

Close enough: negotiating distance on the edge of touch

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Suchan Kinoshita's work *Architektonische Psychodramen* 19th - 27th March marked the fifth and final part of the exhibition program *Am I an Object* at P/////AKT, Amsterdam. The exhibition was the ground of a collaboration between us - Johanna Ekenhorst (or Joe) and Simoni Stergioula. Distance, between my current location in Pafos, Cyprus and Joe's presence in Amsterdam, figured in our dialogues as an interlocutor - to be negotiated with, or to be ignored despite its insistence. *How do we deal with distance? How does space, architecture, art get (mis)communicated? How does it travel through gestures? And how does architecture enable and takes part in the shaping of space?* These questions - along with our interest in the intimacies and intricacies that configure relations of any nature - informed our collaboration as well as the choreography of the workshops lead by Joe in the space of the exhibition at P/////AKT.

Find an other: You two are now person 1 and person 2. Person 1 moves in a way that feels good for them, person 2 copies their movements from a distance, trying to produce a mirror image. At some point, person 2 takes over and person 1 mimics. This switch happens organically and without being communicated verbally. Switch back and forth between who moves pleasurably and who is the mirror image. Maybe the mirror image is surprised at what movements feel good for the other. Approximate each other while keeping distance.

Our meetings took place over (video) calls, text messages, and virtual annotations. They did however include locations and destinations beyond both our physical spaces. Alvin Baltrop's photography, *The Piers (Collapsed Architecture)*, n.d. (1975-1986) entered our conversations quite unexpectedly and stayed throughout. Since 1975 Baltrop documented the piers in New York as an active site that enabled and engaged in the underground queer life world of the city. The piers were a site of cruising, sexwork, art production, violence, narcotics, a housing for runaways, and a space where illicit acts found shelter. Baltrop's long range shots - a clandestine shooting approach he named "practicing invisibility" - of the abstract, large, and fallen structures along with the inconspicuous often invisible intimacies that inhabited them captured ways of moving *otherwise*.

Think of the architectural structures you frequent as a buzz wire maze. Form a loop with your fingers, arms or whole body to move along the (infra-, super-, ...) structure, to come close while still not touching it. Whether object or person, navigate around the obstacles you encounter. When you touch something or someone, shed something. In this way, you mark spots of complicated contact. Move on.

A Play in the Wire Maze - "a performative workshop session" - incorporated our conversations as gestural elements informed partly by Augusto Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992). Boal's approach to theater as a tool and a set of dramatic techniques that can enable liberation transformed the figure of the "spectator" into that of an actor.

Find a pushing partner. This exercise is, as Augusto Boal writes in "Games for Actors and Non-Actors", about using all your strength and still not

winning. You face each other and place your hands on each other's shoulders. There's an imaginary line between you. Start pushing with all your strength. When you feel that your partner and 'opponent' is weaker and that they are going to lose, you ease off so as not to cross the line, so as not to win. If your partner increases their pushing, you do the same, so that together both of you are using all the strength you can muster. Help each other to apply all your strength.

Along Baltrop and Boal's work, and the practices of the Queer Choir Amsterdam, of which Joe is part, echoed in the activities proposed during the workshop.

Find people to sing with. With mouths closed, you all hum any note or melody. You all try to always hum a different note than the others. Start walking around. Maximize dissonance by listening closely. Go on until you find comfort in discord. Then, one after the other, start to sing a lullaby in your mother tongue, until you are all singing, edging on sleepy memories.

The participants of the workshop session “negotiated dispute, dissonance and force” while thinking through the “push[ing], respond[ing], and pass[ing] around of agency”. The exhibition here animates and is animated by a series of gestures, bodies that negotiate their relationship to each other, bodies remembering, trusting, and playing.

Find a pairing partner for this play. One partner closes their eyes to become a camera, the other one becomes the photographer. The photographer walks the camera carefully through the space. The photographer leads the camera to a spot that RESONATES, moves the camera into the needed angle and frame and touches the camera's nose to let them “take a photo” by blinking their eyes. The camera memorises the photo. The photographer walks the camera to a place of DISSONANCE and takes a photo in the same manner. Swap roles: The photographer becomes a camera, the camera a photographer.

Through gestures that mimic structures and other movements, our collaboration engaged its placement - being on the edge *of* something. Edges as a space/location/position of anticipatory potential lean towards an imagined happening or doing tied to an immediacy that never completely passes but always approaches. The title of the workshop, *A Play in the Wire Maze*, was inspired by the toy ‘wire maze’ also known as the ‘wire loop game’ which involves the guiding of a loop along a metallic structure, the goal being to avoid touching between the two. If touched, electric currents flowing through them result in a buzzing noise. Imagining the wire maze *as form* allowed for a way of thinking through and embodying closeness without touch, navigating around obstacles, distance and enabling a proximity and nearness to Kinoshita's work that can never be quite complete.