

Dancing Recurrences

Brynjar Åbel Bandlien

Dancing Recurrences

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Oslo National Academy of the Arts – Department of Dance
www.khio.no

The collection of paper sheets that you are holding are the reflections of *Dancing Recurrences* – a performative practice within dance and dance-making. *Dancing Recurrences*, is an artistic research project by Brynjar Åbel Bandlien, dancer and PH.d candidate at Oslo National Academy of the Arts – Department of Dance (KHIO). This research project took place at KHIO and Henie Onstad Kunstsenter outside Oslo, Norway between 2016 and 2019. *Dancing Recurrences* is a process alongside *Amphibious Trilogies*, an artistic research project by choreographer and professor Amanda Jane Steggell. The process resulted in *#dancingrecurrences* - a performative practice, and these three volumes of text, drawings and interviews that constitute this reflection. All the drawings in this reflection are made by Bandlien. The reflection should be read in relation to the performative practice *#dancingrecurrences*. Use the following links in order to access videos of the performative practice:

Research Catalogue: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile>
Khioda: <https://khioda.khio.no/khio-xmlui/handle/11250/2425899>
CRISTIN: <https://app.cristin.no/persons/show.jsf?id=804948>

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Norwegian Agency for
International Cooperation
and Quality Enhancement
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About the artist

Brynjar Åbel Bandlien is a dancer, dance-maker and facilitator of situations for dance. He has created several works and performances over the last twenty-five years. Bandlien trained ballet in his native country Norway (1991–93) and at the Hamburg Ballet (1993–95). After his graduation, he worked for three years as a dancer for Netherlands Dance Theatre 2 in Den Haag, Holland, with which he toured Europe, the US and South-Africa. In 1998 he started to work as a freelance dancer in Scandinavia, Europe and the US. In the period 2004–2009, Bandlien had his base in Bucharest, Romania and took part in establishing Centrul National al Dansului-Buchuresti (CND-B). He danced, choreographed, trained and taught dances at the center for five years. In 2008 and 2011, Bandlien curated a festival called *Zilele Strimbe* at the CND-B. The Romanian word Strimb, means Crooked or Queer in English. Besides his dancing, Bandlien has published three comic books: *Strimb Life* (2008) and *Strimb Living* (2011). His last comic book *Strimb Kids* was published in 2015. Since 2010 he's been based in Oslo and Berlin.

Dancers

Ann-Christin Kongsness (NO)

Has studied dance and choreography, aesthetic theory and literature science. Kongsness is based in Oslo. She works as a performer, both creatively and theoretically, with dance and choreography. Her work manifests as performances, seminars, workshops, texts and publications. Among later works that can be mentioned are *Skeiv dansekunst – en samtalerekke* (2018) (red. translation: *Queer dance art – a conversations series*) in collaboration with Marte Sterud and *ABOUT* (2018/19) a performance created in collaboration with Solveig Holte. Kongsness is the editor of the anthology *Koreografi* (2016/18).

Roza Moshtaghi (IR/NO)

Is a choreographer and performer. Her works deal with the unexplained narratives of desire generated through the process of adapting or reacting to systems/structures. Questions of how she, buildings, streets, nature, events, bodies, and objects in general react or adapt to structures have been crucial to most of her work. Roza holds an MA in choreography from Oslo National Academy of the Arts. She presents her works internationally and continues to develop projects with other artists, both as a collaborator and as a performer. Her most recent performances are; *What about me* (developed once a year from 2015), *Water grafitti* (2016), *Flinch* (2017), *Only forever* (2018), *Bouncing narratives* (2019) and *Limbo* (2020).

Magnus Myhr (NO)

Has worked as a dancer and a performer/actor since 2007. He holds a BA in modern and contemporary dance from Oslo National Academy of the Arts - KHiO. His work is rooted in his personal experiences, and he is especially interested in the poetic and perceptible powers of the body. Amongst other things, he has produced and choreographed the solo performances *Jeg satt på en stein og så utover «havet»/I sat on a rock and looked out at the “ocean”* (2014), and *I det fjerne, Troja/In the distance, Troy* (2018) at Rosendal Teater, Black Box teater, RAS – regional arena for contemporary dance and at BIT Teatergarasjen. His work has also been showcased at Multiplié dance festival, Bodø Biennale, Barents dance festival and at Gøteborg dance and theatre festival. *I sat on a rock(...)* received the Trondheim prize 2014 for performing arts production of the year at the annual NATT&DAG awards.

Marte Reithaug Sterud (NO)

Works with dance, choreography and text engaging herself in the relationship between practice and theory, art and knowledge production, language and the body. Her work manifests as performances, texts, lectures and seminars – amongst others the conversations series *Queer dance art (Skeiv dansekunst – en samtalerekke, 2018)*. Currently Sterud is currently doing a MA in Gender Studies at The University of Oslo, writing about lesbian performativity. She also writes dance critiques for the journal *Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift*. Sterud is educated with a BA in contemporary dance from Oslo National Academy of the Arts ('08) and from The School of New Dance in Oslo ('10) - now College of Dance Art.

An asynchronous mirror

When Brynjar Åbel Bandlien (BÅB) kindly invited me to write an introductory piece to his Ph.D. reflection, it struck me—when reading through a draft version of his text—that I need to make an asynchronous mirror. That is, a contraption allowing the introduction to act as a candidate recurrence of his reflection. The asynchronous mirror is such a contraption.

It mirrors—yes!—but not in what in mainstream parlance would pass as ‘real time’. There is an exchange between his piece and this introduction that goes on in realm time—since I read his reflection first and then developed this piece—but there is an imaginary element added to real time, since an introduction conceptually appears before the main piece in a volume like this.

The asynchronous mirror is such that it will reflect what is placed before it, but without a pre-determined time at which it is appointed: that is, the appointment is left to a certain kind of chance method. So, there are some parallels between the ‘asynchronous’ mirror and the Guy Debord’s *rendezvous possible* (the queer cousin of the *dérive*): the possible appointment.

Of course, there is also a difference because the possibility of a rendezvous, at a conceptual level, and the materials generated as the experiment is actually carried out. That is, having received the instructions to go—at an appointed time—to meet with another person who may/not have received the same instructions (without knowing beforehand exactly who that person is).

And then, actually meeting up; looking for someone who might/not have received the same instructions. Attempting to find out whom it might be, and if indeed there is another person around who has received the same—or, even similar—instructions. The materials accumulated in this way, everything happening on this question, are contingent: they are also dance materials.

Everything going on in time. Everything going on in space. The elephant in the room. The blind zone: this zone is beyond the comfort-zone, of course, but also beyond Mary-Louise Pratt’s (2005) contact-zone. The blind zone is the realm of what Brian Massumi (2015) calls ‘bare activity’—the non-conscious hinterland of work and action (though not necessarily of *design*).

Hence the afore-mentioned materials are contingent. As Marte Reithaug Sterud remarks in one of BÅB’s interview-sessions in *#dancingrecurrences*: “With contingency, I think of the relationship with everything else that is going on, and that each object is unfolding independently, but still very present.” Here, contingencies emerge between the found, negotiated and unknown.

On the backdrop of bare activity, contingency transmutes into ‘presence’—the shock-and-awe (Massumi, *ibid.*) privy to empowerment and priming: BÅB would close the *#dancingrecurrences* sessions—that would last for a non-determined number of hours—with the simple words: thank you! The priming materials would be mesmerising: videos and soundtracks like broken GIFs.

The power to own time. I was there. The break in the mesmerising materials would break in the dance, which in turn would break in my note-book. At the end of each string of written notes— following the movements of the dancers (via my breath)—I

would write: <break>; just to make sure the message would be passed on, somehow. And somehow it did.

A chance method can yield another: the dancers' engaging with the mesmerising materials—and their own prior dance-research done aforehand in *solitaire*, with the same materials—I extended by deciding that I would stop my note-taking after 18 pages (A6 dotted note-book). As I was finishing my last phrase, I heard BÅB from afar round up with his short and kind: *thank you!*

Rather than consider this coincidence according to the canons of C.G. Jung's synchronicity, I found Eleni Ikoniadou's (2014) idea of the rhythmic event more useful: the kind of event wound up by perambulating breaks—as previously suggested—the “giffy” aspect of the mesmerising materials, the breaks incorporated into the dance, and then propagated into my note book.

The necessity of the asynchronous mirror emerged in response to the rhythmic event as related above: since the premise of BÅB's reflection is that: “these texts and drawings are meant to accompany the performative practice of #dancingrecurrences presented at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Oslo at the end of November 2019” which I have not yet seen.

So, the asynchronous mirror is a response to that situation, and conceived as a complementary transformational half-chain (Simondon, 1964) to the rhythmic event in the related session of #dancingrecurrences at KHiO's *Scene 6* (Eng. Stage 6); that I attended to prepare for my assignment as mid-project evaluator, owing to BÅB's exertions with G. Bateson's *metalogue*.

The asynchronous mirror results from the present necessity of finding a back-door to BÅB's reflective piece (not having partaken of the #dancingrecurrences in November, since we are now in October). And results from the inversion between the elements of priming (dancers from video-library and sound-tracks) and the power to own time (the plot that took shape in my note-book).

At this occasion—writing the introduction—it is my turn to be primed, and for BÅB and his crew to hold the power of time. I think that attempting to be accurate with this is rather important. Reading through BÅB's draft, I found that I was reading the paragraphs with comments—maybe because they are *italicised*—as materials cut-and-pasted from his field-diary, or note-book.

Read in this way, they would not appear as elements in metalogue with the body-text (technical term in graphic design for the main text without the headlines), but a *metalog*: an entry not only defined in a space adjacent to the rest of the text (the body-text), but a text emerging from a different time and place: a *para-site* (Marcus, 200x) breaking into site of the current grounds.

So, the italicised metalog—the commentary paragraphs—emerge from somewhere else at a different time: a para-site. It acts as a place in time similar to a crossroads (Bachtin, 19xx). Once spotted it becomes if not necessary, then at least a handy vehicle in the multi-sited narrative that BÅB has collated from the interviews he has done with different people around the world.

I will not list these here, since they are—as the #dancingrecurrences elements—listed in his text. The point being that the parasitical hit-and-impact of the italicised commentaries (the metalog) is that recurrences are not relegated to dance-forms

in a narrow sense, but dance and “something else”: across a multi-sited dialogue, soup-kitchen at Samos, and BÅB’s separate drawing activity.

BÅB’s reflective piece—if received along this vein—is a system of folding doors (or, accordion doors): when contracted they connect, when unfolded they communicate. This is the way of the synchronous mirror: between the voices in dialogue, in the interviews, between the interviews, body-text and commentary. And last, but not least, his lists. They too are folding doors.

Unfolded, they are like parades—featuring pride or the big line-ups we know from antiquity (e.g. Homer’s Iliad or the Old Testament). Enfolded, they are like algorithms: which Marvin Minski defined as ‘effective procedures’; here they are testimonials of big data—Laurraine Daston’s *third nature*—cramped spaces of boat-refugees (Samos), water-worlds and the big open Trilogy.

BÅB writes that everything that relates itself to dance (even in opposition to dance) can be seen as dance: this is where I started to connect dance—and the necessity of the asynchronous mirror to reflect it—to ‘bare activity’. On the other hand, it appears that in his reflective piece, everything is according to the body: even artificial intelligence is understood according the body.

To this body, I am responding with an agent (the asynchronous mirror); and thereby turn to a distinction between the body and the agent one my find in Mediaeval philosophy: for instance, in Robert Grosseteste’s treatise on light (*De Luce* from 1225 c.e.). The question I end up with is whether the asymmetric mirror—for which I have found the need—relates to dance.

A joke relates an interview with a famous mathematician, who is asked by a science-journalist what the difference is between pure mathematics (of which he is the exponent) and applied mathematics. “Nothing!” he retorts—there is no *difference*; in fact, they have nothing in common whatsoever. Hence the gap and the leap: without it there would be no self-similar recurrence.

On the other hand, the Middle English definition of contingency relates to the latin con- (alongside) and -*tangere* (touch). So, it may be that because of the leap—or, in spite of it—what happens at both sides of the mirror remains in contact. The necessity and impossibility of companionship related by Samuel Beckett in *Company*. Perhaps, contingency, essentially.

The introduction therefore concludes on a note of the expanded physics of what—after all—might connect the body and the agent. There are dynamics of transduction at work here, and the potential to further explore information and communication along the lines expounded by Gilbert Simondon (1964) in *L’individuation à la lumière des notions forme et de l’information*.

Theodor Barth

18.10.2019

Dancing in volumes

Volume I Dancing in volumes

These three volumes of texts, drawings and interviews collect the reflections of my artistic research. My research is necessarily connected to my history as a dancer and therefore draws on my experience and observations from the past fifteen years of my professional life. I am a dancer, and I am writing about dance and the process of dance-making. It is important to know that these texts and drawings are meant to accompany the performative practice of *#dancingrecurrences* presented at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Oslo at the end of November 2019. I hope that these reflections, in their content and form, can function both as documentation of my artistic process but also as an artistic expression in and of itself.

Within the artistic research process of *Dancing Recurrences* I have established practices and followed the recurrences that came out of them. I coin the term *recurrences* to describe the situations, events, actions, movements and states that recurs in artistic practice and that come out of group work that uses a process-based approach to dance and dance-making. I have let the recurrences lead the way through the process, starting from my two research questions: How can the practice of recurrences become a way to understand an artistic work? How can working with recurrences become a performative practice and an artistic work in and of itself?

Instead of trying to answer them, I have found different ways of asking them. I have asked my research questions by dancing them out in the space, I have attempted to document the people, places, and objects that I have encountered in this research process by drawing them. I have tried to get closer to an understanding of what recurrences are and how they form by asking fellow dancers and dance makers to answer my two research questions. The result of this line of questioning is that I have found links between my research and the work of other dance-makers, for instance working with algorithms as a source for dance.

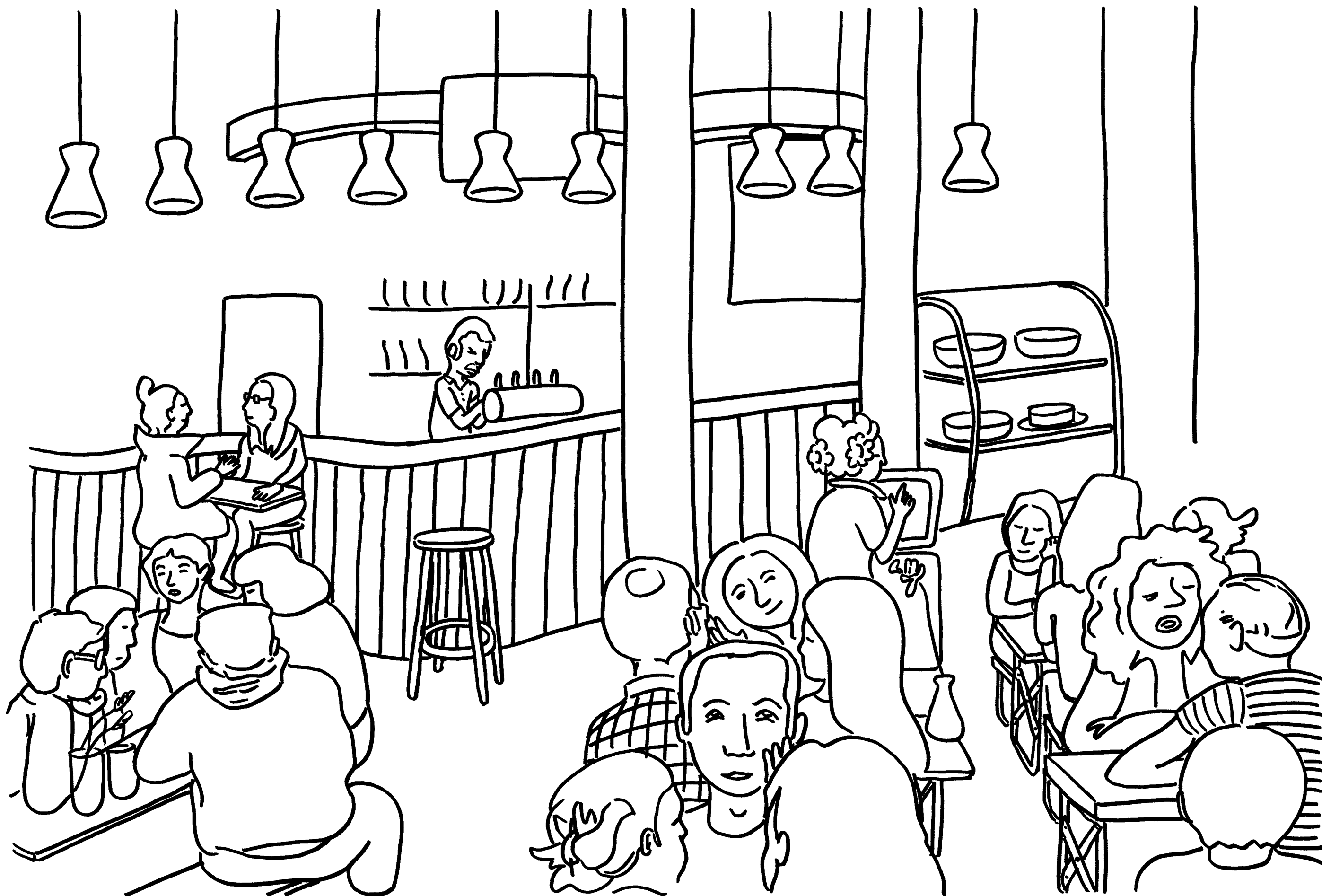
I am researching on recurrences in my process, but my research extends out of the artistic research project *Amphibious Trilogies* (A.T.) by Amanda Steggell, professor of choreography at Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO), and her collaborators, the professors Hans Jørgen Wallin Weihe of Lillehammer University and Andrew Morrison of Oslo School of Architecture and Design. I have been participating in their field works, given presentations and workshops in different contexts, trying to observe the recurrences of their work from the inside. However, in this reflection the focus will be on recurrences in general, and specifically in *#dancingrecurrences*.

