

Dear reader,

We are now entering the core of my research where I will unravel the affect and potentiality of my artistic methods. You will be exposed to graphs showing collected data and you will be hearing the voices of my spectators and collaborators. I will talk about how the artistic methods affect my spectators and how their experiences inform my practice and create knowledge and potentially new artistic methods. The letter contains many threads that will not all be tied together at this point since I am still at the point of creating openings.

I have collected both qualitative and quantitative data to explore the affect of my work. I am an artist researcher, and my readings of the testimonies are subjective, based on my intuition and previous experiences especially from performance making, and from being a spectator myself. I am grateful for the research tools social sciences have created and I am now using as a part of a situated artistic research method designed to develop my artistic method. Let me first introduce to you the quantitative data I collected through the post performance questionnaires and how I interpret the subtracted data.

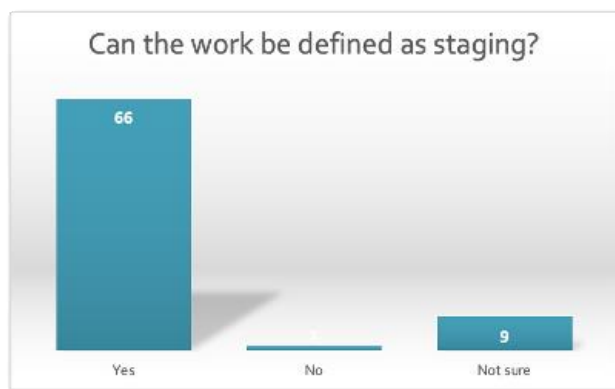
The questionnaires

I decided early to create a questionnaire to have feedback on the staging, the format. The guests of *No Show* were offered to answer a questionnaire on site straight after their experience. The guests had space to do this while the employee from the art festival was preparing the home for a new guest. Through the questionnaires I wanted to understand what the guests regarded as being the work, how the work affected them, what emotions they felt and what parts of the performances made the greatest impact. I wanted to understand if the guests regarded themselves as the subject. I wanted to learn how the guests understood their role as participants in the piece. Also, I wanted to collect some perspectives on the concept *How little is enough?* by asking if the guests regarded the piece as a performance or a theatrical experience and if not, what was missing. 76 guests filled out the questionnaire that was anonymous. (See Questionnaire in appendix). I have created

graphs from the results that I will interpret before we move to the more in-depth and qualitative perspectives of single voices. As a performing artist I thoroughly enjoy the performativity of these graphs, for me they are highly informative, but I also find them extremely playful.

The staging

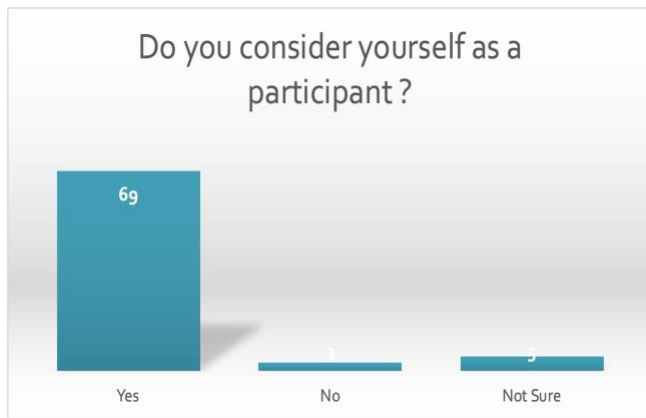
To the question if the guests regarded the work as a performance or theatre, 66 of 76 answered yes and only one did not think this was staging, 9 were not sure. For my research these findings are affirmative since the question on how much production is needed to create a stage performance is central to my research and my artistic method. Together with supporting data from the qualitative interviews where I ask specifically about the staging, this information gives me knowledge about the theatrical affect of the artistic method that I



can use in future performances. The interviews entail more details of what the guests regard as being staging or theatrical, such as a story, a new world, dramaturgical structure, arrangements, or composition. The data suggests that what was produced in *No Show* was enough to

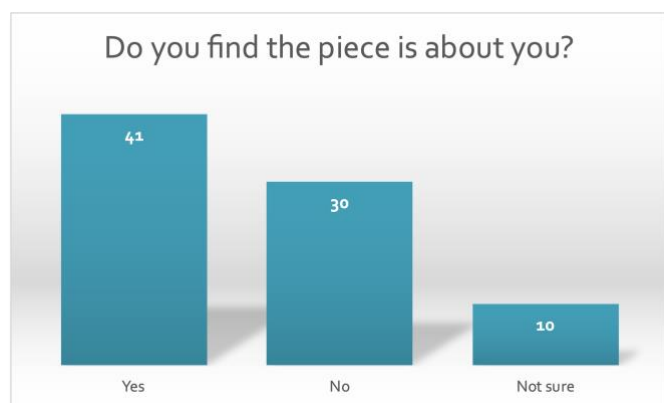
evoke a sense of performance. Here expressed with the words of one of the guests: "It was so incredibly casual and yet very impressive, just with little things, that do a lot."

The participation and the participant



There is a twofold question on participation and the role of the participant. Firstly, I asked the guests if they consider themselves to be participants were 69 out of 76 answered with a definite yes. There is no doubt that the work invites its guests to participate.

