

#1 - The Monday edition

Bergen / Bergen Danssesenter - 19th of February - 1st March 2020

Getting older

We are starting Other People, common ground as Menzo and Mirte, both 30 years old. With the perspective of working for 20 more years, we realise that the life events we will travel through will become part of the work. Being 30 means we have had many life events in the past 20 years, and thinking ahead, probably events in our lives and the context we live in, will happen. Not knowing what it will be, but at least we know that our bodies will get older. That is why emotional states related to live events, will become a part of the work, and are not excluded in the work we do together.

With the perspective of working for 20 years, there is no rush needed in any sense. We wish deeply to share the various outcomes of Other People, common ground with other people than ourselves, but for now we decided against rushing to organise an event of facilitating any idea we might have of the right way of exchanging. Instead we exchanged by interacting with what Bergen offers.

Structure / Rituals

In Edition #0 - Prologue, we decided on some rituals, which gave a strong structure to our days. As a way to start the day we cleaned the studio floor carefully each morning, we took time for a walk every day, walking the same route, we created rules for our activities in the studio, applied the rules, changed them and wrote the unwritten rules or habits down, we worked every day from 10.00h to 18.00h in the studio, and only went out for our daily walk.

At the start of Edition #1 - The Monday edition, we tried recreating these rituals but soon realised that they did not reflect the phase of the work we were in. We started working without a set plan. What we did each day was decided on a day to day basis, sometimes making a plan on the end of the working day for the next day. More often than not, not sticking to the plan if we made it.

Sharing practises

Most of the work in this first edition is focussed on getting to know what our own practises are, by sharing them with the other. Getting to know each other's practice as well as our own. Figuring out the conventions we take for granted. Confronting our expectations.

What are our practises? How do we usually work? How do we practice without thinking that what we practice would become an interesting scene or part of a creation? What are the conventions that we are used to? Does the practice stop outside of the studio walls? What kind of experiences outside of the studio walls are actually part of the practice? Do we know in the moment of practicing what is part of the practice? Can we evaluate the activities as being part of the practice or not, right after we did them? Maybe we only realise what was important to our practice, 10 years in the future. When doing other activities,

going for walks (which during this edition was not very tempting, as the weather in Bergen in February does not invite to go on walks, with the exception of 2 mountain walks which we did in kind-of-ok-weather in the snowy mountains of Bergen), having dialogues with each other and other people, attending events etc. We just do them and do not evaluate them immediately in the sense if they were "useful" or not.

We found out soon that the location of our meeting greatly influenced the nature of our meeting. This edition was scheduled to take place in the dance studios of Bergen Danssesenter. We realised that we have very different relations to the space that is the "dance studio" and that these relations come with expectations of what can/could/should be done in this space. Studio space is seemingly shaped to facilitate the practice of (contemporary) dance creation although it could also be the other way around.

It can be a place of comfort for anyone who can place their practice intuitively within that space. If that is not the case, the studio space can become a sterile room detached from the outside world.

Meaning is formed by the medium through which it is presented and the medium is formed by the context in which it is created. We will have to consider and explore other spaces to find other ways of giving work shape and question how our expectations of any given space influence us. As only the second edition is fixed on where it will be, we know that we are looking for another kind of space, a non-dance-studio-space, for another edition.

Creating the environment of a workshop gives us the opportunity to share our practice. Be it between the two of us or with others. It forces us to first make clear to ourselves what our skills and our practices are. To evaluate our own (individual) way of working and figure out some of the things that we are doing, when we are working. It also gives the other(s) a clear way into the world/work of the person hosting the workshop.

Participating in the workshops of others is always an educational experience. It gives insight on how to share what you are working on and how to make others an active part of that. For now we feel that a good workshop has to account for three things.

1. A more or less clear idea of what the workshop is aiming at.
To know (more or less) where you are going.
2. The management of the expectations of the participant.
To let the people know (more or less) where we are going.
3. The reality of the people participating.
To see if it is realistic to get there and adjust if necessary.

After the first workshop we each created, we found it hard to come up with a new one that still focussed on our own practice. Instead we created a workshop based on exercises we experienced in the workshops of others. This in itself is an interesting aspect, as it makes us conscious of the history of events that formed our practices, trusting that we remember the ones that made an impression.

Translation

Participating in a workshop always leads to making a translation of someone else's ideas through your own body, words or work. By translating each other's practices to our own we try to get a deeper understanding of what our work is. Other strategies that we yet have to explore are the reenactment of our work or the work of others and the consecutive translation of one practice through multiple people.

Usefulness, efficiency and productivity

The concepts of usefulness, efficiency and productivity are to be considered in this project. We got the opportunity to work through funding from a national arts council. We are not expected to present a performative work. There is no-one watching our back. Still there we feel the need to be productive. To produce. The question then becomes, what is it that we produce? Can we produce time to reflect? Can we produce a space to share? Do we produce at all?

