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# **HALL12: The Answer is Presence**

excerpts from the HALL12 script

TAAT



## 08 11 2020 - INVITATION

Dear visitor of Winternights,

We would like to give you something precious.  
A possibility to share a moment together.

This letter is part of the HALL12<sup>1</sup> script, a project we are working on collaboratively since March 2020. The project explores emotional proximity in times of social distance. On December 10-12th a selected group of participants from the Maastricht region are invited to go on a silent walk, together with one other person. Participants in Brussels (July), Riga (August), Dundee (September), Athens and Amsterdam (ongoing) walked before them and will continue walking in the months to come.

Since the lockdown we are increasingly aware of how HALL12 - and by extension our whole practice - works as an *ecosystem of encounter*<sup>2</sup>. This ecosystem is in the first place based on *real* encounters between people, in *real* time and in *real* space. Our current situation, and the *hybrid* forms of communication that are arising, affirm and question this *realness*. They open up a broad spectrum of potential architectures in which *other kinds* of emotional proximities and exchanges can appear.

This invitation aims to collectively explore these hybrid spaces. To share discourse on our common practice. To engage in unexpected encounters. Coming weeks we will invite you personally to take part in a couple of short experiments. Meanwhile you are warmly invited to take a stroll through our HALL12 Research Catalogue on this link: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/964187/964218>.

Thanks for taking part and talk soon.

Sincerely,

Breg Horemans and Gert-Jan Stam

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<sup>1</sup>HALL12 is a project by TAAT in collaboration with Efrosyni Tsiritaki, Menzo Kircz, Israel López, Liga Zepa, Ieva Džindža and Jenny Case. We are kindly supported by SoAP Maastricht, European Culture Foundation, Prins Bernard Cultuurfonds Limburg and Fonds Podiumkunsten.

<sup>2</sup> If you are a dutch speaker, have a look on this article: <https://brakkegrond.nl/verdieping/76/taat-over-hun-ecosysteem-van-ontmoetingen>

## 08 04 2020 - CONTRIBUTION FOR PUBLICATION

08 04 2020 - EMAIL

DWK: I'm working on a publication called *and then the doors opened again*<sup>3</sup> in which I'm asking my peers to answer the question 'What will happen on your first theatre visit after the lockdown?'

Would you like to join?

BH: Yes! and... Good question. Could I propose a score to you, as an experiential answer to your question, or maybe as a speculative condition for possible answers?

DWK: Great! Exciting! Talk tomorrow.

08 04 2020 - THOUGHTS

BH: ...Do I actually want to go back to the 'theatre as it is' after lockdown? I'm afraid I would be more comfortable - more than I already was - questioning the whole ecology of theatre conditions: its architecture, its industry, its oppositions. I see a lot of practices around me that are aware of being part of society and that are building new theatre conditions. Bringing people together. Not stopping radically to pick up business as usual eventually. But continuing, slowly, within the new circumstances. I think 'the first theatre visit' after lockdown is an illusion. We never really stopped. The first 'real visit' is a visit where theatre itself becomes the visitor: encountering these practices, curious to open up its ecology to theirs.

20 04 09 - PHONE CALL

BH: What I'm going to ask you is part of the development of a project called HALL12: a silent walk of two strangers in an urban context, operating within the current social distancing measures.

BH: HALL12 is part of a greater whole, HALL33, in which we aim to develop spaces for staged encounters between people that do not know each other (yet). If you're up for it, I'll connect you to an Other in the coming days.

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<sup>3</sup> David Weber-Krebs (Ed.), *and then the doors opened again*, Onomatopée, 2020

DWK: Ok, so what do I need to do?

BH: I'll send you an email with instructions soon. I do already have some thoughts on your initial question though. I'm doubting if I should share them already.

DWK: ...

20 04 14 - HALL12 SCORE

*Hey David,*

*Thanks again for participating in this try-out during the development of HALL12. HALL12 is part of a long-term research project called HALL33. In HALL12 we're exploring encounters through walking together in public space. In silence. The total walk takes about 1h.*

*As promised in our phone call, you will find the instructions here:*

*Be at the [Place Fernand Cocq, Ixelles]  
on [Wednesday, April 15th] at [17h].*

*You can recognize the other by [short grey hair, male].*

*Please be on time.*

*When you arrive there, respect a 2m distance between you. You can make eye contact, but please stay silent. This is the starting point for you and the other. You are invited to walk towards the endpoint together.*

*Your common endpoint is [Place de l'Albertine, Brussels].*

*You decide together how to reach it.*

*There are two basic rules guiding you through this experience:*

- 1. Stay silent until the end*
- 2. Walk simultaneously, find a common pace*

*At [Place de l'Albertine, Brussels], you decide together what happens next. If you have any questions, email us. Have fun!*

*Sincerely,*

*Breg and Gert-Jan*

## 20 04 16 - PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK EXTRACTS

(6.15 p.m.)

