

IMMATERIAL  
THREAD

**BY ALL MEANS,**

**TREAT THE SYMPTOMS.**

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## INTRODUCTION

From feelings of urgency for human reconciliation with planet Earth and an interest in universal interconnectedness on and beyond the physical plane, I started the reading and writing process for this thesis. Questions of what is that which allows for interspecies communication, of what inspiration is or can be, of what the point of intersection of art and spiritual practices is, followed. It led me to various artists, who, in their artistic practice, embody and manifest expressions of a universal interconnectedness and openness to realms of consciousness different from our “normal” human day-to-day ones. Some might refer to non-physical expressions of this interconnectedness as the spiritual, the godly, the paranormal, the psychic, the collective unconscious, or at the level of the quantum physical. What I aim to talk about runs through all of these different frameworks, and is of an abstract, energetic substance, graspable to all, whether that be consciously or unconsciously.

The artists I will expand on work in various fields, these being painting, performance, sound (and sound-generating inventions), and improvisation therein, which are the media I work with as well. A lot of what I have written I have learnt through my practice and studies in improvisation between 2017-2021, inside and outside of ‘Live Works’ by Pien Vrijhof. I will discuss the practices of Hilma Af Klint, Bernard Schultze, Anne Imhof, Rudolf Eb.er, and Pauline Oliveros, to find how they deal with awareness (or not) of this connection between all, and how this affects their works. I will also touch upon Butoh through the practices of Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata, and discuss aspects of morphic resonance and interspecies communication.

Performance art takes a central role in my argument due to the way it is concerned with the creation of a moment where people physically gather together for a certain amount of time in which a strong presence in the ‘now’ is often triggered, altering people’s experience of time, in respect to the experience of the everyday. As its roots lie in ancient ceremonies and rituals, performance art has a deeply rooted connection to processes beyond the physical plane, which, in my opinion, still finds its expression in our contemporary times.

Do artworks amplify the connection between people, with Earth, or with other planes or dimensions? Can one allow for manifestations from dimensions beyond our visible ‘reality’ through such artworks? Can one respond to them with an artwork? Or make of the artwork a space for a more visible conversation between various dimensions, while including the spectators? Do all parties need to be aware of what is going on on all levels? Does the artwork become a translation? A meeting place? Does it still need translation after it has taken form? What is the role of the artist here? Do they become the bridge?

The reason for most of the artists being situated in Western culture was to find out how connectivity shows itself in a culture that, predominantly, does not concern itself with matters as such, in sharp contrast with cultures for whom they form part of daily life. Problematics are the methods used, and by whom, in such work, as appropriation of indigenous practices and tools are at risk as well as the exploitation of energetic work as an aesthetic or show. Nevertheless, spiritual life is a human birthright and everybody can find their way of working with it inside themselves. Many are unaware, or even in denial of this and of our profound interconnectedness as human beings with the rest of life on Earth, Earth herself, the rest of the Universe and beyond. In my opinion, these things need to be put into question when addressing problems such as the Sixth Mass Extinction, the Corona-Crisis, climate change, environmental pollution, exploitation of live beings and resources, all forms of segregation and discrimination and the global systems in charge. I think the unawareness and denial is part of the source of all these problems, and, a solution. The only life-preserving way out of this situation is the restoration of balance within the multi-species society and with planet Earth, where all can thrive symbiotically and harmoniously. The question is: How do we get there?

To my surprise, many of the artists I researched, along with Butoh and morphic resonance, led me to a place of healing, the expansion of consciousness and evoking of compassion, which, again, is completely in line with the ancient roots of the practice.

Can veils of illusion, in terms of humans’ separation from “nature”, be (temporarily) lifted through the experience of connectedness in an artwork? Additionally, can the context of a performance further facilitate this act of unveiling between all of the people present? Can this initiate a healing process beyond the limits of the physical artwork itself? Not only in individuals, but also in groups? Can this help resurface the profound connection with planet Earth and beyond? Can this then find its way into our everyday ‘reality’ and bring forth concrete change in (Western) humans’ relationship with Earth and non-human creatures?



And initiate a healing process together with Earth and her dying populations? Or at least create (a) space for such a process to initiate on a larger scale?

## THE ILLUSION OF SEPARATION

Comparing the human gene to that of a fruit-fly, the surprise will be the little difference between the two, rather than their contrast. All materially manifested living creatures on Earth are different expressions of evolution and mutation, all with the same basic instinct of ensuring their survival and the survival of their species.<sup>1</sup> Scientists and mystics speak of the connection, even of the smallest particle, as being a waveform, or a vibration - matter being made up of different frequencies.<sup>2</sup> Nothing can then ever be really out of touch. One's field of energy is always weaved into many another's, and thus, the pulling on one string will reverberate through and affect the whole web.

This applies to humans on Earth in connection with all other species of life, as well as to the cells within one's body. Given a finite globe is shared, it seems obvious that the processes of one species will affect the processes of another and of the whole. Living bodies being largely made out of water and carbon makes them part of Earth, quite literally. Different assemblies of the same substances, in more rough or refined compositions, move along the depths, surface or atmosphere of the planet with wills of their own.

When all is connected, what happens to one happens to all, and what happens to all happens, eventually, to one. This is something that the typical Western man has forgotten, or has been un-taught. People in "the Western world" speak of 'nature' and of 'animals', as part of a separate reality. To use Jacques Derrida's example on this matter; as if the protozoon and the dolphin can be classified under the same category, belonging to one and the same group; that of 'The Animal',<sup>3</sup> which has been appointed by the human who is separate and 'superior'. As if there are two groups on Earth, humans and non-humans – Humans and 'things' that serve humans. In this line of thought humanity has exploited, massacred and intoxicated on an ever-growing scale, through the patterning of a monoculture, with the sole aim of individual gain.

In contrast, many indigenous tribes do not even have a word for 'nature', as they see themselves as part of 'it'. This 'it' is the everything and the nothing. Among many other things, these words and language on a larger scale, in the case of dominant Western thought, become problematic, as they condition the conception of perceived reality and perpetuate the illusion of separation among new generations.<sup>4</sup> Millennia of gradual domestication have led us to see things, not as they physically are, but as we are told and taught they are (conditioned).<sup>5</sup> Primitive solutions for safety have grown out into the placing of people in artificial environments, resulting in a seeming, but not definite disconnection from the outer 'nature', as well as from the inner nature.

How can one reclaim their awareness of the connection to the whole? How can one deepen that connection? How can one facilitate their attunement to all around and within them and keep it active continuously? How can people who think they are completely disconnected be shown otherwise? How to tackle the stigmas surrounding this subject? If one could look beyond this illusory separation, one could enter a 'conversation' of vital importance with all living beings on Earth at this time, a relationship more so, and start to heal the wounds that continue to fester and eradicate entire species and ways of living off the face of the planet. Otherwise, the current supposed reality will remain within its own frames. That is to say, the way of thinking and acting that caused the problem will not be able to solve it. Therefore, people need to look and listen in different ways and directions, in order to open up to knowledge that is present everywhere.

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<sup>1</sup> Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance - The Nature of Formative Causation*, (Vermont: Park Street Press, 2009), page xix.

<sup>2</sup> Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Music of Life* (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, Inc., 1983, 1988, 2005), pages 5, 6. Documentary by Paul Howard, *Infinite Potential: The Life & Ideas of David Bohm*, (USA, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) pages 32, 33, 35.

<sup>4</sup> J. Krishnamurti and David Bohm, *The Future of Humanity, Two Dialogues Between J. Krishnamurti/David Bohm*, (Den Haag: Mirandana, 1986), pages 26, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Hoff, trans. Hilde Bervoets, *De Tao van Knorretje*, (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij Donker, 2020), page 227.

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## Disembodied mind

In the contemporary Western world people experience an illusion of separation on multiple levels. Firstly, between the mind and the body, secondly, between themselves and that which is often called 'nature'. One could refer to Descartes' 'Cartesian Split', where mind and matter are deemed as two fundamentally different substances.<sup>6</sup> However, if truly the smallest particle is a vibration or waveform, there can be no fundamental separations.

