

On Presenting Wandering Practices in a Public Context

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with Chloé Schuiten (CS) & Clément Thiry (CT), Francesca Chiacchio (FC), Hans Andreas R. (HAR), Isabel Burr Raty (IB), Marialena Marouda (MM), Loes Jacobs (LJ)

LJ Welcome everybody to the first conversation of this book. The topic we are discussing today is: 'On Presenting Wandering Practices in a Public Context'. We invited 6 artists to talk about this together. We've made a selection of questions that we've put on a pad. People who are listening can add questions, or you can call Nadine by phone. An [Goovaerts] will pick up the phone and will pass your questions or comments to us.

CS Alors nous [Chloé Schuiten & Clément Thiry], on travaille en binôme depuis 2015. On fait des EXPÉRIENCES DE VIE, c'est à dire qu'on décide pendant des laps de temps courts, de vivre différemment. Ces expériences de vie ont souvent lieu à l'extérieur : dans des interstices de la ville, des lieux où la végétation sauvage pousse, des lieux invisibles, des friches, des ronds-points, des zones un peu oubliées, des zonings industriels, etc. Et notre envie, c'est de déplacer notre quotidien dans ces zones délaissées.

CT ... en marge, à la fois à l'extérieur et tout en restant à l'intérieur. Ensuite on retransmet ces expériences dans

différents contextes comme par exemple, sur place même, donc en extérieur, on invite les gens à venir à la fin de ces expériences pour célébrer ça lors d'une petite fête.

CS J'ajouterais juste que ces expériences, on les fait plutôt à deux où depuis peu avec quelques personnes et que le public est invité après à des représentations qui ont lieu dans un second temps.

CT On a fait aussi des expositions et des publications mais l'endroit dans lequel on est le plus à l'aise, qui nous semble le plus juste, c'est la conférence: pour être physiquement dans l'espace et pouvoir retransmettre au public aussi une sorte d'expérience.

CS La conférence – qui est un moment où on raconte, car on aime beaucoup raconter ce qu'on a vécu – va vers la performance et la proposition d'un moment vécu pour le public. Donc souvent il y a des propositions même qui engagent le corps, la manière dont on se positionne et la manière dont on déplace son point de vue... Ce qui est le plus important pour nous c'est d'amener un déplacement de point de vue.

CT Nous mêmes dans nos expériences, on effectue un déplacement de point de vue pour modifier notre regard sur le monde ainsi que notre rapport au monde. Ce qu'on a envie de transmettre, c'est un changement de regard sur le monde.

CS Ce qu'on pourrait ajouter c'est dans quel contexte on présente notre travail. J'ai l'impression qu'on aime S'ADAPTER À TOUS LES CONTEXTES qu'on

nous propose: que ce soit dans des espaces d'expositions - on a essayé, c'est plus de l'ordre du challenge pour nous car c'est une forme un peu figée donc ça nous pose question - dans des institutions culturelles, ou dehors, à l'extérieur, de manière complètement informelle. On aime bien dire oui, donc quand on nous propose, on dit oui et on essaye, mais on se met pas trop de barrières à ce niveau .

CT On aime bien parler un peu partout. On aime bien raconter...

MM My practice within WAB has been THE OCEANOGRAPHIES INSTITUTE. It's an institute I initiated already in 2018 and it focuses on human-ocean kinships. So basically I am interested in the relations between the human body and the oceanic body, essentially between two bodies of water. My research or my artistic work has two main goals: to enter a relation of becoming ocean, trying to understand an oceanic mode of being and to go towards that, but to also institutionalise, or 'becoming institute' in a way that the knowledges that the research produces or the works produce become, in a certain way, solidified or institutionalised.

The relation of the institute to the public is multiple: the main practice of the institute is the OCEAN CONVERSATIONS, where I visit people in their homes or offices and ask them two main questions:

1. What's your relation to the ocean?
2. Is there an element of the ocean that you find particularly relevant?

And then I ask them to demonstrate this element to me, by using objects in their house, in their environment, or a set of sound equipment that I bring. So the public is present in the

conversation as visited participants. And from these conversations and demonstrations I make an archive: THE OCEANOGRAPHIES SCORE BOOK. I am now working on an online platform for this publication where the public becomes a reader.

In a third stage, there are also public performances developed from this material, so then it's more a performative context in which the public enters. All three are quite participatory in terms of the public's engagement to the work, but still I see them as quite different in terms of their engagement.

IB During WAB or my time here, I've been mostly sharing my project BEAUTY KIT. It's an eco-erogenous art project, it's very fluid, it keeps on changing. In its current state, it draws attention to the human body as a possible territory for agricultural development. The idea is to propose alternative life models so that we can offer solutions for the multi-species extinction and ecological catastrophes that we are living in. And also to situate the human as maybe more than a human species.

What has particularly come forth in these past two years is the BEAUTY KIT FEMALE FARM, where we welcome females - with female I mean a person born with an endogenous vagina and that is not undergoing any transgender treatment, like for example, testosterone. We welcome them in this very hybrid space: an installation but also a live body art performance. Together with a team of facilitators, and with me as the patrona, we teach them how to harvest their vaginal fluids and how to turn them into beauty products. There is this notion of eco-erogenous para-pharmaceuticals: we are recycling elements of the human body that are normally regarded as waste.

