



Aske Thiberg

*Shutting Out
the Sun*

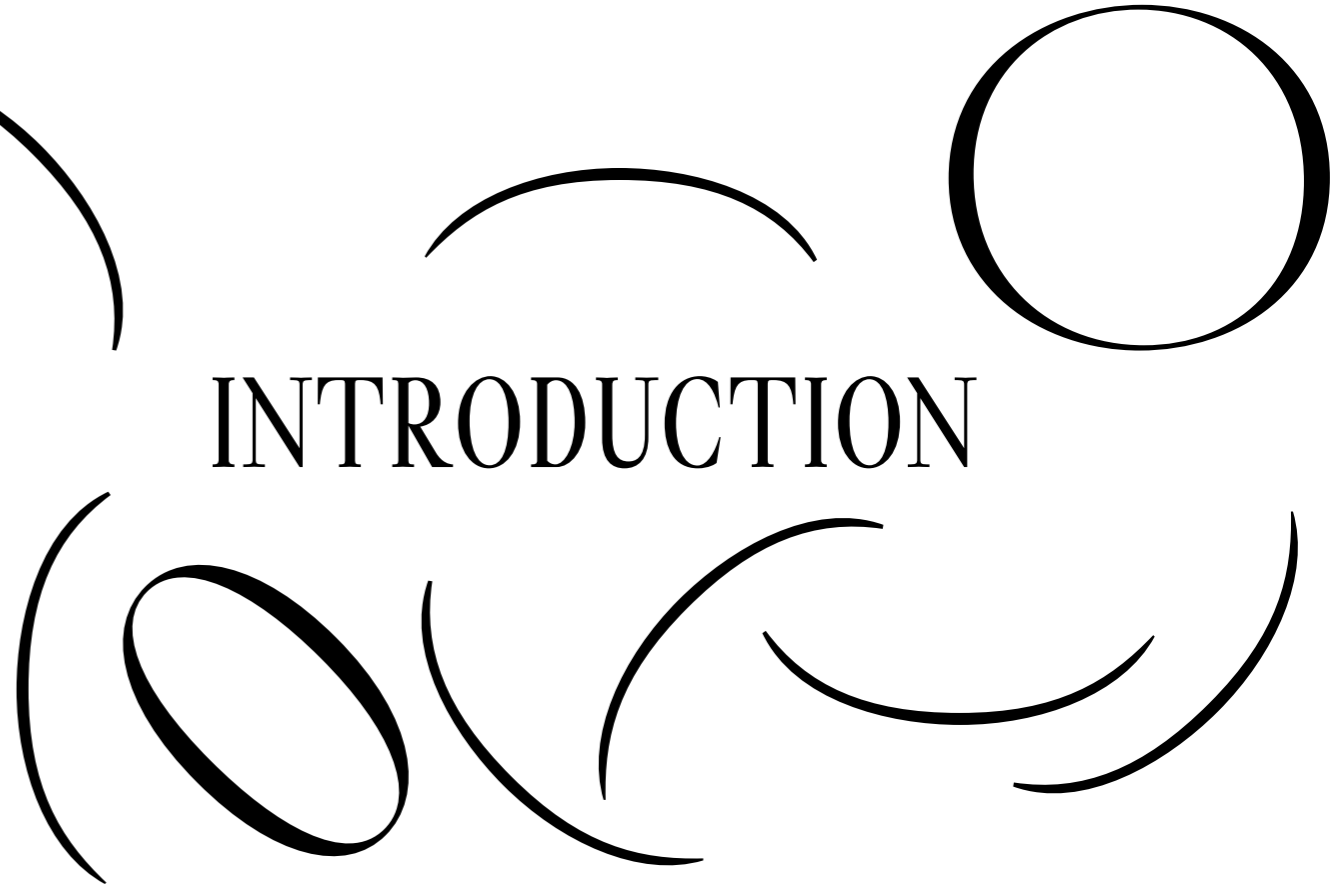


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Aske Thiberg
Shutting Out the Sun
Exhibition period: 31.08.2024 – 13.10.2024

O-OVERGADEN
Overgaden neden Våndet 17, 1414 København K,
overgaden.org



INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure to introduce this publication as a companion to Aske Thiberg's solo exhibition *Shutting Out the Sun* at O—Overgaden. Since 2021, O—Overgaden has, with the generous support of the Augustinus Foundation, published a monographic series in conjunction with our large-scale solo exhibitions, aiming at expanding the conversations around each show and producing new, offspring material.

For this edition, Hendrik Folkerts, Curator and Head of Exhibitions at Moderna Museet in Stockholm, has conducted a conversation with Aske Thiberg, titled "It has always been about entanglement", exploring Thiberg's exhibition and practice, while O—Overgaden's in-house editor Nanna Friis, also a freelance art writer and critic, has contributed the essay "Stages". A warm and heartfelt thank you to both contributors. In addition, I wish to thank the whole team at O—Overgaden for their efforts in realizing the exhibition, as well as the graphic design team at fanfare for their consistently dedicated work. Of course, not least, my gratitude goes to the artist Aske, for generously sharing conceptualizations and co-thinking with all of us, through both the exhibition and this publication.

With live performances taking place on a daily basis, Aske Thiberg's first major solo exhibition focuses entirely on his work with dance and choreography.

A solo dancer on a platform: high-tension, mechanical movements, an almost dead facial expression. Thiberg portrays our contemporary bodies as ever-more robotic and cyborg-like—blurring reality and virtual, displaying how our bodies operate partially in the digital world,

dependent on tech or body-borne computers. He points at a social distance or melancholy, whether nightly doom scrolling or the lonely gamer who is *Shutting Out the Sun*, as the title says.

Unfolding over time, the exhibition consists of three live choreographies, each on show for two weeks. While the first performance centers on Thiberg himself and the second on two professional dancers moving in space, the final chapter stages a seated teenager singing. Created especially for this exhibition, each choreography is synched to the same "theme song", a short recurring digital melody, filling the spaces void of almost anything but the performers' bodies.