We allow ourselves to say that we don't want to be efficient, because we're not aiming at the creation of a performance or any other set result. What we do is share practices, and that sharing in itself is the project. It does however seem to be a bigger challenge not to think in the sense of being useful, that what we do should serve something or ourselves. We grew up and live actively in a society where efficiency, productivity and being useful seem to be the standard expectations. So the question rises, how to be inefficient while working? How do we define inefficiency? Going away from the idea of working hard? But what does hard work include? Could working more inefficiently be done by Broadening the definition of what work includes and taking away our expectation of what we should do to define something as work. At the same time we should not try to set the goal of being not useful or efficient, as that would again put us in the frame of goal-orientedness and being useful.

Creation

At times, we found ourselves working on material for what seemed to be a scene for or part of a performance. The material that emerged seemed to consist of a possible outcome or product. As we are not aiming at making a performance, we have to figure out how to work with our questions longer, without providing possible answers.

"We can't decide what we are looking for yet. We are doing a research"

- Maria Terese Kittelsen during NORMAL work in progress,
Bergen 29th of February 2020.

Inspiration

Or rather, where the work comes from. We questioned what it is that drives us to work. As inspiration is a synonym for breathing in it can feel passive, not

something done consciously. On the other hand, that could be the way work comes into existence. By continuously breathing in the world and unconsciously filtering out whatever resonates, we find new things that drive our work.

Documentation

Mirte would like to document more through audio, but we often forget to record anything. The only sound recording we made was about 40 minutes long and contained a lot of silence during which we were thinking. Therefore we now feel the need to make a transcription, as it might be boring to listen to people thinking in silence.

We are writing another (this) document together, trying to translate the experiences shared over the past twelve days into words. It is an attempt at storing what we hope not to forget. Because with twenty years still ahead it is most likely that when we do not document, a lot will be forgotten. It is only one way of doing things though.

We also have our own notebooks, in which we write what we feel is important for ourselves. What we collectively consider important at any time, is written down on papers. These papers will become a collection, at this moment to become a possible book, by gathering the papers together. Not yet sure how. We scan the papers so they become pdf's to store as a backup, or it might become something else.

During the work we mainly talk in our maternal languages, Dutch/Flemish. Though the language is the same, there are some small differences, which often give cause for the usual Dutch-Flemish jokes, impossible to translate into English. But as Other People, common ground is a project about sharing, we try to write in English, as we do in this document.

We translate with the idea that what we do is to be shared.

In the beginning of this edition, we reread our documentation of Edition #0 - Prologue. Some of it was clear and made us remember what we did, yet definitely not everything. A lot of what we wrote remained unclear, reading it again after 9 months. We have to believe it remained in our bodies in some way or another, but aim this time to write down more clearly what we did.

Annex: The setting

For the duration of this edition Menzo was living in an empty house, at least a house which feels empty, because there is no sign of anybody having lived there before. When moving in the house it was empty, except for the furniture that cannot be removed. The toilet, shower, stove and the rooms with doors and windows. We moved in a table, two chairs, a small improvised mattress that consists of what seems to be two thick lawn chair cushions, some cutlery, plates, glasses cooking tools, a pot and a pan, bedsheets, towels and the next day a work light, borrowed from Bergen Dansesenter. At times it felt quite lonely. His body hurt from sleeping on the cushions. He was happy to be close to the sea and surrounded by mountains.

Mirte was living at home during this edition and was dealing with emotions related to inside-home-emotional events. Her emotional state was quite okay, but her body varied being less or more tired from day to day.

We attended and visited the following events and places during this edition:

Frontlojefestivalen: a local festival for "fresh performing arts". We see "A tail holder" by Yohei Hamada, and "Her Past in Their Present Now" by Brita Grov. Both performances are made by Bergen based artists. We had encounters with several people in the after-performance time.

Norges Fiskerimuseum: as a part of Menzo's proposal on having a practice outside of the studio walls, we visit Norges Fiskerimuseum in Bergen. The Norwegian fish and sea culture is not only a part of the history, but also our daily view out of the window of the studio, with for example the Hurtigruten arriving every day around 2 o'clock in its Bergen Harbor. Having our first edition in Bergen, includes importantly a visit to a museum where we get to know more about Norwegian fishing and coastal culture.

Verkstedet: Carte Blanche takes over a space in the building of KODE 2, one of the art museums in Bergen, where several events are organised on an almost daily basis. We attend events like Borealis listening club #28 and open rehearsal of Øy with Ole Martin Meland and Smerz, Showing of the work NORMAL by Daniel Mariblanca, Maria Terese Kittelsen and Ursula Kaufmann.

BIT Teatergarasjen: Work-in-progress showing Figure-ring/New Voices by Vestland Danseteater/Simba Arts, as well as taking part in a workshop co-organised with Bergen Dansesenter and PRODA, as well as attending the lecture co-organised with Bergen Bibliotek.