

Free Interdisciplinary Performance Lab
Marina Abramović – Billy Zhao
WORKSHOP DIARIES by Francesco Marzano
2022-2023

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PREQUEL

October 2020

I'm working on an article about the opera project *7 Deaths of Maria Callas* by Marina Abramović. The subject fell almost out of the sky: I was groping and procrastinating in the choice of a theme for my essay for the journal *Folia Literaria Polonica*, that my theatre professor in Milan, Annamaria Cascetta, offered me to write. Christian sent me exactly at that point a link from a German TV news programme presenting the premiere of *7 Deaths* in Munich. Shortly before that, I finished reading the memoirs of Marina, *Walk through walls*, a book that I loved and read while travelling between Cologne, Milan and through Sweden, and that in turn I discovered by chance while attending a seminar by professor Rainer Nonnenmann at the Musikhochschule in Cologne.

This chain of coincidences allowed me to deepen and dive into Marina's works, that I fell in love with.

My article at the moment looks like a shapeless mass of sentences in broken English, far from being concise and essential as I'd like it to be. But at least it is honest, keeps the threads together and brings texts together, that otherwise would never have met. [...]

What if everything was easier than I think? Why don't I let lightness pervade me? Why do I add weight to things instead of thinning out, cleaning up and tidying up? See Marina's performances, workshops and retrospectives like *The cleaner*, *Cleaning the house*, *Balkan Baroque*. [...]

29.4.2021

Day full of meetings, e-mails, seminars, Covid-tests... In the evening, however, I discover through an e-mail that my article *Performing Death: Marina Abramović's 7 Deaths of Maria Callas* has been published on the journal *FLP* 4(59) 2020. While I open with pleasure and a rush of adrenaline the PDF, Christian is playing Bach at the piano. When he stops, I show him my article on the iPad. He says, he will read it. I post it on socials with a photo-collage of Marina and Maria Callas that I prepared for the occasion. In the night and at dawn I print and bind some paper copies of it. [...]

11.6.2022

I attended the group performance *Habitat* by Doris Uhlich in Cologne. Such a powerful performance, celebrating the beauty of diversity and bodies of any age, sex, orientation, ethnicity, a collective ritual oscillating between Apollonian and Dionysian extremes, between group contemplation and orgiastic excesses – dozens of naked bodies moving and pulsating as one single organism.

Facing the power of this group experience, I'm tempted to leave everything to concentrate only on that kind of art that gets my blood pumping – like the art of Abramović, Papaioannou, Uhlich. The fire of these experiences: I want to experience it before it's too late. I want more lightness in my everyday life, but more intensity in the things that matter in life. [...]

4.10.2022

After five years, eleven months and four days of relationship, Christian breaks up with me. I'm devastated. I leave the flat and go over to Rebekka's place for the night. On the way

there, while crying on the subway, I receive the e-mail from the Marina Abramović Institut: I've been chosen for the performance class. One door closes, another one opens. [...]

5.10.2022

At 10am I go back home. Christian is crying as well, he just talked on the phone with his mother. He hugs me. We talk for a long time on the balcony. It's very cold. I literally howl in despair. I tell him that I love him – I haven't told him for months. Despite the cry I manage to tell him that I'll take part in Marina Abramović's class – something that I owe Christian after all, because he sent me years ago the link to her project *7 Deaths* and also forwarded the e-mail of the Folkwang with the info for the application. We even get to laugh among the tears when I tell him that I will eventually get to count rice grains in the *Cleaning the House* workshop. [...]

11.10.2022

First online meeting with Marina Abramović, Billy Zhao and the class. It gets real. We introduce ourselves shortly and talk about organizational stuff to prepare the upcoming first working phase. All participants look very interesting. It's overwhelming to hear from Marina and Billy about the selection process of the candidates they went through. They split us up into little groups: we will get to know each other and prepare something to show on the first meeting. [...]

14.10.2022

How productive can idle time be! One hour without internet, connections and distractions on the flight to Milan. I sleep a bit and think about my long durational performance that I will develop in the class of Marina Abramović and Billy Zhao. I come to the idea of using my handwritten diaries of the last years as starting point and source of the most sincere and authentic material I have. [...]

27.10.2023

I come out from my therapy session with a new idea: I belong to a group of people that live on the "threshold", that are constantly in a liminal state and cannot choose only one thing to do in live, will never feel complete and always stay in motion [...]. It gives me some strength to realize that I'm probably the only person on the earth that has – for example – both published articles about Giovanni Boccaccio and worked with Marina Abramović. [...]

Workshop Diaries / Phase 1 / 14.-23.11.2022

14.11.2022

When one door closes, another one opens. Remember how much the experiences in Montapulciano (in 2019 and 2022) brought me! The last project, for example, with Tamara and Andrés, and all the others with the mæro ensemble, Yoana, Luca, Pablo, ... Or think of Tom, who always makes my name whenever other composers look for a flutist for their projects (Federico Perrotti, Jinwook Jung, ...). Or think of the link/the bridge between my encounter and 6-years-long love story with Christian and the encounter with Marina Abramović: everything is connected!

I am in Essen-Werden in a very cozy and warm Airbnb-apartment, all of my own. I'm feeling good. The workshop with Marina Abramović and Billy Zhao just started. In the past days I met Smila, Florian, Klara and Camilla for our teamwork & team building. I really missed such a direct exchange of ideas and emotions with such a harmonious group of people (even though the experience of the exhibition *retro spektiv* by Yoana, that just opened on Su. 13.11., and most of all the studio work and recordings with Tamara and Andrés in October-November have been also socially nice).

Today my alarm clock rang extremely early – I almost didn't sleep –, I made my luggage and left the apartment in perfect order and tidy for my ex-boyfriend Christian. I left with the train for Essen, carrying a thousand pieces of luggage.

I'm feeling full of expectations, both for the Abramović-workshop and the fellow artists I'm going to work with and closely meet, and also for the romantic prospects waiting for me: I don't know how it will go on with Marcel, but we had three very sweet days in Cologne and he writes me every day. In the air there are also a couple of other possible dates in Essen the next days...

So I arrive in Werden, it's a sunny but cold day. First of all I go at Pablo's and Sandro's place to leave the luggage. On my way I meet Hagen – who looks radiant but must go further to give a lesson – and Sandro, in a good mood as usual. Upstairs Pablo is sleepy. I feel a bit guilty because he sent the application for Marina's workshop as well, but he wasn't taken. In return I will give him my ticket for Marina's lecture on Thursday – as an active participant I'm allowed to enter anyway.

After this I go to the cafeteria in the campus. A very kind guy pays for my coffee and banana bread because they don't accept any of my cards (I directly pay him back on Paypal). I sit down and answer e-mails for the IGP-/EMP-Büro and call my health insurance company to solve a problem. A group from the workshop is also in the cafeteria and plans their group presentation. Familiar atmosphere, everybody looks kind. Shortly before 11 o'clock I head to the Pina Bausch Theatre. In front of the library there's a little group of people: Konstantin, Florian, Klara, Smila, etc... everybody is beautiful and radiant. We go together in the theatre. There's excitement in the air, a lot of journalists and cameras are there. I sit next to Konstantin. Marina comes in, surrounded by respectful silence and an aura. The press conference with the rector of the University and the son of Pina Bausch takes place. Marina answers questions with statements that always sound profound, wise, almost proverbial or biblical. But also with a lot of jokes or anecdotes from her life. On the stage speak in her both the woman and the myth. She also affirms that the workshop that is about to start will be with most probability her last course, her last teaching. I feel thankful and lucky.

Outside of the theatre a group of workshop-participants builds up. Here, once more, they look all beautiful and particular to my eyes. I go withdrawing some cash and after that I

spend three hours in the cafeteria, waiting for the course to start, first with Florian, Smila and Anton, then with Hagen.

At 3pm I go to the dance-building for the start of the workshop, finally. A very big studio. A lot of chairs are stacked next to each other, and Marina wants us to sit on the chairs in this uncomfortable but at the same time cozy setting. We start small talks while the others slowly join one after the other. Marina sits in my same row. After this we start with the group presentations, we had the task of preparing something to show:

- Group 5 (Konstantin, Jakob, Goa, Gloria, Gaia): meta-performance with video-installation where they talk, film themselves and comment the very same performance they're doing.
- Group 4 (ours: Florian, Klara, Camilla, Smila and me): *Beginners/Amateurs*. We show the process of learning, the beginning of a new activity, the birth of a new skill. Five beginners (we) learn from a YouTube tutorial new things, they always wanted to learn. In this particular case I learn to dance tango, Klara how to play flute, Florian carnival dances, Smila how to do freestyle rap, Camilla how to flirt.
- Group 2 (Anton, Marija, Veronika, Moonjoo, Anaïs): stories about family and migration, they mix them up and tell them alternatively and fragmented so that they result being one big collective and evocative saga. They sit on photographs printed in big format. They are generated by AI from old family pictures. While telling the story they use earth to build some symbols on the floor/pictures.
- Group 3 (Camillo, Luke, Paulina, Leon, Janina): social experiment. They bring us hand in the hand one after the other into the big room, which is flooded by low frequencies that Leon chose ad hoc for the room. The group and some of us wear white laboratory suits. They start creating on the floor geometrical figures using paper tape. Some lines divide and isolate people and groups (a big rectangle, little squares, ...): how do people move and choose to relate to space now and why?
- Group 1 (Julian, Frederico, Theo, Sophie, Eleonora): *Water Loops*. They drink sparkling water, glass after glass, liter after liter. The noises of drinking and putting down the glass on the table and pouring water are amplified with microphones and looped. Comic effect at the beginning, but the tension rises while the public notices the suffering of the performers.

Marina and Billy watch and comment afterwards, they say something about the members of the groups, make questions, write down notes and give advice.

After this group work, we start with the presentation of the solo-performance ideas. There's the risk of exhibitionism at this point – I have the feeling many of us want to shine and make a good impression in front of Marina. She does not get impressed but comments very professionally our ideas, proposes alternatives, asks for the reasons behind them. Very lucid and punctual comments and suggestions (e.g. how to finish Anaïs' performance with digging the grave: by leaving the ending open: the performer continues digging/laying in the grave/standing up/sitting on the heap and so on, while the public is taken out by facilitators). To finish the class, she tells us the story of how did rumors born about her being satanist. Marina is very human, friendly and down-to-earth. A kind dinosaur of the art world, which I have now the honor of getting to know and work with, listen to, perceive with senses when she sits next to me and breathes heavily but with such a dignity, a piece of history. In short she will turn 76.

This is probably the LAST class that Marina teaches, as she said in the press conference and repeated us.

Also, Camillo said, she didn't teach for a long time anymore (20 years: since 2003!). So this makes this class very special: the first after a long time and the last one Marina teaches. And we are a bunch of really lucky pupils, her very last pupils. I just cannot be more thankful of the thousand little coincidences that brought me here: moving to Germany 6 years ago, meeting Christian who teaches at the Folkwang Universität and forwarded me the e-mail of the application – just before breaking up with me: his last present to his long-time boyfriend –, being still a student this year, having studied Literature and met the theatre professor Annamaria Cascetta, who proposed me to write an article for the journal *Folia Literaria Polonica*, starting writing in the week of the premiere of Marina's *7 Deaths of Maria Callas*, having attended the seminar *Ritualität und Spiritualität* by Prof. Rainer Nonnenmann at the Musikhochschule in Cologne in 2020 where we spoke about Marina's work and then finding at the *Buchhandlung Walther König* in Cologne the autobiography *Walk through walls* by Marina and having read it in August-September 2020 in Sweden, Cologne and Milan. Everything is connected! Should I talk about destiny? Also the fact that I got the E-Mail von Billy Zhao that I was taken for the *Free Interdisciplinary Performance Lab* with him and Marina came on October 4th 2022 at 20:42 and it was exactly the day Christian broke up with me. I saw the E-Mail in the underground, I was crying and going to Rebekka's place to spend the night (the first sleepless night of a long troubled period). I couldn't rejoice 100% in the moment, but joy, thankfulness, pride, enthusiasm came some time later like an overwhelming wave. And as they say, when one door closes another door opens.

15.11.2022

We start the day with a warm-up guided by Marina. And we also start to build rituals and a routine. Marina gives us all toilet paper to let us clean our noses. Then she invites us to breathe nine times through each single nostril and then nine times normally from both. She also gives us advice, which becomes a running gag: go every day to the bathroom before the sunset – in order to start the day pure (“how was your shitting situation today?”; “floating shit is the best!”). Another suggestion is to start the day by Drinking a whole glass of water.

Among the many exercises we do a lot of stretching and then a guided meditation. It's the first time we work on the mantra: “Be here and now. Stop thinking”.

We also do a lot of different sit-ups (hundreds of them!) and I'm very surprised how Marina does it. Even though her knee gives her problems, she is incredibly in good shape for her age. Well, you need to take care and maintain your body in shape – who knows what your next performance requires...

After the warm-up we do a kind of “The artist is present”-condensed exercise: everybody stands one after the other for one minute in front of the other members of the class. We can decide where and how to stand and how to look to the others. Such an easy but powerful exercise. Marina tells me the day after that I have a strong/intense presence. It was amazing to see how differently people just stood there and how different their presence was. One thing she suggested after the exercise was to consider positions of danger, lack of balance (blades, edges, risk of falling down...): all of this obliges you to be fully in the moment.

Then she gave us an example of the “rest energy”: consider somebody who runs a long time and is exhausted. Then point a gun against this person. He/She will nevertheless find some rest energy to escape. There's always rest energy when it comes to survival. With this energy you work in long durational performances.

We talked also about the “Liquid knowledge” that you can access when you really manage to stop thinking.

16.11.2022

Random notes. Today I allow myself to do the groupie and ask Marina: “What’s your relationship with autographs?” before asking her to sign my copy of her autobiography. While giving Camilla a feedback, Marina shows us a method against anger: middle in a quarrel, ask the other person to change position, to take yours. This will be alone disorienting and mind-blowing and will destabilize the other person and reduce his/her anger.

Marina tells us about the “counting the seconds”-performance. It’s a work called *Jargon* by the Greek artist Virginia Mastrogiannaki, in which she counts aloud the seconds, like a human clock, for eight hours a day, for seven weeks, in a museum. When Marina heard the idea, she couldn’t believe, she would do it for real. Towards the end of that period people had spread the word, the museum was always full of public and the visitors started counting the seconds together with the artist! It’s a good example of how the public of long durational performances changes together with you.

Marina also told us – but I don’t know if it is true or a joke – about a performer who kept repeating for a very long time in front of the public: “this is a boring piece”. After a while most of the public leaves the place, only a few remain. At that point the performer starts a beautiful show.

In the afternoon Marina talks about documentation: how to film, photograph, exhibit and eventually sell your performances – depending on the performance-situation, and how to control the process. She tells us a lot of anecdotes, for example about the videos of her performance “Art must be beautiful” with the metal comb: the cameraman just experimented with angles and cameras, filming very few of Marina’s action. As she saw the videos, she sent the cameraman out to smoke, started the camera and filmed it a second time alone.

We get some homework: we have to find a music that we love and a music that we hate and start to think about a concept for head-pieces, videos that we are going to shoot in the weekend, where we perform using only our heads. As favorite song I choose Nina Simone, *Feeling good* (winnig on *Bith Aneth* by the Masada Quartet and on *The Köln Concert* by Keith Jarrett), for the music I hate Vivaldi’s *Spring* from the *Four seasons*.

17.11.2022

Groupie-Chronicles part two. I ask Marina “What’s your relationship with selfies? Can I take one with you?”. She answers, she has a good relationship with them.

Today at 1pm between the morning and afternoon classes, Marina holds a lecture in the new Aula of the University. She chose the title “The past, present, future of performance”.

She started like this: “I’m really honored to be here. And also to see so many people, that sacrificed their lunch to hear this lecture! I really hope, it’s going to be worth... But first of all: this is my fourth day working here and I’m impressed by the incredible 26 young enthusiastic and talented students, who are now all here: can you please stand up? I want people to see you”. And a huge applause followed. I felt – we felt, as the others also told me – grateful and strongly empowered. It was a strong gesture by Marina.

I was also very impressed by the lecture. She, the queen of performance art, talked about and showed art only by other performers (except only one video of *Rest Energy* by her and Ulay), in this public lecture. This was for me a sign of humility that I really appreciated. Also,

when she talked about Tehching Hsieh, she presented him as “the best performer”, a “master” and said: “I look like a child next to him”.

In the night I need to go back to Cologne to collect my diaries, that I need for the performance-pitching tomorrow.

On my way to Cologne I stop in Düsseldorf for a date with Jakob, theatre director, in a Thai Restaurant.

18.11.2022

Intense days in the performance classes of Marina and Billy. We already reached the middle of the first phase. It has become routine, family, we share in that big studio 8 hours of daily activity and intimacy.

After a first moment of depression on Tuesday-Wednesday because of the (for me) unsuccessful presentation of the idea for my solo performance in front of the class, a positive Thursday came (17.11.) and an even better Friday (18.11.). Debates take place in a real circle of elects. Magic performances, already so strong in this showing phase! E.g. Klara’s metamorphosis into a chicken, Luke’s slavery in theatre’s characters (both of them bravely frontal naked), Smila crying non-stop for one hour in front of kitsch films, ...).

This morning my turn came to show my concept.

I knew from the beginning that I wanted to use my diaries. Under the working title of *Farewell* I thought about facing memories from the past that obsess me and turn page, trying to fully live the present and to stop “collecting” words, pictures, etc. I had some ideas for the setting, e.g. to copy sentence after sentence with a chalk-stick in the floor of a big room and, when the floor is full, to wash everything away with water and then start again with the next texts. Or I thought about sitting on a huge ice-block and read page after page, while the ice slowly melts and takes the shape of my body. But, on the suggestion of Marina and Billy, I reduced the idea to the minimum: less is more. Only a chair and a microphone.

For the try-out I took out of the paper briefcase all my diaries and put them in two piles. I sat and took the first volume, which I wrote 10 years ago. I read page after page and then tore them out, crumpled them and threw to the floor at my feet. After a while you could see a heap of paper. One hour of non-stop reading and diving into memories. It was the half of a diary. I had sore throat for the rest of the day. It has been really intense. I got a very good feedback from Marina, Billy and the group. I should also think about the installative possibilities after the performance is finished (heap of paper memories, empty diary-covers, empty chair and microphone as an installation, document of the process, traces of memories which are not there anymore). I could also – they told me – consider the idea of leaving the public some of my memories, maybe with an invitation to come closer and take some of the pages of my diaries with them. Or I could let the memories go by letting them fly away outdoor or melt into the rain or bury them in the earth (maybe in combination with Anaïs’ performance?). I should consider the idea of a live translation that generates subtitles, even if not very accurate, in order to let people understand some keywords of the content, because I mostly read Italian texts. I should also consider the process of transformation of my memories from the written to the spoken word (through the audio and video recordings): it’s a process of changing medium. At the same time my goal (bringing these memories one last time back to life) it’s achieved, since I destroy the original diaries. At the end of the day I’m very tired but also happy and satisfied because I have the feeling I reached the hearth of many people in the class with something strong. This is the most intimate thing I can share and offer, my past, my memories.

Lunch in the Mensa. Lot of chats.

Afternoon: other performance session. Lot of comments and long feedback session. We start to know each other good and open up.

In the evening I go with Pablo to the show “Treasures” of the dance company of the Folkwang – some scenes are just aesthetical perfection – and then I have dinner with him. We go for a walk on the Werden-island and talk a lot. It’s freezing but we have fun, we are there alone and sing a canon in the night. I tell him about the end of the relationship with Christian and my new dates, also with Jakob, who Pablo happens to know.

At some point during the day Marina tells us about “energy vampirism”, which happens when people steal your energy (e.g. in a shopping mall or in the underground). This is how to defend yourself and preserve your energy: put the toes together, the thumbs touch the index finger, the tip of the tongue the upper teeth – so you can “close your energy circuits”. I’ll do it anytime I find myself in those situations among people that exhaust me around the city.

19.11.2022

After the usual warm-up guided by Marina, she gives us very good news: she had dinner the day before with the director of the Museum Folkwang and managed to obtain for us the museum’s spaces for 10 days! This was a bomb. We knew we would do something long durational, but I was thinking maybe for one day or a couple. Ten days is completely a new dimension for us as students.

In this excited atmosphere we start the weekend of video-shooting for our head pieces.

We dive once more, just like with the performance try-outs into a parallel world.

After the long day I go with a small group to eat in an Asian restaurant close to the uni. At the table we watch some videos and interviews that the German television made the last days in our classes.

20.11.2022

Today we started earlier, at 9am, even if it’s Sunday. Marina guides the warm-up downstairs, in the Physical-Theatre’s Studio. There’s an exercise where we are supposed to think about something that makes us smile. A photographer was there and took beautiful photos of some of us smiling. Marina tells us about the baby kangaroo she once took care of.

After that we go back upstairs.

Around 10am Marina proposes me – first privately – to publish the diaries I’m writing anyway in these days in the catalogue of the exhibition.

Then, in the afternoon, just before the last video-shooting of Janina and Leon at piano, she announces in front of the class (“Where is the Italian boy...?”) that I wrote and published a beautiful article about her last opera project *7 Deaths*, that I write beautifully and that if everybody agrees I’ll publish the diaries of these days, where I write about us and what we do, in the catalogue. It’s like a form of documentation – it reminds me of the transcription made by James Westcott of every single movement she made in the 12-day-performance *The House with the Ocean View* (Sean Kelly Gallery in New York, 2002). It’s also like an extension of my diaries-solo-piece: I extend it up till the present and bring it to a meta-level.

I feel honored and so thankful that Marina asked. At the same time a bit overwhelmed because I didn’t write notes all the time: I was much more living the present in the class and letting it be and letting the impulses and impression leave a free trace in my mind – that’s the point of my solo piece: to get rid of my obsession for the past and the details and live freely the present. So my diaries are really an incomplete memory and interpretation of what we are living so intensively these days. And also, if I know that somebody is going to read my diaries probably I will write them differently, even though I will try to be all the time sincere, I

will not write anymore very personal details or comments about specific people. And also the language I should use for the purpose of the publication (English) slightly changes of course the way I'll report the facts. Nevertheless, I'm happy to do this. I'll keep writing in English, translate the previous texts that I wrote in Italian and make a copy of all relevant passages before I do the performance in the museum and destroy all the original diaries.

We spent the rest of the day shooting the remaining head pieces.

Marina, Billy and Wayne bought some food for us and left it in the kitchen: lovely how they care for us. Marina also always goes around with some snacks to feed "her kids".

In the kitchen I overhear an interesting conversation between Klara and Fred about parties of the theatre classes, flirting and open relationships – which will play a role between Fred and me.

In the evening I went with Smila to Wuppertal to see Pina Bausch's *Vollmond*. A masterpiece with such strong images and soaring leaps between emotions, violence, beauty, hilarity, sadness. Marina, Billy and Wayne also attended the show, we met in the foyer, where Marina also introduced us to Jaroslaw Fret, director of the Grotowski Company, and his wife. Smila and I did not have a ticket, but Marina recommended us to wait till the last second. And indeed out chance arrived: Bettina Milz from the Pina Bausch Centre takes us with her inside.

21.11.2022

At the beginning of the day Aleksander shows up with his little lovely dog, Mandu, and Marina tells us a story about her dog. Today the warm-up is led by Frederico. We do a lot of stretching and exercises with the chair, which are perfect for our back and muscles.

