

# *one*

**November – December 2017**

**performing | WUK  
arts**

It gives us great pleasure to be able to publish  
the following message of welcome from New York  
for the opening of WUK performing arts:

***Performance deals  
with the present —  
and the present is  
the only reality we  
actually have.***

**Marina Abramović**



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# *In the hands of artists.*

This brochure, which will appear quarterly in future, is here to introduce to you those artists who will be showing their work at WUK performing arts. But the idea for the brochure also sprang from a further thought: discussions about art have in recent years found themselves increasingly locked into academic discourse, to the point where it seems almost as if artistic projects are there to serve as illustrative material for such discourse. Such a development obstructs a direct experience of the kind so essential for contemporary art forms. And increasingly the context and work developments through which artists operate are lost to the public. My intention is to put discussion of art back in the hands of the artists, for art does not illustrate current debate, it has the power to provoke it. Art can pull the rug from under reality, it can disrupt by bringing the unsayable into the world. It can imagine new things. It can distort perception and cause uncertainty. It can bring happiness. It cannot be reduced to just a single thought.

**Esther Holland-Merten**



# ***SELF-WILL. One or two reflections on my work.***

Otmar Wagner

It is rarely the case that my projects involve completed productions. Performances consist mostly of a “pause” or a state that lies within a longer process, during which the project in hand develops further, changes its form, and on occasion elaborates itself over a period of several years both in terms of content as well as formally. And it is rarely the case that this “process of process” is conceptually or programmatically intended – it is often only clear to me in hindsight. Similarly with elements and forms of expression that I discover are recurrent in my work. I have developed, primarily, two formats – or better expressed two structures for analytical disputation – which are currently working me to death. I’ve named them “Essay Performance” and “Concert Performance.”

## **Essay-Performances**

The term „Essay Performance“ refers primarily to the narrative level of each given performance and its associated material – image, video and sound – as well as to the underlying dramaturgical approach and development methods. The term is really a tool for me, one which, while it may indicate the aesthetic direction of my performances, nevertheless fails to encompass the varying theatrical and performative media that are built into the “Essay Performances”. In the “WUNDE WELT” cycle, these are the



introductory passage and the finale, in which living sculpture and body art are combined with audio drama and sound-art elements. The essayistic narrative block of the piece is interrupted by a musical interaction with the audience, combined with keyboard-driven sampled video clips.

While the essayist – as Peter Sloterdijk has it – is a navigator of unsafe waters, someone who seeks to balance sideways movements of exploration with work on an evolving thesis, in my own case I am not always necessarily trying to distill a thesis from the elaboration of my work. Working myself to death on expressions such as IDENTITY / COLONIALISATION / BORDER leads rather towards essayistic digressions in which an “evolving thesis” in the background progresses to the benefit of ever-surprising chains of association – chains in which it is possible to think together and bring together things which apparently do not belong together. This does not preclude the possibility that theses emerge from the process, just as it does not preclude such theses in turn from being put into play.

In this regard I would describe my method of material research fundamentally as “baroque excessive” – more associative than analytical. From this process, to which belong also the business of being open to and using so-called “serendipity effects”<sup>1</sup>, there result connections which would be hard to construct from a purely conceptual standpoint. Analytical consolidation and concept reduction occur relatively late in the work process.

Distinguishing features of many of my Essay-Performances are abrupt dramaturgical change and the extreme collision of multiple narrative levels, collisions with and into images and actions. On the one hand I thereby put on the table a world of splinters and fragments, substantially held together by the performer as “moderator”; and on the other the associative spaces that arise from this process define themselves as an offer to the audience – they are challenged with the widest possible freedom of personal interpretation. My starting point is that the “true adventure” ultimately does not take place on the stage, but in the heads of guests, spectators, recipients.

# Professional Dilettantism

A female advisor recently counselled me to avoid the expression “professional dilettantism” when referring to my work. There were times (the 1980s) when there was much flirtation with the concept of the “dilettantish” in art. The band, the “Einstürzende Neubauten“, were fêted as “diletante geniuses“. The spelling mistake was a key part of it. My expression “professional dilettantism“ is a deliberately chosen paradox; I claim to be an expert in the in-experts.<sup>2</sup>

As I once wrote in a published work<sup>3</sup> with reference to my Concert Performances (and what goes for the Concert Performances can in general be applied to my other performances and their variety of artistic material, that is my essay-like texts, physical performances, body art, video work etc): “I sing, although I am no singer. I make music, although I am no musician. I play ‘instruments’, although as a child and teenager I was the worst tenor horn player in the village brass band, and quite possibly the worst north of the Alps. This approach is neither original, nor does it provide any justification for undertaking Concert Performances. It’s about something else, both as to the ‘how’ and the ‘what’: fundamentally for me this is not about the pre-sentation or de-monstration of artistic abilities, which bore me in all their variations as being artificial mannerisms (and I include – along with all those things normally associated with this – certain tendencies of super-shiny Minimalist and clinical Conceptual Art in the performing arts scene). THE ILLUSION OF PERFECTION IS THE BUSINESS OF THE CULTURE INDUSTRY, NOT OF ART.

