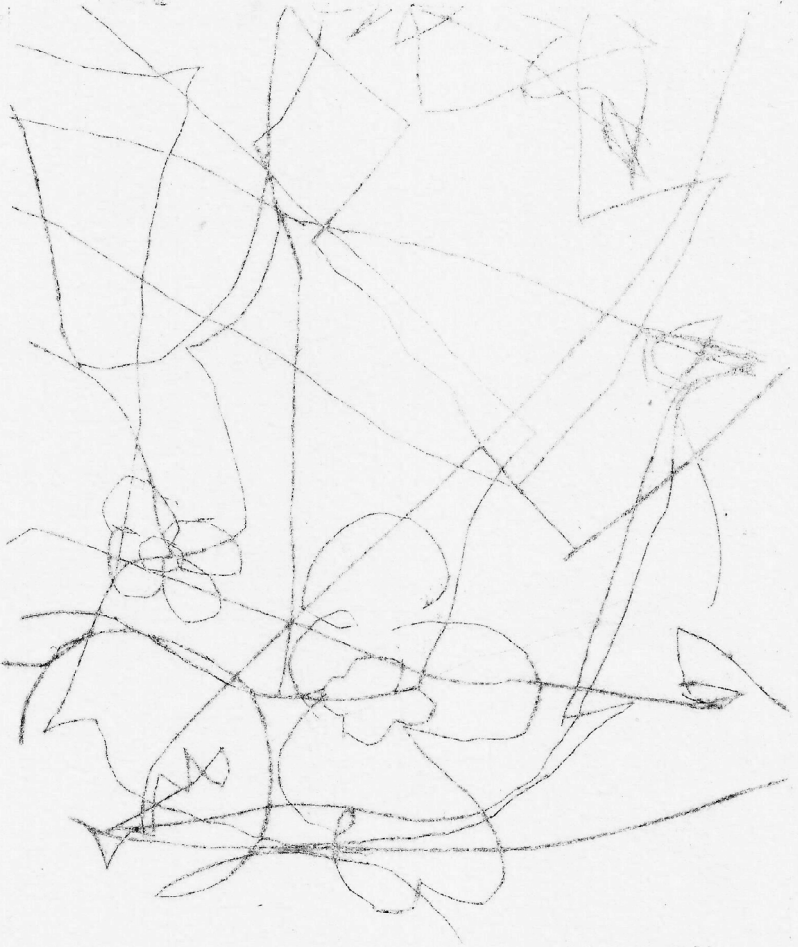


nr 5



Reflecting Light is a fanzine about *light* and *lighting* design in the arts.

After the darkness the lights go back on. But what is left on stage when that happens?

As a piece premieres, what has been left out? What is not there? Will what is there be influenced by what is gone? How is inclusion at large presenting itself?

What happens to the thoughts, the beautiful lines and spirited ideas, the harmonies that are cut out?

Where do the dead darlings go?

What is an autonomous decision in the realms of multimedia, how does hierarchy influence it, how does it relate to budget, how does a creation take its own shape? How much do we see what we don't know of?

This issue is about works that are complete and thought processes that overarch them. We are going into questions of authentic choices, artistic paths and inspiring collaborations, tight bottlenecks, short work processes, budgets that know nothing about Edward Gordon Craig, inspirations, conjunctions of thoughts, and how much they belong to the rest of our thoughts, how much one owns a thought or worse yet, when a thought starts owning a maker.

This issue includes special guests Meri Ekola, Ellen Knops and composer Bilawa Ade Respati. Meri Ekola will welcome us in her collective practice, Jan Maertens talks about how the practice of theater production functions against the expression of lighting among other media, and how it can be otherwise, Henri Emmanuel Doublier looks Dominique Bruguière in the eye and tells us about creative process but also seeing a body of work from the angle of the lighting designer's broader creative process. The edition hosts some works of Jan Fedinger's photo series with the same title as this fanzine.

Ellen

Knops

That whole idea of killing your darlings I think is a beautiful concept. When you have the luxury to try things out there are many darlings to be killed. But you always keep something from it. I do not have a problem with killing my darlings.

But sometimes you kill due to miscommunication or no communication with the set designer or the choreographer. As an example, one studio 52nd piece was about gaming. I am not really into that, so I did not really know what I was going to do. The sound designer, being 21-year-old, helped me to get the atmosphere right.

The actors walked into the world of gaming, but because it was a dark atmosphere the faces were not visible enough, so I had to change it drastically. On top of it the set designer reminded us that there would be a huge curtain coming in on the day of the premiere. So, my whole light plot fell into pieces.

That was a darling I had to kill for the wrong reason.

Ezra

Veldhuis

For the production *Matieklo (2018)*, which revolved around the poetry of Paul Celan, I was responsible for the scenography and lighting design. Throughout our rehearsals, we made two scenes where light played a central role. Unfortunately, one of these scenes didn't make it to the final performance.

