Defining circumstances/spaces/activities for dance
- within my MA in Choreography 2016-2018 at Doch, Stockholm

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DEFINING CIRCUMSTANCES/SPACES/ACTIVITIES FOR DANCE WITHIN MY MA IN CHOREOGRAPHY 2016-2018 AT DOCH, STOCKHOLM

Degree project essay by Tamara Alegre Pérez

INTRODUCTION:
Within the frame of an MA, we know from the start that there will be a specific ending; we call it final project, degree project or final presentation and this essay is meant to accompany the journey of the degree project.

In my case, I want to mention and reflect upon that for me the MA has been a framework for developing and experiencing different types of projects. So not only the project of presenting work at the end of the final semester but long term projects with a broader sense of choreography. Projects that includes social relations and are community based like P0$$€ dance and reading group (appendix 1), a weekly extra-scholarly dance and reading group that shares texts and dance material, in a spontaneous and laid-back way, hosted by a different practitioner each time. The invitation from END FEST where I proposed to do a P0$$€ session in a public swimming pool. The future project of proposing slime workshops at cultural centers and youth-clubs, which comes from the experience and the research on the work that will be presented as the degree project called FIEBRE.

These projects are important for me to highlight because the way I work with choreography is not only about creating final products. Even today, what it is still more common in the dance field is to make pieces that are presented in front of an audience. The process and craft of making a piece is something I find fascinating but I think that many aspects that are activated during a creative process are left unseen and inaccessible to others. It is most probably the case when it comes to making all kind of arts but I find interesting to think that we can make incisions in our creative processes. Producing other kinds of proposals and being busy with other dynamics than making pieces. The contemporary dance field works mainly piece-orientated and this is something that I will like to challenge from now and in the future or at least to have it in mind when I am producing choreographic work.

To situate this essay inside the frame of the MA, it has been written at different occasions from end December 2017 till mid-April 2018.

1. Erik Berg, email to author, January 3, 2018 End Fest is an on-going work by Tove Dahlblom, Stina Dahlström, and Erik Berg, manifesting itself through the idea of a festival that lasts forever. It aims to create connections between artworks, audiences and public entities such as institutions in and outside of the arts. A part of the work with End Fest is to challenge and activate discussions on FORM in the Swedish performing arts scene. (...) What End Fest is aiming for is to continuously create space for work and workers who’s work assumes positions outside of this simple dichotomy between norm and experiment. (...)
I will introduce how hosting is present in how I work, in relation to POSSE and END FEST and how I tend to think about creating spaces as a choreographic tool. Then I will talk about the beginning of the creative process from the first year of the MA where I was busy with two parallel practices; working with objects to generate physical states in the body and a method on making dance phrases. Finally, I will introduce the material that I am working with at the moment, slime, and the relation to the process of making a dance piece, which will be presented as the degree project. It is a process of making a dance piece, a structure that is exploring my view on dance. It is not only a challenge for me to think the work through dance, but I wish to think about the craft of movement, the bodies in the space and dance as a encounter space for physical synergies and sensations.

**TO HOST:**

The occasion of studying in the MA has given me the opportunity for the first time to dedicate myself fulltime to dance and choreography. Before this, I has been mainly working as an underground music curator for festivals, curating in a venue the last year before coming to Stockholm, organising events, working as a producer… I started to be actively involved in dance in 2013 but it was always something I did in the side of my job as a curator until the MA.

My ability to host, create and define spaces is an ongoing practice that stems from my curational past. I have practice curation in different set ups; from a context where I only needed to decide who I was inviting and why, to contexts where I only had a squatted place with no infrastructure, not even electricity. It was from the latter example that practices of creating spaces, hosting and working collectively began. And now, looking back at what I have done during the MA, I realise how these experiences shape how I approach and work with choreography.

**POSSE**

In December 2016, back in Gran Canaria, while writing an assignment for the module “Theoretical Perspectives on the Body” on the work “The sky was Pink” by Mara Oscar Cassiani, I came with the idea of initiating a space/a format for gathering around activities of reading and dancing.

“The sky was Pink” deals with aspects of community, subcultures, dance crews and the activity of hanging out together, in the case of the performance in a public space. While writing the assignment, I had mixed feelings from Mara’s work, being back in the island where I grew and where I used to hang out in corners streets, the mall or the beach and the enthusiasm of being at a dance school, given me the opportunity for the first time of being part of a dance community.

Back at DOCH for the second semester, I proposed to Lisen Pousette, Klara Utke Acs and Chloe Chignel to initiate together a dance and reading group. POSSE started to take place at DOCH from February 2017 as an extra-scholarly weekly gathering for people wanting to spend time reading and dancing.

POSSE comes from a teenage nostalgic feeling of hanging out for the sake of hanging out. Like when you know you can go to that corner of the street or a park because some friends meet there always. There is no specific meeting but its always there, you can just go and hang out.
It has also its background on friendship and how we share with friends. For example, when updating with a friend that you did not see in a while, sharing the new things you know so we can all be part of them, therefore building a common vocabulary. It’s like a playground where one has a new dance that they learned somewhere and wants to show to the rest so we can just dance it together.

