KAJSA SANDSTRÖM
These images are written on my body

KATJA SEITAJOKI
In-between images
Tracing a self-portrait
Emmy Hennings

Emmy Hennings (17 January 1885 – 10 August 1948) was a performer and poet. At the Cabaret Simplizissimus in Munich, she met Hugo Ball in 1913. At the time, Hennings was already a published poet. Hennings and Ball moved to Zurich in 1915, where they took part in the founding of the Cabaret Voltaire, which marked the beginning of the Dada movement. Hennings was a regular performer at the Cabaret Voltaire. Her performances included a role in Das Leben des Menschen (the Life of a Man), in which she appeared with Ball. Hennings sang, did puppetry, and danced. She also recited her own poetry. In 1916 Ball and Hennings created Arabella, their own ensemble troupe, where Hennings performed under the name Dagny. Hennings married Ball on 21 February 1920. Although they had no children together, Hennings had a daughter, Annemarie, from a previous relationship. Hennings, who outlived Ball by two decades, lived in Magliaso, Switzerland from 1942 to 1948. Despite her own achievements, it is difficult to come by information in English about Hennings that is not directly related to her relationship with Hugo Ball. Several biographies of Hennings have been published in German.

Dancer

Emmy Hennings

To you, it is as if I were already marked
And stood on the list of those to die.
It keeps me from committing certain sins.
How slowly I am draining life.
And my steps are so often fearful,
My heart has a sickly beat.
And weakens with each passing day.
An angel of death stands in the center of my room.
Still, I dance until I'm out of breath.
I will soon lie in the grave.
And nobody will snuggle with me.
Ahh, give me kisses until I die.

(Translated by Glenn Wallis)
Hannah Höch

Hannah Höch (November 1, 1889 – May 31, 1978) was a German Dada artist and pioneer of the art form that became known as photomontage. Many of her pieces sardonically critique the mass culture beauty industry, at the time gaining significant momentum in mass media through the rise of fashion and advertising photography. Her works from 1926 to 1935 often depicted same sex couples, and women were once again a central theme in her work from 1963 to 1973. Höch also made strong statements on racial discrimination. Her most famous piece is *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser DADA durch die letzte weimarer Bierbauchkulturrepoche Deutschlands* ("Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany"), a critique of Weimar Germany in 1919. This piece combines images from newspapers of the time re-created to make a new statement about life and art in the Dada movement.
Sophie Tauber

Sophie Tauber (January 19, 1889 – January 13, 1943) was a Swiss artist, painter, sculptor and dancer. Considered one of the most important artists of geometric abstraction of the 20th century. In 1916 she attended the Laban School of Dance in Zürich and in the summer she joined the artist colony of Monte Verità in Ascona; in 1917, she danced with Mary Wigman and others at the Sun Festival organized by Laban in Ascona. In 1915, at an exhibition at the Tanner Gallery, she met the Dada artist Jean Arp, with whom she was to collaborate on numerous joint projects until her death in 1943. They married in 1922 and she changed her last name to Tauber-Arp.

Tauber was involved in the Zürich Dada movement, which centered on the Cabaret Voltaire. She took part in Dada-inspired performances as a dancer, choreographer, and puppeteer; and she designed puppets, costumes, and sets for performances at the Cabaret Voltaire as well as for other Swiss and French theaters. At the opening of the Galerie Dada in 1917, she danced to poetry by Hugo Ball wearing a shamanic mask by Marcel Janco. A year later, she was a co-signer of the Zurich Dada Manifesto. She also made a number of sculptural works, such as a set of abstract "Dada Heads" of turned polychromed wood. With their witty resemblance to the ubiquitous small stands used by hatmakers, they typified her elegant synthesis of the fine and applied arts.

Many museums around the world have her work in their collections, but in the public consciousness her reputation lagged for many years behind that of her more famous husband.

Sophie Tauber – Dada Head, 1920
Following dialogue between Katja Seitajoki, Mairana My Suikkanen Gomes and Kajsa Sandström, took place by email a few days before the premiere of THESE IMAGES ARE WRITTEN ON MY BODY & IN-BETWEEN IMAGES. Tracing a self-portrait, at MDT 22, 23 March 2013.

Katja: I was very happy when Kajsa suggested that Marianna would participate as a writer in the fanzine. Kajsa and I were working for a shared evening at MDT. 1, 5 years earlier I had invited Kajsa to join my project. In the process we had created a practice for discussion and artistic experimentation. During this time, we created various interests that could lead to a project. Finally, my project turned out to be a tracing of a self-portrait. A dialogical self-portrait.

