

BEK BERGER

23. 7. 2024

ANNA Where are you at right now?

BEK Here I am in Berlin. I'm sitting at a cafe on this beautiful wooden bench with this small table in front of me. The americano has just arrived and there is a natural human chaos happening around. There's a dog there, people are waking up, the city is becoming alive in the morning. It's 9.56; so for a summer holidays in Berlin, it's quite lively. Normally, it's much more quiet.

ANNA How do you feel about your practice?

BEK My practice is taking many different identities in many different collaborations and configurations. When I talk about my curatorial practice, I'm interested in creating possibilities for people to exercise a new way of being in the world. How can we meet people, stories or cultures that we are not given the permission or a chance to, in order to create effect and effort in an audience. This hopefully makes a community or a shared experience that can then impact future decisions or choreographies.

When I talk about my dance dramaturgical practice, I'm very interested in working with choreographers to make sure contemporary dance is accessible. I also deal with accessibility in terms of disability. It's very much about trained bodies in dance studios. I think contemporary dance over the last forever has been really inaccessible to a lot of people. It's for everyone actually. We all have a body and when bodies move with the right dramaturgy, it's possible to experience something on a different scale.

This is merging with my artist practice. I feel very much as an emerging artist when we talk about that role. Through the last 15 years of working I've had lots

of micro-solo moments. Mostly always in different configurations to people, audience. Whether that's a reading of tarot and interaction that way, or working with teenagers to create an exhibition. I was thinking about what is a useful artwork. Being of use or of service. It has always been in relation. But is is less established or less certain about the trajectories I want to go.

And then there's also the advocacy on the political side of what I do. I'm on the board of IETM. I've always been interested in being an advocate. Shifting culture, shifting politics.

ANNA Do you think there are any intersections in between of your professional roles? Are they influencing each other?

BEK Yes and no. When we talk about my dance dramaturgical practice, its predominantly with James Batchelor. We've worked together since 2017. The work I do there is really different and feels really separate to the rest of I do, because it's very technical dance. But in terms of curating, advocacy and a solo practice, absolutely. It's easier to think them separately only because they have different functions and outcomes.

My artistic practice is not so much about politics, it's about advocacy, radical agreements,.. Because we could always do better. In terms of the structures, in terms of inviting people..

A lot of the advocacy has a lot to do with generating visibility and fair conditions for and with Latvian artists. I think fairness isn't very popular to be dealt with. I'm very happy to go into fight to create more fair conditions, to redistribute privilege. When we talk about fairness, lets say in the European projects, for Latvians it will take 10 times more effort in terms of writing different applications. Whether in

the Western European institutions, they don't have to apply for any additional funding. That doesn't seem very fair. We just talk about a labor difference of having to do 10 times more labor for the same outcome. Even if we're not talking about dollar to dollar fairness, we're talking about a general fairness with labor politics. I still ask: Why so many of my friends who are based in Western Europe have never even gone to Central or Eastern Europe? Why the value systems are so different?

ANNA Yes!

BEK We have to evaluate fairness. It's not about talking about equity and equality. The equality is inequity of really different things. To achieve a fairness between the East and a West Europe, it doesn't mean everything's equal. It might mean a greater financial investment from others. A lot of the start of the European projects was around getting us (Latvians/Eastern Europeans) to the table. Now we are at the table. How can we ask for better conditions?

ANNA I would frame this as the issue of funding, or the different cost of labor in different contexts; or even a different understanding of an artistic labor. I think in the Eastern European countries, it's still a bit new to think that your artwork is actually a labor, so maybe you should negotiate. Whereas in the West, this has been like really strongly established already.

BEK They have charters, minimum wages, they have the exact idea of what you can pay someone, what you can't pay someone. When we talk about an artist working in the Netherlands, there is more employment and presenting opportunities, more projects, more houses. You have a great chance of being employed most of the year. When we talk about my experience in Latvia, it is quite rare that someone can be employed a whole year round to be an artist. If we bring Australia, where I'm from, into the mix of things, the conditions are more similar to Eastern Europe than to Western Europe. That has a lot to do with funding and cultural importance and significance. I know very few people that can be only an artist in Australia. Most people are subsiding with teaching, PhD, a cafe job, or a delivery job. The possibilities of presenting work are very low. There's this perception we are a rich country. That

is true, but the investment in culture is one of the lowest in the global north. I think the biggest wage I got for something like a 12-week development was 1200 euros. And I thought that was amazing, and it actually was amazing for the time.