Once the farm has concluded, we

open up a SPA. The spa is also presented as an interactive installation, and that's when the public comes and intermingles with the fluids that have been bottled into products. There the research has turned into how to provide spaces for liberation, and how this liberation can involve pleasure or ecstasies, or even orgasms. So the project flirts with notions of production and labour, but also ingredients of seduction that are part of the market: How can you convince someone that this is a product that would bring something into your life? And in this case, I believe it brings transformation. It invites people to become part of an alchemical process. So there is this BIO-TRANSACTION ECONOMY MODEL that I am working on and it is about how do I come to the point of actually selling these products, and how can the profit that we make be brought back to BK.

hAR The wandering has always been more like a STATE OF MIND for my practice so it's the start of what I do. And that translates mostly into work that is EPHEMERAL, that is seen in the moment itself. I try to keep it that way, I try not to make too much of timeless things... like, I don't like to channel it into a concrete form. I try to keep the ephemeral points the most important thing of my work. So in this WAB I made POLYPHONY, which was the first real big installation that I made. But to talk about it would be pointless so I won't go there...

FC I think there are two answers to why I see my work as a wandering practice. The first one is quite literal in the sense that I like to walk, I like to use the environment, urban and natural, as a playground. And I believe everything is already there, it is already made by layers and layers of information that people just put or leave... And this kind of information for me is based on COLOUR AND GEOMETRY. I don't know why,

but it is quite natural to me. Since I was a child, I've loved to count things, to observe subjects or elements.

I like to organise walks, performances that take place in the public space where I ask or propose the public to count elements, to observe things that otherwise would just be left unnoticed. So it's just an excuse, or a proposition to observe differently. As a point of view to read the performance, I sometimes give a sort of map, sometimes it's a real choreography in the space.

The second reason why I think about my practice as a wandering practice is because, for me, wandering is something undefined, it's like a de-ambulation... There might be an impulse to go somewhere, but when I wander I am not going somewhere really, which allows me to be touched by things that I cannot foresee.

For example, I really like to make colouring actions, I call it 'coloreages'. It can be a performance again, installations, or books or concerts... I like to start from a protocol in order to go into the action of colouring, but I don't know where it will bring us nor what the content of these colourings will be. This year for the 4th WAB, I installed a colouring room that was quite big: I covered almost all of the surface at n0dine with a grid of rectangles. The idea was to compose drawings as a kind of pixel art but the colours were generated by codes: for example, one was red, two were green... For me, it was a wandering experience in the sense that I just gave people the possibility to express themselves using this kind of protocol.

LJ The first open question that we imagined for the table was about how to translate or transmit the core of your practice into different contexts because that might be a difficult part

of what a wandering practice is, since it's so diverse and open... So how do you translate it, communicate it to an outside audience...? I think everybody here has different relationships with the audience, in different ways. For example, you have participants coming in during the first phase of the practice or project, and afterwards it gets translated to an outside context, let's say a more institutional cultural space. What is important to communicate there and where can it fail? How do you translate it, what is the exact thing that is really important to say if you make an exhibition?

- CT Par rapport à notre pratique, avec Chloé, ce qu'il faut savoir c'est que lors de nos expériences dans ces Waste-Land, on essaye d'abandonner un maximum de choses de notre quotidien en partant avec pratiquement rien. On part sans nourriture, donc on arrête de manger, on arrête aussi de parler...
- CS Et comme on part sans rien, on produit avec ce qui traîne autour. Par exemple, si on veut écrire, si on veut dessiner, on doit trouver les outils dans ce qui va traîner sur place.
- CT Donc tout dépend vraiment du contexte, on est très attaché au contexte dans lequel on fait les choses. Ce qui nous entoure, ça a de l'importance. Et cette modification de notre mode de vie permet un changement de point de vue et de regard sur ce qui nous entoure. C'est ça qui est important dans l'expérience et c'est ça, je pense, le coeur de notre pratique que l'on essaye de transmettre lors d'une exposition ou d'une conférence. C'est pour ça que les expositions c'est un peu difficile parce que il faut que ça puisse être vécu, c'est à

dire que les constructions que l'on fait lors de nos expériences – parce qu'on construit des structures pour accueillir notre expérience de vie...

- CS Souvent pour accueillir le sommeil d'ailleurs
- CT ...sont des dispositifs imaginés à partir de rien pour pouvoir nous accompagner lors de cette manière de vivre. Et ça, quand on le ramène pour le montrer, c'est toujours difficile pour nous de le montrer juste comme un objet. On a envie qu'il soit utilisé, donc on imagine toujours des dispositifs pour que le public puisse aller dedans et soit par exemple amené à faire une sieste à l'intérieur pendant qu'on fait une lecture à côté.
- CS D'ailleurs lorsqu'on construit des expositions, on calque le même fonctionnement que lorsqu'on fait des expériences de vie. Lors de l'exposition qu'on a fait au Greylight, on a beaucoup récupéré de déchets qu'il y avait sur place pour construire l'exposition. Par exemple, pour mettre des textes dans l'exposition, on a utilisé les papiers trouvés dans les poubelles du lieu. Même si on veut imprimer une photo, on ne va pas aller chez un imprimeur ! Alors, comment est-ce qu'on fait ?
- CT On fait avec ce qui traîne, ce qui est là.
- LJ In the exhibition space as well? So to bring that method there as well?
- CS Oui, même dans la construction des expositions elles-mêmes.
- CT Et pareil, dans nos conférences, on essaye parfois de les orienter vers l'expérience. Il y a des moments où on présente vraiment et des moments qui sont plus dédiés à la

contemplation. En tout cas, le public est AMENÉ AUSSI À VIVRE UN TRUC, que ce soit une errance en extérieur ou une sieste. On a proposé par exemple, à des gens de s'allonger et de devenir du compost ! Donc c'est aussi faire vivre une EXPÉRIENCE aux autres pour présenter notre travail.

