

Testimony of a Pilgrim

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"It matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with."

Donna Haraway

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Prologue

I love soaking in water. Everywhere I reside, any places I travel to, I will seek natural or manmade baths to immerse myself in, preferably warm water where I can lie and let go. It is also where the idea for this text emerged after months of writer's block. I am situated in Malmö, my birthplace. I am lying in a bathtub in a modest residential block in Sofienlund not far from where I lived as a child and had one of my first childhood memories from. We had just moved to a new neighbourhood, and I had no friends to play with. I remember sitting on a fence watching children play in the playground, but not being able to establish contact. In my loneliness, I would spend hours in the bathtub to soothe my lonely heart. Still today, I soak in water when troubled, and it helps. The act of letting the mind go allows the body to do the thinking, and new openings will emerge. This time in the water, made me realise that my PhD project is in fact a pilgrimage which begins with that little girl in the water, her longing for connection and her existential resilience.

*This is a story about an adventurous child
who often moved to new places.
She repeatedly had to adapt to unknown neighbourhoods
and find new friends. She developed a skill of
looking, listening, and adjusting to new environments.
She came from an island where everyone and everything was understood through stories.
That is how she understood the world.
She was curious about people, places, and things and from a secure distance she would
create stories about them.*

*When she grew up to become a performance maker,
she would create performances that held space for people to bring their own stories into an
encounter with other stories
to better understand themselves
and how to proceed
in a changing
world.*

The Quest

The pilgrimage started formally in January 2020 when I enrolled as a PhD candidate at Malmö Theatre Academy as a part of a transdisciplinary graduate school at Lund University. My urge was to find a meaningful way to be an artist in a distressed world. I started the journey with the following mission statement:

In my research project, *How Little is Enough?* I strive to produce, through minimal means, transformative experiences that counteract consumerism and a society of hyper mediation. The project is concerned with values such as existential sustainability, personal responsibility and appreciation of personal experiences, vulnerability, tenderness, uncertainty, genuine exchange, and imperfection. The intention is to stimulate the important discourse on sustainability within performing arts practices and open new perspectives to the role the arts have in a possible solution to current global challenges. The research furthermore aims at bringing my practice into conversation with sustainable development with a particular focus on personal values, human needs, and quality of life. The central research question is:

How to construct sustainable methods of performance for transformative encounters?

I ventured out to explore ways of responding to a global crisis with my performance practice within a context of 16 other PhD projects from all the faculties of the University under the name *Agenda 2030 Graduate School*. We were 17 PhD candidates, like the 17 goals of Agenda 2030, UN's sustainable development goals. *My project, How Little is Enough? Sustainable Methods of Performance for Transformative Encounters* was at the time, the only artistic research within the graduate school that hosted projects from medicine, political science, social studies, philosophy, law, business, and ethnography among others. During my journey, the graduate school grew, eventually taking on more PhD fellows and a group of post-doctoral researchers. These fellow researchers were my companions during my pilgrimage, together with my peers at the Theatre Academy, six other performing artists dealing with listening, caring, co-creating, democracy, postcolonial performance, truth, frictions, and conflicts through different performative formats. All these fellow travellers were my influencers, they inspired me, expanded my context, and helped me read my compass.

Luggage

To be a pilgrim entails embarking on a voyage, into an unfamiliar or foreign territory, with the intention of discovering fresh perspectives and deeper insights about oneself, others, nature, or a greater purpose. Such a journey has the potential to instigate a profound personal metamorphosis,

and upon completion, the pilgrim reintegrates into their everyday existence with the acquired wisdom and transformations (Morgan, 2010).

Before I start telling the story of my research pilgrimage, it is essential that I acknowledge the baggage I brought with me - comprising personal experiences, worldview, and social status. As I will later explain, this baggage turns out to lie at the core of my discoveries.

My personal pilgrimage had started many years prior after experiencing life changing events, professionally and personally. As a person, I had become more and more critical of the world order that had moulded me as a person and my way of acting in the world. I was in a leadership role at the Iceland University of the Arts (IUA), and I started questioning my ways of being a leader and a pedagogue in a higher education institution, of being an artist, of being a parent to adult children, and a life partner to my husband. I exposed my privileges to myself and began to study how I could be a servant to my surroundings, and how I could deepen my listening to the needs of things and beings around me. First, I needed to take a good look at myself, finding out who that little girl in the bathtub had become.

What I saw was a privileged white, educated, middle class woman. A daughter of a medical doctor and a librarian, one of six siblings that all had university degrees in different fields: in the arts, medicine, and economy. I was brought up in a patriarchal society but strongly influenced by the feminist movement of the eighties in Iceland. In my childhood home, I grappled with conflicting influences from both patriarchy and second-wave feminism. My father was a prominent figure in society, but also suffered an addiction that would affect the wellbeing of the family. My mother had given up her academic studies after only two years of study, to support my fathers' studies and later to become a housewife. The growing family moved between places and countries for the sake of my father's career as plastic surgeon. My mother encouraged me to be true to my inner calling and supported me in whatever I chose to do. She was attentive to my needs, loving and positive. She saw me. My mother brought me to witness the historic moment when the people of Iceland greeted the first woman president on the morning of June 30th, 1980. I was just 14 years old at the time. The newly elected Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, a single mother, stood proudly on her balcony in a handmade woollen dress crafted by Icelandic women, embodying the perfect role model for a teenage girl – as was my mother. Not only did Iceland have a female president but also a women's political party in parliament until I was 31 years old. My mother gradually built-up strength to stand on her own and after more than 30 years of marriage my parents separated. At the age of 60 she graduated from university for the second time, now as a librarian, a job that she would hold until the end of her working career, just before she vanished into the black hole of Alzheimer.

When my wakeup call came, I was a mother of three grown children, with a husband I'd been married to for more than 20 years. Before pursuing my artistic education, I had gone on a spiritual journey that culminated in a BA degree in theology. I had worked as a performer, director, writer, dramaturg, artistic leader, and a lecturer. For more than half of my professional life I held secure jobs and leadership-roles in different professional contexts. I had worked as a performance maker both in institutions and as a freelancer caught up in a production cycle, constantly making work for a market in a field that was driven by the laws of commerce, dependent on expectation and demand from paying customers. I was living a lifestyle of the privileged, consuming, and doing my share to contribute to making the world go on. I had properties in Reykjavik, and an electric car, travelling the world for work and pleasure. Professionally, I had access to cultural and social contexts in Iceland and had built a good network in the Nordic and Baltic countries that presented further professional opportunities. The shift inside me happened gradually as I grew increasingly discontent with the neoliberal politics of education and culture.

Within education, I noticed how the students were shopping for brands when choosing their education and how universities catered to that market. During a nine-year period, as dean of the department of performing arts at the IUA, I witnessed a development where even the language we were using took on more and more the terminology of business. Our education became a commodity, and our students our paying customers (until 2024 arts students had to pay a high tuition fee in Iceland) who sometimes refused to take responsibility for their own education. I didn't like the lack of diversity in my surroundings, in terms of people and ideas, and how decisions were made, but maybe the biggest dissatisfaction was how easy it was for me to navigate this patriarchal structure. The two conflicting value systems of my parents lingered in the fabric of my body, like a dual energy that forces itself into the operation of the mind and body, taking turns to lead. The hierarchical structure of the patriarchy was sure to hold, paving my way to power and respect. Until it came falling down.

The shift started with a crash landing in my marriage, followed by the death of my father. The structures I had leaned into collapsed, giving me the choice to persist, adapt or transform, the three variations of resilience (Haider & Cleaver 2023). I went willingly towards transformation.

Like in kintsugi, the ancient Japanese art of repairing broken ceramics with gold, my husband and I renewed the spark in our relationship by gluing the broken bond between us with what constituted gold to us: attentive care, mindful presence, and sincere commitment to a life together. We submitted to a renewed foundation with the golden cracks as a reminder of the precarious nature of life.

With my father, I buried my ego, taking on new worldviews with changed behaviours and a mindset inspired by Buddhist teachings.

I was looking for a new meaning to overcome my challenges and through kintsugi I found the concept of wabi sabi, a Japanese concept that opened my eyes to a new understanding of the world. It is both an aesthetic and a worldview that celebrates impermanence and looks for beauty in the imperfect. It values the old, the withered, the rusted, things with history and appreciates their suchness of existence, the way things are (Koren, 1994, Suzuki, 2011). I saw everything in life as impermanent and the self as collection of different things and attributes interconnected to their surroundings. I was deeply critical of the capitalist society, observing how it commodifies everything and everyone, pressuring for relentless optimisation of every opportunity for growth (Rosa 2022). I felt the energy of consumption pumping life-force through my veins like a drug, and I repeatedly tried to resist its powerful pull.

Early on in my career, I sought to liberate myself from the commercial aspects of theatre. In Reykjavík, I founded a theatre collective named *The Professional Amateurs*, dedicated to creating performances free of charge for the public without relying on financial resources. Our currency was time; we borrowed and recycled materials, accepting only artist grants to buy our own time. By abstaining from money, we fundamentally transformed our landscape for theatre-making, reshaping every aspect of the creative process. This shift not only inspired the development of sustainable methods in theatre-making but also became the cornerstone of my research, embodied in the how-little-is-enough approach.

During the healing phase of my marriage, I collaborated with *The Professional Amateurs* to create a participatory performance centred around the theme of love, that was called *Eternal Piece on Love and Lovelessness*. Drawing inspiration from letters exchanged between lovers at various stages of relationships, we encouraged guests to share their personal experiences of love and heartache. I integrated children into the performance to facilitate dialogues with the audience, recognising their potential to evoke moments of tenderness and emotional connection. The performance contained ritualistic elements, with guests reporting a sense of catharsis during the experience. This was my first major participatory performance and the first time I had used real life experiences in my work. The actors were in the role of facilitators, and I had stepped onto the stage and embodied the work. The experience left me with an urge to create a format where I would leave space for the guest's creative minds and where I could encounter them more directly. Since then, I have not worked with actors on stage, and my practice moved from making performances on stage for a receiving audience into creating site specific performative frameworks for participating guests to render their own stories into.