ANNA That was in which year?

BEK That was 2013. I have to acknowledge that I'm one of the most privileged people to come out of the Australian system. Between the years of 2013 and 2015, I received 65,000 Australian dollars, which is around 40,000 euros from different emerging artists development programs. One, was this post-graduation 6,000 euros to become an artist, which I spent mostly on travel and mentorship. Another was this amazing grant, it only happened once, a year-long residency at an art institution of choice. And then the last was 10,000 euros to come to Europe for three months. Without that kind of financial investments from the Australia Council early in my career I wouldn't be here. I would be in a very different position. That obviously took some vision and cheekiness from me. There was one mentor who told me that I just have a confidence that I'll be able to do it, though I have no idea how. And that's true, even to this day.

I come up with ideas and I know we'll be able to figure it out. We don't need to know all the steps along the way. I think it's valuable that I'm someone who brings people to imagine something together. Initiators or drivers of projects are rare. I think a lot of professionals are very happy to inherit systems, not create them. I am really into finding the conditions in which people can be generous. If there is something that hasn't happened before, everyone wants to try it. If there's an idea, people are excited. I think humans are inherently generous and kind, but they often need an invitation to do so.

But it's important to know I'm in this transitional moment. Going from the institutional role (curator and director of Homo Novus) back to this freelance non-institutional role. How can I create impact as an individual, not as an institution? I'm curious to see what is possible, but I also struggle, because the impact I can make as an individual is smaller than I could do as an institution. I feel like I'm full of big, crazy ideas. And I can't even hold them anymore because I have no context in which to fuel them in.

The other important thing to mention is that I burnt out last year. It's really easy to look at my career or my practice and think I did so much. It was at a cost. I don't want to give up those things, but I need to find a better relationship with them to survive. I think this is one of the biggest issues across the industry in Europe and Australia right now. Acknowledging the political climate, the post-COVID climates, how do we go on? How is it possible to keep doing this? To keep showing up?

ANNA You were speaking about the act of transitioning and what does the individual and institutional impact could be. This is related to the last question of my first block, on the dreams of the distant or possible or close future. Can you speak about your dreams for your practice?

BEK Coming out of this burnout I've been really pleasantly surprised of so much love and generosity and opportunities I got. Being still acknowledged as someone that is valuable outside of an institution. Being invited to be an expert for the Polish dance platform, for example.

In dreams, I'm really interested in finding a balance. I have total confidence in my artistic practice. I don't lack a confidence in offering something special, gather special people, come up with special projects. But I'm really aiming for a work-life balance. How to create culture and new cultural landscapes, and at the same time live a vibrant and meaningful personal life. Yes, I feel I've lived really vibrant professional life, obviously blending into the personal, but I don't have any hobbies. I love the swim, but is that really a hobby? I have beautiful friendships, but I don't have many friends outside of the art. So my dreams are super simple. It's crazy, I know, but it's big.

ANNA Thank you for mentioning the burnout. One of my projects is actually touching the issue of burnout, and the most important question for me is what comes after it? Burnout is not a definite state. It's a symptom of something. And something has to come after.

BEK I think usually people get over the physical and mental crisis and then start enacting the same practices or processes again. It becomes a cycle. This is my most severe burnout, but it's not the first one.

I think the mission is in creating a basis where we can thrive, not survive. We should get to this place where things are manageable and equitable, there is a possibility to rest, and we should also try to influence the system at the same time so it values these things. My future dream is really to do this. And I also want to curate festivals again. I'm not done with this, but I'm done with how I've dealt with stress in the last years. But I have to manage to not give all of myself to everything I do, so I can maintain. If I can do this, it will be amazing.