While the artist's own performance thrives on "locking"—a type of show dance he practiced since childhood—interspersed with monotonous recited story lines, all three acts work with minimalist and machinic gestures, rather than emotionally laden personalized performances. In all three choreographies the performers' bodies are cued by the repeating audio track, making it debatable whether the performer controls their bodily rhythm or if the digital tune, in fact, steers the performing bodies as its automated avatars.

Rhea Dall,
Director and Chief Curator, O—Overgaden
September 2024

Aske Thiberg (b. 1994, SE) is a Copenhagen-based visual artist, holding an MFA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (2025). Thiberg has exhibited as well as performed at art venues including Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2025), Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen (2022), and Malmö Konstmuseum (2022).

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT ENTANGLEMENT

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN
ASKE THIBERG & HENDRIK FOLKERTS

(Hendrik Folkerts)

You have a long history with locking, the dance style established by Don Campbell during the heyday of funk music, comprising a series of core movements that is as much defined by moments of pause (when the “lock” actually occurs) as it is built on fluidity and continuity. As a child, you started locking and practiced it until you were a teenager—and now it continues to impact your practice as an artist. Can you describe, through a sequence of movements, how locking feels in your body?

(Aske Thiberg)

As you point out, locking consists of a handful of core moves such as the Lock, Twirl, Scooby doo, Scoobot, Stop and go, W, Pace, Point, Whichaway, etc. These moves are large and energetic, and oftentimes end with a hard slap, clap or stomp, creating a loud sound that accentuates the switch when going from a body in full motion into a body in complete stillness.

Earlier this year, I participated in a workshop by P-Lock, one of the most prominent second-generation lockers, who called locking “a dance of surprise,” and once you know all these basic moves, you become able to add this element.

To give an example, you might start by doing a Scoobot on the one-count, stepping your left foot out to the left side while twirling your hands at the wrists and extending them to each side of your body. As the audience expects you to continue the step on the two, you instead freeze, hold on the two, turn your head towards a member of the audience on the three, give them a big smile on the four, turn your head back on the five, and then finish the step on the six, seven, and eight.

The feeling of this sequence would initially be a relaxed one, as you keep your arms and left leg loose to be able to quickly swing them outwards into the first position of a Scoobot.

As you hold the pose, a tense feeling spreads through your entire body, except for the neck, which remains relaxed to swiftly turn your head toward the audience. Smiling at the audience member, you feel a slight numbness in your right thigh as your weight rests on your bent right leg. This numbness quickly dissipates as you turn your head back to the front and shift the weight to the left leg to continue the last counts of the Scoobot. Finally, you experience a sharp, stinging sensation in your palms as they come together in a loud clap behind your hip.

As a locker, you continuously work with the element of surprise, through sudden freezes and changes in speed to keep the audience on their toes. Locking, compared to many other styles of street dance, isn’t a social dance, but a performance dance, intended for the big stage.

(HF)

How has locking impacted your approach to performance and, more specifically, the relationship to your body as a medium of artistic process, and display, as well as your interest in movement research?

(AT)

Learning locking is a matter of repetition, with very few surprises. Here the sequence of movements become stagnant, repeating the same steps as an act of perfection. And it is this situation, and feeling in the body, that has shaped my performance work. Being alone in a dance studio or bedroom, away from the big stage, listening to the loud noises coming from your own body, as your arms and legs swing, twist and clap, in the same rhythm, over and over again.

Don Campbell once said that, as a locker, you should be able to blow people’s minds with just one move. If you watch old videos of him dancing and pause at any moment, then replay his last move, you can see him doing just that. He pours all his energy and character into every single count, with every detail perfectly executed, from the groove in his hip to the angle of his index finger as he freezes in a point. There’s something machine-like about becoming a person who can perform with such precision and continuity, and this aspect of locking is something I wanted to incorporate into my upcoming solo performance at O—Overgaden. I’m not at Campbell’s level, of course, but after practicing locking for almost ten years growing up, these moves have become intuitive to me, like walking or lifting a fork while eating. I can perform them without thinking, even while my mind is elsewhere.

The performance will consist of a single performer (myself) telling anecdotal stories while the body performs locking movements repetitively and mechanically. The initial idea of this was to portray a distance between body and language, inspired by a piece by Xavier Le Roy called *Product of Circumstances* (1999). In it, Le Roy tells the story of his life from a podium in a lecture hall, detailing his transition from being a scientist to becoming a dancer in his late thirties. Occasionally, during the performance,

Le Roy stops speaking, steps down from the podium, and dances before returning to his story. As he moves back and forth, it is almost as if he is shapeshifting between a lecturer and a corporeal being expressing form and abstraction.

However, the deeper I get into rehearsing my performance, the more my result diverges from Le Roy’s approach. Instead of creating a contrast between body and spoken language, they start to merge. The words lose their meaning and transform into form and rhythm. I’m starting to realize that I might not be interested in creating a contrast at all. Instead, my process and thinking around performance—shaped by locking—have led me to see the act of reading these texts aloud as new, personal core movements.

(HF)

Indeed, the texts you use as a “backdrop” for your performances, including the solo performance you’re preparing for the show, carry a certain rhythm in the space. They also have a specific narrative quality, merging mundane detail with an understated sense of absurdity, bordering on the surreal. How does narrative perform then, in your texts and by extension, in your performances?

(AT)

Right, these texts begin in the mundane, set in familiar environments like a living room or a local supermarket, featuring generic objects and characters: a beetle, a kitchen table, or an old man. As the story unfolds, these ordinary scenes gradually become more surreal. For instance, one of the texts I’m reading during my coming solo performance is about a six-year-old girl flying alone on an airplane. When the flight attendants turn off the lights and all the other passengers fall asleep, she begins wandering the aisle, slowly unraveling the wall-to-wall carpet on the floor, as loose threads get caught beneath her long, uncut toenails.

