

Articulating the Indiscernible

Quim Bigas Bassart and Rasmus Ölme

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Abstract: *After a career as a free-lance dancer, based in Brussels (BE), Rasmus moved back to Sweden and started a PhD in choreography at Stockholm University of the Arts (SE). Rasmus successfully defended the doctoral thesis *From Model to Module* in 2014 and in January 2015 he was appointed head of education at the Dance and Choreography program at the National Danish School of Performing Arts in Copenhagen. Subsequently 2019, he was appointed professor and acts today as head of program for the BFA in Dance and Choreography and the MFA in Choreography. Currently he is running the research project *An Indiscernible Zone*, funded by the Danish Ministry of Culture and recently premiered his latest work *No Point (Det är ingen idé)* at Dansens Hus, Stockholm. *An Indiscernible Zone* is a research project that attempts to collapse the separation between body and space, through dance experience. It is an exploration of the experiential zone where the borders of body and space become indiscernible. The project is the continuation of a previous pilot project called *Utifrån Utåt (From outside and outwards)*. You can find documentation of it on DDSKS website where you will also find an initial conversation about *An Indiscernible Zone* in dialogue with Sven-Olov Wallenstein (moderated by Natalie Koerner).*

Keywords: *zone, terrain-vague and liminal space, haptic experience, non-differential approach, impressions and expressions of environment.*

This interview takes place as an interjection in the research project *An Indiscernible Zone*, funded by the Danish Ministry of Culture and hosted by The Danish National School of Performing Arts.

Rasmus Ölme, in this research project, continues his interest to put into practice the in-betweens, the liminality, of theory-practice and body-place. For *An Indiscernible Zone*, Rasmus proposes a group of practitioners (Ida Elisabeth Larsen, Sophia Mage and Quim Bigas Bassart) to meet and practice together in the Opera Park in Copenhagen. Rasmus calls this group “The Swarm” as a continuation of a previous group that was created in Sweden and that supported Rasmus’s PhD process, as well as the later research project “Movement Material”¹. In “Suspension” (2018) Rasmus writes “The name, Svärmen, came out of discussions around what collective working and thinking can mean. To form a swarm meant to create a group mind that could produce forms of knowledge different from the individual. In the same way, I wanted to make

¹ The members of the Swedish edition were the dancers/choreographers Linda Adami, Dan Johansson, Tilman O'Donnell, Ellen Söderhult and Rasmus Ölme.

use of this group apparatus to be able to harvest more thoughts, reflections, ideas, and insights than I thought I could do on my own.”

The current edition of the group met on different occasions in March and April 2025. A large part of the gatherings was to collectively do the score later presented in this interview. The score became the ground to reflect together from the experience of performing it, as well as addressing questions to the way we do it and attend to it. The research phase was also followed by the research collaborator and architect Rasmus Strange Thue Tobiasen, who shares a common interest with Ölme around the notion of *terrain vague*.

In the following text, Quim Bigas Bassart interviews Rasmus Ölme. The interview takes place right after practicing the score together and functions as a shared space to drift in and speculate around some ideas of the research.

These are the instructions of the score:

Find a place where to mediate your experience of that place, through dance. Depart from the idea that “the smallest unit of action is letting something affect you” (Timothy Morton). Using your body as a felt-sense measurement tool, your impressions from the experienced environment are expressed back to the environment. Impressions become expressions as a form of blending into the place. Reminders:

- *Camouflage by overidentification with your surroundings.*
- *The physical sensation of your body is spatial.*
- *Your experience of space is physical.*

6th of August, 2025, before practicing.

R: Are we practicing in the park as we have done before or shall we go somewhere else?

Q: How important is the location for this investigation? There was something nice about going to the park, but it also felt as if any place could work.

R: Absolutely.

Q: So, how would you like to do it today?

R: The investigation is not about the site. The investigation is in the physical experience of the relationship between the body and the site. So, it could be any site, and I believe we discovered that in our previous sessions. The research is not trying to say anything about the park, but to say something about the relationship between you and the site. Your physical experience of how body and place meet.

In the pilot version of this project, we looked for liminal spaces to practice in. Spaces that lack definition. But there’s something about when you’re in an obvious functional space, for example your kitchen or something like that. Then the relationship to that function becomes so strong that it is hard to NOT be functioning in relation to it. Therefore, it was helpful to be in more vague places.

Q: I remember you were talking about the notion of “making strange”. The capacity to change your relation to something. I also remember you gesturing as if you were a DJ looking for the right pitch or right mix. I wonder if that pitching can happen anywhere, as long as you feel that you can pitch? Because for you, it might be that the kitchen is not the right place, because of the connotations that it has for you, but for someone else, it might be feasible.

R: Well, of course, one way of working with it is to try to challenge the concept of that place. I was thinking now, when we’re talking, what if we do a session here?

R and Q: Here.