For me the point is that I should work myself to death on my chosen themes, my materials, on a particular form I have chosen, and that this working oneself to death should be visible. That means making space in the performative act for open-ness, fragility, contradictions. The point here is not an aesthetic of failure, as has been propounded as anti-model in numerous artistic theories; rather it is about splitting apart the concept of ‘the aesthetic’ itself – in favour of a productive re-flection in the first instance

on the performative act, and in consequence thereof, a reflection on the performative act that is the creation of living and/or day-to-day realities. The foreground question is no longer whether I sing well or badly, rather it is what this singing-oneself-to-death triggers in those to whom it is addressed.”

## **Humour**

In secular terms my performance style draws on the perfidious wit and the unusual comedy that lie in Syncretism<sup>4</sup>, in the radical incorporation and in the exorcism of social, political and economic realities. In this way, as a performer, I am transformed into extreme-reconstructor and flow-heater of experiences of reality, a “Madness Master-Craftsman.”<sup>5</sup>

## **Art and Politics**

From the perspective of today I consider it a great triumph of the artistic debates of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that we may think of art as “purposeless,” that is that art adheres to its own “self-will.” This is not for me about a Renaissance of “art for art’s sake.” Rather it is about taking up a position that opposes a socio-political appropriation of art as, for example, “social” or “political” art. Eduardo Galeano<sup>6</sup> recounts the anecdote of how the Brazilian painter Cândido Portinari, obliged in 1947 to go into temporary exile in Uruguay by reason of his membership of the Brazilian Communist Party, replied as follows to a question about his opinion on “Socialist Realism”: “I really don’t know.” Adding: “I only know one thing: Art is Art, or it is shit.” Portinari thus insisted on a clear distinction between his political engagement and his artistic work. Perhaps in precisely that there lies a Utopia for the political in art: by escaping from the Leviathan of the machinery of political discourse. For this reason I consider art that insists on its artistic character – which does not exclude the incorporation of political subject matter – as frequently more politically charged than art which attempts to be political by being “political art.”

My scepticism today about “activist Art“ is stirred by the fact that it pushes an opinion or a conviction (often propped up by words) into the world – into the conflict of opinions, a true conflict, that takes place not in the first instance in art, but rather primarily in the so-called “social media.” To the point where activist art now strikes me as the extension – into an analogue reality – of this battle of opinions, and its underlying marketplace of attention-seeking.<sup>7</sup>

I am trying to travel a different path in my artistic work. Currently I am more interested in the uncertain processes of opinion formation than in the aggressive expression of prefab opinions.

- 1 Serendipity effect means the chance observation of something not originally sought, that reveals itself as a new and surprising discovery. [Editor's note]
- 2 According to (German) Wikipedia, the Dilettante "practises something for its own sake, that is out of interest, pleasure or passion and thus is to be distinguished from the professional. This does not prevent him from achieving complete knowledge or proficiency." That sounds quite good.
- 3 Matzke, Annemarie/Weiler, Christel/Wortelkamp, Isa (publisher): *Das Buch von der Angewandten Theaterwissenschaft*. Berlin/Köln: Alexander Verlag, 2012.
- 4 Syncretism is the synthesis of religious ideas or philosophies into a new system or world view. [Editor's note]
- 5 A reference to the 1955 film documentary by Jean Rouch: "Les Maîtres Fous" in which Hauka priests re-enacted British colonisation while in a trance state.
- 6 Eduardo Galeano was an uruguayan journalist, essayist and writer. [Editor's note]
- 7 For instance if the „Zentrum für politische Schönheit“ practises an "aggressive humanism" (in the words of the head of the collective, Philipp Ruch) with its "flyer distribution event" "Death to the Dictator" in the Gezi Park in Istanbul in July this year, thus bringing the Collective's convictions to the fore, it meets its strategic or "aesthetically formal" mirror-image or equivalent in the actions of "Defend Europe" (and their ship the C-Star), part of the European Identitarian movement, who thereby represent a – naturally unspoken – "aggressive anti-humanism."