In a Bottle I have worked with the dialogical, in a polyphonic form, since 2006. The group has searched for different methods to cooperate with the aim to work non-hierarchically. Is it possible to work non-hierarchical? The dialogue between Kajsa and me, was influenced by books we read, courses we attended, performances we saw, discussions with other artists and the environment around us. My project started to be about spaces that are created in-between meetings, impressions, words, sounds, touch and desires. So, Marianna, tell us a bit about why you wanted to join us in writing the fanzine?

Marianna: Well... Let's see how I can express this... I think in some way this for me connects all the way back to leaving Sweden and moving to London, what I did there, and what has happened since then, in my life and in my work (which is all the same anyway, of course). So choices I made that had to do with growing up doing theatre and then finding that there was not really a place for me within that in Sweden, the training didn't feel adequate for what I wanted to explore (and also they didn't want me at the schools anyway, ha, ha). So initially this thing that most young people go through of "should I let myself be defined by others or do I need to uncover my own path", and in my case it led to this Live Arts degree in the UK where I got the chance to throw out these ideas of learning about fitting into a traditional theatre mold, and at the same time live in a fantastic city where if people asked me where I was from it was because everyone in London is originally from somewhere else, they weren't asking because I had black hair. It was this absolutely essential thing for me to do, to leave, I would have totally lost my mind if I hadn't done it, but in the sense of the work I did it naturally felt like I spent the whole time at university unlearning, liberating myself from being a cute and "duktig" actor, and just generally making a fool of myself, trying all these things I never knew I was allowed to do and diving fairly deep into both studying contemporary art/performance but also making embarrassingly therapeutic pieces and trying to find out who I was, or something. And in the working process I was quite alone - which takes me back to answering your question really. Since unwillingly coming back to Stockholm, and especially after the MA year (The Autonomous Actor, curated by Danjel Andersson) it has felt like it's very necessary to open up dialogues with others as much as possible. It's in those encounters, when I can visit someone in the studio and give some kind of attempt at feedback, and see that this attempt is of worth to that persons process, that's when I sense that perhaps it will be possible to work and exist here. Kajsa and I met originally via Frank Vercruyssen who was our guest professor during the Autonomous-year, and I've been wanting to get closer to her process for a couple of years now, so when I visited the rehearsal a month ago that's when the seed for continuing to talk, in
connection to both of your pieces was sown. I'm not quite sure I've
gotten to the answer to your question yet, Katja - but let's keep
talking and see where it takes us, yeah? So, about a non-hierarchical
dialogue - this is something I'm interested in and trying to establish,
although it can somehow never be more than an intention that at best
leads to other ways of dialoguing than the usual ones. Or am I wrong?
Kajsa, could you tell me a little bit of the past year and a half of
collaborating with Katja?

Kajsa: Ultimately, there is a desire in me to share more. When Katja
invited me to be in dialogue with her while working on her new solo
piece, it interested me very much. I have regularly worked on my own,
making three previous solo pieces, and am still interested in questions
regarding the solo artist, working with her self as material, the
direct relation between the audience and spectator and parameters
involved in that meeting. Which was also the theme of my newly written
project description, for THESE IMAGES ARE WRITTEN ON MY BODY.
When working close with someone else it is difficult to draw the line
between what is myself and what is the other. I think the basic frame
for Katja's work also became the main theme of her investigation.
(Correct me if I am putting it wrongly, Katja.) It was a great time for
me to get to know Katja while following her process. Katja's work is
very theoretically oriented and through her process I discovered many
texts and got a generous space to join in with reflections. We were
discussing a lot of different things and parallel to this an artistic
practice formed too, led by Katja. Though there are common themes
running through both works this evening, each piece has been made in
different ways. While Katja has continuously shared her process, with
me since the start in 2011 and with Kajsa Whadía, who is performing in
the piece, I have - again - spent almost all the time alone. Though
this own space of creation is actually very important to me, I am
also looking for ways to share it. I invited Kevin Doyle to join me
during a week in residence in November. I had the feeling he could see
some things in the work based on the response he showed for previous
pieces and I was curious to see how he work. It was a good intuition.
Kevin has lifted some things up in relation to images and sound used
in the performance -- which was absolutely accurate in relation to
how the material was made. For me this way of sharing a certain part
of a process works well. To this piece, Ingrid Hedén Wahlberg made a
musical composition and Annika Sandström made signs. Apart from working
alone I enjoy to be part of different kinds of processes and am mostly
curious to learn and discover what I can do and share with my knowledge
and skills in new ways, under new circumstances. Yesterday I came back
from a weeks' work with children in an orphanage and artists within
the project Corners of Europe, by Intercult. That experience really
overturned my perspective on art in communication completely. And it
was a wonderful experience.