ANNA Rest harder.

BEK Rest harder. My therapist told me I just need to understand life is mostly boring. And I was like what? And she told me to do small tasks, which maybe are not fun, or big, or fibrous, to not miss the possibility of appreciating small things on the everyday. I've been very lucky to live a very vibrant life, but that is not sustainable.

ANNA I really like how you skip from the individual to the institutional, to the systemic, and back towards the communities, and formations in between of people. It's about some complex, relational, dynamic systems. I'm interested in framing this systemic dynamics as a space, or using the metaphor of space as its frame. I think it might really help to see where do we stand, from which perspective we're looking at. I believe that this space metaphor is a good tool to imagine the complexity of cultural practices and understand them better. If you imagine yourself in such a space, what kind of space it would be, and where would you stand?

BEK We come at really different perspectives, right? You could say the grandmother in the village has a very complex view of a system that is very local? She could talk about the intricacies of the one particular plant, because she has observed it four times a day since it was born. I feel like I have a lot of perspective with no detail. I have really broad overview from the standpoint of not even one country, or one economy.

What I imagine is the meeting of these different scales. How can we feel both perspectives are equal? I do know the complexity of the performing arts, but so does the grandma of the village with her garden. I believe all of us have equal perspectives in

different scales. It's around appreciating the scale. Her complexity is equal to my complexity, which is not better than her complexity. How do we then translate scale? The real, physical scale, not the value [volume]. In scenography there is the three-side ruler, that you can change scale. So the space needs to be that somehow. How can we value each other's knowledge and perspective equally. I don't think this happens now. And it's the same with impact. My impact on an international performing art scale might be large, but grandma's impact on her one garden is just as large.

BEK

ANNA That really is an impactful vision of space – thinking about the space in human size dimensions, but also from a very tiny details, and then to the grand scales, and narratives.

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ANNA What kind of spaces have you done in your past and what kind of spaces have you enjoyed making, creating, living in or inhabiting?

BEK I want to give the example of one successful and one unsuccessful festival center of Homo Novus. In the first year in 2021, I found the Vidzemes Market. It's a great big space in the centre of Riga. I never went there, and no one's really goes there. There's maybe like 15 or 20 sellers, but each year the council or the president charge the market and more people leave. There's no infrastructure that's being improved. I had the idea it'd be so nice to place the entire festival on this market, as a way of bringing new audiences here, as a way of trying to amplify the realities of the people that have lived and worked here their entire life. For me, the commitment of working there was in spending 100% of our money here. There was a person that sold stationary, so all stationary we bought, we bought from them. There was a person that sold cakes, so all cakes we would bought from them. This dramatic invitational economy was curatorially great idea. But they didn't want us there, there was no interest in having us all there. The one thing that worked, was that we provided free tea coffee, and cakes every day.

ANNA Yes, this always work.

The thing is we did what we wanted to do, we changed economy briefly, we made this space more visible. But we didn't make things better for the people that worked there. The second year, we were trying to find a place, and my interest was very much in the old town. We found this old casino on the edge of the old town. I felt this space is magical, enough to convince the arts community, or our existing audience, and maybe, because it's in in the old town, we would convince normal people to come. And by normal people I mean non-contemporary arts people. And it was amazing. Each night, we managed to get really nice audience members, people were just happening upon us.

ANNA So this was a special place for you in Riga...

BEK It haven't been opened in 20 years. Nobody knew it existed before we found it. But curatorially it worked. People need an event to come to the festival center. And because this casino had a big event space upstairs, this old 1940s, 1930s, art and rough cinema. It was a beautiful big space in which we could have 400 people dancing, or a discussion for 10, or a film screening with a hundred people sitting down. This space could become anything without much invention, and as an audience member, or an artist, every time you walked through this threshold of this one room, it was completely different. And it wasn't we would do hardcore technical interventions. I think we had eight moving lights, a screen and a projector. It was more about the configuration of the audience and then the artwork that could completely change. And it was warm.

ANNA So casino was an example of space that worked, and you mentioned the space that did not really worked, the market.

