

Paper leaves and other constructions



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a reading companion to *Always Already*

compiled and edited by
Karen Christopher & Tara Fatehi Irani

By way of introduction

Demographics Omikemi

The difficult endurance of enduring in difficulty Felipe Ribeiro

Henry Dagg talks unorthodox musical instruments

The Question Payman Kassaei

Women become plants Eirini Kartsaki

Studio notebook extracts

Always Already is a performance installation, video series
and reading companion by Karen Christopher & Tara Fatehi Irani

By way of introduction

Who writes these words? How do they come through me? I am here and I am moving my fingers and thinking thoughts that are scaffolded into my brain via every thing and everyone I have come into contact with. Every build up and every bring down has contributed to this moment. This is how so much gets away. There was a thought about how other minds traverse my thoughtscape during lunch, when the trigger was food, or another mouth moving and strings of words finding patterns that carry meaning and do so even though I have heard them before when they didn't. These words find the earlier version, the one already inside my head, planted when I read similar words with my eyes from a page of organised letters.

That is to say, I got an idea and I failed to note it down. Even as I wasn't writing it down I thought: it is these words exactly together in exactly this string and it will be meaningless otherwise and unless I write them down in that order now I will forget them and the meaning will not come back via some side door later when I am tired or even more awake than I am now. But somehow it didn't happen, the writing down part, and they vaporised.

It had something to do with the part of my brain that needs to disconnect to let the other part function, make decisions, and speak. This part of my brain is unconscious but knows where all the connections lie. This part of my brain has to be quiet when I'm learning the dance. This part has to keep my breath going when I work on everything else other than breathing yet still need oxygen. Which is to say, there is room for a great deal of variation over time.

The length of time over which Tara and I worked on making *Always Already* stretched further and over more change than any performance piece I have ever worked on. As part of that change our perspective on what we were doing, and why, tilted and re-focussed a number of times. As part of searching for the heart of our material we looked at entanglement of various kinds, at the significance gained through accumulation of insignificant elements, at the overlaps and influence of everything around us and how we become our preoccupations and our materials and how they become us. As part of understanding the mixtures we are part of, we elicited input from other people on the same things we were working with. This reading companion is part of that activity. We had three areas that we thought might benefit from opening up beyond our own treatment of them so that audiences to our work might see other answers to the questions we were looking into. We asked for a response to "Define question", "What is the difficulty in a dance of great difficulty?", and "Can you now sing of humans becoming other things? (specifically machines or plant life)".

These written works were not written in response to our performance work — we had not yet finished the performance and these responders were not part of the making process nor had they seen any of the material we were working on. But just in the final days of finishing our work Tara and I received these pieces of writing and we cannot say we were not affected by them.

We thought of this booklet as a symbiotic document connected with the performance. It tells the story of getting somewhere but not exactly where we got to. It suggests trends and impulses and how the wind was influential and how it was influenza and it compares thee to a summer's day and it listens to the traffic and hears the wooden crack as the floor expands.

We thought about how sun and water are questions endlessly worth answering.

We thought about a good question being reinvented many times, from scratch.

We thought about the roots beneath our feet and stepping on them, is it ok?

We thought about every step, and those in between.

We thought about invitations and how to make them and who to decorate and would they be people we don't already know.

We drank more water. We repeated again and again. We recorded ourselves saying things we had written down. We stood further apart in order not to spit on each other.

We broke for dinner. We called up a performance and listened on our phones.

— Karen, March 2021

Always Already started when we, Karen and Tara, didn't know each other that much. Putting together signs of wanting to collaborate with each other — two sentences at a dinner party, a twist of a head, a whisper at a performance, a wink perhaps — we first tested how it feels to spend time together and then to work together. We did not work towards a particular deadline. We started with occasional field trips in London — once a month — until we moved our work into a studio space where we started developing tasks from the material we had gathered or thought of — tasks to generate more material.

From early on we were interested in the accumulation of small gestures, through repetition and through time. We looked at early machine designs and how individually insignificant pieces come together to move something and make something. We observed bird nests as complex structures made through a repetition of small gestures. We explored — and tried really hard to learn — a dance of great difficulty. We slowed down a tap dance duet by the Nicholas Brothers — neither of us are tap dancers. We later reconsidered what we mean by dance and what we mean by difficulty. We played flutes — we both play the flute. For months we collected all the red and gold objects we came across. This was a response to a visit to Harvey Nichols, a luxury department store in London. Three years later we went through the red and gold objects, threw some away and split the ones we could use in the kitchen or around the house between the two of us. We had months of being apart — travelling, moving, other things. We kept in touch by writing emails to each other to 'create strange imageries with our words'.

We thought of the weaving together of plant and human and machine. We made our dream machine in our heads, with our words and then in drawing and then with strings, springs, ropes, spindles and our bodies. We misunderstood each other and thought of attending more to language. For a while there was water — trays of water and an amplified

sound of a dripping tap in our studio. We looked at plants growing in human bodies. We kept working with the accumulation of small gestures. Knot after knot after knot. We started weaving, we made looms, we imagined the room is a loom, we got into interwoven networks of lines, strings and objects. Again, we tried dances of great difficulty. Found dances and made dances — borrowed from carpet weavers, spinners, darayi weavers, factory workers, assembly lines, operators of heavy machinery, tweed makers, lace makers. We observed the small movements back and forth, left and right, that create larger patterns, simple gestures that amount to something bigger than themselves, bigger than ourselves. We followed similar patterns with our breaths, and our voices — weaving breaths and words together. We listened to the call and response between carpet weavers — we listened to their colours, we made our own colours. How do we make our own palette made of colours that don't exist or can never exist, because they are different in each of our minds? For a while we forgot about the colours, then we re-remembered them.

We made more looms and got stuck in some of them — literally, with our legs, arms, shoes, fingers. We made and recorded small daily gestures. Every day for two months. Did we each actually do every day of each month? Perhaps not. A body language emerged out of these almost daily gestures. Months of being physically (socially?) apart. How do we interact from afar? *Keeping in mind that 'there is no one left to explain the cones in my eyes', explore moments of weird ununderstandables through 'choreographies of the mouth'.*

We wrote one hundred questions: 1. *Is this the beginning?* 21. *What have you inhaled?* 25. *What if we had pins for fingernails?* 79. *Can you weave yourself into lace?* 80. *Is everything inside me growing?* Later we memorised all one hundred questions — almost. Some we memorised by the pond watching the dragonflies. Later we decided they were too much — too much language, too much

words. Out of physical contact, Karen started a website on which we responded to shared tasks we were individually completing. *'In the form of two growing pea shoots, activate your fingers in the wind.'* *'A wavering song for the dandelion growing in the ear.'* We made videos, songs, sounds, texts.

Our bodies grew out of a wall. A wall which we turned into a storm, an island, and the inside of a mountain. A wall underneath which we named our made up colours, long before — one on this end of the wall, one on that end. We made images with paper and wire. We misunderstood each other and reminded ourselves to remember to keep in mind to acknowledge our differences. We danced in the meadow. We held each other from afar. When was the da Vinci machine? When was the jacquard loom? Where are the automata? When was the connect the dots? How do we have falling leaves? All at once? We won't say all the hundred questions. We will dance the hundred gestures. We won't dance the hundred gestures. We will repeat the ones and zeros which will amount to something, bigger than themselves, bigger than ourselves. When was the broccoli? What if this whole piece was a broccoli? — fractal.

