HEINE
AVDAL
YUKIKO
SHINOZAKI
"UNANNOUNCED"
MDT program texts

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This interview with Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki is part of *unwritten conversations*, fieldworks’ most recent project, in which the artists invite long-time collaborators to reflect on past processes, and to experiment with new ideas and practices, without a specific outcome or set endpoint in mind. This edition, with dance dramaturg and scholar Sara Jansen, is a work-in-progress that continues to develop, across different iterations. It started with a lecture as part of *fieldworks PORTRAIT*, a retrospective of Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki’s recent body of work at Pact Zollverein in Essen, Germany (June 15 to 17, 2018), and has since developed into a lecture-performance (July 2018) and a journal publication (December 2018). Additional iterations (a performance, and a book) are in the works. While revisiting and variously (re-) animating the fieldworks archive, *unwritten conversations* also generates an archive of its own.

This conversation took place at Mok café in Brussels on January 18, 2019.

Yukiko Shinozaki: We are not so interested in *audience participation* per se, but we do ask the audience to walk with us, to follow a route, and to not stay seated. We assume that they will follow us but this remains uncertain.

Heine Avdal: You never know how the audience will respond. There’s always an element of “uncertainty, danger, or chance” to the creation process. But it is something we also like to introduce into the performance itself, into the moment we share with the audience. There’s always an element of *chance*.

Yukiko: This is also the case in *Field Works-Office* (2010) and in *Field Works-Hotel* (2009).

Heine: You open a certain *space* to the audience, and then you give them an opportunity to interact with this space. Sometimes you wait and see how do they take on this invitation. In the *Hotel* performance, for instance, it’s about who inhabits a room first. Usually it’s the performer, the performer inhabits the space first. But in some cases we let the audience go in first. We see how they react, and then we try to respond, the performer tries to respond to the situation. We explore the opposite order. How do we enter a space?

Yukiko: In *you are here* (2008), the audience is seated. They do enter across the stage but after that, they stay seated. We hand them small boxes to pass along, and what they do with them is also open. We do introduce a *system*. It’s even clarified on a led screen above the stage. But recently someone in the audience began to keep the boxes and refused to pass them on to the next person. This reaction of the audience becomes a part of the show.

Sara Jansen: I very much like this idea of “giving space” to the audience… Could you say more about how you work with the notion of uncertainty as part of the creative process?

Heine: We often work very intuitively. This was also the case for *unannounced*. We invited more people to work with us without making too many plans.
Yukiko: Sometimes a good idea pops up when you are really uncertain. When we were working on nothing's for something (2012), for instance, we were lying on the floor, stretching, one day, when we saw a curtain, left behind by another dance company, floating in front of a radiator. This curtain was moving. We both thought: “this is so nice.” The space is almost breathing. The fabric is breathing. You don’t see the air or the wind. You see the wind because of the movements of the curtain. This is an example of what we like to call the presence of absence. We were already planning to use helium balloons in this performance, as a way to work with sound, but then we thought: “why not use curtains attached to balloons?” ... to make curtains move. I remember this moment, of not knowing, when we were in an empty dance studio, just observing our surroundings. Sometimes a great idea originates in this way, from noticing a very small detail.

Sara: It’s about chance encounters, perhaps, or chance discoveries? This idea of the discovery, or of not knowing is also central to unannounced, for me, as a spectator. When I enter the performance, I enter a space that I don’t know. I might know the theatre where the performance takes place, and I certainly know what theatre does - I have been to the theatre. I mean - but somehow you treat this familiar space as a space we don’t yet know. Could you say something about that? And about how you start working on a performance such as unannounced? It, in a sense, aims to undo a familiar space. How do you go about undoing a space?

Heine: I think it’s about looking at all the elements in that space, and about re-considering everything. And about opening up the space so unexpected things can happen. It’s not really about danger, but you do put yourself in a difficult situation, and then you have to solve it somehow.

Sara: You destabilize or unsettle the situation?

Heine: You put yourself in an unstable position, and you have to survive. Sometimes it’s like that. Like now, for instance, we are making a film in Trondheim and I am really wondering how I’m going to get out of this situation, and how I am going to survive this. Is this danger…? I think we could go much further into that. I also like the idea that the process can happen any time, at any moment, anywhere. It is much more about a state of mind than about having the right tools at hand. I can walk in the city, or I can be wherever… it is more about opening myself up to my surroundings.

Yukiko: Recently, we were talking about when we work and when we don’t. For us, this boundary is also completely blurred.

Heine: Yes, that’s also an example of blurring the moment.

Yukiko: And blurring space.

