

## DANCE RESEARCH NRW #16 in Bochum

**Interview at the end of the residency:  
“The Idea of Antidepressive Wear –  
Valuable moments –  
fashion art meets choreography”**

**Lili Mihajlović Rampre,  
Performer/choreographer/researcher,  
Slovenia & Germany**

**Tomaž Tomljanović  
visual/fashion artist, Slovenia**

*After six weeks of research in Bochum we would like to look back: What was the starting point and the question in your research and what happened?*

The starting point was my interest in understanding neuromuscular habitual movement patterns as underlying relations and connections in our lives generally. I see (as many others did in the history of dance and somatic practices) a great potential in developing and exploring (new) movement patterns as a basic model for our mental models of comprehension of the world around us and nurture the mutuality of their influence they have on one another.

*You have worked together with Tomaž Tomljanović, a visual and fashion artist, how did you meet and how did the idea come up?*

We knew each other with Tomaž from before. With my frequent visits to Slovenia, our meetings formed a clear desire to work together as we both found a common interest – it was the idea of choice – the choice we have on everyday basis to decide how we want to feel, what kind of body we want to inhabit in-

stead of reacting to the outside circumstance. Tomaž had a clear, developed concept of how he is supporting and realizing the mentioned through his own fashion designing practice. Together with my movement research we both recognized the need for participation, effect in our immediate environment with what we do and not keeping the activity isolated.

*What was the relation from urban art, urban dance styles, urban movement and fashion art?*

As Tomaž is active in creating street wear, urbanity is a notion he has long taken into consideration and approached it from various angles. My interest was more reconsidering “urban”, especially in the realm of dance. Seeing the work of Tomaž coming from and going back to the streets and then reflecting on dance, I picked up on the fact that contemporary and I assumed urban dance styles are very often divorced from the environment where they were produced. Not that anything is wrong with that, but I was curious how they were changing due to that. If urban dance appeared as an expression of a very particular context, I wondered what does it mean today when one mostly learns it only in isolated studio classes. I had an interesting talk about it with some of the Düsseldorf urban style dancers and choreographers, like Alida Dors from the Netherlands.

In the atmosphere of Paris attacks and anti-islamisation movements that were very present in Düsseldorf as well, it seemed that the only movement coming really from the streets in the (current) times were walks – various walks in the city – usually against a certain group or as a protest, rarely for a cause that would be expressed positively.

*Can you explain the slow walk?*

One of the first ideas that appeared was “slow walk” through the city. As Tomaž has been working with his colleagues on his “Anti-depressive wear project” as a cause – supporting and expressing our values instead of the negatives of them, and I was suggesting the above mentioned “walks” as the predominant movement in the cities today, a different type of walk seemed a logical step to express our interest. A walk, where we support slowing down in order to take conscious steps and take time to “wear” our values on ourselves/our clothes.

Then the whole planning was done to reach this – mobilizing the city of Bochum. Connecting with people, inviting them into our studio, into the conversations and explorations. We tried to propose something that leads towards a mass-slow walk and at the same time we tried to stay open for whatever new might appear and lead the way.

*Let's talk about our movements and body experiences as inhabitants in a city...*

In the beginning when I started thinking about urbanity and how it is proposed through architecture, it was the most obvious thing – that our movement are the midway between what the city suggests and how we adopt those suggestions and follow or don't.

According to the basic premise – bodily experience and movement being the fundamental model for developing other models of connectivity (cognitive, social ...), they anyway develop together, but the point is to influence or manage one to change the other – I was curious how urbanity might be experienced in the body; perhaps as a feeling of density, speed, constant flow of perception...

*The body space as urban space?*

In the same line of thinking the body is of course an arena of various forces forming it, playing out in it, but I was interested in how the specificity of urban planning (fast transitions between different locations, disappearance of city core, rise of the non-places) and urbanity as a cultural dimension affect the body that we “practice” every day on a purely physical level. For example – we don't walk a lot anymore, living in the city we rarely have a view accessible to us that would stretch out and reach a horizon, what kind of “bodies” - physical, mental states are being forgotten, simply because we don't practice them anymore.