I have also followed the recurrences of the writing-process itself, looking at my texts and drawings, and commented upon them throughout this reflection. The comments are written in italic. This process took different expressions and forms and opened up several paths. Some of them I have pursued here. Others I had to let be. There are four angry elephants throughout this reflection representing the topics that are relevant, but not central enough to be further pursued, and therefore entered into the blind zone of the process. I hope that the reader may feel free to spread the texts and drawings out on the floor, hang them up on the wall and ceiling and read them in whichever order that makes sense.

One question before we start: Why write in volumes?

My answer to that is that it makes it possible to dance within them.





¹ This text was published in the fanzine *Amatør #2* (February 2018), edited by Dag Johan Haugerud & Kjartan Helleve.

Today I overslept, but it doesn't matter because I dreamt so well. I dreamt that I saw a performance from the wings of a theatre. The performers were dressed in regular clothes and gold, and during the performance, they asked me to roll across the floor to the other side of the stage. There I found a receipt. I dropped it into a ballot box to show, in a very concrete and direct way, where I stand politically. Then I woke up.

Now I have gotten out of bed, taken a shower, had breakfast, and am sitting at my desk trying to concentrate. I have to write three pages. They don't have to be any good, but they have to be three. At least. I observe: The sun is out. Spring is in the air. Birds are singing in the tree outside the window. Cars are driving on the cobblestones and make a sound that is similar to when the last drops of water are being sucked up into the coffee percolator. The pirate flag on the balcony across the street is waving gently in the breeze. By how people outside are dressed, I can tell there is a chill in the air. Sunlight falls at an angle through the windows and creates diagonal squares across the floor.

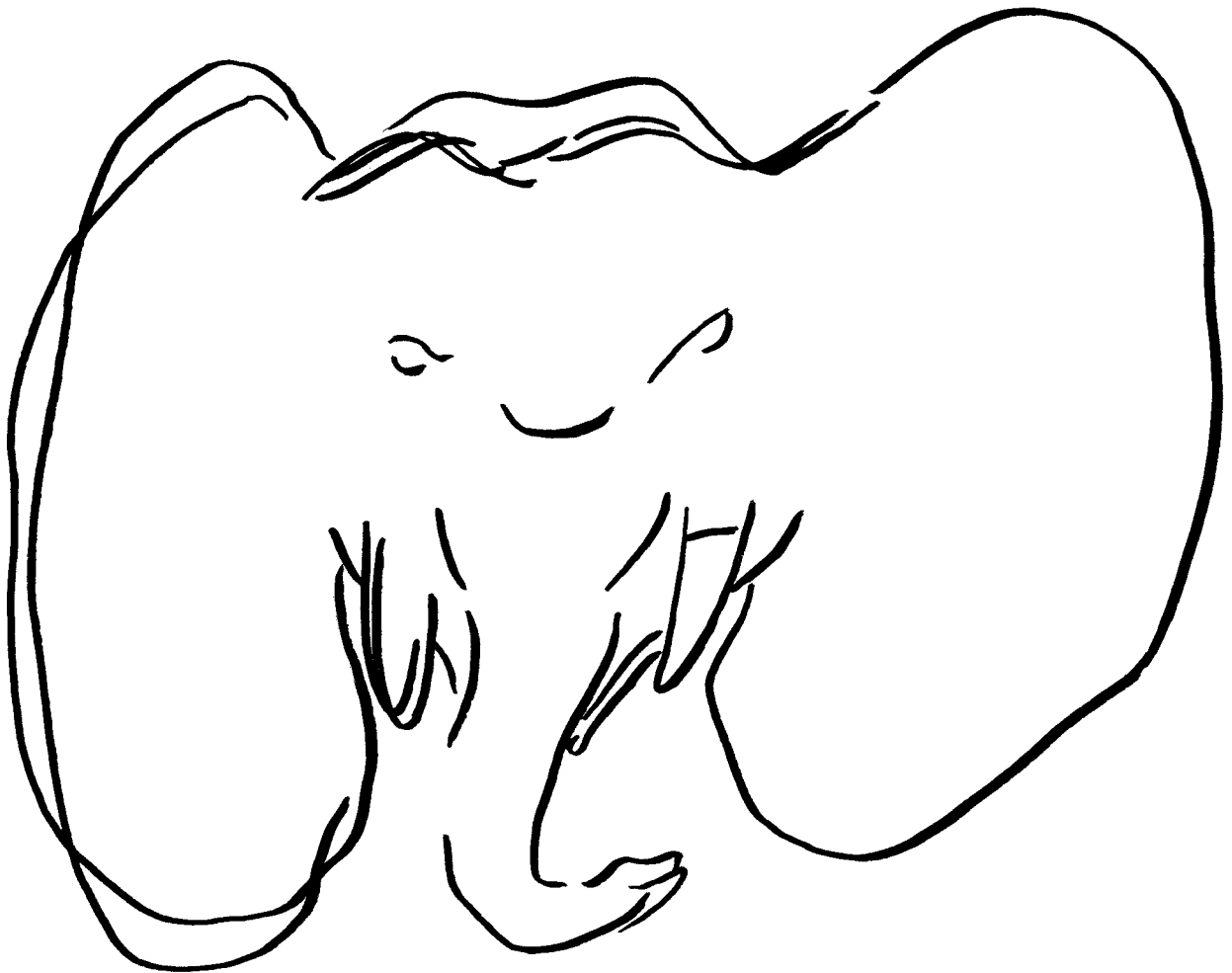
It isn't any good, but it flows. It has been flowing like this for a week. Every day. I get up, shower and have breakfast. Then I sit down and write, read and draw. From 10 AM until 7 PM. Every day. What do I hope to get out of this? What do I expect to find? I hope to find something that only manifests over time. I hope to find something that happens over and over again, but maybe not in quite the same way. I hope to become aware of the small changes within the noise of the sensational. The details of everyday life that easily get overlooked by saturated senses.

When I get tired of writing, I read. Yesterday I finished a book on emergence; meaning changes that happen from the bottom and up, and create complex structures like anthills, metropolises and the Internet. Even though the book seemed dated, I think it is going to influence my understanding of the next book. A book about contingencies, or a future event or circumstance that is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty, like new technology, social fantasy and the climate. Two movements. One movement backwards on how change emerges and one movement forwards on how change manifests. Join them together, and follow the movement all the way backwards and forwards, and you can get a sense of where the world is headed. The world is expanding and expanding until all of a sudden it isn't.

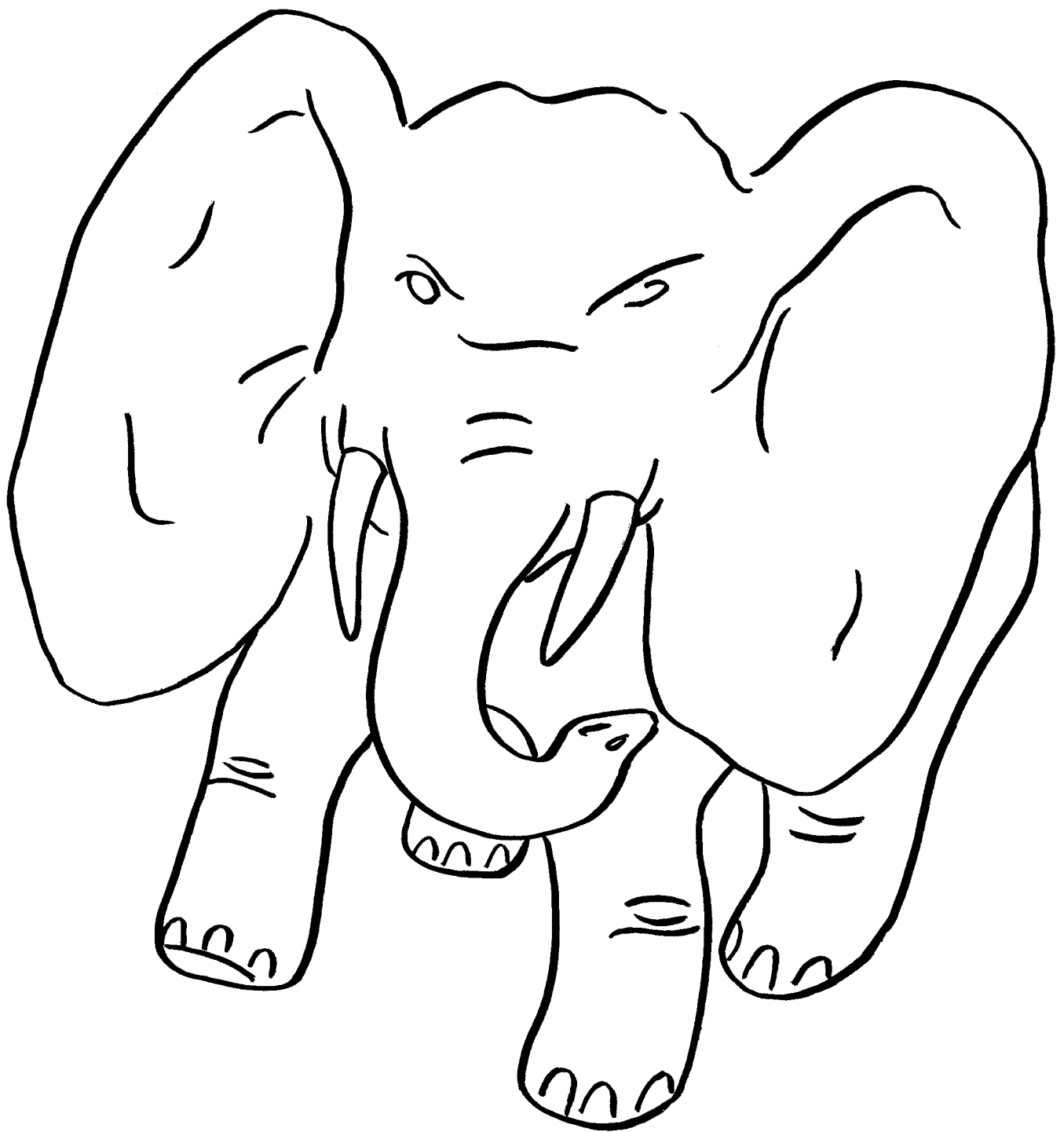
Now I think I will attempt to draw an elephant. A big and angry elephant. If I put the drawing of an elephant in the corner behind me, in my blind zone, then maybe I will be able to focus better so that the rest will flow by itself? I will try to draw it now. There. I managed on the second attempt. I put both of them, the successful one and the not so successful one, up in the corner where I cannot see them. Then I continue to write...

Blind zone

At the very beginning of my research, my supervisor advised me to notice the topics that entered into my blind zone. Throughout the process, I kept drawing angry elephants in the room and hang them on the wall behind me, in my blind spot, as a reminder. Every time I came across an elephant, it put my research into a larger context and connected it to relevant issues. These topics are important and relevant to my research in one way or another, and even if I didn't have the time and opportunity to go fully into them in these reflections, they have deeply influenced this work.



Elephant #1



2 Published in *Journal for ny dans*
#4 (January-September 2018) edited
by J. C. Lyster.

Elephant #2²





Christiania Seildugsfabrik 1856

Christiania Seildugsfabrik was established in 1856 by Ole Matthæus Hauge, Thorvald Meyer, Martinius Christian Brinch and Henry Heyerdahl. Architect P. H. Holtermann designed the factory. At the time, it was the second-largest building in Oslo after the Royal Palace. The factory used power from the river Akerselva to run the mill. It produced fabrics and sails for sailboats, and later, rope, fishing equipment and bags. In the mid-1800s people were moving from the countryside to the city in search of a job and a better life. The growing working class made up much of the labor force at Christiania Seildugsfabrik. In 1908 more than 900 workers were employed there. Most of the workers were women. The working conditions were among the worst in Oslo. Christiania Seildugsfabrikk closed in 1960 due to overproduction. In 2003 Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO) moved into the old factory.

Oslo National Academy of the Arts 2016–2019

The affect of Architecture

The first thing you see when you arrive at Oslo National Academy of the Arts is a big sign on the roof stating, “THIS IS IT!” The foyer has a glass ceiling that lets in a lot of natural light. On the right-hand side by the entrance, there is a cast of a sculpture of John the Baptist, taken from the original in Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim. The old building of the Academy consists of many large ateliers and stages connected by a set of perpendicular corridors. You need a key card to be able to move through the different parts of the building. If you pass through the old part and enter the new building, you’ll find the theatre and dance departments. There are two elevators in the new building. There is one that takes you up to Vrimla on the fourth floor, which is a large corridor with entrances to stages 1, 2 and 3. Vrimla is the Norwegian word for *mingling* or *stirring*. My office is located just outside studio 10 in Vrimla. It has a post-it note on the door saying “ParkBench”. Inside there are two small windows with a view of the river Akerselva and the big white bridge that crosses it. Back in Vrimla, there is another elevator that takes you up to the seventh floor where all the dance studios are, but to get there you need another key card. This is where the Academy of Dance is located.

One thing that I can say about the experience of working at KHiO is that the size of the building is overwhelming. When I am at the academy I feel like I am a small part of a bigger entity that I do not have a full overview of. I always say hello to people when I pass them in the hallway. Only some of them respond. Alone together. Together alone. This context requires the skill of being able to navigate through subtle and complex situations. I think this experience has influenced my work, that it’s reflected in the practices I have developed during the last three years, and can be traced within the work itself. At first, by working physically in this old factory building, I was subconsciously influenced by the building’s historical past. Later on, when I read about the history of the building, I became more aware of this. In this sense, KHiO is not an unproblematic environment. Nevertheless, I have tried to absorb the influence it has had on me, and let it implicitly be part of my research.

Dance

I have a broad sense of what I consider to be dance and dance as art. I consider myself a dancer, a dance maker and a facilitator of situations for dance. To me, dance as an artform is everything that relates to dance or sets itself within the context of that which has been considered dance, throughout its history as a form of art. By this I mean any expression that relates to the traditions or the histories of dance can be considered dance. The opposite is also true. Any expression that distances itself or puts itself in opposition to the histories and traditions of dance can be considered dance.

I am aware that this openness allows for the inclusion of expressions that are not traditionally experienced as dance, but I would rather be part of opening up the understanding of dance rather than participate in narrowing it down further.

When I dance and facilitate situations for dance, the first thing I do, before I look at the aesthetics of the movements, is ask: Can this be a dance? What kind of space would such a dance require? What kind of temporality would such a dance require? I don't necessarily find the answers to these questions, but I ask them anyway, and I try to ask the questions in different ways:

Sometimes I decide that it is the time that defines the dance. By timing it, determining that everything that happens between this and that point in time is to be considered dance, well, then everything that happens at that time is a dance.

Sometimes it is the space that defines the dance. By marking off a certain space as a place for dance, and then proclaiming that everything that takes place within that space is to be seen as dance, well, then everything that happens within that space is a dance.

Rather than judging the outcome of a dance process as good or bad, beautiful or not, interesting or not, I like to ask: Can this movement be a dance? What kind of dance would it be? And what kind of situation needs to be facilitated for this dance to take place?

In Dancing Recurrences, it is these very reflections, written in the three volumes that you are now reading, that create the context for the dance. When the texts, drawings and interviews are displayed on the walls of the performance space, they create a volume within which it is possible to dance. Not only is the practice reflected in the volumes, but in turn, the reflections are again affected by the practice that is unfolding within them.