— Tara, March 2021

Demographics

Omikemi

After Joy Harjo

They'll tell you some of us were kind
well-intentioned and poorly timed
Some of us were knives

Some of us were *just doing our jobs*
Some of us didn't matter
Some of us mattered too much

They'll tell you
some of us were *emotionally dysregulated*
half-baked and half-chewed
animals with teeth of barbed wire
boarding two-by-two

Some of us made you sit next to each other
as though strangers on a bus
careful not to touch
or break the emergency thin glass between us

Some of us were doors left open
for ghosts, people conjured from fantasies,
soon-comes and never-reach, brief meets
and hardly-ever-seens

Some of us were cavities

Some of us spent our lives wondering how or why
we didn't just die
but kept hatching like insects
from the sores in the corners of each strangers' lips

Some of us knew all the answers
so, didn't have any kin

Some of us smelled of tobacco and sheet metal
Some of us didn't know how to hold,
for not being able to let go

Some of us were a starter's gun
going off in your gut
as you sat next to your grandfather,
thin enough to pick and clean
in between your teeth, asking you,
the eldest one if you would go for the first
(and the last) round of treatment

Some of us were made in bad faith
others were the blind
with the world at the tip of a cane

Some of us were washed up
in the dance of water slapped against rock

Some of us were experts
Some of us arrived on horseback
Some of us were hounds
desperate to get free of their traps

Some of us were confined to feint blue paper
transfused through a bookies pen
and folded up into little accordions cantos
to send *back home* to a brother whose eyes
had clouded over with glaucoma
by the time the letter arrived
he would feel us thinking him
as his stubbed digits traced the rivers of ink

Some of us were handwriting
that had just learned how to swim

Some of us were the hair-pin bend
in the conversation
Some of us needed beggars to feel rich
Some of us were the flame that started the burning

Some of us were *just doing our jobs*
Some of us didn't matter
Some of us mattered too much

Omikemi is a writer and healing arts
practitioner based in London.

The difficult endurance of enduring in difficulty

Felipe Ribeiro

I

My first bike arrived at the age of seven. It was a heavy, robust, blue mountain bike. This was also the time my family had just moved to a new neighborhood. It was happenstance the combination of tyrannical imperatives of my youth with the need for socialization in the playground as a matter of my own survival. It might have also been happenstance that while everyone else would exhilarate fun in their speed racing, I casted the tracks for another purpose. Instead of sitting and riding, I rather stood behind my new bike just to hold and push it from the bottom back of the seat. I converged the roles of an empiricist and a servant, managing to find strength in my clumsy body to hold the bike straight and study the balances and misbalancing of its movements. Around me, laughs and screams sounded too hysterical, but rendered the soundtrack of everyone else spinning their wheels to accelerate mobility. My memory may lack some accuracy, but I'm sure that scene repeated itself quite often throughout my lonely playground days. In fact, that scene repeats itself now, in words written and read, as a testament to when difficulty is not a situation to be overcome but endured.

II

If I were to summarize this narrative it would be formulated as the following question: 'what is the difficulty in a dance of great difficulty?' We learn, probably at the age of seven, that problems are meant for answers, which are meant to solve problems, a movement of somewhat reactionary promptness that becomes formational of ourselves, of our wisdom, not least of our anxiety. For years, I attempted to balance my anxiety as a waking trigger, not managing however to overdose excitement such that it would paralyze me. While supercomputers became popular by solving tasks much faster than our real-time human action, I practiced the ability of sticking to the present, neither looking too much ahead, nor carrying too much weight from the past. However, still and often, the same task-solving logic applied, although to a smaller scale. As hard as it is to consider the present as the very concreteness of my space-time, it felt like a betrayal to untangle problems from their complexity in order to cast immediate, even if provisory, solutions. To my disgust, I recently saw how this set of tactics became appropriated as a strategy for white supremacists to claim a ground zero where every identity group would have the same power and opportunity, where "all" lives would matter, and where success would depend only upon self-governance and hard-working entrepreneurship. How not to set up the very traps you aim at disarming?

III

The older I grow, the more I'm aware I won't live to witness the solution for the struggles I'm committed to. Problems that mobilize me also escape my space-time, and exceed both my capacities and the experiences I live through. Yet, they furnish my sense of responsibility, and shape my constant becoming. To deal with problems of magnitudes that exceed my lifetime (ahead and before my coming into the world) may be perceived as a disorienting knockout, but I would rather think this condition sets the rules of the game. How does confinement in a slowly changing situation qualify our movements?

IV

Let there be dance in the impasse.
Let art reveal the paradoxes of situations.

V

Setting up the urgencies that must fit in our agenda seems to be the latest strategy of governmentality. Power structures itself while enacting pressing matters and sponsoring their outreach until they seize our efforts. As a strategy, urgencies carry the ability to merge disciplinary ruling regimes to the biopolitical schemes of teaching us what and how to desire. I wonder what kind of rigor, complicity and planning allows us acknowledge urgencies and their need for action, while still not overlooking the fact that pressing tasks are just as much created to reify power. It's not a matter of alienation, or denial, but of training the ability, as many dancers do, to engage with urgencies — not straightly, but rather transversely; of enduring in urgency beyond their personal need, and amidst their imminent risk of death, until they forge life.

VI

About one hundred years ago, Roger Caillois posed a very corporeal question: 'what is the difficulty in a dance of great difficulty?' In the socio-biological lexicon of his time this would read: 'how can the experience of one individual be cast in such fashion as to impact the whole of their species?' I like the degree of mediation posed to the notion of experience, against the grain of immediacy. Especially given Caillois enduring in this question by way of the realms of mystery and magic. His concern lies in the ability of certain intensive experiences to resonate across the globe and embody themselves in every other individual of the same species. There where action turns into phenomena, where empirical observation confounds with surreal fiction, we fence a sort of transmission across time and space, which codes how species look and behave. Out of the many generative paths this webbed intricacy may pose, I'd choose the stringent one, in which self can be reconsidered as a matter of abandoning oneself into the intensity of others. What kind of dance may happen through this experience of self-evasion?

VII

Still under the rubric Caillois named the instinct of abandonment, all of the environment may also be qualified as alterity, so long as it serves to indeterminate the rigid subject/object division. I wonder if this poses a great difficulty for Dance in the Anthropocene. If primeval abilities would furnish awe correspondences casted as teleplastic operations, the plastic capability of mimicking one being into resembling another — like when insects structurally assume the shape of plants — I suggest magic may also happen regardless of visual faculties, by persevering in the impossible task of entering into the time of the other. There, where experience becomes the inexperienced intersecting point of its own transcendence, we could forge a new definition for choreography.

VIII

May magic be the true ability to equal infinity to immediacy.

IX

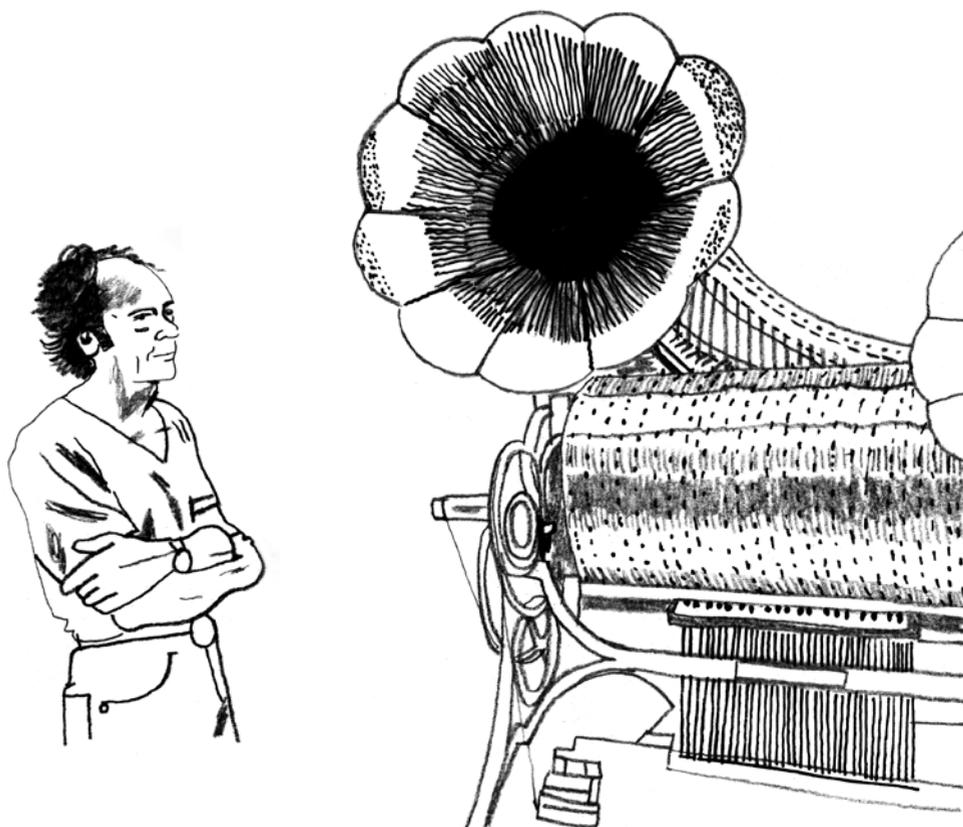
Under such spell, the question of 'what is the difficulty in a dance of great difficulty?' could, then, be rephrased as
How to endure in an awkward situation and not be seduced by its idiosyncrasy?
that could be rephrased as
How does confinement in a slowly changing situation qualify our movements?
that could be rephrased as
How not to set up the very traps you aim at disarming?
that could be rephrased as
How do we unsettle power relations by reframing the very structures that sustain their performatives?
that could be rephrased as
How can an individual experience of pretending to be a ghost impact the disappearance of a whole species?
that could be rephrased as
How to stick to concreteness up to the point it becomes nothing but magic?