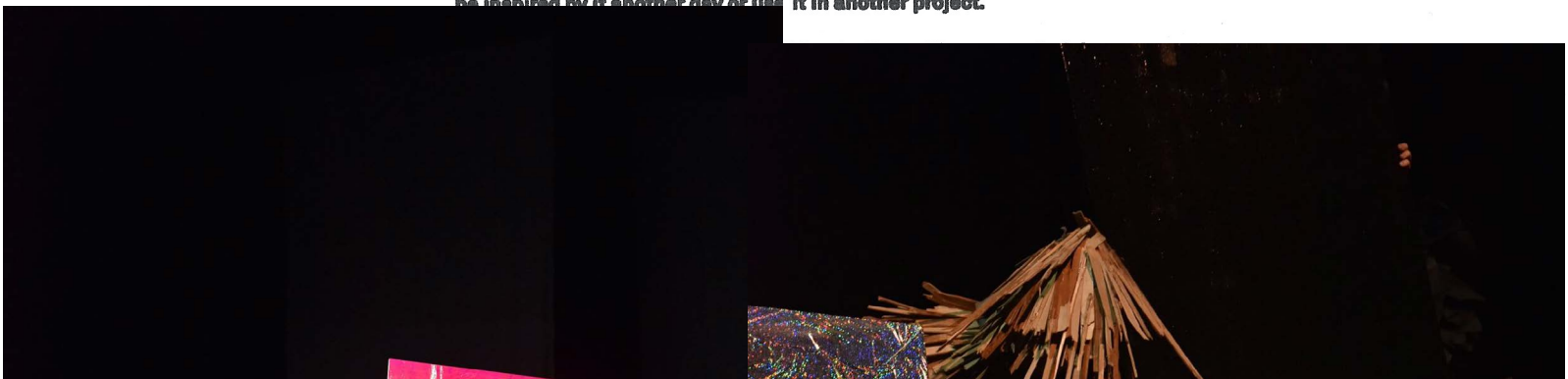
In the scene we ultimately cut, Joeri Happel and Benjamin Cools, the actors of the show, were in costumes – one entirely constructed from wood, the other from paper tissues. They entered carrying wooden panels adorned with various types of glitter foils, presenting them to the audience. Strategically positioned lamps behind and above the audience created diverse reflections within the space. This scene was intended as a poignant, poetic protest, serving as an interlude within the performance. However, after careful consideration of thematic coherence, another interlude was more fitting, leading to the omission of "the glitter protest".

It's a shame that we had to cut this scene, as the simple act of displaying boards with the somewhat tacky glitter foils created a playful, poetic moment within an overall serious performance. Since then, I keep trying to use these foils in other work. It hasn't succeeded yet, but of course I keep trying!

Jan

Fedinger

Every time - until I get over it, document the attempt, store it away, to be inspired by it another day or use it in another project.





Matisklo-©LynnVanOijstaeijen Matisklo-©LynnVanOijstaeijen

playful, poetic moment with
**Since then, I keep trying to use the same materials, but I haven't
 succeeded yet, but of course I keep trying!**

Jan

Fedingei

**Every time - until I get over it, document the attempt, store it away, to
 be inspired by it another day or use it in another project.**

Bilawa

Respat

**No, so far. But this is because I work by starting with many materials,
 taking them out along the way, and arrive with fewer materials.
 However, I never arrived at the point of «there is nothing left to take
 out.» The taking out stops, usually due to deadline or unsolved
 technical challenge/limitation.**

There was a time when I was nearly always frustrated. But since quite a long time now, I don't regret anything anymore. At the beginning of my career, I felt I was discovering very interesting tricks and images, composing with the light. I didn't realise that it was sometimes taking the lead and eating the choreography or the actors. And then, I was fighting, arguing, begging nearly on my knees the maker of the piece to keep this idea in the show. It even arrived to me to ask a director to take my name out of the program, because I wouldn't sign the lighting design if those reflectors (it was a piece I wanted to use reflections of light on white panels) weren't in the piece!!!

Now I consider the research moment of the creation as a playful moment, where ideas can be tried and if after this period nobody feels it's a good idea, I don't try to force it. I worked 20 years in a collective, and I trust in the gaze and sensitivity of a group of makers. I consider that a good idea has an immediate resonance with the piece and works by itself. We usually all agree when it works.

It arrives even more and more to me not to try an idea. I prefer to stay simple sometimes and I'm scared to try something too massive, which would take too much space and time, and money. So, I close my mouth. Even worse, there are some ideas that I decided not to do in the piece after trying it, even if the maker of the piece liked it, because I thought it was too heavy.

As Minna Tiikkainen says: « Lighting design is putting 80% of what we try to the trash bin » and I do agree ...

We try, it's fun. And if you don't like, ok, I really have no problem to put it in my toolbox and I don't regret anything.

What remains of the light

Henri-Emmanuel Doublier

Dominique Bruguière, France's best-known lighting designer, has written a book called *Penser la Lumière* with researcher Chantal HURAUULT analysing her creative processes. The book is particularly interesting, as it gives many pertinent examples drawn from her vivid memories.

She has worked with some of the most innovative directors and choreographers¹. Her subtle use of

Alfredo Arias, Luc Bondy, Yousef Chahine, Petrice Sheraou, Emma Dante, Jerome Deschamps, Arnaud Desplachin, Catherine Durrabin, Jean-Claude Fall, Héla Fârouni and Eric Lamouroux, Darío Fo, Jean-Claude Gallota, Christophe Honoré, Agnès Jaoui, Georges Laveil, Nicolas Le Riche, Marie-Claude Pietragalla, Dominique Pitoiset, Anjelijn Prajsoaj, Pascal Rambert, Claude Régy, Yasmine Reza, Bernard Sobel, Umberto Wilson, Peter Zadek, Francesca Zambello.

light has left a sparkling echo in the history of the performing arts. As preliminary phase of creation, she documents herself, reads the text, imagines, studies the plan of the set designer, and chooses the type of fixtures, and the angle at which they will be hung. She describes this as geometric work, using a ruler, protractor and set square. She also models the set in 3D to ensure perfect rendering of the shadows and cast shadows created by the main light sources. She then observes the staging during rehearsals and imagines how she will write her composition. Finally comes the moment that she's particularly fond of, the composition phase. During this phase, she writes her light in the darkness of the theatre.

