

Simone: 1 Min

Hello!

I'm Simone Basani, I am the editor of the fourth book "Choreography as Self-Conditioning" and contributed to the last book of the series "Choreography as Conditioning".

Thinking about the presentation of the completed book series, we decided to parasite the format "book lunch" in order to not only present the books, but also a new project.

So today we all want to celebrate what has been done and we, who organised this event, also want to introduce a new project that stems from the published texts.

We want to share with you some thoughts about how we imagine to work with the books during the next years.

We want to propose to look at them as co-practitioners, in order to continue the dialogue with them and among us - and today invite you and other practitioners who are present today—, to be part of this.

In the following minutes Heike Langsdorf will revisit how this book series came about, Alex Arteaga will shortly reflect on a core aspect which connects the book series with the new project and Alice Ciresola will explain how we imagine this new project, called

"Disclosing practices ...through books".

Heike 6 Min:

Hello, I am Heike Langsdorf, I am co-editor of the book-series, and the singular books also, and did eventually contribute also to all of them.

How did it happen that many people would become part of a working and writing process under the title “Choreography as Conditioning”, developed between 2017 and 2021?

To be more specific, how did we arrive at a total of about 75 people and organizations contributing to this books series?

It's not my aim to give you the answers to these questions. What I will do is to look back on my initial preoccupations around which people ended up gathering. For this reason I will occasionally quote myself in the next few minutes.

It all started with me receiving the opportunity to apply for a research grant at KASK school of arts HoGent...

... in combination with me being ready to put my fascination of how attention works, at work: what is there to do for me with the fact that attention giving causes attention taking and vice versa.

Well, I proposed “Distraction as Discipline” as a vehicle through which I wanted to

“investigate the function of attention and participation in performance art, art pedagogy, artists texts, writing and thinking practices.”

“Allowing for coincidences, mistakes and failures... What does that mean for an artist in times in which aspiring for high efficiency is the norm?”

I was struggling to clearly identify my object of research. Furthermore I had difficulties imagining how my research would lead me to final conclusions -- knowing that I didn't want to conclude but rather to come to open ends.

Eventually I found a way... — I wrote,

“I want to elaborate on the value that can stem from 'being distracted' and equally investigate the significance of a certain kind of attention coming along with this.

I want to actively participate and let others participate in artistic processes while acknowledging the consequences of that. It is a process of discretely embedding oneself in a reality, a physical or mental environment, and finding one's way there (...)"

When I got granted the proposed research, 'something' could start exactly as I wanted it: with 'someone' -- in this case me -- being thrown into an apparatus -- in this case KASK school of arts:

"a heterogeneous network of components that intervene in existing power relationships, in order to develop them into a certain direction."

A year later I found myself writing in the first introduction to the first book, "Thinking Conditioning through Practice".

"I am currently working as artistic researcher and instructor in the Department of Autonomous Design at KASK School of Arts in Ghent. There, I find myself in a rather specific situation in which a vivid confusion about artistic realms, disciplines, and pedagogies characterizes my daily routine. In this atmosphere that does not prescribe what needs to happen or stipulate the intentions with which work is made, I feel motivated to acknowledge the need to practice together and to reflect on how we make things. By "things", I intend not only objects or performances, but also scores, concepts, and processes that we borrow from dance, choreography, performance, design, installation art, interventions, happenings, events, activism, conversations, etc."

The way our attention works, makes us participate in the world, vice versa, the way we participate in the world, makes our attention be directed here or there or everywhere ...going somewhere...

So, how to reclaim attention and participation in a performance driven society. Performance considered a way of practicing in a quantifying and competitive way.