But I wonder, perhaps I wish:
Is it possible to continue this dialogue while the pieces are being
shaped and encapsulated in their own forms? How can discussions and
questions raised by the work extend after a premiere? Regarding modes
of producing a dance piece in Sweden today; it seems important to try
to find ways to extend the life of an artistic process beyond the
performance itself -- not to stop making pieces necessarily but to see
the work extending beyond the single experience of the performance.
Nothing new, but real.
So, Mariana. When you came to my studio about a month ago I felt that you could relate to questions I have been concerned with while working. That helped me to see some things about what this work may evoke for someone else. I was glad to hear that you also recognized yourself in the questions of "becoming" and in the search for inspiration in work by other female artists. What do you have to say about that subject? You wrote to me before about the problematic division between artists and 'female artists' and wanting to shake it all off you ...

Mariana: I think what I relate to and what somehow also brought me back to the years I spent in London is working with the self as material, and perhaps also performance-making that has a relationship to, or a starting point in, visual art - rather than the starting point being "the craft" (of the actor/dancer). It was a big deal to me to be able to study and have a teacher that started Wednesday session by saying "So this morning we will begin by looking at some vulva-based work", I was watching this documentation video and being like "This woman made art with her vagina and has possibly never attended a voice lesson to learn how to recite Moliere properly!!". It was like the act of watching her body-art simultaneously offered me a space in the world. I honestly had never understood that you could go to art school to do something other than painting or sculpture. It wasn't really the case of searching for inspiration in work mainly by female artists, more gorging on a vast amount of work by artists that I had never been exposed to before, and a lot of them also happened to be women. The work I made myself during those studies isn't anything that I'd like to exhibit or perform now, but I can still see that each day, and each step on the way were part of a process of 'becoming' through the experience of making and doing, rather than through the gaze of the other - if that makes sense at all?

When you were showing me your material recently in the studio, something reminded me of those years, and it made complete sense to me that you had been, in part, inspired by three artists from the Dada movement (which was part of my curriculum back in the London days). What came as more of a surprise was that these artists, women all three of them, seemed to have been erased from the canon and therefore it was through your work that I was given the first chance of getting to know about their existence and their work. Later, when I gave someone the flyer for THESE IMAGES ARE WRITTEN ON MY BODY and IN-BETWEEN IMAGES, the question came up about the problematic division between artists and 'female artists', whether marketing forces us to phrase things in a way that is counterproductive. This is not something that I am personally on a mission to shake off myself; it's more something that I tend to hear reactions around in society at large (or not, as it may be). You know - how people talk about 'women's football' or 'female filmmakers' or 'female artists' but it never has to be emphasized if it's a premiere by a 'male choreographer'. Ahh, I get kind of tired and want to fall off my chair and snore just even putting it into writing here... but is it something that you would like to address before I ask my next question to Katja?

Katja: I see. I understand the point that it isn’t necessary to put ‘female’ before artist today. However, when I came across these artists, they weren't presented as just Dada artists. The fact is that I was also inspired by the perspective in, the book Dadas Women, by Ruth Hemus. The time these artists existed within was a strong
framework for their possibilities to work and 'become' as artists. Sometimes those conditions were inherent in their themes too. Which continued to diminish their importance. I understand the perspective and critique if revisiting history continues to manifest women as marginalized, today. But I must add that there are different ways one can lift things from this process. I have not made three portraits of these artists but let myself become inspired by their art and life in my own reflections. I am thinking that this is a way of sharing just as well -- working in relation to previous artists work is giving a perspective on one's own.

Ok. I think we can leave this topic now, open for several possible views.

Mariana: Absolutely.
Katja, about your self-portrait - could you tell me something about how it has developed over time and in what sense the dialogue with Kajsa Sandström and Kajsa Wadhia has contributed to the process? Also I'm very curious about something that was mentioned in regard to reshaping of the subject, and what this in-between ness that you are working with...?