Felipe Ribeiro is a video and performance artist, founder of Atos de Fala Festival, and Associate Professor in the Dance Studies M.A. Program at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

Henry Dagg talks unorthodox musical instruments

Henry Dagg is a musician and composer who makes a number of unorthodox instruments to produce the effects he is looking for. While we were making our performance installation *Always Already* we visited his workshop at Biscuit House (in Faversham, Kent) where he lives and works, and we saw some truly amazing machines. Some of these were the instruments he has made and some of them were the old fabrication machines he has acquired over the years as and when he needs them.

Our conversation ranged over his work, including Henry's sound sculptures and musical instruments. We began by asking Henry to talk about the first non-traditional musical instrument he made.



Henry Dagg next to the Sharpsichord, which traveled with Bjork's Biophilia tour — weighing over two tons, it includes a rotating music box barrel, keyboard and horns, all conceived and constructed by Henry.

Henry said:

It depends on how you define a musical instrument really. I mean, right back to my preteens, I was building electronic devices for generating sound like little organs. There was a kind of sound effects synthesiser I built, on which I performed for a concert in my first year at secondary school. I must have been around 10 or 11, I suppose. It imitated sounds of various things. There was a teacher who drove a bubble car and it imitated that. There were at that time ambulances and fire engines which produced the alternating air horn sound, the old fashioned type, and it imitated that and various other things like that.

[Later,] during the 15-year period in which I was employed as a sound engineer at the BBC, I was actually still very active as a bass player and a keyboard player. But looking over my shoulder at ideas for new instruments all the time, I was very inspired by a magazine from Nicasio, California, edited by Bart Hopkin called *Experimental Musical Instruments*, which was full of people doing very adventurous things in mainly acoustic instrument design, although there were electronic things as well — circuit bending — all that stuff which is something I'd been doing as a kid. I got a great deal of work composing music for radio and television programmes during that period, but it was really only when I went freelance at the end of that, that I started to really build a facility where I could develop my musical instrument ideas.

I built a smallish sound sculpture called the **Bacchanalian Harp** as a present for some great friends of mine, my physics teacher and his family. The Bacchanalian Harp was a kind of overgrown, angel chimes. But instead of ringing bells, it used a ring of candles on a base 15 inches diameter. The heat convecting from the candles drove a big fan rotor right at the top of a long, ornate shaft. I suppose it must have been about 18 inches high, which supported four scroll shaped branches, which held wine glasses. So each wine glass was supported in an arm, which was actually a pair of parallel levers which moved in a way that maintained the vertical position of each glass. It was moved up and down by a gearbox with a crank. And the gearbox was driven by a spoked wheel without a rim, in other words, like a big spikey cogwheel, and a single **dog** came down from the bush on the rotor and knocked each wheel on one spoke every time it went round. And this would drive the little **worm gear** in a brass box, with a crank to position the lever which supported the glass. So every time I went round, it moved the glass up or down a tiny increment depending on which side of the crane the thing was to be going — up or down. So each glass was very, very slowly moving up and down independently of the others and being struck by a little conical nylon striker. I think there are 3 strikers for four glasses, which gave you an interesting rhythm. And then beside each glass there was a fixed arm with another glass. And both glasses were filled with water and a siphon tube connected the two. So, as each glass rose and fell, it filled or emptied with water, which meant that each glass at any one point in time, would be at one particular pitch. But it would be going either up or down very slowly.

rotor
something like the rotating assembly in a turbine, or the armature of an electric motor, or the rotary winder of a clockwork watch.

dog
in this case, a mechanical device for gripping.

worm gear
a mechanical arrangement consisting of a toothed wheel worked by a short revolving cylinder (worm) bearing a screw thread.

So, as this thing rotated it would play a rhythm on four notes, four different notes, each note of which was very slowly changing from one thing to another. So you were hearing a chord, an *arpeggiated chord*, which was very slowly morphing continuously into another chord and then into another chord. And so it went on.

So that's probably one of the first sound sculptures, and a few years after that was the *Diving Bells*, which you may or may not have seen a version of in the hall at Biscuit House. It consists of a row of tubular bells which are suspended each one on a length of nylon line, up to a crank on a shaft — an independent shaft, in fact, each one had its own independent mounting and a pulley which was driven by a common shaft at the top and because the ratio of each pulley was different. Each set of driving pulleys, from drive to driven, was a slightly different ratio. Each crank was moving, rotating at a slightly different speed to its neighbour, so that meant that these bells were being pulled up and down at a rate which differed, very slightly, from each neighbouring tube. They were being pulled up and down in a tank of water which was tuning the bells, each bell, as it rose and fell. When it rose, it would get sharper in pitch and when it fell, it would get flatter in pitch. So, you have bells with *portamento*, in effect, each playing simultaneously, each being played by a mallet, which was triggered by a *cam* right at the top of the structure on a shaft which allowed you to set the timing of each cam independently from all the others. You could set up your own rhythm by adjusting the position of the cam, for each of the 12 notes. So, you had this rhythm which would repeat after the one rotation of the camshaft. But, every time it repeated, of course, each bell will be in a different position

arpeggiated chord
a chord where the tones are played in succession rather than simultaneously.

portamento
a pitch sliding from one note to another.

