

Untitled Script for Cold Reading

This script was assembled by Althea Thauberger following the event presented as part of the exhibition *Putting Rehearsals to the Test*

Untitled Script Roles

Althea 1:

Althea Thauberger
The Facilitator

Artist and filmmaker from Vancouver; Artist-in-Residence in Photography at Concordia University. Unprofessionally enthusiastic manner.

Althea 2:

Same as Althea 1

Danya:

Dayna Danger
The Artist

Emerging Métis, Polish/Ojibway artist; work challenges perceptions of power and sexual, and intercultural identity; in the final stages of a M.F.A. production at Concordia University. Speaks with conviction.

Mia:

Mia Donovan
The Filmmaker

Known for documentaries *Inside Lara Roxx* and *Deprogrammed*. In production of third feature about a radical group doing acupuncture heroin addiction treatment in the 1970's. Speaks softly with articulation.

Diane:

Diane Roberts
The Theatre Director

Known for powerful productions that bring together Indigenous and Minority Creators Will be Artist in Residence in Theatre at Concordia University in 2017. Speaks with ease and generosity.

Am:

Am Johal
The Community Organizer

Director of the Office of Community Engagement at Simon Fraser University, Woodward, Vancouver; known for housing and human rights advocacy, as well as journalistic and scholarly writing. Often paces while speaking.

Elena:

Elena Razlogova
The Media Historian

Associate Professor of History at Concordia University; known for research on broadcasting and Cold War era state surveillance. Speaks quickly with sense of humour.

Jacob:

Jacob Wren

Artist, Writer, Performance-Maker

Known for performance works *Every Song I've Ever Written*, and *Adventures Can be Found Anywhere, Même dans la mélancolie*, and recent books *Rich and Poor*, and *Polyamorous Love Song*.
Smiles while speaking.

Althea 1:

Hello everybody, we are going to start now. Thank you for coming to this event. Thanks to the gallery and staff at the Leonard & Bina Art Gallery for supporting this event as it developed. I want to acknowledge our presence tonight in unceded Mohawk territory, in an institution that is a university, in a contemporary art gallery, in an exhibition of artists' work, and alongside each other.

Althea 2:

I want to thank Robin Simpson for asking me to contribute the public programming of this show. I want to acknowledge the collaborators who generously contributed their words for this script. I invited each of these folks because I admire their work and I thought they would have some wise words reflecting on the questions at hand. Thank you so much also to the readers who have volunteered to take on these roles. Readers, please identify yourselves after being introduced.

Althea 1:

Dayna Danger is an artist and photographer.

Dayna:

(greet everyone in your own way)

Althea 1:

Jacob Wren is a performance-maker and writer.

Jacob:

(greet everyone in your own way)

Althea 1:

Elena Razlogova is a media historian and radio broadcaster.

Elena:

(greet everyone in your own way)

Althea 1:

Am Johal is a writer and community organizer.

Am:

(greet everyone in your own way)

Althea 1:

Mia Donovan is a documentary filmmaker.

Mia:

(greet everyone in your own way)

Althea 1:

Diane Roberts is a theatre director and theatre artist.

Diane:

(greet everyone in your own way)

Althea 2:

I am grateful to all of these folks for agreeing to contribute their thoughts to this script. They all knew that I would be putting their words slightly out of context. In fact, I have made some of them agree with each other, where they actually might not. We are going to read a montage of their comments, reassembled in the form of a kind of conversation tonight. This obviously is a cold reading. Please don't be stressed about speaking perfectly. We all stumble on words, mispronounce things, and make mistakes when reading. If you get tired of reading at some point, if you feel like leaving, or just taking a break, this is no problem at all, just turn in your script, and together we will find another volunteer to take over. If you do not have a roll, and you feel like reading, please just join in and read along.

Althea 1:

I was thinking of the format of the panel discussion. They are often kind of boring or predictable, but I am rather fond of them. I was thinking about how to organize a panel discussion with people who may or may not be present, and then editing it like a film. The way this often works in a film is, you interview a bunch of people who might have different perspectives on something, and then you cut up the interviews, make a montage out of them and then create a kind of group conversation. My editing might be tedious at times. I hope we can get through it together, but if it all falls apart, at least you can keep this document you are holding on to as an artifact of the attempt. And, for everyone here, please feel free to move around over the course of this event. You can look at the work, you can stretch your legs, or take a different seat. Please be comfortable.

Chorus:

(move to positions in front of Falke Pisano's leaning wall)

Althea 2:

Finally, I want to thank the students who are here. They have helped me conceive of this event. Amir Atouani, Miko Mazza, Roxanne Lapointe, and Pierre de Montalte hey will be participating as the photographers of the evening. Matt Daly, Georgia Graham, Awa Dembele-Yeno, Léa Incorvaia, and Steven Smith Simard, and I will take the role of the chorus. If you are inclined, please join us in the chorus. The chorus actions and lines are included in the script, starting now.

Chorus:

(reading excerpts of Falke Pisano's leaning wall)

Sentences for conversations, filming and editing

- 1 Take a subjective point of view
2. Several worlds exist at the same time
3. Not reducible to one, not placed opposite one another
4. Differences are not erased nor become conflicts
5. Looking from a close distance at the singular
6. Linking in non-linear form
7. Connecting detail to detail
14. Does this mean establishing singular relationships instead of plural ones?
15. Does it matter how the details (the images) are produced?

8. The potentiality of the fragment for its references taken into account at all times
17. Can text or conversation fragments be charged with vectors of time?
19. Can it create in the discourse cartography a space for passage?
9. Its present, its history, its future
10. Movement in these vectors of time
11. Narrative is drawn from movement
12. A different perception of time is established through spacial imagination
13. Relinquishing predetermination for new formations
16. How is the logic of the detail be applied to discourse?
19. Can it create in the discourse cartography a space for passage?

Althea 1:

This exhibition, as you know takes place across three venues and it is curated by a trio of really smart women curators from Vienna. The theme of the larger show is rehearsals, and the stated, kind of, concern of this part of the show is the script. The artists are mostly from Germany and Austria or the Netherlands. That makes me wonder about how the show is working here.

Dayna:
Yeah.

Althea 1:

Like a lot of shows, some aspects that seem really engaging and some that seem alienating.

Dayna:
Okay.

Althea 1:

If I'm coming in doing this conversation, I'm trying to think about how much of it gets to bigger questions about if the show is interested in rehearsals and scripts as a place of potentiality... how are they dealing with the script of art discourses that the show traffics in—that contemporary art practices traffic in.

Chorus:

(reading excerpt from: Subject Put to the Test*)

For in the end, the rehearsal is also aimed at the institution and history of modern art, which thus appear as an instable repertory of rules and practices, and brings the validity of their constitutive rituals of rejection, which are based on repeatable norms, into the arena: Composition is followed by decomposition, the professional performer by the amateur, plan and script by participation and social experiment. Tellingly, the rehearsal also serves as a means to bring artistic decisions into agreement with the concerns of social milieus beyond the classical exhibition visitors. By operating as a source code to produce symbolic and real situations, the rehearsal becomes a fictionalized form of instructions typical of Conceptual Art – a “linguistic” form of work, then, that allots the viewers the status of potential producers.