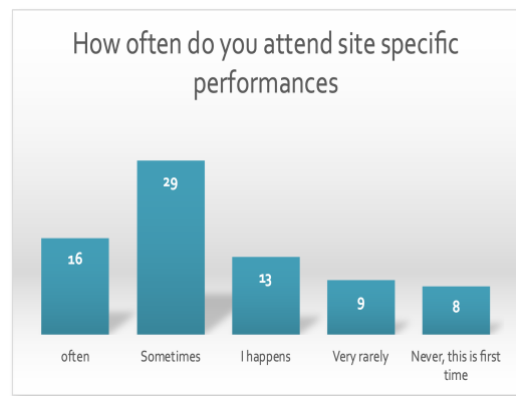
Secondly, I asked if they consider the piece to be about themselves. Here we see a distinctive divide. To this question some guests even gave two answers, both yes and no. 41 answered that the piece was about them, 30 did not think so, and 10 guests were not sure. This suggests that there is more to this point, something that cannot be expressed with a definite yes or no answer. In the interviews I asked people about how much of the piece was about the host and how much of the piece was about themselves and what they shared with the host. The answers to that question (see picture in the interview section) shows a mixed view. The answer seems to depend on how much you relate personally to the host and on what you consider as being the work. I guess that this last point, *what is the actual artwork*, will affect



how you perceive your role as participant and how relevant you regard your personal story to the artwork.

Who are the guests?

I wanted to know how familiar the guests were with participatory site-specific performances as I imagined it could affect how they navigate the work and what they consider being the work.

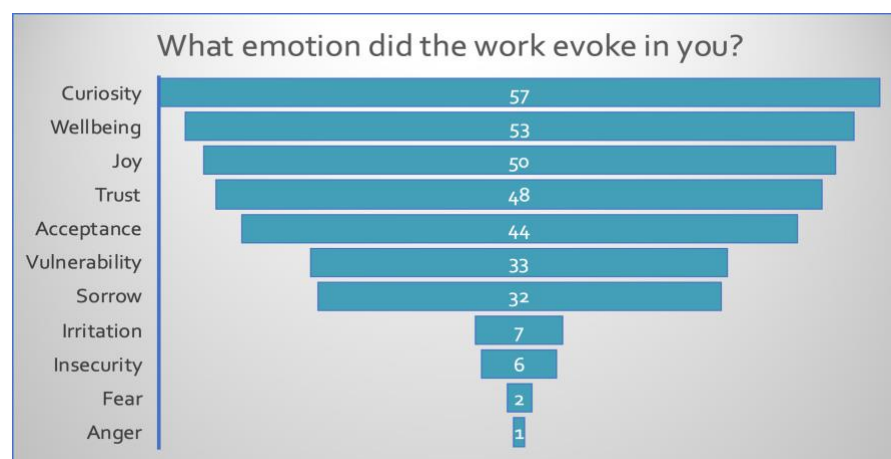


Majority of the guests were familiar with this type of performances, and I did not detect any significant differences in the answers from guests with different experiences of theatre and performance.

Emotions

One way of measuring affect is to ask about felt emotions, and this I did. I am interested in creating a positive affect, that re-enforces the guest's understanding of what they consider quality of life. Positive affect is not only created by positive emotional responses, but as I understand it, by affirming sentiments, appreciation, understanding, connection and belonging. Emotions are complex and can be double sided and can evoke memories and hidden

components. The guests had the option to mark one or more emotion from a list of 11 different emotions and they could add

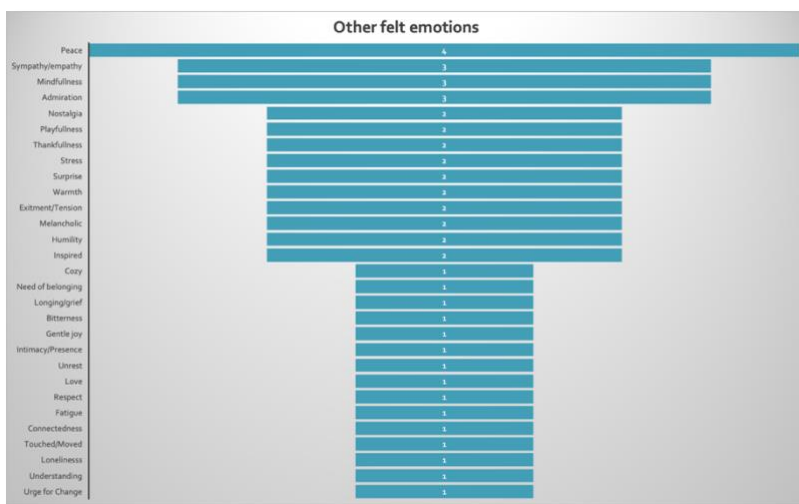


relevant emotions in an empty space. The selection of emotions is based on my special interest and does not reflect a system or a theory. I will not attempt to understand the full scope of what the answers might imply. For me as an artist, it is interesting to understand

which emotions are present in my work and try to make use of this information in my artistic methods. The interpretations are both subjective and speculative.

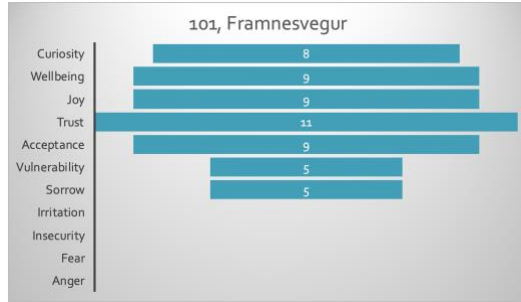
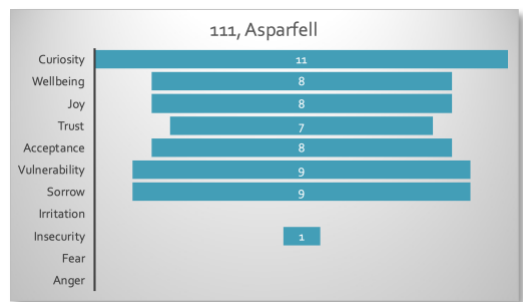
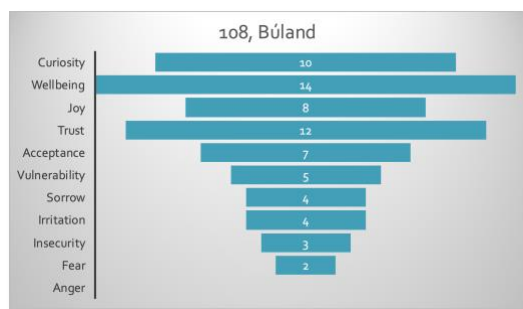
A general conclusion is that the work evoked mostly positive emotions. Curiosity, wellbeing, joy, trust, and acceptance had the highest scores of the 11 emotions presented in the questionnaire. The emotions that also scored somewhat high, although lower than the positive emotions, were sorrow and vulnerability.