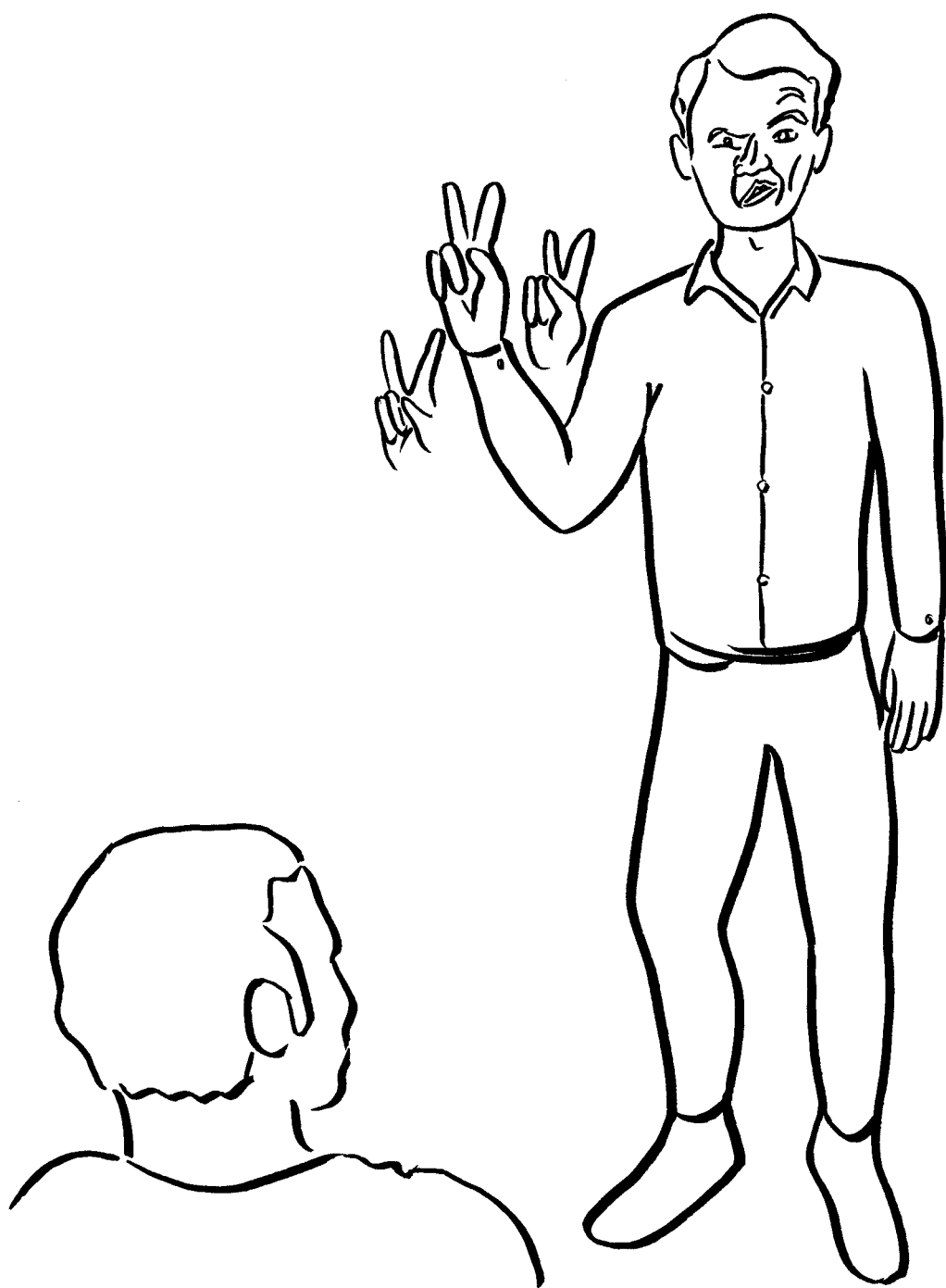
Dancing affect

Baruch/Benedict de Spinoza's statements on affect in *Ethics*³ have been confirmed by recent discoveries in neuroscience. The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio writes in his book *Looking for Spinoza – Joy, sorrow and the feeling brain*⁴ about how the impressions onto the body are directly shaping the brain's ability to conceive mental images and concepts of emotions, feelings and thoughts. Damasio writes: "He (Spinoza) is in effect specifying a set of functional dependencies: He is stating that the idea of an object in a given mind cannot occur without the existence of the body; or without the occurrence of certain modifications on that body as caused by the object. No body, never mind."

I can recognize this order of events in my dancing. First experiencing the dance, and then reflecting. Yet, in dance, the line between the two is blurred, because dancing is a way to reflect, just as the way we think affects the way we move.

3 Spinoza, Baruch/Benedict. *Ethics*, London: Penguin Classics Ltd., 2005.

4 Damasio. Antonio. *Looking for Spinoza – Joy, sorrow and the feeling brain*, United States: Mariner Books, 2003.



Me, dancing recurrences at Norwegian Artistic Research
Program (NARP, now Diku) seminar 6 February 2018

Dancing with Spinoza

Inspired by Joe Brainard⁵

5 Brainard, Joe. *I Remember*. New York: Granary Books, 1970.

I remember dancing with Netherlands Dance Theatre 2 in the mid-nineties.
I remember standing in front of the weekly schedule, looking at the plan, thinking,
How did I get here? Why did they pick me? Do I belong here?
I remember Rosalin Anderson, one of the ballet masters of NDT1, telling me that I
was good enough and that I fitted in.
I remember Jiri Kylian saying, “Bella figura!” to me during a costume fitting.
I remember living in an old Dutch villa in Burgemeister van Karnebeeklaan 7 in The
Hague.
I remember singing the song *Sour Times* by Portishead. “Nobody loves me...”
I remember Fabrizio Mazliah finishing my line, singing “...it’s true!”
I remember moving to Nieuwe Molstraat, right around the corner from Spinoza
House in Pavilionengracht.
I remember riding my bike to work every day and passing Nieuwe Kerk, New
Church, where Spinoza is buried.
I remember what it was like working in the AT&T Dans Theater, later Lucient Dans
Theater at Spuiplein, in the heart of The Hague. The building was designed by the
architect Rem Koolhaas/OMA. The building consisted of a set of perpendicular
corridors and hallways, distinctively designed with the intention of not creating any
place to sit, gather or have meetings. Rem Koolhaas writes in *S, M, L, XL*: “Program
divided into three zones: (1) performance: stage and auditorium; (2) rehearsal:
studios; and (3) administration: offices, common rooms, etc. Cadavre exquis with a
concert hall (architect: van Mourik): void of demarcation line is inflated to become
lobby, the first use of nothingness.”⁶

6 Koolhaas, Rem. (1995) *S, M, L, XL*. New York: The Monacelli Press
Inc.

I remember that the theater was built in cheap materials, mostly plywood.
It was demolished last year.
I remember that it was hard to rest in that building.
I remember having to squeeze together with my colleagues on one side of the
stairway during lunch breaks. While we were sitting there, other dancers would be
rushing past us up and down the stairs on the way to rehearsal. Other colleagues
used to hang off of the bigger platforms at the landing of the stairs to stretch hard-
to-reach muscles.
I remember smoking was permitted in the hallway outside the dressing rooms.
I remember people would either be smoking or reading a book in the five-minute
breaks between classes and rehearsals.
I remember being in love with a dancer in the company. He was ten years older than me.
He was one of the readers. I was one of the smokers.
I remember him reading *Ethics* by Spinoza.
I remember sleeping in every day for three weeks.
I remember Gerard Tibbs, the rehearsal director of NDT2, asking me, “What’s
going on?”
I remember Carmen Thomas, the manager of NDT2, liking me.
I remember liking her.
I remembered being asked by Hans van Manen if I had had too much of NDT?
I remember answering that NDT wasn’t enough.
I remember that I enjoyed dancing, but not so much performing.
I remember being good at dancing.

Lines that go forwards and backwards

Lines that go forwards and lines that go backwards. Lines of people who have influenced me during my education and work, and people who influence my artistic research.

Classical ballet teachers who influenced my dancing:

Marit Toresen, my ballet teacher from the age of 8 until the age of 15
Knut Breder, my ballet teacher from the age of 13 until the age of 17
Kevin Hagen/Anatoli Nisnevitch, my ballet teachers from the age of 17 until the age of 19
John Neumeier, my ballet master from the age of 17 until the age of 19
Jiri Kylian/Hans van Manen, my ballet masters from the age of 19 until the age of 22

Modern dance techniques that influenced my dancing:

Graham technique, my modern technique training from the age of 10 until the age of 19
Cunningham technique, my modern technique training from the age of 15 until the age of 19

Choreographers of contemporary dance that influenced my dancing:

Manuel Pelmus, dancer and choreographer that I worked with since the age of 18
Philipp Gehmacher, dancer and choreographer that I worked with at the age of 29
Raimund Hoghe, dancer and choreographer that I worked with at the age of 30
Vera Mantero, dancer and choreographer that I worked with at the age of 31
Antonija Livingstone, dancer and choreographer that I worked with at the age of 32
Jennifer Lacey, dancer and choreographer that I worked with at the age of 33
Heine Avdal, dancer and choreographer that I worked with at the age of 34

Choreographers whose work influenced the working process of #dancingrecurrences:

Eduard Gabia, Tino Sehgal, Alexandra Pirici, Manuel Pelmus and Anne Imhof

Dancers whose work influenced the working process of #dancingrecurrences:

Ann Christin Berg Kongsness, Roza Moshtaghi, Magnus Myhr and Marte Reithaug Sterud

Other artists and researchers who influenced the working process of #dancingrecurrences:

Amanda Steggell, Kristine K. Øren, Per Platou, Hans Jørgen Wallin Weihe, Andrew Morrison, Michael Klien and Fabrice Mazliah

Artists and academics who influenced the reflection process of Dancing Recurrences:

Kai Johnsen, Chrysa Parkinson and Frank Bock

Artists in the Norwegian Artistic Research Program who influenced my Ph.D. work:

Liv Bugge, Mette Edvardsen, Anne Haaning, Bendik Kaltenborn, Janne-Camilla Lyster, Cecilie Semec, Franz Petter Schmidt and Ida Falck Øyen

I see this movement, moving backwards and forwards along the lines of time and history, like a dance in itself; like a dance through a landscape of contemporary dance history and tradition, from classical ballet, through modern dance and into contemporary dance.

Past recurrences

Three examples of previous artistic processes in which I became aware of how a practice could generate recurrences, and how recurrences could be pursued in a work:

O

In the process of creating the performance *O*, a dance performance about the presence of absence that I made together with dancers Eduard Gabia, Christine Kjellberg and Rui Catalao in 2005, we worked with the task of physically addressing holes, without the use of words. The practice was to follow every thought and impulse with actions and movements in an interrupted flow, and to fill the ever-present hole of the room created by the floor, the walls and the roof with our presence.

After a certain amount of time, approximately 15-20 minutes into this practice, all four of us arrived at a natural stand still. There were many possible reasons for this pause. Maybe we were physically exhausted? Maybe we had exhausted all the actions and movement that we could think of? Or maybe we finally started to listen to each other? Either way, the continuous arrival of this unanticipated pause revealed itself to us as a recurrence of the practice. This pause recurred every time we practiced, and finally it became a leading element when building the structure of the piece.

Until the moment when God is destroyed by the extreme exercise of beauty

During the process of creating the dance performance *Until the moment when God is destroyed by the extreme exercise of beauty* (2006) by Vera Mantero, together with Antonija Livingstone, Loup Abramovici, Marcella Levi and Pacal Quinau, I noticed two events in the first month and a half of the process. The first event was that my feeling of a self was dissolved through a constant interruption and disruption, and the second event was that my body physically melted together with the other six performers into a many-headed, talking monster. This was not an altogether pleasant experience, but to me this experience seemed recurrent to the process, so I pursued this feeling both in content and form.

Different from the process of O, where we more or less stumbled upon the recurrence, I pursued these recurrences in a more focused manner in “The extreme exercise”, welcoming them to occur and recur. I was given the task of structuring the material with the dramaturg towards the end of this process. I proposed to follow this individual recurrence and it became an important element of the final performance.

Stormen 2013

I participated in the practice-based process of creating the performance *Stormen 2013* together with the dancer-artists Ingeleiv Berstad, Kristin Ryg Helgebostad, Pernille Holden, Sigrid Kopperdal, Eivind Seljeseth, Marianne Skjellbreid, Marte Reithaug Sterud and Venke Marie Sortland, which took place at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in 2013. Nine recurrences came out of the practice and became manifest each time the dancers practiced. These recurrences were: walking, running, swimming/drowning, rolling, singing, dancing, disappearing, appearing and melting. Venke Marie Sortland made an accurate and detailed description

of the process: “In this part the constant negotiation continued first and foremost with a ‘fixed improvisation’ as strategy. Rather than a precise choreography, the trajectory of the performance *Stormen 2013* consisted of a list of more or less defined tasks and situations in which the entire group participated.⁷

7 Sortland, Venke. «De største stormene møter man ikke på havet, men ombord». *Bevegelser*, edited by Sigrid Ø. Svendal. p. 84. (my translation) Oslo: Skald, 2016.

The “list of tasks and situations” that Sortland mentions are, in my experience, the recurrences that came out of the practice. When Sortland refers to fixed improvisation, she points to the specific practice that produced these nine recurrences. Neither in the rehearsals nor the final performances did we know in what order recurrences would happen, but we all knew that when all the nine recurrences had been performed, the rehearsal/show was over.

Emergence

In his book *Emergence*, Steven Johnson explains how “change can occur from the bottom up, how individual elements interact and organize themselves, where the result is collective intelligence – even though no one is in charge”⁸.

8 Johnson, Steven. *Emergence*, London: Penguin Books, 2001.

I became aware of emergence in connection with recurrence during a course on reflection by the composer and former Ph.D. student Trond Reinholdtsen. He explained how work can emerge through the practice of writing a piece of music, much the same way recurrences arise from the practice of creating a dance. I was recommended Steven Johnson's book "Emergence" by Dag Johan Haugerud. After reading more about it I could see similarities between emergence and recurrence and how a recurrence can emerge out of an artistic process.

Contingency

Contingency: a future event or circumstance which is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty.⁹ The daily use of the word “contingency” usually has got to do with plans in case of emergency, and in philosophy, contingency is used in opposition to necessity.

9 "Contingency", *Cambridge English Dictionary*, 2018.

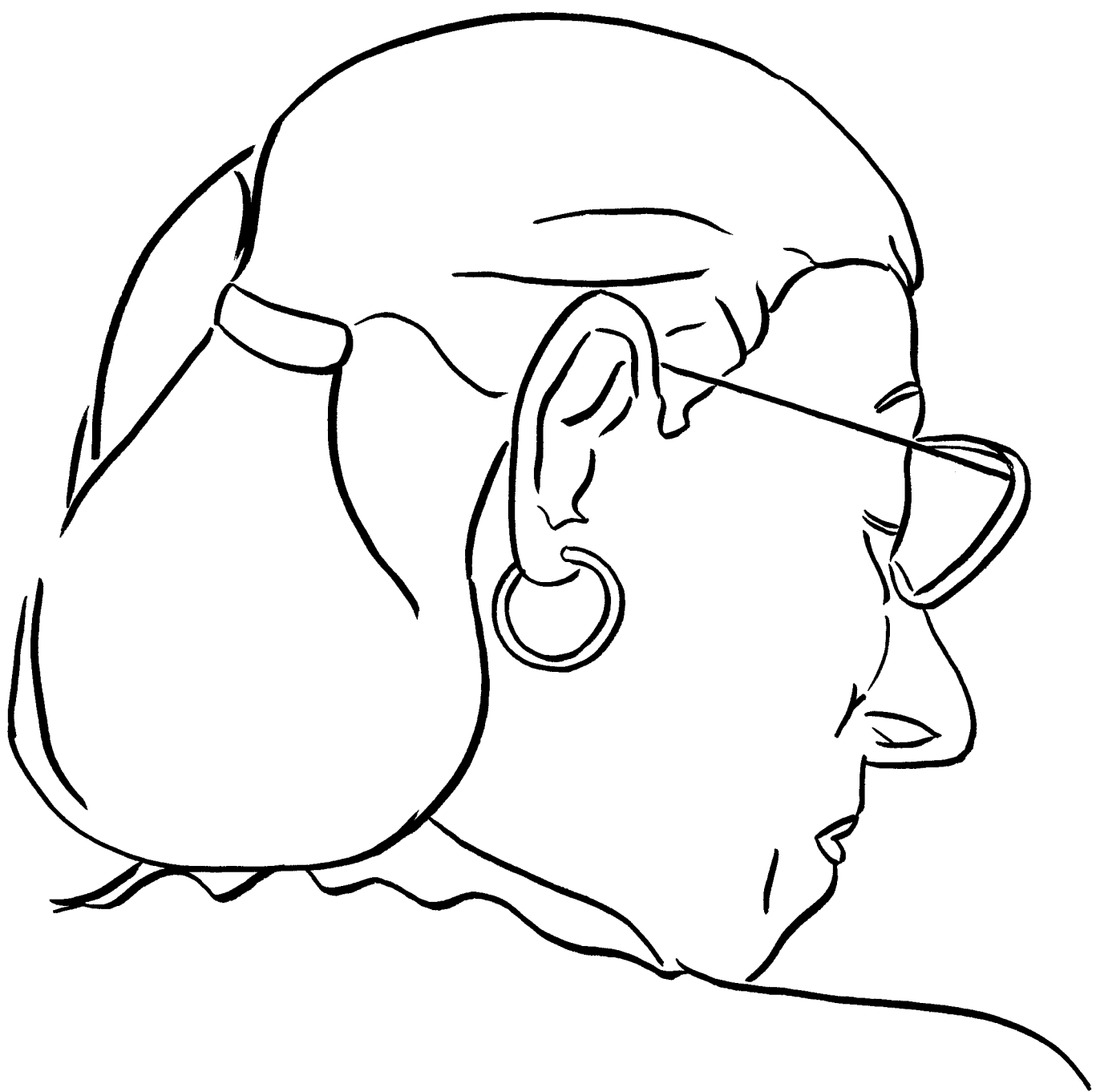
If a group of people get together and establish a practice, and if they continue practicing together over time, it is impossible that nothing will come of it. Something will become manifest, and if one trusts the process, and follow the recurrences that come out of the practice, then the work will reveal itself to the artists and, in the next instance, to the audience.

Dora Garcia is professor of contemporary art at KHiO. She recommended that I look more deeply into the relationship between the idea of recurrences and the concept of contingency. Ultimately, what I understand with contingency concerning artistic work, is that I can rely on the appearance of recurrences without necessarily knowing how or what they may be. I know that they will form and therefore I can count on them.