The reading section of POSSE is influenced by Young Girl Reading Group who share and read mainly feminist critical texts at recurring public reading events. We see reading a text, as something that we can practice together just like we practice dancing. We are exploring how different ways of approaching it will alter our experiences. It cherishes a spontaneous, playful and an amateuristic mode of doing. Amateuristic in its positive qualities as passionate, genuine and without a goal of completion or orientated towards a final product.

When starting POSSE in Stockholm, we did not research beforehand, to check if something similar already existed, which of course it did in many different forms. We decided to do it because we needed it to happen. There was a certain urge to get things going, to not analyse if it was needed from a participant’s point of view. The group of four females that started it, we are both initiators and participants so we just decided to do it for us as a start.

In some of the POSSEs we are fifteen and in others just two or three but this is not important, what is important is that it keeps on taking place every week so that the space is offered as a space to go to or only as a space that you know it exists and that you could go to, like the street corner you can go to, to meet your friends.

POSSE sessions are hosted each time by different people that are connected to the dance and performance field. The purpose is to exercise ways to read and dance together in a spontaneous, playful and non-pretentious way. This way of approaching the material is a key component of the format. The sessions are only two hours long so it has to be done in a straightforward way. We explain to our hosts that things can be at any state of being. It is a place to try out something, also a space to propose things that are not related to one’s own practice.

The urge came also as a reaction to authorship, in my perspective an overrated value regarding the possession of a specific practice in relation to dance and choreography. Some of us had conversations about the anxiety we felt, as we didn’t think we had a specific practice. And of course we all do but we felt a pressure around that and we wanted to break through it. There is no need to have a specific practice to host a POSSE. It can be anything as long as the host feels the urge and desire to propose it.

I understand the practice base component in what we do as artists, however sometimes the importance given to the practice, not to the action of practicing, but to the naming and the possessiveness around it. As long as you have a practice, it’s all good! I am totally exaggerating but personally it has taken me very long to understand what a practice is and even if I finally understand and I can identify some of my practices, for me it’s more important to ask a practice for what than what specific practice.

My opinion on this is always changing and taking me to other perspectives. I think it is perhaps more related in the how we talk about practices and how we share them. I fully respect knowledge and experience, I do not take that for granted but I wonder about the structural parameters that undermines that this person is more experienced than this other or ways of doing that are considered more experienced or valid. I do not have any answer on that but I do have questions on the validation and qualification of experience.


Young Girl Reading Group, a weekly event organised around feminist inspired theory and fiction, and an interest in technology-driven emancipation. The project began sometime in 2013 after artist-collaboration Dorota Gaweda and Egle Kulbokaite read the semiotext(e)-published English translation of Tiqqun’s French language Preliminary Materials for a Theory of a Young-Girl.
Back to POSSE, it questions some of the snobbery and conventions on how knowledge is shared. Especially when working within the dance field there are still a lot of myths regarding ideals, originality, and genius that we like to challenge.

Since POSSE started we have been invited to My Wild Flag festival in Stockholm to a symposium called Urge to Verge on gestures from choreographers in need of creating contexts and invitations to the Stockholm dance community. And we have done some ‘off the grid’ POSSEs in Copenhagen, Milan and Oslo.

In relation to hosting, POSSE’s frame is clear, simple and also porous. The actual frame is both the inside and the outside of the work. The work is always at work, with every session it keeps on working and expanding frames within the POSSE frame. It is about who comes to activate the given structure (not only the ones hosting but the ones coming to participate) and not so much about the ones that provide the structure. Obviously, there in no neutral hosting and the initiators we do curate who comes to be a host for each session but there is some kind of porousness within such a clear and simple frame that I find exciting to work with and to maintain in the long run.

P0$$€ Episode ~ END FEST «€LEM€NTS»

END FEST approached me to be part of their curational programme. It was their second edition and this time they were only inviting one artist. The proposal was open, like a carte blanche, but in the outlines they gave to me, they mentioned ‘event’ and ‘taking over a space’. This was my starting point.

I was thinking of some ideas when I realised that what I wanted to do had a similar format to POSSE, in the sense of inviting other people for dancing, in my first thoughts it was not a reading but a lecture or a screening. After talking to the other POSSE initiators about my idea, I decided to experiment on taking POSSE and making it a public event framed by END FEST festival. I wanted to propose a particular space to be together, I had a strong desire to get out of the common institutionalised spaces and the segregated city center of Stockholm, where mainly all art institutions are. Those institutionalised spaces are carrying a history and structures around privilege and power that reinforces the question of who has access to art. Common dance houses and theatres are spaces inhabited by a specific population belonging to a particular social class. My desire about leaving these spaces and entering spaces like a public swimming pool or a bar in a less-centered area of the city was because these places are more convivial, they host day to day mundane relations and they have a different agenda, there are not there to host art in the first place.

The proposal was to read and dance inside a pool in Skarholmen’s public swimming pool followed by the second part of the event where we could eat Peruvian food and dance at Angelo’s bar, a Peruvian bar also in the area of Skarholmen, which is a suburban district in the south-western Stockholm. We did not privately rent the pool, so it was happening on a Saturday afternoon during opening hours, neither we rented the bar, so the local clients where there too.