Looking at the overall picture with the addition of the specific emotions that guests contributed to the list, the work seems, in general terms, to evoke emotions of wellbeing and joy.



It also seems to evoke positive emotions towards the host such as trust and curiosity, and even emotions that can belong to empathy such as sorrow, vulnerability, and acceptance. Written comments on the questionnaires suggest that the sensation of being trusted

with the home had a great impact on guests, this is also supported in the interviews. It seems like being trusted has an affirming affect that urges one to be worth the trust. Next to these affirming emotions are vulnerability and sorrow. These emotions can suggest that guests are touched beyond the surface and might imply a certain existential notion. The answers differ slightly from home to home, which might suggest that the type of home and information given evokes more or less sombre feelings since the sombre emotions appear more in the homes where the hosts share experiences of loss and struggle.



At this point I want to quote one of my interviewees, let's call her Sally, talking about the emotional affect of the piece in comparison to what she sees as a symptom of our times:

So much of arts just create any sensations [that is] why there are often so much of splatter and rape scenes and all sorts, just somehow to shock, just to create "any" emotion instead of nurturing the beautiful feelings and constructive feelings and the all-encompassing feelings and the warm feelings. (Sally)

I agree with Sally in her appreciation of these warm and encompassing feelings as a replacement for the invasive influence of violence and trauma. Looking at my data, it looks like I have succeeded to evoke these more affirmative emotions in *No Show*.

What made the most impact?

Through the questionnaires, I gathered over 80 written responses to the question 'Was there a part of the performance that had the most impact on you?' As expected, the answers varied widely, with each guest personally connecting to different aspects of the work. Many guests mentioned elements that evoked strong emotional responses, such as recognition or empathy. The most common comment was 'To be trusted with the home,' while others expressed strong emotional affects like love or sorrow, such as 'The bathroom - the thoughts about love' and 'The girl on the wall, the picture of Flateyri, the childhood.'

Additionally, numerous guests noted that having their name written on the dining table had a profound impact of acceptance and belonging, making them feel part of something bigger. One guest expressed, 'To enter the flat in the chair and to see my name on the table, it triggered a lot of emotions.' These comments serve as valuable insights for me to further develop my artistic methods, helping me better understand the impact of specific elements, situations, and arrangements.

One particularly affirming aspect was the mention of care in the work: 'The letters and the care that they presented.' This sentiment was echoed by many interviewees, who described a sense of warmth and tenderness experienced through the letters and the preparation of the home. This is something I deeply value and wish to explore further in my future works.

The questionnaire serves as a type of quality check, offering a quick indication of how the piece resonates with the guests.

The interviews

Given that my research focuses on affect and the transformative potential of my works, conducting interviews with my spectators became essential. Over time, I realized that this aspect became significant and powerful for those who participated. Through these interviews, my aim was to gain insight into the inner workings of individuals as they

experienced the work, both during and after. I was particularly interested in capturing the nuances of their personal experiences.

The 17 interviewees ranged in age from 19 to 69 and included both men and women who had volunteered by adding their names to a list after completing the questionnaire at the performance site. One individual was interviewed twice. Among the interviewees, 10 were artists or cultural workers. I selected these individuals from a long list of interested spectators, choosing 3 to 4 people from each edition of the performance, representing diverse backgrounds, genders, and ages. Some interviews were conducted immediately after the experience, while others took place later, with some up to six weeks after the performance.

The interviews were all around 30 minutes and were semi-structured. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher prepares a few open questions and lets the responses the interviewee gives inform what questions are asked next. The interviews were made in a quiet place of the interviewee's choice, in my home, their home or at a cafe or hotel lobby. I began with an open question; asking the interviewee to describe their experience in general terms. Based on their descriptions I then asked them directly about their reactions to different aspects of the piece, certain moments, or elements of my method. I then asked how likely they thought it was that the experience would affect their mindset and/or behaviour and we would discuss in more general terms about methods of theatre and performance and their general attitude towards different theatrical approaches. I asked each person what the piece was about and if they found the piece more about the host or the guest; themselves. I did not ask them if they liked the work and did not seek affirmative responses. As the author of the work conducting the interviews, I was aware of the risk of trying to influence the answers and tried my best to avoid judgement and stay with their own detailed descriptions of their experiences. Since the interviews were taken along the way while I was still making works, I had the opportunity to experiment with details in the work responding to the data I was collecting. The interviewees are all anonymous and appear in the text with pseudonyms. The interviews were conducted in Icelandic. I transcribed the interviews accurately and after several readings, I selected texts that I translated to English and analysed further. I detected

many recurrent themes that I am currently processing and will now present to you. First, I will introduce a theme that relates to the different aspects of solitude, then a theme that relates to the work being a catalyst of change. A larger theme is how the guests relate to the content, that I divide into four sub themes: the host as a role model, the guest as subject, guest identifying with the host, and abstract experience. I will present themes on sensations, care and connection and themes that relate to the subject of the work and what the guest brings to the piece.