The body is extremely sensitive and smart. It has aeons of experience in survival, adaptation and evolution. Often it knows things the mind doesn't 'know' consciously yet. For instance, the tension in the body in the vicinity of specific people or spaces comes before the rational understanding of why that happens. The state of one's body will generally define how the person feels mentally. Therefore, freedom in movement can be a key to freedom in mind. Movement can loosen up the body, break chains, and make a person feel alive. Movement in combination with (rhythmic) music is also key to altered states of consciousness in rituals and ceremonies across the globe and throughout time, which directly relates to the Western club scene. The form is contemporary but the content ancient. Nowadays, (chemical) drugs are mostly involved, but it does not take away that what is physically taking place is the growing of an organism with hundreds, if not thousands of legs and one beating heart. This results in an immense sense of connection with others and oneself that fulfils the (subconscious) desire thereof, incited by the illusory separation, for a moment.

Referring back to the Cartesian Split, when the connection with the body fails, obviously the connection with Earth follows. The danger of a mind disconnected from the body is that it starts reasoning in an unearthed way, operating from a headspace alone. In the rephrased words of a wise Native American man, supported by the voices of his ancestors; the heart should lead the way and the mind should help one do so, but now it is reversed, the mind is leading the way while it is not meant to and cannot do so in a sane way.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the balance needs to be restored between the heart (body) and the mind, and this needs to be extended into human's relationship with 'nature'.

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## OPENNESS

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### Abstract Painting

Abstract painting, being an artistic medium that often does not allow for symbolic or representational interpretations, in effect appoints a facet of the mind that is more intuitive and sensing in a physical manner, and less situated in the rational day-to-day state of consciousness. Physical feelings and stirrings play an important role in somebody's way of relating with abstract paintings – paintings which become instigators of a change in the mind and body connection.

Though only recently acknowledged as such, Hilma Af Klint is likely to be the first abstract painter in history, well before Kandinsky and Malevich. She mixed abstraction and figuration freely, painting with tempera on very large size paper. Af Klint was a medium and a clairvoyant. Together with her friends, who called themselves 'The Five', she organised seances where they practiced automatism in writing, drawing, and painting. The main topics spoken about were spirituality and the occult. When Af Klint's friends disapproved of her paintings she stopped showing them to people and started working by herself, painting during seances. She prepared herself beforehand through fasting for instance, with the guidance of the spirits. While working she said that her hands were guided and that she was told what the painting must become like. Many times what is said about her is that she had no idea what the works were about, to her own frustration. Given the large amount of written material she left behind in her 'occult diaries', where she analyses what happened during the sessions and the paintings themselves, something contradictory can be said.

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<sup>6</sup> Dr. Christopher B. Germann on Qbism.art, *The Cartesian Split and the Heisenberg Cut*, <https://qbism.art/the-cartesian-split-and-the-heisenberg-cut/> (accessed 21 December 2020).

<sup>7</sup> The Embodiment Conference, Ilarion Mercurieff, *Indigenous Elder Knowledge and Wisdom for Modern Times*, 2020.



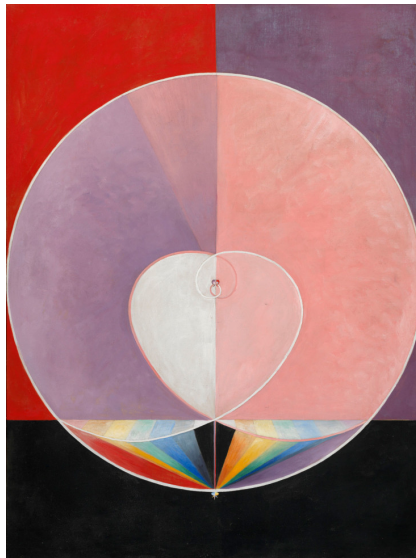


Fig.1 - Hilma Af Klint, *The Dove no. 2*, 1915  
Tempera on paper

Specifically regarding her series *The Large Figure Paintings* (Fig. 2) Af Klint said that she read their size within herself, that she saw signs above her easel, that the paintings were painted through her with great force, without drafts. Also, that she was quick and secure with each stroke while not knowing what was supposed to be shown. Af Klint was told not to show them to other people. This, apparently, applied to her entire oeuvre, as she did not show the paintings to anybody, apart from some select individuals, among which Rudolf Steiner, who discarded her work completely, to her disappointment. She left behind her body of work with specific instructions as to how they were meant to be shown, at least 20 years after her death.



Fig. 2 - Hilma Af Klint, *The Large Figure Paintings, No.5 - Group 3*, 1907

Later on in her career, the spirits granted Af Klint more freedom to create with less of their help. A series of paintings followed titled *Altarpieces* (Fig. 3), which she said encompassed what her previous works had tried to bring across. The three paintings were meant to be shown in the highest space of the building she envisioned her entire body of work to be shown in. In this space the spectator would be to ascend through the building and encounter the paintings in a spiralling way.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Guggenheim, Group X, *Altarpieces*, Nos. 1-3 (1915) by Hilma Af Klint <https://www.guggenheim.org/audio/track/group-x-altarpieces-nos-1-3-1915-by-hilma-af-klint>, (accessed on 4 January, 2021)



Fig. 3 - Hilma Af Klint, *Altarpiece No1, No2, No3, Group X*, 1915  
 Tempera on paper  
 Exhibition in The Guggenheim, New York, *Hilma Af Klint: Paintings for the Future*, October 2018 - April 2019.

Af Klint's paintings dealt with 'the whole' as she saw it, all the forces in the universe, the hidden aspects of it, and of life from birth to death and beyond. Af Klint researched her own work and found symbolism within colour, form, line, geometry, letters, the atomic realm, and botany, which she related to universal truths, such as unity, cycles, harmony, matter, the spiritual world, masculinity, femininity, etc.<sup>9</sup> As inspiration flowed to her, it resulted in paintings readable from many different angles. They speak a language that goes beyond the conceptual and rational, one that symbolism tries to decode, but cannot grasp completely. The paintings in their totality (in Af Klint's entire body of work) create that language, while suggesting and mirroring universal truths, notions, cycles, etc., which reaches the spectator's inside directly. They touch the spiritual inside, because the mind cannot solve the paintings' mystery and place them in a labeled box, which creates an open space for their reception. Af Klint's practice is a prime example of how universal interconnectedness can be expressed through a human. She was able to consciously tap into her connection to 'the whole' and let it flow through her into physical form and colour. Her works then pass on that flow to the spectator in reversed direction and appoint their connection to the 'whole'.

Another example can be found in the work of Bernard Schultze, who called himself a dream-painter. He created "escapes into dreamed-of worlds", in his own words.<sup>10</sup> A spectator can travel through their abstraction or surrealism, and at the same time through a physical landscape, a place on another level of consciousness, or within another dimension of reality and/or time. Yet, one can never fully comprehend them. Mystery and fantasy cloak the paintings, as Schultze traveled through them while painting. He worked following André Breton's line of thought that the creative process should be guided by the unconscious.<sup>11</sup> These inner monologues were not bound by his ratio or ego, which allows for the depth, complexity, surrealism and abstraction to enter the works. Without a fixed destination the paintings grew piece by piece, and the pieces grew into wholes gradually. What one finds within them, landscapes, creatures, pure abstraction, is subjective and depends on the spectator's unconscious, as well as Schultze's, considering that the spectator also gets the chance to travel through the paintings.

<sup>9</sup> Dr Marcus Buyan, article about an exhibition of Hilma Af Klint at Moderna Museet, Stockholm <https://artblart.com/2013/05/22/exhibition-hilma-af-klint-a-pioneer-of-abstraction-at-moderna-museet-stockholm/> (accessed 4 January, 2021)

<sup>10</sup> <sup>10</sup> Janina Sara Klein, *Traum und Inspiration*, <https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9783846763292/BP000010.xml> (accessed 30 November, 2020) pages 147, 148.

<sup>11</sup> Museum Ludwig, Bernard Schultze - A Centennial Exhibition, <https://www.museum-ludwig.de/en/exhibitions/archive/2015/bernard-schultze.html> (accessed November 30, 2020).