A couple of weeks after the opening night of the performance, I had yet another blow to my system. My sister died a sudden death from cancer. It was in 2015 and in a state of grief I went to Paris for a sabbatical. After staying with my husband in the city for some time, horrific terrorist attacks occurred

in our neighbourhood. On the 8th of November, I went to the Bataclan music venue to enjoy a concert with Nina Hagen and only five days later this same place was turned into a slaughterhouse. Life felt very fragile, uncertain, and unsafe. My western values were under attack, values that I both stood by but also criticised. I was in an existential crisis, full of doubt, searching for meaning, feeling vulnerable but also full of love and tenderness. In this state I started making work that is the foundation for my current artistic methods. The first work after Paris, I made in Cirava, a socially deprived town in Latvia. The work was called *The Last Supper* and was a contemplative performance walk, a participatory performance dealing with existential questions, searching for the things that constitute quality of life. The performance took its guests on a journey between stations of contemplation, where voices from the local community would recount stories from their lives and ended at a dinner table, where guests were asked to imagine their last supper. This performance would be the genesis of the method that I am now developing in my project.

Then came the #me-too movement. When it reached Iceland, I was still a dean at IUA, and my mother had just passed away. This was the third death in the family in three years and my heart ached. In my sorrow, all my decisions were tender and loaded with meaning and purpose connected to my state of mind. Again, I was prepared to jump on board the train of transformation, now with my colleagues at the Department of Performing Arts, to make swift changes to the study culture. The #me-too movement gave me an excuse to reconsider my own leadership strategies and I sought inspiration in life coaching techniques. I undertook formal training in life coaching that would immediately bleed into the development of pedagogical approaches, assessment protocols and would serve as a general leadership tool for me. In essence, the method revolves around posing potent questions and identifying opportunities. It entails analysing what works rather than focusing on failures. The method requires deep listening on the behalf of the therapist, pedagogue or leader, and a belief in people's innate wisdom. It revolves around empowering people with agency and accountability for their own journey. The coach assists clients in articulating their existing knowledge and facilitates discovery through a structured process of questioning and visualisation. It was during a life coach session, that I decided to embark on a PhD education in Malmö, the city where I was born. The question *How Little is Enough?* is, in terms of life coaching, a so-called powerful question that can generate constructive answers, opening meaningful insights, opportunities and new paths of living.

During the structural changes at my department, the housing situation of the school was also compromised. Mould was detected in the building and the whole department needed to relocate abruptly. Everyone working in the building, students, teachers, and others were frustrated, discontent and angry at management, and I was a part of the management. I was caught up in a storm that I had no power to calm. After my personal and professional ordeal in the years before, my body and soul refused to support me and started failing. This was the point where I broke down. My privileged

position made it possible for me to take a sabbatical and travel to Japan. The strong Japanese bathing culture allowed me to spend hours in geothermal water, healing both my body and my soul. The Japanese culture, with its Buddhist beliefs and aesthetics — Shinto and the connection to nature and the more-than-human, deeply affected me. While in Japan, I found a strong intergenerational connection that provided comfort after my recent experiences of loss. The culture, history, and the nature of this exotic but familiar volcanic island acted as a mirror, helping me to reflect on my own values and experiences. While in Japan, I applied for an artistic PhD at Malmö Theatre Academy, that offered me a place, starting in January 2020.

Through much privilege, opportunities, as well as challenges, falls, and resurrections, I acquired the skills and motivation to embark on a PhD pilgrimage. The values that emerged from my professional and personal experiences became the guiding light for my journey.

All is not lost.

I feel the shift between generations

on my own skin.

Love that is transferred between people,

lingers after they have been buried.

It feels like I am connected to my source of motivation,

an intergenerational and interspecies affection

that points to the future.

The love that was handed down to me

transfers to my children.

I wish that they will live in a safe and just world

in peace, breathing healthy air, and drinking clean water in harmony with other species.

Love brings hope.

Base Camp

When I started my PhD in January 2020, I was still a dean, but eager to embark on the research journey. As I was about to navigate structures inherently tailored for individuals like me, I grappled with the paradox of being both a product of, and a critic of, the prevailing system. I had become acutely aware of my privileges, mindful of my blind spots, and was ready to broaden my perspective and embrace transformation. Motivated by a personal call for sustainable methods of performance, I was compelled to confront my own contributions to the crisis through my lifestyle. With my backpack fully packed with questions, doubt, and self-awareness I took the first steps of the pilgrimage.

I connected with my peers in Malmö Theatre Academy, and within the first month, ideas for my first two performances emerged. I met with my colleagues from Lund University's cross-disciplinary Graduate School, Agenda 2030, and was truly impressed by their different competences and expert knowledge. This encounter immediately sparked a concept for a third performance.

While in Iceland, I made agreements with the Reykjavík Art Festival to produce the first work of my research project and with the *Akureyri Theatre Company* and *A! Festival* to produce the second performance on an island off Iceland's north coast. However, my plans were altered by the arrival of Covid-19, leading to adjustments to comply with restrictions. Despite the severity of the global pandemic and its devastating consequences for many, the changes forced upon me ultimately worked to my advantage.

As the department's dean during the COVID-19 crisis, my primary focus was on seeking solutions to meet the needs of my students. Once new structures were in place, everything slowed down. The pressure of productivity lifted and for a privileged person like me, with a secure income, surrounded by family, it was an opportunity to slow down. It was a rare moment in history where global priorities shifted from growth and profit towards human needs and safety. The skies cleared, pollution decreased, and it felt paradoxically right in its apocalyptic way. My project aimed to explore minimalistic ways of creating performances, and the pandemic provided an opportunity to test these ideas within the limitations it imposed.

Companions

During the pandemic the IUA's studios stood empty, and I sneaked into the ceramic studio to meditate through throwing on the wheel while listening to Donna Haraway's book *Staying with the trouble*. With my hands deep into the clay, I immersed in her speculative fabulation about an entangled world of beings living in a society of compost. Her description of the interspecies kinship

resonated with me, and I wanted to accept her call to stay with the trouble that comes with being involved and entangled. During the involuntary separation from society during Covid-19, I tangibly felt the need for meaningful connections. Unlike many people during the social restrictions, I was fortunate to be living with my family, including the more-than-human entities that were a part of my surroundings. Haraway's claim that "we become with each other or not at all" (Haraway 2016) deeply resonated with me, in my relational existence. She talked to me about the necessity to stay present in the encounters with others not despite of but because of the complexity. Through my throwing hours in the company of Haraway's thinking, I came to understand that the research I was embarking on was personally situated and that my research methods, topics, and findings would be highly subjective. In my artistic inquiry, I was entangled in my situation and with the diverse agents that belonged to it. Nonetheless, I would be the one to tell the story in the end. I would see things through my eyes, and I would speak with my singular human voice. I could not escape who I was, and I needed to come to terms with the forces that had shaped me.

It matters what matters we use to think other matters with;
it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with;
it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe
descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds; what worlds make stories.
(Haraway, 2016, p. 12)

Haraway's call to be mindful of the origins of our knowledge and the role of my situatedness in the research has informed the navigation of my research journey. At every step, I was reminded of my existential, social, environmental, interspecies, and intergenerational entanglements, thanks to Haraway.

Apart from Haraway I have been inspired by thinkers from different schools of thought such as affect theory, new materialism, deep ecology, critical theory and ecopsychology. Early on, I was influenced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick with her writings on touch (2003), and Deleuze and Guattari with their writings on percept, affect and concept (1994). Timothy Morton and his object-oriented ontology has been a faithful companion with his perspective on the symbiotic real, the human experience of the sixth mass extinction and his thoughts on how love should replace efficiency in the response to the global crisis (2007, 2013, 2017, 2021). Being interested in aesthetics and its relation to values, I invited Yuriko Saito to walk with me for a while with her writings on everyday aesthetics (2007, 2017) and Jane Bennett was a great inspiration in her writings on the enchantment of the everyday (2001). bell hooks spoke to me about love and commitment (1999), Sara Ahmed on critical terms about objects of happiness (2010), and Mary Jayne Rust opened my eyes to nature's potential to heal (2020). These thinkers have been my companions in my artistic research, stimulating my thoughts. However, my

focus has not been on examining or contributing to these theories. I have tried to stay close to the artmaking, speaking with my own voice from the midst of an entangled standpoint of the practicing artist.

I see my artistic role as being someone that skews the view of our everyday life, creating possible new insights to the daily rituals that make up our world. This view can be related to what Timothy Morton describes as an aesthetic dimension of causality where reality is framed in a certain way, so the patterns become visible, and all the objects become super real (Morton, 2013, p. 67).

The four performances that are a part of my research project, all revolve around a guest-host concept. In these performances, guests are invited to interact with their hosts in diverse settings such as homes, communities, or workplaces. The guests encounter the everyday lives of their hosts, providing a mirror to their own lives and values. With the most minimal means the experience is staged to distinguish art from life, making it a timeless affect independent of the lived experience. I find resonance with Deleuze and Guattari's expression of how artistic experience stands apart from other affective encounters. They claim that the essence of art lies in its ability to preserve, and what it preserves is a compound of sensations encountered through a composition: "Composition, composition is the sole definition of art. Composition is aesthetic, and what is not composed is not a work of art" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 191). The affect itself becomes the artwork, individually experienced by each guest. When I talk about affect, I am referring to the accumulation of senses, emotions, and the cognitive resonance an experience has (Schnall, nd). This notion resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's discussion on composition, while the theatre scholar Erika Fischer Lichte uses the term staging or *mise en scène*.

