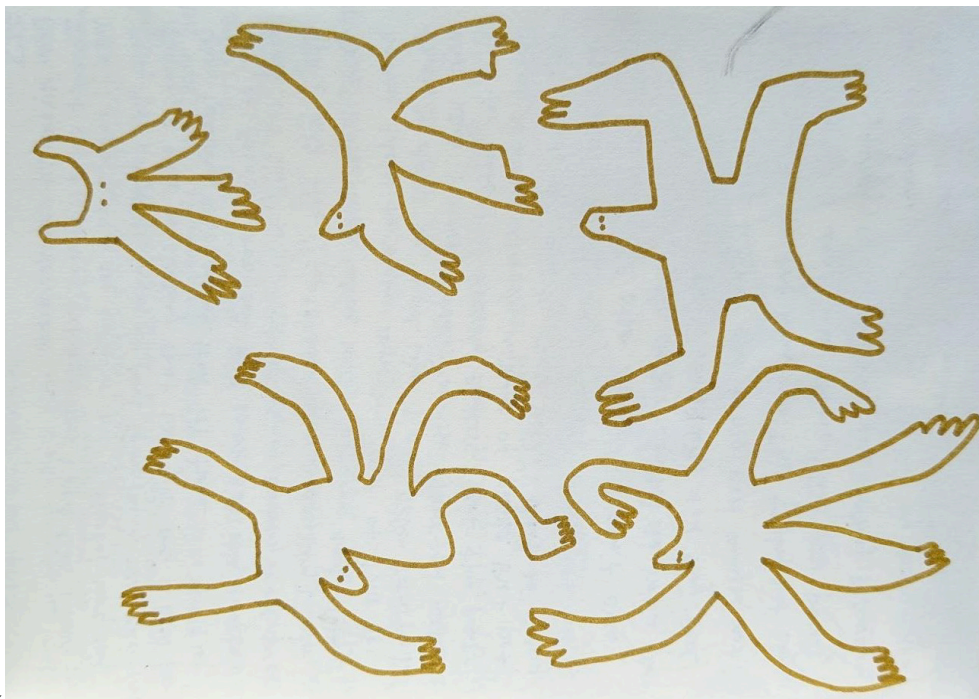


2026

Thesis Project

**Transdisciplinary Practice and the Expansion of the Dancer Identity:
Thinking and writing through artistic practice**

Joma Richter, Master Programme in Dance Performance



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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The artistic work is produced by the Theatre Academy.	<input type="checkbox"/> The artistic work is not produced by the Theatre Academy (copyright matters have been agreed upon).
ABSTRACT (min. roughly 250 words) <p>This thesis explores how my transdisciplinary artistic practice informs and expands my identity as a dancer. Initially framed through questions of performance, friction, and the body produced through artistic work, the text evolved into a broader inquiry into how dancer identity is constructed, internalized, and continuously renegotiated. Rather than seeking fixed definitions, I approach identity as an embodied, relational, and non-linear process shaped by lived experience in all its complexity, artistic conventions and broader socio-cultural conditions.</p> <p>Drawing on practice-based research, the thesis positions artistic practice as both method and subject. Through reflections on the solo work Portraits of Motherhood when we go to sleep (2023) and the experience of working with Others (Choreographers, Dancers, Performers), I examine how embodied knowledge, collaboration, and inherited ideas of the dancing body inform my position as a performer and artist. The research is further contextualized through engagement with theoretical and artistic perspectives, including Ursula K. Le Guin, Bojana Kunst, Deborah Hay, Anni-B Parson, and Amy Sillman.</p> <p>A key aspect of the thesis is the integration of everyday life into artistic practice, particularly through the lens of parenthood. Conditions such as time pressure, fragmentation, and interruption are not treated solely as limitations but as generative forces that actively shape working methods. The thesis also foregrounds a sustained notebook practice as an extension of the body and a site for thinking, collecting, and making connections over time.</p> <p>Writing itself functions as a central methodological tool, enabling reflection and the articulation of embodied knowledge. Rather than presenting definitive conclusions, the thesis adopts an intuitive, process-based approach that mirrors the logic of my artistic practice. It proposes an expanded understanding of dance as a flexible, transdisciplinary field, and of dancer identity as something multiple, shifting, and continuously in motion.</p>	
KEYWORDS (keywords that describe the content of your work) transdisciplinary artistic practice, dancer identity, notebook practice, parenthood	

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1 Introduction

Long before I began the writing process, I approached this paper with several research questions: How does my transdisciplinary art practice inform my position as a performer? What kinds of friction, consequences, and possibilities emerge from this practice? What kind of body is produced through my artistic work?

Initially, I felt confident in these questions. However, once I began writing, I realized that they did not fully align with what I was actually exploring. The first chapters of this thesis became less about defining answers and more about questioning how a dancer identity is constructed, internalized, and renegotiated within myself and in relation to external contexts. This developed into an ongoing inquiry into what it means to be a dancer, and whether I belong to that category at all. In this process, I encountered limitations and insecurities related to terminology and the narration of identity, which led me to question why this identity can feel so pressured and constrained.

Over time, it became clear that I was still engaging with my initial questions, but in a more embodied, non-linear and practice-based way than I had anticipated. My artistic practice, developed over many years, adapting and changing throughout different circumstances, became both the subject and the method of this inquiry. By reflecting on my work, processes, and experiences, as well as my personal history, I begin to situate these questions within a broader context of identity, art-making, and lived conditions.

I therefore approach identity not as a fixed category, but as an embodied and relational process shaped by aesthetic norms, labor conditions, and power structures. It emerges through my practice as a dancer and transdisciplinary maker, and is continuously informed by my everyday life, education, and personal history.

Ursula K. Le Guin's "Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" (2024) became an important reference for how I think about and narrate dance. Returning to this text repeatedly, I began to understand storytelling not as centered around the heroic figure, but as a way of holding complexity, relation, and multiplicity. As Le Guin suggests, dominant narratives can obscure other forms of experience and agency, and I became increasingly aware of how this shapes my own understanding of identity and artistic value.

I then reflect on my artistic practice through the solo work *Portraits of Motherhood when we go to sleep* (2023), in dialogue with Bojana Kunst's *The Voice of the Dancing Body* (2009), which discusses how contemporary dance challenges the idea of the dancer as a silent,

moving object. This led me to recognize how deeply internalized ideas of the dancing body are embedded in my own practice.

I also discuss and reflect on experiences of working with others and how they became a way of learning more about myself. Collaborating with established and emerging choreographers, dancers, performers, and artists in different contexts allowed me to recognize my own preferences: where I feel comfortable, where I feel challenged, and under what conditions I am able to work best.

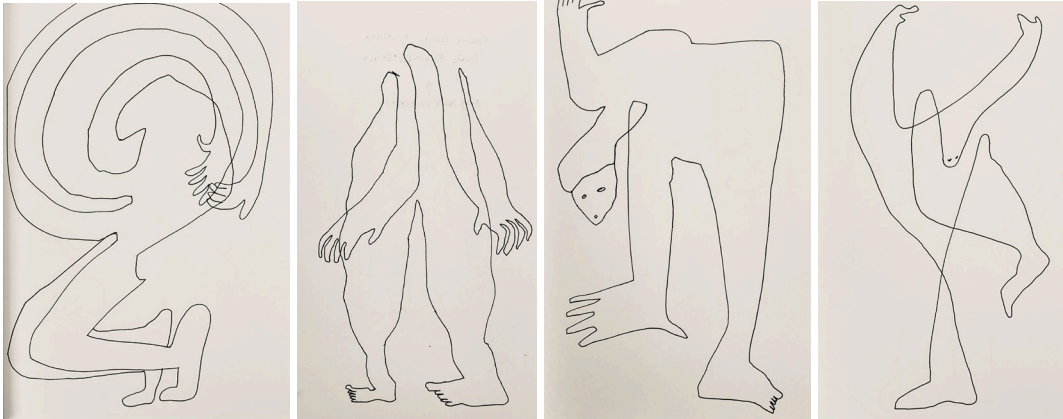
Following this, I introduce my broader art-making practice, including motivation, working methods, and my transdisciplinary approach. I understand life and art as deeply entangled, rather than separate. I then reflect on how parenthood has further shaped this practice. Limitations such as lack of time, fragmentation, and interruption have not only functioned as challenges, but have also become tools and methods. Concepts such as time-pressure, fragmentation, multitasking, efficiency, and improvisation are explored as conditions that actively shape my work.

Towards the end of this text, I focus on my notebook practice, a continuous process of writing, drawing, and collecting that I carry with me almost everywhere. The notebook functions as an extension of my body and thinking, a space where experiences and perceptions take form, and where connections emerge over time through fragments and repetition. It allows me to understand making as a process that unfolds gradually rather than linearly.

In dialogue with Deborah Hay, as well as artists such as Anni-B Parson and Amy Sillman, I reflect on alternative ways of understanding artistic processes that are less linear, less outcome-driven, and more attentive to cycles, accumulation, and relation. These perspectives help me situate my practice outside dominant narratives of productivity, authorship, and fixed identity.

Rather than presenting fixed answers, this thesis follows a process-based approach, moving between personal reflection, theoretical context, and artistic exploration. Writing becomes not only a way of describing practice, but a method of thinking through it. In this sense, the thesis mirrors the logic of the notebook: it gathers, connects, and holds different layers of experience, allowing meaning to emerge gradually

2 What does it mean to be a dancer?



November 2023, Notebook

2.1 Practicing

To be a dancer often means to be hard-working, trained, skilled, sensitive, strong, and capable. I could name so many more adjectives, but I settle for these ones.

It is a constant process of learning and relearning, of faking, moving, sharing, giving, evolving. It means being good at stillness as much as at movement, at controlling the body, mastering space, energy, and expression. It requires speaking the language of someone or something else, making others feel, sensing deeply, experiencing environments, landscapes, emotions, among other things. The task of embodying, representing, materializing or relating to all kinds of different things is a huge part. Some of these feel so far from oneself, which involves a lot of trial and error within the process, within the practice.

To dance is to repeat, to fall, to jump, to try, and to try again. It means submitting to gravity, or the opposite, or something in between. Embracing thoughts and feelings, searching details, which hold meanings and researching those. Giving thoughts form in space and time through movement. It can mean avoiding, exposing and even giving up certain parts of yourself.

Dance holds both discipline and play, perfection and failure. A dancer dances, they are accustomed to moving, to navigating space, to using their bodies in techniques they have learned or in unconventional ways. Yet dance is not only physical. An open mindset, curiosity, and resilience are just as essential as strength or coordination.