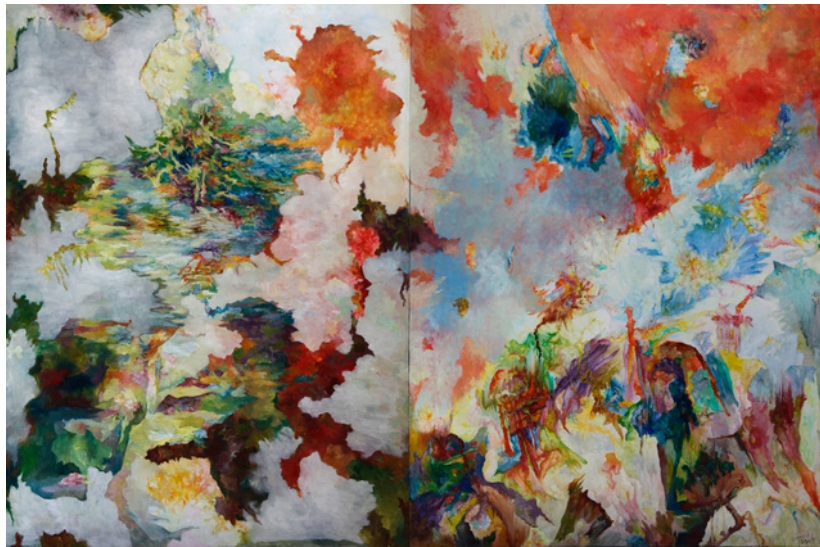


Fig. 4 - Bernard Schultze, *Windhimmel*, 1990  
Oil on canvas, two piece

## SUBTLE COMMUNICATION

The previously discussed way of 'reading', receiving, paintings can be called a form of subtle communication, one that happens on a more energetic level. This kind of communication can also be found between living beings. Every human relates to other physical human bodies directly. Very literally, when people see bodies dancing, their own bodies move along microscopically. On a more subtle level, most of the information that is acquired from people in conversation, actually does not come from the words they are pronouncing. Most of it is in the tone of voice, the facial and bodily expressions, which are under influence of the most important things: The energy they radiate or absorb and their (hidden) intentions. Sometimes, when being approached, someone might feel like they want to flee from someone, or the contrary. This is an instinct, but it is also the reading of somebody's energy and intentions on the level of subtle communication.

### Interspecies Communication

Similarly to single-species communication, beings of different species can come to understandings too. The distinction between friend and foe, peaceful cohabiting, and expressions of tenderness, are examples of such understandings. The fact that this can occur between completely different species of life, and non-life, points to a universal means of communication on a subtle level, through subtle senses. One that is based on the interplay of energy and its frequencies. This could mean that, besides a physical bridge, there is also a deep, spiritual understanding to be found between all.

A prime example can be found in the relationship between a horse and a human. The horse will understand the human's body language, even before an action is made. The thought in the human's brain will already have an effect on the horse. When the horse walks behind the human, for instance, when the two share a clear relationship (meaning the communication is understood by both and the necessary hierarchy is established), and the human thinks strongly that it is time to stand still, before initiating any action, the horse will pick up on that thought. They will then be ready to respond to the human's most minimal physical gesture, if it is necessary at all. It is possible for horses and humans to effectively communicate in many ways. This is also how strong bonds based on trust can grow between them; emotional, soft, loving, and protective. Native American people, for example, considered their horses to be their soul-brothers and connections to super-natural realms. In ceremonies horses were often honoured. The horses would, on the one hand, roam free and, on the other, be prepared to die for their tribe in battle.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Manda Kalimian, *The Tale Of The American Indian Horse: A Relationship Like No Other* <https://canafoundation.org/canafoundation/american-indian-horse/> (accessed 20 February 2021).

Although both creatures have completely different habits, they can still manage to find a common ground where they both enjoy their time together, being not so different after all. What is required for this, nonetheless, is work. Training without torture-mechanisms such as bits, reins, spurs, chains, and whips with the purpose of 'teaching' through pain. The language can be learnt from both sides and from that point on a relationship can be established. Horses, just like humans, will clearly communicate with their bodies and energetic expression in response to whatever is going on. These signals need to be recognised and intuitively understood primarily; a bridge needs to be built for the subtle communication. That is the work. If communication on this level exists between different species of life, it certainly does within one species too.

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## SHARED EXPERIENCE

Although rational communication often takes the overhand between humans, the communication on a subtle level remains. Similarly as in communication with horses, space can be created for more subtle interactions and bridges of understandings on a different level between humans. For instance, through experiences shared by multiple people and created by artists.

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### Live Art

Anne Imhof

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Anne Imhof is an artist who, in collaboration with musicians, photographers, dancers, and people not otherwise related to the arts, creates durational performances that often times include paintings, sculptures, and installations, accompanied by live and pre-recorded music and sound. Her works are built up by multiple images of moving people, scenes one could say, which she develops separately. Sometimes starting as sketches, small scenes of things happening, which she has also referred to as paintings, compositions, coming from poses and postures encountered in rehearsals. Gradually, it becomes clear to her how it all should happen in the space and how the 'images' relate to each other. How the separate pieces form a whole eventually is to be found out at the moment of presentation. Because improvisation is a factor here, the performers and artist keep in touch during the pieces via WhatsApp on iPhones that they carry with them and check openly. There they decide what will happen where and when, for there is no absolute choreography, although there are some rules that function as pillars of support.<sup>13</sup> For example, in Imhof's work *Sex* (2019) performed in the Tate Modern, there is an image where one performer is standing over another performer, who is on their knees making them turn, and the performer standing cannot leave until the person on their knees stops turning them, creating a powerplay that could be related to BDSM play in this case.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the music functions as a decisive framework within which the improvisations take place. It happens almost automatically that the images come together with the music, yet it also allows for new images to happen. In *Angst II*, (2016), (Fig. 5, 6) exhibited in the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, the music played from phones amplified by microphones carried on the body by the performers. In this way, for instance, the performers influence how the piece begins, how long it lasts, and how 'images' within it work together. In this particular work, which Imhof calls an opera, live vocals and pre-recorded music are mixed and work side-by-side with the physical movement of the performers, amongst a mass of visitors in the very foggy, very large space with drones flying around and being interacted with by performers. Different images are created, such as one performer being carried away by two of the other performers from a space where again other performers are sitting on mattresses, staring into the spectator's eyes, while another performer walks on a high slackline in the same direction as the performer being carried. At another moment, walls are spray-painted by one performer sitting on top of the shoulders of another performer and at yet another moment a group of performers stand together head-banging. There are also moments where performers stand and do nothing except look into the spectator's eyes, and others where performers move in more dance-like or repetitive ways across the space, or in a certain place.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Interview Magazine, interview by Lotte Volkova <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/anne-imhof-is-creating-hard-core-performance-pieces-that-speak-to-the-anxieties-of-a-new-generation> (accessed 23 January 2021)

<sup>14</sup> The Guardian, article by Adrian Searle <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/mar/27/anne-imhof-interview-sex-performance-art-tate-modern> (accessed 23 January 2021)

<sup>15</sup> Anne Imhof. *Angst II* | Film zur Ausstellung / Film on the exhibition <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjVGOLmWmRw&t=456s> (accessed 23 January 2021)

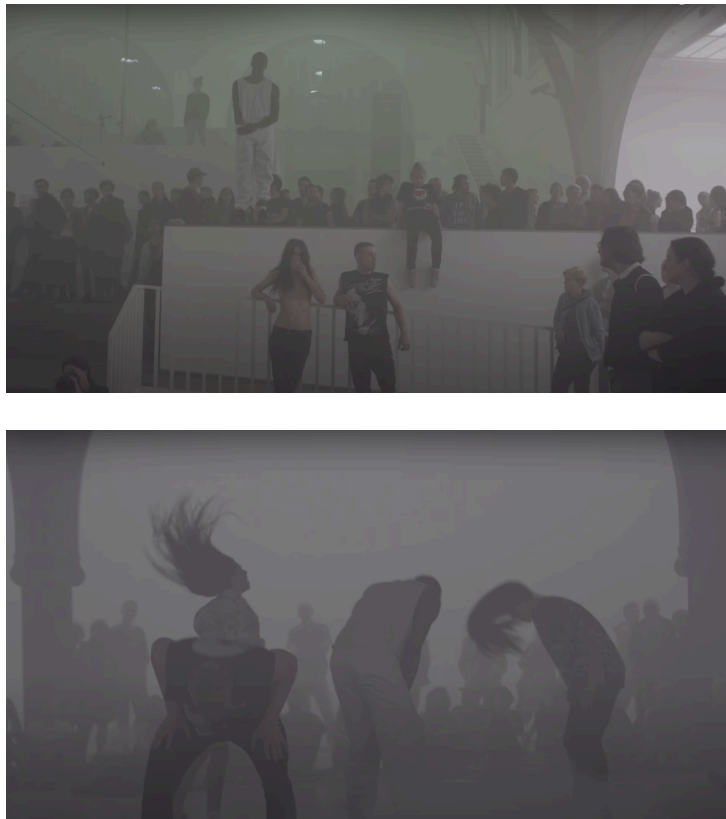


Fig. 5, 6 - Stills from video documentation of *Angst II*, by Anne Imhof in Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin, 2016