Fischer-Lichte (2008) states that the *mise en scène* is responsible for the performative generation of materiality, attracting the audience's attention while highlighting the act of perceiving itself. Through staging, even inconspicuous elements become remarkable and transfigured, prompting spectators to recognise their own transformation by the performance's elements. She defines *mise en scène* as a process aiming at the re-enchantment of the world and the metamorphosis of its participants (p. 189).

This process of skewing the view, similar to Lichte's notion, reveals a new perspective on reality for my guests. Through a *mise en scène*, seemingly ordinary elements within specific settings become remarkable and transfigured. My performances aim to facilitate this re-enchantment of the world, blurring the lines between art and everyday life. The work seeks to stage or highlight certain fragments of reality within specific settings, allowing art and non-art to coexist harmoniously. The staging is an invitation to view certain things through a new lens, the lens of the host; the other. I am interested in creating this awareness of affect that Lichte speaks about, and the staging brings about.

In my performances I invite participants, guests, and hosts, to view everyday objects and daily routines as objects of artistic interest, or in other words, enter an aesthetic dimension that consists of the causality of their own daily actions (Morton, 2013). Morton talks about these experiences as a miracle or magical:

We live in an infinite non-totalizable reality of unique objects, a reality that is infinitely rich and playful, enchanting, anarchic despite local pockets of hierarchy, infuriating, rippling with illusion and strangeness. In this reality, objects are perfectly straightforward, with no transcendental or hidden aspects. Yet precisely because of this very fact, objects are completely weird: they hide out in the open, under the spotlight. Their very appearance is a kind of miracle. (Morton, 2013, p. 55)

Even though I might be interested in magic and miracles it is not motivated by an urge to seduce people into forgetting the seriousness of the imminent global and social crisis. On the contrary I invite the spectators to become aware of themselves in the work, remember who they are, what they strive for and why. In my work I work with real life experiences. There is a host and there is a guest, each one representing themselves and bringing their stories and values to the table. The focus of many contemporary theatre works working with real life experiences, is to shed light on traumatic experiences, violence and social injustices addressing feelings of shame, fear, and insecurity, creating empathy towards the victimised other. This sometimes takes place through documentary or verbatim theatre, giving the protagonists agency and even a central role as performers on stage. This is a noble task and can be constructive for all involved when made with artistic rigour and tender care. I have chosen to approach lived experiences from another angle inviting the guests to look for the qualities in the everyday actions, inspired by Jane Bennet (2001), who says in her book *The Enchantment of Modern Life*: "To be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday" (p. 4). Bennett argues that rehabilitating enchantment in the world and exercising the ability to experience wonder can contribute to the strengthening of ethical behaviour. Bennett describes her mission like this:

I dust off and shine up [...] the experiences of wonder and surprise that endure alongside a cynical world of business as usual, nature as manmade, and affect as the effect of commercial strategy. [...] My counter story seeks to induce an experience of the contemporary world - a world of inequity, racism, pollution, poverty, violence of all kinds - as also enchanted - not a tale of re-enchantment but one that calls attention to magical sites already here. (Bennett, 2001, p. 8)

In alignment with Benet's perspective, my project centres on the exploration of the positive aspects of everyday life, using Sarah Ahmed's concept of happy objects. By focusing on these moments of joy and wonder, I aim to offer a counterbalance to the prevailing narratives of cynicism and disillusionment. Ahmed defines happy objects as "objects [that] become happy, as if happiness is what follows proximity to an object"(Ahmed, 2010, p. 21). Ahmed is critical towards the normative happy objects that can have the opposite effect and trap people in an evil cycle of trying to obtain certain things to appear happy. A circle like what Lauren Berlant describes as cruel optimism, when the thing you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing (Berlant, 2006). The American dream turning against you. Through my work I try to unravel the personal happy objects and focus on what brings contentment and a sense of purpose to people's lives, aware of the destructive nature of the normative objects of happiness that both Berlant and Ahmed point out. The body of work asks its spectator what qualities they are looking for in their daily lives and what makes them belong and feel at ease with the world they live in. It is my belief that beauty exists in the lives of every being, all that is needed is just to shed light on it and cultivate it.

First Stage – *No Show / FjarVera*

I had already started to develop *No Show* during a residency at the Inter Arts Centre in Malmö, in the year 2019. There I had begun to explore the solitary do-it-yourself performance model that became the format in *No Show*. In Malmö, guests were invited into a home of a stranger and through a series of handwritten letters from the host, they were invited to perform tasks in different places in the home; to observe, to act and to contemplate. It was a model that I wanted to explore further. In *No Show* in Reykjavík, I wanted to emphasise the encounter between guest and host, and added personal letters from the hosts, describing their everyday life, providing the mirroring of values and everyday decisions. I had chosen five hosts in different neighbourhoods of Reykjavík that represented diverse social groups. As the first creative process in my artistic research, I needed to establish a research method and to map my artistic practice. Because of the pandemic, the performance period was stretched from presenting all four homes during one week to three months, giving me ample time to stay with my artistic method, make small modifications and conduct interviews with participants and guests while still working on the piece.

Artistic Toolbox

In my Letter two in the *No Show* exposition on Research Catalogue (RC) I describe my artistic method like this:

For each performance the method produces a framework that invites guests to render their own stories, emotions, values, and experiences as the core content of the performance. The framework distinguishes between three types of guest participation: action, observation, and reflection. The work is site specific and human specific and engages individuals, local communities, the more-than-humans, and other stakeholders into the creative process. The work is concerned with personal values and how they relate to quality of life. The method produces work that functions as a vessel for narratives that participants, guests, and hosts, bring to the work. The practice is not occupied with representation as such but rather the singular presence of each participant that re-present themselves by engaging with the work. The aesthetic and dramaturgical approach is porous, dependent on what the spectator brings to the performance and what she sees as part of it. The work provides the spectator with “a map to navigate” (the dramaturgy, the route) and a “backdrop” (the site) to bring out their stories and to test their own ideas and values. At the foreground for the artistic method is question making. The work strives to produce actual questions that are mediated through the performance and transcend the layers of the experience. (Knúts-Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021a))

With this method in my bag, I started my research. Through the journey I would gradually collect insights into the method's affordances and explore its effects on agents involved, guests and hosts.

Interviews and Ethical Considerations

When starting my inquiry, I was eager to delve into my new role as an artistic researcher and test out qualitative research methods to better understand the effect of my method as an instrument for change. During the process of making and presenting *No Show* I conducted semi structured interviews with participants, both guests and hosts, from which I extracted insights and details that would inform my thinking and doing. Through the interviews with the guests, I came to understand the potential of my instrument, that was comprised of a porous performance structure, personal encounters, and an ethical rigour that manifested in the attention to details of care, in the collaboration, and in the accommodation of the guests. I received indications that the work, with its combination of tender care for the guests, the reflection of the indirect encounter between guest and host, and the guests' interaction with the environment, offered a highly personal experience and thus presented a potential for transformation. The porous structure provided guests with space to think, reflect, and weave their own stories into the performance. The work is unique for each person, and I had limited control of what was brought into the porous structure of my creation as this passage from Letter Five in *No Show* exposition on RC, bears witness:

These testimonies manifest to me the complexity of a single experience and how potent a porous dramaturgy can be, where you as an artist balance between control and loss of control in an artwork instigated by you and yet runs off on a course of its own, not only in one direction, but multiple directions, as many as the persons encountering it.
(Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021a))

Some of the most important findings during this first process concerns the ethical challenges and ways to deal with the precarious power structures that present themselves in participatory work dealing with everyday experts and lived experiences. In the *No Show* exposition, I describe a relationship I had with one of my hosts in one of the works, a person with Cerebral palsy living in a socially deprived situation. Our relationship was marked by unevenness in terms of physical abilities, social and economic standing, as well as status and privileges. During the process of creating the work, we both had to stay with the trouble in a complex power relation trying to negotiate a place to meet midways and co-create the performance each on our own terms. Despite the inherent hierarchy of power in this situation, we both needed each other. Her life was partly entrusted to me, just as my life was partly in her hands. We became each other's agents, using the work as a means to engage in

and interfere with each other's struggles. In this delicate negotiation, balance is precarious, and trust becomes essential (Knúts Önnudóttir, Letter Three, 2024 (2021a)). This precarious balance is to be found in all the works, manifesting as a sensation of entanglement and inter-dependency.

In the fifth letter of the *No Show* exposition, I discuss various ways in which guests might mirror or relate to the content of the piece. This could involve viewing the host as a role model, seeing oneself as the subject, identifying with the host, or having an abstract or aesthetic experience akin to connecting with nature. I also highlight the significance of the tactile, embodied, and immersive elements of the experience as a crucial component of the transformational trigger. However, what I particularly emphasised is the level of care and trust that guests discovered, enabling them to surrender to the experience and become open to vulnerable aspects of themselves. I mention three aspects that I find pivotal to my practice of creating potentially transformative experiences: Firstly, establishing a safe and nurturing environment that encourages openness; secondly, building a personal connection with the guest, truly seeing, and caring for them with genuine affection; and thirdly, sharing something personal, embracing imperfection (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021a)).

The feedback I got through the interviews were both affirming but also pointed towards areas of development. In Letter five of the *No Show* exposition, I say:

Based on my findings, I now have an urge to create an opportunity for the guest to revisit the work and to disseminate the affect in a proximity to the experience. I intend to develop new formats for having genuine communication in the work and I will also take seriously the guests need for being safe and being seen. (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021a))

The participants' sense of safety and integrity was crucial to me, and it became evident that I wanted to emphasise a safe space in the work for its participants, both guests and hosts.

Ethical considerations manifested in different ways and during this initial artistic project within my research, I felt ethically challenged on many levels. Firstly, I was collaborating with non-professionals and secondly, I was collecting personal testimonies as research data. I did the utmost to be clear about my motivations, expectations and responsibilities and had written consent from my collaborators and interlocutors. But the challenges lay in decoding the hierarchies that were embedded in the social fabric. That meant understanding my own position, as a known figure in the Icelandic performing arts scene, and a person of power, both when collaborating with hosts but also when conducting interviews with guests. In Letter Three of the *No Show* exposition, I delve into the ethical aspects of my artistic research (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021a)), and as I conclude in my exposition, the major ethical challenge may lie in my desire to instigate transformation in my guests. This is a question that I still have not fully answered for myself.