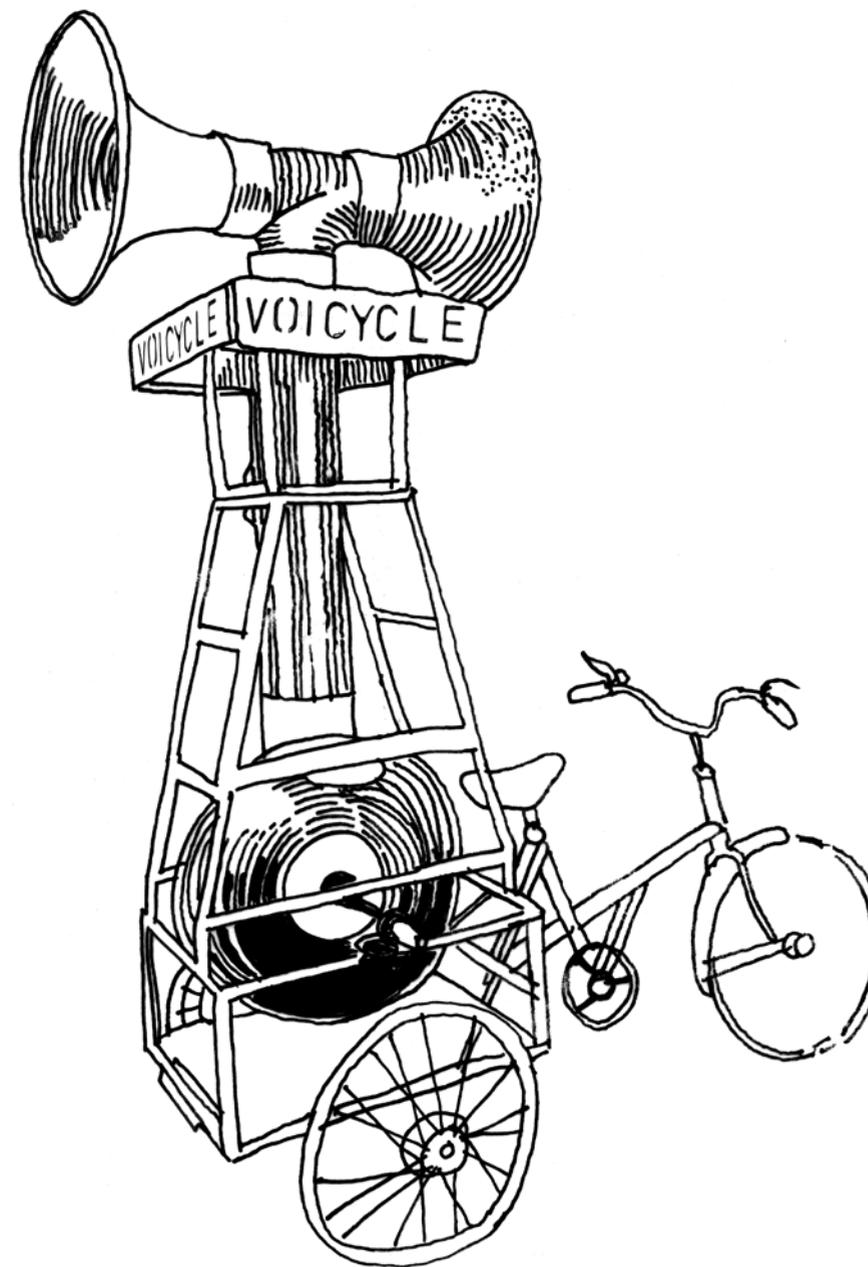
in the water from where it had been before. So, you never actually heard the same sequence of notes twice. Added to that, it was driven by a motor which had a variable speed cone on its drive. So, in addition to driving the top shaft which rotated all the moving elements, it also drove a large programming wheel with a series of studs which could be raised or lowered. And as each stud came to meet a rod with a bearing at its tip it would push that rod over to the position determined by the height you'd set the bolt at, I mean, you had a range of about an inch and a half or so to adjust this. And the further over, the higher the screw, the more the drive will be pushed over to the small end of the cone on the driving shaft for the motor. So, the overall result is that the tempo at which the performance happens is being predetermined by a programmer consisting of a ring of adjustable screws. So you could have the tempo varying over a predetermined cycle of different tempi and have it accelerate and decelerate wherever you want it to.

We asked:
So when did you start making instruments that require a lot of physical energy to make them work?

Henry:
You know, all the work from that time, of course, has come about as a result of commissions. So they don't start out with an idea that I've been pursuing particularly, they'll have an answer to a brief from a client.

[The Ring Cycle] was quite a simple idea. It was based on tubular bells. It took the form of a series of pedestals about three foot high and eight foot long. And each one supported a bearing at each end, and in the middle, to support shafts,

cam
a rotating or sliding piece in a mechanical linkage used especially in transforming rotary motion into linear motion. It is often a part of a rotating wheel (e.g. an eccentric wheel) or shaft (e.g. a cylinder with an irregular shape) that strikes a lever at one or more points on its circular path.



Henry Dagg's Voicycle.

rotating shafts ... a bit like bobbins really ... between which were slung — tensioned — a set of 10 tubular bells, all tuned to more or less the same pitch — just enough drift to give you an interesting chorus. So each drum would give you one note and these were slung on the shaft and there was a line of five of these eight foot modules and in the middle you had a plinth with a bicycle frame, no wheels, but the pedal drive was taken, not to the back but sent to the front to drive a shaft with a couple of coupling dogs on either end, which would mate with the couplers on the nearest ring cycle modules. And the transmission would be passed all along, coupled by rotary couplings from one unit to the next. So one person would pedal away, the entire line will be driven into rotation. And you would have a row of 30 people, each with a mallet, following a conductor who would point to a flip chart with a bar number. And each player would have a list of the few bars on which they were playing and as soon as they come in contact with the bells, you get this incredibly loud, continuous ringing sound from each cylinder. It was a very impressive sound. It was deafeningly loud. When we were in rehearsals, somebody came up and said, you know that we've just measured the sound from this thing, and it's illegal.

And the **Hooty Scooty** [a mix of hurdy-gurdy and scooter], it's had a number of upgrades, because I could see it had potential even at the start. And now it's benefiting from a properly engineered spindle for the wheel bit that bows the strings and that makes a massive difference really — [it] really gives you a very good, clear sound. But what's really transformed it is the cross fertilisation from the **Rochester Gates** project [Henry's stainless steel musical gates at Rochester Independent College], where I had to develop a method of spinning aluminium diaphragms. Very much

akin to the **Stroh amplification** diaphragms you found on Stroh violins and cellos — resonator guitars, and that sort of thing. I developed some tooling and techniques for spinning these diaphragms. When I fitted a couple of these, and a pair of horns, to the Hooty Scooty it transformed its acoustic power. I mean, it turned into one of the loudest acoustic instruments I've made so far. It's quite extraordinary. A lot of these ideas can benefit quite a lot from subsequent projects, you know, if they're allowed to.

We asked:

*Did we see the **Hooty Scooty** in the trailer for the documentary **The Extraordinary Mr Henry Dagg** playing "My Way"?*

Henry:

Yes, that's right, that's the Hooty Scooty. It's just become a very popular part of our variety act. It does make it necessary to create a special track within the audience seating — so we can actually go down to the auditorium and play around them because that's what really makes it work. It's no good on stage.

We said:

That's right. And that's what's interesting about the way that some of these things are made. They need their own place and they need you to operate them or they need someone who knows how to operate them. They're a whole event in themselves.

Henry:

Yes, yes. Well, yeah. That's all part of looking at musical instrument design from a different angle, really. What can you do to give it another dimension. Initially, I didn't really have comedy in mind quite so much during its development. I had more envisaged being able to do a solo around a group of musicians on stage, just being

Stroh amplification
a metal resonator and horn attached to the body of a stringed instrument, originally a violin. John Matthias Augustus Stroh, an electrical engineer in London, invented the instrument in 1899.

able to create a little spectacle. I mean, the visual spectacle is a large part of what makes unusual musical instruments worthwhile. There's not much point in a new musical instrument that takes the form of a black rectangular box, which you stand over on stage, it makes the most fantastic sounds but nobody sees anything happening. We got enough of that with these iPads on stage, and laptops and stuff.

In 2007, for the Tour de France finishing in Canterbury, the Canterbury Festival commissioned me to create a pedal-powered solo instrument to partner the Ring Cycle (which mainly covered chords). That's really the origin of the **Voicycle**. It was a question of finding the best way of musicalising an old tricycle, which I'd originally been using as a busking stage, a mobile busking platform. I had converted it way back in the late 80s as a busking mobile.

So it had built in speakers and canopy and seating and the sound system. So I had to whip all that out and just build on the basic frame. I went through a few ideas but eventually settled on the idea of a very variable pitch siren as the basis for the instrument. It's quite extraordinary how few people recognise what's going on — as an instrument.

The pedalling has to be maintained at constant speed. Because otherwise you lose the pitch where you want it. If you pedal slower than you should — the pitch is controlled by lever — if you aim for that note on that lever, you will find that where you thought you had that note, you won't have it, because you're not pedalling fast enough.

The problem is that it's very easy to lose speed while you're pedalling. And sometimes you even have to pedal — you have to *over speed* — just to get notes that aren't really there most of the time.

You have to, because the pitch is a function of the speed of the **flywheel** driving the siren, the siren is purely a device which rotates and as it rotates it chops a stream of air into little pulses. And every revolution it chops a fixed number of pulses, on and off. So with every revolution that's 12 cycles per second. So you multiply the cycles per second by the revs, and you've got the frequency, you've got the pitch. That means that the faster it's driven, the higher the pitch. So the pitch is not only related to your pedalling speed, but it's related to the gearing relationship between the siren and the drive flywheel. And that's why the whole carriage on which the siren is mounted slides up and down because its drive wheel is running across the face of the flywheel, as it's near the centre, it's driving pretty slow, and as it's near the edge, it's driving pretty fast because of **peripheral speed**. So, that lever is what determines the position of the carriage across the wheel. So as long as you maintain completely stable, fixed pedalling speed, you have a rock solid basis for your pitching. As soon as you've dropped below, or exceed the proper speed, you've lost your pitch. So, I mean, that's another instrument that has a number of upgrades due to it.