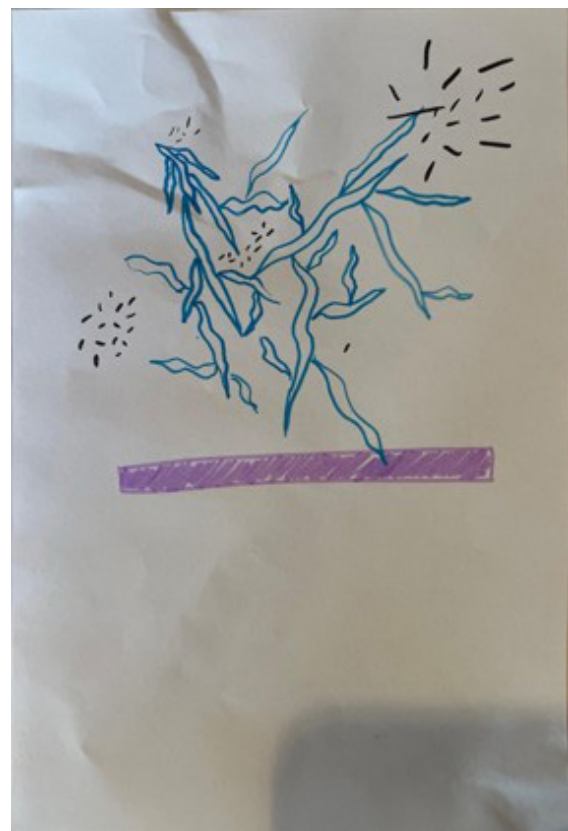
Q: Yes.

R: In the office.² We close the door for a while and practice for about 20 minutes or so. To see if we can manage to make the office space strange.

Q: I experienced this investigation as if there is no score, yet there is a score. Would you like to remind me of the starting point?

R: I will be paraphrasing the actual written score, but it is about turning your body into a haptic measuring instrument. However, the notion of haptic became a bit too conceptual or philosophical somehow, and we changed it to *felt sense*, as the immediate physical response that your body has to being in a place.³ So you are somehow monitoring your physical sensation of that zone where the body and the space meet.

Resuming the interview, after practicing the score



(left) Rasmus Ölme, aureola drawing. Picture: Quim Bigas. (right) Quim Bigas, aureola drawing. Picture: Quim Bigas

Q: So, we moved in the office. In our usual office. And then we did the drawings. How do you call them?

R: We called one of them aureola, relating to the light that is usually seen around iconic figures. But I mean, we could also just call it “the zone” because, in this frame, we speak about the indiscernible zone. An area that is both space and body. Similar to the aureola, it has to do with the body, but it’s around the body somehow. But maybe just for clarity, we can just call it

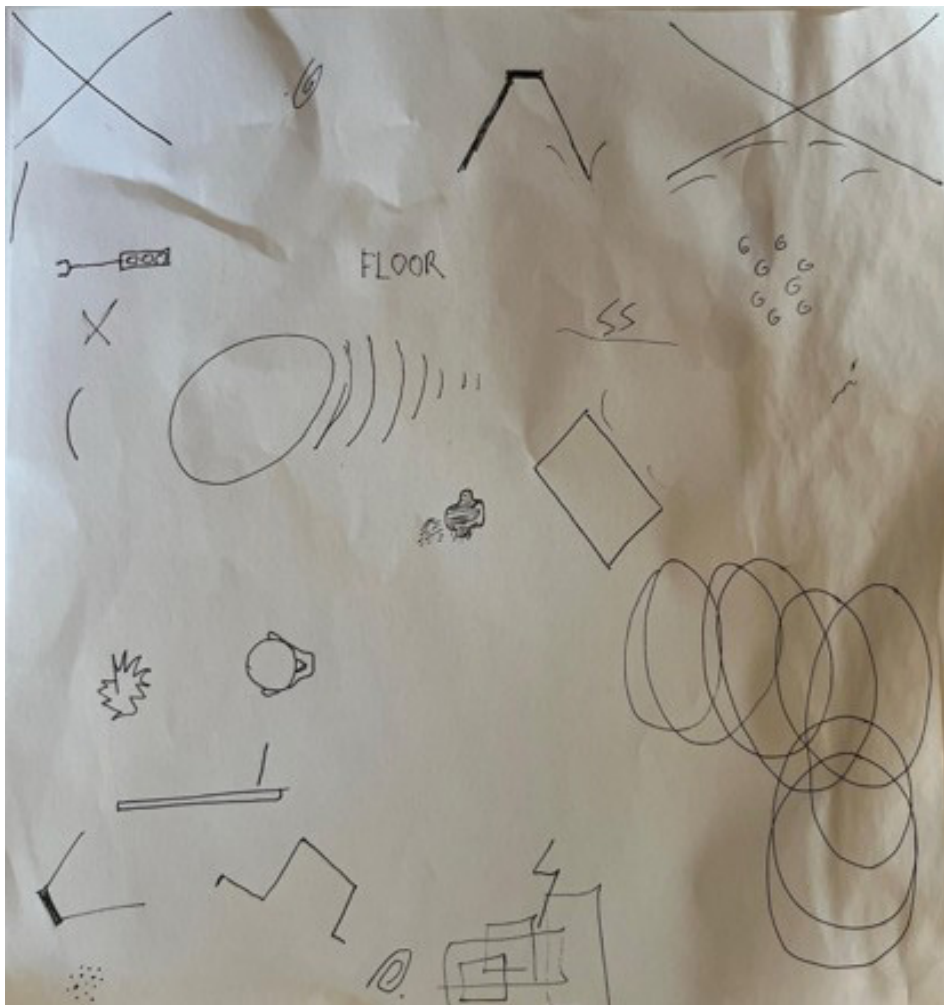
² The Danish National School of Performing Arts, Per Knutzons Vej 5, Copenhagen