Althea 1:

What is the script of looking at a show? What are the theoretical scripts of contemporary art? We all lip sync these tropes, and there is this issue and there is this form of criticality. Does this show interrupt those scripts? Or does it reiterate, or create new ones according to the model? They are powerful scripts, or ones that embody art power.

Jacob:

I have to say that those are scripts that I have not figured out at all.

Althea 2:
You have not figured out? Or you are against...?

Jacob:
Maybe I'm against it.

Althea 2:
Well, I suppose I am too. But also.... But you can't just be against it because...

Jacob:
Because then you should be for something.

Althea 2:
So what are you for?

Jacob:
I am for vulnerability. In art.

Althea 1:
We have been talking a lot about vulnerability and visibility. About responsibility for the visibility and perhaps subsequent vulnerability of people you are working with. Of subjects. Dayna from the perspective of a photographer, Am from the perspective of political organizer, Mia as documentary maker, and Diane as director.

Am:
What came up for me was the notion of the political press conference where you are talking about an abstract policy idea. Like say a single mother who isn't getting the child support from an abusive husband, lets say. So you can talk about it as an abstract thing, but then someone walks into your office and says: "this has happened to me." And you go through the permissions of whether they want to speak about it in public. Somebody might give you their informed consent and say I am ready to speak about this. But that comes with all sorts of things about them being vulnerable in public.

Diane:
Uh huh.

Am:
But at the same time as they give their permission, they are not necessarily...

Althea 1:
...fully aware of...

Am:
Understand the ramifications of what it means to be public.

Diane:
Uh huh.

Am:
But through the political lens and through the communications apparatus, when they are placed in that position of vulnerability to be there, it is a complicated thing about vulnerability and power. Vulnerability combined with visibility, and the ethics of that.

Diane:
Uh huh.

Althea 1:
And in the political area, it creates a very powerful presence, doesn't it? This combination.

Am:
Because you have the politician, you have the person living through the situation. It tells a powerful story, but then you are also open to all sorts of forms of adjudication by a public who have different levels of capacity to understand.

Althea 2:
Where is the responsibility in that?

Mia:
I have a responsibility to my subjects. And I can define that. They want to tell their story, and if they trust me with that I want to do it successfully on terms that work for them, and reach as many people as possible.

Althea 2:
Do you want to reach as many people as possible?

Mia:
Yeah, it depends.

Althea 2:
I was thinking of this performance of Jacob's. As a counterpoint.

Jacob:
We just performed in Chicoutimi with a project *Adventures can be found anywhere, même dans la mélancolie*) that we performed here, where we rewrite, page by page, *The Book of Disquiet*, by Pessoa, to make it a little bit happier.

Althea 2:
...and then do you perf-

Jacob:
We perform each page, and when we finish reading it, and we read them all again at the end and staple them all into the book after we finish reading each page.

Althea 1:
Uh Huh.

Jacob:
Creating what we call a monster book.

Althea 2:
...and how was that.... received...?

Jacob:
...So they found what we were doing, like, way out there.

Althea: 1
Right. Right.

Jacob:
Like, so far out that they could barely read that we were doing a thing. But it was interesting. But, yeah, it was confrontational. I would say people were rather... provoked by what we were doing, and with how anti-spectacular it was. Many people felt there was nothing to look at all. They just thought it was nothing. A lot of people did not even want to stay long enough to watch us finish a page and read it, so they had the feeling that nothing happened except us writing.

Althea 2:
But that is something.

Jacob:
It was something.

Althea 1:
Well, I wanted to ask about your writing.

Jacob:
Well, I started as a playwright and very quickly I couldn't stand it, because I felt like watching people say lines written by other people just seemed wrong to me. As I've often said, I felt like it was watching a politician lying to me. So then, it became a search about how to be on stage as yourself.

Am:
Well, in politics there is the capacity to transmit and be taken seriously. You have to be practiced but not plastic. The language that they use and all of the mediation of professional communications, and all of that kind of stuff, which is really about safety. Its about risk management. For institutions, and that kind of thing. But also, depending on how you are situated as a politician, or an activist or some other person functioning in the social sphere, sometimes you are trying to get an affect, right? Each of them have their own kind of way that allows them to be a real person, lets say.

Althea 1:
Uh huh.

Jacob:
And say things that came from you.

Althea 2:
Uh Huh.

Am:
And they have to work at it because the structures are against them in a sense. There is a performativity to that but there is also an aspect of trying to stay real to where they came from.

Althea 1:
Yeah.

Jacob:
...What kind of structures could enable that.

Althea 2:
Uh Huh.

Jacob:

How to think about performance not based in the body but based in words, but not only in words. The more we did that work, the more it felt that the only way it would have any reality to it is if it was not the same every time. As soon as it is the same every time, you feel it is fake. And the more space you might have to make it different and respond to whatever else might be happening, the more—

Althea 1:

What might the situation that is happening be?

Jacob:

Well, someone might be yelling back at you, or fainting in the audience, or you could fall through a hole in the floor, like we did in Dresden.

Althea 2:

Right.

Chorus:

(moves to Yoko Ono *Grapefruit* book, looks for piece)

Jacob:

Or you could have a new thought, or be in a bad mood, or something could happen that you want to bring up. Or you could have gotten a bad review yesterday that you want to respond to. Or there are things about the city that you are in that you want to mention.

Althea 1:

If those are scripts, what do they look like? More like outlines?

Jacob:

We don't have anything written down. Our productions are getting very simple- Like a game with one rule, or two rules where you have a lot of freedom over how you interpret those rules. My books are also based around an element of structure and an element of freedom.

Chorus:

(reading from Yoko Ono)

WALL PIECE FOR ORCHESTRA to Yoko Ono

Hit a wall with your head

1962 winter

Althea 2:

So...

Jacob:

So, with regard to this exhibition, it gives me the feeling that I, that we don't rehearse, that we work and discuss, but we don't do anything that might be rehearsal in this sense. Like being able to repeat something. In fact, the opposite. We have a process of conversations that tries to create guidelines so that we won't repeat. Or as little as possible.

Chorus:

Or as little as possible.

Althea 1:

And by this exhibition, do you mean...

Chorus:

And by this exhibition, do you mean...

Jacob:

I mean, not every work. But many of the works represent for me a kind of old fashioned idea of rehearsal, which is about being able to repeat something. Well, whether its old fashioned or not that is a kind of prison that I'm trying to escape.

Althea 2:

Well, can I ask you about an exhibition that takes on these thematics, that seeks to situate itself in questions of testing and repetition, what you would want from a show like that.

Am:

Well, that is really not a fair question, but I think there is a value in looking at informality and play that is involved in more formal role-outs of projects and performance. For me, notions of performance function primarily outside of the artistic realm, and so, for me, what would be interesting about what a show like that is trying to raise is what can be recovered from these notions of rehearsal or repetition that can illuminate what happens in the social and political realm, whether that is formal politics, community activism, rather than in an artistic and cultural sense. Like in terms of how that lands down in a gallery and the affect it might produce.

