

TANZRECHERCHE NRW #18 in Köln

PERIOD:
3.10. –25.11.2016

HOST:
TanzFaktur, Köln

TITEL:
Reality Tales / Mental Surgeries

Enad Marouf, Syria
Billy Bultheel, Belgium

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.

Congratulations to this Dance Research residency. You have been selected out of 60 applications with your project "Reality Tales / Mental Surgeries". Can you please first introduce yourselves?

Enad Marouf (SYR) and Billy Bultheel (BE) met during their M.A studies in Choreography and Performance at the University for Applied theater science (ATW) in Gießen. Enad Marouf has a background in international Law and dance, while Billy Bultheel graduated from his studies at the Institute for Sonology (electronic music composition) at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. Their mutual interests in experimental music, performance and Science Fiction as a hybrid art form developed over multiple collaborations between 2010 and 2015. Forming the collective 'New Forms of Life', together with three other artists (Sam Forsythe, Daniel Jenatsch and Franziska Aigner) they

made several productions that were shown internationally at performance venues.

What is your research about and how will you proceed?

"Reality Tales / Mental Surgeries" started with the search for a refined understanding of science fiction and questions relating to technology and techniques of power over life. Inspired by concepts and fields of research in neuroparasitology, biopolitics, queer theory, nanotechnology and cybernetics. Our project exists as science fiction narrative that take place over several episodes using different mediums (e.g, installation, performance, still and moving images) as forms of presentation.

Considering the significant technological development in biomedicine and the rampant progress of social media, the borders separating notions like virtual/actual, technological/biological, cultural/natural become ambiguous. They become harder to define as both sides of these dichotomies proliferate and dovetail into each other. Already during the industrial revolution in the 19th century Marx had foreseen the transformation of social and labor relations. A transformation marked by the total automatization of production processes, which disregards the skills of workers. This thus places the workers on the fringes of the production process, while simultaneously transforming them into the conscious linkage between machines. "A linkage that they might not see because they are it! and if they don't see it nor touch it that doesn't mean it's not there!" – according to W. Gibson. Gibson puts this relation between man and machine quite in perspective for our current times: "The electrons streaming into a person's eye from the screen of the computer

are as physical as anything else. As physical as the neurons subsequently moving along that person's optic nerves. As physical as the structures and chemicals those neurons will encounter in the human brain. We are implicit, here, all of us, in a vast physical construct of artificially linked nervous systems."

For the 3rd episode of "Reality Tales / Mental Surgeries" we would like to explore the grey zone which is described by Gibson. How can we understand this interconnected web of machines and humans that produce and assemble information and intellect, creating what informs our world and constructs our reality? A space where what we see and feel is stretched between real and virtual, private and public. How can we think of notions such as bodies and spaces within such a proposition? How does production and power relations emerge in such intricate structures of information?

During the residency in Cologne we would like to start our research and preparation for the third episode of this project. We want to create a multidimensional space in which the narrative of our project proliferates in a nonlinear manner. Using the arrangement of a virtual archive and video game structures e.g. RTS (real time strategy) or adventure puzzles, we want to develop new performative and narrative matrixes and further research the hybrid space that stretches between the real and virtual. Re-assessing the material that has been created during previous episodes, we want to further develop our fiction and launch it into a new format.

How do you want to engage with people from Köln?

During the residency in Cologne we would like to open our research to the public and establish a space for knowledge production between different individuals and institutions. For the public events we plan to employ formats like screenings, reading groups and workshops as discursive tools and methods for our research. We have been working with public formats during residencies in Brussels in the summer of 2011 and 2015. We find this method an opportunity to develop our artistic research and practice, not only through an isolated private work space but also by engaging peer artists and a wider public in a co-inhabited space of participation.

The public events contain 2 reading groups, 1 screening and 2 workshops.

For us the public events are the extension of our artistic research, not only by presenting our own works but also by showing other artistic approaches and creating a community that can expand and inform our concern and questions. We take those public events as a possibility for knowledge to be produced and shared at the same time.

We want to concentrate the reading groups around science fiction literature, mainly texts about the dissolving borders between real and virtual and the effects of a growing cyberization of life.

The screenings are curated along a similar method. They focus on movies that further extrapolate themes that have been discussed in the reading groups. The screenings show two movies by contrasting or juxtaposing them to one another. We do this in order to initiate a discussion between

the two fictional realities and/or political extrapolations.

For the workshops we invite guest speakers to share and discuss their practices and research. Afterwards we have an open talk with them and the participants. As speakers we would like to invite Alexis C Johnson from the collective voodoo channel and Konstanze Schütze of STORE contemporary.

What do you expect as a result of your research?

Our mission during this residency is to look for alternative ways of developing our fiction. We are interested in nonlinear, multidimensional narrative structures. The residency in Cologne forms the stepping stone of the development of these new strategies. The outcome will be an experiment, a first solidification of 6 weeks of research on this new way of presenting and telling a story.

We imagine the outcome to be something close to a performative installation in which different materials have been distributed. The audience will engage with this space as an active agent, using navigation as a way to activate the elements in the space. It is no longer the linearity of classical storytelling that enfolds the narrative line, but rather the relationship of different elements in space that need to be discovered and manipulated. As the visitor makes his/her way through a network of plot-lines and materials the fictional world becomes visible.