Light affects the narrative, space and time of a performance. So, what influences the decisions and choices the lighting designer must make when faced with so many possibilities? Dominique Bruguière writes that the richer the diversity of sources is, the greater the freedom to invent, to create layers of transparency, hues and textures that blend and mutually enrich each other.

But on what basis do you decide to go for contrasting light that reinforces dramatic intensity, indicates time, weight and pressure; or for directional light that creates visual and spatial hierarchies, defines and sculpts; or for diffused, all-encompassing light, dissolving boundaries and contours, opening up a bare, vacant space. There are so many possibilities for density of substance, transparency, thickness. Possibilities of playing with temporality in a spectacular or subliminal way. The possibility of creating ruptures. To create a style that blends in with the spoken words, the movement or the musical score. Or that breaks away from it.

Above all, there is the interpretation, the intuition, the imagination, the vision and the know-how of the lighting designer. And it is from the lighting designer that the aesthetic direction of the lighting starts. Dominique says that directing is made up of successive approaches, of moments of advancing and retreating, which can divert her from her intuitions. She needs to shield herself from external impulses in order to focus on the moment of realisation when everything comes together.

As she composes the lighting, Dominique Bruguière leaves plenty of room for the emotions the stage work evokes in her. She feels caught up in the dichotomy of letting go and hyper-awareness, giving free rein to an element of irrationality. This state gives her the ability to embrace the whole: the audience, the body, the faces, the music and the set, and to interweave her score with theirs. She describes composing as a connection between a visual and a sound from the scene and the images in her subconscious.

Throughout the book, we follow the various factors that influence the creation of lighting a show. As we saw earlier, she begins to create with a

What remains of the light

Henri-Emmanuel Doublier

dedicated attention to the set plan. It is fundamental for her to begin with this in-depth, geometric study of the space. "Once I've found the spatial structure, I can enter into the otherness of the collective dream". The décor therefore has a primordial influence on her work. She also talks about her relationship with the set designer, a relationship based on dialogue and sometimes conflict. Conflicts are also part of the story of the creation of a show. She quotes the set designer Richard Petuzzi, for whom she has great artistic regard. She talks about her relationship with Daniel Jeanneteau's set designs, which proposed sets and textures designed for light. For her, this close collaboration is the quintessential union between set design and lighting, giving rise to a troubling and moving dialogue. Beyond the set, she also questions the soul of the place, the theatre. Should lighting make its walls exist or, on the contrary, make them disappear, depending on whether we are talking about the outside or the inside?

But more than giving texture to the set, light is what brings people together!

Dominique wants the actors to be free in the space she creates.

She creates a light that is meaningful to the actor through its angle, intensity and quality: frontal, targeted or global, diagonal, vertical, side, fragmented, moving or fixed light. Certain actors have a direct influence on her work, such as Isabelle Huppert, who does not want to see the audience to be able to concentrate, which multiplies the sources and directions on her.

During the rehearsal phase, Dominique Bruguère doesn't necessarily need to talk to the director. Instead, she feeds her imagination by observing his work. She has a reading of the whole that is not necessarily the same as the director's ideas, and this sometimes creates conflicts during the composition phase.

Lighting has great power. It can bring the narrative into a different context, confusing and unsettling, but also pushes the show further or elsewhere in terms of

aesthetics or meaning. This power opens the field of reflection on the place that directors really attribute to ~~lighting~~ *lighting*.

It also happens that the director influences the lighting designer's voice. There's this touching story: When Dominique Bruguère was creating the lighting design for "Time and the Room" with Patrice Chéreau at her side, he asked her to compose an effect that she found distasteful. The set had several windows and they had defined a naturalistic aesthetic. The light passing through the windows evoked temporality. For a certain transition, Patrice Chéreau asked Dominique to programme the light so that each window would switch on and off independently to the rhythm of the music. Dominique was sceptical at first but was won over by the relevance of this effect, which allowed her to escape from the narrative and the representation of reality. It was a great lesson in freedom for her.

She worked with Patrice Chéreau for a long time and recalls the great moments of complicity when they composed passionately together after rehearsals, alone in the theatre, imagining the actors and the staging through the images they were constructing. She also refers to her long collaboration with Luc Bondy, which took her far away from the spectacular. Luc Bondy was a Swiss director who, before directing the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris, had worked for a long time in Germany and Austria. He kept in touch with his contacts across the Rhine and continued to create and perform there. As a result of his work in German theatres, Luc Bondy was used to the kind of lighting that really lit up the actors' eyes. When Dominique was creating with him in Vienna, she realised that the theatres were equipped with spotlights under the cap or in the first balcony so that the actors' faces were well lit, without shadows. This light coming from the front created a flattening rather than a relief and clashed with the set. This concept, which she called "non-light", was a revelation for her. Her long collaboration with Luc Bondy led her artistic approach to evolve towards a desire for precise but discrete lighting. Without emphasis.

The experimentation with German light resulted in a simplicity of purity for the last two Patrice Chéreau shows that she lit.

So, I can't help thinking about what I wrote in this Fanzine about one of these last two shows:

The *Rêve d'automne* written by John Fosse, directed by Patrice Chéreau, created in 2010 and with the lighting design of the master of light in France, Dominique Bruguière, was for me a total disappointment. The lighting design had no dramaturgy. It was just lighting the set and the actors in a comfortable way, but without any strong propositions. It seems that Patrice Chéreau had a vision for the light about this piece for not dramatising, not creating semiological meaning, or not hiding anything.