"Not only 'performance' has become a dominant concept in the corporate culture and the world of technology, but also the invitation to participate in performance has turned into a command. Everything and everyone to-

day needs 'performing'; our cars, our politicians, ourselves ... in the classroom, in front of the camera, at work, in bed ... In addition, our society constantly screams for attention. The infobesity, the oversaturation of images, multitasking ... occupying us through many screens, cause, so-called 'hyper attention': a restless and fragmented kind of attention. You see it everywhere, even in the theater and the class: people are finding it increasingly difficult to raise intensive, contemplative attention to something. How can performance and pedagogy resist the overwhelming power of contemporary, de-subjectifying devices? How can we reclaim hijacked concepts such as attention and participation?"

(This was a quote-quote, me quoting me quoting Jon McKenzie in his famous "Perform or Else -- from Discipline to Performance" from 2001.)

Together with Alex we decided that I would keep close to my given environment, and that he would make sure that we would find a way not to write about but through our collective work.

What did that mean?

Well, for me what it meant was not clear back then, but now I trust that these books -- made possible by many people -- can give a glimpse.

Writing ...through practices left many things resonate further in me, most strongly these four:

- that it's hard to understand what we can afford, sustain and therefore promise to ourselves — and then possibly to others.
- that without the care for one self it is impossible to care for others
- that working together should reinforce what we have in common on the basis of self-trust.
- that continuation and repetition is what I need to consider as the principles of my artistic activity -- not in order to simply insist, but to maintain a non conclusive, transformative motion.

Alex: 3,5 min

I'm Alex Arteaga. together with Heike I co-edited the book series and contributed to the first and the last book.

Listening to Heike's words I believe to recognize a recurrent theme, a leitmotif, a "roten Faden" —we would say in German—a component of Heike's thinking that connects all other elements and that articulates them in a specific way. This element is a preposition, both in its grammatical sense and, regarding the composition of this word—pre-position—a position taken in advance, a perspective, an approach. The word that fulfills this function is "through" —"through practices" and now "through books".

This word, as the German term for "preposition" indicates—"Verhältniswort"—expresses a particular variety of relation. In the framework of this project, these variety of relation is realized as relations established between practices—the internal structure of practices, the performance of practices, the practitioners that perform them or the artifacts that practices might generate—and the focus of these practices, that is, the issues they tackle, the objects, concepts, situations or states of affairs to which they attend and intend.

The specificity of the form of relation that expresses the word "through" can be outlined, metaphorically, in terms of transparency. Practices or, now, books—the entities that enable the dynamic gesture of passing across—are not opaque. They do not reclaim and absorb the light that falls onto them, but let it go through. Practices and books, in this context, are not opaque but translucent: they allow the light to cross their own consistency and illuminate something else. Practices and books here are not objects of attention but media for awareness—conditions of possibility for something else to be "seen".

If during the making of the books—I could say "through making books"—practices performed mostly in other media enabled the realization of practices of writing ("writing though practices"), in the project we present today books become the translucent medium that will allow us to disclose practices.

Alice will now tell you more in detail how this new project—"disclosing practices through books"—is intended to work.

Alice Ciresola: 14 min

I am Alice Ciresola. I have followed the creation of the last 2 books of the series and their publication from afar. It was before summer 2021 and I had just started collaborating with Heike. I observed that Choreography as Conditioning was very relevant for the people gravitating around radical_hope, Heike's platform for artistic research and co-creation.

Unlike many of you, who have probably followed the process step by step, and who may have read the books one after the other, immediately after their publication, I found myself holding the 5 of them in my hands all at once, like a rich treasure of universes to discover.

I actually met some of you firstly reading what you had written for the series, a very intriguing way to meet a practitioner, via their writing through their own practice. "Writing through practices" has been the leading idea for these books.

"Writing through practices" is not writing about practices. "Writing through practices" is performing a practice in the medium of language—writing—conditioned by other practices.

When Heike, Alex and Simone asked me to think with them about how to communicate and celebrate the publication of this series, we all spontaneously thought that this series should not be understood as a point of arrival, but rather as a starting point. In fact, writing and reading these books brings with it the idea of moving forward...

This was the point of departure of a new project: Disclosing practices ... through books, which I will now briefly present to you.