BEK It didn't work in the way it was intended. For the audience, I wouldn't say they felt any of it. It was just the internal curatorial intention. I thought we were going to create a positive shift in this environment, and actually we didn't. How can we create spaces where your body is a 100% desired? In Casino, we also had Queereoke. It's karaoke. Being supported by beautiful ensemble of queer folks from Germany who had also created choreography with the Baltic Drag King Collective so there was about seven

or eight people on stage at any time. Plus we had the Latvian sign interpreter and the Irish sign interpreter. Plus songs in Latvian and songs in English. We had songs in any language basically. It was a free-for-all in terms of song choice. Gucci Fabrica had made the costumes for the Queereoke, that was another collab there. Because we particularly collaborated with Latvian Deaf Community for several years in the festival, they felt really comfortable to come and party with us. I would say 30% of the audience was deaf. I have never seen an integrated dance in my life and it felt fucking amazing. It was a real moment for the community and the real moment for us, the organizers. We gave this frame of generosity and kindness and silliness and fun and beauty. Everyone was safe and sane and it was glorious. I'm ultimately interested in making spaces that cannot yet exist in the normal fabric of society. One that I would like to inhabit. It's extraordinary, it's been not always 100% integrated. I think there's still very much spaces that should be protected.

ANNA A space where people feel welcomed and important and really as being part of it - not just someone witnessing. This creates a specific situation. An event as a space, an event as a situation.

BEK As long as you're creating the right conditions it's always possible. When you're activating yourself, when you're actually becoming a part of a community even if that's a temporal, theatrical community, you are activating parts of your senses that you cannot activate otherwise. The way receptors of how our body and brain learns. It's far more impactful in participation than it is in passivity. This is how we learn as babies, this is how we learn as adults, this is how we create empathy. We don't have the ability to do this while passively watching things on TV or sitting in the dark theater. It's a hell of a more impactful when you're in a relation.

ANNA Do you have anything more to say or imagine about the space in particular?

BEK I like to create these spaces of extraordinary possibility. Here I'm not talking about spectacle but I'm actually talking about an integration of complex desires. Some of the easiest ways you can think about is accessibility in reference to disability, inclusion

in reference to queerness an intergenerationality... What are these extraordinary spaces we can find together with the audience and artists, with me as a curator and producer and other folks. What people need to be entirely themselves. This could be really complex and sometimes really simple. Often there is not a thought from a curator or a space maker of hosting such complex reality. Sometimes that's been around curating personality not necessarily artwork. In terms of creating these places, there is a requirement of curiosity and openness to others. That is essential.

ANNA You were speaking about the spaces and situations. How can you navigate yourself in such spaces? Can you specify or find any tools for navigation?

BEK I would say curatorial strategy. I'm co-curating with people. Whether that being artists or artworks or communities. The level of flexibility or spontaneity or responsiveness is essential. I would say I'm definitely known as a strong voice and ally within disabled community of Europe and as someone who has been working on accessibility for a very long time. This identity often helps to convince people. It's the truth, it's not the interest. It's a practice, it has evidence for a long time and I know it's very important to a lot of folks.

So there is this kind of multi-navigation. One part which is this artistic desire of wanting to bring certain works alongside each other. I think around tension or conflict; and I mean conflict in a good way; conflict of ideas. And then there is reality. All of us who are curating with festivals or within houses, there are a certain amount of projects that you have no curatorial control over. European projects that have curatorial outcomes attached or local works... The ones that are about the process not outcome. But the outcomes are still in the programmes of festivals.

And then there's another category - magic. Every year I try to leave enough space open to be responsive to things that feel right now. Because you don't know what is gonna be urgent. Unfortunately in the last couple years that tool has had to be used not necessarily as profound poetic. Just because of COVID and global crisis. As a curator I haven't been able to curate in good conditions. Or even in non-catastrophe conditions. So I have no idea what it would be to

make a festival where I know everything to happen.

ANNA What's the connection between a reality and magic? Reality is quite often the thing that creates some trouble issues or things that need to be dealt with more or less urgently. And then the magic, I feel it's one of the powers you have to turn it into something that's unexpected...

