

PROCEEDINGS from keðjaReykjavik

Saturday Oct. 9, 2010

Opening speech.

“Free My Body, Save My Soul” by Rui Horta, choreographer and cultural manager:

What happens to our bodies in the time of a digital area? Our bodies are irrelevant to our survival and we only remember our bodies in its absence.

But our body is the only thing that we have. Art mostly discourses on the absence on something. Therefore working with the body is very interesting and relevant in an art discourse, since our bodies are absent to us. The body never lies. There are codes in our bodies that are pre-cognitive.

Regarding communication, it is not what we say, it is how we say it that matters - body language is essential. That is why dance is so vital as an art form today. The body is right there.

□

In some contexts we as humans are a cultural phenomena (for example in the context of nature), in other contexts we can be the natural element by being a body (the only normal living thing in an airport for example). We are nature (the natural body) in some contexts – culture in others.

A cross disciplinary approach is here to stay. A horizontal reality with no centers – a global way of living.

Team work is key to dance work – we can't dance by ourselves.

A creative environment.

Art is a reflection and transformation of reality. Not a reproduction.

Art has little money. Creating is a risky business but culture is part of making money. We are not a risk of society. An art laboratory is expensive as is knowledge and science but also just as important.

Dance and body are the youngest and most uncompromising art forms. The last decade there has been a return to the body. Dance is no longer about steps but about concepts and ideas.

Collaboration with other artforms. Transdisciplinarity is the way.

We cannot consume art as another product. Sustainability is important. By trying and entering the process of creating, one becomes a more interesting artist. Thus collaboration leads to more interesting artists.

Sharing experiences and learning from each other are key words.

Politicians don't understand it. Sustainability is important.

Art is becoming our culture. Creativity is a factor in our daily lives today. If we did not need creativity, machines could do everything in society. People live from art - it is happening more and more.

You have to be really good as a performer to get out of your own environment. Luck is important as well.

Take nothing for granted and jump at every opportunity to grow, and understand that it is a long process.

Lack of broad basis of education, sharing of knowledge mean that young talents won't stay as talented. The sustainability takes time. Time to learn and grow.

The body is better at remembering than forgetting. We need time to forget what we need to forget. A highly trained body is stereotype and not free from codes. It takes time to improve the quality of our art form.

Saturday Oct. 9, 2010

Thinking Out Loud, Are We There Yet?

4 statements and a panel. Moderator: Una Thorleifsdottir

What does it mean to collaborate? In the last decade we have seen interdisciplinarity in education, different art forms coming together to create performances. Where does it leave the art forms themselves? Where do we stand as artists when boundaries between art forms are eliminated?

Anna af Sillén de Mesquita:

The longer you work in research , the more difficult it becomes to know what you are working with. Seeking a greater artistic autonomy. The complex territory makes it also fertile and a place where I can take action. An interdisciplinary life style. The key factor is curiosity. I want to redefine, rearticulate and rediscover thoughts, world view, habits and choices. In the conflicts and frictions something interesting happens and we can find new common ground that can lead to new artistic discoveries. We can take chances. Every individual in the project needs to take a creative role to meet new territories.

Change on an individual level.

What about creating an interdisciplinary society? By sharing ideas every individual is a constructor of the world. We will have as many worlds as there are individuals.

Eli Borchgrevink:

Brought up with two strict curriculums. Ballet and Martha Graham.

Most artists have their educations from abroad but when they come back to Norway the door is closed, because they don't fit in.

There is reason to look at the long term results.

We need an art world of different art forms with clear boundaries that enable them to collaborate across these borders. Talking about identity - communication between rather than infusion of the art forms.

The body is the most unique instrument. Why do we lose it to other instruments? The evolution of dance has lead to a more understandable and communicative body language.

Mingling with other art forms with integrity, does not make dance as an art form inferior.

Ine Therese Berg:

Drawing on different experiences reflects on the way many artists work today.

The notion of hybridity: the assumption that dance is interdisciplinary is highly exaggerated. It's not dissolution of genre as a whole. The art disciplines has not exploded. Interdisciplinarity is an approach and not a label. Dance is still the most important element on stage to dancers and choreographers. Dance is a discipline with special needs and special value. Dance has been specialized because of commercialization. Interdisciplinary dance is hard to sell. People already find contemporary dance, as it is, hard to understand.

We are not there yet in terms of accepting hybridity.