2.2 Skill

When I asked my peer group what first came to mind when they thought of a “good dancer,” they immediately mentioned flexibility and rhythm. But after those more obvious qualities, something else emerged: the ability to work through difficult, uncertain, and uncomfortable situations. Dance requires a body, and because everything is negotiated through the body, everything also affects the body, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Dancers develop a refined capacity to control their bodies, including subtle movements of the eyes and other micro-gestures, enabling them to make nuanced, skillful decisions in real time.

Another factor is that dancers are used to being watched. The presence of a gaze can be pleasurable and rewarding, but also pressuring, painful, or frightening. Part of the work is mental: staying vulnerable and permeable while under observation, allowing oneself to be seen. Alongside this external gaze sits an inward one. Dancers are highly skilled at watching themselves from the inside, an embodied mode of perception characterized by heightened attention, sensory awareness, and presence. It involves continuously monitoring sensation, alignment, intention, and relational cues. This inward gaze is not only about being self-conscious. It is a way of perceiving that holds both the inner and the outer at the same time, connecting the dancer to their own body, to the surroundings, and to whoever is watching.

As with all practices that develop into skills over time, one needs to spend time with them in order to keep them alive in some sense. I do believe that some parts never fully disappear, just like riding a bike, it is something the body remembers. But energies shift over time. My experience is that when I have not exposed myself to it for a longer period, meaning some weeks or months, even the most simple tasks can start to feel quite intense or unfamiliar. The body is suddenly experiencing a lot of different things again.

During the extended period of writing this thesis, I was not exposed to the amount of dance training and practice that I had been used to in the two years before. For this reason, I chose to attend a weekly workshop by Kadence Neill and Barabas Szigeti called *Atten-Dance*.

During the workshop, we did different exercises, researching our own sensation of what it does to be seen. Several exercises were given, involving a chair and a simple score. One of them was structured like this: take your chair to the stage (we had one line of chairs, where everybody was seated, all facing one direction of the studio, which then became the stage),

place it, and sit down. Then get up, move the chair somewhere else, and sit down again. Everybody was watching the doer; we became the audience. The task had a time limitation of one minute, which was announced.

Now to the point I want to make: the feelings I experienced in this exercise were wild. My heart was pounding, I could feel it intensely in my chest, and it felt like I was on fire. I tried to control my face and not laugh, but I did not manage. I laughed, giggled, and smiled. I felt like I couldn't control it.

In the feedback conversation afterwards, another participant mentioned that their nervous system would calm down within ten seconds or so. I found myself thinking about shame, because I could not control my face, which is part of my body. But at the same time, it also gave me joy and adrenaline. I was enjoying the feeling of being almost high, produced through gaze and attention. I felt like I was exactly where I was supposed to be, even though I wanted the one minute to be over as soon as it had begun.

So sometimes even very simple tasks can feel unexpectedly hard and overwhelming, even though I have practiced similar situations many times.

Through this process, dancers develop a language around movement, the body, sensation, and perception. They practice, listen, observe, reflect, and feel. This embodied attentional skill becomes a central mode of being, shaping how dancers navigate both their art form and the world.

2.3 Expanding

But dance can also be messy. It can be unrecognizable, invisible, still, or abstract. Dance can be a form of questioning, of research, of communication, of resistance... And still be dance, even when it doesn't fit into the traditional, conventional, institutional images of dance.

I'm drawn to the idea that dance lives everywhere, in gestures, in the every day, in bodies that move without intention. It's a vision of dance that feels warm and inclusive. Yet I'm not always able to embody that vision myself. Outdated definitions linger, insisting that dance must be trained, intense, *proper*. The word proper has a very visual connotation for me, I always see the Mr Proper guy from the commercial for sanitary cleaning products (also known as Mr Clean) in front of my inner eye. He is big, white and male, standing for

traditional values. Values that remind me of traditions like ballet; institutional, established, and authoritative.

I use the word *proper*, because it makes me feel othered. I don't feel I belong to the proper category and more importantly I don't want to belong there. I don't fit in.

This quote illustrates nicely how I do want to feel about dance:

“Dance, as the most embodied form of creative expression, straddles nature and culture. Dance connects us to our wildness: we mince like egrets, prance like horses, hop like frogs. It belongs to all of us: from the time we can walk we can also twist and jiggle, in the kitchen or at a party or sitting in a traffic jam with our favorite tune cranked up loud.” (Rosenthal, S. & Witte, V. 2025, 29)

And Deborah Hay (2014) describes it so simply and perfectly: “I am not served by the history of dance training and pedagogy. I was, it's part of my body, of how I think, but I feel that I am part of the tradition that wants to push the boundaries.” (Arts In Context 2014)

3 Dancer Identity



24.11.2023 Notebook

3.1 Belonging

At times, I feel my body does not match the image I hold of a dancer. When I feel out of sync with my own idea of a dancer, I wonder if I still belong to that identity. This creates tension, because if I am not always "being" a dancer, I feel I must be something else.

I have put the dancer identity on a pedestal. Unreachable. Too high, too far.

This feeling can appear in simple situations: a body that is too tired to move, or a period of limited time and resources. And by moving, I mean what I have been trained to consider *proper* dancing, sweating in a studio (literally or metaphorically), pushing myself with devotion and intensity. It means creating movements that are within the realm of certain dance traditions, such as ballet, modern, or contemporary dance, or at least are highly intentional and conceptual. In those moments, my visual Mr Proper figure appears, and the impossibility of accomplishing anything according to these standards feels almost absurd.

I internalized the idea that dance only counts if it takes place in a designated space (studio, stage) and demands 100% of my focus and or physical effort. It is a very rigid idea of dance that really doesn't make sense the longer I think about it. Already here, my vision of dance

reveals its limits. It's a definition I rarely share with others, partly because it embarrasses me and I know it is not right. These thoughts run quietly through my head and my veins. I don't want to believe them, and I have worked hard to undo them, but they still surface.

3.2 Questions

So I ask myself: do I not belong? Part of me does, from time to time. Sometimes more, sometimes less. This feels deeply connected to my personal history of going to ballet school from a young age, and being told things like: go to the side, you are not good enough, you don't look right, you don't know how to do it. Very rude and, I would say, dangerous things to say to a child.

So I am quite sure that part of this damage, and this persistent belief system, comes from these unpedagogical ballet teachers. I will return to my dance path later in the text. But already here it makes me think about ownership. Who owns dance? Who decides that dance is only dance if it looks a certain way, for example like ballet?

Why should dance be limited to such a specific vocabulary of movement? It feels strange to me.

So I ask: what if dancing wasn't restricted to training or performing? What if a dancer could also be dancing while cooking, sleeping, eating, washing — simply living? Where does this expectation come from, that I must continuously perform dance in order to justify calling myself a dancer?

Bodies and minds change. Change is constant. People shift. No one is the same all the time. And we all need to eat, sleep, rest, and care for ourselves in order to survive. So why do I feel obliged to dance "properly" all the time, as if I will lose the title otherwise?

These expectations feel unreasonable, and yet they continue to shape my relationship to my body and mind, and my sense of value. Which means I have to constantly work against this unrealistic ideal. I remind myself of what having a body actually means. Vulnerability and permeability feel like important words to describe and relate to my body, my mind, and my experience of them.

3.3 Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction

Perhaps the pressure I feel around the dancer identity is not only linked to capitalist expectations of productivity, outcomes, and value, but also to the kinds of stories we tell about work, labour, and identity.

For a project evolving around bags and embroidery, I was recommended to read “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction” by Ursula K. Le Guin (2024). It took me a while to get to the text, but once I did, it made me very happy. It is short and accessible, and I felt seen and understood on multiple levels.

In the text, Le Guin proposes a different way of thinking about storytelling. A less spectacular one, less linear, and not centred around a single main character, the supposed hero. “Heroes are powerful” (Le Guin 2024, 25), and everything tends to revolve around them. They dominate the story, while everything else merely supports or serves the hero.

We are very used to these kinds of stories, stories of violence and conflict, of men fighting. Because of that, other kinds of stories do not come easily. Le Guin contrasts this with an older and often overlooked story structure based on gathering rather than conquering. As she writes, “If you haven't got something to put it in, food will escape you – even something as uncombative and unresourceful as an oat” (Le Guin 2024, 26). She suggests that early human culture may have been shaped not by weapons, but by containers; bags and vessels used to hold, carry, and share what was collected (Le Guin 2024, 27).

This idea resonates strongly with how I think about dance and the body. The dancer's body or the artist's body, as a vessel, an archive that holds memories, thoughts, and experiences. The “carrier bag” model imagines narrative not as a spear aimed toward a climax, but as a container that can hold many different experiences at one.

Thinking with her theory, I begin to see how the heroic model of constant action and achievement seeps into how I evaluate myself as a dancer, as if I must always be producing, moving, proving. To fit into this kind of storyline, life becomes about constantly fighting something: overcoming, killing, winning.

My experience is shaped by the way I think and talk about it. If the way I speak about it is filled with expectations attached to an identity that is narrow, harsh, and rigid, my experience becomes ultimately unlivable. It feels limited, reduced, and linear – far away from my actual

experience, which is much more circular. I cycle around. I make cycles in all areas of life. No straight line ever.

The carrier-bag perspective suggests another possibility: that a life, a practice, or an identity might be understood as something that gathers, holds, and connects many different modes of being – even the quiet ones, the unrecognizable ones, the strange ones, the constant repetitions. In this way of thinking, I can hold doubt and fear and still continue. There is more space: space for ambiguity, complexity, questions, and simultaneity.

It makes me wonder whether the struggle I feel is less about dance itself and more about the narrative frameworks I have inherited.

So my question becomes: could my identity expand to hold all these shifts without requiring constant performance. Maybe the challenge is not to force the body to match the identity, but to let the identity expand until it can hold the body as it is.

And perhaps this is also why I tend to use the broader term *multidisciplinary* or *transdisciplinary artist* to describe myself. They seem to contain more room for uncertainty. The shame, confusion, and ambiguity tied to “dancer” have made it difficult for me to inhabit that word without resistance.

4 Problems of the body or of the mind, or something in between



5.3.2024 Notebook

4.1 Beauty

What does it actually mean to move beyond the association between dance and beauty, and why does it still matter? “We spend so much time thinking about what's beautiful or right, or correct, all of these words and we are missing out on what's available to us” (Deborah Hay, *Arts In Context* 2014).

Intellectually, I know that dance is no longer defined by aesthetic ideals, yet in practice this link persists: in art institutions, in society, and within myself. Beauty provides social advantages, studies show it affects treatment, access, and opportunity, so why would dance be exempt from that logic? Why would art operate outside those rules? And what does beauty even mean?

Part of the problem is an internalized body ideal. Historically, dance linked artistic excellence to idealized bodies (especially in ballet). To this day in many dance books a certain body type is being preferred or necessary to reach perfection or harmony in the body. Dance teachers and social media can feed into these kinds of narratives, but also the opposite can happen, and inclusivity is increasing. Another point that can be problematic is a constant body comparison, competitiveness and an appearance- focused environment.

