CHOREOGRAPHY AS A MEANING-GENERATING AGGREGATE

ROSALIND GOLDBERG

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Rosalind Goldberg

This publication is part of the outcome of Rosalind Goldberg's artistic PhD project *Choreography as a Meaning-Generating Aggregate* (2019 – 2023). Artistic practice is at the core of this program. At the same time, the artistic practice is to be accompanied by an explicit reflection, which grants others access to methods and insights that have emerged from the artistic research.

The artistic PhD project *Choreography as a Meaning-Generating Aggregate* resulted in the three performances: *Rut* (2018), *The Field* (2020), and *Dark Dynamite* (2022), as well as the publication *Choreography as a Meaning-Generating Aggregate*, written by Rosalind Goldberg.

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2 INTRODUCTION

The body absorbs and leaks out. Things are passing through, and things are also materializing. I can never entirely know what leaks out. I can only, to a certain extent, know what I absorb. But I know of this movement that unevenly sways, drops, crashes, and sneaks into or out of my body. I know that context and activity matter for this movement, but these can't entirely be controlled. The world of stimuli (sensorial, informational, contextual, etc.) is overflowing my system constantly. It's like a shower. It's flooding my flesh, scrubbing my organism, rubbing my structure. As a body, I am not passive in this movement of sensations, information, etc. The movement is met by me, by my accumulated experience, knowledge, and preferences, so that just as it drives away with my body and constantly makes it at the same time, I influence these movements by how I follow them, react to them, or resist them.

2.1 CHOREOGRAPHY AS A MEANING-GENERATING AGGREGATE

The focus of my research project has been to examine choreography as an aggregate of meaning production specific to dance, where habits of perceiving and understanding the body are probed, and an incentive is provided for seeking out words and concepts. By placing the body at the center of my research, I want to highlight its capacity for producing meaning through processes belonging to sensation that are sometimes enacted prior to cognition—where movements and sensations appear faster than words, in a different mode of expression. My research has found support and resonance within the interdisciplinary field of New Materialism, in which the concepts of materiality, the fleshiness of the body, and discourse/language are thought immanently together. Drawing on the principles of New Materialist theory for my choreographic work, I have explored how meaning is something to be sensed, something that resists reduction to linguistic meaning alone. A feeling of coherency can provide an experience of meaning before any attempt to adequately render this meaning in words. There is an increasing tendency under late capitalism to reduce the use of language to efficient and functional communication. Meaning is then often relegated to the status of information conveyed by performative language. Against this, I want to stress that meaning-production in dance requires that we take into account how the corporeal, the material, and the discursive are entangled with one another—a condition that, through the sensorial dimension of dancing movement, distinguishes meaning-production in dance from meaning as it is produced under a regime of efficient labeling.

This research project entails the creation of choreographic methods and choreographic work in which corporeal expression by way of movements and sensations is expanded in order to probe and then challenge the dancers' habits of sensing and perceiving dance. Thus, my choreographic method takes the sensorial input as directional and specifically focuses on the intensity of sensations that overflow and confuse the intelligibility of movement for both the dancer and the audience. This approach is broadly based on the premise that choreography is capable of expanding our perception in ways that inspire us to search for words to describe our sensorial experience. By staying with the materiality of the body and how intricated its fleshiness and the discursive-linguistic dimensions are, I am approaching meaning production in contemporary dance through this New Materialist perspective, in the process hoping to contribute to the manifold of knowledges about the body within the field.

My research has been guided by the following two questions:

- How can I through practice as a choreographic method stimulate and challenge the capacity of the dancing body and how we understand it?
- How does the choreographic process and the work that emerges through practice as a method, as I develop it, encourage a search for words and concepts after the meaning has already been produced in matter?

Within this research period I have created three choreographies.

The description of my method and the three choreographic works that form the foundation for this PhD project take up extensive space in the current reflection. This is in order to show how I approach these questions in practice and unpack how the processes unfold, demonstrating how the process of developing movement material is entangled with the inspirations and ideas that together form the concepts for the works. In turn, the process develops unexpected directions that require reformulations of the practice, new ideas, and further inspiration. In short,

I want to articulate the malleability of the process. Lastly, in choosing to structure the text in this way, I want to show how the material and eventually the form of the finished choreography emerge through these processes, in contradistinction to having a pre-established idea about materiality and form that is then applied to the choreography.

I have written this text with an interest in being transparent about the methods I have developed, and how I have used them, as well as in providing access to the questions, thoughts, and ideas that have stimulated this project. The text is rooted in the inspiration it draws from "Everybodys" an initiative led by the choreographers Alice Chauchat and Mette Ingvartsen, among others. Their objective was to produce a platform for artists to exchange knowledge about artistic practices and support the articulation of work. Their activities varied from developing platforms for games and tools, to creating scores that could be used by whoever wanted to use them, to publishing books (see Chauchat and Ingvartsen 2009, 2). I was a newly trained dancer and creating my first choreographic works when some of these publications came out. Gaining access to how other choreographers worked in the studio, what strategies they used, and how they addressed issues or stimulated movement production made me understand what methods I was already using, and it stimulated me to produce new ones. I believe that their generous approach to making processes and methods visible, as well as sharing and articulating the strategies and the underlying ideologies that form choreographic processes, has helped and continues to help further develop the field of contemporary dance. I have written a text that I hope can function in a similar way to this early, influential inspiration, as a sounding board for colleagues to bounce their ideas off, as a series of methods to test, and as a material-aesthetic-discourse to work alongside with, or against, or to take further.

I started writing this text with a clear format in mind. I wanted to write three essays closely linked to the three works that in different ways reflected this project. Somewhere in the middle of this project, having written one essay and started several, I realized that the writing process was in itself doing something to the text. Thoughts were emerging while writing; the writing, in itself, revealed fields that I hadn't foreseen. It became clear that the text's final form had to emerge from the writing process, and not the other way around. In that sense, how this text has emerged reflects how I have developed choreographic works within this PhD. Body, thought, ideas, and form are all emergent when I engage with them materially.

2.2 MATTER | MATERIAL

Matter and material are two words/notions that will be frequently used in the text. I treat matter and material as distinct yet inseparable. In short, I think of the human body as matter, and I relate to choreography with all its parts as material.

Below, I explain how I understand, relate to, and contextualize matter and material in this project, which will be exemplified later in the text.

2.2.1 BODY AS MATTER

Thinking of the body as matter is tied to an understanding of matter and body in line with the US feminist theorist and physicist Karen Barad's theory of agential realism. Barad offers an account of matter as a dynamic that includes agencies. In this conception, matter is not separated from the mind. Instead, they argue that matter has agency and is connected to, shaped by, and shapes human knowing. Further, this understanding of matter is not only connected to the human body but also includes the environment and other more-than-human bodies. This perspective is often linked to a New Materialist perspective of matter, as it opposes the dualisms of matter and mind, nature and culture, etc.

> In agential realism's reconceptualization of materiality, matter is agentive and intra-active. Matter is a dynamic intra-active becoming that never sits still – an ongoing reconfiguring that exceeds any linear conception of dynamics in which effect follows cause end-on-end, and in which the global is a straightforward emanation outward of the local. Matter's dynamism is generative not merely in the sense of bringing new things into the world but in the sense of bringing forth new worlds, of engaging in an ongoing reconfiguring of the world. Bodies do not simply take their places in the world. They are not simply situated in, or located in, particular environments. Rather, "environments" and "bodies" are intra-actively co-constituted. Bodies ("human," "environmental," or otherwise) are integral "parts" of, or dynamic reconfigurings of, what is. (Barad 2007, 170).

This understanding of matter is based on the physicist Niels Bohr's research, the lessons he drew from quantum physics, and his reflections on measurement. How we measure something affects the result. The actual process of investigating, for instance, the existence of particles or waves, is affected by how we set up the lab, who is there, if someone smokes a particular brand of cigars,[1] etc. More than this, the set-up in which the experiments are situated shapes the physical reality being explored. The idea that one could research matter itself, as a separate entity, is thus here questioned. As Rachel Tillman writes, "matter and mind (ideas, concepts, and social/scientific practices) are deeply interrelated. In fact, they are all part of the same physical reality"(2015, paragraph 12). This stands in contrast to an understanding of matter as passive and the dualistic perspective separating matter and mind. After Descartes and Newton, Western ontology has often reduced matter to something mechanic. It is figured "as passive, immutable, and mute"(Barad 2007, 133). It has been commonly understood that every change is caused by something external; matter has no agency of its own.

1. When Otto Stern and Walther Gerlach conducted an experiment to find traces of space quantization, a result appeared due to Stern smoking a particularly cheap brand of cigars that contained a lot of sulfur (see Barad 2007, 164): "It was only when Stern, a cigar smoker, leaned in to observe the screen on which the atoms had landed that their traces appeared. The sulfur in the cigar smoke had turned the silver into the more easily visible, dark black silver sulfide, 'like developing a photographic film.'" (e - flux 2021)

Barad questions how one can look away from the dynamism of matter. They write:

> Language has been granted too much power. The linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the interpretative turn, the cultural turn: it seems that every turn lately every "thing" – even materiality – is turned into matter of language or some other form of cultural representation. ... matters of "fact" (so to speak) have been replaced with matters of signification. (2007, 132).

Barad questions what they call "the common-sense view of representationalism"—the belief that words or other signs can reflect already existing phenomena. This viewpoint betrays a deep distrust of matter. Instead, Barad develops their understanding of performativity, which "insists on understanding thinking, observing, and theorizing as practices of engagement with, and as part of, the world in which we have our being"(2007, 133). This understanding also shifts the focus from descriptions of reality to questions about practices, doings, and actions, acknowledging that matter is dynamic (see Barad 2007, 133 - 135). If we take this Baradian perspective to understand matter as dynamic, the way we relate to knowledge and certainty also changes. This requires active listening toward how matter (bodies and environments, for instance) emerges as we engage with it, as it unfolds together with us.

This understanding of matter has been fruitful when approaching my research questions, when engaging with the choreographic material, and with the theme of this project. It shows how alive and malleable matter is (including our bodies with everything they inhabit) and how this brings with it both potential and responsibility, exposing the body (matter) as both fantastic and vulnerable.

2.2.2 CHOREOGRAPHY AS MATERIAL

In the Western-centric contemporary dance field, the word "material" is frequently used to speak specifically about choreographic material, both during the creative process and in connection with the finished choreography. Throughout the various stages of this project, we have used the word "material" in this familiar way, and the same is true of the current text.

2.2.3 REFERENCES AS MATTER/MATERIAL

The references I will outline I refer to as inspirations. These range from artworks, to fiction, to theory and are not hierarchically ranked in their categories. Often, I find them through the choreographic material that I have been developing up until then. They act on the material that already exists and are part of shaping what is about to develop. They thus become part of the choreographic material. They carry ideas and signs, and they often open a space for further thinking or imagination, or they exceed a certain intensity. I choose them for their potential capacity for challenging the dancers' habits, and for their potential to generate motion. I then transform them into something corporeal. In the process, the original source becomes opaque. The references/inspirations are not cited in the final piece; they are not used as signifiers, they are rather de-grammaticized. They usually transfer energy or the becoming of a shape or intensity of movement, and in particular, they help me reprogram the systems of the dancing body. Moreover, these references/inspirations are a part of me as matter in the world today. They belong to me as matter and are thus, in the Baradian sense, both matter and—as an intrinsic part of the choreography—choreographic material.

Finally, I would like to clarify the order in which I use the concepts of matter and material. Matter is the broadest concept here, equal to physical reality encompassing mind, thought, and all that we refer to as "immaterial" things—in a word, it is everything living. Hence, it includes both things we ordinarily perceive as natural and human artifacts, including created choreographic material. Choreographic material is thus subsumed by matter. In my understanding of matter, which is informed by Barad's perspective, choreographic material is real, as it acts of its own accord, and not (solely) through the choreographer's decision. In the jargon of contemporary makers, "material" often signifies that which can be still reworked or is in a state of becoming, tending toward a form. When I discuss how artworks, images, and theories inspire me, I take them as referential material from which I learn or draw a quality as I shape my choreography. Therefore, matter is the highest-order concept, encompassing, permeating, and embracing everything, followed by choreographic material and referential material, which denote more narrowly the choreographic aspects of creation.

2.3 MEANING

When I speak of meaning, I speak of an experience of meaning, a sense of meaning, which is closely connected to my understanding of matter as defined above: matter as dynamic.

If I have an experience of meaning but have difficulty defining it, it spurs my interest. But how do I relate my notion of "experience of meaning" to how "meaning" is used in ordinary language? Meaning is most often understood in a semiotic key as a relation between two kinds of things: signs (or, more precisely, "signifiers," material vehicles of things) and the kind of things, or notions, they refer to, express, or denote (in semiotic terms: "signified"). This understanding indicates that meaning is something I can already grasp, something that I will understand on the basis of recognition, synthesizing the notion of what I perceive from the notions I have in memory, imagination, and logic. In this model of meaning, I perceive and decipher the meaning of my perception.

The experience of meaning I refer to points towards something less defined. It is an understanding of meaning that is closely linked to the body, its experiences, and knowledge. If I as a body (matter) constantly am flooded by sensations, and these overflow my intelligibility, it means that I am, to a certain extent, in constant becoming. We can't entirely grasp the body (matter) and how we understand it. Different agencies are acquired through different situations and thus, the body is constantly challenged and in transformation. Barad calls this "knowing as a part of being" (2007, 341), an unrestricted "ontology of knowing" (341) through which reality reproduces itself differentially again. This means also that meaning is not something we can hold on to, rather that it is bound to matter and in constant becoming. In my choreographic work, this specifically means that as a viewer (choreographer or spectator), my own body-in-becoming encounters another body-in-becoming in an environment

which is also in flux. This inserts time into the experience of what my perception might mean. Meaning is thus in becoming too, it is in a process of emergence. As Barad puts it, "meaning is not a property of individual words or groups of words but an ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility" (2007, 149). I would add that matter (including the body) stands at the core of this dance.

This notion of an entanglement of matter and meaning, inspired by Barad, has extended my interest in following the ambiguous yet distinct *experience of meaning* I have in relation to, for instance, choreographic material, as a way to pursue my interest in the dancing body (matter) and its malleable, fantastic, and vulnerable nature. My definition of this experience of meaning has developed through my work into *an experience of coherency of a manifold of perception*. It is this definition I use in my choreographic work and to which I will be referring whenever I speak of meaning hereafter.

This definition points to my interest, when working with choreography, in the *emergence* of matter and meanings, before the conventions of theater and everyday life press us to recognize what performances and everyday experiences represent. My focus thus pushes against a conceptual approach to choreography, where the main task of the choreographer is to devise a concept that regulates most of their decisions. What I share with conceptual methodology (exemplified in the early works by Jérôme Bel) is a critical departure from representation.[2] But while the conceptual method hollows out theatrical representation in order to deconstruct its mechanism and the way this operates in theater, I am looking for material ways—composing materials together with the body and movement—to bypass and disencourage a representationalist reception of the work, one that would be based on the recognition of meaning. Instead, I strive to open the spectator to an experience of matter and meanings that is like the experience I myself draw on.

I gave my research project the title *Choreography as a Meaning-Generating Aggregate* in order to begin speculating on this understanding of meaning production through choreography. It helped me define at the outset of the research project an approach to following the matter (the body) and the material. I have been interested in how the title might enable me to encounter the landscapes of "not-knowing" that exist in and around the body, how it affects my relationship to form, and how it can function as an incentive to develop a specific way for words and concepts to emerge.

2. See for instance André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance* (2006) and Bojana Cvejic, *Choreographing Problems* (2015).

2.4 CONTEXT

It is important for me to mention that I understand context as something inherent to the work. It is situated in the work, in those who take part in the process, where the process takes place, and the circumstances in which it unfolds. Throughout the text, I have thus chosen to describe in detail how the different processes are structured, who is involved, what references/inspirations we have used, how they have entered the processes, and how we have worked *with* them. The context of the work will thus gradually be displayed through the current text. How the work is situated reflects its context, and originates my viewpoint; by the same token, it also points to what I do not see.

2.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

The text is divided into nine chapters. Since the body is so central to the work, in chapter three I will start by outlining how I understand the human body and which questions have extended my interest in the body into further investigations. I continue by unfolding and contextualizing my method in chapter four. In chapters five to eight, I describe the three choreographic processes, how they emerged, how their concepts were formed, what inspirations I used and how they have influenced the process throughout. An extended reflection on these choreographic processes is interwoven in all these chapters.

The first piece I describe is *Rut*. There are some key tools and approaches described there that apply to the processes that produced the other two pieces as well, including the chapters on imagination and on clearly defined roles, for example. On the other hand, the detailed description of how I work with the practice of multi-attentiveness in *Rut* is readdressed later in relation to how I worked differently with the practice for the other pieces. I therefore recommend reading about all three pieces in order to get a complete picture of how I work with the practice of multi-attentiveness.

I will end with a chapter entitled "Materials in Making | Bodies Unfold | Meanings Emerge," in which I reflect on how the approach I describe has informed my relation towards form, words, concept, and the dancing body.

3 THE BODY AS ABSORBING, LEAKING MATTER

I would like to deepen the image of the body as absorbing, leaking matter with which I opened this text, thinking it along with some theorists who have inspired me.

Our bodies are permeable. If they weren't, we would not live. We breathe in and we breathe out, we eat, we poop, we have sex, and we give birth. We cultivate a bacterial flora in our bodies through our way of life, but the life that lives parallel and entwined with our bodies we hardly know before it stops working as it should. Matter moves through our bodies and our movements affect its course.

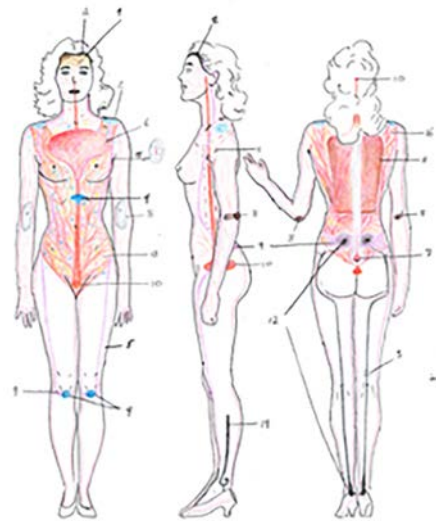
I like to think about the body together with the Australian philosopher Elizabeth Grosz as "a system, or series of open-ended systems, functioning within other huge systems it cannot control, through which it can access and acquire its abilities and capacities"(2004, 397). This understanding points to the way the body as corporeal material is inextricably linked to the materiality of the world. Karen Barad takes this idea further: "'We' are not outside observers of the world. Nor are we simply located at particular places in the world; rather, we are part of

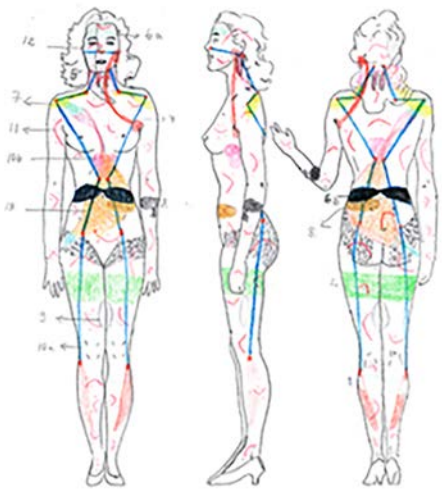
the world in its ongoing intra-activity"(2003, 828). This viewpoint sees an objective understanding of the body and matter as impossible. It endeavors to show instead that there are constantly horizons of knowledge and information that I cannot know, both inside and outside my body. "Moreover," philosopher Monika Rogowska Stangret adds, "these concepts of the body enable thinking about human and more-than-human bodies and worlds simultaneously" (2017, fourth paragraph).

The relationality of the body thus involves the way in which it is constituted, constantly changing and influencing its surroundings and being changed and influenced in turn. Surrounding bodies, humans, and more-than-human worlds influence each other and these processes specifically change the body. The body's dynamic structure is associated with movement, its capacity for acting and being acted upon, and for receiving form and as well as for giving form (see Stangret 2017).

This is how I would describe my understanding of human bodies (matter) as I see them in life and work. This understanding has specifically grown out of my work as a dancer and choreographer, and it has become fundamental for how I think about and work with dancers' bodies in choreographic processes, which further informs my choreographic concepts.

I will go on to elaborate in-depth on my New Materialist orientation, starting with a backward look at a choreographic project that marks the starting point for how I work with choreography today.





3.1 FAKE SOMATIC PRACTICE

Fake Somatic Practice (2011) is a choreographic project I did in collaboration with Stina Nyberg and Sandra Lolax. The concept grew out of an interest in somatic practices.

Somatic derives from "soma," which in Greek means, "of the body." As Anne Schuh writes, "the term 'somatic practices' (Eng. *Somatics*) is broad. It designates a heterogeneous field of experience-related body and movement practices" (2012, 2, my translation). There exists extensive literature on individual methods, mostly written by their founders. However, an official definition is hard to find.[3] Somatic practices could be described as movement practices that when compared to more rigorous dance training, such as ballet or modern dance, have a more "natural" approach based on listening to the body and mind. Somatic practices often aim to connect the body and mind through the dancer's orientation towards the sensations experienced internally within their own body, in the viscera, and through the use of touch, breath, and movement. It can be alternately described as body therapy, body-mind integration, and movement awareness. Some of the more famous somatic practices are Alexander Technique, Body Mind Centering (BMC), Klein Technique, and Feldenkrais Method.

3. One definition that I found, and which provides a reliable account of somatics, is in the text "What is Somatic?" by the US philosopher and movement theorist Thomas Hanna. Dance scholar Anne Schuh summarizes it well: "While the Greek 'soma' means the body as opposed to the mind, and this meaning is common in today's language (see *Duden Dictionary of Foreign Languages* [5th edition, Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1990], 728), Hanna reverses the term in an attempt to define common characteristics of the various practices. 'Somatic' with Hanna means an integrative understanding of the body that is oriented towards the phenomenological body, in which the physical and mental are always to be understood as intertwined in a non-dualistic way" (2012, 12, my translation).

For us, three young choreographers and dancers in the 2010s, somatic practices offered focused research on the body and its capacities. At the same time, we were troubled by the ideologies and economies that we perceived to be at work in many of them. Several of the well-known somatic practices function within an economic system centered around the founder, who claims exclusive ownership, which translates into expensive courses and certificates. The practices not only express an ideal of a healthy body and soul through scientific claims, they also use a language that combines anatomy with spirituality.[4] Many of them emerged as a critique of the hierarchical and streamlining techniques of ballet and modern dance. However, in the last thirty years, they have become part of new hierarchies in the way they protect authorship and value in somatic practice. In the same way as these techniques questioned prevailing methods of dance at the time, we wished to question the underlying assumptions of somatic practices. *How do we look at the body, how should it function and what should it do? How can we make claims as to what an apt body is?* Rather than trying to show the right, and privileged access to a "good" body, we wanted to indicate the many paths to different ideas of what a body can and can't do.

4. Behind this statement are countless classes in somatic practice that Sandra Lolax, Stina Nyberg, and myself took in Berlin, Stockholm, and Vienna within the period 2006-2011. Recurring lingo could sound like this: "Rediscover your natural alignment," "rediscover your more energy-efficient body," etc. We got the feeling that we were born perfect, then got affected by society and our surroundings and developed habits and postures that we needed to exercise somatics to get rid of, returning to the natural state of newborn babies. Often a skeleton of a human body was present, or anatomy books, as aids to imagining the body as one moved. The lingo used insisted on personal experience in relation to the practice, as evidence for the truthfulness of the method. For further reading on the relationship between somatic, spiritual, and personal narratives, see for instance, Amanda Williamson, Glenna Batson, Sarah Whatley, and Rebecca Weber, eds., *Dance, Somatics, Spirituality: Contemporary Sacred Narratives* (2014).

