staging the
invisible elephant
that remains
overlooked
reflective documentation

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Staging the Invisible Elephant that Remains Overlooked
Reflective Documentation

Part of the thesis project “Staging the Invisible Elephant that Remains Overlooked“
submitted by PhD candidate Verena Miedl-Faißt

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Declaration of good scientific practice

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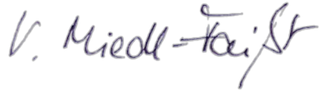
Thesis title: Staging the Invisible Elephant that Remains Overlooked

I hereby declare, that I have independently written/produced all parts of my reflective documentation of my thesis in accordance with the principles of good scientific practice and have not used any sources and aids other than those indicated, that this reflective documentation has not yet been submitted in any form for evaluation, neither in Austria nor abroad, and that this version is identical to the online submitted and assessed version.

Date 27 January 2026

Signature 

This is for Florian. There is no thought we have not shared.

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Abstract

Im Rahmen meines PhD-in-Art-Projekts “Staging the Invisible Elephant that Remains Overlooked” erkunde ich die Möglichkeiten kollaborativen und ko-kreativen Arbeitens mit Kindern als gleichberechtigten Partner*innen – aus meinen Perspektiven als Künstlerin, Workshopleiterin, Lehrerin, Tante, neuerdings Mutter und erwachsener Freundin. Im Zentrum stehen die Schnittstellen, Spannungen und Synergien zwischen künstlerischer Forschung und pädagogischer Praxis.

Die Arbeit erstreckt sich über den Zeitraum 2017–2025 als offener, reflexiver Prozess, der auf projektbasierter künstlerischer Praxis, dialogischen Begegnungen und reflexivem Schreiben beruht. Ergänzend dienen Leseerfahrungen in unterschiedlichen Literatur- und Wissenschaftsgebieten als Resonanzräume, in denen sich Erkenntnisse verdichten. Wiederkehrende Themen sind das Zusammenspiel von Struktur und Freiheit; Fragen geteilter Autor*innenschaft, Verantwortung, Repräsentation und Ethik in ko-kreativer Arbeit mit Kindern in unterschiedlichen Kontexten; sowie die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen künstlerischer Forschung „auf Augenhöhe“ im schulischen Zusammenhang – insbesondere im Umgang mit pädagogischen Herausforderungen, die durch digitale Technologien, soziale Medien und künstliche Intelligenz geprägt sind.

Im Kontext von artistic research verstehe ich Ambiguität, Widersprüchlichkeit und Subjektivität als methodische Stärken. Ich rücke Transparenz, Verletzlichkeit und das transformative Potenzial von Missverständnissen in den Vordergrund und entwickle Vorschläge dafür, wie wir uns in einer komplexen Welt neu zueinander in Beziehung setzen und gefährdete Demokratien stärken können.

In the scope of my PhD-in-Art project “Staging the Invisible Elephant that Remains Overlooked”, I investigate collaborative and co-creative work with children as equal partners – from my perspectives as an artist, workshop leader, teacher, aunt, recent mother, and adult friend. The intersections, tensions, and synergies between artistic research and pedagogical practice form the core of my research.

Spanning 2017–2025 the work unfolds as an open, reflective process grounded in project-based artistic practice, dialogical encounters, and reflective writing. Additionally, reading experiences in different literary and scientific fields serve as resonant spaces in which insights take shape and intensify. Recurring themes include the interplay of structure and freedom; the negotiation of shared authorship, responsibility, representation and ethics in co-creative work with children across different contexts; and the possibilities and limitations of conducting artistic research “at eye level” within school environments. I also examine the potentials that artistic approaches offer in addressing contemporary pedagogical challenges related to digital technologies, social media, and artificial intelligence.

In accordance with the principles of artistic research, I understand ambiguity, contradiction, and subjectivity as methodological strengths. I foreground transparency, vulnerability, and the transformative potential of misunderstanding, and I propose ways in which we might relate to one another differently in a complex world and strengthen democracies at risk.

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Ohara Donshu
Blind Men Appraising an Elephant
1800–1850
(Brooklyn Museum)

Before We Begin

My artistic research explores collaborative and co-creative work with children as equal partners – through the lens of an artist, workshop leader, teacher in various school contexts, aunt, (recent) mother, and adult friend. The intersections, synergies, and tensions between artistic research and pedagogical practice form the core of my thesis.

The framework of my PhD in Art (2017–2025) is an open-ended, reflective space for my questions, aims, struggles, and longings. The three-part reflective documentation offers different approaches to sharing my findings:

Book 1 presents a reflective account in the form of a chronological selection of projects and works from 2017 to 2025, accompanied by documentary, explanatory, contextualizing, questioning – and at times questionable – textual work.

Book 2 is a collection of dialogues I conducted with colleagues from the ZOOM Children's Museum on artistically working with, relating to, and being a child. These interviews serve both as manifestations of and reflections on my artistic research.

Book 3 is a reader comprising partly pre-published texts I produced in the scope of or in relation to my PhD studies.

Each book is preceded by a "Field Guide" explaining and summarizing its respective structure and approach.

There are recurring questions and dynamics that have emerged throughout the research: the interplay between artistic motivation, pedagogical intention, and personal longing; questions of artistic form and quality, structure and freedom; questions of authorship, responsibility, and ethics in co-creative work with children; and the potential – as well as the limitations – of such practices in institutional and public school contexts. In light of recent developments and experiences, I also elaborate on how my approach can offer ways of addressing the challenges posed by digital technologies, social media, and artificial intelligence in pedagogical settings.

In addressing these matters, I clarify my position and articulate my contributions to the intersecting fields of artistic research, pedagogy, and (participatory) art.

First and foremost, I make a disclaimer: this is artistic research, concerned with matters that elude the grasp of hard science. The invisible elephants live between the lines. There is no single research question or hypothesis to be tested, no clear-cut findings. The reason to go on is sometimes more longing than logic. Insights take unusual shapes. Misunderstanding must be accepted – and even transformed – into a special kind of force. Frayed and blurry edges offer something to hold on to. Objectivity is impossible; radical subjectivity is an asset. Love is not a bias, but a superpower.

Conventional scientific methodologies are shaped by clearly defined rules and criteria aimed at ensuring validity and reliability. I choose to break many of them – deliberately and with care. Rather than providing verifiable facts, I seek to remain present with ambiguity, to work with the uncertain, the unresolved, the contradictory – those aspects of experience and knowledge that are often excluded from more rigid epistemological frameworks. I can follow the imaginative, sometimes unruly ideas of children; we trace

creative threads that, in other contexts, might be dismissed as silly, boring, outrageous, or even monstrous. In doing so, I hope to offer propositions that would otherwise be inaccessible – on how to relate with and within a complex and endangered world, and thereby massage the fascia of resilient democracies – and to enrich both pedagogical and artistic contexts.

I am aware of at least some of the concomitant pitfalls and intend to face them as well as I can. Most importantly, I strive to be as transparent as possible in my reflections, finding ways to share my findings instead of withdrawing into a private language. Doing so implies a high level of personal exposure, risk, and vulnerability – though I try to be careful and discreet, not only for myself but also for collaborators and others close to me. I hope neither I nor they will have too many regrets.

Moreover, I recognize that such exposure may also cause discomfort for the reader. Still, I ask you to attune yourself to this experiment. You can trust in my sincerity – but not in my objectivity. I may change my mind without devaluing what I thought before. I need you to switch on your mesopic vision, read between the lines, trust misunderstandings if they prove meaningful, mistrust overly clear statements, and take unguided glimpses of thought seriously – if they offer a thread you can follow. But always remain conscious of where we're at.

The title "Staging the Invisible Elephant that Remains Overlooked" may still require some clarification. At the beginning of my project, I used the term "white elephant." That may have been more accurate, because what I am talking about is not always invisible – but it certainly isn't simply "white" (if at all, then only in the additive sense of mixed color stimuli). The common idiom refers to something clearly perceivable by everyone that no one dares to address. My elephant herds, I believe, are similar – but less obvious, more reclusive.

Scientific standards would probably demand pinning them down like an old-school entomologist would do with a butterfly. But I've taken the liberty of watching them alive – like Jean-Henri Fabre, the first behavioral entomologist, did with the insects in his Harmas. Behavioral science for invisible elephants. Perhaps much of artistic research could be described this way. So this may not yet say much about what I am actually working on, what I deem important enough to be staged worthily.

In the following reflective documentation, I try to be as precise as possible, seeking words for my aims, methods, and questionable/question-worthy findings.

But I must acknowledge that I am like one of the blind monks asked to describe an elephant they have never been able to see. One grasps the tail and says, "Sure enough, an elephant is like a snake!" Another touches its side: "No, it's like a wall." A third, feeling the foot: "No question! It's a tree trunk."

What I can aim at is to embody as many assiduous monks as possible – understanding as much of the elephant as I can, while being aware that most of it will inevitably remain overlooked.

Jean-Henri Fabre

Seemingly unlikely, the entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre is an important reference for me – although you won't find many literal quotes from him in the following thesis. In my BA thesis, however, I proposed Fabre as the first artistic researcher avant la lettre. (cf. Miedl-Faißt 2020) His courage to focus on what was, at the time, considered an unattractive research subject – so-called "ugly critters" – with attention, love, and poetic force did not bring him immediate success or recognition. But in the long run, he became known as the founder of behavioral science. He observed his insects alive, tried to understand their behavior, imagine their motives, empathize with the absolute 'other' – while being conscious of the impossibility of doing so and, perhaps most importantly, find language for what he saw.

My work with children is, of course, not comparable to that of an entomologist – kids are not bugs. But that caring and tender way of relating to the world, and of sharing that relation with others, is something I find deeply inspiring. Especially within pedagogical contexts, it offers profound insight. So I'm crawling through my artistic Harmas together with my young co-creators, trying to share their perspectives, join their excitement about what can be discovered and cared for, what is often overlooked – and collaboratively develop forms and language to once again relate back to the world.

Manifesto of Artistic Research

Within artistic and academic contexts shaped by competitive capitalism and patriarchal dogmas, I have found some breathable space in the contested yet still relatively open field of artistic research. I strongly relate to voices such as those in the Manifesto of Artistic Research by Silvia Henke, Dieter Mersch, Nicolaj van der Meulen, Thomas Strässle, and Jörg Wiesel, who argue for a distinct mode of artistic thinking:

"In opposition to causal verification, to deduction or generalization, it behaves in a tangible, touching way towards its objects. It accords and considers, not to ambush these objects but to acknowledge and accept them, and thus to show their incomparability and vulnerability, and to show what remains unsatisfied by art." (Henke et al., 2020: 62).

Serendipitous Relations

Anne Dufourmantelle

"Gentleness shares with childhood a kind of natural community but also a power. It is the secret lining, or where the imaginary joins the real in a space that contains its own secret, making us feel an astonishment from which we can never entirely return." (Dufourmantelle, 2018: 3)

William Kentridge

If the motives, methods, and approaches are different, then of course the findings and insights will take different shapes as well.

Explaining the approach of "The Centre for the Less Good Idea" – founded by William Kentridge and Bronwyn Lace in Johannesburg – Kentridge himself puts it this way:

"The decisive moment in the art history of the twentieth century is the point at which collage — that natural technique of the studio and the very essence of artistic practice — comes to the fore. Suddenly, collage is no longer a hidden technique (one cannot trace how Caspar David Friedrich painted his tree), but becomes central. The audience is now invited to understand collage not as a mere artistic technique, but as a kind of truth: as an acknowledgment that we make sense of the world by constructing it out of different fragments; and that making sense of the world is something we do — something we are capable of — rather than something that simply happens to us as the world presents itself." (Kentridge, 2018: 28, translated from German by the author.)

My focus here is less on collage as an art historical phenomenon, and more on what Kentridge says about our way of 'making sense of the world'. In my own words: misunderstanding something means understanding something else.

Please Follow Me

This first part of my reflective documentation chronologically showcases the practice-based projects I realized within the scope of my PhD in Art Studies. The reflective text was written retrospectively in 2025 and traces an Ariadne's thread of questions alongside the development of my research.

Beginning with a **Prologue** rooted in the mid-1990s, I attempt to weave my own childhood experiences into these reflections, alongside the artistic path that has since led to my current questions.

The **Videoprojects 2017-2018** were a series of works I realized as a guest artist at several public schools in Vienna, in co-creation with school classes and in close collaboration with their teachers and artist colleagues.

Nirual refers to the years since around 2020, with a main focus on the early Covid period. My dear nephew (born in December 2013) and I embarked on a very close and intense artistic journey, made possible mostly through video calls, as we live far apart.

Between 2020 and 2022, I participated in **The Octopus Programme** – an international, guided research-based educational programme. The experiences and encounters I was gifted with in that context inspired, encouraged, and challenged my work.

In 2022, I formally entered the school system and began working as an art teacher at a public grammar school in an affluent Viennese suburb. The chapter **Grammar School** reflects on my attempts to transfer my understandings of artistic research and co-creation into the institution.

One year later, my partner and I left the city and moved to a village in Upper Austria, where I began working in a **Middle School**, teaching arts, crafts, and digital literacy. The experience, as one can imagine, could not have been more different.

The **Epilogue** returns to the evolving relationship and collaboration with my nephew, who has now nearly outgrown childhood. We met and reflected on the work we have created together – some of it dating back to nearly half his lifetime ago – and elaborated plans for the final exhibition in January 2026.

Looking ahead, there is also something completely new: on April 4th, 2025, I, against all odds, became a mother to a wonderful baby son. There is a new relationship to the world – one that I suspect will be hardly comparable to any other, possibly (though not necessarily) transforming everything I have thought, done, and written about my relationship to and co-creation with children so far. This will undoubtedly also influence the way I approach my role as a teacher after maternity leave.

Concluding my PhD endeavor, I am required to create an exhibition that shares my artistic practice – a particular undertaking, as "my" practice is always densely woven into collaborative and co-creative situations. The final part of the Epilogue offers some general thoughts on how I will approach this mission.

I am searching for an integrative approach that thinks art, pedagogy, and science together as interwoven fields of practice and knowledge. The reflective text is therefore not an exhaustive documentation of individual concepts. Rather, it focuses on specific aspects that I remember being particularly concerned with at the time, and that I can expand upon in describing the respective projects. Each of these subchapters is headed by a corresponding question. The questions are not directly answered in the text but are meant to open up a field of dialectical interplay. Browsing through them should offer an overview of the spectrum of interwoven aspects I have been concerned with.

Sections marked with a grey background contain the projects' key data and credits, as well as project announcements such as those written for the schools' annual reports. I decided to include these texts because I believe comparing them with my reflections highlights some of the ambiguities, subjects, and questions I am addressing.

Sections marked with a rose background present literary references that I weave into my reflections to contextualize and clarify my thoughts.

The book concludes with and index of my **Misleading list of Certain Learnings (Ongoing)** – a manifesto of brittle insights and challenges I want to proclaim.

Prologue

My hen barn, just before it disappeared.

How can I make the transient world my home?

Hen Barn

Meeting Myself as a 10 Year Old

My grandfather helped me carry out the things he had stored in the old hen barn, tucked away in the farthest corner of the farm grounds – mostly old planks and peasant tools that had been sitting there for about twenty years, ever since he had, with some remorse, retired from farming.

After that, I remember sweeping away decades of dust – again and again and again. The first sweeps brought up satisfying heaps of dirt that I could shovel into a bucket and carry out. But even after dozens of diligent sweeps, the broom would always gather small grey piles on the grey concrete floor. After a full day of sweeping, I decided to befriend the remaining dust.

I remember the smell of that dust, mingling with fresh paint and the old carpet from my grandparents' parlour, which Grandpa had fitted into the small room. That way, I could even vacuum with a real vacuum cleaner and then lie on the floor, looking up at the ceiling – just like in a real living room. I rummaged through the rest of the old farm, looking for furniture and decorations. I painted the frame of the opaque glass-tile window facing the neighbouring farm in bright blue, matching the blue curtains I had found in the attic of the residential house. I never found out what lay behind that window, but I loved the afternoon light as it fell onto my small table, couch, and carpet.

Throughout the winter, it was too cold to stay in my little private retreat, but spring and early summer felt endless – when the dark wooden beams of the surrounding barns soaked up the sun, and I began building a porch, a terrace, and a flowerbed.

As my hen barn seasons flew by, I started to realize that those summers might not be eternal – just like the lives of my grandparents, and with them, the existence of the old farm. Much to Grandpa's regret, neither my uncle nor my mother had shown any interest in taking up farming. Those moldy corners in the horse stable, the powdery remains of woodworms, and the rusty rakes, troughs, and pitchforks gradually changed – from adventurous props into harbingers of transience and loss.

I understood, and I tried to act: being a sensible child, I didn't ask Grandpa to inherit the whole farm. I just asked for that little corner with the hen barn. He laughed and said, sure enough. He even signed a testament I had prepared. I tried to be as serious as possible but got no serious reply. I understood that I was locked into the sphere of play, and there was no way to bridge that gap. What I didn't understand then was that it wasn't a lack of respect or love for me as a full-fledged person, but rather the painfulness of reality that made him prefer the soothing fantasy of my infant legislation.

sweeping old
floors keeps
conjuring up new
piles of dust.

"The Books" – Fine Arts Thesis Verena Miedl-Faißt 2013

How can I treasure brittle strands of relation?

The Books

Happening to Become my Diploma Thesis

Some fifteen – or rather twenty – years later, I had reluctantly learned to accept that one cannot stop time from passing, no matter how good or bad it is, nor prevent things from changing – sometimes in ways I wouldn't appreciate. But on top of this loss of infant might, play had ceased to be an excuse for my misunderstandings. Although the world hardly ever followed my rules – later not much more than earlier – I was now being held more and more responsible for what I did, thought, said, or made.

I studied fine arts because I thought that within the arts, one could make up one's own rules and decide how to invest one's lifetime to the farthest extent. Not that I had any idea about the artistic milieu or cultural-economic realities – nor did I care much. I was looking for ways to relate, and I felt that artistic means were the most useful to approach confusing realities. Actually, I was looking for playmates – and found them at ZOOM Children's Museum. Not only among the children, but even more so among my artist colleagues there. But although I felt it was the most relevant work I had ever done, within the university, that "childish stuff" didn't count as serious work. I felt entangled and disoriented in realities that didn't feel like my own, so I moved to Iceland for a year – simply because I thought an island with not much on top would be a good place to disentangle.

That turned out to be true, though it left me quite lonesome at first. But after some months of dark polar winter, the barely setting sun brought along some very particular encounters. Among them were Abdi and Nico. We spent four weeks together at the SIM artist residency in Reykjavik. They were cool, confident hipster-artists from New York City, living in a gay relationship – so I couldn't have been more surprised when they liked me, even said things like: "I love the way you work!" I fell in love with them – with their trustful and loving partnership, their confident identities as artists, and above all, the warmth of their embrace. I was heartbroken when they returned to NYC. How could I hold on to that strand of connection that had felt so good and stable – no matter how unlikely a lifelong friendship or ongoing contact might be after such a short encounter? Once again, I wouldn't be able to freeze that moment of magical time we had shared. I was seeking a way to treasure it – and still let go. Abdi was a photographer, and on all our excursions through lava fields, glaciers, and black-sanded beaches, he kept photographing his love, Nico. And as I was in love with his loving gaze, I kept taking photos of them while he was doing so. From that little series, I made two copies of a small booklet titled So Good to See You, sent one to New York, and kept one for myself – so I could hold on to that fragile strand of connection whenever I longed for it. This turned out to be a reasonable method – one that made the passage of time, of life, and of loved ones more bearable. So I began creating a series of such booklets, treasuring particular but transient moments and encounters. Each booklet was dedicated to a specific person – or sometimes a place or a moment or a non-human creature – and it was important that this particular vis-à-vis would be able to catch and hold the thread I had tossed over. Beyond that, I didn't care much about broader reception. I had come to understand what a rare and precious thing it is to relate deeply to just one other person at one particular moment in time – and that such a bond was worth far more than the excitement of any anonymous audience.

if you can’t hear
yourself speak,
go disentangle.

but hold the lines.

Leslie Jamison

“If every relationship is a collaboration “– two people jointly creating the selves they will be with each other – this collaboration can sometimes feel like tyranny, forcing the self into a certain shape, and it can sometimes feel like birth, making a new self possible.” (Jamison, 2020: 226)

The US writer Leslie Jamison, mainly known for her book The Empathy Exams, has been influential for me – both in form and in content. Her writings about the (mere possibility) of empathy have resonated strongly with my reflections on co-creation. As a non-fiction writer, the encounters she seeks in her research, the interviews she conducts, always become co-creations – she could not write her texts without the information, thoughts, and reports her interlocutors are willing to share. This, on the one hand, raises ethical concerns I recognize as very close to my own. Even though she can try to be as transparent as possible, the people she writes about become objects of her research; their very personal and intimate stories become her material. Sometimes it is hard to say whether they can truly give their informed consent to being published in this way. There is a power gap, made even more problematic by the fact that her relation to those people – and her own experiences shaping the way she empathizes with what she is told – deeply affects her findings. She cannot be objective. She faces this fact with awe-inspiring honesty, continuously sharing, explaining, and questioning her thoughts and deductions.

Leslie Jamison is therefore another literary reference for me, one that is difficult to pin down to a single clear-cut citation. But the quotation I chose, as I understand it, summarizes her general approach to relating to others: making not only intimate relationships but every encounter a collaborative endeavor – leaving both parties, and the world in between, transformed.

Hartmut Rosa

“Whenever we resonate with another human being, a book, a song, a landscape, an idea, a piece of wood, we are transformed by the encounter – although of course in very different ways.” (Rosa, 2020: 34)

The sociologist Hartmut Rosa calls this form of collaborative encounter resonance. He proposes a resonant relationship with the world as an aspirational ideal, offering ways to cope with the contemporary challenges of an endangered planet and collapsing democracies. In his theory, the basic problem is that the capitalist system depends on eternal growth – or, more precisely, can only remain stable through constant acceleration – while resources are finite, and both the world and humanity are running out of breath (cf. Rosa, 2022: 13f).

A resonant relationship with the world is characterized by four dimensions: affection, self-efficacy, transformation, and uncontrollability. One is touched by what one encounters; the encounter is reciprocal; self and other are changed; and – perhaps most importantly – this moment cannot be forced (cf. Rosa, 2018: 28f).

My artistic as well as my pedagogical approach could be described as a search for an impossible methodology: one that seeks to find and encourage such resonant relationships within the world, while tracing and sharing both routes and detours along the way. Rosa himself has extended his theory into the pedagogical realm, describing the aspirational school setting as one that enables resonant encounters (cf. Rosa, 2016).

On the one hand, I attempt to describe hands-on examples of what this might look like. On the other hand, I also suggest that – as is mandatory for a resonant relationship in Rosa’s sense – such a relationship must be reciprocal. This means not only that the teacher needs to be open to transformation through the encounters that take place in the classroom, but also that the school itself must be changed by each and every child who enters the building and the system.

I am convinced that working with children can teach us a great deal about how to deal with the uncontrollability of the world – since control only comes with age. A baby does not even know where its body ends and the world begins. Everything is resonance, or it is not. Thus, I would argue that moving towards an infant perspective as an adult can help us to discover ways of engaging joyfully with what remains uncontrollable.

“Do you still remember the first snowfall on a late autumn or winter day, when you were a child? It was like the intrusion of a new reality. Something shy and strange that had come to visit us, falling down upon and transforming the world around us, without our having to do anything. An unexpected gift. Falling snow is perhaps the purest manifestation of uncontrollability. We cannot manufacture it, force it, or even confidently predict it, at least not very far in advance. What is more, we cannot get hold of it or make it our own. Take some in your hand, it slips through your fingers. Bring it into the house, it melts away. Pack it away in the freezer, it stops being snow and becomes ice.“ (Rosa, 2020: 1)

Videostill from
“Der Baum und das Notenblatt“
by Petar and Verena Miedl-Faißt
at ZOOM Animated Film Studio Vienna
around 2019.

How can I interweave brittle strands of relation?

Der Baum und das Notenblatt

Working in the Animated Film Studio at ZOOM Children‘s Museum

But such singular coincidences don’t build a strong network of relationships that can sustainably withstand existential solitude. I grew frustrated with the hermeticism of my private bonds. I longed to share what I had found – to weave strong threads from those many brittle strands.

At ZOOM Children’s Museum, I experienced many special encounters. In fact, the job itself was to create inspirational sparks – and sometimes, the animated film studio became a fireworks display of imagination. I began working there around 2009. The museum had been founded in 1994, largely by artists who built a space with and for children. The animated film studio offered a unique interface for creating hand-drawn stop-motion animations with large groups of children and a professional sound studio. I became part of the most inspiring, diverse, and interesting team of artists, musicians, scientists, and filmmakers I had ever met. I felt truly and deeply in the right place.

We produced thousands of films and sound experiments, which were published in the ZOOM website’s archive. And honestly, I don’t remember a single day in those early years when I didn’t enter the studio lighthearted and full of anticipation. Things changed – as they, alas, always tend to do – and after more than twenty years, this beloved and fantastic team mostly fell apart. (The reasons are manifold and go beyond – but certainly don’t exclude – what I’m trying to explore here.)

Of course, we had an educational mission toward the children: promoting media literacy, supporting personal development, self-expression, conflict resolution, teamwork, and so on. And of course, this “service” for the children had to be prioritized. But what made a workshop truly special – at least for me – was reciprocity. Sometimes, constellations, processes, ideas, and moments were so unique that none of the participants – neither artists nor children – could have been replaced. Together, we developed ideas and experienced moments of artistic exchange that were inseparably tied to that specific constellation of people, place, and time – offering a glowing new strand of connection to each other and to the world that hadn’t existed, or at least hadn’t been visible to us, before. To me, these were moments of ideal artistic collaboration – or rather, co-creation. I left the studio just like the kids did: with glowing cheeks and a pounding heart.

I longed to share that excitement. But the artistic products drowned in the mass of workshop output, and placing them on a different stage raised a whole bouquet of issues. Most of all, those sparks of magic and inspiration could hardly be transferred by simply watching those flickering fragments of children’s drawings – hastily put together and published after just 90 minutes, no matter what…

some trees
love music sheets
very much.

Videostill from “Inside Me“

How can the infrastructure of the school system be utilized, while pushing aside the disruptive forces of institutional stress, to let an inspiring mycelium of relations grow between kids and artists?

video

Inside Me

AHS Kenyongasse (Grammar School) / Filmarchiv Austria

Although I loved ZOOM, I began looking for ways to push the limits of such artistic co-creation with my dearest artist colleagues and with children.

I realized that the school infrastructure actually had many advantages: School classes are – if not to an ideal extent, still – more diverse and heterogeneous than most voluntary constellations of people in other, later stages of educational, professional, or private life. Bringing together all those different mindsets, needs, and dispositions offers the best chance to “train the muscles” of a resilient democracy. At least, if there is sufficient space and time for such complex processes, and if performance pressure does not reduce the pedagogical impact to merely normalizing and levelling all skills, talents, thoughts, and aims. There is – if not to an ideal extent, still – an existing infrastructure and established routines that make it possible to work with larger groups. There are – if not to an ideal extent, still – well-trained teachers who know their students and are willing to work with and for them. Thus, I started looking for funding and project partners to establish a more ambitious form of artistic co-creation at school.

Together with Michaela Götsch, a dear friend and artist teaching at AHS Kenyongasse, we developed the project “Yes, It’s Magic!” in collaboration with two classes from her school, a group of teachers, and Filmarchiv Austria, which was hosting an exhibition on the history of the moving image at the historic Metrokino Kulturhaus (“Kino.Magie – Was geschah wirklich zwischen den Bildern?”, 6/10/15–30/03/16). The students had some preparatory lessons on film and, of course, an excursion to the exhibition. But our main aim was to use the medium as a catalyst and a space of possibilities for a free collaboration of 59 students, supported by a photographer, a musician, myself, and their teachers. Over the course of several project days, we tried to establish a space for individual artistic expression that would feed into one collective piece. After producing a collective soundtrack, the visual material emerged – without a script or an assigned topic – in different workshops focusing on light, sculpture, performance, and text, all based on the shared audio. The result, which the large film team named inside me, was shown both at school and at the historic Metrokino Kulturhaus, together with an exhibition of props and installations from the film.

Of course, we had elaborate workshop concepts, but I do not want to go into details about timeframes, tools, or individual stories. Rather, I would like to summarize the aims and issues that shaped later projects and my PhD endeavor.

Looking back, we thought a great deal about how to enable self-interest-driven involvement for all participants. Students are accustomed to always having clear tasks and being told what to do. If there is no clear task but multiple options – or even the need to develop individual ideas – this can create a vacuum that requires time and endurance to overcome. Probably the most important thing is that teachers, workshop leaders, or other (involuntary) “authorities” do not become nervous or feel the need to force action.

To foster a positive dynamic, we conducted a preparatory workshop for the teachers involved, explaining our approach. During the project days, there were no other classes scheduled, and compared to usual timetables, we had a lot of time. The students could move freely between workshop set-ups, and there were

also break out areas with drinks and snacks. And, of course, being an artist from outside the school – not a teacher – helped immensely to overcome problematic school dynamics.

As far as we could tell, it worked out very well, and the students were very excited about their product – quite eerie and quite professional-looking. It was at once uncanny and intimate. The students knew they had invented these images, but they would never have written such an experimental script. It was not one director's idea but a filmic mycelium in its own right.

The reflection and exchange afterwards, therefore, felt very important. We scheduled an extra workshop to discuss the process, the outcome, and the option of public presentation. We wanted everyone to feel comfortable with the common work being published, and everyone involved was to be named and credited as they saw fit. What we did not expect was the long-term impact: emotions and thoughts that surfaced later on, which the students could not grasp or did not want to express immediately in our short reflection workshop. The other artists and I were gone after the scheduled project time, but the students continued to talk about the project, their doubts, and even fears concerning "what they had done." This was quite challenging for the teachers, who had not been responsible for the concept and who were just as surprised as the students by what had happened. I felt remorseful about not being able to accompany this process in the longer term.

Another struggle we faced was collaboration on the institutional level. Although the opportunities and general openness of Filmarchiv Austria were amazing, we were not part of the officially curated program but "just a school project." Communication proved tricky, and it was difficult to achieve the level of professional recognition we were aiming for. In the end, we celebrated a worthy premiere with moderation, live performance, and a professionally screened DCP – but only thanks to heaps of extra private effort, plus a good deal of persistence towards people who clearly had not been prepared to take us as seriously as we expected.

I think one of the core paradoxes of my aims appears here: I am looking for unprejudiced encounters and collaborations based on reciprocal openness, curiosity, and the will to engage artistically, no matter whether one is a child or an adult, a professional artist or an amateur. I am convinced that such co-creation can yield insights that are otherwise inaccessible. These insights should be shared and received in the same unprejudiced way – as artistic expressions of artistic research – which can only produce knowledge if taken seriously. But the crucial issue is that being taken seriously also means being exposed to the risks of unforeseeable artistic processes and to the mercilessness of an anonymous or professional audience. As a professional artist, I must be able to handle such risks and take responsibility, consciously or not. Children or non-professionals, however, cannot be expected to do so. Sharing workshop outcomes within the safe framework of art education or school works like a filter, protecting participants from misunderstanding – but also from being taken seriously. As a professional artist, I cannot take the products from projects with non-professionals out of that niche and pretend to share authorship equitably – and thereby also give away responsibility.

To illustrate: some years ago, I successfully obtained the boatmaster's certificate for whitewater rafts. From that day on, I would be held responsible if I went rafting with people without such a certificate – no matter whether I told them or not, whether I steered the boat or not, whether an accident was actually my fault or not. Simply because I should be able to anticipate, judge, and control.

In a similar way, working within the pedagogical field carries an a priori set of expectations and responsibilities that can create a safe space (in the best case) but also one with slightly biased and limited artistic freedom.

If I want artists to become involved with their full professional identity, the framing of the outcome must be professional in a way that I can hardly impose on children, students, or non-professionals in general. Not because the process and the outcome could not possibly be just as interesting, inspiring, and insightful, but because it can be too dangerous for them to leave the sphere of innocent play.

Within my PhD in Art, I challenged this edge from various sides, and I dearly hope that neither I nor my co-creators will ever regret it.

Inside Me – an eerie story about the fear of loosing oneself.

Vienna 2016/co-creators: Maria ABDEL MASSIH Anjitha ANDIVEEDU Architha ANDIVEEDU Eren AYDIN Erik BALKA Das blauflammige Onigiri Gävin-Montgomery DE VILLA Patrick ESTRADA Abanoub GERGES Barbara GERGES Antonius HANNA Katharina HEGER Matthias HOLZER Sandra MAATOUK David MAJKIC Christine MONTALES Antonette OALIN Lyndon-Alexander PANGANIBAN Benjamin PISCHEL Cherland POSADAS Tian POZGAJ Stojan RIKIC Sebastian ROZ Simon SCHUH Grigory SYTNIK Mark TADROS Anushka WITANACHCHI David WOJCIECHOWSKI Qiqi ZHENG Sara ANDIC Anni CHEN Veronika EISTERER Nadine EL GARHY Sheryl FARAG Arne GHOUKASIAN Katja HAUMER Buse KAYA Isabella KOKORIC Ivona LOVRIC Dunia SOLIMAN Angela SOSIC Melisa AYDIN Lukas BALICKI Dinh DANG Marie-Claire EGLHOFER Florian EMATHINGER Moritz FRÜH David HEINDL Veronika KUCZEWSKI Alexander LACIUK Paul LOTZ Robert LUGERBAUER Denis NEDZIBOVIC Teresa PREISSINGER Ömer REYHAN Sandro SPIELBÜCHLER Bünyamin UYAR Terin VALOOKARAN
partners: Michaela Götsch, Ines Stiedl, Nicole Hofer, Katharina Müller, Katharina Goessinger, Sonja Mallinger (AHS Kenyongasse); Tomáš Mikeska (Filmarchiv Austria); Klemens Koscher (video); Oliver Stotz (sound)
supported by: KulturKontakt Austria / culture:connected

The project has been awarded by projekteuropa. It has been presented at
InSEA Regional Conference Vienna 2016 and at
3. Internationalen Symposium Kulturvermittlung in St. Pölten (NÖKU).
InSEA publication on the project:
IMAG # 5. InSEA Publications. DOI: https://doi.org/10.24981/2414-3332-5.2017.5

Videoprojects
2017-2018

How can a project structure be established that relies on organizational and financial scaffolding, so the actual focus can be set on individual questions, possibilities and relations?

Poster announcement cinema screening

Being a Foreign Artist at School

I considered Yes, It's Magic! a kind of pilot project, hoping that the amount of time invested in funding applications and institutional struggles could be reduced – compared to the actual artistic work with students that I was truly interested in – by creating organizational and financial structures that could be reused. Therefore, I planned a series of projects similar to Yes, It's Magic!

The basic concept was always to work as an external artist with school classes and, over the course of several intensive project days, produce a collective film work based on a collaboratively created soundtrack. Depending on the individual groups I worked with, I invited artist colleagues to offer workshops focused on approaches that matched the students' interests.

I did not want these projects to become pedagogical or artistic "services" that schools or students would have to pay for – since I was hoping for reciprocity at the collaborative level, and of course I did not want to work only with privileged students. So I looked for public funding, which turned out to be very difficult. Although always endangered by political shifts and economic cuts, the Austrian subsidy system seems comparatively well resourced. Yet ambitious artistic projects within school contexts proved tricky: All art or film funding programs were categorically ruled out as soon as schools were mentioned. And for school projects, there was hardly any extra money outside the hermetically sealed budget.

The only real option was Kultur:Kontakt Austria, which was explicitly designed to support artists working in schools. They were very helpful and enabled what I was able to realize – but the money they provided was and still is dispersed in the form of micro-grants, following a radical scattershot approach. I had to write extensive individual submissions and reports, sometimes just for €200, in the best case for around €1,500, and even had to pretend to realize dozens of separate mini-projects although I was actually trying to fund a larger framework.

I do not know if I overlooked some hidden "pot of gold," but I was not able to set up an economically sustainable structure to establish these co-creations with school classes as my main artistic practice – as I also had to make a living myself and wanted to ensure fair pay for the other artists involved.

Nevertheless, I realized a series of projects that became the basis and starting point for my PhD endeavor, and I tried to publish them in a worthy manner through a cinema screening I was able to organize with the support of Michael Stejskal (Filmladen Filmverleih) at Votivkino in Vienna. The auditorium was packed – not because the projects had sparked the public interest I had wished for, but because so many students were involved that they filled the space to see their own work on the big screen – and, involuntarily but attentively, watched the films of the other groups as well.

trying
to cover more
than one hole of a
watering can

is not sustainable.

Videostill from “Mamilahpinatapai“

How can the modes of co-creation with professional artists, teachers and students/children be differentiated in appreciative yet equitable ways?

video

Mamihlapinatapai

AHS Krottenbachstraße (Grammar School)

Just after Yes, It’s Magic! I collaborated with Verena Lassnig – again, a dear friend, artist, and teacher at another grammar school in Vienna. This project involved a much smaller group of students – 14 instead of 59 – and no other teachers were involved. This made it possible to spontaneously adjust the process, from materials to film locations, together with the students. Only for the sound workshop did we work with Oliver Stotz, who had already been part of the pilot project. I knew Oliver through ZOOM, although he had not worked there as a workshop leader. I very much appreciated his artistic ability to create rousing sounds and musical ideas from almost anything. He had mostly worked behind the scenes of performances that – as I thought – gained a particular strength through his contribution. Since in our video projects the soundtracks held the entire project together, their quality had to be as sustainably engaging as possible. Moreover, I saw an advantage in the fact that he did not consider himself a pedagogue, while nevertheless holding pedagogical work in high respect. I explained to him that he should not worry too much about a workshop concept or about communicating with the students – I would always be present to support him. He should simply contribute his artistic and technical abilities and treat us as any other professional “client.” Over the course of several projects he was involved in, we developed a well-functioning mode of collaboration: He never worked with the entire group, but instead conducted short and intense recording sessions with a maximum of five students. It was important that everyone had the chance to record at least some small buzz, mumble, rustle, or bang, and that the students could always recognize their input in the final product. Without compromising the children’s artistic sovereignty, he shared his skillful artistic magic, building acoustic narratives, catchy melodies, and rousing beats from these fragments, and connecting the consecutive groups by attentively listening and responding together with each new group of students. Depending on what was available on site, we worked with beautiful instruments – exploring a grand piano or a double bass – as well as with the unexpected acoustic potential of arbitrary findings in the school’s broom closet. Although I deeply value working in teams with pedagogically experienced artist colleagues, I particularly enjoyed the collaboration with Oliver, because he did not divide his professional identity into “pedagogue” and “artist,” but simply carried out these experimental missions to the best of his ability.

A film about MAMIHLAPINATAPAI, following Wikipedia “a look that without words is shared by two people who want to initiate something, but that neither will start“.

Vienna 2017/co-creators: Negar ASADI Carolina CHRISTOFFER Kariem ELSAEDI Laura FRANK Lola GILJON David KÖHLER Sophie KOLTSCHEV Katharina PAYER Canan RAMAZANOGLU Silvia RETTINGER Mathias SCHNEIDER Dario STOHLAWETZ Lukas URCH Nicolas WEISS
partners: Verena Lassnig (BRG 19), Oliver Stotz (sound)
supported by: Bundesministerium für Bildung, KulturKontakt Austria culture:connected, VotivKino

Videostill from “The Cringe“

How can I respond when students use their freedom not to shape the project, but rather to test my boundaries or provoke a reaction – without abandoning the idea of co-creation?

video

The Cringe

AHS Kenyongasse (Grammar School)

The second collaboration with AHS Kenyongasse was again arranged through Michaela Götsch, but she was no longer teaching there. Thus, this was the first project in collaboration with teachers I didn‘t know beforehand – and they didn‘t know me resp. what to expect.

I was clamped together with a young teacher new to the school and the process became quite conflictual. In the end, this person did not want to be involved or named anymore and another teacher – credited as project partner – stepped in.

AHS Kenyongasse is a catholic private school, although I didn‘t perceive any particular conservative bindings impartet by the directorate. For “Yes, it‘s magic!“ we were able to work on the school‘s beautiful theater stage. For the second project though, this space was not available and we moved into the school chapel – a huge bright space, towered by a tremendous wooden crucified Jesus.

To invite the children to get involved, I had produced picture-postcard sets with photographs I had made, each motif only once. Each student was invited to choose one set, consisting of a colour-print, that he or she could keep, and a black and white print of the same motif asking for a wish on the backside. Those “wishes“ could be returned to me, leaving it open if the kids would like to articulate a personal wish, some wish for me or some wish very practically addressing our upcoming collaboration. This way, I was hoping to start the project not by asking something from them, but by offering a personal gift – as individual as it can get, if an adult stranger meets a group of students for the first time.

Afterwards, we started as already tried and tested, with Oliver and the recording sessions. Mostly, those sounds turned out quite uncanny. I think, this is simply because noisy, scratchy, dissonant sound happening is more likely than some harmonic, soothing melody. And moreover it is an archaic instinct to be alert, if there is any sound without clear origin and explanation. So most of the videoprojects have some horror-movie-tendency. But this one turned out particularly creepy.

So when we met in the school chapel for the first time, sitting together as a large group beneath the huge crucifix and listening to the thrilling yet rather horrific sounds, it didn’t surprise me too much that the students came up with some quite gruesome ideas. I hardly intervene in such situations, because I want the kids to understand, that this was actually their project and I would just be trying to help them realize the ideas they came up with and chose to follow. To be honest, I mostly trusted the dynamics, that the scariest plot would dissolve a little, due to either a lack of time and abilities or – and that was more the case in those projects – I would try to make them go so much into details, that actually intense images could evolve, but the cheesy and gruesome cliché horror plot would not become too manifest in the end. Once we actually started working, the students would mostly get involved with an idea and forget about competing to be the most provocative and dreadful.

Not so much in this case. I think, what hampered the dynamics was that the students could sense, that there was some lack of trust between their teacher and me. My project partner was actually scared by what this project turned out to be, sitting in the corner

with earphones plugged in and trying to be as non-involved as possible. Some of the kids were sorry and would therefore be rather held back, some enjoyed their might and tried to push the situation ever more to the edge, trying to ask for things I finally couldn‘t allow or support. The process turned into a powerplay that I found no real exit for.

I think the group was somehow proud in the end, because the film turned out to be quite intense, but everybody knew it was at least partly just pushed to the edge by some and therewith not what it could have been in the sense of an inspired co-creation. The collaborating teacher asked to be taken out of the credits, probably fearing consequences from the directorate or even the superordinate department of education. And lacking an actually involved contact person, nobody encouraged and took the group of students to the screening at Votivkino – which I felt really sorry about.

I‘m not sure if I would act just in the same way again or what could have been a game-changer in that project. But it has been showing quite convincingly, that a trusting atmosphere is a conditio sine qua non for such a process – not only concerning the children, but everybody involved.

If I withdraw from a leading position, others will probably try to step in – that‘s just basic group dynamics. But to what extend can I just endure such a process and make more prolific dynamics prevail – even risking to fail; or must I, at least at some point, take the responsibilty as artist/teacher working with non-professionals/students and perform a leading, protecting and guiding position – and does this necessarily mean failing at least in some way, too?

A brutal story about a psycho, unrequited love and a monster.

Vienna 2018/co-creators: Abanob ASAAD Alejna KACAPOR Alper ASIK Anna SCHREFL Benno SMELY Berk KAI TAN Danijel NEDZIBOVIC Elijah GONZALES Hadis RAHIMI Jana BAYOT Lenard-Pete DOTE Lexi CAPATE Marco KOLESIC Mikhail ENGOYANTS Nina JOKIC Nura GHARAHSHIR Peter HERLIK Pia-Alice STELZL Simon GALLA Stefan POLESNY Zeliha KALDIRIM / Wien 2018
partners: Andrea Weissenbacher (AHS Kenyongasse), Letizia Werth (painting), Oliver Stotz (sound)
supported by: KulturKontakt Austria / culture:connected

power plays
are boring.

Videostill from “Der Schatten des Bösen“

Does the gaze of the public on co-creative products need to be directed?

video

Der Schatten des Bösen

Integrative Lernwerkstatt Brigittenau (Inclusive Middle School)

Working with the Integrative Lernwerkstatt Brigittenau was meeting my approach somewhat better: ILB is a public middle school with an inclusive approach. The children are taught in multi-age classrooms, some of them living with visible or invisible disabilities, and they are used to a more equitable interaction between each other and between teachers and students. Moreover, my project partner, Karolina Kras, was a former colleague from ZOOM Children‘s Museum.

The school, located rather centrally in Vienna‘s 20th district, has a beautiful “satellite” in the woods of the Danube floodplains. We were allowed to use that space and the surrounding nature for our workshops. To my surprise, the children were not too excited about that place. Getting there by train and on foot was quite time-consuming, and, of course, it was nothing special anymore for them. Still, they were quite involved and excited about the project. Challenging in this constellation was, for me, and in this case, the musician and sound artist Werner Möbius, to anticipate the abilities of the individual children. Of course, again, they should work as independently as possible – and they knew the place way better than we did. But it was hard to guess just who could be left strolling through the undergrowth with a sound recorder and who‘d get lost. Who could work near the water, maybe not incessantly observed, and who needed more support and protection? And even more so: who could be asked to take care of another, and to what extent? Either we were just fortunate, or we figured out quite well – at least, nobody got lost or was harmed.

But the question of how, and in what way, some of the children needed more protection than others, and how to reconcile such protection with artistic autonomy, continued to occupy us. Here is one example: one girl, obviously with Down syndrome, was very involved and claimed some sort of main character for herself. She said she was a mermaid, but she would not act as you‘d expect a 10-year-old to play “Ariel” or the like, but positioned herself on different natural stages she found, standing there straight and singing a hardly understandable song. Of course, that was quite a powerful image, but her role became more the one of an uncanny, unsettling, and ghostly appearance than a magic mermaid. Actually, from an artistic point of view, much more interesting, and the other kids happily involved that appearance in their creepy story. But was she conscious of and happy with that role? Were we showcasing her condition in a disrespectful way by staging her like that? And how must we assess these questions when the film would be shown in public?

I came to terms with myself, thinking one will hardly find clear answers to these questions, but it is part of the potential of the arts to find answers that can stand such ambiguity – probably only by remaining ambiguous themselves, though.

Be aware of the “Schatten des Bösen“ –
if you‘re scared, you‘ll fade away!

Vienna 2018/co-creators: Aisha, Aurora, Chiara, Estella, Theo, Jonas, Annemarie, Armin, Liam, Lilith, Antonia, David and Maja
partners: Karolina Kras (ILB), Werner Möbius (sound)
supported by:
KulturKontakt Austria / culture:connected

not

all mermaids
can swim.

Videostill from “Der weiße Schatten“

How can individual ethical and political convictions be reconciled without exploiting a powerful position as teacher-like adult in a co-creational process with students?

video

Der Weiße Schatten

BAfEP 10 (College for Early Childhood Education)

BAfEP 10 is a high school where the students are not only doing their A-levels, but at the same time complete an apprenticeship as kindergarten teachers. Alas, and hardly surprising, although the school is meant to be open to everybody, there were only girls in the class I was working with. As with all the other groups, they came up with a horror-movie plot. And the most horrific thing they could think of was being a bride abandoned by her ~~broom~~ groom. The resulting images actually tell a more complex story. The protagonist escapes from the cage of societal norms and expectations, letting her inner monster break free. At least one could read it like that. Working with others inevitably confronts you with other perspectives, opinions, values, political positions, priorities, etc. Basically, this is not a problem; but negotiating such frictions with artistic means is what enables motion and transformation, if the conflict can be tackled in a fair, respectful, and constructive way. But working with teenagers obviously sometimes confronts me with struggles, concerns, or opinions that I perceive as something simply to be overcome, as superficial or immature. Such a perspective, of course, hinders unprejudiced negotiations at eye-level. Although my aim is a reciprocal relation with the people I am working with, I cannot deny having a pedagogical impetus: I want the kids to develop the ability to perceive, think, judge, and articulate themselves maturely and autonomously. I want them to be able to respectfully negotiate their concerns, to be conscious of their privileges and impairments, of their democratic rights and obligations, and their responsibility within human and non-human ecologies. And of course, I do have strong opinions and reservations against all forms of injustice, populist, opportunistic, or patriarchal propaganda, and social disintegration. Despite, and at the same time because of, this educational aim, there are points where I feel obliged to stop negotiating opinions and just unequivocally say: “This is wrong.” Every pedagogical approach implies some sort of “I know what is good for you,” some sort of placing oneself above the other. Thus, a pedagogy at eye-level is basically a paradox, and claiming such a nonhierarchical approach as a teacher or workshop leader is necessarily dishonest. This is another manifestation of the ambiguity within artistic co-creative processes in pedagogical contexts: to be honest about one’s own convictions without succumbing to the temptation to preach, to manipulate, and to abuse one’s inevitable position of power as teacher, artist, and adult.

Vienna 2018 / co-creators: Chantal BAUER Jessie BAUMGARTNER Jasmin DIEWALD Lisa-Marie FALTNER Selina FINDEIS Sabrina GLATZL Selina-Marie HEINE Sabrina KLETZENBAUER Kathrin LEBENSORGER MAIER Vanessa Marianne MOTLICEK Sarah Elena MUHR Fitesa PIRKUQI Sabrina POLSTER Isabel RUBITZKO Natalie RUPPITSCH Cansu SAGLAM Nicole SASSMANN Sarah-Sophie SCHATZER Michaela SCHIMPF Sanela SISIC Lisa STARSICH Katharina THEUERMANN Julia TOTH Anna TÜRKE
project partners: Eva Ehler (BAfEP 10), Oliver Stotz (sound), Sabine Marte (performance)
supported by: KulturKontakt Austria / culture:connected

if the cheese
is good,

the mouse can
have a good time
in the trap.

Videostill from “lost names / ءاقدصأ انعمچ (alle freunde)

How can it be ensured that every co-creator is able to follow, understand and consciously influence the common process without adopting a position that is too directive?

video

Lost Names / ءاقدصأ انعمچ (Alle Freunde)

AHS and NMS Glasergasse (Grammar School and Middle School)

In April and May 2018, this project, in collaboration with a gymnasium and a public middle school, was realized. Nicole Meeßen was teaching arts at the gymnasium, and her friend Regina Steidl was teaching several subjects at the middle school next door. Although so close, the situations of the students were very different – not only because it was a gymnasium and a middle school, but in particular because the group that Regina Steidl brought in was a separate class for refugee children who had just arrived in Austria and hardly spoke any German.

Realizing one co-creative project with such very different groups was a special challenge. Our plan was to do separate sound workshops but to try to interweave the recordings from these sessions. Afterwards, and still separately, I built huge kites with both groups, adapting a workshop concept by the artist and kite builder Anna Rubin. The idea was to create kites that would function like huge sculptures or masks, somehow referring to the common sounds. For the final shooting of the joint video project, we planned a day with both groups together on the Danube Island, where we would listen to the collective sound piece, fly and film the kites, get to know each other, and see what happened. Afterwards, we had planned two editing workshops, again separately for each group.

The sound artist Werner Möbius and I only realized on site at the middle school that we actually could hardly speak with the mostly Syrian kids, as none of us spoke Arabic. A microphone is always slightly intimidating, but as we could hardly explain anything, those children were particularly brave when they finally dared to record something. One of the boys did an impressively long Arabic rap – we had no idea what it was about, just realized it was long, the other kids were moved, and it was difficult to continue the workshop afterwards. In the following days, through the school, we could contact Wasiem Mourad, a teacher from Syria working at another Viennese school, who translated the rap for us, and we found out that the song, about the Syrian war and the singers‘ lost childhoods, had actually been produced with kids in a refugee camp in northern Lebanon. (See online video available at: https://youtu.be/efw_83be_C8?si=izbwsFpqI7tB-wN-w [Accessed: 11 November 2025])

The rap was almost as long as all the other sound experiments together and, of course, something completely different. Bringing things together into an outcome that all the children could identify with was tricky, as we could not discuss things with the Syrian kids, and the Austrian kids were quite overwhelmed by the heaviness and foreignness of the other children‘s contribution. The common day on the Danube Island was still fun – although the kites were a bit too heavy to fly and there was no wind at all. The two groups did not really mingle, but they perceived each other benevolently and curiously. During the editing workshops, the kids had the opportunity to add some animated bits to bridge the otherwise fragmentary material. The final product obviously turned out to be more heterogeneous and enigmatic than the other videos, but I think the kids were as proud and, at the same time, as irritated as the other groups.

Vienna 2018 / co-creators: Aleksandar LATINOVIC Ben ERLWEIN Clara PAULUS Elias MATHIASCHITZ Fabian ZEHETNER Filip TOMAC Floria FRASS Frieda RIEF Gabriella LOVRINOVIC Isabella RUISS Joudi ALGHARIB Julius ZAUNER Konstantin POLKE Kristina SHUHAR Lara FEHLMANN Leonhard VORABERGER Lina WEIDINGER Lino STOCKINGER Lisa BACHINGER Lorenz SEHER Marko MITROVIC Milan KONRAD Mohamad BRIM Mohammad HAJI BORGHOOTH Moritz SCHRÖDER Mouhamad HUSSEIN Nashat NAMET Paula BECK Philipp MÜLLNER Sedra HAJI BORGHOOTH Shahad ALABD ALJABUL Sophia CICHOCKI Teba AL FAWAZ Tobias ECKELBERG Valentin SCHÖNBAUER Xaver SCHREMS
partners: Werner Möbius (sound); Regina Steidl, Tanja Luszczak (NMSi Glasergasse); Nicole Meeßen (Erich Fried grammar school); Wasiem Mourad (translation rap)
supported by: KulturKontakt Austria / culture:connected, Bezirk Alsergrund
Special thanks to Anna Rubin, Irmgard Bebe, Verena Brabec and Saya Ahmad!

if too much paste
weighs
down the kite,
it won’t rise.

but we can hang it
from a tree
and let it dance
with the wind.

Videostill “Waldfilmtage“

How can artists and children be engaged in a seriously artistic playful encounter?

web-documentary

Waldfilmtage

AHS Krottenbachstraße (Grammar School)

“Waldfilmtage”, the second collaboration with Verena Lassnig at Krottenbachstraße, was the luxurious highlight of this series of workshops. Supported not only by Kultur:Kontakt Austria but also by additional funding from the municipal district and some contributions from parents (without actually paying myself), we were able to expand space, time, and artistic input to the maximum possible extent.

We implemented our project as an optional subject that students from several age groups could choose – meaning that the participating students were motivated and engaged by their own decision and will. Some of them had already been part of the group that produced “Mamilahpinatapai”.

Still, we were eager to overcome institutional dynamics that hinder encounters as much as possible. We thought that the best way to free ourselves from everyday worries and performance pressure – for both artists and students – would be to meet on neutral ground and have as much time as possible. Thus, we tried to set up a kind of artist residency. We found a beautiful setting in Croatia, where two artist friends of Verena Lassnig were running a place that would have perfectly matched our needs. However, releasing the students from school long enough to make such a journey worthwhile was not possible. Instead, we booked a place normally offering “farm holidays” somewhere in Upper Austria for four days in April 2018. They promised to provide not only accommodation but also conference rooms, barns, stables, and nearby woods that we could use as working locations.

We were joined by three additional artists: performance and media artist Sabine Marte, sound artist Werner Möbius, and my partner, scenographer, technician, and art educator Florian Miedl-Faißt. The basic concept was that the three of them would offer inspirational workshops in the mornings and afternoons, each related to their particular skills and focuses. In between, we would meet all together to share what was happening in the parallel groups, aiming to inspire one another and interweave different strands of work. Most of all, however, we hoped that unforeseeable things would emerge during the undefined and open times and spaces in between – at the campfire, during lunch breaks in the sun, or while going for a walk.

Originally, the plan had been to weave one single film from all the results, but the outcomes turned out to be so diverse that it would have been a pity to reduce them to a single timeline. I ended up visiting the school almost every week for the rest of the semester to help the students work on the material, editing various versions of what could be.

Overall, the “Waldfilmtage” were a great success and worked out just as we had hoped – almost. The greatest disappointment, of course, was that it became clear this would not serve as a pilot project to be continued, since all the funding was exceptional and I was essentially working for free.

The other struggle – perhaps more relevant to this discussion – concerned my co-artists rather than the students. I had invited dear friends who were well-disposed toward me and my project. We had been working together for years, and I did not expect any difficulties in the collaboration. Yet at certain moments, it became tricky: they knew this project was very important to me and that I expected them to “take it

seriously". Working seriously as artists with children, without a clear pedagogical mission or topic – artistically exposing oneself while maintaining pedagogical responsibility – turned out to be more demanding than I had realised. Engaging in open artistic processes always requires a willingness to take certain risks. This becomes easier when one can rely on the professionalism of one's artistic counterparts. Yet asking someone to engage their professional identity in the wild and potentially unsettling process of identifying with a young, relatively unformed, and carefree group of teenagers is, in fact, quite a lot to ask.

Vienna 2018 / co-creators: Darin LOVRIC, Katharina PAYER, Canan RAMAZANOGLU, Natascha BISCHOF, Dominik HAUER, Lilian KILPATRICK, Esther LINTON-KUBELKA, Carolina CHRISTOFFER, Kariem EL SAEDI, Kira SCHMUTH, Olivia SERGI, Ognjen UGRCIC, Jakob WURDAK, Anand BAYANJAV, Emil FRAUENDORFER, Emily KURAS, Isabella ROTH, Lea TLAPA, Fiona GARTLGRUBER, Anna KAPAUN, Lena SCHÖNTHALER, Fanni ZEKERT
partners: Verena Lassnig (BRG19 Krottenbachstraße); Sabine Marte (performance); Florian Miedl (scenography); Werner Möbius (sound)
supported by: KulturKontakt Austria / culture:connected, Bezirk Döbling

the forest is
dark at night for
everyone.

Between Us and Me

In Search of a Suitable Context

One morning in October 2018, I hosted a screening of this series of video projects at the Votivkino – a well-established art house cinema in Vienna. Many of the students came, as far as their teachers brought them, and of course, they were quite excited to see themselves and their work on the big screen. Some parents, a few friends, and several of the participating artist colleagues came as well, so the event was actually well attended. I could have been happy, but I remained somehow unsatisfied.

Just as I had felt locked into the sphere of play as a child, I now felt locked into the sphere of the educational context. We were not part of the official cinema programme; there was no external audience that might have come out of genuine interest in our work. It was the kids themselves, plus people attending for amicable reasons or out of a sense of obligation. And I am not sure how many of the students would have shown up if it hadn't been during a normal school day – if any. Even if they enjoyed the project, they had not participated from the beginning out of intrinsic motivation but because it took place at school, and there was, in fact, no way out.

With my artist colleagues, it was a bit similar. Most of them had been fulfilling a job I had asked and paid them for – or, at times, doing me a favour. But, at least it seemed to me, it hardly became "theirs", and therefore not a real co-creation.

For the teachers, I was the guest artist, realising a project they were more or less involved in, but mostly they were something like my clients. At the end of the day, it was my project, and somehow, I was not able to sustainably create the "we" I was longing for.

I had involved so many people and had tried so hard to build a space where this multiplicity could co-create, to stage this big encounter and make its potential bloom. But at the Votivkino, it was me holding the microphone and answering the Q&A – and I felt exposed, wrongfully taking the stage, and lonely.

In the context of my PhD studies, when I showed my work during colloquia, I encountered reactions ranging from friendly curiosity to almost aggressive resistance. I tried to present the videos as what I intended them to be: the outcomes of co-creative processes that a professional audience would take seriously. However, it was difficult to find a "context" for what I did – one that would provide grounding and orientation for such discussions. I had the impression that seemingly related contexts such as pedagogy, art education, participatory art, or art brut and outsider art either did not take my young co-creators and our work as seriously as I wished, or labelled the work in ways that prevented a discussion on equal terms. Moreover, I was collaborating with artists who were definitely not "outsider artists". Focusing on the media we used – such as sound, video, or performance art – was too broad to provide a meaningful framework, particularly since I tried to keep the possible approaches within the projects as diverse as possible.

So I wrapped the video projects in poetic reflections through which I attempted to convey what I was searching for. Yet these mostly did not clarify, but rather obscured, what I was struggling with.

Apart from these content-related issues, I was also frustrated because I did not succeed in finding allies to build sustainable financial and organisational scaffolding for my projects. With a heavy heart, I realised that I should close this chapter for the moment and move on. Looking back, I think I understand the obstacles I couldn't overcome a little better now.

I was busy building spaces for co-creative encounters and stages to be taken co-creatively. I was excited about what could happen if everyone – children as well as artists – would jump into this experiment and make it their own. I expected them to make individual contributions that would bring something exciting, unexpected, and otherwise inaccessible into being. I asked them to take the risk of exposing themselves in a context they had not really chosen. And, in fact, many of them engaged fearlessly and wholeheartedly.

Of course, I tried to make it a safe and comfortable space. But I now realise that I was very held back myself. I thought I had to keep the stage open for them and did not want to claim the foreground. I saw my artistic role as one of inspiring and enabling others, but in retrospect, I must admit that I did not dare to expose myself in the same way I asked them to. I was hiding behind the projects, behind the kids, behind my co-artists. I tried to negate any visible artistic contribution on my part, or at least claimed that I was merely helping the children realise what they had in mind – despite the fact that they would never have initiated such a project on their own.

So, in fact, I was asking a lot while denying any artistic risk myself. Why, then, should anybody else take it for me? I assume that, apart from all the parameters beyond my influence, this might be at least part of the reason for my frustrations – both concerning the projects themselves and the reception I was unhappy with.

While things may seem somewhat dreary at this point, I hope it is becoming visible in the videos and in my previous reflections that this series of projects brought valuable experiences – both for me and for my co-creators. However, this is not meant as an affirmative press release but rather the opposite: by tracing back the trouble, I want to make visible what made me move forward.

Accordingly, let me return in time to a moment when I could not yet grasp what I was describing above. As I tried to make sense of my experiences and continued working – self-employed as well as precariously pseudo-employed – in art educational contexts, I felt somehow thrown back to the start of my PhD journey.

I realised I was becoming better at what I was doing and saw tremendous differences in the quality of the work being done in the field. Yet I grew increasingly frustrated that such quality was rarely acknowledged, let alone remunerated. Sometimes, even people with incredible experience, sensitivity, creativity, and artistic virtuosity in co-creating with children did not claim recognition for their work: it was "just a side job", not "real art".

On the other hand (and of course I am generalising), those identifying with it as their main profession – often in higher positions – struggled with issues of self-confidence, as they did not see themselves as fully-fledged artists, were often afraid of artistic processes, and sometimes even prevented others from doing the artistic work they claimed to be responsible for. Meanwhile, others were content to leave it that way, as their main focus was officially on their next "real" exhibition or performance.

This more or less institutional bickering, often running beneath the surface, was a major part of my motiva-

tion for pursuing a PhD in Art in the first place. I wanted to bring this particular form of artistry out of the shadows: on one hand, the work my artist colleagues and I were doing to enable artistic processes with children – this specific form of anticipation, of thinking through a medium or material, of communication, empathy, and openness to serendipity. On the other hand, I aimed to make visible the unique works that sometimes emerged in co-creation with children or were created by the children themselves.

These two qualities should not be confused – doing so would either locate artistic quality solely in the adult work, rendering the children interchangeable, or, conversely, attribute the co-creative outcome only to a child's "talent", motivation, or mere coincidence.

I wanted my colleagues to stand up for our competence – not only, but also, in terms of career development and remuneration, which I believe we deserve. Having the same position, the same influence, and the same salary as a 19-year-old summer jobber after 20 years of experience brings not only financial struggles and a lack of recognition but also few opportunities to participate in sustainable and profound institutional processes.

I was frustrated by all the projects that seemed deliberately kept small: those in charge knew they could not handle more without relinquishing some power, and those who could have handled more preferred to invest in their "real" careers.

Then suddenly, it was spring 2020, and the unimaginable – the first lockdown – brought most of Vienna to a halt. I must admit, apart from abstract anxieties and closed parks, I personally have rather positive memories of those first weeks of exploding spring, silence, and sunlight in our living room. I was not alone but living with my partner in a beautiful apartment. We had no children to worry about, no jobs in the healthcare system, we were not high-risk patients, and the actual Covid numbers were still quite low. In short: we were able to await what would happen next in a comparatively carefree situation.

The directorship of ZOOM Children's Museum had just been taken over by Andrea Zsutty, who, with impressive determination and courage, had employed all the freelance artists instead of leaving us to face unemployment. This decision caused major turmoil within the institution – for reasons I cannot elaborate on here – but for the time being, it kept us relatively safe within the welfare system.

Museums, universities, and schools were closed. The work I had left to do was reduced to a mostly enjoyable minimum that still gave my days some structure and provided a bit of social interaction – albeit in a then-unfamiliar remote form. My life became radically decelerated, and – somewhat similar to my time in Iceland – I felt detached from the issues I had been struggling with.

Of course, I am referring to the first lockdown, when it was still unimaginable how much worse things would get, when one was still tempted to hope that this collective experience might be strengthening, even inspiring, rather than divisive. There was a certain naïve hope as birds took over the airports, no cars filled the streets, and people supported each other in neighbourly solidarity.

Screening at Votivkino

i am one
and I am many,
but I can

never be only.

Nirual

How do you express your love to a pre-linguistic child that is not your own?

Mei Schdi
me ist mie
ausdem ond
Gfalen
My voice has fallen
out of my mouth / moon.

by Nirual Kenabru
Photo © Ann-Katrin Urbanek

How I Found My Main Research Partner

I have always had a strong desire to have children and parenthood as a natural part in my life, but after some romantic teenage love affairs I had been without a long-term partner throughout my 20s. In 2013, by the age of 28, I met my since-then partner F. , but of course we wouldn‘t start a family right away – not foreseeing, that it would become as difficult as it was later on.

Just in the wake of our fresh relationship, my younger sister confided to me, that she was pregnant with her first child. She and her partner involved me quite willingly to become a very close aunt for little L. and I tried to be there for them with all my soul. So in those very first years, I travelled a lot between Vienna and Bavaria, where they were living. To me it felt like L. and I were deeply connected from the very beginning and it was difficult everytime I had to travel back home to Vienna or see them leave after a visit. I kept being anxious, his young mind would forget me in between our visits, as four or eight or twelve weeks feel like eternity if life in total has hardly been longer, but he never did.

L. was an incredibly sensitive young soul, and we had videocalls obtaining closeness even in pre-linguistic times. I always had cashews and cranberries at hand: sitting in front of the webcam we would both snack them synchronously, getting close through that common sensual moment.

And our friendship became ever closer, as he started to speak. Child language learning is always fascinating, but I was particularly intrigued by L.‘s will to tell stories from his first syllables on. I remember our first conversation very well: We had just arrived at a holiday apartment, where our families would spend a week together in Slovenija. He was about 1.5 years old, excitedly circling through our accomodation. There was a big terrace and walking out there, he blinked towards the sky, where a little white cloud was slowly passing by. He pointed up and said “Olke!“ – his word for “cloud“ (“Wolke“ in German). Shortly after it was nighttime and he went to sleep. In the next morning, we went for the same walk through the apartment, he ran towards the terrace-door, jumped out, looked up to the clear blue sky and said: “Olke weg!“ – “Cloud gone“. That was the first story he told me, the first moment of relating through finding language for our parallel perceptions to be collated.

I was spellbound watching his gaze, his movements, his delicate interactions with the world he had just arrived in. I tried to imagine what he saw, heard, thought, felt and wished and I tried to share his gaze, tried to relate to him, tried to get to where he was as much as I could. Living far apart, we had to find ways to get close just through our minds, as I couldn‘t just cuddle him as you might intuitively do. I wanted to make him feel my love and care for him, but I also wanted to join him on his adventure of relating to this world from scratch.

Very soon, I was not only fascinated by imagining how he might experience moments we shared, but also by his very individual reactions to those perceptions, his genuine and creative bits of articulated worlding, of actively relating, of transferring and connecting experience and thoughts. I considered those insights particular in a way that would be inaccessible otherwise and realized, that I was not just trying to be a loving aunt, but he actually had become a research partner.

cashews and
cranberries make
a good poem.

“Trouble is an interesting word. It derives from a thirteenth-century French verb meaning “to stir up,” “to make cloudy,” “to disturb.” We – all of us on Terra – live in disturbing times, mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times. The task is to become capable, with each other in all of our bumptious kinds, of response. Mixed-up times are overflowing with both pain and joy – with vastly unjust patterns of pain and joy, with unnecessary killing of ongoingness but also with necessary resurgence.

The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present. Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places. In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.“ (Haraway, 2016: 1).

Donna Haraway proposes an understanding of being in and with the world that does not separate humans from other species or entities, but emphasizes that we all live in constant symbiosis. She frames this under the notion of the Chthulucene, an alternative to the Anthropocene or Capitalocene, in which beings are recognized as inextricably entangled. To “stay with the trouble” therefore means not to escape into fantasies of salvation or apocalypse, but to practice responsibility and care within the messy, unfinished present.

Yet these ideas could hardly be further from realization in human reality. There is “human” and there is “nature,” and almost everything humans do seems to rely on this separation. But is it not profoundly implausible that one species on this planet should be fundamentally different from all the rest? Particularly as we know how interwoven our bodies are with other life forms, how closely related we are to other species. How is it that we consider ourselves more important, more intelligent, and more relevant than all the others? I even doubt human intelligence, since it does not seem capable of recognizing the interdependencies and responsibilities in which every being on earth is entangled. Out of sheer arrogance, we continue to destroy everything on which even our own existence depends. A persistent human weakness lies in our limited capacity to truly recognize and value the perspectives and needs of others – of fellow human beings, let alone of other forms of life.

How can anyone be truly empathetic toward a monarch butterfly if they do not even consider the perspective of a young member of their own kind as worthy and relevant?

Donna Haraway

I believe that children can be powerful teachers, showing us new ways of relating to the world – even in Haraway’s sense. A child’s way of encountering new forms of life and modes of living day by day is necessarily immediate and unreserved. There is not yet too much past to burden them, and thus not too much sorrow about whatever the future might bring. That makes children both troublemakers and builders of quiet refuges in the best sense; they cannot help but act and react here and now. Seen through Haraway’s lens, this capacity is not naïve but exemplary: children embody a practice of “making kin” in the present, weaving connections across boundaries of generation, species, and role. If we do not teach them to subdue and dominate “the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every living thing that moves upon the earth,” but instead foster their natural curiosity and empathy, we can join them on the adventurous path of growing into the world anew – rather than sitting alone on our adult and supposedly detached throne.

jungle-sea bees
speak only as a
swarm.

each knows
but
one word.

From my booklet for L.

What do you see?

Ich wünsche Dir schöne Geschenke im Winter.
I'm wishing you beautiful gifts in winter.
Und schöne Schmetterlinge und Hasen in tot, die man anlangen kann.
And beautiful butterflies and rabbits in dead, which one can touch.
Sonst die ganze Welt in ganz ganz schön blau.
Else all the world in all all-beautiful blue.

Early Exchange

Establishing a Bond

We had our very first common world-observation when he was a baby, only a few months old. We stayed the night at my mother's house and in the early morning, my sister brought him to the room where F. and I were sleeping. L. had just been feeded and was happy but wide awake, so we could easily give an extra portion of sleep to his sleep deprivated parents. We lay him in between us. He had a huge cartwheel-like pacifier in his face on which he sucked and smacked while his eyes were curiously wandering through the room. F. had a sip of sparkling water and we only realized by L.'s captivated gaze, that the water's bubbles and swirls had caught some first sunbeams, slanting in through the window, turning the banal plastic bottle into a firework of blinking lights. For at least 30 minutes, the three of us lay on our backs, F. and I taking turns in swaying the bottle as long as our arm muscles would let us, and we admired this unspectacular spectacle, mesmerized by each others mesmerization.

Shortly after that, when I was dearly missing my little friend, I went back to my tested cure of heartaches and made a little booklet for L. with pictures of a bottle, that I shook below the golden leaves of an autumnal linden tree. I made two copies again, one for L., one for me. Of course, it was at least as much a gift for myself as it was a gift to L. – and it worked out only in a limited way, as he was not yet able to really receive it. I don't know if this second booklet still exists and I'm wondering if I should weaken my self-imposed rules in this case and print it again for L. when I feel he can actually rejoice in such gift.

When he was three years old, he asked my sister to send me the poem (on the left) via sms. I was moved to tears. I had spent days creating toys for him, had tried to inspire him, had tried to understand what he saw, thought or wished for and get close by all possible means. And of course he had answered by accepting and joining my play offerings. But this was the first time I realized that he consciously moved towards me inside this sphere of poetic play, that he had thought of me although I was far away and he had actively reached out. He cared for me and expressed this in the most individual, artistic and poetic way.

don‘t
underestimate

the stale rest
at the bottom of
the bottle.

Text and image from our project “Ismya“

What can I give to you?

“...Luring Dino jumped to the side in shock and could hardly believe her eyes:

Those two brave men weren’t fighting a wild dragon – no, they were fighting each other because neither of them wanted the other to claim victory over the great Isyma!

Isyma, who still had the best view of the spectacle, was delighted: It had been ages since there had been such a wild show outside her window! With her fiery snout, she popped herself a bowl of popcorn and settled back into her lookout.

Fritz, the Knight of the Dragon, and Rudolf the Pirate were barely recognizable anymore! All you could really see was a giant pink cloud of dust, from which a sword, a piece of knight’s armor, or the pirate’s hat would occasionally pop out – only to vanish again in the swirl of the battle....”

Ismya

Finding Freedom in the Stories We Invent

For his fifth birthday, my gift to L. was to write a book together. I brought some noble-looking hardcover clip-folder, paper, pencils and some pink shiny cardboard I had found, so we could start right away. From the cardboard we cut out the title: ismya. Wondering what this could mean, it turned out to be the name of a pink dragon lady.

I asked him, who or what should play a role inside our story, and all the usual suspects of a childrens‘ book appeared: There was Fritz the daredevil dragon knight and his horse “Lockende Dino“ (“Curly/Alluring Dinosaur“), some fire brigade, Rudolf the Pirate, a somehow queer wolf called Rolf, who actually longed to be a dragon, as well as some smart little mole-dwarfs – just to name a few.

We took notes about how the story should go and in the meantime, when I was on the train back to Vienna or just after a videocall, I formulated the story and wrote our book. The next time we met or spoke, we printed the text and put it in the folder, so I could read it to him like a “real book“ and we discussed how to continue. It was a lot of fun, I think for both of us. I dearly enjoyed writing the book – I did not consider this a piece of art, there was no audience but L. and me and we both joyfully dived into the world we made up. And from chapter to chapter, it became more and more specific and individual. L. understood, that in our story, we could move to any direction that pleased us and if there was a problem, we would invent the solution. And I did not just provide a framework, as I would in any professional context, but I allowed myself to just jump into the story as he did, to contribute ideas and shifts and elaborations on the sketches we had written together. I even did some illustrations, which I‘d never consider artistically or technically anyhow considerable, but that was irrelevant: I had fun painting them and L. was overly pleased to see what we had both made up being visualized.

After some months he all of a sudden declared: “You know, this story is actually old now. We should start something new!“. So we wrote the end for Ismya and for his next birthday, I brought five printed versions that I had ordered from a self-publishing-company, so we could give them away to our readers – my mother/L.‘s grandmother and some of his friends. We were both very proud.

when a story is old, begin another.

Ursula K. Le Guin

“Nobody can do anything very much, really, alone. What a child needs, what we all need, is to find some other people who have imagined life along lines that make sense to us and allow some freedom, and listen to them. Not hear passively, but listen.” (Le Guin, 2016a: 44)

I suppose we all suffer from our conscious mind, which separates us from one another and expels us from the Garden of Eden. The way back – the way of overcoming existential solitude – lies in finding reassurance that we are not alone by reconciling our experiences and thoughts with those of others. If you see what I see, then we are probably together in this. And if we imagine something together, bring into existence something that has not been there before, we create a materialized bond that can never be broken.

There is something particularly magical about bonding in this way with a child. It feels a bit like outwitting the loss of time – re-entering one’s own childhood and leaving a trace of one’s old soul in the child’s young heart.

Octavia Butler

“‚And those who leave – Toaht and Akjai – you’ll never see them again?‘

‚I won’t. At some time in the distant future, a group of my descendants might meet a group of theirs. I hope that will happen. Both will have divided many times. They’ll have acquired much to give one another.‘ ‚They probably won’t even know one another. They’ll remember this division as mythology if they remember it at all.‘

‚No, they’ll recognize one another. Memory of a division is passed on biologically. I remember every one that has taken place in my family since we left the homeworld.‘

‚Do you remember your homeworld itself? I mean, could you get back to it if you wanted to? Go back?‘

His tentacles smoothed again.

‚No, Lilith, that’s the one direction that’s closed to us. This is our homeworld now.‘“ (Butler, 2022: 89f.)

The extraterrestrial species called the Oankali in Octavia Butler’s Xenogenesis trilogy have no need for language, literature, or art. They join one another through their tentacles, transmitting experiences, thoughts, and emotions without mediation. Humans, however, remain bound to words, images, and sounds. Until an Oankali ship passes by, we (as artists) must continue to weave our fragile transmissions – trying to touch one another across the gap that separates us.

Photo by Nirual Kenabru

Skype with L.

How can we be close?

Der Bär aus dem Dschungelmeer

Nirual Takes Over

The next story was meant to be about the “Bär aus dem Dschungelmeer“ – a rhyme in German, something like “the bear from the djungle-sea“ in English. From the very first sentences, I realized things had turned into something completely different.

Our first session for this story took place online, just after the first Covid lockdown began. L. asked for privacy – the laptop was placed beneath his duvet and the door had to be closed. Then he began to whisper: “Die neue Geschichte muss leise geflüstert werden, bedrohlich, wo viel Wind dabei rauskommt.” – “The new story has to be quietly whispered, threateningly, with much wind coming out.” What he told me afterwards was – in my opinion – of unique and genuine poetic force.

He articulated philosophical reflections on being in and relating to the world from the perspective of a six-year-old. He offered an explanatory model of the world that I considered as fragile as it was strong – something no adult could ever express.

He found words to describe what I understood as a deep awareness of existential solitude – for example the image of running oceans flowing over shady grounds, ceasing to exist as individuals and merging into one being once they collide. They will be one forever, but they lose their ability to walk.

He reflected on language, writing, and death – just before learning to read and write himself: the animals populating those oceans lie down on the ocean floor to die, where they become letters. But there is only one being able to read these messages – a bear living atop a hollow tree filled with honey. For anyone else, these writings would be either too big or too small.

The human understanding of dimensions, whether temporal or spatial, is radically challenged: there are three hundred trillion bees, each as small as a bacterium. They live, compressed into a tiny bucket, forming a spiky ball behind the universe. They can overcome that distance in the blink of an eye, but sometimes they move as slowly as a bumblebee asleep.

There is a strong dependency between species: the bees provide honey for the bear, but they need him to bring them back home by bouncing their ball down from his tree. Such dependency and interspecies care does not come without threat and eeriness: the bees have stings as long as one of L.’s hairs and as hard as granite, so they cannot be touched. They are also individually very strong, but can only speak, function, and live as a swarm: each bee knows only one word.

I realized I could not – as I had done before – mash up L.’s words into some cute children’s story. I felt artistically challenged: I wanted to contribute equally to our co-creation. Framing it as a sweet magical fantasy would have been easy, but it would not have done justice to his literary ingenuity. I wanted to respond in an artistically equal way. And I wanted to handle this poetic voice in a way that would also protect it from being belittled by whichever audience might encounter it. I thought these delicately expressed thoughts contributed a perspective that questioned any understanding of being in the world from scratch.

But sharing this intimate conversation was not an option and would have undermined its meaning. I did not want to push L. onto a stage – this is the first

instance in which I publish a screenshot of a videocall, and thus a picture of him at that time. Of course only after asking his permission – something that, now that he is 11 years old and more distant from that moment, is some-what easier.

I wanted to keep our intimacy protected and really just share the poetry that might be of genuine interest for a public audience. This interest should not be deceived by the cuteness of little L., his sweet giggles and high-pitched voice – and least of all by any child clichés I might (consciously or unconsciously) project onto him.

So, at first, I transcribed our chats meticulously. Next, I cleared the text to preserve only the pure gems of his expression. I am aware that, regarding the question of my "artistic methodology," it would have been more telling to show our process: my asking, our misunderstandings, our various attempts at understanding and being understood, of inspiring and gently moving forward. But my interest was not to analyze my educational, participatory, or communicative concept, but to elaborate a co-creative piece. To do so, I tried tenderly to remove the alluring cuteness that could blur the view of its artistic quality – without bending it – in order to voice this particular child's perspective without faking "adult art."

What I gained was a poetic piece of text, and at first I did not know what to do with it. As mentioned above, there was no need to add further words, and my poor painting skills were no real option. But I wanted to provide a framework – something that would both open up and somehow protect his thoughts. So I decided to build an atmospheric sound space around his words, sometimes intersecting, sometimes forming a background, sometimes gently expanding the literary space. And of course I recorded the text as he had defined it: in a whispering voice.

To involve him in shaping the audio as well, I put together a Fóley kit for him and – also online – we did recording sessions of sounds that we later used in the piece. As a pre-schooler, L. was never particularly interested in drawing, painting, or bricolage. His imaginations were so precise and perfectionist that he was never satisfied with any visual outcome. Working with language and abstract sounds suited his disposition much better: the gap between conception and form is implicit there and therefore not a problem.

In a back-and-forth game, we enjoyed each other's misunderstandings. He explained his ideas to me as precisely as possible, while I tried as assiduously as possible to understand and then explain back what I had understood, asking questions to further develop our poetic worlds. More often than not, noticing a misunderstanding made us laugh and opened up new threads of thought that would otherwise have been inaccessible.

Working with sound was similar: we recorded small noises and, once detached from their material origin, listened closely to discover new, "wrong" meanings. Like Fóley artists, we created acoustic spaces where we could meet despite living far apart: the flap of a rag becoming a heartbeat, L.'s breath a thunderstorm, a dripping tap a stalactite cave…

Fóley-suitcase for L.

public colloquium 2020

audioplay with subtitles

Fóley session via Skype

the gap between
you and me

is the reason why
we‘re not alone.

Mariella Greil

Claire Bishop

“The audio piece ‚Der Bär aus dem Dschungelmeer‘ by Verena Faißt and her nephew L. is a magic pearl fostered in the depths of the walking oceans. It invites the listener into a world full of wonders – or, one could say, into a wonderful land – where mole dwarfs dig their way from story to story, weaving a complex poetic fabric made of whispers about honey rain and otherworldly, charming creatures. The sound work is spacious; it leaves room for resonance and is artistically articulate, especially in its silences. It has the witchery to gently touch and tickle my childhood memories in a sensate way, tenderly opening up the imaginative world of a young, wise soul. My favourite line remains: ‚No bees, just honey.‘

If this applied to academic contextualisation, I could agree with Verena Miedl-Faißt in situating her “invisible elephant” research alongside the writings of Donna Haraway, Jean-Henri Fabre, and Rachel Carson. Yet since we live as artist-researchers in a land with bees – and butterflies that float or sting (as Muhammad Ali knows) – I would encourage her to deepen, articulate, and argue the critique of the discarded areas of potential contextualisation. In this short explanatory excerpt, I am not yet convinced. There is value in knowing one’s ancestral chart, which – from my perspective at least – undoubtedly includes fields such as socially engaged art, pedagogy, and participatory art. I wonder what the (hidden) agendas are in dissociating from these fields. Is it to prove the uniqueness of the research? To claim a space that is taken as it is, without judgement? Is that ever possible – or why shapeshift into posthumanist philosophy? Or is it all always already a game? What happens when the elephant becomes visible? And why can intimate moments not be shared?“ (Greil, 2020, unpublished review)

Mariella Greil wrote this beautiful review of my presentation during one of our public colloquia. The first part was sweet as honey, the second stung like a jungle-sea bee. I actually tried to detach my practice from what is called participatory or socially engaged art – and sought contextual anchorage in less obvious contexts. And of course, I struggled to argue such a stance. I never wanted to hide from or withdraw in the face of possible criticism. But maybe that is not the whole truth: not on my own behalf, but certainly when it came to my beloved nephew. I could hardly endure any critique concerning his work. In this sense, Mariella was right: I sought serious reception, but at least subconsciously I would always protect my young co-creators, of whom I was so proud, against critical judgment. This lack of critical distance is actually a classic issue in participatory art, as even Claire Bishop writes about her struggles when working on “Artificial Hells” – her historiography of the field:

“The more one becomes involved, the harder it is to be objective – especially when a central component of a project concerns the formation of personal relationships, which inevitably proceed to impact on one’s research.” (Bishop, 2012: 6)

There seems to be a general problem concerning the reception and criticism of participatory art, as “socially collaborative practices are all perceived to be equally important artistic gestures of resistance: there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond. While sympathetic to the latter ambition, I would argue that it is also crucial to discuss, analyse and compare this work critically as art, since this is the institutional field in which it is endorsed and disseminated, even while the category of art remains a persistent exclusion in debates about such projects.” (Bishop, 2012: 13)

I think – at least in my perception – one can compare such a common, uncritical approach to participatory art to a mother’s (or loving aunt’s) gaze: I remember thriving on basic trust that my mother would always love and encourage what I did, as she loved me unconditionally – something I am deeply thankful for. But I also remember a certain frustration, even as a child, when I felt that it actually didn’t matter what the drawing I made for her birthday looked like: she would always be moved to tears, and I suspected that she might not be able to perceive whether I had achieved something particular or not. My mere intention of making something for her – or just the fact that my drawing was a creation of her beloved child – was enough.

Again, in Claire Bishop’s words: “(…) the status of the artist’s intentionality (e.g. their humble lack of authorship) is privileged over a discussion of the work’s artistic identity. Ironically, this leads to a situation in which not only collectives but individual artists are praised for their conscious authorial renunciation.” (Bishop, 2012: 23)

I think this tendency is what led me to “hide” behind my co-creators within the video projects. In order not to be suspected of instrumentalizing the students I was working with, I insisted on precisely such a form of conscious authorial renunciation. Yet I suppose that such a stance actually has the opposite effect: true co-creation can never occur if I do not expose myself on the same stage, alongside my co-creators. “Providing a stage” inevitably remains a paternalistic act.

But moreover – if participatory art is judged only with an uncritical gaze, there is an understandable urge among professional artists (even those realizing participatory projects) to separate their non-participatory art from what results from participatory processes – as, if lacking such good intentionality, one needs to compete through other qualities – which, in art contexts, obviously and commonly concern artistic form. I suppose that, to ensure such distinction, artefacts from participatory projects are often shaped and framed in a way that deliberately presents them as “not really art” – to be looked at, if at all, benevolently: No curatorial decisions are made based on the actual artistic form of the results; everyone involved must be included, and the higher the number of “participants,” the more credible and legitimate the project appears. Neither the individual artistic thought and expression is given an appropriate frame, nor is any collective piece carefully shaped and realized.

Thus, such a benevolent, uncritical gaze actually runs the risk of downgrading and disguising not only the artistic qualities within the process, such as “making social dialogue a medium” (Bishop, 2012: 22), but also counteracts the proclaimed ambition of taking the participants’ contributions — arising from individual artistic thinking and practice — seriously, or even causes them to fall short of their potential. Thereby the work is actually deprived of its agency.

In my own projects the collective piece – whatever medium or form it may take – is the shared focus. It embodies the insight gained together in the only truly shareable

way. The collective artistic articulation is the very purpose through which these temporary constellations of "we" become manifest. I don't play at making art; I want to make art together – sometimes through play. The resulting artefacts are not interchangeable, just as the constellations of people who create them are not. Yet the artistic qualities of what is shaped together can differ as much from one another as from any other form of artistic expression. Thus, even if I were to find a context in which I could wholeheartedly position "my" artistic research, it could never serve as a reliable source of suitable criteria for critically engaging with the individual projects. In fact, every co-creative project exists within its own context, depending strongly on the situation, on who my collaborators are, and on what we are actually striving for together.

The challenge I see is rather to find a framing — a "Haltung", an approach to co-creative work with non-professionals — as well as ways to share such work that, on the one hand, bring its artistic qualities and agency to their full potential, while, on the other hand, not compromising the work of professional artists — neither those involved nor artists in general.

On my way to the development of a contribution to the intersecting fields of art, pedagogy and research in that sense, I keep on the track of my subjective methodology and try to understand my ambivalent relation to what is called "participatory art": What is connecting me to the field but also making me withdraw? A good starting point therefore seems to be Claire Bishop's definition, on which she based her book:

"A definition of participation in which people constitute the central artistic medium and material in the manner of theatre and performance. (...) The artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of situations; the work of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product is reconceived as an ongoing or long-term project with an unclear beginning and end; while the audience, previously conceived as a 'viewer' or 'beholder,' is now repositioned as a co-producer or participant." (Bishop, 2012: 2)

I am rather familiar with the context of fine arts, so I am not entirely sure what the concept of material describes "in the manner of theatre and performance," but I feel a strong emotional reaction to this sentence. In my self-critical understanding, I never conceive of my co-creators as material. They are not subjects of my research. I even try not to see them as "participants" – or, in a school context, as "students" (although, of course, these role patterns and the responsibilities they entail cannot, and should not, be fully dissolved).

Rather, they are equal counterparts who contribute what I alone could not. Each collaborator is irreplaceable (or at least this is my aim): what L. and I did cannot be transferred to just any other artist–child relationship. Nor did he qualify as my artistic vis-à-vis by belonging to some minority or particular group. L. is simply L.

And the reasons why we worked together are the same as the reasons one chooses any collaborator: because we complement one another, because there are common interests, sympathy, good vibes, love. Our material is the world itself and the opportunities it offers to relate. We converge through poetic means, finding threads of all kinds that we can weave into something new together – something that could not exist without us.

My artistic education provides me with tools and skills my young co-creators do not have. We necessarily need each other to do what we do. This may result in "finite, discrete objects," sometimes even "commodifiable products," or in brittle, ephemeral traces with unclear beginnings and endings. My collaborators are not my audience either; but together we seek an audience, sometimes more, sometimes less. Addressing an audience elevates our play into something meaningful: someone should understand – or maybe misunderstand, and thereby understand something else. Who this audience is cannot be predefined but is always situational: sometimes fellow researchers, sometimes the art world, sometimes the micro-public of a school community, or just someone's little brother.

I can relate to the conception of an artist as a "producer of situations" (Bishop, 2012: 2). I perceive, anticipate, and try to think through tools and materials through the eyes, hearts, and hands of those I work with. Sometimes we truly explore things together that I have no knowledge of, but most of the time I suggest tools or media that I can handle. Photography, for example, is the medium in which I am professionally trained. I find that I need my skills and experience even more when someone else is going to take the picture than when I take it myself: I must anticipate what my partner might see, be capable of, and want; I prepare and explain just enough to avoid frustration – while leaving space for co-creation.

What guides me is a stance that combines artistic curiosity with pedagogical responsibility. This double movement of openness and care also shapes my practice concerning ethical questions of sharing authorship with children. As equal co-creators, their voices must be taken seriously while at the same time being protected from the risks of exposure in professional art contexts.

In this sense, I feel at home rather in the overlapping fields of artistic research, aesthetic education, and what might be called resonance-based artistic pedagogy: practices that seek transformation through encounter without dissolving the boundaries of responsibility. With Hartmut Rosa (see also p. 21), who coined the term "Resonance Pedagogy," a resonant relationship is shaped by openness to affection, to the uncontrollable, and to transformation – but also by self-efficacy and responsibility: the capability to actively respond (Rosa, 2018: 38f).

I am trying to respond also to Mariella's critique and to position myself within a field to which I am obviously connected. I know I am not the only one struggling with questions of shared authorship, with the ethics of working with children, with the tensions between structure and freedom, and between artistic and pedagogical quality.

You cannot choose your family – so of course I am related to the named fields; but you can choose your friends, your heroes, and your muses. Sometimes bringing contexts into unusual or seemingly nonsensical correlation can yield the uncontrollable findings I am after – or, as it is put in the "Manifesto of Artistic Research":

"Aesthetic practices map out non-scientific epistemologies by drawing their form of knowledge not from syntheses but rather from the sensuous relations of non-predicative conjunctions in which their insights merge and coincide." (Henke et al., 2020: 39)"

Manifesto of Artistic Research

sometimes
benevolent

is another word
for lazy.

it is lonely
between contexts.

“A few years ago, I called two friends of mine, a couple, and asked Basil, who answered the phone, what Adrian, the other friend, was doing. Basil said: ‘Oh, um, Adrian is doing a tree search. He’s doing a tree search right now.’ And I thought: ‘What is a tree search? I don’t know what a tree search is.’ This unsettled me a little, and then suddenly I thought: ‘Ah yes, of course, tree search – that’s an internet term. You start with a word and follow its branches into different directions, you follow a sub-branch, and so on. That’s a tree search. You can refine the search in different ways, and – of course, of course I know what a tree search is.’ At the end of our conversation, I asked Basil: ‘So what is Adrian actually searching for?’ And he replied: ‘What do you mean?’ I said: ‘Well, you said he’s doing a tree search.’ To which he said: ‘No, I didn’t say that. I said he’s making a T-shirt.’ What happened in that moment – because it is a moment – is that an anxiety arose: the fear of not understanding the world (or this word); and a panic that triggered an imaginative leap to close the gap, to jump over what we don’t know” (Kentridge, 2018: 57f., translation from German by the author.)

Within the framework of “The Octopus Programme”, (see also p. 99f) I had the opportunity to visit “The Centre for the Less Good Idea” in Johannesburg, founded and co-directed by William Kentridge and Bronwyn Lace, together with artists from the neighborhood.

Even before going there, I already admired Kentridge’s way of speaking about making art and “Making Sense of the World” (c.f. Louisiana Channel, 2014) – and perhaps the “tree search” anecdote illustrates why I can relate: embracing the “Less Good Idea”, the misunderstanding, and making the gap itself prolific is what I would call artistic curiosity.

William Kentridge

What I did not expect was that my experiences at the Centre would also feel like finding home in my search for the caring dimension of co-creation. Our group of Octopus fellows was invited to participate for two days in a large workshop where around thirty artists gathered and entered moments of artistic and collaborative ignition. The situation was, in fact, competitive: producing a project under the patronage of William Kentridge is of course a major opportunity for emerging artists in South Africa.

Yet the atmosphere was imbued with mutual artistic trust, courage, and care. This may partly reflect a mindset somewhat different from the Central European academic context I am familiar with. But I also believe it is due to the approach of the Centre itself: its main aim is to support the artists working there, to enable their extraordinary artistic force to bloom – not to produce branded “Centre productions,” and certainly not to serve as a William Kentridge factory.

With great attentiveness, all unforeseeable artistic processes are documented from the very beginning through to the finished work. When artists develop individual productions in smaller groups, they are provided with space, equipment, and support, but are free afterwards to take their works elsewhere – having in hand a beautiful and professional documentation, but, as far as I understood, no restrictions in presenting them on outside stages. They are cared for so that they can care for each other, and for collaborative moments of artistic magic.

Yet they do not stop there or linger in those comfortable moments of resonance. Rather, as Kentridge put it during our stay: “this is where the hard work begins” – to trace back the uncontrollable magic and find ways of bringing some of it to the stage, to make it shareable.

Translated into my own practice, this is what distinguishes my artistic research from other school projects or simply well-spent playtime with children I am related to: I try to co-creatively make those special moments shareable, to find an artistic form that allows others to retrace the otherwise inaccessible moments of sense-making I encounter with children.

if you want to be a
good artist,

be generous.

BA-project 2013:
Vinyl cover “Rapsak rüf Ytrapretsnom“

Where can we go?

Rapsak rüf Ytrapretsnom

Working for a 1-Person-Audience

L. and me kept making things and exploring the world together whenever we could. I was intrigued by what we found and longed to share it. It felt like the core of poetry: ephemeral glimpses of being in the world, grasped in a Socratic dialogue. But who was our audience? Who could receive our articulations in an appropriate way? Our family was biased by parental love and concern, far stronger than any artistic interest. I tried to find stages and resonant spaces within art and artistic research – wherever I could access suitable contexts. But those contexts, which I myself struggled with, were definitely inaccessible and actually uninteresting for L. I could not even seriously ask him for permission to publish anything there, because no matter how hard I tried to explain: how could he imagine what I was talking about?

Just before his fifth birthday, L. had gotten a little brother – whom he adored. The newborn had to “put his big brother to bed” and, being of a patient nature, endured his brother’s endless cuddles. This little brother, too young to be spoiled by family affairs or competition, became our perfect audience for the moment. Still during the first Covid lockdown, when we could not meet and children as well as adults were bored and unsettled by the strange situation, we met online to build a monster-party mobile from clay for little brother K. I made some characters in Vienna and L. created others at his home in Bavaria, assisted of course by my sister. I sent mine by mail, and they were united above K.’s bassinet. Since we were already immersed in storytelling, each monster received a name and a short description.

In addition, we spent some of those long lockdown days sending each other sound riddles back and forth. We made “field recordings” in our living rooms, and the other had to guess the origin of the captured sounds. Of course, well-invented guesses were at least as welcome as the “correct answer.” Close listening thus became an important part of our shared time. With sound waves touching the other’s eardrum, our families found closeness in the distance. And when we finally met again in person, after far too long, listening together helped us reconnect quickly and easily.

During one of my visits in real life, L. improvised a melody on the family piano. He was not trained in any way, but being a sensitive and audiophile child, he did not just make noise: he followed the line of keystrokes, the sharp beginning of each note blending into the fading sound of the previous tone. It reminded me of a child’s way of drawing, when (as my friend Diego Mosca once put it) consciousness does not indicate where to go, but rather the pencil traces a new track of consciousness on the go. Reflecting the circling mobile and our by then elaborate practice of storytelling, I used this short piano improvisation and wove an audio piece around the short texts about the mobile’s characters. As with his words, I did not alter his melody or apply any effects; I simply tried to crystallize and interweave what seemed meaningful, resonant, and poetic to me. To find the right form for this co-creative piece, I made two vinyl samples – as I considered this a more dignified format than a bodiless digital file. Moreover, I could keep one for myself and give one to L. – as I had done with my printed booklets – instead of publishing it to an anonymous audience.

After a close discussion and a plea for his permission, I included this work as part of my final thesis for my Bachelor of Education.

Anna the Fang-Filer

Anna the Fang-Filer always lives
somewhere different.
Sometimes under a tree,
and sometimes in the water.
The Fang-Filer is made entirely of liquid metal.
As soon as something enters the liquid metal,
a layer of metal around it hardens.
That's how Anna the Fang-Filer
made the shovels for the mole-dwarfs.
Since then, the mole-dwarfs have been friends
with Anna the Fang-Filer.
Anna the Fang-Filer eats only rowanberries.

Hansi, the Star Acrobat

Hansi is a monster.
He lives on the sun.
And he's as fast as light.
Hansi eats the wrong sunrays.
Because the sun is actually like a circle
with rays spaced evenly all around.
And Hansi eats the ones
that stick out the wrong way.
In his free time,
Hansi is a star acrobat in the deep-sea circus.
His special trick is to coil himself up on a rope,
then spin really fast
and make the rays inside his belly
shine as brightly as possible.

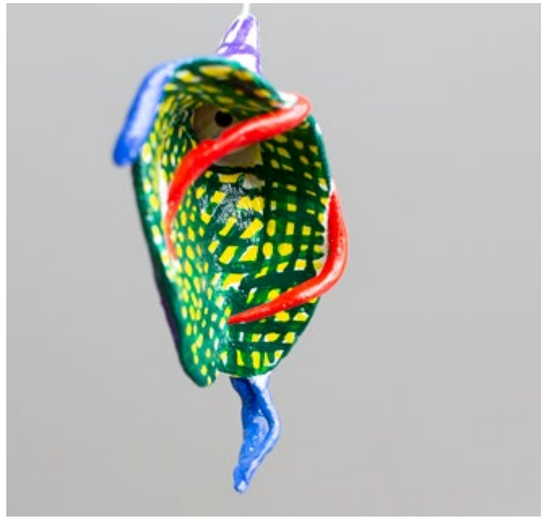
**White Arthur,
the Yellow-Blue-Checkered Fire-Breather**

The Yellow-Blue-Checkered Fire-Breather
is yellow-blue-checkered. His fire too.
Everything White Arthur burns is
yellow-blue-checkered afterward.
White Arthur is a water animal
but he can also be on land.
He lives alone.
But it can also happen that he has a female
and his children at his side.
At first, the children look like a giant coronavirus.

Most of the time,
White Arthur lies like a ray on the ground
and waits for his prey. When he then blows,
a lot of yellow-greenish smoke appears.
He mainly eats seagulls.
With his smoke, he startles the seagulls.
Because of that, they stop flapping their wings
and fall into the water, and he can eat them.
Mmm, tasty!

White Arthur lives in the Red Sea,
which is not red at all.
But White Arthur leaves behind red sweat.
So when he sweats a lot, the Red Sea is red.
During whale hunting, White Arthur starts sweating.
Every second, 300 liters of sweat come out.
The older he gets, the less color he has,
because he sweats out the color.
Often, starting at 30 years old,
he is completely see-through.

For whale fighting, he lies on the ground,
and when a whale swims above him,
he flips around in a flash and grabs it.



Then he turns back into the mud with his prey
and presses it in
and makes a cross over it with his claw.
That way he knows that there is prey of his.
One only knows how big the claws of White Arthur
are, because pieces of the whales sometimes wash
ashore. By their scars you can see
that Arthur's claws are one kilometer long.

In his free time, White Arthur flies a round.
But he cannot fly – he sucks in seagulls
just under the surface of the water
and then throws lots of lassos.
Then he lets them fly back up
and flies along with them.
The seagulls then scream:
"Let go, you giant tentacle!"
But it's not a tentacle at all, it's a lasso!

The Trunk-Tuber

The Trunk-Tuber is not in the underwater circus.
He lives in the air –
because he has an invisible propeller
that allows him to fly.
With his trunk, he can suck up plankton.
So he always goes into the water to eat.
His swimming friend is Hans Sunbeam Lightning Fritz.

The Two-Sausaged Sausager

The two-sausaged sausager sausages his sausage
onto his sausagey sausages. You old gurscht!
The two-sausaged sausager lives on a bacter,
which is as big as a blue whale.

Hans Sunbeam Lightning Fritz

Hans Sunbeam Lightning Fritz,
also called Tangle-Pillar-Fritz,
is the best friend of the Trunk-Tuber.
Together they have a hobby:
long-distance swimming.
They swim (or actually dive) to visit
the Circus-Spinner Drehberg
and steal a few cranberries from
his underwater cranberry island.
Hans Sunbeam is also a member
of the underwater circus.
His trick is that he spins himself around a pole
with his silver ball
and then whirls around like a propeller.

The Gold-Blue-Yellow Coconut: Spherical Heinz

Heinz is actually as small as an atom.
He always wanders
from drinking glass to drinking glass.
In every drinking glass, there are trillions of hundreds
of gold-blue-yellow coconuts.
That's why L. drinks so little.

one

can be a good
audience.

The Palace of Mansa Musa – painting by Nirual Kenabru

How can I hold you?

The House of Mansa Musa

It was night when they disappeared.
The palace of Mansa Musa
walks, hops in place.
But from the inside, it looks like it's standing still.

Behind it lies the enchanted city.
All the houses are empty.
They dance, but never touch.

What does "enchanted" even mean?
I always thought it was sort of magical...
Just deserted. Suddenly so deserted.

The book says that suddenly everyone was gone.
Some believe it, some don't.
The houses never leave the city.
Except for one, which circles the border.

Nobody knows where that could be.
With God, you also don't know where he is.
In the sky or where.
Or if he even exists. I don't know.

I mean, I don't know if I believe in God,
but I believe I do.

The sun dogs stayed behind, then flew to the sun.
But when they were on the sun...
They're also a bit enchanted,
suddenly they couldn't fly anymore.

But the sun dogs don't walk on foot,
but move like the houses in the city:

Two hops and then one spin around themselves,
two hops, spin around themselves,
two hops, spin around themselves.

The castle sets the rhythm for the dance.
They dance on a thin layer of water.
And it splashes.

The control is the flap on the oven.
They are powered by the fire.
Every year a fire dog comes and lights a new fire.
Then it's just a small flame.
That would be enough, but would soon go out.

The mechanism is the secret.

If they touched, there would be a house accident,
Boom crash fadaboom blumm.
Those who want to come together repel each other.

The water is fresh water.
Soda without flavor.
The trees in the city unfortunately died
because of that.
Their roots couldn't absorb real water anymore.

Everything got all mushed up..
Mirror-smooth sugar water surface.
Sludgy like ice.

The houses leave only small gaps,
but it splashes anyway.

long stings
make cuddling a
challenge.

Lockdown after lockdown passed, and we continued meeting online. Sometimes I brought something I had found interesting – like newly published images of the sun's surface – or he brought something, such as a painting of the Palace of Mansa Musa that he had made with his father.

At first, I did not realize that Mansa Musa was not L.'s invention. When I later found out and researched the background, I hesitated: could we use the name, or should I somehow weave in the original story of Mansa Musa, king of Mali? Yet our conversation was so meaningful without it that I found no place for it. Instead, I struggled to process the dense material that had emerged.

There was a time when I was particularly moved by L.'s words. They touched me in ways I could hardly explain – as if they grasped a longing deep within my own soul that I could not express, shaping ideas that perhaps he himself could not fully comprehend. The texts from that period, however, were not his favourites. As he told me in the summer of 2025, Ismya still was the most exciting project for him – the book which, to my understanding, was the least poetic but the most playful and childlike. It was lighthearted. We giggled constantly while inventing the story.

The "new stories," the ones not to be spoken aloud, carried heavy loads of death, solitude, and dystopia: crustacea sending final messages by becoming letters in death – with no control over whether their words would ever find a reader; sundogs dying paw to paw, fading into starlight; deserted houses, longing to touch but forever trapped in a mechanical theatre among dead trees on a pavement of tasteless lemonade. Where is God? Who writes the stories we can believe in?

It became increasingly difficult to handle our work with both adequacy and care. The more relevant it seemed to become, the more intimate, fragile, and vulnerable it also felt.

I tried to continue working with sound and audioscapes, but there was no "prompt to whisper" included, and I have no trained voice; I am not a singer. Whenever I read the text aloud, it always sounded to me like L.'s aunt reading a children's book – which felt wrong.

I asked my friend Sabine Marte, a performance artist and singer with a strong, decidedly unchildlike voice, to record the Sundogs and the Mansa Musa texts for us. She did, and gave me all the recordings, including every attempt and failed version. It was strange to hear her powerful voice reading our intimate, delicate text. I was not sure whether it was good to give it such strength, or whether I felt protective of our intimacy. I tried to build an audio piece around it – but it was never finished.

When I listened to those recordings again with L. this summer (2025) – after several years – we realized that the text itself was enough: no extra sounds were needed. The fragile meaning of the words seemed to grow with every new voice and every attempt we heard. Now, at eleven, L. was able to read the text himself fluently (something that would not have been possible when we first created it), so we made a new recording together.

Sundogs, new recording 2025

"What first-person narratives have done for literature and in general for human civilization cannot be overestimated – they have completely reworked the story of the world, so that it is no longer a place for the operations of heroes and deities upon whom we can have no influence, but rather a place for people just like us, with individual histories. It is easy to identify with people who are just like us, which generates between the story's narrator and its reader or listener a new variety of emotional understanding based on empathy. And this, by its very nature, brings together and eliminates borders; (...) What we are missing – it would seem – is the dimension of the story that is the parable. For the hero of the parable is at once himself, a person living under specific historical and geographical conditions, yet at the same time he also goes well beyond those concrete particulars, becoming a kind of Everywhere Everyman. When a reader follows along with someone's story written in a novel, he can identify with the fate of the character described and consider their situation as if it were his own, while in a parable, he must surrender completely his distinctness and become the Everyman. In this demanding psychological operation, the parable universalizes our experience, finding for very different fates a common denominator. That we have largely lost the parable from view is a testament to our current helplessness." (Tokarczuk 2018)

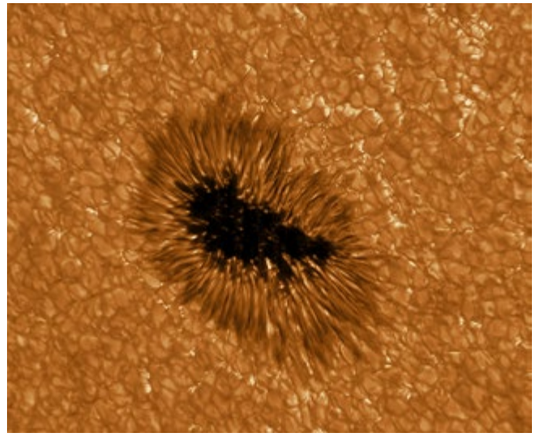
Olga Tokarczuk

Ursula K. Le Guin

"Relationship among all things appears to be complex and reciprocal – always at least two-way, back and forth. It seems that nothing is single in this universe, and nothing goes one way. In this view, we humans appear as particularly lively, intense, aware nodes of relation in an infinite network of connections, simple or complicated, direct or hidden, strong or delicate, temporary or very long-lasting. A web of connections, infinite but locally fragile, with and among everything – all beings – including what we generally class as things, objects. [...] Poetry is the human language that can try to say what a tree or a rock or a river is, that is, to speak humanly for it, in both senses of the word "for." A poem can do so by relating the quality of an individual human relationship to a thing, a rock or river or tree, or simply by describing the thing as truthfully as possible. Science describes accurately from outside; poetry describes accurately from inside. Science explicates; poetry implicates. Both celebrate what they describe. We need the languages of both science and poetry to save us from merely stockpiling endless ‚information' that fails to inform our ignorance or our irresponsibility." (Le Guin, 2016b: 6f.)

misunderstanding something

means understanding something else.



© Leibniz Institut für Sonnenphysik (KIS)

What is the right voice to speak this tale?

Sundogs

This, luckily, is long gone.

120,000 sundogs have overwhelmed the monster.
Using a bludgeon of cold sand.
One can witness the sundogs on the sly,
stealing sand from sandpits.

This, luckily, is long gone.

There is a black hole, which is a lake.
The lake is not liquid.
Lavafalls roundabout.
Someday, the lake will be gone over the lavafalls
and has-been.

This, luckily, is long gone.

There is a monster with tentacles of light, hard
enough, one can sense it.
In any case, it is wicked.
And as big as half the world.

This, luckily, is long gone.

The monster moved on to the sun;
to cart cold water into it,
so the sun grows cold
and we don't have her on earth no more.

Bluewater-Fritz spits on to the monster
through his water-side.
The fireside obviously doesn't help.
Thus he hopes to gain some time.

This, luckily, is long gone.

The monster pours water into its cave
and wants to burrow through the sun,
thus, just a thin seam will remain.
Therefore it needs to keep the entrance
to its cave as small as possible.
If accidentally it enlarges its entrance,
water will drain off again.
If it is wet and then walks on to the sun,
it creates a hole wherever it goes.
That is why the Bluewater-Fritz wets it,
so that it can not return to the sun for a while.

This, luckily, is long gone.

One can see,
how bludgeons were put over the cave.
The monster needs air, just a little.
It takes at least 20 hours,
until it does not have enough air anymore,
if there is as much air inside as in a soup bowl,
that has been tumbled over.
And the monster is quite bad at burrowing.
His cave took a year.

This, luckily, is long gone.

The air has been sucked out a little, with a pump.
Then leaves have been put over
–on the sun, they are fire-impervious and quite firm–
and nailed down with huge nails.

This, luckily, is long gone.

The monster suffocates inside his cave.
It can not tear the leaves apart.
Namely, the leaves are 10 kilometers thick.

This, luckily, is long gone.

Afterwards, they withdrew the nails out of the sun.
And plugged the cave with leaves from earth.
Then, the sun has been blazing even brighter
for two months.
Because those leaves burnt so vigourously.

This, luckily, is long gone.

The monster of light became fervor.
Like, when we die, we' become earth.

This, luckily, is long gone.

Maybe, someday the sun might make a cold ring.
Then the fervor will die down.
If fervor from the sun goes down,
it is becoming sand.
And this sand is going through the atmosphere
as chunks of sand and turns into a falling star.
All creatures, dying on the sun, turn into falling stars.
For example, there are sundogs.
Falling stars from sundogs one can identify
because sundogs always die paw to paw.
Thus, two falling stars will fly next to each other.

This, luckily, is long gone.

But they do reenact this every year.
On the first day of spring.

This is why summer is always bright.

(Miedl-Faißt & Kenabru, 2022)

at our studio

How can we go on?

Himmelsschaukel

Advantages and Disadvantages of Coming Back to Real Life

The lockdowns, luckily, were long gone and traveling became easier again. But during my visits to Bavaria, with parents, siblings, and friends also asking for their share of attention, our time together was no longer as exclusive as it had been online beneath the duvet. To continue our particular journey and remain focused, I set up a temporary studio in the former hair salon my great-aunt had bequeathed us. Yet in the post-Covid reality, with school obligations for both of us, my visits were still infrequent, and we rarely found longer stretches of time to immerse ourselves in larger projects. On a few afternoons we experimented with lino cuts, monotype prints, and larger paintings, but we never reached the same intensity as in our deep-dive online dialogues.

No longer locked down, L. also increasingly found other things to do than spend hours on Skype with his old auntie. And so it happened that the last story – about a swing shooting you into the sky and onto a planet made entirely of whipped cream – remained unfinished. Perhaps that story had simply become obsolete, as the swing actually existed: on a beautiful walk along the Lech River we discovered it at the edge of the woods, its ropes tied high into a tall tree. Swinging there almost feels like flying above the water's surface. We had each other – in real life – and the swing was there: no need to escape and meet in our other worlds.

exhibition view of our space capsules at “The Octopus“, Angewandte Interdisciplinary Lab 2022

How can we share?

These are our drafts for a perfect space capsule. Features:

- Intake capacity: 2-5 persons.
- Positioned approximately 1 meter above the ground, allowing for example to make a puzzle underneath.
- Boarding from underneath through a lockable port.
- No visible windows.
- In the centre: Gimbal with a cup of warm honey-milk (so nothing spills while swinging).

One Meter Above the Ground

Drafts for Our Space Capsule

As our artistic endeavours had become more and more “particularly lively, intense, aware nodes of relation” (Le Guin, 2016b: 6), and as I increasingly began to reflect on and involve them in my artistic research – ultimately my PhD – the urge to share our mellifluous, meandering findings kept growing. Yet even though it was just the two of us – no institution involved, no legal obligations, no rigid framework – the questions of how to transparently share authorship while at the same time protecting the child from public exposure were no less complicated.

At school or in the museum, there is always an obvious public from the start. The scope and aim of such encounters are clear. One knows where an artistic process and its outcome begin and end, and the relationship is defined – be it teacher–student or visitor–workshop leader. In contrast, L. and I simply spent time together as aunt and nephew, and at some point things emerged that – at least to me – seemed to transcend such familiar bonds. For him, however, it could hardly be clear when or why I suddenly considered something relevant — for us, or, even more so, for a distant and unimaginable audience he could not possibly conceive of.

There are general ethical concerns around such issues, even legal ones framed in copyright, guardianship, or children’s rights. But honestly, my greatest worry was that one day L. might resent me for anything I had shared.

So I tried my best. I asked for his consent regarding every glimpse I wanted to publish. I translated every presentation I gave in English into German for him, explained each word, and tried to involve him in every decision. But of course, in the end I must live with the risk that his perspective will change over the years, and that as a teenager or adult he might say: What were you thinking?? Asking a five-year-old for such consent is, in truth, absurd.

A more reasonable way of addressing these challenges was to resolve them within the artistic form. Most directly, for example, by using a pseudonym he chose instead of his real name. This artist name he gave himself allowed him to be fully credited while protecting his personal rights and ensuring that he could later disconnect himself from our projects if he wished. (Usually this issue is dealt with by using only children’s first names – but in that case one might just as well write “arbitrary child.”)

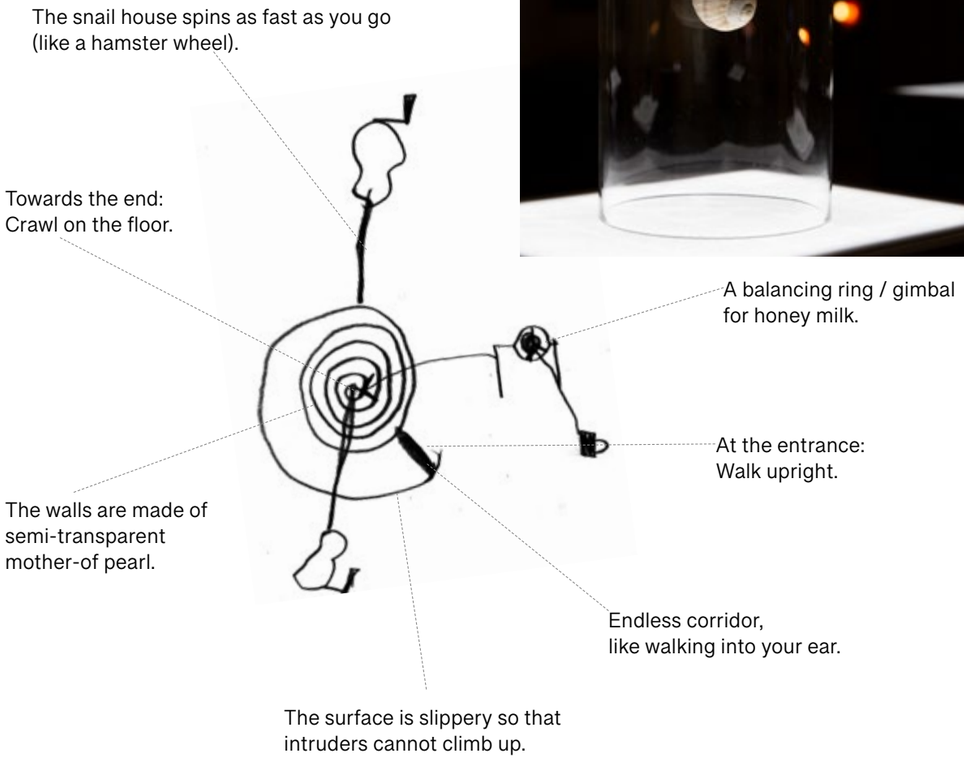
Another strategy was to find artistic forms that did not rely on him being directly seen or heard. Instead, I sought formats that would incorporate and transmit what was genuinely of artistic interest, rather than falling prey to my own love for the sweet child – which of course would bias not only my judgment but probably that of any external viewer when it came to the artistic quality of the work.

And last but not least, I always tried to consider not only my audience but also L.’s – his family, friends, and (future) schoolmates.

Still, the question remained: how to frame our body of work in general, for example within the scope of my PhD defence?

L. grew older and, to me, seemed somewhat wistfully (though perhaps this was just my projection) to leave

what it sounds like inside



behind his magical stage. Yet just before he leapt into the role of a sensible and rather rational schoolchild, we conceptualized an exhibition architecture for our work: the “Drafts for Our Space Capsule.”

We needed a form of protective encapsulation: a space that would serve both as display and as shelter – for us and for our work. Plus, L. insisted that he needed a treehouse. So we set out to design something that could be sustainably useful for both of us.

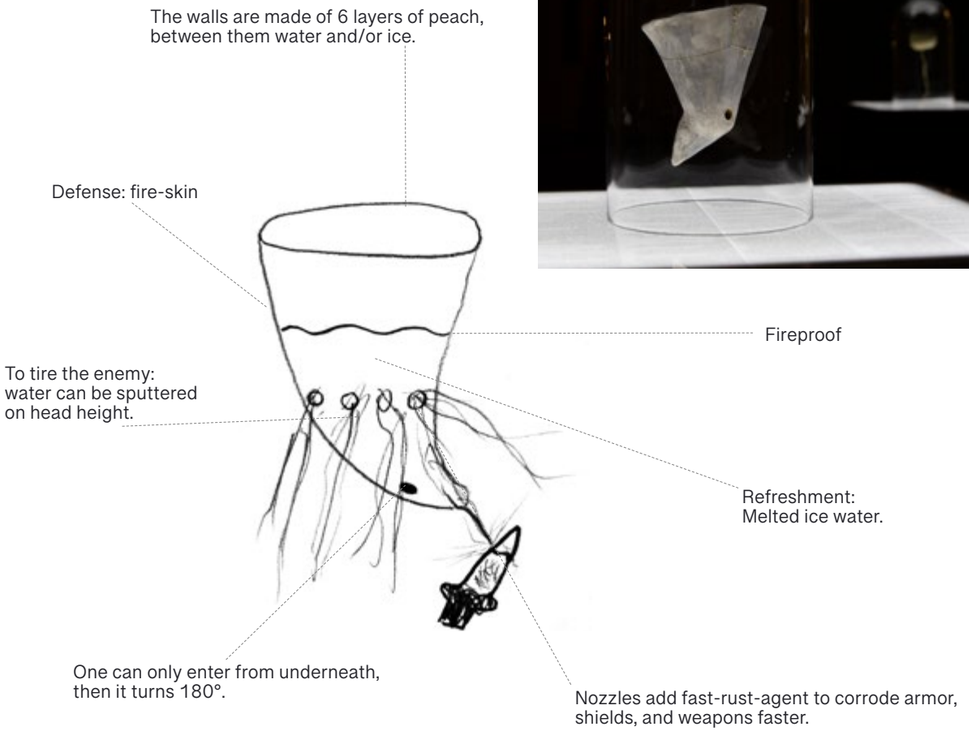
Continuing with what had worked so well before, we met online and began by searching for objects that could inspire architectural drafts. We decided to pretend we could build anything, and I promised – sincerely determined – to remain as true as possible to our utopian ideas when realizing our plans. To start with, we found a snail shell, a ball of cord, a pear, a clay incense smoker L. had made with his father, and a piece of fruticose lichen. We used these objects as “ready-made architectural models” and imagined and sketched what they would look like if enlarged to a walk-in, human scale, what special features they might include, and what they would sound like from the inside.

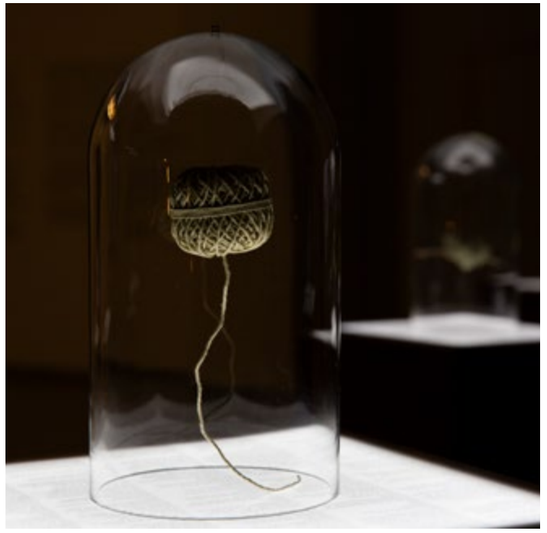
This case study became a beautiful body of work in its own right, and we were able to exhibit it twice, curated by Başak Şenova: first in Vienna, within the final exhibition of “The Octopus Programme”, and later at Zilberman Gallery in Istanbul in the group show “Sarmaşık Ivy”. They are also included in my PhD presentation.

From the exhibition catalogue “Sarmaşık Ivy”,
curated & edited by Başak Şenova at Zilberman Gallery Istanbul 2022:

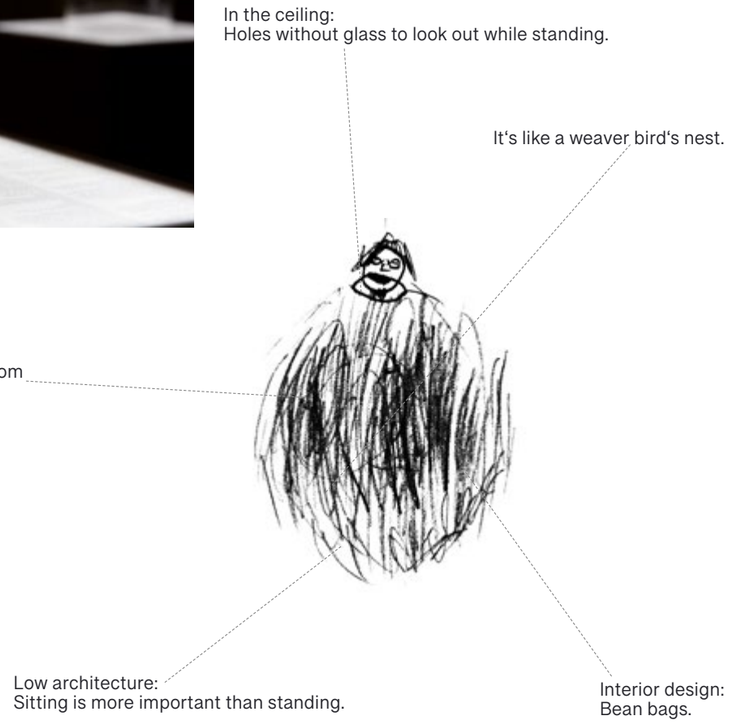
(…) Centrally staged in the main gallery is a stunning installation on methods of relative perception and states of uncertainty, entitled One Meter Above the Ground: Drafts for Our Space Capsule (2022). The artists Nirual Kenabru and Verena Miedl-Faißt, who are part of the Viennese Octopus Programme, present five everyday/botanical/fossil objects encapsulated in glass and floating in space, devoid of gravity, movement, and function: a snail shell, a ball of cord, lichen on branch, an incense smoker (clay), and a (ceramic) pear. Objects with drawings on light boxes underneath grant sketchy insights into the object’s architecture, horizontally or vertically sliced, including amusing visual remarks. The drawings are accompanied by handwritten bilingual commentaries in the boxes’ corners. Architecture, poetry, and a specially composed soundtrack create a specific performative poetry of spatial relation for each of the objects, undoing the central perspective, calling for a way of reading all around the object, even upside down upon the object’s demand. No way to grasp object and poetry at once. The fourfold texts include object descriptions and instructions how to act, move, and proceed with this object as well as how to enter it, how to exit it, what to do with it, warnings included. (…)
(Bruckstein Çoruh, 2022: 12)

what it sounds like inside





what it sounds like inside



what it sounds like inside

Two lichen branches are secret levers.
They open a door. Mark: A molded spot.

Some branches are
fragile – danger of
falling into the abyss.

The walls inside are made from fresh leaves,
and if you touch them, they turn into soft pillows.

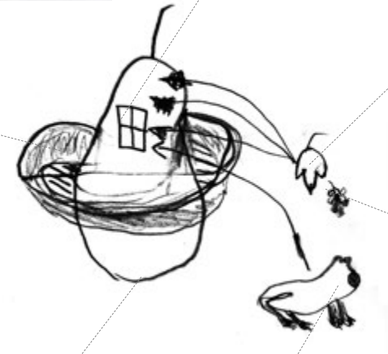
Deep down there are
petrified maple leaves.

what it sounds like inside

Window (not visible to passersby).

Additional blinds:
Ivy branches overgrow
the windows.

It has a balcony at half height.



Red grapes
(indoors only).

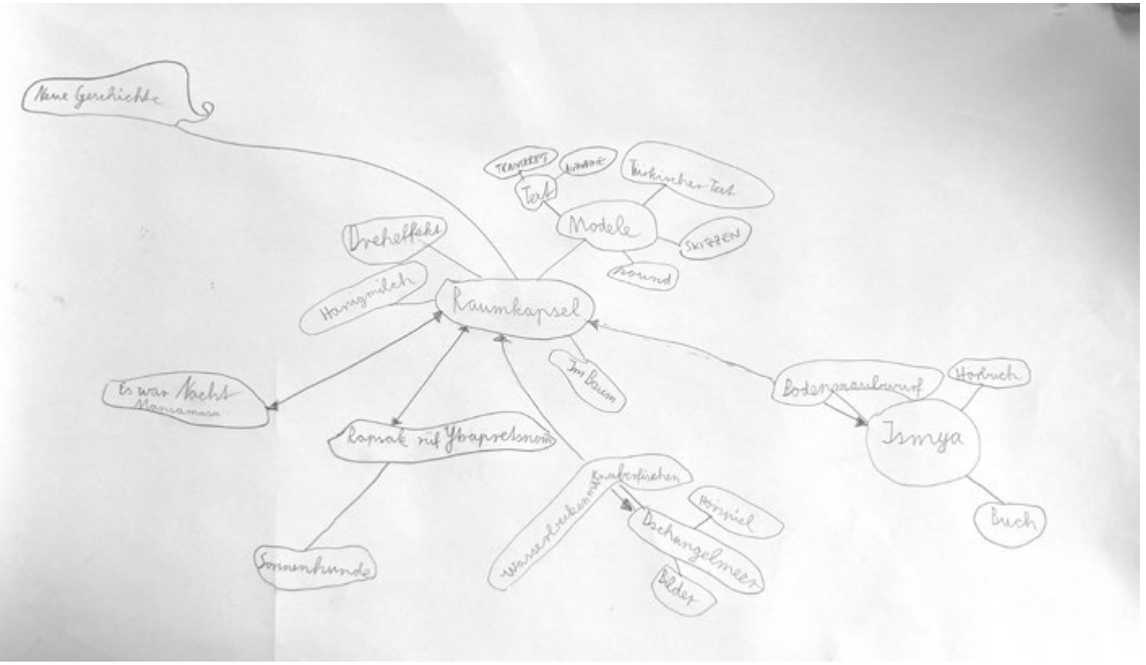
Spiral staircase can be lowered/raised
(for boarding and disembarking).

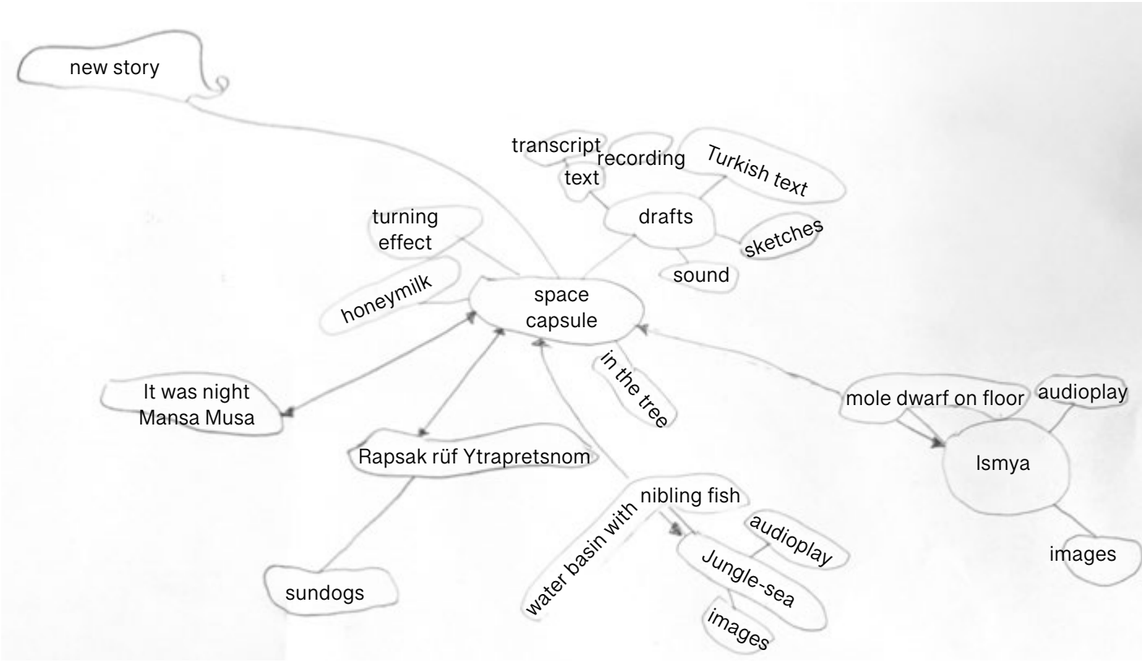
A parrot who imitates the owner‘s voice and a frog live on the ivy.
There is a melody in the frog‘s ear.

a shift in
height changes
perspective

not what is
to be seen.

Planning the Exhibition (1) / Mindmap





Mindmap for our exhibition, ca. 2022

Together with the “Drafts for Our Space Capsule”, we also developed fairly detailed plans for the big exhibition inside it. It was obviously intended not merely as an object, but as a real piece of architecture – housing all our work.

Planning the Exhibition (1) / Floorplan

Schuhregal
Schuhschrank
Schlafdecke
Schnecke
Schnecke
Schn

Model of a model of a model…

but also to find serious, adult ways of realizing something that an adult would not invent but a child could not build. I couldn't build it either – lacking the time, the skills, and the budget. But even though we have not reached utopia, what we found along the way was still rewarding. Still – not that I am actually seeking an ambitious career as an artist anymore – but if I were, then for the sake of having the chance to realize our daredevil plans: with reasonable budgets and, above all, with teams of builders, carpenters, ceramicists, tailors, space and marine engineers, architects, plumbers, metalworkers, woodworkers, electricians, painters, geologists, glaziers, precision mechanics, writers, illustrators, textile experts, musicians, gardeners, entomologists, pyrotechnicians, aquarium builders, and sound technicians – all joining our adventures and helping to develop and bring into being what we could otherwise only – or not even – imagine.

love is my
superpower.

The Octopus Programme

Filmteam in Tunis in front of B7L9 , photo: Başak Şenova

video “Herbs and Flowers“ from Tunis

Growing More Hearts and Brains

I first met Başak Şenova as a reviewer during a presentation at the Centre Research Focus (University of Applied Arts, Vienna). She invited our group of PhD-in-Art students to join some of the online events and seminars taking place within the framework of “The Octopus Programme”. I was truly excited by the inspiring artists and researchers involved, and when Başak asked if I would like to formally join the programme, I eagerly accepted. It can hardly be overstated how important, inspiring, and – above all – encouraging the Octopus became for me. Some of its direct effects are visible in this reflective documentation: for instance, the exhibition of our perfect space capsules within the programme, or the project A Museum for Métlaoui, which I organized together with my fellow Octopus participant, Bochra Taboubi. But the tentacles reach much further – into my references as well as into my most intimate thoughts.

For the programme’s publication, I wrote the following text about my experiences, summing up this adventure as best I can:

Becoming Octopodical
(or Intertwined in Tentacular Love)

Writing about the Octopus Programme feels like becoming one of the blind monks asked to describe an elephant – an elephant with many brains and hearts. It is said that Octopi don’t take good care of their little ones and are forced to be very autonomous from the beginning. Maybe that’s the reason for their many hearts, so they don’t feel alone. Anyway, my Octopus had already overcome a pandemic adolescence and some troublesome early stages when we met. I didn’t know much about this friendly monster, but I was electrified: There were amazing young artists from all over the world sharing what they were concerned with and working on trustfully – as though a zoom conference could ever offer something like a safe space. The Octopus was strong enough to hold this.

I couldn’t grasp what the structure or the aim was from the beginning, but I saw relations emerge – between artists, countries, institutions or first and foremost: people. It was about making interesting, caring friendships – not concerned with taking professional advantage from each other in the first place, but concerned with sharing, caring for each other and thus finding places none of us could have reached alone.

The Octopus took me in to one of the most exciting artistic adventures I have experienced so far: At the “Centre for the Less Good Idea” in Johannesburg (South Africa), we were able to join the initiating workshops for their Season 9. We witnessed and partook a truly mesmerizing collective artistic process, realized by masters of presence, tuning their bodies as musical instruments into a polyphonic choir touching all of us in the very deep.

The Octopus left Johannesburg and I had grown into one of its tentacles. I felt very connected to the other people involved, although I realized, the deep-sea monster also troubled some oceans and stirred some foggy grounds. I was having an amazing time, but I also

had very comfortable grounding to stand on and get involved as I saw it fit. In less privileged situations, those wild rides were probably somewhat more dizzying.

Some weeks after Johannesburg, I joined a trip to B7L9 at Tunis. Although potentially similar to the "Centre for the Less Good Idea" in what the institutional vision seemed to be, this experience couldn't have been more different. Instead of meeting a vibrant group of professional artists, I felt warmly welcomed by a vibrant group of kids of all ages up to early adolescence. Supported by my dear Octopus-friends Mariem Koudhai and Bochra Taboubi, I joined the children on a wild filmic adventure through the backyards of their neighborhood. The premiere of our fast-forward-co-creation was a blast!

In only some months' time, the Octopus had become a beloved, inspiring and enriching part of my artistic life. With its end coming nearer, my wrench was tempered by the Octopus coming to Vienna for the final exhibition at AIL – bringing some of its spirit to familiar surroundings.

As I said in the beginning, I feel like the allegoric blind monk not able to tell which acetabuli of the big Octopus Programme I could get hold of compared to others – but I personally want to take the chance of this publication to thank Bochra Taboubi, Sofia Priftis, Nondumiso Lwazi Msimanga, Maarit Mustonen, Kim M. Reynolds, Els van Houtert, Eser Epözdemir, Sophia Bellouhassi and Mariem Koudhai for the unforgettable time we were sharing in Johannesburg, Tunis and Vienna. I would like to thank Bronwyn Lace and the "Centre for the Less Good Idea" for one of the most memorable artistic experiences I could ever live to see. And of course, I would dearly like to thank Başak Şenova for daring and bearing and holding and not taming the Octopus – and making all of this possible. (Miedl-Faißt, 2024: 237f.)

Links to website of the Octopus Programme:

Artist video Verena Miedl-Faißt

"Duologue" – Exhibition at B7L9 in Tunis

"Translations" / Journey to South Africa

"the Octopus" – Exhibition in Vienna

The Booklets

the good ones
have stone
collections

but know
one can never
own a stone.

Grammar School

Teaching at a grammar school

After some 15 years, I left my dear ZOOM Children's Museum in 2022 and started teaching at a large grammar school on the outskirts of Vienna. I was hired particularly because of a special subject called "Arts Lab", which the school was proud to offer: in 9th grade, certain project-based classes were scheduled, and my former projects seemed to predestine me for the job. The director seemed genuinely pleased with my application, and I confidently believed my experience could be fruitful for this next step in my working life and research. After the intense projects as an external artist and the intimate work with my nephew, I was eager to become acquainted with the perspective and possibilities of being a teacher inside the institution.

Most of all, I was excited about the prospect of working with groups of students over longer periods of time – instead of just passing through for a few project days. I looked forward to trying out things I had never had the time for in other contexts. And I appreciated not having to worry constantly about my financial situation and instead having a budget (or at least the possibility of organizing one) to invite other artists to work with me.

From the very beginning, though, one of my biggest regrets was being alone in class: one teacher, many students – particularly since a school lesson is short. Evenly distributing 50 minutes among 25+ children means less than two minutes of focused attention for each per week – what a contrast to my endless chats with L.! But then, paradoxically, a school year is very long when it comes to holding an arc of suspense – as opposed to a 90-minute workshop.

My beloved team at the Animated Film Studio had already been dwindling before I left, and I dearly missed that unique constellation of working together – playing off each other in a friendly and inspiring atmosphere, and having the backup to really focus on individuals when needed.

I had hoped to find some fruitful exchange among my new colleagues, and I also hoped to recreate parts of my old team constellation by inviting former colleagues to run workshops in my classes with me.

I knew I would have to get used to a new kind of role. I tried to prepare myself for situations where my vis-à-vis would not be as positively excited as the children coming to the museum. I was aware that the everyday nature of school was the flip side of being able to work together over a longer period. Still, I felt uneasy at the thought of no longer being "Verena," but instead becoming "Mrs. Miedl-Faißt."

I did expect that the students would not perceive me as a badass artist, and I thought I was fine with being "just" their art teacher. What I did not expect, however, was that at times I would feel like I was no longer a person at all: In the end, I was almost relieved if I was at least called "Mrs. Professor" instead of "Mr. Professor". Whereas I knew 180 students' names within a week, some students were not only too indifferent to remember my name (first or last) but didn't even bother to consider whether I had any gender identity at all. I was just the Other.

These dynamics were reinforced by the wealthy, conservative milieu in which the school was located. Once, on the train to school, I overheard a group of teenagers discussing their French teacher. They obviously liked her and thought she was nice, competent, and qualified. Yet they wondered aloud: Why doesn't she have a real job? If the French teacher was already considered pitiable, what did that imply about the art teacher? Unsurprisingly, my colleagues in arts and crafts – though friendly and competent – were, at least in part, very frustrated, each one "cooking in his own pot," as the saying goes.

All the more, I tried to bring former friends, colleagues, and people from outside the school universe into the school. Even before the school year started, I had organized an artistic research project in cooperation with ZOOM Children's Museum ("The Symbuddy Project") and another project involving an artist residency with my Octopus friend Bochra Taboubi from Tunis ("A Museum for Métlaoui"). For each of the many classes I had to teach, I had planned projects that I thought would keep us joyfully occupied for at least the whole year.

All of this could have been a blast – and at times it was. But mostly, it was incredibly exhausting. I thought: if only I had a team and more space; if the groups were smaller; if the students were used to engaging in projects they were invited to co-shape at their will; if they were accustomed to tasks without clear rights and wrongs; if thriving in a creative process, making it their own, and enjoying developing things together was considered a success of any relevance – things would be easier. Then again, I felt my job was to improve all these factors: extend the school format with extra workshops. Apply for funding. Invent more or better artistic inducements, as individually appealing as possible while still functioning for everyone. Care more for each and every child, while becoming ever more resilient to their sometimes repellent behavior. Foster confidence and interest-driven engagement. Get involved with all my soul while not taking things too personally.

I'm not sure anyone can truly resolve this knot, but I couldn't. Even though the school was actually rather privileged – everyone spoke my language, and the majority of the students came from sheltered backgrounds – I was about to burn out after only one year. The focus on performance, efficiency, and a deeply capitalist and patriarchal value system was so antagonistic to what I envisioned that I felt like a micro-Sisyphus in the desert.

Still, there were sparkling encounters. Still, I believe some of the children enjoyed and benefited from our work together. Still, I miss some of them. And still, I learned a lot – and I am trying to invent a teacher identity that makes it possible to exist and thrive in this system without surrendering to values too contrary to my convictions. I want to attune myself to the positive opportunities, bend the framework where necessary, and work in a way that is sustainable enough to survive – happily.

Note:

I have written the texts "from the school's annual report" about "The Symbuddy Project", the "Arts Lab", "A Museum for Métlaoui" and the Stop Motion projects in German and translated to English for this reflective documentation.

Hartmut Rosa

In his chapter on education, Hartmut Rosa describes school as fundamentally influential for how one relates to the world:

“Wenn ich die Schule als Konstitutionsgrund für Weltbeziehungen beschreibe, dann meine ich damit insbesondere, dass sich in ihr die Art und Weise herausbildet und verfestigt, in der Subjekte der Welt beziehungsweise den Dingen, Menschen und Ereignissen der Welt begegnen.“ (Rosa, 2022: 418)

School either fosters “dispositional resonance“ or “dispositional alienation“ (cf. Rosa, 2022: 418) – that is, a stance that confidently expects a resonant relationship with the world, or an attitude shaped by the expectation of boredom or disappointment when encountering something new. Rosa – consistent with much pedagogical theory – emphasizes the crucial role of the teacher. If school fails, becoming a “zone of alienation“ (cf. Rosa, 2022: 409), there is no resonant relationship between students, teacher, and subject. Successful teaching, by contrast, fosters school as a resonant space: the teacher is enthusiastic about their subject, caring, and accessible; the students are excited by the subject, trusting and open to a resonant relationship with both teacher and subject; and the subject itself appears meaningful and challenging for both teacher and students (Rosa, 2022: 411).

Rosa even argues that in contemporary pedagogical and didactic discourse – shaped by an overemphasis on autonomy and individualism – the teacher’s role is unjustifiably reduced to that of a mere moderator or facilitator of know-how, while students are expected to decide for themselves what they want to learn and how they want to relate to it:

“Dies unterschätzt aber meines Erachtens die Bedeutung eines als erste Stimmgabel, das heißt als Inspirator und Impulsgeber, fungierenden Lehrers (…)“ (Rosa, 2022: 414).

I can clearly relate to Rosa’s definition of what school should be: a resonant, trustful space where everyone is eager to be transformed by new encounters, instead of a space of boredom, fear, and alienation. Obviously, it is advantageous – indeed essential – that the teacher is passionate about their subject and positive toward their students, and that the students feel safe and have already had positive experiences of self-efficacy.

But Rosa‘s account also risks making it too easy to blame teachers when school fails. Being a tuning fork is uplifting – if one strikes a well-tempered sound box. But if there is no sound box, because the classroom is overcrowded with bodies, hormones, conflicts, expectations, and smartphones, then a single tuning fork cannot produce resonance. Especially if students are not accustomed to a tuning fork that requires them to resonate, but only to teachers entering the room with a ghetto blaster of one-way lessons in efficiency and demarcation.

John Dewey

“Craftsmanship to be artistic in the final sense must be ‘loving’; it must care deeply for the subject matter upon which skill is exercised.” (Dewey, 1934/1980: 47f.)

Love, in almost every professional context – particularly in the sciences and in schools – is considered a bias. Love is never evenly distributed: one will always relate more to some than to others. Love makes one vulnerable and susceptible to manipulation. Love undermines any attempt at objectivity.

Yet in the arts, as in pedagogy, love is both a condition and a superpower – despite all its risks and pitfalls. Of course, I am not speaking of romantic love, but of a gentle attentiveness, an intrinsic interest and care for children, as well as for any “world-bit” one encounters through artistic thinking and making:

“[…] Tenderness personalizes everything to which it relates, making it possible to give it a voice, to give it the space and the time to come into existence, and to be expressed. It is thanks to tenderness that the teapot starts to talk. Tenderness is spontaneous and disinterested; it goes far beyond empathetic fellow feeling. Instead it is the conscious, though perhaps slightly melancholy, common sharing of fate. Tenderness is deep emotional concern about another being, its fragility, its unique nature, and its lack of immunity to suffering and the effects of time. […] It appears wherever we take a close and careful look at another being, at something that is not our ‘self.’” (Tokarczuk, 2018)

Olga Tokarczuk

Pedagogical as well as artistic work requires all the senses: an attunement to the other, an openness to being affected and moved. This entails a high risk of failure, of exhaustion, of being wounded. Nobody can reasonably expect a teacher responsible for 300 students per week to attune to each of them in this way, to open up and be so vulnerable. But what is the alternative? The solution cannot be simply to surrender, put on armor, and cultivate alienation in order to survive.

If school is to become more of a resonant space, as Hartmut Rosa suggests – and as I strongly agree – then the framework itself must change. The entire system needs to be rethought in the most fundamental way. Teachers cannot remain teachers if they are to fulfill this task. They must be allowed to become friends, companions, fellow travelers – and they must not be left alone in doing so.

if you want to
be fair,

don’t hide
love or pain.

Symbuddy Waldblumenheinzelmännchen NILA

How can we relate although you are so many?

research catalogue exhibition
"The Symbuddy Project"

The Symbuddy Project

An Artistic Research Project at School

Donna Haraway

"Sympoiesis is a simple word; it means "making-with." Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing. In the words of the Inupiat computer "world game," earthlings are never alone. That is the radical implication of sympoiesis. Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with, in company. Sympoiesis enfolds autopoiesis and generatively unfurls and extends it." (Haraway, 2016: 58)

From the school's annual report:

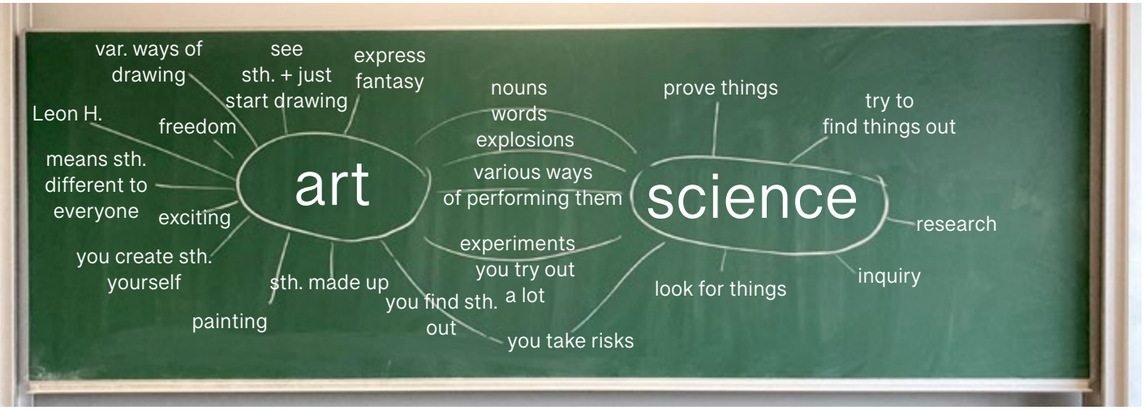
"The Symbuddy Project" was an artistic research project in cooperation with the ZOOM Children's Museum, which approached the serious challenges of our time with childlike confidence and daring. Artistic research can engage with matters for which concepts and ideas are lacking. In the Symbuddy Project, this meant asking what kind of image of humanity does not locate us outside of nature, but rather in a loving entanglement with everything that exists.

After all, who is supposed to help people out of their mess? Hardly the machines they have taught to calculate instead of to know. To run instead of to live. Perhaps it would be better to ask ants how to live in harmony with their environment, or to learn from trees how to whisper to one another, or to take lessons from clouds on how to tower. You can only find what you are able to imagine. In the Symbuddy Project, new threads were spun to connect with the world.

Together with the artistic researcher Verena Miedl-Faißt (their art teacher) and the artist and art mediator Michael Simku, the pupils from 1a, 1d, and 1e set out in search of fantastic yet possible worlds and (re)discovered models of living together in planetary solidarity. Always at their side were the non-human "Symbuddies", which combine the special abilities of earthly fauna and flora. Unfortunately, "Symbuddies" do not exist. So the project team had to invent them – or become Symbuddies themselves. As part of the project, the musician Oliver Stotz, the anthropologist Matthias Herrgen, the dance educator and performance artist Waltraud Brauner, and the evolutionary biologist and philosopher of science Johannes Jäger visited the Symbuddies at school.

The research process could be followed at www.symbuddy-project.org on the Research Catalogue of the Society of Artistic Research and was featured throughout the summer semester on the homepage of the ZOOM Children's Museum.

On June 19, 2023, a final project presentation and discussion with Johannes Jäger and the Symbuddies took place at the ZOOM Children's Museum.



What “art“ and “science“ meant to the children of class 1d

For me, the Symbuddy Project was the first and foremost attempt to bring my artistic research, the Children’s Museum, and my friends and colleagues into school – and since it was truly a large-scale project by school standards, it worked out to quite a far extent. I was scheduled as the arts teacher for three classes of 5th-graders, who together became a huge research team. Thanks to additional funding, ZOOM Children’s Museum was able to commission the Symbuddies along with the concept I had developed together with Michael Simku. The funding covered his participation in 18 double lessons throughout the school year, as well as the involvement of guest artists who offered several additional workshops, culminating in a panel discussion as the final presentation in the ZOOM foyer. In addition, I received a budget to create and maintain our online exhibition in the Research Catalogue.

This project certainly required a lot of extra effort, but in return I had colleagues with me almost every other week. During the lessons I held on my own, we nevertheless continued our Symbuddy endeavors. In fact, I transformed the arts classes into this artistic research project for the entire school year.

When I met the children for the first time and announced our special adventure, we began by creating a mind map of what “art” and “science” meant to them. I explained why I was convinced that they, as children, would be highly qualified co-researchers: because they are used to relating to new things every day, and because they were experts in making “Unfug.” According to the Manifesto of Artistic Research, this kind of “Unfug” is a core quality of artistic thinking:

Manifesto of Artistic Research

“Kompositionen sind – wörtlich – »Zusammen-Stellungen«, Montagen oder »Fugen« ohne explizite Regeln, die nicht auf Identitäten abzielen, sondern die Inkompatibilität der Elemente, ihre buchstäblichen »Unfugen« mitpräsentieren. Deshalb sprach Adorno von der Kunst als einer »urteilslosen Synthesis«, die bestenfalls »sprachähnlich« sei, aber denjenigen, der sie »als Sprache wörtlich« nehme, chronisch in die Irre führe.“ (Henke et al., 2020b: 40)

The English translation lacks an important part of the polysemy in the German word creation “Unfugen”:

“Compositions are combinations, montages, or ‘splices’ without specific rules, not focused on identities but instead co-presenting the incompatibility of the elements, their nonsense. Adorno thus spoke of the art of a ‘synthesis without judgment’ which is at best ‘similar to language,’ although those who take it ‘literally as language’ would be chronically misled.” (Henke et al., 2020a: 40)

The German word “Fuge” means fugue, but also gap, joint, or seam. The verb “fügen” means to join or to fit together, but also to comply or to submit, or, if used impersonally, to signify that something happens serendipitously. “Unfug” (nonsense) is a junction that does not make sense: a fugue that does not offer refuge, does not submit itself, but keeps you challenged and requires the active act of bridging a gap.

Anton Zeilinger

“30 years ago, when journalists asked me what can this be used for, I said, I can probably tell you this is not good for anything. We just do it out of curiosity. (…) In the beginning, I had no idea how to realise the things I wanted to do. This came slowly, it took years. What to me is my most important experiment is entanglement of more than two particles.“ (Zeilinger 2022)

Each child received a high-quality sketchbook to honor individual ideas, perceptions, curiosities, and sketches. They were allowed to use it at will and at any time – but they had to handle it with care and were not allowed to tear out pages, erase anything, or use it to play Battleship.

From the very beginning, they organized themselves into research groups. They were free to choose the size of their groups – some as large as seven or eight children, others preferring to work alone.

Each team, however, received one additional member: a Symbuddy. I explained to them what Symbuddies are – not merely fantastic creatures like unicorns, but symbionts of earthly critters whose special abilities would be of great advantage in facing questions and challenges that humans alone could not answer.

To determine which Symbuddy would join which team, each researcher first chose a totem animal: a real creature with a special ability that could be useful, such as flying (eagle), cracking asphalt (dandelion), changing color (chameleon), or surviving in outer space (tardigrade). The Symbuddies then emerged as beings that combined all these special abilities into one.

When Michael Simku joined us for the first time in the classroom, the children introduced themselves together with their totems. Afterwards, each research group received a package of research equipment: a bag containing magnifiers, rubber bands, pipettes, test tubes, zipper bags, tweezers, and cotton wool. These bags were tagged with the names of the respective research groups, and in a nearby park we searched for potential body parts for the Symbuddies.

In the following lessons, the research teams assembled their Symbuddies in the form of collages, using what they had found in the park along with the large pile of leftover materials I had discovered in the school’s basement. When Michael Simku returned for the second time, he brought professional recording equipment and conducted extensive interviews with the teams about their Symbuddies: what they could be asked and how they might be able to help humanity. We were occupied with the development of these creatures for several weeks. Since the classrooms were too small for five research teams to discuss, be interviewed, and work in a concentrated manner, we spread out into other classrooms and the hallway.

Once the Symbuddies had been well integrated into the research teams, Oliver Stotz visited for small sound workshops during which the individual languages of the Symbuddies were invented.

Thus incarnated, the next step was to find potential housings where the Symbuddies could live in harmonious flatshares with their research teams. Therefore, we built elaborate architectural models of these housings, and in the continuous interviews with Michael, the teams explained their concepts.

A Symbuddy being born

Besides, the children were busy making PowerPoint presentations on their Symbuddies (very popular), building the Symbuddies and their housings in Minecraft, or working in their sketchbooks – Symbuddy-related or not.

Accompanying the project, we kept a research diary. This log, including a contribution by visiting anthropologist Matthias Herrgen, is available in the Research Catalogue in both German and English.

Towards the end of the project, dancer and choreographer Waltraud Brauner offered an additional workshop in the afternoon. The participating children discovered how their Symbuddies moved and how it felt to embody their Symbuddy on a physical level.

The final event was a panel discussion at ZOOM Children's Museum. The evolutionary biologist and philosopher Johannes Jäger prepared the panel with a group of children who were willing to participate and hosted the presentation, where he discussed the Symbuddy inventions from an evolutionary perspective. The video of this panel is also available on the Research Catalogue.

Symbuddy-experiments

Dance workshop with Waltraud Brauner

The Symbuddy Project was loud, chaotic, fun, and very inspiring – at least to some. But to my regret, I hardly had any time at all to immerse myself in the sympoietic inventions: when Michael or one of our guest artists or scientists was present, they took care of the truly inspiring part, while I had their back – managing the other 20 students, who more or less had to work independently, as I was busy resolving desperate art-scientific disputes and cleaning the (newly renovated) school building after occasional Symbuddy explosions. Even more so during the weeks when I was alone with the students – especially since the children were spread out over several spaces. I was constantly bending my duty of supervision and quite relieved after each lesson if there were no injuries or other inadvertent traces.

It was quite challenging to maintain an arc of suspense in these in-between weeks, as basically every child, or at least every research team, developed their own project – more or less successfully. At times, it turned into more of a debate club than an arts lesson, and many children worked hard on developing their skills in constructively negotiating ideas and opinions. What to do if voting for the Symbuddy's name only produced animous decisions? Voting again and again wouldn't help, and kicking opponents out of the team was no sustainable solution either. (For more reflections by the children and their Symbuddies themselves, see our Research Diary.)

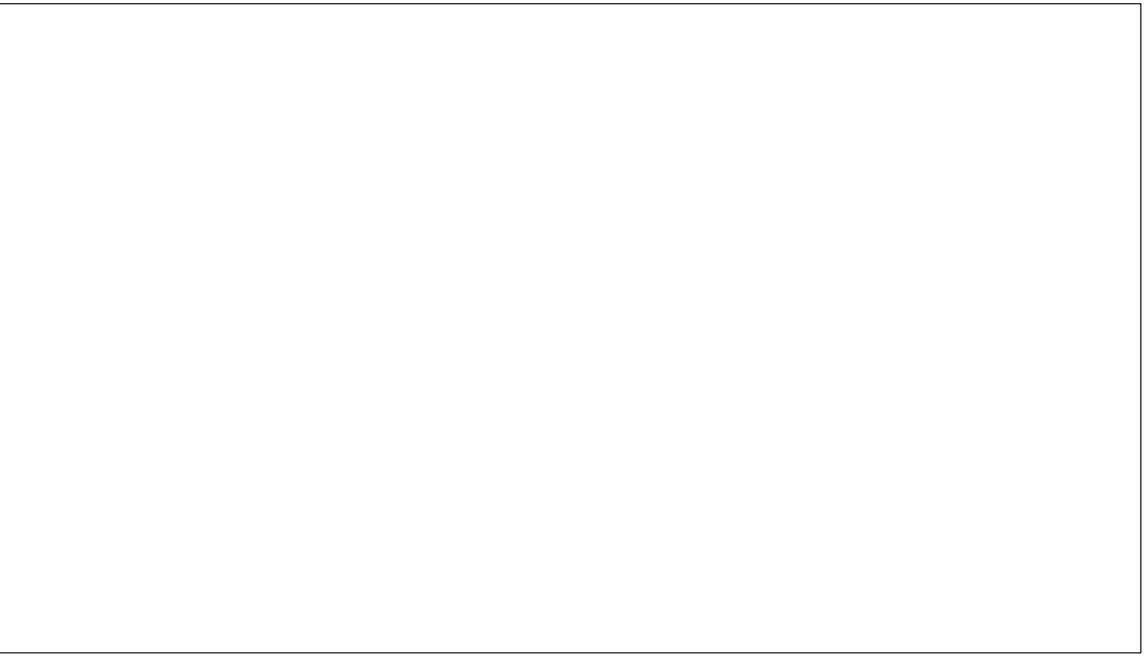
Nevertheless, I was happy to see that most of the children, for most of the time, were quite enthusiastically involved (at least by school standards) – not only in the beginning, but actually throughout the school year. Towards the end, I increasingly prepared them for the event at which our findings would be publicly shared. In line with my aim of equal co-creation, I placed great value on considering their audience by showcasing the Symbuddies at the school's open house and additionally transcending the school setting through our public presentation at ZOOM Children's Museum.

Early in the year, I started planning this event, carefully considering the school calendar. I could have scheduled a school event on some morning – but I did not want a mandatory event. Instead, I tried to motivate my research teams enough that they would come voluntarily and bring their parents and friends. In agreement with the school administration, we scheduled the event not in the last week before summer break (when every day was already filled with special activities), but the week before, when the schedule was still more or less normal. And in fact, quite a large part of the students were highly motivated and even joined the voluntary preparatory workshop with Johannes Jäger.

I don't want to conclude my reflections on this big and beautiful project with an account of frustration, but I was incredibly frustrated when I realised that a teacher colleague had planned a trip to an amusement park on the very day of our panel discussion – ignoring the project her class had been excited about throughout the year, ignoring the flyers we had printed, the email invitations, and – perhaps most annoyingly – the fact that our event had never made it into the official school calendar, simply because it was not a "school event".

I don't want to blame this individual teacher, although I was personally very disappointed. Rather, this incident illustrates that a school is simply too large an institution to genuinely relate on an individual level. But a positive note to end with: some of the children organised a parent shuttle and still made it to our event, which turned out to be crowded and beautiful. The video documentation of the panel discussion is available online in our Research Catalogue exposition.

naming is the hardest thing to agree on.



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What shall I do, if the group I‘m supposed to work with, does not appreciate or even openly rejects, what I understand as the core aim of a co-creative project?

The Arts Lab

Struggling with Expectations, Apparent Freedom and Group Dynamics

From the annual report:

The ArtsLab offers special opportunities but also special challenges - although the setting does not change, suddenly everything is different: the double lesson on Thursday afternoon begins and ends with the school bell, the classroom does not change and, as always, a school class finds itself facing a teacher. And yet there is suddenly a great deal of freedom: no curriculum, no exams, no guidelines. Dealing with this freedom becomes a challenge: How do you develop an idea with twenty-four people? How do you find a common denominator that - although everyone can agree on it - is not boring? How do you deal with the incredibly long time span of a school year, which is always divided into equally short Thursday afternoons? And where does the motivation come from when the pressure to perform at school, which otherwise sets in when in doubt, is removed? There was a lot of discussion in the first half of the school year: What is art anyway? Why is “selling something” not yet an artistic idea? And what is even possible on a Thursday afternoon?

Separate working groups were formed in the first semester: There were writers who worked on scripts, seamstresses who produced personalized fabric figures as key rings for the class, candles were cast, teacher caricatures were created as stickers and drawings were made for an animated film story. This time could therefore be described as a long warm-up phase for a necessary new start in January: the group wanted to take on the challenge of a joint project in the second semester after all. It turned out that the class‘s respectful culture of discussion had its pitfalls: there were lots of great ideas, but if not everyone was enthusiastic straight away, these ideas were immediately discarded. Getting involved in something that only grows bit by bit from many different ideas and contributions and that nobody can quite foresee because it is a joint work was not an easy exercise for many. Nevertheless, the class can be proud: In the second semester, the 4fal created an entire world.

The class was once again divided into teams according to the interests of the individual pupils. There were illustrators, scriptwriters, actors, costume designers, sound designers and editors. Each team worked freely - the only requirement was to produce “puzzle pieces” that related to some other puzzle piece that had already been created. No one was “allowed” to invent an overall plot. Places were drawn, sensually described and set to music, roles were worked out and equipped with great costumes, wishes and conflicts. The process was based on three project days in the Königsleitn theater village in Litschau, where the individual pieces of the puzzle were finally put together at the end of April, an exciting plot was developed and the film was shot. The 4fal were not only supported by Verena Miedl-Faißt, but also by their class teacher Renate Weimann in Litschau, as well as by cameraman Klemens Koscher and theater teacher Johanna Jonasch as part of special workshops.

At the Long Night of Talents, not only was the film product shown, but the work was also embedded in an exhibition of all the works created during the ArtsLab. This meant that the jointly created world could not only be experienced on the screen, but actually entered.

To my great regret, the screening claimed in the annual report did not take place at all, although there would have been a lot to show.

The “Arts Lab” was something I had expected to be smooth sailing. The school regarded this special subject, offered in the eighth grade (for 13–14-year-olds), as a unique selling point of which it was very proud; and the “curriculum” seemed to align perfectly with my goals: the class was intended to enter a co-creative process of their own accord. We had an entire school year to work together, with no predefined framework we needed to fit into. And the class, moreover, had a reputation for being fun, talented, and highly motivated.

But it turned out to be an incredible struggle and – despite being successful in many ways – strangely frustrating for both the students and for me.

But let me start at the beginning. Before our first meeting, I had heard suspiciously little about previous “Arts Lab” projects. All I knew was that some groups had produced plastic-bead jewelry to sell at the Christmas bazaar – and, to be honest, I thought: Well, we’ll do more than that.

Since I didn’t know the group yet, I thought it would be good to take some time to tune in. I asked each of them to draw a wish on a 15 × 15 cm sheet of sketch paper – a way of introducing themselves and contributing to a collective set of artistic intentions for us as a team. The exercise worked well and was enjoyable.

However, after that first session, the group quickly became nervous and impatient: “When do we start?” they asked. So I said, “All right – what shall we start with?” If there had been a concrete plan or idea within the class that they were eager to pursue, I would gladly have supported it. But the only thing resembling a common goal was: “We want to sell something at the Christmas bazaar” – without any idea of what that might be.

So I decided we should open things up a bit more and held a brainstorming session on what art can be. The results ranged from drawing and painting to theatre, music, street art, fragrance design, and even “Is It Cake?“ – a Netflix series featuring cakes that look like every-day objects.

With this broader foundation, I tried to moderate a discussion that might lead to a project idea. There were genuinely fun, unusual, and even performative suggestions.

Among the more memorable ideas was a plan to seriously propose bringing a live tiger to school – writing letters to the headmaster, considering what would be required, and exploring how such a thing might be legally and practically possible. I immediately thought of this as an ambitious, socially critical project that could open up multiple avenues for reflection. Obviously, they had heard about the radical performance by the Centre for Political Beauty – the German activist art collective that, in 2016, brought a live tiger to Berlin and provocatively invited refugees to volunteer to be “eaten” by it as a protest against EU migration policies (see Zentrum für Politische Schönheit, n.d.).

At that point, however, a tricky dynamic began to unfold. The group didn’t know me, nor what I could offer them; they only knew that I was the teacher – in a subject whose only given premise was that they were supposed to decide what to do, not the teacher. So my role, as it turned out, was mostly to serve as the point of opposition.

The problem was: they couldn’t decide on anything themselves – except that it shouldn’t be what I approved of. Even when an idea sparked genuine interest, the moment I said, “Good idea!” or “Okay, what do you think – how could we approach this?”, the idea was instantly dead. Yet they would still look at me expectantly, waiting for me to solve the stalemate.

They lacked the ability – or rather the motivation – to actually get something going; to develop an idea together that wasn’t just a one-liner attributed to a single idea-giver and immediately acceptable to everyone, but something that could evolve through a process of negotiation – which, admittedly, is no easy task. My role, as I understood it, would have been to support them in achieving this, yet their opposition to anything coming from my side blocked every attempt I made. And in the end, ninety minutes on a weary Thursday afternoon in an ordinary classroom do pass – even if all you do is sink comfortably into the dead end of collectively agreeing to reject whatever the teacher suggests.

After a few weeks, their class teacher asked if I would join them for a few project days at the Theater- und Feriendorf Königsleitn, and I agreed – hoping that getting to know the students in a different setting might help ease our struggles.

The “Theaterdorf” is beautifully situated by a lake. The students were accommodated in comfortable holiday apartments. A large tennis hall had recently been converted into professional rehearsal rooms, complete with a big green screen and – best of all – a spacious attic filled with an inspiring collection of theatre costumes and props.

Over the course of three days, the class participated in a theatre workshop led by theatre pedagogue Johanna Jonasch. It was bittersweet for me to watch them working eagerly with “not-the-teacher.” At the same time, it was slightly painful to see how trusting and appreciative their relationship was with their class teacher, who had known them since their first day at school and taught “ordinary” subjects such as German and Music.

It was wonderful to see good work being done and to observe the students in such a positive and creative environment. Yet I felt strangely out of place. In the past, it had been my role to show frustrated teachers how lively, motivated, and inspired their “bored” students actually were. And now – almost without noticing – I had become the frustrated teacher.

Despite all better hopes, these project days did not break the deadlock in the “Arts Lab,” and all of us became increasingly frustrated. It was, quite simply, boring.

A few weeks before the Christmas bazaar, I finally gave in and made what could be called a tautological top-down decision: I said, “All right, until the bazaar, let’s stop trying to work as one big group. Form smaller teams based on your interests, and create whatever you’d like to sell at the bazaar.”

Not surprisingly, they didn’t end up selling anything. Some made DIY candles ordered from Amazon; others sewed rather charming little keychain figures, drew pictures, or wrote short texts. I kept my distance and tried not to interfere – since, to my great regret, my involvement usually proved more disruptive than helpful.

Consequently, I also handed over the task of grading their own work. Each student wrote a reflection on what they had done and the grade they believed they

deserved. Naturally, they all gave themselves an A (1). And although I hadn't explicitly asked for feedback on my teaching, many of them added that it was actually my fault that there were so few results – I simply should have been more strict.

At the start of the second semester, I told them, "All right, that was frustrating for all of us – let's try something different. You asked me to be more strict, so I've decided that we'll make a film together."

First, I explained, this was something I actually had experience with and could truly support them in. And second, filmmaking was ideal because it offered endless possibilities for individual contribution: we would need actors, scriptwriters, set designers, costume makers, sound engineers, photographers, animators – and more. There would be something for everyone.

Relieved to finally be freed from the burden of endless, fruitless negotiations, they went along, muttering their agreement.

But almost immediately, resistance resurfaced. They just wanted to film with their smartphones, use templates, and do what they always did. I, however, felt responsible for ensuring that they actually worked on something meaningful – something slightly more ambitious that would engage them in a process lasting longer than half a session. So I tried to raise the level a little, or rather, to create conditions that might eventually surprise us and lift our Thursday afternoons out of sleepy, grumpy boredom.

To motivate both them and myself, I invited my friend, cinematographer Klemens Koscher, to our class to share insights from professional film production – how such a process unfolds, and what needs to happen before the record button is pressed for the first time. He brought along some fascinating making-of material from a chase scene he had filmed, and the students were mildly interested. (A few even seriously told me, in an apologetic tone, that it was really nice – but, actually, what could they possibly be taught, or what should they ask, since they already knew everything?)

In addition, I got back in touch with Johanna Jonasch, the pedagogue from Litschau they had previously worked with. I invited her to lead another workshop focused on our planned film project, and I organized a new set of project days – returning to Litschau to use the facilities and, in particular, the impressive costume collection for our film shoot.

This way, it was clear that we wouldn't just be filming something random in the school hallway, but instead preparing for an actual shoot towards the end of the semester in Litschau. They were excited about the place – and, of course, the prospect of another trip sounded fun. So once again, they agreed, albeit mildly.

I asked each student individually what they would be interested in doing within the scope of our film project. This quickly resulted in five clearly defined working groups: playwrights, actors, illustrators, cinematographers and sound designers, and costume makers.

In the following session, I brought a specific task for each group: the writers were to invent a character with a problem and/or a wish; the sound and camera group was to find a sound that suggested a particular setting; the actors were to explore how to perform an emotion; the illustrators were to draw objects that could be cut out and animated; and for the costume makers, I brought Japanese paper for quickly sketching costume ideas.

All the groups soon began working with real enthusiasm. By the end of the session, they presented their results to one another.

For the next session, I brought follow-up tasks that connected the different groups. The illustrators were to draw the scenery suggested by the sounds created by the sound designers. The actors were to perform their chosen emotion in the role of one of the invented characters. The writers were to describe several possible settings, while the sound designers were to find ways of recording sounds that matched the illustrated objects.

The costume makers had begun creating a beautiful jellyfish costume, which the writers and actors were asked to incorporate into their work. The costume team, of course, was also encouraged to develop costumes for the other characters.

As I had worked in other projects before, I tried to get them to dig deeper into the details and resist the temptation of jumping too quickly into a plot. From session to session, I encouraged them with targeted tasks designed to help them develop their ideas further. They kept protesting against this approach, feeling that they were losing time – waiting for the "real start" – while, in fact, they were already working continuously, developing rich storylines, complex characters, and interwoven plotlines.

But at last, the Arts Lab afternoons began to live up to their name. The students were writing, rehearsing, recording, editing, sewing, colouring, and drawing – and I was genuinely looking forward to our film shoot.

I packed two suitcases with equipment: my (private) professional camera and audio gear, a range of materials, and everything the students had produced during class. Still muttering, they boarded the train with me, and I had to beg for help carrying the luggage – literally at every step. When I asked who would volunteer to assist, not a single one moved. Arriving in Litschau, I was frustrated and exhausted, but I tried to stay in good spirits and bring the project to a positive conclusion.

We had a large room that served as our editorial office. We laid out the drawings, sketches, writings, and everything the students had prepared, taking a close look – a kind of survey of all existing material.

Next, we created storyboards for all the micro-scenes that had been developed in parallel throughout the semester. From these micro-scenes, each student chose the ones that absolutely had to be included in the film – and finally, in a very focused session, we linked and wove them into a coherent storyline.

The students worked together remarkably well, and again I thought: Wow, we've finally broken through. The entire compound of the Theaterdorf was at our disposal. We were filming in our editorial office, outside by the lake, at the bar, using the green screen to integrate the hand-drawn elements, and of course thriving in the attic full of costumes and props.

I rushed through the days, moving from group to group, helping to realize the ambitious plan. And we succeeded – really well! Just before leaving, we managed to watch a surprisingly polished rough cut of the project. Everyone was happily excited – for a moment.

Then came our wrap-up and feedback session. Almost everyone seemed content and proud of what we had accomplished, and of the time we had spent together. Until one student resurfaced the supposedly resolved conflict: If we had started earlier, we could have done

so much more – this is actually embarrassing. That single comment managed to shatter everything we had built.

Although I was deeply frustrated – as I admitted – I tried to offer positive feedback: to tell them how well they had worked, how remarkable it was that they had truly co-created this film, how dense and engaging the story had become, and how special it was that they had genuinely co-authored a piece of art. For a moment, it seemed that some of them wanted to hold on to a positive conclusion – but the constructive energy was gone.

Exhausted and drained, I returned home. It felt as if I had given everything I could: time, experience, mediation, support, (good) energy, had succeeded by the skin of my teeth – and yet still completely failed.

Shortly after our shoot in Litschau, there was the school's big "Long Night of Talents" – the event where I had planned to proudly premiere our film. To prepare for the screening – possibly combined with an exhibition of all the materials they had produced – I had scheduled several Thursday sessions. But when I returned to class, expecting to plan this final presentation, the students confronted me once again with refusal rather than engagement: the lead actors, who had been most eager to play the main roles, declared that they would not allow the film to be shown – they were dissatisfied with their performances and with the overall result.

We discussed it again. Some students were clearly disappointed – they had stepped back, taking on roles behind the camera even though they would have liked to act, and now those they had given the floor to were rejecting the work and denying them the audience and recognition they deserved.

I tried to mediate the discussion and argue in that direction, but – as before – my voice didn't count, or worse, was counterproductive. So I said: All right, maybe we should vote. If a large majority really doesn't want the film to be shown, so be it. But if it's only a few, then we should find a way to adapt the film so that everyone can agree – rather than dismissing a whole semester of work.

To my perplexed astonishment, the anonymous vote was unambiguous: there should be no public screening at the "Long Night of Talents". But the already difficult situation was made even more challenging. That very afternoon, our class was visited by a group of primary school children and their teacher – there to get an impression of the exciting Arts Lab the school was so proud of. The small children sat at the tables with curious eyes, while the defiant teenagers hid behind them. I took a deep breath and tried once more to handle the situation as best I could.

I said: All right, you've decided, and although I deeply regret this decision, I have to accept it. But this is the Arts Lab – and making art is a form of communication. If there is no receiver, no audience at all, it ceases to exist as art. (One could certainly debate this position, but that's what I told them as a given.) So if your audience is not the visitors at the "Long Night of Talents" – then who should it be? You must decide, even if it's only a single person.

Eventually, we reached an agreement to organize a private screening for invited guests – a few of their teachers – for whom they then wrote elaborate invitation letters. They were, with good reason, actually somewhat proud of the result; yet we were once again caught up in adolescent insecurity, the same problematic deadlock that had haunted us all year, and in power plays among the students that overshadowed

what could have been a truly collective process.

My impression was that the hardest part for them was accepting the result precisely because it could not be attributed to a predefined plan or to individual authorship. None of the students who had aspired to peer leadership could claim to have defined the plot or shaped the outcome more than the others – nor could that authorship be attributed to me as their teacher. Each had to share a part of the responsibility, and they struggled with the intangibility of such collective authorship.

I thought of how they constantly took selfies: they didn't simply photograph moments they wanted to remember, or things that visually interested them – the act was about recognizing and reaffirming themselves in relation to others, with each of the hundreds of images they took on their smartphones.

Our film didn't function like a selfie; it was more like a group portrait – taken from many perspectives at once. I suspect that was what unsettled them.

students and
teachers are
actually human,

but tend to forget.

Exhibition view at Belvedere 21

How can an open co-creative process create understanding, respect and possibly even prolific ideas for very foreign and distant living conditions, issues and challenges?

A Museum for Métlaoui

Fossil Inventions and Palaeontological Friendships

I have always been close to school contexts – working with school classes, teachers, and within comparable institutional settings.

Yet what was truly new to me was the "closed circuit" I entered when becoming a teacher at a school. At ZOOM Children's Museum, although our team was fairly stable, people came and went, pursued other projects, and travelled. There was constant input from outside – guest artists offering workshops, collaborations with other institutions, often internationally. And even though we worked with school classes every day, it was always different schools.

At school, however, I encountered colleagues approaching retirement who had themselves attended this very school as children, completed their teacher training quickly, and then – throughout their entire working lives – had never left this one institution again. This way of living and working was alien to me, or rather, downright frightening. I didn't know how to relate to such a closed system.

For my own peace of mind, I was eager to stay connected to friends as far removed from the school context as possible – and I was thrilled that we could organize "A Museum for Métlaoui" with my Octopus friend, Bochra Taboubi. On rather short notice, I reached out to Philomena+, a small gallery connecting "artists and architects from the WANA region (West Asia and North Africa) with the local art community in Vienna and vice versa" (cf. Philomena+, n.d.), to submit a proposal to the "culture:connected" program (OeAD). Thanks to this initiative – and to the personal commitment and generous support of Christine Bruckbauer from Philomena+ – Bochra was able to travel to Vienna for a short residency. She visited us at school and held workshops with two classes of 12–13-year-olds as part of my lessons.

Bochra introduced her artistic methods to the children, and together they produced material for an online exhibition on the Research Catalogue (cf. Miedl-Faißt & Taboubi, 2023), which Bochra and I curated. Only online – but still, through this project, my students collaborated with students in Tunis, who had worked with Bochra in a similar way.

A serendipitous highlight of this collaboration was that Philomena+ was exhibiting at Belvedere 21 as part of "On the New – Viennese Scenes and Beyond" (cf. Belvedere, n.d.). They had transferred their exhibition space to the museum for the duration of the show, and as they presented our project there, the students – together with Bochra Taboubi – had the opportunity to exhibit their work at Belvedere 21. There, we organized a special event, celebrating and presenting the project. We had a small buffet and a guided tour through the exhibition.

Once again, I hoped for greater engagement if visiting their own exhibition at this prominent museum was not a school event, but the students should come voluntarily, be proud, and bring along family and friends. (This required quite a bit of additional communicative, practical, legal, and of course unpaid effort.) I even went to the train station near the school to pick up students who wanted to come but couldn't be accompanied by their parents, and brought them back afterwards. Many of the students came – and so did some parents – but for the school itself, the project was not an official event and, as such, irrelevant. No headmas-

ter, and hardly any colleagues, showed up. I hope at least some of the students realized how special this project really was.

Although the importance of alternative learning environments is constantly being emphasized, school has a strange leveling effect: everything implemented within the school context becomes ordinary – more of a task than an adventure. At the same time, to be considered relevant at all within school, things have to become school events and must submit to school rules: what is relevant is mandatory, and what is voluntary is merely leisure. When the institution declares something important – such as participation in “The Long Night of Talents” – it becomes meaningful within that frame. But if something happens slightly beyond the grid of what is officially recognized as “school,” and within school as “important,” it easily gets lost in the sea of – at best – “just class.”

Although I myself did care deeply, I can hardly resent anyone personally for this. School, as a “closed circuit” in which students and teachers spend such a large part of their time and lives, is so overloaded with social interactions, relationships, responsibilities, tasks, and sensitivities that – in order to remain mentally and physically sane – one probably has to rely on the given structure simply to keep from losing track.

From the annual report:

A Museum for Métlaoui
Fossil Inventions and Palaeontological Friendships

In collaboration with the philomena+ gallery and with the support of the OEAD, the Tunisian artist Bochra Taboubi was invited to Mödling for BE lessons on the initiative of Verena Miedl-Faißt. In a virtual exchange with a group of young people from Tunis, the two classes 3ar and 3br worked on an artistic research project on the fossil collection from Métlaoui (TUN): the historically important finds have been in Paris since 1900. The local museum was burnt down during the Tunisian revolution in 2011. Hardly anyone knows about the fossil-rich layers of earth in the region, which therefore remain unexplored. Instead, the landscape is characterized by phosphate mining - with highly problematic consequences for people and the environment. The region is torn between its colonial past and current geopolitical interests.

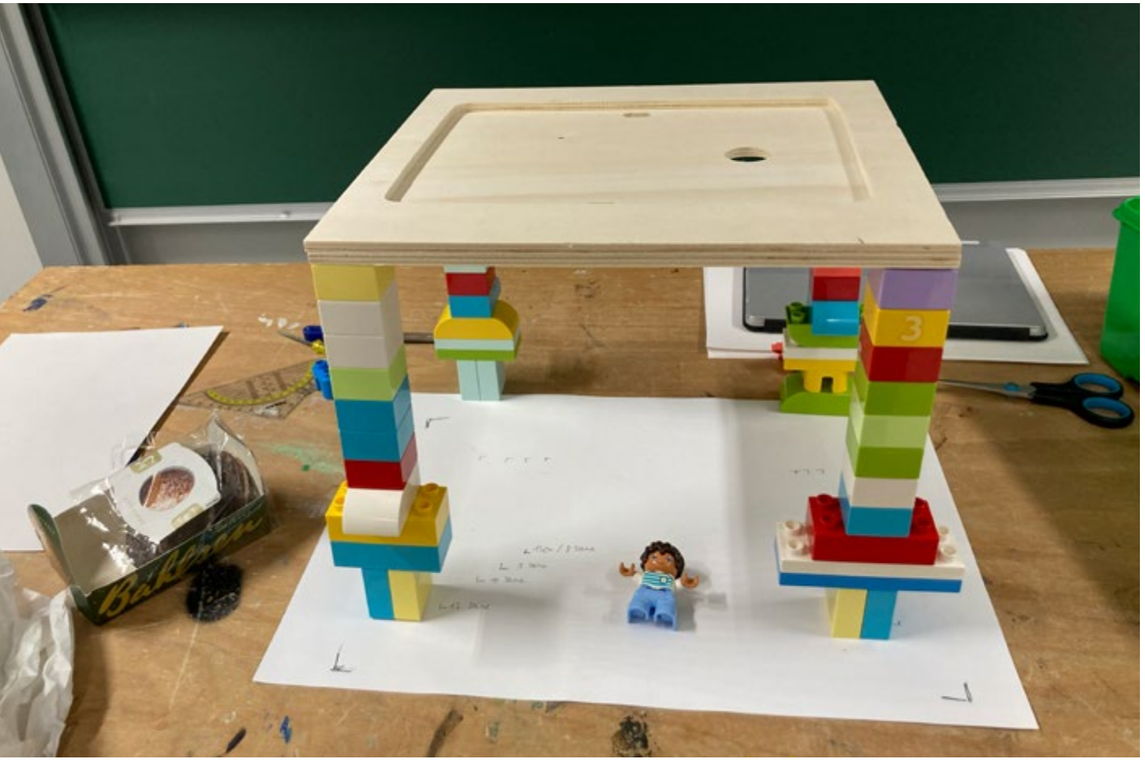
In her drawings, Bochra Taboubi develops fantastic chimeras of the fossil finds from Métlaoui. In this way, she attempts to reinvent the past, to give the traces a tangible form. After a temporary exhibition in the old church in the village, she has set herself the goal of building a museum for Métlaoui again. But how do you build a museum that powerful people don‘t want and whose most important collection has been lost?

Verena Miedl-Faißt is not only the BE teacher of classes 3ar and 3br, but as the founder of “Unsichtbare Elefanten - Kunstverein zur Förderung unwahrscheinlicher Kollaborationen”, she is also an expert in getting seemingly hopeless processes off the ground. And children (like artists) are experts in dealing with imponderables and confidently putting together apparent nonsense. This is not always helpful, but sometimes it is.

As an immodest think tank, the 3ar/br pupils developed visions for a new museum for Métlaoui in their BE lessons. They thought, talked and acted together - not only in spoken language - but above all by drawing, looking, admiring and showing together. The work-in-progess with the works of 3ar and 3br can be viewed at www.a-museum-for-metlaoui.site

From April 18, 2023 to May 12, 2023, the project with the students‘ works was presented very prominently at Belvedere21 (Arsenalstraße 3, 2030 Vienna) as part of the exhibition “PHILOMENA+ @BELVEDERE21 / Über das Neue. Viennese scenes and beyond“.

it’s hard to make
school recognize
something that
isn’t part of school.



Developing an affordable tablet-stand for animation in the classroom

How can the use of low-threshold animating techniques in schools help foster openness for the co-creative development of ideas and narratives, and support the active and competent use of digital media as a collective tool?

Stop-Motion Animation at School

Transferring Experiences to a New Context

Already during my teacher training, I found it quite challenging how broadly spread the skills and crafts were that one was expected to master and even teach. The way I had been working independently – and also at the animated film studio – was actually specialized in animation, sound, and photography. As I have already reflected earlier in this documentation, in order to offer and mediate one's skills in a way that enables transformative co-creation, one needs to master their medium even more thoroughly than when working alone.

At school, I am officially qualified – through my Bachelor of Education – to teach both fine arts and crafts. As such, I would ideally possess the skills of a painter, graphic artist, cinematographer, photographer, ceramicist, wood sculptor, tailor, weaver, architect, bookbinder, printmaker, and so on. I still don't quite know how to meet my own standards when it comes to teaching all the different skills I am supposed to cover.

Anyway, the medium I feel most experienced with – also in an educational setting – is stop-motion animation. Before entering school, however, I would hardly ever conduct a workshop with more than seven children on my own, simply because we thought it was not possible to do so in a meaningful way.

At school, I found myself in the luxurious situation of teaching classes equipped with tablets for every student, and I even managed to secure a school license for the professional version of "Stop Motion Studio" – the app I had used most frequently. Still, accompanying twenty-five students as they each produced an animation on their own seemed impossible. In my experience, it is essential to work alongside them, at least at the beginning – until they have understood the importance of not moving the camera or backdrop, of maintaining consistent lighting (especially avoiding one's own shadow), and, most importantly, of breaking down movement into as many micro-steps as possible. Otherwise, there's a plot for ninety minutes of film and only five still images in the end. To address this, I developed a new concept for working with such a large group – and since the children were quite skilled and at least some of them very patient, it worked out surprisingly well.

But before we could begin, I had to solve an equipment issue. With just a tablet and the app, it's still very difficult to produce a satisfying animation. Equally important as the device itself is some sort of tripod to keep the camera as stable and at the same time adjustable as possible. Buying sturdy tripods – strong enough to hold large tablets – plus lights for an entire class would have been far too expensive for a school budget.

This challenge led to a great collaboration within the otherwise rather solitary school environment. Together with my colleague Peter Girsch, we developed a prototype for a tripod with an integrated light. The headmaster agreed to cover the material costs, and we were able to build a series of fifteen stands – enough to work with a whole class.

Once the setup was complete, we also offered a workshop for other teachers on how to implement this setup not only in arts and crafts, but also across other subjects. About fifteen colleagues participated (it was classified as required elective professional development). The group was genuinely enthusiastic, as it

provided a practical, simple, and creative way to use the tablets that everyone was expected to incorporate into their teaching – all while keeping the focus on hands-on, physical activities.

Apps used to produce stop-motion animations are actually quite basic. There's no need for cheesy templates or effects – you create every effect yourself and essentially just take photos – many photos – while observing how the most fundamental illusion of moving images comes to life.

I used our setup for smaller, individual projects with the Symbuddies, but mainly for larger projects with two classes of 13- to 14-year-olds. I decided to try co-producing one film per class, divided into several scenes that could be produced in smaller groups. This way, I hoped not to lose oversight and to keep motivation high – since producing a coherent story requires quite some effort and patience.

The first stage, which I have always liked best, was inventing the plot together. In this case, we consulted the "Krakel-Orakel" ("Scribble Oracle") to determine what kind of film we were going to make. We asked: Where is the film set? Who is the protagonist? What does he or she want? And who is antagonist or friend?

Each "oracle consultation" required three performers – a "priest," an "oracle," and a "scriptor" – plus the rest of the class to interpret the oracle's message. The oracle sat with eyes closed in front of a tablet connected to the projector, pen in hand (it also worked on the old-school blackboard). The scriptor whispered each question into the priest's ear, who then drew it with a finger on the oracle's back. The oracle transferred what they felt onto the tablet – or with chalk onto the board. Afterwards, the scriptor asked the class what they saw and wrote down the collective interpretation as the oracle's answer. After successfully consulting the oracle, the group was tasked with incorporating all its sayings into a single storyline.

In the following session, we developed a storyboard together, which I sketched on the blackboard. Once the plan was complete, the students divided into working groups, each taking responsibility for one part of the storyboard.

In one of the two classes, the process of inventing the story was particularly remarkable: the oracle only came up with terms referring to memes, (online) games and codes, at least I should not know (and I didn't). I took careful notes of all those words and coming back in the next lesson, I told them, that I did my homework: I had researched all the mentioned terms and would now give an account of the glossary of our film production. If I had gotten something wrong, they of course should correct me. That was not only fun, but also had the advantage that I could, first of all, make sure, that I wouldn't support anything harmful or somehow seriously problematic, while still going along with "their" prompts and that secondly, the whole class was "on board" without individuals having to expose themselves by admitting that they didn't know the codes either. After clearing the grounds in this way, everyone was eagerly involved in inventing the (quite dadaistic) storyline and the whole class worked enthusiastiically through weeks on the common movie.

Both animation projects were screened during the Long Night of Talents and one of them even at the "SWIFT Coding Challenge", some big event, where many students from other schools got to see our work. As the children were partly copying comic characters that are protected by copyright, I am not allowed to publish the result here.

From the annual report:

The Surface tablets that all first, second and third grades received as part of this school year's digital device initiative are great tools. However, actively using them rather than just operating them is easier said than done.

One inspiring way of using them that promotes sensory experience of the world rather than suppressing it is animated film production, e.g. with the Stop Motion Studio app.

Verena Miedl-Faißt brought many years of experience in working with this app to the school. Together with Peter Girsch, tripods were built, which are essential for making animated films, and teachers of other subjects were also introduced to the possibilities of animated film production in the classroom as part of an internal school training course (SCHILF).

Classes 3ar and 3br are implementing two great best-practice projects and have achieved something truly extraordinary: In each case, the whole class worked on a joint animated film over many weeks in BE lessons. This is really something special, because they managed to develop and realize a joint story as a large group in collective authorship! The classes wrote, drew, animated and set the entire film to music as a team.

Only in Ohio. Back to the backrooms! At the SWIFT Coding Challenge

After the "scribble oracle" had spoken, a wild plot about a cursed flower store, a scheming alien named Möy and a dramatic chase unfolded in the 3ar - because everyone wants to rule Ohio, but (almost) no one escapes the backrooms! Fortunately, the work "Only in Ohio. Back to the Backrooms" could be presented on a large stage: On May 31, the SWIFT Coding Challenge organized by the Vienna Department of Education took place. Hundreds of schoolchildren took part, gaining their first game-based experience in the field of coding/robotics and working creatively with digital tools.

The 3ar didn't just take part in the various workshops - together with their BE teacher Verena Miedl-Faißt, they also led animation workshops for the other children. Meanwhile, their film "Only in Ohio. Back to the Backrooms" was shown in the cinema there and celebrated its world premiere!

Snail of D.U.T.Y. - Fart with consequences

The 3br also developed a boldly fabulated film work through persistent teamwork - including overcoming all unavoidable crises. The apocalyptic story of a snail whose fatal fart gives birth to an evil angel with a tablet and a good Alf leads to nothing less than the end of the world, which crashes into the sun.

Both films were ceremoniously presented at the Long Night of Talents.

if in doubt, ask the krakel-orakel.

Draw-and-run output

How can creative blockades be overcome, and the delight in playfully exploring unexpected artistic adventures be nourished?