Althea 1:

Right.

Am:

Any kind of utopian or neo-utopian consideration of a social project requires rehearsal and repetition. And testing. In that sense, the question of the political and social realm often runs into questions of scale. And durability of how projects can continue to sustain themselves over time. The capacity to transmit into different fields.

Althea 2:

What do you mean by utopian?

Am:

Trying to...

Althea 1:

Trying to make the world a better place?

Am:

Trying to build out a social project. A new idea that you are trying to land down in the real world and build out into real change. Be that policy-wise, various forms of intervention.

Althea 2:

Okay. How does that relate then to the question of scale?

Am:

When projects or ideas are being germinated in political spheres, they often start out with a small group of people bandying about an idea and then building and developing it in a smaller scale. This

most often happens in private rather than public. This tends to be on the more democratic and participatory side of things.

Althea 1:
Because they can establish their own protocols?

Am:
Yeah. But once you get to the point that you need to make something more public, the performative aspect of how you communicate it out...

Althea 2:
Becomes really important...

Am:
Becomes very important. And similar to somebody working on a script, before it gets staged, there is a whole lot of work that happens in private, in the background.

Althea 1:
Right.

Am:
The term 'rehearsal' is not one that would be used, but in a sense, that is what is happening behind the scenes of a political context. There is very little visibility to those things, how things work before things go public. Sometimes you can talk in a really straightforward way, and sometimes you have to disguise your politics because you might be raked through the coals by mainstream or corporate media and how it adjudicates those politics. And so, those are questions of language and rehearsal that are mediated in the public terrain.

Althea 2:
...and that relates to a kind of writing.

Mia:
I would say that the first step of rehearsal is in writing the treatment. You have to write out a vision of the film, and be confident of that. Even though you might..

Althea 2:
You might not be?

Mia:
Well, you don't know...

Althea 2:
What is a treatment? Can you explain that?

Mia:
It is a script. You have to convince somebody that this is a story that needs to be told. That needs to be seen. You need to paint a picture for them. That can't be a compilation of research. It needs to be more like: This is what the film is going to look like, this is what you are going to see... And you have to get them drawn into the storytelling. So, you have to visualize it. That is also an important step for me, because if I get excited about what I am writing, I hope that will translate to whoever reading it, and making decisions about it, getting excited about it.

Althea 2:

Is that when something coheres for you?

Mia:

Yeah. Because then when you contact people who you want to interview, you have a better sense of your direction and how those you want to interview fit into the picture.

Althea 2:

Because then you as the filmmaker have a script. To convey the project to someone who might want to be involved.

Mia:

Yes. Totally. Like for example, I recently talked to somebody who was a drug policy administrator under Carter in the 1970's and I had to get him excited about this film. That could be intimidating. But after writing the treatment, you kind of see it already, and that helps. Does that make sense?

Althea 2:

Definitely.

Mia:

But you have to know that treatments change all the time. I was talking to some former Concordia students who are on their 42nd fiction film treatment. Or script. Their 42nd treatment and they are finally going into production with that seven years later.

Althea 2:

Wow. So, it was rewritten so many times, because?

Mia:

Finding feedback, different producers get involved, you learn more and change your ideas, you know? You meet different actors, they have suggestions... So many things. The same happens in documentary, but with documentary, you are negotiating with people's real lives. The more you get to know people, and understand what they are sensitive you, you become more responsible in representing them. I mean, its their lives.

Chorus:

(reading excerpt from: Subject Put to the Test*)

For in the end, the rehearsal is also aimed at the institution and history of modern art, which thus appear as an instable repertory of rules and practices, and brings the validity of their constitutive rituals of rejection, which are based on repeatable norms, into the arena: Composition is followed by decomposition, the professional performer by the amateur, plan and script by participation and social experiment. Tellingly, the rehearsal also serves as a means to bring artistic decisions into agreement with the concerns of social milieus beyond the classical exhibition visitors. By operating as a source code to produce symbolic and real situations, the rehearsal becomes a fictionalized form of instructions typical of Conceptual Art – a “linguistic” form of work, then, that allots the viewers the status of potential producers.

Althea 1:

So, we have been re-reading an excerpt of this text, written by two of the exhibition curators. It was published in 2013 as a preliminary articulation of the ideas in the show. I was thinking that we could think of that as a treatment. But in terms of the script of how to look at the show... I'm trying to think about what they wrote about the idea of rehearsal and the space between the symbolic and real. My question is where is the real here? And what are the behavioral and gestural scripts?

Elena:

This reminds me of a recent conversation that I had. When you talk about gestures and rehearsal. There was this important media scholar who came in and gave a seminar. John Durham Peters.

Althea 1:

Who is it? Zond...?

Elena:

Peters. Peters. John Durham Peters.

Althea 1:

John Durn Peters. Okay. I'll look him up. John...

Elena:

Durham Peters. It was a paper. He gave a paper. For the seminar we read a paper. It was about breathing as a medium. And then the conversation was about: can something human, be a medium?

Althea 1:

How do you mean something human?

Elena:

Well media in the in media studies sense, media is something technological, human made. Techne. Originally that would be media of transcription and transmission. But he argued for a more expanded definition. He believes in God, he is a Mormon, and he came up with this idea that everything can be a medium. The tides can be a medium.

Althea 1:

What does that have to do with believing in God?

Elena:

Because it is only medium if it is made by somebody.

Althea 1:

Oh my God!

Elena:

But that is not a useful way of thinking about it. But we did have a useful discussion about whether a body in dance is a medium. His distinction was. What was it? Between technique and technology. Technique is a mode, so definitely dance is that. You are under observation, rehearsing and reproducing.

Althea 1:

Or an actor? Reading, using body and voice.

Chorus:

(move close to Katarina Zdjelar video monitor)

Elena:

But is it a technology? A dancer argued for yes. A body in dance is like a radio set. It performs a program. The dancer trains herself repeatedly, and that makes her a technology. So the point is that rehearsal produces techniques and maybe technologies. But that is only when the body is performing a prepared program, not when the body is doing something else. According to rules that are learned.

Chorus:
(join pronunciation sounds of video, continuing through conversation.)

Althea 2:
I saw this video a number of times before I realized what was going on. And that is maybe why I liked it because I thought it was something different than what it is. It is in fact a voice coach working with a student who is trying to speak a second language without an accent. To speak unaccented.

Jacob:
So many of these pieces make me think that rehearsal has a goal.

Althea 2:
Right. Well this definitely does, right? In the subject matter. And this one definitely does (pointing to wall mural). And this one does, maybe. I mean not an immediate goal maybe, but as a kind of aspirational thing. (pointing at leaning Falke Pisano wall)

Jacob:
That makes me wonder why I've been fighting so hard with having a goal. My whole life.

Althea 2:
You have been fighting so hard with having a goal your whole life?