To me, these texts are inherently choreographic. The characters interact with each other and their environment through movements and gestures, and the narrative is driven by the idea that one action leads to another. Like improvisational dance. Whenever your body enters a new position—such as dropping down on your knees in the W step, named after the shape you create with your legs once your knees hit the ground—there are a certain number of choices you have following that, like jumping back up or beginning to move your arms with your knees still planted on the floor. Every move offers a new set of choreographic possibilities, just as each new sentence, character and environment in my texts.

In turn, the narratives in the texts help set a scene for the performances—a context for the movements. The characters often seem automated, disconnected from others, navigating the world in isolation. Take the six-year-old girl, who at the end of the story manages to stay on the airplane after it has landed, long after all the other passengers have disembarked:

she lies spread out on her back across three seats in row number two, and as the sun sets outside, leaving her in such darkness that she can’t even see the palm of her hand, you follow her as she begins trying to remember what the palm of her hand looks like. This is the kind of atmosphere and reality I envision for the dancers, where they exist and move within this detached, almost digital space.

(HF)

This automated aspect of the characters in your text, as well as your description of how you and other dancers in your performance work are prompted by the text to move in this detached, “digital” space, point to your previous experience in 3D animation. As you told me in preparation for this conversation, after you quit locking, you turned to rendering movement—and, by extension, characters, objects, space—in digital animation. What did that shift from the physical and the choreographic, toward the virtual, produce for you? And how does that experience echo in your current work, in terms of your relationship to text, choreography, and space?

(AT)

One thing this shift produced for me was a whole new range of choreographic possibilities. 3D animation allows for the manipulation of the physical world: flattening round objects, making an ant bounce around a living room like a basketball, or having a person walk in circles endlessly in a boundless, gray space. This provided me with entirely new tools for thinking about objects, the body, and the spaces they occupy.

Another outcome of this shift was that I continued to work with movement, but now without moving my own body. Earlier, you asked how locking feels in the body, and perhaps it’s interesting to consider how it feels to do 3D animation. You might sense the pressure of the chair flattening your buttocks, a tingling or itching sensation in your neck, or the weight of your eyebrows hanging heavily above your eyes. While your body experiences these sensations, the digital body on the screen is jumping, twisting, and tumbling—going through an entirely different set of sensations. This creates a detachment between your physical self and the virtual movements you’re orchestrating.

When I returned to dancing after a five-year break, this sense of detachment lingered in my body. I think my work now reflects a blend of both worlds: imitating 3D avatars moving around in digital environments, while also portraying the experience of being a real person immersed in that virtual world.

(HF)

In addition to your solo performance at O—Overgaden, you are planning two other performances for the exhibition: one in which dancers perform different choreographies to the same music in separate rooms, and another, in which a teenager sits on a sofa singing a song in a very monotonous, expressionless manner. Both performances build their own relationship to a state of disengagement or separation, and point to how,

not unlike locking, your performances and work at large continuously move between two forces: connection and disconnection, movement and pause, attachment and detachment. Yet, you are also keenly interested in how these binaries are in fact entangled in your experience of the world today, a world so marked by pervasive connectivity and profound disconnection. So, to end with a big question, why is performance such an important medium, and condition, for you?

(AT)

What makes observing a disconnected or distant person compelling is the mystery of their inner world. When someone seems disengaged, it's because they're connected to something that isn't visible or accessible to others in the room. This disconnect turns their body into a surface for projection—a mirror reflecting different meanings depending on who's looking.

Performance is important to me because it allows me to explore and express this state of being. By using the body as material, performance transforms it into a medium through which I can share the feeling of disconnection with others. The word "share" is crucial here because that's exactly how I felt after presenting my first performance—like I had shared an experience with others. The audience wasn't just observing; they were actively participating. Their postures, gazes, and clothing mirrored mine—standing with expressionless faces, dressed in jeans, T-shirts, and sweatshirts, all enveloped by the melancholic melody coming from the speakers. We were a group of people, disconnected together.

Before I had this experience, I was seriously questioning whether I should remain in the art world. I had created works intended to evoke specific emotions in others, but found myself at my own openings, sipping beer in a corner, feeling none of those emotions—completely out of tune with what I came there to do. It was anticlimactic, to say the least. But when I started performing, I was able to immerse myself in the same emotional state as the work itself, directly engaging with the people who came to see it.

So, as you mentioned, it has always been about entanglement—about the interplay between connection and disconnection, and realizing that you can't portray one, without including the other.

STAGES

Nanna Friis

I

It starts with counting. A subtly disheartened, subtly buoyant note launch the body's movement and so, cycles of four or eight keep it going. Notes continue, somehow timbre-less but not at all devoid of mood. Occasionally there are long silences where thumping steps and arms are the only soundtrack. How small can a melody be without losing its emotion-injecting abilities. This body moves with slack and control. Ways that a sleeved arm or a trousered leg can resemble fabric architecture that make the limbs look like constructions.

The speaking-dancer-dancing-speaker is Aske Thiberg. It is his shoulders and knees and his voice in the room—for some reason, exactly the joints seem most conspicuous: the near-mechanical centers of bodily movement. They make these movements look equally autonomous and organic, something that could happen because a button was pushed in another room or something that comes from the specifically human condition of exquisite body control. Internal and transient like an emotion.

At some point people will stare at Aske Thiberg with expectant eyes, the mild and possibly frightening gaze of an audience—but this is a test. Counting starts over. Lines repeat. Feet reset their position. With shoes, without shoes, considering the sound of socked heel versus the sound of rubbery sole. Unapologetic theorizations on the conceptual outlines of rehearsal (and, indeed, theater) appear to be increasingly *en vogue* in some speculative art/thinking practices; but what takes place right now is plain rehearsal—it is not conceptual or theoretical, but actual. Refining intonation and sound volume and the trajectories of body parts like fine-tuning a sculpture. Polishing it. Countless repetitions of the anecdotal monologue.