³ For more information about this term: Gendlin, E. T. (1962). *Experiencing and the creation of meaning: A philosophical and psychological approach to the subjective*. Free Press.

zone. The other one we call archeological drawing which is the one that maps the memory of where different experiences took place.

Q: Zone. When we talk about this, I recognize that this practice is not busy with definitions. It is not about defining what a zone is or to make it discernible, but to stay in it. I think you also refer to “the threshold” between things: between what you managed to say, but also what is left behind in experience, as well at what stays as felt sense.

R: This threshold, it was something that Sven Olov Wallenstein, a philosopher that I collaborated with in the pilot project, talked about.⁴ The way things make sense before they get articulated. That was the threshold. I believe he said, “right under the threshold of articulation”. When something gets articulated, it gets defined. So, it is to see what it is like to be in the process where things are being defined, but never quite fall into definition.



Archeological drawing by Rasmus Ölme and Quim Bigas. Picture: Quim Bigas

Q: Today when I was practicing, I again remembered that approach to “making strange”, but I was also, at times, thinking about what recognition and desire does to me. You might find yourself in a possibility of something but, on the way there, you find yourself somewhere else.

⁴ <https://www.sh.se/english/sodertorn-university/contact/researchers/sven-olov-wallenstein>

How do you experience that? How do we, how do you, articulate the research in relation to that idea of recognition, while still staying connected to “making strange”?

R: There are a couple of things that come to mind when you say this. One thing is a text from Timothy Morton. You used this, “you might find yourself”. Morton took that example, in a text, from a Talking Heads song.⁵ Morton is writing the text from a hotel room in Oslo, I think.⁶ And when they write “you may find yourself”, they are annoyed by how the Word document wants to police their language into definitions rather than staying in vagueness. And in relation to estrangement, Morton is jet lagged when writing that text and mentions how jet lag reveals how strange of a thing time is. It’s not that jet lag makes time strange. It makes you see that time is really strange.

I have an example of estrangement from the session we just did here in the office, where I had an encounter with an extension cord and found myself blurring or undefining it. I was doing something with the extension cord that does not relate to its function of being an extension cord. I was not using it in its function, but just experiencing it as a thing. A bit like you can see small kids do when they don’t know what things are, but they still engage with them. Or, you know, this YouTube clip from Mel Baggs, that reflects on their experience of autism and about being in dialogue with all the aspects of one’s surrounding.⁷ This is how I understand estrangement. To not allow things to fall into their own definition, or at least not to be limited to their definition. You can affirm the definition and recognize an extension cord as such, but that is just a conceptual recognition, because then when I’m handling it, it also just becomes a thing.

Q: I guess it connects back to the felt sense. I recall that, when we are practicing, we are also creating a state of being with.⁸ In a way, it’s like within the practice. You are with and within it. The zoning can be a place in between that does not deny that things are what they are. But at the same time, it brings the sensorial experience, or the felt sense of the thing, and it carries that relation into the event.

R: Yeah. I mean, something can be something, and it can feel like something else. Like the extension cord is an extension cord, but it can also feel like many things while I am handling it.

Q: Making it a thing. It is like I am relating with my body, with where I am, with that allowance that we create by being in correlation, but also like in some sort of thinginess. I guess that also relates to that moment when I sense that I’m doing something concrete, that I recognize myself and I have the need to make it “a thing”.⁹ To make it more, well, “thingy”. Amorphous or strange. It connects to the experience of recognizing yourself or finding a desire that is like, “ah, I want to hit that”. And yet, on the way, you meet yourself somewhere else, through the sensorial.

