel autonomy and agency

beyond language – is possible and a step towards reformulating our relationship to its binaries and power-structures. Is it possible to use language to deconstruct itself? Perhaps, to deconstruct the way language travels inside of us physically and constitutes our perception of ourselves.

Probably, there are values and meanings ingrained in the language we use, which are impossible to reformulate through that same language. We perceive the world through the language which has been given to us. There is no way to suddenly perceive the world differently through a predetermined language. How can we change a language through the language we want to change? Butler (whom I don't know too much about) and many other philosophers do not believe there is a state beyond language. To exist we have to think, and as soon as we think we use language, to put it simply. That there is nothing natural, neutral, there is no essence. To perceive and constitute myself is to exist through something made up. For them, the body I display and perceive is performative, gender and sex is the same and is performative. We cannot imagine a body without prescribing artificial gender and desires onto this body, and what we write onto the body is steered by the predetermined cultural and social normative desires.

To a large degree I agree. When I communicate and think through language. But, I do also want to believe that there is a way to perceive and "think" which stays in the undefined. In the mere sensation of something. These moments might be brief... but when we then return to the world of language, we have had a new experience, an experience which might change our relationship to the word or symbol. An identity crisis. When I suddenly experience the material of my body, the cells, what my body is, without meaning prescribed to it, I have lost the prescribed definition of it. I am experiencing my body "in-itself", not "for-itself", as Sartre would put it. I also think this is the opposite to Plato's "theory of ideas". And it is not just my own body, but other people's bodies, and the objects around me, which I can experience in its intrinsic value – in its physical matter, not its name and its meaning. The only way to see the world for what it is, today, would be to enter a state where we do not know, that we cannot name.

These thoughts about language seem to relate a bit to queerness, which you mention in the score – would you like to explain why you claim that the somatic improvisational practice is a feminist, anarchist and queer practice?

Yes.. This is what I am trying to formulate by going into this research. I do not have an academic background in queer theory, but my personal interests around the body, subjectivity and coding steers me in that direction often. When I speak of feminism in relation to my practice, art and activism that I am pursuing I am speaking of an environment where there are no power-structures governing privileges, experiences, freedom of will, or identities, among other things. I am also speaking of a specific type of intimacy. An intimacy based on listening to the physical reality, purely listening to what is there, not what we think is there or what we wish to be there. Where one is able to listen to oneself at the same time as one is listening to the Other or the environment. I speak of a specific way of perceiving ourselves through our physical self reacting to our environment and vice versa.

In order to feel like one exist we put ourselves into narratives that can be recognized, both by ourselves and by others. We conform our experience into a universal normative language. Our search for our "self", is then, perhaps, a search for the part of ourselves we have lost through self-narrative. We are looking for the memory of the sensation of the experiences that has made us up, but which we do not give an account for as we weren't able to put it into language.

There is a difference in moving from sensation, from perception, and moving from an intellectual choice. The intellect is conditioned by normative values. To be queer or other, is to not fit into the codified knowledge of the world that most people are navigating themselves through. The language we use is a language built on patriarchal values, power-structures and binaries. Through the language I use, I reproduce values which does not include those, including myself, which do not feel that they can identify with this language. The word woman, for example, brings with it a series of ideals. These ideals varies from person to person, depending on which meaning they have got connected to the word through out their life. I am not the woman which my mind has

conceptualized that a woman is. In the same way, thinking of body parts, we ascribe specific values and images to these body parts. These can both be subjective, but also affected by the information given by parents, teachers, media and everyone in our environment. Today queer has of course contradictingly become an identity, with a specific behavior and looks ascribed to it. Self-narrative and language, is also a way of creating a beginning and an end, of consciously coding ourselves in relation to how we want to be perceived. Creating completion so that our sentences or movements will be understood, so that we will be recognized and feel seen. To be queer or other, to me, is to not give into this act of molding my self and my body into something artificial and put upon me in order to be understood. To not identify myself with a definition and symbols, but to listen to the actual matter of my body and act in relation to that sensation. To act in relation to my hormonal level, to my unjustified attraction towards people of any gender, to the density of my bones or the needs of my intestines and diaphragm, without conforming to specific gender ideals. To admit that my performative identity is not fixed, but fluid and in constant change depending on the context that my physical self is reacting to. Almost like a chemical process.

Then, additionally, to know what one wants, autonomous from an authoritarian voice and act on that impulse, to not obey the power with our body, is also anarchist, but speaking of this could bring us into a whole new tangent... That I am using these words in the text is more a play on language, because it is words that people are familiar with.

My theory is that when we have this feeling of existing in the void, in nothingness and of being mindless, it is the moment when our thought is integrated with our body. Not separating itself and making judgements from an outside perspective, not defining or recognizing identity. However being there as a link between the outside world and the inside world.

In the text you speak of intimacy, and are even asking the audience "how would you like to be intimate?". Would you like to explain the link between the physical practice and intimacy?

There are a lot of layers to this. The gender which is prescribed to us, the meaning of the symbols that exist through my body, will decide how my body is being interacted with. The different contexts a body is displayed in, and the power-structures it is placed within will condition the mind and the body to have certain thoughts and reflexive behaviors in relation to the body. Research shows that watching violent porn creates an expectation on pleasure and performance sexually, and that watching women being compared to objects in advertising, desensitizes the viewer when they are faced with an actual three-dimensional physical female body. Language separates us from the physical matter we are actually encountering, so that instead we are communicating with the image, the made up meaning, the concept of what we are encountering. I believe this is happening in most intimate encounters. Before even starting to be able to sense another persons body for what it is, as a subject, for it's actual desires, not the assumed desires, we first have to sense our own body as a subject, for what it is. To perceive someone else and ourselves without defining, I believe is intimacy. Being in contact with our own body, another persons body or object, not as a means to an end, but for the sensation of it, is intimacy.

A persons sexual arousal is often used a means to satisfy another's. Touching another persons body is often a means to have sex. Sex is often a means to reach a climax, a goal. With these end-gaining's in mind, we exist in the concept, expectations and desires of these acts, but not in the actual encounter or perception. We're not in reality. This can lead to violence. Or just to not being present in reality when being intimate, which is objectifying. I recently realized that what I am interested in has a term; "sexual subjectivity", the erotic body, as a subject. Also, to become aware of how we are conditioned to obey power -structures with our body. How most of our desires are constituted to please the person in power.

This seems to be another big tangent and I have a feeling we are running out of both time and words... but thank you.

Thank you.

How do you feel?

As if I could have been much more clear, and that there are lots more to say. That I missed out a lot and instead repeated myself.

Maybe this means that you have to become more specific? There are a lot of different ideas coming up...

Yes, but I do feel that they are all related. And I can't really be interested in less things than I am interested in naturally... I could definitely go into more detail and depth theoretically, by reading more. Though, there is something about the idea of applied philosophy and psychology that is attractive. The thought of just learning pre-determined concepts by reading, seems to separate my mind from my body. How can I understand the concepts fully, the world fully, in my whole "self", if I haven't experienced it in practice? Though turning to people's research whom have already made discoveries related to my search can help me put names on the things that now feels very rich but still undefined...

Ok, we really have to stop...

Ok. Well, thank you.

Thank you.

Bye.

Hejda.