Imhof states that there is an emphasis on ‘contentlessness’ in her work, “a hollowing out”. “But it should be OK to do something for the sake of it”, she says.<sup>16</sup> Also, characters might be played by multiple performers and might be recurrent throughout different works, the character might not have a character, be emptied of it. “It is actually about the image creating a certain thought” and “how the image manifests itself in a temporality”, she mentions in an interview.<sup>17</sup> Imhof mentions that her work is not based on ideas but rather on accidents that come her way; things and images that she encounters in rehearsals.<sup>18</sup>

The images she creates she describes as existing in a moment in-between. Between being and becoming in a certain state, moments that are intangible but that become iconic for her. The intangibility spreads on into questions like who the observer is and who is the one being observed. Here, the audience is at interplay. Imhof states that sometimes the work leaves its internal structure and only gets its meaning personally with each spectator, but that it makes no sense otherwise. To Imhof’s surprise, as spectators document her works with their own smartphones and place pieces of her works onto different media platforms, something comes into being which the artist has come to call a ‘Common Archive’ of the work in question. Sometimes, this completely changes the image and certain images are repeated, captured, over and over again.<sup>19</sup>

The openness to circumstantial influences allows for her works to change in accord to the space it takes place in. Much is in fact defined by that space. Therefore, various performances of one work in different places might develop as different chapters of it. Chance becomes an active element within her practice, and it is there that the collaboration becomes most apparent. Besides, there is no onstage and no offstage, which brings the spectator into the work as a participant and into the decision-making process, blurring the lines. There are sometimes people that engage more and then there are people that watch those people engage. The audience comes together in the performance, it becomes a part of it. Thus, the piece becomes

<sup>16</sup> See note ‘5’ interview mag

<sup>17</sup> See note ‘7’ film zur Ausstellung

<sup>18</sup> The Talks, interview by Ana Bogdan <https://the-talks.com/interview/anne-imhof/> (accessed 23 January 2021)

<sup>19</sup> See note ‘7’



everybody's and creates a world of its own, which becomes alive and dynamic, also, because of the improvisational aspect to the work.<sup>20</sup>

Something noteworthy that happens is the establishment of a connection between all people present, one that is dynamic and true to the moment. People can relate to other people through their bodies, and this can awaken empathy, but also the feeling of the deeper connection between all. Given the factor of improvisation that is present, performers have to be more alert and open than they would be otherwise, which also has an effect on the type of attention the spectators have for the piece. Therefore, the connection is felt on a more subtle and sensitive level than it would be if the same people gathered 'normally'.

Whether we talk about improvisation in dance, movement, theatre, music, painting, or in words, what is an essential quality – requirement even – to it is openness. An openness to what is to come, what wants to come, what is already there, and what has been there. In Imhof's work this is expressed in how the separate pieces are brought together in the space and with the audience in addition. Openness is asked from both the performers and the audience, and what we can see from Imhof's work is that this can happen naturally and can create a flowing experience, which all people present become part of.

Through opening a door mentally and physically, taking out from in-between the rational mind, through being present in the moment in the current ever evolving and fluid 'now', information of the abstract and of the literal kind can start flowing to the improviser, the perceiver. Where it comes from is an abstract realm, but it evokes a feeling which becomes concrete in the sensory body, which can then be translated into movement, sound, words, or an entire character that 'possesses' the human, situations, etc. The substance remains abstract, ghostly. When repeating the act of opening and improvising, one can, every time more nuanced, open up more and more (to their innate abilities probably), but this requires rhythm in practice, in order for the person to find silence, presence, awareness, and consciousness of their surroundings. When improvising with multiple people it also requires a strong conscious connection between them.<sup>21</sup>

All objects being material, all matter having a history of sedimentation, manufacturing, sculpting, whatsoever, gives the object memory, information that it can share. So it is with spaces, and the entire Earth. Energies remain and leave traces that will change the character of the place or object, and that can be picked up by sensitive individuals, and can also be channeled into some form of translation. Therefore, what happens in improvisations in diverse places is extremely different, as the place influences everything, bathing the people in its energy, being what holds the happening and its participants together, and keeping them away from 'elsewhere'. The presence of spectators has similar, varying effects, as every person and group of people is different. Again, openness is of the essence, as with it one can let in the space and the gaze of another, and form part of the created whole. Remaining closed would keep up a mental barrier, keeping one isolated in their experience, unable to be immersed, where in contrast, the connection with the group becomes what the work is based on.

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## Rudolf Eb.er

Rudolf Eb.er (also working under Runzelstirn & Gurgelstøck) is a multidisciplinary artist who often works with sound and performance, which take on the form of "de/composition", "psycho-physical tests and training", for both audience and performer. The element of shock is often present in the audience, relating his works to actionism, although intentions of the performer lie rather in discipline and concentration, along with the will to perplex.<sup>22</sup> "A shaman enters altered states of consciousness through rituals and returns with knowledge. That's what I try to do at my performance with obvious psycho-magick elements. [...] consciousness altering or expanding exercises is sure what I aim for"<sup>23</sup>, states Eb.er in an interview. Performances are mostly not tested or rehearsed before being brought on stage and, thus, navigate the raw, embodied states (of consciousness) rather than their polished appearances. Improvisation is, again, an active element. To achieve these states, he makes use of trance-inducing sounds found in instruments often used in shamanism due to their direct effect onto the psyche, such as the big drum, the rattle, flutes,

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<sup>20</sup> Volkswagen ART4ALL Online Edition | Gespräch mit der Künstlerin Anne Imhof <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=si6qGCUgoU0> (accessed 23 January 2021)

<sup>21</sup> Empiric research done in 'Live Works', Improvisation sessions in- and outside led by Pien Vrijhof, 2017-2021

<sup>22</sup> UBU Web: Sound <https://www.ubu.com/sound/runzelstirnantgurgelstock.html> (accessed 20 January, 2021)

<sup>23</sup> "The Noise Beneath the Snow" Music Interviews <https://thenoisebeneaththesnow.wordpress.com/2018/04/18/interview-rudolf-eb-er-experimental-noise-performance-art/> (accessed 20 January, 2021)

wooden sticks, along with manipulated field recordings, isochronic tones (tones that pulse repetitively), and binaural beats (with which the left and right ear receive sounds asynchronously). With these ways of using sound the brain's frequencies can be modified and mental states altered.<sup>24</sup> Also, Eb.er has built gloves and other pieces of equipment that allow him to control the sound during the performance, making it possible to have less equipment on stage, and have a closer, physical connection to the sound, even to the point of headsets that would pick up the brainwaves of the performers, and send them to receivers and back wirelessly, which a program would turn into sounds and make mental states and changes within them audible. (*Wellenfeld, in Memory of Urs Schwaller, 2012*, by Rudolf Eb.er, Joke Lanz, GX Jupitter-Larsen, Mike Dando). In another way, Eb.er, in collaboration with Dave Philips and together a part of Schimpfluch Gruppe, made a work in 1996 titled *Paris Action 961123*. There, in gradually decreasing intervals, both men, sitting side-by-side at a table, dressed in white shirts and neckties banged their heads on plates of spaghetti, thereby activating a sound. A violin player accompanied them with screeching single strokes. The performance intensified until chairs were being broken and thrown around the space – a visual chaos along with a sonic one.<sup>25</sup>

Naturally, the effect of the sound created differs per person, but the intention of Eb.er's use of these sounds is geared towards evoking awareness expansion, or of the awareness that there is something to expand. Newer performances have become less provocative and have, therefore, become more of an energy exchange with the audience. Although becoming more physical, the attention lies on the internal rather than the external.<sup>26</sup> His work *Brainnectar* (2016), (Fig. 7), in collaboration with Alice Kemp, is based on techniques used to raise psychic energy. In the performance they use binaural sounds, a soundscape, and continuous analog rattling. Eb.er tested how his brain and body reacted to sounds, which ranged from tingling sensations to full 'showers' coming from the top of his head (hence the title), which materialised in the performance as thick liquids in different colours from white to brown being poured over his head by Kemp dressed in a black garment and a hat that covers also her face and hands, but not her breasts. The liquid drips down his body, dressed in only skin-coloured underwear, seated on a table, while he continuously shakes the rattles with other sounds playing simultaneously from speakers.