Research Toolbox

Early on, I identified my research approach as action-based research (Jokela, Hiltunen & Härkönen, 2015), using the method's cycle of actions as a guiding structure. However, I eventually moved away from conventional methodological definitions. I experimented with adapting post-qualitative methods (St. Pierre, 1997) and weak theory approach (Sedgwick 2002, Stewart, 2008), but finally I settled on the term artistic research method. This approach, akin to my artistic practice, is a pluralistic methodology. I instinctively apply mixed methods of thinking, making, and mediating, drawing inspiration from various research methods within humanities and sociology. Still, my research follows the structure of action-based research, alternating between phases of making, analysing, and developing, then repeating the cycle in a spiral, gradually adding to the situated knowledge from my artistic practice.

I analysed the process of *No Show* and developed a strategy for the next work, focusing on areas within my artistic method that required further attention or were underrepresented. The development of the second artwork within the research, titled *Island*, overlapped with *No Show*, with elements flowing directly and organically into the creation of *Island*. My primary goal was to establish a framework for dialogue within the performance, shifting from a guest's solitary mission to creating a structure for a collective journey. The performance setup in Hrísey, a place categorised as a fragile settlement, provided an opportunity to directly address questions of ecology and sustainability. In my research questions, I was deeply concerned with sustainability. I wanted to tackle issues such as empowerment, equality, inclusivity, well-being, existential sustainability, consumption patterns, and finding ways to reduce the carbon footprint of performance making. Hrísey, the island, functioned as a symbolic representation of Earth, shedding light on the existential, environmental, social, and economic challenges it confronts.

Sustainability

Imagine a world in which we consider the impact of our decisions on the earth and on the seventh generation ahead, in which humans no longer see themselves as the superior species, in which all aspects of the web of life are truly respected as equals, in which rationality and intellect can sit beside our animal selves (feeling, intuition, and our bodily senses) as equal partners in our guidance. Imagine a world in which humans' express gratitude toward all who support us in every breath. Imagine. (Rust, 2014, p. 48)

Thus Mary-Jayne Rust, an ecopsychologist, starts her article titled "Daring to Dream?" where she offers strategies for society to pave way for necessary changes to behaviour and mindset in times of ecological urgency. The strategies are to enable humans to move towards an ecocentric value system

away from an individualistic consumer driven anthropocentric culture that is destroying the planet. As many other thinkers Rust bases her ideas on the fact that humans are one with nature, not separated from it. Nature is as much inside of you in the micro-organisms that make up your body as something that is out there. Many thinkers of deep ecology and related strands of thought are critical towards the romantic idea of nature as something to admire or the consumerist notion of nature being a product to entertain you or help you to wind down, or that it needs to be rescued (Rust, 2014; Morton, 2007).

These thinkers are critical of the concept of nature and even refrain from using the word. Rust speaks of other than human world whereas philosopher Timothy Morton refers to the natural world as symbiotic real; a wider ecosphere, non-hierarchical solidarity of humans with nonhumans (Morton, 2017). In my writings I use more-than-human about non-human entities: other beings, things, landscapes, and plants. However, I am not opposed to using the word nature. When contemplating nature as a phenomenon of the physical world, it is crucial to recognise the human body as part of nature. As my supervisor, environmental philosopher Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir, along with philosopher Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir, argue in their article "Reclaiming Nature, by Reclaiming the Body":

If we really want to get beyond understanding nature as something outside of us, and truly sense and understand ourselves as natural or environmental beings who are a part of the earth's ecosystem, we should direct our attention to how nature as the biotic, inner/outer environment is experienced and sensed in and through our bodies.
(Jóhannesdóttir & Þorgeirsdóttir, 2016, p.39)

Both environmental philosophy and ecopsychology present ecological approaches to transforming people's worldviews, behaviours, and, most significantly, their well-being. As individuals' consumption patterns and economic growth policies continue to negatively impact the planet, the resulting climate change and looming global environmental crisis also affect people on a psychological and emotional level. For those who take the global call for change seriously, such as the young activists marching with Greta Thunberg, the struggle is fuelled not only by hope but also by more destructive emotions like fear and anxiety. This form of eco-anxiety is well recognised by psychologists and, at its worst, can be paralysing.

Naturally we are seeing a rise in what many call 'eco-anxiety' or 'eco-grief' as the situation worsens. These are not pathological symptoms to be treated by therapy, rather, they are healthy responses to a world in crisis which need to be shared and held in community.
(Rust, 2020, p. 7)

There are also other common psychological reactions to the imminent environmental situation recognised by psychologists, such as defence and denial. Joseph Dodds uses Freud's kettle logic to explain how many react to the crisis (Dodds, 2011, pp. 41-43).

The logic goes like this:

1. It's not happening.
2. It's not my fault.
3. There's nothing we can do about it (so I can just get on with my life as usual).

Dodds explains:

Psychoanalysts have long known that defences need to be tackled carefully. Perhaps green campaigns, as worthy and as truthful as they may be, might at times have caused more harm than good, representing a 'sledgehammer' approach to tackling eco-defences.

(Dodds, 2011, p. 41)

While I am not as sceptical as Dodd when it comes to green campaigns, I do lean against strategies that are less direct and do not risk evoking these negative emotions. Fear is not existentially sustainable for human beings. In the work I make I try to nurture hope and create positive attitudes towards the future, through connection and affection. Rust speaks about resistance as an implicit part of change (Rust, 2014, p. 49) and points out, that an awareness of the risks involved when instigating changes is vital. As an artist I can see an opportunity to contribute with positive images or imagination for the future that counteract these paralysing tendencies. Through my art practice I am looking for the right conditions for transformation in the context of performance, asking what moves people profoundly and what drives them to action. These questions have naturally led me to the field of deep ecology and ecopsychology that study and nurture biophilia and mindfulness and appreciate felt emotions.

When we do allow ourselves to feel, we might find a whole range of strong emotions, such as anxiety and fear about the future, despair at our lack of political will, grief for so many losses, guilt that we continue to be part of the cause and more. While therapy has helped us to become more emotionally literate interpersonally, we are still a very 'stiff upper lip' culture in relation to the bigger picture; when we block out our feelings, we lose touch with the urgency of crisis. (Rust, 2008, p. 160)

Within my practice I want people to get in touch with the urgency of the imminent crisis from relating to constructive feelings that do not risk being blocked out. For me it has been a mission to find a

constructive and positive way of creating an awareness of humans' place in the web of life and an understanding of what makes us really feel good and creates a sense of belonging and harmony with our environment.

The goal is not to preach, shame, or correct, but rather to nurture hope by focusing on what is worth living for and fostering an imagination for a brighter future. The strategies that Rust presents in "Daring to Dream?" involve communication and care. She is adamant about creating a language for a new worldview that does not separate man from nature and thus enables the mainstream population to envision positive images for the future, to bring ecopsychology into the theory and practice of professional care. The methods of ecopsychology in essence involves nurturing people's connection to the more-than-human world by restoring the bond with their natural environment. As a Jungian psychologist, Rust relies on images, myths, and imagination. One of the myths Rust describes is the "myth of progress", a belief in the progress of technology and knowledge that will solve the problems for us. But in fact, technology alone will not do the trick; urgent action of changed behaviour is needed. Yes, we should dare to dream, and we should train our imagination to create positive images for the future. But we urgently need a hook, a valid reason for wanting to change the perspectives for future generations.

The Icelandic novelist and activist Andri Snær Magnason makes a sound argument in his book *On time and water* for how we can fuel the desire to make the future our business (2020). He describes a situation where he sits with his 10-year-old daughter in his 94-year-old grandmother's kitchen, born 1924. They bear the same name, Hulda, and there is a strong bond between them. He asks his daughter to calculate what year she herself will be 94 years old, and after calculating she says 2102. Then he asks her to imagine that she sits in her kitchen with her 10-year-old great granddaughter and asks her then to calculate when her great granddaughter will be 94. The answer is 2186.

I've one more puzzle. How long is it from 1924 to 2186?' Hulda does the maths. 'Is it 262 years?' 'Imagine that. Two hundred and sixty-two years. That's the length of time you connect across. You'll know the people who span this time. Your time is the time of the people you know and love, the time that moulds you. And your time is also the time of the people you will know and love. The time that you will shape. You can touch 262 years with your bare hands. Your grandma taught you; you will teach your great-granddaughter. You can have a direct impact on the future, right up to the year 2186.' 'Up to 2186!' (Magnason, 2020, pp. 16 - 17)

What better motivation for change than love and genuine connection to another being?

Second Stage – *Island / Eyja*

When creating an approach to the second work of the research, in Hrísey, based on my findings from *No Show*, the time spectrum of love that Magnason presents in his text was key. Another key element was the dialogue. In a video essay in the *Island* exposition on RC, I describe the approach like this:

My findings revealed the transformative qualities of the genuine exchange in the host - guest relationship, the enriching impact of the tactile, embodied, and immersive experience and how a caring atmosphere creates trust and thus possible change. What is added in *Eyja* is the continuous verbal and sensory communication that the dramaturgy brings forth. (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021b))

Together with Gréta Kristín Ómarsdóttir, a colleague from Hrísey, I created a work about what it means to belong, and examined existential, social, and ecological questions. The work explores what belonging entails and how something can belong to something else. We both had personal attachments to Hrísey and were concerned with the future of the habitants of the island, that was categorised as being a fragile settlement by the Icelandic Regional Development Institute, a term used for towns and villages where future livelihood of the human population was at risk. We invited the children of Hrísey, as the future of the island, to take a central place in the performance, guiding guests through a participatory journey around the island, through landscapes, cultural landmarks and into private homes. The performance started on the ferry to the island where guests were provided with passports that would be stamped at different stations on the island. The guests would then travel in small groups through the different stations, with a child as their guide. The child perspective and energy were the glue that held the work together as they played a central role in the performance. During the experience the guests were invited to engage in a dialogue with hosts and other guests to discuss, imagine, and contemplate various tasks.