R: Mm, I wanted to pick up on that when you said this thing about you might have a definition of something that makes you want to do something with it, like the cup asks you to pick it up, you know? Then you’re still in the function of the cup, which I think you should allow yourself to do, because if not, you stay in some kind of resistance to the process all the time, which is really difficult. So, I think you need to go with that, but then open it up somehow to say like, “okay, yes, I pick up the cup as a cup, but once I’m with the cup, it’s not a cup”. It goes beyond that and that’s maybe the thinginess. Same goes for the body, like, “yes, it’s my body”,

5 Talking Heads. (1980). *Once in a lifetime* [Song]. On *Remain in light*. Sire Records.

6 Morton, T. (2021). *All art is ecological*. Penguin Books.

7 Baggs, A. (2007, January 14). *In my language* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnylM1hI2jc>

8 For furthering this idea, check: Nancy, J.-L. (2000). *Being singular plural* (R. D. Richardson & A. E. O’Byrne, Trans.). Stanford University Press. (Original work published 1996). For a more than-human approach to this idea, check: Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

9 Steyerl, H. (2010). A thing like you and me. *e-flux journal*, (15). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/15/61298/a-thing-like-you-and-me/>

but I also try to turn it into something else. There's a thinginess with the body as well. So, both the thinginess of the things that you engage with and the space itself, but also the thinginess of our own body. And there's this "zone". To turn the body into a zone is also to turn it into a thing because there is an effort to un-identify it. To make it strange and indiscernible.

Q: Something that supported me in the practice were your thoughts on impression and expression. Could you share something about it?

R: I think it was um... Again, it came from something from Timothy Morton, but it was a talk that I heard online and I haven't been able to find a proper quote afterwards. It was something like "the minimal level of activity is allowing yourself to be affected". Before, you said something about allowing yourself to be a bit more amorphous, it's like you're allowing yourself to be affected by things. Which means that you are not a stable entity that is interacting with things, but you're letting them change you, no? You are allowing yourself to be affected.¹⁰

Before we started today, I said something about the body as a felt sense instrument, and its output is movement. So, if we then say, since we were working with dance, that expression in our case is movement then I allow myself to be affected at that minimum level, and then I can play around with the level of expression, which is movement. So, it's almost like a volume button that I can dial up or down, but with movement instead of sound. I perceive something, and then turn my perception into an action so that it's not just only input, but input that becomes output. Impression that becomes expression.

This also relates to my inspiration from camouflage in this project. Roger Caillois, a French thinker, spoke about camouflage as a kind of over-identification with your surroundings.¹¹ In camouflage, it is as if you reflect the environment back onto itself, so you start to look like it. In our practice, the body blends with the place. Allowing yourself to be affected by the place you're in as a way to blend with it, to become part of it, the being with - like you said - is, as well, a way of reflecting the space back onto itself. Same goes for the impression/expression, in the sense that whatever comes in as impressions is reflected back out as expression. I'm turning myself into a kind of reflection of the place.

Q: On a conceptual level, it is almost as if, at the end of the day, there's no difference between what I think, what I do, and how I'm being done. I guess there's also something around dismantling certain binaries. For instance, theory and practice, body and mind, inside and outside.

R: And also loosening up these definitions. Our thinking mind works a lot through binaries. So, when you're trying to loosen up definitions, binaries come along somehow. Thinking back to the volume dial I mentioned, it is the difference between a dimmer and a switch. The switch is binary. It's on or off, not in between. The dimmer has all the nuances of in-between. So, it's never one or the other, it's always in between minimum and maximum and wherever on the scale you are, you're always in that in relation to the binary, but never in any of them.

Q: Now that you mention the dimmer, I remember a term that I think I've heard you talking about before, which is tuning. This idea of putting yourself in a frequency.

R: Yeah, it is a frequency that you're picking up on. There's this psychological term called "affect attunement".¹² It's used in developmental psychology. Small kids teach themselves to attune their affects, by reading other people. You know this typical scene with a toddler that falls over and then they look at their parents to see if they hurt themselves or not. Like to know if it

¹⁰ Although correct quote is missing and, in relation to allowing yourself to be affected, we refer to: Morton, T. (2018). *Being ecological*. The MIT Press.

¹¹ Caillois, R. (1938). *Mimétisme et psychasthénie légendaire*. In *Le mythe et l'homme*. Gallimard.

¹² Stern, D. N. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. Basic Books.

was a problem or not. Of course, they feel something. There's immediate feedback in their knee when they hit it, but whether that's a thing or not, they tune through the reaction of others.

Q: Looking at the table where we are now, I would like to hear a bit about these drawings. They, in a way, become grounds of reflection or grounds of trying to filter, or furthering and continuing the thought of the practice. I would like to hear a bit more about how you relate to them. What do they do to you?

R: I think about the drawings a lot. I mean, on the one hand, it's a way to create documentation. It was also a way for Rasmus (Strange Thue Tobiasen) and myself to find a common medium to talk through. As an architect, Rasmus draws a lot and I also had a bit of a relationship to drawing from making scores.¹³

The drawings are reflections that we do after the fact. In that sense, they are interpreted by ourselves. We're turning our memory of the experience into something. They function more as a reflection tool than as an artwork, but it's also interesting that they are there. They stay, but they're not there to really explain anything. It's not like it is an explanation to what happened, even if there of course is a relationship to what happened, they also become something on their own. A kind of artistic byproduct rather than end product. It is not like we created the practice in order to produce the drawings.

Q: How do you navigate the drawing? Is the drawing part of this practice, or is it more like a way of bringing up some sensation of the practice.

R: I think that there is an aspect of the drawing that still is an application of the practice as well. Because there's something about the experience of doing the drawing.