I was fully aware about the intrusion of the proposal not only being in a public space but being an area where most of the population is immigrant. Specially me being a privileged white person studying art, making an event there. I was aware of all this, also aware that I will ‘fail’ in many aspects of the project but I still wanted to try do it from a place of awareness. I live in Skarholmen and somehow that made it a bit less intrusive, I could visit the pool many Saturdays before the event to imagine and feel how it could take
place. I felt extremely welcome at Angelo’s, being able to speak Spanish helped me a lot to organise the event with them and for both part to feel comfortable. I knew from before that they hosted different kind of parties with other type of music and clients. I knew they could be open for that type of collaboration.

My questions were on how to take the space needed for the event to happen without taking to much space. That it could be remarkable and still convivial with its surrounding. Being a disruption in the common life of the spaces inhabited, aiming to stay ‘open’, perhaps ungraspable for some but still available to enter it.

We read “A Theory for the Strange Girl: Raw Red Text” by Jennifer Boyd. It’s a text that has been present in the early stages of the process of FIEBRE, I will write about this later in the essay. I didn’t want to modify my choice of reading because we were in Skarholmen and I was aware that reading in English might feel excluding for some of the audience even though printed version were handed out. The dancing part after the reading was a participatory water dance choreography. This part was more accessible to some of the audience that was present. The event unfolded surprisingly well, there was a very special attention while the reading and great fun with the dancing. It was satisfying to experiment with what a public POSSE event could be, how this could be inscribed in a public space and with an audience.

SLIME WORKSHOP

Together with Lydia Östberg Diakité and Marie Ursin and, my current collaborators on the work with the slime, we have hosted two slime POSSEs in relation to our research. What has been expressed about it after, is that the slime workshop is inspiring, challenging and liberating. The experience of working with your body as another material in the slime-material, that embraces all the surfaces of your skin, is an unusual and a mesmerising experience. The slippery slime dictates new ways of sliding, playing, moving and collaborating with the others bodies. It’s a new ground and we build from that point of view.

For the future, we are very enthusiastic on developing the idea of a slime workshop for teenagers, more particularly for female and non-cis male teenagers. Working with and through this material could be a common ground to approach and practice issues like inclusiveness, sharing, togetherness, non-competitiveness and failure. Topics like queer youth, power structures and soft values can be explored together, to form identities and question norms/normative behaviors we take for granted.

At the moment, we are mainly focused on the degree presentation and not in the development of the workshop. In the paragraph just above, I mention topics that we think could be accessed through the slime as a stimulator. Inside the slime we have to find out new ways of moving, it is very risky to stand up, so we mainly work horizontally. Special attention needs to be addressed as we cannot fully control our movements, this will inevitably affect the other bodies in the space. The most effective way of moving is by using the other bodies in the space, a negotiation on how to do this must be collectively established. From these practicalities and specially by having fun, we think we can propose a space for empowerment. Specially after the #metoo wave, we realise how important it is to cherish the conception of sibling-hood settings, spaces where we can practice consent, trust and togetherness in a safe environment.

I am also extremely excited about the idea of not only making a piece but a piece that could be proposed together with a workshop. In relation to the contemporary dance market working mainly product-orientated, it will be interesting to see the capacities and willingness of welcoming the workshop and not only the piece. We are aiming at showing the work in other spaces and places after the degree project. We aim, nevertheless,
to propose the workshop as a thing in itself to cultural centers and youth clubs. Once again the hosting dimension manifests and I realise that for me it makes sense to approach work in this way. Choreographically I tend to think about creating frames and environments for different types of encounter. I have approached the creative process of FIEBRE in this way.

**DEGREE PROJECT:**

As I have stated in the introduction, the MA for me has been more than working towards the final presentation, why I decided to start the essay talking about my practice of hosting during these last two years. Hosting is something that I do without thinking that I am doing it and it has been a surprise to realise how it is present in the way I work.

Having time and space to focus on dance and engage in a creative process is something that I have never done before. Being in a process of creating a dance piece is one of the hardest, passionate and complex things I have ever done. It has been and still is, as we are in the middle of the process while writing this essay, very challenging, beautiful and extremely painful too. It is hard for me to define a specific or one practice that I have. Hosting is a practice but it is quite broad, it can contain many ideas/practices/desires inside and manifest in many formats. In the following sections of the essay I will use the word practice even though, for the moment, I prefer to understand it more as things I do in relation to contexts, frames and ideas.

It was not until the second year of the MA, more particular through the exercise of writing this essay and in conversation with my mentor Karina Sarkissova\(^\text{10}\) that I was able to make a connection between the two practices. At that time I had a feeling that both echoed each other and now with more distance, I am able to define something more and therefore start to understand my ways of working.

During the first year of the MA, I started working on two parallel practices: one was following a technique to make dance phrases based on still moving images/screenshots from dance. And the other one was on accessing particular physical states by working with objects.

**ACCESSING STATES THROUGH WORKING WITH OBJECTS**

The action or practice of dwelling was introduced to me by Jen Rosenblit in the research laboratory “On rituals and remedies in troubling times” by Simone Aughterlony in March 2017 at Zürich Moves, dance festival in Zürich.