Between the aim and the outcome

My second supervisor, Chrysa Parkinson, once said to me that she could see the aim for perfection in my drawings in relation to my background as a classically trained dancer. I took her comment as an encouragement to aim for perfection. There is the aim, and there is the outcome, and there is a gap between them. Inspired by my ph.d. fellow Bendik Kaltenborn, the Norwegian comic book author, and his process of arriving at the final design of a comic book cover, described in his book "Tegning, form og farge"¹⁰, I will share five drawings I made of Chrysa. They are all attempts to try and capture Chrysa sitting and writing at the desk in her mother's atelier in Berkeley, California. I encourage you to look for the elements that are present in all the different attempts, from the first to the last:

10 Kaltenborn, Bendik. *Tegning, form og farge* (Drawing, Form & Color). Oslo: No Comprendo Press, 2017.



Chrysa writing #1, Berkeley, California 22 August 2018

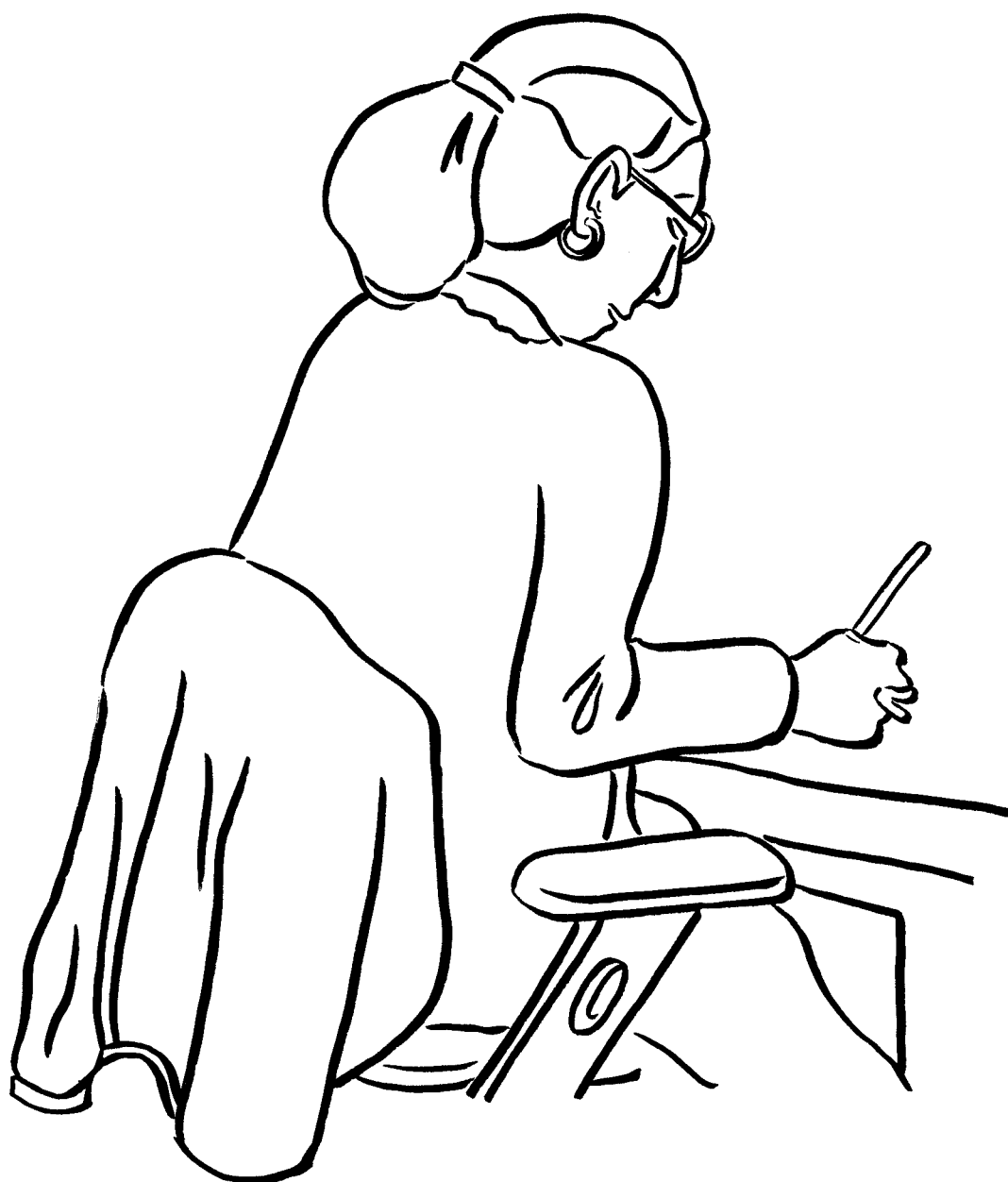


Chrysa writing #2, Berkeley, California 22 August 2018



chrysa

Chrysa writing #3, Berkeley, California 22 August 2018



Chrysa writing #4, Berkeley, California 22 August 2018



Chrysa writing #5, Berkeley, California 22 August 2018

Body to body

Volume II Body to body

Berlin, 12th of February 2018

Speaking from a body to a body. When I say speaking from a body to a body, I mean speaking from my body to your body. And I mean between us as physical beings. So how do we do that? Well, we are doing it all the time. We send and receive information, physically, and we project and analyze it on the go without even thinking about it. It all comes very naturally. So, how do I transcribe that kind of physical communication into this form of written and read communication that you and I are engaged in right now? Because physical communication is also sent and received, but it is not a language like the written word is.

Let's try an experiment: If you, for instance, imagine me sitting here at my working table, writing away on my laptop. Can you imagine what my posture is, how my shoulders are placed, and how my head is tilted? Can you imagine what mood or state I am in, as I am sitting here writing this text? And can you, from this image, imagine how I feel?

Now, it is this body that is sitting here writing this, that wants to reach your body, sitting there reading this. Yes, I imagine that you are sitting down reading this, either on a chair or on the floor of some vast space. I imagine that you are reading this on your computer screen or printed on a sheet of paper. I imagine that you are now trying to focus on your body just like I am trying to focus on mine. Like me, you are probably a bit tense, or maybe you are relaxed? Either way, you might shift your position just a little, to make yourself more comfortable. Once your body is in a comfortable position, my body is going to tell your body something, and your body will understand without even trying. Here we go:

wavy	fast-forward	never-ending	extravagant	changing
quick	slow	abrupt	sticky	
natural	organic	rhythmic	lustful	energetic
lackluster	relaxed	exhausted	unreal	
artificial	mechanic	roleplay	hot	chemistry
strict	discipline	cuteness	overload	
virtuosity	slow-motion	spirals	hypnotic	odd
creepy	queer	repetition	pattern	
perfection	familiar forms	synchronized	movement	

With this text, I attempt to capture into words some of the qualities that we experienced during the performative practice of #dancingrecurrences. I hope to bridge the gap between dancing and writing by addressing the experience of my body when writing the text, and by addressing the experience of the reader's body while reading the text.

Introduction to volume II

Volume II dives into the main research of my ph.d.-work, namely the performative practice of *#dancingrecurrences*. I describe how it came about, what approaches and strategies were used, how it developed, what qualities appeared and what recurrences emerged from it.

I have already started with an attempt to translate into words something that I experience happening during a performative moment, and the exchange that happens, body to body, between the performer and the witness of a performative situation.

I go on to explain how the idea of “mezmerizing” appeared from the qualities of videos found on social media, how we worked with those mesmerizing qualities, and how this again turned into the performative practice of *#dancingrecurrences*.

Included are a selection of reflections from myself and the dancer-researchers I’ve been working with: Ann Christin Berg Kongsness, Roza Moshtaghi, Magnus Myhr and Marte Reithaug Sterud. We reflect very differently on the performative practice and our thoughts on the outcome vary a great deal. But rather than looking for the recurrences of the practice in one reflection or the other, I propose to look for the recurrences that are shared in the different reflections.

I have also included a description of 1:1, an approach I use in order to translate the different qualities of the video into a performed moment. In addition, I offer an excerpt about 1:1 taken from an interview that I did with Fabrice Mazliah, a colleague of mine from NDT2 and a former dancer at the Frankfurt Ballet. Mazliah also danced in *Duplex* by choreographer Michael Klien, who is now professor at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. I will return to Klien’s significance in volume III, so here in volume II I include only the ideas that are relevant to *#dancingrecurrences*.

I then describe how a “body of work” is generated by the performative practice, a body that is larger than the sum of its parts, and how the stretching of time, or queering up of the temporality, affects this overall body of work. I go on to describe the role of the witness, and how the dance is influenced by the witnesses and vice versa. After which I share some thoughts about the recurring qualities that emerged from *#dancingrecurrences*.

Finally, in “What recurrences are not”, I get to the critical point in my reflection regarding the conditions that generate recurrences. There is still so much unexplored territory within the art of dance and dance making, and so much knowledge to be revealed when it comes to research on recurrences. By sharing my experience in these volumes, I hope it is possible for the reader to get closer to an understanding of the subtle and complex processes of work that form recurrences.

Use the following links in order to access videos of the performative practice:

Research Catalogue: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile>

Khioda: <https://khioda.khio.no/khio-xmlui/handle/11250/2425899>

CRISTIN: <https://app.cristin.no/persons/show.jsf?id=804948>

The practice of #dancingrecurrences

In the autumn of 2017, I initiated a process with four dancer-researchers. Together we established the practice of #dancingrecurrences. This became the practice that allowed us to research recurrences, and to see what recurrences might come out of the practice. But let's backtrack a little:

In 2016, I started to repost videos that I found to be mesmerizing under #mezmerizing¹¹. I coined the word *mezmerizing* as a play on “mesmerizing”, which derives from the name of the German scientist Franz Mesmer. Mesmer discovered a phenomenon that he called animal magnetism, which James Braid later renamed hypnotism. The qualities of the videos that I selected and reposted on social media all have a hypnotic quality.

11 Before the name #dancingrecurrences was found, the performative practice was called #mezmerizing-recurrences.

My first curating of the videos was a bit random, following my gut feeling about whether something is mesmerizing or not, so the contents of the posts were very different. Still, I realized that all of these different videos had something in common, and by selecting exactly those types of videos, I curated a series of qualities. There is also something queer about these qualities. After a while, the algorithms of Facebook and Instagram suggested posts with mesmerizing content and mesmerizing videos would show up in my feed. Time passed, and mesmerizing had caught the attention of friends and colleagues, so they started to post videos with mesmerizing content on my wall. Slowly, I had quite a series of mesmerizing videos.

The second curatorial filter was that any video that lasted longer than 59 seconds would be too long for Instagram, and therefore any video longer than that was immediately excluded from the series.

The third selection was done by my fellow dancer-researchers during the shared practice of #dancingrecurrences. In this practice, I worked with four other dancer-researchers: Ann Christin Berg Kongsness, Roza Moshtaghi, Magnus Myhr and Marte Reithaug Sterud. Rather than being selected on the usual criteria of skill and experience, I chose them based on a gut feeling. I think of recurrences as a queer strategy of navigating through complex and delicate processes, and I was looking for material that had some potential for creativity. I came to think of mesmerizing as potent material to establish such a practice, and as an interesting starting point from which to research recurrences. Gradually, a performative practice emerged. The practice came into my research through my blind spot. I didn't think of it. It was more like it dawned upon me.

The qualities of *#dancingrecurrences*

First, I introduced the four dancer-researchers to the material individually, because I wanted them all to have the chance to become familiar with mesmerizing on their own terms. In this way, I hoped to get as many individual approaches to the material as possible. I asked each of them to pick videos from the series and to study the movement qualities in the videos. I also asked them to notice what they found mesmerizing about the qualities, and we would discuss the different qualities we found mesmerizing in the videos. Here is a list of common recurring qualities of the *#dancingrecurrences* videos:

Movements:	synchronized movement, waves, fast-forward, never-ending basic-step extravaganza, change of focus, quick and slow, abrupt and sticky.
Natural/organic:	making rhythm, lust for life energy, lackluster, relaxed/exhausted, natural/unreal.
Artificial/mechanic:	natural/unreal, roleplay, hot chemistry, strict discipline, cuteness overload, virtuosity.
Slow:	feeling the slow motion, slow motion energy, spirals.
Hypnotic:	spirals, odd, creepy, queer.
Repetition/pattern:	perfection in familiar forms, synchronized movement, following the order of..., waves, spirals, never-ending basic-step extravaganza.

After we had found these recurring qualities in the videos, I asked the dancer-researchers to translate these qualities into a physical expression, or a little dance. We worked individually the first three months. After that, we met and practiced our different approaches side by side in one space, translating the mesmerizing qualities of the videos into physical qualities in the room, over and over again, in succession.

We found different ways of being mesmerized/ing:

- 1) Being mesmerized by the video.
- 2) Becoming mesmerized by our own dance.
- 3) Being mesmerizing for others to watch.

We sometimes would use sound and music, but always only the sound and music that would come with the video, and only from time to time. When someone has found a video with a nice soundtrack and felt the need for it, they would just plug their phone to the sound system and play the track for as long as it lasted or until they thought it was enough. Like this the sound became part of the same selection as the videos through the use of algorithms.

We found that we could also support each other by watching one another while practicing. We also found that we could ask one another if we needed help to fulfil some quality or another in one of the videos. The only rule was that one had to ask, and afterwards, when the one who had asked was satisfied with the translation, that person would have to end it by saying: thank you!

Reflections on #dancingrecurrences

In the shared practice of #dancingrecurrences, we searched for recurrences together. For three to four hours, we translated mesmerizing qualities from videos circulating on social media into small dances of mesmerizing physical qualities. We looked for recurring situations, events, actions, movements and states in the practice by physically asking my second research question:

How can working with recurrences become a practice and an artistic work in and of itself?

We found several recurrences, individual and common ones. We are still researching on this topic, so the recurrences will become clearer to us as we keep practicing. We developed individual strategies for translating the videos. Some tried to interpret it and translate the quality more abstractly. Others again tried to copy the video as concretely as possible. All the different attempts brought different qualities to the practice. Here are the strategies and experiences made by the other dancer-researchers:

Roza Moshtaghi

QUALITIES OR CONTEXT

we are working with videos (they);

They are short

They repeat themselves

They are there forever

They are past

They are there for everyone

They are mesmerizing

They are there and everywhere

They are safe

We are 5 performers/artists

We are inside an inside of an institution

We are looking at the videos on a small screen

We are here for three hours

we are looking at them individually, together and with you

we are trying our best to be inspired by them

we are having fun (sometimes)

we are getting bored (some other times)

We are getting serious (in between)

we are using our performative knowledge

we are doing

we are not doing

we are looking at each other

we are doing together

we are not doing together

We are boring

We are mesmerizing

We are vulnerable

* These three reflections were originally written in Norwegian and are translated by me into English.

The practice of mesmerizing to me is an exercise of finding a spark, interest and effort in the small videos from Instagram, which are curated for the occasion, to bring me into a flow, a state. I continuously work to let myself get enchanted by the videos, and to bring that out into the room through my body. Sometimes I keep the experience to myself, sometimes I show it, and sometimes I invite the viewer inside. This is happening over a certain amount of time, usually from 3 to 4 hours in one go. Sometimes it is easy to get enchanted, and sometimes it takes more of an effort. No matter, this work brings me into a flow, a state that can be described as mesmerizing.

Ann Christin Berg Kongsness

... Something that seems recurrent to me in this practice is how I try to relate to all of the parallel versions or procedures of this practice, for every person that passes by the space, by us who are dancers, and those who are the audience, simultaneously. How this, to a large degree, informs decisions I make, to create a space with a span as vast as possible, both for myself and for the audience who have sat there watching for two hours, as well as for the audience who just walked in ten minutes ago. To compose with time in such a way that everyone can experience the space continually as contingent, or open, and that anything can happen, and that any possible universe can unfold through us at any given moment. This is where I experience that this practice has very large potential.