Q: Exactly.

R: Now, the tactile experience of doing it, that's where I feel like the practice is continuing while drawing and not just like a reflection of it.

Q: Yeah, you also mentioned a very nice word when we work previously together, a French word in connection to the word tapping.

R: Yeah, this "Tâter le terrain". Like a feeling your way, and checking something out before engaging with it.

Q: Exactly. Which I think it could relate to the way I go back to it. There is a slight sensation of Tâter my own experience of it. Tatata.

R: I think this deliberate vagueness is very important. Now I said vagueness, but through the course of the project we have moved away from that word and replaced it with indiscernibility. In the practice, I'm not trying to discern, but to indiscern. So also, when making the drawing, it's not that I'm defining things in the drawing through the drawing, but also allowing the drawing to be indiscernible.

R: There may be one thing to add before we finish. There was one thing that was happening today in practice that I wanted to share, that might have something to do with what I just said now. I don't know what to call it. "Thinking" doesn't feel like the right word. Thinking could also be a little bit like thinking about something else, and this is more like a sharpness of awareness to what's happening. I'm monitoring my awareness quite a lot. So, on one hand, and this is like a paradox in the practice, I want to let myself go. You know, to see what happens. At the same time, I don't want it to become whatever. I do not make up my mind about what is going to happen, yet at the same time, I want to stay with this specific practice. If not, I could also start doing lots of other things. Although the practice aims at indiscernibility, it is something very

13 Rasmus Strange Thue Tobiasen, architect and collaborator in this research project. Tobiasen, R. S. T. (2023). *URO: Strange commonplace exercise*. Paper presented at CA²RE, Aarhus, Denmark. <https://aarhus.ca2re.eu/submissions/s-t-tobiasen-uro?s=s>

specific. There's some kind of, what do you call it - acuity! A cognitive sharpness that is not thinking that I found very interesting. Although I struggle to define it, I notice when I lose it. I notice when I fall out of the practice and I know how to put myself back on track.

Q: There is something about this cognitive accuracy that you mention that is quite clear when we practice this. Sometimes when I'm in the practice, and I've done it much less than you, there is something concrete. The task of bringing it into the *felt sense* is so specific. I need to be in tune with that sensing. I cannot get out of it. In a way, it demands a sensitive movement also to be in tune with that. I remember from one of our conversations that you, while practicing, found yourself wanting to do a handstand. If you put your cognitive self into experience in order to be in tune with what affects you, you might not end up doing the handstand. And it doesn't matter if you do it or not. What is important is that this form of cognitive experience is still taking place all the time. I think that's the challenge. There's something that falls into place. Here and here and here. There are many different textures to be experienced within the practice. That in a way, they have a lot of value because they open like a scope or like a sense of modulation. Like the dimmer.

Maybe one last thing about this awareness of the social that we have talked about some times before. The awareness of, for instance, knowing that all these objects belong to an office. And the fact that I have no interest whatsoever in destroying any of it.

R: It is not about going against the usual uses of the office.

Q: There's an acceptance.

R: I remember I talked about that in relation to another work. There is this idea coming from Aikido and its relation to change: "Align to divert".¹⁴ It's like, you align with things in order to make them go somewhere else. I think I recognize what you were saying now. Like you're accepting a situation, but you're also trying to see...

Q: How you go together somewhere else.

R: Yeah, exactly.

Q: How do we encounter together somewhere else.

Interview #2: 14th of August 2025

After our first interview, we decided to meet again. We finished the conversation with the need to talk more about dancing and the role of dancing on relation to this specific research. We met again in the same office.

Q: Maybe we can go directly to talk about dance and dancing and then we'll see where it goes.

I feel that I can do this practice because dancing has given me an availability to it. Dance has given me tools to do this. In that sense, dance is not just a technique, but also a tool to remain in, or with, complexity. The ability to navigate sensation and awareness.

R: Yes. There is something that is taken for granted when I do this work and I choose to place it within choreography. On one hand, it has to do with just my own...I don't know, I have to call it identity or background. It's the lens through which I work. I don't need to question whether this is dance or not. Because it feels that, if I'm doing it, it's dance because that's what I do. Some skills that relate to dance are not necessarily dance skills. I'm sure I was using some of those dance skills when we were doing our office session here, you know? There are some moments where I'm physically also doing things that someone without the dance training would maybe