Sara: This happens also when I am writing. Most of the time, ideas don’t come when I am sitting down to write but rather when I am walking in the city and my focus is elsewhere, when I am distracted.

Yukiko: Doing the dishes.
Heine: Or in the **in-between moments**. You may be in the studio and work intensively for 8 hours straight and nothing happens, and then you go and you change your clothes and you take the garbage out and suddenly something happens that makes you go like “wow.”

Sara: Your brain needs some downtime to put everything together. You mentioned that the **unknown** is a recurring theme in your work....

Heine: It is really OK for us to go there when it’s just the two of us but when we invite more people, that makes it more complicated.

Yukiko: Because you feel responsible. When it’s just the two of us and we are lost, we are lost. We are not afraid of not knowing. If you know everything, there is no need to make a piece.

Sara: You want to discover things within the process.

Yukiko: Yes, but I also question that approach. Some choreographers decide on a specific topic before they start: it’s about this, or based on this book, or about a political statement they want to make, and so on. We do start with a few elements in place, but it’s only through making the piece that the issues become visible, afterwards. So it’s the other way around, at least for me. A few key words do always pop up. In *unannounced*, we wanted to focus on **light**, or darkness. Previously, we talked about space, and about sound, but we took light for granted. When you make a performance in a theatre space, there is always the issue of light.

Heine: But this also came out of **nothing for something**, in which we worked on the idea of visible black, which we liked. That’s why I also like this sentence: “Darkness can have a tactility, a weight.” (Miyam. Sas on Shunji Terayama) Darkness is dark, but when does darkness become visible? I like the notion of **visible black, visible darkness**.

Yukiko: We started working with mag lights and projectors. In the beginning, we had one huge projector, and we walked around with it. But then we discovered small projectors, and they became a light source. We also experimented with fluorescence. The different elements of the performance look unrelated but they are all connected to this notion of darkness, and light. We also always work with diverse **materials**, and props. It’s about solving practical questions. For **nothing’s for something**, we travel with eight suitcases. In *unannounced*, we use lots of props, but we decided not to bring anything on tour, and to use what we find in the theatre instead. That’s why we use cleaning products, light bulbs, and so on: ordinary objects, common to every theatre. How you arrange them becomes important, like with the curtain, how the curtain drops.... It’s all composed. It’s a complete fiction. It feels like non-fiction, because it looks like an average theatre: it’s a little bit messy in the back stage, there are left over coffee cups and beer bottles, .... But in most cases we placed them there. How do you construct a composed mess?
Heine: It is also a material blackout. We use all kind of material, or a wall, for instance, to make something visible or not visible. It's another kind of blackout or a block out.

Sara: This kind of manipulation of objects, the way in which these arrangements of objects look “real” but are at the same time “not real,” also reflects how you treat the theatre space, and the theatre, in general. It's performance but is it? It's about the boundaries between reality and fiction: the fiction of reality and the reality of fiction. Concretely, what do you bring when you go to a theatre, and to what extent do you work with what you find there? I am curious to know more about your process, as you choose to not travel to a theatre with a finished performance, with an object, as it were, to present or show. This is a recurrent theme in your work: you like to (re-) create performances on site.

Heine: We tend to integrate objects that we find on the way, often completely by chance. We like the encounters that are part of the creative process. In unannounced we wanted to introduce this aspect into the performance situation as well. That is why we wanted to include found objects in another way.

Yukiko: What is nice is that, to set up the backstage area, we don't ask the theatre for a specific amount of buckets, for instance, or specify their colors, but leave it to coincidence. We find what we find. It's always different. Sometimes the theatre provides a huge Genie, sometimes a ladder. Sometimes there are ten chairs. It's always different. It looks kind of the same but slightly different. For Kristianis and myself – we dance backstage – this means that we have to recreate our part for each place where we perform, which keeps the dance fresh. It's not completely set, we don't do exactly the same every time. In this sense, the process is integrated into the performance. I like that.

Heine: In every space, there are objects that belong but don't belong. Do you know what I mean?

Sara: You mean that they are out of place?

Heine: Even at a café or a restaurant, where-ever you go, you will always encounter objects that are there but that are not accounted for. There are always objects just laying around.

Yukiko: When we presented Caro on in Bergen (in 2016), we found a garbage bag in the basement, and when we looked inside we saw that there were ten wedding dresses in it. That was really strange.

Heine: There's this whole world of objects, just floating around, and left out, somehow.

Sara: No-one pays attention to them, you mean?

Yukiko: But somehow, objects, when you think about it… our human body, when we die, we disappear, but sometimes objects stick around longer than we do. Sometimes that is a really powerful image.
Sara: In the theatre, there are probably many such objects, left behind. People forget things.