The most common definition of a dwell is a building for shelter or a home. However, dwelling also means to live or continue in a given condition or state, to linger over, emphasize, or ponder in thought, speech or writing\(^\text{11}\). What I got from Jen Rosenblit’s proposal of dwelling was to be in the space and tune-in with a sensorial attention to the surroundings. To experience spending time, to just be there and see what state this brings you in and from there, to act. In the laboratory there were different kind of materials/objects available to work with like silicon skins, vaseline blocks, chains, robes…

Back in Stockholm I continued the dwelling practice as I was quite amazed by the physical aspect of it, precisely by the states that one can access with it. I choose some objects and materials that were not clearly utilitarian like a cup or a pencil. The materials were more like fishnet, rolls of plastic, chains, a tree branch and a piece of silicone that I took with me from Zurich as a souvenir.

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10. Karina Sarkissova is a choreographer, working with social and expanded choreography. Based in Stockholm, Karina is curating the festival My Wild Flag together with Pontus Pettersson, a yearly international festival exploring queer and normcritical choreographic proposals. Karina is studying at Dutch Art Institute 2017-2019, exploring curatorial practices. Karina is working regularly as a mentor and giving dramaturgical advice to choreographers.

What I find interesting from the dwelling practice are the sensations and affects one can experience. More specifically, the way I started to approach it was to tune-in to perceive the object’s agency and at the same time holding back first impulses on how to approach them. I was also inspired by Karen Barad’s term intra-action as a substitute of interaction. Thinking of intra-actions made me access a particular state of hosting the possible emerging actions that come from inside the relation to objects and not from outside/external ideas.

How I also dwell is by modifying my perception and I called this ‘augmented perception’. By practicing the augmented perception you are entering a specific physical and mental state that transforms to something else with the objects. By enhancing the perception, I practice to look at my surroundings, objects around me, myself, the air… trying to go further than the first layer of information or common knowledge that comes from what I am looking at. To stick with it and look further away from their main functionality, to fictionalise on them and how this consequently affects my sensorial state. I used the dwelling and the augmented perception to improvise with and within the objects and to approach energetic physical states that arose from the situations themselves. Spending time with the objects, applying a specific perception and attention produced a certain way of relating to them, a certain way of constructing different bodies and actions, and an emergence of different energetic states. What is the most important for me is the actual emergence of the states, actions and relations. Popping up, not entirely consciously decided upon, they are more of consequences or outcomes from the intra-actions.

I am conscious that this practice can be inscribed and related to theories like New Materialism, Object oriented ontology and Speculative realism. Even though I have read on this, I do not feel myself in a place of conceptualising about them nevertheless, I thought I would just mention it.

In this practice of dwelling, there is a particular mode of being that resonates with the action of hosting. It is like defining a specific spatio-temporal environment that can host what emerges from the intra-actions between the objects and me. I have practiced mainly alone but I have also invited other people to join.

**MAKING DANCE PHRASES**

Parallel to working with the objects I was making dance phrases. The method I was using was to select images of dancing bodies; either pictures or screenshots of dance videos and putting them together as a sequence of movement. The assemblage of the images is not aleatory, it is done consciously placing one image after the other. The assembling order dictates the order of the sequence to be danced. While assembling I do not try the movement from the still images in my body physically, I only try the movement once the composition is done.

The dance images where predominantly from western female choreographers like Martha Graham, Josefine Baker, Trisha Brown and Yvone Rainer. Each phrase or photo collage was from mainly one of these choreographers and mixed with other dance images from diverse sources such us contemporary pop music video clips from Chairlift, AJ Tracey, hip hop phenomena DAB move, dance in videogames, video clips from 18+ with 3D animated dancers, K-pop choreography from Suzumiya Haruhi no Yuutsu, baile funk moves from MC Bin Laden and Dancehall moves that I learned in afternoon classes with Jacqueline form Enough Production in Stockholm.

It was definitely a dance references mash up and I was interested in some kind of alien encounter be-
between high and low art and how gestures from different genres and history could coexist and transform by being next to each other. When this material was showed at diverse work in process presentations or shows, some of the feedback was that you could sense the references but that the sense of collage and accumulation was so strong that the quotations blended into each other. I did not quote from where the references came from as that was no the main interest of the practice. It was important for me but not to reveal the sources.

The core of the practice was on how to connect from one image to the other trying to respect the original order previously decided upon. What came out was a combination of movements that were not organically linked, or in another words missing momentum. Momentum in dance helps you to go from one move to another, you gain momentum in order to do jumps, for example. Even though there was no momentum, the dances were driven by something else. Driven by a structure, that permits to make connections that will not be there on a first instance. Some of the transitions were barely possible, therefore I had also to invent steps to be able to follow the order.

This practice comes from a similar method that Mårten Spångberg, with whom I have worked since 2016, uses to create dance phrases. By juxtaposing very distinct dance genres, mainly clashing high and low culture or classic/modern and pop dance material using photographs and videos.

I can see a certain correlation between both practices; working with the objects and the dance images. In the case of the dance phrases, the origin of the image is important as I liked the idea of spending time with those references in the studio. What was meaningful for me was the outcome of the collage, even more, the way the outcome comes through, the way it emerges from the given structure/collage. In the case of the objects, the type of object is important but what is at stake is what happens with and through them. Again is what emerges in the dwelling.