Most dance educations do not prepare students of this discourse in the art field. A lack of theoretical backbone.

Where does dance stand? Which dance are we talking about? Contemporary dance has not had a clean break with tradition. Dance is situated between sport, art and entertainment.

Dance still works on terms that are no longer important to the contemporary art field. Too much empty form in dance tends to confuse. Dance becomes isolated.



Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson:

Are definitions and boundaries necessary? The boundaries defines music from all art forms. As a collaborative artist you are among artists from other disciplines. Moving back and forth between the two roles as singularly and collaborative artist. Always in the dilemma of what world you want to live in. The concept of the singularly artist that developed through the Romantic period almost depicts the artist in the role of God. Self definition becomes important. Performance art is hard to label. Performance art has developed during the last decades and has been an experiment. It has been constructed but also destructed.

As a singular artist you are your own master but also confined by the space of your art discipline. In collaborations you don't control everything. You are challenged. Your contribution comes as a part of a whole but is not the whole itself. Thus the collaboration of a group can generate a new art.

Sunday Oct. 10, 2010

The artist of the future. Moderator Dragan Klaić:

The career of the artist has become more diffuse:

- Dominated by mobility, multiple simultaneous jobs and situations.
- Artists are freelancers rather than employees.
- Moves around a lot. Nomadic existence.

Europe has become a shared intercultural space

Shared European cultural space, and shared europ educational space.

Artistic networks have become the dominating infrastructure in the international art world.

The Bologna process has not created a harmonization of the educational system but a standardization of the educational system.

On the other hand, for most artists today, applies:

- They make little money, they have long periods of unemployment.
- Meanwhile they have become their own producers, employers, and distributor (e.g. via Youtube), and thereby have got a greater autonomy as artists.

Question for Joost and Ragnheidur: *How do you recruit, shape and prepare your students for all these instabilities?*

Ragnheidur Skuladottir, Dean of the Theatre and dance department of Iceandic Arts Academy (IAA)

IAA consists of:

Five departments. 470 students.

Because of its small size, cross-dicipline is necessary.

Department of theatre and dance established in 2000.

Acting (2000); theory and practice (2005) – inspiration from US and UK, rooted in contemporary performance theory; dance (2005).

10-12 students accepted biannually to each program.

The idea of the dance department came from outside.

IAA teaches the students how to be individual artists/employers, apply for funds, etc.

Lacking: MA and PHD-studies.

IAA is the only art academy in Iceland: therefore has to look abroad for inspiration.

IAA dominated by young staff.

Manifesto of the department (2004, reviewed in 2009):

- Society of independent creative artists.
- The world is our point of reference (students must travel in body and mind)
- We are progressive, curious and inventous.
- We view theatre and dance as a state of mind rather than institutions.
- Technique = a tool, not a goal. (we get critiqued for the students' technique).
- We use history as a platform for the future.
- We use material from other forms of art and science.
- Anti-complacency

Dragan:

QU: *Isn't it unusual for an institution to have a manifesto?*

Ragnheidur:

We were in a defensive position. We needed to be clear about what we were striving for.

We try to make the students critical, eg. of the manifesto.

Practical reference to the theory. Students get theory class and afterwards try it out in practice.

Dragan:

Your dep is based on Stanislavski/1900-theater-conception.

QU: How can you dynamize this model?

Ragnheidur:

We have to train students to have a wide perspective but also to be able to work on a stage/classical acting.

Dragan:

Students today are not driven by classical theater wishes/drives/knowledge but by **fame**/reference to television/film.

Ragnheidur:

There is a challenge in the fact that the teachers and students have different backgrounds and references.

Joost Rekveld, Arts & Science, Den Hague

Art science interfaculty

I compare discipline to the world:

- Solid ground: represents that which doesn't change, only very slowly, through erosion and continents drift, etc. Is fixed.
- Liquid: represents the experiments.
- Gas: represents space, what is possible, imaginable.

The world of the future: you can navigate freely.

Only need is a plug to plug in, which makes communication possible.

"The open society" (Karl Popper)

"The open system"

"The open work" (Umberto Eco)

"Open form" (from music)

OPPENNESS:

Flat free surface.

Underneath: machinery (Yves Klein)

Organisms construct themselves interacting with society/the world.

We get skills/develop through interaction (reaction-reaction/input-output /loop)

Artist of the future: small organism in the liquid.