We said:

It takes a lot of practice to play.

Henry:

It does. Yes. And it's harder to play than it needs to be.

*Look Henry up online to see some of his amazing unorthodox musical instruments and sculptures in action. In one video of a performance of Henry's **Catastrophony**, Prince Charles is in the audience and completely unable to stop laughing. A documentary, with the working title **The Extraordinary Mr Henry Dagg**, is in development.*

flywheel
a heavy revolving wheel in a machine used to increase the machine's momentum and thereby provide greater stability or a reserve of available power.

peripheral speed
the distance a given point on the perimeter of a rotating circular object travels, expressed in feet or metres per second.

The Question Payman Kassaei

When a child first dabbles in the craft
of the question

—The interrogative words, the upward inflection—

She is not looking for answers; She seeks to
engage with the world

The Question, as a ploy to enter the conversation
To have any footing where she has no handle

Soon the answers matter, much more

The Question, as a means to a share
in the wisdom of the world

To tap into the social in the animal

To traverse the fractal
of trial and error
in leaps, in shortcuts

A dance
To follow, to be led to unexpected grace

The Question, as a medium, as a space

So we master the craft of the Question

—The inquisitive mind, the art of dissection—
The arrogance of control

To consider the plausibilities
Abandon the absurdities
Imagine the impossibilities

The sophistication of abstraction

To isolate, to generalize
To keep distraction
At bay

Compare, distinguish, classify
Expect

The Question, itself, the discovery

Then, the answers matter, much less

To imagine
To dream

Rebel, Expand, Transcend
Accept

When we perfect the art of the Question

—The introspective soul, the inward reflection—
The humility of surrender

We are not looking for resolution; We seek to
engage with ourself

The pleasure of beholding our own beauty

The Question, as the truth itself

Payman Kassaei is a Professor of
Mathematics specializing in Arithmetic
Geometry. He currently lives in London.

Women become plants Eirini Kartsaki

I have a vague memory of dreaming about
Leonora Carrington last night. My nicotine
patches make me jumpy and give me strange
dreams. I remember a woman in the middle of a
field with arms tight around her body; her hair
forms a boxing ring, weaved in plats. Her eyes
are closed and she is dreaming. Two dogs and
four reindeers on either side of her. The field
extends beneath her and her shadow resembles
a tree. Under her feet a similar woman is giving
birth to a similar tree.

Women are said to have transformed into
serpents, botanic gardens, beasts, in order to
escape, succumb or simply exist. Women and
plants provoke the need to know something.
To know what becomes of them, how their
wilderness can be nurtured; how to let the
wilderness take over, let loose, let be. Women
cannot be seriously domesticated, in the
same way that plants cannot be seriously
domesticated. A woman who refuses to eat
becomes plant. A woman dying transforms
into plant. A story of a woman's resolute
steps towards becoming tree. 'Becoming-other',
'becoming-tree', 'becoming-woman', 'becoming-
imperceptible' are all ways of escaping rigid,
violent forms of existence.¹

'Look, sister, I'm doing a handstand; leaves are
growing out of my body, roots are sprouting
out of my hands ... they delve down into the
earth. Endlessly, endlessly ... yes, I spread my
legs because I wanted flowers to bloom from my
crotch; I spread them wide ...'²

South Korean novelist Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*
(2005) is a story of a woman refusing to stay
still or fit in; the rigid, violent structure within
which she exists forces her to refuse her body
and strength and to start transforming into
other. Yeong-hye refuses to eat meat and then
eat altogether and becomes non-verbal. She
is convinced that the only way she can avoid
the brutality of humanity is to become plant.
Han Kang's short story *The Flower of My Wife*
precedes *The Vegetarian* and carefully handles the
transformation of another woman into a tree.

'The bruises that had been the size of a new-
born's fist the previous spring were now more
like large taro leaves. On top of that, they'd
darkened. They were the dull colour of a
weeping willow's branches, whose pale green
seems tinged with a hint of blue at the onset
of summer.'³

2. Han Kang, *The Vegetarian*, trans. Deborah Smith
(London: Portobello Books; 2005). p.127.

3. Han Kang, *The Flower of my Wife*, trans. Deborah Smith,
available at <https://granta.com/the-fruit-of-my-woman/>
(Accessed 20 November 2020).

1. Mijeong Kim, 'A Deleuzian Reading of "Becoming-
plant" in Han Kang's Writing: "The Fruit of My Woman"
and *The Vegetarian*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary
Fiction*, 61:3, pp.327-340.

What does it mean to feel unfamiliar in one's own body? To feel one's own limbs strange, stranger's limbs. Pale blue bruises on the bottom of one's spine, fingers shaking as if they belong to another. Feeling like a floating beast with no roots. Nothing holding in place. Feeling oddly withdrawn from the surroundings, no real sense of existence. Shaky like jelly or whipped cream and floating. The density of the body changes, with scales now and gills, or roots that act like straws.

Is becoming plant a strategy of resistance and escape or a route towards death and dying? Is it a celebration or a process of mourning? Is becoming plant a pulsation of the body, a hazy sensation, a refusal to speak, socialise, eat or grow? Not belonging to one's own self or body, not fitting in, not being able to contain this kind of thing, life, to position this body in place. Flailing or wandering with no purpose. Wanting more. Wanting to belong, to feel at home, to feel some kind of rooted. What are those weird processes then of becoming? Weirdness in Han Kang's writing takes us through this transformation to articulate a position that goes beyond the familiar, a desire that exceeds the parameters of the ordinary. These lives of becoming are not concerned with notions of stability, longevity, permanence as these appear in normative life narratives. These weird lives offer a way into reconsidering the terms, names and categories we use to understand our bodies, desires and sexualities. They open up a space to articulate our longings. The theatre of transformation that they propose is an experience of sensitive awareness of things opening up.⁴ From within that awareness, a different world emerges; a woman that does not fit into her own body or the structures that surround her points towards what else exists, what other possibilities might there be. The gesture of opening up and becoming other can be read as both a gesture towards freedom,

4. Romeo Castellucci, cited in Nicholas Ridout and Joe Kelleher, *The Theatre of Societas Raffaello Sanzio* (London: Routledge, 2007), p.4.

but also a choice of death. It can be read as a celebration of rethinking and reconfiguring desire, as well as a gesture of denying this world. However, in both cases, what stands out is a resistance to oppressive structures and modes of living, a protest against the rigidity of normative lives. This becoming mostly underlines a desire to actively search for a wilderness beyond and to wilfully inhabit it.

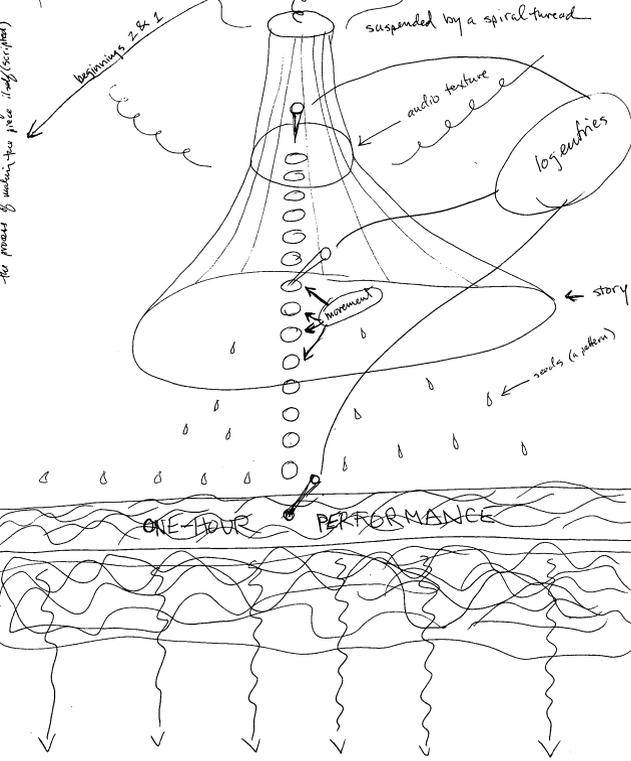
'My trachea sucks up clear water, so taut it seems it will burst, my chest thrusts up to the sky and I strain to stretch out each branching limb. This [is] how I escape from this flat. Every night, mother, every night the same dream.'⁵

Becoming plant is not about surrendering. Closing one's eyes and ears, being unable to speak or swallow. There is freedom in such things. No need to respond or pretend or perform care. Just a need for air and water, purified water from the top of the hill. Limbs falling out, flowerpot too small. Is this a celebration or a sort of mourning. When a plant is dead, are its roots still alive. There are no vital signs in plants like a heartbeat or breathing. Instead, one has to rely on subtle clues. The green expands up the back, climbs the neck, foliage on the shoulders. The feeling is that of coolness and despair. There is no clear proposition here, just a portal of things, opening to another place.