**Otmar Wagner** is a performance artist, actor and director. Most recently his work has been on show at the Steirischer Herbst in Graz, and in the Tanzquartier and the Fluc in Vienna. He will be a guest of WUK performing arts in November.

# *Mit sämtlichen Mitteln, die mir zur Verfügung stehen.*

Ryan Mitchell

## *Wer bist du?*

Mein Name ist Derrick Ryan Claude Mitchell, ich bin der Leiter von Saint Genet und war offiziell Ko-Leiter von Implied Violence. Ich bin ein Monomane. Ich betreibe gewerblichen Fischfang in Alaska. Ich tue Dinge, die oft menschenfeindlich sind. Ich halte Schicksalsprobleme für interessanter als Fragen des Zufalls.

## *Woher kommst du?*

Ich komme aus einer sterbenden Stadt, deren Hauptwirtschaftszweig eine im Verfall befindliche Glücksspielindustrie ist, und arbeite auf einem Boot, wo die Leute ohne erkennbaren Grund grausam zueinander sind. Ich habe erst mit über 20 ein Theaterstück

gelesen und ein Museum besucht. Ich ziehe es vor, meine Phantasie einzusetzen, um der unbeugsamen Wut und der unergründbaren Trauerhaltung zu begegnen, die Leute umgibt, die aus solchen Orten kommen und an ihnen arbeiten.

## *Was tust du?*

Ich erarbeite eine Lieder-Suite und eine Bilderserie, die vier performative, installative und symphonische Groß-Events verkörpern, die im Lauf von drei Jahren stattgefunden haben. Diese Lieder und Bilder sind in einer Zeit des Umbruchs, der Angst und der glühenden Begeisterung von Leuten geschaffen worden, die die persönlichen, ökonomischen und gesellschaftlichen

Konsequenzen ihrer Tätigkeiten nicht begriffen und nicht begreifen konnten.

***Wie tust du es?***

Mit sämtlichen Mitteln, die mir zur Verfügung stehen.

***Wie arbeitest du?***

Das ist nicht nur ein Prozess, der an die faktische Geschichte von Events und Performances erinnert, sondern auch die Geister unserer gemeinsamen emotionalen Vergangenheit über die Endgültigkeit von etwas gebieten lässt, das nie endgültig sein kann. Ich habe viel Zeit alleine verbracht, eine Menge persönlicher Gefallen eingefordert und wider besseren Wissens gearbeitet, wenn ich mich hätte ausruhen sollen.

***Warum tust du es?***

“Deine ganze Stärke, deine ganze Kraft, deine ganze Liebe. Alles, was du hast. Und zwar jetzt!”  
Rocky IV

**Ryan Mitchell** ist Performer und künstlerischer Leiter der Gruppe Saint Genet, die mit ihren Arbeiten in den USA zu erleben waren und zuletzt beim donaufestival Krems, bei den Wiener Festwochen und beim Holland Festival. Im November sind sie zu Gast im WUK performing arts.

***Es wurde übereingekommen:***

Über den Göttern steht das Schicksal.

***Und deshalb sagen wir:***

Dass Schicksalsprobleme immer noch betörender sind als Zufallsprobleme, denn innerhalb dessen, was das Schicksal umfasst, bedarf es der Einsicht, wie man den eigenen Willen zurückerwirbt. Hier sind wir also, unsere Partei (wir selbst), im Angesicht der Wüste, wo man Besitz und Vergangenheit aufgegeben hat und auch den Gesellschaftsvertrag, nichts außer verschwindenden Reifenspuren, dem Geist eines Tanzes, und dem drohenden Anfang des Kannibalismus. Das ist der Ort, an dem die Götter uns höchstwahrscheinlich im Stich lassen werden; wo alles so getan wird wie immer, immer weiter getan werden wird, ohne jegliches Versprechen, dass irgendwas einen Sinn ergibt, wissend, dass wir nicht wissen, nichts wissen können, nur wissend: bei unserem Tun geht es darum, wer es tut.

***Und deshalb stellen wir fest:***

Dass dieselbe Seele nicht zwei Herren dienen kann.

***Und wir haben beschlossen:***

Das, wonach wir streben müssen, danach streben wir unnachgiebig; zu jeder Zeit. Auf Bildern beharrend, die zu Obsessionen werden, auf Bestimmung, die sich in Schweigen hüllt.

***Es wurde gesagt:***

Dass jedes Geschenk ein Opfer beinhaltet.