Then we sit and watch some videos. First some repertoire videos that Marina and Billy chose and relate somehow with our head pieces (e.g. *Two dogs & Ball* by William Wegman, something by Gilbert & Georg, a video with snake, one with mirror, one with kiss, one with a microphone that gets swallowed, ...). After this we watch and discuss the videos we shot ourselves in the previous two days:

Camilla	Theatre piece she always wanted to realize, but she cannot express it with words. Very emotional. It's about personal demons. She talks about a devil-like person on stage, a woman who sees in the Harry Potter-like Mirror of Erised her deepest desire, which is uncanny.
Gloria	Just crying with music (<i>Bathroom dance</i> by Hildur Guðnadóttir, from the film <i>Joker</i>).
Aleksander & Janina	Lehár, Paganini, "Gerne hab ich die Frauen geküsst" (sung by Placido Domingo). Alex kisses Janina very passionately. She remains impassible like a stone. It's about sexual abuse. Trigger warning/disclaimer for sexual abuse needed. Discussion in the group. Is it disturbing? What does it mean to reproduce and show violence? Is it a parody? What is the context? Does it affirm that "something is wrong" or just reproduces a practice that in the opera-world is still taking place? It's about opera-stereotypical roles. Maybe the parody should be made more extreme in order to work (e.g. the woman upside down or

	with exaggerated opera costumes, with more connections with the opera world). Marina comments: "Show reality without giving solutions". Contrast: musically beautiful <i>but</i> disturbing content/message.
Smila	Turning like ballerinas until exhaustion. Maybe command in French needed: turn clockwise.
Frederico & Moonjoo	Head choreography in canon. Suggestions: no make-up-lines on the face, only frontal, start together and then after a while shift in the canon -> disturbing, irritating element because it changes the synchronicity. (cfr. La Monte Young, <i>Well tuned piano</i>)
Veronika	1. with water/basin Wagner music + laugh. A stranger's hand pulls her down into the water. 2. singing folksongs about homesickness, being orphan and living far away. Maybe she should connect videos and performance about loneliness and put different layers of her own work in just one exhibition-space in the museum (performance + installation).
Anton	"This is me" – photos with self-timer looking in the camera repeating the sentence in Russian every time. A lot of slightly different shots/representation of the self.
Anton & Pau	Bubble gum video. Music: Elvis, <i>I'm so lonesome tonight</i> . Importance of the sound.
Marija	Mumbled incomprehensible monologue. Maybe with two screens facing each other, building a dialogue? Increasing the concept makes the non-sense. Marina comments: "Sometimes when it doesn't work alone, you have to double it".
Theo	Lying down, breathing in the microphone in his open mouth. Better framing for the video needed (diagonal, b&w, cropped). Maybe works as sound piece, 10 min. live.
Konstantin	Singing aloud out of tune a song he is listening in the earplugs. Camillo tapes him with adhesive tape all around the head and face. Konstantin can barely breath but keeps singing.
Florian	Lollipop. Just smiling and licking once. So powerful.
Goa	1. "Faster" – just this one word pronounced very slowly and distorted. 2. Apnea. With song <i>Guided by Angels</i> .
Sophie	1. Vacuum cleaner passed on her skin and face. 2. Olive oil spitting like blood.
Jakob	Hair in the wind (with Elene Fisher, <i>Atemlos?</i>)
Gaia	Gift situation. She pours water colored in blue out of her mouth. Looks like a witch or a poisoned/poisoning cheerleader. Etude on poisoning (like Carmelo Bene?). Strangeness/Playfulness.
Luke	Fingers-Etude tipping lightly all over his face on Saint-Saëns' <i>Swan</i> played by Clara Rockmore on theremin.

Francesco	Working title: “restart”. I look directly into the camera-lens which becomes my mirror. I just do my morning toilet, brush my teeth, shave, etc. Simply my starting ritual into the day, at the time when potentially everything can still happen in the following hours.
Klara	Eating a whole lemon also with peel. Music: Gino Paoli, <i>Senza fine</i> (favorite song of her parents, also used at the wedding). Maybe should be looped.
Leon & Janina	Hommage à Kurtag. Very strong. Playing piano duo with heads, mocking Tchaikovsky’s first piano concert. Maybe they should make also an installation out of it, where the score is visible in the museum on a note-stand beside the screen.
Moonjoo	Drawing face with lipstick. Go on till all the face is completely red? Or the drawing needs to have a meaning.
Camillo	Light matches in the mouth burning till they reach to the lips.
Anaïs	Tongue-clock. One minute.
Julian	Sound topography of his face by passing a microphone on every inch of his face. Synesthesia: the sense of touch translated with a microphone into sound!
Eleonora	Mirror. You see the world around her through the mirror rotating around her head. Music: In The Mood For Love - Song Yumeji's theme Shigeru Umebayashi. But maybe we musicians of our group can play ourselves if we make the video again.

After the videos we watch to the last pitching of solo performances by Camilla, Moonjoo, Jakob, Julian, Theo, Leon.

Today Klara showed me her drawings. They’re beautiful and she also did a portrait of me. I come to the idea of including these as well into the catalogue, and maybe also some texts or quotation by the other members, in order to build a kind of collective diaries, memories and sketches of the workshop. I’d like to put all materials together and edit it (here the philologist in me comes out!).

After the class I spent the evening alone at my Airbnb place in Essen. I played flute finally! I saved and organized the many fotos and videos of these days, I wrote my diaries, I cooked pasta (orecchiette al sugo con cipolle) and drunk white wine. I chatted a lot with Marcel.

22.11.2022

I had a talk with Janina in the morning about the experience, the intensity of it, in the dance studio, still dark and with traces of the performances of the precedent evening. What is intense? The emotions, all the sharing, the openness, the receptivity: getting to know each other, show our very personal stories, phobias, dreams, unconsciousness – all of this comes out also while making the videos. We also talked about how it will be to come back to the “normal reality”, her interviews, ...

I heard then Luke and Marina talking. Luke said that he feels “awake” in the workshop and this makes the difference with other “normal” university days: also when he is not performing and just observes the others, he feels present.

We do the warm-up by Marina.

I managed to take a picture of her with the ritual toilet paper for cleaning the nose before the nostril-breathing-exercise.

After the work-out we proceed to the presentation of some performances curated by Camilla and Anaïs.

In the morning the remake of the group performance of the first day by Anton, Marija, Veronika, Moonjoo and Anaïs with the big photographs and the family-story-telling of different but similar destinies of migration. Then they transit to the solo performances: Anaïs starts digging with the shovel. Strength, determination, yellow rain-jacket like Jonas (Louis Hofmann) in the series *Dark*. Strong images also when she just stands by the threshold of one door and stares inside, and when she digs outside and we just hear the noises of the effort.

Veronika cries while singing beautiful folks songs and lullabies and jazz standards (Billie Holiday, *Lover Man*; Nina Simone, *Ne me quitte pas*). She also just speaks, not only singing. All the five of them show different forms of solitude to me: Anton builds his own walls around himself; Marija shows the solitude of the perfectionistic musicians; Anaïs digs her own grave; Veronika shows her “Weltschmerz”; Moonjoo shows the silence, the music of the spheres with the perfection of concentric circles and using her elegant and beautiful body to paint them with ink: it’s an amplification of calligraphy, the pure beauty of the sign.

Marija shows frustration, tension and bother for the G-major scales that are never perfectly pitched. It is nice to see the pitch powder in the air when she plucks a hair from the bow. We share her excitement/feelings while she plays the scales and feel supportive when she almost gets to the end of the octave.

In the afternoon:

We let some external public come in: we stopped passengers on the street and asked them to join one hour. A journalist is also there: Christiane Hoffmans from *Welt am Sonntag* – she will publish a reportage on the 4th December under the title: “Ausbrechen als Methode”. Somewhen during the day we talk about the topic of the disturbing factor of the too many visits from outside: photographers, camera teams, television, journalists... There was too much media attention and this disturbed our work since we had to show some “products” which were not finished. Julian talked somewhen about a “capitalistic” approach: producing a lot of material instead of freely experimenting.

Nevertheless the 7 strangers in the public in the afternoon were a good external and neutral feedback (three old women that went away almost directly after the showing, two men – a couple? –, an architect and a craftsman, who asked a lot of questions actually and were really interested).

In the afternoon the performers are: me (diary pieces), Gaia (Veline, “stacchetto”, anti-Berlusconi piece), Luke (actor running, exhaustion, cleaning the naked body), Julian (pianist’s self-punishment when measures finger nails that are too long).

We play also our videos in the meanwhile, projected big on the wall.

Gaia’s performance and mine work good together – they have something to do with our past.

Julian-Marija-Luke could also work as a triptych about perfectionism and being under pressure as an artist.

We have a long conversation with the public. The two man and tell us that they’d like to have a kind of explanatory text to better understand the background of our performances. Marina says at some point: “The public wants to be part of something”, at the same level with the performers. This was her experience with *The artist is present*.

Which was something different from *House with ocean view*, where she was on a higher level, distant, observed, exposed.

In the evening they order a lot of pizza and some wine that we eat in the big room. Very funny and relaxed atmosphere after the hard work. We also improvise a kind of talent show, where everybody shows strange skills. Marina sings folksongs. She makes a comment about how happy she is that the group is so united and there is no jealousy among us.

23.11.2022

For the last day we meet at the SANAA-Gebäude at the Zeche Zollverein in Essen.

The luxury of entering an enormous space, with 10 meters-high columns, only for us. Full of sun coming through the huge square windows. We will be working here for our second phase of the Workshop in February. We meet at the ground floor at 10am. Small talk.

Everybody looks so cool and new, with other clothes, not sport-clothes for the first time.

Then we spend two hours planning the next working phases on the 3rd floor.

Marina and Billy also give us some exercises to do from the Abramović's method, in preparation for the *Cleaning the House* workshop. Marina read some exercises aloud and then she leaves me the papers (some examples: remember the moment between being awake and falling asleep, clean the floor of your house on your knees for one hour, drink a glass of water as slow as possible, ...). She also mentioned an exercise to go "minimal": take a notebook and write all the objects you have in your house, in each drawer, closet, ecc. You'll realize how much useless stuff you keep. Then strike through the stuff you don't need and get rid of it. You'll feel like a new person. I'm thinking about doing this soon, taking the chance of moving out of my flat.

Then we make some photos on the 2nd floor and Marina and Billy give us all personally a hug to say goodbye. Marina also tells us that she is so involved in our group and ideas, that she dreams every night about us.

After the goodbye I got to the Mensa of the campus there and chat with Frederico, Klara, Konstantin, Camillo, Florian, Eleonora. We talk about the importance of being there all the time and take part to all the discussion, also in the dead moments; about the transition from the self-focus to the group-focus and how we became a group day after day; about the "empowerment" of taking part to this – Camillo says he had goose bumps when Marina at the lecture said: "these are my students. Can you please stand up" and we got the applause of a full theatre. We talked a lot about what this experience means and how it will influence our future. We also talked about some misunderstandings between some people and Marina (the topic of the political correctness, generation gap?, east European sense of humor?, something lost in translation?, ...).

I'm feeling feverish and almost drunk or stunned because of the many strong emotions, people, stories. Like an overflowing vessel. My senses are activated at 360 degrees.

Workshop Diaries / Phase 2 / 30.1.-8.2.2023

29.1.2023

Complicated luggage-making session. I end up with six pieces. Christian lends me his car, so I drive from Cologne to Essen-Katernberg, where Smila booked a flat for her, me and Gaia – a very big flat in a kind of ex coal-mine next to a protestant church – people were singing when I arrived. Then Smila and her mother arrive, we make small talks, I take a pizza from the only open place in the neighborhood and some stuff for breakfast from a very crumbling kiosk with a little old Arabic woman, then I drive to Wuppertal to attend at the Opera House two Pina Bausch's pieces: *Café Müller* and *Rite of spring*, the latter with an amazing African dancers' company – pure energy, standing ovation in the end. There was also a new piece, *Common ground[s]*. I met in the theatre Marina, Billy, Wayne and some classmates. Marina just arrived from Hong Kong and had jet leg. After the show I drove back to Cologne to take the car back and slept there.

30.1.2023

Train to Essen. Breakfast in a café in the train station. At 10am we have a meeting at the Museum Folkwang. Many of the class are dressed in black and wait at the back door. We are excited when we get into the museum. The director of the Marina Abramović Institute, Serge Le Borgne, is there and talks to me – he recognized me from the pictures of the proposal I handed in and told me that my performance is brave. The museum's team and the director, Peter Gorschlüter, gave us a guided tour in the museum: nice space, huge, but we are a lot of (sometimes very noisy) people. The design department makes a presentation and there is a little catering with coffee for us. Then Gaia, Smila, Luke and I drive to our place, eat something little, I write some e-mails for my new flat in Cologne, we go to the Saana-Building with our cups of coffee. We start to occupy and divide the spaces and we receive a technical introduction about what is possible to do and what is not in this very special architectural masterpiece. We finish in the auditorium with a talk and Marina shows us the book *Student Body* and tells us stories of her students of that time.

I go back home with Gaia, we buy some food at Rewe and then drive to Werden, where we have dinner in a Indian restaurant with Belendjwa, Gigi and Livia and visit a student-self-organized underground concert in the basement of the university. Then we drive back to our place by car. Lukas and Belendjwa come with us and sleep at our place. [...]

31.1.2023

Woke up at 7am, made coffee in the silent kitchen, where I'm alone till 9am. I answer e-mails, plan, write, collect documents, ... I take Gaia's car, leave Bel and Lukas at the bus station, go pick up Fred with his pole and drive quickly to the Saana. We're a bit late, join the warm-up by Marina, who then leaves the role to Fred. It's very nice to come back to this training-routine and stretch the spine and the entire body. [...] Nice talks and people in the Mensa at the campus. In the afternoon we make us comfortable, and everybody occupies his/her own spot in the Saana-Building. Gaia and I build our own "office" in the middle of the first floor with desks, chairs and lamps. I figure out what to do for the bureaucracy of my new flat. At 5pm we meet in the Auditorium downstairs and Marina shows us video documentations of performances from the project *NEON+MAI* in Athen, 2016: *O Jardim* by Rubiane Maia, where the performer builds a beans-lab, where she takes care of the little plants in their fragility dealing with growth and death; *A Key* by Yiannis Pappas, where the performer spends days to open a passage through four walls using only a simple

key and in the end gives the key to somebody in the public who unlocks his glass-cage to let him out; *Jargon* by Virginia Mastrogiannaki, where she counts the seconds 8 hours a day for 7 weeks and her performance becomes in the end a collective experience where the public takes part, counting with her; *Portrait of the Unknown Man* by Yannis Adoniou and Stavros Apostolatos; *Corner Time* by Despina Zacharopoulou. And finally: *O vínculo* by Mauricio Ianês, who now teaches performance in Wien, where he de-spectacularizes the performance simply creating an open space, where he just spends time, talks with the public, if anybody comes in, and explains that they can do whatever they want with the space and his body. In that space everything is done by the public. It's a liberatory space. One could observe different dynamics like destruction vs. development. An exercise in social responsibility. After the videos I go home with Gaia, eat some fruit and muesli and go back to Saana. I spend there a wonderful and productive evening completely alone on the 1st floor of the empty, silent and illuminated building. I record the piece *Glacier* for bass flute by Dai Fujikura for the presentation video of the artistic research lab at by Evelyn Buyken at the Musikhochschule. It is a pleasure to be alone and creative in such a huge space, a temple of modern architecture. At 21:20 Belendjwa comes to pick me up, we go to the flat, I cook something for us all (also for Gaia and Lukas) and then go to sleep.

1.2.2023

I woke up again very early and enjoyed coffee, kitchen, etc. alone. I answered e-mails and prepared the last documents for my flat. Then we have breakfast all together and I go to the Saana with Bel and Gaia. Today there is no warm-up because Marina and Billy need to give us all feedback. I sit at my office/working-place in the middle of the first floor and cut the crystals-presentation video. Then Marina and Billy come to me for the feedback: we discuss the news about my performance *Tabula rasa. Diary pieces*, the steps to go through in this phase, the translation program, the little stage to sit on, an intimate space in the museum (maybe in an angle?), my outfit (black, simple: come as you are now – says Marina), etc. Marina says that I look very good and happy and asks me if I'm in love. I'm happy indeed even though confused and also emotionally "überfordert". But I let me happily carry by the flow of things. Then I work and research stuff for the performance, write down notes, etc... For lunch Gaia, Smila and me go back to the flat and cook pasta. We have a really nice chat. Afternoon at the Saana. Again research and desk-work. At 5pm: videos + kind of lecture by Marina in the auditorium.

She shows us documentation material from her work *House with the Ocean view*. First a suggestion about the title: think big, transcend the concept. In this case the audience is the ocean. She spent 12 days on three platforms in a gallery in New York. She didn't eat, drunk only water. It was a process of purification that affected also the public, with which she was intimately connected: they could use a telescope and see any detail of her body and routine and could also go closer to her. Using the towel after the shower was her only moment of privacy. She dressed everyday a different color according to Indian symbology and used the same shoes she had to do the walk on the Chinese Wall. To force herself to be in the here and now she stood in front of the ladders that had blades instead of rungs. In those 12 days she developed routine and experience, which are grounding stones for long durational performances. In such works you can transcend simple activities into miracles. For this performance she chose to have a written documentation in the catalogue: a report of every single action she did on the platform that could give more than a 12-days-long video the sense of the time passing.

Those days were for Marina holy, she developed a super-self, things happened, everything was part of the performance.

Her focus, her energy came from the audience. But too much energy is also dangerous and can destroy.

Performance is a transcendental form of art. It changes people.

Then Marina and Billy show us some historical material: *Das triadische Ballet* by Oskar Schlemmer, a Bauhaus ballet; fashion shows by Comme des Garçons and by Harri for the London Fashion Week; Joseph Beuys' *I like America and America likes Me*; Austin Powers' *Dr. Evil*; Ana Prvački, *Nourishing façade*, where she licks the copper façade of a building and other works by her: *Mask*, *Money Laundering Wet Wipes*, *Hand Pollination Glove* (very short video, advertising-like).

After the videos I stay a little bit longer in the Saana and organize last things (material and so on), then leave, shop at Rewe, go with Smila to Vierhofer Platz to see the exhibition by Lukas and then reach the others at Nord-Café, where Belendj also joins us. We then drive home together. [...]

2.2.2023

I woke up at 8am. Breakfast. Bel leaves the flat by taxi, we'll not be meeting for many days since now. Way to Saana with Gaia. I sit at my desk at the 1st floor, organize the translation program with Jan, Leon's boyfriend, and the shooting of some videos (new head pieces for my final bachelor concert *Crystals*). In the lunch break I go shopping in Essen-City, I buy items I need for the videos with Gaia, Fred and me. While walking I get a phone call by mom. I'm happy to hear her voice, but she is depressed and I cannot help her. I feel overwhelmed by the quantity of stuff I'm planning. Running alone through the city, doubting about the quality of my art, ideas and performances... Essen is also very grey and it doesn't help. It gets better when I go back to Saana and sit there, talk with the others from the class.

At 5pm: meeting in the Auditorium. We start planning the disposition of our performances in the museum. Marina shows us other videos

Vesúvio by Grupo EmpreZa, a ritual based group performance, and *DNA de DAN* by Maikon K, where the performer frees himself from a snake-like skin made of egg white, slowly gets to dance and establishes an ancestral communication with the public. Both of them were part of the MAI-Project *Terra Comunal* (São Paulo, 2015).

Then some videos by the Swedish/German Performance Duo TBL (TallBlondLadies): *Anything But*, where they try to go up a mountain wearing roller skates, *Runway*, ... and other performance with absurd and surreal actions. Then: *Not scared* by Anna Berndtson, where she stands naked on a bathroom scale and lets the audience select food, weight it, calculate the number of calories it contains, and then feed her. After the performance she gained three kilos; *Butter Dance* by Melati Suryodarmo; *Starless* by Daniel Friedrichsen; *Back to sarajevo after ten years* by Ivan Civić and then the videos by Amanda Coogan with random people dancing to classical symphonic music and the song with the sign language for her deaf parents.

In the evening I talk with Gaia and Goa, who also remained a bit longer in Saana. Then I record 10 minutes of reading from my diaries, that Jan, the programmer, needs to develop the translating program. Christian calls me on the phone. Do I miss him? I'm right now on another planet and I really cannot focus on him and our (past?) relationship. I stay in the Saana-Building till late, then I go back home. Smila is already sleeping. I drink a beer, bake a zucchini pie and chat with Jakob H. about spicy stuff for hours. Then I fall asleep, very deeply.

3.2.2023

I woke up at 7am, shaved, had a shower, drank coffee, had breakfast, planned the day, talked with Smila first and Gaia and Lukas after that. I went to Saana alone, sat at my workplace, talked privately with Julian, Konstantin, Fred, and prepared my setting. I got again short feedback from Marina. Around 11:30am we – all performers of the 1st floor – performed and after that we sat in a circle around Marina and Billy and talked, commented, gave and heard feedback.

In the lunch break I sit in the canteen with Fred, Konstantin, Gaia and Veronika. We wanted to shoot some videos in the studios, but it was already taken. We chilled and chatted a bit in the cafeteria, went back to Saana, watched the try-outs of the performers on the ground floor. Marina took a picture of me while writing these pages on the diary sitting in the perfection of the architectural lines of the huge building converging. At 5:30pm we all meet in the auditorium for exchanging feedback and starting discussing ideas for the poster picture and the title of the exhibition. Klara and me prepare a big board, start to collect words that we find inspiring and ask everybody to do the same. We see some videos of artists having fun (Fluxus and Dada Groups). Before leaving the Saana, Fred and me shortly try the head-piece with the steam-kiss. Dinner at our place. I cook pasta for us (Gaia, Smila, me) and guests (Smila's boyfriend and Fred). I then go at Fred's place to spend the night.

4.2.2023

I woke up and had breakfast in Fred's huge kitchen. I phone with Johanne who will design the poster of my concert *Crystals*. At Saana I do some adjustments to my performing spot. I have a personal talk with Marina at a bar table. Then we do a photo session with Anton – to collect material to generate AI pictures for a possible poster. Then we do some group photos on the ladders. We come to a conflict situation, some people in the group are against group-photos. Marina turns sad if not upset because of this negative energy. We discuss in the auditorium and say a sad goodbye.

Then the sun comes out. We shoot some videos with Konstantin, Gaia and Fred. I have lunch with Konstantin and Janina. In the afternoon only students are in the Saana. We shoot again, this time the steam-kiss-video with Fred. Konstantin films us and we start to get some public (Gloria, Camillo, ...). At the sunset all we students meet at the 1st floor and have a very nice and healthy talk, I'm grateful. It is necessary to let conflicts and frustration come out. We talk for example about the "collective" of 6 people that was founded inside the bigger group of 26 in order to document our workshop. We spend a cozy evening in the shared apartment with Gaia and Smila, have very nice talks about friends, childhood, performing, projects, ... we eat pizza and ice-cream. Then I borrow Gaia's car, drive first to Saana, where I take two of my diaries with me and meet Camillo and Janina who are still working there, and then I drive to Cologne.

5.2.2023

I come across Marina before class and she tells me: "I'm very found on you... You know that I have 1% Italian blood in my veins?". Then we have the warm-up and at 11:15am we meet in the Auditorium for a new start with Marina and the group. We "make peace" again. Marina told us, she was so sad and frustrated yesterday that she could only watch Netflix. But couldn't stop thinking about us. She also dreamt about us. Then Marina and Billy show us something very funny and ironical they prepared: a power-point presentation with dozens of funny or very original group photos showing also very famous groups – like an invitation to

reconsider the reluctances of the day before: Umberto Boccioni and the Futurists, the CoBrA group, the Dadaists, the Bombay Progressive Art Group, the Surrealists, the Student Cultural Centre Belgrade of the 70s, Warhol's Factory, the Young British Artists, General Idea (*Nazi Milk* and *File-Magazine*), Guerrilla Girls, Beijing East Village, Artclub 2000, DIS Magazine, JAM Gallery, Pussy Riot.

At the end of the day we meet again in the Auditorium and watch a documentation film by Giada Colagrande, that has been just released after 12 years, about the theatre piece Marina did with Robert Wilson: *Bob Wilson's 'The Life and Death of Marina Abramović'*. It was her sixth biographical piece and she gave Bob Wilson complete control on the biographical material. After watching Marina is very emotional and leaves overwhelmed by memories.

6.2.2023

I woke up at 8am, showered, had breakfast with Smila and talked with her about possible titles for her performance – “Catharsis” came out of our talks. Then Gaia joins and we talk about mutual support and inspiration. I go to Saana with Gaia and we talk about the possibility of applying for festivals in Italy with our performances.

At 10am we do the best warm-up ever of this phase: relaxing and “purifying”. I mostly like the couple exercises. Marina shows the first one with me. One person stands, the other “cleans” the energy around the first by shaking air and producing hissing sounds or demon-like sounds. Then I do it with Konstantin and also switch roles. Then we do the trusting-exercise: one person holds, the other lies down on the back of the first and relaxes. I'm still with Konstantin. Then comes a beautiful meditation: put aside any thought, just feel the body touching the ground, focus on different parts of the body.

After the warm-up we meet in the auditorium. Some small talk with Marina: she tells us about her boyfriend, who works with mixed reality and did an exhibition with a Japanese composer; then she tells us the crazy story of how she got the Dutch passport, even without knowing a word of Dutch. Then Marina and Billy start giving us some info about the workshop in Greece.

Marina says that all artists working with long durational performances become part of a big family – they are aliens to the rest of the world.

Doing this kind of performance is similar to having the lifestyle of the Aboriginal: celebrating, building things just for one day and then letting them go.

We start talking about filming because the camera team of ARD will come. Marina says it's strange at the beginning, but then one gets used to it and forgets it.

At 3:30pm we do one hour tryout all together for the ARD filming crew. Their impression afterward is: a wave of melancholy, different statues, deep ideas.