*BD: I do this trajectory almost daily, but now the uncanniness of the situation – this stranger that I just ‘met’ – made me hyper-attentive to the public realm and the bizarre moment we’re all experiencing. What struck me is the consciousness of my personal character, my social identity that is evoked by the other’s presence.*

(6.36 p.m.)

*DWK: I wouldn’t say we had a real encounter. Maybe the other could be anybody. But the walk had two qualities that stuck with me: occupying public space with/through another person gave me a clear frame and a pleasant confidence to look at the city in a new way / again. This ‘just being together’ felt like a welcome alternative to ‘filling any possible space between us’ with words about the lockdown...*

## 20 05 15 - ZOOM CALL ON COLLABORATION

BH: Hi all, great that you’re all involved in this project. There are some parallel trajectories going on around HALL12, where this zoom session could generate a common ground for us to work on together. I think it’s important to be aware of a mental shift we’re all going through. And I think it’s important to address the value of a physical ‘being together’ in public space as a basic human condition. I’ve sent you the HALL12 script and the feedback from our first HALL12 participants in Brussels.

GJS: We noticed that the matching itself is not necessarily the most important part. There is no perfect match. But what happens in HALL12 is a heightened level of care to arrange [an encounter] for two specific people. It’s about a personal investment, a bubble of care, that we arrange for these people. This is where the real effort of ‘*staging encounters*’ takes place. It’s a [much more] intensive audience approach than what we’re used to. The ritual of theatre is translated into a dramaturgy of care.

MK: I have a strong feeling that people are genuinely looking for connections right now, because a lot of people are quite lonely or much more so than they used to be. The lockdown is lending itself to making people more open to meet in other ways.

BH: Unfolding HALL12 could be done in a hyperlocal way to 'sharpen our antennas' for what our local communities need. Doing this 'hyperlocal act' has a huge potential of creating a multiplicity of 'bubbles of care' in expected and unexpected places.

LZ: When any spectator steps back into his/her old footsteps, whether it is a black-box performance or a site specific immersive piece, the evocation of 'the experience that was once there' cannot be other than incorporating a fullness in understanding social distancing - or exactly the lack of closeness.

## 20 07 16 - FEEDBACK TALK BRUSSELS<sup>4</sup>

GV: I was blown away by the silence in the first moment. I felt you went in, and I went 'waaaaw'... so I was ready to 'fly away' into the city. At the same time, I noticed you were going inside yourself emotionally. This made me feel insecure. Actually, your calmness made me feel insecure. It took about 10 seconds. I remember thinking 'Huh? She is not ready to *fly away*??'... And then I thought 'ok, we have to reconsider how to be together in this experience.'

BH: (*towards LC*) Did you also feel this contrast between the two of you?

LC: YES. (laughing). You were moving around very much. And also, you were walking around from the place where we stopped, while I would just stay where we arrived. You were wandering around with your attention from here to there, constantly moving.

BH: On the moment you walked inside, you said something about how you projected yourself on the other, how did that work?

GV: Yes. While stopping - and thanks to her calm, steady, appearance - I could go into a lot of layers of discovery (reflections of windows, materials that surrounded us,...). I was trying to observe how we were differently relating to what was around us. I could imagine you were composing things in your head or looking for relations. What were you actually projecting?

LC: I was very aware of the desire of the other, the chosen direction or paths we took, or not took. I was considering what was attracting me or not: simple thoughts like 'going too far or going to an unknown or known place', or 'going towards an open or a closed space.' I was trying to read what was attracting me or what was attracting you.

GV: I was curious how we were both projecting stories and exploring the 'stored memory' of the different spaces, acknowledging I was here before because I live in the area. My own memories were creating compositions with the spaces we passed through. But although I know the streets very well I was never so amazed by this *huge flower pot* that we passed by at some point (laughs enthusiastically)! I was incredibly attracted by it, so I ran towards it. I really wanted to share this feeling, so I thought 'Come here and see!!!' Things that you are accustomed to, can be suddenly very exciting... (smiles).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://apass.be/what-do-you-depend-on-where-you-are/>



(pause)

GV: It is not an innocent thing to step into an other person's shoes.

## 20 10 29 - FEEDBACK TALK ATHENS

(transcription<sup>5</sup>)

ET: Περιέγραψε σύντομα την εμπειρία σου, από την στιγμή που σου είπα για τον περίπατο, τις σκέψεις που είχες όταν είδες το άτομο απέναντί σου, μετά τον ίδιο τον περίπατο και τί σου άφησε αυτή η εμπειρία.