THE GUESTS

The many sides of solitary experience

In the first interviews I conducted after the second edition of *No Show*, there were already important findings that would immediately affect how I proceeded with the work and influenced how I approached my later work *Island*, that I was creating concurrently. These first findings relate to the fact that the performance is a solitary experience and is unique to each guest. This solitary experience comes with specific aspects to it. One guest described the feeling like this:

When you are alone, you allow yourself other, stronger emotions, you allow yourself to surrender to it, you do not have exactly the same fences, the same restrictions around you. I am not talking about movements or anything like that, I am talking about emotions and what goes through you. You allow yourself to experience, exactly the same as if you are experiencing something in nature, something very beautiful in nature, then you are experiencing maybe, e.g., in this work some kind of nature too, yes this is nature. (Albert)

The experience has specific potentials as other guests also described to me: they had more influence over the situation, they could control the pace and they could choose to skip tasks and revisit scenes etc. and give themselves the permission to dwell.

It was also just privacy; you are alone with yourself, your thoughts and affects and that was also one of the things [...] that I was so grateful for, to have this privacy to allow the emotions and thoughts to go off like that.
(Gloria)

Another aspect to being alone is that you do not have another person to talk to about the experience.

"It's not often, that you're just alone, it's a completely different experience [...] I knew someone who was going two days later, well, I was pretty excited, and it was hard not to be able to talk about this. [...] I just had to figure out what I really felt without being influenced by someone else [...] so, there I had to work on this all by myself, somehow ..." (Anne)

The numerous comments I received about solitude and the insights I gained into the dynamics of sharing an experience with others prompted me to revise my dramaturgical approach for *Island*. In this work, guests enter as part of a small group, engaging in close contact and interaction with others throughout the experience.

Another important aspect of being able to share your experience has to do with dissemination of what happens and the awareness of the affect the work has on you and the potential transformation.

I'm sure this work has a much bigger impact on me right now because I've been talking to you so much about it. ...

...There is something about sharing an experience with others that makes the experience a little stronger or can do it. (Angela)

The work as a whole, stimulates me most here at this table in these afterthoughts and maybe you know, also, to say it out loud or understand what I mean. It stimulated me then and there but its like I am feeling the stimulus here and now. (Bella)

Many of my interviewees talked about the urge to discuss the experience with others, that they became more aware of the affect if they had the opportunity to discuss their experience with others. Talking about the experience made them aware of details in the work that they had not paid attention to while in it and also made them conscious about where the affect originated from. This provides me with valuable insight into how people process the work and what they perceive as impactful. For some, the questionnaire offered a chance to reflect on the experience and begin to process the affect it had on them. The recurring theme in the interviews led me to realize that for a work to truly resonate, it requires revisitation and processing through some form of communication. Another aspect of the solitude is the guest's lack of opportunity to communicate back to the host that has a voice through the letters. In the first two editions the guests did not have any opportunity to communicate with the hosts.

This is such a gift and I accept it and I can not directly thank her for it you know. I really feel that it is missing, it was so emotional. I felt like a bit rude somehow. (Bella)

The only way the guests had to show their gratitude was through the questionnaires. Many guests expressed a longing to communicate with the hosts or at least be able to do something in return for the hospitality. An element in the

first two editions was to invite the guests to write a list, a note to themselves, inside the work and take it home with them. I decided to change that to inviting the guest to write something for the host instead and leaving it behind. This I tried in two editions of the work.

I found this somehow beautiful, but I also found it incredibly difficult. But still it was good to write her a message [...] Hopefully she got something out of that. I hope so at least. (Ella)

To hear about the Word Box and to be able to contribute to that.
(Anonymous answer to *What made the most impact on you?*)

Catalyst of change

In retrospect, I think there is value in both leaving a note to the host and writing a note to yourself that you come back to after the experience. A note that you take with you makes you revisit the work and can act as an enabler for deeper affect or even drive to action.

My brother and his wife, they have been picking up their notes quite often since then and just think, hmm, "just here you see, what do you think about this, or I've been thinking about this. (Sally)

Here we could talk about how a physical object from the piece has become a catalyst for change, other objects can be less tangible but be still as effective. Sally shared with me how her family decided to go together to see *No Show*. They were 10 people that visited edition 101 City Centre, and they then organised a dinner party where they shared their experience. Later they went to see edition 101, West town.

Everyone who was at the dinner party talked about how they wanted to reorganize their home [...] everyone wanted to create more cosiness at home, everyone wanted to find more peace. I find it incredibly remarkable that you create a work so that people want to change their home, because they saw your work. (Sally)

Creating a sense of awareness or moving the spectator to action is the desired outcome. Here it seems to manifest in the way these spectators are inspired to rethink and redesign their living spaces to improve their quality of life. Since the works are performed in homes with a focus on daily rituals, everyday situations and the small details of daily life, most guests can easily reflect and relate to the content.

There was just somehow such great beauty in the little things. (Bill)

I have a hard time with everyday life somehow, I find it the hardest part of life and still it is such a big part, so, [...] I took it further with me, you know, everyday life is so crazy, especially if you are reading about someone else's everyday life, because then you can imagine and create, you can still somehow, change your own, or see your own. Often you just keep going without contemplating anything in what one is doing, one way or the other. So, I think most in this work, what I take with me [...] these little things are so very important. (Anne)

The hosts became role models or examples of how one can perform these daily rituals and the work also provides the context and puts things in perspective in relation to value systems and life situations. The values and behaviours of the hosts easily become contagious.

She was so inspiring. To just understand how she sees all the good in things and how she takes full advantage of what she has, yeah, this was just amazing, just unbelievably inspiring. (Johanna)

I was immediately inspired e.g., of one thing in this home [...it] was the dinnerware that was handmade, and handmade for this family. There was something there that I felt was so amazing. I thought, why I have not long ago started to make my own dishes for my [family]. You take the time to nurture these everyday things [...] make them precious. (Gloria)

I've been thinking for a long time about wanting to work with either elderly people or children or something, [...] be some volunteer, work with people who have a harder time living life, and this could just be something that, at least it was like something that helped me, maybe direct my thinking [...] I'm finally going to do something. (Bill)

Half a year later, this young man was indeed working with children and found it important and meaningful. Another guest described how she started playing the ukulele after writing it down when asked in the work to make a note listing things she wanted to learn and taking it with her. She expressed how the note pushed her into taking the first step.