Thanks to Dominique Bruguière's writings on the genesis of this piece, I was able to follow her approach and I now understand better why the light seemed so neutral and without emphasis.

Rêve d'automne was created in the Louvre Museum in Paris. Dominique's approach was one of purity. She wanted to blend into the natural light of the museum's rooms. She wanted the light she added to the actors to remain discrete and sensitive.

When Richard Petuzzi created an exact replica of the museum on the stage of the city's theatre, Dominique had the intuition that she should continue with this approach, also guided by the desire to do away with shock effects and flamboyant aesthetics.

We followed Dominique Bruguière's creative process and noted the significant influence of the set designer, actor and director during the lighting composition phase. We saw how she positioned herself within a collective of artists and technicians. The importance of the "we" in favour of the "I".

Understanding Dominique Bruguière's artistic approach to the creation of *Rêve d'automne* opened my eyes to the importance of the "I": I'm convinced that what remains of the lighting on stage is above all the lighting designer's

state of achievement, approach and artistic maturity. Alongside our lighting creations, we all carry out our own personal research. This is reflected in every piece we light. I can recognise the lighting of all the members of our research collective, because I know their preoccupations and their desires: intermingling subtle colours, creating layers of strange textures born of different qualities of light, programming software for innovative rendering, working on the musicality of light, questioning the status of representation...

What remains of the light on stage is the abstract unveiling of our uniqueness.

Is there a work that you witnessed
where you noticed a trace of
something missing?

Is there a work that you witnessed
where you noticed a trace of
something missing?

Emese

Csorna

**Yes, mostly in works that could not find a way to my heart.
It is easy to tell when a piece is created in disharmonious *circumstances.*
circumstances.**

**When I see the very local staged art language codes that we take over
not weighing the benefits, I wish for a more consistent international
touring network in Europe.**

Ellen

Knops

**I would say yes, but I wouldn't be able to bring an example.
I worked with SNDO a long time and they all asked for 201 in the gel *department.*
department.**

**The teachers were, the students were, and it is not my favourite color.
And then I saw a piece of one of them, and the whole piece was lit in
201, 202 and 203-s, but beautifully done.**

**And then I was like: now I understand what you all meant. It made
me realize that you can only design from your own feeling, taste
and ability. If someone asks something that is not inside of you, you *cannot.*
cannot.**

Henri-Emmanuel

Doublier

**Yes, sometimes I feel that there is no dramaturgical line, that the
light doesn't propose anything, that it is just something to see or
to accompany, that it does not create the visual line, that there
is no quality, no vision. I can feel then that there is no desire (or
misunderstanding in the artistic crew, or no time, or no money, or a bad
technical support, a bad performing space...) to develop something
with the light.**

**It arrived to me a lot when I saw theatre plays specially in the OFF
program at Avignon. But I could perceive that even in big productions.
The « Rêve d'automne » written by John Fosse, directed by Patrice
Shéreau, created in 2010 and with the lighting design of the
master of light in France, Dominique Bruguière, was for me a total
disappointment. The lighting design had no dramaturgy. It was just
lighting the set and the actors in a comfortable way, but without any
strong propositions. It seems that Patrice Shéreau had a vision for the
light about this piece for not dramatizing, not creating semiological
meaning, or not hiding anything. The taking out stops, usually
due to deadline or unsolved technical challenge/limitation.**

Between thought and expression.

Jan Maertens

The on-stage technical creation phase into a new performing arts project is too often thought to be a linear process. After having spent the condoned meandering time – non-technical time that is mostly – to make up artistic minds and set the noses in sync, the hands-on technical creation process is presumed to be straightforward. Consequently, the creative potential of working with stage-technical media gets diluted and narrowed down to a one directional pragmatic processing and wrapping up of pre-thought ideas. There is of course the ever-scarce time and limited budget to work creatively while enjoying a stage in its full technical extend. But giving in to a Realpolitik of all too pragmatic technical production planning, would mean ruling out possible agency of technical media in a post-humanist materialist approach to performing arts. So how can we, lighting designers, escape the common functionality process-thinking in favour of installing agency with lights while staying within a reasonable process-functionality?

When starting up a stage production process by brainstorming and collectively thinking out loud, all too concrete design ideas coming out of that preliminary phase will, later, rarely nor directly be leading to satisfying results. Materialist agency doesn't let itself pre-think.. Also, artistic technical drafts often lose their co-creating and performative potential when their actual concretisation is being manoeuvred towards the end of the production process and trial-and-error is no longer an option. It is hard to make abstraction of the full implementation, both functional and artistic, of a technical medium installed on top of a performance-still-to-become. Be it that it might be suggested as a

shortcoming by the institutional definition of quality to the job, an all too confident and sustained belief in humanising materialist design leads in my opinion unavoidably to uninspired window-dressing, first degree representation or reactionary spectacularity. We should let the lighting design speak more for itself! And by itself!

On the one hand, exactly playing out the cards of working with an abstract medium may give a lighting designer the advantage of iterative re-interpretation or re-contextualisation of pre-thought working constructs. Be it that, within this approach, preliminary work shouldn't be considered uniquely functional towards a concrete production, but rather in line with an overall working method or a conceptual approach to the lighting design job as such. In an ideal world, potential agency of lighting design is being valued in a fair, consistent, and constant communication towards and with other co-creators. In the real production world however, its chances within a singular production are often limited to a functional epilogue or a trial-without-error. Therefore, it is important to open to a more comprehensive experimentation level based on trial-and-error with a broader perspective:

A dead end in a particular production line up, might be worthwhile re-investigating in a next one.