Drawing Challenges

Prompts One Cannot Google

Deepening my worries about my lacking skills, the school subject “Arts” is most commonly referred to not as “Photography” or “Animation,” but simply as “Drawing.” And I had hardly any serious drawing practice. My colleagues worked with quite ambitious but rather classical methods – bringing objects for still-life studies to class or setting other exercises that prescribed theme, technique, and material. The results were usually twenty-five more or less identical images on standard A3 sheets – some more, some less well executed. Proper work, but no surprises.

To encourage more interest-driven and individual work, I quite early on put together a first set of “Drawing Challenges” – A5 cards that I planned to further develop and expand over time. Each challenge addressed a specific topic – for example: drawing three-dimensional objects, conveying spatial depth, drawing human faces, or very basic abstract exercises. Each card included a short explanatory text and some visual examples. My idea was that the students would come up with their own ideas and use the guidance provided only as support for realizing them. They could either sketch and practice in their sketchbooks or create more elaborate works on larger sheets of paper.

I discarded those first cards rather quickly. I’m not sure any of them were ever read all the way through by a single student. If the students bothered to do anything without a more concrete prompt from my side, every one of them would – before even putting pencil to paper – ask: “Can I please Google? I need a reference.” Some of them were actually astonishingly good at copying images, mostly manga or comics. But as soon as the reference was taken away and they had to draw from the three-dimensional world around them – or from imagination – the results looked like a toddler’s first attempts at holding a pen. Of course, this was frustrating for them, and they couldn’t understand why they weren’t allowed to copy, since the copied results were so much more satisfying and skillful.

Worst of all, they hardly seemed to enjoy the act of drawing itself – the purposeless joy of leaving a trace on paper. And, obviously, many of them had hardly done any drawing as children.

I tried to explain to them, at least theoretically, that the most difficult part of drawing is translating something from 3D to 2D. Copying an image was fine, of course, and also required skill, but it skipped the truly difficult part. And when one only aims to reproduce someone else’s visual idea as precisely as possible, one’s own perspective and thoughts can hardly emerge.

But such discussions were, obviously, not very fruitful. Since my first attempt with the “Drawing Challenges” had required quite some effort with zero positive effect, I decided to approach it differently – more playfully, and in a way closer to my own artistic approach.

I started formulating short prompts – one-liners that would hopefully be fun and inspiring but, above all, impossible to “Google.” I printed these prompts on blank postcards, quite small, in the space where you’d normally find the photo credits. I produced a set of sixteen such cards, each printed a hundred times. The idea was that the children could choose cards they liked at any time, repeat challenges as they wished, draw on the front, and actually use the cards as postcards (see p. 137). The only rules were: they should

invest at least ten minutes per challenge, and erasers were forbidden. If someone really liked a challenge or was inspired to a larger project, they could, of course, realize that on a bigger scale.

The younger children especially loved these challenges and were even enthusiastic about inventing some of their own (see p. 138).

The higher the grade, though, the more school logic set in: prompts were not meant to dive into – and possibly even enjoy – but to accomplish as quickly as possible. The ten-minute rule was often boldly ignored, and sixteen prompts – which, if done one after the other and taken seriously, could have filled almost an entire school year of art classes – were used up within half a lesson.

I kept working with such prompts, though mostly no longer using them all at once. Sometimes I also tried some challenges collectively, like the “draw-and-run challenge” (see photo, p. 133) – ideally suited for an overexcited group of first-graders: each received a small sheet of sketching paper to place on their sketchbooks and a thick colored crayon (not least for saftey reasons). The task was to walk around the schoolyard – not running, but as fast as possible – and draw the person in front of them from behind. The idea was to overcome the perfectionist urge to copy digital images and instead revel in movement, color, and trace.

Other drawing challenges aimed to foster the joy of drawing itself, such as drawing with chalk on the blackboard. One game the children really loved (though quite challenging for me) went like this:

I collected one word from each child, written on a small piece of paper, and put them all into a hat. I drew one word after another and improvised a short story that I told them aloud. The moment a child recognized their word, they would stand up, come to the front, and draw an illustration matching the story on the blackboard. When the next child came, they took turns and continued the collective board drawing.

All these attempts to relieve the children of the pressure to create perfect simulacra worked quite well in that sense. The next, or rather the other step, however, was difficult: to move beyond the stage of scribbling, to enter into a dialogue with pen and paper, to allow oneself to engage in the aleatory, playful act and then see what emerges – and to work with it. To develop some-thing further without becoming frustrated if the result did not exactly match the plan, but instead respond to one’s own trace – that was hard to achieve. And for me, it remains an open challenge to find ways of enab-ling such a reciprocal process.

The following citation is an excerpt from a foreword by Anna Freud for “On Not Being Able to Paint“ by Marion Milner. In this text, the reciprocal movement between allowing oneself to dive into the unknown – without getting completely lost, yet taking breaths of orientation through finding terms, distance, and perspective in between – is compared to a psychoanalytic process:

“The amateur painter, who first puts pencil or brush to paper, seems to be in much the same mood as the patient during his initial period on the analytic couch. Both ventures, the analytic as well as the creative one, seem to demand similar external and internal conditions. There is the same need for ‚circumstances in which it is safe to be absent-minded‘ (i.e. for conscious logic and reason to be absent from one‘s mind). There is the same unwillingness to transgress beyond the reassuring limits of the secondary process and, to accept chaos as a temporary stage‘. There is the same

fear of the ‚plunge into no-differentiation‘ and the disbelief in the ‚spontaneous ordering forces‘ which emerge, once the plunge is taken. There is, above all, the same terror of the unknown. Evidently, it demands as much courage from the beginning painter to look at objects in the external world and see them without clear and compact outlines, as it demands courage from the beginning analysand to look at his own inner world and suspend secondary elaboration. There are even the same faults committed. The painter interferes with the process of creation when, in the author‘s words, he cannot bear the ‚uncertainty about what is emerging long enough, as if one had to turn the scribble into some recognisable whole when, in fact, the thought or mood seeking expression had not yet reached that stage‘. Nothing can resemble more closely than this the attitude of haste and anxiety on the analyst‘s or patient‘s part which leads to premature interpretation, closes the road to the unconscious and puts a temporary stop to the spontaneous upsurge of the id-material. On the other hand, when anxieties and the resistances resulting from them are overcome, and the ‚surrender of the planning conscious intention has been achieved‘, both - painter and analysand - are rewarded by ‚a surprise, both in form and content‘. It is at this juncture only that we meet the essential difference between the analytic process and the process of creation.

The legitimate result of analysis is the inner experience of formerly unknown affects and impulses which find their final outlet in the ego-processes of verbalisation and deliberate action. The creative process in art on the other hand ‚remains within the realm in which unknown affect‘s and impulses find ‚their outlet, through the way in which the artist arranges his medium to form harmonies of shapes, colours or sounds‘; whether deliberate action is affected or not in the last issue, the main achievement is, according

Anna Freud

Marion Milner

to the author, a joining of that split between mind and body that can so easily result from trying to limit thinking to thinking only in words.“ (Freud, 1957: xiii-xiv)

The “spontaneous ordering forces” are precisely what children are systematically taught from their first day at school. To enable a genuinely creative process, these forces must be unlearned – or at least suspended – as described in this text. But it is a twofold movement: not simply letting go into chaos, but being able to perceive surprise, to move within the unknown, to “come to terms,” and to let them go again – be it visually, socially, or verbally.

I think I have reasonably achieved the first part: loosening reason and playfully engaging in experiments. Elevating such a process to the next level, however, is a different challenge. Factors like time, trust, space, the teacher’s skills, social dispositions, sympathy, mood etc. can support or hinder this. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn’t. But, generally speaking, I have not yet found a clear, nameable, and reliable method to foster such forward movement – one that balances between mind and body, sense and sensibility, aleatorics and intention. Coming from another angle, this aim resembles the impossible methodology of “creating” resonant relationships within the world (see p. 16). Still, I suppose that is precisely what it’s all about – at least a toenail of my invisible elephants.

No.1: Take a deep breath. Scribble randomly as long as you exhale. Look for something recognizable and complete the drawing.

No.2: Draw a monster with your “weaker“ hand. Add to the drawing with your “stronger“ hand.

No.3: Draw an ABC made of stick figures.

No.4: Draw a face with your eyes closed.

No.5: Draw an animal dressed up as a human.

No.6: Draw the taste of gummy bears. Do NOT draw gummy bears or fruit.

No.7: Draw an ice-cold fire.

No.8: Draw a flower meadow in the moonlight. Make sure to use the right colors!

No.9: Draw the shadow of your favorite animal.

No.10: Draw an undiscovered deep-sea fish.

No.11: Draw a spiderweb with a hammock function.

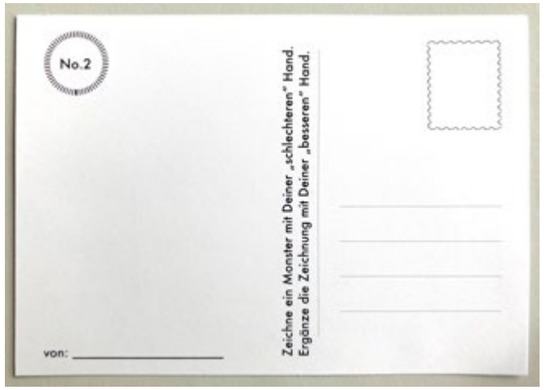
No.12: Draw a water surface.

No.13: Draw a dripstone cave.

No.14: Draw a long-haired cat. Try to make one line for each hair in the fur.

No.15: Draw a cloud crocodile.

No.16: Close your eyes. Let someone draw on your palmwith their finger. Transfer what you feel directly onto the postcard with a pen.



never trust

ugly schoolbooks
and bad copies.

Middle School

Teaching at a Middle School

After one year of teaching at a “grammar school“ near Vienna, my husband and I left the city and moved to a small village in Upper Austria. I had always considered it a major advantage of teaching that there are jobs available even outside metropolitan areas. And since we both love trees, water, birds, bugs, and mountains, we decided to try life in the countryside.

As there was (and still is) quite an acute teacher shortage across the country, it was fairly easy to find a position close to our new home. I could even commute by train within twenty-five minutes, and we managed to live without a car for more than a year (alien to neighbours, students, and colleagues alike).

The new school, beautifully situated next to the river Ybbs, was not a “grammar school“ but a middle school, with students between ten and fourteen years of age. As a “Bildungszentrum“ with an attached primary school and a college for social work, it was not particularly small – but compared to the large Viennese schools I was used to, it felt rather homely. There were two classes per grade, and the teaching staff at the middle school comprised around twenty people. At my previous school, I hadn’t spoken to every colleague by the time I left again – but there were five art teachers who had all studied at an art academy. At my new school, I was the only one with such a background.

I should add that only a few years before I began teaching in 2022 – namely in 2019 – the Austrian legal framework for teachers had been completely restructured. Before this reform, the training systems for lower and upper secondary teachers were entirely separate: those teaching at a “Pflichtschule“ (mandatory school), including middle schools, were required to attend a “Pädagogische Hochschule“ (College of Education), whereas teaching at a “grammar school“ required a university degree. As a result, graduates of art academies typically taught at “Gymnasien“ (which were also better paid), and teachers at middle schools rarely had any specific artistic education.

As part of the Bologna reforms, the “Pädagogischen Hochschulen“ (Colleges of Education), the universities, and the art academies were all converted to the bachelor’s–master’s system. Naturally, the same degree must now qualify for the same level of teaching. Since 2019, every new teacher has essentially had the same contract (the “Pädagogischer Dienst“), regardless of whether they teach at a middle school, “grammar school“, or any other public school (cf. § 38 (1) of the “Vertragsbedienstetengesetz“ 1948 (VBG), Republic of Austria, 1948). Thus, I hope that in the future I might meet more artists teaching art at middle schools. Because all the while, I actually enjoyed teaching at a middle school more than at the “grammar school“: the students were less shaped by pushy performance ideologies and therefore (at least in part) better companions for my playful art offerings. Some even said they looked forward to our lessons or regretted when our time was up – admittedly, those were my personal highlights and not everyday occurrences.

I also learned to appreciate teaching crafts (at the “grammar school“ I had only taught art). First of all, crafts were actually more highly valued at a school where students would ideally continue their educational path through an apprenticeship. The school had well-equipped workshops for textile and, above all, woodwork. By contrast, the art lessons were held in a cramped classroom, using the meagre remnants of materials the children had brought from home: cheap, crumpled paper, worn brushes, and almost empty, murky watercolour sets rattling around in huge, battered cardboard boxes, which they placed on their small desks between piles of books, water bottles, and homework from other subjects.

But the greatest advantage of the craft lessons was that, for safety reasons, the classes had to be split in order to use the workshops – and for some groups, I actually had the rare luxury of working with fewer than ten students at a time (instead of 25 or more).

Before starting at the new school, I had also expressed the wish to focus my fifteen teaching hours on as few classes as possible. I hoped to build stronger relationships with the students if I saw them more frequently and didn’t have to spread my attention across too many individuals. At middle schools, it is still quite common for teachers to teach various subjects, even without formal qualification. Although I find this practice rather problematic, I agreed to teach some German (as an assistant teacher) and “Digitale Grundbildung“ (Digital Literacy), which I felt comparatively qualified for – and, to my delight, those classes were also split into smaller groups.

As I had wished, almost half of my teaching load was actually spent with a single class of twenty-three thirteen-year-olds. I had hoped to connect the different subjects – and to some extent, I did – but in fact, each lesson was quite different. In three units, I accompanied the German teacher, who was not particularly interested in co-shaping the lessons. I merely assisted, often without knowing what my colleague had planned – admittedly relieved not to have to prepare three lessons a week in a subject outside my expertise.

In art, I taught the entire class, although during the first semester only for one unit per week, directly after a double lesson in their main subject, German, where I had just been the “real teacher’s sidekick.” Within those fifty minutes, it was nearly impossible to get anything done (the students seemed to treat it as an extended lunch break), and I was looking forward to the second semester, when it would be two units – which, however, did not necessarily work any better, as the dynamic remained the same.

In addition, I taught crafts, with the class divided into two groups – one of seventeen boys and the other of six girls. (Because sports lessons had to be gender-separated, those same groups were kept for the other subjects that required splitting.)

During the second semester, I also had two weekly units of Digital Literacy with the small group of six girls. Needless to say, working with them was a walk in the park (at times literally) compared to ensuring the survival of seventeen boys in the wood workshop. But overall, my hope of building a stronger relationship with that class was, to a considerable extent, fulfilled.

Additionally, I taught the girls from the parallel class in Digital Literacy during the first semester, two groups of slightly younger girls (around twelve years old) in crafts, and a mixed group of the youngest (around eleven years old) also in crafts, a class of fourteen-year-olds in arts in the first semester and both groups of their parallel class in crafts during the second semester.

Generally speaking, I resolved to keep my teaching somewhat simpler – to make it sustainable in the long run. I didn’t start with ambitious monster projects but instead tried to draw on what had worked on a smaller scale – and, even more, on what was already there:

How can the use of low-threshold animating techniques in school foster basic (media) literacy and even democratic awareness?

Animation workshop with Diego Mosca

(Digital) Literacy

Coming to Terms between Virtual and Actual Life

As stop-motion animation had worked well at my previous school – and since I believed it could incorporate almost any subject – I planned to use it again. This time, I approached the equipment issue a bit differently: the middle school students had iPads, and the free version of Stop Motion Studio worked well enough on iOS. I began adapting the prototype stands we had developed at my former school but mostly got through the year with improvised solutions (large glue clamps, for example) and my private tripods.

In the first few units, after some initial tuning in, I explained my approach to artistic research at school to all of the groups – telling them that I was genuinely interested in what we could discover and invent together (perhaps even more than in teaching them something I already knew) – and that I wanted to share our findings because I believed that what we were doing could also be of interest beyond school. For that purpose, I created expositions on the Research Catalogue to collect, document, and present our ongoing work. Mostly, I did not actually publish those expositions in the end, because it seemed to me that the children neither understood nor cared what that would have meant – and so the effort of collecting consent forms and explaining to parents something that was, for their children, irrelevant did not seem worthwhile.

From the beginning, I noticed a significant difference in this regard: the children at the grammar school might not have been particularly impressed by such statements about being my co-researchers, because they were already quite self-assured and mostly came from academic households. Of course, what they said and thought mattered – at least in contexts they could imagine and relate to. Artistic research may not have seemed especially relevant to them, but they were, to some extent, motivated by the idea of entering a public sphere – of being heard rather than merely listening.

At middle school, however, I fear that most of the students hardly understood how what I was trying to do with them differed from their regular classes: I encountered a fundamental lack not only of digital but also of general media literacy and basic democratic education. They had little understanding of the various spheres of public life – their relevance, thresholds, and distinctions – something the students at the grammar school simply grew up with. As I observed during the German lessons, hardly any of the middle school students had ever consciously looked at, let alone read, a newspaper (aside from the free ones where one can hardly distinguish edited articles from advertisements). Not only did they have no notion of current politics – many didn't even know what the word politics meant. Universities, research, science, or anything referred to as "high culture" seemed to them entirely out of reach – and equally irrelevant. There was TikTok and YouTube – whose algorithms decided what they saw.

I know this may sound harsh and overly generalizing, and I apologize if I am doing anyone an injustice. The middle school I was working at was surely not a "high-need school." Although some of the children were already looking back on short but troubled lives and were living in state care, most came from at least economically fairly sheltered backgrounds, and as I already mentioned, the atmosphere at school was caring and positive. Thus, I had not expected the difference concerning the ability and opportunities for

social participation and inclusion between the two schools to be that startling – largely due to an overall lack of media literacy, reading comprehension, and a stunning lack of awareness of societal structures in general. Some of the students indeed faced particular learning challenges and might not have been able to grasp such contexts on a purely cognitive level.

But for most of them, I am quite sure this was not a nature but a nurture problem. There was simply no such awareness around them that they could have absorbed. I hardly met any parents, so I could not form a well-grounded impression; but, for example, they often did not bother to reply to my messages – whether I was sharing something positive we had achieved or addressing an issue that required attention. It seems to me that they simply did not feel addressed. In contrast, communication with parents at the grammar school was positive, appreciative, and reliable. At middle school, neither the students nor their parents seemed accustomed to being asked anything. The students, it seemed to me, had therefore never developed any motivation to ask questions themselves, to discover things out of intrinsic curiosity, to thrive on experience and learning opportunities, to articulate thoughts, argue with arguments, or rely on their own understanding.

During my first semester teaching Digital Literacy, I was trying to figure out what I was actually expected to do in this subject. On the one hand, there seemed to be overwhelming curricular targets (rather vaguely assembled depending on whom I spoke to). Above all, there was the competent use of all Microsoft Office applications, followed by safe internet use, distinguishing reliable sources, programming, building computers, fixing the school printer, understanding artificial intelligence – and never using ChatGPT. All this while some students seriously struggled to memorize their login credentials for the school PCs and could hardly distinguish whether they were looking at a desktop application or a web browser – let alone recognize the difference between a website, Google results, or AI-generated summaries.

So I decided to start where they actually were and asked them what “digital” meant to them, what kinds of digital devices they used, and what media they consumed. The unanimous answer was: smartphone, many hours per day, mostly “watching” TikTok and YouTube. Only a few played games. I was not yet too surprised by this result. But I was completely stunned when they literally had no answer to my seemingly obvious follow-up question: “What do you watch on YouTube or TikTok?” It was not that they didn’t want to tell me – the atmosphere was friendly, and I think they liked chatting with me. But their way of watching videos online was simply not comparable to how I thought one does that. They could not name a single YouTuber, channel, or even individual video they liked. They never opened the app to look for something in particular but just let the algorithmic stream blur their minds.

Remembering from my previous teaching experience that their favorite activity had been making PowerPoint presentations (with crazy transitions, of course), I gave them what I thought would be a simple first task – perhaps enough for two weeks: I asked them to think of one specific online thing – a website, a channel, a video – that they wanted to present and recommend to the others and prepare a short PowerPoint presentation about it. This turned out to occupy them for the rest of the semester – partly because they were not as familiar with PowerPoint as the grammar school students had been, but mostly because the prompt itself was so alien to them. It took me a while to understand that this really wasn’t their fault: apps like TikTok

are designed to keep children passively consuming and becoming remotely controllable ~~subjects~~ objects. They are not tools to be used; rather, they use their users – turning everyone into both a source of data and manipulable tools themselves. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to share a specific piece of content from TikTok – especially when leaving one’s account and device. Creating a PowerPoint presentation about something from TikTok was therefore genuinely challenging, and I barely managed to help them even once they had finally found something they wanted to show.

Thus realizing where we were at, I barely knew where to start. How could I raise awareness of the power of the companies they were completely absorbed by and at the same time enable active and skillful use of (partly) exactly the same applications, when the children lacked the very basic terms needed to reflect on such matters? At that point, I decided to stop struggling with things none of us really enjoyed and instead returned to what I was good at: making stop-motion animations with them. And this was not merely the easy way out.

Of course, after producing one animation with Stop Motion Studio, we were still far from fulfilling the overwhelming curriculum the world confronted us with. But it offered learning opportunities at the necessary basic level – the kind one can hopefully build upon, no matter how digital industries continue to work with us: How does reality become a digital image? How does that image relate back to reality? How are illusions – starting with the moving image – created? And how is a story told? One might argue that the children are constantly taking photos with their smartphones – so what’s the difference? I think the difference is that when taking selfies, they don’t look – they simply reperform learned gestures and poses. If they look at the result at all, it’s only to check whether it corresponds to what a selfie should look like, or what they should look like in one. But they don’t translate space into image by deliberately choosing frame, perspective, and moment.

In cut-out animation, that is absolutely essential. The illusion only works if nothing is visible but the illusion itself: using a green and a blue sheet of paper can create a vast horizon stretching over a green meadow. But if the surface of the school table flashes into the corner, it’s just paper. If a cut-out horse is meant to graze on that meadow, it will only come to life if, from frame to frame, only the horse changes its position. If the horizon jumps up and down or shadows flicker between frames, there is no horse, no meadow, no illusion – only crumpled paper and random photos.

The – as I suggest – truly special part is that while creating a digital illusion, one must be deeply attentive in physical space. The app on the smartphone is only used to take photos, watch the result, and perhaps delete frames if necessary. The children are used to offloading any responsibility onto digital tools: handwriting legibly – unnecessary; pictures can be photoshopped – or better yet, just Googled. Templates and digital effects stylize and idealize everything, masking imperfections and making anything handmade appear awkward or incomplete. Thus, they are deprived of the opportunity to genuinely create and discover their own means of expression in a non-flat-reality, on more than 7x15 cm, with all senses and their body in relation to other bodies, present in a surrounding space. In stop-motion animation, agency lies literally in the children’s hands. Although simple, the magic becomes physically tangible – literally in their hands. At the same time, the alluring spectacles they are used to passively consuming (and sometimes mistaking for active creation) lose some of their manipulative power, rather than being merely dismissed.

fund humans,
not tablets.

digital literacy is analog.

A creature from “Chicken Dicken Masala“

Teaching Arts at a Middle School

Working on Common Grounds

I was convinced that my approach to teaching art was equally suitable for any child, no matter what needs, skills, or expectations were at play. The headmaster of the middle school warned me not to expect too much – this was not a grammar school. I told him that I was actually looking forward to working with groups less immersed in the logic of performance and competition, and that I was sure to find good partners among the middle school students. And I did – but there were other challenges I hadn’t expected.

First of all, the groups were far more heterogeneous. In the same class, there were smart teenagers and dreamy, introverted children, some very focused, some always tired, some fluttery like a moth at a light bulb, some angry, some sad, some constantly sick, some very cool, some sympathetically odd, some slightly unsettling. Of course, all these types – and more – can be found in any school class or larger group of people. But at middle school, I perceived these differences more intensely than at the rather segregated grammar school. Actually, I would still consider that an advantage – but it did not necessarily mean that the children had developed a high degree of tolerance or empathy (at least not all of them). If they were too different, they would simply ignore each other as much as possible – live and let live, without crossing paths too often. If one let them do so, that was fine – but co-creating something like a collective storyline for an animated film became quite difficult.

In the class I taught the most, I tried to frame all our efforts within such collective “worlding” – for which I also created one of the Research Catalogue exhibitions. We again started with a “Krakel-Orakel” and somehow managed to cobble together a Surrealistic story about a fish-head shoe living in a house in some magical woods, a ball that accidentally killed the fish-head shoe when rolling over in the sewer into which it had fallen, a walking word, and a heaven of Chicken-Dicken-Masala – whatever that means. (I tried to find out!)

Although I have not explicitly sought consent to do so, I would like to publish this Research Catalogue exposition here. Strictly speaking, this is incorrect – but as the group was quite proud of our web presence, and since no personal data are involved, I dare to do so, because I believe it serves well as a comprehensible trace of our fragmented yet collective process – its heterogeneity, shared grounds, and struggles. I cannot credit the authors by name, as I wish to protect their data, but I hope I may be forgiven for publishing this piece of collective work in this way (see excerpt and link on p. 151/152).

What becomes visible is for example how we tried to combine writing and drawing. In their German classes, they had been asked to write inner monologues. Within our project, we wrote inner monologues for the characters appearing in our story. The drawn figures populating the exposition had been prepared for a stop-motion animation. I had originally planned to involve the whole group again in one larger film project, but it turned out that the inventors of the fish-head shoe would simply ignore the magic horse at the heavenly spring in the woods, and those invested in Chicken-Dicken-Masala were not particularly keen on any ball story. Thus, things kept their fragmented character. Whenever we talked about one part of this strange world, the rest of the class would drop out and lose any thread of connection.

To still keep everyone involved, I created individualized drawing challenges for each of them over several weeks. I tried to observe their individual humor, interests, and capacities, and wrote and printed personalized prompts (see examples on pp. 153–154). I wanted them to feel seen, heard, and challenged – in the best sense – while always connecting their work back to the collective story, to show them that their individuality was part of, and complemented, the bigger picture.

The next thing I hadn't expected – besides the challenge of such diversity – was that drawing, bricolaging, and building things were even less naturally part of what the children would do (or had done when younger) than at the grammar school. It was genuinely difficult to find something satisfying to do with a fourteen-year-old who could barely draw a stick figure or hold scissors correctly. So how do you even start?

To value them individually – and their artistic voices (even if they didn't know they had one) – I again gave each of them a high-quality sketchbook at the beginning of the school year. I gave it to them as a gift (I actually bought them myself, which of course is not sustainable), but it was important that this little book was different from a regular school notebook with cheap paper that they had to buy in stacks. I wanted them to identify with their sketchbook. As before at the grammar school, I didn't tell them what to draw or write in it; they could use it at any time, at home or at school (of course, in agreement with the other teachers). But they had to treat it with respect, and were not allowed to tear out pages or erase anything. I announced that I wanted to look at the books at least once per semester, but they could decide when to hand them in. If they wanted to keep certain pages private, they could simply clip them together with a paper clip.

I had done the same at the grammar school, where some of the students had filled several of these little books. Some had only scribbled a few lines, but I replied to every sketchbook that was given to me with a personal letter, including some positive, encouraging feedback. At the grammar school, this was quite a lot of work, and I suspect that I spent more time with some of those books than their actual owners. But I thought that, following the law of conservation of energy, if I invested enough encouraging energy, it had to yield some result. Admittedly, this again is not sustainable for a single teacher with limited energy resources and hundreds of students. And it didn't always work. But at middle school, it was even harder to establish a sense of respect for these sketchbooks – and I hardly ever saw any of them again (except for a few lying on the floor, crumpled and empty, except for footprints).

I realized that treating all students as co-researchers actually meant first igniting and then accompanying twenty-five highly individual creative and artistic processes at once. This was already unmanageable at the grammar school, but at least there I could assume that every child would be able to carry out my basic prompts. I "only" had to develop projects that everyone could somehow relate to or find interesting. At middle school, I sometimes planned projects that were simply too complex, frustratingly overwhelming at least some of the students. If I had had the capacity to help every individual, it might still have worked – but obviously, that's impossible with a group of twenty-five.

For example, I planned a stencil project with the oldest students (around fourteen years old). I thought they should be able to try something a bit more complex – and I had tested it with my little nephew, with great results. To tune in to the project, we watched the Banksy documentary. We discussed – and rather superficially touched on – topics such as what could be

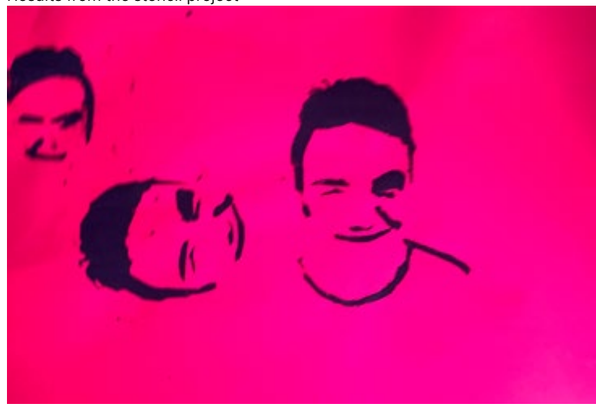
called "art," what motivations there might be for making art, how activism, protest, and "illegal" street art are related, and why calling something "art" does not automatically legitimize breaking the law. Afterwards, I explained the stencil technique to them. I brought overhead transparencies. As a first try, I asked them to draw simple shapes on paper, transfer them onto the transparencies, cut them with a craft knife, and use those stencils to print on paper, using small sponges and liquid paint. Some of them already struggled with that part – and, in any case, they neither enjoyed the printing process nor understood why they shouldn't just draw directly. They didn't start experimenting with the shapes, as I had hoped and encouraged, but were done after producing a single print, wondering why they had to spill so much paint.

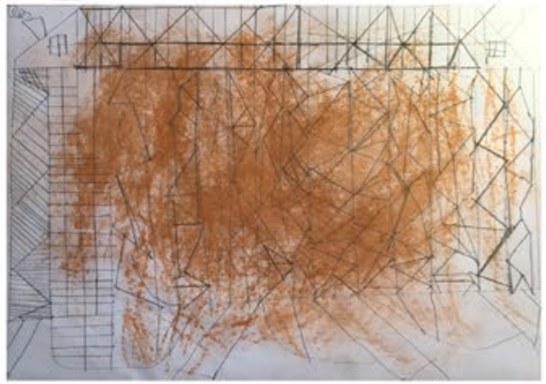
The next step was to take photo-portraits of each other, which we then converted into black-and-white stencil templates on the computer (using filter effects in Microsoft Word – as I assumed this program would be available to most of them). We printed the black-and-white images on the school printer, and I provided black and white pens so they could rework the templates, avoiding "white lakes" that would fall out when cutting. This proved far too demanding for most of them – and, admittedly, it requires quite some spatial imagination and visualization skills. In the end, there were no T-shirts, bags, collages, or whatever I had originally envisioned. Out of breath, some managed to produce a single print – mostly in black, since the template had been black – and again wondered why they should invest all this effort when the school printer could do a much better and easier job. Some never got to cut out a stencil at all, but we framed it as a success to have at least abstracted the photo-portraits into black-and-white, stencil-like images and created some collages from the digital prints and the simple shapes we had made earlier.

This group of students was really friendly, polite, and motivated, and I was more than sorry that this project turned out a bit messy. After each unit, I missed my train home because it took me so long to sort the materials and carry the equipment back to the cupboards and shelves that were at my disposal – because we needed every minute during class to achieve at least somewhat satisfying results individually.

If the group had been half as big – so that I could have provided more individual support and tailored adjustments – and if we had proper workspaces that I could have prepared, instead of just shoveling the materials into the classroom right after the previous teacher had left, this project could have been a much more successful experience for all of us. That means, as so often, it was not the task that was too difficult for the students' skills and abilities, but rather that the implementation of the project in this form was barely possible under school conditions. Thus – of course, I can reduce complexity, requirements, and ambition, but in the end, this comes at the expense of the students. I would much rather change the circumstances.

Results from the stencil project





WASSERBALL

Ich bin der **Wasserball** und ich verbringe gerne Zeit im Abwasser-Kanal." (rollt auf Fischkopf zu, denkt sich: "Woaaaaa es tut mir Leid! Das ist mir aber zu schnell gegangen. Ohje, hab ich ihn umgebracht? Bin ich jetzt ein Mörder?"

Dap du Dap die du. Ein angenehmer Tag im Schmutz. Gar nicht so viel Kot wie erwartet... Wieso wohl so viele Deckel offen sind? Wo bin ich eigentlich... oh verdammt, ich kann nicht mehr bremsen. Egal! Ohhhh! Kacke, da lag wer. Hehe! Der fünfte heute. Wie wäre es, nochmal drüber zu fahren? Ich mache es einfach! Das ist lustig. Das war doch Fischkopf. Der sieht aus als so ein Typ den ich kenne

Ich heiße ich Jeffrey Bella

Oh Mann... Es tut mir so leid, dass ich den Fischkopf überrollt und umgebracht habe... Ich wollte das gar nicht, aber ich war so schnell und konnte mich nicht mehr stoppen... Das Gefühl, als ich über ihn rollte war so komisch es fühlte sich so ungut an... Ich hoffe, mir passiert das nie wieder... Ich fühle mich wie ein Mörder das ist schrecklich.... Aber wie konnte das überhaupt passieren? Ich darf doch gar nicht so schnell rollen... Ich lerne aber aus meinen Fehlern, darum roll ich nie wieder so schnell... Es

SCHNITZELPOMMESKETCHUP

"Ich spawn mich mal in den Kühlschrank von Fischkopf!"

Ah hier ist es zu warm ... ich spawn mich in Fischkopfs Kühlschrank ... Ah hier ist es gemütlich ... aah das Haus bewegt sich ... höre ich da Gehwort ... was wohl was anders ... Das Haus steht still!

So! Wo ist denn der Fischkopf? Ich spawne mich mal in seinen Kühlschrank. Endlich! Ich sehe an seiner Kleidung, dass er jagen war. Wird er mich finden? Ich denke, er wird mich verpeisen. Er hat anscheinend nichts schießen können. Jetzt hat er mich entdeckt. Oh nein!? Wo bin ich gelandet? Achso in seinem Bauch. Aber jetzt flutsche ich mit einigem anderen verdautes Essen aus ihm. Oh jetzt lebe

WALDHAUS

Das **Waldhaus** ist ein **Haus** im **Wald**.
Das **Waldhaus** arbeitet gerade.

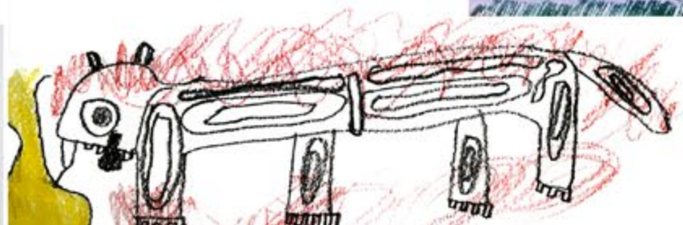
research catalogue
"Chicken Dicken Masala"

Ich habe sehr Durst! Wenn ich im Wald doch irgendwas zu trinken finden würde?
-> Trinkt vom Himmelswasser

DAS PFERD

Eines Tages kam ein **Pferd** names **Huhn** im **Wald** vorbei. Es hatte Durst und dachte sich: "Ah hier ist ja ein Fluss mit einer **Flüssigkeit** drin!" und es war Wasser. Es trank die Flüssichkeit und fühlte sich auf einmal so kräftig. Das Pferd fühlte sich so kräftig, dass es überall herumrannte. Das Pferd rannte sogar in die Stadt. Plötzlich kam ein Auto und fuhr es zusammen. Das Pferd lebte mit einem gebrochenen Bein im **Wald** wunschlos glücklich.

Wann geht es los... Ich möchte endlich von den Profis gekickt werden... Wer spielt denn... Es spielt Barca gegen Real Madrid...wer spielt denn dort... spielt bei Barca nicht Messie und bei Real nicht Ronaldo... wann geht es wirklich los.... endlich nimmt der Schiedsrichter mich in die Hand... wer wird gewinnen... gewinnt Real oder Barca.... In der ersten Minute gibt es einen Freistoß... werde ich fliegen... oder in das Tor geschossen... wird das wehtun oder nicht... wer schießt den Freistoß Real oder Barca.... Messi schießt ihn.... Aua, der Schuss in die Mauer tat weh... ist es ein gutes Gefühl zu fliegen.... wann werde ich im Tor liegen, jetzt oder beim Elfmeterschießen... das werde ich hoffentlich erfahren... in der 10. Minute wurde ich gegen die Latte geschossen, das tat voll weh... gleich darauf flog ich in die Mitte wegen einem Eckball.... dann flog ich über das Tor... 10 Minuten später... flog ich gegen den Pfosten....



Individualized Drawing Challenges

T.:
Draw a fantasy bird cloud full of colorful feathers.
(At least as big as your hand.)

L.:
Draw a Chicken Dicken Masala.
(At least as big as your hand.)

M.:
Draw a stage for the Fishhead rapper.
(Cover the whole page!)

A.:
Draw the frightened face of the “Walk Word”
when it realizes the Fishhead is gone.
(At least as big as your hand.)

V.:
Draw Tomatohead dressed as a chicken!
(At least as big as your hand.)

J.:
Draw a chicken that’s in love with Fishhead.
(At least as big as your hand.)

A.:
Draw a friend for the inhabitant of the Sky-Water-For-
est. (Big enough to walk between your trees.)

R.:
Draw a guard dog for the forest house.

L.:
Draw a goal for your soccer player.

N.:
Draw a place in the Chicken Dicken Masala Heaven
where Fishhead has a date with Chicken.
(Cover the whole page.)

H.:
Draw a friend for your fish.

F.:
Draw the cash register for the
“OachkatzlschwoaffishheadshoeTM store.”
(Big enough for your shopkeeper to fit in.)

E.:
Draw someone who only ever eats Leberkäse.
(At least as big as your hand.)

J.:
Design matching sunglasses for the AirKatzl7.
(At least as big as your hand.)

H.:
Draw your fantasy bird flying large in the air.
(At least as big as your hand.)

T. S.:
Draw the portal guardian.
(At least as big as your hand.)

P.:
Draw one good person and one evil person.
(Each at least as big as your hand.)

N.:
Draw Fishhead’s shoe full of fries-banana-ketchup.
(At least as big as your hand.)

T.
Draw a Chicken-Dicken-Masala angel.
(At least as big as your hand.)

J.:
Design a dress that matches the FireFish2000.
(At least as big as your hand.)

O.:
Draw a ketchup bottle.
(At least as big as your hand.)

S.:
Draw a Chicken-Dicken-Masala lightning bolt.
(At least as big as your hand.)

M.:
Draw Jonesy disguised as a chicken.
(At least as big as your hand.)

T.:
Draw a chicken cloud.

L.:
Draw a microphone and speaker.
(At least as big as your hand.)

M.:
Draw a Fishhead rapper.
(Cover the whole page!)

A.:
Draw the Fishhead without mouth and eyes,
so the separately drawn parts can be placed on top.

V.:
Draw a throne for the Chicken Temple Priest Chicken.
(At least as big as your hand.)

J.:
Draw the “Walk Word” from the front and from the
back. (Make it the right size to fit next to the fridge.)

A.:
Draw an inhabitant of the Sky-Water-Forest.
(Big enough to walk between your trees.)

R.:
Draw the forest around the forest house,
including the drain.

L.:
Draw a soccer ball for your soccer player.

N.:
Draw a close-up of the door to the forest house.
Cut out the door so it can be opened.
(Cover the whole page.)

H.:
Draw the sky-water spring where your fish lives.
(Cover the whole page.)

F.:
Draw the OachkatzlschwoaffishheadshoeTM store clerk.
(At least as big as your hand.)

E.:
Draw the best Leberkäse sandwich in the world.

J.:
Draw a stylish model wearing FireFish2000.
(At least as big as your hand.)

H.:
Draw a fantasy bird that lives in your trees.
(Cut it out so it fits among the trees.)

T.:
Draw the staircase behind the portal.
(Cover the whole page.)

P.:
Draw the tax office.
(At least as big as your hand.)

artificial intelligence
is only dangerous
if there is not

enough creative
intelligence.

How can a female teacher like me (she/her) cope with the surplus of women and the lack of queer or male role models in the pedagogical field and overcome stereotypical stances towards certain techniques ?

Inside “Leberkas Pepi“

Teaching Crafts at a Middle School

Activating Material and Individual Potential

My approach to teaching crafts was actually not so different from the art lessons: I tried to ignite inspiration and make the students create things they had invented themselves, with more or less given materials and techniques. But within the scope of the crafts classes, this worked much better – because there was more space, fewer students, and thus more time.

In particular, the workshop for Technisch Werken – mostly a wood workshop – suited my practice quite well. There was an empty cupboard and a lot of leftover materials from abandoned craft projects lying around. There is a popular online store for craft supplies, specializing in school needs. They sell affordable basic equipment and materials, but also many craft kits – very popular among my colleagues. These kits come with strict instructions to be followed exactly, producing almost identical results – just more or less finished and more or less accurately executed – such as toy trucks, bottle openers, simple robots, or Easter decorations. These craft kits are (at least some of them) well designed, and the children probably learn how to read manuals and use a hammer, saw, file, and sandpaper. But they do not set goals for themselves, develop ideas, or find individual solutions – and they are bored.

The advantage for me was that there was a lot of material lying around that nobody used or missed. After sorting the pieces of plywood, slats, boards, metal, screws, nails, wire, and paint neatly into boxes and shelves, it magically turned from annoying rubbish – or worse, failed and discarded projects – into boxes of opportunities. The students’ eyes began to glow when I showed them the filled cupboard, telling them that all this material was at their free disposal.

The class I spent most time with also spent most of their time with me in this workshop. With the tiny group of girls, this came close to an ideal studio situation (I will reflect on this a bit later). But it felt slightly as if I had to earn that easy time by coping with the seventeen boys in their crafts lessons. Still, they too thrived in the wood workshop.

Before working in a very open way, I started all my crafts groups with a fairly structured kite-building project. I followed the methods and workshop concepts of the wonderful Austrian artist and kite-maker Anna Rubin – resulting in highly individual, yet always beautiful and functional kites. I think there are few things more uplifting than seeing and feeling something one has created with their own hands rise up into the sky.

Afterwards, I asked each group what they had done previously in crafts and what they would be interested in doing together. I told them that I was no master in any of the possible fields – as a teacher can never master everything they are supposed to teach – but that I was good at improvising and learning together. Unfortunately, it feels a bit predictable, but all the boys wanted to build houses or cars. Trying at least to open up what was preconceived as a “house” or “car,” I asked the large group of boys to build models that could be used as backdrops for our animated film, set in their crazy chicken world. They formed small teams or worked individually as they wished, drew sketches, listed all needed materials, and presented their plans to the group. Their material requests were actually quite realistic, and so – to their great surprise – I could provide what they had asked for. They started to work – and remained enthusiastically absorbed by their “houses” for a large part of the school year.

Most of them used a wooden base plate, on which they patiently built brick buildings out of miniature bricks. One of the models looked like a prefab house, though quite elaborate, with a garage, staircase, and pool; one was a black box with a big window and a cash desk – the "Oachkatzlschwoaffischkopfschuhgeschäft." Another was a Leberkäs store (the only one made of cardboard), and one was a complex two-storey model of a forest with a sewer below. They found out how to build stable walls from bricks or how to mount thin plywood or cardboard walls on the base plate, how to mix plaster and produce a smooth surface. They used the band saw and drill press, and tried out various joining methods such as gluing, nailing, stapling, and clamping different materials – wood, cardboard, paper, fabric, and more. They found different ways to construct stairs, windows, and doors – on different levels of complexity and functionality. They designed light concepts for their architectures, soldering simple electric circuits and installing small LED bulbs.

As long as there were enough miniature bricks, as long as their plans worked out satisfactorily, as long as it wasn't time to clean up or deal with other inconveniences, as long as there were no conflicts and the night before had brought enough sleep – at least on average – everyone enjoyed those hours in the crafts workshop. But as soon as there was a problem, things became difficult: If there was a conflict within the group, I had a hard time being heard when trying to mediate. If the solutions they came up with didn't work – like trying to make a 5×5 mm, 50 cm long wooden strip stand on its narrow edge and support a platform on the opposite side with only a drop of glue – I had a hard time being heard when trying to help. If the floor had to be swept at the end, I had a hard time being heard that kicking the dirt under the neighbour's table was not the idea – and that men, too, could use a broom.

Not only because of these discussions about dustpan and broom, I can't help assuming that my struggle to deal with the boys-only group was at least partly a gender issue. The segregation into "boys" and "girls" anyway felt anachronistic to me, as did the separation into "textile" and "technical" crafts. But this was quite natural to most of the students and colleagues, as it had simply never been different. At least it was no question anymore that both groups would be taught in both craft subjects.

When I told the headmaster that I was a bit worried about the occasionally messy lessons with the boys in the workshop – not least for safety reasons – he sent one of the three male teachers to support me. My colleague entered with considerable masculine authority – and the boys fell silent. I was not overly pleased, because naturally, the effect only lasted as long as he was in the room, performing his authority. Once he left and I did not fill the authoritarian vacuum he had left behind, trouble resurfaced. The boys did not resolve their conflicts, see why sweeping was necessary, or suddenly appreciate my hints toward possible solutions for their construction issues.

Likewise, it was hardly possible to move beyond simply letting them do whatever they wanted, as they would not adopt any new task or challenge. Whatever I suggested, they asked for bricks and kept building miniature walls. It worked quite well as long as I let them be – but, similar to some experiences in the "Arts Lab" – any intervention on my part was difficult. At the grammar school, this had not been so much a gender issue – and it was the same for the whole group. There I rather faced a general opposition toward the teacher, breaking free as soon as I, representing "the teacher," loosened the authoritarian screws in favor of a more equal, collaborative setting.

At middle school, this opposition was not as distinct. But I think all the students at middle school actually suffered from a lack of male – let alone queer – role models. At the grammar school, there were (annoyingly) conservative gender stereotypes at play – but at least there were as many male teachers as female ones. At middle school, the headmaster and three colleagues were cis-male. All the other teachers were cis-female – and I could offer nothing else myself.

What I tried to do was involve friends and artist colleagues who offered different role models – or rather: together with me, exemplified ways of encountering each other in a non- or at least less-stereotypical, respectful, communicative, and collaborative way. For example, I was able to invite my dear friend Diego Mosca for an animated film workshop that we held together in a very well-established, mutually inspiring, and harmonious way – with both of us taking on both the cliché-"female" tasks like being empathetic and caring and the rather cliché-"male" tasks like handling the big camera.

Moreover, I of course tried to empower shy girls to also naturally use the band saw and pillar drill – and boys to naturally use needle and thread. Generally speaking, though, it was easier to excite the girls about the wood workshop than to excite the boys about textile classes.

During the summer semester, I was teaching the parallel class of those I had done the stencil project with, in textile crafts – again, boys and girls separately. I told both groups that I was no tailor or specialist in textile crafts, but I tried to open up their understanding of what one could do in this field beyond identical embroidered doilies and potholders. I gave a short introduction on smart textiles, fashion design, and fabric sculpture, and then asked them – if we could do anything (as I had told L.), if we had the skills and media to do absolutely everything we could think of – what would you try to do?

Of course, one might say that this is not a sustainable approach, as encouraging unrealistic projects may only foster frustration. But I wanted them to dare think beyond what they were used to. Most of the girls planned to make bombastic ballroom dresses (just one designed a bag for her dog and had her grandmother sew it). I told them that I myself by far did not have the skills to realize their ideas (mostly pictures they found on Instagram) – but that we could just go for it and see how far we could get. They agreed, and it was actually quite wonderful: In the first units, I brought rolls of thin but strong Japanese paper that actually felt a bit like fabric when crumpled and reopened (the same paper Anna Rubin had suggested for the kite workshops). The students built paper models of their dresses directly on each other's bodies. After fitting the paper with masking tape, I asked them to open up the dresses with scissors and try to flatten the paper shapes – not by crushing them, but by making small cuts. This way, they realized that their bodies were not flat but three-dimensional – and thereby, through a multi-sensory experience, understood the process of creating a flat pattern from a three-dimensional shape. In a next step, we tried to derive the sewing patterns from these hands-on templates.

By that time, it turned out that one member of the school's cleaning staff was actually a tailor. After helping me repair the sewing machines before class, I asked her if she'd be available to give some professional input for those complicated dress projects. She was eager to join – and gave invaluable support. I was able to at least symbolically pay her, as the headmaster of the school appreciated our collaboration. I also tried to get some extra funding for her through Kul-

tur:Kontakt Austria (the program through which I had invited the other colleagues), but as she was not an “official artist,” that was not applicable to her.

Within the group of boys, things were again a bit more difficult. They appreciated, at first, that I would not make them produce potholders, but they could hardly be persuaded to come up with a better idea – or rather: they only liked their ideas until the moment they actually had to start working. This group, too, was very heterogeneous. I was told that two shy, friendly, and motivated boys were outright bullied and tormented by some of the others. I rarely witnessed actual incidents during my lessons, but the dynamic overshadowed our time together, and it was hardly possible, in the few hours we had, to establish a positive, co-creative atmosphere.

For both groups (boys and girls), I planned a joint excursion to shop for the materials they needed for their projects (or to get inspired if they still didn’t have one). Rosemarie Zemla, the tailor who had helped me out, agreed to join. About an hour away from our school, there is a branch of “Textil Müller” – an Austrian outlet for surplus fabrics, buttons, and other textile supplies. I knew the branch near Vienna – which is quite impressive: huge storage halls with piles and piles of fabric rolls, some beautiful, some not, many ugly but most of them really cheap. A paradise for costume designers, stage designers, and makers of all kinds. But the branch near us was special in its own right. It was called “Der Stoffbauer” – “the fabric farmer” – and in fact, the store was housed in the barns of a rather remote old farmstead.

Our trip was quite an adventure: I had planned to hike there from the next train station, as it seemed like a beautiful 45-minute walk along a small river. But the weather was chilly, and the students were lazy, so we took another bus that should – according to my smartphone navigation – have dropped us only a few hundred meters from the store. And it did – but once we had crossed a field and already saw the farm, we realized that the “bridge” marked on my digital map was actually not a bridge but a rather deep ford. It began to rain, and our time was running short, as we had to catch the only train connection that would bring us back to school on time. Eventually, the store owners and Rosemarie picked us up in their private cars, going back and forth at least three times – and they were fantastic once we had made it into the store. Every single student was seriously advised and assisted, and everyone found what they needed for their projects or discovered one inspired by what was available. Each student’s material was packed in a separate bag, I paid with the school’s materials budget, and Rosemarie took everything back to school in her car – while we walked through heavy rain across some other fields to another train station to catch the only train of the day stopping there. We made it – and I think nobody got sick, but everybody got inspired.

Unfortunately, though, I got very sick and missed several weeks toward the end of the semester. Obviously, the other teachers could not really take over the many half-finished projects, and so many of them fell short of their potential. But thanks to some extra hours when I returned – and thanks to Rosemarie Zemla – quite a few of the projects were finally completed. There were several more or less wearable dresses, a knitted bikini, a small jeans bag, two pillowcases, a sewn flower pot, a sewn Jupiter, a textile phone stand, a fully functioning miniature washing machine in a peanut can, a repaired backpack, and a dog bag.

And one of the students told Rosemarie Zemla in the end, that she was inspired by our project evisaging to become a tailor now.

Building a textile phone stand

buy a fake
moustache and a
novelty belly.

crochet
pot holders.

ambitions can
never be too high

if you don’t mind
changing plans
along the way.

Piece by Sebastian

How does it change the understanding of the role of teacher and student, the preconceived aims, learning targets, conditions and limits, if handicraft classes are transformed into artistic research laboratories?

Crafts Workshops as Research Laboratories

(Mis-)Understanding Together

Basically, I don't encounter a group of eleven-year-olds as much different from a group of adults. Already at the animated film studio, we had observed during the not-so-rare workshops with adults that the dynamics and challenges do not differ significantly. Adults are (sometimes) a bit more polite and motivated, but I assume this is not so much due to their adult personality as to the fact that adults in workshops are almost always there because they have chosen to be. Children, by contrast, are almost always placed in the situation by someone else: hardly any child has independently decided to attend a workshop at the ZOOM Children's Museum, and school is, in any case, always mandatory. Adults in mandatory situations can be just as annoying as children.

And everything else is quite comparable: there are group dynamics, flow, inspiration, issues and struggles in the co-creative process, inter- and intrapersonal conflicts, various levels of skill, courage, experience, and empathy, and a high level of unpredictability. Thus, also at school, my general approach to classes with younger or older students is very much alike.

In all of my classes, I tried to establish a form of research diary. For the more structured kite projects, I also prepared pre-structured worksheets that the children were asked to fill in. I did not hand out instruction or data sheets or make them copy a drawing from the board. Instead, I told them they should take notes that would enable them in some weeks to build a kite for their younger sibling. I offered some scaffolding to hold on to – such as: How do I find the right position for the hole to attach the flying line? What should I keep in mind when taping the bamboo? How do I attach the kite tail? How do I attach the flying line to the kite? But, of course, there is not just one correct answer to these questions. The children were free to write keywords, full sentences, or draw – however it suited their way of remembering best. Translating a practical process into written words or drawings is quite challenging, but simply by trying to do so, they learned far more – on various levels, not just about kite-building – than if I had printed out a DIY instruction sheet they would never look at.

Taking this to the next level – documenting their individual projects in a similar way – overwhelmed us and didn't really happen. For future classes, I would again try to establish a routine of finishing each lesson with five minutes of note-taking about what had been tried, learned, failed, or achieved that day – as I am convinced this is extremely beneficial.

I know that routines and rituals – time to prepare and time to reflect, to tune in and out calmly – would be urgently necessary. But please follow me through a short digression. I just counted. The crafts classes were 75 minutes long (1.5 units). Suppose I had the time to prepare the space and wait for the students relaxed and focused (not a given), and the group had only twelve students (not a given):

- Students dropping in from other classes, picking up their pieces, settling down – 5 minutes.
- Getting together at a big table for an introduction round – 2 minutes.
- Group review (2 minutes per child) – 24 minutes.
- Spreading out and finding what they need – 15 minutes.
- Actually working.
- Finishing current steps – 5 minutes.

- Cleaning up and sorting back materials – 15 minutes.
- Writing in the research diaries – 5 minutes.
- Packing the research diaries and leaving the workshop – 2 minutes.

Obviously, this is no generous calculation, and there is no time buffer for unforeseen conflicts or problems. If I add the minutes for tuning in and out, there are an incredible two minutes left to enter a state of flow and work. Two minutes in which I can walk through the workshop, offer individual assistance, inspire, and enter into meaningful dialogues. Well – what can I say.

Naturally, one had to compromise such beautiful schedules in favor of a few more minutes of actual work – resulting in slightly messy crafts classes and me feeling guilty because the room wasn't really clean and the shelf with the students' work was a mess; because there were issues and conflicts I couldn't address; because there had been slightly dangerous situations; because some students were lost and I had no time to support them; because others had worked wonderfully and I had no time to acknowledge or co-create; because I couldn't say what we had actually done – let alone learned – that day; because I hadn't properly said goodbye.

As I didn't see too much leeway within the lessons themselves, I tried to prepare them as best as I could – not by writing meticulous plans, scripting every minute, or putting together well-prepared input in line with the curriculum. Actually, this is perhaps the crucial difference between providing a crafts lesson and transforming the workshop into an artistic research laboratory – the very momentum that is also artistically the most challenging for me and shifts my role from teacher to co-creator: Ahead of each lesson, I tried to think of every child – to understand where they were, what they had in mind and body, and what they might need – materially, socially, or artistically – in order to be encouraged, motivated, and able to develop and realize their individual ideas. Some of the children quite instantly thrived when allowed to tell a story, develope their own approach, find their own challenges – but not all of them. Quite a few had a hard time getting into any kind of process if there was no clear task – not always out of well-learned opposition, but because they simply weren't used to becoming active in such a way. When I told them, "Look: we have around fifty hours together, we have this space with these machines and tools, and we have a small budget for materials – what would you like to do?" they could neither believe nor make use of the fact that I was actually putting it in their hands to at least co-shape our shared time.

Some just sat silently, presumably hoping I would forget their presence. Others bounced through the workshop like rubber balls – bored within seconds, bothering others, and looking (rather creatively) for ways to disturb and provoke a reaction. To get the ball rolling – not just bouncing destructively – required more than a single kick. It felt more like pushing it uphill: they would either lose their drive again every other moment and fall back into silence, or their energy would lead them astray – like the boy who desperately wanted to build a remotely controlled car out of a single piece of wood – just a piece of wood. Once they had found a glimpse of an individual idea, opening up to share it for further co-creative development was, of course, another difficult step.

Apart from creative blockages, I also faced incredibly different levels of technical and material experience. Some children actually built functioning motor-driven vehicles – meticulously designed and shaped, using the band saw and belt sander, soldering and assembling the electrical parts completely without any need for help. Others tried to hammer screws through a piece of plywood they were holding in the air, or let wood glue drip between two pieces of wood they had already tried to tape together with masking tape.

To be able to support all of them, chiming in at the right moment, I kept a diary myself. I noted observations about each child as carefully as possible – not whether they had behaved well or said clever things I could use for grading, but rather: What had they been preoccupied with? What had they laughed about or been angry at? When had I seen that spark in their eyes? What had they come up with that was surprising, interesting, or new to me? And what should I focus on regarding that child in the next unit? Should I bring special materials, refer to something the child had said before, gently push or pull in a direction, or rather hold back? Should I find a practical solution myself because we hadn't managed to do so during class? Should I remove an obstacle directly – for example, fixing something myself so the child could continue without getting too frustrated? Or was there possibly a connection between two children they hadn't noticed yet – and could I somehow encourage them to engage with one another?

Very important for this preparation and follow-up work were the group reviews I managed to implement at least from time to time. Every child had a moment of focused attention – from me and from the others. They were asked to reflect and articulate their ideas, plans, and struggles – and to understand what the others were working on. Addressing one individual problem in the big group, of course, always offered opportunities to learn and relate for everyone. Each child could feel seen, supported, and relevant – yet also challenged. Of course, such rounds took a lot of time, and the students often grew impatient. But I don't think a single one of those minutes was wasted.

Getting started and cleaning up definitely took too much time, though. Solving this would require more space – or a better organizational structure for the space we had. Yet, the workshop was not my queendom but a shared space used by other teachers as they always had, including some who weren't trained in arts or crafts but simply substituted for someone else and were mainly occupied with keeping the students safe.

Most, if not all, of my colleagues probably observed my work with a mix of mild awe and suspicion, yet they definitely preferred letting the students work on craft kits with clear instructions and minimal supervision. Reorganizing the space would therefore have required meeting their needs as well – without demanding too much extra effort from anyone. Ideally, though, the space would function in the sense of "architecture as teacher," encouraging both teachers and students to take untrodden paths.

automata by S.

teachers should
be octopuses.

Just behind the school building

Six Girls

Almost Perfect Conditions

The more I gained insight into school realities, the more I realized that what I aimed for was hardly sustainable in practice. Teaching a class of twenty-seven students for fifty minutes a week, I have to find a different approach. Entering into deep individual exchange, enabling twenty-seven independent projects under such circumstances is simply impossible.

So I became very aware of the luxurious situation I found myself in with the group of six girls I taught in crafts and digital literacy. With them, I came quite close to my personal school utopia.

As with everyone, we started with the kites. Following Anna Rubin's concept, the Japanese paper is dyed using Shibori – folded in various ways and then dipped into colored ink. Every paper turns out differently; every paper is a surprise – yet one can still experiment and be proud of the result.

With a large group, this (like everything) is quite a challenge: the ink cannot be washed out of clothes and can hardly be wiped off any surface it touches. The wet papers must be thoroughly squeezed out and then laid flat to dry – which is fine if there is a drying rack. But if you have to find free surfaces to cover with plastic film for more than ten students, each dyeing at least a square meter of paper – that becomes a real challenge.

With six kind, enthusiastic girls, it was simply fun. Even more so when they asked for a follow-up project – without me having to push them. Since they had enjoyed the Shibori, they asked to batik something wearable. I wondered what we could make that would result in something more interesting than one-size shirts in dull colors that no one would ever wear except as nightgowns. I brought a long length of thick white fabric and suggested dyeing it and sewing individual bags from it. I didn't bring a ready-made pattern for them to copy. Instead, this became the first project where I tried developing a sewing pattern by creating a model from paper, cutting it open, flattening it, and using it as a template. It worked beautifully — and the girls produced six distinctly individual pieces (see p. 167).

The first session after finishing this project happened to be my birthday. So I brought tea and cake and had them celebrate with me. And I gave a little speech – as one does on birthdays. I told them that I really liked them (which was true) but that I was a bit sad that they didn't really stand together. They were very different, and beyond pairing up two by two, they mostly ignored one another. I said it was my birthday wish that they would support each other a bit more and show some solidarity – without necessarily becoming friends. They were a bit embarrassed, but that was factored in.

Afterwards, I asked them what they wanted to do during the summer term. Since there were so few of them, and we even had four lessons per week together (crafts and digital literacy), we could really do something meaningful. At first, they were a bit stunned – but after a moment, they were thrilled when they realized they could actually define what we would do. They – like the boys – wanted to work in the wood workshop and build house models.

During one of the following lessons, we made a short excursion to the hardware store around the corner. I told them what budget we had left, and they put

together the materials they needed for their projects. They were over the moon, and I could hardly get them out of the workshop on Friday afternoon when our lesson was over.

They all started by building house models – a bit like elaborate dollhouses, furnished with delicate miniature furniture. As the projects evolved, they became increasingly individual — and since the group was so small, I could genuinely accompany each of them throughout their process. One of the girls kept thinking about her model throughout the week, telling me about her new ideas whenever we met in the school hallway. Two others, who loved to sing and had performed a duet in front of the whole school, decided to record their song and produce a music video. They worked completely independently, using my professional camera, shooting scene after scene, and editing it on my laptop with professional software. For one scene, they even involved the whole class as background actors.

One day, we experimented with an old overhead projector, creating beautiful visuals. Another day, we spent time outside by the riverside behind the school — of course bringing a picnic. Some of the girls became completely absorbed in taking macro photos of grass, stones, and water. We used both these photographs and the house models as backdrops for animations, using a green screen — playing with space and dimension as they found themselves inside their model spaces, facing life-size clay figures or as small as ants between blades of grass and giant water drops.

Finally, one of the girls transformed her house into a miniature cinema with a rear projection screen onto which we could project the films we had produced. Painting small wooden cubes black to use as cinema seats, she realized that when she used a lot of paint, the thick body of the wet color formed aleatoric reliefs that beautifully reflected the light in different ways. Those small artworks disappeared once the cheap school paint had dried — but under these exceptionally favorable circumstances, I had the time to share in her delight, admiring all the different small black cubes together.

As mentioned earlier, I was unfortunately ill for several weeks toward the end of the school year. As a result, a large final workshop that I had planned — and for which I had invited guest artists — with the whole class could not take place.

Instead, we were still able to conclude our time together beautifully: my partner Florian and I organized a smaller-scale workshop for the whole class, during which we installed an exhibition of the houses in the school's attic. We painted large-scale backdrops for the houses, one of the girls created an exhibition catalogue, and over the course of a school day, two boys and two girls gave guided tours of the exhibition to every other class.

On the right: The batik-bags

Insert: On Sharing Authorship

As mentioned earlier, my work at middle school was increasingly less geared toward framing co-creative pieces that could be shared and reach an external audience, as I reflected in the chapter on digital literacy. I also gradually moved away from trying to realize collective projects with large groups in favor of enabling projects that were as individual as possible. This felt necessary given the vastly diverse needs, interests, and levels of cognitive and creative potential among the students. Some were already challenged enough “simply” to enter a creative process more or less independently.

Thus, my sharing of children’s work, resulting from different contexts and time spans, must also be approached in a highly differentiated manner — both within this reflective documentation and in my final exhibition (for considerations regarding the exhibition, see p. 225 f.).

I was very concerned about giving accurate credit to everyone involved in the larger video projects, including the external artists, and about presenting them as “total collaborations.” I collected proper consent forms from everyone and listed each student by their full name, unless requested otherwise. At the time, that seemed important; now, however, I occasionally receive messages from individuals asking to have their names removed from my website — for entirely understandable reasons. For me, these projects remain deeply relevant, and I still strongly identify with them — but for one of more than a hundred students, who was involuntarily involved in a three-day project and is now almost ten years older, it is, of course, important to have the possibility to detach themselves.

With my nephew, it was just the two of us — and thus much closer to a true co-creation. I did not frame a project for him to fill with his creative work; rather, we genuinely played and developed everything together, in equal exchange. Therefore, it will always remain very much his work, and I both want and need to credit him properly — though, as he was so young at the time, I still do not know whether he will one day wish not to be publicly associated with this part of his child self. Thus, using an artist name still feels like a coherent solution.

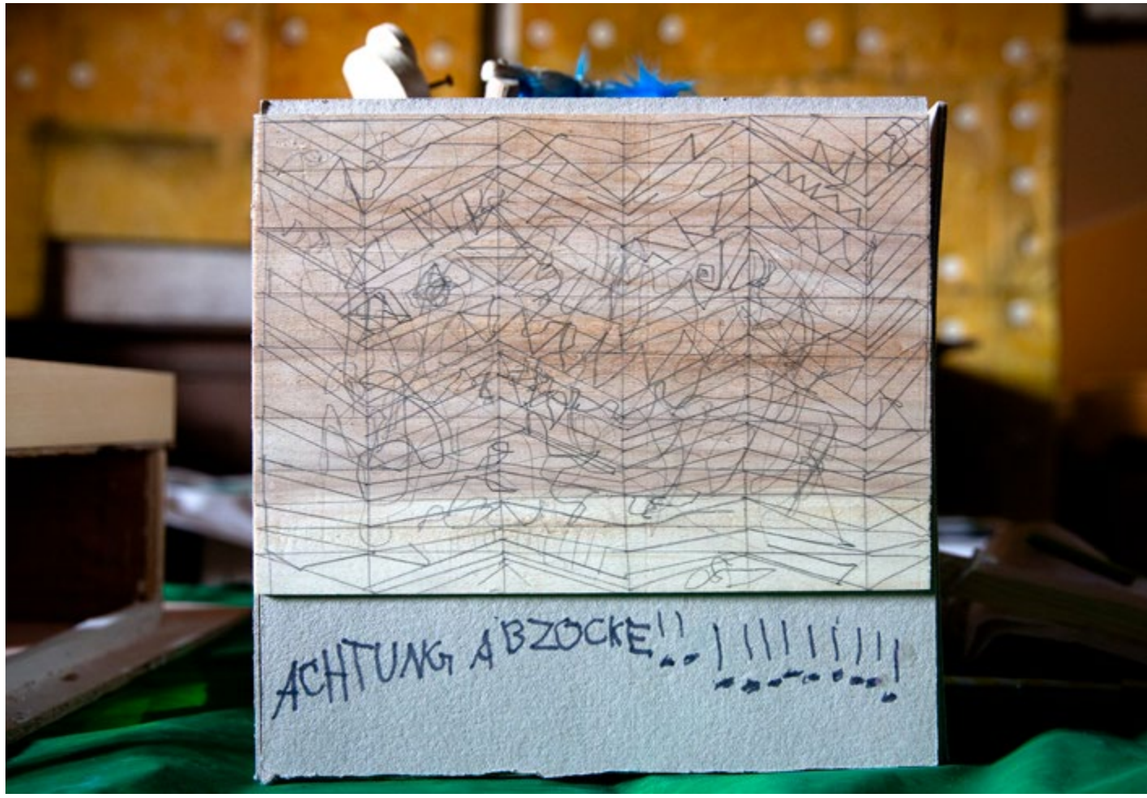
At grammar school, the larger projects — such as the symbuddy project — had a clearly defined framework regarding what should be published. Producing work for the online exposition, the exhibition at Belvedere 21, or screenings during school events was an integral part of the project itself. I again collected consent forms — which the parents were quite used to — and can now share the clearly defined results, crediting the students accordingly.

At middle school, I did not collect consent forms, as I already explained, and the projects were much more individual. Consequently, my artistic co-creative contribution is also less apparent. Rather, the students’ pieces are their individual works. Yet, on another level, they also serve as material traces of my work as a teacher, who was trying to establish a space for co-creation and artistic research — in the sense of gaining insight through artistic experimentation and thinking, through sensual experience and open creative processes. Therefore, I would like to share some documentation of these results as well — fully aware of the problem that I did not ask for consent, as doing so would have been overwhelming and distracting. I am also aware that reflecting on school contexts in such ways could potentially become problematic for individuals appearing in them. Thus, on the following pages I will include some more documentation of the students‘ work without clear credits.

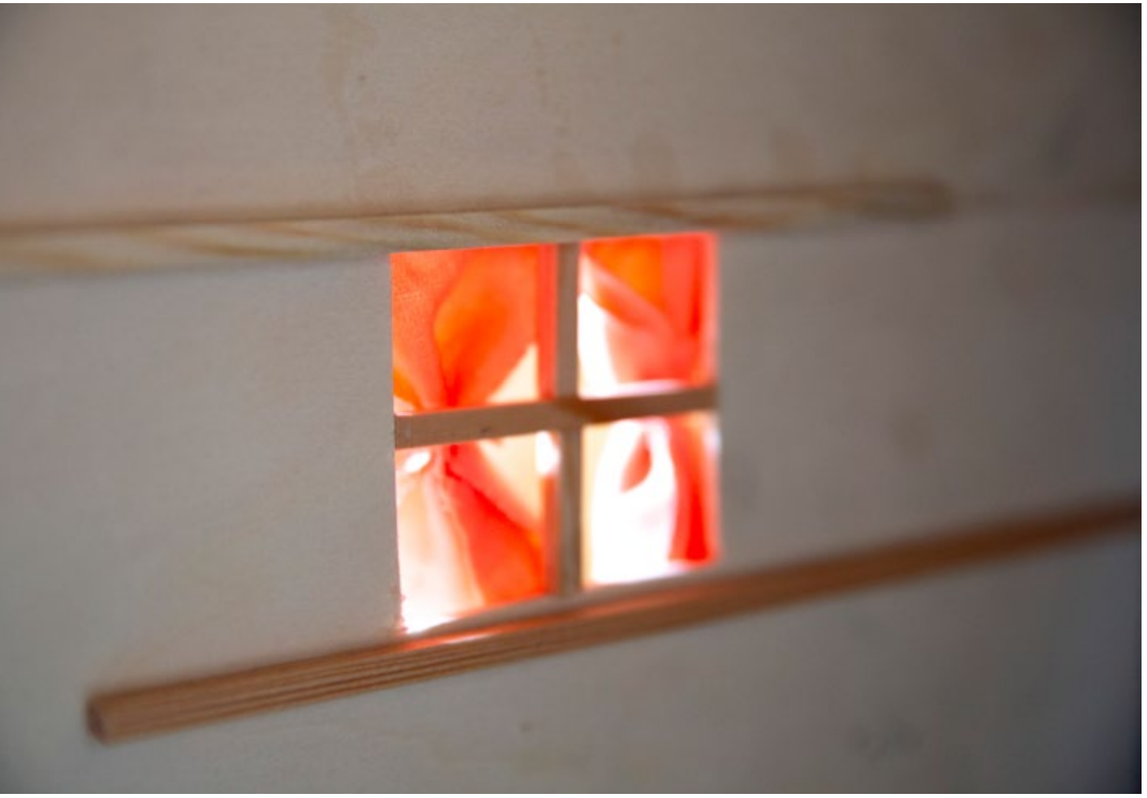
I want to sincerely thank my young collaborators from middle school — I truly enjoyed working with them — and symbolically give full credit to them for their work, hoping they will forgive me if they ever come across it in this publication.

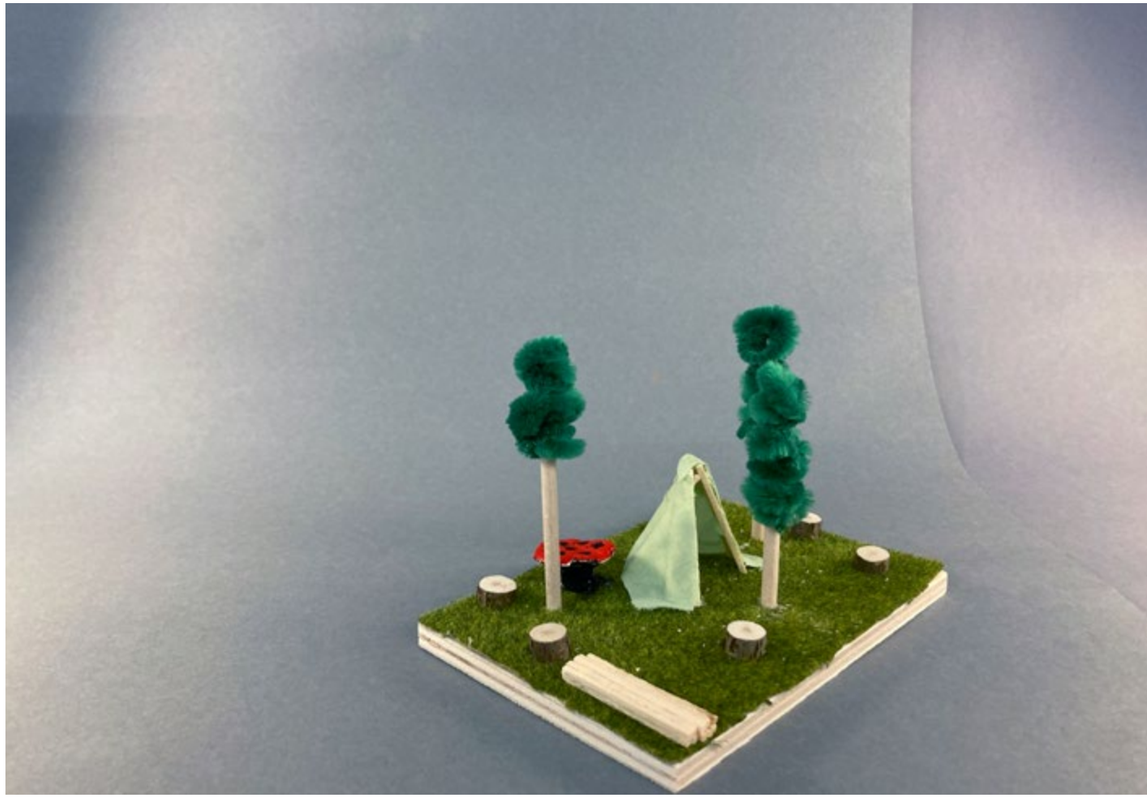
bring cake
and strawberries.

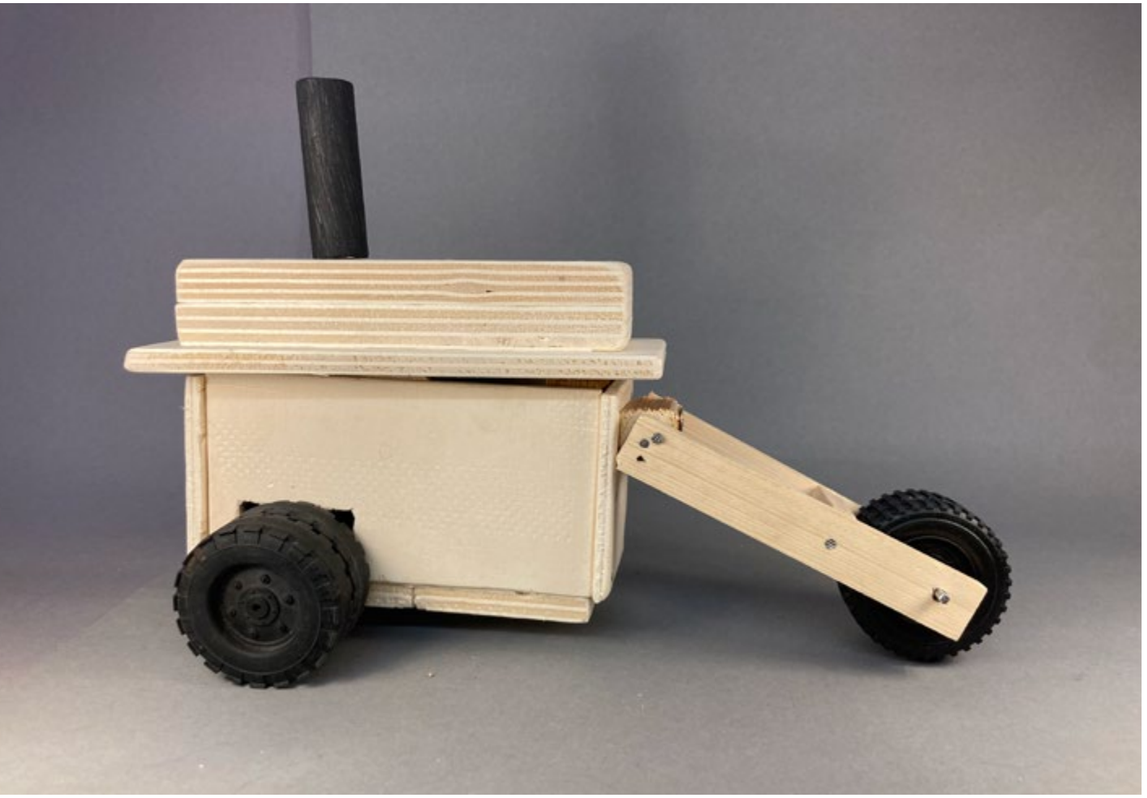
BETTER


ACHTUNG ABZOCKE!!

Restaurant







What resources are needed, and how can an organizational structure look like to invite teacher-colleagues to open up ingrained methods and try something new?

The new “Kustodiat“

Making Space for Art

Working Towards My School Utopia

As mentioned, there were crafts workshops — not fulfilling all my dreams, but still far better than having no art space at all. Most urgently, I argued for smaller groups in the art classes, as they were in crafts — but of course, every teacher would prefer smaller classes, and rightly so — yet resources are limited.

To my great delight, however, the headmaster was surprisingly easy to convince that, at least regarding space and equipment, things could and should change. When I told him about my considerations, he came up with a suggestion only a few hours later. Since we were in the fortunate position of being a semi-private Catholic school, it was possible to allocate some budget for setting up a dedicated art space.

There was not really an extra room available, but next to the physics room there was a small chamber where some space could be cleared for new shelves to store art supplies. The students were not allowed to enter that storage room, since some dangerous chemicals were kept there — that was simply a given. The physics room itself was slightly smaller than the regular classrooms and did not provide any extra storage space, but it was to be transformed into a space dedicated to art and research — and I assumed that dedication alone would already help elevate the relevance of the subject. The main practical advantage was the linoleum floor instead of wooden parquet — obviously more suitable when working with paint, glue, and other things likely to spill.

Regarding the organizational system, I intended to create a structure supporting my approach of a rather free studio situation — one that would allow me to draw out materials and tools as needed on the go, while at the same time functioning for more conventional teaching approaches and for colleagues unfamiliar with art and crafts education.

I therefore developed a color-coding system: Boxes marked with green tape contain simple, basic, everyday materials that anyone can just take out and hand directly to the students if needed — such as watercolors, paper, or brushes. Boxes marked with blue tape contain materials that require some introduction and supervision — things that should not simply be handed out by a substitute teacher unless the teacher has been informed that the students are already familiar with using them and can continue their projects independently. Boxes marked with red tape contain materials and equipment that should never be handed out freely, but only used within specific projects and under constant supervision — because they contain either dangerous, delicate, or expensive items.

Within this structure, I assembled a range of basic supplies intended to encourage the use of various tools and media — not just watercolors and colored pencils. Some leftover materials were already there; I simply sorted and made them accessible. Additionally, a budget was set aside to purchase essential supplies that should always be kept available.

As I was seriously annoyed by the empty boxes cluttering the students’ tables — which were officially supposed to hold their art and craft supplies such as watercolors, brushes, scissors, glue, etc. — those items myself, planning to get rid of the useless boxes and instead provide identical basic tools and materials for everyone.

Excerpt from my Bucket List

Storage and Equipment:
Ivar system (IKEA shelving system)
Castors
Lockable castors
Drying rack
Cardboard crates
Stepladder
Cleaning and Maintenance
Cable reel / extension cable drum
Bucket
Dustpan and hand brush
Broom
Plastic sheeting for tables
Painter's aprons
Light pad
Display cabinet
Paper plates
Paper towels
Cleaning cloths

Tools
Clamps
Stapler (for fabric or wood)
Paper stapler
Hammer
Combination pliers
Screwdrivers
Assorted nails
Assorted screws

Library
Hand library of art books
Online library / Padlet

Paper and Cardboard
Drawing paper A3
White drawing paper A4
Coloured paper
Roll of drawing paper
Japanese paper
Grey board A3

Recycled Materials
Yoghurt buckets
Fabric scraps / offcuts
Old picture frames
Photographs

Cutting Tools
Children's scissors for left-handers
Children's scissors + stand
Cutting mats
Large scissors
Cutters

Adhesives
Spring clamps 40 mm
Paper masking tape
All-purpose glue
Wallpaper paste
Glue sticks

Drawing and Painting
Oil pastels
Box of coloured pencils
Graphite pencils (2B and softer)
Erasers
Pencil sharpeners
Fixative spray
Soft pastels
Charcoal

Painting Materials
Water cups / paint cups
Tempera paint
Paintbrushes (various sizes)
Sponges for dabbing
Watercolour sets

Craft Kitchen
Hot plate
Large pot
Kitchen utensils
Cutlery set
Sieve
Electric kettle
Ink – red / green / blue

Printmaking
Linocut sets
Flower / leaf press
Brayers / rollers
Plexiglass plates for monotype printing
Repair of printing press
Printing press
Linocut handles
Chemicals for cyanotype
Craft foam
Printing ink
Linoleum plates A6

Clay and Modelling
Smooth cutting boards
Clay wire cutter
Modelling tools
Air-drying clay (2.5 kg)
Plasticine / modelling clay

Projection and Light
Overhead projector
Transparent tray for OHP
Slide projector
Slide mounts with glass

Animation Equipment
Spring clamps 60 mm
Vanguard tripod
Repro stand
Tablet holders
3 lights for stop-motion animation
Green mats for green screen
Stop-motion props
Reusable adhesive

Arguing for the budget:
The new curriculum allows for, encourages, and promotes the development of creative, individualized, interest-driven, and skills-oriented learning — especially in the asubject of Art and Design. To make this possible, schools need spaces and infrastructure that enable students to explore individual forms of practice and knowledge acquisition as independently as possible. The new art room is designed to offer exactly that: a well-structured, open space with a clearly organized system. Students will have increasing autonomy to access inspiring and diverse materials, allowing them to acquire, apply, and transfer various techniques, knowledge, and information according to their own needs and interests.

One smaller shelf was mounted on wheels, intended to be loaded before each lesson with the specific materials needed. Additionally, I bought a large drying rack that also fit into the storage room.

Together with this newly set-up space, I also created a new basic structure for my art classes. Unfortunately, I got to try things out only once — then I had to begin early maternity leave. But I summarize my concept here:

Since I had to expect to work with 25 students or more at a time under rather cramped conditions, I set up a strict structure, hoping to enable the greatest possible individual freedom and self-determined work within it.

Basically, the students were to be responsible for finding their own projects — within a framework that allowed me to support them as individually as possible. Basic materials and supplies were freely available, so if a student had an ongoing project, they could simply pick up what they needed and start working within the first minute of the lesson.

In parallel, I would offer a short input of around 20 minutes at the beginning of each class. This could be theoretical, art-historical, or technical in nature, or serve as another form of inspiration — for example, looking closely at, listening to, feeling, or even tasting something designed by humans or by non-human nature. Depending on the group, these inputs could build on one another — if, for example, there was particular interest in a certain technique or material — or remain single, self-contained impulses. Participation in these inputs was voluntary, but each student was expected to take part at least four times per semester. In this way, I hope to create smaller, more focused working constellations, even while teaching the entire class.

Of course, when experimenting, not everything can result in a finished or satisfying piece. To acknowledge this, the students were encouraged to experiment freely, but they had to submit at least three works per semester that they considered complete and well executed.

To keep track of what happened in between — the "less good ideas" (cf. Kentridge, 2018) — they were asked to keep a research diary, allowing me to see whether they were actually engaging in a process. For these diaries, I set up a digital Class Notebook using an application familiar to them. Conveniently, I could provide "pages" with content related to the current input (including links, videos, audio, and images) for the whole class, while each student could work individually in their own section. I could then reply or comment directly in each student's notebook — while each student saw only their own notes. These digital diaries were not meant to replace artistic sketchbooks but to serve as documentation and reflection tools.

For scribbling and experimenting, I again gave each student a paper sketchbook. As additional, immediate inspiration, these sketchbooks came with a first set of drawing and painting challenges they could always turn to if they didn't know what to do (see pp. 203–206).

What the students were most excited about, however, was that I allowed them to listen to music — under very strict conditions (see p. 202). Although allowing the use of smartphones or tablets can be tricky, I decided to permit it, as it offered the students the opportunity to withdraw into a private, concentrated working space — even while sharing a small, noisy room with 25 others.

Rules for Art and Design

- The adjoining room may not be entered.
- I am responsible for coming up with and carrying out my own art projects.
- Mrs. Miedl-Faißt provides inspiration for this.
- I use the tablet only as a tool (camera, microphone, etc.), not to look for templates or "ideas."
- I participate in at least four "inputs" (instructional sessions) per semester.
- I handle all materials and tools carefully.
- I behave quietly at all times and never disturb others.
- I plan enough time at the end of each lesson to clean and tidy up my workspace, materials, and tools thoroughly.
- At the end of every lesson, I write a short report with a photo of my current work in the OneNote class notebook, under the correct date.
- If I was absent due to illness, I note this in the corresponding OneNote class notebook page.
- I submit at least three works per semester for assessment.
- For this, I upload a photo to the notebook page "My Works", including the date, technique, and title.

Listening to music is allowed only if:

- I use headphones.
- I am at my workplace and working independently.
- At the beginning of the lesson, I select a playlist within two minutes.
- No searching, skipping, or changing during the lesson.
- My phone or tablet must remain out of sight.
- When Ms. Miedl-Faißt speaks to the class or directly to me,
- I immediately remove BOTH headphones.
- If any of these rules are violated, the phone or tablet will be confiscated and returned only at the end of the lesson.

don’t

let children work with dull colors, dead brushes and hard pencils.

clean up the classroom.

ban “decorative” plastic items.

don’t use
sticky tape or
pre-installed
plastic frames

to display
students’ work.

Sketchbook Painting Challenges

Mix the color that best matches your mood today.
Use it to paint an entire page.

Paint a cloud crocodile.

Paint a waterfall from behind (a view through the water).

Load your brush with plenty of paint and make three splashes with your eyes closed. Open your eyes, look for something recognizable, and continue working on it.

Invent at least 10 different painting techniques using a brush. (Dabbing, dripping, using only the tip, twisting and pulling, thin lines, thick lines, etc.)

Work only with paint and brush — no preliminary drawing!

Work on each challenge for at least 10 minutes — or longer if you like.

Never tear pages out of your sketchbook.

Sketchbook Drawing Challenges

Draw a monster with your “weaker” hand.
Add to the drawing with your “stronger” hand.

Draw a secret.

Draw a long-haired cat.
Try to make one line for every hair in its fur.

Draw a saber-toothed butterfly and its friend.

Draw your pet filming a TikTok dance video.

Use a new page for each challenge and each attempt.

ERASING FORBIDDEN!

Work on each challenge for at least 10 minutes.

KAS! and HEU!

Kids / Artists / Scientists. Together for Hope and Mischief

Admittedly, a few new shelves and a set of classroom rules do not yet deserve to be called utopian. In my school utopia, the borders of the institution are permeable. The art space is a studio that can also be used outside regular school hours. Everyone entering this studio is no longer a “student” or “teacher,” but a person – or perhaps an artist. It is a place to meet, think, and do together.

In my school utopia, this studio is a place where people beyond compulsory school age – and without teaching obligations – also come together. A space for exchange between children, artists, scientists, and (future) responsible citizens of all kinds. In this utopia, there is no lonely teacher-figure, but rather interesting people coming and going, inspiring and being inspired.

My utopian school studio has octopodian tentacles reaching out into the wider world – into other spaces, architectures, and countries – offering opportunities for exchange and mutual inspiration.

In the summer of 2024, together with my partner Florian – with whom I co-run “Unsichtbare Elefanten – Kunstverein zur Förderung unwahrscheinlicher Kollaborationen“ (Invisible Elephants – Art Association for the Promotion of Unlikely Collaborations) – we developed an ambitious project that could become a vessel carrying us remarkably close to many of these seemingly dreamlike, utopian goals.

We involved and convinced a large number of people and institutions that this endeavor was worth the effort – but in the end, we did not receive the main funding. And I got pregnant. But if you are reading this and would like to step in – we are open to any form of support of unquestionable moral integrity.

On the following pages, I include our draft. I have removed the name of the middle school for data protection reasons (obviously, it is the school I have been writing about on the previous pages).

from our project proposal:

KAS!

Kids / Artists / Scientists. Together for Hope and Mischief

Time is running out, the air is thick, spring has gone quiet. We need space for encounters – and time for connections we’ve so far overlooked. We need ideas that no one can have alone. We should listen to those who don’t know but ask – before algorithms ruin all the questions.

In the project KAS!, the association “Unsichtbare Elefanten – Kunstverein zur Förderung unwahrscheinlicher Kollaborationen“ works with a variety of local and international educational and cultural partners to connect artists, children, and cultural institutions. Through playful exploration and mutual curiosity, the project uses methods of artistic research to foster sustainable, intergenerational, cross-milieu, and possibly even cross-species friendships.

The project is guided by the perspectives, needs, ideas, and approaches of the participating children. The emerging art gangs – made up of children and young people, artists, and scientists – are developing “HEU! – Festival für Hoffnung und Exquisiten Unfug“ (Festival for Hope and Exquisite Mischief). A publication in the form of a children’s book will make the jointly developed methods, experiences, insights, and adventures accessible in a lasting way.

The main school partner is PNMS*. In addition, the college of hospitality and tourism management in Weyer is involved as a secondary school partner. Curatorial guidance for the project is provided by the transdisciplinary working group The ZoNE, while author Barbara Stieff accompanies the conception and creation of the children’s book.

Key institutional partners include Kunsthalle Wien, the ÆSR Lab (Applied / Experimental Sound Research Lab) at the University of Applied Arts Vienna and, in the Ennstal region, the FRIKULUM Association and the Bertholdsaal Weyer.

Like every project, KAS! begins long before its official start – namely, with this very proposal. Already at this stage, we aim to bring the different participants into dialogue and collectively draft a plan that connects diverse ideas and visions, allowing something to emerge that none of us could create alone.

“I imagine that…”

“I imagine that in the afternoon, people will come to continue working with us if we run out of time. I would like people who are into music to come, to write a song with me and Julia, to help us along the way and always be there for us. They should be nice and always by our side.” – Jana R., student.

“I imagine that we don’t just stand there and sing, but express feelings and radiate joy.” – Julia S., student.

“I imagine that we’ll work with artists to create backgrounds. I want to meet someone who can invent computer games – like ‘Save the World’.” – Marvin H., student.

“I imagine that famous people will come to school to build, paint, and sing with us in workshops. It’s really important that we get to do things ourselves.” – Niklas L., student.

“I imagine working closely with children in exhibition spaces and involving them in discussions about spatial design. Through these interactions, I want to spark their imagination and encourage them to rethink and reshape exhibitions by exploring different ideas and perspectives. I want to curate an exhibition together with the children, using an open format that fosters collective thinking and action.” – Başak Şenova, curator, The ZoNE.

“From the new mediation studio of Kunsthalle Wien, a wildly choreographed parade bursts through the main courtyard of the MuseumsQuartier, carrying its messages – with pulsing beats – out into the city. But the city’s borders are not enough for the participating middle schoolers: their journey continues to G*, Graz, and Weyer, all the way to Lake Constance.” – Michael Simku & Martin Walkner, Kunsthalle Wien.

“I imagine that the students, building on the skills they acquire in the field of sound, will later be able to develop and implement independent explorations of acoustic landscapes. These might include not only technical surveys and measurements, but also performative, installative, and sculptural interventions and concepts based on the principles of deep listening.” – Karl Salzmann, Applied / Experimental Sound Research Lab.

“I imagine that someone will notice how, when you overlay the gurgling of the Ybbs and the Enns rivers, a captivating beat emerges. Two of the children become fascinated by the water music and write a song about it, which they record together with an audiophile visitor. ”– Verena Miedl-Faißt, Unsichtbare Elefanten.

None of these visions will likely unfold exactly as imagined – but their overlap, shifts, and synergies allow us to sense what might be possible together.

During Wienwoche 2024, a small delegation of students from class 3b (PNMS*) joined Verena Miedl-Faißt on a detour to meet artists at the ZOOM Children’s Museum, Michael Simku at the Kunsthalle Wien, and Başak Şenova and Florian Miedl-Faißt at the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

Together, they reflected on what artists actually do, who or what curators are, where one might encounter them – and which of these aspects seemed most relevant or interesting to them. Based on these conversations, the project plan was refined, cooperation partners identified, and the visions above formulated.

New Friendships:
Artist-in-Residence Program at the School

In the event that the funding is approved, a call for artists will be distributed as soon as possible through various networks – including the mailing lists of all project partners.

A jury consisting of representatives from the students, The ZoNE, and the Unsichtbare Elefanten will select three artists from the submissions. Each artist will be invited for a one-week residency during the school year. The artists will be accommodated in Weyer, where students from the HLW Weyer (college of hospitality and tourism management) will act as hosts.

Their studio space will be set up in the newly established art room at PNMS*, which they may use freely during their residency.

Incubator Workshop / hosted by The ZoNE

“Our collective The ZoNE is deeply engaged in Knowledge Art – a new form of inquiry that moves between philosophy, science, and art. The opportunity to apply this concept directly as an intervention with schoolchildren is something we find extremely exciting!” – Johannes Jäger, The ZoNE

At the beginning of the 2024/25 school year, before the first residency takes place, a two-day Incubator Workshop will be held at the Bertholdsaal in Weyer. Participants include the selected artists, next year’s class 4b of PNMS*, students from the vocational schools of Weyer, and interested pupils from other classes.

The ZoNE will, together with Florian and Verena Miedl-Faißt (Unsichtbare Elefanten), design and lead the workshop.

Students of HLW will provide culinary support throughout the workshop days, applying their professional training. Shared meals – as connecting rituals – are intended to open the senses and foster readiness to engage with one another and with new ideas.

During these first workshop days, students from the participating schools and the invited artists will get to know each other. We hope this will give rise to fruitful connections, alliances, friendships, ideas, interests, questions, and curiosity – especially about one another. From this open format, smaller and larger collaborative projects and research ideas are expected to emerge.

Open Studio at the School

During the residencies, the artists will usually stay individually (or, if explicitly desired, together) in Weyer. Over the summer break, a new art room will be established at the school (none exists yet). This art room will serve as the artists’ studio during each residency week.

Workshops will take place within the school schedule, while afternoons will be open for informal collaboration beyond regular classes.

Between residencies, this open studio will continue to be supervised once a week by the Unsichtbare Elefanten. This ensures that students can gradually claim the art room as their own studio, continuing to work on individual projects.

Some workshops will be cross-school collaborations, and students from HLW Weyer will be invited to visit the open studio or meet the artists-in-residence at PNMS*.

Students Lead the Artists to Special Places

On at least one day of each residency, students from both schools will choose a special place to take the artist – either with a small group or an entire class. These might be places that matter to them, that they want to share, or that could serve as locations for film experiments, sites for discovery, play, or admiration, or simply spaces where it feels good to be together.

Support by and Relation to Kunsthalle Wien

“Kunsthalle Wien sees itself as a space for the full diversity of international contemporary art. We aim to be open and accessible to all, and therefore work with our partners to create integrative programs that demonstrate how engaging and essential contemporary art can be. Our mission is to bring contemporary art closer to everyone – including those who may not yet have had much exposure to it.

Under the new artistic direction of Michelle Cotton, this commitment is emphasized through co-creation processes. The focus lies on deep collaboration between artists and school classes, who are invited to engage in extended artistic processes to reveal the potentials of contemporary art and stimulate reciprocal creative and intellectual exchange. We also aim to collaborate with decentralized initiatives, thereby contributing to regional cultural accessibility. From this perspective, we consider the collaboration within KAS! to be exceptionally valuable and promising.

Kunsthalle Wien acts as one of the institutional partners in the project – providing not only its newly designed studio space, materials, and financial support, but also serving as a conceptual partner through its exhibitions and workshop programs. The goal is to establish the presence of Kunsthalle Wien beyond the urban context, breaking down barriers, opening institutional spaces, and making them accessible to a broader public.” – Michael Simku & Martin Walkner, Kunsthalle Wien

In parallel with the residencies, art and design classes will include excursions to project partners in Vienna and Graz, as well as to locations selected by the artists.

In the spirit of a “return visit”, the project seeks to blur the boundaries between reception and production, allowing cultural institutions to be experienced as accessible, participatory spaces.

The shared exploration of exhibitions, spaces, and cultural offerings thus becomes an integral part of the collective creative and formative process.

Examples of Advanced Activities:

- In the newly established studio of Kunsthalle Wien, and with the support of the museum’s education and production teams, students will be able to realize projects that would not be feasible within a regular school setting.

- At the ÆSR Lab, small-group workshops within the framework of KAS! will focus on field recording (how to record and edit sounds), deep listening sessions (how to focus one’s hearing, the ethical principles of listening, and the connections that become audible), and sound projection (how to make sound perceptible beyond the use of conventional loudspeakers) Additionally, field recording equipment can be borrowed afterward for projects outside the studio.

- The artists Bronwyn Lace and Marcus Neustetter (both members of The ZoNE) will invite students to visit their studio in Vienna’s 5th district, Margareten.

- During a visit to Kunsthalle Exnergasse, in preparation for Başak Şenova’s exhibition “The Atlas” (opening June 2025), students will gain direct insight into a central phase of the artistic production process.

- In Graz, during a visit to <rotor>, students will get to know another artist-in-residence program and gain a behind-the-scenes look at the exhibition “Sediment” (November 2024), curated by Başak Şenova and Dicle Bestas.

Logbook in the Research Catalogue of the Society for Artistic Research

The traces and results of the many artistic, creative, and – above all – socially connective processes set in motion through the project will be continuously gathered, recorded, and documented.

These “traces” will feed into an online exhibition in the Research Catalogue of the Society for Artistic Research, making the voices, artistic outcomes, and research findings of the participating children and artists publicly and internationally accessible.

HEU! – Festival for Hope and Exquisite Nonsense

As its culmination and celebration, KAS! will conclude with a one-day festival at the Bertholdsaal in Weyer.

“I see this project as an initiative to promote creativity and cultural exchange among young people in Austria. Through hands-on collaboration and mentoring, participants will not only strengthen their artistic skills but also gain deep insights into the creative process and the rich diversity of cultural perspectives.

At its core lies the idea that experiential learning is essential for inspiring and empowering young people. By fostering connections within the artistic community, participants will gain access to a supportive network of mentors, peers, and potential collaborators – and they will also learn from each other. For the adults involved, too, this project represents an ongoing learning process.

This network will serve as a solid foundation for lifelong learning and creative growth. Ultimately, this project has the potential to inspire the next generation of artists, thinkers, and innovators, while nurturing their analytical and critical thinking.” – Başak Şenova, The ZoNE

Curated by Başak Şenova together with a student curatorial team, the HEU!-Festival will showcase the highlights of the shared process: artistic productions and collaborations by all participants that emerged from – or were inspired by – KAS! encounters. These works may be presented in new constellations, recontextualized, and celebrated in a joyful act of being-in-the-world together.

KAS! – The Book

Author and art educator Barbara Stieff will accompany the KAS! project from the beginning and, together with an emerging children’s art-book collective, will conceptualize and develop the KAS! publication.

The book will not merely document and depict the project and its results; rather, it will serve as a translation of KAS! methods – an extension of the shared creative space, an invitation and guidebook into the world of KAS!/HEU!, designed for both young readers and curious adults.

It will connect the participating regions, institutions, and people beyond the project’s duration – to be found in school libraries, museum bookstores, and the private bookshelves of everyone involved.

steal my concepts.

create architecture

for unexpected encounters, not for expected discipline.

make “pedagogy“
a fine art degree.

find a
new name.

Epilogue

How can one deal with the different pace of time and development when working in longer creative processes with children becoming adolescents becoming adults?

L. embodying Edgar from Brawlstars / August 2025

Growing Up but Not Apart

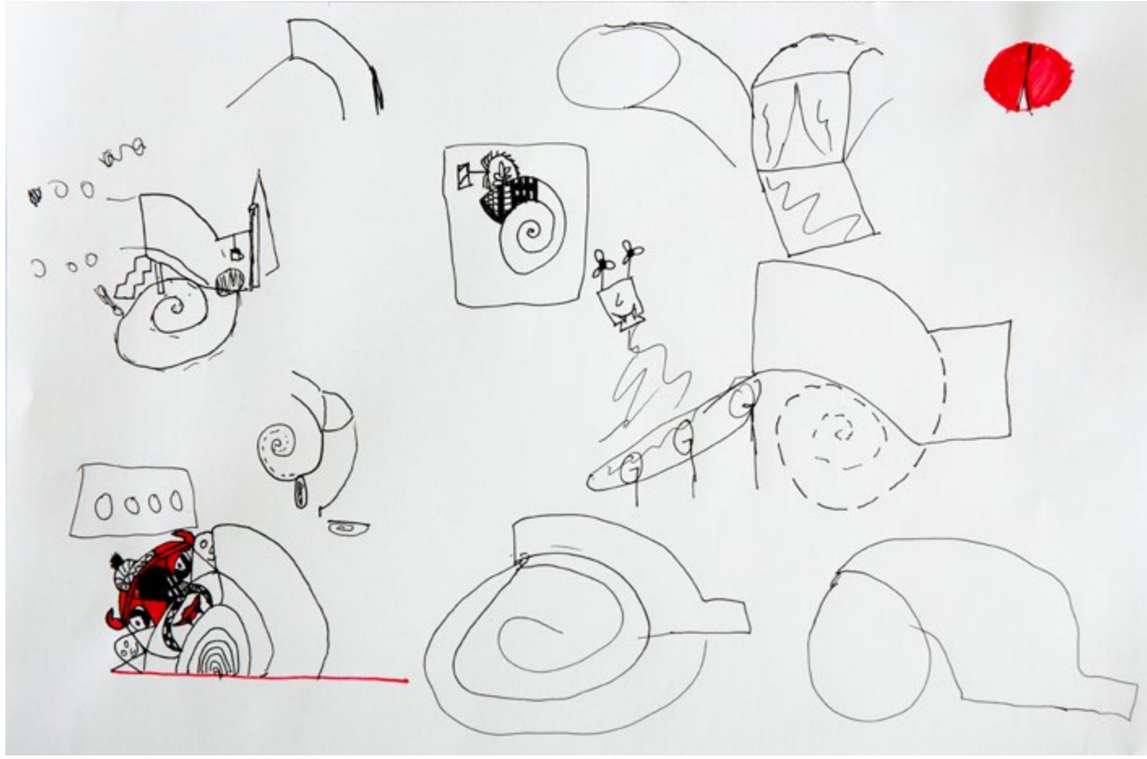
Now, in the summer of 2025, L. is 11 years old. We are still close – yet the time of our intense magical journeys lies about five years behind us, almost half of his life.

On the one hand, I regret the unfinished projects and look back wistfully on the artistic landscapes we have since left behind. On the other hand, it is an exciting chance to revisit our shared past together with the young adolescent – so close to me, yet already distant for him: To my great joy, L. agreed to spend a working retreat with me this summer. Within two days, we revisited all our artistic endeavors, re-planned the exhibition for my PhD defense, and created a portrait of L. as one of his favorite characters from the online game “Brawl Stars“.

I had intended to conduct an interview with L., similar to the ones I have carried out with my colleagues from the ZOOM Children’s Museum – so the audio recorder was running through almost our entire retreat. At the beginning, we each wrote down separately what we remembered most – and these recollections turned out to be astonishingly similar. Beyond that, however, there was little to transcribe: highly focused, snacking on grapes and Pombärs, we listened to all our audioplays. L. remarked that he found the work quite impressive “for a small child” (as if it had not been his own). For the texts that had never become finished audioplays, he preferred the simple reading versions – and we made a new recording of the Sundogs together. But in the end, he said he liked Ismya best – and if we were to resume our storytelling, he would rather continue with that, though in the form of another audioplay.

What turned into a particularly fruitful working session was our new exhibition planning, together with my partner. L. sketched how we could realize the snail-shell idea: constructing only the snail’s entrance, directly adjacent to the large window of the exhibition space at Rustenschacherallee (University of Applied Arts Vienna), where a cut-out spiral would suggest an endless Fibonacci swirl. The honey-milk gimbal would be evoked only through a subtle fragrance drifting from an inaccessible core.

I am deeply grateful that L. and I have thus far been able to carry our artistic friendship from phase to phase. And I am more than curious to see what he will remember and think of our Socratic dialogues over the course of what I hope will be a long and dear friendship, binding us together for the rest of our lives.



Scribbling towards the exhibition

How to relate to the unknown?

Or rather:

What happens if there is no gap?

The old cherry tree that blossomed to welcome our son.

Becoming Mother

I am writing these lines now with a hormonally fogged brain and a newborn on my chest, wrapped in a sour-smelling shirt I haven't managed to change since yesterday. The newborn is not as newborn as I had planned for my first written lines after his birth – he is the easiest, most relaxed baby, yet we are still struggling, as probably every new parent does.

Anyway, here he is – our child. We call him Mio, like in "Mio, mein Mio," the story by Astrid Lindgren. It is not the actual name we have given him (a scandalous thing to do, by the way), but something like his heart-name. The sound of those vowels somehow resonates with the awe I felt from the moment he came into being inside my womb. Mio is no longer a wish or a longing, but an incredibly tiny, irreplaceable human. Such a unique moment in time, incomparable to anything else in my life so far – yet at the same time the most ordinary thing in the world.

I had planned to have all of this written before his arrival – hence the title about the unknown. I wanted to reflect on my expectations, on how we could connect even before his birth. How can one co-create with a newborn – or even a not-yet-born?

I thought the problem would be that we are alien to each other, unknown. I feared I might not be able to relate to him the way I related to L. from the very beginning. And indeed, our relationship is incomparable to that dreamy, mind-driven, longing connection L. and I shared. We would watch a sparkle in a bottle of water and then not see each other for weeks, letting that spark grow ever brighter in my memory. Up until what I called L.'s first poem, I never knew whether he thought of me for even a second once I was out of sight.

This is so different with Mio. Not just more intense – my love for L. and his little brother K. is not relativized in any way. But Mio is always – corporeally – present. I missed him so much before he was here, and now there is nothing to miss anymore. He is so close that there is no gap to be filled with artistic longing. For the time being, our relationship is actually less poetic – because there is no need for poetry. It is all about keeping this tiny body alive and safe and warm; soothing his aches, as if a fragile extension of myself; it is about feeding without drowning in milk, digesting with every cell from toe to eyebrow, and then sleeping in the most improbable positions. About exchanging warmth between our bodies, still remembering the time of being one.

But to be honest, I did not enjoy being pregnant. Although it was, comparatively, no complicated pregnancy, I perceived it as bodily overwhelming and exhausting. But worst of all, I was so anxious he might not make it – that he would remain a longing and leave us again before ever arriving. And even more so, that this would somehow be my fault. I was dearly looking forward to the moment when I could share this responsibility with my partner – giving the baby into his loving hands. And I cannot tell how much I now enjoy feeling that new living bond between the two of us. Although I would love to stop time at the moment he was placed on my chest in the hospital, I also cannot wait to relate anew to the world with him and through him. Already now, I wonder what experiences his brand-new sensory organs create in his brain – this universe that just popped out of my belly. I wonder what his dreams look and feel like. How can you dream if you have not yet seen anything? How are such fresh dreams so startling that they trigger a Moro reflex every other moment? I want to teach him how to speak, how to articulate, as soon as possible – yet I do not want to tell him what to say, because I do not want to spoil what he has to say. I know I should talk to him as much as possible – yet I catch myself repeating silly baby lines over and over, humming the same simple melody for hours on end. I am thankful every time I see my partner, my mother, my sister, my nephews, my partner's family – every human who unconditionally loves Mio, talks to him, touches him, and lets themselves be touched. Then he smiles his random reflex smiles, and I know – that is all we need for now.

Peter Handke

"Kaspar setzt ein.
Er spricht langsam:

Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!
Das merken und nicht vergessen!

Seit du einen ordentlichen Satz sprechen kannst, beginnst du alles, was du wahrnimmst, mit diesem ordentlichen Satz zu vergleichen, so daß der Satz ein Beispiel wird. Jeder Gegenstand, den du wahrnimmst, ist umso einfacher, je einfacher der Satz ist, mit dem du ihn beschreiben kannst: jener Gegenstand ist ein ordentlicher Gegenstand, bei dem sich nach einem kurzen, einfachen Satz keine Fragen mehr ergeben: ein ordentlicher Gegenstand ist der, bei dem mit einem kurzen einfachen Satz alles geklärt ist: für einen ordentlichen Gegenstand brauchst du nur einen Satz mit drei Worten: jener Gegenstand ist in Ordnung, von dem du nicht erst eine Geschichte erzählen mußt. Für einen ordentlichen Gegenstand brauchst du nicht einmal einen Satz: für einen ordentlichen Gegenstand genügt das Wort für den Gegenstand. Erst mit einem unordentlichen Gegenstand fangen die Geschichten an."

(Handke, 1967/2019: 31f.)

How can I make one exhibition doing justice to hardly countable particular encounters, co-creations and constellations, far apart in space and time?

Making an Exhibition

But unfortunately, Mio's smile is not all I need for the completion of my PhD in Art: I also need to make an exhibition, sharing my artistic practice. As I have explained and reflected upon in various contexts within this reflective documentation, I want to share – I feel the urge to share – what I have found, what "we" (in all its various meanings) have made.

Finalizing a PhD in Art on co-creation with children, one might expect my young co-creators to be thrilled to take part in this show. There should be a children's committee planning and setting up the exhibition, a panel discussion, guided tours led by children, children working on site. If not – doesn't that seem suspicious? If there are no children present, eagerly identifying with the work I am showing, isn't that a sign of failure in my project? How could I prove any co-creative credibility then?

I wish there were some students sitting on a stage, telling the audience how much they loved and identified with what we did – how they remember every bit of it, how proud they are. But it doesn't work like that.

The video projects are long gone. The fourteen-year-olds of back then are now young adults, studying somewhere, probably hardly remembering what we did during those school project days almost ten years ago. Some might remember, some might have been particularly touched – but it is impossible to tell who they were, and even more impossible to contact them now. Some of them might even find it strange to learn that their film is being screened in this context today. They all signed, and their parents signed as well, confirming that I am allowed to use and publish the films without restrictions. But back then, they only thought of the cinema screening shortly after, a screening at school, and perhaps my website – not of anything like an exhibition now.

With L., it is slightly different, since we are still close and he is actually involved in planning the exhibition. But we have been planning this exhibition several times already. Now, who am I more obligated to – the six-year-old L. or the eleven-year-old L.?

Regarding the work resulting from my teaching at the grammar school and Middle School, I hardly have any physical pieces at hand. As long as we were producing online exhibitions or films, it's fine – but the individual student pieces belong to the students and, I'm afraid, mostly no longer exist, so I only have some photo documentation left. Moreover, as I have already mentioned, I wrote quite critically about the school(s) and also about my, at times, difficult experiences with the students. So why should they be eager to be represented in such a context?

Throughout my PhD in Art, there were countless encounters – some more, some less inspirational and formative for both sides. Each had its specific context, time, and constellation within which a presentation to a very specific audience was possible; a sharing of our insights, of co-created works, of our common mind-space. Afterwards, our paths diverged again, and those encounters cannot be forced back into the present – nor can they be aligned with all the others.

The only common denominator is me. This is what I have to accept, admit, and stand by – even though it might feel strangely lonesome in the context of co-creation. So what, and how, can I share?

First of all, I can share all my pedagogical and artistic reflections as collected in this documentation – which become more comprehensible when linked to the artefacts of the processes I am referring to.

But the pieces, works, and glimpses I still have at hand are more than just exchangeable examples of certain methods and observations, subordinate to the artistic process or pedagogical objectives. They are co-created artistic expressions, distinct and dear to me on a very personal level. Because the encounters they originate from – otherwise fleeting and never to return – have taken material shape and have become somehow, however imperfectly, comprehensible. Through sharing those artistic, material traces I can share glimpses of an encounter, make it relatable again, even though it has already passed. I can actualize it, reclaim something from the loss of time – and weave a tighter net to hold the world, and be held within it.

Roland Barthes

The differentiation between rather interchangeable examples of outcomes from pedagogical or co-creative processes — showcasing a particular technique or an "average student performance" — and the artistic co-creations I would like to share can be compared to what Roland Barthes describes as studium and punctum:

"What I feel about these photographs derives from an average affect, almost from a certain training. I did not know a French word which might account for this kind of human interest, but I believe this word exists in Latin: it is stadium, which doesn't mean, at least not immediately, "study," but application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity. It is by studium that I am interested in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally (this connotation is present in studium, that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the action. The second element will break (or punctuate) the studium. This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of the studium with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick; this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many points. This second element which will disturb the studium I shall therefore call punctum; for punctum is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole – and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)." (Barthes 1982: 26f)

I would like to create an exhibition that is not only interesting from a professional or pedagogical point of view, but also punctuating — piercing holes that allow glimpses into other moments in time, creating relations between viewers, children, and myself that would otherwise be impossible.

Making the exhibition function in such a way is an artistic and curatorial challenge I have to accept – without being able to relinquish even a fragment of the responsibility for it. Thus, the exhibition for my PhD in Art on co-creation ultimately remains a solo show.

My Misleading List of Certain Learnings (Ongoing)

Sweeping old floors keeps conjuring up new piles of dust.

If you can’t hear yourself speak, go disentangle. But hold the lines.

Some trees love music sheets very much.

Trying to cover more than one hole of a watering can is not sustainable.

Power plays are boring.

Not all mermaids can swim.

If the cheese is good, the mouse can have a good time in the trap.

If too much paste weighs down the kite, it won’t rise. But we can hang it from a tree and let it dance with the wind.

The forest is dark at night for everyone.

I am one and I am many, but I can never be only.

Cashews and cranberries make a good poem.

Jungle-sea bees speak only as a swarm. Each knows but one word.

Don’t underestimate the stale rest at the bottom of the bottle.

When a story is old, begin another.

The gap between you and me is the reason why we’re not alone.

Sometimes benevolent is another word for lazy.

It is lonely between contexts.

If you want to be a good artist, be generous.

One can be a good audience.

Long stings make cuddling a challenge.

Misunderstanding something means understanding something else.

A shift in height changes perspective, not what is to be seen.

Love is my superpower.

The good ones have stone collections but know one can never own a stone.

If you want to be fair, don’t hide love or pain.

Naming is the hardest thing to agree on.

Students and teachers are actually human, but tend to forget.

It’s hard to make school recognize something that isn’t part of school.

If in doubt, ask the Krakel-Orakel.

Never trust ugly schoolbooks and bad copies.

Fund humans, not tablets.

Digital literacy is analog.

Artificial intelligence is only dangerous if there is not enough creative intelligence.

Buy a fake moustache and a novelty belly. Crochet pot holders.

Ambitions can never be too high if you don’t mind changing plans along the way.

Teachers should be octopuses.

Bring cake and strawberries.

Don’t let children work with dull colors, dead brushes, and hard pencils.

Clean up the classroom. Ban “decorative” plastic items.

Don’t use sticky tape or pre-installed plastic frames to display students’ work.

Steal my concepts.

Create architecture for unexpected encounters, not for expected discipline.

Make “pedagogy” a fine art degree. Find a new name.

Always finish your fear up to the very last drop, as long as it’s liquid.

If you cannot see, listen and hum.

Wisdom is not bound to age or species.

Riverbanks make a good flatshare.

If you cannot hear, borrow someone’s ear.

Mud dumplings are the best dumplings.

Be vulnerable and confident.

One needs termites to build a didgeridoo.

Co-creation means standing next to each other, not one behind the other.

If you’re too far to caress, use a sound wave.

Sing with the tongue of your mother’s soul.

There is no artistic cure for artists.

Listen quietly, with all your fingertips.

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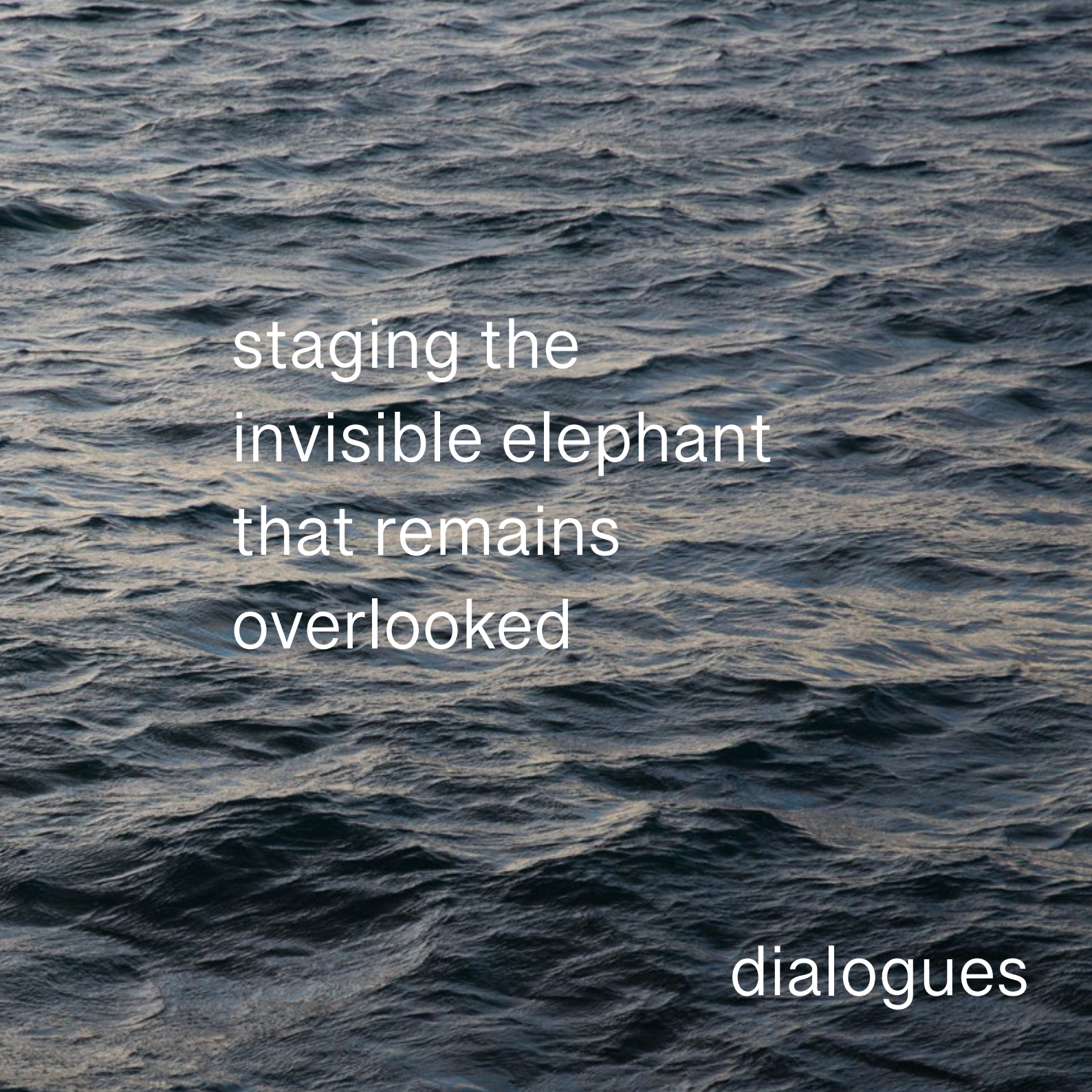
Staging the Invisible Elephant that Remains Overlooked
Reflective Documentation / Book 1: Reflective Documentation
by Verena Miedl-Faißt
2017-2025

Supervisor: Barbara Putz-Plecko

University of Applied Arts Vienna


staging the
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Field Guide Book 2

Walking around invisible elephants, it is easy to forget that one is not alone. Maybe the elephant has just stepped on your toe, while another person is being caressed by its tail or lifted by its trunk. How should one possibly relate?

I have always been looking for others sharing my approach to art and pedagogy as congruent endeavors. But artists often withdraw when I speak about children while pedagogues grow suspicious when they sense artistic ambition – both for their own good reasons. Even my former colleagues at ZOOM Children‘s Museum mostly emphasized the distinction between their own artistic practice and what happens when working with children.

Yet I thought: even though I won’t find someone else with exactly my perspective, working with so many inspiring artists and friends in artistic processes with children on a daily basis, it is impossible that I am truly alone with my thoughts and struggles.

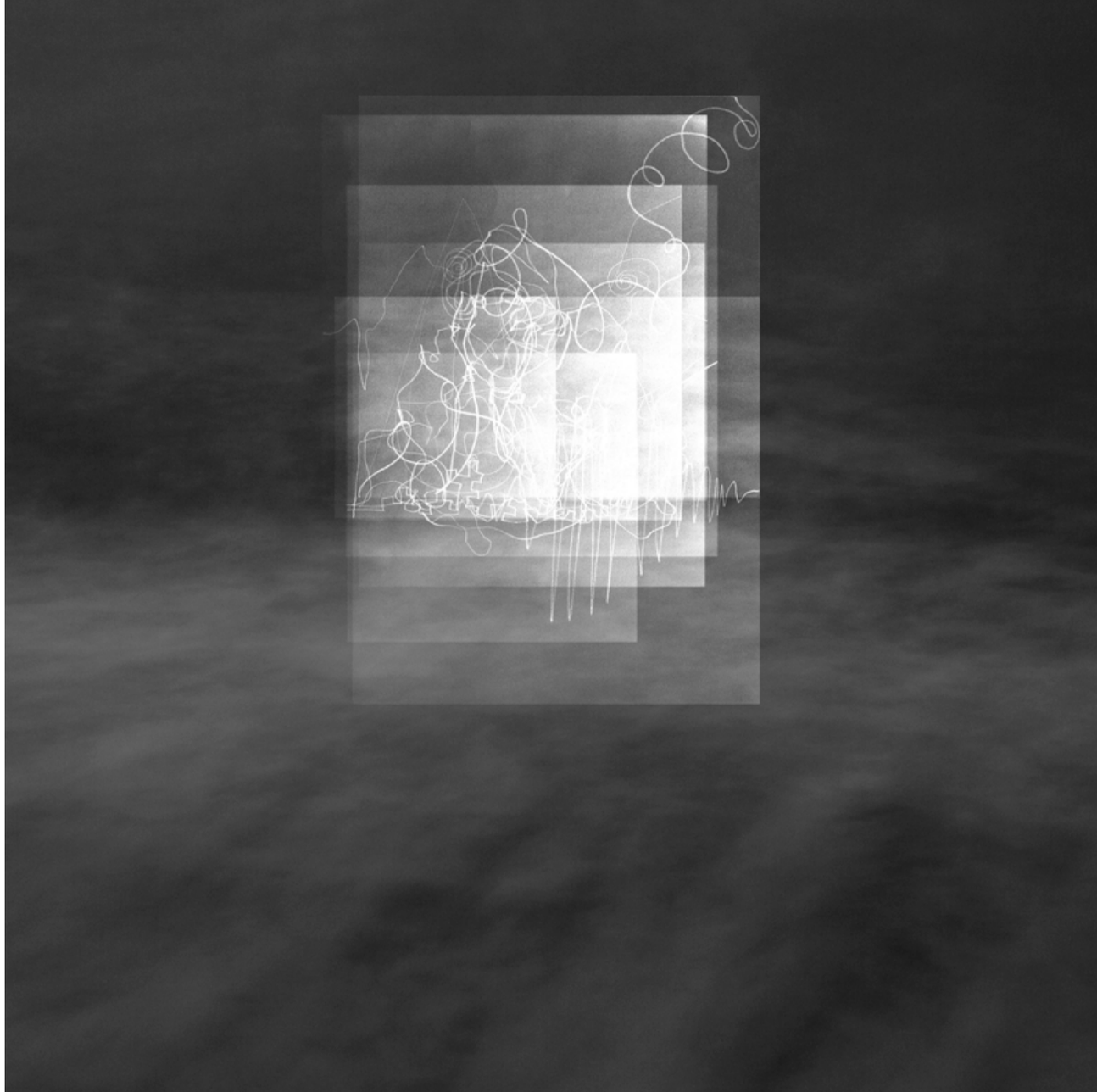
And so I sought to relate. I conducted 13 conversations with colleagues from the Children‘s Museum that became central to my research. Together with each dialogue, we made a photo-portrait. Those images, also accompanying the texts in this book, were my gesture of appreciation and of representation.

The only prepared question was: What would you do if you could spend a day together with yourself as a child? Not only, what would your adult-self undertake with your child-self, but rather what is only possible for the two of you together? This question opened intimate and insightful exchanges about childhood, art-making, and everything in between. It became a way of reflecting together with the younger selves of my colleagues, on an artistically educated adult level.

The dialogues were recorded in German and carefully transcribed. I had thought of writing stories based on the interviews – but their dialogical form itself proved closest to my methodology. Dissecting the content from its form did not seem adequate. Thus, I only edited lightly for readability, preserving the Sprechdenken (thinking-in-speaking) and the unique tone of each vis-à-vis. This way, not only did our reflections become comprehensible, but also my general „Haltung“ (stance) in co-creational situations. My colleagues, like the children I work with, were not research subjects but co-authors with whom I produced the following bodies of text. Together we realized that in the places where each of us thought ourselves alone, we were, in fact, together.

The conversations appear in chronological order, allowing one to trace not only the development of my thoughts but also how they were shaped by each exchange. The English version was translated with some AI support.

I conclude each chapter with a potentially misleading lesson I learned not necessarily within the respective talk, but somehow in relation to it; and a collage composed of a line gifted by the respective friend, overlaid on a nocturnal collaboration with the Atlantic. The lessons are part of my ongoing collection of misleading learnings that I have partly shared before.



General (Explanatory) Notes

Gender Sensitivity

As these are largely verbatim transcripts of spoken language, the text has been left unaltered in those passages where the masculine form alone was used, despite its incompleteness. Please excuse, elsewhere as well, when inadequacies of spoken language become evident.

The ZOOM Children‘s Museum

Everyone appearing in this book has worked at the ZOOM Children’s Museum. Official information is available on its website: https://www.kindermuseum.at (Accessed: 08 October 2025).

The following glossary and summary are based on my own perspective and memory. I have been engaged at ZOOM mainly between 2008 and 2022.

Founded in 1994 as an artist-run association, the museum today consists of five main areas, which are visited by school classes, kindergarten groups, and individual visitors in pre-scheduled sessions.

The “Exhibition”
...features one or two exhibitions per year on a wide range of topics, designed specifically for the needs of children aged 6 to 12. Mediators are involved in developing the exhibitions and are given great freedom in how they work with the different “stations” within each show. The concept is generally that each child explores the exhibition at their own pace and according to their individual interests.

The “Ocean”
...is an indoor play space for toddlers and young children aged 0 to 6. The inspiring and stimulating spatial installations – featuring an underwater landscape, a ship, and a submarine – invite individual exploration and play. Mediators provide a brief introduction and conclusion and are available throughout to engage and interact with the children as needed.

The “Studio”
...is a workshop area for children aged 3 to 12. Once or twice a year, new workshop concepts are introduced, focusing on analogue materials, tools, and experiences. Originally, the workshops were led exclusively by artists who guided children through individual creative processes. Following major structural changes, the mediator teams have been equalized, and the team structures across the different areas are now less segregated.

The „Animated Film Studio“
..., as the “Studio”, is a workshop area for children aged 8 to 14. This has been my primary workplace. Here, animation and sound workshops are conducted in a specifically designed setting that enables larger groups – such as school classes – to co-create stop-motion films within a relatively short time frame. While the basic set-up remains consistent, workshop concepts focusing on storytelling and cinematic approaches are regularly developed and adapted.

“ZOOM Mobile”
...was developed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Equipped with an electric van, it allows ZOOM mediators to offer workshops directly on-site at schools or in public spaces.

Michael Baumgartner

über Gründe, Künstler zu sein, Kinderfreund- und -feindschaften, Grashütten, Schnecken, Pfarrer und Hochwasser im Waldviertel, Hilfe beim Welt-aushalten.

on reasons to become an artist, childhood bonds and battles, grass shelters, snails, village priests and floods in the Waldviertel and help to cope with the world.

Ich besuche Michael als meinen ersten Interviewpartner am 26.06.2021 vormittags um 10:00 in seinem Atelier im 2. Bezirk. Es ist ein großes Gemeinschaftsatelier gemeinsam mit den Leuten von dérive – Verein für Stadtforschung. Wir setzen uns in den Innenhof.

Michael und ich kennen uns seit vielen Jahren aus dem ZOOM – allerdings bis dato eher oberflächlich: Michael arbeitet vor allem als Workshopleiter im Atelier, ich war immer mehr im „Trickfilmstudio“. Nach der großen strukturellen Umstellung 2020 sind wir uns öfter begegnet.

00:00:00 MB:
Gut dann stell mir die erste Frage und ich versuche zu antworten.

00:00:07 VMF:
Ja, ich hab ja schon gesagt, dass ich gerne versuchen würde, in so eine Geschichte reinzukommen und du hast schon gesagt, dass du glaubst, dass das Kunst machen schon irgendwie mit dem Kind sein...

00:00:26 MB:
... mit dem Kind sein zu tun hat. Ich weiß nicht, ob ich das noch so sehe, aber früher mal vor längerer Zeit, habe ich gemeint, dass es keine schönen Gründe sind, die jemanden zum Künstler werden lassen. Das ist aber vielleicht so eine Generations-Geschichte. Ich habe das Gefühl, bei jüngeren Künstlerinnen und Künstlern kann das durchaus positiv sein. In meiner Generation kenne ich viele, die nichts Schönes erlebt haben in der Kindheit. Also ich kann nur von Freunden reden, wo man sich wirklich darüber austauscht. In Künstler-Interviews erfährt man das ja höchst selten oder gar nicht.

00:01:13 VMF:
Also ich kann es aus meiner Perspektive..., wenn ich überlege, warum ich das eigentlich mache mit meinem Neffen oder was ich da tu ... was ich irgendwie... was ich da initiieren soll. Dann sind das vor allem Dinge, wo ich mir zumindest vorstelle, dass ich mir das als Kind gewünscht hätte. Oder dass ich gerne jemanden gehabt hätte, der das mit mir macht. Es ist schon so, ich versuche ihm auf Augenhöhe zu begegnen. So Reisen zurück quasi. Und wir sind da... ich bin schon als Kind irgendwie mit ihm unterwegs.

00:02:04 MB:
Das ist bei mir ganz virulent geworden, wie wir unsere Tochter gekriegt haben. Der habe ich versucht, was das betrifft, Ausdruck im Künstlerischen, auch Partner zu sein oder Mentor, ist ein bisschen schwierig. Sie hat mich dazu gebracht, im Kindermuseum zu arbeiten. Ich habe 1997 zum ersten Mal im Kindermuseum gearbeitet, da war sie zwei Jahre alt. Dadurch habe ich Kontakt mit Kindern gekriegt. Man hat ja dann nicht nur das eigene Kind, sondern Bekannte kriegen zur selben Zeit auch Kinder. Dann lernt man auch diese Kinder kennen, lernt die Kinder im Spiel kennen. Also das war für mich der Impuls ins Kindermuseum zu gehen.

Und a bisserl später, so ´98, ´99, habe ich dann an einem größeren Projekt in der Schweiz gearbeitet, wo mir Sammler, die auch so eine Art Galerie im Haus betrieben haben, angeboten haben: Wir geben dir so und so viel Geld und du kannst machen, was du willst. Und ja, wir sind neugierig. Wir kaufen‘s – also was du machst, gehört dann uns, komm mit dem Geld aus, verdien was. Na, das war damals ganz schön viel. Ich hab eigentlich nie wieder so ein Budget gehabt.

I’m visiting Michael as my first interview partner on June 26, 2021, in the morning at 10:00, in his studio in the 2nd district. It’s a large shared studio space together with the people from dérive – Verein für Stadtforschung. We sit down in the courtyard.

Michael and I have known each other for many years from ZOOM – although until now only on a rather superficial level: Michael mainly works as a workshop leader in the studio, while I was always more involved in the „Animated Film Studio“. After the major structural changes in 2020, we were running into each other more often.

00:00:00 MB:
Alright, then ask me the first question and I’ll try to answer it.

00:00:07 VMF:
Yeah, I already mentioned that I’d like to get into a kind of narrative, and you said that you believe that making art has something to do with being a child...

00:00:26 MB:
...with being a child, yes. I don’t know if I still see it that way, but a while ago, I used to think that the reasons someone becomes an artist aren’t really pleasant ones. Maybe that’s a generational thing. I feel like with younger artists, it can definitely be a more positive experience. In my generation, I know a lot of people who didn’t have a happy childhood. I mean, I can only speak from conversations with friends – these are things people rarely talk about in artist interviews, if at all.

00:01:13 VMF:
From my perspective, when I think about why I do what I do with my nephew or what I’m trying to initiate there... it‘s mostly things I imagine I would have wished for as a child. Or I would’ve liked to have someone to do those things with me. I really try to meet him on equal terms. It’s like a kind of time travel. And we’re there together... I’m somehow traveling as a child myself with him.

00:02:04 MB:
That became really intense for me when we had our daughter. I tried to be, in that sense – in terms of artistic expression – a kind of partner or mentor, although “mentor” is maybe not the right word. She was the reason I started working at the Children‘s Museum. I worked there for the first time in 1997, when she was two years old. That’s how I came into contact with kids. And of course, it’s not just your own child – friends and acquaintances also start having kids around the same time. So you get to know those children too, and you get to know them through play. That was what led me to the Children‘s Museum.

And a bit later, around ’98 or ’99, I worked on a larger project in Switzerland. Some collectors who also ran a kind of gallery in their house offered me a deal: “We’ll give you this amount of money, and you can do whatever you want. We’re curious. We’ll buy it – whatever you make will belong to us. Make it work with the budget, earn something from it.” At the time, it was quite a lot of money. I’ve actually never had a budget like that again.

Und also, ich denke besonders an eine Arbeit. Das Haus war dreigeschossig, in jedem Geschoss eine Arbeit. Das war so eine Körper-Seele-Geist-Geschichte. Im mittleren Stock, im größten, also quasi im Wohnraum war die Arbeit „Body Box“ und das war… ich kanns dir dann zeigen, oder du magst es gleich sehen, wie das ausgeschaut hat? Ich kann‘s dir am Handy zeigen. Das war eine recht große Arbeit, so viereinhalb Meter und 1,30 m hoch. Man konnte reingehen. Es war eine Spiegel-Arbeit. Und ja, meine Tochter war damals vier. Und die Sprachregelung in der Familie war „das ist das Modell“. Ja, es war natürlich ein recht großes Modell. Warte mal, was hab ich da für Fotos… ja, da sieht man‘s nicht so gut. Das war diese große Box mit einem Türl, einer Glastür.

00:04:36 VMF:
Also das ist der Raum jetzt?

00:04:38 MB:
Das ist der Raum und diese Arbeit drinnen. Es gibt eines, wo man klarer sieht, wo das ist. Ich habe leider keine guten Fotos von der Vernissage. Eigentlich ging es darum, dass ich mit meiner Familie, also mit Freundin, Tochter und mir einziehe in diese Galerie als Parasiten. Und bei der Eröffnung haben wir eine Performance gemacht: Zuerst war das für die Besucher nur von außen einsehbar. Es hat so ausgesehen, von innen nämlich… da ist was passiert mit den Fotos. Ganz obskur. Meine Freundin ist früher als ich zurück nach Österreich gefahren und sie hat einen Teil der Filme mitgenommen. Und beim Foto Händler wurde die Box, wo die fertigen Fotos ankommen, heruntergerissen und Fotos gestohlen. Meine waren weg. Also ich habe die Fotos dann eigentlich – das ist fünf Jahre gestanden bei denen – fünf Jahre später erst gemacht.

Wir waren da drin als Familie und haben miteinander gesprochen – uns hat man draußen nicht gehört – und haben getan und gelesen und so, eine Stunde ungefähr. Meine Tochter hat sich aber im Zuge des Aufenthalts dort, im Zuge des Aufbaus mit den ganzen Nachbarskindern, angefreundet. Alle in ihrem Alter oder vielleicht 6, 7 maximal. Und hat ihnen erzählt der Papa macht ein Modell und wir dürfen da rein! Und ich hab mir überlegt: Was mach ich da? Und hab so schwarze flüssige Kreiden gekauft, womit die Lebensmittel Händler so anschreiben, da konnte man auf die Spiegel zeichnen. Und dann gab‘s ganz viele weiße Luftballons. Und irgendwann nach einer Stunde haben wir gesagt: Okay, jetzt können alle rein. Dann waren zeitweise, weiß ich nicht, 15 Kinder da drinnen und die Erwachsenen wollten dann auch rein. Die Kinder konnten aufrecht gehen und die Erwachsenen mussten krabbeln oder auf den Knien gehen.

Ich hab das öfter eingebaut in Arbeiten. Ich mach seit 20 Jahren diese Spiegelarbeiten was Kindern enorm taugt, also das funktioniert immer auch sehr gut für Kinder. Da gibt‘s noch einige Arbeiten, wo Kinder ganz stark drauf geflogen sind.

00:07:21 VMF:
Ja und wenn du dich selber erinnerst. Also ich meine, so Höhlen bauen und so ist ja was, was man…

00:07:35 MB:
Ich bin am Land aufgewachsen, im Waldviertel, an zwei Orten eigentlich, die wichtig waren. Beim ersten war ich bis fünf, da war das noch nicht so, dieses Höhlen bauen. Das war eine sehr schwierige Zeit. Ich hatte einen Bruder, der ein sehr auffälliges Kind war. Der war zwei Jahre älter und hat mich in dieser ersten Zeit nur sekiert. Es war furchtbar. Das tut ihm heute unendlich Leid. Er hat sich hundertmal entschuldigt. Er weiß selber, dass er mir die Hölle auf Erden bereitet hat. Mit mir Angstmachen.

There’s one piece I remember in particular. The house had three floors, and there was one work on each floor. It was a kind of “body–soul–spirit” concept. On the middle floor – the biggest one, the living space – was a piece called Body Box. I can show it to you – or do you want to see right now what it looked like? I can show you on my phone. It was quite a large piece, 4.5 meters long and 1.3 meters high. You could go inside. It was a mirror piece. My daughter was four at the time. In the family, we had this way of talking about it – we called it “the model.” Of course, it was a rather big model. Let me see… what kind of photos do I have here… yeah, you can’t really see it well. That was the big box with a little door, a glass door.

00:04:36 VMF:
So this is the space now?

00:04:38 MB:
Yes, this is the space and the piece inside it. There‘s one photo where you can see more clearly what it looked like. Unfortunately, I don’t have any good pictures from the opening. The idea was that my family – my partner, daughter, and I – would move into this gallery space as parasites. At the opening, we did a performance: at first, visitors could only see us from the outside. It looked like this, from the inside… something weird happened with the photos. My partner went back to Austria before me and took some of the film rolls with her. At the photo store, the box where the developed pictures arrive was knocked over and some photos were stolen. Mine were gone. So in the end, I actually didn’t take photos until five years later – the piece stayed with the collectors for that long.

We were inside as a family, talking – people outside couldn’t hear us – and we were reading, doing things together, for about an hour. During the time we spent there setting everything up, my daughter made friends with the neighborhood kids, all about her age, maybe six or seven at most. And she told them: “My dad is building a model and we’re allowed to go inside!” And I thought, okay, what can I do with that? So I bought this black liquid chalk – the kind used by grocers to write on boards – and you could draw on the mirrors with it. And there were tons of white balloons. After about an hour, we said: Okay, now everyone can come in. At one point there were, I don’t know, maybe 15 kids inside, and then the adults wanted in too. The kids could walk upright, but the adults had to crawl or move on their knees.

I’ve used that idea in multiple pieces. I’ve been making these mirror works for 20 years now – kids absolutely love them. They always work incredibly well for children. There are several more pieces where kids totally latched onto it.

00:07:21 VMF:
And when you think back – I mean, building forts and stuff like that is something that…

00:07:35 MB:
I grew up in the countryside, in the Waldviertel, in two places that were really important. I lived in the first one until I was five – we weren’t really building forts yet at that point. It was a very difficult time. I had a brother who was a very difficult child. He was two years older and spent that early time constantly tormenting me. It was awful. He feels terribly sorry about it now. He’s apologized a hundred times. He knows he made my life hell. He used to scare me so much.

So Geschichten wie: Wir haben uns ins Auto gesetzt. Klar will ich auch am Beifahrersitz sitzen und dann fängt er an, so die Pedale zu treten und Hebel und so und ich habe so Angst gekriegt. Er hat aber den Knopf runter gedrückt und ich habe das nicht gewusst, dass man den zum Aufsperren hochziehen muss. Da muss ich vier gewesen sein oder drei, hab panische Angst gekriegt und gebrüllt. Immer wieder solche Sachen.

Und dann sind wir weitergezogen von dort nach Rosenburg. Da haben wir mit anderen Kindern 12 Säcke vollgestopft mit Gras, mit hohem Gras, das haben wir mit den Händen ausgerissen und dann so eine wirklich wasserdichte Hütte gebaut. Ich glaube sechs waren wir. Da gab‘s dann natürlich auch Kriege mit der gegnerischen Indianer-Bande, die nicht ungefährlich waren. Mein Großvater war Müller und die sind immer recht geschickt mit Holzarbeiten. Der hat uns die Waffen produziert, von Speer bis Säbel, so alles, was ihm eingefallen ist. Ich habe zwei Brüder, also immer so abgestuft für alle Brüder in verschiedenen Größen, in verschiedenen Farben. Er hat auch ein kleines Sägewerk betrieben – da gab es jede Menge Lager-Kugeln, also von Kugellagern, so Stahlkugeln, ganz blanke. Und die haben wir gefladert und für Steinschleudern verwendet. Also ich kann mich an eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Bande erinnern, wo unser Häuptling gefangen wurde und wir schießen mit diesen Lager-Kugeln auf die und die sammeln die aber ein und schießen zurück. Das war echt heftig. Das hat voll blaue Flecken gemacht. Das waren noch ziemlich wilde Zeiten. Aber genossen ja, das war, das ist der schöne Teil der Kindheit. Die frühe Kindheit war immer in Verbindung mit meinem Bruder. Der hat auch lange Therapie gemacht. Da ist einfach einiges schief gegangen. Mit meiner Mutter und so...

00:11:13 VMF:
Okay, das heißt, es sind schon eher so Schutzbunker, die Du da so baust.

00:11:17 MB:
Aber es war interessant. Mein Bruder ist dann auch in Rosenburg weiter der gewesen... da gab‘s noch Cowboys in der Nachbarschaft und der hat sich von Anfang an im Haus komplett gegen alle gestellt.

00:11:30 VMF:
Also Kinder-Cowboys oder? Also ihr wart die Indianer und dann gab‘s die Cowboys.

00:11:35 MB:
Ja genau. Es gab zwei Indianer-Banden: Wir und die andere Indianer-Bande, die Pilli-Bande hat die geheißen. Die Pilli, nach dem Familiennamen von den zwei Größten von denen und wir waren die Pirnax-Bande. Der Älteste von diesen Kindern über uns war schon zehn oder so. Und die Cowboys waren die Rebenbauers. Mein Bruder hat sich auf deren Seite geschlagen. Und dann, über Jahre hindurch, haben die immer versucht, unsere tollen Bauwerke zu zerstören. Kann mich erinnern. Ganz böse. Da haben sie mich mal gefangen und mir angedroht, sie werden mich jetzt martern und haben mich auch wirklich geschlagen und so, dass ich verrate, wo unser neuestes Bauwerk ist. Und ich hab‘s dann verraten, weil ich so Angst gehabt hab, und dann war ich in meiner Bande natürlich unten durch mal für einen Monat oder so... da haben sie nicht mit mir geredet. Das war auch eine wilde Erfahrung.

00:12:39 VMF:
Woa, obwohl du ja nichts dafürkonntest.

00:12:41 MB:
Ja eh. Naja, ein Indianer darf auf keinen Fall was verraten. Das geht nicht.

Stuff like: we’d get into the car, and of course I wanted to sit in the front seat, and then he’d start pushing pedals and pulling levers, and I got so scared. He’d locked the door by pressing the knob down, and I didn’t know you had to pull it up to unlock it. I must’ve been four, maybe three – I was terrified and screamed. Things like that happened over and over.

Then we moved to Rosenburg. There we started building with the other kids – we filled twelve sacks with grass, tall grass that we tore out with our hands, and built a proper waterproof hut. I think there were six of us. And of course, we had wars with the rival „Indianer-Bande“ – it wasn’t without danger. My grandfather was a miller, and millers are usually handy with woodwork. He made us weapons – spears, sabers, whatever he could think of. I had two brothers, so he made them in different sizes and colors for each of us. He also had a small sawmill, so there were lots of ball bearings – these shiny steel balls. We stole them and used them for slingshots. I remember one fight with the rival gang where they captured our chief, and we were firing those balls at them. But they collected them and shot back. It got pretty intense. We all ended up with bruises. That was a pretty wild time. But it was great. That was the good part of childhood. The early years were always marked by my brother, though. He also had years of therapy. Things went pretty wrong – with my mother and so on...

00:11:13 VMF:
Okay, so the structures you build are more like protective bunkers?

00:11:17 MB:
That’s an interesting point. My brother was still the same in Rosenburg... There were kids in the neighborhood who played cowboys, and right from the start, he sided with them – completely opposed to everyone else in the house.

00:11:30 VMF:
So kids playing cowboys? You were the Indians, and they were the cowboys?

00:11:35 MB:
Exactly. There were two Indian gangs – us and another one called the Pilli gang, named after the two oldest boys’ last name. We were the Pirnax gang. The oldest among them must’ve been around ten. And the cowboys were the Rebenbauers. My brother joined their side. And for years they kept trying to destroy our awesome constructions. I remember them catching me once and threatening to torture me if I didn’t reveal the location of our latest fort. They hit me too – and I ended up giving in out of fear. After that, I was totally outcast in my own gang – they didn’t speak to me for like a month. That was a wild experience too.

00:12:39 VMF:
Wow, even though it wasn’t your fault.

00:12:41 MB:
Yeah, but... I mean, an Indian must never reveal a secret. That’s just not acceptable.

00:12:47 VMF:
Aber das war ein...

00:12:48 MB:
Das waren Buben-Spiele, da gab es ein einziges Mädchen im Haus. Unsere Squaw war das. Die Jüngste.

00:13:00 VMF:
Gut. Und wenn du... vielleicht kannst du das von dieser Grashütte noch mehr erzählen, wie diese Bauwerke funktioniert haben?

00:13:09 MB:
Ja diese Grashütte stand im Garten. Die war nicht im Wald, sondern im Garten und war deshalb relativ gut geschützt vor Angriffen, weil die anderen immer Angst vor den Eltern im Haus haben mussten. So, es hat sehr afrikanisch ausgesehen, interessanterweise. Aber das war halt das, was wir uns vorgestellt haben, wie ein Indianer, Waldläufer oder so, sich einen Regenschutz baut. Das ist auch ziemlich lang gestanden. Meine Tante ist mal gekommen und hat gesagt: Was ist denn das? Das ist ja ein Heuschober. Aber es hat super funktioniert. Wir haben auch drin übernachtet.

Und das zweite, an das ich mich erinnere, war ziemlich groß. Wir haben es Indianer-Fort genannt. Das war rundherum befestigt, nicht mit so Palisaden, sondern einfach mit Strünken, mit Baumstümpfen, die wir ausgegraben oder gefunden und rundherum so gelegt haben. Und dann gab‘s einen recht hohen Hochstand, was in unserer Vorstellung wichtig war, um die Feinde rechtzeitig zu sehen. Direkt hinterm Haus hat der Wald begonnen und ist steil angestiegen. Das war dann oben auf der Kuppe. Diese Gegend, die liebe ich immer noch. Also wenn ich da hinkomme, wenn ich nach Rosenburg komm. Ich gehe ziemlich viel wandern und hab dann mal eine Wanderung gemacht um diese alten Plätze zu suchen. Jetzt ist es interessant, dass man die dann wirklich noch findet, obwohl das ein ziemlich verzweigtes Wegesystem dort war. Also das sind dann so Flashes. Da war das und wie klein schaut das eigentlich aus? Und mir ist es so riesig vorgekommen.

00:14:58 VMF:
Aber ich kann es mir noch nicht ganz vorstellen. Diese Hütte, diese Grashütte, das waren Säcke, die ihr gestapelt habt?

00:15:05 MB:
Nein, nein. Wir haben das Gras aus den Säcken rausgenommen. Also eine Konstruktion aus Ästen gemacht, die wir zusammengebunden haben. Also so und so und so und so, dann haben wir in Längsrichtung, also so, wenn das so dasteht, so Schnüre gespannt. Und da haben wir dann unten anfangend das Gras so drüber gebogen. Kannst du dir das vorstellen, so drüber biegen, drüber biegen, drüber biegen...

00:15:31 VMF:
Cool!

00:15:35 MB:
Ja eh!

00:15:35 VMF:
Und das habt ihr euch selber überlegt?

00:15:41 MB:
Na das haben wir uns selber überlegt. Also mein Freund der Thomas und ich ... die hießen übrigens alle Pilli, der kleine Pilli, der mittlere Pitti und der große Pilli. Also beim Vornamen haben wir uns nicht genannt. Und wir waren die Baumis. Ich hab gleich nach der Matura Architektur studiert, für ein, zwei Semester. Dann habe ich gewusst, ich will nicht Architekt werden.

00:12:47 VMF:
But that was a...

00:12:48 MB:
It was boys’ games. There was only one girl in the house. She was our squaw – the youngest one.

00:13:00 VMF:
Okay. And could you maybe talk more about that grass hut – how those constructions worked?

00:13:09 MB:
Yeah, that grass hut was in the garden – not in the woods – so it was pretty well protected from attacks, because the others were always afraid of the adults in the house. It looked very African, funnily enough. But it was what we imagined an Indian or woodsman would build to stay dry. It stood for a long time. I remember my aunt visiting and saying: “What is that? It looks like a haystack!” But it worked really well. We even slept in it.

And the second structure I remember was much bigger. We called it the Indian fort. It was fortified all around – not with palisades but with stumps, tree stumps that we dug up or found and laid around the perimeter. And we had a pretty tall lookout tower – in our minds it was crucial to be able to see the enemy coming. Just behind the house, the forest began and rose up steeply. We built it at the top of that hill. I still love that area to this day. When I go back to Rosenburg – I hike a lot – I once went on a walk to try and find those old spots. And interestingly, I actually did find them, even though the path system there is really winding. You get these flashes – like: that was it. And how small it all looks now! Back then it felt enormous.

00:14:58 VMF:
I still can’t quite picture it. That grass hut – you said you filled sacks?

00:15:05 MB:
No, no. We took the grass out of the sacks. We built a frame out of branches that we tied together – like this and this and this. Then we strung cords across lengthwise. And starting from the bottom, we bent the grass over them like this – can you picture it? Bent it over, bent it over...

00:15:31 VMF:
Cool!

00:15:35 MB:
Yeah, totally!

00:15:35 VMF:
And you came up with that yourselves?

00:15:41 MB:
Yes, we figured it out on our own. My friend and I... by the way, they were all called Pilli – little Pilli, middle Pilli, big Pilli. We didn’t use first names. And we were the Baumis. Right after high school, I studied architecture for a semester or two. Then I realized I didn’t want to be an architect.

00:16:20 VMF:
Okay, also ihr hattet die so… dann so… aber wie? Wie habt ihr das geschafft, dass die stehen geblieben sind?

00:16:29 MB:
Naja, das waren vorn und hinten so ein Ding und dann längs drüber oben ein First. Und dann noch ein paar Verstrebungen und weiß ich nicht mehr so genau. Also nach hinten. Einfacher wäre es, ich zeichne es dir auf…

00:16:45 VMF:
Einfach ein Dach quasi?

00:16:48 MB:
Also es war ein Dach. Ja, im Prinzip ein Dreiecks-Gebäude. Ja, in den 70er Jahren ist ja diese Mode aufgekommen, mit solchen Häusern. Manchmal sieht man sie noch. Kennst du das? Die einfach nur aus Dach bestanden.

00:17:04 VMF:
Gab es ein Fenster auch?

00:17:08 MB:
Ein Fenster nach vorn war offen, hinten war zu, vorne war offen. Eine relativ kleine Öffnung, wo man dann rein kriechen konnte.

00:17:16 VMF:
Und wie hoch war‘s ungefähr?

00:17:21 MB:
So schon.

00:17:22 VMF:
Also ihr konntet stehen in der Mitte?

00:17:22 MB:
Na stehen konnten wir nicht, oder? Weiß ich nimmer. Wie groß das Hüttl war. War also von jetzt aus gesehen für Kinder groß. Aber wenn ich‘s sehen würde, wäre es wahrscheinlich klein.

00:17:39 VMF:
Und das andere, war das die gleiche Technik?

00:17:42 MB:
Nein, der Hochstand war auch ziemlich professionell. Ich muss dazusagen, als ich sechs war und die Pillis ein bisschen älter, sind wir alle nach Gars zu den Pfadfindern gekommen und dann war das natürlich extrem professionalisiert. Auch unsere Spiele – die dann aber bald aufgehört haben, weil es jeden Samstag dort die Heimstunde gab, da mussten wir mit dem Zug hinfahren. Am Anfang war das schon ein Abenteuer: Boa krieg ich diese alte Zugtüre auf – das war zu schwer für Sechsjährige.

00:18:15 VMF:
Und wie habt ihr das andere gebaut?

00:18:19 MB:
Wie gesagt, so ein relativ großer Kreis aus Baumstrünken mit Ästen und Zweigen, mit einem Eingang. Ich weiß nicht, ob der irgendwie auch zum aufzumachen war. Und da gab es dann einen Baum, der sehr geeignet war, seitlich an dem Ring. Und da haben wir aus geraden Ästen so eine Plattform gebaut, wo man dann raufklettern konnte, alles ohne Nägel, nur mit Schnüren und Seilen. Ich weiß nicht, ob das schon in der Pfadfinder-Zeit war, weil da lernt man das ja. Oder vielleicht waren die älteren Buben schon bei den Pfadfindern? Das weiß ich nicht mehr.

00:19:05 VMF:
Also ein Ring aus Strünken und über dem Ring drüber war diese Plattform.

00:16:20 VMF:
So you had it like… but how? How did you manage to make it stable?

00:16:29 MB:
Well, there was a structure at the front and back, then a ridge beam running along the top, plus a few supports. I don’t remember exactly. Maybe I should just draw it for you…

00:16:45 VMF:
So basically a roof?

00:16:48 MB:
Yes, basically a triangle-shaped building. Those were all the rage in the 70s – you still see houses like that sometimes. Just a roof, basically.

00:17:04 VMF:
Did it have a window?

00:17:08 MB:
The front was open, the back was closed. There was a small opening you could crawl through.

00:17:16 VMF:
And how tall was it?

00:17:21 MB:
About this high.

00:17:22 VMF:
Could you stand in the middle?

00:17:22 MB:
No, I don’t think so. I can’t really remember how big the hut was. From today’s perspective, it was big for kids. But if I saw it now, I’d probably think it was small.

00:17:39 VMF:
And the other one – did you use the same technique?

00:17:42 MB:
No, the lookout was pretty professional. I should say: when I was six, and the Pillis were a bit older, we all joined the scouts in Gars. That’s when everything got way more professional – also our games. But they stopped pretty soon after that, because we had meetings every Saturday and had to take the train to get there. At first it was an adventure – like, can I even get this old train door open? It was too heavy for a six-year-old.

00:18:15 VMF:
And how did you build the other one?

00:18:19 MB:
Like I said, we made a large circle out of stumps and branches, with an entrance. I don’t know if it had a proper door. And then there was a tree beside the circle that was perfect. We used straight branches to build a platform you could climb up to – all without nails, just ropes and cords. I’m not sure if we were already in the scouts by then – because that’s where you learn that stuff. Maybe the older boys were already scouts? I don’t remember.

00:19:05 VMF:
So a ring of stumps, and the platform was on top of that ring?

00:19:11 MB:
Nein, die Plattform war auf den Ästen vom Baum. Also der Kreis, ich kann es schwer sagen, in der Erinnerung hat der ein paar Meter Durchmesser.

00:19:25 VMF:
Ah, der war nach oben offen?

00:19:26 MB:
Offenbar war da geplant, dass wir wieder Hütten bauen oder so. Das ist aber glaube ich nicht passiert. Daran kann ich mich nicht erinnern. Aber ich kann mich an die Intention mit den Strünken rundherum erinnern, dass das ein geschützter Bereich sein sollte, wo dann das Dorf oder was auch immer, eine Mauer, einen Schutzwall hat...

00:19:51 VMF:
Du hast eh gesagt: Ein Fort.

00:19:51 MB:
Ja, da war es gar nicht so einfach raufzuklettern. Und genau das war das, was ich verraten habe in meiner Angst. Die anderen haben es komplett zerstört. Also Schnüre durchgeschnitten, alles durcheinander gehauen. Die Plattform kaputt gemacht und so. Kannst dir vorstellen, dass meine Indianer-Kollegen und Kolleginnen ziemlich sauer waren, weil es war sicher wochenlange Arbeit, das ganze Ding. Aber es war eine wilde Land-Kinder-Kindheit. Die ich nicht missen mag. Mit allen Ängsten und Gefahren und so, einfach von heute aus gesehen. Die ein Kind wachsen lassen. Wie auch immer.

00:20:46 VMF:
Aber hättest du jetzt das Gefühl... wenn du da jetzt dazustoßen könntest, zu dieser Indianerbande, als Erwachsener. Mit dem, was du jetzt vielleicht als Künstler auch gelernt oder dir angeeignet hast oder so, kannst du da überhaupt irgendwie... also ich meine, das hört sich so professionell an, wie ihr da diese Architekturen geschaffen habt. Vielleicht ist‘s eher andersrum? Was glaubst du... oder was glaubst du, worüber würdet ihr Euch unterhalten?

00:21:33 MB:
Was wolltest du sagen, wie du abgebrochen hast? Ob ich interessanter finde, was ich als Kind künstlerisch gemacht habe als jetzt?

00:21:40 VMF:
Nein, nein, nein, nein. Ob du also so vielleicht...

00:21:45 MB:
Ist schon eine interessante Frage,

00:21:47 VMF:
Ja mal so rein technisch auch...

00:21:48 MB:
Ob da was verloren geht oder so.

00:21:51 VMF:
Ob du so quasi wenn jetzt... in welche Richtung wäre die Frage?

00:21:57 MB:
Mit meiner Tochter und ihren Freunden. Ich habe sehr lang, bis vor 12 Jahren, ein Haus am Land gehabt und da gab‘s besonders eine Familie, mit der wir befreundet waren. Die hatten drei Kinder. Meine Tochter ist ein Einzelkind und war ständig bei ihnen. Und ich habe mit denen sehr viel gemacht. Dieses Hüttenbauen hab ich da wieder aufleben lassen. Laubhütten, das war so ein Lieblingsspiel.

00:19:11 MB:
No, the platform was in the tree branches, off to the side of the ring. The circle – it’s hard to say – in my memory, it was a few meters in diameter.

00:19:25 VMF:
Ah, it was open at the top?

00:19:26 MB:
Apparently we had plans to build more huts or something, but I don’t think we ever did. I don’t remember that part. But I do remember the intention behind the ring of stumps – to create a protected area, like a village, or a wall, or a defense perimeter...

00:19:51 VMF:
You said: A fort.

00:19:51 MB:
Yeah, and it really wasn’t easy to climb up there. And that’s exactly what I gave away in my fear. The others completely destroyed it. Cut the ropes, messed everything up, broke the platform and all that. You can imagine my fellow „Indians“ were pretty mad – because it had taken weeks to build. But it was a wild country childhood. One I wouldn’t trade for anything. With all the fear and danger and all that. Looking back, it was just the kind of thing that helps a kid grow. However you look at it.

00:20:46 VMF:
But do you think... if you could join that group of “Indians” again now, as an adult – with what you’ve learned and picked up as an artist – do you think you could even... I mean, it sounds like you were pretty professional in how you built those structures. Or maybe it’s the other way around? What do you think... or what do you think you‘d talk about?

00:21:33 MB:
What were you about to say before you stopped? Were you going to ask if I find what I did artistically as a kid more interesting than what I do now?

00:21:40 VMF:
No, no, no, no. I meant maybe...

00:21:45 MB:
It’s an interesting question.

00:21:47 VMF:
Just technically speaking too...

00:21:48 MB:
Like, is something lost, or something like that.

00:21:51 VMF:
If now... which direction was I going with this...

00:21:57 MB:
With my daughter and her friends... until about twelve years ago I had a house in the country, and there was one family we were especially close to. They had three kids. My daughter is an only child and spent all her time with them. And we did a lot together. I revived that whole hut-building thing. Leaf huts were a favorite game.

Über Jahre haben wir da immer wieder jeden Sommer, oder war es eher schon Herbst, an einer Stelle an einer Hütte weitergebaut, mit Ästen, mit Laub drauf. Ganz ähnlich wie diese Strohhütte, nur mit Laub. Das hab‘ ich sogar mal für eine Freundin, die bei mir im Haus einen Teil gemietet hatte, die Tänzerin ist, die Barbara Kraus hat mal bei mir so eine Laubhütte als Performance-Setting bestellt. Und ich hab ihr das gebaut. Ich hab im Waldviertel gleich die die Äste und Prügel und so aufs Autodach gepackt und bin dann ins Mostviertel gefahren. Und hab ihr da diese Laubhütte gebaut.

00:23:13 VMF:
Dann kamen aber keine Cowboys und haben‘s auseinandergenommen?

00:23:16 MB:
Na, da kam der Pfarrer, das war ein sehr interessantes Erlebnis, was die Wirkung von Kunst betrifft. Und zwar war – wie hat denn das geheißen... Reinsberg. Iris Andraschek and Hubert Lobnig haben da über Jahre immer wieder so ein Kunst-Event veranstaltet. Kurse, Künstler. Sie haben kuratiert, haben Künstler eingeladen zu einem bestimmten Thema und die haben dort in dem Dorf was gemacht. Das ist ein kulturell engagiertes Dorf. Die haben da so eine Freiluft-Opernbühne in der Ruine über dem Dorf. Ja und die Barbara Kraus hat da was gemacht. Erstens war sie unter Plastik nackt und hat eine Schnecke gespielt. Ich habe ihr ja meinen Garten im Waldviertel übergeben, weil es mir zu blöd geworden ist mit den Schnecken. Aber sie war auch nicht so oft da. Jedes Mal, wenn sie gekommen ist, waren die Salatpflanzen wieder aufgefressen. Also das Performance-Setting bestand aus dieser Laubhütte und ganz viel Salat. Ich glaub hundert Salatköpfe. Und sie war die Schnecke. Und mitten in der Performance tritt da der Pfarrer, so ein Landpfarrer, so ein fetter megaknorriger Schlossherr, auf dem Kirchplatz gleich neben der Kirche auf und hat das Ganze gesprengt. „Das ist eine unglaubliche Gotteslästerung!“ so irgendwie. Die Dorfbewohner waren ganz verdattert, das war so Huch! Und die Barbara hat dann einfach weitergespielt. Das war echt extrem Wahnsinn. Hat sich in die Laubhütte zurückgezogen und war nicht mehr ansprechbar. Hat nur so Pieps-Töne von sich gegeben. Ich glaube, da war sehr viel improvisiert bei dem, was sie gemacht hat, aber ziemlich gut. Aber die Kuratoren haben dann echt gefürchtet, dass das nie wieder stattfinden kann, dort. Es hat dann noch einmal stattgefunden, aber es waren fünf Jahre Pause, weil die, die das unterstützt haben, irgendwie Angst gehabt haben, dass sie dann den ganzen Ort gegen sich haben, wenn nochmal so was passiert. Weil das natürlich über Wochen Gesprächsthema war. Und auch die 50 oder 100 Salatköpfe, kann man doch nicht einfach wegschmeißen, hat man gesagt. Tun wir eh nicht, da kann sich jeder so viel mitnehmen, wie er mag und so.

00:26:08 VMF:
Gut, dass sie nicht die Kugeln von deinem Großvater hatten! Und euch beschlossen haben.

00:26:17 MB:
Ja. Ich habe die Geschichte sehr präzis gehört dann von den beiden, weil ich mit denen befreundet bin. Von Kuratorin und Kurator. Ich war nicht Künstler, sondern... ich habe auch Bühnenbild studiert, allerdings nie ausgeübt. Das war das einzige Mal, wo ich sowas in die Richtung gemacht habe. Das war das Performance-Setup. Im Freien. Na ja, die Barbara hat gesehen, wie ich mit der Lenka und ihren Freunden diese Laubhütten gebaut hab und hat gesagt: Genau das will ich auch haben. Mach‘ mir sowas!

An den ersten Ort meiner Kindheit bin ich zurückgegangen, mit achtzehn. Das ist Krumau am Kamp. Da

Over several years, every summer – or maybe it was more autumn – we kept building on a hut in the same spot. With branches, covered in leaves. Very similar to that straw hut, just with leaves. I even once built one for a friend who rented part of my house – she’s a dancer. Barbara Kraus asked me to build a leaf hut as a performance setting. And I built it for her. Loaded up all the branches and sticks from the Waldviertel onto my car roof and drove to the Mostviertel and built it for her.

00:23:13 VMF:
But no cowboys came and tore it down?

00:23:16 MB:
No, but the priest did. That was a very interesting experience in terms of the impact of art. It was at this event – what was it called... Reinsberg. Iris Andraschek and Hubert Lobnig have been organizing this art event for years. Courses, artists. They curated, invited artists around a certain theme, and they did projects in the village. It’s a culturally active place. They even have an open-air opera stage in the ruins above the village. Barbara Kraus did a piece there. First of all, she was naked under plastic and played a snail. I had given her my garden in the Waldviertel because I was fed up with the snails. But she didn’t come often. Every time she did, the lettuce was eaten again. So the performance setting was this leaf hut and a bunch of lettuce. I think a hundred heads. And she was the snail. And right in the middle of the performance, the priest – a really big, gnarly land-priest-castle-lord kind of guy – comes marching out onto the church square and crashes the whole thing. “This is outrageous blasphemy!” Something like that. The villagers were completely baffled, like “whoa!” And Barbara Kraus just kept performing. Totally intense. She retreated into the hut and stopped responding to anyone. Just made these little squeaking noises. I think a lot of her performance was improvised, but it was really good. But the curators were seriously afraid it would never happen there again. It did, but only after a five-year break, because the sponsors were scared the whole village would turn against them if anything like that happened again. It was the talk of the town for weeks. And also the lettuce! People were like, “You can’t just throw away a hundred heads of lettuce.” So we said: No worries, take as much as you want.

00:26:08 VMF:
Good thing they didn’t have your grandfather’s bullets and lock you all up.

00:26:17 MB:
Yeah. I heard the full story directly from the two curators – they’re friends. I wasn’t involved as an artist. I studied stage design but never worked in the field. That was the only time I did anything close to it. The performance setup, outdoors. Barbara Kraus had seen me build those huts with L and her friends and said: That’s exactly what I want. Build me one!

hat eben mein Großvater eine kleine Mühle gehabt, die schon nicht mehr in Betrieb war, wie ich auf die Welt gekommen bin und ein kleines Sägewerk, das er noch lang betrieben hat. So eine Bauernsäge, superschönes Haus. Und es gab ein Ausgedinge. Das haben wir immer vermietet. Und ab da, wo ich das quasi genutzt hab, hab ich immer geschaut, dass das gute Leute sind, die da quasi über einen gemeinsamen Hof auch das als Ferien-Mietshaus nutzen.

00:27:37 VMF:
Gibt‘s das noch?

00:27:38 MB:
Das Haus gibts noch. Das hab ich vor 13 Jahren verkauft und zwar nach dem Hochwasser von 2002, da ist ziemlich viel kaputt gegangen. Das hat mir dann so weh getan, dass ich gesagt hab: Ich will nicht mehr. Außerdem wars für meine finanziellen Möglichkeiten einfach nicht haltbar. Also da hätte ich irgendetwas damit machen müssen, irgendwas erzeugen dort oder so. Das hätte Geld verdienen müssen und das wollte ich nicht, weil dann wäre ich weg gewesen von der Kunst und das wollte ich auch nicht. So Atelier-mäßig genial. Ja, das hat 450 Quadratmeter Wohnfläche gehabt und noch extra so Mühl-Böden, wo ich immer im Sommer mein Atelier hatte. Riesiges Sommer-Atelier, auf drei Geschoßen. Bei dem Hochwasser ist auch viel von meinem Zeug kaputt gegangen. Also fast alles, was es vor dieser Zeit gab, war schon verkauft, Gott sei Dank. Fast alles andere ist kaputt gegangen.
Es ist auch interessant zum Thema Kindheit. Als das Wasser gestiegen ist, das ist in der Küche bis zum Hals gegangen. Und wie es so wadenhoch war, bin ich… ich bin immer wieder reingegangen, durch eine höher gelegene hintere Tür rausgegangen, dann bin ich dringestanden und hab einen Lachanfall gekriegt und hab mir gedacht: Was ist wichtig? Was nimmst du jetzt mit? Und ich ziehe die Fotos von meiner Tochter so aus dem… eh schon so viel unter Wasser. Das war echt schiach, heftig. Meine Tochter hat nur gelacht. Die war sieben, wie das war. Ist gekommen aus Italien mit ihrer Mutter, hat gelacht. Papa, jetzt kannst du innen schwimmen. Tu dir nichts an. So auf die Art.

00:29:46 VMF:
Eh, es ist ja auch so ein Kindertraum, nicht…

00:29:52 MB:
Für meine Tochter ist es jetzt ganz schwer, dass ich das verkauft habe. Ich habe es verkauft, wie sie 13 war, und da hat sie das überhaupt nicht interessiert. Da wollte sie nicht mehr raus. Diese Familie mit ihren besten Freunden ist weggezogen. Aber jetzt hätte sie es gern mit 26!

00:30:16 VMF:
Aber ich finde es spannend: Bei den Sachen, die du erzählst, geht es ja immer um diese Raumerfahrung. Also sowohl bei deiner künstlerischen Arbeit, mit der du angefangen hast und dann das Fort und die Grashütte…

00:30:32 MB:
Was ich mach hat sehr viel mit Architektur zu tun, aber auch mit dem Blick, mit interpersoneller Wahrnehmung heißt es in der Psychologie. So im Grenzbereich zur Soziologie. Also einfach Zack, da ist wer.

I went back to the place of my childhood when I was eighteen. That’s Krumau am Kamp. My grandfather had a little mill there – already out of use when I was born – and a small sawmill that he ran for quite a while. A rustic sawmill, a beautiful house. There was also a retirement home on the property that we always rented out. And once I started using it, I made sure it went to good people. They shared the yard and used it as a holiday rental.

00:27:37 VMF:
Is it still there?

00:27:38 MB:
The house is, yeah. I sold it thirteen years ago – after the 2002 flood. A lot got damaged, and it hurt too much. I said, “I’m done.” And financially, it just wasn’t sustainable anymore. I would’ve had to make it into something productive. It would‘ve had to generate income, and I didn’t want that, because then I’d have had to move away from art, and I didn’t want that either. But as an atelier, it was amazing. 450 square meters of living space, plus the old mill floors, where I had my summer studio. A huge studio across three floors. The flood ruined a lot of my stuff. Luckily, almost everything from before that time had already been sold. But nearly everything else got destroyed.

It’s interesting in relation to childhood. When the water kept rising – it reached up to my chest in the kitchen – I kept going in through a higher back entrance, and once I stood there and just started laughing. I thought: What’s important? What do you take with you? I pulled out the photos of my daughter – already half underwater. It was really intense. My daughter just laughed. She was seven. She came from Italy with her mom and laughed: “Papa, now you can swim indoors. Don’t be upset.” Something like that.

00:29:46 VMF:
It’s kind of a childhood dream, right?

00:29:52 MB:
It’s really hard for my daughter now that I sold it. She was thirteen then and couldn’t have cared less. Didn’t want to go there anymore. That family with her best friends had moved away. But now she’s twenty-six – and she wishes she still had it.

00:30:16 VMF:
What I find interesting is that all these stories you tell are about spatial experiences. In your artistic work too – starting with that fort, the grass hut…

00:30:32 MB:
What I do has a lot to do with architecture, but also with perception – with interpersonal perception, as they call it in psychology. Sort of bordering on sociology. Like, boom, there’s someone.

00:30:55 VMF:
Ja, es wäre jetzt auch im Kampf gegen die verfeindeten Banden eigentlich keine so schlechte...

00:31:05 MB:
Ich muss sagen, ich war immer ein sehr schüchternes Kind.

00:31:07 VMF:
... sich untereinander einen Spiegel hinhalten und sie erschrecken vor sich selber ist eigentlich eine gute Strategie...

00:31:14 MB:
Einander im Spiegel anschauen ist auch so eine Strategie, die die Angst nimmt vor einer Begegnung. Diese Lacan-Geschichte, die angeblich widerlegt ist, das Spiegelstadium, das kennst du wahrscheinlich. Dieses „ich ist ein anderer“, also das Kinder in einem bestimmten Alter, wenn sie sich zum ersten Mal im Spiegel sehen, sehen sie einen anderen...

00:31:37 VMF:
„Ich bin ja gar nicht die Mama!“

00:31:39 MB:
So genau. Gute Geschichte, aber stimmt wahrscheinlich so nicht. Naja, ich glaube ganz wichtig ist... also ich bin heilfroh, dass ich das geschafft habe, in meinem Leben wenigstens ein Kind zu haben, ein eigenes, weil du damit die eigene Kindheit und das Wahrnehmen der Welt nochmal erlebst als Erwachsener, das ist das ganz Essenzielle am Kinder haben. Also ich will es nicht zu sehr verallgemeinern, aber für mich war es absolut so, und ich habe viel mit Freunden geredet und wir haben da übereingestimmt. Das ist das Tolle. Weil du über das eigene Kind auf dich selber noch einmal zurückgeworfen bist, in diesem die-Welt-sehen, Staunen. Ich arbeite im Kindermuseum am liebsten mit den unter Sechsjährigen vor der Schule. Die Leben so in einer magischen Welt und da hole ich mir so viel. Deswegen auch diese blöde Frage am Anfang von mir, ob du jetzt meinst, ob man sowas wie einen Verlust an künstlerischem Potenzial erlebt, auch wenn man Künstlerin oder Künstler wird als erwachsene Person. Das glaube ich schon. Ich glaube, das sind die größten Künstler. Also grad bis sie in die Schule kommen, dann fzzzz...., dann wird‘s ihnen so raus... nicht geprügelt, aber rausgezwungen. Ich mein, der Aufnahmetest für Schule ist, zeichne ein Haus, einen Baum und einen Zaun und eine Sonne. Manche Kinder, die so aus Kindergruppen kommen, haben mir erzählt, sie haben das verweigert, sie haben sich umgedreht: Das mach ich nicht. Ich will zeichnen, was ich will.

00:33:37 VMF:
Ja total, also es war schon... ich hab nur nicht so ganz gewusst, wie ich die Frage stellen soll. Also wenn du dir jetzt diese Situation vorstellst: wer hätte dem anderen mehr zu sagen, du dir als Kind oder das Kind dir?

00:34:14 MB:
Naja, am schönsten wärs, wenn‘s auf Augenhöhe passiert.

00:34:17 VMF:
Ja, also ich rede von dir...

00:34:21 MB:
Ich meine, im Kindermuseum ist das schwieriger. Weil Du gleichzeitig ja... bei sowieso ist es schön. Wir haben von Anfang an gesagt, das funktioniert nur, wenn es eine 1:1 Begleitung gibt. Wir nennen das auch gar nicht Betreuung, sondern Begleitung und reden davon, dass wir gemeinsam eine Reise machen. Eine erwachsene Person und ein Kind. Und da ist es ... ich mein, klar musst du dann auch schauen, dass sich das Kind nicht verletzt oder andere verletzt oder

00:30:55 VMF:
Yeah, and in the fight against rival gangs, that’s actually not a bad...

00:31:05 MB:
I have to say, I was always a very shy child.

00:31:07 VMF:
... holding a mirror up to each other so they scare themselves – that’s actually a good tactic...

00:31:14 MB:
Looking at each other in a mirror is also a strategy – to take the fear out of a confrontation. That whole Lacan thing, which supposedly has been debunked – the mirror stage – you probably know it. That “I is another” idea, that when kids see themselves in a mirror for the first time, they think it’s someone else...

00:31:37 VMF:
“I’m not mommy!”

00:31:39 MB:
Exactly. Great story, but probably not true. But I think what’s really important... I’m just so glad I managed to have at least one child in my life. Because with a child, you get to re-experience your own childhood, your way of seeing the world, but as an adult. That’s the essence of having children. I don’t want to generalize too much, but that’s how it was for me – and I’ve talked to many friends who felt the same. That’s the magic. Your child reflects you back to yourself. I love working at the Children‘s Museum, especially with kids under six, before school. They live in this magical world, and I get so much from that. That’s why I asked that clumsy question earlier – whether becoming an artist as an adult means you lose something. I think you do. I think little kids are the greatest artists. Especially before they go to school. Then fzzzz... it gets squeezed out of them. Not beaten out, but pushed out. I mean, the school entrance test is: draw a house, a tree, a fence, and a sun. Some kids from progressive preschools told me they refused. They turned their backs and said: I don’t want to draw that. I want to draw what I want.

00:33:37 VMF:
Yeah, totally. I just didn’t quite know how to frame the question. If you imagine that situation: who would have more to say to whom – you as a child or the child to you?

00:34:14 MB:
Ideally, it would happen on equal footing.

00:34:17 VMF:
Yeah, I mean you...

00:34:21 MB:
At the Children‘s Museum, that’s harder. But at “sowieso”, it’s great. From the beginning we said: it only works if it’s a 1:1 interaction. We don’t even call it “supervision” but “accompaniment” and talk about going on a journey together – one adult and one child. Of course you have to make sure the child doesn’t get hurt, or hurts others, or seriously disturb the rest. But basically, they can do whatever they want. I love the painting workshops or the ones with clay. Where they can make a mess. Where you get really physical.

die anderen extrem stört. Aber im Grunde können sie alles machen, was sie wollen. Da sind mir auch am liebsten die Malerei-Workshops oder wie jetzt der Ton. Da kann man richtig rumsauen. Da kann man so körperlich werden.

00:35:07 VMF:
Wenn wir jetzt nochmal konkret … natürlich ist diese Augenhöhe so das Ideal. Aber wenn du dir jetzt wirklich konkret vorstellst du triffst dich da bei eurer… oder vielleicht, wir können‘s ja einmal so und einmal so machen. Einmal triffst du dich bei eurer Grashütte und einmal kommst du zu dir hier ins Atelier oder so…

00:35:34 MB:
Was ist interessanter?

00:35:35 VMF:
Ja, kannst du dir irgendwie was vorstellen? Was du dann mit dir machen würdest oder dir erzählen würdest, oder dir zeigen würdest … oder was du dich gerne fragen würdest…

00:35:53 MB:
Da wäre eine große Sehnsucht, helfen zu können. Fällt mir jetzt spontan ein, dem Kind helfen zu können und wenn es umgekehrt wäre. Ich komme hierher. Da ist auch eine Sehnsucht, dass das Kind mir hilft.

00:36:10 VMF: Wobei?

00:36:12 MB:
Wobei… ja beim die Welt aushalten.

00:36:20 VMF:
Ja und was glaubst du, was wäre das, was helfen könnte, die Welt auszuhalten?

00:36:39 MB:
Was wäre das, was helfen könnte? Halten. Halten, ja. Das ist jetzt eher Performance.

00:36:55 VMF:
So also du meinst das ganz wörtlich?

00:36:57 MB:
Ganz wörtlich ja, Halten.

00:37:03 VMF:
Die Äste halten, dass sie nicht umfallen…

00:37:10 MB:
Das Kind halten. Ja, weiß nicht. Das ist eigenartig. Das ist schon ein bisschen Seelenstriptease. Ich war ein schüchternes Kind und hab eigentlich – das hab ich als Erwachsener noch, eigenartig, dass ich mir die Arbeit im Kindermuseum aussuche – ich habe sowas wie eine Sozialphobie und fürchte mich einfach davor, vor Gruppen zu reden, tu das im Kindermuseum ja aber ständig, wo auch die Eltern dabei sind. Aber eben, ich rede mit den Kindern und nicht mit den Eltern. Das sind schon so Situationen, ich weiß nicht. Ich habe mir das nie überlegt, warum das so ist. Ich mein, ich tu mir einfach mit einem Gegenüber… ja, sobald es vier sind, fällt es mir schon schwer. Meine Arbeiten sind fast immer für eine andere Person gemacht. Da gibt‘s nur eine Ausnahme, da sind es vier oder acht. So eine kleine Gruppe. Und ich hab‘ mich in zehn Jahren Therapie da langsam herangetastet, Ich hab das lang gehabt, dass ich vor sowieso totale Ängste gehabt hab, weil viel Verantwortung und was kann alles passieren und so. Oder Reden halten vor einem Auditorium. Da sterbe ich nachts. Ich meine, ich tue es dann schon. Weil‘s zu dem Beruf auch gehört. Das hab ich als Kind auch gehabt, dass ich schon die Dinge tu, vor denen ich Angst hab. Aber es wird nicht besser. Es wird nicht wirklich besser.

00:35:07 VMF:
If we get specific again… I mean, this idea of being equals is the ideal. But if you really picture it – maybe once you meet at your grass hut, and once the kid visits you in your studio…

00:35:34 MB:
What’s more interesting?

00:35:35 VMF:
Yeah – can you imagine what you’d do together, what you’d show each other… or ask?

00:35:53 MB:
There’d be a strong desire to help. That’s what comes to mind. To help the child – and if it were the other way around, for the child to help me.

00:36:10 VMF:
With what?

00:36:12 MB:
With… dealing with the world.

00:36:20 VMF:
And what do you think would help to deal with the world?

00:36:39 MB:
What would help? Holding. Holding, yes. That’s more of a performance idea now.

00:36:55 VMF:
You mean literally?

00:36:57 MB:
Yes, quite literally. Holding.

00:37:03 VMF:
Holding the branches so they don’t fall down…

00:37:10 MB:
Holding the child. Yeah, I don’t know. It’s strange. It’s already kind of a soul striptease. I was a shy child, and I still am in a way – it’s odd that I chose to work at a Children‘s Museum. I have something like social phobia and am afraid of speaking in front of groups – though I do it all the time there, even with parents watching. But I’m talking to the children, not the parents. It’s weird, I’ve never really thought about why it’s like that. One-on-one I’m fine… but as soon as it’s four people, I struggle. My work is almost always for one person. There’s only one exception, with four or eight. A small group. And I worked my way through that slowly in ten years of therapy. I used to be terrified of “sowieso” at the beginning. So much responsibility. What could go wrong. Or giving a talk in front of an audience – those nights are awful. I still do it though. It’s part of the job. I was like that as a kid too – still did the things I feared. But it doesn’t get easier. Not really.

Ja, in die Richtung geht das „Halten“. Ich weiß nicht, es ist schwierig, über eine Künstler-Biografie zu reden, ohne… ich will das gar nicht Seelenstriptease nennen, sondern an die Substanz gehen. Also ich glaube ohne Seelenstriptease macht es nicht viel Sinn. Aber ich würde es nicht so nennen.

00:39:27 VMF:
Na ich… ich wollte damit nur sagen, ich will mit diesen Dingen… nicht jemanden… also das ist für mich einer der Outputs vielleicht, könnte man sagen, oder das, wo ich irgendwie das Gefühl hab so ein Stück weit zu einem Punkt gekommen zu sein: Wenn man darüber nachdenkt, was denn jetzt wirklich den Unterschied macht bei jemandem, der sagt ich bin Künstler oder Künstlerin. Das ist mein Beruf. Oder ich mache das professionell oder wie immer man das fassen will. Und dann ist da eben genau dieses Gefühl, dass ich auch sehr gut kenne: So irgendwie, eigentlich sind die Kinder doch die besseren Künstler. Der große Unterschied natürlich ist, dass man als professionelle Künstlerin oder Künstler zumindest bedingt irgendwo ein Bewusstsein dafür hat, was ist privat und was öffentlich und mit wem spreche ich?

00:40:32 MB:
Das gehört zum Handwerkszeug.

00:40:35 VMF:
Genau. Das ist aber für mich auch ein totaler Knackpunkt in dem, was mich da so beschäftigt. Letztendlich in dem Moment, ich arbeite jetzt zum Beispiel mit meinem kleinen Neffen und er produziert Unglaubliches für mich oder eben gerade auch in dem Miteinander kristallisieren sich Sachen heraus, die eine unglaubliche Kraft haben und die aber auch wirklich an die Substanz gehen. Und ich nehme das aus unserem privaten Kontext heraus und setze es der Öffentlichkeit aus. Also dieses …darf ich das überhaupt oder will ich das überhaupt? Und was bedeutet das?

00:41:16 MB:
Also meiner Tochter hab ich die Angst nicht nehmen können. Die hat auch Angst vor Gruppen zu reden, weicht dem lieber aus. Aber das ist überhaupt so ein spezieller Fall. Ihre Mutter ist auch Künstlerin oder hat BE und vorher Kunst studiert. Arbeitet allerdings als BE-Lehrerin. Aber unsere Tochter hat gesehen, wie schwierig das ist, was das für ein Kampf ist. Sie hat immer sehr gut gezeichnet. Sie kann viel besser zeichnen als ich. Hat nach der Matura gleich einmal Jus studiert und war in Mindeststudienzeit fertig, wo ihr ein Professor mal gesagt hat: Sie können alles, aber es interessiert Sie nicht. Warum wollen Sie Juristin werden? Sagt sie drauf unter Tränen (hat sie mir so erzählt): Meine beiden Eltern sind Künstler, sagt er drauf: Das kann ich verstehen.

Und jetzt macht sie immer noch nicht wirklich Kunst, obwohl sie eine sehr gute Künstlerin sein könnte. Sie hat Grafik und Werbung studiert, wo es auch noch so eine Sicherheit gibt. Ja, und ich habe mich auch langsam bei den Studien vorgetastet. Ich habe zuerst Architektur gemacht, dann Bühnen- und Filmgestaltung. Beides nicht fertig – und dann Bildhauerei. Und erst wie ich rausgeflogen bin aus der Bühnenbild Klasse, weil ich Kunst gemacht hab und nicht Bühnenbild, habe ich gewusst: Jetzt mach ich endlich das, was ich will. Was ich von Anfang an wollte. Das sind natürlich immer so Geschichten mit den Eltern, die dich finanzieren.

00:42:55 VMF:
Und letztlich schon ist die Sinnfrage, oder?

So yeah, that’s what the “holding” is about. And it’s hard to talk about an artist’s biography without… I don’t want to call it soul striptease, more like: going to the core. I think if you don’t go to the core, it’s not worth it. But I wouldn’t call it that.

00:39:27 VMF:
I just meant – I don’t want to… for me that’s actually one of the key questions. Like, what really makes the difference when someone says, “I’m an artist. That’s my profession.” And there’s that feeling – I know it well too – like, actually, kids are the better artists. The real difference is: as a professional artist, you have at least some sense of what’s private and what’s public. And who you‘re talking to.

00:40:32 MB:
That’s part of the craft.

00:40:35 VMF:
Exactly. That’s actually the crux of it, for me. Like, I’m working with my little nephew right now, and he creates amazing stuff – or it’s the interaction where something powerful emerges. And it really goes deep. And I take it out of our private context and expose it to the public. And I keep asking myself: Can I do that? Do I want to do that? And what does it mean?

00:41:16 MB:
I couldn’t take that fear away from my daughter. She’s also afraid of speaking in front of groups, avoids it. But she’s kind of a special case. Her mom is also an artist – studied arts education and fine arts. But she works as a teacher. And our daughter saw how hard it is – what a struggle it is. She was always really good at drawing. Much better than me. After high school, she went straight into law school and finished in minimum time. One professor told her: “You can do everything, but you’re not interested in any of it. Why do you want to be a lawyer?” And she said, in tears (that’s what she told me): “Both my parents are artists.” He replied: “Ah, I see.”

And she’s still not really doing art, even though she’d be a great artist. She studied graphic design and advertising – which still has that sense of security. I also approached my studies gradually. First architecture, then stage and film design – never finished either – then sculpture. And only when I got kicked out of the stage design program – because I was doing art, not stage design – did I know: Now I’m finally doing what I want. Of course, that‘s always the story with the parents who finance you.

00:42:55 VMF:
And ultimately, it really comes down to the question of meaning, right?

00:43:01 MB:
Ja absolut. Also als Architekt wäre ich sicher nicht glücklich geworden. Ich hab schnell gesehen, dass das Entwerfen der geringste Teil von dem Beruf ist.

00:43:13 VMF:
Aber eben, wenn du Architekt wirst, dann weißt du sehr genau, was dein Job ist und wofür du bezahlt wird. Und so als Künstlerin und Künstler, noch dazu, wenn man sich in einem Bereich bewegt, der vielleicht nicht quadratmeterweise verkauft werden kann, wird das halt einfach sehr viel schwieriger. Und eben in dem Bereich, in dem wir uns jetzt da im Kindermuseum bewegen, wird es dann nochmal schwieriger, also oder überhaupt im kollaborativen Bereich, wenn dann auch nicht mehr klar ist, wo... also gerade, wenn ich dann irgendwie versuch davon zu leben, wenn ich will, dass irgendjemand mir Geld dafür gibt, weil er oder sie irgendetwas davon hat, dann wird das alles kompliziert. Na ja. Ja schön.

00:44:13 MB:
Reichts?

00:44:13 VMF:
Ja auf jeden Fall, also danke für das schöne Gespräch.

00:44:21 MB:
Gern! Danke dir fürs Interesse. Kann dir noch eine Arbeit zeigen, die viel mit Kindheit oder mit meiner Kindheit zu tun hat. Wenn du magst hier drinnen...

00:44:31 VMF: Soll ich‘s noch kurz laufen lassen?
00:44:36 MB: Wie du magst.

00:44:38 VMF:
Es ist eigentlich immer so, dass man, wenn man ausschaltet, dann kommt das Eigentliche...

00:44:44 MB:
Das ist diese Arbeit, dieses Kasperltheater. Schau her. Schaut so aus. Das war der Titel der Ausstellung. Ja, es steht so im Raum und es sind 4 Bänke da. Und wenn du jetzt da reinschaust, und rundherum sitzen vier Leute, passiert das.... und das taugt Kindern auch. Damit jeder weiß, wo er herkommt. Das Kaspertheater für Kinder.

00:45:29 VMF:
Der rote Vorhang.

00:45:36 MB:
Na sagen muss man da ja nichts dazu. Ich meine, das ist auch eine Methode, die man kompakt leichter macht oder auf eine andere Weise auch schwierig oder auf eine andere Ebene führt. Weil so grad anschauen tut man sich im normalen Leben nicht.

00:45:53 VMF: Ja, stimmt.

00:45:54 MB:
Und man sieht sich ja auch selber schauen, weil der Spiegel kommt ja auch auf einen selber zurück.

00:46:00 VMF:
Aber ach so, den direkt gegenüber sehe ich halt dann, immer wenn‘s...

00:46:05 MB:
kurz, kurz...

00:46:05 VMF:
...aber ohne...

00:46:07 MB:
Ohne Spiegel.

00:43:01 MB:
Yeah, absolutely. I definitely wouldn’t have been happy as an architect. I quickly realized that designing is actually the smallest part of the job.

00:43:13 VMF:
Right, but when you become an architect, you know exactly what your job is and what you‘re getting paid for. But as an artist – especially in a field that can’t be sold by the square meter – it just gets way more complicated. And in the area we’re working in here, like the Children‘s Museum – or collaborative art in general – it becomes even harder, especially when it‘s not clear anymore where... I mean, if I want to make a living off of it, if I want someone to pay me because they’re getting something out of it, then it all becomes very complicated. Yeah. Well.

00:44:13 MB:
Is that enough?

00:44:13 VMF:
Yes, definitely – thank you for this lovely conversation.

00:44:21 MB:
My pleasure! Thanks for your interest. I can show you one more piece that has a lot to do with childhood – or my childhood, actually. If you want, it‘s in here...

00:44:31 VMF:
Should I keep the recorder running?