The exhibition spaces have not been this empty for a long while, perhaps ever. Physically, nothing but the short suggestion of a stage occupies the room. One person's podium; it oozes. The artwork is practically alone in here; there is just one single body on this piece of non-majestic elevation interior. The big or small difference between being alone and being lonely. So much neutrality around the possible outline of severe loneliness: white walls, vacant eyes, the sound of machines, thoroughly rehearsed elbows. There has been plenty of time for this whole body to get talented.

And then language appears. With its inherent and quite ultimate ability to create human connection, it distorts what is allegedly empty and lonely. Words become thick, almost tangible in the room,

when they start pouring out of the speakers, when the sudden presence of a grandfather and some kisses and a bunch of literally interwoven people coats the whole situation with a warmer tint. The colorless geometry of the space and the automatized holster that the body so resembles are somehow softened, but alongside this softening, a disjuncting seems to take place. What is spoken sounds relational, some glimpses of love even, but what is seen looks isolated. A human with distance on his face.

When rehearsing is over and the show begins, this stage will be empty most of the day—and is an empty stage more expectation than disappointment? Did someone not yet come or did someone already finish? Self-sufficiency is a virtue.

II

Eventually, the wordless way of approaching someone can be electric. Noticing the vibration of a wrist, a jaw's sudden sharpness, that orb-like bone on top of a spine which often feels like the epicenter of neck beauty, and then noticing how such registrations benefit from the lack of language. Movements melt or stretch out in time, not necessarily because they are slow or hot, but when no one is speaking, eyes become more attentive. Two people may never really reach each other despite an ongoing physical proximity. Another form of solitude arises between two people because the fact is that they are not alone when they are with each other.

In a long room, two people could be together and they could not.

One dancer at one end, the other dancer at the other end. Between them, a semi-long hallway and the clear instruction that they are supposed to be apart. Each in their own T-shirt and stuff. They are falling and falling and getting up and getting up, knees almost collapse, thighs are strong. It is possible to listen to their bodies, how soles slide across floors with their little sneaker shrieks. How more than two arms are thumping into more than one torso, subtly clapping palms—all is doubled up. Two outfits, two independent heads, the ceaseless stream of thoughts blasting through most heads no matter if they are with another person or not. A possible tristesse embedded in the slim accompanying music; its light gray notes share some atmosphere with the tickle of seasonal change. Perhaps not downright hope, but that certain degree of expectation.

They are not meant for each other, these two dancers. Not in the unsuccessful-romance-understanding of the phrase, merely as a spatial and choreographic circumstance. Aske Thiberg has become a kind of director. Laying out the space, mediating his own solitary head or automatic body or paralyzed gaze to two unfamiliar others, who will eventually mediate it (mediate something) to potential groups of potential strangers. The spectrum of disconnection is wide,

the route of alienation is quite long. Perhaps no audience will come and see this. It will take place every day two weeks in a row. That could be a bore. Repetition is the backbone of rehearsal as well as defining most live shows—and is not repetition essentially a cornerstone of boredom? Is it boring or lovely to be on your own? Is it boring or lovely to do the same things over and over again? Is being with someone more repetitive than being alone?

The long room might be completely devoid of tension. Not any tension whatsoever. Sweating and breathing are indeed testimonies of physical activity, possibly even bordering some version of erotic, but the two trajectories of movement are parallel. Each dancer's investigation seems directed inwards rather than towards the other. Nothing will ignite in the space they share, probably because the space they do not share is so large. So much space we do not share in these wealthy regions of loneliness. Imagine, a whole gallery to be almost yourself in, almost always.

All of this nothing to look at while glimpsing a shoulder blade behind magenta jersey and then not being able to stop thinking about shoulder blades, until the multitude of uninhabited square meters fill up the gaze again.

III

There is no person on the three-person sofa. Then there is one person. Never the three it can fit. One teenage face staring at nothing with remarkable skill, one pair of teenage feet rooted on an attention-seeking stone floor and they somehow look like guests, these feet. Even the slightest discomfort is usually detectable in a person's stature, and isn't being a guest always a bit uncomfortable no matter how welcome you are. Perhaps a guest and a teenager share some mandatory anxiety.

In this quite scenic space is nothing but four columns and light air and the sofa, dirty and secretive. Cream-colored pleather and padded in the senior citizen way, this piece of furniture cradles the inactivity of its shifting inhabitants. Three teenagers take turns being the main character. They are solo in rotation, never the trio that the sofa could facilitate. One voice at a time because, yes, they are supposed to sing. Few things are more intimate than singing alone in front of an audience; some things are, of course, but it is seriously few. When a voice is used for singing instead of talking, it somehow detaches itself from the throat and the personality and becomes its own trembling creature, always kind of exposed no matter the singing skills. The space between listening audience and singing teen will be drenched when it is showtime; nothing contaminates like other people's nerves. To comfort can actually feel compulsive. Preparing for the show is singing the same line over and over, *someone like you someone like you someone like you someone like you*, trying out the acoustics while placing the body in various positions.

Aske Thiberg as a considerate puppeteer. Try with the arms on the backrest, try sitting in front of the couch, try lying behind the couch, just do something else if you find it awkward. Keep emptying your gaze.

A passivity kicks in. When looking at someone not doing anything, the act of looking becomes saturated, almost intrusive. This stoner moment is private, singing is private, lying down is somehow private. Standing people are usually accessible, it is the public position, but to lie down is a matter of choosing who to lie down with. Or who not to allow into the realm of lying down. All the things that could happen in this couch, yet are not happening because the sitter is so thoroughly deactivated and so alone. The numbed screen-eyes make it difficult to detect whether this situation is pleasant or not. Could there even be a general enigma attached to the teenage face? What does he want? Is she full of contempt or longing? Does singing out loud make them happy or embarrassed?