Images are also objects and by playing the collage game and the activation of the sequences of movements I was also speculating in giving agency to those images, putting them next to each other. In both cases, it is an emergence of content that is not completely pre-decided or entirely conscious, like setting the ground for things to happen. It makes me think that it also resonates with hosting, preparing a space for, making frames for the emergence of content.

After the first year, I stopped the practice of making dance phrases, I lost the motivation as I found it extremely time consuming. As a dancer with no traditional dance technique education, I found it interesting to use this method to make my own phrases. My approach of not thinking through momentum, working more on an image based, step-by-step collage desire. Not taking into consideration what is possible for a physical body to do, or in relation to dance styles, how moves should be done.

There was something strange in the outcome that I enjoyed. The problem was that it took me a lot of time to compose those phrases. In the third semester, I was dancing in other contexts for other choreographers therefore I had less of an urgency to dance and make my own phrases.

I also stopped the dwelling with the objects after the first year but clearly these two practices were very present in the work I showed for the working process presentation in May 2017. I will not go into detail about that work or presentation, as I want to prioritise the process and work I am busy with at the moment, which is connected to the final presentations.

SLIME

From the end of 2017, until now I have been working with slime as my main object/definition of space/motivation of movement.

Slime is a non-toxic viscous, squishy and semi-liquid green substance.


Force or speed of movement; impetus, as of a physical object or course of events
Also called linear momentum. Mechanics. A quantity expressing the motion of a body or system, equal to the product of the mass of a body and its velocity.
It was marketed in the late 70’s as a toy for children, sold in a plastic can and on different colours. Throughout the 90’s and till today it is popular on TV shows, such as Slime Time, or Nickelodeon Kids’ Choice Award where participants are gunged, meaning to get a bucket of slime thrown out at you. Throughout time the symbolism of being gunged have oscillated between something disgusting aiming to cause embarrassment to something pleasurable and honouring.

Slime is today an online phenomenon with millions of tutorials of people trying different DIY recipes on how to make slime. It is connected to the ASMR - Autonomous sensory meridian response, which is a tingling sensation on the scalp from certain auditory, olfactory, or visual stimulation. ASMR video phenomena involves role-play to camera, whispering with soothing tones whilst acting routines such as wrapping presents, applying make-up to the absent audience, brushing hair with the aim of producing a tingling sensation.

Youthubers and Instagramers, mainly young teenagers, are posting videos that are viewed over million times on how to make DIY slime but also manipulating it in front of the camera to stimulate the sensorial. The slime videos contain disembodied fingers poking and pressing it, resulting in loud pops and smacks.

Craig Richard, PhD, professor of biopharmaceutical sciences at Shenandoah University, explains in regards to the slime phenomenon: “the subtle sensory experiences elicited by ASMR videos likely create a sense of intimacy for viewers. These videos relax us because we are hardwired to be soothed by people who can provide care to us. Sounds like soft whispers, a paintbrush against paper, and—yes—fingers squishing into slime may engender feelings of personal attention, of being in an intimate environment. Richard posits that they likely activate our brains to release specific neurotransmitters and hormones that soothe us—possibly oxytocin, endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin.” It was the top ‘how-to’ query on Google in 2017 — ahead of ‘how to make solar eclipse glasses’ and ‘how to buy bitcoins’.

I find this material fascinating, it affects you by its viscous texture, it connects with your body fluids and aquatic qualities, it slips through your skin. It is sensual, pleasant and allows you to move and slide through space in unusual ways. It creates sound, has an hypnotising effect when playing with it, attracts you towards itself by its haptic sensation.

It is not only about pleasure, it has also a repulsive and alienating effect; it gives you the sensation of being trapped and greatly limits the functioning of your extremities. It obstructs movement to the point that you cannot move in the same way you have always moved (this is when liters of slime are on the floor). The slime decides for you, it conditions your actions in space and your physical states, it acts as an intensifier of sensations.

I have a connection to fluids, water and the sea. It comes from spending most of my childhood around the sea. Born in Canary Islands, I have lived one minute away from the beach and we spend all the weekends, which I can recall of my childhood, sailing on a boat.

I miss the island that I left when I was 17 years old, this longing is constantly growing. Living in countries such as Switzerland and now Sweden for the last past years makes me idealise the place I come from and that I decided to leave.

This connection has been re-appearing throughout the education. It was not a conscious decision for me to decide that I wanted to work with liquids or water as an element or the sea as a theme though I have discovered that it is inherent in what I am doing lately.

Thanks to my colleagues being present, watching and giving feedback on my work, I have realised how

I easily create environments that recall underwater situations or exploration with liquids. For example, activating specific sounds, working with saliva, particular movements or the work with the slime. Throughout the MA we have presented many stages of the work and we have speculated and fictionalised on our colleagues’ professional future or what will be our next project. It has been through these activities that I have understood the influence that fluid materials have in my work.