Artists of the future have to be Auto-disciplinary:

Have to develop their own/new artform.

Have to develop theoretical framework.

Have to construct their own house.

Schools of the future: must be like a pond/pool. Must be solid, but with access to liquid and gas.

Interfaculty of image and sound

Started by: Dick Reimakersch (?), musician, theoretic.

Students collaborated to make performances.

Composer does multimedia theatre: Peel it apart and look at the elements.

Bar: Space and music based on Piet Mondrian's new plastic theory.

Sonic Acts Festival (arranged by alumni students from the faculty).

2006

Conservatory and the academy.

Image and sound had become a fixed thing: something that everyone understood.

Composers and filmmakers used the same tools: eg. computer.

Biotechnology and nano-technology changes our world. Artist have to be aware of that.

Today, the interfaculty makes research, eg. Robot-technology.

Research project: eg. to develop new senses.

Structure of the interfaculty: the curriculum involves:

Research projects

Labs

Courses: theory, etc.

Question from audience: *How do you prepare the students for the harsh future?*

Ragnheidur: I am sick of thinking about money. No one will suffer in the future.

Question from audience: *In the kedja seminar and performances, I haven't seen any embodiment. Are we going away from the physicality?*

Ragnheidur:

No, we are looking at physicality in new ways.

Joost:



We have a stage lab about body training/moving.

The virtual reality-idea, that we don't need our body, is old-fashioned.

Intelligence *is* embodied, connected to senses, something that we learn when moving around as children.

Question from audience:

Culture politics and artistic challenges are deeply connected. How do you prepare the student to not only write the right application, but also shape the world?

Dragan:

Problem eg. in dance training: dancers use time to stand in front of the mirror instead of looking at the world. Dance performances reflect that self-absorbedness.

Question:

Many students don't see other performances, because they are too much into their own art/work.

How do we get the students out of the academy before they have to go out to the world?

Joost:

There is a difficult balance between working in the academy and connect to the world. We let the students work a lot in the field.

Comment from audience:

Isn't there a clash between an institution manifesto and artist manifestos: you teach students to be experts in their field but also to be new.

Sunday Oct. 10, 2010

MIND THE DANCE

John Ashford masters five dottirs and three sons with quick-force choreography questions.

Panellists (Contenders): Jón Páll Eyjólfsson (You are here)
 Louisa Gunnarsdóttir* (Transaquania)
 Saga Sigurðardóttir (Great Escape and Humanimal)
 Steinunn Knútsdóttir (Eternal Piece on Relativity)
 Steinunn Ketilsdóttir (Steinunn and Brian DO Art: How to be Original)
 Leifur Þór Þorvaldsson (Feedback)
 Vilborg Ólafsdóttir (Safari)
 *replacing Gabriela Fridriksdóttir



The presentation takes the form of the panel game Mastermind, with John Ashford acting as the host.
Magnus Magnusson

PART 1: THE HOT CHAIR . The participants answer questions in their chosen subject.

Name: Louisa Gunnarsdóttir

Occupation: Assistant choreographer

Specialist subject: Transaquania

In the piece we follow the evolution of creatures from the Blue Lagoon. All water has disappeared, so they must evolve and adapt to life thin air. Louisa was originally one of the creatures, but nature kicked in and made her pregnant. In her new role as assistant choreographer, she found it inspiring to be the mediator between creatures/artist and the God Gabriella - the costume artist. Louisa saw the performance this weekend at the theatre and felt proud and happy.

Name: Saga Sigurðardóttir

Occupation: Dancer/choreographer

Specialist subject: Humanimal

'Love conquers lust and the male polygamist is persuaded to monogamy through maturity'. The people involved in Humanimal are a group of people from the arts; two choreographers, actors and artists. All had equal voices in the making of the piece. The process was risky, but giving, as you have to fulfil many roles. The collaboration was like an animal farm, a polygamist experience. The set is made of clothes – no other animals wear clothes. Ideas arose through the project, through debate between performers, and as a product of the animal farm experience. Maybe the unseen collaborator is Orwell?

Name: Jón Páll Eyjólfsson

Occupation: Theatre maker

Specialist subject: You Are Here

How will theatre change island? Theatre should be a part of the democratic conversation, the artist acting somewhere inbetween nation and parliament. It is not the case that institutions are broken - perception and narrative IS reality. There should be dissidence in a healthy society. The company tried to create a tragedy, but ended up with a comedy instead, because this is how the audience perceives violence. The performers wear make up as masks that distance the artists. The performance is poetry.

