

((Transcription)) Artist Talk, O—Overgaden Thursday 16 June

Currently exhibiting artist Liesel Burisch and Dr. Justin Hunt, researcher in queerness and queer activism, meet at Burisch's exhibition *Bring Time* for a conversation about clubs and queer culture's spaces of opportunity. Moderated by Vera Østrup, Curator, O—Overgaden

Vera Østrup:

Hi everyone and welcome to this conversation with Liesel Burisch and Dr. Justin Hunt.

I'm very happy to introduce you to artist Liesel Burisch and Dr. Justin Hunt, academic scholar researching on queerness and queer activism.

You guys have known each other since the beginning of 2021 where Liesel followed your [Justin Hunt] online course "Queer Club Culture" and I know that this was a great inspiration for Liesel and that a lot of the stuff you were discussing back then you [Liesel] also used and reflected on in your exhibition *Bring Time* which opened last Friday here at O-Overgaden.

In the exhibition you have been working with exploring club and night culture, night life culture and today Justin, who also wrote a text for [the publication](#) is joining us in a conversation on the possibilities of the after parties and how the after party, clubs and queer culture space function as a way of talking back to society.

We will go much deeper into your [Justins] research but first I would very much like you, Liesel to give a short introduction to the exhibition and maybe tell us a bit more about why you use the after party as a space and what is fascinating to you about it.

Liesel Burisch:

I did the show *Bring Time*. And as Vera so nicely said it's all around the after party. I have been drawn to the after party for very personal reasons, it's always my favorite time to go out.

And from the beginning that I started going out, it was always the time that I was waiting for it to happen. When I was working in nightlife, it was the time where I felt like I could finally relax - where my co-workers could relax. It's also, specifically as someone that would all too often be seen as prey in nightlife, a time where the people who wanted to hunt had already found someone. Or as someone who's always been the caretaker when it comes to drug taking for other people, it was the time when all the drugs had been taken. And everyone who needed to be tended to was already sleeping it off in a corner. So it was a time where I could finally also relax and almost like the dancers in the video start moving without having to think about being objectified or even noticed because a lot of the people who are at the after party are either in their own world, or in a very specific space with each other. So that was always the time that I really wanted to be in.

For this show, I wanted to investigate all the complexities that go into the after hour. In Justin's course, we often talked about this thing of what possibilities are in the after hour, and also what challenges and what dangers are in and at the after hour. And that's also why the show is called *Bring time* because the after

hour, I felt like is the first thing that ends when you start meeting obstacles in everyday life. That could be having to take care of someone, be it your parents, a friend, a child, or if you start being so financially challenged that you have to work during the time where after hours usually take place. The after hour is the first thing you scale back on. You may still go to the party, but you will no longer be there [at the after hour].

The title really refers to having the time to spend which in itself is an activist statement in leisure. Specifically when you are a minority, to rest together can be the most cutting edge thing you can do. In the show we meet three different kinds of groups. There's Don [Jegosah] and Jess [Sarkodie Preach] who almost functioning as narrators. I presented them with a pool of questions that all were questions I'd also asked myself in the zines. They were in that way mimicking the conversations that start happening at after hours. You start to finally maybe talk about something that goes beyond the day to day [topics]. You finally have the time to go a little bit deeper. They create that space in the video.

Then there is Maji [Claire], who is moving within O-Overgaden in this in-between space between building up a show and taking down a show. And I like to think of her as the...they're [Maji is] someone that's in their [Don & Jess'] mind that moves them. That is the moving factor of their desires.

And then finally, we meet the dance group, JUCK, from Sweden. Their whole practices is a lot about how you're able to move or how you're not able to move within a club space. But in a little bit more of an aggressive, optimistic way, instead of spending time being sad about being constantly sexualized and harassed in a club space. They are way more interested in thinking about how we as a collective can subvert that in our movements, like how can you move in a way that could be seen as repulsive, but also liberating at the same time?

Vera Østrup:

As part of the exhibition, you wrote three zines, and work as your research for the exhibition. In the first volume *Business of nightlife*, you're talking about the after party as a space where you can investigate the "being free from" in relation to "being free to". I'm going to read a bit of it out loud: „A space as a revolution, an utopia. Free from: all the things we are flooded with outside, finally creating a somewhere where we are free to be. The space being defined by the ratio between "free from" in relation to "free to"."

What is it about the after party that creates these opportunities?

Justin Hunt:

Yeah, so we met in a course I teach that I created for a bunch of queers to think together about nightlife and my interest is in after parties. Because I see them as really traumatizing spaces as much as they are really utopia spaces. And together in the course, we really read our desires across one another. And that's why I think our friendship kind of bubbled up there, because we were able to critically disagree and agree on that kind of space that is not really present. But it's felt in so many ways and labored to be created in so many ways. I'd love to hear you say a little bit more about the, the split you feel in that binary.

Liesel Burisch

So the page that comes after what Vera just read, is where I started thinking about this back back back in the day when we were all looking for places to live online[on housing homepages]. You remember when you could still find housing that way? And all these collectives would always be like: if you're a racist, don't apply! And it's the same when you go to clubs spaces, they'll state things like: We say no to all these things to narrate a space that's free from homophobia, racism, sexism, transphobia, xenophobia, all these things. And I always thought that was really a strange way to create a space by saying all this shit we leave outside and in here is what? In here is...? It's free from and I recently have been thinking about how that's the easy

way. To say well, all the trash we leave out here and then in here, what you [Justin] say, that's when actually I feel like the place becomes really vulnerable to trauma, because we have not sat down and talked about well what is it we want to be free to do? So what if the sign would say something different, which I think is a way harder topic to tap into, as these places are for minorities, but who all face wildly different challenges. Just because you're queer, you have not factored in class, skin color, whatever religion like all the other stuff. So what the space should look like, for everyone is way harder to create than to agree on that we don't want any racist people in here. It something that I had to realize, and it took me some time to realize that being in a space that's "free from" in itself is very unsustainable, and very fragile. And also, it feeds into this idea of the safer space. This idea that: "this is a safe space, because it's free from all this shit", instead of saying "this is a safer space because here you are free to". It's a way harder discussion- You can agree singularly on what you want to be "free from", but within the club space, you have to collectively decide on what you want to be "free to" do.