***Und deshalb sagen wir:***

Dass unserer ein exemplarischer Fall von unnachlässiger Liebe sein wird, der einen psychischen Raum mitten im Herz der Gleichgültigkeit öffnet. Wo jede unserer Handlungen erträumt worden ist, um, wenn nicht den Tod, dann zumindest das Abstumpfen außerhalb des Existenz-Ringes zu halten, der unserer Phantasie von Langlebigkeit innewohnt, der wir alle erliegen. Das kann nie geschehen, tut es aber ständig. Hierin liegt Wahnsinn. Außergewöhnliche Dinge passieren nur noch selten.

Wir bringen Körper zurück in Seelen.

*(Kollektives Abkommen 2016)*





# *We come from speech acts.*

Jörg Albrecht and Gerhild Steinbuch

## *Who are you?*

We are both writers and – first and foremost – we “are” when we write. And when we read what we have written or feed it in some other way into a space. In the form of a costumed slide show for instance. Or perhaps a concert of text. A radio play that is also a drinking game. In our younger days, nothing was sufficiently “undramatic” for us. These days, though, we’ve arrived at a state of “Mellow Drama”.

## *Where do you come from?*

We come from speech acts and are spoken. We studied all manner of things (law, history, theatre studies, literature, dramatic writing, dramaturgy, among others). And we have

studied even more (Masters in gender studies, in broken relationships, in demagogy, in the sublime). Somewhere in between we applied it all and came to the realisation: that too is a form of study.

## *What do you do?*

We come equally from past and future, and we seek the present. From time to time we reflect on its catastrophes big and small; and then we try to assemble them as meaning. Or to set them in opposition to each other in such a way as to allow the world to shine through the gaps. Sometimes (although rarely) we can ourselves be found on stage; at others we just write, hoping our texts will invoke some kind of stage for the bodies of

others. Sometimes (though practically never) we are classically inclined. Mind you! From time to time we play at Noah's ark, or Joan's one. We are both muses and museum. Do come in. But please do not handle the exhibits. Or rather: Please handle us.

### *How do you do it?*

We set out, we observe, we eavesdrop, take notes, reflect, set out once more, observe once more, eavesdrop once more, take notes once more, reflect once more, go back, write notes on top of each other, lay everything out beside each other, and assemble the result. Then we set out once more again ... etc. etc.

### *How do you work?*

We work as a collective, with ourselves, with other artists. We are dramaturg, director, translator, curator, maker and drinker of coffee, occasional writer, frequent bootlegger. We perceive, we receive, we alienate. We'll work ourselves to death on some theme, or overlay something on it, so it has to fight to get through, to make itself heard. We work simultaneously or together, but rarely side by side, and

sometimes against each other. Indeed, if conflict does not arise in the text, it must arise elsewhere.

### *Why do you do it?*

Because reality comes knocking – even if there's always someone trying to knock it back. It's a little desperate, a little confused, with its melancholy notes, its moments of black comedy – to the point where reality itself does not know what or who it is. And because that's how we are, too. Because in the end, together, out of all that despair and confusion, we'd like to bang out a profit. No, wait: a loss. Because it's not often you get the chance to bang stuff together. Especially not language. Because despite it all the urge to try comes knocking too.

**Gerhild Steinbuch** is a writer, dramaturg and teacher. **Jörg Albrecht** is a writer and a member of the theatre collective copy & Waste. They are both founding members of Nazis & Goldmund, an alliance of writers against the European Right. They are guests of WUK performing arts in November.

# *Zwischen Realität und Fiktion.*

notfoundyet

## *Wer seid Ihr?*

Wir sind ein Künstler\_innenpaar, das in Wien lebt und arbeitet. Die Inspiration für unsere Produktionen ziehen wir aus dem Leben der Gegenwart. Laia ist geboren und aufgewachsen in Barcelona, Thomas stammt aus Österreich. Wir haben uns für Wien als Standort entschieden, arbeiten aber international. Wir bewegen uns im Bereich von Performance, Choreographie und Bildender Kunst. Bei unseren Produktionen arbeiten wir mit anderen Künstler\_innen, Musiker\_innen und Performer\_innen zusammen.

## *Woher kommt ihr?*

Wir kommen beide aus mehreren unterschiedlichen Disziplinen: Laia kommt aus der

Bildenden Kunst und Architektur, Thomas hat einen Hintergrund in Vergleichender Literaturwissenschaft, Film und Performance. Während unserer Zusammenarbeit der letzten Jahre haben wir Arbeiten entwickelt, in denen sich alle Medien mischen, mit einem Schwerpunkt auf der Performance. Oft fügen wir noch weitere hinzu.