I stay a bit longer at Saana. I meet Marina, Billy and Wayne going out. Marina hugs me while wishing good night and says “my Italian...”. She is like a mom.

7.2.2023

I have breakfast in the morning with Gaia and Belendj. We go at 9am to Saana in a beautiful sun. At 10am we meet in the Auditorium for a private talk with Marina about the problems that the camera team – particular the old white sexist and racist director – raised. We talk about swallowing shit, finding compromises and her work to give us visibility. Then we let the camera team in. Gaia is our spokesperson and expresses our demands to the director (more respect and discretion in first place, more space for his woman colleague as co-director). After the diplomacy, I go upstairs to finish building my stage and set up. Leon helps me. But I have to sacrifice a couple of hours to go to a very far MediaMarkt and buy a cynch-cynch

adapter. The film crew is filming, but they chose very few people to film closer, some “protagonists” for their documentation. I feel frustrated because they do not show any interest for my performance and my 10 days of preparation will not end up into the documentary. These feelings trigger in me thoughts about egoism, competitiveness, jealousy, the need of artists to be recognized, etc. I do really appreciate how other members of the group, also very young, act mature and constructive in this situation that is another big challenge to the unity of the group. Konstantin for example wrote in our Telegram-Chat a beautiful message where he invites us all not to be pulled down by the situation and enjoy the opportunities that we still have in the class and most of all the amazing group of people that we are.

It's our last afternoon at the Saana. At the sunset I feel melancholic. I went through very strong emotions in the last 10 days here. Now I feel a sense of fugacity and disorientation. I cry. Gaia hugs me.

In the evening at Saana there is a student-talk with Marina, moderated by Darko Radosavljev. Marina talks about a lot of huge topics, but maybe the new one to me was: to have courage and be open to failure. Marina told us the story of her avantgard-theatre piece with Charles Atlas, *Delusional*. A beautiful, brave, failure. Be free to do art, do not overthink.

Back in the flat Smila, Gaia and I have our last common dinner. Sitting around the table we make our little farewell ritual: we list day after day the last 10 days and resume what we have done, where we were and with whom. It's a very nice exercise.

8.2.2023

Woke up early, breakfast, luggage, shaving, shower. With thousand bags I go to the Saana together with Smila. I have some stress for the translating program, that in the end does not work today. Nevertheless I'm grateful to Leon, Wayne, Billy and Gaia who helped me a lot. We do a 2-hours try-out. The Museum's staff is there to watch the results until now. After the two hours I feel satisfied and tired.

We meet all downstairs with the museum's team and discuss title, poster and other stuff. Marina doesn't like farewells, so she cuts the moment and says: see you this evening at the lecture or in Greece.

We spend then some hours cleaning the Saana. In the meanwhile I have a snack with Gaia and Smila and, at the sunset, a beer with Florian and the “collective”.

Together with Klara, Florian and Janina we take the train to Werden and manage to get into the New Aula for Marina's second public lecture, even if we have no tickets. It's funny that they didn't want to allow us – from Marina's class – in and that also the rector of the uni could not say a word against the security woman. Somehow Billy takes us in and we do manage to stay. The beautiful thing about this lecture is that Marina makes a kind of mini exercises from her method together with the public: breathing, humming, being silent all of the hundreds of us together, holding the breath against anger, change position with the quarreling partner, staring the neighbor in the eyes, hugging and loving unconditionally unknow people around us...

After the lecture, the second phase has really come to an end.

I drive with Gaia to Essen-City to see again Lukas' racoon-exhibition. We eat falafel and in the little restaurant we meet Vicky, who even remembers my name!

Gaia and me then drive to Cologne and Gaia leaves me her car for a couple of days because she leaves for Barcelona. The next morning I take her to the airport.

Workshop Diaries / Phase 3 / 14.-22.3.2023

14.3.2023

I'm sitting on the train for the Düsseldorf airport. From there I will take a flight to Athens with the other members of the performing class of Marina Abramović and Billy Zhao and from there we will take a bus to Karyes, a little town in the southern part of Greece within the Peloponnese peninsula, about 40 km North-East from Sparta. This evening we will join Marina and Billy, who are already there, will have lunch together and tomorrow we will start the *Cleaning the House* workshop.

The hours before the departure have been stormy for me: yesterday I was around the city till late, only then I could deal with a lot of bureaucratic stuff and e-mails and only around midnight I started shaving, dyeing my hair, etc. Belendjwa also told me at the telephone that he doesn't want to date me anymore, just like that, and makes me a lot of accusations that I find unfair. I'm surprised, sad and hurt. [...] But I don't let it take me down now and spoil the spirit of excitement and the enthusiasm for the journey to Greece. I wake up very early to pack up, unfortunately not with the necessary calm. I say goodbye to Christian with a kiss, he wishes me a good journey and says that it will be a wonderful experience. [...] When I leave my flat there is already the sun and a fresh spring air. I buy the ticket for an intercity train, to be sure to arrive in good time in Düsseldorf.

In the airport I met first Fred, then at the check-in desk Smila joins us, cheerful as always. It feels very pleasing and natural to meet all the others from the group, as if there was no pause after the last working phase. On the plane I sit next to Fred, I fall asleep and he hugs me. Then we chat about this and that, future projects, art, his date with Philippe Jaroussky, ... We get a rustic snack from the Greek airline. To our left there is a very funny little girl who smiles at us all the time and plays hide and seek with Fred.

I'm looking very forward to abandoning myself to complete silence and meditation, to purifying. Yesterday, five minutes before reaching Tom in the room 315 of the Musikhochschule, I sat at the desk in the Cafeteria and Claudia shortly passed by to pick something up – she had been for long time in hospital; in a three-minute conversation we catch up on our lives. We have little in common, but when I meet her in the Cafeteria she radiates calm and kindness. I tell her that I'm leaving for Greece for this workshop, where among other I will fast, and she says that it will be great: she does sometimes retreats and fasting that she find regenerating.

Yesterday afternoon took place a little drama in the performance group: two members informed the university about the contract we had to sign with the Marina Abramović Institute and made a big fuss. I didn't follow the whole story – had no capacity yesterday for further thoughts. Marina felt betrayed in the trust. These people will not join the workshop in the end. That's a pity for the group dynamics, but it is not possible to discuss every single thing, it's exhausting. I had no energy to take a stand. I let myself go and trust Marina and Billy.

Once landed in Athens, there is a Mediterranean climate with 14 degrees. We collect our bags; Wayne is there to wait for us at the arrivals. Then also Gaia and Gloria land with other flights. We buy and eat some bananas and apples. With two little black buses we set off to Karyes. On the bus I sit next to Klara and we exchange confidences about ex boyfriends, Greece, shows and concerts... When Camillo and Konstantin start playing with water I

comment “there we go...” (I mean: with homoerotic tensions) and Klara asks them for me to do again the number of exchanging water from mouth to mouth and tells my, complicit, *bitteschön!* Then we all play Truth or Dare, which is something that really unites the group and paves the way to sometimes really intimate conversations. We end up talking about our expectations, fears, need, etc. related to the workshop. We should have recorded or noted this, it was such a dense conversation – instead those words will remain lost on an unknown highway in the Greek hinterland.

We arrive in the dark in the new Greek headquarters of the Marina Abramović Institut, a huge building, former hotel, that the institute bought for a very reasonable price. Marina and Billy welcome and hug all of us. We also get to know Thanos Argyropoulos of the MAI institute, who prepared the building for our arrival and speaks very softly with an incredibly rich English vocabulary.

In the main hall a simple but very tasty Mediterranean dinner waits for us, prepared by the women of the village, with chicories, chickpea soup, aubergines, savory pies, ... all tastes that remind me the Apulian cuisine of my grandmother and I ate in my childhood.

Marina then holds an introductory speech and gives us practical instructions for the following days. Then we sign the certificates that she will give us back at the end of the workshop, we make our last phone calls (family and Christian), we leave all our clocks and phones in a box, I make a last very short updating-chat with Gaia, then we hug and wish all goodnight and go to our rooms (the rooms were divided by random drawing). I’m in a room with Fred, Moonjoo and Janina. “Goodnight” is our last spoken word.

15.3.2023

I don’t know what time it is. I slept like a baby. Marina woke us up by ringing a huge bell. There is a beautiful light in this village in the Peloponnese. We all meet downstairs in the big hall. Nobody is speaking anymore, except Marina and Billy, very softly. We then go out in the courtyard. We do some warm-up exercises to let the energy out, we run, jump, shout. Outdoor, without jacket, short after the sunrise, in the nature. You can hear an incredible concert of birds, dogs, roosters, sheeps, ... Then we go back inside and we have some time to go to the toilet, dress and drink some Greek mountain tea (a naturally caffeine-free herbal tea made from a single variety of the sideritis plant) – the only thing we are allowed to take except water and a spoon of honey, in case we get dizzy. We meet again in the big hall for the proper warm-up.

In the end there is no TV-troupe at all to film the workshop and also no photographers. Maybe it is better like this, for the effectiveness and intensity of the workshop, with no distractions, and for the group spirit, with no competitiveness and need to show off.

For the warm-up Marina shows exercises similar to those we did in Essen. Her problems with the knee ligaments got worse, so she can do less efforts than usual now, but still makes the work-out with us. We then prepare for a long walk in the nature. Billy and Wayne will guide us. I drink a tea out in the sun while writing these lines. Ten minutes alone in the sound of the nature. Then, back among the others, I’m surrounded by silent smiles and knowing glances. The five days of silence and fasting are promising. I feel a positive energy in this mild Greek winter.

We had a long walk in the mountains. I try to write down the salient moments now, back home, lying on the spotless white bed of our monastic big bedroom with wooden ceiling and stairs. Outside blows a strong wind.

While walking I accidentally broke the silence, a “thank you” addressed to Goa slipped out. At a crossroad we got lost. Leon has an harmonica with him and we start a kind of little jam session with body percussion elements.

We find a huge tree and make a sound ritual around it, while touching and embracing the tree all together.

Gloria writes here and there on the stones and rocks traces of our presence (a symbol, a signature, the date, ...) with a permanent marker.

Jakob builds a flower crown, Konstantin creates also a flower composition for his ear.

At our first stop in a little clearing, Wayne falls asleep.

We arrive to a brook with crystal clear water.

We make a long pause in a big clearing, kissed by the sun and caressed by the shadows of the clouds. We lie down and feel the contact with the earth. We all rest and doze off.

The communication is reduced to its essential: only gazes and gestures, nothing superfluous, no small talks.

We see two very long chains of processional caterpillars. One chain is made of 131 caterpillars – someone counted them.

Jakob makes us laugh by simulating a huge effort in breaking into two parts some rocks, which are in reality very crumbly.

During the walk we start hugging each other here and there. It’s our equivalent, now, of checking on the others and express non-verbally closeness.

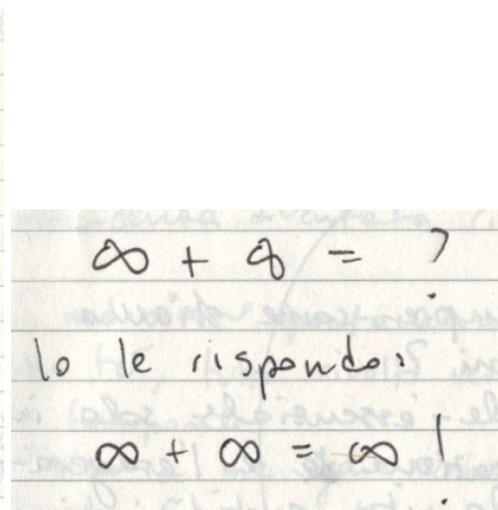
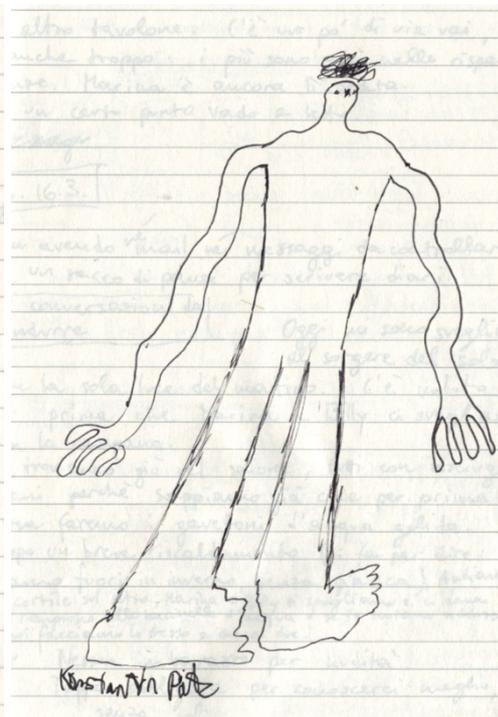
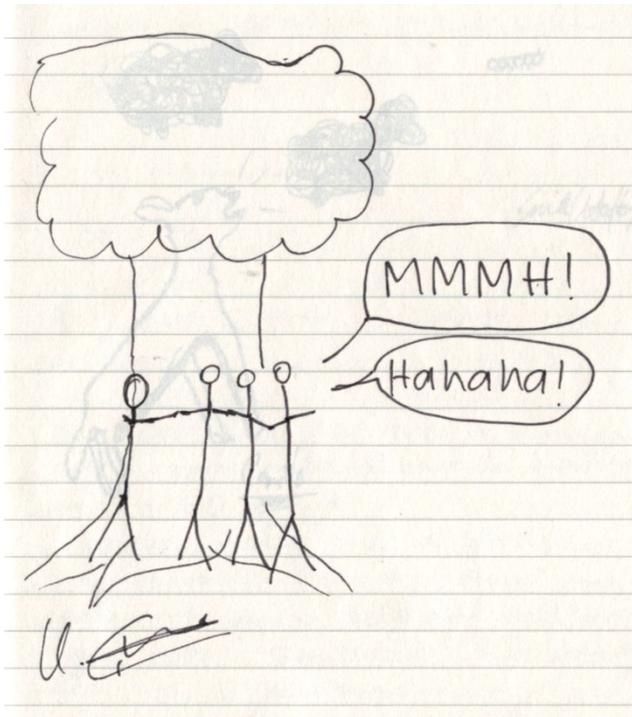
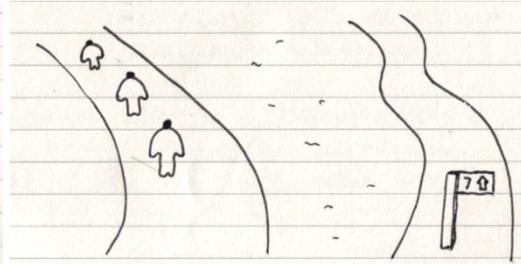
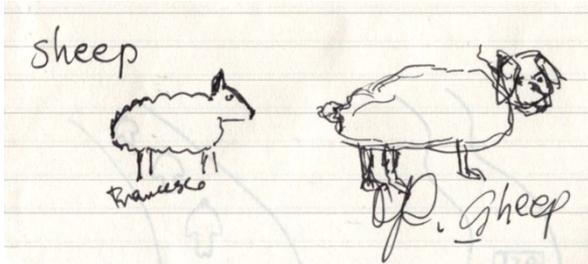
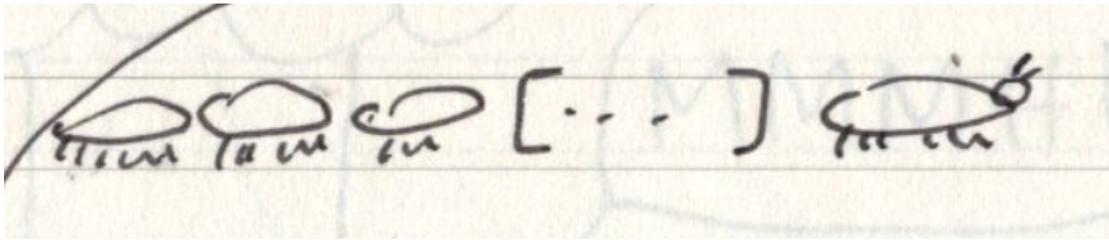
Right now I’m not hungry at all.

Some recurring thoughts: I should try to transfer the silence and the fasting into my everyday-life and try them with close people. I imagined the scene of a “mute holiday” with Christian in Venice. I also thought about furnishings for my new flat and about my professional and studying future: I’m not worried as I’m used to be, they are pleasant flashes of thoughts that I leave unfinished in order to complete them somewhen in the future.

Now I sit in the big hall. The sky clouded over and then a torrential downpour comes down of the sky. There is a surreal silence. I think about the relief from the weight of social conventions: here we don’t need to always say something to fill the silences. Just let something emerge from the silence. Open the senses. During this pause the sound of Jakob’s saxophone from far away reaches our ears.

Janina sits outside and looks at the horizon. Eleonora does the same from inside the room, symmetrically, sitting on a table. Smila writes while lying next to me. Florian and Jakob stretch on yoga mats on the floor and Gloria on another table, curled up. There are three huge tables of solid wood, each one in a recess in the front wall, and some more around the floor.

Little by little all the others come to the hall. The rain gets more intense. Then also Marina comes, wearing a shawl and pushing a little cart with things we need for the next exercise. We rearrange four big tables in the room for the first exercise of the afternoon. But before starting: I sit next to Marina and we start telling her and each other non-verbally what happened in the morning, using gestures and drawings (also on this notebook).



Marina presents me a written riddle:

$\infty + \infty = ?$

And I answer:

$\infty + \infty = \infty !$

And then she replies “Ah, now I know” with a smile.

First exercise: write our names on a white paper with a pencil in slow motion, without ever lifting the pencil off the paper. Duration: 1 hour.

Marina says: In the line of your names there is an infinite number of points. Inside one single name there is a whole universe.

We will repeat this exercise at the end of the workshop to compare the results.

After 30 minutes I’ve written only “Fran”, but then I speed up too much and at the end of the hour I’ve already written all my name and the first line of the “M” of my surname.

While doing the exercise I experience a dilatation of the time, the pencil seems to assume huge dimensions and weight in my hand, paralyzed by the time.

After the exercise: another pause, another tea. Marina, Billy and Wayne hang big blue, yellow and red cardboards on the walls: in the niches and along the corridors. We will need them soon for one exercise.

Why don’t we live always like we are living these days? Does it feel so special and essential to me only because I come from the saturation and the exaggerations of impulses of my everyday life in the city? Is it possible to live more than a week in this ascetical and spiritual condition? Is it regenerating only if there is a contrast to compensate?

In the meanwhile the sun came out. We take the opportunity to go out and do the exercise of walking backwards looking the world only reflected through the mirrors in our hands. This awakens different associations in me:

- Reality and the way or the direction we read it is only a convention, an agreement, a formality.
- My face (or even myself and my ego?) is an obstacle for the purposes of the perception of the reality around me. But I cannot eliminate it: my ego is omnipresent, I have to cope with it and eventually keep it smaller and give more space to the reality that I can glimpse through small openings.
- It is essential to perceive and recognize the position of the others, in order for me to orientate.

As soon as we finish and go back to the building, another storm breaks. Once again, the nature seems to coordinate with us – or we with its rhythm. These coincidences are becoming a ritual today.

We gather spontaneously in the hall, drink tea and all of us look out through the big glasses and admire the storm on the valley. Next to me sits Gaia, who draws and writes with the pencil of Traveler’s Company that I gave her for her birthday and that she shows me now with a smile.

Common stillness, shared peace, relieved waiting.

Some of us sleep on the yoga mats on the floor, some write, some read. Marina is here in the room, behind us at a table with a little notebook on which she writes. Dressed in black, but with a long beige wool sweater, eyeglasses with a big black frame.

I'm not hungry but very sleepy: I could fall asleep while sitting.

When I hear Jakob playing saxophone at first I regret that I didn't take the flute with me – is this again my need for visibility, since almost nobody in the group ever heard me playing? But now I put aside this thought and enjoy his playing.

The film crew of the public German television is not coming anymore. We fucked this up, as Marina said. But later on, in the evening, she tells that they have a money issue – which maybe is the actual reason why they didn't come – and that they are considering sending the woman director instead of the problematic old man. Maybe is better like this, that they don't come at all: the problems and possible rivalries are solved at the root. We will make some footage and photographs with our tools on the last days, after the workshop.

The darkness falls, I have no idea what time it is. Marina consults with Billy and tells us: for today we are finished, you did already a lot of physical activities – which is good against stomachache and headache. She recommends an hot shower before going to sleep. She tells something about documentation, which is important because we are the first group that uses the new home of the Marina Abramović Institute, so we will manage to find a way to do videos and photos, if not with the German ARD, maybe with a local crew.

I'd like to go to bed already, but I have a kind of closed-door syndrome and I'm afraid of missing something important that could happen in the big hall with all the others. At a certain point I go upstairs to have a shower with scentless soap, then go back downstairs in the common room. Moonjoo is doing stretching, Eleonora writes, Marina is also working at a big table. I prepare my last tea of the day, take a book and my diary and sit at another table. There is a bit of coming and going, but also not too much, most of the people is already gone to sleep. Marina still sits there. I go in my room to sleep.

16.3.2023

Not having e-mails to write, messages to check or conversations to conduct, I have a lot of pauses to write diaries.

Today I woke up at sunrise, with the shy light of the sun. It took a while before Marina and Billy woke us up with the bell. We meet downstairs in the hall, everybody took from the room a big white towel because we know that we'll have a cold shower outside.

After a short warm-up – so to speak: we are outside dressed light and it's winter, so it feels long anyway – we go to the clearing behind the building, close to a huge barrel full of water. Marina and Billy give us the example, undress and take a bucket each, fill it with water and pour the icy water on their head a couple of times. We are standing in a line and do the same two by two.

There is no embarrassment for nudity. I feel this is a kind of obliged step in the process of coming together, knowing each other better, without veils, intimately.

In a rush of enthusiasm, I stay there in the end with Camillo, Eleonora, Aleksander, Konstantin and Fred for a second round.

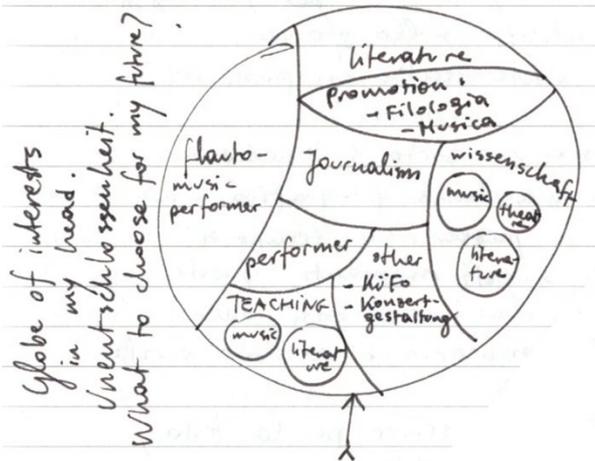
We go back inside, have warm showers in our rooms and meet in the big hall for the training with gymnastic exercises and stretching.

After that, in a pause, Marina comes to me and says: "I plan to give you as much space as possible in the catalogue of the exhibition for the diaries" – which gives me a bit of pressure and responsibility, but I'm honored to hear that. I'd like to take one week off, when we'll be

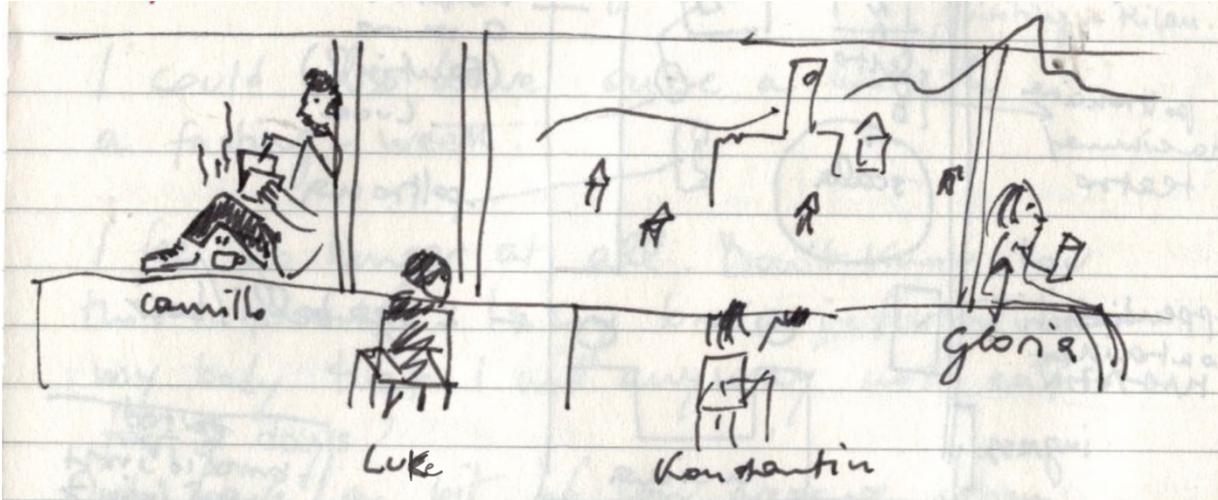
back, in order to organize the texts. Maybe in my new flat, where I could also reproduce this setting while working on them: clear mind, fasting, just a table, my diaries and the laptop to type them in. No internet. When the book will be published, I'll bring a copy to prof. Annamaria Cascetta as a present, when I visit her in Milan.