Heine: And there are broken things. When people are not sure whether to keep them or throw them away, repair them or not. Then there is the old set and the new set. Like at Stuk in Leuven (Belgium) recently, we didn’t go into the basement with the audience as part of unannounced in the end, but I came across the old seating of the dance studio there, the old wooden chairs, and they were so beautiful, stacked in a corner of the basement.

Sara: Like the ruins of the theatre, its history.

Heine: A kind of archeology.

Yukiko: We also know the old Stuk.

Heine: I was so struck by this, by encountering the old chairs there, that I really wanted to use this situation, and go there as part of the performance, but somehow it didn’t work out. These objects also say something about the history of the place, where it comes from.

Sara: I assume that sometimes it’s difficult to gain access to certain areas of a building. Perhaps that’s also part of the identity of the space itself, that parts are restricted, that you are not supposed to open all doors, and that some things have to remain hidden. What does it mean when there’s a kind of resistance, on the part of the theatre, to open up these spaces?

Heine: Yes, what does it mean to open up a space?

Yukiko: When we were making unannounced, we talked about the first part, the guided tour, as opening up the space. Normally it is so closed. How do we open up this space? It is also always interesting to see the technical rooms, the boiler room, the laundry room, and so on, rooms that you don’t pay attention to, but without which the theatre does not function.

Sara: It’s part of the underlying structure that supports the system as a whole?

Yukiko: The architecture of the building does not just consist of the main hall and the foyer. There are many other spaces. We always talk about a non-hierarchical process. In terms of space, there is no space that is not needed somehow. We didn’t only examine the light and the music, for instance, but also wanted to extend our non-hierarchical approach to the space, and not only include the actual theatre space.

Heine: This space exists because of all the other spaces around it.

Yukiko: I also find them interesting to look at. We try to find a way to make them look important.
Heine: It’s one aspect of what we mean when we talk about **opening up**. Another aspect of it is engaging with the people who work in the building. How can we meet all these people who are there on a daily basis, and how can we also **co-exist** with them. How far can we go in this process of opening up, not just what the diverse spaces of the building are concerned, but also in our relationships with its inhabitants somehow?

Yukiko: I don’t know how much this shows to the audience, but for us, as artists, these encounters are very important. In some places people are more open than in others.

Sara: How does this reflect, also, on how the place in question operates?

Heine: That’s interesting.

Yukiko: And also political, somehow.

Heine: Their protectiveness.

Yukiko: It is also about **boundaries**.

Heine: And control.

Yukiko: To what extent do you own this space?

Sara: Yes, that is very interesting. If you think about choreographic work, or about choreographing a space, or relating to a space, through your work, if access to it is limited or you are just passing through, how can you take some ownership of it, and how far does that go, what kind of effect can you have on such a space?

Yukiko: Whether we make a piece in the theatre space or in another space, the 4th wall is always there. That’s a premise. We don’t erase this border, that’s not our purpose. It’s always there, even when the performers don’t do anything, it is a given. Currently, I am not interested in **participatory performances**, in asking the spectators to do something for us. In how we work now, performers are still doing things and the spectator is still in the position of the one who is watching, but, still, there is a difference between remaining seated in an auditorium and taking a walk with us. In that sense, the spectators do participate, they walk with us, and they can refuse, or choose to not follow the guide (and they often do), but the idea is that, like in **carry on**, spectators in **unannounced** pass through different rooms, or follow a route. We often use one key **object**. In **carry on** this is a small, black cube. At times we leave this black cube behind somewhere but often it is attached to us, to our **bodies**. The audience then watches us and the object as one unit. In **unannounced**, we extend this space. We, the performers, carry a projector, but we project words into the space. As performers, our mobility, our range of movement, is limited, because we are not dancing. But because of how we use projection, the audience starts to see beyond the body and the object. They don’t watch us, they watch the space. In general, when you come to see a performance, you come to see performers perform. In **unannounced**, in the first part, the guided tour, what interests me is that we still control the narrative, as if we are talking, but we don’t talk. We
project words: "we start"... "looking up"... "noticing,"... and in this way, we make
the spectator notice the walls, the cracks in it. other objects (like the leftover
objects Heine mentioned earlier). Sometimes the text we project acts like a title, for
an object. When we use an object, to what extent is it a part of our body, or is it
separate from the body? We play on constantly shifting this relationship.

Heine: In some cases, the words name the object or name the space, so that the
text makes the object visible. Sometimes we play on double meanings, also, like
when we write "reflecting on the concrete," and we project the word "concrete"
onto the material concrete, for instance.