Name: Vilborg Ólafsdóttir

Occupation: Theatre maker

Specialist subject: Safari

Jon: 'Why have you not yet engaged in conversation with you 5 target people? I know that because you haven't approached me'. Vilborg: 'You weren't on my list'. John walks out. Kviss búmm bang have done some performances in Berlin. They rarely perform themselves, and once did a piece where there were no actors, no audiences, they just handed out scripts to the participants. They perform anywhere but in a theatre, in private homes or where ever. They have recently done a 6 week long life style course, teaching people to get 100% success in all aspects of life. The performers themselves have of course found a state of being where they are always the best possible version of themselves.

Name: Steinunn Ketilsdóttir

Occupation: Dancer and choreographer

Specialist subject: Steinunn and Brian DO Art: How to be Original

John: 'How did you decide what to leave in the studio as a private matter and what to bring to audience?' Steinunn and Brian keep the things that interest them, or that stay with them. Performing is always different with an audience, seeing people react to what you do, performing at Kedja felt like 4 premieres in one day.

Name: Leifur Þór Þorvaldsson

Occupation: Theatre artist

Specialist subject: Feedback

There was a piece of glass in an earlier version of piece. Now the glass is gone. The specifics of what he says in the performance are not important. He is not concerned about conveying information. Audience should not think about dance as something that emanates meaning, there are no outside world connections. For instance, when the audience experiences lights going up and down do they think about experiencing it?

Name: Steinunn Knútsdóttir

Occupation: Mother

Specialist subject: An Eternal Piece on Relativity

The company The Professional Amateurs are a group of professional actors, who are amateurs in the sense that they only do what they love to do and want to do. They do this in all their pieces. The piece is one of a series of five. It is more or less the same people in all the pieces, and they plan to show all five together. They are concerned with human existence on a deeper level; what drives people, what is the stupidity of

man (such as the financial crisis). Everything is relative, words and actions are always relative to a context, which we can not control.

PART 2: PANEL DISCUSSION

John is always shocked about the wealth of work coming from Iceland. How is it an advantage or disadvantage to be isolated in the middle of the Atlantic?

Louisa has worked mainly in Iceland. She says you can be curious and not too influenced by others, so you find your own way, something unique. It is necessary, though, to go abroad to find a bigger audience.

Steinunn Ketilsdóttir was educated in New York and she thinks it is good to not be influenced. But you can miss a bigger community to see more diversity, and just more shows. The access to people is easier in Iceland, getting to a light designer etc is easier.

Jón: Everyone in Iceland does something else. He doesn't like to take inspiration from theatre, but thinks we must lead the "new enlightenment" that can lead to political and environmental change. His piece got longer than its original version when the language changed, he really needs people to understand what they say.

Saga: It is confusing not to know where you live. Art and dance are not bound to a specific place, so it is easier to be in many different places. When you create work in Iceland, there might not be as many dancers as you like, so then you work with other artists instead.

Steinunn Knútsdóttir: Artists function on a broader level for instance as teachers or in other jobs. This is a good thing, as it gives the artists a bigger influence on many levels. The bad thing is that you see the same people everywhere and it is not always clear what is what, you may, for instance see the same actor featuring in grass root stuff and TV commercials.

John: It is hard to find someone with same area of interest in a large city. In Berlin you can easily meet people from other discipline, and easily start creating work. A small community such as Iceland should make this more possible?

Vilborg: There are relatively few people of importance, so they need to have conversations with normal people.

Vigdir Anderson (audience member, film maker etc): Reykjavik is very exciting. If for instance you need someone to do a soundtrack, there is always someone who knows someone, and everyone is excited and willing to contribute.

Ása Richardsdóttir (organiser): When there is a cause, people join in, you go out and do it no matter what.

John: Do you feel restrained by lack of finances?



Everyone: Yes!

Jón: The artist must be responsible and responsive. Iceland is a little inbred. You cannot always be honest, when everyone knows everyone.

Leifur: The quality can go down when you can't hire professionals.

Louisa: It can be a good thing to pair down to the essentials.

Steinunn Knútsdóttir: In some ways crisis is good. It gives us the urge to speak, and it is good to feel this emergency, that you actually care. People weren't happy buying lots of stuff. You go abroad because you need to in order to bring back inspiration.