Thinking about fasting, I could also have once in while a fasting-week back home. I feel no hunger at all. I don't know how this is possible. Is my brain informing my body that I will anyway not eat for five days? I feel only a bit of low pressure when I move too fast. I try for the first time some honey – we are allowed to take a spoon of it to add to the tea when we feel dizzy. It's an explosion of taste.

In many free moments, and sometimes also during some long durational exercises, when I cannot stop the movies in my head, I get to think about my future, my interests, ... what will I turn out to be? How many things am I allowed to be at the same time?



After the warm-up in the big hall, it's a moment of collective peace. Everybody has a book to read or a notebook to write in the hand. Somebody sits also outdoor, under the pergola, with book, notebook or a cup of tea in the hand. In the background: the village of Karyes and the mountains of the Peloponnese.



Anaïs and Sophie are sitting inside with the feet on the radiator. I'm thinking right now that it is a blessing not to have a camera or a mobile phone, otherwise I would spend the time

making pictures of these moments, of these images, that now I must instead save in the memory or on paper.

How much music rushes through my head! I have my own playlists saved in my memory, a continuous flow. Theoretically I don't need any new musical input for many years.

At a certain point of the day the bell rings. We start with the next exercise: sitting in front of primary colors (red, blue, yellow) and stare at them for one hour each (so three hours altogether). There are huge cardboards hanging on the walls of the entire building. Billy marks the hours with the bell. Every hour we change position and color. I dive into the colors in this order: blue, red, yellow. The first hour seems eternal. The other two a bit less. Staring one hour long into the yellow is very difficult though. The colors start to shimmer and move after a while, sometimes I see a black hole, sometimes light-hieroglyphics emerge from the paper. My thoughts spin, they change direction at the speed of light. I start planning things, make calculations. I try though all the time to go back to the colors and stop to think. After three hours we feel pain in all the body. I personally see the light illuminating objects and rooms differently. Looking out into the nature with the light of the sun gives me the impression I can see with a double resolution.

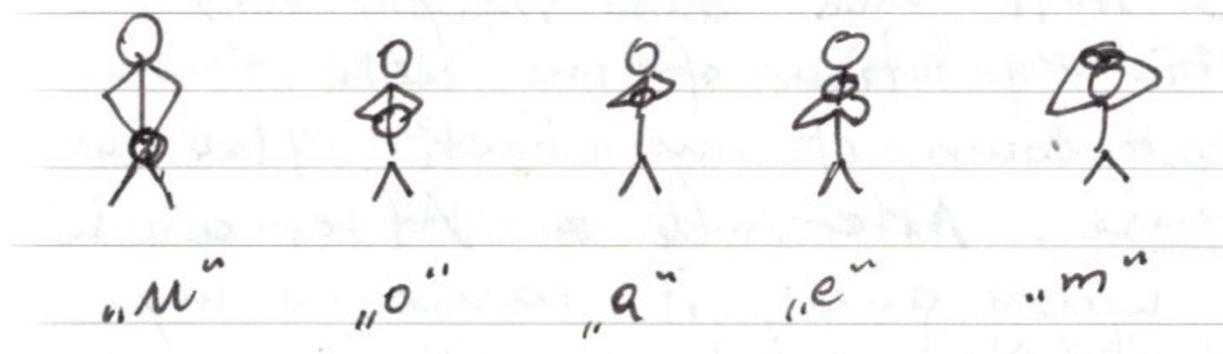
To recover from the muscle soreness caused by maintaining so long the same position, we massage reciprocally neck, shoulders and back with oils and balsams. It's a feeling of mutual gratitude. Another level of closeness reached, sharing the same physical state, contact of mind and body.

After this we go out. With sharpened senses we have two hours to go around in the nature, everyone for him/herself, and find two objects: one with a smell we like, one with a smell we don't like. I found these things:

- [I like] pine needles, pine cone and mushrooms: this combination is for me the smell of autumn, of a warm embrace when outside is cold, of freshness, of clean air, of the Nature breathing.
- [I don't like] unknown plant: acute, sharp and penetrating smell of an unwanted plant. I'm probably allergic to it.

When we come back we put all our objects on the table with a short description and show them to each other and go around smelling them.

Then we take yoga mats and do the sound-exercise of the Tibetans, singing the vowels and humming while touching different parts of our body for a very very long time, much longer than in the warm-ups in Essen.



The body resonating in itself and in the group was such a strong feeling. A couple of us were overwhelmed or even felt dizzy: we took care of them and brought to bed. We stayed in the common room and Marina started measuring our blood pressure.

Then she proposed a couple of exercises for the evening. In the end we did something not demanding for the body, but still very strong: blindfolded and acoustically isolated with headphones for construction workers, we spent a very long time like that (maybe one hour?), then Jakob started playing the saxophone, improvising. At that point we could remove headphones but remained blindfolded. Jakob went through all the building and among us. This 3D-sound effect gave me goose bumps. I could hear the sound moving, his multiphonics, his melodies like the quotation of the Egyptian Fantasy by Vincent Peirani and Emile Parisien, his more rhythmical stuff and also simply very minimalistic repetition of one note. A tear went down my cheek. The music was so intense: after a while having heard nothing, it came to my brain like a tsunami, overwhelming. Klara next to me was also crying. It was a very moving end for this second day of workshop. Some of us remain in the common room: Billy takes pictures of our found objects; Janina, Leon and me write; Klara and Konstantin hug on the yoga mats, then go out to the fresh air and Camillo joins them. Moonjoo and Julian are writing on a big table. Gaia comes down in her white pajama and embraces us to wish good night.

17.3.2023

I slept very deep but woke up again before the sunrise. I also went to the toilet – Marina would be proud: she always recommends to go to the toilet before the sunrise, to start the day empty and light – but with the fasting I had nothing to expel except water... Also the last meal we had on the evening of our arrival was not expelled yet. How is this possible? At a certain point I get dressed and go to the common room, make a tea and drink it looking outside. It's raining.

Not much later Marina comes and rings the bell to start the day.

First we go on the veranda and: shake; shake and make verses to let energy out; run while doing the same; jump and scream seven times; the breath in and out exercise (once in-once out, twice in-twice out, ... ten times in-ten times out – always with the same amount of air – and in the end breath normally and feel the energy through the activated body). I love it – I love the beauty of controlling my breath in different situations.

Then we do the cold-water-washing-ritual: through the back door of the kitchen, we go one after the other naked outdoor to the barrel in the backyard and pour a couple of buckets of freezing cold water on our bodies. Then we have time for a proper hot shower in our rooms. When I go back downstairs everybody is writing notes or diaries.

I feel my body awake and somehow synchronized with the environment – the same sensation I had as a teenager at the seaside. Full of live, with the senses at their peak of activation, almost a sexual pleasure being there and alive – but it has nothing to do with horniness, also because fasting reduces the libido...

Then we start the daily training: Marina leads it, we follow the indications and copy her moves on the yoga mats, a similar routine as the trainings in Essen. We start today by cleaning the nose. After one hour of work-out, breathing, stretching, etc., we have about one hour pause. I make myself a tea and sit next to Janina with my diary at a big table facing

outside. Everybody is keen on embracing: Alex just took me in his arms while I was making a tea. Also last night I took initiative with Janina, Camillo, Gaia, ... It's also a very valid alternative to say goodnight, good morning or all those rhetoric questions and small talk phrases.

Such beautiful "missed photographs" forming around me: on my left at the big table: Klara with a cup, Alex and Wayne with a diary facing outside, illuminated by natural light, sitting at the same table.

I'm feeling kind of hunger today for the first time, mostly while doing exercises.

I'd really love to have a flute with me and play some time.

I'm not reading books these days. I tried the first day, but first, I was too sleepy in the evening, second, I didn't manage to switch to another fictional reality. It felt like distracting me from the present. I cannot and will not lose any second of what I'm living here and now. There is already so much going on around me in this very privileged and precious group of soul mates – it's like in Boccaccio's *Decameron*: a group of young friends escaping the plague and retiring in a villa to tell each other stories – we are also away from reality and sharing a meditative and purifying alternative to everyday life.

For a moment it looked like it was snowing.

I hear once again the sound of the saxophone coming from the distance.

Marina sits close to the entrance door close to our smelling foundations from the wood on the big wooden table and reads a book. Fred is sleeping on the floor. Spread around the hall, the others are reading or writing.

Today will be the slow-motion day: we start with the gazing-exercise: we build couples by chance and will sit in front of each other. First 10 people sit and cover eyes and ears. Then the 10 people left draw randomly a name, but don't read it yet. They are taken blindfolded as well to the chosen ones. After a long time sitting like this, two facilitators come to one couple and remove at the same time headphones and eye-bandage.

We have a maximum of impact of the presence of the other person. At this point we had such a long time to dive into the soul of our mate. It is very demanding to hold eye contact for that long (one hour or more?). I was together with Gloria. Very strange phenomena happened: her face was surrounded by void. I concentrated on her eyes and the rest of her face got animated. I saw things that weren't there: a smile on her lips, a tear dropping from her eye, etc., but as soon as I millimetrically changed the view-angle, I saw her neutral face again. It was like gaining an insight into... the future? Like the portal-like forces that emerge from people and Donnie Darko can see in the film? Or did I enter and see the realm of possibilities? Looking into somebody's eyes for such a long time leads anyway in most cases to crying. It's simply emotionally intense and physically demanding. I projected into Gloria's eyes so much of my experience and tried to read hers out of them. People's noses were running, someone was crying – even sobbing – as I understood from the noises. At some point I perceived in the background a white figure coming in. It was Marina announcing the end of the exercise. The tension was released: Gloria and me hug, Klara and Gaia are still crying, most of us go out to the fresh air.

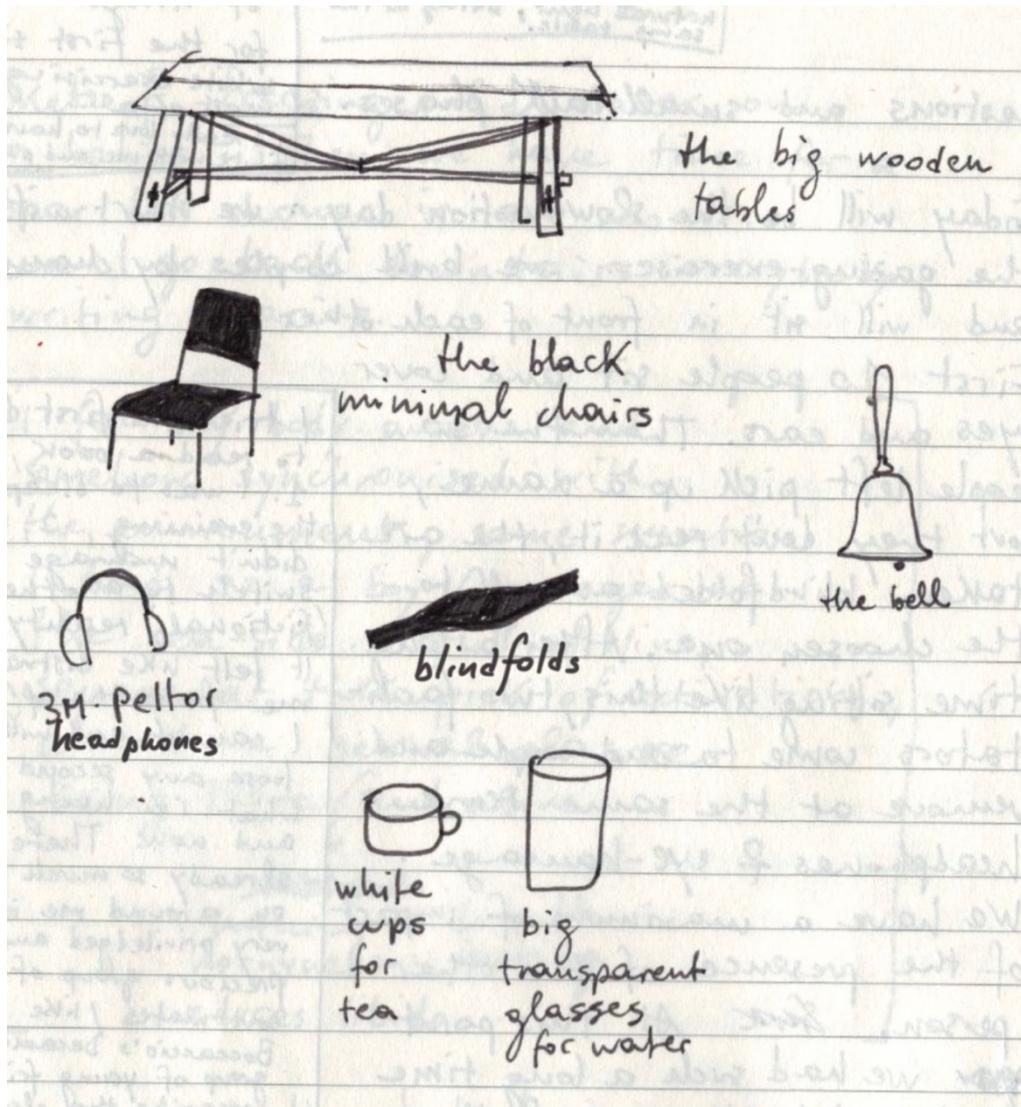
We have a pause before the next exercise. Many go to rest, many write or read, some of us lie down on the floor in the common room.

I come across Camillo after making a tea and he embraces me!

I write a bit close to the fireplace, then I get two yoga mats and lie down close to Moonjoo on the floor. I enjoy being half asleep surrounded by friends in a safe environment. My brain goes 180 km/h and in this frenzy I do follow asleep.

At a certain point I wake up and see Camillo sleeping – his face covered by a book, and Fred lying on a table and writing. Then I close my eyes again and I shiver while perceiving movements in the room or windows opening.

When I completely wake up, I find a message from Gloria next to me, that makes me smile and feel grateful: it's about our experience before, staring in each other's eyes. I will reply her later.

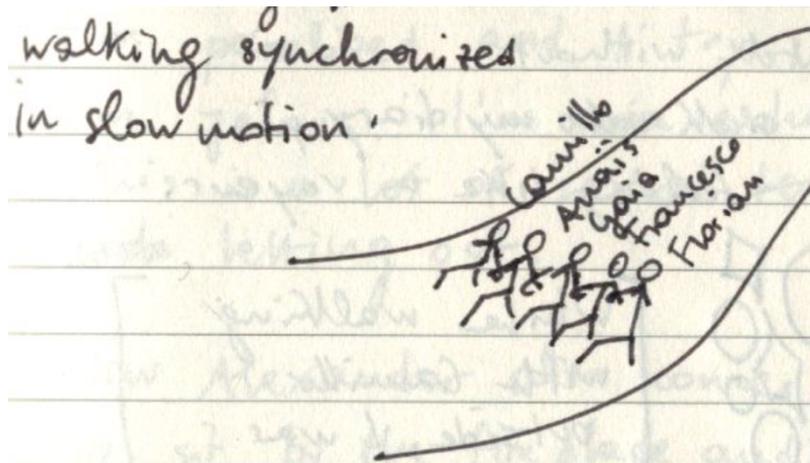


Marina rings the bell. We all meet in the common room and she tells us about the mind-blowing power of slow motion exercises. Going through pain, desperation, frustration, boredom, craziness, etc., somewhen the brain makes a click and you enter another dimension. This is why we are going to do the exercise of opening and closing doors for three hours.

It was very demanding. Physically but most of all mentally. I was on the brink of crying for desperation. It drives crazy not to know how much time is left. You learn the details of the door you are moving by hearth. I tried thousands of "stage entries" of my role and thousands variations of opening a door, thousands of body positions. I thought much less than by other

exercises. This physical repetitive movement kept my body and mind occupied. I heard people going crazy for real downstairs, screaming and starting to open and close the door frenetically. It was a concert of squeaky doors. When finally the bell rung, it was a liberating explosion of sighs, hysterical laughs, screams, ... My exercise-neighbors, Moonjoo and Camillo, opened up their embrace to me. For the first time I embraced Anaïs. Downstairs Alex gave me a neck and shoulders massage.

Marina said: no more exercises today, but all the rest we do this day should be in slow motion: walking, drinking, brushing teeth, peeing (?!), ... In the frenzy of my life, a slow motion day (plus of course fasting, no talking, no technology) will be for sure therapeutical. I start by drinking a big glass of water in slow motion, then I dress warm and go for a walk. In the veranda I meet Camillo and Florian, who signalize me that they want to come as well. We



go up the hill together and meet Anaïs and Gaia. The four of them simulate a Matrix or western-film battle. I “change team” and line up with the girls, then all of us build a line and we go arm in arm back to the building walking synchronized – still everything in slow motion.

Once arrived in the inner yard, Gloria is there and takes Anaïs’ place, Florian leaves the group, but we keep following him. As he turns, we stop spontaneously. This is the start of the slow-motion version of the statues-game (red light, green light). Billy sees us and makes a photo. In the end we catch Florian and carry him high in triumph.

Then we enter the common room and assist so a beautiful slow-motion choreography by Moonjoo and Fred. Simply sublime.

Then Moonjoo leaves and Gaia and Gloria join.

Fred, master of the party – and of flirting – “catches” people sitting around and takes them inside the group of moving bodies. He is like a hunter and the preys he hunted remain in his spider-web and create a new organism that moves at a slow pace. It looks like a chaste slow-motion orgy, with bodies twisting, touching, caressing, massaging. [...]

18.3.2023

The night was a nightmare. I had so much energy accumulated in my body. I could not sleep at all. It’s probably because of the slow-motion day or the unreleased sexual tension. I probably stayed awake in bed for hours, planning, listing things in my head, making mental notes. Then I came downstairs with my notebook and something to read. I might spend hours here alone before the new day. I make myself a nighttime tea with a spoon of honey. Janina comes downstairs as well to drink a glass of water, but then leaves again. I’m completely alone in the common room. Silence, cold, wind outside. I sit on the yoga mats with my night lamp. I was driving crazy in the room upstairs. I needed to move normally – no slow-motion anymore! – and fix my thoughts, plannings, drafts on paper. I’m freezing, but luckily I find a jumper here, no idea who it does belong, but I need to borrow it. Now it’s

6am, I know it from the tolling of the bell of the church. This means that the single, double and triple toll I heard, meant 1am to 3am and that I spent the whole night awake. Finally the sun starts rising.

Marina comes down and rings the bell. She has a blue and white Disney pajama bought in Thailand, that pairs with a pajama that Billy also has. Very cute together! We go out in the courtyard and do the warm-up, then to the back for the cold shower ritual, getting naked one by one in the row and pouring freezing water on us.

Then have hot shower and tea pause.

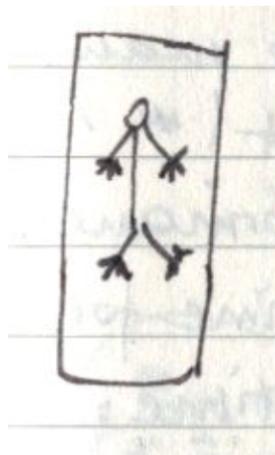
Marina comes among us unexpectedly (well not for me, because I saw her) with a mirror in the hand – she makes the “stop-exercise”, which consists in putting this mirror in front of our face for a few seconds, when we are supposed to stop anything we are doing and maintain the facial expression we have in that exact moment and observe it. It is unique because we are unaware that we are going to pause and observe ourselves, so we cannot prepare as we usually do in front of a normal mirror. Marina actually started already yesterday during the open-and-close-doors exercise to do it – that’s when she came to me.

We wait like this for the next exercise to come.

I have a mute chat with Goa about how we are doing. Gloria, Smila and Fred are doing a warm-up with a choreography on chairs. Marina is drinking tea and writing or reading notes on the big table close to the entrance. A group of people (Klara, Konsta, Luke, Julian, Camillo) are sitting and looking outside into the landscape with mountains through the window – it looks like a painting by Edward Hopper. The weather today is icy but sunny.

Today my stomach is growling loudly.

If I didn’t have this notebook, I would go crazy. Five days without talking articulately brings to an obstruction of the brain, that is about to explode.



We make the usual warm-up and a new exercise that Marina shows us to release anxiety: you have to lie down on your back and to perfectly stick to the floor with every limb and finger. Then take a deep breath and keep the air for 10 seconds. Then release the air explosively all at once. Do the same with 20 seconds, 30, 40, etc. The last round: keep the air as long as you can.

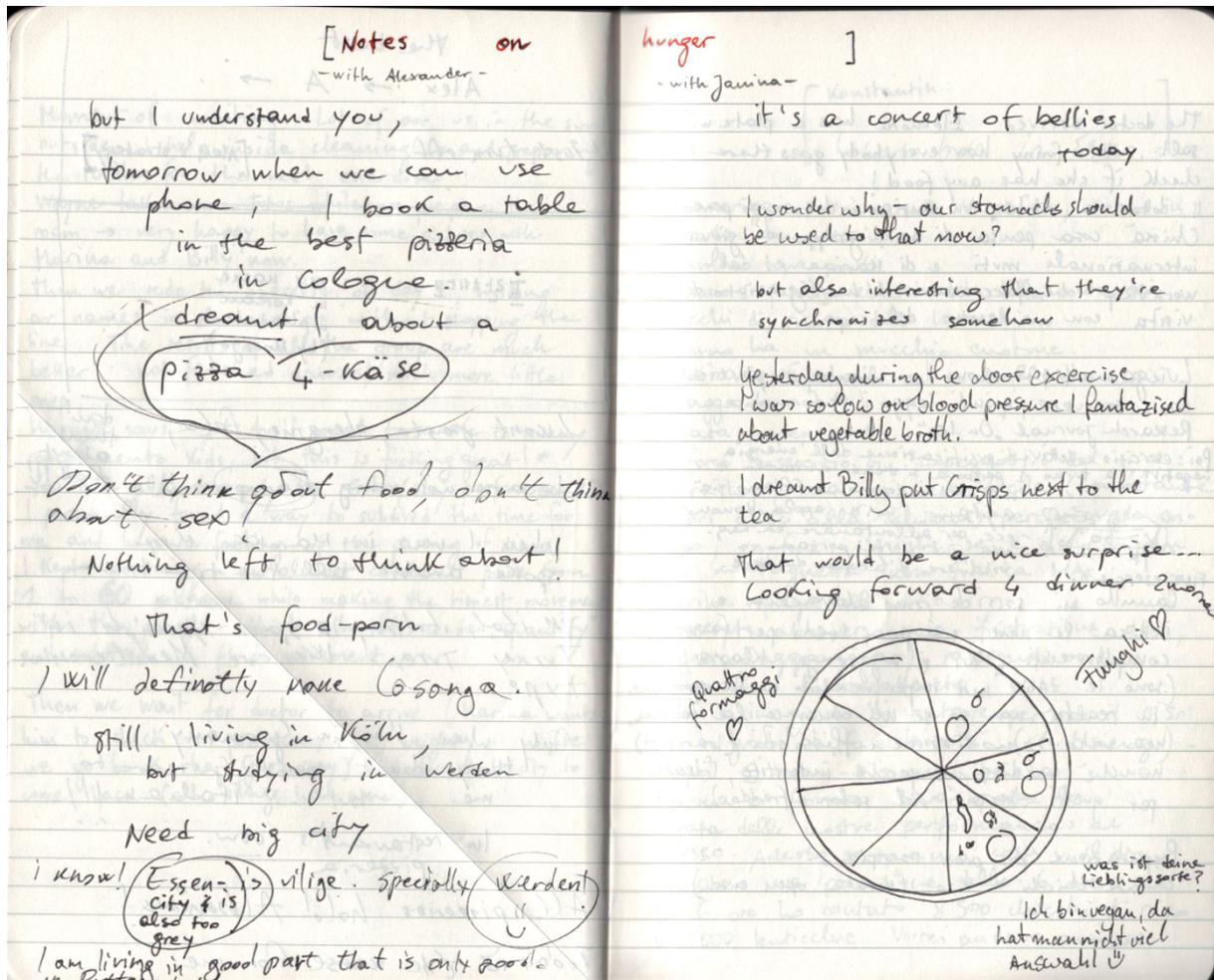
I leave Marina a little message on paper with ideas and proposals of things to do and shoot for the documentation the last days. Alex hugs me, Marina comes to us and comments: Italian-Serbian-connection. Moment of waiting. Lot of us sit in the sun outside. I help inside cleaning up and preparing the tables for the next exercise. Wayne

takes some photos during this: I’m so happy to have a photo with Marina and Billy now. Then we redo the exercise of the first day, writing our names in slow-motion without stopping the line. The results of all the group are much better: not finished names, much smaller ones, ... Marina says: “I don’t want to make too many compliments kids, but this is fucking great! You are almost ready for six hours/day performances!”