Justin Hunt:

Yes, and I think that's even more present at the after party. Because when we think about club culture in general, it's about exclusion, right? It's not about inclusion, there's no possibility for inclusion in nightlife, because all the practices that sustain it, are about exclusion. The hours of operates, the transport available to those [places], the door practices, how you let someone in, security protocols... all that is about exclusion, and insulating a certain in-group. The interesting thing about the after party is, that it starts to be were we see heterogeneous or hetero, social operations operate. So instead of it being the same people... if we move on homosexual and heterosexual as ideas away from gender solely, which we'll come back to, I'm sure. But to think about a "same group", we're all in the in-group, we're all out to be here, we are the cool kids like y'all right now, y'all cool kids, you came to this talk, thank you. When we break from this, we have to re-enter a heterogeneous heterosexual space. Taking on whatever pleasures or traumas we had that night, and that work, that labor becomes the most secreted and downplayed. The labor to create a space to "be free to" becomes much more laborious, which sounds silly. But what we both, I think, have a really keen interest in, is the labor it takes to leisure. The labor it takes to party. We have both worked at countless parties and made countless parties, made money from them, made friends from them, made cohesive zines from those, for ourselves as in our own identities. But what happens to the after party tends to be a permeating space that doesn't cohere. I'm really interested in what your work is showing us about that coherence, in terms of what feels like a night out, getting ready. In that first video, we see that people are preparing themselves and the performative dimensions of that. Then we move into the space where we have these almost alone characters, really solo characters performing in spaces, as if it were a club, which is what you do at the after party, right? At the after party you're like:,,are we still grooving? Are we still drinking? Are we still snorting coke? Are we still going to have sex? Are we going to go to the toilet today? Are we going to do it on the floor? Where are we going to do these things? And what are we free to do?". And because of the amount of excess, that those spaces engender, we suddenly have sometimes more... all the things we were "free from" come back to us. The thing that you never wanted to say what you say because you're too drunk well, too high, it slips out. You know, the misgendering your friends, the sexual overtones, the kind of micro aggressions that you wouldn't do in the social space. Suddenly at the after party in its intra social, new homo social space you do. I'm really interested in that, and how your work is speaking to that. And all the conversations we have. And the zines are speaking to that. So much of the work we think about with nightlife is that the after party is a space where you can chill out. And I think that what we both are interested in this. That maybe we can never chill out? And how terrifying is it that you can never relax? You can NEVER relax in night life. That's beautiful to me because I'm a tall, white, American, cis, gay man, and I just like trauma. But what does it mean to never ever calm down, to chill out? And I think the screen split screen work that you've done in the far back of the exhibition, asking about hope, asking about anger in that beautiful way in which you split the screens to unspeak and speak for and speak across, because we're also translating in that space. We start to see what other monetary labor is happening. Would you want to speak a little bit about the politics of representation in the work a little bit, and how that plays

into maybe how we're thinking about partying or leisure after parties? Because I think it's important for you and the work?

Liesel Burisch:

In relation to who I asked to participate, right? They're all total dream collaborators. It's like one of these moments, like, when you just call me "friend", I was like, whaaaat? And it's the same with these people. Are we friends? It would be the biggest honor. I don't know, where I got the courage to write all these people and to go head on, but where we all met was through the zines. I wrote them talking about exactly acknowledging their presence in the space. There are a bunch of black people in there [the works]. We have a bunch of different sexualities and identities in there. And it's something that, of course, I had to position myself in, since I'm very white. For those who are listening and reading: It's a very white panel, very white audience too that's fine. But it's something I thought about. I read this quote from the artist Jesse Darling[JD], they're incredible. And they said something like, "whatever the art world touches, it ruins". And I then started thinking about that in relation to a video I was making with people; I was honored to call my friends positioning them in a very white space. And the way I'm currently positioning myself is that first of all, to have full disclosure and transparency with them about all these conversations, but also: this is the reality, the diverseness of this is. This is not an utopia, it is a necessary reality. Trying to figure out how to navigate that space, so that it's not seen as like an utopia that you visit. No, no, these are real people with real lives, with real challenges. And this is not a performance, this is them. This is how they react to the zine and the situations. And then how to navigate that as a filmmaker and a director has been super tricky. And the thing that has helped me through all this is friendship. I'm, of course also not nervous, but interested in how audiences will react to this. And I talked a lot with Jess and Don about this idea of them leisuring in a white art institution, in a city where... they had this game when they came [to Copenhagen] where they would say hi to every black person, because there's so few here. We talked a lot about them hanging out, chilling out, this vulnerable, intimate space, that we created, to be blasted out on two mega screens. And they saw that as like, the best way to deal with this space. But again, I'm very... I'm not conflicted. I'm just very aware of the complexity of this topic. Because I work with people I truly admire. And I don't admire them because of their skin color. I admire them as the whole person, and how to work with minorities of all sorts, I think right now is to be really open about our own limitations. And specifically also, that's also giving away authorship around the work, in the sense that I didn't tell them what to do.