14 In The book of five rings (1645) by Miyamoto Mushashi, there is a reference to the notion of *uke nagashi*-style movements (to receive and let flow past) rather than meeting force with force. Musashi, M. (2002). The book of five rings (W. Scott Wilson, Trans.). Shambhala. (Original work published 1645)

not do. It wouldn't come to them as an option. So, there's something that has to do with the trained body, like what just appears as an option. When I look at the space and, you know, blend myself into that space, possibilities come to me. Those possibilities come to me also because I have those physical possibilities to put my legs somewhere or whatever. If that didn't exist within my body, I wouldn't feel the call to do it. Just like I don't feel the call to fly. And then I thought about that sometimes when I watch, for instance, parkour, it's interesting to see how they see the space. Because they see what they can do there. They see things I don't because they are not options to me. So, when my body meets that site, I'm not like "oh, I wish I could do this or that", because I don't even see it. I'm sure that there's some of that, some dance skills in that sense, that enable me to see the possibilities of the space in a certain way. But, then, there's this other side of dancing, and we brought it up the other day, I think. The scene from *American Beauty* with this plastic bag that is flying around. In that scene, the off voice in the movie says something as if that plastic bag is dancing with him or asking him to dance with it.¹⁵ So he uses dance as a kind of a metaphor because, of course, the plastic bag isn't dancing. Like, it is not thinking to itself "now I'm gonna dance". But there's something in our perception that relates that event with the plastic bag to dance, and he also, in that same scene, uses the metaphor of a child asking him to play with him. So, there's something about playfulness and dance. I can relate that to what happened when we were doing our session here in the office the other day. There is physicality, and there is some sort of spatial awareness and then there is that: playfulness.

In the morning classes I was teaching this week, I started to share a current thought of mine that dance is relational. So, that you're always dancing with something. Of course, you have it in social dancing, dancing together with other people. Dancing on your own is different, you know? But even when you're dancing on your own, it's like you're dancing with something. You're dancing with the music maybe or you could be dancing with an idea. So, you have some kind of task that you're working on. And then to think that doing that task is not necessarily dance but that it could also be a way of relating to the task. I'm not just doing a dance task but I'm also dancing with the task. A bit like the relation to this plastic bag, asking him to play with it. There is something that's happening between the two. We're relating to each other and we're moving in relation to each other. So, we're dancing *with*. So, if my intention, when I get something like a score for an improvisation, it's not just that the score itself is an explanation to how the dance should be done, but that dance is also my relation to the score. I'm dancing with the score and not just performing the score as a dance.

Sometimes in class, I use this cue where I tell the participants to consider what they're doing dancing. So even if they're just figuring out a sensation in their shoulder or something, or a more analytical movement research, like experiencing your tailbone or whatever, to also remember that it's dance that we're doing. And when I give that cue, something always happens in the space. I can see that people, when they remind themselves to consider what they do as dancing, change what they do. Or maybe even more, how they do what they do. There is something about that lightness or playfulness that comes in. And of course, you could say that it's a cliché of dancing or a prejudice about what dance should be, but at the same time, like those are the concepts that we have. I'm not telling them how to dance. But more saying, consider, remember to consider, that what you're doing is dancing. Bringing that concept in it does something. It lightens up.

Q: There are two distinctions that you made that I go back to. One is the dimmer as a degree that you can explore. Then, there is the way the score, like this "I am always dancing with something", brings me back to this dismantling of the inside and the outside. I usually like

15 "(...) and this bag was just dancing with me. Like a little kid begging me to play with it. For fifteen minutes. That's the day I realized that there was this entire life behind things (...)" Mendes, S. (Director). (1999). *American Beauty* [Film]. DreamWorks Pictures.

to refer to this idea of being some sort of medium or channel. That I mediate between my own experience, the possibilities of my body, the space and the conditions that are already in place. I also go back to your invitation to think that the feeling of space is already in my body and I am the space at the same time.

Parallel to that, I was also thinking about dancing and skills and its connection to experience, awareness or alike. Alva Noë comes to mind.¹⁶ I feel that as a dancer, I am used to changing my perspective to be with other angles. Even in my verticality, I'm always in the potential of another perspective or another relation. As someone that comes from dance, I sense myself in a state of readiness where I am ready to change perspective and to change my relation with where I am. And I think that's also something that dance, as a skill, carries, like that possibility of three dimensionality.

R: I just came to think that maybe it's also important to differentiate a little bit when we say dance. Because there is also a lot of dance that is not working at all with this change of perspective. It's this contemporary dance not as a dance style, but as a relationship to the art form. To me, contemporary, in that sense, is something that has gone through the modern and the postmodern movements in art. And I think one thing that happened, especially in postmodernism, was the question of the art form itself.¹⁷ And not just dance, but all art forms. A sort of collapse. If it's not learning how to paint anymore, what's the skill of the painter? There, I think some of those skills that you mention about awareness of one's own position, capacity to change position, the decision making and the grounds from which I make my decisions... That kind of awareness to the practicing of the art form has to do with it, for me, with a contemporary approach.

I talked yesterday to the BA students in dance and choreography and I was asking them: what is a good dancer? What are the skills that you need to develop to become a good dancer? And then I was saying to them that, a lot of times, I can watch a dance performance and have a feeling that they're not dancing, because I don't see that kind of relationship that I was trying to explain: the relationality and the playfulness and some kind of "being in the feedback of your own experience while you're doing it" that I think a contemporary performer does. It's like you are in dialogue with what's happening while it's happening. This mediation that you mentioned of that experience, it's not just the mediation of the choreography. It's the mediation of this particular situation with me in front of you.