Jacob:
I think that having a goal is the opposite of being an artist. (pause) In some way that might be a total fantasy on my part.

Althea 2:
Yeah. You mean, like, when you are making something, having a sense that it is going to look like something, or mean something, or be somehow working to...

Jacob:
Yeah

Althea 2:
But you hope things for your work. You must have goals for your work? Even if they are not in a literal sense.

Jacob:
Yeah but I'm fighting them. Or I'm fighting against my own goals specifically, and then fighting against the idea of having goals in a general sense.

Althea 2:
So, you its like shooting yourself in the foot?

Jacob:
Yeah.

Althea 2:
Yeah. I think that's normal though. Well, maybe not for super successful people.

Jacob:

That is what I want to do. I mean if I'm not doing that I feel I'm not being an artist.

Althea 2:
And then in the general sense?

Jacob:
If I have the feeling that I know where I'm going, then I feel like I'm not exploring enough. Or I'm not fighting enough to discover something I don't know.

Althea 2:
Really. As long as you are work--

Jacob:
And there is a turning point in any work where its going to be what its going to be.

Althea 2:
Exactly.

Jacob:
When its, like...

Althea 2:
When it is, like, over for you?

Jacob:
Well then I have to force myself.

Althea 2:
You have to finish it.

Jacob:
I have to finish it.

Althea 2:
But then...

Jacob:
...But I don't want to know what it is for as long as possible. Or I want to keep alive the idea that it could be anything for as long as possible. But at some point, enough things get decided, that its not going to be anything anymore. I want that point to come as late as possible.

Althea 1:
I mean look at all of us right now. We are performing a program, but aren't we always doing that? I mean we have ways to conform to norms, architectures, objects. The way we move our faces. The way we use our voices.

Chorus:
(Cease vocalizations. Take new positions in the gallery)

Elena:
Well, ok architects deal with this in the organization of space.

Althea 1:

Or you can organize a condition that encourages some different behavior.

Elena:

There was this performance. It was organized in the MAC. I don't even remember the guy, if he was Canadian or not. The artist had several people from the area. Professors and artists. They were asked to rehearse a series of conversations in English and in French.

Chorus:

(take new positions in the gallery)

Althea 1:

Sorry, who were the people doing these conversations?

Elena:

They were recruited from the local intellectual scene. They were intellectuals. A bunch of my colleagues were doing it. Some artists too.

Althea 1:

Okay.

Elena:

...and so they had these stories that they learned. The visitors to the museum knew what was going to happen. You knew that you were going to have to interact with these people, so it was already as a performance space, not just a regular museum space.

Chorus:

(take new positions in gallery)

Althea 1:

What made that difference?

Elena:

Just knowing.

Althea 1:

Oh, right.

Elena:

Actually, I was asked to do it but I decided not to because I get nervous sometimes, and then I can't speak very well.

Althea 1:

That happens to me all the time.

Elena:

For me, I am fine when I am in the classroom or on my radio shows, but the art gallery is different.

Chorus:

(take new positions in gallery)

Althea 1:
What about the gallery is different?

Elena:
Well, it's a new environment. I'm not sure what will be expected of me there. When I teach, I know the information I want to convey so if I stumble a bit, it's okay. But in the museum setting, I thought that would be awful if I stumbled in someone else's project. So anyways, we walk into the room. And I knew half of them, but we had to pretend we did not know each other. And they started these conversations. The phrase that starts the play is "Welcome to the Situation." I think it was called *The Situation*. The whole space. They would go in circles, in these prepared little speeches. And they were all kind of philosophical. The ones that I remember were about the environment and about travelling. But they were kind of silly. So, I walk in and one of the guys says about how you can learn so much from travelling, and travelling the world is really cool, and I felt like this is something we discussed in my post-colonial theory class when I was a student, that travel tourism is not really the best way to go. So, but you could not really react because there were only certain things that they would respond to. You could not have a conversation.

Chorus:
(take new positions in gallery)

Althea 1:
Sounds kind of like a Tino Sehgal piece. He is another artist who works in this way. Hey, maybe it was Tino Sehgal!

Elena:
Maybe it was! I can look it up
(reaching for phone)

Althea 1:
No, its okay. No, no, look it up this is interesting, it could be really interesting to relate to what we are doing with this script in the gallery.

Elena:
Yah, but ok, it didn't work. In this case, it did not work. I mean unless it was just supposed to make you uncomfortable because that worked.

Althea 1:
Okay, make you uncomfortable, but also kind of test your

Elena:
Interaction...

Althea 1:
Endurance...

Elena:
(with phone)
So...Tino Sehgal, how do you spell that?

Althea:
Tino is T. T. T. Is it just T.I.N.O.? And Sehgal is. Its S. S. E. G. H. A. L. I think.

Elena: Okay, I got it. Yeah! Its him!

Althea 1:

Cool! Wow, okay, cool, so basically, these people, who were the performers in the work, these people who you knew, they had been given this... this script.

Chorus:

(take new positions in gallery)

Elena:

The script.

Althea 1:

That was limit.

Elena:

Limited. It was limiting.

Althea 1:

Limited.

Elena:

Well, they were not allowed to respond to direct questions that were not part of the script.

Althea 1:

Right.

Elena:

They would ask you a question, and they would expect your answer. But then

Althea 1:

If you didn't have the answer-

Elena:

If you tried to... Okay. If you tried a question that was about the meta thinking behind The Situation, they would just pretend they did not hear it. Like: "Oh I see we are going in circles, and I wonder what will be next." That is not how you are supposed to respond. You can only respond to the philosophical piece. And even then, if you tried to critique the philosophical idea behind it, there is no script that allows that person to respond. They were not allowed to go beyond.

Althea 1:

So what would they...

Elena:

They would just move on to another person.

Althea 1:

So what were they allowed to respond to?

Elena:

I don't know.

Chorus:
(take new positions in gallery)

Althea 1:
If you participated in this, say, particular way that you were supposed to, then they would respond to you?

Elena:
Yes.

Althea 1:
Like if you said: "Yes, I agree, travel the way to self-actualization, and I just had this amazing trip in, like, Thailand." Then they would respond?

Elena:
Yes. But I can't remember if I was afraid to address them directly on the issue of tourism and post-colonialism. But I think I tried to respond about the ecology section, in a way that was mildly critical. Only certain types of answers worked. Basically, I thought it did not work.

Althea 1:
Huh.

Elena:
I mean it definitely made you uncomfortable because there was this group of people, like, moving around you. And your conversation did not work because they were not allowed to respond, so it would trail off and they would start with the next person: "Welcome to *The Situation*." So the spatial construction of discomfort definitely worked. But intellectually, it needed other questions, more open-ended texts. Without so much judgment. There was no space to disagree.

Althea 1:
Was there anyone who was able to insert themselves into the script?

Chorus:
(take confrontational positions in gallery)

Elena:
Not while we were there. I mean a couple came in after us, a Francophone couple with a kid and they clearly did not know what to do and they left right away.