Unhinged—in the very literal disconnected sense, not the rowdy one—is the isolation of teenagers in their rooms. Withdrawing to a bed or a couch or some other soft spot of one's own to keep people/chores/expectations/reality at bay. This void of personal space, closed doors, online presence, perhaps a slight relational absence. And then a full audience suddenly looks at this imagined isolation. The lone privacy becomes public and staged, and what happens to the loneliness then.

You cannot fake being alone, but you can rehearse it.



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egen automatisk krop til disse to fremmede andre, som til sidst vil formidle det (/formidle noget) til potentielle grupper af potentielle fremmede. Spektret af frakoblinger er bredt, fremmedgørelsens rute er her show, det finder sted hver dag i to uger i træk. Det kunne sagtens blive kedeligt. Repetition er ryggraden i ethvert prøveforløb såvel som i de fleste liveoprædener, og er repetition ikke essensen af kedsomhed. Et det kedeligt eller dejligt at være alene. Et det kedeligt eller dejligt at gøre de samme ting igen og igen. Et det mere repetitivt at være sammen med nogen end at være alene.

Det lange rum kunne godt være fuldstændig blottet for spænding. Ingen spændingsforhold overhovedt, selvom sved og åndedrag bestemt er et vidnesbyrd slags erotik, men de to bevægelsesbaner er parallelle. Hver dansers undersøgelse retter sig tilsyneladende indad snarere end at være vendt mod den anden, intet vil slå gnister i det rum, de deler, sandsynligvis fordi rummet, de ikke deler, er så stort. Så meget plads, vi ikke deler i disse velhavende ensomhedsregioner, bare forestil dig: Et helt udstillingssted til at være så godt som alene i, så godt som altid.

Alt dette ingenting at kigge på, mens man får øje på et skulderblad bag magentafarvet jersey og derefter ikke kan lade være med at tænke på skulderblade, indtil mængden af ubeboede kvadratmeter igen fylder blipper.

III

Der er ingen person i trepersonerssofaen. Så er der én person. Aldrig de tre, den har plads til. Et scenegængersigt stritter på ingenting med bemærkelsesværdig dygtighed, et par scenegæfodder slår rod i et opmærksomhedskrævende stengulv, og de ligner på en eller anden måde gæster, disse fødder. Selv det mindste ubehag er normalt påviseligt forbundet med en smule ubehag at være gæst, uanset hvor velkommen man er. Måske deles gæsten og scenegæren om noget obligatorisk angst.

I det her temmelig sceniske rum er der intet andet end fire søjler og lys og luft og sofaen, snarvt og hjemmelighedsfuld. Cremefarvet kunstlæder polstre på pensionistmåden, dette møbel omfavner den inaktivitet, der har grebet dens brugere. Tre scenegære skiftes til at være hovedpersonen, de er solo i rotation, men aldrig den trio, som sofaen kunne facilitere. En stemme ad gangen, fordi ja, de skal synge. På ting er mere intime end at synge alene foran et publikum, selvfølgelig er der visse ting, men det er virkelig få. Når en stemme bruges til at synge i stedet for at tale, løstvirer den sig på en måde fra halsen og personligheden og bliver sit eget dirrende væsen, altid lidt blottet uanset sangfærdigheden. Nummeret mellem lyttende publikum og syngende scenager vil være gennemvædet, når prøverne er færdige, og showtime er over dem, intet smitter som andres nerver.

At opnuvret kan faktisk føles som en tvangshandling. Forberedelsen til showet er at synge den samme linje igen og igen, someone like you someone like you someone like you someone like you, afprøve akustikken, placere kroppen i skiftende positioner. Åske Thiberg som en slags betænkksom dukkefører. Prøv med armene på ryglænet, prøv at sidde foran sofaen, prøv at ligge bag sofaen, gør bare noget andet, hvis det føles akavet. Bliv ved med at tømme dit blik.

Frakoblet – i den helt bogstavelige forstand – er scenegærens isolation på sit værelse. At trække sig tilbage til en seng eller en sofa eller et andet blødt punkt, der er ens eget, for at holde folk/opgaver/forventninger/virkelighed på afstand. Dette vakuum af privatliv, lukkede døre, onlinenærverer, måske en analyse relationelt travert. Og så kigger et helt publikum pludselig på denne forestillede isolation. Den ensomt private bliver offentlig og iscenesat, og hvad sker der så med ensomheden.

Man kan ikke fake ensomhed, men man kan øve det.

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STADIER

Nanna Friis

I

Det begynder med optællinger. En subtil modløs, subtil habefuld tone igangsætter en krops bevægelser, og taktcyklusser af fire eller otte holder dem derefter i gang. Tonerne fortsætter, på en måde klangløs, men slet ikke uden stemning. Fra tid til anden lange pauser, hvor dumpc trin og arme er det eneste lydspor. Hvor lille kan en melodi være uden at miste sin evne til at være følelsesindsprøjtning? Den her krop bevæger sig med tilbagefærdighed og kontrol. Måder, en ærmeklædt arm eller et buksklædt ben kan minde om en slags arkitektur af stof, få lemmernes til at ligne bygningskonstruktioner.

Med tiden kan den ordløse måde at nærme sig nogen på blive elektrisk. At bemærke vibrationerne i et håndled, en kæbes pludselige skarphed, den kugleliggende knogle øverst på en rygsgøjle, der ofte føles som et epicenter for nakkers skønhed – og derefter bemærke, hvordan sådanne registratorer skærpes af manglen på sprog. Bevægelser smelter eller strækkes ud i tid, ikke nødvendigvis fordi de er langsomme eller attraktive, men når ingen taler, bliver øjnene mere opmærksomme. To mennesker kommer måske aldrig rigtig til at nå hinanden på trods af en vedvarende fysisk nærhed. En anden form for ensomhed opstår mellem to mennesker, fordi faktum er, at de jo ikke er alene, når de er sammen med hinanden.