Katja: Yes, the performance I am creating in collaboration with many other voices is a tracing of what I am in dialogue with others. In this concrete process it has been Kajsa Sandström, Kajsa Wadhia, Tommi Seitajoki (who has made the films) and Ingrid Hedlin Wahlberg (who has made the sound). The journey is a tracing, a dialogue where I have been influenced very much by the others. So, in some way maybe I even have lost myself, or erased myself. But anyway in the end I think every one stands alone with the decisions and has to make the choices self. So, the whole, (helheten), I have created but the parts in collaboration with the others. And the question is if the whole is bigger than the parts or if the parts are always bigger then the whole. Anyway I would say that the subject becomes in collaboration with others. In this way my process is near Kajsa's theme. How do we become. I am focusing on how we become in relation to other people but also the unknown. In particular I am focusing on the boarder-space between different spaces and languages. It is a multiple space. Because of this Kajsa Wadhia is making many multi-tasking practices in the performance. I am fascinated of how the human being has a capacity to navigate between different spaces at the same time and in some strange way orientate oneself and become in-between the spaces. I am intrigued about how the human being can perform many things at the same time, maybe unconsciously but anyway. I am also interested in how we can connect with other people. Sometimes I experience that people, at least in the Western countries, have difficult to connect with each other and to trust one another. Since one can feel that everything is capitalized; feelings, thoughts etc. This becomes a difficulty when we should organize each other. It is difficult to create a group outside Facebook's liking-system. I don't want to criticize Facebook in this sense but I think it is a bit too easy to press the like button. In the end it seems that it doesn't really mean anything. But when one gets many likes on Facebook this anyhow influence one. It is easy to expose one self's private life at Facebook, but what are we really showing there? In my self-portrait, or artist-portrait you get nothing of my private secrets, except from that I admit that I have been very lost in the tracing and that I still don't really know where I am in the piece. Maybe I am only disorder. In
this process I affirm the self that is lost, baffled, and in a space where one don’t really know where one is. It is a quite weak subject, which is listening to others. I don’t really like this state, since I am always scared there, but I would like to have courage to let me be there more. It is a space where one has not articulated yet, and one has many possibilities. It is a state where the subject is ambiguous. I think this is an interesting space with potentiality of a huge creativity.

I would like to ask you a question about desire. I am amazed of how many artists and women are working in spaces with difficult economical and social situation. What is driving them... and probably me. Has it something to do with desire? And what is this?

Kajsa: Katja, I can pick up the thread by pointing to two things that you have each said before in this text. What continues to drive at least me, doing this, is definitely looking for- and enabling spaces with (huge) potential for creativity and - like Mariana wrote - the process of ‘becoming’ through the experience of making and doing, rather than (only) through the gaze of the other. That makes a lot of sense to me. On the one hand an instinct for freedom and creation and on the other, the desire to share important things with others. Big words!

What do you think Mariana?

Mariana: Wow. Huge question. And somehow overwhelming, all the layers of it. There comes a wave of reluctance - putting words on what drives me feels surprisingly dangerous and connected to taboo. But yes absolutely - many, many layers of desires... constructive and destructive ones. Again reconnecting to something you were talking about earlier Katja, the difficulty to connect with others when everything is capitalized. I recognize a desire to establish moments of interpersonal intimacy, or possibilities for collective creation that are not a commodity (whether it is in relation to collaborators or in relation to spectator/s). I realise these are probably vain attempts but they are necessary to me. Also there is the desire to let desire be the deciding factor in the working process. Here I am talking about the emancipation of the actor, to cast off the role as well trained puppet who exists to embody someone else’s vision and instead create ones own material or even just be ones own dramaturge and choose what words from the script you want to say. This is a perspective that was the basis of our Master year, and it may sound bonkers that you would even need to teach it - but at least in the field of theatre in this country this is nowhere near an obvious fact (the actor as artist). And of course the desire to keep working, despite all the social and economical hurdles. To have audacity enough to maintain an attitude of sheer stubbornness and persistence, even on the margins.
MDT program texts

The program texts is a series of unedited fanzine-style booklets available on the MDT website and in a limited cost price edition, printed, folded and stapled on MDT’s Konica Minolta All-in-one Copier.

MDT

MDT is an international co-production platform and a leading venue for contemporary choreography and performance in Stockholm. MDT was founded in 1986 and has ever since presented Swedish and international emerging artists. MDT is supported by Kulturförvaltningen Stockholm stad, Kulturrådet and Kulturförvaltningen Stockholms läns landsting.

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