00:44:36 MB:
Up to you.

00:44:38 VMF:
It’s always like that – you turn it off, and then the real stuff comes out...

00:44:44 MB:
This is the piece, a puppet theatre. Take a look. That was the title of the exhibition. It’s just set up in the room like this, with four benches around it. And if you look in, with four people sitting around it, then this happens... and kids really like it too. It’s about everyone knowing where they come from. A puppet theatre for kids.

00:45:29 VMF:
The red curtain.

00:45:36 MB:
Yeah, and you don’t have to say anything. I mean, that’s also a method of simplifying things – or making them more complex in a different way, or lifting them to another level. Because people don’t usually look at each other like that in everyday life.

00:45:53 VMF:
True.

00:45:54 MB:
And you also see yourself looking, because the mirror reflects back at you too.

00:46:00 VMF:
Oh right, so I’m seeing the person directly across from me every time...

00:46:05 MB:
...just briefly, briefly...

00:46:05 VMF:
...but without...

00:46:07 MB:
Without a mirror.

00:46:12 VMF:
Super! Na, dann mach ich das hier mal aus. Vielen Dank!

00:46:15 MB:
Bitte gerne.

00:00:03 VMF:
Also du meinst, dass Kinder und Künstler unterscheidet, dass Kinder auf Virtuosität noch nicht so aus sind, hast Du vorher gesagt, glaube ich?

00:00:10 MB:
Ja ich glaub, dass sie gar nicht wissen, was das ist. Ja, dass man das im Erwachsenwerden lernt, das zu bewundern und im Kunststudium umso mehr, werden einem so Vorbilder hergestellt–hingestellt. Ich kann mit Virtuosität nicht viel anfangen, stößt mich eher ab. Mich interessiert es da, wo es rauh ist. Rauh und einfach und nicht virtuos. Kinder sind keine Virtuosen. Klar kann man behaupten, sie seien virtuos, wenn man sie so betrachtet, wie man Kunst von Künstlern anschaut. Ich glaube, das hat nichts miteinander zu tun.

00:00:52 VMF:
Das letztlich ist auch der Unterschied in der Motivation und dann der Blick drauf, oder? Ja, weil ich meine, jetzt so im Rückblick, haben wir eure Grashütten irgendwie als Kunstwerke betrachtet. Und aber das war ja überhaupt nicht Eure Motivation. Naja, es war Spiel und es war irgendwie Schutz gegen die Feindesbande...

00:01:15 MB:
Genau gegen die Feindesbande oder gegen den Regen oder was auch immer. Schon interessant, die Bauwerke an die ich mich erinnert hab, sind beides Schutzbauten.

00:01:28 VMF:
...und dann wahrscheinlich einfach auch Spaß.

00:01:31 MB:
So einfach am Tun. Und dann sehen, woa, das haben wir gemacht, ja. Na, das ist schon das, was mich als Künstler immer noch interessiert: boa, das hab ich gemacht.

00:01:44 VMF:
Und da geht‘s dann natürlich schon wieder... also das käme dann am nächsten zu so einer Faszination von Virtuosität, dieses...

00:01:52 MB:
...vielleicht ja, aber, aber wie gesagt, Virtuosität verkauft sich am besten, deswegen interessiert‘s mich nicht. Das ist einfach so. Leider. Ich mein, klar kann man alles als virtuos bezeichnen. Das ist ein schwieriger Begriff, finde ich. Aber das Wort Virtuosität allein macht mich baa...mag ich nicht. Vielleicht liegt es daran, dass ich nicht so gut zeichnen kann, aber trotzdem viel zeichne. Mir bleibt der Mund offen, wenn ich sehe, wie meine Tochter am iPad zeichnet. Klar, am iPad kannst du immer löschen und richtig machen. Aber trotzdem wow. Ich habe ganz früh angefangen, sie zu fördern... will ich gar nicht sagen, ihr Möglichkeiten zu geben. Sie hatte... in dem Haus gab es so einen Vorraum zum Stall. Der war auf einer Seite offen. Du kannst dir vorstellen, so einen Raum, bei dem eine Wand fehlt und von dort gehen dann Türen weg, aber man ist vor dem Regen geschützt. Da hab ich ihr ein kleines Tischchen hingestellt und Farben hatte sie eh immer vom Feinsten. Und dann hab ich verwendet, so Passepartout Kartons ohne Zeichnungen, wo die Zeichnungen schon wieder rausgenommen waren. Die hab ich ihr gegeben. Ist lustig, was sie gemacht hat. Sie hat eine Phase gehabt, da hat sie ständig Krankenhäuser gezeichnet, obwohl sie, außer bei der

00:46:12 VMF:
Awesome! Okay, I’ll stop recording here. Thanks so much!

00:46:15 MB:
You’re very welcome.

00:00:03 VMF:
So you said earlier that what separates children from artists is that children aren’t focused on virtuosity yet – right?

00:00:10 MB:
Yeah, I don’t think they even know what that is. You learn to admire that as you grow up – and even more so in art school, where these role models are placed in front of you. I don’t really care much for virtuosity. It actually puts me off. I’m more interested in where things are raw. Raw and simple and not polished. Kids aren’t virtuosos. Sure, you can say they are if you look at them the same way you look at art made by professional artists. But I don’t think those two things have anything to do with each other.

00:00:52 VMF:
In the end, it’s about motivation – and the way you view it, right? Because, looking back now, we kind of regarded your grass huts as artworks. But that wasn’t your intention at all. It was about playing, and protection from the enemy gang...

00:01:15 MB:
Exactly – either from the enemy gang or the rain or whatever. Funny though, the structures I remember most clearly were both kinds of shelters.

00:01:28 VMF:
...and probably just fun, too.

00:01:31 MB:
Yeah, just doing something. And then seeing – “Whoa, we made that.” That’s still what fascinates me most as an artist: “Wow, I made that.”

00:01:44 VMF:
And that comes pretty close to a kind of fascination with virtuosity, doesn’t it?

00:01:52 MB:
Maybe, yeah. But like I said – virtuosity sells best, which is exactly why it doesn’t interest me. That’s just how it is. Unfortunately. I mean, of course you can call anything virtuosic. It’s a tricky word, I think. But just the word “virtuosity” itself makes me go ugh – I don’t like it. Maybe it’s because I can’t draw that well, but I still draw a lot. My jaw drops when I see how my daughter draws on the iPad. Of course, on an iPad, you can always erase and redo things. But still – wow. I started encouraging her really early – well, not encouraging, more like just giving her opportunities. In the house we lived in, there was this little entryway to the stable. It was open on one side. You can picture it – a room missing one wall, with doors going off from it, but still protected from the rain. I put a little table there for her, and she always had top-quality art supplies. I used these passepartout mats that had the drawings already taken out – gave those to her. It was funny what she came up with. She had a phase where she kept drawing hospitals. Even though she’d never actually been in one, except when she was born. But it must’ve fascinated her – the sick people, I guess. She also said at the time she wanted to be a doctor or a dentist. Maybe she was scared of the dentist.

Geburt, nie im Krankenhaus war. Aber das muss sie fasziniert haben, die Kranken so. Sie hat damals auch gesagt, sie will Ärztin werden oder Zahnärztin. Vielleicht hat sie Angst vorm Zahnarzt gehabt.

00:03:41 VMF:
Ja bei Zahnarzt hab ich jetzt immer wieder drüber nachgedacht, dass das ja eigentlich ein sehr bildhauerischer Beruf ist...

00:03:43 MB:
Ja ja diese Implantate und so ja...Kronen...jaja, sehr.

00:03:52 VMF:
Oder auch die Farbe treffen?

00:03:56 MB:
Ja, ja, genau. Okay.

00:04:03 VMF:
Ja, danke dir.

00:04:04 MB:
Bitte gern.

Michael Baumgartner, geboren 1963 in Krems an der Donau, lebt und arbeitet in Wien. Studien an der Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst (Architektur, Wilhelm Holzbauer) und an der Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Bühnen- und Filmgestaltung, Erich Wonder, Bildhauerei, Bruno Gironcoli), Wien. Diplom in Bildhauerei 1989, Mag. Art.

00:03:41 VMF:
I've actually thought before – dentistry is kind of a sculptural profession...

00:03:43 MB:
Yeah, yeah – with the implants and all that. Crowns... yeah, definitely.

00:03:52 VMF:
And even matching the color?

00:03:56 MB:
Yeah, exactly.

00:04:03 VMF:
Well, thank you.

00:04:04 MB:
My pleasure.

Michael Baumgartner, born in 1963 in Krems an der Donau, lives and works in Vienna. Studied Architecture at the University of Applied Arts Vienna (under Wilhelm Holzbauer) and Stage and Film Design (under Erich Wonder) as well as Sculpture (under Bruno Gironcoli) at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Graduated with a degree in Sculpture in 1989 (Mag. Art.).

(Explanatory) Notes and References

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“Indianerbande”

In the 1970s, playing “Cowboys and Indians” was a common childhood game in Austria and Germany. While problematic from today’s perspective, it is included here to preserve the authenticity of the spoken reflection. We acknowledge its implications, but have chosen to critically contextualize rather than erase it.

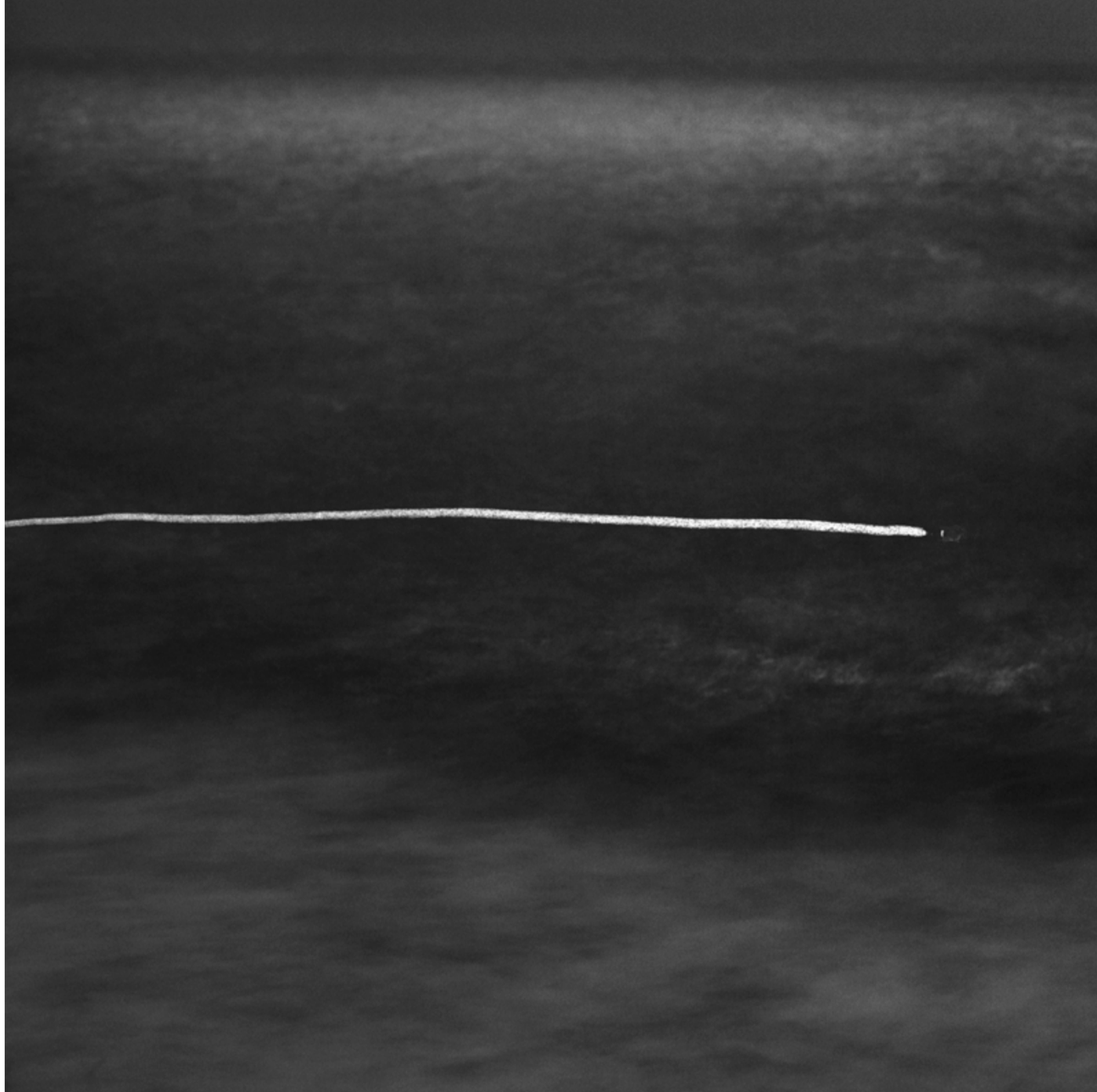
The Pillis and the Rebenbauers

The names have been changed to protect the identities of those involved.

so-wie-so!

“sowieso” is an association that organizes artistic workshops for children with and without disabilities. Each child is accompanied by an artist. Michael is a founding member of “sowieso.”
https://www.so-wie-so.org
(Accessed: 29 September 2025).

always
finish your fear
up to the very
last drop, as long
as it‘s liquid.



Verena Brückner

über Sprache (er-)finden, Forschen mit Meer, schlechten Klavierunterricht, Hörspaziergänge, Hingabe, gute Fragen und Perspektivwechsel.

about discovering language, research with the sea, bad piano lessons, listening walks, devotion, good questions and changing perspectives.

Ich treffe Verena an einer Picknick-Bank im Prater. Zwischendurch kommt ein Eichhörnchen vorbei. Verena und ich kennen uns seit vielen Jahren und vielen gemeinsamen Workshops im ZOOM „Trickfilmstudio“. Außerdem haben wir eine äußerst erfolgreiche imaginäre Band zusammen.

VMF:
Kannst du da prinzipiell was anfangen mit diesem Bezug aufs Kindsein und dann deinem Kunst machen oder der Arbeit im Kindermuseum? Oder ist dir das irgendwie...

00:00:24 VB:
Also ich kann sehr viel damit anfangen. Es gibt sehr unterschiedliche Aspekte von dem Ganzen. Ich meine, so ganz frisch fange ich gleich da an, weil ich war gestern in einem Kindertheater im Dschungel und das war für Drei- bis Sechsjährige. Und ich war... ich war so glücklich. Weil einfach diese Zurückführung auf eine andere Sprache da war. Diese Sprache, die man halt als Erwachsener extra für Drei- bis Sechsjährige sucht, um was zu vermitteln oder um eine Welt entstehen zu lassen. Das war sehr schön. Es war so, wo man sich so ein bisschen verzaubern lässt. Also was mich berührt hat, war wirklich in dem Fall so eine Sprache, die es nicht gibt, die aber quasi extra für dieses Stück kreiert worden ist. Also wirklich gelernte Sprache. Aber die halt einfach nichts bedeutet.

00:01:33 VMF:
Also schon gesprochene Sprache?

00:01:34 VB:
Gesprochene Sprache.

00:01:35 VMF:
Gibberish?

00:01:36 VB:
Gibberish, aber nicht in der Improvisation, sondern richtig wirklich niedergeschrieben und gelernt. Und dadurch war das so eigentlich ganz klar. Und es gab dann so ganz wenig Wörter, die sehr nahe sind auch an unserem, an der deutschen Sprache und dann auch, was so schön war, auch diese Interaktion mit dem Publikum, dass dann die Kinder, diese Dreijährigen da drinnen sitzen oder Vierjährigen, oh die reden aber lustig! Oder: Oder boa schau und wie die sich bewegen! Die Darstellerinnen, die zwei haben sich ganz langsam bewegt und haben sich auch ganz viel immer wieder berührt. Also quasi so übereinander untereinander. Ich finde, es war so ehrlich. So ein ehrliches Dasein.

Und eben das, was ich sagen will ist, es hat so ein bisschen gezeigt, wo wir herkommen und wo wir uns hin entwickeln, auch ein bisschen. Also das wir uns ja von so einer schönen Art und Weise auch wegentwickeln, von unterschiedlichen Gegebenheiten, die wir einfach da mitkriegen in die Welt und durch diese ganze Sozialisation und Schule auch eigentlich total verbildet werden.

Und ich finde, das ist ein großer Auftrag im Kindermuseum gewesen, immer für mich. Dass die Kinder auch wirklich zu dieser Welt noch einen Zugriff bewahren oder nochmal wiederfinden. Dass sie einfach aus sich heraus, in ihrem Tempo... also ich finde, dass Zeit und Tempo ein großer Faktor sind, um sich selber wahrnehmen zu können. Also das, was da ist – dem Platz geben können und Raum geben können, auch weg von diesem ganzen wie-es-zu-sein-hat... ah... sein dürfen.

I meet Verena at a picnic bench in the Prater. At one point, a squirrel passes by. Verena and I have known each other for many years and through many shared workshops at the ZOOM “Animated Film Studio“. We also have an extremely successful imaginary band together.

00:00:00 VMF:
Can you relate to this idea of connecting your childhood with your art-making or the work at the Children‘s Museum? Or is that not really your thing...?

00:00:24 VB:
Oh, I can absolutely relate. There are so many different aspects to it. Actually, I’ll just jump right in – because just yesterday I was at a children‘s theatre piece at Dschungel, for three- to six-year-olds. And I was... I was just so happy. Because it brought us back to a different kind of language. This way of speaking that adults try to create specifically for three- to six-year-olds, to communicate something or to create a world. It was beautiful. A little magical. What really touched me was that they used a made-up language – not improvisation, but one that was actually written out and learned. It didn’t mean anything, but it was clear and purposeful.

00:01:33 VMF:
So it was spoken language?

00:01:34 VB:
Yes, spoken.

00:01:35 VMF:
Gibberish?

00:01:36 VB:
Gibberish, yes – but not improvised. It was learned, structured. And that made it really clear. There were only a few words that sounded close to German. What was beautiful too was the interaction with the audience – the kids sitting there, three- or four-year-olds saying, “Oh, they talk so funny!” or “Wow, look how they move!” The two performers moved really slowly and touched each other a lot, physically interacting – overlapping, leaning on one another. It felt so honest. Just honest presence.

And that’s really what I want to say: it showed something of where we come from, and how we grow away from that. The ways we’re shaped by society and school – it kind of ruins us.

And for me, that’s always been a huge part of working at the Children‘s Museum: helping children hold on to that world, or find their way back to it. So they can move from within themselves, at their own pace. I think time and tempo are really big factors in being able to perceive yourself. To give space to what’s there – and get away from all the “how you’re supposed to be”... just being allowed to be.

Und das ist einfach etwas total Schönes, was mich auch immer wieder in den Workshops berührt hat. Wenn du gemerkt hast, das funktioniert ein bisschen und die Leute können vergessen, dass sie irgendwie so und so ausschauen sollen, das und das sagen sollen und so und so zeichnen müssen. Und wenn sie dann einfach merken plötzlich: Ha, das ist einfach schön. Das ist stimmig. Das sind so finde ich, total tolle Momente.

Und also jetzt so betrachtet im künstlerischen Dasein mischt sich‘s halt. Weil ich meine, also wenn man es als künstlerischen Auftrag sieht, könnte man sagen: Das ist doch die Brücke, wo man einerseits ehrlich sein will, also Ehrlichkeit ganz wichtig und ganz voran, und auch diesen Bruch mit dieser Sozialisation eigentlich, den man irgendwo hervorprovozieren will. Um eine neue Perspektive auf das Ganze zu bekommen.

Also ich glaube, das ist schon so ein bisschen ein Auftrag, wo die Kinder total hilfreich sein können. Oder dieser Bezug zur Kindheit. Also manchmal geht‘s auch ohne. Aber ich für mich war halt gestern bei diesem Stück z.B. und auch im Kindermuseum immer wieder … wenn die Reaktion, also nicht das einfache Tun, sondern diese Interaktion mit den Kindern, da bin ich, dann öffnet sich, kann sich schnell was öffnen. Ja. Es ist ich finde eine Bereicherung, tatsächlich.

00:05:39 VMF:
Und jetzt auf dich bezogen. Wenn du dich nochmal treffen könntest. Zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt und ich weiß nicht, was jetzt ein guter Einstieg sein könnte. Ob es eher der Zeitpunkt ist oder das Alter oder vielleicht ein Ort oder, oder eine Tätigkeit. Fällt dir da was ein? Also vielleicht, wo es einen Bezug gibt zu dem, was du jetzt gesagt hast, dieses einfach Dasein und irgendwo Reagieren, mit der Welt irgendwie so in Verbindung treten. Gibt‘s da irgendwie eine Erfahrung, die da irgendwie gekoppelt ist oder so?

00:06:34 VB:
Na mir ist jetzt schon auch gleich was eingefallen. Ich weiß jetzt nicht, ob es mit der Jahreszeit grad zu tun hat und ob es überhaupt. Aber wo ich mich erinnern kann an wirklich so eine tiefe Zufriedenheit, also das war so: ich hab mich jetzt grad gesehen, wie ich am Strand, eben Kleinkindalter, also am Strand und einfach mit dem Sand, in den Sand so rein zeichnen. Na ja, man hört die Wellen rauschen, man ist nackt. Es ist es sinnlich. Die Sonne scheint. Man spürt den Wind und die Sonne, die Wärme und man weiß, die Familie ist gleich da. Ich meine, das ist so eine wahnsinnig geborgene Sache. Man zeichnet so in den Sand und vor sich hin. Und es ist total ein Tun, nicht müssen, einfach Sein. Es ist glaube ich so ein tiefstzufriedener oder akzeptierender, aber auch kreativer Moment, den ich da jetzt gerade vor mir habe, der mir da jetzt gerade gekommen ist.

00:07:58 VMF:
Ja, also vielleicht diese Geborgenheit und das andere ist aber dann eben auch dieses Spuren ziehen also ich meine, du tust ja was. Oder das ist die Frage, was dann die Grenze ist zu einem kreativen Prozess.

00:08:26 VB:
Ja voll.

00:08:27 VMF:
Weil letztlich, wenn du vorgelesen kriegst und hast die Bilder im Kopf, ist das mindestens genauso ein kreativer Prozess. Aber es ist ja schon dieses Spuren ziehen, oder? Und dann aber auch sehen, wie die Spuren… also ich stelle mir jetzt so vor, du bist ganz vorne am Wasser, wo die Wellen kommen und es immer wieder weg…

And that’s something so beautiful that keeps coming up in the workshops. When you notice it’s working, a little bit – that people can forget what they’re supposed to look like, say, or draw. And then suddenly they realize: “Wow, this just feels right. This feels good.” I think those are incredible moments.

Now, in terms of being an artist – if you see it as an artistic mission, you could say: That’s the bridge. Where you’re aiming for honesty, above all else. And wanting to break out of that social conditioning, to provoke a shift in perspective.

I do think that’s one of the big roles that children – or a connection to childhood – can play. Sometimes you can find your way there without it. But for me, yesterday at that performance for example, and also at the museum – when there’s a reaction, not just action, but real interaction with the children – that’s when something opens up. It’s a real gift.

00:05:39 VMF:
And for you personally: if you could meet yourself again at a certain point – I don’t know what would be a good starting point. Maybe it’s a specific time, or an age, or a place or activity. Is there something that comes to mind? Something that ties in with what you just said, this being present and reacting to the world?

00:06:34 VB:
Actually, yes. I don’t know if it’s the season or what, but I just remembered something where I felt really deeply at peace. I saw myself on the beach – I was little – just drawing in the sand. You can hear the waves, you’re naked, it’s sensual. The sun’s shining. You feel the warmth, the wind. You know your family’s nearby. It’s just this incredible sense of safety. You draw in the sand, completely immersed. You’re just doing, not because you have to, but because you want to. I think that was one of the most content, accepting, and also creative moments. That’s what just came to me.

00:07:58 VMF:
Yeah – maybe that feeling of safety, and also this act of leaving traces. You’re doing something. Or the question is, where’s the line to a creative process?

00:08:26 VB:
Yeah, exactly.

00:08:27 VMF:
Even being read to and imagining pictures in your head – that’s already a creative process. But you were leaving traces. And I imagine you were at the edge of the water, where the waves kept washing things away…

00:08:45 VB:
Ja genau. Die werden immer wieder weggeschwemmt. Lustigerweise merke ich gerade, da ist so ein Forschungsimpuls auch dabei. Man schaut, man macht was und wie verändert sich das dann aber von außen auch, oder? Also man ist nicht alleine im kreativen Prozess, sondern es schwemmt dann immer das Wasser dazu und es verändert sich von außen. Und es gibt immer so eine leichte Spannung. So was passiert jetzt. Oder vielleicht schon auch dieses: Was mache ich jetzt? Und was will ich jetzt schauen? Also was will ich jetzt zeichnen? Wie um zu sehen, wie sich dieses dann wieder verändert. Also es ist ein Spiel. Was ja in der Kreativität oft irgendwie auch der Fall ist und es hat auf jeden Fall auch so einen Spaß-Charakter.

Wenn ich mich umdrehen würde weg vom Wasser und schauen würde, wie sich was entwickelt, dann ist es natürlich auch ein sehr schöner, kreativer Prozess, wo einfach nicht bei jeder Welle die ja urschnell daherkommt, alles verändert wird, sondern wo vielleicht dann irgendwann einmal der Wind daherkommt. Ich meine hier bewegen wir uns in Quasi-Land-Art Kriterien. Was aber finde ich ja z.B. bei Gruppen-Kooperationen auch die ganze Zeit ist, wenn man kreativ gemeinsam arbeitet, man tut was und dann schaut man was schwemmt quasi von der anderen Seite daher und verändert das. Und dann schaut man sich das neu an und agiert da wieder rein. Also es hat viel, finde ich von diesen … von Kooperationen eigentlich auch.

00:10:34 VMF:
Eine Kooperation mit der Welt oder mit dem Meer…

00:10:36 VB:
In diesem Fall mit der Umwelt, mit der mit Umgebung…

00:10:40 VMF:
Mit dem Meer, mit dem Wasser.

00:10:40 VB:
Ja genau.

00:10:42 VMF:
Sehr schön.

00:10:42 VB:
Ja, voll schön. Aber eben, warum ich das sage ist auch, weil wir im Kindermuseum ja auch immer wieder kooperativ arbeiten und da finde ich, gehört auch eine gewisse Offenheit dazu. Also beim Film natürlich ganz klar: Ah, du gibst deine Figur rein, du hast vielleicht Ideen, aber sie werden natürlich in der Gruppe zu ganz neuen Ideen. Also da irgendwie auch so eine Art Vertrauen zu haben oder so eine Akzeptanz zu entwickeln. Ja, das ist was irrsinnig Schönes und finde ich eigentlich etwas sehr Reifes auch. Ja und das hat man eigentlich als Kind schon. Und dann glaube ich, wird man eher so dazu erzogen, in der Schule, dass man „Seines“ gut macht. Weil es geht ja ganz viel um die eigene Note und nicht um die ganze Klasse als Gesamtgefüge. Und da wird man schon dazu erzogen, dass man quasi als Einzelkämpfer agiert. Und das finde ich halt schön im Kindermuseum. Also generell an Gruppenarbeiten, dass man dann so Sachen einbringt und gemeinsam schaut, wie sie sich weiterentwickeln.

00:12:02 VMF:
Ja, schon. Also das eine ist diese Akzeptanz, dass das Meer oder die Welt das wieder verändert, was du machst und dass das eben nicht ganz in deiner Hand liegt. Aber es hat ja auch etwas mit Dauer zu tun, oder? Also diese vollkommene Akzeptanz und Zufriedenheit damit, dass das jetzt genau in dem Moment da ist und nachher ist es weg. Und wenn es niemand anders

00:08:45 VB:
Exactly! The waves kept coming and washing it away. What's funny is that I realize now, there was already a research impulse there. You're doing something and observing how the outside world affects it. You're not alone in the process – the water comes in and changes it. There's a constant light tension – like, what's going to happen next? Or even: What do I want to draw now? Just to see how it changes again. So it's a game. And play is a huge part of creativity. There's definitely fun in it.

If I turned away from the water and just watched things develop on their own, that's also a creative process. The wind might come eventually. This starts sounding like land art – which is how it feels in group collaborations too. When you work creatively with others, you add something and see what "washes in" from the other side and changes it – then you respond again. It's really like collaboration.

00:10:34 VMF:
A collaboration with the world – or the sea…

00:10:36 VB:
Exactly. With the environment.

00:10:40 VMF:
With the sea, with the water.

00:10:40 VB:
Yes, exactly.

00:10:42 VMF:
Very nice.

00:10:42 VB:
Yeah, totally nice. But the reason I say that is also because in the Children's Museum we always work cooperatively, and I think that requires a certain openness. With film, for example, it's clear: You bring your character, you might have ideas, but in a group those ideas naturally turn into something completely new. So it's about having a kind of trust or developing acceptance. Yeah, that's something really beautiful and, to me, quite mature. And you actually have that as a kid already. But then I think you get trained, especially at school, to do "your own thing" well. Because it's so much about your own grade and not about the class as a whole. And there you're taught to act like a lone fighter. And I find that the nice thing about the Children's Museum, and group work in general, is that you bring things in and work together to see how they develop.

00:12:02 VMF:
Yeah, exactly. So one thing is this acceptance that the sea or the world changes what you do, and that it's not fully in your hands. But it also has something to do with duration, right? Like, this complete acceptance and contentment that it's exactly there in that moment and then it's gone. And if no one else but you saw it, it doesn't matter at all.

außer dir gesehen hat, macht es überhaupt nichts.

00:12:29 VB:
Ja ja.

00:12:30 VMF:
Das ist schon so ein Unterschied, dass man dann eben beigebracht bekommt, dass man das...

00:12:37 VB:
...für jemanden auch macht , dass es dauerhaft ist, dass man es verkaufen kann. Ich meine, es gibt natürlich im Künstlerischen schon viele Entwicklungen, wo es dann auch nur eine Zeichnung, also Raumgestaltung, nicht für ewig, sondern nur für einen Zeitraum ist. Das ist ja eh sehr in oder auch, dass man einfach eine Zeitlang gar keine Sachen mehr signiert hat. Auch spannend.

00:13:08 VMF:
Aber es ist trotzdem immer gebunden, also ich meine, sonst kriegt man es halt nicht mit, aber meistens schon gebunden an ein Gegenüber oder wenigstens eine Person als Publikum oder so. So dieses nur für dich und in diesem Moment mit dem Meer interagieren. Dann würde man es halt wahrscheinlich nicht als Kunst machen bezeichnen, sondern als, weiß ich nicht... meditieren.

00:13:36 VB:
Ja genau.

00:13:38 VMF:
Und wenn das jetzt ginge, dass du da zu dir selber hinspazierst. Glaubst du. Also was ... andersrum: Ich habe viel jetzt auch immer wieder drüber nachgedacht, was von den Sachen, die ich mit dem L. mache, ich das Gefühl habe, da hätte ich mir als Kind irgendwie Unterstützung gewünscht. Auch so die Ermutigung, z.B. bei diesen Geschichten. Ich hab irrsinnig gern auch Geschichten geschrieben als Kind und mich hat das eigentlich immer gestresst, dass es da irgendwie so diesen Plot geben muss mit Einleitung, Hauptteil, Abenteuer, Schluss und ich hab irrsinnig gern einfach so Welten oder so was ... Hallo??

00:14:24 VB:
Urfrech, aber voll abgemagert. Wir sehen gerade ein Eichhörnchen vorbei hoppeln. Urnah. Ich meine, das springt jetzt gleich auf Verenas Schoß.

00:14:41 VMF:
Glaubst du, das ist wirklich abgemagert? Die sind doch in Wirklichkeit nur so dünn...

00:14:45 VB:
Aber bitte, das ist urfrech! Das frisst jetzt wahrscheinlich gleich aus deiner Tasche, Verena.

00:14:51 VMF:
Ähm, wo war ich?

00:14:59 VB:
Ja ich überlege auch gerade.

00:15:00 VMF:
Ja, genau also. Ich hatte das Gefühl, der L., als wir damit begonnen haben, das zu machen. Also ich hab mich da irgendwie so drin wiedererkannt, dass er auch so einen Stress hatte mit den Protagonisten und irgendwie letztlich halt den klischeehaften Kindergeschichten, die man dann irgendwie doch das Gefühl hat, reproduzieren zu müssen oder so. Und da habe versucht, ihm da irgendwie das aufzumachen und das eben auch gemeinsam zu sehen, was es so für andere Türen gibt. Aus dem Ding heraus, dass ich mich daran erinnert habe, letztlich vielleicht mehr für mich selber als jetzt, weil er das tatsächlich so notwendig gehabt

00:12:29 VB:
Yeah, yeah.

00:12:30 VMF:
That's quite a difference to what you get taught, that you have to...

00:12:37 VB:
...do it for someone else too, so that it lasts, so you can sell it. I mean, of course in art there are many developments where it's just a drawing or a room design, not forever, but only for a period. That's very trendy anyway. Or that for a while you didn't even sign your work anymore. That's interesting too.

00:13:08 VMF:
But it's still always attached, I mean otherwise you wouldn't notice it, but usually it's tied to some kind of audience or at least one person. This "just for you and interacting with the sea in that moment" – then you probably wouldn't call it art but more like, I don't know... meditation.

00:13:36 VB:
Exactly.

00:13:38 VMF:
And if that were possible, that you could just walk to yourself. Do you think so? Or, the other way round: I've been thinking a lot about what I do with L., and I feel like that's the kind of support I wish I'd had as a kid. Also encouragement, for example with those stories. I loved writing stories as a kid but it always stressed me out that there had to be a plot with intro, main part, adventure, ending. I really just loved creating worlds or whatever... Hello??

00:14:24 VB:
Super cheeky but really skinny. We're just watching a squirrel hopping by. So wild. I mean, it's about to jump on Verena's lap.

00:14:41 VMF:
Do you really think it's skinny? Aren't they just naturally that thin?

00:14:45 VB:
But come on, it's really cheeky! It's probably going to eat out of your bag soon, Verena.

00:14:51 VMF:
Um, where was I?

00:14:59 VB:
Yeah, I'm thinking too.

00:15:00 VMF:
Yeah, exactly. So, I felt that when we started doing this with L., I kind of recognized myself in him, that he was stressed about the protagonists and the kind of cliché kids' stories that you somehow feel you have to reproduce. And I tried to open that up for him and look together at other doors. But honestly, maybe it was more for me than because he actually needed it, or maybe he was doing more with me than I with him. I'm not sure, but...

hätte oder vielleicht hat er das eh in Wirklichkeit mehr mit mir gemacht als ich mit ihm. Ich weiß nicht genau, aber...

00:16:00 VB:
Mehr er für dich, als du für ihn meinst du auch?

00:16:03 VMF:
Jaja, genau. Also ich habe mich eben gefragt, wenn man sich das so überlegt, dass man sich selber begegnen kann... eh, wenn du selber Kinder hast, der Michael hat da gestern auch eigentlich mehr gesprochen drüber, wie es war, als seine Tochter klein war und so, dass er da ganz viel an eigener Kindheit nochmal so durchlebt hat. Wahrscheinlich auch ein relativ normaler Prozess.

Aber jetzt einfach nochmal die Situation. Also ich meine ja, es ist vielleicht eine schwierige Frage, weil es so zumindest in der Erinnerung nach einem vollkommenen Moment klingt. Also da kann man irgendwie, da will man ja gar nicht stören, oder? An deiner Stelle würde ich da gar nicht als Erwachsene reinplatzen wollen.

00:16:57 VB:
Nein, ich glaube, in dem Moment ist es auch nicht wirklich... aber es gibt sicher andere Momente. Ich glaube, in dem Moment kann ich mir sehr schön vorstellen, dass sich jemand neben mich setzt und einfach dasselbe auch macht. Und dann macht man das plötzlich gemeinsam und zeichnet gemeinsam an einer Sache und die wird dann weggeschwemmt. Aber, also quasi so unterstützende Sachen. Warte mal, muss ich kurz nachdenken.

Ich meine, mir sind jetzt mehrere Sachen gekommen. Ich gehe jetzt gleich dorthin, wo ich, wo ich mir denke, so für mich unterstützende Sachen. Ich glaube, das wird mehr vielleicht in der Musik irgendwo liegen. Meine Oma war ja auch schon Malerin. Mein Opa Photograph. Das war schon irgendwie alles sehr normal, dass die Kinder sich austoben können. Ich bin ja eher so aus einem Hippie-Haushalt ... eher so von der Förderung. Ich weiß z.B. beim Klavierspielen, ich habe sehr gern gespielt, aber meine Eltern, die haben dann immer wieder gesagt geh, kannst du jetzt mal aufhören? Also das war eher da wo ich mir denke: okay, da wäre es schön gewesen, hätte ich irgendwie vielleicht einen Raum gehabt oder vielleicht dann doch eine coolere Lehrerin. Das hätte mir schon glaub ich sehr geholfen.

Da kann ich ganz konkret sagen meine Klavierlehrerin, die V. war das. Also das war ein reiner Sozialakt von Anfang an. In der ersten Stunde hat sie schon so einen kleinen epileptischen Anfall bekommen und das ganze Klavier mit Bleistift angemalt und dann ihren Rock. Und ab dem Moment dann hab ich gewusst okay, wenn ich jetzt da weggeh dann tut sie mir leid! Und dann war ich vier Jahre bei der und wir haben nur alte Stücke... und ich wollte immer Jazz, ich wollte improvisieren. Ich wollte einfach woanders hin. Ich hab das sogar meiner Mutter gesagt. Und sie hat gesagt ja, vielleicht, na vielleicht der oder die. Und dann hab ich es nie geschafft, von dieser Alten wegzugehen. Und da hätte ich, glaube ich, einfach von meiner Mutter gebraucht: Hey, schau mal, ich hab da jemanden Geilen gefunden. Mach‘s bei dem, wir wechseln jetzt. Das ist so ein Moment, wo ich mir denke, das wäre extrem cool gewesen.

Beim Zeichnen ich meine, ich war ja schon ab 14 in der Kunstgewerbeschule. Warte mal, da überlege ich auch, weil ich meine, in der Schule selber da ist es natürlich sehr klassisch hergegangen: Wie zeichnet man was und wo sind die Schatten und so. Da gibt‘s sicher viel bessere Arten und Weisen, das zu ver-

00:16:00 VB:
More him for you than you for him, you mean?

00:16:03 VMF:
Yeah, exactly. I wondered, if you think about it, that you can meet yourself... I mean, if you have kids, Michael also talked about this yesterday, how having a little daughter made him relive a lot of his own childhood. Probably a pretty normal process.

But just thinking about that situation again... I mean, it’s maybe a tough question, because in memory it sounds like a perfect moment. You wouldn’t want to disturb it, right? If I were you, I wouldn’t want to crash in there as an adult.

00:16:57 VB:
No, I don’t think in that moment it really is... but there are definitely other moments. I can totally imagine someone sitting down next to me and doing the same thing. And then you suddenly do it together, drawing together on something, and it gets washed away. So, supportive stuff like that. Wait, let me think.

I mean, several things come to mind. I’m thinking of where I would feel supported. I think that’s probably more in music. My grandma was a painter. My grandpa a photographer. It was very normal that kids could just go wild. I’m more from a hippie household... more like being encouraged. I remember with piano playing, I loved it, but my parents would always say, “Go on, can you stop now?” So that’s one place I think it would have been nice to have maybe a space or a cooler teacher. That would have helped me a lot, I think.

I can say very concretely my piano teacher, V., was a total social act from the start. In the first lesson she had a little epileptic fit, and she painted all over the piano with pencil and then on her skirt. From that moment I thought, “Okay, if I leave now I’ll feel bad!” So I stayed for four years and we only played old pieces... and I always wanted jazz, to improvise. I wanted to go somewhere else. I even told my mom. And she said, “Maybe, well maybe that or that person.” But I never managed to leave the old lady. And there I think I needed my mom to say: “Hey, look, I found someone cool, switch now.” That moment would have been so cool.

With drawing – well, I was already in art school at 14. Wait, thinking about that too, because at school it was very classical: how to draw what, where the shadows are, and so on. There are definitely way better ways to teach that now. I’ve already seen that a lot has changed with my kids. There are cool teachers today who just start with scribbles. I think that’s great. I wish that for all kids and would have wished it for myself. Of course, my grandma also had very concrete art. It was very spiritual but not abstract. Yeah, exactly.

mitteln. Das habe ich dann später sogar mit meinen Kindern schon gesehen, dass sich da viel, viel getan hat. Also es gibt coole Lehrer heute, die wirklich einfach vom Kritzeln irgendwohin kommen. Das finde ich super, dass es das gibt. Das würde ich mir wünschen für alle Kinder und hätte ich mir auch gewünscht. Es gab bei mir natürlich auch bei meiner Oma so sehr konkrete Kunst. Das war sehr spirituell, aber nicht abstrakt. Ja, genau.

00:20:40 VMF:
Aber vielleicht mit der Musik. Das hast du dir einfach total erarbeitet, oder? Als Erwachsene? Und wenn du da ganz konkret an dich in dem Alter denkst. Also angenommen, du hättest jetzt einen Nachmittag und könntest mit dir selber als Kind irgendwie musikalisch was machen. Was könnte das sein? Oder wie würdest du es angehen?

00:21:20 VB:
Ich glaube, es wäre schon einmal wunderschön, einfach in ein Stück zu gehen, auch wenn Neue Musik einfach total durchkonstruiert sein kann, aber mal so andere Klänge, andere Rhythmen, einen anderen Umgang mit Rhythmen und mit Tönen, Disharmonien, ich glaube, sowas ist total cool eigentlich. Also da einfach ein Konzert anzuschauen.

Oder auch, dass mich ein Mensch mitnimmt und sagt okay, wir reden jetzt. Egal wohin. Auf einen… in eine Fabrik. Einen Weg durch die Stadt. Das man einfach nur die Geräusche wahrnimmt. Einfach so das Hören lernen. So urold fashioned John Cage Gedanke einfach, dass man ja mal alles als Musik wahrnehmen kann. Als Kind hätte ich das super gefunden und ich glaube tatsächlich, dass es heute auch… Ich meine, mit meinen Kindern mache ich das zwar so, aber ich glaube wir sind in einer anderen Zeit. Ich glaube, dass es immer noch total… und stimmt ja gar nicht. Es gibt ja total den Konservativismus, der wirklich überhandnimmt. Also man kann da eh heute ganz genauso herangehen an die Sache.

Oder was auch total schön sein kann, ist einfach irgendetwas nehmen, wo man Geräusche rausholen kann. Sei es ein Instrument oder auch irgendetwas, was einfach herumliegt. Und mit dem einfach schauen, was man da machen kann und gemeinsam vielleicht auch spielen mit Tönen, Geräuschen was musikalisches Entwickeln. Das ist was total Schönes.

Oder etwas Berührendes ist natürlich, wenn Leute einfach ganz spontan Musik machen oder dass man einfach geht und dann sind da Musiker oder Musikerinnen oder auch einfach nur Menschen, die Musik machen und Freude dran haben.

Oder was ich mir auch – das ist lustig, weil ich versuch das bei meinen Kindern immer: Ich leg dann ab und zu so ethnologische Musik auf, also halt von unterschiedlichen Teilen des Globus, weil man da immer so viel neue Rhythmen, ein neues Verständnis von Musik bekommen kann und unterschiedliche Stilrichtungen und sie sind schon jetzt so eingeschossen. Ich meine, es ist halt jetzt vielleicht auch die Zeit, aber jetzt ist halt Pop an der Sache und da aber schon ein bisschen zu öffnen, auch wenn es nur dieses kurze äääh irgendwie voll komisch. Aber sie haben es mal gehört, finde ich auch gut. Also, da gegen die Muster auch ein bisschen zu kämpfen vielleicht. Einfach eine Erweiterung von dem, was möglich ist, ist glaub ich immer hilfreich.

Und dann auch den Mut zu haben. Also das sollte man finde ich immer fördern, wenn man sieht, da gibt‘s eine Faszination, aber vielleicht noch nicht ganz den Mut. Da nicht reinreden, sondern einfach nur sagen… also nicht mal sagen, sondern einfach dahinter sein, dass dieser Mut für dieses andere, vielleicht nicht der brei-

00:20:40 VMF:
But maybe with music, you just really worked that out for yourself as an adult? And if you think of yourself at that age – imagine you had an afternoon to do something musical with yourself as a kid. What would that be? Or how would you approach it?

00:21:20 VB:
I think it would be wonderful to just get into a piece of music, even if new music can be totally constructed, but other sounds, rhythms, a different way to handle rhythms and tones, dissonances – I think that’s really cool. Like just watching a concert.

Or having someone take me and say, “Okay, now we talk. Wherever. Into a factory. A walk through the city.” Just noticing the sounds. Learning to listen like that. The old-fashioned John Cage idea that everything can be music. I would have loved that as a kid and I actually think it still works today. I mean, I do that with my kids, but I think we live in a different time. There’s still a lot of conservatism, which is really taking over. So you can approach it the same way today.

Or something else really nice is just taking something that makes noise, like an instrument or something lying around, and seeing what you can do with it, playing with tones and sounds, developing something musical together. That’s really beautiful.

Or something touching is when people just spontaneously make music, or you just walk somewhere and there are musicians or people making music and enjoying it.

Or something I try with my kids – it’s funny – I sometimes put on ethnological music from different parts of the world, because you get so many new rhythms, a new understanding of music, different styles. And they’re already so stuck. I mean, maybe it’s just the time now, but now pop is the thing. So opening that a little, even if it’s just a weird little “uhhh” moment. But they’ve heard it, and I think that’s good. Fighting a bit against patterns, maybe. Just expanding what’s possible is always helpful, I think.

And then having the courage. I think that should always be encouraged if you see fascination but maybe not the courage yet. Don’t interfere, just support it. Or not even say anything, just be behind it, that this courage for something different, maybe not for the mainstream, can have a place, and that the person – the kid, let’s say – can follow that further. That’s really beautiful.

ten Masse entsprechende, dass das Platz haben kann und dass die Person, also das Kind sag ich jetzt mal, das weiterverfolgen kann. Das ist was total Schönes.

00:25:16 VMF:
Das heißt, wenn du einen Nachmittag hättest, du würdest wahrscheinlich mit dir einen... weiß ich nicht, einen Stadtspaziergang machen?

00:25:26 VB:
Ja, am besten ein Stadtspaziergang, der dann immer weiter raus aus der Stadt geht und bis in die Natur rein, wo man dann kein Auto mehr hört und nur mehr schöne... keine Ahnung Natur-Geräusche und dann vielleicht trotzdem noch in ein Fabriks-Gelände kommt. Einfach wirklich ein Hörspaziergang. Ja, total, mit jemanden, der das auch ganz gut kann. Ich stelle mir einen alten Mann vor, oder halt nicht einen alten Mann. Es muss gar kein Mann sein. Einfach eine in sich ruhende Person, die auch sehr gut hören kann. Also, dass ich das so übernehmen kann.

00:26:14 VMF:
Ich habe gedacht, du gehst mit dir selber.

00:26:15 VB:
Ah ja, okay, dann gehe ich. Na dann bin ich genau die Richtige, ja eh, voll schön. Ja, ja, ich bin tatsächlich. Also wenn ich mit mir geh. Das ist super. Ja, bei meinen Kindern weiß ich, da bin ich immer sehr schnell verunsichert. Aber wenn ich mit mir geh als Kind – voll schön. Also da brauche ich viel Ruhe. Also von mir ich als Kind brauch dann sehr eine hingebende Ruhe. Tatsächlich.

00:26:52 VMF:
Vom Gegenüber?

00:26:54 VB:
Vom Gegenüber. Also das zu machen, erfordert von mir, von der alten Verena, tatsächlich eine Hingabe, das einfach jetzt zu machen, mir die Zeit zu nehmen. Das ist das, was ich vielleicht nicht so gehabt habe von meinen Eltern. Das ist was, ich glaub jetzt kommen wir zum Punkt, weil ich glaube, das ist etwas, was wirklich, wirklich Großes, das ist das Beste eigentlich, was man jemandem geben kann, diese Hingabe in Form von Zeit, von wirklich, ich bin jetzt da für dich. Und wir müssen nichts machen. Wir müssen eigentlich nichts machen. Einfach. Wir sind gemeinsam.

00:27:40 VMF:
Schön.

00:27:41 VB:
Ja. Also das ist es eigentlich, weil wenn wir dann über Kreativität und so reden, dann könnte es gleich mal so in einen Stress reinkommen, der nicht notwendig ist, um kreativ zu sein.

00:27:55 VMF:
Produktion, Produktionstress.

00:27:59 VB:
Ja.

00:27:59 VMF:
Und ist das... also wahrscheinlich ist es eh so vice versa. Aber das ist auf jeden Fall das, was du dir als Kind, die alte Verena der Kinder-Verena geben könntest oder wollen würdest. Gibt‘s was, was andersrum funktionieren könnte? Also ich meine, das habe ich jetzt herausgehört, auch aus der schönen Strand Geschichte, dass das ja das ist, was man als Kind halt einfach besser kann. Also auch in unserer fiktiven Situation wäre das etwas, was ihr euch gegenseitig geben würdet, wahrscheinlich. Dieses im Moment Sein und

00:25:16 VMF:
So if you had an afternoon, you’d probably go on... I don’t know, a city walk with yourself?

00:25:26 VB:
Yeah, ideally a city walk that goes further and further out of the city and into nature, where you no longer hear cars but only nice... nature sounds, and maybe still get to an old factory site. Just a sound walk. Yeah, totally, with someone who’s really good at that. I imagine an old man, or not necessarily an old man. Doesn’t have to be a man. Just a calm person who can listen really well. So I can just follow.

00:26:14 VMF:
I thought you meant going with yourself.

00:26:15 VB:
Ah, yeah, okay, then I’d go. Then I’m exactly the right person, yeah, totally nice. Yeah, I really am. If I go with myself – that’s great. With my kids I get insecure quickly, but if I go with myself as a kid – totally nice. I’d need a lot of calm. Like as a kid, I’d need a devoted calm. Really.

00:26:52 VMF:
From the other person?

00:26:54 VB:
From the other person. Doing that requires from me, from the old Verena, a devotion to just do it now, to take the time. That’s maybe what I didn’t have from my parents. I think we’re getting to the point now, because I think that’s really, really big – it’s the best thing you can give someone: this devotion in the form of time, really, “I’m here for you now.” And we don’t have to do anything. We really don’t have to do anything. Just. We are together.

00:27:40 VMF:
Beautiful.

00:27:41 VB:
Yeah. That’s it, because when we talk about creativity, it can get stressful, which isn’t necessary to be creative.

00:27:55 VMF:
Production, production stress.

00:27:59 VB:
Yeah.

00:27:59 VMF:
And is it... well, probably it goes both ways. But that’s definitely what you’d want to give the kid you were as a child. Is there anything that could work the other way around? I mean, I’ve heard this also from the nice beach story, that’s something kids can do better. So in our fictional situation, that would probably be something you’d give each other: being in the moment, having time, not having to do anything, reassuring each other that it’s good and right now. But is there something you’d like to ask yourself, for example?

Zeit haben und nicht müssen und sich gegenseitig versichern, dass das jetzt richtig und gut ist. Aber gibt es was, was du dich gerne fragen würdest z.b.?

00:29:12 VB:
Welche Frage ich gerne gestellt bekommen hätte, so auf der Art?

00:29:18 VMF:
Also was die erwachsene Verena jetzt eigentlich die Kinder Verena gerne fragen würde.

00:29:24 VB:
Ah, okay, okay, okay. Puh... warte...

00:29:36 VMF:
Oder vielleicht ist das leichter: Gibt‘s was, was die Kinder-Verena der erwachsenen Verena gerne zeigen würde? Irgendwo, wo du dich hinführen würdest, jetzt eben nicht so quasi in dieser Groß zeigt Klein oder führt Klein, sondern umgedrehter, wo du dich hinführen, was du mit dir machen würdest oder eben was du, was die Alte, die Junge fragen würde?

00:30:11 VB:
Urschwierig. Ähm, weil ... wart mal. Das ist gar nicht so einfach. Generell finde ich, wenn ich jetzt diese Situation sehe, quasi die Strand Situation. Also da würde ich jetzt, auch wenn sie nicht ewig andauert, in der Situation würde ich z.B. nichts fragen wollen, weil ich das nicht unterbrechen will. Danach auch nicht, weil, das ist abgeschlossen dann. Ich glaube ich muss da zu einem anderen Ort gehen. Vielleicht beim Spaziergang. Das ist komisch. Da bin ich total vorsichtig. Unglaublich, also da habe ich das Gefühl. Das ist jetzt sehr interessant. Da bin ich fast zu vorsichtig. Ich merke, das ist gar nicht so cool.

00:31:59 VMF:
Du musst also, wenn dir das irgendwie zu...

00:32:05 VB:
Diese Frage finde ich schwierig. Das mit der Frage finde ich schwierig. Da habe ich das Gefühl, da bin ich so... Es kommt mir fast wie übergriffig vor. Aber was natürlich gar nicht stimmt, weil jede Therapie beruht ja lustigerweise auf den richtigen Fragen. Jede gute Therapie.

00:32:22 VMF:
Meinst du, es ist von mir übergriffig, dich das zu fragen?

00:32:24 VB:
Nein, ich als mich. Was total komisch ist, weil ich bin ja erstens mal dieselbe Person und da... es mischt sich dann so: da gibt‘s den Wunsch, was gefragt zu werden, finde ich. Und da gibt‘s irgendwas, wo ich die kleine Verena so antupfen will, dass sie quasi irgendwo weiterfragt, weiterschaut, auch sich fragt. Und dadurch irgendwie irgendwas Neues erfährt.

00:32:54 VMF:
Vielleicht kannst du versuchen, weniger zu psychologisieren, sondern einfach so eine Wissensfrage.

00:33:01 VB:
Ich will was wissen von der Kleinen.

00:33:04 VMF:
Ja, nämlich vielleicht gar nicht unbedingt von der kleinen Verena, sondern etwas, was die kleine Verena noch weiß...

00:33:09 VB:
Ah.

00:29:12 VB:
A question I would have liked to be asked, something like that?

00:29:18 VMF:
So, what the adult Verena would actually like to ask the child Verena.

00:29:24 VB:
Ah, okay, okay, okay. Phew... wait...

00:29:36 VMF:
Or maybe this is easier: Is there something that the child-Verena would like to show the adult Verena? Somewhere you would take yourself – not so much like “big shows little” or “leads little,” but reversed – where would you take yourself, what would you do with yourself, or what would the old you ask the young you?

00:30:11 VB:
Super difficult. Uh, because... wait a second. That’s actually not so easy. Generally, if I look at this situation, like the beach situation, I wouldn’t want to ask anything right then, even though it doesn’t last forever, because I don’t want to interrupt it. Not afterwards either, because then it’s finished. I think I have to go somewhere else. Maybe on a walk. That’s weird. I’m really cautious there. Unbelievably cautious. I feel like that’s very interesting. I’m almost too cautious. I notice that’s not so cool.

00:31:59 VMF:
So you have to, if it somehow feels too...

00:32:05 VB:
This question I find difficult. The question itself is difficult. I feel like I’m so... It almost feels intrusive. But of course that’s not true, because every therapy is, ironically, based on the right questions. Every good therapy.

00:32:22 VMF:
Do you mean it feels intrusive coming from me to ask you this?

00:32:24 VB:
No, I mean to myself. Which is really weird because, first of all, I’m the same person, and then... it mixes in a way that there’s the desire to be asked something, I think. And then there’s something where I want to gently tap the little Verena so that she keeps asking questions, keeps looking, also asks herself. And through that learns something new.

00:32:54 VMF:
Maybe try to psychologize less and just ask a knowledge question.

00:33:01 VB:
I want to know something from the little one.

00:33:04 VMF:
Yes, maybe not necessarily from the little Verena herself, but something the little Verena still knows...

00:33:09 VB:
Ah.

00:33:11 VMF:
... was du jetzt irgendwie nicht mehr weißt, weil es was mit ihrem Blick auf die Welt oder mit ihrem Seinszustand zu tun hat oder vielleicht einfach nur, weil sie nur einen Meter groß ist und alles aus einem Meter Höhe sieht oder so. Also es muss kein Seelen-Striptease sein, sondern mehr jetzt eine Erkenntnisfrage. Oder wenn es nicht zu verbalisieren ist, kann das ja vielleicht auch was sein, jetzt entweder in der Strand-Situation, dass du irgendwas an ihr beobachten kannst, was du gerne sehen würdest. Wie die Kleine was macht oder was die Kleine sieht oder...

00:34:07 VB:
Ich meine, was mich generell interessieren würde... das ist keine Frage, sondern... also, das weiß ich auch bei meinen Kindern, da hat es mich immer interessiert: So, was denkst du gerade? Also was geht dir gerade durch den Kopf? Woran denkst du gerade? Also , woran denken Kinder generell? Ich glaube, das ist auch sehr unterschiedlich. Aber von der Olivia weiß ich, wie schnell sie springen kann von einem zum anderen Thema. Beim Albin weiß ich, wie dass er über Wochen an eine Sache dranbleibt. Und wie war es bei der kleinen Verena? Obwohl, da bin ich wohl wieder im Psychologisieren drin. Da komme ich urschnell rein. Aber eben dann, quasi hmmm... ich weiß, dass die kleine Verena urviel geträumt hat z.b. Also die war in so einem Dämmerzustand, hab ich das Gefühl die ganze Zeit und da hätte ich gerne gewusst so: was waren das für Gedanken. Und auch um einfach zu schauen, was hat das dann ausgelöst. Wo hat sie das gespürt, die Kleine, warum hat sie sich da immer so gefüttert mit diesen vielen Träumen. Also, was hat ihr das gegeben.

Ich meine, das könnte ich natürlich eh selber wahrscheinlich irgendwie, aber da sind wir so im Psychologisieren drinnen. Wahrscheinlich, vielleicht war die kleine Verena auch ständig schon am Psychologisieren durch die ganzen Verhältnisse in der Familie. Ich meine, es ist ja auch oft so, dass die Kinder dann irgendwie nicht verstehen, warum jetzt die Eltern so miteinander sind oder überhaupt so sind, wie sie sind und dass überhaupt nichts zusammenpasst mit irgendwelchen anderen Sachen, die sie eigentlich sagen. Schon allein die ganze religiöse Geschichte. Ich glaube, da kommt man sehr schnell in dieses komische Denken rein, wo man versucht, dann auch immer wieder wegzukommen davon, weil es einfach keine Antworten, keine logischen Antworten für dieses Alter gibt. Und für später auch nicht wirklich Befriedigende, würde ich jetzt mal meinen. Aber naja, da muss ich jetzt aber sagen, das ist super, weil ich hab grad vorher noch am Wasser diesen Schirach, wie heißt er...

00:37:03 VMF:
Ferdinand?

00:37:04 VB:
Genau. Der Ferdinand von Schirach. Ich mein, ich hab lustigerweise gedacht, jetzt sind wir ein bissl im Philosophieren, oder Psychologisieren aber was auch immer drinnen, was ja finde ich auch sehr gut passt zu allen möglichen Daseinsformen und kreativen Akten. Aber ich hab Kurzgeschichten von ihm gelesen und er schaffts immer, diese unterschiedlichsten Seiten der Menschen so herauszukehren. Jetzt weiß ich gar nicht mehr, wie er heißt, der aus Amstetten... Fritzl, genau: diese nach außen total alles ist gut, alles ist perfekt. Also dieses einerseits total strikt zu sein und dann ganz plötzlich einfach jemanden umbringen z.B.

Oder der andere da, immer der Beste, Sex total überbewertet, bla bla bla bla bla und immer alles total strikt. Hat irgendwann mal eine Liebelei, aber das war dann auch bald aus. Weil das war ihm dann gleich zu kompliziert. Und dann irgendwann einmal in seiner

00:33:11 VMF:
...something you don't know anymore now because it has to do with her view of the world or her state of being, or maybe just because she's only a meter tall and sees everything from a meter height or something. So it doesn't have to be a soul striptease, but more like a question of insight. Or if it's hard to put into words, maybe it's something you can observe in the beach situation that you'd like to see – how the little one does something or what she sees or...

00:34:07 VB:
I mean, what would generally interest me... that's not a question, but... well, I also know this from my kids; I've always been interested in: What are you thinking right now? What's going through your head? What do kids generally think about? I think that's very different. But with Olivia, I know how quickly she can jump from one topic to another. With Albin, I know how he sticks to one thing for weeks. And how was it with little Verena? Although here I'm probably psychologizing again. I get into it really quickly. But then, hmm... I know little Verena dreamed a lot, for example. She was in this twilight state, I feel, all the time, and I would have liked to know: What kind of thoughts were those? Also to see what it triggered. Where did she feel that, the little one, why did she keep feeding herself with all those dreams? What did that give her?

I mean, I could probably figure that out myself, but then we're in the psychologizing again. Maybe little Verena was already psychologizing a lot because of all the family circumstances. I mean, it's often like that that kids don't really understand why the parents are the way they are or why they don't fit with the things they say. Especially with the whole religious stuff. I think you get into this weird kind of thinking fast where you keep trying to get away from it because there are no answers, no logical answers for that age. And not really satisfying ones later either, I'd say. But well, I have to say, this is great because I just read something by Schirach at the water earlier...

00:37:03 VMF:
Ferdinand?

00:37:04 VB:
Exactly. Ferdinand von Schirach. I thought it's a bit of philosophizing or psychologizing, whatever, which fits well with all kinds of existence and creative acts. I read his short stories, and he manages to bring out these different sides of people. Now I don't remember the name, the guy from Amstetten... Fritzl, exactly: outwardly everything looks good, perfect. So strict on the outside, then suddenly someone kills someone, for example.

Or the other guy, always the best, sex totally overrated, bla bla bla, everything very strict. Had a little affair once, but that was over soon because it was too complicated. And then once in his obedience, he saw a robbery, caught the criminals, called the police. Then it turned out they hadn't broken into the car but just got the keys for the father who forgot them in the car. And he was the one guilty because he acted wrongly. I even read that in the newspaper because the father of the two sons was a journalist and made a big deal out of it. Then he fled to Phuket in Thailand, did all kinds of drugs, was sexually promiscuous, got tattoos on his penis, was aggressive, got arrested several times because he showed his dick everywhere and so on. So a super well-behaved person, definitely.

Bravheit hat er gesehen: ah da ist gerade ein Überfall. Und hat die Verbrecher quasi gefangengenommen und die Polizei geholt. Und dann kommt raus, dass die beiden nicht eingebrochen haben ins Auto, sondern nur für den Vater den Schlüssel, den er im Auto vergessen hat, rausgeholt haben. Und er war dann der Schuldige. Also er hat falsch gehandelt. Das hab ich in der Zeitung sogar gelesen, weil der Vater von diesen beiden Söhnen war Journalist und hat das dann gleich ganz groß gemacht. Und dann hat er sich abgesetzt auf Pukhet in Thailand und hat sich's voll besorgt, alle Drogen genommen, die man nehmen kann und hat sich's sexuell in alle Richtungen gegeben. Hat sich am Penis irgendwas tätowieren lassen, war dann total aufdringlich und ist mehrmals polizeilich aufgenommen worden, weil er halt einfach dann seinen Dick überall hergezeigt hat und so weiter. Also so dieser superbrave Mensch auf jeden Fall.

Also in jedem ist einfach so viel drinnen und ich finde im Kind, da bildet sich halt wahnsinnig viel. Wahrscheinlich. Also da bin ich halt schon so ein bisschen psychologisiert, auch wegen meiner anderen Arbeit. Und ich finde es aber auch gleichzeitig spannend im Kindermuseum zu arbeiten, weil man ja grad da sieht, wo ist da schon was gebettet und wo wird's grad irgendwie total in eine Richtung gelenkt. Und was sind schon diese eineinhalb Stunden? Gibt es irgendeinen Einfluss, den ich haben kann, den ich überhaupt haben will, wo ich mir auch denken kann: Was hab ich für einen Anspruch eigentlich oder was bilde ich mir eigentlich ein? Also das kommt ja finde ich alles da mit rein. Ah, das ist halt spannend und das ist auch das Leben.

00:40:38 VMF:
Also du würdest dich einfach fragen: Was denkst du gerade?

00:40:42 VB:
Ja, ich glaube schon, aber dabei muss ich sagen, ist das urkomisch ein Kind das zu fragen weil ich meine: Ist es nicht viel spannender zu fragen: Wie geht's dir grad? Was fühlst du gerade? Ist doch eigentlich viel besser, oder? Das ist ja auch so ein... dieses: denk mal! Man geht ja gleich auf diese rationale Ebene, statt dass man einfach sagt: Hey, wie spürst du gerade deine kleine Zehe? Also das ist viel naheliegender, oder? Oder einfach nur so: schau mal, du hast da ein Muttermal und drauf tippen und dann das so einkreisen, einfach viel mehr auf die sinnliche Ebene zu gehen. Das ist doch eigentlich was, was so selten da ist.

Also du hast gesagt: Was würde ich fragen. Also weil, wenn ich mir denk, was würde ich meinem Kind oder der kleinen Verena geben? Ist es wahrscheinlich eher so ein Nehmen und geknuddelt werden. Ich glaube, das war wahrscheinlich, warum ich so gehadert habe, weil das Fragen einfach gleich so rational ist.

00:41:52 VMF:
Na okay, aber dann: Wenn es einfach nur darum geht, das umzukehren. Also das ist eine ganz natürliche Bewegung, ein Kind möchte man umsorgen. Und wenn man sich erinnert, dann ist es dieses kindliche Bedürfnis, auch gehalten zu werden im weitesten Sinne. Aber wenn man es trotzdem... ich habe das Gefühl, dass ich auch als Erwachsene so irrsinnig viel bekomme von den Kindern. Ich habe keine eigenen Kinder, aber L. oder auch im Kindermuseum. Wenn die Situationen gelingen, dann kommt ja da auch irrsinnig viel zurück. Und das ist, glaube ich, jetzt nicht nur irgendwie ein Erfolgserlebnis, dass ich das Gefühl habe, ich habe jetzt diesem Kind Gutes getan, sondern da gibt's einen Austausch. Und insofern, also ich finde das, was du jetzt noch gesagt hast, irgendwie das: Wie fühlt sich deine kleine Zehe an mit dem Sand und dem Wasser oder wenn du da diese Linie siehst oder das mit dem

So there's so much inside everyone, and I think it's forming so much in children, probably. So I'm a bit psychologized, also because of my other job. But I also find it exciting to work at the Children's Museum because you can see where things are already embedded and where they're pushed in a certain direction. And what is one and a half hours? Is there any influence I can have, want to have, or think I have a claim to? That's all part of it, I think. Ah, that's exciting, and that's life.

00:40:38 VMF:
So you would just ask yourself: What are you thinking right now?

00:40:42 VB:
Yes, I think so, but it's funny to ask a child that because isn't it much more exciting to ask: How are you feeling right now? What are you feeling? That's actually much better, right? That's like this... "think!" You go straight to the rational level instead of just saying: Hey, how does your little toe feel right now? That's much more obvious, right? Or just: Look, you have a birthmark, touch it, circle it, just go more to the sensory level. That's actually something so rare.

So you said: What would I ask? Because if I think about what I would give my child or little Verena, it would probably be more about taking and cuddling. I think that's why I struggled, because asking is so rational.

00:41:52 VMF:
Okay, but then: If it's just about reversing it. It's a natural movement; you want to care for a child. And when you remember, it's that childlike need to be held in the broadest sense. But still... I feel I get so much from children as an adult too. I don't have kids myself, but L. or also at the Children's Museum. When the situations work, you get so much back. And that's not just some success feeling, like "I did something good for this child," but there's an exchange. So what you just said about how your little toe feels with sand and water or that line you see or the birthmark is incredibly beautiful. It doesn't have to be a rational question. It can be a question you ask while doing something.

Muttermal ist irrsinnig schön, ja. Also es muss ja keine so rationale Frage sein. Es kann doch eine Frage sein, die man im Tun stellt.

00:43:19 VB:
Absolut.

00:43:20 VMF:
Also so war es jetzt nicht gemeint, dass man jetzt so auf diese Reflexionsebene gehen muss, sondern einfach nur: Was könntest du dir da holen? Ich meine, du hast es ohnehin vorher auch schon beantwortet, weil das einfach so eine vice-versa Geschichte ist, mit dem im-Moment-Sein und Zeit haben und sich hingeben, der Situation. Als Erwachsene eben den Rahmen und diesen Schutzraum anbieten können und als Kind sich den nehmen können.

00:44:08 VB:
Genau. Ja. Nein. Ich kann es nicht auf einer Frage festmachen. Weil ich finde, ein Gespräch ist wunderschön. Also das kann ich mir schon viel eher vorstellen, dass man sich wohin tastet. Ich meine, ich bin jetzt die ganze Zeit an diesem Kleinkind. Es gibt ja unterschiedliche Stufen und wir arbeiten ja auch mit Älteren im „Trickfilmstudio“. Da kommen natürlich ganz andere Fragen auf. Aber das ist halt doch mein anderer Beruf, glaube ich. Dieses: was fühlt man, was oder worauf hat man Lust grad. Also die ganz kleinen Kinder, die schauen ja eh, dass sie ihren Lustbedürfnissen und ihren Bedürfnissen irgendwie nachkommen. Und dann später eben gar nicht mehr. Da versuchst du ja die ganze Zeit, das zu unterbinden eigentlich. Und ja, ich bin da irgendwie geprägt.

00:45:31 VMF:
Na aber das passt ja. Also ich will ja diese Gespräche auch mit Leuten führen, die sich nicht als Künstlerinnen begreifen. Also da muss man sich jetzt nicht drin sehen oder so. Also warum ich das jetzt vorher gesagt habe mit dem Psychologisieren ist nicht, weil mich das nicht interessiert, sondern… ich habe kurz mit dem der Felix – hat sich auch gleich zurückgemeldet…

00:45:56 VB:
Ah super, nett!

00:45:57 VMF:
… und den habe ich dann daraufhin kurz getroffen. Aber an einem Tag, wo ich voll schlecht drauf war und aber wir haben trotzdem kurz geredet und ich hab versucht ihm zu erklären, was auf ihn zukommt und so. Und da hab ich ihm das halt erzählt, diese Idee mit was würdest du mit dir Kind und so. Und da hat er gleich … wie hat er gesagt… Traumatherapie willst du mit mir machen? Und ich so nein, ah…

00:46:28 VB:
Ja, es hat was, also es hat gleich so diesen Touch natürlich.

00:46:31 VMF:
Natürlich. Aber… ich will nicht irgendwo reinbohren und irgendwie eben psychologisieren, wo es nicht notwendig ist oder wo es einfach nicht passt. Aber wenn die Reflexion was mit Psychologie und auch mit deinem anderen Beruf zu tun hat… also das greift ja ineinander. Ich meine, du bist ja überall die gleiche Person. Und genau das interessiert mich ja. Also was haben diese ganzen Zugänge zur Welt miteinander zu tun? Der Zugang zur Welt als kleine Verena und dein Zugang zur Welt als Künstlerin und als Musikerin und als Shiatsu-Praktikerin und als Stimm-Expertin. Und als alles das, was dazwischen ist und keinen Namen hat. Natürlich mindestens genauso.

00:43:19 VB:
Absolutely.

00:43:20 VMF:
That wasn’t meant to say you have to go to this reflection level, but just: What could you get there? I mean, you answered that before anyway, because it’s a vice-versa thing with being-in-the-moment and having time and surrendering to the situation. As an adult offering the framework and protection, and as a child being able to take it.

00:44:08 VB:
Exactly, yes. No, I can’t put it on one question because I think a conversation is beautiful. I can imagine that much more that you feel your way. I mean, I keep thinking about the toddler. There are different stages, and we also work with older kids in the “Animated Film Studio“. Then very different questions come up. But that’s my other job, I think. Like: what do you feel, what do you want right now. The very small kids just follow their desires and needs. Later, not anymore. You’re trying to suppress that all the time. Yeah, I’m influenced by that.

00:45:31 VMF:
That fits perfectly. I want to have these conversations as well with people who don’t see themselves as artists. You don’t have to see yourself that way. Why I said psychologizing before isn’t because I’m not interested, but… I briefly met Felix – he got back to me right away…

00:45:56 VB:
Ah, great, nice!

00:45:57 VMF:
…and I met him shortly, but on a bad day. I tried to explain what’s coming to him and told him about this idea with what you would do with your child. And he was like… how did he say it… trauma therapy, do you want to do trauma therapy with me? And I was like no, ah…

00:46:28 VB:
Yes, it has that touch, of course.

00:46:31 VMF:
Of course. But… I don’t want to drill or psychologize where it’s not necessary or doesn’t fit. But if reflection has to do with psychology and your other job, it all intertwines. You’re the same person everywhere. And that’s what interests me. What do these different worldviews have to do with each other? The worldview of little Verena and your worldview as an artist, musician, Shiatsu practitioner, voice expert, and everything in between without a name. Of course, at least just as much.

00:47:49 VB:
Also ich meine, was ich sagen kann, ist, dass es mir ganz viel um die Erfahrung geht. Und die Erfahrung ist bei mir einfach das Erleben und das finde ich besser, wenn man es wirklich auf die Sinne zurückführt, als wenn man sich im Rationalen verliert. Aber natürlich, muss ich gestehen, philosophische Gesprächen finde ich auch spannend, weil die können auch sinnlich sein. Die haben auch ein Erlebnis. Du bist grad da. Du atmest, während du denkst. Die Worte sind auch wie Nahrung. Manchmal. Also insofern, ja also ich würde das nicht so trennen.

Eben mit Kindern philosophieren ist eigentlich was total Schönes. Also deswegen, hin und her und weg vom Psychologisieren, wahrscheinlich ist es schön, wenn man eine philosophische Frage stellt. Also „was denkst du?“ ist da bisschen eng. Aber vielleicht kommt dann auch total eine schöne Antwort, weil vielleicht ist es gerade so, ach ich denk grad wie der Sand... was für ein Leben der Sand da hat oder was für Tiere da drinnen leben, was die so für ein Leben haben und wie sich das anfühlen würde. Insofern ist das vielleicht eh eine schöne Frage: Was denkst du gerade?

00:49:56 VMF:
Sicher. Na klar ist die schön.

00:49:58 VB:
Also ja und kann was irrsinnig Schönes öffnen.

00:50:04 VMF:
Ich kann mir das irrsinnig gut vorstellen. Also für mich ist jetzt in unserem Gespräch diese Situation am Meer irgendwie so der Kern. Das ist total fein. Und ich kann mir auch diesen Austausch total schön vorstellen. Und ich finde auch das, was du nur so angedeutet hast, also dieses Sinnliche. Also es wird immer dann ja auch poetisch und faszinierend finde ich, also wenn ich mich zum Beispiel mit dem L. unterhalte, wenn er versucht, Sprache zu finden für sinnliche Eindrücke, Zustände oder Vorstellungen, letztlich also bis hin zu physikalischem Welt-erfahren, und das versucht zu verbalisieren. Da wird es ja dann irrsinnig spannend und cool.

00:51:34 VB:
Ja, ja, genau. Ja, weil es eben so eine neue Perspektive eröffnet. Jetzt komme ich auch da drauf. Was ich immer wieder cool finde, ist, wenn mein Gehör manchmal wirklich irgendwas macht mit den Sachen, die mir entgegenkommen, dann denke ich mir irgendwie cool. Also weil, dadurch wird‘s so ein bisschen wie abstrakt fast und es öffnet sich etwas ganz Neues und das finde ich eigentlich manchmal total schön. Und mit Kindern ist es halt auch öfters so, dass man einfach wie so vor den Kopf gestoßen wird. Was ist das eigentlich für ein komischer Ausdruck „vor den Kopf gestoßen“... ja...

00:52:19 VMF:
So perplex?

00:52:19 VB:
Ja also, dass man dann irgendwie so was Neues suchen muss, um ein Verständnis, also quasi diese Wellenlänge zu finden und da auf eine Ebene zu kommen, wo man gemeinsam schwingen kann und wo man sich versteht. Das ist was unglaublich Schönes, eben, das ist eine Bereicherung. Das habe ich eh schon gesagt. Und beim L. eben. Ich meine, was ich bis jetzt mir angehört oder gesehen habe, ist ja genau das. Das öffnet so. Und das ist irrsinnig schön. Und gleichzeitig erfordert es wirklich dieses Einlassen auch. Also der L. hat sicher genau das, was... also in dir könnte ich mir vorstellen da gibt‘s irrsinnig viel diesen Wunsch auch nach sowas als Kind, dass da jemand ist und der hört dich. Der versucht dich zu verstehen. Der springt auf deinen Wagen auf und fährt mit dir

00:47:49 VB:
What I can say is that it’s all about experience for me. And experience means to me simply living it, and I find it better to bring it back to the senses than getting lost in the rational. But I admit, I find philosophical conversations interesting because they can also be sensory. They have an experience. You are here now. You breathe while you think. Words can be like nourishment. Sometimes. So yes, I wouldn’t separate that.

Philosophizing with kids is really something beautiful. So back and forth and away from psychologizing. Probably it’s nice if you ask a philosophical question. “What are you thinking?” is a bit narrow. But maybe it gets a really nice answer because maybe it’s like “Oh, I’m thinking like the sand... what life does the sand have or what animals live in there, what kind of life do they have, how does that feel?” So maybe that’s a nice question after all: What are you thinking right now?

00:49:56 VMF:
Sure. Of course, it’s a good question.

00:49:58 VB:
Yes, and it can open something incredibly beautiful.

00:50:04 VMF:
I can really imagine that very well. So for me, in our conversation now, this situation at the sea somehow feels like the core. That’s really nice. And I can also totally imagine this exchange being really beautiful. And I also like what you only hinted at, this sensual aspect. It always becomes poetic and fascinating, I think, for example when I talk with L., when he tries to find language for sensual impressions, states, or ideas, ultimately even for physical world-experience, and tries to put that into words. That’s when it gets incredibly exciting and cool.

00:51:34 VB:
Yes, yes, exactly. Because it opens up such a new perspective. Now I’m getting to that. What I always find cool is when my hearing sometimes really does something with the things that come toward me, then I think somehow, cool. Because it becomes a bit abstract almost, and something completely new opens up, and I actually find that really beautiful sometimes. And with children, it’s often like that too, that you’re kind of „vor den Kopf gestoßen“ (taken aback). What kind of weird expression is „vor den Kopf gestoßen“ ... yeah...

00:52:19 VMF:
Like perplexed?

00:52:19 VB:
Yes, so that you then somehow have to look for something new to find an understanding, like this wavelength, and come to a level where you can resonate together and understand each other. That’s something incredibly beautiful, exactly, that’s a real enrichment. I already said that. And with L., well, what I have listened to or seen so far is exactly that. It opens up like that. And that is incredibly beautiful. And at the same time, it really requires this willingness to engage. L. definitely has exactly that... I could imagine that in you, there is so much of this desire as a child, that someone is there and listens to you. Who tries to understand you. Who jumps on your wagon and travels with you into space or whatever. Flies with you to the moon or yeah, or into my world. That’s just an incredible gift. I mean, of course, you give him an enormous amount.

ins Weltall oder was auch immer. Fliegt mit dir zum Mond oder ja oder in meine Welt. Das ist einfach ein unglaubliches Geschenk. Also ich mein, du gibst ihm natürlich irrsinnig viel.

00:53:37 VMF:
Ja und er nimmt mich mit.

00:53:39 VB:
Und er nimmt dich auch mit. Natürlich. Also voll schön. Eben das ist einfach ein perfektes Zusammen...spiel.

00:53:49 VMF:
Ja ZusammenSPIEL.

00:53:52 VB:
Ja genau. Und ich glaube, also im besten Fall kann sowas auch in einem „Trickfilmstudio“ möglich sein.

00:54:06 VMF: Ja.

00:54:06 VB:
Und ich finde, es kann noch besser möglich sein, wenn einfach die Strukturen gegeben sind. Schwieriger wird es, finde ich, wenn es so eine zeitliche Begrenzung hat, natürlich.

00:54:53 VMF:
Wobei, es ist ja immer dieses Pendeln... ich meine, ein Stück weit ist es ja auch gut so einen zeitlichen Rahmen z.B. zu haben, wo ich weiß, in diesem bin ich dann aber ganz frei und nicht: nach 5 Minuten muss das und nach 10 Minuten muss das passiert sein... oder dass das auch voll okay ist, dass wir 85 von 90 Minuten scheinbar nichts machen und in den letzten fünf Minuten passiert eben was.

00:55:22 VB:
Genau, das war sehr oft. Und da war unser Team auch besonders, weil am Ende war immer klar, wir schauen, wo alle sind und bemühen uns, was auch immer: Das muss jetzt aber noch diesen Punkt da drauf kriegen und dann ist es quasi ganz. Also das Überziehen braucht es auch teilweise.

00:55:58 VMF:
Also ja einerseits das Überziehen, aber andererseits auch dieses Zulassen, dass vorher ...

00:56:02 VB:
... nichts passiert. Ja voll!

00:56:04 VMF:
Und dann, wenn noch eine Minute was passiert ist super, und wenn bis zum Schluss nichts passiert, passiert nichts.

00:56:09 VB:
Genau. Diese Freiheit ist großartig und ist notwendig dafür, dass bestimmte Sachen passieren können.

00:56:19 VMF:
Ja, schön!

00:56:25 VB:
Ja urschön! Ja, die Arbeit mit Kindern ist sehr schön. Ich meine, die Arbeit mit Kindern, das hat ja gleich mal so eine Reklamation finde ich ein bisschen in sich, dieses Spiel mit Kindern, wenn man sich darauf einlässt, ist es sehr sehr schön. Ich glaube oft die Termini, die Begriffe sind einfach so ausschlaggebend für das, wie man es angeht, auch selber. Also wenn ich jetzt hingehe und sage, ich mache Arbeit, ich arbeite. Also dann ist es natürlich sehr individuell, wie man Arbeit sieht. Und ich ich glaub, ja, das ist schon auch die Bezahlung, lustigerweise, weil je weniger du kriegst, desto mehr ist quasi die Arbeit so spürbar. Wenn du mehr kriegst, hab ich das Gefühl, du hast mehr Frei-

00:53:37 VMF:
Yes, and he takes me along.

00:53:39 VB:
And he takes you along too. Of course. So beautiful. That is just a perfect co...operation.

00:53:49 VMF:
Yes, coOPERATION.

00:53:52 VB:
Yes, exactly. And I think, ideally, something like that can also be possible in an “Animated Film Studio“.

00:54:06 VMF:
Yes.

00:54:06 VB:
And I think it can be even better possible if the structures are simply given. It becomes more difficult, I think, when there is a time limit, of course.

00:54:53 VMF:
Although, it’s always this pendulum... I mean, it’s also good to have a time frame, for example, where I know I’m completely free within it and not: after 5 minutes this must happen and after 10 minutes that must have happened... or that it’s also totally okay that we seemingly do nothing for 85 out of 90 minutes and then something happens in the last five minutes.

00:55:22 VB:
Exactly, that happened very often. And our team was also special in that because in the end it was always clear: we check where everyone is and try to, whatever it is: This now still needs this point, and then it’s basically complete. So sometimes you also need to overrun.

00:55:58 VMF:
So yes, on the one hand overrunning, but on the other hand also allowing that before that...

00:56:02 VB:
... nothing happens. Yes, totally!

00:56:04 VMF:
And then if something happens one minute before the end, that’s great, and if nothing happens until the end, nothing happens.

00:56:09 VB:
Exactly. This freedom is fantastic and necessary for certain things to be able to happen.

00:56:19 VMF:
Yes, beautiful!

00:56:25 VB:
Yes, utterly beautiful! Yes, working with children is very beautiful. I mean, working with children already has this sort of claim in it, I find, this play with children, if you allow yourself to, is very very beautiful. I think often the terms, the words, are simply so decisive for how you approach it, yourself as well. So if I now go and say, I do work, I work. Then of course it’s very individual how one sees work. And I think, yes, it’s also the payment, funny enough, because the less you get, the more the work is tangible in a way. If you get more, I feel like you have more freedom in the work, and it becomes more playful and therefore more valuable. I have to say. Funny, really.

heit im Arbeiten und es wird spielerischer und deswegen wertvoller. Muss ich schon sagen. Lustig eigentlich.

00:57:57 VMF:
Ja es ist so, es fällt halt der Frust weg, weil wenn man sich die ganze Zeit irgendwie ärgert, dass es eigentlich nicht wertgeschätzt wird...

00:58:04 VB:
Und das andere ist halt erledigen. Also das Abarbeiten. Ja.

00:58:09 VMF:
Ja, obwohl eben als Kind am Strand beim Wellenzeichnen spielt ja diese Anerkennung keine Rolle oder also, letztlich Feedback kriegst du von der Welle...

00:58:31 VB:
Ja.

00:58:31 VMF:
Du bist mit der Welt irgendwie so direkt in Kontakt.

00:58:38 VB:
Ja!

00:58:40 VB:
Das ist... ich frage mich grad, ob diese Welle, die das dann immer wieder quasi verändert, auch eine wahnsinnige Freiheit gibt. Du kannst machen, was du willst, weil es verändert sich auch gleich. Und es wird nicht so: Ah, das ist es! Man wird nicht drauf festgelegt. Das ist schon etwas, was man den Kindern wirklich auch im Trickfilmworkshop geben konnte – immer wieder mal – so eine andere Perspektive.

Also mir ist vorher auch zum Trickfilm eingefallen, weil ich bin ja zum Trickfilm gekommen durch Super 8. Und da weiß ich noch, da war auch diese Freiheit einfach noch diese experimentelle Schiene, weil die auch so viel kann. Und ich finde, dass auch wir, wenn wir mit abstrakten – Du kannst jederzeit ausdrehen – dass du nicht zu viel...

00:59:56 VMF:
Nein, nein, das passt!

00:59:59 VB:
... dass einfach eben nur dieses Antupfen immer so schön ist. Weil was sein kann, das was das Antupfen machen kann, auch wenn man sich gleich wieder wehrt, es kann gleichzeitig so ein: ah ich erkenne mich wieder sein. Oder ich erkenne etwas. Von meiner noch viel tieferen Kindheit. Oder von was auch immer. Und ich glaube, das ist dann so wertvoll, um zu wachsen.

01:00:43 VMF:
Also du meinst Antupfen, weil es dich irgendwo erwischt?

01:00:47 VB:
Ja. Weil es dich irgendwo berührt vielleicht. Auch wenn du irgendwie vielleicht...

01:00:54 VMF:
... hat mich da was so gebissen? Ist das Blut? Oder hat es mich jetzt ange...

01:01:01 VB:
Angepieselt vor lauter, ja. Ich glaube angeschissen. Nein. Aber das war so und das ist lustig. Weil ich war mit meinem kleinen Bruder, der 15 Jahre jünger ist, da war ich grad so mit Super 8 und so. Und dann hab ich raufgeschaut und hab mir gedacht: da hab ich quasi die Perspektive vom Baby und hab dann gefilmt. Nur dieses Gehen durch diesen Blätterwald.

00:57:57 VMF:
Yes, it's like the frustration disappears because if you're constantly annoyed that it's actually not appreciated...

00:58:04 VB:
And the other thing is just getting it done. So working through things. Yes.

00:58:09 VMF:
Yes, although as a child at the beach, drawing waves, that recognition doesn't matter, or rather, ultimately, you get feedback from the wave...

00:58:31 VB:
Yes.

00:58:31 VMF:
You're somehow directly in contact with the world.

00:58:38 VB:
Yes!

00:58:40 VB:
That is... I'm just wondering if this wave, which keeps changing things, also gives an incredible freedom. You can do whatever you want because it changes immediately. And it's not like: Ah, that's it! You're not stuck with it. That's really something you could always give children in the animation workshop – again and again – such a different perspective.

Before, animation also came to my mind, because I came to animation through Super 8. And I still remember, there was this freedom, just this experimental approach, because it can do so much. And I think we also, when we work with abstract stuff – you can always go wild – you don't have to, you can switch off anytime...

00:59:56 VMF:
No, no, it's ok!

00:59:59 VB:
... that it's just this gentle tapping that is so beautiful. Because what can happen, what that tapping can do, even if you immediately resist it again, it can simultaneously be like: Ah, I recognize myself again. Or I recognize something from my much deeper childhood. Or from whatever. And I think that is so valuable to grow.

01:00:43 VMF:
So you mean tapping because it somehow hits you?

01:00:47 VB:
Yes. Because it maybe touches you somewhere. Even if you somehow...

01:00:54 VMF:
... did something bite me there? Is that blood? Or did it just pee on me or...

01:01:01 VB:
Pee on you from sheer, yes. I think it pissed on you. No. But it was like that and it's funny. Because I was with my little brother, who is 15 years younger, back then I was just working with Super 8 and so on. And then I looked up and thought: I basically have the baby's perspective and then filmed. Just walking through this leaf forest.

Ich sage dir, den Film habe ich mir tausend mal angeschaut und fand es so cool. Also warte wie war das? Nein, es war dann so, dass mein Freund, der Harald, der hat nämlich das Kunstprojekt draus gemacht. Der hat das dann nämlich nochmal gemacht. Ich hab‘s mit der Videokamera gemacht. Er hat es dann mit Super 8 gemacht. Und er hat sich mit dem Beworben beim Kubelka und dieser Film ist irrsinnig oft gezeigt worden bei irgendwelchen Experimental Screenings und ich hab immer wieder gedacht: Ah so schön. Eigentlich ist es ja nur diese kleine Perspektiven-Veränderung. Und Perspektivenwechsel, das ist das, was man den Kindern oder was man jedem geben kann und was auch, finde ich, ja ein künstlerischer Auftrag ist. Generell.

01:02:17 VMF:
Ja und was man selber bekommt, wenn die Kinder es schaffen, ihre Perspektive irgendwie auszudrücken.

01:02:23 VB:
Ganz genau. Ja. Stimmt. Danke, dass du dieses vice-verse noch. Ja, weil ich meine, das ist das, was am schlimmsten ist, wenn man dann nicht mehr dort arbeitet. Weil man kriegt wirklich viel. Es ist ja genau das. Dieses andere Schauen, dieses andere Benennen, dieses Kindliche, wie man so sagt. Es ist einfach unheimlich viel wert und kann sehr inspirierend sein oder es ist einfach beglückend und bestärkend und sinnvoll.
01:03:13 VMF:
Das ist doch ein gutes Schlusswort, oder?

01:03:17 VB:
Yes!

01:03:18 VMF:
Danke Verena.

01:03:21 VB:
Ja danke, Verena – es war urnett. Urschön.

Die Performerin und Sängerin, Stimmtrainerin & Körpertherapeutin VB war jahrelanges Mitglied des Carpa-Theater-Labors, welches Strukturen von Musik-Improvisation aufgriff und anhand von Bewegung und Stimme im Raum erforschte. Als Performance-Duo ‚Erika Storm‘ mit Anna Mendelssohn untersuchte sie in ihren Stücken ‚Transakustische Bewegungen‘. Verena wirkte in Theaterproduktionen u.a. mit Toxic Dreams mit. Mit Eva ‚Gustav‘ Jantschitsch gründete sie das Akkordeon-Punk-Duo ‚Agenda LoBarbara Krausov‘, welches sich zum Auftrag machte, Arbeiterinnenlieder zu agitieren. Weitere musikalische Projekte u.a mit Jorge Sanchez-Chiong, KMET, Franz Reisecker, Manfred ‚Raumschiff‘ Engelmayr, DUO MIGNON. Soloprojekte mit Akkordeon und Stimme in Zusammenarbeit mit bildenden KünstlerInnen und SchriftstellerInnen. Musikalische Beiträge auf diversen CD-Produktionen. Sie besuchte Meisterkurse am ‚Institute for living Voice‘ (Belgien) bei David Moss, Sainko Namtschilak und Joan La Barbara u.m. Sprecherausbildung bei Adelheid Pillmann. Als ausgebildete Shiatsu und Grinberg-Praktikerin sowie Atem-Tonus-Ton Pädagogin, arbeitet sie sowohl in eigener Praxis sowie als Stimmtrainerin an diversen Hochschulen.

I tell you, I watched that film a thousand times and thought it was so cool. So wait, how was that? No, it was like this: my friend Harald actually made it into an art project. He then made it again. I made it with the video camera. He did it with Super 8. And he applied with it at Kubelka and this film was shown insanely often at some experimental screenings and I kept thinking: Ah, so beautiful. Actually, it’s just this small change of perspective. And change of perspective is what you can give children or anyone and what is, I think, a kind of artistic mission. In general.

01:02:17 VMF:
Yes, and what you yourself get when children manage to somehow express their perspective.

01:02:23 VB:
Exactly. Yes. Right. Thanks for adding this vice-verse. Yes, because I mean, that’s the worst thing when you no longer work there. Because you really get a lot. It’s exactly that. This other looking, this other naming, this childishness, as they say. It’s just incredibly valuable and can be very inspiring or it’s simply uplifting and strengthening and meaningful.

01:03:13 VMF:
That’s a good closing statement, isn’t it?

01:03:17 VB:
Yes!

01:03:18 VMF:
Thanks, Verena.

01:03:21 VB:
Yes, thanks Verena – it was super nice. Utterly beautiful.

**Performer and singer, voice coach, and body therapist Verena Brückner was a longtime member of the Carpa Theater Laboratory, which explored structures of musical improvisation through movement and voice in space. As part of the performance duo ‘Erika Storm’ with Anna Mendelssohn, she investigated ‘transacoustic movements’ in their works. Verena also participated in theater productions, including Toxic Dreams. Together with Eva ‘Gustav’ Jantschitsch, she founded the accordion-punk duo ‘Agenda LoBarbara Krausov,’ which aimed to agitate workers’ songs. Additional musical collaborations include projects with Jorge Sanchez-Chiong, KMET, Franz Reisecker, Manfred ‘Raumschiff’ Engelmayr, and DUO MIGNON. Her solo projects combine accordion and voice in collaboration with visual artists and writers. She has contributed musically to various CD productions.
She attended masterclasses at the Institute for Living Voice (Belgium) with David Moss, Sainko Namtschilak, Joan La Barbara, among others. She completed voice acting training with Adelheid Pillmann. As a certified Shiatsu and Grinberg practitioner as well as a Breath-Tonus-Ton pedagogue, she works both in her own practice and as a voice coach at several universities.**

(Explanatory) Notes and References

Dschungel

„DSCHUNGEL WIEN, founded in 2004, is a co-production house for independent performing arts with a focus on young audiences.“

Dschungel is located directly next to the ZOOM Children’s Museum in the MuseumsQuartier Vienna.

Available at: https://www.dschungelwien.at
(Accessed: 25 September 2025).

if you cannot see,
listen and hum.

Perihan Seifried

über Fliegen täuschen, persönliche Epochen, kompliziert Denken, Hemmungen, schubsende Schlüsselfiguren, Kunst als Alibi, Reykjavik, Tirol, Istanbul, Tattoos und Bubbles.
about deceiving flies, personal epochs, complicated thinking, inhibitions, pushing key figures, art as an alibi, Reykjavik, Tyrol, Istanbul, tattoos and bubbles.

Ich besuche Peri am 28.06.2021 bei ihr zu Hause. Sie wohnt mit ihrem Freund in einer großen Wohnung in der Nähe vom Museumsquartier. Zu ihrer Wohnung gehört eine Dachterrasse auf einem einstöckigen Gebäude im Innenhof. Wir sitzen zwischen vielen Pflanzen umgeben von den Brandschutzmauern der umliegenden Häuser. Peri und ich kennen uns zwar noch nicht sehr lange, haben aber wie ich fand ein paar sehr lustige Workshops miteinander gemacht und sind schnell zu einem guten Team und guten Freundinnen geworden.

00:00:00 VMF:
Ja. Okay. Die Aufnahme ist gestartet. Aber wie gesagt, die Aufnahme ist nur Notiz. Und alles, was irgendwie verwendet wird, war vorher bei dir und du hast es freigegeben.
00:00:20 PS:
Das schaut lustig aus.

00:00:23 VMF:
Das nimmt uns auf.

00:00:24 PS:
So jetzt musst du mir nochmal die Frage sagen.

00:00:27 VMF:
Okay. Aber bei den anderen habe ich am Anfang so viel gequatscht. Also, ich versuch‘s ein bisschen knapper zu halten: Ich würde gerne ein Buch machen. Zum einen für Leute, die weder uns noch das Kindermuseum kennen. Das man sich gerne anschaut, das nett zu lesen und inspirierend ist. Und auch eine Art Bühne für uns und für die ganzen individuellen Persönlichkeiten und Geschichten und Zugänge. Im Endeffekt geht es mir darum, mich dem anzunähern, in was für einem Verhältnis eine im weitesten Sinne künstlerische Arbeit zu dem steht, was wir mit den Kindern machen, egal wie sehr man sich selber als Künstler oder Künstlerin empfindet oder nicht. Oder inwieweit das eine künstlerische Arbeit ist oder vielleicht mehr so etwas wie ein künstlerischer Welt-Begegnungs-Modus. Also es geht mir überhaupt nicht darum wieviel verkaufst du in irgendeiner Galerie, sondern in einem sehr weiten Kunstbegriff, einfach in Ermangelung einer anderen Vokabel für das, was mich interessiert.
Das ist ein Teil von meinem PhD, so wie ein Kapitel. Ich habe ja einerseits diese Projekte mit den Schülern und Schülerinnen gemacht, die riesig waren und cool und gut funktioniert haben, aber irgendwie auch alles nur noch komplizierter gemacht haben für mich: In der Fragestellung wo stehe ich da jetzt und wie positioniere ich mich? Und was ist meine Gestaltungsmöglichkeit? Meine künstlerische Arbeit? Was ist meine Qualifikation? Spielt das eine Rolle? Was sind dann meine Kollaborationspartner und -partnerinnen? Und was macht es für ein Unterschied, ob die einen professionellen Anspruch haben oder nicht? Und was passiert dann, wenn da was rauskommt, was ich toll finde? Vielleicht als Einzige. Und ich nehme das raus aus dem Kontext. Darf ich das überhaupt? Diese ganzen Fragen sind da nur noch viel komplizierter geworden.

Und dann hab ich ja viel mit meinem Neffen gemacht und es ist da nicht weniger kompliziert, weil halt viel intensiver. Aber es ist zumindest nur diese eine Beziehung. Dadurch ist viel in Bewegung gekommen, aber es sind noch mehr Fragen aufgetaucht.

Und dann war schon auch immer das Thema, ja irgendwie hab ich mich so allein gefühlt mit diesen ganzen Fragen. Es ist ja immer so dieses: ich bin Künstlerin oder Künstler und nebenher als Brotjob mache ich halt

I visit Peri at her home on June 28, 2021. She lives with her boyfriend in a spacious apartment near the MuseumsQuartier. The apartment includes a rooftop terrace on a one-story building in the courtyard. We sit among many plants, surrounded by the firewalls of the neighboring houses. Although Peri and I haven’t known each other for very long, I felt we had already done some very fun workshops together and quickly became a good team and good friends.

00:00:00 VMF:
Okay. The recording is on. But just so you know, it‘s only for note-taking. And anything that actually gets used, you‘ll have seen and approved beforehand.

00:00:20 PS:
That looks funny.

00:00:23 VMF:
It‘s recording us.

00:00:24 PS:
So now you‘ll have to repeat the question for me.

00:00:27 VMF:
Okay. But with the others, I talked so much at the beginning. I’ll try to keep it a bit shorter now:

I’d like to make a book. For one, something for people who don’t know us or the Children‘s Museum – something that’s enjoyable to look through, nice to read, and inspiring. And also a kind of stage for us, for all the individual personalities, stories, and approaches.

Ultimately, I’m trying to explore the relationship between what could broadly be called artistic work and what we do with the kids – regardless of whether one sees themselves as an artist or not. Or whether this is artistic work at all, or maybe more like an artistic mode of engaging with the world.

It’s really not about how much someone sells in a gallery – I’m thinking in terms of a very broad concept of art, mostly because I don’t have a better word for what I’m actually interested in.

It’s part of my PhD, like a chapter. On one hand, I did these big projects with students that were amazing and worked really well, but in the end, they just made things more complicated for me – in terms of the question: where do I actually stand in all this? How do I position myself? What are my possibilities for creating or shaping something? What counts as my artistic work? What’s my qualification? Does that matter? Who are my collaborators? And what difference does it make if someone is a professional or not? And then what happens if something comes out of it that I love – maybe I’m the only one who does – and I take it out of the context. Can I even do that? All those questions just got even more complex.

And then I did a lot with my nephew – and it’s not any less complicated, because it’s way more intense. But at least it’s just that one relationship. It set a lot in motion, but it also raised even more questions.

And then there’s always been this feeling that I was kind of alone with all these questions. There’s this unspoken thing – like, “I’m an artist, and I work at the Children‘s Museum on the side, just to make a living – of course, obviously. And I do not even want more hours.“

im Kindermuseum, ist doch eh klar. Und ich will auch gar nicht mehr Stunden.

Aber das gibt‘s doch nicht, dass diese ganzen Fragen nur mich beschäftigen. Da kommt man sich halt immer alleine vor, wenn man selber nicht so ganz fassen kann, was man macht und wo man ist, was man will und so. Und ich dachte es ist einfach gut, das nochmal auch in meiner Forschung aufzumachen und zu schauen: Okay, wer ist da noch? Und auch das Netzwerk zu stärken sozusagen.

Und jetzt natürlich. Also die ganzen Kindermuseum-internen Beweggründe brauch ich nicht aufzählen. Dass das glaub ich schon auch für das Haus gut, sich bewusst zu machen und dann auch für uns gut zu reflektieren, was wir da machen und was wir gut können.

Naja und weil es aber schwierig ist, das so direkt zu greifen… bzw. da gibt‘s die Soziologinnen, die Fragebögen haben, so strukturelle Sachen abfragen, was ja schön und gut ist. Aber das, was ich glaube, dass den großen Teil dieser Besonderheit bei uns ausmacht und das, was ich glaube, dass ich kann oder bin, das liegt irgendwie zwischen 0 und 1, das sind eben diese Grauwerte, für die es keine so klaren Begriffe gibt. Das, was immer entfleucht und man nicht so richtig fassen kann.

Deswegen führe ich jetzt diese Gespräche nicht so nach einem Leitfaden: Was tust du, wenn du im Kindermuseum arbeitest, sondern versuche, das sogar wieder ein bisschen auf die Seite zu schieben. Und hab mir gedacht, für mich ist ein wichtiger Kompass – eigentlich immer, aber vor allem natürlich, wenn ich mit Kindern arbeite, dass die kleine Verena, die eh immer dableibt und nie ganz weggeht, was hätte sich dieses Kind gewünscht, dass wir machen, dass jemand mit mir macht? Oder was hätte ich gebraucht? Oder auch gleichzeitig, was hab ich damals vielleicht gekonnt oder gemacht, was irgendwie ganz viel mit dem Jetzt zu tun hat? Vielleicht etwas, was ich jetzt gar nicht mehr kann oder nicht mehr so habe.

Und deswegen habe ich mir gedacht, dass das vielleicht ein guter Schlüssel ist, die Vorstellung, dass du dich selber treffen könntest. Also wenn man einfach sagt, da könntest du für dich als Erwachsene jetzt von dir als Kind etwas abholen oder andersherum mit dem, was dazwischen noch passiert ist, in deinem Leben. Wenn du damit zurück gehen kannst, was würdest du dann dem Kind, dem Kind Peri vielleicht geben können oder wollen?

00:08:02 PS:
Soll ich einfach mal anfangen?

00:08:03 VMF:
Ja, wenn du einen Ansatz hast?

00:08:05 PS:
Irgendwie hab ich da so an ein paar Sachen denken müssen, weil das…ich wollt ja schon immer… ich fange einfach an. Als Kleinkind habe ich eine Begegnung gehabt mit unserer Nachbarin, die mir auch meinen Spitznamen Pele geben hat, aber andere Geschichte. Und die hat immer sehr gerne gemalt. Also wo es mich angefangen hat, überhaupt zu interessieren – meine Familie kommt nicht aus einem Künstler … also es ist ja, den meisten geht‘s so, dass die Eltern nicht künstlerisch irgendwie interessiert sind. Aber die Nachbarin hat gern Pflanzen gemalt. Und ich war da so 5 oder sowas und mich hat das voll fasziniert, weil alle Fliegen gedacht haben, das ist echt und sind auf ihr Bild geflogen. So habe ich es in Erinnerung.

But it can’t be that I’m the only one struggling with these questions. You feel really alone when you can’t quite grasp what it is you’re doing or where you’re going or what you want. And I thought it would be helpful to include that in my research, too – to open it up and ask: who else is out there? And to strengthen that network, so to speak.

And of course, there are also all the internal reasons within the Children‘s Museum that I don’t need to list now – I do think it’s good for the organization to become more aware of this and for us to reflect on what we do and what we’re good at.

But because it’s hard to get a grip on it directly… I mean, yes, there are sociologists who use questionnaires to gather structural data, and that’s fine. But I think that the specialness of what we do – and whatever it is that I think I am or can do – that lives somewhere between 0 and 1. In these grey zones where there aren’t really clear terms. It’s that slippery stuff you can never quite pin down.

That’s why I’m not doing these interviews in a structured format – like “what do you do when you work at the Children‘s Museum?” I’m actually trying to push that a bit to the side.

And I thought – for me, a really important compass, always but especially when working with kids – is to ask: what would little Verena, the kid that’s still kind of always there, have wanted us to do? What would she have needed someone to do with her? Or also: what did I maybe do or know back then that really connects to the present? Maybe even something I’ve now lost or forgotten.

So I thought that might be a good key to start with – this idea of meeting your younger self. Like: if you as an adult could meet yourself as a child, what would you bring to them? What would you want to give them, from everything that’s happened in your life in be-tween? What would you, the adult Peri, offer to little Peri?

00:08:02 PS:
Should I just start?

00:08:03 VMF:
Yeah, if you have an idea?

00:08:05 PS:
A few things came to mind because I’ve always kind of… I’ll just start. When I was really little, I had this encounter with our neighbor – she actually gave me my nickname “Pele”, but that’s another story. She loved to paint. That’s when I first started getting interested. My family isn’t artistic – which is probably the case for most people. But this neighbor painted plants. I must’ve been around five, and I was completely fascinated – because flies actually landed on her painting, thinking it was real. Or at least that’s how I remember it.

Das hat mich voll fasziniert und immer so ein bisschen begleitet. Ich wollte immer Kunst machen, weil das war ja Täuschung und in der Täuschung ist es irgendwie auch eine große Freiheit. Und das war mein Ausgangspunkt, warum mich das immer dahin verschlagen hat, weil es irgendwie wenn ich drüber reflektier und das Kindermuseum.... Also ich muss kurz die Uni erwähnen, es wird jetzt ein bisschen historisch, weil die Bildhauerei hab ich mit 18 angefangen zu studieren. Und im Nachhinein, es hat mich sehr frustriert, obwohl ich auch voll viel gelernt habe. Also das hat schon voll Sinn gemacht, weil ich rausgefunden habe, wie arbeite ich als Person gerne.

Aber es hat mich auch sehr frustriert, weil es irgendwie nur einen Weg gekennzeichnet hat: das Beste ist, wenn man in einer Galerie gefällt und wenn man gefördert wird und solche Sachen. Und wenn man nicht den Rhythmus... ich weiß nicht, ich sag nicht, es hat an den Leuten gelegen, es hat sicher hauptsächlich an mir gelegen, aber es war nicht meine Welt.

Und dann hab ich angefangen, mit Kindern zu arbeiten, erst bei der Caritas und dann im Kindermuseum. Und da bin ich dann draufgekommen, dass mir die Kunst eben diese Freiheit oft über die Räume eröffnet, wo man sich begegnet. Aber auch, dass man das als Instrument für die Kommunikation zwischeneinander verwenden kann.

Da habe ich so Schlüsselerlebnisse immer wieder gehabt, auch viele im Kindermuseum mit den Kolleginnen und Kollegen. Also das Atelier hat mir viel beigebracht. Also das, was mir immer taugt, das Material und das, was man mit dem kleinen Rahmen Großes schaffen kann. Also dass man da gar nicht so kompliziert denken muss, dass es voll simpel gehen kann, weil es eben so eine freie Sprache ist.

Und wenn ich jetzt ein kleines Kind wäre, was ich gerne gehabt hätte, wäre wahrscheinlich irgendwie mehr Material, mehr... mehr Leute, die mit mir das spielerisch machen. Oder... ich finde das mit dem zum Kind versetzen deswegen schwierig, weil ich ja als Kind schon immer irgendwie was Künstlerisches machen wollte und mir das auch immer gesucht habe in der Schule oder sonst wo. Mein Schulweg, das war jetzt keine künstlerische Schule, es war eine Malerschule, aber es war schon sehr nah an Kunst, bevor ich im Studium dann voll viel Material entdeckt und mit Material gearbeitet hab. Aber als Kind, dadurch, dass es bei uns überhaupt kein Thema war, habe ich es mir halt von draußen gesucht. Und ich werfe das auch meinen Eltern nicht vor. Aber vielleicht hätte es einfach mehr... also ich weiß es nicht. Ich möchte jetzt nicht sagen, als Kind hätte ich gern ein Kindermuseum gehabt, weil ich habe kein Kindermuseum gehabt. Ich bin ja auf einem Berg aufgewachsen...

00:12:38 VMF:
Na das passt schon, voll schön, was du jetzt schon erzählt hast. Vielleicht kannst du einfach nochmal ein bisschen genauer erzählen, diese Situationen mit den fliegenden Fliegen oder überhaupt das, was du als Schlüsselmomente beschreibst?

00:12:53 PS:
Ja klar, ja eben diese Nachbarin hat uns eh immer voll fasziniert. Meine Eltern waren auf einem Berg oben, wo es vielleicht zehn Häuser gab und wir waren die einzigen migrantischen Leute. Und wir haben diese Nachbarn gehabt, die aus der Stadt als Ferienwohnung hergekommen sind. Ich glaube, der Mann war Architekt und sie hat gemalt und es ist sicher auch die Liebe zu ihr gewesen. Ich kann mich einfach immer noch erinnern, es waren so ähnliche Pflanzen wie diese Kermesbeere, so violett und rosa und sie hat das halt so realistisch... obwohl, sie hat gar nicht realistisch

It totally blew my mind and stuck with me. I always wanted to make art – because it was a kind of illusion, and within that illusion, there was this huge freedom. That's what initially drew me in. And then when I think about the Children's Museum... I have to quickly mention university – sorry, this'll get a bit historical. I started studying sculpture when I was 18. Looking back, it was both really frustrating and also super valuable. I learned a lot – especially about how I like to work as a person.

But it was frustrating, too, because it felt like there was only one valid path: being successful in galleries and getting funding and all that. And if you didn't keep up with that rhythm... I don't want to blame the people there – it was probably mostly about me – but it just wasn't my world.

Then I started working with kids – first at Caritas and then at the Children's Museum. That's when I realized: art gives me this freedom, especially in the spaces where we meet and connect. But also, it can be an in-strument for communication.

I had a bunch of those "aha" moments, especially at the Children's Museum and with my colleagues. The studio there taught me so much – especially about how much you can do with limited materials. That you don't need to overthink things – it can be really simple, because it's such a free language.

And if I were a little kid now, I think I would've really liked more materials, more people to do creative things with in a playful way. But... I also find it hard to imagine "becoming" that child again, because I always wanted to do something creative, even back then. And I actively sought it out – in school, or wherever I could. My school wasn't specifically artistic, but it was a painting school, so it was already pretty close. Then during my studies I discovered so many materials and ways of working. But as a kid, because there was just no context for that at home, I had to find it outside. And I don't blame my parents at all – but maybe if there had just been a bit more... I don't know. I wouldn't say I would've wanted a Children's Museum as a kid – because I didn't even know such a thing existed. I grew up on a mountain...

00:12:38 VMF:
No, that's totally fine – what you just said is already really beautiful. Maybe you could just go into a bit more detail about those moments? Like the flies, or those key experiences you mentioned?

00:12:53 PS:
Yeah, sure. That neighbor of ours really fascinated us. My parents lived up on this mountain, maybe ten houses total – and we were the only migrant family. These neighbors had a vacation home there – I think the husband was an architect and she painted. I'm sure it was also partly about how much I loved her. I still remember it so clearly – she painted plants that looked like pokeweed, those purple and pink ones. And she painted them in this really... actually, not even super realistic way, but I just saw the insects landing on the canvas.

gemalt, ich hab nur die Insekten gesehen, die auf das Bild geflogen sind.

00:13:44 VMF:
Also sie hat die Pflanzen gemalt.

00:13:46 PS:
Genau, eher konservativ. Klassische Malerei, also Abbildungen, aber echt gut irgendwie. Ich hab eben diese Täuschung so faszinierend gefunden, dass man die Insekten täuscht. So habe ich es mir halt eingebildet. Und da habe ich dann Malerin sein wollen. Ich habe auch anscheinend gut gezeichnet. Zum Beispiel im Kindergarten kam ein Polizist zu uns zu Besuch, weißt eh, diese Berufsvorstellung. Den habe ich porträtiert und dann wurde das aufgehängt. Also ich hab da immer wieder so Feedback gekriegt von… obwohl es gab auch so Lehrpersonen: Für die Aufnahme an der Malereischule hab ich ein Bild voll lang gezeichnet und dann hab ich ein Bild voll schnell gezeichnet. Das hab ich dann der Kunstlehrerin gezeigt, und sie hat es dann analysiert und gesagt: Da hast du dir voll Zeit gegeben und das ist voll schnell, aber es war halt umgekehrt. Das war schon wieder so eine Täuschung. Also diese Absurdität, die Kunst halt auch hergibt, hab ich immer aufgeschnappt oder aufgesogen.

Genau. Also da fallen mir jetzt voll viele Geschichten ein! In dieser Malerschule haben wir immer Techniken gelernt für ein Semester, also Frescomalerei, Ölmalerei, Schilder-Herstellung. Und bei der Ölmalerei war es so, dass alle so klassische Engel gemalt haben. Das ist ja voll die aufwendige Arbeit so mit der Grundierung. Also dann haben alle Engel gemalt und ich von Picasso den blauen Gitarristen. Als 15jährige oder 16, ich weiß nicht, hat mich das mehr interessiert. Und ich war dann total enttäuscht, dass ich einen Dreier gekriegt hab, weil ich hab das ganz alleine gemalt, den anderen hat der Lehrer gerne reingemalt. Und der hat das dann auch in der Vitrine ganz unten reingestellt. Also voll gemein die ganze Zeit. Das hat dann eine aus der Buchhaltung von der Schule gesehen und gekauft. Ich hab immer irgendwie was gemacht und dann Feedback von außen. Das war cool. Aber ja, diese naiven Gedanken, die ich vorher gehabt hab, das hat sich beim Studium ein bisschen weg gelöst. Das war dann weggebeamt, die ganzen romantischen Vorstellungen.

00:16:43 VMF:
Aber wie? Was meinst Du mit romantisch?

00:16:46 PS:
Mir war… also das ist ja eh lustig. Weil mir war ja Konzeptkunst nicht klar. Mir war die Komplexität dieser Freiheit von Kunst nicht klar. Also ich hab großen Respekt davor bekommen und ich hab auch das Gefühl gehabt, dass dieser Gedankenstrudel, der da drinnen ist, irgendwie gar nicht so beliebig sein muss. Weil es ist gar nicht beliebig. So fühlt es sich für mich an. Es war nicht schlimm. Es hat mich am Anfang frustriert, weil ich gedacht habe: Okay, da gibt‘s eine Mode oder Bewegung und später bin ich draufgekommen, davon gibt es voll viele. Aber dann, also ich bin voll konzeptuell geworden und hab da auch meinen eigenen Weg gefunden. Nach dem Studium, Jahre später, also, ich mach ja keine Kunst mehr, weil es mir so schwerfällt: diese Bürde, diese Freiheit gibt‘s halt irgendwie nicht. Da sind ja so Epochen, die ich quasi erlebt habe, in der Schulzeit, die‘s eh in der Kunstwelt auch gegeben hat und ich hab manchmal das Gefühl, ich bin noch nicht up to date. Also ich hab den Prozess noch nicht erlebt, dass ich den nächsten Schritt gehen kann. Meine Herangehensweise war immer voll langsam. Also ich bin irgendwie ein bisschen so. Früher habe ich einfach irgendetwas gemalt. Danach hab ich jeden Tag 6000 Punkte gezählt und so einen Kreis vollgemacht mit Punkten. Es war so diese Leere, oder auch diese

00:13:44 VMF:
So she painted the plants.

00:13:46 PS:
Right, more on the conservative side. Classical painting – representational – but somehow really good. I just found this illusion so fascinating, the idea that insects could be fooled. At least that’s how I imagined it. And that’s when I decided I wanted to be a painter. Apparently, I was good at drawing. For example, in kindergarten, a police officer came to visit us – you know, one of those job introduction things. I made a portrait of him, and they hung it up. So I kept getting feedback like that… although there were also teachers: for the painting school application, I worked forever on one picture, and I did another one super quickly. I showed both to the art teacher, and she analyzed them and said: “You really took your time on this one, and this one was done quickly” – but it was actually the other way around. So that was another illusion. I was always really drawn to that absurdity that art can offer – I soaked it up.

Yeah. I can think of so many stories now! In that painting school, we learned different techniques each semester: fresco painting, oil painting, sign-making. And for oil painting, everyone was painting classical angels. That’s a really elaborate process with the priming and everything. So everyone painted angels, and I painted The Old Guitarist by Picasso. I was like 15 or 16 – I don’t remember – and I was more interested in that. And I was totally disappointed that I got a C. I painted it completely on my own, while the teacher helped the others. And then he displayed my work in the very bottom of the display case. So unfair. But then someone from the school’s accounting department saw it and bought it. Somehow, I always created things and got outside feedback. That was cool. But yeah, those naïve thoughts I had before – they kind of dissolved during my studies. All those romantic ideas got beamed away.

00:16:43 VMF:
How so? What do you mean by „romantic“?

00:16:46 PS:
Well… it’s kind of funny. I had no idea about conceptual art. I didn’t grasp the complexity of that artistic freedom. I came to respect it a lot. I also felt that this whirlwind of ideas inside it wasn’t arbitrary. Because it’s not. That’s how it feels to me. It wasn’t a bad thing. At first, I was frustrated because I thought: okay, there’s a trend or movement, and later I realized – there are so many. But then I became very conceptual and found my own path. After university, years later – I don’t make art anymore because it’s just so hard: this burden, this so-called freedom doesn’t really exist. There were these eras I lived through at school that also existed in the art world, and sometimes I feel like I’m still not up to date. Like I haven’t gone through the process to take the next step. My approach was always super slow. That’s just how I am. Before, I would just paint whatever. Later, I counted 6,000 dots every day to fill a circle with dots. That void, or the effort – it became more about the struggle than the freedom…

Anstrengung. Also es war mehr mit Anstrengung verbunden als mit Freiheit...

00:18:51 VMF:
... also die 6000 Punkte?

00:18:53 PS:
Na es war mehr, also jeden Tag 6000 Punkte.

00:18:55 VMF:
Das war die Konzeptkunstphase?

00:18:57 PS:
Das ist eher die Phase, die ich dann auch irgendwo beibehalten hab, dieses Verfahrensmäßige. Das hat nichts mit Zufall zu tun gehabt, aber kontrollierter Zufall. Das ist grad super, weil solche Sachen haben mich voll interessiert und dann auch das Material: was man oder wie man das ausschöpfen kann. Also Gips habe ich sehr ausgeschöpft, aber nicht mit Skulpturen, sondern was kann man mit dem Material Gips alles machen.

Also ich kann kurz die Diplomarbeit erzählen, weil mit der hab ich mich am Anfang schwergetan, aber im Nachhinein finde ich sie lustig. Also ich glaube, das beschreibt es eigentlich ganz gut: Ich hab die Gipsmischverhältnisse einfach in Frage gestellt. Wenn man eine Skulptur haben will, braucht man halt eins zu zwei Gips-Verhältnis. Aber ich habe dann zwei große Espresso Kannen, diese Mokka Kannen gekauft, die größten und hab dann in den Kaffeeträger Gips reingetan und unten halt das Wasser. Und diese Verhältnisse habe ich gewürfelt, eine Woche lang. Dann war halt mal zu wenig Wasser, mal zu viel Wasser. Manchmal hat‘s gepasst und ich habe jedem Würfel-Zug quasi die gleiche Chance geben, was aus dem Material dann wird. Das hat ein bisschen archäologisch ausgeschaut und ich hab dann ganz viel verschiedene Gips-Platten, also Gips-Tellerchen gehabt, die alle eine verschiedene Konsistenz gehabt haben. Das war meine Diplomarbeit.

00:20:30 VMF:
Wie, du hast dann die Kaffeemaschine auf den Herd gestellt?

00:20:33 PS:
Ja, ich hab gewürfelt. Ein Würfel war für Wasser, der andere für Gips. Und dann habe ich so kleine Schnapsgläser gehabt. Das war die Einheit. Und dann hab ich eben das, was ich gewürfelt habe in die Kaffeekanne reingetan und hab‘s 10 Minuten kochen lassen. Und das was dann rauskommen ist, ist das Ergebnis gewesen.

00:20:58 VMF:
Aber ich verstehe es noch nicht also, diese normalen Espressokannen und dann kommt das Wasser, geht durch den Gips...

00:21:06 PS:
Ja genau. Die Vermischung funktioniert so, wie die Espressokanne funktioniert. Es staut sich unten, wenn es warm wird, der Dampf schießt auf einmal hoch und das, was eben dann hochgeschossen wird mischt sich mit dem Gips im Kaffeebehälter.

00:21:35 VMF:
Aber das mehrere Wasser ist dann weggeschüttet worden?

00:21:37 PS:
Das Mehrere ist halt drüber gegangen. Aber die Eigenschaft von Gips ist so, dass ähm... also das hab ich mal besser gewusst. Aber es ist halt so, dass die ein bestimmtes Verhältnis an Wasser brauchen. Aber wenn du zu viel Wasser nimmst, ist es egal, dann wird

00:18:51 VMF:
...you mean the 6,000 dots?

00:18:53 PS:
Yeah, it was more – like, 6,000 dots every day.

00:18:55 VMF:
That was during your conceptual art phase?

00:18:57 PS:
That’s more the phase I’ve kept – this procedural way of working. It had nothing to do with randomness, or maybe controlled randomness. That’s what fascinated me. And also the material: how far you can push it. I really explored plaster, but not for sculptures – rather, what else can you do with plaster?

So I can tell you briefly about my diploma project. I struggled with it at first, but in hindsight I think it’s funny. I think it describes me well: I questioned plaster mixing ratios. If you want to make a sculpture, you need a 1:2 plaster-to-water ratio. But I bought two huge espresso pots – those moka pots – the biggest ones, and I put plaster into the coffee basket and water in the bottom. I rolled dice to determine the ratios for a week. Sometimes there was too little water, sometimes too much. Sometimes it worked. And I gave each dice roll the same chance to determine what would happen with the material. It looked a bit archaeological, and I ended up with all these different plaster plates – like small plaster bowls – all with different consistencies. That was my thesis.

00:20:30 VMF:
Wait, you actually put the espresso pot on the stove?

00:20:33 PS:
Yeah, I rolled the dice. One die was for water, one for plaster. I used shot glasses as the unit. Whatever I rolled went into the coffee pot, and I let it boil for 10 minutes. And whatever came out was the result.

00:20:58 VMF:
But I don’t get it – those normal espresso makers? The water goes through the plaster?

00:21:06 PS:
Yeah, exactly. The mixing worked like how an espresso pot works: it builds pressure at the bottom as it heats, then steam shoots up and mixes with the plaster in the top chamber.

00:21:35 VMF:
And the excess water just spilled over?

00:21:37 PS:
Yeah, the excess spilled over. But the property of plaster is – well, I used to know this better – it needs a certain amount of water. If you use too much, it just becomes more brittle. You can still make a sculpture with lots of water and little plaster – it’ll just be fragile. But it still sets. There are more air pockets...

es halt spröder. Also du kannst schon mit wenig Gips und viel Wasser eine Skulptur machen. Das ist aber dann brüchiger. Aber es verbindet sich trotzdem. Es gibt mehr Hohlräume...

00:22:06 VMF:
Aber der Gips selber ist im Sieb geblieben?

00:22:10 PS:
Ja genau.

00:22:12 VMF:
Aber hat es dann überhaupt einen Unterschied gemacht? Wieviel Wasser da durchgeht? Weil ich stell mir vor, wenn ich jetzt nur an‘s Kaffeemachen denke, dann ist ja der Kaffee immer gleich nass... oder?

00:22:29 PS:
Ja, mit den Espressokannen ging es darum, diese Mischungsverhältnisse in Frage stellen. Ich hab nach einem Verfahren gesucht, wo ich alle gleich behandle, damit es irgendwie pseudowissenschaftlich wird. Und es war halt die Espresso-Kanne dann. Und das Wasser, das hochgegangen ist... es ist manchmal zu viel weggegangen, aber es ist auch viel unten geblieben. Wenn es zu viel Wasser war, war es halt brüchiger. Wenn es zu wenig war, wurde es voll trocken. Aber der Gips schafft‘s ja immer, trotzdem hart zu werden.

00:23:17 VMF:
Das heißt, du hast dann den Gips rausgenommen, hast eine Schale draus geformt...

00:23:20 PS:
Nee, das war schon. Eben, das ist so kompliziert. Aber so arbeite ich gerne, eigentlich... also ich hab in diesen Träger, wo man den Kaffee reintut, noch so einen Papierfilter reingetan, damit ich‘s rausnehmen kann. Ich hab‘s dann aufgeschraubt und hab diesen Kaffeefilter mit auf den Tisch gelegt und aushärten lassen. Aber so, das ist jetzt die Diplomarbeit.

Danach habe ich eine Zeit probiert, Gips zu recyceln, mit so einem Bonzengerät und hab halt den Gips runterpulverisiert und dann wieder angemischt. Also das ist nur so eine Phase gewesen mit dem Gips. Ich hab auch Videos gemacht. Aber ich wollte einfach sagen, dass ich gerne so kompliziert denk, wenn ich irgendetwas mach. Dass es nicht darum geht, wie die Schalen dann ausschauen, sondern darum, was dazwischen passiert. Aber wenn man mit Kindern arbeitet, finde ich, dass man das sehr gut weglegen kann. Dieses komplizierte eigene künstlerische Denken.

Ich finde z.B. ... ich probier es einfach so: Ich hab einmal meine Gastro-Frustration, sage ich mal, in der Kunst so ausgedrückt, dass ich einfach ein Glas vollgespuckt habe. Es hat ja auch etwas Meditatives, wenn man sowas immer wiederholt. Für sowas würde ich gerne manchmal den Kindern mehr Freiraum geben, aber ich habe einfach das Gefühl, dass das nur manchmal..., dass die eben noch nicht in dieser Epoche sind, dass sie das so zum Ausdruck bringen. Sagen wir‘s so. Dass das simpler gehen soll. Weil bei so Kleinkindern, ich mag das ja, dass die einfach nicht nachdenken und was machen. Aber wenn man dann halt auch Kinder hat, die nur ihre Namen schreiben, bei Cyanotypie, wo du dir denkst, ok, könntest du da nicht mehr rausholen? Aber anscheinend ist es gerade deren Phase, weil irgendwie will man ja auch nicht bei der Begegnung mit den Kindern ihnen irgendetwas reindrücken, das Kunst jetzt so zu funktionieren hat, weil das stimmt halt einfach nicht. Es stimmt nie. Glaube ich.

00:26:22 VMF:
Ich mein, ich frage mich gerade nur... dein Initiations-Erlebnis mit den Fliegen auf dem Bild von den Pflanzen, das ist ja ziemlich kompliziert eigentlich.

00:22:06 VMF:
But the plaster stayed in the sieve?

00:22:10 PS:
Exactly.

00:22:12 VMF:
So did it even make a difference how much water went through? I mean, when I think of making coffee, the grounds always seem equally wet...

00:22:29 PS:
Yeah, with the espresso pot it was about questioning the mixing ratios. I was looking for a method that would treat everything equally, so it would become pseudo-scientific. The espresso maker just worked for that. And the water that went up – sometimes too much boiled off, but a lot stayed below, too. If there was too much water, it got brittle. If there was too little, it got really dry. But plaster always manages to set in the end.

00:23:17 VMF:
So you took the plaster out and shaped it into a bowl?

00:23:20 PS:
No, it was already in that shape. That’s the thing – it’s so complicated. But I like working that way. I put a paper filter into the coffee basket so I could remove the plaster easily. I’d open it up and place the filter with the plaster on the table and let it set. That was my thesis project.

Later, I tried recycling plaster for a while – with a candy grinder. I pulverized it and mixed it again. That was just one plaster phase. I also made videos. But my point is – I like thinking in these complicated ways when I make something. It’s not about what the bowls look like, it’s about what happens in between. But when you work with kids, you can really put that complicated artistic mindset aside.

Like, for example – I once expressed my frustration from working in gastronomy through art by spitting into a glass. There’s something meditative about repeating an action like that. I’d sometimes like to give kids more freedom to do that sort of thing, but I also feel like... they’re not in that phase yet, where they express things that way. It has to be simpler. With young children, I love that they just do things without thinking. But then you also get kids who only write their name, even when you’re doing cyanotype. And you think: couldn’t you do more with that? But apparently that’s just their phase. And you don’t want to push something on kids – like, “this is how art is supposed to work” – because that’s just not true. It never is. I think.

00:26:22 VMF:
I mean, I’m just thinking – your initiation moment with the flies on that plant painting is actually pretty complex. Illusion is such a primal moment in art. Always. And I think when they write their names in cyanotype, it’s also about so much more – about the material itself, the way you were interested in plaster.

Täuschung ist ja einfach so ein Urmoment von Kunst. Immer. Und ich glaube eben, also wenn die dann mit Cyanotypie ihren Namen schreiben, da geht es einfach um viel mehr, um die Materialität, oder so dieses mit Material umgehen, wie es dich ja mit dem Gips z.B. auch interessiert.

Du hast ja von Anfang an immer zu mir gesagt, du machst ja jetzt keine Kunst mehr. Und irgendwie ich glaub ich kenne das. Auch diese Phasen, wo ich das Gefühl hatte, ich muss mich jetzt irgendwie entscheiden. Der Matthias Herrmann hat immer zu mir gesagt, wenn ich dann in die Portfolios meine Workshop-Projekte reingenommen habe: die muss ich raustun. Das ist nicht meine Kunst. Das ist mir immer voll auf die Nerven gegangen. Für mich war es total befreiend, dann irgendwann zu denken: Das bin alles ich und ich kann gar nicht anders als Künstlerin sein, weil es irgendwie so eine Art ist, der Welt zu begegnen, und ich glaube, das hast du ja auch. Mich würde jetzt interessieren, dieser Urmoment, diese Faszination von dieser Täuschung. Ich meine einerseits ist es die Täuschung, die fasziniert. Dieses in die Irre führen. Und dann aber ja schon auch, dass es Insekten sind. Du hast ja nicht andere Menschen getäuscht, sondern...

00:28:35 PS:
Stimmt ja. Ja ich weiß nicht, das mit der Natur?

00:28:38 VMF:
Dieser Perspektivwechsel, dieser ganze radikale. Vielleicht hast du in dem Moment auch einfach das erste Mal darüber nachgedacht, was so eine Fliege sieht, oder?

00:28:51 PS:
Also ich muss sagen, die Geschichte erzähle ich öfters, dass es mich fasziniert hat, dass sie so realistisch gemalt hat. Das ist heute zum ersten Mal, dass ich sag, quasi das war eine Täuschung. Ich hab mich immer gefragt, was hat mich... ich hab mich dann viel mit realistischer oder auch surrealistischer Malerei beschäftigt und das war es halt nicht.

Mittlerweile... also, ich sage zwar, dass ich keine Kunst mache. Ich glaube ich mein immer, dass ich halt nicht für den Markt Kunst mache, aber das, was mich jetzt immer mehr beschäftigt, wo ich jetzt endlich Raum dafür hab, ist z.B. die Linie an sich oder wie abstrakt kann man sein und trotzdem irgendwie den Punkt treffen. Dieses Urbild, was ich da hab, das hat mich voll lang beschäftigt. Ich habe immer das Gefühl gehabt, ich muss gut zeichnen, ich muss realistisch zeichnen. Im Nachhinein denke ich, das hemmt mich mehr, als dass ich...

Und das wegen der Cyanotypie mit den Kindern, dass sie dann ihren Namen schreiben und so, das war ja auch einfach ein Ausdruck. Was ich gemeint habe ist, das ist ja nicht meine Aufgabe, also darum soll es ja nicht gehen, dass ich sag so: He, du hast jetzt die Möglichkeit Cyanotypie zu machen und du schreibst deinen Namen?? Weil, es ist ja voll ok. Man könnte jetzt nicht sagen: Mach jetzt Kunstwerk. Das geht nicht. Aber trotzdem ist es super, dass sie mit einem Material arbeiten, das sie nicht kennen und das echt zauberhaft ist, also weißt eh, Zauberpapier. Also wenn ich das als Kind gekriegt hätte, weisch was I mein, ich wär auszuckt. Also das hätte mir so gefallen. Also ich glaub du merkst das auch generell im Kindermuseum. Es gibt einfach Kinder, die da sehr viel mehr Interesse haben. Wir leben alle irgendwo in der Blase. Finde ich immer noch. Und viele Leute haben gar keinen Zugang zu Kunst. Aber trotzdem, also wenn jemand Künstler sein will von klein auf, dann merkt man das auch, wie er mit den Sachen umgeht. Aber das ist ja nicht unsere Aufgabe, dass man den Kindern beibringt...,

You've always told me that you don't make art anymore. And I think I understand that. I've had phases where I felt like I had to decide. Matthias Herrmann always told me to take out my workshop projects from my portfolio – "that's not your art." That always annoyed me. It was liberating for me to eventually think: this is all me, and I can't help being an artist, because it's a way of encountering the world. And I think you have that too. I'm curious about that primal moment – this fascination with illusion. On the one hand, it's the illusion itself. This misleading. But also the fact that it was insects. You weren't fooling people...

00:28:35 PS:
True. Yeah, I don't know – maybe it's about nature?

00:28:38 VMF:
That radical shift in perspective – maybe it was the first time you thought about what a fly sees?

00:28:51 PS:
Actually, I often tell that story – that I was fascinated by how realistic the painting was. But this is the first time I'm saying it was actually an illusion. I've always asked myself, what was it... I got really into realistic and also surrealist painting, and in the end, that wasn't it. These days... I say I don't make art. But I think what I really mean is that I don't make art for the market. What's been occupying me more and more lately, now that I finally have the space, is, for example: the line itself – or how abstract can something be and still hit the mark. But that primal image had stayed with me for so long. I always felt like I had to be good at drawing, had to draw realistically. In hindsight, that's been more limiting than anything...

And about the kids writing their names with cyanotype – well, that's just their expression. What I meant was: it's not my job to say, "Hey, you've got the chance to use cyanotype and all you do is write your name??" Because, really, that's totally fine. You can't say, "Now make an artwork." That doesn't work. But it's still great that they're using a material they don't know – and it's magical. You know, magic paper. If I had gotten that as a kid – you know what I mean – I would've freaked out. I would've loved it so much. And I think you notice that at the Children's Museum too. There are just kids who are way more into it. We all still live in a kind of bubble. I think that's still true. A lot of people don't have any access to art. But even so, when someone wants to be an artist from a young age, you can see that in how they engage with things. But that's not our job – to teach kids...

00:31:25 VMF:
...dass alles Künstler werden müssen.

00:31:26 PS:
Nein, aber das eben deswegen finde ich, dass dieses Material und die Rahmung irgendwie als Instrumente dienen. Also, ich red jetzt so durcheinander. Ich hoff, das ist nicht schlimm, aber weil du gesagt auch, dass du deine Projekte da mitreingetan hast und das wurde dann von der Uni oder im Fotostudium wahrscheinlich nicht so anerkannt. Finde ich halt irgendwie bissl doof, weil irgendwie, das ist auch wieder: Es gibt nur diesen Weg quasi und das stimmt einfach nicht. Und das kriegt ja auch ein bisschen eine Abwertung, indem man das nicht mit akzeptiert. Aber andererseits denke ich mir, es gibt mittlerweile mehr Bewegungen, die darauf hinzielen, das mehr hervorzuheben. Irgendwie glaube ich, dass wir echt immer ein bisschen hinterherhinken mit der Umgebung. Und dass es so eine Zeit-Raum Verschiebung gibt. Auf der Bildenden hab ich mir gedacht: Ok, vielleicht hat das bei Duchamps voll Sinn macht, dass der so irre war. Aber es gibt jetzt keinen Sinn mehr, die gleiche Irrheit zu machen, weil es ist nicht der Zeit entsprechend. Also ich glaube, dass das voll verschoben ist. Ich glaube nicht, dass das ... was ja eh auch cool ist. Also, es ist ja nicht schlecht, aber. Ja, jetzt hab ich den Faden verloren...

00:33:05 VMF:
Ja naja, dass es halt keine One-Way-Entwicklung ist oder so? Also, wenn man mit Kindern arbeitet, dann ist ja schon auch einfach so eine Frage, was man für einen Begriff von Kindheit hat. Wenn Kinder immer defizitäre Erwachsene sind, die noch nicht fertig sind und noch nicht da und noch nicht das und das können, schränkt das halt die Möglichkeiten schon sehr ein. Ich habe immer wieder das Gefühl, dass das da einfach irrsinnig.... du bist die Dritte, mit der ich rede. Und es kommen natürlich immer so Initiations-Momente, die jetzt aber auch drei Mal total unterschiedlich waren. Und wo die Personen irgendwie schon so total drin stecken. Natürlich hat es auch was mit deiner Jetzt-Retro-Perspektive zu tun. Ja natürlich. Die die Situation dann auch auflädt. Aber es ist andererseits eben auch so, dass ja von den Kindern auch immer wieder Sachen kommen, die einfach total faszinierend sind. Und das was du sagst, ich meine das ist mir genauso gegangen, dass einem die Kunstakademien manchmal austreiben, Kunst zu machen. Das ist ja echt kein Einzelfall.

00:34:44 PS:
Voll.

00:34:46 VMF:
Und das ist ja schon sowas, was ich ein bisschen mit meine, mit diesem Versuch zu sich selber als Kind zurückzugehen: dass man sich eben genau diese Faszination und Inspiration und so wieder irgendwie zurück holt.

00:35:05 PS:
Ja, ja, das stimmt. Am Kunstmarkt gibt‘s halt so ein hartes Wertesystem. Und ich weiß nicht, der Maßstab ist irgendwie beliebig. Die Kinder wissen ja noch nicht, was sie in ihrem Leben machen wollen. Und dann ist es nochmal cooler, ihnen Material zu geben und zu sagen so jetzt hast Du den Raum und mach daraus was, weil es kommen manchmal echt genial... deswegen hab ich gemeint, dass ich so viel von meinen Kollegen gelernt habe: dass man mit ganz wenig den Trigger Punkt auslöst bei den Kindern, wo sie dann so einen freien Umgang mit dem Material kriegen und unbefleckt das machen, was dann voll einen Ausdruck hat. Das hab ich oft im Atelier erlebt. Also ich meine, da gibt‘s auch andere Positionen, einerseits eben dieses sehr künstlerische Ausarten-mäßige und dann auch dieses Rahmen und Abholen und ich finde, das kann beides Platz

00:31:25 VMF:
...that they all have to become artists.

00:31:26 PS:
No, but that’s exactly why I think this material and the framing somehow function as tools. I mean, I’m talking all over the place right now. I hope that’s not too bad. But because you said you also included your own projects and that probably wasn’t really accepted by the university or the photography program. I find that kind of stupid, actually, because again, it’s like: there’s only one “right” way – and that’s just not true. And it gets a bit devalued when it’s not acknowledged. But on the other hand, I think there are more movements now aiming to highlight that more. I kind of feel like we’re always lagging behind a bit in our environment. Like there’s a kind of space-time displacement. At the fine arts academy I thought, okay, maybe it made sense for Duchamp to be that crazy – but there’s no point in repeating that kind of craziness now, because it doesn’t fit the time anymore. So I really believe that it’s all quite displaced. Not that it’s bad or anything – actually, that’s cool in itself. But yeah. Now I’ve lost my train of thought...

00:33:05 VMF:
Yeah, well, that it’s not a one-way development, right? I mean, when you work with children, it really depends on how you understand childhood. If children are always seen as incomplete adults who aren’t finished and can’t yet do this or that, then you’re limiting the possibilities from the start. I often feel like it’s incredibly... you’re the third person I’ve spoken to about this. And naturally, certain initiatory moments always come up – but they were totally different each time. And the people were already really deeply into it. Of course, that also has something to do with your current retrospective. Sure. It colors the situation. But on the other hand, there are also always these moments where children come up with things that are just absolutely fascinating. And what you said – I felt the same way – that art academies can actually drive the art out of you. That’s really not a rare experience.

00:34:44 PS:
Totally.

00:34:46 VMF:
And that’s kind of what I mean with the idea of trying to return to yourself as a child – to somehow regain that sense of fascination and inspiration.

00:35:05 PS:
Yeah, that’s true. The art market has such a rigid value system. And I don’t know, the criteria feel so arbitrary. Kids don’t yet know what they want to do with their lives. So it’s even cooler to just give them material and say, “Here’s your space, make something out of it.” And sometimes they come up with truly brilliant things. That’s why I said I’ve learned so much from my colleagues – that you can trigger something with very little, where kids then get this totally free, unspoiled access to the material and create something with real expression. I’ve seen that often in the studio. And there are different approaches – on the one hand, this very expressive, artistic explosion, and then also this framing and guiding. And I think both should have their place. One doesn’t have to cancel out the other.

finden. Es muss nicht das eine das andere verdrängen.

Und oft ist es dann auch zum Beispiel, wenn es kleine Kinder sind und man macht dann halt zuerst eine Schnecke, die dann auf einmal eine Antenne kriegt, dann machen die das erstmal einfach nach, aber danach machen sie auch was Verrücktes. Also diese Hemmungen auch wegzunehmen, das finde ich, ist nicht nur in der Kunst wichtig, sondern in jeder Disziplin.

Und das können wir voll gut machen, dass man sagt, es ist alles nicht so schlimm, Du kannst echt ein bisschen drauf scheißen und es gibt keine Norm und es gibt dieses Wertesystem nicht. Was halt vielleicht hoffentlich niemals dazu führt, dass diese Illusion gebrochen wird vom System, Schulsystem oder Uni-System. Aber das ist ja dann nicht mehr unser Bier.

Aber das muss ja auch sagen: Ich hab das Glück gehabt, dass ich immer Schlüsselfiguren in meinem Leben gehabt hab, die mich in die Kunst geschubst haben. Natürlich der Ype zum Beispiel. Das ist so ein Holländer, der Siebdruck bei uns auf der Schule gemacht hat. Der hat mir dann die Möglichkeit gegeben als 16-Jährige mit ihnen in einer Ausstellung mitzumachen. Also ich hab dann versucht, so reale Sachen, also so Teenager-Sachen kann ich jetzt im Nachhinein sagen... also, weil alle haben immer T-Shirts gedruckt und ich hab immer auf Papier gedruckt. Und das hat dem voll gefallen, der Spirit. Ich hab mich so geehrt gefühlt, dass ich da jetzt mit ihm ausstellen darf. Also es hat immer wieder Leute geben, die mich in dem „sein-wie-ich-bin“ einfach unterstützt haben. Und das waren eben oft Künstler. Auch wenn ich dann irgendwie andere Erlebnisse gehabt habe, denke ich oft gerne an die Leute, die mir dann irgendwie... es ist auch nicht so oft, man muss es mir nicht 100 mal sagen, ob das gut ist oder nicht. Aber es braucht einfach einen Moment, der dann wertvoll ist.

00:38:53 VMF:
So gesehen werden.

00:38:54 PS:
Genau. Einmal im Jahr ist voll okay. Es braucht nicht öfter sein. Und ich kenn alle Namen von den Leuten, die irgendwie Schlüsselfiguren waren für mich. Das möchte ich zum Beispiel im Kindermuseum auch sein. Es muss nicht jedes Kind sich an mich erinnern, nicht an mich, sondern einfach an diesen Zugang. Dass man das irgendwie beibehält, das nicht-werte-Skala entsprechend oder diesen freien Zugang oder, dass das alles nicht so kompliziert sein muss.

00:39:45 VMF:
Ja und ich höre schon raus, sowas wie eben erkannt oder werden oder verstanden werden.

00:39:54 PS:
Sprache also...

00:39:56 VMF:
... also eher ich weiß nicht, ob‘s jetzt sprachlich ist oder kunstsprachlich oder...

00:40:00 PS:
Ja. also das ist jetzt vielleicht schon ein bisschen persönlich, aber für mich war aus familiären Gründen einfach Kunst immer die große Freiheit, weil damit haben sie sich nicht ausgekannt. Da hab ich mich voll bewegen können. Ich bin dann später draufgekommen: Diese Frustration auf der Kunstuni kam auch daher, dass ich mich dort mit der Kunst auseinandersetzen musste und nicht mehr nur das war, was Kunst als Alibi einfach hergibt. Ist aber alles spannend. Passt alles zusammen. Es hat eh gepasst.

And often, for example, with very young kids, you might start by making a snail, and then it suddenly gets an antenna – at first they just copy, but then they start doing something wild. Removing those inhibitions – I think that’s not just important in art, but in any discipline. And that’s something we’re really good at: saying, “It’s not a big deal, you can break the rules a bit. There’s no norm. That value system doesn’t apply here.” Hopefully without ever shattering the illusion that the system – school or university – is different. But that’s no longer our problem then.

But I do have to say: I’ve been lucky to always have key figures in my life who nudged me toward art. Like Ype, for instance – this Dutch guy who taught screen printing at our school. He gave me the chance to exhibit with them when I was 16. And I tried to make real things – like, now I can say “teenage stuff” – because everyone was printing on T-shirts, and I was printing on paper. And he loved that spirit. I felt so honored to be part of that exhibition. So there were always people who supported me just for being the way I was. And they were often artists. Even though I had other experiences later, I often think back fondly on those people. And I don’t need to hear it a hundred times whether something is good or not. But it just takes one moment that feels meaningful.

00:38:53 VMF:
To be seen like that.

00:38:54 PS:
Exactly. Once a year is totally fine. It doesn’t have to be more. And I remember the names of every person who was a key figure for me. That’s something I’d like to be in the Children‘s Museum too. Not someone every child remembers – not me personally – but just the experience itself. That they remember this kind of access. That they keep that open, non-hierarchical approach or that sense that things don’t have to be so complicated.

00:39:45 VMF:
Yes, and I really hear that in what you’re saying – this sense of being seen, or understood.

00:39:54 PS:
Language, like...

00:39:56 VMF:
... not necessarily verbal language, but maybe artistic language, or...

00:40:00 PS:
Yes. This might be a bit personal now, but for me, due to family circumstances, art was always this great freedom – because they didn’t understand it. I could move freely in that space. Later I realized that the frustration at the art university came from having to actually engage with art, and not just use it as an alibi. But it’s all interesting. It all fits together. It worked out.

00:40:46 VMF:
Aber kannst du... also in welcher Form war das dann Freiheit? Weil du da irgendwo hingehen konntest, wo sonst niemand war oder...?

00:40:54 PS:
Erstens, dass ich weit weg kann von daheim. Und die Aufnahmeprüfung war auch ein Zertifikat für meine Eltern: ok irgendwas wird schon passen, dass sie da reinkommt. Und auch ich meine, du hast dann ein Profil. Was machst du? Also Du malst grad Landkarten weiß an. Es ist nicht so wie ich operier gerade am Patienten. Es ist irgendwie so divers, also es kommt darauf an, mit was du Dich beschäftigst. Aber es ist auch nicht wirklich erklärbar oder so. Meine Mama hat mich irgendwann mal angerufen, weil sie eine Michelangelo-Doku im Fernsehen gesehen hat. Und hat das so ganz stolz erzählt, weil das hat ja auch bei meinen Eltern was ausgelöst mit dem Künstlerischen. Aber irgendwie war das halt... ich hab mit der Kunst flüchten können, also in die Kunst flüchten können.

Und wie ich dann da war, habe ich mich halt wirklich mit der Kunstwelt auseinandersetzen müssen. Angefangen, dass ich nicht gewusst hab, wer Erwin Wurm ist und danach das Studium halt. Und ich muss sagen, ich habe im Studium, abgesehen von dieser Werteskala am Markt, extrem viel gelernt. Also was mich selber betrifft, was irgendwie wertvoll ist im Nachhinein, auch wenn ich‘s früher nicht so gesehen hab, im Moment. Aber es braucht halt einfach Zeit, bis man manche Sachen verdaut. Aber mittlerweile... ich glaub es ist so die Frustration ist weg. Es ist voll okay, wie es war oder auch besser.

00:43:01 VMF:
Das hört sich jetzt für mich so an, dass diese Freiheit dann vielleicht die Illusion war, das, was man nicht erklären kann, dort auch nicht erklären zu müssen. Ja und dann bist du da reingeflohen und hast gemerkt, da sind aber ganz viele Leute, die ständig alles Mögliche erklären.

00:43:21 PS:
Ja, genau, genau, irgendwie ist das halt diese Kompliziertheit, auch weil wenn ich mir denke, wie ich aufgenommen worden bin, was ich da für ein Kunstverständnis gehabt habe und wie es nach dem Studium... es hat mir ja viel mehr Hemmungen gegeben anstatt Freiheit. Aber ich finde, diese Hemmungen sind ja dann auch irgendwie wieder so eine Challenge, die man für sich dann nimmt. Deswegen habe ich gemeint hat mich zwar nie dieses realistische Thema interessiert, aber mittlerweile bin ich interessiert. Ich denk mir oft, ich bin voll spät dran mit diesem Entwicklungsprozess, den alle anderen wahrscheinlich schon vor dem Studium gehabt haben. Aber ich will mich da nicht vergleichen. Aber jetzt bin ich irgendwie konkreter an Sachen interessiert, über die ich auch gerne länger nachdenke, bevor ich‘s angehe. Ich hab wieder angefangen zu malen, also langsam und hab voll lange gebraucht, bis ich das Motiv für mich... ich hab mir früher nie Zeit gegeben dafür. Aber jetzt hab ich irgendwie die Zeit, weil ich den Druck nicht hab und das auch nicht für irgendwen mach. Deswegen sage ich ja, dass ich keine Kunst machen will. Ich mache es trotzdem gerne, weil das für mich ein Ausdruck... also oder.... es lässt mich nicht los, es lässt mich nicht los! Das finde ich dann beruhigend, wenn es mich nicht loslässt. Also dann fühle ich mich irgendwie als Künstlerin, für mich.

00:45:07 VMF:
Also erst war es eine Fluchtbewegung. Und dann bist du da irgendwo angekommen, wo Du vielleicht gar nicht gewusst hast...

00:45:11 PS:
„Oh, jetzt muss ich mich damit beschäftigen.“

00:40:46 VMF:
But how was it a form of freedom? Because you could go somewhere that no one else was?

00:40:54 PS:
Partly because I could get far away from home. And the entrance exam was like a certificate for my parents: “Okay, she got in – must be doing something right.” And also, I mean, you end up with a profile. Like, “What do you do?” “Well, I’m painting maps white.” It’s not like, “I’m operating on a patient.” It’s more like... it depends on what you’re working on. And it’s not really something you can explain. My mom once called me after seeing a Michelangelo documentary on TV, and she was so proud – because it sparked something in her too, this artistic thing. But I used to be able to escape into art.

And then once I was there, I had to really engage with the art world. Like, I didn’t even know who Erwin Wurm was at first – and then came the whole academic experience. And I have to say, aside from the market’s value system, I learned an incredible amount during my studies. About myself. That’s something I really appreciate now in hindsight, even though I didn’t see it that way back then. It just takes time to digest certain things. But now... I feel like the frustration is gone. It’s fine how it was – maybe even better.

00:43:01 VMF:
So it sounds to me like this freedom was maybe an illusion – this thing you didn’t have to explain, and then you ran into a place where suddenly everyone was explaining everything.

00:43:21 PS:
Yes, exactly, exactly. That complexity – also when I think about how I got accepted and what kind of understanding of art I had back then – after studying, I had way more inhibitions than freedom. But I think those inhibitions are also a kind of personal challenge. That’s why I said, I was never that into realism, but now I’m kind of interested in it. I often feel like I’m really late in my development process – that most people probably went through this before starting their studies. But I try not to compare myself. Now I’m more concretely interested in things I want to reflect on before I start. I’ve started painting again, slowly, and it took me ages to choose a subject. I never used to give myself that kind of time. But now I have it, because there’s no pressure – and I’m not doing it for anyone else. That’s why I say I don’t want to “make art.” But I still do it – because it expresses something for me. Or... it won’t let me go. That’s comforting – that it doesn’t let me go. Then I feel like I am an artist – for myself.

00:45:07 VMF:
So it started as a form of escape. And then you ended up in a place where you realized...

00:45:11 PS:
“Oh no, now I have to deal with it.”

00:45:14 VMF:
Ja, und dann war es ein Stress. Und jetzt? Jetzt hört sich‘s halt so an, dass du wieder die Kraft oder die Ruhe hast zu einer, nicht zu einer Flucht, sondern zu einer Zuwendung.

00:45:25 PS:
Ja, genau, weil ich hab mich echt ganz, ganz schlimm gewehrt. Denn nach dem Studium, also auch im Lehramtsstudium, habe ich mir irgendwie schwer getan künstlerische Projekte zu machen. Weil echt, das war voll die Blockade. Aber irgendwie löst sich das gerade. Also ich finde deswegen das Alter auch immer so wichtig, in welchem Entwicklungspfad... also ich bin jetzt nicht die, die der Norm entsprechende Entwicklungsphasen runterlesen will. Aber ich glaube schon, dass es einfach Jahrzehnte braucht, damit man irgendwie Übersicht über das hat, was da ist im Leben, also auch in der Kunst, dass man halt irgendwann einmal reflektiert – über das, was eigentlich passiert und was einem selbstverständlich vorkommt und man zu hinterfragen anfängt. Da muss ich sagen, das dauert bei mir einfach länger aber es braucht einfach Zeit und ich darf mich nicht stressen lassen. Und das war halt im Studium so, da war man auch immer im Konkurrenzverhältnis. Der wird jetzt ausgewählt für die Essence oder so und natürlich ich nie... aber es hat schon gepasst. Mit dem Kindermuseum oder auch im Lehramtsstudium bin ich einfach drauf gekommen, mir taugt die Begegnung mit den Kindern extrem. Also weil bei denen noch so viel offen ist. Man kann die gar nicht auf ihre Persönlichkeit festnageln, weil sie sich noch so verändern werden. Und wenn man dann halt irgendwie 0,1 Prozent Eindruck hinterlassen kann, mit irgendeinem gemeinsamen Tun, dann finde ich es schon viel gewonnen. Irgendwie.

00:47:56 VMF:
Ja genau und dadurch ist es natürlich auch eine Selbstbestätigung, die du rausholst. Aber plötzlich ist da ja auch diese große Freiheit, also so, wie sich das anhört, die du eigentlich immer gesucht hast in der Kunst und vielleicht als Kind mehr hattest oder mehr gefunden hast. Dann als Erwachsene so: Ok, Kunst ist doch nicht so frei. Und da gibt‘s irgendwie Kontext.

00:48:35 PS:
Kontext, ganz viel Kontext, voll viel Kontext. Ja, aber irgendwie, ich find ja immer noch, dass die Kunst voll viel kann, auch wenn sie kompliziert ist. Aber wenn man mit Kindern arbeitet, finde ich, dass man es einfach bei der Täuschung, dass die Kunst voll viel kann, belassen kann, so dass sie dann in der Kunst diese Freiheit finden. Also es ist ja nur mir so ergangen. Aber ich glaube, dass das so ein großer riesiger Raum ist, oder man schwebt da drinnen. Also, es ist halt nichts Abgeschlossenes...

00:49:26 VMF:
Freiheit muss man halt aushalten. Also das fühlt sich nicht unbedingt gut an und du musst in der Freiheit dich finden. Also ich glaube, das ist ja kein Widerspruch. Das ist tatsächlich glaube ich schon das, was die Kunst kann. Also ich formuliere es immer so, dass sie sich halt bewegen kann, im Unverfügbaren und im Unplanbaren, und im Ungreifbaren. Und dass du trotzdem irgendwie handlungsfähig bist. Aber wenn du sagst ich bin jetzt Künstlerin und letztlich ja irgendwie Verantwortung übernimmst für diesen nicht greifbaren Schwamm, dann ist das Stress...

00:50:14 PS:
Das hat mir – das war voll nett: Da war mal Weihnachtsessen vom Kindermuseum und da war einer, der irgendwie eine Station gemacht hat und ein paar Mitarbeiter, die bei uns im Museum die Tänzerinnen sind, die bezeichnen sich als Künstlerinnen, zu Recht, also voll zu Recht. Aber die haben sich dann bei mir

00:45:14 VMF:
Exactly. And that was stressful. And now? Now it sounds like you’ve regained the strength or calm not to escape anymore, but to turn toward it.

00:45:25 PS:
Yeah, exactly. I really fought it hard after my studies – also during the teaching program. I had such a hard time doing any artistic projects. It was a complete block. But now it’s starting to dissolve. That’s why I think age is so important – where you are in your development path. I don’t mean in terms of ticking off phases from a textbook – but I do think it takes decades to really get an overview of life, and of art too – to reflect on what’s happened and what you take for granted, and to start questioning it. For me, that just takes longer. And I have to allow myself that time. That was the issue during my studies too – there was always competition. Like, “Who gets picked for the Essence?” And of course it was never me... But it was fine. With the Children‘s Museum and the teaching program, I’ve realized: I really love working with kids. Because there’s still so much open. You can’t pin them down to a fixed personality, because they’re still constantly changing. And if you can leave even a 0.1% impression through some shared activity – then that already feels like a win to me. Somehow.

00:47:56 VMF:
Yes, exactly – and in that, you’re also finding a form of self-affirmation. But it also sounds like you’ve found that big freedom you were always looking for in art – and maybe had more as a child. Then as an adult: “Ok, art’s not actually that free – there’s all this context.”

00:48:35 PS:
So much context. So much. Yeah, but still, I believe art can do so much – even if it’s complicated. And when you work with kids, I think you can just leave it at the illusion that art can do anything. And through that, they find freedom in art. At least that’s how it was for me. But I think it’s such a huge space – or like you’re floating in it. It’s not something that’s ever finished...

00:49:26 VMF:
You have to be able to endure freedom. It doesn’t necessarily feel good – and you have to find yourself in it. That’s not a contradiction, I think. That’s really what art can do. I usually say: it moves within what’s unavailable, unplannable, and intangible – and yet you’re still capable of acting. But when you say, “I am an artist,” you’re kind of taking responsibility for this intangible sponge – and that’s stressful...

00:50:14 PS:
I had a really nice moment: there was a Christmas dinner at the Children‘s Museum, and someone who had set up one of the activity stations was there. And a few of the performers who work with us – dancers – they call themselves artists, and rightly so. Totally rightly. But they were upset that I don’t call myself an artist. I mean, I studied it – and it was so sweet, this guy said: “I get it. It’s tough to say that easily once you’ve been inside the system. Once you’ve sniffed around in there, it gets harder to say, ‘I’m an artist.’” Everyone can call themselves whatever they want – that’s up to them. But I’ve had this discussion a lot. And for me, it just doesn’t make sense. Although now I’ve even started writing in job applications that I’m an artist. Because, in some way, it’s true. But it’s not like it used to be.

aufgeregt, dass ich mich nicht als Künstlerin bezeichnen will. Weil ich hab das ja studiert und das war voll nett von diesem Herren, der dann irgendwie gemeint hat: Hey du, ich verstehe schon, dass es einfach blöde ist, dass man das nicht einfach so leicht sagen will, also dass du dir dadurch, dass du drinnen geschnuppert hast oder so in der Art, dass es dann schwerer fällt zu sagen, ich bin Künstlerin. Jeder kann sich bezeichnen, wie er will, das ist jedem selber überlassen. Aber diese Diskussionen habe ich oft geführt und ich hab mir eben gedacht so: Für mich macht es halt einfach keinen Sinn. Also es kommt darauf an, weil für mich selber kann ich mittlerweile sagen, sogar bei Bewerbungen schreibe ich rein ich bin Künstlerin, weil irgendwo stimmt es auch, aber es ist halt nicht mehr so wie früher.

00:51:33 VMF:
Vielleicht ist das ja auch ein Teil von dieser kindlichen Freiheit. Ich meine, die Kinder kommen ja nicht zum Kunst machen zu uns. Und als du bei deiner Nachbarin warst, wirst du wahrscheinlich auch nicht darüber nachgedacht haben, ob das jetzt Kunst ist oder nicht, sondern Du warst fasziniert, dass die Fliegen auf diesem Bild landen, das keine Pflanze ist, sondern gemalt, eine Illusion.

00:52:04 PS:
Mit Malerei kann ich jetzt als Erwachsene so wenig anfangen. Also mit Malerei als Kunst... also das ist eine andere Diskussion... ich verstehe noch nicht ganz, was die Funktion von Malerei in der heutigen Zeit ist, weil die schon so viel durchgemacht hat. So wie Collage auch und dann ja aber eh alles eigentlich. Aber irgendwie, mit Manchen tu ich mir schwerer.

00:52:58 VMF:
Naja, es sind alles Medien, die einem irgendwie helfen, mit der Welt ... helfen oder erschweren, mit der Welt irgendwie umzugehen.

00:53:08 PS:
Voll, na voll. Jetzt haben wir einen Kaffee vergessen zu machen,

00:53:11 VMF:
Stimmt, sollen wir kurz den Kaffee machen und dann nachher noch weiter. Weil ich muss dich nämlich schon noch was fragen.

00:53:18 PS:
Okay, soll ich schnell einen machen?

00:53:21 VMF:
Dann mach ich kurz auf Pause. [...]

00:53:23 VMF:
Jetzt läufts wieder.

00:53:23 PS:
Okay. Du wolltest, das mit den Ameisen... ähm, ja ich weiss nicht.

00:53:30 VMF:
Genau, weil ich glaube, es war, als ich dir zum ersten Mal gesagt habe: Wo würdest du dich treffen, wenn du dich als Kind... oder wo siehst du dich da oder so ähnlich...

00:53:41 PS:
Ja, das war dann im Dorf. Wir sind vom Berg runter in ein Dorf gezogen, ganz in die Nähe der Schule und ich weiß nicht warum, aber ich bin dann immer fast zwei Stunden früher dort gewesen. Ich hab mich dann einfach auf die Wiese gehockt und geschaut, was die so machen, die Ameisen und Insekten.

00:51:33 VMF:
Maybe that's part of that childlike freedom, too. I mean, kids don't come to us to make art. And when you were at your neighbor's place, you probably didn't think about whether what you were doing was art – you were just fascinated that flies landed on that image, which wasn't a real plant but a painting, an illusion.

00:52:04 PS:
Painting, as an adult, I really struggle with now. Painting as art... that's a whole different discussion. I just don't quite understand what the function of painting is in today's world – it's been through so much already. Just like collage – well, everything really. But some things I struggle with more than others.

00:52:58 VMF:
Well, they're all just mediums that either help – or make it harder – to deal with the world somehow.

00:53:08 PS:
Totally, yeah. We totally forgot to make coffee.

00:53:11 VMF:
True! Should we make a quick coffee and then continue? Because I still have a few things I want to ask you.

00:53:18 PS:
Okay, should I quickly make one?

00:53:21 VMF:
I'll just pause for a bit. [...]

00:53:23 VMF:
It's recording again.

00:53:23 PS:
Okay. You wanted to ask about the ants... um, yeah, I don't know.

00:53:30 VMF:
Exactly. I think it was when I asked you for the first time: If you imagined yourself as a child, where would you be? Or something like that...

00:53:41 PS:
Yeah, that was when we moved down from the mountain into a village, really close to the school. And I don't know why, but I always arrived like two hours early. I'd just sit down in the grass and watch what the ants and insects were doing.

Also das war schon auf dem Berg: ich habe zwei Schwestern, eine ist älter und eine jünger, die haben immer miteinander gespielt und ich bin dann immer alleine unterwegs gewesen. Zum Beispiel, es ist so der Weg runter gewesen vom Berg und da waren Bäume und wenn es windig war, hat es voll geschaukelt. Und was ich immer gern gemacht: Ich bin hingegangen und habe mitgetanzt. Ich hab immer gedacht so: Die tanzen gerade, dann tanz ich halt mit. Also so gesehen habe ich ja eine super naturnahe Kindheit gehabt. Und bin gerne allein gewesen bin. Das hat mich nicht gestört. Unsere Nachbarn haben zum Beispiel so ein Holzlager gehabt, das hatte so eine Überdachung, und dann überall voll viele Nägel. Das war dann mein Schloss irgendwie und ich bin immer so dort abgehangen und hab sehr viel rumfantasiert immer. Also ich hab mir so eine eigene Welt gehabt. Meine Schwestern haben immer gesagt, dass ich ein bissel komisch war, also das klingt jetzt... anders haben sie gesagt. Ich hab mich mit dem Christian verlobt und dann waren wir in Tirol und haben dieses Verlobungfest gemacht und dann haben alle gesagt: Ja Du warst schon immer anders. Aber ja...

00:55:53 VMF:
Ein schönes Kompliment.

00:55:54 PS:
Irgendwie schon, aber irgendwie auch so: Ja, eigentlich seid‘s ihr anders. Man muss das einfach mal umgekehrt sehen. Ja, genau. Also ich war verträumt, als Kind. Voll verträumt.

00:56:06 VMF:
Aber das sind total schöne, schöne Bilder, dass Du mit den Bäumen tanzt.

00:56:10 PS:
... ja ich glaub ....

00:56:17 VMF:
Und die Ameisen hast Du immer an der gleichen Stelle beobachtet?

00:56:19 PS:
Na, ich hab mich einfach auf die Wiese gelegt, also beim Park. Und dann hab ich einfach geschaut, was die so tun. Aber es war jetzt nicht so... ich hab sie einfach beobachtet. Das war meditativ. Ich weiss gar nicht... ich war erstens immer aufgeregt in die Schule zu gehen und war vielleicht deswegen immer vorher dort. Und ich war auch nicht viel daheim. Also ich bin immer gern gleich rausgegangen. Ich glaub das mit den Ameisen, das war einfach... ich habe einfach auch die Ruhe immer genossen. Das ist halt ja ... Du hockst halt da und es bewegt sich alles. Das ist ja voll weggegangen wie ich nach Wien gekommen irgendwie. Aber als Kind war ich da schon... also ich hab mit Spinnen gespielt und ich erinnere mich immer ganz gern daran, weil es gibt halt auch so bissel düstere Kindheit, aber das vergisst man dann immer, was alles cool war. Also da kann ich nur ... im Vergleich zu meinen Schwestern und meinem Bruder war ich die verträumte Komische, die halt ein bisschen anders war, verruckt war, ja ein bissl ein Psycho war ich auch glaube ich.

00:57:55 VMF:
Das ist ja eher schiach, wenn du das so empfunden hast. Weil ich meine, das ist ja eine irrsinnige Qualität. Also das klingt nach einem total sensiblen, feinen, phantasievollen Kind, das die Welt wahrnimmt und sich mit der Welt in Verbindung setzt.

00:58:16 PS:
Ja, aber ich hab immer so... ich höre immer, also ich hab sehr schnell herausgefunden, dass es kein Gott gibt für mich selber. Und dann habe ich mir über das Universum immer Gedanken gemacht und ich hab mir immer eingebildet, dass ich voll Kopfweh krieg, weil es

That actually started up on the mountain: I have two sisters – one older, one younger – they always played together, and I was usually off on my own. For example, there was this path down the mountain, and there were trees along the way. When it was windy, the trees would sway like crazy. And I loved going there and dancing along with them. I always thought: they’re dancing, so I’ll join in. So yeah, I had a super nature-connected childhood. And I liked being alone. It didn’t bother me. Our neighbors had this big woodpile with a roof over it and nails sticking out everywhere. That was kind of my castle, and I’d hang out there, fantasizing all sorts of things. I had my own little world. My sisters always said I was a bit weird – well, not weird, they said “different.”
When I got engaged to Christian and we had our engagement party in Tyrol, everyone said: “Yeah, you were always a bit different.” But yeah...

00:55:53 VMF:
That’s a beautiful compliment.

00:55:54 PS:
Kind of, but also like: „Actually, maybe you‘re the different ones!“ You just have to flip the perspective. Yeah, I was dreamy as a kid. Really dreamy.

00:56:06 VMF:
But those are such beautiful images – dancing with the trees.

00:56:10 PS:
... yeah, I think so...

00:56:17 VMF:
And did you always watch the ants in the same spot?

00:56:19 PS:
Nah, I just lay down in the grass, like near the park. And I just watched what they were doing. I didn’t really analyze it – I just observed. It was meditative. I don’t even know... I was always nervous about going to school, maybe that’s why I showed up so early. And I wasn’t home much. I loved being outside. I think with the ants... I just enjoyed the calm. You sit there and everything’s moving around you. That part of me kind of disappeared when I moved to Vienna. But as a kid, yeah... I played with spiders and I remember that fondly. Sure, there were some darker aspects of childhood too, but you tend to forget those and remember the cool stuff. Compared to my sisters and brother, I was the weird, dreamy one. Maybe a bit psycho too.

00:57:55 VMF:
That sounds a bit harsh – if that’s how you felt. Because to me, that sounds like a deeply sensitive, imaginative child, very in tune with the world.

00:58:16 PS:
Yeah, but I always kind of... I realized very early on that there was no God for me. And I’d think a lot about the universe, and I used to imagine I was getting headaches from it – because it was so abstract. I liked thinking about it, but it all kind of faded away during puberty. Probably normal, I guess.

nicht so greifbar ist. Ich hab mich damit schon sehr gern auseinandergesetzt, aber danach ist das voll weggegangen mit der Pubertät. Aber das ist eh normal wahrscheinlich.

00:58:51 VMF:
Also was ist weggegangen? Diese Sinnsuche, Sinnfrage?

00:58:57 PS:
Ja dann war halt irgendwann das Geschlecht wichtig und die Pubertät und die Beliebtheit in der Schule oder sowas. Aber vorher ja, keine Ahnung. Ich kann mich da nicht einmal erinnern, aber ich hab Volleyball gespielt und anscheinend hab ich dann halt immer so irgendwie so probiert so zu tanzen oder sowas. Und dann hat mir eine mal gesagt, was mit mir los ist, ob ich einen Vogel hab, warum ich da so umatanz, verspielt... und dann war's auf einmal so ein Realitätsschock. Wo ich mir gedacht hab: Okay, die nehmen das gar nicht so wahr wie ich.

00:59:58 VMF:
Ja, ich weiß nicht. Es hört sich für mich halt so an, dass du dann mit künstlerischem Ausdruck das Gefühl hattest, irgendwo andocken zu können oder erkannt zu werden. Und das hat halt offenbar ein bisschen gefehlt. Also, wenn du sagst, du warst mit diesen Dingen irgendwie die Komische und Andere. Das passt ja alles zusammen. Aber das klingt nach wahnsinnig schönen Qualitäten und es gehört doch zum Kindsein dazu, dieses Magische und so...

01:00:44 PS:
Ja voll.

01:00:45 VMF:
Aber gleichzeitig so eine Offenheit für die Welt zu haben und die Ameisen nicht zu zertreten, sondern ihnen zuzuschauen und mit den Bäumen zu tanzen. Also ich meine, das sagt ja schon etwas über dich.

01:00:59 PS:
Ja aber es gibt ja... ich hab dir jetzt nur die netten Seiten erzählt. Ich hab auch mit Blindschleichen Rodeo gespielt oder so, weißt Du was ich mein. Also ich glaube, das hat auch ein bisschen was mit den Eltern zu tun. Ich will jetzt gar nicht so auf das wie es bei meinen Eltern war eingehen, aber die Grundeinstellung war, dass die Kinder einfach draußen spielen sollen. Also so wie jetzt zittert da keiner neben dir ob du jetzt fällst oder nicht – wir sind gefallen, wir haben uns wehgetan, es war voll egal. Entweder voll viel draußen oder voll viel vor dem Fernseher. Also, vieles habe ich vom Fernseher gelernt. Also vor allem meine Mam hat uns einfach tun lassen. Also da. Und ist nicht mitgegangen zum Spielplatz schauen, ob es uns gut geht oder nicht. Wir sind halt mit offenen Beinen und Füßen heimgekommen und haben ein Pflaster gekriegt, wenn überhaupt. Also meine Mama war voll liebevoll, aber wir haben halt echt viel draußen alleine gespielt oder gerauft. Und dann war es das gleiche auch in der Türkei. Wir sind jedes Jahr in die Türkei gefahren, ins Dorf und da war das halt auch so. Mein Lieblingsspielzeug war dann der Müll, mit den Dosen draußen Schlamm kochen. Und der Geruch – das ist auch lustig. Es hat ja voll nach verbranntem Müll gestunken und für mich, wenn ich das irgendwo rieche, fühl ich mich voll nostalgisch.

Ja, aber weil Du gesagt hast, dass ich keine Ameisen zertreten hab: Also mit Blindschleichen hab ich doch einiges ausprobiert. Also ich habe sie nie zerschnitten oder so. Das nicht. Aber so ein bissel Lasso gespielt und das ist eine Geschichte, jetzt erzähl ich dir einfach fast alles. Aber meine Oma hat immer Küken gehabt und es war immer auch ein bisschen Wissbegierde da, eine patscherte, wir haben immer probiert, ob Die

00:58:51 VMF:
What faded away? That search for meaning?

00:58:57 PS:
Yeah, at some point it was all about gender and popularity at school or whatever. Before that, I don't even remember clearly, but I played volleyball and apparently I always tried to kind of dance during it or something. And then someone once asked me what was wrong with me – if I was nuts – for dancing around like that. And it was a reality check. I thought: okay, they don't see this the way I do.

00:59:58 VMF:
Yeah, I don't know. It sounds to me like creative expression was the one way you could feel recognized or connected. And that was maybe missing a bit. Like you said, you were always the odd one out with your interests. But it all fits together. And it sounds like you had beautiful qualities. That kind of magic is what being a child is about.

01:00:44 PS:
Totally.

01:00:45 VMF:
That openness to the world – and instead of squashing ants, you watched them. You danced with trees. That says something about you.

01:00:59 PS:
Yeah, but I only told you the sweet parts. I also played rodeo with slowworms, you know what I mean? I think it's partly about how your parents raise you. I don't want to get into my parents too much, but their general approach was: kids should just play outside. No one was hovering over you worrying whether you'd fall or not – we did fall, we got hurt, and it didn't matter. We were either always outside or in front of the TV. I learned a lot from TV. My mom just let us be. She didn't come to the playground to check if we were okay. We came home with scraped legs and feet, and maybe got a Band-Aid, if anything. My mom was loving, but we were really out on our own. That was the same in Turkey, too. We went every year to our village, and there we'd play with trash. My favorite toy was garbage – cooking mud with tin cans. The smell too – it was all burnt garbage, and now when I smell that, I get super nostalgic.

And yeah, you said I didn't squash ants, but I did try things with slowworms. I never cut them or anything, but I'd play lasso. And my grandma had chicks, and we were curious – we'd test if they could fly. It wasn't from very high up, but still, not cool.

Küken fliegen können. Aber es war nicht so hoch. Aber es war trotzdem, es war nicht so cool.

01:03:28 VMF:
Na ja, eh. Aber ich meine, woher soll man es wissen? Es zeigt einfach eine Neugierde für die Welt.

01:03:39 PS:
Ja die hat‘s eh geben ja. Wir haben eine Nachbarin gehabt, die hat die Blindschleichen zerschnitten. Sowas hätte ich nie gemacht.

01:03:50 VMF:
Eben. Ja das ist schon was anderes.

01:03:52 PS:
... schon tief derb, irgendwie.

01:03:56 VMF:
Ja brutal und aggressiv. Und nicht empathisch...

01:04:02 PS:
Ja, das stimmt. Na nein, nein, nein. Da würde ich auch überhaupt empfehlen, zu dem Berg hinzufahren, wo ich aufgewachsen bin. Der ist echt einfach traumhaft gewesen. Also wenn du schlafen gegangen bist, dann hast du die Hirsche unten gehört... das war schon cool.

01:04:19 VMF:
Wirklich Hirsche?

01:04:23 PS:
Rehe, Hirsche. Also das war so ein Hang runter und haben sich unten immer versammelt und du hast sie gehört am Abend. Also es war schon cool. Es war schon schräg, alles zusammen.

01:04:42 VMF:
Ja so eine Heidi Kindheit, aber als kurdische Familie.

01:04:47 PS:
Ja genau, irgendwo im Ötztal... auf einem Berg oben.

01:04:48 VMF:
Das ist schon speziell.

01:04:53 PS:
Es war schon cool im Nachhinein. Ich mein, Rassismus habe ich auf jeden Fall erlebt. Aber andererseits war es auch so, dass die das halt auch nicht besser wussten. Sie mochten uns ja alle dann irgendwo. Also sie haben immer gesagt, euch mögen wir, aber die anderen... da hab ich mich immer richtig stolz gefühlt, dass ich nicht die anderen bin. Aber es war schon okay. Es war jetzt nicht so oarg. Aber ja, ich mag Tirol. Dass ich vom Berg... ich hab mich immer als Spätzünderin empfunden. Weil wir eben nit so up to date waren. Also ich glaub, wenn ich Kinder hab, würde ich auch irgendwo auf einen Berg... nein würde ich nicht. Jetzt schwafel ich lei nur mehr.

01:05:52 VMF:
Alles gut.

01:06:03 PS:
Ja. Ich weiß nicht, wir waren jetzt nicht arm oder sowas, aber das war halt auch das, was ich mein mit dieser Einfachheit, dass man so viel machen kann. Wenn ich meine Neffen anschaue, oder halt jedes Kind, dass ich jetzt kenne, die haben einfach voll viel Zeug. Es ist wahrscheinlich auch, weil es leistbarer ist und einfach in Massen da. Aber wir haben halt echt kaum Spielzeug gehabt und haben uns dann immer irgendwas gebaut. Ich habe schon als Kind Puppen gemacht, aus Stroh, die waren cool, die waren echt cool. Das ist schon auch so ein Gefühl, das ich wertvoll finde, wenn man einfach mit ganz wenig Sachen voll viel machen kann.

01:03:28 VMF:
Yeah, but I mean, how would you know? It just shows curiosity about the world.

01:03:39 PS:
Yeah, that was there for sure. We had a neighbor who used to cut slowworms in half. I’d never do that.

01:03:50 VMF:
Exactly. That’s a whole other level.

01:03:52 PS:
... pretty brutal, honestly.

01:03:56 VMF:
Yeah, violent and not empathetic.

01:04:02 PS:
Totally. And hey, I would really recommend going up to the mountain where I grew up. It’s truly beautiful. When you went to bed, you’d hear the deer below... it was pretty special.

01:04:19 VMF:
Really? Deer?

01:04:23 PS:
Deer, stags. They’d gather down the slope in the evenings and you could hear them. It was kind of surreal.

01:04:42 VMF:
Like a Kurdish Heidi childhood.

01:04:47 PS:
Yeah, exactly – somewhere up in the Ötztal mountains.

01:04:48 VMF:
That’s something special.

01:04:53 PS:
Looking back, it really was. I mean, sure, I experienced racism too. But at the same time, people just didn’t know better. They liked us. They always said: „We like you, but not the others...“ And I used to feel proud of not being „the others.“ It was okay. Not super bad. I do like Tyrol. But growing up on a mountain, I always felt like a late bloomer – because we weren’t exactly up to date. If I ever have kids, I’d want to raise them on a mountain too... or maybe not. Now I’m just rambling.

01:05:52 VMF:
It’s all good.

01:06:03 PS:
Yeah. I don’t know, we weren’t poor or anything, but what I mean is this simplicity – how much you can do with so little. When I look at my nephews or any kids today, they have so much stuff. It’s probably more affordable and more available now. But we had hardly any toys, so we’d make our own. I used to make dolls out of straw as a kid. They were cool, really cool. That feeling – that you can do a lot with very little – is something I still really value.

01:06:54 VMF:
Also, wie hast du die gemacht? Die Strohpuppen?

01:06:56 PS:
Also wir haben ja voll viel Heu gehabt, weil wir auch beim Mähen immer geholfen haben. Und dann wirklich halt so einen Buschen zusammengehalten und zusammengebunden in der Mitte und dann auch probiert die Arme zu machen. Also, es war keine stabile Puppe, aber es war eine Puppe. Es war keine Barbiepuppe. Aber es war cool. Und dann muss ich sagen, ohne dass ich da jetzt auf das eingehe, aber der Christian ist 10 Jahre älter. Der hat zum Beispiel eine ganz andere Kindheit gehabt als ich. Ich hab eher so die ähnliche Kindheit wie sei Mam gehabt schon fast, also von dem das ist total verschoben. Deswegen mein ich auch, deswegen spür ich das glaube ich auch so, dass dieses Raumzeit noch nicht ganz auf der gleichen Ebene ist oder dass die Zeit dem Raum nachläuft irgendwie. Also nein, es stimmt nicht. Aber du weißt was ich mein.

01:07:51 VMF:
Ja ich kann‘s mir vorstellen. Wobei da ja einfach die Dinge so viel parallel passieren. Also ich weiß nicht, dieses Jahr in Island war zB... da hatte ich auch total das Gefühl, dass irgendwie... auf der einen Seite haben die sich so als Avantgarde verstanden und alle waren Künstler und so und gleichzeitig... irgendwie waren sie auch stolz auf dieses leicht Exotisierende, so wir sind die Elfen-Freaks und haben sich halt drüber lustig gemacht über die Touristen, die geglaubt haben, sie glauben wirklich an Elfen...

01:08:35 PS:
Das Mystische, das ist auch so irgendwie touristisch, gell?

01:08:41 VMF:
Ja voll. Und es war aber halt auch so, du hast den Wohnungen angesehen, dass es Ikea erst seit einem Jahr gegeben hat dort und den haben sie aber leer gekauft. Also ich meine ganz Island hatte damals ich weiß nicht genau, wie es jetzt ist, so 300 000 Einwohner und die hatten einen Ikea wie für eine 2 Millionenstadt und haben so wild geshoppt, dass der noch vergrößert hat.

01:09:12 PS:
Echt ja, voll org.

01:09:13 VMF:
...und haben auch immer wieder erzählt, dass es vor ein paar Jahren noch zwei Sorten Tee gab im Supermarkt und so. Also da gab es schon irgendwie das Gefühl, abgehängt zu sein in so einer komischen, westlichen, medial vermittelten Norm... also ich meine, was soll das sein?

01:09:38 PS:
Das ist aber überall, mir kommt vor, das ist die Modernisierung einfach...

01:09:44 VMF:
... dieses Gleichschalten irgendwie.

01:09:47 PS:
Ja, das habe ich ja in Istanbul voll gespürt. Also das war auch bei meiner Diplomarbeit voll spürbar. Einfach geschichtlich abgehängt. Irgendwie ist es ja auch spannend. Ich habe es so zusammengefasst: Ich habe das Gefühl, dass die Türkei, also die Elite, und das hat es in vielen Ländern gegeben, so probiert hat, modern dem Westlichen zu entsprechen und plötzlich Institutionen reintut, die eigentlich eine geschichtliche Entwicklung im Westen gehabt haben für sich. Etwas Fremdes irgendwie reinstellen und sagen so schaut es jetzt aus. So muss man sich kleiden zum Beispiel. Und

01:06:54 VMF:
How did you make them? The straw dolls?

01:06:56 PS:
Well, we had loads of hay from helping with the mowing. I’d grab a bunch, tie it in the middle, try to make arms. It wasn’t a sturdy doll, but it was a doll. Not a Barbie, but still cool. And I have to say, without going into it too much, Christian is ten years older than me. He had a completely different childhood. Mine was more like his mom’s childhood, actually. So everything feels kind of shifted. That’s why I feel like time and space aren’t always on the same level – like time is trailing behind space. Or... not really. But you know what I mean.

01:07:51 VMF:
Yeah, I think I get it. It’s like everything’s happening in parallel. Like in Iceland this year – it was so strange. On one hand, they saw themselves as super avant-garde, everyone was an artist. But on the other hand, they kind of leaned into this exotic image – like “we’re the elf freaks” – and they laughed at the tourists who thought they actually believed in elves...

01:08:35 PS:
That mystical stuff is kind of touristy too, right?

01:08:41 VMF:
Yeah, totally. And you could see in people’s homes that Ikea had only been there for a year – and they had bought it out. I mean, all of Iceland had, I don’t know, 300,000 people, and they had an Ikea made for a city of two million. They shopped so much they had to expand it.

01:09:12 PS:
Really? Wow, that’s wild.

01:09:13 VMF:
Yeah, and people would tell you there used to be only two kinds of tea in the store. There was definitely this feeling of being left behind by some weird, Western, media-driven standard... whatever that even is.

01:09:38 PS:
That’s everywhere, I think. Just modernization...

01:09:44 VMF:
... that sort of homogenization.

01:09:47 PS:
Yeah, I really felt that in Istanbul. That was a big part of my thesis, actually. This sense of being historically bypassed. It’s interesting though. My conclusion was: the Turkish elite – and you see this in many countries – tried to copy the West, pushing Western institutions into society without the historical evolution that made those institutions make sense there. Like just plopping something foreign in and saying “this is how we do it now.” Including how you dress. And that created this unease among people, because they couldn’t identify with it...

das hat dann bei den Leuten einfach so ein ungutes Gefühl hinterlassen hat, weil sie nicht dem Westen...

01:10:30 VMF:
... weil es keine Entwicklung war, sondern so aufgepfropft...

01:10:34 PS:
Reingepfropft und dadurch kommt irgendwie die eigene Identität voll durcheinander. Und deswegen, also so plump gesagt, bin ich ja der Überzeugung, dass die Konservativen so viel Macht gekriegt haben. Also ja, ich war in der Kunstuni dort in der Malereiklasse in Istanbul...

01:11:01 VMF:
Für ein Auslandssemester?

01:11:02 PS:
Erasmus, ja. Und das war halt eine Institution. Weil außerhalb gab es dann eh dieses künstlerische Dasein, was es hier auch gibt, aber einen Tick politischer logischerweise fast, weil es da irgendwie mehr Not hat.

01:11:19 VMF:
Da bist automatisch irgendwie dann politischer, selbst wenn Du das gleiche machst wahrscheinlich?

01:11:22 PS:
Ja, vor allem weil es da einfach mehr Repression gibt, genau. Aber in der Uni selber gab es Aktmodelle, die dann zwei Wochen lang in der Früh die gleiche Position gehalten haben. Und wenn jemand zu viele Farben verwendet hat, hat der Professor gesagt „das ist zu bunt." Also das war schon die Revolution. Das war sehr schulisch. Die alle haben top gemalt, da hast echt das Gefühl gehabt, die können alles super. Das war auch so ein Bild, wo ich mir gedacht hab: Okay, das hyperrealistische Malen kann man lernen. Also diese Täuschung kann man sich anlernen. Aber ist es das dann? Ist das dann die Malerei? Ja, das war auch eine gute Erfahrung muss ich sagen. Und überhaupt, die Stadt habe ich so empfunden, weil die so europäisch wirkt...

01:12:16 VMF:
Getäuscht? Geht es eigentlich um eine europäische Täuschung?

01:12:22 PS:
Ich glaube, wenn Sie dann selber eine Stimme kriegen, dann wird es wieder was anderes. Aber bisher ist es einfach eine Täuschung, weil sie da noch nicht ihre Stimme gefunden haben, also vor allem die jungen Leute oder die Andersdenkenden oder die Westlichen. Nein, es gibt in der Türkei immer nur die Bezeichnung „White and Black Turks" und da geht es um Bart-Haarwuchs oder sowas. Also es gibt halt viele aus dem Osten, die sind halt dünkler und ein bissl bärtiger. Und dann gibt's die blonden Türken. Nicht nur blonde, aber die halt einem bestimmten Bild entsprechen. Also es gibt einfach diese Kontraste. Na, das war auch ein gutes Erlebnis für mich selber, für meine Identität.

01:13:11 VMF:
Ja, ich stelle mir vor... wann ist deine Familie nach Tirol, deine Eltern?

01:13:18 PS:
Ja das ist ein bisschen eine komische Geschichte, weil meine beiden Opas waren Gastarbeiter. Und mein Papa hat ja schon mit 10 angefangen zu arbeiten und ist gaube ich mit 15, 16 mitgekommen zum Arbeiten. Aber dann halt nicht offiziell, sondern mit seinem Vater. Und ist dann wieder zurückgekehrt. Und mit Anfang 20 hat er geheiratet und war mal zwei Jahre beim Militär. Dann wurde meine Schwester geboren

01:10:30 VMF:
... because it wasn't a process, it was imposed.

01:10:34 PS:
Exactly. And that's why, I think – simplified of course – that's how conservatives gained so much power. I studied painting at the art academy in Istanbul...

01:11:01 VMF:
As an exchange semester?

01:11:02 PS:
Yeah, Erasmus. And it was very institutional. Outside the school there was a vibrant, artistic scene, like here – but maybe a bit more political because the stakes were higher.

01:11:19 VMF:
You're kind of political by default there, even doing the same things, right?

01:11:22 PS:
Exactly. Because repression is stronger. But inside the university – it was so rigid. We had life models holding the same pose for two weeks. If someone used too many colors, the professor would say "it's too colorful." That was their idea of rebellion. Very academic. Everyone painted so well – you felt like they could do anything. It made me realize: hyperrealistic painting is a skill you can learn. This illusion is teachable. But is that really what painting is? Still, it was a great experience. And the city – it felt so European, but also...

01:12:16 VMF:
Deceived? Is it actually about a European deception?

01:12:22 PS:
I think once you get your own voice, it becomes something different. But so far, it's just a deception because they haven't found their voice yet – especially the young people, the dissenters, or the Westerners. No, in Turkey there's always only the term "White and Black Turks," and it's about beard and hair growth or something like that. So there are many from the East who are darker and a bit more bearded. And then there are the blonde Turks. Not only blondes, but those who fit a certain image. So there are simply these contrasts. Well, that was also a good experience for me personally, for my identity.

01:13:11 VMF:
Yes, I imagine... when did your family come to Tyrol, your parents?

01:13:18 PS:
Yeah, that's a bit of a strange story because both my grandfathers were guest workers. And my dad started working at 10, and I think he came along to work with his father when he was 15 or 16. But not officially, just with his dad. Then he went back again. And in his early twenties, he got married and spent two years in the military. Then my sister was born and they moved to Tyrol, and I and my other siblings were born in Tyrol.

und sie sind nach Tirol gezogen, ich und meine anderen Geschwister sind in Tirol geboren.

01:13:54 VMF:
Also in diesem dazwischen eigentlich total sozialisiert?

01:13:58 PS:
In dem Dazwischen sozialisiert... wie meinst du das?

01:14:03 VMF:
Zwischen Österreich und ...

01:14:05 PS:
Ich weiß nicht. Ich habe immer das Gefühl gehabt, dass ich da nicht. Also früher. Jetzt bin ich da ganz anderer Meinung.

01:14:11 VMF:
Also Dein Vater, meine ich...

01:14:12 PS:
Mein Vater, der ist halt, ich weiß nicht... ja er ist schon voll angepasst. Also er kennt sich in Tirol aus, hat voll viel erlebt, aber auch negative Sachen. Viel mehr als wir. Aber ja, er wollte ein offeneres, moderneres Leben für ihre Kinder. Das passt eh auch voll, ja.

01:14:36 VMF:
Na ich stell mir nur vor, wenn man dann hier aufwächst. Und die Eltern haben aber diese ganz andere Vergangenheit und man kommt dann irgendwie an diesen Ort dieser Vergangenheit, also ich stell mir vor, dass das so eine eigenartige Rückkoppelung geben muss, wenn man irgendwie... also ich weiß nicht, es ist so banal und geht natürlich nicht so tief, aber ich war nur einmal kurz in den USA, in New York. Und wie ich da hingekommen bin, hatte ich das Gefühl, so: Ah! Achso. Also gerade in New York, man hat das Gefühl, man kennt jede Straßenecke aus irgendwelchen Filmen und...

01:15:23 PS:
... dieses Reden und halt auch diese Art so...

01:15:25 VMF:
Ja irgendwie alles Mögliche. Und wo man das Gefühl hat, Europa hat irgendwie so ein ABarbara Krauslatsch davon nachgemacht. Also es kommt einem alles so seltsam vertraut vor. Also ich stelle es mir so ähnlich nur viel, viel krasser vor. Wenn das halt so richtig in die Familiengeschichte reingeht so, dass man irgendwo ist, wo man eigentlich fremd ist...