I personally found a way to subdivide the time for me and have a feeling of the passing of time: I kept counting in an almost constant pace from 1 to 60 while making the tiniest movement possible with the pencil – which allowed me to quantify and subdivide a fluid movement.

After the exercise we wait for the doctor to arrive. Marina wants him to check us all: pressure, eyes, weight, ... before we go back to Germany. We also wait for electricity to come back: there is none in the whole village.

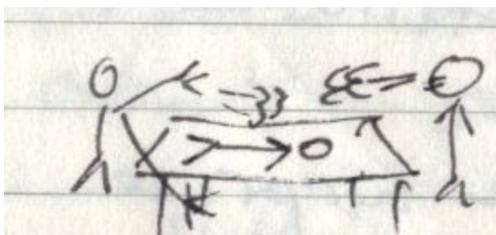
I have a short written dialogue with Alexander and Janina about food, that we are dreaming of:



The doctor arrived. Eleonora has a plate with salt. It's funny to see how everybody goes to her to check if she has any food on it!

The doctor visits us, he is an old man from the village. Who knows what he thinks about us, a group of young international students that stays mute all the time, about Marina and the workshop we are doing. I thank him for the visit with a nod.

The wait is long and I don't have anything particular to write, so I read the Performance Research Journal, the issue "On Ice".



After everybody went to the doctor, we do a new exercise: a collective purification of negative energies: taking turns, a person lies on a big table and the others of the group "blow away", clap hands, move the air, etc., in order to push away the bad energies of the lying person. When finished, the

“purified” person receives also a glass of water to drink. After we went all through this, we insist that also Marina, Billy and Wayne lay down for a round.

After the exercise Camillo smiles at me and hugs me and points at my shoes, I think to make compliments – then Klara does the same – they’re my new, black, little, very warm, bare foot boots.

It’s afternoon, there is a wonderful sun outside. We are in the veranda with Marina. Then we prepare the room for the next (in)famous exercise: counting and separating rice and lentils. Duration: open end...

The big tables are ready with a considerable mountain of mixed rice and lentils for each of us, a white piece of paper and a pencil. We are supposed to count the grains of rice and the lentils and separate them. No other indication.

Maybe this is the most challenging exercise of the workshop, but to me it feels easier than others – despite the pain in the back – because I can see a goal in it, an end – even though very very far away from me: the mountain of rice and lentils seems not to decrease, even though I’m counting since hours... it’s absurd!

Marina explains at the beginning: “you will pass through boredom, frustration, hate – hysteria, I would add – and resignation. But in the end, you will accept it. Those who are able to count rice for hours, they are also able to ‘do life’”. We started with the sun and it is already dark outside, when Marina stops us, after six hours. This will be the duration of our performances in the museum. Now we know what it feels like, we have a kind of familiarity with doing a task for six hours without pauses. In six hours I counted 8.500 grains of rice and 3.000 lentils. I would keep on counting, like Janina is doing, but I am very tired and I would not like to be seen while doing it. Maybe tomorrow before the sunrise. People have very different reactions to release the tension after the six hours. I do a bit of stretching and exchange some signs with Smila.

19.3.2023

I sleep very deeply and long. I wake up with the light, go to the toilet, brush my teeth and hear the wake-up bell. We meet as usual in the big room, where on the tables you can still see our heaps of rice and lentils from the previous evening. Then we go in courtyard for the morning rituals: warm-up and icy shower. It’s incredible how refreshing and invigorating this shower is! Now I’m sitting on the edge of the wooden bed in my room, waiting to have a warm shower. I feel light, in good shape like I wasn’t since ages, with open pores. The lethargy was washed away with the outdoor shower, the sun comes in from the window. I see also the mountaintops of the Peloponnese, covered with snow.

After the shower I go down in the common room, where Billy and Wayne collect the rice and lentils that we separated yesterday. Probably we will cook and eat it after the fasting. I make a tea with these leaves that I still cannot identify and put a spoon of honey inside. I start not to stand this tea anymore...

Then the daily work-out comes. After that we weight ourselves. I weight 65,2 kg after 5 days of fasting, but I don’t know how much I weighted before. Then we clean up all the building and put the tables in the middle of the room.

Alex sings baroque soprano vocalizes and among other the melody of Händel’s *Lascia ch’io pianga*, in the empty room. I shiver: music is so strong when you hear so little sound impulses the whole day and your senses are so sharp.

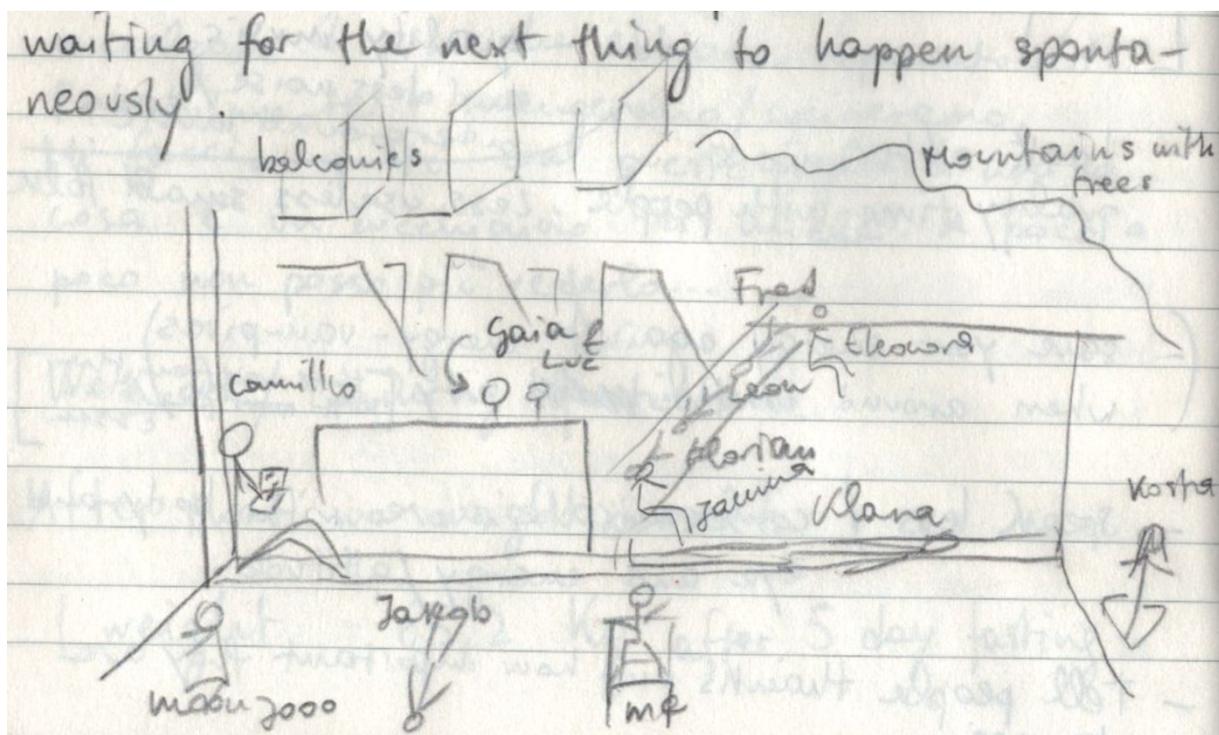
I think about what I will bring home from the workshop in everyday life:

- Detox pauses from food and technology now and then.
- The beauty in the sense of measure.
- When eating, only healthy and not exaggerate, e.g. only one coffee a day, but a really good one; generally: stay light. I like to feel the empty stomach, not to fill it up as soon as I feel the urge of eating.
- Less sound impulses: enjoy more moments of quality music and less noise and background music.
- Look after more quality time with people.
- Less useless small talks.
- Save my energy, protect it from the energy vampirismus when I'm around in the city (see first phase in Essen).
- Speak less but communicate more with body, eyes, energy, attitude.
- Tell people "thanks" and how important they are to me.
- ...

We sit or lay down on the veranda in the sun. Fresh air. In the meanwhile Marina, Billy and Wayne prepare the tables for the gold-ball ritual. Alex keeps singing and vocalizing fragments of various stuff (from *Norma*, *Traviata*, etc.) – he is very happy because we are going to eat again today. He also comes out and in, gives us massages, already breaks the silence-rule and we "psst" at him smiling.

I thought many times in these days about my family and Belle, our family dog – I'd like them to experience this peace and be free of thoughts.

It is so peaceful here outside with people I like and I shared so much with. It's out of the time, waiting for the next thing to happen spontaneously.



Billy is taking photos of us and of the landscape, I guess.

In the end we had no other documentation, but we'll shoot something ourselves tomorrow. Better like this, having done the workshop for real and not pretending or posing for the cameras.

While waiting, Marina said: "For the dinner tonight – prepared again by people from the village – I want you to dress well, man shaved and girls with lipstick!"

Marina then rings the bell. We sit along three tables. First thing we do is to peel a big almond each and eat it. It's an explosion of taste. I never realized in my life how crunchy, tasty, satisfying and essential an almond could be.

She then explains the next ritual, of the gold-ball. It comes from Tibet.

This is the recipe:

7 almonds, 2 or 3 white pepper, 2 to 4 black pepper, 7 coriander, 1/2 teaspoon honey, 3 drops of water, 1 golden leaf.

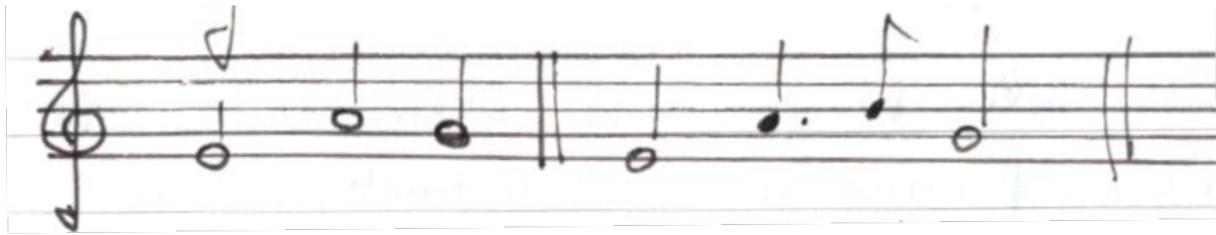
We only have one mortar to crush the ingredients, so we prepare the balls in groups of four people. After crushing, each of us rolls the dough into a 24-carats gold leaf. It is eatable, the body just expels it. With this precious ball in the hand, we go out in the nature. We have two hours time to listen to nature and to celebrate the end of the fasting with a precious ball, that we are supposed to taste slowly and blindfolded. The sky has no clouds at all today, the Greek winter turned mild again, the sun shines. I go up the hill to the church and meet Gaia on the way. I help her to blindfold, then find a sunny spot for me, blindfold myself and enjoy this unique moment. Eating literally gold! The ball is little but incredibly tasty – ten times stronger than the almond. Nature is around me, I feel mostly the sun. Some noises come from the city. I cannot avoid thinking about things I want to talk to the others and Marina about. I hope we have enough time the next two days left in Greece.

The final ritual.

Marina rings the bell. We go inside, where white bowls wait already on the tables. Marina sits at the front with a huge pot full of boiled rice covered by a white towel. It smells so good! We sit patiently and wait for the last of us, Smila, to come back from the walk. Marina introduces then the last ritual: we will eat a little bowl of white boiled rice, with closed eyes, used or hands and in slow motion. "Rituals are about beauty and sense of community" – she says. We start. Simple white rice is so tasty, pure, white. There is something ancestral in eating it like this. My body is so thankful for this little bowl of simple food. I feel the others eating around me. I perceive movements and sounds. Slowly the group finishes. We open the eyes.

We are actually now allowed to speak, but nobody feels ready to break the silence yet. It's a sacred moment – so powerful and beautiful. There is a wave of people crying. I cannot control my tears and Gaia next to me as well. Marina is also crying, very moved. Konstantin sits in front of us, takes Gaia's hand and mine. In the meanwhile Billy distributes the certificates of attendance at the MAI-Workshop, which makes a very definitive feeling of an ending-ritual.

Instead of talking, Janina proposes very gently to chant together and starts humming a melody over and over, with little variations:



We take hold hands, each of us the hands of the neighbors, and start humming and singing all together, in a big crescendo. This is for me – and not only for me – the end. This is the most intense ritualistic and community feeling I have ever experienced. I cannot control my tears and sobs. Gaia and Florian hold tight my hand. After a while the chant spontaneously ends. Marina, with the face covered by tears, says: “I know you and I don’t, but I love you all – unconditional love also hurts”. That’s true: I’m also crying for the love that comes so freely from the group, unconditionally, and for the end of this amazingly intense experience.

There is no photo or video of this mystic experience. We are the only witness of the magic happening in these four Greek walls. But we still have two days of sharing and working together. We need to produce documentation for the catalogue, etc. For example, tomorrow we are filming the morning washing ritual and Konstantin wants to make single portraits of us frontal naked for a project of him and we need to film some exercises from the workshop, like walking backwards with mirrors in the nature or eating the gold-ball.

Some random notes. We get our electronic devices back. First thing I put my watch on – it’s so nice to have it back, it’s a Junghans Max Bill, Marina notices it and makes compliment for the elegance and simplicity of the design. Camillo as well and tells me also about the watch he took off from the wrist of his dead grandfather. Klara tells me I’m an handsome man! She starred at me two minutes in the sun. I love her sincerity and genuineness.

Marina tells us: “You are always welcome as artists at the Marina Abramović Institute”. Marina gave the last *Cleaning the House* workshop 10 years ago and doesn’t teach a class since 2002, so we are doing something very historical!

Once the ritualistic part of the day is over, the group slowly opens up to different activities. Some go to the village, some talk with Marina, some talk in little groups and finally comment also verbally the last crazy days.

Marina and Billy reveal us the waking up times of the last days: around 6-6:30am. And we usually finished the activities around 8-9pm.

Starting the phone again was ok. I thought it would explode because of messages, but in the end it was fine. It seems I didn’t miss any important deadline of bureaucratic stuff. But I still have dozens of e-mails to process. I won’t do it here in Greece though, but when I’m back in Germany.

I have a phone call with my mother, write with Christian, book a table at the restaurant Toscanini in Cologne for a pizza the day I come back, answer Belendjwa, who calmed down and is ready to have normal talks again, and had a short look to the photos of Sophia Hegewald of my final concert and performance for my Bachelor in Cologne – amazing pictures! Then I shave and make me ready for the dinner.

At 6:30pm we have dinner in the common room. It's a frugal but very tasty meal, like the one we had on the first evening, but bigger, prepared by the team of the restaurant of the ex-owner of this building, that used to be an hotel.

Thanos holds a short speech and tells us about the region: Karyes is the area of the old Sparta; there is a human-made pyramid on the mountain chain, but it's a mystery who transformed the mountaintop into a pyramid; we are in a natural park; there are a number of eternal plane trees, planted by the King of Sparta, Menelaus, around 1100 BC according to the legend.

I skip the soup and start with Greek olives and chicories: so simple but so delicious!

I remember when I was a kid in the school and I was learning about the ancient Greeks – there was a paragraph in my book about what they ate, it said among other olives and cheese – I was learning with my mother, who finds the combination exquisite and mentioned it often in the years.

Then I eat the peppers stuffed with rice and vegetables, the little frittatas and other delights of the Mediterranean cuisine. I eat only a big dish, then I'm already full. I only take a little bit of chicories – they're exactly prepared as my grandmother, nonna Anna, did. I drink a lot of glasses of water.

I think about the beauty of choosing not to eat junk food and drink chemical beverages and to rather wait long to reach a place where I can enjoy a little amount of very good food/drink – like my precious gold ball in everyday life.

I sit in front of Marina, who lost all of a sudden her voice, but still whispers us a lot of anecdotes. She eats first a bowl of soup, then she makes a composition of little appetizers of all the other courses on her dish – it looks like an artistical composition. Next to her sits Fred, on my right Konstantin and Camillo. We ask Marina to show us some photos with celebrities: Lady Gaga, Harry Styles (who Smila really likes), etc.

We talk about the changes we noticed in our bodies, for example how strange our voice sounds after five days of silence.

With Fred and Konsta we talk about "gay-radar" and dancers at the Folkwang, then I suggest Konsta for his portrait-project to find a private and intimate setting, where people can enter one by one without public.

After the dinner, we clean the tables and wash the dishes. I shortly show the photos of my concert *Crystals* to Gaia and Goa – who took part to it – and to Marina: I tell her about the ice blocks I used – because it was a thing also in our first workshop – and about the kind of long durational performance that Goa did with the melting ice cream.

Then we watch on a laptop the pictures that were taken with Konstantin's Camera during the last days and those taken with Marina's and Billy's phones. Then we talk a lot in the full group around the tables. In the end only a few remain there, I stay on the balcony and then inside with Konsta, Camillo, Klara and Gloria.

20.3.2023

I slept very deep, woke up anyway spontaneously at 6am with a feeling of fullness. I can feel the process of digestion going on in my body.

We hear again the waking-up bell, but today in a kind of holiday-mode: at 8am. We meet in the hall downstairs as usual. Marina still has no voice. Billy leads the warm-up outdoor, then we do the morning wash ritual. Konstantin films from far away.

I should stop to let me influence by thoughts of missed photos, imperfection or lost opportunities! And I should let me surprise by those that by chance will turn out to be perfect, even though it's only two of them in the whole life, that would be a good result.

Today we warm up inside under the guidance of Fred with his very good stretching exercises. Then we have breakfast with porridge made by Billy, fruit, nuts and honey. We eat in a big circle and start a very important feedback round, where everybody says something about the experience we went through. I transcribed most of it. I'm happy to enjoy and be proud of the others and what they say and thought about the last days. Since Marina is voiceless, she lets other repeat louder what she whispers, in this case Camillo speaks for her. She makes very big statements in between our comments, for example about being present, universal energy, thresholds in the performance art, etc.

After this we spend the day redoing some exercises from the workshop in a shorter version with the purpose of filming them: walking with mirrors backwards in the nature, the slow motion walk in the nature, ... I have a nice talk with Jakob on the way back about the possibilities of doing concerts with silence at the beginning (maybe using headphones) and about creating formats for workshops or journeys where one applies similar conditions of those we had in the *Cleaning the House* workshop: fasting, no talking, sharpening the senses and doing similar exercises but with sound and maybe setting time slots every day (e.g. one hour) for improvising. The setting would enhance the perception of music.



The lunch is very light but tasty: feta cheese, bread and chicories: amazing. After lunch I stay in the almost empty building and wait to talk with Marina. She sits with a tea in the veranda. The cat is going around and is very cuddly. Marina and me talk first about my diary performance. Because I showed her pictures of my concert *Crystals* and at the beginning of her class in November I talked about ice, she proposes another stage element: three blocks of ice containing a flute, some diaries and maybe pens. She makes a sketch of it. The title could change from *Tabula rasa. Diary pieces* to *Frozen memories*. Instead

of pens, it comes later to my mind, I could freeze in one ice block photographs of important people and moment in my life (like Marina had some personal photos on the stage of *7 Deaths* or like the Pina Bausch company did in *Der Fensterputzer*).

Then we talk about the catalogue of the exhibition and how it should be organized. She wants to give me some space to publish my kind of logbook of the workshop phases. I feel very honored but also somehow guilty and embarrassed towards the others. I will still insist, that we make a kind of collective diary, with quotes and sketches from everybody. While talking with Marina – she still whispers because she has no voice – so many connections come out of her very big luggage of experiences. She suddenly switches from a sketch (that she does on my notebook with pencil – “I like pencils – she says – because you can erase them”), to a big statement about life, to showing me photos from her phone about a project

or a book coming out soon (right now she is working on three books: *Nomadic Journey and Spirits of Places*, *A visual biography* and our catalogue). She drinks a tea out of a honey jar containing some last rests of honey: so that we don't throw anything away – she says. The team of people who design and write for the catalogue are going to come to the exhibition in Essen and stay with her in an apartment of the museum. Gaia takes a perfect picture of me and Marina talking – I'm so thankful. Happy after the talk with her, I go up to the hill where people set up for shooting Jakob's idea of the concert played in concentric circles for a lying or sleeping public. I luckily find a free bed.

So I lie in one wooden minimalistic bed of the circle on top of the hill. White sheets and pillows are taken from our rooms. On the bed next to me on the right there is Janina, left Moonjoo. The blanket keeps the body very warm, the face is exposed to the very fresh air. Jakob starts playing. He moves in circles around us, that get bigger and bigger. The listening experience of the 3D-sound surrounding me and moving makes me shiver. Circle after circle he steps further into the wood and the sound becomes quieter. He also leaves gradually one of the twelve notes out. I fall in a semiconscious state, but not totally asleep. It's a divine sensation of security, comfort, torpor, connection with the nature. The auditive sense is still very sharp, my thirst of music is huge; the light caress of the breeze on the face, the natural landscape, the Greek sky at the sunset – that I glimpse through the mostly closed eyes – enhance these unique feelings.

We we're finished, we bring the beds back. Dinner is arrived in the meanwhile. At the big table I have very nice and long talks with Moonjoo, Konstantin and Jakob about a lot of stuff: astrology and the need of transcendence that people have, Christianity and Buddhism, competitiveness versus creativity, Hartmut Rosa's book *Resonanz*, the sense of life itself (giving love, sharing, being curious, ...?), capitalism, happiness versus content, ...

I phone with mom, who – as I expected – remembers the culinary pleasure derived from the simple reading of that history lesson when I went to elementary school.

As little dessert, while we clear the table, I eat with Florian bread, honey and cheese.

Klara is drawing portraits of each of us.

We go for a night walk to the village and on the way I have a long talk with Florian. We enter a little pub and fill it up. We order some Greek beer, cocktails and water and play a game: one after the other we ask "who in the group has done...? / will do...? / is...?" and everybody has to "vote" by pointing the finger a person, who he/she thinks suits the question better. At the question "who is the most romantic person in the group?" a lot of people to my surprise pointed at me. At the question "who is the easiest person to make a present to?" Fred pointed at me and Klara and said, he would give us of course a writing/drawing set. [...] At the question "who spends the most time for the morning toilet?" a lot pointed again at me because of my head-piece video – but I protested and objected that it was only a 7 minutes video and all laughed. Then came the question: "who of the group do you have a crush on?" which caused some embarrassment, so I suggested to change it into: "raise your hand if you have (had) a crush on someone of the group. I personally raised my hand. A lot of others did as well. At the question "who ate the most honey?" everybody pointed at Camillo – very funny. It was a very funny and open session of talks and games. On the way back I have a long talk with Gaia about Belendjwa and Lukas. Once arrived back in the big hall Fred, Janina, Julian and me talk about polyamory. Then we go to bed. [...]

21.3.2023

I went finally really to toilet before the sunrise, first time since the arrival in Greece.

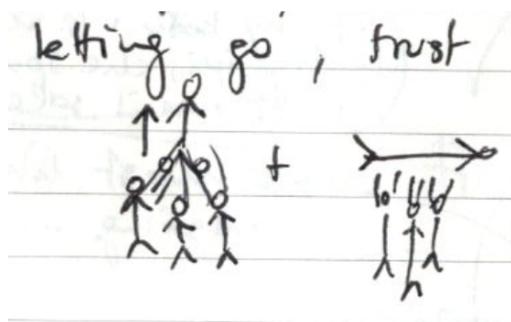
At 6am I go downstairs. The very first lights are coming out. I listen to the conference of the Greek birds. I'm writing using an emergency light on a big table. Fred is also here downstairs. Then, at 6:30am Billy comes down and rings the bell.

We go outside for the awakening and coming-together warm-up. Then have our ritual of the cold shower. Jakob takes some pictures with his camera that turn out to be very nice, some of them even surreal and poetic.

Then we do the photo shooting for Konstantin's project. The setting he chose is on the top of the hill, with the forest in the background. One after the other we go naked up to the hill, directly after the shower. Before me there is Sophie, after me Camillo. Konstantin did not expect that we all go fully naked without towels. As he will tell us later, he took inspiration from Rineke Dijkstra for these portraits, in particular from the photos she took after swimming, an activity she had to do to recover after an operation – in those photos you can see exhaustion on her face, still wet. He wanted to immortalize how we look like at the sunrise, right after an icy shower, naked in the nature.