Fig. 7 - Still from video documentation of *Brainnectar*, by Rudolf Eb.er and Alice Kemp in Hackney Showroom London, 2016

*Brainnectar* also became an album, on which Eb.er notes that he wanted to create music with the function of being a tool for the realisation of the psychic body and a higher consciousness. "I want the listener to become aware of the own psychic energies and to take it from there - actively", Eb.er says in another interview.<sup>27</sup> In this album he uses many sounds from nature, human vocals, and bodily sounds in combination with electronic (drone) sounds and instruments of shamanic origin. Eb.er is aware of his connection with the audience, and he addresses this very thing with his work, while trying to use his performances and sound pieces as tools to alter that connection and the people's individual states of consciousness. Here, openness on their behalf is necessary. In turn, this can amplify the feeling of connection, that is different from day-to-day gatherings, among the people present. Experiences of expansion of consciousness and deep interconnection are likely to continue their workings within people after the performance.

<sup>24</sup> Tiny Mixtapes, Interview by Asha Sheshadri <https://www.tinymixtapes.com/features/rudolf-eber> (accessed 20 January, 2021)

<sup>25</sup> See source '5' (accessed 20 January, 2021) interview mag

<sup>26</sup> See source '6' (accessed 20 January, 2021) the guardian

<sup>27</sup> Chain D.L.K., Interview by Vito Camarretta <https://www.chaindlk.com/interviews/rudolf-eb-er/> (accessed 20 January, 2021)



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## Butoh

A practice that is both an art form and a way of life is Butoh. One can practice Butoh on stage just as much as one can practice it while gardening. Darkness is important in Butoh, to test the importance of beauty in art, but also to purge and create space for light. Originating in post-war Japan, the source of the darkness becomes apparent; destroyed environments and mutilated bodies were and are themes worked with in form and content. An important principle is the surrendering to natural forces and spirits, letting them in physically and psychologically as a form of possession, while also being referenced. The fully integrated performer, their body an empty shell, becomes a season, a plant, a rock, another person, a deceased, a spirit, etc. The boundaries of life, death, so called nature, so called animals, so called humans, and so called art are tested and shown to be of a mental material; one could speak of an act of 'un-domestication'. The language spoken lies in and beyond the physical, visual, and audible.

Butoh speaks of the resonance between all, how everything is energy, how different organisations of energy and resonance patterns make up different entities, and of how, when people can connect on that energetic, resonating level, a sense of separation can disappear, thereby evoking compassion and connection. Because of the raw physicality of this practice, it speaks to humans directly through that physicality which everybody embodies in one way or another.<sup>28</sup>



Fig. 8 - Photograph from Kazuo Ohno's performance of *My Mother*, 1998



Fig. 9 - Photograph from Tatsumi Hijikata's performance of *Hijikata Tatsumi and Japanese People: Revolt of the Body*, 1968

Kazuo Ohno (Fig. 8), one of two founders of Butoh, the other being Tatsumi Hijikata (Fig. 9), thought that the most important part lies not in technique, because technique could stand in the way of reaching what is crucial, that being the focus on the spiritual. He stated that he does not need techniques or structures to live his life after death, referring to Butoh. He believed that art cannot be taught, but that it comes out of a human being naturally. Ohno's approach to Butoh was that form should follow life, which was in opposition to Hijikata's approach, who insisted form should be leading life. Both of their styles of dancing were different as a result of this. Nevertheless, they both agreed upon that form equals life. Ohno taught his students that with every step they must have life coming out of them, that steps or expressions must not just look a certain way, but that they must be actually experienced that way, physically and emotionally.<sup>29</sup> A starting point for dancing Butoh is the creation of a new space-time as a basis for the dancers, which ghosts and other creatures are then allowed to enter.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Documentary by Camila Geoffroy and Eduardo Oliveira, 'Dancing In Between - a portrait of Butoh with Tadashi Endo', 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIa-ZhPEByo> (accessed 23 December 2020).

<sup>29</sup> Documentary by Richard Moore, 'Butoh - Piercing The Mask', 1991 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiGsqAnbBIA> 25:30-30:00 min (accessed 18 February 2021).

<sup>30</sup> ARTE Documentary as part of the 'Tokyo Paranormal' series, by Yves Montmayeur, 'Butoh - After the Horror', an interview with Akaji Maro, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8nFCRJ25HU> (accessed 18 February 2021).

In contrast to Western dance, which reaches the energy up to the sky, in Butoh the energy is pulled down to and into the ground. Hijikata described the dance as crawling to the bowels of Earth.<sup>31</sup> Simultaneously, the struggle in the relationship between life and gravity is a central theme.

To live in nowadays world is to be surrounded by misleading symbols and tiresome conventions. There is dark uneasiness everywhere... But we shake hands with the souls of those who have gone before us and they give us their strength. That is the unlimited power of Butoh.<sup>32</sup>

- Tatsumi Hijikata

Especially through Butoh it becomes clear, that it is in fact possible to create in collaboration with Earth, with 'nature', with spirits, creatures from other dimensions, and death as living forces. Moreover, the fundamental interconnectedness is shown. A question of who the creator is arises and gets answered as though being a collaboration, it reverberates into nowadays culture of 'individual genius' artists. The importance comes to lie in the work, in what is transmitted, and in its repercussions. Evoked feelings of compassion and interconnection in the people present along with the facing of a certain darkness can leave people with an experience that touches aspects deep inside of their humanity, which they might have forgotten or never known. This can be considered the start of a healing process and could act as the start of a reconciliation between (Western) humans and Earth.

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### Pauline Oliveros

Similarly to how Butoh asks people to go deep within themselves and creates deep connections between people, Pauline Oliveros found her way of doing this differently through 'Deep Listening'. Pauline Oliveros was a pioneering musician on many fronts, starting this in the late 1950's. Much of her pioneer work had to do with the usage of electronics and tape. She would often work with a re-tuned accordion, which was also under the influence of electronics. Oliveros developed a system for her own performances with digital signal processors and, in contrast, also worked with conch shells, the acoustics of spaces the performances took place in, improvisations, rituals, and meditations.<sup>33</sup> As she highlighted the importance of the space in her practice and worked a lot with improvisation, no two performances of the same piece could ever be the same. They would change every time while maintaining a recognisable line throughout them. "Play is improvisation and improvisation is play", Oliveros said.<sup>34</sup> At some point she abandoned her composition performance practice, and tried to erase the subject and object relationship between performer and audience by including the audience in the work.