Althea 1:
I've experienced that with his work too, but also... Because he has different kinds of works that are not meant to be so interactive. But I've always thought, of this work of his that I know, that the most fully realized receiver of his work, or let me put it this way: the audience of his work who most fully experience his work are the performers themselves.

Elena:
They are the real audience.

Althea 1:
Well, I'm not sure.

Elena:
Well that makes sense because the people who did it, they had a good time, and they bonded.

Althea 1:

Right, well, interesting, but also they would have met all these different groups of people and witnessed so many different interactions, that they would know the work really well.

Elena:

Kind of like hazing. Having a tough experience together that brings you closer.

Chorus:

(take relaxed positions in gallery)

Jacob:

Well it kind of goes back to the script of the contemporary art world. There is maybe a difference between the discourse and what we see actually happening in the work. Which maybe is the central question in rehearsal. Is what you think you are doing in rehearsal what you are actually doing? You don't always know.

Diane:

Where does that dialogue go? It is that negotiation that is a pathway. I am kind of drawing as I am talking. It is about finding pathways for negotiations to happen, and it is in the making of the pathway that stuff is! Its not in getting to the end goal. Solving the problem. Its not about that but in how you travel that road. *And then what?* It's the: *and then what?*

Althea 1:

And then what?... Is that the question that happens when the production is finished? Or is that always a question?

Diane:

I think it is always a question. It always needs to be a question. It is: *...and then what?* after the first day of rehearsal. It's: *...and then what?* after the first performance, before the last performance. *...and then what?* That is what keeps it fresh. And present. And real. As we were talking about before. *...and then what?* needs to be always present. Otherwise it is by rote. ...Ceremony and ritual are, I have found, ways through. Ways to get through some of the difficulties. To find a way to create ceremony. As African-descended peoples, we don't have our ceremonies. We have to find and figure out what they could have been. And so we piece together. We piece together these fragments from things that maybe were taught to us. And we have to find where it resonates. For example, is libation part of my practice? And if it is, am I satisfied with water, or do I need to have liquor? When you are in a shared space with Indigenous Artists, and have a requirement to negotiate these protocols, an easy thing would be to say, okay, because you have your traditional medicines in the space, we won't bring alcohol. But how can I honor my own ancestors if capitulate to some one else's ancestors? So I have to find a way to bring the ceremonies together without it being some kind of New Age free-for-all.

Chorus: (take positions around the circle of guests)

Althea 1:

So, then, if I can ask something about working with. About creators who don't come through professionalized streams, about working with people who have lived experiences that are weighty and who have dealt with things that are really, like, ongoing structural violence, as would presumably be the case with your Arrivals Project that brings together different artists. Indigenous artists and minority artists. I wonder how you how that affects your process when there could be things that are triggering. You are working towards positions of visibility in that there will be performance. That must be scary. In your workshops and rehearsals, they must rely on you as a director. How do you create structures that are unique to those situations?

Diane:

It comes down to the power of gesture. I teach gestures. For example, there is an exercise that I do in many community workshops. It is simple. **Standing up with hands open. Sitting down with hands closed.**

Chorus:

(repeats actions as they are spoken, and continue with actions)

Diane:

Standing up with hands open. Sitting down with hands closed. I say: "We stand up. We sit down." And then all of a sudden after we go through a series, I stop instructing, and we just do it. And then, all of a sudden, it's a ritual. And it has meaning. And then I will start to tell the story of what we've done. And then I start to tell it as a memory. "I remember there was this time that we were in a circle, and we were standing up and we were sitting down." And so I describe what we went through. And so what we learn from that is how easy it is to move from gesture to ritual, to ceremony, to story, to memory. And that seems to open up pathways for an ease of creation. So we don't have to be drowning. We just have to live. To be. And to be in each others presence and to be seen, and to see.

Chorus:

(sits down in circle)

Elena:

I really like this.

Althea 1:

Me too. And just thinking about how we are seen. ...we are being photographed now, by the art students. Are there any surveillance cameras in the gallery?

Chorus:

(looking for surveillance cameras)

Althea 1:

Can we go back to this conversation about gesture and surveillance?

Elena:

Well there is definitely evidence of different behavior with cameras around. ... In the Soviet Union it was less about being observed by technology and more about being observed by other people. For example when you walk down the street, you would not look in people's eye. You would never smile or look friendly. You need to have closed off faces.

Althea 1:

Because they want to communicate that interaction is not welcome.

Elena:

Right. When I moved to California people would walk up to me on the street and ask if I am all right, if I am sick or something. In California, you have to smile. You have to look happy for the other person who is there observing you. It is not clear that one is better than the other. You are still forced to do something.

Althea 1:

Similar tyranny, different results.

Elena:

But there are a lot more studies of what people are likely to do when observed. Self discipline is different. And you know, there was a sense in Soviet Union that whenever you are on the phone you are being monitored. My grandmother to this day believes she is being listened to.

Althea 1:
And she is right!

Elena:

Well, I actually think there is much less listening going on in Russia right now, and nobody really cares about my grandmother's secrets as far as I know.

Althea 1:
So, what is thank like on the phone with her now?

Elena:

Well, she shushes me if I say something like a family secret. She says:
"Don't tell that to the KGB!"

Althea 2:

So, I think that part of what Diane was talking about with her practice is about unlearning these gestures that are honed through oppression, and about my conversion with Dayna about the work all of us need to do in unlearning.

Dayna:

Unlearning is so fucking hard, and it took me a while to where I am now.

Althea 2:
Does it take our whole life, or not?

Dayna:
It is ongoing.

Althea 2:

I think we can think if this as a really important aspect of repetition, or rehearsal in life but also in art. What is unlearning in art practice?

Dayna.

In art and in life. For me, it is really looking at what I had been taught, and flipping it. It was about questioning everything. And listening. Listening a lot. Once you accept that how you have been raised is fucked; that your unconscious impulses are affected. When you think about this in your self, you think, "Oh, right, there is a lot of suppression. Then you can move forward and ask "What can I do to make or give space for others? What does that even look like?" It can be about actively supporting people of colour with practical things, supporting others. People supported me, and I can do the same for others. Who am I giving my energy to, and who am I lifting up? When you do the work, then you realize...

Althea 2:
...how much more needs to be done.

Dayna:

Yeah. And it's also about admitting what you have done. Have those conversations and admit that you have made some shitty decisions.

Althea 2:

...and do you think this is also the work of the art world?

Dayna:

It is incredibly important. I was just at a feminist conference with women talking about language, about sexism in a number of different worlds, and there I was talking about representation, but come on. Annie Pootoogook was just found in a fucking river. Here we are doing this academic blah blah. Do you even know whose territory you are on? Who is around us? Annie won the Sobey Award. How does that even fucking matter when things like this keep happening to such legendary, brilliant people like her? How does the art world even matter? Who is getting that opportunity to speak? I ask that of myself, as a white-passing mixed person. Having a platform to speak. At least when I have an opportunity like that conference, I can say what I need to say. When I have an opportunity, does that mean I should decline and request that space be given to another person? Its hard. I don't want to give things up. I would lose money, its hard. That is what is hard about reconciliation. People don't want to give up things. I don't want to give up things! Why would I expect some cis white bro to want to give up his space? Right? But..