Marte Reithaug Sterud

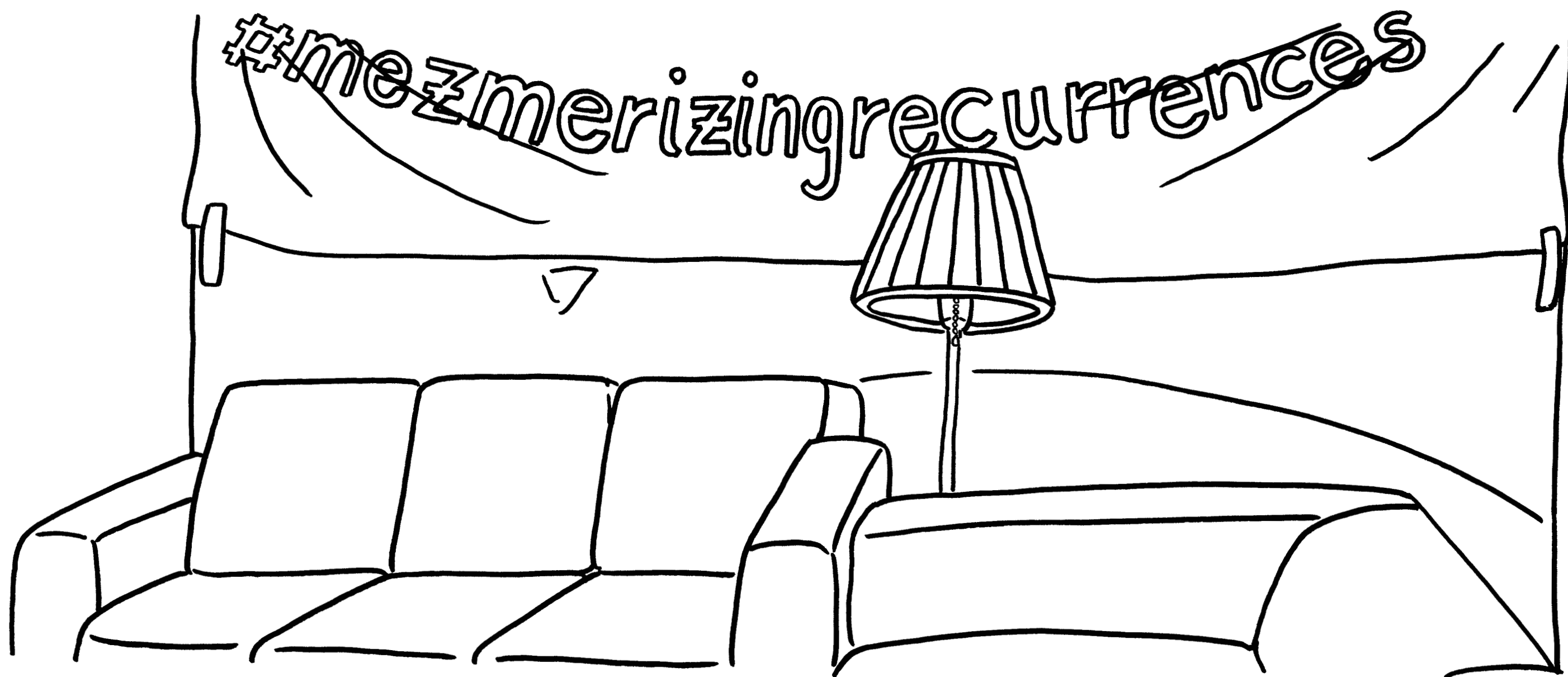
I have some strategies; for instance, I choose the same video one more time because I like the video or because I like my interpretation of it. I notice that I like to compose spatially, for instance, I chose some activity similar to that which is already happening, but at another level, or I respond to something in the sense of timing; I decide that I want to do something before I know what to do (slowly I have built a repertoire, so either way something familiar will appear). I have some mantras that I am busy with; dance as an object and dance as a contingency. When I think of dance as an object, I go into the material and do it. In a way, I think that I have a distance to the material and that the object needs duration and consistency to be an object, meaning that the material doesn't need to transform too much. With contingency, I think of the relationship to everything else that is going on, and that each dance object is unfolding independently, but still very present.

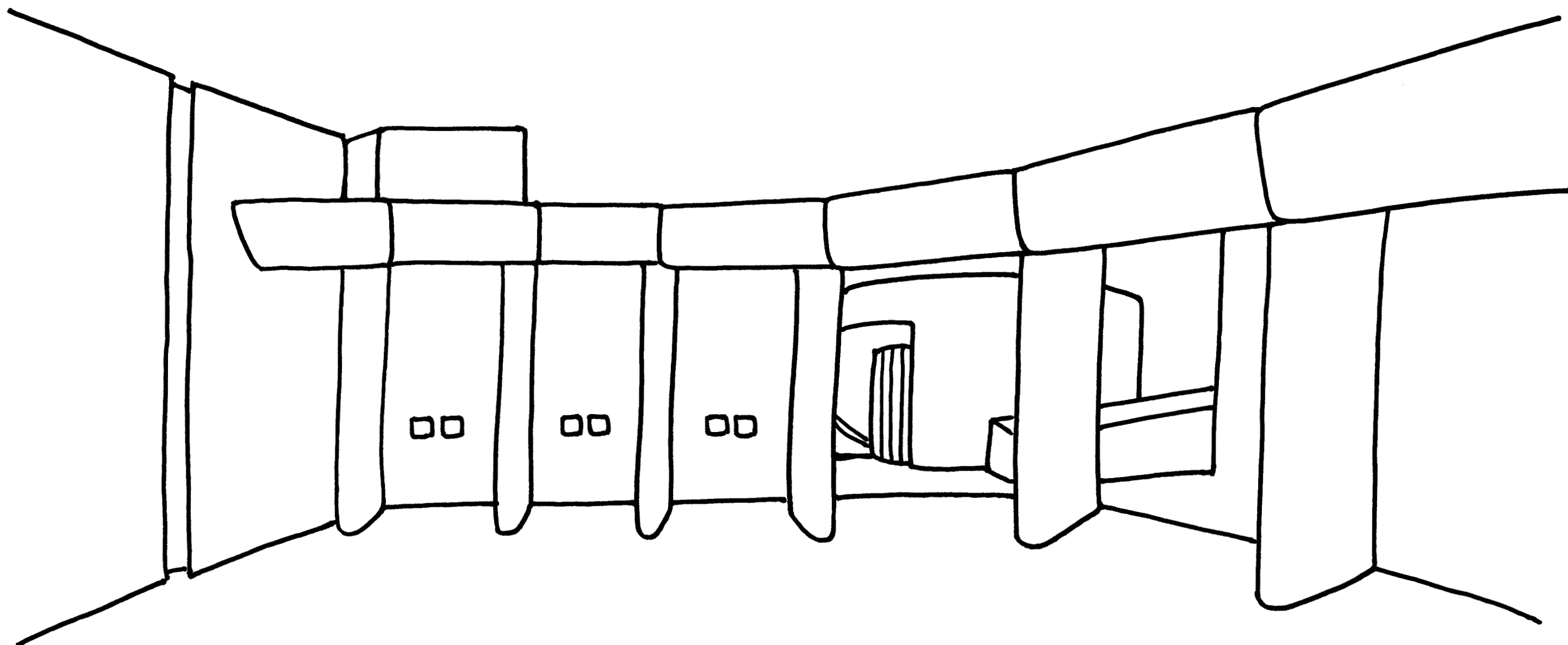
When I watch the others, I think that it is both very strange and very beautiful at the same time, and I like that combination; I never really understand what is going on, but that is why I continue to watch. It becomes that work that we are accessible and sensing in our bodies. Mesmerizing as execution – recurrence as landscape.

12 Drawing of Marte Reithaug Sterud by Brynjar Å. Bandlien first published in *Mer Bevegelse/ eng. More Movement* (my translation) edited by Sigrid Ø. Svendal. Oslo: Danseinformasjonen. 2019.



Marte Reithaug Sterud talking at midterm seminar at KHiO, 5 October 2018





Henie Onstad Kunstsenter at Høvikodden

If you want to visit Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (HOK) at Høvikodden you have to leave Oslo behind. Away from the city with its shops and traffic and enter into nature. The first thing you'll see when you get close is a sculpture park. The second is the fjord. Between the pine trees, you'll see the low and broad building right by the water. The building has a dated futuristic 60ies feel. Upon entering the foyer you might be reminded of the old terminal of the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris. Here too you can go places! Through your senses and experiences. The walls are filled with the vibe of all the exhibitions and concerts and events that have taken place there before, and the spaces invite you to imagine all the things that haven't happened yet. Visual arts. Music. Poetry. Dance. The idea of bringing all the different arts under one roof, and to let them contaminate one another and to bleed into each other, gives the space an exciting edge. All the contemporary artists that have been active at HOK¹³ over 51 years have left a trace. Maybe not a visible

13 Bergersen, Damm, Gellein, Hauglid and Kjelsrud. *Høvik Ballett*. Orpheus Publishing, 2019.

one, but it is possible to sense them in the whole building. In 1969 Merete Strand Bergersen, Kjersti Engebriksen, Kari Fjeld Glesne, Marianne Luihn Hermansson, Anne-Grete Lingsom and Wenche Lund established Høvik Ballett at HOK. It was one of the first and by far the most influential dance group to exist outside of the Norwegian Opera. The group existed at HOK for 20 years. Later, in the 90ies the artists Amanda Steggell and Per Platou, known as Motherboard, experimented with multi-media art performances at HOK.

The Studio is full of their vibe. This draws lines back through time and shapes the experience of the performative practice.

Reflections from my notebook

...the sensation that these are the building blocks; the videos, the dancers, the audience, the time, and space; but at the same time the sensation that this equals more than the sum of its parts. That there is something else present that wouldn't necessarily be pointed out or shown. That something has got to do with imagination (in Norwegian: forestillingsevne).

First looking at the activity in the space. Then looking at the video. Choosing where and when to enter the space. Feeling how the quality of the energy and movements are contrasting and fueling the body of work: the dancers, the audience, the experience before showing the video. Sensing how the movement was fueled. But then when looking at the gaps between the video and the dance, the audience has to use their imagination to bridge the gap.

It is like a magician doing magic tricks. First, show the audience how the trick is done, and then do it all over again. The trick will still work the second time even if the audience knows what happens because they want to be mesmerized (in Norwegian: fortryllet)! What's happening in the mind? What's happening in the body? What's happening in the room? What's happening in the mind of the audience? While moving in slow motion, I try to feel what else is going on around me. I listen. I can sense the other dancers. I listen to my own body.

From time to time the music cuts into this body of work. Giving it a new life. New context. It is on the border of keeping the wheel spinning, and at the same time the mesmerizing moment lasts longer so that you have the time to feel it from inside. Sometimes it goes all quiet, and I realize that the silence of the audience's attention and my focus on the simple task that I am concerned with, gives the common body of work new life, new meaning and potency. I could even feel how the silence or stillness that followed my action, kept ringing or hovering in the air a little while longer after I had halted.

I sensed how the activity I was involved in altered the quality of the other activities and actions in the space. And again, how my action altered the quality when that other action halted. And again, how when the music came on, how it gave new life to all that was going on. And how the silence that followed again altered the quality. I sensed how doing things together opened up space and gave energy to us and the room. I sensed how the music could do the same, but there were also times when the music took away something or simplified it.

After approximately two hours, I find the room enters into a hum. A different spatiotemporality. No beginning. No end. Only the doing. The hum is interesting in the way that it is like a tweaking, or queering, or skewing things up. I certainly did not try and control things from inside. I am dancing alongside the others as I like to do. Together alone. Sometimes together, but mostly alone. Also, taking care of the audience. Handing out programs. The detail and the total, at the very same time. Tweaking, queering, taking responsibility, taking liberties, sensing, listening, looking. The body of work survives with comfort, love, desire, lust, curiosity, beauty, mesmerizing recurrences. The recurrences are the qualities that appeared during these four hours. At precisely 15:59:59 the air conditioning in the studio switched back on, and the shared practice is finished.

1:1

When translating qualities from the video into dance, I used 1:1 as an approach. 1 cm on the map equals 1 cm in the terrain. Meaning, I attempt to translate the quality of the video in such a direct way that it immediately can take place as an expression of my body in the room. It is the quality of the video that I try to translate. Physically. Concretely. Direct.

At the same time as I am attempting to do it, I am aware that it is an impossible task to translate something in a 1:1 way. When I dance, all of my experience, my understanding and my physical ability to translate qualities are dancing along with me. Quoting Gregory Bateson quoting Kybizk: “the map is not the territory”¹⁴. If

14 Bateson, Gregory. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972. p. 455.

the attempt to translate qualities is the map, and the outcome of the actual dance is the territory, then there is a gap between them.

However, the interesting qualities are neither to be found in the attempt of translating nor in the outcome, but rather in this gap between the two. It is in the discrepancy between them, between the attempt and the outcome, that all the unexpected, interesting, human and playful qualities appear, and this is where I wish to search for recurrences.

Algorithms

In his lecture *Creative & Social Computing*¹⁵ by Dan McQuillan, he lists some qualities that we often accredit to algorithms, but that they do not have. Here are the first five:

15 McQuillan, Dan (2018) *Creative & Social Computing*, presented as a lecture at the symposium on 'Reimagining Digital Humanitarianism', Goldsmiths, University of London.

- “1 – There is no intelligence in Artificial Intelligence.
- 2 – Nor does it really learn, even though its technical name is machine learning.
- 3 – It is simply mathematical minimization.
- 4 – Like at school, fitting a straight line to a set of points.
- 5 – You pick the line that minimizes the differences overall.”

If computers are not intelligent and machines are not able to learn in our sense, then algorithms are nothing more than the shortest distance drawn between two points, connecting the dots most efficiently. Algorithms in themselves are simple mathematics. Is it first when the algorithms are put to a use that the ethical questions arise? Does this mean that algorithms can be worked with without ethical implications? Drawing lines. Connecting dots.



Excerpt about 1:1 from an interview with Fabrice Mazliah, dancer colleague from NDT2 and former dancer of Frankfurt Ballet and performer in *Duplex* by Michal Klien 13 February 2019.

Fabrice

What was exciting in a way was that we didn't... we never knew... because we performed it a bit. We went around so what was exciting was that we never knew what was coming. It was never this creative mind behind, choosing what would happen, so it had this very kind of surprise element. I say it's kind of manipulative in a way, but in another way, it's not because it is not caring about what we are doing at all. It is doing its own thing. It's more how we dealt with it that was exciting. How we could handle this, yeah, this proposition that the computer or the program would give us and also how we can make something interesting. You know like... and what could have been more like... I don't know what... but something that developed or the way was how to go from one thing to another, how things can break apart you know, be fragile, or more permeable, or more... you know, so, this is something that developed and at some point, it was also like... I am going to mark this thing... Finding different strategies to do it, where you can... of course you give me this thing, but at first, we were too... eh... we were way too 1:1. Too literal to whatever it was that the computer was giving. And then we were like, we don't have to be like that... Who says?! There were no nuances about the colors that fade, or be that or not, or the music and... So, I think that it could have gone to many, many places. But it didn't. But that didn't mean that we couldn't. So, basically, we were in this frustration of why are we stuck, you know?! We don't have to be. So, there was this, yeah, you know, like, yes, you are in a box, but being in a box, that doesn't mean that you have to be like a box. You can do a lot of things in a box. Obviously. So, there was a little bit this sensation of... which is interesting, I have to say.

Brynjar

Absolutely. I mean, this 1:1 thing, what you are saying, is also what I am experiencing a lot, so it's a... I mean I find that interesting, that similarity because I like the limitation of 1:1. Also, it's an impossibility, because you can't do that. It's like translating a block of color or a phrase into the moment, it is never going to be the thing, so it is always an interpretation, there is always some sort of gap between what you attempt to do, and what you are capable of doing. So, that's... I am really happy that you have had this experience because it is something I can also recognize in my work.

A body of work

After practicing over a longer period, the dancers and I started to think less of our composition in time and space and more of our common activity in the space. The activity of one dancer would overlap with the activity of another, and we formed a common body of work between us. Slowly the activity of this body of work became more and more important to us. This common body of work became more important than each one of us individually.

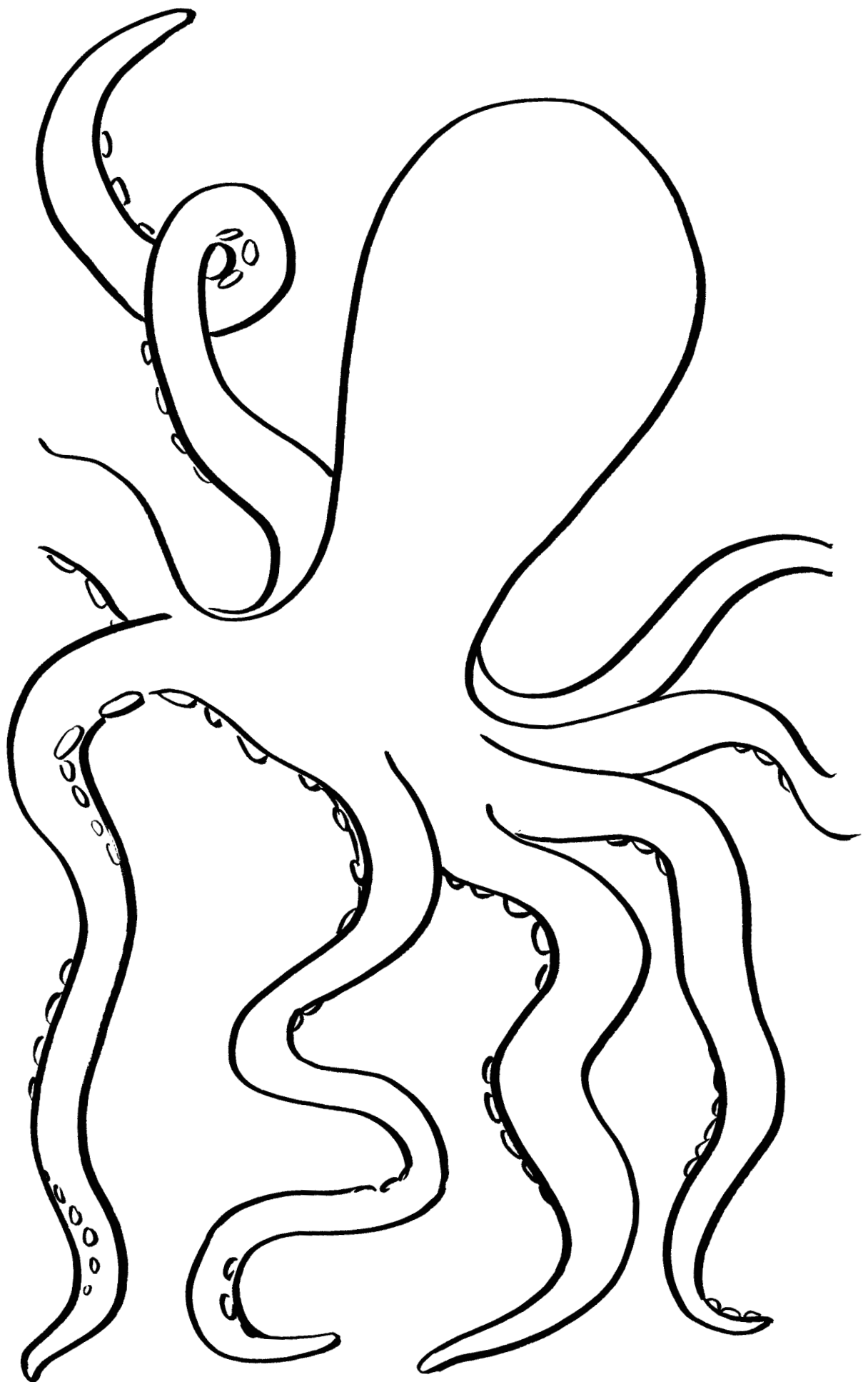
We started to think of our practice as a body of work that we equally shared responsibility for. It was up to each one of us to make sure that this body of work was in continuous activity. We were all responsible for ensuring that this body of work thrived.