- CS Ou encore, des conférences qui finissent par un moment où tout le monde nous suit dans la rue pour se déplacer vers un autre lieu...
- CT La conférence dérive souvent vers une expérience qu'on propose au public.
- LJ Mais dans les conférences il y a aussi l'aspect 'live'. Ce qui est différent avec des expositions...
- CT C'est pour ça qu'on privilégie les conférences c'est parce que notre corps est important pour transmettre les choses : notre présence, la manière dont on bouge, la manière dont on parle physiquement, en personne. C'est des choses qu'on utilise beaucoup pour transmettre notre travail.
- CS Oui et ce qui nous intéresse c'est de proposer un décalage de point de vue, parce ce que nous, c'est ce qu'on vit quand on fait une expérience et c'est ce qu'on propose aussi à un public : de se poser des questions sur notre quotidien et de voir autrement les actes ou les choses qui sont vraiment acquises et qui sont ancrées dans notre culture. Et se dire : « Tiens ! pourquoi ne pas proposer de faire carrément autrement, d'ouvrir les possibilités. » Sans du tout proposer un modèle parce que on n'a aucune solution. On a juste envie d'expérimenter, de proposer des expériences.
- CT On floue les frontières entre intérieur/

extérieur, entre conférence/expérience et expositions/expériences.

- IB I was thinking because, in my case what the space means, for example, varies completely, it's like I have a universe, let's say, that I am giving to totally different spaces – so I've had a barn in Portugal that used to be an olive barn, then I had a barn in Amsterdam that used to be the place where they were constructing water locks for controlling the water flow. I've also installed a farm in a simple house, or an exhibition space... So I would say that my relation to the wandering has to do with this MOBILITY – actually, it is a mobile structure that I can move and place and it adapts to the site specific conditions of the space.

But the question of translation for me happens because I am also working with conference. I have this so-called 'focus group' with me as a patrona, which is not a fictional character, it's a roll that emerges out of the need of having a manager, and that's when I basically share the premises of the project to the public and it's very participatory, and I see that there's a difference actually between what really happens in the live experience when we are together harvesting in this farming context that's one story, but then there is the story I tell to the public. And it's totally different. Like I play a lot with this because what's important for me is to trigger imagination. So I cannot reveal what's happening but because the topic is strange for people, it just enhances the imagination.

That's where my work as a scriptwriter, coming from film making, comes in. There I can see how I can bring in certain ingredients that can tap into your own images on what's happening. I also do it when the farm is over. There is a tour we organise. So when

all the participants are gone, we open up the doors for the public to come visit the farm and it's an incredible narrative because you can see all the traces of what has happened. The public is wandering around in the space, and it's incredible to see how they create their own story in their head. It's kind of like playing with the abstract, because I am not really saying what's happening, but then they relate it to something very concrete which is a space that has been transformed because there was an experience. And what that provokes in the body of the public is what I enjoy a lot. Because it all has to do with mystery, the mystery of not revealing what's really happening on the farm.

So let's say I like the notion of science fiction. That's where it comes into place in my research, 'what is a fiction?', because you know there is a real thing happening but there is also this fiction that is in the head of people.

- LJ Yeah, the outside context, let's say the suggestion of what's happening is the science fiction part, so it's a lot in language actually...
- IB I think so! Maybe. How is it for you on a language level? I am very busy with that in a way, how do you tell the story, and how to do that by not completing the story. Then you are giving space for people to do so and it becomes very multiple. So it's not one story, it's like a never ending story...
- MM But then you don't see the participants of the farm as public. For you, the participants and the public are quite separate in a way.
- IB Yeah. When I say 'performance', it's non representational, so it's not theatre performing, but it's about you signing a contract to say that for seven days you are going to be a harvester, and it happens through the actions that you undertake that

it is an experience, and once you have gone through there, you are in it, in the real part of it, so you are no longer public I would say...

- LJ Would you say then that they are co-creators? Or is that a bridge too far?
- IB I would say so, yes.
- MM Very literally.
- LJ Which is for you [MM] maybe also the case, I mean not literally.
- MM Maybe. I am interested in what you are saying about creating a dispositive for making a certain personal experience visible or audible, but somehow I feel that in the Oceanographies Institute it's not necessarily about my experience, but the person's experience. And then the work is actually creating a DISPOSITIVE FOR FRAMING THEIR EXPERIENCE. You could even say, harvesting it, and somehow often those conversations function quite therapeutically. Let's say, I wander from person to person and talk to them or focus on their experiences or relation to this element (so, the ocean), and I try to frame my questioning in the sense that I would tell them, 'tell me your life story but in a way of how you are related to the ocean'. I guess it's not so difficult to do but then very often, in the conversation and the demonstrations, they realise, 'Ah, I actually never realised that I was super interested in this movement that my father did'. For example, a biologist told me that her father, when she was small, put his hand in the river and took out all these little animals and for her this was the moment of magic that made her go into her career because she thought, 'all this life is coming from the ocean'. But she never realised

this until she talked to me, because she was actually made to focus on what the moment was that made you relate to this in a very specific way.

And I think this moment is for many people THERAPEUTIC, they realise 'ah there is actually a non-human element that has shaped certain decisions of what I do or where I live'. Someone was telling me 'now I realise I am always living in proximity [of water]'. Many people have this experience and they tell me I am a kind of ocean doctor... But in a sense I am not doing anything. This dispositive is the set of curations I asked them.