Yukiko: Or when "it is over" becomes "it is over there"....

Heine: If we could go back to that process and develop it further, I would push the
performer's actions more. We could make even more connections with the body of
the performer than there are now. There is potential for that. The performer lies
down, for instance, when the text reads "it is over." We do that from time to time.
The performer goes to sleep. Those moments are nice.

Yukiko: Just before it says "a moment later," I wake up and move to another
position. There is a lot more potential there, but that is for another project, later.

Sara: There's a nice blurring between the performative and poetic actions that you
describe and the more purposeful or functional actions that occur as well. For
instance, when I was on a tour with Ingrid her projector stopped working. At that
moment, we saw her performing but also fixing the thing and reloading the software.
These moments, when a kind of blurring or layering happens between being in the
moment of performance and carrying out another task, like problem solving or
dealing with something that occurs accidentally, make me wonder about the position
of the performer in your work. Conventionally, when we go to see a performance,
there is a performer on the stage performing for us, being visible to us, or being
there because we are looking at her. You are always blurring that premise. The
performer doesn't appear to be the performer in the sense of a person to be looked
at. There are different levels of visibility and invisibility of the performer's actions,
also. How do you, as a performer, perform in that moment? Sometimes you are
presenting or showing, but most of the time you are not.

Yukiko: We use the term guide, you know, like a tour guide, or a guide in the
museum, who talks about the work. We are performers but we are also guides.

Sara: Guiding people, or inviting people into the work, you mean?

Yukiko: Guiding people through different rooms. Our function is to take them from
room A to B to C.

Heine: But in that moment, the blurring of the functions of the performer is indeed
interesting. The performer is a guide but when a technical problem occurs, what
happens to his function as performer? When you have to solve something purely
technical or practical it's like ... You compared it to a performer in the theater
performing, but while that performer is on stage, there might be a light technician in the back struggling with some serious technical problem.

Sara: And you don’t notice that.... But I meant more from the perspective of the performer, how you deal with that, internally? In carry on, for instance, we walk through the building, and then we encounter Kristiane, who is pushing a wheel barrel with a large cube in it. I walk into the room and I see him but someone else who walks in with me doesn’t see him, or sees him later... This is different from performing on the stage in a more straightforwardly structured context. How does this work from the inside, as a performer?

Yukiko: In the first part of unannounced, the guided tour, I am in my performative mode when I do something like this... (slowly picks up a coffee cup) And then I try to drop (my level of concentration). I can never be at zero, because I am performing, but in terms of the way in which I carry my body (like tuning one’s tone of voice), I distinguish...

Heine: This is actually not steady. In fact, we practice this extensively with the performers. They are performing but the level of performativity of their actions is not static, it is constantly changing. We work a lot with them on stepping in and out of these different levels of performativity, or performative functions. Sometimes they are performing an action as if they would be on stage, but they can also step out of that and just open a door, for instance.

Sara: Executing a task?

Yukiko: In nothing’s for something, I am in a performative mode, quite high, from beginning to end, because I am on the stage and being watched. If I would have that kind of presence in unannounced, in the beginning, that would be much too dramatic. We cannot do that. I think we began to experiment with this in Field Works-Office, when we guided the audience for the first time. I am asking you if you want coffee but I act as if I am serving you coffee. It is stupid to say, but we go back to “normal.” This is something you can train. It is sometimes more difficult for trained dancers because they have the tendency to open the door, like this, instead of just opening the door, like this. The more we work together, the better this [cheer?] blends in.

Sara: Is this also related to the idea of working in a non-hierarchical way?

Heine: Totally. There is no difference between these different levels of awareness, these modes of performative presence. In a certain way all these levels have the same value.

Yukiko: When analyzing a movement, I ask performers, for example, to just stand still. If they have a dance background, their feet will be turned out. In that case, I ask them to turn to a neutral position, feet parallel. So in a way, I am also choreographing. We ask very specific things of the performers. Even in the way
you turn a door handle, for instance, if you go like this or like this, or you look in this way or like this, or you take an object like this, or turn it at this speed,… these are small choreographies.

Sara: It looks very natural or neutral but in fact it is very precise?

Heine: It is also quite rhythmical, what the kind of awareness is concerned. Your performative awareness has to be rhythmical. Because if you stay in the same mode too long, whatever mode that is, it becomes kind of flat.

Yukiko: While I am talking, I can drink coffee in the normal way, like this, but when I am talking and I stop, like this, that's weird, right? And if I go like this… That's already a performance.