One of the fundamental ideas behind this project is to consider these books not as passive entities (as I said before as mere points of arrival), but as matter endowed with epistemic agency, as "colleagues of research and study", as partners in a dialogue, as, what we like to call, "co-practitioners".

In this way, the books extend an invitation.

Those who have written through their practices are invited now to go back to them - to their practices - to reactivate them, make them emerge, make them become evident, visible, through a process that we name "disclosure", hence the title "Disclosing practices.. through books".

The project consists precisely in creating the adequate conditions - in terms of time, space, context, modes of presentation - to disclose practices through the performance of these practices, namely by practicing practices.

Each disclosure will focus on one specific practice. With disclosure we mean to unveil the practice at stake, that is, to provide evidence of the practice. We don't aim at representing, describing, defining or speculating theoretically about the practice, but rather at leaving space for the practice itself to emerge, to speak for itself.

We see this series of "disclosures" as potentially endless and as a constellation of events to be developed between 2023 - 2027, in Belgium or abroad.

radical_hope and their committing partner-organisations are working on a co-production circuit which practitioners can join as co-producers of their own "disclosure".

When we began to conceive this project, we realized that only by doing ourselves the first disclosures we could understand what this really means. That's the reason why we decided that Alex, Heike and Simone would conceive and realize the first three projects.

In this sense, the first three disclosures that we are introducing today are not to be understood as a model to be replicated. They are meant to be cases of study for the clarification of what "disclosing a practice" might mean. Taking these cases as a reference, each further disclosure should choose a specific practice and the means for its disclosure.

We want to introduce them to you as they show how different the size and the typology of a disclosure can be.

This constitutes a base to start getting in dialogue with you who have contributed to the books if you are interested. This can happen here tonight around the bar or in the next weeks, months.

I would like to present now a short description of the first three disclosures in order to try to make clear the project to which we are inviting you to participate.

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Alex will go back to his research practice of “exploratory essay writing”. This practice is conceived and performed as an aesthetic research practice of very slow observation. Two exploratory essays have been published in the book series.

For disclosing this practice, he will work in two phases. In the first, a series of essays on an ongoing urban-architectural project will be written by a group of invited practitioners in a “writing retreat”. In the second, the resulting essays will be shared in specific ways with other practitioners such as architects, sociologists, or local politicians engaged with the urban-architectural project at stake. Whereas the first phase will enable a disclosure of the performance of the practice, the second will facilitate the disclosure of its transformative agency in the field of urban conception, organization and construction.

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Heike will disclose a new practice to be developed in response to writing ***through*** Mount Tackle, a piece for the big theatre space.

Mount Tackle was the ‘making public’ of her research “investigating attention and participation” in a physically shared space. This provides now a fertile basis for Heike to conceive a first ‘disclosure’ of a research practice.

The new practice to be disclosed will aim at enabling for witnessing the many stages there are between ‘getting inspired’ and coming to ‘articulated thought’.

She will start next year with a couple of small residencies in order to find out what actually needs to be put in practice. She will start with herself and the materiality of the books, and step by step find out how many co-practitioners she needs to

gather in order to work towards a disclosure as a public event or even a new piece in two years.

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Simone will disclose his research practice “Unrequested Services” which he explored in the last book of the series. For him, Unrequested services can be understood as a field of art practices of individual and collective empowerment, the existence of which is based on politics of attention and collaboration...

For this disclosure, he will propose to a group of practitioners interested in collaboration / participation / social-political engagement through the arts to come together.

They will be invited to collectively and critically work with other possible meanings of the term “services” in the realm of the arts. In particular those services that nobody requested if not the artists themselves following their own desires and needs.

To do that, the group of practitioners will focus on the same place for at least three months, be it a building, a street or a specific neighborhood. The practitioners will be invited to react, misread, interpret or contradict the practice protocol Simone’s established.

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As already said, these are very brief outlines of three possible first disclosures. We hope that the diversity of these three cases will reinforce our invitation to imagine, if you are interested, your own disclosures.