- IB Yeah, but the ocean is somehow linked to the subconscious... Like this tremendous amount of water that enters into your body to release memories that maybe you have been keeping at the back of the consciousness...
- MM Maybe... But I feel we are conditioned or socialised to consider mostly human elements as relevant, but once you ask to focus on your life from the perspective of your relation to water, then something really shifts. So for me, in this sense, the participant and the public are quite close.
- LJ Because, that's what you do. You translate what the participant has told you or shared with you towards another audience. What is important there?

- MM I see those interlocutors as public too because they are making the work appear, and the work is the evocation of ocean or the sounding of ocean. But when it's a public performance – the audience is always limited as it's a very introverted experience – I feel that people who enter experience the performance as much in their imagination as in the actual

space. So they become in a sense a participant, because somehow a certain memory can be evoked that they are then really going into.

- LJ And does it sometimes not work?
- MM No, it always works! (haha). Yeah, I think in the frameworks where it doesn't work with public performances was where the audience was bigger and it wasn't framed in a way that people would really get into it emotionally, let's say.
- LJ I can imagine it is important that it triggers as much in emotion as with the first interviews you have with the participants.
- MM Exactly. So I realised the context where there is a limited amount of people is much better, and where there is proximity and a certain vulnerability. And yes, maybe to say that since 2019, there are two collaborators who entered: Elpida Orfanidou and Charlie Usher, who are performers and musicians. So we are also going into this direction of contemporary ocean mythologies, and their story becoming a song. We are working on 'polyphonic protocols', as we call them. How to make a story or an experience of someone into music? An experimental opera is what we are working on at the moment.
- FC One of the questions [in the preparatory pad] was if we agree with the term TRANSLATION. I thought about it and it is quite perfect in relation to my work. Because sometimes I have the problem that I want to communicate how my brain works. Why I do geometries, why I do colours, why I ask to calculate it...? I don't know why I am so fixed on these kinds of

things... And then how to translate this and to propose something? I found a solution in using the GAME language for different reasons. Because we all know how to play. Playing for me is agreeing with the rules. Even if there are not so many rules. For example, children decide that something is like that: for example, a glass of water that is a swimming pool. It can be a swimming pool when everybody agrees. It helps to transform an environment, just like in a playground.

So in a game there are rules, there are choices to take, but in my case, there is also space for mistakes. It's the most personal part that the public can bring into this process. In the 'coloreages', the rules allow us to be in contact and in dialogue because we know where we are. We have decided that we are in this kind of reality that we have built together.

And to answer also the question: 'when does it fail?'. For the moment it never happened, really, maybe just once with a mantra-pop, for me it was the only failure... Where it fails it is too written, I think. When there is no 'lacher-prise', when the strategies of the game are too written.

- IB Too many scores maybe...
- FC Yeah, when it's too fixed. But it never happened until now. It's work to do and realise: 'okay, I give the disposition to the others and maybe it's not going to work', but it's the only way to bring information and bring the sensation of the others into the structure. That it's a shape of a game.
- LJ I think for everybody [around the table] there is a certain agreement between you and the audience and it requires the imagination of the audience to go into the story you are presenting. They need to agree, they need

to join you, they need to believe.

- IB Agree and believe. Believe and agree.
- hAR It's a way of ABSTRACT STORYTELLING so you are not really telling a specific story, but it's present.
- MM So would you see the relation with the audience as a certain RITUAL or... How do you relate to that?
- IB In the FARM, the whole experience is a huge ritual. We are using what is normally understood as the production process (like the production machine behind the production of a good) and we take that to work with the notion of repetition, for example. When you are making a product and there is always either the machine or the human repeating this movement in order to get the bottle down or to attach the sticker, or whatever involving the repetition of the production process. We take that and we bring it into the dramaturgy of what's happening in the farm to twist it around, deconstruct it so to say, or to reappropriate it. So it's through this repetition that you can take somebody to a place of catharsis, for example.
 - It maybe also relates to you [MM] in the sense of a therapeutic thing, and in the case of the farm, it's via this repetition of going to a territory that has been repressed, so to say – how can that be healing? And so that happens with the participants, the ritual aspect of it. And I would say the other public becomes a part of it, it's like the second wave of the remains of what the ritual has caused in the body of people.
 - But there is no set score when the visitors come. You choose yourself where you want to go and what you want to grab and what not, but there are still the remains of transformation which is at the core

of what a ritual is about: a possibility to move something in you and that hopefully brings about a new vision. Maybe you also experience this?

- CS Moi, je ne sais pas si je parlerais de rituel par rapport à notre pratique mais en tout cas, d'une forme de soin. Parce que dans nos expériences, c'est tout d'abord un soin que l'on s'apporte à nous mêmes. On parle beaucoup de centre de bien-être ou de zone de confort. Parce que c'est une retraite aussi. C'est une pause, ça permet de ralentir et de se poser des questions. On jeûne, on fait un jeûne de paroles... C'est du soin, autant mental que physique. Et après il y a aussi une idée de soin même du territoire... Entre autre, surtout dans l'expérience de vie qu'on a fait à Dunkerque, où on allait se balader, on marchait, on zonait dans le territoire.
- CT Parce que marcher dans un territoire c'est aussi prendre soin de ce territoire puisque c'est d'une certaine manière, lui porter attention.
- CS Comme un médecin rend visite à ses patients, on rendait visite à ce territoire malade...
- CT Et complètement déshumanisé...
- CS On était dans le port industriel avec toutes ces pollutions qui sont visibles et gigantesques et on a pas mal réfléchi sur cette notion de soigner aussi le territoire...
- CT Et puis à Dunkerque, on était aussi ouvert. Il y avait d'autres participants, qui étaient avec nous, donc qui n'étaient pas du public mais plus des participants qui venaient aussi suivre notre expérience, qui jeûnaient avec nous... Là, on se soignait les uns les autres autant
- qu'on se soignait soi-même.
- CS On n'est pas des médecins pour les autres, on est des médecins pour soi-même.
- CT On était médecin de la zone autant que la zone prenait soin de nous. C'est une histoire de soin et d'attention qui est réciproque : si tu soignes les autres, les autres te soignent aussi en échange.
- IB Yeah, but it seems like most of us on this table are doing that a little bit. Like the notion of care. So all the species allocated to that specific territory and then the human...
- FC For me, it's more to take care of the free expression of the body. In a sense, playing in a way like, try to be ironical (self-irony), conceive that you are going to be a square but also consider your way to be square and how you show yourself, how you hide yourself, your relation with the others... So it's not a ritual in a way to understand that you start from A and then you come to arrive to B, but it's more like how you can set up a discussion, go in dialogue. Especially when you're asked to put on a swimming cap, it's really interesting because your face is completely clear, you cannot hide any kind of defect; and you are almost presenting yourself as being naked in a way. There is always someone who laughs, or someone who is really shy. I don't force, for sure, but it's interesting how people start to say: 'okay, I put my swimming cap on, I try to be serious, I try to...'. I don't know, it's kind of interesting how the reaction of the body throws a limitation of the body given by simple tools to become a drawing.