The pressure of beauty standards continues to shape my expectations of the dancer's body. I don't want this to be the focus, but I can't pretend it's gone; beauty is still part of the landscape I move through. And when I cling to a particular image or sensation of what a dancer should be, it limits my doing. It interferes with dancing, especially because art-making, and dance in particular, requires stepping into the unknown rather than reinforcing familiar ideals.

I have my own sense of beauty, I think most people do, to some extent. My desire for colors, patterns and rhythms in dance, art, clothing and bodies feels endless. I'm a very visual person, drawn to contrasts, humor, and moments of surprise. Beauty feels like a practice to me. We are constantly flooded with opinions, trends, and styles, so discovering what I personally find beautiful requires attention and research. It is a distinguishing process, where part of the task is finding out what I find beautiful generally and what actually works on or with my body, two different things in my experience. My sense of beauty, or to rephrase this slightly; my sense of attraction is a driving force, but it shifts over time. What I notice is that it depends primarily on energy: my energy shapes my gaze, influences my attention, and determines what I'm drawn to in a given moment. This aligns with the idea of beauty as a phenomenon of perception rather than a fixed feature, where beauty depends not only on the thing itself, the object, the dance, but on how we perceive it, and how our cognitive and sensory engagement meets it.

4.2 Expectation

In *Radical Bodies*, Simone Forti recalls Robert Dunn talking about John Cage: "...he always had a double experience of the sound itself and the expectation. And he wanted to be able to just hear sound without any expectation..." (Bennahum, N., Perron, W. & Robertson, B. 2017, 111). I resonated with this, as it shows the way expectation interferes with perception—how deeply it is entangled in how we sense the world. If we replaced "sound" with "movement," the question remains: Can we ever just see movement, feel movement, without the weight of expectation? What happens when movement is stripped of expectation? What becomes visible? What becomes possible?

We all have viewing habits - ways of seeing shaped by repetition, familiarity, and cultural norms. Especially in visual media, we are constantly exposed to certain patterns, filters, and aesthetic codes. These images create expectations about how bodies should move, look, and behave. They influence what we recognize as dance and what we overlook or dismiss.

Over time, these habits become internalized, making it difficult to perceive movement without comparison or judgment.

Even in experimental or non-traditional settings, these expectations can linger in the background, quietly framing our responses. As a dancer, I notice how easily I measure movement against ideas of skill, virtuosity, or intention - even when I am trying not to. To perceive movement outside of those frameworks requires effort. It asks for unlearning, for staying open, for noticing what is actually happening instead of what I assume should happen. Expectation can become both comfort and barrier, structuring my perception and limiting it at the same time. Can I suspend or evade expectation? I suppose a change of presence as the viewer or the performer, to be driven by noticing rather than correctness. The image of a young child that is just learning all the things comes to my mind, as an often used strategy to avoid existing patterns of movement and finding new ways of moving. I can not go back to that state, but I can imagine it, re-invent it to widen my field of perception.

4.3 Fear

I do want to talk about fear and its presence in the body and mind. I would not describe myself as a very fearful person, but within the process of art-making and dance-making it is definitely something I encounter. There is the doubt of making something completely stupid, of exposing one's own dumbness and incapacibilities. Of fucking it up. The fear of repeating myself, again and again and again. Of only ever being able to make the same piece, the same content. Even though this in itself is impossible. But fear can be persistent, and self-doubt can be a killer.

I think this is also related to the idea of genius. The book *Art and Fear* by David Bayles and Ted Orland (2024) helped to declutter some of my thinking around this. In the introduction, they write that making art is a common and deeply human activity, filled with the same kinds of risks and rewards that come with any meaningful effort (Bayles & Orland 2024, 1). The following idea, especially, simplified my feelings almost immediately: the difficulties artists face are not distant or heroic, but universal and familiar.

Through reading this book, and simply through the affirmation it gave me, I began to feel more at ease. It helped me to see more clearly.

Another moment in the book where I felt very seen is when they state that making art can feel dangerous and revealing — and that it is dangerous and revealing (Bayles & Orland 2024, 17). This makes me think that fear is not something to eliminate, but something that is

part of the process itself. Something I have to invite, embrace, and accept. I challenge my fears by not giving up, by not quitting making.

One fear that keeps coming back is oversharing. I want to make personal art, I believe art should be personal. But when something becomes too private, it can feel very exposing and unsafe. It is a constant negotiation, a balance that shifts. And I think it is also a personal decision how far to go.

For example, do I use red paint, or do I use my blood? It is such a difference in material, in meaning, and in intention. Does using my own blood in my art feel too personal? I don't know yet, it depends on what I want to do... I am not the first to think about this. Artists like Ana Mendieta (1948-1985) have used blood as material, making the body both present and exposed in a very direct way.

5 Solo Work: *Portraits of Motherhood when we go to sleep, 2023*



Lets go Lets get fucked up

*Who is creating the piece
the material
the things present*

November 2023 Notebook

5.1 Context

In this chapter, I draw on a reflective text written shortly after completing and performing my solo work *Portraits of Motherhood when we go to sleep* (2023), to which I now add further reflections. In the original text, I outline the central themes and interests of the performance. I examine the relationship with my child, particularly in the context of the evening and the transition from day to night, reflecting on how to support a young being through such shifts. This inquiry also led me to consider my own experiences of transitioning between different states and the responsibility of accommodating another body and rhythm.

Furthermore, I explore my personal history with dance and how it has shaped my artistic process and my relationship to the form. Questions surrounding my voice, how I use it, withhold it, or position it within dance, emerge as significant concerns. Bojana Kunst's *The Voice of the Dancing Body* provides an important theoretical framework in this regard, as it challenges and expands my perspective on the piece.

Returning to this text now, I find it fascinating to recognize that I was already engaging with many of the questions that continue to occupy my practice today. The struggles articulated in the reflection remain present in my current research and are further examined in the chapters

above. The text also opens up my personal background and artistic pathways, which now serve as a meaningful point of re-entry and reconsideration.

5.2 Practicalities

Portraits of Motherhood when we go to sleep is a solo performance that I created during the first year of my Master's program in the fall of 2023. The work was developed within an approximately six-week creation period in a conventional theatre setting. As students, we were responsible for all aspects of the production, including choreography, performance, lighting, sound, scenography and costume design.

This process allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of my artistic interests within performance-making. I realized that my curiosity extends beyond performance itself to include choreography, scenography, musical choices, and the creation of a specific lighting atmosphere. My aim was to create a layered, multisensory experience that invites the audience into a distinct world. The creation process clarified that I benefit from working with a high degree of artistic autonomy, with fewer people involved and decision-making power remaining largely within my own control, apart from those collaborators I consciously chose to include.

While we were able to ask other students for limited assistance, such as operating lighting or sound during the performance, the production process was largely self-managed, as no professional technical support was available (only introductions to the equipment). Each student worked with a mentor of their choice; I collaborated with the visual and performance artist Anni Puolakka, with whom I developed a strong working relationship. Their feedback was meaningful and contributed significantly to the artistic development of the piece.

5.3 Making Process

In the making process I had a meaningful moment as a source, which I refer to in the second half of the title: *Portraits of Motherhood when we go to sleep*.

I used this point as a safe port, metaphorically speaking and would often return to it if I felt lost. An artistic process in this image would resemble the wild and unknown sea. And making actual tangible objects within the artistic process is for me like anchoring myself. Throughout I created many things closely related to bringing a child to sleep for example poems, drawings, maps, several mobile and audio material.

I was interested in the transition moment from day to night. When one thing is over but the next has not started yet, we are within a period of changing from one condition into the next. Day and Night are seemingly opposite and relate to different states of the body. I associate consciousness, light, warm, active, awake with day and subconscious, dark, cold, asleep with night (for example). The moment of bringing my child to sleep is the peak for me in this shift. There are so many things at play; when we are together in her bed and I help her to let go of all she has learned and went through on that day, I get to witness that in between state very closely.

From my own experience, letting go and changing into resting mode can be difficult and even ambivalent. When facilitating someone else's transition similar feelings can appear: peaceful feelings and a sense of completeness. Yet at the same time it can be so boring, difficult and almost annoying.

Very important and connected to this transition from awake to resting mode is the night time routine. For many children a set routine makes it easier to handle change and for many adults this applies as well. In the making process I recognized that I am using the beginning of the piece as an analogy to a night time routine, the whole opening scene serves me as a performer as a preparation in a similar way. One possibility of understanding the structure of the piece is by reading it as references to different times during the night. The opening scene is referencing a night time routine, ending with me taking my glasses off, which I always do before going to bed. The middle part is working within a sleepy, dreamy state, touching on non-human bodies and worlds. Clear associations are still possible since I work with memories in this part. The last scene suggests a deeper dream state that does not necessarily have clear reference points in my life anymore.

5.4 Map

To understand the exact actions I take during the solo I like to write down what I am doing as a list or a map. In this way I can escape my own poetic narrative and stay concrete. It also makes it easier to remember and to invite the reader along.

First Scene:

Choir Music (Water Night by Eric Whitacre)

based on :

Water Night Poem

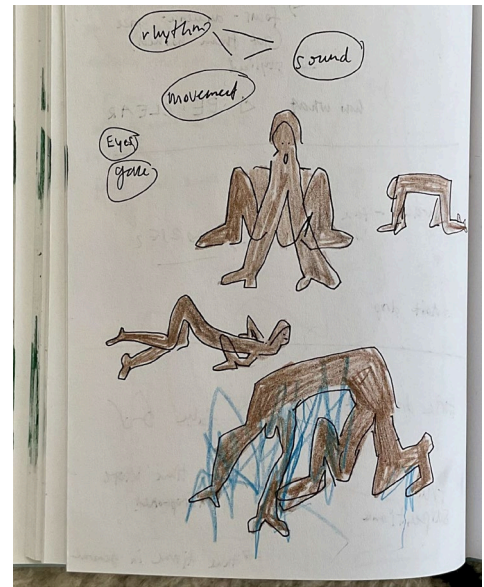
Night with the eyes of a horse that trembles in the night,
night with eyes of water in the field asleep
is in your eyes, a horse that trembles,
is in your eyes of a secret water.

Eyes of shadow-water,
eyes of well-water,
eyes of dream-water.

Silence and solitude,
two little animals moon-led,
drink in your eyes,
drink in those waters.

If you open your eyes,
night opens, doors of musk,
the secret kingdom of the water opens
flowing from the center of night.

And if you close your eyes,
a river fills you from within,
flows forward, darkens you:
night brings its wetness to beaches in your soul.