01:15:52 PS:
... aber trotzdem vertraut. Genau das war es eh, das ist es immer noch. Deswegen mag ich's ja auch gern. Also ich hab das immer genossen, es war halt eine andere Welt. Aber so, wo es angefangen hat sich zu spalten, wo ich mir gedacht hab, ich möchte nicht in diesem Patriarchat leben. Das ist immer noch ein Prozess, obwohl ich denke, ich bin jetzt emanzipiert, fühle ich mich schon wieder so in dieser Mädchen Rolle, die dann auf den Boden schaut. Also nicht mal absichtlich. Aber mir ist es oft passiert. Das ist halt etwas, was man so mitkriegt.

Aber das mit der Türkei, die hat sich auch voll verändert. Das ist echt ein Unterschied, wenn du in der Diaspora wohnst oder vor Ort. Ich glaube, dass meine Eltern auch mit uns sehr viel erlebt, also durchgezwickt, sich verändert haben. Und ich glaube, dass es dann in der dritten Generation wieder etwas anderes wird, mehr Sehnsucht. Das merk ich halt bei den Jugendlichen. Also ich hab mich immer hin und her geschwankt gefühlt. Aber die Jugendlichen, die ich kennengelernt haben, fühlen sich, weil sie sich in Österreich oder in Wien vor allem ein bissel ausgeschlossen fühlen, der

01:13:54 VMF:
So you were actually socialized in this in-between?

01:13:58 PS:
Socialized in the in-between... what do you mean by that?

01:14:03 VMF:
Between Austria and...

01:14:05 PS:
I don't know. I always felt like I wasn't. Well, earlier. Now I feel very differently about it.

01:14:11 VMF:
I mean your father...

01:14:12 PS:
My father, he's... I don't know, yeah, he's fully adapted. He knows Tyrol well, experienced a lot, but also negative things. Much more than us. But yeah, he wanted a more open, modern life for his children. That fits well, yeah.

01:14:36 VMF:
Well, I just imagine growing up here, but the parents have this very different past, and you somehow come to that place of the past. I imagine that must be a strange feedback loop when you somehow... I don't know, it's so banal and obviously not that deep, but I was only once briefly in the US, in New York. And when I arrived there, I had the feeling, like: Ah! Oh, right. Especially in New York, you feel like you know every street corner from some movie and...

01:15:23 PS:
... the way people talk and also the style of it...

01:15:25 VMF:
Yeah, like everything. And you get the feeling Europe has somehow copied a watered-down version of it. Everything seems so strangely familiar. I imagine it's similar but much more intense when it really goes into the family history, that you're somewhere where you're actually a stranger...

01:15:52 PS:
... but still familiar. Exactly, that was it, that's still how it is. That's why I like it too. I always enjoyed it; it was a different world. But that's when it started to split for me, when I thought I didn't want to live in this patriarchy. That's still a process. Even though I think I'm emancipated now, I still sometimes feel like that girl who looks at the ground. Not even intentionally. But it often happened to me. It's something you pick up on.

But Turkey has also changed a lot. It's really a difference whether you live in the diaspora or on site. I think my parents went through a lot with us, changed a lot. And I believe in the third generation, it becomes something else again, more longing. I notice that with the youth. I always felt caught in-between. But the young people I've met feel closer to Turkey again, because they feel a bit excluded here in Austria, especially in Vienna, and Erdoğan offers that. But that was never the case for us. We didn't learn Kurdish so we wouldn't speak Kurdish in Turkey because our parents were afraid since it was forbidden. So it was always like: you're in Tyrol and called Turkish, but you think, well, I'm Kurdish anyway...

Türkei wieder näher, weil der Erdoğan das so anbietet. Aber das war bei uns nie so. Wir haben nicht Kurdisch gelernt, damit wir in der Türkei nicht kurdisch reden, weil die Eltern Angst hatten, weil es verboten war. Also das war irgendwie immer so ein Thema: du bist halt in Tirol und wirst als Türke bezeichnet und denkst halt, na ich bin eh Kurde...

Aber das ist halt so. Das war früher schwierig. Und jetzt... das ist eine Qualität finde ich. Aber ja, in New York oder überhaupt in Amerika hab ich mir auch gedacht – das ist alles so vertraut. Das war schon cool. In New York, das hat mich voll überfordert. Woa, das war echt voll. Am meisten die U-Bahn-Stationen. Das ärgert mich in der Stadt, wenn man von A nach B nicht leicht kommt.

01:18:14 VMF:
Ja, da ist man halt, wenn man länger in Wien war, total verwöhnt.

01:18:16 PS:
Ich lieb das eben... ich mag Berlin auch nicht deswegen. Aber ja, wenn man in der Diaspora lebt, ist es dann... z.B. bei mir ist es sicher etwas anderes, weil ich in Tirol aufgewachsen bin, weil es da einfach nicht so viele Migranten gegeben hat wie jetzt in Wien. Also ich glaube, wenn ich meine Cousinen anschaue, die im Zehnten aufgewachsen sind, ist das was völlig anderes, als wenn wir uns betrachten. Wir waren gezwungen: Also ich bin Österreicherin. Aber da waren halt nur Österreicher.

01:19:04 VMF:
Da gab‘s diese Community gar nicht so...

01:19:06 PS:
Genau diese Community gab es schon. Aber halt nicht in unserem Alter. Also es gibt eine große kurdische Bewegung in Tirol. Da haben wir viel zu tun gehabt. Aber so, an bestimmten Tagen hat man sich getroffen, zu bestimmten Festen. Aber so in der Schule war ich die einzige, mit meiner Schwester, also ganz wenige. Es hat sich auch verändert, aber ich glaub ich bin dadurch noch mehr österreichisch geworden, als jetzt zum Beispiel meine Cousine in Wien, die hinterfragen noch weniger diese Strukturen, die es gibt. Kommt mir vor. Also dort bist du halt gezwungen, die Strukturen zu hinterfragen, weil du damit die ganze Zeit konfrontiert wirst.

01:19:57 VMF:
Glaubst du, hat das auch was damit zu tun, dass die Kunst für dich so ein Freiraum war? Also dieses zwischen den Welten sein – Kunst, die das auch kann, wo das einfach sein darf, wo man sich in so einem Dazwischen bewegen kann?

01:20:22 PS:
Also die Flucht hat damit was zu tun, aber nicht so wirklich, weil in der Kunst wollte ich nie auf meine Wurzeln reduziert werden.

01:20:31 VMF:
Nein, das mein ich jetzt auch gar nicht, überhaupt nicht so direkt, sondern mehr so, dieses Gefühl von irgendwo dazwischen sein...

01:20:37 PS:
Ja, das eher voll. Das war voll die Auseinandersetzung. Meine ersten Tattoos habe ich deswegen, weil ich mich erinnern wollt, dass ich anders leben will – ohne Schuldgefühle.

Und das war fürs Künstlerische... ich mein, ich wollt‘s nie thematisieren. Aber der Zugang war sicher auch von dem beeinflusst, dass es nicht nur einen Weg gibt, also ich meine nicht nur eine Welt gibt. Aber deswe-

But that’s how it was. It was difficult before. And now... that’s a quality, I think. But yeah, in New York or anywhere in America, I thought – it’s all so familiar. That was cool. In New York, it totally overwhelmed me. Wow, that was intense. Especially the subway stations. It annoys me in a city when you can’t get easily from A to B.

01:18:14 VMF:
Yeah, when you’ve been in Vienna for a while, you get totally spoiled.

01:18:16 PS:
I love it... I don’t like Berlin for that reason. But yeah, living in the diaspora is different. For me, it’s definitely different because I grew up in Tyrol, where there weren’t as many migrants as there are now in Vienna. I think if I look at my cousins who grew up in the 10th district, it’s totally different from how we grew up. We were forced: I’m Austrian. But there were only Austrians there.

01:19:04 VMF:
So that community wasn’t really there?

01:19:06 PS:
That community existed, but not in our age group. There’s a big Kurdish movement in Tyrol. We were involved a lot. But only on certain days, for certain festivals. But at school, I was the only one, with my sister, very few. It has changed, but I think I became even more Austrian because of that, than for example my cousin in Vienna, who questions these structures even less. It seems that way. There you’re forced to question structures because you’re confronted with them all the time.

01:19:57 VMF:
Do you think it also has to do with art being a free space for you? This being-in-between – art that allows that, where it’s allowed, where you can move in that in-between?

01:20:22 PS:
The escape has something to do with it, but not really, because in art I never wanted to be reduced to my roots.

01:20:31 VMF:
No, that’s not what I meant – not in a literal way – more like that feeling of being in between somehow...

01:20:37 PS:
Yes, that’s much more it. That was a huge part of what I grappled with. I got my first tattoos because I wanted to remind myself that I want to live differently – without guilt.

And when it comes to art... I mean, I never wanted to explicitly make it my subject. But my approach was definitely shaped by the idea that there isn‘t just one way – or rather, not just one world. That’s why I often say: whether we like it or not, we live in a bubble.

gen sage ich ja oft, ob wir wollen oder nicht, sind wir in einer Bubble.

01:25:46 VMF:
Also es ist halt, man sucht ja immer irgendwo...

01:25:54 PS:
Gleichgesinnte.

01:25:54 VMF:
Ja, genau. So eine Ebene, wo man irgendwie eine ähnliche Welterfahrung macht und dann fühlt man sich nicht mehr allein, dann fühlt man sich erkannt. Ja. Na gut hier. Ich glaube, ich drücke mal auf Stopp! Sonst ist mein Transkriptions-Abo ausgeschöpft.

Geboren in Tirol, Österreich. Sie lebt und arbeitet in Wien. 2014 schloss sie ihr Studium in Bildhauerei und Multimedia an der Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien ab. 2013 erhielt sie ein Föhn-Stipendium. Die Stadt Innsbruck erwarb 2015 eines ihrer Werke. Mit ihrem verspielten, aber analytischen Ansatz sind ihre Objekte niemals einfach feste Formen, sondern werden in ihrer Vielfalt und Wandelbarkeit präsentiert. Sie arbeitet mit verschiedenen Medien, darunter Video, Collage und Skulptur.

01:25:46 VMF:
Well, yeah – we're all looking for something...

01:25:54 PS:
Kindred spirits.

01:25:54 VMF:
Exactly. A space where people share a similar sense of the world – and then suddenly, you don't feel alone anymore, you feel seen.

Alright, I think I'll hit stop here – otherwise I'll max out my transcription subscription.

Born in Tyrol, Austria. She lives and works in Vienna. She graduated in Sculpture and Multimedia from the University of Applied Arts in Vienna in 2014. In 2013 she was awarded a Fohn scholarship. The City of Innsbruck acquired one of her works in 2015. With her playful but analytic approach, her objects are never simply fixed forms, but are displayed in their variety and mutability. She works with several media, including video, collage and sculpture.

(Explanatory) Notes and References

Matthias Herrmann

Among other things, I studied Fine Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in the Art and Photography class, led by Matthias Herrmann.

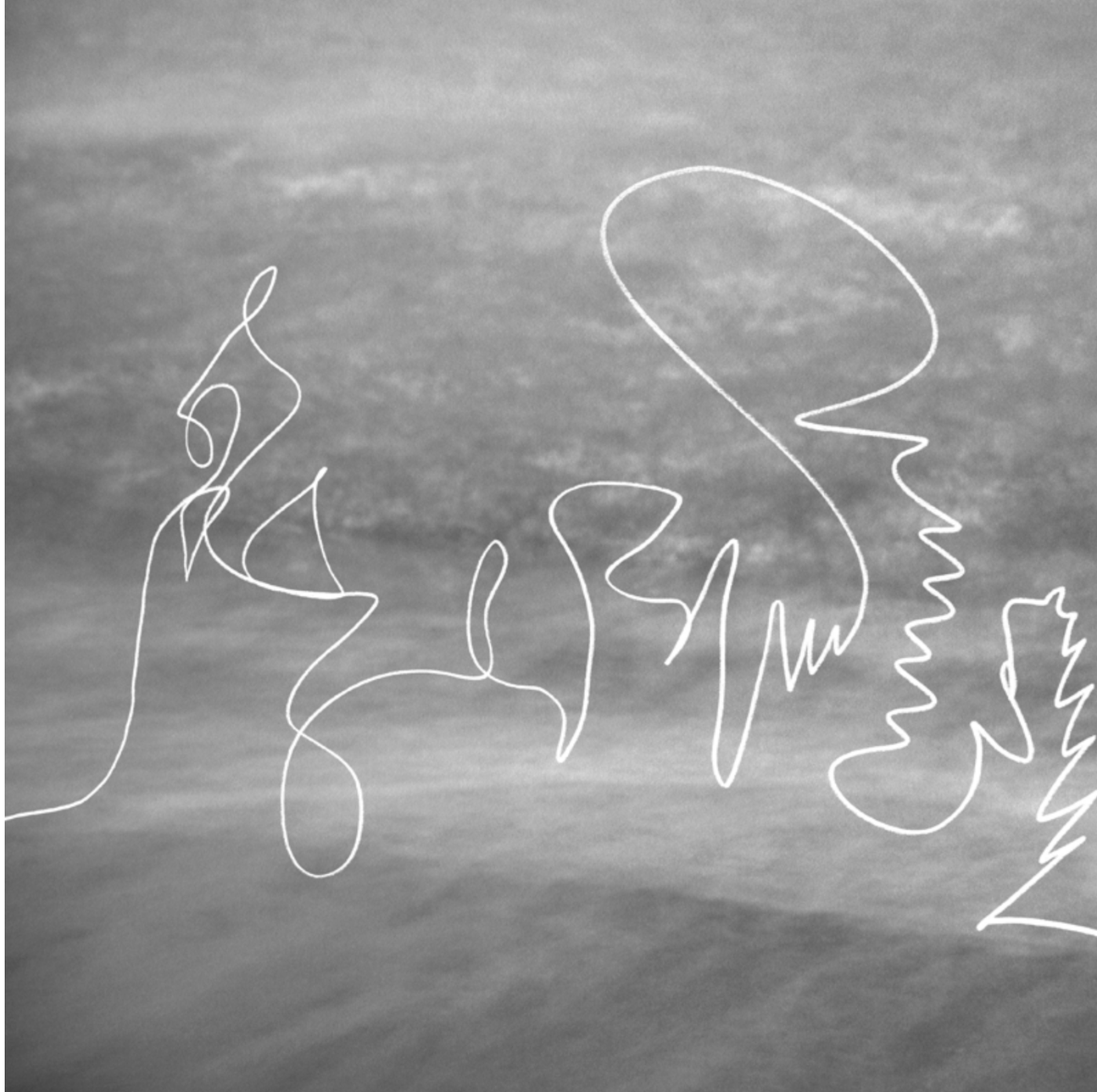
Essence

The Essence is the annual exhibition of the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

Iceland

Towards the end of my MFA studies, I spent one year in Iceland — first completing a six-month internship at the Living Art Museum in Reykjavík, followed by another six months in artist residencies across they island.

wisdom is not
bound to
age or species.



Ulla Szwajor

über ein bisschen gefährliche Abenteuer, gemeinsam und jede*r für sich, Zeitdruck, was-muss-man-da-machen, Betreuungsschlüssel und Reife im Hirn.

about slightly dangerous adventures, together and each for themselves, time pressure, what-must-I-do-here, childcare ratio and maturity in the brain.

Ich treffe Ulla vor einem gemeinsamen Dienst im ZOOM Kindermuseum in einem der Cafés im Museumsquartier. Es ist ziemlich laut. Ulla und ich haben noch nicht oft gemeinsam gearbeitet: sie war einige Jahre in Elternkarenz und eher im Ausstellungsbereich des ZOOM Kindermuseums beschäftigt. Seit der strukturellen Umstellung im ZOOM haben auch wir uns etwas häufiger gesehen und waren uns, zumindest nach meiner Wahrnehmung, sehr sympathisch.

00:00:00 VMF:
Kannst Du irgendwas damit anfangen?

00:00:35 US:
Ich find‘s voll interessant, weil ich hab so das Gefühl, für dich sind so die Menschen an sich die Kunst. Also dein künstlerisches Projekt ist eigentlich der Mensch hab ich irgendwie den Eindruck von dem, was du jetzt erzählt hast.

Es ist irgendwie für mich immer ein bisschen schwer zu erfassen, also, wie soll ich sagen – du hast jetzt urviel erzählt. Aber was bei dir da trotzdem alles noch dahinter abläuft, das sieht man ja oft nicht. Ich finde gerade im künstlerischen Bereich, dass man so viel Arbeit reinsteckt, urviel Zeit aufwendet und man sieht das alles nicht im Ergebnis, also das schätzen vielleicht viele gar nicht so. Ich muss mich da selber immer so ein bissel, weil ich hab halt auch viele Menschen, die künstlerisch arbeiten oder im künstlerischen Bereich sind, so in meinem Umfeld und da kriege ich halt immer mit, was da eigentlich dahinter steckt. Aber ich muss mir das dann selber oft bewusstmachen, wenn man nur das Ergebnis sieht.

Also das hat nichts mit meinem Kind-treffen zu tun, aber ist mir jetzt eingefallen. Bei dir habe ich den Eindruck, das ist so ein Riesenriesenriesenprojekt, das du dann irgendwie versuchst, wieder zu konkretisieren. Und ich tu mir immer von außen schwer, dass ich das dann fassen kann, also auch nicht nur auf dein Projekt bezogen. Wenn ich dann auch so den Prozess mitkrieg, dann ist es wieder leichter für mich. Aber auf jeden Fall weiß ich, dass immer sehr viel Arbeit und sehr viel Zeit und Dings hinter einer Sache steht, die man oft einfach nicht sieht, auch wenn das Ergebnis ein schönes ist, oder?

00:02:50 VMF:
Ja aber ich mein, eigentlich geht es mir um Momente, die ich ja zum Beispiel in der Ausstellung genauso sehe. Also kennst du das nicht, dass man das Gefühl hat: Wow, jetzt ist mir gerade was total gelungen. Da steckt in Wirklichkeit ganz viel meiner Erfahrung drin und ganz viel Einfühlung. Ein Kind, das am Anfang alles verweigert oder keine Ahnung, total schwierige Voraussetzungen hat. Und ich schaffe es dann, dass es da hinten eine halbe Stunde seinen Kreisel abschleift und total begeistert ist. Zum Schluss kommt halt auch wieder so ein Kreisel raus und man sieht es ja eigentlich nicht von außen. Wenn die Leute die Wahrnehmung nicht haben, kriegt‘s vielleicht überhaupt gar niemand mit und trotzdem hat man das Gefühl, da vibriert‘s. Und das sind die Momente, nach denen ich aus bin und ich glaube, dass du die ganz bestimmt auch kennst, wir die alle irgendwie kennen; die man eben nicht so fassen kann, aber man kann sich dem vielleicht annähern.

00:04:11 US:
Ja, es schwingt viel mit von der Erfahrung oder von der allgemeinen Lebenserfahrung. Aber ich muss mir das vielleicht auch öfter wieder bewusst machen, dass

I meet Ulla before a shared shift at the ZOOM Children‘s Museum in one of the cafés in the MuseumsQuartier. It‘s quite noisy. Ulla and I haven’t worked together very often: she was on parental leave for several years and has mostly worked in the exhibition area of the ZOOM Children‘s Museum. Since the structural changes at ZOOM, we‘ve seen each other a bit more frequently, and, at least from my perspective, we seemed to really click.

00:00:00 VMF:
Can you make anything out of that?

00:00:35 US:
I find it really interesting because I have this feeling that for you, people themselves are the art. So your artistic project is actually the human being – I somehow get that impression from what you just told me. It’s always a bit hard for me to grasp, how shall I say – you’ve told me a lot now. But what’s really going on behind the scenes, you often don’t see that. Especially in the artistic field, I find that people put so much work and so much time into something, and you don’t see all that in the final result, so many people maybe don’t appreciate it that much. I have to remind myself of that sometimes, because I have a lot of people around me who work artistically or are in the artistic field, so I always get a sense of what’s actually behind it. But I often have to consciously remind myself when you only see the result.

So this has nothing to do with my child-meeting thing, but it just came to mind. With you, I have the impression that it’s this huge, huge, huge project that you’re somehow trying to make more concrete again. And from the outside, I always find it hard to grasp, not only regarding your project. When I do get to experience the process, it’s easier for me. But I definitely know that there’s always a lot of work and time and stuff behind something that you often just don’t see – even if the result is a nice one, right?

00:02:50 VMF:
Yes, but I mean, basically, it’s about moments, which I also see in the exhibition, for example. You know that feeling, right? Like, wow, I just really succeeded at something. There’s actually a lot of my experience and a lot of empathy in there. A child who at first refuses everything or has, I don’t know, really difficult conditions. And then I manage to get them to spend half an hour polishing their spinning top back there and be totally enthusiastic. In the end, there’s just another spinning top again, and you actually don’t see it from the outside. If people don’t have that perception, maybe nobody notices at all, but still you feel like it’s buzzing. And those are the moments I’m after, and I think you definitely know them too – we all somehow know them; you can’t really grasp them, but you can maybe approach them.

das vielleicht auch nicht jeder kann, ja...

00:04:37 VMF:
Ganz sicher nicht.

00:04:38 US:
Eh. Also bei mir ist es oft so, dass ich mir Dinge irgendwie so bewusst machen muss so irgendwie. Aber wenn man dann irgendwie drüber nachdenkt und das konkretisiert ja und dann ist es doch wieder vielleicht ein bissel schwammig also es ist eh so wie du sagst. Ja okay.

Und jetzt auf deine Frage. Wenn ich einen Tag mit mir als Kind verbringen würde oder mit mir als Erwachsener, als Kind...

00:05:16 VMF:
Genau, was würdest du machen? Oder würdest du eher... vielleicht könnten wir so starten: Fällt dir eher was ein, dass du einfach quasi in die Vergangenheit gehst, wo würdest du dich treffen, oder holst du dich eher als Kind ins Jetzt?

00:05:47 US:
Ich weiß gar nicht ob ich... ja, es ist ganz lustig, weil ich hab da noch nie drüber nachgedacht, wie ich eigentlich auf mich selber als Kind gewirkt hätte. Weil ich habe manchmal das Gefühl, ich bin ein bisschen zu laut oder zu... oder ich bin als Erwachsene zu sehr noch so wie ich als Kind war und schreck damit die Kinder ein bisschen ab. Manchmal passt es auch genau so. Und manchmal passt es super, dass ich dann irgendwie herumblödel und Blödsinn mach, quasi. Aber es kommt halt immer drauf, ob die Kinder das grade wollen oder brauchen. Aber ich bin halt jetzt so in dieser Mama-Rolle auch und hab da den Gedanken gleich wieder bei meinen Kindern, als dass ich den Gedanken habe, dass ich selber das Kind bin. Also da fällt mir dann immer eh als Erstes ein, wenn ich so dran denk ans Kind sein, dass ich halt gern will, dass die Kinder Kind sein dürfen. In der Arbeit oder auch so ist es mir wichtig, dass die Kinder ihre Gefühle so haben und zeigen dürfen, wie sie es halt gerade erleben. Das beziehe ich jetzt mehr so auf meine Kinder. Ich weiß nicht, ob das passt, aber dass mir das einfach wichtig ist, dass die Kinder auch das fühlen dürfen, was sie fühlen und dass das nicht irgendwie zurückgedrängt wird. Und ich habe das Gefühl, bei mir als Kind... ich war eigentlich immer ein lustiges und fröhliches Kind und habe aber trotzdem jetzt oft, wenn ich so als Erwachsene daran denke, wie soll ich das jetzt sagen, hab ich manchmal den Eindruck, ich hab das irgendwie verloren, dass ich meine Gefühle so zeigen oder leben kann, wie sie eigentlich sind. Weil ich dann vielleicht doch als Kind nicht so gelernt habe und ich möchte, dass die Kinder, mit denen ich zu tun habe, wissen, sie dürfen das. Also ich weiß nicht, ob du das jetzt verstanden hast. Wenn ich das jetzt wieder auf meine Kinder beziehe, ich mag das nicht, wenn meinen Kindern jemand sagt, wenn es ihnen gerade irgendwie schlecht geht oder ihnen was unangenehm ist und sie zeigen das, dass dann wer sagt: ach, ist ja nichts passiert! Oder: brauchst ja jetzt nicht weinen! Aber gut. Das geht in eine andere Richtung.

00:09:42 VMF:
Nein, nein. Es ist nur so ein Startpunkt. Wo uns das hinführt ist ganz offen.

00:09:42 US:
Ich finde urschwierig, die Frage.

00:09:51 VMF:
Ja, ich weiß eh.

00:04:11 US:
Yes, there's a lot that resonates from experience or general life experience. But maybe I have to remind myself more often that maybe not everyone can do that, yeah...

00:04:37 VMF:
Definitely not.

00:04:38 US:
Exactly. For me, it's often that I have to consciously think about things somehow. But when you think about it and make it concrete, then maybe it's a bit vague again – so it's like you said. Yeah, okay.

And now to your question. If I were to spend a day with myself as a child or with myself as an adult, as a child...

00:05:16 VMF:
Exactly, what would you do? Or would you rather... maybe we can start like this: Does it occur to you more to go into the past, where would you meet yourself, or would you rather bring your child self into the now?

00:05:47 US:
I don't even know if I... yeah, it's funny because I've never really thought about how I would have affected myself as a child. Because sometimes I feel like I'm a bit too loud or too... or as an adult, I'm still too much like I was as a child and sometimes scare kids a bit. Sometimes that fits exactly. And sometimes it fits great that I mess around and do silly things, basically. But it always depends on whether the kids want or need that right now. But I'm now in this mom role too, and my thoughts immediately go to my children rather than thinking of myself as the child. So what always first comes to mind when I think about being a child is that I want children to be allowed to be children. At work or otherwise, it's important to me that children are allowed to have and show their feelings the way they experience them. I'm referring more to my own kids now. I don't know if that fits, but it's just important to me that children are allowed to feel what they feel and that it's not somehow pushed back. And I have the feeling that as a child myself... I was actually always a funny and happy kid, but now as an adult, when I think back, how should I say it, sometimes I have the impression I somehow lost that ability to show or live my feelings as they really are. Because maybe I didn't learn that as a child, and I want the kids I work with to know that they are allowed to do that. So, I don't know if you understand that now. If I apply it again to my children, I don't like it when someone tells my kids, when they feel bad or something is unpleasant and they show it, "Oh, it's nothing!" or "You don't need to cry now!" But well. That goes in another direction.

00:09:42 VMF:
No, no. It's just a starting point. Where it leads us is completely open.

00:09:42 US:
I find the question really difficult.

00:09:51 VMF:
Yeah, I know.

00:09:54 US:
Ich weiß nicht, ob ich mir manchmal mit konkreteren Sachen irgendwie leichter tue. Wobei dann oft das natürlich auch wieder schwierig ist, wenn es so eingeschränkt ist. Das ist finde ich so eine offene Frage, wo ich dann so mir schwer tue einen Anhaltspunkt zu finden.

00:10:12 VMF:
Aber vielleicht fällt dir was ein... das, wonach ich aus bin, ich hab's ja vorher schon so angedeutet, sind diese Momente in der Begegnung mit den Kindern wo es irgendwie so zu knistern beginnt. Wo, ich weiß nicht, wo man merkt, da ist irgendwie jetzt eine Resonanz, da passiert was. Das ist eben so schwierig zu fassen, aber es hat für mich total viel mit Situationen zu tun oder es gibt so parallele Gefühlslagen in der Kindheit wo ich sowas auch gefunden hab. Also, wenn ich mir selber die Frage stelle, dann hatte ich als Kind auch schon solche Momente, so Flow-Momente quasi oder so Kopf-Räume, Geschichten in denen ich da unterwegs war, wo ich im Nachhinein das Gefühl hab, ich war ein bisschen allein damit als Kind oder es gab niemanden, der mir das auch gezeigt hätte, dass man sich da bewegen kann und dass man da auch gemeinsam sein kann. Ein Ort, den man sich selber schafft sozusagen. So dieses Weltgestalten einfach auch. Und da gibt es halt so ein paar Momente, an die ich mich erinnere oder Dinge, die ich gemacht habe, wo das irgendwie so passiert und wo ich mir jetzt denk, da würde ich eigentlich gern nochmal hin.

Ich weiß nicht, zum Beispiel meine Großeltern hatten einen Bauernhof, der schon lange aufgelassen war und da gab es einen Hühnerstall, den ich mir als Kind dann so einrichten konnte. Mein kleines Haus sozusagen. Ich würde voll gerne mit mir da nochmal was dran bauen. Das sicher anders machen, jetzt mit den Geschichten, mit denen ich mich halt jetzt beschäftige oder so. Also vielleicht fällt dir eine Situation ein, in deiner... ich weiß schon, das ist jetzt sozialwissenschaftlich ganz schlecht, dass ich jetzt... aber vielleicht fällt dir irgendwie eine Situation ein, an die du dich irgendwie erinnerst, entweder ganz positiv... oder weil du vorher angefangen hast zu erzählen, mit den Gefühlen, wo du den Eindruck hattest, da war das nicht ok. So dass wir zu einer Situation kommen, von der du mir einfach erzählen kannst.

00:13:43 US:
Ja, ich tu mir schwer das so konkret zu machen auf eine bestimmte Situation.

00:13:43 VMF:
Was hast du als Kind so gemacht?

00:13:44 US:
Das Erste, was mir einfällt, wenn ich so an meine Kindheit denke, und was mir immer super gefallen hat, war, wenn ich mit meinen Cousinen und Cousins und meiner Schwester auf den Bauernhof von meiner Tante gefahren bin. Auf die Frage, wo würde ich gerne nochmal hin, quasi mit mir als Kind, dann fällt mir das eigentlich als Erstes ein. Oder auch Miesenbach, wo meine Oma ein Haus gehabt hat. Da durften wir gemeinsam einfach in der Natur tun, wie wir wollten. Es war immer so schön, weil wir irgendwie wenig Grenzen hatten und viel einfach ausprobieren konnten. Wir haben halt so Sachen gemacht, die kleine Abenteuer waren. Wir sind oft allein zum Fluss runtergegangen. Das war so ein kleiner Bach und dort haben wir uns eine... das ist lustig, dass du das mit der Wohnung gesagt hast, das ist auch immer das Erste, was mir als Kindheitserinnerung einfällt, dass wir uns eine Wohnung gebaut haben. Quasi jeder hatte dann so sein Zimmer, das haben wir dann schön eingerichtet und jeder hat sich irgendwie seinen Bereich geschaffen. Aber trotzdem waren wir immer gemeinsam. Ja, das sind halt

00:09:54 US:
I don't know if I find it easier with more concrete things sometimes. Although then that's often difficult again because it's so restricted. I think it's such an open question where I find it hard to find a starting point.

00:10:12 VMF:
But maybe something will come to you... what I'm after, I already hinted at it before, are those moments in encounters with children where it somehow starts to crackle. Where, I don't know, you notice there's some kind of resonance, something is happening. It's hard to grasp, but for me it's very much about situations or there are parallel emotional states in childhood where I also found something like that. So, when I ask myself the question, I had those moments as a child too, like flow moments or spaces in one's mind, stories I would wander within, where in hindsight I feel like I was a bit alone with it as a child or there was no one to show me that you can move in those spaces and also be there together. A place you create for yourself, so to speak. This shaping the world thing. And there are a few moments I remember or things I did where that kind of happened, and now I think, I'd really like to go back there.

I don't know – for example, my grandparents had a farm that had been abandoned for a long time, and there was a henhouse that I could set up and furnish as a kid. My little house, so to speak. I'd love to build something there again with myself. Definitely do it differently now with the stories I'm dealing with now or so. So maybe a situation will come to your mind in your... I know this is socially scientific bad, that I now... but maybe a situation you remember, either very positively... or because you started talking about feelings, where you had the impression, it wasn't okay there. So that we come to a situation you can just tell me about.

00:13:43 US:
Yes, I find it hard to make it concrete on a specific situation.

00:13:43 VMF:
What did you do as a child?

00:13:44 US:
The first thing that comes to mind when I think about my childhood, and what I always really liked, was when I went with my cousins and my sister to my aunt's farm. When you ask where I'd like to go again, with myself as a child, that's actually the first thing that comes to mind. Or also Miesenbach, where my grandma had a house. There we were simply allowed to do whatever we wanted together in nature. It was always so nice because we had few limits and could just try lots of things. We did stuff that were little adventures. We often went down alone to the river. It was a little stream and there we built a... it's funny that you mentioned the apartment – that's also always the first childhood memory I have, that we built ourselves an apartment. Basically, everyone then had their own room, which we decorated nicely, and everyone created their own area somehow. But still, we were always together. Yes, those are somehow nice childhood memories, but I wouldn't know... as an adult, I'd probably disturb it if I was there, but I'd like to watch again or I don't know. We just had our time and could do what we wanted, and it was just beautiful. And the nature aspect was always there. My aunt was pretty cool, and I find it important, also now when I work with children, that children are allowed to try things out...

irgendwie schöne Kindheitserinnerungen, aber da wüsste ich jetzt nicht … also ich würde da jetzt, wenn ich als Erwachsene mit dabei wäre, stören. Aber ich würde gerne nochmal zuschauen oder ich weiß nicht. Da haben wir einfach unsere Zeit gehabt und tun können, wie wir wollten und irgendwie urschön. Und es ist auch immer diese Naturaspekt doch dabei. Meine Tante, die war halt immer recht cool und ich finde es wichtig, auch jetzt, wenn ich mit Kindern arbeite, dass die Kinder auch ausprobieren dürfen …

00:17:28 VMF:
Also was zum Beispiel?

00:17:28 US:
Naja, in kleineren Situationen und auch in größeren, aber wenn ich das jetzt darf, in der Arbeit im ZOOM, dass ich ihnen nicht von vornherein sag genau wie sie… ich weiß nicht. Ich finde es immer recht cool, wenn was entsteht, was rauskommt, weil die Kinder irgendwie dann doch noch was ausprobieren oder so.

00:17:57 VMF:
Aber kannst du dich erinnern, was zum Beispiel, sind da irgendwelche konkreten Erinnerungen, was du, was deine Tante da, was ihr ausprobiert habt?

00:18:04 US:
Naja, ich weiß nicht. Wir durften halt überall herum klettern und oben in diesen Strohballen Sachen bauen. Es ging immer so ein bisschen ums Bauen und Wohnungen bauen und dann gab‘s Babyhasen, die haben wir dann auch mitgenommen in unsere Höhlen und so. Das war halt jetzt konkret bei dem Bauernhof, wo meine Eltern schon gesagt hätten, das ist gefährlich, hört‘s auf damit! Und wir durften es aber machen. Also auch so bisschen über Grenzen gehen, was jetzt da im ZOOM nicht so leicht machbar ist. Aber ich habe ja im Hort auch gearbeitet und eben nicht in so einem Regel-Hort, sondern in einer elternverwalteten Kindergruppe, wo auch da die Grenzen ein bisschen offener waren und ich auch den Kindern mehr Spielraum geben konnte als in einer anderen Nachmittagsbetreuung. Das hab ich immer recht cool gefunden. Und ich glaube, den Kindern hat das auch gefallen, dass sie nicht wirklich dauerbeobachtet sind und dauernd gesagt wird: Nein, das jetzt aber nicht mehr und das macht‘s jetzt so und so! Sondern dass sie halt einfach Kind sein dürfen. Ich finde das geht oft irgendwie verloren.

Das war mir damals irgendwie wichtig. Ich habe lustigerweise vor kurzem ein Ferien-Tagebuch von mir gefunden, wo ich sag wie cool ich das alles gefunden habe bei dem Bauernhof. Wir haben da bei den Stroharbeiten mitgeholfen und sind auf dem Anhänger von dem Traktor ganz oben gesessen, haben raufgeladen und dann war das bissi schief und wir sind halt oben gesessen. Ich weiß gar nicht, ob ich mir selber das jetzt erlauben würde, auch nachdem ich dieses Tagebuch jetzt gelesen habe. Weil da steht auch drin, meine Eltern haben gesagt, ich darf da jetzt vielleicht gar nicht mehr mitfahren, weil wir lauter so gefährliche Sachen machen und für mich war das aber so toll. Und dann denke ich mir oft: Ja, man muss halt auch den Kindern Sachen zutrauen oder Räume geben, wo sie ausprobieren können. Dass die Kinder auch einfach mit sich selber experimentieren im Großen und im Kleinen.

Ich finde das immer urschön, auch zum Beispiel konkret auf die Kreisel, wenn Kinder so reinkippen und dann einfach selber tun. Und dann so richtig drin sind in dem, was sie machen. Und das finde ich halt bisschen schade, dass das oft nicht geht, weil man so einen Zeitdruck hat. Das sind halt dann wieder so äußere Gegebenheiten, wo es dann oft nicht so leicht ist, aber ich versuche halt trotzdem das irgendwie,

00:17:28 VMF:
Like what, for example?

00:17:28 US:
Well, in smaller situations and also bigger ones, but if I’m allowed to speak about work in ZOOM, that I don’t tell them right from the start exactly how they should… I don’t know. I always find it pretty cool when something happens or comes out because the kids try something out or so.

00:17:57 VMF:
But can you remember, for example, any concrete memories of what you or your aunt, what you tried out there?

00:18:04 US:
Well, I don’t know. We were allowed to climb everywhere and build things up there in those hay bales. It was always a bit about building and making little homes, and then there were baby rabbits, which we also took into our caves and stuff. That was specifi-cally at the farm where my parents would have said, “That’s dangerous, stop that!” But we were allowed to do it.

So a bit about pushing boundaries, which isn’t so easy to do in ZOOM now. But I also worked in after-school care, not in a regular after-school program, but in a parent-managed children’s group where the limits were a bit more open and I could give the kids more room to play than in other afternoon care programs. I always thought that was pretty cool. And I think the kids liked it too, that they weren’t constantly watched and constantly told, “No, you can’t do that anymore,” or “Do it like this and like that now!” But that they could simply be kids. I think that often gets lost somehow That was somehow important to me back then. Funny enough, I recently found a holiday diary of mine where I wrote how cool I found everything at the farm. We helped with the straw work and sat way up on the tractor’s trailer, loading it up, and it was a bit tilted and we were just sitting up there. I don’t even know if I would allow myself to do that now, even after reading this diary. Because it also says my parents told me I probably shouldn’t go there anymore because we did so many dangerous things. But for me, it was so amazing. And then I often think: Yeah, you just have to trust kids with things or give them spaces where they can try things out. So that kids can simply experiment with themselves, both in big ways and small.

I always find that really beautiful, also specifically with the spinning tops, when kids dive into and just do it themselves. And then they’re really immersed in what they’re doing. And I think it’s a bit sad that it often doesn’t work because of time pressure. Those are external circumstances again, where it’s often not easy, but I try anyway, I don’t know, to convey somehow that they… It’s really difficult. We’re kind of jumping from one thing to another now.

weiß nicht, zu vermitteln, dass sie ... es ist urschwierig. Kommen wir jetzt so von einem ins andere.

Aber ich habe auch das Gefühl, den Kindern wird von klein auf, vom Kindergarten weg, gesagt, wann sie wie was zu tun haben. Auch in der Schule, bei jeder Unterrichtseinheit. Und dann gibt's so Fächer, wo das ein bisschen offener ist, wie der Werkunterricht. Der M. ist ja Werklehrer. Wenn die Kinder mal dürfen, sie wissen gar nicht, wie sie dann tun sollen mit dieser kleinen Freiheit und dann wird oft die Dynamik so schwierig. Dann artet das manchmal so aus. Ich denke mir, die Kinder können das oft gar nicht mehr, dass sie sich selber was erarbeiten oder sich beschäftigen mit einer Sache, weil ihnen von klein auf gesagt wird: Jetzt machts ihr aber das, jetzt machts ihr das so und jetzt machts ihr das so und so lang. Und das finde ich halt irgendwie schade.

Immer dieses: Was müssen wir da machen? Was müssen wir da machen? Und ich sag immer: Ihr müssts gar nix machen. Aber ihr könnt euch das anschauen. Das irgendwie so ausprobieren... ich weiß nicht. Ich mein, bei mir war da jetzt eine große Pause dazwischen, aber ich finde es ist immer wichtig, wenn sie dann einen Ausflug hierher machen, dass das so ein bisschen rauskommt, aus diesem: Was müssen wir da machen? Und es ist schwierig, weil es oft in so einer großen Gruppe mit drei Schulklassen nicht klappt – und das ist ja bei dem Werkunterricht auch so – weil es die Kinder nicht mehr können, das artet dann aus, weil sie zu wenig Zeiten haben, wo sie irgendwie Prozesse selber... wo sie einfach draufkommen: Sie können selber so und so tun oder so.

Weil diese Zeiten, wo ich als Kind tun durfte, auch in der Gruppe. Ich war immer am glücklichsten in der Gruppe. Ich mein, sicher, ich habe auch gut mit mir alleine spielen können, auch immer irgendwie in Höhlen. Da waren halt die Gegebenheiten super. Draußen in der Natur und so. Und das fehlt halt oft. Heute. Weil selbst wenn man dann wohin geht, dann ist es wieder so geführt und geleitet oft. Also man muss halt immer so den Mittelweg finden zwischen es artet alles komplett aus und es ist nur vorgegeben. Das ist halt da so bisschen der Versuch, finde ich immer.

Natürlich, für mich als Pädagogin ist das oft gefährlich, weil ich bin dann halt verantwortlich. Und das ist, finde ich, heutzutage viel zu oft das Problem, auch allgemein dieses: das und das darf man nicht so, weil sonst könnte das passieren und dann ist man dran. Auch unabhängig jetzt vom Kinder-Thema. Das wird immer mehr so und dadurch verliert man viele Freiheiten habe ich das Gefühl. Und ich finde das ist aber so wichtig. Diese Räume, wo es auch frei ist, irgendwie.

00:26:36 VMF:
Ja, ich fand das total schön, das Bild das du hattest, wo ihr da am Fluss gespielt, und irgendwie jeder für sich seinen Raum so gestaltet und es gibt auch das Haus, das irgendwie alle gemeinsam...

00:26:51 US:
Genau, das war so unsere Wohnung dort. Und wir haben da gewerkt und waren halt irgendwie alleine dort. Irgendwann hat es dann gebimmelt und wir sind raufgerufen worden zum Mittagessen und danach waren wir wieder unten und es waren einfach schöne...

But I also have the feeling that from a young age, starting at kindergarten, kids are told when and how they have to do things. Even at school, in every lesson. And then there are subjects where it's a bit more open, like arts and crafts. M. is crafts teacher. When kids are allowed to, they don't even know what to do with this little freedom and then the dynamics often get complicated. Sometimes it escalates. I think kids often can't work something out themselves anymore or engage with a thing because from a young age they are told, "Now do this, now do that like this and for this long." And I find that kind of sad.

Always this: What do we have to do here? What do we have to do here? And I always say: You don't have to do anything. But you can look at it. Just try it out somehow... I don't know. I mean, for me there's been quite a long break in between, but I think it's always important — when they come here on a trip like this — that they kind of get out of that mindset of "What do we have to do?" And that's hard, because it often doesn't work with such a big group, with three school classes at once — it's the same in craft class — because the kids don't really know how to do that anymore. It just gets out of hand, because they rarely have the time or space to work through processes on their own... to just discover that they can do things themselves, in their own way.

Because those times when I was allowed to do things as a kid, also in groups. I was always happiest in groups. I mean, sure, I could play well by myself too, always somehow in little hideouts. The conditions were great – outside in nature and so on. And that's often missing nowadays. Because even when you go somewhere, it's often led and guided again. So you always have to find a middle way between things escalating completely and everything being predetermined. That's kind of the attempt, I think.

Of course, for me as a pedagogue it's often dangerous, because then I'm responsible. And that is, I think, often the problem nowadays, also generally this: You're not allowed to do this or that, because otherwise some-thing could happen and then you're liable. Also inde-pendent of the kids topic. That's happening more and more and because of that you lose a lot of freedom, I feel. And I think that's so important. These spaces where it's also free somehow.

00:26:36 VMF:
Yes, I really liked the picture you had, where you played at the river and everyone kind of created their own space and there was also the house that somehow everyone together...

00:26:51 US:
Exactly, that was our apartment there. And we did our crafts and were kind of alone there. At some point the bell rang and we were called up for lunch, and afterwards we were back down and it was just nice...

Und bei dem Bauernhof war, ich ruf mir das oft in Erinnerung, dass ich selber gern mehr so wäre wie z.B. meine Tante damals mit uns war. Ich weiß nicht, wie alt wir waren und wir durften sogar mit einem kleinen Moped herumfahren und einfach so Dinge ausprobieren, sich trauen. Und letztens … ist auch schon wieder länger her, aber meine Tante ist halt jetzt Oma, also meine Cousine, mit der ich als Kind immer so viel zusammen war, die hat halt jetzt Kinder. Da waren wir wieder auf dem Bauernhof, weil ich den mal wieder besucht habe und die Kinder sind da raufgeklettert, wieder auf diese Strohballen, wo ich als Kind auch immer war und der kleine Sohn von meiner Cousine wollte von da oben runterspringen und ich habe mir gedacht, oh Gott, das ist ja urhoch! Und ich hab sogar gesagt glaub ich, ich glaube ich habe es getan: Ist das nicht ein bisschen hoch? Und meine Tante hat das gar nicht gehört und steht neben mir und sagt: Eins! Zwei! Drei! Und hat ihn so angespornt. Und da hab ich mir wieder gedacht: Urcool. Das war einer der Gründe, meine Tante, dass ich dort so eine schöne Kindheit hatte. Also es ist mir so bewusst aufgefallen, dass meine Tante da so cool ist, irgendwie halt mehr zulässt. Das möchte ich, wenn ich mich als Kind treffe, würde ich das auch gerne so machen wollen, dass ich… weiß ich nicht. Nicht alles zu sehr in Bahnen lenke.

Ich finde z.B. freies Spiel urwichtig. Also urwichtig. Und ich will nicht, dass das so verloren geht, und habe aber das Gefühl, das wird immer weniger eigentlich. Und dass sie das dann gar nicht mehr können, dann wissen Sie nicht, was soll ich jetzt machen in der Zeit, wo ich jetzt mal eigentlich mit Materialien tun dürfte oder auch ohne Materialien. Aber das ist wieder so auf den Werkunterricht bezogen. Da artet das dann manchmal so aus und das ist dann uranstrengend für uns Erwachsene oder für den M. halt.

00:30:32 VMF:
Ich glaube, ich weiß gut, was du meinst. Ich finde es aber auch schön, weil irgendwie ist das ja dann schon, also wenn ich das jetzt richtig verstehe, die Aufgabe… also wir haben uns ja dann diese gewissen Berufe trotzdem ausgesucht. Aber irgendwie ist das so ein Paradox. Oder wie du vorher auch gesagt hast, na ja, als Erwachsene – ich dürfte eigentlich gar nicht da sein oder ich würde nur stören oder so. Aber letztlich ist genau das die Aufgabe, irgendwie da zu sein und gleichzeitig aber auf diesen Freiraum zu achten, diesen Abstand irgendwie zu schaffen und trotzdem die Nähe.

Also weil für mich klingt es trotzdem, wenn du da erzählst, total geborgen. Ihr habt ja gewusst, die Tante weiß dann schon und im richtigen Moment wird sie trotzdem irgendwie… also natürlich, irgendwo so ein Stück weit Risiko ist dabei und es wird eingegangen, aber sie ist ja trotzdem da und präsent und behütet das. Oder bei der Geschichte vom Fluss ist dann die Mittagsglocke, also es ist auch irgendwie so geframed, aber eben dieser Freiraum geschaffen.

00:32:14 US:
Ja aber dann kommen so Berichte mit: Die Pädagogin wird verklagt wegen so und so. Und das ist … ich finde, das geht in die falsche Richtung. Ich meine, ja sicher, man ist dann verantwortlich. Ich hab auch im Hort Ausflüge gemacht und dann durften die Kinder im Park sein und spielen, ohne dass ich ihnen durchgehend genau auf die Finger schau. Und dann ist das halt so ein bisschen als Erwachsene eine Gratwanderung, was man jetzt eigentlich noch erlauben darf und was dann zu gefährlich wird, weil da könnte ja was weiß ich was alles rauskommen.

00:33:10 VMF:
Was man erlauben darf. Absurd, dieser doppelte Zwang.

And at the farm – I often recall that – I'd like to be more like my aunt was with us back then. I don't know how old we were, but we were even allowed to ride around on a small moped and just try things out, be brave. And recently… well, that was a while ago – but my aunt is now a grandma, so my cousin, with whom I spent a lot of time as a child, has children now. We were back at the farm because I visited again and the kids climbed up on those hay bales, where I was as a kid too, and my cousin's little son wanted to jump down from there, and I thought, oh god, that's really high! And I even said – I think I did – "Isn't that a bit high?" And my aunt didn't hear and was standing next to me saying, "One! Two! Three!" and encouraged him like that. And I thought again: super cool. That was one of the reasons my aunt made my childhood so nice. It really struck me how cool my aunt is, how much she lets happen. That's what I'd want if I met myself as a child, that I… I don't know. Not direct everything into tracks too much.

I find free play super important. Like, really important. And I don't want that to get lost, but I feel it's happening more and more. And that they can't do it anymore, they don't know what to do when they are allowed to do something with materials or without materials. But again, that's about craft classes. Sometimes it escalates and that's super exhausting for us adults or for M.

00:30:32 VMF:
I think I understand well what you mean. But I also find it beautiful because somehow, if I understand that right, that's the task… I mean, we chose these professions anyway. But somehow it's a paradox. Or as you said before, as an adult – I probably shouldn't be there or I'd just disturb or something. But in the end, that's exactly the task, somehow being there and at the same time watching that free space, creating that distance and still the closeness.

Because to me it sounds so safe when you tell it, you knew your aunt would know and at the right moment she'd still somehow be there… of course, there's a bit of risk involved and it's accepted, but she is still there and present and protects it. Or in the river story there's the lunch bell, so it's framed somehow, but that free space is created.

00:32:14 US:
Yes, but then you get reports like: The pedagogue gets sued for this or that. And that's… I think that's going in the wrong direction. I mean, sure, you're responsible then. I also did trips in after-school care and the kids were allowed to be in the park and play without me constantly watching their every move. And then as an adult it's a balancing act, what you're still allowed to allow and what's too dangerous because something might happen.

00:33:10 VMF:
What you're allowed to allow. Kind of absurd. This double bind.

00:33:20 US:
Ja, ich als Erwachsene bin ja auch in gewissen Bahnen. Alle stecken ja irgendwie wo drinnen, wie soll ich das jetzt sagen. Es verhält sich halt doch jeder durch die eigene Geschichte. Aber es wird einem auch ein bisschen auferlegt und dann muss man sich manchmal Dinge bewusst machen und versuchen, dass man dem doch ein bisschen entgegenwirkt.

Ich komm ja quasi aus diesem pädagogischen Hintergrund, weil ich hab ja das Kolleg für Kindergarten-Pädagogik gemacht, schon als Erwachsene quasi. Viele machen das ja als fünfjährige Schule, was ich übrigens viel zu früh find, weil ich weiß nicht, da kommt man dann wieder aus so einem Schulkontext und fängt direkt an mit den Kindern zu arbeiten. Ich finde da fehlt ein bisschen die Lebenserfahrung, dass man...

00:35:03 VMF:
So aus dem System mal raus...

00:35:03 US:
Also ich habe eben dazwischen studiert und hab dann das Kolleg gemacht.

00:35:10 VMF:
Was hast du studiert?

00:35:12 US: Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie. Dann hatte ich so bisschen eine Krise und wollte eigentlich aufhören, hab das Kolleg gemacht und nach dem Kolleg habe ich dann noch den Bachelor fertig gemacht. Ich wollte eigentlich ganz aufhören mit dem Studium und bin froh, dass ich den Bachelor noch gemacht habe. Aber ich hätte halt... ich war da gerade in der Umstellung vom Magisterstudium zum Bachelor und im Endeffekt hätte ich die Magisterarbeit geschrieben...

00:35:39 VMF:
Ja das kenne ich.

00:35:42 US:
Ja, also ich habe zwei Bachelorarbeiten geschrieben, wo ich dann eine Magisterarbeit auch schon gehabt hätte. Aber auf jeden Fall, was ich eigentlich sagen wollte ist, das Studium... nein ich wollte eigentlich was anderes sagen, aber es fällt mir jetzt ein, dass ich das Studium einfach auch wichtig find, egal was man studiert. Diese Zeit vom Studium, unabhängig davon, welches Fach ich studiert und was ich dort gelernt habe, ist einfach wichtig, um die Reife im Hirn zu kriegen.

Und dass ich dann das Kolleg gemacht habe, war glaub ich besser, als wenn man das in der Schule direkt mitmacht und dann direkt zu arbeiten anfängt mit den Kindern. Und ja, ich bin dann halt irgendwie im Hort gelandet und nicht in einem Kindergarten und bin froh, dass ich da in einer elternverwalteten Kindergruppe. Ich finde prinzipiell dieses ganze System blöd, dass 25 Kinder mit einer Pädagogin... man ist so gefangen in dem System. Da geht viel Qualität verloren, weil es nur um Quantität geht. Wenn immer nur 14 Kinder mit zwei Betreuungspersonen wären, dann hat man einfach viel mehr Möglichkeiten. Dann haben auch die Kinder viel mehr Möglichkeiten. Und das finde ich halt urschade, dass das nicht gesehen wird, habe ich das Gefühl.

Also. Ich wollte eigentlich was anderes sagen. Am Kolleg, da waren ein paar Lehrer, die waren mehr so in die offene Richtung und manche waren aber doch halt wieder so extrem „pädagogisch“ oder „schulisch“ oder ich weiß nicht... sicher, ich bin sicher mehr pädagogisch als andere im ZOOM auch, die auch aus anderen Bereichen sind. Ich habe halt nicht so den künstlerischen Zugang. Und auch in der „Ausstellung“ finde ich es immer so ein bisschen anders als im Atelier oder im

00:33:20 US:
Yes, as an adult I’m also somehow stuck in certain tracks. Everyone is somehow in something, how should I say it. Everyone behaves through their own history. But it’s also imposed on you a bit and sometimes you have to be aware of things and try to coun-teract them a bit.

I basically come from this pedagogical background because I did the college for kindergarten pedagogy already as an adult. Many do it as a five-year school, which I think is way too early because then you come straight from a school context and start working with kids right away. I think life experience is missing there.

00:35:03 VMF:
To get out of the system a bit...

00:35:03 US:
Yes, I studied in between and then did the college.

00:35:10 VMF:
What did you study?

00:35:12 US:
Cultural and social anthropology. Then I had a bit of a crisis and actually wanted to quit, did the college, and after the college I finished the bachelor. I actually wanted to quit studying altogether and I’m glad I finished the bachelor. But I was just transitioning from the magister to the bachelor and basically I would have written the magister thesis...

00:35:39 VMF:
Yes, I know that.

00:35:42 US:
Yes, so I wrote two bachelor theses, so I basically already had a magister thesis. But anyway, what I actually wanted to say is, the studies... no, I wanted to say something else, but now I realize that I just think studying is important, no matter what you study. Be-cause that time, where you’re not working and doing other things, is important and forms you.

And that I then did the college, I think it was better than if you do it directly in school and then start working with children right away. And yeah, I somehow ended up in after-school care and not in a kindergarten, and I’m glad I was in a parent-managed children’s group. Basically, I find this whole system stupid – 25 children with one pedagogue... you are so trapped in the system. A lot of quality is lost because it’s all about quantity. If there were always only 14 children with two caregivers, then you simply have way more possibilities. Then the children also have way more possibilities. And I think it’s such a shame that this isn’t seen, that’s the feeling I get.

So... I actually wanted to say something else. At the college, there were some teachers who were more into the open approach, but some were still very “pedagogical” or “school-like” or I don’t know... Sure, I’m definitely more pedagogical than others in ZOOM who come from other areas. I just don’t have that artistic approach. And also in the “Exhibition”, I always find it a bit different than in the “Studio” or the “Lab”, I think, where it’s much more about freer doing. I have a slightly different approach there.

Lab glaube ich, wo es viel ums freiere Tun auch geht. Ich habe halt da so ein bisschen eine andere Herangehensweise.

Aber es steckt auch in den Ausstellungen urviel dahinter. Viele kommen dann und erwarten, dass man den Kindern jetzt das und das erklärt und ihnen sagt, was sie wie machen müssen. Und dabei vergisst man oft, dass es darum geht, dass die Kinder ja gerade eben weil es viele unterschiedliche Stationen und Herangehensweisen gibt, auch was mitkriegen, selbst wenn man nicht angeleitet, geführt, irgendwie einen Vortrag erhält. Und das sehen aber viele Lehrerinnen so, oder auch Eltern, die sind dann so enttäuscht. Ich meine, ich mache das gerne, dass ich mit den Kindern... weiß nicht, ich finde es immer am besten, wenn Gespräche entstehen. Da ist halt oft wieder die Schwierigkeit, wenn man mehr Zeit und Ruhe hat, dann entstehen neue Dinge und das ist dann immer das Schöne, finde ich, wenn man so durch das Tun miteinander auf Sachen kommt, die man vielleicht vorher gar nicht erwartet hätte oder auch jetzt nicht selber so geplant hätte. Und durch den Input von unterschiedlichen Leuten entsteht dann was Neues, Schönes.

Aber auf was ich hinauswollte, dass halt oft die Eltern oder die Pädagoginnen erwarten, so: Jetzt erklären sie das meinem Kind. Und dabei vergisst man aber, dass sie auch vieles mitbekommen, ohne dass man sie durchgehend beschallt.

00:42:00 VMF:
Ja, oder dass sie, auch wenn sie nachher keinen Begriff dafür haben, aber sie haben was ...

00:42:05 US:
Ja. Und ich finde, das ist vielleicht das, was du so machst oder lebst. Also so hab ich jetzt den Eindruck gehabt von dem, was du erzählt hast. Dass dir diese ganzen Dinge, die eigentlich im Hintergrund passieren, die man oft gar nicht greift oder sich vielleicht viel zu selten bewusst macht, dass das ja auch alles mitspielt.

00:42:35 VMF:
Weil du vorher gesagt hast, du hast das Gefühl, du bist da so pädagogischer. Also ich finde die generelle Skepsis gegenüber Pädagogik im Kindermuseum falsch. Also ich weiß schon, was damit gemeint ist. Und ich verstehe auch die Skepsis demgegenüber, aber grundsätzlich gerade das was du jetzt beschrieben hast als deinen Zugang, das würde ich 1:1 übernehmen und sagen ja, das ist ja genau das, was auch im „Trickfilmstudio“ passiert, das miteinander in ein Tun kommen, in ein Gespräch kommen, mit den Dingen die da sind, irgendwohin kommen, wo man vorher nicht gewusst hätte...

00:43:05 US:
Ja, weil du vorher gefragt hast wegen den Situationen eben, wo man sich dann denkt, ich genieße das jetzt, oder das fände ich cool, wenn ich als Kind die Möglichkeit hätte, dass man so tun kann...

00:43:43 VMF:
Also es wären dann schon in erster Linie so Naturräume oder, die du...

00:43:59 US:
Wenn ich an meine Kindheit denke? Schon, ja. Voll.

00:44:02 VMF:
Ja also für mich hört es sich jetzt so an, dass es ganz stark darum geht in der Arbeit als Erwachsene mit Kindern irgendwo letztlich... „das System“ ist so ein überstrapazierter Begriff, aber eben diese ganzen Reglementierungen und Grenzen und so für die Kinder wenigstens für eine Zeitblase ein bisschen wegzuhalten.

But there is also so much behind the exhibitions. Many come and expect that you now explain this and that to the children and tell them how and what to do. And in doing so, people often forget that the children, precisely because there are many different stations and approaches, still take something in, even if they're not guided, led, or given a lecture. But many teachers or parents see it differently and get disappointed. I mean, I like to do it so that I... don't know, I always find it best when conversations arise. But then there's often the difficulty that if you have more time and calm, new things arise, and that's always the beautiful part, I think, when you come to things through doing together that you maybe hadn't expected before or hadn't planned yourself. And through input from different people, something new and beautiful emerges.

But what I wanted to say is that often parents or pedagogues expect something like: Now they explain this to my child. And in doing so, they forget that the children also take in a lot without being constantly talked at.

00:42:00 VMF:
Yes, or that even if they don't have a term for it afterwards, they have something...

00:42:05 US:
Yes. And I think that's maybe what you do or live. That's the impression I got from what you told me. That all those things that actually happen in the background, which you often don't grasp or maybe very rarely consciously realize, also play a role.

00:42:35 VMF:
Because you said before you feel you're more „pedagogical“. I think the general skepticism toward pedagogy at the Children's Museum is misplaced. I understand what is meant by that, but basically what you just described as your approach – I would adopt that 1:1 and say yes, that's exactly what also happens in the “Animated Film Studio“, coming together in doing, coming into conversation with the things that are there, arriving somewhere where you didn't know before...

00:43:05 US:
Yes. Because you asked before about the situations where you think, I enjoy this now, or it would be cool if as a child I had the possibility to be able to do that...

00:43:43 VMF:
So those would primarily be natural spaces or, that you...

00:43:59 US:
If I think of my childhood? Definitely, yes. Totally.

00:44:02 VMF:
Yes, for me it sounds like it's very much about, in the work as an adult with children, somehow... “the system” is such an overused word, but all these regulations and limits and such, at least for a bubble of time, to keep those away from the children a bit.

00:44:35 US:
Und ich mein sicher, es gibt trotzdem immer einen Rahmen, worin man sich bewegt, aber vielleicht auch mal in Richtungen, die man vorher gar nicht erwartet hätte. Aber es ist halt oft schwierig.

00:45:23 VMF:
Gibt‘s irgendwie ein Material oder ein… also weil du vorher gesagt hast, es ist schön, dann ins Tun und ins Sprechen zu kommen. Gibt‘s da irgendetwas, was du besonders gerne hast, als Basis quasi? Wo du das Gefühl hast, da funktioniert es besonders gut? Oder das ist so wie für dich ein gutes Medium, um da in Kontakt zu treten?

00:46:04 US:
Nicht so konkret, glaube ich, weil ja im Grunde aus allem irgendwie was entstehen kann. Und einerseits finde ich das ZOOM wichtig als Ort, wo die Schulklassen mal kommen und ein bisschen andere Lernmethoden sehen können oder lernen können. Andererseits sehe ich halt, dass viele Kinder sich dann schon schwertun mit anderen Möglichkeiten, weil sie es von klein auf nicht kennen oder nicht wissen, wie man damit umgeht …

00:47:15 VMF:
Einfach das im Hier und Jetzt sein und mit dem umgehen, was da ist…

00:47:24 US:
Ja, es gibt eh ein paar so Schulen, das sind halt dann wieder spezielle Schulen, wo die Kinder das dann voll gut können, dass sie halt auch selbstständig irgendwie wollen. Weil oft, wenn sie dann diese Freiheiten kriegen, wollen die Kinder das ja gar nicht mehr, weil sie‘s nicht gelernt haben oder weil sie es nicht erleben durften.

00:48:16 VMF:
… und so erzogen wurden, dass man nur entweder ausführen oder opponieren kann.

00:48:22 US:
Aber Material hast du mich gefragt. Das ist ganz unterschiedlich. Ich finde z.B. die Ausstellung cool, weil Holz irgendwie ein cooles Material ist. Und weil das auch ein bisschen mehr Natur in den Raum bringt finde ich. Also ich finde eben freies Spiel, freie Räume und vor allem freie Räume in der Natur sind eigentlich für Kinder um zu lernen urwichtig.

00:49:10 VMF:
Ja schön.

00:49:22 US:
Ich weiß nicht, ob da was dabei war…

00:49:22 VMF:
Na total schön. Ich finde, es waren superschöne Bilder dabei. Es taugt mir total, dass bei diesen Gesprächen, also es gab immer so irgendwo diese Erinnerung, aber es sind so unterschiedliche Aspekte dabei. Bei dir war irgendwie ganz stark dieser Freiraum, auch dieses Risiko-Lernen und aber trotzdem dabei irgendwie behütet sein und dann dieses für sich selber Räume gestalten können, im Zusammenspiel mit den anderen, so wie da bei eurer Situation an dem Bach und ich finde das fügt sich total schön mit dem, was du dann auch über die Arbeit, egal ob im Hort oder hier oder mit den eigenen Kindern, naja Arbeit ist irgendwie in dem Kontext eh so schwierig… gleichzeitig möchte ich ja, dass es anerkannt wird, dass man … also mein PhD-Projekt heißt ja „staging the invisible elephant that remains overlooked“. Also ich hab irgendwie immer wieder so das Gefühl, weiß nicht, wenn wir unsere Arbeit richtig gut machen, dann …

00:44:35 US:
And sure, there’s always a framework you move in, but maybe also sometimes in directions you wouldn’t have expected before. But it’s often difficult.

00:45:23 VMF:
Is there some material or… because you said before it’s nice to come into doing and talking. Is there something you particularly like as a basis? Where you feel it works especially well? Or that’s for you a good medium to get in contact?

00:46:04 US:
Not so concrete, I think, because basically some-thing can arise from anything. And on the one hand, I find ZOOM important as a place where school classes come and can see or learn some other learning methods. On the other hand, I see that many children already have a hard time with other possibilities because they don’t know them from early on or don’t know how to handle them…

00:47:15 VMF:
Simply being in the here and now and dealing with what is there…

00:47:24 US:
Yes, there are a few schools, those are special schools where children are really good at being independent. Because often, when they get these freedoms, children don’t want it anymore because they haven’t learned it or haven’t been allowed to experience it.

00:48:16 VMF:
…and have been raised so that you can only either obey or oppose.

00:48:22 US:
But you asked about materials. It depends. I think the exhibition is cool, for example, because wood is somehow a great material. And because it also brings a bit more nature into the space, I think. So I find free play, free spaces, and especially free spaces in nature really important for children to learn.

00:49:10 VMF:
Yes, nice.

00:49:22 US:
I don’t know if there was anything in there…

00:49:22 VMF:
No, totally beautiful. I think there were really beautiful images. I like that in these conversations there was always some memory, but so many different aspects. For you, that free space, that risk-learning, and still somehow being protected, and then being able to create spaces for yourself in interplay with others, like your situation at the brook, fits so nicely with what you said about the work, whether in after-school care or here or with your own children… well, work is difficult in that context anyway… but at the same time, I want it to be acknowledged that… my PhD project is called “staging the invisible elephant that remains overlooked.” I always have the feeling, I don’t know, if we do our work really well, then…

00:49:33 US:
... sieht man uns nicht.

00:49:33 VMF:
Ja, dann sieht man uns eigentlich nicht. So wie du sagst, wenn du bei dir selber als Kind dabei wärst, dann wärst du eigentlich lieber unsichtbar.

00:49:33 US:
Ja, vieles, was eigentlich dahintersteckt, eh auch so wie bei den Kunstprojekten, was wir am Anfang gesagt haben, man sieht das oft nicht. Also es ist vielleicht dann richtig gut, wenn man eigentlich nicht sieht, was alles dahintersteckt. Wobei ich schon oft finde, dass man es sich vielleicht manchmal bewusst machen muss. Wobei oft habe ich das Gefühl, man muss sich dann rechtfertigen, dass man doch eh so viel getan hat für das, dass es jetzt so läuft. Weißt was ich mein?

00:52:13 VMF:
Ja, ja.

00:52:13 US:
Und eigentlich naja, rechtfertigen hat so was Negatives. Aber ich finde es auch nicht schlecht, wenn man sich selber bewusst macht, wenn man selber sieht, was man eigentlich kann oder geleistet hat, und das dann schöne Räume schafft für irgendwen. Egal ob Raum in einem zweisamen Tun oder Raum in einer gestalteten Umgebung.

00:52:43 VMF:
Na das seh ich auch so, dass es einfach wichtig ist es, dass es dafür eine Wertschätzung gibt. Ich meine, das ist ja offensichtlich existenziell, wenn man das beruflich macht. Und aber gleichzeitig ist es so schwierig, das zu fassen. Na urschön. Danke!

00:53:10 US:
Ja bitte.

00:53:10 VMF:
Magst Du mir noch eine Zeichnung schenken?

00:53:36 US:
Wo arbeitest du dann in welchem Bereich? „Ausstellung“?

00:53:36 VMF:
Äh ja. (Kramt Block heraus). Also du kannst den Bleistift testen.

00:54:23 US:
Ich find das ja... nein, ich red immer weiter... nein, nein, nein, nein. Eben weil ich gesagt hab, dass das, was da alles dahintersteckt. Diese Arbeit, die Ausstellung vorzubereiten. Manche Eltern sehen das schon so... also manche erkennen das und manche erkennen‘s eben gar nicht. Und die erwarten dann oft noch so viel, weil sie nicht sehen, dass eben schon so viel da ist... also egal wo man anfängt?

00:54:53 VMF:
Genau, du kannst dir aussuchen, welchen Bleistift du gerne hättest, oder du weißt es eh schon. Dann bitte natürlich dein eigenes Blatt nehmen und irgendwo auf der einen Seite beginnen und irgendwo auf der anderen Seite ankommen.

00:55:07 US:
Und ja, jetzt könnte ich natürlich. Jetzt könnte ich natürlich... uh. Aber soll ich mir da jetzt was konkretes diesbezüglich überlegen oder weil...?

00:55:22 VMF:
Ich werde dir sicher nicht verbieten dir was zu überlegen, aber du musst auch nicht...

00:49:33 US:
...you don’t see us.

00:49:33 VMF:
Yes, then you actually don’t see us. Like you said, if you were there as a child yourself, you’d actually prefer to be invisible.

00:49:33 US:
Yes, a lot of what actually happens behind the scenes, just like with the art projects we mentioned at the beginning, you often don’t see. So maybe it’s actually really good if you don’t see what’s behind it all. Al-though I often think you should maybe consciously realize it sometimes. But often I feel like you have to justify yourself that you actually did so much to make it work. You know what I mean?

00:52:13 VMF:
Yes, yes.

00:52:13 US:
And actually... well, justifying sounds negative. But I also don’t think it’s bad to be aware yourself, to see what you actually can or have accomplished, and then create beautiful spaces for someone. Whether space in doing something together or space in a designed environment.

00:52:43 VMF:
Yeah, I see that too, that it’s just important that there is appreciation for it. I mean, that’s obviously existential if you do it professionally. But at the same time, it’s so hard to grasp. So beautiful. Thanks!

00:53:10 US:
You’re welcome.

00:53:10 VMF:
Would you like to give me a drawing as a gift?

00:53:36 US:
Where do you work now, in which area? “Exhibition”?

00:53:36 VMF:
Uh, yes. (Fumbles for notebook.) So you can test the pencil.

00:54:23 US:
I find that... no, I keep talking... no, no, no, no. Just because I said what’s behind it all. That work, preparing the exhibition. Some parents already see it like that... some recognize it and some don’t at all. And they often expect so much more because they don’t see that there’s already so much there... no matter where you start?

00:54:53 VMF:
Exactly, you can choose which pencil you want, or you already know. Then please take your own sheet and start somewhere on one side and end somewhere on the other side.

00:55:07 US:
And yeah, now I could of course... now I could... uh. But should I think of something specific about it now or because...?

00:55:22 VMF:
I certainly won’t forbid you to think of something, but you don’t have to...

00:55:28 US:
... na weil weil ich jetzt so viel über Natur geredet habe, jetzt muss ich hier fast ein paar Bäume zeichnen. Aber ich mein, ich hab nämlich, wie du zu mir vorher gesagt hast, hab ich mir gedacht: Ich weiß gleich, was ich mach. Aber jetzt weiß ich es doch wieder nicht. Schau her, weil ... ich hab urdreckige Finger übrigens, weil ich ständig im Garten in der Erde herum... und das geht nicht mehr raus. Also ich hab sie mir schon oft gewaschen. Sie sind trotzdem so grauslich. Falls du jetzt... das hätte ich zeichnen sollen während dem Reden. Das nächste Mal... wenn ich nämlich, wenn ich rede, also wenn ich telefoniere, dann zeichne ich oft immer das Gleiche lustigerweise. Und das hätte ich jetzt irgendwie auch gemacht. Nicht absetzen oder absetzen?

00:56:36 VMF:
Eine Linie irgendwie von da bis da.

00:56:39 US:
Aber das Ziel ist parallel. Nein. Aha. Also ich dachte, es wird dann so ein langer Strich, wo jeder sieht ja...

00:56:47 VMF:
Ja, also irgendwie ist das schon ein bisschen im Hintergrund aber jeder kann das so machen wie... aber ja, mach dir keinen Kopf.

00:56:51 US:
Hui!

00:56:54 VMF:
Ja ich weiß schon, dass ist so dieser Klotz...

00:56:57 US:
Muss das Erste gleich was werden?

00:57:08 VMF:
Nein, du kannst auch nochmal machen.

00:57:10 US:
Dann erzähl mir noch was, dann mal ich währenddessen.

00:57:18 VMF:
Aber das mit dem Foto machen wir dann wahrscheinlich irgendwann anders, oder? Oder willst du gleich?

00:57:27 US:
Wie spät ist es?

00:57:31 VMF:
Oder wir machen es in der Pause. Oder möchtest du? Soll ich dich einfach irgendwie irgendwo fotografieren? Oder sollen wir uns nochmal irgendwo treffen und das machen? Also mir ist es wirklich ganz, ganz gleich. Ich mache auch gerne von dir ein Foto, dass du deiner Oma schicken kannst. Also was du brauchen kannst, was dir...

00:57:51 US:
Nein, es muss nicht so frontal sein. Ich bin so unfotogen. Also absetzen oder nicht, also mir gefällt es schon nicht.

00:58:06 VMF:
Eigentlich nicht absetzen.

00:58:08 US:
Eigentlich nicht absetzen.

00:58:09 VMF:
Aber du kannst auch gleich nochmal neu beginnen. Es gibt so viele Blätter!

00:55:28 US:
... well, because I talked so much about nature now, I almost have to draw some trees here. But I mean, as you said to me before, I thought: I know exactly what I'll do. But now I don't know anymore. Look, because... by the way, my fingers are really dirty because I keep messing in the garden dirt... and it won't come off. I've washed them often, still so disgusting. In case you... I should have drawn that while talking. Next time... when I talk, like on the phone, I often draw the same thing, ironically. And I would've done that now somehow. Not lifting or lifting?

00:56:36 VMF:
A line somehow from here to there.

00:56:39 US:
But the goal is parallel. No. Aha. So I thought it would be a long line where everyone can see...

00:56:47 VMF:
Yes, so it's kind of in the background, but everyone can do it however they want... but yeah, don't worry about it.

00:56:51 US:
Wow!

00:56:54 VMF:
Yeah, I know, that's that block...

00:56:57 US:
Does the first one have to be something?

00:57:08 VMF:
No, you can do it again.

00:57:10 US:
Then tell me something else, I'll draw while you talk.

00:57:18 VMF:
But we'll probably do the photo thing some other time, right? Or do you want to do it now?

00:57:27 US:
What time is it?

00:57:31 VMF:
Or we do it during the break. Or do you want me to just take a picture of you somewhere? Or should we meet again somewhere and do it? I really don't mind. I'd be happy to take a photo of you that you can send to your grandma. Whatever you need, whatever...

00:57:51 US:
No, it doesn't have to be so frontal. I'm so unphotogenic. So lift or not, I already don't like it.

00:58:06 VMF:
Actually, don't lift.

00:58:08 US:
Actually, don't lift.

00:58:09 VMF:
But you can also start again right away. There are so many sheets!

00:58:13 US:
Weil ich kann das nicht so machen, wenn ich nicht absetze. Na gut, ich tu einfach so weiter. Erzähl mir noch was.

00:58:23 VMF:
Mir gefällt‘s jetzt schon! Ja schau, jetzt hab ich vorher so viel gequatscht ist, und jetzt weiß ich auch nicht, was ich noch sagen soll.

00:58:31 US:
Na, das mit dem Foto. Das weiß ich nicht genau, ob nicht du das eher anleiten müsstest, wie du das möchtest. Ich habe übrigens keine Oma mehr.

00:58:45 VMF:
Ah, das tut mir leid. Vielleicht machen wir‘s trotzdem für deine Oma?

00:58:53 US:
Ich schick‘s ihr dann.

00:58:55 VMF:
Also ich möchte schon, dass diese Fotos… also dass es auch irgendwie so ein bisschen ein Bilderbuch wird. Das heißt, wenn du dich dann einfach nicht wohl fühlst, wenn da ein klassisches Porträtfoto von dir drin ist, dann finde ich es auch nicht gut, wenn wir jetzt ein Porträtfoto machen, aber wir könnten z.B. weiß nicht, vielleicht dich in einer Situation, in der du dich wohlfühlst, oder die irgendwie einen Bezug hat zu dem, worüber wir gesprochen haben. Oder wenn du magst auch mit deinen Kindern. Also irgendwie was, wo du das Gefühl hast…

00:59:44-6 US:
Muss das jetzt eigentlich zu ZOOM-bezogen sein?

00:59:48 VMF:
Nein, überhaupt nicht.

00:59:48 US:
Also am liebsten wäre es mir, glaube ich, so während ich irgendwas anderes mache, weil so Portrait…

01:00:31 VMF:
Naja, also blöd gesagt, ich will keine Passfotos machen, sondern weiß nicht… vielleicht machen wir irgendwann einen Ausflug gemeinsam… ich mache da mal aus.

Ulla Szwajor lebt und arbeitet als Kunstvermittlerin und Mama in der Nähe von Wien. Sie studierte Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie an der Universität Wien und absolvierte im Anschluss ein Kolleg zur Ausbildung als Kindergartenpädagogin. Anschließend war sie in einer elternverwalteten Kindergruppe sowie als Vermittlerin im ZOOM Kindermuseum (Wien) tätig. Derzeit ist sie dort zusätzlich als Produktionsassistentin beschäftigt.

00:58:13 US:
Because I can’t do it without lifting. Well, I’ll just keep going. Tell me something else.

00:58:23 VMF:
I already like it! Yeah look, I talked so much earlier, and now I don’t know what else to say.

00:58:31 US:
Well, about the photo. I don’t know exactly if you should guide that more, how you want it. By the way, I don’t have a grandma anymore.

00:58:45 VMF:
Ah, I’m sorry. Maybe we do it anyway for your grandma?

00:58:53 US:
I’ll send it to her then.

00:58:55 VMF:
So I do want these photos… to somehow become a little picture book. So if you just don’t feel comfortable with a classic portrait photo of you, then I don’t think we should do a portrait now, but we could maybe take a picture of you in a situation where you feel comfortable or that somehow relates to what we talked about. Or if you want, also with your kids. Something where you feel…

00:59:44 US:
Does it actually have to be ZOOM-related?

00:59:48 VMF:
No, not at all.

00:59:48 US:
So ideally it would be while I’m doing something else, because portraits…

01:00:31 VMF:
Well, to put it bluntly, I don’t want to make passport photos, but maybe we’ll go on a trip together sometime… I’ll switch off now.

Ulla Szwajor lives and works as an art educator and mother near Vienna. She studied Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Vienna and subsequently completed a college-level training program to become a kindergarten teacher. She then worked in a parent-run children‘s group as well as an educator at the ZOOM Children‘s Museum (Vienna). She is currently also employed there as a production assistant.

(Explanatory) Notes and References

Spinning Tops

When Ulla and I met for this conversation, the current exhibition was about wood and included a small workshop where children could build their own wooden spinning tops.

The “Lab”

In its early days, the “Animated Film Studio“ was called “Lab” — short for “media laboratory“.

riverbanks make a good flatshare.

Florian Fusco

über Bock haben, Bezugspersonen,
in Ruhe alles falsch machen, was in echt machen und
professionelle Distanz.
about having a go, reference persons,
doing everything wrong in peace, what to do in real life and
professional distance.

Ich besuche Flo Fusco am 14.7.2021 um 9:00 morgens bei ihm zu Hause. Wir sitzen am Küchentisch und trinken Tee. Die Fotos machen wir gleich im Anschluss, zuerst mit seinem Blitz in der Wohnung, dann im MuseumsQuartier. Flo und ich kennen uns noch nicht allzu lange, haben aber dafür vor allem im „Trickfilmstudio“ schon einige Male zusammengearbeitet.

00:00:00 VMF:
Für mich ist immer ein Kompass, auch in der Arbeit, egal ob das jetzt im Kindermuseum ist oder mit meinem Neffen oder auch mit den anderen Schülern oder in Wirklichkeit, auch wenn ich irgendwie sonst Kunst mach: das hat total viel mit der Erinnerung an das Selber-Kind-Sein zu tun. Einerseits mit dem, was ich vielleicht als Kind besser gekonnt habe und mir da irgendwie abhole als Erwachsene und andererseits aber natürlich auch die Vorstellung das, was mir als Kind vielleicht gefehlt hat und was ich mir gewünscht hätte...

00:00:52 FF:
Ah das, was die Lehrer so falsch gemacht haben, was man besser machen kann.

00:00:56 VMF:
Die Lehrer, die Erwachsenen, sonst irgendwer. Ja genau. Jedenfalls, meine Frage ist – und dann ist mein Sermon zu Ende, dann können du und ich gehen, wohin immer es uns trägt – wenn du dir vorstellst, du könntest jetzt mit dir selber, mit dem kleinen Flo – also nicht, dass du jetzt einfach nochmal einen Tag Kind bist, sondern dass du dich selber als Kind triffst, dass du mit dir selber als Kind ein Tag verbringen könntest, so wie jetzt mit A., was würdest du machen? Es ist mir auch egal, ob wir sagen, wir gehen in deine Vergangenheit und sind da unterwegs, weil da gibt‘s irgendeinen Ort oder irgendetwas, was einfach cool war und wo du das Gefühl hast, du könntest vielleicht jetzt auch als Künstler dir nochmal was rausholen. Oder ob es eine Situation im Jetzt ist, wo du das Gefühl hast, das wär‘ irgendwie damals cool gewesen oder es wäre schön, dir das selbst als Kind zu geben. Genau. So als Ausgangspunkt. Ich weiß nicht, ob du irgendetwas damit anfangen kannst?

00:02:25 FF:
Okay, es geht schon ums Kunst machen?

00:02:26 VMF:
Ja, genau. Also mir fallen natürlich Situationen ein, wo ich als Kind jetzt nicht gesagt hätte, ich mache Kunst, aber im Nachhinein wird einem irgendwie bewusst, dass das schon was miteinander zu tun hat.

00:02:47 FF:
Hmmmm... also es gab glaub ich schon so ein paar Situationen, wo ich dann so Erwachsene gefragt hab: Wie macht man das eigentlich? Wie funktioniert ein Trickfilm? Wie spielt man dieses Instrument? Und ich glaube, ich würde mir selber den Tipp geben, wenn die eine Person zu faul ist oder wenn man nicht weiterkommt mit Erwachsenen: schau dir ein Youtube-Video an oder geh in die Bibliothek. Also ein bisschen erklären, dass man nicht wirklich abhängig ist von einer Person oder von den Leuten um sich herum, dass man schon... andere nerven kann, die vielleicht mehr Interesse haben zu helfen, dass man sich auch selber sehr gut helfen kann. Und... äääähhh.... und auf jeden Fall dieses prozessorientiert einfach loslegen. Als Kind macht man ja einfach. Also dann macht man und wenn das fad wird, macht man das nächste. Ich glaub, man bekommt ganz viele fertige Sachen auch vorgesetzt, als Kind und denkt sich dann so:

I visit Flo Fusco at his home on July 14th, 2021, at 9:00 in the morning. We sit at the kitchen table and drink tea. We take the photos right afterwards – first indoors with his flash, then at the MuseumsQuartier. Flo and I haven’t known each other for very long, but we’ve already worked together several times, especially in the “Animated Film Studio“.

00:00:00 VMF:
For me, there‘s always a kind of compass, also in my work – whether it‘s in the Children‘s Museum, with my nephew, or with other students – or actually, even when I‘m making art on my own: it all has a lot to do with remembering what it was like to be a child. On one hand, it‘s about things I might have been better at as a kid, that I now try to access again as an adult. And on the other hand, of course, it‘s about imagining what I might have missed as a child, what I would’ve wished for...

00:00:52 FF:
Ah, like the stuff teachers got wrong, that you could do better now.

00:00:56 VMF:
Teachers, adults, whoever. Exactly. Anyway, my question is – and then I’ll shut up, and we can go wherever this takes us – if you imagine you could now meet yourself as a child, not just be a kid again for a day, but actually spend a day with little Flo, like you would with A. now – what would you do? And I don’t care if we say we‘re traveling back to your past because there’s a place or something that was just cool and where, as an artist, you feel you could still get something out of it today. Or if it’s a situation in the present, where you think it would’ve been nice back then, or would be nice to give that to your younger self now. Exactly. Just as a starting point. I don’t know if that means anything to you?

00:02:25 FF:
Okay, so it‘s about making art?

00:02:26 VMF:
Yeah, exactly. I mean, of course there are situations I can think of where I wouldn’t have said I was making art as a kid, but in hindsight I realize that it actually had something to do with it.

00:02:47 FF:
Hmmm... I think there were a few situations where I’d ask adults: “How does that actually work? How do you make an animated film? How do you play that instrument?” And I think I’d tell my younger self: If one person is too lazy or if you‘re stuck with the adults, watch a YouTube video or go to the library. Basically, I’d explain that you’re not totally dependent on one person or the people around you. You can bug others who might be more willing to help, and you can also help yourself pretty well. And... uhhh... definitely, just start in a process-oriented way. As a kid, you just do things. You just do, and if it gets boring, you do something else. I think as a kid you get handed a lot of finished things, and then you think:

Ah, ok. Wenn ich das jetzt nicht plötzlich kann und bei mir das dann ein Lernprozess ist, dann bin ich eh schlecht. Ich glaube, das hatte ich ganz viel in der Schule, da gab‘s die Leute, die waren eh gut in Kunst und die Leute, die haben eh ein Instrument gespielt, die Leute, die waren eh gut in Sport und die anderen waren halt so anstrengende Leute, die doofe Fragen gestellt haben. Aber das war vielleicht auch Berlin-Kreuzberg Ende 80er. Die Lehrer haben eh nicht so gute Noten bekommen im Nachhinein. Aber ich glaube… schwer zu sagen. Also es gibt Dinge, die reißen einen halt mit als Kind und andere Dinge nicht so. Also ich war glaub ich an genau zwei Terminen im Fußballverein und dann war mir klar, es interessiert mich nicht. Da hätte jede Pädagogik auch versagt. Weil jetzt zum Beispiel so Schlagzeugspiel mit 13 oder so .. das war so wichtig, dass es dann eben … es gab eine ziemlich lässige Musikschule, die zur Volkshochschule gehört hat. Ja, ich glaub das ist eher so… wenn Kind weiß, man darf was sagen und dann passiert was, worauf die Bock haben…. aber jetzt auf Kunst machen… so richtig die bewusste Entscheidung, Kunst zu machen kam erst so nach der Schule.

00:05:46 VMF:
Ja, vielleicht gar nicht bewusst Kunst machen, sondern mehr … ich weiß nicht, was für dich beim Kunst machen … also warum du Kunst machst oder … also als Beispiel, bei mir sind halt so Themen, die mir im Nachhinein bewusst sind, dass meine Familie ein etwas komisches Verhältnis zu Dingen hat. Also eigentlich, wenn einem Dinge wichtig sind, ist das irgendwie materialistisch und böse, weil wichtig sind die Menschen. Trotzdem war die Wohnung aber immer voll mit Tchibo-Produkten oder so, weil es ist ja egal und man darf sich nicht zu viel damit befassen. Es war so eine seltsame…

00:06:58 FF:
Also eine visuelle Ignoranz?

00:07:01 VMF:
Ja, eine Gestaltungs-Feindlichkeit. Aber die Dinge um sich herum bewusst auszuwählen und zu gestalten bedeutet ja auch, das eigene Leben aktiv zu gestalten – und das hat etwas mit Selbstfürsorge zu tun. Das ist sowas, was für mich in meiner Auseinandersetzung mit Kunst reinspielt. Weiß nicht, vielleicht gibt‘s sowas…

00:07:19 FF:
Ich fand eher Comics cool. Aber ich war zu faul um so akribisch oder ordentlich zu malen. Und ich glaube, was auch ein Thema war, oder was du angesprochen hast, ist so, dass man längerfristige Projekte macht und da geht‘s ja auch um Bezugspersonen. Im Jugend- und Kulturzentrum Wasserturm, auch in Kreuzberg, da gab‘s eine Siebdruck Werkstatt und einen Siebdruck Onkel. Da konntest du halt hingehen und dann hast du einen schwarzen Filzstift bekommen und dann komplett analog hast so was Kleines gemalt, konntest das groß kopieren und auf ein T-Shirt drucken und das hat nichts gekostet. Und ich konnte in Ruhe… also ich hab wirklich über Jahre, zwischen 16 und 19 oder so… es war wie so eine versehentliche Siebdruck Ausbildung. Und da hab ich wirklich alles kaputt gemacht zwischendrin, also so Siebe eingerissen und dann gibt‘s ja diese Vakuum Scheibe, die das Sieb ansaugt, die hab ich falsch rum gedreht. Dann ist eine riesen Schraube rausgeflogen und dann die komplette Glasscheibe. Ist aber nicht kaputt gegangen. Also ich konnte so in Ruhe jeden einzelnen Schritt irgendwie falsch machen. Und es gab so eine persönliche Beziehung trotzdem. Also vielleicht war das für mich als Teenager dann so: Nein, ich hab das Schlimmste angestellt, was angestellt werden konnte. Keine Ahnung, sind das noch so Teenager-Hormone oder was. Und null Lebenserfahrung.

“Ah okay, if I can’t do this immediately, and it’s actually a learning process for me, then I must be bad at it.” I felt that a lot in school – there were the kids who were already good at art, or already played an instrument, or were already good at sports, and the rest were the annoying ones who asked dumb questions. But maybe that was just Berlin-Kreuzberg in the late 1980s. Those teachers didn’t get great reviews in hindsight. But I think… it’s hard to say. Some things grab you as a kid, and others just don’t. I think I went to football practice twice, and then I was like, nope, not for me. No teaching method would’ve helped with that. But then later, like drumming at age 13 or so… that was so important. There was this pretty cool music school that was part of the Volkshochschule (adult education center). Yeah, I think it’s more about… when a kid knows they’re allowed to say something, and then something happens that excites them… but in terms of making art – the conscious decision to be an artist didn’t really come until after school.

00:05:46 VMF:
Yeah, maybe not consciously making art, but more like… I don’t know, what it is about making art for you… like, why you make art, or… like for me, for example, in hindsight I realize that my family had a slightly weird relationship to “things.” To me, it felt like: if something mattered to you, that was somehow materialistic and bad, because what is important are people. But at the same time, the apartment was always full of stuff from Tchibo or whatever, because, like, it doesn’t matter, and you shouldn’t care too much. It was this weird…

00:06:58 FF:
Like visual ignorance?

00:07:01 VMF:
Yeah, a hostility toward aesthetics. But consciously choosing and shaping the things around you also means actively shaping your life and has something to do with selfcare. That’s something that plays a big role in how I deal with art. I don’t know if you had something like that…

00:07:19 FF:
I was more into comics. But I was too lazy to draw super precisely or neatly. And I think another topic, which you touched on, is doing longer-term projects – and that has to do with role models or mentors. At the Wasserturm youth and cultural center in Kreuzberg, there was a screen printing workshop and a screen printing guy. You could just go there, and they’d give you a black felt-tip pen, and then you’d draw something small, and completely analog, you could enlarge it and print it on a T-shirt. And it didn’t cost anything. And I could just… I really spent years there, from like 16 to 19. It was like an accidental screen printing apprenticeship. And I messed everything up along the way – tore screens, and there’s that vacuum table that sucks down the screen – I turned it the wrong way, and a huge screw popped out and with it the whole glass pane. But it didn’t break. So I was allowed to mess up every single step in peace. And at the same time, there was this personal connection. Maybe that was the thing for me as a teenager: No, I did the worst thing you could possibly do. I don’t know if that was just teenage hormones or what. And zero life experience. And then there was this screen printing guy who was relaxed and supported you, but he didn’t tell you: “Draw this or that.” So, the first things were like postage stamp-sized drawings that got blown up to A3 and printed. And all of it completely without a computer. I got my first computer when I was like 22.

Und dann gab es halt irgendwie den Siebdruck-Onkel, der entspannt war und einen unterstützt hat, aber der hat jetzt nicht gesagt: Mal mal das und das, also… die ersten Sachen die irgendwie auf Briefmarken Größe gemalt und dann auf A3 hochgezogen werden und gedruckt werden, das ist eigentlich schon… und komplett ohne Computer. Ich hatte meinen ersten Computer mit 22 oder so.

00:09:39 VMF:
In Ruhe alles falsch machen.

00:09:44 FF:
Ja, genau, genau. Und das ist ja auch prozessorientiert: du machst eine Sache, noch eine Sache und man zeigt es so im Freundeskreis und die ersten 10 Sachen werden zwar gelobt, aber so ein bisschen ignoriert. Und dann sagt jemand ah, kannst du mir auch sowas drucken und ich geb dir auch Geld oder so. Ja, aber das sind wirklich so Prozesse, das waren so drei Jahre. Und ich glaub bei mir war es eher generell so… Bock auf Machen oder Bock auf Malen.

Das Coole bei Siebdruck ist: Du machst dir was Echtes, was in echt existiert. Ich dachte mir erst Okay, was ich da mache ist irgendwie Grafik und hab dann ein Praktikum in einer Werbeagentur gemacht, sechs Monate, was echt cool war – davon profitiere ich noch heute, weil der Computer-Unterricht ein bisschen lahm war auf der Kunstuni. Aber da habe ich auch gemerkt, okee. Diese ganzen Grafiken werden am Bildschirm erstellt und die bleiben auch da drin. Deswegen war auch mein erstes Studium Textil Design. Weil ich dachte mir, ok, das ist schon ein bisschen Computer, aber es kommt was Echtes dabei rum.

Ja, aber ich glaub dieser erste Schritt, diese Orientierung. Ich glaub da geht‘s einerseits um‘s Machendürfen, andererseits auch um’s Grenzen lernen: die Grenzen waren irgendwie sehr offensichtlich. Ich hatte keine eigenen Arbeitsmaterialien und es gab halt einen schwarzen Stift und Papier, das ich benutzen durfte. Und es gab Termine, die man vorher vereinbart hat. Man hat angerufen und dann hat in der Siebdruck-Werkstatt das Telefon geklingelt. Und mit Bleistift hat man das eingetragen. Du hast ja jetzt Kinder, die sagen: Oh ja, ich will auch sowas haben und dann sagt die Mutter: Ja, das gibt‘s hier aber nicht zu kaufen, dann sagt das Kind: Aber das kann man doch bestellen. Also die wissen irgendwie, dass es immer alles gibt und für mich war klar: Zuhause gibt‘s nix und da gibt‘s einen Stift und da kann ich was machen. Ich glaube schon eher auf eine Art war das einfacher, vielleicht. Hat irgendwie auch viel mit Technik zu tun. Und dabei geht es darum: okay, wie vereinfacht man das so sehr, weil wenn man zu viele Optionen auftut, dann ist man so viel mit den Optionen beschäftigt und nicht wirklich mit dem Machen an sich. Und ich mein, natürlich haben wir im Kindermuseum einen kleineren Zeitrahmen, aber da geht es ja auch erst mal ums Machen.

00:13:22 VMF:
Was echt machen.

00:13:25 FF:
Ja, was in echt machen und deswegen… Es gibt natürlich einen Ablauf, den wir besprechen und den wir planen, den wir so brauchen. Aber ich glaube, wenn jetzt ein Kind einen Filzstift in die Hand nimmt, du weißt ja nicht wirklich, was passiert. Und das ist ja schon Kunst-Machen: da gibt‘s immer ein Element, eine unbekannte Variable, die macht es interessant und da entsteht etwas Neues. Auch wenn die sich dann untereinander kopieren, das ist ja ganz normal. Es hat mehr als nur eine Punkband gegeben, und mehr als nur einen impressionistischen Maler. Und dieses Machen an sich ist ja überhaupt nicht reflektiert.

00:09:39 VMF:
Messing everything up in peace.

00:09:44 FF:
Yeah, exactly, exactly. And that’s process-oriented too: you do one thing, then another, and you show it to friends. And the first ten things get praised but also sort of ignored. And then someone says: “Oh, can you print one of those for me too? I’ll pay you.” That was a real process, those three years. And I think for me it was more a general thing… like, just the joy of doing, the joy of painting.

The cool thing about screen printing is: you make something real, that actually exists. At first, I thought: Okay, this is graphic design. So I did a six-month internship at an ad agency – which was really cool and I still benefit from it today, because the computer classes at art school were kind of lame. But there I realized: Oh okay. All this graphic stuff stays on the screen. That’s why my first degree was in textile design. I thought: okay, it‘s still a bit computer-based, but something real comes out of it.

Yeah, but that first step – that orientation. I think it’s about being allowed to do things, and also about learning limits. The limits were very clear: I didn’t have my own materials, there was a black pen and paper I was allowed to use. And you had to make appointments. You’d call, and the phone would ring in the screen printing workshop. And someone would pencil you in. Now you have kids who say: “Oh yeah, I want that too!” And the mom says: “Yeah, but you can’t buy that here.” And the kid says: “But you can order it, right?” They already know everything is always available. For me, it was clear: We had nothing at home, but there’s a pen there, and I can make something. Maybe that made it easier, in a way. A lot of it’s about tech too. Like, how do you simplify things enough, because when you open too many options, you end up spending all your time just navigating those options instead of doing any-thing. And of course, at the Children‘s Museum, we’re working with shorter timeframes, but even there, it’s about doing.

00:13:22 VMF:
Doing something real.

00:13:25 FF:
Yeah, making something real. So, sure, we talk through a process, we plan what we need. But I think when a kid picks up a felt-tip pen, you have no idea what’s going to happen. And that is making art – there’s always an element, an unknown variable, that makes it interesting, that leads to something new. Even if they copy each other – of course they do. There wasn’t just one punk band, and not just one impressionist painter. And that act of making isn’t reflective at all.

Die Eltern machen gerne alles kaputt oder die Lehrer, wenn sie sagen: überleg dir ganz genau, was du machen willst! Das war‘s dann eigentlich. Aber sobald ein anderes Kind einen Fisch malt, der cool aussieht, dann geht‘s schon wieder weiter, weil da wird irgendwas Rudimentäres angesprochen. Ja, ich glaub, die negativen Kindheitserlebnisse sind genau das, dass einem jemand so reinquatscht, was so komisch blockiert, wo es ja um nichts geht. Also es kann ja meinem Kunstlehrer egal sein, ob die Prinzessin fertig ist oder nicht. Aber dann sagt er: ach komm, da kannst du ja jetzt aber noch mehr Schmuck draufkleben. Dabei geht es vielleicht nur darum, dass die Lehrer müde sind und die Kinder sollen länger beschäftigt werden. Aber ich weiß nicht, das Ding ist halt bei diesen Rückblicken. Man hat ja, eh das Leben lang, aber als Kind noch mehr vermute ich, so ein subjektives Gerechtigkeitsempfinden. Was jetzt die Volksschullehrer meiner Tochter angeht, da habe ich nicht die Riesenansprüche, dass das wirklich so „der beste Kunstunterricht“ ist, weil ich glaube das gehört auch zum Erwachsenwerden dazu, dass halt der beste Kollaborations-Partner vielleicht nicht der ist, der neben dir sitzt…

Aber ja, ich finde es cool, zu reflektieren oder zu sagen: Man denkt sich ein Workshop-Konzept aus und das läuft irgendwie zu 90% nicht so gut. Aber die 10% Prozent, die gut laufen, sind super. Ich würde sagen, das Ding ist, dass man diesen Prozess respektiert und nicht sagt, das ist in Stein gemeißelt. Also ich habe ein bisschen ein Problem mit diesem Ego Ding. Ich finde, da verbaut man sich total viel, man macht es sich auch anstrengender, weil einem zum Teil die Kinder mit so unbewussten Vorschlägen eigentlich den Job leichter machen können. Da muss man halt mit klarkommen, sehr bewusst scheitern wollen, da kann man halt in dem Moment nicht sagen: Ja, ich bin Künstler, ich weiß, dass das gut für dich ist, sondern man sagt: Ah, okay. Das war jetzt eine echt blöde Idee von mir. Was hältst du davon? Das hast du ja ganz toll so gemacht. Und dann findet das gleich der ganze Raum toll.

Ja, und ich mein die Arbeit mit Kindern ist halt anders. Die können halt die Bedürfnisse nicht wirklich ausdrücken, haben eine ganz andere Perspektive. Wenn du den gleichen Workshop mit Erwachsenen machst, dann kommt direkteres Feedback oder es gibt Leute, die zu mir sagen, uff, der Computer-Teil war mir ein bisschen zu viel. Und dann kann ich das ändern. Bei Kindern muss man glaube ich ganz viel Verhalten beobachten, da kann man jetzt gar nicht sagen: Willst du das oder willst du das? Dazu braucht es ein bisschen Distanz.

Also, diese Künstler-Identität… jeder darf stolz sein und niemand soll sich schämen zu sagen: Ja, ich bin Künstler und mal ist Geld da, mal nicht. Für den einen ist man irgendwie eine wertvolle Astralgeburt, die einfach so Ideen aus-lacht und spontan den Tisch ganz toll bemalen kann. Und der kommt dann ins Museum und ist historisch wertvoll. Und für andere ist man jemand mit Suchtproblem, der einfach orientierungslos ist. Und sobald man diese Dinge ein bisschen lockerer nimmt und sagt ja, es sind halt Stereotypen. Wenn ich Busfahrer bin, dann fragt mich keiner, was für ein Buch ich da lese, sondern da gibt‘s auch irgendwie Projektionen.

Aber wenn man die nicht ganz so ernst nimmt, also diese Schwere irgendwie rausnimmt, dann ist es auch egal. Und dann kann ich auch in so eine veränderte Rolle schlüpfen, wenn ich im Kindermuseum arbeite. Ich finde es schon cool, dass es eine gewisse professionelle Distanz gibt oder dass die möglich ist. Weil man eine Uniform trägt und es gibt Rahmenbedingungen, die man vorher kommunizieren muss, um überhaupt dieses freie Machen zu ermöglichen. Es gibt da einen pragmatischen Teil, den ich für mich einmal

Parents or teachers often ruin it when they say: “Think carefully about what you want to do!” That basically kills it. But as soon as one kid draws a fish that looks cool, things move again – something basic gets sparked. I think negative childhood experiences are exactly those moments when someone interrupts like that, and it weirdly blocks everything – even when it‘s about nothing! Like, my art teacher shouldn’t care whether my princess is finished or not. But then he says: “Oh come on, you could glue on a bit more jewelry.” But maybe that’s just because the teachers are tired and want to keep the kids busy longer. I don’t know. The thing about looking back is: I think, all through life, but especially as a kid, you have this strong sense of what’s fair. Like, with my daughter’s elementary school teachers, I don’t expect it to be “the best art education,” because I think that’s part of growing up – realizing that your best collaboration partner might not be the person sitting next to you…

But yeah, I think it’s cool to reflect – or say, okay, you design a workshop, and it works 90% badly. But the 10% that works? That’s amazing. I’d say the main thing is to respect the process and not treat it like it’s set in stone. I’ve got a bit of an issue with ego in that sense. I think it blocks so much – you make things harder for yourself. Sometimes kids make unconscious suggestions that actually make your job easier. You just have to be okay with that. You have to be willing to fail very consciously, and not say: “I’m an artist, I know this is good for you!” Instead, you say: “Ah okay, that was a really bad idea of mine. What do you think?” And then suddenly the whole room loves it.

And I mean, working with kids is different. They can’t really articulate their needs, and they have a completely different perspective. If you do the same workshop with adults, you get more direct feedback. Someone might say: “Ugh, the computer part was too much for me.” And then I can change it. With kids, you have to watch their behavior. You can’t really ask: “Do you want this or that?” You need a bit of distance.

So, this whole artist identity… everyone should be proud, and no one should be ashamed to say: Yes, I’m an artist, and sometimes there’s money, sometimes there isn’t. For some, you’re this kind of precious astral being who just laughs out ideas and can spontaneously paint a table beautifully. And then it ends up in a museum and becomes historically valuable. For others, you’re someone with an addiction problem who’s simply lost. And as soon as you take these things a bit more lightly and say, well, they’re just stereotypes… If I’m a bus driver, no one asks me what book I’m reading. There are projections there, too.

And once you take that less seriously – once you lighten it up – it doesn’t matter. Then I can also step into a different role when I’m working in the Children‘s Museum. I think it’s cool that you can have a certain professional distance, or that it‘s even possible. Like, you wear a uniform and there are boundaries you have to communicate beforehand to make free expression possible. There’s this pragmatic part – I accepted that once, and now everything‘s chill.

akzeptiert habe und dann ist eh alles lässig.

Ich hab auch kein Problem damit, dass jemand mein fertiges Konzept nimmt und das besser macht oder vereinfacht oder sowas. Also ich finde das Projekt, das ist wie so ein Virus, das interessiert sich überhaupt nicht für unsere Emotionen. Die Kinder, die vorbeikommen haben Bedürfnisse und das Projekt hat ein Ziel, hat auch auf eine Art „Bedürfnisse“ und wenn man die respektiert, dann kann man das entsprechend verändern. Aber ich finde, dass man das Künstler Ego nicht zu sehr respektieren darf, weil dann ist es kein Nebenjob mehr. Dann wird es so eine Art Teilzeit-Therapie. Dann muss ich Samthandschuhe anziehen, weil der Kollege sonst zerbricht und emotionale Probleme bekommt. Aber ich glaub, das gibt‘s in ganz vielen Berufsfeldern. Sobald es eine Person gibt, die so ein bisschen anti ist oder unrund, dann ist der ganze Arbeitstag irgendwie anstrengend. Und es gibt Leute, die mit einer Leichtigkeit reingehen, dann vergeht die Zeit einfach und man kann seine Freizeit viel besser genießen. Ich weiß nicht, ob das nicht auch was mit Festanstellungen zu tun hat. Es sind ja auch gewisse Zwangs-Beziehungen mit Leuten, die nicht deine besten Freunde sind.

00:24:49 VMF:
Du sagst ja immer, das Kindermuseum ist für dich der Nebenjob. Und du machst aber sonst ja schon auch Workshops, so wie das im Webereimuseum Haslach und … gibt‘s dann für dich noch so deine „Kunst Kunst“? Also was ist dann anders, wenn du quasi nur mit dir selber Kunst machst? Ist es dann, dass du alleine bist? Oder, dass du kein Geld dafür kriegst oder…

00:25:33 FF:
Ich würde sagen, meine eigene Kunst-Kunst muss nicht nur ich selber sein. Aber da habe ich schon eine andere Rolle. Ich glaub, meine eigene Kunst ist viel persönlicher. Also ich sag mal mein Haupt-Kunst-Kunst-Ding ist Musik, oder Tonkunst, die ich mit einer Freundin mache. Und da gibt‘s eigentlich wenig Material, was ich dir zeigen könnte, sondern nur Livegeschichten, die wir gemacht haben. Da geht‘s ganz viel um die Situation und auch um unsere Freundschaft irgendwie. Also … das ist komplett anders. Ich finde schon, dass Kunst-machen so ein absolutes Privileg ist, weil wenn du Hunger hast, dann hast du andere Probleme, dann kannst Du nicht Kunst machen.

Und ja, wir gehen schon mit dem Ziel los, dass wir sagen, wir würden gerne Tanzmusik machen. Und wir sind beide total politisch interessiert und beide ein bisschen geschädigt, weil wir längere Phasen unseres Lebens absolut null Geld hatten. Also es gibt so eine Art ähnliche Sozialisierung im Leben und das ist so ganz doll Thema. Und es gibt ähnliche politische Ereignisse, die uns ähnlich berühren. Das ist der Vorlauf, also. Jetzt Covid-mäßig – sie war ewig auf einem anderen Kontinent und konnte nicht weg. Und ich weiß ganz genau, wenn wir uns treffen, arbeiten wir fokussiert und dann entstehen neue Aufnahmen, aber was mit den neuen Aufnahmen entsteht, was dann passiert, wissen wir nicht. Ob es jemals wieder Auftritte gibt, wissen wir auch nicht, aber es ist noch so ein ganz anderer geschützter Raum. Der ist auch nicht kindgerecht.

Ja, dieses Workshops- und das Kindermuseum Ding, da hab ich schon den Anspruch, dass die Kinder ein bestimmtes Erlebnis haben, oder wenn es das Ziel ist, dass wir einen Trickfilm machen, dass die auch wirklich einen Trickfilm haben. Oder wenn sie nicht zurechtkommen, dass ich Hilfestellung leiste.

I also have no problem if someone takes my finished concept and improves it or simplifies it or whatever. I think of the project like a virus – it doesn’t care about our emotions. The kids that come by have needs, and the project has a goal – its own kind of “needs” – and if you respect those, you can adapt accordingly. But I think you can’t respect the artist ego too much – because then it’s no longer just a side gig. Then it becomes like part-time therapy. Then I have to wear velvet gloves because my colleague might fall apart emotionally. But I think that happens in a lot of professions. As soon as there’s one person who’s a bit off or contrary, the whole workday becomes a drag. And there are people who bring this lightness – then time just flies, and you can enjoy your free time so much more. I don’t know, maybe that has something to do with permanent contracts too. They force you into relationships with people who aren’t your best friends.

00:24:49 VMF:
You always say the Children‘s Museum is your side job. And you also do workshops, like the one at Webereimuseum Haslach and… is that still your “art art” for you? So what’s different when you’re making art just for yourself? Is it that you’re alone? Or that you don’t get paid for it, or…?

00:25:33 FF:
I’d say my own “art art” doesn’t necessarily mean just me by myself. But I definitely play a different role in it. I think my own art is much more personal. I’d say my main “art art thing” is music, or sound art, that I do with a friend. And there’s really not much material I could show you, only live stuff that we’ve done. It’s all very much about the situation and also about our friendship somehow. So… it’s completely different. I do think that making art is an absolute privilege, because when you’re hungry, you have other problems – you can’t make art then.

And yeah, we definitely set out with the goal of wanting to make dance music. We’re both very politically engaged and also both a little damaged, because we had long phases in our lives with absolutely zero money. So there’s a kind of similar socialization in life, and that’s a huge theme. And there are similar political events that move us in similar ways. That’s the background. Now, with COVID – she was stuck on anoth-er continent for ages and couldn’t leave. And I know exactly: when we meet, we work with focus and new recordings emerge, but what happens with those new recordings, what comes next, we don’t know. Whether there will ever be gigs again, we don’t know either. But it’s still this completely different protected space. It’s also not child-friendly.

Yeah, with the workshops and the Children‘s Museum thing, I definitely have the expectation that the kids will have a certain experience – or if the goal is to make an animated film, that they actually end up with an animated film. Or if they get stuck, that I offer help.

Und das ist bei meiner eigenen Kunst Kunst: Da kann 100 Prozent der Menschheit sagen: Das ist keine Kunst oder das interessiert mich nicht oder das klingt doof und das ist einfach voll egal. Ich freue mich, dass ich eine lässige Freundschaft habe, die dieses konstruktive Ding hat und wir fangen was an. Und irgendwie entsteht da was, was unvorhersehbar ist. Ich kann das schon sehr gut trennen. Es ist aber wirklich sehr, sehr verschieden. Also wir haben ja schon für andere Bands Vorband gemacht – im Technikmuseum für Chicks on Speed haben wir den Anfang gemacht. Das war extrem witzig. Also es gab schon konventionelle Auftritte, aber irgendwie ist auch ganz viel egal. Und ganz viel, sehr, sehr impulsive Entscheidungen.

Jetzt arbeite ich gerade an einem Videospiel. Da wird es einfach über die nächsten Jahre hinweg Betaversion 1 bis 12 geben. Da geht es um lustige Grafiken und so einen Sound. Wir wissen selber nicht, wie wir das verpacken und verkaufen sollen… aber ich glaube schon, dass ich ganz viel Kunstmach-Erfahrungen einfließen lassen kann in die Konzeption von meinen Workshops und ich glaube auch, dass ich gut beobachten und zuhören kann. Und umgekehrt, dass ich durch die Workshops einfach besser reden kann vor allem und besser scheitern, so dieses Ding: Ja man darf sich blamieren und man muss jetzt keine Notlüge erfinden, warum es nicht funktioniert. Das ist auf jeden Fall eine Sache, die mein Kunst-machen, absolut positiv beeinflusst hat. Auch da, dass diese Künstlerpersönlichkeit, auch wenn ich für mich Kunst mache, nicht so wichtig ist, nicht ganz so ernst.

Also ich habe für mich schon eine gesunde Trennung. Ich glaube, was du auch angesprochen hast, ist so dieses Zeitproblem, dass man das Gefühl hat: okay, ich schau auf die letzten vier Monate zurück und ich bin eigentlich noch genauso angestellt wie jeder andere da. Das sag ich natürlich auch schon. Also gerade als ich dann auf Ateliersuche war und dann halt nur Nebenjobs in Anführungsstrichen… ich mache eh nur lässige Konzepte, aber da gab es auch zwischendurch so öööö … da bräuchte ich mal so einen Ausgleich irgendwie. Ich fühle mich jetzt aber nicht verdammt oder so. Ich habe jetzt nicht das Gefühl, dass ich den Anschluss verloren habe und kein Künstler mehr bin oder so.

00:32:31 VMF:
Also für mich hört es sich eigentlich so an: Das Kunst-Kunst machen ist in erster Linie freier, man muss noch weniger, muss eigentlich gar nichts. Also wenn ich dich richtig verstehe. Und du hast mit dieser Freundin so einen gemeinsamen Boden, von dem ihr startet, der ist irgendwie klarer und ein bisschen… nicht unbedingt stabiler, aber tragfähiger.

00:33:16 FF:
Man kann schon sagen, so eine Konstante, wie so eine Stütze oder eine Säule oder… ein cooler Orientierungspunkt.

00:33:30 VMF:
Und ihr seid euch nix schuldig. Es gibt keine Bringschuld in irgendeiner Form, sondern ein Dasein. Und was passiert, passiert und das ist gut. Aber dann, … ich glaube, dass es prinzipiell für dein Seelenheil gut ist und für mein Seelenheil gut wäre, das so mehr zu trennen, wie du es tust. Aber wenn ich mir vorstelle, ich könnte diese vollkommen utopische Situation schaffen, dass man im Kindermuseum oder in diesen Workshop-Situationen das weggekürzt, was eben diesen Druck macht oder diese Bringschuld, das Angestelltendasein im Sinne von „ich muss jetzt arbeiten für mein Geld“, ich muss irgendwie eine Dienstleistung erbringen. Da gibt‘s Erwartungshaltungen, die ich erfüllen muss, weil nicht einfach die Kinder kommen, so wie meine Freunde und dann mit mir spielen, son-

And with my own “art art”: 100% of people could say that’s not art or that it’s boring or sounds stupid and it’s totally fine. I’m just glad to have this chill friendship that has this constructive thing, and we start some-thing. And somehow something comes out of it that’s unpredictable. I can separate it really well. But it’s really, really different. Like, we’ve opened for other bands – we opened for Chicks on Speed at the technology museum. That was extremely funny. So we’ve had conventional gigs too, but also a lot of things just don’t matter. And a lot of very, very impulsive decisions.

Right now I’m working on a video game. Over the next few years there’ll just be beta versions 1 through 12. It’s all about funny graphics and sound. We don’t even know ourselves how we’re going to package or sell it… but I do think I can bring a lot of my art-making experience into the way I design my workshops. And I think I’m good at observing and listening. And the other way around, I think the workshops have made me better at speaking, especially, and better at failing – like this idea that it’s okay to embarrass yourself and you don’t have to come up with some white lie to explain why something didn’t work. That’s definitely something that has had a really positive impact on how I make art. Also that this artist personality, even when I’m making art for myself, just isn’t that important – not to take it too seriously.

So for me there’s a healthy separation. I think what you were also referring to is the issue of time, that you feel like: okay, you look back on the last four months and you’re basically just as employed as anyone else there. I do say that too, of course. Especially when I was looking for a studio and only had so-called side jobs… even though I’m basically just doing cool concepts, there were definitely moments where I was like, ugh… I really need a counterbalance. But I don’t feel doomed or anything. I don’t feel like I’ve lost touch or that I’m not an artist anymore or something.

00:32:31 VMF:
To me it sounds like: the “art art” is, first and foremost, freer – you don’t have to do anything, really. If I understand you right. And you have this common ground with your friend that you start from, and that’s clearer and maybe… not necessarily more stable, but more supportive.

00:33:16 FF:
You could definitely say it’s a constant, like a support beam or a pillar or… a cool point of orientation.

00:33:30 VMF:
And you don’t owe each other anything. There’s no obligation in any form, just being there. And what happens, happens, and that’s good. But then… I think it would actually be really good for my own peace of mind, too, to separate things more the way you do. But if I imagine being able to create this completely utopian situation – where in the Children‘s Museum or in those workshop settings, all the pressure is removed, like the obligation, the employee dynamic in the sense of “I have to work for my money“, I have to deliver some kind of service. There are expectations I have to meet – because it’s not like the kids just show up like my friends and play with me, I have to create a framework and all that. All these things that are just part of it. But let’s say you could strip all of that away and it wasn’t like that.

dern ich muss ja einen Rahmen schaffen usw. Diese ganzen Dinge, die natürlich so sind. Aber angenommen, man könnte das alles wegkürzen und es wäre nicht so.

Das ist das, wo ich irgendwie versuche hinzukommen auf die eine oder andere Art: Mit Kindern in Situationen zu kommen, die so ähnlich sind wie du es mit deiner Freundin hast, diesen Freiraum irgendwie zu schaffen, da dann genau so agieren zu können mit dem gleichen nichts-müssen und irgendwie alles-dürfen. Und dann weiß ich, da gibt's aber natürlich immer noch Unterschiede, weil z.B. wenn du einen Auftritt oder so mit deiner Freundin hast, kannst du davon ausgehen, dass sie sich in einer ähnlichen Situation befindet wie du und ähnlich gut einschätzen kann, ob sie will, dass das der Rest der Welt mitkriegt oder nicht. Wenn ich das mit einem Kind mache, kann ich es schon schaffen, auch in ähnliche Situationen zu kommen. Aber die Verantwortungfrage ist dann eine andere. Das interessiert mich eigentlich sehr viel mehr also diese Ego-Befindlichkeiten.

00:36:46 FF:
Na ja, das Ding ist zum Beispiel: Wenn ein Workshop im Atelier ein paar Wochen läuft, und du hast schon überall Sachen rumstehen von Kindern, die vorher was gemacht haben. Die Kinder kommen dann in so eine Art unordentliche Ausstellung und haben noch eher Lust, so rudimentäre Lust, was zu machen. In der ersten Woche haben sie diese Referenz nicht, da müssen wir dieses Rudimentäre ersetzen. Was irgendwie nicht wirklich geht.

A. war jetzt bei so einem Workshop in der Kunsthalle. Da haben sie sich erst einmal die Ausstellung angeschaut, das waren ganz viel textile Sachen. Also verrücktes Zeug. Es ging um Zapatisten und gab Wandteppiche und so geknüpftes Zeug, aber mit modernen Motiven irgendwie, so eine vermummte Person mit Videokamera. Danach durften sie selber so eine Art Stoff Collage machen. Das fand ich total clever, weil es total sinnlich angegangen wurde. Ich sehe was und dann darf ich aber auch selber etwas anfassen, was so ähnlich ist und ich würde sagen, dass diese sinnliche Erfahrung oder diese sinnliche Motivation sehr dominant ist. Dass man das als Impuls nimmt, statt nur zu sagen: Du bist kreativ, es steckt ein Künstler in dir. Das sind ja alles abstrakte Dinge. Und jetzt im „Trickfilmstudio" z.B. diese Technik, die ist zwar überwältigend, aber eine sehr beschränkte sinnliche Erfahrung. Also ich glaube, wenn du jetzt mit deinem Neffen arbeitest, mit dem ins – keine Ahnung – Naturkundemuseum gehst und anfängst Schrumpfköpfe abzuzeichnen oder was, da gibt's noch mal eine haptische und visuelle, also eine komplett sinnliche Verbindung. Und das wird dann irgendwie animiert oder so. Also, dass man irgendwie mit sinnlichen Impulsen arbeitet, nicht nur verbal so ganz viel macht.

00:40:31 VMF:
Man tendiert natürlich dazu und klar ist es auch der Job, dass man sich überlegt, was für die Kinder gut ist. So wie wir jetzt auch drüber gesprochen haben. Wie lege ich das an? Vielleicht: was hätte ich mir als Kind gewünscht? Aber andersrum, das ist natürlich irgendwie schwieriger zu denken und auch noch schwieriger zu fassen, aber was kommt aus der anderen Richtung? Also was holst du dir auch als Künstler von den Kindern? Im Idealfall ist es doch eben nicht nur diese one-way Dienstleistung, sondern schon irgendwie eine Begegnung. Auf das hin hat vorher diese Frage auch gezielt: Wenn du mit dir selber als Kind Zeit verbringen kannst, also wenn du versuchst es nochmal zu denken, nicht nur in die Richtung, was hättest du dir als Kind gewünscht und was wäre für dich gut gewesen, sondern angenommen es gäbe diese total utopische Situation, du könntest mit dir selbst als Kind so

That's what I'm kind of trying to get to in one way or another: getting into situations with children that are similar to what you have with your friend, creating that kind of free space, and then being able to act just as freely, with the same "don't have to" and "can do anything." And I know of course there would still be differences, because for example, when you perform with your friend, you can assume that she's in a similar place as you and can judge for herself if she wants the rest of the world to see it or not. When I do that with a child, I might manage to get into a similar situation – but the question of responsibility is totally different. That's something that actually interests me a lot more than these ego-based concerns.

00:36:46 FF:
Well, the thing is for example: if a workshop runs in the studio for a few weeks, and you already have stuff lying around from the kids who were there before, then the kids walk into this kind of messy exhibition and already kind of want to make something. In the first week, they don't have that reference yet, so we have to replace that rudimentary motivation. Which isn't really possible.

A. just did a workshop at Kunsthalle. First, they looked at the exhibition – it was all textile stuff. Crazy things. It was about Zapatistas and there were wall tapestries and knotted things, but with modern motifs, like a masked figure with a video camera. Afterward they got to make a kind of fabric collage themselves. I thought that was really smart because it was such a sensory approach. I see something and then I get to touch something similar. And I'd say this sensory experience, or sensory motivation, is very dominant. Using that as an impulse instead of just saying: You're creative, there's an artist inside you. Those are all abstract ideas. And now in the "Animated Film Studio", for example, the technique is overwhelming, but the sensory experience is very limited. So I think if you work with your nephew, take him to – whatever – the natural history museum and start sketching shrunken heads or something, then you get a tactile and visual, a fully sensory connection. And then that gets animated or something. So, working with sensory impulses and not just doing everything verbally.

00:40:31 VMF:
You tend to think that way – and of course, it's the job – to think about what's good for the kids. Like we were just talking about. How do I set this up? Maybe: what would I have wanted as a child? But the other way around, that's much harder to think about and even harder to grasp, but what comes from the other direction? What do you get as an artist from the kids? Ideally it's not just a one-way service, but rather an encounter. That was really the point of my earlier question: If you could spend time with yourself as a child – so not just thinking in the direction of what would've been good for me as a kid, but imagining this totally utopian scenario, you could make music with your child-self the way you do with your friend, for example. Or maybe do something else. Can you imagine that? Or your child-self is just there as a third person in the room. You said earlier that children have a totally different perspective. What role does that childlike perspective play?

wie mit dieser Freundin Musik machen zB. Oder vielleicht irgendwas anderes. Kannst du dir da irgendwas vorstellen? Oder du als Kind wärst noch als dritte Person im Raum. Vorher hast du ja auch gemeint, die Kinder haben eine total andere Perspektive. Welche Rolle spielt diese kindliche Perspektive?

00:42:43 FF:
Ja, ich meine, es ist ja auch so: Damals als Kind wollte ich zum Großteil das, was jemand anders grad hatte, oder ich wollte das machen, was jemand anderes grad gemacht hat. Sehr sinnlich und so erlebnisorientiert, aber ich würde mich selber jetzt nicht als gleichberechtigten Künstler respektieren können, irgendwie. Ich sehe da keine verborgene Magie oder so. Das ist ein bisschen grausam ausgedrückt. Ich finde dieses Unterstützen voll wichtig, weil das doch ein Kind voll glücklich macht. Also wenn A. zum Beispiel zu mir sagt: Ich will auch mal dabei sein, wenn du Krach machst mit WeiWei, dann sage ich so: natürlich. Und dann warne ich WeiWei vor, dass das bisschen eine andere Probe wird. Und dann ist das total verrückt oder angenommen, sie kann schon ein bisschen was spielen, dann darf sie mit auftreten, was für sie das Beste ist und, soll man sagen erhebend oder so. Und es ist ja dann kein verbales Lob von mir, sondern so ja, na klar. Wenn sie bereit ist, bis 4 zu zählen und irgendwie mitzumachen und ein bisschen zuzuhören, was da passiert. Also ich glaube, sowas hätte ich toll gefunden, und sowas finde ich sinnvoll. Aber ich würde es schon immer kindgerecht machen.

00:44:40 VMF:
Was bedeutet das?

00:44:46 FF:
Das bedeutet, ich glaube nicht, dass ich mit einem Kind gleichberechtigt Kunst mache. Also für mich ist es trotzdem so ein automatisches Machtverhältnis wie bei allen Beziehungen durch den Altersunterschied. Also wenn ich jetzt eine 20-jährige Freundin hätte, dann gäb‘s einfach so eine Art Machtgefälle, ganz automatisch.

Ich glaub ganz viel ist einfach zuhören und beobachten, schauen was spricht das Kind an oder was spricht das jüngere Ich an oder worauf reagiert der so? Ich meine, was ich davon zurückbekomme, ist jetzt nicht: Er hat einen direkteren Draht zur Kunst, weil das Kind noch nicht so versaut ist, daran glaub ich irgendwie einfach nicht oder an diese Unschuld. Die unschuldigen Augen des Kindes. Manchmal braucht es das unschuldige Auge eines Kindes, um die Wahrheit zu sehen…sowas so… ne. Also was ich davon bekomme als Erwachsener ist schon eher so eine Art Bestätigung, dass ich tatsächlich irgendwelche greifbaren Fähigkeiten habe als Künstler und die vermitteln kann. Ich könnte dir jetzt beibringen, wie ich einen Sound gemacht habe. Oder eine Installation. Ich könnte dir das so beibringen, dass du genau das Gleiche nachbauen könntest. Und dann hast du gewisse technische Fähigkeiten, handwerkliche Fähigkeiten. Ich könnte dir jetzt aber nicht beibringen oder nicht vorhersagen, was du als nächstes baust. Und das ist tatsächlich das Kunst-Ding und ich meine, was wir vermitteln können, ist eher das Handwerk dahinter. Wir tricksen dann die Kinder in so eine Situation, dass sie nicht nachdenken, sondern einfach machen. Und natürlich bekomme ich eine Bestätigung: Ja, ich habe es geschafft, aber das hat ganz viel mit Zurückhaltung zu tun. Ja, aber dass mir das Kind jetzt direkt was vermitteln kann, was ich noch nicht weiß… ist mir noch nicht passiert, sag ich mal so.

00:48:51 VMF:
Aber kannst du es genauer fassen, was dieses Kindsein überhaupt bedeutet. Weil, eben die leuchtenden Kinderaugen und der naive Blick und so…

00:42:43 FF:
Yeah, I mean, as a kid I mostly just wanted whatever someone else had, or I wanted to do what someone else was doing. Very sensory and experience-oriented, but I wouldn’t be able to respect myself as an equal artist somehow. I don’t see any hidden magic there. That’s a bit harshly put. I do think supporting is super important because it makes kids really happy. Like when A. says to me: I want to be there too when you make noise with WeiWei, then I say: of course. And then I warn WeiWei that the rehearsal’s going to be a bit different. And then it’s totally crazy. Or let’s say she can already play a bit, then she can perform with us – which for her is the best thing. And – what do you call it – uplifting, maybe. And it’s not a verbal compliment from me, just like yeah, of course. If she’s ready to count to four and sort of follow along, listen a bit to what’s happening. I think I would’ve found that great, and I think that’s meaningful. But I’d always make it age-appropriate.

00:44:40 VMF:
What does that mean?

00:44:46 FF:
It means I don’t think I can make art with a child on equal footing. For me, there’s still an automatic power dynamic, like in all relationships with an age gap. If I had a 20-year-old friend, there’d automatically be a power imbalance too.

I think a lot of it is just listening and observing, seeing what speaks to the child or what speaks to the younger me or what gets a reaction. I mean, what I get out of it as an adult is not that the child has a more direct line to art because they’re not corrupted yet – I just don’t believe in that, or in this innocence. The innocent eyes of the child. Sometimes it takes the innocent eye of a child to see the truth… that kind of thing… nah. What I get out of it is more of a confirmation that I actually have some tangible skills as an artist and can pass them on. I could teach you how I made a certain sound. Or an installation. I could teach you in a way that you could recreate the exact same thing. Then you’d have certain technical or craft skills. But I couldn’t teach you or predict what you’re going to build next. And that’s really the art part. I mean, what we can teach is more the craft behind it. We trick the kids into a situation where they stop thinking and just start doing. And of course I get confirmation: yeah, I managed it. But that has a lot to do with holding back. But that a kid could teach me something I don’t already know… hasn’t happened yet, let’s say.

00:48:51 VMF:
But can you define more clearly what this being-a-child even means? Because – yeah, the shining child-like eyes and the naïve gaze and so on…

00:49:20 FF:
Genau, das naive Genie.

00:49:22 VMF:
Ja genau. Aber dieses naive Genie-Klischee hängt ja auch mit der Vorstellung zusammen, dass man ein Kind eigentlich immer nur als defizitären Erwachsenen denkt.

00:49:56 FF:
Joa..

00:49:57 VMF:
Ist halt noch nicht fertig, noch nicht ausgebacken. So irgendwie. Aber weil du vorher gesagt hast, du könntest dich selbst als Kind oder sonst irgendein Kind nicht als gleichberechtigten Künstler ernst nehmen. Kannst du erklären warum?

00:50:24 FF:
Ich finde, wenn man noch nicht genug schlimme Sachen im Leben erlebt hat, hat man nicht so viel zu erzählen. Also es gibt ja auch ganz junge Comedians. Die sind so 20 und können so zynisch und schnell reden. Aber die haben nichts erlebt, da ist niemand gestorben. Sie hatten noch nie eine Alkoholvergiftung oder waren noch nie längere Zeit depressiv oder hatten noch nie Geldprobleme oder… Meine Lieblings-Witze-Erzähler sind mindestens Mitte 40. Haben so bestimmte Dramen einfach schon wirklich erlebt und nicht nur kommentiert. Ich finde, das ist dann für mich auch gesellschaftlich relevant, oder das ist eine Sache, die man gut teilen kann, oder da kann ich eine Brücke dazu bauen. Aber ein Kind, das in einem Workshop einen Trickfilm macht, da ist noch nicht so viel Teilbares. Da ist der gemeinsame Nenner noch nicht so groß, der gemeinsame Erfahrungs-Nenner, wie bei jemandem, der schon ein bisschen mehr gelebt hat. Ja, in der Musik genauso. Es ist natürlich toll, dass ganz junge Leute schon Gitarre spielen können im Fernsehen und soulmäßig singen. Aber mich berührt das nicht so sehr wie jemand, der das seit 40 Jahren macht. Es sind einfach noch nicht genug schlechte Erfahrungen …

00:52:49 VMF:
Also wenn so ein Kind eine richtige Scheiß-Kindheit hat, dann…

00:52:52 FF:
Dann hat es auf jeden Fall mehr zu erzählen, ja. Vereinfacht gesagt ja. Also ich finde es auch vollkommen okay, wenn jetzt mein Kind mit ihrer besten Freundin chillt und die malen Prinzessinnen-Bilder und dann gibt‘s eine Diskussion darüber, welches Kleidungsstück reinpasst oder nicht. Das ist auch total wertvoll und so. Aber ich würde mich jetzt nicht dazusetzen und sagen ich mag auch Prinzessinnen. Und ich will jetzt nicht sagen, dass die doof sind, weil die das so machen, aber es ist einfach altersgerecht, oder? Ich würde jetzt diese spontanen Kinderzeichnungen nicht… ich würde jetzt nicht argumentieren können, warum die gesamtgesellschaftlich oder historisch relevant sind. Also mich berühren einfach andere Dinge. Also, wenn irgendwo in einem anderen Land, keine Ahnung, im Migrationsrecht sich was verändert, dann berührt mich das total. Und wenn dann jemand aus dem Land, den ich kenne, Musik macht, dann ist das für mich eine Person, zu der ich einen emotionalen Kontakt aufbauen kann, wo ich dann sagen kann: Ja, mit der kann ich eher kollaborieren als jetzt mit dem 3- oder 6-jährigen Kind. Also ja, ich würde sagen, es gibt ja eh kein universelles, wie soll ich sagen, Kunst-Wertungs-Schema. Irgendwie ist es immer leichter, irgendwas zur Kunst zu erklären, als zu sagen: Na ja, eigentlich ist das keine Kunst. Irgendwann in den letzten Jahrzehnten ist es passiert, dass irgendwie selbst ein Banker als Finanzgenie auch so eine Art Künstler

00:49:20 FF:
Exactly, the naïve genius.

00:49:22 VMF:
Yeah, exactly. But this naïve genius cliché is also tied to the idea that a child is basically just an incomplete adult.

00:49:56 FF:
Yeah…

00:49:57 VMF:
Just not fully baked yet. But because you said earlier you couldn’t take yourself as a child – or any child – seriously as an equal artist. Can you explain why?

00:50:24 FF:
I think if you haven’t had enough bad things happen to you in life, you don’t have that much to say. I mean, there are young comedians – 20 or so – who can speak cynically and fast. But they haven’t experienced anything. No one’s died on them. They’ve never had alcohol poisoning. Never been depressed for an extended period. Never had financial problems. My favorite joke-tellers are at least in their mid-40s. They’ve really lived through certain dramas – not just commented on them. I think that makes it socially relevant, or that’s something you can actually share, or build a bridge to. But a kid in a workshop making a stop-motion film – there just isn’t that much shared ground yet. Not like with someone who’s lived a little more. Same with music. It’s of course great when young people can already play guitar on TV and sing soulfully. But it doesn’t touch me the same way as someone who’s been doing it for 40 years. There just haven’t been enough bad experiences yet…

00:52:49 VMF:
So if a child has had a really shitty childhood, then…

00:52:52 FF:
Then they definitely have more to say, yeah. Put simply, yes. I also think it’s totally fine when my kid hangs out with her best friend and they draw princess pictures and then argue over which piece of clothing fits. That’s totally valuable and all. But I wouldn’t sit down and say, “I like princesses too.” And I’m not saying they’re stupid for doing that – it’s just age-appropriate, right? I wouldn’t take those spontaneous children’s drawings and argue why they’re socially or historically relevant. I’m just moved by different things. Like if in some other country, something changes in immigration law – that moves me a lot. And if someone from that country, someone I know, makes music, then that’s a person I can build an emotional connection with. I’d say, yeah, I can collaborate more easily with them than with a 3- or 6-year-old child. I mean, there’s no universal… what should I say… art evaluation system. Somehow it’s always easier to call something art than to say: actually, that’s not art. At some point in the last few decades, it even happened that a banker could be considered an artistic genius – because he creatively reinvests debt interest elsewhere and somehow makes money with it…

sein kann, weil der kann ganz kreativ die Zinsen von Schulden woanders investieren und irgendwie Geld verdienen damit...

00:56:19 VMF:
Weil er zaubern kann...

00:56:20 FF:
Genau. Also der Kunstbegriff wurde jetzt so ausgeleiert.

00:56:27 VMF:
Nein, ich verstehe das. Zu sagen: Ich bin Künstlerin, ich mache das total selten. Also ich mag es auch bis heute eigentlich überhaupt nicht. Es ist ein komischer Begriff, aber irgendwie habe ich doch noch keinen besseren gefunden für viele Dinge.

00:56:48 FF:
Ich finde, das entscheidet auch ganz oft der Auftraggeber. Also ich habe jetzt letztens so Video, Licht und Sound gemacht, die Interviews hat jemand anders geführt, das Konzert hat jemand anderes gemacht, dann war ich halt der Video-Typ oder der Technik-Hansel. Und das war okay. Ich muss jetzt nicht die Interviews unterbrechen und sagen: übrigens, ich hab' da eine sehr impulsive, wertvolle Idee. Oder dann hab' ich mal Grafiken an so ein japanisches Textilunternehmen verkauft, da war ich Grafikdesigner Florian Fusco.

00:57:41 VMF:
Ja ich mein, diese ... einerseits sind diese Dinge wurscht, andererseits sind sie dann immer mal wieder existenziell, weil man dann halt irgendwie die Miete zahlen kann oder nicht. Aber, ich weiß nicht. Also das interessiert mich irgendwie auch erst in zweiter oder dritter Linie. Aber ich finde interessant, was du sagst: dass es zu tun hat mit dem, was dich berührt und was man irgendwie so als gemeinsamen Nenner hat. Vielleicht auch, inwieweit man sich dann in so einem gemeinsamen Prozess sowas wie einen gemeinsamen Nenner erarbeitet und dadurch berührbar wird für die Dinge des anderen. Ich habe mich ja da sehr darauf konzentriert und arbeite viel mit Kindern und in Schulen. Und da entstehen tolle Sachen und ich möchte, dass die gesehen werden. Dann machen wir eine Ausstellung und da muss man dann aber alles aufhängen, auch wenn es irgendwie 98 Prozent Prinzessinnen sind und vielleicht ist gar nichts Interessantes dabei. Aber immer wieder sind dann doch Dinge dabei, die mich berühren. Manchmal habe ich das Gefühl, das bin nur ich und das drückt halt bei mir irgendeinen Knopf. Aber manchmal glaube ich, da ist schon mehr, auch wenn man irgendwie nicht so richtig sagen kann, wo das herkommt oder warum das jetzt auf einmal eine Kraft hat. Aber das ist das, was mich fasziniert und ich versuche, mich dem anzunähern ...

00:59:46 FF:
Okay, also Du machst diese Dinge in einem Rahmen, wo der Output vielleicht bisschen zu demokratisch ist oder demokratisch behandelt wird?

01:00:00 VMF:
Nein, also ich finde das auch voll okay. Es ist prima, im Atelier einfach alles aufzuhängen und dann ist das halt so mehr oder weniger die inspirierende Raumgestaltung für die, die nachkommen. Es ist auch gut, dass es um diese ganzen Dinge geht, die uns als Job so bewusst sind. Es gibt aber einfach Momente, Begegnungen, wo irgendwie etwas zu leuchten beginnt. Und für mich ist es schon das Ziel, das möglichst oft zu schaffen, weil ich das Gefühl habe, dass da – vielleicht ist das nur meine Projektion. Aber ich habe das Gefühl, es sind schon die Momente, in denen was aufgeht. Auch für die Kinder. Und wo für alle gemeinsam nachher etwas anders ist. Das ist das, worum ich kreise und dann bleibt immer noch die Frage: Manchmal hängt es an dem Ding, das man nachher sehen kann, also

00:56:19 VMF:
Because he can do magic...

00:56:20 FF:
Exactly. The term „art“ has become so watered down.

00:56:27 VMF:
No, I get that. Saying “I’m an artist” – I hardly ever do that. I actually don’t like it at all, even to this day. It’s a weird term, but somehow I haven’t found a better one for many of the things I do.

00:56:48 FF:
I think often it’s actually the client who decides that. Like recently I did video, light, and sound, someone else conducted the interviews, someone else did the concert, and I was just the video guy or the tech dude. And that was fine. I don’t have to interrupt the interviews and say, “By the way, I have a very impulsive, valuable idea.” Or like once, I sold some graphics to a Japanese textile company – then I was Graphic De-signer Florian Fusco.

00:57:41 VMF:
Yeah, I mean, on the one hand those things don’t matter, but on the other hand, they’re sometimes existential – like, whether you can pay your rent or not. But, I don’t know. That’s kind of a secondary or tertiary concern for me. Still, I find what you said interesting: that it has to do with what touches you emotionally, and what you share as a common ground. Maybe also the extent to which, through a collaborative process, you develop a kind of shared basis, and that makes you open to being touched by what the other person is doing. I’ve really focused on that – I work a lot with children and in schools. And wonderful things happen, and I want those things to be seen. So we do an exhibition, and then everything gets hung up, even if 98 percent of it is princesses and maybe nothing particularly interesting. But every now and then, there is something that touches me. Sometimes I feel like it‘s just me, and it just pushes some personal button. But sometimes I think there is something more, even if you can’t quite explain where it comes from or why suddenly it has this power. But that’s what fascinates me, and that’s what I try to approach...

00:59:46 FF:
Okay, so you do these things in a context where the output is maybe treated a bit too democratically?

01:00:00 VMF:
No, I actually think it’s totally fine. It’s great to just hang everything up in the studio and have it be this kind of inspiring spatial arrangement for those who come after. And it’s also good that we’re so aware of these aspects of our work. But there are just moments, encounters, where something starts to glow. And for me, the goal is definitely to make that happen as often as possible, because I feel like – maybe it’s just my projection – but I feel like those are the moments when something opens up. Also for the children. And afterward, something is different for everyone. That’s what I circle around. And then there’s still the question: sometimes it’s about the thing you can see afterwards – like a trace, something object-like. But sometimes it’s just the moment itself. Maybe like when you make music. But that’s the art thing – that it’s not necessarily transferable...

es gibt eine sichtbare Spur, so was Werk-artiges. Und manchmal ist es aber auch wirklich nur der Moment. Vielleicht so, wie wenn ihr Musik macht. Aber das ist halt das Kunst-Ding. Also, dass das nicht unbedingt transferierbar ist…

01:01:27 FF:
Ja, ich mein ich hatte das auch im Atelier: So total coole Kein-Bock-Jugendliche, also wenn die schon so ein bisschen älter werden. Und je älter die werden, habe ich das Gefühl, desto strengere Regeln gibt es, was cool ist und was nicht cool ist. Ein dreijähriges Kind legt einfach los und dann hörst du irgendwann: Ok ist fad. Tschüss! Aber ich hatte ein paarmal solche Workshops in der Erwartungshaltung: die müssen jetzt hier mal diesen langweiligen Creative-Zwang aussitzen und dann sind die froh, wenn sie weg sind. Aber dann hat einer angefangen ne Münze oder so ein Symbol von dem Fortnite-Videospiel zu machen. Und da meine ich so: ah das ist Fortnite, und er so: Ey du kennst Fortnite! und dreht sich um: Hey wir dürfen auch Fortnite machen! Und ja, ist ja auch das Ding, die wissen, keine Ahnung, Umweltverschmutzung ist böse, Fernsehen ist böse, Videospiele sind böse. Das erwähnt mal lieber nicht gegenüber den Lehrern. Aber dann haben sich alle voll rein gehangen und total schräges Zeug gemacht. Und ich hätte selber gedacht: Ok, die wollen das sicher nicht machen, weil es nicht so perfekt wird wie am Bildschirm. Aber das hat sie überhaupt nicht interessiert. Und alle haben irgendwie das „gleiche“ gemacht. Aber dann war da so eine Serie von so verrückten Fun-Münzen, einen Schatz gemeinsam. Also ich kenn das Spiel nicht, aber die haben prozessorientiert gearbeitet, die haben mit den Händen was gemacht und es war auf jeden Fall eine Bereitschaft. Also ich glaube, wir haben so ganz viel unsichtbare Gegner, die wir nicht kennen. Ja, aber das passiert dann aus Versehen… oder BTS diese verrückte K-Pop Band: Da hat einer beim Cyanotypie-Kurs nur Liebesbotschaften an die Band gemacht und dann ich so: Ah cool, du magst BTS! Woa, du kennst BTS! Es war wohl etwas vollkommen Ausgeschlossenes, dass da ein Kreativ-Hansel mit Brille aus dem Kindermuseum, dass der das kennen könnte. Und dass das überhaupt ausgesprochen werden darf. Ja wenn man die Popkultur so akzeptiert oder auch diese Welt der Kinder dann so akzeptiert, die Wahrnehmungswelt, ich glaube schon, dass es dann coole Ansätze geben kann. Wir sind ja auch alt und kennen das alles nicht.

01:05:30 VMF:
Na eh, ich glaube, dass mit den Berührungspunkten, einen gemeinsamen Nenner finden ist sicher ein großer Teil bzw. eben berührt einen manches dann auch irgendwie so aus Versehen, was dem Kind vollkommen wurscht ist. Also es passieren sicher in beide Richtungen so Momente, in denen man das Gefühl hat, da ist so eine Resonanz da, und in Wirklichkeit ist es total einseitig.

01:06:08 FF:
Genau, das Kind hat sich gefreut, Kunst zu machen. Jaaaa, oder? Genau so eine Situation hatte ich auch da meine ich so: Oh, das ist aber ein schönes Boot und was passiert mit dem Boot? Und dann so: Das ist die Titanic und sie versinkt gleich. Ah, okay, was ist das für ein Monster, was du gemalt hast? Das ist meine Mama. Also ja, ich meine so wahrhaftige Berührungspunkte sind da eher schwierig, absolut schwierig. Und ich verstehe natürlich bei den BTS Girls dieses Ding so Musik und Tanzen und Mitreißen, verstehe ich schon. Auf so einer abstrakten Ebene. Aber ich würde jetzt nicht kreischend auf und ab hüpfen: Yeah BTS!! Also es ist einfach eine andere Wahrnehmungs- und Gefühlswelt.

01:01:27 FF:
Yeah, I had the same thing in the studio: totally cool, couldn’t-care-less teenagers – especially when they’re older. And the older they get, I feel like, the stricter the rules become for what’s cool and what’s not. A three-year-old just dives in and at some point says, “Okay, I’m bored, bye!” But I had a few workshops where I expected: they’ll just have to endure this boring creativity stuff and will be glad when it’s over. But then one of them started making a coin or some symbol from the Fortnite video game. And I was like: oh, that’s Fortnite, and he goes: Wait, you know Fortnite? Then turns around: Hey, we’re allowed to do Fortnite! And yeah, that’s the thing – they know: pollution is bad, TV is bad, video games are bad. Better not mention it to the teachers. But then they all totally got into it and made really weird stuff. I thought they wouldn’t want to do it because it wouldn’t be as perfect as on screen. But they didn’t care at all. And they all kind of did the “same” thing, but it turned into this wild series of fun coins – a shared treasure. I don’t even know the game, but they worked in a process-oriented way, they made stuff with their hands, and there was definitely a willingness. I think we have a lot of invisible enemies that we’re not even aware of. Yeah, and then these things just happen by accident… Like BTS, that crazy K-pop band: there was a kid in the cyanotype course who made nothing but love messages to the band. And I said: “Oh cool, you like BTS!” and she was like: Whoa, you know BTS? It was apparently totally unthinkable that this creative dude with glasses from the Children‘s Museum would even know that. Or that it could even be mentioned. But yeah, if you accept pop culture, or that world of the kids, their perception of the world, I do think you can find some cool approaches. We’re just old and don’t know any of this.

01:05:30 VMF:
Totally. I think these points of contact, finding common ground, are definitely a big part of it – or sometimes you get touched by something purely by accident, even if the child doesn’t care at all. These moments of resonance go both ways – and often, it’s actually completely one-sided.

01:06:08 FF:
Exactly, the kid’s just happy to make some art. Right? I had a moment like that – I said: “Oh, what a nice boat! What’s happening with the boat?” And the kid says: “That’s the Titanic. It’s about to sink.” “Ah, okay… and what’s that monster you drew?” “That’s my mom.” So yeah, having genuine points of emotional contact – that’s pretty difficult, honestly. And I do get the BTS girls – this thing about music and dancing and being swept up in it, I understand that on some abstract level. But I’m not gonna be jumping up and down screaming, “Yeah, BTS!!” It’s just a different world of perception and feeling.

01:07:05 VMF:
Ja.

01:07:10 FF:
Dann haben wir‘s.

01:07:10 VMF:
Schlusswort. 1 Stunde 07.

Jetzt
Florian Fusco baut und spielt seine eigenen Sound-Maschinen. Ausgestellt entstehen Sound-Installationen. Auf der Bühne wird daraus Tanzmusik. Als Freischaffender konzipiert und vermittelt er künstlerische Strategien.
Vita
Lebt und arbeitet in Wien. Erhalt des Textil-Design Diploms 2011. 2013 folgt der Meisterschüler-Abschluss mit dem Schwerpunkt Ton-Kunst. In seinen freien Arbeiten erforscht er Klang und Interaktion.

01:07:05 VMF:
Yeah.

01:07:10 FF:
That’s it then.

01:07:10 VMF:
Final words. One hour, seven.

Now
FF builds and plays his own sound machines. In exhibition settings, these become sound installations; on stage, they turn into dance music. As a freelance artist, he develops and communicates artistic strategies.
Bio
Lives and works in Vienna. Received a diploma in textile design in 2011, followed by a master class degree in sound art in 2013. In his independent work, he explores sound and interaction.

if you cannot
hear, borrow
someone‘s ear.

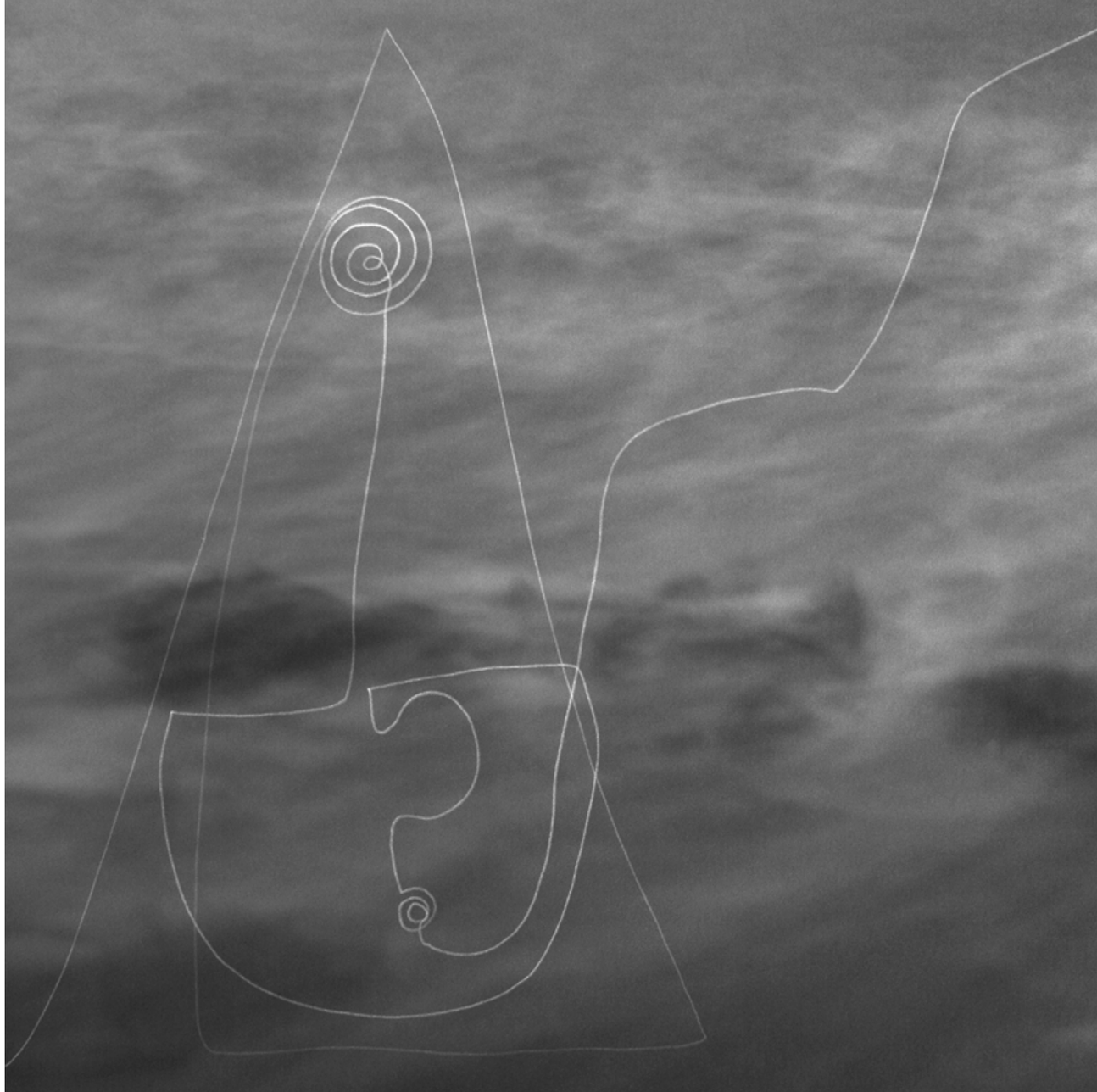


Foto: Arling Riese

Nora Gutwenger

über Matsch-Knödel, Freundschaften mit Orten, Elefanten in Ljubljana und den Unterschied zwischen Kollaboration und Partizipation.

about mud dumplings, friendships with places, elephants in Ljubljana and the difference between collaboration and participation.

Ich besuche Nora am 14.07.21 in ihrer Wohnung in der Nähe der U6-Station Meidlinger Hauptstraße. Es gibt Soda Zitron zu trinken. Wir sprechen fast eineinhalb Stunden, aber leider hat das Aufnahmegerät nach einer knappen halben Stunde aufgehört, aufzunehmen. Nora schickt mir im Nachhinein ein paar wichtige Geschichten, über die wir gesprochen haben, als kurze Voice-Mails.

Nora und ich kennen uns zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch kaum und trotz von mir vermuteter gegenseitiger Sympathie ändert sich daran auch in der Folge vorerst nicht allzu viel: Nora ist bei unserem Gespräch hochschwanger. Als ich sie im Zuge der Redaktion der Gespräche kontaktiere, um den Fototermin nachzuholen, stellt sich heraus, dass sie mittlerweile Mutter von zwei Kindern ist und in Südtirol lebt. Sie schickt mir das obige Foto.

00:00:01 NG:
Okay.

00:00:02 VMF:
Aufnahme läuft aber auch. Keine Sorge, die kommt nirgends hin. Das ist meine Transkriptionsgrundlage. Genau. Also ich hab schon ganz viel gequatscht. Fällt Dir dazu irgendwas ein?

00:00:20 NG:
Ich sehe mich auf alle Fälle draußen. Und ich habe auch gleich ein… eigentlich habe ich zwei Geschichten im Kopf. In der ersten Geschichte bin ich auf alle Fälle unter 7 Jahren und es ist Herbst. Eine Jahreszeit, die ganz lange meine Lieblingsjahreszeit wa. Und ich bin draußen und es regnet und es ist Matsch. Überall ist Matsch und ich mache Knödel.

00:00:51 VMF:
Matsch-Knödel?

00:00:52 NG:
Matsch-Knödel. Ganz viele Matsch-Knödel. Ich bin draußen und ich bin auch sehr viel allein draußen. Also ich kann mich, ich konnte mich als Kind sehr gut alleine beschäftigen. Ich hab auch Zeit mit Freunden sehr genossen. Natürlich, aber es war irgendwie nicht so ein Problem für mich.

Und das andere, das war dann, als wir umgezogen sind in ein anderes Haus. Eben immer am Land. Es war Sommer und ich hab ganz viel gekocht mit Pflanzen. Und auf diesem Gartentisch gab es dann unzählige Gerichte für mein Schiff, mit dem ich dann losgefahren bin. Ich war die Kapitänin und ich war die Köchin. Also so „tutta fare“. Alles habe ich auf diesem Schiff gemacht und das war wunderschön. Das war eine wunderschöne Sommerbeschäftigung.

Vielleicht, hab ich mir gedacht, komme ich gerade auf diese zwei Geschichten, weil ich ja im Vorfeld ein bisschen darüber nachgedacht habe. So Momente zwischen Kindern und mir, im Tun oder im kreativen Tun und ein Moment, der mir sehr gut gefallen hat und den Kinder sehr gut gefallen hat – unter Vielen – war auch im Wald. Ich habe zwei Jahre lang beim Forum Alpbach das Lernprogramm mit geleitet. Und da war ich eben als Organisatorin auch für die Freizeit von den Kindern verantwortlich. Ich habe so einen Workshop vorbereitet für einen Nachmittag. Ich weiß gar nicht mehr, wie es genau war, aber irgendwie es gibt ja auch diese Kunst und Kulturtage oder so ähnlich. Auch eher alles sehr traditionell, aber trotzdem. Wir haben halt oft über Kunst diskutiert. Und dann kam dieser typische Satz von Kindern: „Ja, das kann ich auch.“ Oder: „Warum ist das Kunst?“ Und ich hab dann versucht in diesem „Vortrag unter Anführungszeichen“, den ich

I visit Nora on July 14th, 2021, at her apartment near the U6 Meidlinger Hauptstraße station. We drink soda with lemon. We talk for almost an hour and a half, but unfortunately, the recording device stops working after just under thirty minutes. Nora later sends me a few important stories we talked about as short voice messages.

At that point, Nora and I hardly know each other, and despite what I assumed was mutual sympathy, not much changes in that regard for the time being: during our conversation, Nora is heavily pregnant. When I contact her later during the editorial process to reschedule the photo shoot, it turns out she is now a mother of two and living in South Tyrol. She sends me the above photo.

00:00:01 NG:
Okay.

00:00:02 VMF:
Recording is running, but don’t worry – it’s not going anywhere. This is just my transcription basis. Right. So I’ve already done a lot of talking. Does anything come to your mind?

00:00:20 NG:
I definitely see myself outside. And I immediately think of… actually, I have two stories in mind. In the first one, I’m definitely under seven years old and it’s autumn. A season that was my favorite for a very long time. And I’m outside and it’s raining and it’s muddy. There’s mud everywhere and I’m making dumplings.

00:00:51 VMF:
Mud dumplings?

00:00:52 NG:
Mud dumplings. Lots of mud dumplings. I’m outside and also spending a lot of time alone outside. Like, I was really good at entertaining myself as a kid. Of course, I also enjoyed time with friends. But somehow it just wasn’t a problem for me.

And the other story is from when we moved to a different house. Still in the countryside. It was summer and I was cooking a lot with plants. And on this garden table there were countless dishes for my ship, which I then sailed off in. I was the captain and I was the cook. So kind of a tutta fare. I did everything on that ship and it was beautiful. That was such a beautiful summer activity.

Maybe I’m thinking of those two stories now because I had thought a bit beforehand about moments between me and children, in action or in creative activity. And a moment that I really liked – and that the kids also really liked – among many, also took place in the forest. I co-led the learning program at the Forum Alpbach for two years. And there I was, as one of the organizers, also responsible for the kids’ free time. I had prepared a workshop for one afternoon. I don’t even remember exactly how it went, but you know, there are these arts and culture days, or something like that. It was all rather traditional, but still – we often discussed art. And then that typical line from the kids would come: “Yeah, I could do that too.” Or: “Why is that art?” And then I tried, in this “lecture,” in quotation marks, that I gave to the kids, to explain: Why is this art, how is the art system built up, the history of art? And why does it have its legitimacy? Yeah, briefly.

vor den Kindern gehalten habe, zu zeigen: Warum ist das Kunst und baut sich das System der Kunst auf und die Kunstgeschichte? Und warum hat es seine Berechtigung? Und ja, in kurzen Zügen.

Und da kam ich auch zu Landart und habe gesagt: Ja, das ist eine Richtung. Gab es in den 60er Jahren. Und dann gingen wir in den Wald. Und das war... es gab da irgendwie keine Regeln. Ich habe ihnen doch, ich habe ihnen schon ein paar Beispiel-Bilder gezeigt, von Landart Künstlern und Künstlerinnen. Aber ja, es hat dann einfach jeder drauflos gebaut, auch wir Mitarbeiterinnen. Und dann haben wir uns natürlich am Ende alles gegenseitig gezeigt. Das war so ein schöner und freier Nachmittag. Das sind die Momente für mich, die sehr häufig funktionieren, weil man kreativ mit Kindern arbeitet oder auch, weil man mit Kindern spielt, es muss nicht immer ein kreativer Gedanke oder Output am Ende stehen, aber dass man auf so einen gleichen Nenner kommt und dass irgendwie diese Hierarchie unterbrochen wird. Ja, diese Gleichwertigkeit und diese Freiheit sind voll schön und voll angenehm und lassen neue Situationen zu. Ich glaube für die ganze Gruppe, also in beide Richtungen. Dann kommt man ja doch wieder raus, wenn man mit Kindern arbeitet: Ich bin ja trotzdem die Verantwortliche und irgendwann ist das dann auch vorbei. Aber diese Momente sind voll schön.

00:05:39 VMF:
Also da ist das Besondere eigentlich genau das, dass man das für einen Moment irgendwie vergessen kann, diese... und sich so trifft.

00:05:49 NG:
Genau.

00:05:52 VMF:
Und das heißt, dir sind jetzt diese anderen Geschichten eingefallen, weil das irgendwie so eine ähnliche... so, das Matsch-Kugeln machen und...

00:06:02 NG:
Ich glaub, das kam mir auch vielleicht, weil ich ja selbst auch Inspiration und Kreativität immer mit draußen verbinde. Also ich gehe sehr viel spazieren oder viele Arbeiten, auch meine kreativen Arbeiten, beginnen mit der Suche nach einem Ort. Das heißt, ich gehe und sammle oder ich denke im Gehen. Für mich ist das draußen sein, das sich draußen bewegen ein aktiver kreativer Prozess. Im Gegensatz zum hier sitzen in der Wohnung und recherchieren oder schreiben. Und ich glaube, das kommt auch stark von dem, wie ich aufgewachsen bin und wie ich das empfunden habe, das draußen sein. Dass das einfach etwas ist, das mir guttut. Und damit ich kreativ sein kann und Spaß daran habe, muss es mir gut gehen und ich muss mich in eine Situation begeben, in der es mir gut geht. Das ist halt eine einfache Rechnung. Deshalb gehe ich raus.

00:07:28 VMF:
Kannst Du die Situation noch ein bisschen genauer beschreiben, wo du die Matsch-Kugeln machst?

00:07:32 NG:
Ja, also es war halt der Gemüsegarten, also rohe Erde. Und es gab Frisbees. Das waren meine Teller. Und da gab‘s auch noch so ein – das war das Schlimme für meine Mutter, wie gesagt, nicht drum herum, dass es schlimm war – aber es gab eine Kiste auf der Terrasse mit Vogelfutter. Und da hab ich ganz tief reingegriffen, ganz tief so gegriffen und dann alles dekoriert.

00:08:06 VMF:
Also in diesem, in dem Vogelfutter gewühlt, weil das schön war, das zu...

And then I got to land art and said: Yes, that’s a genre. It existed in the 60s. And then we went into the forest. And there were really no rules. Well, I did show them a few example pictures of land artists, but yeah, everyone just started building freely – including us, the team. And at the end, we of course showed each other everything. That was such a beautiful and free afternoon. Those are the moments that often work so well for me – when you’re working creatively with kids, or just playing with them. It doesn’t always have to be about a creative output. But it’s about getting on the same wavelength, where that hierarchy somehow dissolves. Yeah, that equality and that freedom are so beautiful and pleasant and allow for new situations to emerge. I think that applies to the whole group – both ways. Then, of course, you come back out of it again, when you’re working with children. I’m still the responsible adult, and at some point, it’s over. But those moments are just really beautiful.

00:05:39 VMF:
So the special thing is really that, for a moment, you can kind of forget that... and just meet like that.

00:05:49 NG:
Exactly.

00:05:52 VMF:
And you thought of those other stories now because they’re sort of similar... like making mud balls and...

00:06:02 NG:
I think maybe that’s also because I always associate inspiration and creativity with being outdoors. I go on a lot of walks, or many of my creative processes begin with the search for a place. So I walk and collect, or I think while walking. For me, being outside and moving outdoors is an active creative process. As opposed to sitting here in the apartment and researching or writing. And I think that comes strongly from how I grew up and how I experienced being outside. That it’s just something that’s good for me. And for me to be creative and enjoy it, I need to feel good. I need to put myself in a situation where I feel good. It’s a simple equation. That’s why I go outside.

00:07:28 VMF:
Can you describe the situation a bit more, where you’re making the mud balls?

00:07:32 NG:
Yeah, so it was the vegetable garden – so raw earth. And there were Frisbees. Those were my plates. And there was also a – that was the terrible part for my mother, it has to be said – but there was a box of birdseed on the terrace. And I would reach in, really deep, and then decorate everything.

00:08:06 VMF:
So digging around in the birdseed, because it was nice to...

00:08:10 NG:
Ja, voll!

00:08:14 VMF:
Und mit rein in die Matsch-Kugeln? Ach so, so als Vogelfutter-Mosaike? Schön!

00:08:22 NG:
Ja.

00:08:22 VMF:
Und waren die dann Essen auch die Matsch-Kugeln oder..

00:08:25 NG:
Sie waren Essen. Soweit ich das in Erinnerung hab schon. Ja, so viele Erinnerungen hab ich nicht mehr an dieses erste Haus, aber das weiß ich noch.

00:08:44 VMF:
Und das war allein oder hat es eine Rolle gespielt, dass da jemand irgendwie...

00:08:49 NG:
Das war alleine. Dieses Kochen dann. Wenn ich bisschen älter war, das war mit anderen Kindern. Aber dieses Erste nicht.

00:09:05 VMF:
Und wenn du jetzt da als Erwachsene dazu kommen könntest, glaubst du, das wäre schön, weil man es dann so gemeinsam machen kann? Oder war das gut, so ganz alleine dabei zu sein?

00:09:23 NG:
Ob es für mich als Kind schön wäre?

00:09:27 VMF:
Ja, es war jetzt ein paarmal in diesen Gesprächen, dass die Leute dann gesagt haben: Ja, nein, ich will da gar nicht stören als Erwachsene, sondern es war genau gut so und manchmal ist es aber auch so, also ich kann mich an Situationen erinnern, wo ich das Gefühl hatte, ich finde eigentlich... also ich hätte eigentlich schon die Sehnsucht gehabt, da mit jemandem zu sein. Und es hat dabei ein bisschen jemand gefehlt, der diese Dinge auch irgendwie begleitet oder dann vielleicht irgendwo noch Türen aufmacht oder so.

00:10:14 NG:
Es war wohl das Entdecken. Und. Es war so eine Welle. Es war so schnell und impulsiv und eine Situation, in der ich einfach so vieles mochte. Ich mochte das Wetter. Ich mochte die Konsistenz. Ich mochte das Endprodukt. Ich mochte den Geruch, die Geräusche. Es war so ein wildes Treiben und Experimentieren. Ich kann mir die Situation schon vorstellen. Als erwachsene Person weiß ich nicht. Ein anderes Kind hätte mich sicherlich, oder glaube ich, hätte mich nicht gestört. Erwachsene Personen – kann ich mir nicht so gut vorstellen.

00:11:16 VMF:
Es klingt nach so einer Flow Situation. Nach der man dann irgendwie als Erwachsener schon sucht oder dass man...

00:11:28 NG:
Total.

00:11:31 VMF:
... und so dieses total sinnliche Tun, aber schon etwas schaffen wollen.

00:08:10 NG:
Yeah, totally!

00:08:14 VMF:
And into the mud balls? Oh, like birdseed mosaics? Beautiful!

00:08:22 NG:
Yeah.

00:08:22 VMF:
And were the mud balls food too? Or...

00:08:25 NG:
They were food. As far as I remember, yes. I don't have many memories of that first house, but I do remember that.

00:08:44 VMF:
And were you alone, or did it matter if someone was around?

00:08:49 NG:
I was alone. That cooking part later – when I was a bit older – that was with other kids. But not the first part.

00:09:05 VMF:
And if you, as an adult now, could join that situation – do you think that would be nice, because you could do it together? Or was it better to be completely alone in it?

00:09:23 NG:
You mean, would it have been nice for me as a child?

00:09:27 VMF:
Yeah, that came up a few times in these conversations – that people said, no, I wouldn't want an adult to intrude, it was just right that way. And other times it was like – I remember situations where I actually had a longing for someone to be there. Someone to kind of accompany that or maybe open more doors somehow.

00:10:14 NG:
It was about discovery. And – it was like a wave. It was so quick and impulsive, a situation where I just loved so many things. I loved the weather. I loved the texture. I loved the end result. I loved the smell, the sounds. It was this wild rush and experimenting. I can imagine the situation. As an adult, I don't know. Another child wouldn't have bothered me, or I think it wouldn't have. But an adult – I can't quite imagine that.

00:11:16 VMF:
It sounds like a flow state. The kind you often seek out as an adult, or...

00:11:28 NG:
Totally.

00:11:31 VMF:
... and this totally sensory activity, but also wanting to create something.

00:11:37 NG:
Voll. Es ist voll die Flow-Situation. Diese Momente im künstlerischen Handeln, aber schon auch ein Antrieb, warum man es macht.

00:11:52 VMF:
Würdest du… also ich hab auch im Rahmen von diesen PhD- Projekten, hab ich zuerst so riesige Videoprojekte gemacht mit Schulklassen, um manche Dinge irgendwie noch mehr auszureizen. Die im Kindermuseum eben nicht möglich waren. Oder um so ein bisschen besser zu verstehen… wo ich da bin und wie das funktioniert in dieser Zusammenarbeit. Dann hab ich gemerkt, das ist irgendwie alles… also es war schon gut und super. Aber es ist natürlich irgendwie immer noch komplizierter geworden, weil halt so viele Player und so viele Beteiligte und Schule als Institution und oder … und dann bin ich so ein bisschen ins Gegenteil und hab jetzt die längste Zeit, was gar nicht ursprünglich als Teil von diesem PhD-Projekt geplant war, aber irgendwie ist es so geworden, mit meinem Neffen gearbeitet. Am Anfang war er 4 oder so und jetzt ist er 7. Und da habe ich total das Gefühl, dass ich ganz viel so mich in ihm als Kind sehe. Und dann ist das so mein Kompass, mir irgendwie zu überlegen, was hätte mir jetzt getaugt oder was hätte ich mir damals gewünscht?

Wir haben eigentlich so eine Storytelling-Technik entwickelt und ganz viel geskypt – er ist in Bayern. Und diese Unterhaltungen haben sich sehr weiterentwickelt und verändert. Am Anfang war es noch so ein bisschen klassischeres Kindern Geschichtenerzählen. Also mit ihm so als Stichwortgeber. Ich habe das dann so verflochten habe dann versucht, immer mehr irgendwie auch so Denkräume aufzumachen. Oder so nach dem Motto, ihm bewusst zu machen, dass wir uns die Geschichten selber ausdenken, quasi die Probleme selber setzen, aber auch die Lösungen dann selber finden können. Und das ist total intensiv und super, auch was er… Ich finde, er macht da unglaubliche Sprachkunst.

00:14:22 NG:
Aber was ist das Ziel? Wie? Was sagst du zu ihm? Worum geht es?

00:14:31 VMF:
Ach so ja, unterschiedlich. Wir haben so Projektchen quasi. Also zuerst habe ich gesagt: Wir machen ein Buch. Und dann hat er gesagt, die Geschichte ist jetzt schon alt, die ist jetzt zu Ende. Weil wir zu lange daran gearbeitet haben. Aber es war auch irgendwie schon ziemlich dick. Da haben wir die Geschichte beendet und haben eine neue begonnen. Und dann war das irgendwie auch so anders von der Qualität. Da hab ich angefangen, Hörstücke draus zu machen, weil ich das Gefühl hatte, ich kann das… ich will nicht so eine Kindergeschichte darüber legen, sondern diese Qualität von dem, was er gesagt hat, stärker beibehalten. Ganz viel waren halt auch Missverständnisse, die wir dann aber produktiv gemacht haben …

00:15:26 NG:
Ja cool.

00:15:27 VMF:
Das ist immer ein sich so weiterhanteln. Also es geht schon um Nähe, weil du vorher gesagt hast da im Wald, weil das dann schön ist, wenn man so einen gemeinsamen Nenner findet, dieses sich wirklich begegnen können, sich nahe sein können, wie man es sonst nie sein kann, weil man Erwachsene sein muss und er Kind ist und man in den meisten Situationen sich das eigentlich nicht leisten kann. Aber diese Perspektive von jemandem, der einfach erst so kurz auf der Welt ist und sich Sprache auch gerade erst aneignet und da irgendwie nach Ausdruck sucht, das hat mich total

00:11:37 NG:
Absolutely. It's totally a flow state. Those moments in artistic action, but also a drive for why you're doing it.

00:11:52 VMF:
Would you… So, as part of those PhD projects, I first did these huge video projects with school classes to kind of push certain things further. Things that weren't really possible in the Children's Museum. Or just to get a better understanding… of where I'm at and how this collaboration works. And then I realized that it was all… I mean, it was good, it was great. But of course, it also just kept getting more complicated, because there were so many players and so many people involved, and school as an institution, and… yeah. So I kind of went in the opposite direction. And for quite a while now – this wasn't actually planned as part of the PhD project originally, but somehow it's become that – I've been working with my nephew. He was about 4 when we started, and now he's 7. And I really feel like I see myself in him as a child. So he kind of became my compass, helping me think: what would I have liked, what would I have wished for back then?

We basically developed a storytelling technique and did a lot of Skyping – he lives in Bavaria. And those conversations really evolved and changed. In the beginning it was more of a classic children's storytelling format, with him giving prompts. I'd weave them into a story and then tried to open up more thinking spaces. Kind of like: making him aware that we're making up these stories ourselves – that we create the problems, but also the solutions. And that's been super intense and really great, also what he… I think he creates incredible language art.

00:14:22 NG:
But what's the goal? Like, what do you say to him? What's it about?

00:14:31 VMF:
Ah yeah, it depends. We had little "projects," you could say. At first I said, let's make a book. And then he said the story is old now, it's over – because we'd been working on it for too long. But it was already pretty thick. So we ended that story and started a new one. And then that one was just really different in quality. That's when I started turning it into audio pieces, because I felt like I didn't want to lay a typical kids' story over it, but instead preserve the quality of what he was actually saying. A lot of it was based on misunderstandings, but we made them productive…

00:15:26 NG:
Yeah, cool.

00:15:27 VMF:
It's always this process of moving forward bit by bit. So it is about connection – because earlier you mentioned being in the woods – and how beautiful it is when you find this common ground, this real sense of connection. Being close in a way you otherwise can't be, because you're the adult and he's the child, and in most situations you just can't allow yourself that kind of closeness. But the perspective of someone who's only been on this earth for a short time, and is just learning language and searching for ways to express themselves – that really fascinated me. Being able to connect like that also means stepping into a different space, one that's normally closed off to me.

fasziniert. Dieses sich begegnen können heißt für mich auch, in einen anderen Raum reinzukommen, der mir sonst nicht zugänglich ist.

Wenn du jetzt die Situation beschreibst einerseits bei diesen Kugeln, da kommt mir vor, das ist jetzt so dieses total sinnliche, plastische Arbeiten. Das andere ist dann eben schon eher mehr Rollenspiel mit der Schifffahrt und dem Kochen und so. Aber ich habe mir ursprünglich... es ist lustig, wie unterschiedlich die Gespräche sind. Eigentlich, ganz nahe sind wir nie an dem, was ich mir ursprünglich gedacht hab, drangeblieben.

Aber wenn du jetzt als Erwachsene mit dem, was du an Erfahrungen gesammelt hast, auch an künstlerischer Erfahrung und an Möglichkeiten mit der Welt umzugehen oder Wahrnehmungen auch umzuinterpretieren oder einfach nur keine Ahnung, technisch Dinge zu tun oder auszuprobieren oder so: gibt‘s irgendetwas, wo du das Gefühl hättest: Boa, das wäre eigentlich cool, das mit dir selber als Kind in dieser Situation zu machen.

Also bei L. zB war jetzt eben dieser Moment, wo ich dann das Gefühl hatte: ah, das wäre jetzt eigentlich total spannend auf so eine Klang-Ebene zu gehen. Dinge, die er jetzt so nicht gemacht hätte. Er wird nicht auf die Idee kommen, so ein Hörstück zu machen. Und schon gar nicht so, sondern er hätte sich wenn dann irgendwie so ein Kinder-Hörspiel, was er halt kennt überlegt. Aber gibt‘s da was, wo du das Gefühl hättest, das wäre cool aus dieser Situation vielleicht zu machen...

00:18:52 NG:
Also jetzt wenn ich an diese zwei Erinnerungen denke?

00:19:00 VMF:
Ja. zB. ... aber vielleicht fällt dir irgendwas anderes dazu ein oder vielleicht, wenn du jetzt mit dem Gedanken gar nichts anfangen kannst, können wir auch woanders abbiegen. ... Ich glaube, eigentlich funktioniert meine Frage vielleicht nicht. Mir kommt vor, diese Situationen, die einem da einfallen, sind irgendwie so perfekt. Das sind eben solche Flow-Momente.

00:19:44 NG:
Das stimmt schon.

00:19:44 VMF:
Dass man die gar nicht... dass es da nichts zu ...

00:19:49 NG:
... zu verbessern gibt oder zu ändern.

00:19:53 VMF:
Und dass man das Gefühl hat, es geht eher kaputt oder man würde, wenn man einem Kind dabei begegnet, würde man es niemals rausreißen wollen.

00:20:02 NG:
Ja das stimmt.

00:20:14 VMF:
Das ist irgendwie schön. Weil es hat schon jeder von so einem Moment erzählt. Und es haben alle Momente irgendwie so ... dann unterschiedliche Brücken ins jetzt geschlagen.

00:20:33 NG:
In das kreative Tun vom Jetzt, oder?

00:20:35 VMF:
Auch. Bei manchen ist es irgendwie mehr in die Räume gegangen oder ums sich einen Raum schaffen, ganz, ganz physisch so dieses Höhlen bauen oder so. Oder

Now, when you describe the situation with the balls, for example – that feels like a very sensual, tactile kind of work. The other one is more like role play with the ship and the cooking. And I thought... it’s funny how different these conversations are. We never actually stuck very close to what I originally imagined.

But when you, as an adult, with your accumulated experiences – also as an artist, with your ways of interacting with the world, of reinterpreting perceptions, of trying things technically or experimentally – if you think back, is there anything where you’d go: “Wow, it’d be so cool to do this with my younger self in that moment”?

With L., for example, there was this moment where I felt: now it would be really exciting to explore sound. That’s something he wouldn’t have done on his own – he’d never think of making a kind of audio piece. If anything, he’d imagine a children’s radio play like the ones he knows. But is there something where you’d think, yeah, that would actually be great to do with my childhood self in that situation?

00:18:52 NG:
You mean if I think about those two memories?

00:19:00 VMF:
Yeah, for example... or maybe something else comes to mind. And if the question doesn’t really click for you, we can take a different turn. I feel like maybe my question doesn’t quite work. It seems like the situations we remember are kind of perfect. They’re flow moments.

00:19:44 NG:
That’s true.

00:19:44 VMF:
Like there’s nothing to...

00:19:49 NG:
...improve or change.

00:19:53 VMF:
And you feel like, if you were to step into that moment with a child, you’d never want to break them out of it.

00:20:02 NG:
Yeah, that’s true.

00:20:14 VMF:
That’s kind of beautiful. Because everyone I’ve spoken with has shared a moment like that. And all of those moments built these different bridges to the present.

00:20:33 NG:
You mean into creative action now?

00:20:35 VMF:
Yes, for some it was more about physical space – like making space, literally building forts and dens, or finding your own little space within the bigger space where everyone’s playing.

der eigene kleine Raum im Verhältnis zum großen Raum, in dem man gemeinsam spielt.

Oder dann gab‘s dieses „Fehler machen dürfen“. Einfach irgendwie so ausprobieren dürfen. Dieser Freiheitsaspekt. So Initiations-Momente, die einen irgendwie zum Kunst machen gebracht haben oder so. Und bei dir kommt mir vor, ist es so ganz stark dieser sinnliche Moment. Du hast das total schön beschrieben, diese Situationen, dieses in diesem Moment sein, in diesem Wetter sein…

00:22:03 NG:
Und dieses alles drumherum auch sonst vergessen, einfach tun.

00:22:08 VMF:
Ja. aber eigentlich nur so im zeitlichen Sinn. Das direkte Drumherum hast du ja total präsent. Ich hab das Gefühl ich ich spür die Nässe oder den Regen und rieche die Erde oder auch das mit diesem Vogelfutter, da ganz tief rein greifen. So ganz körperliche Erfahrungen eigentlich.

00:22:43 NG:
Das stimmt.

00:22:45 VMF:
Ich weiß gar nicht genau, was du jetzt so künstlerisch eigentlich machst? Ich kenn gar nichts von dir?

00:22:50 NG:
Seit meinem Abschluss 2017 – also ich hab ja Ortsbezogene Kunst studiert und seit dem mache ich sehr viel partizipative Sachen. Also gar nicht mehr so… ich hatte schon Projekte, also das waren eh Orte, die sehr viel zulassen, Leerstände oder Häuser, die abgetragen werden oder Brachen. Also die Herangehensweise ist so ein bisschen wie in einer Beziehung, in einer Freundschaft. Ich gehe hin und man lernt sich kennen gegenseitig kennen.

00:23:43 VMF:
Also der Ort und Du?

00:23:45 NG:
Der Ort und ich. Und ja, man beginnt zu reden und irgendwie sich auszutauschen. Der Ort wird zum Arbeitsraum als auch zum Material. Und ich spiele damit. Verschiebe es und… also ein konkretes Beispiel: Das letzte, was ich gemacht habe in dieser Herangehensweise. Ich arbeite sehr oft nicht allein, sondern… kollektiv kann ich nicht sagen, eher mit Freundinnen oder anderen Konstellationen. Und das war eben auch in einem Abbruchhaus in Kaufbeuren, einer Kleinstadt in Deutschland.

00:24:43 VMF:
Lustig, ich bin ganz aus der Nähe.

00:24:45 NG:
Wirklich? Und in der Altstadt war dieses Haus. Es ist ein ehemaliges Geschäftshaus und wir waren dort. Die These war: Alle sind gegangen und jetzt geht das Haus auch. Also dem Haus reicht‘s. Und dann haben wir tausende – wir haben es Teilchen genannt, letzten Endes, das waren Wesen aus einem Dämmmaterial, es ist mir auch entfallen, was es war – tausende solche Teilchen gemacht. Einfach so Deckenplatten gebrochen. Dann haben sie vier Beine bekommen und sie sind marschiert… durch das ganze Haus und auch aus dem Haus raus. Aus den unterschiedlichen Gruppierungen. Sie sind so von den Löchern rausgekommen und es waren auch andere – also es waren mehrere Leute, die dort ausgestellt haben. Teilweise haben sie dann Kunst-Werke umzingelt oder sie haben sich einfach flüchtig gemacht.

Or it was about the permission to make mistakes, to just try things. That aspect of freedom. Kind of these initiation moments that led people to making art. And with you, it really seems to be this strong, sensual moment. You described those situations so beautifully – being in that moment, being in that weather…

00:22:03 NG:
And just forgetting everything else around you, simply doing.

00:22:08 VMF:
Yes, but only in the sense of time. The immediate surroundings were completely present in your story. I feel like I can feel the wetness or the rain, smell the earth – or like with that birdseed, digging your hands deep into it. These are very physical experiences.

00:22:43 NG:
That’s true.

00:22:45 VMF:
I actually don’t really know what kind of artistic work you do. I haven’t seen anything of yours.

00:22:50 NG:
Since I graduated in 2017 – I studied Site-Specific Art – and since then I’ve mostly done participatory projects. Not really… I mean, I’ve had projects, but the spaces were usually very open to experimentation – vacant buildings or places about to be torn down, or wastelands. And my approach is kind of like a relationship, like a friendship. I go there, and we get to know each other.

00:23:43 VMF:
You mean you and the place?

00:23:45 NG:
Yes, me and the place. And yeah, we start talking, exchanging. The place becomes both the workspace and the material. And I play with that, shift things around… One concrete example: the last thing I did using that approach – I rarely work alone, but I wouldn’t call it a collective either, more like with friends or in different constellations – was in a building slated for demolition in Kaufbeuren, a small town in Germany.

00:24:43 VMF:
Funny, I’m actually from nearby.

00:24:45 NG:
Really? So, this house was in the old town. It used to be a commercial building and we were working there. The idea was: everyone has left, and now the house is leaving too. Like, the house has had enough. So we made thousands – we called them “particles,” they were like creatures made from some kind of insulation material, I forget exactly what it was – we broke ceiling tiles into pieces, gave them four legs, and they marched… through the whole house and even outside. In different groupings. They came out of holes in the walls. And there were other people exhibiting their work too. Sometimes the particles surrounded artworks, or just kind of fled on their own.

Und eine andere Herangehensweise, die ich habe, ist eben das Partizipative. Ein Projekt, das sich in mehreren unterschiedlichen Farben gezeigt hat, an unterschiedlichen Orten oder auch mit unterschiedlichen Menschen, oft auch wieder in einem Leerstand und sehr oft, also zweimal oder dreimal, war dieser Leerstand in einem Gemeindebau. Und wir haben den dann gefüllt, indem wir die Bewohnerinnen in der Nachbarschaft gefragt haben, ob wir denn Dinge von ihnen haben können, ob sie uns Dinge leihen oder schenken können und wir mit diesen Dingen dann ein Café machen. Also wir haben dann auch ein Café gegründet für die Nachbarschaft.

Voicemail Elefantengeschichte:
Das Projekt entstand in Ljubljana im Zuge meines Erasmusaufenthaltes dort. Ich habe mir in diesem Jahr versucht, eine Arbeitsweise zurechtzulegen, die ohne Arbeitsmaterial und ohne Atelier auskommt. Ich habe angefangen mit der Suche nach Orten, an denen ich mich wohlfühle. Dabei bin ich sehr intuitiv vorgegangen und in meinem Zimmer, das ich in Ljubljana hatte, das war sehr nah am Bahnhof. Vor allem in der Nacht hat man dort immer sehr laut die Züge gehört und diese Geräusche haben mich an die Geräusche von Elefanten erinnert. So bin ich auf die Suche nach diesen Elefanten gegangen. Ich habe auf Google Maps geschaut, wo eine sehr hohe Intensität und Dichte von Gleisen ist und bin mit dem Rad drauflosgefahren in diese Richtung. Und tatsächlich fand ich die Elefanten dann auch dort. Es war so ein Art Industriegebiet, eine Brache entlang der Gleise, wo neben vielen anderen abgelagerten Dingen auch alte Zugwagons standen. Für mich waren diese Zugwagons dann die Elefanten. Es war ganz klar, dass das der Ort sein wird, an dem ich mich jetzt länger aufhalten möchte. Also ich habe diesen Ort dann zu meinem Wohlfühlort, zu meinem Arbeitsort ausgesucht und bin dann immer, wenn ich künstlerisch arbeiten wollte, dorthin gefahren. Ich habe fotografiert, gesammelt, gefilmt und nachgedacht. Wie ich gesagt habe, die Arbeit ist dann doch woanders entstanden, aber es war auf alle Fälle die Quelle der Inspiration für diese Arbeit, die in Ljubljana entstanden ist.

Voicemail zu Kollaboration und Partizipation:
Also bei der Kollaboration suche ich mir aus, mit wem ich eine künstlerische Arbeit machen will und es ist einfach alles klarer definiert. Aufgaben werden verteilt. Im Gespräch wird immer wieder für beide oder für die beteiligten Personen abgewogen, was ist okay, was ist nicht okay, wie wollen wir das machen. Sowohl ästhetisch als auch inhaltlich und ja so entwickelt sich das Projekt. Hingegen bei der Partizipation entsteht eine Bühne durch mich und die beteiligten Personen des Projekts, also mit denen ich zum Beispiel in einer Kollaboration gerade ein partizipatives Projekt leite und die Mitwirkenden, die von außen, diese Personen, wo ich auch keinen Einfluss habe, wer das ist oder wie oft die sich da aufhalten, die agieren frei. Ich kann nicht steuern, was auf dieser Bühne passiert und wie deshalb auch das Projekt letzten Endes wirklich ausschaut und abläuft.

Nora Gutwenger verwendet in ihren Arbeiten Orte, deren Geschichte und Kontext als Arbeitsmaterial und Aktionsfeld. Das Aufbrechen alltäglicher Vorstellungen erlaubt ihr, diese Orte als Material für künstlerische Interventionen und Experimente einzusetzen. Viele ihrer Arbeiten entstehe im Kollektiv. Oft bezieht sie die Bewohner*innen der Nachbarschaft oder der Gegend in den Entstehungsprozess mit ein. Sie konzipiert ihre Arbeiten so, dass sie ohne die Hilfe anderer nicht entstehen können. Über diese Auseinandersetzungen entstehen Arbeiten an der Schnittstelle zwischen Partizipation, Performance und Installation.

And another approach I use is participatory. One project, which took on different forms, happened in different places and with different people – often again in vacant spaces, and two or three times these were apartments in public housing. And we filled them by asking the neighbors if we could have things – borrowed or donated – and we used them to create a café. So we actually opened a café for the neighborhood.

Voicemail – Elephant Story:
This project came about in Ljubljana during my Erasmus exchange. That year I tried to develop a working method that didn't rely on any materials or studio. I started looking for places where I felt comfortable. I did this really intuitively. The room I had in Ljubljana was very close to the train station. At night, you could hear the trains very loudly, and those sounds reminded me of elephants. So I started looking for the elephants. I checked Google Maps for where there was a high density of train tracks and rode my bike in that direction. And sure enough, I found the elephants.

It was this kind of industrial area, a wasteland along the tracks, where among many discarded things there were also old train cars. For me, those cars became the elephants. It was immediately clear that this would be the place where I wanted to spend more time. So I made that spot my comfort zone, my studio. And whenever I wanted to work artistically, I went there. I took photos, collected things, filmed, and thought. Like I said, the actual artwork ended up happening elsewhere, but this was definitely the source of inspiration for the project I made in Ljubljana.

Voicemail – Collaboration and Participation:
When it comes to collaboration, I choose who I want to work with artistically, and everything is more clearly defined. Tasks are divided up. In conversation, we keep checking in: what's okay, what's not, how do we want to do this – both aesthetically and in terms of content. That's how the project develops.

But with participation, it's different. I create a kind of stage with the collaborators I'm working with on a participatory project – but then the people who actually participate, the ones from outside, I have no control over who they are or how often they show up. They act freely. I can't control what happens on that stage or how the project ultimately looks or unfolds.

Nora Gutwenger uses places in her work, drawing on their history and context as both material and field of action. Breaking open everyday assumptions allows her to use these places as material for artistic interventions and experiments. Many of her works are created collectively. She often involves the residents of the neighborhood or area in the creative process. She designs her projects so that they cannot come into being without the help of others. Through these engagements, works emerge at the intersection of participation, performance, and installation.

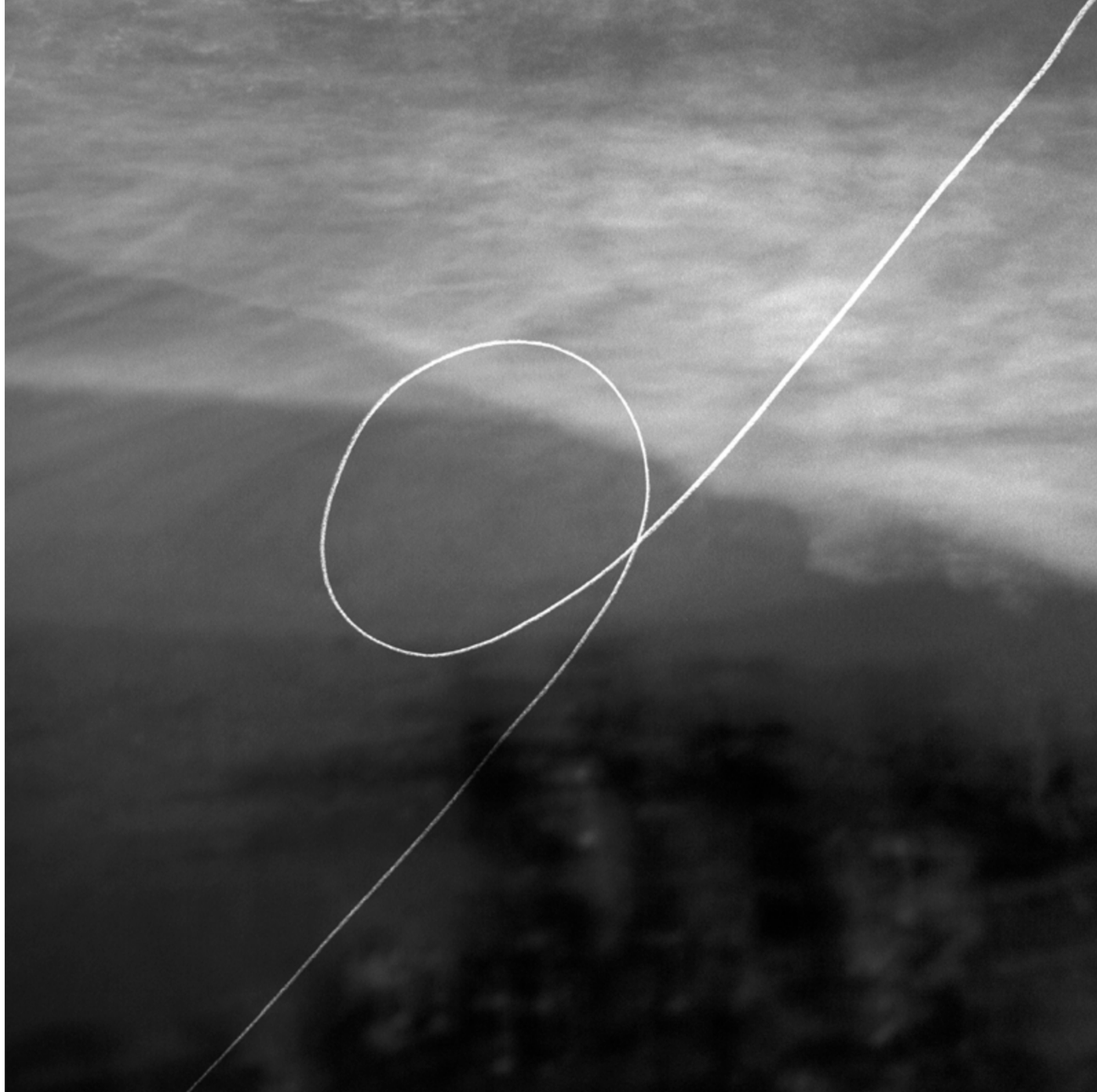
(Explanatory) Notes and References

The European Forum Alpbach

... is a renowned annual interdisciplinary conference and platform held in Alpbach, Tyrol (Austria). It aims to bring together “the most innovative minds from politics, business, civil society, culture, and science to drive ideas for a strong and democratic Europe.”