When I decided to work with slime for the work in progress presentation last May 2017, the slime was contained in plastic bags. I had a resistance on pouring it all over the floor. The resistance was not about spreading the slime on the floor or in other words making a mess but more the fact of being alone in it. I felt a rejection to the picture of one person, a female, being messy with that material. I wanted to avoid the many sexual connotations that this type of fluid on a female body may project. When we are more than one body, it is easier for me, to not project this, even though it is still there. With more bodies I find it easier to activate another agenda and relations that point elsewhere too.

For the wip, it was contained in plastic bags that were hanging from the ceiling and gathered on the floor. I pierced the bags to let the slime fall. They had different falling rhythms depending on their viscosity, I blew air inside the bags, poured it on the floor. The material affected me and I danced with it.

In June 2017 I attended Scene:Bluss, a research lab taking place as part of PIT, Porsgrunn International Theatre Festival in Norway. The lab was in relation to the TV series Buffy the Vampire Slayer hosted by Jassem Hindi together with Marie Ursin and Alexandra Tveit. We were working on themes like fighting training, casting spells and made liters of fake blood as a material to work from. The fake blood had a very similar texture to the slime I was working with.

To start off the blood was contained in a plastic pool but eventually we poured it on the floor. This was for me a perfect occasion to test on ideas that I had in relation to the slime, that I never tried before since the slime was never disposed all over the space, on the floor.

There were many bodies in the space, therefore I understood that multiple bodies were needed for my own interests and explorations.

I tried different sliding exercises, helping each other to slide, trying to maintain static positions with the instability that the material provides, we wrestled and used the other bodies to slide across the space.

After the research lab it was clear for me that I wanted to spread the slime in the space and that I needed to work with other people.

**WORKING STRUCTURES**

I invited Lydia Östberg Diakité and Marie Ursin to participate in the work. More precisely, I invited Lydia and by that time Marie was going to start an MA in Oslo so we said we would share the research/the project. I was excited about this, I always wanted to collaborate more than to create solos. Marie quitted the MA a few months after starting therefore, this shifted the situation. I became the person leading the project even though I did not felt very comfortable about that role. Throughout the working process there has been several crisis around the idea that I would prefer to share the work instead of leading it.

It is complex to work with friends, to ‘direct’ friends, and more complex when you prefer that everyone takes upon equal responsibility.

The positive side of working with friends is that you can be honest with them. I decided to share my anxieties. Lydia and Marie have been very supportive in the process.

In two occasions I proposed that we shared the work but Marie and Lydia insisted that I should keep initiating the ideas. They mentioned that with the context of the MA, writing this essay, having organised
feedback sessions and dialogue with my colleagues, Karina my mentor and teachers, it made more sense that I kept on being the choreographer. To take the opportunity to explore where my own ideas would end up within the frame of the MA.

I understand their points of view and practically in terms of agenda and time, this was the only way to continue. It was too late for them to approach a shared work situation, they did not have the time needed to work and maintain the deadline of the degree presentation. For the future, I am still keen on the idea of sharing authorship and working collectively. Not as a way of escaping responsibility and hierarchy but in a way of organising these amongst a group and not only relying in one person. Maybe different functions can be given to different roles. Nevertheless, in relation to how we are working, I feel we are doing the work together and that not everything is up to me. We are collaborating and finding out what the work is together. They are, as I said earlier, very supportive and I appreciate this immensely.

At the beginning of the process we had a working week in Oslo. Runa Born Skolseg and Marie had a two working weeks residency and invited me and Lydia to join for one week to start working with the slime. Runa is a writer and dramaturge based in Oslo, Norway. It was exciting to work together with someone from a different field with different working methods and not necessarily inside the slime project. It was not an easy situation as the group formation was slightly unbalanced with three dancers and one writer. Three persons sharing a project and previously been in the slime together for a POSSE that took place in Stockholm, and two persons (Runa and Marie) sharing another project that was less defined at that time.

Including the complications mainly about ways of accessing work, the experience of sharing research even though we were not all working towards the same goal was very appealing and something I would like to reproduce in future occasions.

FIEBRE

Back to the slime. During our first week of work in Oslo, we started reading “A Theory for the Strange Girl: Red Raw Text” by Jennifer Boyd. I encountered this text during the summer 2017 and since then it was haunting my interests. I found it inspiring and full of strength and I initiated the work from some of the ideas mentioned in the text.

The theory of the Strange Girl is a concept responding to the theory of the Young Girl, written by the French collective Tiqqun in 1999.

“The Young-Girl is a blanket term descriptive of the state of the consumer body. Every citizen living under consumer capitalism is young-girlified, meaning it is not a specifically gendered condition. (…) The Young-Girl is also the exemplar avatar of late capitalism’s social life: plasticised, stretched and smiling. As both molecular infection and model citizen, the Young-Girl is a single girl, all girls, and is also non-human.”

On the other hand, the Strange Girl is “a raw thing, birthed from the red raw skin of the Girl-sign. The sign of Girl is a fluid one. She is a figure in progress, leaving her open to both the manipulations of capitalism, and the figurative and conceptual experimentations of those who want to see capitalism fall.”

