

## **DANCE RESEARCH NRW #18 in Cologne**

### **Interview at the end of the residency**

#### **TITLE:**

Reality Tales / Mental Surgeries

#### **THEMATIC FOCUS:**

Real vs. Virtual Spaces The dance research project in Cologne examines the relationship between reality and digital utopia in the context of current technological possibilities.

Enad Marouf, choreographer and performer, Syria  
Billy Bultheel, performer and sound artist, Belgium

*Enad and Billy, Let's start maybe with how you both first met?*

We met during our studies choreography and performance at the Institute for Theatre Applied Science in Giessen and from then we started collaborating together.

*You've spent 8 weeks in Cologne for your research project "Reality Tales/ Mental Surgeries". What was the starting point and the questioning of your research for this residency?*

Our starting "question" or interest came from a desire to question "Real v.s Virtual space" not as two separate spaces, but as a space where what we see and feel is instantly experienced as real and virtual at the same time, stretched between private and public. So in short we were questioning notions such as body and space within this scope of thought.

*How did you start to work in Cologne?*

For the Cologne residency we wanted to develop what we've produced in a previous residency into a video installation and simultaneously further our conceptual research.

One important aspect or methodology to our research is organising open and public research platform inviting other fellow artists and researchers that we share interests with. This turned into a public conference to which we invited Alexis c. Johnson, Simon Speiser and Ian Edmonds. We were invited as well to share our research and lead a reading group at digital feminism festival "dgtl fmnm" at Festspielhaus Hellerau, Dresden.

*Can you tell us more about the public event you organised here in Cologne?*

We curated at TanzFaktur a day with talks and screening under the title "Undetected". In Undetected we wanted to map out how techniques and technologies applied in science, medicine and digital culture, that constitute notions such as body and self. In the sense of the body as an individual, as a mass and as species.

Throughout the day we tackled three topics: Molecular Biology, Sexuality and the Pharmaco-drug Complex. We invited Cologne local scientist and artist Alexis C. Johnson to contribute her knowledge on epigenetics from the viewpoint of a bio-engineer. Simon Speiser dovetailed with his readings into literary fragments that highlight the grey zone between sexuality and technology in science fiction literature. And we closed the day by screening 'A Scanner Darkly' by Richard Linklater, an animation film after Philip K. Dick's novel -with the same title- a story about a hallucinatory substance infused reality.

Throughout the day we initiated discussions between the audience and the speakers. The whole day was streamed online for a wider audience that couldn't attend physically.

*What did you show in the final presentation on Sunday 27th November?*

In 2015 we started to film material during another residency for the second episode of "Reality Tales/ Mental Surgeries" in Brussels, already with the aim to dismantle and question our present reality through science fiction and queer theory.

Another aspect in Cologne was to find ways of developing non-linear narrative structures using the footage material already shot in the previous residency in Brussels.

In the Final presentation at TanzFaktur, the audience entered an empty black box, seated in the middle of the room surrounded by a multi screen and audio channels, each screen and channel given a role/ character or a fragment of the narrative.

We thought a multi-channel video/audio installation could expand on this notion of nonlinearity in a direct and formal way, which produced for us the type of cinematic experience we wanted to explore.

*Can a person view the work somewhere on the internet?*

Yes, here are some open excerpts of the work: <https://vimeo.com/aishaassaikaaa>

For the full length work we have a private link can be given upon request.

*What do you take with you after this research in Cologne? How do you want to develop this material? Are there any ideas for a concrete performance or production?*

Dance Research NRW gave us the possibility to further develop our project. "Reality Tales/ Mental Surgeries" is for us an artistic endeavour aimed to produce artistic works and other public formats for knowledge production. We see this episode as video installation mixed with

some live acts, all under a guided cinematic experience if we can put it like that. We are in contact with different organisations in Brussels, Warsaw and Berlin to curate and present the following stages of the work.