Octavio Paz 1914-1998

Adapted by Eric Whitacre, Translation by Muriel Rukeyser

Additional Note about the Musical choices and Intentions:

As a teenager, I was part of a professional youth choir, and choral music formed an important part of my artistic background. During the creation process of the performance, it became clear that I wanted to work with a musical composition to which I felt a strong personal and emotional connection to. I was interested in inviting layers of meaning and relationality across different temporalities, almost like a sensuous form of time travel, where past and present experiences could coexist within the same space.

So initially, I was drawn to the a cappella motet *O Magnum Mysterium* (1994) by Morten Lauridsen. The piece is meditative and sonically rich, based on a Latin Christmas chant that centers on the mystery of the Incarnation; God becoming human. However, this explicit

theological reference created an association that felt too direct for my artistic intention.

Water Night by Eric Whitacre (composed 1995), on the other hand, carries a similarly contemplative atmosphere while remaining more open in its associations and ambiguous. Its delicate textures, subtle dissonances, and multilayered harmonies create a suspended, almost weightless sonic environment. This quality resonated with my exploration of transitional states, between day and night, wakefulness and sleep, autonomy and caregiving. The elasticity of the music mirrored the emotional and temporal shifts present in the relationship between parent and child, where boundaries between bodies and rhythms soften and intertwine.

The composition is based on the Spanish poem *Agua Nocturna* by Octavio Paz (1957), translated into English as “Water Night” by Muriel Rukeyser. Later in the performance, I worked with the image and sounds of a horse, and I was struck by how this image already appears in the poem in a surrealist manner. This unexpected resonance felt like a merging of different layers within the work, connecting sound, memory, and imagery across distinct parts of the piece.

I am on my knees unrolling slowly a very narrow
long carpet (domestic object), diagonally
I sing partly along and on top of the choir
When the carpet is unraveled, I lay down
underneath, pretending it is my blanket
I lay there for a moment, my arms stretched to
the side, singing a very high long note
I look at the audience for the first time,
get out from underneath the carpet and crawl on
top of it,
starting to roll myself inside of it
I roll backwards, making myself a fishtail with
the carpet, while singing and keeping eye
contact with audience (“flirting”)
When I have reached the back stage and i have
rolled the whole carpet from my waist to my feet
and longer,
I start to crawl towards up stage again, like a seal,
I climb out of the carpet, peeling myself out



the song ends while i am in the front middle on my back but head facing (upside down) to the audience

I take my glasses of

Second Scene:

the creature appears

mixture of

dirty laughing loud / screaming / coughing / ugly rough noise

hysterical emotional too much everything

stopping and staring into audience angry affected (only face shows emotions)

whipping/ real moments of hiding within just being (head down maybe or eyes closed)

creature moves on floor first left then right towards the lamp

then behind the painting, the foot moves for a moment (other body hidden)

creature comes out again

creature stuff,

giving birth to carpet

(imitating) holding carpet in arm, trying to pile it up, throwing it off stage (angry/ loud with noise)

finding the horse breathing amplified (microphone stand with microphone hidden under white ikea blanket that had been standing there the whole time)

calming the horse and myself (iiihahaha)

talking, soothingly in german and finnish

petting the horse

slowly careful climbing on the horse

galloping to the corner, while eye contacting the audience (serious face)

taking the microphone off underneath the white fabric (horse)

singing "Oh Tannenbaum" slowly while looking into the audience (like singing to a child)

Third Scene:

Sound starts (edited sound of child singing blau blauuu blauu uu blauuuuu)

I walk to the right side of the stage (picking up my glasses again that had been laying on the floor)

I pull third painting up (that has just been laying on the floor)

then another creature dance appears walking dancing
pathway is very close to the three big scenographic paintings hanging from the ceiling
until I reach the third one
I look at the paintings and imitate them dance with them from them through them
The end is black out sound of I stop moving in weird uncomfortable sideways body bend.

5.5 In Conversation with Bojana Kunst

Recently I have become more interested in using voice, noise and speech in my dance art, meaning I have started to build awareness about my choices and interests regarding the body and how it moves through space. Why do I hold my breath while dancing? Why am I so silent when dancing? This has been changing, I have started to include breath and sounds more easily, but it still feels like a relearning of what dance is within myself. How am I using my body? What does it mean to dance? Is dance only movement?

The second scene of the Solo is very much about that process, widening my own sensemaking of dance. I am making noise, letting sounds appear that are related to the animal and non human spectrum, but which are coming from within me. I am working with somatic states and acting as methods, listening and creating voices that are unknown to me yet.

Bojana Kunst's 2009 text *The Voice of the Dancing Body* has been very stimulating for my thinking and made me realize (again) how deeply embedded history is in our bodies. Representation is essential and the consumption of a very narrow perception of bodies and movement can be hurtful to the person and to the art itself. Bojana's text refers to the legend of St. Christine of Tyre, which is a story of a woman who refuses to surrender to her father's requests. Christine's tongue was cut out, but she was still able to speak. Bojana's text links the discovery of the voice to the breaking point in dance history, when the oppression of ballet was outdated and dance no longer had to be only silent (Kunst 2009, 2). The audibility, inner voices and even more so inner sonority of the body reveal a different reality in dance art and mark a new artistic genre (Kunst 2009, 3).

I can recognize this history in my own path and I unfortunately think ballet still has a dominant influence in some institutions.

I don't see myself or my dance art closely related to ballet (anymore) and still I can't deny my body archive and my entangled history thereof. I have taken ballet classes approximately from the age of eight or nine to sixteen extensively in different state and private schools. I want to mention that I have experienced abusive behavior by non educated ballet pedagogues that were teaching ballet only from the perspective of being successful dancers in their younger years and now being too old to dance themselves and therefore teaching. Because of this I am at moments still uncertain of my abilities connected to ballet and I attribute a learning difficulty (when learning physical phrases/ dance material) due to the triggered trauma and anxiety that I experienced for many years in ballet classes.

I would say that I have spent my twenties unlearning patterns of ballet. I may have taken a ballet class still in the beginning, for my ego, my reassurance, my self confirmation, until I felt more and more uncomfortable, because I was doing something that I did not identify with, that was highly restrictive, that felt unnatural and hurt and did not suit my body and mind in many ways. Now I sometimes forget this and almost pretend like I don't know any ballet. Ballet seems to be behind doors, hidden in my memory and lost, I wonder if there is shame connected to the denial. I do link my ongoing crisis with the "dancer identity" to the trauma related to ballet. Another factor that could be related to this as well, is that I have not been using my voice much in my dance making. I have been intrigued by noise and speaking and sounding and singing and of course music in general for a long time also in performative contexts, but I have also felt like I can't do it *myself on stage*. There is a separation of the dancing body and the "sounding/loud/noisy" body. Something about how making sounds and words feel, seems to be negative and raw, opposite from well educated, beautiful and lets say "good". Kunst writes exactly about this separation, which reveals the body as something hopeless and miserable (2009, 7). She describes the disclosure of voice, a smashing of the peaceful connection between being and representation. But in this opening, a space gets created where the dancing body can appear.

Another interesting point Kunst discusses is how our voices can feel so strange and weird when we listen to them through another device (2009, 3). Even though our own voice is such an intimate thing, it can easily become alien to us. I relate to this very much and connect it to a wider political problem as well. Especially female associated voices are often connected to negative adjectives like: cute, fake, off, too much, hysterical, stressed, hyper, too high or too fast. Living in a patriarchal and misogynistic society creates many harmful thoughts that have to be actively opposed.

In a writing workshop that we had with Teo Ala-Ruona in preparation for the Solo performance in autumn 2023, I was thinking a lot about how “something was *coming* out of me”; the words “to come” resonated a lot with me. The task was to perform our text to our peers, whatever we had written. For me, starting to speak was difficult. Being in my “performing body” using my voice intentional with content. I think the beginning was the most challenging; breathing in to prepare the mouth to form words and sounds. In the little demo that we did on the last day of the workshop I was working exactly on that. Teo had advised me to take the challenge and start from where I am at (this was so helpful). So I was working with just the word “coming”. When it finally came out of me, I was singing it many times and could not stop singing it anymore.

The solo *Portraits of Motherhood when we go to sleep* consists of three scenes, which each include contrasting facets of voice usage. During the first scene a harmonious choir song is played very loud from the sound system. I add another layer by singing along with it and partly on top of it, to extend it. The second scene is a manifestation of roaring and weird, loud, ugly, abstract noises. Sound and movement explore each other and work together. Towards the end the sounds get softer and finalize in gentle singing that resembles interacting with a child. Part three has an edited voice recording of my own child, who I have recorded singing themselves to sleep. Here the dancing body is silent, or not audible.

5.6 Developing a Continuation of this Solo

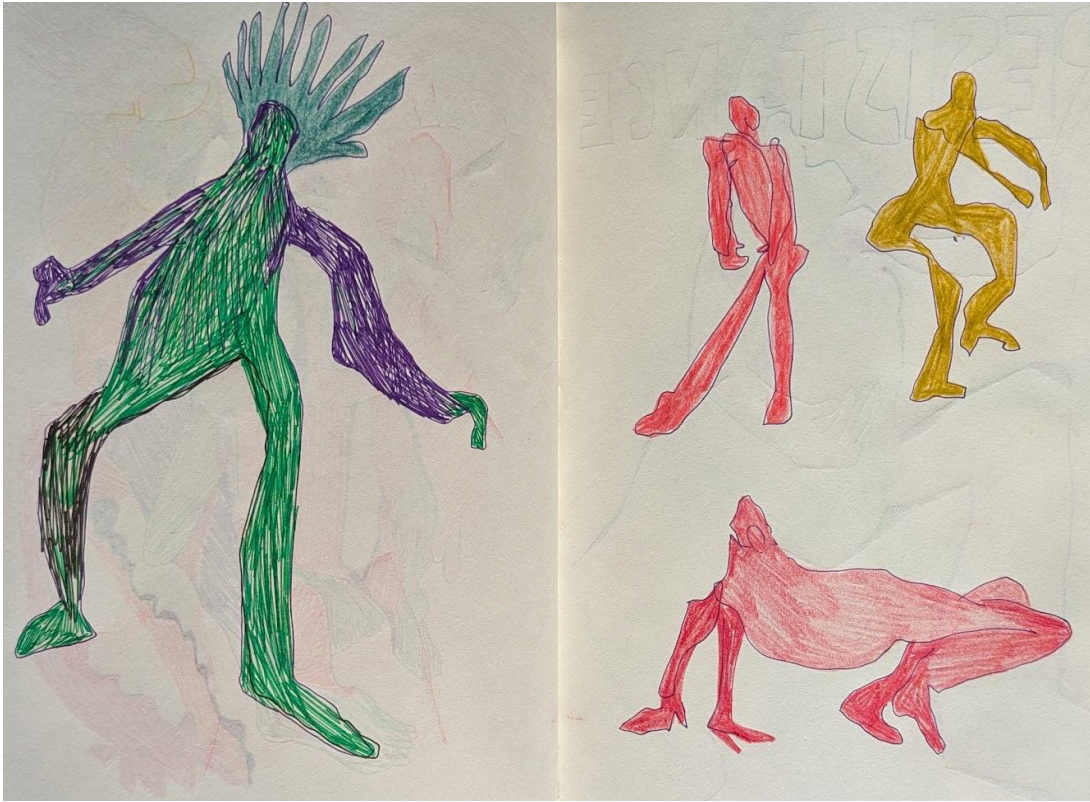
I have started to think about and plan a continuation of this solo, dealing with the overall transition from being a child, a daughter to my mother, to becoming a mother myself. I would call it *Motherhood is a Journey and I am Driving without a Licence*. I imagine it as a combination of performance, dance, and music, creating a space to care for and share emotions around motherhood, revealing its overwhelming, humorous, and tender dimensions.