## *Was tut ihr?*

Wir haben bisher Performances, Choreographien und Installationen, aber auch Video-Arbeiten gemacht. Eigentlich ändert sich das Medium, das wir nutzen, von Projekt zu Projekt, abhängig vom Thema und den Projektbedingungen. Wir sind gerne in der Lage, auf das reagieren zu können, was

im Probenprozess entsteht, um das Projekt dann in diese Richtung weiterzuentwickeln. Das korrespondiert gut mit den verschiedenen künstlerischen Hintergründen, aus denen heraus und mit denen wir arbeiten. Unsere Bestrebungen gehen in eine performative Richtung und fragen hauptsächlich nach der inhärenten performativen Intention.

### ***Wie tut ihr es?***

Wir machen gerne Arbeiten, die die Zuschauer\_innen miteinander verbinden, sie als Teil eines Live-Events vereinen, wodurch eine temporäre Gemeinschaft entsteht. Wir arbeiten gerne mit gesellschaftlich etablierten Codes und spielen mit ihnen. Wir arbeiten gerne mit Sprache. Wir mögen, wie sie unsere Welt gestaltet, wie das Sprechen über Welt diese neu gestaltet. Wir mögen gefundene Texte, Fotos und Materialien, es interessiert uns, zeitgenössische Räume neu zu denken und unsere Zuschauer\_innen zu ermutigen, sie neu zu bewerten. Wir mögen alltägliche Bewegungen und willkürliche Gesten. Wir mögen schlechte TV-Shows und Late-Night-Entertainment und deren Moderator\_innen.

Wir arbeiten gerne zwischen Realität und Fiktion, unter der Verwendung von Ironie und Kulturkritik. Wir haben Spaß daran, bestimmte Strategien wie Wiederholung, Aneignung und Verlagerung auf unsere Arbeiten anzuwenden – mit kulturellen Codes zu arbeiten und sie im Prozess zu verändern. Wir ziehen auch aus dem Reisen Inspiration, aus der Lektüre fantastischer Autor\_innen, aus dem Kino, aus Ausstellungen und der Betrachtung von Designer\_innen und Mode, die unsere Gegenwart und unsere Lebensweise reflektieren.

### ***Wie arbeitet ihr?***

Unser Arbeitsprozess basiert auf Kollaboration, die Produktionen entstehen aus einer prozessorientierten Probenroutine heraus, die auf Recherche, Try-Outs, Texte, Objekte und Musik zurückgreift. Als Basis dient ein Konzept, das die Hauptideen umreißt und dann während der Proben einen Recherche- und Entwicklungsprozess durchläuft.

### ***Warum tut ihr es?***

Ich glaube, es ist der einzige Weg ... einfach ein Weg, besser zu leben ... durch Kunst. Also

machen wir weiter damit.  
Es geht auch darum, Dinge,  
Ideen und Themen zu untersuchen. Mit einer Gruppe von Leuten, die zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt im selben Raum sind, gemeinsam nachzudenken. Sich etwas auszumalen und zu träumen. Dinge neu zu erfinden und sie einer genauen Betrachtung zu unterziehen, um herauszufinden, wie alles miteinander verknüpft ist.

**notfoundyet** ist ein in Wien lebendes Performanceduo. Sie waren mit ihrer neuesten Arbeit "Houseparty Episode 1 & 2" zuletzt im brut Wien zu erleben und sind im November zu Gast im WUK performing arts.

# *I am the objet d'art and then again I am not.*

**Denise Kottlett**

## **Who are you?**

Denise Kottlett, (female) artist. Based in Vienna since 2006.

I am a painter and a performance artist.

Alongside that, I am involved as an organiser and event-producer in an independent queer scene.

In this field I work for myself and am focused, from the perspective of a queer femme, on queer feminist topics, discussions, issues and approaches – which influence me through their content and which affect me (limits and privileges included). Intersectionality is important for me.

I use a variety of media, contexts, and spaces to create visibility for my own and other people's performances. I perform, I moderate, I play, I promote, I organise, I work as a dj and I do make-up.

But there is much on the buffet of thoughts, idea, and plans in my head that rots while I am busy fighting with my precarious productivity – and living conditions, and with my constant multi-tasking.

I love chaos, but at some point it will swallow me up.

## **Where do you come from?**

I studied for a long time at four separate art universities, but in the end I never graduated.

My takeaways from that time: to begin with I studied at a small, informal interdisciplinary college, but then, owing to a “missing something” in terms of subject matter, I switched – and also began a search.