Oliveros, through her many explorations, discovered and developed a practice she named 'Deep Listening'. Regarding listening, unlike hearing which she found to be a purely a physical perception, she states: "Listening is directing attention to what is heard, gathering meaning, interpreting and deciding on action".<sup>35</sup> The 'Deep' in 'Deep Listening' she marked as the unknown, that which is beyond the ordinary and which defies stereotypical knowing – something that is maybe never to be understood. With 'Deep Listening', which to Oliveros meant listening to her listening, one can learn to expand their perception of the landscape of sound in the space and time continuum, through different forms of attention; both in complexity and in vastness, respectively, the 'Focal' and the 'Global'. The landscape ranges from personal thoughts and sounds in the surrounding environment to sounds in the distance and imagined sounds. The conscious shifting between these forms of attention would allow one to move through the continuum, and as a result of this new awareness and an impartiality to the sounds listened to, which inevitably affect the body/mind continuum, one could experience an expansion of consciousness. Oliveros found that such an expansion meant that one is connected to the entirety of their environment and beyond. This reflects to a deep connection with oneself and one's inner world. When listening, particles of sound decide to be heard, therefore, the environment is activated and a symbiotic relationship between the act of listening and the sounding is established, according to her. She called this 'the listening effect'. Her meditations were both a fundament and a result of 'Deep Listening', as crucial for both were relaxation, letting go, focus,

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<sup>31</sup> See note '20', (accessed 18 February 2021), 00:00-02:19 min

<sup>32</sup> See note '20' (accessed 18 February 2021) 23:38 min

<sup>33</sup> Discogs, artist page of Pauline Oliveros, <https://www.discogs.com/artist/32194-Pauline-Oliveros> (accessed 12 February 2021).

<sup>34</sup> Critical Studies in Improvisation Vol.12, No. 1, Pauline Oliveros, 'Safe to Play', at "Just Improvisation: Enriching child protection law through musical techniques, discourses and pedagogies" Symposium, Queen's University Belfast, 29 – 30 May 2015 <https://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/article/view/3913/4172> page 1 (accessed 12 February 2021).

<sup>35</sup> See note '21' (accessed 11 February 2021). ny'er

concentration, discipline, and control, along with, importantly, openness to listen impartially; without judgement, prejudice, analysis, or criticism. Openness to what is being listened to and openness to what that might evoke emotionally or physically, referring to the establishment of receptivity. 'Deep Listening', she believed, could lead to compassion, thus, spiritual development and understanding, so that one's thoughts could reach new ranges and that they might connect with other people in a new way. She also found 'Deep Listening' to enhance creativity, and called creativity the forming of new patterns, beyond the limits of old patterns, or the usage of old patterns in new ways.<sup>36</sup> 'Deep Listening', she thought, should be practiced continuously (and she did) as to refine one's capacity to do so and to bring improvisation into daily life as an intrinsic part of it.<sup>37</sup>

Oliveros was specifically interested in the healing power of 'Sonic Energy', as she called it, and its transmission within groups of people. She argued for this with the fact that the powers of sound and music are acknowledged by all human societies, who all have their own traditions in respect to this. Her meditations emerged from sound and body experiments, which also grew into her improvisations. Some of these meditations were written down as scores for other people to follow, such as 'Sonic Meditations'. These she considered as being a healing practice, "a tuning of mind and body."<sup>38</sup>

Healing can occur ... when individuals feel the common bond with others through a shared experience, when one's inner experience is made manifest and accepted by others, when one is aware of and in tune with one's surroundings, when one's memories, or values, are integrated with the present and understood by others.<sup>39</sup>

Oliveros aimed to create a space for all to open, and then understand that listening is healing. Her aim was for her work to be transformational and to create lasting changes on the body and mind, especially an expansion of consciousness.

In Oliveros' line of thought, the performer that merely performs and doesn't listen to or feel what they are doing will not be in the same space and time continuum as the audience that is 'receiving' the work. Therefore, there will be a split between them, and the interaction between the two will then, arguably, remain superficial. To break that split and to make interactions of whatever kind possible, a performer needs to enter the space and time continuum that is being created by them, not merely 'perform' it as a dry action. In the case of music and noise, this means for the performer to really hear the tones and let themselves be moved by them.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, Oliveros acknowledged that different people's perceptions would never be one and the same. Besides, because of the delay between the brain's perception of stimuli and the conscious realisation of them, she argued that time is an illusion.<sup>41</sup>

To performers, improvisation is a strong tool to use in order to arrive in the same space and time continuum as the audience. For, in improvisation, the performer cannot but be present in the moment and highly alert to what is being done and what is happening in that moment. When a particular piece is performed mechanically, the attention and integration can go for a stroll around the park. The piece then loses its intention or soul, the rawness of the experience, although it maybe keeps its apparent body. Furthermore, as the performer and the audience are not in the same space and time continuum, the limits of 'the performance' will not be transcended. These can be transcended, though, when audience and performer arrive in the same continuum and the perception of time and space is changed, which can have lasting impact on a person.

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<sup>36</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening* (Deep Listening Publications, 2005), pages xxiii, xxiv, xxv.

<sup>37</sup> Critical Studies in Improvisation, Vol.12, No.2, Tomie Hahn, *Sputtering Rituals: Remembering Pauline Oliveros as Improvisation-in-Action*, December 2018. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329973527\\_Sputtering\\_Rituals\\_Remembering\\_Pauline\\_Oliveros\\_as\\_Improvisation-in-Action](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329973527_Sputtering_Rituals_Remembering_Pauline_Oliveros_as_Improvisation-in-Action) (accessed 12 February 2021).

<sup>38</sup> The New Yorker, article on Pauline Oliveros, Kerry O'Brien, 'Listening as Activism: The "Sonic Meditations" of Pauline Oliveros', December 2016. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/listening-as-activism-the-sonic-meditations-of-pauline-oliveros> (accessed 11 February 2021).

<sup>39</sup> See note '20', page 2 (accessed 12 February 2021). critical studies

<sup>40</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening* (Deep Listening Publications, 2005), pages xvii, xxiii.

<sup>41</sup> idem, pages xxi, xxiii.

In a performance, the relations created, the ties, can exist and grow between performer and performer, performers and audience, audience and audience, (obviously influenced by the position of the performers respectively to that of the audience). This is under the influence of multiple factors: What goes on outside, literally outside the room and outside in the entire world, what goes on in people's inner lives, socio-economic, racist, sexist, homo- and transphobic segregation, people's (different) indoctrinations - often resulting in their projections. Also, influences of substances used by any of the people, people's past traumas, memories of possibly similar situations, expectations and unexpectedness, physical and mental health, any objects in the space, and the relation with that present moment - timing. All these factors and inter-relations have an impact on the totality of the energy in the space of the performance, especially if it is an enclosed space, where energy can build up without being washed away or leaking out. This could be called the overall intensity. Intensity can be built up in many ways, for instance through the use of abjection within the work, or through a tension curve in narrative, dangerous activities, silence, a challenging relationship between audience and performer, etc. Mainly, it is formed through attention. When the sub-connections, in the space where the performance takes place, tie together, they amplify each other. A spectator takes over energy emitted by a performer for instance, which blends with their own and with their reaction towards the performance, which is then given back to the performer, times the amount of people present, circulating on and on. This can create one large connection, a sphere, a bubble, an accumulation of 'nows' becoming one resonating 'now'. If then the connection splits with the outside, people outside and the world outside, then the bubble that is created inside, let's say, drifts off. The bubble itself is the liminal matter here, as the body is to the human, and it is what allows the bubble to drift off, the border between inside and outside, between the 'now' and the always. As a whole, it travels.

In the bubble, in the performance, in effect is a change in the perception of space and time. Something is warped, bent: The perception. It is how 5 minutes can feel like half an hour and how the same 5 minutes, even of the same thing, can feel like one second. It is a way of experiencing a moment more intensely and entering a state of mind that connects to the depths within oneself. This, partially, depends on the space and time continuum the experiencer is in and whether it is their individual own or whether it is shared, whether the people are in some way immersed or not. Through chronology, we can look at this in different ways: one is that we can't be in one state without having been in another, which comes down to thinking of time in a linear way. Then there's a non-linear way, in which we can say that the past and the future are defining the 'now', and that past, present, and future are all happening at the same time, namely, now. Then, in terms of the bubble(s), there's a switch happening from experiencing linear time to experiencing the 'now'. From thinking in terms of clock time to experiencing universal time. This is a step out of societally imposed mind frames and a step closer to 'nature', which lives in universal time.<sup>42</sup> The popping of the (mental) bubble is quite essential, specifically, for one to experience the contrast not only between the inside and outside of the bubble (performance), but also between a mind frame and perception of time of one's own and one imposed within the bubble.