(European Forum Alpbach, n.d. Purpose & History. Available at: https://www.alpbach.org/about/purpose-history (Accessed: 17 October 2025))

mud dumplings
are the best
dumplings.



Diego Mosca

über Vertrauen, Verantwortung, Schießpulver, Divergentes Denken, Weltgestalten, Hirschgeweihe, wirtschaftliches Talent, Medien, Instrumente, Werkzeuge und sympathische Krätz‘n.
about trust, responsibility, gunpowder, divergent thinking, shaping the world, deer antlers, economic talent, media, instruments, tools and likeable brats.

Ich treffe Diego Mosca am 18. August 2021 morgens um 09:30 im Augarten. Ich trinke Kaffee, er Mate. Diego und ich kennen uns seit meinen ersten Tagen in Wien. Über ihn bin ich ins ZOOM Kindermuseum gekommen. Wir haben miteinander an der Akademie der bildenden Künste studiert, viele Jahre und viele Stunden gemeinsam im „Trickfilmstudio“ sowie an intensiven Sonderprojekten zusammengearbeitet.

00:00:00 VMF:
Ich möchte irgendwie dieses Sprech-Denken erwischen und verarbeiten. Also mein Plan wäre, dass es zu jeder Person, mit der ich diese Gespräche mache, so etwas wie eine Erzählung gibt, die ich schreibe. Also werde ich voraussichtlich nicht das Interview abdrucken, sondern es zu einer Art Erzählung überformen, wie ein Porträt eigentlich, eine Art Textportrait. Also das ist glaube ich jetzt eh klar, aber ich sage es trotzdem nochmal: Ich werde natürlich nichts verwenden, bevor ich‘s dir nicht nochmal gegeben hab. Wenn du dann irgendwie sagst, das taugt mir jetzt doch überhaupt nicht, kannst du jederzeit sagen: nein doch lieber gar nicht.

00:02:20 DM:
Das ist ja so in der Forschung üblich.

00:02:23 VMF:
Ja, auch bei den Videoprojekten habe ich immer zu den Schülerinnen gesagt, wir machen das jetzt und jeder muss die Sicherheit haben, dass dann nichts irgendwo auftaucht, was nicht von allen freigegeben ist.

00:02:47 DM:
Wieviele hast Du jetzt schon interviewt eigentlich? Christian, Sabine....

00:02:53 VMF:
Naja, die weiß ich jetzt noch gar nicht, ob ich sie so mit reinnehme. Das waren Interviews für die Bachelorarbeit und das hab ich auch noch ein bisschen klassischer gemacht und sehr konkrete Fragen zu den Workshops und ihrem Zugang dazu gestellt.

00:03:27 DM:
Also das ist jetzt das PhD-Projekt, oder?

00:03:29 VMF:
Genau. Der Plan wäre, jetzt wirklich ein Buch zu machen und ich möchte ein Buch machen, das man sich gerne anschaut. Das inspirierend ist. Keine sozialwissenschaftliche Abhandlung. Es geht darum, diese unterschiedlichen Persönlichkeiten und künstlerischen Zugänge sichtbar zu machen. Mir geht es im PhD Projekt ein bisschen darum, mich dem Verhältnis von meiner eigenen künstlerischen Arbeit, dem künstlerischen Zugang und der künstlerischen Arbeit mit Kindern im Kindermuseum anzunähern. Ich gehe davon aus, dass es so ein Blick auf die Welt oder so ein Modus ist, aus dem man gar nicht rauskommt, auch wenn man jetzt nicht ausstellt oder eine künstlerische Karriere verfolgt. Was wollen wir da? Warum machen wir diese Arbeit mit den Kindern? Und was holt man für sich selber da raus? Und wie? Wo? Auf welchen Ebenen finden diese Begegnungen statt? Darum versuche ich diese Gespräche irgendwie kreisen zu lassen. Es ist eben, wenn man so konkret danach fragt, oft schwierig, eine Antwort zu bekommen, die über Allgemeinplätze hinausgeht. Also das versuche ich ein bisschen anders als bei den ersten Gesprächen. Die zweite Runde habe ich jetzt mit Michael Baumgartner begonnen. Das war sehr nett. Dann mit der Peri und mit Verena Brückner, solange sie noch abrechnen kann. Dann mit Flo. Und

I am meeting Diego Mosca on August 18, 2021, at 9:30 a.m. in Augarten. I’m drinking coffee, he’s having mate. Diego and I have known each other since my first days in Vienna. Through him, I came to the ZOOM Children‘s Museum. We studied together at the Academy of Fine Arts for many years and spent countless hours working together in the “Animated Film Studio” as well as on intensive special projects.

00:00:00 VMF:
I somehow want to catch and process this way of thinking while speaking. So my plan would be that for each person I have these conversations with, there will be something like a narrative that I write. So I’m probably not going to print the interview as it is, but rather reshape it into a kind of narrative – like a portrait, really, a kind of text portrait. I think that’s pretty clear by now, but I’ll say it again anyway: I’ll of course not use anything before I’ve given it back to you. And if at that point you feel like, “No, I actually don’t like this at all,” you can always say: no, better not at all.

00:02:20 DM:
That’s kind of the standard in research.

00:02:23 VMF:
Yeah, even in the video projects I always told the students: we’re doing this now, and everyone needs to feel sure that nothing will show up somewhere that hasn’t been cleared by everyone involved.

00:02:47 DM:
How many people have you actually interviewed so far? Christian, Sabine...

00:02:53 VMF:
Well, with those I’m not even sure yet if I’ll include them. Those were interviews for the bachelor’s thesis, and I did them a bit more traditionally, with very specific questions about the workshops and their approach to them.

00:03:27 DM:
So this is the PhD project now, right?

00:03:29 VMF:
Exactly. The plan is now to really make a book, and I want to make a book that people enjoy looking at. One that’s inspiring. Not a social science treatise. The goal is to make these different personalities and artistic approaches visible. In the PhD project, I’m also trying to explore the relationship between my own artistic work, the artistic approach, and the artistic work with children in the Children‘s Museum. I assume that it’s kind of a worldview, or a mode of being, that you just can’t get rid of – even if you’re not currently exhibiting or pursuing an artistic career. What is it we want? Why are we doing this work with children? And what do we get out of it for ourselves? And how? Where? On what levels do these encounters take place? That’s what I’m trying to circle around with these conversations. Because when you ask too directly, it’s often hard to get an answer that goes beyond generalities. So I’m trying to approach it a bit differently now than I did in the first interviews. The second round I started with Michael Baumgartner. That was really lovely. Then with Peri, and with Verena Brückner, as long as she could still do her invoices. Then with Flo. And with Nora Gutwenger, shortly before giving birth. She should have had her child by now, actually. Yeah, and there was a sixth person... oh right, with Ulla.

mit der Nora Gutwenger, kurz vor der Entbindung. Also sie müsste jetzt ihr Kind eigentlich schon haben. Ja, es war noch jemand sechster...ahja mit der Ulla.

Genau. Ja, und ich habe am Anfang immer wieder ein bisschen zu lange selber gequatscht und vom Projekt erzählt, das muss ich dir jetzt glaube ich nicht so im Detail erklären. Du kennst ja auch die Ausgangsfrage für das Gespräch schon. Erzähl einfach und wir schauen, wo es uns hinbringt – weniger konkret auf unsere Arbeitsstätte hingedacht. Eher als Gedankenspiel. Ich bin draufgekommen, dass das für mich eigentlich immer schon ein Kompass ist in der Arbeit, die Erinnerung an mich selber als Kind: Wie hätte ich das gesehen oder was hätte ich mir gewünscht oder was hat mir damals irgendwie gefehlt? Oder wie hab ich was empfunden? Also diese Zusammenarbeit mit dem eigenen inneren Kind sozusagen. Auch mit L. mach ich die ganze Zeit Sachen, von denen ich mir als Kind gewünscht hätte, dass das jemand mit mir macht. So hole ich für mich selber da auch Sachen nach glaube ich.

Also sag mir bitte einfach, ob du was damit anfangen kannst oder nicht: Wenn du dir selber irgendwie nochmal begegnen könntest. Also so einem kleinen Diego, in welchem Alter auch immer. Ein kindlicher Diego. Nicht im Sinne von „was würdest du jetzt anders machen“, sondern wenn er jetzt wirklich hier wäre, oder du könntest ihn in der Vergangenheit als Erwachsener besuchen, was würdest du dann mit ihm machen? Oder gibt‘s was, was du dich gerne fragen würdest? Oder wo würdest du dich treffen?

00:08:36 DM:
Okay, das läuft eh schon, oder?

00:08:41 VMF:
Ich glaube, es geht.

00:08:47 DM:
Puh. Also vielleicht muss ich bisschen ausholen. Meine Kindheit, wenn ich jetzt so dran denke, wenn ich mich jetzt zurückversetze und mich sehe als Kind. Was mir gefehlt hat, weiß ich nicht. Ich kann nur mal beschreiben, wie es war und vielleicht davon ausgehen. Wenn ich das vergleiche damit, wie meine Kinder heute aufwachsen, unsere Kinder, dann sehe ich gravierende Unterschiede, weil wir sind am Land aufgewachsen. Meine Mutter hat auch immer gearbeitet. Mein Vater sowieso, hat pendeln müssen. Und mein Vater war damals auch künstlerisch tätig. Also der malt ja, schreibt und publiziert auch immer noch. Mein Papa war zB. eine Figur, die eigentlich wenig da war, einfach rein zeitlich nicht. Der ist um fünf aufgestanden oder so, damit er irgendwie rechtzeitig in Wien ist, ist spät heimgekommen und es hat eigentlich nur die Wochenenden gegeben. Und meine Schwester und ich, wir waren eigentlich sehr viel uns selbst überlassen.

Also ich merk so den Unterschied zu unseren Kindern: es war, also es ist heute unvorstellbar, wie viel wir schon früh eigentlich Zeit alleine verbracht haben. Irgendwo in der Gstettn, im Garten, bei Freunden, im Dorf. Das ist in einer Großstadt absolut unmöglich. Undenkbar. Und das ist deswegen wichtig glaub ich, weil das hat urviel gemacht. Also das war so eine strukturelle Freiheit, die irgendwie ganz praktisch begründet war. Die Kinder waren halt irgendwie beschäftigt und meine Eltern oder eher meine Mutter hat ja sonst auch zu tun gehabt. Sie hat Teilzeit gearbeitet und die restliche Zeit, Du weißt ja auch wie das ist mit Kindern... einkaufen, alles Mögliche. Und das war jetzt rückblickend betrachtet total eine coole Kindheit. Weil wir haben so viel machen können, ohne Restriktionen, ohne dass

Exactly. Yeah, and at the beginning I kept talking too long myself, telling about the project – I don’t think I need to explain all that to you in detail now. You already know the starting question for the conversation. Just talk, and we’ll see where it takes us – not so focused on our specific workplace. More as a thought experiment. I’ve realized that for me, my own memories as a child have always been a kind of compass in my work: How would I have seen that? What would I have wished for? What was missing for me back then? Or how did I experience something? So it’s a bit of a collaboration with your own inner child, so to speak. Even with L., I’m always doing things I would’ve wished someone had done with me when I was little. I think I’m also recovering some things for myself through that.

So just tell me whether this resonates with you or not: If you could somehow meet yourself again. Like a little Diego, whatever age. A childlike Diego. Not in the sense of “what would you do differently now,” but more like: if he were really here now, or if you could visit him in the past as an adult – what would you do with him? Or is there something you’d want to ask him? Or where would you meet?

00:08:36 DM:
Okay, it’s already recording, right?

00:08:41 VMF:
I think it’s working.

00:08:47 DM:
Phew. So maybe I need to elaborate a bit. My childhood – when I think back now, when I put myself back in that time and see myself as a kid... What I was missing, I don’t really know. I can just describe what it was like and maybe work from there. If I compare it to how my kids are growing up now – our kids – then I see huge differences, because we grew up in the countryside. My mother also always worked. My father of course too – he had to commute. And back then, my father was also active as an artist. He still paints, writes, and publishes. My dad was, for example, a figure who wasn’t really there much, simply because of time. He’d get up at five or something to get to Vienna on time, came home late, and basically only weekends existed. And my sister and I, we were really left to ourselves a lot.

I really notice the contrast to our kids: it was – it’s almost unimaginable today – how much time we spent alone already at a young age. Somewhere in the vacant lots, in the garden, with friends, in the village. That would be absolutely impossible in a big city. Unthinkable. And I think that’s important, because that made a huge difference. It was a kind of structural freedom, based in practical necessity. The kids had to be somehow occupied, and my parents – or more my mother – had other stuff to do. She worked part-time, and the rest of the time – you know how it is with kids – shopping, all sorts of things. Looking back, it was actually a super cool childhood. Because we could do so much, without restrictions, without anyone coming and saying “No” or “Don’t do that.” We had tools, we built things somewhere.

irgendwer herkommt und dir sagt Nein oder dies nicht, also wir haben Werkzeug gehabt, wir haben Sachen gebaut irgendwo.

Also diesen Raum zu haben, schon so früh als Kind selbstständig sein zu können. Und einfach das zu machen, worauf man grad Lust hat. Und das andere war auch – das sind halt auch meine Eltern, glaube ich. Ich mein, wir durften auch einfach wahnsinnig viel. Also weißt du, so Sachen wie Experimentieren mit Dingen. Werde ich nie vergessen, ich war Volksschüler und über einen anderen Volksschulfreund hab‘ ich so ein bisschen mit Schwarzpulver und Piraten … so haben wir so bissl Bomben gebaut. Und der hat mir das alles beigebracht, das ganze Know-How. Und so hab ich das weitergegeben. An einen anderen Schulkameraden. Wir sind am Schreibtisch gesessen und haben halt Schwarzpulver irgendwie extrahiert aus den Piraten, weil wir große Mengen gebraucht haben, um eine gescheite Bombe zu bauen.

00:11:54 VMF:
Aus den Piraten?

00:11:55 DM:
Ja, diese Schweizer Kracher.

00:11:56 VMF:
Ah, achso ok.

00:11:58 DM:
Und ich weiß noch, wie meine Mutter und seine Mutter im Türstock gestanden sind und sich beraten haben, ob das jetzt in Ordnung ist oder nicht, also ob sie jetzt eingreifen sollen. Und wir natürlich, wollten einfach Bomben bauen. Das war halt irgendwie das Coolste überhaupt. Das ist so ein Extrembeispiel. Also wir haben für kreative Beschäftigungen Räume bekommen.

00:12:27 VMF:
Also das ist jetzt nicht nur passiert, weil die Eltern es nicht mitbekommen haben, sondern die haben das schon…

00:12:33 DM:
Naja, na, den großen Teil haben sie nicht mitbekommen. Zum Glück. Weil dann hätten sie sicher gesagt Nein. Aber das haben sie halt mitbekommen. Und ich weiß nicht, wie das dann ausgegangen ist. Aber ja, und wir waren dadurch, dass mein Papa eigentlich auch viel ausgestellt hat in Niederösterreich, im Weinviertel, oft auf so Vernissagen. Weißt, in irgendeinem Kaff, in irgendwelchen Hügeln wo irgendwelche Skulpturen im Land rumgestanden sind und so. Das hat mich schon auch irgendwie geprägt. Da waren wir auch wieder uns selbst überlassen mit anderen Kindern. Das war eigentlich ziemlich toll. Und das heißt von dem her – ich glaube, das war so eine Mischung aus viel Freiheit und viel Vertrauen genießen. Ich glaube, wenn ich mir jetzt selbst begegnen würde: Toll. Irgendwie beneidenswert, wenn ich jetzt an meine Kinder denk, weil die das halt so nicht haben.

Und ja, was mir gefehlt hat. Das kann man vielleicht schon auch sagen. Also zum Beispiel, in der Zeit so Kindergarten/Volksschulalter, da haben wir wirklich eigentlich wenig Geld gehabt. Meine Eltern haben das Geld, das da war, gespart, um ein Haus zu bauen. Und ich weiß noch, wir haben Secondhand Sachen gehabt. So die ganzen fancy Sachen, die andere Kinder gekriegt haben zu Weihnachten, so ein riesen Lego Technik Truck, das hat‘s bei uns nicht gegeben, bei uns hat‘s ein Limit gegeben. Und das habe ich schon als Defizit empfunden. Also ich hab‘ nicht alles haben können, was ich wollte – ich meine, welches Kind kann das schon. Aber man vergleicht sich ja doch irgendwo als Kind und sieht halt, dass andere ökonomisch woanders stehen. Aber ich weiß noch, ich hab‘ trotz-

So having that space – being able to be independent as a child, so early on. And just doing what you felt like doing. And the other thing was – that’s also down to my parents, I think. I mean, we were just allowed to do a ton of stuff. You know, things like experimenting with stuff. I’ll never forget, I was in primary school and through another classmate I kind of got into black powder and firecrackers… we built little bombs. He taught me all of it, all the know-how. And then I passed it on – to another classmate. We sat at the desk and somehow extracted gunpowder from the firecrackers, because we needed large quantities to build a decent bomb.

00:11:54 VMF:
From the firecrackers?

00:11:55 DM:
Yeah, those Swiss ones.

00:11:56 VMF:
Ah, okay.

00:11:58 DM:
And I still remember my mom and his mom standing in the doorway, discussing whether this was okay or not, whether they should intervene. And of course we just wanted to build bombs. That was, like, the absolute coolest thing ever. That’s a bit of an extreme example. So we were given space for creative activities.

00:12:27 VMF:
So it wasn’t just because the parents didn’t notice – they did…

00:12:33 DM:
Well, no, they didn’t notice most of it. Luckily. Because otherwise they definitely would have said no. But that part they did notice. And I don’t know how it turned out in the end. But yeah, and because my dad also had lots of exhibitions in Lower Austria, in the Weinviertel, we were often at vernissages. You know, in some small village, in the hills somewhere, where sculptures were just placed out in the landscape and so on. That really shaped me, too. And again, we were left to ourselves with other kids. That was actually really great. So, in that sense – I think it was a mix of a lot of freedom and a lot of trust. I think if I were to meet my younger self now – amazing. Kind of enviable, actually, when I think about my kids now, because they just don’t have that.

And yeah, what I was missing. That’s maybe something I can say after all. So for example, during that time – kindergarten and early elementary school – we really didn’t have much money. My parents saved what they had to build a house. And I remember we had second-hand stuff. All those fancy things that other kids got for Christmas – like some huge Lego Technic truck – we didn’t have that. There was a clear limit. And I did experience that as a lack. I mean, I couldn’t have everything I wanted – which kid can? But you still compare. And you notice that other kids are economically in a different place. But I do remember that I always ended up getting what I really wanted. My parents were aware of that. For example, once I got a microscope. I was still in kindergarten, probably in the last year. It wasn’t a high-end device, but I think it was one of the coolest things I ever had. So they did pay attention to making sure there were also material inputs. For creativity. Because – now I don’t even know what point I was trying to make with all this.

dem dann immer das bekommen, was ich eigentlich wirklich wollt. Also das haben meine Eltern schon am Radar gehabt. Zum Beispiel hab‘ ich einmal ein Mikroskop bekommen. Da war ich noch im Kindergarten, vielleicht im letzten Kindergartenjahr. Das war kein High End Ding, aber ich glaube, eines der coolsten Dinge, die ich je gehabt habe. Also sie haben schon darauf geachtet, dass es auch materielle Inputs gibt. Für die Kreativität. Weil ja, jetzt weiß ich gar nicht, was ich damit sagen wollte.

00:15:26 VMF:
Ja, also ich meine, dass das ein Kind nervt und man dann den Lego Technik Truck auch haben will… aber wahrscheinlich würdest Du jetzt trotzdem als Erwachsener Dir ja auch nicht alle Lego Technik Trucks der Welt kaufen, oder?

00:15:46 DM:
Nein, natürlich nicht. Genau. Aber von dem her sage ich: so richtig gefehlt hat mir eigentlich eher nix. Weil das Wichtigste ist, glaube ich, diese Mischung aus Freiräumen und und Vertrauen. Und also, wie soll ich sagen, diesen Raum geben und das Kind einfach selber machen lassen. Mit dem, was da ist. Und sonst gibt es halt Dinge, die man schon kaufen kann, so wie ein Mikroskop. Aber im Grunde, im großen Ganzen, das sehe ich auch bei meinen Kindern ist: Eigentlich brauchen sie nicht viel. A. hat jetzt zum dritten Geburtstag bekommen, so Holzklötze. Einfach nur Holzklötze. Alle gleich, eine Packung. Und er hat schon voll die Gaudi damit gehabt. Das ist total anregend, weil es einfach dadurch, dass es so simpel ist, viele Möglichkeiten öffnet. Und das fordert Kreativität geradezu ein. Also du musst ja irgendwie irgendwann … weil sonst sind es ja einfach nur Klötze. Genau, solche Dinge haben wir schon auch gehabt. Also wir haben Mengen an Lego gehabt, das war halt auch gebraucht vom Flohmarkt in so Kisten wo nix wirklich zusammengepasst hat. Aber man hat es dann halt einfach so gemacht, wie man es gebraucht hat.

Ja, wenn ich mir jetzt vorstelle, ich würde mir selbst begegnen in dem Alter… es ist schwierig, mir das vorzustellen, weil ich weiß nicht, wie ich eigentlich wirklich war. Weil ich weiß es ja nur von innen. Und wenn ich mir selbst jetzt begegne, dann würde ich es ja auch irgendwie von außen sehen müssen. Und das ist schon eine andere Perspektive. Also vor allem bei A. denke ich mir, so gewisse Charakterzüge glaub ich hat er wirklich von mir. Ich glaube, die sind angeboren. Die taugen mir nicht. So extrem stur, voll dickköpfig, so kompromisslos. Ja, da sehe ich mich dann oft drinnen. Das wäre so eine Außenperspektive, die ich natürlich habe. Ich glaub, wenn ich mir begegnen würde, bin mir nicht sicher, ob ich mir selbst sympathisch wäre. Ich glaub, ich war schon bissl a Krätzn auch. Wobei Krätzn sein ist ja nichts… das muss man auch differenziert sehen. Das ist ja praktisch eine wertende Zusammenfassung von gewissen Eigenschaften. Und wenn man die so aufdröseln würde, dann sind viele dieser Eigenschaften vielleicht doch nicht schlecht. Also dass man seinen eigenen Kopf hat, dass man sich durchsetzen kann und dass man ein Ziel verfolgt und nicht aufgibt. Das ist ja nichts Schlechtes. Nur oft für das Umfeld oder in gewissen Institutionen für manche Menschen vielleicht nicht so angenehm, weil dann Konfliktpotenzial da ist und Konflikte entstehen. Aber ja, was würde ich mit mir machen. Ich weiß nicht.

Wenn ich jetzt zurückdenke, daran, wie ich überhaupt ins Kindermuseum gekommen bin. Ich habe ja damals die Schule für Kunst und Photographie bei der Kubelka gemacht, Fotoschule, und ich wollte einfach nur, ich wollte nur fotografieren. Ich wollte Kunst machen und hab dann auch beim Catering gearbeitet, um mich über Wasser zu halten. Und dann war da eine Freundin aus Gänserndorf. Die hat im Kindermuseum gearbei-

00:15:26 VMF:
Yeah, I mean, that it annoys a kid, and you also want that Lego Technic truck… but as an adult you probably wouldn’t go and buy every Lego Technic truck in the world now either, right?

00:15:46 DM:
No, of course not. Exactly. So that’s why I say: I didn’t really miss anything. Because the most important thing is, I think, that mix of free space and trust. And, well – how can I put it – giving the space and letting the child just do their own thing. With what’s there. And otherwise, yeah, there are things you can buy. Like a microscope. But overall, in the bigger picture – I see that with my kids too – they don’t really need much. A. got wooden blocks for his third birthday. Just wooden blocks. All the same. A box of them. And he had such fun with them. That’s totally stimulating, because it’s so simple that it opens up lots of possibilities. It really demands creativity. I mean, at some point, otherwise they’re just blocks. Yeah, we had things like that too. We had piles of Lego – second-hand, from flea markets, in boxes where nothing really matched. But you just made it work with what you had.

Yeah, if I imagine now that I’d meet myself at that age… it’s hard for me to picture that, because I don’t really know what I was actually like. Because I only know it from the inside. And if I were to meet myself now, then I’d also have to see it somehow from the outside. And that’s already a different perspective. Like, especially with A. I think to myself: certain character traits – I really think he got them from me. I believe they’re innate. I don’t like them. Like being extremely stubborn, totally hard-headed, completely uncompromising. Yeah, I often see myself in him. That would be one kind of external perspective that I obviously have. I think if I were to meet myself, I’m not sure I would actually like myself. I think I was kind of a brat too. Though, being a brat – that’s nothing… you have to differentiate that too. It’s really just a judgmental summary of certain traits. And if you were to break those down, then many of those traits might actually not be bad at all. Like having your own mind, being able to assert yourself, and pursuing a goal without giving up. That’s not a bad thing. It’s just that often, for the environment or in certain institutions, for some people that might not be so pleasant – because then there’s potential for conflict, and conflict arises. But yeah, what would I do with myself? I don’t know.

When I think back now – how I even got into the Children‘s Museum. I did that art and photography school with Kubelka back then and all I wanted was to take photos. I just wanted to do art. And I also worked catering jobs on the side to stay afloat. And then there was a friend from Gänserndorf. She worked at the Children‘s Museum, but I didn’t really care where she worked. And at one point she asked me if I could help out at some kind of summer festival – no, it was winter – some anniversary event, and I said, yeah okay, fine. I’ll show up. And there was this huge snow pile in the courtyard at Museumsquartier. It turned into a snow fight, yeah, seriously, there were hundreds of kids and it was super cool. That would’ve totally thrilled me as a kid too.

tet, aber mir war es eigentlich wurscht, ob sie arbeitet, wo sie arbeitet. Und sie hat mich mal gefragt, ob ich da irgendwie bei so einem Sommerfest, na es war Winter, irgendwie bei so einem Jubiläumsfest einspringen kann, und ich hab gesagt ja, passt schon. Komm ich halt hin. Und da war so ein Riesenschneehaufen im Hof im Museumsquartier. Es war eine Schlacht, ja also wirklich, da waren hunderte Kinder und das war voll cool. Das hätte mir als Kind auch voll getaugt.

Aber solche Dinge hab ich als Kind auch gehabt, glaube ich. Also vielleicht nicht so, weil es war ja ein künstlicher Schneeberg mit einer Schneekanone im Museumsquartier. Das hat natürlich eine andere Wirkung, als wenn du im Schnee spielst, weil es halt Schnee gibt und weil du dort lebst. Also das hat irgendwie so was Sensationelles. Also für mich war das eine Sensation, und dann waren die Kinder dort. Die haben halt ziemlich Gas gegeben und mir hat das auch getaugt. Ich kann schon kindisch sein, also jetzt nicht im negativen Sinn, sondern halt das Kind in mir sozusagen rauslassen und es hat mir einfach Spaß gemacht. Aber das war für mich jetzt nicht so, dass ich mir in dem Moment dachte: Boah, das ist so super! Ah, ich möchte im Kindermuseum arbeiten, überhaupt nicht. Aber die Franziska war dort und hat mich gleich angesprochen. Hat mir ihre Visitenkarte geben, hat gesagt, ob ich mich nicht bewerben mag. Hab mir gedacht, na gut, dann mach ich das halt. Dann war ich dort im „Ozean“ und hab dieses absurde Bewerbungsgespräch gehabt. Weißt weil, ich hab damals nur so formale Vorstellungen gekannt und dann sind wir da im „Ozean“ gesessen. So wie sie es mit jedem macht. Und so bin ich ins Kindermuseum gekommen.

Ich weiß noch so in den ersten Monaten im „Ozean“: Ich habe damals mit Kindern eigentlich nichts zu tun gehabt, in meiner Verwandtschaft. Meine große Verwandtschaft ist in Argentinien und in Österreich nur eine Cousine, die gleich alt ist, also da hat es überhaupt keine Kinder gegeben in meinem Umfeld und schon gar keine Kleinkinder. Aber es hat mir voll getaugt mit den kleinen Kindern irgendwie. Es hat mir… ich will nicht sagen „die Augen geöffnet“. Das ist so ein blöder Stehsatz. Aber es war so wertvoll, denen zuzuschauen, wie sie tun. Und ich habe so viel gelernt von ihnen. Ich weiß nicht. Das ist wie die Begegnung eigentlich schon ein bisschen… nicht mit sich selber als Kind. Aber es versetzt mich auch nicht in meine Kindheit zurück. Man sieht irgendwie, wie Kinder die Welt wahrnehmen und sich entwickeln. Diese unglaubliche Offenheit in ihrer Wahrnehmung und im Denken. Weil ja alles noch nicht so eingeengt ist und wie soll ich sagen. Also die Wahrnehmung ja noch nicht so funktional eingeschränkt ist, wie es unsere Lebensumstände ein bisschen befördern. Das war so faszinierend. Ich sehe es auch bei meinen Kindern. Was da für Kommentare kommen. Wo ich selber merke: Da bin ja ich eingefahren. Ich hab mal gelesen, vor vielen Jahren, dass Kinder bis zu einem gewissen Alter eigentlich ein divergentes Denken haben. Also weiß nicht, ob ich das so richtig sage, aber ich habe es so verstanden, dass Denkprozesse nicht ultimativ abgeschlossen sind. Dass Du nicht schon in die Zukunft projizierst, wie es ausgehen muss, also nicht determinierend, sondern noch so offen denkst. Und ja, ich glaube offen trifft‘s am ehesten. Das wird dann über die Jahre immer weniger. Schule ist ein gutes Beispiel. So: ist es richtig, ist das falsch? A. fängt auch schon so an.

Und ich glaube, da ist auch so ein bisschen eine Schnittmenge: Wenn wir reden von Kindern und Kunst oder dem Künstlerischen und der Wahrnehmung der Welt. Wie man das jetzt nennen mag – ich glaube, da gibt es einfach unterschiedliche Ansätze, zu beschreiben, was da passiert. Aber diese prinzipielle Offenheit, Dinge oder Situationen aus verschiedensten Perspek-

But I also had things like that as a child, I think. Maybe not quite like that – because this was an artificial snow mountain made by a snow machine in the Museumsquartier. That of course has a different effect than just playing in snow because there happens to be snow and you live in it. So it has something kind of sensational about it. For me it was a sensation, and then the kids were there. They really went all out and I enjoyed it too. I can definitely be childish – not in a negative way – just in the sense of letting the child in me out, so to speak, and it was simply fun. But it wasn’t like I thought in that moment: “Wow, this is amazing! I want to work at the Children‘s Museum.” Not at all. But Franziska was there and came up to me right away. Gave me her business card and said, would I want to apply. I thought, okay, I guess I’ll do it. So I ended up at “Ocean” and had this absurd job interview. You know, because back then I only knew formal job interview settings, and suddenly we’re sitting there in the “Ocean”. Just like she does with everyone. And that’s how I got into the Children‘s Museum.

I still remember the first few months in “Ocean”: I had never had anything to do with kids before, in my family. My big extended family is in Argentina, and in Austria I only have one cousin who’s the same age as me – so there were no kids around me at all, and definitely no little ones. But I really enjoyed being around the small children. It was… I don’t want to say “it opened my eyes.” That’s such a tired cliché. But it was so valuable to just watch them and how they do things. I learned so much from them. I don’t know. It’s kind of like an encounter already… not with yourself as a child. But it also doesn’t transport me back into my own childhood. You just see how children perceive the world and how they develop. This incredible openness in their perception and in their thinking. Because everything is still not yet so narrowed down – and how can I put this – their perception hasn’t yet been functionally constrained, like our life circumstances tend to push it to be. That was really fascinating. I also see it in my own kids. The kinds of comments they make, where I myself realize: Wow, I’m totally locked in by now. I once read – many years ago – that children, up to a certain age, basically think divergently. I don’t know if I’m putting it quite right, but I understood it to mean that their thought processes are not ultimately concluded. That they’re not already projecting into the future how things have to end – not deterministic – but still thinking openly. And yeah, I think “open” is the best word for it. That gets less and less over the years. School is a good example. It’s like: is it right or is it wrong? A. is already starting to think like that.

And I think that’s kind of an overlap: when we talk about children and art, or the artistic and how the world is perceived. However you want to describe that – I think there are just different ways of framing what’s going on there. But this fundamental openness, of looking at things or situations from many different perspectives – being able to look at them from more than just one single point of view – that’s already… you could call it a great achievement. But to me it seems like children can do that from birth, and have to be able to do that. You can’t come into the world already narrow-minded – that’s going to be a problem. You really always have to open yourself, depending on where and how you grow up, in all these different constellations, in worlds that place totally different demands on you.

tiven zu betrachten, betrachten zu können und nicht nur aus einer einzigen. Das ist schon … man könnte sagen eine große Leistung. Aber mir kommt vor, dass das Kinder eigentlich von Geburt an können und können müssen. Du kannst ja nicht auf die Welt kommen, schon so eingeengt, weil dann wird‘s schwierig werden. Man muss sich eigentlich immer öffnen, je nachdem, wo und wie man aufwächst, in unterschiedlichen Konstellationen, Welten, die völlig unterschiedliche Anforderungen stellen.

Also wenn ich mir jetzt alleine vorstelle, Argentinien und Österreich, das ist jetzt nicht so ein riesiger Unterschied, beides doch unter Anführungszeichen „westliche Kulturen“ mit sehr vielen Überschneidungen. Aber trotzdem wächst man da natürlich anders auf. Es sind andere Anforderungen. Das prägt, wie man auf die Welt reagiert und was man von ihr erwartet. Das ist mir klar geworden, als ich zurück gekommen bin nach dem Jahr Buenos Aires. Wie verrückt sich die Leute hier machen, wenn der Bus eine Minute zu spät kommt! Es ist mir wie Schuppen von den Augen gefallen. In Argentinien funktioniert vieles nicht so gut. Es ist nicht so zuverlässig. Man muss immer selber schauen, wo man bleibt. Das habe ich dann auch als Kampf empfunden und ich habe zu schätzen gelernt, wie das bei uns ist. Aber der Kontrast war dann doch auch: da kommt der Bus ein, zwei Minuten zu spät und die Leute hier werden nervös. Und zwar ungut. Man spricht dann gerne von unterschiedlichen Mentalitäten. Wobei, da muss man aufpassen. Weil das natürlich sehr zuschreibend sein kann. Aber sicher gibt es Unterschiede.

Das hat jetzt auch mit meinem Geschichtsstudium zu tun. Also, was mich so fasziniert an Geschichte ist, wie Menschen gelebt haben, unter welchen Umständen und warum. Es gibt so eine unglaublich hohe Bandbreite an dem, was wir Kulturen nennen, oder eben so eine riesige Range an dem, was Menschsein ausmachen kann, kulturell betrachtet. Und ich frage mich immer, wie es wäre, wenn man jetzt ein Kind zurückreisen lassen könnte in der Zeit und irgendwo aussetzen. Egal in welchen Kontext. Es hätte wahrscheinlich null Anpassungsschwierigkeiten, weil es offen ist, weil es offen sein muss. Und ich glaub das ist das, was ich auch in der Arbeit mit Kindern schätze. Die Arbeit ist halt ein Kontext, in dem ich Kindern begegne. Sonst hat man ja diese Begegnungen viel weniger, wenn man nicht mit ihnen arbeitet oder welche hat. Die eigenen Kinder sind auch wieder was anderes. Das ist eine Dauerbegegnung.

00:30:35 VMF:
Ja, du hast eine andere Rolle. Du musst auch andere Dinge.

00:30:40 DM:
Trage ja auch eine andere Verantwortung. Aber diese Offenheit, das wäre so schön, wenn sie nicht verloren gehen würde. Ich merke es ja bei mir selber. Ich bin ja auch nicht mehr so offen. Das liegt wohl in der Natur der Dinge.

00:32:15 VMF:
Ja, du hast eben anders am Schirm, dass es gefährlich… bist nicht so unbefangen.

00:32:15 DM:
Aber, ja vielleicht ist es auch, Kinder sind ja neugierig. Die wollen wissen, warum, wie, welche Dinge, wo, wer…und da muss man einfach Sachen ausprobieren. Auch wenn man die Konsequenzen noch nicht kennt. Oder nicht erahnen kann. Kinder wollen immer irgendwo raufkraxeln. Da hat es A. am Wochenende von der Sprossenwand runtergehauen und zwar von ganz oben, zwei Meter. Wir waren eine Nacht mit ihm im Krankenhaus, Freitag auf Samstag. Eigentlich woll-

Like, even just imagining Argentina and Austria – and that’s not even such a huge contrast, they’re both – in quotation marks – “Western cultures” with a lot of overlap. But still, of course you grow up differently there. There are different demands. That shapes how you respond to the world and what you expect from it. That really hit home when I came back from that year in Buenos Aires. Just how crazy people make themselves here when the bus is one minute late! It was like scales falling from my eyes. In Argentina, lots of things don’t function that well. It’s not reliable. You always have to figure things out for yourself. I also experienced that as a struggle, and I learned to appreciate how things work here. But then the contrast was still: the bus is a minute or two late, and people here already get nervous. And not in a good way. People like to talk about different mentalities. But you have to be careful with that. Because it can be quite stereotyping. But sure, there are differences.

That also ties in with my background in history. What fascinates me about history is how people lived, under what circumstances, and why. There’s such an incredible range of what we call cultures – or such a huge range of what being human can mean, from a cultural perspective. And I always wonder what it would be like if you could send a child back in time and just drop them somewhere. No matter the context. They would probably have zero trouble adapting – because they’re open, because they have to be open. And I think that’s also what I value in working with children. That work is just a context where I encounter kids. Otherwise, you don’t have those encounters nearly as much – if you don’t work with them or have any of your own. Your own kids are something else entirely again. That’s a continuous encounter.

00:30:35 VMF:
Yeah, you have a different role. You also have to do different things.

00:30:40 DM:
I also carry a different responsibility. But that openness – it would be so nice if it didn’t get lost. I notice it in myself. I’m no longer that open either. That probably just comes with the territory.

00:32:15 VMF:
Yeah, you’re just more aware that things are dangerous… you’re not so uninhibited anymore.

00:32:15 DM:
But, yeah maybe it’s also – kids are curious. They want to know why, how, which things, where, who… and you just have to try things out. Even if you don’t yet know the consequences. Or can’t anticipate them. Kids always want to climb on something. A. fell off the climbing wall this weekend – from all the way at the top, two meters up. We spent a night with him in the hospital, Friday to Saturday. They actually wanted to keep us there for 48 hours. In the end everything was fine. But from that height, they said, it could cause damage to internal organs – but everything was okay. What I mean is: they have to try it. I actually love it when they climb high. I don’t say he’s not allowed to or he can only do something at a certain age. My belief is always: if they want to do something and they kind of can, then they should. So if he can climb up, then let him. What I’ve never done – not with A. either – is help them climb up. But still – you know how it is. Even if I’m standing right there, he can still fall. And that’s exactly what happened. They’d gone up and down that wall probably a hundred times already. And then they’re both sitting up there and I’m really gone for only 10 seconds – not even, maybe 5 seconds – just stepped into the next room to grab something, come back out – bam! He’s lying on the ground. And yeah. But he tried it. Now he knows what can happen.

ten sie uns 48 Stunden dortbehalten. Es war eh nix. Aber aus der Höhe, haben sie gesagt, kann es Schäden an den inneren Organen geben – es hat eh alles gepasst. Aber was ich sagen will, sie müssen es ausprobieren. Ich finde es ja auch toll, wenn sie hochklettern. Ich sage nicht, er darf etwas nicht oder er darf etwas erst ab einem gewissen Alter. Mein Credo ist immer, wenn sie etwas machen wollen und es auch schon irgendwie können, dann sollen sie es auch. Also wenn er hochkraxeln kann, dann soll er. Was ich nie gemacht hab, auch bei A., war ihm rauf zu helfen, aber trotzdem – weißt eh. Selbst wenn ich dabeistehe, kann‘s ihn runterhauen. Und so war‘s halt auch. Die sind da rauf und runter zum hundertsten Mal schon. Und dann sitzen sie beide oben und ich bin wirklich nur 10 Sekunden, nicht einmal – vielleicht 5 Sekunden kurz rüber gegangen in das andere Zimmer was holen, komm raus – baff! liegt er am Boden. Und ja. Aber er hat es ausprobiert, er weiß jetzt, was passieren kann.

00:33:44 VMF:
Ja, na … na ja.

00:33:45 DM:
Es wäre so schön, wenn Erwachsene auch mehr Kinder sein könnten. Mehr Erwachsene sich diese Offenheit erhalten könnten. Es gibt eh viele. Das habe ich schon gemerkt, zuerst war es im Kindermuseum und dann hab ich angefangen auf der Kunstuni zu studieren. Ich weiß noch, ich hab so eine völlig naive Vorstellung gehabt von einer Kunstuni. Am ersten Tag dort, um neun, kaum jemand da, ich so: ok, kommt da jemand? Dann kommt der Professor daher, restfett vom letzten Abend, also das war schon ein ziemlicher Schock. Weil ich dachte so: Professor auf der Uni, Künstler irgendwie, alles stocksteif, so bissel ernst. Und dann habe ich festgestellt, diese Klasse besteht aus völlig verschiedenen Menschen, die völlig unterschiedliche Dinge gemacht haben. Und irgendwie doch etwas gemeinsam haben. Das ist nicht nur die Kunstuni, sondern eben die künstlerische Tätigkeit, künstlerische Berufung, wenn man so will.

Es waren ja viele so wie ich, die jetzt nicht den ultimativen Plan gehabt haben, die klassische Künstler-Karriere zu starten und dann in einer Galerie zu verkaufen. Also die Flause habe ich schon im Kopf gehabt, weil das war halt irgendwie in meiner bürgerlichen Blase der Goldstandard: als Künstler, da verkauft man Werke und die hängt man sich dann an die Wand. Performancekunst fällt da ja eh schon ein bisschen raus. Das kann man nicht so gut sammeln. Unter den Bürgerlichen ist halt doch dieser Objekte- und Sammel-Charakter irgendwo noch da und das Besitzen. Das Ökonomische, das Kaufen und so. Das sind Dinge, die hab ich damals natürlich überhaupt nicht überblickt und erst im Zuge des Studiums in der Auseinandersetzung mit diversen künstlerischen Positionen hat sich das weiter aufgefächert. Da hab ich dann auch gesehen, dass es noch ganz andere Dinge gibt, die mit Kunst zu tun haben. Aber es ist nach wie vor natürlich eine kapitalistische Welt, in der man mit Kapital auch Wert misst, da gibt‘s in diesem Spektrum von dem, was wir Kunst nennen, immer noch den entsprechenden Teil, der das meiste Ansehen genießt.

Wenn man jetzt Daniel Richter hernimmt – ich war ja in seiner Klasse. Ex-Punk, verkauft Megaschinken um viel Geld und die hängen dann bei weiß ich nicht, George Clooney als Trophäen an der Wand. Das ist ja doch nur ein Hirschgeweih. Na ja, irgendwo. Der Daniel hat auch gesagt ab dem Punkt, wo es verkauft ist, hat er auch keinen Einfluss mehr darauf. Und es stimmt ja auch. Aber interessant ist es halt trotzdem.

00:33:44 VMF:
Yeah, well… yeah.

00:33:45 DM:
It would be so great if adults could be more like children. If more adults could keep that openness alive. There are lots, of course. I already noticed that – first it was at the Children‘s Museum, and then I started studying at the art university. I still remember, I had this totally naive idea of what an art university would be like. First day, 9 a.m., hardly anyone there. I was like: okay, is anyone going to show up? Then the professor comes in, still kind of drunk from the night before – that was quite a shock. Because I thought: a professor at a university, an artist even – all uptight, kind of serious. And then I realized: this class was made up of completely different people who had done completely different things. And yet somehow they had something in common. It’s not just about the art university, but really the artistic practice, the artistic calling, if you want to call it that.

A lot of them were like me – people who didn’t have the ultimate plan to start a classic artist career and then sell work in galleries. I mean, I did have that fantasy in my head, because in my bourgeois bubble that was kind of the gold standard: as an artist you sell work, and people hang it on their walls. Performance art already kind of doesn’t fit in there. You can’t really collect that. In bourgeois circles, there’s still this character of the object and collecting, and owning. The economic side of things, the buying and all that. I didn’t understand any of that back then, and only through the studies and engaging with various artistic positions did things start to open up. I saw that there are so many other things connected to art. But of course we’re still living in a capitalist world, where value is also measured in capital. So within the spectrum of what we call art, the parts that enjoy the most recognition are still those.

If you take Daniel Richter – I was actually in his class. Ex-punk, sells giant canvases for tons of money and they end up at, I don’t know, George Clooney’s place as trophies on the wall. It’s really just a deer antler. Well, sort of. Daniel also said, once it’s sold, he has no more control over it. And that’s true. But it’s still interesting.

00:38:40 VMF:
Also ich gehe jetzt mal davon aus, dass das Bomben-basteln zumindest entfernt was mit der künstlerischen Tätigkeit zu tun hat, weil Du es einfach in dem Zusammenhang auch erzählt hast. Und dieses Schießen – dann warst Du ja bei der Kubelka, wo ja die Kamera auch immer eine Waffe ist.

00:39:19 DM:
Achso ja ja. Ich weiß schon, was Du meinst. Das ist ein wichtiger Aspekt. Auf jeden Fall. Das Schießen ist faszinierend.

00:39:32 VMF:
Der erste Workshop hieß doch immer „Täter Opfer“ oder so ähnlich...

00:39:34 DM:
Ja, genau, die Leute attackieren, sozusagen, auf der Straße und ein Foto machen, Fotos stehlen. Ja, so war das. Das hat mir schon gefallen. Aber ich würde das jetzt auch nicht überbewerten, diese Schießerei. Es ist schon aufgetreten in meinen Arbeiten, aber es ist eine Entwicklung. Das ist etwas, das ich aktuell wirklich neu reflektieren möchte: schauen, was ich eigentlich alles gemacht hab. Ich glaube meine letzte Arbeit ist sicher über 5 Jahre her. Seitdem die Kinder da sind, ist da nichts mehr passiert. Aber ich werde mich jetzt inskribieren.

00:40:51 VMF:
Ah willst Du das Diplom machen? Super!

00:41:00 DM:
Ja. Und deswegen steht das jetzt sowieso an, mir alles nochmal anschauen. Aber irgendwo bewegt sich vieles so zwischen Ikonoklasmus, also wirklich die totale Ablehnung dieser Verehrung von Bildern, so wie wir vorhin geredet haben, wie es in diesem Bürgerlichen passiert, ja. Das ist das eine. Und also meine Lieblingsarbeit – wirklich, da hab ich das Gefühl gehabt: Eigentlich brauche ich jetzt keine Kunst mehr machen. Ich glaube, das war‘s jetzt. Da hab ich ein Foto gemacht, aber ohne Licht – also nicht belichtet. Das hab ich entwickelt und dann mehrmals ausbelichtet. Das waren natürlich lauter schwarze Fotos und die schwarzen Fotos hab ich als Boden verlegt. Und einfach so ich glaub ein halbes Jahr oder so liegen lassen. In der WG, damals am Boden der Küche und mit der Zeit nutzt sich das halt einfach ab. Es war ein Farbpapier, also kommen doch die Farben teilweise zum Vorschein. Schaut dann irgendwie so aus wie ein Bild ins Weltall hinein oder so.

00:41:59 VMF:
Ich glaub ich kann mich erinnern, das hast Du in der Fotoklasse gemacht, oder?

00:42:01 DM:
Nein, da war ich sogar noch in der in der Richter-Klasse also das letzte Semester in der Richter-Klasse. Aber ich hab‘s mal gezeigt. Irgendwo hab ich‘s auch nochmal gemacht, aber es war immer schwierig, weil es wurde immer wahnsinnig rutschig, sobald da Wasser drauf war. Ich meine, das war schon so im öffentlichen Raum, da hab ich keine Lösung gefunden, wie ich das hätte machen sollen. Aber das war so die Schlüssel-Arbeit. Aber das ist halt völlig Kubelka beeinflusst und vor allem auch von ihm natürlich. Also vom, wie heißt er?

00:42:41 VMF:
Peter.

00:42:41 DM:
Peter Kubelka. Also dieser Arnulf Rainer Film, der hat mir total getaugt. Das war so alles und nichts, weißt Du so dieses...wo‘s ganz tief hinein geht in die

00:38:40 VMF:
So I’m going to assume that the bomb-making at least loosely has something to do with your artistic work – since you mentioned it in that context. And that “shooting” – then you went to Kubelka’s school, where the camera is always also a weapon.

00:39:19 DM:
Ah right, yeah yeah. I know what you mean. That’s an important aspect. Definitely. Shooting is fascinating.

00:39:32 VMF:
The first workshop was always called something like “Offender Victim,” right?

00:39:34 DM:
Yeah, exactly, like attacking people, so to speak, on the street and taking a photo, stealing photos. Yeah, that’s how it was. I did enjoy that. But I wouldn’t overemphasize the shooting thing either. It has come up in my work, but it’s a development. That’s something I really want to re-reflect on now: to look at everything I’ve actually done. I think my last work was at least five years ago. Since the kids came along, nothing’s happened. But I’m going to enroll again now.

00:40:51 VMF:
Ah, you want to do the diploma? That’s great!

00:41:00 DM:
Yeah. So that’s why it’s time now anyway to look at everything again. But in some way, a lot of what I do moves between iconoclasm – really the total rejection of this image-worship, like we just talked about, how it happens in the bourgeois world. That’s one thing. And – my favorite work, really, where I felt: I probably don’t need to make art anymore. I think that was it. I took a photo, but without light – so it wasn’t exposed. I developed it and then made multiple prints. Of course they were all black photos, and I laid the black photos down as flooring. And just left them there, I think for half a year or so. In the flatshare, on the kitchen floor. And over time, they just wore down. It was color paper, so some colors started to come through. It ended up looking kind of like an image of outer space or something like that.

00:41:59 VMF:
I think I remember that – you did that in the photo class, right?

00:42:01 DM:
No, I was still in the Richter class at that point – the last semester in Richter’s class. But I showed it once. I also did it again somewhere else, but it was always tricky, because it became incredibly slippery as soon as water touched it. I mean, that was in a public space, and I never found a solution for how I should’ve done it. But that was kind of the key piece. Totally influenced by Kubelka – especially by him, of course. I mean – what’s his name again?

00:42:41 VMF:
Peter.

00:42:41 DM:
Peter Kubelka. That Arnulf Rainer film – I loved that. It was everything and nothing, you know, this... going really deep into human perception. What are we even seeing there? How much of it... our gaze constructs reality. We don’t encounter reality, and we don’t represent it either – we construct it constantly. That was totally fascinating. I think that piece was really about how actually nothing is there – something kind of nihilistic. There’s nothing, we just do. And by doing – because shaping also means transforming – whether you call that destroying, removing, breaking, or creating something new, that’s just a matter of perspective.

menschliche Wahrnehmung. Was sehen wir da? Also wie viel davon… also unser Blick konstruiert ja Wirklichkeit. Also wir begegnen ja nicht der Wirklichkeit und wir bilden auch nicht die Wirklichkeit ab, sondern wir konstruieren sie die ganze Zeit. Und das war total faszinierend. In dieser Arbeit ist es glaube ich auch darum gegangen, dass eigentlich nichts da ist, also irgendwie was Nihilistisches. Also es gibt nichts, wir machen halt und indem wir machen – also Gestalten heißt ja auch umformen. Ob man das jetzt Zerstören nennt, Abtragen, Kaputtmachen oder ob es ein Schaffen von etwas Neuen ist, das ist nur eine Frage der Perspektive. Es ist rein menschliche Wahrnehmung.

Es ist so, wie wenn ich jetzt hier im Augarten sitze. Das ist ja auch so ein Trugschluss, das hier hat mit Natur nicht viel zu tun. Ich meine, es sind natürliche Wesen diese Bäume, diese Pflanzen, aber da wird gemäht, die Bäume werden geschnitten. Es ist alles gestaltet. Aber das ist halt jetzt auch eine Frage der Perspektive. Ich kann hier sitzen und sagen ich genieße die Natur. Ich kann auch hier sitzen und sagen: das ist alles Fake. Ich kann sagen, die armen Bäume werden zerstört. Die Wiese wird zerstört. Das ist ja für die Biodiversität ziemlich schlecht, den Rasen zu mähen. Also das sind halt alles Perspektiven. Deswegen die Arbeiten von Lois Weingartner…

00:44:25 VMF:
Weinbrenner glaub ich, oder? Dieses Paar?

00:44:27 DM:
Weinberger.

00:44:27 VMF:
Weinberger? Weinbrenner!

00:44:33 DM:
Nein nein nein. Ja genau das Paar. Die waren ja auch mal bei der Biennale, gell. Wart, ich habe da zufällig glaube ich einen Tab offen von denen, weil ich mich ja in Geiste schon ein bisschen in Richtung … .

00:44:51 VMF:
… ah -berger, ok.

00:44:55 DM:
Ja. Ist nicht seine Frau gestorben? Irgendwas war da…

00:45:00 VMF:
Ich glaube schon. Sonst wär jetzt auch nicht nur er immer im Fokus… das finde ich auch total spannend, die Arbeiten. Wenn sich diese Abgrenzung so auflöst. Ich meine, natürlich kannst du sagen, das ist keine Natur, weil der Mensch hat den Rasen gemäht, aber der Mensch ist ja auch irgendwie Natur.

00:45:22 DM:
Genau, ja eben. Wo stellt man sich da hin in diesen ganzen Zusammenhängen. Von wo blickt man auf das Ganze.

00:45:37 VMF:
Ja, das ist schön, was du vorher gesagt hast: Es ist ja alles Gestaltung und egal ob du jetzt etwas scheinbar zerstörst, was in die Luft jagst oder was schaffst, es ist immer ein Formen. Flo sagt immer, so wie dieses: Man kann nicht nicht kommunizieren. Man kann nicht nicht gestalten.

00:46:03 DM:
Ja, ich weiß nicht. Kennst du den Film Wall-e?

00:46:11 VMF:
Diese Roboter-Dings?

It's purely human perception.

It's like, now I'm sitting here in Augarten. That's also kind of an illusion – this has very little to do with "nature." I mean, the trees, the plants, they're living beings, yes – but the grass gets mowed, the trees are trimmed. Everything is shaped. But again, that's a matter of perspective. I can sit here and say I'm enjoying nature. I can also sit here and say: this is all fake. I can say the poor trees are being destroyed. The lawn is being destroyed. It's actually really bad for biodiversity to mow grass. All of that – it's all about perspective. That's why I find the works of Lois Weingartner…

00:44:25 VMF:
Weinbrenner, I think, right? That couple?

00:44:27 DM:
Weinberger.

00:44:27 VMF:
Weinberger? Weinbrenner!

00:44:33 DM:
No no no. Yeah, that couple. They were at the Biennale once, right? Wait, I think I even have a tab open from them by chance, because in my mind I've already been thinking in that direction a bit…

00:44:51 VMF:
…ah – -berger, okay.

00:44:55 DM:
Yeah. Didn't his wife die? There was something…

00:45:00 VMF:
I think so. Otherwise he wouldn't always be the only one in focus now… I find their work totally fascinating too, when that boundary dissolves like that. I mean, of course you can say this isn't nature because a person mowed the lawn, but the person is also, in a way, nature.

00:45:22 DM:
Exactly, yeah, exactly. Where do you place yourself in all of these contexts? From where do you look at the whole thing?

00:45:37 VMF:
Yeah, what you said earlier was beautiful: it's all shaping, and whether you're seemingly destroying something, blowing something up, or creating something – it's always a form of shaping. Flo always says: just like "you can't not communicate," you also "can't not shape."

00:46:03 DM:
Yeah, I don't know. Do you know the film Wall-E?

00:46:11 VMF:
That robot thing?

00:46:14 DM:
So ein Pixar-Film.

00:46:14 VMF:
Ich weiß nicht, ob ich den mal gesehen hab, aber doch, ich glaub irgendwie dunkel....

00:46:18 DM:
Ich finde das ist ein toller Film, eigentlich der Traurigste von diesen ganzen Pixar-/Disney Studios, weil die Perspektive auf die Menschheit ist so traurig. Weißt Du, wenn ich sehe, viele haben so die Sehnsucht, möglichst nichts zu tun. So kommt es mir vor, vor allem in reichen kapitalistischen Gesellschaften wie in unserer. Ich weiß nicht, ob‘s ein latenter Wunsch ist oder ob es irgendwie etwas ist, wohin alles driftet. Jetzt habe ich gesehen so einen Mann spazieren gehen mit seinem Hund und er fährt am e-Scooter. Und dann denk ich mir, jetzt gehst mit dem Hund spazieren und das nicht einmal mehr selber, das ist ja.... Diese Vermeidung von Bewegung, von Aufwand. Das ist etwas, das ich schon sehr kritisch sehe, weil etwas gestalten ist immer ein Aufwand. Und ob du jetzt etwas zerstörst oder etwas baust, ist eigentlich wurscht. Das ist auf jeden Fall ein Aufwand. Und insofern verstehe ich diese Umformung von dem Zitat. Aber ich sehe schon auch, dass es irgendwo so Tendenzen gibt, nicht gestalten zu wollen. Oder vielleicht hat es etwas mit der Kindheit zu tun. Dass es die Gelegenheit nicht gab, weißt Du was ich meine? Es gibt manchmal so diesen Wunsch nach Trägheit, nicht die Treppen zu gehen, den leichteren Weg zu gehen.

00:47:56 VMF:
Aber glaubst du nicht, dass es einfach um diese kapitalistische Luxusvorstellung geht, eben nicht arbeiten zu müssen und es damit geschafft zu haben?

00:48:06 DM:
Ja sicher.

00:48:07 VMF:
Und aber letztlich, du gestaltest ja auch, indem du Dir so nen blöden E-Scooter kaufst, Du gestaltest über die Objekte, mit denen du dich umgibst – dein Leben bis hin zur Umwelt und zum gemeinsamen öffentlichen Raum. Weil, du brauchst dann den asphaltierten Gehsteig, wo dann die Fußgänger nicht mehr gehen können, weil sie abgeschossen werden.

00:48:39 DM:
Ja, stimmt ja, das ist auch eine Umformung. Man kann nicht nicht gestalten in dem Sinne. Wir sind verdammt dazu, alle sind verdammt, es sind ja auch Tiere verdammt dazu, alle, also wir sind ja auch Tiere.

00:48:53 VMF:
Na und insofern ist Gestalten ja auch nichts Schlechtes per se oder auch nichts Gutes.

00:48:55 DM:
Nein.

00:49:01 VMF:
Es ist eher die Frage, inwieweit man vielleicht bewusst gestaltet. Für mich ist das auch eins von diesen Themen... ich möchte irgendwie versuchen, eben so eine Kollaboration mit mir selber als Kind zu machen. Also ich habe auch ganz viel Vertrauen und Freiheit gehabt. Ich komme auch nicht aus dem bürgerlichen Kontext, im Gegenteil, irgendwie eher sogar so ein Bürgerlichkeitsfeindlicher Kontext. Es gab diesen Bauernhof meiner Großeltern, in den meine Oma, die eher aus einer bürgerlicheren Familie war, reingeheiratet hat. Mein Opa hatte glaube ich immer ein bisschen das Gefühl, ihr nicht entsprechen zu können.

00:46:14 DM:
A Pixar film.

00:46:14 VMF:
I’m not sure if I ever watched it, but yeah, I kind of vaguely remember...

00:46:18 DM:
I think it’s a great film – actually the saddest of all those Pixar/Disney studio ones – because the perspective on humanity is so bleak. You know, when I see it, it seems like so many people have this yearning to do as little as possible. That’s how it feels to me, especially in wealthy capitalist societies like ours. I don’t know if it’s a latent desire or something everything’s drifting toward. Just recently I saw a man walking his dog – while riding an e-scooter. And I thought to myself: now you’re out walking the dog and you’re not even walking. That’s just... this avoidance of movement, of effort. That’s something I view quite critically, because shaping something always takes effort. And whether you’re destroying something or building something – it doesn’t matter. It’s effort either way. And in that sense, I totally get that reinterpretation of the quote. But I do see that there are tendencies toward not wanting to shape at all. Or maybe it has to do with childhood. That the opportunity wasn’t there, you know what I mean? Sometimes there’s this desire for inertia – not taking the stairs, always choosing the easier way.

00:47:56 VMF:
But don’t you think it’s really just this capitalist luxury ideal – that not having to work means you’ve made it?

00:48:06 DM:
Yeah, for sure.

00:48:07 VMF:
But in the end, you’re still shaping something – like when you buy a stupid e-scooter. You’re shaping your life through the objects you surround yourself with – even your environment and the shared public space. Because then you need the asphalted sidewalk, and pedestrians can’t walk there anymore because they’re getting run over.

00:48:39 DM:
Yeah, that’s true, that’s also a form of shaping. You can’t not shape, in that sense. We’re condemned to it, everyone is – even animals are, and we’re animals too, after all.

00:48:53 VMF:
Right, so shaping isn’t inherently good or bad.

00:48:55 DM:
No.

00:49:01 VMF:
The question is rather to what extent you shape consciously. That’s one of the themes... I’m trying to create some kind of collaboration with my younger self. I also had a lot of trust and freedom as a child. I didn’t come from a bourgeois background either – quite the opposite, actually, more anti-bourgeois. There was this farm owned by my grandparents. My grandmother – who came from a somewhat more bourgeois background – had married into it. My grandfather, it seemed, had a bit of a complex about not living up to her.

Andererseits war meine Oma ja „Flüchtling“. Jedenfalls habe ich das Gefühl, dass sich daraus eine gewisse Feindlichkeit gegenüber Dingen entwickelt hat. Es gibt diese Geschichte, dass mein Opa einen ganzen Wagen voller Sachen – darunter schöne, gut gestaltete Dinge aus dem Haushalt meiner Oma – aufgeladen und einfach auf die Müllkippe gebracht hat. Ich glaube, das hatte zur Folge, dass sich in der Familie eine Vorstellung hielt, Interesse an Dingen und an Gestaltung sei irgendwie „materialistisch“ und oberflächlich.

Und gleichzeitig gab es dieses Gefühl der Trauer um die verlorenen Gegenstände aus der Familie meiner Großmutter in Böhmen – was, glaube ich, eine gewisse Neigung zum Konsum erklärt.

00:50:58 DM:
So transitorisch quasi, es kommt und geht.

00:50:59 VMF:
Genau. Und unser Haus – auch unsere Kinderzimmer – waren ziemlich vollgestopft. Damit bin ich aufgewachsen: dass man von Zeit zu Zeit, wenn es wirklich zu viel wurde, eine Ladung Sachen in Kisten gepackt und sie auf den alten Hof rübergebracht und dort in der Scheune abgestellt hat. Die Vorstellung war: Ich kann diesen Teil meines Lebens einfach dort lassen. Wie in einer Zeitkapsel. Und wenn ich irgendwann wieder Lust darauf hab, kann ich es zurückholen. Und dann ist es mir vor ein paar Jahren wie Schuppen von den Augen gefallen, als der Hof geräumt und verkauft werden musste – alles war nur noch ein riesiger, verschimmelter Haufen. Da wurde mir klar, dass ich die Chance völlig verpasst hatte, bewusst zu entscheiden, was ich behalten wollte und was nicht, was für mich einen Wert hatte und was nicht. Und genau um diese Frage des Gestaltens geht es…

00:52:02 DM:
Naja, aber wir haben eh gesehen, da bin ich jetzt voll bei dir und Flo: Man kann nicht nicht gestalten. Also wir müssen unser Leben gestalten. In meiner Kindheit glaub ich, ist es vielleicht ähnlich wie bei dir. Auch wenn ich anders aufgewachsen bin. Aber wir haben beide zwar viel Freiheiten gehabt, aber ich hätte mir auch gewünscht, das kann ich natürlich nur im Nachhinein äußern, aber ja, ich hätte mir gewünscht, dass meine Eltern ein bisschen mehr wie soll ich sagen. Mehr Ahnung gehabt hätten von Möglichkeiten, die es gibt. Für uns Kinder, aber ich will jetzt gar nicht sagen, nur Ausbildung oder Bildung. Da zeigt sich‘s halt am besten. Also für meine Eltern war es nie Thema, was für Schulen es gibt, was für Möglichkeiten es gäbe, und ich meine, wir waren in der Nähe von Wien. Es wäre möglich gewesen. Es war so unausgesprochen ganz klar, wir gehen ins Gymnasium und dann studieren wir halt irgendwas. Am besten Medizin, so wie der Papa. Aber es wäre total super gewesen, wenn wir ein bisschen mitbekommen hätten, was es für andere Möglichkeiten gibt.

Meine Eltern waren oder sind immer noch sehr schlecht in, wie soll ich sagen, Planung und Umsetzung. Wirtschaft, also einfach Wirtschaft, ist bei uns inexistent gewesen. Also es war immer sparen und dann ein Haus bauen, das schon. Aber wie man Mittel einsetzen kann, um ein bisschen darüber hinausgehend… also das hat die auch nie interessiert. Das sind dann so Sachen, die wollten sie am liebsten immer abgeben, haben sie auch abgegeben und sind ziemlich eingefahren mit einem Fremdwährungskredit.

On the other hand, my grandmother was a “refugee.” In any case, I feel that some sort of hostility toward objects developed out of that. There’s this story of my grandfather loading an entire cart with things – including beautiful, well-designed items from my grandmother’s household – and simply dumping it all at the landfill. I think the effect of that was a fairly pervasive idea in the family that an interest in things, in the design of things, was somehow “materialistic” and superficial.

And yet there was also this sense of mourning for the lost possessions of my grandmother’s family in Bohemia – which, I think, explains a certain tendency toward consumerism.

00:50:58 DM:
Sort of transitory – it comes and goes.

00:50:59 VMF:
Exactly. And the house – and our children’s rooms – were quite stuffed. I grew up with that: that every so often, once it all became too much, you’d box up a load of stuff and bring it over to the old farm, and store it in the barn. The idea was: I can just put this part of my life there. Like a time capsule. And if I ever wanted it again, I could go get it. Then, a few years ago, it hit me like a ton of bricks when that farm had to be cleared and sold – it had all just turned into a massive pile of mold. And I realized I’d completely missed the chance to make a conscious decision about what I wanted to keep, what not, what held value for me and what didn’t. So that whole question of shaping…

00:52:02 DM:
Yeah, totally. And I’m with you and Flo on this: you can’t not shape. We have to shape our lives. And I think in my childhood it was maybe similar to yours, even though I grew up differently. But we both had a lot of freedom, and still – I think I would have wished – I can only say this in hindsight, of course – I would have wished that my parents had a bit more, how should I say… more knowledge about the possibilities that existed. For us kids. And I don’t even just mean education or schooling – but that’s where it’s most obvious. For my parents, it was never a topic, like what schools are out there, what kinds of opportunities exist. And we lived near Vienna. It would’ve been possible. But it was just this unspoken thing: we’ll go to a Gymnasium, then we’ll study something. Preferably medicine – like Dad. But it would’ve been great to get a sense of what else was out there.

My parents were – or are – still really bad at, how should I put it, planning and executing things. Economics – just simple household economics – didn’t exist in our family. It was always about saving money and then building a house, sure. But how to use resources in a way that goes beyond that… they were never interested in that. They always wanted to hand off those kinds of things. And they did. And they really got burned – with a foreign currency loan.

Und das ist etwas, da merke ich schon, dass ich ein Defizit habe. Weißt du das Ganze ist ja auch ein Aspekt des Künstler-Daseins, des glücklichen Künstler-Daseins, dieses Selbstmanagement und das Verkaufen. Weißt, ich sag immer ich wär ein schlechter Verkäufer, bin ein schlechter Verkäufer. Ich kann ja meine eigene Kunst nicht verkaufen, weil ich das auch irgendwie nicht will.

Ich hab mal in den Sommerferien so einen Studentenjob gemacht mit einem guten Freund von mir in Trier in Deutschland, fürs Rote Kreuz Mitglieder werben. Und ich sofort, also wirklich sofort ein schlechtes Gewissen gehabt. Weil ich gemerkt hab, wir müssen denen etwas aufschwatzen und ich wollte das nicht. Ich wollte nur sagen, es gibt das und das Rote Kreuz ist eigentlich ziemlich cool und wir brauchen Unterstützung und Hilfe. Aber trotzdem, Du kommst aus dieser Situation nicht raus, weil dir, wenn die die die Tür aufmachen und die merken, was du willst, es entsteht ja sofort so ein Rollenverständnis – selbst, wenn das nur Zuschreibung ist. Das beeinflusst dann doch auch den Gesprächsverlauf. Und da habe ich gemerkt, das gebe ich gleich wieder ab. Und ich glaube, es gibt Leute, die können das voll gut – verkaufen und sich daraus was holen. Aber ich hole mir nichts daraus, wenn ich was verkaufe, gar nichts. Sobald ich das Gefühl hab, ich drehe jemandem was an, dann taugt‘s mir schon nicht mehr. Das ist halt leider nicht gut, wenn man Bilder verkaufen will.

00:55:53 VMF:
Andersrum ist ja so dieses – das magst du dann bestimmt auch nicht gern, oder? Dieses auf dem Basar, wo man handeln muss, und dann hat man ein schlechtes Gewissen, wenn man die Händler runtergehandelt hat.

00:56:07 DM:
Das kommt drauf an... Nein, ich kann es nicht gut. Aber ich kann es manchmal gut. Zum Beispiel da wollte A. mal ein Leiberl kaufen von so einem Standl, so ein gefälschtes Fußball-Leiberl. Und der hat halt gesagt 30 Euro oder sowas, der schaut dich an und denkt sich Bobo, und da kann man mal 30, 40 Euro verlangen, weißt eh, sicher nicht, das ist viel zu teuer für so ein gefälschtes Leiberl. 20 Euro hätte ich gesagt, ich kauf‘s nicht, dann sagt er 10 Euro. Da hab ich mir gedacht: Okay. Also wenn Du jetzt von 30 auf 10 runter gehst, dann kaufe ich schon alleine deswegen nichts mehr, weil du es versucht hast, mir um 30 anzudrehen.

00:56:43 VMF:
Eben genau! Man pendelt da zwischen angefressen sein, weil man sich verarscht fühlt und dann irgendwie ein schlechtes Gewissen haben...

00:56:49 DM:
... wenn man ihn so weit runter handelt, dass er kaum noch ein Geschäft macht. Ja eh, ja stimmt. Also dieses wirtschaftliche Ding.

00:56:56 VMF:
Aber interessant, weil du gesagt hast Wirtschaft – das eine ist dieses verkaufen können und das andere ist, was du über deine Eltern gesagt hast, dieses: wie setze ich meine Mittel ein und das ist ja wieder was total Künstlerisches auch, oder? Also Mittel im Sinne von nicht nur ökonomische Mittel, sondern auch wie verwende ich ein Medium letztlich oder ein Werkzeug oder Material oder so.

00:57:19 DM:
Naja, aber siehst du, da sind wir jetzt auch wieder so ein bisschen beim divergenten Denken. Weil „wie setze ich etwas ein?“ ist ja prinzipiell ziemlich offen.

And that’s something where I feel like I’m lacking, too. You know, this whole thing is also part of being an artist – or of being a happy artist – this self-management, and the selling part. I always say I’m a bad salesman. I really am. I can’t even sell my own art – because deep down, I don’t want to.

One time I had a summer job with a good friend of mine in Trier, Germany, recruiting members for the Red Cross. And right away – like instantly – I had a bad conscience. Because I realized: we’re trying to talk people into something. And I didn’t want that. I just wanted to say: this exists, the Red Cross is actually pretty cool, and we need support and help. But still – you can’t get out of that dynamic. Because the moment someone opens the door and realizes what you’re there for, a role is assigned to you – even if it’s just projected. And that influences how the conversation goes. And I realized right then: this is not for me. And I think there are people who are really good at that – at selling and making something out of it. But I don’t get anything out of it when I sell something. Nothing. As soon as I feel like I’m pushing something on someone, I’m not into it anymore. And that’s not great when you want to sell artwork.

00:55:53 VMF:
And the opposite – you probably don’t like that either, right? Like at a bazaar, where you have to haggle, and then you feel bad if you talked the vendor down too far.

00:56:07 DM:
Depends... No, I’m not good at it. But sometimes I can do it. Like once A. wanted to buy a little shirt at a street stall – a fake football jersey. And the guy said 30 euros or something. He looked at me and thought: “Bobo.” [note: Viennese slang for “Bourgeois Bohemian.”] So, yeah, of course – he figured he could ask 30, 40 euros. But no way, that’s way too expensive for a fake jersey. I said 20, he said no, I said I’m not buying it – and then he said 10 euros. And I thought: okay. If you go from 30 down to 10, I’m not buying it anymore just because you tried to sell it to me for 30 in the first place.

00:56:43 VMF:
Exactly! You bounce between being pissed because you feel cheated, and then feeling guilty...

00:56:49 DM:
... for bargaining the guy down so much that he hardly makes a profit. Yeah, right. That’s economics.

00:56:56 VMF:
But interesting that you mentioned economics – one part is being able to sell, and the other is what you said about your parents: how do I use my resources? And that’s something very artistic too, right? Resources not just in the economic sense, but how do I use a medium, or a tool, or a material?

00:57:19 DM:
Yeah, and see – now we’re back to divergent thinking. Because “how do I use something?” is a fundamentally open question.

Natürlich, wenn ich jetzt an Werkzeug denke, da schlummern schon einige Imperative drin. Aber die muss man kennen, du musst wissen, wofür ein Hammer ist, damit du ihn als Hammer verwenden kannst. Aber du kannst ihn natürlich auch verwenden, um die Tür offen zu halten, wenn du ihn dazwischen legst, weil du nix anderes hast. Und da merke ich schon, da ist Offenheit das A und O. Also wie setze ich etwas ein? Ist nicht determiniert. Und das hängt davon ab, was ich eigentlich will. Mir kommt vor in so einem künstlerischen Prozess ist es ein ständiges Hin- und Herdrehen. Aus 100.000 Perspektiven an etwas rangehen, um sich zu überlegen: Wie setze ich was ein und was bewirkt das dann bei wem. Man muss sich auf so vielen Ebenen überlegen, was das dann eigentlich tut. Und ja, das gilt ja nicht nur im künstlerischen Prozess, sondern auch für kommunikative Prozesse allgemein.

00:58:34 VMF:
Dir ist kalt auch gell, sollen wir nochmal in die Sonne übersiedeln? Wir sind jetzt voll im Schatten.

00:59:03 DM:
Ja. Wir können uns auch in die Wiese setzen.

00:59:03 VMF:
Ist die trocken glaubst?

00:59:03 DM:
Ich schau mal. … Nicht so.

00:59:03 VMF:
Sollen wir einfach da… warte mal, die ist auch im Schatten… sind jetzt alle im Schatten, die Bänke, oder? Siehst Du irgendeinen Sonnenplatz?

00:59:03 DM:
Wir können uns auch einfach in die Sonne stellen. Oder wie lange würdest du noch.

00:59:07 VMF:
Solange Du magst.

00:59:15 DM:
Ich hab Zeit. Über solche Dinge kann man auch ewig reden finde ich. Weil ich merke auch bei diesem Sprechdenken – man kommt nicht, ich komm nicht an den Punkt, wo ich sagen kann: das unterschreibe ich dir jetzt.

00:59:24 VMF:
Also wir müssen halt beide um Dreivierteleins arbeiten und ich würde vorher noch…

00:59:30 DM:
Essen.

00:59:31 VMF:
Essen ist nicht schlecht. Ja und ich hab ja hier noch alles Mögliche dabei, das würde ich gerne noch daheim abwerfen…

00:59:46 DM:
Ja machen wir kurz eine Pause, ich glaub das Bankerl da drüben ist in der Sonne.

00:59:47 VMF:
Ok und dann können wir nochmal kurz schauen – oh ja, es ist gut, dass wir das jetzt machen, weil ich seh grade der Akku ist fast leer. Das sind solche Anfängerfehler …

(UNTERBRECHUNG)

01:00:17 DM:
Wo waren wir stehen geblieben?

01:00:25 VMF:
Mittel einsetzen und so.

Of course, if I think of tools, there are already some built-in imperatives. But you have to know them – you have to know what a hammer is for in order to use it as a hammer. But of course you can also use it to hold a door open, if you wedge it in there because you've got nothing else. And that's where I really think: openness is the be-all and end-all. How I use something isn't predetermined. It depends on what I actually want. And to me, in an artistic process, it's this constant turning back and forth. Approaching something from 100,000 different angles, thinking: how do I use what, and what effect does it have – and on whom? You have to think on so many levels about what something actually does. And yeah, that applies not only to the artistic process, but to communication in general too.

00:58:34 VMF:
You're cold too, right? Should we move back into the sun? We're totally in the shade now.

00:59:03 DM:
Yeah. We could also sit on the grass.

00:59:03 VMF:
You think it's dry?

00:59:03 DM:
Let me check… Not really.

00:59:03 VMF:
Should we just – wait, this one's also in the shade… They're all in the shade now, aren't they? Do you see a sunny spot anywhere?

00:59:03 DM:
We could just stand in the sun. Or how much longer would you…

00:59:07 VMF:
As long as you like.

00:59:15 DM:
I've got time. I could talk about this stuff forever, really. Because with this speaking-thinking thing – you never get to a point where you can say: okay, I'd sign off on that now.

00:59:24 VMF:
Well, we both have to work at a quarter to one, and before that I'd still like to…

00:59:30 DM:
Eat.

00:59:31 VMF:
Eating wouldn't be bad. And I still have all kinds of stuff with me here, I'd like to drop that off at home…

00:59:46 DM:
Yeah, let's take a short break. I think that bench over there is in the sun.

00:59:47 VMF:
Okay, and then we can take another quick look – oh yeah, it's good we're doing this now, because I just noticed the battery is almost dead. These are the kind of rookie mistakes…

(RECORDING PAUSES)

01:00:17 DM:
Where were we?

01:00:25 VMF:
Using materials and all that.

01:00:25 DM:
Ja, ja, der Einsatz von Mitteln. Wie verwendet man was.

01:00:25 VMF:
Ja genau, mit der Offenheit und so. Man kann ja mit dem Hammer auch dies oder jenes machen. Vielleicht ist das sowas, was dann eben in dieser Arbeit mit den Kindern passiert, weil auf der einen Seite ist diese Offenheit für das künstlerische Arbeiten wichtig, dass man den Hammer vielleicht auch anders verwendet. Und auf der anderen Seite gibt es aber ja schon dieses Wissen über Mittel und Werkzeuge und Medien das ich brauche, um in einem Medium auch irgendwie denken zu können. Also ich meine, wenn ich mich zum ersten Mal an ein Klavier setze oder eine Geige in die Hand nehme, dann kann ich damit alles mögliche machen. Kann es erforschen. Ist cool. Aber wenn ich das irgendwo schon auch klassisch gelernt habe, habe ich natürlich nochmal andere Möglichkeiten. Mir gehen vielleicht die Möglichkeiten verloren, die ich mit diesem ganz unbefangenen und offenen Blick habe. Aber ich gewinne dafür andere Möglichkeiten, weil ich was lerne. Und im Idealfall ist das irgendwie zusammenzubringen, das eine nicht zu sehr zu verlieren, aber trotzdem Möglichkeiten zu gewinnen.

01:02:00 DM:
Vielleicht ist das auch … ich meine, das eine ist das Instrument und das andere ist das Medium. Das ist nicht unbedingt dasselbe, aber es gibt natürlich Überschneidungen. Und vielleicht ist das auch das Interessante so wie du sagst. Also so Dinge. Das ist ja ein Ding. Das Ding ist gemacht und wenn es gemacht ist, dann stecken da Intentionen drin und diese Intentionen, wenn man sie gut kennt und kennenlernt und nutzen lernt, dann können die Dinge auch ihren medialen Charakter entfalten, so wie bei Musikinstrumenten. Du kannst dann virtuos darauf werden. Dann erfüllt man diese intendierten Funktionen voll und ganz. Dann ist es ein Instrument und man bewegt sich im Medium Musik oder so. Und da gebe ich dir voll Recht. Das ist wie bei einer Fotokamera. Eine Fotokamera hat ja auch einen Zweck, also ganz klar. Es wäre gut, natürlich, dieses Instrument oder dieses Ding da mal zu beherrschen. Das ist irgendwie wichtig. Und dann kann man machen, was man will damit. Man kann auch davor schon machen, was man will damit. Aber es wird etwas anderes herauskommen, wenn ich es beherrsche, wenn ich es verstehe, das Ding.

01:03:37 VMF:
Ja, man kann ja auch diese Erfahrungen, die man dann hat, wieder übersetzen in was anderes. Mir fallen jetzt immer nur diese musikalischen Bilder ein, aber wenn du Erfahrungen mit einem klingenden Körper gemacht hast, weil du zum Beispiel – du hast ja Bratsche gespielt, oder? – dann schaust du dir vielleicht den Tunnel in der Ausstellung jetzt auch anders an.

01:04:14 DM:
Achso meinst Du, ja.

01:04:15 VMF:
Weil du irgendwie den auch als Klangkörper begreifen kannst und dann vielleicht andere…

01:04:23 DM:
…das anders wahrnehme.

01:04:23 VMF:
Ja.

01:04:25 DM:
Oder Facetten daran wahrnehme, die vielleicht verschlossen bleiben würden, wenn man da keine Erfahrungen hat. Ja, sicher, aber so ist es mit allem, oder? Da geht‘s Kindern schon so. Aber das ist das Coole an

01:00:25 DM:
Yeah, yeah – the use of materials. How to use something.

01:00:25 VMF:
Exactly, with openness and so on. You can do this or that with a hammer. Maybe that’s also something that happens in the work with children. Because on one hand, that openness is really important for artistic work – like maybe using a hammer differently. And on the other hand, there’s also this knowledge of tools and materials and media that you need in order to be able to think within a medium. I mean, when I sit down at a piano for the first time, or hold a violin, I can do all kinds of things with it. I can explore it. That’s cool. But if I’ve also learned it in a more classical way, then I of course have other possibilities. Maybe I lose some of the options I had with that completely uninhibited and open perspective. But I gain other possibilities – because I’ve learned something. And ideally, those things come together – not losing the one too much, but still gaining new possibilities.

01:02:00 DM:
Maybe that’s also… I mean, one thing is the instrument, and another is the medium. They’re not necessarily the same, but there’s overlap. And maybe that’s what’s interesting, like you said. Like, things. A thing is made, and when it’s made, there are intentions embedded in it. And if you get to know and understand those intentions and learn how to use them, then things can also unfold their medial character – like musical instruments. You can become virtuosic with them. You fulfill their intended functions fully. Then it’s an instrument, and you’re operating within the medium of music, or whatever. And I totally agree. It’s like with a photo camera. A photo camera also has a purpose, quite clearly. It’s good, of course, to be able to master that instrument or that thing. That’s important. And then you can do whatever you want with it. You can already do whatever you want before mastering it – but what comes out will be different when you understand it, when you’ve mastered the thing.

01:03:37 VMF:
Yeah, and you can also translate those experiences into something else. I keep coming up with musical metaphors, but – if you’ve had experiences with a resonant body, like for example… you played viola, right? – then maybe you’ll look at the tunnel in the exhibition differently now.

01:04:14 DM:
Ah, you mean, yeah.

01:04:15 VMF:
Because you might perceive it as a resonant body too, and then maybe other…

01:04:23 DM:
…perceive it differently.

01:04:23 VMF:
Yeah.

01:04:25 DM:
Or perceive facets of it that might stay hidden if you haven’t had those kinds of experiences. Yeah, for sure. But that’s true for everything, isn’t it? Kids are the same. That’s what’s so great about kids, right? That sensitivity and openness that’s still there – to engage with something like that.

den Kindern, oder? Diese Sensibilität und Offenheit, die noch da ist, sich auf sowas einzulassen.

01:04:47 VMF:
Ja, einerseits sind die Erfahrungen noch weniger. Und andererseits ist die Übersetzung einer Erfahrung in einen anderen Kontext vielleicht selbstverständlicher.

01:04:56 DM:
Ja, irgendwie so, genau. Es ist ja auch wenn... bei A. manchmal, der ist jetzt 5 und sprachlich natürlich, er kann schon Vieles sagen, aber Vieles kann er eigentlich auch noch nicht sagen. Auch wenn er reden kann, wo man sich denkt: Der spricht ja schon normal. Aber klar, er ist auch noch ein Kind und es fehlen viele Wörter und viele Nuancen, die er nicht ausdrücken kann. Und das ist ja, das hört ja nie auf.

Man ist ja selbst auch ein Instrument, die Sprache ist auch ein Tool, das Vokabular, das wir haben... Und ich meine, darüber sind wahrscheinlich schon weiß nicht wie viele tausende Bücher geschrieben worden über die Kommunikation. Funktioniert halt nicht so, wie wir das gerne hätten. Es kommt nicht immer das an, was wir sagen wollen. Das ist ein Werkzeug und Kinder tun sich da irgendwie ... die sind da ein bisschen flexibler. Dass das Wort eben so auch angewandt werden kann. Ja und wenn ich dann sag nein, das heißt so und so – das ist dem Kind eigentlich wurscht. Ja, natürlich - wenn ein Kind überhaupt nicht verstanden wird, sorgt das für Frust. Deswegen wird es immer präziser. Also diese Anwendung von Wörtern und Sprache wird einfach immer spezifischer, das Vokabular immer breiter, so wie wir uns das erwarten als Erwachsene, weil wir das ja auch schon so gelernt haben.

01:06:36 VMF:
Ja also ich... das mit der Sprache. Das ist auch das Besondere, wenn man irgendwo diese Freiheit hat, wie wir sie jetzt z.B. im Kindermuseumskontext versuchen zu schaffen oder wenn ich mit dem L. etwas mache, wenn man eben nicht Eltern ist und quasi das Kind existenziell davon abhängig, dass du jetzt verstehst, wenn es sagt „ich habe Hunger“. Und ich bin nicht die Lehrerin, die bewerten muss, ob das jetzt richtig oder falsch ausgedrückt ist. Sondern dieses mit der Sprache spielen ... mich fasziniert das total, weil es ... ich meine, der L. ist halt auch so ein Kind, dem Sprache einfach Spaß macht und der irrsinnig um Ausdruck ... ja „ringt“ klingt so negativ, also ohne Leidensdruck – dem es Spaß macht, irgendwie Ausdruck zu finden. Neulich hat er zum Beispiel gesagt – da hatte mein Zug Verspätung und ich habe angerufen und gesagt, sie sollen mich eine halbe Stunde später vom Bahnhof abholen. Dann hat er gesagt: „Aber ich bin schon so versehnt“ und das ist so. Das ist halt so cool. Und du kannst dann diesen Luxus haben, in diese Missverständnisse reinzugehen, ohne sie... oder nicht Missverständnisse...

01:08:02 DM:
... diese Wortneuschöpfung, die das ausdrückt, was er ausdrücken will, eigentlich.

01:08:10 VMF:
Ja, genau. Und dann gleichzeitig aber auch in das Reingehen, warum das bei mir jetzt etwas zum Klingen bringt, nicht nur eins zu eins vielleicht. Immer wieder ist es so, dass es nicht nur wirklich klarmacht, was er möchte, sondern oft dadurch, dass es quasi unter Anführungsstrichen falsch verwendet ist oder bei mir andere Assoziationen als seine Intendierte aufmacht, dass da Sachen aufgehen, wo man sonst nicht hinkommen würde. Weil, wenn ich ihn ganz gleich richtig verstehen würde, dann wäre es quasi so, als hätte er das genormte Wort, das genormte Vokabel verwendet. Also die Poesie entsteht eigentlich aus einem Unvermögen und macht was Neues auf.

01:04:47 VMF:
Yeah, on one hand they have fewer experiences, and on the other, the translation of one experience into another context is maybe more natural for them.

01:04:56 DM:
Yeah, something like that, exactly. It's also like... with A. sometimes – he's five now – and linguistically, he can say a lot, but there's still a lot he can't say. Even if he speaks where you think: "He's already talking normally." But of course, he's still a kid and missing lots of words, lots of nuances he can't express yet. And that never stops.

You're an instrument yourself too. Language is a tool. The vocabulary we have... I mean, I'm sure there are thousands of books already written about this – about communication. It just doesn't work the way we wish it did. What we say isn't always what gets through. Language is a tool, and kids are just more flexible with it somehow. Like: "This word can also mean that." And if I say: "No, this is what that means" – the kid doesn't care. Of course – if they're not understood at all, that creates frustration. So it gets more precise over time. The use of words and language becomes more specific, the vocabulary broader – just like we expect as adults, because we've already learned it that way.

01:06:36 VMF:
Yeah, and that thing about language – that's also something special when you're in a space of freedom, like what we try to create in the Children's Museum, or when I do something with L.. When you're not the parent – where the child is existentially dependent on you understanding when they say "I'm hungry." And I'm not the teacher who has to evaluate whether something is expressed correctly or not. But playing with language... I find that totally fascinating. Because – L. is also just a kid who really enjoys language, who loves finding ways to express things. Not like he's struggling with it – more like he enjoys it. The other day, for example – my train was delayed and I called to say they should pick me up half an hour later. And he said: "But I'm already so 'versehnt'" [Note: Made-up word, meaning something like "longsome."]. And that was just so cool. And you get the luxury of going into those misunderstandings – or not misunderstandings...

01:08:02 DM:
...those neologisms that actually express exactly what he wanted to say.

01:08:10 VMF:
Yeah, exactly. And at the same time, you can reflect on why that hits something in me – not just one-to-one. It often happens that it not only clearly communicates what he wants, but precisely because it's "wrong," so to speak, or sparks different associations in me than he intended – it opens things up that you wouldn't otherwise reach. Because if I understood him exactly right, then it'd be as if he used the standardized word, the standard vocabulary. So poetry actually comes from a kind of inability – and it opens up something new.

01:08:59 DM:
Ja klar. Poesie ist. Also das Spiel. Es ist das Spiel mit Normen, oder? Weil damit Kommunikation über Sprache funktioniert, muss sie genormt sein, sonst geht‘s nicht. Also konventionell. Jedes Wort ist eine Konvention. Weil natürlich der Zusammenhang zwischen Wort und Bezeichnetem ja vollkommen arbiträr ist, kannst ja blimps bling sagen. Ist wurscht. Aber jetzt sind wir wieder bei dem Thema, oder? Weil das ist so wie mit dem Werkzeug auch. Also es gibt Zwecke dahinter und sie zu kennen ist notwendig, wenn man sie zweckgemäß verwenden will. Aber das Künstlerische ist auch das Dehnen und Verbiegen und davon weggehen. Also dadurch, dass man damit spielt, hat man ja auch ein Bewusstsein dafür. Das ist ja nicht arbiträr. Eigentlich eine Erweiterung. Ein Bewusstsein schaffen vielleicht sogar für diese Normen und Konventionen. Und ein lustvolles Distanz nehmen, drumherum gehen, wieder hingehen und wieder weggehen. Das heißt ja nicht, dass man es über den Haufen wirft.

Daniel Richter hat das mal auch gemeint – weißt, so in der Malerei ist es ja auch so ganz komisch. Also grad in der Malerei gibt‘s so viele Leute, die malen halt so vor sich hin und haben so eine andere Beziehung zu ihren Werken, weißt so das innere Bild nach außen, die Emotion auf die Leinwand. Und er war dann irgendwann einfach schon so angepisst, weil wieder so klischeehafte Situationen entstanden sind und dann jemand… weißt du weil, beim Richter ist total viel kritisiert worden, es ist total viel auf sprachlicher Ebene passiert. Du hast Arbeiten gezeigt und er ist ja einer, der gerne redet. Und das war für manche Maler-Künstler schwer, weil die eigentlich gar nicht reden wollen, sondern einfach nur malen. Und dann ist da alles drinnen, mehr als man sagen kann, was von mir aus ja auch stimmen mag, irgendwo. Aber bei ihm ging das halt nicht. Da musste man über Sachen reden, und zwar wirklich Tacheles und er hat dann gesagt: Du kannst auch deine eigene Sprache erfinden. Aber es wird dann halt keiner sprechen. Das ist ja kein Problem. Aber irgendetwas zu machen, wo nix mit nix zu tun hat. Das geht erstens gar nicht, aber wenn man so tut, ist es schlimm, weil es ist halt falsch. Es kann nicht sein. Wir haben gewisse Schnittmengen und das ist eine gute Basis. Und dann machst du etwas und dann können wir auch darüber reden oder auch nicht. In solchen Momenten sieht man: das ist alles gar nicht so Mediumsabhängig. Und so kannst du auch sagen Butschikakabrrrrrrtsnbumm und sagen, das ist Kunst, wenn es keinen Bezug zu Nichts hat und dann hat es keinen Bezug zu nichts.

01:12:26 VMF:
Ja, ist eine private Sprache.

01:12:27 DM:
Ja, ja. Dann sollte ich dich fragen, ob das dann Kunst ist.

01:12:32 VMF:
Ja oder ich mein, wenn du sagst, ich bin mein einziges Publikum oder mein einziger Adressat oder Adressatin, dann ist es okay.

01:12:37 DM:
Ja, aber sich da hinzustellen und das als große Kunst da…

01:12:42 VMF:
In dem Moment alleine, wenn du in die Institution Akademie reingehst, und willst, dass das da irgendwas tut, dann…

01:12:47 DM:
Ja, dann bist du schon … es ist sind Kommunikationsräume und irgendwo naja.

01:08:59 DM:
Yeah, for sure. Poetry is – it’s play. It’s the play with norms, right? Because for communication through language to work, it has to be standardized. Otherwise, it doesn’t function. It has to be conventional. Every word is a convention. Because, of course, the connection between the word and what it refers to is completely arbitrary – you could say “blimps bling,” it doesn’t matter. And now we’re back at that topic again, right? Because that’s like with tools. There are intended functions behind things, and knowing them is necessary if you want to use them as intended. But the artistic part is also in stretching and bending and deviating from that. By playing with it, you become aware of it. It’s not arbitrary – it’s actually an expansion. Maybe even an act of creating awareness of those norms and conventions. A kind of joyful stepping back, circling around them, returning again, stepping back again. That doesn’t mean you throw it all out.

Daniel Richter said something like that once too – you know, especially in painting, it’s so strange. In painting there are so many people who just paint away and have this very different relationship to their work – like projecting the inner image outward, the emotion onto the canvas. And at some point, he was just really pissed off, because these cliché situations kept coming up – and then someone… you know, with Richter, there was always a lot of criticism, and a lot of it happened on a linguistic level. You’d show work, and he’s someone who likes to talk. And that was hard for a lot of the painter types – because they didn’t want to talk at all, they just wanted to paint. And then they’d say: “It’s all in there – more than I can say,” which, okay, might be true. But that didn’t fly with him. You had to talk about things – really frankly. And he once said: “You can invent your own language. That’s fine. But no one else will speak it.” And that’s not a problem. But if you make something that has no connection to anything – that doesn’t work. First of all, that’s not even possible. But if you pretend it is, then it’s bad – because it’s just wrong. That can’t be. We have certain overlaps, and that’s a good foundation. Then you make something, and we can talk about it – or not. In moments like that, you realize: this is really not about the medium. And sure, you can say “butschikakabrrrrrrtsnbumm” and call it art – but if it has no reference to anything, then it just doesn’t have a reference.

01:12:26 VMF:
Yeah, it’s a private language.

01:12:27 DM:
Yeah, yeah. Then I should ask you if that’s still art.

01:12:32 VMF:
Yeah – or, I mean, if you say: “I’m my only audience, my only addressee,” then fine.

01:12:37 DM:
Yeah, but to then stand there and call that great art…

01:12:42 VMF:
The moment you enter an institution like the academy and want it to function somehow in that context, then…

01:12:47 DM:
Yeah, then you’re already… these are communicative spaces, and somewhere, well…

01:12:57 VMF:
Na gut, ja, vielleicht ist es … es wird ganz schön kalt, gell. Und es ist eh auch schon spät. Ich mach hier mal Stopp.

Diego Mosca ist seit 2005 Teil des Vermittlungsteams des ZOOM Kindermuseum. Seit 2022 leitet er die Produktion des ZOOM „Trickfilmstudio“s sowie die ZOOM Sammlung. Neben seiner künstlerischen Praxis war er in verschiedenen Bereichen der Kunst- und Kulturvermittlung aktiv, u.a. im Haus der Geschichte Österreich und dem kl!ck Kindermuseum in Hamburg. Gemeinsam mit anderen Künstler*innen konzipierte und realisierte er zudem Workshops und Projekte an verschiedenen Schulen, unter anderem über das OeAD-Kulturvermittlungsprogramm „Kultur:Bildung“. Berufs- und familienbegleitend studiert DM Spanisch, Geschichte und politische Bildung. Derzeit schreibt er eine Masterarbeit über argentinische Roadmovies.

01:12:57 VMF:
Alright, yeah. Maybe that’s… it’s gotten pretty cold, hasn’t it? And it’s getting late too. I’ll hit stop here.

Diego Mosca has been part of the education team at the ZOOM Children‘s Museum since 2005. Since 2022, he has been leading the production of the ZOOM “Animated Film Studio“ as well as the ZOOM Collection. In addition to his artistic practice, he has been active in various areas of art and cultural education, including at the House of Austrian History and the kl!ck Children‘s Museum in Hamburg. Together with other artists, he has also conceived and carried out workshops and projects at various schools, including through the OeAD cultural education program „Kultur:Kontakt.“ Alongside his professional and family life, DM has been studying Spanish, History, and Civic Education. He is currently writing a master‘s thesis on Argentine road movies.

(Explanatory) Notes and References

Fotoschule Friedl Kubelka

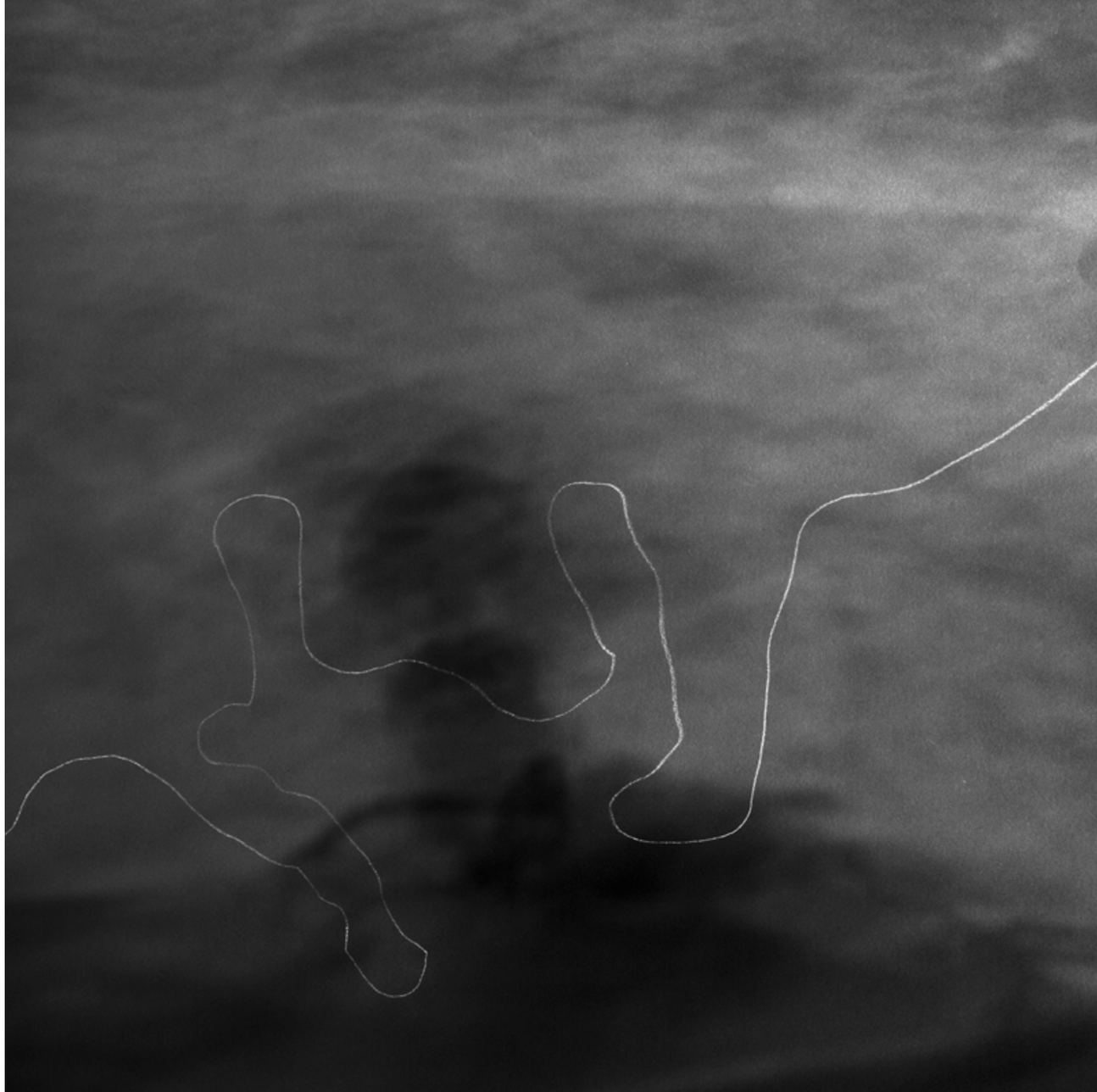
Diego and I both attended the School for Artistic Photography run by Friedl Kubelka – only a few years apart. From 1990 until 2010, the Austrian psychoanalyst and artist Friedl Kubelka led this very special program.

Over the course of one year, a meticulously curated group of around 10 students worked together in several intensive workshops, each guided by a different invited artist – as well as in two workshops and some individual consultations with Friedl Kubelka herself.

The “tunnel” in the “Exhibition”

For the exhibition on wood at the ZOOM Children’s Museum, where the children could also craft their own spinning tops, the artist Hans Schabus built a huge wooden tube that filled almost the entire exhibition space.

be vulnerable
and confident.



Lucca Teissig

über die Tontechnikerschule, Instrumente basteln, Rick und die Termiten, Surfen, Erwachsensein oder nicht, Bambus, Stacheln, Blödsinn, Gutes Chaos, Böse Filme und Strengsein.

about sound engineering school, making instruments, Rick and the termites, surfing, being an adult or not, bamboo, spikes, nonsense, good chaos, evil movies and being strict.

Ich besuche LT am 13.09.2021 gegen Mittag in seiner Wohnung in Wien Liesing. Wir sprechen in seinem Studio vor einer riesigen Wand voller Schallplatten, hören in diverse Soundprojekte hinein und schauen uns Projekte auf seinem Bildschirm an. Lucca und ich kennen uns noch nicht sehr lange, haben aber schon einige Trickfilmworkshops miteinander gemacht.

00:00:00 VMF:
Wir starten das hier einfach mal, dann rennt das so dahin... so ein großer Bildschirm!

00:00:19 LT:
Ja der gehört nicht mir, den habe ich mir ausgeborgt. Also eigentlich hat ihn mir ein Freund geborgt, weil er hat mich leiden sehen, wie ich da auf diesen 13 Zoll so Riesenspuren offen hab. So ein Audioprojekt schaut ja nicht gerade angenehm aus. [Anm.: Spielt Musikvideo vor, dass er gemastert hat. Gespräch nebenbei unverständlich]

00:00:53 LT:
Urgeiles Lied, aber ich kann‘s nicht mehr hören.

00:04:02 VMF:
Ja aber cool, hört sich sehr fein gemacht an.

00:04:02 LT:
Fürs Radio tauglich ja. Mehr sollte es nicht sein, mehr wollt ich nicht von dem Lied und er auch nicht. Ich finde es nur schade, dass es erst so wenig Klicks hat.

00:04:16 VMF:
Hat er es irgendwo gefeatured oder...?

00:04:21 LT:
Nein, also Marketing schlecht. Schlechtes Recording, fix it in the Mix, schlechter Mix, fix it in the Master, schlechtes Mastering, fix it in the Marketing. Wenn man alles gut macht, aber das Marketing versaut ist schon scheiße... aber ja, kann ja passieren, kann ja passieren. Aber so richtig selber Musik... ich mach schon, aber ich bin halt nie zufrieden. Es dauert noch. Es kann noch viel, viel, viel mehr werden,

00:04:57 VMF:
Aber was machst du selber für Sachen?

00:05:00 LT:
Funk und Hip-Hop und Ambient Musik.

00:05:05 VMF:
Singst Du selber?

00:05:06 LT:
Nein, leider. Aber ich würde gern ... ich singe unter der Dusche und ich singe immer überall mit, wo es geht. Und ich weiß, ich bin eher so ein Nachmach-Singer. So... hast Du Ray Charles den Film gesehen?

00:05:21 VMF:
Ich glaube schon, aber der ist schon älter...?

00:05:24 VMF:
Ja, 2000, 2005, sowas, da sagt er auch am Anfang, dass er alle nachsingt. Und klingt wie Nat King Cole und klingt wie der und der und seine Frau sagt ihm dann: Du musst deine eigene Stimme finden. Das ist halt... so selber Lyrics schreiben, da musst du dich halt auch verantworten dafür, kannst nicht sagen: Ich sag‘s nur so. Ich weiß nicht. Ich würde urgern Texte schreiben. Ich habe auch Gesangsunterricht genommen und war im Chor in der Schule. Also ich kann singen. Ich traue es mich halt nie und es ist wirklich schreck-

I visit Lucca Teissig around midday on September 13, 2021, at his apartment in Vienna Liesing. We talk in his room, in front of a huge wall filled with vinyl records, listen to various sound projects and look at projects on his screen. Lucca and I haven‘t known each other for very long, but we‘ve already done several animation workshops together.

00:00:00 VMF:
Let’s just get this started, then it’ll just run from there... such a big screen!

00:00:19 LT:
Yeah, it’s not mine, I borrowed it. Well, actually, a friend lent it to me because he saw me suffering, working on this 13-inch screen with massive waveforms open. An audio project like that doesn’t exactly look pleasant. [Note: Plays a music video he mastered. Side conversation unintelligible.]

00:00:53 LT:
Absolutely awesome track, but I can’t listen to it anymore.

00:04:02 VMF:
Yeah, but cool, sounds very well made.

00:04:02 LT:
Radio-worthy, yeah. That’s all it was supposed to be, I didn’t want more from the song, and neither did he. I just think it’s a shame that it still has so few plays.

00:04:16 VMF:
Did he feature it anywhere, or...?

00:04:21 LT:
No, I mean the marketing was bad. Bad recording? Fix it in the mix. Bad mix? Fix it in the master. Bad mastering? Fix it in the marketing. If you do everything well but mess up the marketing, that just sucks... but yeah, it can happen. It can happen. But as for making music myself... I do, but I’m never satisfied. It still needs more. It can become so, so, so much more.

00:04:57 VMF:
But what kind of stuff do you make yourself?

00:05:00 LT:
Funk and hip-hop and ambient music.

00:05:05 VMF:
Do you sing yourself?

00:05:06 LT:
No, unfortunately not. But I’d love to... I sing in the shower and I sing along wherever I can. And I know I’m more of a mimic singer. Like... have you seen the Ray Charles movie?

00:05:21 VMF:
I think so, but that one’s a bit older, right?

00:05:24 LT:
Yeah, 2000, 2005, something like that. In the beginning, he also says he mimics everyone. Sounds like Nat King Cole, sounds like this guy and that guy, and then his wife tells him: You have to find your own voice. That’s the thing... writing your own lyrics, you have to take responsibility for that too, you can’t just say: “I just said it like that.” I don’t know. I’d love to write lyrics. I even took singing lessons and was in a choir at school. So I can sing. I just never dare to. And it’s really awful hearing your own voice when you record yourself. And then you also have to sing layers – one

lich, deine eigene Stimme zu hören, wenn du dich dann aufnimmst und dann muss du auch noch Layers singen. Einmal hoch, einmal tief, einmal ganz tief und das dann so gut wie möglich zusammen mischen, da muss ich mir dann überlegen, ob ich Künstler sein will oder mischen will. Also wenn Benedict jetzt zum Beispiel einen Song macht, dann nehme ich mir lieber seinen Song zum Mischen her. Wenn ich dann einen Song gemacht hab, gebe ich's dann ihm wieder. Wir tauschen uns lieber aus, weil die ganze Arbeit selbst machen ... irgendwann mischt Du nur noch in falsche Richtungen.

00:06:29 VMF:
Naja, sich selber... ich kann mir vorstellen, das ist viel Gewohnheit wahrscheinlich auch.

00:06:34 LT:
Du bleibst nicht objektiv, du kannst einfach nicht so mit frischen Ohren reinstarten, sondern du hörst immer wieder dich selber.

00:06:41 VMF:
Ja und das ist so ein totaler Parallaxenfehler, oder? Es geht irgendwie gar nicht.

00:06:48 LT:
Ja. Das macht wirklich überhaupt keinen Sinn die eigene Stimme zu mischen. Jetzt bei der Prüfung hatten wir's gerade – die * hat sich selbst gemischt, sich selbst aufgenommen, sich selbst gemastert. Und von ihren ganzen Kollegen klang der Song einfach viel besser. Logisch.

00:07:05 VMF:
Also die haben den gleichen Song...?

00:07:09 LT:
Die haben den Song zu fünft recorded, dann haben alle Fünf das Mixing und das Mastering auf demselben Recording aufgebaut.

00:07:17 VMF:
Das ist eigentlich voll interessant was da rauskommt!

00:07:19 LT:
Wir fänden es cooler, wenn wir recorden und dann alle recordings tauschen, dann mixen wir alle was anderes, und mastern dann wieder je unseren eigenen Song. Das wäre eigentlich das Coolste gewesen. Hmm... hab' ich den Song den ich da gemacht, den ich da recorded hab da...?

00:07:31 VMF:
Bist Du eigentlich fertig jetzt mit der Ausbildung?

00:07:38 LT:
Ja, ich warte nur noch auf meine Ergebnisse und es dauert so lang schon. Bis zum 20. muss ich noch warten, auf vier Sachen... das ist einfach nur... einfach nur gemein. ... So. Welches ist es? Das da müsste das Master sein. [Spielt Song] ... Der Sänger kann natürlich nicht singen.

00:08:29 VMF:
Hattet ihr dafür ein Prüfungszeitfenster oder...?

00:08:29 LT:
Neun Stunden für's Recording.... oder nein acht Stunden fürs Recording, sechs Stunden fürs Mischen und drei Stunden fürs Mastern. Was wirklich wenig ist, weil Mischen heißt ja auch Editieren. Das heißt, wenn du jetzt am Anfang hörst ... [Räuspern auf der Aufnahme] ... müsste ich wegschneiden.

00:08:49 VMF:
Ja, oder auch nicht.

high, one low, one super low – and mix them together as best as possible. Then I really have to think: Do I want to be an artist or do I want to be a mixer? Like if Benedict makes a song, I'd rather take his song and mix it. And when I make a song, I give it to him again. We prefer to exchange. Because if you do all the work yourself... at some point, you just keep mixing in the wrong direction.

00:06:29 VMF:
Well, doing your own stuff... I imagine it's a lot of habit too, right?

00:06:34 LT:
You just can't stay objective. You can't go in with fresh ears, you always hear yourself again and again.

00:06:41 VMF:
Yeah, and it's like some kind of parallax error, right? It just doesn't work.

00:06:48 LT:
Exactly. It makes no sense at all to mix your own voice. In the exam, for instance – she mixed herself, recorded herself, mastered herself. And compared to all her classmates, her track just sounded worse. Obviously.

00:07:05 VMF:
So they all had the same song?

00:07:09 LT:
They recorded the song together as five people, then all five built their own mix and master from the same recording.

00:07:17 VMF:
That's actually super interesting what comes out of that!

00:07:19 LT:
We thought it would've been even cooler if we'd recorded and then swapped all the recordings, so we all mix someone else's stuff, and then master our own again. That would've actually been the best setup. Hmm... do I have the song I recorded here...?

00:07:31 VMF:
Are you done now with the training?

00:07:38 LT:
Yeah, I'm just waiting on my results, and it's taking so long. I have to wait until the 20th, for four things... it's just... just unfair. ... Okay. Which one is it? That one should be the master. [Plays song] ... The singer obviously can't sing.

00:08:29 VMF:
Did you have a time window for the exam or...?

00:08:29 LT:
Nine hours for recording... no, eight hours for recording, six hours for mixing and three hours for mastering. Which is really not much, because mixing also includes editing. So if you hear something at the start... [cough on the recording] ... I'd have to cut that out.

00:08:49 VMF:
Yeah, or not.

00:08:51 LT:
Oder auch nicht...

00:08:53 VMF:
Ist wohl die Frage, ob die das dann cool finden ...

00:08:57 LT:
Genau deswegen haben wir das Klatschen dazugemacht. Weil man hört einfach, wie wir im Studio ein Bier aufmachen und unsere Lehrer... das ist einfach nicht erlaubt so. Ab da wird‘s dann angenehm. Die Gitarristin von ihnen ist 16 und die anderen sind so drei 35jährige Punker. Stimmung war auf jeden Fall beim Recording, Stimmung war auf jeden Fall. Kann man so sagen. Ja halt wie Musikmaschine.

00:10:03 VMF:
Ja, ich habe sie ja schon im Einsatz gesehen.

00:10:05 LT:
Ja und?

00:10:06 VMF:
Ja, es ist ein cooles Teil und der Chris Janka ist cool. Aber mit den Kindern...

00:10:14 LT:
Kann man das nicht, erstens die Kindersicherung, warum ist die unten?

00:10:19 VMF:
Ja das ist wurscht – soweit kommen sie gar nicht. Die stöpseln zweimal herum und wenn du Glück hast, gibt‘s ein bisschen wow! Aber diesen Schritt dann da einen Beat zu machen oder so... da ist halt auch das alte Problem, dass auch die Leute das können müssen, die dann damit arbeiten sollen.

00:11:06 LT:
Der Spaßfaktor ist ja das zusammenzubauen, dann schaust du, ob es funktioniert, und dann bist Du happy.

00:12:16 VMF:
Ja, aber wenn du es dann noch quasi spielen kannst und es schaffst, lustige Beats zu machen...

00:12:22 LT:
Das ist genauso, wie wenn ich mir eine Talkbox baue, weißt so... Dann will ich es einfach mal geschafft haben. Aber so richtig verwenden tu ich‘s jetzt auch nicht... oder mir ein Mikro bauen. Der Lautsprecher – die drei da, sind alles Mikros. Nur für die Kickdrum, weil die keine hohen Frequenzen aufnehmen und es gibt Subkick-Mikes für 300 Euro zu kaufen. Aber es gibt auch einfach genügend Hochtöner, die kaputt sind, die keiner mehr verwendet und ich nehm den Tieftöner. Also den Elektroschrott einfach aufrüsten. Ja, das ist mein derzeitiges Hobby.

00:13:07 Ja und ich habe probiert, auch sowas zu bauen. Aber Oszillatoren halt und der Flo macht das ja. Ja, aber er macht das mir so fertigen Bauteilen und ich will das halt wirklich kapieren. So meine Elektrotechnik-Box ist da oben und da oben und da unten und ich versteh‘s trotzdem noch nicht. Es gibt viele Arten etwas zum Oszillieren zu bringen, aber es ist eigentlich nur ein Stromkreis. Brauchst du Widerstände, eine Diode und so weiter. Und ich verstehe trotzdem noch nicht, warum aus dem Lautsprecher kein Sound rauskommt. Ich versteh das einfach nicht. Wir haben alles richtig gemacht. Es will aber nicht erklingen. Das Licht blinkt. Alles tut, was es tun soll, aber...

00:14:25 VMF:
...es kommt kein Ton...

00:08:51 LT:
Or not...

00:08:53 VMF:
I guess the question is whether they’d think it’s cool...

00:08:57 LT:
Exactly. That’s why we added the clapping. Because you can clearly hear us opening a beer in the studio, and our instructors... that’s just not allowed. From that point on it gets nice though. Their guitarist is 16, and the others are like three 35-year-old punks. The vibe was definitely there during recording. Definitely a vibe. You could say that. Just like the music machine.

00:10:03 VMF:
Yeah, I’ve already seen it in action.

00:10:05 LT:
Yeah, and?

00:10:06 VMF:
Yeah, it’s a cool piece of gear and Chris Janka is cool. But with the kids...

00:10:14 LT:
You just can’t with kids. First of all, the child lock – why is that even down there?

00:10:19 VMF:
Yeah, it doesn’t matter – they won’t get that far anyway. They plug stuff in twice, and if you’re lucky, there’s a little “wow!” – but taking it further and actually making a beat with it or something... the old problem remains: the people who are supposed to work with it need to know how.

00:11:06 LT:
The fun part is putting it together, then you see if it works, and then you’re happy.

00:12:16 VMF:
Yeah, but if you can then actually play it and manage to make some fun beats...

00:12:22 LT:
It’s just like when I build a talkbox, you know... I just want to say I built it. But do I really use it? Not really... or like building my own mic. Those three speakers over there – all mics. Just for the kick drum, because they don’t pick up high frequencies. And there are subkick mics you can buy for 300 euros. But there are also enough tweeters lying around broken that no one uses, and I take the woofer. So I just up-grade electronic waste. Yeah, that’s my current hobby.

And I also tried building something like that. But oscillators, you know... and Flo does that. But he does it with ready-made parts, and I want to really understand it. So my electronics kit is up there, and there, and down there, and I still don’t get it. There are many ways to make something oscillate, but in the end it’s just a circuit. You need resistors, a diode, and so on. And I still don’t get why there’s no sound coming from the speaker. I just don’t get it. We did everything right. It still won’t sound. The light blinks. Everything is doing what it’s supposed to, but...

00:14:25 VMF:
...there’s no sound...

00:14:27 LT:
So ein Rauschen manchmal das ist dann ah... maybe he‘s broken. Manchmal geht er auch kaputt der Lautsprecher oder was weiß nicht. Sachen auseinandernehmen und wieder zusammenbauen. Das mache ich gern. Spielzeug von den Nachbarskindern, das sie weghauen. Das Mikro geht nicht mehr – her damit! Zwei Tage später geht‘s wieder, dann sagst du so: Na, das nervt eh nur!

00:15:00 VMF:
Bitte nicht reparieren!

00:15:01 LT:
Sag ich so dann: Darf ich‘s behalten? Ja sicher, sicher... so ein Mikro, so ein kleines rosanes. Why not. Sie ist froh, dass Sie Ihr Kind nicht mehr beebebebeep.... ein Mikro, das von selber Sound macht und auch noch was einsprechen kann, irgendwie nur auf die Nerven geht. Praktisch für sie, praktisch für mich...

00:15:23 VMF:
Win-Win!

00:15:25 LT:
Und für‘n Vali auch – das ist der mit dem ich am meisten bastle.

00:15:26 VMF:
Macht ihr Musiksachen dann auch zusammen?

00:15:33 LT:
Na wir sind nur Bastler-Kollegen. Also Musik-Kollege ist der Benedict, und so die Uni-Leute aber, mit dem Vali mach ich eigentlich immer so... also den Plattenkasten hab ich mit ihm gebaut.

00:15:46 VMF:
Also das Regal?

00:15:48 LT:
Ja voll. Also die Vierecke haben wir als erstes gebaut. Dann mussten wir die aber irgendwie in die Höhe stapeln. Dann haben wir nur noch so Bretter gekauft und die aufeinandergestellt. Sind gar nicht befestigt. Wozu? Wenn ich wieder ausziehe, muss ich die wieder mitnehmen.

00:16:22 VMF:
Wieso, willst du ausziehen?

00:16:26 LT:
Nö, sag ich nur immer so dem Vali: In zwei Wochen ziehen wir aus, wir müssen die Platten wieder wegbringen, ich habe drei Bandscheibenvorfälle, dann hasst er mich. Ich darf halt nicht mitmachen.

00:16:33 VMF:
Hast du wirklich drei Bandscheibenvorfälle?

00:16:35 LT:
Ja... ich war so ein riesiges Baby, 55 Zentimeter und fünf Kilo. Meine zwei untersten Rückenwirbel sind verschoben.

00:16:46 VMF:
Oh fuck. Das heißt, Du hast die eigentlich schon immer?

00:16:49 LT:
Eigentlich ja. Also vom Zivildienst an ging‘s dann schlimmer, so du darfst ja keinen Patienten berühren. In einem unterbesetzten Altersheim wirst Du es aber müssen. Erster Bandscheibenvorfall. Nächster, weiß ich nicht wie. Achso, Klavier heben. Und übernächster auch Klavier.

00:17:09 VMF:
Und jetzt Übungen?

00:14:27 LT:
That static noise you sometimes get, it’s like... maybe he’s broken. Sometimes the speaker just breaks or whatever, I don’t know. Taking things apart and putting them back together again – that’s something I really enjoy. Like toys from the neighbor’s kids that they throw out. “The mic doesn’t work anymore” – give it to me! Two days later it works again, and then you’re like: “Ugh, it’s just annoying anyway!”

00:15:00 VMF:
Please don’t fix it!

00:15:01 LT:
Then I go: “Can I keep it?” And they’re like: “Yeah, sure, sure...” Some little pink microphone. Why not. She’s happy her kid no longer goes beebebebeep... a mic that makes noise by itself and also records stuff – just gets on your nerves. Convenient for her, convenient for me...

00:15:23 VMF:
Win-win!

00:15:25 LT:
And for Vali too – that’s who I tinker with the most.

00:15:26 VMF:
Do you guys make music together too?

00:15:33 LT:
No, we’re just tinkering buddies. Music-wise, it’s Benedict, and the people from uni. But with Vali, it’s always more like... we built that record shelf together.

00:15:46 VMF:
You mean that rack?

00:15:48 LT:
Yeah, exactly. We built the cubes first. Then we had to somehow stack them vertically. So we just bought some boards and stacked them on top of each other. They’re not even fixed in place. Why bother? When I move out again, I’ll need to take them with me anyway.

00:16:22 VMF:
Why, are you planning to move?

00:16:26 LT:
Nah, I just always say that to Vali: “We’re moving out in two weeks, we’ll have to carry all the records out again, I’ll get three slipped discs and then you’ll hate me.” I’m not allowed to help, really.

00:16:33 VMF:
You really have three slipped discs?

00:16:35 LT:
Yeah... I was a giant baby, 55 centimeters and five kilos. My two lowest vertebrae are misaligned.

00:16:46 VMF:
Oh damn. So that means you’ve basically had it all your life?

00:16:49 LT:
Basically, yeah. It got worse during my civilian service. You’re technically not allowed to touch patients. But if you’re working in an understaffed nursing home, you’ll have to. First slipped disc. Next one – I don’t even know how. Ah right, moving a piano. And the third? Also piano.

00:17:09 VMF:
And now, do you do any exercises?

00:17:18 LT:
Ja halt Bauch legen und irgendwelche isometrischen Übungen machen oder Schlagzeugspielen.

00:17:27 VMF:
Echt, Schlagzeug spielen ist gut bei Bandscheibenvorfällen?

00:17:29 LT:
Nein, aber es ist einfach nur gut für den Bewegungsapparat und außerdem ist es sauschwer. Ich habe nur zwei Elemente, das macht es noch schwerer.

00:17:43 VMF:
Zu spielen?

00:17:45 LT:
Zu spielen, ja. Überhaupt, Instrumente hab ich auch so verdammt viele, das gibt es einfach nicht. Da oben liegt ein Saxofon, kann ich bisschen spielen, Gitarre bisschen spielen, Bass bisschen spielen, Ukulele am besten spielen, Klavier ist da drüben, Midi-Keyboard, Maschinen. Da drüben sind Flöten, da oben sind auch Flöten, Shaker und so weiter, so viel Zeug. Zum Glück habe ich diesen Raum für mich. Den Rest darf die Freundin bestimmen. Sie sagt: Da, nimm Dein Studio, das ist das Jungs-Zimmer, macht‘s was ihr wollt‘s. Da kann ich mich austoben. Und basteln halt.

00:18:32 VMF:
Ich glaube, du machst eh das, was ich dich eigentlich fragen wollte.

00:18:37 LT:
Was?

00:18:38 VMF:
Weil es ist lustig mit diesem Video… also das Video ist ja ein bisschen kitschig.

00:18:44 LT:
Ja extrem kitschig. Auch das Lied.

00:18:47 VMF:
Aber, aber es passt ein bisschen zu dem, was mein Ausgangspunkt immer war zu den Interviews.

00:18:53 LT:
Achso cool, haha!

00:18:54 VMF:
Also ich mache ja schon immer diese Workshop-Geschichten und arbeite mit Kindern und Jugendlichen, mit allen möglichen Leuten und das hat sich immer so verwoben mit dem, was ich so als Kunst verstanden habe, und wenn ich irgendwie künstlerisch was Neues gemacht oder gesehen habe, dann war das eigentlich immer vor allem interessant, um es dann zu verwenden oder mit den Kindern auszuprobieren. Aber ich bin nicht gut darin, mich selber da zu positionieren. Egal ob das jetzt im Kindermuseum ist oder was ist jetzt meine Kunst oder was ist meine künstlerische Arbeit, also im Verhältnis zu dieser Arbeit mit den Kindern. Was sind eigentlich Kooperationen und wie ist es dann mit der Autorschaft und irgendwie gehört das ja dann uns beiden …

00:20:03 LT:
Voll, who did it?

00:20:04 VMF:
Ja und aber was passiert dann, wenn ich das dann urcool finde? Das ist eigentlich das Hauptproblem: Dass dann immer wieder so Sachen rauskommen, die mir irrsinnig taugen und vielleicht aber nur mir.

00:20:15 LT:
Achso, ja… [lacht] Aber das ist das Risiko!

00:17:18 LT:
Yeah, like lying on my stomach and doing isometric stuff… or playing drums.

00:17:27 VMF:
Really, drums are good for slipped discs?

00:17:29 LT:
No, but it’s just good for the musculoskeletal system. And it’s super hard. I only have two elements, which makes it even harder.

00:17:43 VMF:
To play?

00:17:45 LT:
To play, yeah. Also, I have so many instruments, it’s insane. Up there’s a saxophone – I can play it a little. Guitar, a little. Bass, a little. Ukulele, the best. Piano is over there. MIDI key-board. Machines. Over there are flutes, up there too. Shakers and so on. So much stuff. Luckily I have this room all to myself. The rest of the flat is my girlfriend’s domain. She’s like: “Here, take your studio, this is the boys’ room, do whatever you want.” That’s where I can go wild. And tinker.

00:18:32 VMF:
I think you’re already doing what I was going to ask you about anyway.

00:18:37 LT:
What?

00:18:38 VMF:
Because it’s funny with this video… it’s kind of cheesy.

00:18:44 LT:
Yeah, super cheesy. The song too.

00:18:47 VMF:
But it kind of fits with what my starting point for these interviews always was.

00:18:53 LT:
Ah, cool, haha!

00:18:54 VMF:
So I’ve always been doing these workshop things, working with kids and young people, with all kinds of people, and it’s always kind of intertwined with what I consider art. And whenever I did or saw something artistic, it was usually interesting because I could use it or try it out with the kids. But I’m not good at positioning myself in all that. Whether it’s in the Children‘s Museum or what my art is or what my artistic work is, in relation to the work with kids. What actually is collaboration, and how does authorship work? Somehow it belongs to both of us…

00:20:03 LT:
Totally – who did it?

00:20:04 VMF:
Yeah, and then what happens when I think it’s super cool? That’s the main issue: sometimes stuff comes out that I really love – and maybe I’m the only one who does.

00:20:15 LT:
Ah right, yeah… [laughs] But that’s the risk!

00:20:19 VMF:
Nicht einmal das Kind interessiert das mehr vielleicht nachher, aber ich finde es voll cool. Aber in dem Moment, ich nehme das da raus, aus diesem Kinderirgendwas: total privat oder Schule oder so, ich nehme das da raus aus dem Kontext und sag: Woa schaut‘s mal, das ist voll die Kunst! Dann wird es sofort kompliziert. Und das ist eigentlich der Ausgangspunkt für dieses PhD-Unterfangen gewesen, dass ich mir gedacht habe, da habe ich Raum, um das auseinanderzuklamüsern. Und dann habe ich mir gedacht: Ich habe immer das Gefühl, es ist schon so ein bisschen, dass ich so allein mit diesem Problem bin.

00:20:58 LT:
Ne.

00:21:00 VMF:
Ja also wenn irgendwo nicht, dann im Kindermuseum.

00:21:06 LT:
Ja voll.

00:21:06 VMF:
Und aber auch im Kindermuseum sind ja schon viele, die sagen: eigentlich mache ich ja das und das und dann tu ich halt mit Kindern irgendwie, damit ich Miete zahlen kann. Also wirklich glauben tu ich das den Wenigsten, die das so behaupten.

00:21:29 LT:
Ich bin dort seit acht Jahren nicht als Studentenjob. Die ersten vier Jahre habe ich gar nicht studiert. Mir hat das einfach Spaß gemacht als Kunst. Manchmal, einen Streit mit der Freundin zu haben und dann einfach den Mund zu halten, weil du weißt, es ist unnötig jetzt was zu sagen ist auch Kunst.

00:21:49 VMF:
Ja, genau das ist so dieses Grund-Ding. Das ist so ein Weltbegegnungsmodus für mich eigentlich. Jedenfalls habe ich jetzt gedacht: Also was für mich immer so ein Kompass ist, wie ich Entscheidungen treffe, gerade wenn es mit Kindern zu tun hat, ist schon, dass ich mich erinnere oder dass das so dieses Kind in mir triggert. Ich meine, ich bin immer noch fünf, genauso wie immer noch sieben genauso wie ich jetzt 36 bin, aber… und mit meinem Neffen mache ich ja irrsinnig viel.

00:22:34 LT:
War das Skypen?

00:22:36 VMF:
Genau.

00:22:37 LT:
So geil.

00:22:37 VMF:
Und in Wirklichkeit mache ich mit ihm lauter Sachen, wo ich weiß, die hätte ich als Kind gern gemacht, oder da jemanden gehabt. Oder da konnte ich sie halt noch nicht und jetzt kann ich es irgendwie und mache es mit ihm. Und er kann aber noch Sachen, die man irgendwie nur als Kind kann.

00:22:56 LT:
Also typisches Peter Pan Syndrom.

00:22:58 VMF:
Ja, eigentlich schon.

00:23:02 LT:
I love it!

00:20:19 VMF:
Maybe even the kid doesn’t care anymore afterwards, but I think it’s so great. And in that moment, I take it out of that kid-context: totally private or school or whatever, and I say: “Hey look, this is totally art!” And then it instantly gets complicated. And that was kind of the starting point for this whole PhD project – I thought, I need space to pick that apart. And I always had the feeling I was kind of alone with that problem.

00:20:58 LT:
Nope.

00:21:00 VMF:
Yeah, like if anywhere, then not in the Children‘s Museum.

00:21:06 LT:
Exactly.

00:21:06 VMF:
But even there, a lot of people say: “Well, I actually do this or that and just work with kids so I can pay rent.” Honestly, I don’t really believe most of them when they say that.

00:21:29 LT:
I’ve been there for eight years, and not as a student job. The first four years I wasn’t even studying. I just enjoyed it – as art. Sometimes, getting into an argument with your girlfriend and keeping your mouth shut because you know saying anything would be pointless – that’s also art.

00:21:49 VMF:
Exactly, that’s kind of the foundation of it all. That’s how I encounter the world, really. Anyway, I’ve realized that what always serves as a compass for me, especially when it comes to decisions involving kids, is when something sparks a memory or triggers that child inside me. I mean, I’m still five, just like I’m still seven, just like I’m now 36. And I do tons of stuff with my nephew.

00:22:34 LT:
Was that the Skyping?

00:22:36 VMF:
Exactly.

00:22:37 LT:
So cool.

00:22:37 VMF:
And really, I just do all the things with him that I would have loved to do as a kid. Or where I wish someone had done them with me. Or maybe I couldn’t do them back then but now I can, and so I do them with him. And he can still do things that you can only really do as a kid.

00:22:56 LT:
So basically a Peter Pan complex.

00:22:58 VMF:
Yeah, kind of.

00:23:02 LT:
I love it!

00:23:02 VMF:
Und in den ersten Interviews habe ich die Leute so ganz direkt nach den Workshops, wie sie arbeiten und so gefragt. Aber dann ist es irgendwie schwieriger, zu wirklichen Aussagen oder konkreten Geschichten zu kommen. Und deswegen habe ich jetzt gedacht, ich frag gar nicht so sehr nach Kindermuseum und den Kindern im Kindermuseum, sondern eher: Wenn du dir vorstellst, du könntest mit dir selber als Kind nochmal einen Tag verbringen. Also nicht ganz Peter Pan, weil nicht nur, dass du wieder jung sein kannst, sondern...

00:23:39 LT:
Du besuchst Peter Pan damals im Nimmerland.

00:23:41 VMF:
Oder Du holst ihn ins Jetzt.

00:23:47 LT:
...und zeigst ihm was Du kannst.

00:23:47 VMF:
... und zeigst ihm was. Also was würdest du mit dir selber machen oder wo würdest du hin?

00:23:54 LT:
Ich ertappe mich selber in letzter Zeit uroft dabei, dass ich so um 3 Uhr früh noch einen Trickfilm zu Hause mach mit der Stop Motion App. Und ich weiß nicht so ab 12 Uhr bin ich glaube ich eh wieder drei oder fünf oder so und dann schläft die Freundin, während ich Blödsinn mach. Ich weiß nicht, so das wär meine blödeste Antwort.

00:24:40 VMF:
Nachts aufstehen.

00:24:46 LT:
Oder nicht nachts aufstehen, sondern wach bleiben. Ich bin gestern um 4 schlafen gegangen, war um neun munter, schau gar nicht fertig aus oder so. Da war einfach etwas zu tun. Hab meinen Kreisel weiterbemalt. Eh den da, das ist meiner Meinung nach der beste Kreisel, der jemals aus dem Kindermuseum rausgekommen ist. Funktioniert verdammt gut. Es ist so oarg! Der funktioniert sogar auf der Hand.

00:25:22 VMF:
Cool. Ich war neulich im... kennst du diese Gyroskope?

00:25:29 LT:
Voll! Da gibt es diese Billardtische auf Schiffen, kennst Du das? Ein Billardtisch am Schiff und sobald eine Welle kommt, kann das das ausgleichen und die Kugeln bleiben einfach so, obwohl die Leute, die drum herumstehen und spielen wollen quasi nicht mehr stehen können.

00:25:47 VMF:
Ah wie cool!

00:25:56 LT:
So blödsinnig, schaut aber einfach geil aus. Das Schiff bewegt sich und der Billardtisch bleibt so. Das ist genial, was Leute schon gemacht haben.

00:26:07 VMF:
Okay, also das heißt, du würdest mit dir selber lange aufbleiben?

00:26:10 LT:
Ja, oder basteln oder Sachen zerlegen. Ich durfte als Kind mal ein Auto kaputt machen auf einem Schrottplatz und das war einfach das Coolste. Kannst jeden Stein nehmen – darf ich den Stein durchs Fenster werfen? Ja! Sollst du sogar. Schön! Duz. Darf ich auf dem Dach rumspringen? Ja, pass nur auf, dass du dir nicht wehtust. Okay. Ich glaub ich hatte sogar noch ein

00:23:02 VMF:
In the early interviews I used to ask people directly about their workshops and how they work and so on. But then it got harder to get to meaningful answers or specific stories. So now I've started asking less about the museum or the kids in the museum, and more like: If you could spend a day with your childhood self – not full-on Peter Pan, not just going back in time, but...

00:23:39 LT:
Visiting Peter Pan back then in Neverland.

00:23:41 VMF:
...or bringing him into the present.

00:23:47 LT:
...and showing him what you can do.

00:23:47 VMF:
...and showing him something. So what would you do with your childhood self, or where would you go?

00:23:54 LT:
Lately I catch myself super often, like around 3 a.m., making stop motion animations with this app. I don't know, I think after midnight I basically am three or five years old again. My girlfriend's asleep while I'm goofing around. I don't know, that's probably the silliest answer I could give.

00:24:40 VMF:
Getting up at night?

00:24:46 LT:
Not even getting up – just staying up. I went to bed at four last night, was up at nine, don't even look tired or anything. I just had stuff to do. Painted my spinning top some more. That one over there – I think it's the best spinning top to ever come out of the Children's Museum. It works insanely well. It's crazy! It even spins on your hand.

00:25:22 VMF:
Cool. I was recently at... do you know those gyroscopes?

00:25:29 LT:
Totally! There are these billiard tables on ships – have you seen those? A billiard table on a ship that compensates when a wave hits, so the balls just stay there, even though the people around it can barely stand.

00:25:47 VMF:
Oh wow, how cool!

00:25:56 LT:
It's so ridiculous but looks awesome. The ship's moving and the table stays level. It's genius what people have come up with.

00:26:07 VMF:
Okay, so you'd stay up late with your childhood self?

00:26:10 LT:
Yeah, or tinker or take stuff apart. As a kid I once got to destroy a car at a junkyard and it was the coolest thing. You could pick up any rock – "Can I throw this through the window?" – "Yes! You should." Nice! Smash. "Can I jump on the roof?" – "Yeah, just don't hurt yourself." I think I even had the steering wheel from that car at home for a year. It was impossible to break. I wanted to break it. It didn't even have a horn anymore, that was already gone. I don't know, I was like eight years old. But what else do you want to do with your child self?

Jahr lang das Lenkrad von dem Auto bei mir zu Hause. Es war unmöglich zu zerstören. Ich wollt‘s gern kaputt machen. Da war nicht mal eine Hupe drin! Die war auch schon draußen. Ich weiß nicht, da war ich acht Jahre alt oder so. Aber was willst mit Dir selbst noch machen als Kind?

00:27:03 VMF:
Ja da hin und mitmachen beim Auto zerlegen? Also ich finde auch, es muss nicht unbedingt sein, dass du dir als Kind irgendwas zeigst, sondern es kann schon sein, dass...

00:27:14 LT:
Dass das Kind mir was zeigt?

00:27:15 VMF:
Oder irgendwas mit dir unternimmt.

00:27:16 LT:
Also ich sag‘s Dir ganz ehrlich, meine Kindheit sofort in Portugal. Also jedes Mal, wenn ich ans Kindsein denke, denke ich sofort wieder zurück an den Strand oder Surfen oder Surfübungen. Am Strand Sand wegpaddeln, bis du dann aufspringen kannst und dann wieder wegpaddeln den Sand. Das machst du die ersten drei Wochen Surftraining. Nichts im Wasser. Nada. Bleibst nur am Strand. Training für die Arme und für die Beine. Es ist böse, die andere Klasse schwimmt schon und du so... Sand weg. Sand weg. Hopp! Runterlegen, wieder Sand weg.

00:28:09 VMF:
Das ist aber hart.

00:28:09 LT:
Ja, dafür hast du dann Beine, die wirklich helfen. Du musst ja die ganze Zeit das Wasser eigentlich so wegdrücken beim Wellenreiten. Ganz ehrlich, wenn ich jetzt noch mal Wellenreiten gehen würde, würde ich es nicht nochmal machen, ich würde mich nicht trauen oder nicht so können wie damals. Ich würde vielleicht noch aufstehen können, aber dann würde es mich sofort wieder runterpracken. Es ist halt, das Meer ist die Urwucht. Kannst eine Welle runterdrücken und sie einschneiden, aber Du musst halt schon auch wissen, wie du das machst.

00:28:42 VMF:
Ja – mit dem Wasser auch.

00:28:47 LT:
Und vor allem brauchen wir halt heftige Wellen. Heftigste Wellen. Wenn ich Atlantik...

00:28:53 VMF:
Und da warst du als Kind? In diesen argen Wellen?

00:28:58 LT:
Ja. Ich liebe es, wirklich. Ich war auch im Winter dort schwimmen. Also Winter gibt es dort nicht wirklich, aber es ist halt scheißkalt, das Wasser. Das war es auch schon im Sommer. Aber das ist ... ich geh auch bei 6 Grad ins Wasser. Oder bei 0 Grad. Nein 1 Grad. 0 Grad ist ja schon gefroren, oder?

00:29:17 VMF:
Ich glaube nicht unbedingt...

00:29:19 LT:
Der Quellwasser-See, glaube ich, hatte ein oder zwei Grad. Das war so geil. So schön. Aber sonst... wenn ich mich entscheiden dürfte, dann sofort Meer, nur Meer. Das ganze Jahr jeden Tag eingraben, den Rechen suchen, den ich verloren hab.

00:29:40 VMF:
Als Kind, oder was? Einen Rechen?

00:27:03 VMF:
Go back there and join in on the car destruction? I mean, I don’t think it has to be about showing your childhood self something – it could just be...

00:27:14 LT:
... that the child shows me something?

00:27:15 VMF:
Or just does something with you.

00:27:16 LT:
To be honest, my childhood instantly takes me back to Portugal. Every time I think about being a kid, I go right back to the beach or to surfing or surf training. On the beach, paddling through sand until you can jump up and then paddle again in the sand. That’s what you do for the first three weeks of surf training. No water. Nothing. Just the beach. Training your arms and legs. It’s brutal – the other class is already in the water and you’re still like... sweep sand. Sweep sand. Jump! Lay back down, sweep sand.

00:28:09 VMF:
That’s rough.

00:28:09 LT:
Yeah, but you end up with legs that really help. You’re basically always pushing water away when surfing. Honestly, if I went surfing again now, I wouldn’t do it. I wouldn’t dare or wouldn’t be able to do it the way I used to. Maybe I’d still manage to stand up, but then I’d immediately wipe out again. The ocean is just this primal force. You can slice into a wave, but you really need to know how.

00:28:42 VMF:
Yeah – working with the water too.

00:28:47 LT:
And above all, you need gnarly waves. Really gnarly waves. When I say “Atlantic”...

00:28:53 VMF:
And you were in those heavy waves as a kid?

00:28:58 LT:
Yeah. I love it, really. I even went swimming there in winter. I mean, “winter” doesn’t really exist there, but the water’s freezing. It was already freezing in summer. But I’ll go swimming even when it’s 6 degrees. Or 0 degrees. No – 1 degree. 0 is already frozen, right?

00:29:17 VMF:
I don’t think necessarily...

00:29:19 LT:
The spring-fed lake was like 1 or 2 degrees, I think. That was awesome. So beautiful. But otherwise... if I could choose, then straight to the sea. Nothing but sea. Every day of the year, digging holes, trying to find the rake I lost.

00:29:40 VMF:
As a kid, right? A rake?

00:29:47 LT:
Ja.

00:29:47 VMF:
Was hast du gerecht?

00:29:47 LT:
Wir haben einen Rechen eingegraben. Ich hab gesagt, ich finde den fix wieder. Nie wieder. Oder den Bumerang mit dem Rick machen. Ich habe ja auch das Didgeridoo... nein, es ist nicht das in der Arbeit, aber so ein ähnliches wie das, was ich in der Arbeit habe, habe ich auch selbst gemacht. Auch in Portugal, mit dem Rick. Rick's Bar hat das geheißen und der hat Termiten gehabt, die hat er durch den Bambus durchkräun lassen. Und die haben es dann ausgefressen, dann hattest du ein Didgeridoo. Nachdem Du oben Wachs draufgetan hast. Und ja, für mich hat er so ein Kleines gemacht. So ein Dünnes. Jetzt habe ich so ein Dickes. Urcool. Also ich glaube ich bastel schon mein Leben lang irgendwelche Musikinstrumente.

00:30:34 VMF:
Ja das klingt ja super! Die Termiten haben das...

00:30:37 LT:
Bambus ist ja innen eigentlich hohl und dann kommt die nächste Etage und die nächste Etage und ich weiß nicht mehr, wie viele das waren. Also der hat so ein Ding gehabt, da hat er das draufgetan, umgedreht, die krabbeln dann da rein und unten musst Du's auch zu machen, weil die krabbeln dann wirklich perfekt wieder ins Glas zurück, sozusagen. Die erste Etage fressen sie komplett weg, dann krabbeln sie runter zur nächsten Etage, tun die komplett wegfressen. Nach außen können sie irgendwie nicht, weil die Stränge sind zu fest. Keine Ahnung, aber die kommen wirklich perfekt runter.

00:31:14 VMF:
Und wie lange dauert das?

00:31:15 LT:
Lang. Also ich hab nicht zugeschaut und wir haben auch gewartet und am nächsten Tag war's dann...

00:31:20 VMF:
Achso, also schon so einen Tag oder so. Das ist ja eigentlich voll schnell...

00:31:24 LT:
Am Abend, das war ja auch nicht so groß, ein, zwei, drei, vier Kammern...

00:31:27 VMF:
Und wie viele Termiten?

00:31:31 LT:
Nicht viele, ich hab aber auch nicht wirklich sehen können, wie viele das waren. Einfach so im Glas, das war nicht durchsichtig. Das haben wir einfach so draufgestöpselt.

00:31:43 VMF:
Also oben und unten ein Glas quasi?

00:31:44 LT:
Genau, man hat es schon so gehört. Ganz kleine Knipser, ganz ganz winzig. Also musste ich schon so am Holz hören.

00:31:55 VMF:
Das ist ja urcool!

00:31:57 LT:
Ja und das Geilste ist, solange sie noch nicht ganz durch sind, kannst du unten das Glas noch abnehmen

00:29:47 LT:
Yeah.

00:29:47 VMF:
What were you raking?

00:29:47 LT:
We buried a rake. I said, "I'll definitely find it again." Never did. Or making a boomerang with Rick. I also have the didgeridoo – not the one at work, but one like it – that I made myself. Also in Portugal, with Rick. His bar was called "Rick's Bar," and he had termites that burrowed through the bamboo. They hollowed it out and then you had a didgeridoo. After you sealed it with wax on top. And yeah, he made a small one for me. A thin one. Now I have a thick one. Super cool. I think I've been building instruments my whole life.

00:30:34 VMF:
That sounds amazing! The termites actually...

00:30:37 LT:
Bamboo is actually hollow inside, and then it's like one chamber after the next, and the next – I don't remember how many there were. So he had this setup, right? He'd put the bamboo on it, flip it over, and the termites would crawl inside. And you had to seal it on the bottom too, because they'd crawl all the way back down – literally straight into the jar again. They'd eat through the first chamber completely, then crawl down to the next and chew through that one. They somehow can't get through the outside because the fibers are too tough. I don't know, but they just crawl down, perfectly.

00:31:14 VMF:
And how long does that take?

00:31:15 LT:
A while. I didn't really watch. We just waited, and the next day it was...

00:31:20 VMF:
Ah okay, so like a day or so. That's actually pretty fast...

00:31:24 LT:
By the evening, yeah. And it wasn't even that big – just like one, two, three, four chambers...

00:31:27 VMF:
And how many termites?

00:31:31 LT:
Not many, but I couldn't really tell how many. They were just in a jar that wasn't see-through. We just kind of stuck it on.

00:31:43 VMF:
So a jar on the top and bottom?

00:31:44 LT:
Exactly. You could hear it. Tiny little clicks – really, really faint. You had to listen through the wood.

00:31:55 VMF:
That's so cool!

00:31:57 LT:
Yeah, and the best part is: as long as they haven't made it all the way through, you can still take the jar off at the bottom and listen. Then it's super loud... sounds like white noise on a TV.

und so reinhören, da hörst du‘s dann urlaut... Das hört sich an wie so weißes Rauschen im Fernsehen.

00:32:07 VMF:
Und was waren das für Termiten? Wo hat er die hergehabt?

00:32:14 LT:
Das weiß ich nicht, das ist ein Australier der Rick und der hat in Portugal eine Bar gehabt und hat dort alles mögliche gemacht, auch Bongos und Kongos und so gebaut. Das ist ein richtiger ... sein Dad war 90 und ist noch Motorrad gefahren und so.

00:32:32 VMF:
Okay, das scheint so ein bisschen ein Urmoment zu sein, der Rick.

00:32:39 LT:
Ja.

00:32:41 VMF:
So Instrumente basteln. Das klingt ja großartig.

00:32:42 LT:
Überhaupt so der Typ, wohnt jetzt leider nicht mehr dort, also er hat die Rick‘s Bar nicht mehr, aber er wohnt genau dahinter. Weil er hat jetzt alles was er will und jetzt braucht er nicht mehr arbeiten.

00:32:52 VMF:
Hast du Kontakt?

00:32:58 LT:
Nein. Mein Dad hat aber noch Kontakt und ich habe aber leider wenig Kontakt zum Vater.

00:33:01 VMF:
Ist der in Portugal?

00:33:04 LT:
Nein, nein der Papa ist im Heim. Alkoholbedingte Demenz, Korsakow-Syndrom.

00:33:17 VMF:
Hier in Wien?

00:33:20 LT:
Ja, nicht zu gutes Verhältnis zu ihm. Das letzte Mal, dass ich ihn gesehen hab, war zum Begräbnis seiner Mama. Ja.

00:33:34 VMF:
Wann hast Du den Rick das letzte Mal gesehen?

00:33:48 VMF:
13 12 12 13 14 sowas. Ich war nicht mehr in Ricks Bar, seitdem ... also mit 9 bin ich von Portugal weg, da hat die Bar auch irgendwann zugemacht. Der war eigentlich ziemlich schnell am Ziel.

00:34:06 VMF:
Hat er so viel Geld mit der Bar verdient?

00:34:07 LT:
Nein, nein, nein. Der hat so einen Garten sich hergerichtet...

00:34:12 VMF:
So Selbstversorger-mäßig?

00:34:14 LT:
Genau – der hatte auch... wie heißt das Wort? Du kannst ja eine Speis haben, die unter der Erde ist, die sich selbst kühlt, wie heißt das nochmal?

00:34:30 VMF:
Erdkeller?

00:32:07 VMF:
And what kind of termites were those? Where’d he get them?

00:32:14 LT:
No idea. Rick’s Australian, and he had this bar in Portugal. He did all sorts of stuff there – built bongos, congas, and all that. Real character... his dad was 90 and still riding motorcycles.

00:32:32 VMF:
Okay, sounds like Rick was kind of a primal moment for you.

00:32:39 LT:
Yeah.

00:32:41 VMF:
Making instruments and stuff. That sounds amazing.

00:32:42 LT:
He was just that type of guy. Doesn’t live there anymore, unfortunately. Or he doesn’t have Rick’s Bar anymore. But he still lives just behind it. He’s got everything he wants now, so he doesn’t need to work anymore.

00:32:52 VMF:
Are you still in contact?

00:32:58 LT:
No. My dad still is, but I don’t really have much contact with my dad anymore.

00:33:01 VMF:
Is he in Portugal?

00:33:04 LT:
No, no, my dad’s in a care home. Alcohol-induced dementia. Korsakoff syndrome.

00:33:17 VMF:
Here in Vienna?

00:33:20 LT:
Yeah. I don’t have the best relationship with him. Last time I saw him was at his mother’s funeral. Yeah.

00:33:34 VMF:
When did you last see Rick?

00:33:48 LT:
2013, 2012, 2013, 2014, something like that. I haven’t been to Rick’s Bar since then... I left Portugal when I was 9, and the bar closed sometime after that.
He actually reached his goal pretty quickly.

00:34:06 VMF:
Did he make a lot of money with the bar?

00:34:07 LT:
No, no, no. He fixed up a garden for himself...

00:34:12 VMF:
Like self-sufficient style?

00:34:14 LT:
Exactly – he even had, what’s the word... you know those food cellars underground that keep things cool on their own? What’s that called again?

00:34:30 VMF:
A root cellar?

00:34:36 LT:
Nein, nein, nein. Ach wurscht. Das sich selbst Kühlende, selbst Konservierende... na wurscht, mir fällt‘s jetzt nicht ein.

00:34:39 VMF:
Und da hat er für den Rest seines Lebens schon genug...

00:34:50 LT:
Nein, das ist sozusagen sein Kühlschrank. Er braucht auch keinen Strom und so... der Typ ist einfach... der Rick. Ich weiß leider nicht mehr, wie seine Freundin geheißen hat. Die war auch lustig – Dreads bis zu den Füßen. Überhaupt, da hatten so viele Leute so lange Haare, habe ich Dir erzählt von der Freundin von mir, die einfach nie ihre Haare hat schneiden lassen?

00:35:17 VMF:
Ah doch...

00:35:18 LT:
So lang. Und jetzt hat sie immer Kurzhaarfrisuren. Das war die Tochter vom Dottore, aber wie sie heißt, weiß ich auch nicht mehr. Dottore... alle heißen Maria oder João. Du kannst 100 pro, wenn Du nach Portugal fährst, hast du sicher 5 João, 5 Carlos. Die heißen so wie bei uns Müller und Meier. Aber vorhin als du angefangen hast, da hab ich Dich unterbrochen....

00:35:57 VMF:
Du hast es dann eh beantwortet mit diesem Instrumenten bauen...

00:36:11 LT:
Der Rick...

00:36:16 VMF:
Das ist dann wohl der Rick und die Termiten.

00:36:16 LT:
Der Rick und die Termiten, ja... das könnte sogar eine süße Kinderstory werden.

00:36:16 VMF:
Ja das ist super. Es hat sich jetzt bei allen diesen Gesprächen gab es irgendwie einen so...

00:36:22 LT:
Crucial Moment.

00:36:23 VMF:
... der sich so rauskristallisiert. Und ich glaube bei Dir...

00:36:32 LT:
Hab‘s schon. Portugal halt. Ich weiß nicht, das ist... Portugal ist so, das ist meine Kindheit. Ich kann an nichts anderes denken, wenn ich an Portugal denke. Hier bin ich schon so ein bisschen erwachsen gewesen, auch wenn ich erst 10 war, weiß nicht, da hat dann Skaten und Kino-gehen begonnen. So alleine. Alleine unterwegs sein, ohne die Eltern.

00:36:52 VMF:
Ah da waren Deine Eltern schon immer dabei?

00:36:55 LT:
Ja also beim Rick war mein Papa.... meine Mama war in Wien und ist immer nur hin und her gereist. Und da war mein Vater halt dabei, der hat währenddessen gegen den Vater Backgammon gespielt. Sein Vater hat abbissen, mein Vater war wirklich gut. Und ja, wir haben dann halt gebastelt, ich habe auch bei seinem Haus mit Ölen geholfen und mit Schleifen. Wenn ich nichts zu tun hatte, dann bin ich zum Rick raufgegangen. Oder zu Maria. Das war mein Kindermädchen sozusagen, die hat mich urlieb gehabt und war da und die war die beste. Maria Maria! Das war so meine zweite Mami dort oder Omi, sagen wir besser Omi,

00:34:36 LT:
No, no, no. Ah whatever. It keeps things cool and preserves them... can’t remember the word right now.

00:34:39 VMF:
And that was enough to last him the rest of his life?

00:34:50 LT:
No, that was basically his fridge. He doesn’t even need electricity... the guy is just... Rick. I don’t remember what his girlfriend’s name was either. She was funny too – dreadlocks down to her feet. Actually, so many people there had super long hair. Did I ever tell you about that friend of mine who never cut her hair?

00:35:17 VMF:
Ah yeah...

00:35:18 LT:
It was that long. And now she always has short hair. She was the daughter of “Dottore,” but I don’t remember her name either. Dottore... everyone’s called Maria or João there. Like, if you go to Portugal, I guarantee you’ll meet five Joãos, five Carloses. It’s like Müller and Meier here. But anyway, earlier when you started talking, I interrupted you...

00:35:57 VMF:
You actually answered it already – with that instrument building...

00:36:11 LT:
Rick...

00:36:16 VMF:
So it’s Rick and the termites.

00:36:16 LT:
Rick and the termites, yeah... that could totally be a children’s story.

00:36:16 VMF:
Yeah, that’s great. It’s like, in all these conversations, there’s always one...

00:36:22 LT:
...crucial moment.

00:36:23 VMF:
...that kind of crystallizes. And I think for you...

00:36:32 LT:
Got it. Portugal. That’s it. Portugal is my childhood. I can’t think of anything else when I think of childhood. Here, I was already kind of grown up. Even if I was only ten. That’s when I started skating and going to the movies. Like on my own. Being out and about without parents.

00:36:52 VMF:
Ah, so your parents were always with you there?

00:36:55 LT:
Yeah, like with Rick, my dad was there... my mom was in Vienna and traveled back and forth. And my dad was there, playing backgammon with Rick’s dad. His dad would lose, my dad was actually good. And yeah, we’d be tinkering. I helped Rick oil stuff at his house and sand things. If I had nothing to do, I’d go up to Rick’s. Or to Maria. She was like my nanny – super sweet and caring, the best. Maria, Maria! She was kind of like a second mom – or rather grandma. Let’s say grandma, because she was...

weil die war...

00:37:42 VMF:
Ah war die schon älter?

00:37:43 LT:
Ja, ja. Die hat meiner Mama zum Beispiel auch gezeigt, wo du und wie du Fisch einkaufst. Sachen wie Lesen, Schreiben, Rechnen hat sie nicht können aber Kochen bis zum geht nicht mehr, urgut. Die hat in einem vier Hauben oder 5 Sterne, keine Ahnung, Restaurant gearbeitet und dann nur noch als Hausmädchen. Die geht am Fischmarkt und sagt so: Den Fisch können Sie nicht verkaufen, der ist schwanger, schauen Sie sich die Augen an. Warum die Augen? Glasig, schau – da ist das Kind. So ganz oarg. Nur an den Augen erkennt sie das. Sie sagt so, na das lernst du halt in der Küche – naja sicher nicht. Ist auch eine Kunst. Wenn man mir Zucchini unterjubeln kann, ist das eine Kunst. Ich hasse Zucchini. Hab gestern Zucchini gegessen. Das ist die ärgste Kunst. Jaja Lucca, sind Gurken. Weiße Lügen, das ist die Kunst der heutigen Zeit. So etwas lieb, aber nicht ehrlich zu sagen. Ist das die Definition von weißen Lügen? Es gibt die White Lies und die Black Lies, die schwarzen Lügen sind nur um dich selbst zu schützen, aber den anderen zu verletzen oder so. Keine Ahnung, die weißen Lügen so: Taugt dir mein T-Shirt? Und du weißt, er will ja hören, obwohl es dir nicht taugt. Und du sagst, jaja – fix!

00:39:34 VMF:
Aber wenn dir jemand Zucchini verkauft und er weiß, du magst keine Zucchini?

00:39:39 LT:
Naja wenigstens dann...

00:39:40 VMF:
Nee, das ist doch keine White Lie. Also, wenn das White Lies sind... eine White Lie wäre, wenn du dann sagen würdest: Hmmm Zucchini! Meine Leibspeise.

00:39:51 LT:
Stimmt. Vielleicht lüge ich mich aber auch selber an.

00:39:54 VMF:
Dann wird‘s komplex. White Lies gegen sich selber, das klingt ungesund.

00:40:05 LT:
Ja, eh aber das machen ja trotzdem urviele Menschen! So weichen doch die meisten Menschen ihren Problemen aus, so jaja, ich weiß eh Bescheid, ich kümmere mich später drum. Oder? So kommt es mir halt vor.

00:40:21 VMF:
Stimmt, stimmt.

00:40:24 LT:
Ist heute eigentlich irgendwas los im ZOOM? Ich will dann hinfahren und die Röhre aufnehmen.

00:40:34 VMF:
Naja um 4 Uhr ist halt dieses Fest.

00:40:34 LT:
Voll. Kann ich jedem sagen: Schhh!! Recording! Bin schon gespannt, ob das überhaupt funktioniert.

00:40:38 VMF:
Termiten durch die Röhre schicken. Das wäre cool, wenn Hans Schabus so die Riesenröhre gebaut hätte!

00:40:42 LT:
Das wär wirklich geil. Oder so einen dicken Bambus mal finden.

00:37:42 VMF:
Ah, she was older?

00:37:43 LT:
Yeah, yeah. She was the one who showed my mom where and how to buy fish, for example. She couldn’t read, write, or do math, but she could cook like nobody’s business. She’d worked at some four-toque or five-star restaurant – no idea – but later she just worked as a housekeeper. She’d go to the fish market and say: “You can’t sell this fish, she’s pregnant – look at her eyes.” Why the eyes? “They’re glassy – see, there’s the baby.” Totally wild. Just from the eyes she could tell. She said: “You learn that in the kitchen.” Yeah, sure... that’s an art in itself. If someone can sneak zucchini past me, that’s an art form. I hate zucchini. I ate zucchini yesterday. That’s the highest art form. “Yeah yeah Lucca, it’s cucumber.” White lies – that’s the art form of our time. Saying something nice without being honest. Isn’t that the definition of a white lie? There are white lies and black lies. The black ones are to protect yourself but hurt someone else, or something like that. And white ones are like: “Do you like my shirt?” And you know they just want to hear “yes,” even if you don’t like it. And you say: “Yeah yeah – totally!”

00:39:34 VMF:
But what if someone gives you zucchini and knows you hate zucchini?

00:39:39 LT:
Well, at least then...

00:39:40 VMF:
No, that’s not a white lie. A white lie would be if you said: “Mmm zucchini! My favorite!”

00:39:51 LT:
True. Maybe I’m just lying to myself.

00:39:54 VMF:
That’s when it gets complex. White lies to yourself – that sounds unhealthy.

00:40:05 LT:
Yeah, true, but tons of people do that! That’s how most people avoid their problems. Like: “Yeah yeah, I know, I’ll deal with it later.” Right? That’s what it feels like to me.

00:40:21 VMF:
True, true.

00:40:24 LT:
Is anything going on at ZOOM today? I want to go record the tube.

00:40:34 VMF:
Well, there’s that party at 4 p.m..

00:40:34 LT:
Right. I’ll just tell everyone: “Shhh!! Recording!” I’m curious if it’ll work at all.

00:40:38 VMF:
Send termites through the tube. That’d be awesome if Hans Schabus had built that giant tube like that!

00:40:42 LT:
That would be amazing. Or just find a super thick piece of bamboo.

00:40:52 VMF:
Bambus ist kein Holz – geht nicht.

00:40:56 LT:
Ja, ist ein Gras, gell? Zach, zach! Und außerdem wurzelt das ja wie... weißt Du, wie die Wurzeln, die Dinger? Die müssen ja flach, nicht tief. Pflanz nie einen Bambus in deinem Garten!

00:41:10 VMF:
Ja der ist dann überall.

00:41:11 LT:
5 Nachbarn später ist er dann im Garten. Die Nachbarn neben uns in meinem alten Haus, im alten Haus von meinen Eltern, der Besitzer davor hat Bambus gepflanzt und der Pool von den Nachbarn ist kaputt gegangen. Unter der Erde, weil der Bambus sich einfach durchgebohrt hat.

00:41:37 VMF:
Ja das ist ein arges Zeug. Ich hab mal... kennst Du die Anna Rubin?

00:41:40 LT:
Anna Rubin...?

00:41:41 VMF:
Diese Drachenbauerin?

00:41:43 LT:
Drachenbauerin, ja, ich glaube schon. Der Name sagt mir auf jeden Fall was.

00:41:45 VMF:
Seit 20 Jahren baut sie Drachen aber halt so ganz arge – google mal Anna Rubin.

00:41:53 LT:
Warum habe ich eigentlich den Laptop offen? Anna mit Doppel-N? Rubin? Anna Rubin. Gehen wir mal auf Bilder.

00:42:08 VMF:
Na kannst eh auf ihre Webseite.

00:42:11 LT:
Achso da.

00:42:12 VMF:
Ja. Und die macht... also das sind so fliegende Skulpturen, aber die macht auch super Workshops. Das ist meistens aus Bambus und Papier. Du tust selber den Bambus spalten.

00:42:29 LT:
Woa, ist ja urgefährlich.

00:42:32 VMF:
Ja, ziemlich arges Zeug.

00:42:36 LT:
Weil, du kannst dich ja extrem schneiden. Also in Portugal hatten wir Kakteen, Bambus und Brombeeren. In alle drei bin ich reingeflogen und alle drei tun wirklich weh. Also Kaktus war am wenigsten schlimm.

00:42:53 VMF:
Echt?

00:42:53 LT:
Ja, also da waren nur fünf oder sechs dicke Kakteen und ich weiß nicht, ich hatte 20 Stacheln oder so, das war nicht so schlimm.

00:43:01 VMF:
Naja, je nachdem wie giftig die sind, oder?

00:40:52 VMF:
Bamboo's not wood – doesn't work.

00:40:56 LT:
Yeah, it's grass, right? Tough stuff! And the roots – do you know how they spread? They're shallow, not deep. Never plant bamboo in your garden!

00:41:10 VMF:
Yeah, it spreads everywhere.

00:41:11 LT:
Five neighbors down and it's still spreading. At my parents' old place, the neighbor planted bamboo – and it broke the neighbors' pool. Underground. Bamboo just pierced right through.

00:41:37 VMF:
Yeah, that stuff's intense. I once... do you know Anna Rubin?

00:41:40 LT:
Anna Rubin...?

00:41:41 VMF:
The kite maker?

00:41:43 LT:
Kite maker, yeah, I think so. The name definitely rings a bell.

00:41:45 VMF:
She's been making kites for like 20 years – crazy stuff. Look her up: Anna Rubin.

00:41:53 LT:
Why is my laptop even open? Anna with two Ns? Rubin? Anna Rubin. Let's check images...

00:42:08 VMF:
Or just go to her website.

00:42:11 LT:
Ah, there it is.

00:42:12 VMF:
Yeah. She makes flying sculptures – but also does amazing workshops. Mostly with bamboo and paper. You split the bamboo yourself.

00:42:29 LT:
Whoa, that sounds super dangerous.

00:42:32 VMF:
Yeah, pretty intense stuff.

00:42:36 LT:
You can cut yourself so badly. In Portugal, we had cacti, bamboo, and blackberry bushes. I crashed into all three – and they all really hurt. Cactus was the least bad.

00:42:53 VMF:
Really?

00:42:53 LT:
Yeah, there were just five or six big cacti. I don't know, I had maybe 20 thorns in me – not that bad.

00:43:01 VMF:
Depends how poisonous they are, right?

00:43:04 LT:
...waren sie zum Glück nicht. Es war nichts Schlimmes. Viel schlimmer waren die Brombeeren. Musst Dir vorstellen so ein Brombeerfeld, aber so hoch, ich so klein. Ich geh an der Mauer entlang – schwupp! rein... und einmal bin ich gegen einen Bambus gelaufen. Dann hatte ich einfach hier einen Schnitt. Gefallen bin ich auf den. Ich weiß nicht, ist ein bisschen zu lange her. Aber da hatte ich hier so einen bösen Schnitt. Oder hier, warte...da. Ich spür ihn nämlich noch.

00:43:44 VMF:
Woa.

00:43:44 LT:
Voll. ... Das schaut ja aus wie ein Stein! Ist ja urgeil. [Anm.: Zu Anna Rubins Drachen.]

00:43:44 VMF:
Und sie macht eben auch so Workshops, wo sie ganz einfache Formen hat und die fliegen so super.

00:43:53 LT:
Ja urgeil.

00:43:55 VMF:
Das ist so erhebend, wenn was von dir, das du selber gemacht hast, in die Luft steigt.

00:44:03 LT:
Urschön.

00:44:04 VMF:
Weil ich hab vorher... Drachen waren für mich immer nur hässliche Plastik-Drachen, die mein Vater sich einbildet und dann selber nicht checkt und eigentlich nur Frust.

00:44:12 LT:
Ja. Ich habe mich gefreut über die kleinen Blätter.

00:44:16 VMF:
Ja, ja, ja, ja, da gibt es auch so kleine japanische Zimmer-Drachen, kennst Du die?

00:44:23 LT:
Naaa

00:44:23 VMF:
Ich weiß nicht, ob sie die auf der Webseite hat, aber die sind so...

00:44:31 LT:
Das schau ich mir gleich an!

00:44:31 VMF:
Die sind halt nur so... eh so Blatt-groß oder so. Und da ein Staberl und eine Schnur und die schweben so gut, dass die ... wenn Du so machst, dass die schweben. Ich weiß nicht, ob man das findet.

00:44:44 LT:
Cool. Selber basteln! Ich hab ja letztens ein Ding gebaut... einen Kreisel aus Papier... was, sowas gibt‘s wirklich?

00:44:44 VMF:
Na es ist viel... ich bring Dir mal einen mit. Ich hab glaube ich schon mal gegoogelt und nichts gefunden.

00:45:10 LT:
Google – nicht immer hilfreich. Ich mach urviel so Blödsinn mit ZOOM-Zeugs. So, ich hab mal urlang vom Spitzer die Reste gesammelt und dann hab ich so ein Bild gemacht. Ich weiß. Eigentlich mach ich zu viel Blödsinn. Ich weiß gar nicht, wo das Bild ist. Achso, das hängt drüben.

00:43:04 LT:
They weren’t, luckily. Nothing serious. The blackberries were way worse. Imagine a blackberry patch taller than me – I was small. Walking along the wall – bam! Fell in... And once I ran into a bamboo stalk. Got a nasty cut right here. Fell onto it. Don’t really remember well, it’s been a while. But the cut was bad. Here – wait... there. I can still feel it.

00:43:44 VMF:
Whoa.

00:43:44 LT:
Totally. ... That looks like a stone! That’s so cool. [Referring to Anna Rubin’s kite.]

00:43:44 VMF:
And she also does workshops with really simple forms that fly beautifully.

00:43:53 LT:
Yeah, super cool.

00:43:55 VMF:
It’s such an amazing feeling when something you made actually lifts off into the air.

00:44:03 LT:
So beautiful.

00:44:04 VMF:
Because for me, kites were always just these ugly plastic things my dad insisted on, never understood, and it always just led to frustration.

00:44:12 LT:
Yeah. I was excited about the little leaves.

00:44:16 VMF:
Yeah, yeah, yeah – there are also these tiny Japanese room kites, do you know them?

00:44:23 LT:
Nooo.

00:44:23 VMF:
I’m not sure if she has them on her website, but they’re like...

00:44:31 LT:
I’ll check that out right now!

00:44:31 VMF:
They’re about the size of a leaf or so. Just a little stick and a string, and they float so well that... like, if you just do this, they float. I don’t know if you can find them online.

00:44:44 LT:
Cool. DIY! I just made something recently... a spinning top out of paper... wait, those actually exist?

00:44:44 VMF:
Yeah, I’ll bring you one sometime. I think I googled it once and didn’t find anything.

00:45:10 LT:
Google – not always helpful. I do a lot of silly stuff with ZOOM materials. Once I collected pencil sharpener shavings for ages and made a picture out of them. I know. I do way too much nonsense. I don’t even know where that picture is. Oh right, it’s hanging over there.

Voll, Und Kunst sammeln tu ich auch. Aber das macht eher die Mama für mich. Den Hubert Scheibl da aufhängen, drüben den Hellnwein aufhängen. Und solche Sachen. Das eine Bild hängt drüben, das kann ich nicht rausholen, das habe ich gemacht – viel Spaß beim Restaurieren. Sind halt einfach so 50 Schichten von irgendwelchen Klebern drauf und wie ich dann keinen Kleber mehr hatte, so: Schatz, darf ich Dein Haarspray haben? Ja und halt so urviel vom Spitzer die Farbschnipsel auf dem Kleber verteilt und so. Ich bastel auch viel lieber was zum Geburtstag als was zu kaufen... so Kerzen. Meiner Mama habe ich letztens eine Kerze geschenkt, aber einfach nur aus den restlichen Kerzen, die ich ... wenn ich so eine kleine Kerze anzünde, dann bleibt immer so viel Geruch da drinnen... da bin ich viel zu viel spar... ein Bausparer.

00:47:01 VMF:
Machst du die Musik genauso wie du bastelst?

00:47:06 LT:
Ja genauso chaotisch, ja. Würde ich schon sagen. Magst was von mir hören? Schon geil, ich hab‘s mir eh gedacht. Muss ich halt meine Festplatte holen, weil ich habe jetzt mal alles wieder von dem Computer heruntergetan und dann machen wir das letzte Projekt auf. Hab ich gesampelt, oder? Es ist unfair, wenn ich sample, das ist dann keine Musik von mir.

00:47:34 VMF:
Ach Quatsch.

00:47:36 LT:
Na ja, es ist inzwischen eh alles sehr simpel. Amelia the second. Hallo Amelia. Es kommt dann Amelia the Third, Amelia the Fourth, Amelia the Fifth.

00:47:45 VMF:
Wieso Amelia?

00:47:45 LT:
Amelia Bounce. Amelia ich bin bald fertig, ich schwör‘s dir, bald.

00:47:51 VMF:
Hehe, was ist Amelia?

00:47:57 LT:
Das Sample.

00:47:58 VMF:
Aber warum?

00:47:58 LT:
Das Lied heißt El Testamento de Amelia.

00:48:01 VMF:
Ah ok.

00:48:01 LT:
Ich habe es halt... ich habe es halt Amelia genannt.

00:48:15 VMF:
Ah versteh.

00:48:15 LT:
[Spielt Song] ... sehr eintönig ... das muss noch komplett geändert werden. ... so geil ... ich liebe es. Automationen! [unverständlich] ... geht schon. [Stoppt Song] Automation, wo ist sie ... einfach so ganz hinten einmal reinhauen, einmal raushauen, einmal reinhauen, einmal raushauen... da kann man auch einen ganzen Score füllen. [Song läuft, spielt herum] Aber das ist halt ein Preset. Das verwende ich nicht so gerne. Da bau ich‘s mir lieber selber so... kann man urviel machen.

00:50:31 VMF:
Aber nimmst du auch deine gebastelten Sachen auf?

And I collect art too – but mostly my mom does that for me. Hanging a Hubert Scheibl there, a Helnwein over there, that kind of thing. That one painting over there, I made it – good luck restoring it. Like 50 layers of random glue on it, and when I ran out of glue, I was like: „Babe, can I borrow your hairspray?“ Yeah... and then I scattered all those colored shavings from the sharpener over the glue. I’d rather make something for someone’s birthday than buy a gift... like candles.
I gave my mom a candle recently, just made out of the leftovers of other candles. You know when you burn those small ones and there’s always so much scent left? I’m way too stingy about that... a real saver.

00:47:01 VMF:
Do you make music the same way you tinker?

00:47:06 LT:
Yeah, just as chaotically, for sure. Want to hear something of mine? Cool, I figured you might. I’ll have to grab my hard drive, though, since I moved everything off this computer. Then we can open up the last project I worked on. I sampled something, right? But it’s kind of unfair – if I sample, then it’s not really my music.

00:47:34 VMF:
Come on, that’s nonsense.

00:47:36 LT:
Well, nowadays everything’s super simple anyway. Amelia the Second. Hello Amelia. There’s gonna be an Amelia the Third, Fourth, Fifth...

00:47:45 VMF:
Why Amelia?

00:47:45 LT:
Amelia Bounce. Amelia, I swear I’m almost done.

00:47:51 VMF:
Hehe, what’s Amelia?

00:47:57 LT:
The sample.

00:47:58 VMF:
But why that name?

00:47:58 LT:
The song is called El Testamento de Amelia.

00:48:01 VMF:
Ah okay.

00:48:01 LT:
So I just called it Amelia.

00:48:15 VMF:
Ah, I see.

00:48:15 LT:
[Plays song] ... very monotonous ... I need to completely change that. ... so good ... I love it. Automation! [unintelligible] ... it‘s working. [Stops song] Automation – just drop it in at the back, fade in, fade out, fade in, fade out... you could fill an entire score like that. [Plays around with the track] But that’s just a preset. I don’t like using presets. I’d rather build everything myself. There’s so much you can do.

00:50:31 VMF:
Do you also record the things you build?

00:50:36 LT:
Voll. Das wollte ich dir als nächstes shown... wie ich nämlich die Talkbox gebaut hab, die habe ich eigentlich nur gebaut, weil ich ein Referat darüber gemacht hab für die Uni. Und es ist halt leiwander ein Referat zu halten ohne Papier in der Hand, sondern da: das funktioniert so und so. Ich führe es euch gleich vor. Viel angenehmer, als einfach nur ein Referat zu halten, so: Hier habt‘s ihr die Handouts. Lest‘s ruhig mit. Das pack ich nicht. ... Wo ist heeeey... beep beep! Wo ist es? Da... [spielt Nummer]

00:51:15 VMF:
Das hat Deine Talkbox gesagt?

00:51:15 LT:
Ja, also durch meinen Mund. Und da sind dann noch dabei die Klangrohre aus dem ZOOM und was ist noch dabei... der Bass... aber den hab ich nicht selbst gebastelt. Shaker sind sicher auch urviele. [unverständlich] da mach ich aber auch nur was nach, was es schon gibt. Das Heeey beep beep, das gibt‘s schon. Von These Boots are Made for Walking. Aber halt auch nur nachgesungen, das heißt ich durfte es nehmen.

00:52:26 VMF:
Aber das hört sich super an.

00:52:35 LT:
[unverständlich] Ich wusste nicht, wie ich das nennen soll, da habe ich einfach ... can‘t sleep in start living... ich find das sagt eh schon alles. Ach, nicht schlafen. Sitz nur so im Tunnel. Und dann kommt die Freundin so um fünf in der Früh rein und schaut dich so an: Du Schatz, es wird Fünf! Schau raus, es wird hell... Auch schon wurscht, oder? Mach ich halt weiter... [unverständlich] von Ambient Music zu einem harten Techno-Track... [unverständlich] Ja, das sind die Sachen, die ich raufgeladen habe, weil es mir einfach schon auf die Nerven geht. Ich will nichts mehr damit zu tun haben. Weg mit dem Song. So wie der, den ich da grad offen hab, den hab ich dem Benedict schon geschickt, so: Bitte mach du weiter! Das ist schon bisschen fad, nervt mich schon.

00:54:17 VMF:
Ah ja, das ist auch eine gute Strategie, wenn man nicht weiterkommt, weitergeben.

00:54:25 LT:
Weg damit. Das sieht man eh: Ah Lucca probiert ne Base-Line zu schreiben... wheeee geht nicht, wenn der Sound Dir schon auf die Nerven geht. Geht einfach nicht, lass es. Schick‘s weg! Außerdem hat er einen Moog zu Hause, Moog Grandmother. Den geilsten Bass-Sound überhaupt. Synthesizer sind so geil.

00:54:46 VMF:
Also einen original Moog Synthesizer hat der? Boa!

00:54:48 LT:
Voll. Halt keinen Uni-Moog, nicht diese ganz oargen Dinger, aber einen Grandmother. Was heißt nicht die ganz oargen Dinger, das ist oarg genug! ... Warum kann ich da denn nicht... ich hab‘s urlieb, dass ich da jetzt eine Pflanze hab, aber eigentlich wollte ich nie eine. Sophie war irgendwie: Du brauchst eine Pflanze in deinem Zimmer! ... Wieso kann ich da jetzt nichts öffnen? Geht‘s noch?? Wo ist es? Da ist der Bass, probieren wir‘s mal hier. Bitte? Ach so, ich bin in der falschen Spur. Sorry. Achso, ist gefreezed. Na, machen wir‘s halt so. Ultra Beats... Multi Output... Read. Das ist halt, das ist so ein Drum Sampler. Da tu ich mir meine Drum Base reinladen. So... was auch immer. Geil was? Da kannst du dir dann jedes Sample reinspielen, egal welche Lautstärke, du kannst auch dann urgemütlich hier pitchen, die analogues verändern. Die Richtung verändern. Eigentlich, mit einem Sound kannst du

00:50:36 LT:
Totally. That’s actually what I wanted to show you next... like when I built the talkbox. I only made it because I had to give a presentation for uni. And it’s way cooler to give a presentation without reading off a paper – like: “It works like this and that. I’ll show you.” Way better than just handing out a script and saying, “Follow along.” Can’t stand that... Where’s heeey... beep beep! Where is it? There... [plays clip]

00:51:15 VMF:
That was your talkbox?

00:51:15 LT:
Yeah, through my mouth. And also the sound tubes from ZOOM are in there, and what else... the bass... but I didn’t build that myself. Tons of shakers too. [unintelligible] But that’s mostly stuff I recreate that already exists. The Heeey beep beep – that’s from These Boots Are Made for Walkin’. But I just sang it, so I was allowed to use it.

00:52:26 VMF:
It sounds great though.

00:52:35 LT:
[unintelligible] I didn’t know what to call it, so I just... “can’t sleep in start living...” I think that says it all. Not sleeping. Just sitting there in the tunnel. And then my girlfriend comes in at five in the morning and looks at me like: “Babe, it’s five! Look, the sun’s coming up...” Whatever. I just keep going... [unintelligible] from ambient music to a hard techno track... [unintelligible] These are the tracks I uploaded because they were getting on my nerves. I didn’t want anything to do with them anymore. Away with the song. Like the one I have open right now – I already sent it to Benedict, like: “You finish it. I’m bored of it.” It’s annoying.

00:54:17 VMF:
That’s actually a good strategy when you get stuck – just pass it on.

00:54:25 LT:
Exactly. Just let it go. You can tell – “Ah, Lucca’s trying to write a bassline... wheeee... doesn’t work.” If the sound already annoys you, it won’t happen. Just send it off! Besides, he has a Moog at home. A Moog Grandmother. The best bass sound ever. Synths are so cool.

00:54:46 VMF:
Wait, he has an original Moog synth? Damn!

00:54:48 LT:
Yeah, not a Univox Moog or one of those extreme beasts, but a Grandmother. Not one of the really insane ones, but still – it’s wild enough! ... Why can’t I... I love that I finally have a plant now, but I never even wanted one. Sophie was like: “You need a plant in your room!”... Why can’t I open anything? Seriously?? Where is it... there’s the bass, let’s try that. What? Oh, I’m in the wrong track. Sorry. Oh right, it’s frozen. Okay, let’s do it this way. Ultra Beats... Multi Output... Read. That’s like a drum sampler. I load my drum base into it. There we go... whatever. Cool, right? You can load any sample in, any volume, pitch it easily, tweak the analog settings, change the direction. Honestly, you can do anything with a single sound. You can make fat kick drums out of a piano. We made a huge bass from a kick drum. All my projects are over there. Most Funky Project is over there. Funky Onion. Look: Betty and Lucie. There – ZOOM Tubes.

alles machen. Du kannst aus einem Klavier fette Kick-Drums machen. Wir haben aus einer Kickdrum einen fetten Bass gemacht. Meine ganzen Projekte sind halt drüben. Most Funky Project ist drüben. Funky Onion. Da schau: Betty und Lucie. Da: Röhren ZOOM.

01:00:59 VMF:
Das klingt voll schön.

01:01:21 LT:
Ah schau, das ist von dir – das hast du aufgenommen. Die Dschungel-Sounds! Paula Blubber… she has a big dynamic range.

01:02:31 VMF:
Hmm, sie singt wirklich cool. [Über Mackie Messer von Lucie in der Schabus Röhre] … Macht sie eigentlich auch selber Musik? Also selber geschriebene Sachen?

01:02:54 LT:
Ich glaube nicht, nein. Also das hat sie so improvisiert, aber es ist eigentlich Mackie Messer. Die Lucie ist so süß! Ich freu mich eh schon ur, wenn ich sie heute seh. Das ist die Mami von mir im ZOOM würde ich sagen. Aber Aufnehmen macht halt viel mehr Spaß als produzieren. Ich habe es bis heute nicht geschafft die zwei zu überreden, dass sie nochmal mit mir hingehen.

01:04:50 VMF:
Wer war das zweite?

01:04:52 LT:
Betty und Lucie.

01:04:58 VMF:
Wusste ich gar nicht, dass die Betty auch so singt.

01:04:59 LT:
Betty ist – die hat auch studiert. Gesang am Konservatorium. Die hatte die schlimmste Gehör-Prüfung, von der ich je gehört hab – mit Bass. Das heißt, okay, du kannst easy ein Intervall erkennen, aber nicht plom-plom. Das ist fast so, als würdest Du am Schlagzeug ein Intervall spielen. Das ist ja urunfair! Die Arme.

01:05:15 VMF:
Das wusste ich nicht, dass die Betty am Konservatorium studiert hat.

01:05:23 LT:
Die macht auch oarge Musik. Finde ich. … Ich weiß nicht mehr, wo meine Funky Onion ist … [murmelt]

01:06:03 VMF:
Hast Du als Kind auch Musik gemacht? Mit diesem Rick dann?

01:06:30 LT:
Na eher mit dem Papa. Musik gehört halt viel. Also Musik gemacht… ja, ich habe viele Instrumente begonnen, aber nur, weil sie immer so zur Verfügung waren. Wenn eine Gitarre bei mir war, habe ich mal ein Jahr Gitarren-Übungen gemacht oder Klavier dasselbe … das Klavier ist 106 Jahre alt, gehört meinem Großvater und wenn das gratis daherkommt, dann bringst du deinem Kind ein bisschen Klavierspielen bei. Und weiß nicht sonst… habe ich nichts gelernt. Ohja, Flöte in der Schule. Naja, ist jetzt auch kein interessantes Instrument. Blockflöte. Ein Instrument richtig gelernt habe ich nie. Würde ich auch nicht sagen, dass ich das irgendwann mal so richtig zufriedenstellend für mich hinkriege, weil halt da gehört urviel Übung dabei und dann übe ich lieber das da. Außerdem kenne ich mich grade einmal in Logic aus und es gibt aber Ableton, es gibt so verdammt viele DAWs. „Kalimba Lonely“ – moi. Da war ich mal traurig. Woa der Benedict hat ein Kalimba-Projekt da. Das ist ja oarg. [murmelt] Hast du sonst noch Fragen?

01:00:59 VMF:
That sounds beautiful.

01:01:21 LT:
Oh look, that’s from you – you recorded that. The jungle sounds! Paula Blubber… she has a big dynamic range.

01:02:31 VMF:
Hmm, she sings really well. [About Lucie singing Mackie Messer in the Schabus tube.] Does she write her own songs too?

01:02:54 LT:
I don’t think so, no. That was kind of improvised, but it’s actually Mackie Messer. Lucie is so sweet! I’m really looking forward to seeing her later. She’s like the mom of ZOOM for me. But recording is way more fun than producing. I still haven’t managed to convince those two to go record with me again.

01:04:50 VMF:
Who’s the second?

01:04:52 LT:
Betty and Lucie.

01:04:58 VMF:
I didn’t know Betty sings like that too.

01:04:59 LT:
Betty – she studied. Vocal performance at the conservatory. She had the worst ear training exam I’ve ever heard of – with bass. Like, sure, you can recognize intervals easily, but not plom-plom. That’s like trying to play an interval on a drum kit. Totally unfair. Poor thing.

01:05:15 VMF:
I didn’t know Betty studied at the conservatory.

01:05:23 LT:
She makes wild music too. I think… I don’t know where my Funky Onion is… [mumbling]

01:06:03 VMF:
Did you play music as a kid? With Rick?

01:06:30 LT:
No, more with my dad. Listened to a lot of music. Played music… yeah, I started a bunch of instruments, but only because they were always around. If there was a guitar nearby, I’d practice for a year. Same with piano… The piano’s 106 years old – was my grandfather’s. And if that comes for free, you teach your kid a bit of piano. Otherwise? I didn’t really learn anything. Oh right, recorder at school. Not exactly a thrilling instrument. I never really mastered anything. I wouldn’t even say I ever will, because you need so much practice, and I’d rather be doing this. I barely know my way around Logic, and there’s Ableton, and so many damn DAWs. Kalimba Lonely – that one’s mine. I was sad at the time. Whoa, Benedict has a kalimba project there. That’s wild. [mumbling] Any more questions?

01:08:09 VMF:
Ich glaube, das passt. Ich glaube, ich kann da schon was zusammenbauen.

01:08:15 LT:
Termiten. Die Termiten-Story. Wenn ich das der Mama erzähl wird sie sagen: Süß! Der Rickerl. Meine Mami. Die hat den Rick immer am besten gefunden. Rick! Lucca is coming!

01:08:28 VMF:
Und waren da noch mehr Kinder?

01:08:32 LT:
Na nur ich, ich war dort. Also in Azóia [?] weiß nicht. Also wenn ich meine Freunde dabeihatte, waren sicher Freunde auch mit, aber meistens habe ich dann, wenn mich der Papa aus der Stadt geholt hat, weil wir haben ja weit draußen gewohnt und ich hab in Lissabon die Schule gehabt. Wenn wir dann am Heimweg waren, haben wir immer so einen Weg runter gehabt. Mein Papa hat so einen alten Renault gehabt. Den Gang rausgehaut und so mit mir runtergerollt. Ich hab dann meistens gesagt so: bleib noch beim Rick stehen! Weil da musste man da so reinfahren. Man konnte also rückwärts sich rollen lassen und genau vor der Tür stehenbleiben und dann sind wir zum Rick gegangen. Wenn ich so zurückdenke. Manchmal habe ich das Gefühl, dass ich nie Kind war oder dass ich es immer noch zu sehr bin. Ich bin extrem kindisch, extrem kindisch. Egal wann, egal wie, egal zu wem und die Mama sagt mir dann aber: mit drei Jahren, als du mit dem Papa nach Portugal geflogen bist, habe ich gesagt so: Pass auf den Papa auf! Und da habe ich gesehen in deinen Augen: Switch! Und du bist erwachsen gewesen. Was für ein Blödsinn. Ich kann mich daran nicht erinnern. Und der Papa ist mit mir mit vier Jahren am Motorrad gesessen, ich hab nicht auf den Papa aufgepasst – wir haben nur Blödsinn gemacht! Leave your son alone with your dad. Es ist so viel Blödsinn passiert. Fix sogar. Na erzähl das deiner Mama niemals! Das mit dem Motorradfahren! Aber Papa! Nächste Woche ist sie da. Wie machen wir das, wenn wir fahren gehen wollen? Einmal hat sie uns dann erwischt. Dann haben wir gesagt, wir machen‘s nie wieder. Bis sie halt wieder in Wien war. Dann sind wir wieder Motorrad gefahren.

01:10:21 VMF:
Aber das hört sich eigentlich nach einem ganz guten Vater-Sohn-Gespann an...

01:10:34 LT:
Eh, voll. In Portugal war alles noch cool. Auch in Wien war alles eigentlich noch ganz okay und dann hat das mit dem Trinken begonnen. Da ist er mit dem Bier dagesessen und hat gesagt: Lucca, das ist antialkoholisch! Und ich hab gesagt, das ist ein Wieselburger wie es im Buch steht... da steht‘s drauf. Nein, nein. Und dann noch die Mutter anlügen und so. Lügen, stehlen und Anzeigen kriegen wegen Geld, Schulden und... ja. Aber ich bin ihm extrem dankbar. No hate against this man. Nur wegen ihm kann ich so viel Musik ... wirklich nur wegen ihm. Mama hat mir Eminem gezeigt, er zeigt mir V.C. Elliott. [?] Meine Mutter bringt mir mit den Ärzten Deutsch bei, er mit den Prinzen. Ich weiß nicht, was gibt‘s noch für Deutsche Sachen. Prinzen und Ärzte hat wirklich perfekt gepasst.

01:11:43 VMF:
Hast Du eigentlich Geschwister?

01:11:47 LT:
Nein leider, ich eigne mir nur immer welche an. Sind auch die Eltern immer gewesen – sie wollten immer alle kennenlernen, jeden Freund des Kindes kennenlernen. Nicht, um es zu beurteilen, sondern einfach um die zu kennen also... auch wenn du alle meine Freunde fragst, so: Kennst Du Luccas Eltern? Ja sicher, Clau-

01:08:09 VMF:
I think that’s great. I think I can build something from this.

