



Portrait of...

Report Portrait of.. Collection Latvia

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Within the Dance research NRW scholarship I have conducted the research "Portrait of..." (collection Latvia). In April 2023, specifically 13th April - 7th May I traveled to Latvia and visited three collaboration partners in three different regions of Latvia:

PAiR - Pāvilsta Artist in Residency - Vita Liberte <https://pair.lv/>

Ģertrūdes ielas teātris - Rīga - Linda Krumina <https://git.lv/>

Vecate - Library - Inta Balode - <https://dance.lv/>

The research project initiates an introspection that researches cultural identity in body expression and collects individual movement stories within which is being searched for shared values with which we resonate as a society no matter the cultural or social background.

The residency aim was to conduct interviews with locals, collect movements and gestures from each individual and then explore the potential of the collected material through dance and investigate different documentation/notation forms.

The research was accompanied by the dramaturg and translator Modris Opelīts, who translated all the interviews and reached out to locals.

During the residency we have carried out 10 interviews and collected 10 various movement signatures, 12 music preferences and 10 spoken stories of people from the age 25-89, with or without disability, Latvia/Russian/Ukrainian, coming from various backgrounds. This material is recorded and part of a larger "Portrait of.." collection.

Below I share the interview questions plus the portrait titles with movement notes co-created with the participants of the interviews.

1. Who are you?
2. From where are you?
3. Where do you live?
4. Where is your home?
5. What is important to you? (in general)
6. Which experiences - situations of your ancestors you think have created some of your characteristics?
7. What characteristics do you think you have in "your blood"?
8. How would you call your portrait?
9. What music/song moves you? Was/Is important to you? What music/song do you feel a feeling of belonging/ you identify with?
10. What is "your movement"? What is the movement/gesture you would say is YOU? Your movement signature?

List of collected portrait titles and movement notes:

Portrait of Labsirdiga/Kindhearted	plastic ballet arms
Portrait of Artistic Mess	ballet position in hands
Portrait of Multitasker	hand gesture - expressive
Portrait of Hardship guy and delicate lady	running around!
Portrait of Kitesurfer	change of personality
Portrait of VARONĪGS/Heroic	washing dishes - soft
Portrait of POZITĪVS RATIŅNIEKS / positive wheelchairer	wheelchairing - being relaxed
Portrait of CERĪBA/Hope	love
Portrait of Typical Latvian	peace

The chosen format of conducting a personal conversation enables the opening up of the interviewees' trust, who then feels comfortable enough to share different movement/dance ideas and engage physically. After the first phase of the residency = conducting interviews, I have invited dance professionals from the local dance scene to explore the collected movement in a movement laboratory which was hosted at the "Ģertrūdes ielas theatre". Within the laboratory we have explored the specific movement signatures, through various tasks based in choreutics and eukinetics, initiating a dialogue about the semantics of single movement signatures as well as their performative potential. Within the movement laboratory short dance phrases have been created, which the whole group then notated in individual forms such as: poetry, paintings, labanotation, graphs and so on.

The Portrait of... collection Latvia research has been accompanied by the local artist - writer Annija Broniča. A. Broniča observed the whole process in Latvia and also had an insight into the interviews and the movement signature collection, through that insight she has suggested writing tasks on how to capture the research in written word as well how to transform physical/dance experience into text. From this encounter new research methods evolved, which will be applied in future, alongside that A. Broniča has written three creative texts inspired by the research, one of the texts is part of the multimedia presentation.

Overall I reflect on the residency in Latvia very positively, it was enriching for my artistic endeavors and creative work. Seeing how dance is present in the whole country, through the kept folk traditions, is encouraging for the meaning and position of dance in society and education. Nevertheless it has been difficult to reach out to the local collaborators and communities, experiencing an underdeveloped territory of Europe, devastated by the Soviet Union and witnessing present poverty has been sadening but also inspiring for future collaboration and understanding what could be pointed out through dance.

The Dance Research NRW scholarship has enabled concentrated research and the practical implementation of the project and the possible potential of the topic for the performing arts. It also supported an optimal, sustainable and continuous working situation.