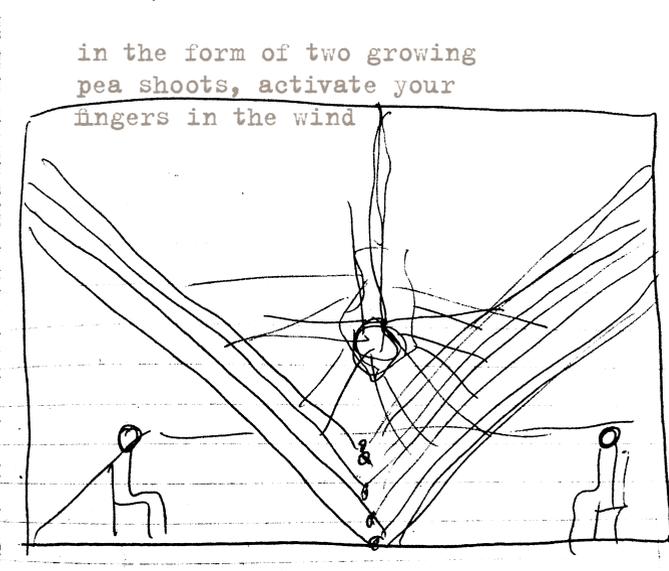
Eirini Kartsaki is a performance practitioner, writer and lecturer (East15 Acting School) and the author of *Repetition in Performance: Returns and Invisible Forces*.

5. Han Kang, *The Flower of my Wife*, trans. Deborah Smith, available at <https://granta.com/the-fruit-of-my-woman/> (Accessed 20 November 2020).

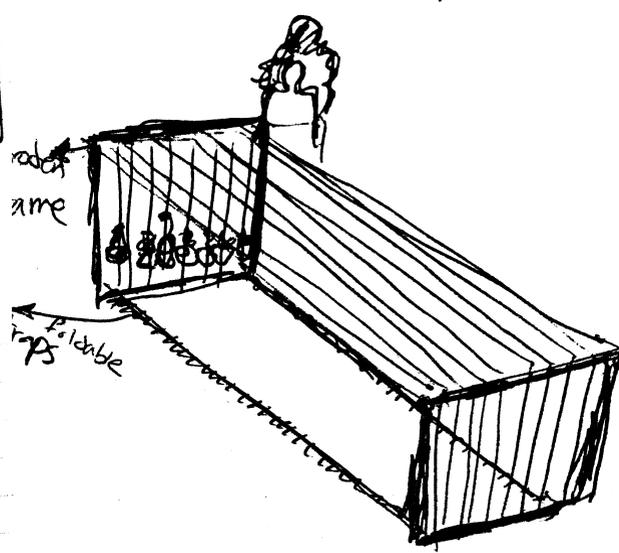
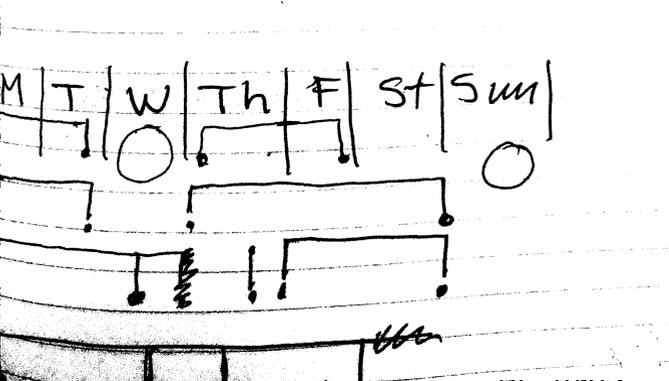
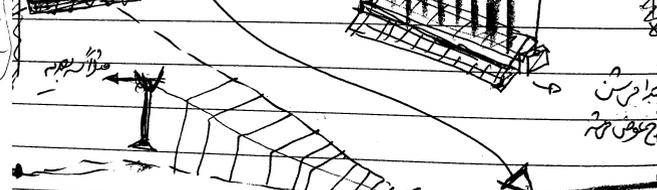




- Annie Abers beams / patterns
- Room is team
- sound of carpet weaving / قماش بافندگی
- the court lanashire cotton mills
- cbg dance / weaving movement (فیضان)
- daragi sound



performance set up:
What would a foldable, variable look like?

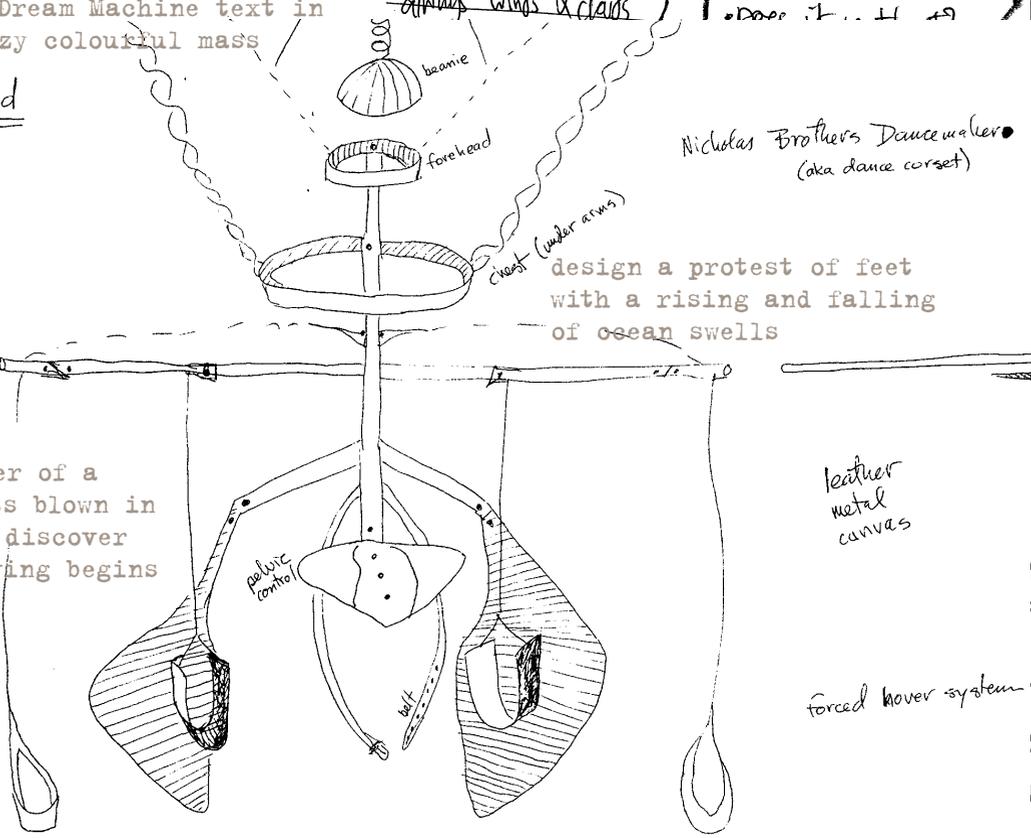


Questions: Is the sheep wool activated only in performance time it's different (though present as landscape form beginning)

in the style of weavers' pattern calling, activate the Dream Machine text in a hazy colourful mass

sometimes takes a month
So you do the same in the whole time?
Does it... 11 19

NB unlimited



Nicholas Brothers Dancewalker (aka dance corset)

design a protest of feet with a rising and falling of ocean swells

in the manner of a field of grass blown in a windstorm discover how the weaving begins

leather metal canvas

forced mover system

human body middle weighted system

Tara's Shirerish un... + some moments of Karen's Armaleg. song

The body is a dangerous structure



in the style of Bakhtiari rug, grow plants in your body eight times slower than the clouds on a Tuesday

improvise magnets clips object songs songs psalms

a wavering song for the dandelion growing in the ear



31 October 2020. Karen.

Reflection and declaration of frustration following running the piece for the first time:

There's too much talking. The sense of the piece is disappearing in the words.