For me taking part to this photo shooting, being completely naked in front of the camera for Konstantin's project, means working on my body-acceptance and empowerment. It's a challenge: I've never been photographed by anybody naked, without any control on the result, armless, freezing – right after the cold shower outside in the nature. It's about accepting me as I am, with my imperfections or with things of my body I'm not comfortable with. In little it is the same topic of Fred's performance, *The yellow shoes*. (There is one thing I actually really like of my body: my freckles on the face that come out with the sun!)

After going back inside, having warm shower and dressing, I go downstairs in the kitchen and help preparing the breakfast: I cut the fruit while chatting with Billy, Florian and Jakob. Billy asks us about our next projects and trips. I talk also with Eleonora about analog cameras and developing own films, as she does. I should try at the Folkwang campus: "Ask Olaf!" she suggests.



Then we do the proper warm-up, under the guidance of Fred. Today he lets us do very poetical exercises and choreographies about falling, rising, letting go, trusting the group, support, ... After that Marina thanks him and he is visibly moved.

While sitting in circle for the breakfast we start talking about organizational stuff for our time in the museum and the next steps to go through. Marina

says (today whispering to Jakob, who repeats for the group aloud) that she sees the workshop we just did in Greece as a necessary step for us in order to be able to cope with the 9 days of performance in the museum. At a certain point Alex makes a question: "Do we have to fast during those 9 days of performances?" – Everybody overreacts: "No way!". Marina answers: "I will certainly not! No, actually this is a good question about the preparation and what to do in the spaces in between the performances, in the evening, before starting again the next day. So: you cannot go to parties, you cannot just have a normal life, you have to be in this capsule, you have to go home, you have to eat, you have to

rest, take long showers – we will write you a big list of all the things to do or not: no alcohol, minimal sex – from sex you lose energies. Sex is really good, I'm not against sex, but not during the performances, because this basic sexual energy is the same energy we use for creativity, love and all the rest – so we have to preserve this energy to perform. Now, that the workshop is finished you should have as much sex as possible. Doctor Abramović's advice!"

The museum sends us two drafts of the poster, one with Janina immersing her face into the aquarium, one with Aleksander peeling potatoes. We hope they will still consider, as promised, to do other drafts, maybe more representative of the group and the collective work, with the photos that we are doing in these days in Greece. After breakfast I help washing the dishes in the kitchen.

We spend the day making videos and photos. First Konstantin films the door-exercise. In the meanwhile I have a short talk with Smila, Janina and Camillo about John Cage. Then we go out and Konstantin shoots "my" idea for the poster: a kind of re-make of our morning washing-ritual. The posing group consists of Camillo, Fred, Jakob, Janina, Gaia and me. ...so we get to do another – the very last – cold shower together here in Greece. We make a couple of try outs for the coordination, then get naked and shoot the proper Photo. After that Camillo shouts into the Valley at our feet: "We are naked in the nature and proud!" And indeed I'm proud also of me managing any kind of shame, feeling very calm and comfortable naked outdoor with friends. Also there isn't any sexual component or connotation at play. After this I have the first hot shower using shampoo and shower gel, have a talk with Janina about "last days", go downstairs, Konstantin smiles while coming to me, hugs and asks if I want to shoot with him the eye-gazing exercise outdoor. Of course I do. I join the group and sit in front of Alex, as he asked. After shooting I go inside and help preparing the room for lunch. Our pretty empty and spacious common room. Some people are shooting a video with Gaia by the church. Konstantin shows us already some amazing pictures.

Then we have lunch all together. Marina gives an Ukranian Shirt to Jakob, it was a present, but it is way to big for her – and I think not minimalistic enough to be wore by her... Marina asks me to get closer and reveals me the plan for a surprise: at 4am the next morning, just before we all live for the airport, she and Billy will come out of the bed in the blue Disney pajamas to say goodbye and take the group photo that I proposed to shoot some days ago on a written note I gave Marina. I clean the dishes with Julian, Janina and Leon.

Klara invites me to sit in front of her on the low wall of the porch, after Jakob. She is drawing portraits of all of us. They're so beautiful, and it is amazing to pose in front of her and see her smiling and concentrating while drawing.

Then I have a walk in the village alone. It's the first time I see it in the daylight. There are a lot o dogs running around and exploring. One also came a couple of times to our place and is very confident with us. We caressed it last night before the beer. It's the village dog.

Right now I'm sitting in a café with a beautiful view over the valley. It's called "Savas". The bar keeper started a small talk: where are you from, how long are you staying, Ah from Italy – "una faccia, una razza": we are very similar! Then he makes me a very tasty Greek coffee. So

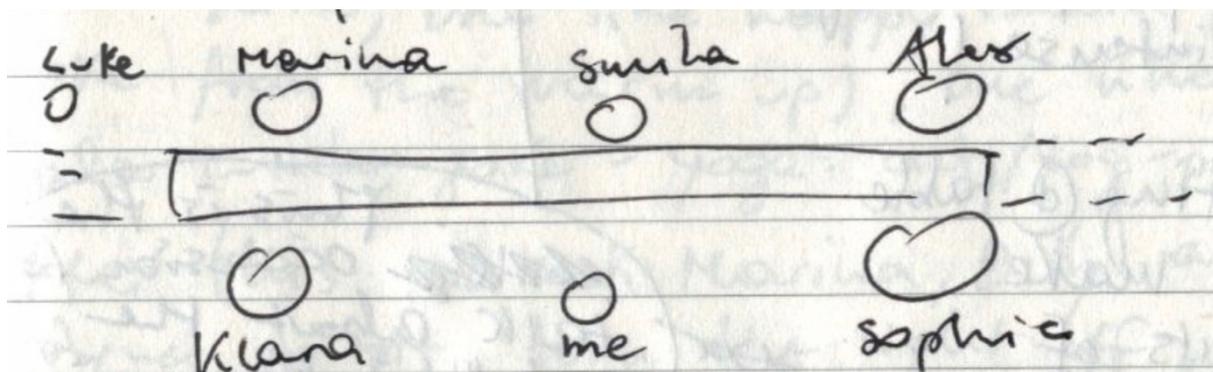
tasty. The first coffee I drink in the last two weeks. And the only possible to make – he said – because there is no electricity in the whole village right now. I also took a piece of orange-pie. Also an explosion of taste, also the first sweet since weeks, with such a soft consistency, such tasty and bittersweet oranges. Perfect with the coffee and in combination with this place, this completely empty café, a lot of space but still cozy, with the fire burning in the fireplace, the village people speaking Greek in the background out of the door.

I send some pictures I took “backstage” of Camillo and Konstantin talking with Marina and write to my friend Elena Bray about the workshop. She just wrote me that she’s been reading the autobiography of Marina I gave her for Christmas and how therapeutic it is right now for her to read this book. Elena said that I have a connection to the world’s energy and I can feel which book people need in certain moments. It is a nice coincidence that I got her message right here in Greece, when I’m spending time with Marina.

On the way back I meet a group of us. Gaia insists that I stay with them. I finally manage to talk a bit longer with Leon. There are also Jakob, Camillo and Julian. Someone tells me that in Karyes live 250 people and the price for which Marina’s Institute bought the building, that Marina defined “very reasonable price”, but I estimated to be much lower. We scream in the valley the name of Gloria – we see our building, maybe she can hear us. One fraction of second after we shout, the bell of the bell tower next to us tolls – as if it wanted to answer to us. I talk a lot with Jakob and Janina about my job in the radio and about giving music lessons. With Camillo we talk about honey (see the game yesterday in the pub) and he asks me about my final concert *Crystals*, with the ice block – he is very interested and I show him some pictures.

Around the city we see abandoned car parts but placed like sculptures, somehow melancholically poetic. In one abandoned building made of stones there is a huge, spotted, silent and majestic dog that keeps watch.

We enter a little market. The woman at the check-out is so sweet and elegant together. She says goodbye and thank you in Greek, but with great dignity, modesty and the simple elegance of a woman who spent her life in a village and welcomes foreign people coming from very far away into her little shop. I buy some Greek honey – and make a joke with Camillo- apiarist: I tell him he can advise me on honey! I buy also Greek honey-sesame bars, one of which I will later give to Goa, who was very happy of it. I wanted to buy the herbs for the mountain tee, that we used to make tee all these days, but Jakob bought the last package. Then we enter again the café where I’ve been shortly before. Lot of us. We order something but have not much time to spend there because dinner is supposed to arrive at 6pm at our place. I take another Greek coffee and taste the Greek Yogurt with honey and walnuts from Jakob and Camillo – they spoil me! – and talk with Julian about teaching music. Camillo asks again about my final recital, how I came to the idea, how I financed it, where I took the ice from, ... On the way back I walk next to Gaia. We have to hurry up a bit to meet the cooks of our meals and thank them – so we challenge ourselves: who arrives first? We meet in the big hall the owner of the restaurant (and ex-owner of the hotel), his wife and little kid and a old woman. They’re sitting at a table and talking with Marina, who introduces Gaia and me to them as “gli italiani”. We thank them for the Greek delicacies, light but incredibly tasty, they prepared. When all of us are back, we give them a round of applause. I change clothes for dinner and put the white shirt on and some perfume. When I go downstairs everybody at one end of the table react surprised or with compliments, come closed and hug and smell me and I laugh – this reminds me the last scene of the book/film *Perfume*, where the protagonist gets eaten by the people attracted by his smell – and Konstantin says: “I’ll eat you later”. I sit like this at the table:



We talk a lot also with Marina, even though she still has almost no voice. She remarks that in the world there is so much shit and hate and it is so special that we created a space where there is none. So much love instead.

Klara mentions the new documentary that came out on Arte: *Die Kunst des Hörens* about the music project she did in Frankfurt.

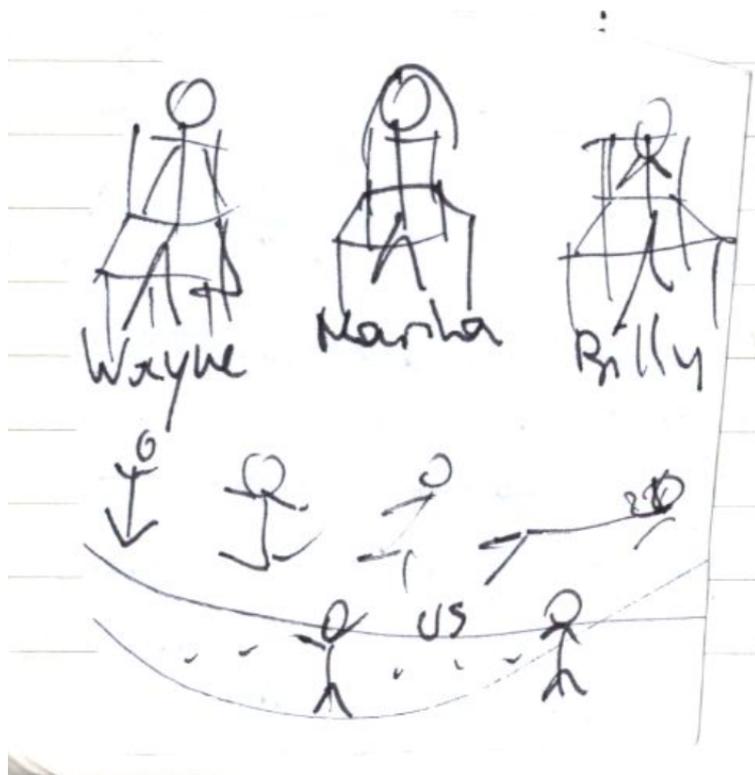
Marina tells us about some more anecdotes from her crazy life. “I could listen to her for hours – comments Luke – like a podcast”. For example, she tells about a project by the artist ORLAN who planned an operation and created a huge new nose as implant inspired partially also by Marina’s big one. The project turned out to be impossible though. “Beauty is temporary, ugliness is forever” – she adds.

I talk with Klara about emotions, closeness, casual sex, ex-boyfriends. Her eyes are so beautiful, a huge door to her soul. She is so intense and without veils, also when she is not performing!

While sitting at the table, Klara makes two portraits of Marina. In the meanwhile Gloria offers cookies as dessert. Marina while posing says: I also want one! I put one biscuit in front of her and she does not resist the temptation to eat it. We laugh and she tells us about the three Marinas, her three personalities that coexist: the spiritual one, the energetic one (warrior) and, finally, the bullshit one. The three of them exist in her and all of them are very important; she gives also space to the last one, she is also very important. She is the one who just ate the cookie.

After dinner we sit around the table and watch on Billy’s MacBook the Photos and Portraits that Konstantin shot during the day. We choose some to send to the museum for poster and advertisement. I think there are some pearls: Moonjoos’s portrait naked jumping with the forest in background; “my” idea of the six people having icy showers pouring water from the bowls; even a photo of mine was chosen that Jakob did during the cold-water ritual in the morning. A very magical surprise for me! You don’t really see my face, only one fourth, but my hair is “extended” by the water jet falling and creating long-watery hair.

After this we shoot group pictures, joking with the concept: first in three rows, one of people sitting on the floor, one sitting on the chair and one standing. One version serious, one version like happy babies (insider joke from our warm-up), one like dogs (also an insider joke from yoga positions of cat and dog). After this we ask Marina, Billy and Wayne to sit, we turn the light off and make spontaneously a “cleaning-energy” ritual around them and Gloria then puts a chocolate bar in their hands. I’m so grateful that Gloria thought about this little gesture. It’s a very little symbolic present from the little market shop, also a bit ugly with the huge Nestlé logo on them, but in their hands they look like treasures, and they’re so happy when they open the eyes. Wayne says that chocolate is one of his strongest addictions. We



make a huge applause for them, expressing all our love and gratitude. Then the three of them make a kind of speech. Wayne tells us about the first encounter with Marina and Billy at the airport last year and how they bought a currywurst for him and how Marina – who he just met – tried to feed him with it, while he was driving the car from Frankfurt to Essen, just pushing the wurst into his mouth. Collective laugh. Billy expresses his gratitude and says how happy and motivated he was to wake up every day and work with and for us, even if it was really a lot of work, he always started the day with a smile! Marina says that she wants to adopt us all – our parents should

fill a formular. She is still without voice, whispers in Billy's ear and lets him repeat aloud. She then tells again how difficult the world is and how much love in contrast we were so lucky to share there in Greece, how much unconditional love and protection, care and being taken care of, creating a safe space. She thanks Billy and Wayne for their support and hugs them. Then she gives us some very important messages and principles to follow, for example: be yourself, never be afraid, do what you believe in, follow your idea till the end, even though it sounds crazy: you can do anything!

She invites us to join the workshop again, whenever we need to “reset” and life has become too much in the next years. Previously she invited us to join MAI anytime as artists in the next years. She says that our show will be a success!

Among other stuff we, we discuss that we will spend the day-off, during the 10 days in the museum, Monday 3.7. when the museum is closed, eating and talking somewhere in Essen. She mentions, speaking of crazy ideas, some performers, like the one sending glasses per post after having made an insurance, to get paid back, and then exposing those broken glasses in exhibitions; the one who lets museums build houses for him, that he then collects, slowly building a village at expenses of the museums; the one taping bananas on the walls; but then she comments: “but we do different kind of art”. And that “we” means a lot for me. Marina also asks us what we we are going to do first when we get back home. She suggests another “exercise” that she used to do with students as well: take paper and pencil and start writing down every object you have at home – open every drawer and write every name: you end up with hundreds of pages. One piece of cloth you used maybe only once and keep in the wardrobe thinking you might need one day, is actually useless. Throw away, get rid of at least the half of these burdens, start new!

We also talk about our mindsets and expectations at the beginning of the course in November 2022 and now. Konstantin for example tells about a reverential fear he had in the beginning. And about our surprise that Marina spends *all* the time with us – somebody expected her to come at the most a couple of times on Zoom – and Marina comments:

“When I accept a job, I give 100% of me”. That’s why she resigned the professorship in Braunschweig – because she could not be there so engaged the whole time anymore. I find very funny how Wayne and Billy share without hesitation their chocolate with us, while Marina asks: “Is it ok if I have mine *all* for myself?” – with an ironic and voracious smile, like a young child or a funny grandma. Also funny is the fact that Marina tries to speak to us without voice and Billy has to “translate” – she kept picking a new translator among us the last days. Nota bene: as soon as we were allowed to speak again, she lost her voice! And as soon as we left Karyes on Wednesday, she got her voice back! Also funny that she demonstrates how bad her voice is by singing “happy birthday to you”: some basses of the song come out like sudden animal verses and some highs like very tiny and fragile whistles. How she laughs herself out loud while showing it to us!

We slowly spread in the building after this last big celebrative moment of togetherness. I help cleaning in the kitchen and wash the dishes with Camillo, Julian, Smila, Eleonora. Julian and Camillo perform, after *Mamma mia*, a rap song. Then we go packing and to bed. Klara goes out to fresh air. I was excited and wanted to stay with the others, but it seems that the common moment is over, so I reach my other flat mates in the room. [...] Very short night.

22.3.2023

The bell rings one last time at 3am. The prepare, leave the rooms, meet downstairs in the dark. Marina and Billy appear wearing their blue pajama. Marina goes out of the house and rings the bell like crazy in the night to call our bus. Then she insists in doing the group Photo as we planned: outdoor with torches, she and Billy in the paired pajama. We had no much time, but still she remembered and insisted that we take the other photo I proposed: each of us with Marina and Billy – but there is no time for all, so they do the selfie with me and then with Moonjoo.

Last hugs. Billy says thank you very sweetly.

Marina calls me “Francescović” after the hug.

Wayne tells me “grazie mille” in Italian.

In the night we drive with the bus to the Athens’ airport. From the night to the Greek sunrise. I sit again next to Fred. Caresses.

Nice group waiting and chats in the airport. On the plane I sit next to Janina and have a very long and nice talk about our studies and activities, the music we like and play, operas (a lot about *Don Giovanni*, that we both know very well), how we ended up in Marina’s class, the music job market, partners, ...

I also read a bit of the journal *Performing Research/On Ice* on the plane and I find Marina randomly quoted on page 30 about visible/invisible performing categories. These random epiphanies give me the dimension of what we are living. I show to the others around me the passage and somebody comments: “Yes, and we had breakfast, dinner and showers with her!”

At a certain point I hear somebody saying my name. They’re talking about smoking. Who saw me, Camillo? And I declare me “pleasure smoker”. During the dinner last night it also happened that my name was mentioned twice, first by Smila talking about the HfMT Köln and then by somebody at my left, maybe Gaia.

At the luggage claim and after in the train station of the airport in Düsseldorf: goodbyes and hugs. Florina invites me on Tuesday to a theatre piece with him and Klara in Cologne. With Camillo we promise that we will invite each other to our next projects. Klara has such an intense gaze also now saying goodbye...

I'm not ready to go home, talk with people in Cologne, answer e-mails yet. I put loud music in the headphones and look for a café to sit and write and order notes and diaries. But I'm also looking forward for the dinner with Christian at Toscanini, for the pizza quattro formaggi and the stories we are going to share.

[...] Christian booked two tickets for the film *Inside* by Vasilis Katsoupis, with Willem Dafoe in the main role. I didn't expect to see him, just discovered it on the poster at the cinema Odeon. He is a really good friend of Marina, see for example the videos they made together for *7 Deaths of Maria Callas* or the documentary about Bob Wilson's *Life and Death of Marina Abramović*. The I see at the cinema box-office the book *Ich fand Kunst doof und gemein* edited by Cornel Wachter, where there is also a text by her. This is the third coincidence, the third time today, after saying goodbye in Greece, that I come across her name or something strongly related to her: 1) *Performance Research / On Ice* (Routledge, p. 30), randomly read on the plane; 2) film *Inside* with Dafoe, chosen by Christian; 3) book at the box-office with her text about El Greco. [...].

At the restaurant I keep on telling Christian about my workshop experience and summarize it as follows. Am I a new person? Probably not, but for sure I learnt a lot that will change my habits:

- Communication/connection with people
- Sense of balance/measure, and related to that: senses at their peak
- Self-awareness of my body (nutrition, nudity, ...)
- Connection with nature
- Concentration/dedication
- (Ab)use of technology
- Times passes by anyway, no matter what I do, so I should have no worries or at least less worries.

I notice some differences after coming back from Greece:

- My body does not stand anymore all at once a pizza, two little beers and a glass of wine. What before was normality now is an exaggeration/intoxication.
- My body is much fitter, my muscles compact because of the one-hour daily training, even though it wasn't a hard workout (but also because of the life-style there, the diet, the balance with nature, ...)
- I'm overwhelmed by too many people, impulses, noises, voices, technology, talks, appointments, advertisement, writings, ... around the city. I do really feel the "energy vampirismus" we talked about in Essen!
- I have a much stronger need to protect me and isolate. I kind of understand/admire how Marina sometimes disappears and makes retreats, long and short ones.

Random notes from the following days:

I find very inspiring that a 76-year-old woman can still fast, make demanding physical exercises – and is more flexible than me in the stretching –, takes cold showers naked

without problems among young people in their twenties/thirties. I find fascinating her moderation and accuracy while tasting a soup and a plate with little quantities of food that she composed herself.

I want to preserve also here, back in “real life”, that sensation of purity and lightness of the body that I had in Greece. Around midday I’m hungry, in the train station in Düsseldorf, but I willingly give up ordering any kind of junk-food and I opt for a Matcha-Milchreis with mashed mango. Delicious things can also be light. Now I know and will remember forever how a single almond can be a precious treat.

I’d also like to always preserve the pleasure of a healthy routine for the body. For example I could: wake up and check the open nostrils and start the day with the right foot (should be, according to Marina, the same side of the open nostril), go to the toilet before sunrise, drink a big glass of water, do one hour of physical exercises, stretching, breathing, meditation. If the day starts like this, it can only go perfectly fine!

Feedback round after the *Cleaning the House* workshop

20.03.2023, Karyes

[Marina talks with a faint voice, Wayne – sitting next to her – repeats aloud]

MARINA

Can we talk about the experience? I have no voice... It would be great that everybody says individually something about the general experience of these last days.

GAIA

I can start sharing how I felt last night and this morning. I felt incredibly overwhelmed because I felt like I suddenly went from a place that was 25 floors underground to ground floor again and a safe space where I had all the time to deal with my thoughts, no one was talking, so no one was really interfering with my thinking, questioning my discoveries and so on – to a place where we were talking again, exchanging thoughts about each other's experiences from the exercises and life here. Every day I was writing how my body was feeling, what I dreamt in the night and how I felt in the night, things about the group, Marina and what I was excited about. And since yesterday it was not anymore only you but the whole world because I had my phone back. Right now, I feel it will take time to integrate this experience inside my daily life. It is also hard to talk about it now because I feel it is coming from another world, another universe. But I think for me was really important to fast, because I realize when I do long duration things, or when we worked in the workshops in Essen, it was so much about the reward: I did something and then relaxed, had a snack, ... Here it was not possible, no reward was coming – we only have time. So it was really about finding the pleasure in the task.

The first very important exercise was for me the colors-meditation: from this experience on, I started to relate all following tasks to this experience. I grew through them, orientating myself also in longer exercises. I tried to find my safe space again and again also in the following exercises, until the counting the rice one six hours long. [...]

FRANCESCO

I don't know where to start... I can maybe react to a couple of points from Gaia: going back to reality – for me it is very important to take something I experienced here with me back into the everyday life, like enjoying things slowly and concentrating more on one single task at the time without distractions. Also in the communication with other people I discovered how many important things you can share just through eye contact and through the body, with no need to use useless conversation and small talks that sometimes you feel obliged to do. People can really have quality time just by remaining in silence. For sure I want to take this with me back to normal life.

A short comment about the exercises: for me the most challenging day was the slow-motion day (opening and closing the door and then moving slowly for all day): I was going crazy because I couldn't see any goal or end in it. I had a really bad night after that because I was so full of energy, but I am so thankful to have experienced this – outside the workshop I probably wouldn't have. I think everybody should experience once in life this slowness, also in order to cope with fastness and with the high rhythm of everyday life. There's really a lot going on in my mind, I can just add that I am very thankful to be here.