Heine: But if you stay in that too long, it also becomes… you see… if you stay too long…

Yukiko: It again becomes too dramatic. You go like this… maybe like this… and you go back to… so there is a small shift…

Heine: There is a rhythmical shift, I would say, in your awareness, right?

Sara: To make it more or less dramatic,… This perhaps also relates to how your work always plays on **what is visible and what is not visible**. Even in nothing's for something; when you are on stage, you are always (partly) hiding behind the curtains, and often staging only a suggestion of presence, or a sense that something moves or is being moved,… You play on extending the potential and the limits of movement, also, of moving and being moved.

Yukiko: We also play a lot on **anatomy**. If I hold this [cup] in this way… versus in this way… versus in this way… Or at this angle… Depending on the angle [of the wrist?], the image is very different. We do analyze that. It is constructed to look very normal.

Heine: When developing a version of *carry on*, we sometimes spend an hour with someone, just practicing opening or closing a door, and that can drive people crazy.

Sara: Really? You do that?

Heine: Yes, but sometimes you feel that it is really that important. For us, it is not so much about how a dancer executes a more performative dance action in the room, but about how they leave this room, and how they enter it. It might seem like “it's just opening a door” but actually it is a really valuable moment.

Yukiko: How you decide to **focus** on the door handle, or just on the body, or how you position yourself in the space,… it changes everything.

Sara: When you talk about it like that, it is almost like a tableau in a way, or a visual composition, or about how things are laid out in space. It is similar, then, to what you do also with objects: you place them, and then you reposition or displace them,
and there is a rhythm to these actions, a specific aesthetic, and poetry also, to how
things move, how they are arranged in relation to each other in space.

Yukiko: Yes, in space and in time, in a very basic kind of way.

Sara: I would like to return, for a moment, to this idea of the guide. How do you
see that? I don't have the impression that you are guiding or inviting the audience
into the "illusion" of the theatre, if you will. As a spectator, I rather feel like I am
becoming part of the "reality," in the sense of the "materiality," of the performance,
or part of the theatrical space.

Yukiko: The audience is part of it.

Heine: What happens to the audience?

Yukiko: In carry on, some people might notice something while others don't, which is
fine. We try to make a space as accessible as possible so everybody is able to see,
but, still, there are always many things happening simultaneously. We accept that
people make choices, about where they look and what they decide to look at...

Heine: We try to guide their gaze, but we cannot control it. We suggest a focus, but
it is always...

Yukiko: Because often the room itself is so interesting...

Heine: When we enter a space, it happens that the performer suggests a specific
focus right away, but sometimes it's better not to do that. You can also leave the
focus open for a moment. If there are ten people in the room at a time, you may
decide that: "OK, there are ten people here, and ten different focuses"; they are all
looking in different directions. And then, only after a while, the performer starts her
action.

Yukiko: Or you make a sound.

Heine: How you guide these ten different focuses to converge on one small detail in
the space... that is also choreography.

Yukiko: Sound is very powerful in that sense, much more than visual impulses. The
moment you hear the sound of glass breaking, anywhere, ...

Heine: But it also depends on where you position the performers, on where and
how the performers position themselves, when they take a group of people into a
space, whether they stay near the door...

Yukiko: ... or whether they hold the door and come in and close the door, or
whether they open the door and walk all the way into the room, or only halfway
into it.

Heine: Do they stay together with the audience? Do they stay in front of the
audience? The timing of all of this is crucial, too. And each room is different and
has its own needs. Sometimes it's better not to do anything, because the space in itself is already so dense, includes so much information.

Yukiko: The location Black Box in Oslo selected for the next edition of Carry On, in March 2019, is the opposite. It will take place in an old bank building, which was also used as a museum of contemporary art for a number of years, but is now deserted, and completely empty. This is an entirely new/different challenge.
In Stavanger, last year, we worked in an art center where each room was very distinct. Some rooms were even under construction, construction sites. So we just needed a little bit. Because each room was so different, it was fascinating to walk around, and to go into the basement, outside, into a completely new elevator, or a half-renovated room... This time we are dealing with nothing but empty, white rooms.

Sara: In this sense it is also the opposite of the premise of unannounced, in which you examined the darkness of the black box and the materiality and tactility of this darkness, but also the clutter of the back stage, and the material of the theatre, including its conventions and how the space is marked by them. You mentioned that you went looking for what was already there, for what tends to remain invisible or what we might look past, including conventional structures and forgotten objects, and for what we might see, or sense, when we find ourselves in utter darkness.
Here, you are in the white cube, conventionally empty, and presumably a "blank space," and somehow "unmarked," or a "neutral," welcoming space (while this, too, is an illusion/fiction, of course). In the museum, you bring something from the outside and you put it there. In that sense, every object is out of place, and also appears to have cut its ties with where it came from, with its original context, location, or process. This (one, isolated) object becomes the thing to look at, and, to make it stand out, everything around it should be invisible. So you are kind of looking at it from the opposite position, in a way. It is almost the inverse, also visually. And, of course, the conventions are very different, in terms of modes of presentation, participation, and perception or spectatorship, for instance, or what the use of time and space are concerned.