01:08:15 LT:
Termites. The termite story. If I tell my mom, she’ll say: “So sweet! Little Rickerl.” My mom always liked Rick the best. “Rick! Lucca is coming!”

01:08:28 VMF:
And were there any other kids?

01:08:32 LT:
No, just me. I was the only one there. I mean, in Azóia [?], not sure. If I had friends with me, there were probably other kids too, but usually it was just me when my dad picked me up from the city – because we lived way out in the countryside and I went to school in Lisbon. On the way home, there was always this downhill stretch. My dad had this old Renault, he‘d pop it into neutral and we‘d just roll down. I’d usually say, “Let’s stop by Rick’s!” You had to turn in and reverse-roll right up to the door – perfectly lined up – and then we’d go in. Looking back... sometimes I feel like I was never really a kid, or maybe I still am way too much of one. I‘m super childish. Always have been. No matter the time or the person. And my mom used to say, “When you were three and flew to Portugal with your dad, I told you, ‘Take care of your dad!’ And I saw it in your eyes – click! You were suddenly grown up.” What nonsense. I don‘t remember any of that. And my dad put me on a motorcycle when I was four, I definitely wasn‘t taking care of him – we just did a bunch of dumb stuff! Leave your son alone with your dad. So much nonsense happened. Definitely. And don’t ever tell your mom about the motorbike! But Dad, she’s coming next week – what do we do if we want to ride again? She caught us once and we promised, never again. Until she was back in Vienna. Then we were back on the bike.

01:10:21 VMF:
Sounds like a pretty solid father-son team...

01:10:34 LT:
Yeah, totally. In Portugal things were still cool. Even in Vienna things were okay at first. Then the drinking started. He‘d sit there with a beer and say, “Lucca, this is non-alcoholic!” And I’d be like, “That’s a Wieselburger, straight out of the book... it says so right on the label.” “No, no.” And then lying to my mom, stealing, getting in trouble over money, debt... yeah. But I’m still super grateful. No hate against this man. It’s only thanks to him that I know so much about music – truly only because of him. My mom introduced me to Eminem, he showed me V.C. Elliott [?]. She taught me German with Die Ärzte, he did it with Die Prinzen. What other German stuff is there... Prinzen and Ärzte was a perfect combo.

01:11:43 VMF:
Do you have any siblings?

01:11:47 LT:
No, unfortunately not. I just sort of adopt them as I go. And my parents were always like that – they always wanted to meet every friend I brought around. Not to judge them, just to know them. Like, if you ask any of my friends: “Do you know Lucca‘s parents?” They’ll say, “Of course, Claudia! She‘s great.” They all have her number. Sometimes it’s wild – like, Dani will come to me and be like, “Did you talk to your mom yet?” I’m like, “No.” And he’s like, “Yeah, we’re doing this and that on Sunday.” “I can‘t, I have to work.” “Oh, she hasn’t called you yet?” “No.” Then they all go do something on Sunday, and I’m working. But honestly, I’m totally fine with that. If a mom only has one son and I’m not available, but other people are around, that’s great.

dia, super. Jaja. Die haben auch alle ihre Nummer. Manchmal pack ich‘s nicht, wenn dann der Dani zu mir kommt, so: Ja hast du schon mit deiner Mama geredet? So: Nein. Ja am Sonntag, machen wir das und das. Am Sonntag hab ich keine Zeit. Achso? Hat sie dich noch gar nicht angerufen. Nein. Dann gehen die alle am Sonntag irgendwas machen und ich bin arbeiten. Aber ist mir eh urrecht. Wenn die Mutter nur einen Sohn hat und ich kann mal nicht am Sonntag, dafür sind andere Leute dabei, ist doch cool. Mein Großvater hat auch immer mit acht Leuten von uns Mathe gelernt. Wir hatten auch Nachhilfe zu acht. 35 Euro die Stunde zahlt man nur zu acht. Eine Nachhilfe-Lehrerin, Maria Holzer, 35 Euro die Stunde, wir kommen zu 8, wir legen alle so paar Euros hin. Hat halt gesagt: Wird euch nicht viel bringen. Hat uns viel gebracht. War der coolste Mathe-Unterricht überhaupt. Naja Leute, zu acht? Schauen wir, ob sich das am Tisch ausgeht. Das war so witzig. Wir waren auf so einer Waldorfschule mit Öffentlichkeitsrecht...

01:13:29 VMF:
In Portugal oder in...?

01:13:36 LT:
Nein zur Matura dann. Und die ganzen Leute konnten sich halt 35 Euro die Stunde für die Nachhilfe leisten. Und dann gab‘s halt uns. Wir nicht. Oder ich wollt es mir zumindest nicht leisten, ich wollte zu meinem Großvater nicht sagen: Großvater, ich nehm noch extra Mathe Nachhilfe. Waaa... lernst du nicht genug? Ich habe es trotzdem geschafft, Mathe-Matura.

01:13:57 VMF:
War das der... hast du dann bei deinem Großvater gelebt?

01:14:04 LT:
Nein nein, der Großvater ist nur einmal die Woche in den 19. zu mir gekommen oder ich zu ihm. Acht Jahre hat er mir Unterricht gegeben, durch das ganze Gymnasium, weil ich war einfach wirklich schlecht in Mathe. Es war nicht mal meine Schuld, meine Mathelehrer haben mich alle geliebt. Ich habe alle Hausaufgaben gemacht, alle Verbesserungen gemacht, alle Schularbeiten verschissen. Ich hatte mal eine Nachprüfung in Mathe, da hab ich einen Einser gehabt. Da hat mich meine Mama zwei Monate eingesperrt. Du bleibst zu Hause! Ich hatte dafür nie wieder eine Nachprüfung.

01:14:43 VMF:
Pädagogisch effizient.

01:14:47 LT:
Stempel. Du hast es einmal, gell! Willst du nochmal? Das ist genauso wie die Kreiseltheorie: Es verlassen keine perfekten Kreisel das ZOOM. Weil dann will jeder einen perfekten Kreisel. Nur so schiefe Charakterkreisel.

01:14:53 VMF:
... der ist aber ganz schön gut!

01:15:01 LT:
Ich weiß, ist aber auch meiner. Wo sind die ganzen anderen? Ich habe drei oder so.

01:15:10 VMF:
Ich hab auch mindestens drei.

01:15:12 LT:
Man muss die ja mitnehmen, oder? Basteln, Basteln, basteln.

01:15:20 VMF:
Ok, das heißt mit den Kindern, da spielst du einfach mit?

My grandpa used to tutor eight of us in math at once. We had group tutoring. Thirty-five euros an hour – but split between eight people. The tutor, Maria Holzer, would say: “It’s not going to help much,” but it helped a ton. Coolest math lessons ever. Like: “Alright folks, eight people – can we all fit around the table?” It was hilarious. We went to one of those Waldorf schools with public recognition...

01:13:29 VMF:
In Portugal or...?

01:13:36 LT:
No, that was for my high school finals. And all the other kids could afford private tutoring at 35 euros an hour. And then there was us. We couldn’t. Or at least I didn’t want to. I didn’t want to say to my grandfather: “Grandpa, I need extra math tutoring.” He would’ve gone, “What? Aren’t you studying enough?” But I still made it – passed the math final.

01:13:57 VMF:
Was that when... did you live with your grandfather then?

01:14:04 LT:
No, no. He just came to see me once a week in the 19th district or I went to him. He tutored me for eight years, all the way through secondary school, because I was honestly terrible at math. And it wasn’t even my fault. My math teachers all loved me. I did all my homework, all the corrections, and still failed every test. One time I had to take a make-up exam, and I actually got an A. My mom basically locked me in the house for two months. “You’re not going anywhere!” I never had to do another make-up again after that.

01:14:43 VMF:
Efficient pedagogy.

01:14:47 LT:
Stamp of doom. You get it once, right? Wanna try again? It’s just like the spinning top theory: no perfect tops leave the ZOOM studio. Because then everyone wants a perfect top. Just crooked, character-filled ones.

01:14:53 VMF:
...that one’s pretty good though!

01:15:01 LT:
I know, but it’s mine. Where are all the others? I have like three.

01:15:10 VMF:
I’ve got at least three too.

01:15:12 LT:
You gotta take them with you, right? Crafting, crafting, crafting.

01:15:20 VMF:
So with the kids, you just join in and play?

01:15:25 LT:
Ja, eigentlich schon. Deswegen ist es auch im „Trickfilmstudio“ so schwer für mich, mich nicht einzubringen. Ich will dann trotzdem was machen. Ich sage dann immer, nein, das soll nicht mein Film werden. Das mag ich nicht. Ich probier wirklich immer, mich so möglichst rauszuhalten. Aber es geht halt nicht. Deswegen …

01:15:50 VMF:
Ja, aber ich verstehe das voll. Also ich hab‘ mir irgendwann gedacht, auch zu diesem Dilemma, was ich vorhin gemeint hab, was ist denn von den Kindern und was ist meine Arbeit und so: Am fatalsten ist es, wenn man sich hinter den Kindern versteckt und so tut, als wäre es nicht das Eigene. Also wirklich auf Augenhöhe kommst du erst, wenn du mitmachst.

01:16:17 LT:
Das war eh ursüß letztens, haben die Kids zu mir gesagt: Ja aber jetzt steht dein Name gar nicht da, und ich sag so: am Ende, keine Sorge! Und sie so: ah ok passt, puh! Weil du hast schon geholfen! Ich so, passt – danke schön! So gerne, aber es gibt auch so Kids, die dich so aussaugen, so: sag uns, was du machen willst. Dazu lasse ich mich zu leicht hinreißen…

01:16:51 VMF:
Ja eh, aber ich finde es funktioniert ja dann auch nicht so richtig, oder? Wenn von den Kindern so gar nichts kommt, ist es für einen selber ja auch fad.

01:17:02 LT:
Ja voll.

01:17:03 VMF:
Also am coolsten ist es, wenn es wirklich so ein Ping-Pong ist.
01:17:07 LT:
Chaos, Chaos, Gequatsche und dann aber ein Chaos-Film. Also Chaos im Sinne von gutem Chaos.

01:17:15 VMF:
Ja und wenn man irgendwie dann weiß… also ich meine, den meisten Firmen sieht man ja nicht an, was alles drinsteckt.

01:17:25 LT:
Ja voll. Ich schau uroft einfach so Filme zu Hause vom „Trickfilmstudio“, einfach so zum Input zu kriegen. So ah: Das gab es schon, das gab es schon, das gab es schon noch nicht, das gab‘s schon, so was?? Was ist das? „Das gab es schon“ ist jetzt eigentlich komplett falsch gesagt, sondern wow, wie heftig es ist, wie teilweise Schnitt und Ende. Nix happy end. Sondern zack. Aus! Aus!

01:17:52 VMF:
Ja ist vielleicht nicht fertig geworden…

01:17:57 LT:
Nicht mal nicht fertig worden, sondern so wirklich nicht-Happy End. Das steht bei End und es ist so nicht happy. So woa kids! Warum so böse?

01:18:10 VMF:
Wenn die Filme wirklich so böse wären, wie manchmal die Bilder oder die Ideen, dann wäre es ja noch viel ärger. Aber das ist ja unser Sicherheits-BackUp, dass es dann nicht so ausschaut. Dass es immer niedlich ausschaut.

01:18:24 LT:
Es schaut wirklich immer niedlich aus. Wirklich.

01:15:25 LT:
Yeah, pretty much. That’s also why it’s so hard for me not to get involved in the „Animated Film Studio“. I still want to do stuff. I always say, “No, this shouldn‘t be my film.” I don’t like that. I really try to hold back as much as I can. But it’s hard. So…

01:15:50 VMF:
Yeah, I totally get that. I’ve thought about that dilemma myself – like, what’s the kids’ part and what’s mine? The worst thing is pretending it’s all the kids’ work when it’s not. You only really meet them at eye level if you’re in it with them.

01:16:17 LT:
That was actually super sweet recently. The kids said to me, “But your name’s not even in the credits!” And I was like, “It’ll be there at the end, don’t worry!” And they went, “Ah okay, good! Because you helped!” And I was like, “Thank you, that’s so nice.” But yeah, there are also kids who totally drain you, like, “Tell us what you want us to do.” And I let myself get roped in too easily…

01:16:51 VMF:
Yeah, but it doesn‘t really work anyway, right? When nothing comes from the kids, it’s boring for you too.

01:17:02 LT:
Yeah, totally.

01:17:03 VMF:
The best is when it’s really a ping-pong kind of thing.

01:17:07 LT:
Chaos, chaos, chatting, and then – boom – a chaos movie. Chaos in a good way.

01:17:15 VMF:
Yeah, and when you sort of realize… I mean, you usually can’t tell from a film how much is in there.

01:17:25 LT:
Yeah, totally. I watch films from the „Animated Film Studio“ at home all the time, just to get inspiration. Like: “Ah, that’s been done. That’s been done. That hasn’t been done yet. That’s been done. What?? What is that?!” Saying “That’s been done” is actually wrong – it’s more like: wow, how intense it is, how the editing and the endings sometimes just cut – no happy end. Just boom. Over. Done.

01:17:52 VMF:
Maybe they just didn’t finish it…

01:17:57 LT:
Not even that. Some of them end with, like, a real non-happy ending. It says “The End” and it’s like… not happy at all. I’m like, whoa, kids! Why so dark?

01:18:10 VMF:
If the films were actually as dark as some of the images or ideas, it would be much worse. But our safety buffer is that everything still looks cute in the end.

01:18:24 LT:
They really always do look cute. Really.

01:18:27 VMF:
Auch wenn es die ärgsten Gemetzel sind.

01:18:29 LT:
Ja eh, das wollte ich auch fragen. Ist das eigentlich erlaubt, so? Letztens hat ein Junge gesagt: Gehen wir einen saufen!

01:18:37 VMF:
Im Film oder was?

01:18:39 LT:
Im Film, ja. Da wurde der Sound dann nicht hochgeladen. Was ich schade finde, ja passiert halt. Und da habe ich mich gefragt, wenn das dann so ein Neunjähriger sagt, ist das okay?

01:18:52 VMF:
Es sind so… weiß ich nicht, irgendwie hat der…

01:18:56 LT:
Gibt‘s Tabus?

01:18:56 VMF:
Also ich würde sagen, das klarste Tabu ist, wenn Gewalt gegen konkrete Personen vorkommt, die erkennbar sind. Also ich weiß, wir haben mal diskutiert, als Donald Trump in einem Mixer zerhäckselt wurde. Der war ziemlich oarg. Wobei das aber dann so Grenzfälle sind, weil dann gibt‘s andere Filme, die finde ich viel ärger, die dann irgendwie so durchgegangen sind.

01:19:31 LT:
Den finde ich geil. Finde ich richtig geil.

01:19:35 VMF:
Und sonst ist es ziemlich viel so Ermessenssache und hängt davon ab, wer den Workshop macht.

01:19:45 LT:
Auch Ansichtssache, oder?

01:19:49 VMF:
Ja eh, voll. Du hast halt deine Grenzen. Grundsätzlich bin ich überzeugt davon, dass die Kinder… also ich finde, wenn die Kinder irgendwelchen argen Scheiß im Kopf haben, dann glaube ich ist es immer gut, der kommt raus.

01:20:00 LT:
Ja voll. Besser als sie behalten‘s drin, bis es dann unabsichtlich rausplatzt.

01:20:05 VMF:
Voll, ja. Und blöd ist es halt, wenn du viele Kinder hast und die pushen sich dann so gegenseitig, dann wird es schon schwieriger.

01:20:16 LT:
Das ist aber ganz cool eben bei euch im TFS kann ich endlich mal streng sein aber im Sinn von nicht strengstreng sondern im Sinne von: Hallo! Das reicht wirklich schon. Wollt‘s ihr weitermachen. Ja, ja, kommen alle wieder zurück. So ein easy streng-sein. Ich weiß nicht, ob es an meiner Stimme liegt, dass sie einfach so… die schauen einfach wirklich alle her! Das ist immer wirklich urcool. Wow!

01:20:53 VMF:
Schauen wir mal, wie es dann wird im Herbst mit Schulklassen.

01:20:57 LT:
Ja voll. Da hab ich eh schon Angst. Hast du auch Angst? Bitte sag ja!

01:21:00 VMF:
Ja schon, mit diesem Touch-Ding.

01:18:27 VMF:
Even when it’s total carnage.

01:18:29 LT:
Exactly. That’s actually something I wanted to ask. Is that even allowed? A boy recently said, “Let’s go get drunk!”

01:18:37 VMF:
In the film?

01:18:39 LT:
Yeah, in the film. The audio didn’t get uploaded in the end. Which is a shame, but okay. I just wondered – is it okay when a nine-year-old says something like that?

01:18:52 VMF:
It’s kind of… I don’t know. He…

01:18:56 LT:
Are there taboos?

01:18:56 VMF:
I’d say the clearest taboo is violence against identifiable people. Like, I remember we once had a debate when Donald Trump got shredded in a blender in a film. That was pretty extreme. But even that’s kind of a grey area, because there are other films that I think were much worse, and they slipped through.

01:19:31 LT:
I loved that one. I thought it was amazing.

01:19:35 VMF:
Otherwise, it really comes down to judgment calls and depends on who’s leading the workshop.

01:19:45 LT:
So, also subjective then?

01:19:49 VMF:
Yeah, exactly. Everyone has their boundaries. But in general, I really believe that if kids have intense stuff in their heads, it’s always better if it comes out.

01:20:00 LT:
Yeah, definitely. Better to let it out than keep it in until it explodes.

01:20:05 VMF:
Exactly. The problem is when you’ve got a big group and they start pushing each other – that makes it tricky.

01:20:16 LT:
That’s actually what’s great about working with you guys at the „Animated Film Studio“. I finally get to be a little strict – but not strict-strict, just like, “Hey! That’s enough now. You want to keep going?” And they’re all like, “Yeah, yeah,” and come back. That kind of light-touch strictness. Maybe it’s my voice – I don’t know – but they really all stop and look. It’s so cool. Wow!

01:20:53 VMF:
Let’s see how it goes in the fall with school classes.

01:20:57 LT:
Yeah, I’m kind of scared already. Are you scared too? Please say yes!

01:21:00 VMF:
Yeah, especially with that touch-screen thing.

01:21:03 LT:
I was thinking – why don’t we just split them up? If it’s a class of, say, 25 kids. Some could get the tablets, and some could stay at the tables or something. That doesn’t work? Or?

01:21:03 LT:
Ich hab mir überlegt, warum teilen wir die nicht auf? Wenn es eine 25-Leute-Klasse ist, so zum Beispiel. Dann kriegen ein paar die Tablets und ein paar dürfen bei den Tischen bleiben oder so. Das geht nicht. Oder?

01:21:21 VMF:
Ja, wo machst du das dann mit den Tablets? Ist einfach ein Platzproblem.

01:21:28 LT:
Im Atelier-Raum. Freut sich das Atelier drüber. Oioioi. Bei euch ist ja überhaupt so eine Tension, oder? So Atelier und „Trickfilmstudio“, das war doch immer so...

01:21:41 VMF:
Na das habe ich jetzt eigentlich nie so empfunden. Es gab so ein paar Leute, die in beiden Welten waren, aber ansonsten hat es sich relativ wenig berührt.

01:22:19 LT:
Okay.

01:22:20 VMF:
Es war ja eher so ein bisschen halb ironisch, die Atelier Leute waren halt so: Ja „Trickfilmstudio“, die machen sich die Finger nicht schmutzig.

01:22:35 LT:
Achso, okay – ha! Ja, ja, ich sehe es eigentlich genauso: Ich will mir die Finger auch nicht schmutzig machen! Ich will nicht im Ton herumgraben! Will ich nicht!

01:22:49 VMF:
Echt? Oh ich mach schon gerne Ton auch.

01:22:56 LT:
Ich mache es gern so als Besucher. Sehr gern. Aber nicht dort arbeiten!

01:23:05 VMF:
Aber was ist da der Unterschied?

01:23:06 LT:
Als Besucher kann ich, weiß ich nicht – mich mit einem Kind dort hinchillen. Aber als Arbeiter, weiß nicht. Ich habe auch noch nie im Atelier gearbeitet, muss ich schon sagen. Wahrscheinlich dieses gezwungene Herrichten und ... man kann eh selber mitmachen. Aber ich glaube, es ist nur dieses: Heute muss ich dort hingehen und das machen. Dieses Mindset macht es mir einfach kaputt, glaube ich. Mir ist es auch recht, vom „Ozean“ dann rüberzukommen und wegzuräumen mit denen, und dann sagt der Michi: Woa, sind wir schnell. Danke fürs Helfen. Ich so, passt schon – weg hier.

01:23:54 VMF:
Im Atelier kannst Du viel mehr mitmachen als im „Trickfilmstudio“.

01:24:05 LT:
Ich liebe es, wenn die Katharina die Einführung macht. Da schau ich dann immer so zu und denke mir so: Ja, aber selber würde ich es so nicht gerne vorstellen.

01:24:13 VMF:
Man muss es ja nicht so machen wie die Katharina. Also, ich finde es auch super, wie sie das macht, aber...

01:24:18 LT:
Ich mein halt, so das Programm an sich vorstellen. Vielleicht ist es einfach nur dieser Blick drauf, dass das Atelier für mich – arbeiten, nein. Spaß ja. Ich weiß nicht wieso, hat sich vielleicht einfach festgebrannt. Es war aber auch bei jeder anderen Sache, nicht nur beim Ton. Was gab es da noch... alles hat mich abgeschreckt, so zum arbeiten dort.

01:21:21 VMF:
Yeah, but where would you do the tablet stuff? It’s just a space issue.

01:21:28 LT:
In the studio room. The studio will love that. Oof. There’s already kind of this tension with you guys, right? Like, Studio and „Animated Film Studio“ – that was always kind of a thing...

01:21:41 VMF:
Nah, I never really felt that way. There were a few people who moved between both worlds, but otherwise, they didn’t overlap much.

01:22:19 LT:
Okay.

01:22:20 VMF:
It was kind of half-ironic anyway. The studio folks were like: “„Animated Film Studio“? They don’t even get their hands dirty!”

01:22:35 LT:
Ohhh, okay – ha! Yeah, yeah, I actually feel the same. I don’t want to get my hands dirty either! I don’t want to dig around in clay! Not my thing!

01:22:49 VMF:
Really? I actually love working with clay.

01:22:56 LT:
I like it as a visitor. Totally. But not to work there!

01:23:05 VMF:
But what’s the difference?

01:23:06 LT:
As a visitor, I don’t know – I can just chill with a kid, you know? But as a staff member... I don’t know. I’ve never actually worked in the studio, to be fair. Maybe it’s just the whole “you have to be there today and do that.” That mindset ruins it for me, I think. I do like coming over from the “Ocean“ and helping clean up, and then Michi’s like, “Whoa, that was fast! Thanks for helping!” And I’m like, “No worries – gotta run!”

01:23:54 VMF:
At the Studio, you can actually join in a lot more than in the „Animated Film Studio“.

01:24:05 LT:
I love it when Katharina does the intro. I always watch her and think, “Yeah, but I wouldn’t want to explain it like that myself.”

01:24:13 VMF:
You don’t have to do it like Katharina. I mean, I think it’s great how she does it, but...

01:24:18 LT:
I mean just introducing the program in general. Maybe it’s just how I see the Studio – it’s work? No. Fun? Yes. I don’t know why, maybe it just got stuck in my head like that. But it was the same with every other activity, not just clay. What else was there... everything kind of turned me off from working there.

01:24:48 VMF:
Das ist aber schon interessant! Und das, wo du so ein Bastler bist.

01:24:53 LT:
Ja, ich weiß. Urkomisch, gell? Ur eigenartig. Aber irgendwie ich weiß nicht... ich splitte ein bisschen Arbeit und privat. Und basteln, verrückt halt. Ist irgendwie sehr gesplittet. Aber vielleicht auch gar nicht?

01:25:11 VMF:
Warum?

01:25:13 LT:
Keine Ahnung. Vielleicht bin ich schüchtern, bin ich sowieso manchmal. Vielleicht habe ich Sachen zu verbergen.

01:25:23 [...]
VMF:
Ok, ich drück hier mal auf Stopp. Oder nein, ich lass noch laufen und wir machen noch kurz das...

01:32:59 LT:
... mit dem Strich. Yeah! Der Strich. Woa ist das ein geiler Block. Bin ich der erste?

01:33:15 VMF:
Nein, ich will nur, dass du nicht abschaust.

01:33:18 LT:
Ah okay. Geil geil geil.

01:33:21 VMF:
Schau du darfst gern auch ein Blatt verwenden zum Testen, welchen Bleistift du gerne nehmen möchtest.

01:33:32 LT:
So? Hmmm das Medium Checkpoint kann nicht ausgeworfen werden. Es ist ausgeworfen. Egal. Ich überleg gerade. Aber es darf, es muss nicht gerade sein, gell?

01:33:58 VMF:
Nein überhaupt nicht, es darf alles dazwischen passieren, was will. Es ist nur ein Strich und Anfang auf der einen Seite und Ende auf der anderen Seite.

Tristan Immanuel Lucca Teissig (auch Til Teissig oder T.I.L.T.), geboren 1993 in Wien, ist Kunst- und Kulturvermittler sowie Tontechniker. Er arbeitete 12 Jahre im ZOOM Kindermuseum Wien, absolvierte Diplomas in Audio Design und Tonmeister an der Deutschen Pop und ist seit 2023 als selbstständiger Tontechniker/Tonassistent tätig – meist für den ORF. Künstlerische Projekte realisierte er mit Florian Fusco (#plattenbau_kru) und Benedict Gstöttenbauer.

01:24:48 VMF:
That's really interesting! Especially since you're such a crafty person.

01:24:53 LT:
Yeah, I know. It's super weird, right? So odd. But somehow, I don't know... I kind of split work and personal stuff. Crafting, going wild – that's kind of its own thing. Totally separate. Or maybe... not at all?

01:25:11 VMF:
Why?

01:25:13 LT:
No idea. Maybe I'm just shy. I am, sometimes. Maybe I've got stuff to hide.

01:25:23 VMF:
Okay, I'll hit stop here. Or no – let's keep rolling and just do this one last bit...

01:32:59 LT:
...with the line. Yeah! The line. Whoa, that's a sexy block of paper. Am I the first?

01:33:15 VMF:
No, I just don't want you to copy anyone else.

01:33:18 LT:
Ah okay. Cool, cool, cool.

01:33:21 VMF:
Feel free to use a test sheet to try out which pencil you like best.

01:33:32 LT:
Like this? Hmm, "Medium Checkpoint can't be ejected." But it is ejected. Whatever. I'm just thinking... But it doesn't have to be a straight line, right?

01:33:58 VMF:
Nope, not at all. Anything can happen in between. It's just a line, with a beginning on one side and an end on the other.

Tristan Immanuel Lucca Teissig (also known as Til Teissig or T.I.L.T.), born in 1993 in Vienna, is an art and culture educator as well as a sound engineer. He worked for 12 years at the ZOOM Children's Museum in Vienna, completed diplomas in Audio Design and Sound Engineering at Deutsche Pop, and has been working as a freelance sound engineer/sound assistant since 2023 – mostly for ORF. He has collaborated on artistic projects with Florian Fusco (#plattenbau_kru) and Benedict Gstöttenbauer.

(Explanatory) Notes and References

The “music machine” by Chris Janka

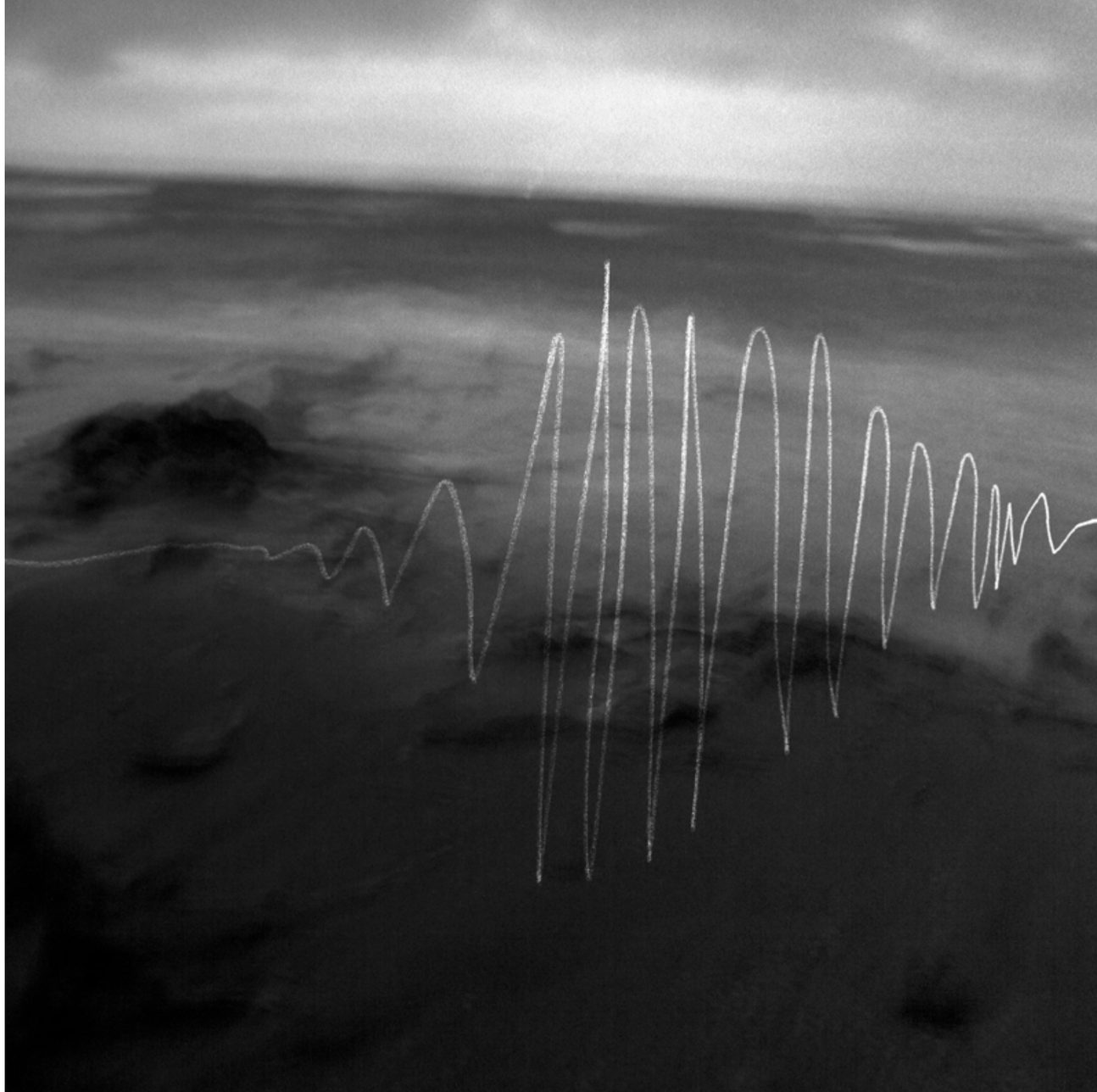
The artist Chris Janka built an analog drum sequencer for the ZOOM Children’s Museum, designed to be used in workshop-like settings.

https://www.chrisjanka.at/projekte/analog-analog-drum-sequencer [Accessed: 25 September 2025]

The “tunnel” in the “Exhibition”

In the exhibition on wood at the ZOOM Children’s Museum, where the children could also craft their own spinning tops, the artist Hans Schabus had built a huge wooden tube that filled almost the entire exhibition space.

one needs
termites to build a
didgeridoo.



Felix Helmut Wagner

über Gott, Quatsch, Zuhören, Mentoring,
Führung und dunkle Kammern.
about God, nonsense, listening, mentoring,
leadership and dark chambers.

Ich besuche Felix Wagner im September 2021 gegen 19:00 in seinem Atelier in einer Wiener Altbauwohnung. Ich sitze auf einer weichen Couch neben seinem Schreibtisch und bekomme ein Dosenbier. Wir kennen uns aus dem ZOOM, allerdings noch nicht lange.

FHW:
Ich finde, es liegt viel am eigenen Mindset, so: was lasse ich über mich ergehen. Von der Institution oder von der Autorität zum Beispiel. Wie viel setze ich ein, wie sehr mach ich mich abhängig von der Institution oder von der Autorität.

00:00:21 VMF:
Aber wie gesagt, wenn ich versucht habe, das zu reflektieren, bin ich genau in diesem Kreisel gelandet, als ginge es nur um diesen Frust-Moment, irgendwie für meine Arbeit nicht bezahlt zu werden oder meine Arbeit nicht vermittelbar machen zu können. Das ist ein Teil davon, sicher. Aber es geht mir schon auch um etwas anderes. Darum diesen künstlerischen Prozessen nachzuspüren, die für mich in der Arbeit mit den Kindern liegen.

00:01:11 FHW:
Du nimmst jetzt gerade auf schon? Das heißt, was ich jetzt sage, ist dann auch auf dem Band drauf. Also um was geht es jetzt genau? Was ist dein PhD? Was ist das alles?

00:01:20 VMF:
Also was ich jetzt machen möchte und wozu wir dieses Gespräch führen, ist: Ich möchte ein Buch machen. Der Bogen, der die Protagonisten im Buch verbindet, ist einfach das Kindermuseum, also dass wir da alle arbeiten. Wir sind alle irgendwie Künstlerinnen und Künstler. Und letztlich geht es mir schon auch um dieses … hmm wie du es gesagt hast, hört sich das irgendwie hilflos und einsam an…

00:01:55 FHW:
Ja also hilflos habe ich gesagt, einsam hast Du dann gesagt.

00:01:58 VMF:
Habe ich dann gesagt, ja. Also ich möchte dieses Sternensystem für mich aufspannen im Kindermuseum, weil da klar ist, dass ich nicht die Einzige bin, die sich in diesem Feld bewegt, auch wenn vielleicht niemand das genauso sieht wie ich. Ohne ein Manifest schreiben zu wollen, das irgendwelche Dinge in Stein meißelt.

00:02:30 FHW:
Aber es geht spezifisch um das Kindermuseum und nicht um vermittlerische Arbeit mit Kindern im Allgemeinen?

00:02:35 VMF:
Es geht um die unterschiedlichen Zugänge und Positionierungen der eigenen künstlerischen Arbeit zu der Begegnung mit Kindern. Und um das eigene Kindsein im Verhältnis auch zur künstlerischen Arbeit und zu dieser künstlerischen Arbeit mit Kindern. Was ich jetzt machen möchte, sind letztlich Porträts von euch. Also das, was wir jetzt aufnehmen, wird als solches nirgends hinkommen. Das ist nur meine Notiz. Ich werde das transkribieren und möchte versuchen, diese unterschiedlichen Erzählstimmen zu erwischen. Ich werde keine glattgebügelten redigierten Interviews machen, sondern ich werde das noch stärker überarbeiten.

I visit Felix Helmut Wagner in September 2021 around 7 p.m. at his studio, located in a classic Viennese apartment. I'm sitting on a soft couch next to his desk, handed a can of beer. We know each other from ZOOM, though not for very long.

FHW:
I think a lot depends on your own mindset – like, what do you allow to happen to you? From the institution or from authority, for example. How much do you invest, how dependent do you make yourself on the institution or on authority?

00:00:21 VMF:
But like I said, whenever I've tried to reflect on this, I end up in this same cycle, like it's only about the frustration of not being paid for my work or not being able to make my work communicable. That's definitely part of it, sure. But there's more to it than that for me. It's also about tracing these artistic processes that, for me, are tied to working with children.

00:01:11 FHW:
You're already recording now? So that means what I say now is also on tape. So what is this actually about? What's your PhD? What's this all about?

00:01:20 VMF:
So what I'm trying to do now, and why we're having this conversation, is: I want to make a book. The thread that connects the protagonists in the book is simply the Children's Museum – because that's where we all work. We're all artists in some way. And in the end, it's also about this… hmm, the way you said it, it sounds kind of helpless and lonely…

00:01:55 FHW:
Yeah, well, I said helpless. You added lonely.

00:01:58 VMF:
Right, that was me. So I want to create this kind of star system for myself in the Children's Museum, because it makes it clear I'm not the only one moving in this field – even if maybe no one else sees it quite the way I do. I don't want to write a manifesto that chisels anything in stone.

00:02:30 FHW:
But it's specifically about the Children's Museum and not about educational work with children in general?

00:02:35 VMF:
It's about the different approaches and positions of one's own artistic work in relation to encounters with children. And also about one's own childhood in relation to artistic work – and to artistic work with children. What I want to do now are essentially portraits of you all. So what we're recording now won't appear anywhere as is. It's just my notes. I'll transcribe it and try to capture these different narrative voices. I'm not doing polished, edited interviews – I'll actually be reworking it even more.

00:03:24 FHW:
Aber es kommt in Textform, also nicht in Audio-Form, sondern in Textform.

00:03:29 VMF:
Ja, ja.

00:03:30 FHW:
Ok.

00:03:30 VMF:
Und dazu wird es diese Foto-Porträts geben und jeder hat ein Kapitel.

00:03:40 FHW:
Fotos – ich habe mir schon Klamotten rausgesucht, die ich anziehen werde oder möchte. Ich zeig‘s dir mal, die hab‘ ich da schon hingelegt. Ja, weil ich wusste, dass du Fotos machst.

00:03:52 VMF:
Und du kriegst das natürlich alles, bevor das irgendwo hinkommt. Und auch wenn du dann sagst: Das taugt mir jetzt überhaupt nicht und das bin nicht ich oder ich will das nicht, Du kannst das bis zum letzten Moment auch sagen, und ich schmeiß das einfach schnell wieder raus und es ist nicht geschehen. Also, nur dass du keinen Stress hast…

00:04:13 FHW:
Ok, ok.

00:04:13 VMF:
Es sollen eben Porträts werden, ein bisschen essayhaft. So möchte ich unterschiedliche Zugänge aBarbara Krauslappern, die sich automatisch ergeben, weil wir einfach unterschiedliche Leute sind. Und Ausgangspunkt bei den Gesprächen war immer dieses Gedankenspiel und du kannst dann sagen, ob du was damit anfangen kannst oder nicht. Und wenn nicht, dann kann man da auch darüber reden. Für mich ist das halt so ein Kompass, auch im Kindermuseum. Wenn du dir vorstellst, du könntest… nicht jetzt einfach nochmal Kind sein, sondern du könntest mit dir selber als Kind nochmal Zeit verbringen, so einen Nachmittag oder so. Was würdest du dann mit dir machen oder was würdest du dich fragen? Würdest du lieber als Erwachsener in eine Zeit oder an einen Ort oder…

00:05:19 FHW:
Ich würde vor allem, ich als Erwachsener, ich würde mir viel mehr zuhören, so. Viel mehr darauf achten, was hab ich – das Kind Felix – zu sagen und dann hören, mehr zuhören als das Eigene, das Erwachsene darüberzustülpen. Das fällt mir jetzt spontan ein. Hast du dich damit… hast du geschaut, was ich so künstlerisch mache? Hast du mal auf meine Website geschaut? Oder ist das total unbekannt?

00:05:46 VMF:
Ziemlich unbekannt, du kannst mir gern was zeigen oder erzählen…

00:05:48 FHW:
Okay, okay, aber dann ist das auch nicht so wichtig für dich, oder?

00:05:52 VMF:
Doch doch, ich meine vielleicht in Bezug auf diese Fragen. Also wie gesagt, mir geht es immer um die eigene künstlerische Arbeit in Bezug auf dieses Kinderthema, aber Du kannst es mir ja einfach so mal erzählen und dann sehen wir, ob es diesen Bezug gibt oder nicht.

00:06:14 FHW:
Ja, ich überlege gerade.

00:03:24 FHW:
But it’ll be in text form, not audio?

00:03:29 VMF:
Yeah, yeah.

00:03:30 FHW:
Okay.

00:03:30 VMF:
And there’ll be photo portraits too, and everyone gets their own chapter.

00:03:40 FHW:
Photos – I’ve already picked out some clothes I want to wear. I’ll show you, I laid them out over there. Yeah, because I knew you were going to take photos.

00:03:52 VMF:
And of course you’ll see everything before anything gets published. And even if you say at the last minute, “No, this doesn’t work for me, this isn’t me, I don’t want this” – you can absolutely say that and I’ll just pull it out, no problem. So really, no stress…

00:04:13 FHW:
Okay, okay.

00:04:13 VMF:
They’re meant to be portraits, kind of essaylike. I want to explore different approaches, which will naturally come up since we’re all different people. And the starting point for the conversations was always this little thought experiment – you can tell me if it means anything to you or not. And if not, we can talk about that too. For me, it’s like a compass, even in the Children‘s Museum. Imagine you could… not just be a child again, but actually spend time with yourself as a child – like an afternoon or something. What would you do with yourself, or what would you ask yourself? Would you rather be the adult in a different time or place or…

00:05:19 FHW:
I think, as an adult, I would mostly just listen more – really pay attention to what I, as little Felix, had to say. And just listen more, instead of overlaying it with adult stuff. That’s what spontaneously comes to mind. Did you… have you looked into my artistic work at all? Have you seen my website? Or is that completely unfamiliar?

00:05:46 VMF:
Pretty unfamiliar. Feel free to show me or tell me about it…

00:05:48 FHW:
Okay, okay, but then it’s not really that important to you, is it?

00:05:52 VMF:
Oh, it definitely is – especially in relation to these questions. Like I said, I’m always interested in the relationship between one’s own artistic work and this child-related theme. But just tell me about it and we’ll see if there’s a connection or not.

00:06:14 FHW:
Yeah, I’m just thinking about it…

00:06:23 VMF:
Aber zeig doch mal ein bisschen …

00:06:26 FHW:
Naja, also ich komm ja gerade von der Parallel [Kunstmesse in Wien]. Ich kann von der letzten Arbeit anfangen. Die Arbeit heißt „People Look at Melons, Melons Don‘t Look at People.“ Die habe ich extra gemacht für die Parallel. Es war eine Rauminstallation. Also das waren so 20 Quadratmeter und ich habe quasi den Raum verbaut mit so einer Konstruktion, ja.

00:07:33 VMF:
Konnte man reingehen?

00:07:36 FHW:
Man konnte bis dahin gehen und dann nicht weiter. Also so ein Außenrahmen aus angemalenem Holz, aus diesem rosa Holz und innen hängen so Ebenen aus diesen Holzrahmen. Das ist das Holz, das hier in der Ecke steht, aber blau angemalt. Und auf jeder Kreuzung ungefähr liegen so Achtel Melonen. Es geht um diese Sache, dass Menschen den Dingen die Bedeutung geben und nicht umgedreht. Wir geben den Kunstwerken eine Bedeutung. Ohne Mensch hat ein Kunstwerk keine Bedeutung. Und ich habe mir gedacht, das hat irgendjemand mal entschieden, dieses Gesetz, ja, dass es so ist, dass es diese Hierarchie gibt. Und ich habe dann ein Video gemacht. Bist du okay, das aufzusetzen? [Kopfhörer] Nur ich benutze das.

00:08:31 VMF:
Wenn‘s für Dich passt?

00:08:33 FHW:
Für mich passt‘s. Und das Video hängt hier in der Installation drin und ich zeig dir mal kurz, was da passiert. Hast du Ton? …

00:09:21 VMF:
Hmm.

00:09:21 FHW:
Das heißt also, ich spiele so eine, ich nenn das immer so eine metaphysische Figur oder ich nenne sie auch die „Außerhalblichkeit“ oder „der unbewegte Beweger“ oder vielleicht Gott, was Göttliches, der dieses Gesetz ausspricht.

00:09:33 VMF:
Ok.

00:09:34 FHW:
Er ist bei den Menschen und spricht dieses Gesetz immer wieder aus. Es geht also in der Arbeit auch um Betrachtung und um das betrachtet werden. Und natürlich waren dann auch die Betrachter*innen bei der Arbeit, die bei der Parallel waren, Teil der Arbeit, weil sie ja dann die Menschen waren, die die Melonen betrachtet haben. Und dann natürlich sind die verschimmelt oder halt vergammelt. Immer mehr, die Melonen. Es ist immer mehr so eine Todeszone, ein Massengrab geworden. Und letztlich haben die Leute angefangen, das zu assoziieren mit Leichen und so weiter. Und das fand ich ja interessant, dass man eben Objekte so personifiziert. Ja, obwohl die das ja gar nicht sind. Das sind ja einfach nur Kohlenstoffverbindungen, diese Melonen. Aber die Menschen geben denen diese Bedeutung. Das war aber auch so ein bisschen extra, weil das war eine alte Frauenklinik, die Semmelweisklinik, also ein Ort der Geburt. Und da wollte ich eben, dass da was stirbt. Und ich finde diese Wassermelonen schauen ein bisschen aus wie Babys und wie … für mich hat das so was Fleischliches, ja. Und dann ist das so … die Folie macht das so wie Leichensäcke und es tropft dann, die Leichenflüssigkeit ist quasi runtergetropft. Und es hat so eine schöne

00:06:23 VMF:
But go ahead, show me a bit…

00:06:26 FHW:
Well, I just came from the Parallel [art fair in Vienna]. I could start with my latest piece. It’s called “People Look at Melons, Melons Don’t Look at People.” I made it especially for Parallel. It was a spatial installation – about 20 square meters – and I kind of built up the room with this structure, yeah.

00:07:33 VMF:
Could you go inside?

00:07:36 FHW:
You could go up to it, but not further. It had this outer frame made of painted wood, this pink wood, and inside there were these layers made of wooden frames. It’s the same wood that’s over there in the corner, but painted blue. And at each crossing point, there were slices of melon – like one eighth pieces. It’s about how people assign meaning to things, not the other way around. We give artworks meaning. Without humans, an artwork has no meaning. And I thought – someone must have decided this at some point, this rule, that that’s how it is, that this hierarchy exists. And then I made a video. Are you okay with putting these on? [headphones] It’s just for me to use.

00:08:31 VMF:
If it‘s ok for you?

00:08:33 FHW:
It‘s ok for me. And the video is part of the installation. I’ll just quickly show you what’s going on there. Do you have sound? …

00:09:21 VMF:
Hmm.

00:09:21 FHW:
So basically, I play this figure – I always call it a metaphysical character, or sometimes I call it “the externality” or “the unmoved mover,” or maybe God – something divine – that declares this law.

00:09:33 VMF:
Okay.

00:09:34 FHW:
He‘s among the people and keeps proclaiming this law. So the piece is also about observation and being observed. And of course, the viewers at Parallel became part of the work, because they were the ones looking at the melons. And then, of course, the melons started rotting. More and more, they became this death zone, like a mass grave. And eventually, people started associating it with corpses and so on. And I found it interesting how people personify objects – even though they’re not people. They’re just carbon compounds, those melons. But people assign them meaning. That was also kind of intentional, because the venue was an old women’s hospital, the Semmelweis Clinic – a place of birth. And I wanted something to die there. And I think watermelons kind of look like babies… they have something fleshy about them, yeah. And then with the plastic wrap, it was like body bags. And the fluid started dripping – like corpse fluid – and it created this kind of beautiful painting on the floor. And it smelled, too, which was kind of nice, because it added another barrier – so people didn’t want to go in.

Malerei dann auf dem Boden gemacht. Und gestunken hat es dann auch, und das war aber auch ganz nett, weil es nochmal so eine zweite Barriere war, nicht den Raum zu betreten.

00:11:17 VMF:
Eine geruchliche Barriere?

00:11:18 FHW:
Eine geruchliche, genau. Das heißt nicht nur durch die Konstruktion selbst, sondern auch durch den Geruch wollte man da nicht reingehen.

00:11:23 VMF:
Und spielst du immer solche Figuren, taucht das wieder auf?

00:11:30 FHW:
Ganz viel, ja. Ich zeig Dir mal meine Website. Also ich performe ja ganz viel. Das ist die letzte, das ist meine Diplomarbeit. Es dauert nur drei Minuten, kannst nochmal anschauen, also die Videodoku. … „Entstehung und Entwicklung einer künstlerischen Tatsache“ heißt die Arbeit. …

00:12:57 FHW:
Hmm na sehr schön!

00:12:57 FHW:
Genau, also das war auch so eine Installation, das hast Du ja eh gecheckt, also wo halt vorne die fertigen Arbeiten sind, und hinten kann man den Prozess sehen, der dort hinführt. Es hat aber auch so eine Modellhaftigkeit wie die andere Arbeit bei der Parallel, also so ein Welterklärungsmodell. Und ich sitze da eben hinten, also bin im Studio hier und hab mich bei der Arbeit gefilmt im Prozess. Ich glaube schon, dass hier auch… jetzt wollte ich sagen Kindlichkeit, aber was ist das denn überhaupt? Also was ist denn Kindlichkeit überhaupt? Neugier. Aber das haben Erwachsene auch irgendwie, ich weiß nicht. Oder vielleicht als Kind, dass man weiß, dass man eigentlich gar nichts weiß so irgendwie. Oder dass man ganz wenig weiß und dass es ganz viel gibt, was man erforschen und entdecken kann. Das ist vielleicht etwas Kindliches, irgendwie.

00:16:34 VMF:
Ja wenn du Kunst machst, machst du dann irgendwas anders? Weil ich finde, das ist irgendwie eh nah an dem, wie ich das auch immer sehe: dieses Welt verstehen wollen und sich mit der Welt in Beziehung setzen letztlich, nicht?

00:16:58 FHW:
Aber anders zu was? Was meinst Du?

00:17:00 VMF:
Ja zu früher. So kannst du irgendwo so eine…

00:17:04 FHW:
Jetzt kann ich das halt formulieren und rausbringen. Ich habe jetzt so eine Formulatur gelernt, wie ich das aus dem Kopf so rauskriege. Aber die Fragen sind glaube ich die gleichen… die Frage nach dem Ursprung, die Frage nach Gott oder nach dem unbewegten Beweger oder dem Tod. Also die Fragen sind gleichbleibend, würde ich sagen, ja.

00:17:34 VMF:
Weil du gesagt hast, du willst dir zuhören: Würdest du dich etwas fragen?

00:17:44 FHW:
Nein, ich würde mich reden lassen, das unterstützen die Fragen und nichts abtun, so: „Das ist doch Quatsch. Darüber muss man nicht nachdenken“, sondern viel mehr das so unterfüttern. Das würde ich machen, ja.

00:11:17 VMF:
An olfactory barrier?

00:11:18 FHW:
Exactly, an olfactory one. So not just through the structure itself, but also through the smell – you didn't want to go in.

00:11:23 VMF:
And do you always play these kinds of characters? Does that show up again?

00:11:30 FHW:
A lot, yeah. I'll show you my website. I do a lot of performance work. This one's the last one – it's my diploma project. It's only three minutes – you can watch the video doc. … The piece is called "The Origin and Development of an Artistic Fact." …

00:12:57 FHW:
Hmm, yeah, very nice!

00:12:57 FHW:
Right, so that was an installation too, as you probably noticed – up front were the finished pieces, and in the back you could see the process leading up to them. It also had a kind of model-like quality, like the other piece at Parallel – a kind of model for explaining the world. And I'm sitting in the back, in the studio here, and I filmed myself working on the piece. I do think there's also – I was about to say childlikeness – but what even is that? What is childlikeness, really? Curiosity? But adults have that too, I guess. Or maybe it's that, as a child, you know you don't know anything – like, you know that you know very little and that there's a lot out there to explore and discover. Maybe that's something childlike.

00:16:34 VMF:
Yeah, and when you make art, do you do anything differently? Because to me, that actually sounds really close to how I always think about it too – like trying to understand the world and ultimately trying to relate to it.

00:16:58 FHW:
But different from what? What do you mean?

00:17:00 VMF:
Yeah, compared to earlier. So can you… like, somehow…

00:17:04 FHW:
Now I can articulate it and put it out there. I've learned a kind of phrasing now, a way to get it out of my head. But I think the questions are still the same… the question of origin, the question of God or the unmoved mover, or of death. I'd say those questions stay constant, yeah.

00:17:34 VMF:
Because you said you'd listen to yourself: Would you ask yourself something?

00:17:44 FHW:
No, I'd just let myself talk – support it with questions, but not dismiss anything. Like: "That's nonsense, no need to think about that." Instead, I'd reinforce it – treat it as something worth thinking about, not something silly. That's what I'd do, yeah. Emphasize that it's valid to think about those things, that it's not rubbish. But I also don't want to romanticize childhood too much. I mean, a child couldn't make something like this – these two installations I just showed you. A child couldn't do that. I can do it because I've spent years developing the skills to make it happen.

So dass das wichtig ist, darüber nachzudenken und dass das kein Quatsch ist. Aber ich will auch das Kindsein nicht so romantisieren. Ich mein, das könnte kein Kind machen. Also so eine Installation, diese zwei Installationen, die ich dir jetzt gezeigt hab. Das könnte jetzt ein Kind nicht machen. Das kann ich, weil ich jetzt die Skills über Jahre gelernt habe, das zu machen. Ja.

00:18:51 VMF:
Aber gibt es auch etwas, das ein Kind könnte, was du nicht kannst? Oder was du als Kind vielleicht gekonnt hast... also quasi, wenn Du kongenial Dich jetzt als Kind dazuholen könntest, würde es dann irgendwie anders werden? Oder auch das mit diesem Redenlassen, ist es mehr, weil du glaubst, dass es für das Kind dann gut ist, wenn es irgendwie halt ermutigt wird?

00:19:25 FHW:
Genau ermutigt und unterstützt.

00:19:26 VMF:
Oder hast du schon das Gefühl, da kommt dann auch für Dich irgendwas raus, was dich weiterbringt ...

00:19:31 FHW:
Ja schon, weil es ein Dialog ist. Das heißt, wir lernen voneinander. Da war zum Beispiel der Max, also der Sohn von Christian, war auch da bei der Parallel mit dem Christian. Und wir hatten ein Gespräch vor der Installation. Es ging dann auch um Gott und so weiter und der hat dann auch so Worte gefunden, die ich selber nicht hatte.

00:19:51 VMF:
Zum Beispiel?

00:19:54 FHW:
Also ich hab‘s dem Max halt sehr einfach erklärt, in einfachen Worten. Ich habe nicht Metaphysik gesagt oder der unbewegte Beweger und so weiter. Doch das habe ich ihm erklärt, dass es irgendwo eine Instanz gibt, die nicht mehr bewegt wird. Die Dose wird bewegt von Menschen und die Hand wird vom Kopf bewegt, usw. Das hat er dann schon verstanden. Aber ich habe vor allem gelernt, durch diese einfache Sprache kann ich es jedem erklären dann. Aber was habe ich von ihm gelernt? Ich weiß nicht. Ich glaube, was ich in der Arbeit mit Kindern lerne von den Kindern ist so... wie soll ich sagen, eine Leichtigkeit, ja. Aber die habe ich auch in mir eh schon, also diese Leichtigkeit.

00:20:49 VMF:
Es gibt ganz schön schwermütige Kinder...

00:20:54 FHW:
Aber ich lerne schon auch was von denen. Also du meinst, die Frage ist, was ziehe ich von den Kindern?

00:21:15 VMF:
Was kriegst Du raus, ja.

00:21:16 FHW:
Ich weiß nicht, das ist so eine Emotion ... einfach die Freude, jemandem was zu zeigen und dem Kind zu zeigen, was es kann. Die Fähigkeiten, die in dem Kind stecken, zu zeigen und dann, wenn es Freude hat, das ist so das, was zurückkommt, ja.

00:21:43 VMF:
Eigentlich eine Selbstwirksamkeit für dich?

00:21:45 FHW:
Genau. Aber auch, weil ich halt eben schon gern so eine Mentoring-Position habe oder annehme. Es macht mir einfach Freude, das gibt mir so eine Emotion, die ich sonst in keinem anderen Bereich irgendwie hab. Schwierig das Thema.

00:18:51 VMF:
But is there something a child could do that you can’t? Or something you maybe could do as a child... like, if you could somehow bring your childhood self into the process – would that change things? And this idea of letting yourself talk, is that more because you think it would be good for the child – to feel encouraged?

00:19:25 FHW:
Exactly – to feel encouraged and supported.

00:19:26 VMF:
Or do you also feel like you get something out of it – something that pushes you forward?

00:19:31 FHW:
Yes, definitely – because it’s a dialogue. That means we learn from each other. Like for example, Max – Christian’s son – was there at Parallel with Christian. And we had a conversation in front of the installation. We ended up talking about God and so on, and he came up with words that I didn’t even have.

00:19:51 VMF:
For example?

00:19:54 FHW:
Well, I explained things to Max in really simple terms. I didn’t say “metaphysics” or “the unmoved mover” or anything like that. But I did explain that there’s some kind of entity that is no longer moved by anything. The can is moved by people, and the hand is moved by the brain, and so on. He got that. But what I mainly learned was: using that kind of simple language, I can explain it to anyone. And what did I learn from him? I don’t know... I think what I learn from working with children is – how should I put it – this lightness. Yeah. But that lightness is something I already carry within me anyway.

00:20:49 VMF:
There are some pretty melancholic kids out there...

00:20:54 FHW:
But I do learn something from them. You mean, what do I get from the kids?

00:21:15 VMF:
Yeah – what do you take away?

00:21:16 FHW:
I don’t know – it’s more of an emotional thing. Just the joy of showing someone something – of showing a child what they’re capable of. Seeing the abilities that are already in the child, and showing them, and then when they’re happy – that’s what comes back to me, yeah.

00:21:43 VMF:
So it’s actually a sense of selfefficacy for you?

00:21:45 FHW:
Exactly. But also because I genuinely enjoy taking on that kind of mentoring role. It just brings me a kind of emotional experience I don’t get anywhere else. It’s a tricky topic.

00:22:04 VMF:
Aber es ist dann eigentlich schon ein… eben, also wie Du sagst, so ein Mentoring. Du stehst drüber, nicht?

00:22:13 FHW:
Nein nein, Mentoring ist nicht hierarchisch. Ich sehe das eher so, dass ich versuche, das Kind hochzuheben. So sehe ich das. In seinen Fähigkeiten hochzuheben und nicht von oben. Mentoring heißt nicht, dass man von oben herabschaut oder höhergestellt ist, sondern ich sehe es eher so, dass man das Kind oder den Jugendlichen erhebt durch die Mentoring-Position, ja.

00:22:45 VMF:
Also bedeutet dieses Augenhöhe-Thema was für Dich?

00:23:02 FHW:
Naja, wie ich gerade sagte, dass man halt den Kindern zuhört. Dass man sie auf Augenhöhe betrachtet und nicht von oben herab, sondern dass sie was zu sagen haben und dass man den Kindern das Gefühl gibt, dass das wichtig ist, was sie sagen und dass das kein Quatsch ist.

00:23:22 VMF:
Ja, aber in welcher Form ist es dann wichtig? Also eben ich höre immer „für die…“ und das ist der einfachere Moment. Das ist halt auch dieser pädagogische Ansatz. Natürlich wollen wir in so einem Kontext wie dem Kindermuseum oder wenn wir einen Workshop machen, noch dazu, wenn die mit der Schule kommen oder wenn die Eltern dafür bezahlen, dann sollen die Kinder nachher irgendwie bereichert rausgehen, klar.

00:24:03 FHW:
… reicher als vorher, aber es muss auch kein Spaß sein, das haben wir schon besprochen. Es muss nicht verbunden sein mit Spaß, sondern mit einer zusätzlichen Erfahrung.

00:24:17 VMF:
Aber wenn du sagst, du hörst ihnen wirklich zu, wenn du quasi nicht nur ihnen das Gefühl gibst, du hörst zu, sondern eben wirklich zuhörst, dann muss das ja ankommen und dann macht das was mit dir, was sie sagen, sonst ist es ja irgendwo nur Theater.

00:24:41 FHW:
Also ich freue mich einfach, dass sie gehört werden. Das gibt mir Freude. Vielleicht ist das eine Selbstlosigkeit zu sagen: Du bist wichtig und du hast jetzt hier den Raum auszuprobieren, zu experimentieren. Und ich mache das jetzt nicht, um irgendwelche Infos oder so von denen zu bekommen, sondern habe einfach eine Freude daran… jemand anderem zu helfen oder so… ja, so würde ich das sagen.

00:25:18 VMF:
Zu kommunizieren.

00:25:19 FHW:
Kommunizieren, genau, Kommunikation. Ich frage mich jetzt im Kopf immer: Wie ist das? Was fühle ich denn, wenn ich im Kindermuseum bin, mit denen im Atelier und mit Ton baue. Ja, ich freue mich einfach, dass es da auch jetzt mal im Moment gar nicht so viel um mich geht. Sondern jetzt geht es um den anderen oder die andere. Und ja, dann macht es mir auch Spaß, mich zurückzustellen und dass ich da jetzt gar nicht so zeigen muss, was ich alles kann und soll, sondern es geht um die Förderung des Kindes. Und das finde ich gut. Das ist ja auch so eine Selbstwirksamkeit. Selbstwirksamkeit durch Selbstlosigkeit so ja. Jemandem zu helfen, das gibt ja ganz viel Wärme und Freude für einen selber, irgendwie.

00:22:04 VMF:
But then it really is a sort of – like you said – a mentoring thing. You're in a position above, aren't you?

00:22:13 FHW:
No, no – mentoring isn't hierarchical. I see it more like I'm trying to lift the child up. That's how I see it. Lifting them up in their capabilities – not from above. Mentoring doesn't mean looking down from a higher position. I see it more as: you elevate the child or the young person through the mentoring.

00:22:45 VMF:
So does this idea of meeting at eye level mean something to you?

00:23:02 FHW:
Well, like I just said – that you really listen to the children. That you meet them at eye level, not from above. That they have something to say, and that you give them the sense that what they say is important – that it's not nonsense.

00:23:22 VMF:
Right, but in what form is it important? I keep hearing "for the child…" – and that's the easier part. That's also the more pedagogical approach. Of course, in a setting like the Children's Museum, or in a workshop – especially when they're coming with a school group or their parents paid for it – you want the kids to come away enriched in some way, obviously.

00:24:03 FHW:
…more enriched than before. But it doesn't have to be "fun" – we've talked about that. It doesn't have to be about fun – it can be about having a new experience.

00:24:17 VMF:
But if you say you're really listening to them – if you're not just giving them the feeling that you're listening, but actually listening – then that has to land with you. Then what they say has to do something to you. Otherwise, it's just a performance.

00:24:41 FHW:
I just feel happy when they're being heard. That gives me joy. Maybe that's a kind of selflessness – saying: "You matter. You have this space to try things, to experiment." And I'm not doing it to get something out of them – some info or whatever – but simply because I enjoy helping someone else. That's how I'd put it.

00:25:18 VMF:
To communicate.

00:25:19 FHW:
Communicate, exactly – communication. I keep asking myself: What is that feeling when I'm in the Children's Museum, in the studio space, working with clay? I just enjoy that – for once – it's not about me. It's about the other person. And yeah, I also enjoy stepping back and not having to show everything I can do. It's about encouraging the child. And I think that's great. That's also a kind of selfefficacy – selfefficacy through selflessness, yeah. Helping someone else – that gives you a kind of warmth and joy you don't get elsewhere.

00:26:13 VMF:
Ja, das ist dann tatsächlich so ein bisschen ein Gegenpol zu dem, was du in deiner Arbeit machst, wo du sehr viel stärker dich selber in den Fokus setzt.

00:26:25 FHW:
Genau, in meiner Arbeit geht es sehr viel um Menschen und Kommunikation. Die ist aber nicht so sozial wie das Kindermuseum.

00:27:15 VMF:
Ja, es geht halt um deinen Blick ganz stark, den du irgendwie zeigst.

00:27:21 FHW:
Genau um einen Blick, wie ich die Welt verstehe, so. Ich meine, jetzt die Installation ist ja recht auFHWendig, da arbeite ich auch mit anderen Leuten zusammen und bin dann auch immer so in einer – wie sagt man...

00:27:48 VMF:
Regie?

00:27:49 FHW:
Regieposition oder wie sagt man? Artist Director? Art Director? Diese Position macht mir viel Spaß. Aber es geht immer um meine Arbeit. Aber im Kindermuseum ist es so, da will ich gar nicht, dass es so viel um mich geht, sondern da soll es um jemand anders gehen.

00:28:11 VMF:
Aber welche Rolle spielt oder wie setzt du dein Künstlersein in dieser Begegnung mit den Kindern ein? Kannst Du das formulieren?

00:28:27 FHW:
Der Werner hat das gestern gut gesagt: vielleicht in genau dem Moment, wo man nicht sagt: Ihr müsst im Atelier zielgerecht etwas bauen. Eine Schildkröte zum Beispiel. Sondern dass es um den Prozess geht, also um die Lust am Prozess und an ... soll ich sagen, an der Wildheit? Und dass das okay ist, wenn es wild ist und kein Produkt am Ende entsteht. Vielleicht ist es genau dieses künstlerische Skill, das ich da mitnehme.

00:28:55 VMF:
...das du irgendwie versuchst, ihnen zu geben?

00:29:00 FHW:
Ja, aber ich bin hier in meinem Atelier viel, viel mehr Künstler als im Kindermuseum. Das ist vielleicht so 10 Prozent, oder? Na stimmt auch nicht, das ist zu wenig, ich weiß nicht genau. Ich glaube, vielleicht ist es da eben dieser künstlerische Gedanke, dieser freie Gedanke oder prozessorientierte Gedanke. Vielleicht ist genau das, der künstlerische Einsatz im Kindermuseum.

00:29:30 VMF:
Ja, ich finde es total interessant, weil das für mich klarer fassbar macht, was vielleicht der Unterschied ist zwischen uns. Dieses „meinen Blick auf die Welt ausdrücken und das ist der Kern von meiner Kunst“, das habe ich überhaupt nicht. Mich fängt es dann an zu interessieren, wenn man sich in einem künstlerischen Prozess begegnet und wenn dann in dieser Begegnung etwas entsteht, was mir allein nicht passieren würde.

00:30:13 FHW:
Du hast selber gesagt, dass du eigentlich keine Verena-Faißt-Dinge tust.

00:30:18 VMF:
Genau.

00:26:13 VMF:
Yeah, that really is kind of the opposite of what you do in your own work – where you put yourself very much at the center.

00:26:25 FHW:
Exactly. My work is very much about people and communication. But it's not as social as what happens at the Children's Museum.

00:27:15 VMF:
Yeah, it's really centered on your perspective – your way of showing how you see the world.

00:27:21 FHW:
Exactly – it's about a gaze. About how I understand the world. I mean, the installation is pretty elaborate – I also work with other people on that, and I often take on a kind of – what's the word...

00:27:48 VMF:
Director?

00:27:49 FHW:
Yeah, like a director's role. Artist director? Art director? That's a role I really enjoy. But it's always about my work. Whereas in the Children's Museum, I don't want it to be about me. It should be about someone else.

00:28:11 VMF:
But what role does your identity as an artist play in those encounters with the children? How do you bring that in?

00:28:27 FHW:
Werner said something really good yesterday – maybe it's exactly in the moment when you don't say: "You have to build something specific in the studio. A turtle, for example." But when it's about the process – the joy of the process and... should I say... the wildness? And that it's okay for it to be wild and for there not to be a finished product in the end. Maybe that's the artistic skill I bring to it.

00:28:55 VMF:
...something you try to pass on to them?

00:29:00 FHW:
Yeah, but I'm much more of an artist here in my own studio than I am in the Children's Museum. Maybe only ten percent there. Or... no, that's too little – I'm not sure exactly. I think maybe what I bring there is this artistic mindset – this freedom of thought or process-oriented thinking. Maybe that is the artistic input I bring into the Children's Museum.

00:29:30 VMF:
Yeah, I find that really interesting – because it helps clarify what might be different between us. This idea of "expressing my view of the world – that's the core of my art" – that's not what I'm about at all. I only start getting interested when you meet someone in an artistic process – and something comes out of that encounter that wouldn't have happened on your own.

00:30:13 FHW:
You've said yourself that you don't really do "Verena Faißt-things."

00:30:18 VMF:
Exactly.

00:30:19 FHW:
Und das ist für mich eigentlich das.... dieses eigene Machen ist ja gerade das künstlerische Tun so für mich, ja.

00:30:32 VMF:
Nein, das ist so eine Gratwanderung. Ich merke zum Beispiel, dass es auch total problematisch wird, wenn ich sage, ich arbeite mit den Kindern oder mit den Jugendlichen, bei diesen Filmprojekten zum Beispiel, und ich verstecke mich dann hinter den Kindern. Sondern es funktioniert viel besser, auch im „Trickfilmstudio“, wenn man dann sehr wohl auch reingeht und seine Dinge reingibt und auch dazu steht und sagt „Das ist jetzt mein Beitrag“. Aber die Grenzen sind so schwimmend. Und es gibt diese Macht, dieses Machtgefüge einfach ... auch wenn du noch so sehr sagst, du versuchst irgendwie eine Augenhöhe zu schaffen. Aber alleine durch den Altersunterschied, durch das Setting, durch die Institution oder einen mehr oder weniger institutionellen Kontext gibt es da einfach irgendwie diese Gaps.

00:31:23 FHW:
Oder man muss dann auch so Ordnung schaffen, wenn da ganz viele Kinder im Raum sind, den Schwarm zusammenhalten.

00:31:28 VMF:
Und selbst wenn du das überhaupt nicht machst oder meinst, das überhaupt nicht zu machen ... also ich hab das immer wieder irgendwie versucht in den Videoprojektion so: geht das, die totale Kollektivität in so einem Setting zu schaffen.

00:31:49 FHW:
Das geht schon, aber ich glaube es ist halt wichtig, doch so eine Führungsposition zu haben.

00:31:53 VMF:
Und selbst wenn du es nicht willst, wirst du es automatisch haben in dem Moment, wo du das Projekt initiierst und den Rahmen setzt, ja. Aber interessant. Wann hast du angefangen, Kunst zu machen?

00:32:04 FHW:
Zu studieren oder zu machen?

00:32:07 VMF:
Zu machen?

00:32:08 FHW:
Ich würde sagen mit 14 habe ich so eine Videokamera bekommen von meiner Schwester oder ich habe sie nicht bekommen, ich habe sie immer geklaut und hab damit erste Filmchen gemacht. Damit würde ich sagen, hat es angefangen. Ich habe mich erst sehr für Kameras und Film interessiert und so Kurzfilme gemacht.

00:32:32 VMF:
Direkte Übersetzung von deinem Blick, nicht?

00:32:33 FHW:
Genau. Ich habe aber auch ganz viel schon immer getanzt so, auch als Kind sehr viel mich bewegt und getanzt. Ich spiele auch in einer Musik-Combo mit einem Freund zusammen, wo ich singe und tanze. Es ist einfach für mich immer ganz verbunden, also meine Bewegung, mein Körper, das wird wahrscheinlich so sein bis zum Tod, der ist so verbunden mit Emotionen und Gedanken, dass es so automatisch ist für mich, mich nach meinen Gedanken oder meinen Emotionen zu bewegen. Tanzen war schon ganz früh irgendwie...

00:33:22 VMF:
Gibt es da Erinnerungen, so Konkrete, die für dich vielleicht was zu tun haben mit dem, wie du jetzt arbei-

00:30:19 FHW:
And that, for me, is really the core of it... this act of doing something yourself – that's exactly what artistic practice is for me.

00:30:32 VMF:
No, it's such a balancing act. I've noticed, for example, how problematic it can be when I say I work with children or teens – like in those film projects – and then I hide behind the kids. But it actually works much better, even in the „Animated Film Studio“, when I also contribute something of my own, when I really step in and say, "This is my input." But the boundaries are so fluid. And this power dynamic – this structure of power – is always present... even if you try your best to create some sense of equality. Just the age difference, the setup, the institution or the semi-institutional context – it all creates these gaps.

00:31:23 FHW:
Or you have to establish order when there are a bunch of kids in the room, keep the group together.

00:31:28 VMF:
And even if you're not doing that – or think you're not – I've always tried to explore this in the video projects: can you really create a completely collective process in that kind of setting?

00:31:49 FHW:
I think you can – but I do think it's important to have some kind of leadership role.

00:31:53 VMF:
And even if you don't want it, you automatically have it the moment you initiate the project and set the framework. Yeah. But tell me, when did you start making art?

00:32:04 FHW:
You mean studying it or doing it?

00:32:07 VMF:
Doing it.

00:32:08 FHW:
I'd say when I was 14, I got a video camera from my sister – or, well, I didn't get it, I just kept stealing it – and I started making little films. I think that's when it all began. I was really interested in cameras and film, made lots of short films.

00:32:32 VMF:
A direct translation of your gaze, right?

00:32:33 FHW:
Exactly. But I also danced a lot, even as a kid – I was always moving and dancing. I also play in a music duo with a friend – we sing and dance together. It's always been interconnected for me – my movement, my body. That's probably going to be true for me until I die. My body is so tied to emotion and thought that it's automatic: I move the way I feel or think. Dancing has always been a thing for me from very early on.

00:33:22 VMF:
Do you have any memories – specific ones – that maybe connect to how you work now? Did you dance alone, just for yourself?

test? Hast du alleine getanzt, für dich oder hast du…?

00:33:44 FHW:
Nein ich hab‘ alleine getanzt, für mich.

00:33:45 VMF:
Also der Blick von außen, dass dir jemand zuschaut, so bühnenhaft, war nicht wichtig?

00:33:51 FHW:
Nein, es ging um die Bewegung. Ich war immer einer, der sich viel bewegt hat und das war immer was, was eigentlich unterdrückt wurde, so: zappel doch nicht so rum! Und aus diesem Verbot jetzt ziehe ich ganz viel Energie oder Positives heraus – die ganzen Dinge, die mir als Kind verboten wurden, sind jetzt eigentlich, wie sagt man, das Füllhorn meines Lebens. Das hat eine Weile gedauert, bis ich das so gewählt habe. Aber ja, ich weiß nicht, ob in dieser vermittlerischen Arbeit mit Kindern nicht auch so ein Versuch ist, ein therapeutischer Versuch, die Kindheit zu retten. Das kann man vielleicht jedem Pädagogen, pädagogischer Arbeit irgendwie nachsagen. Aber bei mir ist schon vor allem dieser Gedanke: Ich nehme dich so, wie du bist, und ich will schauen: Was kannst du? Und das wird erhoben und nichts wird verboten. Ich glaube, das hat schon auch mit einem Heilungsversuch meiner eigenen Kindheit zu tun, so.

00:35:01 VMF:
Das heißt, hast du dann … also Kunst machen ist ja schon irgendwie so dieses Publikums-Thema… spielt das eine Rolle, wer das sonst sieht und ob es wer sieht? Wenn man tanzt oder so performt ist das ja nochmal viel stärker.

00:35:20 FHW:
Es geht schon darum, dass Leute das sehen, auf jeden Fall. Also auf jeden Fall habe ich einen Geltungsdrang, aber es ist nicht so, dass ich berühmt sein muss oder dass es die Massen sehen. Es muss einfach eine Kommunikation geben. Und es hat mir schon immer Spaß gemacht, so vorzulesen, zum Beispiel in der Schule, im Unterricht oder Vorträge zu halten, auch so … wie hat man das genannt?

00:35:54 VMF:
Referat?

00:35:56 FHW:
Referate, genau, das hat niemanden Spaß gemacht hat. Aber mir hat es immer sehr viel Spaß gemacht. Also es gibt schon so eine Veranlagung dafür, vor Leuten Sachen zu machen, ja.

00:36:07 VMF:
Und weil du sagst, so dieses Körperliche und über den Körper was ausdrücken, in der Emotion sein körperlich ist so wichtig – ist es dann in der Vermittlung auch so? Reflektierst du das?

00:36:32 FHW:
Ja schon, also durch meine Performance-Praxis in der Kunst ist mir bewusst, wie wichtig der Körper ist, was man damit aussagt. Zum Beispiel erzähle ich oft: Wenn ich mich so runterknie und dem Kind in die Augen schaue, dann…. aber ich finde, die Kinder gehen auch viel lockerer um mit dem Körper, also die schlackern auch plötzlich mal so. Einfach so aus dem Unbewussten. Und das passiert mir ja, das mach ich auch, dass ich mich bewege, unbewusst und ich weiß gar nicht warum. Und das finde ich irgendwie ganz schön zu sehen, wie das Kinder machen und ich glaube, dass sich das so ein bisschen herauswächst. Je älter man wird. Oder dass Kinder plötzlich auch einfach mal so BLALALA irgendwie so Geräusche machen oder so was, ja.

00:33:44 FHW:
Yes, I danced alone, just for myself.

00:33:45 VMF:
So the external gaze, the idea of someone watching you like on a stage – that wasn’t important?

00:33:51 FHW:
No, it was about the movement. I was always someone who moved a lot, and it was something that was actually always suppressed – like, “Stop fidgeting so much!” And now, from that prohibition, I draw so much energy or something positive. All the things that were forbidden to me as a child are now basically – how do you say – the horn of plenty in my life. It took a while for me to choose that. But yeah… I don’t know, maybe this work with children is also a kind of therapeutic attempt to rescue my own childhood. You could probably say that about any educator or pedagogical work in some way. But for me, the core thought is really: I accept you the way you are, and I want to see – what can you do? And that gets lifted up. Nothing gets forbidden. I think that is connected to trying to heal something in my own childhood.

00:35:01 VMF:
So then – artmaking is always tied to having an audience, right? Does it matter to you who sees it, or if anyone sees it at all? Especially with performance or dance, that element is so strong.

00:35:20 FHW:
It is important that people see it, definitely. I definitely have that urge to be seen – but not in the sense that I need to be famous or reach the masses. There just needs to be communication. I’ve always loved reading aloud, for example, in school, in class – giving presentations… what do you call it?

00:35:54 VMF:
A “Referat”?

00:35:56 FHW:
Exactly, presentations – something no one else liked. But I always really enjoyed it. So there’s definitely a tendency in me to do things in front of people, yeah.

00:36:07 VMF:
And since you said expressing emotion through the body is important – being physically in that emotion – is that something you reflect on in your teaching or educational work too?

00:36:32 FHW:
Yeah, definitely. Through my performance practice in art, I’m really aware of how important the body is – what you express with it. For example, I often talk about how I kneel down and look the child in the eye… But I also find that kids are just much more relaxed with their bodies – they just flap their arms around or something, out of nowhere, just from the unconscious. And that happens to me too – I move without realizing it, and I don’t even know why. And I think it’s beautiful to see how children do that. And I think that kind of fades over time – the older you get. Or like when kids suddenly go BLALALA – make weird noises or whatever.

00:37:20 VMF:
Also ich habe ja jetzt hauptsächlich mit meinem Neffen gearbeitet. Er ist ja in Bayern, also viel über Skype, Storytelling, Sound-Geschichten und so. Und ich weiß nicht. Mich hat immer so fasziniert: er ist nicht austauschbar. Ich könnte das nicht mit jedem Kind machen. Er hat so spezielle, auch so physische Fantasien, irgendwie, so ganz technische Ideen eigentlich, die aber natürlich komplett anders funktionieren als erwachsene Ideen, wenn du irgendwie schon mal irgendwas zusammengebaut hast; wenn du dieses Erfahrungswissen hast, was irgendwie geht und was nicht geht. Ich hab so diese Fantasie, diese Dinge, die er sich ausdenkt, dann wirklich zu bauen. Also weil du vorher gesagt hast, dass das, was du gemacht hast, das könnte ein Kind ja nicht machen. Das hört sich für mich ein bisschen so an, als hättest du es dir als Kind vielleicht schon so ähnlich vorgestellt, aber jetzt kannst du‘s halt und machst es dann.

00:39:01 FHW:
Ja.

00:39:06 VMF:
Aber… für dich ist es einfach deinen Blick irgendwie rauszubringen, nicht? Oder könntest du dir das vorstellen, dass das noch mal etwas anderes wäre…

00:39:26 FHW:
…wenn ein Kind entscheidet? Eine künstlerische Entscheidung macht oder was?

00:39:29 VMF:
Ja, oder halt, das aus so einer Begegnung heraus wachsen zu lassen? Oder hast du das schon mal irgendwie…? Hast du schon mal irgendwas so…? Warst du irgendwann nicht der Gott?

00:39:48 FHW:
Also mir ist schon wichtig, der Schriftführer zu sein oder der Autor zu sein. Das macht ja die Freude an der Kunst. Aber wenn es jetzt um ein Video-Projekt mit Kindern geht, ist es für mich eher … es macht mir Spaß, ja. Aber es ist nicht meine Kunst. Es ist für mich ein Workshop oder eine vermittlerische, pädagogische Arbeit. Ich will das dann nicht mischen. Nicht das… es würde mir schon sehr viel Spaß machen, aber es ist mir schon wichtig, der Autor zu sein und vielleicht kann ich mir vorstellen… aber das ist dann übergriffig, ich weiß es nicht: Ich bin der Autor und ich nehme das Kind als Instrument, um eine künstlerische Arbeit zu machen. Dass ich das Kind benutze… Ich habe das Gefühl, in meiner künstlerischen Arbeit kann ich dann auch so dunkle und unangenehme Kammern öffnen, die ich jetzt in dem Workshop nicht öffnen kann, ja. Zum Beispiel. Helikoptermäßig zu sein oder was weiß ich, weißt du? Deswegen unterscheide ich so… in der Kunst da kann ich alle Kammern öffnen, die in mir drin sind und es gibt ja nicht nur gute Kammern, sondern… oder es gibt nicht nur das Licht, es gibt auch die Dunkelheit, die kann da auch sein. Und das möchte ich halt nicht mit Kindern machen. Obwohl im Kindermuseum gab es ja auch eine Ausstellung über den Tod. Aber es gibt manche Anteile, das hat jeder, die will ich nicht, dass das ein Kind sieht oder da will ich kein Kind mit reinziehen, das weiß ich genau. Und die Grenze ist mir wichtig.

00:41:53 VMF:
Ja, ja, wobei Kinder mindestens so dunkle Anteile haben…

00:42:03 FHW:
Ja, jaja.

00:42:04 VMF:
Aber könntest du dir dann vorstellen, wenn das Kind

00:37:20 VMF:
I’ve mostly worked with my nephew so far – he’s in Bavaria, so a lot of it’s over Skype. Storytelling, sound stories and such. And I don’t know – I’ve always found it fascinating: he’s not interchangeable. I couldn’t do that with just any kid. He has such specific, physical kinds of fantasies – very technical ideas, actually. But of course, they function completely differently than adult ideas – because as an adult, you’ve already built things, you have experiential knowledge about what’s possible and what’s not. I kind of fantasize about really building the things he imagines. Because what you said earlier – that a child couldn’t make what you made – it sounds a bit like maybe, as a kid, you already imagined it that way, but now you can do it. So you do.

00:39:01 FHW:
Yeah.

00:39:06 VMF:
But for you, it’s really about putting your gaze out there, right? Or could you imagine it being something else?

00:39:26 FHW:
…if a child made the decisions? Made the artistic choices?

00:39:29 VMF:
Yeah – or if something grew directly out of the encounter? Have you ever…? Was there ever a time when you weren’t “God”?

00:39:48 FHW:
Well, it is important to me to be the scribe, the author. That’s part of what makes art fun. But if it’s a video project with kids, for me that’s more… I enjoy it, sure – but it’s not my art. That’s a workshop, or an educational, pedagogical activity. I don’t want to mix those things. Not that… I mean, I’d enjoy it, sure – but it’s still important to me to be the author. Maybe I could imagine something, but then I feel like that would be overstepping. I don’t know. Like: I’m the author, and I use the child as an instrument to make an artwork. That I’m using the child… I just feel like, in my own artistic work, I can open dark and uncomfortable rooms – rooms I can’t open in a workshop. Like, for example, being helicopterlike or whatever, you know? That’s why I make that distinction. In art, I can open all those chambers that are inside me – and they’re not all good ones. It’s not just light, there’s darkness too. And that’s allowed there. But I don’t want to bring children into that. Even though the Children‘s Museum had an exhibition about death once. Still – there are parts of myself that I don’t want a child to see. I don’t want to draw them into that, and I know that very clearly. That boundary is important to me.

00:41:53 VMF:
Yeah, yeah – though kids have just as many dark sides…

00:42:03 FHW:
Yeah, totally.

00:42:04 VMF:
But could you imagine – if the child were actually you – that you could work that way?

du selber wärst, mit dem du arbeitest...

00:42:12 FHW:
Ja das kann ich mir schon eher vorstellen dann ja, oder dass es um meine Mutter geht oder solche Sachen ... ich als Kind und dann Mutter, ja solche Sachen, das kann ich mir vorstellen.

00:42:22 VMF:
Aber würde es dann überhaupt einen Unterschied machen oder ist das sowieso drin?

00:42:28 FHW:
Ich will ... also ich habe das Gefühl, wenn jetzt ein Kind käme, also ein fremdes Kind, das nicht ich selber bin und ich das verletze, wenn ich frei künstlerisch arbeite ... also ich möchte ja das Kind schützen und es deswegen nicht involvieren in meine künstlerische Arbeit. Macht das Sinn?

00:42:52 VMF:
Ja, sicher. Also ich habe halt immer das Gefühl, das ist das Coole am Kindermuseum, dass man da so ein Stück weit diesen Freiraum hat, eben nicht Eltern und nicht diese Schutz-Instanz sein zu müssen. Sondern, ja, da ist dann schon die Institution und dieser Rahmen, das ist ein natürlicher Schutz. Ja, du schützt vielleicht schon und vielleicht ist das auch so dieses Ding, zu dem ich immer mehr gekommen bin, dass das eigentlich der größte Unterschied ist, wenn ich mit Kindern oder Jugendlichen oder sonst jemandem, der sonst keine Kunst macht, arbeite, dass das eigentlich ganz, ganz viel der Job ist, die Person dann auch ein Stück weit vor sich selber zu schützen. Vor allen Dingen, wenn noch andere Leute dabei sind oder wenn es dann nach außen geht und ich merke okay: Du machst gerade etwas und bemerkst selber gar nicht, was du da grad alles preisgibst, zum Beispiel, oder was das tut, wenn es vielleicht diesen Raum verlässt. Und ich muss das wissen, weil das ist meine Profession sozusagen.

00:44:38 FHW:
Du meinst, wenn Du ein Projekt machst mit Kindern?

00:44:41 VMF:
Ja, also deswegen glaube ich, ist das so was Zwiespältiges, weil auf der einen Seite glaube ich, Kunst machen ist ja immer Risiko. Also wenn du weißt, was am Schluss rauskommt, ist es ja irgendwie keine Kunst. Und gleichzeitig passt du auf, dass dann trotzdem kein allzu großer Schaden passiert oder bist irgendwie so das Gummiseil außen herum. Also weiß ich nicht, ein Beispiel, bei so einem Medienprojekt mit Mädels. Die haben sehr poetisch einen relativ abstrakten Film gemacht. Und dann gab es da so eine Sequenz, in der das eine Mädchen so dasaß mit ihrem Telefon im Schneidersitz und sie haben ihr total in den Schritt gefilmt. Es ging aber um etwas komplett anderes. Es ging nur um dieses Telefon oder so und sie haben das vollkommen übersehen, was das halt so... ein Frauen-Schritt in Hot-Pants ohne Kopf...

00:46:05 FHW:
Aber da kann man ja dann drüber reden, oder? Genau das ist für mich dann auch wieder pädagogische Arbeit, so dass man da dann darüber spricht.

00:46:14 VMF:
Ja, aber ich denke, da sind die Grenzen total fließend, weil Du als Pädagoge nicht unbedingt die Qualifikation hast, dann einerseits so Prozesse auszulösen und zu begleiten und zu antizipieren und dann an der richtigen Stelle so einzugreifen, dass du nicht einfach sagst: Nein, das machen wir jetzt nicht, weil das ist irgendwie... weiß ich nicht, böse oder unanständig oder so, sondern dass du damit dann halt auch weiter irgendwie künstlerisch umgehen kannst.

00:42:12 FHW:
Yeah, that I can imagine. Or if it was about my mother or something like that... me as a child, and then my mother – yeah, those kinds of things, I could imagine.

00:42:22 VMF:
But would it really be different then – or is that kind of already part of it anyway?

00:42:28 FHW:
I want... I feel like, if a child came along now – a child that isn't me – and I hurt them through my free artistic work... I want to protect the child, and that's why I don't want to involve them in my art. Does that make sense?

00:42:52 VMF:
Yeah, of course. I always feel like that's the great thing about the Children's Museum – that you do have this space of freedom. You don't have to be the parent, you don't have to be the protective figure. The institution itself provides that protective framework. Sure, you protect to some extent – but maybe that's also what I've come to more and more: that the real job, when I work with children or teens – or really with anyone who doesn't normally make art – is to protect the person a little from themselves. Especially when there are other people around, or when it's going to be shared publicly, and I realize: okay, you're doing something right now and you don't even see what you're revealing – or what it could do once it leaves the room. And I have to know that, because that's my profession, so to speak.

00:44:38 FHW:
You mean when you're doing a project with kids?

00:44:41 VMF:
Yeah, exactly. That's why I think it's such a double-edged thing. Because on the one hand, artmaking is always a risk. If you already know what the outcome will be, then it's not really art. And at the same time, you're also making sure no one gets hurt too badly – you're like this bungee cord around the whole thing. Like, for example, in a media project with a group of girls – they made a really poetic, abstract film. And then there was this sequence where one girl was sitting crosslegged with her phone, and they filmed her totally in the crotch. But the scene was about something completely different – about the phone or whatever – and they didn't even notice what that image actually conveyed: a woman's crotch in hot pants, no face...

00:46:05 FHW:
But that's something you can talk about, right? That, for me, is also part of pedagogical work – that you talk about exactly that.

00:46:14 VMF:
Yeah, but I think the boundaries are really fluid. Because as an educator, you're not necessarily trained to initiate, accompany, and anticipate such processes – and then to step in at the right moment. Not in a way where you just say, "No, we're not doing that because it's... I don't know, wrong or inappropriate," but in a way where you can still engage with it artistically somehow.

00:46:42 FHW:
Man kann auch sagen, dass es eben künstlerisch sehr, sehr interessant aussieht, sehr spannend, aber jetzt reden wir mal darüber, was das eigentlich ist, was es macht. Also zum Beispiel, das wäre dann… Ich muss jetzt ans Filmen denken. Zum Beispiel du kennst ja Es oder It mit dem Clown? Da spielen ja auch Kinder mit. Und die haben ja auch so richtig krasse Szenen mit diesem Clown. Und das muss ja dann auch am Set irgendwie gut abgeklärt sein, nicht. Und es funktioniert irgendwie schon, diese Dunkelheit dann zu verbinden mit den Kindern, ohne dass sie Schaden nehmen, also das gibt es schon irgendwie. Aber ich unterscheide schon, ich unterscheide zwischen pädagogischer kunstvermittlerischer Arbeit und meiner eigenen künstlerischen Arbeit, also da ist schon ein ziemlicher Cut so drin.

00:47:38 VMF:
Ja, ja, es ist auf jeden Fall ein Unterschied, ob es Dunkelheit ist, die einfach in den Kindern auch ist, mit der man sich auseinandersetzt oder ob das wirklich deine eigenen Abgründe sind, die du da reinlegst. Das würde ich jetzt auch nicht sagen, dass ich das mache, natürlich trifft man sich irgendwo in so einer gemeinsamen Dunkelheit unter Umständen. Und das kann dann irrsinnig super und wertvoll sein.

00:48:03 FHW:
Ich fände auch interessant, zum Beispiel einen Workshop über den Tod zu gestalten mit den Kindern. Aber ich würde dann, wenn ich das Thema Tod in meiner eigenen künstlerischen Arbeit habe, würde ich das ganz anders werten als in dem Workshop mit den Kindern. Oder vielleicht würde ich Jugendlichen eine künstlerische Arbeit von mir zeigen in dem Workshop und dass man dann darüber redet. Vielleicht wäre das so eine Verbindung.

00:48:46 VMF:
Ja… mir kommt vor vielleicht drehen wir uns ein bisschen im Kreis. Ich glaub, es ist relativ klar, was da der Unterschied ist: Für dich ist einfach ganz radikal deine Perspektive und so ein möglichst direkter Ausdruck von dem, was du bist und was dein Blick auf die Welt ist im Fokus. Und ich versuche diese andere Ebene irgendwo gemeinsam hinzubekommen.
Aber was so ein bisschen offen bleibt und natürlich schwierig zu beantworten ist, inwieweit oder in welcher Form du das künstlerische Arbeiten und deine künstlerischen Erfahrungen, abgesehen von diesem: Okay, du darfst alles und der Prozess bleibt offen… weil das ist ja so diese Illusion: du hast ein Haufen Kinder und gibst meinetwegen noch das Medium vor, aber der Idealfall heißt, du gibst gar nichts vor und sie dürfen alles machen und alles ist richtig und alles ist gut und das passiert dann aber ja nicht. Also je mehr sie dann lost sind, umso mehr fallen sie in Klischees zurück und suchen sich dann wieder ihre Käfige, in die sie sich reinsetzen, weil sie das ja gar nicht aushalten.

00:50:15 FHW:
Wenn es zu lost ist, ja, aber das kann man ja auch sehen, wenn da jetzt irgendwas nicht stimmt oder so und dann kann man da eingreifen.

00:50:24 VMF:
Ja aber eben da wird es ja interessant! Also in welcher Form greift man dann da ein? Wie schafft man es dann – weil letztlich ist ja künstlerisch arbeiten so phasenweise zumindest ein sich bewusst in diesen Zustand freiwillig reinbegeben, in dieses lost sein und da was rausholen und es dann irgendwie manifestieren und dann gehst du wieder rein. Und du kennst das gut genug, dass du dabei nicht verloren, nicht wirklich verloren gehst …

00:46:42 FHW:
You can also say: artistically, it looks really interesting, really striking – but now let's talk about what it actually is, what it does. Like, for example, I'm thinking of film. You know „It", the one with the clown? There are children acting in it, too. And they're involved in some really intense scenes with that clown. That must've been carefully managed on set. And it does work – connecting darkness with children without causing them harm. That's possible somehow. But I definitely make a distinction – a very clear one – between pedagogical or educational artistic work and my own artistic practice. There's a real break between the two for me.

00:47:38 VMF:
Yeah, yeah. There's definitely a difference between engaging with the kind of darkness that already exists within children and bringing your own inner darkness into the mix. I wouldn't claim that I do the latter, of course. But sometimes, you do meet somewhere in a shared darkness. And that can be incredibly powerful and meaningful.

00:48:03 FHW:
I'd also find it interesting, for example, to design a workshop about death with kids. But if I take on the theme of death in my artistic work, it would have a completely different tone than in a workshop with children. Or maybe I'd show a group of teenagers one of my own works during a workshop – and then we could talk about it. Maybe that could be a bridge.

00:48:46 VMF:
Yeah… I feel like we might be circling around a bit. I think the difference is pretty clear: for you, it's radically about your perspective – about expressing, as directly as possible, who you are and how you see the world. And I'm always trying to find a way to build something mutual on a different level.

But what remains kind of open – and is of course hard to answer – is: how exactly do you bring your own artistic work and experience into your educational work, beyond just saying, "You can do anything, and the process is open"? Because that's a bit of an illusion, right? You've got a group of kids, and maybe you set the medium – but the ideal would be that you set nothing, they can do anything, and everything is valid and good. But that doesn't actually happen. The more lost they get, the more they fall back into clichés, back into the same old cages – because they can't tolerate that kind of openness.

00:50:15 FHW:
If it gets too lost, yeah. But you can usually see if something's not working, and then you can step in.

00:50:24 VMF:
Yeah, but that's the interesting part! How do you step in? How do you make that work? Because ultimately, artistic work – at least in phases – is about voluntarily entering that lost state, digging something out of it, and then manifesting it somehow. And then you go back in. And you know how to do that without actually getting lost… not really lost.

00:51:05 FHW:
Ich glaube, bei einem Kind würde ich sagen: Ja, hey, wie geht es dir denn grad mit dem, was du machst? Und wenn ich künstlerisch arbeite, ist es ja eher so im Dialog mit mir selber ein hin und her. Und sonst, wenn ich dann nicht mehr weiterkomme, hole ich mir Feedback. Also dann rufe ich Leute an. Und dann kommt jemand und ich hol mir Feedback. Aber dieses: Ja, wie geht es dir grad? Und: Es ist gut, es muss nicht perfekt sein, es muss nicht ideal sein, das lerne ich im künstlerischen Arbeiten. Und das kann ich so weitergeben, dass das, was herauskommt, nicht einem Bild entsprechen muss oder keinem Ideal.

00:51:54 VMF:
Es manifestiert sich ja immer unterschiedlich, je nach Medium, aber zum Beispiel, wenn du einen Film machst mit Kindern oder Jugendlichen, dann ist so diese Klassiker-Situation: Wenn du alles offenlässt und sagst: macht was ihr wollt! Sie halten das ja dann nicht aus, was Abstraktes zu machen, sondern dann hast du erst recht irgendwie den Mashup-Klischee-Plot, den sie dann versuchen nachzumachen, dann aber da auch nicht hinkommen, das aber von sich selber auch gar nicht erwarten…

00:52:37 FHW:
Ich finde immer gut, halt ein Gerüst zu bieten oder ein Muster. Und dann kann man die Lücken füllen mit dem Eigenen. Also das mache ich auch in meiner künstlerischen Arbeit. Ist bei mir auch schon eigentlich sehr planerisch, was ich mache, lasse aber Lücken für Improvisation. Und ich glaube, das ist auch gut für Kinder. Oder das bewährt sich, würde ich sagen.

00:53:00 VMF:
Ja und da wird es dann interessant. Was sind dann diese Grids oder dieses, was man setzt. Und sind die dann noch beweglich oder sind die…

00:53:18 FHW:
Ja das muss man ausprobieren. Ich überleg jetzt… ich denk jetzt an das Atelier [im ZOOM], da gibt es ja auch immer die Einführungen, Vorgaben. Ich mag eigentlich auch gerne so eine Klarheit: Da gibt es die Schiffe und den Ton und dann kann man machen, was man will. Es gibt aber klare Vorgaben. Du musst die Schuhe anziehen. Wir haben eineinhalb Stunden Zeit und dann ist es vorbei. Aber in dieser Zeit kannst du machen, was du willst. Aber gerade, dass es die zeitlichen Vorgaben gibt und diesen begrenzten Spielbereich, das ist gut so. Diese Mischung aus Raster und Improvisation. Ich glaube, wenn das eine zu stark in Bezug auf das andere wird, also es gibt nur die Impro, das zerfällt. Und wenn es nur das Gerüst gibt, dann ist es irgendwie keine Kunst, dann ist es zu starr, ja.

00:54:09 VMF:
Aber das sind eben gerade diese künstlerischen Prozesse, die mich interessieren! Also, auch wenn du sagst, du hast da nicht den Fokus drauf, aber wir tun das ja trotzdem. Also das eine ist ja unbestreitbar eine künstlerische Arbeit: Das aufzusetzen. Das sind Schiffe, da ist Ton drin. Und so und so machen wir diesen Ablauf. Also das ist einfach eine künstlerische Arbeit mit einem bestimmten Zielpublikum.

00:54:42 FHW:
Aber ich sehe das mehr als Handwerkszeug oder künstlerisches Handwerkszeug. Und dann gibt es vielleicht diese intellektuelle Ebene, diese emotionale, persönliche Ebene. Oder, ja. Muss ich überlegen. Aber das stimmt schon, durch die eigene künstlerische Arbeit weiß man, wie man was gut in die Welt rausbringt, also man hat Routinen oder Taktiken, um Dinge aus dem Kopf in die Welt zu bringen. Und ich glaube, das kommt auf jeden Fall im Kindermuseum auch mit rein.

00:51:05 FHW:
I think with a child, I'd say: "Hey, how are you feeling with what you're doing right now?" When I make art, it's more of a back-and-forth dialogue with myself. And when I get stuck, I get feedback – I call people. Someone comes in, and I get their input. But that whole "How are you doing with this?" – that's something I learned through making art. And I can pass that on: that what comes out doesn't have to match some image or ideal. It's okay as it is.

00:51:54 VMF:
It manifests differently depending on the medium. But say you're making a film with kids or teenagers – then you get that classic situation: if you leave everything open and say, "Do whatever you want!" – they can't really handle making something abstract. Instead, you get this cliché mashup plot that they try to imitate, but can't quite pull off – and they don't even expect themselves to, either…

00:52:37 FHW:
I always think it's helpful to provide a structure or a pattern. And then the gaps can be filled with their own ideas. That's also how I work artistically. What I do is actually very planned – but I always leave space for improvisation. And I think that's also really good for children. Or at least, I'd say it's proven to work.

00:53:00 VMF:
Yeah, and that's where it gets interesting: what are those frameworks or grids that you set? And are they still flexible, or are they…

00:53:18 FHW:
Yeah, you have to try it out. I'm thinking now about the Studio [at ZOOM] – we always start with an introduction, some kind of guideline. And I actually like clarity. Like: here are the ships and here's the clay – and now you can do what you want. But there are clear boundaries. You have to wear shoes. We've got an hour and a half. And then it's over. But in that time, you can do whatever you want. And it's exactly this mix of time constraints and creative freedom that's good. This mix of structure and improvisation. I think when one outweighs the other – if it's all improvisation, things fall apart. But if it's all structure, then it's not really art anymore. Then it's too rigid.

00:54:09 VMF:
And those are the artistic processes I'm interested in! Even if you say that's not your focus, we're still doing it. I mean, it's undeniably an artistic act: setting this up. These are ships, here's the clay, here's the process. That's just a form of artmaking with a specific audience in mind.

00:54:42 FHW:
But I see that more as craft – or artistic tools. And then maybe there's also this intellectual layer, or emotional, personal layers… I'd have to think about it. But yeah, it's true: through your own artistic work, you know how to get things out of your head and into the world – you develop routines or strategies for that. And I think that definitely plays a role at the Children's Museum too.

00:55:16 VMF:
Es ist ja eben nicht einfach nur das Material Ton, sondern es ist überlegt: wo befindet sich der, wieviel ist es und eben wie viel gibt man mit diesen Schiffen... Das sind für mich schon künstlerische Entscheidungen, die sich nicht viel unterscheiden davon, wenn du eine Installation machst: Das ist ja gar nicht unähnlich, wenn du Dinge vorgibst und dann auch wieder offenlässt, wo was passieren kann, in der Begegnung mit dem Betrachter, oder mit jemandem, der da vorbeikommt. Und ich finde, da ist es noch relativ klar zu greifen. Aber ich glaube, dass ganz ähnliche Prozesse dann immer mikroskopischer oder feinstofflicher in der Begegnung mit den Kindern ständig passieren. Also dass du wieder und wieder, auch wenn du da drinstehst, auch wenn du das Ding nicht gemacht hast, aber einfach nur in dieser Mini-Situation: du nimmst irgendwie wahr, das Kind ist gerade irgendwie verloren. Woran erkennst du das in diesem Tun? Also woran spürst du, dass das jetzt irgendwie kein produktiver Prozess mehr ist, was er macht? Und was bietest du dann an, damit es irgendwie weitergeht? Und dieses Angebot ist wieder ... also natürlich kannst du es nicht vergleichen mit deiner Diplomarbeit. Aber es ist so eine Mini-Intervention eigentlich.

00:57:20 FHW:
Du meinst, dass in dem Angebot ein künstlerischer Akt steckt, so Beuysisch. Ich hab ja in Braunschweig, wo ich studiert habe... wie hieß das? Freie Kunstvermittlung auch noch dazu, das war so ein Zusatz-Dings. Und die Frau, die das gemacht hat, war sehr an Beuys orientiert. Wie ist das für dich, ist das interessant oder nicht so interessant?

00:57:50 VMF:
Es ist mir immer wieder ein bisschen zu esoterisch. Ich habe schon ein großes Interesse an einem materialisierten Werk, auch wenn es kollektiv ist. An dem, was entsteht in einem Gemeinsamen. Also natürlich ist es interessant und es gibt Bezüge. Aber so ganz ... ich finde, es hat auch so etwas Egomanes, was er macht. Es kippt dann manchmal so ins Gegenteil dieser Behauptung des totalen Sozialen, in sowas irgendwie Patriarchales.

00:58:55 FHW:
Bei ihm ist das so vermischt, nicht. Also das Pädagogische und das Ego, das künstlerische Ego. Was mich ein bisschen stört am Kindermuseum oder an dieser museumspädagogischen Arbeit ist, dass man die Kinder immer nur eineinhalb Stunden oder so kennt. Und ich würde gerne mal über eine längere Zeit mit Kindern arbeiten. Ich würde sehr gern an der Uni arbeiten, so für ein, zwei Semester. Einfach, um die noch besser kennenzulernen, noch mehr aus denen herauszuholen.

00:59:49 VMF:
Ich finde. das, was am Kindermuseum toll und interessant ist, ist dass da eben diese unterschiedlichen Persönlichkeiten .... dass ich da als Verena drin steh mit dem, was ich bin und meinem Blick auf die Welt und diesen Blick anbieten kann und mit meinem Blick reagieren kann und mit meinem Blick die Kinder sehe und die sehen mich.

01:00:24 FHW:
Ja, ich hab schon das Gefühl, dass sie mich als Felix sehen und wollen so, ja.

Wollen wir das Foto machen? Oder hast du noch Fragen? Es ist ja schon – da musst du schon viel transkribieren.

01:01:14 VMF:
Ich hab mir so ein online-Ding gekauft...

00:55:16 VMF:
It's not just the material – clay. You've thought about where it is, how much there is, how the ships relate to it... For me, those are artistic decisions. And they're not so different from when you build an installation: you set something up and then leave it open for interactions – with viewers or whoever walks by. And I think there, it's still relatively easy to see. But I think really similar processes are happening constantly, in a more microscopic, subtle way, in interactions with the kids. Like again and again, even if you didn't design the whole setting – just in a small moment: you notice that a kid seems lost. How do you recognize that in what they're doing? How do you feel that it's no longer a productive process? And then – what do you offer to help move it forward? And that offering – sure, you can't compare it to your diploma project – but it is a kind of micro-intervention.

00:57:20 FHW:
You mean that the offer itself is an artistic act – like in the sense of Beuys. At Braunschweig, where I studied... what was it called? "Free Art Mediation" – it was an elective. And the woman who taught it was very influenced by Beuys. How is that for you – is that interesting or not really?

00:57:50 VMF:
I find it always a bit too esoteric. I'm very interested in materialized work – even if it's collective. In what emerges from the shared process. Of course there's something fascinating about it and there are connections. But fully... I think what he did also had this egomaniacal quality. It sometimes flipped into the opposite of his claim of being radically social – became something almost patriarchal.

00:58:55 FHW:
With him it's all mixed together, right? The pedagogical and the ego – the artistic ego. What sometimes bothers me about the Children's Museum, or museum education work in general, is that you only get to know the kids for, like, 90 minutes. I'd really like to work with children over a longer period. I'd love to teach at a university – for one or two semesters. Just to get to know them better and draw more out of them.

00:59:49 VMF:
What I find so great and interesting about the Children's Museum is that all these different personalities come together... and that I, as Verena, can bring what I am – my view of the world – and offer that view, respond through it, see the children through it, and they see me.

01:00:24 FHW:
Yeah, I do feel like they see me as Felix – and they want that, yeah.

Should we take the photo now? Or do you still have more questions? I mean, you've already got a lot to transcribe.

01:01:14 VMF:
I bought this online tool...

01:01:16 FHW:
Und da musst du nur so ein Audio rein und dann...

01:01:19 VMF:
Also es funktioniert nicht zu 100 Prozent, ich muss schon nochmal drüber gehen, aber es geht um einiges schneller.

01:01:24 FHW:
Aber ja, bezahlt? Es gibt nämlich viel kostenlos, aber die sind nicht so gut?

01:01:27 VMF:
Es ist sogar ziemlich teuer, aber das habe ich mir jetzt geleistet. Mir sind einfach so diese Nuancen im unterschiedlichen Ausdruck, dieses Sprech-Denken wichtig. Und ich hoffe, dass ich es irgendwie schaffe, also das sehe ich auch so als meine autorschaftliche Challenge, das zu übersetzen in einen anderen Text. Aber das geht halt nur, wenn ich das wirklich eins zu eins hab.

01:02:02 FHW:
Dann kommen auf jeden Fall die Individuen richtig gut vor. Also wenn das so steht, wie es gesprochen ist.

01:02:12 VMF:
Ja, ich habe schon mal eine Arbeit gemacht, da habe ich mit Werner, Sabine und Letizia gesprochen – so ein bisschen direkter, einfach über die Workshops. Aber ich hatte das Gefühl, wenn man so direkt danach fragt, kommt man so wenig zum Punkt. Also es war einfach in fast allen Gesprächen, die ich jetzt aktuell geführt hab, dass mehr konkrete Geschichten drin waren. Also du bist jetzt glaube ich der Einzige, der nicht so sehr eine Kindheitsgeschichte erzählt hat. Aber dafür sind wir mit deiner Arbeit ... also mir kommt vor, das funktioniert dann genauso. Also was sehr Greifbares, letztlich etwas, was man einfach erzählen und beschreiben kann. Wenn man so direkt nach der Arbeit im Museum fragt, dann kommt so diese Meta-Ebene und es ist irrsinnig schwierig, einfach ein Beispiel zu beschreiben. Also man reflektiert das ja immer, aber dann fällt es einem im Moment einfach nicht ein. So, und dann hat mir aber trotzdem auch dieses Sprech-Denken so gut gefallen. Ich dieser älteren Arbeit habe ich dann einfach kilometerweise die 1:1-Transkripte reingenommen. Und mir hat‘s schon getaugt, aber es ist halt irgendwie unlesbar und es ist auch den Leuten nicht angenehm.

01:03:39 FHW:
Die das gesprochen haben?

01:03:42 VMF:
Ja. Weil das natürlich... es ist fast ein bisschen der gleiche Effekt, wie wenn du dich aufgenommen hörst und es nicht gewohnt bist. Du sprichst ja keine Schriftsprache. Mich macht das auch immer fertig, wenn ich mich da Stammeln höre.

01:03:56 FHW:
Ich kenne mich jetzt mittlerweile sehr gut. Also für mich ist das kein Schock mehr.

01:03:58 VMF:
Ja man gewöhnt sich ein bisschen dran. Aber mal schauen, wie ich das hinkriege. Ich schreib eigentlich auch total gern. Und das ist ja das Coole an diesem künstlerischen PhD ...

01:04:12 FHW:
Was ich halt gerne schreibe, sind Dialoge, also dramatische Texte, so das finde ich irgendwie ganz gut. Da kann man so ganz viel bestimmen, auch so Sprech-Rhythmus und Intonation. Und das ist schon gut. Aber es hat auch was... dieses Sprechen hat ja was vom Zeichnen auch, so wie eine schnelle Zeichnung, wo

01:01:16 FHW:
And you just drop the audio in and then...

01:01:19 VMF:
It doesn’t work 100%, I still have to go over it, but it’s way faster.

01:01:24 FHW:
But you paid for it? There are lots of free ones, but they’re not that great?

01:01:27 VMF:
It’s actually pretty expensive – but I treated myself to it. For me, it’s really about the nuances in how things are expressed, the way thoughts are spoken. And I just hope I can somehow manage to translate that into a different kind of text – that’s how I see my challenge as an author. But that only works if I really have it word for word.

01:02:02 FHW:
That way the individuals really come through – if you keep it the way it was spoken.

01:02:12 VMF:
Yeah. I once did a project where I spoke with Werner, Sabine, and Letizia – more directly, just about the workshops. But I found that if you ask too directly, you don’t get to the point. In nearly all the interviews I’ve done recently, there were more concrete stories. I think you’re actually the only one who hasn’t told a childhood story. But in return, we got really deep into your work... and to me it feels like that works just as well. Something very tangible – something you can describe and narrate. When you ask directly about the museum work, it always becomes so meta. And it gets incredibly hard to just describe a simple example. I mean, of course we reflect on it all the time – but in the moment, nothing comes to mind. Still, I really liked this kind of spoken thinking. In that earlier piece, I just included endless pages of verbatim transcripts. And I liked it – but it ended up being almost unreadable. And people didn’t really like seeing themselves like that either.

01:03:39 FHW:
The people who spoke?

01:03:42 VMF:
Yeah. Because, of course – it’s kind of the same thing as when you hear your voice recorded and aren’t used to it. You’re not speaking written language. It always drives me crazy when I hear myself stumbling like that.

01:03:56 FHW:
I know myself pretty well by now. So it’s not a shock anymore.

01:03:58 VMF:
Yeah, you get used to it a bit. But we’ll see how I manage. I actually really enjoy writing. And that’s what’s so cool about this artistic PhD...

01:04:12 FHW:
What I really enjoy writing are dialogues – dramatic texts. I find that quite fun. You can shape so much – like speech rhythm and intonation. That’s great. But this way of speaking also has something like drawing to it – like a quick sketch where you don’t think too much. Something sketchlike.

man gar nicht nachdenken kann, wie eine Skizze. So was Skizzenhaftes.

01:04:42 VMF:
Apropos, ich hätte noch eine andere Bitte. Das können wir vielleicht noch zuerst schnell machen. Und ich weiß ja noch nicht so ganz genau, wie das dann alles ausschaut, aber ich habe noch als drittes Element jeden gebeten, mir eine Linie zu schenken.

01:04:57 FHW:
Eine Linie?

01:04:58 VMF:
Eine Linie von der einen Blatt-Seite zur anderen, was dazwischen passiert, darfst du entscheiden.

01:05:07 FHW:
Achso – das muss kein gerader Strich sein, sondern es kann... okay.

01:05:10 VMF:
Und ich hab warte... ich hab Bleistifte...

01:05:12 FHW:
Damit‘s gleich ist?

01:05:17 VMF:
Es gibt unterschiedliche: Du kannst dir aussuchen wie hart. Und ich habe einen Spitzer, wenn du möchtest. Und du darfst gerne auch mehr als ein Blatt verwenden.

01:05:28 FHW:
Aber es soll eine Linie insgesamt so durchgezogen sein.

01:05:30 VMF:
Also ich bin nicht ganz streng, aber es soll irgendwie auf einer Seite beginnen und gegenüber enden, wie oder wo oder was...

01:05:39 FHW:
Ok. Diagonal? Ist egal?

01:05:41 VMF:
Ganz egal.

01:05:43 FHW:
Schön! Das ist das Instagram Format hier. Bist du auf Instagram?

01:05:55 VMF:
Nein. Ich bin superschlecht mit diesen ganzen online-Sachen.

01:05:58 FHW:
Ist gut. Ich war da auch vor fünf Jahren oder vier Jahren dagegen, aber jetzt... es macht viel aus! An Kontakten und bla.

01:06:05 VMF:
Ich bin... ich bin gar nicht so dagegen. Mich stresst das nur irrsinnig. Ich kann das nicht. Mir fehlt da die Leichtigkeit.

01:06:17 FHW:
Aber die B. zum Beispiel ist auch, die B. A. kennst du ja auch, also... aber es muss ja nicht für jeden...

01:06:32 VMF:
Nee, ich hab‘ einen uralten Facebook-Account wo ich alle heiligen Zeiten mal reinschaue. Bei diesen Videoprojekten, die haben wir dann im Kino gezeigt. Dann hab ich das da gepostet und hatte eine Stunde Herzrasen, weil ich dachte, es kommt bestimmt ein Shitstorm und die armen Schüler und so... und dann habe ich zwei Stunden später oder drei Tage später gese-

01:04:42 VMF:
Speaking of which – I have one more little request. Maybe we can do that quickly first. I don’t know exactly how it’ll all come together in the end, but I’ve asked everyone for a third element: to gift me a line.

01:04:57 FHW:
A line?

01:04:58 VMF:
A line across a sheet of paper – from one side to the other. What happens in between is up to you.

01:05:07 FHW:
Oh – I see. So it doesn’t have to be a straight line. It can... okay.

01:05:10 VMF:
And I’ve got... wait... I have pencils.

01:05:12 FHW:
So they’re all the same?

01:05:17 VMF:
They’re different – you can choose how hard. And I’ve got a sharpener, if you want. And you’re welcome to use more than one sheet.

01:05:28 FHW:
But it should be a single continuous line?

01:05:30 VMF:
I’m not super strict – but it should start on one side and end on the other. How, where, or what – that’s up to you.

01:05:39 FHW:
Okay. Diagonal’s fine?

01:05:41 VMF:
Totally fine.

01:05:43 FHW:
Nice! This is the Instagram format here. Are you on Instagram?

01:05:55 VMF:
No. I’m terrible with all that online stuff.

01:05:58 FHW:
That’s good. I was against it too – like five or four years ago – but now... it makes a big difference! In terms of contacts and all that.

01:06:05 VMF:
I’m... I’m not really against it. It just stresses me out like crazy. I can’t handle it. I don’t have that kind of ease with it.

01:06:17 FHW:
But B., for example – and B. A., you know her too, right – they are on it. But yeah, it’s not for everyone...

01:06:32 VMF:
Nah, I’ve got this ancient Facebook account that I check once in a blue moon. For one of the video projects we showed in a cinema, I posted something – and then I had heart palpitations for an hour, thinking, “Oh God, there’ll be a shitstorm, poor students...” And then I looked again two hours or three days later, and three people had seen it.

hen, dass es drei Leute gesehen haben...

01:07:23 FHW:
Du musst ja – Content produzieren. Immer mehr, damit Leute kommen. Ich bin ja auch, also Kunst ist ja auch... nehmen wir noch auf eigentlich grade?

01:07:52 VMF:
Jaja. ... Sehr schön. Dankeschön! Warte ich schreib noch hinten drauf, dass ich weiß, dass es von dir ist.

01:07:58 FHW:
Kannst du draufschreiben. Und ich würde jetzt so ein Kleid anziehen und eine Maske. Sind wir Foto-bereit schon?

01:08:15 VMF:
Jaja.

01:08:19 FHW:
Dann komme ich gleich wieder.

01:08:19 VMF:
Ich schalte das Aufnahmegerät mal aus.

Felix Helmut Wagner ist ein in Erlangen (Deutschland) geborener, in Wien lebender Medienkünstler (Mag.Art., äquivalent: B.F.A + M.F.A.), Bauingenieur (B.Eng.) und Performer. Wagners Arbeiten wurden bereits in über fünfzig Einzel- und Gruppenausstellungen in Deutschland, Österreich und den USA gezeigt. Darunter fallen die Kunstmesse PARALLEL in Wien, die Spring/Break Art Show in Los Angeles, die Untitled Art Fair in Miami, die Galerie Krinzinger/Krinzinger Schottenfeld in Wien, der Kunstverein DG-Kunstraum in München, die City Gallery des Kunstvereins Wolfsburg und der Österreichische Skulpturenpark in Graz. Felix Helmut Wagner hat Bauingenieurwesen an der Technischen Hochschule Nürnberg studiert, anschließend Freie Kunst an der Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig bei Aurelia Mihai, Corinna Schnitt und Wolfgang Ellenrieder sowie Transmediale Kunst an der Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien bei Brigitte Kowanz. Wagner war Stipendiat der Begabtenförderung des Cusanuswerks, schloss sein Studium 2021 mit Auszeichnung ab und erhielt den österreichischen Würdigungspreis für die beste Absolvent*in der Universität für angewandte Kunst. Neben anderen Lehr- und Vermittlungstätigkeiten ist er seit 2022 Coach für Studierende am Angewandte Performance Laboratory (APL) der Universität für angewandte Kunst in Wien.

01:07:23 FHW:
You have to produce content. Constantly – so people come. I mean, art is also... wait, are we still recording?

01:07:52 VMF:
Yeah, yeah. ... Very nice. Thank you! Hang on – I'll write your name on the back so I know it's from you.

01:07:58 FHW:
You can write it down. And I'm going to put on this dress and a mask now. Are we photo-ready?

01:08:15 VMF:
Yep.

01:08:19 FHW:
Then I'll be right back.

01:08:19 VMF:
I'll go ahead and turn off the recorder.

Felix Helmut Wagner is a media artist (Mag.art., equivalent to B.F.A. + M.F.A.), civil engineer (B.Eng.), and performer, born in Erlangen (Germany) and based in Vienna. His works have been presented in over fifty solo and group exhibitions in Germany, Austria, and the United States. These include the PARALLEL art fair in Vienna, the Spring/Break Art Show in Los Angeles, Untitled Art Fair in Miami, Galerie Krinzinger/Krinzinger Schottenfeld in Vienna, DG Kunstraum (Kunstverein) in Munich, the City Gallery of the Kunstverein Wolfsburg, and the Austrian Sculpture Park in Graz. Wagner studied civil engineering at the Nuremberg Institute of Technology, followed by Fine Arts at the Braunschweig University of Art with Aurelia Mihai, Corinna Schnitt, and Wolfgang Ellenrieder, and Transmedia Art at the University of Applied Arts Vienna with Brigitte Kowanz. He was a scholarship holder of the German Cusanuswerk Foundation for gifted students, graduated with distinction in 2021, and received the Austrian Award of Excellence for the best graduate of the University of Applied Arts. In addition to various teaching and educational activities, he has been a student coach at the Angewandte Performance Laboratory (APL) of the University of Applied Arts Vienna since 2022.

co-creation means
standing next to
each other,
not one behind
the other.

Werner Moebius

über Rote und Schwarze, Prothesen, liebevolle Zumutungen, sprechende Sounds, die nichts sagen, Schwangerschaft als Gesamtkunstwerk, Katalysata sein und große Dinger.
about the reds and the blacks, prostheses and tender impositions, sounds that speak but say nothing, pregnancy as Gesamtkunstwerk, being a Katalysata and big things.

Ich treffe Werner, in bewährter Manier, an der Feuerwache Steinhof und wir spazieren zum Schutzhaus Rosental wo wir unser Gespräch aufzeichnen. Werner und ich kennen uns aus dem ZOOM „Trickfilmstudio“. Wir haben viele Workshops im ZOOM, aber auch Projekte außerhalb des Kindermuseums miteinander realisiert und viele
Stunden, meistens spazierenderweise, geredet und gedacht.

00:00:21 WM:
Ich weiß nicht, sollen wir‘s ein bisschen näher? Ich hab so das Gefühl…

00:00:23 VMF:
Das ist so auf 180°…

00:00:25 WM:
Ach so hast Du‘s eingeschaltet. Gut!

00:00:27 VMF:
Ich hätte gesagt, das einzige ist der Wind, aber das wird schon passen. Also nur nochmal für dich und um das noch mal ganz klar gesagt zu haben: Diese Aufnahme ist nur meine Notiz. Mit der mach ich sonst nichts oder jetzt zumindest planmäßig nicht und schon gar nicht, ohne es mit dir abgesprochen zu haben. Und auch das, was ich dann mache, kriegst du natürlich noch mal, bevor‘s irgendwer anderer kriegt. Weil ich möchte schon, dass es … also es hat einen Bezug zu dir, soll so eine Art Porträt von dir werden und dann muss es natürlich für dich passen. Und auch wenn alles fix fertig ist und du sagst, aber Verena, das geht irgendwie nicht, das bin nicht ich und das möchte ich so nicht, ist es für mich wirklich ganz ehrlich total okay, im letzten Moment auch zu sagen, ich nehme das einfach wieder raus oder man ändert es nochmal, wie auch immer. Also, das will ich nur, dass du weißt. Dass du da nicht irgendwie einen Stress hast. Mir hat eben bei diesem letzten Mal, wo wir das gemacht haben mit diesen Gesprächen, mir hat ja dieses Sprech-Denken so gefallen und mir ist vorgekommen, darüber kommt so eine andere Ebene rein oder eben eure Stimme…
00:01:49 WM:
Das „Trickfilmstudio“?

00:01:49 VMF:
Als wir diese anderen Gespräche gemacht haben, genau. Und da hab ich ja dann so irrsinnig große Passagen – also das ist ja nicht groß öffentlich geworden – aber da habe ich ja große Passagen von euch so direkt transkribiert. Was natürlich also zum einen – du hast ja auch gesagt, so richtig angenehm war es für euch nicht. Man spricht halt nicht in Schriftsprache. Und zum anderen ist es ja auch relativ unlesbar, weil… ich würde aber gern versuchen, diese unterschiedlichen Stimmen zu übersetzen und zu erwischen und dann irgendwie in eine andere Textform zu bringen.

00:02:31 WM:
Also auch nicht mehr so fragmentiert, oder?

00:02:35 VMF:
Nein.

00:02:35 WM:
Das wird ein durchgehender Fließtext?

00:02:36 VMF:
Ja, genau – eine Erzählung. Also ich möchte eigentlich Erzählungen schreiben, wo ich versuche, unterschiedliche Erzählstimmen zu erwischen und ich werde das relativ… also versuchen, meine Stimme auch transparent zu machen sozusagen. Das irgendwie klar ist, es

I meet Werner, as usual, at the Steinhof fire station, and we walk together to the Rosental lodge, where we record our conversation. Werner and I know each other from the ZOOM “Animated Film Studio”. We’ve led many workshops together at ZOOM, as well as projects outside the Children‘s Museum, and we’ve spent countless hours – mostly while walking – talking and thinking.

00:00:21 WM:
I don’t know, should we move a bit closer? I’ve got the feeling…

00:00:23 VMF:
It’s set to 180°…

00:00:25 WM:
Ah, that’s how you set it up. Good!

00:00:27 VMF:
I’d say, the only issue might be the wind, but I think it’ll be fine. So just again for you, and to make it clear: this recording is just my note. I’m not doing anything else with it – or at least, that’s not the plan – and certainly not without discussing it with you. And whatever I do with it later, you’ll of course see it again before anyone else does. Because I want it to… well, it has something to do with you, it’s meant to be a sort of portrait of you, so of course it has to feel right to you. And even if everything is completely done and you say, “But Verena, this just doesn’t work, that’s not me and I don’t want it like that,” it’s honestly totally fine with me to say at the very last moment, “I’ll just leave it out,” or we change it again, however that works. I just want you to know that. So you don’t have to stress about anything. What I liked so much last time we did these conversations was this idea of speaking while thinking. It felt like it brought in another layer – or your voices did…

00:01:49 WM:
The “Animated Film Studio”?

00:01:49 VMF:
When we did those other conversations, yes, exactly. And then I transcribed really large sections – though it didn’t become super public – but I transcribed large parts of what you said verbatim. Which, of course… I mean, you said it yourself, it wasn’t exactly comfortable. People don’t speak the way they write. And it’s also fairly unreadable because of that… but I’d still like to try to translate and capture these different voices and somehow bring them into a different kind of text.

00:02:31 WM:
So not as fragmented anymore?

00:02:35 VMF:
No.

00:02:35 WM:
You mean more like continuous prose?

00:02:36 VMF:
Yes, exactly – like a narrative. I actually want to write narratives where I try to capture different narrative voices, and I’ll be pretty… well, I’ll try to make my own voice transparent too, in a way. So that it’s clear: this is a text I’ve written. It’s my perspective on you, but at the same time, it’s meant to be a portrait of you, so to speak.

ist ein Text, den ich geschrieben habe. Das ist mein Blick auf dich, aber es soll gleichzeitig ein Porträt von dir sozusagen sein.

00:03:02 WM:
Das wär jetzt noch der Punkt… ein Porträt von „Künstler arbeitet mit Kindern“ oder?

00:03:11 VMF:
Ja von dir als Künstler bzw. das wäre dann so die andere Ebene, die ich gerne hätte, dass das irgendwie als Linie, die sich so durchzieht, unterschiedliche Aspekte abdeckt vom künstlerisch arbeiten und künstlerischen arbeiten mit Kindern und vom Kindsein in Bezug auf die eigene künstlerische Arbeit. Also das hat jetzt auch nicht den Anspruch, dass das quasi Werner Möbius von A bis Z als Künstler perfekt… also das wäre ja eine Anmaßung…

00:03:53 WM:
Ja ja.

00:03:53 VMF:
Aber so ein Bild von dir schaffen, über das Aspekte dieser Fragen, die mich beschäftigen, mit aufgemacht werden. Also ich versuche so etwas wie ein Koordinatensystem zu schaffen über euch, über die Leute im Kindermuseum, weil eben ja ein Teil von meinem Ding ist ja schon immer so eine gefühlte Einsamkeit mit dem, was ich möchte. Oder dieses irgendwie nicht so ganz greifen können, was man da tut und was einem wichtig ist. Und in dem drüber reden, in dem irgendwie Punkte setzen und versuchen, sowas wie ein Sternenbild zu schaffen, wo dann vielleicht im Gesamten … also das wäre mein Wunschgedanke, genau.

So. Und die anderen Gespräche waren jetzt einfach immer so: Ich habe dieses Bild, das ich dir jetzt auch schon immer wieder gesagt habe. Weil ich gemerkt habe, dass das für mich eine wichtige Rolle spielt, dass ich, wenn ich einem Kind begegne oder mit einem Kind arbeite… oder alles, was ich mit dem L. mache, das sind in Wirklichkeit Dinge, bei denen ich das Gefühl habe, die hätte ich gerne als Kind gemacht oder da hätte ich super gefunden, wenn man mich unterstützt. Also dieses eigene Kind-Sein, Erinnerungen an das, was mir als Kind Spaß gemacht hat oder was mir gefehlt hat. Und das ist letztlich auch das, was ich mir raushole. Deswegen habe ich mir gedacht, das ist vielleicht ein guter Ausgangspunkt.

Also mit diesem Kunstding nur so als Grundrauschen im Hinterkopf, wenn du jetzt einen Tag hättest, mit dir selber als Kind, also nicht nur Werner ist wieder klein, sondern du kannst dir selber begegnen, was würdest du machen, wo würdest du dir gern begegnen? Also kann in der Vergangenheit sein oder du holst dich ins Jetzt? Was würdest du dich fragen? Und vice versa?

00:06:44 WM:
Also du meinst, die Kunst ist im Hintergrund. Das ist keine künstlerische Intention.

00:06:49 VMF:
Also muss nicht, darf natürlich. Ich weiß nicht, was dir so…

00:06:57 WM:
Weil das ist nämlich so… ich mein das ist relativ breit gesteckt, weil es gibt ja persönliche, also, wie soll ich sagen, Erfahrungen, Eindrücke. Weißt du, das ist ein weites Feld.

00:07:09 VMF:
Also ähm, es ist einfach so ein Ausgangspunkt für ein Gespräch und wir können auch einfach darüber reden, warum dir das zu breit ist oder zu eng…

00:03:02 WM:
So just to clarify… a portrait of “artist working with children,” right?

00:03:11 VMF:
Yes, of you as an artist – or rather, that’s the second layer I’d like to include. That it sort of weaves through as a thread, touching on different aspects of artistic practice and of working artistically with children, and also of childhood in relation to one’s own artistic work. So this isn’t trying to be some complete picture of “Werner Moebius from A to Z as an artist” – that would be presumptuous…

00:03:53 WM:
Yeah, yeah.

00:03:53 VMF:
…but more like creating an image of you through which these questions I’m concerned with can be explored. I’m trying to create something like a coordinate system based on you all – on the people at the Children‘s Museum – because part of my thing has always been this sense of loneliness with what I want to do. Or this difficulty in really grasping what we’re doing, what’s important to us. And by talking about it, setting points, trying to create something like a constellation… then maybe, in the bigger picture – that would be the idea.
So. The other conversations have always started like this: I’ve had this image, which I’ve already told you about a few times. Because I realized it plays an important role for me – when I meet a child or work with a child… or everything I do with L., it’s basically things that I would have loved to do as a child, or that I would have loved to be supported in. So this being-a-child-myself, memories of what I enjoyed as a child or what I missed. That’s really what I draw from. That’s why I thought this might be a good starting point.
So with this art thing just as background noise, if you had a day with yourself as a child – not just little Werner again, but actually meeting yourself – what would you do, where would you want to meet yourself? Could be in the past, or bringing your child self into the present. What would you ask yourself? And vice versa?

00:06:44 WM:
So you mean, the art is in the background. This isn’t about a specific artistic intention.

00:06:49 VMF:
Doesn’t have to be, though it can be, of course. I don’t know what you…

00:06:57 WM:
Because… it’s kind of broadly framed. I mean, there are personal, how should I say… experiences, impressions. You know? It’s a vast field.

00:07:09 VMF:
So um, it’s just a starting point for the conversation, and we can totally talk about why that feels too broad or too narrow to you…

00:07:15 WM:
Okay, good. Sounds good. So just a starting point, and then…

00:07:15 WM:
Okay, gut. Passt. Das ist einfach so ein Einstieg und dann.
00:07:16 VMF:
...und dann können wir schauen, wo wir hingehen.

00:07:22 WM:
Okay, zu breit oder zu eng mein ich deswegen, weil das Künstler-Sein, also in der frühen Kindheit, eigentlich nicht gegenwärtig war.

00:07:38 VMF:
Hmm.

00:07:43 WM:
Also so weil's kein... also wie soll ich sagen... nicht so vom familiären Hintergrund, hat's eigentlich keine Kunst in dem Sinne gegeben, bewusst, also dass ich jetzt zum Beispiel aufgewachsen wäre damit. Ich kann mich nicht erinnern, dass... also es sind Medien im Haus gewesen, Schallplatten, Fernseher. Die Mama hat viel Musicals gehört und mein Stiefvater hat sich so ein bisschen für so südamerikanische Rhythmen interessiert. Aber im Prinzip würde ich sagen, wenn was wirklich präsent war, war es die Politik, definitiv also, durch das, dass mein Urgroßvater Landeshauptmann-Stellvertreter war in Tirol. Und dann quasi mein Opa, meine Tante, die waren im Gemeinderat, in Innsbruck. Und wenn ich mich an was wirklich erinnern kann, dann war es mehr Politik als Kunst, in Wirklichkeit. Also in der Familie, bei jedem Familientreffen ist das lautstark irgendwie verhandelt worden.

Das ist so eine Erinnerung: Wenn es darum gegangen ist, dass die Roten und die Schwarzen irgendwie sich uneinig waren und Diskussionen oder Kämpfe ausgetragen haben, dass ich immer gemeint hab, es ginge um Menschen mit roter oder schwarzer Hautfarbe. Also weil ich ja nicht genau gewusst hab, was Politik ist. Aber ich hab halt gemerkt, da gibt es Kämpfe und meine Kinderwelt ist mehr ... also ich mein, es sind irrsinnig viele Western gelaufen, wo quasi die „Roten" gegen die „Weißen" gekämpft haben. Und das war dann irgendwie so meine Vorstellung. Das war immer ziemlich abstrus, weil in der Familie natürlich alle weiß sind und ich mein, Innsbruck in den 60er Jahren: Das war eine ziemliche Sensation, wenn jemand mit einer anderen Hautfarbe durch die Innenstadt gegangen wäre oder so, das wäre eher so ein Ereignis des Tages gewesen. Also soweit ich mich daran erinnern kann. Da gibt es auch Familiengeschichten dazu. Das geht jetzt zu weit, aber das ist vielleicht der Punkt, genau. Ich bin eigentlich mit Politik jetzt so als Familienkultur groß geworden. Mit Sozialdemokratischer, kann ich auch noch dazu sagen.

00:11:08 VMF:
Und die hast du gleichgesetzt mit Native Americans...

00:11:13 WM:
Mit meinen kindlichen Vorstellungen, das zeigt das eigentlich, ja genau.

00:11:18 VMF:
Aber hast du da viel zugehört? Oder war das eher so ein Hintergrundrauschen?

00:11:26 WM:
Na schon, also ich muss noch vorausschicken, die Erinnerungen sind jetzt lang her und Vieles mit Erzählungen überschrieben und so weiter. Das ist ja was wo ich vielleicht.... das ist auch noch so ein Ansatzpunkt, was so Wahrnehmungen betrifft. Also die Wahrnehmung an sich eigentlich, jetzt vielleicht als künstlerischen Zugang, ist vielleicht so ein Kernpunkt, und vielleicht auch so eine Uminterpretation. Jetzt in dem Fall ist es eine ganz klare politische Erzählung gewesen. Ich habe sie einfach uminterpretiert in eine Erzählung meiner kindlichen Vorstellung. Und daraus haben sich

00:07:16 VMF:
...and then we'll see where it takes us.

00:07:22 WM:
Right, I just meant "too broad or too narrow" because being an artist – in early childhood – wasn't really present.

00:07:38 VMF:
Hmm.

00:07:43 WM:
Because, well... how should I put this... not from my family background, there really wasn't anything like "art" in that sense, consciously – I didn't grow up with it, for instance. I don't remember that... I mean, there were media in the house – records, a TV. My mom listened to a lot of musicals, and my stepfather had some interest in South American rhythms. But basically, I'd say if anything was really present, it was politics. Definitely. Because my great-grandfather was deputy governor in Tyrol. And then my grandfather, my aunt, they were on the city council in Innsbruck. And if there's anything I really remember, it's more politics than art, honestly. In the family, every get-together involved loud discussions about politics.

That's a memory: when people were arguing about the Reds and the Blacks not agreeing on something, I always thought it was about people with red or black skin. Because I didn't really know what politics was. But I picked up that there were conflicts, and in my child's world... I mean, there were so many westerns on TV where the „red ones" were fighting the „white ones". And that kind of became my idea of it all. It was pretty absurd, because of course everyone in my family was white, and I mean, Innsbruck in the 60s: It would've been a major event if someone with a different skin color walked through the city center. At least that's how I remember it. There are family stories about it too, but that's maybe beside the point. The main thing is: I grew up with politics as part of the family culture. Social-democratic politics, I should add.

00:11:08 VMF:
And you equated that with Native Americans...

00:11:13 WM:
With my childhood imagination, yes – exactly, that's what that shows.

00:11:18 VMF:
But did you listen to a lot of it? Or was it more just background noise?

00:11:26 WM:
No, I did listen. Though I should add: these memories are from a long time ago, and a lot has been over-laid by stories told later, and so on. That's something I... maybe that's another starting point – about perception. Perception in itself, maybe as an artistic approach, is possibly a key element. Maybe also this idea of reinterpretation. In this case, it was clearly a political story. And I just reinterpreted it into a narrative from my child's perspective. And from that, how should I say... maybe new possibilities or stories emerged that are now part of my childhood memories – but in a way that's completely personal, just for me, not for anyone else.

dann... wie soll ich sagen...ja, vielleicht haben sich da neue Möglichkeiten, Gedanken oder Geschichten ergeben, die jetzt Teil meiner Erinnerungen, meiner Kindheitserinnerungen sind, die aber nur für mich ganz persönlich so sind, für niemanden anderen.

00:12:29 VMF:
Aber kannst du das ein bisschen genauer beschreiben. Also gibt es da irgendwelche konkreten Erinnerungen, also vielleicht ein reales Ereignis und wie du das übersetzt hast?

00:12:41 WM:
Ja, ja, da gibt es, da gibt es einige. Wenn du jetzt wirklich aus der Kindheit so Erinnerungen punktuell hören magst...

00:12:48 VMF:
Also vielleicht nur als Beispiel?

00:12:49 WM:
... die aber weniger jetzt mit Politik zu tun haben, sondern einfach, deswegen habe ich die Wahrnehmung ins Spiel gebracht. Ich mein – ich kann das sogar vorlesen, wenn du das magst, weil ich hab das in meiner Autobiografiearbeit,+ ich hab nämlich das Heft mit. Da hab ich nämlich ein paar Situationen rausgearbeitet.

00:13:05 VMF:
Wow, ja?

00:13:07 WM:
Also, wenn du es magst?

00:13:09 VMF:
Ja, also wenn das für dich passt?

00:13:11 WM:
Ja, ich hab mir das heute angeschaut. Nicht jetzt da in dem Kontext, wie wir mit Kindern arbeiten, oder wie man als Künstler*in mit Kindern arbeitet. Also die Wahrnehmung an sich. Ohne, dass sie noch interpretiert ist, aber so wie ich es bei den Kindern im Kindermuseum auch beobachte. Also ich weiß einfach, die kommen in den Raum des Ateliers und da gibt es Material und sie kommen gerade von ganz woanders her, und sind dann auf einmal in einer Situation, also mit Künstler*innen. Und dann... passiert ja was in der Wahrnehmung. Ja und wenn die Kinder offen sind, dann sind sie auf einmal in dem Raum. Und sie könnten sogar, wenn sie wollen, sie könnten Künstler*in spielen. Das finde ich aber nachher recht sekundär. Aber man muss einmal in das Atelier gehen und schauen, was da ist. Da ist der ganze Ton, und dann fährt man da rein und ...

Diese ganzen Sachen also, die wirklich auf dieser sinnlichen Ebene passieren, das sind so Erinnerungen, die ich da festgehalten habe. Wo ich gemerkt hab, ok, die Erinnerung geht total über die Wahrnehmung. Also jetzt hab ich mich eh schon wiederholt, aber das finde ich einen wichtigen Punkt, dass es nicht so Erinnerung-Erinnerung ist, sondern dass es an eine Wahrnehmung gekoppelt ist oft. Und die Erinnerungen an diese Wahrnehmungen, an die sinnlichen Aspekte, die gliedern dann eigentlich was auf, was ich jetzt im Nachhinein, wenn ich mich dazu distanziere, vielleicht als einen künstlerischen Prozess interpretieren kann. Da gibt es natürlich verschiedene Zeiten in der Kindheit. Lass mal schauen. Es gibt nämlich von vorgeburtlich bis ... na vorgeburtliche Kindheit machen wir jetzt nicht, ein eigenes Thema, was die Wahrnehmung betrifft... haha!

00:15:58 VMF:
Die Erinnerungen würden mich...

00:12:29 VMF:
But can you describe that a bit more specifically? Like, are there any concrete memories – maybe a real event – and how you translated it?

00:12:41 WM:
Yeah, yeah, there are quite a few. If you want to hear specific childhood memories...

00:12:48 VMF:
Just as an example, maybe?

00:12:49 WM:
...they're not necessarily political, but that's why I brought up perception. I mean – I can even read something if you like, because I brought my autobiography work notebook with me. I actually wrote down a few scenes.

00:13:05 VMF:
Wow, really?

00:13:07 WM:
Yeah, if you want?

00:13:09 VMF:
Yes, if you're okay with it?

00:13:11 WM:
Yeah, I looked at it today. Not specifically in the context of working with children or being an artist working with children. More about perception itself. Uninterpreted perception, the way I observe it in the kids at the Children's Museum. Like, I know – they come into the studio space, there's material there, and they've just come from somewhere else entirely, and suddenly they're in this space – with an artist or artists. And then... something happens in terms of perception. And if the kids are open, then suddenly they're really in that space. And they could even – if they wanted – they could play being artists. I actually think that part is secondary. But first, they have to enter the studio and see what's there. There's all the clay, and then you dive into it and...

All of these things – these sensory experiences – that's what I've recorded in these memories. Where I realized: okay, these memories are entirely tied to perception. So now I've kind of repeated myself, but I think that's an important point: it's not memory in the conventional sense, it's tied to a perception. And the memories of these perceptions – of these sensory elements – they're what reveal something. Something that, in hindsight, with some distance, I might interpret as an artistic process. Of course, there are different phases of childhood. Let's see. I mean, I've even got ones from before birth... though we won't get into prenatal childhood now, that's a whole topic on its own when it comes to perception... haha!

00:15:58 VMF:
I'd really love to hear those memories...

00:15:59 WM:
Schau mal, die Vorschulzeit. So… eine Erinnerung: Situation mit dem Opa im Badezimmer. Also der Opa war krank, der hat Kehlkopfkrebs gehabt. Und er konnte nicht mehr aus eigener Kraft sprechen und benötigte eine Art Sprech-Apparat, aus dem eine roboterhafte Stimme erschallte. Und er hat einfach immer das Gerät so hingehalten und dann ist so … bei ihm hat‘s irgendwie so hhhhch so der Atem und das Gerät hat irgendwie, also man hat‘s verstehen können. So hat er manchmal zu mir gesprochen und er hat da ein Loch unterhalb des Halses gehabt und da hat er so ein Metallteil immer reinstecken müssen. Ich glaube, das war für die Reinigung – echt ich weiß es nicht, ich weiß noch ganz genau wie es ausgeschaut hat. Ich glaub, dass das war, weil man ihm den Kehlkopf rausoperiert hat.

Ja. Und das ist jetzt also die Situation. Ist vielleicht eine ganz interessante Situation, weil das hat total viel Inhalt. Ich hab später dann mit einer Künstlerin zusammen gearbeitet, in meinen Anfangsjahren. Da hab ich so Performancearbeiten gemacht, aber noch nicht genau gewusst, so ist das jetzt Performance oder… so, also schon: Okay, wir sind irgendwie Künstler*in, aber wie weiß man denn das? Ob das jetzt dann schon Kunst ist? Aber eigentlich, es fühlt sich schon so an. Und so haben wir dann so umadum-experimentiert eine Zeit lang, mit so einem Sprechapparat und vor allem mit Prothesen. Also die hat es ziemlich interessiert mit Prothesen zu arbeiten. Und da habe ich halt einfach einen Zugang gehabt, weil ich das gewusst hab, was die Prothese eigentlich macht, also in dem Fall, dieses Kehlkopferlebnis, und da haben wir immer Scherze drüber gemacht.

Es ist nämlich lustig, weil aus heutiger Sicht ist das ja total tragisch. Also, in meiner Autobiografie-Arbeit mit lauter über 50 bis 60-jährigen, da haben diese Sachen eine ganz andere Tiefe, vielleicht sogar Tragik oder so einen Respekt vor dieser schweren Krankheit und eigentlich dieser ganzen fürchterlichen Situation, wo meine Mama jetzt auch manchmal erzählt, dass das total arg war, weil das war ihr Papa und der hat Krebs gehabt. Also aus heutiger Sicht war das damals eigentlich eine schwere … vielleicht, wenn ich‘s jetzt reininterpretiere, depressive Familie, also die Familie hat das total tragen müssen. Und ich als Kind hab diese Erinnerung, dass mir der Opa im Bad das Loch im Hals zeigt, diesen Sprechapparat hat, mit mir redet und ich war irgendwie total verwundert, es war eine intime Situation und das war sehr nett, weil das ist ja der Opa also…

Also ich weiß nicht, ob du das überhaupt erwähnen willst, aber ich sag einmal bei dieser Weiterbildung, ist es ja viel drum gegangen, sich Situationen anzuschauen aus der Vergangenheit und eine Stellungnahme aus heutiger Sicht dazu zu finden. Und dann ist in dem Gespräch da herauskommen, dass das eigentlich auf der Beziehungsebene mit dem Opa, trotz seiner Krankheit… also ich war da 3, 4 Jahre oder so. Also es muss früh gewesen sein, weil ich war echt klein, als er gestorben ist. Es war eigentlich eine schöne Situation. So mit ihm im Bad sein, mit dem Opa und er zeigt mir das.

Und das Interessante ist dann auch, also das hat die ganze Situation irgendwie transzendiert. Ich glaube, dass ich vielleicht als Kind fähiger dazu war, den Opa als Menschen zu sehen, also nicht nur als Mensch mit der fürchterlichen Krankheit, sondern in erster Linie war das der Opa und wir haben es eigentlich gut gehabt miteinander. Und die fürchterliche Situation hat sich in das eingeschrieben, also die war da eingebettet, aber eigentlich war das ein totaler Vertrauensbeweis. Nämlich auch so: er hat mir das zugemutet, wir haben uns das gegenseitig zugemutet. Das war

00:15:59 WM:
Look, the preschool years. So… one memory: a situation with my grandpa in the bathroom. My grandpa was sick – he had throat cancer. And he couldn’t speak on his own anymore and needed this kind of speech device that produced a robotic voice. And he’d always just hold this device up and then there was like… with him, it was like this hhhhch, this breathing, and the device somehow… I mean, you could understand him. That’s how he’d sometimes talk to me. And he had this hole below his throat, and he always had to insert this metal piece into it. I think it was for cleaning – honestly I don’t really know, but I still remember exactly what it looked like. I think it was because they had removed his larynx.

Yeah. And that’s the situation. It might actually be quite an interesting one, because there’s so much in it. Later on, I worked with a female artist – early in my career. I was doing performance pieces then, but I didn’t really know exactly – is this now performance or… you know, it was more like: okay, we’re artists, I guess, but how do you even know? Like, when does it actually count as art? But it already felt like it. And we spent a while experimenting, going around with this kind of speech device, and especially with prosthetics. She was really interested in working with prosthetics. And I had a way into it, because I knew what a prosthesis actually did – in this case, the experience with the larynx – and we would always make jokes about it.

It’s funny, because from today’s point of view, it’s totally tragic. Like, in the autobiographical work I’ve done with people aged 50 or 60 and up, these kinds of things have a completely different weight, maybe even a sense of tragedy or a kind of deep respect for the seriousness of the illness and the whole terrible situation. My mom tells me now sometimes how extreme it really was – because it was her dad, and he had cancer. So from today’s perspective, it was actually a serious… maybe, if I interpret it now, a depressed family. Like, they really had to carry that. And as a child, I have this memory: that my grandpa showed me the hole in his throat in the bathroom, had this speech device, talked to me – and I was just kind of amazed. It was an intimate moment, and it was really nice, because – it’s Grandpa, after all.

I don’t know if you even want to mention this, but in that training program I did, a big part of it was looking at past situations and finding a kind of stance toward them from today’s point of view. And in that conversation it came out that, on the relational level with my grandpa – despite his illness… I was 3 or 4 years old or so. It had to be early, because I was really little when he died. It was actually a beautiful situation. Being there with him in the bathroom, with Grandpa, and he showed me that.

And what’s interesting is – it somehow transcended the whole situation. I think maybe, as a child, I was more capable of seeing Grandpa as a person – not just as a person with a terrible illness. First and foremost, he was Grandpa, and we actually had a good time together. And the awful situation was inscribed in that – it was embedded – but really, it was a total expression of trust. Like, he trusted me with it, and we trusted each other with it. It wasn’t a big thing like, “Come to the bathroom, we’re going to face something hard together.” That’s already the interpretation in hindsight. It was an intimate moment where we exchanged something – where we really connected, and something was laid bare. A kind of reality was revealed.

jetzt aber nicht so groß: Komm ins Bad, wir muten uns jetzt was zu. Das ist jetzt schon wieder die Bewertung in der Reflexion. Es war eine intime Situation, wo wir was ausgetauscht haben, ich sag einmal, wo wir in Beziehung gegangen sind und wo wir was offengelegt haben, also eine Realität offengelegt haben.

Die Realität, das ist für mich auch was Wichtiges in der Kunstpraxis, also durch Dinge durchzuschauen und sie wirklich zu erfassen, wie sie vielleicht für die eigene Wahrheit oder für eine eigene Realität sind. Also dass man, wenn man Erfahrungen macht oder was wahrnimmt, dass man sich das lässt, dass das jetzt die eigene reale Erfahrung ist, auch wenn sie vielleicht in irgendwelchen anderen Kontexten absurd wäre.

Und das ist jetzt eine Situation, die das für mich widerspiegelt, weil es hat für mich etwas Künstlerisches aufgemacht, später in der Erinnerung, diese komische Abstraktion mit der Roboter-Stimme und diese Arbeit mit Prothesen. Und drum hab ich auch Künstler*innen gefunden, die mit Prothesen arbeiten, sich Sachen … weiß auch nicht, annähen. Also da gibt es ja einen ganzen Bereich in der Performance, wo quasi… ja, das führt jetzt zu weit. Aber genau – ich weiß ja nicht, wenn du da jetzt Fragen dazu hast, wäre mir lieber, du stellst eine Frage, bevor ich mich da jetzt….

00:22:50 VMF:
Hast du eine Erinnerung an die Stimme ohne Roboter von deinem Opa auch? Oder ist das die quasi erste…

00:22:56 WM:
Ja, ja, ganz… wie soll ich sagen… ich muss nochmal nachfragen. Wenn es wirklich so ist, dass er keinen Kehlkopf mehr gehabt hat, dann bringst du… also er hat, wie sagt man, ohne Ton, so lautlos gesprochen. Ich glaube, vielleicht die Oma oder irgendjemand, der ihm sehr nah war, hat das vielleicht verstanden. Aber es war natürlich irrsinnig anstrengend. Also soweit ich mich erinnern kann, ist da schon was gekommen. Aber natürlich hat man total nah hingehen müssen. Und dieser Sprechapparat hat quasi dieses Atemgeräusch irgendwie strukturiert. Also rein akustisch ist es… also, wenn ich jetzt das Künstlerische sehe, total eine spannende akustische Situation: etwas Künstliches, aber doch etwas, das wirklich von der Stimme kommt und gleichzeitig ein komplett komischer Mix… genau.

00:24:05 WM:
Genau. Aber hast du eine Erinnerung an die Stimme von deinem Opa vor dieser Situation?

00:24:10 WM:
Na ich war zu klein.

00:24:12 VMF:
Also das ist wirklich quasi eine isolierte Erinnerung an…

00:24:16 WM:
Schau Stimmen von Leuten, zu denen ich eine Beziehung hab… als ganz Kleiner, wenn ich mich da zurückerinnere… ich würd sogar jetzt, wenn es um Kommunikation geht und es geht nicht nur um Schallwellen, sondern es geht um Kommunikation, würde ich sogar jetzt sagen, ich würde die Stimme vom Opa kennen. Vielleicht nicht die Schallwellen-Stimme, aber wenn du was sagst zu jemandem, da ist ja eine Intention. Die Intention ist ja mehr als die Akustik. Also es ist ja beides da, je nachdem, wie du das analysierst.

Eigentlich kannst du ja immer, bei jedem Sound… wenn wir jetzt ein künstlerisches Medium da einbringen wollen. Ich hab ja mal mit dem Christoph Hinterhuber eine Performance gemacht in Südtirol und da hab ich auch mit so Sounds gearbeitet, die so mäan-

Reality – that's something important for me in my art practice too. Like, seeing through things and really grasping them for what they might be, for your own truth or your own reality. That when you experience something or perceive something, you allow that – let it be your own real experience. Even if, in other contexts, it might seem absurd.

And this is one of those situations that reflects that for me – because, in retrospect, it opened up something artistic for me. This weird abstraction with the robotic voice, and the work with prosthetics. And that's why I also found artists who work with prosthetics, who… I don't know, sew things onto themselves. There's a whole area of performance like that, where… yeah, that's getting too far off track. But anyway – right. I don't know, if you have a question about that, I'd rather you ask, before I…

00:22:50 VMF:
Do you also have a memory of your grandpa's voice without the robot? Or is that the first…

00:22:56 WM:
Yeah, yeah, very… how should I say… I have to double-check. If he really didn't have a larynx anymore, then you… like, he, what's the word, spoke without sound, silently. I think maybe Grandma or someone very close to him could understand him. But of course, it was incredibly exhausting. As far as I can remember, there was something coming through. But you had to get really close. And this speech device somehow structured that breathing sound. From an acoustic standpoint – well, from an artistic standpoint – it's actually a really interesting acoustic situation: something artificial, but still something that really comes from the voice, and at the same time this totally strange mix… yeah.

00:24:05 VMF:
Right. But do you have a memory of your grandpa's voice before that situation?

00:24:10 WM:
No, I was too young.

00:24:12 VMF:
So this is really kind of an isolated memory of…

00:24:16 WM:
Look, voices of people I had a relationship with… as a very small child, when I think back… I'd even say now – if we're talking about communication, and not just sound waves but communication – I'd even say: I knew my grandpa's voice. Maybe not the literal sound-waves-voice, but when you say something to someone, there's an intention behind it. And that intention is more than the acoustic layer. So both are there, depending on how you analyze it.

Actually, with any sound – if we bring in the artistic medium now – I once did a performance with Christoph Hinterhuber in South Tyrol, and I was working with these meandering sounds and so on. And Christoph said I was using sounds that speak but don't say anything. That maybe sums it up.

dert sind und so. Und dann hat der Christoph gesagt, dass ich Sounds verwende, die sprechen, aber die nichts sagen. Das beschreibt es vielleicht.

Und jetzt mit dem Erlebnis mit dem Opa würde ich sagen… also das war wirklich eine Kommunikation, wo die Stimme … sie war ja da. Es war jetzt seine richtige Stimme. Es gibt aus der Zeit keine Aufzeichnungen natürlich. Also da hat‘s diese Aufnahmegeräte so nicht gegeben. Da hat‘s nur so alte Plattenspieler und so… also es hätte sie gegeben, aber es wäre interessant. Kann mal meine Tante fragen. Vielleicht gibt es zufällig irgendeine Tonaufnahme… ja egal. Auf jeden Fall … in meiner Wahrnehmung war die Tonaufnahme ja da. Das finde ich das Spannende, ja.

Und jetzt… das war jetzt ein starkes Erlebnis. Deswegen ist es eben so fragmentiert, was ich da aufgezeichnet hab. Das war ein Erlebnis, das es mir wert war, das hervorzuheben. Und das ist wahrscheinlich wie beim Beuys mit seinem Filzerlebnis, das nicht wirklich stattgefunden hat. Und vielleicht doch. Es hat ein bisschen so was. Mir gefällt es auch ja, weil es ist tatsächlich passiert. Es ist eine Erinnerung. Es ist eine Wahrnehmung, die immer noch mitschwingt über das akustische raus, weil es auf einer Beziehungsebene stattgefunden hat, auch in der Familie und eine starke Erinnerung an den Opa. Mir war das eben nachher nie klar, wieso. Es ist aber total vielschichtig und es ist eine gute Erinnerung.

Es ist nämlich … da wären wir wieder beim Kind-Sein. Ich weiß nicht, ob das für jeden Erwachsenen so eine gute Erinnerung wäre, so eine Situation. Es würde mich total berühren, aber so Erwachsenen-berühren. Wenn man einen total kranken Menschen besucht, dann ist es nicht so einfach… oder man sagt oft, Kinder tun sich da leichter. Also die Wahrnehmung ist komplett anders, noch nicht so reflektiert oder analysiert. Es ist so eine direkte Wahrnehmung. Du kannst die Krankheit noch mehr wegklappen.

Das ist echt eigentlich ein eigener Punkt – ich weiß jetzt nicht genau, aber so wenn du total an die Realität andocken kannst, nicht bewertest. Wenn der Impact von der Situation einfach stärker ist… mit dem Opa sein und was zu erleben, was Vertrauliches, aber auch so was Pragmatisches, so schau, das ist mein medizinisches Gerät, das ist meine Prothese, schau ich mach das so. Also ja, das ist die Situation. Es ist echt vielschichtig auf eine Art.

Ja, aber vielleicht die Brücke jetzt. Das ist mir zum Beispiel meistens bewusst, wenn Kinder ins Atelier kommen, dass die jetzt quasi in so einer Prothesen-Situation… also wir haben was für sie vorbereitet, recht gut, und wenn Kinder manchmal sagen: Du, ich bin schüchtern oder so. Also da reinkommen in so ein Atelier mit so Mitte 50er alten Künstler*innen… also da musst ja er erst einmal eintauchen. Und da sind die Kinder ja echt offen, je nachdem, wie sie aufgestellt sind. Es gibt ja auch Kinder, die mehr konsumieren, die vom Spielplatz kommen und… aber manche Kinder tauchen da ein in etwas, was wir bereitstellen. Also nicht nur von der Logistik her, sondern mit uns wirklich auf die Beziehungsebene gehen. Also einfach, weil sie, wenn sie einen guten Tag haben, offen sind, interessiert, um die Situation wahrzunehmen. Und das wäre meine Hoffnung, dass das dann Momente sind, die nachhaltig mitschwingen in so Situationen, wo es zum Beispiel darum geht, wie man künstlerisch was macht. Das heißt ja jetzt bei den Museen die „Startermuseen“ für Kinder, wo man Kunst vermittelt. Wo Kinder mal in sowas Eintauchen. Dieser Moment der Wahrnehmung, wenn der dann ist, dann gibt es eh verschiedene Möglichkeiten, das irgendwie so auszuformen oder nicht auszuformen.

And now, with this experience with my grandpa – I’d say it was really a form of communication, where the voice… it was there. It was really his voice. Of course, there are no recordings from that time. We didn’t have those kinds of devices then. Just old record players and so on… I mean, the technology existed, but still. I could ask my aunt, maybe there’s some random audio recording… whatever. In any case… in my perception, the recording was there. That’s what I find fascinating.

And yeah… that was a powerful experience. That’s why what I wrote about it is so fragmented. It was an experience I felt was worth highlighting. It’s probably like with Beuys and his felt-blanket story, which maybe didn’t actually happen. Or maybe it did. It’s kind of like that. I like that too, because in my case it did actually happen. It’s a memory. A perception that still resonates – beyond the acoustic – because it happened on a relational level, within the family, and it’s a strong memory of my grandpa. I never really understood why. But it’s really multilayered, and it’s a good memory.

It’s… we’re back to childhood again. I don’t know if that would be a good memory for every adult – a situation like that. It would really move me now, but in the way that things move adults. When you visit someone who’s very sick, that’s not easy… or people often say children have an easier time with it. Because their perception is totally different – less reflective, less analytical. It’s a more direct perception. You can push the illness aside more easily.

That’s actually a point in itself – I don’t know exactly, but like, when you can really connect to reality without judging it. When the impact of the situation is just stronger… being with Grandpa and experiencing something, something intimate, but also something very pragmatic, like: “Look, this is my medical device, this is my prosthesis, look, this is how I use it.” So yeah, that’s the situation. It’s really complex in a way.

Yeah, and maybe that’s the bridge. That’s something I’m usually aware of when kids come into the studio – that they’re kind of entering a “prosthetic” situation. Like, we’ve prepared something for them, well thought-out. And when a child says, “Hey, I’m shy,” or something like that… well, entering an artist’s studio with two artists in their mid-fifties – you have to dive in first. And the kids are actually really open, depending on how they’re wired. Of course, there are kids who consume more, who come from the playground and… but some kids really dive into something we’ve prepared. Not just logistically, but also by really entering into relationship with us. Just because – when they’re having a good day – they’re open, curious, ready to take in the situation. And that’s my hope: that these are moments that resonate long-term. Especially in situations where it’s about engaging with art. They call them “starter museums” for kids now – where art is introduced. Where kids get to immerse themselves in it. And in that moment of perception, if that happens, then there are all kinds of possibilities of shaping it – or not shaping it.

00:31:45 VMF:
Ja, da ist die Situation mit dieser Prothese eigentlich ein schönes, wirklich schönes Bild. Weil die Prothese nicht, wie es dann später vielleicht wäre, was Bedrohliches hat, weil es für etwas Bedrohliches, Beängstigendes, Defizitäres und letztlich vielleicht Todbringendes steht, sondern es ist wirklich die Brücke, die möglich gemacht hat, dass dein Opa was zu dir sagt.

00:32:19 WM:
Und genau da liegt der Unterschied oft für mich zwischen Kindern und Erwachsenen. Weil das, was du jetzt grad formuliert hast, das kann eigentlich nur ein Erwachsener formulieren. Und da geht es dann wieder um die Bewertung von Dingen und von Menschen. Also man muss in der Lage sein, jemanden mit Behinderung überhaupt als behindert zu sehen. Das ist einfach eine Bewertung. Aber du verstehst, was ich mein.

Das, was du willst, was du jetzt beschrieben hast, ist eigentlich genau der Unterschied, weil ich merk‘s bei meinem Sohn jetzt aus der eigenen Situation, dass der einem Freund aus Kindergruppen-Tagen, obwohl der erblindet ist, weiß, was er braucht und jetzt spielt er halt anders mit ihm. Also sie verändern das Setting und sind Freunde und es hat nicht diesen Beigeschmack. Es gibt manchmal Situationen, wenn er bei einer Geburtstagsfeier ausgegrenzt wird, weil manche Kinder den Erfahrungsraum einfach nicht haben, die spielen einfach dann nicht mit ihm. Aber wenn das eine Basis hat, wie bei ihnen die Freundschaft, dann liegt das vor dem, was eigentlich die Hindernisse wären. Also die Behinderung. Und da wird einfach umgegangen damit: Also klar, du kannst jetzt nicht sehen. Wie kann man es machen? Schau mal, ich zeichne das jetzt ganz groß auf oder so irgendwie. Ich mein, das gefällt mir, das hat so was Lösungsorientiertes im besten Fall. Also… ich will ja nicht generalisieren, aber das ist jetzt eigentlich das Erlebnis, das ich gehabt hab mit meinem Opa, auf eine ähnliche Art. Der Opa ist da im Mittelpunkt gestanden und das andere waren irgendwie so seine Behelfe, mit mir sprechen zu können und dass war natürlich irgendwie Science Fiction und krass und ist um so stärker jetzt in der Erinnerung, ja. Weil wahrscheinlich habe ich es schon mitgekriegt, aber ich habe nicht die Tragik damit verstärkt…

00:35:00 VMF:
Und da finde ich es eben auch wirklich in Bezug auf Kunst und auf diese Erfahrung im Museum, diese Starter-Erfahrungen oder wie du es genannt hast – also deswegen habe ich das jetzt auch so ausformuliert. Dieses Erwachsene, dieser erwachsene Blick, über den man immer erst drüber muss, um es wirklich als Brücke benutzen zu können…

Also jetzt in Bezug auf deinen Opa, diese Prothese, da sind für jemand Erwachsenen diese ganzen Bedeutungszuschreibungen so groß, dass das Ding erst mal zwischen dir und der anderen Person steht. Und eigentlich ist es mit Kunst oder mit künstlerischen Mitteln vielleicht ein bisschen ähnlich: also als Erwachsener, wenn du ins Museum gehst und hast diese positive Grunderfahrung nicht, dann ist da diese ganze symbolische Aufladung und dieses ganze Distinktionsding und diese ganze Bedeutung und dieses irgendwie sich dazu in Beziehung setzen müssen und verorten müssen. Drüber, drunter, daneben, dahinter und über das musst du alles eigentlich erst mal drüber, um dann wirklich eine Begegnung zu schaffen.

Und genauso, wenn du selber was machst, du nimmst den Pinsel in die Hand und dieses Ding ist alles Mögliche. Und ganz am Schluss erst das Werkzeug, das dir hilft, dich in Beziehung zu setzen zur Welt.

Und das finde ich eine schöne Parallele zum Atelier auch, wenn du sagst, die Kinder kommen rein und

00:31:45 VMF:
Yeah, and that situation with the prosthesis is actually a really beautiful image. Because the prosthesis – rather than being something scary, as it might seem later on, something that represents something threatening, frightening, a lack, or ultimately even death – it was really the bridge that made it possible for your grandpa to say something to you.

00:32:19 WM:
And that’s exactly where the difference often lies for me – between children and adults. Because what you just described, that can really only be formulated by an adult. And then it becomes about judging things and judging people again. Like, you have to be able to see someone with a disability as disabled in the first place. That’s a judgment. But you get what I mean.

What you’re talking about, what you just described – that’s exactly the difference. Because I can see it now with my son, in my own life. His friend from when they were in the toddler group together has gone blind, and my son knows what he needs and just plays with him differently now. They adjust the setting and they’re friends, and it doesn’t carry that undertone. Sometimes there are moments – like if they’re at a birthday party – where his friend gets excluded, because some kids just don’t have the experience. They just don’t play with him. But when there’s a foundation – like the friendship between those two – then that’s stronger than whatever the barriers might be. Like the disability. And they just work with it: “Okay, you can’t see now. How can we do it?” “Look, I’ll draw it really big for you,” or something like that. I mean, I really like that – it has this problem-solving spirit, in the best possible way.

So… I don’t want to generalize, but that’s basically what I experienced with my grandpa, in a similar way. Grandpa was at the center, and the rest – those were just his tools to be able to speak with me. And of course, it felt like science fiction and wild and that makes it even more intense in the memory now, yeah. Because I probably did pick up on it back then, but I didn’t reinforce the tragedy…

00:35:00 VMF:
And I think that’s actually really important when it comes to art, and these experiences in the museum – those starter-experiences, or whatever you called them – that’s why I spelled it out the way I did just now. This adult-ness, this adult gaze, that you always have to get past first in order to actually use something like a bridge…

Like with your grandpa – this prosthesis – for an adult, all those layers of meaning are so huge that the thing ends up standing between you and the other person. And it’s actually kind of similar with art or artistic tools: when you go to a museum as an adult and don’t have that initial positive experience, then it’s just this whole symbolic overload, and all the status stuff, and the meaning and this constant need to position yourself in relation to it. Above it, beneath it, next to it, behind it… and you have to work through all of that before you can actually have an encounter.

And it’s the same when you start making something yourself. You pick up a paintbrush and it’s everything. And only in the very end is it just a tool to help you connect to the world.

man stellt was bereit und im Idealfall schaffen sie es, das so direkt zu nehmen und diese Erfahrung mal zu machen, ohne diesen ganzen begrifflichen, rationalen und auch emotionalen Lawinen, die sich mit jedem Tag mehr Leben und Erfahrung so drauf ansammeln. Eine direkte Erfahrung damit zu machen und sich in Beziehung zu setzen und das Bereitgestellte einfach als Brücke zur Welt zu nutzen. Also als Brücke, über die ich drüber gehen kann und nicht als Brücke, die trennt.

00:37:45 WM:
Ja genau, es ist direktes Andocken eigentlich. Als Eltern, da merkt man das halt, dass man total gefordert ist, wirklich man selbst zu sein, weil wenn man das nicht ist, dann ist es wie so eine direkte Übertragung. Du bist einfach so präsent in ihrem Alltag und du spürst auch, sie nehmen dich wirklich gut wahr. Und das ist ziemlich ein offenes Feld eigentlich, dieses Wahrnehmungsfeld. Und es ist recht dicht oder ich weiß jetzt nicht, wie man das beschreiben soll. Das ist jetzt meine eigene Erfahrung einfach: Es ist schön, wenn man es schafft, das nicht zu verstellen, sondern stattfinden zu lassen, das ist vielleicht auch was jetzt vielleicht für die Arbeit im Atelier und vielleicht auch manchmal als Künstler*in gilt: man möchte sich nicht verstellen, also es sollte nicht so verstellte Kunst sein. Man möchte den Kompromiss ausschalten. Der sich eigentlich unwillkürlich ergibt durch das, dass man was schafft, das ist vielleicht das, wo du sagst die Brücke oder… aber das geht. Das ist eben, wenn man nix schafft. Sagen wir mal so – man schafft eben kein Produkt oder so, sondern man begegnet vom Kind zu Erwachsenen, jetzt also in unserem Fall, und dann findet es einfach statt. Ja, wenn man einander zugewandt ist… vielleicht ist das eh, was Beziehung ist. Da findet dieser Wahrnehmungsaustausch statt. Den kann man auch teilen. Dann vielleicht, wenn man jetzt zum Beispiel was baut oder sich was erzählt. Das ist ein großer Anteil, finde ich, wenn man mit Kindern in so einen Kunst-Prozess geht.

00:40:26 VMF:
Ja man geht drüber. Für mich ist es mit dieser Brücke – vielleicht ist das ein bisschen zu platt, aber wenn ich jetzt sag die Brücke ist wie … wie der Apparat, ist wie der Ton, ist wie der Pinsel oder irgendwie das Medium. Und entweder eine Brücke ist was, was uns trennt, was zwischen dir und mir ist, und entweder die ist aufgeladen mit allem Möglichen. Und ich komme an dem erst mal gar nicht vorbei. Oder ich kann halt drüber gehen, weil sie noch nicht so…

00:41:05 WM:
Ja… ich seh‘s einfach, ich mein… vielleicht ist das zu esoterisch, wenn du im Bauch bist von deiner Mutter oder so, das ist wie so ein Gesamtkunstwerk… also die Problematik glaube ich liegt in der Trennung. Also wenn du jetzt so ein Wahrnehmungsfeld hast. Das ist ja das, was wir echt gern hätten, als Erwachsene, also das trau ich mir mal jetzt so zu sagen, weil sonst würden wir nicht irgendwelche Gigs suchen, um irgendwie immer irgendwas zu erleben, was uns so mitnimmt.

Das mag ich auch so gern im „Ozean“: Die wirklich kleinen Kinder, die sich erst strukturieren. Also da ist die Wahrnehmung. Und dann wird Erfahrung geschaffen und vielleicht, wenn sie öfter stattfindet, dann manifestiert sie sich und dann weißt du, okay, wenn ich dann jetzt da einischau, das blendet mich jedes Mal. Und mir kommt vor, dass sich das erst strukturiert, dass das Kind dann erst Begrifflichkeiten dafür findet. Also die Erfahrung findet statt und dann wird sie vielleicht eingereiht oder so. Und im Prinzip sind jetzt meine guten künstlerischen Prozesse, also wo ich wirklich fähig war, in sowas einzutauchen, wahrzunehmen, aus dem auch sowas zu strukturieren, sind das vielleicht ähnliche Sachen.

And I think that’s a beautiful parallel to the studio, too – when you said, the kids come in and something’s been prepared. And in the best-case scenario, they manage to just take it in directly and have an experience without all that conceptual, rational, and emotional avalanche that piles on more and more with every day of life and experience. To have a direct experience and connect through it – and use what’s been set up simply as a bridge to the world. Like a bridge to walk across, not one that separates.

00:37:45 WM:
Yeah, exactly – it’s direct connection, really. As a parent, you really feel how much you’re challenged to actually beyourself, because if you’re not, it just transfers directly. You’re just so present in their everyday lives, and you feel that they really do perceive you clearly. And that’s a pretty open field, that field of perception. It’s very dense – or I don’t even know how to describe it. That’s just my personal experience: it’s beautiful when you manage not to block it, but to let it happen. And maybe that’s something that applies to working in the studio too, or sometimes even as an artist: you don’t want to fake it. Like, it shouldn’t be faked art. You want to cut out the compromise. Which kind of inevitably happens once you create something – that might be what you were referring to, the bridge, or… but it’s possible. That’s actually when you don’t create something. Let’s put it that way – you don’t create a product or whatever, but instead you meet: child and adult – in our case – and then it just happens. If you’re open to each other… maybe that’s what relationship is. That’s when this exchange of perception takes place. And you can share that. For example, by building something together, or telling each other something. That’s a huge part, I think, when you go into an art process with kids.

00:40:26 VMF:
Yeah, you cross over. For me, this thing with the bridge – maybe it’s a bit simplistic, but if I say the bridge is like… like the device, like the sound, like the brush, or like the medium. And either a bridge is something that separates us, something that stands between you and me, and it’s loaded with all sorts of stuff. And I can’t even get past that. Or I can walk across it – because it’s not loaded up yet…

00:41:05 WM:
Yeah… I just see it – I mean, maybe it sounds too esoteric, but when you’re in your mother’s womb or something, it’s like a Gesamtkunstwerk… and I think the problem really lies in the separation. Like, if you have this field of perception – that’s actually what we really want, as adults, I’d say. I feel like I can say that. Otherwise we wouldn’t be chasing gigs all the time to try and experience something that really moves us.

That’s also what I love about „Ocean“: these really small kids, still just forming their structures. Perc-ep-tion comes first. And then experience is formed, and if it happens repeatedly, it starts to manifest, and then you know: okay, when I look into this, it blinds me every time. And I feel like that’s when it starts to take shape. Like, the child then starts to find words for it. The experience happens, and then maybe it gets categorized or something. And basically, my best artistic processes – the ones where I was really able to dive in, perceive, and shape something from that – those are maybe similar things.

Also ich hab dir das glaube ich das letzte Mal erzählt, dass ich mich oft so vorbereite. Das mache ich nicht immer, aber manchmal gehe ich extra noch eine Strecke zu Fuß. Dann denk ich mir: Okay, was ist das Kindermuseum. Ich probier‘ mir das einfach frisch zu halten. Und dann weiß ich, da kommen jetzt urviele Leute zusammen, alle aus komplett verschiedenen Lebenskontexten, Alltag, Kultur. Und dann sind da so künstlerische Sachen drin. Es gibt ein Atelier. Es gibt die Schwierigkeiten, also die Schwierigkeiten des Tages. Irgendwas funktioniert nicht. Also in das Ganze, in den ganzen Organismus, das ganze Gebilde, da kommen dann irgendwie Kinder und wir sind auch dort. Und dann passiert diese ganze Wahrnehmung. Also da fahren die Lifte runter, aber man hat Hunger, man kann dann nimmer essen. Der Bruder liegt im Krankenhaus. Es sind diese ganzen Geschichten eigentlich von Menschen, von Personen, die zusammenkommen mit dem künstlerischen, dem konzeptuellen Impact. Also ich mein, das ist einfach ein mega-monströses Ding und ich gehe da hin.

Das finde ich schon faszinierend – also das ist halt irrsinnig fluid… wenn es diese Analogien zum Sound gibt: das ist für mich ein total fluides Medium, es kommt was zusammen und dann strukturiert sich was, dass wir es hören, dann verschwindet es wieder. Oder? Ich denke das, was wir erleben im Kindermuseum, das könnte man vielleicht ähnlich sehen: Als fluiden Prozess. Das ist dann der Flow Moment oder so, wenn so Prozesse zusammenfließen. Wenn man einen guten Tag hat mit seinem Körper, sich gut fühlt und verschiedene Wahrnehmungsebenen zusammenkommen. Jeder hat irgendwie teilhaben können, das sehe ich dann nachher nicht so getrennt… ich meine, man darf das ja alles nicht so sagen, dass „wir“. Aber wenn man es jetzt abstrahiert, wirklich auf so organische Ebenen, dann würde ich schon sagen, dass wir dann weniger getrennt sind voneinander. Dass das ein ungeahnter Austausch ist. Schon das Kulturelle, aber auch so auf der Gefühlsebene: Eine Klasse mit 25 Kindern mit verschiedenen kulturellen Hintergründen kommen in ein Atelier mit den Künstler*innen, ich meine, es ist eigentlich im besten Falle wirklich ein schönes Ding.

Aber das muss nicht im Kindermuseum sein – wir haben‘s ja da in unserer Arbeit mit den Kids in dieser NMS… weißt eh, also im besten Fall. Man hofft, dass das vielleicht zu einer Durchmischung kommt, dass alle offen sind, also man hat einfach eine gute Zeit auf dieser vielschichtigen Ebene.

Und ich glaube, sowas haben wir auf dem Weg als Künstler*in kennengelernt. Auch wenn ich jetzt das „Kunst mit Kindern“ oder „Kinder“ ausblende: Wenn z.B. ein Konzert ein Gutes ist, es waren die richtigen Leute da, wo einfach einmal alles gepasst hat. Und je öfter man das erlebt, desto eher kann man nachher mit der Zeit davon sprechen.

Und vielleicht ist es dann, wenn ich ganz zurück geh in die Kindheit: Vielleicht ist es genau eigentlich dieses Setting, mit meinem Opa, das sich dann quasi verselbstständigt, also immer wieder in andere Kontexte als andere Situationen zusammengestellt und wieder ereignet hat. Und vielleicht ist es so, dass ich deswegen das über die Zeit kenne, was möglich ist und es schätzen gelernt hab.

Und natürlich, wenn man was schätzen gelernt hat, dann will man es halt immer wieder haben. Und dann hat man, wenn sich das nicht einstellt, nicht so eine Frustrationstoleranz. Also das muss man halt dann üben. Da bin ich auch nicht immer imstande. Je nachdem, wie das Leben ausschaut. Das ist halt so wie mit wie mit Zucker. Also wenn Du mal was gewohnt bist, was quasi deinen Körper in andere Sphären bringt

I think I told you this last time: that I often prepare myself in a specific way. I don’t do it every time, but sometimes I’ll deliberately walk part of the way. Then I think to myself: okay, what is the Children‘s Museum? I try to keep it fresh. And then I know: there are going to be tons of people coming together, all from completely different everyday contexts, cultures, lives. And then there are these artistic elements. There’s the studio. There are the everyday challenges – something doesn’t work. So into all that – into this whole organism, this whole structure – kids come in. And we’re there too. And then this whole perceptual thing starts happening. The elevators go down, but someone’s hungry, and now you can’t eat. The brother is in the hospital. It’s all these stories, really – human stories – meeting this artistic, conceptual impact. I mean, it’s just a huge, monstrous thing, and I go in there.

I do find that fascinating – it’s just so incredibly fluid… if we go with sound analogies: for me, that’s a totally fluid medium. Something comes together, and then it structures itself into something we can hear, and then it disappears again. Right? I think what we experience at the Children‘s Museum could be seen in a similar way: as a fluid process. That’s the flow moment, maybe – when processes merge. When you’re having a good day in your body, feeling good, and various perceptual layers converge. Everyone gets to take part in some way. And afterward, I don’t really see it as separate anymore… I mean, of course you shouldn’t say “we” too broadly. But if we abstract it – really down to these organic levels – then I would say we’re less separate from each other in those moments. That it’s an unexpected kind of exchange. Yes, cultural too, but also on an emotional level: a class of 25 children with various cultural backgrounds comes into a studio with the artists – at best, that’s actually a really beautiful thing.

But it doesn’t have to be in the Children‘s Museum – we’ve seen it in our work with the kids in that middle school… you know what I mean, like in the best-case scenario. You just hope that there’s maybe some mixing, that everyone’s open, and you just have a good time on that multilayered level.

And I think we’ve experienced something like that on our path as artists. Even if I take “art with children” or “children” out of the equation: like when a concert is really good, the right people were there, and for once everything just came together. And the more often you experience that, the more you can later recognize it and talk about it.

And maybe – if I go way back to childhood – it’s actually that setting with my grandpa that kind of took on a life of its own, showing up again and again in different contexts, reassembled in different situations. And maybe that’s how I came to know what’s possible, and learned to value it over time.

And of course, once you’ve come to value something, you want to experience it again and again. And then if it doesn’t happen, you don’t have that much frustration tolerance. That’s something you have to practice. And I’m not always able to, depending on what life looks like. It’s kind of like sugar. Once you get used to something that can take your body into other spheres – or drugs – it’s something you want to experience again and again. And at the same time, you never know what the others are experiencing, because you might just be the catalyst. That’s another thing in art.

oder Drogen, dann möchte man das halt immer wieder erleben. Und gleichzeitig weiß man nie, was die anderen erleben, weil man kann ja einfach nur der Katalysator sein. Das ist auch so ein Punkt in der Kunst.

Und ich habe das als Kind auch erlebt. Ich habe als Kind auch schon immer wieder Situationen gehabt, in denen was durch mich passiert ist, wo ich aber einfach nur dabei war. Es war mir aber nicht bewusst oder so. Also das erlebe ich im Kindermuseum auch. Nämlich auch mit unseren lieben Kollegen und Kolleginnen. Wenn man zum Beispiel sich denkt, heut wird‘s schwierig mit dem oder der zu arbeiten und dann auf einmal nimmt das ganze Ding einen Bogen und du denkst dir: das ist ja komplett super. Und das hätte ich nie gedacht.

00:50:22 VMF:
Ja. Danke für die Geschichte mit deinem Opa. Das macht irrsinnig viel auf. Stimme ist ja auch so ein Riesenthema und Stimme und Prothese, ich meine, das ist ja wirklich… reicht für eine Biografie.

00:50:58 WM:
Sag ich ja. Das ist meine Beuys-Geschichte. Bin ich gerade draufgekommen. Das werd ich jetzt immer erzählen, wieso ich Sound-Artist geworden bin. Da warst du jetzt die Katalystin, oder wie sagt man da? Die Katalysator.

00:51:13 VMF:
Die Katalysatorin.

00:51:14 WM:
Ja „der Katalysator“ – was ist die weibliche Form? Die gibt es scheinbar nicht.

00:51:23 VMF:
Die Katalysata.

00:51:42 WM:
Du warst jetzt in dem Fall die Katalysata.
Hast du noch? Was ist denn Dein Fragenkatalog?

00:51:52 VMF:
Ich habe keinen Fragenkatalog. Ich hab nur diese eine Frage und vielleicht passt es einfach so. Es ist auf jeden Fall genug. Und ich weiß, dass wir immer weiterreden können. Es wird ja nirgends aufhören. Wie du gesagt hast, man macht halt den Bogen irgendwann zu.

00:52:17 WM:
Zuerst hab ich gedacht: ich kann mich an meine Kindheit gar nicht erinnern. Ich brauche diese Prothese. Und das war jetzt auch irgendwie, es hätte noch andere Situationen gegeben. Aber mir fällt gerade auf, dass die Zusammensetzung gar nicht so wichtig ist, sondern dass die Situationen ähnliche Parameter haben. Wie sie erlebt werden und wie sie vielleicht eine Grundlage werden für etwas, wo man später, wenn man es analysiert oder Distanz dazu bekommt… also wo man was rausnehmen kann und rausbilden. Ja, das ist mir jetzt aufgefallen. Und auch, dass das vielleicht wirklich was ist, was Kinder verbindet, wenn sie halbwegs bei sich sind, diese vielfältige Wahrnehmung.

Deswegen versteh ich‘s zum Beispiel nicht, wenn jemand nicht im „Ozean“ arbeiten kann: „Ja, da sitz ich dann und ich kann nix tun, eine Stunde lang“ – und mir geht es einfach nicht so, weil das ganze Ding läuft, ich meine, das handelt sich von selber ab im Prinzip. Aber man kann damit spielen, etwas in Gang zu bringen. Oder man kann auch nur da sitzen und mal schauen, wie die Kleinen so arbeiten und dann hat man vielleicht eine witzige Idee, oder? Oder sie kommen eh. Aber das ist eben der Punkt. Und hast du jetzt noch

And I experienced that as a child too. I had moments, even back then, where something happened through me, where I was just present. I wasn’t aware of it or anything. And I experience that now in the Children‘s Museum too. Also with our dear colleagues. Like, when you think it’s going to be difficult to work with someone today – and then suddenly the whole thing takes a turn and you think: this is absolutely brilliant. And I never would’ve expected that.

00:50:22 VMF:
Yeah. Thank you for the story about your grandpa. It opens up so much. Voice is such a huge topic, and voice and prosthesis – I mean, really… you could fill a whole biography with that.

00:50:58 WM:
Exactly. That’s my Beuys story. Just realized it. That’s what I’m going to say now, when people ask why I became a sound artist. You were the catalyst now, or how do you say it? The Katalysator?

00:51:13 VMF:
The female form is Katalysatorin.

00:51:14 WM:
Yeah “Katalysator” – what is the feminine version? Apparently it doesn’t exist.

00:51:23 VMF:
Die Katalysata.

00:51:42 WM:
Then in this case, you were the Katalysata.
Do you have more? What’s on your question list?

00:51:52 VMF:
I don’t have a question list. I just had this one question, and maybe that’s already enough. It feels like it is. And I know we can always keep talking. It’s never going to really end. Like you said, at some point you just close the circle.

00:52:17 WM:
At first I thought: I can’t remember my childhood at all. I need that prosthesis. And in a way, that’s what this was. There were other situations too, but I just realized that the specific composition isn’t so important – it’s more about the situations having similar parameters. The way they’re experienced, and how maybe they become a foundation for something that, later on, when you analyze it or gain some distance from it… where you can pull something out and shape it. Yeah, that just occurred to me. And also, that maybe that’s something that really connects kids – when they’re at least somewhat in touch with themselves – that multifaceted perception.

Which is why I don’t get it, for example, when someone says they can’t work in “Ocean“: “Yeah, I’m just sitting there and I can’t do anything, for a whole hour” – and I just don’t feel that way, because the whole thing runs itself, basically. But you can play with it, you can get something going. Or you can just sit there and watch how the little ones work, and maybe you get a funny idea, right? Or they come over to you anyway. But that’s exactly the point. And wait – are you still recording?

eingeschalten, oder was?

00:53:59 VMF:
Es läuft. Also macht ja nix.

00:54:02 WM:
Weil bei der Arbeit in dem Kindermuseum. Also ich muss da nicht unbedingt handeln, also… noch weit weg von Unterhaltung, aber das zu erkennen, wie das ganze Spiel in Gang kommen kann und man probiert einfach aus. Als Gruppenarbeit eigentlich.

00:54:33 VMF:
Ja.

00:54:33 WM:
Das ist eigentlich die Herausforderung. Und manchmal klappt es, manchmal nicht. Ich glaube auch, wenn‘s halbgut ist, ist es trotzdem ok. Das stimmt mich bei der Arbeit auch positiv. Du kannst nicht rein konzeptuell mit Handlungsanweisungen agieren. Aber du kannst schon die Möglichkeiten erkennen. 25 verschiedene Wahrnehmungen. Ja ich meine, es ist eigentlich ein großes Ding. Deswegen glaube ich ist es auch oft so, dass uns das so komplex vorkommt. Man kann es nicht erfassen und ich meine, es ist ein totales Aufkommen von irrsinnig viel Schichten und das kann man dann so reflektieren. Aber die Kinder, die nehmen einfach das Ding mit. Dann umarmen sie einen noch und dann wollen sie ein Eis essen gehen, weil da wissen sie ja auch, da ess ich ein Eis und dann geht es mir total gut. Also das ist wirklich so von einem Ding zum nächsten.

00:56:37 VMF:
Ja, wir reflektieren‘s halt, weil man dann in diese Realität so reingeworfen ist, dass wir da irgendwie halt dafür bezahlt werden. Also das ist ja ein Job ist und ein Job definiert sich dadurch, dass man ihn definieren kann. Vermeintlich können sollte.

00:56:58 WM:
Die Idee. Die Idee vom Job allein ist…

00:57:01 VMF:
Eben, und dadurch entstehen dann halt diese… es ist, du hast ja nicht die gleiche Rolle wie die Kinder, aber irgendwie dann auch wieder schon.

00:57:15 WM:
Ja genau, das muss man halt irgendwie wissen, dass das so ist. Es ist nicht so einfach, weil, überhaupt, wenn sich etwas verdichtet, die strukturellen Sachen, Kulturtechniken und so. Auf einer kognitiven Ebene prägen uns die einfach total stark.

Deswegen, das was ich Dir am Anfang erzählt habe, deswegen geht mir der Alltag dann echt auf die Nerven, obwohl er einfach nur Alltag ist, aber er strukturiert halt echt total komische Sachen, die sind nachher nicht inspirierend, die sind zu bewältigen.

00:58:13 VMF:
Es kostet nur Energie… dann drücke ich auf Stop?

00:59:07 WM:
Ja außer Du möchtest noch was wissen, weil…

00:59:09 VMF:
Ja mir kommt vor, der Bogen ist ganz schön geschlossen jetzt gerade. Wir könnten jetzt etwas Neues anreißen, aber ich habe irgendwie das Gefühl, dass…

00:59:19 WM:
Ja, dann passt‘s.

00:59:21 VMF:

00:53:59 VMF:
It’s running. But that’s fine.

00:54:02 WM:
Because when it comes to the work in the Children‘s Museum – I don’t necessarily have to do something, I mean… far from entertainment – but seeing how the whole play starts to come alive, and you just try things out. It’s actually group work.

00:54:33 VMF:
Yeah.

00:54:33 WM:
That’s really the challenge. And sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t. I also think that even if it’s only half good, it’s still okay. That’s something that gives me a positive outlook on the work. You can’t just act conceptually with instructions. But you can recognize the possibilities. Twentyfive different perceptions. I mean, it’s actually a big thing. That’s why I think it often feels so complex. You can’t fully grasp it – and I mean, it’s a full-on eruption of countless layers, and you can reflect on that. But the kids – they just take the thing with them. Then they hug you and want to go get an ice cream, because they know: when I eat an ice cream, I feel great. It’s really just from one thing to the next.

00:56:37 VMF:
Yeah, and we reflect on it because we’re thrown into this reality where we actually get paid for it. Like, it’s a job. And a job is defined by the idea that you can define it. Or at least supposedly should.

00:56:58 WM:
The idea. The idea of the job alone is…

00:57:01 VMF:
Exactly. And from that come all these… I mean, you don’t have the same role as the children, but somehow you kind of do.

00:57:15 WM:
Yeah exactly, and that’s something you have to know – that that’s how it is. It’s not easy, especially when things start to solidify – structural things, cultural techniques and so on. On a cognitive level, they shape us really strongly.

That’s why – what I told you at the beginning – that’s why everyday life really gets on my nerves. Even though it’s just everyday life. But it ends up structuring things in these totally weird ways. And later, they’re not inspiring – they’re just things you have to manage.

00:58:13 VMF:
It just drains your energy… Should I press stop now?

00:59:07 WM:
Unless there’s something else you want to ask?

00:59:09 VMF:
No, I feel like the circle has just closed really nicely. We could start something new now, but somehow I feel like…

Das passt schon so. Sonst frage ich dich noch mal...

00:59:23 WM:
Und Du hast eh gesagt, du gibst mir dann den Text zum Lesen, dann kann man ja...

00:59:29 VMF:
Ja genau, klar. Danke!

Werner Moebius arbeitet zwischen bildender Kunst und Musik im erweiterten Feld von Sonic Art und ästhetischer Praxis. Er befasst sich mit der Plastizität von Sounds in akustischen, intermedialen und performativen Kontexten und ermöglicht so Dialoge im Spannungsfeld von neuer Musik, elektroakustischer Improvisation, Konzeptkunst, schrägen Beats und künstlerischer Forschung. Für seine Arbeit wurde er ua mit dem Förderungspreis der Stadt Wien und den Auslandsstipendien des BMUKK für Chicago und Mexiko-Stadt ausgezeichnet. http://www.wernermoebius.net

00:59:19 WM:
Yeah, then it's good.

00:59:21 VMF:
It's good like this. Otherwise, I'll just ask you again later...

00:59:23 WM:
And you said you'd send me the text to read, so then we can...