BEK For me it's super different. This magic for me as a curator, is what happened in 2023. I literally just saw works super last minute. Queereoke was that; I actually I saw Queereoke on July 11th, our festival flier was going to print the July 15th And I was like: guys are you available to do this? This year you can meet the city so you can understand and then you can make a better show. Not this, but the next year. And they said yes. And it all could happen in two days. Magic and reality are actually the same but different. They're not controllable in terms of how they can happen.

ANNA I feel relations and relationships are the most important material we, as curators, work with. We use existing bonds or we create a new ones. Can you elaborate a bit about how do you feel about creating, inhabiting or forming relationships?

BEK I think this is my most powerful tool as a curator. I know that I have an incredible web of very dense relationships that come from very different perspectives, which is not so common for someone my age. Coming to where I am now, I've worked in many different configurations, in different producing, dramaturgical, curatorial and whatnot positions. Also simply because of my geographical relationship to the world, I suspect I have quite a large knowledge of different cultures, religions. For me, this is the core of my curatorial practice.

I don't buy artwork, there are some curators (I would argue that they're programmers) that buy artwork and there's not a conversation with the artist. My process usually is to set up a meeting, talk about what they want to do, and why. What is their burning desire. Because the work is always better if it's about the thing that's burning. When we come to negotiation with the artist, I usually would like to meet before, outside of production. That's a lot of before doing any kind of practical stuff, just talking

about potentials or imaginations or dreaming.

I guess I've been very privileged in terms of relations. I moved here when I was 18. I had some funding, and at that time I wasn't committed to one space. Basically when I met anyone interesting, I went to visit them within three months. I think I'm done now. I don't think I need any more people in my life. I have so many great people that I really want to back and support. I care for so many people that are incredible artists, incredible friends. And I don't know how much more time I have. Each year, I already have a certain amount of time in a day.

It's maybe interesting to also talk about the fact that I'm part of a lot of formal networks. I'm on the board of IETM. And what I really appreciate about these networks is that they force me to go out of my comfort bubble. So I'm also connected to a lot of people who I'm totally not interested in, but I can appreciate. I think it's important to have lots of different connections, but that doesn't mean relations.

Then my therapist would say there is one more level. At one point I just called everyone friends. And she's like, you have to have a difference between friends and colleagues. Because you use the verb "friends" for everything.

ANNA The professional contacts.

BEK There's very few people that I would call for a favor who are not friends. I feel like I have enough people to share these across the industry or the sector.

ANNA What kind of relations you've wished to create? Maybe there's not enough of them, or you miss some particular something. Do you have any wish, in thinking about your relationships map or wire?

BEK I'm going to really go wide. I think I would love to create more contacts on the African, Asian and South American continents. I do have folks throughout those three areas. I do genuinely want to go to spaces because of connections I already have. But I think there is this good question going on with these more requested questions. How much can one give? How much more can I give to an network or a relation? Within mine.

ANNA Can you imagine or visualize your

relationships map? What's its shape? Where is the center? Where is its edge?

BEK It's not a map in terms of a globe map, it's more like connections. Basically it's like a mindmap. It doesn't look very exciting, you know? There's no center and there's no edge. It's not I see myself at the center and then everything goes off. It's more about time, locality, people. It's just consistently unfolding, depending on what input is put into that. That's the way I see everything. It's a metramaturgy with curatorial, with artworks, festivals, inspirations.

ANNA So you also understand the artworks as part of the map, not only people and places, right?

BEK It's also artworks, it's also the way I do research. As a producer, if I'm interested in finding a new location for one of our works, I will look at artists that I think our work resonates with. I will then go to their websites, then I'll go to every one of the festivals that they shown, I'll then look at all the artists they work with, and then I'll use that as a starting point. And this is the advice I want to give to you, other artists would give you context about their work. That's how I recall places, memories. It's all in the same kind of configuration in my brain. It's not a different configuration.

ANNA I like this one.

BEK I know this is a super power, and I know this is something I'm known for, within professional circles. I feel quite privileged to have this ability because it makes life really easier to play this game.