In the concept of the Strange Girl, I am interested in what Boyd describes as a force. The Strange Girl is a force and is coming from heat and hot messes. Unlike the Young Girl who only knows and values herself through the production of her image, the Strange Girl does not have a body, she is only known by the experience of being inside her, the sensations of molecules, the vibration of their potential. She is an

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The Strange Girl is pure force and friction, her form may be imagined as comprised only of sensations and forces of matter. The Strange Girl in opposition to the Young Girl, has a secret, a hidden agenda, something that she knows and lets Capitalism know that she is knowing without revealing it. The Young Girl on the contrary, plays the spectacle game and feeds Capitalism in this way, her guts are always open, she is always smiling and available for the system, she is empty.

I contacted Jennifer Boyd to ask her if she could send me her thesis. The text from the Strange Girl was an edited version of her thesis at Goldsmith University in London. From her thesis, she mentioned the concept of lurching and the gif that we found interested and that we introduced to our first working sessions.

“The sensation of the gif is a mechanical lurch. We can think of this lurch as the exiting of suspension, a recurring jar into action. The gif does not allow the viewer to bask in the smooth loop of a perfect moment, rather, it hurtles around itself, always announcing when it has reached its starting point. The last and first image never match; there is always a digital point of break. In these cracks, chances can be found as they ensure that the viewer never loses themselves in the image, as they are always made aware of its mechanical construction. It is in this crack of critical awareness that the Strange-Girl can gain momentum. The gif is therefore a threatening, vibrating, shifting space, a temporality in which suspended elements begin to shake and gain a pace that is their own. This lurch may be thought in relation to the cycle of regurgitation and force-feed in which the consumer-subject engages.”

We used the concept of the gif and lurching together with the dwelling. It informed a specific way of being in the slime for us, gave us an entry point on how we could access the material.

We started part of the research dwelling in the slime, giving the slime agency. The slime’s agency is very strong and determinate, it dictates what we are able to do and what not. Karina Sarkissova wrote the following in relation to the research and to our bodies in relation to the slime. “The slime is opposing the body’s function of counteracting gravity. To navigate the slime, you have to keep your limbs close to the body and slowly intending a direction being close to the ground. Standing up is in itself a failure. The limbs are useless to uphold and control in the slime, but they are useful for sliding. To try to create lines in space is dictated by the slow opposition of the slime, disturbing the performers to build symmetries and relating to each other’s bodies.”

The dramaturgy of the piece or the order that choreographic materials could be presented is dictated by the agency of the slime. When the slime is freshly made it is viscous and think, with friction it becomes liquid. Some choreographic material needs to be done before others depending on the texture needed from the slime at every stage of the work. The slime agency has also dictated our working schedules, as we cannot reuse it from one session to the other. By the end of the rehearsal, it has become totally liquid, meaning that everyday we cook new slime.

Due to the formlessness of the slime and how this lack of form affects our actions turning them into imprecise and unachieved moves, we attempt to create symmetries and work on forms. The form becomes a place of encounter where we come together. It is interesting that it is never a controllable form, always dissolving, always in negotiation. It is being sculptured again and again.

The notion of plasticity from Catherine Malabou has been useful in this regard. Malabou speaks about the brain’s plasticity, “a term which stands between (as a kind of deconstructive “indecidable”) flexibility and rigidity, suppleness and solidity, fixedness and transformability, identity and modificability, determination and freedom. This means seeing the brain no longer as the “center” and “sovereign power” of the body—as it has been seen for centuries, at least in the West—but as itself a locus and process of selfsculpting (self-forming) and transdifferentiation, as being very closely intercon-

In the work we make attempts to synchronisation and symmetry between the three of us. This allows not only to encounter in the slimy fictional landscape but to touch upon a specific imagery that is culturally loaded as sensual or sexual, girly, within the harmony and aesthetics of synchronise swimming or Esther Williams’

water choreographies. In the slime we try to make this imagery pervasive; sometimes as we cannot maintain the image/form because we slip, or we intentionally slip in order to not maintain the image but quickly going through it, projecting it as a reference. By twisting the imagery we are working with, we evoke aspects of soft porn. Specifically how we approach with subtle humour situations that are symbolically charged. Paul B. Preciado describes soft porn less as a theory and more of a conceptual cartography used to describe different critical strategies for the intervention on the representation of pornography, coming from feminist, queer, transgender, intersex and anticolonial movements.

Soft porn as written in the “Comunicado pro post porn” aims to give another point of view to what is, or stops being, sexual or exciting. Displacing the focus of pleasure from the genitals, tries to open the debate, discover new sensations through ego and fun. Post porno has no limit, … opens the door to the visualization of our fantasies and desires.

The work is loaded with sensuality; not only from our experiences but aesthetically from the viscous material in contact with our skin, the performers wearing costumes based on swimsuits and particularly the string shape in our asses, which is not only an aesthetical choice but a practical one to slide better.

Soft porn and pornography were not initial themes of the work, even though the connotations are present and we are now playing and using them choreographically. We have focused on movement practices on desire, sensuality and sensations. For the coming working period we will activate the guts as a physical place from where not only pleasurable sensations car emerge but also disgust.

Our horizontal sitting positions in the slime makes our lower limbs less available, leaving the upper body to be explored and choreographed. In the coming rehearsals we will explore the connection between our mouths and our genitals. Thinking our genital’s orifices as one connected to the mouth, breathing through our genitals, evoking the cloaca from animal’s anatomy, as the one orifice to digest, reproduce and excrete.