JAKOB

For me the workshop was a lot about physically and emotionally experience things that I might have known before, but experiencing is something else than knowing. For example, with the fasting: I think I never felt the effect of what food means. Yesterday, when we could finally eat again, I felt again so much energy. Before I was super slow. Five minutes after eating the rice I felt "normal". I really feel that this food that I take into my body it's the thing that gives me energy to move, to think, to do stuff. Of course, this is something that you know, but it is something that I never experienced in my life. It was great to have this experience. Another thing I felt and I could really experience now is that time is passing by, no matter what you do. The sensation of how long it takes might be different, but you don't need to do anything to make it pass: it will pass anyway. This was also a thought that helped me to get through the longest tasks and those where we were very passive, like sitting in front of the colors. It was so different than counting the rice, where you can make your strategy. The latter was actually really fast for me because I could do something, my brain was constantly working so time was running. But just looking at one color – still time will pass anyway, no matter how long it feels. To accept that you can just sit there and open yourself to the feeling that it might create and just let it happen – that was really good.

MARINA

I need to tell you something for the performances in the museum. With this experience you have to know that you can do really little and still keep the attention of the public. You can do really little, also just standing there and still keep the tension. This is a discovery you should do at the workshop. Not much is necessary: it's minimal, but just being there with your mind in the space, all public is like a face to you. It's incredible.

JAKOB

Two more things that I would like to share: while opening and closing the doors, I asked myself at a certain point: if I would have to do this for the rest of my life and if I had a pill to commit suicide, would I take it or rather accept the task with the doors? I realized I would rather keep on closing and opening the doors even without eating than to die on the spot. So there must be something nice about it and afterwards I could actually feel something nice about it: how nice it is to have sensations in your fingers, to breathe air, to have thoughts – this was very healthy. And then one other very important thing is that I enjoyed so much this experience of the group becoming a group without talking, this was very special and I'm so thankful to everyone that we could have this experience together.

ANAÏS

I also have two important things. The first is also the silence, because there was so much communication going on in some way, but without words. And I really always felt connections with single people but also with the group. I never felt alone and sometimes I also felt really deep connections. It was very kind, soft and special. This was for me much related to the silence. Sometimes groups are too much for me, when there is too much talking going on, sometimes I just get overwhelmed, so this for me was a super nice feeling to be in a group without this pressure.

MARINA

You know, this group experience is going to be forever. Every time you meet each other in the life, you know that you had this experience together. It is something that stays forever.

ANAÏS

Yes, but it is also interesting because it not about having the same experience – you can do the same thing and having completely different experiences of it. It's something about being in the same place and time that allows some kind of connection.

The second thing I liked is the slow motion: I loved it and found it so beautiful to watch the others moving in slow motion. I was overwhelmed by how esthetic it was, how beautiful all actions by everybody were. And also to experience it myself was good – my mind was racing all the time – so it is, I can never do meditation for this reason. But in the doors-exercise in slow motion I noticed that my thoughts were completely at zero, that I was just doing the task, I was like in a kind of different very quiet place. I didn't think before that I could enjoy so much silence and slow motion.

JULIAN

I already knew that I would have enjoyed the non-talking and I also really enjoyed this kindness between people that you don't really have otherwise. For me it was also important to spend this time here without any other appointments and commitments, being here and doing whatever we were asked to do was such a relief and made possible to get into the exercises. I enjoyed the exercises that kind of manipulated your perception of time, for example the door-exercise, where for me the time passed so quickly because of the commitment I put into this single task. Also counting rice and lentils, because of the goals I set to me, even though I lost motivation when I realized that I couldn't fulfil the task of counting everything.

FRED

On the topic of time, I share with Jakob this perception of time passing – at some point I realized that I do not need to do anything in order to let time pass.

The first day I realized I had pain in my jaw in the evening, because I realized that I have a habit that I would like to cut now – that is to talk a lot and to always make a comment.

Stopping it because of the rule of silence, generated pain.

I was really happy because I did not cheat at all with the rules: I didn't eat, I didn't talk. When I was tired, I went to bed without judging myself – I accepted my weakness.

I also found fascinating the communication with each other.

I realized that not talking makes me more kinesthetic, so I was longing a lot for touch and for touching people – but I had to consider: am I invading their space? This is something that also happens usually with talking. So I went through this self-reflection about what is really necessary. I'm not saying it was life changing, but these are all things you need to think about.

Although we were not allowed to speak, I found beautiful to see small characteristics of everybody: this person is smart, this is so inspiring, ... I found all the time little surprises everywhere.

KLARA

[Cries] I'm sorry, it's just very difficult for me right now to control myself and find words because this experience was just really great for me. I relate to everything that was said. This connection with the group was really special to me. I'm really afraid to go back to reality – I'm so afraid that I will forget everything or not take it with me, sort of... I think I just want to thank you for all this: it was really nice.

ALEXANDER

I think that no matter if we will continue doing performances or not, these three days were so important: I went again through my entire life in my head with flashbacks and I somehow cleaned myself...

About the food: for me it was illuminating to experience after the fasting how grateful one can be of eating just a bit of boiled rice – it made me feel grateful of what I have in my life. I'm also grateful to have gone through all the long durational exercises, such as the rice counting for six hours, because I realized that, even though I'm a very energetic and impatience person, I can do a single activity for so long – but the group helped me a lot, I could have not done it without the energy of everybody here around.

MARINA

I just want to say: I wouldn't have started this if I didn't go to the monasteries and do it with the monks. They support each other with energy: it is so important. In the first place one asks him/herself why should I do this? But then when I saw the results on me, I saw the incredible qualities of this experience. All the communication in the monasteries was so beautiful: so much smiling, purity, honesty...

BILLY

[Talks about the] connection within the group and the support. [It will be the] same in the show in the museum, knowing that we are together even in the other room. Common energy and support. Try to keep the feeling of the workshop with you in other contexts.

FLORIAN

[Particularly liked the] slow motion in the nature and the visual experience of the nature. Also moving in the group was nice and the writing-exercise, where I forgot time, totally present in the pain of writing. Very nice because it just happened.

LUKE

[About fasting: it's] interesting that I had to slow down my body and control and divide my energy, so that I had to do pauses between the exercises and spare the energies for the next one. It was really interesting to listen to the body. Also, while doing the door-exercise I was very thirsty and had the temptation of stopping to take a sip of water, but then I realized I could manage it – I stepped over this border, and this was really cool. I knew that, if I was really going to faint, I would have known and would have stopped. This was really important for me to discover. Also, after that task, before beginning the new one, even if I was thirsty, I slowly went to get some water, without any hurry.

As far as the tasks are concerned, I really liked that they helped me – sometimes they pressured me because I was supposed not to think, and this was not productive: I was thinking all the time and seeing memories from the childhood and feeling guilty and repeating myself: no, I should try to be empty! If I will do the workshop another time, I will allow myself to go to those memories and also have fun with it and not just kill myself because of it.

The last thing: I really like the image when we all sat and counted rice and lentils all so concentrated. Everybody was doing the same thing, sometimes looking at each other and keeping doing the own task with this working peace in the room.

MARINA

I have to say something you triggered: when you say you were close to the bathroom and so to the water and very thirsty and you come to the question if you should stop and just drink some water, but you decide to continue the exercise: this kind of decision is so crucial in these exercises and in long durational performances. When you don't stop and keep doing your task. Because when you decide something in your mind, you have to stick to it, no matter what. In my example, when I was sitting on the chair in MoMa for The Artist is present, after three or four hours it was incredibly painful. You go through all phases of pain and all you want is to change position, but you're not changing and at the same time you think: if I don't change I'm going to faint. But when you really get to the point, and you say "fuck, just faint!", at that point everything disappears, you don't feel pain anymore. This is an incredible thing. You go to another level, you transcend. At that level you can go higher and higher to come to this complete emptiness. It's an amazing experience. It really takes much time, but it really works. You really need to reach that point, when you say "I faint" but you don't.

SMILA

For me an incredible thing to experience was to see how my body got energy that did not come from food or things from the outside. After we did the "energy wash" exercise I felt incredibly full of energy and this was not because I did something to my body, but my body did something from itself. Or also after the doors-exercise my energy level went really high – I didn't know that this could happen.

I also enjoyed that my biological rhythm went together with the sun. When it was getting dark my eyes became tired and I also always woke up before the bell rung, together with the sunrise and everything was colored in pink. This felt very natural.

Another thing was the use of the breath – while dancing it comes natural to me and I try not to overthink and interrupt its naturality, but here I learnt that breath is also something you can control and it's also helpful to control it and it is enjoyable to slow yourself down and that the breath has a strong connection with your mind.

I also think it was really helpful for me that we did something really for six hours, so that we have an idea of what is waiting for us in the museum. I didn't perceive them as the sum of many hours but just as whole thing. I was happy to see that I could do it with no interruption for drinking or going to the toilet.

LEON

I just thought also of the door-exercise because I had to go to the toilet badly and I was moving the door of a bathroom, so I was literally already there. I set me the task to open and close the doors as slowly as possible, and when I was closing the door for the third time, I challenged myself and thought to repeat the task only one last time even more slowly. When I closed the door and sat on the toilet, in that exact moment, the bell rung to signalize that the three hours were over. I was so happy.

The most important things I enjoyed were to be totally isolated and not caring about anything else except for being here inside or out into the nature and focus on one single thing, which is something I'm not good at in real life. I think it is really important to experiment it and to know that it is possible.

The other thing I really enjoyed was the not talking. When we were again allowed to in the end, the first hour was so hard for me and I remained silent for longer.

ELEONORA

About the fasting: I felt really stronger than I thought.

[Liked:] No pressure to talk. We were still together but in silence and in a slowly pace.

Collective energy in the exercises. Coming down and seeing people drinking tea.

Nature: sun/rain had our same rhythm.

CAMILLO

For me it was an incredible experience to never stop working or performing: it felt all like one very long durational performance for five days nonstop, living in this bubble. Especially the 3rd day with the slow motion task, that ended only when we went to bed. This was one big arch with no ending: it was even stronger than fasting and staying silent for the whole time. One big point was for me that I lost the feeling of time: in everyday life I usually check very often the watch – not having at all a watch was a totally new feeling. It was ok because the day was divided into tasks and I just waited for the next to come. Also, the slow-motion thing: I read just these days a sentence about moving in slow motion in tai chi, it said that when you move slowly you are very concentrated on the preciseness of the movements and hence you are totally present and in the moment, forgetting time and everything. This is what I also felt here. It was also surprising where did we take energy from all day, without coffee and so on. I loved also the cold-water ritual in the morning and all the rituals coming every day in the same way, but still every day was different. After the slow-motion day, the other most intense moment was when we woke up here the first day: everybody was in it, we all did this together – we heard the bell and we woke up and met here downstairs. Because of this collective decision to do it, because it was our task to do this crazy stuff of the workshop, everybody was like: ok, let's do this and change our life for these four days. It was incredible that we decided it, and everybody was doing it for real. I'm very thankful for this.

MARINA

You know, I was reading this Grotowski book these days and there is one great sentence: 'Searching for the present in the present'...

KONSTANTIN

It's hard for me to say something, I don't have a complete opinion yet. I knew before that I was going to put a lot of pressure on myself to get the most out of this workshop and be in the moment and have crazy revelations. And then I wrote down on the first day: "okay, no epiphany today". Second day: "also no epiphany". Third day: "okay, there might not be one". Fourth day: "okay, no epiphany is going to arrive, but that's fine". This is a problem of mine: I have this huge expectation on myself. During the first day I also wasn't able to really be in the moment: my thoughts were running, I could never really stop them, but it's also fine. During the exercises I could go with my head in a place, where I was kind of detached from the task and really think about stupid random stuff and then I was just doing it and it was fine. I mean I also really had fun, especially with the doors... But I can't really shut my mind except for very short fragments of 10 to 20 seconds, I think. And then, when we were counting the rice, I think I was at first really in it. I also had some crucial moments with many people or one person, the pair-staring exercise with Klara felt like an eternity.

JANINA

I want to add a point about minimalism: for me it was so precious. Having only unscented soap for myself to clean my whole body and wash my hair – it worked so well actually. And

also, the minimalism of not having anything really: we had only a couple of clothes, some mirrors, tea, some rice in the end. I felt that I actually don't need anything more. And reached a point where I just thought how much useless stuff I have in my life, and I want to just go through it and throw it all away.

The hardest exercise was the one with the doors. I did a movement forward and backward that made me seasick, I started to shiver and feel nausea, my whole body at some point screamed ...

Counting the rice: I was so inspired by your [Marina's] talk about the three stages of the long durational performances – first you enjoy your task, then you hate it or are bored, and in the end, you accept it and are just there, present, and time does not matter anymore. After those six hours were gone, I was still in the first phase, enjoying it and was annoyed to stop because I wanted to go through also the other stages. After everybody stopped and relieved energy and screamed and jumped around, I believe I would have done it myself as well if I stopped at that point, but this was kind of giving me some anger and at the same time I thought: ah, but I'm still here, I'm still doing this... And from this point on I could perceive the experience as even more precious. I found a lot of connections about myself, my personality, my strengths, my limits. This was really beautiful for me. In the end I was kind of frustrated that we started late and I couldn't keep on counting for hours into the night, since we had to wake up early again. But it was also a nice experience to accept that this task was not completely doable. This kind of acceptance was a strong moment.

MARINA

These exercises are the key for getting connections to another other kind of energy, the universal energy. This energy is always there, in all of us. You only need to get the key to get there. It is essential sometimes to exhaust your own energy, in order to open your body to the other energy.

GOA

I agree with many things that were said. In addition, for me it was so interesting the first day we went for hiking to realize how it was very personal – how I would jump on every one of the group to check on them, taking care of everyone. And then realizing my pattern of wanting to take care of everyone in the group and sensing – and then having to go back to me was very precious for me: to have this time to exercise and to feel that first I need to take care of myself and then I can jump to the others or check what is going on. I didn't expect to feel this so strongly and to have the possibility to connect with myself, which is something I struggle with a lot. I really enjoyed the rule of no speaking, which I missed when we in the end were allowed to speak again.

It was interesting, while counting the rice, that I felt I was going crazy, because I struggle with concentration, but time passed kind of fast. I know I am slow, so I decided to reduce the task and only separate the rice from the lentils, and exactly when I finished doing this, the six hours were over.

GLORIA

First of all, I think I am in the right place with the right people in the right time of my life: I'm so grateful for this. I really challenged myself to let something happen and move inside. I got used to so many new things: the early waking up, the cold shower outside – which I was afraid of, but became my favorite thing. Other were unexpected: I thought I would have liked counting the rice, but I hated it. I just accepted everything as it came. It was really different

from what I usually do: to push myself to do something. But here I realized, it is also ok to recognize my limits. This was a process.

About dealing with emotions – this is a big topic for me: usually I solve problems with cigarettes, coffee, keeping myself busy, but here we were not allowed to, so I really had to face the emotions. I had to cope with and accept anger, frustration, sadness. The support of the group was very important.

I love this place, I felt here like the five-years-old me, free in the nature, without the need to be productive all the time, just enjoying being here.

SOPHIE

I can relate to a lot of things that were already said. I will just mention some highlights. These days were the perfect combination of things for me: cold showers, I don't like talking, etc. I enjoyed the whole time and I'm very thankful. It felt very familiar, there are a lot of parallelism with practicing and making music, so in many exercises I could relate to a mindset I already had, and enhance it. I had a problem with my knee and the operation before coming here, so taking part to the workshop was also a source of energy and motivation to get fit and walk again. The hike the first day was the first moment I really felt the group dynamics: everybody signaled care about me and my leg, so I felt safe with all of you around.

WAYNE

I was in this very luxurious situation, that I was able to take part to your experience, which I appreciate really much. I loved to see the development of the group. Especially in the last phase in the Saana building in Essen you were very isolated, in a university context and it was very unpredictable for me how it would go on. Here in Greece, I saw in you the unity of human beings not caring about anything else than being together. And this is also reflected in what you said and how you reacted to the experience.

I'm really wondering how I can bring all this back home. I think many feelings and impressions will disappear, for sure, but then they will also come back at certain moments. I probably will not go out in my neighborhood naked to have a cold shower... maybe I'll figure it out though, I loved it...

I loved the exercise of sitting in front of each other and staring: for me it was very intense. I still was a satellite at that moment, in between Marina and Billy as institute on the one side, and you as students on the other. But in that moment I was sitting in front of Fred and I was just sitting there as myself. For me it was a huge step to connect really with you [Fred], and through you to the group, so thank you very much. Especially the hug afterwards was great. A last thing: sometimes I'm so immersed and focused on my work, that I get a working-bitch-face – and this became clear to me during the door-exercise, when Marina was going around with the mirror and just put it in front of my face. It was a revelation.

MOONJOO

I was really pleased to live with no phone, little clothes, no talking... I'll miss these moments of connection with myself, where I also thought a lot about my childhood – when I also had no phone, or I couldn't read the clock. I'll miss also the silence, the sound of the birds and of the nature.

I liked the moment in the exercise with the doors, where I had no other thoughts, and I was only focused on the lines of the doors and on the door sounds also from the others: it was like music.

I enjoyed the feeling of possessing the time. Maybe it does not make sense, but I really could feel the time. I think, because I know nothing about time, I can really be the time, I can really be in the moment and feel every single hair of my head, arms, ... this moment was really amazing. That's why I also wanted to try to dance with this feeling, in slow motion.

KLARA

I'd like to add one more thing: we always get judged in our art fields. I'm always struggling with this, because I'm scared to be judged and I always want to do the things in the right way. I got so frustrated in the exercise where we had to look at the colors: I kept falling asleep when looking at the yellow and I was judging myself so much for this and thinking: no, you can't fall asleep now, this is not your task, you have to stay awake and focus right now, you have to do it right! After this, I fainted. And then we did the door exercise – in this case I really enjoyed it: first I wanted to do it as well "in the right way", I tried to do it in slow motion, but felt dizzy. After this I thought: ok, just do it in the way you want and can do it: there will be no judgment, nobody coming to you to tell: you're doing it wrong. So I accepted this and I came in such a flow, it was so great, I wasn't judging myself anymore, it was a relief in general because I don't think there is a right way to do art.

Workshop Diaries / Phase 4 & Exhibition / 24.6.-10.7.2023

Preparation

On the 14.6.2023 I rent a car and bring all my equipment to the museum and install it. Friederike, the architect, and Karin and Reiner from the technicians welcomed and helped me. We went together to my spot in the museum: it's huge but also very intimate – they built a triangular stage in a corner on which I will sit and under which I will put all the technical stuff. This precision and functionality of a big institution gave me again motivation, after some technical problems and doubts about my performance.

After Greece I reconsidered my performance and had to give up the idea with the ice blocks – I keep it minimal and go back to the title *tabula rasa*.

On the 20.6. I drive to Werden with a lot of technical stuff, take a room in the university and spend a lot of time with Jan, the programmer, experimenting and fixing the translation program. The weather is terribly hot, but I appreciate the time spent together. The program should work now, but there's a little issue with the microphone that hopefully tomorrow in the museum will not occur.

On the 21.6. I'm again in the museum. The front cover of my stage with the little window for the subtitles is ready. The audio works, but I still miss an adapter for the microphone headset. I'm really happy to see again Billy, Wayne and some of the group. I'm really happy to see Gaia, who just came back from Barcelona. We have lunch together in the restaurant of the museum, even if it is very expensive. We update us on our news. [...]

Stop living for 10 days and live instead my past again, in some of its details, even though arbitrarily collected: this is what awaits me during the exhibition with our long durational performances.

The days before the last phase I'm very busy with moving out of my flat: I paint the walls of the new one and carry dozens of very heavy boxes. After six years of accumulated life and things, the old flat looks empty and sounds differently when I walk or talk. Today, 24.6., I set an alarm at 6am, make coffee, breakfast, then in the fresh air of the morning and in the light of the summer sun, I shave, dye my hair dark cherry and prepare myself for the adventure of the next two weeks in Essen. I go out with the backpack, the yoga mat and my bike and go full of energy to the train station. Ah, I just realize that today is my birthday. New chapter, new white page to write.

24.6.2023

Another train, another beginning. Today I turn 31 years old. I'm sitting on a high-speed train to Essen. Today the last working phase of the Free Interdisciplinary Performance Lab starts and we all meet at the Folkwang Museum for the preparation of the exhibition.

Billy and Wayne will be there, Marina can be there only virtually from New York: she had a very bad time after the knee operation and the doctors have forbidden her to travel.

It was a pleasure to meet the group again! We are in the middle of the preparations in the museum, there is a whole team working for/with us. Peter Daners, who works here as an art educator, comes by to my spot to introduce himself – he is the husband of Simone Scholten, with whom I worked in the museum in Mülheim for the DAX-Project.

I get almost dizzy if I think that every 90 minutes 260 visitors are attended.

Friederike Külpmann, the architect of the museum, welcomes us and gives us an introduction about safety standards and other practical things for our stay in the museum. Then, in the huge "green room", that will be our dressing room, resting room, canteen, etc., something to

eat is waiting for us and Billy and Wayne tell us about the program for the next days but give us also motivation, reassurance and strength. Billy tells also that it is possible and also normal that our concepts evolve and might take another direction during the 10 days in the museum. Then we keep on building the spaces and our settings. Of course it turns out that I miss an adapter for the microphone. Unfortunately the decision of the university, not to borrow us all the stuff we could borrow in February, has strong consequences. Wayne and Leon look after other solutions, but I don't see any other than run to Cologne and buy one by Music Store. I take another high-speed train to Cologne – at least I have air conditioning and the trip is calm. I hope tomorrow my setting will work. [...] I'm early at home, I take a shower, make a video-chat with my family for my birthday. Belle, our dog, is also there on the couch and turn her head when I call her name, but does not understand where the voice comes from. At 8pm I go to the Japanese vegan restaurant Nobiko with Christian. [...]

25.6.2023

Second day of installation in the museum. At 10am I'm already in the museum to try my technical stuff as soon as possible. With the €100-adaptor it works. I needed to act in advance and myself, because today I have the video-call with Marina and tomorrow the press and the photographs are coming. I needed to be sure today that everything works. With a sigh of relief I go to the common room and we have a warm up at 10:30 guided by Billy. It's a heart-felt warm-up, especially the energy-wash in pairs. I was with Luke. Then we spend the day to make adjustments and improvements of the set-ups. It is incredible that – despite all the restrictions and security norm, any of our requests are taken in account. Today, for example, I receive the ok for putting in a corner my GoPro and film during the exhibition! I want to document all the 54 hours of performance. At 2pm I take an espresso in the museum's bar and then go to help Julian, I discover the reading room of the museum and I'm enthusiastic about it: I will go back there to write diaries. At 3pm I talk with Marina through the laptop in my spot. It's everything very quick and dense. I'd prefer her to be here with us, concretely. I have the feeling that through the video a lot of details get lost. Marina gives me anyway many inputs; I'd need one more week to try them out and process them – but the general rehearsals with photographers and journalists is already tomorrow. First she suggested me to try also other positions: besides sitting on the bar stool, also lying down on the floor or standing. Then she suggested to put a bench or some seats in front of my little stage, to invite people spending time there – this is so important, I didn't think about it. Then there is the question of the pages: crumble them or leave them flat? The problem is that I already wrote on the explanatory text on the wall that I will crumble them and that a heap of paper will grow... As far as the contact with the public is concerned (eye contact?) she couldn't give me a recipe, but suggested to develop my own system during the days of the performance: I can make eye contact when I do natural pauses from the reading, change position or drink a sip of water. Without forcing anything. Being myself, as it comes following the feeling of the moment. I'm pretty worried that the translation doesn't work, gets stuck or becomes surreal – as it happened more than once today – and that it ruins the strength of the whole performance. I feel a bit lonely and helpless today. It must be the tiredness. I oscillate between moments of big mistrust in my capacities and (very short) moments of exaltation and confidence. This evening I go to Düsseldorf to see the theatre piece *The Sandman* by Robert Wilson [...].

26.6.2023

I'm sitting again in the train. On my left I see a topical, almost allegorical scene: a young man in his twenties sits in front of an old one. The first looks beautiful, healthy, fit. The other scrawny, wrinkled and deformed. Perfect reminder of the transience of life.

At the main station I meet Klara and we take the bus together to the museum. When we arrive, we see that huge posters of our exhibition have been hung in front of the museum and around the city. It's a happy surprise, even though the picture that the museum chose is not representative of the group, and the hours we spent discussing the title of the exhibition and doing picture for the poster were useless in the end (or at least useful only for us, as group experience). Once arrived, I leave my stuff in my spot and then go to the common room for the warm-up led by Billy. Today for me is much better: I'm not sweaty. Today I'm with Veronika for the pair-exercises. In the museum there is a lot of activity: a lot of preparation before the press comes to do interviews, photos and videos. I didn't raise my hand when Billy asked who wanted to be interviewed.