Theatre-maker Bertolt Brecht would disrupt his own created immersions by showing the mechanics the play made use of, something that is also called the 'Vrefremdungseffekt' or 'estrangement effect', which did not mean he wanted the audience to be unengaged, on the contrary. For example, he would turn on the lights above the audience in the middle of a scene, or share the outcome of a scene while it was still in process. He did not aim at offering an enjoyable escape from reality with his plays, nor to create consumable illusions, but to expose contradictions and problems within the capitalist society and make the audience think about them.<sup>43</sup> He used theatre as a way to trigger questions about things normally taken for granted by making them seem strange, like the inner workings of a play that usually remain hidden. These questions would then reflect onto the larger world and status quo outside of the play, through his use of settings, temporalities, narratives, and characters. Typical of the epic theatre, a style Brecht is often related to, is that it is made clear to the audience that a story is being told for a reason and from a specific point of view. Brecht would play with this and sometimes place seemingly unrelated scenes after one another, leaving it up to the spectator to make the connections. He changed the way in which people thought, rather than what they thought, as the feelings of the spectator did not run parallel to the feelings of the characters. Often, they were in complete opposition, because Brecht created space for the spectator to experience

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<sup>42</sup> Lia Ouendag, *Nu Even Helder*, (Private publishing, 2020), page 40.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Gordon, Brecht, *Interruptions and Epic Theatre* <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/brecht-interruptions-and-epic-theatre#> (accessed 25 February 2021).

things in their own way and actually demanded a critical position from them by keeping them active, having to continuously reorient themselves. Hence, in a way, his plays are all about the spectator.<sup>44</sup>

The potential of becoming aware of mind frames opens up a door, because as soon as one has stepped out of a mind frame, one can, first of all, see that and not be subjected to it anymore. In a world where mind frames are continuously imposed it can be of great value to an individual's sense of freedom to realise this, or to gain further insight on this matter. Problems invisible previously can come to light, as, in an abstract sense, the range of sight is expanded, illusions dissolved, and vicious circles broken, which can then lead to more awareness, consideration, and thought on various matters, changes in people's behaviour and, eventually, systemic change.

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## THE POTENTIAL FOR HEALING

Many of the previously discussed artists aim for healing, or happen to bring forth this unconsciously, whether through invitations for people to open up, creating group connections, deepening that connection, directing awareness, or expanding consciousness. It shows that art can be a tool to create spaces where healing can occur, for many people at a time, and possibly on a collective level too.

Somebody else who worked with healing and art was Joseph Beuys. He thought that ideas are of fine substance, of light, which crosses the border of the substance, goes beyond it. That these ideas need an anchor for earthly conditions, to tie them down basically. All humans have a sensitivity to the physical world, as all have physical bodies. He also states about the anchors - artworks - that the 'thing' is only complete with the people viewing it in the space: "Chaos can have a healing character if it is coupled with the idea of open movement to channel the walls of chaotic energy into order or form."<sup>45</sup> Here, he directly appoints the act of channeling within the process of creation; that it is possible to catch streams of (abstract) information from anywhere. This requires great openness from the receiver (which can be trained), as the information-energy is always there, but cannot always be grasped. The movement comes in when looking at the flow of that information-energy. In a chaotic state it will go in all sorts of directions, but when there is a movement or direction intended for it by someone, this creates a pathway for it to follow. This could lead from the outside to (a person's) inside, say in meditation or in automatic writing, plain receiving, etc., and/or from (a person's) inside to the outside, where the abstract obtains physical form, be it in materiality or in live bodily expression. Beuys states, that through concrete processes both physical and spiritual life can be transformed. Sufi writer, musician, scientist Hazrat Inayat Khan adds to this the reverse; that spiritual processes can transform both the spiritual and the physical. Beuys thought that an artist can indicate the traumas of a time and initiate a healing process through awareness. Art is, in his eyes, the only discipline that touches the epistemological seam of human consciousness.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, as also argued by previously discussed artists, art can play a role in expanding that consciousness and bringing forth transformation and healing on a deep, collective yet personal level.

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## Attunement

"Attunement: The act of making harmonious."<sup>47</sup> To find harmony within oneself in relation to the surroundings, seeing their harmony, and making the relationship harmonious.

Attuning oneself, to a being of a different species, to a landscape, or to an object, presents the thought that anything one can attune oneself to (being everything), must have life, must have a consciousness. Obviously, moving or growing beings acceptably have life, but what about macro-organisms, such as ecosystems or Earth herself? What about supposedly inanimate objects? If one can attune themselves in a room with only objects, to find harmony amongst and with them, that implies life from both sides. If there were none, one would not have to attune, meaning that one would not have to change anything in their state of being. While attuning oneself one can become aware of the interconnectedness of everything, consciously and can direct oneself to find a common harmony out of respect, empathy, and compassion.

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<sup>44</sup> Why is Brecht still relevant today? An interview with Dr Laura Bradley <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-A8mCjRu5g> (accessed 8 March 2021).

<sup>45</sup> <sup>45</sup> Documentary by John Halpern, *Transformer*, 1979. 26:39min

<sup>46</sup> Documentary by John Halpern, *Transformer*, 1979.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/attunement> (accessed again 2 March 2021).

In the case of artworks, the material is infused with the artist's energy, thoughts, intentions, consciousness, subconscious, and unconsciousness and passes this over to its viewers; flowing through the cracks of its physical form.<sup>48</sup> The viewers then attune themselves to the artwork and, therefore, find a ground on which to meet it.

## Morphic Resonance

Rupert Sheldrake, in a variety of his books and scientific journals, speaks of something called morphic fields and morphic resonance. A morphic field is the energetic field of vibration that organises the corresponding matter, not only physically but also culturally. It has the blueprints for the organisms, where DNA has the building blocks. It contains information for adaptation to the environment and behavioural patterns, for instance. Basically, everything is connected to a field of its species and also to the 'whole' within its surroundings and more fields, from small to large scale. Let's say, an oak tree is connected to fields of the part of the forest it stands in and of the entire forest, but it is also connected to the global field of the entire oak species.<sup>49</sup> These fields are a way in which universal interconnectedness reveals itself, distinctly, as also entire planets have a corresponding field.

In a state of relaxed concentration, someone can enter in resonance with the morphic field of a 'corresponder', be it a tree, a forest or a painting, in order to access information within it. What is deemed as an unused part of the human brain, is actually a very powerful resonator that can attune people to certain fields through the direction of attention. This can be triggered by other resonators in a number of ways: Through visualisation of images, the seeing and touching of physical ones (photographs), and through objects or smaller parts of the attuned to, say a leaf in the case of a tree.<sup>50</sup>

How can this work between an audience and a performer? Hypothetically speaking, say the performer(s) create(s) a situation in which they and the audience are in an enclosed space. The creation of this situation becomes a 'whole' and creates a morphic field of its own within the field and space the performance takes place in, in the 'here and now'. Inayat Khan says, similarly, about artistic creation, that a world is created that rises above the physical plane.<sup>51</sup> During the performer's preparation the addressed field has been determined, and its frequencies become familiar, therefore, the performer knows how to access it and 'summon' it. When it concerns multiple performers they must have established a strong connection and understanding among each other. Unavoidably, the performer is also connected to the field of the 'here and now', where the human bodies in the space resonate and create a field of their own, along with whatever else is in the space and the architecture of the building or landscape. The performer, being attuned now to two fields (which is possible, as molecules can vibrate on a number of different frequencies at the same time<sup>52</sup>), becomes a bridge between the two fields. Thus, they could possibly connect the audience with the more distant field of the reality in which the performance hypothetically or energetically takes place, besides the one physically in the 'now'.

According to Hans Andeweg, who heals forests on location and from a distance with morphic resonance, a next possibility is that of reciprocity. Here information can actually be sent back into the field, in this case, by the performer and the audience. This can be information of a problem-solving, healing, nature. For this, requirements are a relaxed state of concentration and inner calm, energy, a connection to the heart, and positive intentions. The content is important for the morphic field, but not the form. The form is important for the 'caretaker', which in this case are both performer and audience, and it does not exclude the use of technology. As long as it is infused with heartfelt energy, the content (information, intentions, energy) will be read by the field and/or its correspondent all the same. It could take the form of sound, music, dance or words, for instance.<sup>53</sup> Importantly, permission should be granted by the addressed to be healed, and for the way in which that should be done in the first place. The human, here, becomes the bridge between that which is ill and a possible cure.<sup>54</sup> The performance could become a tool to gather the people and concentrate the attention, while giving physical form to a process happening on an abstract, energetic level.