00:59:29 VMF:
Yes, of course. Absolutely. Thank you!

Werner Moebius works between visual art and music in the expanded field of sonic art and aesthetic practice. He deals with the plasticity of sounds in acoustic, intermedial and performative contexts and facilitates dialogues in the field between new music, electroacoustic improvisation, conceptual art, weird beats and artistic research. For his work he has been awarded, among others, the Music Award of the City of Vienna and grants of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture for Chicago and Mexico City. http://www.wernermoebius.net

(Explanatory) Notes and References

The “Reds“ and the “Blacks“

Austrian post-war politics were shaped primarily by two parties: the conservative ÖVP, known as the “black party,” and the socialist SPÖ, the “red party.” This terminology, of course, has nothing to do with skin color. Yet in a cultural environment marked – seen from today’s perspective – by the problematic popular culture of Westerns on television and children naturally playing “cowboys and Indians,” it is hardly surprising that a child overhearing adults discuss conflicts between the “Reds” and the “Blacks” might misunderstand the subject. Although potentially misleading, we have chosen not to omit this passage, as it is highly revealing of the social, political, and familial milieu described.

Autobiography work / Viktor Frankl

Werner Moebius has recently completed a training program in “Logopedagogy“ according to Viktor Frankl at Viktor Frankl Zentrum Wien. Within this framework, autobiographical work constitutes an essential component. In the course of the interview, he shares the sequence concerning his grandfather and the speech prosthesis.

https://www.franklzentrum.org/lehrgang/lehrgang-logopaedagogik.html (Accessed: 25 September 2025).

Christoph Hinterhuber

https://www.chinterhuber.com
(Accessed: 25 September 2025)

Joseph Beuys and his felt-blanket story

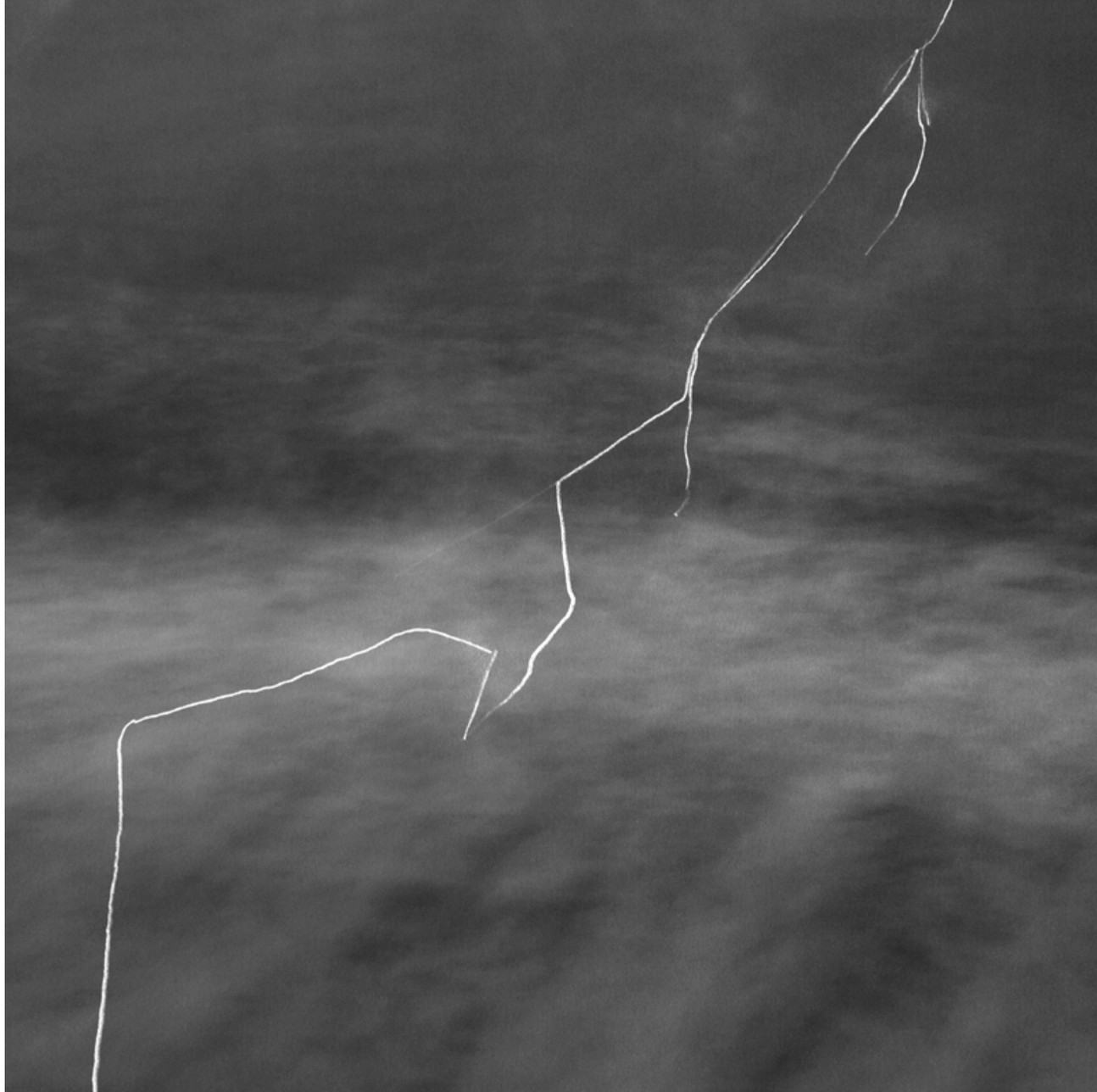
“The cardinal scene of his fantastical biography, the Beuysian Ur-myth, took place in 1944, when he was involved in a near-fatal plane crash. Knowing he would be drafted, he had volunteered for the Luftwaffe four years earlier, working first as a radio operator and then as a rear gunner stationed in the Crimea. On 16 March he was shot down in the mountains, where, he claimed, he was saved by Tartar tribesmen, who wrapped him in insulating layers of felt and fat to keep him from freezing to death. This narrative, which was still repeated as fact in Beuys’s New York Times obituary, has by now been conclusively disproved. Beuys was in a plane crash, which killed his pilot and badly injured him, but there were no tribesmen, no fat nor felt.(...) It may be that he was deliberately evading responsibility for his part in Germany’s programme of total war, though it’s also possible that he was, like many artists, simply engaging in an act of bombastic self-creation.“

Jones, J. (2016) “Fat, felt and a fall to earth: making and myths of Joseph Beuys“. The Guardian, 30 January. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/jan/30/fat-felt-fall-earth-making-and-myths-joseph-beuys (Accessed: 25 September 2025).

The “Studio“ and all that clay

The conversation was recorded during a program at the “Studio“ based on clay: several tons of raw clay were provided in the studio, and children and artists played among the clay mountains as if in a huge sandpit.

if you’re too far to caress, use a sound wave.



Lucia Derndorfer

über Gesehenwerden, Einsamkeit, Arbeit am Tonfeld, Richtigsein, Tastsinn als Beziehungssinn, Clown- und Jazz-Diva-sein, Authentizität, Resonanz, Empathie, Tod, Hausgeburt und Hendlsupp'n.

about being seen, loneliness, working with the clay field, being right, the sense of touch as a sense of relationship, being clown and jazz diva, authenticity, resonance, empathy, death, home birth, and chicken soup.

Ich besuche Lucia am 27.09.21 um ca. 11:00 bei ihr zu Hause. Sie wohnt in einer kleinen Wohnung in Wien Rudolfsheim mit Balkon auf eine große Kreuzung und Blick auf Schönbrunn zusammen mit ihrer Tochter Ava. Obwohl Lucia auch schon lange im ZOOM arbeitet, kennen wir uns noch nicht gut – mögen uns aber glaube ich sehr.

00:00:00 LD:
Achso, aber das hört man dann vielleicht nicht, wenn ich wirklich rausgehe...

00:00:05 VMF:
Nehmen wir's halt mit.

00:00:09 LD:
Nehmen wir's einfach dann mit. Na, bei dem was du gerade erzählt hast, kam mir irgendwie der Satz „Gesehen werden" im Kopf unter. Also zumindest ist es etwas, was ich sehr gut nachvollziehen kann, weil es auch bei mir darum geht. Erstens mal bin ich ein Mensch, der von Grund auf wahrscheinlich gesehen werden möchte, weil ich mich gerne auf Bühnen stelle, einfach das gerne mache. Und da habe ich mich auch so gefragt: Ma, brauche ich leicht unbedingt immer den Mittelpunkt. Privat jetzt vielleicht nicht ständig, aber ich habe das Gefühl, ich hab' was zu erzählen oder ich erzähl gern und hab dann auch festgestellt: Hey, die Leute hören mir auch zu! Oder wenn ich auf einer Bühne stehe, mach ich ja meistens ein Konzert, wo ich dann einfach von einer G'schicht zur nächsten gehe. Ich singe kein Lied, das nicht einen Bezug zu mir hat. Also, die Lieder, die ich singe, die liebe ich von ganzem Herzen. Und deswegen hab' ich auch festgestellt, ok von der Musik werde ich nie leben können, weil ich bin wahrscheinlich eine schlechte Background-Sängerin. Weil ich erstens mal gerne Frontfrau bin und zweitens auch, weil ich's nicht für Geld mach, sondern ich möcht was machen, was mit mir zu tun hat. Und da bin ich dann auch gut. Oder ich brauch, wenn ich für wen anderen was mach, viel Information über den Menschen, damit ich's dann auch individuell zuschneiden kann und mir einfallen lass: was könnte denn da passen oder was... was ist denn stimmig?

Ja und gesehen werden ist definitiv in meinem Leben ein großes Thema, weil es halt passiert. Manche spirituellen esoterischen Menschen sagen naja man sucht sich die Eltern – ich kann dem zum Teil was abgewinnen, zum Teil aber auch nicht. Ich glaube nur ... dass alles im Leben einen Grund hat und ich glaube auch, dass wenn du jetzt eine Mutter oder ein Vater bist, dann gibst du zwar das, was du geben kannst, aber das ist natürlich oft einmal... hmm jetzt widerspreche ich mir, wenn ich sage oft einmal nicht genug, weil es gibt den schönen Ausdruck von Winicott, das war ein Kinderpsychiater, der gesagt hat: good enough mother. Das hilft mir auch immer sehr. Ich bin gut genug für mein Kind und die Übermutter kann man sowieso nicht sein.

Aber meine Eltern haben zum Beispiel sehr auslassen. Sie konnten nicht anders. Das heißt, ich kenn dieses: Ich bin alleine und ich bin einsam schon sehr früh. Und das ist halt irgendwie ein Teil in meinem Leben, ich möchte mir das halt anschauen, ich möchte mir meine Geschichte anschauen. Warum es so ist und warum es so kam und aber auch, was hab' ich für Ressourcen dadurch gewonnen oder: Was ist dadurch jetzt mein Weg? Und mittlerweile weiß ich: Sie konnten nicht anders. Also es war einfach nicht mehr möglich. Und zugleich merke ich, dass ich in den letzten beiden Jahren, vielleicht durch diese Ausbildung, die ich jetzt macht, nämlich Arbeit am Tonfeld, den Lebens- und

I visit Lucia on 27.09.21 at around 11:00 at her home. She lives in a small apartment in Vienna Rudolfsheim with a balcony looking out onto a big intersection and with a view of Schönbrunn, together with her daughter Ava. Although Lucia has also been working at ZOOM for a long time, we don't know each other very well yet – but I think we really like each other.

00:00:00 LD:
Oh, but maybe you won't hear that if I actually go outside...

00:00:05 VMF:
Let's just take it with us.

00:00:09 LD:
Yeah, let's just take it with us then. Well, with what you just said, the phrase "being seen" popped into my head. At least it's something I can really relate to, because that's also a big theme for me. First of all, I'm a person who, by nature, probably wants to be seen, because I like getting up on stage, I just enjoy that. And then I started asking myself: oh, do I always absolutely have to be the center of attention? Maybe not constantly in private life, but I feel like I have something to tell, or I just enjoy telling stories, and then I realized: hey, people actually listen to me! And when I'm on stage, I usually do a concert, where I simply go from one story to the next. I don't sing a song that doesn't have a connection to me. The songs I sing, I love them with all my heart.

And that's also why I realized: okay, I'll never make a living from music, because I'd probably be a terrible background singer. First, because I like being the front woman, and second, because I don't do it for money. I want to do something that has to do with me. And that's when I'm good. Or if I do something for someone else, then I need a lot of information about that person, so I can tailor it individually, and figure out: what would fit here? What feels right?

So yes, being seen is definitely a big theme in my life, simply because it keeps happening. Some spiritual or esoteric people say: well, you choose your parents. I can get on board with that to a point, but not completely. I just believe that everything in life happens for a reason, and I also believe that if you're a mother or father, you give what you can give. But often – well, now I'm contradicting myself – often it's not enough. There's that wonderful expression from Winnicott, who was a child psychiatrist, who said: "good enough mother." That always helps me a lot. I am good enough for my child. You can't be the perfect mother anyway.

But my parents, for example, left a lot undone. They couldn't help it. Which means, I know that feeling of being alone, of being lonely, from very early on. And that's just part of my life. I want to look at it, I want to look at my story – why it's like that, why it happened that way, but also: what resources did I gain from it? What's my path because of it? And by now I know: they couldn't do any better. It just wasn't possible anymore. At the same time, I notice that in the last two years, maybe because of the training I'm doing now, namely Arbeit am Tonfeld – working with clay fields – training as a life and social counselor with that method, which is a kind of Gestalt therapy that's entirely based on haptics. Because through a lot of talk therapy myself, I learned that yes, talking is important, but you can also wrap yourself and the therapist around your little finger. Somehow "the mind" can lie to you, but the body can't. The body doesn't lie, and some traumas are just deeply embedded in the body.

Sozialberater mit der Methode Arbeit am Tonfeld – das ist eine Art von Gestalttherapie, wo alles über die Haptik geht, weil ich selber durch viel Gesprächstherapie die Erfahrung gemacht habe, dass das Reden zwar wichtig ist, aber du kannst dich und den Therapeuten um den Finger wickeln. So irgendwie „the mind“ kann dich belügen, was der Körper nicht kann. Der Körper lügt nicht und manche Traumatisierungen sitzen ganz fest im Körper drin. Und durch die Haptik und das Material – du hast da quasi einen Holzkasten mit 10 Kilo Ton gefüllt – durch die Haptik, den Tiefendruck, dient das einfach auch der sensomotorischen Entwicklung. Das heißt, Du gehst von selber zurück in das Stadium, wo du vielleicht ein Defizit hast und es ist aber alles ohne Bewertung. Du musst weder im Tonfeld deine Geschichte erzählen, du kannst, wenn du willst. Nur ist es wirklich interessant. Deine Geschichte ist nicht relevant, sondern einfach das, was die Hände mit dem Material machen und das ist einfach so genial.

Ich mache das selber seit zwei Jahren und seit Februar jetzt diese Ausbildung. Lerne das Handwerk dazu. Meine Tochter ist auch im Tonfeld, bei meiner Tochter fehlt quasi die väterliche Instanz und das kann man im Tonfeld gut ausgleichen. Und ich habe gemerkt, dass sich in den letzten beiden Jahren die Beziehung zu meinem Vater um 180 Grad verändert hat. Mein Vater ist eine männliche Bezugsperson zu meiner Tochter geworden. Der ist 82 Jahre alt, ein ziemlicher Freak. Ein schrulliger Latein Professor, wie er im Bilderbuch steht, sehr zerstreut, sehr humanistisch, sehr philosophisch, spricht sieben Sprachen, sehr gescheit, war für uns als Kinder nicht da, nicht erreichbar. Hat sich durch die Krankheit meiner Mutter, die ist schwerst manisch-depressiv, in Bücher geflüchtet oder ins Wirtshaus und war nicht für uns da. Und jetzt? Wir übersiedeln ihn ins betreute Wohnen. Dadurch haben wir irrsinnig viel Zeit miteinander verbracht, haben seine viereinhalb tausend Bücher aussortiert, haben jedes Buch in der Hand gehabt. Papa brauchst du das? Brauchst Du es nicht? Haben eine Tonne Bücher weggeführt und eine Tonne Bücher hat er jetzt in seiner 50 m2 Wohnung. Das hat aber recht viel Respekt gehabt. Wir haben uns viel Zeit genommen und haben da wieder sehr Beziehung aufgebaut, die wir die letzten 20 Jahre einfach nicht gehabt haben. Und wie gesagt, er ist eine Bezugsperson geworden zu meiner Tochter, ist irrsinnig lieb mit ihr, ist witzig, der Opa macht einen Schmäh. Das ist absolut heilsam und echt wunderschön. Wir telefonieren, das haben wir 20 Jahre lang nicht gemacht. Und ich habe das Gefühl, wir holen da einfach auf. Das berührt mich total und ich sehe, wie ihm das gut tut.

Mein Vater hat kaum auf uns allein aufgepasst. Da gibt es Anekdoten … es hat oft geheißen, der Max ist ins Klavier gefallen, weil er leidenschaftlich Klavier gespielt hat und die Mama sagt: Du, ich geh schnell in den Keller, die Lucia schläft und sie kommt rauf nach fünf Minuten. Ich schreie wie am Spieß und die Mama sagt Max, das Kind. Und er sagt: Welches Kind? Also so viel dazu. So lustig das jetzt klingt, das war für uns als Kinder nicht lustig. Und jetzt sagt er auch: Ich bereue es so, dass ich nicht für euch da war. Ich kann mich aber dafür nicht verurteilen. Und ich sag: Papa, danke für die Erkenntnis. Danke, dass wir drüber reden können und danke, dass du jetzt als Opa da bist für dein Enkelkind. Genau. Ich rede von selber schon recht viel.

00:07:36 VMF:
Ich kann ja meine Ausgangsfrage nachschieben, das passt eh irgendwie zusammen. Es ist immer schön, wenn man irgendwie so auf konkrete Momente kommt. Ich meine, das ist eine traurige Geschichte mit dem Klavier…

And through the haptics and the material – you basically have a wooden box filled with 10 kilos of clay – through the tactile experience, the deep pressure, it serves your sensomotoric development. That means, you go back on your own into the stage where maybe you had a deficit, and it’s all without judgment. You don’t have to tell your story in the clay field – you can, if you want to. But it’s really fascinating: your story isn’t what matters, it’s simply what your hands do with the material. And that’s just brilliant.

I’ve been doing that myself for two years, and since February I’ve been doing the training, learning the craft. My daughter also works with the clay field; for her, the fatherly figure is missing, and that can be well compensated in the clay field. And I’ve noticed that in the last two years my relationship with my father has changed by 180 degrees. My father has become a male reference person for my daughter. He’s 82 years old, quite a freak, a quirky Latin professor like out of a picture book, very scatterbrained, very humanist, very philosophical, speaks seven languages, very clever – but for us as children, he wasn’t there, not reachable. Because of my mother’s illness – she’s severely manic-depressive – he retreated into books or into pubs, and he wasn’t there for us. And now? We’re moving him into assisted living. Because of that, we spent an insane amount of time together, sorting through his 4,500 books. We had every single book in our hands: “Papa, do you need this? Do you not need this?” We took away a ton of books, and he still has a ton left in his 50 m² apartment. But it was treated with great respect. We took a lot of time, and through that we rebuilt a relationship we simply hadn’t had for the last 20 years. And as I said, he’s become a reference person for my daughter. He’s incredibly sweet with her, he’s funny – grandpa makes jokes. That’s absolutely healing and really beautiful. We talk on the phone now – that’s something we didn’t do for 20 years. And I feel like we’re catching up. That touches me so deeply, and I see how good it does him too.

My father hardly ever looked after us on his own. There are anecdotes… it was often said: “Max fell into the piano,” because he passionately played the piano. And my mom would say: “Hey, I’ll just run down to the basement, Lucia is sleeping,” and she comes back up after five minutes, I’m screaming my head off, and mom says: “Max, the child!” And he goes: “What child?” So, there you go. Funny as it sounds now, it wasn’t funny for us as kids. And now he says too: “I regret so much that I wasn’t there for you. But I can’t condemn myself for it.” And I say: “Papa, thank you for realizing that. Thank you that we can talk about it, and thank you that you’re here now as a grandpa for your granddaughter.” Exactly. I’m already talking quite a lot on my own.

00:07:36 VMF:
I can follow up with my initial question, it kind of fits anyway. It’s always nice when we get down to concrete moments. I mean, that’s a sad story with the piano…

00:08:02 LD:
Und wenn das eine das andere dann irgendwie ergibt, vom Tonfeld zu dem...

00:08:08 VMF:
Genau. Ja meine Ausgangsfrage, die ich immer gestellt habe und manche haben sie beantwortet und manche nicht, die einen können was damit anfangen, die anderen nicht. Und ich habe es immer relativ schwurbelig vorgetragen, aber ich hab immer gedacht, es passt schon. Es hat immer irgendwie funktioniert: Wenn du dir vorstellst, du könntest mit dir selber als Kind noch mal einen Tag verbringen. Also nicht, dass du einfach noch mal jung bist und nochmal Kind sein darfst, sondern du begegnest der kleinen Lucia, wahlweise in der Vergangenheit oder du holst sie her. Was würdest du machen?

00:08:47 LD:
Das berührt mich total. Allein, dass Du das sagst, es berührt mich wirklich, weil – ich hole jetzt ein bisschen aus – ich darf seit zehn Jahren ein CliniClown sein. Die CliniClowns haben jetzt gerade 30 Jahre CliniClowns gefeiert. Und einen der wunderschönsten Momente hab ich erlebt in Clown Workshops. Und diese Clown Workshops waren mitunter nicht nur Clownen, Improvisation, sondern ganz viel Musik, ganz viel präsent sein, wenn du rausgehst und dich herzeigst und auf einer Bühne stehst, dann mach‘s mit einem offenen Herzen und ein Mensch ist mir wahnsinnig hängengeblieben. Das ist der Maurice Williams, ein Flame. Der ist Psychologe und arbeitet mit Menschen und Stimme. Er singt nicht, aber er wird so psychologisch mit dir, macht ganz viel so Stellungen und schafft es dann einen Raum mit zwölf Menschen so mit Liebe zu füllen, dass sich alle nur mehr umarmen. Und er schafft es auch, dass jeder dorthin kommt, wo man total nackert ist, total pur, alle Fassaden, alle Masken fallen lässt und so das wahre Wesen zum Vorschein kommt. Und dann ist jeder Mensch wunderschön und meistens weinen dann auch die Leute, die rundherum sind, weil das ein magischer Moment ist und weil das total berührend ist und er hat ganz viel mit dem gearbeitet mit dem Kleinen, mit dem Kind in sich.

Das war eines meiner Highlights, bevor meine Tochter auf die Welt kommen ist, 2014. Ich glaub, das war im Mai 2014. Da hab‘ ich einen Workshop mit ihm gemacht. Ich war hochschwanger und da hat er gemerkt, boah nicht nur, dass da jetzt schon ein großes Kind in mir ist und ich wahnsinnig rund bin von allen Seiten. Da hat er gemerkt, ich brauch was und hat mich in die Mitte gestellt und gefragt: was wünschst Du dir denn und ich hab gesagt ich wünsche mir die Hände von allen Clowns auf mir, auf meinem Körper. 26 Hände oder so. Und das war alles absolut respektvoll. Aber ich bin einfach nur berührt worden. Innen wie außen. Das heißt, der hat so ein irrsinniges Gefühl.

Und dann ... er hat öfters mit mir gearbeitet. Ich glaub beim letzten Mal war die Ava dann mit Sicherheit schon da. Und dann hat er auch immer gesagt: Ihr habt‘s diesen Baum in euch. Und der gibt euch auch einen Rückhalt. Und ich bin jetzt quasi diese erwachsene Frau. Aber er hat gesagt: Schau, nimm doch beim nächsten Ausflug die kleine Lucia an der Hand und dieses „Ich nimm die kleine Luzia an der Hand“ ist total wichtig und nimm auf der anderen Seite deine Tochter an die Hand und gehts gemeinsam.

Und das ist einfach so ein schönes Bild, mich auch immer wieder zu erinnern, wenn es mir schlecht geht, wenn ich das Gefühl hab‘, ich reagier vielleicht jetzt auch nicht erwachsen. Einfach zu sagen: Oh, das kommt daher, dass da die kleine Luzia was nicht gekriegt hat, was sie braucht. Aber ich bin jetzt trotzdem diese erwachsene Frau und Mutter und die gehört umsorgt von mir, von der Erwachsenen in mir

00:08:02 LD:
And when one thing somehow leads to the other, from the clay field to that...

00:08:08 VMF:
Exactly. Yes, my initial question, which I always asked – some answered it, some didn’t. Some could do something with it, others couldn’t. And I always phrased it a bit vaguely, but I thought: it’ll be fine, it always worked somehow. If you imagine that you could spend another day with yourself as a child. Not that you just get to be young again, but that you actually meet little Lucia – either in the past or you bring her here. What would you do?

00:08:47 LD:
That really touches me. Just you saying that, it really moves me, because – I need to go back a bit here – I’ve been allowed to be a CliniClown for ten years now. The CliniClowns just celebrated their 30th anniversary. And one of the most beautiful moments I’ve ever experienced was in Clown workshops. And those Clown workshops weren’t only about clowning, improvisation, but a lot about music, a lot about presence – when you go out, when you show yourself, when you’re on stage, then do it with an open heart.

And there’s one person who really stuck with me: Maurice Willems, a Fleming. He’s a psychologist and works with people and voice. He doesn’t sing, but he gets very psychological with you, does a lot of postures and such, and he manages to fill a space with twelve people so full of love that everyone just ends up hugging each other. And he also manages to bring everyone to that place where you’re totally naked, totally pure, all façades, all masks fall away, and your true essence shines through. And then every person is beautiful. And most of the time, the people around cry, because it’s a magical moment, because it’s so moving. And he worked a lot with that inner child.

That was one of my highlights before my daughter was born in 2014 – I think it was May 2014 when I did a workshop with him. I was heavily pregnant, and he noticed – not only that there was already a big child inside me, that I was round as can be – but he noticed I needed something. And he put me in the middle and asked: “What do you wish for?” And I said: “I wish for the hands of all the Clowns on me, on my body.” Twenty-six hands or so. And it was all absolutely respectful. But I was simply touched – inside and out. That’s how sensitive he was.

And then... he worked with me several times. I think the last time Ava was already born. And he always said: “You have this tree inside you. And that gives you support too. And now you’re this adult woman.” But then he said: “Look, on your next outing, take little Lucia by the hand. And taking little Lucia by the hand is so important. And on the other side, take your daughter by the hand. And go together.”

And that’s just such a beautiful image, one that always reminds me – when I’m not feeling well, when I feel like maybe I’m not reacting in an adult way – to just say: oh, that’s coming from the little Lucia not having gotten what she needed. But I am still this adult woman and mother, and it’s my job as the adult in me to care for that little Lucia. That’s such a beautiful image, and as I said, it’s deeply moving.

gehört diese kleine Lucia umsorgt. Und das ist ein so ein schönes Bild, das wie gesagt total berührend ist.

Und wenn ich einen Tag mit ihr hätte – ich habe eh viele Tage nach wie vor mit ihr. Weil allein schon, dass ich ein CliniClown bin und einfach da alten Menschen, kranken Menschen und Kindern begegnen darf, immer wenn ich mich verwandel von der erwachsenen Lucia in diese Clown-Figur, Dr. Daisy Düse, ist die ja sehr naiv oder hat einen ganz einen anderen Zugang zur Welt. Einen, der mich im Alltag dann auch bereichert. Und da ist eben was Schönes drin.

Was die kleine Lucie auf alle Fälle braucht, ist Geborgenheit. Er hat dann auch so eine wunderschöne Übung mit uns gemacht, nämlich einer liegt in der Mitte und die Clown-Gruppe ist rundherum. Und dieser Mensch darf sich einen musikalischen Wunschort wünschen: wo möchtest du hin? Ich hab‘ keinen Ort gehabt, ich hab gesagt, ich möchte Geborgenheit. Ich habe die Augen zugemacht und dann haben alle Clowns mit Sounds rund um mich und zum Teil, weil sie mich kennen und jeder weiß, ich stehe auf Berührungen, mich auch berührt und haben mich an einen Ort der Geborgenheit gebracht. Und ich würde auf alle Fälle die kleine Lucia, ich würde ihr ganz viel Geborgenheit geben, ich würde sagen: He, was immer du machen willst, worauf du Lust hast: Wir machen das gemeinsam und ich bin für dich da. Und wennst einen Mut brauchst, dann ermutige ich dich, uns wannst eine Umarmung brauchst, dann gebe ich dir Halt und du darfst in meine Arme und vielleicht würden wir eine Heißluftballon Fahrt machen an einem wunderschönen sonnigen Tag mit einem total bunten großen Fallschirm über die wunderschönste Landschaft. Coole Musik haben wir auch dabei. Und vielleicht machen wir dann so ein bisschen wie Mary Poppins In einer Fantasiewelt, wo es total bunt ist und dort steigen wir einfach kurz ab. Und dort ist‘s einfach nur cool. Und die Süßigkeiten hängen an den Bäumen und so. Und dann wieder zurück. Ja, so ein bisschen was von Mary Poppins hätte ich da wahrscheinlich, ja.

00:15:04 VMF:
Ich hätte jetzt nämlich noch nachgefragt. Es ist jetzt relativ stark so dieses, was du dir selber als Kind geben wollen würdest und damit natürlich dir selber gibst. Und die Richtung andersherum? Also es hört sich ein bisschen an, als wäre dieses Land, wo ihr da aussteigt, würde dich die kleine Lucia dann dahin führen oder was würdest du dich fragen? Vielleicht… ist ein bisschen schwierig.

00:15:37 LD:
Aber du meinst, was die Große jetzt mit der Kleinen machen will?

00:15:41 VMF:
Also es ist so…genau. Also es ist klar, was die Große der Kleinen geben würde. Aber was würde die Kleine der Großen geben oder sagen oder zeigen?

00:15:57 LD:
Ich glaub die Kleine würde einemal zur Großen sagen: Danke, dass du da bist. Danke, dass du mich siehst. Danke, dass ich mit dir über meine Gefühle reden darf. Ja, in erster Linie danke, dass du mich siehst. Danke, dass du mich wahrnimmst. Danke, dass du mir Halt gibst. Danke, dass du mich hältst.

00:16:27 VMF:
Ja, aber das ist dann die Dankbarkeit für das, was die Große der Kleinen gibt. Aber was gibt die Kleine der Großen. Wofür sagst du zur Kleinen: Danke!

00:16:39 LD:
Danke für deine Fantasie. Ja. Danke für deinen unglaublichen inneren Reichtum und das, wie du die Welt siehst.

And if I had a day with her – I do still have many days with her. Because simply the fact that I’m a CliniClown, and that I get to meet elderly people, sick people, and children – every time I transform from adult Lucia into this Clown character, Dr. Daisy Düse, she’s very naïve, she has a totally different approach to the world. One that enriches me in everyday life too. And there’s something beautiful in that.

What little Lucia definitely needs is a sense of security. He also did this wonderful exercise with us, where one person lies in the middle and the Clown group is around them. And that person can choose a musical place they want to go to. Where do you want to be? I didn’t have a place, I just said: “I want security.” I closed my eyes, and then all the Clowns created sounds around me, and some, because they know me and know I love touch, touched me too, and they brought me to a place of security. And I would definitely give little Lucia that – I would give her lots of security. I would say: hey, whatever you want to do, whatever you feel like: we’ll do it together, and I’ll be there for you. And if you need courage, then I’ll encourage you. And if you need a hug, then I’ll hold you, and you can come into my arms. And maybe we’d take a hot-air balloon ride on a beautiful sunny day, with a big colorful parachute, over the most beautiful landscape. We’d have cool music with us too. And maybe we’d do something a little like Mary Poppins, in a fantasy world that’s really colorful, and we’d just land there for a while. And it would just be amazing. And the sweets would hang from the trees and all that. And then we’d come back. Yeah, so it would probably have a bit of Mary Poppins to it.

00:15:04 VMF:
I was actually going to ask that as a follow-up. So far it’s mostly about what you would want to give yourself as a child, which of course also means giving it to yourself now. But the other way around? Because it sounds a bit like this land where you two land, that maybe little Lucia would lead you there. Or what would she ask you? Maybe… it’s a bit tricky.

00:15:37 LD:
You mean what the grown-up would do with the little one?

00:15:41 VMF:
So it’s like… exactly. So it’s clear what the grown-up would give the little one. But what would the little one give to the grown-up? Or say? Or show?

00:15:57 LD:
I think the little one would say to the grown-up: Thank you for being here. Thank you for seeing me. Thank you that I can talk to you about my feelings. Yes – above all: thank you for seeing me. Thank you for noticing me. Thank you for giving me support. Thank you for holding me.

00:16:27 VMF:
Yes, but that’s gratitude for what the grown-up gives the child. But what does the child give to the grown-up? For what do you say “thank you” to the little one?

00:16:39 LD:
Thank you for your imagination. Yes. Thank you for your incredible inner richness, and the way you see the world.

00:17:00 VMF:
Hast du da vielleicht… ich mein, es ist eh mit dem Ballon… gibt es irgendwie so eine Situation, wo du gerne… also, es muss jetzt auch nicht so sein, aber die meisten haben irgendwie wie so eine Urerfahrung, also so Kinderspiel-Erinnerungen letztlich oder mehr oder weniger Spiel-Erinnerungen, aber so Situationen in der Kindheit, die in irgendeiner Form Bezug haben zu dem, wer du jetzt bist und was du machst…

00:17:51 LD:
Also da kann ich jetzt ganz in die Tiefe gehen. Ich bin mir nicht sicher, ob es das ist, was du gern hättest.

00:17:57 VMF:
Also ich will nicht zu tief bohren, wenn es dir unangenehm ist,

00:18:05 LD:
Mir ist es nicht unangenehm, nur die Frage, ob es wirklich passend ist. Ich habe ganz wenig Erinnerungen, um ehrlich zu sein, weil das ziemlich dramatisch war. Meine Kindheit. Ein Grund dafür ist aber wahrscheinlich… ich erzähl das jetzt einfach. Meine Mama ist in der Schwangerschaft zu mir – und ich glaub sehr, dass es irre relevant für das Leben eines Menschen ist, was pränatal in diesen 9 Monaten im Uterus eines anderen Menschen passiert, dass das sehr große Auswirkungen hat auf das Leben dieses Menschen. Meine Mama, der Muttermund meiner Mutter hat sich geöffnet in der 20. Woche, das heißt meine Mama musste 20 Wochen in der Schwangerschaft liegen. Das heißt, das ist die halbe Schwangerschaft. In diesen 20 Wochen bin ich nicht bewegt worden. Es ist extrem relevant für das Kind, dass das durch die Mutter permanent bewegt wird. Das heißt, man kann davon ausgehen, dass meine erste große Traumatisierung im Mutterleib war, wie bei vielen Menschen – man redet nur nicht drüber.

Wenn ich Erwachsene frag: hast Du einmal gefragt, was in den neun Monaten vor deiner Geburt war? Na eigentlich nicht… Hast Du mal gefragt, wie die Geburt war? Na das weiß ich eigentlich nicht – müsste ich einmal fragen. Das hat eine Relevanz, da bin ich überzeugt davon. Und das weiß ich auch durch die Arbeit meiner Schwester und durch das Tonfeld jetzt auch. Natürlich habe ich meine Mama mal gefragt, die schwerst manisch-depressiv ist, seit ich denken kann: Wie ist es dir denn da dann gegangen? Naja schlecht. Also sie war erstens einmal sehr, sehr depressiv. Sie durfte nicht mehr aufs Klo gehen, sie durfte gar nicht aufstehen und sie haben irrsinnig viel gebetet, weil sie so eine Angst gehabt haben. So eine Angst: Kann dieses Kind überhaupt überleben? Kommt dieses Kind überhaupt auf die Welt? Schafft es dieses Kind? Die Geburt war dann eigentlich eher easy, weil wir alle sehr gebärfreudige Becken haben, aber ja.

Und ich habe irgendwie schon ganz viel in meinem Leben gemacht und mich haben oft Leute gefragt: Hast du denn keine Bilder? Und ich hab gesagt, nein ich hab nicht wirklich viele Bilder. Da ist viel Traurigkeit dagewesen, das zieht sich durch. So, so, so lebensfroh ich bin… es sagen ja auch ganz viele Leute: Du suchst dir nicht einfach so einen Beruf, sondern der hat immer was mit deiner Geschichte zu tun. Du kannst Dir sicher sein: Lehrer wollen gesehen werden. Menschen, die auf einer Bühne stehen, wollen gesehen werden. Menschen, die Clowns werden oder so, haben mit Sicherheit irgendwas sehr Trauriges erlebt. Also, das hat einen Grund, warum man sich Berufe wählt oder Kunst. Kunst ist einfach ein Ventil. Ich glaub Künstler brauchen ihre Kunst um nicht verrückt zu werden, um ihre Traumatisierungen… ein Ventil dafür zu haben. Und deswegen sind die oft auch so genial, diese Menschen. Aber sie sind oft nicht mit ihren Füßen am Boden. Sie fliegen irgendwo herum.

00:17:00 VMF:
Do you maybe have… I mean, the hot-air balloon already counts… but is there some situation you'd like to – well, it doesn't have to be – but most people had some kind of primal memory, like a childhood play memory, more or less, but some situation in childhood that in some way connects to who you are now and what you do…

00:17:51 LD:
Well, I could really go deep with that. I'm not sure if that's what you'd like.

00:17:57 VMF:
Well, I don't want to dig too deep if it makes you uncomfortable.

00:18:05 LD:
It's not uncomfortable for me, it's just the question of whether it really fits here. To be honest, I have very few memories, because it was all quite dramatic. My childhood. One reason for that is probably… well, I'll just tell it. When my mom was pregnant with me – and I really believe it's hugely relevant for a person's life what happens prenatally in those nine months in the womb, that it has a massive impact – my mother's cervix opened in the 20th week. Which meant she had to stay in bed for 20 weeks of the pregnancy. That's half the pregnancy. And in those 20 weeks, I wasn't moved. But it's extremely relevant for a baby to be constantly moved around through the mother. Which means you could say my first big trauma was in the womb, as it is for many people – it's just not talked about.

When I ask adults: have you ever asked what happened in the nine months before your birth? No, not really… Have you asked how your birth was? No, I don't actually know – I'd have to ask. But it matters, I'm convinced of that. And I also know that through my sister's work and through the clay field work now. Of course, I once asked my mom – who has been severely manic-depressive for as long as I can remember: How was it for you then? And she said: bad. She was, first of all, very, very depressed. She wasn't allowed to go to the bath-room anymore, not allowed to get up at all. And they prayed endlessly, because they were so scared. So scared: can this child survive? Will this child even be born? Will this child make it? The birth itself was then actually pretty easy, because in our family we all have very birth-friendly pelvises, but yeah.

And somehow, I've done a lot in my life, and people often asked me: Don't you have pictures? And I always said: no, I don't really have many pictures. There was a lot of sadness, that runs through everything. As cheerful as I am… people also often say: you don't just choose a profession randomly, it always has to do with your story. You can be sure: teachers want to be seen. People who stand on stage want to be seen. People who become clowns or the like have definitely experienced something very sad. So, there's a reason why you choose certain jobs or art. Art is simply a vent. I think artists need their art to not go insane, to have a vent for their traumas. And that's why they're often so brilliant, these people. But also often not grounded. They're flying around somewhere.

Also es gibt Bilder, die hab – also nochmal zurück zu deiner Frage – mit meiner Schwester. Ich habe eine sechs Jahre ältere Schwester, die sehr wichtig war für mich, obwohl sie oft auch ein Mutterersatz war. Sie war sehr streng. Sie war braver als ich. Ich war der Besen. Sie war ruhiger als ich. Aber sie hat mir auch einen Halt gegeben. Wir haben Märchen Park gespielt oder Lieder erraten, wir haben immer irgendwelche Lieder gesummt. Musik ist recht wichtig bei uns in der Familie gewesen und wir haben so ein Gute-Nacht-Ritual gehabt, dass wir uns auf vier, fünf Sprachen immer good night – buona notte – bonne nuit sagen, und dann sagen wir gemeinsam „und gute Nacht" und dann ist es aus. Oder wir spielen Märchenpark, machen irgendwelche Märchenszenen und die andere muss erraten, welches Märchen das jetzt ist. Meine Mama war sehr viel im Krankenhaus, von dem her hab ich da wirklich wenig… also unsere Großmütter waren viel für uns da, weil meine Mama war bis zu 12 Wochen im Krankenhaus. Und mein Vater war woanders. Mein Vater war da und dort aber nicht als Vater präsent.

Was ein entscheidender Punkt für mich war, war das Theaterspielen. Also da gab es dieses Oberhaupt der Perger Theatergruppen aus Oberösterreich, aus Perg. Pilz hat der geheißen, war auch eine Vaterfigur für mich. Der hat gesagt, boah Kind, du kannst total viel. Und dann haben wir angefangen Theater zu spielen und haben selber Theaterstücke geschrieben und ich hab mit ihm gesungen. Mit 12, 13 Jahren Gershwin Sachen. Die Kinder in meinem Alter haben jetzt nicht unbedingt ein Bezug gehabt zu Gershwin, aber ich liebte diese Musik, weil mein Papa mir immer Musik aus alten Filmen vorgespielt hat und Jazz und so. Und da bin ich irrsinnig aufgeblüht. Also dieses Theater spielen war definitiv ein heilsamer Halt oder ein Überlebenselixier für mich. Und das ist auch geblieben. Tanzen, Theater, Musik, das hat mich am Leben gehalten, würde ich sagen. Und dann eben schon auch Bezugspersonen, die für mich eine väterliche Instanz waren. Oder eine Mütterliche, weil das eben meine Eltern nicht so geschafft haben. Und dafür verurteile ich sie aber nicht. Weil ich einfach sehe: Es ging nicht anders.

00:24:18 VMF:
Weißt du ob Deine… ja gut, dieses Beten halt vielleicht. Ich habe nur gerade drüber nachgedacht, wenn so die Bewegungsreize wegfallen, hören tust du ja trotzdem, also dass vielleicht über das dann die Klangwelt im weitesten Sinn auch irgendwie noch mal wichtiger war, weil das irgendwie…

00:24:46 LD:
Ja, möglich. Weiß nicht, ob meine Mama viel… also dass sie gesungen hat in der Zeit kann ich mir nicht vorstellen, aber meine Mama hat die Kinderliedertafel in Perg geleitet, das heißt, wie ich dann ein Baby war, war ich immer mit bei diesen Proben. Das heißt im Babyalter war singen für mich das Natürlichste und mein Papa hat stundenlang Klaviermusik gespielt. Das ist glaube ich ein Grund, warum ich einfach eine leidenschaftliche Ö1-Hörerin bin, weil Klaviermusik beruhigt mich und ich liebe Jazz. Das Hobby von meinem Papa, bin ich ihm sehr dankbar und wir sind so eben mit Volksmusik…. Wir mussten – bissl so, wie die Trapp-Familie, wurden meine Schwester und ich in Dirndlkleider gestopft und Zopferl und wir mussten dann Hausmusik machen und vor anderen Leuten singen. Das heißt, das Singen hat für mich auch eine lange Geschichte, weil einerseits hab ich viele Stimm-Probleme gehabt, bin auf meinen Stimmbändern auch schon operiert worden, und zugleich hab ich aber Jazz-Gesang studiert. Ich merke aber erst jetzt, dass ich zu meiner tatsächlichen Stimme komme und immer freier singe, je älter ich werde. Also ja, mein Weg würde ich sagen ist in keinster Weise ein geradliniger, sondern er ist sehr kurvig. Aber ich würde sagen, es wird immer besser,

So, there are images I have – coming back to your question – especially with my sister. I have a sister six years older, who was very important to me, although she was often also a mother substitute. She was very strict. She was better behaved than me. I was the wild one. She was calmer than me. But she also gave me support. We played "fairy-tale park," or guessing songs – we were always humming some song. Music was really important in our family, and we had this good-night ritual, saying good night in four or five languages: good night – buona notte – bonne nuit – and then together we'd say "und gute Nacht" and that was the end. Or we'd play fairy-tale park, acting out fairy-tale scenes, and the other one had to guess which fairy tale it was. My mom was in the hospital a lot, so I really don't have many memories with her… our grandmothers were there a lot for us, because my mom would sometimes be in the hospital for up to 12 weeks. And my father was elsewhere. He was around, but not present as a father.

What was a decisive point for me was theater. There was the head of the Perg theater groups, from Upper Austria, from Perg. His name was Pilz, he was also a father figure for me. He said: wow, kid, you can do so much. And then we started doing theater, writing our own plays, and I sang with him. Gershwin songs at age 12, 13. The kids my age didn't exactly relate to Gershwin, but I loved that music, because my dad always played me music from old films and jazz and so on. And that's when I really flourished. Theater was definitely a healing anchor or a survival elixir for me. And that stayed. Dancing, theater, music – that's what kept me alive, I would say. And also other reference people, who became father figures for me. Or mother figures, because my parents just couldn't manage that. But I don't condemn them for it. Because I can see: it just wasn't possible.

00:24:18 VMF:
Do you know if your… well, maybe the praying, I was just thinking: when those movement impulses fall away, you can still hear. So maybe sound, in the broadest sense, became even more important then, because somehow…

00:24:46 LD:
Yes, possible. I don't know if my mom sang much… I can't imagine her singing at that time. But my mom ran the children's choir in Perg, which means that when I was a baby, I was always at those rehearsals. So singing was the most natural thing for me as a baby. And my dad played piano music for hours on end. I think that's one reason why I'm such a passionate Ö1 [Austrian classical radio] listener – because piano music soothes me, and I love jazz. That hobby of my father's – I'm really grateful to him for that. And we also did folk music… a bit like the Trapp family – my sister and I were stuffed into dirndls, with braids, and we had to make house music and sing in front of other people. So, singing also has a long history for me, because on the one hand I had many voice problems, I've even had surgery on my vocal cords, and at the same time I studied jazz singing. But I only now realize that I'm finding my real voice, that I'm singing more freely the older I get. So yes, my path, I would say, has been anything but straight – it's been very winding. But I'd say it's getting better and better.

00:26:06 VMF:
Das ist gut!

00:26:11 LD:
Und genau das Beten ja... weiß nicht, ob wir das jetzt noch aufreißen sollen, aber dadurch, dass mein Vater Lateinlehrer war, ist er da ein bisschen speziell; ist sehr doppelmoralisch gewesen. Sein Leben lang. Das heißt, der Lebemensch, der rhetorisch gut drauf ist, der Gelehrte im Wirtshaus, dann der Professor, der die Schularbeitenheftln im Wirtshaus vergisst wenn er es verbessert, der zerstreute Professor, Latein und Altgriechisch. Das heißt, er liebt alles, was vor dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil war – Messe auf Latein. That‘s another story. Aber bissl schräg alles.

00:26:53 LD:
Naja, da ist halt dann... also ich weiß nicht, wie du das dann mitbekommen hast oder ob das wirklich so eine akustische Erinnerung ist, also halt so eine Sprache, die man nicht versteht, die nur über die....

00:27:04 LD:
Genau, Latein ist mir nicht fremd, obwohl ich sie nicht spreche, die tote Sprache. Und ich weiß auch nicht, ich bin aus der Kirche ausgetreten. Mein Vater sagt dann so Sachen wie: Du lebst doch so nach christlichen Werten. Sag ich, ist ja auch okay, ich hätte ja auch gern mit dem Jesus einen Kaffee getrunken, ich glaube, das war ein extrem leiwander Kerl, aber... und ich glaube auch, ich bin definitiv gläubig. Ich bin halt nicht bei der katholischen Kirche.

Und was schon spannend war, wie ich dann quasi aus heiterem Himmel plötzlich merk ich bin schwanger war für mich glasklar, da gibt es jetzt keine Alternative: Da kommt jetzt ein Kind. Auch wenn das sehr, sehr schwierig, wird, weil ich weiß, ich muss von Anfang an zu 100 Prozent für dieses Kind allein da sein, war das schon sehr spannend, dass es für mich keine Alternative gab. Ich war bei einer Beratungsstelle, bei fem, und erzähl der so: ich krieg jetzt ein Kind und die sagt mir: Wollen Sie sich nicht drei Wochen Zeit nehmen und überlegen, ob Sie dieses Kind kriegen wollen? Hab‘ ich gesagt: Nein, brauch ich nicht. Da ist keine Option, da ist schwarz. Das Kind kommt. Ich hab da die Verantwortung, ich war da selber dabei.

Also das Kind kommt und das war natürlich auch lustig für meinen Vater, weil einerseits war er so: Um Gottes willen, jetzt kriegt meine Tochter ein uneheliches Kind, er hat quasi nicht geschafft, dass er mich im katholischen Glauben so erzieht, dass mir das nicht passiert. Zugleich hab‘ ich gesagt: Lass mi aus‘m Kraut. Du kannst beten, so viel wie du willst, aber ich habe jetzt irrsinnig viel zu tun in neun Monaten. Lass mich aus dem Kraut. Und im Endeffekt hat er es dann sehr katholisch auf sich genommen, weil es ist seine Schuld, es ist seine Schuld, weil er hat mich eben nicht so erzogen, dass mir das nicht passiert. Und natürlich ist jedes Kind ein Kind Gottes und willkommen.

Und wie gesagt, jetzt sind sie ein Herz und eine Seele. Und mein Vater ist ja nicht nur sehr religiös, sondern auch extrem lustig, der volle Freak und sehr sehr unkonventionell. Er ist ja irgendwie eben ziemlich... mein Vater ist glaub ich einer der größten Freaks, die ich kenn. Wirklich, ist ein interessanter Mensch, total. Und sehr liebenswert, nicht der optimale Vater. Aber jetzt holen wir auf.

00:29:44 VMF:
Also den Vater von der Ava gibt‘s gar nicht?

00:29:47 LD:
Den Vater von der Ava gibt‘s, aber das ist ja auch wieder eine andere Geschichte. Die ist einfach sehr schwierig und es ist schwer genug, quasi alleine zu

00:26:06 VMF:
That’s good!

00:26:11 LD:
And about the praying, yeah... I don’t know if we should even open that up now, but since my father was a Latin teacher, he was a bit special. Very double-standarded. All his life. Meaning, a bon vivant, rhetorically gifted, the scholar in the pub, then the professor who forgets the exercise books he’s correcting in the pub – the absentminded professor, Latin and Ancient Greek. He loved everything from before the Second Vatican Council – Mass in Latin. That’s another story. But yeah, all a bit odd.

00:26:53 VMF:
So I don’t know how you experienced that, or if it’s really some kind of acoustic memory – like a language you don’t understand, that only comes through the...

00:27:04 LD:
Exactly, Latin isn’t foreign to me, even though I don’t speak it, it’s a dead language. And I don’t know – I left the church. My father says things like: you live by Christian values. And I say: that’s fine, I would’ve liked to have had a coffee with Jesus too, I think he was an extremely cool guy. And yes, I definitely believe in something. I’m just not in the Catholic Church.

And what was exciting was that when, out of the blue, I realized I was pregnant – it was crystal clear for me: there’s no alternative. A child is coming. Even though it’s going to be very, very difficult, because I knew I’d have to be 100% there for this child on my own. But still, there was no question for me. I went to a counseling center, to fem, and I said to the woman: I’m having a child. And she said: don’t you want to take three weeks and think about whether you really want to have this child? And I said: no, I don’t need that. There’s no option. It’s black and white. The child is coming. I’m responsible – I was there when it happened. So, the child is coming.

And of course, that was funny for my father, because on the one hand he was like: my God, my daughter’s having an illegitimate child! He basically failed to raise me in the Catholic faith so that this wouldn’t happen. And at the same time I said: leave me alone. You can pray as much as you like, but I have way too much to do in the next nine months. Leave me out of it. And in the end he took it on very Catholic-style – saw it as his guilt. It’s his fault, because he didn’t raise me in a way that prevented this. But of course, every child is a child of God and welcome.

And as I said, now he and Ava are inseparable. And my father isn’t only very religious, he’s also extremely funny, a total freak, and very, very unconventional. I think my father is one of the biggest freaks I know. Really, he’s an interesting person. Totally. And very lovable. Not the ideal father. But now we’re making up for lost time.

00:29:44 VMF:
So Ava’s father isn’t in the picture at all?

00:29:47 LD:
Ava’s father exists, but that’s another story. It’s just very difficult. And it’s already hard enough being completely on your own, 100% single mom with a child. But it would be even harder with him. And the thing was – we weren’t a couple, we weren’t together. We’d known each other for a few years, but yeah. One thing worked very well, the rest didn’t. And that’s exactly how it was meant to be. I’m grateful to him that this wonderful child exists. He’s also been through enough. And I also feel like we keep repeating patterns. Like if my mom went through terrible traumas, then I carry

sein, zu hundert Prozent alleinerziehend zu sein mit einem Kind. Aber es wäre noch schwerer mit ihm. Und das war jetzt quasi... wir waren nicht ein Paar, wir waren nicht zusammen, sondern wir haben uns zwar einige Jahre gekannt, aber genau. Eine Sache funktionierte da sehr gut, der Rest irgendwie nicht. Und das ist dann schon genau, das hat so sein sollen. Ich bin ihm dankbar, dass dieses wunderbare Kind da ist. Der hat auch genug erlebt und ich habe ja auch das Gefühl, dass man immer wieder Muster wiederholt. Also wenn da meiner Mama schlimme Traumatisierungen passiert sind, dann trag ich da ja bis zu einem gewissen Grad ihre Geschichten weiter und dann die von der Großmutter auch noch...

00:30:54 VMF:
Immer wieder erschreckend, wenn man das so merkt....

00:30:58 LD:
Dieses Transgenerationale, wenn das so heißt. Ja, ich glaub an das. Und das ist auch so, dass man Sachen weitergibt oder dass Sachen in einem sitzen, die gar nicht die eigene Geschichte sind. Genauso ist es bei ihm auch. Und das ist eine Wucht, eine riesengroße Wucht, was da bei ihm so ist. Er ist ein wahnsinnig talentierter Mensch, Tänzer am Broadway, bis sie seine Stimme erkannt haben. Opernsänger, der aber so... ich erklär‘s der Ava immer so: der Papa, der liebt dich, aber der führt ein ganz, ganz anderes Leben als wir. Und das passt irgendwie nicht zusammen. Wir würden einfach wahnsinnig viel streiten. Wir hätten kein harmonisches Leben, wir streiten auch miteinander, du und ich, und es wäre einfach zu viel. Sein Lebensstil geht mit unserem Lebensstil nicht zusammen.

00:31:48 VMF:
Haben die beiden überhaupt gar keinen Kontakt?

00:31:49 LD:
Die haben mittlerweile keinen Kontakt oder sich zuletzt gesehen vor zwei Jahren und ein paar Monaten. Sie haben sich insgesamt zwischen fünf und zehn Mal gesehen. Und wie gesagt, ich bin die Letzte, die sagt ein Kind braucht keinen Vater, vollkommener Blödsinn. Ich hab‘s auch jahrelang versucht, dass sich die zwei sehen und Kontakt haben. Ich hab zum Teil Babysitter bezahlt, dass es quasi eine Bezugsperson gibt, weil er sich schwer tut, Verantwortung zu übernehmen. Und eine Mama lässt das auch nicht so leicht zu, wenn man weiß das ist... Ich hab das echt versucht und ich finde eine Vaterfigur wichtig, aber mittlerweile sag ich, es muss nicht der eigene leibliche Vater sein. Es braucht männliche Bezugspersonen und es ist allein schwer genug, es wäre mit ihm schwerer. Also es ist das geringere Übel, sag ich jetzt, und ich darf mich schützen und uns schützen. Und es ist wie es ist. Und es passt so.

00:32:57 VMF:
Ja, ja. Bei den anderen war immer wieder irgendwie dieses Gespräch...

00:33:12 LD:
(flüstert)

00:33:12 VMF:
Ja, sicher.

00:33:12 LD:
Schauen wir mal, ob das geht.

00:33:22 VMF:
Sicher geht das.

00:33:22 LD:
Schade jetzt regnet‘s. ... [übersiedeln auf den Balkon]

some of her stories further. And then also those of my grandmother...

00:30:54 VMF:
Always shocking when you notice that...

00:30:58 LD:
This transgenerational stuff, as they call it. Yes, I believe in that. That you pass things down, or that things sit in you that aren’t even your own story. It’s the same with him. And it’s heavy, an enormous weight, what he carries. He’s an incredibly talented person – dancer on Broadway until they discovered his voice, then opera singer. But he... I always explain it to Ava like this: your dad loves you, but he lives a completely different life than we do. And that just doesn’t fit together. We would just argue constantly. Our life wouldn’t be harmonious. We already argue, you and I, but with him it would be way too much. His lifestyle just doesn’t match ours.

00:31:48 VMF:
So do the two of them have no contact at all?

00:31:49 LD:
By now they have no contact, or they last saw each other two years and a few months ago. Altogether, they’ve seen each other maybe between five and ten times. And as I said, I’m the last person to say a child doesn’t need a father – that’s total nonsense. I tried for years to make sure the two of them saw each other, had contact. I even paid babysitters at times, just so there’d be some consistent person, because he struggles with taking responsibility. And as a mother, it’s also not easy to allow that if you know that’s the case... I really tried. And I do think a father figure is important. But by now I say: it doesn’t have to be the biological father. Children need male reference figures, yes. But it’s hard enough alone, it would be harder with him. So, I say it’s the lesser evil. And I’m allowed to protect myself and protect us. It is what it is. And it’s fine.

00:32:57 VMF:
Yeah, yeah. With the others, this conversation came up again and again...

00:33:12 LD:
(whispers)

00:33:12 VMF:
Yeah, sure.

00:33:12 LD:
Let’s see if this works.

00:33:22 VMF:
Of course it will.

00:33:22 LD:
Too bad, now it’s raining... [they move to the balcony]

00:33:56 VMF:
Also, egal ob diese Clown-Geschichten oder im Kindermuseum, wie ist das Verhältnis für Dich? Ist das was Ähnliches oder total...

00:33:56 LD:
Also es hat...es ist schon was Ähnliches ... grad vor Kurzem war ich allein im „Ozean“ im Kleinkindbereich des Kindermuseums, weil in der Ausstellung wer gefehlt hat. Und es waren dann genau zwei Kleinkinder da, ich nehm einmal an, und so um die 3 bis 5 Erwachsene, ist total unoptimal, wenn das so aufgeteilt ist. Aber es war so wunderbar – ich erzähl gleich warum – dass ich danach ein ähnliches Gefühl gehabt hab, wie nach einem CliniClown-Einsatz, nämlich dieses: „Und da bin ich richtig.“ Und das ist nicht nur ein Beruf, sondern eine Berufung. Und ich hab da Talente und ein Potenzial. Und ich krieg dafür sogar auch ein Geld, weil ich die Berufung zum Beruf gemacht hab.

Und ich bin sowieso der Meinung, jeder sollte was arbeiten, wo er sagt, da liegen auch meine Talente und meine Bereiche sind einfach Menschen, Menschen von 0 bis 100 oder auch 105, wenn sie so alt werden. Menschen, Musik und Theater.

Und es war einfach so herrlich, weil da einfach zwei Jungs waren und der eine war wahnsinnig schüchtern. Und zum Schluss war es dann so, dass diese zwei Jungs, zum Ende quasi im „Ozean“, wo wir so einen kleinen Ausklang machen, bei mir sitzen. Und die Eltern waren das Publikum und wir waren eine Band. Ich hab sie auf der Ukulele begleitet. Und die Ukulele ist auch ein wichtiger Teil auf der Geriatrie als CliniClown. Ich habe auf der Ukulele was gespielt, der eine hat auf Klangstäbe gehauen, und der andere hat eine Kinderukulele gehabt und hat auf der gespielt und die Eltern waren so begeistert. Die Kinder haben ein Grinsen gehabt im Gesicht und wir waren eine Band, die Eltern haben dann Zugabe geschrien und es war ein tosender Applaus und ich hab mir dann gedacht, die zwei Buben waren total glücklich, die Eltern waren glücklich und ich war total glücklich und es war so schön.

Und bei CliniClown Einsätzen ist es eben auch so: natürlich ziehe ich selber auch einen Nutzen draus. Aber es ist einfach so schön, eine Intimität zu schaffen. In kurzer Zeit. Im Kindermuseum ist es auch so, dass du nicht wie im Kindergarten Kinder über einen längeren Zeitraum begleitest. Auf der Geriatrie begleite ich zwar oft schönerweise Menschen jahrelang, aber oft sind es auch nur Begegnungen mit Menschen, die man nicht so gut kennt. Und plötzlich hast du in kurzer Zeit aber eine große Intimität, weils‘t einen irrsinnig intensiven Blickkontakt hast, weils‘t a Berührung gibst, die wichtig ist. Und da passieren magische Momente.

Und die passieren im „Ozean“ genauso wie im Atelier, genauso wie im Tonfeld und genauso wie bei CliniClown-Einsätzen oder mit alten Menschen. Ich stehe ja sehr auf Menschen mit... auf desorientierte Menschen und habe eine Ausbildung gemacht, die nennt sich Validation, Naomi Feil, der Umgang mit desorientierten Menschen und ich liebe quasi auch Menschen, die anders sind, die desorientiert sind, genauso wie Menschen mit Behinderung. Weil ich mir oft denk, da ist die Gefühlswelt näher als bei unter Anführungszeichen normalen Menschen. Desorientierte Leute haben einen besseren Zugang zu ihrer Gefühlswelt, genauso wie Kinder, genauso wie oft Menschen mit Behinderung, das ist oft eine ehrlichere Begegnung und ich kann dann einfach gut darauf einsteigen.

Und was man dazu braucht, egal ob im Kindermuseum, auf der Geriatrie oder mit alten Leuten überhaupt, ist Empathie. Aber was Echtes, das darf man nicht

00:33:56 VMF:
So, whether it’s these clown things or the Children‘s Museum – how do you see it? Is it similar for you, or totally...

00:33:56 LD:
Well, it is... it’s definitely something similar. Just recently I was alone in the “Ocean” section in the toddler area of the Children‘s Museum, because someone was missing from the exhibition team. And then there were exactly two toddlers there, I assume, and about three to five adults. Totally unideal, when it’s split up like that. But it was so wonderful – I’ll tell you why – that afterwards I had a feeling similar to after a CliniClown shift. Namely this: “This is where I belong.” And that it’s not just a job, but a calling. And that I have talents and potential for this. And I even get paid for it, because I’ve turned my calling into my job.

And I honestly think everyone should work in something where they feel: yes, my talents are here. And for me, my areas are simply people – people from age 0 to 100, or even 105 if they get that old. People, music, and theater.

And it was just so wonderful because there were these two boys, and one of them was incredibly shy. And by the end it was like this: these two boys, at the very end of the “Ocean,” where we do a little closing ritual, were sitting with me. And the parents were the audience, and we were a band. I accompanied them on ukulele – which is also an important tool in geriatrics as a CliniClown. I played something on the ukulele, one of them was banging on chime bars, and the other had a child’s ukulele and was strumming away. And the parents were so thrilled. The kids were grinning from ear to ear, and we were a band. The parents were shouting for an encore, there was thunderous applause, and I thought: the two boys were totally happy, the parents were happy, and I was completely happy. It was so beautiful.

And with CliniClown work it’s the same: of course, I benefit too. But it’s just so beautiful to create intimacy. In a short time. At the Children‘s Museum, it’s the same – you don’t accompany kids for a long period like in kindergarten. In geriatrics, luckily, I sometimes accompany people for years, but often it’s also just encounters with people you don’t know well. And suddenly, in a very short time, there’s this intimacy, because you have incredibly intense eye contact, because you give a touch that matters. And magical moments happen.

And those happen in the “Ocean,” just as much as in the studio, in the clay field, or with CliniClown visits to elderly people. I really love working with people who are... well, disoriented. I did a training called Validation with Naomi Feil, dealing with disoriented people. And I also love people who are different, disoriented, or people with disabilities. Because I often think: their emotional world is closer than with so-called “normal” people. Disoriented people have better access to their emotional world, just like children, just like often people with disabilities. Those encounters are often more honest, and I can tune in really well.

And what you need for that – whether at the Children‘s Museum, in geriatrics, or with elderly people in general – is empathy. But real empathy. You mustn’t confuse it with sympathy or antipathy. And yes – with more empathy, we’d have a better world. We’re not so good at that anymore. Did I answer your question?

verwechseln mit Antipathie oder Sympathie. Ja und mit mehr Empathie hätten wir eine bessere Welt. Da sind wir nicht mehr so gut drin mittlerweile. Habe ich jetzt geantwortet, auf Deine Frage?

00:38:03 VMF:
Ja, ja. Ich les gerade – das ist nur so ein Einsprengsel – ich bin grad so begeistert von der Leslie Jamison, kennst Du die?

00:38:06 LD:
Nein – Leslie Jamison?

00:38:10 VMF:
Hm, Amerikanerin, es war jetzt im Falter so ein großer Aufmacher, weil das neue Buch herausgekommen ist, das heißt „Make it Scream, Make it Burn“. Und das erste Buch, das hat alle möglichen Preise gewonnen, waren „The Empathy Exams“.

00:38:26 LD:
Das brauche ich dringend.

00:38:28 VMF:
Ich glaub auch!

00:38:35 LD:
Leslie Jamison?

00:38:35 VMF:
Ja, ich schick‘s Dir dann. Die ist wirklich super. Voll cool. Also es ist halt so eine Essaysammlung und sie schreibt total direkt und persönlich, aber trotzdem keine egozentrische Nabelschau, sondern immer wieder auch ein sich selber in Frage stellen, eine Reflexion von ihrer Perspektive oder ihren eigenen Erfahrungen oder dann auch so dieses – was ich auch so gut kenn, gerade jetzt auch in diesem PhD – etwas wo rausnehmen und zu was anderem machen, was aber aus einer Begegnung mit jemandem kommt, oder so. Diese quasi Gewissensbisse: Darf ich das jetzt? Darf ich jemand anderen zu meiner Metapher machen? Darf ich jemand anderes‘ Geschichte irgendwie – Du kannst sie ja nur immer interpretieren und irgendwie im Moment Du findest Sprache dafür, Du findest irgendwie Ausdruck, ist das ja… nimmst Du‘s ja von der Person weg und so weiter. Und ich habe jetzt schon öfter versucht, darüber zu sprechen, weil‘s mir so taugt und ich merke, dass es total schwierig ist, das irgendwie auf den Punkt zu bringen, was sie da macht, weil…. sie ist total präzise, kein Geschwurbel. Es ist irrsinnig gescheit, es gibt ganz viele Querverbindungen zwischen den Essays, manchmal direkt und manchmal nur so ungreifbar, aber sie kippt nie in ein Schwarz-Weiß, also Du liest nie einen Essay fertig und kannst dann mit einem Satz sagen, was sie da jetzt will. Sie bleibt immer so in den Grauzonen.

00:40:31 LD:
Das bringt mich fast jetzt zum Tonfeld wieder, weil da ist es uns quasi untersagt – nicht, dass es uns nicht passiert – aber es ist uns eigentlich untersagt zu interpretieren, weil durch das Material – wir lernen das Handwerk – werden Sachen ersichtlich, aber es ist nicht unser Ding, es zu interpretieren. Und das ist finde ich eben oft auch so schwer.

Ich finde schon, also Sachen sind eigennützig. Also man zieht einen Nutzen aus … es wird einen Grund haben, warum die Leslie das schreibt, aber zugleich … deswegen finde ich es eine der wichtigsten Gaben, auch, was man Kindern mitgeben soll, sich reflektieren zu können. Das merke ich auch in Auseinandersetzungen mit der Ava, meiner Tochter, wenn sie total auf stur schaltet und vollkommen auszuckt, dass wir‘s auseinander klauben. Hey, was ist denn da jetzt gerade passiert? Und wenn sie dann sagt: Ah ja stimmt, dann bin ich total erleichtert, ich will nicht, dass mein Kind,

00:38:03 VMF:
Yes, yes. I was just reading – just as a side note – I’m totally excited about Leslie Jamison, do you know her?

00:38:06 LD:
No – Leslie Jamison?

00:38:10 VMF:
Yes, an American writer. There was a big feature in the Falter because her new book just came out, it’s called “Make it Scream, Make it Burn”. And the first book, “The Empathy Exams”, won all kinds of prizes.

00:38:26 LD:
I need that desperately.

00:38:28 VMF:
I think so too!

00:38:35 LD:
Leslie Jamison?

00:38:35 VMF:
Yes, I’ll send it to you. She’s really great. Super cool. It’s a collection of essays, and she writes very directly and personally, but without being some egocentric navel-gazing. It’s always also questioning herself, reflecting on her own perspective or experiences. And also this thing – which I know so well, especially now in this PhD – where you take something and turn it into something else, but it comes out of an encounter with someone. These pangs of conscience: am I allowed to do that? Am I allowed to turn someone else into my metaphor? Am I allowed to use someone else’s story somehow – you can only ever interpret it. And in the moment you find words for it, expression for it, you’re sort of taking it away from the person. I’ve often tried to talk about this because I love it so much, and I find it’s really hard to put into words what she’s doing, because… she’s so precise, no rambling. It’s incredibly smart. There are so many cross-connections between the essays – sometimes direct, sometimes just intangible. But she never slips into black-and-white. You never finish an essay and can sum up in a sentence what she’s saying. She always stays in the gray zones.

00:40:31 LD:
That almost brings me back to the clay field again, because there it’s basically forbidden – well, not that it never happens – but we’re really not supposed to interpret. Because through the material – yes, we learn the craft – things become apparent. But it’s not our job to interpret them. And I think that’s often so hard.

I do think, of course, things are self-serving. You benefit from them – there’s a reason Leslie writes what she writes. But at the same time… and that’s why I think one of the most important gifts we can give children is the ability to reflect. I notice that with my daughter Ava too. When she totally shuts down and completely freaks out, that we then pick it apart together: hey, what just happened here? And when she says: oh yes, you’re right – then I’m so relieved. I don’t want my child – in a time like now, when so much is possible, when she has everything, even though we’re not rich; we have a different kind of wealth, other than money – I don’t want to raise her into a narcissistic little asshole. That can happen so easily, turning kids into little tyrants. But still, I’m the adult. And I can give her, for a few more years, a mother’s guidance.

das in einer Zeit wie jetzt, wo so viel möglich ist … sie hat ja alles, obwohl wir nicht wahnsinnig reich sind, also wir haben einen anderen Reichtum außer dem finanziellen. Wie kann ich mein Kind… ich sage es jetzt einfach so: Zu einem narzisstischen Arschloch will ich es nicht erziehen. Das passiert uns leicht, dass man aus Kindern trotzdem kleine Tyrannen machen. Und es ist trotzdem so, dass ich die Erwachsene bin. Und ich kann ihr jetzt noch ein paar Jahre eine mütterliche Führung.

Aber natürlich ist es wichtig, dass ich mich selber reflektiere und dass sie auch die Fähigkeit hat, zu reflektieren. Ich hoffe, dass wird jetzt nicht missverstanden. Da gibt es so ein schönes Gedicht von Khalil Gibran. Irgendwie, die Kinder kommen, also jetzt bezogen auf die Eltern, kommen durch euch, nicht von euch und nicht für euch.

00:43:06 VMF:
Woa schön.

00:43:09 LD:
Du sollst ihnen auch ihre Gedanken lassen und sie sollen definitiv frei sein. Nur trotzdem brauchen sie eben diesen Halt. Und ich sage oft zu der Ava: Ava, es ist wichtig, dass du jetzt trotzdem auf mich horchst, weil ich bin einfach erwachsen und es ist meine Aufgabe, dich zu beschützen. Und wenn du aber jetzt auf die Straße rennst, dann kann ich dich nicht mehr beschützen. So ja, so mein ich‘s, ja. Genau. Ja cool. Empathie. Empathie ist echt was Wichtiges.

00:43:44 VMF:
Ja ich frag mich… also auf der Suche nach Begriffen für das, was da passiert in solchen… bei den meisten Kollegen jetzt im Kindermuseum, wie mit dir auch, hab ich das Gefühl, es geht um genau dieses Dazwischen die ganze Zeit. Dieses sich da irgendwo begegnen. Bei einzelnen, und das sind dann natürlich oft die Leute, die sagen: Ja, ich bin ja eigentlich Künstler und Künstlerin und nebenher bin ich Kindermuseum. Meistens fällt‘s damit zusammen, dass das Leute sind, die sich auch mit diesem ganzen Kunstding relativ leichttun, weil sie einfach sagen: Ja, in meiner Kunst, ich will, dass sich was materialisiert. Ich baue mir irgendwas im Kopf zusammen oder ich begebe mich in einen Prozess, dann kommt irgendwas aus mir raus. Und wenn ich mit irgendjemandem zusammenarbeite, weil ich einen Kameramann brauch, dann muss der halt das machen, was ich sage. Und das ist dann ein Produkt, so quasi. Ob das jetzt eine Performance ist, als Produkt oder wirklich was, was ich mit heimnehmen kann, sei dahingestellt, aber das ist relativ einfach.

Aber mich fängt es ja da an zu interessieren, wo es eben nicht mein One-Way-Produkt ist, das dann vielleicht für mich irgendwie kommuniziert, sondern wenn da was anderes dazu kommt, an Menschen, Zeitraum, Begegnung und das irgendwo hingeht, wo ich allein nicht hinkommen würde.

00:45:23 LD:
Das bringt mich auf einen Punkt, was du sagst, also ich hab ziemlich lang braucht, bis ich selber sag, dass ich eine Künstlerin bin. Am Papier war ich eine Künstlerin, weil mich da als CliniClown-Frau der Künstler-Sozialfonds unterstützt. Aber ich hab mich ewig lange nicht als Künstlerin gesehen. Jetzt bin ich soweit, dass ich sag ja, durchaus bin ich eine Künstlerin, aber die Kunst liegt eigentlich in Beziehungen und auf der einen Seite denk ich mir in der Beziehung zu mir selbst, dass ich mal herausfinde, ich hab eh ein Leben lang Zeit, wer bin ich und was macht mich aus aber auch… also ich finde, es geht im Leben um die Beziehung zu dir selbst und um die Beziehung zu anderen und Beziehung hat eine Qualität. Deswegen interessieren mich auch die Hände so, weil der Tastsinn, die Haptik ist

Of course, it’s important that I reflect on myself and that she has the ability to reflect too. I hope that’s not misunderstood. There’s this beautiful poem by Khalil Gibran. Something like: children come – this in relation to parents – they come through you, not from you, and not for you.

00:43:06 VMF:
Wow, beautiful.

00:43:09 LD:
You have to let them have their own thoughts, and they must absolutely be free. But they still need that grounding. And I often say to Ava: Ava, it’s important that you still listen to me, because I’m the adult, and it’s my job to protect you. But if you run out onto the street, then I can’t protect you anymore. That’s how I mean it, yes. Exactly. Yeah, cool. Empathy. Empathy really is something important.

00:43:44 VMF:
Yeah, I wonder… I mean, in searching for words for what happens in these… with most of the colleagues at the Children‘s Museum, like with you too, I have the feeling it’s always about this in-between. This meeting in that in-between space. With some people – and usually it’s the ones who say: yeah, but I’m really an artist and I do the Children‘s Museum on the side – it’s often the case that those are people who find the whole “art thing” easy. Because they just say: yeah, in my art, I want something to materialize. I put something together in my head, or I go into a process, and then something comes out of me. And if I need someone to work with, like a cameraman, then he just has to do what I say. And then it’s a product, more or less. Whether that’s a performance as a product, or something physical you can take home, doesn’t matter. But it’s relatively straightforward.

But where it gets interesting for me is when it’s not just my one-way product, something that maybe communicates for me, but when something else comes in – other people, time, encounters – and it goes somewhere I wouldn’t get to on my own.

00:45:23 LD:
That brings me to a point, what you’re saying. It took me quite a long time before I could say myself that I’m an artist. On paper, I was an artist, because as a CliniClown, I was supported by the Artists’ Social Fund. But I didn’t see myself as an artist for ages. Now I’ve come to the point where I say: yes, absolutely, I am an artist. But the art really lies in relationships. On the one hand, the relationship to myself – figuring out who I am, what makes me who I am, and I have my whole life for that. But also, I think life is about the relationship to yourself and to others. And relationships have a quality. That’s why I’m so interested in hands – because touch, haptics, is the sense of relationship. And likewise: we all need touch. And I notice that with the elderly, who often don’t even perceive me as a clown in geriatrics, but to whom I simply give an anchored touch – how they suddenly sigh with relief, because we all need that somehow.

der Beziehungssinn. Und genauso: wir brauchen alle Berührungen und das merke ich bei den alten Menschen, die mich oft auf der Geriatrie nicht als Clown wahrnehmen, sondern denen ich dann einfach auch eine verankerte Berührung gebe, wie sehr die plötzlich aufatmen, weil wir das irgendwie alle brauchen.

Ich glaub auch in so Settings, wo du jetzt, weiß ich nicht, einen Workshop hältst, oder mit jungen Menschen zusammen bist und eben Begegnung stattfindet, wennst irgendwo in einen Raum kommst… also ich denk mir, es ist immer gut, ein Konzept zu haben, um es dann vor Ort in der Situation zu verwerfen, zu sagen jetzt braucht‘s gerade das. Das macht genauso dieser Mensch, von dem ich zuerst gesprochen habe, dieser Maurice Williams. Der hat natürlich extrem viele Ausbildungen, ist Psychologe, arbeitet mit Stimme und Musik und bla. Aber er schaut dann einfach, weil‘s ja von den Menschen abhängt: Was braucht die Situation jetzt?

Und das ist meine Arbeitsweise eigentlich. Ich habe was im Hinterkopf, aber dann vor Ort… ich muss nicht meinen Plan durchziehen, weil da bin ich ja dann wieder sehr nur bei mir, sondern da braucht es den Mut auch zu sagen, ich improvisier jetzt, ich lass mich ein auf mein Gefühl und wenn was in Resonanz geht, dann ist‘s stimmig. Und das merk ich dann körperlich, indem ich eine Ganslhaut krieg.

Wennst da im Ton im Atelier eingehen kannst auf die Kinder, ich mein, wenn du irgendwie gut hinschaust, genauso wie eben im „Ozean“, wann‘s dich net braucht, nimmst dich zurück, und wenn‘s dich braucht, dann bist du da. Ich glaub auch im „Trickfilmstudio“, da hab ich mich bis jetzt noch nicht drüber getraut, aber da ist glaub ich wichtig: was schafft denn die Gruppe. Deswegen braucht‘s auch den, der das ganze leitet und sagt: Hey ihr seid‘s eine Gruppe und als Gruppe habt‘s ihr jetzt eineinhalb Stunden Zeit was Kreatives gemeinsam zu erschaffen. Also das heißt, es ist das Miteinander so wichtig und da braucht es wen, der einfach diese Inputs geben kann die es braucht. Da brauchst ein Gefühl für Menschen…

00:49:03 VMF:
Ja ich hab das jetzt schön gefunden, mit dem Berührungs… Entschuldigung, wolltest Du noch was sagen?

00:49:06 LD:
Ja?

00:49:08 VMF:
Mit dem Berührungssinn, also über das hab ich auch viel nachgedacht… ich meine, Musik ist dann nochmal so ein ganz eigenes Thema, wann ist was Musik und so, überhaupt Klang und Stimme und so. Dass hat einfach eine andere Qualität … es hat so viel mit Raum zu tun, mit Raum, den man gemeinsam bespielt und ja auch mit Berührung, nicht? Es ist ja eigentlich auch Berührung.

00:49:43 LD:
Musik ist Berührung. Musik berührt ja auch.

00:49:44 VMF:
Ja, ja, berührt und berührt, rein physisch und aber natürlich dann auch anders. Und das Visuelle braucht die Distanz eigentlich, nicht? Damit Du… ja.

00:50:03 LD:
Aber es braucht einfach die… genau. Die Resonanz. Und ich find, das merkt man ja auch in Begegnungen. Du merkst sofort oder relativ schnell, geht ein Mensch mit Dir in Resonanz oder nicht.

Und wie gesagt, die Musik ist ein ganz eigenes Thema. Großes, wichtiges Thema für mich, weil ich glaube,

I also think in those kinds of settings – whether you’re holding a workshop, or being with young people, or wherever encounter happens – when you come into a room, it’s always good to have a plan. But then to throw it out in the situation, to say: no, right now what’s needed is this. That’s exactly what Maurice Willems, the man I mentioned earlier, does. Of course, he has tons of training, he’s a psychologist, he works with voice and music and all that. But then he just looks, because it depends on the people: what does the situation need right now?

And that’s really my way of working too. I keep something in the back of my mind, but on site… I don’t have to stick to my plan, because then I’d be focused only on myself again. Instead, it takes courage to say: I’ll improvise now. I’ll go with my feeling. And if something resonates, then it’s right. And I notice it in my body – like when I get goosebumps.

When you can tune into the kids in the clay studio – when you really look closely – just like in the “Ocean”: if they don’t need you, you step back; if they do need you, you’re there. I think it’s the same in the “Animated Film Studio” – I haven’t dared try that yet – but I think the important thing is: what does the group create? That’s why you need someone to lead it, to say: hey, you’re a group, and as a group you have an hour and a half to create something creative together. So the togetherness is so important, and you need someone to provide the inputs that are needed. You need a feel for people.

00:49:03 VMF:
I really liked that, what you said about touch… Sorry, did you want to add something?

00:49:06 LD:
Yes?

00:49:08 VMF:
About touch. I’ve thought about that a lot too… I mean, music is again its own big topic – when something becomes music, sound, voice. It just has another quality. It has so much to do with space, with shared space that you inhabit together. And also with touch, right? Music is actually also touch.

00:49:43 LD:
Music is touch. Music touches you too.

00:49:44 VMF:
Yes, yes – touches you physically, but of course also otherwise. Whereas the visual actually needs distance, doesn’t it? To… yeah.

00:50:03 LD:
But what you need is… exactly. Resonance. And I think you also notice that in encounters. You notice immediately, or fairly quickly, whether someone resonates with you or not.

And as I said, music is its own huge topic. Very important to me. Because I don’t think there’s a person who isn’t moved by music. You don’t need language for music. If you have profes sional jazz musicians, they can meet, each speaking a different language, and they don’t need to agree on anything. They just play a song that exists, a jazz standard – Fly Me to the Moon, whatever. Everyone has their own space to solo, to be free. You have the shared framework, and you simply listen to each other. And that’s it. And it’s wonderful. That’s what I love so much about jazz – that you have that freedom, but also the framework. That’s when my heart just opens up.

es gibt keinen Menschen, den Musik kalt lässt. Du brauchst keine Sprache für Musik, weil wenn du Profimusiker hast, im Jazzbereich, dann könnten die Leute sich treffen, jeder spricht eine andere Sprache, Du musst dir nicht ausmachen, wie du was machst, sondern du spielst einfach miteinander ein Lied, das es halt gibt, einen Jazz-Standard, Fly me to the Moon, was auch immer. Jeder hat seinen eigenen Raum, um zu solieren, um frei zu sein. Du hast das Grundgerüst gemeinsam und du hörst einfach aufeinander und that's it und es ist herrlich. Das ist es. Das ist das, was ich im Jazz so liebe, dass du quasi den Freiraum hast. Aber trotzdem ein Grundgerüst. Das ist halt, da geht mir das Herz auf.

00:51:34 VMF:
Ja, das ist eigentlich ein super Bild für das, was wir in diesem Workshop machen. Dass wir eben wirklich so ein Gerüst haben, eine gemeinsame Basis. Und dann hat irgendwo in diesem gemeinsamen Raum jeder seinen Raum, seine Möglichkeiten, um mit den anderen irgendwie...

00:51:57 LD:
Das bringt mich jetzt wieder zu dem, was du zuerst gesagt hast... also wie gesagt, wahrscheinlich ist Kunst immer autobiografisch. Und das ist ja okay. Aber es ist halt dann auch... wie ist es im Miteinander. Also rein egozentrische Kunst ... ja, aber dann schon zu schauen, was macht es mit dem anderen oder die Beziehung ist einfach das Um und Auf finde ich. Also es gibt ja oft so Musiker, die irrsinnig gut sind in irgendwas. Und das kenne ich durchaus so, ich hau dir das jetzt hin, das ist meins und du bist das Publikum und du musst das jetzt schlucken. Ähm, turnt mich nicht so an, weil ich mir dann denke, ok, aber ist doch viel schöner, wir atmen gemeinsam und wir sagen, da geht es miteinander. Es ist ja ein gemeinsamer Abend. Wenn ich auf einer Bühne bin, bin ich trotzdem nicht allein. Ich mache es ja für euch, möchte euch ja eigentlich nicht „aussi-spielen", sondern ich möchte, dass wir miteinander einen schönen Abend haben. Und in Resonanz gehen mit euch. Oder auch fragen: Geht's euch eh gut? Passt euch das eh? Nicht irgendwem etwas aufdrucken.

00:53:24 VMF:
Ja eben, wenn es darum geht, warum man das macht, greift irgendwie das „gesehen werden" ein bisschen kurz. Vielleicht ist es näher dran, wenn man sagt: die eigene Resonanz spüren oder so. Oder eine Resonanz in Schwingung bringen...

00:53:53 LD:
Ja genau, einen Raum gefüllt mit Menschen ins Schwingen bringen. Weil es hat ja genauso eine Qualität, was zu geben, was zu erzählen, durch ein Instrument oder mit der Stimme wie auch qualitatives Zuhören.

00:54:14 VMF:
Ja, also Resonanz bedeutet ja: Du schickst was aus und es kommt irgendwie transformiert zu dir zurück, du bekommst irgendwas anderes zurück, was du auch nicht vorhersehen kannst. Also ich habe das gleiche Thema: Wenn mich jemand fragt, was ich mache oder wer ich bin, weiß ich immer noch nicht, was ich sagen soll. Dieses „Ich bin Künstlerin"... Es ist halt so ein dehnbarer Begriff. Aber es gibt so viele Dinge, die sich unter diesem Begriff versammeln, mit denen ich überhaupt nichts zu tun haben will. Und ich habe ein totales Thema, weil ich bin überhaupt kein Bühnenmensch.

Also gerade bei diesen Schulklassen-Projekten zum Beispiel habe ich immer gemerkt: Ich habe schon den Wunsch, dass gesehen wird, dass das toll ist, was da passiert. Und da ist natürlich auch der Wunsch mit

00:51:34 VMF:
Yes, that's actually a perfect image for what we do in this workshop. That we really have this structure, a shared base. And then within this shared space, everyone has their own space, their own possibilities, to...

00:51:57 LD:
That brings me back to what you said earlier... like I said, art is probably always autobiographical. And that's fine. But the question is also: how does it work in togetherness? Purely egocentric art... sure. But then to also ask: what does it do to the other person? For me, relationship is the be-all and end-all. There are often musicians who are insanely good at something. And I've definitely experienced that: they throw it at you – "this is mine" – and you're the audience, and you have to swallow it. That doesn't really turn me on, because I think: okay, but isn't it so much nicer if we breathe together, if we say: this is about togetherness. It's a shared evening. When I'm on stage, I'm still not alone. I'm doing it for you, I don't want to just "play at you," I want us to have a beautiful evening together. To resonate with you. Or even to ask: are you doing okay? Does this work for you? Not just impose something on someone.

00:53:24 VMF:
Exactly. So when it comes to why we do it, "being seen" seems a bit too short. Maybe it's closer to say: feeling your own resonance. Or bringing something into resonance, into vibration...

00:53:53 LD:
Yes exactly – to set a room full of people vibrating. Because it has the same quality – whether you're giving something, telling something, through an instrument or through the voice – as listening with real quality.

00:54:14 VMF:
Yes, so resonance really means: you send something out, and it somehow comes back to you transformed – you get something else back that you couldn't have predicted. I've got the same issue: when someone asks me what I do or who I am, I still don't know what to say. This "I'm an artist"... it's such a stretchy word. And there are so many things that gather under that word that I don't want to have anything to do with. And I have a real hang-up, because I'm not a stage person at all.

Especially with those school class projects, for example, I always noticed: I do want what happens there to be seen, for it to be seen as something great. And of course that includes the wish to be seen myself. But at the same time I had this picture of myself that what I really had to do was prepare the stage for the young people to shine, and I realized at some point: I'm hiding behind the kids.

drin, dass ich gern gesehen werden möchte. Aber gleichzeitig habe ich dieses Bild von mir, dass ich vor allem die Bühne immer noch toller bereiten muss für die Jugendlichen und hab dann irgendwann gemerkt: Ich verstecke mich hinter den Kindern.

Und jetzt gerade mit L. hab ich gesehen: Es funktioniert am besten, wenn ich aus der Deckung gehe und wenn irgendwie ganz klar ist, ich gebe auch was rein und das ist total okay. Also es ist kein schlechterer Kinder-Workshop, wenn von mir auch ein Input passiert, sondern im Gegenteil, es ist eigentlich erst dann wirklich auf Augenhöhe, wenn ich sag: Schau, ich öffne mich, ich gebe dir was. Was machst du jetzt damit? Und dann natürlich sehen, was er dann macht oder ob dann diese Resonanz passiert...

00:56:48 LD:
Das erinnert mich gerade auch wieder an eine Impro Übung, wo es darum geht: Ich gebe dir ein Angebot und du sagst mal Impro-Regel: „ja ja“ dazu und dann kann das weitergehen mit: „Ja und.“ Und ich gib was von mir dazu. Und dann steigt der andere wieder drauf ein.

Das, was mir zuerst in den Kopf gekommen ist, ist dieses Koexistieren. Ich hab auch lange geglaubt, ich muss mich entscheiden: Will ich jetzt Jazz singen oder will ich ein Clown sein, bis ich gemerkt habt, ich habe genau diese Bandbreite. Es kann zwar manchmal schlimm sein, wie heißt das, himmelhochjauchzend, zu Tode betrübt. Das habe ich auch. Aber ich darf ein Clown und eine Jazz-Diva sein.

Und genauso denk ich, ist es auch legitim zu sagen: Ich muss da nicht auf der Bühne stehen, aber ich zieh Fäden im Hintergrund. Es ist meine Arbeit essenziell und wird auch gesehen, genauso wie es okay ist zu sagen: und ich stehe gern auf der Bühne oder auch: ich war jetzt ewig im Hintergrund. Ich will den Mut aufbringen, jetzt selber auf die Bühne zu gehen. Also, das hat alles seine Berechtigung und hängt glaube ich schon auch wieder mit den eigenen Geschichten zusammen. Was hat man erlebt und was ist...

00:58:17 VMF:
Ja, aber... quasi nur die Fäden im Hintergrund zu ziehen... also wenn es wirklich um eine Begegnung geht, dann funktioniert das glaube ich nicht. Also das heißt nicht, dass du dich unbedingt auf die Bühne stellen musst. Du musst einfach von dir was reingeben...

00:58:44 LD:
Genau, also da finde ich es wiederum wichtig, auch wenn viele Leute dieses Wort nicht mögen, ich mag‘s: Authentisch sein. Also du siehst Künstler auf der Bühne, die technisch der Hammer sind oder eben ein Kunstwerk, das toll gemacht ist, aber es berührt dich nicht. Und mir ist lieber, es singt wer technisch net super, aber ich hab Tränen in den Augen, als es ist top gemacht und lässt mich kalt. Und natürlich, wenn ich jetzt zu einem alten Menschen geh auf der Geriatrie, der nicht mehr spricht, dann komm ich mit was von mir, zum Beispiel mit einem Kinderlied, kommt ein Vogel geflogen, und begib mich mal quasi auf die Höhe, dass mich der Mensch vielleicht wahrnimmt, dass ich in das Blickfeld von den Menschen komme und fange das zu singen an, da bring ich was mit. Und dann merke ich, dass der Mensch plötzlich wacher wird und vielleicht sogar anfängt, mit mir mitzusingen. Dann bringt der was ein und ich hinterlass eine Lebensfreude oder eine schöne Erinnerung oder eben ein Berührt-sein, eine Aktivierung. Oder aber ein Bedürfnis wird gestillt, ja.

01:00:18 VMF:
Ja eine Berührung.

And just recently with L. I saw: it works best when I come out from hiding, when it’s clear that I also put something in, and that that’s totally okay. A workshop with kids isn’t worse if I also contribute something – on the contrary, it only really becomes an equal exchange when I say: look, I’ll open up, I’ll give you something. What do you do with it? And then of course, seeing what he does, or whether that resonance happens...

00:56:48 LD:
That reminds me of an improv exercise, where it’s about: I give you an offer, and the rule of improv is you say “yes, yes” to it. And then it can go on with “yes, and...” And then I add something from myself. And then the other person picks up on it again.

What first came to mind for me was coexistence. I also long thought I had to decide: do I want to sing jazz or do I want to be a clown? Until I realized: I have exactly this range. It can sometimes be extreme – what do you call it? Ecstatic joy to deep despair. I have that too. But I’m allowed to be a clown and a jazz diva.

And just as much, I think it’s legitimate to say: I don’t need to be on stage, I can pull the strings in the background. That work is essential too, and it’s seen. Just as much as it’s okay to say: I enjoy being on stage. Or: I’ve been in the background forever, now I want the courage to step onto the stage myself. All of it is valid, and I think it’s always tied to your own story. What you’ve experienced and what...

00:58:17 VMF:
Yes, but... only pulling the strings in the background – if it’s really about an encounter, then I don’t think it works. That doesn’t mean you have to stand on a stage. But you do have to put something of yourself into it...

00:58:44 LD:
Exactly. And that’s why I think it’s so important – even though many people don’t like the word, I do: to be authentic. You see artists on stage who are technically brilliant, or an artwork that’s wonderfully executed – but it doesn’t move you. And I’d much rather hear someone sing who’s not technically perfect but brings me to tears, than something flawless that leaves me cold. And of course, when I go to an elderly person in geriatrics who no longer speaks, then I bring something from myself – for example a children’s song, Kommt ein Vogel geflogen – and I lower myself, so to speak, to their level, to where they might notice me, where I come into their field of vision, and I start singing. I bring something. And then I notice the person suddenly becoming more awake, maybe even starting to sing along. Then they contribute something, and I leave behind joy, or a beautiful memory, or simply the feeling of being touched, being activated. Or maybe a need is met, yes.

01:00:18 VMF:
Yes – a touch.

01:00:21 LD:
Es geht um Geben und Nehmen. Und in der Kunst find ich genauso. Mit Menschen sowieso.

01:00:32 VMF:
Ja und das... also ich meine, du hast die Alten und die Kinder vor allem, weil das ist auch so was, wo ich mich selber immer wieder frag so: warum eigentlich? Wieso immer mit den Kindern? Also ich habe dann immer Angst, dass es nur aus einer letztlich... weil es einfacher ist. Die Kinder können nicht davon – wenn ich in die Schulklasse gebucht werde, dann müssen die da sitzen.

01:01:10 LD:
Sie kommen nicht aus!

01:01:15 VMF:
Wenn ich sage, ich biete für Erwachsene was an, da muss ich mich dem aussetzen. Dann müssen die das wollen. Und gleichzeitig ... also ich mag ja auch die Challenge, jemandem zu begegnen, der vielleicht am Anfang skeptisch ist. Und dann merkt man irgendwie, man macht eine Tür auf und auf einmal ist es total super. Aber abgesehen davon, dass einem die Kinder nicht so auskommen, frage ich mich schon auch immer wieder: Was ist denn ...warum eigentlich?

01:02:06 LD:
Ich kann das voll gut nachvollziehen. Ich finde es auch mitunter einfacher. Wobei es ja oft heißt Kinder und alte Leute.... also Kinder sind oft ein kritisches Publikum, weil sie so ehrlich sind und weil sie auch sagen: Das ist scheiße, was du machst! Was ein Erwachsener vielleicht nicht so macht. Und ich kenn‘s wiederum auch von Kollegen, bei der Tonfeldausbildung, anders, die sagen: Ich trau mich nicht mit Kindern, ich fang zuerst an mit Erwachsenen. Ich würde eher sagen, Kinder sind glaube ich für mich viel einfacher als Erwachsene, weil bei Erwachsenen, weiß ich nicht, kommt vielleicht viel eher ein Konkurrenz-Ding dazwischen, oder eine Mangelerscheinung, die man selber hat, was weiß ich. Wobei wie gesagt, ich finde Jugendliche genial, genauso wie Gleichaltrige. Aber es ist durchaus spannend, oder? Das zu reflektieren ist sicher auch...

01:03:08 VMF:
...was denn halt der Unterschied ist, nicht?

01:03:11 LD:
Hmm. Der Zugang ist oft schon ein anderer. Auch jetzt als CliniClown bei Kindern hat‘s eine andere Energie als bei den alten Leuten. Es geht um was anderes. Da geht es um ... um diese magischen Momente, wo dann gezaubert wird oder einfach Blödsinn gemacht. Und bei den alten Leuten geht‘s oft um Berührung, um ein Lied eben oder ... aber ich finde beides ziemlich toll. Und was auch eben so schön ist, ist die Mischung ... das hab ich im Kindermuseum genauso wie als CliniClown. Die Mischung zwischen was Sozialem und was Künstlerischem. Als CliniClown bin ich kein Bühnen-Clown, der jetzt sagt: Ich spiel euch heute ein Stück. Sondern ich muss mich auf die Situation und auf das Gegenüber einlassen. Und das ist befriedigend.

01:04:09 VMF:
Was auch überhaupt nicht im Widerspruch steht. Ich empfinde eigentlich eben diese Begegnungen als die urkünstlerischen Prozesse. Genau, das war das, wo ich vorher angesetzt hab und wir dann irgendwo anders abgebogen sind, aber weil wir es so von Empathie hatten: ich habe das Gefühl, es ist so eine eigene... auch jetzt wieder, in Ermangelung einer besseren Vokabel, so eine Art künstlerische Empathie, die irgendwie noch mal anders funktioniert, weil du zum Beispiel ... um so zu arbeiten, wie wir arbeiten, musst du auf eine

01:00:21 LD:
It’s about give and take. And in art, just the same. And with people in general, anyway.

01:00:32 VMF:
Yes, and that... I mean, you have the elderly and the children especially, and I keep asking myself: why, actually? Why always children? I’m always a bit afraid that in the end it’s just because... it’s easier. Children can’t leave. If I’m booked for a school class, then they have to sit there.

01:01:10 LD:
They can’t escape!

01:01:15 VMF:
If I say I’m offering something for adults, then I have to face that. Then they have to want it. And at the same time... I actually like that challenge of meeting someone who might be skeptical at first. And then you see a door open, and suddenly it’s wonderful. But apart from the fact that kids can’t just walk out, I keep asking myself: what is it really – why, actually?

01:02:06 LD:
I totally get that. I also find it sometimes easier. Although they often say: children and elderly people... kids are often a very critical audience, because they’re so honest, and they’ll also say: “what you’re doing is crap!” Something an adult might not say. And then I also know colleagues – in the clay field training, for example – who say: I don’t dare work with kids, I’ll start with adults. I’d actually say children are much easier for me than adults, because with adults... I don’t know, maybe there’s more competition involved, or some sense of lack you bump into, who knows. Although, like I said, I think teenagers are brilliant, and people my own age too. But it’s definitely interesting, isn’t it? To reflect on that, too...

01:03:08 VMF:
...what the difference really is, right?

01:03:11 LD:
Hmm. The approach is often different. As a CliniClown with kids, it has a different energy than with the elderly. It’s about different things. With kids, it’s about magical moments, conjuring, or just being silly. And with the elderly it’s often about touch, or a song. But I think both are wonderful. And what’s also so beautiful is the mixture. I have that at the Children‘s Museum as much as as a CliniClown. The mix between something social and something artistic. As a CliniClown I’m not a stage clown who says: I’ll perform a piece for you today. Instead, I have to respond to the situation and to the person in front of me. And that’s fulfilling.

01:04:09 VMF:
Which is not at all contradictory. I actually feel these encounters are the most original artistic processes. That’s what I was getting at earlier, before we veered off elsewhere. Because when we were talking about empathy: I feel there’s this... lacking a better word... some kind of artistic empathy, which works a bit differently. Because in order to work the way we do, you need to know your medium – whether that’s music, clay, filmmaking, the camera – your tool, in a way, much more deeply than if you were “just” using it for your own art. Because you’re thinking it through someone else, in a sense.

ganz bestimmte Art irgendwie dein Medium, egal ob das dann Musik ist oder der Ton oder Film machen, die Kamera, also auch das Werkzeug quasi, ja irgendwie auf eine Art noch viel besser kennen, als wenn du jetzt unter Anführungszeichen „nur“ das für deine Kunst verwendest, weil du es so wie durch jemand anderen denkst.

Also letzthin habe ich einen Video-Workshop gemacht, der mir irrsinnig getaugt hat. Das war relativ spontan... also es hat dann total schön ineinandergegriffen: die hatten eigentlich einen Tanz-Workshop für Schülerinnen, also Jugendliche. Also es gab wirklich Tanz als Unterrichtsfach und die waren quasi schon so ein bisschen drin, hatten schon einen Tag gearbeitet und haben so Übungen gemacht, wie z.B.: Es sind alle in einer Art Freeze und eine ist irgendwie unterwegs und bewegt sich da durch, tanzt und dockt dann an eine andere an. Und die geht dann los.

Mein Job wäre eigentlich gewesen, das halt irgendwie zu dokumentieren. Dann haben wir aber – und das war so cool – dann haben wir die Kamera in die Übung total eingebaut und es hat dann quasi die, die sich bewegt hat, immer auch die Kamera bewegt, mit der Kamera getanzt, dann die Kamera übergeben und damit die Bewegung übergeben. Das war so schön und hochkonzentriert! Auch das Film-Produkt, das da rausgekommen ist, war cool und war wirklich eine Dokumentation von dem, was da passiert ist.

01:07:25 LD:
Urschön.

01:07:27 VMF:
Und da habe ich irgendwie in dem Moment schon gedacht, ich weiß genau... also weil ich hatte meine große Spiegelreflex dabei und habe die dann, bevor wir das gemacht haben, einmal im Kreis durchgegeben, so dass sie wussten: Wie schwer ist die und wie fühlt sich das ... und ich habe mir überlegt: was stelle ich jetzt ein? Wieviel erkläre ich ihnen? Was sage ich ihnen nicht? Und das sind alles so Sachen, wo ich mir denke, das ist so ein... wenn du halt an so was dran gehst mit so einem: ja das, was die Kinder machen, die Kinder spielen im Ton, die Kinder tun ja eh nur gatschen, das kann ja jeder irgendwie, dann bekommst du halt diese Qualität nicht. Und das ist aber was, was auf den ersten Blick gar nicht unbedingt sichtbar wird.

01:08:29 LD:
Aber hast du das, wie du dorthin gefahren bist, hast du das schon im Hinterkopf gehabt oder ist es dir dort gekommen, dass das möglich wäre?

01:08:39 VMF:
Na das war dort, ja.

01:08:40 LD:
Aber das ist ja auch – sich total darauf einstellen: Was ist da möglich? Wo sind meine Möglichkeiten? Und es geht total um Resonanz... also ja, da krieg ich auch die Gänslhaut.

01:08:55 VMF:
Also ich meine, da war es einfach so, ich habe die Schule schon gekannt, ich hatte mit denen schon mal gearbeitet. Also nicht mit den Schülerinnen, aber mit einer Lehrerin. Es war okay bezahlt, aber im Vergleich zu dem Projekt vorher gab‘s ein bisschen weniger Geld, wobei ich mich bei dem ersten Projekt um das Geld selber gekümmert hatte. Beim zweiten Projekt haben sie mich gebucht, hatten selber das Geld aufgestellt. Damit war ich drei Tage bezahlt und dann hab‘ ich gesagt, ich mache diese drei Tage und ich versuch einfach das zu machen, was da geht und das nicht irgendwie ausufern zu lassen. Aber ich habe gemerkt, ich kann da halt einfach zurückgreifen auf...

Like recently I did a video workshop that I absolutely loved. It was pretty spontaneous. And it all came together beautifully: they actually had a dance workshop for students, teenagers. Dance was even an actual subject there, so they already had one day of work, and they were doing exercises like: everyone freezes in a pose, and one person moves through, dancing, and then connects with another, and then that person starts moving, and so on.

My job was actually to just document it. But then – we did something so cool – we integrated the camera completely into the exercise. So the one who was moving also moved the camera, danced with the camera, then handed over the camera, passing on the movement. It was so beautiful and so focused! And even the film that came out of it was great, really a documentation of what had happened there.

01:07:25 LD:
So beautiful.

01:07:27 VMF:
And in that moment I thought: I know exactly... because I had my big SLR camera with me, and before we started, I passed it around the circle so everyone could feel: how heavy is it, what does it feel like. And I thought: what do I set? How much do I explain to them? What don’t I tell them? And those are all the kinds of things where I think: if you go in with the attitude “well, the kids are just messing around in clay, just splashing mud around, anyone can do that,” then you don’t get that quality. But that’s something that’s not immediately visible on the surface.

01:08:29 LD:
But when you were on your way there – did you already have that idea in mind? Or did it only come to you on site, that it could be possible?

01:08:39 VMF:
No, that came on site, yeah.

01:08:40 LD:
But that’s exactly it – totally tuning in: what’s possible here? Where are my possibilities? It’s all about resonance. Yes... I get goosebumps.

01:08:55 VMF:
And I mean, in this case I already knew the school, I’d worked with them before. Not with those students, but with one of the teachers. It was okay paid, but compared to the project before, a bit less. In the first project I’d organized the funding myself, in the second they booked me, had raised the money themselves. So I was paid for three days, and I said: okay, I’ll do these three days, I’ll just try to do whatever is possible here, without letting it get out of hand. But I realized: I can draw on...

01:09:57 LD:
... auch auf deine Ressourcen, oder?

01:09:59 VMF:
Genau.

01:10:02 LD:
Voll schön, ja. Aber das finde ich, darin liegt die Kunst.

01:10:05 VMF:
Genau, genau. Ja.

01:10:07 LD:
Absolut. Und da braucht‘s einfach genau dieses... dieses zwischen den Zeilen und dieses G‘spür für den Moment, für die Situation, für die Menschen und für die Möglichkeit. Irgendwie.

01:10:25 VMF:
Ja.

01:10:28 LD:
Und das ist auch so schön, um wieder zurückzukommen zum Tonfeld: Diese Tonfeld-Sprache ist sehr besonders ... also am Tonfeld kommst du dir zu. Also was verstehst du darunter... es zeigt sich am Tonfeld immer die Bedingung. Es zeigt sich ... wie soll ich das sagen... deine Themen, deine Blockaden, da wo du steckst vielleicht. Und in jedem Gestaltkreis zeigt sich aber auch die Möglichkeit und du gehst immer wieder... diese Bewegung hast du nämlich lustigerweise zuerst auch gemacht. Du gehst schon immer wieder zurück zu deiner Bedingung, aber du kommst immer mehr in deine Möglichkeit und irgendwann, du kannst es auch Blockaden nennen, aber irgendwas hält dich ja manchmal.

Aber das ist überhaupt auch mein Ziel, noch viel mehr in meine Möglichkeiten zu kommen und eben dann auch mit dem Potential, das ich hab, weiterzugehen, um Bereicherung herzustellen. Für mich und für andere. Und es ist urschön, wenn sich Möglichkeiten zeigen und du diese Möglichkeiten dann auch aufgreifen kannst. So wie es du da gemacht hast beim Tanzen. Ah, es ist eine Möglichkeit, da die Kamera mittanzen zu lassen mit den Menschen. Wie geil ist das? Aber es wäre nicht passiert, wenn du nicht die Möglichkeit gesehen hättest und auch nicht, wenn die Menschen da gesagt hätten: Na das können wir nicht... also irgendwie schon cool.

01:12:20 VMF:
Ja fein.

01:12:31 LD:
Schön. Haben wir eh viel g‘redt.

01:12:32 LD:
Ja.

01:12:32 LD:
Voll.

01:12:32 VMF:
Ja voll schön, also es ist auf jeden Fall... ich mein, man kann immer noch ewig weiterreden.

01:12:32 LD:
Man kann noch ewig weiterreden, ja. Mir war wichtig, dass die Empathie drin ist. Und ich glaube eh, ich glaube, es ist ganz viel drinnen.

01:12:40 VMF:
Ja. Das glaub ich auch.

01:12:42 LD:
Von dem, was mir jetzt auch wichtig ist oder worum es

01:09:57 LD:
...also on your resources, right?

01:09:59 VMF:
Exactly.

01:10:02 LD:
So beautiful, yes. But I think that’s where the art lies.

01:10:05 VMF:
Exactly, exactly. Yes.

01:10:07 LD:
Absolutely. And it needs exactly that – reading between the lines, the sense for the moment, the situation, the people, and the possibilities. Somehow.

01:10:25 VMF:
Yes.

01:10:28 LD:
And that’s also what’s so beautiful, to circle back to the clay field: the language of the clay field is very special. In the clay field, you come closer to yourself. What that means is – it always reveals your condition. It shows your themes, your blockages, where you’re stuck maybe. And in every “Gestalt circle,” the possibility is revealed as well. And you keep going back to your condition – you even made that movement earlier, funnily enough. You keep returning to your condition, but you come more and more into your possibility. And at some point – you can call them blockages, but something’s holding you.

And that’s really my goal: to move more and more into my possibilities, and to carry forward the potential I have, to create enrichment. For myself and for others. And it’s so beautiful when possibilities show themselves and you can pick them up. Just like you did there with the dancing: oh, there’s the possibility of letting the camera dance with the people. How amazing is that? But it wouldn’t have happened if you hadn’t seen the possibility. And also not if the people there hadn’t said: yeah, we can do this. So – it’s really cool.

01:12:20 VMF:
Yes, lovely.

01:12:31 LD:
Beautiful. We’ve talked a lot, haven’t we?

01:12:32 LD:
Yes.

01:12:32 LD:
Totally.

01:12:32 VMF:
Yes, really lovely. I mean, of course you could just keep talking forever.

01:12:32 LD:
You really could keep talking forever, yes. What was important to me was that empathy was in there. And I think it is. I think it’s very much in there.

01:12:40 VMF:
Yes. I think so too.

01:12:42 LD:
From what matters to me now, or what it’s all about – it’s in there.

geht. Eigentlich drin.
01:12:48 VMF:
Danke dir!

01:12:49 LD:
Danke dir. Und schön.

00:00:03 VMF:
Ich mach‘s nochmal an.

00:00:03 LD:
Ok. Also weil wir auch eben… es sind immer alles Reisen, ja, also oft so wenn ich sag: was hast du für eine Erwartung bei einem Workshop? Beim Clown-Workshop oder… ich habe mir gedacht, ich möchte einfach eine Reise machen und durchs Reisen wiederum, wenn du offen reist… das was du auch ein paarmal gesagt hast: wenn ich was von mir gib, da hast du die schönsten Begegnungen.

Also ich liebe es einfach auch, andere Kulturen kennenzulernen und zu reisen. Das ist auch noch was, was ich unbedingt machen möcht. Viel, viel noch bereisen, auch wenn man nicht zu viel fliegen sollte, um diesen Planeten zu schützen.

Und zugleich war die Geburt von der Ava die volle Reise. Und lustigerweise war die Geburt von der Ava sehr nah an dem Tod dran von meiner Großmutter. Und das waren beides eigentlich die stärksten Erlebnisse in meinem Leben. Dieses ich begleite meine Großmutter beim Sterben und erfasse den Tod…

00:01:07 VMF:
Warst du dabei?

00:01:08 LD:
Ich war dabei und wir haben uns das auch ausgemacht. Also meine Großmutter war auch – das ist diese Family-Seite – ein ziemlich traumatisierter Mensch. Das wurde brav weitergegeben. Und sie hatte – was total spannend ist – sie hatte ein Jahr bevor sie gestorben ist, eine Wesensaufleuchtung. Durch die CliniClowns haben wir ja immer wieder Seminare über den Tod. Sterbebegleitung ist auch noch was, was auf meiner Liste steht. Das möchte ich unbedingt noch machen. Und das war so, dass sie ein hohes Fieber gehabt hat. Und ich habe da schon eine Nacht bei ihr am Bett so gehangen, meine Schwester dann gesagt: Ich glaube du hast ein Kilo abgenommen in der Nacht, du bist schlanker worden. Und plötzlich war ihr Fieber weg und sie war ein anderer Mensch. Und es war kein Hirngespinst, jeder Pflegerin ist es aufgefallen. Meine Großmutter hat für drei Wochen anders gesprochen. Die ist aus Oberösterreich, aus Linz und hat einfach Oberösterreichisch gesprochen, und sie hat dann drei Wochen nach diesem hohen Fieber Hochdeutsch gesprochen. Und es ist ihr selbst aufgefallen, sie hat dann immer gesagt: Warum spreche ich denn jetzt so außergewöhnlich? Ich hab doch nie so gesprochen. Und es war alles… meine Großmutter war ein verbitterter, kleinkarierter Mensch, nur Äußerlichkeiten zählen. Wie‘s dir drinnen geht, das ist wurscht. Nur feine Dame nach außen hin. Und mein Großvater war… ja da gibt‘s noch so viel zum erzählen! Whatever. Er war jüdisch und hat sein Leben lang seine Identität verleugnet, weil er beim ORF war, der erste Kameramann Oberösterreichs. Und sie war die Frau Mühlberger, die vom Reporter, vom Kameramann die Frau und außen hui, wie es innen ausgeschaut hat, war wurscht.

Gut, und dann hat sie drei Wochen Hochdeutsch gesprochen und war nicht mehr der Charakter, der sie ihr Leben lang war, sondern war plötzlich: es ist alles wunderbar, hörst du die Engel singen, und es war alles in der Liebe. Und nach drei Wochen war das aber auch wieder vorbei und sie war wieder ihr alter Charakter. Und ich habe mir dann gedacht: Bitte, was war das?

01:12:48 VMF:
Thank you!

01:12:49 LD:
Thank you. Beautiful.

00:00:03 VMF:
I’ll start it up again.

00:00:03 LD:
Okay. Because – well, it’s always journeys, right? Often when I ask: what do you expect from a workshop, a clown workshop or… I thought to myself, I just want to take a journey. And when you travel openly – you said that yourself a few times – when I give something of myself, that’s when you have the most beautiful encounters.

I simply love discovering other cultures and traveling. That’s still something I want to do a lot more of, even if you shouldn’t fly too much, to protect the planet.

And at the same time, Ava’s birth was the ultimate journey. And funnily enough, Ava’s birth happened very close in time to my grandmother’s death. And those were really the two strongest experiences of my life: accompanying my grandmother as she died and grasping death…

00:01:07 VMF:
Were you there?

00:01:08 LD:
I was there, and we had agreed on that. My grandmother – this is that family side of things – was quite a traumatized person. That got passed along dutifully. And what was really fascinating: a year before she died, she had what I can only call a kind of inner illumination. Through the CliniClowns we often have seminars about death. End-of-life accompaniment is also something still on my list – I definitely want to do that. Anyway, she once had a very high fever. I spent a night at her bedside, and my sister even said: “I think you lost a kilo last night, you look thinner.” And suddenly the fever broke and she was a different person. And it wasn’t in my head – every nurse noticed it. For three weeks, my grandmother spoke differently. She was from Linz, Upper Austria, and always spoke dialect. And after that fever, for three weeks she spoke High German. She herself noticed and kept saying: “Why am I talking so strangely? I’ve never spoken like this.” And it wasn’t only the language – her whole being changed. My grandmother had always been bitter, small-minded, obsessed with appearances. How you felt inside didn’t matter. Only the fine lady façade for the outside world. My grandfather – there’s so much to tell there too – he was Jewish but denied his identity his whole life, because he worked at ORF, the first cameraman in Upper Austria. And she was Frau Mühlberger, the cameraman’s wife – shiny on the outside, inside it didn’t matter.

And then, for three weeks, she spoke High German and wasn’t the person she’d been her whole life. Suddenly she was: “Everything is wonderful, can you hear the angels sing?” Everything was love. And then, after three weeks, it was gone. She was back to her old self. I thought: what on earth was that? I later spoke with someone who had studied death for decades, and he said: “That exists. In English we call it “the shining”.” So beautiful. A kind of illumination of the true self. And I asked: “Does that mean, then, that through trauma and conditioning she lived something other than her true self?” And he said: “Yes. Traumatic events can keep you from really living your life.” And I think that’s the case for so many people.

Ich habe mich mit einem Menschen unterhalten, der sich jahrzehntelang mit dem Tod beschäftigt hat, der hat gesagt: Das gibt es. Das nennen Sie im Englischen „Shining“ – total schön – das ist quasi eine „Wesensaufleuchtung“, also eigentlich ihr wahres Wesen. Und ich hab dann gesagt: Ja aber kann ich dann davon ausgehen, dass durch Traumatisierungen, Prägungen und so weiter, sie was anderes gelebt hat? Ja. Also man kann davon ausgehen, dass Schicksalsschläge Traumatisierung bringen können, die dich einfach nicht dein Leben leben lassen. Und ich glaube, dass das ganz viele Menschen so haben.

Und dann war klar: Also wir haben das zwar nicht offen angesprochen, aber ich hab dann gesagt: Omi, wenn‘s einmal soweit ist, möchtest du, dass ich dich begleite so lange ich kann? Ja, und dann war es echt so: Eines Tages bin ich angerufen worden, da war One Billion Rising, ich wollte eigentlich zur Demo gehen, dann hat‘s geheißen: Bitte komm, die Omi spricht jetzt überhaupt nicht mehr. Da hab ich mich in den Zug gesetzt und bin nach Linz gefahren, also nach Perg, da war sie im Altersheim, wo meine Mama jetzt ist.

Und dann woa ma nu alle da und dann san die irgendwann um Achte auf‘d Nacht ganga und i bin dann dag‘sessn und i hob ihr was vorgsunga und i hab ihr durchaus Liada vorgsummt, die sie meiner Mama vorgsummt hat und hob mi no bedankt bei ihr. Das war total schee und respektvoll und irgendwann, i glaub es woa nach Mitternacht, gegen halb eins, hat‘s mi angschaut und i hab ihr no was vorgsummt und i hab sie berührt und es san ihr Tränen oba g‘runna. Und sie hat den letzten Atemzug gemacht und hat aufgehört zu atmen.

Und es war ein so ein schöner Moment und ich hab dann das Fenster aufgemacht und hab die Batterie aus der Uhr außa toa und hab dann schon der Schwester geläutet, weil ich mir gedacht hab, ok... und dann hab ich meine Schwester angerufen und hab dann noch ein ganz ein schönes Lied gespielt „Is scho still uman See“. Am nächsten Tag um acht Uhr in der Früh hab ich sie angekleidet und war mit den Leichenbestattern da. Und es war alles total respektvoll und es war am nächsten Tag ein kalter Körper. Also ich habe das einfach... ich hab den Tod wirklich begriffen dadurch. Und es war total friedvoll und schön und ich bin ihr so dankbar, dass ich sie da begleiten hab können.

Und lustigerweise war der Ava ihre Geburt, die quasi dahoam war, weil mir die Hebamme damals gesagt hat, heast, mechst du ned a Hausgeburt machen, weil du bist so im Vertrauen. Dein Körper ist bereit und dein Kind ist bereit und ich bin 27 Jahre Hebamme und ich seh bei dir eine Hausgeburt. Und das lustige war, wie sagt man das, weil mein Muttermund da auch schon offen war, die hat ja geglaubt, ich ruf ein paar Stunden später an, weil die Geburt schon losgeht – das passt nämlich jetzt auch noch dazu: Ich geh da raus bei ihr und denk mir: Sie hat gesagt: Du entscheidest das, bist angemeldet im Krankenhaus und ich denk mir dann so, boah, es macht ja nur frei. Ja logisch, Hausgeburt. Aber ich habe es eben nicht lang geplant. Das heißt, niemand hat mir sagen können: Bist du wahnsinnig, das kannst ja nicht machen, das ist viel zu gefährlich, sondern ich habe dann gesagt: Ja logisch, ich habe weder Bilder gesehen, ich hab mich weder in einem Krankenhaus gesehen, noch... und wenn die jetzt sagt, das ist... ja!

Und die Person, die ich unmittelbar darauf treffe, ist die Katharina aus dem Kindermuseum. Katharina Jäger und ich sag zu der Katharina: Du ich komm jetzt gerade von der Hebamme – ich war so rund. Und sag: Du, die hat jetzt gesagt: Hausgeburt und ich glaub ich mache eine Hausgeburt. Und die sagt: „Ja Mensch, logisch, Du. Ich meine, schau dich an. Du kannst doch

So it became clear between us – though we never said it outright – that when the time came, I would be with her. And one day I got the call. It was One Billion Rising, I had wanted to go to the demonstration, but they said: “Please come, grandma isn’t speaking at all anymore.” So I got on the train and went to Linz – well, Perg – where she was in the nursing home. The same one where my mom is now.

We were all there, but around eight in the evening everyone else left. I stayed. I sang to her, hummed songs she had once hummed to my mom, and I thanked her. It was so beautiful and respectful. And sometime after midnight, maybe around half past twelve, she looked at me, I hummed again, touched her, and tears rolled down her cheeks. She took her last breath and stopped breathing.

It was such a beautiful moment. I opened the window, took the battery out of the clock, rang for the nurse. Then I called my sister, and I played one more very beautiful song, “Is scho still uman See”. The next morning at eight I dressed her and was there with the undertakers. It was all deeply respectful. The next day she was a cold body. I truly understood death through that. It was so peaceful and beautiful, and I’m so grateful I could accompany her.

And funnily enough, Ava’s birth was also at home. The midwife said to me: “You know, why not do a home birth? You’re so trusting. Your body is ready, your baby is ready. I’ve been a midwife for 27 years and I see a home birth for you.” My cervix was already open, so she thought I’d call again in a few hours when it started. And this fits perfectly here: I left her office and thought: she said it’s my decision, I’m registered at the hospital, but – wow – it feels so freeing. Of course, a home birth! But I hadn’t planned it long in advance, so no one had the chance to tell me: “Are you crazy? You can’t do that, it’s way too dangerous.” Instead I just said: “Yes, of course.” I had no images of myself in a hospital, nothing like that. And if she said: “Yes” – then yes.

And the very next person I saw was Katharina from the Children‘s Museum – Katharina Jäger. And I told her: “I just came from the midwife, she said home birth, and I think I’ll do it.” And she said: “Yes, of course! Look at you. You could go into the woods and have your baby there.” And I thought: yes, perfect.

alleine in den Busch gehen und dort dein Kind kriegen.“ Und da hab ich mir dann gedacht, ja passt.

Also die Katharina war die erste, der ich das gesagt habe, und dann hab ich noch eine Freundin angerufen und dann hab ich eine Hausgeburt gemacht in zweieinhalb Stunden. Und es war intensiv, aber voller… wirklich. Ich war so bei mir. Mein Körper hat gewusst, was er zu tun hat und auch, wenn ich oft Probleme habe oder auch gehabt habe mit meinem Körper, weil er einfach zu viel Gewicht hat und ich zu rund bin, hab ich mir dann gedacht, der hat genau gewusst, was er machen muss. Und es war genug Vertrauen da, es war so a g‘mahde Wiesn. Einfach echt ein schönes Erlebnis.

Es waren nur Frauen da und wir haben dann Hendlsupp‘n gekocht und … dann war da plötzlich dieses Kind und es ist… es waren heilige Momente und das war ein heiliger Moment, wie die Oma gestorben ist und es war ein heiliger Moment wie die Ava gekommen ist und es gibt auch eben im Zwischenmenschlichen bei einem CliniClown Einsatz … da nenn ich‘s magische Momente oder mit Kindern im Kindermuseum, ja… wenn ich nicht sagen will heilige Momente, da ist Magie. Das ist einfach total cool. Genau. Das wollte ich jetzt noch sagen.

00:08:24 VMF:
Danke!

00:08:25 LD:
Gerne.

Lucia Derndorfer, geb. 1981 in Linz, lebt und arbeitet in Wien. Seit Mai 2014 ist sie Mama und arbeitet seit vielen Jahren in unterschiedlichen Rollen/Funktionen mit Kindern zusammen: als CliniClownin, Sängerin, Mitarbeiterin im ZOOM Kindermuseum und als Vorstandsmitglied bei sowieso! (Inklusive Kunstworkshops für Kinder). Neben ihrem musikalischen Schaffen – im Jazz-Duo und -Trio in diversen Formationen – sammelte sie Berufserfahrung mit Kindern als Pädagogin, Erzählerin, Clownin, Kultur- und Kunstvermittlerin sowie als Workshopleiterin. Da ihr auch die ältere Generation sehr am Herzen liegt, besucht sie als CliniClownin vor allem Geriatriestationen in Pflegeheimen. Ihre Leidenschaften sind Menschen von 0 bis 100 Jahren und darüber hinaus. Musik – vor allem Jazz – sowie Theater, Tanz und Performance.

Ausbildungen:
- **BBA für Kindergartenpädagogik in Linz**
- **Studium der Theater-, Film- und Medienwissenschaft sowie Pädagogik an der Universität Wien**
- **Diplom für Jazzgesang am Gustav-Mahler-Konservatorium Wien**
- **Aus- und kontinuierliche Weiterbildung bei CliniClowns Austria (Körper-, Stimm-, Tanz-, Theater-, Impro- und Präsenz-Workshops bei internationalen Künstler*innen, u. a. Maurice Willems, Virginia Imaz, Yve Stöcklin, John Britton, Lila Monti)**
- **Validations-Anwenderin nach Naomi Feil**
- **Diverse Fortbildungen in der Kinder- und Jugendarbeit**

Katharina was the first I told. Then I called another friend. And then I had a home birth. Two and a half hours. It was intense, but so… truly. I was so with myself. My body knew exactly what to do. And even though I’ve often struggled with my body – too heavy, too round – I realized: it knew exactly what to do. There was enough trust. It was like a clear meadow. Simply a beautiful experience.

Only women were there. We cooked chicken soup afterwards. And suddenly there was this child. Holy moments. A holy moment when grandma died, and a holy moment when Ava came. And in between, in the encounters as a CliniClown – I call them magical moments. Or with kids in the Children‘s Museum. If I don’t want to say “holy moments,” then: “magic”. And that’s just so cool. That’s what I wanted to add.

00:08:24 VMF:
Thank you!

00:08:25 LD:
My pleasure.

Lucia Derndorfer, born in 1981 in Linz, lives and works in Vienna. Since May 2014, she has been a mother and has worked with children for many years in a variety of roles: as a CliniClown, singer, staff member at the ZOOM Children‘s Museum, and as a board member of sowieso! (Inclusive Art Workshops for Children). Alongside her musical work – in jazz duos, trios, and various other ensembles – she has gained professional experience with children as an educator, storyteller, clown, cultural and art mediator, and workshop leader. Because she also cares deeply about the older generation, she regularly visits geriatric wards in nursing homes in her role as a CliniClown. Her passions are people of all ages – from 0 to 100 and beyond – as well as music, especially jazz, and theater, dance, and performance.

Education:
- **BBA in Early Childhood Education, Linz**
- **Studies in Theater, Film, and Media Studies as well as Education, University of Vienna**
- **Diploma in Jazz Vocals, Gustav Mahler Conservatory, Vienna**
- **Training and continuous professional development with CliniClowns Austria (workshops in bodywork, voice, dance, theater, improvisation, clowning, and stage presence with international artists including Maurice Willems, Virginia Imaz, Yve Stöcklin, John Britton, and Lila Monti)**
- **Certified Validation Practitioner, Naomi Feil method**
- **Various further training courses in child and youth work**

(Explanatory) Notes and References

„The Good Enough Mother“

The concept of the „good enough mother“ was coined by the British pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott in his book „Playing and Reality“, first published in 1971. It encapsulates his theory of maternal care as a balance between responsiveness and the facilitation of the child’s growing independence.

Winnicott, D.W. (2005) Playing and Reality. London: Routledge Classics.

„Validation“

Naomi Feil developed the „Validation“ therapy, an empathy-based approach to communicating with and caring for disoriented older adults.

Feil, N. (1993) „The Validation Breakthrough: Simple Techniques for Communicating with People with Alzheimer’s and Other Dementias“. Baltimore, MD: Health Professions Press

Leslie Jamison

Review in „Falter“ on „Make It Scream, Make It Burn“:

Nüchtern, K. (2021) „Scheiß auf die Geschmack-spolizei“. Falter, 13 July. Available at: https://www.falter.at/zeitung/20210713/scheiss-auf-die-geschmackspolizei [Accessed: 08 November 2025].

Jamison, L. (2014) „The Empathy Exams“. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press.

Jamison, L. (2020) „Make It Scream, Make It Burn“. London: Granta Books

Maurice Willems

https://mauricewillems.com
[Accessed: 08 November 2025]

Khalil Gibran – On Children

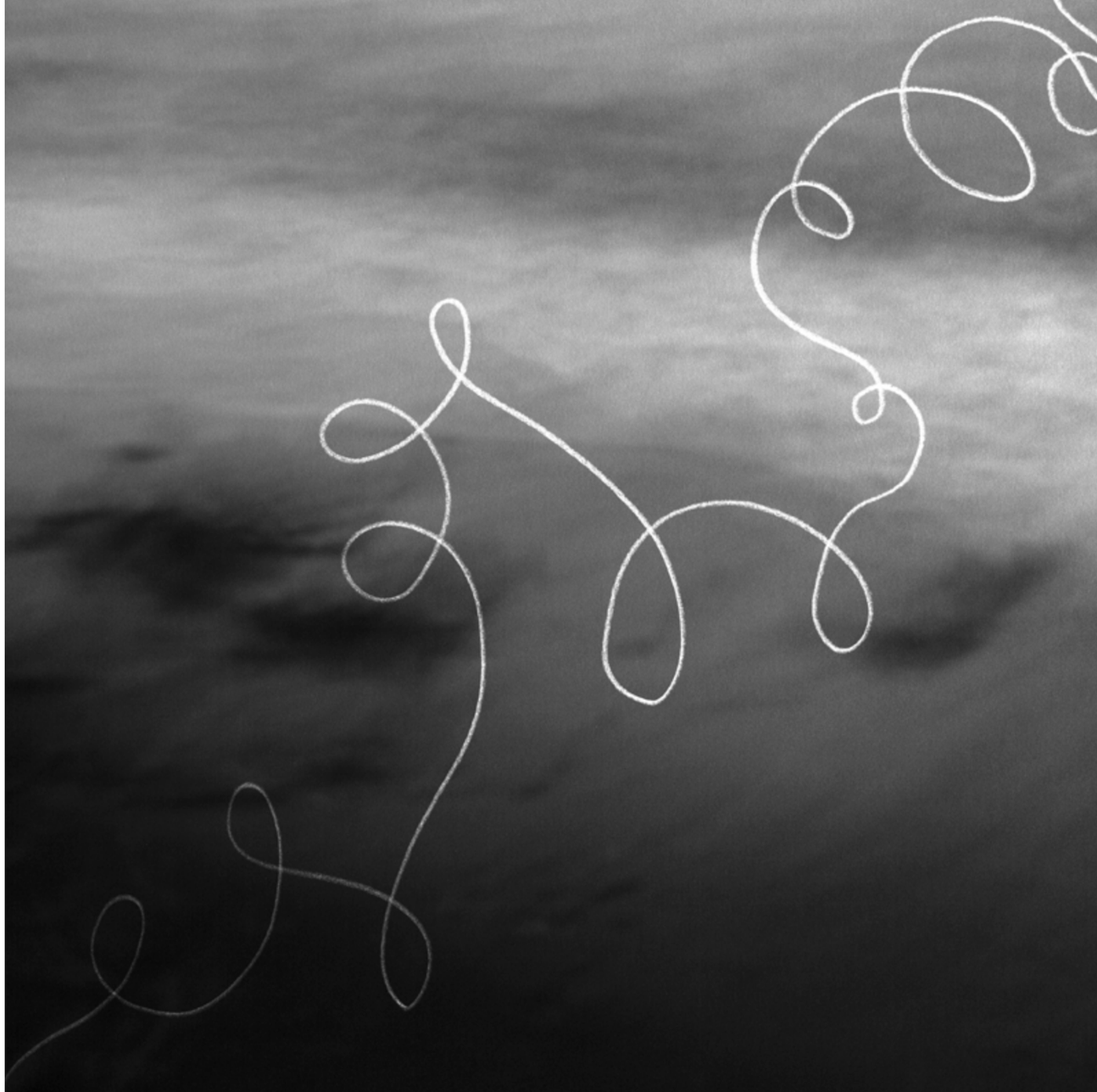
„Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of
Life’s longing for itself.
They come through you but not from
you,
And though they are with you, yet they
belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not
your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not
their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of
tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not
even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek
not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries
with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.
The Archer sees the mark upon the path
of the infinite, and He bends you with
His might that His arrows may go swift
and far.
Let your bending in the Archer’s hand
be for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies.
so He loves also the bow that is stable.“

Gibran, K. (1948) „The Prophet“. New York: Alfred A. Knopf., p. 21f.

sing with the
tongue of your
mother’s soul.



Katharina Jäger

über inspirierende Müllhalden, Baumhäuser, schmutzige Finger, Kunst und Wissenschaft und Kunsttherapie und Dermatologie, vom Hirn zur Kunst oder andersrum.

about inspiring garbage dumps, tree houses, dirty fingers, art and science and art therapy and dermatology, from the brain to art or the other way around.

Katharina besucht mich in unserer Wohnung am Samstag, dem 16. Oktober 2021 um 15:00. Wir plaudern in unserer Küche. Das Photo entstand erst knappe vier Jahre später, am Sonntag, dem 21. September 2025 im Botanischen Garten in Wien.

00:00:03 VMF:
Die Frage, die ich allen zum Einstieg gestellt habe, war: Wenn du dir selber als Kind nochmal begegnen könntest, also mit dir selber einen Tag verbringen könntest, was würdest du dann machen? Was würdest du dich fragen? Wo würdest du hingehen? Du kannst dir aussuchen, ob du als Erwachsene eine Zeitreise zurück machst oder mit der kleinen Katharina irgendwo im Hier und Jetzt unterwegs bist.

00:00:39 KJ:
Was würden wir machen. Wir würden in den Garten gehen und uns eine Bude bauen, möglichst ein Baumhaus ein paar Meter über der Erde. Und da würden wir uns dann aus der Küche meiner Mutter super viel Lebensmittel klauen und da oben mit dem Campingkocher irgendwas zusammenbrutzeln. Das würde ich machen.

00:01:01 VMF:
Welcher Garten?

00:01:04 KJ:
Früher gab es hinter dem Garten meiner Eltern eine aufgelassene Gärtnerei. Und da haben wir uns immer rumgetrieben, das wär‘ genau das. So eine Gstettn. Keine Erwachsenen möglichst. Man darf alles machen.

00:01:26 VMF:
Aber Du bist ja erwachsen.

00:01:30 KJ:
Ich würde das auch für ein Kind so schön finden. Hab ich auch mit meinen Kindern so gemacht, hinten im Garten und dann los. Alles was rumlag zusammengeklopft und irgendwas gebaut. Find ich immer noch gut.

00:01:49 VMF:
Und glaubst Du…. also es klingt so, als wäre alles eine relativ klare Kollaboration. Also die die kleine Katharina und die Große machen das einfach gemeinsam, oder? Wer bräuchte wessen Hilfe mehr?

00:02:07 KJ:
Also ich bin diejenige, die es technisch macht und die kleine Katharina würde sagen wie. Also vom Design her sag ich mal. Ja, da würde ich mich drauf schon einlassen, weil jeder hat so seine Wünsche, ich weiß aber wie‘n Akkubohrer geht und welche Schraube wir brauchen und sie weiß, was sie will und da treffen wir uns. Also ich glaube, die kreative Vorstellung kommt von der kleinen Katharina und dann überlegt sich die große Katharina: Wie können wir das umsetzen und wo muss ich minimale Kompromisse machen? Weil ich bin ja groß, ich kann ja auch einen Schritt zurücktreten.

00:02:51 VMF:
Ah ok, das ist der Unterschied.

00:02:55 KJ:
Ja. Ich komme ja auch für die kleine Katharina, will ihr ja nichts aufdrücken. Es soll ja für beide Spaß machen.

00:03:08 VMF:
Ja genau. Und was würdest du sie fragen? Oder was glaubst du, wie das Baumhaus aussehen würde?

Katharina visits me in our apartment on Saturday, October 16, 2021 at 3 p.m. The photo was taken almost four years later, on Sunday, September 21, 2025, at the Botanical Garden in Vienna.

00:00:03 VMF:
The question I asked everyone at the beginning was: If you could meet yourself again as a child – spend a day with yourself – what would you do? What would you ask yourself? Where would you go? You can choose whether you, as an adult, time travel back, or whether little Katharina is hanging out with you here and now.

00:00:39 KJ:
What would we do. We’d go into the garden and build a hideout, preferably a treehouse a few meters off the ground. And then we’d steal a ton of food from my mother’s kitchen and cook something up on a camping stove up there. That’s what I’d do.

00:01:01 VMF:
Which garden?

00:01:04 KJ:
Back then, behind my parents’ garden, there was an abandoned nursery. That’s where we always hung out – that would be it exactly. A kind of wasteland. Hopefully no adults around. You could do anything you wanted.

00:01:26 VMF:
But you are an adult.

00:01:30 KJ:
I’d still think that would be wonderful for a child. I did that with my kids too, in the back garden – off you go. Just grabbed whatever was lying around, nailed it together, and built something. I still think that’s great.

00:01:49 VMF:
And do you think… it sounds like this would be a pretty straightforward collaboration. So little Katharina and big Katharina would just do it together, right? Who would need whose help more?

00:02:07 KJ:
Well, I’d be the one handling the technical side, and little Katharina would say how it should be. From a design perspective, let’s say. Yeah, I’d go along with that, because everyone has their wishes – but I know how to use a cordless drill and what kind of screws we need, and she knows what she wants, and that’s where we’d meet. So I think the creative vision would come from little Katharina, and then big Katharina would figure out: How can we make this happen, and where do I have to compromise just a little? Because I’m the grown-up, I can also take a step back.

00:02:51 VMF:
Ah ok, that’s the difference.

00:02:55 KJ:
Exactly. I wouldn’t want to push anything on little Katharina. It has to be fun for both of us.

00:03:08 VMF:
Right. And what would you ask her? Or what do you think the treehouse would look like?

00:03:25 KJ:
You’ll have to ask little Katharina.

00:03:25 KJ:
Da fragst du die kleine Katharina.
00:03:26 VMF:
Ja mach ich ja gerade.

00:03:29 KJ:
Wie das aussehen würde. Es müssen mindestens drei Meter über dem Boden sein. Dass sich da niemand so einfach hochschwingt. Ist ja klar, es braucht eine Strickleiter, es darf keine Treppe haben, weil die könnte man ja nicht einziehen. Man muss sich ja isolieren können. Ja, und ansonsten ist es eine reine Frage: Was gibt es denn hier im Garten, was liegt rum, alte Bretter und so das ist so work in progress halt. Also mir kommen die Sachen sehr oft… ich brauche immer das Material vor mir. Ich gehe ja auch gerne durch Baumärkte und guck mir einfach irgendwas an, was ich nicht mal brauche, aber einfach um es so haptisch wahrzunehmen, was kann das…

00:04:18 VMF:
Und was liegt in dieser Gstettn so herum?

00:04:21 KJ:
Na das Übliche, so die alte herausgerissene Sauna, die da verrottet vom Nachbarn und irgendwelche alten Behältnisse, Plastikeimer liegen immer überall rum und so, ja. Was in so alten Gärten rumliegt an Müll.

00:04:45 VMF:
Also Sauna, Plastikeimer. Drei Meter über dem Boden, Strickleiter. Mit Eingang von unten durch den Boden nehm ich an, sonst geht‘s ja nicht?

00:05:01 KJ:
Ja, das kannste auch über Kante machen. Also das ist natürlich edel.

00:05:09 VMF:
Zweigeschossig oder eingeschossig?

00:05:12 KJ:
Ach Du, wenn‘s geht natürlich drei Geschosse.

00:05:13 VMF:
In so die Astgabeln rein?

00:05:17 KJ:
Ja genau. Lange Zeit haben wir … kennst Du die Prinzessinnen-Gärten?

00:05:26 VMF:
In Berlin?

00:05:27 KJ:
Ja, das ist ja alles aus Paletten übereinander gebaut. Die sind dann auch so drei Geschosse und so. Und immer nur so kleinen Zimmerchen, wo nur ein Tisch, zwei Stühle, drei Stühle, mal auch mehr. Oder kennst du in München das Kinderhaus? Das ist so ein Projekt aus den 70er Jahren, so ein offenes Haus in München, wo Kinder regelmäßig hinkommen konnten und wo sehr, sehr offen Projekte gemacht wurden. Und da gab‘s auch so ein Bauprojekt, wo die Kinder alles, was herumlag von Matratzen und Leitern bis Paletten, alles verbaut haben. So bin ich auch aufgewachsen. Ich bin von meinem Vater, von der Seite, so‘n Sammler. Also der muss immer alles sammeln und hat sofort eine Idee, das ist ja bei mir leider auch so. Ich kann ja an keinem Container vorbeigehen, muss immer erst mal reingucken: Was ist denn da? Und ich habe dann auch sofort eine Idee und das nehme ich dann mit. Und das sind ja meine Lagerräume und meine Ideen, die auf Halde gelagert sind.

00:06:39 VMF:
Hmm das kenn ich. Ok, und dann wird gekocht.

00:03:26 VMF:
That’s what I’m doing right now.

00:03:29 KJ:
What it would look like? It has to be at least three meters off the ground. So that no one can just swing themselves up easily. Of course, it needs a rope ladder, no staircase, because you couldn’t pull that up. You have to be able to isolate yourself. And otherwise, it really depends on: What’s lying around in the garden? Old boards, that kind of thing – it’s always work in progress. I often need to see the materials first. I like wandering around DIY stores too, just to look at things I don’t even need, just to get a feel for them – what can this…

00:04:18 VMF:
And what kind of stuff was lying around in that wasteland?

00:04:21 KJ:
Oh, the usual. Like the neighbor’s old sauna that had been torn out and was rotting away, or random old containers, plastic buckets are always lying around, that sort of thing. Just the junk that always piles up in old gardens.

00:04:45 VMF:
So sauna, plastic buckets. Three meters up, rope ladder. I assume the entrance would be through the floor, otherwise it wouldn’t work?

00:05:01 KJ:
Yeah, but you could also do it over the edge. That’s the deluxe version, of course.

00:05:09 VMF:
Two stories or one?

00:05:12 KJ:
Oh, if possible, three!

00:05:13 VMF:
Built right into the forks of the tree?

00:05:17 KJ:
Exactly. For a long time we… do you know the Prinzessinnengärten?

00:05:26 VMF:
In Berlin?

00:05:27 KJ:
Yeah, they’re all built up from pallets stacked on top of each other. They’ve got three stories too. And just little rooms where you can fit a table, two chairs, maybe three – sometimes more. Or do you know the Kinderhaus in Munich? That’s a project from the 70s, an open house where kids could come regularly and all sorts of projects happened. And there was a building project too, where the kids used whatever they found – mattresses, ladders, pallets – and built everything out of that. That’s how I grew up too. From my father’s side, I’m a bit of a collector. He always had to collect everything, and immediately came up with ideas for it – that’s my problem too. I can’t walk past a dumpster without looking inside: What’s in there? And then I instantly have an idea, and I’ll take it with me. That’s my storage space, my ideas in reserve.

00:06:39 VMF:
Hmm, I know that. Okay, and then there’s cooking.

00:06:58 KJ:
Ja. Es muss nichts Realistisches sein, aber wir haben immer früher alles gesammelt, was hübsch war im Garten. Ganz viele Töpfchen, Gläschen und da wurde dann immer irgendwie gemischt mit Wasser, mit Schlamm, zermixt und das wurden dann diese fiktiven Essen, die man hinterher dann natürlich auch verkauft hat.

00:07:21 VMF:
Ahja.

00:07:22 KJ:
Kennst du das nicht? Habt ihr das nicht gemacht, so Theken gebaut und dann müssen immer alle einkaufen kommen.

00:07:28 VMF:
Doch doch, aber wir haben eher Steine verkauft.

00:07:30 KJ:
Was nur Steine? Das ja langweilig.

00:07:31 VMF:
Na bemalte Steine.

00:07:36 KJ:
Achso. Nachher haben wir auch so Kermesbeeren zum Beispiel – hochgradig giftig.

00:07:44 VMF:
Kermesbeeren?

00:07:45 KJ:
Kennste nicht?

00:07:45 VMF:
Wie schauen die aus?

00:07:45 KJ:
Ach die sieht man hier öfters: ist eine hohe Staude – gibt‘s amerikanische oder asiatische und die haben so größere Blätter, wachsen auch ganz viel im Schatten, brauchen gar nichts und haben so Dolden mit dunkelroten Beeren und so Riesenknollen unten. Die asiatischen, die hängen und die amerikanischen Dolden stehen, kennste sicher. Das war ein wahnsinniges Unkraut und die färben so dunkelrot. Und daher kommt der Kermes, der rote Farbstoff, den man im Mittelalter verwendet hat, um Kleidung rot zu färben, weil es so der günstigste rote Farbstoff war und der ist so schön blutrot.

00:08:29 VMF:
Das heißt, ihr hattet immer blutige Finger.

00:08:33 KJ:
Immer, wir sahen immer dreckig aus. Ich weiß nicht in meiner Jugend, ich war glaube ich nie sauber. Ich bin heutzutage auch nie sauber. Na da lachst du, das ist schon problematisch. Ich sehe Dreck und er springt mich an, andere laufen da mit weißen Pullovern zwei Tage rum, ohne Fleck, bei mir nicht möglich.

00:08:56 VMF:
Kommt halt darauf an, was man als Dreck versteht?

00:08:57 KJ:
Naja, also wenn du so mal an Dir runterguckst und dann hast du da irgendwie schwarze Schlieren und da Kaffeeflecken, da irgendwie Farbe und da ist der Kuli dran. Das ist dann nicht so, aber bei mir ist das so…

00:09:13 VMF:
Und bist Du mit der kleinen Katharina allein oder sind da noch andere?

00:06:58 KJ:
Yeah. Doesn’t even have to be real food, but we always used to collect everything that looked nice in the garden. Loads of little pots and jars, and then we’d mix it with water, mud, stir it up, and it became these pretend dishes that of course we sold afterwards.

00:07:21 VMF:
Ah, I see.

00:07:22 KJ:
Don’t you know that? Didn’t you do that – build counters and then everyone has to come shopping?

00:07:28 VMF:
Yeah, yeah, but we mostly sold stones.

00:07:30 KJ:
Just stones? That’s boring.

00:07:31 VMF:
Painted stones.

00:07:36 KJ:
Oh, okay. We used pokeweed berries too, for example – highly poisonous.

00:07:44 VMF:
Pokeweed?

00:07:45 KJ:
You don’t know it?

00:07:45 VMF:
What does it look like?

00:07:45 KJ:
You see it around here often: a tall plant – there are American and Asian varieties. They’ve got big leaves, grow in the shade, don’t need much, and have clusters of dark red berries, with big roots underneath. The Asian ones droop, the American ones stand upright – you’d recognize them. It was a rampant weed, and it stains a deep red. That’s where “kermes” comes from, the red dye they used in the Middle Ages to color cloth, because it was the cheapest red dye. And it’s such a beautiful blood red.

00:08:29 VMF:
So you always had bloody fingers.

00:08:33 KJ:
Always, we always looked filthy. Honestly, I don’t think I was ever clean in my youth. Even now I’m never really clean. You’re laughing, but it’s a problem. Dirt just jumps onto me. Other people wear white sweaters for two days without a stain – not possible for me.

00:08:56 VMF:
Depends what you consider dirt, I guess?

00:08:57 KJ:
Well, if you look down at yourself and there are black smudges, coffee stains, some paint here, pen ink there… other people don’t get that, but with me it’s always like that.

00:09:13 VMF:
And would you be alone with little Katharina, or would others be there too?

00:09:19 KJ:
Ach du wenn‘s geht? Dann sind alle Kinder der Nachbarschaft dabei. Ich finde es immer ganz gut, wenn man viel Action hat...

00:09:28 VMF:
Und würdet ihr euch unterhalten? Oder nur übers Tun?

00:09:49 KJ:
Naja, natürlich unterhält man sich erst mal: wenn man irgendwas sieht, dann muss man beratschlagen, was man da machen könnte oder wer Lust hätte oder was darin sieht. Und dann gibt es dazwischen, wenn man sich mal so in der Richtung einig geworden ist, dann gibt es einfach so Flow-Phasen. Da muss man ja nicht reden, da macht man einfach. Aber ich meine ohne Kommunikation funktioniert das ja nicht. Weil wir sind ja nun ein Team.

00:10:17 VMF:
Kannst Du bisschen genauer erzählen, wie das Baumhaus ausschaut?

00:10:20 KJ:
Wie das Baumhaus aussieht? Hehe, ja, wenn du mir Rahmenbedingen gibst, also was ich am schönsten fände wäre: Du kommst hoch, meinetwegen Strickleiter durchs Loch, der Klassiker und dann bist du auf einer Ebene, also sowas wie Balkon / Vorzimmer. Und dann gehst du irgendwie nochmal hoch und da muss dann irgendwas Geschlossenes sein, das darf sich gerne dann auch verbreitern. So, aber man muss schon ein, zwei geschlossene Sachen haben, weil so Regen und störende Einflüsse von draußen muss man ja auch raushalten können.

00:11:00 VMF:
Gibt es Fenster?

00:11:02 KJ:
Klar, auf jeden Fall.

00:11:04 VMF:
Und was sieht man da?

00:11:05 KJ:
Da sieht man Garten, Grün. Naja, Natur halt, wäre wünschenswert. Also wenn‘s da wär, wo ich früher gewohnt hab, das gibt es ja nicht mehr die Gstettn, ja dann würde man aus dem Baumhaus genau auf den Teich meiner Mutter gucken.

00:11:30 VMF:
Die hatte einen eigenen Teich?

00:11:34 KJ:
Meine Ma? Ja, hatte einen eigenen Teich.

00:11:34 KJ:
Ah bei dieser Villa, die Du jetzt...

00:11:38 KJ:
Ja also da wo ich mal gewohnt hab, hat die einen eigenen Teich.

00:11:42 VMF:
Lebt da was drin?

00:11:43 KJ:
Ja Fische, manchmal Enten. Ab und zu kommt der Waschbär vorbei.

00:11:50 VMF:
Wirklich?

00:11:51 KJ:
Ja, ihr Fuchs geht auch immer, die hat eine Brücke, also hat ein kleines Becken und ein größeres und es

00:09:19 KJ:
Oh, if possible? All the neighborhood kids too. I always like it when there’s lots of action.

00:09:28 VMF:
And would you talk with each other? Or just through doing things?

00:09:49 KJ:
Well of course, you talk at first: when you see something, you have to discuss what you could do with it, or who wants to, or what someone sees in it. And then once you’ve agreed on a direction, there are just flow phases. You don’t need to talk, you just do. But I mean, without communication it wouldn’t work. We’re a team after all.

00:10:17 VMF:
Can you describe more precisely what the treehouse would look like?

00:10:20 KJ:
What the treehouse would look like? Hehe. Well, if you give me the framework... what I’d like best would be: You climb up, let’s say rope ladder through a hole, the classic, and then you’re on a platform – like a balcony or entry area. And then you go up again, and there has to be something enclosed, which can even spread out a bit. You need one or two closed spaces, because you have to be able to keep out rain and outside disturbances.

00:11:00 VMF:
Are there windows?

00:11:02 KJ:
Of course, definitely.

00:11:04 VMF:
And what would you see from there?

00:11:05 KJ:
You’d see garden, greenery. Nature, ideally. If it were where I used to live – though that wasteland doesn’t exist anymore – then from the treehouse you’d look straight onto my mother’s pond.

00:11:30 VMF:
She had her own pond?

00:11:34 KJ:
My mom? Yeah, she had her own pond.

00:11:34 VMF:
Ah, at that villa you...

00:11:38 KJ:
Yeah, where I used to live, she had her own pond.

00:11:42 VMF:
Anything living in it?

00:11:43 KJ:
Yeah, fish, sometimes ducks. Occasionally a raccoon would show up.

00:11:50 VMF:
Really?

00:11:51 KJ:
Yeah, and her fox too. She’s got a bridge – there’s a small basin and a larger one with a bridge across. At night the fox always runs over it, takes the shortcut, won’t go around, too much trouble. Well, everything you’d expect in a pond was in there. Dragonfly larvae, which look so disgusting! You know them?

geht eine Brücke rüber. Da rennt dann nachts immer der Fuchs rüber, der nimmt immer die ABarbara Krausürzung, der geht nicht außen rum, das ist ihm zu blöd. Ja na ja, alles was in so einem Teich ist, ist da drin. Was weiß ich, Libellenlarven, die sehen so eklig aus! Kennste?

00:12:13 VMF:
Hmmm weiß nicht?

00:12:16 KJ:
Die machen so eine Entwicklung durch wie Schmetterlinge, so ich bin mal ne Raupe und dann flieg ich weg. Die machen das im Wasser und sehen aus wie Monster. Also echt brutale Monster. Libellenlarven, musst Du Dir mal angucken. Voll ätzend. Sind so fett. Molche, Frösche, Kröten. Ne Schlange hatten wir mal. Ich wusste gar nicht, wie schnell die Schlangen schwimmen können.

00:12:58 VMF:
Libellenlarve. Findest du, die schauen so schlimm aus?

00:12:59 KJ:
Zeig her. Also im Original sehen die... schau mal, Google macht das wahrscheinlich... das sind ja gar nicht die im Wasser. Doch da. Ich finde die schon eklig. Ich mag ja Heuschrecken auch nicht, finde ich auch nicht so schön.

00:13:28 VMF:
Ich habe meine eine Bachelorarbeit über den Jean-Henri Fabre geschrieben.

00:13:37 KJ:
Jean-Henri Fabre.

00:13:41 VMF:
Es gibt diesen einen Künstler, der Jan Fabre, das ist der Enkel von Jean-Henri Fabre. Der war ein Insektenforscher im 19. Jahrhundert, hat den größeren Teil seines Lebens auf dem Bauch liegend in seinem Garten verbracht hat und so ein Opus geschrieben über Insekten, die er da getroffen hat. Und der war der Erste, der auf die Idee gekommen ist, dass man mehr über die rausfindet, wenn man sie nicht aufspießt, sondern ihnen zuguckt.

00:14:14 KJ:
Achso, intelligent ja.

00:14:18 VMF:
Das war ein ziemlich super Typ. Und seit ich dem begegnet bin, sozusagen, find ich Insekten nicht mehr eklig, sondern ... also es liest sich wie ein Roman.

00:14:33 KJ:
Wie er die beobachtet?

00:14:34 VMF:
„Die Erinnerungen eines Insektenforschers“ und es ist tatsächlich – er gilt als Begründer der Verhaltensforschung.

00:14:41 KJ:
Ah, alles klar. Also meine Mutter war ja Biologin und wir hatten Mikroskope und alles zu Hause. Und sie hat ja auch immer die Viecher für ihre Untersuchungen für ihre Schüler bei uns gezüchtet. Also ich bin ja mit so Reagenzgläsern, die da rumstehen... da wurden Drosophila-Fruchtfliegen gekreuzt und dann gab es immer Schaben, amerikanische Schaben, die Fetten, die hat sie dann seziert und wir durften die dann immer umsetzen. Ja, du musst ja immer Nährboden... und mikroskopiert haben wir viel. Also ich glaub mit 5 hat meine Mutter mir wahrscheinlich mit meinem Bruder das erste Mal gezeigt: wer lebt im Wassertropfen, die ganzen Einzeller. Sie war nämlich immer fasziniert

00:12:13 VMF:
Hmmm, not sure?

00:12:16 KJ:
They go through a development like butterflies – I'm a caterpillar, then I fly away. But they do it in the water and look like monsters. Really brutal monsters. Dragonfly larvae – you've got to look them up. Totally gross. They're fat. Newts, frogs, toads. We even had a snake once. I had no idea snakes could swim that fast.

00:12:58 VMF:
Dragonfly larvae. You really think they look that awful?

00:12:59 KJ:
Show me. In real life they... well, look, Google probably... no, those aren't the ones in the water. Ah, there. I think they're gross. I don't like grasshoppers either, don't find them very nice.

00:13:28 VMF:
I wrote my bachelor's thesis on Jean-Henri Fabre.

00:13:37 KJ:
Jean-Henri Fabre.

00:13:41 VMF:
There's this artist, Jan Fabre – he's the grandson of Jean-Henri Fabre. Jean-Henri was an entomologist in the 19th century, spent most of his life lying on his stomach in his garden, and wrote this opus about the insects he encountered there. And he was the first to come up with the idea that you could learn more about them if you didn't pin them down, but just watched them.

00:14:14 KJ:
Oh, smart.

00:14:18 VMF:
He was a really amazing guy. And since I encountered him, so to speak, I don't find insects gross anymore. It actually reads like a novel.

00:14:33 KJ:
The way he observed them?

00:14:34 VMF:
The Memoirs of an Entomologist. He's actually considered the founder of behavioral research.

00:14:41 KJ:
Ah, right. Well, my mother was a biologist, and we had microscopes and everything at home. And she always bred critters for her research and for her students, right in our house. So I grew up with test tubes standing around... Drosophila fruit flies being crossbred, and then there were cockroaches, American cockroaches, the big ones – she dissected them, and we were always the ones who got to transfer them. Yeah, because you always need fresh nutrient medium... and we did a lot of microscopy. I think when I was about five my mother probably showed me and my brother for the first time: who lives in a drop of water – the protozoa. She was always fascinated by protozoa. And I think by the time we were ten we'd already observed every protozoan living in European lakes under the microscope, watching what they all do.

von Einzellern und ich glaube mit 10 hatten wir schon jeden Einzeller, der in europäischen Seen lebt, unterm Mikroskop beobachtet, was die da alles machen.

Ja, das ist… ich komme aus einer komischen Familie, daran nage ich immer: Mein Vater ist Kreativgeist und Künstler und meine Mutter, die Wissenschaftlerin. Und so sind wir auch aufgewachsen. Bei uns gab es immer auch ein bisschen diese Machtkämpfe. Sie haben sich schon in Ruhe gelassen in ihren Fachgebieten, aber wo es sich überkreuzt hat, diese Diskussionen, die habe ich mein Leben, so lange ich zu Hause war, immer mitgekriegt.

00:16:29 VMF:
Im Sinn von einem Wahrheitsanspruch oder…?

00:16:32 KJ:
Ja, ja naja, auch eine grundlegende Einstellung. Mein Vater, der immer gesagt hat: Als Lehrer, wie soll ich einen Schüler menschlich beurteilen? Ich kann ihn maximal fachlich beurteilen. Jeder hat seine Spezialitäten. Ich lege ihm nichts in den Weg, also bei mir gibt es keine andere Zensur als eine 2. Und meine Mutter ist dann ausgeflippt, hat gesagt: da ist ja keine Leistung und der weiß nichts. Der kriegt ne 5, ist doch ganz klar. Wie kannst du so was sagen und so …

00:17:03 VMF:
Eigentlich ging es so um das Bewertungssystem?

00:17:05 KJ:
Also im Bewertungssystem auch die Anerkennung von bestimmten Dingen und so, ja. Aber sie waren immer … also mein Vater hatte auch sehr großes Interesse an Blümchen und an Pilzen. Also der hat die Pilze unterm Laub schon gepflückt. Der hatte da einen Blick für und ist auch als Kind immer in der Natur gewesen. Und meine Mutter hat sich nicht im künstlerischen Bereich ausgekannt, aber geht jetzt mit 91 mit den Freundinnen immer noch in Museen und guckt sich nicht nur Barock oder Rokoko oder Gotik an, sondern die geht genauso in die Neue Nationalgalerie und guckt sich Beuys an oder so, das macht sie schon. Auch wenn sie bei manchen Sachen aussteigt, klar.

00:18:07 VMF:
Kannst du mit ihr reden über Kunst?

00:18:10 KJ:
Ja, auf einer nicht theoretischen Ebene eher. Ganz oft will sie wissen: ja, wie ist denn das gemacht oder so, die Technik, das kann ich ihr natürlich sehr schnell erklären. Aber manchmal kommen wir natürlich auch in andere Bereiche, wo sie sagt: Damit kann ich überhaupt nichts anfangen. Ja, und da haben wir dann manchmal eine Grundlage, um über Sachen zu diskutieren. Viele Sachen sind ihr aber auch sehr klar und sie macht übrigens auch wahnsinnig viel Führungen mit. Mit ihren Leuten. Also die alten Omas, die gehen dann zu Führungen und dann wird ihnen das schon irgendwie erklärt. Nicht, dass die da alles verstehen würden, aber das machen sie auch ganz bewusst.

00:18:51 VMF:
Aber es ist dann schon so: dass ist so gemeint und das gehört so oder so. Oder ist sie da schon frei im Kopf? Für das, was man nicht fassen kann?

00:19:01 KJ:
Naja wie kannst du da frei sein? Du kommst aus dem naturwissenschaftlichen Bereich, die Kunst ist dir irgendwie angenehm oder du hast Interesse, weil du da Leistung drin siehst. Kennst dich aber selber nicht aus. Und dann hast du einen Führer, der sagt: So und so hat der Künstler das gemeint. Was machst du damit als Laie? Dann akzeptierst du das und gibst es nur noch mal durch einen subjektiven Filter: sehe ich das

So yeah… I come from a strange family, and I still wrestle with that: my father the creative spirit and artist, and my mother the scientist. And that's how we grew up. There were always a few power struggles. They left each other alone in their own fields, but wherever things overlapped, the discussions – I heard those all through my childhood.

00:16:29 VMF:
In the sense of "who owns the truth" or…?

00:16:32 KJ:
Yeah, well, also a fundamental attitude. My father always said: As a teacher, how can I judge a student as a person? I can only evaluate them professionally. Everyone has their own strengths. I won't put obstacles in their way – in my class no grade lower than a B. And my mother would flip out, saying: But that's no performance, he doesn't know anything, that's a failing grade, obviously! How can you say that…

00:17:03 VMF:
So basically it was about grading systems?

00:17:05 KJ:
Yes, about grading and about recognizing certain things. But they were always… My father also had a big interest in flowers and mushrooms. He could spot mushrooms hidden under leaves, he had an eye for it, and he'd been out in nature since childhood. And my mother, she wasn't versed in the arts, but even now at 91 she still goes to museums with her friends – not just Baroque or Rococo or Gothic, but also to the Neue Nationalgalerie to see Beuys, for example. She really does that. Even if with some things she checks out, of course.

00:18:07 VMF:
Can you talk with her about art?

00:18:10 KJ:
Yes, but more on a non-theoretical level. Very often she wants to know: How is that made, what's the technique? That I can explain right away. But sometimes we get into other areas where she says: I just can't relate to that at all. And then we've got a basis for a discussion. But lots of things are also very clear to her, and by the way she goes on tons of guided tours with her group. The old ladies go to guided tours, and then things get explained to them. Not that they understand everything, but they do it quite consciously.

00:18:51 VMF:
But is it like: "This is what it means, this is how it's supposed to be"? Or is she open-minded – for things that can't really be pinned down?

00:19:01 KJ:
Well, how can you really be open-minded about it? If you come from a scientific background, art is pleasant to you or you're interested because you see achievement in it. But you don't know it yourself. And then you've got a guide saying: This is what the artist meant. What do you, as a layperson, do with that? You accept it, and then you filter it subjectively: Do I see it the same way or not? But you don't really discuss it – you just experience its effect on you, with that bit of background knowledge. I don't think there's much discussion like: "I see it differently."

genauso oder nicht? Aber da diskutierst du eigentlich nicht, sondern du erlebst die Wirkung auf dich, mit dem Hintergrundwissen. Aber da wird glaube ich nicht groß diskutiert: Ich sehe das anders. Das glaube ich nicht.

00:19:41 VMF:
Ja aber gibt es so ein...? Gibt es so eine Akzeptanz für das zwischen 0 und 1?

00:19:51 KJ:
Ja, die kann das so stehen lassen, weil irgendjemand hat das gemacht, sich was gedacht. Und da sie es nicht wissenschaftlich auseinandernimmt, kann sie sagen „es gefällt mir“ oder „ich verstehe es“, oder „das gefällt mir und ich verstehe es“. Oder „das ist nicht meins“. Also das ist für sie ganz einfach. Und wenn ich dann eine künstlerische Vorbildung habe, ja, wie gucke ich mir dann Sachen an? In erster Linie auch erst mal: wie wirkt es auf mich? Und dann kann ich Fragen dazu stellen, passt es zu mir oder nicht. Und dann kann ich es eventuell mit anderen Augen sehen. Oder sagen: Ne es ist immer noch nichts für mich. Oder?

00:20:32 VMF:
Ja, dieses Kunst- und Wissenschafts-Ding taucht natürlich in diesem PhD-Kontext immer wieder auf. Dann gibt es unterschiedliche Zugänge dazu, es gibt die Leute, die knallhart sagen, es geht sowieso nicht, das sind zwei Sphären, die sich vielleicht aneinander reiben können, aber das geht niemals zusammen. Und es gibt die, die das rein ökonomisch ausnutzen, weil für Wissenschaft und Forschung gibt es halt Kohle und wenn ich behaupte ein Projekt zu machen, das eine bestimmte Frage beantworten kann oder ich die Frage zumindest nachher besser stellen kann und so weiter, also da geht es darum, sich gegenseitig zu legitimieren. Aber mein Zugang ist mittlerweile zumindest, dass ich das Gefühl habe, es interessiert mich dann, wenn es eine Akzeptanz dafür gibt, dass es schon so eine Form von Wissen gibt, das in einer künstlerischen Produktion steckt, das über ein technisches Wissen hinausgeht, das du nur in anderen Medien, in anderen Sprachen ... das du sonst nicht fassen kannst. Was eine eigene Form hat, die auch schwer zu übersetzen ist. Dann ist immer die Frage, ob man damit was anfangen kann. Manche Leute haben eher Angst davor, kommt mir vor und versuchen das mit Gewalt in andere Grids reinzupressen, damit sie damit umgehen können.

00:22:36 KJ:
Also ich bin ja nun Kunsttherapeutin und das ist ein nonverbaler Job. Also würde ich infrage stellen, dass ein Kunstwerk, egal woher du kommst, einen Einfluss auf dich hat, dann könnte ich eigentlich sagen: Kunsttherapie ist vollkommener Schwachsinn. Dann müsste ich das ja canceln. Und ich denke, das ist ja der Witz: Kunsttherapeutisches Arbeiten mit Künstlern ist ganz schwierig, das geht fast gar nicht. Woran liegt es? Dass sie ihr Hirn nicht ausschalten können oder irre lange brauchen, bis sie in eine rein emotionale, künstlerische Äußerung kommen. Ja, das ist wirklich ein ganz großes Problem. Und anhand dieser Situation, das ist ja rein phänomenologisch meine Beobachtung, anhand der kannst du ja schon sagen, dass es zwei verschiedene Zugänge geben kann. Die sind auf jeden Fall da und man versucht sie jetzt in einen Kontext zu bringen. Ich finde, dass ist immer so ein bisschen wie beim Hautarzt. Man kann das gar nicht bei allen Menschen so richtig nachvollziehen, weil es einfach so viele Daten gibt. Ich sage jetzt Hautarzt deswegen, weil du guckst hier auf das größte Organ, das der Mensch hat. Und dieses Organ wird exogen und endogen befeuert. Und das ist ja auch bei der Wahrnehmung irgendwie so. Also deine gesamte Biografie spielt mit rein. Diese ganze subjektive Ebene, die du mitbringst. Und dann gibt es noch diese ganze theoretische Ebene, die du eben mitbringst oder nicht. Und

00:19:41 VMF:
Yeah, but is there... is there acceptance for something in-between, for the space between zero and one?

00:19:51 KJ:
Yes, she can leave it at that. Somebody made it, somebody thought something with it. And since she doesn't dissect it scientifically, she can say, "I like it," or "I understand it," or "I like it and I understand it." Or: "That's not for me." For her it's very simple. Whereas for me, with an artistic background, when I look at something, the first question is also: how does it affect me? Then I can ask further questions: does it resonate with me or not? And maybe I can then see it with different eyes. Or say: No, it's still not for me. Right?

00:20:32 VMF:
Yeah, this whole art-and-science issue keeps coming up in the PhD context. Different approaches: some people say flat-out, it just doesn't work, they're two spheres that may rub against each other but will never merge. And then there are those who exploit it purely economically, because science and research get funding – and if I claim I'm doing a project that can answer a certain question, or at least help frame it better, then it's about legitimizing each other. But my own take these days is: I'm interested when there's an acceptance that there is in fact a kind of knowledge embedded in artistic production that goes beyond technical knowledge – something you can only grasp in other media, other languages... you can't capture it otherwise. It has its own form, hard to translate. The question is always whether you can do something with that. Some people, I feel, are actually afraid of it, and they try to force it violently into other grids so they can handle it.

00:22:36 KJ:
Well, I'm an art therapist, and that's a nonverbal profession. So if I were to question whether an artwork, no matter where it comes from, has an effect on you, then I'd basically have to say: art therapy is total nonsense. I'd have to cancel it. And I think that's the whole point: art therapy with artists is really difficult, almost impossible. Why? Because they can't switch off their brains – or it takes ages for them to get into a purely emotional, artistic expression. That's a huge problem. And from this situation – and this is purely phenomenological observation – you can already see there are two distinct approaches. They definitely exist, and now people are trying to bring them into one context. To me it's a bit like dermatology. You can't really pin it down for everyone, because there's just so much data. I say dermatology because: you're looking at the largest organ humans have. And this organ is influenced both externally and internally. And perception works kind of the same way. Your whole biography plays into it. All the subjective baggage you bring. And then there's the theoretical knowledge you may or may not bring. And the particular situation you're in at the moment you're looking. So many factors. And by now I've really come to believe that we humans identify way too much with our individuality. And it's awful to admit that as a person I don't always have total free will. But in recent years I've really come down from that idea. And that's something I'd also bring into any consideration of art, of how you approach and understand it: that I know I'm also shaped systemically.

deine momentane Situation, in der du jetzt stehst, in dem Moment, wo du dir das anguckst. Also es sind so viele Faktoren und ich glaube ja grundlegend inzwischen, dass wir als Mensch uns viel zu viel identifizieren mit unserer Individualität. Und das ist natürlich ganz schrecklich, sich das einzugestehen, dass ich als Mensch nicht die volle Wahlfreiheit immer habe. Da bin ich in den letzten Jahren extrem runtergekommen von dem Ding. Das würde ich bei dieser Betrachtung, dem Umgang mit Kunst und dem Verständnis einfach auch mit rein geben. Dass ich weiß, ich bin systemisch auch geprägt.

00:25:46 VMF:
Also dieses Objektive ist unmöglich.

00:25:49 KJ:
Das Objektive ist unmöglich, genauso wie ein ganz neutraler Versuchsaufbau. Ich meine, das fängt da an, wo ein Mensch diesen Versuchsaufbau macht. Also das ist dann die letzte Sackgasse, glaube ich. Du kannst dich natürlich 15 Jahre tiefenpsychologisch auf die Couch legen nach Freud. Und ich glaube, dass du danach auch nichts neutral betrachten kannst.

00:26:27 VMF:
Also für mich ist das der Grund, warum ich das Gefühl habe, Kunst ist die einzige Chance… also ich verstehe das Künstlerin-sein letztlich als Zugang. Als Haltung zur Welt. Weniger im Sinn von ich produziere jetzt irgendwas, was ich verkaufe und davon zahle ich meine Miete, sondern einfach als diese Haltung, die einerseits genau das akzeptiert, was du sagst, dass es diese Objektivität nicht gibt, dass ich nie alles fassen kann, was da ist, dass es immer Dinge gibt, die ungreifbar bleiben, die unverfügbar sind, die nicht in meiner Macht liegen und so weiter, aber mit künstlerischen Mitteln bin ich nicht in dem Moment ohnmächtig. Ich flüchte mich nicht in die wenigen Dinge, die ich fassen kann, sondern ich akzeptiere, dass da ganz viel ist, was in der Schwebe bleibt und was ich nicht kapier aber was da ist und wirkmächtig ist. Ich kann es nicht ganz fassen, ich kann es nur irgendwie vielleicht spüren, vielleicht auch nicht. Und ich kann aber trotzdem handlungsfähig bleiben. Ich kann trotzdem mit der Situation umgehen und ich kann trotzdem irgendwie gestalten.

00:28:08 KJ:
Ja, das würde ich jetzt nicht nur auf das Künstlerische, sondern auf jeden kreativen Akt beziehen. Den gibt es ja nicht nur in der darstellenden oder bildnerischen Kunst, sondern der kann auch in einer Lebensform, in einer Freizeitbeschäftigung, in einer Gartenarbeit, im Kochen liegen. Ganz im Gegenteil, je älter ich werde, desto mehr habe ich oftmals das Gefühl, dass der Künstler, der das als Beruf hat, den oftmals auch gewählt hat, um sein Ego nicht anfechten zu müssen… ja, ja, ich kenne wahnsinnig viele Künstler, die einen gewissen Autismus haben, die um ihr System kreisen und die auch das System, auf das sie treffen zwangsläufig da draußen, sich gerecht formen durch ihre Kunst. Ja, also es gibt so Künstler, da denke ich, ihr hättet nichts anderes machen können, weil ihr unfähig wärt, euch Kompromissen zu unterziehen. Das empfinde ich immer mehr, ich lerne immer mehr Künstler kennen, die gefangen sind in sich selber und versuchen – wie soll ich sagen – mit der Welt in Kontakt zu bleiben, ohne ihre vermeintliche Freiheit aufzugeben. Ich meine, das mildert jetzt nicht, warum ich… jeder macht das wahrscheinlich. Aber bei Künstlern siehst du das wahnsinnig oft, dass sie einfach woanders keine Chance hätten. In so einer Gesellschaft, in so einer Umwelt, unter solchem sozialen Druck, noch geradezustehen, bin ich sicher.

00:30:24 VMF:
Ja, hast Du sicher total recht. Ich meine, das ist klar,

00:25:46 VMF:
So objectivity is impossible.

00:25:49 KJ:
Objectivity is impossible, just like a completely neutral experimental setup. It already starts with the fact that a human being is the one designing that setup. That's the dead end, I think. Of course you can spend 15 years on the psychoanalytic couch after Freud, but even then I don't think you'll ever be able to see things neutrally.

00:26:27 VMF:
For me, that's exactly why I feel art is the only chance… I see being an artist ultimately as a way of accessing the world, a stance toward it. Less in the sense of: I produce something, sell it, pay my rent with it. More like: it's this stance that accepts exactly what you just said – that objectivity doesn't exist, that I can never grasp everything that's there, that there will always be things that remain intangible, beyond my control. But with artistic means I'm not powerless in that moment. I don't retreat into the few things I can measure. I accept that there's a lot that stays unresolved, that I don't understand but that exists and has power. I can't capture it fully, maybe I can sense it, maybe not. But I can still act. I can still deal with the situation, I can still shape it somehow.

00:28:08 KJ:
Yes, but I wouldn't limit that just to art – I'd apply it to any creative act. It's not only in visual or performing art; it can be in a way of life, in a hobby, in gardening, in cooking. Quite the opposite: the older I get, the more I often feel that artists who've made it their profession have often chosen it so their egos won't be challenged. I mean, I know an incredible number of artists with a certain autism – who orbit around their own system, and then through their art shape the external systems they inevitably run into so they fit their own. Some artists, I think: you couldn't have done anything else, because you'd be incapable of compromise. I see that more and more: artists trapped in themselves, trying to stay in touch with the world without giving up their supposed freedom. And that doesn't mean it's any different from the rest of us – we all probably do that in some way. But with artists you see it very often: they'd simply have no chance anywhere else. In this society, in this environment, under this kind of social pressure – they couldn't stay standing, I'm sure of it.

00:30:24 VMF:
Yeah, you're probably totally right. It's obvious that the term "art" is worn out – what it means, what being an artist means, and so on.

dass diese Vokabel einfach ausgeleiert ist – was Kunst bedeutet und was Künstler sein bedeutet und so.

00:30:40 KJ:
Aber ich muss immer sagen … also ich bin ja Kunsttherapeutin. Ich sage immer, ich bin keine Künstlerin.

00:30:50 VMF:
Aber was ist der Unterschied?

00:30:52 KJ:
Ja der Unterschied, das ist das: Ich habe eine Ausbildung gemacht, die sich wahnsinnig viel erstmal… also du musst dir vorstellen: bei uns wurden immer Trimester macht, immer drei Monate gab es die Vorgabe von einem Material. Ob das nun Holz, Ton, Textil, Grafik war oder was weiß ich. Diese ganzen Möglichkeiten, die man in der Therapie anwenden kann. Und da haben wir uns knallhart mit dem Material auseinandergesetzt und hatten Aufgabenstellungen a) speziell zu unserer künstlerischen Arbeit: wie würden wir damit umgehen, wenn wir ganz frei sind? Und b) für welche Krankheiten kann ich das anwenden? Weil manche Materialien darf ich bei bestimmten Sachen nicht anwenden – also zum Beispiel jemand ist schizophren, dann werde ich nicht anfangen mit gelber Wasserfarbe zu malen in einem wässrigen Milieu. Weil das hebt den raus. Da geht alles, was erdend ist, was zentrierend ist, damit er sich wieder irgendwie finden kann. So, also das lernst du da alles. Und klar, du musst dich auch mit deinem eigenen künstlerischen Ding auseinandersetzen. Aber im Endeffekt bin ich Diplom Kunsttherapeutin. Das bedeutet: neutralisiere dich möglichst gegenüber dem Klienten, da stehst du nicht im Vordergrund. Ganz im Gegenteil, du darfst hier nicht reinpfuschen, du musst eine neutrale Ebene für dessen Ausdruck geben.

Ich habe immer künstlerisch gearbeitet, weil ich es musste oder weil mich bestimmte Materialien oder Themen sehr interessiert haben. Aber das habe ich immer nur für mich persönlich gemacht. Ich bin nie damit raus, außer mein Diplom oder so, das musste ja. Aber das war auch nie der Sinn der Sache für mich. Also weil viele immer sagen, ja willste nicht mal ne Ausstellung machen, hast ja soviel auf Halde und dann sag ich immer ne – ich will gar nicht rausgehen. Und ich muss auch nicht. Also ich kann mir rausnehmen, allein aus meiner Psyche oder aus Materialfreude mich mit irgendwas zu beschäftigen. Ich muss mich da nicht rechtfertigen, auch nicht auf einer wissenschaftlichen Ebene. Ich kann ganz banale Sachen machen, und sei es, ich würde Bügelperlen in eine Reihe bügeln. Tja, das kann ich machen. Das kann aber jemand der Mag. Art. hat… außer er macht jetzt da die ganze Brandmauer voller Bügelperlen, dann bekommt es wieder diese Dimension, wo es dann plötzlich Kunst wird… ja kann er das nicht machen oder kann er schon, aber dann ist es ein Statement, weil das ist ja sein Job. Mein Job ist nicht Künstlerin. Deswegen bin ich da ziemlich wertfrei.

Zum Beispiel auch im Arbeiten mit den Kindern. Ich kann das so stehen lassen. Natürlich weiß ich auch, wo die in ihrer Entwicklung stehen. Ich bedenke immer, der ist so und so alt, das müsste der können oder so, da fange ich an und dann je nach Charakter oder nach seiner Entwicklung, fordere ich ihn auf, was zu tun; meine Trigger die ich immer so ganz gerne setze, aber da bestimmt das Gegenüber und ich muss da auch nichts regulieren, weil alles in dem Moment richtig ist, weil es nicht mein Ausdruck ist.

00:34:41 VMF:
Ja, das berührt genau den Punkt, der mich so beschäftigt. Also ich kann das total nachvollziehen, was du sagst, dass du nicht das Bedürfnis hast, mit diesen Dingen, die du für dich tust, rauszugehen, weil es mir

00:30:40 KJ:
But I always have to say… well, I'm an art therapist. I always say: I'm not an artist.

00:30:50 VMF:
But what's the difference?

00:30:52 KJ:
Yeah, the difference is this: I did a training program that, first of all, spent an incredible amount of time… well, imagine this: we always worked in trimesters – every three months we were assigned one material. Whether it was wood, clay, textiles, printmaking, whatever. All the options you might use in therapy. And we engaged with the material in a really hard-nosed way and had assignments a) specifically for our own artistic practice – how would we handle it if we were completely free? And b) which illnesses could I use it for? Because certain materials you must not use for certain conditions – for example, if someone is schizophrenic, I'm not going to start painting with yellow watercolor in a very watery setup. Because that pulls them out. You need everything that grounds and centers so they can find themselves again. So, you learn all that. And of course you also have to grapple with your own artistic thing. But in the end, I'm a certified art therapist. Which means: neutralize yourself as much as possible toward the client – you're not center stage. Quite the opposite: you're not allowed to interfere; you have to provide a neutral plane for their expression.

I've always made art because I had to, or because certain materials or themes really interested me. But I only ever did it for myself. I never took it out into the world – except my diploma, of course, I had to show that. But that was never the point for me. People often say, "Don't you want to do an exhibition? You've got so much stockpiled." And I always say no – I don't want to put it out there. And I don't have to. I can give myself permission – just for my psyche or for the joy of materials – to dive into something. I don't have to justify it, not even on a scholarly level. I can do totally banal things – even if it were ironing fuse beads (Perler beads) in a straight line. Yep, I can do that. Someone with a Mag. art. might not… unless they cover the entire fire wall with fuse beads – then it again takes on that dimension where it suddenly becomes "art." They can do it, sure, but then it's a statement, because that's their job. My job is not "artist." So I'm pretty non-judgmental about it.

Same with working with kids, for example. I can let things stand as they are. Of course I also know where they are developmentally. I always consider: he's such-and-such an age, he should be able to do this or that – that's where I start, and then depending on character or development I prompt him to do something; my little triggers I like to set. But the other person is in charge, and I don't have to regulate anything, because in that moment everything is right – since it's not my expression.

00:34:41 VMF:
Yes, that hits exactly the point that concerns me. I can totally relate when you say you don't feel the need to go public with the things you do for yourself, because I've always felt the same.

immer auch so gegangen ist.
00:34:57 KJ:
Ich weiß ja auch, dass ich sie in drei oder vier Jahren, ganz anders sehen werde.

00:35:02 VMF:
Ja, das sowieso. Also ich muss ehrlich sagen, es interessiert mich auch einfach nicht so. Felix zum Beispiel, mit dem habe ich schon gesprochen, der ist so ein bisschen der Gegenpol gewesen. Das war auch bisher der Einzige, der überhaupt nicht auf meine Frage geantwortet hat, sondern mir lieber seine Arbeit zeigen wollte. Und dann ist ziemlich rausgekommen, dass er da so ganz am anderen Ende der Skala ist. Er macht einfach Kunst, weil er irgendwas aus sich hervorbringen, Sachen zusammenbauen möchte, die er für wert befindet, dass die sich materialisieren. Und wenn er mit jemandem zusammenarbeitet, dann ist der dazu da, um ihm zu helfen. Aber es geht letztlich immer darum, irgendwas, was aus ihm rauskommt hinzustellen und die Welt soll sich das dann anschauen. Und ich hab dann auch zu ihm gesagt: Also für mich wird es eigentlich erst dann interessant, wenn da eine Begegnung stattfindet und wenn Prozesse ablaufen, die nicht mehr nur mit mir zu tun haben, sondern wenn da irgendwo was passiert, was nur in dieser bestimmten Konstellation passieren kann und Türen aufgehen, die ich alleine nicht aufmachen könnte, wo man dann gemeinsam durchgeht. Und das, was du jetzt beschreibst, wie du arbeitest, wo du eben sagst, dieses sich selber auch irgendwie neutralisieren oder da so eine neutrale Ebene schaffen …

Ich meine, es ist ja auch die Kunsttherapie ein künstlerischer Prozess und ich finde, es ist eine eigene Kunstform diese Möglichkeitsräume aufzumachen, dieses Wahrnehmen-können vom Gegenüber auf all diesen Ebenen. Bis hin zu einem technischen oder medialen Wissen: Auf eine Art musst du dein Material mindestens so gut kennen und denken können wie jemand, der nur mit gelber Wasserfarbe arbeitet, weil du quasi mit dem Material durch jemand anderen durchdenken können musst. Sozusagen. Das sind genau diese Momente, denen ich versuche nahe zu kommen, ohne sie kaputt zu machen. Da fängt die Kunst an, mich zu interessieren, da will ich besser werden und da bin ich fasziniert, wenn jemand anders das gut kann und gut macht. Und da würde ich mir auch wünschen, dass das wahrgenommen wird. Weil in dem Moment, wo ich so einen neuen Link zur Welt schaffe oder einen neuen Link zwischen zwei Personen … das was ich einmal wahrgenommen habe, auf das werde ich auch in Zukunft anders schauen. Und in dem Moment, wo Leute auf die Welt schauen und aufeinander schauen, geht es halt besser. Das ist ein bisschen mein Weltverbesserungsding.

00:39:43 KJ:
Das sind ja zwei verschiedene Ebenen. Das eine ist eine Vermittlungsebene, ja und das andere ist ja jetzt vielleicht eine reine… Also wenn ich mir Kunst angucke oder auf einen Künstler treffe, dann sind ja zwei Pole: Der eine Pol will mir ohne große Erklärungen über dieses Kunstwerk was zubringen. Also ich geh jetzt meinetwegen zu Felix und gucke seinen Melonenaufbau an und entweder es spricht mich an oder spricht es mich nicht an, dann frag ich eben: Was willst'n damit? Und dann kann es sein, dass es mich mehr anspricht oder eben auch nicht. Also das wäre ein theoretischer Zugang. Und andererseits bin ich im Museum und es gibt dann Bilder, die sprechen mich extrem an, ohne dass ich mir Gedanken darüber mache, worum geht es da. Und das sage ich immer, das ist die archaische Kunst.

Also das ist jetzt banal, aber was ich immer versuche, wenn wir einen neuen Workshop haben, ist es rauszufinden, wo sind archaische Ordnungssysteme auch

00:34:57 KJ:
I also know that in three or four years I'll see them completely differently.

00:35:02 VMF:
Yeah, that too. Honestly, I'm just not that interested in it. Take Felix, for instance – we've talked. He was kind of the counterpoint. He's actually the only one so far who didn't answer my question at all but preferred to show me his work. And it became pretty clear he's at the opposite end of the scale. He just makes art because he wants to bring something out of himself, assemble things he deems worthy of being materialized. And if he collaborates with someone, that person is there to help him. But in the end it's always about putting out something that comes from him, and then the world should look at it. And I told him: For me it only gets interesting when there's an encounter – when processes happen that aren't just about me, when something occurs that can only happen in this specific constellation, when doors open I couldn't open on my own and we go through them together. And what you're describing about how you work – this neutralizing yourself in a way, creating that neutral plane…

I mean, art therapy is also an artistic process, and I think it's an art form in its own right to open up those spaces of possibility, to perceive the other person on all those levels. Down to technical or media know-how: in a way you have to know and think your material at least as well as someone who only works with yellow watercolor, because you basically have to be able to think with the material through someone else. So to speak. Those are exactly the moments I try to get close to without breaking them. That's where art starts to interest me; that's where I want to get better; and that's where I'm fascinated when someone else does it well. And I wish that were recognized. Because the moment I create a new link to the world – or a new link between two people – whatever I once perceived, I'll look at differently in the future. And when people look at the world and at each other, things just go better. That's kind of my world-improvement thing.

00:39:43 KJ:
Those are two different levels. One is the level of mediation, yes – and the other might be a purely… So when I look at art or encounter an artist, there are two poles: One pole wants to convey something to me through the artwork without a lot of explanation. So say I go to Felix and look at his watermelon setup – either it speaks to me or it doesn't. Then I might ask: What are you after with it? And maybe it speaks to me more, or not. That would be a theoretical approach. And on the other hand I'm in a museum and there are pictures that speak to me intensely without my thinking about what they're "about." And what I always say is: that's archaic art.

It sounds banal, but whenever we start a new workshop I try to find out where the archaic ordering systems are – even in my own home. There's this very odd layer that's kind of universal for lots of people. You know all that business – color psychology and those underlying perceptual systems that slosh around underneath. No, seriously, I'm absolutely convinced: there are things that speak to everyone at once. In psychology you know the "baby schema" – those big round eyes – and it doesn't matter whether you like comics or small children or whatever. When a puppy shows up with those big googly eyes, you crouch down and suddenly go, "goo-goo, you're so cute." Normally you'd say, no, I won't even talk to a baby in that voice. But it's automatic. And I think there's something like that, too, in how we look at certain things – regardless of what we do or don't bring with us. Getting there, or experiencing that – that's always cool to me. How did I get onto this?

bei mir zu Hause. So eine ganz komische Ebene gibt es, die für ganz viele Menschen allgemeingültig ist. Also du kennst dieses Thema, was weiß ich, Farbpsychologie und so Systeme in der Wahrnehmung, die untendrunter wabern. Nein, ernsthaft, ich bin da ganz fest davon überzeugt: Es gibt so Sachen, die sprechen alle auf einmal an, in der Psychologie, kennste ja das Kindchenschema, diese großen Kulleraugen und egal ob du Comics magst oder ob du kleine Kinder magst oder wie auch immer. Wenn dann Hundewelpen mit so Glupschaugen ankommen, dann gehst du herunter und sagst plötzlich dudududu bist du aber süß. Normalerweise würdest du sagen, nee, ich rede nicht mal mit einem Baby in so einer Sprache, aber das ist ein Automatismus. Und sowas gibt es auch, glaube ich, in der Betrachtung von bestimmten Sachen, egal was wir mitbringen oder nicht mitbringen. Und da hinzukommen oder das zu erleben, das finde ich immer cool. Wie komme ich jetzt darauf?

00:42:24 VMF:
Naja also Du hast gesagt, das sind zwei Dinge, eben dieses Vermittlungs-Ding und ...

00:42:32 KJ:
Ja, das ist anders. Das kommt ja von der ganz anderen Seite. Also wenn ich jetzt Vermittlerin bin oder mir was für die Vermittlung ausdenke, dann mache ich das ja für den anderen und ich möchte etwas vermitteln. Also muss ich ganz anders denken. Ich meine das ist ja so witzig. Im Atelier ist es ja so, wir haben diese ganzen verschiedenen Leute, auch diese Künstler, die dann sagen, sie wollen das oder das machen. Und ich versuche immer, diese Utopie, die es gibt, so hinzubekommen, dass sie in die Vermittlung gehen können. Ja, weil die Künstler können das nicht. Die sind zu gefangen in ihrem Ding. Die kriegen das dann nicht in eine Struktur, die auch noch für die Kids passt. Die brauchen immer Hilfe, weil sie so viele Kompromisse eingehen müssen. Aber ich kann ja diese Kompromisse eingehen als Vermittlerin. Ganz wenig Künstler können das auch gegenüber ihrer Klientel. Deswegen sage ich, ist da noch mal ein bisschen Unterschied.

00:43:48 VMF:
Ja, also ich verstehe, was du meinst.

00:43:53 KJ:
Du bist ja schweinemanipulativ in der Vermittlung.

00:43:57 VMF:
Ja na sicher.

00:43:57 KJ:
Also schon die Wahl vom Werkzeug, die Wortführung, was ist wichtig in der Einführung, das ist ja reine Manipulation.

00:44:06 VMF:
Sicher, eh – aber letztlich ist doch alles Manipulation. Also das, was Kunst machen kann, egal ob das jetzt die Wassermelonen vom Felix sind oder eine von dir gestaltete Workshop Situation: Im Idealfall spricht es jemanden an, macht einen Raum auf und es passiert irgendwas. Ich glaube, das ist vielleicht das Problem jetzt gerade im Kindermuseum, dass es einfach kein Bewusstsein dafür gibt, was wir da für Kunst machen. Weil eh, wie du selber sagst, du „brichst die tolle Utopie runter“. Allein in diesen Formulierungen steckt so viel Abwertung, als wäre das dann irgendwie minderwertig oder ...

00:45:34 KJ:
Nein, nein, das ist eigentlich nicht so gemeint.

00:45:38 VMF:
Ich weiß, dass du es nicht so meinst, aber ...

00:42:24 VMF:
Well, you said there are two things – this mediation thing and...

00:42:32 KJ:
Yeah, that's different. It comes from a completely different angle. If I'm a mediator, or I'm designing something for mediation, then I'm doing it for the other person and I want to convey something. So I have to think differently. It's funny: in the studio we have all these different people, including artists who say they want to do this or that. And I always try to shape the utopia that exists so they can actually move into mediation. Because artists can't do that. They're too trapped in their thing. They can't get it into a structure that also works for the kids. They always need help because they have to make so many compromises. But I can make those compromises as a mediator. Very few artists can do that with their audience. That's why I say there's a bit of a difference.

00:43:48 VMF:
Yeah, I get what you mean.

00:43:53 KJ:
You're damn manipulative in mediation.