Fake Somatic Practice was a project that dealt with the creation of somatic practices and their choreographic use. The idea of a *fake somatic practice* was coined in order to be productively disobedient towards existing somatic practices.

By making up the notion of *fake somatic practice* we wanted to give ourselves the freedom to ignore the way scientific facts were used in relation to a commonsense notion of the human body, in favor of imagination. The practices we created were fake in the sense that they opposed the parts of a somatic practice that claim to be real, or more faithful to the nature of the human body. Our practices were nevertheless not less real when it came to our belief in their political, physical, and choreographic capacities.

3.2 HOW DO WE LOOK AT THE BODY?

The question of how we look at the body and what we expect from it constituted the core of this project, which was inspired by Spinoza's famous statement: "no one has yet determined what the body can do" (71). In particular, we engaged with the question of how and to what extent a practice developed for a choreography could challenge the body, and how it could create frictions in our understanding of what a body can do. At that time, "practice" had established itself as a widespread concept in contemporary dance, mainly in Continental Europe (see Schuh 2019). Definitions of practice varied, but present throughout the word's use was an overall concept implicating a way of relating to the development of movement materials as opposed to training and practicing an already defined technical skill. By setting up frameworks for investigation and physical exploration, the idea of practice was to use the recurrence of particular ways of engaging with the body as an essential part of developing material for choreography.[5]

5. For a detailed description of practice, see the chapter Practice | Method.

3.3 FAKE | FICTION | INVENTION

The meaning of the term "fake" as we used it was manifold. It primarily indicated an artistic strategy that consisted of several things. First, we wanted to distance ourselves from what somatic practice claims is real (the way practices express an ideal of a healthy body and soul through scientific claims while using a language that combines anatomy with spirituality). At the same time, we wanted to acknowledge the inspiration we drew from this focused, body-centered research and the many questions about the body the somatic practices had provoked. It is therefore important to note that with the adjective "fake," we were not intending to throw the baby out with the bathwater; we kept the notion of somatic practice in the project title in order to link back to the many ideas and skills that doing somatic practice and continuing to learn from it throughout our project had made available to us. Secondly, the word fake also gave us a certain freedom to speculate on what a body could be, inspiring us in the creation of our own practices. Thirdly, if one translates "fake" into the Swedish adjective "*uppdiktad*," the noun "*påhitt*," or the German verb "*erfinden*," one ends up with notions of fiction and invention. These two synonyms resonate closely with how I used the word "fake" in our project insofar as they point to the process of creation. The word "fake" was thus used in this project more as a way to clearly show our creative starting point (somatic practice), than as an indication of our counterfeiting somatic practices in an ironic manner. "Fake" could be read as a provocation and was to a certain extent used in this way in order to trigger critical reflection on the constructed ideas about the body that somatic practices produced, as well as being a starting point for us to create practices that talked differently about the body.

4 PRACTICE | METHOD

The notion of "fake," the questions of how we look at and what we can expect from the body, and the idea of practice as a method for creating choreography, became central for how I developed my work after the *Fake Somatic Practice* project. These three orientations extended my interest in the body, its formation, and its representations in Western contemporary dance and followed me into my next production, *Mit* (2013), where I developed the practice I call multi-attentiveness, which I have worked with ever since. Multi-attentiveness has been foundational in my choreographic works *Rut*, *The Field*, and *Dark Dynamite*, the choreographies that constitute the core of my PhD project.

Practice as a notion within Western contemporary dance is fuzzy and it is used in many ways. Although the expressions "in my practice I … ," "let's share practice," or "this is a practice-based choreography" have been part of dancers' and choreographers' lingo throughout the last fifteen years, "there is no wide agreement about what or which activity the notion of practice actually signifies in the context of Western European contemporary dance and performance" (Ana Vujanovic 2018, 356).

Practice comes from Greek (*prattein*, to act or to do) and, as Schuh writes, "can refer to the actual execution of a 'method' or 'idea' … as opposed to theories relating to it." She goes on:

> Specific to the arts, two further meanings of practice are important to mention. First, practice marks a distinct form of knowledge, which is understood as embodied and situated, as referred to in the context of "practice as research." Secondly, practice can also refer to the Aristotelian distinction between *praxis* and *poiesis*. While *poiesis* stands for an act of making that aims to create a product (crafts), *praxis* refers to the act of doing unto itself. By the 1960s, the resonance of the idea of praxis became visible in the shift away from art as artwork or object, to art as performance, process, or project. (2019, 80).

In what follows, I will outline how some prominent dancers and choreographers have used the concept in their work in order to both contextualize my work and show more specifically how I use the notion of practice.

The dancer Chrysa Parkinson reflects upon her use of the notion in her self-interview on practice.[6] She uses practice as an ongoing "thing" that is neither training, process, nor product, but which rather informs, challenges, and sparks interest in her training, as well as in her relation towards the processes and performances she is a part of. She describes practice as a movement, not necessarily in relation to what she does when she practices, but rather to show how her practice is in flux:

> I'm a performing artist. I change—I get old, I fall in love, I move to another city, I get injured, I develop skills, I develop knowledge, I lose interest, I get seduced. In order to guide me through training, processes, and product, my practice has to change. (Parkinson 2009).

Parkinson describes her practice as an *active thought* and as a way to process information. Furthermore, she depicts her practice as something ongoing, something that follows her through different performance productions, but which does not end with a production. The practice might have changed slightly through the production, and it might influence the next production, yet it keeps on being her companion throughout her work as a dance artist. I understand her use of practice as a way to orient herself amongst the guidelines, tasks, concepts, visions, etc. that a production, but also life as a dancer, offers and demands. Parkinson uses her practice as a strategy to keep up her interest in the work, which here includes the multitude of activities a dancer undertakes. Her notion of practice is personal, it is for her own sake that she does it, it is not constructed to be exhibited, and it is not expected by anyone that she does it.

A different use of the notion of practice can be found in the collective *Praticable*, which was established in 2005 in Berlin by and with the choreographers and dancers Alice Chauchat, Frédéric de Carlo, Frédéric Gies, Isabelle Schad, and Odile Seitz.

The collective worked with a horizontal structure in which the sharing of body practices constituted their base. Isabelle Schad stated in a self-interview that: "we're working on body practices as a source for choreographic work" (2009, 28). Their work "brought together research, learning processes, creation, production, and distribution, multiplying circulations between them" (Chauchat 2005). They made clear that the collective element was about sharing body practices as well as sharing

6. *Self-Interview on Practice* was published as an illustrated film-essay, and as a text excerpted from the film-essay on sarma.be, accessed April 6, 2023, http://sarma.be/docs/1336.

opportunities to distribute the work, but didn't imply shared authorship (see the *Self-Interview* of Isabelle Schad et al. 2009). *Praticable* was thus using practice as a fundamental element in the creation of their performances. Their practice was the core of their work and determined the work's form, time, materiality, and dramaturgy. Practice was not only the starting point for the performance projects, it was also important that it continued on stage (Schad et al. 2009, 30). In other words, one could say that their performances were practice-based choreographies.

With that said, their way of working with practice also incorporated practices that were later never used for a choreographic project. Their collective centered around practice as a vehicle through which to engage with the body, a way of collecting and sharing knowledge, and a method for researching ideas. Some of the practices were later used in the development of choreographies. The practices required an articulation that the choreographers also wanted and sought out by creating the collective *Praticable* (see Schad et al. 2009).

A third perspective on practice can be taken from the US choreographer Deborah Hay, known as one of the pioneers of "post-modern dance" in New York. Hay was a dancer in Merce Cunningham Dance Company and a co-founding participant artist of the Judson Dance Theater, and thereafter an independent choreographer. Choreographer and dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster writes in the foreword to Hay's book *My Body, The Buddhist* (2000) that Hay has "elaborated a powerful alternative dancing practice" (x).

In Hay's work, practice is an integral part of training when she teaches, and of the creative process of making performance when she performs. In her work, she "attends to the body's changeability" (Hay 2000, ix); her choreographies emerge from "her ongoing reflections about bodiliness" (ix). A metaphor she uses is the body "as the ever-changing cumulative performance of seventy-five trillion semi-independent cells" (xii). This metaphor is cultivated through her practice, which is focused on directives such as:

"Where I am is what I need, cellularly," or "Alignment is everywhere," or "What if Now is Here is Harmony." (xiii).

There are many more such directives. They are used as an approach to movement, as a vehicle for exploring and listening to the body while moving, and as a frame for the dancer's attentiveness. They are a way to sensitize the dancer towards the body's changeability and to play with the body's responses. This could be called a "practice of bodily perception," writes dance scholar Kirsi Monni (2019, 6). Foster writes in her foreword to *My Body, The Buddhist* that:

> such instructions cultivate the differentiatedness of body—the many distinctive possibilities for physical articulation—and the attentiveness required to track and take note of the body's inclinations. … In her daily practice of dancing and in the classes she teaches, Hay's use of these directives summons the dancer into the creative and also critical process of moving in a new way. (2000, xiii).

This way of working, where the training is the practice, the process, and the performance, points to the shift that was a salient feature of post-modern dance. It sees art as a process, performance, or project rather than an object. In a context defined by moments like the Judson Dance Theater and the Fluxus movement, a common idea among choreographers in the 1960s was that "each new choreographic project requires special skills and hence special training in order for the dancer to acquire those skills" (Hay 2000, ix).

In contrast with a more traditional or generic way of working where a dancer is usually expected to train in ballet or in modern or contemporary technique before going to the rehearsal, with Deborah Hay the training involved sessions running from forty minutes to three hours, in which the dancers followed directives like those quoted above. These explorations were not only training but also the practice and the process on which Hay based her choreographies.

What then does the step from training/practice/process to choreography involve? Foster describes it as follows in her foreword to *My body, the Buddhist*:

> While practicing the directive, Hay makes certain choices and decisions, some of which she retains in subsequent practices so as to build an established sequence. She does not mold patterns of movement in order to express an image, but instead, selects from her dialogue between body and image impulses that most vividly reflect and amplify her experience of working with the image.
>
> Once the movement material has been choreographed so that it congeals in a reliably repeatable sequence of actions, Hay re-infuses the performance of the choreography with focus on the directive. Using the choreographic form as a kind of stable reference, she re- animates each action with consciousness of the practice that produced it. (2000, xv-xvi).

What I would like to underline in Hay's method is the moment when the choreographer selects, frames, and composes the material that has been derived from this directive-based cycle of training/practice/process. At this stage, the directives are specified and framed in space and time and are thus shaped to a more defined score. The practice aspect of the work continues, but now with slightly more detailed instructions.

Throughout this process, she engages the dancer in a perceptual, conscious play with the body, instead of giving them pre-designed movements and forms to accomplish. This method of working "does change the dancer's role and agency to a creative co-agent and the choreographic work to a score-based emergent event" (Monni 2019, 1). Hay's way of working with the dancers as "co-agents" was a huge shift from the more traditional understanding of the dancer as a "tool" for the choreographer. As Kirsi Monni writes, "Hay says that she tries to give dancers a world that would really interest them, and she teaches a method for how the dancer could be in a creative relationship with the choreography" (2019, 14).

Hay thus uses practice as an integral part of the work from the very beginning. She also "offers a view of performance as a practice of bodily perception." Practice enters her scores through her interest in the body's changeability. Her choreographies are score-based but bound up with practice as a way of engaging in her scores.

My way of using practice as a method for choreography can to some extent be aligned with Deborah Hay's, and with *Praticable*, such as I have presented them above.

My practice also derives from an interest in the body's changeability, as it does for Hay, but there are some differences in how this interest is approached, and the scope of the interest differs. Hay approaches the body's changeability through directives and scores, whereas I approach the body through a practice that is built on a variety of tasks that are modulated, redeveloped, and in particular layered throughout the process with the dancer, changing them for each new production in order to meet the dancer's particularity. I'm interested in challenging the dancer's capacity to handle sensorial, anatomical, and imaginable information (amongst other kinds) and in this way,

working with my interest in the body's changeability is closely tied to the dancer's distinctiveness.

In what follows, I will analyze how my practice is structured, articulate what my intentions are when I use it as a method for choreography, and unpack how I use it to create choreography. In the process, its distinctiveness in respect to the use of practice by Hay and *Praticable* will become clear. Talking about my practice through the lens of the productions and production processes in which it has been applied implies that the contours of this practice will appear gradually.

4.1 MULTI-ATTENTIVENESS

"Multi-attentiveness" is a practice where I work with the dancer's attention in different ways. By directing attention towards different parts of the body, imagination, the room, and later the audience's bodies, I am interested in seeing how attention, when "failing" to be attentive, and searching for and regaining attention anew, can function as a guiding principle for the development of the movement material. The performer's attention is the guiding principle when choosing movements, speed, and range while improvising (in the beginning of the process) and when shifting from one movement to another. Developing the practice, I was interested in directing the dancer's focus towards parts of the body they do not necessarily focus on in order to produce new patterns and habits in the dancer, and in such a way challenge their body, potentially challenging its representation as a result. Furthermore, I work with attention as a way to help the dancer lose their bodily self-consciousness so that they do not control what they produce/represent/let out. I'm interested in *a dancer at work*, too busy with the different tasks to control what leaks out, and in this my interest stands in opposition to the Western habit of visually controlling one's movement.[7] As dancers with Western-centric training, we learn to control our body from a visual understanding of its emergence. What I intend with

7. Working with the mirror in dance education and choreographic processes has been common in a Western-centric context since the beginning of ballet. Exceptions can be found in contemporary dance education settings, where you often draw curtains for the mirrors. Still, a teacher, a choreographer, or a camera is always very present in educational settings and in development processes when creating work, as someone reflecting upon the visual appearance of the dance. There is no doubt that ocularcentrism— "a perceptual and epistemological bias ranking vision over other senses in Western cultures" (oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100245338?)— dominates the history and the contemporary culture of dance in a Western context, though an alternative tradition includes the movement away from the mirror introduced by the Judson Church in the 1960s.

the practice of multi-attentiveness is to force the dancer not to control the emergence of movements and states (or how they appear on the outside for viewers). This is also a way for me to find movements for a work, rather than starting with an idea about a form. Instead, I practice listening to the emergence of movement and the dancer's attention and ways of being within the movement as a guiding principle for the creation, which is a particular way to find form through a process. This means that the dancer may have ten tasks they need to be attentive to at once, with the possibility of reducing tasks depending on their interest and capacity. The practice thus welcomes the moment when the dancer loses their attention or interest in the work, the moment when they are seeking to recover their attention, and when they start to find their way to a form of attention again.

I use the practice as a tool to produce the movement material and to create a relationship to how the material should be danced. By producing material in this way, I try to make use of the dancer's special timing and ways of shifting attention, as a central aspect of the expression of the movement material.

The movement material produced later informs the choreography. This means that the dancer feeds the choreography, and the choreography forms the dancer, in a back-and-forth, a practice that never ends. Working with attention in this way thus directs the development of the form. The material grows into a form, rather than arising through an idea about a particular form.

Even when a choreography has premiered and has taken on a defined form,[8] the practice of the material continues with the help of parameters we have defined as part of the multi-attentiveness practice for that particular piece, which can influence the timing of the piece and in particular the dancer's way of being in the material with the audience. Practice is thus used as a way to not only develop the material but to keep the work interesting in the long run for the dancer onstage. This idea of "keeping up the interest in the work through the practice" goes back to Deborah Hay. Whereas Hay does it "regardless of potential audience interests" (Schuh 2020, 279, my translation), I use it as a strategy to invite the audience into experiencing the intricacies of embodiment, movement, and the dancer's work in general. I thus insist on the practice as I think it can invite the audience to follow the particularities of the work, through the dancer's interest as this appears in her shifting attention. Practice is entrusted with this function in my work, without the need for the audience to know anything concrete about the practice.

8. How the work gets its defined form will be described for each piece.

4.1.1 ATTENTION

Attention is the core of the practice, and I want to say something more about why that is so central in my work.

When I look at a performance, I'm drawn to *how* the performers are in the material. I follow the movements of the dancer's attention, their tonus, their way of handling the material, how they experience the material while dancing. I am interested in a double articulation: what material is danced, and how it is danced sometimes communicate differently. The what and how of the material can open up different meanings and symbolic registers. *How* it is performed can confuse its representation. The way of being in a material can thus generate a friction in relation to how you understand the material being presented.

To give an example by comparing dancing with everyday speech, how someone enunciates a word, for instance, is not only expressive of the agreed upon meaning of this word. It is

filled with that person's understanding of the word, her history with it, and that information, that lived experience with the word can fill the word, giving it a slightly larger circumference perhaps, or directing it towards a more explicit meaning, which can result in the word itself shifting meaning slightly. The same goes for movement, although in a more abstract way. Working with attention is thus based on an interest in incorporating the dancer's lived experiences when they encounter the propositions I come with. It is impossible to escape the dancer's cumulated experiences, but one can choose to look for ways to include them in the material and its formation, which I do through attention. Attention is a flickering, dynamic movement that resonates with capacities and interests. It reveals rhythms, desires, and unknowns in the dancer. Focusing on attention helps me to work with the experiences layered in the dancer's body, without knowing them beforehand. They leak out while working.

Through my interest in attention, I found an extensive interview that the artist Myriam Van Imschoot had undertaken with the US dance-maker Lisa Nelson. After Van Imschoot had interviewed Nelson and they had been talking about attention in particular, she reflected on this notion:

> In its etymology, "attention" means to stretch towards: ad tendere. Attention is a stretch, a reach, a shifter, a micro-movement with huge consequences, as it creates a dynamic sphere of connection and the way this shapes the perceptual field defines how we as sentient beings operate in conjunction. (Van Imschoot 2018).

This description depicts the vivid quality of attention. As I see it, attention is connected to *movement* and to *listening*. It has to do with tuning into the senses, playing with the imagination, visualizing the body from within, and visualizing substances and forces working on the body in various ways. Attention is about *listening* to sensations, discomfort, and interest as they arise while we move. Thus, not only does it reveal the dancer's experiences towards attention itself, but, in the dancer's attention to a task, she is stretching towards something constructed that her accumulated experiences are bouncing against. Attention is somewhere in the middle between what we know and what is new. Attention can function as a tool to stretch, open, and move towards the unknown, through our accumulated experience.

When I was a teenager, a drama teacher once told me that he always became very attentive right before he knew that an actor had forgotten his line, suddenly his interest in the actor and the play were heightened … and then he heard the theater prompter speak the missing line. My teacher's hypothesis was that the actor heightened his bodily attention as a result of not remembering his lines, in an effort to either recall them or find another way out. This attention created another awareness and presence onstage, a negotiation was at stake, in which the actor did not quite know how to proceed in the work. It was a moment of risk that created a special presence in the actor.

One of my intentions in my work with the practice of "multi-attentiveness" is to open up to play and risk: if the particular audience on a particular night is incorporated into the dancer's attention, then the dancer's capacity to be attentive that night, and their navigation through these parameters together with the choreography, involves the choreography and the dancer in play and risk. This practice is thus a strategy to keep the work vibrant.

My interest in using the practice of multi-attentiveness as a method is also to take the body's processual unfolding—it's uneven absorption and leaking of experiences that make the body all the time—into account.

Multi-attentiveness has been developed with each production (*Rut, The Field, Dark Dynamite*) in close collaboration with the dancers. Since the practice primarily centers on attention, a feature that differs with every dancer, the tasks did not remain the same from one production to another. I'm interested in the dancer's own particular timing, desires, and range, and since everyone reacts differently and sensitively to tasks communicated through words, touch, images, sound, and a combination of these, I developed, changed, and created new tasks for each production. The practice was also influenced by the different themes and concepts behind the projects. I will go into further detail about how I have worked with multi-attentiveness in the three productions while unpacking and introducing other inspirations and strategies that have shaped these works. Multi-attentiveness is the main method through which I produce movement material and relations to how to perform the material. With the material from the practice at hand, I use additional strategies to handle, develop, and create more material. I will start by introducing listening, which, as I mentioned briefly, has been an integral part of the practice of multi-attentiveness, and I have used it when dealing with the material produced through the practice.

4.1.2 LISTENING

Listening is the sensorial activity I practice the most when producing a choreographic work, and it is also one of the main activities I ask the dancer to practice while exploring the practice and while dancing. Listening—to follow the composer Pauline Oliveros—stands in contrast to hearing. It encompasses the whole body as a listening organ: the ear hears, the brain listens, and the body senses vibrations. Listening is a lifetime practice that depends on accumulated experiences. When listening, there is a constant interplay with the perception of the moment compared with remembered experiences (see Oliveros 2015). I listen to the material that is arising through the dancer's work. The dancer is asked to listen to what sensations, desires, inclinations, disinterests, and other bodily conditions and thoughts arise while moving.

This focus comes from an interest in creating material that is not only created with an aim to being "read." The body, the room, and the situation are inscribed with signs and language; it is impossible to escape representation. But I want to insist that the work is more than what one can grasp intelligibly. I want to think about the choreographic work as a block of sensations waiting to be perceived rather than to be read, to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's terms (O'Sullivan 2001, 126). The work abounds in sensations and sensorial intensities that overflow their intelligibility. In order to help me to strengthen this argument, I want to think along with Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), whom I learned about through the Swedish philosopher Jonna Bornemark. Nicholas talks about a "not-knowing" in each situation, and within knowledge. "We grasp knowledge through concepts and categories," writes Bornemark, "and Nicholas of Cusa opines that there is always a gap between these and the abundant reality. No matter how much we polish our distinctions, reason remains fixed within a conceptuality that defines and separates, while nature is fluid" (2018, 36, my translation). Nicholas thus considers that both reality and our sensory impressions always exceed their intelligibility.

A guiding question for me, inspired by the researcher in urban and regional studies Sofia Wiberg, is: What can listening and perceiving that open up to a not-knowing mean? Or to put it differently: If we want to listen, we cannot decide in advance what we want to hear. (see Wiberg 2018, 30).

This line of reasoning considers sensorial input as directional. I want to acknowledge this aspect as an orientating principle

"Poetry opens the doors of perception to singularity. Poetry is language's excess: poetry is what in language cannot be reduced to information, and is not exchangeable, but gives way to a new common ground of understanding, of shared meaning: the creation of a new world. Poetry is a singular vibration of the voice. This vibration can create resonances." (Berardi 2012)

in my work, both in how I intend the audience to encounter the work but also, and principally, in the method at work throughout the choreographic process.

Following the materiality of the body and working with sensorial input as directional requires me to listen. This listening is present for the dancer in the practice of multi-attentiveness but also for me at several stages in the choreographic process. Firstly, there is the dancer's listening to the sensorial information arising and not arising (desires and sensations of all sorts, but also curiosity, emotions, disinterest, boredom), when working with multi-attentiveness. Secondly, there is my perception of the material the dancer is producing: paying attention to what it does to me before naming and categorizing the material. This is not a clear-cut division, but it helps me focus on perceiving the material at the beginning of the productive process. Knowing that the perception of the material is manifold, that it is intertwined with and partly directed by symbols and signs but at the same time abounds in sensations that overflow my intellectual capacity, is a plentitude that I'm interested in. Thirdly, there is the audience's perception of the piece, where I intend to provide a sensuous, poetic experience of the work. By poetic, I mean a space where I am reminded of the everyday in an encounter with the border of something that works a little differently to the everyday. At best, this makes me listen actively, resting in the feeling of an experience without having to

"How a sound without meaning, a word as a shell, a kind of word in itself, reflected itself in the word's exceptions, where art becomes one's reality in a search for another place, the unknown." Artist Tarje Eikanger Gullaksen.

grasp it in words directly. Here also, in the poetic experience, the intertwined nature of the sensorial and the intelligible is immanent. I work towards an emphasized sensuous impression of the work in how I structure the choreography, and, at the same time, I play with how it can confuse our intellectual perception of the work. I'm interested in the rubbings that occur when an impression doesn't fit one's ability to place or give words to an experience. I think that in these moments, a desire can occur in the spectator to search for words that could adequately express the experience. It is from this perspective that, in reference to my second research question, I think choreography can work as an incentive to produce language.