Earlier in the process, I wanted to work with a specific embodiment that I wanted to bring inside the slime. This body presence/embodiment was connected to what I practiced for the work in progress presentations last May 2017. My experiment of bringing it inside the work with the slime did not work. While working, we discovered that the ideas we brought from outside inside the slime did not work. From these try-outs that did not work, we started to research from, within, through the slime… Realizing that the ideas and proposals needed to be articulated from an experiential perspective of being in the slime. My proposal for working with the upper body is now inscribed in an inner logic of sliding, that we have experienced from the work itself. In the coming rehearsals I will introduce a practice for embodiment from that perspective.


Catherine Malabou is a French philosopher. She is currently professor in the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP) at Kingston University. (…) Her doctorate was obtained under the supervision of Jacques Derrida from the Ecole des hautes etudes en sciences sociales. (…) Catherine Malabou’s contention that plasticity has become a major category in philosophy, arts, psychology, neurobiology and cell biology has opened up new perspectives on the way in which subjectivity and materiality, mind and body, are interrelated, along with new relationships between philosophy, arts and biology.


Esther Williams nicknamed “America’s Mermaid,” was an American actress who helped popularize synchronized swimming through a string of hugely popular films in the 1940s and ‘50s.


Paul B. Preciado is a philosopher and queer activist. S/he is the director of the Independent Studies Program at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA). (…) His/her first book, Contra-Sexual Manifesto (Balland, 2000), was acclaimed by French critics as “the red book of queer theory” and was translated into five languages.
Aimee Bahng researched Octavia E. Butler’s archives of collected papers and notes at the Huntington Library in California. She found an unpublished note on slime molds dated December 31, 1988. “In multicoloured pen Butler has written: “We find true colony organism rare and fascinating. Here they are the exception. There, perhaps the rule.” Aimee argues that “Butler’s approach to slime molds and what she learns for them models modes of engagement with other life-forms that comes from practice thinking with alien-human entanglements… In slime she looks for a model of life that could be rather than life that already is. It is a speculative fabulation, drawn from life unruly.”

“Descriptions of slime mould behaviour often focus on its anomalous self-organising, which requires systematic morphing between single-celled and multicellular forms. As long as there is enough food around, the single cells are self-sufficient, growing and dividing by binary fission. But, when starved, the cells undergo internal changes that lead to their aggregation into clumps which, as they grow bigger, topple over and crawl off as slugs.” (Keller 1983)

Butler in her science fiction stories often describes species which highlights cooperation rather than competition in describing the organisation and evolution of complex non-hierarchical social structures. It is fascinating to read about the slime mold in relation to FIEBRE. As mentioned before, I started the work by defining the space or the material that defines the space. I connect to what Octavia Butler defines as “there”, not here but there, as a speculative space where you can imagine an otherwise. An otherwise where slime and our bodies are entities through which to imagine another ontology, beyond here, but there.

FIEBRE’s creative process is not finished yet. We have worked two weeks and a half until now and we have two more weeks after the deadline of this essay. What will be presented, as the degree project is a starting point, a beginning.

There are many aspects of the process, but for the moment, I choose to write about the above mentioned. Some of them are concepts that nourish and accompany the work, others more practical from the work itself, more and less developed.

Something that I can clearly point out is that I am choreographically working from the space. Defining the space first. I can relate this to hosting in the sense of creating a specific context for things to be developed. Confining a specific environment or frame and working from there.

The slime is the space. The slime covers the floor and becomes the main element in the space to work from. It defines a big part of the things we want to or can do. It is an exercise of surrendering to the environment and reimagining ways of relating and doing.

Jennifer Boyd in her text asks how to change a reality, how to escape the chalk circle around you. She mentions that rather than drawing another circle around you a succession of kicks should be made to the chalk circle to change its matter.

FIEBRE is the consequence of wanting your reality to change, after giving kicks to what we consider our reality to be, we have ended up in slime. Slime as a fictional landscape and how do we move from there, from that new environment. What emerges from being in the slime, with the slime, for the slime, under the slime, as the slime, through the slime, against the slime…

Octavia E. Butler, invigorated the genre of science fiction by using her stories to grasp readers’ attention and explore freedom, empathy, race and all around human-ness.
Physarum polycephalum is a unicellular multinucleated slime mold that can grow up to hundreds, in special circumstances even thousands of square centimeters in size. Physarum forms extended networks in order to search for and connect food sources. The nutrients taken up are transported along tubes via shuttle streaming, an oscillatory mechanism organizing as a peristaltic wave. Although Physarum does not have a nervous system in the conventional sense, it is able to adjust its structure and foraging behavior as a response to complex challenges.
I will end this essay with a quote from Audre Lorde33 from her book Sister Outsider from the chapter Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power. This quote has accompanied the work in its trajectories and decisions on working from the sensual, the desires and the erotic. Using them as means for identifying, re-sculpting realities and reinventing ways of socially being together.

“The erotic functions for me in several ways, and the first is in providing the power which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference.”

A self-described “black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet,” Audre Lorde dedicated both her life and her creative talent to confronting and addressing the injustices of racism, sexism, and homophobia.


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Appendix 1