In the performance, I will work with a hybrid character, emerging from parts of a child, a mother, and a monster. By monster, I mean a creature that is not from this world, something estranged, alienated. I am deeply fascinated by bodies whose edges blur, that have a ghostly presence and can shift between states, emotions, and identities. Maybe I am drawn to this because I struggle with it in real life. So in my work, I create figures that can shift more freely, almost effortlessly, across these states.

How can opposites like outrageous joy and boredom exist at the same time? In this performance, I want to reconnect with earlier physical states and reawaken embodied memories that I have already begun to explore during the solo process in 2023. Through sounds produced both inside and outside my body, I will shape a landscape of shifting emotional terrains, where fear, anger, pathos, and failure can coexist. The process will unfold as a kind of collage, assembling emotions, exercises, and fragments of past work into new constellations.

I remain interested in scale, and in combining the body with larger images or ideas of bodies. Even though our physical bodies have a certain size, that perception can shift, depending on how we relate to it and how we choose to look.

6 Working with Others



November 2023 Notebook

6.1 General Thoughts

During the three years of my Master's, I had many opportunities to work with established and emerging choreographers, dancers, performers, and artists through longer collaborative projects as well as in classroom and studio contexts. Encountering different personalities, temperaments, artistic approaches, and ways of working was a pleasure and privilege. Through these experiences, I learned a great deal about my own preferences: the environments in which I feel comfortable and able to work, the conditions that support me, and the kinds of challenges I can engage with productively. I became more aware of where my limits are and how to recognize them.

I also found discussions with colleagues, friends, and peers extremely valuable, whether within a teaching context or in more informal, private situations. Being able to witness how others process and relate to different conditions and information was important to me. It reminded me that everyone may be struggling with something different, or sometimes with very similar issues.

Two weeks after beginning the MA programme, I wrote this note:

"I know who I am a bit more, I guess. Just because there is so much socialness that asks who you are — self-defining, background, and again: who are you? So I am now again defined. Borders are more clear. I start here and end here. Or I guess, not at all at the same time. Because I grow with each encounter, I learn and question."

Looking back, I recognize this tension between definition and openness as something that continued throughout my studies. Becoming clearer about myself did not mean becoming fixed; rather, each encounter also expanded and shifted my understanding of who I am.

6.2 What works

There are several factors that support and help me within an artistic process, whether in creating a piece or participating in a dance class. This is not to say that if these elements are absent, the work will not go well. Rather, I have realized that certain things can activate me and bring me from a state of not being able to move to not being able to stop moving. Some of these are also things I can offer myself, without anyone else needing to do anything.

Firstly, "good" music. Music can itself be a reason for me to move.

Secondly, sentences that affirm, encourage, and soften the situation, such as: *"you don't have to produce anything new," "you can stay,"* or *"give yourself permission to be where you are."* Some of these are inspired by classes with Maria Saivosalmi in Spring 2024. In a reflection text after the class, I wrote:

"The way Maria Saivosalmi instructed the class and gave 'permission' to follow, trust, and move in whatever way felt good or necessary helped me immensely to move. Her attention to the performing body and its never-ending process, and her awareness of the many layers of the outer and inner gaze, stayed with me. She kept saying: "it is okay to follow / allow the body to go somewhere else."

I think these encouraging words are meaningful because it can become quite scary and muddy inside oneself.

Thirdly, allowing myself to prioritize internal physical sensation and lived experience over external visual shapes and forms, at least in the beginning, as a starting point. In this way, I acknowledge the body and allow perception and imagination to meet and play together. Working like this does not make the experience less real or less specific; rather, it feels more

true, messy, and complicated. For me, it is impossible to fully say what all the different parts are that move me.

Fourthly, time and space. It has been essential for me to have enough time (not endless time) to develop, delve into, transform, and sit with my dance and my relationship to a task without constant interruption, for example through ongoing comments or suggestions while I am in the middle of doing it. Equally important is taking a break from the dance. I often think about the importance of rest and sleep, and I relate this also to my dancing practice. Taking distance, stepping away, and pausing can be just as important as diving in, exploring, and working intensely.

So much can happen once you step out and create some distance. It does not necessarily need to be a large distance, a toilet break, for example, or any small shift of attention. A moment of changing one's relationship to the dance can change everything.

And lastly: talking, contextualizing, and sharing. Getting to know who I am working with and being invited into their thinking, plans, and feelings. Being vulnerable together, associating freely, and relating what we are doing to the world outside the studio. Spinning a web of meaning together through unexpected connections, uncommon entry points, and diverse ways of thinking.

6.3 What I struggle with

Now I would also like to share what I struggle with in contrast.

I find it difficult when exercises feel too dry and too concrete, so I can foresee the outcome; when they focus purely on technique while creativity, expression, playfulness, and other experiential dimensions are mostly absent. I also struggle with rigid schedules and endless repetition. Repeating the same thing over and over can create a strong resistance in me.

I noticed this especially in situations where someone else decided what I needed to do, for how long, and with what intensity, often in ways that felt disconnected from what my body and mind needed at that moment. Questions around interest, investment, and commitment began to surface: *How do I stay engaged? How do I make the work my own? Do I have agency?*

I realized that my boredom was not necessarily caused by repetition itself, but rather by a lack of contextualization. Internal thought processes that could have been shared, discussed, or opened collectively remained unspoken. Power dynamics and a feeling of

losing control lingered beneath the surface, shaping my experience of the process more than the actual content of the work. Talking did not accompany the process; it often entered only once the process had already begun producing negative effects.

All of this made me realize something important: I am not the kind of dancer who is simply a silent doer, detached from thinking, making, or deciding. It is difficult for me to repeat and memorize without context or involvement. That kind of dancing is not “interesting hard” for me: it is just hard.

6.4 Thoughts on gaze (unfinished)

A very strict and critical outside gaze, a judgmental gaze, a male gaze, can strongly affect my experience of dancing and performing.

Regarding the performative aspect, or the gaze of others watching, I do not yet have many fixed thoughts. I think the presence of others watching creates more dimensions, because every pair of eyes enlarges the space and sees something different.

I try not to get stuck when I am being watched. I notice that I can slip into certain modes: my “show off mode,” my “I don't care mode,” or something else. But I would like not to enter an already existing frame of myself that feels too small or ungenerous. I want to remain more open than that.

I have also experienced situations in which I did not feel comfortable being watched. In one process, a choreographer's gaze made me uncomfortable throughout the work. After the piece was finished, their involvement in the project ended, and they left. Strangely, things shifted after that. Performing without their gaze on us changed the experience. I could focus more on myself and on the work itself. Gradually, the material became separated from the choreographer and began to belong more to the performers.

The realization that I have, on several occasions, been strongly affected by the male gaze and the choreographer's gaze was important for me. I am not free from it, and it exhausted me. I had not fully understood the responsibilities that come with carrying power until I experienced its effects myself. I think that in some processes I was actually afraid to a certain extent, although I did not want to admit that to myself at the time.

I am reminded of a conversation between Chrysa Parkinson and Ursula Robbin that touches precisely on what I am struggling with: the power of the choreographer, questions of

authorship, who material belongs to, and who decides whether something has been danced “correctly.” Is it possible to free oneself from that struggle?

“The author’s hand would be on you very heavily.” (Robbin & Parkinson 2014, 20)

I am drawn to this quote because the metaphor functions physically. I can feel it in the body: a hand resting on you, guiding, shaping, but also carrying weight.

7 Art Making Process (general)

A burden or a gift

Artistic process
a special guest
almost a ghost
entering and not leaving
staying, and not giving a shit
sometimes a witch,
hosting magical moments
that can't be explained with logic

Artistic process
can go deep
make holes, glue thoughts build bridges,
even heal.
It's something when it happens, ambivalent by nature,
because it's human I believe.

And then its done, its out, its art,
alive and not,
artistic process over,
left or went to sleep,
before it starts again.

2.12.2023 (poem) ; 17.12.2021 (drawing) Notebook



7.1 Motivation

My motivation to make art is very tight to expression and understanding. I make art to express myself, to expose details or the obvious. But I don't think art necessarily is always selfish and only about the self in that sense. I think artists listen to themselves and their experiences in the world, to politics, to different layers of knowledge that we are all embedded in. And this is how it connects to understanding: there is an investigative process that can be research related. Artists seek to understand or maybe not even understand, because some things are not meant to be understood, but rather to be brought up into consciousness. Some things need to be seen and felt, and this is only possible if one becomes aware of them.

I therefore understand art-making as a process of thinking, a transdisciplinary act that involves care, asking questions and which exist in time as constructed matter. By care I mean, among other things, a continuous process of awareness and adjustment, where my artistic practices have to adapt to my everyday life and the time that is available to me. This demands a constant organization and modification, as circumstances are always specific to the person and their priorities. If making art has taught me anything, it would be to accept and enjoy the uncertainty of a process. But enjoyment is not always possible, so the task can also be to live through it and trust that joy will return at some point.

Sometimes this feels very good. Life feels generative, meaningful, full of potential. It becomes a state of flow. I use what comes my way, things click, I find things, and I feel excited. But this is not everyday.

During the process of writing this thesis, which is the longest continuous text I have written so far, many things have been happening in parallel. And often, other things seem more important. I think it took me until now, this last week, to realize that of course life keeps happening. I cannot just write. I need other things alongside it. There is a reason why my practice is so diverse — I need it to support me. There are many things I do to balance this writing process, and some days I manage better than others. Some days, other things take priority and I don't get to write at all, and that is okay. That feels normal.

Maybe some people work differently — they need to fully immerse themselves and cannot multitask. I need the variety, the stopping, the wandering, the oozing around, touching things, using my bodily senses. Writing feels quite specific to me, and I need a certain mindset to focus and think, to not get distracted. Usually I need to do other things first, to release some of my restless energy, before I can sit down and write. Now it is late, dark — night, you could say — and I find that helpful.