Althea 2:

..but it's the only...

Dayna:

..but its actually the only way. There has to be serious decolonizing. That is the work that needs to be done. Do you bite the hand that feeds? You can work both inside and outside institutions. In these spaces we have a lot of work to do. We have to create discomfort when we know things need to change.

Althea 2:

Well, we are in a university, a university that is in an urban centre. Is there a difference in the obligations there? I am talking about programming, and ideas of reform.

Am:

If an urban university is doing outward facing programming, the ability to access the public is greater. They are also closer to the social issues at play. When there is a crisis of space, then the conversations around issues tend to be mediated by decision makers like cities, health authorities. Et cetera. They are not neutral. The university is rightly or wrongly viewed as a neutral space, so it can mediate some of these conversations, and can also elevate community groups so they can have access to decision makers, for example.

Althea 2:

Well, then how do you see the obligation on the cultural side, do you see the discussion or art programming as having an obligation to immediate community?

Am:

I see it as a programming obligation.

Althea 2:

Do you?

Am:

I don't see it as the only thing. But for example, in Vancouver, in the Downtown Eastside, in our neighbourhood, 12% of the population is Indigenous, where it is far less in other parts of the city. Do we have an obligation to work with our program so that it reflects who is in our neighbourhood? I would say: Yes, we do. And we should be doing that with community partners who have been working on these things for a long time. That is in artistic and cultural programming as well.

Althea 2:

Well, what is your responsibility?

Am:

My responsibility is two fold. The first is to the public mission of the university, as a positive, progressive force in society beyond its teaching and research mission. To bring the university back toward its orientation social justice.

Althea 2:

Bring it back to that? Was the university ever about social justice?

Am:

I think from the inception of the idea of the university, it had those intimations.

Althea 2:

Did it? What are you talking about?

Am:

Well, say, the equivalent of universities in Greece. The more modern university of Bologna in the 11th Century. There were periods in the late 19th, early 20th Century, like John Dewey who talked about the public mission of the University. There is also the Jesuit College tradition. They always had an important social aspect, how they viewed the role of higher education. Social justice movements in the 60's, civil rights movements, feminist movements, and others have tried to inflect these movements into the roles of universities. The more modern ideas of "service learning" or "community engagement," comes out of the mid 80's and early 90's. And now you see a proliferation of it in the 2000's. I mean people used to do these things far before, they just did not call it that.

Chorus:

(move to positions in front of Krüger & Pardeller mural wall)

Althea 2:

Ok. Well thanks, but what is the second part of your responsibility?

Am:

Well the second is the responsibility to the community that I work out of. Supporting cultural and community organizations that relate to the public mission of the university, which is to take some of those ideas that might be considered to be on the margins, to help them enter into the mainstream. That is in the porousness of the institution. So, trying to get the ideas from the university, the research teaching, out into the community in a way that is relevant for the community, and also to bring ideas that are being generated in the community out into the university and broader society. ...Both of those things. We are trying to maintain a relationship between arts and culture, between social justice, department of justice, and the city that we are in. That is what we do from inside of an art school. But I don't think anything that I am talking about now is relevant for this thing that you are trying to do.

Chorus:
(silently reading text on mural wall)

Althea 2:
Institutionally, how is it even possible to think about this porousness?

Am:
Part of a role like this is that you are also talking about institutional reform. You can't do the work that I do without on some level talking institutional reform, because most of the things that you want to do on the community side beats up against university policy and rules that either don't allow it to happen or don't allow it to happen well. So part of my role is to attempt to stick handle those things so that the community can access those things in the institution in a way that works for them. It is a kind of smuggling in of a community agenda into the institution, which you can do once or twice, but to make it work in a long term sense, you need to change those policies. It can't just be something that happens on the margins of the institution as something on the side. Part of my role is to cement it in as part of what they do everyday without it being viewed as an attachment or an add on. Otherwise it is not sustainable. That means changing the university on a policy level from the institutional apparatus and the inertia behind it. You change the way people teach. Change the way research is done. Change the community impact of what is being done because there is a new knowledge base entering into the institution that traditionally has not been valued. I have no idea how this relates to your topic.

Althea 2:
And who benefits? Primarily the university?

Chorus:
(continue to silently read text on mural wall)

Am:
Ideally there is reciprocal value in the way that it is produced. It can help social movements in a way that it creates a broader understanding. It can work towards policy makers being influenced by work that is being done on the ground. The majority of our programming happens with both a community and academic partner. We are rarely organizing things on our own. New networks come about.

Chorus:
(read excerpts from Krüger & Pardeller wall mural)
CASES FOR ACTION

RKS IS NOT VISIBLE OR CLEARLY DEFINED AS AN INSTITUTION. THIS MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO CLAIM ANY IMPORTANCE OR VALUE + NO INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY. RKS WILL IN TURN HAVE NO SAY IN THE NEW POLITICAL CLIMATE AND LOSE OUT, BOTH FINANCIALLY AND IDEOLOGICALLY.

2.
COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ARTISTS-INSTITUTIONS-POLITICIANS, ETC. WHAT CAN WE GAIN FROM EACH OTHER?
ART + BUSINESS
-A TABOO OR A POSSIBILITY?

A2.
THE REGION WILL BE MORE ATTRACTIVE TO ARTISTS AND ART LOVERS

IT WILL BOOST THE CULTURE ECONOMY IN THE REGION
THE IMPORTANCE OF ART WILL BE MORE INTEGRATED IN THE SOCIETY AS A WHOLE
THE REGION WILL BE MORE ATTACHED TO THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. THROUGH
IMPORT/EXPORT.

A1
RKS ISN'T VISIBLE IN THE REGION AND THE
FOR BOTH ARTISTS AND THE
PUBLIC IS UNDERESTIMATED
THE NEXT STEP FOR PUB-
PRIVATE PARTNERS AS WELL.
RKS' ECONOMY NEEDS TO-
TO SUPPORT ITS ACTIONS AND
IF NOTHING IS DONE, THE
GET LESS ATTRACTIVE, ESPECIALLY
BUT IN THE NEXT TURN THE
CULTUR LIFE AS A WHOLE

Ability!
Readiness to perform.

Althea 2:

But are these professionalized communications and think tank operations not very similar in many spheres? Like for example, in corporate spheres, in various institutional spheres... That's public relations.

Chorus:

(go to Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit* book, turn to touch poem)

Am:

Well in civil society or community activism. People are functioning with very little resources to advance ideas that are often on the margins, or periphery of society, and attempting to elevate them into a more public space, so that institutional, or policy change can happen. People can be working through sweat equity, voluntary labour. Tensions can emerge when people come from outside, like from artistic, cultural spheres, or other trends, like "design thinking," they are bringing a field of language into play into an area that has its own methodologies and language.