Listening is thus the sensorial activity I practice the most when producing a choreographic work and that I intend to provoke in the audience through the work. In a lecture on listening at KTH in Stockholm, Sofia Wiberg and Stina Nyberg pointed out some crucial aspects of listening that show its quiet, yet powerful activity.

> To listen when you already know what you want to hear is contradictory. Listening, therefore, means to listen to what is already there, but in an unexpected way: to listen, to see, to experience, without making preconditioned judgments, interpretations, or analyses. To open up to being influenced and moved by what you hear, even though you don't yet know what it will be. Listening, therefore, requires a certain defenselessness.

> As Susan Bickford puts it, the risk of listening is partly that what we hear may require us to change. To expose oneself to this possibility of change therefore means to temporarily surrender control and security, which may cause some discomfort. (2017, 397).

This space that opens up when you expose yourself to an experience can be an in-between one—between knowing and possibly knowing more. It is a space in which you can find room for new ways of acting and also changing direction, and it is this space that forms part of what I investigate through choreography.

4.1.2.1 NOT-KNOWING

Thinking of the body as matter where agencies[9] and forces can emerge, disappear, and not be fully controlled or directed, means that we must open ourselves to listening to the body and the environment, as information, knowledge, wounds, energies, and desires are all the time bubbling up. These can be thought of as fields of not-knowing, following Nicholas of Cusa. These fields are in motion, expanding and shrinking, in line with how the body (matter) is constantly being made and remade.

9. When talking about agencies here I think alongside Karen Barad, who understands agencies as "a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has. Agency is doing/being in its intra-activity" (2007, 235). Furthermore, "agency is not held, it is not a property of persons or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements. So agency is not about choice in any liberal humanist sense; rather, it is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices" (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 54).

> Not-knowing can be perceived as what we do not yet know, as a puzzle piece in our almost finished puzzle. But for Nicholas of Cusa, not-knowing is the horizon that frames our lives. We can never understand the infinite or know what will happen in the future. But we have a faculty of reason that, according to Nicholas of Cusa, consists of two parts. *Ratio* is rational, calculates, and sees causation. What *ratio* does not understand, however, is reason's other faculty, *intellectus*. *Intellectus* is reflective, stands on the edge of what we do not know, and has the ability to pick up what is meaningful in the chaos. (Bornemark 2019, paragraph 2, my translation)

A sense of meaningfulness, or a feeling that something is important, nagging, teasing, can be guiding for the work, or for one's life, without it perhaps being completely clear what it is or what it means. The concept of not-knowing reminds me of that not everything can be described directly. It opens a space where following an experience can guide me to new discoveries. Opening oneself to not-knowing requires listening, or as Bornemark writes, "being able to listen means having a relationship with a not-knowing. It's precisely because I don't already know, that I have to listen" (2017, my translation). From this perspective, listening has become even more important in my work. All the time fields of not-knowing are being produced in my body and outside of it, which enables new discoveries of my own body and of others', and—among other things—challenges my way of perceiving the body and my use of words.

4.1.2.2 LET THE LANGUAGE "REST"

The notion that it is necessary to actively listen to how matter (bodies, environments, and others) is emerging while engaging with it implies an understanding of matter as unfolding together

with us. Matter can evoke an experience of meaning, but it might be that only parts of this experience of meaning take on linguistic form, the fact that matter is in constant becoming affecting its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility. And it is out from this perspective that my second research question has developed: *How does the choreographic process and the work that emerges through practice as a method, as I develop it, encourage a search for words and concepts after the meaning has already been produced in matter?*

This question has prompted an exercise I've practiced when working, which I call "let the language 'rest'."

I tend to want to capture every interest, sensation, experience, or friction in words as quickly as possible. It's like I go and chase my experiences with my word net, metaphorically speaking. Often, the interests, sensations, etc. do not have time to appear in their length, strength, or intensity before I have been there and put them into words. When I've done this in the context of a choreographic production, as a way of writing a concept and starting a production, the words and concepts have been so much bigger and clearer to me than anything else that their power of definition has taken over. I have forgotten or lost what made me choose those particular formulations in the first place. Instead, the words stand out as guidelines, which I can then follow towards a production. In this framework, my relationship to movement production is governed by the words and concepts, and I begin to think about the meaning and significance of the movements when I produce them. This way of working generates movements and an approach to movement that is familiar from an earlier period in my working life and it seems to drain my creativity. I get a job done, but I don't know why.

Indeed, I once put myself in such a situation, early in my working life, shortly before the *Fake Somatic Practice* project. I had a concept, it had a premiere and tour dates, and I quickly saw the whole production in front of me. There was little to discover, and motivation waned.

After that experience, I had a six-week residency where I decided not to know where the work would lead. The only two guidelines I had for myself were: first, be interested in and curious about the material I was producing—and if I wasn't, I had to find a new approach to movement—and second, wait to put into words what I was working on, until the material had become so extensive, or manifested itself so much in the body that it could not slip away so easily and required a certain level of precision to capture its complexity in words.

During this residency, I found a way to relate to movement that made it easy to go to the studio every day. I didn't know what it was at all, and at the same time I couldn't stop exploring it. This was the start of the practice of multi-attentiveness, even though at the time I did not have that name or that understanding of what it was I was working with.

It took me a long time to name what it was I was working on. But I continued the work and made the production *Mit* based on this research. I was able to start the production without a concept, since I developed it as a part of my Master's in choreography, where I received a production budget. I decided to work with a dancer other than myself, as I was so dazed each time after working with the practice. I knew what I was focusing on, but not really what the material was producing. I could thus describe where I had my attention and guide the dancer into that work.

Without going further into describing the production *Mit*, I can say that it was only after that production that I named the

method multi-attentiveness. And the naming of it has helped me explore it further. But I would never have come to that name without this process. The insistence on continuing the work without naming what I was working on before I found the words that could describe it produced a suspenseful relation to the word.

After that production, I developed the exercise and encouragement "let the language 'rest'." To trust that there is something in material when it pulls you in or when you can't let go of it, to rest in that experience, and step by step collect more material—a word, a reference, even more material—until concepts and longer descriptions emerge, has become an exercise and a method I work with in order to find a specific language in relation to my choreographic work. It's like a meditation that requires practice, but also a state of desire. The satisfaction can be immense when the words, filled to the brim with the work, emerge.

5 RUT

5.1 BEGINNING A PROJECT | STARTING WITH AND FROM THE BODY

The creation process of *Rut* started in a residency at the performance space Skogen in Gothenburg in Sweden. I was working alone in the studio for three weeks. Apart from knowing that I wanted to develop the practice of multi-attentiveness further, I brought no other information, inspirations, or a written concept. I wanted to start *with and from the body*. Given the idea of the body with which I began this text—as absorbing, leaking matter—having the point of departure in the body entails a lot of information already from the body's accumulated history, its cultural and contextual experiences, but also sensations and fields of unknowns. At Skogen, I started out by listening to my body, listening for desire, inclination, resistance. I was curious about the quality of movement, rhythm, and texture these different bodily occurrences provoked, or to put it another way, what materiality these occurrences possessed. I continued by moving towards these sensations, to see what they evoked. I was looking for something that kept my interest. If a place of desire or resistance in my body held my attention, maintaining my curiosity and exploration, I had found something I wanted

to investigate further. I moved with it for some more time, to experience and examine its range. Then I started to name what body parts I was engaging when moving, what tonus, what range, what the rest of the body did when not being directly engaged, where my attention was directed when moving, and the feeling I had while moving. I was naming these aspects in order to "record" the finding, and to be able to go back to it without necessarily having to do the listening that thoroughly again. After several days, I also started to film myself when moving, to see if I had found something that held my interest visually as well. I waited this time in order to give space to this first exploration's first, vulnerable steps, to let the discoveries establish themselves before surveying them visually as well. The experience of the material and its visual expression did not always match. I narrowed down my findings, until they only contained the parts that were holding my interest while moving *and* watching. The formative endeavor of trying to provoke unfamiliar movement through the tasks that constituted the practice of multi-attentiveness remained, at this stage, a part of the process, and was not yet included in what I saw as the work. This later came into play when I started to work with the dancer. The most important thing at this early stage was to map out bodily desires or hindrances while moving, and while watching myself move, without having further names or concepts to frame the work with yet. It was this first step of mapping out interests and developing some tasks that brought me to inspirations that later formed the base for the practice and even later the concept.

5.2 THE BODY PRECEDES LANGUAGE

What I want to point out here is that I insist on starting from the body because I'm interested in the layered, complex, not always goal-oriented desires that lurk inside my body as something that can guide me toward expressing it in language (words). It is a way for me to take a leap into exploring a terrain populated by experiences, references, and episodes that I, as a whole, haven't found a way to capture through language (words) yet. Or, to put it differently, a way to find a material that fascinates and interests me before I have words for it and before I have worked out a concept. It is a strategy I'm using to work with the sensorial information that floods my system constantly and that works on me faster than I can grasp it. I am interested in bathing in this sensorial information and the material that grows out of it and letting the material ferment and show direction before I put it into words and shape it into a concept. The Canadian philosopher and social theorist Brian Massumi writes that "the skin is faster than the word" (2002, 25). In a similar line of thought, the philosopher Marie-Luise Angerer writes that the body is equipped with a sensorial realm that operates faster than language (see 2007, 66), and the Danish choreographer Mette Ingvartsen states in her dissertation that "the speed of your perception is faster than the speed of your recognition" (2016, 7). One further reference that points towards the slowness of language and wording in relation to sensorial bodily conditions is the French anthropologist François Laplantine, who states that "the body precedes language" (2015, 116). These short statements all point to an understanding of the body where language accompanies the body and seems, in our consciousness at least, to lag behind the senses. I want to orient myself towards this sensorial realm as a strategy to find words and develop a concept through and from the body. It's like I catch sight of or capture a greater complexity when I start my work in the studio in this way, with the body, rather than

starting with writing a concept. I tell myself to suspend my desire to grasp the material through words until a mass of material is there and I've worked with it for so long that the material won't just slip away as soon as I start naming it. How long that takes differs according to the materials that I find. Sometimes material can manifest clearly in the body within hours, other times I swim among sensations and it takes days before I land in material that I can describe through words. The words, concepts, and language that grow out of this way of working are filled with the time of exploration. They constitute a framework that conveys a desire for further exploration, which is often due to a combination of the work that has elicited them and the fact that this language, its rhythm and poetry, is often a bit new to me.

In this initial phase, there is a continuous back-and-forth between listening, moving, naming, filming, watching, and naming again, until I have detected a broader frame of interest.

In the residency at Skogen, it boiled down to the two notions *time* and *weight*. I became interested in weight from a very physical perspective—how weight influences the body—as well as from the linguistic and metaphoric perspective of what it means to give something weight through attention, value, focus, volume, and time. With these notions found, I started to develop the practice of multi-attentiveness further, now with a subtitle: *wait weight*.

While starting to develop the practice, I was in parallel doing research on processes of bodily change, influenced by the notions of weight and time, which in themselves indicate forces of transformation on the body. I learned about Catherine Malabou's notion of plasticity, which became a further inspiration for *Rut,* and which also influenced the development of the practice. Before continuing the description of *Rut*, I will introduce the basic concept of plasticity according to Malabou.

5.3 PLASTICITY

Catherine Malabou is a philosopher working in the Continental European tradition and through her work on plasticity she draws on neurobiology and the medical sciences as well as the history of philosophy and political theory. She derives her concept of plasticity from Hegel, and the concept of neuroplasticity from the medical sciences. Plasticity is a neurobiological notion that describes different functions in the brain. In brief, plasticity describes the influence our surroundings have on our brain, which is in a state of constant change throughout our entire life. It changes through our experiences in a properly physical sense. What makes this possible is that our synapses, or "brain connections," are being strengthened or weakened throughout our life in relation to our experiences and to how we consciously and unconsciously use our brain. The activities we regularly practice such as dancing, playing music, cooking, reading, speaking a particular language, etc. are activating particular synapses that create certain neuronal assemblies and pathways (or "motorways") in the brain. Synapses that aren't used become weaker than the brain connections or synapses we use more often. It also means that they become more difficult to activate than the ones we use more regularly. The activation of our synapses is not only related to what we can and cannot do, it also involves the experiences we have and undergo in the world. Having a traumatic experience or experiencing events related to our regular actions and behavior produce reactions, connections, or associations more or less quickly depending on the history of our experiences and our general physical constitution (see Rathe and Goldberg 2020).

Malabou also addresses plasticity in philosophy. Through this perspective, which I will unpack hereunder, it is interesting to talk about humans as plastic beings. Malabou claims that

plasticity carries a double meaning. On the one hand, what is plastic is opposed to being elastic. Plasticity resists what you could call endless formability or polymorphism. She gives an example of a marble statue (2008, 15), which can be shaped, but can never go back to what it was in the beginning. Its shape can undergo change, but it can't take on all kinds of form. The plastic also stands in contrast with that which is completely stiff or rigid. Plastic capacity is a changeable state. It does not contain infinite possibilities of change, but that which is plastic has a capacity to transform and to form itself, and can be formed anew constantly. An example is adult stem cells, which are undifferentiated cells: they can renew themselves and take on different shapes depending on what is needed, in order to regenerate damaged tissues for example. To say that we are plastic beings means that we are in flux, in constant transformation, in the same way that our brain is always changing. We can't become just anything at all, yet we are changeable. Plasticity is thus not the same as flexibility, it is not that we are completely soft and formless. We have a form, and that form has a certain solidity, but it is possible to change. The notion of plasticity has consequences for the questions of who I am and what I can do because it says something about the way we cannot neglect who we have been both biologically and existentially, but at the same time we are not locked in or bound to it completely. (see Rathe and Goldberg 2020).

It is alongside this philosophical perspective that I have worked with plasticity. My focus has been on the lessons we can draw from encounters between neurobiological insights and philosophy and not so much on neurobiological mechanisms. This means that plasticity has served as one inspiration in constructing different tasks for the practice of challenging the dancer's habits and capacity. My interest isn't a scientific investigation of the possibility of correlating the practice and the choreographic process to neuroplastic changes in the dancer's brain-body. This PhD project is about developing methods in response to my research questions about the representation of the body in a performing arts context and the body's capacity for generating meaning, and not neurobiological research. Instead, as a source of inspiration, this material has influenced how I structure the creative process, develop methods, work with the dancer, and create choreography, with the intention that it might challenge the body's representation onstage.

On a daily basis it is easy to forget about this changeability and this powerful force contained in the body. It isn't visible to the naked eye. Learning about this notion inspired me to think further about what implications the practice of multi-attentiveness could have on the dancer. Could small paths or big motorways be created in the dancer's brain? Could this choreographic process actually challenge both the dancing body and its representation onstage (to link back to my first research question)? These questions became the foundation for the choreography *Rut*.

5.4 PROCESS

Rut was created for and with the dancer Marianne Kjærsund. The process was short, we had only five weeks to create the piece, and just two of those weeks together with the whole team. I therefore worked separately with Marianne, Alexander Krantz (set designer), and Camilla Barratt-Due (composer) in order to maximize the time we had. Since much of this time with them was spent one-on-one, I will describe the creative process as it developed with each of the members of the team separately.

I had a two-fold interest in making *Rut*: to work with multi-attentiveness – wait weight while drawing inspiration from the notion of plasticity, and to thematize plasticity aesthetically through the choreography. I will unpack forthwith how this was done practically, starting with "multi-attentiveness – wait weight."

5.5 WAIT WEIGHT | SPECULATION | FICTION

I primarily derived a practice of "multi-attentiveness – wait weight" from fictional image sets of the body. Through talking, touching, and showing painted images, I guided the dancer into a set of images as an entrance point and approach to working with time and weight. I thus used speculation and fantasy as a tool to animate different weights that could exist in Marianne's body. It was a tool for stimulating Marianne to experience her body differently, to deploy another logic of moving than the one she was used to—creating another pathway in her brain, to say it like Malabou. An image set could be described like this:

Imagine the skin of your body, 360 degrees, and think of the skin as a shell. Empty the inside of your body completely. The only thing that exists now is the skin as a container shaped like a body. In order to insist on the image, I started to describe how the feet were touching the ground, when the only thing existing was the skin. I continued by asking Marianne questions about the texture of the skin, its color, and how it felt, to hold on to this image of an emptied body that was only constituted by a skin shell. Then I continued by asking Marianne to *fill her feet up to the calves and also a section around the elbows with stones. The stones are chunky, they are grey and black and wet.* Then I asked Marianne to move and experience her body, now filled with stones. I was curious about what this image did to her way of moving. Did it make her experience her body differently? What rhythms and qualities did it provoke? And further, what could its material qualities tell us?

In the beginning, we played around with different image sets; we filled the body with various substances such as tar and gel, for instance. I altered the places where Marianne should imagine it in the body and talked about their different qualities and how they moved around in her body when she was moving.

I drew body-sized drawings to illustrate the substance's density, color, and place. I did this as a way of talking about the same thing through a different medium, to see how such illustrations influenced Marianne's work.

Below, you can see one of the illustrations. In this illustration, the body to the left is filled with tar, and the body to the right is filled with gel.



Process, *Rut*. Drawing: Rosalind Goldberg.

The drawings were a strategy for making the imaginative tasks more concrete, something to hold on to, something to point to when describing experiences in the body. Images in the mind tend to slip away, and the drawings became one of three strategies I used in order to insist on the imagination as the starting point for movement.

Another layer involved working with touch. I touched the places a chunk of gel was placed, for instance, and talked about its characteristics and qualities, possibly increasing Marianne's capacity to "experience" the gel. I also touched other parts of the body that weren't filled with a gel and asked Marianne to move from there, to see how that effected the gel.

Weight and time in *Rut* were used as a way to work with the microscopic yet influential biological happenings that shape our bodies constantly. "Wait weight" became something graspable for us, which we could use to amplify the abstract neurobiological movements happening in the brain. The weight and the time were both something Marianne could maneuver and something that maneuvered her. In this way the practice reflected the fundamental principles of the notion of plasticity as Malabou defines it:

> The word plasticity has two basic senses: it means at once the capacity to receive form (clay is called ''plastic,'' for example) and the capacity to give form (as in the plastic arts or in plastic surgery). Talking about the plasticity of the brain thus amounts to thinking of the brain as something modifiable, ''formable,'' and formative at the same time. Brain plasticity operates, as we shall see, on three levels: (1) the modeling of neuronal connections (developmental plasticity in the embryo and the child); (2) the modification of neuronal connections (the plasticity of synaptic modulation

> throughout life); and (3) the capacity for repair (postlesional plasticity). ‘‘Plasticity in the nervous system means an alteration in structure or function brought about by development, experience, or injury.’’ But it must be remarked that plasticity is also the capacity to annihilate the very form it is able to receive or create. … We thus note that plasticity is situated between two extremes: on the one side the sensible image of taking form (sculpture or plastic objects), and on the other side that of the annihilation of all form (explosion). (2008, 5).

“Wait weight” became a way to explore the concept of plasticity in a very physical manner. It was a way to challenge Marianne’s habits, and capacities for being attentive, with the intention of carving new pathways in her brain through her engagement with the practice. The two notions of weight and time demanded slowness from Marianne, in order to actually experience her weight. “Wait” and “weight” were therefore tightly intertwined. These two aspects of the practice fostered an increased capacity for experiencing the body due to the time it sometimes took to become aware of a weight and its qualities. The aspect of time helped Marianne to taste and navigate the sensorial information that arose as she moved.

Weight and time are something you can pretend to control but which will always, in the end, run over you thanks to the law of gravity and the fact that we are aging. These facts made me turn a similar focus towards plasticity, which in a similar way to time and weight is driven by natural forces. To what extent can we interact with our plasticity? Is it even possible for the “multi-attentiveness – wait weight” practice to have a plastic effect on the body?

Malabou writes that ‘‘plasticity in the nervous system means an alteration in structure or function brought about by development, experience, or injury” (2008, 5). Learning that events and experiences materialize in the body’s complex physical network and shape me, and that every experience but also habits, laws, and norms have a direct material impact on the body and vice versa, with the body affecting our experiences and habits, meant that the notion of plasticity became an inspiration through which I could explore the body—and through which I could motivate the structuring of the practice which helped me generate material that might challenge the dancer’s body.

These first tryouts were designed to detect what Marianne reacted to, and how. How long could she stay within an image, what excited her, what didn’t work, what pulled her out? They were also designed to detect what excited me in Marianne’s explorations. Our experiences didn’t always match. In this initial phase of the production, we spent some time clarifying expectations.

5.6 EXPECTATIONS, TRUST

Working with these image sets as a starting point for movement production requires a few things. First, it requires accepting the fictional aspect of this method for movement production, the fact that it is a constructed set-up, made to produce movement through the dancer's particular engagement with a given set of images. Second, there is a need to concentrate, listen, and be attentive to one's body's engagement with these images. Third, it requires acknowledging that one loses concentration, attention, and even interest in the images—and then there is the question of *how* one works one's way back into the image set. Lastly, the movements being produced are sometimes barely visible, and they might not be to the dancer's own taste in movement or have the qualities they like.

Working like this means that the dancer gives herself to the work without being able to control its outcome. This set-up of working with the practice of multi-attentiveness is designed to challenge the dancer's habits and inspire her to move from places from which she doesn't usually move. The result is that the dancers often can't grasp what they produce, and it is difficult to know and name what it is—except for the experience or feeling of the movement. However, this experience or feeling of the movement is very valuable information, and is used as a way to orientate and communicate through the material for both myself and the dancer.

This intention of mine—to work until a dancer loses her bodily self-consciousness to the point that she no longer controls what she produces/represents/lets out—I communicate to the dancers even before we start working together, but the practice requires trust from the dancer and an interest in giving way to the work. This can be easy to get interested in as an idea, but harder to acknowledge on the floor.

Throughout the three different productions that were part of this PhD project, the time it took to find this working ground differed from dancer to dancer, and each process came with its own challenges, insights, and needs, requiring me to keep developing the practice in such a way that it could support each dancer in her engagement with its playful and challenging tasks—including leaving a place for vulnerability.

5.7 IMAGINATION

Imagination has been a powerful tool for me when working with attention and movement production, and when searching for new ways to work with the body. I learned to actively use it when dancing original Isadora Duncan dances as a child and a teenager in the dance company Lilla Baletten.[10] In Duncan's dances, imagination plays an important role. Many dances are carried by a story or images that feed the dancer when performing the movements. They inform the timing and the quality. Dancing Isadora Duncan's dances taught me how my inner work with images plays an important role in how the movement is performed and comes across. Playing with the technique and the form of the dances always needed to be accompanied by my inner work with the given image, in order to perform in the tradition of Duncan.

This work with imagination was introduced at a time when I was simultaneously learning techniques. It took on a dominating role in how I was dancing. It gave me ownership of the dance. Although the images were specified and determined, I was the one who would give life to the images; this gave me, as a dancer, an agency in how the dance ultimately emerged.

Through the work with "multi-attentiveness – wait weight," I tried to animate an imaginary space the dancer could inhabit and re-animate, to make her a co-agent of the work, in the sense I discussed earlier in relation to the work of Deborah Hay. It was a way to unfold a logic of moving that held different modes of attention, different ways of orientating in the movement materials.

10. Lilla Baletten is a children's dance company created 1993 by Kathleen Quinlan in order to maintain the tradition of Isadora Duncan. Kathleen had a close friendship with Anna Duncan and also inherited Duncan's entire archives and belongings. For further reading see Lilla Balettens webpage: accessed October 7, 2023, http://www.inalivingtradition.com/main-page.