7.2 Process - transdisciplinary vs. multidisciplinary

My process of artmaking is nonlinear and usually cycles around and through different artistic means and mediums before reaching a performative collage, performance installation, or something else. During my BA Studies in Dance, Context, and Choreography, I was still using the term multidisciplinary, as I did not know other terminology existed. In a multidisciplinary art practice, different disciplines stand next to each other, whereas in a transdisciplinary art practice, the disciplines dissolve into each other. I am not only interested

in combining different forms, I think through them together. They affect and reshape one another.

Therefore, I understand my practice as transdisciplinary, or as an expanded practice, as I move between writing, drawing, and movement, allowing them to overlap and inform each other.

At the same time, in my thinking, dance still feels limited and carries certain restrictions, and I struggle to move beyond this very traditional way of understanding it. Art, on the other hand, feels more open to me. I experience fewer constraints. It can be everything and nothing, it can be fun and boring, and to some extent limitless. Of course, art is also embedded in histories, in the art market, and in specific contexts, but for me personally, it does not feel as heavy.

And then I wonder why that is. Is it because I studied dance, and not art? I professionalized as a dancer, a performer, not as an artist. Maybe it comes down to words and definitions, and the way I follow them, how I allow myself to be limited and restricted by language.

So I think my struggle with defining myself as a dancer comes from there. I want more space. I need it. I don't want to be limited beforehand, before even starting to make, to think, to feel. Art can be anything. I can be anything, and I can do anything.

7.3 Other Artistic Practices

To give a short overview of some of the methods I use, I want to briefly mention three of my other artistic practices that I have developed alongside the notebook practice, which I will expand on later in greater detail (Chapter 9).

Firstly, the Biomorphing Dance Practice enables me to focus my attention on my movement and on the relationship to my whole body, while at the same time being in nature and being stimulated and affected by all there is around me. I practice awareness and receive information through the five senses, responding to the continuously changing landscape of sound, movement, patterns, rhythms, smells, and colors. My movement is at times minimal, shifting its shape over time and through the act of doing.

I developed this practice during my bachelor research thesis project, which mostly took place in nature, as I was living at a mökki during the summer of 2020. The Corona pandemic had

just begun, and isolation was the dominant condition. I found myself in Finland, somewhat stranded, living out of a small bag, as I had not planned to stay that long, but in a way, I never really left. Of course, I visited Berlin occasionally, but only for short periods, a week or two, to move out of my apartment and store my things. The shift from a busy life in Berlin to the solitude of a cottage was extreme.

This soft and gentle movement practice takes inspiration from Deborah Hay's work, particularly her invitation to engage with cellular consciousness, to ask from the perspective of the whole body, and to remain fully in the present moment.

The Biomorphic Dance Practice allowed me to connect to the place and to become part of an unfamiliar environment. It led me to think more about the intricacies of ecosystems. I began to recognize and experience natural spaces as spaces which are alive, in constant transformation and saturated with the agency of more-than-human beings. As I understand, ecosystems always consist of a dynamic balance between external and internal factors. External factors such as climate, underlying geological material and topography are framing the overall structure of an ecosystem while the internal factors are composed of the multiplicity of relations between the species, individuals and their processes of living and dying.

Secondly, my painting practice. It is very much about curiosity, processing my surroundings, and expanding my research. It is related to the notebook practice, but it is mostly visual and not text-based, not language-based. I have been interested in how this practice is informed by my work with movement and the body, but even more in how painting can also inform those practices.

The paintings embody movement, with vibrant color, pattern, and fragments of bodies and landscapes. This practice is not always so present, as I need space and materials (I like to paint on larger paper, starting from A3). There have been very prolific periods that come and go. At those times, I would paint every day, facing new questions: How do the body and the painting relate? How do I perceive time while creating a painting? What does a painting need?

And thirdly, a digital practice that I have been developing since 2017, which I usually refer to as the *Bathroom series* or archive. It consists of short recordings of myself in bathroom

spaces, usually between 30 seconds and a maximum of 2 minutes. I set up the camera, almost always on the sink, and then I move, express, and live through a moment.

It feels like a release, or a micro-performance for myself and for the camera, in a very small space. It feels private, because I do not do it when others can see me, but at the same time, others could enter, so in some way it is not fully private either. I am investigating the impulse itself, as well as what it produces. Questions of self-expression, self-control, public versus private, impulsivity, tension, and release are central to this practice.

Although the practices appear quite different, they all circle around similar questions of body, time, perception, and expression, just through different materials and situations. I have the feeling I always come back to my body, it remains my central point of reference across all my practices.

More for the sake of completeness, I would like to mention that I also have a musical practice. I learned to play the piano from the age of four, and I have always enjoyed improvising and playing with rhythm, tempo, and different variations. In recent years, I did not have access to a piano at home, and therefore this practice, which I had been building for many years, almost disappeared. I also sang in a choir for many years, which is something I would like to return to. Still, it feels connected to my other practices, even if it is currently less present.

7.4 Ways of working

Overall I could say my ways of working are experimental and playful, yet always emotionally driven, seeking to cultivate connection to each other, to oneself and to other than human.

I use my artistic practices fluidly, switching intuitively between them. My approach depends on what the artistic process needs, but also on what is asked of me, what I am asking of myself, and, of course, what materials and space are available. I am looking for a space of resonance within the practice. Since my artistic practices largely draw on my own experiences, I encounter them on multiple levels. Through these means, I often engage with themes such as resistance, control, intensity, regulation, impulses, power, failure, love, guiding, forgiving, and empathy.

The Biomorphic Dance Practice functions more as an opening practice, one that brings sensitivity and grounds me in my body. I also work with different kinds of exercises, alone or with others, that cultivate bodily states of vulnerability. These states can emerge through

disorientation and overstimulation, using methods such as repetition to exhaustion, body-tonus exercises that play with opposites, rapid speaking and moving, gibberish talking and singing, re-enactments of embarrassing moments, and pretending games.

Another aspect I have noticed is that I seem to work best in close proximity to a feeling, an event, or the situation I am responding to in my art. I try to document or respond as immediately as possible through one of my practices. In this way, I can return to that feeling, thought, or knowledge later on. I tend to forget many things. Of course, some processes take time, but I try to catch glimpses of something, they seem like snowflakes. You have to be quick and careful to catch them, and even then, they might just melt in your hand and disappear.

A clarifying thought: my artistic practices keep me alive. They are my training and, in some ways, relate to a coping mechanism. My art-making, however, is a different kind of work. It is where I gather from these different practices, connect them, and assemble something. This work feels more like organizing than making. Overall, it is about balancing these two very different processes and I need both.

Rather than moving in a straight line, my artistic practices unfold in cycles, where experiencing, processing, and assembling continuously feed into one another. It is somewhere within this balance, between living, practicing, and organizing, that my art begins to take shape.

8 Parenthood conditioning Artistic Practice



13.02.2025 Notebook

8.1 overwhelmed

Finding balance in life; between different tasks, jobs, exercise, work, different kinds of practices, health maintenance, physical and mental conditioning, friends, family, all different kinds of relationships, networking, alone time, preparation time, actual art making, thinking, social media, advertising, planning... I feel like it is an endless list, that just keeps growing and expanding the older I get. Time shrinks.

I do enjoy bouncing between different things, having flexibility and freedom in my daily life. But I also find it complicated at times to keep an overview and to stay balanced. I think it is a mix of having high expectations of myself and the wide range of work that art making actually includes, especially if I want to make a living from it. It is a highly competitive field, where self-motivation is essential, and where one has to be creative not only in the art itself, but also in figuring out how to sustain a living in these precarious conditions. It is a challenge I am not up for every day.

And then there is the point that has really shifted my perspective and scattered my life even more: parenthood. It affects all areas of life with tremendous force, to the point that I would say it is conditioning my artistic practice especially in the beginning, in those first couple of years. Keeping another human alive that depends on you for everything is not for the weak.

8.2 Limitations become tools, methods and skills

When my child was about 15 months old, I wrote an application text analyzing and describing parallels between taking care of a child and an artistic process. My perspective was shifting from finding myself in a constrained position, because of limited access for example to time, to changing the way I look at the situation. I began to see my circumstances as advantages, a possibility to gain from. Care work was partly reshaping how I related to time in my artistic process and therefore limitations were becoming tools. I focused on time, fragmentation, and multitasking as methods rather than obstacles.

Reframing how I related to the situation, a circumstance I could not change, was helpful and meaningful.

At that time I was interested in finding out how the skill set of mothering and doing the work of caring for another human being has sharpened and progressed my thinking about art and doing art. So basically taking the experience of pregnancy and parenthood as a material of artistic inquiry. "Becoming a mother requires transformation from a self focussed individual to an other focussed one" (TEDx Talks 2014). This shift has affected me deeply, and I began to wonder how it might also relate to artistic research.

Firstly, most of the changes that influence everyday life so immensely during the transition into parenthood are connected to time in some way or the other. For example; no time alone, no time for food, no time to take a shower etc. When I look at my artistic practice and how it has changed and grown over the course of the early parenting stage, I notice my tools and methods are adapting and processing to the circumstances. The practice of care work starts to affect how I deal with time in my artistic process.

8.3 Tools: Time-pressure, Fragmentation, Multitasking

Three factors stand out in particular. Through reframing, they slowly became tools. They have remained constant within my artistic practice, and through them I can trace the changes I have experienced, both bodily and mentally.

Time-pressure as a tool:

Already before I got pregnant I liked to use time as a tool. Especially time limitation and time pressure worked well as working methods to create or set a focus in a certain artistic practice. Parenthood brought the limitations and pressures of time to a new level: in the last fifteen months, the time I got exclusively to myself was almost non-existent. This has had one of the more noticeable impacts on my art– the time for my note taking practice, dance practice (biomorphic sculpture) and painting practice was quite limited, art had to be made fast. I try to have a daily notebook moment, which can last between seconds to minutes, seldom hours. The dancing practice happens anywhere it happens, and often in public bathrooms, the park, my living room.

Fragmentation as a tool:

Thoughts can usually not be finished. I believe art production and artistic practices are oftentimes non linear, ambivalent and full of surprises. In that sense, fragmentation can be a useful tool, an instrument. One is often forced to zoom in and out of projects, to leave and return. Taking distance, and then making connections because of that distance, can be an advantage.

At the same time, fragmentation can also make one feel lost and desperate, interrupting flow and motivation. I notice that my mind and body are sometimes interrupting themselves already, jumping from one thing to another. In that way, the fragmentation of time can be frankly challenging, but it also shapes how I work and think, it becomes part of the practice itself.

Multitasking as a tool:

At this stage in my life art production had to happen next to other things. Art making is not exclusive time reserved for one thing only, meaning sitting/ moving/ thinking alone in a quiet studio space. I wrote this while breastfeeding my baby to sleep. My body can feed and think at the same time. I am physically attached to another human being and I feel the sensation, while I write. Everybody has specific circumstances and these provide certain possibilities and certain impossibilities/ challenges.