Each one contributed to this in their way, and we were not always aware of what or how the other dancers were contributing to shaping the body of work. I could compare our individual, yet common activity to that of an octopus¹⁶. An octopus that has brain cells in each of its eight tentacles, so that each tentacle can act independently of the others. This enables the octopus to perform several complex tasks at the same time, even if the right tentacle doesn't know what the left one is doing. All the tentacles are a part of the same organism, the same working body.

16 Paraphrasing the design-fictional character of Octopa by Andrew Morrison from *Passage*, a fieldwork within *Amphibious Trilogies* by Steggel, Amanda. Oslo: Oslo National Academy of the Arts 2016-2020.

Being fully submerged in the work, and only functioning as a witness of the others' activities for short moments, none of us got a full overview of the practice. We would discuss how the practice was experienced from the inside with one another, and how it was experienced from the outside with other dancer colleagues who came in and watched us practice.

The idea of a common body of work gave a sense that we were building something together, the outline or the contour of something bigger that all the dancer-researchers were part of, but that none of us knew nor were fully in control of. Each one of us had the freedom and the responsibility to shape the practice, but none of us alone could make decisions on behalf of the overall body of work.



Octopus

Temporality

After having practiced #dancingrecurrences for some months, the dancer-researchers and I started to prolong the time frame in which we would practice, stretching the different attempts from one hour to four hours. After attempts of a few different lengths, we found three hours to be the perfect amount of time for our practice.

When I use the word practice, I mean a daily routine or an activity that is done frequently. It must be done over a considerable amount of time to become a practice. I believe that the moment it becomes relevant to the work is when the practice becomes a part of life.

In my experience with this performative practice, after approximately one to one and a half hours of dancing, we forget where we started and we are unable to see where the practice is going. The only thing we are capable of relating to is every moment, following in succession, one movement after another. A flow. A constant stream of activity. This is where I would claim that we enter what Elizabeth Grosz calls “a single relentless movement forward”:

“Time inhabits all living beings, is an internal, indeed constitutive, feature of life itself, yet it is also what places living beings in relations of simultaneity and succession with each other insofar as they are all participants in a single temporality, in a single relentless movement forward.”¹⁷

17 Grosz, Elizabeth. *The Nick of Time – politics, evolution and the untimely*. Durham & London: Duke University Press. 2004.

In the early stages of establishing the performative practice of #dancingrecurrences, temporality became a way to dissolve the narrative, the meaning, the conclusion, the final point. In this way, we avoided the usual dramaturgy of a performance with a beginning, a middle and an end. This makes the work look less like a piece and feel more like a practice, without losing the performative aspect. We shared the practice by staying within a mode of rehearsal and we were able to research recurrences in a room full of witnesses. By practicing over several hours each time, from one hour to four hours, to three hours, the witnesses were invited to come and go, in and out of the space as they wished. During the three-hour experience of the practice at Henie Onstad and at KHiO we had a feeling that the experience of time was extended.

Witnessing #dancingrecurrences

We always share the practice with an audience present, but we do not consider it to be a piece, and we never rehearse. In this way, #dancingrecurrences is at the same time artistic research and performative practice, but neither a choreography nor a performance.

At first, we observed each other. Then, later on, we opened the door to the studio and let some friends and colleagues enter our research and witness us dancing recurrences. This made the flow of activity more intense and continuous as we all could then focus on the act of translating the videos, and we could spend less time observing each other.

The witnesses were invited to sit on all sides of the space, so the practice was observed from every angle. This meant that the same dance was observed up close by the witness that sat nearby, but took place in the background for the witness who was seated on the opposite side. No one saw it from the same angle. No one had an overview.

We also decided that we could share the video that was the source of the dance with the witness that had observed that particular dance. We had the choice of first showing the video to the witnesses and then translating it into a performative moment, or to dance first and then share the video. Sharing the video gave the witness access to both the source of the quality and the physical attempt of translating that quality into a performative moment. Both options were practiced in an order determined by the dancer-researcher.

Some of the witnesses that stayed for a considerable amount of time said that they felt that they were part of something other than a piece or a performance. Sindre Jacobsen of Dance Information Norway said this: “I don’t feel like an audience member. I am something else. I feel such freedom, at that moment, when you are busy. I can go in and out. I can whisper a bit with Lise (Amy Hansen) if I want to. I can take out my mobile phone if I want to. I can come and go. So, I just wanted to say that I don’t feel like a member of an audience... in this situation, I feel like I am something else.”

By comparing these different qualities, being affected by the gaze of the witnesses and the feedback that they gave us afterwards, we found that the ones who were observing us experienced the same qualities. In this way, we discovered that we could trust our experiences from the inside and that the qualities we were dancing were transmitted as an experience to the witnesses.

The recurrences of *#dancingrecurrences*

In my experience, most of the processes in which recurrences appeared lasted over periods of more than three months and involved more than three people. That makes it complex to attempt to listen to what recurrences come out of the practice. The common recurrences are the ones that more than one person in the group recognizes as recurrent, and that appear more than two times during the process. Here are some common recurrences that were discovered during the performative practice of *#dancingrecurrences*:

After three or four hours of constant dancing, the practice has ended and I can't seem to remember the order of what I did, or when. It's like waking up from a dream where I was physically and mentally present, but at the very same moment that I wake up, I forget everything. But, I am left with this notion, a specific sensation, and next time I practice and a similar situation or event or action or movement appears, then I remember it all again. It is like we have built a common physical memory and collective intelligence of all that has happened in *#dancingrecurrences* from all the different attempts we have had, up until now.

It's like a buzz or the hum of a refrigerator that you don't hear until it stops, but then it keeps humming in your ear even if it now is silent. Except, for me this hum continues in my body. It rattles. It vibrates. It pulsates. It sings. It resonates. It trembles. It echoes. It lingers.

What is recurring in the practice of *#dancingrecurrences* is the experience of...

The plasticity of the space.

The plastic temporality.

Throwing our bodies into our common body of work, one moment after another.

The shift of presence when the task becomes embodied.

The collective intelligence and physical memory built over time.

The insistence of the moment. The insistence on the movement.

The minds forgetfulness of every moment. The physical remains of the movement.

The intimacy between the practitioners when asking for help, and when saying thank you.

The intimacy between the practitioners and the witnesses when sharing the videos.

The mood shared between the practitioners and the witnesses. One state. One hum.

The contradiction of a saturated sensation, and at the same time the experience of unfulfilled potential, after the practice is over.

What recurrences are not

It is important to distinguish recurrences from what they are not. Recurrences aren't repetitions or habits. That may also become manifest during a creative practice-based process, but repetitions and habits are more often than not the result of known methods and established choreographic strategies. Recurrences, however, are unforeseen and must become manifest more than two times to be recognized as recurrent. This continuous critical reflection is crucial to the research to distinguish recurrences from other situations, events, actions, movements and states that may occur during the process.

In my experience, recurrences are more often than not the outcome of practice-based processes that use a physical approach to develop a work of art. Those practices are more often than not developed by a group of three or more dancer-artists. The group will more often than not work together for a longer period, stretching from three months until half a year. In this way, there is space and time for the practice to develop and to let situations, events, actions, movements and states establish themselves. This also provides enough space and time to let the situations, events, actions, movements and states occur and recur.

When a group of dancers get together and are provided with enough space and time to form a practice, it is impossible that nothing will come out of it. It is not an option that the outcome will be nothing. No, not nothing. Something will take place. Something must emerge, crystallize and manifest. However, in a process that uses a different approach to develop a work of art, such as more strategic and structural approaches, the practices that are established must necessarily be different, and the recurrences that come out of such practices must necessarily also be different. Just because the recurrences appear differently it does not mean that they are not there. All one has to do is to keep practicing and patiently wait for them to let themselves be known.

Environments

Volume III Enviroments

Between April 2018 until February 2019, I conducted a series of interviews with five of my fellow dancers and dance-makers, all of whom have worked with algorithms as a source of dance.

Michael Klien is professor of choreography at DUKE University College in North Carolina. He created the work *Duplex*¹⁸ at the Frankfurt Ballet in 2002. Fabrice Mazliah is a Swiss dancer with whom I worked at Netherlands Dance Theater 2 in the mid-nineties, and who later worked with Klien on *Duplex* at the Frankfurt Ballet.

18 Klien, Michael. *Duplex*. Frankfurt Ballet, Germany. 2002.

I also interviewed Amanda Steggell, professor of choreography at KHiO, dancer Kristine Karåla Øren and multi-media artist Per Platou, all of whom collaborated in the Oslo-based art collective Motherboard (Steggell and Platou) on the making of *Maggies Love Bytes*¹⁹ (1996, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden).

19 Motherboard/Steggell, Amanda & Platou, Per. *Maggies Love Bytes*. Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Norway. 1996.

I asked all of them to answer my two research questions: How can the practice of recurrences become a way to understand an artistic work? How can working with recurrences become a performative practice and an artistic work in and of itself?

They all relate differently to the terms *practice* and *recurrences*, and their answers to these questions vary a lot. Instead of looking for similarities and contradictions in their answers, I have tried to learn how recurrences can be thought of differently. Rather than creating a tautology by repeating the term *recurrences* as a mantra, or proclaiming it as a self-fulfilling prophecy, I listened to their answers and let their associations take me further. Rather than looking for an answer to what recurrences are and how they can be seen, I propose, like the reflections in volume II, to look to the environment created between their different answers.

It was through the environment of these interviews that I first saw the link to cybernetics within the work of these artists in general, and more specifically the work with algorithms that concerns *#dancingrecurrences*. Steggell and Klien were among the pioneers within the field of dance and dance-making to use computers and new software in the early stages of the Internet in order to generate choreography, and there is a clear link between the works *Duplex* and *Maggie's Love Bytes*. Here I try to outline these links and create an environment for the performative practice of *#dancingrecurrences*.

My research has been conducted in a parallel track to the work of Amanda Steggell, following the fieldwork of her research process Amphibious Trilogies (A.T.). Steggell is engaged in practices quite different from mine, and I am trying to recognize the recurrences that come out of them. In the moment of writing this, A.T. has not been concluded and I have not been able to recognize what is recurrent in the work. However, I have been able to recognize some recurring elements in Steggell's earlier works, and so I disclose them here.

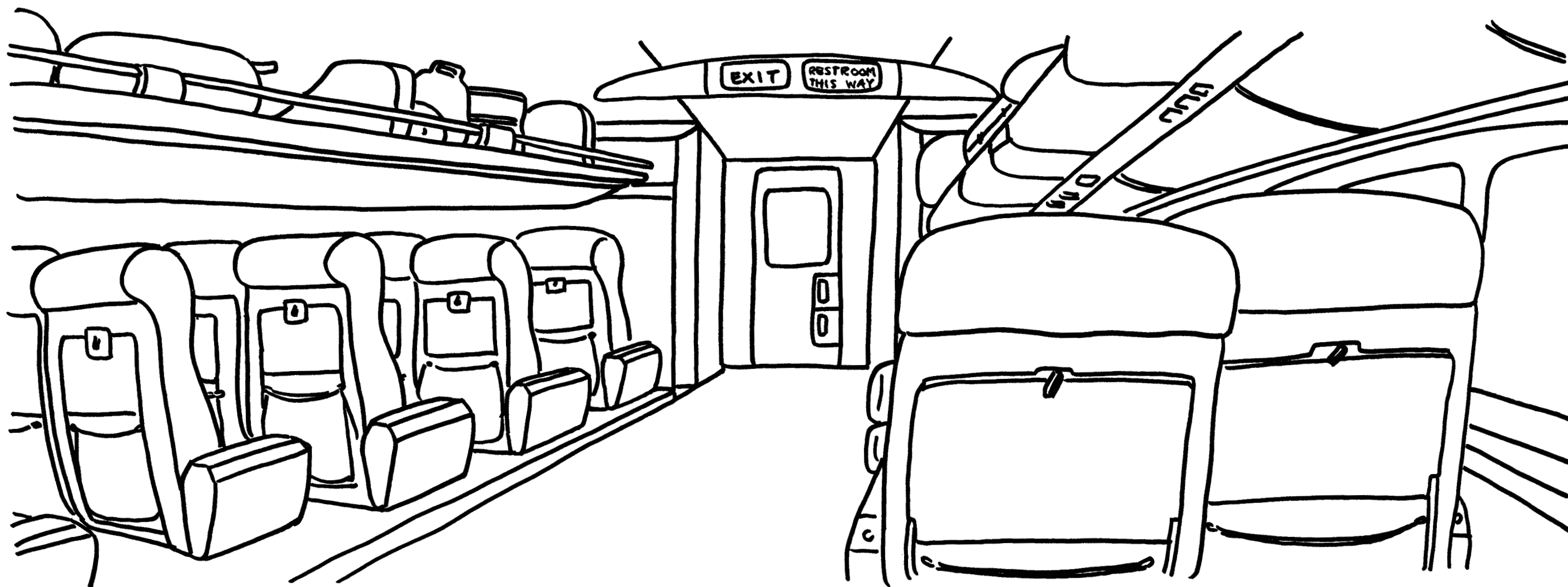
Excerpts from an interview with choreographer Michael Klien about algorithms in *Duplex* (2002). The interview took place at Duke University College, North Carolina, 18.10.18.

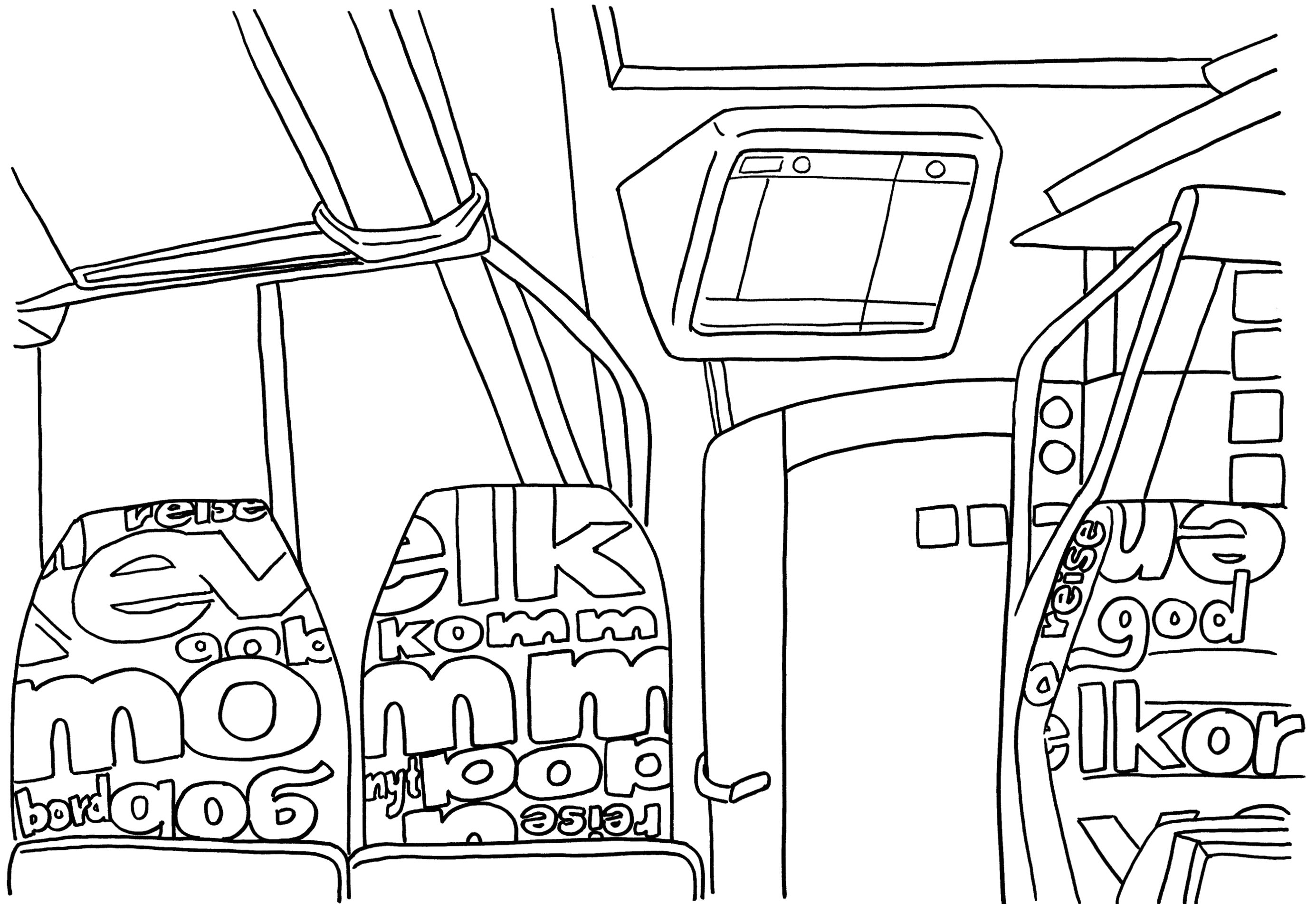
Brynjar ...but that's why I wanted to talk with you specifically about the work *Duplex*, which are the first work that you mentioned in your Ph.D. dissertation *Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change* (2008). Could you speak about the practices that you developed to come up with such work? And, also, if any recurrences came out of those practices?

