

Dear friend,

I am interested in how the artistic methods affect my spectators and how their experiences inform my practice and create knowledge and potentially new artistic methods. In this letter I address the concept of affect in relation to my practice, especially the work *No Show*. I will account for my understanding of the concept and how it manifests in my artistic practice. When I talk about affect, I mean the sensorial, emotional, and cognitive influences of an experience, that evoke physical sensations, feelings, and thoughts. My understanding of affect is shaped by the ideas of several influential thinkers who have left a profound impact on my perspective. Donna Haraway's concept of 'staying with the trouble' (2016) has resonated deeply with me, urging a commitment to engaging with the complexities and challenges that arise in the world. Eve K. Sedgwick's work on the senses (2003) has been instrumental in my exploration of how we perceive and interact with the world through our senses. Additionally, Deleuze and Guattari's insights into percept and affect (1994) have fundamentally shifted my understanding of the essence of artistic work. Their definitions have opened my eyes to the dynamic interplay between perception and affect, highlighting how the work itself is not just an object but a force that influences and is influenced by those who engage with it. The work I am striving to produce is in fact an affect. I can describe the composition, the route, or the elements in play in my performances but I will not be able to describe what each spectator defines as being the work. Art and non art are almost inseparable. The experience is sensorial with all the complexity that entails. The full body of the work does not have a pre-designed effect but works differently for each guest encountering the work. It is through being present, touching, feeling, sensing, meditating, acting, and reflecting that the guests generate the work, and it takes shape as an artwork inside them. The artwork is the bloc of sensations and reflections that emerge inside of the guest while struggling to travel through the performance and perform tasks such as dancing in a wheelchair. This was the case in the edition 105 of *No Show*, where the guest is invited to dance to the song, *I want to break free*, performed by Freddie Mercury wearing women's clothing in a video displayed on a laptop screen placed on a living room table within a stranger's home, with a black cat observing in bewilderment. The guest is invited to engage

in a complex physical action within an unfamiliar environment, triggering a multi-layered affect that encompasses the sensory, emotional, and cognitive realms. At any given moment, there are multiple stimuli present, each evoking diverse responses within the guest.

I have chosen to work with an immersive participatory art form where the experience itself is the artwork, not what I have produced as an artist, but rather the affect of the situation I have invited people into. I am staying with the trouble, and I am inviting the spectators to stay there too. The border between art and non-art is erased and I embrace my loss of control of what the work entails. What I am looking for in my performances are liminal experiences that are potentially revelatory and life changing.

Fischer-Lichte, a leading theorist on transformative powers and aesthetics in performance describes the transformative potential of staging like this:

Staging brings about situations in which even inconspicuous and ordinary elements become remarkable and appear transfigured. Moreover, the spectators become aware that they are affected and transformed by their experience of the movements, light, colours, sounds, odours, and so forth. The *mise en scène* can therefore be defined and described as a process that aims at the reenchantment of the world and the metamorphosis of the performance's participants.

(Fischer-Lichte, 2008, 189).

In the case of *No Show* the re-enchantment happens in the real world and the staging is an ephemeral frame that is put against real conditions, thus inviting different realities to cross borders. The performative encounter becomes a frontier or a threshold (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, 203-204) instead of a border and paves way for the affect to take hold and transformation to happen.

To understand the affect of *No Show* and to find out how particular aspects of my artistic method and aesthetics work, I gathered data from both the participants and guests about

their experience. I decided that I would use different methods that would both give me an overview of the general affect of the performances and an insight into personal experiences. I created a post performance questionnaire that most of the guests of the performance filled in. I recorded audio interviews with the hosts before and after the performances and I also interviewed 17 guest that had gone through one or more editions of the performance. In my next letter I will give an account of how the interviews, together with data from the questionnaires, informed the process and created awareness, understanding and new knowledge to me. I will also give a brief insight into how this data informed the following artistic work, *Island*, and how I foresee my research method developing.