We need to tumble out and dance much earlier. We need to start with dancing. We need to dance, then we need to dive into the wall, then we need to pull ourselves out, then we need to dance some more, and then we need to get in very carefully, and then we need to layer ourselves into the fabric of it and make noise. Then we need to sing and then we dance again with more shock or more difficulty or the most minimal silence-heavy lightness we can find and then we slip the string and one leaf falls.

16 September 2020. Tara.

Jute goes through plank, goes to the hook on the wood on the wall, then to the next hook on the wall and comes down to the plank, goes through a hole then through the back.

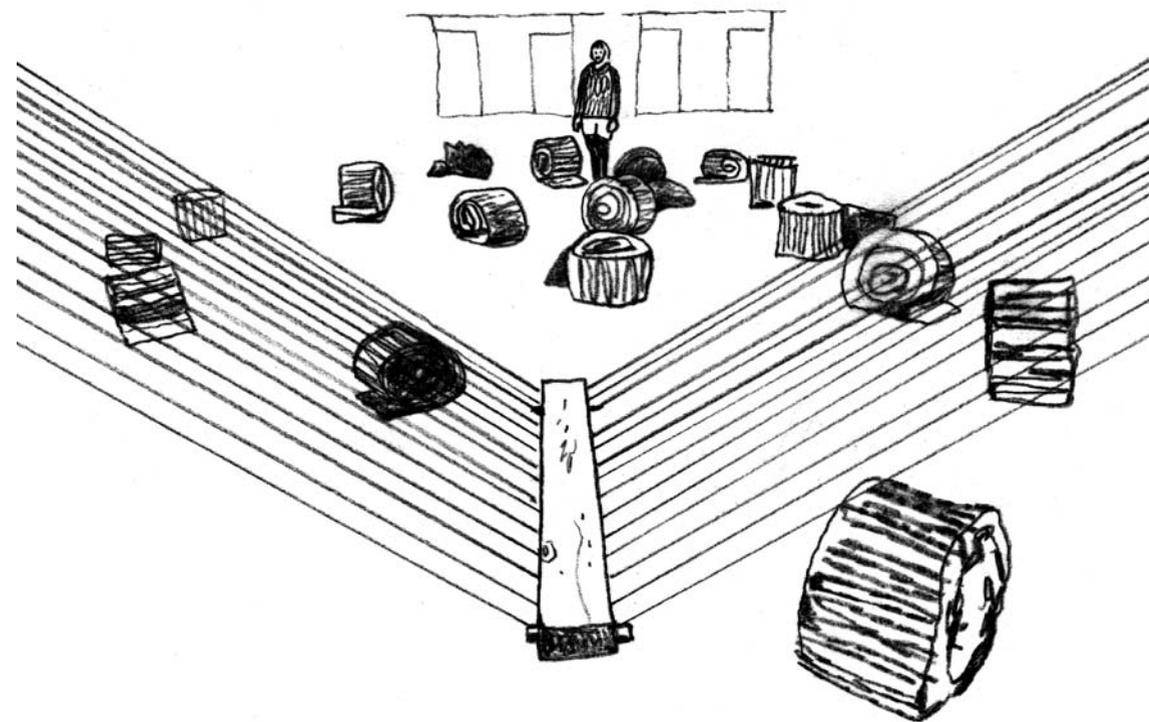
We made a loom in the room. Turned lots of screw hooks into a plank with our fingers. What if we had pins for nails? Filled with joy, pride, a sense of achievement. Looking at this thing that has been in our minds in different shapes for so long and now this piece of salvaged plank — that Karen drove to a nearby town to pick up with her neighbour both wearing masks — is *it*. We had to get CJ to see it, we needed to share this moment.

Cases for or against asymmetry. What if the loom is only half of the wall? Is there a lung? Is the loom a rib cage? Does it show?

We went for a walk, the other side of Faversham. Karen led the way through town and then through the fields. Looking at the weeds or the bamboos and the dragonflies and the marshy still water, we said our hundred questions. Karen asked me 'do you think things are drastically changing?' I had written about changing cells in my body earlier that morning. I mentioned the bridge in Sydenham woods where there is an image of a painting of that spot by Pissarro and in it there is a railway where there is now the wildest woodland. The weeds did their dance in the wind as we talked. Our voices were different out there, I thought. There was a blue, mature, gently moving dragonfly and a smaller, hizzy vizzy red one. We walked to the area where the signs said they'll shoot dogs. We peashooted in the wind. When there is a landscape, the eye and the direction of the gaze feels different. I need to bring that feeling into the studio.

She pulls a thread down from the clouds and makes a knot. She pulls another thread from the clouds and makes another knot. A carpet made of clouds. A sheet made of wind and cloud. What you call marbling, I call cloud and winds.

The sound of the wind in the air when moving, the rattle daddle, shiver and quiver of the grass in the wind. A sense of being placed in nature needs to be replicated in the body when in the studio. Keep those momentary reactions (jiggles?) to the insects, the grass and the wind, in the body. Bring the atmosphere of moving in the wind under the clouds, amongst the grass, into the studio.



we both warp the loom and then as we go
the wool is arranged and displayed
in various circumstances

16 September 2020. Karen.

I suggested we might go for a walk and Tara liked the idea. We took our lists of 100 forgotten questions (just the first three pages) in order to work on memorising them outside in the fields. We walked through the bike path next to the school near Abbey Place and through to the back of the water filtration station and out onto the larger fields and where the big trees and tiny stream runs along, then just over the bridge where the farmer has put a sign about dogs being shot if they are going for the sheep. It wasn't so sunny today and there was a bit of a breeze. We talked in relaxed ways though we also talked a bit about our frustrated communication yesterday. We worked on our list memorisation and then Tara suggested we do some of our dances in the field. We worked on the pea shoot dance and on the carpet weaver dances. A bi-plane flew overhead and a tractor buzzed in the distance. The trees shivered in constant motion and the grasses interlaced and re-interlaced and laid down when the wind was exceptional. There were some big birds circling an area in the near distance and it looked like they might be expecting to dive down for food at some point soon. The whole sky was open, the grasses were a bright and deep green, the wind made noise through everything.

We came back to the studio and it was time for lunch.

After lunch we set up the beam with its warp — we began with great difficulty and then found our groove and by the time we finished the construction of a panel with hooks to run through and with screwing it to the wall of the studio and threading it up and correcting the tension and taking its picture because we were so amazed by how it looked it was 6:30pm.

Nothing feels horrible now that we have done this, not the fact that we had other things to do in addition to warping the spine, not the struggle to find our way through with the practicalities and our separate sensitivities.

Walking back from the fields Tara spoke calmly about having stayed up until 4:30 in the morning last night because she was worried about her VISA options and the many details which make it happen or fall afoul of the system. And we calmed our biggest fear that we will be scuppered in our attempts to make the piece either because we fight about it or don't really have our hearts in it or because some action in the world will make it impossible to carry on.

We have worked so long on this piece that the world has changed completely in the time since we began. This makes it even more important but also even more difficult to imagine finishing it.

It is taking patience and discipline and a lot of self examination alongside the usual effort it takes to pull meaning and insight out of a pile of ideas as yet in no particular order.

Now we have only half a slant on the warp from the beam. It was too much work to do both sides. We have half agreed that maybe it will be good just like that. Perhaps we will stick to the V-shaped warp design which indicates ribs from a spine or perhaps we will let that go and use just one side which might open up the space in more interesting ways. One day it will have a shape that seems like the only shape it could have been.

15–16 September 2020. Tara.