"The power of imagination has a fundamental temporal constitution. Whether what is made present is 'real' or not, exists 'for real' or not, becomes secondary here." (Schuback 2011, 34, my translation)

It would also provide a certain way to inhabit the given time in front of the audience, including by helping the dancer to find appetite for the movements, and it was a tool to expand both my sense of what dancing could be and the dancer's own range of movement. Thus, in the multi-attentiveness practice at the beginning of the project, imagination was used as a tool for finding material, movement qualities, and timings. It was also something we came back to when the piece had found its form, in order to feed, fill, and play with the form.

Imagination is, to me, a great gateway to sensing and playing with the material, and a component that can keep the work vibrant for the dancer. Working within imaginary worlds can uncover energies and interests (see Peeters 2022, 123). Jonna Bornemark writes that "imagination can be understood as a freedom from the here and now, an opportunity for thought to move beyond the boundness of the body. But the imagination can also intensify this here and now"(2022, 108). The idea of moving beyond the boundness of the body through imagination is, for me, an additional motivation for working with imagination—it is a way for me to imagine the body differently. It can reveal hidden perceptions and timings in the body, and it can spark interest in the material over and over again. The Dutch writer and philosopher Rick Dolphijn points out that "imagination is strongly connected to appetite, the never-ending hunger that drives all possible and impossible bodies" (2021, 25). I like the idea that something can trigger appetite in the dancer when moving.

Appetite is a raw force that can put the dancer at risk and cause the material to move. It is also a force that requires the dancer to negotiate with the rest of the choreography, and in this way it keeps the dancer busy onstage.

5.8 MATERIAL TAKEOVER | SENSORIAL INPUT AS DIRECTIONAL

Some weeks into the different production processes, the practice we used as a method had generated material that came to function as the foundation for the choreography. This generated material indicated particular timings, textures, rhythms, and sensations. To borrow dramaturg Jeroen Peeters' words when paraphrasing dancer Chrysa Parkinson speaking about her own practice, the practice was thus not only "geared towards developing movement material, choreography, or performing. It shaped a shared imaginary space through corporeal means. As such it mediated the … work in different ways than through reading, discussion, and other methods heavy with language" (Peeters 2022, 125). The materiality of the work stood at the center. At this stage in the process, I thus actively tuned myself to the material's corporeality, to its sensorial output, in order to listen in on its logics and textures, rather than reading and analyzing its expression. In other words, when the practice, the concept, and the inspirations found through the process had pushed the material this far, I started to shift focus and direct my attention more exclusively to what the material had become and how it acted on me. I was letting the concept and the practice rest for a while in order to listen to the material generated. This listening to the material had been an integral part of the process from the beginning, as I describe above. But with extensive material at hand, the shift towards the material at this stage in the process was more radical. I was at this stage open to questioning the concept in favor of the material. In other words, it was possible for the material we had generated, and its particular logic, to take over.

Based on this listening, I started to map out the material by giving name to the parts, noticing their length, quality, and

energies. I then started to navigate through the material, looking for what framing, development, and refinements the material "asked for" in order to stand out in its particularity.

In *Rut*, the practice had provoked a material that reflected its subtitle, "wait weight". The material was fleshy, heavy, sensuous, and slow. It consisted of variations of slowness where the body surged and experienced its own transformation at a slow pace.

5.9 THE TITLE AND THE NAME "RUT"

As I looked at, listened to, and experienced the material, before me appeared a body both old and young at the same time. Marianne's body was floating between different ages while moving, weighed down by time and imaginary weights. Over a long moment of shifting weight, her appearance could change from very old to very young, reflecting the way she toyed with the image sets that followed her through the movements.

The Norwegian artist Tori Wrånes' work *Ancient Baby* (2017) emerged as a reference, with its baby/troll/old person floating in space. The way Wrånes dressed and titled a rather abstract movement material with figurative characteristics, and the way that framed the experience of the material, caused me to ask myself who that *Ancient Baby* was, what times and experiences it was hiding inside its both caricatured and sensuous appearance. The questions that appeared while watching Wrånes' piece were the kinds of question I wished to provoke in the audience as they watched *Rut*: Who is Rut? How old is she? What are her references? What does she like? What drives her? Why is she doing what she does in the way she does? From this base, I gave Marianne and the piece the name *Rut*.

I was curious about how the name would frame the audience's experience of the material. Could it evoke questions, curiosity, feelings of closeness/resistance to *Rut*? To put it differently, I was curious to know if this abstract material, once it was dressed and framed as a character, would open itself up to the audience so that they could engage with the material unfolding before them. Could the name and the character be a gateway to immersion in abstract material and tease out of the audience words for their experience—perhaps because *Rut* behaved differently to how she was expected to, from her appearance? These questions were clearly also closely tied to my second research question—how does the choreographic process

and the work that emerges through practice as a method, as I develop it, encourage a search for words and concepts after the meaning has already been produced in matter?

The name and the title "Rut" were thus a strategy for calling Marianne's way of moving a behavior, to see what would be further provoked in the process. I was interested in how the name and the character would influence the development of the material.

Having this heavy, sensuous material in front of me, I started to think about Rut's relation to this weight and if there were other, contrasting rhythms in her body. Emphasizing a faster, wilder speed, parallel with the weight, might make the weight even more visible. If the material that was weighing down the body were contrasted with a tempo that was riding the body in parallel, the body attempting to keep up a rhythm, the material's fleshiness and weight could potentially appear with even more force.

Reflecting upon it with Marianne, she suggested adding "the jack in the box" or "the jack," which is a basic movement in House Dance that emerged in the context of Chicago House in the 1980s. When "jacking," the dancer is rippling their torso back and forth in an undulating motion. Marianne was regularly practicing House Dance and "the jack" was an embodied way for her to produce a rhythm in her body.

We played around with different ways of adding "the jack" to the material. We started by improvising with the jack and the material we already had at hand. We also tried improvising with sequences of House Dance moves together with the material we had from before. The trials to improvise and forge new movements while simultaneously being in the multi-attentive material didn't work out well. The attentiveness was then only directed toward the new task. We figured out that we needed to decide in advance what material from House Dance we wanted to use and thereafter find a way to merge it with the rest of the material. I therefore asked Marianne to improvise with House Dance only. Through this improvisation we found and created a combination of movements. We then applied and smeared out the House Dance combination with the principles of the practice and infused it with the material we already had. We did this in such a way that the references to House Dance disappeared. The final material had, in the end, gained a new rhythmical quality, which added *pleasure*, *commotion*, and a *drive* or a feeling of multiple directions. These modulations made Rut as a character more complex.

We wanted to follow the newly found experiences of pleasure, commotion, and drive that we had found in the rhythmical part even further, and we asked ourselves how Rut would dance to different kinds of music, as a way to push the material against a rhythm outside the body. I asked Marianne to pick a song she enjoyed dancing to, and to dance to it from within the material generated through the practice. I chose a part of the material that wasn't infused by "the jack." She chose the song "My Love" by Justine Timberlake. Dancing to the song through the material, the material became a thick layer, a hindrance for Marianne to move to the song in known patterns. The combination of the fleshy, heavy, sensuous material with the snappy beat and genre-specific music generated a vulgar, strong, hedonistic tone to the material, where pleasure was at the core of the dance. We continued playing with this, but with other music. The composer Camilla Barratt-Due brought in the London-based electronic musician Beatrice Dillon, who creates experimental compositions, where sampling and creative mixes of dynamic club music and Afro-Cuban rhythms are the main ingredients. The very different realm that opened up with Dillon's music, and with which Marianne now met the material, generated another complex rhythmical movement quality. We kept the movement

material and quality generated, but left Dillon and Timberlake aside. Barratt-Due now started to create her own musical composition based on the material generated.

Another test we did to contrast the weighted material was to produce something we ended up calling the weightless material. It was rooted in the idea of depicting a state of transformation, where it is difficult to feel anchored in anything when everything suddenly changes, a feeling the notion of plasticity evoked in me. The weightless material was also inspired by work-in-progress material for the performance *Episodes of Flight* by Rosemary Butcher, which I had seen on her webpage (see 2008). I was fascinated by how the dancer was sitting in the material, how she seemed open to various possibilities, while at the same time being pulled forward by the material. I saw daily life occurring through abstract means. I was interested in this dry dailyness, and its drive. Based on these inspirations, I created a task where at first, I wanted to reach an ease towards the movement, like what I had seen in the material by Butcher, together with a drive or a force within the material. The task was based on image sets with the empty skin-shell body as a base, but instead of filling the body with different substances, we placed radiating chips on the body that were reaching out in the room, with different gradations, in 360 degrees. Marianne's task was to direct the chips and follow their direction and their intensities with the body, while simultaneously imagining body parts that were weighing her body down. Through this work a dry, poetic material appeared. After working with the task for some time, and once Marianne had come to be at ease with it, I added a new layer. I asked her to notice and then give space to arising sensations such as joy, pleasure, irritation, discomfort, boredom, etc. while working with the task—to let the sensorial information seep out, block the movement, or take part in the dancing. I asked her to observe what space the sensorial information took up and how it took it up. Visually this appeared at times just as a smile on her face, and as smaller or bigger ramifications in the movement. Other times it interrupted the movement and required her to find a way into it again. For Marianne, on the other hand, this focus on the sensorial information floating around, sinking away, taking over, and teasing her in an irregular motion was challenging. It was a difficult task to focus on dry and light movement material, while at the same time handling and noticing sensitive motions of all sorts. How to remember complex tasks while at the same time having another task that asks you to notice sensorial information that might even drive away with you? Marianne was by now deep inside multi-attentive work. It didn't always generate a flow of movements; it required her to stop many times. It wasn't dancing as she knew it, flowing away and losing herself in movements. The tasks constantly required her attention, even when she lost attention.

But the combination of tasks gave the material an ambiguity, a particular life that made me interested in being with it, looking at it, as I couldn't foresee where it would go.

At this stage in the process, we faced an issue. The different parts and materials Marianne worked with had many layers. The material we had found through the practice was already layered, and now with the added music, sensations, and weightlessness, the work could take different directions depending on Marianne's day/interest/capacity to be attentive. Although I was interested in the variety that the same bundle of tasks could generate, there would be timings, materials, and qualities generated on one day that kept my interest more than material generated on other days. Because of the altered timings and expressions of the material, Marianne could also get exhausted within the scope of the work. I therefore decided to set some of the material that we had found, to choose the parts that held my

curiosity and made me wonder the most. These parts were often characterized by Marianne being able to be attentive to many of the aspects in the work, and at the same time playing with its challenges and interruptions. It was also a strategy to give Marianne something to rest in while continuing the exploration of the work. I wanted to see if setting the material could free some capacity to be attentive and to continue playing with the work.

This turned out to be successful. It released more capacity in Marianne to work with the different layers and the set material, and we found even more material in this way.

Based on this experience, I decided to set more and more material as we went until we had the whole piece set. When the different parts in the piece became embodied in such a way that Marianne didn't need to think about what steps were to come, I re-infused the material with more layers of practice for Marianne to able to experience the material while dancing. It was a strategy for reinjecting the choreography with playfulness and risk, for constantly challenging the found form, and for keeping the work vibrant.

This working method shows that this choreography was not solely based on practice. The practice functioned as a tool for challenging the dancer's capacity to work with attention while moving. It helped us, the dancer and I, to find materials, qualities, and rhythms. This guided me as the choreographer towards more inspiration through which I generated additional tasks to practice. The material generated in this way indicated particular time structures and qualities on which I based the dramaturgy of what finally became the choreography *Rut*.

What in the end constituted the piece was an intertwined relation amongst the material generated through the practice followed by the dancer and myself, the notion of plasticity, the other inspirations that had arisen through the work, the aesthetic expression that emerged from these inputs, fine-grained choreographing, and the elements of sound, light, set design, and costume that we based on all of this. These interwoven aspects were all driven by the practice and the material it generated. The pillar of the work thus consisted of an entangled relation between the material on the one hand, and the discourse and reasoning it had provoked on the other.

5.10 CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES: DANCER/CHOREOGRAPHER

Working with this practice as a method makes it difficult for me to dance in my work. I'm unable to lose my bodily self-consciousness at the same time as orientating myself in respect to what the material does in a production framework. For this reason, I decided not to dance in the productions I developed for my PhD project. That decision created a clear division of responsibility between the dancer and myself in respect to the process. Our relationship was built on me creating and detailing a practice that Marianne moved through. But this also meant that she responded through movement, and articulated experiences while working with the practice, which defined how the practice was further shaped and articulated. In this way, the material emerged between the dancer and myself, based on our different perspectives on both the practice and the material. I focused on the appearance of the material and its sensorial vibrations and effects. The dancer focused on how it felt, on what provoked movement and what didn't, and on the realm of experiences that arose while moving.

In this it can be seen that these projects were not primarily directed through vision, but that instead other senses prevailed. The dancer's experience with the practice, and her capacity to be attentive, are extremely central to the work, and this together with my approach to the material, where I meet it through listening, is an attempt to undermine vision as the overarching directional device when creating.

Another, more political aspect to this relation to the dancer's body is an ethical question concerning how we work together in a choreographic process. This body, our body that is so malleable—what is the best way to handle this moldable nature of ours? How do we structure a choreographic process in such a way that we can work on challenging an understanding of the dancing body, allow a project to unfold, see what it opens us up to and what it demands of us, and at the same time build an environment where we all learn from and exchange with each other and the project's themes? This perspective on working and creating was not present in my dance education. The dancer who was accessible and could take on multiple choreographies without difficulty was idealized. If you mixed in your questions or perspective, especially if it was of a critical nature, it was perceived as a problem. The dancer should be interested and followable, but in my educational environment there was no interest in the dancer as a co-agent or participating artist in a choreographic process. As a newly educated dancer in 2007, the question of the dancer's role in a choreographic process started influencing my projects. I was collaborating with the dancer Sandra Lolax and the dancer and choreographer Stina Nyberg at that time, and together, through different projects, we tested and discussed the relations that pertained within a choreographic process and how a process could be structured in such a way that it involved everyone as co-agents, without their necessarily becoming co-authors. We were interested in uncompromising ideas developed under inclusive circumstances. We therefore decided that clearly defined roles, clarified expectations, and enabling both a platform for everyone to actively participate in the process and a free space for the choreographer to lead the process and choose what will eventually become the choreography was a strategy to follow. This approach has been with me ever since.

5.11 SET DESIGN

Before I started working with Marianne, the set, costume, and mask-designer Alexander Krantz and I met. We primarily tested out what the set design could be, based on my research during the residency at Skogen. We talked about my research in plasticity, the inner happenings in the body, the things that were changing under the influence of all sorts of experiences, events that weren't necessarily visible to others. We asked ourselves how this inner life of a body could be felt in the room. We wanted to create a room that had fleshy and transformational characteristics, something that reflected the changes happening inside the body in a corporeal, poetic manner.

We started talking about covering the floor with a material that would change appearance with the light. It could emerge at first as a rock, and in another moment as a soft landscape, a colorful, uncertain ground, a dream.

Through various tests with different textiles, we found that memory foam was a material that could be shaped in a lasting way, could transform in various ways with light, and would provide a more or less stable ground for the dancer.

Two paintings by the surrealist painter Max Ernst provided us with an inspirational reference for how to sculpt the floor:



Max Ernst, *Solitary and Conjugal Trees* (1940).

The paintings were abstract and fleshy at once. They appeared to have an inherent life, without us being fully able to point to how this worked. This quality was something we looked for in the set design (and in the work as a whole).



Max Ernst, *Fascinating Cypress* (1940).

Judy Chicago's *Rejection Breakthrough Drawing* (1974) also served as an inspirational reference:



Judy Chicago, *Rejection Breakthrough Drawing*, from the *Rejection Quintet* (1974).

Alexander started sculpting the memory foam with a knife, and coloring it, to look for these qualities, and to erase the reference to memory foam.



Carved memory foam with acrylic paint and dry pastel. Photo: Alexander Krantz.

The work of carving out, sculpting, and coloring the floor was time-consuming and we knew from early on that it wouldn't be ready until a week before the premiere. We decided that the maximum size of the floor would be eight by eight meters, which defined one spatial aspect for the choreography.



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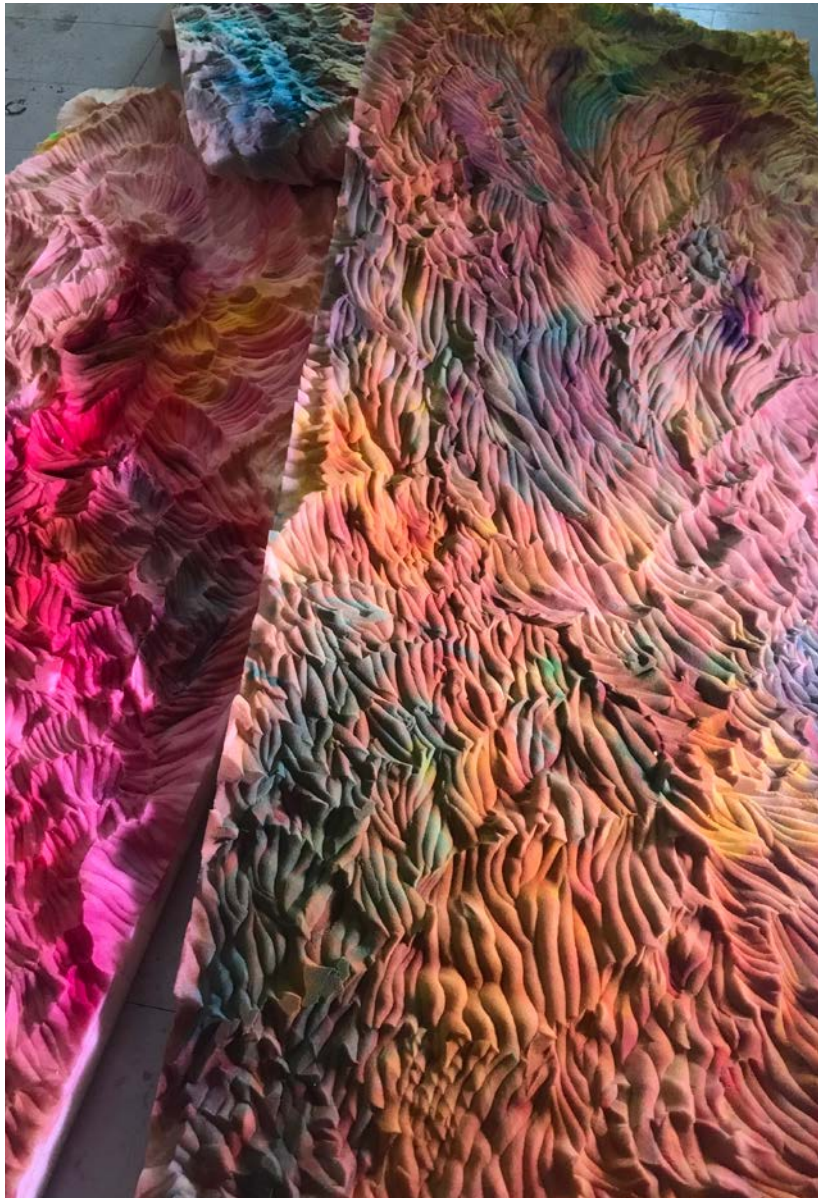

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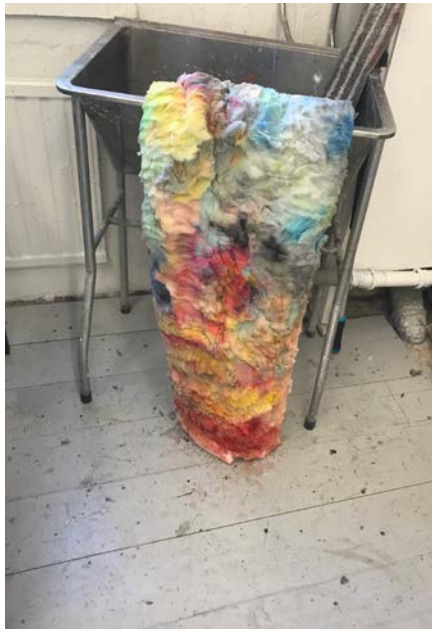

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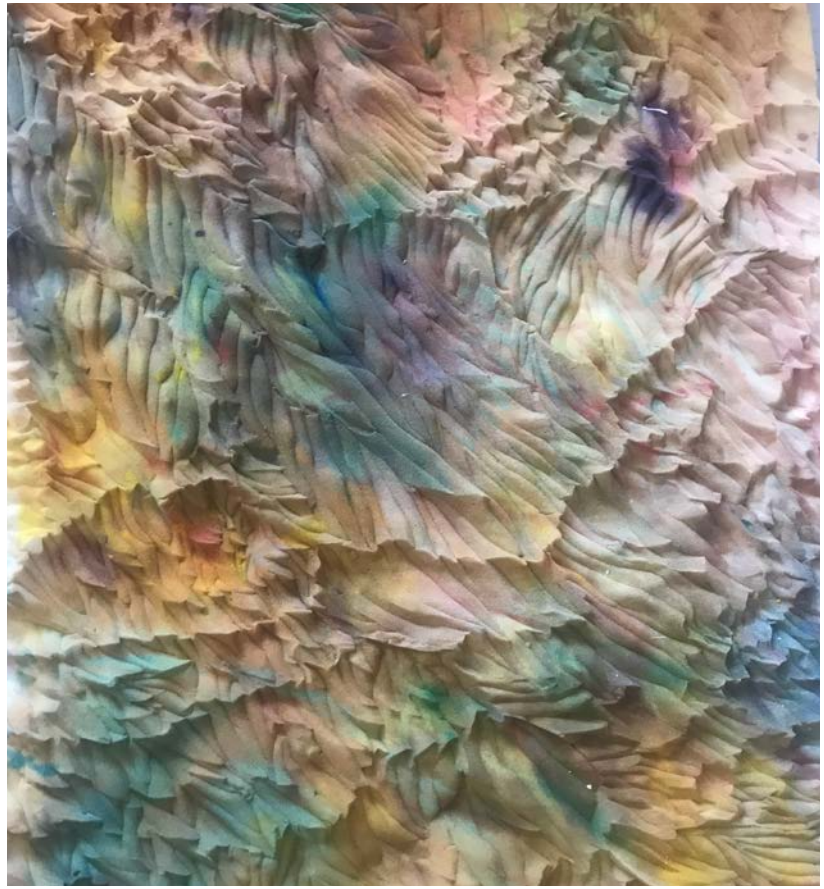

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Process images of sculpting the floor for *Rut*.
Photo: Alexander Krantz (1–7).



The final floor for *Rut*. Photo: Anders Lindén.

When the floor was finished, and Marianne and I could start working on it, it affected the choreographic material in many ways, some which were expected and others which were surprising. We knew, for instance, that the sound of Marianne's movements would disappear into the mattress material and that she would sink into the floor with every step, but the effect of it was stronger than expected. The parts of the choreography that were very physical now required more effort, as Marianne had to lift her feet higher than usual to avoid tripping on the mattress, and she had to provide more downwards force in order to be able to use the resistance from the floor. The silence the mattress brought introduced an atmosphere of concentration in the room that was rewarding for that work in relation to how it had developed. The mattress constituted a world, it was part of a room that was both in motion and meditative.

With the set design completed for the room, I felt like trying another approach to the form of the choreography than the one that had first emerged. I wanted to try a long-durational set-up, where the work could last over six hours and the audience could come and go. "Rut's" task would then be to "bathe" in the material for as long or as short as she wanted, throw the order around, repeat parts as many times as she wanted, take breaks, and find a way to "live" with the material. I was curious about what it would do to the material and Marianne's approach to it.