The affect of the human encounters and the dialogue was profound and manifested in different ways in the work. Through the hosts I heard many accounts of moving situations. One of the hosts recounted a touching interaction with a guest who was an immigrant with a few years of residency in Iceland. They shared stories about their respective challenges, and the guest was deeply moved by gratitude towards his own community, eventually shedding tears in the host's kitchen. Reflecting on the encounter, the host admitted feeling surprised by the emotional impact it had on her (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021b)).

I agree with Magnason when he highlights, in his story about his daughter and grandmother, that intergenerational love is a perfect guide towards sustainable behaviours. In *Island*, the children intuitively led us to these thoughts. They were the heart and soul of the project, contributing to the affective atmosphere of the performance while also likely being the most profoundly affected. The children's empowerment was tangible, as indicated by a teacher who observed a notable increase in the self-esteem of the youngsters, prompting them to take an action against the municipality regarding their rights. She noticed a significant shift in their attitude, which she attributed to the project's influence (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021b))

Porous and Embracing Dramaturgy

Doing two performances back-to-back produced a lot of research data in a short time. One of the key findings was identifying the dramaturgical tool I was using. I took departure in Kathy Turner's term *porous dramaturgy* (2014). Porous dramaturgy points to how I invite content from participating agents to sieve through the pores of a performance structure that is mainly based on question making, mindful observation and embodied engagement. In her writing, Turner describes the porous structure as embracing (Turner, 2014), whereas I split the term into two elements, the *porous* and the *embrace*. Where the porous refers to a structure that provides a space for guests to render their stories, ideas, and values into the performance. Whereas embrace refers to the holding environment (Winnicott, 1953) the work seeks to create, in terms of care and attention to the needs that the invited guests might have. The work aims at holding space for its guests to contemplate their own personal experience of the world, their stories, values, and worldviews. The porous and embracing dramaturgy became one of the key concepts that I decided to unfold and explore in relation to my research questions. As I elaborated in my video article "How Little is Enough? Porous & Embracing Dramaturgy for Transformative Encounters" (Knúts-Önnudóttir, 2022), this approach to performance structure serves as a response to my research question, providing a framework for facilitating transformative encounters.

Relation Specific Performance

When disseminating my first two works, initially through online expositions and later by mediating some findings in the peer-reviewed journal for video articles, *Journal of Embodied Research*, I found myself using terms that I eventually outgrew. Changing my vocabulary was essential. Some terms no longer served me; I couldn't align with their overall meaning and context. It was crucial to experiment with words, discover the right language, and speak with my own voice.

Two terms I previously used to describe my method were *site-specific performance* and *human specific performance*. These terms emphasised the role of the hosting agent and their environment. Site-specificity highlighted the contribution of the environment (Pearson, 2010), while the human-specificity coined by Nullo Facchini, former artistic director of Cantabile 2 in Denmark, referred to performances tailored to each participant's unique experience (Facchini, 2020). Both terms captured crucial aspects of my performances and their relationality to the guest's self and surroundings. However, when I encountered the term *relation-specific performance* introduced to me by installation artist, Charlotte Grum, it resonated deeply with me. In an unpublished essay (Grum, 2012), Grum describes her own performance as relation specific. While Grum didn't provide comprehensive explanation, she used the term to describe a performance that centres around individual experiences and their connections to the performance site and objects, encompassing all associated elements. As I interpret it through my own work, relation-specific performance unfolds in the interplay between the guest and the various agents present during the performance. It transcends both the site and the individual, humans, and the more-than-human. Relation-specific performance narrows the gaze to the individual guest's experience and acknowledges the different types of interactions they may have during a performative experience. All theatrical experiences have a degree of relation-specificity, but in my performances, it is the relationships that are forged that define the work. In my overall dissemination, I have decided not to extensively elaborate on the term relation-specific performance. Instead, I have chosen to explore different aspects of relationality present in my work using the term performative encounter. I will address this later in the text, particularly when examining my final performance within the research. Relation-specific performance truly deserves its own dedicated artistic research, a topic that will not be fully explored within this context.

Me-thod

When analysing the creation process of *Island*, and looking at my artistic methods, I came to recognise the inherent subjectivity present in all aspects of my work, whether as an artist or a researcher.

This is where my baggage became significantly important, and I took all my objects out of my backpack to understand how they were at play in my work.

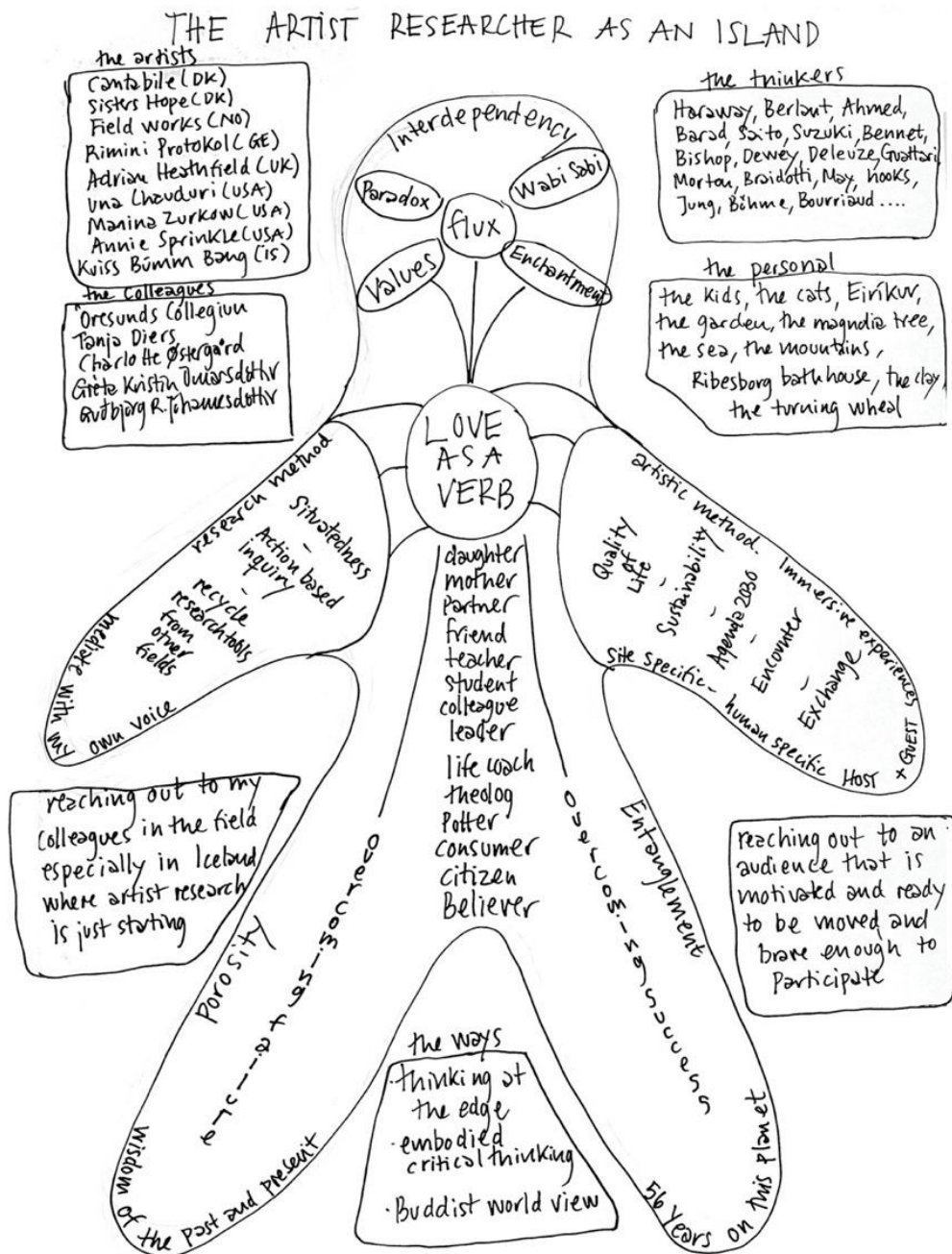
My methods are a manifestation of who I am, and what skills and insights I have gathered in my life. They reflect my education, background, experiences, and personal preferences. Being a theologian, I am interested in existential questions. As a life coach, I am using mindful observational practice and powerful questions as an artistic tool. The focus on fragile and broken subjects and my interest in using elements from wabi sabi and kintsugi, belong to my experiences of loss and of the healing

period that I spent in Japan. Even the little girl in the bathtub is present in my practice with her needs for relations and meaning. My mother's example of care became my ethical compass when creating the holding environment that I had identified as being important to my practice. The urge to remove myself from the work and create a platform for others to share and create, is a result of the structural changes I undertook, from a patriarchal worldview to more feminist methods of caring, listening, and sharing. The sustainability questions, and the reduced production are directly related to my critique of consumerism and of how I imagined the future of my own children, now being the oldest generation alive in my lineage. Paradoxically, when wanting to remove myself from my works, I became the work. I started to call my method, ME-THOD, reflecting this fact. In Greek the word μέθοδος, *methodos*, means pursuit of knowledge, meta meaning in pursuit of and *hodos* that means a way. I like to understand my artistic methods as my-way, *me-thod*. I am creating performances from my situated experiences, knowledge and skillsets that reside in my body and in my person. I cannot claim that I am unique, but I can claim to have a unique view from inside this entangled situation of the practicing artist from where I can mediate what I see, feel, and think. It is not out of self-interest that I make my claim, I am rather pointing out that this is the case for all artists, and researchers.