Michael I think these two works, funnily enough, I don't talk about anymore. That's the cut-off-point for me. After *Duplex*. So, I did *Nodding Dog* and *Duplex*, and the process was interesting. The thing is that they almost formed the framework of my future works, you know, of thinking (...) And I came up with this software system called The Choreographer, at that point. Similar to a music sequencer, to display color-coded sequences. Like a Lego-block system. Like a red thing would be the turning sequence. The blue thing would be the jumping sequence. And we had names for all the sequences. And you could now run the sequence on the monitor, and the dancer would dance whatever comes. And the order of the structure would be determined by a sequencer. By a randomizer. And you could then start creating rules, like blue and red can go together if... And then you can make exclusion rules. Like red for example, would only be a sequence for the legs. Blue would only be a sequence for the arms. By shifting them above each other, you could always kind of... yeah, they were choreographed so that they could always fit, but they could also stand alone as well. And so, some sequences worked with some, and some others worked with others. So, you fed the system into the computer and all that into the software, that was programmed back then with Mac's NSB, a visual interface. At first, my brother did the programming, later on it was Mike Rothwell, who now is working with Ewan McGregor. And we came up with this very simple system that was called Solo One, and it was just a solo, only comprised of fifteen... twelve or fifteen different sequences, that were running on a sequencer according to an algorithm. It was always re-composed. New and new and new. (...)

Brynjar So, that was left to the dancer then, to interpret those colored blocks?

Michael Yeah, but I was being very dictatorial. I picked a dancer that was very neo-classically trained. The blocks were extremely tightly choreographed in the traditional way. Like there was no room for interpretation. There was no room for improvisation within it. Somehow you had to connect the sequences. But they were also choreographies, so they were open in the movement, so they would all fit into each other...





Excerpts from an interview with Fabrice Mazliah, dancer of Frankfurt Ballet about working with Michael Klien in *Duplex* (2002). Skype interview 13.02.19.

- Brynjar** Yes. So, that's the context. Nice. I have a bit of an agenda here, so you just feel free to talk as you see it best, or how you understand my questions... You don't have to feel bound by my inquiries, but I am kind of interested in what kind of practices you engaged in. I know about the computers and all that, but still; how did you go about it? What was the daily work? The way you entered and worked in this process? Physically? Practically? So, yeah...!
- Fabrice** Em... well, it's kind of vague, but my memory is that we first created sequences, I don't know what you call that... variations... no, not that...
- Brynjar** Combinations? Steps?
- Fabrice** Yeah, like choreographies, if you like. One step after the other. And the way that we created this stuff... (...) so there was this computer that generated a kind of program, animation, whatever with colors. Each sequence had a color (...) it would complexify while it goes, I think, but I had my colors, Jone [the other dancer] had her colors, and our duets had their colors, and of course, sometimes... you had the things. It's like basic improv ideas, you know, like, you do the duet material while doing your solo, or you do your solo while you do this other thing, and then... (...) let's say I had five duos, I mean solos, and she had five solos, so she does her solo, the red solo there, and I do the orange solo with her, but I start after her, because it was all, like it was moving, it was clear.
- Brynjar** Like in music, you have this kind of, different parallel tracks.
- Fabrice** Yeah. And you had to start it there, and you know how it moves in a way, so it's with the music of course, so it's with a tempo, so she starts after, so it composed everything. In a way like I start doing this [shows a movement], and she start doing this [shows another movement], and maybe next time it happens that I start doing this [shows a movement], and she starts doing this [shows another movement] at the same time, or she does another one that goes like that [shows another movement], I don't know... And so, I think you know at one point, I don't think, but then maybe there was some duet where we also had to do our solos and the duet at the same time? But I think that it was much simpler, like it was binary, like bam pam. She did her thing. I did my thing. We did the duets. It's kind of composed. Basically, I think that that's what happened.
- Brynjar** And all this you did, I mean you went in the studio, you made the phrases, you got the system installed on the screens, and you learned how to read it, and then you just practiced that? Just did that every day in the studio? So, the score was set, the movement was set, the practice, translating those things into real time. Basically.
- Fabrice** Yes.

Excerpts of an interview with Michael Klien about the recurrences and glitches of *Duplex* (2002). The interview took place at Duke University College, North Carolina, 18.10.18.

Michael ... because also sometimes things went wrong, and it was all a burden then, with the decision-making. And those little mistakes were fantastic, like for example, he would not catch her at some point, by misunderstanding, and she would get really pissed, genuinely angry, that he would have missed, that the trust was let down, and she would attack, with the movement that she had, in the role, but she would completely change, and she would almost hit back and like, and he would kind of try to... for the rest of the work, he would try to make up with her, you know, slowly inching towards her, because they had ways of... their spacing was partly determined by themselves because it depended on what was coming next. Would they want to go closer... but then you realized they actually had a lot of frameworks to play with. Like she was so pissed that he was like almost dancing around her like a little boy, trying to figure out a way back, how can he get her to engage with him, you know. And this became the key for..., that's the super interesting part.

Brynjar These small glitches.

Michael These small glitches in the matrix. Absolutely. The glitches in the matrix that required the human mind to step forward. And to be shown, to reveal itself, for insecurities to reveal themselves, for shame, for emotions to reveal themselves. For the sweating, fleshy, loving, hating self, and I think that was the beauty of it. And that came in little drips and drops, it oozed in between the structure that I've created. And so, it was serendipity.

Brynjar I find that quite interesting. The strict score, and out of that score comes life.

Michael No, I wanted to create a diamond. But out of the structures of that diamond, all the puss was squeezing out, and life, blood, and life came out of the little pores of that diamond. You realize that this is interesting, like, you almost try to gather it at the bottom. So, that was totally unexpected. And that was why I completely shifted afterward, into *Einem* [another work created for the Frankfurt Ballet].

Brynjar So, it was important. You were really at the edge of your capacities, of your choreography. And the dancers were at the edge of their ability to dance the choreography, and exposing it too, getting the feedback...

Michael Yes, I realize in the end that I talk a lot about it, from the Internet I realize that... Like in *Duplex*, I really knew what was good and what was bad, what they should do, what they shouldn't do, but then when they were performing it, I realized that I didn't know. That the stuff that I didn't make, that I didn't plan, was the stuff that I connected to. And that kind of provided a different kind of

quality to the work, that I wanted to look for. And so, for that next work, I decided that I am going to do a whole solo, where I never say good or bad, where I don't do a single step, where I don't do a single spacing, where we don't even do timing. Like, we're not going to do anything. I am not going to decide any of this.

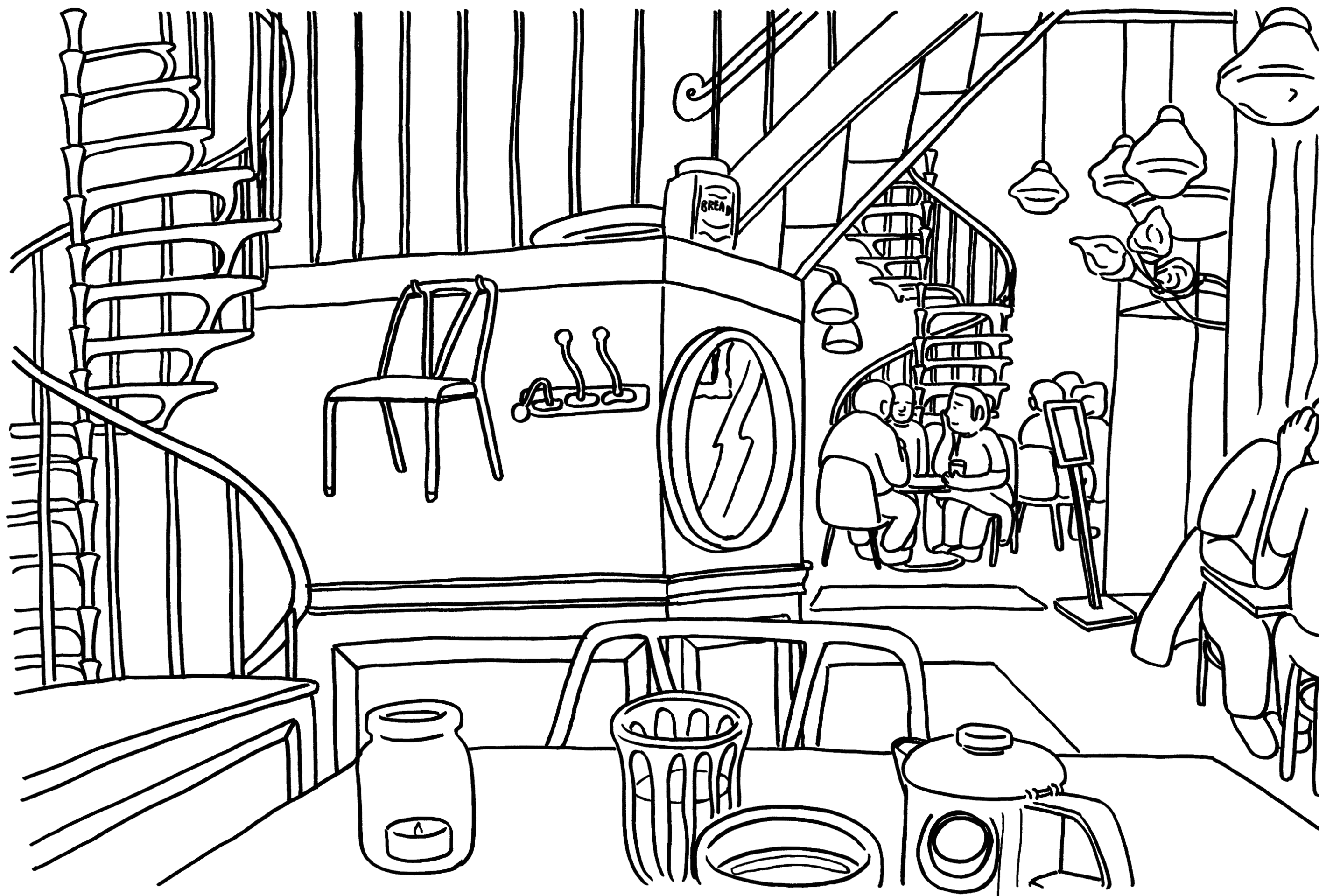
Excerpts from an interview with Amanda Steggell about the use of algorithms in her work *Maggie's Love Bytes* (1996). The interview took place at Grorud in Oslo on the 29 October 2018.

- Amanda** But they [the dancers of *Maggie's Love Bytes*] weren't supposed to be seen looking at the screen, at what was happening, so that was why I had to communicate with them quite a lot.
- Brynjar** But, weren't they looking at the screens?
- Amanda** Sometimes, but they were not looking... they had to be somewhat independent. Otherwise they would just be looking backward into an image, so we had to...
- Brynjar** But weren't they getting commands through the images?
- Amanda** Yes, but only when they were in that phase when you can look at the wall.
- Brynjar** The wall?
- Amanda** Yes, the wall that the things were projected onto.
- Brynjar** So, from time to time they would look to the wall to get commands through images, and then they would do something accordingly.
- Amanda** But it would be like, this sound, would be for everybody (...) just seeing it up there or... and then they would maybe have their plunger up there and they would probably select somebody, a face, on the wall.
- Brynjar** So, in *Maggie's Love Bytes*, the Internet technology had improved, so you could work with faster images? Or how were the images selected and distributed?
- Amanda** We didn't have to decode them at this point because the web pages, you know the Internet pages weren't there in 1994, that came in 1995, so it made it much easier to grab them.
- Brynjar** So, in *Maggie's Love Bytes* it was done live, like you could find images and you could download them immediately?
- Amanda** No, some people made them, but I also made a webpage, talking about *Maggie's Love Bytes*, because you could also contribute to... would you like to send Maggie a gift? Here is the gift box. (...) Proper postbox from London. It was really fun. And messages. And then we would open them. And actually, there was a Darth Vader who came up then, I don't know why, but he came into the next one. He had the plunger. Hahaha.
- Brynjar** Darth Vader with a plunger. Fun. But did you open it during the show? So, it was live?

(...)

- Amanda** Yes, that was it. And then when that was finished, they knew almost what was going to happen next, but how it happened...? So, it was like... what was kind of planned, and what happened, was a different thing. But at least there were some guidelines. So, it was like a crazy talk show in a way...kind of... something... or games or...
- Brynjar** ...of coded messages and dance and music and sounds... ok... How long was it? Approximately?
- Amanda** Everything from twenty minutes 'til one and a half hours.





20 This interview was originally in Norwegian, and then afterwards translated by me into English.

Brynjar So, if you weren't working in a dance studio, how would you say that you worked?

Per I guess it was like... We traveled around and saw a lot of different stuff. We read a lot of books and saw a lot of exhibitions. We traveled a lot and I took Amanda to a lot of different places. The things I thought I knew a great deal about. I knew a little more about electronic art than Amanda, at least in the beginning, and I was co-curator for Electra at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter. So, we drove around a lot, saw exhibitions and talked with people. And Amanda took me to the School of New Dance Development in Amsterdam and we got to know someone called Scott deLahunta. He was also very interested in this type of thing, so he invited us to talk at a conference. So, we got kind of pulled into this, and then we did this show at Electra, and that was sort of the beginning. That was our first common project.

(...)

Per But, yes, again, something that is a kind of recurrent theme, and something that has been recurrent, at least after the 2000s with Motherboard, and that is that we were extremely concerned with so-called mistakes. And that's mistakes in the form of glitches because we constantly experienced that machines were crashing, and that sort of thing. This happened to us all the time. And we became concerned with these mistakes because they created a sort of drama.

(...)

Per Delicious. But there is one thing that I would like to say, and I think Amanda would agree, and that is that this mistake is quite recurrent, and it is always highly original. So, it is hard to look for it, to find it and to cultivate it, because when you start cultivating it, then it is no longer a mistake.

Brynjar But after a while, you became so experienced that you could start counting on the fact that mistakes would turn up, that you in turn could... that you knew that you could use. Then one can start working with one's recurrences, because one knows what they are, and one can start counting on them appearing...

Per To know, and maybe just add it to the recipe, and say... take a bit of this... you take this and that much of flour and water and sugar and so on and so on, and then you need this and that much of that which is to the left in the back of the top shelf in the refrigerator. Two full spoons of that, no matter what it is, and just hope that it hasn't turned or something, and if it has, then it will just turn out that way. I don't really know if this is a good metaphor...

21 This interview was originally in Norwegian, and then afterwards translated by me into English.

Kristine ...but then there was *Maggie's Love Bytes*, which in my experience released in many ways her [Steggell's] artistry more than *Arena 2*. *Arena 2* was a kind of transition into technology, right?! (...) because we were dancing in bikinis, and we had this plunger, and when we hit on... I remember us rehearsing this... we had this wall, in front and behind, we had the virtual, we chatted with guests from abroad through the Internet, we had... (...) We were hanging out.

Brynjar But can you say something more about cultivating growth? I feel that it has got something to do with both practice and maybe also recurrences... What kind of recurrence(s) came out of this practice/work?

Kristine You mean how it grows? How it, in a way, gets nurtured? That is the strangest thing. It is... it gets nurtured by the absence of interference.

Brynjar Exactly! A bit like plants?

Kristine Yes, in a way. At the same time, being part of a collegium, experiencing yourself as part of a context, because, obviously there is a context in relation to many other things that one does not necessarily understand the magnetism or connection between, but somehow, you just have to let it emerge, if you see what I mean. One just has to stay with it, stay in the room, do things together, set things up against each other, place it differently in time, on a different length. One gains experience through that. It has to be allowed to coexist over time, and then the connections emerge, more so than it being decided that something has to grow. And sometimes, we were unable to see the connections, and that was very frustrating, and then we had to go and get drunk. But equally, those times when it did emerge, one feels like a genius, if you see what I mean (...) But it has also been so that, in certain productions, we got very frustrated, because if one expects that to happen, and it doesn't, then you feel very left out. That was also a recurrence.

(...)

And then there was *Arena 2*. And I remember that very well, because that was the first time I met Per Platou, and that was, I remember this very well, because then there were images that appeared on the wall, different images, and Per played some sounds to them, and it is a bit vague if Per chose those images or not, but those images, they functioned like commands for what we were going to do on stage. That was when she [Amanda Steggell] started working with the white wall and projections and... We had these fantastic plastic costumes. Costumes play between different pop-cultural references in a very quirky, queer, and crooked approach to relations seems to be quite recurrent. I find.

My reflections on the conversations and interviews I had with Steggell, Klien, Mazliah, Platou and Øren.

Having followed Amanda Steggell's work over the last twenty-five years, I can see how her early use of computers, the Internet and algorithms was groundbreaking, both in the Norwegian dance scene and abroad. Steggell has been involved with extended choreographic practices since the mid-90ies. She has been facilitating situations for dance by creating art that moves beyond the traditional ways of dance and dancemaking. Working closely with Amanda over the last three years has influenced me, first subconsciously and later on consciously, in developing the performative practice of #dancingrecurrences.

