

## **Evaluative report of Jardin d'Europe two-week residency at Workshop Foundation, Budapest.**

**Asher O'Gorman and Tara Silverthorn: COMB**

The two week long residency in Budapest gave us 'space' physically and otherwise to focus our collaborative choices whilst inviting and investigating an independence from each other. We were able to claim the right and necessary requirements for the work to be comfortably practiced day-to-day and eventually shared with an intimate audience.

### **Living in Budapest**

All efforts were made to ensure that our stay in Budapest was comfortable and that we were well-informed about the city, its transport, the possibilities for visitors, as well as the location of the studios and the Trafó Theatre. Our flat was conveniently located an easy tram-ride away from the studios. In addition to our work, we were made aware of the performances which were happening at Trafó, giving us the chance to further contextualise our work within the Budapest scene and have reflective discussions on what we had seen, which informed and fed into our own choices for the work.

### **Studio Space and Programming**

The studio we were allocated was of ample size to meet our needs for the work as a pair. It was a pleasure to sometimes share the top floor with different groups, for instance local artists, babies and toddlers movement groups, as well as classes which were open to the public. This gave us a feel of being part of a community for the time that we were there, and as we were often working with the door open as part of our process, the coming and going of people was for the large part very welcome and unobtrusive.

### **Mentoring/dramaturge element**

We were delegated a dramaturge for the process, whom we saw in the studio context twice and who attended our sharing. Whilst the Workshop Foundation offered that we could request a specific dramaturge (within geographical reason) for our project, we decided in the end, partly due to preparatory time constraints, to trust the judgement of the organisers on this matter, and we were open to different points of view entering our thought process. The invited dramaturge had a very different background and experience. This was interesting and at times challenging to negotiate. Our interests and the dramaturge's interests for the work sometimes collided, which generated the necessity for us to further clarify our objectives and preferences.

### **Studio practice and residency support**

We were given the support that we needed to be able to work effectively within the time-frame. The environment was relaxed and without unnecessary pressure, which meant that the project was given the necessary 'space' for us to work in the way that we wished (i.e. non-product oriented and flexible with our working hours according to what was needed). This provided a grounding for experimentation.

We took the opportunity to give an informal sharing at the end of our time. This seemed an appropriate moment to open the doors on what we were doing, and it also encouraged us to make decisions related to construction leading up to the sharing. However, it was made clear at the start by the organisation that this sharing was optional. This created a freedom. Artists could choose to hold such an informal review if that was what was needed for their work at that given point. Alternatively it was made clear that no obligation existed in respect of this and privacy would be respected.

During our residency, it transpired that one of us had to leave after ten days, thus the other continued the process and did the sharing alone. This was supported by the Workshop Foundation, and they showed great flexibility and understanding to our varying requests regarding studio time because of this factor. They also went to the trouble of moving the allocated time slot for the sharing to happen because we wished for the work to be shared during the daytime.

## **What we spent our time with**

We firstly had questions around how we wanted to be within the frame of the residency. We had a strong desire to remain independent from unwitting pressures that might arise from the responsibility of receiving a residency. In particular the pressure from working with a mentor / dramaturge and deciding to share the work with a public at the end.

We decided to protect the work and to keep it as free as much as we could from these unwitting pressures that often house unreal expectations and anxieties. The work, therefore, needed a strong independence. We tried to uphold this by taking the necessary time in our approach and disarming any fears and unrealistic expectations. We were interested in inviting people to see the reality of the progress of the work. This sounds like an obvious thing to say, but we have previously experienced that projections come into play a lot when inviting "new" people into a fresh working environment.

With these thoughts we spent time pondering on how to empower an audience to have their own freedom whilst watching the work e.g. through a physical action that they are invited to make at their own time giving them (also) a responsibility/participation within the work? Giving enough time for an audience to absorb all that they are surrounded by in order that they can then arrive at a place where they can be aware of their presence in the whole scene and let go, drop over and over again their first initial expectations and then start to dialogue with their own desires, rhythm and imagination.

How do you make a dance out of details? Practice an awareness and openness to be in the details of what I am doing.

Choosing 'Things': We spent some time being specific about the 'things' (objects) we choose to be inside the space with us. Textures, colours, normative use, size, necessity, togetherness. There was a haberdashery shop around the corner from the studios in which we spent quite a bit of time, looking and feeling and genuinely being amazed by the beauty that colours and textures have on our sensorial view of the world. In the space with us were about seven things e.g. a charcoal used to burn in a sheesha; Blue and purple wool; a bit of white polystyrene; A candle that looked like red honeycomb; A strip of fabric binder; A little grey band; A small white plastic bag inflated with small almost luminous pinky-orange beads inside and tied up with a rubber elastic band. They all sat well together visually.

## **Thoughts and questions that have emerged from the residency**

Questions on performing and the private.

Questions of how much you share. How much is shown?

Questions of intuition. What to choose? Why to choose for things? We made decisions on an instinctive level - doing or selecting something simply because of liking it, then letting our reasoning reveal itself subsequently.

Questions of importance and focus. Our interest was to not give things too much focus or importance deflecting the importance by not looking with the eyes at the thing that might look important, rather sensing it in a different way, noticing how it makes us notice other things. Doing two things at once, splitting our attention. Being within the now, the situation, placing ourselves in context of the before, the 'history of things happened' and the time after 'the possibility of things'.

Questions on approaching things, touching things. How can we give time within an action, in our approach to the action, so that the multiple possibilities of the action may become apparent to our perception?

Which one of those endless possibilities do we choose to seize?

Animating objects! Physically, imaginatively. Use music as an element to animate 'things'. The music commented on the 'things' and gave them an importance. Transformation of the 'things'. The music also as a new spatial texture in itself.

Cleaning the space.... opening the windows, washing space with noise, deleting noise to be left with the noise of us.

What is amateur; the objects or the dancing?

How are we together?

The quality of nothing that is something! Almost seeing something!

Threesomes and conversation! How do we deal with a third; the third proposes questions. How do we deal with the multiple? What does it mean to focus in on one thing, being aware that I am sharing space and time with many different things?

What is the most appropriate future way/space/medium in which this work can be seen and given?

### **Continuation**

We are excited to continue the work entitled COMB together. Engaging with these thoughts and questions that came to surface whilst in Budapest.

Tara Silverthorn and Asher O’Gorman wish to thank the Workshop Foundation and all the people who popped in to see what we were up to. Their kindness, generosity made our sojourn in Budapest extremely enjoyable and productive.

**Tara Silverthorn**

**Asher O’Gorman**

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