This idea also came up in response to our having such a short period in which to work and was a strategy for helping Marianne to own a method that was constantly trying to destabilize her.

Unfortunately, we didn't have time to explore this idea, but it remains a wish.

5.12 COSTUME | MASK

From the moment that we decided on the name and the title "Rut," we started talking about how Rut would dress, or how we could dress her to emphasize the character and its varying ages and expressions. We wanted to create a distinct character who could provoke a manifold of expressions as Marianne moved with and through the choreographic material. It would be a character that on the one hand appeared to have a clear integrity, and at the same time raised questions such as: Who is this? What age? What kind of history and what reserve of experiences does this figure carry?

We were thinking about creating a rawer skin on the hands, and enlarging the hands a little in order to tweak the audience's perception. We did some tests, and I tried out some of the choreographic material with clay on my hands.





Testing of the mask for Rut. Clay on hands. Photo: Alexander Krantz.

I was interested in the look and the physical experience of the clay on my hand, what it did to how I perceived its weight and consequently the material. But it ended up muddying the whole floor, and falling off when it dried, so we decided to look for other solutions to how Rut's body could be tweaked a bit.

We wanted to have the colors of the floor reflected on her body, and to create a particular mask or a particular kind of makeup with those colors. This was to connect the materiality of the floor with the materiality of the body so that at times, in certain lighting conditions, they would blur into one another, emphasizing their connectedness. The idea was also to create a mask in which the audience would see at once a childish side, a fabulous figure, and someone with their own taste in makeup. Alexander brought in a work by the painter David Hockney, in which the arms of one of the figures and parts of its torso are striated with colors, and its face is completely covered in variegated color.



David Hockney, People in the Museum (1962).

We used it as a reference when starting to paint our bodies for various tests:



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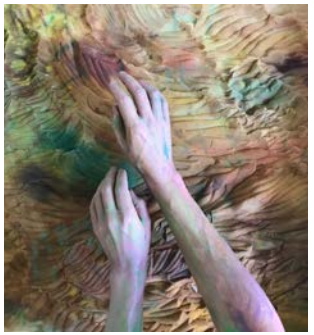

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Alexander suggested dressing Marianne as if she worked in an office but emphasizing her shoulders, Adam's apple, and butt, tweaking the look slightly. It was everyday contemporary Western clothing with a tweak. This was in order for the audience not to simply imagine Rut as a fairy tale figure or something abstract with no resemblance to the audience members themselves. It was a version of Rut that would ideally provoke questions in the audience about her person, manner, behavior, and context.



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Process images, *Rut*.

1–3. Painted arms.
4. Illustration, sketch of the costume.
5. Marianne testing a first draft of the costume at the residency c.off in Stockholm.
6. Marianne testing the set-design at Weld.
7. Portrait of Marianne Kjærsund as *Rut*.

Photo: Alexander Krantz (1–6), Anders Lindén (7) .

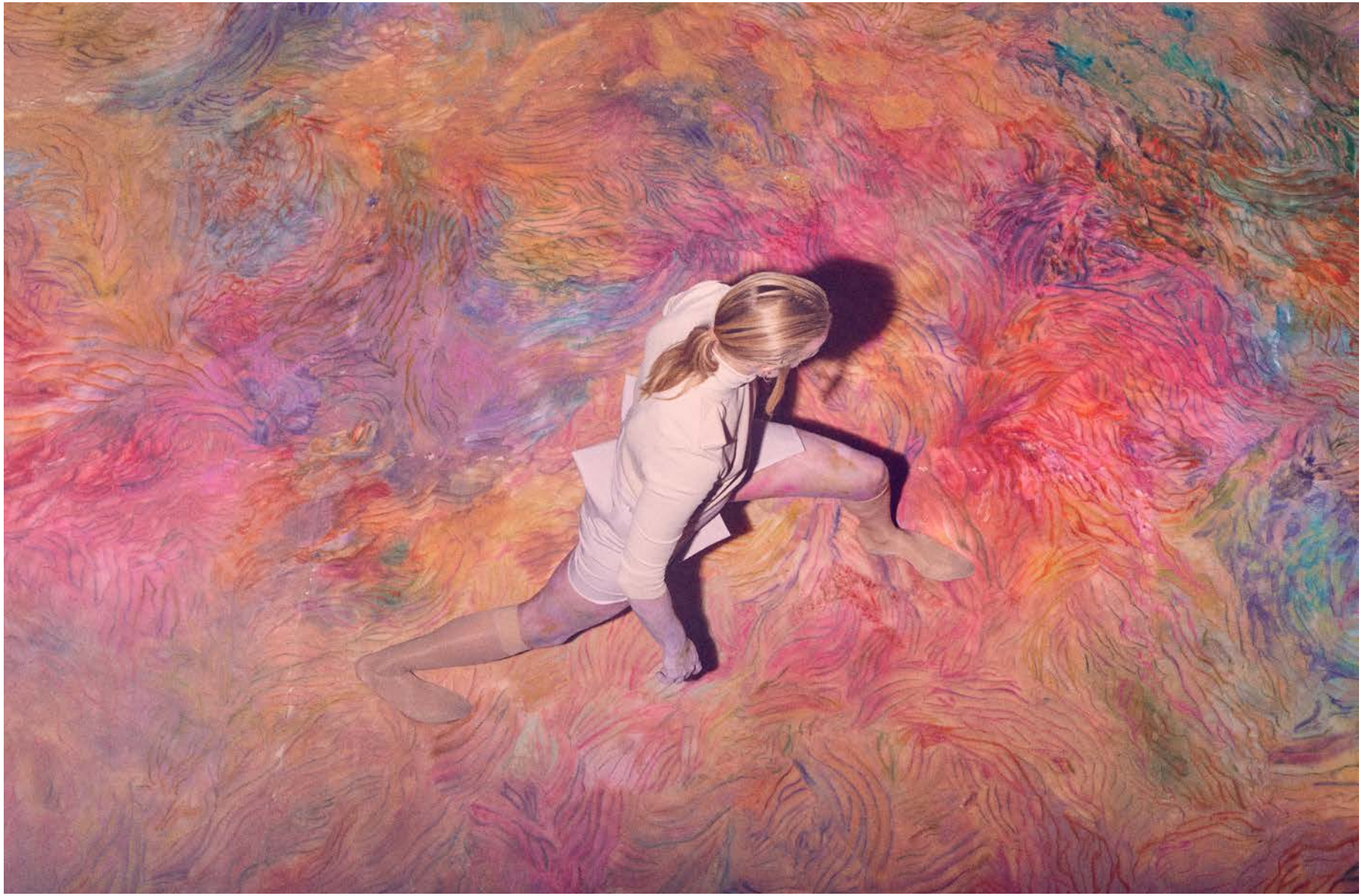


Photo: Anders Lindén.

5.13 A PROCESS OF UNFOLDING

This project—and I can already say that the same goes for the other two projects—was characterized by an unfolding of materials, ideas, and references throughout the process. When working, I'm interested in what unfolds as we work, in the material, ideas, motivations, and desires that occur between the dancer and myself, between all the members of the production team, as we all engage with the practice I propose. There is something exciting about finding qualities, movements, or ideas that gradually add to an aesthetic world that we get to know and inhabit, but that we didn't know existed before.

6 THE FIELD

A turbulent, immanent field in which various and variable materialities collide, congeal, morph, evolve, and disintegrate. (Bennett 2010).

The Field started in a similar vein as *Rut*: in the studio where I worked by myself, four hours every morning for four weeks. I found myself exploring a bouncy, aggressive, dynamic movement material. Watching myself move in the recording, I perceived a turning, condensed, explosive material with crashes and bumps in and through the body, rapid switches of direction, and morphing qualities. It was a material that at times ripped, tore, and pulled at the body, and at other times was condensed in a shaped yet listening form and quality. It drew my attention to the explosive side of plasticity I had learned about through Malabou, and I started to think that I had not exhausted my interest in the notion of plasticity yet.

Through the material, I started to ponder a body constantly flashed through by movements, movements that came from all directions, with different tempi, agents, and effects, a body in which nothing could ever stagnate completely. It was a moving image I got through the material, and which related to the movements I imagined when thinking about the notion of plasticity.

It was an image depicting a motion already taking place in our bodies, an image of the plasticity that is constantly at work, on both a small and a large scale. A movement that drives away with the body and makes the body constantly, all at the same time.

I started imagining what circumstances this body could be placed in, what its surroundings could be, acting on and being acted upon by them. What place and setting could evoke these movements that flashed through the body? It occurred to me that a forcefield was an intriguing place, and I asked myself what different fields could do to a body, and the other way around, what the body could do to different fields. The notion of field evoked a feeling of potential in me, a raw, yet sensual energy. A field is a place where a game or a battle happens, where work or study is executed, where something takes off and lands. A field symbolizes a place where something can change, often as a result of a certain effort. In a football game, for instance, the body traverses a physical and emotional outpouring, pushing itself to extremes in order to win the game. This context, frame, and set-up can force the body into new endeavors and experiences that can change it as a result. Imagining different investments of energy and what these can enable a body to do, I started researching fields of different sorts.

I recalled the artwork *The Saints* (2007) by the US artist Paul Pfeiffer, which I had seen ten years earlier at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum in Berlin. In *The Saints*, you walk into a huge room and are met by an overwhelming sound installation consisting of chanting and cheering soccer fans in a stadium, the sound being played through several loudspeakers hanging on the ceiling. At the entrance, there is a model of a sports stadium, and further on inside the room, there is a tiny screen showing a lone football player running around. Otherwise, the huge room is empty. My memory of the experience of the artwork was that of being immediately caught up by the sound and immersed in its tremendous intensity. I had the feeling that I was alone on a huge field while being embraced by the energy that came from the chants. I stayed in the room for 45 minutes, and I didn't want to leave. The sound provoked an immense feeling of potency in me. I walked, sat, and tasted the pulsing vibrations the sound triggered. I was fascinated by the feeling of capacity it created in my body and how it activated my imagination. Recalling this artwork and the experience I had had of it boosted my interest in exploring the field of an arena, as well as the idea of sound as movements that act on the body.

The body within a field, surrounded by an arena filled with an audience, can be empowering, but the body in that setting is also exposed and vulnerable. There are at least two sides to the force that can be felt in such a setting: you can become excited and vitalized by the audience, and at the same time feel scrutinized and made vulnerable by their presence and gaze. The energy thus flickers in a scale of extremes. This electric field of energies became a point of interest in relation to the body's capacity for change. How do these forces act on the body and how could we work with such forces within a performance? I started to think that sound could create an emotional field of appropriately high voltage, with the audience also experiencing the energies and movements of the sound on their bodies. I therefore decided to create a mini arena onstage, where the audience would sit, and to work with a multi-channel sound set-up in order to build the intensities that occur in a sports arena, as one way to push the body towards unknowns.

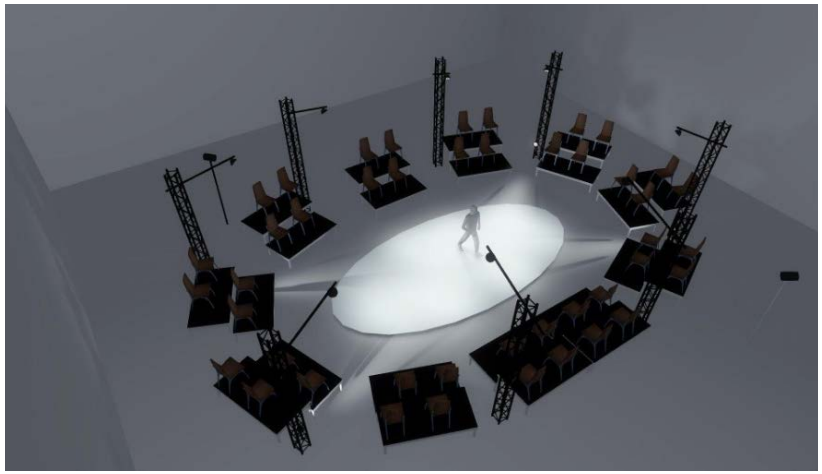
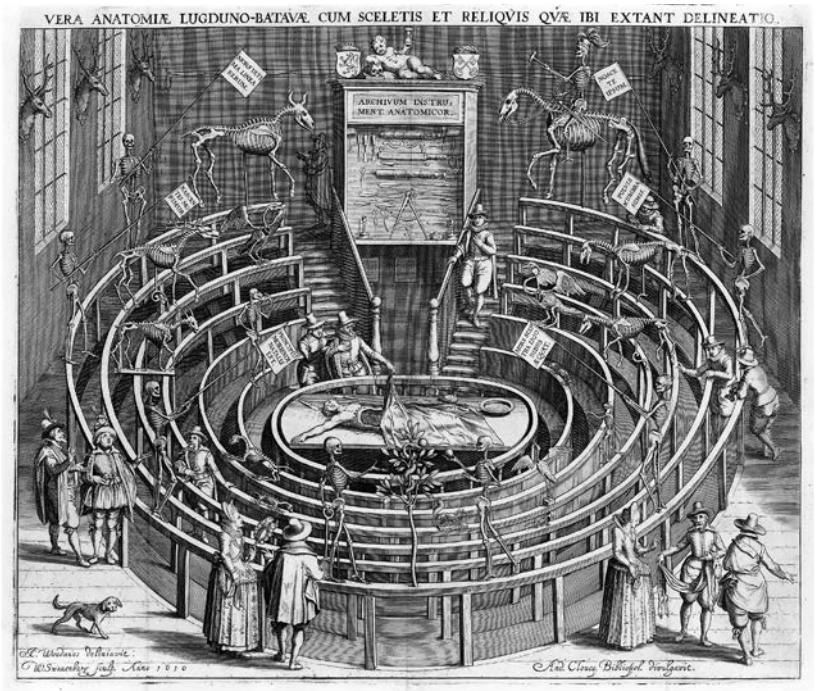


Illustration of the set-up of the audience for *The Field*, by Anton Andersson.

As I was researching fields, the anatomical theater also emerged as an interesting model, its tiny field housed within a mini arena. It depicted another type of investigation of the body.

In the midst of concentric, organized rows that descended in a staircase-like manner down to the spectacle, the body was placed onstage in order to reveal its true nature. Through unveiling the invisible by uncovering skin and surfaces, the dissector unloaded earlier existential meanings from the body by replacing them with facts.

I became interested in the meeting-point between these two different approaches to the body, which was their directed focus on the body's capacities. With the anatomical theater's pursuit of new knowledge through a spectacular set-up and the sports arena's playful battle as a backdrop, I wanted, with *The Field*, to speculate on the body's malleable nature and what it would look like if we could see it. I intended to direct the audience's attention towards the body's plastic capacity by producing an image of what that could look like. Instead of dissecting the body as in the time of the anatomical theater, I wanted to use a contemporary re-setting to speculate on the body's plastic nature and indeed to magnify and exaggerate that speculation. Starting with the idea of the body as a radiant sensory economy, one that on a micro level imbibes and pours out information constantly, I wished to amplify this sensorial realm through the choreography of *The Field*.



The anatomical theater at the University of Leiden, early 17th century.

6.1 DISOBEDIENCE

Reading Malabou again, this time in Norwegian, I stayed longer with the idea that plasticity signifies the ability to destroy the form that plasticity was also able to receive or create (see 2017, 40) What destructive capability do we possess, how does it act on the body, and how is it expressed? In the epilogue by the philosopher Kaja Jenssen Rathe, who also translated Malabou's book into Norwegian, Rathe ponders the resistance and force that exist in our bodies.

> The resistance is found in the brain's continuous transformation of who we are (or have become) in constant interaction with the world. The key to this process, for Malabou, is the plastic subject's material anchoring and the ability we have to continuously reshape ourselves through our own bodily starting point. Transformation of the self occurs when the brain concretely forms new nerve connections through practice and experience. This is how synaptic plasticity can be a powerful political tool: We have the ability to change ourselves—and the world around us—when we cultivate certain types of relationships and experiences. (2017, 172-173, my translation).

Rathe turns plasticity into a constructive opportunity and highlights practice and experience as places for change, which reflects the potential for change I also find in the notion of practice. Further on in her text, she also speaks of the body's exposure and vulnerability.

> Bodies are vulnerable. Bodies are subjected to coercion, discipline, or violence, and disappear daily as a pure source of nutrition into the capitalist machinery. But the body is also a source of resistance. We need the living body to understand where the resistance comes from. Without the bodies, it is not possible to understand what injustice and harm are. It is the bodies that move us to resist—often at the risk of life and health. Malabou shows us a plastic subject that will always be biologically and materially rooted and is therefore at least as vulnerable as it is resistant. ... Biology is central to the resilience of plasticity, not just as a tool for transformation and cultivation of the self, but as a pain threshold, motivation, driving force. (See Rathe 2017, 173-174: my translation).

This image of a both vulnerable and resistant body was central in *The Field*. The idea that our bodies have a plastic nature not only implies that they are creators and receivers of form but also agents of disobedience to certain forms, capable of refusing to submit to a model, pushed the question of what we can expect from the body further. When is the agency to refuse a model or disobey possible, within what circumstances? How do we find ourselves in such conditions, and how do we reflect on them? How conscious or unconscious is this resistance that we encounter in our plastic nature? With these questions to hand, I wanted with *The Field* to research the dancer's bodily conditions on the threshold between vulnerability and physical outpouring, as a way to look for disobedience, and as a way to push my understanding of the dancing body further.

6.2 PRACTICAL CONDITIONS FOR THE PROCESS

The Field was created with and for the dancer Jens Jeffry Trinidad. His movement background differed from mine, something I had gone looking for once my early research had pointed towards bouncy, aggressive, dynamic qualities. Jens is a self-taught dancer. He started out dancing Streetdance, and he is today working as a dancer in his own and others' projects in street and contemporary dance. I thought that the knowledge he brought with his background could push the qualities I was after in more directions than might have been possible with a dancer with a more similar background to mine.

Practically, we had nine weeks to work in total, and the process was initially divided into two parts over a period of four months. It was structured like that so that we would have a longer period to engage with the material, being able to leave and come back to it. Due to Covid-19, the process was, in the end, divided into four parts stretched over nine months, with several postponements of the premiere. Because of Covid, the whole team was never able to meet in the studio together, as only Jens and I lived in Norway. The dramaturg Maja Zimmermann only saw the work via Zoom. The composer Daniel Glatzel created most of the music based on documentation of the work and through seeing it on Zoom. Daniel came to Oslo two weeks before the premiere to see the work live, and to do some fine adjustments to the composition. The light designer Anton Andersson followed the work via Zoom and could come to Oslo for ten days, in the middle of the process. We finished the light design two hours before the premiere since Covid-regulations only made it possible for him to enter the theatre six hours before the premiere. The costume and set designer Alexander Krantz saw most of the material over Zoom, on the basis of which he created the first ideas for the costume and the room. Alexander could come to Oslo for four days in the middle of the process, a period we used to finalize the costume and the set design.

The whole process was affected by uncertainty and challenges in communicating at a distance. It was made possible thanks to the team's incredible efforts in finding solutions, their willingness to adapt to the constantly changing schedule, and their engagement in the work.

6.3 PROCESS

The production can be divided into two parts in respect to the way we worked with the practice of multi-attentiveness. In the first part, I started off creating several multi-directional tasks to get Jens' body to turn, spin, and to constantly change form while doing this, as a way to speculate on, exaggerate, amplify, and visualize the neuronal happenings within the body. In contrast with *Rut*, where we had started off working with plasticity on an internal level through imagination, I wanted in *The Field* to direct the attention to actual body parts and work with the space around Jens more actively, although I was not completely excluding imagination as a component in the practice. We started with simple tasks, in order to introduce and get to know the practice of multi-attentiveness, and from there we layered further tasks. Two of the tasks in this initial phase could be described as follows:

The line from the little finger up to the elbow:

Focus on the little finger and the line from the little finger up to the elbow.

Imagine that the air around you is filled with grey particles, which form a resistance in the air when you move. Ground the heels on the floor and let the flesh of the feet melt over the floor. Work with weight shifts from foot to foot as a way to move forward and as a way to shift directions. The feet are never lifted off the ground. Initiate the movement from the area between the little finger and the elbow.

Turning:

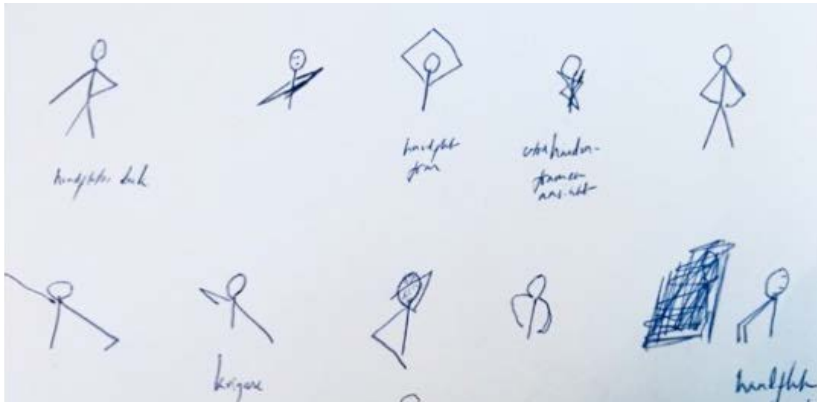
Focus on the heel of the hand and the heel of the foot. Notice the weight of the selected body parts. Find seven spots in the room, on objects close to you or on the walls. Choose spots that are placed unevenly but 360 degrees around you. Imagine a magnetic field between the spots and the heels of your hands and feet. Let the heels of your hands and feet pull you toward the spots.

A third task was called *the flag dance*, where we worked with the arms as flags moved by the wind in varying intensity, both above the head, at a 90-degree angle to the body, and in the space between the two points. The arms could separate as if they formed two flags. The arms could bend, become soft, stiffen, and form distinct angles.

Also, in this exercise, the attention towards the feet was emphasized. I asked Jens to notice the soles of the feet and the weight in the feet in order to create a counterbalance to the movements of the arms.

To add some more options to how to work with the arms I found a wind sculpture entitled *Windzeichen* (2011) by the German visual artist Reinhard Haverkamp. The sculpture was divided into three connected parts, moved by the wind in different ways due to their size and weight. I thought it could produce more options for Jens in how to move the arms.

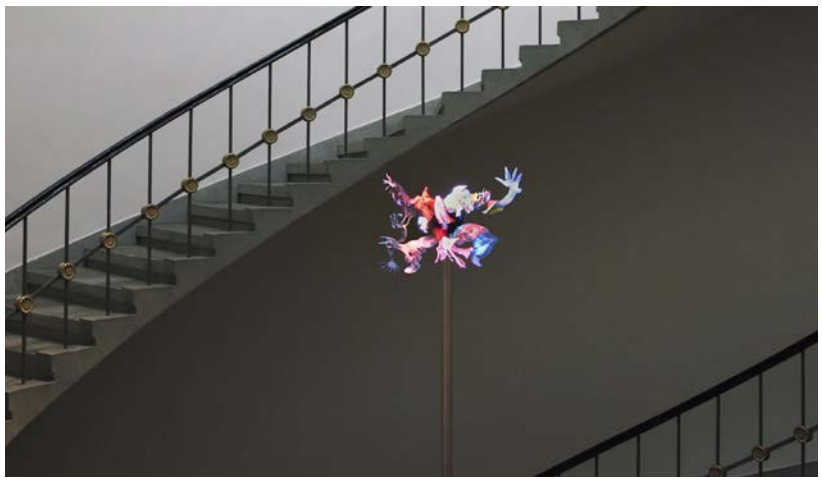
After some exploration, we found some formations of the arms that I decided to set. I did this in order to be able to add more tasks so that we could immerse ourselves in multi-attentiveness. The arms looked like this:



Sketches of some arm formations from the process of The Field. Drawing: Rosalind Goldberg.