- LJ But at the same time, when you ask people to be in a public space with a swimming cap, the audience gives so much more attention to the environment. What happened there is similar. Because they start looking everywhere and they start seeing everything in a different way then.
- IB So it is an invitation to see, contemplate, otherwise people don't notice.
- LJ Yeah. Which caring is, maybe?
- FC I was talking about the reach with the public in the sense... Because maybe if you do a ritual in the farm, you are confronted with your body and your environment, but it's really an experience that comes to you. And as participants of making a live experience it is really to be confronted with yourself. I was now thinking, what happens as a ritual in my work? Is it this process that you go through by yourself and that you are sharing? I don't know, I was just questioning that.
- IB In the work it is problematic because how can you free it from maybe a spiritual context, or a religious context, but if you think of the structure as a ritual, I think that's where it becomes interesting. You know, kind of like the steps.
- LJ It's a structure you propose to trigger something.
- IB And there are certain elements present in rituals already as part of visual arts or performance. They are kind of intertwined in the arts by definition. Because there is a structure and you take people through a voyage and normally there is a 'coming into realisation thing'. This is part of a ritual.

- LJ This connects to the next question of how you can bring a practice that is taking place in wandering to 'the outside'. And what is this outside? And then there is of course, the question if the public is necessary in the work, or is maybe the ritual that people or participants are experiencing by themselves already enough? Do we need the outside public?
- IB Yeah, I think we all have this. What is the outside and what is the inside? It is hard to define, no? We are breaking the limits of what is normally understood as public. First of all, we contextualise outside of how this phenomenon would happen. Like, it's not a fixed gallery or it's not fixed theatre, or it's not...
- LJ I think Hans needs the public though...
- HAR Yeah, I was thinking about my previous work ATLAS, which is a series of installations. There was a big emphasis on the ritual that I lost in my project POLYPHONY for some reason. I wonder where it went actually... Atlas was like an exhibition, but at the same time it was a PIECE OF THEATRE because it was time-based. People came in a certain hour, discovered the house where all installations were, and then in the end there was like a grand finale, a performance. Afterwards people could experience something like in the idea of theatre, yet what was there was more like visual installations and interactions. And now I made a 'real' installation. A white cube with an installation where people just come and visit it.
- LJ Yes, but the installation itself brings or visualises reality in a way. So, if we talk about giving attention to what is happening, this [polyphony] is an extreme form

of looking that you propose.

- HAR But it's interesting that this point of ritual is very big in Atlas. I would like to do it again, but for some reason I moved away from that aspect of the work. And I just now realise that. Where did it go? I don't know. It really evaporated. Like the importance for me of a ritual rendered itself unnecessary.
- FC In polyphony there is also a sort of evaporation, a real one.
- MM Ritual seems a very charged word. When I brought it up, for me it doesn't necessarily have a religious or spiritual connotation. For me, contemporary scientific practices also have rituals. Like what you were saying about the production practice is a ritual. Like, then of course not to use it for everything but there is a certain procedure realisation that becomes holy by some context, let's say, and for capitalism it's the production line, so in science there is a certain procedure realisation. It's interesting nobody talked about their work as 'art' necessarily, but more as us making an experience. So that's what I feel where the ritual thing could come in, because it links different practices. I feel it links to the scientific practice, like these whole demonstrations have a clear scientific context for me, as the notion that you show that this link would evaporate into thin air...
There are scientific demonstrations historically that say, I would use in my work as context. So I felt that maybe it could be a way to link what we do to a certain outside world, in terms of the artistic framework. Like you [IB], the farming and the Beauty Kit, it's not necessarily in the arts field that this happens.