This idea that ruptures in time can generate new ways of experiencing time, is also described by Varinia Canto Vila in *Bodies In and Out of Work* (2014). In her text she explores how freelance dancers experience time, space, and practice as fragmented and discontinuous. I was inspired by the term ‘pockets of moments and periods,’ (page 7), which I think is really fitting, because working periods encompass a specific way of doing and being, that often doesn't extend, and sometimes it does. It reminds me of parenting, with its endless tasks that are both deeply individual and endlessly repetitive. The constant juggling of change, transitions, uncertainty, and interruptions in parenthood feels remarkably similar to the rhythms of the freelance art scene.

Vila also uses the concept of “porosity” (Vila 2014, 10-11), empty spaces that may be filled with other material, and I think about whether the pockets of time and interruptions in my own practice might create a similar sense of unity and connection.

In this way, time-pressure, fragmentation, and multitasking are not just challenges — they are shaping the way I move, think, and create. They weave through my daily practice, returning in different forms, shaping both what I make and how I experience making it. Art is never linear or separate from life; it moves with life, in its interruptions, repetitions, and unexpected rhythms, folding the ordinary and the extraordinary into the same practice.

8.4 Methods: Efficiency, Organization

Related to the tools I described, also certain methods established themselves; efficiency and organization.

Efficiency as a method:

I had to become a mother to understand, if I want to achieve anything I have to do it in an economical way. By that I mean; accepting the particular resources and working as productive as possible in the given time and space.

This realization also made me appreciate and respect the time and efforts of others much more. Throughout that process my own borders became more clear, which enabled me to actually value them. The ability to prioritize and choose, which is an essential part of working efficiently, has created useful spaces inside my artistic process.

Organization as a method

Having a child means managing someone else's life, usually with another person together (the father or chosen partner). Communication skills are a necessity and the skill to plan

ahead and schedule together is the base. As an artist, this ability is very important as well to survive, next to other factors for example endurance and luck.

Organizing the framework of a structure for an artistic process to unfold is crucial. The lack of time often requires high flexibility while planning and literally making time.

8.5 Skills: Play/ Improvisation, Uncertainty, Pretending/Performing

Now I would like to shift perspective and ask: How have my performance skills helped me with parenting?

Play / Improvisation

Playing and improvising often overlap. When I engage in free play of movement and sound, I often use methods of improvisation to facilitate the situation for my child. My child finds joy in interacting in diverse ways and exploring different means of communication through physical and vocal expressions. This ability to improvise also helps me to navigate moments of uncertainty.

Uncertainty

If making art has taught me anything, then to accept and enjoy the uncertainty of a process. It can be very difficult and challenging for one's patience.

Parenting is very much about allowing, listening and accompanying another person in different moments. In these early years, a child cannot control, fully understand, or clearly communicate what is happening to them. Even within a set structure, their emotional availability is not easy to read, and moments of unpredictability can feel difficult. Accepting unpredictability also requires moments of calm and self-control, which is where performance skills become invaluable. Sidenote from a later stage of parenting (the child is 4.5 years old now): other parents have given me the feedback, that I looked so composed and calm, handling my child's meltdown and refusal to leave so well, when I was on the inside struggling very much, and suffering a lot, in that moment, unable to do anything.

Pretending / Performing

One fundamental factor of performing and live art is control. E.g. Controlling the body, the voice, the emotions, etc. Discipline and practice can help to navigate oneself in a situation that can feel very overwhelming. Calm breathing and paying attention to a predetermined plan can provide a safety strategy, performing control and calmness can make oneself peaceful. In parenting there are many situations where control and staying calm is necessary

for the caretaker. Circumstances that are demanding are for example a crying, needy baby in the supermarket, an angry toddler that doesn't want to leave the playground, a child that is protesting for or against food / sleep or any other task. Using techniques from the performing arts field can support the caretaker. Often it is crucial to stay at ease in the most stressful situations, because the child reacts very directly to the level of stress.

8.6 In Conversation with Lene Albrecht and Phyllida Barlow

I had read an essay by the German author and curator Lene Albrecht, which resonated with my experience of making art. The essay, "*Bis auf die Milch*" (eng.: *down to the milk*), asked how motherhood and being an author could be reconciled, and what is produced when an author becomes a mother, or a mother becomes an author. The text, which was only available in German audio format and read aloud by the author herself, felt very close to my own reality as an artist and overlapped with my own thoughts. Albrecht spoke about the rhythms of work and texts, and about the process of adaptation when an object of art, or a process, became subject to more than one person's needs. The word "rhythm" was serendipitous here, forming an easy analogy to my own working process as a performance artist: how the rhythm of my dance had changed, and what happened when my process of dance-making became subject to another person's needs.

While pregnant with her first child, Lene Albrecht is searching for role models; women who write, make art, and mother successfully. She suggests that the patriarchal structures of our thinking make us believe this is impossible. In order to be taken seriously as a female (or queer, or non-binary) artist, a masculinization takes place to get closer to the image of the (white) cis-male Artist. I only began to question this reality myself when I was no longer able to imitate it.

Another artist I had been drawn to during this time was the British sculptor Phyllida Barlow. Her work challenges the hierarchy of material usage, as she often works with inexpensive, non-traditional materials to create large, space-taking, and yet nonetheless anti-monumental sculptures. The production itself is also made visible in her work, shedding light on otherwise hidden processes. I was fascinated by that transparency, because it visualizes, alongside the material choices, the physical action of building; time and process become materials.

In a short video documentary about her work on Art21, Barlow speaks about the relationship between form and process. She says she prefers actions that are "more functional than artistic, like a cleaning gesture with a brush that happens to be loaded with paint. It's about

information and expediency.” Barlow’s methodology favors simple, functional gestures over flourish, and in this way can be understood as a practice of the quotidian. As with Albrecht and her texts, I was curious how Barlow’s methods could be applied in performance or choreography. As I was also working with painting alongside my performance practice, I found the overlap (and ambiguity) between visual and time-based media very exciting.

9 Notebook Practice



I take my notebook to my bed
just in case
Something interesting comes up.
We wrestle
I give up.

22.1.2024 (drawing) ; 2018 (poem) Notebook

9.1 Describing the practice

The notebook practice is an essential way of thinking and processing for me. It consists of writing, drawing, and collaging in a book that I carry with me almost everywhere. I think of my notebook as an extension of my body. Its pages become a surface on which perception and experience continue. Writing, drawing, and collaging are not separate techniques; they are different modes of sensing.

Through this practice, I create a dialogue between my experiences and my understanding of what I perceive and feel. While it can be reflective, it is even more a somatic approach. Visualizing thoughts through colours and lines, or through words, becomes an improvisation on paper. I rarely know in advance where a page will lead or what it might transform into. The unknown becomes tangible, and often insight arrives later, sometimes as an answer, sometimes as a deeper question.

The notebook functions almost like a cartographic tool, mapping inner and outer terrains. Unlike a static map, however, it remains dynamic and evolving. Over time, it reveals connections and patterns that I was not previously aware of.

Keeping notebooks has been part of my daily routine for many years. It allows me to stay in dialogue with myself and my surroundings, to trace, visualize, and give form to thoughts as they emerge.

I think it is precisely the lack of separation between personal life, work, pleasure, and everyday fragments that gives the notebooks their specific quality. Diary-like reflections (almost like letters to myself) exist alongside quotes from books or people, copied social media snippets, found materials, random doodles, and even drawings by my child. All of these layers coexist on the same pages. I value this layering because it generates meaning over time, it all melts together, without becoming the same.

Often, I write something down, add a drawing or a doodle, and only later, when I return to the page, does it begin to make sense. The meaning does not always appear in the moment of making; it frequently requires distance. Sometimes it takes months or even years. When I revisit older notebooks and take the time to look through them, I often discover something new, connections or insights that were not visible to me before.

I find this process difficult to fully explain. It is not always easy. I think carefully about what I write; I want it to make sense, and I often long for clarity or an overview. Yet the process is not predictable. There are moments when I feel stuck, or when I find a page so visually unresolved that I can hardly look at it. In this way, an artistic process unfolds within the notebook itself. Although it is rarely the main focus of my work, it remains an essential and ongoing part of my practice.

9.2 Deborah Hay - Encounters

In 2019, *Tanz im August Festival Berlin* had a RE-Perspective of her, called: Works from 1968 to the Present by the American dance legend Deborah Hay. The retrospective included two world premieres, adaptations and a multimedia installation and it was the biggest presentation to date of the US-American choreographer and dance pioneer.

I went to see the multimedia installation *Perception Unfolds: Looking at Deborah Hay's Dance*, which was first created in 2014 and shown three times before 2019. The installation created an immersive environment. Four projections of choreographed dances, which were

actually multiple filmed versions of a single dance, were shown on large, white, silky, translucent textiles. The rectangular cloths were hanging from the ceiling inside a larger, darker room, forming a smaller space that one could enter and exit through each corner.

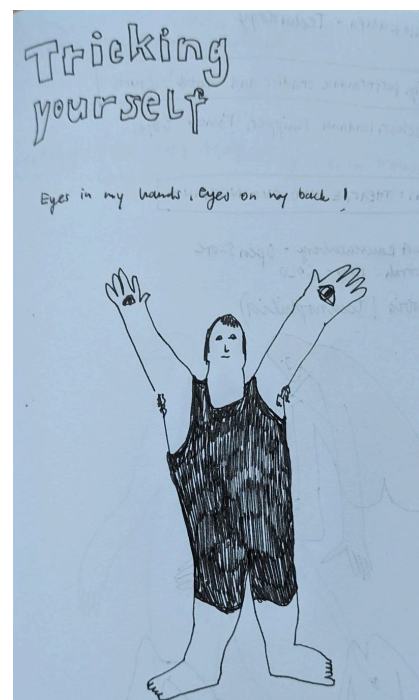
The spectator was invited to make their own choices, to adapt, and to observe. Through these movements, walking through the space, changing perspective, and deciding where to look, one could experience many different versions of the same dance.

I mostly squatted, if I remember correctly; I didn't really feel the need to move. I may have missed some details and parts of the installation by not changing my perspective much, but I felt more comfortable this way.

I also visited the documentation center, an archival room with lots of different kinds of materials, like scores, letters, pictures and written texts from and about Deborah Hay. This room was done in collaboration between Deborah Hay and the artist Laurent Pichaud, who is a long term collaborator of hers.