That's the thing as a director, of course, I tell them what to do, but I am interested in creating a space of collaboration, unrelated to how they present or identify. And that's also this aspect of how to collaborate that goes beyond payment. These projects are open source. So what happens when I give up my authorship? Maji and I shot a tiny film upstairs for her OnlyFans account and Jess and I made a music video while shooting this video and some of the photographs... There are more of them where Don would then change into an outfit that's not present in the work because the photographer made an complete press kit [for Don]. And with JUCK too we're hoping to make a publication. So there's this whole thing of how can you work with marginalized groups within such a horrific industry as the art industry? How that's important to represent them, but at the same time also...again, very complex topic, very important topic, but I'm not completely... I'm figuring it out as I go. And again, friendship and open transparent communication and understanding my scope has been the way through. But that's a great thing about being raised in a club culture is, that you have a different entry point than if you were coming at it from an art angle. If you've worked in these in these [club] spaces, you just learn how to exchange in different... how to say it... well nobody has money. So you find different ways of exchanging. And you also understand that, I will never be rich enough to pay people enough to not communicate with them as well. Like there needs to be an exchange that goes beyond the monetary.

Justin Hunt:

I was making notes when I was watching earlier, because I am academic and that's what I'm prone to do. And I kept writing down the word surveillance and then crossing it out again, because I couldn't figure out the authorial gaze. I think you just named it for me, which is it's the friendship gaze. The gaze of friendship. You talked earlier about two things. One, the predation in nightlife. So when we think about predation in night life: If you're somebody who designs clubs, you design zones of predation, zones of opulence and zones of exclusion, that is what you do. We're trained to build club spaces. How do you create a space where there can be an outer ring that watches the inner ring perform for them and decide who they want to engage with? You always have to make that space, and any good club will have that. Along with a space of opulence, which typically in the consumption space, bar or a VIP lounge, or whatever it is. And then you have these spaces for seclusion, where you get to have the hidden kiss or the sad cry, or the running away from trauma or whatever it is. But what you [Liesel] do, which really struck me when I started watching, especially the first film that's circling, which felt really careful to use that language. I hear it now as it is surveillance. But it doesn't have that. It feels documentary. But it has something else. And I think you've named it as friendship, which I think is really interesting to think about. Because when we think about the modes of selection for the after party, the first people you grab people, are either the people you want to fuck or the people you want to be friends with. Yeah, so there are those two important "F's". I'm really interested in the way you found this way to represent...what we can call "otherness", but keep in that friend surveillance space.

Liesel Burisch

The surveillance part... I wanted to push the role of the viewer inside of the show a bit. I didn't want people to go in there and "to understand" or to feel like they're part of something. I didn't also want it to make too easy in the sense of them surveiling something or someone. So I tried to hit that duality... most of the video shot is with little tiny micro drone, and the guy who did that usually does car commercials. And is super expensive. And so he made a really good deal with me. But it also meant that I didn't have a lot of time. So a lot of these shots I did not see until after we had wrapped. And so a lot of these queues I gave to him [I didn't see the product of until later]. We were talking a lot and for him as a straight white cis dude to film Maji [Claire] in the space was a really wild experience to witness, like how he was doing that. Another layer that is super interesting is, when you know it, that she was very well aware of who was watching her and that that person that was watching her was a very "other" person and someone that usually wouldn't be in a space [with her] to watch her. It was something that was totally a coincidence but interesting in the way that he filmed it, but also how I asked him to film it is to think about the viewer within the space and to make it. When I started planning out the show, which was like, head hardcore COVID, I wanted to actually talk about exclusionary and inclusion practices in the sense that I was interested in how the club scene is treating Baby Queers.

Justin Hunt:

Explain Baby Queers?

Liesel Burisch:

As I see Baby Queers, [I see them as] people who are on the beginning of their journey into potentially realizing that they maybe are not part of the norm. So they might still present fully like a banker. But they are maybe on their journey to understanding that there are a raging homosexual, but they are not in a position to go home where their partner is, or maybe their 16 children to change[clothes], in order to get into the gear, in order to get in[to the club]. But they still need to be in this space to "be free from" or to finally "be free to". And this idea of how these exclusionary practices that are meant to protect the space, then start excluding these people. But then again, I thought, not so interested in talking about this topic within an art institution. Because everything the art world touches, it destroys like, that really struck a chord with me, I was like, fuck, I can't take this topic here [to an art institution] right now. So it's in there [the zines] now and use it here [in the text]. And then thought it was way more interesting to exactly explore, and to see if I

could make the viewer tap into their own ambiguity about the after hour, and to connect to the vulnerability and also start questioning their own limitations, and experiences and traumas within. And it's not that I want to make like a democratic experience. But what I tried to navigate was to think about how to invite them all. If you think of all the viewers as Baby Queers: How do you protect all these people, without excluding them from something that they are more than welcome to explore? Because, as someone who fully believes that gender is a full on social construct, and that we're all performing, what if this place could be a place where you finally could just for a second, consider your own performance as you're watching people perform? Whatever it means to chill?

Justin Hunt:

Well, and what is beautiful, is that you are giving the space for all of you [the audience] and us to chill. And one of the beautiful aspects of the chill out is that thing of, my best friend, Jay, and I call it sort of the anxious walk. Where someone is just sort of walking around, maybe figuring things out, are fiddling with their clothes, because they're a little bit too high or a little bit tweaked, or whatever, in various ways? And they kind of take in the scene. And that magic of the tacking in of the scene becomes something else. I just lost my thread thinking about that....The podcast dies here. Wait, no, it was good. It's gone. But it's fine. It will come back. It was about what you said. I had a question. That's, oh! It was about JD' thing! Jessie's requirement that all things art world touches, it kills.