- IB It's funny because I arrived in Belgium 10 years ago and I never spoke of myself as an artist. I encountered a community here that is really emphasising that word, 'I'm an artist', and it helped me to reflect and I've adopted it – to say I am an artist because it makes sense. But it's true, like maybe we can start thinking of a new word, because we are like breaking the boundaries of what's normally understood of what that is. I think the notion of experiencing or experience, which has been part of the arts actually, it seems to be very relevant.
- FC It could also be activist. I like the idea of the activist, the one that can activate something. Because we use a lot the word 'animator' everywhere in the social context, but an animator is the one that animates something, and for me it's more being able to conduct something from one point to the other, in an artistic way, where the absurd can be part of this process, because it's one of the places where we can justify that what you do is maybe useless, even if it's useful for you, but it's the only place where you can really try things out. And if it doesn't work it's not a problem, it's like 'why not'?
- IB For me 'useful' and 'useless' are very complicated because I believe that we can 'have' and impact in society, and also on a political level. I think it was in an online conference that somebody commented that they thought the role of the artist was purely speculative and had no real impact in biopolitics, for example, which is what I'm concerned with in a way. And I thought what the f*** is this guy saying? It really made me think that's not at all how I envision my practice. And I feel if it wouldn't have a political impact in the body of people, I

- wouldn't be busy with it. Because then what is it – decoration? And I am not interested in the idea of decoration.
- MM Yeah, I remember that also in the first WAB presentation that you did, at least what was part of it in 2018, there was also this question of: how do you define what you do as art. I find that interesting because it's not relevant somehow.
- IB I think it's a very important question. The last time I was in Amsterdam there was a woman working in marketing and she couldn't see the art part of what I do. Then I told her: 'Look, what I am telling you is making you react, because now you are angry, and now if you go home and you are thinking about the work for another two weeks, then maybe it's art'.
- CS Nous aussi on s'est plein de fois posé la question de ce qu'on fait : est-ce que c'est de l'art ? Est-ce qu'on est des artistes ? Mais j'ai tendance à dire que c'est une question un peu vaine et moi je préfère remplacer cette question de « c'est quoi l'art ? » par « c'est quoi la vie ? ». Parce que je trouve ça beaucoup plus intéressant. L'art qui parle de l'art, il n'y a rien plus triste, alors que se poser la question de « c'est quoi la vie ? » c'est très riche.
- CT Comment vivre, comment être ?
- CS Peu importe, si ça se trouve on fait de l'art, si ça se trouve on n'en fait pas, on fait autre chose, mais, là n'est pas la question... Le centre de ma recherche ce n'est pas l'art. L'art c'est un outil, un moyen d'y arriver... Et pour moi c'est une manière de répondre qui est plus ouverte qu'une réponse scientifique ou une réponse anthropologique... On met tout ensemble :
- c'est une réponse où on peut slalomer entre des domaines différentes mais, ce n'est pas une question en tout cas. Parce que si la question c'est « Est-ce que c'est de l'art ? » ou « Est-ce que je fais de l'art ? », j'ai l'impression qu'on se regarde le nombril...
- LJ I also think that all your practices work outside of the cultural field as well.
- IB Yes, but you're still in an artistic context here so I think it's important to take a position especially when, and that's why I reacted, when art equal decoration. As if it has no impact and what you are saying has an impact because you are thinking on life.
- CS La décoration a mauvaise réputation aujourd'hui alors que moi je trouve qu'il n'y a rien de mieux... Souvent, on voit la décoration de manière très superficielle mais en fait, peut-être que si les gens apprécient ça - la décoration en superficie - alors ils apprécient déjà la beauté de la chose. Peut-être que le sens profond leur échappe mais chacun y voit ce qu'il veut.
- LJ I do think that the framework of the arts can help, especially for an audience, to know that they enter a place where the imaginary can just go out. I think that this helps.
- IB I think that we agree, like in the notion of imagination, because if you talk about decor...
- CS Ce qu'on met derrière le mot « décor » a un peu une connotation mauvaise mais en fait, un décor, c'est aussi un objet magique. Quand il y a un décor et que tout le monde y croit, ça peut transformer une pièce en autre chose. Ça peut avoir un pouvoir magique qui se donne à un lieu. J'ai l'impression
- qu'aujourd'hui on voit de manière négative des choses qui ne le sont pas.
- FC When I think about the question of WHAT IS ART AND WHAT IS NOT, I think of my project Manifesto that I started 5 years ago. I applied for money from Wallonie-Bruxelles for a trip to Italy, the idea was to make a choreography with the inhabitants of these buildings, a sort of fireworks show without fireworks, writing a rap song with teenagers, things like that... and they answered to my proposal: 'sorry but what you propose here is not art'.
- This letter was quite frustrating and it was expensive for me as I had to pay for everything myself. Even if they declare it at the time, I am working with the social, it is part of my practice. Now I was supposed to be in France, and I am doing a residency called CLEA, and so I am confronted again with different kinds of public like people with mental and physical disabilities, asylum seekers, autistic people, seniors, teenagers, children. So I am on many projects and I say, 'okay, it's true that I am working on the social, in an artistic way'. What does it mean? I work with animators who already do their proposals with creative ateliers, so what is the difference? What do they propose and what do I propose? I am questioning that. But is it art or not? I also don't say I am an artist because I feel uncomfortable with it. And also about the question: 'do we need the public?' I don't have an atelier practice at all, so I need a context to work in, I need people to work with, I need to be stimulated by the request. I cannot think about myself working alone on my proposal, unless if I work on a project proposal or a call. So I need an audience and a context otherwise I am not motivated.
- FC And a colourist.
- MM I think about my practice as anti-individualist. But I would also never communicate, but the core of my practice is to prove that there are others within, that are part of who you are, giving attention or listening to certain elements that are not human, who we are collectively but also personally. Very much about situating a certain multiplicity or plurality within yourself.
- LJ And then you are making an institute.
- MM Yeah, also that (haha). It could definitely not happen with just me, that doesn't work.
- hAR I was drifting off with the word 'practice'. I don't have a practice, I create work, so it's vocabulary...
- LJ But work that enables situations or experiences?
- hAR The ritual just happened with the visitors when they were looking at the installation. I was no longer the person who had to guide the audience. But this idea of practice, the idea of ritual, some things are already laid out, I don't really have that. In relation to the wandering also, I bump into something and then I start to work it out. Carving it out sometimes, somehow. So it's more an
- CT Je pense que pour nous aussi

act of labour of work, more than it's going through farce or something.