A darling killed in function of a director's cut might inspire another director.

An at first glance unfinished discourse might only get fully outspoken over more productions.

A promising attempt might need to find multiple projects to get fine-tuned in all its potential.

...

Between thought and expression.

Jan Maertens

Just don't mistake this working method for serial recuperation of second-hand ideas. A rather systematic exercise, be it conscious or circumstantial, is at the base here to understand and practice the full potential of lighting design's agency on stage. On the contrary, it would be pretentious to believe that a lighting design process functions as a pop-up of ever freshly invented ideas and proposals while anticipating all implications towards the performance-to-become. All has been done before :-)

It is renewing an idea's materialist-humanist interplay that is able to generate contemporary performativity. And it is especially due to the abstract nature of the lighting design vocabulary - variety in temporal and spatial quantity & quality, contrast & tone, rhythm & duration, ... that what is left on one stage, doesn't necessarily lose validity to get re-contextualised on another one: an abstract language looks to be interpreted within the concrete world it is spoken in, along the narrative of the performance it lends its agency to.

On the other hand, and that might initially sound as a contradiction, working with this long-term notion of pre-thought working constructs, might even help the lighting designer answer the ever-impatient quest for originality. It should be clear that implementing abstract working concepts over a history of productions isn't a linear process at all. When processing this, while truly relying on the inherent agency of the lighting design medium, one soon ends up in a multidimensional world with many connecting circuits: similar preliminary constructs lead to a variety of directions when being exercised in different situations, depending on variable conditions, confronting different line ups, juxtaposed to ever changing co-producers of content, ... Given the rather uniform toolbox and staging context, a dull repetition on designing lights

won't be overcome by simply tracking along an all too evidently chosen meta-trajectory of trial-and-error... albeit that perseverance is a quality too :-)

But exactly making lighting design speak for itself while reckoning its plural agency within a multiform of exercises, can generate an ever renewed source of inspiration to make lighting genuinely perform. To an adept, a well-wrought implementation of the metier with a consistent behaviour on that multidimensional circuit board of humanist and materialist interaction, might then well be addressed to as signature design... knowing that this is not to be confused with repetitive design. But I do believe that it is such signature design, although not always rationally understood by solicitor or receiver, that makes lighting design a valuable co-performer on stage.

But may we conclude in the first place, that the lack of unconstrained technical experimentation time as well as the insatiable thirst for novelty can both be overcome - to a certain extent that is of course - by revitalising what once has been left on stage. Or in other words: what is left on stage, waits between (initial) thought and (further) expression.

Did you ever miss something
from a piece that evolved into
something greater?

Jan

Fedinger

Every project I have been in attempts to produce something totally new but has to acknowledge that it is carried by past ideas, assembled in new circumstances. Many ideas I try in creation processes might have been born out of other situations. Something in the 'new' process of creation triggered their memory to apply them in this circumstance. This is when they turn into something new. I don't know if such a thing as a wrong idea exists [in creative arts at least]. Maybe it is just an idea whose time hasn't come yet. Therefore, every idea that I dismiss from a project enters my carrier bag of inspirations. There is for example a folder on my computer with half-baked concepts that did not make it into the projects they once were intended for. This bag of inspirations is what I open to stimulate my own fantasy and those of others. What I bring to start and feed conversations. What helps me to illustrate possibilities. To this I must add that I treat every project as a playground, as a test setup for something I want to research for myself. A friend once gave me the advice that if I gave my time to other people's projects, I should always make sure that I could get something out of there for myself.

Ellen

Knops

Sometimes you have an idea or a tool that you would love to use in a piece. For me that was a LED strip. I had a 1m long LED strip, and I tried to push it into a piece. I don't mean the meter, but the things you could do with it. I wanted light to come from the middle of the room, instead of from up. You can tape the LED strip into the floor, that tickled my imagination.

I tried it out in a rehearsal for a new piece, and it did not really do the thing I thought it would do. I wanted a little stripe of light in the room the dancers would pass through, but the LEDs would not at all do it - it didn't do anything, basically.

In the end I put up profiles with a centimetre wide stripe, in a pattern. I was proud of thinking about that, and proud of what the dancers did with it. They understood it completely. There a darling showed me what I wanted and how to achieve it in a completely different way.

Later, in a different piece, someone wanted a light object in space, and I thought of several spirals of LED hanging down. I showed the meter and said: Jelena, imagine this is 10 meters long. And she said: I cannot. I need to see it. And I said: that is very expensive. I still had my meters of LED strips, I had some now, some cold, some warm.

When I showed the LED strip to Jonathan, he knew what is 10m. He said he wanted a circle, and he wanted 30m. At a point there were 3 circles 3 dancers and 3 times 30m.

Meri

Ekola

I once had the idea of huge inflatable stage element that would slowly take over the space and the performers would just get pushed away from the stage. How this triggered the imagination was wild and we really researched for materials and techniques for implementing the idea. But still we never realized it, we were just talking about it with longing. This thought process created an imaginary presence of something immense in the stage that was invisible and this was a very nice feeling in the eventual performance, that would not have been achieved if the element would have actually been there.

Bilawa

Respati

Once in 2021, I had a collective performance in the form of a pop-up dinner. In between the long performance, I was asked to create a musical transition. I played with the idea of gamelan generative music, using self-recorded gamelan samples, but dismissed the idea due to impracticality and the rather disjunct aesthetics with the rest of the performance. In 2023, recording "serious" gamelan samples became the main premise of the project Latent Sonorities with the musician Morgan Sully and the composer Khyam Allami. The computer program for the dismissed generative music builds the base of our current work Distant Memories of the Void (2024).