Heine: We are spending a lot of time thinking about how we may approach this space.

Yukiko: It's a challenge for us.

Heine: It was the headquarters of the Norwegian state bank. When you go in, you see it's a bank, but you also smell that it's a museum. The smell of money and of art...

Yukiko: As you said, the museum is supposed to be empty, so that it can house any artwork. We can use this premise, and bring boxes.

Heine: Another idea would be to have a route and to keep on circling the same rooms, while they keep on changing. One room, for instance, may be empty when you pass through it the first time, but the second time around, something has been added, and when you pass through it a third time, yet another element is added. First an object is added, then a performer, ... and so on. You pass through the same space several times, and each time it is different, it grows into something.
Sara: Then you also choreograph the audience’s movements. Or play on the dramaturgy of an exhibition.

Heine: We went to Mori Museum in Tokyo recently, and it is so choreographed, the way in which the exhibition is set up, how they create a path through it. It’s one big room but they put up walls and you have to follow a fixed route. It is very controlled.

Yukiko: Because the entrance and the exit are separate. You cannot go in the opposite direction.

Sara: You have to make a circle around the building, which is round.

Yukiko: It was a nice exhibition.

Heine: Nice, but so conventional, the organization of the exhibition....

Sara: How does the imagination figure in your performances and installations? They are always very evocative, and often zoom in on details, small gestures, and displaced objects evoking a different world, almost.

Heine: We started thinking about the role of the imagination more consciously when we embarked on the Office piece. This is when we began to use drawings and cartoons to suggest a kind of augmented reality, in co-existence with the “real” reality. The cartoons use the existing reality to take you into an imaginary world.

Sara: An alternative reality?

Heine: An alternative way of reading the space.

Yukiko: In Office, there are many drawings of Heine under the desk. In this performance, he mainly stays under the desk. But he hands out papers, showing him counting money or drinking Whisky, for example. The cartoons suggest what could have been happening. Of course, the audience starts thinking about what he is really doing under that desk. This idea came from a time when we went to Regus, to rent an office, for research, and we called on the woman, the receptionist, because we didn’t have an internet connection or something...

Heine: Something didn’t work...

Yukiko: And she had on this very tight skirt, you know, and she’s like, “let me fix it,” and she gets under the table...

Heine: With her mini skirt...

Yukiko: ... to arrange the cables.

Heine: She is doing this... but really roughly,... and we’re standing there...
Yukiko: ... with her high heels... She's moving like this... trying to figure out the cables... but these cables... they are... here...

Heine: ... it's so...

Yukiko: ... but this can happen, right, in the office? You can have a bad connection, and then you have to go under the desk, and the cable is all tangled up...

Heine: ... a "cable chaos" ...

Yukiko: ... and I'm thinking oh my god, you know. She's not even a performer, she's not aware of this, she is just trying to help us to figure out the internet. But we were laughing so much inside.

Sara: You are looking at it like a scene, like a performative situation?

Yukiko: Also when a light bulb suddenly goes out, and there is no ladder, people get onto their desks to fix it. There is one drawing of Brynjàr, on the chair, with his arm up like this ... But what is he doing? Is he trying to fix the light bulb? In the first drawing, he is, but there is another drawing, in which he is trying to catch a fly with chopsticks. It's a joke, you know, but there is a whole series of drawings, and by the end he is trying to hang himself, or...

Sara: One situation transforms into a range of other situations?

Yukiko: Yes, into a series of possibilities. We start out with very simple gestures, postures or actions, you know, but they give people the space to think...

Sara: ... of possible, alternative developments?

Yukiko: Say, you have a window, and I am just standing in front of it, looking down, and then I just disappear. But the moment I disappear, there's the sound of breaking glass... So it's as if someone does this... Or like I jumped or.... I also have a drawing of an empty cup, and I have a water boiler with a speaker in it. The moment I go like this... the sound of pouring coffee or tea emanates from the real object, but you don't see it actually happening...

Sara: As if there is a disconnect between an action and its effect, or between the expectations people have of a situation and what really happens?

Yukiko: Yes. You know that coffee is poured into the cup, but you don't see it. But, because of the sound, you imagine it....