I wonder if the same could be said about club culture? Given the ways in which club culture becomes a commodity in a very strategic and very strange way through regeneration practices, and through a host of things. But it reminds me of what the scholar and artist Madison Moore writes about nightlife as form. And in a really useful essay, Madison says, why and how is the art world now taking on club culture this like, extreme way. And of course, this happened in the 80s. And we had the ICA to do our first ever trans thing in London, and it was like, Whoa, and you know, MoMa did a thing and it was oh, wow, they're doing it. What? Why are these two spaces talking to each other? Because they are spaces of exclusion. And so I'm always: well, if it's killed, then it becomes archival. Because the archive is dead, which is why I did my PhD on it and I like that, I like dead things. And so what can we do not to resuscitate? Because I'm not interested in bringing things back to life. Things have to have a shelf life, things have to have a point of end. And that's interesting about after parties. Because it's that desire to keep the excess going. It's like, we could just go for two more days, just like we could sit for two more days and party. And outside of the room are the structures of the institution, the thing that might kill it. But it will die. And then those mnemonics we have to use to recall that, which you're not employing here, which is interesting, because you're not resuscitating. You're demonstrating. That's really interesting. Do you want to say something about what I just said? Sorry, I'm riffing now. But I think that if we think about nightlife as form, and this question we talked about earlier about archive, and the documentation of nightlife. You're not documenting nightlife in this. But what might that mean? What does that mean for the piece or for you?

Liesel Burisch:

Well first of all that was super sad.

Justin Hunt:

Sorry! We said we might go to trauma. We said it was ok! We had a little talk a couple of days ago where we asked ourselves: „should we go really dark? Should we take this to a really dark place?“ - Sorry I tend to go there. You can bring it back!

Liesel Burisch:

When you were asking about why I was so interested in the after party...I wonder if I have been so interested in the after party because it has not been in my life for two years. It has just been something that has been ultra precarious and has not happened. That is for sure something I hope is not true. I hope it is not over. But I think for me through investigating it, I have also understood, that whenever I wasn't able to

go to these after parties it was because it is such an exclusionary space. And when other things happen, like for example illnesses, care work... you are just out of it. It has always been so strange to me how fragile these friendships that are made in nightlife are. As someone who likes to go super dark, I like to grieve that a lot. I have had circles of being really sad about all the friends I no longer talk to and then finding new friends and then something happens and this circular...well maybe its not circular...maybe it just ends at some point. But that's also why, there in the zine [is this page that asks]: how do you find a new spot? - you can't. It's over. And this thing of...what if that is really true? And also this idea of starting to feel old in the sense of: what now? Because you are starting to become so aware of how whole societies want you to no longer take your time to leisure or to labor to leisure or to party or to chill. It seems like the world on all levels is [making] going out a precarious practice, it seems to become harder and harder to do. I hope it is not a swan song for the after hour, personally. But that is also why there are aspects in this, like Jess asking Don: „what are you're struggles?“. And he then talks about his anxiety and he asks her back and she answers with: „I just want a babysitter.“. This idea of real life is keeping you from staying, bringing this time. As a caretaker myself it is also just a horrific fact that I don't want to face. This thing that, I don't have that amount of time anymore. Does that mean that I no longer can go to the after party? I refuse to think that. If the after party demands that, then there is something wrong with the after party, but what does that even mean. There is definitely aspects of [wondering]...am I documenting in order to archive? And here, I was working with people who were asking themselves the same [questions]. Maybe it is also a very 30's art work? Everyone is in their 30's. Its starting to become weeded out. The people have found their spouses. The people who were Baby Queers have realized they weren't queer anyway and went back to their jobs.

Justin Hunt:

I don't think this is a swan song. I am really interested in what you are talking about in terms of when the party ends. We talked a little bit about it in the class but I definitely talk about it a lot with my students because all the work around nightlife is about youth culture. 16-25 year olds. The worst fucking time to be thinking about in terms of what you are doing at a party because you don't know at 16 or 25. Maybe I knew at 23 when I was drug running at the Limelight[a London night club] with lots of coke in my wig. That was how I got into parties for free, because tall drag queens with coke in their hair can get into any party. And the party hasn't ended. But what you bring up is an ethics of “being with”. Maybe? What I am trying to articulate a bit about what I loved about your work, this installation, all this [the exhibition], is that you have an ethical lens to the whole structure to think about how representation operates. So that it doesn't become this stale “youth culture in 1980” or “The second summer of love in London 89”. It doesn't become that. It becomes a way, a methodology...what's the word I am looking for...you are offering people a way of looking. A methodology of approach instead of saying: „This was“, you are saying: „here is how“. That is nice, that is lighter right? Was that lighter? I am trying, it is a roller coaster with me, and maybe we will crash down in a minute. I kept, as I said, thinking about the politics of your gaze in it [the work] and I kept looking for you in it. There were a couple of moments where I saw a camera stick, which maybe isn't you and then I realized that is about your ethics, of your approach to care. And I think that is interesting.

Liesel Burisch

What really took the wind out of my motivation to do this work is that I suddenly started to see [art works about] techno and club everywhere. Just like care work...

Justin Hunt:

Yeah...the zeitgeist...

Liesel Burisch

How to deal with something becoming trendy in the art world? As you said, it maybe makes sense that it becomes a topic that people want to work when they start no longer engaging? But what if you are still engaging and you make work about, it how does that look different? And also this thing of...what if the

party never ends? What does that mean in the sense of shaming? All these people have been subject to shaming for not having their life together. And at the same time: nobody has [their life together] and go fuck yourself for demanding that from anyone. This is your idea of a sensible life. I really don't want it to be over and definitely had to go through accepting that as not being a failure. So one is not failing by staying, but at the same time it is also insane to think of the club space or the after hours as a safe space. And I remember vividly us [in class] talking about this thing about where the after hour happens. In my experience it always either happens at the poorest or the richest [house], it is never in between. And the strange thing about when you are at someone's real trash place, is that people will still steal everything you have there, even though they are your friends. And if it is at someone's place who is rich as well, but the rich person is into it? There is always this...