After accepting my subjectivity as a researcher, I made an important decision. I felt an urge to articulate my motivations for doing the research and clarify to whom I was addressing it. After being involved in academia for two decades, and being a dean of a department when I started my pilgrimage, the professional needs of my colleagues, the role of the arts in society and the future of performance were imprinted in my professional DNA. During my time as a dean, Iceland University of the Arts was establishing an understanding of artistic research, and I found it hard to convince my colleagues in the field of theatre and performance, of the benefits of doing artistic research. It is to these Icelandic colleagues and peers that I address my research. To engage with these colleagues effectively, I needed to communicate using my own voice rather than conforming to conventional academic methods of theorising and problematising. My research path was designed to develop sustainable artistic methods for transformative encounters and to articulate findings and experiences to performance makers and researchers to further explore, recycle and redefine. My criticality should manifest in detailed investigation of openings, on what works. I wanted to pay attention to qualities and not focus on finding flaws. I insisted on speaking with my own voice, a porous voice that was affected by things I loved and thoughts that moved me. I have used varied mediation formats, allowing the content to influence the format. When disseminating *No Show*, a performance using letters, I disseminate the work through letters. When disseminating performative encounters, I do it through a podcast series based on performative encounters with my peers. This cappa text is in the form of a testimony, allowing me to bring you on the transformative journey with me.

Through my supervisor, philosopher Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir, I was introduced to the concept of embodied critical thinking (Schoeller, Thorgeirsdóttir, & Walkerden, 2024). Together, we utilised Thinking at the Edge, a method developed by Eugene T. Gendlin (Schoeller, 2023; Gendlin, 2004). This method recognises the accumulation of knowledge stored in the body and aims to systematically release and use this knowledge. It involves a series of processing sessions between two or more individuals, employing various sharing, listening, and mirroring techniques. These sessions facilitate the development of new language, images, theories, and ideas. The participants tap into their felt sense, containing knowledge that is situated in the body, and move the thinking from the rational mind to include the body. These practical exercises have contributed to the development of my research methods and my understanding of my embodied knowledge.

My immediate surroundings also affected my thinking and decision-making; my husband, children, research colleagues, extended family and friends, the artists I was inspired by, the thinkers I was reading, and not least my peers in Iceland, the people I wanted to address my research to. I was heavily entangled in my subjectivity, and I saw value in it. Rather than resisting the affect it made on me, I went along with it and started to monitor its progress. Me-thod is a pluralistic artistic and research methodology rooted in my personal and professional background and skill set, used with intuition, and guided by embodied criticality. This approach differs from the rational and fiercely critical methods often found in scholarly fields. The pluralistic approach facilitates cross fertilisation between different fields and creates a more entangled outlook on knowledge. In me-thod, objectivity does not exist; it is based on subjectivity, which I strive to be transparent about. To help me understand my entangled method I drew a picture of how I saw my myself and my environment.



The drawing was made in connection to my halfway seminar in December 2022

Fellow Pilgrims

I situate myself amongst a growing number of performing artists who are occupied with sustainable development, green strategies and the relation to earth and the environment. I have been inspired by many likeminded artists and thinkers like Una Chaudhuri and Marina Zurkow (The Dear Climate Project, n.d.) and Annie Sprinkle (The Ecosexuals, n.d.); three American women that focus on imagination, creation, and humour in their artistic response to the global crisis. In the Øresund region, where I am based, there are artists and collectives that are dealing with the same questions in similar ways as myself. These are groups that are either concerned with the future of the planet or have developed performative strategies to invite their guests to co-create their experiences. What they have in common is that they are artist researchers who are dedicated to an inquiry into the affordances of theatre and performance, especially the transformative power of participatory performative experiences.

The Copenhagen-based cross-disciplinary performance group, hello!earth, stands as a pioneering force in Scandinavia, particularly in the realm of developing strategies for participatory and immersive performances and fostering nature interconnectedness. Known for their innovative approach, they have devised techniques to engage participants as co-creators in immersive durational performances, participatory walks, and explorations of urban spaces and natural environments. Their repertoire includes the creation of site-specific installations and interventions, alongside ongoing investigations into various formats for participation. Collaborating with a diverse selection of partners, ranging from professional artists to biologists, journalists, philosophers, social scientists, and everyday experts, hello!earth has cultivated an approach they term social sensitive spaces. Through their work, they explore the qualities and potentials of collectives and collective action while delving into themes related to post-capitalist living (hello!earth, n.d.).

Another Copenhagen based performance project, Sisters Hope led by artist researcher Gry Worre Hallberg, is exploring the poetic dimension as a strategy to create different futures for humans to inhabit a sensuous society. They look at their practice as an "intersection of immersion, intervention, activism, research, and pedagogy" (Sisters Hope, n.d.). The collective guests to inhabit their work for a longer duration; to eat and sleep and do things together within the staged settings. In her recent PhD, *Carving the path towards a sustainable future through aesthetic inhabitation stimulating ecologic connectedness*, Hallberg concludes that establishing a meaningful and sensual relationship with one's environment leads to greater sustainability (Hallberg, 2021).

Cantabile 2 in Vordingborg, Denmark, have been developing their participatory practice since 2007 and have created a term for their performance approach, human-specific performance. Human

specific performance invites an audience to render their own ideas, stories and experiences to a format that is designed to give room for personalised performative experience. Human specific performance relies on a personal engagement and is based on a series of encounters between the participants: guests, hosts, and artists. The work is often immersive and non-fictional, and the dramaturgy is based on ritual- or game-based structures (Cantabile2, n.d.).

These three companies in my local area are all actively developing strategies to engage their audiences by creating spaces where guests can transform their stories, ideas, and worldviews into a performative platform for reflection and contemplation. Their approaches resonate closely with my own artistic practice, providing a valuable professional mirror that I deeply appreciate. While they are not the only artists or collectives exploring these themes and strategies, they exemplify a growing trend among artists and a shared need within the artistic community. These initiatives highlight the increasing importance of creating immersive and participatory experiences that go beyond traditional forms of art consumption, encouraging active engagement and dialogue with the audience.

Third Stage – *Strings*

The inception of my third project took place during my initial meeting with colleagues at the *Agenda 2030 Graduate* school in January 2020. Following a weekend at a bathing resort in the countryside of Scania, where I immersed myself in water with my peers while discussing their projects and aspirations, I felt compelled to create a work about and with them.

Intrigued by their motivations for pursuing research, I was inspired to delve into their childhoods to trace the roots of their motivation and drive. Upon sharing this idea with the group, I was met with eager excitement from everyone.

From the onset, I was interested in creating direct encounters between the researchers and guests. I intended to employ a strategy informed by findings from previous works on transformative experiences, specifically focusing on how revisiting and processing an experience is crucial for lasting impact. In my earlier works, many interviewees noted that meeting me again for a follow-up interview enhanced the depth and strength of the work, providing them with an opportunity to gain new perspectives from their experiences (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021a)). Consequently, I made the decision to organise two events within the same project, offering guests the chance to revisit their initial experience not through interviews but through a sequel performance. The overarching theme for the work was that everyone is a researcher and has the potential to effect change in the world. The two parts of the piece were distinct in nature: the first part involved one-on-one performative encounters between a guest and a researcher from Agenda 2030 at their workstation in Lund University. The second part was a larger gathering, with the title *Strings II: The Hub*. The gathering took place in an old ceremonial location at the main campus of the University. In the performance, we introduced a playful concept called the school of research, where members of the graduate school hosted workshops on research practices. These workshops were centred around themes of Care, Connection, Empathy, and Love. Guests enrolled as students and participated in four small workshops, gaining insight into the fundamental principles of research. At the culmination, they graduated from the school in a ceremony where certificates were handed out. My colleagues assumed the roles of teachers, I was the headmistress, and all participants, including hosts and guests, were outfitted in white laboratory cloaks to emphasise the scientific ambiance of the setting.

The How-little-is-enough Approach

Strings was a big enterprise, logistically complicated, with many participants. Despite this, I was the sole member of the artistic team, and the production rested primarily on my shoulders. Dating back to The Professional Amateurs, founded in 2005, I have been using a minimal production approach that I have reduced even further during my research. In the video essay, *Island*, I describe my production method like this:

The research question How little is enough? refers to the level of production needed to create a performance that has transformational potential. Here we already have a site, multiple stories, and concerns. The place has resources and infrastructure that can be mobilised. I recycle, re-organise and re-frame. (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021b))

The question, how little is enough? has engendered an approach to theatre making that incorporates reduced production, being attentive to what is already in place and figuring out what is needed. The question is relative, and is influenced by the situation where it is applied and can refer to materials, energy, labour, distance, numbers etc. Throughout my journey, my primary goal has been to induce the transformative potential of a performative encounter. Along the path toward this objective, I consistently apply the how-little-is-enough approach to decision-making. This means that at every stage of my research and creative process, I am mindful of what is truly essential for creating an environment that can foster transformative encounters. Whether it's selecting a host for the performance, choosing a site, or determining the thematic framework, I consistently question how I can accomplish the desired outcome using the fewest resources, minimal energy, and avoiding unnecessary complications.

According to this approach, the aim is to minimise the production, not necessarily to scale down or create minimal performances. Despite the reduced production, my ambition is always to create eclectic work that strives to make an impact, involving communities, landscapes, and big ideas. The method is attentive to what is already in place at the site, reorganises the inherent content, and creates a framework around its participants. When downscaling the production, I had removed all the excess from the process, only using essential resources. This also meant that I had removed creative partners and external producers. I was doing all the labour by myself, and I had big ambitions for the performance. I was working with over 20 non-professional collaborators who needed encouragement, guidance, and support. The logistics of the one-on-one performative encounters were extensive and the burden of doing two-in-one performance was beyond what I could take on physically and emotionally. On top of that, I was conducting research, with added activities such as documenting, collecting materials, and interviewing.

I was on a verge of a burn-out.