Four ways of relating to the content

In the interviews people described how they related to and were affected by the content, the hosts, or the experience. I can divide these experiences into four categories; the host as a role model, the guest as the subject, the guest identifies with the host and abstract experience.

The host as a role model: For many guests the host became either a role model, or a relatable person that the guest could recognise themselves through:

I really connected with the fact that she's a former nurse or something, yeah, yeah, I'm there now, or something like that, we were like pals, and her values were so healthy. So just being here, creating a sanctuary for her children and grandchildren and that was enough for her, she felt like the big bedroom was too big, she needed less. If she manages to be a sanctuary, then she's satisfied, there's something like that that I found so beautiful. I [...] was a little spellbound, like, she was such a role model, a mentor, a lesson. What I needed so much. (David)

Here David both relates to the host and sees her as a mentor, a double hook that I think can amplify the affect.

The guest as subject: Many guests described how they were confronted with themselves, with their predetermined judgements, inner thoughts, values, and experiences:

I can be quite frank with the fact that I have been wondering [...], should we say that this way: I looked at my *Breiðholt prejudices* (Breiðholt is a notorious suburb of Reykjavík) through this work ... so I think that, if anything, my prejudices about Breiðholt diminished. (Michael)

It affected me (...) to sense that maybe people, people I see, just the guy who was helping, as soon as I met him again, I thought, yes, he's in a car like that, yes, I think he is of foreign origin. So, I immediately start thinking

about him, not only the first thought, but also, I expanded my ideas about people, I think, at least, first afterwards...

... more such acceptance of people. That things are, much bigger, much more complex, much bigger. I think so. It had that affect. (Albert)

What is described here is profound revelations about the other. Both Michael and Albert spoke about changing their views on people, they acknowledge how they confront their own ideas. Other guests expressed similar changes. But as Albert says, it affected him "at least first afterwards." This is a significant remark since I think that the longer the affect lasts determine the power of transformation.

The guest identifies with the host: The third category is learning something new through the story of another, like you are putting yourself in someone else's shoes, identifying with them.

When I looked out the window in the kitchen, I was supposed to notice some movement [...] it is hard to describe the feeling, but it was like looking into the future somehow [...] like me, like old looking out the window...

I experienced myself so old and it's so interesting [...] it kind of stayed with me because I'm just young, I'm just turning nineteen. I never think about when I get old [...] and also the feeling that I could possibly loose someone, my child or something like that [...] you never think about it when you're young. It's at least very rare so that, yes. Maybe this experience of being old, it's so insane, I have just never experienced this before. (Alice)

You're seeing someone's world, and this is not directly your world, but some other world you are seeing into, and it can let you feel some emotions whether it's sadness, happiness, I mostly just felt some kind of happiness...

...I went into her world but still I was not her but somehow, I ... I was not me, but I was some kind of version of me. (Bill)

Of course, [...] this was a real person who lived there, you are experiencing a certain story, it's like you are in a novel or a movie or something but it's really real. Right, it was really weird it felt like you were on a set or something, but it is not, it's just someone's reality, which was very interesting you know and also [...] it just underscores that everyone has their story. (Fanny)

Identifying with another person is the classical approach to theatre. Seeing a story unfold and imagining it was you. In this work the experience intensifies with the "reality" of the setting, like Fanny describes.

The abstract experience: The fourth category is where the experience is more abstract and has an affect like when experiencing nature.

It was simple, it was physical, and it was a description of "stairs" as a phenomenon. It was very strong somehow, and this intermediate state, liminal space to be there, out in the corridor, to be in a kind of nowhere, and this action to bend the knees, incredibly beautiful somehow, feel the weight of the body somehow and yes, it was a really cool opening somehow into the work and how you were a spectator as a body. [...] I somehow became part of the environment, somehow like that, it was just my consciousness, this witness, that you see in dreams or that is looking, looking at one's dreams, there was some kind of rupture. (Jimmy)

To walk into a piece like this is like walking up a mountain or some nature situation, a nature scene. It does not come to you unless you, unless you

surrender. You have to be here; you can not wait to be fed [...]. You must not have too many filters for the affect you are exposed to, it is completely true of being in nature, just like this, that you must come in with an open mind and in fact just accept what you think and experience [...] without filtering it too much. And that, of course, applies to everyone. Maybe this kind of performance, is maybe closer to the theatre to the point that [...] you must accept the magic, otherwise it's just a man with makeup on stage, a smoking mirror. You must go into the story and accept it [...] you must sit back in the chair in the living room up there in Asparfell and take it in, this is where it meets the experience of nature, you must come with open senses. (Michael)

I can completely see myself being affected by this experience like when I go out into nature. To see the vision directly, face to face, not on a screen but here, that too, moves me. (Eve)

For this abstract affect to function the person needs to allow the affect to take hold, like Michael describes, you need to “surrender” and “you have to accept the magic”.

The tactile, embodied, and immersive experience

These four different ways of relating to a content and being affected can co-exist in a multi layered experience. As mentioned above the affect is created through sensorial experience in combination with cognitive perception. Most of the guests that I interviewed talked about the strong impact of physical engagement, the doing, the sensing, and the entire interactive and immersive aspect of the experience.

You came closest in these homes when you touched the floor, barefoot in one of the homes, and in the wheelchair. There was some contact, there you somehow got in touch - but always in fact as an observer of another's life, the life of others. (Carl)

Now I remember all the actions somehow but like e.g., the contemplations and what was the other thing again.... (- observation) yes, exactly [...] now I do not remember what that was ...