Justin Hunt

Yeah, the fetish of the mob.

Liesel Burisch

Whenever there is an after party at [the house of] someone really rich, I also... I remember hot Claudia from our course

Justin Hunt

Hot Claudia, Claudia Palazzo, an amazing dancer in London.

Liesel Burisch

Incredible. Hot Claudia was talking about, well going back to this idea of never being "off duty". That going from being a dancer in a club, where you create the atmosphere and people feed of you, and then you go to the after hour and thereby legitimize the person [hosting] as cool. You legalize their capitalist life, because they sometimes "slum down" and invite a bunch of queers to their space and are fine with them taking your grey goose half empty bottle[wodka brand] that you got as a company gift 5 years ago. So where does it happen and what happens and what is left in the space once everyone is gone.

Justin Hunt

And that is what COVID did though. COVID reminded us all what it feels like to be at the after party. Because we had to do it at our house. We were all stuck in our homes and all had to ask(whispering) :,,how much Gin do we have in the closet? I think there is some Ketamine left form that one time we went to Ibiza and brought it back"

Liesel Burisch

Everyone found their old weed.

Justin Hunt

They found their old weed, they scraped out the bong as hard as they could to get the resin. They were just going for it. Everyone had to do the things you do at an after party at home. And for those of us who made a life or a friendship and therefor a life, kinship through nightlife we were alone. It was traumatizing. And then to hear, what you are saying, about the fear of losing that because you've had to make choices that are protective, potentially/primarily. Because when you go to an after party, it means you are also saying [agreeing to] that there are not going the be masks, everyone is going to say:,,well I just took a COVID test after I did my bump and I am happy to tell you that I am fine" - you can't... you are not going to do that in those spaces. And the extra labor of the come down, which we could spend days on [talking about] all becomes that thing where it is not gone but how we approach the ethics of that care, that involvement...there is something about what happened with COVID for all of us in terms of recognizing what it felt like to be cooped up at the after party. To be stuck in it. Cause we are all at the after party.

Clubs are closed. Clubs are gone. They could not have come back in lots of ways. A lot of places still haven't [come back/opened up again] because they couldn't ever regenerate. We were all stuck in that after party. On the come down...I went dark again! Shit! So what does that mean for us? But again, what I think you are enabling with the research, the zines, the work is to start thinking about the ethics approach and the politics of representation around that, so it is not just like (makes quick beat with mouth) techno party on a canal boat where everyone waves. It becomes something else. So its not just "oh look at those crazy ravers" it is "I was also stuck at home and drank all of the Christmas sherry that grandma left me when she died, cause I had nothing else to drink... just doing shots of that" - I didn't do that (mouthing inaudibly *I did that*). What happens with that.

Liesel Burisch

I have been thinking about this aspect of after care, trying to figure out how much I can translate from BDSM after care to the club space? Do you want to do an intro to the concept of after care as a sub and a dom?

Justin Hunt

Sure. If we think about after care in psycho sexual politics and practices, it recognizes that you take on sadomasochistic sex practices. That both sides will have exerted various amounts of labor, that require care to come down or up from. If you are in the sadist position, the constant labor of berating and being in control over somebody is quite taxing. The sub position takes on a whole host of dehumanizing tactics and practices and that requires some "bringing back up". And to level you both out and to return to the non-performative-sexual self, you need various forms of care. Also your body may have been prolonged, engaging with sex in various costumes etc. and you need to think about how you come back to life from that.

Liesel Burisch:

For the zines I tried to find texts about after care and I enjoyed the [BDMS internet] forums advising each other on how to best preform after care. One of the things that kept on coming up was that you have to make sure that you stop in time to have enough energy to [do] after care. And when you start putting that into the [context of the] club, it becomes such a paradox, as in: that you should stop at the time, the party should end when you [still] have the minimum energy you need in order to take yourself up or down again. But then, you don't. So either you fail at after caring for yourself or you need someone else to care for or you just stay up or down until the crash. Responsible drinking, responsible partying seems to not really exist... I really enjoyed comparing BDSM [after care] to club culture and how they, like Copenhell [metal festival that was happening at the same time of the talk, close to the venue] outside: Such extraverts but they are in line, behave really well, and it is maybe like BDSM? There are tons of rules for the "play" but then the club space seems to not really have that many rules except from what they want to be "free from".

Q&A starts

Audience member 1:

You are talking very much about the location of the after party as being in a private home or in a very private setting. Do you have thoughts about potential other places or other spaces where the qualities of the after hour can happen? Could it happen at a public space? What are the structural elements of that space? Does it really have to be in a private home? Could it be in other places?

Justin Hunt:

That is a really great question actually. Primarily because we just hit festival time in the UK, all the staff has just gone to Glastonbury to launch the festival. And I think of Glastonbury as the perfect example of what we have talked about in terms of after care. A structure whereby we are not in a private home. We are in

the middle of a field. So what happens at the end of Glastonbury is, that if you have worked at Glastonbury, that you instill a circle and everyone who has worked is allowed to go and chill out there. People share drugs, blankets, they just share the space. The idea is that everyone who wants to be there should just be there to chill. What happens at that space is, because there is varying levels of people being in control and not being in control, that everyone works to level out together. It is the only time I have ever been in a space where there is that person circling, not because they are tweaked, but because they are that person who is choosing for that hour to circle and to connect, to check on people, to help dose, to help sleep, all those things.