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ANNA Last time we ended with your superpower. Going on with relations and relationship structures, I have one more question - about struggles. What are things you struggle with, within the relationships?

BEK I've had many struggles, both as an artist and also as a curator. And every single time it's come down to communication. The performing arts feels all the time so big and important. And in that importance, it can become very emotional and I think this is where it breaks

down. I guess I look more longingly to economists or scientists who can communicate rationally. How to communicate about work in professional manner, removing emotion within the creative industries. If we look at also financially how it works, the unpaid and emotional labor, the personal gets involved. I think this is very complicated and I don't have any strict answer for it.

I guess I have a particular way of wanting to be very transparent with artists. I want to ensure that they understand a complexity of the space, of the programming. Coming back on the other side, I realize that this does not happen often, you spending time with a curator and understanding where you're curated. If we talk about moving towards a shift in the way we can work, I would love that to be part of the status quo in terms of how curators work with artists within the performing arts.

ANNA You just said that as a curator, you would love more communication be part of the status quo. What do you think is the current status quo?

BEK What is the context? Who is the audience? What is the space that you're coming into? What is the context of the other artworks? How is your work being positioned in relation to that artworks? Is there a direct tension with another artwork that's intentionally put there as a curator? Is the artworks servicing some sort of purpose for an audience or for a collection of people? Is it around activating or antagonizing? I don't think that's the current status quo, particularly within the European scene. So I would love that that shifts, right? I'm happy to be incorrect, I feel it's something we have to really ask in conversations. It's not offered.

ANNA How do you challenge or approach hierarchies? Because we still live in an hierarchically organized society. What's your approach towards this particular thing?

BEK I work in many different hierarchies. Do I believe in flattened hierarchies? Absolutely. Do I think they work when people don't know the system? Absolutely not. I don't think it works in practice so much because I don't think people truly understand what a functioning flattened hierarchy means. For me, effective flattened hierarchies is around

distributed responsibility. I actually think sometimes hierarchies work well, and I think there can be ethical hierarchies.

Unfortunately within our industry, people often have different desires from the roles that they have. That has been my case in the past. Being a producer, but wanting to be an artist or curator. What happens when something you desire as a worker or within an organization is different from your responsibility. Because within this industry, we are predominantly underpaid and things get murky about what is people's responsibilities versus people's desires. I have to say it's quite a relief being a freelancer, now. My relationship to hierarchy is very different at the moment. This autonomy that I have, it's pretty easy, because actually all the time it's just me. So it's a flattened hierarchy of one. I'm still working within other structures, but I am now very clear about what is my responsibility. And that's all I'm taking on.

The fact is, that lots of people are really bad at their jobs. And this is in general, not just in our industry. And I remember, one of the first pieces of advice I got was, if you just reply all your emails within two days and do everything you say you're going to do on time, you will be in the top five percent of this industry.

ANNA Wow, okay.

BEK And I absolutely believe that. I know that the reason I'm respected in this industry is that I answer my emails quickly. And everything I say I'm going to do I do.

ANNA Is it?

BEK It's easy, but...

ANNA Well...

BEK This is more of an observation. Everyone has the right to be bad at their job, but no one has the right to impact your job. And I think this is where we talk about responsibilities. And I think, as any curator, any artist, anyone working in any industry, your work gets impacted just by people not replying to your emails, not doing what they say in time. Simple things, right? When we talk about flattened hierarchies, they only work when you have this

functioning system. People doing their jobs on time. When you're working within an institution, you're representing more than yourself, there is a performance that needs to happen, or relations that need to be maintained. It's actually such a privilege to be outside of that system and not have to bow or kiss the ring of anybody.

ANNA How do you approach the issue of funding, considering what you've said?

BEK I have no problems with funding. I apply for everything, and I get a lot, no? So, I try to become a man in his early 30s, when I apply for grants, in a sense of not feeling entitled, but not feeling ashamed. I'm going to write the thing and leave it up to the experts. Obviously I still get really emotional when I get a rejection. Rejection hurts. In writing a grant, you are heading into this space of science fiction. It's not true. You're imagining a future scenario, you're imagining something that is not true, it's science fiction, but to write a really good science fiction, you really have to believe it, right?