...I find that one of the most interesting things about this work, how you as an active participant somehow feel more impact than if you were just seeing this [...] or you were just a passive spectator, yes. (Fanny)

Care, trust, and vulnerability

In conversations with many guests, a recurring theme emerges they describe a feeling of being genuinely seen and cared for, with everything meticulously prepared with attention to detail. A particular detail that nearly all guests mentioned was the simple yet impactful presence of their name tag on the dinner table. This small gesture of being acknowledged by name seems to hold great significance, fostering a sense of personal connection and enhancing their overall experience.

It's this personification, your name on tag at the table [...] it gives the feeling that you are, or I felt, I was part of the work. (Michael)

I felt welcome, because, you know, your name was there, somehow, not just a guest or something but completely, the name, my arrival had been prepared for. (Anne)

I thought it was nice to sit at the table [...] I chose a seat and then I first saw that my name was on a card exactly by the seat I had chosen, this was so funny and pleasant. It felt kind of beautiful to be one of the group, one of the family. This is such a magic, suddenly seeing the card with your name... (Charlotte)

...I felt welcomed, warmth, intimacy, affection it's like it was beautifully wrapped. I appreciated that and yes, no, no, I was just led into something, it was not staged, more like a gift, a present. (Charlotte)

I felt like this was you embracing us with your tenderness so we could be more ourselves. (Sally)

Another central theme was trust. Majority of the interviewees mentioned how being trusted had a powerful impact.

To be given a key instead of someone else opening a door for a you [...] there you become so aware of some decision [...] you are given both some kind of trust and responsibility and such, and you take it or... So, it is as kind of agreement on something. (Bella)

I just think like that, because you are so trusted in the house, you want to be trustworthy somehow. You do not want to betray anyone, you just want to be a decent citizen, this came so strong over me. (Anne)

I am trusted with the home as I am just a stranger visiting a home that is empty and this is where I enter. I immediately felt like this, it was immediately something that had such an affect [...] I was immediately [...] humble...

...One is somehow safe but at the same time vulnerable and perhaps precisely vulnerable because one feels safe [...] vulnerable and secure at the same time. I found it interesting to find it. (Gloria)

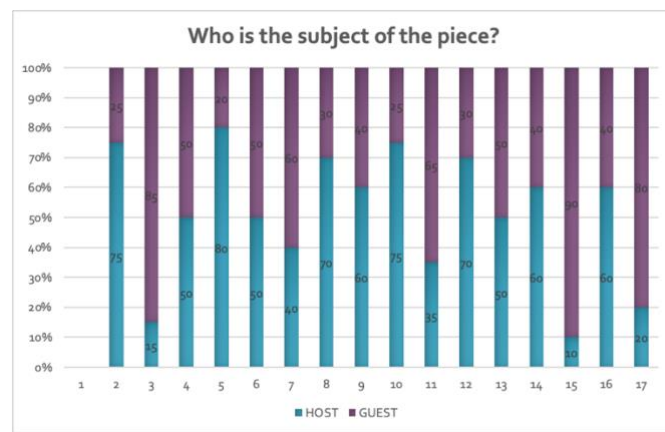
In this last comment Gloria mentions her vulnerability and safety as being two sides of the same coin. One could describe vulnerability as a kind of openness and here she relates that to being safe. Being safe allows you to be open and thus vulnerable. I am starting to believe that this sense of safety together with a sensation of belonging might be the precondition for the openness that is required for a transformation. When I asked Charlotte, who is a practising psychologist, what she thought was the key factor in helping her clients in transforming their life she answered:

I think that a kind of warmth and caring communication and to share [...] be truthful, do not hide anything, and no fireworks, I think it is effective. I also use it in my treatment, I share, it is not always beautiful what I share. We have all sorts of thoughts, they are not all noble, politically correct, beautiful or... I find it so liberating for the next person. To realize that everyone has all kinds, and everyone has their struggle. (Charlotte)

Here I have mentioned three significant features that I find important to my practice of creating potentially transformative experiences; firstly, to create a safe and caring environment that allows you to open up, secondly to create a personal relationship with the guest, see them and care for them with sincere affection, thirdly to share with them something personal, daring to be imperfect.

Who is the subject of the piece?

I have claimed that the essence of the work lies within each individual guest, encompassing both the experience itself and the unique contributions brought forth by the guest. This contribution may include elements drawn from the guest's past experiences, values, and perspectives, which are illuminated and integrated into the overall experience. In essence, the work is an interplay between the external experience and the internal reflections and contributions of the guest. To understand if the guest recognised themselves being a subject of the piece, I asked how much of the work was about the host and how much about the guest and the things they shared with the host. I asked them to divide the work in



percentages between them and the host. As you can see in the picture, the answers are very individual, and from the 17 interviewees, only two agree on the work being 50/50, which is the average outcome if the answers are merged. I have an interest to create a heightened awareness in spectators about themselves during the work and these findings suggest to me that the degree of awareness is very individual.

But all my interviewees agreed that they brought something to the work. It is probably impossible not to bring your values and your worldview to any experience, like Jimmy says:

I'm fully aware that I see the world through me with all my prejudices and experiences and so to speak, my formatting. I see the world completely, the world is just me, I see it through my upbringing and all [...] It's a good

question: Where does the work end and where do I start. Is the work reflexology, one presses some points in me that...? (Jimmy)

What David brought with him into the piece is more concrete:

I had the wrong time, so I came too early and then all of a sudden, I was in a stairwell and people were walking past, it was just all kinds of smells and people from all over the world [...] from Asia and obviously from the east bloc and Icelanders, and a bad smell and a good one, and an overpowering smell and I thought: this is a powerful intro. [...] So, this is my story, and the reason I connect with these smells, weird smells and something like that, is because I'm used to these smells from my childhood apartment block. That's my story. (David)

Where does the work start and where does it end?