Once we were no longer looking for what shape the arms should take, I asked Jens to experience the weight of his arms, to play with how he made—and how he experienced—the transition from one arm formation to the next. We played with tempo, staying in one arm formation for longer and then speeding through several arm formations in a short amount of time.

When Alexander saw the movement material generated through these tasks, he brought in a reference from the visual artist Cyprien Gaillard, the holographic sculpture *L'Ange du foyer (Vierte Fassung)* (2019). The work refers to the famous painting of the same name by Max Ernst. With the means of digital technology, the painting has been given flickering life, continually transforming itself anew. Alexander wanted the costume to emphasize the movement already existing in Jens' movement. He also wanted it to add more movements through its structure, increase the complexity of the movements Jens performed, and add extensions to Jens' body so that its formations became something to marvel at.



L'Ange du foyer (Vierte Fassung) © Courtesy of the artist and Sprüth Magers/Ulrike Kolb.

We looked at a reference from Loïe Fuller, the pioneer of modern dance and theatrical lighting techniques. In her famous dances with a long skirt where she was choreographing the movements of the skirt and experimenting with how it could reflect light, her way of using the costume as a main element for the choreography and as an extension of the body was a useful reference to pass through.



Loie Fuller in the dance *The Archangel*. Painting by Koloman Moser (1902).

Alexander started creating a layered T-Shirt that, in total, included six T-Shirts that Jens could morph in and out of and that formed his body in various ways. The T-shirt was a sample of a football T-Shirt and referred to the notions of the field and the football game. Its layered structure, with various possibilities for Jens to change shape through, was a way to approach the concept of plasticity via the costume. The T-shirt was sent to us,

and Jens and I started exploring what it did to the movement and how we could develop the tasks so that Jens' body would transform through the T-Shirt in various ways.

I added more focal points to the task of *the line from the little finger up to the elbow*, for Jens to direct his attention towards. I asked him to focus on the back of the head and the area between the shoulders, the heels, and a spot just below the knee. I further asked him to imagine the grey particles as even denser as a way to increase the resistance in his movements. And finally, the possibility to imagine that he was fermenting and swelling at any of the focal points on the body. These additions were to slow down the movement, increase his possibility of experiencing sensations and thoughts arising while moving, and, in a very subtle way, start to move the costume slightly.

With *turning*, I wanted the arm movements to enable Jens to morph through the costume and change shape, as well as to complicate the emerging forms. I was also interested in further developing the research material I had found by myself at the very beginning of the process—the aggressive, dynamic movement qualities. I started researching movement forms that were using arms in forceful ways, such as Karate, Voguing, Waacking, and French Electro dance (also called Tecktonik, which is a blend of different dance styles, including industrial dance, Moroccan Chaabi, Disco, Vogue, Waacking, Hip-Hop, etc.). We looked at these different forms of movement, named principles that we saw, and played with the principles together with the turning task. Quite quickly, it became clear that the principles we had drawn from Karate didn't work well with the turning task, and that the movements became too symbolically loaded with martial arts. Through Voguing, Waacking, and Tecktonik, we started working with circular movements over the head and on a horizontal plane. We kept the focus on the heels of the hands and feet, the attention towards the magnetic points around in the room, and we added a magnetic point between the torso and the hands. Important for me was to keep the arms at a certain distance from the body and constantly direct the attention towards the focal points, to avoid posing. Voguing, Waacking, and Tecktonik were thus used as an inspiration to develop the arm movements, but we also distanced ourselves from some of their characteristics, such as posing and a strict relation to a beat.

We ended up with arm movements that reminded me of a solar system out of sync. The task made Jens turn both on a high and a slow speed. What the task didn't manage to do was engage with the costume in any way, as here the costume took away many details in the movements that we had found. I therefore decided to try to find a way to work with the costume through the flag dance instead.

With the flag dance, we started by putting on the costume and improvising with it, together with the parameters that already made up the flag dance. We needed to adjust some arm formations that were drowning in the costume, and we found new ones that worked well with it and the task. The costume brought a new sensorial dimension through constantly touching Jens' skin, which we tried to use as a way to attach the costume to his body as if they were one thing. When the costume became an object that Jens expertly maneuvered, the idea of a body in transformation disappeared. I wanted the materiality of the costume and the materiality of Jens' body to become intertwined and at moments be experienced as one. This was more challenging to implement, however. The costume wasn't easy to maneuver with all its different holes and the sheer amount of textile. It asked for some concentrated work, in order to figure out a relationship to it and to be able to morph in and out of different formations. This work required controlled movements so that Jens could find his way through the labyrinth of the costume mass. When he knew how to orientate through the costume and in

the space, I added some more tasks, as a way of blurring the distance between his body and the costume. For instance, I asked him to follow some of the principles in the flag dance without caring about the costume, *then* deal with the costume and the time it required to find a new formation. This was a way to challenge Jens' remarkable ability to control difficult transitions, a way to extend the relationship to the costume, and a way to continue playing with it.

These three tasks constituted what I'm calling the first part of the production. When structuring this first part, we started playing around with the tasks, combining them with each other, adding more layers, simplifying them, and through this exploration found a path of transformation. This first part turned out to be an intense, meditative development, with Jens completely covered in the costume in the end.

In this first part we ended up working with a combination of physical and imaginative tasks, together with the costume both as a metaphor for an extended skin, an organ, a synapse, and with its physical mass and sensorial input on Jens' body. All of these parameters constituted the multi-attentiveness practice for the first part of the piece.

At this stage we started thinking about how the costume could also visually resemble our metaphors of skin, organ, and synapse. The reference to games and football was no longer well founded in how the material had developed. Alexander started knitting a new version with much more textile, which could take on more various shapes than the earlier version.

For what became the second part, I was interested in exploring even further the material that I had researched at the very beginning of the process (the bouncy, aggressive, dynamic movement material), as the first part had turned out more concentrated and meditative. I started looking at the material, to see if there were some principles that could inspire me to develop the forceful, rhythmical quality further.



Process photo from *The Field*. Photo: Alexander Krantz.

We worked with a particular rhythm in the torso, while simultaneously walking with minimal steps in another rhythm. I was interested in directing his attention towards different rhythms produced simultaneously. In parallel, I researched more movement forms addressing rhythm and force. I found Gabber dance, which is a form of rave dance originating in the Dutch hardcore and Gabber scene and is characterized by fast leg movements.[11] I was interested in the high intensity and in the aggressive movement quality as a way to visualize explosion and other intense movements happening neurologically, invisible to the naked eye. We picked out some principles from Gabber dance, which Jens learned, then we merged the material with the existing principles from my early research. We placed the principles we drew from Gabber dance in the arms instead of in the legs, which is distinctive for Gabber dance. An example of a collection of tasks could at this stage look like this:

1. Ground the heels on the floor and let the flesh of the feet melt out over the floor. 2. Work with weight shifts from foot to foot as a way to move forward and as a way to shift directions. 3. Focus on the small spot right beneath the knees when walking. 4. The steps are only half a foot long. 5. Add the Gabber-arms. 6. Add the rhythm to the torso (a particular rhythm, differing from the one in the arms in the previous point). 7. Relax the muscles in your lips, around your eyes, relax your jaw. 8. Walk the agreed path in the room when working on the previous seven tasks. 9. Play with the intensities of the arm movements and notice how far the punches are reaching, try to reach through and behind the audience. 10. Notice how far your shoulders are reaching towards the sides.

11. For an example, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvSRq_BLJ0Y, accessed October 4, 2023.

Merging Gabber dance with the other material was a way to produce friction in the material itself. But it was also a way to add another task in the practice that brought over other rhythms and shapes the first material didn't convey. The merging of the materials produced material of its own. Gabber dance was thus used as a brick in the multi-attentiveness practice and was not there to represent itself.

The way we worked with the practice of multi-attentiveness in the second part was rhythmical, with only a few imaginative tasks. In the example of the task above, Jens executes three different rhythms in the body at once. The multi-attentiveness thus shifted towards more rhythmical attentions.

6.4 SET DESIGN

Alexander suggested during the middle of the process to cover the floor with chalk, in order to emphasize and visualize the relation and inevitable connection between the body and the environment. By adding a mass of chalk, each of Jens' steps would make the chalk move, and it would also create the movement of a dust-cloud sweeping through the room. The chalk would influence Jens' movement and Jens would influence the chalk's movements.

After approval from the technical team at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO), we tested it on a small scale, to see how it acted and to get to know if we were allowed to use it onstage. We got to test it on a larger scale and finally we received permission to test it full scale on the stage where we were rehearsing. We filled the floor with 300 kg of chalk. We had decided to arrange the chalk in an elliptical shape, to create our own field, but also so as to have a recognizable shape that could take on other shapes through the choreography. We tested out the choreography on the chalk and the result was aesthetically magic. From simply creating a resistance to Jens' footsteps and marks on the floor, to forming clouds in the space that travelled and transformed for so long that you forgot where they started, and which were joined by other chalk-clouds, the chalk created a space where not only was Jens' body in transformation, the whole space changed—the chalk was even embedding and "attacking" the audience. With the chalk we had our own "theater smoke," and it created many more possibilities for lighting effects.

After a week on the stage with 300 kg of chalk, the technical team at KHiO came to have a look and stopped the rehearsals: the clouds of chalk had travelled all the way up to the lamps and were creating a film of dust on the lamps and the roof.

We needed to interrupt the work immediately. At that time, we only had two weeks left to finish the performance and we needed to rapidly find a solution without the chalk. Two days were spent on testing and researching other possible materials or solutions. We tried without any material at all, and we researched various other materials, looking for something that was not damaging but had a similar effect as the chalk. We ended up using road salt, a grainy, structured salt that also produced clouds, but as it was much heavier than chalk, it didn't travel up into the rigging.

Visually we wanted to get away from the connotation of salt only and open up for broader mineral, earthy impressions (a field, a painting, constructed land, culture). Alexander started experimenting with colors and how to paint the salt in order to get this ambiguous impression we wanted to create with the set design.



Set design, *The Field*. Photo: Rosalind Goldberg.





Set design, *The Field*. Photo: Rosalind Goldberg.



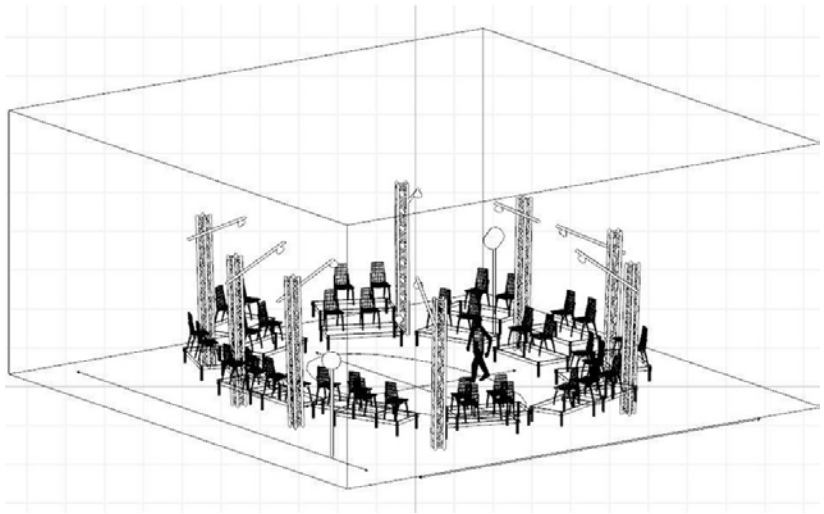
Set design, *The Field*. Photo: Rosalind Goldberg.

He rubbed the colors into the salt and created patterns with it and landed on the configuration on the next page as the starting image for the piece.



Set design, *The Field*. Photo: Ola Rindal.

The set design became an important part of the choreography. Jens' movement was hindered, helped, and stimulated by the salt, and the salt moved because of Jens but lived on in several surprising ways where clouds of it moved towards the audience and were both beautiful, intimidating, and intrusive.



Light set-up. Drawing: Anton Andersson.

6.5 LIGHT

At first, the plan was for *The Field* to premiere at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, but due to Covid-19, the premiere happened at Oktoberdans at BIT-Teatergarasjen in Bergen, in a black box. Because we planned to perform the work in several different types of space that did not always have theatrical rigging, we decided to go for a lighting rig that did not need to be hung from the ceiling, but was more portable, so that the work could be performed in both white boxes, black boxes, and other spaces.

The initial idea from light designer Anton Andersson was to follow the set-up of the audience seating, the sound set-up, and the inspiration we had been drawing from the ideas around the field. The idea was to frame and intensify the field we created within our arena. We were thinking about light that could be immersive, could concentrate the room at times, and create dynamics and movements alongside the dancer. We also thought of the light as an environment that acted on and influenced the dancer in a similar yet different vein as the salt on the floor.

A challenge we had was to find the right proportions of light in relation to the other aspects of the performance. At times, the light was present in such a way that the rest of the material faded. To emphasize the interactions and interplay between the set design, the dancer, the light, and the sound, we needed to look for certain timings in all these elements and proportion it all carefully.

Against this background, the light got its own moments in the piece, its movement at times causing Jens' shadow to be thrown around the room, as a way of emphasizing how several forces act on Jens, and Jens on them. With the light, an uneven but ongoing movement was also created that played with caresses of various kinds and glare—forces that both disturbed and moved Jens.

6.6 SOUND

Like the set design and the light, the sound was conceived of as an environment, in a highly accentuated manner. The music set-up was quadraphonic, and we looked for immersive, dynamic qualities that could hint at an arena, including weather, sounds from a city, and noise, in a way that would draw the audience's attention to Jens' transformation.

Due to the practical circumstances, the music was created based on the movement material. Like the dance, the music could be divided into two main parts. The first part emphasized the mediative, intense, transformative nature the dancer went through. And the second part was a very rhythmical, yet morphing soundscape. Combined with the choreography, which already included three rhythms in the second part, the music pushed, energized, and challenged Jens. The sound thus acted here as one parameter in the practice of multi-attentiveness.



The Field. Photo: Ola Rindal.



The Field. Photo: Ola Rindal.



The Field. Photo: Ola Rindal.



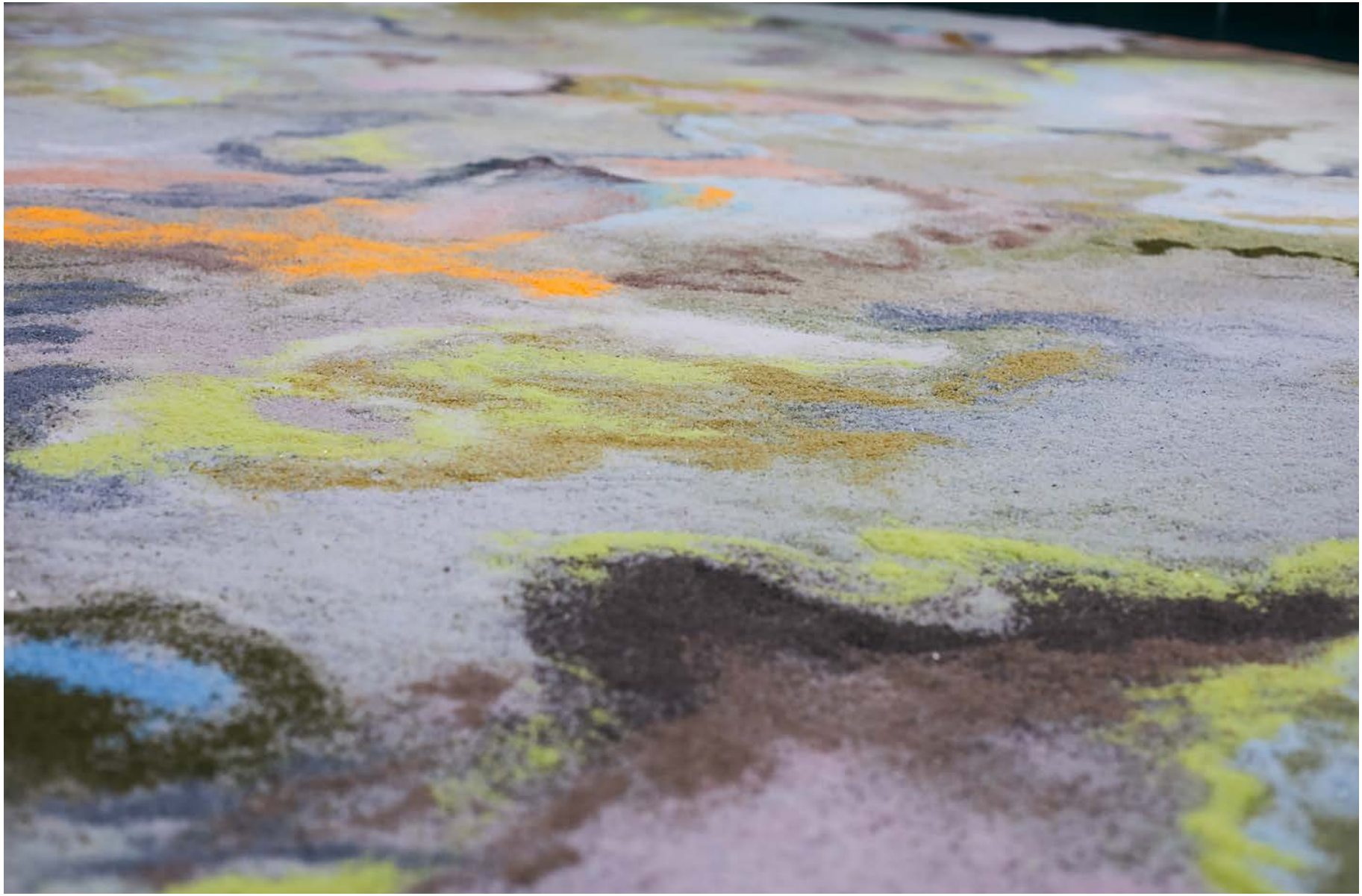
The Field. Photo: Ola Rindal.



The Field. Photo: Ola Rindal.



The Field. Photo: Ola Rindal.



The Field. Photo: Ola Rindal.



The Field. Photo: Ola Rindal.



The Field. Sånafest (2021). Photo: Andreas Strand Renberg.

7 PREPARING THE BODY – AN UNEXPECTED PREFACE FOR DARK DYNAMITE

As listening was an important part of the method and something that required special vigilance in the body in order to follow the many sensations, thoughts, desires, and frictions that occurred, I became curious about developing a dance class that could prepare the dancer for this work. I thought that a class could be a useful tool for the dancer to learn the method of the work. It could be an aiding device that worked on them and took them to a bodily state of listening before we had to talk too much about it. Already in 2019, after the process of *Rut*, I invited the dancer Sigrid Hirsch Kopperdal to work with me for a week. The idea was to put together different exercises which could constitute a class with the goal of tuning the tempo in the body, awakening an attentiveness to all the events that moved around the body.

Over the first three days, we created several classes individually but next to each other in the studio, which we then tried out on each other when they were done. At first, the classes contained variations of bodily awareness exercises, directing the attention towards weight and how the body touches the floor, etc.; core and cardio exercises to create some heat and

circulation in the body but also to exhaust it; release-inspired exercises; and exercises inspired by Qi Gong and Tai Chi. We evaluated them, reworked them, or produced completely new classes in order to find one that helped us access listening in various ways in the body.

I had the idea that if you pump your body so that you get sweaty and exhausted, then a silence would arise in it that would make listening more accessible. Sigrid had the same goal, but was going at it via release exercises and repetitions of the same exercises at differing intervals. The classes worked to train the body, but they didn't quite bring us to a day of multi-attentiveness work. Either they tired us out too much or were so varied that the focus was not as directed as we wanted.

After some days, we tried an hour-long Qi Gong class that I had found on YouTube.[12] Afterwards, I asked Sigrid to improvise with one of the exercises from the class as a starting point. It was a weight shifting exercise that included a light twist in the torso. I asked her, to begin with, to simply taste and follow the bodily state created through the Qi Gong class when playing with the exercise further. After some time, I asked her to see if she could find a way to include the arms, to turn and/or travel in the room with the exercise as a base. We worked with this exercise for an hour and continued with other multi-attentiveness tasks thereafter. The Qi Gong class turned out to be efficient in creating a focused, listening body, which made it easy to work and play with the layers in the multi-attentiveness work. We continued for the rest of the week with the Qi Gong class in the morning, before going on with the multi-attentiveness practice.

The exercise that had started from a Qi Gong exercise developed into a multi-attentive task where the head moved independently

12. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjYhoAuGqUU, accessed July 20, 2023.

of the arms, the arms had their own pace, and the feet moved in yet another logic, turning the body unevenly back and forth. The disjointedness of the task was growing out of the improvisation that Sigrid did after the class but was something I built further on when developing it into a multi-attentiveness task. There was something meditative and fascinating about these disjointed parts that caught my interest. I decided to continue working on the exercise and the material it produced for two more weeks, starting every day with the Qi Gong class. The exercise was tied to the Qi Gong class in the sense that it was putting Sigrid in a listening state that generated a particular way of relating to the movements—how they arose, how she saw them out, and how she continued on from them. She described it as if a logic was generated that she kind of just had to follow. When she was not in this state, it was difficult for her to do the exercise.

I added more layers to the exercise, as a way to look for its limits, and to get an understanding of when the logic Sigrid described disappeared. We added the possibility of slowing down the tempo even more, we made longer or shorter pauses, we tried to speed up the tempo in the arms, we lowered the body towards the floor, etc. We explored the exercise for hours at a time during these weeks, and I recorded and archived the material. When the working period was over, I wasn't sure about what to do with the material. It had something I couldn't quite let go of, although I couldn't put my finger on what this was. I let the material rest.

8 DARK DYNAMITE

Sometimes a life is experienced less as a beatitude and more as terror*, less as the plentitude of the virtual and more as a radically meaningless void.*

Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*

The research for *Dark Dynamite* started in the summer of 2021, two years after the working period with Sigrid and after the project *The Field*. I picked up the material from that working period with Sigrid and found that I could still sit and look at it for hours. There was something in Sigrid's expression that was somehow passive, and at the same time, she was moving actively. I experienced it as a split in her body where I couldn't see the motivation to move at all, and at the same time, the movement just continued. That aspect fascinated me.

In parallel, I started reading in an attempt to find analytical tools to work with what I saw. I read Karen Barad's "No Small Matter" (2016) and "What is the Measure of Nothingness" (2012), Fred Moten's "Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)" (2013), Stephanie Bunn's "Materials in Making" (2011) and Karin Johannisson's "Den Sårade Divan" (2015). But it was when reading Catherine Malabou's "Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity" (2012), that I found something that I could relate to the work with Sigrid.

In that book, Malabou problematizes the notion of plasticity through thinking about it in relation to trauma, accidents, illness, etc. She writes:

> In the usual order of things, lives run their course and eventually one becomes who one is. … Bodily and psychic transformations do nothing but reinforce the permanence of identity … As a result of serious trauma, or sometimes for no reason at all, the path splits and a new, unprecedented persona comes to live with the former person … an unrecognizable persona whose present comes from no past and whose future harbors nothing to come; an existential improvisation, a form born of accident and by accident. (2012, 1–2).

Malabou speaks of a split emerging in a person when living through a trauma of sorts, a split that makes you experience life differently. In some situations, everything can seemingly continue as before, but the person affected has suddenly had an event forced onto their identity that can't be taken away, an experience of having another (unchosen) identity combined with the one they know. It can make you experience time differently; you can watch yourself shopping as if someone else was shopping, you can become a stranger to yourself, you can age instantly, etc. Malabou calls this destructive plasticity.

