

Methods and Paths of Artistic Practice (2018)

Here I will describe two ongoing projects which I see as paths that one could retrace to have a better understanding of my practice. Their ways may or may not intersect in the future but they are definitely influential in their coexistence.

For the first six months of my studio practice in Piet Zwart Institute I concentrated on conceptual and choreographic development of a performance piece called “Mind Your Step”. Before I came to Rotterdam, I was already following a path of theoretical and visual research to find my way in dealing with issues like social choreography, collective body and the modes of resistance against the enforced systems of daily life. My interest in these issues was inspired by Istanbul Gezi Park ¹ occupation that was set in the summer of 2013. Although my motivations were triggered from my local experiences, I find them interrelated with global issues and traceable in the daily lives of every individual. The book of Ana Vujanovic and Bojana Cvejic, “Public sphere by Performance” became one of the first resources of my theoretical research providing a sociological perspective around these topics, while after I started the program, some readings from Henri Bergson as well as stories from Norse mythology ² attracted my interest towards the concept of time. Contemplating on themes like duration, transformation, evolution and destiny helped me gain an abstract and holistic perspective in order to communicate with a wider variety of people. I was already flirting with the image of a linear pendulum animation to represent an individual’s act transforming into a collective motion. In Piet Zwart Institute this two dimensional movement translated itself to a sound focused performance piece presenting an oscillating body in a corridor with the echoing sound of rhythmic steps.

Through the sound works that I have encountered in the art scene, I realized that sound/rhythm has a strong but natural effect on people’s presence. The viewer automatically becomes an active participant and correlates through his/her own experience. Departing from this idea, I experimented with the corridor space and the loop pedal in two different choreographies. In these trials, the sounds recorded with objects or motion were accumulated through the loop pedal as the audience observed from a fixed point at one end of the corridor. I’ve tried different pacing rhythms which created a variation of references and helped me embody different characters. I wanted to play with the perception of presence by continuously introducing and breaking a rhythm.

¹*Istanbul Gezi Park Occupation:*

This was a park/square occupation movement that I was involved in 2013. This event changed my approach towards the medium of performance and had an effect on my psychological well being.

²*Norse mythology:*

During my studio visit with Alex Cechetti, because of my pendulum image, he mentioned the tarot card, ‘Le pendu’ and the story behind it. Through this encounter I discovered the story known as ‘Odin’s discovery of the Runes’ and got curious about the female figures called Norns.

<https://norse-mythology.org/gods-and-creatures/others/the-norns/>

I've also combined elements like text, video or screens with live feed to try other possibilities of synchronization and producing a fragmented body through one action. The creation process of this performance piece opened up a platform where I can experiment with new elements and mediums. I use my body as an instrument to produce sound and transform daily objects or basic motions into a narrative. I cannot narrate or imagine without the right tools hence I feel the need to find or create my own idiom that would fit the needs of expression. The choice of medium has this capacity to establish the thought process of the artist while embracing the references to the history of that material in use.

For the project "Mater.ial"³ which was initiated in 2014, I chose to work with printmaking technics while re-imagining mythological stories of goddesses. These stories were kept alive for centuries and they were transmitted from one civilization to another thanks to print technics on clay tablets of the time. The project aims to attract attention to the survived qualities of those myths and to the resistance of the material. To support this concept, artist books are produced with gravure and cyanotype, old print making techniques, while taking a stand against the contemporary production methods. I find this project important and fruitful for my practice because what matters now has all kinds of connections to what happened before and helps us to imagine possibilities offered by the future. For me, the stories and the figures from antiquity are not only an inspiration point but a method to understand, connect and deal with the current global situations. The technical and theoretical information I've accumulated in the making of these works add layers to my practice and opens up new veins towards future projects.

For instance, since a couple of months I've been experimenting with copper sheets to produce sculptural objects using the skills I've mastered through metal etching. Instead of printing on paper, this time my aim is to use the plates or sheets of copper, brass and zinc as final products. Through this approach, what traditionally was acknowledged as the matrix, becomes a unique object that is pregnant-incinta⁴ to unknown possibilities. Another element I've been trying to reuse is the Luffa⁵ plant which I used during the production of the Tiamat book from 'Mater.ial' project. This dried plant that can be purchased as a bathing sponge has a web like texture on the outside. For the book of Babylonian goddess Tiamat, I've transferred this texture on my metal plate to imitate the web of the intergalactic space. Fascinated by the form and the texture of it, I recently brought this plant back to my studio in search of a method to transform it into sculptural objects.

³ 'Mater.ial': A book series dedicated to goddesses from Mesopotamia. The books are installed as offerings in the space as a modern shrine.

-Tiamat is a Goddess from the Babylonian Creation.

-Inanna is a goddess from Sumerian mythological stories.

<http://mervekilicer.com/material-2014-2015/>

⁴ *Incinta*: This word means pregnant and 'incidere' means engraving in Italian. I don't know if they share the same latin root but this is one of the concepts we often discussed with Alessandro Fornaci, my engraving master. The plate as virgin and the 'point' as the instrument to engrave/impregnate the plate and create an image.

⁵ Luffa: is a genus of tropical and subtropical vines in the cucumber family.

Besides dyeing the dried plant with cyanotype and playing with the form, I also prepared an etched copper sheet with the texture that I used before. This time I wanted to push the limits of this pattern so, I kept the copper sheet in a long and strong acid bath. The result was an oxidized, mostly damaged but still one intact sheet of copper with the texture of Luffa printed on it. These experiments may become part of the 'Material' project or transform in to a new path of production. Not knowing where the path leads or this sweet curiosity keeps me aware of the positive or negative outcomes of my actions.

The projects I'm working on are open ended and require long term processes so that they have the liberty to transform and evolve in time. This does not mean that they are trapped in studio environment. On the contrary, the works needs to be installed and exhibited to have a wholesome process. Since I have a studio space, I find the liberty to walk different paths at the same time. I can see that my work is slowly weaving a net while creating its own narrative through notes that would eventually transform into an 'opera'⁶. Often we discuss with the tutors where these paths may encounter or how they can support each other. I find it tricky to put this process into words because I don't want to concretize the flow of things to come. Nevertheless I do acknowledge the importance of reflecting on my process, and deeply appreciate the feedback I receive from my peers.

⁶ Opera: Opera d'arte means 'art piece' in Italian. The notes are references to textures/patterns or methods I discover in the process of making and eventually put them together to complete an art piece.

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Alessandro Fornaci : <https://www.vantiber.com/>

Alvin Lucier - I am string in a room: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jfssj80oNuM&list=PLgw56dvx6C2Pt-HKkGSkV0ccTaRGoga4z&index=11&t=1s>

Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker - Rosas danst Rosas

Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller / Documenta 13 - Forest piece

Jetta Van Dinther and Mette Ingvarstsen -It's in The Air : <https://vimeo.com/183854721>

Joan Jonas - Vertical Roll: http://ubu.com/film/jonas_vertical.html

Jonathan Burrows - The Stop Quartet <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmRa7DomeP8&index=4&list=PLgw56dvx6C2Pt-HKkGSkV0ccTaRGoga4z>

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Samuel Beckett - Quad: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPJBIvv13Bc>

Toni Pecoraro: <http://www.tonipecoraro.it/>

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