Chorus:

(reading Yoko Ono):

TOUCH POEM FOR GROUP OF PEOPLE
Touch each other.
1963 winter

Althea 1:

There is a space between responsibility to subjects and collaborators, in their trust in you. And then your responsibility to your audience, and their trust in you.

Mia:
Yes.

Althea 1:

So, those interests are likely different. They have maybe an overlap, but they are still different.

Mia:
Yes.

Althea 1:
How do you find a balance between those things?

Mia:
I don't know exactly. You are making intuitive decisions all the time. But the other thing is that my audience changes from film to film. For the first film, I was not so interested in listening to distributors who wanted a broad audience. It was more of a complex psychological portrait of this compelling person. And that does not necessarily generate wide audiences. But for the new film, I want it to have a broad audience because the subjects are more overtly political.

Althea 1:
And you are thinking about policy, and the film doing work that is political work?

Mia:
Yes. And I am thinking about the audience in a different way, and I want this film to be extremely accessible.

Althea 1:
So how do you make it more accessible?

Mia:
Well, that's what I'm working on now.

Althea 1:
So, how... I mean, this is a hard question...

Dayna:
Accessibility is super, super important. ...I see a potential.

Althea 1:
Yes.

Dayna:
I feel like I don't need space for my own representation, but I can make space for other representations, other bodies. ... I don't consider the people who pose for me as models but I. I refer to them as individuals. ...when I did the *Big'Uns* series with the antler strap ons, most of the models—they felt empowered. But there had to be a kind of space safe for that to happen. It was like: okay, now you are naked, and wearing this thing in front of your crotch. This is really intimate. It could be weird... but its not weird because its like... I actually respect you.

Althea 1:
Yeah!

Dayna:
And its different now because this stillness is happening. There is this different vulnerability, but without such exposed bodies. But it is still putting out these ideas of like, kink, of identity. Its like: you are queer, you are Indigenous, and our sexuality is not usually our own, right? It can get us murdered. It is different.

Althea 1:

But there are scripts that are implicit in this too, ones that maybe people will be bringing to your work. As viewers.

Dayna:

I would say yes. It makes me think. In terms of subjects, there is so much access, or, there is no problem finding people to pose naked for me who are white and thin. Not a problem. The other bodies, that do not find that space accessible, are usually over-sexualized or not in control of their image. They are not given representation space. So that inherently becomes political.

Althea 1:

And so you are saying that a reluctance comes from, comes from, an experience and understanding of the representations of the non conforming bodies to be already controlled.

Dayna:

That is why I think about that all the time as a white-passing mixed person. So, I'm looking at fashion and pornography, and these cues in order to try to claim some space in these images or plays.

Althea 1:

And we were talking about accessibility in terms of audiences... you were talking about one of your shows here in Montreal, when people from different publics came. Like for example you work at an Indigenous Women's shelter and you were talking about women from your work coming to your show. Do you see opportunities or even obligation in galleries, in art circles, in this university, to be able to open things up for publics who are often alienated? Or do you see your work doing some of that work with audiences?

Dayna:

I hope so.

Althea 1:

Our work has work to do.

Diane:

...I'm thinking of spaces where there isn't a separation between the audience and performer, so in an open staging type situation, or community performance. Spaces like that. But for actors on stage—there still has to be a realness and spontaneity in a performer, even if they are working on a scripted work. If for example somebody laughs in a certain place in a certain way that they don't expect, they have to be able to live in that. And not just barrel through. I mean, I can't stand performances where they just totally ignore. If they drop something, they will just pretend it did not happen and walk over it... or if someone in the audience does something unexpected, the performers treat them like they are not there. To be able to breathe. To breathe with an audience. There are some performances that rhythmically are there. In Japanese Noh Theatre, rhythmically they are in sync with the audience, so that they take the audience, through their breath in certain ways, so each action is on the rhythm of a breath. That allows the audience to breathe in to the piece. That kind of relationship between audience and performer, I think, has to be alive. It has to be a living thing. If you don't have that, you have dead theatre.

Althea 1:

You have dead theatre.

Diane:

Yes.

Althea 1:

Well maybe this is also related to the goal-oriented rehearsal.

Jacob:

...And from my perspective that is working towards a dead thing. Which a lot of people like better.

Althea 1:

I think about relationships with audiences, in my film work, well, I hope it is alive. I feel my work so differently when I am alongside other people.

Mia:

...Because you don't really understand your own films, in a way. I mean, the first time you watch your film with an audience, you see it so differently.

Althea 1:

What is that?

Mia:

I don't know what it is. But I think it is so important. But I actually re-cut the last film after the World premiere, because I saw the film so differently with an audience and I needed to make a few changes.

Althea 1:

So then do you have a different reaction to your own film when you watch it with different kinds of people?

Mia: Yes, for sure.

Althea 1:

I feel that too. I guess, because I am putting myself in the position of the other person viewing my film, and I imagine what they are thinking about it. But I can't do that until I am actually in the room with them watching the film.

Althea 2:

Does this help us understand the accessibility of our work?

Mia:

Well, that's what I'm working on now.

Althea 2:

So, how... I mean, this is a hard question... say, for the film you are working on right now...

Mia:

Right, because I'm still doing things my way, but the film needs to garner support for a cause, and I have to honour that this is going to be an activist film in a sense. I want it to have a broad audience because the subjects are more overtly political.

Althea 2:

Right.

Diane:

...Sometimes I might direct my collaborators in such a way as to provoke a response that I anticipate from an audience. And so we rehearse in that way. What if the audience responds this way? This is what we might do to provoke the audience in this way. It is way of manipulating the material in a way, to provoke a certain response. And then how do you react to that response? That is mostly with political work. You want to be able to provoke a reaction so that you can have a conversation. Another way of doing it is to have a semi-permeable process with collaborators so that they can stay present and real in the moment. How to prepare and rehearse with performers in order to allow them to be completely grounded in who they are and their reactions, so that anything can happen. It is about creating certain space. What protocols do they need to have in place that will protect themselves, but also how do they poke through the barriers that one would normally have between oneself and an audience member. How do you poke through those barriers? On stage.

Althea 2:

Earlier you were making the point about a successful and supported rehearsal process that enables "the real."

Diane:

Yes.

Althea 2:

And that seems like a contradiction or irony.

Diane 2:

I would say so. Because we are trained as storytellers and artists to lie. But to be alive and real in the lie.

Althea 2:

That takes practice.

Diane:

Right.

Althea 2:

And you were also touching on the points that the performer needs to be protected and supported. Needs to have processes or ceremony in order to build the strength to do what they do. But then it seems to me that realness or aliveness also involves a kind of vulnerability.

Diane:

Absolutely.

Althea 2:

So what about that seeming contradiction between strength and vulnerability and what the rehearsal process needs to do to accomplish that?

Diane:

It is about being naked. And available. And in order to be that, you have to know what your limitations are. You have to know when it feels right to go past those limitations. The rehearsal process is meant to take you there. In good rehearsals, there are things that strip away barriers. It's like peeling an onion. Skins are shed off until you get to the nub. It can be a profoundly vulnerable place. But if you are supported by the other performers, by the directing team, then you can go to those hard places. It really does demand everything of you.