At my spot I try out a couple of things, I'm not sure about the positions I should take, where to position the diaries, and so on... In the pauses before the general rehearsal I write diaries. But I cannot really isolate myself in the common room. First the huge dog of the owner of the restaurant, then we get pizza for lunch. I coordinate with Florian, Klara and Moonjoo for some organizational thing before and after the performances: we help each other with keys, towels, ladders, cleaning stuff, etc. Little by little the journalists arrive. At 1:30pm everybody goes to his/her place and at 13:45 we start performing. I read and rip pages off from a diary I prepared extra for this rehearsal of 1,5 hour. While performing I feel incredibly alone. I read aloud more or less important things, more or less private facts from my life, while journalists, photographers, video crew, museum's staff, ... pass by very quickly. On average they remain there in my room for less than one minute. Maybe it's just because they quickly to their job, maybe because my private life is not interesting at all for them or even embarrassing. This hurts my feelings a bit. I guess I feel alone because nobody from our group is there to watch and support. Nobody will give me feedback. Marina passes by on the screen carried by Billy, watching through the video-call. Billy and Wayne are very busy with tons of organisational stuff. When Fred asks me afterward how it was, I almost burst out crying. I'm also disappointed again for the presence of the media – maybe I'm jealous that television, radio and newspaper are interviewing and filming others. I did not step up for the interviews because I hate to fight to obtain visibility. I'm also disturbed by the prima-donna behaviours [...]. The best thing I can do to calm down, is helping Klara to clean her space, full of feathers and encrusted syrup. Then I go to the common room, eat cold pizza and drink Rhabarberschorle alone at one table. The museum is now almost empty. Then I leave myself and go to the station to take a train to Cologne. The sky is cloudy, the air conditioning makes me freeze. On the train I sleep a bit, but I must put music on with headphones to cover loud and annoying conversations. My old flat, where I still sleep, is dirty and messy, I don't feel anymore at home here, but on the balcony I see that the fig tree is putting forth its leaves! I thought it was dead.

27.6.2023

I wake up at 6:30am and feel much better after nine hours sleeping. [...] I realize how healthy it is to sleep: tiredness blows every problem out of proportion – with the right mind-set, instead, the right amount of sleeping and, sometimes, some compromises, everything – or almost everything – is manageable.

With bike and backpack I feel really light and go to take my train to Essen.

When I arrive at the museum almost nobody is there from the group. They come little by little and we build a little group for the warm-up. It is similar to the other days, but today we do in the middle a slow-motion-walk. For my set-up I only do millimetrical steps forward. Today I simply get access to the crew-WiFi and put a bank in front of my stage for the public to sit down and spend more time in my space. For the rest the wait is a bit long and unproductive. I don't manage to isolate in the reading room and work on my things though, because I'm afraid of missing something important or that the technicians don't find me if they look after me. Here and there I have some nice conversations, for example with Smila, Jakob, Florian. I go to collect some new plants that arrive for Gloria's performance, then I sit at the big table with the potatoes, write and wait that Billy passes by with Marina in the screen for a round of comments and feedback about the general rehearsal. In the end, they don't pass by where I am, but it doesn't matter: it was better to stay here in the museum than at home alone doubting about myself. I ate a lot of sandwiches of the catering, worked on my diaries and enjoyed the silence of the museum's galleries. Only very few of the group stayed until the end of the day. [...]

28.6.2023

I wake up early, make a coffee and leave to Essen. This morning I have a jacket with me to survive the air conditioning in the museum (always 22 degrees) and on the train, that causes me backache. It's drizzling. Today everybody is there for the warm-up. Billy guides us, we make the usual exercises of taking the heat from the hands to the face, the walking with different speeds, the stretching, the mutual massages and energy-wash (today I'm with Aleksander) and then the group humming.

Then we have breakfast in the common room. I have a cappuccino and a sandwich from the catering. At 11am the museum director, Peter Gorschlüter, comes in to greet us and give feedback about the rehearsals of yesterday. The most important thing – he said – besides immerse ourselves in our performances, is to open the senses also to the others around us, so that we create moments of unity and harmony.

Then we go all together with the group through the museum spaces to visit them. Everyone tells something and presents his/her space and performance, which is very useful because many concepts developed a lot or even changed completely from the last phases. The group likes my space and are impressed by the live translation. I say in the microphone "vi voglio bene" for them all. Shortly after though, there are some funny moments because I speak English and the program randomly translates fragments of sentences and at a certain point you can read in the subtitles: "you suck!". Everybody laughs. The rest of the day consists in little adjustments and long waits, but luckily the carpenter passes by and installs the little support for my GoPro on the wall in a high corner, so I don't need to come back tomorrow to Essen and my set-up is finally completely ready. I go back to Cologne in a good mood and confident. [...]

I really have to follow the advice of the museum's director and not overdo or worry to perform for every single visitor. To be there, present, even silent, is enough to create a tension and expectations. I "only" need to dive into my diaries, in the evoked stories, and to live them again. I don't need to do something for the others, to be productive. The contact with the public, if there will be any, will be spontaneous – I don't need to and shouldn't create them forcefully.

29.6.2023

Last day of preparation. [...] I say goodbye to Christian, make the luggage with my clothes, have a shower, shave and arrange the new flat in a way that Serena and Elena can use it, when they come to visit me. I leave for Essen very tired, once I'm there I do the check-in in the Airbnb flat I found very close to the museum. It's in the basement, very spartan, a bit humid, but very silent and perfect for the next 10 days.

30.6.2023

I wake up at 6:30am. I didn't sleep that good because of humidity and felt hot and cold in waves. I shave one last time before the 10 days performances: I will let my beard grow in parallel with the process of the performance: another way to underline the passage of time. I find a bakery close to my place, where I order a double espresso and a butter croissant – the last things I eat/drink until this evening: I must resist six hours without eating and going to toilet. Then I go on foot to the museum, very light, with only my turtleneck black shirt and my last notebook in the backpack. It's a sunny and fresh day. I'm very excited. When I arrive to the museum we smile at each other and hug. We find some little presents by Billy, Wayne and Marina: one "gemischte Tüte" (mixed-candies bag from a kiosk – which is an insider thing, because it was one of our ideas for the title of the exhibition) and a signed postcard for each of us. The team of the museum and the security is completely mobilized: they are more than us performers! The journalists start to arrive. We do some last-minute preparations. Photographers and journalists walk along the museum's galleries. There is fervour, the museum looks like an ants' nest. I still have one hour and a half to acclimate. I'd like to have the support of the group on the one side and silent concentration on the other. It's 10:20am and here I finish writing my diaries that I will use in my performance for the next 10 days.

Performance-logbook

30.6.2023

First day of performances at the Museum Folkwang.

Just before starting, in the common room, Wayne wishes me good luck and tells me that everything is perfect: set-up, presence, outfit and even says "I'm a bit jealous of your elegance...".

Nice moment in the video-room: I'm sitting close to Moonjoo and Fred and nostalgically watch a footage made by Konstantin of our workshop in Greece.

During the six hours of performance:

Time has passed quicker than I expected.

My muscles and my voice sustained the effort.

The live-translation program got stuck once on the word ragout. I could see it on the opposite wall because the lines are projected a bit also over there. I simply got off the stage, opened the front cover, "revealing" the hidden technique, and started the program again. I couldn't allow my performance to be ruined by this technical issue: so many personal memories read one last time in front of so many visitors – I couldn't stand that a single banal word like influences the fruition of my work.

During the six hours the public reacted very differently: some people stayed only a few minutes in front of me. Some other stayed very long. In particular, there was a woman who

sat there for a really long time and came over and over again also later. She left me a little piece of paper with a message on the stage, in a corner – she wrote that she felt almost a physical pain watching me throwing such beautiful and precious texts away, these pieces of my own self, that maybe in 37 year I do want to meet again.

Also another man spent there a lot of time. Many have taken pictures and made videos. Some also wrote down notes.

It's true – as Marina says – that the public gives you a lot of energy: it's like a little booster of energy anytime a new visitor came in.

After the first day performing, we do a video-call with Marina, who asks each of us how it was and says that she received thousands of messages about us from people that were there at the show.

In the green room I talk with a lot of people, for example with Klara about my reactions to the reading: I did not cry today, I felt like I was reading memoirs of another person – today I read diaries from 2013, ten years ago... Serge Le Borgne, the director of MAI, is also there and tells me, as the woman wrote and also as Marina already suggested me, to keep the pages I rip off. We also talk about my previous ideas with ice and chalk and he agrees on the simplicity and minimalism of the last version of the performance. I talk also with Christian, the videomaker of the university, about the strength of the spoken language and about how to film the performance on Wednesday.

Smila turns 18 today, so we eat a cake and drink a champagne. It's crazy that she became legally an adult by doing such a thing like performing (and crying) for six hours!

I have dinner close to the museum with Gaia, Lukas and Giulia, a designer and friend of Gaia, who made the costumes for her. Then I go early to bed, as Marina recommended.

1.7.2023

Difficult awakening. I slept bad again, maybe because of the humidity. First thing I finish watching and reading photos, videos and articles about the opening of our exhibition. There are dozens of them, on TV, radio, newspapers and social media (MAI, Museum Folkwang, Folkwang Uni, other members of the group and many visitors). Every day new people from the public follow me on Instagram.

Then, with devastated muscles, I take a shower and get ready for the second day of performance.

I go out – it's a cold and rainy day. At the museum I drink a cappuccino and today I do try to eat something before starting, in order not to have stomach noises on the stage during the six hours. But, as I realize later, this is a mistake because then I get thirsty and have a dry mouth. I hug and talk to the others, prepare my set-up again, then walk a bit around the museum. In the video-room I meet Serge, who invites me to sit and tells me about a project they're planning for 2025, an artistic residency at the museum Schloss Moyland, where they preserve Joseph Beuys' archives. The MAI is putting together a group of artists who will study material in the archives and develop long durational performances in dialogue with Beuys' materials. He asks if I could be interested, since I already work with an archival perspective in my diary performance, and of course I say yes. I'm moved that Serge asked and maybe also trusts my capacities.

At 12am we start.

Technically for me everything works well today.

Time goes by much slower than yesterday though.

I'm not sure about what I should do with those parts of the diaries where I write in other languages or I write very long lists of things and books or very erudite passages about a very

niche-topic or things that are not translatable or potentially very boring for the public. Sometimes I paraphrase – also to let the translation-program work better –, sometimes I skip something.

My reactions today: I got emotional when I read some passages about my mom and grandma and I had to laugh when I read a passage about my brothers (Claudio laughing about Paolo who was driving crazy in the kitchen while trying out a new recipe).

Today there are some people of the public who spend a long time with me as well, sitting on the bench or standing somewhere in the room. I feel very grateful and this gives me a lot of energy. I exchange also a lot of glances with the visitors today. There are people of all ages: children, teenagers, young and older adults. I recognize some friends and people I know in the public.

After the six hours, all my muscles hurt like hell.

I help Moonjoo, Klara and Florian with clothes and ladder and stop the recording of my GoPro. Wayne gives me a long hug.

In the common room we diffuse the tension, change clothes, talk. People leave little by little. We compare the experience of today with the first day. Then we all leave the museum. I go to the city-centre to buy a hoodie because I'm freezing all the time. I eat something there, then go back to my room and go to bed. Outside is still hell.

2.7.2023

Third day. I wake up early as usual. Have coffee and croissant in the bakery and go to the museum to set up. No more eating or drinking. I also put the glass of water away from the stage: I noticed that I don't need it. In the pauses I find a lot of photos and posts about us on the socials.

Today the six hours pass quicker for me, but my legs, back and headache.

Serena and Elena came from Italy to see my performance. I saw them among the public in the exact moment I read a passage about them in the diary! In the public I recognize people that were there the last days and also today spend a lot of time in my room.

After the six hours there is a dinner in the front yard of the museum. The restaurant prepared potato fritters with the potatoes that were peeled in Aleksander's performance. I take also Serena and Elena with me at the table, the museum's director – who I discover is half Italian – says they're welcome. We say hallo to Marina per video-call. I have very nice talks with everybody around: the French lady with turban, an anthropologist; Ines, Smila's mother; Livia, the physical theatre student; Wayne; Christian, Alex' boyfriend; Christian, the video-maker and his husband; ... We say goodbye to Billy, who will leave tomorrow to go to Ireland. Serena and Elena come to my place in Essen. I talk really long with Elena about art and performance, then we go to sleep all together.

3.7.2023

Today the museum is closed, so we have a day off. I spend it reconnecting with Serena and Elena. It's very nice, even though I planned a day of total solitude, reset and silence. We have a brunch together, talk non-stop and then, in my room, we improvise a photo-shooting with Serena's instant camera. Then I bring them out and say goodbye, buy some groceries and go at Gaia&Smila's place to cook something. Long and deep talk with Gaia. Then I go back to my room. In the staircase I find a sparrow: it's trapped inside, wanted to fly out, but kept flying against the window. I set it free. It feels like a very intense, solemn and symbolic moment.

I think again about the technical problems of the live-translation program (getting stuck and translating inaccurately) during my performance. The first time it happened I died inside. But I got off-stage and started it again. It happened also on the third day. And I reacted the same way. Now, if it happens again, I'll integrate this action in the performance. I can live with that and also give it a meaning – thanks to some input from other people:

- the French woman at the dinner talked about the topics of incommunicability, lost in translation, problems in transmitting messages and contents 100%. This is a technical issue but also a personal one: I also wrote many times in the diaries about the limits of communication between people and how lonely we actually are in our individual worlds of meanings.
- Gaia noticed that the problem of the program that gets stuck, of the “machine that gets jammed” and needs to be reset is an analogy with my operation of doing *tabula rasa*, destroying written memories and start again: I do reset myself as well.
- I personally like also the idea of “revealing the mechanism” behind the performance. As a spectator I like those performances or shows where I get to take a look behind the scenes and every is transparent, at least for a moment. I like this moment of revelation and “disenchantment” (it's similar to Ronconi's filmic version of the *Orlando Furioso* in the credits, where he shows the machines he used for the effects, or in Bob Wilson's theatre pieces, when he puts the light technicians of the theatre on stage to interact and change the settings directly in front of the public).
- It means accepting the imperfection, the finitude.
- It means taking a breath, taking a pause from my past. To come out of the performance, of my reevoked past for a moment and remember the present, being in another way here and now. I also need to come off of the stage to open the front of the stage and restart the program, so I come back to the same physical level of the public.

4.7.2023

Today I wake up more comfortably around 7:30am. Same morning routine: I go out, stretch my leg going to the bakery, have breakfast with double espresso and brioche, go back home and have a shower. I like living my place light, going to the museum very close and to immerse myself for 8 hours in only one task in the museum, deal with only one thing, my past, and then going out again, in the “real” and present life. This notebook is waiting for me all the time in my room, open for some incidental and pacific note, is not an imperative anymore, not a warning about my finitude that I take everywhere with me in my bag as I used to do and has often prevented me to live the present, reminding me that if I don't write details down I will forget them all.

Today our exhibition is again fully booked. It's impressive to hear and see people at the box office asking for a ticket for our show. On Sunday, told us Wayne, there were 1.600 visitors! Today I do stretching in the green room, to prevent muscular pain. It hurts everywhere and after the six hours performance I always limp and feel like stabs in the shoulders. In the end I decided not to change position at all, and just sit on the bar stool – it's more statuesque and the other positions didn't feel natural for reading.

I prepare my setting, talk to a security guy, a young beautiful and gentle man from east Europe, and ask him to signal me if the translation stops. During the six hours I see him passing by to check, we made eye contact and he smiled. But the translation program worked perfectly today.

Time passed not too slowly today, but also not quickly for sure.

At a certain point I saw Christian in the room. He has been there already for a long time, but I didn't notice him until he sat down on the bench in front of me. The diaries I read today are from 2017 and there was a lot about him in them. It's a pity that he missed the beginning of our relationship and the time when I was living in Eichstätt. He got instead all my jealousy scenes – but also many nice memories of us. Many people (Christian, Fred who performs in the next room, the silent public, ...) noticed today the power and the intimacy, for example, of the scene of my coming out with my father.

Once I'm out of the museum I eat a falafel-dürüm alone in my room I collect photos and articles about our show, prepare the answers to the questions for the podcast of the museum and plan a concert – I've been asked today to play in late August in a festival in Trier two very good paid concerts. I'm already in bed, when I phone with Christian, who after the visit in the museum went to Düsseldorf to practice organ.

5.7.2023

Today I see again in the public the woman who left me the message on the first day. This is the third day that she comes to the museum and spends a lot of time in my room.

The hugs with Wayne give strength.

I have dinner with a take-away pizza and spend hours putting together a good program for the concert with 21st century music from France.

6.7.2023

First thing in the museum: I do the interview for the podcast of the museum. Klara and me are interviewed by Annika Schank. It was a really nice talk, a lot of memories and very good questions.

During the performance I see Liga and Olivier in the public. Also in this case, as luck would have it, I read something about Liga when she is there listening.

Today I arrive to the part of the diaries where I was working on the article about Marina's project *7 Deaths of Maria Callas*. From now on the name of Marina will appear more and more in my memories.

There is a blond girl who spends a lot of time listening to me – I think she studies at the Folkwang.

I feel guilty because I missed Goa's birthday dinner after the show, but Christian came to Essen and needed a shoulder to cry on, so I spend the evening and the night with him and bring Goa tomorrow a little present.

7.7.2023

Christian tells me I should do more often long durational performances because they make me sexier – actually I do feel fitter and a bit more muscular than usual – even though my only physical activity is the stretching before the performance and turning pages of my diaries... Christian leaves and I go to the bakery for breakfast. The young woman at the desk prepares it automatically, before I order: she noticed I always take the same double espresso and butter croissant.

Today while performing:

- I noticed that already since many years I had the desire to have more time for me to reflect and meditate, metabolize, make pauses, let experiences sediment, come back to myself. I finally did it, now, in these 9 days of long durational performances. It was a mostly rational process: I analysed and vivisected my past 10 years.

- I cried only for the passages about my grandmother and my mother and when I read about the visit to the Buchenwald concentration camp.
- I laughed for certain memories about my brothers and about mom and Claudio (the biscuit scene).
- I appreciated the power of the voice in itself and in spreading stories. Other performers in the other rooms (Fred and Veronika) hear my voice and ask with curiosity sometimes: who is Serena, who is Christian, why do I write so often about the food I ate?
- I realised that I love the silence and intimacy of some moments (like the coming-out scenes with the family) when the public is so concentrated and silent!
- I discovered that the idea of using my diaries as material for something artistic – maybe a performance – came me a lot of time before the course with Marina: today I read a note about this idea that I wrote in October 2020!

In the public today I also recognized people I know and Anna also came with Kris. A man also stayed again long time there at my place – I think he is the colleague of Annika and works in the museum as well. Then I get to know a really nice surprise: the mother of Jakob, Stephanie Jentgens, visited our performances on the opening day and was impressed by mine – it resonated with her because she is a scholar and is writing a book about fragmentation in literature. She wrote a very lucid comment and interpretation of my performance and will include it in her upcoming book! I'm very honoured and ask Jakob to put us in contact.

Today the museum is open longer, I take a (cold) soup from the green room and take it out in the yard where I sit and talk with Florian, Klara, Camillo, Gloria and Konstantin.

8.7.2023

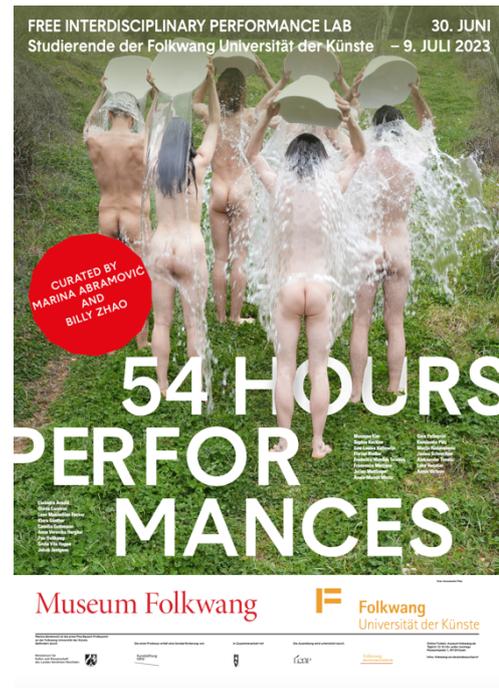
Before my usual breakfast I write down some ideas of adjustment/changes I could consider for my performance:

- I could give some pages of my diaries to some people in the public. This would enhance the fragmentation and the process of letting go. Actually I could still do this maybe on the last day – but this would also reduce the heap of paper and the height of the mountain of my memories.
- One could think/have thought about eliminating completely the translation, so that the public concentrates only on my voice and reactions, not on the contents (since they cannot be conveyed completely in any case).
- I could have another setting, where I don't see the public (for example sitting behind a one-way mirror), or on the contrary at the very same level with the public, without stage or maybe walking among them while reading. The first option, not seeing them could have helped to not smooth or paraphrase some texts, as I did sometimes with the sex scenes, mostly when children were there.

Before going to the museum, I pick up from a copy shop ten copies of the unofficial poster of the exhibition I realized with the group photo of the cold-shower ritual we did in Greece. I give one copy to all the participants of the photo shooting, but also others are interest in having one.

Today I cried a lot while reading in the performance about the end of my relationship with Christian. The security team even asked me after the six hours if I was fine.

I appreciated the hug and the comments of Wayne, who asks me also an update on the sentimental situation – he remembers the answer I gave in February to Marina that I was in love. But I tell him that that story is no longer up to date. Then, in the green room, he gives me food to eat like a mother.



On the way to my room, I meet Marija with a friend and Gaia with friend and brother. I join them shortly for a little beer, but then leave because I have a call with Marina and Billy. Marina asks how I am feeling, I tell her shortly the things I wrote in the last few pages here. She asks also when I can hand in the texts of the diaries for the catalogue.

9.7.2023

Same breakfast with very cute baker, Janson. As always, but for one last time, I check my set-up, do a stretching warm-up, get dressed in my black outfit. Fred bought roses and chocolate for the security team. They have been so caring, with some of them there was a strong empathy as well and they commented: we have changed the museum with our presence. At 11:30am we have a moment all together in the green room, where we all 24 and Wayne hug and stay there like this, close, all together, in silence, for very long. The six hours pass by extremely slowly. When I thought it was over, we were probably at the half of the performance.

Visitors stayed long on the bench. Christian came for the second time.

I perceive that outside is raining.

Towards the end a woman passes by, she has a bouquet of roses and leaves one in every room for every performer. She leaves one on my little stage, on the right.

Then I see and hear a young man on the bench ripping off a page from a notebook – a sound that I know really well. I'm incredibly curious to know what is going on, but I keep performing. I see him leaving this crumbled page on my stage as well. After the performance I will read the paper: "I was very moved by your sacrifice. Here is a page of mine in gratitude". I'm so thankful to this person that I will never meet again probably.

It's over, I read the last sentences, but I already hear the applause. Annika comes and tells me to reach the others in Klara's space. We get a huge, really long, really loud applause. Many of us and in the public cry. Also the sweet women of the ticket-box that know all our names. It's a great success, we performers hug one by one each other. We did it. The applause keeps going on.

When the public leaves, we do a video-call with Marina and Billy in Smila's cinema-spot. Marina repeats that when you do long durational works, you become part of a family – we will be always connected and never forget it. Marina also says that we can measure our success from the fact that we brought the security team to cry – which is something she never managed herself. Marina and Billy cry. We say goodbye. I hope to see them soon, hopefully in October for the launch of the catalogue.

We help Gloria with the plants. I get to know Jakob's mother, who wrote that beautiful text about fragmentation in my performance. Then I reach the big group to eat pizza – of course quattro formaggi notice Smila and Gaia! I have very good conversations with Anaïs, Gaia, ...

10.7.2023

Deinstall-day. I manage to do some photos with Gaia in my spot before the lights are changed and we start disassembling everything.

I spend all day in the museum and help the others, after having packed my thousand things. I walk around the empty spaces of the museum that are mostly already deinstalled and read the wall descriptions of the performances of the others in detail. It's my personal silent farewell from this place, so full of life for 10 days, now empty, tomorrow no more existent. Outside, on the back of the museum, there are only Camillo, Klara, Konstantin, Gaia, Julian and me – and we hug for a long time before saying goodbye. Camillo tells me in Italian "grazie di tutto". In the green room there is only Wayne left, who thanks me once again with a hug for the work we did together – I do have to thank him.

I'm the last one, completely alone in the green room – I'm waiting for Christian coming with the car from Düsseldorf for picking up me and my equipment.

I feel like in a limbo. Everything happened so quickly. Ten days, 54 hours performances. So intense – but in my perception it was all in one breath, one single time span.

I don't know why I don't feel nostalgia and the void yet, now, alone in the museum. Will I realize what we have done only in the next days? Or have I become – also thanks to this experience – more balanced, less troubled and obsessed with the past and in peace with the world?