- CT Par rapport à cette idée d'être avec les autres, j'aime l'idée de rendre confus les frontières de mon corps autant que l'n s'attache à rendre confus les frontières entre les espaces. C'est à dire que j'essaye de dissoudre ma personne, mon corps dans le monde. C'est une image qui a beaucoup de sens pour moi.
- CS On n'est qu'une personne à deux. Tout ce qu'on produit, tout ce qu'on crée, on ne sais pas si c'est moi ou lui qui l'a fait. Quand on fait une expo ou lorsqu'on montre des choses, les gens nous demandent : « Ah c'est toi ou c'est Clément ? » , « oh je ne sais pas... » On essaye de ne plus avoir de propriété intellectuelle ou de propriété d'oeuvre.
- CT Même dans les paroles : on se complète nos phrases et on ne sait plus qui a dit quoi.
- CS On essaye vraiment de rendre ça confus et secondaire : Ça n'a pas d'importance de savoir qui a fait quoi. Dans nos dernières expériences, on dit souvent qu'on a grossi car on est devenu plus nombreux à les faire. Et pendant l'expérience, il n'y a pas d'auteur. On n'est qu'un seul corps et on produit ensemble. Par contre, quand on est nombreux à faire une expérience, Clément et moi restons les initiateurs, ceux qui proposent. On est les auteurs de l'idée de base puis des formes de traductions par la suite dont on tire des conférences et des expos. Mais au centre de l'expérience, on est un grands corps. Et après, tous les participants en font ce qu'ils veulent aussi. Il n'y a pas que nous qui pouvons utiliser ce qui est produit. Tout

le monde s'approprier cette matière.

- CT L'essentiel de notre pratique c'est ce qui se fait dans ces expériences. Et notre rôle, c'est : les initier et les raconter, les traduire.
- CS Et à ce moment là, il n'y a pas de hiérarchie, pas d'artistes, juste des humains en train de faire des choses... ou faire rien, c'est aussi possible !
- IB Maybe we can address the reality where things emerge. With this hyper-controlled pandemic moment. I think that's the reality we are in right now, and we don't know where this is heading, it's pretty much an uncertain future, so maybe that also brings this question of the public and how you do what you normally do. It's just a mystery where we are now, if we have to get accustomed and live in a viral world or not.
- LJ Yeah, because we are speaking about how everyone works with a public but there is no public at the moment.
- FC That depends who we call 'public'. It's incredible this moment, this limitation of individual freedom, this social distance that is installing in our lives. But I can say, it is really strange that I like limits in my work. Limits, the context, the place, everything contributes to a new production, a new way to avoid limits. Because limits are just an excuse to avoid them. And what happened that, for example, I say I cannot have a public for a performance, but I can go in the public space, I can insist on this thing, I can stay outside, I can walk, I can play with the environment for a colouring room.
- We put a streaming because people could not come inside and this allowed people from other places in Brussels to see the evolution of the

collective drawing, but also thanks to this distance I felt I could ask people from Milan, from Paris, to send me a drawing to be realised. Or also, the fact that there were people passing by the shop windows who could see the evolution and could give me a second time, a drawing to add, all these elements, the limitations, I never stopped to produce publicly because it happened during the lockdown.

The first lockdown I had an invitation to make posters for Bar du Matin, and then I just thought, okay, I am going to make a poster that is sort of an invitation game and I am interacting with a ghost public and I never would be able to think about this if the lockdown was not there. Not that I am saying that it is cool and that I would prefer to stay in this situation, but it is good to have possibilities to address all kinds of public, but in my case, I think it helped me a lot. It is part of my present in my wandering...

And also the public for a long time were children, and that was fine. The only thing we could do was to address our practice to children, and I had a saturation for a period.

- LJ I think there are parallel worlds at the moment which I find also difficult because I feel online is not sufficient to actually communicate what we need to communicate, but how to... I think you blend these two quite well but at the same time there is always a problem of communication then, you cannot communicate public, you cannot officially have a public, so... not so easy.
- CS Oui c'est sûr que le net et le online n'est pas du tout une solution. Il peut s'y passer des choses, mais par exemple, lors d'un moment comme celui-ci maintenant, si on était chacun derrière un écran en train de parler ensemble ce serait pour moi impossible, je pense, d'interagir. Je pourrais juste dire qui je suis mais interagir

et discuter en ligne – en plus avec la barrière de la langue et toutes les difficultés que ça représente de s'adresser à un écran – serait pour moi un moment impossible.

- FC Also because when you are in front of your screen you are looking at you, you are confronted with a virtual 'me', confronted with your image, it's like, for me, it's really complicated. You are scared that you cannot express the way you want, you tend to stop because you think people see if you are bored.
- MM I think what's problematic is also the fact that there are these, like necessary activities defined as like, consumption or supermarkets and food, etcetera. And then not necessary – which is the arts – so then you are somehow confronted with the fact that even though you feel that you need art to live, relating to this last question, what if things don't happen, it is so problematic – do you need art to really feel joy? I would say yes, but then it is a non-essential activity, so then it's banned, and at the same time I think it could be very well adapted, like theatres could be opened up and there could be less. There are ways to deal with it in a way. But in my own practice it has affected it, of course, because I feel the conversations are very much interpersonal, like an element I don't know so I haven't been able to do them. And I have to wait until the weather is better to meet people outside. But then what I have been focusing on is rehearsals with my collaborators, so development of the polyphonic protocols, but I haven't been able to continue because I cannot really go online for the conversations, it has really affected. With this anti-indi-

vidualist practice that I like to do...
COVID has caused a focus more on
the individual as consumer as... and
then everything else has to wait.