Sara: You complete the action.

Yukiko: We use this strategy a lot in the Office performance.

Heine: It's also about the presence of absence. This notion originated from this performance, in fact.
Yukiko: The only thing missing is the actual coffee. Sometimes I use a real cup and a real tea bowl. I put in small speakers and Fabrice and I look at each other like this and then I do 1, 2, 3, 4 steps and then, like this, and he just launches the sound exactly like... And I know it stops, you know. And the audience is watching, and it always makes people smile.

Sara: What is it, would you say, that you want to explore in your work? What do you want to find out more about by doing this kind of work? Maybe it is unconscious? Maybe this is an unanswerable question?

Heine: No, it's a question everyone deals with all the time. We question what we are doing and why we are doing it and where it leads us.

Sara: Or where it comes from? From this conversation, it is clear that the questions or themes or ideas you choose to address in a work often come out of a previous process, and that you return to past projects, or parts of them. There is no linearity to this process. This kind of linearity does not really exist. Looking at unannounced from this perspective, it is also, in a way, a kind of map/mapping of your own trajectory/trajectories so far.

Heine: There are two things. There is an overall movement, and then there is each individual project, which may have a certain kind of desire, or need, for a certain kind of exploration. But if you put all projects together, there is a familiarity, connecting the different projects. It is not always conscious, in the moment, when we are creating, but afterwards we see that there is a link with the other projects. It changes, from project to project, but often it is about how to deal with daily-ness, with daily life.

Yukiko: With life in general.

Heine: How we move through the spaces of everyday life.

Sara: Do you think this is related to the fact that your life and work are completely blended in a way, because you live together and you work together?

Heine: Yeah, but in certain projects, like Office, for instance, we try to step out of our daily surroundings by moving the creative process into office spaces.

Yukiko: This is normal for normal people.

Heine: For some people this is normal.

Yukiko: But not for us, we normally go to the studio to work.

Heine: We try to step into different worlds somehow, or into other spaces.

Yukiko: We always try to question what we take for granted, I think. Say the curtain, in nothing's for something (2012), for instance. Hiromi, the curator of TPAM, in Japan, said, "I think of a curtain as what divides a space, and as the place from which the performers appear, so the fact that the curtains started moving made me laugh." It
makes us aware of what this object is supposed to be. We question the most boring thing in the space, like the curtain. We see curtains in the theatre all the time, but what is this curtain?

Sara: It hides things, makes them invisible.

Yukiko: But what happens when it starts to move? Or think about the shaking of the floor, also in nothing's for something.

Heine: This evokes an earthquake.

Yukiko: We didn’t make it because of the earthquake that hit Japan in March 2011. Somehow you see the connection afterwards. You realize that you think of the ground as stable, and you take that for granted.

Sara: And then it starts shaking and many people die.

Yukiko: It was at exactly the same time. In 2011, we started the creation process, and then this happened. But it was an aftereffect. It’s not the earthquake that was “backwash.” The word refers to the ripples you see behind you, in the water, when you are on a boat. It also refers to what stays behind when a wave, the sea, recedes: shells, rubbish, ruins. This is the image we were thinking about.

Heine: Exactly at this moment the earthquake and the tsunami came.

Yukiko: This title, “backwash” came before, when you were in Australia, Heine, and working on a text, but then...

Heine: The title wasn’t clear for people here in Brussels. When I talked about the idea, programmers asked me what it meant.

Yukiko: That summer, we were on the boat with Heine’s parents, and saw all these waves. It’s like shhhsh and the water does this... That image was very powerful. And it felt like we were going somewhere.

Sara: It’s an evocative image for your projects. The *aftereffects*, traces, leftovers, ruins, remains... are notions that keep on recurring throughout this conversation. And the idea of the waves, it is also very much alive.

Yukiko: There is so much *drama* in our daily lives. Many events happen. It's nice to pick up on these things, to pay attention.

Sara: Everyday life is very routine but it can also be very dramatic; and you can change it, you can intervene (in small or large ways) and then big things may happen. There is always that tension.

Heine: Can you change the world with your art? I also like the idea of *loose translations*. We talk about current events, like the earthquake, for instance. We have a certain kind of awareness of what happens around us but we don’t necessarily
incorporate it so literally into our work, but I think that there is a kind of loose translation of it somehow...

Sara: A residue, or an echo?