One of the reason we are talking so much about the private home is because we think of the quasi public space of a gallery or a club as membership driven, as exclusionary institutionally. What happens when we switch to the fully private home? That becomes interesting in terms of urban life sociology and as a sociologist my interest lies there, but what I am really learning more about is these spaces where we can learn about potential for the not-private residential.... Should we all go to the gym after[the club]? Or should we all go to the clinic after? And that actually happens. We all know, especially in Berlin and London... I don't know about here?

Liesel Burisch
It exists...

Justin Hunt
The Monday, Tuesday clinic visit... Heavy! And they're still up!

Liesel Burisch
I love that place in Copenhagen, it is great.

Justin Hunt
Oh is it? Amazing. Dean Street Clinic in SoHo on a Monday and a Tuesday is a place to cruise and to be. And it is a performance of self that you can't imagine. I don't know if that fully answers the question but if you[Liesel] want to follow up?

Liesel Burisch
The reason why I think about the private space is because I feel like there is no public space for this to happen, not even at the clubs anymore. The bar is an illusion almost. And the empty club in the video is also an illusion because of fire restrictions, police records and neighbors. The idea and illusion of being able to stay on.

Justin Hunt
A "lock in" yes

Liesel Burisch
[to stay on] in a bar or in a club... I think you have to go further south or in any other direction than Copenhagen or Berlin or London to be allowed to stay longer than your liquor license. I remember parks being the space, but that is also not possible anymore because police will show up. For sure this [the video] is an utopian space. Could it be somewhere else? We talked about what could be a safe place?
I worked at a bunch of festivals for "research" [for this show] and all of these festivals would have spaces for people to be cared for. We were talking a little about GHB before, but drugs being so available, both being cheap but of bad quality and a lot of people going to festivals to do these drugs. The festival becomes the safe enclosure, without police presence. In Denmark, police is allowed into the festivals. It is wild. They walk around and people take photos with them. It becomes a thing, it is very strange. For a lot of people the festival will be the place for excess. One of these festivals I went to, Nation of Gondwana, have multiple

tents for aftercare where people will go to sober up. There will be physical aftercare, psychological aftercare and all these places will be staffed by people who are semi-skilled but also super fucked up [themselves]. Because they also go to this thing [the festival]. So these places [of care] exist but also, this person at Glastonbury, nobody knows what their motive is.

Justin Hunt

And it could be quite nefarious of course.

Liesel Burisch

Someone I was working with, I held their hair before they went to care for someone else. Which meant that they were lying in a bed [at the after care tent] hoping that nobody else would overdose. Why do you need these structures for after care within a semi public space? The reason is again: police. We talked about it shortly before that you need to, as a festival or any event, to have structures that filter through what is a care that needs hospital attention, what can you deal with yourself as you need to keep the police records and records of drug use and abuse low in order to get your license back.

Justin Hunt

It is true for the private domicile as well. I have countless friends' stories and my own stories of after parties that have gone really wrong and someone has nearly died or died at someone's house. I know people who have been ejected naked out onto the street, completely passed out just so that they didn't die in someone's home. Especially in terms of the class question.

Liesel Burisch

That is why we move around all these spaces because they all hold opportunities and have aspects of safeness to them in the sense of regulation and commonality of the semi-public space. But non of them actually function as an ideal after hour space.

Justin Hunt

It is a good question, could you imagine the perfect after party? Potentially not...

Liesel Burisch

It is [answered] in "How Not To Exclude"

Justin Hunt

And in my essay [in the publication] when it gets printed. It sort of asks the question back to you [Liesel], what can that [after party] be fully?

Audience member 1:

Just to follow up because I think it also speaks to architecture, and you haven't spoken about that. Which you [Liesel] have done here in the exhibition, you have worked with scaffolding and that represents all kinds of things. But could you please talk a bit about what architecture means to these practices.

Justin Hunt

I am not the best person to speak about architecture in terms of: I don't know enough about it. However the work of Ben Campkin and Lo Marshall from UCL have just finished a 3-year project on night and architecture. The urban pamphleteer is where I did my first thinking around after parties alongside Ben and Lo. It is free and online. We used it in the course. I lifted my initial thinking from here to the essay I wrote for your [Liesels] catalogue. So Ben Campkin and Lo Marshall both do amazing research on urban studies and architecture. They are both in architecture, thinking about what are the architectonics of that [night life]. One of the things we have talked about ad nauseum is the toilet. So I can speak to the toilet in this

answer. There used to be a great blog in London that told you the best places to do a line in a toilet. So you would be like: which spaces have the best toilets to do a line quickly and do a bump and leave? It is gone now, which is sad. But it makes one think about design elements and how accessible spaces are. To think about what practices are being used. If we think about urban landscape as desire lines, we see a pathway that has been trot in, because we actually want to go that way, but the road goes another way. In architecture we don't see that plump set of that [the movements] as easily. Through toilets we can talk about how buildings are used and how that use-value shifts and how it then get reconstructed. But also what practices are enabled and disabled because the design. That is my short answer, do you [Liesel] have thoughts on that, well especially on why chose this design and architecture for this [the exhibition].