When reading about destructive plasticity, and in particular about the split occurring in the experience of identity, it resonated with the material that I had worked out with Sigrid—not in what we had thematized, but in how the material appeared to me. I saw in Sigrid a combination of activity, presence, and absence at the same time. It was a strange blend of a sensuous and numb appearance all at once that made me unable to stop watching the material. I got curious about exploring the concept of destructive plasticity as a further frame and inspiration for the material, not only because of the link I saw between the material and the concept but also in relation to this aspect of plasticity that dealt with the darker sides of the development of bodily life. Until then I had used plasticity as an inspiration to work with the body's changeability, and I had focused on the extent to which a choreographic process could challenge the dancer's body's habits and what material that produced in turn. It felt relevant to work with changeability, progression, and development from a less positive perspective, but one that is as much part of life as positive progression. To me it was an eye-opener to read about development from this perspective. We know that the body's capacity to go through metamorphosis is part of our biology, and we praise that ability to change. But that change is often seen as something positive, a progression, a step forward. As Malabou points out, that progressive capacity is counterbalanced by a form of destruction. As she writes, "the fact that all creation can only occur at the price of a destructive counterpart is a fundamental law of life. It does not contradict life, it makes life possible" (2012, 4). She argues that in Western literature, science, medicine, art, and education, the connotation of the term plasticity is always positive (3, see also 7) and adds:

> No one thinks spontaneously about a plastic art of destruction. Yet, destruction too is formative. A smashed-up face is still a face, a stump is a limb, a traumatized psyche remains a psyche. Destruction has its own sculpting tools. (2012, 4).

By looking at the early movement research material with the newfound inspiration it had generated, I decided that the dark forces that are an inherent part of shaping our bodies should guide this work. Through the movement research material and reading Malabou, the following words crystallized, which came to be included in and direct the work further: *fatigue, lethargy, apathy, restlessness, negligence, despair, looseness*. I was also

thinking about other unbridled or decelerating conditions in the body, which could occur as a consequence of a trauma of sorts. While their opposites are often endorsed (ability, strength, wakefulness) this extreme favoritism for bright dynamism doesn't erase the dark. It might even emphasize aspects of it. The questions I brought to the project were: *How does this focus on the bright yet narrow side of life influence how we carry our bodies? Where do the dark forces hidden inside the body reside and how do they act when they are forced, or constrained, to appear? Can we not allow for the body's destructive transformative power to do its job, without fearing complete decay?*

The Swedish historian of ideas Karin Johannnisson formulated it well in her book *Melankoliska Rum*: "The more of vulnerability we label with medical names, the more we risk shrinking normality" (2009, 25, my translation). This book became a further inspiration at this stage in the process and when forming the concept, including the quote from the poet Rainer Maria Rilke that Johannnisson cites: "Do not shut out the gloom from your life, wrote Rainer Maria Rilke to a young writer, because you never know how these conditions work with you and add something new" (2009, 66, my translation).

Working with the dark forces, I wanted to look at the side of bodily life that we hide, the one I hide from myself, and the one society often hides in institutions, behind sick leave and other medical apparatuses. By letting life's worn and unbridled sides unfold, I wanted with the choreography to point to the idea that there are parts of life that are self-forming matter beyond control, and life's dark forces are inevitable players in the game.

8.1 PROCESS

The process with Sigrid was divided into four parts over a period of ten months and we had in total nine weeks together.

It is important for me to mention early in this section on *Dark Dynamite* that working with these dark sides of life, in combination with an interest in Sigrid's attention span, habits, and bodily life, I did not approach and search for apathy, fatigue, restlessness, unbridledness, etc. through the performer's own psychological experiences. I was more interested in what textures, rhythms, times, and resistances the states brought. Together we read about these bodily conditions through Malabou and Johannisson, and looked at the other references that came up while working, and we talked about them thoroughly. I also told Sigrid that if any of these bodily conditions were making themselves felt or present through earlier experiences while working/dancing, she was free to use that if she wanted, without her having to explain anything about it to me. I decided on this approach because I was unsure of what I would encounter when I opened the door to personal psychology. I was instead interested in how the early research material had emerged—out of Qi Gong and later multi-attentive work—and where the material produced expressed something that made me interested in destructive plasticity. Thus, I continued to look for concrete physical starting points that could bring us closer to an experience of the states of apathy and restlessness, etc., rather than working from our past psychological experiences. As I write this, I am thinking at the same time that much of our early experience seeps out without us even knowing it, as I mentioned at the beginning of this reflection, thinking about the body as matter that absorbs and leaks out as fundamental to being a living body. The leaking can be unknown to us, and things can leak that we may never have (been able to) put into words yet.

8.1.1 DISCOVER THE DANCE WHILE DANCING

For the movement material, I had the idea to work with marionettes and video game characters as an inspirational source. Some marionette and game characters are imitations of the human body but as they lack the body's fleshy reality, they stand apart from it. I was interested in that contrast for the alienation towards the body that the spectator and the dancer could both experience when the dancer embodied their movements, in the same way as strong physical and/or mental conditions can produce estrangement in the body. The contrast and possible alienation could disturb the audience's perception of the body and generate questions about function and ability. We tend to hold on to the idea that the body is graspable in its function and abilities. The body is a crossroads for a multitude of inputs, diseases, and emotional reactions towards this mixed traffic that all the time destabilizes and strengthens our functions and abilities.

The inspirational source we worked with in the beginning was the artwork *Dream Journal 2016–2019* (2019) by the Canadian artist and filmmaker Jon Rafman. The work explores the effect of information overload on the contemporary psyche and how it influences our unconsciousness. In the film, you are exposed to a variety of characters with human and mythical features. Their behavior is emotional and guided by a dream-like logic. Their movements are either rugged, where average dance moves at a club are given a rough twist, or they are characterized by superhuman powers, e.g. aggressively running forward as if floating across the floor, jumping tirelessly, restlessly through corridors, or their mobility is slightly reduced, which combined with a softness lends a detached attitude to the movements, with emotions being expressed on a parallel plane.



Still from *Dream Journal 2016–2019* (2019) by Jon Rafman.

We picked up the material from our early research that had originated from the Qi Gong class and that we had now named "originalen." I asked Sigrid to learn specific movements from the *Dream Journal* that I had picked out and that we later merged with the material from "originalen." It was a way to see if the material could handle a greater variety of movements, and at the same time retain the veil of inertia alongside the awake, almost hypersensitive qualities it already carried. We found some movements that could be mixed into "originalen" and that gave the material a greater complexity.

We talked studiously about every detail in the material, so that on one level we knew what we were working with. But when Sigrid was performing "originalen," the listening and sensorial aspect of the material was so demanding that she was more floating in sensations than being "on top of" the material. From my perspective this was great, and for Sigrid mostly exciting, as the task required a listening that made her discover the dance while she danced. But at times it was too demanding, as she didn't

know what the material expressed, which could be a vulnerable position to be in. To a certain extent, we can never be completely sure of what we express. But the work here, in the practice of multi-attentiveness, aims directly at losing an understanding of how one appears, which can be challenging. Again, the work was to find a balance between letting go of control and an active listening towards arising sensations and interests. This was a balance that for Sigrid required both precision and the ability to not control how the movements appeared. It was in this gap, in this balancing act that the practice of multi-attentiveness unfolded.

I was interested in a peculiar state, namely, when it seemed that there were more things guiding the movement than Sigrid could control, and as a result the body did not have one and the same goal. This interest was based on how I perceived "originalen" from the beginning, and a quality I wanted to hold on to. Here I also refer back to the chapter "Not-Knowing," where I talk about the body (matter) as material where agencies and forces can emerge, disappear, and not be fully controlled or directed. This was something I wished the material to convey.

We continued adding material to "originalen" and developing it further, but there was a limit to how long Sigrid could stay within that very particular listening state the material required. I decided to try to set the material, to see if we could keep its quality and if it would be possible then to add more layers and extend it without losing the layers we already had. I recorded Sigrid when performing "originalen" and asked her to learn the material recorded. It worked out well, similarly as in *Rut*, where setting the material freed the dancer up to take on new layers.

In parallel, I was wondering if the material and quality of "originalen" could direct us further. I was curious to see if the logic and quality of "originalen" had produced any physical desires and if these could themselves propose a development. I asked Sigrid to do "originalen" and then continue with what she wanted to do after that quiet, sensitive movement session, as a way to get to know her tempo and to get an understanding of her attention span and the desires that were lurking in her body. She started walking through the room and continued with fast, intense, repetitive, slightly restless movements on the spot. Based on this improvisation, I started looking for restless, repetitive movements in *Dream Journal* and ways of walking that could tweak Sigrid's movements slightly. I picked some dance movements from a club scene in *Dream Journal* that we begun improvising and playing with. We developed them further by following the logic contained in these club scene movements and looked for an experience of dance in the constraint this reference provided. I added three more references from *Dream Journal*. These were short fragments of movement sequences that came from non-dancing characters. Sigrid learned their movements, and then I asked her to improvise with the four references as if they were the ingredients for a dance. After a while, I also asked her to add her own movements, informed by the quality of the movements imposed on her. It turned into a both groovy and twitchy/nervy dance. We improvised with it for a week before I recorded the material and asked her to learn it. This was again to be able to add more layers to the material.

When she knew the material, I added a reference with the US artist Dennis Oppenheim's sculpture *Theme For A Major Hit* (1974). The sculpture is a motor driven marionette that seems to play drums to a song by Oppenheim that he is playing with his friends. What drew my attention to the work was the minimal, groovy, twitchy qualities that the movements of the marionette contained. When Sigrid had picked up the movements from the marionette, I asked her to improvise with them within the already set material, to take longer or shorter pauses from the set material so as to add in the marionette, or to only add fragments of the marionette to the set material.

The multi-attentiveness aspect of the work was here slowly built up through various references I added to the already set material, along with physical, sensory focal points I gave to Sigrid.

I also found a walk in the video game *ULTRAIDENTIFIKASJONS-PAVILJONG* (2021) by the visual artist Steinar Haga Kristensen. I wanted to apply this to Sigrid's walk and develop it further. The walk from *ULTRAIDENTIFIKASJONSPAVILJONG* had a rhythmic character, with a weight down towards the right leg that gave the walk a slightly oblique quality. I used it as an inspiration to tweak Sigrid's walk slightly. It gave the walk a weight and drive that felt somewhat uncontrolled in an exciting way. We named the walk "the bull."



Still from *ULTRAIDENTIFIKASJONSPAVILJONG* (2021) by Steinar Haga Kristensen.

Until now, the material in "originalen" expressed a split in Sigrid, where her body seemed to have several focuses at once. That was in particular visible due to the fact that the gaze did not control the movement, but rather that something happened in the body that took it forward. Sometimes the gaze registered it, sometimes it was somewhere else. In the material, a hint of restlessness/ manic drive was above all present. As I had found the words fatigue, lethargy, apathy, restlessness, despair, unbridledness, etc. through "originalen," I was interested in exploring their texture, rhythm, and tempo even further in the next stage. I was not concerned with representing how I until now thought these conditions would express themselves. I was rather interested in exploring what these conditions had triggered in people who have been in these states, as a framework for Sigrid's and my work. We therefore started looking closer at the references we found through "originalen." In *Melankoliska Rum*, there were several descriptions of these conditions that expanded the word set we had collected so far: *lost, rootlessness, undetermined aggression* were some of them. Based on these words, I wanted to search for more of a tearing, a drive, and a rage in the movement material, qualities which could be imbedded in *rootlessness, undetermined aggression,* and in an unrestrained body.

8.1.2 UNDETERMINED AGGRESSION

Under *undetermined aggression*, we collected the words *explosiveness, confused direction,* and *effort without aim* as images and words to continue the research with. Based on this, I started looking for dances where the legs were the main focal point for the dance. I researched several rave dances, as I thought they contained something manic that could bring out such texture and rhythms in Sigrid, and I found the Shuffle dance. Shuffle is a rave dance developed in the 1980s in Melbourne, Australia. The dance is characterized by fast heel and toe movements and includes steps like "T-step," and "running man." The dancer improvises with a set of different steps, including those mentioned, where she or he shuffles their feet and moves their arms up and down or side to side to the beat. I thought of using the dance as a basis to speed up the body and make it take up

large parts of the room. I was thus more interested in how I saw that Shuffle could potentially move the body around than in its aesthetics.

Sigrid learned the basic steps, and to begin with we started to improvise with them to get the movements settled in the body. After some days, I started to add layers and morph the steps, slowly moving away from its aesthetics. I asked Sigrid to widen her legs so that the feet were not in parallel under her as is typical in Shuffle. I also asked to drop her pelvis slightly, to emphasize her weight downwards. Sigrid came up with an image of having a huge, heavy pillow between her legs, tied to her through a belt attached to her hips. It helped her remember the weight and the wide foot position. I also asked her to move more freely with the arms, to use them as she preferred, either ornamenting the movements or dropping them. She could also add steps that weren't original Shuffle steps, but that followed the logic of the Shuffle movements, as a way to take up even more space in the room. With these parameters, we continued the improvisation. We had fun with the task, it generated a lot of joy for movement in Sigrid, and she could be within the task for stretches of 30 minutes without getting tired of the parameters. I emphasized that she could use even larger steps and use the room more, which resulted in her starting to bump into the walls. It gave me a feeling that the room was too small for her, that her energy, her restlessness, her indefinite aggression were uncontrollable. It gave an impression of not knowing how it was going to develop, and it added a tension to the situation that I wanted to keep and follow up.

I started to set the material, in a similar way as before, recording an improvisation that Sigrid then learned. From there I started to space the material to add more bumps into the wall. We played further with the material by using the set material as a starting point and then continued through improvisation. I saw that the material could perhaps continuously increase in intensity, with our version of the Shuffle steps becoming wilder and more spaced as time went on. I thought Sigrid could stumble, fall, and sometimes crash into the wall rather than bump into it.

Through playing with these ideas, a material developed that was both playful and aggressive, at times appearing uncontrolled, and at others graceful. The references to Shuffle dance had disappeared, and a strange attempt to dance, to stay alive, to alternately tumble over the body that refused to follow and enjoy the grace of the dance appeared. It was both painful and humorous to watch, and at times the material was difficult to place.

The use of space was very different from in the two other works, where the set design had defined the space, specifically through the floors. The nature of a body balancing between extremes of apathetic/manic, lethargic/restless states etc. could not have such a controlled space and I wanted to emphasize the dimensions of the body's condition by having more and more an experience that it could not fit in the room.

I therefore started to create material where I used a lot of walking on half-toe in set patterns on the floor, while simultaneously making shapes and ornamentations with my arms. To begin with, the inspiration for movement came from references to Jazz dance and Voguing. I used these inspirations as the movements (in my experience) inhabited a force that was directed outward, an energy that could be placed in different parts of the body and pull the body forward, along with a playfulness and a drive. I taught Sigrid the material, and when she knew it, I involved her in creating more steps with me based on the logic I employed. Together we created material relatively quickly. Then I used that material as a basis to begin to—metaphorically speaking—pull and tear the body even more, and to move away from the references to Jazz dance and Voguing. I extended and repeated

some sequences, and I told Sigrid that instead of shaping the arms in the clear formations we had created, she could throw them more in the directions that had been set before. I changed some parts that were on half-toe to more active walking with the whole foot on the ground, and I asked her to max out the steps, so that she was constantly on the edge of losing her balance. It was valuable to have the set material as a basis now that we were starting to morph it, as it made it easier for Sigrid to remember the material by how it had been placed in the room. This was especially the case when several new layers were added to push the body another notch higher through exercise as well as the layers I added to get to the multi-attentive practice working in this part also. Not only did we work with purely physical directions and stretches in the body, I also asked her here to produce pleasure in the body at particular places in the material, using different images and letting these affect the movement and its shape, allowing them also to be reflected in the face.

At this stage in the material this was a demanding instruction. The material had been increasing in intensity since the beginning, and now we had reached a kind of crescendo. In an exhausted body, it was more difficult to work actively with multiple layers of attention. Despite this, the work itself and Sigrid's constant trying was almost more important to me than her always "succeeding" in the practice with the material. It meant that she was constantly experiencing, struggling, and playing with the material, which affected how she was *in* the material and how the material came out, and it gave the material and her a presence in it a vibrancy and a slightly unpredictable air.

The material for *Dark Dynamite* was thus developed by constantly building on materials created before: "originalen" generated a dance, which took us to Shuffle, which took us to the final stage, with constant feedback into the concept for the piece.

My intertwined relation with the material—how it grew and impacted me—together with the references found in the process, as well as the way the concept further developed based on this process, all gave me further direction. "Originalen" was the material that started *Dark Dynamite* and that got me interested in destructive plasticity but the goal was not to illustrate destructive plasticity; this merely served as one of the building blocks that took the work further.

8.2 SET DESIGN

Early in the process, when talking with the dramaturg Maja Zimmermann,[13] we considered surrounding Sigrid with sculptures. The idea was to populate the space with other bodies that could accompany her in her endeavor. At that stage, we thought that the shapes of the sculptures would take on fantasy proportions, using speculation as a method when thinking about how lethargy and fatigue make shapes inside the body. We were thinking of the sculptures as bodies affected by dark dynamite, and we wished to create an immersive space where the sculptures were encumbering the room with their weighty bodies. In the very beginning, I also thought of using tar and asphalt when creating the sculptures. I was accompanied by the image of tar's gooey quality and its pitch-dark color as something that could reflect the thick nature of lethargy, and of asphalt's heavy and compact characteristics, which could generate a weighty atmosphere affecting the room and the audience members.

Quite quickly though, when starting the process with Tarje Eikanger Gullaksen, the visual artist who was going to create the set design, the idea of working with black and dark colors to reflect these darker sides of life was problematized. Experiencing restlessness or despair could rather come with the experience of an unsettling, flickering color of bright green, for instance. Or apathy could evoke experiences of a roaring field of screaming yellow, which made rest impossible. Restlessness and fatigue were often connected and not in opposition to each other. Apathy could come with a difficulty in actually getting rest for recovery, even though rest seemed to be the only thing one did, and restlessness without significant opportunities for action. The gamut from acceleration to deceleration could often be experienced as parallel, contrary states. Karin Johannisson gives great examples of this in *Melankoliska Rum* (2009, 75, 248).

13. The plan was for Maja Zimmermann to be involved as a dramaturg in *Dark Dynamite*, but due to the production's small budget, this was ultimately not possible. These reflections were based on discussions we had before the budget was finalized.



Early reference to color for the scenography. Photo: Anders Lindén.

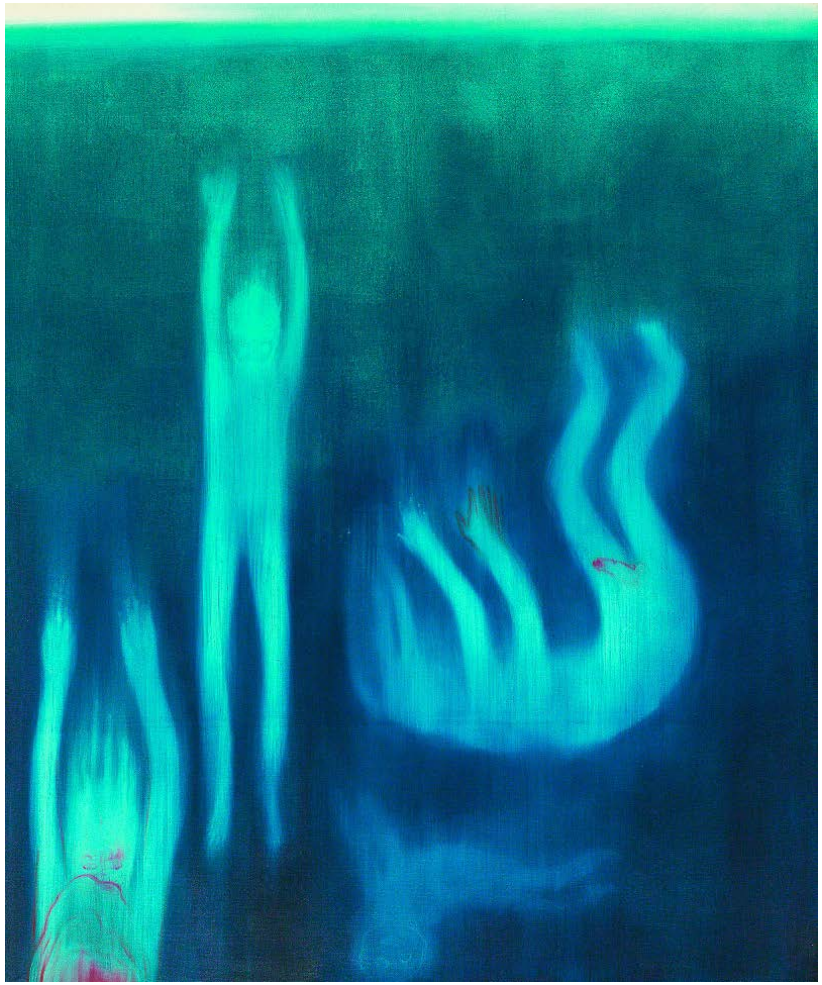
Following these reflections, Tarje brought in paintings by the Swiss painter Miriam Cahn as a reference:



Miriam Cahn, *o.t., 27.6.2018* (2018).



Miriam Cahn, *Schlafen* (1997).



Miriam Cahn, *Blau* (2017).

Based on these references, discussions, and reflections, we decided, as a guiding principle, to work with bright and screaming colors for the room and the set design, in order to emphasize the constant "noise" and buzz that prevents the person affected by these feelings from resting or acting.

Tarje was also considering what material to produce the sculptures in. On this point, we had some practical constraints. We didn't have much production money for this piece, and it was intended for it to go on tour, so we needed the sculptures to be transportable without incurring high costs for transportation. Tarje brought in some references by the Swiss visual artist Ugo Rondinone and the Austrian visual artist Franz West that used stones and papier-mâché as material. Stones we could find ourselves in the woods, and papier-mâché was a cheap production option.



Reference: Ugo Rondinone, *Seven Magic Mountains* (2016), seven stacks of boulders.





References: Franz West, *Sisyphos IX, Sisyphos II* (2002).



Reference: Franz West, *Telefonskulptur* (1995).

Papier-mâché offered more and simpler possibilities for making the sculptures than stones. Painting them, for instance, would be easier: Tarje could use the same materials (paper and gouache) that he used in his own work, which was attractive on many levels. The fact that he knew how to handle the colors in relation to the material was appealing given that we did not have infinite time. Furthermore, with papier-mâché we could create hollow sculptures, which interested us for what it could allow us to do with light. Based on all this, we decided on papier-mâché as the material for the sculptures.

An additional inspiration from Franz West was his *Paßstücke* sculpture series. West created the *Paßstücke* ("adaptives") to be engaged with by the viewer, his intention being to make "body-enhancing sensory prostheses and potentially attempting to give shape to neurotic symptoms"(Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, paragraph 1):



Franz West, *Paßstücke*, 1998 © Archiv Franz West.





Franz West, *Paßstücke*, 1998 © Archiv Franz West.

Tarje was interested in the dancer's action of carrying the sculpture, and in how that could visualize a weight, an outgrowth, a sickness, a bodily state, a transformation. The *Paßstücke* created for *Dark Dynamite* by Tarje turned out like this:



Prop for *Dark Dynamite*.
Photo: Tarje Eikanger Gullaksen.

It was finalized two weeks before the premiere and we tested out different ways of including it in the choreographic material. We ended up using it in "the bull" material, which helped affect the weight of the material even more.



Screenshot from the documentation of *Dark Dynamite*.

8.2.1 SPECULATION VS. CONCRETE REFERENCES FOR THE SET DESIGN

The process of creating the set design went through a transformation in how to relate to its shapes. First, we started with the idea of speculating on how, for instance, apathy could create shapes in the body. Tarje made some trial pieces, including the sculpture below, which became part of the final landscape for the piece.