Q: When I think about the manifestation of the practice, and the fact that we've done it for half an hour, I think of the importance of time and frames. We need the time to shift, to be and embrace that change of atmosphere. Through doing it, there is this moment of letting go or losing track of conscience in the sense that neither you, nor I can trace what we did.

R: And that's a part of it. That's also why we have these archaeological drawings we do and that are based on the fact that we don't remember everything we do in the practice. Some things are gone. We are also deliberately trying to put ourselves in the mind state where we're not making decisions and where we are supposed to lose ourselves a little bit.

Q: Exactly. I think it is interesting going back to reinforce this idea of the contemporary. The form of contemporary dance that we practice. There is something about losing sense of position that is very different in relation to other lineages of dance where the position is all that matters. Where you need to be in the right position. You need to take the right position. And in this

¹⁶ Noë, A. (2004). *Action in perception*. MIT Press.

¹⁷ For context: Goldberg, R. (2011). *Performance art: From futurism to the present* (3rd ed.). Thames & Hudson. And (more dance-focused): Banes, S. (1987). *Terpsichore in sneakers: Post-modern dance*. Wesleyan University Press.

score, it's almost like we use the space as a way of losing track.

R: Yeah, and that's also part of this making it strange, no? Back to Timothy Morton's words, it's more like noticing how strange things are. So, it's not that you need to make them strange. It's more reminding yourself of the fact that they're really strange. Like things are really strange, but you forget about it through habit. And when you move outside your habit, it's like all this strangeness of things, for example the strangeness of this office, appears because you're not anymore habitually using it just like an office. It's not that we are making it weird, it was weird already before. Its weirdness is revealed through relating to it from a different perspective.

Q: At some point, we even had the joke, with one of our colleagues after talking about the practice in the office, that by doing this practice here we cleansed the space a little bit.

R: There is something cleansing in the sense of... I love this expression in Danish: "at ryste posen", have you heard that? To shake the bag. It's like if you have sweets in a bag and you're going to see a little bit of what's in it by shaking it. In that sense, I think this way of revealing the strangeness of things is a bit like shaking things up. Loosening up the concepts a bit. The things that are there become different, and so do we. The space becomes different for you because you've had those experiences there. It's like when you have a party or something in your apartment, and afterwards, the place is a bit different. It's not just your home anymore.

Q: This also makes me think, again, about Alva Noë and how our experience of things affects the way we are with them. I don't need to go around this table to know that it is a table, because my cognitive self has already had a similar experience of being around a table like this. At the same time, now I can say that I've been around it. And that I've been under, I felt each side... the resistance of the legs... I've heard the way it sounds when it's dragged. In a way, it is a noun, it's been used as a table. At the same time, the possibility that this could be something else... has been reawakened or shaken up.

R: I think this is the indiscernibility. You're making things a little bit more indiscernible. As if you unplug the conceptual. I think that's what you're saying when you say that when the table becomes only the table. Like, it's not the thing anymore that can be different things, not the material, not the form, color or texture. It's just the table. A table. But then when you engage with it, all of a sudden, it appears as a thing that is not just the object of use and its function. It opens up to experience in a different way. This could be the role of art, no? To open up things to experience. And there is that thing you said about positionality, maybe, you know, like the shift of relationship.

Q: I go back to how this kind of practices and procedures have been tried to be translated into words. And also, these distinctions between saying that you are sitting on a chair, saying that you are chairing or that you are being chaired.¹⁸

R: There is a very nice lecture online that I saw with Timothy Morton, that we mentioned a few times already. There's a typical critique to anthropomorphization, and how it turns the world into an extension of the human. But Morton says that, obviously, we anthropomorphize. It is the only thing we can do. Everything we touch becomes anthropomorphized. But it works both ways. So, when you're being chaired, the chair is also being humaned. I'm now anthropomorphizing this mug as I grab it, but the mug is also...

Q: ...mugging you!

Q: Speaking of anthropomorphizing. I feel this space, that we share here and where we did the practice for half an hour, is very anthropomorphized already. I think most of the things here

18 Deleuze, G. (1990). *The logic of sense* (M. Lester, Trans.). Columbia University Press. (Original work published 1969).

are created in relation to certain movements and functions of the body.

R: Yeah, and that's why these spaces are an extension of us, no?

Q: At the same time, we go the other way around as well.

R: We also become the spaces that we are in.

Q: The score is not site specific.

R: No.

Q: But yet the space is doing the score at the same time as I am the space. What seems clear to me is that the indiscernibility that I inhabit here is only possible because I am here. The score is the same and the premises are the same but the way that gets mediated through my body, maybe the way it becomes an expression, will change.

Usually, I propose an approach to "being moved by the space and move with the space". The strangeness comes already from not staying in an action-reaction relationship. But comes from acknowledging the tendencies and where I already am. So, that I remain in it and with it.