To keep track of my condition, I kept a personal diary through the process. When disseminating the project my main findings lay in this diary. A significant lesson I learned was recognising that my own energy is a limited resource that I needed to take care of. Thus, I had to safeguard my existential sustainability. This required me to prioritise my own needs, marking a shift from my previous focus on the needs of others or the demands of the work itself. When implementing the how-little-is-enough approach and scaling down the production, I seriously underestimated the labour of responsibility inherent in the artistic process. The burden that I felt was threatening my wellbeing, was the sensation of being solely responsible for the whole thing; producing, creating, and researching. This is what I wrote in my diary on April 1st, 2022:

In *STRINGS* I am responsible for:

- the personal stories and other personal details of my participants and partners.
- the wellbeing of the people involved in the encounters, guests, and hosts.
- the work I send into the world and partly its affect on the guests that encounter it.
- the material that is shared with me in my research.
- the knowledge/experiences that I create and mediate through my research.
- the methods that I create.
- my own existential sustainability.

...and I make myself response-able to all these aspects.

I have created a porous creation method that invites me to think about responsibility as something that I share with others rather than taking the whole thing on by myself. So, I cannot blame the method for my stress. But it is true that I have brought it on myself by reducing the production and taking on a lot of roles by myself. Maybe there is too much of the old parameters inside of me. I need to question my expectations of the process.

Note to self: Responsibility equals Ethics.

(Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2023a))

An aspect of the how-little-is-enough approach is also applicable to the production of research output. I have followed the Japanese principle of Hara hachi bu of only filling the stomach up to eighty percent. To you, my reader, I serve small plates that each one by itself will not satisfy your hunger but between them and along with what you bring into the porous structure, there should be enough nourishment for your own journey.

Existential Sustainability

Encountering the challenges in the process of making *Strings* helped me recognise the true essence of the project. My research revolved around existential sustainability, transcending from the motivation, through the practice, into the meeting with the guests.

I had been introduced to the term during my first year at Lund University and was invited into a transdisciplinary working group that was exploring existential sustainability and how it related to different fields of research. At the time, I was not ready to commit to this line of research, so, I let it go. However, when the time came and I was standing on the edge of a cliff about to fall, existential sustainability took centre stage in my pilgrimage journey, leaving me no choice but to carry it along in my backpack.

Existential Sustainability has recently gained attention from scholars across various academic fields such as sociology, health, religion, arts, and design (Loor, 2022). This term encompasses the systematic care and innovative methods required to meet fundamental human needs. In a speech by Archbishop Antje Jackelen of the Swedish church in Uppsala in 2018, she introduced the concept existential sustainability. Antje emphasized the urgency of existential health issues, stating that without existential sustainability, there is no guarantee for any other form of sustainable development – social, economic, or environmental. She discussed the significance of meeting our spiritual needs and the role that arts and culture play in contributing to existential sustainability (Jackelen, 2018).

The concerns raised by Archbishop Jackelen resonated deeply within me. Questions on sustainability are anchored in my motivation to do work. The existential questions related to the individual are particularly important. I firmly believe that being existentially sustainable as a human being, an artist, and an artist researcher is a prerequisite for any artistic or intellectual creation, or any development that involves human resources. In the video article, "How Little is Enough? A Quest for Existential Sustainability." (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024b), I delve into what I mean by the term existential sustainability and how I see it manifesting in my creative processes and performances.

*I am existentially sustainable
when I am nourished,
physically, mentally, and spiritually.
I am motivated to do
meaningful work when
I feel purpose,
when I find myself in a friendly environment,
exchanging experiences
with human and more-than-human
peers.*

Mission

As I am clear about in my writing, I am on a mission. I use my performances as a vehicle for my own vocation and I invite other humans and more-than-humans on a ride with me. When I am describing my intentions, I often say that I am researching the instrument of theatre making. The word instrument evokes negative connotations in many artists. It may point to the systematic instrumentalization of the arts in authoritarian regimes, but I want to claim the instrument for me as an artist. As I see it, I am exploring the potential of theatre as a transformative tool in relation to sustainable development, using my work as instrument for change. I am intrigued by the impact artworks can have on individuals involved; artists, collaborators, and guests, potentially contributing to systematic changes. I am committed to understanding how my artistic output influences my guests. However, I am utterly opposed to external authorities attempting to instrumentalise artists. This distinction should not be misinterpreted with when artists utilise their expression as a tool for their own purposes. Freedom of expression is paramount in all artistic endeavours, and while discussing artistic methods as instruments may be controversial and provoke reactions from some colleagues, performance serves as a powerful platform for influencing both humans and non-humans and can be used for various motives. It is crucial for an artist to be clear about their intention. Transparency regarding motivation and methods is critical, particularly when navigating the complexities of privilege. Therefore, as a person of privilege, I approach the use of my instrument with caution. Instead of postulating truths, I am committed to fostering a platform for agents from diverse backgrounds and abilities to engage with existential questions. These questions transcend mere social and racial issues, providing a space for profound exploration and dialogue. While I do not always succeed in drawing a diverse group as guests to my work, the method I am applying to my performances may work for different contexts and can be applied as a tool to address any social question, due to its porous nature.

Coming back to *Strings*, and my precarious mental and physical state during the creation process, it needs to be said that I pulled through this ordeal and the performances were well received. The interviews I conducted with my peers in the graduate school confirmed the transformative potential of the method. They describe having a new outlook on their research and a deeper connection to their source of motivation and sense of purpose. However, the experiment of dividing the performance experience in two to provide the guests with an opportunity for a deeper reflection, failed. I couldn't evaluate the effect because there weren't enough guests for both performances. Additionally, the performances were so different and intense that guests had no chance to reflect during them. My existential crisis during the process took over and the reflection space was not a priority. The concept of having a space for reflection within the experience emerged organically during the fourth artistic work within my project, *Pleased to Meet You*, as I will explain in the next chapter.

Fourth Stage - *Pleased to Meet You*

I had created three performances within my research project: *No Show*, a performative encounter with an absent stranger in their home, *Island*, a performative encounter with a community on an island, and *Strings*, a performative encounter with a group of researchers at their workplace. While the presence of the more-than-human had been tangible in these performances, the focus had largely been on human encounters. Furthermore, in terms of the *how-little-is-enough approach* and scaling down the production, I was prepared to push the boundaries of what was possible. Therefore, it felt like a natural progression to develop a highly minimalistic performance that would place the more-than-human world at the centre. This led to the creation of a do-it-yourself performance involving non-human agents.

I introduced the idea to *Lokal, International Performance Festival* in Reykjavík, a festival focusing on work in progress, and was invited to try out the concept at their joint festival with *Reykjavík Dance Festival* in November 2022. I invited three more-than-human entities around the festival hub, in the city centre in Reykjavík, to join me, a pond, a community of birds and a lamp inside the festival building. I sensed a positive reply and initiated the work, creating three do-it-yourself performative encounters with these new friends.

At the festival desk guests could pick up a do-it-yourself box, containing a performance kit including a manual/manuscript and props to perform the work. From there the guest would generate the work by following the instructions and using the props. This initial trial felt like a significant step towards concluding my research and answering the fundamental question: How little is enough to create a transformative encounter through performance? It was a guest-host scenario, featuring a performative encounter between two entities: a human and a non-human. Utilising a porous and embracing dramaturgy, the performance facilitated numerous secondary encounters. The piece remained intentionally simple, employing no non-renewable resources. It highlighted the entanglement of all lifeforms and provided a mirror for guests to test their values and worldviews and their place in the world order.

One challenge I struggled with was to protect my own existential sustainability. I was doing everything alone. The piece was not as logistically challenging as *Strings*, and the more-than-human participants were not as demanding as the humans, but the solitude was tangible, and the responsibility felt burdensome. In my last diary entry for *Strings*, I wrote a comprehensive list of my own needs, a manifesto for honouring my existential sustainability as an artist.:

- I need to be in touch with the things I love and that nourish me.
- I need to be present in my body.
- I need good motivation for doing work.
- I need to stay close to my values.
- I need creative partners.
- I need moral support.
- I need practical support for production and promotion.
- I need to articulate my own needs and organise the work around them.
- I need to understand the needs of my collaborators.
- I need to share the responsibility with my collaborators.
- I need to tap into an organic flow of things and avoid forcing things to happen.
- I need to listen to myself.
- I need to enjoy the process.

(Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024, (2023a))

In Reykjavík, I failed to honour my manifesto of needs but when I revisited the piece in Malmö in March 2023, I took the list seriously.

I brought costume designer and artistic researcher Charlotte Østergaard onto my creative team to design new boxes around the performance kit. As I had anticipated, collaborating with Østergaard brought everything together effortlessly. Having someone to bounce ideas off of, lifted the burden and liberated my spirit. Another aspect that also fell into place was the reflection space, which I had overlooked during the creation of *Strings*. By structuring the experience in three parts with space in between, there arose an opportunity for guests to internally reflect between these encounters. Furthermore, I provided each guest with an opportunity to sit down and write down highlights from their encounters in a book. These reflections often took on a contemplative nature, where guests would delve into the relationships between their relation to the host as well as the connections between the human and more-than-human in general. These written testimonies echo the written tasks from *No Show*, where guests were invited to write lists or letters inside the work either to themselves or their hosts. In interviews it became evident that these written assignments made an impact on the guests and triggered transformative reactions (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2021a)).

Transformative Encounters

In *Pleased to Meet You*, my primary goal was to focus on the transformative encounters. However, despite my ambition to create such encounters, predicting whether an encounter would indeed be

transformative presented a challenge. The nature of what triggers transformation in individuals is deeply personal, prompting me early on in my research to seek a new term for the tool that fosters such transformation. This tool emerged as *performative encounters*, offering a degree of control. I would even define the format of my performances as performative encounters.

From my perspective the performance starts when I, as the artist, encounter my collaborators in a staged setting, an arranged situation within the frame of the creative process. Subsequently, the collaborators, now acting as hosts, encounter the guests of the work, who in turn encounter the site, including other guests and the more-than-human environment. All participants, the artist, guests, and hosts, encounter their inner self: values, stories, prejudices, and emotions. Ultimately, the guest encounters the artist through the artwork.