Set design for *Dark Dynamite* by Tarje Eikanger Gullaksen. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.

But Tarje rather quickly found out that he had difficulties generating ideas based on that principle and found other references that were more interesting for him to work with. The painting *Die eine Orange war das einzige Licht* (1912) by the German visual artist Egon Schiele became an inspiration for one of the sculptures.



Egon Schiele, *Die eine Orange war das einzige Licht* (1912).

Schiele spent some time in prison. In the painting/sketch where he depicts his cell, an orange lies on the sheets. The title of the work reveals the darkness he experienced in the cell, where the smell, texture, and light of the orange were all that reminded him of something alive.

Tarje used the shape of the sheets and the orange to produce a sculpture, which turned out to become a place for rest and light in the piece, as well as an important piece in the landscape of the set.



Set design for *Dark Dynamite* by Tarje Eikanger Gullaksen. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Set design for *Dark Dynamite* by Tarje Eikanger Gullaksen. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.

Another sculpture came into being through a bag full of trash, where he used tape to produce a shape and then added papier mâché on top. While sculpting, he "saw" a potential for a hand, and he sculpted this too.



Set design for *Dark Dynamite*. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Set design for *Dark Dynamite*. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.

The hand in the sculpture pointed in a more figurative direction, which interested Tarje. We discussed the possibility of pushing the sculptures in that figurative direction, continuing to think of them as bodies, but pointing even more concretely towards bodies than we had until now. Tarje was convinced on this point, and I decided to follow his lead, which became the starting point for the last sculpture.

The idea for the last sculpture emerged through this painting by Miriam Cahn:



Miriam Cahn, Name of painting, date

Working from the painting, Tarje said he was "interested in the displacements that occur when you transform a two-dimensional painting into a three-dimensional sculpture, how to evoke the new sides. In the sculpture, I worked with evoking a state where the object morphs. Where root becomes body becomes animal, where twig becomes bone becomes finger, where fingers both grow out and grow in" (Gullaksen 2022).

Tarje's statement, together with the sculpture itself, points to a body in transformation, matter undergoing change, but also to how connected the matter of the human body is with the rest of nature. The sculpture blurred a border between human and nature that in our language—and particularly in our Western culture—can be experienced as a divide.

The final sculpture looked like this:



Set design for *Dark Dynamite*. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.

8.2.2 PURPLE WALL-TO-WALL CARPET

For a long time, we thought of placing the sculptures on a black dance carpet, or directly on the floor in the different spaces that we planned to perform the piece in. But as the sculptures grew, along with the choreographic material, it became clear that we wanted to have something that connected the sculptures together, and we wanted to define the location Sigrid was moving in. Emphasizing the idea that Sigrid's realm of matter with its diverse bodily conditions of fatigue/restlessness etc. was too big for the room she was in, we wanted to evoke a room in a home. From there, we had the idea to cover the floor with a wall-to-wall carpet. Tarje immediately had the idea that the carpet should be purple. The purple carpet also pointed towards a fantasy landscape that could appear in dreams or in video games, which opened up the possibility for a broader experience of the work, where the sculptures could be lamps, sofas, etc., or monstrous bodies in formation, or nature in a landscape.

8.3 SOUND

Composer Camilla Barratt-Due created the sound for the piece. She followed the development of the movement material from the beginning but started to create music for the piece three months before the premiere. At that point, Sigrid and I had completed two thirds of the movement material, and Tarje had started to create the first sculptures.

We had had the idea of creating an acoustic-electronic choir for the piece, where we would place speakers inside of the sculptures, as if the sculptures were making sounds. Together with Sigrid, they would form a choir. The idea was rooted in a desire to underline that the sculptures were bodies and to play with how they were also affected by dark dynamite. But when Camilla thought more about the theme, about the fragmented and/or persistent bodily states that tore at the body, the idea of a choir became too harmonious to her. She wanted to think of the sound as something that was not always in relation to another body as it is within a choir. Camilla wanted to create a more asymmetrical experience of the sound, where it could both affect Sigrid to the point of almost overwhelming her, and appear like passing matter capable of doing something to her (or not). Lastly, she wanted to use the sound as a means other than movement to show what condition Sigrid was in. Following on that last idea, we also thought that the sound could be played alone at times, and be allowed to develop material with the theme on its own terms, in parts that would only contain music (and maybe light).

Camilla visualized her ideas about sounds by placing them in the room and referring to a flute or clarinet that only passed by for a few seconds at that specific location and at a relatively low volume. Or she referred to the sound as textures beating the room. The idea was to project the music onto the room like a force that does something to the room, accentuating the ramifications certain events can have on environments and bodies.

Camilla started by creating a song, which she imagined would be played alone without Sigrid dancing to it. It quickly became apparent that it fitted with the Shuffle part. After having the song with us for a month, it grew to become a self-evident part of what now constituted the material. The way it was placed gave the impression that Sigrid was putting on a song she liked listening to. This impression made me have the idea that she could sing along to the song, as if she was home alone and humming to a song she liked, the way we do when we know that no one is listening.

When we tried it, something opened up in the work. That aspect of having her singing made me get close to her in a different way than through the movement material. Her presence somehow became more real, I couldn't distance myself from it, and I experienced the movement material that followed with a heightened presence.

Based on this development, we wanted to explore the use of her voice even more. Camilla wrote a song that we placed in the middle of the Shuffle part, after she had "fallen" to the floor. She also recorded a new melody that was placed at the beginning of the very noisy musical part towards the end. In that part Sigrid didn't sing herself, but you got the impression that it was her singing, based on her earlier moments of singing.

In this way, the sound wove itself into the movement material in places, and in other places it acted as a force, a gust of wind, or passing material. It was inspiring to work with the sound material in this way, not as something that clarified, reinforced, or contextualized the movement material, nor as something we generated movement material from, but as matter with its various forces contributing in different ways to the world and the work that *Dark Dynamite* became.

8.4 LIGHT

In a similar vein as with the sound, we conceived of the light as a force that could affect the work in different ways, rather than something that merely clarified and reinforced the material that was already there. Anton Andersson was again the light designer.

Since the work was going to premiere at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, an art center without proper theatrical rigging, we decided to work with lamps placed on the floor. In total, we used six lamps, four behind the audience and two onstage within the sculptures. Another practical aspect of the work was its limited funds, which meant that we had to decide that neither Camilla nor Anton would join the work on tour and that I would be responsible for both light and sound during the performances. We therefore looked for solutions that I could easily handle.

A third practical aspect we took into consideration when creating the light was that the work was going to be performed in a white box, in a beige/yellow room, and in black boxes. The light thus needed to function in all these different spaces.

Behind the audience, we used three sky panels, which are lights often used in TV and film. They could create a variety of colors, and Anton wanted to work with colors that flickered on for seconds at a time, the way that glimpses, thoughts, sensations, emotions, and events can flicker by in our bodies and lives. Lights flashed in and out independently to the action onstage, as if reality had split for a moment.

We also worked with how to light the sculptures. Anton suggested working with Astera NYX lamps, wireless lamps that also could produce a variety of colors.

An important aspect when creating the light was to not show off the technical aspects of these different lamps, nor to give an

impression of showmanship, but rather to use the light to bring out life in the sculptures in a new way, and to feel the light on the body as different forces acting on it.

With these simple yet precise choices, light became one more kind of matter that had a huge impact on the final version of *Dark Dynamite*.



Dark Dynamite. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Dark Dynamite. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Dark Dynamite. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Dark Dynamite. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Dark Dynamite. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Dark Dynamite. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Dark Dynamite. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Dark Dynamite. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.



Dark Dynamite. Photo: Iselin Linstad Hauge.

9 MATERIALS IN MAKING | BODIES UNFOLDING | MEANINGS EMERGE

"As movement and action, thinking is a coming to thought rather than a system of concepts." Schuback 2001, my translation

"Corporeality as the dynamic prerequisite of thinking." Spindler 2009, my translation

9.1 MATERIALS IN MAKING – COMING TO FORM

In this project, with these three works, the matter and material have been what has guided me forward—the matter of the dancers' and my own bodies, and the material of the choreography. I have leaned into matter, listened to it, been seduced, irritated, and repulsed by it, allowed myself to become directed by it, and have been formed by it. In short, I have wanted to shift the perspective towards listening to matter, rather than reading it. I have listened to what it does to me, in preference to reading what its inherent signs can tell me, without closing my eyes to its representations.

The material I have worked with that has taken up most of my attention is the dancers' bodies. Their bodies (matter) with their capacity to change are the core foundation of my interest in choreography in this project. The choreographic material developed with this focus and the methods I used developed between the dancers and myself, in the space between us, in the gap, the friction, the sympathies and the misunderstandings. In the relationships between the dancer and myself, and later between all of those involved in the processes, the choreographic material arises. Our bodies are thus the matter through which a choreographic material occurs. The material in the making is at work between us.

The anthropologist Stephanie Bunn distinguishes between two different relations to material:

> If we ignore the central role of materials in making, the "idea" of making becomes a technique, or a technology, where something is done to something, the materials, in order to make something, an object. In other words, it is perceived as a goal-oriented process with the end product being the main objective. This ignores the action of making, which is a working with rather than a doing to. It has often led to the assumption that the worker has a blueprint of what he or she is making in mind, and simply executes this. But the maker's relationship with materials is an important and fundamental part of making for craftspeople, artists, and handworkers throughout the world, without which culture would not be as we know it. (2011, 1).

The "working with" instead of "doing to" is important here. I work with the dancer, and the dancer works with me, and this working with gives direction when looking for the choreographic material. Furthermore, this material holds within it a time of trying, engaging with tasks and questions, experiences of shortcomings, embodiment, reformulations, and emergences. Within this material time, logics[14] often develop that give me an idea of a form for the choreography. These logics play out as a tone in the body, a specific rhythm in a material, a particular way for the dancer to listen to the motion in the body. The logics last a certain amount of time, which I use as an indicator for the rhythm of the form.[15] These logics can also guide us towards developing more material based on the dancer's physical desire after performing the material, their accumulated energy or need for stillness. But my own need or desire after experiencing the material, the energies, desires, or inclinations the material produces in me also take us further in the development of the material and—by extension—the form. In this, it is clear that the form is developed and emerges through and with our bodies (matter) and the choreographic material. There is no blueprint; instead, it is the dancer and the relationship we develop and maintain during the process that are decisive for the choreographic outcome: how both of us listen to the material emerging, from our different perspectives, and how we simultaneously listen to our bodies when we experience the material.

14. See for instance the chapter "Preparing the Body – An Unexpected Preface for Dark Dynamite".

15. See the chapter "Material Takeover | Sensorial Input as Directional" for an example.

9.2 SUSPENSEFUL RELATION TO THE FORM

The three works all emerged into a clear form, although through two different means. In *Rut* and *Dark Dynamite*, much of the material was set, then re-filtered through layers of the practice of multi-attentiveness that played with and challenged the set material. In *The Field*, the material was placed in the room through patterns and spacing, with a set relationship to the sound, but where the material was constantly emerging based on the practice of multi-attentiveness. The practice was structured, and Jens knew what to work with at different points in the piece, but not always how to get there, which challenged the relationship to the sound.

These two ways of relating to the form, however, offered similar challenges. A major challenge lay in the tension between having to relate to a set form and at the same time practicing multi-attentiveness, which required listening to sensations, emotions, and callings from the body that could constantly arise in the course of the piece. The practice of multi-attentiveness could mess with the defined form and make it difficult to perform it. When you start to disturb the form and end up in a completely different place in the music, for example, it can be exhausting and seem overstimulating, so that it is actually difficult to listen to the body or difficult to actively work with the practice of multi-attentiveness.

One strategy I used to meet this challenge in *The Field* was to ask Jens to indulge his own attention and interests in the material that constituted the piece, to not think about the audience and not let his idea about their expectations determine his work with attention. I asked him to focus more on following the movements of his attention rather than controlling the outcome of the practice. The work thus opened the possibility for Jens to break out of the grid of the form through this *playing with and indulging in the practice*. What was important was the opportunity to work with uninterrupted attention as a way to not control what he was letting show. It isn't easy to give in and let go of your idea of what you let show, which is what these instructions are going for. But it is exactly what I'm interested in, as I think it can give glimpses of how volatile, multifaceted, and layered bodily life (matter) is. The work itself can open up a space where the body is not only in control and "on top" of the material, but rather faces several choices, leaks and absorbs, and is "at work" and in the making right there in front of us.

I'm also interested in playing with the production materials in this way as it can keep up a suspenseful relation to the form, which I in turn believe performs the transformative nature of form, body, and meaning. By suspenseful relation to the form, I mean the tension that is created when the dancer actively works against something we have defined. A tension is created between the defined form and the form that is about to emerge. This way of working means that, even though there is a defined form, the practice is there to destabilize it. The practice then rather works in a movement from a defined form to a slightly different form. Attention is directed towards this transformation, rather than representing a certain form. The philosopher Marcia Sa Cavalcante Schuback reflects upon this way of relating to form:

> Following in the form the coming to a form does not mean primarily transforming what is to be understood, conferring on it a new meaning or more original signification. It means rather to transform what is being given to understanding into something transformative. (2010, 162).

Working with the form in this way is to understand the form as malleable, not rigid, in becoming. This further points to the

notion that this involves not only a way of working with the body as changeable matter but also opens us up to the experience of meaning as something you can't separate from the body and which therefore must also be treated as transformative, changeable, and volatile. That the experience of meaning is something you can't separate from the body connects to how I relate to and understand matter, as I outlined this in the introduction, drawing my inspiration from Karen Barad, who remarks that where matter and mind are deeply interrelated and part of the same physical reality, "mattering is simultaneously a matter of substance and significance" (2007, 3). How the body works with "following in the form the coming to a form" thus not only affects its materiality but also its significance. The experience of meaning is here in flux. In the same way as material is in the making, meaning is at work, it is emerging. It is from this perspective that I understand *choreography as a meaning-generating aggregate*.

9.3 BETWEEN BODY AND BODY/ BETWEEN MATTER AND MATTER

To understand meaning in this way is to highlight the relationship between body and body/between matter and matter. It is in the gap as it is in the meeting, in the fact of not existing without the other that what we understand as something (which can give rise to meaning) comes into being. The meanings at work here thus can't be stable. They come alive with the dancers working with the practice through the production process and during the performance, when they meet the audience. The meaning is emerging between the dancer and myself, between the dancer and the choreographic material, between the dancer and the audience, between the material of the choreography and the matter of the audience's bodies.

A question that might come up is: What then, does this understanding of meaning further do, or add?

An important point is that it distances meaning from being something solely tied to language. Barad writes:

> To assume that meaning is a property of individual words or group of words is to stay within a linguistic frame of meaning making. Discourse is not a synonym of language. Discursive practices are the material conditions for making meaning. (2007, 335)

Meaning is thus here understood as something temporal, in the making, rather than solely bound to words and notions we already know. It is alive and at work in close connection with the becoming of the body (matter).

This perspective supports my search for words through an experience of meaning. If an experience of meaning arises

through a choreography, it might generate images and perhaps a thirst to find words that can describe the experience of meaning there, but language is not alone what defines whether something carries meaning. This understanding of meaning relativizes the primacy of language. Here, putting into language isn't given the interpretive priority I experience it to have in our contemporary Western society, and it is within this realm of understanding meaning that my second research question has been fruitful when developing work.

9.4 CHOREOGRAPHY AS AN INCENTIVE FOR WORDS AND CONCEPTS TO EMERGE

All the works in this project have emerged out of my work in the studio, without a written concept to begin with, as I described earlier in the process descriptions. What has emerged is not only the concept for the pieces, but also the words and concepts: *listening, attention, imagination, not-knowing, let the language "rest," an experience of meaning = an experience of coherency of a manifold of perception*, and all the words within the processes that further joined up the work, such as: *fatigue, lethargy, apathy, restlessness, despair, unbridledness,* to name a few from *Dark Dynamite*.

This approach to how the words and concepts emerge has thus also characterized the way the works have been shaped, how I have named my method, and how this text has come to be. The approach also sidelines the inclinations in me to begin by using words and concepts, as a strategy to expand, nuance, and specify my use of language in my choreographic work, through my choreographic work. The words, concepts, and language that grow out of this way of working are filled with the time of exploration. They constitute a framework that conveys a desire for further exploration, often due to a combination of the work that has elicited them and the fact that this language, its rhythm and poetry, is often a bit new to me.

This relationship to words and concepts shows a motion of appearance: they emerge through the work. It is in this way that I understand my choreographic work, with its methods, as something that can act as a spur or an incentive to the words and concepts that end up forming a specific working language.

9.5 DANCING AGENCIES

Matter vibrates, it never sits still. This perspective is stimulating when I think about how the dancer's body can be represented on stage. How can you take advantage of this "life" in the training, the process, and the final choreography? What can it teach me about the dancing body, and what language can it stimulate?

My strategy to approach these questions has been through the practice of multi-attentiveness (which, in turn, led me to this understanding of matter).

The approach has made me listen to how materials are in the making, how bodies unfold, and how meanings emerge. It's a movement that takes me from already knowing to knowing in a state of becoming. In other words, it's a gradual process of learning and understanding how the work evolves from the materials. I discover the body through this approach, I discover relations towards attention that manifests themselves through muscle tone and different tempi. I discover restlessness and desires and nuances of sensibility, which get to take part in the choreography. And everything stretches between the poles of accumulated and new experiences, between what we know and what is new. From this perspective, the dancer's body cannot be understood as an object. The dance, the material, and the choreography emerge on the basis of something that has been, with an interest in reaching towards something new.

The dancer is not understood here solely as a co-creative agent. Rather, all the agencies that play into the situation are required by the situation, one that is open to a discovery of bodies, meanings, and materials. It's not just that I want to challenge the understanding of the dancing body: I have been provoked, fascinated, bored, curious, and bewildered by the bodies (including my own) that unfold among us.

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RUT

Concept and choreography	Rosalind Goldberg
Developed with and performed by	Marianne Kjærsund
Musical composition	Camilla Barratt-Due
Set design, costume and mask	Alexander Krantz
Light design	Anton Andersson

Co-produced by Weld in Stockholm, Skogen in Gothenburg and Avant Garden in Trondheim. Residency support: c.off. Supported by The Swedish Arts Grants Committee & Det Norske Komponistfond.

TOURING

Weld, September 20th, 21st and 22nd 2018.
Skogen, October 6th, and 7th 2018.
Teaterhuset Avant Garden, October 20th and 21st 2018.
Dansens Hus Oslo, August 17th 2019.
RAS – Regional Arena for Samtidsdans, November 9th 2020.

THE FIELD

Concept and choreography	Rosalind Goldberg
Developed with and danced by	Jens Jeffry Trinidad
Musical composition	Daniel Glatzel
Costume and set-design	Alexander Krantz
Light design	Anton Andersson
Artistic advice	Bojana Cvejić
Dramaturgy	Maja Zimmermann
Sound technician	Christian Obermayer
Assistance costume and set-design	Kjersti Alm Erikse

Co-produced by: BIT Teatergarasjen, Black Box Teater Oslo, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Weld, RAS – Scene for Samtidsdans. Supported by the Norwegian Arts Council and Oslo National Academy of the Arts.

TOURING

Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, June 7th, 2020, *cancelled due to Covid-19.*
BIT Teatergarasjen, Oktoberdans, October 20th, and 21st 2020.
Black Box Teater Oslo, October 28th, 29th and 30th 2020.
Henie Onstad Kunstsenter January 31st, 2021, *cancelled due to Covid-19.*
Weld, March 11th, 12th, and 13th, 2021, *cancelled due to Covid-19.*
Weld, May 27th, 28th, 29th, 2021, *cancelled due to Covid-19.*
Sånafest, June 25th 2021.
Artistic Research Week at KHiO, January 27th 2022.

DARK DYNAMITE

Concept and choreography	Rosalind Goldberg
Developed with and performed by	Sigrid Hirsch Kopperdal
Scenography	Tarje Eikanger Gullaksen
Musical composition	Camilla Barratt-Due
Light design	Anton Andersson
Illustration	Tarje Eikanger Gullaksen

Co-produced by Henie Onstad Art Center, BIT-Tetatergarasjen Bergen, RAS – Regional Arena for Samtidsdans. Supported by Arts Council Norway, The Cultural Fund. Danse- og Teatersentrum via the support scheme financed by the Foreign Ministry in Norway. The Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Rosalind Goldberg, Tarje Eikanger Gullaksen, Sigrid Hirsch Kopperdal, Anton Andersson, Camilla Barratt-Due.

TOURING

Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, October 20th, 2022.
BIT Teatergarasjen, October 26th, 27th 2022.
Dansens Hus, Stockholm, November 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, 2022.
RAS – Regional Arena for Samtidsdans, October 18th, 2023.
Rosendal Teater, February 16th and 17th 2024.

ROSALIND GOLDBERG (SE/NO)

Rosalind Goldberg is a choreographer based in Oslo.

Rosalind's work explores processes of change and is characterized by a physical and conceptual approach to choreography, where the entanglement of the two directs the process. Central in her work is the question of what we can expect from the body: to what extent the body can change, and what sides of the body we hide away from. She examines this question through a social, economic, cultural, and environmental lens. She is interested in the unknown, uncomfortable, leaking, fantastic sides of bodily life and explores the murky water where biology and bodily states rub up against each other. Drawing inspiration from neurobiology, philosophy of plasticity, New Materialism, and notions around the unknown, she creates practices to challenge dancers' habitual approaches to their craft, as a method for reconfiguring the body's representation onstage.

In 2022 Rosalind premiered *Dark Dynamite* at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Norway. Previous works include *The Field* (2020), *Rut* (2018), *Still Life* (2018), *Immunsystemet* (2017), *Jump with me!* (2016), *Mit* (2013), and *Fake Somatic Practice* (2011).

Rosalind just received multi-year support from the Norwegian Arts Council for upcoming productions for the years 2024-2026.

Rosalind's work has recently been performed at Impulstanz Festival in Vienna, Tanz Im August in Berlin, Schauspielhaus Bochum, Sophiensaele in Berlin, Schauspielhaus Chemnitz, Uferstudios in Berlin, TanzFabrik Berlin, Dansens Hus in Stockholm, Inkonst in Malmö, Dansens Hus in Oslo, BIT-Teatergarasjen in Bergen, Henie Onstad Art Center, Rosendal Teater in Trondheim, Black Box Teater in Oslo, RAS – Regional Arean for Samtidsdans, and other venues.

ERRATA NOTICE

Cpltf – change of page layout or text format

Page 229: Williamson, Amanda, Glenna Batson, Sarah Whatley, and Rebecca Weber, eds. 2014. *Dance, Somatics, Spiritualities. Contemporary Sacred Narratives*. Bristol: Intellect Ltd. Cpltf: Moved to page 233.

Page 229: Vujanovic, Ana, and Ellen Söderhult. 2018. "Movement Research as a Performance Practice." In Movement Research Performance Journal 51. Cpltf: Moved to page 233.

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Page 1, 2, 251, 521: Layout cover, font and color. Cpltf: The layout for the cover, fonts and colors has been changed.

The body absorbs and leaks out. Things are passing through, and things are also materializing. I can never entirely know what leaks out. I can only, to a certain extent, know what I absorb. But I know of this movement that unevenly sways, drops, crashes, and sneaks into or out of my body. I know that context and activity matter for this movement, but these can't entirely be controlled. The world of stimuli (sensorial, informational, contextual, etc.) is overflowing my system constantly. It's like a shower. It's flooding my flesh, scrubbing my organism, rubbing my structure. As a body, I am not passive in this movement of sensations, information, etc. The movement is met by me, by my accumulated experience, knowledge, and preferences, so that just as it drives away with my body and constantly makes it at the same time, I influence these movements by how I follow them, react to them, or resist them.

Oslo National Academy of the Arts
The Academy of Dance

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