So I wound up in Vienna in 2016, at a time when Hans Ashley Scheirl had begun teaching a class at the academy that was also home to Katrina Daschner and Jakob Tina Knebl.

In terms of subject-matter, I wanted to know more about art criticism, forms of feminism, body politics, projections, stereotypes, the politics of public space, and the queer theory that from my perspective results from all of that.

To date my goal is to sound out and broaden performances in an interdisciplinary way – and for me the term “performance” applies to more than actual “staging”.

Artistic context for me is a constant re-visiting of personal context, because I have for a long time been using my identity and my body as material for my work.

I am the objet d’art and then again I am not. “I fake it so real I am beyond fake”.

I am interested in polytheism but I like to be on my own. Music is crucial for my work, as is history and the writing of history. Admittedly, my own artistic output suffers a great deal from multi-tasking in my daily and performing life.

## **What do you do?**

Right now, my main project is STUDIO KOTTLETT, a collaboration with okto and a platform with and created by Stefanie Sourial, das\_em, Guilherme Pires Mata, Frau Resch and myself. It is a queer show format at okto, that – alongside performance artists – delivers a programme to a live audience involving several cameras.

I first began doing performances in 2004, and over the course of years have staged these in various contexts and with various ensembles or groups.

What I really wanted to do was find a term for the many different things I do, for the different tasks, planning sessions, organizings and artistic realisations. And then I thought: I



shall found a studio, working from the idea of “the House of”... But it had to be anti-hierarchical in its style and must achieve as fair a distribution as possible, even if, or especially if, it was named after me. I have enough frustrating experiences under my belt, and I often know what is missing or what it is that performers are being denied on principle.

It should be mentioned, too, that my daily life consists of multi-tasking between doing art, organising art and presenting art, between money job 1, money job 2, earning a living and not-falling-out-of-the-system. That demands my complete attention. But the Millenials tell me: I should not worry so much.

## **How do you do it?**

In my own performances I draw on contemporary queer discourse and enjoy connecting it with historical discourse – nothing is new, after all – and with my own position in relation to it.

With that as a base, I make room for associations, emotions, my own experiences and the ambiguities that result from them.

I take pleasure in being critical and to question things, including myself.

And I would greatly enjoy changing things.

If I make mistakes in the process, I learn from them and work on them.

In the past I was very focused on “being oppositional” but that has changed recently.

Nowadays, as far as my own positioning and responsibility within the queer scene is concerned, I look at things rather from this angle:

I create and I consider myself a part of that creation from the start.

To a large extent, questions about networking, responsibilities, reallocations, the creation of platforms and the re-positioning of it all come into play here.

But I undertake all of this with a certain hopelessness, too, as I lug my heavy bags down the road to the job centre.

## How do you work?

I am familiar with the very quiet and the very loud.

The very fast and the very slow.

Begin by reading and listening. Reflect. Be absorbed by my own thoughts.

Try to think it through for myself, to relate it to myself and at the same time to change perspectives.

After that I make room for impulsive behaviour, for example for my tendency to be destructive and self-destructive, to make a scene, to press every button. In the process, however, it's important not to lose sight of the basic propositions. I try to pull everything to pieces and put it back together afterwards. That at least is my process for my own work.

If I am organising an event it's a different story, of course: one that is all about taking care of the artists, stress and organisation.

## Why do you do it?

Empowerment.

Performance means self-representation and authorship for me.

In a performance of my own making I feel autonomous and self-reliant.

It allows me to build a working environment for myself that is at least an attempt to work in an anti-hierarchical way.

Despite all the stress I find it beneficial, and it represents for me a contrast to the structured, normative working world that tells me repeatedly: "You are never good enough," – along with "Kiss up, kick down".

I perceive art at every level as one of my basic needs.

Let them eat art. Yours, Marie Antoinette.

Joke.

Art and neoliberal capitalism do not get along too well, in my opinion.

I am preoccupied with the acknowledgement of creativity; and the fact that art can deliver socially and politically relevant comment, and provoke change.

I want to act contemporarily and I want to grasp other realities of

contemporary life. And to “talk” about such contemporary realities in a creative way.

They're not handing out fame or money for such things. But I've come to terms with that, in the meantime.

All the best!

Yours, Kott

P.S.: If you really want to know, I would like to be a little baby bear in a fantasy left-wing world.

**Denise Kottlett** ist Performerin und war mit ihren Arbeiten an zahlreichen Orten in Wien zu erleben, u. a. mit Formaten wie STUDIO KOTTLETT, dem Anti-Valentines-Ball und dem Wiener CLUB BURLESQUE. Sie ist im November zu Gast im WUK performing arts.