And I did go to see *Animals on the Beach* at HAU. I remember that I didn't have a ticket at first, and I really wanted to get in. I was excited and nervous. Somehow, I managed to buy a ticket in the end, which felt great. I had a perfect seat in the first row of the balcony, right in the middle. But I remember how boring it felt to me. I hadn't done much research beforehand, I had heard things, but I wasn't prepared for the rawness, the attention to detail, the slowness. I was surprised and frustrated. I didn't really like it, and I felt ashamed of that. I even fell asleep. What stayed with me are only fragments: a few images, the heaviness in my body, the effort of trying to stay awake, watching this "important" figure perform. That internal struggle became part of the experience itself.

Then much later, during my Master studies in January 2024, we had a workshop with Vera Nevanlinna. A dancer who is very familiar with Deborah Hay's practice, and is one of the few who can give workshops in her name. I struggled, one note in my notebook says: today was easier, shorter, lighter, less resistance and confusion maybe, uncertainty still but, good enough. I was present and more with myself, maybe connected, daring. Playfulness, moving vs dancing, how to make it always interesting for yourself." (January 2024 Notebook ride side)



9.3 Deborah Hay - Inspiration

I find Deborah Hay a fascinating artist for many reasons, especially in relation to my notebook practice. In the following section, I reflect on and relate to aspects of her practice.

Deborah Hay has a very particular way of asking questions, which I am drawn to, as I also work through questioning. It seems to be a central part of her method, deeply ingrained in her artistic practice, and something she uses when creating dance scores. Her way of asking often begins with “what if...”, functioning as an impulse within the process of working with dancers. These questions are frequently formulated in a paradoxical way, containing elements that feel impossible. This sense of impossibility has thrown me off in the past when I am in the dancer’s position. I noticed that I find it frustrating to engage with something that already feels unattainable, and my motivation can drop quickly in such situations. A mental and physical resistance appears, as if my body wants to avoid failure altogether. I may start to feel heavy and tired, so I can not even try.

At the same time, I understand the intention behind this approach: to expand perception, to reflect, and to surprise oneself. In my notebook practice, I recognize this tension between resistance and openness, fascination and conflict, curiosity and fear. Asking questions feels elementary, and her way of asking has shaped how I engage with tasks and processes within my own practice. It also took me a long time to realize that it is not about fulfilling the tasks, that there is no right way, and that trying and staying present is enough. It might sound pathetic, but I find it very hard to do.

Another guiding principle of Hay’s is the phrase “Turn your fucking head!” or “Turn your damn head!”. This very direct instruction can initially come across as rude, and perhaps it is but it is also extremely simple and effective. I am inspired by it because of its clarity. It functions as a kind of interruption or wake-up call. In both life and dance, I often find myself very inward, absorbed, and trying hard to do something “right.” In those moments, the act of simply shifting perspective by “turning the head” can change everything. It is a small gesture, but it has the potential to open up new ways of seeing and moving. In that sense, it could also be understood as a method within my own practice: a reminder to shift attention, to reorient, and to question my own patterns of thinking.

Hay has also developed a practice of creating dance scores in textual form, accompanied by a writing practice that I find myself relating to. I am not entirely sure whether it is the form; small, delicate booklets with simple pencil drawings, or the poetics of her language that

excites me. Perhaps it is the combination of these elements. I do not always feel that I fully understand the texts, yet I am still engaged in them. She formulates rules and structures for how dancers can interact with and practice the score, and there is something playful and inviting in that approach. The scores also function as an extension of the embodied performance, continuing the process of questioning and exploration that originates in the choreography.

In my own work, I notice a similar interest in combining writing, drawing, and movement, and in creating frameworks that allow for both structure and openness. My relationship to my notebook practice feels similar in that sense, as I think of it as an extension of my body.

Hay studied and worked in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in the 1960s, but later stated that she never set foot in a dance studio again and chose not to work within that kind of company structure. I find this decision very clear and bold. It reflects a strong sense of recognizing one's own needs and following through with them. This resonates with my own questions around how and where I want to situate my practice, and what kinds of structures I want to engage with or move away from.

9.4 Contextualizing the Notebook Practice further

I feel close to how Deborah Hay reflects on her process. While she speaks about writing in relation to dance, I understand this in a wider sense. I remember her describing how writing allowed her to notice dimensions of the dance that were not visible to her before. In a similar way, I often only come to understand parts of my experience once I write or visualize them.

This makes me think that writing and visualizing are not separate from the experience, but part of it. They allow me to extend, reflect on, and sometimes make visible what was already there. In this sense, my notebook practice becomes a space where experience, reflection, and making continuously inform each other. With this in mind, I started to notice other works differently during my research.

During my non-linear research time in the library, I sometimes moved through the shelves intuitively, picking up books that caught my attention by their cover. That is how I discovered *Drawing the Surface of Dance: A Biography in Charts* (2019) by Anni-B Parson. I was immediately fascinated by the charts, their colors and details, and the way they emphasize visual traces of different materialities. Parson rethinks dance and choreography as a kind of theatre on paper. Each chart represents a dance she has made in the past. They can be

understood as maps, as an aftermath of performance, or even as a dance piece in themselves.

This combination of image and text, together with its reflective and score-like quality, was very intriguing to me, and I found myself connecting it to my own notebook practice. As Parson writes, the duration of a drawing unfolds in real time (2019, 8–9), ranging from a slow, tiresome, seemingly endless process to something very quick. She also describes the lack of durational control in how a drawing is read, which can be freeing from a choreographic perspective. I relate strongly to this idea.

Within my notebook practice, I have experimented with building scores, or with reconstructing memory and thinking of it as a kind of dance or choreographic gesture. I began to understand that the notebook does not only function in a forward direction; from an unknown present towards a future understanding, but can also work in reverse. Starting from an experience, something I already know or have done, I collect and compose a page, similar to how Parson's charts operate. In that sense, the notebook allows me to move back and forth between experience and reflection, between what I know and what I am still figuring out.

Another artist I want to mention here is Amy Sillman. A good friend of mine, who is a painter herself, introduced me to her work some years ago. I also had the chance to see some of her works at the 59th Venice Biennale, curated by Cecilia Alemani.

Sillman has a very dynamic, process-oriented painting style that blurs the lines between abstraction and figuration, often incorporating humor, anxiety, and a certain rawness. To me, it often feels like she is not afraid and simply does what she does — and it works. This does not mean that it is not hard work or that it comes easily, but there is a sense of directness that I am very captivated by.

I take a lot of pleasure in looking at her work. Because it does not force me to see something concrete, it opens up many different associations. I can kind of wander or “ponder” in her paintings.

In her book *Faux Pas* (2020), she writes about the difference between painting and drawing. She describes them almost as two ends of a spectrum: painting as something more fixed, valuable, and exclusive, while drawing is more direct, even “dirty,” and accessible to anyone (Sillman 2020, 29). She also speaks about her interest in loosening painting, bringing in humor and a sense of lightness.

This connects strongly to my notebook practice. I use my skills and I make specific decisions, but at the same time I value a direct, clear, and straightforward approach. It does not have to be perfect or resolved, I try to stay open, not so serious, and still hold meaning.

In different ways, their practices open up a space where writing, drawing, and movement overlap, which feels very close to how I work in my notebook. It makes me understand my practice less as a fixed method and more as something that shifts, adapts, and unfolds over time.

10 Conclusion

This thesis has explored my understanding of dancer identity through artistic work, process, and practice, including reflections on a solo and working with others, the impact of parenthood, and a deeper engagement with my notebook practice. In doing so, I have moved between personal experience, artistic inquiry, and theoretical context, revisiting past memories and engaging in dialogue with other artists and thinkers. The writing process itself has been central to this research. It has functioned not only as documentation, but as a method of thinking through experience, allowing me to articulate connections that I had previously only sensed. Language has played an essential role in this process. Searching for words, repeating them, and reworking them has enabled me to gradually shift and challenge older belief systems.

Through this process, I have come to a clearer understanding of my own position: I am a dancer. This does not need to correspond to fixed or traditional definitions. It remains flexible and context-dependent, and it is acceptable that my practice does not always align with conventional expectations. I could describe myself as a dancer with an expanded practice, but I do not need to. Dance, for me, can take many forms, and I actively participate in shaping its meaning. At the same time, I identify as a transdisciplinary artist, which reflects the way I work across and through different mediums, grounded in a long training in dance.

My growing awareness of the relationship I have with language is a new tool. I have become more sensitive to how language feels: at times it is precise, at other moments it feels unstable. Words can feel slippery, changeable, sometimes difficult to hold onto, yet I have learned to work with this instability rather than against it.

If I return to the initial research questions, I understand now that my transdisciplinary practice expands my position as a performer beyond fixed definitions. It allows me to move between writing, drawing, movement, and everyday actions, understanding performance as something that emerges through living, sensing, and relating. This approach produces both friction and possibility. While it has brought moments of insecurity, resistance, and a sense of not fully belonging, particularly in relation to established ideas of dancer identity, it also opens space to question these norms and to develop alternative ways of working that respond to lived conditions such as fragmentation, care, and time.

The body that emerges through my artistic work is not stable or singular, but shifting, relational, and often contradictory. It moves between control and vulnerability, visibility and

withdrawal, shaped by experience, memory, and context. It is not a fixed form, but an ongoing process of negotiation.

In conclusion, I understand artistic practice as something that allows me to survive, to think, to process, and to remain in movement. It does not need to appear as “art” from the outside. It includes documentation, reading, walking, scrolling, making, embroidery, gathering, searching for materials, nesting, and wondering. This list is open and continuously expanding, and no external framework determines how it should look. Artistic practice is adaptable and inseparable from life. It is an ongoing process of learning, sensing, and expressing.

The work of making art, however, is something slightly different. It requires refinement, selection, and a process of distillation, as if pressing something into form, like extracting juice from a larger field of experience, memory, and practice. The work then starts to exist more independently, with its own rhythm and specific needs.

Mariella Greil writes about not-belonging and inhabiting cracks and fissures in relation to disciplinary identity (Greil 2021, 181). I initially related strongly to this idea. However, when returning to it now, I realize it no longer fully describes my experience. I do not primarily inhabit an “in-between” space. I feel grounded in dance, while also moving within visual art contexts. Rather than existing in a gap between disciplines, my practice draws from a multiplicity of them. At times I think of this less as swimming in-between and more as moving through different mediums with different conditions, like water flowing in multiple directions. I also find myself thinking of an octopus, moving with several limbs at once, each engaging with a different surface, yet belonging to the same body.

As I come to the end of this writing, I also recall a recurring voice, my grandmother’s suggestion to focus on one thing, to reach depth rather than breadth. This idea has stayed with me and has also contributed to moments of doubt around my practice. However, I now understand this doubt as part of the process of forming identity rather than a contradiction of it. To counter this, I return once more to a visual metaphor: different plants develop different root systems depending on their environment. Not all plants grow deep roots or tall structures. Some grow wide, adaptive, and interconnected systems that still anchor them firmly in place. My practice, I realize, resembles this kind of rootedness.

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