The specific setting of each piece, the 'zip code,' if you will, is intentionally crafted as part of the work. However, the exact details of what this entails are determined by the guest's encounter with the work. For example, in the instance mentioned earlier, David perceives the smells as an integral part of the work. These scents evoke memories that are personal to him, shaping his identity and reflecting his background and values.

Many guests mentioned how the work 'turned on' something within them, altering their perception of their surroundings. Jimmy, for instance, describes this experience:

You surrender completely into this space, the theatre, or this side reality, or this portal that art is, when you just open it, there is so little really needed between life and death or here yes, life and art,

[...] To go into this, this world, you just press the ON button just turn it on. This is what happened when I turned my car into Framnesvegur. (Jimmy)

Jimmy described in detail a long scene that for him was a part of the performance that he experienced sitting in his car waiting to be let into the home. Other guests also described similar experiences where they described people, situations, smells, and sights in proximity to the work, before or after the actual work took place. What I hear them describe is being fully present with their senses open, attentive to the surroundings in a magical mode. This relates to the point from before when Michael spoke about the necessity to surrender.

People bring all sorts of things into the piece, such as residues of a bad day at the office or the mood of a world situation that shifts the entire worldview, like Bella described to me:

I went into a mode like [...] in light of all sorts of things, you know world events, and current affairs and things like that. I felt like this huge privilege. What surprised me was that it provoked me so much [...] it has nothing to do with the people who live there.

Coming almost straight from Austurvöllur (parliament Square), from a protest march. But this, when I mention this mode, I think that it is because you only get a beautiful picture. I remember the experience. You are not presented with anyone's struggle story. (Bella)

This was in an atmosphere of *Black Lives Matters* and public protests that were held worldwide in connection to George Floyd's murder. Here the outside world situation invaded the whole experience and changed momentarily the perspectives of the guest. What Bella describes are important political events, but smaller issues can affect as easily. The guest can bring anything into the work and

there is no control over what becomes a part of the work and what not, potentially everything can:

You were just alone in this and were just experiencing something completely alone while in the movies or in a theatre you can disconnect yourself, you can just go watch yourself, look down on you, "yes, I have some dirt on the pants" But here everything is connected, so you somehow, all of a sudden everything is part of the same, for some time, in these twenty to thirty minutes, somehow you are all in this. (Bill)

Filling the gaps

The guests not only come with their worldviews and perspective, stories, and value system, but they are also given the responsibility to create a whole image of the fragments of information that is given to them through the letters and by the surroundings.

The text is very limited, and you just "Take it away". Your mind just starts spinning. As I may have said more than once, you always start to wonder what is true and what is a lie. What is a staging and what is reality and where do we draw the line? It's so hard to set boundaries and define what's true and what's not true. Everything is partly a lie and partly true. (Carl)

You get a lot of information in a way, because we tend to draw our own conclusions. If someone tells you [...], here I live, I'm so old, I've been doing this during my days, my family is made up of this and this: From relatively little information, you draw all sorts of conclusions about what has happened. (Michael)

This is of course a study; I'm researching this person. This is of course a study of her and a study of my reactions to her that I found exciting because I kind of control where it goes. (Albert)

The guests play an integral role in the creation of the work. It is their presence and interaction that bring together the various elements, forming a cohesive whole, a combination of observations and experiences that one individual can gather within just 30 minutes spent encountering a stranger's home.

I found it so amazing how one small letter can somehow open up a lot for a person. Just the connection between this letter and where you are, both the home, where you are in this home, and also where you are yourself as a guest. This home, a guest in this life that you are only getting to know and, in a way, somehow, where you are in your own life and this kind of volatility there between. My life, the life of these people in this house and this flickered there. (Gloria)

Through these interviews and listening to their testimonies, I came to realize the significance of providing these individuals with the opportunity to share their experiences in detail. I felt as though I was witnessing a transformation in progress, understanding that the revelatory moment did not necessarily occur during the performance but rather emerged during the reflection on their experiences afterward. The encounters sparked a desire to delve deeper into the experience by sharing it with others. This indicates that true transformation not only needs both body and mind (physical experience and reflection) but proximity and distance as well. The ultimate transformative encounter often occurred after the performance itself, as the spectators left the space carrying the affect within them, ready to be further developed into something new. In my observation, the post-performance interviews acted as a catalyst in some cases or served as a recognition of the impact of their experience. Many of my

interviewees expressed gratitude for the interviews, finding them helpful and revelatory. They recalled more details and gained deeper insights into how the experience had affected them, both consciously and unconsciously.

This discovery is among the most significant insights I gained throughout this process. These testimonies will continue to serve as a source of discovery, as there are still many threads waiting to be explored and integrated into my artistic practice.

THE HOSTS

The work did not only affect the guests, but also the hosts. I had chosen hosts from different layers of society, all women, a fact that dawned on me during the process. The hosts did not have particular expectations of the work and expressed curiosity and trust in me as an artist, and the fact that the work was programmed by the Reykjavik Art Festival contributed to the trust they had for the project. One explained her motivation for participating like this:

I like what art does, because it breaks up everyday life, and I not only find it enjoyable but necessary. I feel it is very necessary that things are not always as monotonous as life is. It's just a new perspective on what others are doing and what I'm doing, through the arts [...] and I feel it's necessary - not just a bonus to life but a part of life and necessary.

(Agnes)

Generally, they felt positive about the process and the outcome.

I had not formed any opinions beforehand, because I was just going to see how it developed before I formed any opinion. I did not have any expectations. But it all came out very well.