# *Possibilities and limits of participation, about (restricted) freedom of choice.*

## **Interrobang**

### *Who are you?*

We are a performance group from Berlin, consisting of Till Müller-Klug, Nina Tecklenburg, Lajos Talamonti, and guests. We develop new performance formats to analyze contemporary sociopolitical topics and issues, for example the future of Europe, Big Data, neoliberal self-optimization or the politics of emotion. To this end, we build theatre spaces and participatory game settings that are out of the ordinary, installation-like and immersive, that can be experienced, mirrored and co-formed by the audience.

### *Where do you come from?*

Interrobang's originates from the international performance scene. We see our co-operations

with municipal and state theatres to date as a reciprocal and productive challenge to our differing working methods. Our group combines assorted areas of competence: Till Müller-Klug is a graduate of the so-called "Gießener Schule" (Andrzej Wirth), and a multiple award-winning writer of radio dramas and plays. Nina Tecklenburg is a theatre academic with a track record going back many years as a performer and co-developer, working with groups such as She She Pop, Gob Squad, and Lone Twin Theatre, among others. She is currently guest professor at the "Ernst Busch" drama school in Berlin. From 2018 she will be taking on a role as professor of Performance and Contemporary

Theatre at Bard College/Berlin. Lajos Talamonti is a former dancer turned performer, director and writer who works in collaboration with Forced Entertainment, Hans-Werner Kroesinger, Martin Clausen, Jacob Wren, Nico and the Navigators, Andreas Liebmann, and Jerome Bel, among others. Every project Interrobang undertakes involves working with varying constellations of guest artists from multiple fields. Currently these are: Kaja Jakstat and Lisa Großmann (dramaturgy), Bettina Grahs, Elisabeth Lindig (performance), Sandra Fox (stage and costume design), Georg Werner (sound art, computer programming), Friedrich Greiling (music), Dirk Lutz (light design) and Florian Fischer (video, computer programming, sound editing).

### ***What do you do?***

In our specifically developed performance formats we have dealt with topics such as the future of Europe (Pre-enacting Europe, 2014), the privatization of language (Sprachlabor Babylon, 2012), Big Data (To Like or Not To Like, 2015), the limits of freedom of choice (Callcenter Übermorgen, 2013),

neoliberal personal responsibility and self-incrimination in the 21st century (Der Prozess 2.0 – ein Schuld-labyrinth nach Kafka, 2016) or the politics of emotion (Emocracy, 2017).

We often develop installation-like walk-in spaces for our performances with participative game build-ups. The process is not one of creating abstract art spaces; rather it is the reconfiguration of known spaces, known situations, to the alien: a courtroom, a language lab, a call centre, a waiting room.

One of our newly created staging formats is called “Pre-enactment”. Unlike inherently retrospective “Re-enactment”, the aim of “Pre-enactment” is to explore exemplars of contemporary phenomena – for instance: privatization, the European crisis, populism – and to extrapolate them into the future through performance and theatre. Trends are thus highlighted, exaggerated and – together with the audience – acted out, tested and questioned in an interactive format – this is future as experience.

### ***How do you do it?***

At the heart of our work lies the audience: their decisions, their experiences. A central aspect of our pieces is a kind of dramaturgical multiple choice: plays rarely evolve in strict linear fashion; instead they are a space for branching action, manifold outcomes and unpredictable dramaturgies. The decision-maker is almost always the audience: it has the power to shape and reshape the course of the performance at certain moments. And for this reason our projects are always also about participative processes, about the possibilities and limits of participation, about (restricted) freedom of choice. The common theatre space becomes a social microcosm in which we can both mirror and distort existing social and economic structures and rules.

### ***How do you work?***

We often describe our projects as staged systems. We at Interrobang take the role of system-designers, and a huge amount of our rehearsal work consists of inventing and shaping the participative game structure. There is a highly speculative aspect to

this work: The course the performance might take needs to be anticipated and the decisions and behaviour patterns of future audiences must be played out by us, their stand-ins, in the rehearsal process.

At one level our collective testing of the resulting game structures makes apparent certain fundamental mechanisms. But the real energy and quality of the game – and thus in effect the narrative reality of the performance – are revealed only when the audience is involved. For this reason so-called try-outs with a test audience are an essential part of our rehearsal process, along with subsequent feedback sessions. Outcomes and insights from these try-outs are in turn incorporated into further design of the system.