What I believe, too often, artists or organizations self-censor funding. I think we should all be applying for more. And politically, the more we apply for things, the better we are as artists, in the sense that we have our name – we are counted, right? We exist, and there should be more funding, right? But people don't put an application in, because they say they don't have a chance. Maybe you don't have a chance, but politically it's important that you put the application in. I think funding applications, like job applications, are really good moments to have your voice heard for a different groups of people. The transaction is more complex, and I think this asking for money, receiving money, or being rejected for money, there's a much more complex system behind it.

ANNA Now it's the time for tools. You've already mentioned some. But do you have any ultimate tool, curatorial tool, dramaturgical tool, artistic tool? And I don't mean tool as an object, but more as an established practice, method, methodology.

BEK I wouldn't say I use any standard methodology. One of the biggest things that I'm interested in, dramaturgically and curatorially, is

audience. Because I think we don't talk about it. For me, dance dramaturg is advocate for the audience in the rehearsal room, in the making room. Not thinking about the audience in the making room is one of the biggest mistakes of an artist and I think it's consistently witnessed. How can an audience meet this work? What are the conditions that the audience require to meet this work? And that starts from the moment the first marketing text goes out. How do you prepare an audience to come into a space? Welcome them at the door. What kind of seating is there? There's also structural things, right? But then, once we're in the work, how do you meet that audience? How can an audience meet the artwork? And meet the artist in that artwork? Why do we think that the audience is such a threat? Because if an audience thinks that they don't need to be there, or they've misunderstood or they feel dumb, they won't come back to the performance space. And here I'm talking less about artistic audiences, because I feel like we don't need to think about artists coming to shows. Because if we are just making work for ourselves, this is really easy way for us not to exist anymore.

ANNA Does this apply also to your curatorial practice?

BEK As a curator, I'm there to create a program for the audience, for the city. And that could be in complete opposition to my taste, or the shows that I love. In Latvia there was some shows I totally fucking loved. I just knew that I would have to create a context around the work, that the power of the work would shift. So also, thinking about how to challenge an audience. And not just being what the audience would like, but how to create forms of translation and transmission when you're inviting work.

Who is our audience? How do we develop it? How do we invite them in? How do we challenge them? All these things. Both from the curatorial perspective, but also from artistic perspective inside. A live performance only exists with an audience. Performing arts needs an audience to work.

ANNA You're working with these tarot cards quite often. Can you say a little bit more about your ultimate, navigational and conversational tool of a tarot card deck?

BEK These Cards Are not Magic are dramaturgy, which I think I am very good at. I see it as somewhere between being a dramaturg and a curator, right? It is coming from this deep desire to find ways of having better conversations. In a bigger reflection, when we talk about tools, I know I'm a collaborator. I'm not a solo artist. I don't make great work by myself, I need to be in collaboration, in conspiracy, in the constellation, to make interesting work. And that could be because I don't have any, let's call, hard artistic skills. Some people though say it's a visual arts practice. That's how you define the difference of art forms. When we talk about performance in a gallery, performance on a stage, one can be called visual arts, one can be called theatre, depending on the dramaturgies. It could be exactly the same performance on the outside, but it's the internal workings that define it.

ANNA Now we are slowly coming to an end. How do you navigate endings? How do you relate towards when something ends?

BEK I think the endings are not ever great and I'm not good at them. So I think there's something interesting about defining them before they start. How to end something as a way of planning. How to define when to end when something it's indefinite. Or if it is forever, or 100 years, then it's about not thinking about temporality. Think about permanence, no? How can we build these permanent structures? I'm very interested as endings as curatorial anchors and curatorial frames. I'm moving forward. If I take any kind of formal curatorial or professional position, I would define my ending as a part of my application, really structurally. I think this is incredibly important, because if you think that you can have the job forever, there is not enough accountability and enough milestone moments to hit. To be able to prepare for the end at the start, it can be celebratory.



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