*Philipp Unger works as a scientist at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum about urban questions, how did you meet him?*

Philipp came to the “Bureau for future movement planning”, a little room I have set up at the opening of Zeche 1 in order to meet interesting, helpful conversation-ists. And I did. We engaged in conversations about the mentioned topics and questions. As the residency was going towards the end, and it was clear that the “slow walk” will not happen, Philipp invited me to join their walk around the city of Bochum - *Bochum Bilanziergang in the frame of Experiment Stadtalltag and conduct the slow walk with the participants, which indeed happened on the campus.*

*You have met many peoples in Bochum of course...*

Apart from people I have met at the walk, I have found common points and delightful exchange with Essen based choreographer Foteini Papadopoulou, dramaturg and host of our residency, Sabine Reich, as well as some dancers from Renegade company. Tomaž has connected to “I am

love” cafe in Bochum where he collected “values” of Bochum people to put them on the t-shirts.

*What does all this mean for a dancer’s body, in which sense is this interesting in artistic practice?*

I think of dancers as a leading edge researchers in this wondrous experience we all share – having bodies and using them, especially for perceiving, sensing the world around us and consequently acting, moving in response. To think of “bodies we can inhabit” almost as shell we can choose, is exciting in terms of expanding the register of performativity as well as choreographic tools and approaches. On the most basic level I am interested purely in experiencing oneself and almost making an archive of how one can “stretch” herself in the intricacy of the available constellations we find ourselves in.

*What is the relation to fashion?*

My understanding of where fashion comes in, except as one of many facets of understanding and creating urbanity, was especially in the visualization of the bodies we practice as a kind of a second skin – so, whatever material we put onto our skin is of course suggesting a certain attitude, behaviour, body tonus even. It carries political and economical implications as well – where the piece of clothing was produced, who has worked for it and how, what is it made of, how safe/healthy the material is, how does it affect our organism, how does this reflect our culture and values...

*Tell us about the city map and paper patterns which we can see on the photos in the documentation.*

A somewhat naïve, but effective gesture to begin with – I have decorated the space with both – city maps as well as sewing patterns from Burda and similar. The idea was to deepen insight in how both prescribe and what kind of body they suggest – a tightened one, a relaxed ...

*What did you do with the Plastelin/Fimo Masse?*

Fimo Masse was a useful attempt at building a shell and experiencing the process of mutual influence the body and the material had on each other. It made these concepts very physical and visceral – the body shaped the material, but the material due to its texture, weight, density and so on dictated the body how to handle it, what kind of moves to use in relation to it. What I wished to explore more was to go from shaping another body, an armour almost out of Fimo Masse into shaping a miniature landscape according to my body.

*What didn’t work from the originally planned idea?*

Apart from the split in interest between me and Tomaž, that then consequently divided the invested efforts into half – it was a lot harder to get people interested and mobilize the city as we envisioned. It was in general very difficult to gather more than 1 or 2 people to meet, let alone a group to work with.

*What are the results of the research?*

The results of Bochum residency are for me personally sharpened questions and crystallized trajectory of my research, newly found material – like the visualization of the connection between the space and the body or the notion of the two being an extension of one another. This is

something I have also presented in the final presentation. It is also the material I continue to work with, with an idea of an installation/performance to be developed. What became very clear was to continue the research into the somatic field, exploring fascia in understanding kinaesthetic empathy and in comprehending how we sense space with it.

I have started focusing my artistic practice on the study of senses as a prerequisite for any metaphysical notion to be approached. I find all the mentioned very necessary in studying body knowledge and keep developing formats that support its further use, transmission and as a tool to approach other modes of perception, although they are intertwined.

Some of the material from the presentation reminds of “home made virtual reality” as it reassesses our own perception of space, as well as body as a space. My current research since the end of the residency is extending from Bochum phase, focusing on the receptivity of the body in relation to the proprioception – simply put, how different physical composition of our body provides us with various perceptions.

The interview was conducted by Christian Watty.