

Episode 1 with Maaïke Bleeker

Reciprocal illumination

Introduction

I was so lucky to have as my first guest Maaïke Bleeker, a guest professor from Utrecht University. Maaïke is a prominent dramaturg and a scholar that has made an important contribution to the field of performance making with her writing on dramaturgy. Her most recent publication, *Doing Dramaturgy* (2023), gives voice to different performance makers on how they do dramaturgy. Previously she has been occupied with exploring how performance making is a way of thinking.

Summary

What an illuminating encounter with Maaïke. So, if I try to summarise our conversation, the first thing that comes into my mind is the introduction of *reciprocal illumination*, from Roger Kneebone, a medical surgeon that arranges encounters between unrelated experts from different fields sharing their skills and insights. Through parallel sharing the two agents are illuminated each in their own way from experiencing each others' craft. It took me straight to my performance *Strings* where members of the public were invited to visit researchers in their workstations at Lund University. The guest and the host shared insights, aspirations, and values in a reciprocal sharing. Of course, the roles of the host and guest differ, but on a personal level, the exchange is genuine and as the witness to the situations I certainly saw evidence for what can be called reciprocal illumination.

Maaïke also talked about how in her understanding, an encounter is not one transmitting something to another but something that happens in between agents, and theatre being a place that can engender thinking thoughts that do not belong to any one agent but something that happens collectively. Other interesting points are the encounters with materialities and other more-than-human entities. How through experiences of time and space in encountering materialities through scenography one can open up new domains and temporalities. In that context Maaïke mentioned

Deleuze's theories on time and space in connection to montage in film. Maaïke repeatedly mentions the relationality of the term and how unpredictable an encounter can be in terms of transformation, that she describes as something personal and something that has to land with individual persons, which resonates with my experience, especially from the piece *No-Show*, a work I made in private homes in Reykjavík, where people were led by personal letters from the absent hosts. Many guests described how significant parts of the work landed with them. Each person has their own trigger points depending on their personal background, experience, and worldview.

This was all for now, until next time on Transformative Encounters.