R: I think what you're describing is what I was trying to say before around making things strange. Like, you don't need to make it strange. It is already strange. So, it's more about noticing how strange it is. When you're just connecting to this felt sense and you unplug a little bit the conceptual understanding. For instance, you create space between letters to create a word. Then the word becomes a sound. W does not mean anything. It's like, aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaj. So the same thing with the chair I'm sitting on. It is not any more a function, but it's an experience. And when I start going to that experience, and let that guide me, things start to happen. When I open that door, that perceptual door to my own experience, things happen.

Q: I'm also thinking about the role of performance around these frames. Most practitioners have been in places where we've been in a sensorial approach and we've been asked to "experience yourself sitting on the chair". And then a certain performing sometimes comes with it. I feel that there's a bit of an assumption, and maybe that is a misjudgment of mine on the way we perform experience. We are always in experience. I am already sitting in a chair.

R: Yeah, but maybe there's something about this impression expression. You are doing it, but when you're perceiving and you start to have other impressions, you also start to express them differently, no? Like if you're expressing your impressions, when you're opening up to that experience, you are getting impressions. And if it's not just about you getting impressions, but also expressing them, then performance shows up.

Then there's also another side of performance which is this awareness of an external eye. Whether there is an audience or not. Or with the camera like we did the other day, as we filmed our session. I became very aware of where the camera was. So, I'm performing for the camera in that sense because I'm organizing the space in relation to my awareness of whether I'm in the frame or not. There's performing happening in relation to that, and if you're doing it with an audience, then there's also the experience of there being an audience which also gives you impressions. So, there is not just you experiencing the chair, but also the awareness of someone watching you experiencing the chair. That is also an impression that needs to be expressed. So, in that sense, the audience is also the chair, or, I mean, you're being audienced and you are performing them. They are audiencing you and you are performing them. That angle or aspect of the activity also needs to be recognized.

We had it with this previous research project, called *Movement Material*, where we had a score that we were practicing.¹⁹ Just like the score we have now, it wasn't for an audience. But

¹⁹ <https://ddsk.dk/da/projekter/movement-material>

then we had people watching and we needed to deal with that. And something is turned on. Like for us, for example, here in the office space the other day, there was no audience, but the cameras were there. And then we were there for each other, as well, so there's an awareness that I'm performing it a bit for you. Even though you're not watching me as a spectator, I'm aware of your presence and that you might see me. That level is present. Anyway, so with this project *Movement Material*, when we had to deal with really performing it, doing the practice in front of, you know, 50 people, some questions came up: Do we need to change anything? Do we have to compose? Should we make some agreement? Should there be cues? Then we said, "no, the audience is a condition", just like it's different for us to be performing or practicing outdoors or in the studio. So, it becomes part of the experience, rather than saying, "I now need to perform my experience for the audience", I'm trying to still only experience the thing that I'm supposed to be exploring in my research, but I'm doing it in the condition of being watched. I'm performing it for them and they become a part of the experience that it's also being performed.

Q: In a way, in this kind of practice, as more different conditions appear the more you need to take them in.

R: Yeah. It would have been very different if we practiced here in pitch dark. And it would also have been very different if it was 4 in the morning, or, if you know, our mothers were here. It's all these conditions that affect what it is and an audience member, an audience, is not different from that. The audience will also do something to the space that I'm experiencing.

Q: I was happy to hear you speak about this impression because, in a way, I think my comment comes a bit from a bit of a judgment on the way we perform experience. Specifically, in somatic practices. But at the same time, now, listening to you, I'm also just like, "ah, but that's the way people think this becomes an impression". Which is not any different from me, that I don't want it to be like that. You know? At the end, we are dealing with the same. We're trying to attend to experience and to the felt sense and work with that in order to mediate some sort of expression.

R: And of course, there are conventions, no? About what it looks like. I had a colleague that was also commenting on this when talking about BMC.²⁰ He mentioned something about how it's strange that whether you are experiencing and working on the vestibular system in your ear or if you're exploring some gland, kind of looks the same. I don't see the thing that you're experiencing, I see you experiencing. And that, certainly, can fall into a convention.

Q: When we were together, I appreciated not having to care directly about you. I feel that we built trust by sharing the experience.

R: There's something about *The Swarm*, I mean, the fact that I use that word for our working group. I used it already during the PhD when I formed the research group for that work.²¹ It came about from discussing different names of animal gatherings. In English there's quite a lot of them: like flock, herd, pack of wolves, or school of fish. We ended up choosing the swarm because there's movement in it and it has something amorphous about it? Like it's not established or...

Q: It's also a buzz.

R: Yeah, exactly.

Q: The space in between each individual in the swarm.

R: Yeah, it's a vibration. Something about that way of being together that fit. We are together, but it's also everyone for themselves in their little buzz next to each other. I'm both with you and

20 <https://www.bodymindcentering.com/about/>

21 Ölme, R. (2014). From model to module: A move towards generative choreography (Doctoral dissertation). KTH Royal Institute of Technology. <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:kth:diva-145355>

not. We don't talk with each other, or have direct eye contact but we move together. There is something specific about that way of being with each other. Maybe it is that being *with*. Like we are *with* each other more than together.