Letter to a future collaborator

Meri Ekola

The final outcome of a performance is mostly a direct result of the nature of the creative process and how it is conducted. Underlying conditions, like the budget, are an easy-to-guess influence on any final artistic result, but in this text I want to focus on some more opaque aspects that the stage reflects as well. That is why I want to ask the question 'What is left on stage?' by taking a look at the premises of the collaborative and process-driven work by the performance collective Oblivia (FI).

Collaboration in Oblivia happens both between long-time members with extensive experience of working together and visitors who join on specific projects. Having spent over ten years in Oblivia, where my role has involved creating lighting and scenographic interactions in performances, I still find the collective's creative process mysterious.

Collaboration is rooted in experiential knowledge and it truly unfolds through experience. Observing numerous encounters over the years has revealed the diverse responses of visitors to being submerged in the process of an unexpected kind — sometimes assimilating, sometimes clashing, and also rebelling against it. For this fanzine I engaged in the exercise of writing a letter to an imaginary future collaborator about the creative process of Oblivia.

Dear colleague,

Letter to a future collaborator

Meri Ekola

To ease your landing as a part of this group I write you this letter. I will introduce you to our work by describing three key qualities of our collaboration and how they resonate in practice. Recognising these qualities will help you to navigate through the process, from the first steps of our collaboration till the final outcome on stage.

Before we start, it is necessary to understand that our work stems from a starting point where there is only minimal knowledge about the resulting performance, where the implied methods are grounded in improvisation and devising, where there is an excess of overlapping input without a hierarchy of decision making. It might be challenging at times for all of us to adjust to this multifaceted working environment where there are no definitive yes or no, answers that are right or wrong.

Trust is the mental cornerstone to build the processual and collaborative work ethics we believe in. Trust the people gathered to work on this performance—trust in their professionalism, personality, opinions, and sense of responsibility. The work is grounded in the idea of performance-making as a form of thinking together. It is a shared process but also very individual. There is a great deal of respect for each individual's input, as well as for the group's collective will, both of which are formulated through a cyclic process of sending and receiving and adjusting in between. Trust in the process that develops over time. It will consist of good times and bad times, busy periods and slow periods, it might feel gradual, chaotic, unorganised, or stuck, but its function is clear and powerful. When the process is given the trust, it feels as though the work is shaping itself autonomously.

Curiosity creates the overall conversational mode, providing the fuel and organisation for our work. It serves as the access point to the various themes we explore, legitimising our expertise in only making our own interpretations. We are aware that, as a group of individuals, we share a fairly similar socio-cultural background, which is also where our curiosity is rooted.

Openness is the mindset and precondition for engaging in the creative process. It entails sensitivity and a willingness to seek pathways forward, to recognise thoughts that seek collective formulation, and to give those thoughts the attention they require. Decisions emerge through listening and interpreting these moments of occurrence. They are sometimes silently internalised and digested, rather than firmly declared—they can be difficult to trace. It is the moods, feelings, tendencies, preferences, and

wishes that bring the process forward, rather than explicit *decisions* *decision*

The entire working period is a process of constant entrance and exit, coming ins and leaving outs. Everything and everyone can be alive in the process, taking centre stage for a period of time, with no preconceived notion that their presence is to stay. In the beginning, everything is trying to find its way to the stage. Even the small anecdote heard during a break tries to sneak in, seeking a suitable moment to become part of the process, to be transformed, reinterpreted or reimagined.

Over time, the persistence of certain materials begins to manifest itself, revealing the entanglement of various bodies and media as a result of trust and openness. The same notes are played, steps repeated, and as the light dims in counterpoint, questions arise and connections are on the verge of formulation. There is something in there, and this something makes us curious.

Building on these three qualities—trust, openness and curiosity—the performance takes shape and is finally set on stage as well. The process leaves behind a hybrid formulation, a complex system, which functioning is tuned together in a way that it is hard to break down into cued components. We live through the performance in an open encounter with the audience, trusting our invented constellation of altering presences of various human and material performers. While remaining curious about the transmission of the questions we continue to ask ourselves.

Please feel safe and welcome. Let the process begin.

Did you see a work where one gesture made the rest seem irrelevant?

Ellen

Knops

Not a specific piece. When the first videos were staged 30 years ago, it was quite hip, and it was something new to add video. They were always overpowering the stage. It took everybody a while people came to the conclusion that yes, using video is beautiful but you really have to pace it and be careful that its not becoming a videoplay, with the rest ignored. Anything that is bigger than the things going on on stage, it takes all the attention. In one performance I have seen a live recording where they tilted the camera, filming the backstage at Melkweg. There the dressing room is on the right, so you would see someone rolling down the right backstage and the door opened and he appeared on stage. That was the first time I thought, you get it! That is the only thing I still remember from the piece.

Emese

Csornai

I have seen Notebook of Agota Kristof from Forced Entertainment a long time ago at HAU. The twins starring the story were in unison, mirror-perfect in a large but confined square on two sides. They were always speaking in unison until one escaped the country. This was such a powerful staging concept that I felt nothing more was needed; it would work outside the theatre too.

Meri

Ekola

Yes, I have that feeling, but I can't come with that example right now. It connects with the idea that some element has such a strong influence on the interpretation that it unbalances the whole, that other elements just seem minor factors next to it. Or when some gesture is so strong, like approaching the audience physically in a manner that feels intruding, no words, or safety guidelines can undo this effect.