A possible ending: I really really am dying to do this dance of great difficulty. With you, for you, near you. In touching reach but not touching. Two steps away. Always. If I had learned it eleven years ago, most of the cells in my body would have changed by now. Would I have to teach them again or will each cell teach a dance to the next generation? The majority of the cells in my body have changed since I left home. The majority of the cells in my body have been always already travelers. And it is around this time when the majority of the cells have been always away that you start to question what is home and why am I where and why do I try so hard and why doesn't my face show that I am trying so hard. I feel like Buster Keaton sometimes. Stoneface.

15 September 2020. Karen.

How quickly it goes from high to low, this is a seasonal variation, this is a series of seasonal shifts in a matter of minutes, this is a quantity unknown, this is shaky ground, this is the straw, this is chilly with sun and wind, this is never to be finished if we don't press down, this is to be patient with and never give up on, this is a mountain of mud, this is a mountain of ice cream, this is a mountain and we are breathing it. The subtle shifts from idea spark to desperate disappointment are tearing me down. I feel like rushing to my room and crying but why would I do that? Why do I feel these blocks of struggle that get worse not better when we try to keep going? This is the last day of the rest of my life, this is the last day of the dreadful downshift, this is the last day of speaking too much, this is the last day of feeling we don't have enough time, this is the last day of saying what I think about anything, this is the last day of worrying about bad puppets.

28 May 2020. Karen.

Our guiding principles for this piece have been:

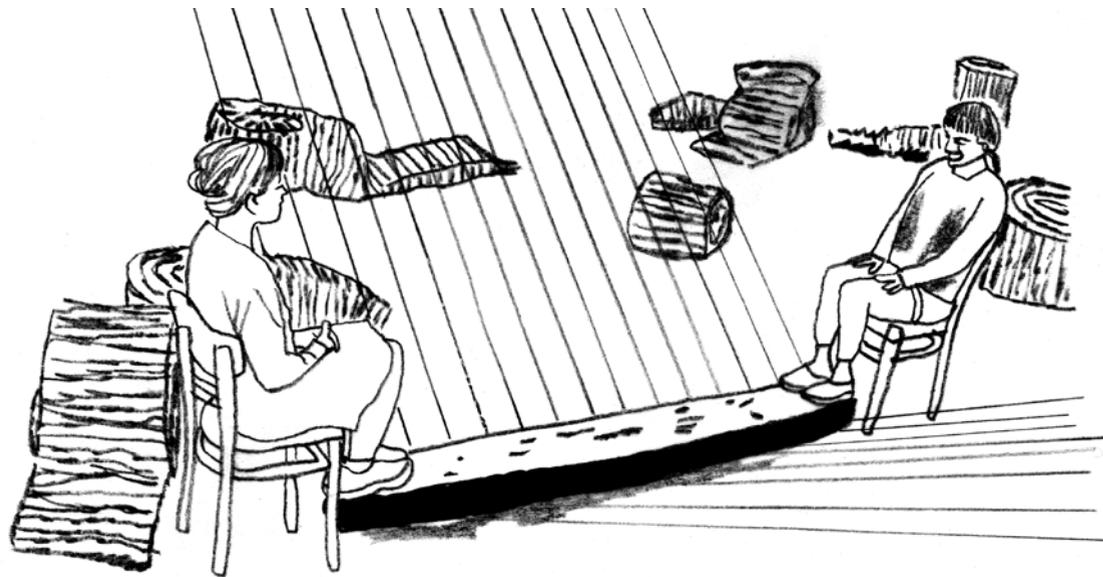
— Everything around us is moving.

— Liveness is the dynamism that both human and nonhuman materials create together.

— We are in the world and not as a separate force but part of a combined energy with interlocking parts. Everything we do reflects this, everything we create also operates this way.

We've asked ourselves, 'What is the difficulty in a dance of great difficulty?' We thought it would be difficult to perform but perhaps the difficulty lies in finding it.

As part of our interest in hybrid forms — specifically human/plant and human/machine — we are looking at the way human movement is influenced by work and by technology and also by flora, especially the way time-lapse photography allows us to see the movement of seemingly stationary plants. Osmosis is an uptake of behaviours or conditions caused by habituation or repetitive exposure, it causes work-related or other environmental motion to find its way into our bodies. Our dance adopts movement from yarn spinning, assembly line interface, digital glitches, from piece work such as carpet weaving, or the blowing of tree limbs in the wind. We move toward what we are most subject to regardless of whether that influence is consciously sought.



the room is the loom,
the loom is the whole room

We have not assembled a compendium of the ways this kind of influence filters into the bodies of people who dance. We are looking specifically at entanglement and repetitious durational accumulation. We are looking at the reaching and clinging of pea shoots seeking stability from structures in their immediate vicinity. We are adopting the kind of foot work that resembles the rhythms of textile machines. As part of the durational elements of our installation some of our movement resembles repetitive motion from machines or human/machine interface. Through repetition our movement shimmers between its relations to popular dance and repetitive labour. We are looking at the way our lives become enmeshed with what most occupies us. We are looking at insignificant gestures which become significant through relentless repetition. These two threads sit interlocked.

Hold a pile and twist it, turn it, let it run like a river. Wrap it around you to make the movements your pinkie fingers would inside a cat's cradle. This is your body and the river is the string now. We don't think it is a river. It is a river but we don't think of it that way. From this distance, and running down our faces as it is, it is many things at once. It is rain, a river, string, our tears, the boat on its path over the map of our pillow. It is red and green depending on which side the sun is setting. The moon leaves a string as it travels across midnight water. The tree sheds them all at once, its sparkles across the surface of the sea. Always. Always. Always. The top, the top, the topside. The outside, the roof. The toppling tremor machine. It never stops as it can't find the bottom. Hold a bundle of flax and twist it. Begin pulling, retting, scutching, hackling, and spinning. The water is needed to cool it down, to break it down, to calm it down. And the mountain face our face.

23 January 2020. Tara.

The sound rhythms:

First we mixed voice and sound from objects (Karen had rocks, I had a chair and floor): more sense of rhythm

Then we did: only sounds and the same sound for each person (continuous sounds — archeyi / bow-string-like — didn't have the same rhythm effect)

Then we did voice only: not complicated but maybe that's the point

___the change in sound when we were close to each other. When I was sitting on the chair Karen was banging the rocks on.
___what would happen with language: one, yes, yes, one, yes, yes, the mach—
___maybe the rhythm is copied from a machine.
___the sound/voice rhythm links back to the production line.

These sounds/voices could be an opening ritual for a long performance/installation, like the noises of a machine starting up, they could then return either at intervals or be present through the whole running time (you can't weave without the sound of weaving).

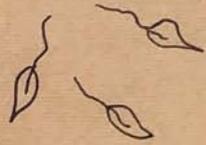
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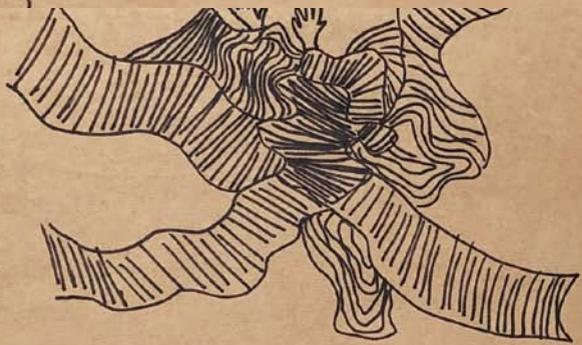
MATH

TOWER

WALK AROUND THE BACK AND FALL IN



Measuring II: 4K 4T



SOMETHING

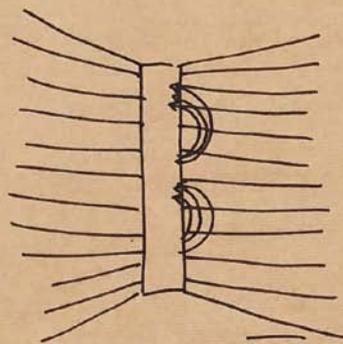
PRISING

SR



PATHS

HONEY COMB



WARNING
SURING
IV
3T
4K
5

LAST!
ONE!





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and reading companion by Karen Christopher & Tara Fatehi Irani

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