A distinction exists between the primary encounter, that of the guest and the host, and the secondary encounters that arise as a consequence of this primary performative setting. These secondary encounters can be the most transformative, particularly those that occur on a deeper personal level. Only the primary encounters can be planned, but secondary encounters can be suggested and anticipated, by tactile, visual, or cognitive prompting in the dramaturgy and kinaesthetic or visual composition of the encounters. The title of the piece always refers to the primary encounter. Some of the performative encounters are indirect, like an encounter between a guest and an absent host. Both these agents experience the encounter, but not simultaneously.

In my understanding, a performative encounter can possess attributes that may or may not lead to transformation, depending on conditions that I explore in the podcast, *Transformative Encounters*. The podcast I made as a part of my research to unpack the affordances of performative encounters.

In the introduction to the podcast series, I describe the term like this:

When I use the term Performative Encounters, I am referring to a meeting between two or more agents that takes place in a staged setting during a performance. The encounter can be between humans or between humans and the more-than-human; people, animals, things, landscapes, temporalities (geological time, the future...) and phenomena like values, paradigms, or forces like the weather. These encounters are performative in the moment they are labelled and understood as a part of or related to a performance or heightened moment of religious or social ritual. Performative encounter is an exchange between two or more entities that has the potential to create new meanings, understandings, and relations or strengthen knowledges or relations that already exist. These encounters can either be tailor made or they can occur organically within a performance. (Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2023b))

I concluded that what makes an encounter transformative is partly the tactile and embodied experience and the cognitive resonance that a person connects to their pre-existing personal values and beliefs. These experiences create a new understanding, and the person has transformed. The fact that the encounter is performative is imperative, as this is what makes the moment count, a clear frame around what can be a subtle but profound revelation.

Being consequent in my how-little-is-enough approach, I only invited guests to my podcast series that happened to cross my path during the production period in spring 2023. My guests were: Maaïke Bleeker, dramaturg and theorist, Gigi Argyropoulou artist, activist and researcher, Charlotte Østergaard, costume designer and artistic researcher, Tanja Diers, dramaturg, and artistic researcher, Sofie Lebech, theorist and performance maker, Erik Pold performance maker, Liv Kristin Holmberg, performance artist and artistic researcher, and Sima Wolgast psychologist. These guests provided a width and depth to my thinking about the affordances of the performative encounter that I would not have gained otherwise.

Through the transformative encounters I had with my peers in the podcast, I came to realise that I could utilize the term performative encounters as a lens through which to view the dynamics within a performance. I employed it to examine various types of revelatory moments, both external and internal, viewing them as interactions between entities. Additionally, I adopted a broad interpretation of the duration of a performance. In my perspective, the performance begins long before the actual staging begins, encompassing the experiences that guests bring to the work, and it continues as they exit the staged setting, carrying the affect to develop further in the world.

What I concluded towards the end of my inquiry was that a performance can be seen as a series of external and internal encounters facilitated by the setup of the performance.

I set out to explore performative encounters as a dramaturgical tool to use in designing participatory performances, but instead I found a term that gives me an insight into what happens in a performative situation. Sure, I will be able to use the tool. To set up and pay attention to the actual meeting points between agents, pay attention to ethical aspects, understand my guests, the holding environment, the use of play and so on. But the notion of the aesthetic experience being a series of encounters between different elements is a thrilling discovery. A discovery that is in line with my wish to create relation-specific performances that are designed to incorporate the many different realities that happen to come together during a performance.

(Knúts Önnudóttir, 2024 (2023b))

Through transformative encounters with fellow travellers, in my podcast series, and engaging in dialogues about what performative encounters could mean to them, I felt I was reaching my destination. This is where my journey seemed to conclude. Not because the path had ended, but because it was a point where the path split, presenting me with a choice for a new journey and different paths to follow. These professional peers all had rich practices and theories, that pointed in different directions, grounding me once again in my situated knowledge, which was in a state of flux, changing with every new encounter. It was time to return home.

The Return

The Carrier Bag

I am a collector, and as I was about to complete my pilgrimage, with my research backpack full of things I had collected on the way, I was reminded of Ursula Le Guin's *The carrier bag. Theory of fiction*. In her book she reimagines the narrative of human origins through a story about a bag. In her retelling, technology is not depicted as a tool of domination but as a cultural carrier bag - a vessel for stories, memories, and collective wisdom. I had reached my destination, fulfilled my mission. For me it wasn't about bringing back the ultimate truth, but rather being able to tell the story about the process of going through various stages, experiencing the highs and lows of artistic research. The story about being imperfect and human, collapsing, rising again, doubting my methods, and questioning my intentions.

I returned home, not with a single profound revelation or artistic knowledge, but with a collection of items gathered along the way. These are the pieces of insight, experience, and challenges that have shaped my journey. Each item with its own story and purpose.

There is no hierarchy in the bag, when I reach down with my hand, the findings randomly land in my palm: guest-host situation, love, care, affect, bond, playfulness, embodiment, tactility, do-it-yourself-performance, maps, stamps, passports, imperfection, relation-specific-performance, site specificity, human specificity, blindness, privileges, mirroring, values, transformation, impact, proximity-distance, impermanence, Hara hachi bu, vulnerability, tenderness, collapse, awkwardness, forced intimacy, disobedience, kintsugi, wabi sabi, inner gaze, outer and inner dramaturgy, connection, empathy.

However, there are things bigger than the rest, such as; *existential sustainability* - the mission that provides a source of motivation that transcends the layer of production; *porous and embracing dramaturgy* - the dramaturgical tool that creates the condition for personal engagement and transformation; and *performative encounters* - the relational format, a term through which I understand the instrument of performance.

Other large items in my carrier bag are, *me-thod* - a pluralistic and situated artistic/research practice, and the *how-little-is-enough approach*.

Questions and Answers

The objects from the carrier bag can be used to answer my initial research question.

Q: How to construct sustainable methods of performance through transformative encounters?

A: Through *performative encounters* that serve as a platform for guests and participants to reflect on their lives and values to others, both human and more-than-human agents. The encounters foster an affective bond between participants and their surroundings. This connection has the potential to nurture aspirations for sustainable behaviours.

A: Using a *porous and embracing dramaturgical* approach in a playful setting where guests and participants render their stories as content, may enhance existential sustainability of both artists and other participants, by facilitating meaningful connection between humans and the more-than-human. Porous dramaturgy may reduce the artistic production and lift the labour of production, if basic needs of participants are being cared for during the creation process.

A: Using the concept of *me-thod* offers a pluralistic artistic and research approach. This approach is *existentially sustainable* for artists, departing from embodied knowledges that are situated and utilised with intuition. It also draws from a professional artistic skillset that is both personal and rooted in sustainable values.

A: By using *how-little-is-enough production approach*, utilizing already existing platforms, infrastructures, and materials. The approach strives to give space for old and new stories to emerge and spark meaningful dialogue and contemplations while reducing the carbon footprint. The approach is based on the belief that you do not have to travel far to find meaningful materials.

A: *Existential sustainability* serves as a foundational pillar for broader sustainable development. The arts, with their ability to evoke meaning and spiritual connection, play an important role in fostering these connections between humans and their surroundings. When guests are invited into a performance setting as whole individuals, encouraged to share their knowledge and perspectives, and given the space to be truly seen and cared for, the work establishes a framework for affection and can engender new relations. These connections not only enrich the performance experience but also have the potential to contribute to enhanced existential sustainability of people. In this context, the performance setting becomes a space where guests can bring their entire selves, including their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. By engaging in a dialogue that goes beyond words, the

performance invites guests to explore their connections to the environment, to each other, and to themselves. This holistic approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of nurturing these relationships for the well-being of individuals and potentially, the planet as a whole.

Through this process, guests may find a renewed sense of purpose and connection to their surroundings, leading to a deeper understanding of their role in the world. This, in turn, can inspire actions and attitudes that contribute to solutions to the global crisis.

A: The arts, with their power to evoke emotions, provoke thoughts, and inspire change, are uniquely positioned to facilitate transformative experiences, and contribute to a more sustainable and interconnected world.

The Walking Dissertation

This text stands as a testimony of the journey of an artistic PhD pilgrim who ventured far from home for many years, only to return transformed. Rather than a traditional written dissertation, the research has manifested in embodied experiences that now reside within the pilgrim. You could say that the PhD pilgrim embodies the essence of a dissertation, moving through the field of performance with a carrier bag full of objects to utilise, demonstrate, or display for peers, providing inspiration or practical use. The pilgrim is me. I am a living testament to my situated and entangled knowledges.

The little girl from the bathtub in Malmö, has now arrived in Hvalfjörður, Iceland where new journeys can begin. In a place called Vindheimar (Windworlds), I have discovered a location that aligns with my artistic vision and can embrace my evolving practice. I am increasingly compelled to delve deeper into relation-specific performances and nurture a profound connection with nature with my artistic practice.

*I stand on my balcony in the sunset,
facing the ocean, mountains,
an industrial plant and a whale station,
a beautiful yet intricate scene
in our complex and turbulent world.*

*I have moved to the countryside
where I can unfold my transformed artistic practice into
the natural landscapes,
inviting new and returning participants
to create bonds
with their inner and outer
mountains, oceans, or power plants.*

*In a few minutes,
I will be soaking in warm geothermal water
in a home-made bathtub on the beach.
I will expect a local seal to pay a visit
and greet me from the sea
looking me in the eyes
searching for a connection.*

How Little is Enough?

I hope that the testimony of my artistic research pilgrimage will inspire other performance makers to embark on a pilgrimage of their own, to further explore the territories and bring back new insights and more carrier bags with new tools and gems.

During my whole journey I have been asking myself:

How Little is Enough?

The answers have been many, as it always depends on what context it is posed against. To conclude my testimony, I will leave you with my most consistent answer, a question in itself:

What is needed?

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