(Sofia)

I think I'm very grateful for the work, it was a bit of a mystery trip, I did not know where it was going and when you created the text from the interview, I got a really warm feeling. I found it incredibly beautiful how you could see my story and how you experienced it and put it into words. I often find it hard to share this story and it was like a maze to me but then you came up with this and it was just somehow beautiful and simple and clear [...] so there came kind of warmth with your text and security too. It was a very beautiful and enjoyable experience to get into this little adventure.

(Rose)

The process created more awareness of the host's values and life situation, and evoked sensations of gratitude and appreciation of privilege.

You know, you go through everyone's movements, everyone's rituals, [...] how we are and how we behave and here, yes, it has become more tangible - everything you do. [...] and now I'm just looking at these rituals, they are there, things become visible that were [...] unconscious before. (Agnes)

... I feel a real privilege and I am very aware of it because it certainly is not like that everywhere. So, to speak, quite yes, yes, it came back to me quite many times, wow, how lucky I am.

My husband got a lot out of it, he was all into it and could somehow dwell in the work, [...] what did he say again [that it was] just very clear, the form,

structure of everything and he felt the content had a great impact, he felt it had a great and strong effect on him. To see himself through me then also [...] to be able to be a spectator in his own home [...] he thought it was just amazing. (Agnes)

As the work focuses on quality of life and affirmative emotions the hosts saw their own homes and life stories in a new light that had a great impact on them:

You know, I must mention it, that I felt shame for many years to be an immigrant and ashamed to have this story - to come here, to look for work, to look for work for my family, and to try to save everyone, such an unease that came with all this. As I get older, this is diminishing, this immigrant shame I experienced. I thought, to get such positive attention, that it was dignifying, I got back a kind of security. (Maria)

What you write is very positive, positive about me and my home and family [...] it has given me a lot, because basically I am rather negative towards myself [...] it has given me a lot to get such a positive image. (Maria)

The hosts describe a mostly positive experience of having people into their homes since they feel that the work is not only about them but is somehow important in a wider context. They expressed gratitude towards the guest and their notes left behind.

They are all very positive. I found it very funny. They do not know me personally but yes, good to read, because then you feel, the work gets more value, or worth. This is a valuable encouragement.

It is just quite unique to get such comments in the notes, rewarding and beautiful comments. (Sofia)

The overall conclusion regarding the work's impact on the hosts reveals a significant effect on both the hosts and the guests. The process as a whole heightened the hosts' awareness of their values and illuminated the important role of everyday rituals and routines in well-being and quality of life, mirroring the impact on the guests. Generally, the hosts gained new perspectives by viewing their lives through a positive yet profound lens, with some experiencing a healing effect. The duration of time spent by the hosts with the project, along with the ongoing personal sharing that took place in our collaboration, likely contributed to this. The work remained a constant presence for them throughout the entire creation process and beyond, as the artwork became intertwined with the fabric of their lives within their homes.

In contrast, the guests' experience was more ephemeral and potentially less enduring in terms of long-lasting impact.

These testimonies manifest to me the complexity of a single experience and how potent a porous dramaturgy can be, where you as an artist balance between control and loss of control in an artwork instigated by you and yet runs off on a course of its own, not only in one direction, but multiple directions, as many as the persons encountering it. Through these findings that I have encountered and my interpretations of them, I am able to further develop my artistic methods. One important finding is that the format I am developing and testing out that is based on the concept, *How little is enough?* does seem to work and allows for steps towards further reduction. There is ample space to reduce the production, giving the guests more space to generate the work. Based on my findings, I now have an urge to create an opportunity for the guest to revisit the work and to disseminate the affect in a proximity to the experience. I intend to develop new formats for having genuine communication in the work and I will also take seriously the

guests need for being safe and being seen. Toward these goals I have already taken some steps in the work *Island*, a site specific and human specific performance on belonging, performed in Hrísey an island north of Iceland in august and October of 2020.

In *Island*, I had the opportunity to develop the guest's possibilities to reflect as they went along within the performance experience. There the guests enter the work as a group and their experiences were affected by their co-travellers. In interviews with guests, I learned that the personal exchange is very affective. It is comforting to be both seen and trusted with personal information from the people you encounter, and you are more receptive to the work. The guests created a bond with their guides and hosts and also with their co-travellers and even the island itself.

Unlike *No Show*, many guests of *Island* express how they learned something about the other; the islanders, the island, or new people but less about how they were confronted with themselves. The sense of transformation that happened in *No Show* had another appearance in *Island*. The experience was less private and more communal, with discussions on quality of life becoming more prominent in the various dialogues that unfolded throughout the work.

The stimuli of the senses were strong, according to guests, and the constant moving around and paying attention to nature when contemplating profound themes of belonging seemed to stir people's thoughts and value systems. In my experience and through the interviews I saw evidence for a great impact on the co-creators. By co-creators, I mean the people on the island that contributed to the performance process, myself included. One reason could be that we were more people involved in *Island* than in *No Show* and that the co-creators were either children or people that are inexperienced in culture work and performance making. Another reason could be that the community on the island is in a state of transition and has a greater motivation for a positive outcome of a project like

this. The community has been categorised as a “vulnerable settlement”, where life and livelihood is precarious, together with a handful of villages and towns around Iceland. The inhabitants are already working on different strategies to attract visitors and new inhabitants to the island.

Not many of the inhabitants came as guests to the piece, but the few that did express feeling proud of their island and a sense of re-enchantment of their home settlement.

For now, I want to end this letter on affect with the words of Gloria that experienced *No Show*, edition 101, City Centre in June 2020:

I guess it touched me, just deep somehow to experience this, this vibration, often harmony of these feelings and thoughts that I connected with from my life, also some things that were maybe a little bit alien to me and I feel that are not maybe necessarily present in my life but like that yes, in fact still [...] I identified with and live in yes, [...] then in the end the doorbell rang and then I was so awake. (Gloria)