I et langt rum kan to mennesker være sammen, og de kan lade være.

En danser i den ene ende, den anden danser i den anden ende. Imellem dem er en smilang gang og en klar instruks om, at de skal være adskilt. Hver med sin egen t-shirt på og det der. De falder og falder og rjuser sig op og rjuser sig op, knæ kollapser næsten, lærene er stærke. Det er muligt at lytte til deres kroppe, hvordan sæler glider hen over gulve med deres små sneaker-skridt. Hvordan mere end to arme dunker ind i mere end en torso, tavs klappende håndflader, alt er fordbløt. To outflits, to uafhængige hoveder, igennem de fleste hoveder, uanset om de er sammen med en anden person eller ej. En mulig tristesse indlæret i den spinkle musik, der akkompagnerer scenen, dens lysegrå toner deler noget stemning med det kildrende ved årstidsskift. Måske ikke ligefrem hab, men den der grad af forventning.

De er ikke skabt for hinanden, de to dansere. Ikke i en mislykket-romance-fortsættelse af udtrykket, blot som en rumlig og korogoratsk omstændighed. Aske Thiberg er blevet en slags instruktør. Den, der arrangerer rummet, formidler sit eget ensomme hoved eller paralyserede blik eller sin

at arbejdet med bevægelse kunne foregå, uden at jeg bevægede min egen krop. Tidligere spurgte du, hvordan locking føles i kroppen, og måske er det interessant at tilføje, hvordan det føles at lave 3D-animationer. Man kan mærke, at trykket fra stolen flader balderne ud, en prtkkende eller kløende fornemmelse i nakken, eller vægen af ens øjenbryn, der hænger tungt over ens øjne. Imens kroppen mærker dette, mærker den digitale krop en helt anden slags fornemmelse, når den hopper, snor sig og tumler rundt på skærmen. Det skaber en adskillelse mellem dit fysiske selv og de virtuelle bevægelser, du orkesstrerer. Da jeg vendte tilbage til dansen efter fem års pause, havde jeg stadig en følelse af at være afkoblet fra min krop. Jeg tror, mit nuværende arbejde reflekterer begge verdener – det imiterer 3D-avatare, der bevæger sig rundt i digitale miljøer, og portrætter samtidig opfølelsen af at være et rigtigt menneske i den virtuelle verden.

(HF)

Ud over din egen soloptræffelse på Ø – Overgaden plantægger du to andre performances i løbet af udstillingsperioden: En, hvor to dansere udfører forskellige korogorater til den samme musik i separate rum, og en anden, hvor en teenager sidder i en sofa og synger sange på en meget monoton, udtryksløs måde. Begge performances beskæftiger sig på hver deres måde med tilstanden af frakobling og adskillelse og demonstretter på den måde, hvordan din praksis kontinuerligt bevæger sig mellem de her to kræfter: forbindelse og frakobling, bevægelse og pause, tilknytning og løsrivelse. Men du virker også interesseret i, hvordan de binære modsætninger faktisk vikler sig ind i din verdensopfattelse i en tid, der er så præget af heftig forbindelse og ekstrem frakobling. Så for at slutte med et stort spørgsmål: Hvorfor er performance så vigtigt et medium (og så vigtig en tilstand) for dig?

(AT)

Det, der gør det fascinerende at observere en afkøbt eller fjern person, er mysteriet om deres indre verden. Når nogen lader til at være væk fra virkeligheden, er det, fordi de er forbundet til noget, der ikke er synligt eller tilgængeligt for andre i rummet. Denne frakobling gør deres krop til en slags overflade, man kan projicere på – et spejl, der reflekterer forskellige betydninger, afhængigt af hvem der kigger. Performance er vigtigt for mig, fordi den giver mig mulighed for at udforske og udtrykke den tilstand. Når kroppen bruges som materiale, gør performance den til et medium, hvorigennem jeg kan dele følelsen af frakobling med andre. Ordet "dele" er afgørende her, fordi det var præcis sådan, jeg havde det, efter at jeg havde lavet min første performance – som om jeg havde delt en oplevelse med andre. Publikum observerede ikke bare; de deltog aktivt. Deres kropsholdninger, blikke og løj spjlede mit, de stod også med udtryksløse ansigter, klædt i jeans, t-shirts, sweatshirts, alle indhyllt i den melanolske melodi fra højttalerne. Vi var en gruppe mennesker, der var frakoblet sammen.

Før den oplevelse var jeg alvorligt i tvivl om, hvorvidt jeg skulle blive i kunstverdenen. Jeg havde lavet værker, der skulle fremkalde bestemte følelser i andre, men endte altid med at stå og nippe til en øl i et hjørne til ferniseringerne, uden selv at føle nogen af de her følelser – helt ude af trit med det, jeg kom for at gøre. Det var mildt sagt et antiklimaks. Men da jeg begyndte at performe, kunne jeg fordybe mig i den samme følelsesmæssige tilstand som værket selv og engagere mig direkte med de mennesker, der kom for at se det. Så som du nævnte, har det altid handlet om sammenhæftning – om samspillet mellem forbindelse og frakobling og erkendelsen af, at man ikke kan skildre det ene uden at inkludere det andet.