Liesel Burisch

The scaffolding has many reasons. First of all it mimics the videos and the states that the spaces were in when filming but I also like to use scaffolding because... well in all the text for the publication we have explained the use of scaffolding because they often are where clubs can still be. Raves can occupy spaces that for a moment are forgotten or not occupied because they [the spaces] are being constructed or torn down. Here [in the exhibition] the barrier that usually is at the bottom is on the top [of the scaffolding]. You will usually climb over the barrier to sit on top to after care and after hang out. These precarious spaces could maybe be one of those public, but illegal spaces for you to chill out. What is interesting in relation to the blog you were talking about, is that I left a note on the back of the projections to support or celebrate the people who go beyond and who find the spaces that are hidden. That is where you often will find the after party: where nobody else looks. There is also this whole thing with hunting the after party and finding the after party. It is like a treasure hunt, a strange different mindset that you need to go in, in order to find them [the after parties]. I had a friend that was doing this to a sickening degree so that he would bike around and just find the party and go up the stairs and enter the after party because there is something about the door that changes at an after hour. Because everyone just assumes that you belong, as nobody really does. Everyone just ended up there. He would take advantage of that and really bike around town to find these spaces and it really is a specific way of thinking - but Ben [Campkin] and Lo [Marshall] probably went way more into it.

Justin Hunt

I hadn't clocked in the mimesis of it [the space in relation to the video]

Audience Member 2

Thank you for this wonderful talk and for the way how you both frame your artistic thinking and your theoretical engagement with these topics. I wonder how you think about boundaries, because that is a word you haven't mentioned. But you have mentioned trauma and for me those two [words] go hand in hand. Especially all of society is engaged in the human inability to set boundaries, to talk about boundaries, to feel our own boundaries. How does that work at the after party as a construct? And how does it work when you are taking substances? When it is a space that encourages substances that are intended to expand our minds and/or our consciousness but also the connection we feel to others. So I am curious how you are thinking about these things from both a theoretical and personal perspective.

Justin Hunt

Should I start with this?

Liesel Burisch

That is your topic

Justin Hunt

That is my topic. So I talk about this in my essay that is in [the publication](#). First thing I want to say about boundaries is that, like galleries and most clubs, the first thing that is architecturally a boundary is that they are not accessible. The idea that there is a unity, a connection in those spaces is not the case. If you are a wheel chair user and try to go to a club in London you are fucked. Or here. Or I don't know, you might have a ramp. There is so much work around what those boundaries are and what boundaries are necessary for safety.

Short tangent to help us get to the answer: When you are designing a club and to think about accessible spaces, meaning if you factor in somebody with varying abilities and needs in terms of hearing, sight, mobility, the ways in which you can keep them safe and then also to have them boundaryed in order for them to get to exits in case of emergency, becomes *extremely* hard to work on. So what are the boundaries of today in terms of that structure? Leading back to Pulse, the Pulse shooting in Florida [Shooting at the Pulse nightclub on the 11th of June 2016 in Orlando Florida, killing 49 and injuring 53 people]: who survived the shooting? The people who hid in the bathroom. Because for some reason, the shooter didn't go to the bathroom. And they [the people trapped inside the club] couldn't get out. They were barricaded in. The reason they were barricaded, the reason they survived, was because it wasn't a safe toilet. There were no exit points in that space for them to leave. When we think about boundaries first, we need to think about the limits of boundaries. And when we then think about the productive limits of boundaries, then we start thinking about what boundary work means. I think about boundary work in two ways. In sociology we think about boundary work in a number of ways, we steal it from the physical sciences. There is a scholar named [Ashley Mears](#) who does amazing work on female bodies and labor in social spaces and is thinking about sex work, club culture. Ashley's [Mears] work tries to think *with* boundary work. What are the labors we have to cohere a scene, a space, this, that maintain its coherence? What maintains this? What are we assuming and enabling? What are we participating in with that? You all participated by sitting over there [pointing to audience], very nicely and quietly. You didn't disengage from that expectation. You were docile subjects, if you want to go Foucauldian. Well done, being docile. What happens when we want to have connection? What happens when I want connection and you don't want connection, but I am going to keep pushing for connection? Or vice versa? And what if I am going to use a substance to make that connection even more palatable?

At the beginning of each session, I ask my students: what is the gendered labor that happens pre game, at club and after club that your counterpart, if we think about binary gender, doesn't know about? Typically the men are terrified and surprised that the "men", they self elect that, that the self elected women in the room cover their drink and if they don't get to cover their drink at any given time or they can't see their drink at anytime, they will leave it and buy another drink. They will find a way to not engage, cause that is no longer a boundary. It is unsafe. A whole host of this labor is to create boundaries that maintain a self and an other. And recognizes that "other" is always dangerous in these spaces. It is not safe. And then we add the question of MDMA [a drug often associated with spike in happiness, a sense of safety and trust], acid [a drug often used to distort perceived realities], G [short for GHB, a drug with the positive effects like euphoria, increased sex drive. Among negative effects are amnesia, loss of consciousness and coma], coke [short for cocaine, a drug associated with increasing energy, alertness and euphoria] etc.

Primarily uppers [term to describe drugs that increase wakefulness, alertness etc.] are lonely-making drugs. They make you feel alone and your boundaries are up actually. There are other aspects that bring them down. What are the typical tropes that go around in terms of that?

Do you [Liesel] want to add something?

Liesel Burisch

What you said about female-presenting people and how they navigate the club space compared to others feeds into the boundary work of the dance [in the video]. They really go straight at it. This saying "dance as if nobody is watching" is an illusion that no female presenting person has ever been given in a club space. Maybe at an after hour because everyone is gone, somewhere else, mentally. You can finally figure out how

would you move if nobody is watching inside of a club space. Boundary setting within the after hour is not gone but different. It is one of the first things my mom told me when I was starting to go out was to never to drink a drink that has not [that you haven't kept an eye on the entire time]. This is almost generational boundary setting, with her stating that one can never broke enough to not be able to pay [for] a new drink. In the zine I talk a lot about how not to be an idiot on a dance floor. So that also feeded in to the movement practices [of the video], in the sense of how movement on the dance floor can be misunderstood as invitations when in reality the boundary is up. That also goes back to the architecture of the club. You put boundaries up so that people can within that little nook, explore what happens within the boundary. At the after hour for sure a lot of nasty shit happens and it is not until the aftercare that you maybe realize what boundaries have been overstepped. I see it as a space where you might not even be aware [of the violation of your boundaries]. That is also [addressed in] the circular movement of the video. The video stays in a loop because I think boundary setting is also in a loop. You experience something that makes you put up a boundary but then that is only referring to experience that has happened to you, which does not protect you from other shit. There is no way to chill out. There is no safer space other than when you are alone, but then other stuff comes up.