LJ I think it's funny that before we
avoided the question of functionality,
and functionality within the arts, but
then we are put in the non-functional,
non-essential by society.

IB But this is tremendous. But I think one
of the crises we are experiencing now
I find positive for this conversation we
are having is to think about the habits
we have as a society. We are not just
suffering because we cannot have a
coffee in a café or not able to have a
drink with someone in a bar, but also
because we cannot go to theatre. Or
the cinema. It is a question of habits.

And if you think about our practi-
ces, we are all questioning habits
and we're questioning life also. And
maybe this is a moment to destroy
all this also. And find new ways of
being together. And I think there
can be this power for those who are
used to living in a world where there
was no internet yet, we know what
it means to be together. And now
there is this generation that is born
with technology, and now they are
getting accustomed to this world. We
are talking about a new anthology of
beings, a way of understanding the
world so that why I am stressing the
underground, the real underground,
because we appreciate what it is to
be together, that's what I am trying
to do also with the Beauty Kit farm,
like to use recycling and interacting
with our bodies and appreciate this,
but there is a whole generation living
virtually both on- and offline because
we have social media and there is
this generation who is experiencing
life via the devices, and they are

aiming to have the perfect body.

And even with the crises, this habit
is becoming even more enhanced.
Because people are waiting for this
in order to consume even more. So
if you ask me as a storyteller, artist,
magician or whatever, the question
for me at this point is really about
what does it mean to resist and how
can we really reinvent the meaning
of what it is to be human because
we are in a transaction. What has
been understood as human, or what
composes human is changing. This
whole experience of the virtual is
generating other kinds of hormones
in my body. My body is acting in
another way that is linked to other
psychological connotations, a lot of
people experience this because we
are more online, and it is confront-
ing that, because we had another
life. The being in life experience,
but the generation that has not
experienced that is the future. So
we break out the bars, the theatres,
going back to the political connota-
tion of creating art, or insistence in
thinking about our life and habits,
for me it's almost my life mission.

I feel that we are living in a crack.
And I would love to destroy
pharmaceuticals, to destroy the
mall and the credit cards and all
this shit. But unfortunately, this
is mainstream culture. It's dom-
inating. And you cannot act any
longer as an individual, you have
to form a movement to maybe
influence other movements.

FC How can you approach different peo-
ple that are far from your usual public
because the only way I think is to be
on the street, doing things and taking
the public space, talk, or give a word,
it's the only way to be confronted with
another reality. Or being invited into
this social institution, groups of people
where you are just helping, doing
things, being part of another human-
ity. Because otherwise we look for a
clandestine activity, for example, but
then it becomes niche, we are always
between us, and it's really elitist.

CT Elitiste... Je suis d'accord avec cette
critique, mais dans un sens, c'est
aussi l'occasion de faire autrement
dans une expérience collective.
Comment cette clandestinité peut
refaire société en dehors d'une
société qui n'est plus vraiment une
société puisqu'elle tend vers un
individualisme extrême. Et com-
ment refaire société ailleurs, toute
en restant dedans. Donc oui, il y a
un coté « entre soi » mais aussi un
coté qui propose une recherche de
« Comment vivre autrement ? »

IB I am talking really about a movement.
When you have the strength of people
aligned, it's about gathering those that
think alike and create that strength
in a position first so that you are not
being alone trying to do something.

MM Two questions here, because yes,
on the one hand there has been a
destruction of a public sphere, our
practices also really happen within
a public sphere, or exist because
there is a public sphere, but on the
other hand I do feel that it's not only
about ignoring the rules, because it's
also taking caring of each other in a
time it's difficult to be together, does
a certain danger... The only way to
resist we know is coming together,
but in this situation it's harmful to do
this. You realise also that you are
not actually your own body, there is
a kind of responsibility... For me, it's
very important to pose the question
also how to take care in this period?
Ourselves, while we are working, but
also the ones we are working with.

LJ And how do you take care of
a public that wants to be part
but cannot because of this
situation? What's a strategy?

IB Yeah, but that also brings
the question of fear...

LJ Yeah, and also the idea of public
space that we need to continue to
use, public space has also become
a space of transit... Because you
cannot claim it even anymore.

IB In Paaseiland there was a process of
repression on the indigenous commu-
nity that is not told about. Genocide,
ghetto, they were not allowed to
speak their language – to dance,
somehow they managed to keep this
culture alive. And this is what I am
addressing. Dehumanisation now,
and a generation that is brought up
in a digital era, how can we still have
that experience of being together.

FC To keep the memory of all these
experiences that we had alive.

CS C'est effrayant à quel point on peut
vite oublier et vite changer... Ce qui
m'étonne un peu c'est l'assurance
avec laquelle vous parlez de clan-
destinité... Parce que ce que moi, ce
qui me fait le plus peur actuellement,
c'est la société de contrôle. Et là,
on est ouvertement enregistré, il y
a une vive répression policière, on
est tous tout le temps en infraction
et on s'habitue à ça. Et c'est impos-
sible de suivre toutes ces règles...

FC Someone on the pad says the
best artists will go underground,
quoting Marcel Duchamp.

IB It was Andy Warhol who said
everyone will have a moment of
glory. So maybe he is already
addressing the aftermath of the
moment of glory. After the moment
of glory we all go underground.

LJ For sure, this will all go into the practices that everyone is doing. The resistance and the strategies appear.