Henri-Emmanuel

Doublier

The worst example for me is, 80% of the time, rock concerts, where after 10 minutes of using effects that can blow you up, you don't feel anything anymore because it was too much, not written, couldn't keep strong effects for specific moments, the use of angles and colours without knowledge. Then there are visual artists and directors like Bob Wilson or Romeo Castellucci, that I admire a lot. But I admit that sometimes, I feel that the massive stage and the light installation take the lead on the performance and the piece itself. I could see "Moses and Aaron" at the Opéra national de Paris in 2015, which made a lasting impression on me with its stylised beauty, its ritually powerful images and its dialectic of black and white, reflecting the moral conflict and the difficulties of telling and

showing that are at the very heart of Schönberg's work.

But, during this Opera, I really felt a distance from the performance and the music two times. The first time because for one scene, the profiles were so badly focused that we could see irisation and the curve of the shutters.

A second time, he used so much smoke that we couldn't even see the smoke and light installation. (Maybe a mistake that night).

It reminds me of a joke of Jan Fedinger. For one show, he is using a lot of smoke. And one night, he did too much. At the end, someone told him that, because of the smoke, he couldn't see the dance. And he answered: but you could see the smoke!

What's left on stage?

Jan Fedinger

What's left on stage?

what is left on stage once the lights have gone out? Once the applause has echoed from every last corner of the theatre? Although everyone in attendance will agree that some.thing has happened, there on stage, it might be a little more complicated to define what that some.thing was and even harder what it still might be. Much has been written

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Aitana

excerpt from whats left on stage

What's left on stage?

Jan Fedinger



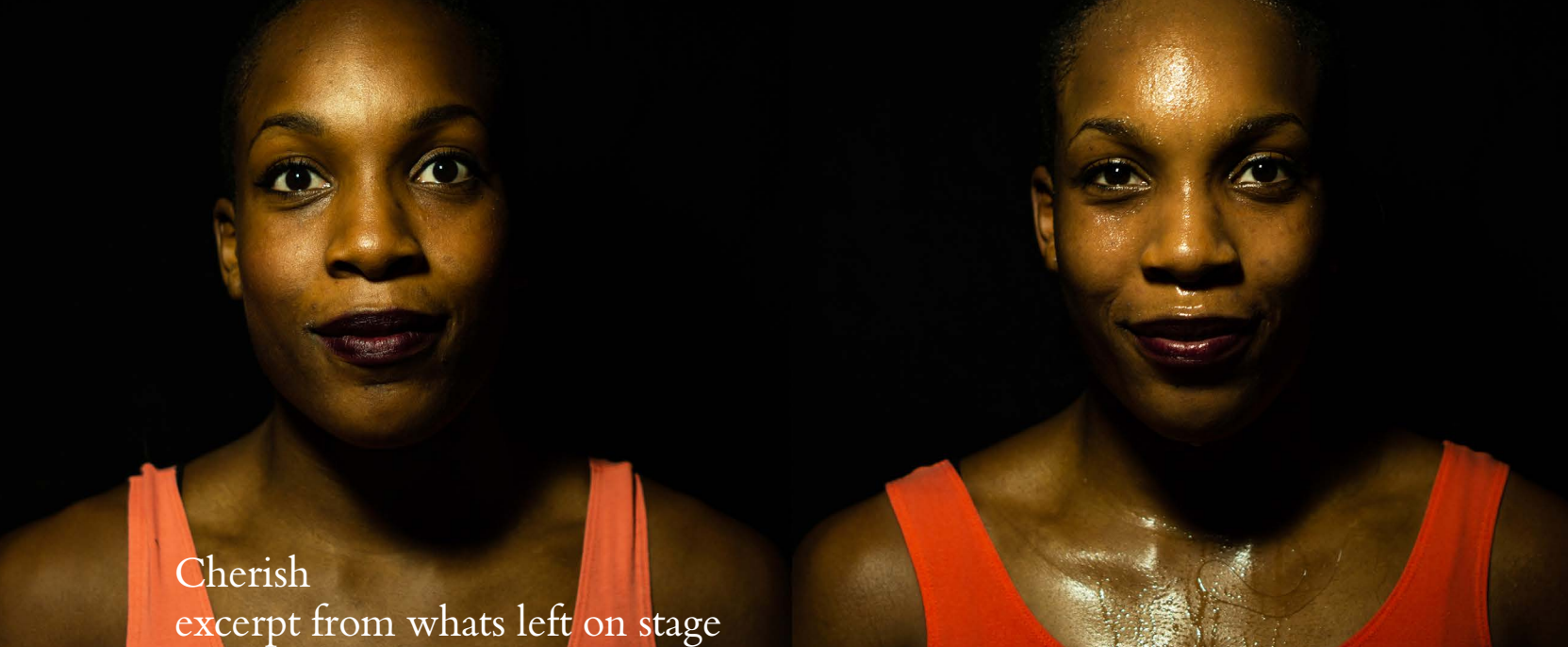
Marcus

excerpt from whats left on stage

about the ephemeral nature of theatre, of life and alive art. About how IT disappears after IT has happened. Disappeared without a tangible trace and transformed into a memory. Sound can be recorded, listened to again and again in the comfort of one's home. You could place a piece of scenography in a frame and hang it onto your wall, but just like the actions of the performers on stage, the light no longer IS THERE. Both disciplines of theatre share this volatile nature of being in the moment, part of an experience that you can't take physically with you. Or is it really this simple? To find out I started to photograph performers just before they entered the stage and immediately after they left it again. To find out what they had brought to the stage, what they had left there, what was no longer with them after they had exited the confines of the defined space that makes for the theatre.