Justin Hunt

What are the boundaries between sober and not sober? Who sets that and how do we make spaces that enable the crossing of those boundaries? Can you have a sober rave, what does that really mean? Is it fun?

Liesel Burisch

Is it esoteric? That is also the thing about coexisting on different scales of consumption. I always love different levels [of consumption] but of course it comes with a lot of challenges. What we haven't talked about, which is my main reason to still be so connected to and interested in and devoted to clubs is the music. Music has always made us reconsider our boundaries, when we let ourselves [get lost] in that. And that is not necessarily a dangerous thing. Can be, but dancing and moving with each other going into ecstasy by the music in it self is a really beautiful thing. So that is also the problem with setting up boundaries and being like: „everyone is a predator and I need to protect myself“. Are you [then] still able to go into that state of mind that you wanted to go into, which is why you are there?

Audience member 3

Just a comment: Thank you for this talk and a wonderful exhibition Liesel. A lot of stuff came up that I would want to talk about. But this thing of living in a time of new boundaries, of confusion and anxiety and one not knowing where ones boundaries are and maybe having lived a life overstepping many of them. I am wondering if there is a point where we have to accept that this condition? It is really brutal all this darkness. You are naming it and then you are fleeing from it.

Justin Hunt

Yes. Do you want to pay for my therapy?

Audience member 3

Of course the darkness is there, all the traumas are there and I think it is courageous to talk about them. It is difficult. Is there a point where all those traumas, where you get to a place, where night life after hours, where brutal art spaces are brutal? Sometimes it triggers me a bit because well, clubbing, I want it to be wild. I want it to be aggressive. I want it to be that other thing. Art is what we want. That crazy thing. I don't want to numb that because I think we also need that space. But is there a point where we need to stop expecting our traumas to be met in [the] substance filled, crazy, art world context?

Justin Hunt

I think three things but they are quick.

- 1) I think a lot about the HIV crisis and its response in and of club cultures and musical settings. And the way in which embodied practices of care and life affirming structures were enabled and disabled because of the massive amounts of death and evacuation of bodies from the scene. From a scene. So that comes to mind as not an answer but a gesture to part of what we are thinking about. COVID helps us think about that maybe, but they are very different structures.
- 2) Queerness and its ultimate, soon to be, death as a structure. I did my PhD on queer theory and the archive. I should have realized then that that was the death for it. But queer and its capacity to gesture to any social structure or identity, thankfully, might be going away. What happens with that “everything goes” and “everything doesn’t go” space is that there is no opportunity to consider what labor will be required to meet the needs of every individual in and of that umbrella.
- 3) I think it comes back to that question of “can you have a sober rave”? The answer is yes you can. Because I have so many amazing friends who have found sobriety as a means to continue their life and their party and do it without any seeming direct problems and ability to reflect on it. I don’t have that. Yet. In terms of the amount of abuse I did to myself, with myself as part of my artistic research and my life. I can’t go to a club still. I stopped clubbing 2019. I just stopped. I had to stop. That is why I have to write about, why I have to think about it. Because I miss it. And when I go to spaces like that, it is too traumatic. I can come to this club [the exhibition] and be in this guest position. Because I am an invited guest, I have always loved to be on the VIP list, is what I am trying to say. It is that secondary journey of how you find the people, the scene and how that changes over time. Again, not an answer, just a gesture.

Liesel Burisch

I think that is the core idea of the “free from” versus the “free to”. It is the moving away *from* triggers, free *from* feeling all the things that you don’t want to feel. And start thinking about what it is you want to be free *to* do. What is this space? That is a conversation and for sure if you don’t want to put in the work and think about that, for yourself and within a collective, you will go to a place and hope to be free *from* and you are just going to ruin it for yourself and everyone else. Because you haven’t put in the work. For sure there is this whole idea that as a traumatized person, as a minority person to then also [having] to put in the work, to start thinking about this can seem overwhelming cause you just want to tap out for a moment. You just don’t want to feel. Specifically if you look or perform your gender in a way that is hated by society, you just want to not feel that[hate] for a moment. But it is not sustainable. And it does not create, in my view, the party I think we all should go to. So there is work to be done. I know that we are both [pointing to audience member] sick of people thinking about what they want to be free *from*. But there is still work to be done [in terms of] thinking about what this party looks like. That is also why in the zine “how not to exclude” there is just a blabber on all these aspects. I go into chargers on the toilet and this idea of an awareness team. I understand and support the idea of it, but again, who is there to catch you where you are at, what is this person at a club space? Why is it their job to do your job? Why are they there for you to feel safe? What is their role in it? Within this context, I often think about dunst, a collective that was happening from 2010... Ah they are still alive, it is still going. I really enjoy that they created a party that was all about crossing boundaries. And that can become annoying in itself as well. That is suddenly becomes all about rule breaking and doing all these things that nobody expects you to do. But at the end of the day they did take a stand. They wanted to make a space that was free *to* do all these things. That I think is for sure the way to go. To start thinking about what is it you want to be free *to* do instead of what you want to be free *from* experiencing.

Justin Hunt

We got back to free *from* versus free *to*, perfect.