På et tidspunkt vil folk betragte Aske Thiberg med forventningsfulde øjne, det milde, muligvis skræmmende blik fra et publikum, men dette er en test. Optællingen starter forfra. Sætninger gøres. Fødderne nulstiller deres position. Med sko, uden sko, overfølelse omkring lyden af en strømpehæl versus lyden af en gummiagtig sål. Uforbeholden teorisering over de konceptuelle rammer for prøven (og teater i det hele taget) som spekulation synes at komme stadig mere på mode i visse spekulative kunst-/teoripraksisser, men det, der finder sted lige nu, er slet og ret en prøve, det er hverken konceptuel eller teoretisk, det er bogstaveligt. Intonation og lydstyrke og kropsdelenes bevægelser forfines, som man andægtigt færdiggør en skulptur. Polerer den. Utallige gentagelser af den anekdotiske monolog. Udstillingsrummene har ikke været så tomme i lang tid, måske aldrig. Helt fysisk er der intet andet end den have anvendning af en scene i rummet. En enkelt persons podium, der osrer den af. Kunstværket er praktisk talt alene herinde, der er kun en krop på dette ikke-majestætiske stykke forhøjet intetør. Den store eller lille forskel mellem at være alene og at være ensom. Så meget neutralt omkring den mulighed for at heftig ensomhed: Hvide vægge, tomme øjne, en lyd af maskiner, grunddigt øvede albuer, hele denne krop har haft masser af tid til selv at blive talenfuld. Og så dukker sproget op. Med sin iboende og ret ultimative evne til at skabe mellemmenneskelig forbindelse styrer dette sprog fornemmelsen af det tomme og ensomme. Ordene bliver tykke,

DET HAR ALTID HANDLET OM SAMMEN- FILTRING

EN SAMTALE MELLE

ASKE THIBERG OG HENDRIK FOLKERTS

Du har en lang historie med locking, en dansstil, som Don Campbell opfandt i funk-musikkens storhedsstid, og som består af en række grundbevægelser, der lige så meget er defineret af pauser (hvor "låsningen" faktisk sker), som den bygges på flydende bevægelser og kontinuitet. Du begyndte til locking som barn og blev ved indtil teenagerårene – og i dag fortsætter det med at påvirke din kunstneriske praksis. Kan du beskrive, måske gennem en bevægelsesskavens, hvordan locking føles i din krop?

(Hendrik Folkerts)

(Aske Thiberg)

Som du siger, består locking af en håndfuld grundtrin såsom Lock, Twirl, Scooby doo, Scoobor, Stop & go, W, Pace, Point, Whichaway osv. Disse trin er brude og energiske og slutter ofte i et lidt hårdt klask, klap eller en stampe – det skaber en lyd og fremhæver skiftet, når kroppen går fra fuld bevægelse til komplet stilstand. Tidligere i år deltog jeg i en workshop med P-Lock, en af de mest anerkendte locking-dansere, som kaldte den "en overraskelsessdans", og det er netop, når man kender alle grundbevægelserne, at overraskelseselementet bliver muligt. For eksempel kan man starte med at have en Scoobor på den første takt, træde ud til venstre side med venstre ben, mens man drejer i håndledene og strækker hænderne ud til hver side. Mens publikum så forventer, fra nakkens, som skal være afslappet, så man hurtigt holder stillingen, spænder hele kroppen op bortset fra nakken, som skal være afslappet, så man hurtigt kan dreje hovedet mod publikum. Når man smiler til publikum, registreres en let følelseshed i højre lår, fordi vægten hviler på det bøjede højreben, men den her følelseshed forsvinder hurtigt, når man drejer hovedet fremad igen og skifter vægten over til venstre ben og fortsætter med de sidste slag i Scoobor-takten. Endelig kan man mærke en skarp, stikkende fornemmelse i håndfladerne, når de mødes i et højt klap bag lænden. Som locker arbejder du konstant på tæerne. Sammenlignet med mange andre street dance-stilarter er locking ikke en social dans, men en performance, der beregnet til den store scene. Hvordan har locking påvirket din tilgang til performance? Mere specifikt forholdet til din egen krop som medium for en kunstnerisk proces og din interesse for at udforske bevægelser?

(HF)

Ja, det er rigtig, at de tæster, du bruger som en slags "baggrund" i dine performances, også den solo-performance, du forbereder til udstillingen, skaber en vis rytme i rummet. De har også en ret specifik narrativ kvalitet, der blander hverdagsdetaljer med en underspillet følelse af absurditet, grænsende til det surrealistiske. Hvilken rolle spiller narrativer i dine tekster – også i samspil med selve performance?

(HF)

af tæsterne som nye, personlige grundtrin. Formet af locking – fæst mig til at opfatte recitationen og min tænkning omkring performancearbejdet – ikke er interesseret i kontrasten. I stedet har processen til form og rytme. Jeg er ved at indse, at jeg måske slet sammen. Ordene mister deres betydning og omdannes mellem krop og tal. Spørg begynder tingene at smelte også fra Le Røys værk. Frem for at skabe en kontrast har over min egen performance, jo mere afviget den der udtrykker form og abstraktion. Men jo mere jeg form mellem at være forelæser og en slags væsen, bevægelser frem og tilbage er det, som om han skifter og danser, og fortsætter så sin historie. I de her stopper Le Roy sin tale, træder ned fra talerstolen danser i slutningen af trædverne. Fra tid til anden liv, beskriver overgangen fra at være forsker til at blive han fra en talerstol i en foredragssal fortæller om sit af Xavier Le Roy kaldet *Product of Circumstance*, hvor arstænd mellem krop og sprog, inspireret af et værk og mekanisk. Den opfindelige ide var at skabe en mens kroppen laver locking-bevægelser, reprecender enkelt performer (mig selv), der fortæller historien, andet sted. Performance kommer til at bestå af en have dem uden at tænke, selv når mine tanker er et mig, ligesom at gå eller spise med en gaffel. Jeg kan jeg var barn og ung, er de her trin blevet intuitive for fordi jeg har øvet mig på locking i næsten ti år, mens jeg er selvfølgelig ikke på Campbells niveau, men indarbejdet i min soloperformance på O – Overgaden, og dette aspekt af locking var noget, jeg gerne ville optræde med den form for præcision og kontinuitet.