Chorus:

(take positions around group)

Dayna:

As a director, I have to be serious. ... I have to have a sense of what I am doing. But not to be overbearing, but to allow the people to be confident, so they don't have to worry too much about what to do. I have to accept their experience.

Althea 2:

I don't know. It is also a thing of when to allow space for tangents and mistakes, when to be okay with not knowing what is going on or not knowing if you have pushed things too far. ...and when to stay on script.

Dayna:

I just don't know the answer. Am I empowered? Am I objectified? Who the fuck knows? I have to work. I don't want to be hopeless.

Chorus:

(stop performing)

Althea 2:

What about the way subjects or interviewees perform in documentary? Is that something you think about?

Mia:

What do you mean?

Althea 2:

I'm not sure.

Mia:

What I'm thinking about is how there can be a group dynamic. Like how it is different if it is just me or if there is also a small crew.

Althea 2:

That changes things.

Mia:

Right. There can also be gender dynamics.... And group dynamics. And with my first film, it took years of shooting until I found my first moment where Lara was not performing. But generally, if there is a camera in front of you, it is hard to ignore, even when you are being authentic. That is just normal. But I think I am always trying to find those moments...

Althea 2:

Trying to find what moments?

Mia:

These moments... like in that case it was a moment when she was real. This is hard to achieve in so many cases.

Althea 2:

And is that what you are after?

Mia:

It depends. With Inside Lara Roxx, yes. But with this new film, Okay, for sure, people relate to other people who come across as real. But then if it is a story you have been telling for forty years, about something you did when you were 19....

Althea 2:

Then you have this script.

Chorus:

(take viewing positions in front of artworks)

Mia:

You have a script. You can talk to a number of people about the same incidents, and they will all have a different take.

Althea 2:

In many of these conversations, or interviews that I have done, the notion of "the real" has come up. I use that term as well. And I have thought about how to think about it in relation to this show. Because one of my struggles with the show is that it is not particularly accessible and it does not have an active engagement with what we might understand as "the real." Despite the way the idea of the rehearsal is framed.

Chorus:

(reading excerpt from: Subject Put to the Test*)

For in the end, the rehearsal is also aimed at the institution and history of modern art, which thus appear as an instable repertory of rules and practices, and brings the validity of their constitutive rituals of rejection, which are based on repeatable norms, into the arena: Composition is followed by decomposition, the professional performer by the amateur, plan and script by participation and social experiment. Tellingly, the rehearsal also serves as a means to bring artistic decisions into agreement with the concerns of social milieus beyond the classical exhibition visitors. By operating as a source code to produce symbolic and real situations, the rehearsal becomes a fictionalized form of instructions typical of Conceptual Art – a "linguistic" form of work, then, that allots the viewers the status of potential producers.

Jacob:

Well it kind of goes back to the script of the contemporary art world. There is maybe a difference between the discourse and what we see actually happening in the work. Which maybe is the central question in rehearsal. Is what you think you are doing in rehearsal what you are actually doing? You don't always know.

Althea 1:

If this thing is important, if we are chasing it, but we can't really define it. How can we understand what that means? We are all working in spheres of representation, but we are all looking for something real. Are we?

Mia:

That is something that I think about all the time, but I also don't know how to answer it. With documentary, you assume that people understand that it is a take on reality. An interpretation.

Althea 1:

But then there are moments when something breaks through that. Right? I mean, I don't know what that is, but I know it is really important.

Mia:

Totally. But you can still have documentary that does not break through that, but that tells a really important story. Like in Grey Gardens, for instance, you can tell. There is a lot of performance, but there are also these real moments. And then it all blends together in this kind of truth. But then you can watch an Eroll Morris film. That is very set up. Staged and scripted. And there are some really important truths in that too. The outcome and negotiations with reality in how it might change things. People describe documentary that way. Negotiations with reality.

Althea 2:

I have been following some of Ken Lum's writings in the last years. I am also thinking about an interview he did with Rosemary Heather. His preoccupation with "the real" Vis a vis art spheres. This has to do with art and so called "non-art," and of course the intersection of art and life. But it also has to do with trauma and the limits of the linguistic, or the limits of representation. What does "the real" mean to you? In your work?

Am:

For me, some of the most interesting programming that we have done that gets to the crux of what is happening in the area, be it gentrification, or homelessness, addiction, all sorts of other things, and in fact our own institution is implicated in those processes. When we can get out of the way, and promote a conversation where people feel heard; things get said. I don't know how to describe it properly, but I know when it happens. And it does happen.

Althea 1:

How does it get facilitated? Okay, never mind that. What is that space? What is it next to? How does it become a thing?

Chorus:

(Move toward Falke Pisano mathematics wall)

Am:

It involves an element of risk. For the people participating and for us organizers and supporters...

Althea 2:

What do you mean by risk, because probably any programmer would say they take risks. Programmers who you don't consider to be, you know, particularly edgy, or something, they say that they take risks.

Am:

I..

Althea 1:

So, what does that mean for you?

Am:

I, for me, it means that right before an event is about to start, I don't know if it is going to completely collapse into dysfunction, or if it will just be the most amazing thing ever. Like sometimes, I just don't know. I just don't know. But when you take a risk and believe in something that could collapse, you have to be willing to stand beside whatever does happen.

Chorus:

(reading from Falke Pisano Panel 5)

5

According to Gabriel Tarde, the logical potential of the sentence is more effective than the logic of the discourse. In the logic of the discourse, “panoramic illusions” are at work: Illusions that neglect details in their singularity in order to construct the view of the grand ensemble. The logic of the sentence, however, departs from the singularity of the detail, the small difference of each phenomenon. It does not neglect differences or transform them into oppositions but looks at the singular from a close distance: at how one detail can be linked with the next detail in every single situation, one singularity with the next. This resembles the kind of “nonlinear editing” that a migrant is compelled to practice daily: linking heterogeneous elements in her thinking and actions, which would normally be regarded as contradictory. Transforming oppositions through the ability to adapt through continuous creation and innovation. In this way several worlds are allowed to exist simultaneously instead of being reduced to one world.

Based on: Angela Melitopoulos, Timescapes: The Logic of the Sentence

-6 Changing perspectives

-1 Exchanging one for plural

Source texts:

* Sabeth Buchman and Constanze Ruhm, "Subject Put to the Test." *Text Zur Kunst*, Issue no. 90, June 2013. Translated by: Karl Hoffmann

Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*, A book of Instruction and Drawings. New York: Simon and Schuster. 2000.

Falke Pisano, *The logic of the detail*, 2015
Vinyl, 203 x 470 cm

Falke Pisano, *The value in mathematics*, 2015
5 prints mounted on aluminum, each: 43 x 28 cm

Katarina Zdjelar, *The Perfect Sound*, 2009
Video, color, sound, 14 min. 30 sec.