Yukiko: My father died in 1999. Heine made a performance called *terminal* (2002). In it, he talks about how signals pass through our bodies and about objects. When my father died, my mother couldn’t throw out any of his clothes, so when I go into my mom’s room, I see his clothes hanging, and this is such a powerful image. We may talk about that we all die but my mother still cannot get rid of my father’s stuff. He had so many suits. There still are so many suits in her room. I understand that she cannot just throw them out. They are objects, but also an extension of the body, somehow. But to return to *terminal*, my father was in the hospital, and unconscious, but when I held his hands, you know, on the screen, it went like this... So the nurse says “talk to him, he listens to you, he understands you,” and sometimes he would clasp my hands. You know, we couldn’t talk, but we were able to communicate via this database, of his heartbeat.

Heine: When the heartbeat went up on the screen, it felt as if he was actually connecting with you on an emotional level.

Yukiko: This is not integrated into the text of *terminal*, but the performance talks about how the body or an energy passes through, you know, like an electric current. I know what happened with my father at the time, so I see it in that way...

Sara: As connected to the terminal illness of your father?

Yukiko: Terminal, like the end, but also the airport terminal, for instance, as a place one passes through.

Sara: To make a connection also.

Heine: The body as a transitional space, as a space we travel through.

Yukiko: It’s always like that in our work. It doesn’t come out of nowhere, there is always something, but...

Sara: Like reverberations of things? It’s sort of independent but resonates with things that happen around you at the time, or perhaps the other way around. Reverberations rather than the actual literalness of things, maybe? That also resonates with the idea of the aftereffects that came up earlier; and of the tactility of darkness.

Yukiko: Going back to nothing’s for something, the bodies behind the curtain are invisible but they are always there, and they start to appear. But at a certain moment, this image becomes static, you know? It is moving, it is animated, in the dark, we play with it, and, at the end, we disappear, but then we re-appear on the floor, like a trace, which is then lifted up. Maybe this is too literal but there is something spiritual about it, too. The presence of the body; from invisible to visible,
from fluid to static, to digitalized, to animated, to again being treated in a material way, and moving backwards in the space.

Sara: Are you talking about the materiality of the body?

Yukiko: It is shifted and transformed, and, at the very end of the performance, the body is replaced by a balloon, and by sounds.

Sara: This connects also with what we spoke about earlier, about how present the body is in the space. The performers' sense of presence, and the different levels and types of performativity they play with, also has to do with a kind of materiality. Is the body more visible when its actions are more performative, or is it the opposite? What kinds of materiality are there to the body in dance? And to movement, or to space and time, for that matter. When you talk about nothing's for something, it sounds like you are exploring that boundary. The body disappears, becomes an outline, disappears into the air, but you can still see it because you saw it before, or at least you project a body onto the thing that disappears because that is what you saw before, but in fact it is not there....

Yukiko: Something great happened when we performed nothing's for something at Pact Zollverein last year. The stage is very big at Pact, but it is also quite intimate, in terms of the relationship to the audience. At the end of the show, a spectator walked onto the stage to take a closer look. This was very nice because the stage belonged to the performers before but suddenly this boundary was crossed and more and more audience members started to walk around, while the balloons were floating, and the drawing on the back wall was up. I really loved that. The space was never this open before. Sometimes it happens that a few people walk onto the stage, but in this case, one person's action set off a movement, and everybody started to walk around, and that was really wonderful.

Sara: In that case, too, it is about the conventions of the theatre, whether we are supposed to be there or not. I remember when we saw him go we were like "oh, is he supposed to go there, it's dangerous," but then afterwards it was indeed really nice that this boundary was crossed. But when it happened, it was kind of "oh, what's going on?"

Yukiko: Yes, because the boundary is very clear in nothing's for something. From the beginning to the end, the audience is seated, in a conventional setting.

Sara: The emptiness of it, at the end, is also an important part of the piece. The performers vacate the space. They don't return. And then someone just walks into this emptiness.

Yukiko: Yes.

Heine: And then things shift.

Yukiko: It becomes an installation, in the space, and after that it just continues.
"The cards are not always put on the table straightaway.
Pretty often things happen unannounced...."

classic and direction: Heine Avdal, Yukiko Shinozaki
created and performed by: Heine Avdal, Gabel Eiben, Ingrid Haakstad, Krisjanis Sants,
Orfee Schuijt, and Yukiko Shinozaki
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sound design: Johann Loiseau
light design: Hans Meijer, Micahel Janssens
drawings: Orfee Schuijt
media artist: Julie Pfeiderer
electronics: Johann Loiseau
assistant electronics: Matthieu Virot
management: Bob Van Langendonck
produced by: fieldworks (BE) and Heine Avdal (NO)
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Heine Avdal (Norway) and Yukiko Shinozaki (Japan) have been collaborating since 1996.
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