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<sup>48</sup> Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Music of Life* (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, Inc., 1983, 1988, 2005), pages 183, 184.

<sup>49</sup> Hans Andeweg, *In Resonantie met de Natuur* (Utrecht: Kosmos-Z&K Uitgevers B.V., 2001), pages 55, 56, 84

<sup>50</sup> idem page 129

<sup>51</sup> Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Music of Life* (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, Inc., 1983, 1988, 2005), page 329.

<sup>52</sup> Robijn Tilanus, *Klankduiken* (Amsterdam: Improvisatie Academie, 2019) page 121

<sup>53</sup> Hans Andeweg, *In Resonantie met de Natuur* (Utrecht: Kosmos-Z&K Uitgevers B.V., 2001), pages 158, 163, 166, 181

<sup>54</sup> idem pages 134, 135, 142, 184, 186

Similarly to how morphic fields can be found from small to large scale, people have, since ancient times, recognised parallels between micro and macro scales. Rudolf Steiner's holistic approach is built on this, thinking that everything exists out of 'wholes' and that everything is connected, also the smallest and the largest, as they are built following the same principles; such as the solar system and a human cell. When thinking in analogies this becomes apparent, these similarly being an ancient habit that can be found in rituals, mythology, homeopathy, etc.<sup>55</sup> It can become a way of relating to or addressing the macrocosm; the (abstract) matter, process or morphic field, etc., through the microcosm in the form of an analogy. Also, it could attract mirroring effects through sympathetic vibration, which incorporates the law of attraction where, roughly, positive meets positive and negative meets negative; like meets like.

Could a performance take on the body of such an analogy, and connect to a specific morphic field that also the audience gets granted access to, through resonators in the form of art pieces? Could the entire happening be a micro-scale event that becomes a model attracting a macro-scale event? Or even just a way to see something on the macro level and heal through awareness and attention? Do all parties need to be aware of what is going on on all levels?

Would this be possible, the performance could, in this form, with its inherent way of gathering people, become a tool for collective healing. Healing that goes beyond individual 'therapy' and which connects back to humanity's roots within 'nature', bringing people closer, or removing the illusory separation for a moment - new awareness which may then ripple on into daily life.

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### Alignment

Through attunement we can find alignment. A state where parts of our being are balanced in respect to each other and the world outside. If we look at it through the physical human body we see that we need alignment to function properly. When we are not aligned properly our breath cannot flow, our blood cannot reach our extremities, our mind gets stuck and, eventually, we get sick. Anything can be looked at in terms of alignment. Our human position in respect to Earth also, for instance. Alignment suggests a line, but a circle is also a line, and so is a spiral. Alignment is not rigid nor stagnant; it moves and transforms, requires transformation with it. Also, like life itself, it has a rhythm. Like the seasons on Earth and their conditions, which are a direct effect of the alignment of Earth in relation to the Sun. Any earthling's natural rhythm needs to align and adapt to those conditions. For example, winter is a time for rest and retreat (hibernation in it's exaltation), mainly because there are less sources of energy (food). Summer, in contrast, is a time of outgoingness and abundance. All seasons are recurrent in a cyclical yearly manner and ask from Earth's inhabitants to move along with them, rhythmically. On large and small scales alignment is required. When we surrender to this movement we can live in harmony. When we resist, however, we start a fight and set off a chain reaction into disharmony and, eventually, chaos and illness.

When multiple humans are aligned they can work together, or create a field of energy together, through which things can be worked on or worked out on multiple levels: Physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. What it can do within people, depending on how it is performed, is create connection, community, a sense of belonging, safety, healing, and non-abusive, constructive power. Indigenous and pagan rituals show many examples of such workings and so do the performative practices of artists previously discussed. Looking back into history through an anthropological lens we see, that often times dancers, performers and musicians were shamans in tribes, people who acted as an intermediary between the spiritual and the physical, life and death, on Earth and in the Universe, often with the intention of healing or foretelling. Underneath contemporary ways, somehow, traces of these ancient practices remain, say, within performances. The conscious tapping into these roots could re-open doors long closed by many human lineages and allow Earth to teach lessons of attunement and alignment. This can offer a deeper understanding and healing of the human relationship with different beings, Earth and the Universe.

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<sup>55</sup> idem, pages 77, 78, 174.



## CONCLUSION

How we can understand compositions of colour, sound, form, movement, action, situations, people, non-human creatures, all points to a layer where all is connected, possibly one of vibration, energy. Various art practices, as discussed in this thesis, prove to reveal deep expressions thereof. When we look at the main required ingredients, we could summarise them as following: An impartial openness to receive anything from physical and metaphysical realms - a state of passive receptivity, while remaining actively attentive. It is also necessary to embrace being present in the 'now', in connection with all whom are present; attunement to everyone and everything around, meaning also feeling respect and empathy. Rhythm, in practising these qualities, and in finding a practical and concrete direction for the received 'information' to follow and take form in, provides a framework and gives freedom to improvisation and openness.

If we can create such a moment, with a 'performance', for instance, where all people present come into a similar state of mind, experience time differently, are in the 'now' more intensely, it can bring into effect the expansion of consciousness, a strong sense of interconnectedness, the asking of new questions, which will not be undone by the time the 'performance' ends. People will come back to their day-to-day perception of time, after the immersion and disruption of the immersion, with the experience of something different, with the knowledge that there is something different to experience at least. Part of this is the shift of perception from clock time to universal time. From a human doctrine to a 'natural' state. Therefore, experiencing shifts in consciousness can dissolve illusory separations with 'nature' and can make people aware of various states of being and manipulations thereof that culminate in conditioning.

An experience which sparks a strong connection between all people present can in itself be healing for people, as it is a 'natural' state but a rare one in the contemporary West. It is possible that for someone it becomes a way of relating with other people in a new way, on a more subtle level possibly, of finding common ground with others on a deeper layer of their humanity. It can then extend to beings of different species. This way of relating is embodied. Body and mind are connected and so are human and 'nature'. Here too, we can speak of healing, harmonising effects of such a happening, and the possibility of it setting into motion a positive chain reaction.

What if, through conscious direction of energies during such a happening, performance, however it must be called, the destination of the healing could be chosen? Through work with morphic resonance or application of micro-macro models, analogies, for instance. Is this necessary? Or is this what performances of many kinds have always been doing (unconsciously)? Possibly, the 'performance' or 'art-gathering' could then become a concrete tool for healing, together with and for entire groups of people and specific matters. Granted, for one, that the artists work from a connection with their hearts and positive intentions. Secondly, that the artists stay true to their integrity and take the work for what it really is on both the spiritual and the physical level; so not use it for show and not by means of cultural appropriation, but that they themselves also go through the (learning) processes they aim for others to go through, say, when purging darkness. By starting with the healing of oneself, in doing so together, one or many can learn to heal others. This can transfer to the relationship with life itself (and all forms of life), with Earth as a living entity, with the sense of universal interconnectedness, interdependency and compassion. Art, here, can become a connecting factor.

Questions for such a scenario are then: Is the healing work and the artwork one and the same? Or does one allow for the other to come into being? Is there space for healing work in the art world? And is there space in the healing work for the art world? Can the art world provide an opening to get healing work out of its own (stigmatised) bubble and grant access to a wider, or even apprehensive to reluctant public? And can healing work, in turn, create an(other) opening within the art world for views and practices outside of the general Western norm? What about the controversial role of money and pay in this situation? Who is the creator anyway and what is their relationship with the spectator? How can peoples be protected against cultural appropriation? How can it become more of a movement rather than a trend? How can developments as such benefit marginalised communities, who in many cases became marginalised for the very reason of living in conscious connection with Earth? Does the demarcation of the borders and conditions of art even matter at this point of no return, in which we find ourselves as living beings on Earth in 2021? Can different teams not team up? It seems like a new world now, but it might just as well be the ending of one. That is why people must look, listen and question in more directions than in the current Western norm, so that not only fragments get dealt with, but that the 'whole' of all interconnections is taken into consideration. This already happens in many different ways, right under our noses.

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