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Cherish excerpt from whats left on stage

I asked myself: if there was something they had brought, that was no longer with them, then maybe I could also understand what the light had been doing there. If IT had brought some.thing to the stage? What had been ITS impact? The value IT had added. The transformation IT had initiated / brought about. Had the lights been similarly consumed ? If the light similarly could not have been taken home by the audience then it might still be there. Still reflecting from the walls, the floor and other surfaces. Maybe

on stage?
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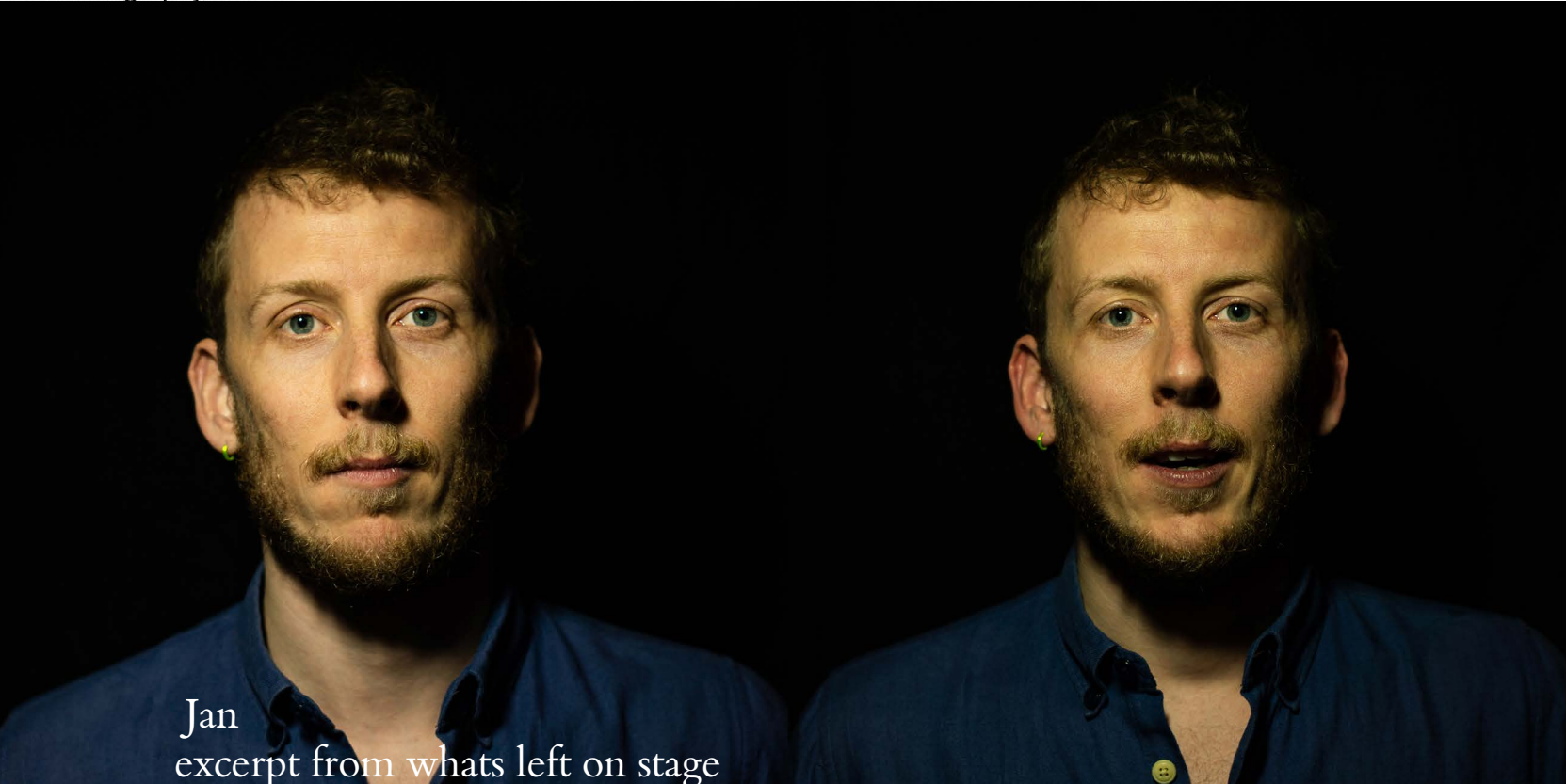
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the light was still bouncing around the particles of dust that linger through the space.

Why did I assume that the performers left the stage with less than they brought? Maybe within the time shared with the audience a transformation occurred, an exchange of energy of some sort. Not a simple loss, or one way distribution of energy. While the performers maybe did not leave with everything they brought, but might have gained some.thing else in return. Another undefinable some.thing. [acknowledgement, recognition, respect] They gave some. They gained some. And what about the lights? What role did they play?

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They gave some. They gained some.
And what about the lights? What role did they play?
What impact did they have and on whom? Did the
lights leave some.thing on stage and left with some.
thing else?



Jan
excerpt from whats left on stage

What is left on stage

Members of the research group: Emese Csornai, Henri Emmanuel Doublier, Jan Fedinger, Tomi Humalisto, Jan Maertens, Bruno Pocheron Ezra Veldhuis, Bram Coeman & Geert Belpaeme.

V.u. Geert Belpaeme



...design in the arts. The research project *Reflecting Light* is financed by the HOGENT Arts Research Fund and co-financed by BUDA arts centre (Kortrijk), HAUT (Copenhagen) and Mad House (Helsinki).

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