AG: Από τη στιγμή που είδα ένα κορίτσι που ήταν μικρότερο σε ηλικία από μένα, ένιωσα ότι πρέπει να την προστατέψω στον περίπατο αυτό και ότι αυτή θα νιώθει άβολα. Κατά την διάρκεια του περιπάτου, είχα κάποιες απορίες για το αν θα μπορούμε να δείξουμε το δρόμο ή αν θα μπορούμε να κοιτιόμαστε στα μάτια.

(translation)

*ET: Describe briefly your experience, from the moment I told you about the walk, your thoughts when you saw the other person, the walk itself and what you took from this experience.*

*AG: The moment I saw a girl younger than me, I felt I had to protect her on this walk because she must be feeling awkward. During the walk, I wasn't sure whether we were allowed to show the way or whether we could make eye contact.*

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<sup>5</sup> Transcription and translation by Efrosyni Tsiritaki, Athens

ET: Τι γλώσσα μιλησαν τα σώματά σας?

AG: Στην αρχή ήμασταν και οι δύο λίγο άβολες. Η κοπέλα νομίζω κρατούσε την τσάντα της, οπότε κάτι είχε να κάνει με τα χέρια της, και έβγαζε εκεί πέρα το όποιο άγχος είχε. Το είχα παρατηρήσει αυτό στην αρχή, φορούσε γυαλιά ηλίου και φορούσα και εγώ γυαλιά ηλίου και ενώ την είδα αρχικά κάπως γατζωμένη πάνω στην τσάντα της, προς το τέλος είχε χαλαρώσει. Όπως και εγώ είχα τον καφέ στην αρχή και μετά τον πέταξα, μέχρι το τέλος, κάπως σαν να λυθήκαμε, δεν χρειαζόταν να πιαστούμε απο κάπου.

*ET: What language did your bodies speak?*

*AG: In the beginning we were both acting a bit awkward. The girl was clutching onto her bag, so she kept her hands busy, relieving any anxiety on it. I noticed it from the beginning, she was wearing sunglasses, and so was I. Although, initially, she was hooked to her bag, towards the end she relaxed. Just like me, with my coffee-to-go in one hand, that I got rid of at some point. By the end, it felt like we were more at ease with each other and we didn't need to hang on to anything.*

## **20 08 16 - CONVERSATION BETWEEN MENZO AND ISRAEL<sup>6</sup>**

MENZO:

Dear Israel,

Nice to meet you once again. We weren't complete strangers to each other before our encounter at the ferry but I do feel like we got reintroduced. In the not too distant past, we went on four walks through Amsterdam.

In the not too distant future, we will go on many more. Instead of analyzing exactly what we did and how we did it, I would like to start out by writing you this letter. I am unsure how this project will unfold and what this digital space will mean for the way in which we encounter each other. I am sure you feel something similar. A lot of my work tends to revolve around intimacy in one way or the other. So does this. That is also a reason I am now writing about my own work, because I feel we have to get intimate in some way for this project to work. We are working in a time that physical intimacy or even nearness between two strangers has become almost impossible if not illegal in some situations.

So how one question is how to deal with that. How can a shared experience, an experience that is co-created by its participants, give space for meaningful encounter?

Another aspect of my work is the use of imagination. I feel like using the imagination is a skill that humanity is losing because we live in a world filled with images. Everything refers to something else, nothing has to be imagined. I am not sure if this has a place within our current project but I am curious to see if it does. Maybe it is about a sense of adventure. Of being part of something that other people don't know about. Something that doesn't really mean anything until you make it meaningful.

Who knows. We will figure something out.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/964187/964199>

By writing this letter, I don't want to impose this format for our conversations. I hope this digital space will become a playground for us. Not something that is always neat or orderly, but something that can move. With messy corners.

Can you play hide and seek in here somehow?

All the best,

Menzo

ISRAEL:

Dear Menzo,

I appreciate the introduction in the form of a letter, it just makes things more easily approachable. It was nice to walk with you and start the project without the pressure of figuring out (yet) what we are doing. But, in any case, looking back to my notebook I figured out that we did much more than that. What exactly? I don't know but we'll see. Maybe these digital encounters are the way to figure it out?

I'm now thinking about the idea we discussed about walking and making the distance between the people *grow* bigger, to - afterwards - come back together again. This moment of *on-line/ cybernetic* encountering feels like *the street grew bigger*. Or maybe this is the moment in which each of us experiences different paths, and then at some point we'll see when we arrive at another *meeting point*.

Thanks for sharing your artistic vision, I guess this is also shaping the way we develop this work. I can personally relate to this, as my personal focus is on different kinds of "staging" that go beyond the visual. I'm really curious on how we perceive realities and create other realities. Let's see how our personal curiosities encounter each other in HALL12.

Looking forward for all what is next.

Cheers,

Shaly

find out more about HALL12 on  
[www.taata-projects.com](http://www.taata-projects.com)



**TAAT 2020**