### ***Why do you do it?***

The goal of our performances is to lay bare the frequently hidden power structures and ideologies of the contemporary world, to make them tangible and to stimulate critical debate. For 2018 we plan two bigger projects at Sophiensaele/Berlin that deal

with the superficially insignificant, hidden “technologies of government” in contemporary Western society and its lifestyle. Each project portrays a specific “soft” form of (self-) conditioning and its social effect: On the one hand the “gamification” of more and more areas of life, in our show *Brot und Spiele* (which premieres in January/February) and on the other hand a society founded on self-improvement and therapy, in *Total Therapie* (premiering in November 2018).

**Interrobang** is a performance collective based in Berlin, most recently hosted at the Sophiensaele Berlin with their production *Emocracy*. They are guests of WUK performing arts in November.

# *21st Century Men.*

## **Fearleaders Vienna**

The Fearleaders Vienna were founded in 2012 to offer support to the female players of Vienna Roller Derby in the form of half-time shows at sporting contests. It rapidly became evident that an exclusively male cheerleader group supporting a female team engaged in a very physical, tactical and aggressive full-contact sport must at the same time engage with issues surrounding existing role models and gender clichés, in particular as manifested in the world of sport. Out of our initial, very loose reflections on how to develop our own choreographic style for the entertainment of spectators at intermissions, there quickly evolved a number of very concrete approaches, of serious intent, to the creation of a cheerleading group at the intersection of classical cheerleading, floor gymnastics, 80s-style aerobics, performance, and pop culture. Since then we have developed choreographies for our two separate acts, whose fame has in the meantime spread well beyond Vienna's city limits. These acts involve diminutive spandex pants, legwarmers, headbands, and orange and turquoise braces, and are performed not only at Vienna Roller Derby home fixtures, but are also presented at international festivals and as onstage performances, as opportunity arises.

In addition to our choreographic work, we have found a further artistic route to a more specific approach to those themes already



introduced by our performances. Thus for a fifth time this year we are publishing a pin-up-calendar: the "Fearelli." After an initially rather unfocussed approach to female pin-up photography (and its postures), last year's calendar ("Working Class Heroes") moved us on from the strict corsetting of female eroticism, and committed us instead to a political topic of explosive current relevance. In the context of our thematic focus on "work," we not only dealt with compensation inequality in the job market (the "Gender Pay Gap") but also engaged with the issue of the continuing traditionally defined distinction between "male" and "female" professions. The boundaries between stereotypical female and traditional male professions were exaggerated in a sexy and self-mocking way, then wiped away and queered up by us.

Under the slogan "Dirty Deals," the calendar for the coming year allows us for the first time to dedicate ourselves to a classically male topic. To this end we are seeking out places, moments and situations where men gather alone (in silence and secrecy, and thus out of the public eye – and in the widest sense, too, out of the female eye) to make decisions with economic and social consequences – private but also of (global) political significance. Shadow businesses, Trumpism, male nepotism, lobbying, corruption, blackmail, the games of puppeteers: "Dirty Deals", in short, the full repertoire of male strategies to maintain and organize power. Strategies which prevent real equality from coming into being, and will prevent it until such time as women are granted access to those circles in which the real decisions are made.

From which arises the additional problem that in order to gain access to such decision-making positions (whether as a man or a woman), there is a requirement to fit certain well-defined behaviour patterns, to possess character qualities with male connotations. The Tough Negotiator, the Cunning Whisperer, the manipulative Puppet-Master, the relentless Stopper-at-Nothing, the reckless All-In Gambler – these are all roles which especially appeal to men, and which they have been creating

and shaping for themselves for centuries. These structures and patterns need to be dismantled, not only in order to achieve real equality, but also in the interests of social justice and co-determination in a broader sense. It is no great help if women – all kitted out with Alpha-Kevin-style competitive and patrimonial behaviour patterns – effectively submit to the male habitus in pursuit of decision-making positions; because at a certain point it is irrelevant with which gender a Dirty Dealer identifies. We need collectively to find ways to counteract the whole system, and to return decision-making sovereignty to public control and to collective debate.

Our calendar is an attempt – ironic, playful, kinky, yet also trenchant and critical – to point to these behaviour patterns and to question our own male habitus. As men of the 21st Century we refuse to be part of this system and offer ourselves as projection screens for an alternate image of masculinity. At all events, Fearelli 2018 will show how what “Dirty Deals” really look like.

**The Fearleaders Vienna** are a male cheerleading group based in Vienna. They will be the guests, with their calendar release party, of WUK performing arts in December.