Der er noget maskinelt ved at blive en person, der kan hoften til vinklen på hans pegfinger, når han fryser. trin, hver detalje er perfekt udført, fra groover i hans lægger al sin energi og personlighed i hvert eneste bevægelse, kan man se, at han gør netop det. Han er hvilket som helst tidspunkt og nærstuderer hans af ham, der danser, og så sætter videoen på pause på folk med en enkelt bevægelse. Hvis man ser videoer som locker skal man kunne slå benene væk under igen og igen. Don Campbell har cngang udalt, at og ben svinger, snurter, klapper den samme rytme til lydene, der kommer fra ens egen krop, når arme eller et soveværelse, væk fra den store scene, lytte performancearbejde. At være alene i et dansestudie perfektionering. Og det er den her situation, fordi de samme trin gentages som en slags

(HF)

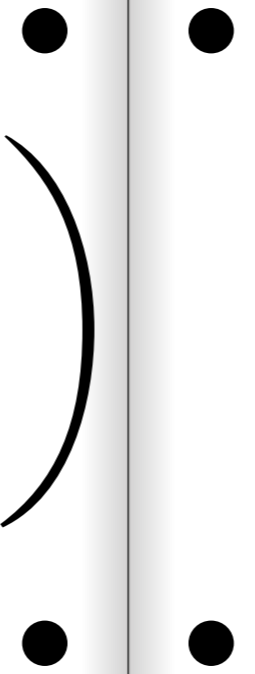
Karakterernes automatiserede aspekt og din beskrivelse af, hvordan du og andre dansere i dine performances instrueres i at bevæge sig i dette løstevne, "digitale" rum, peget på din erfaring med 3D-animation. Som du fortalte mig i forbindelse til denne samtale, begyndte du, efter at du var stoppet med locking, at animere bevægelser, karakterer, objekter og rum. Hvad gjorde dette skift fra det fysiske og koreografiske til det virtuelle ved dit arbejde? Og hvordan afspejler den erfaring sig i din nuværende arbejde i forhold til tekst, koreografi og rum?

(AT)

Nøget, som dette skift medførte, var et helt nyt spektrum af koreografiske muligheder. 3D-animation giver mulighed for manipulation af den fysiske verden. Man kan gøre runde objekter flade, få en myre til at hoppe rundt i en stue som en basketball, få en person til at gå rundt og rundt i cirkler i et grænseløst, gråt rum. Det gav mig helt nye værktøjer til at tænke objekter og kroppe på, og de rum, begge dele optager. En anden konsekvens var,

(AT)

Tæsterne udspringer af noget hverdagsligt, de foregår i velkendte omgivelser som en stue eller et supermarked, med velkendte genstande og karakterer:



OVERGADEN

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O – OVERGADEN

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Aske Thiberg

Shutting Out the Sun

Udstillingsperiode: 31.08.2024 – 15.10.2024

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Det er en stor fornøjelse at introducere denne publikation, der udkommer i forbindelse med Aske Thibergs soloudstilling *Shutting Out the Sun* på O – Overgaden. Siden 2021 har O – Overgaden med genrøs støtte fra Augustinus Fonden produceret en publikationsstrække, der udgives i forbindelse med kunsthallens soloudstillinger. Målsætningen med denne serie er at mangfoldiggøre samtalerne under og efter udstillingerne og åbne op for, at nyt materiale kan udspringe heraf.

I dette tilfælde har kurator og udstillingschef på Moderna Museet i Stockholm Hendrik Folkerts under titlen *Det har altid handlet om sammenfletning* faciliteret en samtale med Aske Thiberg, der udforsker kunstnerens udstilling og praksis. Parallelt har O – Overgadens in-house-redaktør Nanna Friis, som også er freelance kunstkritiker, dertil bidraget med essayet *Stadier*. En stor og varm takke hele O – Overgadens team for den store indsats i forbindelse med udstillingen, og naturligvis også fanfare, vores grafiske designere, for deres dedikerede arbejde på denne publikation. Sids, men ikke mindst, en særlig tak til Aske for at dele sit materiale – fra koncept til udvalgte samtaler – med os alle sammen, både gennem udstillingen og denne publikation.

Gennem daglige liveperformances fokuserer Aske Thibergs første store soloudstilling på hans arbejde med dans og koreografi.

En solodanser på en platform: højspændte, mekaniske bevægelser, men med et næsten dødt ansigtsudtryk: Thiberg portrætterer vores samtidige kroppe som stadig mere robotagtige og cyborg-lignende – hvor grænserne mellem virkelighed og virtuelt liv udviskes,

idet vi delvist lever i den digitale verden, afhængige af teknologiske enheder eller kropbårne computere. Thiberg peger herved på en social distance eller melankoli; tænk bare på natens doomscrolling på sociale medier eller den ensomme gamert, der lukker solen ude, som titlen *Shutting Out the Sun* siger.

Udstillingen, der udfolder sig over tid, består af tre forskellige livekoreografier, som hver vises i to uger. Mens den første performance er centreret omkring Thiberg selv, og den anden viser to professionelle dansere i bevægelse, iscenesætter sidste del en sidende sceneger, der synger. Hver koreografi, som alle er skabt særligt til denne udstilling, er synkroniseret til den samme temasang, en kort melodi, som igen og igen fylder de rum, der stort set er tømt for alt undtagen performerens kroppe.

Ligesom Thibergs egen performance udgår fra 'locking' – en særlig showdans, som han har praktiseret siden barndommen – og monotont fortalte historier, så anvendes i alle udstillingens tre dele en minimalistisk, maskinel gestik frem for et følelsesladet, personligt udtryk. I alle tre performances igangsættes koreografien af det gentagne soundtrack, hvilket gør det tvivlsomt, om det er den optædende, der styrer den kropslige rytme, eller om den digitale melodi faktisk styrer performerens kroppe som sine automatiserede avatarer.

Rhea Dall

Leder og chefkurator på O – Overgaden,

september 2024

Aske Thiberg (f. 1994, SE) er billedkunstner med en MFA fra Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi (2023), bosat i København. Thiberg har udstillet samt performeret på institutioner som Kunsthal Charlottenborg, København (2023), Den Frie Udstillingsbygning, København (2022) og Malmö Kunstmuseum (2022).