Michael Klien's work with computers and algorithms was groundbreaking in the 2000s. Even if the dance vocabulary it produced was more or less the result of known methods and established choreographic strategies, Klien was working innovatively with algorithms and creating new situations for dance. Here I can see a clear link between Klien's work "Duplex" and "Nodding Dog" and the performative practice of #dancingrecurrences.

Michael Klien also explains how the glitches and mistakes became an important part, if not to say the most interesting part of the work. Like in 1:1 it is in the discrepancy between the attempt and the outcome that all the interesting qualities are to be found. In my reading, Fabrice Mazliah also recognize this discrepancy between the aim and the outcome to be recurrent to the practice of "Duplex".

Per Platou explains how a process consists of several components, including the glitches and mistakes. I don't think that "recipe" is a fitting term to describe an artistic process, but it is interesting that Platou, like Klien, finds the glitches and mistakes to be recurrent to the work. There is a link here to my observations of the gap between the aim and the outcome in 1:1.

Kristine Karåla Øren explains how Motherboard worked with movement commanded by the computer-generated images. She also explains how the elements of the work "grew out" of the practice, and the frustration when the process of growing wasn't working. Her observations are relevant to #dancingrecurrences in the sense that there are no automatic results in working with recurrences, nor is there a direct cause-effect relation between the aim and the outcome, or between the practice and the recurrence.



refugee camp samos
amanda making
fishing rope 9/4-17
from plastic bottle

Amanda

My observations of movements and recurrences in the works *The 8th Sister* (2005), *Electro-Magnetic Fountain* (2008) and *Energy Bank* (2010/2012) by Amanda Steggell.

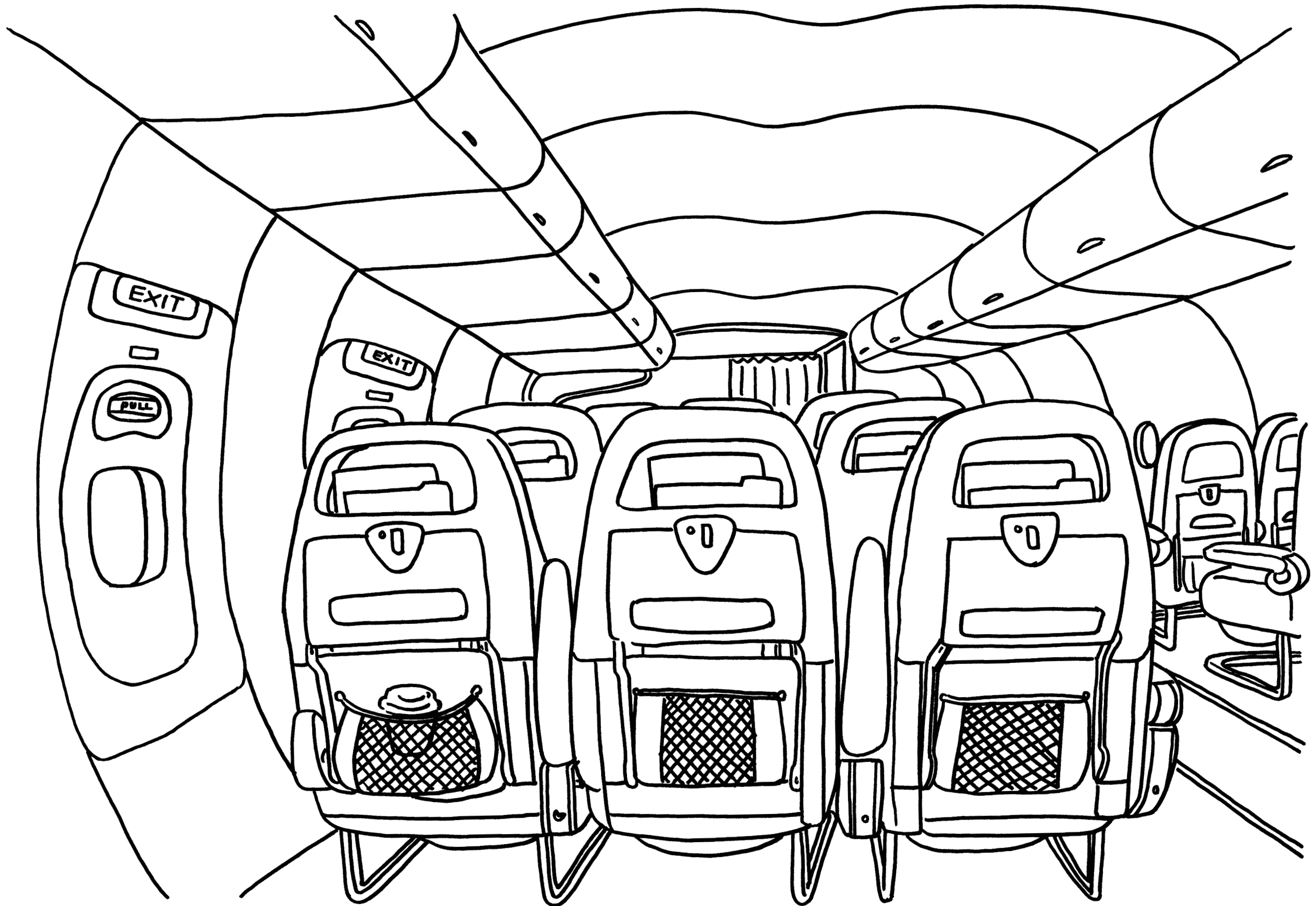
I can recognize three movements in the work *The 8th Sister* (2005), an underwater sculpture in Lofoten, Norway: First, there is the movement of the silver threads that are attached to the coins that form the sculpture at the bottom of the sea. Secondly, there is the traffic of fishing boats that move over this sculpture that can only be seen on their echo sounder. And the third movement is the rumors about the beauty of “The 8th Sister” that move by word of mouth down at the local bar.

I recognize three movements in the work *Electro-Magnetic Fountain* (2008), a fountain that react to the signals of mobile phones: First, there is the movement of mobile phone signals that are invisible to us, but become visible through the fountain. The second movement is the water that dances up and down in the fountain, reacting to the signals of mobile phones of the people passing it. And the third movement is the movement of the families that move around it after their kids have discovered how it works. This movement can all be seen as a choreography.

I recognize three movements in the work *Energy Bank* (2010/2012), a backpack with a battery that is rechargeable by a dynamo: First, it is the movement of the person [Steggell] carrying the backpack with the energy bank through Shibuya Square in Tokyo. The second is the movement of the passer-by reloading the energy bank by winding up the dynamo using the handle at the back. And the third is the movement of people traveling through the city after they have charged their mobile phones, bringing the energy with them, so that the movement of the energy spreads throughout Tokyo.

All these movements can, in my understanding and definition of dance, be seen as a dance and can also be seen, in my understanding of Steggell’s extended choreographic practice, as a choreography.

Amanda Steggell’s interest in extended choreographic practices seems to bring forward two recurrences in her work: One recurring element is the use of technology to generate movement qualities by placing technical equipment at the center of the situation for dance, like in Electro-Magnetic Fountain and Energy Bank. The second recurrence of Steggell’s work is how she underlines the movements that are already there or trace movements that continue far beyond the situation for dance, like in Energy Bank and The 8th Sister. In this way, she facilitates a situation for dance.





the camp

An example of extended choreography from *Amphibious Trilogies*, fieldwork *island/pond* at the refugee camp on Samos, Greece.

As part of *Amphibious Trilogies*, Amanda Steggell and I worked for three weeks in April of 2017 with the NGO-group *Samos Volunteers* in a refugee camp located in the hillside above the main village on the island. We worked the morning and afternoon shifts in the tea kitchen inside the camp. We taught English lessons and drawing classes for grown-ups at the Red Cross office, and dance classes and, when the pool was open, swimming lessons for kids at Paradise Hotel. Once a week we opened a library inside the camp.

On a Tuesday morning, Amanda and I were keeping the library open at the small square right inside the top entrance of the camp. The library consisted of a foldable table with books in four different languages; English, French, Arabic, and Farsi. While we were handing out books, one of the kids we had played with many times before came up to us. His name was Barra, he was between 5 and 8 years old.

Barra still had both his parents. He was not an orphan. He liked to laugh. He liked to play. He would stop and say no if he felt it was needed. He was well-adjusted in an ill-adjusted place and this would shine in his eyes and become very visible. There was something that shone through his eyes, but I cannot say what... His father said he had it from his mother.

Barra insisted that we should play skip rope with him like we had done the day before. He could jump to 97-98-99-100-101-102... more than one hundred and he would just keep going. On and on. He didn't know that he was good at skip-roping before trying. In fact, he was surprised that he was the best of all of the kids in the camp at skip-roping. He loved it so much.

We told him that we didn't have the skipping rope with us and that he anyway had to wait until after the library closed. He didn't accept this. He wanted to skip right now. After some time, Amanda did something brilliant. She went in front of the library and asked me to come with her. Together we held an invisible pretend skip-rope between us, and we started to pantomime the action of swinging it around. Without hesitation, Barra started to jump. It was like this little boy wanted to skip-rope so much that he didn't care if we had a rope or not. Amanda and me made-belief. Barra made our pretending real.

The impact this action had on the people in the camp was palpable. All the people around the square stopped and watched. This little performance spread hope around the camp and smiles across the faces of the men and women and even a tear in the corner of an eye or two. The feeling moved in waves throughout the square like rings in water. Through make-belief, Barra had brought hope to people in a hopeless situation. Barra jumped to more than one hundred.

*Like in the other examples of extended choreographic practice in the work of Steggell, she is able, under unusual circumstances, to stage situations for dance. With the use of her imagination, Steggell was able to transform this hopeless situation into a situation of possibility. There is, as usual, the protagonist at the center generating the movement; in this case, Barra. Barra fulfilled the potential by accepting the invitation to complete the make-believe proposal. The pretend-act moved the people around the square and made them smile, laugh and cry. This act brought hope. It is my opinion that this example sheds light on Steggell's current work *Amphibious Trilogies*.*

The pattern that connects

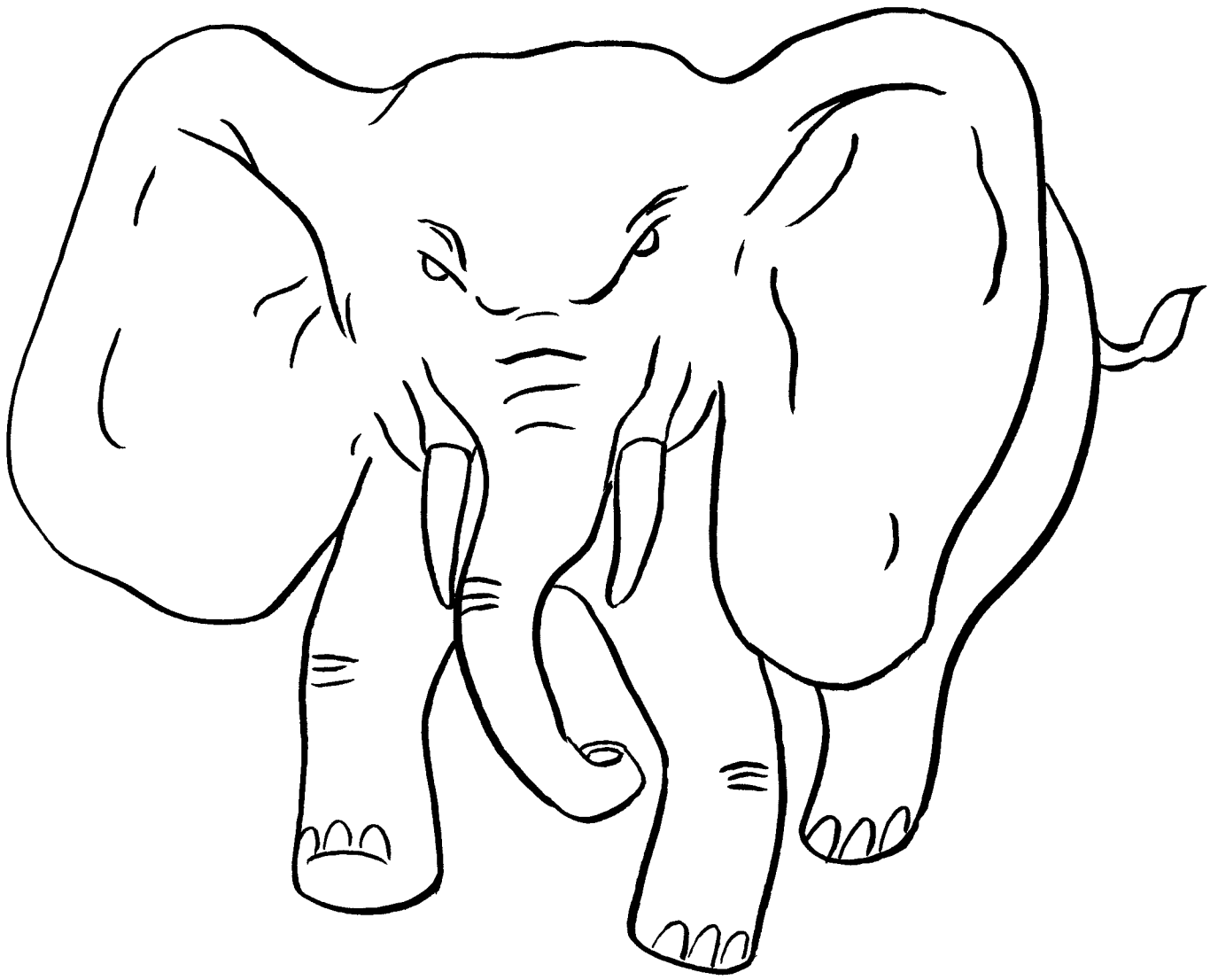
Placing my texts and drawings like dots on the floor in the order that they make sense to me. I am drawing lines between the dots and connecting them, creating an outline of my process. I am looking at the pattern that forms on the floor in front of me and trying to see if there is a contour or shape that I can capture somehow. In my work, I am looking for a pattern that connects recurrences to emergence to contingency to algorithms to mesmerizing to glitches to blank spots to the elephants in the room. And the elephants in the room to me. And me to you. I am sure it is here, and I am starting to sense it, but I just don't see it quite yet. The pattern that connects.

The pattern which connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose and the dolphin to the whale and all four to me. And me to you²².

22 Bateson, Gregory. *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. New York: E.P. Dutton. 1979.

23 This text was published in the fanzine *Amatør #2* (February 2019), edited by Dag Johan Haugerud and Kjartan Helleve.

Get up. Eat breakfast. Go to KHiO. On my office door is a yellow post-it with the word “ParkBench” written on it, named after two of the most prominent writers in the early days of *The New Yorker*, Dorothy Parker, and Robert Benchley. They had a sign like this on the door to their office. At ParkBench I do several things simultaneously: I check my email, print out some drawings and answer an SMS. I have borrowed a cable for my old computer and I am now transferring some files that are more than ten years old, that I had forgotten all about. The machine is so old it cannot be connected to the Internet. I transfer and then send the files to an art historian in Bucharest who is researching queer culture in Romania. She is very happy to receive these documents and answers immediately that we have to drink wine together sometime. I answer “ok”. Now I have to get going with what I am supposed to be doing. I put all the drawings and all the texts into piles, and then I go into Studio 10, which is right next door to ParkBench, and I start having a look at them. I put the texts and the drawings down on the floor in the order that it makes sense to me. I make a kind of map. I map it out. Slowly the sheets become spread out on the floor. They create lines from the middle of the room. They stretch towards the windows and the mirror. I use tape to hang the text about the blind spot and the drawing of the angry elephant on the back wall. But before I get even halfway, the door springs open and a full class of ballet dancers enters the studio. I feel like I have been caught in the act. One of the dancers explains that they are going to have a presentation there in less than three minutes from now. I become very stressed and try to gather all the drawings and the texts from the floor as fast as possible. Some of them ask me if they can help. One of them takes down the elephant and the text on blind spots and hands them over to me. I think it is the girl who played Eva in the NRK TV series *SKAM*. I take them, say “thanks”, and manage to get out of the studio with all of my sheets just in time before the audience comes in the door. I use this interruption to eat my lunch at ParkBench and to check my old computer to see if I can find some more interesting documents. I find a whole folder of pictures from the first gay parade in Bucharest fifteen years ago. I remember that we had to walk inside of a pocket of heavily armed police. I remember people threw bottles at us from balconies on both sides of the boulevard. I remember thinking “medieval circumstances”. I transfer these pictures to an external hard drive while listening to the music through the wall. I think I can hear Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* playing inside, and a lot of jumping and landing. After the music, the jumping, and the landing stop, I wait a little longer, maybe five minutes, before I take all the sheets back into studio 10 again. It is empty, but there is a scent of sweat and used-up air in there. I sit down in the middle of the studio and start spreading the sheets again: the texts and the drawings. Now I get the time, peace and quiet, to do it properly. I spread everything out in the way it makes sense to me. Then I collect them in the order they were lying on the floor. Afterward, I go home and eat dinner. Alone. Stew from yesterday. Later, Ann-Christin and Desiré come over for a visit. We drink red wine and talk about the drag-king show that they hosted at the gay bar *Elsker* the night before. When they leave, I sit down and write all of this out exactly as I experienced it. Ready. Set. Nite.



13.02.18

Angry elephant: Elephant#4

Reading list

Amatør #2, edited by Dag Johan Haugerud and Kjartan Helleve. 2018

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Høvik Ballett edited by Merete Bergersen, Knut Morten Damm, Tone Gellein, Inger Marie Hauglid og Anne Brit Kjelsrud. Oslo: Orpheus Publishing. 2019

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bab

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