00:43:57 VMF:
Well sure.

00:43:57 KJ:
I mean, already the choice of tools, your wording, what's important in the introduction – that's pure manipulation.

00:44:06 VMF:
Sure – of course. But ultimately everything is manipulation. What art can do – whether it's Felix's watermelons or a workshop situation you designed: ideally it speaks to someone, opens a space, and something happens. I think that's the current problem at the Children's Museum: there's simply no awareness of the art we're making there. Because, as you yourself say, you "break the grand utopia down." Even in those phrases there's so much devaluation, as if that made it somehow inferior or...

00:45:34 KJ:
No, no, that's not how I mean it.

00:45:38 VMF:
I know you don't mean it that way, but...

00:45:39 KJ:
Ja das hört sich jetzt mal so an. Aber nehmen wir mal im ZOOM. Ein Künstler macht was für die Kinder und es gibt niemanden, der zwischen dem Künstler und dem Kind steht, dann klappt das zu 90 Prozent nicht.

00:45:58 VMF:
Ja, weil es eine eigene Kunstform ist, was wir da machen.

00:46:05 KJ:
Vermittlung ist auch eine eigene Kunstform.

00:46:08 VMF:
Ja, nur ich bin ziemlich auf Kriegsfuß mit diesem Begriff, weil ich finde eben, dass es das, was wir da machen und das, wo es mich auch interessiert nicht ganz trifft. Da gibt es dieses Dings und da kommt ein Kind und da bin ich und ich vermittle, dass das Kind irgendwie dieses Dings verstanden hat. Aber was mich interessiert ist, es gibt ein Dings und es gibt dieses Kind und es gibt mich. Und im Idealfall vermittelt das Ding vielleicht zwischen uns und macht irgendwie was auf und wir können anders kommunizieren oder so. Und das kann ein Bild sein, aber das kann auch ein Werkzeug sein oder es kann ein Glas Wasser sein. Aber dieses Vermittlungs-Ding hat immer so eine Hierarchisierung: da gibt es irgendeinen Inhalt, der muss von mir vermittelt werden an das Kind, das ist one way – was wir ja nicht wollen und nicht machen.

00:47:05 KJ:
Nö, also die Ausstellung macht das.

00:47:08 VMF:
Eben genau, deswegen haben wir ja auch in der Ausstellung ein Problem.

00:47:10 KJ:
Weil da habe ich ja auch keinen Zugriff, also ich kann nichts abstimmen zwischen dem Kind und der Situation, weil ich nichts verändern kann. Ja genau. Das ist im Atelier genau das, dass ich auf die Gegenreaktion reagieren kann, also weil das ja immer ein Schwingen ist. Ja, das geht ja ständig hin und her eigentlich.

00:47:39 VMF:
Und ich bin davon überzeugt, dass das einfach künstlerische Prozesse sind, so wie sie mich interessieren. Diese Vorstellung, die mir Angst macht und mich eben auch nicht interessiert, dass ich irgendwas produziere, und das hängt dann irgendwo und ich bin gar nicht dabei und krieg gar nicht mit, was das tut. Warum? Also was habe ich davon, dass ich das in die Welt raus* und dann kriege ich bestenfalls irgendeine Rezension oder so zurückgeknallt. Aber diese Kommunikation findet nicht statt.

00:48:25 KJ:
Naja, der Felix hat das ja so gemacht, der hat sich in sein Kunstwerk...

00:48:28 VMF:
Der hat sich dann hingestellt, ja...

00:48:29 KJ:
Oder Michael auch, der hat die ganze Parallel dagesessen in seinem Kunstwerk und nur gewunken.

00:48:35 VMF:
Ja, da hat es dann schon wieder mehr miteinander zu tun, wenn ich antizipiere, was passieren könnte, wenn jemand kommt und das anschaut, wenn das an einem bestimmten Ort stattfindet, wenn man sich durchbewegt oder von mir aus sogar nur was passiert, wenn ich das für mich materialisiere und ich kann dann da drin sein, ja. Wenn ich das als Prozess denke, der

00:45:39 KJ:
Yeah, it sounds that way at first. But take ZOOM, for example. If an artist does something for kids and there's no one standing between the artist and the child, then 90 percent of the time it doesn't work.

00:45:58 VMF:
Yeah, because what we do is a distinct art form.

00:46:05 KJ:
Mediation is also its own art form.

00:46:08 VMF:
Yes, only I'm kind of at war with that term, because I feel it doesn't quite capture what we're doing – or what interests me. There's this thing, and then a child comes, and there's me, and I "mediate" so the child understands the thing. But what interests me is: there's a thing, there's this child, and there's me. And ideally the thing mediates between us and opens some-thing up, and we can communicate differently. That thing could be a picture, but it could also be a tool or a glass of water. But this mediation idea always has a hierarchy: there's some content that I have to transmit to the child. That's one-way – which we don't want and don't do.

00:47:05 KJ:
No – the exhibition does that.

00:47:08 VMF:
Exactly – that's why we also have a problem in the exhibition.

00:47:10 KJ:
Because there I don't have any access – I can't calibrate between the child and the situation, because I can't change anything. Right, exactly. In the studio it's different: I can respond to the counter-reaction, because it's always a kind of oscillation. It's constantly back and forth, really.

00:47:39 VMF:
And I'm convinced those are simply artistic processes – the kind that interest me. The idea that scares me, and that I'm not interested in, is that I produce something and it hangs somewhere and I'm not there at all and don't even notice what it does. Why? What do I get out of putting it out into the world and then, at best, getting some review slammed back at me? That communication just doesn't happen.

00:48:25 KJ:
Well, Felix handled it by putting himself into his artwork...

00:48:28 VMF:
He stood there in it, yeah...

00:48:29 KJ:
Or Michael too – he sat the whole time inside his piece and just waved.

00:48:35 VMF:
Right – then it already has more to do with one another, if I anticipate what could happen when someone comes and looks at it, if it takes place in a specific location, if you move through it – or even if something only happens because I materialize it for myself and can then be inside it. If I think of it as a process that triggers something, where it keeps going, where there's some kind of "after." If there's a kind of trace and that trace leads me somewhere else, then there's really not much difference from what we do when we design a situation where encounters and things can happen.

irgendwas auslöst, wo es irgendwie weitergeht, wo es in irgendeiner Form ein danach gibt. Wenn es eine Art Spur gibt und die Spur führt mich aber wieder woanders hin, dann ist einfach kein großer Unterschied mehr zu dem, was wir machen, wenn wir uns eine Situation überlegen, in der Begegnungen und Dinge passieren können.

00:49:58 KJ:
Franziska hat jetzt zu mir gesagt: Ja, Katharina, im Prinzip, was wir so in den letzten Jahrzehnten hier gemacht hatten, wir haben eigentlich ein eigenständiges Berufsbild kreiert. Ja, und da ist mir das nochmal so ganz bewusst geworden: Ich fühle mich immer so ein bisschen am Schnittpunkt zwischen dem Kind und dem, was es da gibt. Also stehe ich immer zwischen diesen Polen. Bisher hatte ich immer die Freiheit, auch diese Pole mitzubestimmen. Und wenn ich sehe, hier flutscht die Vermittlung nicht, dann zu sagen: Ich versuch‘s jetzt anders. Aber das ist das, wo ich mir so schwer tu in der Ausstellung. Ich merke einfach, da stimmt genau diese Kommunikation nicht. Ich meine, ich nehme denen das nicht übel, wenn da von oben falsch gedacht wurde. Weil ich habe schon so viel auch verhauen, wo ich gedacht habe, okay, das müsste jetzt richtig sein für die Kids und die haben mich eines anderen belehrt, dann schmeiß ich das raus, mach was anderes, aber da hat es so … so eine Statik. Und deswegen komme ich da einfach nicht klar … mir wird was aufoktroyiert, arbeite damit, friss oder stirb so und das bin ich nicht gewohnt.

00:51:49 VMF:
Hm, ja. Diese Beweglichkeit ist halt entscheidend.

00:51:54 KJ:
Ja und ich denke mal, ich fühle mich ja auch in der Beweglichkeit nur gut, wenn ich zum Beispiel das Material kenne. Also bei diesen ganzen Workshops, die ich gemacht habe, da ging ja alles vorher durch meine Hände, bis zum letzten Werkzeug, um das wahrzunehmen, um auch eine Einschätzung zu haben. Viele machen das einfach so mal theoretisch, stellen das hin und los gehts. Und das traue ich mich nicht. Also das kann ich auch nicht, ich weiß nicht. Ich möchte die Sicherheit haben, um dann eben auch in dem Moment, wo mir was entgegenkommt, womit ich nicht gerechnet habe, trotzdem noch dazustehen und zu sagen okay, lass uns das machen.

00:52:45 VMF:
Ja, beweglich zu sein.

00:52:47 KJ:
Genau diese Beweglichkeit, das ist…

00:52:49 VMF:
Du hast gleich Kunsttherapie studiert? Oder hast du Kunst vorher gemacht?

00:52:59 KJ:
Nee, ich bin ja medizinisch-technische Assistentin, Naturwissenschaft. Ich war ja auf einer Waldorfschule, da musste ja von Anfang an mit den Wasserfarben und weiß ich was. Also von daher hatte ich das alles schon mal durch. Die haben ja vier Stunden Kunst pro Woche, schon von klein auf. Auch bei uns zu Hause wurde wahnsinnig viel gemacht, weil mein Vater war Lehrer für Kunst und Kinderspiel, hat Kindergärtner und Erzieher ausgebildet. Der hat mit uns viel gemacht. Einfach so riesige Masken gebaut, jeder Kindergeburtstag wurden irgendwelche Raketen gebaut, die dann so 2 km hochgeflogen sind. Mein Vater hat zum Beispiel alle Kostüme für den Fasching für uns Kinder genäht und selber gemacht. Das war so sein Part. Ja und zu Hause wurde viel gemalt bei uns. Ich hab noch solche Stapel meiner ganzen Frühzeichnungen.

00:49:58 KJ:
Franziska said to me recently: “Yes, Katharina, essentially, what we’ve done here over the last decades is create a profession in its own right.” And that really made me aware again: I always feel a bit at the junction between the child and what’s there. I’m always standing between those poles. Up to now I’ve had the freedom to help determine those poles, too. And if I see the mediation isn’t flowing, I can say: I’ll try it differently. But that’s exactly what I have trouble with in the exhibition. I can just tell that this communication isn’t right. I don’t hold it against them when the thinking from above is off. I’ve wrecked plenty of things myself – thought, “Okay, this should be right for the kids,” and they taught me otherwise; then I toss it out and do something else. But there it’s so… static. And that’s why I just can’t deal with it – something’s imposed on me: “work with it, take it or leave it,” and I’m not used to that.

00:51:49 VMF:
Hm, yeah. That flexibility is crucial.

00:51:54 KJ:
Yes, and I also think I only feel good in that flexibility if, for example, I know the material. With all the workshops I’ve done, everything went through my hands beforehand – down to the last tool – so I could sense it, so I had a feel for it. Lots of people just do it theoretically, set it up, and off they go. I don’t dare do that. I can’t, I don’t know… I want the security so that when something comes at me I didn’t expect, I can still stand there and say: okay, let’s do that.

00:52:45 VMF:
Yeah – being flexible.

00:52:47 KJ:
Exactly, that flexibility – that’s…

00:52:49 VMF:
Did you study art therapy right away? Or did you do art first?

00:52:59 KJ:
No, I’m a medical technical assistant – natural sciences. I went to a Waldorf school, so from the beginning you have watercolors and all that. So I’d already been through all of that. They have four hours of art per week, from a young age. And at home we did tons too, because my father was a teacher for art and children’s play – he trained kindergarten teachers and educators. He did a lot with us. We’d build huge masks; for every kids’ birthday we built some rocket that then flew two kilometers up. My father, for example, sewed and made all the carnival costumes for us kids. That was his thing. And there was a lot of painting at our house. I still have stacks of my early drawings.

Und dann habe ich irgendwann angefangen, so Märchen-Zeichnungen zu machen. Und meine Eltern hatten so ein komisches Servierding, wo man so Schüsseln und Teller drauf gestellt hat. Kennst das? Gab's früher, so Wärmeplatten. Und irgendwann, ich war ja Waldorfschule, da haste Stockmar Farben, das sind ja so die reinen Bienenwachs- und Pflanzenfarben, die wir jetzt auch bei der Frottage haben. Und die schmelzen dann. Und dann hat mein Vater gesagt Okay, mit Papier geht es nicht, hier hast du Butterbrotpapier, weil das haftet. Das war auf einer Seite auch wachsbeschichtet, dann hat er mir das immer da draufgelegt und es zieht sich dann so ganz glatt, das ganze Blatt. Und dann kannst du mit diesen Wachsstiften alles malen. Das ist eigentlich eine Enkaustik-Technik, aber ich kannte das ja gar nicht, wusste ja gar nicht, was... und dann habe ich ganze Märchenserien so gemacht, weil ich bin ja mit den Gebrüdern Grimm aufgewachsen. Immer so 10 Blätter ein Märchen, mein Vater hat dann überall so, also das darfst du natürlich nicht knicken, weil das dann abgeht. Und das alles habe ich letztens gefunden! Ich konnte mich gar nicht mehr daran erinnern. So eine Riesenmappe, drei oder vier Märchen, so 40 Blätter.

00:55:36 VMF:
Wie alt warst du da?

00:55:36 KJ:
So acht, neun vielleicht.

00:55:42 VMF:
Das ist ja voll schön. Hast du die hier?

00:55:42 KJ:
Nene. Unter irgendwelchen Betten gelagert und so naja, wir haben viel gemalt. Auch mit meinen Kindern habe ich irre viel gemalt, also Glotze gucken und so war eher weniger, oder wenn nur wenn jemand daneben sitzt, der das auch mitkommentiert. Und „artgerecht". Ja und die haben aber immer viel Hörspiele gehört und immer nebenbei gezeichnet und gemalt. Also wie die Blöden, auch wenn die Großeltern Geburtstag hatten, haben sie so Wimmelbilder so in der Größe zu dritt gemalt. Hat meine Mutter auch hängen. Wo tausend Sachen passieren so, und das habe ich auch als Kind gemacht. Also von daher ich habe irgendwie immer... und dann natürlich dreidimensional oder eben auch: wir Kinder waren ja immer draußen. Baumhäuser und Buden bauen, Feuerchen machen, irgendwas verbrennen und daraus hinterher Kohle machen zum Straße bemalen. Ich bin ja auch in der Freiheit so aufgewachsen. Wir sind aus der Schule gekommen, ich kann mich erinnern, dann gabs Essen und abends um sechs gab es Abendessen und was dazwischen war, das hat unsere Eltern nicht so interessiert.

00:57:08 VMF:
Ja, aber offenbar gab es ja schon Angebot, also so was wie diese Enkaustik-Geschichte oder...

00:57:13 KJ:
Ja na das war halt mal am Wochenende oder bei Schlechtwetter und so. Und wenn bei uns gutes Wetter war, haben wir uns 10, 20 Kinder auf der Straße getroffen und jeden Scheiß gemacht. Wir waren so eine Peer-Group. Also es war nicht reglementiert. Naja, die Großen sonst waren auch – das ging über vier Jahre Altersunterschied. Also die haben uns schon tyrannisiert.

00:57:38 VMF:
Da braucht man dann Baumhäuser, wo man die Leiter hochziehen kann.

00:57:45 KJ:
Da baust nicht du die Baumhäuser, sondern die Großen sagen: Hier das schleppste mal hier rüber, und

Then at some point I started doing fairy-tale drawings. And my parents had this weird serving contraption where you set bowls and plates – do you know those? They used to exist – warming plates. And since I was in a Waldorf school, we had Stockmar colors – pure beeswax and plant pigments, the same ones we now use for frottage. And they melt. So my father said, "Okay, paper won't work – here's wax paper (butterbrotpapier), because it adheres." It was wax-coated on one side. He'd put it on there for me and the whole sheet would go perfectly smooth. Then you can draw with those wax crayons. It's basically an encaustic technique, but I didn't know that – I had no idea what... and then I made entire fairy-tale series like that, because I grew up with the Brothers Grimm. Always like ten sheets per tale. My father then – well, you mustn't fold them, of course, or it flakes off. And I just found all of that recently! I didn't even remember. A huge portfolio – three or four fairy tales, like forty sheets.

00:55:36 VMF:
How old were you then?

00:55:36 KJ:
Around eight or nine, maybe.

00:55:42 VMF:
That's really lovely. Do you have them here?

00:55:42 KJ:
Nope. Stored under various beds and so on... Anyway, we painted a lot. I also painted a ton with my kids – TV was more of a rarity, or only if someone sat next to them commenting along. "Appropriate to the species," so to speak. And they always listened to radio plays and drew and painted alongside – like mad. When the grandparents had birthdays, they'd make those big busy "wimmelbilder" together, the three of them, in that size. My mother still has one hanging – thousands of things going on. I did that as a child too. So I've always kind of... and then of course in 3D, and also: we kids were always outside. Building treehouses and dens, making little fires, burning something and then using the charcoal afterward to draw on the street. I grew up with that freedom. We'd come home from school, I remember, there was lunch, and at six in the evening there was dinner – and whatever happened in between didn't really concern our parents.

00:57:08 VMF:
Yeah, but apparently there were offers too – like that encaustic thing, or...

00:57:13 KJ:
Yeah, that was for weekends or bad weather and so on. And if the weather was good, ten, twenty kids met up on our street and we did every kind of nonsense. We were a peer group. It wasn't regulated. Well, the older ones... there was a four-year age span. They tyrannized us, too.

00:57:38 VMF:
That's when you need treehouses where you can pull the ladder up.

00:57:45 KJ:
You don't build the treehouses then – the big kids say: "Carry this over here," and "Hold this here," and yeah – you have to work your way up in that kind of thing. No, artistically – I always did it on the side... in my studies I had to, but otherwise...

hier halt mal fest und ja, dann musst du dich hocharbeiten in so was. Ne, also künstlerisch – ich habe das immer nebenbei... im Studium musste ich dann ja, aber sonst...

00:58:08 VMF:
Und dann hast Du aber eh diese medizinisch-technische Ausbildung... also erstmal richtiger Beruf...

00:58:15 KJ:
Genau, ganz klassisch. Erstmal lernst du was, das du immer machen kannst, wo Du immer abgesichert bist, kriegste auch immer nen Job. Und dann kannst du machen, was du willst.

00:58:25 VMF:
Ja, super. Ist doch eh gut, also das ist so was, was ich... also bei uns zu Hause gab‘s überhaupt keine Kunst. Also es war schon vogelfrei und auch irgendwie halt Dorf und den alten Hof bei den Großeltern, wo ich mir den Hühnerstall ausgebaut hab und da gefühlt Jahre verbracht habe. Aber ich hatte da überhaupt keine Begleitung oder so. Ich habe dann immer versucht, Puppen, Puppenmöbel aus Dachlatten mit Dachlatten Nägeln zu bauen und so...

00:58:56 KJ:
Ja Puppenhaus. Kaufmannsladen, das wurde bei uns alles selber gebaut. Hat alles mein Vater gebaut. Es wurde fast nichts gekauft. Barbie habe ich vom Sperrmüll. Ich wollte auch mal eine Barbie haben und bei uns gab‘s immer Sperrmüll, kennste vielleicht auch noch. Leider gibt es den ja nicht mehr. Das wäre was für mich. Naja, auf jeden Fall, meine Mutter hat ja diese anthroposophischen Puppen für uns... wir hatten nur selber genähte Puppen. Und dann kam immer von Tanten oder so Plüschtiere, aber eigentlich nicht. Und es hat mich grundsätzlich ja auch eigentlich nicht so interessiert. Ich hatte mal so eine Zeit, wo das ganze Bett, also da hatte ich so viel Platz, der Rest waren die Plüschtiere im Bett. Ja, das ist ja so eine Entwicklungszeit und auch die Barbies. Ich war so stolz, dann hatte ich 6 Barbies. Übrigens habe ich festgestellt jetzt, ich habe noch ein paar gehabt, die haben meine Kinder dann ruiniert, so Haare geschnitten und sie geschminkt mit Edding. Da habe ich festgestellt, dass das ganz wertvolle Barbies waren. Na ja, die hatten die halt rausgeschmissen. Die hatte ich als Kind gefunden und die waren da schon 10 oder 20 Jahre alt. Die sind heute in Museen. Die hätte ich meinen Kindern gar nicht geben dürfen. Mich hat effektiv nur das Finden interessiert. Dann habe ich die dreimal an- und ausgezogen und festgestellt mit den Teilen kannste ja gar nichts machen. Und dann innerhalb von einer Woche war ich.... ich brauche nie mehr Barbie.

01:00:27 VMF:
Erledigt.

01:00:27 KJ:
Erledigt. Lagen irgendwo auf dem Dachboden. Und als ich Kinder hatte, habe ich gedacht ach nee, die Mädels. Warum nicht? Ich kauf denen keine Neue, sondern sollen meine Alte haben, falls sie mal nach einer Barbie fragen. Und das haben Sie dann mit sechs oder sieben getan und fanden sie auch zum kotzen. Also sie wollten die unbedingt und hinterher haben sie festgestellt: damit kannst du nichts tun. Und deswegen wurden halt die Haare geschnitten, angemalt und Klamotten genäht oder so geklebt. Also so ins Geschäft gehen und wir kaufen jetzt alles, das war für sie so... na, wir haben auch viel gemacht. Jetzt arbeiten ja alle. Alle haben sie andere Jobs, nichts mehr mit Kunst aber machen alle in ihrer Freizeit, bauen sich Möbel und malen und ach weiß ich was. Das ist für die einfach so entspannend. Also die definieren künstlerisch arbeiten als Entspannung. Das ist bei mir ähnlich so.

00:58:08 VMF:
And then you did that medical-technical training... so first a proper profession...

00:58:15 KJ:
Exactly, classic. First you learn something you can always do, where you’re always secure – you’ll always get a job. And then you can do whatever you want.

00:58:25 VMF:
Yeah, great. That’s something I... At our place there was no art at all. It was free-range though, and kind of village life, and the old farm at my grandparents’ – I converted the chicken barn and spent what felt like years there. But I had absolutely no guidance. I kept trying to build dolls and doll furniture out of roof battens with big nails and so on...

00:58:56 KJ:
Yeah, dollhouse. The little grocer’s shop – at our place everything was homemade. My father built it all. We hardly bought anything. My Barbie came from the bulky trash pickup (Sperrmüll). I wanted a Barbie once, and we always had Sperrmüll – you might remember that. Sadly it doesn’t exist anymore. That would be my thing. Anyway, my mother made those anthroposophic dolls for us... we only had handmade dolls. And then from aunts or whoever came plush animals – but basically not. And fundamentally it didn’t really interest me that much. I had a phase when my whole bed – well, I had a lot of space – was full of stuffed animals. That’s just a developmental phase; same with Barbies. I was so proud when I had six Barbies. By the way, I’ve now realized – I still had a few, and my kids ruined them: cut the hair, drew makeup with permanent marker. I then realized they were really valuable Barbies. Well, they tossed them. I’d found them as a kid and they were already 10 or 20 years old back then. They’re in museums today. I shouldn’t have given them to my kids. What really interested me was the finding. I dressed and undressed them three times and realized: you can’t really do anything with these pieces. And within a week I was like... I never need Barbie again.

01:00:27 VMF:
Done.

01:00:27 KJ:
Done. They were lying somewhere up in the attic. And when I had kids I thought, oh well, the girls – why not? I won’t buy them a new one; they can have my old one if they ever ask for a Barbie. And they did, at six or seven – and they thought it was disgusting. They really wanted one, and afterward realized: you can’t do anything with it. So the hair got cut, they drew on them, and sewed or glued clothes together. Going to the store to buy all the stuff – that was just... well, we made a lot ourselves. Now they all work. They all have other jobs – nothing to do with art – but in their free time they all make things: build furniture, paint, you name it. For them it’s simply relaxing. They define making art as relaxation. It’s similar for me.

01:01:38 VMF:
Also so, das nur für sich tun.

01:01:46 KJ:
Ja, irgendwie dieses Runterkommen und einfach Spaß an der Haptik, am Machen und Spaß am Scheitern und es anders ausprobieren, das finde ich auch cool. Also so dieses Forschen. Und wenn es mal fertig ist, dann interessiert es mich auch nicht mehr. Ich muss auch sagen, ich habe nur von anderen Leuten Dinge bei mir in der Wohnung hängen. Bilder und so. Also echte künstlerische Arbeiten habe ich nichts von mir, niemals aufgehängt. Brauch ich auch gar nicht, will ich auch gar nicht, also ich würde nie ein Kunstwerk von mir aufhängen in meiner Wohnung. Also es ist ganz komisch, aber da habe ich überhaupt kein Bedürfnis nach.

01:02:40 VMF:
Na ja, es kommt halt auch immer darauf an, was das denn ist oder was es mit einem… also wir haben da drüben diese Riesenzeichnung, weiß nicht, ob Du die gesehen hast im Wohnzimmer…

01:02:57 KJ:
Ah ja, ja, ja.

01:02:58 VMF:
Das ist Flos Vater.

01:03:04 KJ:
Flos Vater. Ach der ist Grafiker oder? Arbeitet grafisch? Wie alt ist der?

01:03:30 VMF:
82 glaub ich.

01:03:31 KJ:
Und macht der immer noch Sachen?

01:03:34 VMF:
Oh ja!

01:03:34 KJ:
Hat er davon gelebt?

01:03:36 VMF:
Er hatte eine Professur in Passau für Lehramt. Hat eigentlich relativ spät wieder angefangen.

01:03:48 KJ:
Kreidezeichnung, ja ist doch cool.

01:03:59 VMF:
Ja voll super, aber es ist das einzige Bild in der Wohnung…

01:04:10 KJ:
Hab mich vorhin gewundert, dass du da kein…nix…

01:04:17 VMF:
Wenn ich alleine wohnen würde, wäre da mehr an der Wand.

01:04:20 KJ:
Also würdest du jetzt was aufhängen, dann müsstest du es erst abgleichen oder Flo würde kommen, und sagen Verena. Muss das sein?

01:04:30 VMF:
Wir haben da immer wieder schon darüber diskutiert. Ich meine, man braucht halt auch ab und zu irgendwie Freiflächen, wenigstens an der Wand…

01:04:44 KJ:
Ist bei mir übrigens genauso. Bei mir nur im Schlafzimmer, da hab ich so eine Wand mit ganz vielen Sachen, so in Sankt Petersburger Hängung. Also unterschiedliche Rahmen ganz dicht aneinander. Das ist so von

01:01:38 VMF:
So – doing it just for yourself.

01:01:46 KJ:
Yeah, kind of coming down, just enjoying the feel of things, the making, the fun of failing and trying it differently – that's cool to me too. The experimenting. And once something's finished, I'm not interested anymore. I have to say, I only have other people's things hanging in my apartment – pictures and such. As for actual artworks, I've never hung anything of my own. I don't need to, don't want to – I'd never hang one of my own pieces at home. It's odd, but I just have no desire for that.

01:02:40 VMF:
Well, it always depends on what it is or what it does to you… over there we've got that huge drawing, not sure if you saw it in the living room…

01:02:57 KJ:
Ah yes, yes, yes.

01:02:58 VMF:
That's Flo's father.

01:03:04 KJ:
Flo's father. Oh, he's a graphic artist, right? Works in graphics? How old is he?

01:03:30 VMF:
82, I think.

01:03:31 KJ:
And is he still making work?

01:03:34 VMF:
Oh yes.

01:03:34 KJ:
Did he make a living from it?

01:03:36 VMF:
He had a professorship in Passau for teacher training. He actually started up again relatively late.

01:03:48 KJ:
Chalk drawing – yeah, that's cool.

01:03:59 VMF:
But it's the only picture in the apartment…

01:04:10 KJ:
I wondered earlier that you don't… have… anything…

01:04:17 VMF:
If I lived alone there'd be more on the walls.

01:04:20 KJ:
So if you wanted to hang something you'd have to clear it first – or Flo would come and say, "Verena. Does it have to be?"

01:04:30 VMF:
We've gone back and forth about it. I mean, you also need some open space once in a while – at least on the walls…

01:04:44 KJ:
Same for me, by the way. Only in the bedroom do I have a wall with lots of things, in a Petersburg hang – different frames close together. Those are pieces by artist friends and things from my dad. Otherwise I don't have any pictures hanging.

Künstlerfreunden und von meinem Papa Sachen und so. Und sonst habe ich keine Bilder hängen.

01:05:07 VMF:
Ich habe mich mittlerweile auch daran gewöhnt ...

01:07:07 KJ:
Was wolltest du eigentlich von mir wissen? Wolltest du was von mir wissen? Ich komm mir gerade so vor, als würde ich irgendwie... ich dachte, du hättest eine konkrete Frage an mich vielleicht.

01:07:18 VMF:
Ja hab ich ja, hab dir eh eine konkrete Frage gestellt.

01:07:24 KJ:
Ja die erste Frage oder was?

01:07:24 VMF:
Ja und dann haben wir eine Stunde geredet – genauso war der Plan. Was hast du denn gedacht, dass ich dich frage?

01:07:30 KJ:
Ach och weiß nicht. Vielleicht, einen Fragenkatalog aufgrund der wissenschaftlichen Arbeit ... äh Du brauchst ja eine Vergleichbarkeit, vielleicht? Zwischen Menschen und die kriegst du natürlich immer, indem Du eine konkrete Frage...

01:07:55 VMF:
Ja aber ich vielleicht...

01:07:58 KJ:
Ich dachte, Du arbeitest hier wissenschaftlich.

01:08:03 VMF:
Artistic Research...
01:08:04 KJ:
... ist nicht wissenschaftlich. Ach nee ...

01:08:08 VMF:
Ich hab‘s Dir ja eh gesagt, am Anfang habe ich überhaupt nicht drüber nachgedacht, dann war auf einmal so o.k., this is artistic research und what is your research question. Research question? Wenn ich meine research question weiß, bin ich fertig. Was soll ich denn dann noch machen?

01:08:24 KJ:
Na, du musst es ja dann untersuchen, ob das wirklich so ist. Du musst ja sozusagen...

01:08:29 VMF:
...untersuchen, ob meine Frage wirklich meine Frage ist?

01:08:31 KJ:
Nee, du musst deine Fragestellung beantworten.

01:08:36 VMF:
Jaja eben. Aber dann...

01:08:37 KJ:
Ja, und das ist ja gar nicht so einfach.

01:08:42 VMF:
Aber eine Frage, die ich beantworte, interessiert mich ja nicht.

01:08:44 KJ:
Na ja, eine Fragestellung kannste ja in die Luft, ohne dass du die Antwort weißt. Und jetzt suchst du ja gerade nach einer Antwort.

01:08:52 VMF:
Ja eh, genau. Aber ich habe nicht eine Frage dazu.
01:08:54 KJ:

01:05:07 VMF:
I’ve gotten used to it by now...

01:07:07 KJ:
What did you actually want to know from me? Did you want to ask me something? I suddenly feel like... I thought maybe you had a concrete question for me.

01:07:18 VMF:
I did – I asked you a concrete question.

01:07:24 KJ:
Yeah, the first question or what?

01:07:24 VMF:
Yes, and then we talked for an hour – that was the plan. What did you think I’d ask you?

01:07:30 KJ:
Oh, I don’t know. Maybe a catalog of questions based on the scholarly work... you need comparability, maybe? Between people – and of course you get that if you ask a concrete question...

01:07:55 VMF:
Yeah, but I maybe...

01:07:58 KJ:
I thought you were doing scientific work here.

01:08:03 VMF:
Artistic research...

01:08:04 KJ:
...is not scientific. Oh come on...

01:08:08 VMF:
I told you – at the beginning I didn’t think about it at all, and then all of a sudden it was: okay, this is artistic research, and what is your research question? Research question? If I know my research question, I’m done. What am I supposed to do then?

01:08:24 KJ:
Well, then you have to investigate whether that’s really the case. You have to, so to speak...

01:08:29 VMF:
...investigate whether my question is really my question?

01:08:31 KJ:
No, you have to answer your research question.

01:08:36 VMF:
Yes, yes, exactly. But then...

01:08:37 KJ:
And that’s not so easy.

01:08:42 VMF:
But a question that I can answer doesn’t interest me.

01:08:44 KJ:
Well, you can float a question without knowing the answer. And now you’re looking for an answer.

01:08:52 VMF:
Right, exactly. But I don’t have a single question for it.

Ja vielleicht fehlt Dir die Frage als… das ist wahrscheinlich Dein Problem.

01:08:58 VMF:
Ich sage ja, wenn ich die Frage habe, bin ich fertig.

01:09:01 KJ:
Ja genau.

01:09:02 VMF:
Aber ich habe gar nicht das Gefühl, dass ich so wirklich ein Problem habe. Also es gab schon so Phasen, wo es schwierig war in diesem PhD-Kontext, weil es gibt ja unglaublich viele Leute, die dann: na, das geht ja gar nicht und du musst es so und so machen oder du musst es so und so machen. Also jeder erzählt was anderes, aber alles superdogmatisch und jetzt mittlerweile denk ich mir pfft, dann mach ich meine eigenen Dogmen. Und im Moment tue ich einfach das, was ich gern tun möchte. Ich genieße diese Gespräche total und mir macht ja sogar das Transkribieren Spaß, weil das jedes Mal wie so Mini-Zeitreisen sind und es auch total schön ist zu merken, ah, warte mal, Du hast eigentlich was ganz anderes gesagt als ich damals gehört habe oder so. Und dann geht genau in dem Winkel wieder was auf … und in der Form, wie ich mir jetzt die Freiheit nehme, macht mir das Schreiben auch Spaß. Und ja, wenn mir dann einer irgendwann dafür diesen Titel gibt, dann freue ich mich. Und wenn nicht dann… schauen wir mal.

01:10:29 KJ:
Du machst es ja im Prinzip so… also nehmen wir mal Felix: Er kommt von der Uni und hat dieses abstrakte Konzept, und das setzt er dann um. Also er geht immer vom Hirn in die Kunst. Und da wo ich herkomme, da ist das anders. Da gehst du von der Haptik des Materials, von deiner inneren Einstellung, lässt dich da rein und analysierst danach. In der akademischen Welt ist der Anfangspunkt in der Abstraktion und es wird eigentlich nicht geduldet, dass du aus einem subjektiven, angenehmen Kontext startest, egal was dann rauskommt oder kann ja auch ganz brutal sein. Arbeite mal dein Trauma auf. Aber du darfst eigentlich davon nicht ausgehen. Das hat mich immer in allem so wahnsinnig blockiert, weil ich von meiner Person aus dann niemals anfangen konnte was zu tun. Und das ist vielleicht auch der Grund, warum ich niemals was zeige. Weil das nicht meine Arbeitsweise ist. Das heißt, meine Arbeitsweise ist nicht richtig anerkannt im Kunstbereich und deswegen geht es auch niemanden etwas an. Dabei kenne ich so viele Künstler, die genau so arbeiten und hinterher, wenn sie in der Galerie hängen, dann kommt noch der Kunsthistoriker und schreibt den klugen Text oben drüber, den ich dann lese und denke: Was hat das eigentlich mit deinen Werken zu tun? Das war doch mal anders. Ja, aber hört sich gut an.

01:12:13 VMF:
Na eh genau. Ich kann mich erinnern, als ich mich auf der Bildenden beworben habe damals bei Matthias habe ich ihm schon erklärt, dass ich nicht funktioniere in diesem Sinne, dass es mich auch nicht interessiert, so eine Kunstkarriere zu machen. Aber natürlich, das dann trotzdem zu studieren und eine Identität zu finden, wenn man sagt ich bin es zwar, aber ich bin es auch überhaupt nicht ist natürlich schwierig. Dann trotzdem auch immer wieder Anlässe zu finden, um weiterzumachen, sich zu verorten, ist schon immer wieder eine Herausforderung. Aber ich habe jetzt beschlossen, einfach immer zu versuchen … also wenn ich sage, ich will nicht damit reich werden und ich will nicht berühmt werden, dann gibt es eigentlich nur einen Grund, warum man das alles tut. Und der Grund muss damit zu tun haben, dass man es für sich selber macht und dass es das ist, was man selber gerne macht, wo man irgendwie ein persönliches Interesse

01:08:54 KJ:
Maybe the question is what you're missing… that's probably your problem.

01:08:58 VMF:
I'm saying: if I have the question, I'm done.

01:09:01 KJ:
Exactly.

01:09:02 VMF:
But I don't feel like I really have a problem. There were phases when the PhD context was tough, because there are an incredible number of people who say: no, that's impossible and you have to do it like this or like that. Everyone says something different, but all super dogmatic – and now I just think: pfft, then I'll make my own dogmas. And at the moment I'm simply doing what I want to do. I really enjoy these conversations, and I even enjoy the transcribing, because each time it's like a mini time-travel – and it's lovely to realize, "Ah, wait, you actually said something completely different than what I heard at the time," and then something opens up at just that angle again… And in the way I'm giving myself freedom now, I enjoy the writing too. And yeah, if someone eventually gives me the title for it, I'll be happy. And if not, then… we'll see.

01:10:29 KJ:
Basically you're doing it like… take Felix: he comes from uni with this abstract concept and then implements it. He always goes from the head into the art. Where I come from, it's different. You start from the haptics of the material, from your inner stance, you dive in – and analyze afterward. In academia the starting point is abstraction, and it's basically not tolerated to start from a subjective, comfortable context – no matter what comes out, even if it's brutal. "Work through your trauma," for instance. But you're not really allowed to start from there. That's always blocked me terribly, because from my own person I could never begin to do anything. And that's maybe also why I never show anything. Because that's not my way of working. Which means my way of working isn't properly recognized in the art field, and therefore it's nobody's business. Yet I know so many artists who work exactly like that, and afterward – once they're hanging in the gallery – the art historian comes along and writes a clever text over it that I read and think: what does that have to do with your works? It used to be different. But hey, it sounds good.

01:12:13 VMF:
Exactly. I remember when I applied to the Academy back then – with Matthias – I already explained that I don't function in that sense, that I'm not interested in a conventional art career. But of course, to study anyway and find an identity when you say "I am it, and I'm also not it at all" is tricky. To keep finding occasions to continue, to locate yourself – that's always a challenge. But I've now decided to always try… well, if I say I don't want to get rich from it and I don't want to be famous, then there's really only one reason to do all this. And that reason has to be that you do it for yourself, because it's what you love to do, where you have a personal interest or curiosity or feel a pull in that direction. And I look for occasions and spaces where I can do that. And right now that's this PhD.

dran hat oder eine Neugierde oder irgendwie einen Zug spürt in die Richtung. Und ich suche mir Anlässe und Räume, wo ich das tun kann. Und das ist jetzt eben dieser PhD.

Ich meine, jetzt rede ich so cool und nächste Woche ist wieder so eine Woche der Forschung, für die ich mich angemeldet habe und wo ich dann so ein Poster hinhänge, einen Text geschrieben habe, den ich vorlese und der… dann passiert es oft, dass die Leute so häääh machen. Und natürlich ärgert mich das dann und ich versuche mich irgendwie zu rechtfertigen oder damit umzugehen oder so. Aber letztlich versuche ich, mir Räume zu schaffen, für Verbindungen zur Welt aber auch in der Welt. Kennst Du … hast Du von der Olga Tokarczuk mal was gelesen?

01:14:44 KJ:
Olga…?

01:14:43 VMF:
Tokarczuk. Das ist die, die im Schatten von Handke den Nobelpreis gewonnen hat. In diesem einen Jahr wo zwei…

01:14:48 KJ:
Ja, ja, also ihr Name ist mir bekannt, aber ich habe von ihr nie was gelesen.

01:14:51 VMF:
Ich habe ja parallel diesen Lehramts-BA gemacht und bin dann immer zu Ernst Strouhal ins Seminar – kennst Du den?

01:15:02 KJ:
Wen?

01:15:03 VMF:
Ernst Strouhal. Der ist Kulturwissenschaftler und er gibt so ein Literaturseminar und das hab ich jetzt, weiß nicht, fünf oder sechs Mal belegt, so als Lesezirkel. Und da haben wir irgendwann die Tokarczuk rauf und runter gelesen, ein Semester lang, das hat mir irrsinnig getaugt. Von der gibt es eine Rede, die sie zum Nobelpreis gehalten hat. Ich glaube, die könnte dir auch gefallen, heißt: der liebevolle Erzähler.

01:15:38 KJ:
Kann man sicher im Internet?

01:15:40 VMF:
Ja die ist tatsächlich online. Sie geht so von da nach dort und hier, aber letztlich beschreibt sie auch ihre Beweggründe, warum sie arbeitet oder wie sie arbeitet und schreibt. Dass ja irgendwie der Welt so dieser All-Erzähler verloren gegangen ist, oder zumindest in ihrer Wahrnehmung. Also quasi der Bibel-Erzähler oder so. Irgendwie so eine Welterklärung. Kaum jemand, der nicht gefährlich ist, wird sich noch anmaßen zu behaupten, dass er die Welt erklären kann, so von Alpha bis Omega. Aber was hat man dann? Was hat man dann, wenn man selber erzählen muss? Also was ist dann quasi deine Utopie oder wenn irgendwie klar ist, du kannst diesen Anspruch nicht haben, dass du die Geschichte als Ganzes erzählst, was tust du als Erzählerin dann eigentlich? Und sie beschreibt es irgendwie so schön, dass sie es eben versucht. Es ist diese Überzeugung: Alles hängt mit allem zusammen, ich werde es nie alles begreifen, aber es gibt letztlich Verbindungslinien, über die du von einem beliebigen Punkt immer irgendwie beim anderen Punkt ankommst, und sie versteht es als ihre Aufgabe, diese Verbindungslinien aufscheinen zu lassen. Auch wenn es nur einzelne sind. Und wenn das dann viele machen, dann leuchtet möglichst viel und ihre Methode, sozusagen, ist der liebevolle Blick … also sich zuwenden. Ja, ich weiß nicht. Ich kann es nicht so gut nacherzählen, aber sie beschreibt es irrsinnig schön. Also so unkit-

I mean, I'm talking coolly now, and next week there's another "research week" I signed up for, where I'll hang a poster and read a text I wrote – and then often people go "huh?" And of course that annoys me, and I try to justify myself or deal with it somehow. But ultimately I try to create spaces for connections – to the world and also within the world. Do you know – have you read anything by Olga Tokarczuk?

01:14:44 KJ:
Olga…?

01:14:43 VMF:
Tokarczuk. She's the one who got the Nobel Prize in Peter Handke's shadow – the year there were two…

01:14:48 KJ:
Yes, yes, I know the name, but I've never read her.

01:14:51 VMF:
I did a teacher-training BA in parallel and always went to Ernst Strouhal's seminar – do you know him?

01:15:02 KJ:
Who?

01:15:03 VMF:
Ernst Strouhal. He's a cultural theorist and runs a literature seminar, and I've taken it – I don't know – five or six times, as a reading circle. And at some point we read Tokarczuk up and down for a semester, and I loved it. She has a speech – the one she gave for the Nobel. I think you'd like it too – it's called "The Tender Narrator."

01:15:38 KJ:
You can find it online, I'm sure?

01:15:40 VMF:
Yes, it's actually online. It meanders here and there, but ultimately she describes her reasons – why and how she works and writes. That somehow the world has lost that all-knowing narrator – or at least that's her perception. Like the biblical narrator, a sort of explanation of the world. Hardly anyone who isn't dangerous would dare claim they can explain the world from alpha to omega anymore. So what do you have then? What do you have when you have to narrate yourself? What's your utopia, so to speak – if it's clear you can't claim to tell the story as a whole, what do you do as a storyteller? And she describes it beautifully: she tries anyway. The conviction is: everything is connected with everything; I'll never grasp it all, but there are connecting lines by which you can get from any point to any other point – and she understands it as her task to make those lines flicker into view. Even if only a few. And if lots of people do that, then as much as possible lights up. And her method, so to speak, is the tender gaze – the act of turning toward. I don't know – I can't recount it as well, but she describes it incredibly beautifully. Un-kitschy, and yet it feels like a counter-position to the Frankfurt School – "the world is terrible, and anyone who says otherwise is evil or naive." She doesn't claim the world is good, but she has… well, yeah, I really loved it. And I'm also a huge fan of… now I'm going to hit stop, otherwise I'll have to pay to transcribe my own monologue…

schig und trotzdem wirkt es so ein bisschen wie die Gegenposition zu dieser Frankfurter Schule, die Welt ist schlecht und jeder, der was anderes behauptet, ist böse oder naiv. Sie behauptet nicht, die Welt ist gut, aber sie hat irgendwie… also ja, hat mir sehr getaugt. Und ja, wovon ich grad auch noch ein voller Fan bin… jetzt drück ich dann auf Stopp, weil sonst muss ich nur die Transkription von meinem eigenen Sermon bezahlen…

01:18:22 KJ:
Aber das ist auch gut, wenn du dich mal ab und zu selbst hörst, weil jedes Mal wenn du dich hörst zu dem Thema, rutscht du auf einen bisschen anderen Standpunkt. Man soll ja seine Geschichte immer wieder aufschreiben. Weil Du dann den Blickwinkel…

01:18:38 VMF:
Eh schon, aber weißt Du ich zahl grad 70 Euro im Monat, weil, das ist ja irrsinnig viel Arbeit. Und es gibt aber so ein Online Tool, das eigentlich erstaunlich gut funktioniert und automatisch transkribiert …

01:18:54 KJ:
Ah und dann musst Du nur noch korrigieren.

01:18:56 VMF:
Also man muss schon noch korrigieren, aber es erleichtert es irrsinnig. Naja, insofern ist es teuer, aber egal,

01:19:03 KJ:
Ja aber cool, das hilft ja echt sehr.

01:19:08 VMF:
Ja schon. Und das ist zum Teil auch sehr lustig, was das Ding dann versteht und was auch total lustig ist, dass es so die unterschiedlichen Sprecher auseinander kennt, was irrsinnig viel bringt und das funktioniert manchmal besser, manchmal schlechter. Und aber ich habe mir zum Beispiel gedacht, als ich mit der Verena Brückner gesprochen habe, dass es sich da vielleicht schwertut – da hat es super funktioniert und mit Diego hat es dann überhaupt nicht funktioniert.

01:19:33 KJ:
Nein lustig, ernsthaft. Find ich ja witzig. Na ja, ich hab ja früher den Google Übersetzer immer geliebt, weil da so crazy Sachen rauskamen, die uns auch so gezeigt haben, wie man durch zwei kleine Worte, die anders definiert sind, plötzlich alles umdreht, diesen ganzen Satz und ich fand es irre, dass durch so eine kleine Bewegung dann alles anders ist. Aber der wird immer besser gemacht. Ja, leider, wird immer realistischer. Das ist schon fast schade…

01:20:14 VMF:
Ich mein, das ist ja letztlich das, was ich mit dem L. mache, mit meinem Neffen. Weil der L. war schon von Anfang an so, also der hat eine irrsinnige Faszination für Sprache gehabt. Ich habe das Gefühl, dass er mit drei Silben schon so richtig nach Ausdruck gesucht und wirklich Dinge beschrieben hat, Weltwahrnehmung übersetzt hat mit diesen wenigen Tools, die er hatte. Also ich finde so wie Kinder Sprache lernen, das fasziniert mich ungemein. Und jetzt … also die Freunde, mit denen ich da heute Mittagessen war, haben auch einen kleinen Sohn, der ist jetzt zwei oder so und der hat auch einen totalen Sprachtick. Aber bei dem ist es ganz anders, weil da hab ich das Gefühl der spricht unglaublich schön und präzise für so einen Zwerg. Aber der liebt einfach das Sprechen an sich. Er hat immer so Lieblingswörter, eine Zeit lang hat er alles Petersilie genannt, einfach nur, weil er Petersilie so ein tolles Wort findet. Er wollte damit überhaupt nichts sagen, ihm hat‘s einfach nur Spaß gemacht, Petersilie zu sagen. Das war bei L. nie, sondern der hat wirklich immer so richtig um Ausdruck gerungen und hat

01:18:22 KJ:
But it’s good, too, to hear yourself once in a while – because every time you hear yourself on the topic, you shift to a slightly different standpoint. You’re supposed to keep writing down your story over and over. Because then the angle…

01:18:38 VMF:
Yeah, sure – but you know, I’m paying 70 euros a month right now, because it’s insanely time-consuming. There’s this online tool that actually works surprisingly well and transcribes automatically…

01:18:54 KJ:
Ah, and then you just have to correct it.

01:18:56 VMF:
You still have to correct it, but it makes it so much easier. So, it’s expensive, but whatever –

01:19:03 KJ:
Yeah, but cool – that really helps.

01:19:08 VMF:
Yeah. And sometimes it’s very funny what the thing “hears,” and it’s also hilarious that it can distinguish different speakers, which is incredibly useful – sometimes better, sometimes worse. But for example, when I talked to Verena Brückner, I thought it might struggle – there it worked great, and with Diego it didn’t work at all.

01:19:33 KJ:
No way – seriously? I find that funny. Well, I used to love Google Translate, because such crazy stuff came out of it. It showed us how, with two little words defined differently, you can suddenly flip an entire sentence – I found it wild that such a small shift makes everything different. But they keep making it better. Unfortunately – it’s getting more realistic. That’s almost a pity…

01:20:14 VMF:
I mean, that’s basically what I do with L., my nephew. L. was like that from the start – he was insanely fascinated by language. I feel like with just three syllables he was already searching for expression, really describing things – translating his perception of the world with the few tools he had. I’m fascinated by how kids learn language. And now… the friends I had lunch with today also have a little son, he’s two or so, and he’s got a total language thing too. But with him it’s completely different – I feel like he speaks incredibly beautifully and precisely for such a little one. But he just loves speaking for its own sake. He always has favorite words; for a while he called everything “Petersilie” (parsley) just because he thinks “Petersilie” is such a great word. He didn’t want to say anything with it – he just enjoyed saying “Petersilie.” That was never L. – he always really wrestled for expression, but then came up with incredible coinages which, as misreadings or “wrong” usage or misunderstanding, were just so poetic, opened up unbelievable worlds. And when we then go ping-pong into those misunderstandings – that’s insanely fun. Yeah, and I think Olga Tokarczuk is cool – and have you heard of Leslie Jamison?

dann aber unglaubliche Wortschöpfungen gemacht, die dann aber als Missdeutungen oder im scheinbar falschen Verwenden oder falsch verstehen, einfach so poetisch waren, so unglaubliche Welten aufgemacht haben. Und wenn wir dann im Pingpong in diese Missverständnisse einfach so reingehen, also das macht irrsinnig Spaß. Ja und die Olga Tokarczuk finde ich cool und hast Du von der Leslie Jamison was gehört?

01:21:58 KJ:
Ja, das hat mir letztens ne Freundin...

01:22:01 VMF:
Haste gelesen?

01:22:02 KJ:
Ne hab ich noch nicht, liegt neben meinem...

01:22:06 VMF:
Super, voll cool.

01:22:07 KJ:
Was hast du gelesen?

01:22:09 VMF:
Diese beiden Essaybände, also das Neue und das „Empathy Exams".

01:22:15 KJ:
Ich habe das...

01:22:17 VMF:
„Make it scream, make it burn"? Ja, die ist jetzt für mich auch super, weil die irgendwie auch so eine Textform gefunden hat, wo ich das Gefühl habe, so kann ich mir auch vorstellen, zu schreiben. Bei Essays hast Du ja oft das Problem, dass die Leute entweder total verstiegen sind in irgendwelche theoretischen Konstruktionen oder schrecklich um ihren Bauchnabel kreisen und es eigentlich irrsinnig fad ist. Und sie schreibt irrsinnig persönlich und ganz subjektiv und legt ihre Erzählerin total eins zu eins mit ihr als Person auch aus. Sie schreibt einfach von sich und beschreibt ganz persönliche Erfahrungen, beschreibt auch ständig ihren Schreibprozess und wie sie ihre Gedanken entwickelt. Reflexionen nur um sie dann danach wieder total zu zerlegen, weil sie draufkommt, na das geht eigentlich überhaupt nicht. Also es ist irrsinnig schwer zusammenzufassen, finde ich, was sie schreibt.

01:23:44 KJ:
Also sie seziert immer ihre Aussage und kommt dann zur nächsten.

01:23:48 VMF:
Genau und kommt nie zu einem ... also es ist dann nie so ein: jetzt weiß ich endlich es ist so und so, sondern sie bleibt immer so in den Graustufen und ist aber da irrsinnig präzise und cool.

01:24:00 KJ:
Und es ist trotzdem befriedigend?

01:24:02 KJ:
Ja, total. Es ist, man fühlt sich so erkannt irgendwie. Also ich meine, es ist schon so ein Generationen-Ding. Sie ist ziemlich genauso alt wie ich glaube ich, zwei Jahre älter oder so. Also es sind viele Dinge, wo ich so das Gefühl habe, da spricht jemand, der... auch wenn's die USA sind und viel komplett anders, aber trotzdem als Frau in dem Alter in auf vielen Ebenen wohl ähnlichen Situationen aufgewachsen und ähnliche Erfahrungen gemacht und so. Aber es ist auch lustig, in den Empathy Exams ganz am Schluss ist dann ein Essay drin, wo sie sich eigentlich nur entschuldigt, dass sie es nicht mehr schafft, den Leuten allen zurückzuschreiben, die ihr ihre Geschichten erzählen wollen... Ich glaube, meine anderthalb Stunden sind voll, ich

01:21:58 KJ:
Yeah, a friend mentioned her to me recently...

01:22:01 VMF:
Have you read her?

01:22:02 KJ:
Not yet – it's sitting next to my...

01:22:06 VMF:
Great, super cool.

01:22:07 KJ:
What did you read?

01:22:09 VMF:
The two essay collections – the new one and „The Empathy Exams".

01:22:15 KJ:
I've got the...

01:22:17 VMF:
„Make It Scream, Make It Burn"? Yeah. She's great for me right now because she's found a text form where I feel like, okay, I can imagine writing like that. With essays you often have the problem that people are either completely lost in theoretical constructions or circling their belly button in a terribly boring way. And she writes incredibly personally and subjectively, and she lines up her narrator completely one-to-one with herself as a person. She just writes from herself and describes very personal experiences, constantly describes her writing process and how she develops her thoughts – reflections only to then totally dismantle them afterward because she realizes, no, that doesn't work at all. I find it insanely hard to summarize what she writes.

01:23:44 KJ:
So she dissects each statement and then moves on to the next.

01:23:48 VMF:
Exactly – and she never arrives at a... it's never like, "Now I finally know it's this or that." She always stays in the gray areas – and she's insanely precise and cool there.

01:24:00 KJ:
And it's still satisfying?

01:24:02 KJ:
Yeah, totally. You feel so seen, somehow. I mean, it's also a generational thing – she's pretty much my age, I think two years older or so. So there are lots of things where I feel like someone is speaking who – although it's the U.S. and a lot is completely different – still, as a woman that age, grew up in similar situations on many levels and had similar experiences and so on. And it's funny, too – in „The Empathy Exams", right at the end there's an essay where she basically just apologizes that she can't manage to write back to all the people who want to tell her their stories... I think my hour and a half is up – I'm really going to hit the... or is there anything else you...?

drück jetzt dann wirklich mal auf das... oder gibt‘s noch irgendwas, was dir...?

01:25:27 KJ:
Du musst jetzt noch sagen, ich danke dir für dieses Interview. Das sagen die immer...

01:25:33 VMF:
Ich danke dir Ihnen für das Gespräch und ihre Zeit ... aber das hätte ich...

01:25:37 KJ:
Schön, dass ich kommen durfte.

01:25:39 VMF:
Ok gut, stopp.

Geboren 1966 in einer von einer Mauer umgebenen Stadt.
Aufgewachsen in einem sowohl naturwissenschaftlich als auch künstlerisch geprägten Umfeld.
Diplomierte MTA, Kunstpädagogin und Kunsttherapeutin.
Mutter von drei Kindern.

Seit 35 Jahren im klinischen und sozialen Kontext tätig.
Unzählige Projekte unter dem Motto „Kunst im Sozialen“.
Seit 30 Jahren im ZOOM Kindermuseum aktiv, mit Schwerpunkt Atelier.

Konzeption, Produktion und Vermittlung – stets im Blick auf gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen – haben und werden weiterhin schlaflose Nächte kosten. Doch keine dieser Nächte war vergebens.

Die Eröffnung kreativer Räume im künstlerischen Kontext verstehe ich als Akt der Ermächtigung zur individuellen und biografischen Handlungsfähigkeit.

01:25:27 KJ:
You have to say now, “Thank you for this interview.” That’s what they always say...

01:25:33 VMF:
Thank you for the conversation and your time... but I would have...

01:25:37 KJ:
Nice that I got to come.

01:25:39 VMF:
Okay, good – stop.

Born in 1966 in a city surrounded by a wall.
Raised in an environment shaped equally by science and the arts.
Certified MTA, art educator, and art therapist.
Mother of three children.

Active in clinical and social contexts for 35 years.
Countless projects under the motto “Art in the Social Sphere.”
Engaged with the ZOOM Children‘s Museum for 30 years, with a focus on the studio.

Conception, production, and mediation—always attentive to social developments—have cost, and will continue to cost, many sleepless nights. Yet not a single one of those nights was in vain.

I understand the opening of creative spaces in an artistic context as an act of empowerment for individual and biographical agency.

(Explanatory) Notes and References

Jean-Henri Fabre

I wrote my BA-Thesis on Jean-Henri Fabre as artistic researcher avant-la-lettre. Please find the English translation in part 3 of my reflective documentation.

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Olga Tokarczuk

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Leslie Jamison

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there is no artistic
cure for artists.

Franziska Abgottspon

über mit den Fingern lauschen, was die Erwachsenen als Welt bezeichnen, das Schubladen-Museum, Gemeinsam, Schule spielen, Heilmassage, Künstler*in sein und Improvisation.
about listening with your fingers, what adults call the world, the drawer museum, together, playing school, healing massage, being an artist and improvisation.

Ich treffe Franziska am 13. Juni 2022, also um einiges später als die übrigen Kolleg*innen aus dem ZOOM Kindermuseum. Wir treffen uns im Atelier einer Freundin, bei der ich mich temporär mit eingemietet habe. Seltsamerweise erinnere ich mich aber viel genauer an die Foto-Session zwei Tage später im Schmetterlinghaus im Wiener Burggarten. Franziska ist als Leiterin des ZOOM „Ozeans“ und des ZOOM „Ateliers“ die einzige Kollegin aus dem Mittelbau, die ich interviewe. Wir kennen uns entsprechend seit meinem ersten Tag im ZOOM – ich hatte sogar bei Franziska mein Bewerbungsgespräch. Aber sehr viel zusammengearbeitet haben wir nicht.

00:00:00 VMF:
Also ich hätte jetzt mit dir nochmal so ein Interview gemacht wie mit den anderen aus dem Kindermuseum. Das Audio werde ich so nirgends verwenden, das ist nur meine Notiz. Ich habe die anderen teilweise schon ganz genau transkribiert, weil mir dieses unterschiedliche Sprech-Denken so gefällt. Auch, um es für mich dann nochmal durchzuerleben. Ich möchte das jetzt auch nicht als redigiertes Interview veröffentlichen, sondern ich werde eher so eine Art Antwort darauf verfassen, die das spiegelt, was du mir erzählst oder was wir besprechen. Ich würde gerne diese unterschiedlichen Stimmen irgendwie einfangen, und hab dann gemerkt, naja, ich bin ja keine Schriftstellerin, und 15 verschiedene Erzählstimmen zu entwickeln… also es ist vielleicht anmaßend, wenn ich mir einbilde ich kann das, aber was ich kann, ist meine Antwort darauf, und das ist ja dann automatisch immer anders, weil wir ein anderes Verhältnis haben und unser Gespräch anders ist als die anderen. Ich habe auch keinen Leitfaden. Was ich die anderen immer gefragt hab am Anfang, mehr oder weniger schwurbelig vorgetragen, und das frage ich dich jetzt auch, und du kannst dann darauf antworten oder nicht, oder wir reden darüber, warum du nicht drauf antworten magst oder warum schon, oder wie auch immer: wenn du mit dir selber als Kind, wenn ihr einen Nachmittag miteinander hättet, also zu zweit, aber du als Erwachsene und du als Kind, was würdest du dann mit dir machen, oder was würdest du dich fragen, oder wo würdest du mit dir hingehen? Was würdest du dir zeigen, kann entweder in der Vergangenheit sein oder natürlich jetzt, also du kannst dich entweder da oder dort hinholen.

00:02:38 FA:
Ich würde versuchen, eine Art Sicherheit zu vermitteln, irgendetwas, was nicht stressig ist, etwas wo ich, sie einfach sein kann. Ich würde wahrscheinlich etwas Körperliches machen, wo man sich spürt, raufen, also spielerisch raufen, kitzeln oder so. Ich würde sitzen und umarmen und vielleicht was hören, Geräusche hören, gemeinsam. Ich würde nicht so viel reden. Ich würde vielleicht einfach schauen, was passiert, wenn man so ist und nichts vorhat, keine Ahnung, mit den Fingern irgendwo nachfahren, also. Es wäre mir wichtig, dass Raum da ist und irgendwie Ruhe.

00:04:41 VMF:
Und wie alt bist du?

00:04:43 FA:
Fünf.

00:04:43 VMF:
Und wo würdest du dich da treffen? Oder wo würdest Du mit Dir hingehen?

00:05:02 FA:
Ich würde gerne vielleicht in einem Gartenpavillon sein, also wo ein Innenraum und ein Außenraum gleichzeitig da ist. Ich stelle mir gerade vor in einem Garten, und da ist ein Dach, aber man sieht raus, und

I meet Franziska on June 13, 2022 – quite a bit later than the other colleagues from the ZOOM Children‘s Museum. We meet in the studio of a friend with whom I’m temporarily sharing the space. Strangely, though, I remember the photo session two days later at the Butterfly House in Vienna’s Burggarten much more vividly. As head of the ZOOM “Ocean” and the ZOOM “Studio”, Franziska is the only colleague from middle management whom I interview. We‘ve known each other since my very first day at ZOOM – I even had my job interview with Franziska. But we haven’t worked closely together.

00:00:00 VMF:
So, I was thinking of doing an interview with you, similar to the ones I did with the others from the Children‘s Museum. The audio won’t be used anywhere – it‘s just for my notes. I’ve already transcribed some of the others very precisely because I really like how differ-ent people think and speak. It helps me relive the conversation in a way. I don’t plan to publish this as an edited interview either; instead, I’ll write some sort of response to it, reflecting what you’ve told me or what we discussed. I’d like to somehow capture these different voices, and I realized – well, I’m not a novelist, and creating 15 distinct narrative voices… it’s probably presumptuous to think I can do that. But what I can do is respond, and that’s automatically going to be different every time because each relationship is different, and every conversation is different from the others. I also don’t have a script. What I asked the others at the beginning – more or less in a roundabout way – is what I’ll ask you now. And you can respond to it or not, or we can talk about why you don’t want to respond, or why you do, or however it goes. So: If you could spend an afternoon with yourself as a child – just the two of you – you as the adult and you as the child, what would you do together? What would you ask yourself, or where would you go? What would you show yourself? It could be set in the past or in the present – you could bring yourself there or bring the child here.

00:02:38 FA:
I think I’d try to create a sense of safety, something that’s not stressful, something where I – she – can just be. I’d probably do something physical, something where you feel your body, like roughhousing, but playfully – tickling or something like that. I’d sit and cuddle, and maybe listen to something, listen to sounds together. I wouldn’t talk much. I’d probably just see what happens when you’re just there without a plan – like tracing something with your fingers, no idea. What would matter to me is that there’s space and some kind of calm.

00:04:41 VMF:
And how old are you?

00:04:43 FA:
Five.

00:04:43 VMF:
And where would you meet? Or where would you go together?

00:05:02 FA:
Maybe I’d like to be in a garden pavilion – somewhere that’s both inside and outside at the same time. I’m picturing a garden right now, and there’s a roof, but you can still see out. And inside the pavilion there’s a sofa, and you can sit down and just listen. The sounds of the leaves, and other sounds – I don’t know. Maybe there’s a house nearby and you can hear something from it. Yeah. A kind of open interior space, maybe.

in dem Pavillon ist ein Sofa, und man kann sich da hinsetzen und nur mal hören. Die Geräusche von den Blättern und die Geräusche von weiß nicht. Vielleicht ist ein Haus in der Nähe, wo man etwas hört. Genau. So ein offener Innenraum vielleicht.

00:05:37 VMF:
Einer den es gibt oder mal gegeben hat?

00:05:42 FA:
Nein, das ist jetzt grad gekommen.

00:05:44 VMF:
Weil Du gesagt hast, das mit dem Nachfahren, das hab' ich schön gefunden. Wir haben, da musste ich jetzt gerade dran denken, in dem Center for the Less Good Idea in Südafrika so eine Übung gemacht, immer zu zweit, wo die eine Person die Augen geschlossen hat, und die andere führt sie so durch den Raum. Mit mir hat es eine Frau, eine von den KuratorInnen dort, so toll gemacht. Das war wie ein Stück mit allen Sinnen, außer dem visuellen Sinn halt: So eine Dramaturgie von wärmeren und kälteren Zonen über unterschiedliche Oberflächen, unterschiedliche olfaktorische Zonen, über... irgendwann hat sie mir dann ein bisschen Honig in den Mund gegeben, und das war so– pooooch, eine Explosion. Und da hab ich jetzt grade daran denken müssen, ob ihr vielleicht sowas ähnliches machen würdet und dann habe ich mich gefragt, ob du das für die kleine Franziska machen würdest oder anders rum und was der Unterschied wäre.

00:07:23 FA:
Also, ich glaube, wir würden es beide mögen. Ich würde nichts machen wollen, was ich nicht als erwachsene Franziska auch gerne mache, oder eben was gemeinsam erfinden oder mir zeigen lassen von der kleinen Franziska.

00:07:41 VMF:
Was glaubst du würde sie dir zeigen?

00:07:43 FA:
Ja, irgendwelche Details wahrscheinlich, die ich nicht sehe, oder irgendwelche Geräusche, die ich überhört habe, oder ...

00:08:11 VMF:
In diesen Gesprächen sind wir oft zu Orten gekommen, die es tatsächlich gab, also die natürlich was mit Erinnerung zu tun haben und irgendwie auch mit Kunst machen. Und die man, wenn man sich selbst da nochmal hinbegleiten könnte, anders wahrnehmen würde, gleichzeitig aber als Kind auch Zugang zu was hatte, wo man jetzt vielleicht keinen Zugang mehr hätte. Das hört sich jetzt für mich ein bisschen so an, als wäre dieses Hören oder dieses direkte Wahrnehmen irgendwie auch so etwas, wo du das Gefühl hast, das verbindet dich mit dir selber als Kind, oder gleichzeitig ist es vielleicht was, was man als Kind noch mal irgendwie anders kann, oder darf oder...

00:09:31 FA:
Ja also gerade so mit drei, vier Jahren glaube ich, das ist jetzt eher, was ich beobachte, nicht so, dass ich mich daran erinnere, oder vielleicht doch. Vielleicht klingt was an, wenn ich ein, Drei-, Vierjähriges beobachte, dass da plötzlich wieder was zu Schwingen anfängt bei mir. Dieses: was ist was, was gibt es und was gibt es nicht – ich hab das Gefühl in dem Alter muss man sich so drauf einlassen, was die Erwachsenen als Welt bezeichnen und muss diese eigene Welt irgendwie hinter sich lassen und ich finde, das ist natürlich schade, es ist doch so toll, diese mystischen Welten und Wesen, die man da kennt.

00:05:37 VMF:
One that actually exists or once existed?

00:05:42 FA:
No, that just came to me now.

00:05:44 VMF:
Because what you said about tracing with your fingers – that really struck me. It made me think of an exercise we did at the Center for the Less Good Idea in South Africa – always in pairs. One person had their eyes closed, and the other guided them through the space. One of the curators there did it with me, and it was amazing. It felt like a whole piece made for all the senses – except sight: a kind of dramaturgy through warmer and cooler areas, different textures, different smells... and at one point she put a little bit of honey in my mouth, and it was like – boom, an explosion. That's what your words reminded me of. I started wondering if you'd maybe do something like that with your younger self. And then I asked myself, would you do that for little Franziska – or the other way around – and what would be the difference?

00:07:23 FA:
I think we'd both enjoy it. I wouldn't want to do anything I don't like now, as grown-up Franziska. Or maybe we'd just invent something together – or she'd show me something.

00:07:41 VMF:
What do you think she'd show you?

00:07:43 FA:
Probably some little details I don't notice anymore. Or some sounds I've been tuning out. Or...

00:08:11 VMF:
In these conversations, we've often ended up talking about places that actually existed – so they're connected to memory, and also somehow to making art. And if you could accompany yourself back there, you might experience them differently. But at the same time, as a child, you had access to things you maybe don't anymore. What you're describing now – this listening or direct perception – it sounds like something that connects you with your child-self. Or maybe it's something kids are simply more allowed to do, or better at, or...

00:09:31 FA:
Yes, especially around the age of three or four. I think that's more something I've observed rather than remember – although maybe I do remember, maybe something resonates when I watch a three- or four-year-old, like something in me starts to hum again. That sense of: what is real, what exists and what doesn't? I feel like at that age you have to really buy into what the adults call "the world" and kind of leave your own world behind. And I think that's a shame, because those mystical worlds and creatures you know at that age – they're amazing.

Aber ich finde, also, wenn ich jetzt an mich denke, das waren nicht nur schöne oder tolle Orte und Wesen. Also ich habe da schon auch viel selber erlebt, wo es glaube ich ganz okay ist, dass man diese Welten hinter sich lässt.

00:11:19 VMF:
Oder zumindest bewusst rein oder rausgehen kann.

00:11:27 FA:
Ja, genau!

00:11:28 VMF:
... wenn es beängstigend ist.

00:11:34 FA:
Und sonst, weil du auch nach Erinnerungen gefragt hast. Also das ist jetzt wirklich was ganz Konkretes, eine Erinnerung, weil du Kunst erwähnt hast. Meine Eltern haben mich immer mitgenommen in Ausstellungen und ins Theater. Mein Papa war Schauspieler und Hörspiel-Regisseur, und Ausstellungen und Kunst waren einfach immer sehr, sehr präsent. Da war ich oft auch im Kunsthaus in Zürich. Und da hat es eine Ausstellung gegeben, das war das Schubladen-Museum. Das besteht aus so einer alten Nähfaden-Display-Kiste, wo so die unterschiedlichen Nähfäden drin sind in Schubladen. Und diese einzelnen kleinen Kästchen sind gestaltet worden von unterschiedlichen Künstlern und Künstlerinnen, und das war für mich so ein starker Moment. Das hat mich so angesprochen als Kind, die Kleinheit natürlich und diese Verschiedenheit. Also alle haben die gleichen – ich glaube, das waren vielleicht vier mal fünf Zentimeter, und alle Künstlerinnen und Künstler haben da drin einfach was anderes gemacht. Ich glaube Max Bill ist drin, vielleicht was von Picasso, ich glaube es war sogar Meret Oppenheim auch, also wirklich große Namen waren da versammelt, und das hat mich wahnsinnig fasziniert, einfach diese Vielfalt und wie man diese Aufgabe so unterschiedlich lösen kann. Das ist mir vorher jetzt gerade beim Thema Kindheit und Kunst so aufgepoppt. Ich weiß nicht, ob das passt.

00:13:36 VMF:
Es passt alles und nichts. Wunderbar, aber konnte man die dann wirklich aufmachen?

00:13:43 FA:
Nein, man konnte sie nicht angreifen, also ich glaube, sie hatten vorne ein Glas oder sind die einzelnen Schubladen ausgestellt worden, daneben oder so...

00:14:02 VMF:
Ah ok. Aber du hast schon Erinnerungen daran, wie die unterschiedlich ausgeschaut haben?

00:14:06 FA:
Ja also, ich habe auch noch einen Katalog. Ich muss den mal suchen, den habe ich mir irgendwann dann als Erwachsene noch besorgt.

00:14:29 VMF:
Weil ich jetzt gedacht habe, wenn das alles geschlossen war und du als Kind das so museal nur von außen gesehen hast und auch mit diesen Namen wahrscheinlich noch nicht viel hast anfangen können, wenn das nur in deinem Kopf war ...

00:14:51 FA:
Ja, voll ja.

00:14:52 VMF:
Und hast Du dann auch ein Schubladenmuseum angelegt?

But thinking about myself specifically: those weren't only beautiful or magical places or beings. I experienced a lot myself that makes me think it's maybe okay to leave some of those worlds behind.

00:11:19 VMF:
Or at least to be able to move in and out of them consciously.

00:11:27 FA:
Yes, exactly!

00:11:28 VMF:
...when they get scary.

00:11:34 FA:
Right. And since you also asked about memories – this is something very specific, a memory. Because you mentioned art. My parents always took me along to exhibitions and theater. My dad was an actor and radio play director, and exhibitions and art were just always very present. I was often at the Kunsthaus in Zurich. And there was this one exhibition – the Drawer Museum. It consisted of this old display case for sewing thread, with lots of little drawers for different colored threads. And each of these little compartments was designed by a different artist. And that moment was just so powerful for me. It really spoke to me as a child – the smallness of it, of course, and this variety. They all had the same – maybe four by five centimeter – space, and each artist did something completely different inside. I think Max Bill had one, maybe something by Picasso, I think even Meret Oppenheim was part of it – so really big names. And I was totally fascinated by that – this diversity, and how differently you can approach the same task. That just popped into my head now when we were talking about childhood and art. I don't know if it fits.

00:13:36 VMF:
Everything and nothing fits. Wonderful. But could you actually open them?

00:13:43 FA:
No, you couldn't touch them. I think there was glass in front of them, or maybe the drawers were displayed separately, like next to each other or something...

00:14:02 VMF:
Ah okay. But you do remember how different they looked?

00:14:06 FA:
Yes, and I still have the catalog somewhere. I should look for it – I got it later on, as an adult.

00:14:29 VMF:
Because I was just thinking – if it was all closed off, and as a kid you could only see it in this very museum-like way, and those names probably didn't mean anything to you yet – if it was just in your imagination...

00:14:51 FA:
Yes, totally, yeah.

00:14:52 VMF:
Did you ever make your own drawer museum?

00:14:58 FA:
No, but I always loved boxes and pouches and tins. That's probably also why the drawer museum resonated with me so much – I'd already loved that kind of thing before. My grandpa was a chemist, and he always had drawers full of strange things – some kind of equipment, and you never knew what it was for. And he collected stones too. They were also displayed in glass cases. I loved that as a kid!

00:14:58 FA:
Nein, aber ich hatte immer gern Kistchen und Beutel und Dosen. Wahrscheinlich hat mich das Schubladenmuseum auch so angesprochen, weil ich das schon vorher gerne gehabt habe. Mein Opa war Chemiker, und der hat auch immer so Schubladen gehabt mit seltsamen Dingen, irgendwelchen Geräten, wo man nicht gewusst hat, wofür die sind; und er hat Steine gesammelt. Die waren auch so in Vitrinen. Das hab‘ ich schon als Kind mögen!

00:15:35 VMF:
Also nicht Schubladen, die du gestaltet und gefüllt hast, sondern eher so Schatzkisten, die schon da waren?

00:15:51 FA:
Genau. Und ich glaube, dass mich am Kunstthema als Kind hauptsächlich so diese Freiheit, die darin liegt, fasziniert hat. Dass es da einen Ort gibt, wo man selber einfach machen kann, was man möchte. Also das ist halt so eine Vorstellung, dass es keine Regeln gibt. Ich glaube, deswegen hat es mich da ein bisschen hingezogen.

00:16:35 VMF:
Aber dann in erster Linie mit den Eltern in den Museen oder hat sich das irgendwie in deinem Spielen oder in deinem… also ja mit diesen Schachteln und Kistchen und so. Aber das ist eigentlich dann eher auch so eine Schaulust in erster Linie oder? Auch weil du vorher gesagt hast, der Pavillon im Garten, wo du liegst, mit dir selber und lauschst, das ist eigentlich vor allem wahrnehmen und gar nicht so sehr irgendwas tun oder so, sondern eher so aufsaugen.

00:17:32 FA:
Mhm. Ja.

00:17:33 VMF:
Oder kannst du dich erinnern, bald auch den Raum irgendwie ausgenutzt zu haben? Also, jetzt machst du ja Musik – hättest du in dem Pavillon dann irgendwann nicht mehr nur gelauscht, sondern auch geantwortet?

00:17:59 FA:
Ja, ja, voll. Also ich hab ganz viel gezeichnet und gebastelt, also eher im Bildnerischen. Ich hab ja dann auf der Kunstakademie studiert. Ich glaube ich mochte auch so dieses in Ruhe gelassen werden. Das war wichtig für mich – also, keine Ahnung … den Schlauch vom Fahrrad flicken, das hat einen Anfang und einen Schluss, aber wenn man was zeichnet oder so, dann ist es nicht so definiert. Ich glaube, das hat mir getaugt.

00:18:48 VMF:
War es dann nie fertig?

00:18:52 FA:
Ja, ja, ja, ja!

00:18:57 VMF:
Ja, es ist dann eigentlich lustig, weil im Kunstding irgendwann braucht es dann doch Produkte, die fertig sind. Aber ich genieße das auch gerade mit dem L., weil es da, auch im Gegensatz zu den Workshops, kein Anfang und kein Ende hat. Aber dann wird es eben schwierig zu sagen, ok warum… also so dieser Moment des Herzeigens oder Teilens, vielleicht auch in einem anderen Kontext, sowas wird dann halt eher noch komplizierter.

00:19:39 FA:
Das kann eh auch der Grund sein, wieso ich dann letzten Endes in der Musik gelandet bin. Also ich habe irgendwann gemerkt, dass die Sprache, mit der ich mich ausdrücken kann, einfach nicht so im Bildneri-

00:15:35 VMF:
So not drawers you designed and filled yourself, but more like treasure chests that were already there?

00:15:51 FA:
Exactly. And I think what fascinated me most about art as a child was mainly the freedom it represented. That there was a space where you could just do whatever you wanted. I mean, that was kind of the idea – no rules. I think that’s why I was drawn to it.

00:16:35 VMF:
But at first mainly through your parents, in museums? Or did that also show up in your own play – in your boxes and tins and so on? Because that sounds more like a visual curiosity at first, right? Also, earlier you mentioned the garden pavilion where you‘re lying there with yourself, listening. That’s really more about perception than doing something – more about absorbing.

00:17:32 FA:
Mhm. Yes.

00:17:33 VMF:
Or do you remember using space in an active way early on? I mean, now you make music – so would you, in that pavilion, at some point have stopped just listening and started responding?

00:17:59 FA:
Yeah, yeah, totally. I used to draw and do crafts a lot – more in the visual realm. I even studied at the art academy. I think I also just really liked being left alone. That was important to me – like, I don’t know… fixing the tube on a bicycle, that has a beginning and an end. But when you‘re drawing or something like that, it’s not so clearly defined. I think I liked that.

00:18:48 VMF:
So it was never really finished?

00:18:52 FA:
Yes, yes, exactly!

00:18:57 VMF:
It’s funny, because in art you eventually do need to have finished works, right? But I also enjoy that with L. – unlike in workshops, there’s no beginning and no end. But then it gets tricky when it comes to sharing it – showing it in a different context, that becomes even more complicated.

00:19:39 FA:
That might actually be why I ended up in music in the end. At some point I realized that the language I could express myself in wasn’t really visual – it was music. Also because music is something you often do together. I’ve maybe kept four drawings that I like… but it was all still too much in my head. And with music, I feel like it’s a form of expression that’s just closer to me.

schen liegt, sondern eher in der Musik. Auch weil man Musik oft eben auch gemeinsam macht. Ich habe vielleicht vier Bilder aufgehoben oder so, die ich mag … aber es war noch zu sehr im Kopf und in der Musik habe ich das Gefühl, das ist einfach ein Ausdrucksmittel, das näher bei mir ist.

00:21:30 VMF:
Ja, ja, und das verbindet sich anders mit der Welt, oder? Also auch die Sachen, die du zuerst gesagt hast, das war ja ganz viel Hören und Spüren und eigentlich so erstmal andersrum in Verbindung treten und über die Musik gibt es halt dann so eine direkte… also die Schallwellen sind halt Berührung, das überschneidet sich dann direkter.

00:21:58 FA:
Genau ja.

00:21:59 VMF:
Als Kind hast du gar nicht Musik gemacht?

00:22:04 FA:
Doch doch doch schon! Ich habe gerade gestern mit meiner Schwester und meinen Eltern geskyped, und aus irgendeinem Grund – ahja genau, meine Schwester ist grad krank und ist heiser und jetzt hat sie ganz eine rauchige Stimme. Dann haben wir gesagt, ja von Joe Cocker mittlerweile zu Bonnie Tyler und es ist uns eingefallen, dass sie als Kind auch so eine ganz raue Stimme gehabt hat, und da haben wir drüber gelacht. Wir wissen das noch, weil es Kassetten-Aufnahmen gibt: Wir haben ein Buch gemeinsam vertont, meine Schwester und ich.

00:22:53 VMF:
Oh, voll schön! Gibt‘s das noch?

00:22:56 FA:
Ja das müsste es noch geben. Wir haben uns natürlich vorgenommen, das gesamte Buch zu vertonen. Das war ein schweizerisches Globi, das kennt jeder, das ist entstanden aus einer Werbefigur eigentlich. Das waren viele Bilder und immer gereimt, und meine Schwester hat das gelesen, und ich habe die Musik dazu gemacht. Es ist einfach wirklich witzig, weil erstens kann sie noch nicht so gut lesen und stockt immer und sagt „D…dd…der…. Ti….Tiger äh äh äh“ und immer „äh äh“, da ist kein weiterkommen, und ich mache Musik mit so einem Metallofon, bin dick, dick, dick, ding, dududu! also so ganz abstrakt irgendwie, voll schräg. Natürlich haben wir dann nur das erste Kapitel oder so geschafft. Und wir haben beide gestern wieder gelacht, dass wir so eine starke Erinnerung haben, wie wir da sitzen im Kinderzimmer, auf dem blauen Teppichboden, mit dem Kassettengerät. Ich glaube, sie war sechs und ich eben neun sowas um den Dreh, oder vielleicht ein bisschen älter. Genau.

00:24:41 VMF:
Ist ja auch lustig, dass sie dann gelesen hat, obwohl du bestimmt schon besser gelesen hättest.

00:24:46 FA:
Ja voll, total! Ich habe ja auch mit meiner Schwester zuhause immer Schule gespielt. Sie hat es angezipft, dass ich in die Schule gegangen bin. Also sie ist zweieinhalb Jahre jünger als ich und wir sind nach Zürich übersiedelt, als ich dann in die Volksschule gekommen bin. Und sie musste oder konnte daheimbleiben. Und dann, hat meine Mutter erzählt, hat sie sich geweigert aufzustehen. Sie steht erst auf, wenn Franziska wieder aus der Schule zurück ist. Und wir haben dann Schule gespielt zu Hause. Also ich habe ihr einfach das beigebracht, was ich in der Schule gelernt hab.

00:21:30 VMF:
Yes, yes, and it connects to the world in a different way, right? I mean, the things you talked about at the beginning were all about listening and sensing and sort of connecting the other way around at first – and with music, there’s a kind of direct… like, sound waves are a kind of touch, so it overlaps more directly.

00:21:58 FA:
Exactly, yes.

00:21:59 VMF:
So did you not make music as a child?

00:22:04 FA:
Oh yes, definitely! Just yesterday I was on a video call with my sister and my parents, and somehow – oh right, my sister is sick at the moment and has this really raspy voice. We joked that she’s gone from Joe Cocker to Bonnie Tyler. And then we remembered that she had that raspy voice even as a kid. We know that because there are cassette recordings – we once did an audio version of a book together, my sister and I.

00:22:53 VMF:
Oh, that’s so lovely! Do you still have it?

00:22:56 FA:
It should still exist. We had big plans to record the whole book. It was a Swiss Globi book – everyone in Switzerland knows it, originally a marketing mascot. Lots of pictures, all written in rhyme. My sister read the text and I did the music. It’s really funny because, first of all, she couldn’t read very well yet and kept stumbling and saying, “Th…th… the… ti…tiger… uh uh uh,” and all the time “uh uh,” never getting anywhere. And I’m there with my metallophone going “ding, ding, ding, dududu!” – all really abstract and weird. Of course we only managed the first chapter or so. And we were both laughing about it yesterday, because we both have this vivid memory of sitting there in our childhood bedroom, on the blue carpet, with the tape recorder. I think she was six and I was around nine, or maybe a bit older. Yeah.

00:24:41 VMF:
And funny that she did the reading, even though you probably could’ve done it better.

00:24:46 FA:
Yeah, totally! I always played school at home with my sister. She was annoyed that I got to go to school. She’s two and a half years younger than me, and we moved to Zurich when I started elementary school. And she had to – or got to – stay home. And then, my mom told me, she refused to get out of bed. She said she’d only get up once Franziska came home from school. So we started playing school at home. I just taught her what I’d learned in class.

00:25:32 VMF:
Das hab ich mit meiner Schwester auch gemacht, so lange, bis sie mir dann Nachhilfe in Mathe gegeben hat...

00:25:39 FA:
Ok? Ist sie jünger?

00:25:39 VMF:
Ja sie ist viereinhalb Jahre jünger.

00:25:44 FA:
Ah wow, ok!

00:25:44 VMF:
Und so mit Zahlen und so habe ich es nie gehabt. Ich habe die Relevanz nicht verstanden, eins mehr oder weniger, und sie hat dann in der Volksschule schon so eine Eingaben-Ausgaben-Bilanz in ihrem Geldbeutel gehabt und so, war da anders strukturiert.

00:26:01 FA:
Also, das ist so ganz früh... Musik war einfach immer vorhanden. Ganz laut klassische Musik hören am Sonntag, der Plattenspieler und die Platten... also, das ist sehr, sehr präsent. Aber nicht nur Klassik, sondern auch das Weiße Album z.B. war von Anfang an da in meiner Welt, in meiner Musik. Und wir haben viel gesungen. Wir sind ja vom Wallis, das ist da, wo ich geboren bin und im Kindergarten war, übersiedelt nach Zürich. Das ist damals so drei, dreieinhalb Stunden Autofahrt gewesen. Da sind wir oft am Wochenende zurück ins Wallis und haben im Auto immer gesungen – meine Schwester und meine Mama immer die erste Stimme, mein Papa und ich die zweite Stimme.

00:26:55 VMF:
Cool!

00:26:55 FA:
Das war so normal für mich, dass ich geglaubt hab, dass jeder zweite Stimme singen kann. Das war für mich erst eine erwachsene Erkenntnis, dass es Leute gibt, die das schwierig finden oder das nicht hören. Das ist so weit gegangen, dass ich dann mal in einem Chor war, da haben alle die erste Stimme gesungen, und ich habe geglaubt, das ist Konzept. Dass es irgendwie einfach so sein soll. Und als ich dann gewagt habe zu fragen, hieß es: Ja! Sing doch zweite Stimme, wenn du magst, so also... und musikalische Früherziehung, das habe ich ganz toll gefunden, auch aus dem Grund, merke ich jetzt grad im Gespräch, weil das nicht einengend war. Also das war sehr auch wieder auf Hören... genau: Peter und der Wolf. Oder auch diese eine Volksschullehrerin hatte ich, die einfach Musik vorgespielt hat, und wir haben überlegen sollen, welcher Komponist das war. Und es war stresslos, es war keine Prüfung oder so. Und die musikalische Früherziehung war ganz viel auch so Rhythmik...

00:28:39 VMF:
So diese Orff-Geschichten?

00:28:39 FA:
Genau. Und ich habe da einfach sehr, sehr schöne Erinnerungen an dieses Freie und nicht Wertende und Franziska-sein können. Im Gegensatz dann zum Klavierunterricht. Also ich glaube, ich habe acht Jahre Klavierunterricht genommen, das war schrecklich. Also nicht spielerisch, das war so alte Schule: Ich muss den kleinen Finger krumm halten, aber der ist so klein bei mir, war er schon immer und auf allen Noten stehen fünf Rufzeichen. Also es wurde nicht das Schöne an der Musik vermittelt, sondern nur das Theoretische, Mühsame, also das, was damals einfach nichts mit mir zu tun hatte. Aber da ist ja Gott sei Dank ein bisschen was passiert in der Musikerziehung in den letzten dreißig Jahren!

00:25:32 VMF:
I used to do that with my sister too – until the day she started tutoring me in math...

00:25:39 FA:
Oh really? Is she younger?

00:25:39 VMF:
Yeah, she's four and a half years younger.

00:25:44 FA:
Wow, okay!

00:25:44 VMF:
And with numbers and that stuff – I just never got it. I didn't understand why it mattered whether it was one more or one less. And she, even in elementary school, had this little balance sheet in her wallet – like income and expenses. She was just wired differently.

00:26:01 FA:
So yeah, from a really early age... music was always around. Blasting classical music on Sundays – the record player, the vinyls... that's a very strong memory. But not just classical music – like, The White Album was there from the beginning too, part of my world, my music. And we sang a lot. We're originally from Valais – that's where I was born and went to kindergarten – and then we moved to Zurich. Back then, the drive was three, three and a half hours. We often drove back to Valais on weekends, and in the car we always sang – my sister and my mom sang the first voice, and my dad and I did the second.

00:26:55 VMF:
Cool!

00:26:55 FA:
It felt so normal to me that I assumed everyone could sing harmony. I only realized as an adult that there are people who find that difficult or don't hear it. It went so far that when I joined a choir, everyone was singing the melody line and I thought that was the concept – that it was supposed to be that way. And when I finally dared to ask, they said, "Sure! Sing the harmony if you want," like no big deal. And I really loved early childhood music classes – I'm just realizing now, as we talk – because they weren't restrictive. It was very much about listening again... like Peter and the Wolf. Or I had this one elementary school teacher who would just play us music and we'd guess the composer. And it wasn't stressful – there were no tests or anything. And those music classes were very rhythmic too...

00:28:39 VMF:
Like Orff-style?

00:28:39 FA:
Exactly. And I just have really lovely memories of that freedom, that non-judgmental space where I could just be Franziska. In contrast to piano lessons. I think I had piano lessons for eight years – it was awful. Not playful at all, very old-school: "You have to keep your pinky curved" – but mine is so short, it always was. And every note in the sheet music had five exclamation marks next to it. It wasn't about the beauty of the music, just the theory and the drudgery – things that had nothing to do with me at that time. But thankfully, music education has changed a bit in the past thirty years!

00:29:52 VMF:
Ja, ich finde es interessant: das Musikschulwesen im Vergleich zur bildenden Kunst… also es ist ja immer noch viel schulischer. Die Tochter von der Başak – also Başak ist diese Kuratorin, mit der ich jetzt unterwegs war, und ihre Tochter Maya, die ist gerade 15 geworden und spielt wahnsinnig gut Klavier. Basak hat mir immer wieder erzählt von diesen Klavier-Müttern, die ihre Kinder zum Weinen bringen und hauen, und was weiß ich, wenn sie den zweiten Platz machen bei Prima la Musica. Und Basak ist immer wieder irritiert, weil Maya selber so ambitioniert ist und so ehrgeizig, dass sie dann auch frustriert ist, wenn sie nur den zweiten Platz hat.

Aber die Maya ist unglaublich! So ein absolutes Gehör, sowas habe ich noch nie erlebt. Sie war jetzt auch in Südafrika dabei, und William Kentridge hat sie eingeladen, bei einer der nächsten Produktionen dabei zu sein, nachdem sie dort bei einer Jam-Session dabei war. Das war so…. ich war so weggeblasen! Also ich war irrsinnig neidisch, dass ich da nicht die Tools hatte, um mit einzusteigen, weil das einfach ein Niveau war, das wäre peinlich gewesen. Aber ich bin eine halbe Stunde dagesessen und hätte nur heulen können, weil das so berührend war. Den Kolleg*innen, die mit mir dort waren und auch keine Musiker*innen und Performer*innen sind, ist es genauso gegangen.

Aber jedenfalls in der Musik gibt es ja schon immer noch so diese konservativen Zugänge, aber irgendwie ist es selbstverständlich, dass so was wie ein Handwerk einfach vermittelt wird. Und ich meine, jetzt habe ich, ich weiß nicht wie viele Jahre Kunst studiert, aber ich habe nicht das Gefühl, dass ich irgendwie etwas kann.

00:32:32 FA:
Mhm.

00:32:33 VMF:
Und jetzt fange ich im Herbst in der Schule an, und eigentlich habe ich ziemlich Bammel, weil ich nicht so genau weiß, was ich denen beibringen soll, also wenn es darum geht irgendwas mit einem Lehrplan zu verknüpfen und dann am Ende noch zu bewerten…

00:32:45 FA:
Mhm.

00:32:47 VMF:
Und wenn ich gerade über Musik nachdenke, merke ich immer mehr: das, was ich im Kunst-machen suche, ist eigentlich ein in Verbindung treten über das Gemeinsame tun. Und das funktioniert halt in der Musik schon noch mal…

00:33:06 FA:
Ja.

00:33:07 VMF:
… auf einer ganz anderen Ebene, gerade gemeinsam Singen. Also ich habe eigentlich eine totale Sehnsucht, mir das auch irgendwie noch anzueignen …

00:33:24 FA:
Du musst es einfach machen. Also das ist das, was ich vorher glaube ich gemeint hab: ich finde, es gibt einen Unterschied, von welchem Alter wir reden, wann man jetzt der Musik begegnet oder einem Instrument. Weil ich glaube, wenn ich eine Klavierlehrerin gehabt hätte, die eher dieses Spielerische, dieses tu‘ mal ein bisschen und horch einmal… aber das war von Anfang an Tonleiter als allererstes. Also natürlich muss man das auch lernen, die Tonleiter. Aber ich glaube, diesen ersten Zugang, das Feuerentfachen, das braucht es einfach. Das Handwerk braucht es unbedingt, weil da geht es dann plötzlich, wenn Du irgendein Stück spielen musst, eben um Geschwindigkeit oder es geht

00:29:52 VMF:
Yeah, I find that interesting – music education compared to visual arts. It’s still a lot more school-like. Başak – the curator I’ve been working with – her daughter Maya just turned fifteen and plays the piano incredibly well. Başak has told me stories about these piano moms who make their kids cry, or even hit them if they only get second place at Prima la Musica. And Başak is always a bit unsettled by it because Maya herself is so ambitious and competitive and then she’s frustrated if she only gets second place, too.

But Maya is amazing. She has perfect pitch – I‘ve never seen anything like it. She was with us in South Africa, and William Kentridge invited her to be part of one of his next productions after seeing her in a jam session. It was just… I was blown away. I was honestly jealous that I didn’t have the tools to jump in – because the level was so high, it would’ve been embarrassing. I just sat there for half an hour on the verge of tears because it was so moving. And the others with me – non-musicians and non-performers – felt the same.

Anyway, in music there are still these conservative approaches, but somehow it’s accepted that there’s a craft to be taught. And I mean, I’ve studied art for – I don’t know how many years – but I don’t feel like I actually know how to do anything.

00:32:32 FA:
Mhm.

00:32:33 VMF:
And I’m starting to teach at a school this fall, and honestly, I’m kind of nervous about it – because I don’t really know what I’m supposed to teach them, especially when it comes to linking it to a curriculum and then, on top of that, grading…

00:32:45 FA:
Mhm.

00:32:47 VMF:
And when I think about music, I realize more and more that what I’m really looking for in making art is this sense of connection that comes through doing something together. And that just works differently in music…

00:33:06 FA:
Yeah.

00:33:07 VMF:
…on a whole other level, especially singing together. I actually really long to somehow learn that too…

00:33:24 FA:
You just have to do it. I think that’s what I meant earlier – there’s a difference depending on what age you first encounter music or an instrument. I think if I’d had a piano teacher who encouraged more playfulness, like “go ahead and try something, and listen…” But instead, the very first thing was scales. And sure, of course you have to learn scales at some point. But I think that initial spark, that sense of ignition – that’s crucial. The craft side of things, that’s definitely needed, because once you want to play a certain piece, suddenly it’s about speed or reading notes well. But I think that first encounter is so important. And that brings me back again to the work at the Children‘s Museum, where I see the studio space as a place where that kind of encounter can happen – with a material, for instance – without some adult immediately asking, “What’s that going to be?” or…

darum, dass du die Noten gut lesen kannst. Aber ich glaube, dass diese erste Begegnung einfach so was Wichtiges ist, und da komm ich vielleicht wieder dann doch auf die Arbeit im Kindermuseum, wo ich das Atelier so sehe: dort darf so eine Begegnung passieren mit einem Material, ohne dass ein Erwachsener sagt, was wird das und …

00:35:11 VMF:
… ist das richtig oder falsch.

00:35:11 FA:
Genau und dass man dann danach, wenn man Bildhauer werden will oder Malerin oder was auch immer, sich mit der Technik, den Materialien auseinandersetzen muss, ist klar. Aber so dieser erste Kontakt, dafür braucht es einen Ort, wo man eben diese Freiheit spürt. Das finde ich was Wesentliches.

00:35:49 VMF:
Ja, ja, diese Selbstverständlichkeit, also das, was du erzählst von euren Autofahrten, wo ihr einfach gesungen habt, wo das irgendwie ganz natürlich war. Also, ich habe auch jahrelang Klavier- und Gitarrenunterricht gehabt, aber ich habe überhaupt nicht… also ich mache ja jetzt mit dem L. auch ziemlich viel so Sound-Geschichten, und ich habe das Gefühl, das hat überhaupt nichts mit dem zu tun, was ich damals in diesem Unterricht erlebt habe… obwohl dass jetzt kein besonderer Drill war, es war eher andersrum, dass ich das Gefühl hatte, die bringen mir eigentlich nichts gescheit bei. Das eine war so Lagerfeuer-Gitarre, aber da habe ich nie nach Noten spielen gelernt. Und Klavier, mit dem bin ich dann irgendwann Klettern gegangen und wir haben geplaudert, also alles andere als Drill. Aber das, was es eigentlich hätte sein können, dieses Musizieren und auch gemeinsam musizieren, das habe ich da nicht wirklich… ich wollte immer eine Band haben und hatte aber das Gefühl, ich kann das ja gar nicht…

00:36:57 FA:
Also deshalb konnte ich auch… bei meinen Eltern sind viele Musiker da gewesen, da hat es immer geheißen: Üben, üben, üben, man muss üben, üben, üben, erst dann darf man vielleicht irgendwann auf die Bühne, und das habe ich ziemlich verinnerlicht gehabt. Und man muss es studieren, also Kunst muss man studieren, damit man es nachher machen darf. Für mich war es ein wahnsinniger Schritt, mich auf eine Bühne zu stellen, weil ich das nicht studiert habe. Also das war so eine kleine Rebellion. Und ich habe gemerkt, wie ich drüber nachgedacht hab, dass ich das meinen Eltern irgendwie auch ein bisschen vorwerfe. Im Nachhinein war es schon okay, auf der Kunstakademie zu studieren, weil jetzt habe ich das irgendwie kennengelernt und dadurch die Musik anders angehen können. Als ob ich bildende Kunst studiert hätte für die Musik. Ich glaube, wenn ich Musik studiert hätte, wäre ich mit der Musik nicht dorthin gekommen, wo ich dann war. Also ich war da eben frei, dadurch, dass ich nicht Musikerin bin. Also natürlich bin ich Musikerin, aber eben nicht so eine studierte Musikerin, eine offizielle Musikerin, und ich muss nicht das können, um mein Geld zu verdienen, dass jemand sagt: Komm ins Studio, da sind die Noten, sing das bitte in dem und dem Stil. Das muss ich nicht. Deswegen kann ich meine ganz eigene Stimme verwenden, die für meine Sachen passt. Ich glaube, dass ich nur durch das Künstlerische, Kreative, eher Bildnerische dann so hab musizieren können.

00:39:13 VMF:
Hat eigentlich für dich die Massage was mit Kunst machen zu tun?

00:39:25 FA:
Ja, weil du vorher gesagt hast, du hast das Gefühl, du fängst mit dem Unterrichten an und kannst eigentlich

00:35:11 VMF:
…is it right or wrong.

00:35:11 FA:
Exactly. And sure, later, if you want to become a sculptor or painter or whatever, you'll have to dive into technique and materials. But for that very first contact, there has to be a space where you can feel that freedom. That, to me, is something really essential.

00:35:49 VMF:
Yes, yes – like the naturalness of what you described, singing in the car with your family. Where it just was, without needing to be anything. I mean, I also took piano and guitar lessons for years, but I never… well, now I'm doing all these sound things with L., and I feel like it has nothing to do with what I learned back then. Not that it was especially strict or rigid – it was almost the opposite. I felt like I wasn't really being taught anything useful. Guitar was just campfire-style – I never learned to read music. And with piano, at some point I'd just go climbing with the teacher and we'd talk. So, the opposite of discipline. But the thing it could have been – this experience of actually making music, and making music together – that never really happened. I always wanted to be in a band but felt like I didn't actually know how to.

00:36:57 FA:
That's why I couldn't… I mean, we had a lot of musicians around when I was growing up, and there was always this message: practice, practice, practice. You have to practice, and only then – maybe – you'll be allowed on stage. I really internalized that. That you have to study art before you're allowed to make it. For me, getting up on stage was a huge step, because I hadn't studied music. It felt like a small rebellion. And when I really thought about it, I realized I even kind of resent my parents for that.

In hindsight, I'm glad I studied at the art academy, because it gave me access to something – and I could approach music differently because of it. It's like I studied visual art for the sake of music. I think if I'd studied music, I wouldn't have ended up where I did with it. The fact that I wasn't "officially" a musician gave me a kind of freedom. I mean, of course I am a musician, but not a formally trained one, not a "proper" musician – and I don't need to be able to walk into a studio and be handed sheet music and be told "please sing this in such-and-such style" in order to earn a living. That's not my world. And because of that, I can use my voice – one that works for what I want to do. I think it's only through the creative, artistic, visual side of things that I've been able to find my way into music like that.

00:39:13 VMF:
Do you feel like massage is related to making art?

nichts wirklich... also ich habe einfach das Bedürfnis gehabt, ein Handwerk zu erlernen. Was ich mögen habe beim Kunststudium, ist so dieses Reinschnuppern in die verschiedenen ... in Keramik, Guss, in Tischler-Geschichten, Metallbearbeitung. Das habe ich super gefunden. Aber du lernst das nicht, also du kannst ein bisschen herumbasteln. Aber es ist mir ein bisschen abgegangen, ein Handwerk wirklich zu erlernen.

Und das andere war: Das Studium ist ganz viel Anatomie, auswendig lernen, wirklich viel Stoff bearbeiten, und ich war in der Schule immer ganz schlecht und habe von mir das Bild gehabt, dass ich das nie könnte. Also das war so ein zweites Ding, dass ich mir das ein bisschen beweise, dass ich doch nicht zu blöd bin, sowas auswendig zu lernen, dass ich das kann.

Also einerseits gibt es diese ganze Theorie, aber dann auch das Intuitive. Das ist für mich so eine Verbindung zum kreativen Arbeiten oder Musizieren: Du hast nicht eine ganz strikte Vorgabe, sondern du musst auch spüren, was ist da. Also ich finde es keinen Zufall, dass man sagt, Musik berührt und so eine Behandlung, da berührt man auch einen Menschen. Und was mir taugt beim Massieren ist dieses: sich nichts vornehmen und dann einfach mal spüren, was ist da und dann drauf reagieren. Das Wissen ist vorhanden, weil das habe ich gelernt, aber das benutze ich eher intuitiv und das finde ich was Gutes. Ich habe gerne Dinge, wo ich merke, es kommt jetzt einfach so von irgendwo da her, und es ist nicht so kopfig.

00:42:41 VMF:
Ja, es ist so ein anders vertrautes Wissen.

00:42:45 FA:
Genau, und es fühlt sich für mich auch frei an.

00:42:54 VMF:
Ja, es ist auch schön, weil du ganz am Anfang gesagt hast, was du mit dir selber im Pavillon machst, im Gartenpavillon, war ja das Lauschen und Spüren auch. Mit den Fingern lauschen.

00:43:11 FA:
Genau, das ist es auf alle Fälle. Also das merke ich beim Massieren: dieses ganz Feine, dass die Hände wie Sensoren sind, wo man eben nicht nur die Oberfläche spürt, sondern das, was darunter ist auch, das finde ich supercool.

00:44:02 VMF:
Hast du Octavia Butler mal gelesen?

00:44:04 FA:
Nein.

00:44:04 VMF:
Ich hab das jetzt gerade angefangen, weil es immer wieder irgendwo aufgetaucht ist, dieses ganz bekannte Buch aus den 80er Jahren. Dawn heißt der erste Band. Also ich bin erst ganz am Anfang, und der Plot ist irgendwie: die Menschheit hat sich zugrunde gerichtet aber dann sind Aliens gekommen, die so grade die letzten paar Exemplare Menschen von der Erde gerettet haben und es über 200, 300 Jahre geschafft haben diese Menschen total zu erforschen und durch so einen Tiefschlaf am Leben zu erhalten, währenddessen die Erde zu reparieren, Krankheiten zu heilen und so weiter. Ein paar Einzelne, so Arche-Noah mäßig, wollen sie dann wieder zurückschicken. Und eine davon ist die Protagonistin von diesem Buch, die wacht in so einer weißen Zelle auf und erst sprechen sie nur von außen zu ihr, und sie sieht niemanden aber irgendwann gewöhnen sie sie so langsam an dieses Andere, sie muss quasi erst trainieren, sich vor dem Alien nicht zu fürchten, erst dann darf sie raus.

00:39:25 FA:
Yes – especially because you just said you feel like you're starting to teach and don't really know anything... I had this strong desire to learn a craft. What I liked about art school was getting to try things out – ceramics, casting, woodworking, metalwork. I thought that was great. But you don't really learn it. You can dabble, but that sense of truly learning a craft – I missed that.

And massage school was a lot of anatomy, memorizing, going through a huge amount of material. I was never good in school and always thought of myself as someone who couldn't do that. So part of it was also wanting to prove to myself that I'm not too dumb to learn something by heart – that I can do it.

On the one hand, there's all the theory, but then there's the intuitive side too. That's what connects it to creative work or making music for me: you don't have a strict blueprint – you have to feel what's there. It's no coincidence, I think, that people say music touches you – and in massage, you literally touch someone. What I love about massage is going into it without a plan and just sensing what's there and responding. The knowledge is there – I've learned it – but I use it more intuitively. And I really value that. I like doing things where it just kind of comes from somewhere, where it's not so much in my head.

00:42:41 VMF:
Yeah, it's a kind of different, familiar knowledge.

00:42:45 FA:
Exactly, and it also feels like freedom to me.

00:42:54 VMF:
It's nice too because at the very beginning you said that what you'd do with your younger self in the garden pavilion would be to listen and sense things – with your fingers, even.

00:43:11 FA:
Yes, exactly – that's totally what it is. I notice that with massage: that super subtle sense, how the hands are like sensors – not just feeling the surface, but sensing what's underneath. I think that's really cool.

00:44:02 VMF:
Have you ever read Octavia Butler?

00:44:04 FA:
No.

00:44:04 VMF:
I just started reading her because that one famous book of hers from the '80s kept popping up – Dawn is the first volume. I'm only at the beginning, but the plot is something like: humanity has destroyed itself, but then aliens show up and manage to save a few last humans from Earth. They keep them alive for 200, 300 years through suspended animation while they repair the Earth and cure diseases and all that. And then they want to send a few people back – kind of Noah's Ark-style. One of them is the book's protagonist. She wakes up in this white cell, and at first, they only speak to her from the outside, and she doesn't see anyone. Slowly, they get her used to this Other – she has to be trained not to fear the alien, and only then can she go out.

Und der hat eben schon so was Anthropomorphes, aber sie haben kein Gesicht, keine Augen und Nase und Mund, sondern der ganze Körper ist wie mit so Tentakeln besetzt, die Sinnesorgane sind, so wie eine Seeanemone oder so, und jetzt habe ich gerade gedacht, mit deinen Fingern, die wie so Antennen sind...

00:46:00 FA:
Ja, ja.

00:46:00 VMF:
Ja schön. Mir haben diese Gespräche jetzt irrsinnig Spaß gemacht, einfach dieses: Warum macht man Kunst? Dieses unterschiedliche in-der-Welt-sein und mit der Welt umgehen und mit sich selber umgehen und dann auch darauf kommen, dass egal, ob du dann Masseurin bist oder... also, es ist ja alles miteinander irgendwie verbunden.

Und ich finde es so wichtig auch für mich selber, es ist mir so ein Anliegen, dass ich mich nicht aufspalte in unterschiedliche Identitäten, so: da bin ich Künstlerin und da bin ich irgendwas anderes, oder jetzt höre ich auf, Künstlerin zu sein, weil ich kann ja davon nicht leben, oder irgendwie so.

00:47:03 FA:
Ja.

00:47:04 VMF:
Und ich weiß nicht, ich hab so viele Leute in meinem Umfeld, bei denen ich das Gefühl habe, das sind eigentlich die interessantesten Künstlerinnen und Künstler, die dann trotzdem sagen, ich mache ja gar keine Kunst, aber ich denk mir, das stimmt überhaupt nicht! Es geht doch eigentlich darum, wie ich der Welt begegne, bei dem, was irgendwie so dieses... in Ermangelung einer besseren Vokabel: dieses Künstlerische ausmacht, was so bereichernd und so schön ist.

00:47:36 FA:
Ich habe das auch mit dem... Du kennst den M. vielleicht?

00:47:42 VMF:
Ja, vom sehen ...

00:47:43 FA:
Ich finde einfach, der hat so eine Künstler-Seele, aber seit zehn Jahren tut er nix mehr, kunstmäßig. Und ich denk mir, das ist schade. Er ist in Graz, wenn er in Wien wäre, dann würde er sich vielleicht anders künstlerisch bewegen. Also ich glaube, dass das Umfeld auch etwas fördern oder niederhalten kann.

00:48:54 VMF:
Total, aber gerade in Wien kommt es mir schon irgendwie extrem vor, dass so viele Leute z.B. an der Kunstakademie dann aufhören, Kunst zu machen. Oder sich überhaupt nicht mehr erlauben, eine Künstlerseele zu sein. Für mich ist L. so ein Beispiel: sie ist so eine super Künstlerin und so eine interessante Person, und eine coole Musikerin, und nur weil sie irgendwie in so bestimmte Schubladen nicht ganz reinpasst oder die Karriere nicht entsprechend absolviert hat oder so, hadert sie mit dieser Identität total und erlaubt es sich dann gar nicht mehr.

Im Zusammenhang mit dieser Ausstellung waren ja jetzt so Screenings. Dort war auch Brownyn Lace – das ist die Künstlerin, die mit William Kentridge gemeinsam das Center for the Less Good Idea gegründet hat und leitet. Sie verkörpert für mich total den Spirit vom Center. Auf so eine irrsinnig warmherzige und feine und irgendwie auch stille, aber total unterstützende Art, einen gemeinsamen Raum schaffen, wo ich so das Gefühl habe, da geht es wirklich um Kunstmachen

The alien is kind of anthropomorphic, but it doesn't have a face – no eyes, nose, or mouth. Instead, the whole body is covered with tentacles that are sensory organs, like a sea anemone. And I was just thinking, with your fingers – how you described them like antennae...

00:46:00 FA:
Yeah, yeah.

00:46:00 VMF:
So beautiful. These conversations have given me so much joy – this whole question of: Why do we make art? This different way of being in the world, of engaging with it, and with ourselves. And realizing that, whether you're a massage therapist or... whatever – it's all somehow connected.

And I think that's so important for me too – it really matters to me that I don't split myself into separate identities. Like: here I'm the artist, and over there I'm someone else. Or: now I'll stop being an artist, because I can't make a living from it. Or whatever version of that.

00:47:03 FA:
Yeah.

00:47:04 VMF:
And I don't know – I know so many people in my circle where I feel like they're actually the most interesting artists, but then they say, "I don't really make art." And I think – that's just not true! For me, it's really about how you engage with the world. That thing – lacking a better word – that artistic quality, which is so enriching and beautiful.

00:47:36 FA:
I feel that too – with... you know M. maybe?

00:47:42 VMF:
Yeah, by sight...

00:47:43 FA:
I just think he has such an artist soul, but he hasn't done anything art-related in ten years. And I think – that's a shame. He's in Graz. If he were in Vienna, I think he might move differently in terms of art. So I do believe that your environment can either support something – or suppress it.

00:48:54 VMF:
Totally. But especially in Vienna, I find it really extreme how many people – like, people who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts – end up quitting art altogether. Or stop allowing themselves to identify as an artist. For me, L. is an example: she's such a great artist, such an interesting person, and a cool musician, and just because she doesn't quite fit into certain boxes or hasn't followed a typical career path, she struggles so much with that identity and doesn't even let herself claim it anymore.

As part of the exhibition, there were these screenings recently, and Bronwyn Lace was there too – she's the artist who co-founded and co-directs the Center for the Less Good Idea with William Kentridge. She really embodies the spirit of the Center for me. In this incredibly warm, gentle, quiet but deeply supportive way, she creates a shared space where I really feel like it's about making art for reasons I relate to – reasons that matter to me.

aus den Beweggründen, die mir nah sind, oder die ich wichtig finde.

Und im Vergleich dazu habe ich in Wien immer wieder das Gefühl... naja jedenfalls, ich finde alles, was irgendwie einen Raum schafft, um sich zu verbinden; da sind für mich diese Gespräche auch so schön, weil das auch so ein Erkennen von Gemeinsamkeiten ist und es macht so ein schönes Spektrum auf, was es alles bedeuten kann, ein Künstler*innenleben zu leben oder einfach, wie man sein Leben und seine Verbindung mit der Welt angehen kann.

00:53:07 FA:
Also da finde ich auch, dass die Frage ist, worüber reden wir? Reden wir über das, was unsere Gesellschaft als Kunst sieht, reden wir über das, was das Finanzamt als Kunst sieht? Ab wann ist man Künstlerin oder Künstler? Wenn man davon leben kann, habe ich immer beigebracht gekriegt, aber das sind einfach Definitionen.

Ich glaube, dass diese Freiheit so wichtig ist zu sagen: ich mach einfach das, was ich tun muss. Wenn jemand anderes sagt, meine Musik ist Kunst, okay, aber bei der Musik hab ich ganz stark gespürt, das ist ein inneres Bedürfnis. Also meine Solo-Platten, das war einfach sowas von dran, dass ich das mache. Das ist dieser intrinsische Aspekt, das ist wirklich nicht aufgesetzt, sondern das ist etwas, was kommen muss und dann auch wieder weggeht.

Also ich habe gemerkt, jetzt war mir wichtig, dass ich das Massieren, dieses Handwerk lerne, und ich hab gewusst, wenn ich währenddessen noch Musik weitermachen müsste, das hätte mich gestresst, dann hab ich gesagt, okay, ich pausier da jetzt.

Mich hat es auch bei der Musik dann irgendwie einfach nicht mehr interessiert dieses Musikbusiness Drumherum. Ich habe total lässige Konzerte spielen können, im Radio-Kulturhaus zum Beispiel, das war ein Wahnsinn, oder mit einer anderen Band auf Tour in der Schweiz vor 20000 und mehr. Das sind coole Sachen. Aber ich habe dann irgendwie gemerkt, dass dieses Drumherum so wahnsinnig wichtig ist, und das Künstlerische ist mir einfach abgegangen in diesem Business.

Ich weiß noch 2018 oder so war das glaube ich schon, da habe ich gefunden, hey dieses Facebook und die ganzen sozialen Medien, ich will das nicht mehr. Weil ich das Gefühl gehabt hab, die Leute, wenn sie ein Foto von einem Konzert gesehen haben und einen Schnipsel auf Youtube, haben sie das Gefühl, sie waren dort. Aber ich finde so dieses authentische Erlebnis so wichtig, gerade in der Musik. Und bei Konzerten ist das immer weniger wert, also da hab ich ein bisschen einen Frust gehabt.

Wo ich auch wieder mehr Lust krieg, das zu machen oder eben mir diese authentischen Momente zu schaffen, die es vorher und nachher nicht mehr gibt, ist in die Impro-Richtung zu gehen, wo man einfach sagt: Hey, ihr müsst zum Konzert kommen, es gibt keine andere Möglichkeit. Also dieses Zusammenkommen, finde ich so was Wichtiges, auch bei Kunst, auch bei Ausstellungen, also dass es eben nicht so losgelöst ist, nur in einem Insta-Bild. Aber da könnten wir jetzt noch zwei Stunden weiterreden...

00:57:27 VMF:
Ja, letztlich über das Ding eben auch irgendwie in Verbindung sein, oder? Das ist ja das Seltsame an diesen ganzen Online-Geschichten, dass das dann so abgekoppelt ist. Das ist mir auch irrsinnig unheimlich...

00:57:53 FA:

In contrast, here in Vienna I often get the feeling... well, anyway – I think anything that creates space for connection, that's what I find so beautiful about these conversations too: it's a form of recognition, of shared ground. And it opens up this rich spectrum of what it can mean to live a life as an artist – or simply how to approach your life and your connection to the world.

00:53:07 FA:
Yeah, and I think the real question is: what are we talking about? Are we talking about what society considers art? What the tax office considers art? When do you become an artist? I was always taught: when you can live from it. But those are just definitions.

What I think is really important is that freedom to say: I'm just doing what I have to do. If someone else wants to call my music art – fine. But for me, music has always felt like an inner necessity. My solo albums – I just had to make them. That was an intrinsic thing, not put on or constructed. It's something that needs to come – and then it might go again.

I realized at one point that it was important for me to learn massage, to learn a craft. And I knew that if I'd also tried to keep making music at the same time, it would've stressed me out. So I said, okay, I'm putting that on pause for now.

And I also just stopped being interested in the whole music business side of things. I've had the chance to play really cool concerts – like at the Radiokulturhaus, which was incredible – or going on tour in Switzerland with another band, playing to 20,000 people or more. Those are amazing experiences.
But I started realizing how much everything around the actual art matters in that world. And for me, the artistic part started to get lost in the business side of it.

I remember in 2018 or so, I just thought – this whole Facebook thing and all the social media, I don't want it anymore. I felt like when people see a photo of a concert and a clip on YouTube, they think they were there. But for me, that real, lived experience – that's what's so important, especially in music. And live concerts seem to be worth less and less – that really frustrated me.

What's making me excited again is the idea of going more into improvisation – creating those moments that only exist then, and never before or after. Where it's like: "Hey, you have to come to the concert – there's no other way." That coming together – I think that's so essential. In art too, in exhibitions – it shouldn't just be something detached, like an image on Instagram. But I mean, we could talk about that for another two hours...

00:57:27 VMF:
Yeah, in the end, it's all about connection, isn't it? That's the weird thing about all this online stuff – it gets so disconnected. It kind of creeps me out...

Ja und dann andererseits, während so einer Pandemie hat man plötzlich Tools, über die man sich vernetzen kann. Während eines Kriegs, habe ich gedacht, da macht Facebook dann wieder Sinn, wenn sich die Leute austauschen können, und nicht alles glauben müssen, was irgendwer behauptet.

00:58:15 VMF:
Und gleichzeitig ist das auch wieder super unheimlich: das ist jetzt vielleicht irgendwie in diesem isolierten Fall gut ist, dass es Facebook gibt, weil Facebook das zulässt, aber wenn dann dieser eine Typ so eine unglaubliche Macht hat und wenn es ihm gerade passt, manipulieren kann, wie er möchte, das ist dann auch wieder… Aber ja, ich mein natürlich, auch diese live online tools, zoom und skype und so – das will man sich eigentlich gar nicht vorstellen, wie das jetzt gewesen wäre ohne die Möglichkeit. Wenn man wirklich isoliert daheim sitzt und gar keinen Kontakt mehr hat.

Ja aber weil du gesagt hast, Richtung Improvisation, diese Momente schaffen… da war das jetzt auch in Südafrika so spannend. Die arbeiten ja immer so, dass sie pro Saison drei Tage einen Initial-Workshop machen, also da gibt es ein paar Leute, die als Kuratoren oder Kuratorinnen eingeladen sind, und die suchen wiederum eine relativ große Gruppe an Performer*innen, Musiker*innen und so weiter aus, mit denen etwas entwickelt werden soll für quasi ein Jahresprogramm. Und wir waren jetzt eben bei diesen drei Tagen Initialworkshop dabei, was natürlich super aufregend und voll toll war.

01:00:05 FA:
Wahnsinn, ja!

01:00:06 VMF:
In Wirklichkeit war das lauter so Zeug, was man auch schon 100 Mal gemacht hat mit mehr oder weniger Fremdschämfaktor, so Impro-Geschichten und kleine Übungen, aber auch dieses, was ich vorhin erzählt habe mit dem geführt werden und so.

Und dann am zweiten Tag morgens war diese Impro-Session mit der Maya, und das war einfach unglaublich. William Kentridge hat dann gesagt, so, ja, und jetzt beginnt die Arbeit. Davon etwas reproduzierbar zu machen, dann auch irgendwie teilen zu können.

Und ich fand auch total spannend, wie sie es schaffen diesen ganzen Prozess permanent mitzudokumentieren, aber auf eine Art, die irgendwie okay ist. Also weil ich immer denke, das ist so schwierig, da macht man es ja kaputt. Aber die sind auch total dahinter: also da ist jetzt dieses tolle Dings entstanden, da wird der Kentridge eine große Produktion daraus ableiten. Aber die Leute, die sonst dabei waren, sind auch frei, unabhängig oder parallel Projekte zu machen, und haben dafür auch den Ort und den Raum.

Und es werden sowohl der Prozess als auch dann das Produkt, wenn es dann ein, zwei, drei, fünfmal aufgeführt wird, super dokumentiert, so dass die Künstler*innen das auch in der Hand haben und damit nochmal weitergehen können.

01:02:06 FA:
Das ist echt eine Kunst dann.

01:02:06 VMF:
Ja! Und ich finde diese Videos, von denen auch ganz viele online sind, die sind so inspirierend und so toll, weil sie eben eine Verflechtung hinbekommen von diesen besonderen Momenten in der Entwicklung und dem geschliffenen Endprodukt.

00:57:53 FA:
Yeah, and then on the other hand, during the pandemic we suddenly had tools to connect with each other. During a war, I thought – okay, Facebook actually makes sense again if people can share information, if they don't have to believe whatever one person claims is true.

00:58:15 VMF:
Right – and at the same time, it's kind of scary again. Like, okay, maybe in this isolated case, it's good Facebook exists because they allow it – but then one guy has that much power and can manipulate things however he wants, whenever he wants. That's terrifying too. But yeah, I mean of course – even these live online tools like Zoom and Skype – imagine if we hadn't had those. If you were really stuck at home during lockdown and had no contact at all…

But going back to what you said about improvisation, about creating those moments – that was so exciting in South Africa too. They always work like this: every season starts with a three-day initial workshop. A few people are invited as curators, and they each invite a relatively large group of performers, musicians, and so on, to develop something together for a year-long program. And we were there for one of these initial workshops, which was super exciting and really amazing.

01:00:05 FA:
That sounds incredible, wow!

01:00:06 VMF:
In reality, it was all stuff you've done a hundred times before – some with more, some with less cringe factor – like little improv exercises and games, including the one I told you about earlier, the being-guided-through-space thing.

And then on the second morning, there was this improv session with Maya, and it was just incredible. William Kentridge said, "Okay, now the real work begins." Meaning: taking something from that and making it reproducible – something you can actually share.

And what I found super fascinating is how they manage to document the whole process continuously, but in a way that somehow feels okay. Because I always think that kind of thing ruins it. But they're really intentional about it – like, this amazing piece has just emerged, and Kentridge is going to develop a big production from it. But the other people who were there are also totally free to take it in their own direction, to start their own projects, and they have the space and support to do that.

And both the process and the final product – when it's performed once, twice, three times, five times – are documented in a really great way, so the artists actually have it in hand and can use it to go further.

01:02:06 FA:
That's really an art in itself.

01:02:06 VMF:
Yes! And those videos – many of which are online – are so inspiring and beautiful because they manage to weave together these unique developmental moments with the polished end result.

01:02:32 FA:
Cool, super!

01:02:35 VMF:
Ja, gut, danke! Liegt dir noch irgendwas auf den Lippen?

01:03:17 FA:
Nein, ich mag das Pavillon-Bild, das werde ich mitnehmen, weil das ist frisch aufgetaucht, aber da werde ich, glaube ich, noch drüber nachdenken hat, war auch sehr inspirierend für mich das Gespräch. Dankeschön.

01:03:37 VMF:
Schön, das freut mich. Ja ich fand das Pavillonbild auch sehr schön – das hat gut als Ausgangspunkt funktioniert. Wenn dir noch irgendwas einfällt, kannst du mir gerne eine Voice-Mail oder so schicken. Das funktioniert... ja die Aufnahme läuft noch... bei der Nora Gutwenger ist mir das so ganz klassisch passiert, dass nach einer halben Stunde die Aufnahme gestoppt hat, weil die Karte voll war...

01:04:09 FA:
Mhm und du hast es nicht gemerkt?

01:04:12 VMF:
Zu spät. Aber es war dann irgendwie auch okay, weil wir haben dann danach überlegt, was so die entscheidenden Momente im Gespräch waren, ich hab ihr dann nochmal zwei, drei Fragen gestellt und sie hat mir dann Voicemails nachgeschickt...

01:04:29 FA:
Habt ihr das aufgenommen auch, so dieses drüber reden: Was haben wir jetzt eigentlich geredet?

01:04:35 VMF:
Ja da war die Karte dann eben voll.

01:04:38 FA:
Achso, okay, schade, weil das wäre ja lustig! Dass man das dann transkribiert.

01:04:42 VMF:
Ja, ich meine, ich mag diese Gespräche so gern, am liebsten würde ich eh einfach die Gespräche publizieren. Aber zum einen sie sind ja total intim, und wir haben ja auch über Sachen gesprochen, die man vielleicht jetzt nicht will, dass die publik werden, und wer soll das lesen. Also ich hab als Bachelorarbeit auch schon mal so Interviews gemacht über das „Trickfilmstudio“ eigentlich oder über die Workshops dort und mir hat einfach deren Art zu sprechen so gefallen, dass ich in Wirklichkeit einfach die Transkripte abgegeben habe. Der, der mich dann bewertet hat, hat sie cool gefunden, die anderen haben mir eher den Vogel gezeigt, und mit drei Interviews geht es halt dann noch irgendwie. Aber wenn ich das mit 15 mach, je anderthalb Stunden, das liest ja niemand.

01:05:51 FA:
Oder vielleicht irgendwie Auszüge oder so, kann ich mir schon interessant vorstellen. Und du kannst ja auch die Leute fragen, ob man jetzt einverstanden wäre, dass der Teil irgendwo drin ist.

01:06:12 VMF:
Naja, sicher. Also, ich meine, das ist eh klar, wenn dann nur in Rücksprache. Ich drücke mal auf Stopp, weil sonst muss ich das alles auch noch transkribieren.

01:02:32 FA:
Cool. Amazing!

01:02:35 VMF:
Yeah. Okay, thanks! Is there anything still on your mind?

01:03:17 FA:
No, I really like the image of the pavilion. I'm going to carry that with me. It just came up now, but I think I'll keep thinking about it. This conversation was very inspiring for me too. Thank you.

01:03:37 VMF:
That's lovely. I'm really glad. I thought the pavilion image was beautiful too – it worked really well as a starting point. If anything else comes to mind, feel free to send me a voice message or something. That works... yeah, the recording is still running... with Nora Gutwenger, I had that classic situation where after half an hour the recorder stopped because the memory card was full...

01:04:09 FA:
Mhm – and you didn't notice?

01:04:12 VMF:
Too late. But it turned out okay, because afterward we tried to remember what the key moments in the conversation were. I asked her two or three follow-up questions, and she sent me some voice messages in response...

01:04:29 FA:
Did you record that part too – like the reflection: "What did we actually talk about?"

01:04:35 VMF:
That was when the card was already full.

01:04:38 FA:
Ah, too bad – that would've been funny! To transcribe that.

01:04:42 VMF:
Yeah, I mean – I really love these conversations. Ideally, I'd just publish them as they are. But on the other hand, they're so personal. We've talked about things that maybe you don't want to have out in public – and who would even read it all? I did something similar for my bachelor's thesis – it was actually about the "Animated Film Studio" and the workshops there. What I loved was the way they spoke, so I basically just submitted the transcripts. The person grading me thought they were cool – but the others kind of looked at me like I was crazy. And with three interviews, that's just barely manageable. But if I do it with fifteen people, each one an hour and a half – who's going to read that?

01:05:51 FA:
Maybe some excerpts or something – that could definitely be interesting. And you can always ask people if they're okay with a certain part being included.

01:06:12 VMF:
Yeah, of course. That goes without saying – only ever with consent. Okay, I'm going to hit stop now – otherwise I'll have to transcribe all of this too.

Franziska Abgottspon, 1972 geboren in Visp, Schweiz, lebt seit 1993 in Wien. Studium an der Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien. 1995-2025 Mitarbeiterin im ZOOM Kindermuseum, zuerst in der Vermittlung, ab 2002 Kuratorin und Bereichsleiterin Atelier und Kleinkinderbereich „Ozean“. Als Künstlerin und Musikerin Beteiligung an zahlreichen Kunstprojekten. Seit 2025 Veranstalterin und Kuratorin eines Offspace in Wien Simmering. Als Musikerin Eloui Veröffentlichung von zwei Soloalben, als Bassistin aktuell Bandmitglied von Thalija und den Brainmanagerz.

Franziska Abgottspon, born in 1972 in Visp, Switzerland. Has lived in Vienna since 1993. Studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. 1995-2025 she has worked at the ZOOM Children‘s Museum – initially as an educator, and since 2002 as curator and head of the “Studio“ and the “Ocean“ area for toddlers. As an artist and curator, she has participated in various art projects. As a musician under the name Eloui, she has released two solo albums. Currently, she plays bass in the bands Thalija and Brainmanagerz.

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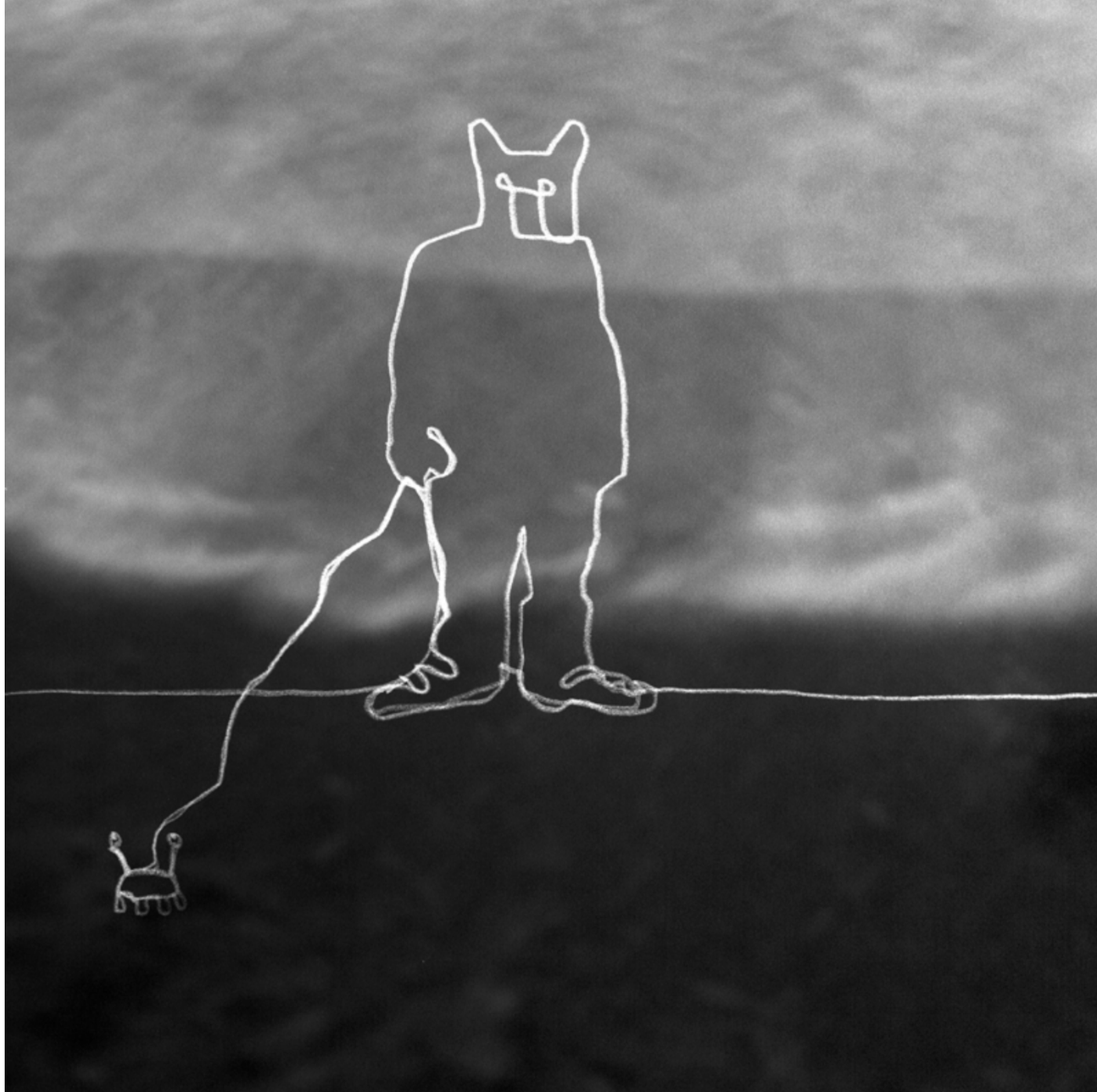
listen quietly,
with all your
fingertips.



The conversations in this book have been kindly supported by ZOOM Children‘s Museum.

Staging the Invisible Elephant that Remains Overlooked
Reflective Documentation / Book 2: Dialogues
by Verena Miedl-Faißt
2017-2025

Supervisor: Barbara Putz-Plecko

University of Applied Arts Vienna

staging the
invisible elephant
that remains
overlooked
reader

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Jean-Henri Fabre (1823–1915) as an Artistic Researcher (BA-Thesis)

Field Guide Book 3

In this volume, I have compiled a selection of texts produced in the course of my PhD in art, presented in chronological order. Browsing through this reader may offer an additional perspective on the development and insights of my work.

I have also included texts in which I am no longer fully confident, that in retrospect appear somewhat misleading or unclear, or that were highly situational—for instance, written for a colloquium of individual colleagues. These texts are not specially marked, as it seems evident where I was momentarily at an impasse. At the same time, such detours are part of the process and may still offer loose threads worth holding on to. Some texts take on a more poetic form, expressing a sense of longing rather than addressing a concrete research question. Yet following such intuitive strands of thought was my way of finding language for my questions and related findings.

There are also repetitions: citations that recur across several texts, or that appear both in this reader and again in my reflective documentation or within the book of dialogues—though never in exactly the same context. This, too, is intentional, as it sheds light on how thoughts, convictions, and relations have evolved over the course of my research.

Finally, my BA thesis is included as an appendix to this reader (originally written in German and translated into English here). It further elaborates my understanding of artistic research and contextualizes the reference to the entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre.

Videostill from „Mamilahpinatapai“

Staging the White Elephant that Remains Overlooked

Abstract for the website of Center Research Focus

Naturally artistic PhD projects aim to empower and validate artistic methods as a way of generating significant insights and knowledge in their own right – independent from traditional scientific methods.

But what, even within the art field, is considered valid artistic practice? When, how and by whom is an artistic process and its outcome acknowledged, received and evaluated as such? Although the art world seems to be an amorphous, shady territory where meaning is unfixed and the rules of expression negotiable, there are surprisingly concrete and in most cases insurmountable limits to this infinity.

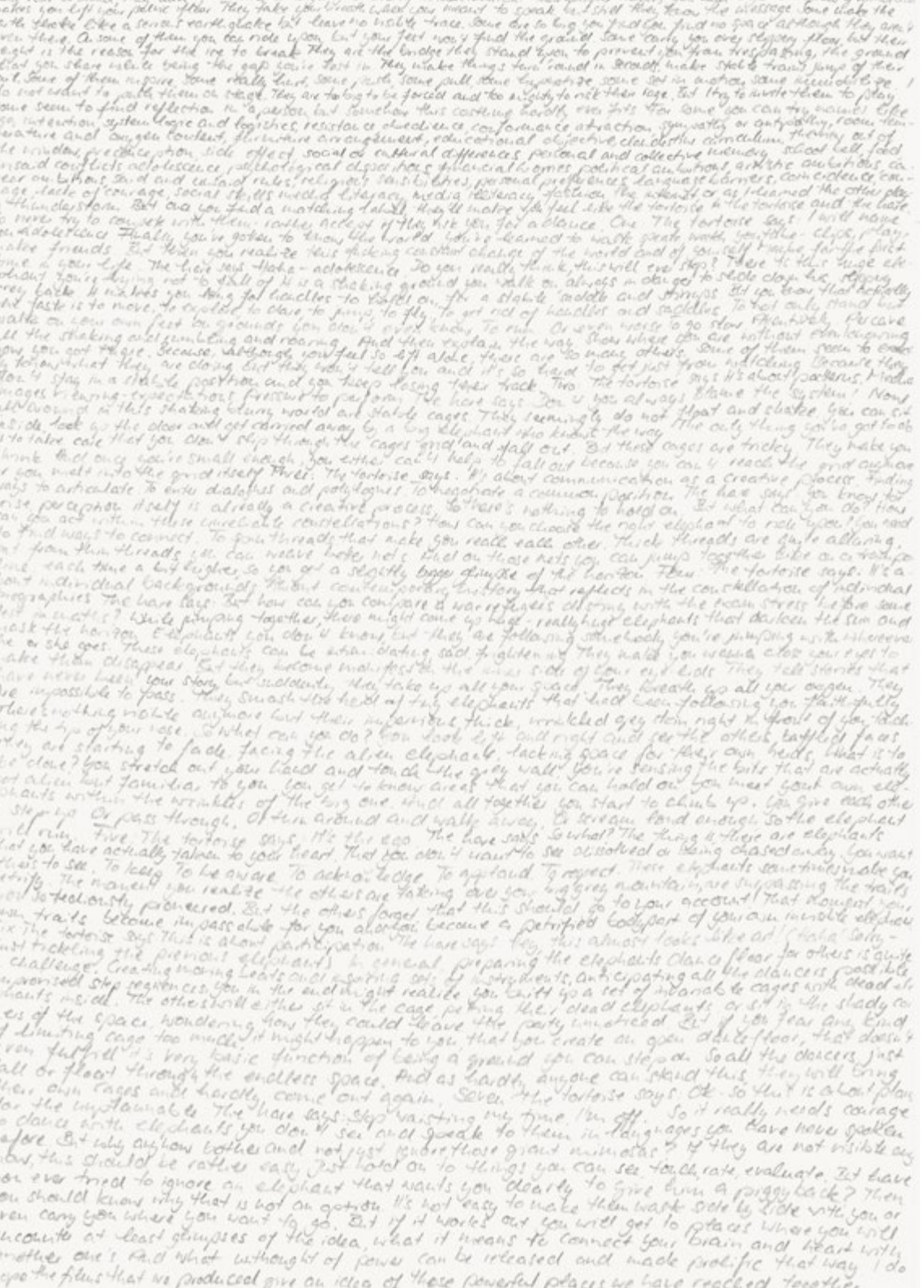
I'm not talking about the subject matter – art can break up deadlocked patterns of perception and is able to focus on the blind spots of our society. I am talking about a taboo within the art field itself: The air is getting thinner already, when we can no longer attribute an artistic process to a nameable and singular genius-artist, but multiple authors. Difficulties multiply if the collaborators are "laypersons". But game is completely over if these "laypersons" are kids or teenagers and the project takes place in a school.

You might find artists working as teachers, whose work is being recognized as ambitious art education. But certainly it will never be acknowledged as legitimate art within the art field – neither the work of the artist-teacher enabling the creative process of the students nor the products it yields. I am convinced that this is wrong.

First of all it is an artistic practice in its own right to enable, inspire and accompany collective creative processes. Of course this has nothing to do with clichéd art lessons, where students are merely encouraged to copy somebody else's artistic product. But to be rooted in the pedagogical sphere is no contradiction to the claim of being artistic practice. And beyond that, these processes can yield (collective) artistic products that need to be received as such. Discrediting this artistic praxis deprives the arts, discourse and society of exciting and fruitful knowledge.

Thus, within the scope of a PhD in Art, I want to find ways to stage and reflect on the work produced with teenagers and kids as valid artistic products that deserve a place in social, political and artistic discourse as forms of expression by fully-fledged members of our society.

Intertwined with this target, I will further develop and clarify my artistic methods. I will reflect on my role as a professional artist within the pedagogical field and likewise on my positioning within the art field as an artist that is working within the pedagogical context.



Introducing Invisible Elephants

Reading Public Colloquium at Angewandte Innovation Lab May 2018

Some roar so loud, they leave you dumb, although you hardly understand. But their whisper tickles you down at your stomachs ground and makes you lift your pelvic floor. They take your breath when you‘re meant to speak but still they know the message. Some make the earth shake like a serious earthquake but leave no visible trace. Some are so big, you find no space, although they aren‘t even there. On some of them you can ride upon, but your feet won’t find the ground. Some carry you over slippery floor, but their weight is the reason for the ice to break. They are the bridge they stand upon to prevent you from trespassing, the ground that you share while being the gap you‘re lost in. They make things turn around in seconds, make stable trains jump of their rail. Some of them inspire, some really hurt, some push, some pull, some hypnotize, some set in motion, some immobilize. I do not want to push them on stage. They are too big to be forced and to mighty too risk their rage. But I try to invite them to play.

Some seem to find reflection in a person, but somehow this costume hardly ever fits. For some you can try names, like ego, intention, system logic and logistics, resistance, obedience, conformance, attraction, sympathy or antipathy, room temperature and oxygen content, furniture arrangement, educational objective, clandestine curriculum, the view out of the window, preconception, sideeffect, social or cultural differences, personal and collective memory, school bell, food, unsaid conflicts, adolescence, psychological dispositions, financial worries, political ambitions, artistic ambitions, career ambitions, said and unsaid rules, religious sensibilities, personal preferences, language barriers, coincidence, courage, lack of courage, social skills, media literacy, media illiteracy, fashion, the internet, or as I learned the other day, a thunderstorm. But once you find a matching label, they’ll make you feel like the tortoise in “the tortoise and the hare”. So never try to compete with them – rather accept if they ask you for a dance.

ONE:

The tortoise says:
I will name you Adolescence. Finally, you’ve gotten to know the world. You’ve learned to walk, speak, watch Youtube clips, play, make friends. But then you realize this fucking constant change of the world and of yourself – maybe for the first time in your life.

The hare says:
Haha, adolescence. Do you really think, this will ever stop?

There is this huge Elephant, you’re trying not to fall off It is a shaking ground you walk on, always in danger to slide down his slippery grey back. It makes you long for handles to hold on, for a stable saddle and stirrups. But you know, that actually the task is to move, to explore, to dare, to jump, to fly. To get rid of handles and saddles. To not only stand but walk on your own feet on grounds you don’t even know. To run. Or even worse: To go slow. Attentively. Perceive all the shaking and rumbling and roaring. And then explain the way, show where you are without even knowing how you got there. Because, although you feel so left alone there are so many others. Some of them seem to exactly know what they are doing. But they won’t tell you and it’s so hard to get just from watching. Because they don’t stay in a stable position and you keep losing their track.

TWO:

The tortoise says:
It's about patterns. Media-images. Viewing-expectations. Pressure to perform.

The hare says:
Don't you always blame the system!

Now all around in this shaking blurry world are stable cages. They seemingly do not float and shake. You can sit inside, lock up the door and get carried away by a big Elephant, who knows the way. The only thing you've got to do is to take care, that you don't slip through the cages' grid and fall out. But these cages are tricky. They make you shrink. And once you're small enough, you either can't help to fall out, because you can't reach the grid anymore or you melt into the grid itself.

THREE:

The tortoise says:
It's about communication as a creative process. Finding ways to articulate. To enter dialogues and polylogues. To negotiate a common position.

The hare says:
You know tortoise, perception itself is already a creative process. So, there's nothing to hold on.

But what can you do? How can you act within these unreliable constellations? How can you choose the right Elephant to ride on? You need to find ways to connect. To spin threads, that make you reach each other. Thick threads are quite alluring, but from the thin threads you can weave better nets. And on those nets, you can jump together like on a trampoline, each time a bit higher so you get a slightly bigger glimpse of the horizon.

FOUR:

The tortoise says:
It's about individual backgrounds. About contemporary history that reflects in the constellation of individual biographies.

The hare says:
But how can you compare a war refugees destiny with the exam stress before some test in math?

While jumping together, there might come up huge, really huge Elephants, that darken the sun and mask the horizon. Elephants, that you don't know, but they are following somebody you're jumping with wherever he or she goes. These Elephants can be intimidating, sad, frightening. They make you wanna close your eyes to make them disappear. But they become manifest on the inner side of your eye lids. They tell stories, that have never been your story, but suddenly they take up all your space. They breath up all your oxygen. They are impossible to pass. They smash the herd of tiny Elephants that had been following you faithfully. There's nothing visible anymore but their impervious, thick, wrinkled grey skin right in front of you, touching the tip of your nose.

So what can you do? You look left and right and see the others baffled faces. They are starting to fade, facing the alien Elephant, lacking space for their own herds. What is to be done? You stretch out your hand and touch the grey wall. You're sensing the bits, that are actually not alien but familiar to you. You get to know the areas, that you can hold on. You meet your own Elephants within the wrinkles of the big one and all together you start to climb up. You give each other a step-up. Or pass through. Or turn around and walk away. Or scream loud enough, so the Elephant will run.

FIVE:

The tortoise says:
It's the Ego.

The hare says:
So what?

The thing is, there are Elephants that you actually have taken to your heart. That you don't want to see dissolved or chased away. You want the others to see. To keep. To be aware. To acknowledge. To applaud. To respect. These Elephants sometimes make you petrify. The moment you realize, the others are taking over your big grey mountain, are surpassing the trails you tediously pioneered. But the others forget, that this should go to your account. That moment, your own trails become impassable for you and you become a petrified body part of your own invisible Elephant.

SIX:

The tortoise says:
This is about participation.

The hare says:
Hey, this almost looks like art! (Haha, sorry – only tickling the previous Elephant...)

In general, preparing the Elephants' dance floor for others is quite a challenge. Creating moving beats and inspiring sets of instruments, anticipating all the dancers possible improvised step sequences, you in the end might realize you built up a set of invariable cages with dead Elephants inside. The others will either sit in the cage, petting their dead Elephants, or sit in the shady corners of the space, wondering how they could leave the party unnoticed. But if you fear any kind of limiting cage too much, it might happen to you, that you create an open dancefloor, that doesn't even fulfil its very basic function of being a ground you can step on – so all the dancers just fall or float through the endless space. And as hardly anyone can stand this, they will bring their own cages and hardly come out again.

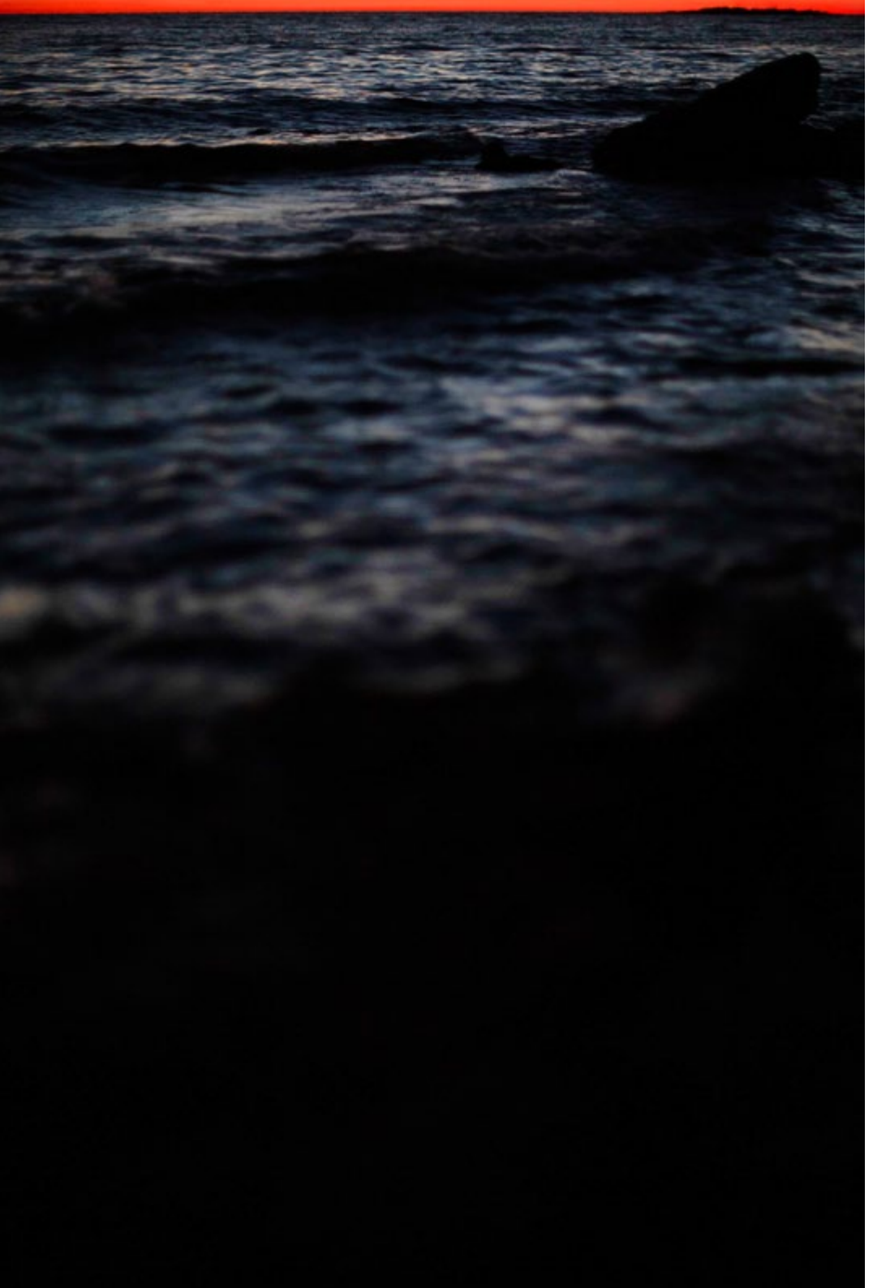
SEVEN:

The tortoise says:
Ok, so this is about plans for the unplannable.

The hare says:
Stop wasting my time. I'm off.

So it really needs courage to dance with the Elephants you don‘t see and speak to them in languages you have never spoken before. But why an- yhow bother and not just ignore those giant mimosas? If they are not visi- ble anyhow, this should be rather easy. Just hold on to things you can see, touch, rate and evaluate.

But have you ever tried to ignore an Elephant, that wants you dearly to give him a piggyback? Then you should know, why that is not an option. It‘s not easy to make them walk side by side with you or even carry you, where you want to go. But if it works out, you will get to places, where you will encounter at least glimpses of the idea, what it means to connect your brain and heart with another one‘s and what unthought of power can be released and made prolific that way.



Welcome to my aviary!

Internal Colloquium January 2019

„Es war wie der Einbruch einer anderen Realität. Etwas Scheues, Seltenes, das uns besuchen kommt, das sich herabsenkt und die Welt um uns herum verwandelt, ohne unser Zutun, als unerwartetes Geschenk. Der Schneefall ist geradezu die Reinform einer Manifestation des Unverfügbaren: Wir können ihn nicht herstellen, nicht erzwingen, nicht einmal sicher vorherplanen, jedenfalls nicht über einen längeren Zeitraum hinweg. Und mehr noch: Wir können des Schnees nicht habhaft werden, ihn uns nicht aneignen: Wenn wir ihn in die Hand nehmen, zerrinnt er uns zwischen den Fingern, wenn wir ihn ins Haus holen, fließt er davon, und wenn wir ihn in die Tiefkühltruhe packen, hört er auf, Schnee zu sein.“ (Rosa, 2018: 7)

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I must admit I once participated in one of those tourist whale-watching trips in Akureyri. They guarantee whale sightings, but of course, they can not guarantee that you actually encounter what you are looking for.

So you‘re getting on this boat. You know, you‘re a tourist. You know that what you do is actually harming what you admire. You know, you‘re kind of ridiculous. But the boat has this slight melvillian aura of adventure. You‘re secretly jealous of the local fishermen, being an authentic part of what is only being staged as a tourist spectacle for you. Still, you hope to get a grasp of something big.

From the very first instant on the boat, you start looking around. You‘ve booked these animal actors, so they should show up soon. Some part of you starts to hope they will just boycott this absurd event and stay invulnerable and sublime.

But shortly after, there is this slight glimpse on the horizon. Was this a whale‘s water fountain? Or was it just your figment? No, there it was again. All the other tourists, whom you so dearly wish to be unalike, rush over to your side of the boat. They try to picture the next event on the limits of what is perceptible. They take a lot of lopsided photos of the empty horizon. “Using flash won‘t help, stupid!” – your mind is occupied by a fictional discussion with your co-watchers.

The boat turns around to get closer to where the animals are supposed to be. Some 200 meters away, a tail fin can be hypothesized. Now, another boat is showing up. The two boats converge to the fictional whereabouts of the objects of desire.

You‘re now able to distinguish the people on the other boat and stare at the water’s surface through their smartphones’ displays. The row of sullen faces on your boat is mirrored by an equivalent row of sullen faces on the other boat, blaming each other for having expelled the whales. A couple of minutes later, the ships are heading back towards the harbour.

Slightly seasick, you get off the boat and get yourself some plastic-wrapped tasteless sandwich while the others enter the whale-watching museum, where a huge plastic whale is supposed to show what you‘ve just been more or less close to.

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“[All these ventures], the analytic as well as the creative one [as well as teaching and learning], seem to demand similar external and internal conditions.

There is the same need for ‚circumstances in which it is safe to be absent minded‘ (i.e. for conscious logic and reason to be absent from one‘s mind). There is the same unwillingness to transgress beyond the reassuring limits of the secondary process and ‚to accept chaos as a temporary stage‘. There is the same fear of the ‚plunge into no-differentiation‘ and the disbelief in the ‚spontaneous ordering forces‘ which emerge, once the plunge is taken. There is, above all, the same terror of the unknown.

Evidently, it demands as much courage from [all members of a collective creative process – be it an artistic process or a matter of learning in school] to look at [each other and at the] objects in the external world and see them, [oneself and each other] without clear and compact outlines, as it demands courage from the beginning analysand to look at his own inner world and suspend secondary elaboration.

There are even the same faults committed. The [artists, learners and teachers interfere] with the process of creation when, in the author‘s words, [they] cannot bear the ‚uncertainty about what is emerging long enough, as if one had to turn the scribble into some recognisable whole when, in fact, the thought or mood seeking expression had not yet reached that stage‘. Nothing can resemble more closely than this the attitude of haste and anxiety on the analyst‘s or patient‘s part [or student‘s or teacher‘s part] which leads to premature interpretation, [blind fulfillment of an authoritarian task], closes the road to the unconscious and puts a temporary stop to the spontaneous upsurge of id-material, [authentic expression and autonomous interest.]

On the other hand, when anxieties and the resistances resulting from them are overcome, and the ‚surrender of the planning conscious intention has been achieved‘, [the artists collective, the students, the teacher, the analysand,] are rewarded by ‚a surprise both in form and content‘.

It is the juncture only that we meet the essential difference between the analytic process, the [process of teaching and learning] and the process of creation.

The legitimate result of analysis is the inner experience of formerly unknown affects and impulses, which find their final outlet in the ego-processes of verbalisation and deliberate action.

[The legitimate result of a learning process is the experience and understanding for formerly unknown parts of or perspectives on the world, which find their final outlet in new possible courses of deliberate action.]

The creative process in art, on the other hand, ‚remains within the realm in which unknown affects and impulses find their outlet, through the way in which the artists arrange their medium to form harmonies of shapes, colours or sounds‘; whether deliberate action is affected or not is the last issue, the main achievement is, according to the author, a joining of that split between mind[s] and body[s] that can so easily result from trying to limit thinking [and speaking] to thinking [and speaking] only in words.”

(Freud, 1957: p. xiii-xiv, [in brackets: changes & additions])

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I once met a dead whale. Now this is not a metaphor. It happened in 2012 very near by Snaefelsjökull, where Jules Vernes entrance to the center of the earth is located.

Someone had told me there was a stranded whale at Snaefelsness, close to Jules Verne’s entrance to the centre of the earth. It felt a bit awkward, but together with two other photographers, we tried to find it.

Some four hours’ drive away from Reykjavik, there is a small village nearby, the place we‘ve been told to go. We stopped at a gas station and asked the guy there if he knew about the whale. He did and explained the way to us. It was rather easy to find. There was a huge lava field below the volcano at the shore. We left the car by the road and found it after only a couple of minutes of walking. We knew in advance that it was about 15 meters long. The sky, the ocean, and the landscape around were so huge that it actually felt smaller than expected.

We were prepared to bear some maddening smell, but it was not that bad. We approached carefully and realized that somebody had brutally cut off the lower jaw. And there was a wound at its belly where the body obviously burst. But still, it was incomparably beautiful and did not at all make the impression of a corpse. The weight of his mass made it yield on the rough surface of the black lava rocks, building small caves with seawater puddles inside. Below the wound, red blood and white, thick liquid dripped into the puddles, marbling the water and building small stalactites. I sat down on a rock next to it and let my gaze wander over this hugest body I had ever been allowed to come so close.

I felt tears pressing up – not because I was so sad about the death of this whale, but because I felt so honoured and moved by this intimate and corporeal encounter.

At first, I did not know what to do or how to react. Was photography not too much an act of usurpation? But then I found it to be a way to connect.

I did not dare photograph the whale as a whole. Not because it wouldn‘t have been possible technically, but rather because it felt pretentious to take a single picture, claiming to depict what I experienced overall. I started to tenderly caress the creature‘s surface with my gaze. My fingers did not touch the whale, but I can still remember a haptic sensation of his wrinkles, scars, and the unctuous texture of the huge wound as if it were glowing from the inside.

Spatial logic dissolved, and I was embraced by the presence of this animal being, which itself transcended the borders of its body and became the sea, the sky, and the lava fields.

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“What I feel about these photographs derives from an average affect, almost from a certain training. I did not know a French word which might account for this kind of human interest, but I believe this word exists in Latin: it is studium, which doesn‘t mean, at least not immediately, „study,“ but application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity. It is by studium that I am interested in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally (this connotation is present in studium) that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions.

The second element will break (or punctuate) the studium. This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of the studium with my sovereign conscious-

ness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many points; This second element which will disturb the studium I shall therefore call punctum; for punctum is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole - and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).“ (Barthes, 1981: 26f)

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I tend to be categorically disappointed after presenting my work. I was told, that this is normal – but for me it‘s exceptionally true for screenings of my collaborative film work. I don‘t entirely understand why. To find out a bit more, I will now phantasize the ideal reaction I am longing for:

There is an uncountable amount of people, all dearly interested in what I am going to show because it feels relevant to them.

They are a diverse and heterogeneous mix of kids, adults, art-professionals, amateurs, musicians, filmmakers, photographers, psychologists, teachers, politicians, natural scientists, profilers, kindergarteners, philosophers, craftsmen and people from professional and social backgrounds that I can‘t even think of, friends, people I admire, people I dearly love, people I don‘t know, people I will get to know afterwards, people that I can work with afterwards in inspiring, well financed and prolific ways.

They have heard about the way I work and are keen on getting to experience the artistic articulation of the kids I‘ve been working with, because they want to learn what they have got to say. Because they want to get inspired.

The audience is there to watch all the films in a row, because it‘s obvious to everybody, that the films need to be seen and add to each other.

During the screening the audience is moved. Some cry because of being so touched, some lough, some don‘t move or say a word but dive magnetized into what is happening on screen. One or two will leave the cinema furiously. (Some weeks after, they will send me a letter explaining their fury, asking for a personal discussion with me and two particular persons out of the film team.)

After the screening, people applaud but stay seated, because they feel the urge to talk about.

Their contributions go like

I hate this.

I love this.

„This is very inspiring because...

is relevant because...

is threatening because...

is affecting because...

is original because...

is uncanny because...

is problematic because...“

„This is showing quite intriguingly to me that our world needs more ... and less ...“

„I am working on similar questions. I‘ve come to the point that...“

„I am a musician and would really like to record an album with you.“

„I am an architect and would really like to build a space with and for you.“

„I am a philosopher and would really like to write a text about your work.“

„I am a writer. I‘d like to write a book with you.“

„I am a teacher and I will found a new school. I would really like you to join me!“

„Watching those films is like examining forensic traces. They trigger stories in my mind, but I‘m not sure which reality they belong to.“

„I am impressed by how these many voices form a polychromatic choir singing about places I‘ve never been to“ or „places I had forgotten about“ or „places I always thought I was alone at.“

The passages about living and dead whales have been published in „Shadows“, Booklet #5 in the scope of the Octopus Programme (Miedl-Faißt 2022a: 13)

Welcome to my woods.

Internal Colloquium April 2019

I still like my aviary, but I don‘t want you to feel caged so today I‘ll try it with trees and of course there are birds as well in the forest but also branchings and stable columns and invisibly rooted intersections and tryings to grow up to the sky and risks to fall if a branch cracks and you can get lost or find glades or listen closely to whispering beech leaves and singing tree trunks or you can step into mud holes and you can hate those harvesters but like foresters and you can try to watch the trees grow but probably you will fail.

As this is the internal colloquium today, I‘ve brought some small gifts to each of you.

But let me start elsewhere.

I think the problem is, that we are no mushrooms. Being a big mushroom mycelium we would feel perfectly connected just naturally.

But the way it is, we are not. Not to one another and not to the world. That makes us feel lonesome, scared, jealous, greedy, insufficient, lost.

The mostly defective substitute to being connected are our senses – they create some kind of connection. But to be sure that we‘re not existentially alone, we need to align our perception. But the bad thing is, we can not just plug and play each others sensual information, but it somehow only works through communicative mediation. We‘ll never get to solve the riddle, but we can get to feel close. And there are few things more uplifting than this.

First gift, to Martin:
The very special feature in their bedroom was, that it was really dark. And in the very darkness small multicolored moving creatures appeared silently. I was able to catch them with my hand – if I made a fist, they would get stuck in between my fingers and my palm before floating away.

I really like the german term „bewundern“. Actually, I do like it more than the english term to „admire“. Admire is more adult and more one-way. Somehow a passive-aggressive audience-like, distanced judgement.

Bewundern is a bit more careful. And a bit clumsy. It‘s a bit like „bekleckern“ – you spill out wonder over something, that will throw the wonder back on you. Bewundern is a reciprocal action – it‘s not taking anything for granted, rather taking what you perceive as a suggestion. Accepting the riddle.

This is to Fabian:
It was a huge factory building. They hung up satin panels all over, covered the plastic garden chairs with white plastic slip covers, covered themselves with huge plastic dresses and there was a giant chandelier. The latter was not bright enough, so they additionally lit the halogen pipes. They all cried.

Bewundernd is kind of the best state you can be in. Kids are very good at „bewundern“. The more adult you get, the less you‘re good at bewundern. Not because you don‘t see the marvellous things anymore. It‘s more, that you rather stop wondering. You know. You know what is a-ma-zing and what not. And this doesn‘t have to do too much with you. But this way, the things stay closed up for you. You can judge them, admire them, frown on them, but it‘s getting harder to make them resonate. As long as you‘re in a state of

wondering, the borders between you and the world stay rather vague and easy to trespass. Everything is one possibility out of many.

Of course you never know what might pass these vague gaps and opened up doors. You never know, where you might end up, loose your way, get lost. That‘s why it‘s also good not to wonder alone. Also because the experience of common wonder makes the world a less lonesome and hopeless place. While „be-wondering“ something together, things can not only travel between the be-wondered thing and yourself but also in between the bewonderers.

This is to Barbara:
It had been snowing a lot over night.

And this is to Rizki:
Once I dreamt, I was climbing along the cliffs of a steep coast all around the island, but I was not able to enter.

Actually, there is nothing more uplifting and reassuring your own existence in the world than being able to enter a state of „bewondering“ together with somebody else.

When I met my love, the most touching thing for me was our common talent to crawl sideways over stone ledges like small crabs for hours – observing, examining, be-wondering micro canyons, natural drawings, tiny insects, fossiles or whatever was there to be found for us.

This is to Ralo:
They are small balls, some of them perfectly round, some slightly squeezed, about as big as a tennis ball. They show up in groups of hundreds. At first, they are kind of invisible, because they take over the colour of the sand. But once it started, you can‘t stop seeing them!

I think bewondering really can safe the world. If you have ever bewondered something, you‘ll treat it with respect and care afterwards. Same is true for people you have entered a state of bewondering together with – because you feel connected.

I think, this is how art can help in general. Making art for me means making suggestions to enter states of Bewunderung. And by the way, that‘s the other good thing about Bewunderung in contrast to admiration: Bewunderung is not blind affirmation. If you wonder, you still ask.

This is to Cordula:
I wonder if one can do something about it then.

This is to Katarina:
She told me this was really perilous. I could have lost my sight. I think I scared her. This scared me.

So, if Bewunderung will safe us, it‘s important to teach Bewunderung in school. Actually, I think it would be totally fine, if this was the only subject.

Not to make kids learn to do Bewunderungen (as I said, they are good at this anyhow). Rather to make them as the future society „bewunder“ together and therewith get connected. Practicing „Bewunderung“ together makes me recognize and also makes me feel being recognized.

This is to Marie-Claude:
I like riding on the train through twilight with the curtains open.

This is to Hinnerk:
One day, he just broke it with a ball. Because he didn‘t get what it was. Later on, I decided to still like him. Maybe that was a mistake.

For beginners in collective bewonderings, it‘s hard to bewonder the present together, because you‘re always too late. You never know, if the other one is really looking at what you are looking at. Using for example a camera or a microphone can help: Some sort of recording machine, or framing machine, some kind of marker. You know where to look at. You can relax and let go in wondering.

This is to Bogomir:
I only understood after being held down by the swirls of the deflecting wall for about 30 seconds, that one actually can drown in white water.

This is to Anna:
Cover your right eye and look through the left eye. Then cover the left eye and look through the right eye. Then cover the right eye and look through the left eye. Afterwards cover the left eye and look through the right eye. Repeat the same with your left ear and with your right ear.

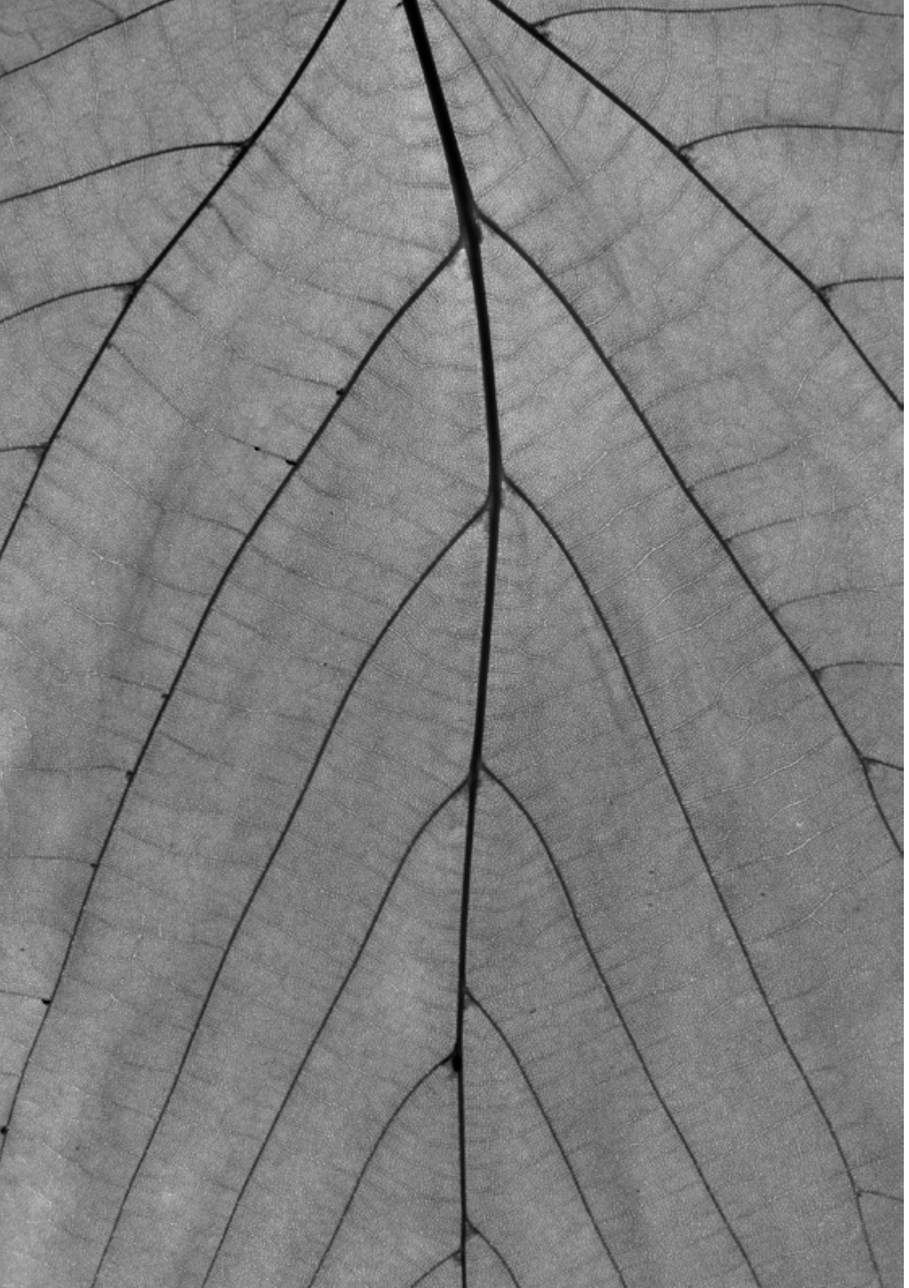
This is to Charlotta:
Yesterday I was walking up to Agnesbrünndl next to Cobenzl. There is this section of the path, where sight opens up and you‘ve got this kind of sublime view over the soft Wiener Wald hills with some glimpses of the city in between. I passed a little boy who had just climbed up a tree trunk. At first, he smiled a bit insecure towards his mother, but she said, „it‘s ok, you can sing!“ And so he lift his walking stick and from all the power of his lungs he started to sing this Lion King Song.

This is to Barbis:
Be aware of the resonance desaster!

This is to Michael:
Did you ever consider just to?

This is to Anahita:
She was trying to make gigantic ice cubes. Maybe it was, because she wanted to prevent the water from leaving her.

The good thing about recorded bewonderings is, that you can put them together with other bewonderings. They will interact and together depict a very special sort of portrait of the established mycelium. And through this portrait, the mycelium can grow.



Lost

Public Colloquium May 2019

1

Again, I want to read to you. Still, I am trying to position myself and the films I have produced in open collaborative processes together with teenagers, musicians and fine artists in a place that feels right – which I haven't found yet.

I've been writing about them as footprints of invisible elephants, as some kind of resonance-tracker, as collective dreams or rather nightmares or as the mycelium of collective bewonderings.

Now I thought, probably it's not about positioning the films but about positioning myself regarding the films, as they seem quite reluctant and tend to not follow my instructions.

I learned that you can see them from various perspectives. It sounds like a plan to collect at least some of them. Or to phantasize them at least.

But I'm struggling from the beginning. I can not even grasp my own perspective, as it's kind of many.

Then I wonder what the films are really like for my collaborators. I have the impression, they can't tell themselves. Most of the time, they seem proud and scared at the same time.

I guess you can see the films rather clearly with the caring eye of a parent or teacher. Then you'll be concerned about, what the kids learned. What I could teach them or what they taught themselves. You'll be pleased if you recognize the expression of your child but you don't want to see the abyss – because you still want to believe there is no abyss in a kids soul.

Or you can watch them as a professional artist and filmmaker. You will recognize, that these films have not been produced by professionally trained people – and you will also look for proof for that, because of course you don't want your profession to be compromised. You'll be relieved to find elements you'd find to clichéd to use in serious, adult work. But these elements will somehow hold you back from taking the film in general serious as artistic expression. You question if this can be teenage work, because you think to know, what teenage work should look like.

Or you can see them as my friend. You know, that although the process was so open, there were so many people involved, it is still a very personal work of mine – because I am the link in between all those other people involved. You might try to recognize me – which might work to a certain extend if you know me and my way of working well enough. Maybe you then will want to tell me, that these films are ‚almost'...

2

Last time I said, that it's a shame that we are no mushrooms – being connected through some big mycelium would make things easier I thought. And that collective bewonderings can help making a mycelium grow.

In between someone told me: Verena, maybe your life is all about not getting frustrated about the gap in between you and me.

So I started thinking – as you always do, if someone is

telling you something really insightful: No, here she's so wrong! This gap is frustrating. It makes death such an offense and makes humanity phantasize uncountable versions of an afterlife connecting everything and everyone, while resigning the here and now. Overcoming the gap between you and me seems to me the biggest challenge to render some sense into this life.

But then I thought, this person is mostly right so maybe I should just be more thankful for the gap. And actually yes: What a chance, that I am not you. Actually, this is the reason, for that we can be together.

And maybe one needs to get out of one's mycelium to be able to somehow understand it. Maybe actually the problem is not that we are no mushrooms but quite the contrary...

3

F. keeps telling me, I should write a Manifesto. I feel some deep objection against this idea. But looking for something I could cope with, F. suggested Adalbert Stifters foreword to "Colourful Stones" which is known as the "Law of gentleness" from 1852. This is my translation to English:

„A whole life full of fairness, simpleness. Overcoming the self, understanding, feeling active, bewondering of what is beautiful, joint with cheerful, serene longing, I think is big; mighty roars of the mind, ferocious rage, craving for revenge, burning spirit, covetting actionism, tearing down, violently changing, destroying and meanwhile chucking your life out of excitation, I do not consider bigger, but smaller, because these things are mostly the product of singular, one-sided forces like storms, volcanoes or earth-quakes.

We should try to behold the principle of the gentle, which guides humanity.

There are forces targeting something singular. They take up and spend everything, if it's useful for the existence and development of the particular. They secure the continuance of the singular and therewith the continuance of everything.

But then – if someone is usurping this one thing, that his being craves for and therewith destroys the conditions of being of someone else, then something bigger enrages in us, we support the weak and oppressed, we restore the state in which one person can exist next to the other and follow his or her human path, and when we've done so, we feel satisfied, we feel elevated and more authentic, than we could ever feel as individuals, we experience ourselves as humanity.

So there are forces, that take effect in the existence of humanity as a whole, that should not be limited by individual interests, but rather should be limiting to the latter.

It's the principle of those forces, the principle of fairness, the principle of solidarity, the principle, that wants everybody to live respected, cherished, safe and sound next to the other, so one can persecute his or her path, to acquire love and bewondering from his fellows, being taken care of as a gem, as every human should be a gem for every other human." (Stifter, 1908: 7)

4

I wonder what it is that makes me prefer working with kids. I think it's the small time implosions vibrating in encounters with the really young. The younger you are, the more time you have on hand. Not only the more time left to live in a banal sense. But also every minute is more because compared to the total length of your life, a minute is growing shorter and shorter with every minute you grow older. For a one-year-old, one year is a lifetime. For a ninety-year-old one year is only the 90th part of a lifetime. This is why bewondering or bewildering with a child can open up something like the opposite of a black hole.

5

Now the following is another excerpt from Adalbert Stifters "Colourful Stones" – this time from Crystal Rock in the translation of LEE M. HOLLANDER.

...they would not have been able to conquer their desire for sleep, whose seductive sweetness outweighs all arguments against it, had not nature itself in all its grandeur assisted them and in its own depths awakened a force which was able to cope with sleep.

In the enormous stillness that reigned about them, a silence in which no snow-crystal seemed to move, the children heard three times the bursting of the ice. That which seems the most rigid of all things and yet is most flexible and alive, the glacier, had produced these sounds. Thrice they heard behind them a crash, terrific as if the earth were rent asunder, – a sound that ramified through the ice in all directions and seemed to penetrate all its veins. The children remained sitting open-eyed and looked out upon the stars.

Their eyes also were kept busy. As the children sat there, a pale light began to blossom forth on the sky before them among the stars and extended a flat arc through them. It had a greenish tinge which gradually worked downward. But the arc became ever brighter until the stars paled in it. It sent a luminosity also into other regions of the heavens which shed greenish beams softly and actively among the stars. Then, sheaves of vari-colored light stood in burning radiance on the height of the arc like the spikes of a crown. Mildly it flowed through the neighboring regions of the heavens, it flashed and showered softly, and in gentle vibrations extended through vast spaces. Whether now the electric matter of the atmosphere had become so tense by the unexampled fall of snow that it resulted in this silent, splendid efflorescence of light, or whether some other cause of unfathomable nature may be assigned as reason for the phenomenon – however that be: gradually the light grew weaker and weaker, first the sheaves died down, until by unnoticeable degrees it grew ever less and there was nothing in the heavens but the thousands upon thousands of simple stars.

The children never exchanged a word, but remained sitting and gazed open-eyed into the heavens. Nothing particular happened afterward. The stars gleamed and shone and twinkled, only an occasional shooting star traversed them.

At last, after the stars had shone alone for a long time, and nothing had been seen of the moon, something else happened. The sky began to grow brighter, slowly but recognizably brighter; its color became visible, the faintest stars disappeared and the others were not clustered so densely any longer. Finally, also the bigger stars faded away, and the snow on the heights became more distinct. Now, one region of the heavens grew yellow and a strip of cloud floating in it was inflamed to a glowing line. All things became clearly visible and the remote snow-hills assumed sharp outlines. (Stifter, 1913: 393)

6

So I assume you are conscious about again being hovering with me within my aviary. Hopefully it's less a

cage and more a space of possible common or at least crossing flights, thoughts, vibrations, wonderings, bewonderings, bewilderings.

Maybe you can see them flutter around, my research questions which are...

I wonder if some of them are actually too big to ask. Ridiculous to say this could be a “research question”. So big, they are getting banal once outspoken. You might possibly be allowed to claim particular arguments concering them after a life of having studied philosophy or theology or after having raised 7 children or after having celebrated your 100th birthday (but then you’ll probably have forgotten the question) or after having meditated for seven years in some detached monastery or at least you probably should be male and have some belly of evidence. And glasses.

And on the other hand one can say, these are the questions everybody has to struggle with. Not worth speaking about. How can you fancy yourself having something actual, particular, original, new to say about this.

Anyway. Like could one dare to do a PhD in art and claim: My research question is: What is a good life? What is a human life? What are the responsibilities entangled with being human? What are the responsibilities entangled with not being the only human on this earth? What is the difference between being a tree and a human? What is the difference between being a child and being an adult? What is the difference between things with difference and things without a difference? What is the difference between thoughts and emotions? What is the difference between to be befallen and to experience? What is the difference between artist and audience? What is the difference between teacher and student? What is the difference between things to learn and things to unlearn? How do we perceive? What is a thought? What is a gaze? Can one see a thought? Can thoughts belong? Are we connected? Should we be disconnected? Is there a link? What happens afterwards? What do you see when you see? Or listen? Or feel? What is the now? How can you think something that you can’t speak? If things can talk to us themselves, do they care about their producers? Who cares? What is it like to be someone else? Can a question be a question if there is no question mark? Can a lot of answers form the question? Can a lot of questions form an answer?

(...)

Screenshot from my Video-Message

Hello Everybody

Internal Colloquium 2020 during the 1rst Covid-Lockdown / Script for Video-Message

Hello everybody! The ditch of a virtually distanced encounter makes me dare to show you a fragile and very personal close-up on a work in progress.

I am stuck in a dilemma concerning these presentations.

My special force is my personal relation to and my love for the people I am working with.

Love is not my special force but my bias, because:
1. It is private – nobody else should be bothered with.
2. Rose-coloured glasses are bad warrantors for quality.

Establishing relationships that ground artistic collaboration feels like the core of what I am good at and would like to be acknowledged for.

And I am overwhelmed by what is there to be found within these intimate spaces. So I must find ways to share.

To admit: This for me is the usp of artistic research: Within classical sciences love is bias and should be cancelled. Artistic research allows me to dig into this special force.

But how shareable is what I am finding there?

My working pattern so far:
1. Establish intimate collaborative situations
2. Explore those newly found spaces
3. Crystallize fragments that to me and my collaborators seem to be shareable
4. Share and speak about those edited fragments.

Problem 1 (old):
Nobody can tell, if our edited fragments are true. Because we cannot listen with the ear of somebody not involved and vice-versa.
Would be no problem, but:
Problem 2:
Sometimes intimacy leaks through, makes the translation feel like a masquerade, and makes people unwillingly get involved into some place they are not invited to. So they are also not willing to get in touch with what seems to be a dishonest façade.
Problem 3:
It is very hard for me to openly reflect on work in progress, as there are always other people and not seldomly wards involved, whose intimacy and privacy I must protect.

I will now show you, what I am working on right now with my little nephew L..

Obviously now and in the following, I am withholding relevant information, because I must not expose L.. I cannot give you a thorough grasp of our relationship, which is bound within a partly tight net of more or less complicated other relationships, shaping and framing the way, we are able to work.

My sister's family lives in Germany, I live in Vienna. So most of our communication happens through Skype – which makes us somehow strangely prepared for the current situation.
During the past year, L. and I have established a practice of storytelling via Skype together.
After having passed the entertaining plains of kid's literature mash ups, L.'s narration became more and more particular. To meet the special quality of his words, I produced an audio piece, which you will hear now. The text I am speaking consists of L.'s original words.

The other week we've had a Skype-date to work on this new project.

At this point I would dearly like to show you the Skype video recording of L. listening to what you just heard. By watching him listening, highly concentrated with mouth and eyes wide open and watching me watching him listening 500 kilometers away, quite some part of what is so hard to grasp is getting sensible. But I cannot expose him like that. As a compromise – here is a videostill.

We've been working for about an hour. I will now insert an excerpt of our original recorded Skype session. (...)

Of course it also would be interesting to analyze the 30 minutes before and after our actual "working-time", when I was trying to prepare a relaxed, safe space for the whole family, so L. and I could work without being disturbed and without him feeling stressed by somebody else's nervousness. And of course, it would open up a lot, if you could see my nephew speaking and acting and if you could see, how we were gently sliding from every day talk into working on our story. But therefore, I would have to ask him and his mother for permission and I am afraid, this could irritate the trusting atmosphere of our future collaborations.

I did a close transcript of our session and tried to shorten it in a way, that would make his telling a bit easier to understand. Then I recorded the copyedited text and created the following prosecution for the soundpiece. (...)

May I now ask you:
On the way from the "original skype sequence" to the edited sound piece – what is are gained or got lost in your perception?

Screenshot “Der Bär aus dem Dschungelmeer“

Dschungelmeer

Public Colloquium 2020 during the 1rst Covid-Lockdown / Script for Video-Message (Translation)

My presentation is a collaboration made together with my nephew L.. L. is six years old and does not yet understand English – but I would like to speak with him about what I am saying. This is why I am speaking German with English subtitles.

The title of my PhD in art project is “staging the white elephant, that remains overlooked.”, translated into German something like: I am building a stage for the invisible white Elephant.

I am mostly working in collaboration with kids and teenagers, often in schools. What I’m presumably good at is listening. And creating situations within which the participants dare to fabulate together and therewith create world.

In doing so, particular encounters happen and together things are being created, that seem so precious to me, that I would like to share them with the world outside. But that’s difficult: How can experiences, which often are invisible, ungraspable and unpredictable like the proverbial invisible elephant – how can those experiences be made comprehensible, without endangering the therefore necessary grounding of a loving, trusting and safe space?

The scientific resp. artistic references, within which I am finding ways to relate, are hardly the obvious contexts of participatory art, socially engaged art or pedagogy. I can rather relate to questions from within science studies. How do we verbalize/articulate experience? How do we fathom? How do we explain what and to whom? Who is “we” anyhow? Who speaks to whom and who thinks he’s right?

Authors like the entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre, the founder of the US-ecologist movement Rachel Carson or Donna Haraway help me, to reflect on my perspectives, practices and questions – even though my praxis is rather not the one of a natural scientist.

In the introduction of her book “Staying with the trouble”, Haraway writes:

„We – all of us on Terra – live in disturbing times, mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times. The task is to become capable, with each other in all of our bumptious kinds, of response. Mixed-up times are overflowing with both pain and joy – with vastly unjust patterns of pain and joy, with unnecessary killing of ongoingness but also with necessary resurgence. The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present.“ (Haraway, 2016: 1)

Sounds like a motto. At the beginning of this PhD-programme, I focused on filmprojects with school classes. The most important goal of these projects was, in spite of my role as project leader, in spite of pedagogic and didactic aspects, in spite of institutional bindings – a free, collective authorship.

There was no script, but everybody should at least have the possibility to join as they saw fit. The films which evolved became traces of a specific situation, a unique encounter of a specific group of people at some specific time at a specific place.

But for people who did not participate, this hardly is becoming apparent. I’ve been trying to understand, what we had done. Which was “my work” and there-

with my responsibility, what has happened why and how, who should be bothered with and who could benefit from. That was terribly complicated. I tried to grasp all the different threads and did a lot of writing, through which I could explain myself and my work more or less.

Now to the project with my nephew L.: Instead of in total 130 students and various artists and musicians, during the last year I've been mainly working together with L.. That is less complicated. It's just the two of us and I love L.. That I like him so much, would be a problem within classical sciences, I would be biased – but within artistic research I am allowed to. I consider this even to be my superpower – L. and me being so close is yielding the ground for our collaboration.

L. lives in Bavaria – so not only in Corona-times, we don't see each other very often – but we are speaking through videocalls. This way, we've been writing a whole book during the past year. Through storytelling, we have been creating a world, within which we're able to be close, even though we're actually quite far apart.

I presume, that on many children's books, maybe even on quite some adult literature, the naming of young co-authors like L. is missing. But I am not only after bringing beautiful new stories into the world while correctly indicating the authorship, but I want to try to share and therewith be able also to reflect on this particular space L. and I have been acquiring throughout our Skypesessions together.

For the last internal colloquium, I imported an excerpt of an original skype-recording. Afterwards, I got quite positive feedback – of course finally one could grasp the way I am working with kids, namely L., which kind of relationship connects us, how we speak to each other, how things evolve.

But I do not want to publish such an intimate moment and expose L..

This is why this public presentation only contains the shaped product, the way L. an I want to release it or in L.s words: How "the whole world should hear":

An audiopiece about the djunglesea.

I do hope this audiopiece makes experienceable, where L. and I have taken each other. Where we can meet and linger and be close. A part of the world nobody can take away from us anymore. Never. But we can share.

If it sounds scary, it doesn't mean we didn't have a lot of fun producing the scary moment. But we meant to make that moment scary, not funny.

I spoke L.s text and produced most of the sound, but you cannot divide the product anymore into "my part" and "L.s part". It is our place.

Here is a short comment from L. concerning our piece:

When asked how L. would tell a friend about our project, L. says:

"It's about a bear who lives in a forest where the seas can flow. And his friends live mainly under water. (...) I made this radio play with my aunt over Skype."

How can you describe how we came up with it? How we came up with the ideas?

Well, I would put it like this: You have the book Ismya. From this book we got the idea that we could also make this radio play. That's how I would have said it."

Do you remember why you thought we should start a new story?

„Well, Ismya was already quite long. But we could still carry on with Ismya actually.

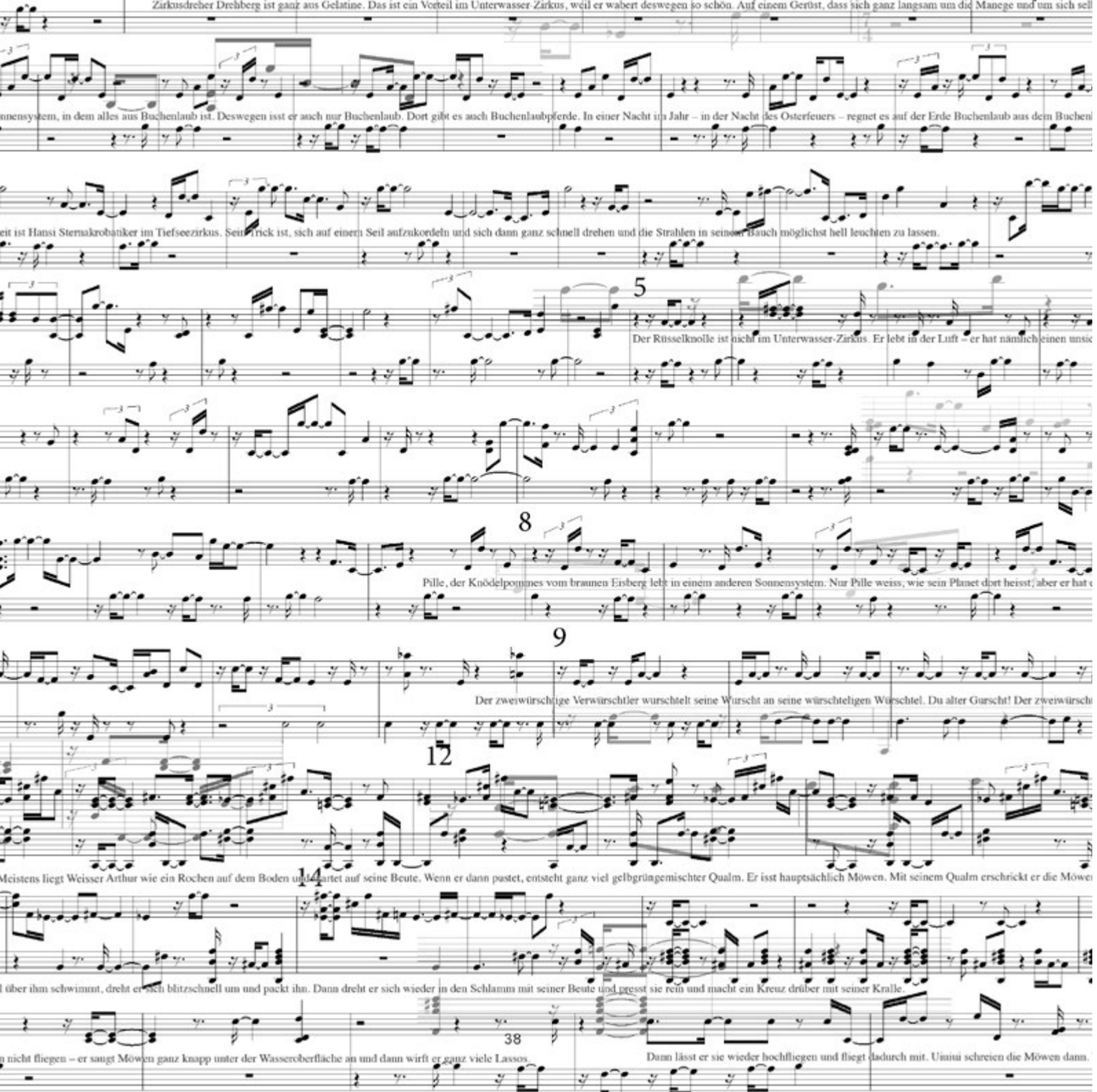
But for now we're a bit busy with Jungle Bear, I'd say. I want the radio play to be about an hour long. Because there are a few radio shows that have two parts or something."

Do you have any idea who it could continue with?

„I have an idea who could become an important member of the story."

Aha, so?

„The mole dwarves could dig from story to story."

Haha, that's great. That's a good idea.

Das Fliegende Fleuchende Schwebende Kreuchende Wendende Klingende Flüsternde Tastende Summende Hoffende Hörende Hüpfende Hin[...]

Research Week 2020 University of Applied Arts Vienna

Mein Name ist Verena Faißt, ich bin PhD in art candidate. Bisher waren unsere Präsentationen hier meist auf Englisch, heute versuche ich es mal auf Deutsch, but we can switch to English in the discussion of course.

Ursprünglich habe ich Photographie studiert. Zu dieser Zeit konnte ich mir nur schwer vorstellen, wie man Film machen kann, wo schon ein Photo so viel Aufmerksamkeit verlangt. Ich habe dann langsam angefangen, mich dem Bewegtbild anzunähern – meine ersten Filmarbeiten musste man aber sehr genau ansehen um merken, dass sich da was bewegt. Das, was mich aber immer mehr für das Medium Video eingenommen hat, war, dass die Kollaboration dem Medium so sehr eingeschrieben ist. Ein Film ist die Spur eines kollaborativen künstlerischen Prozesses. Durch die Beschäftigung mit Video und Film ist dann der Sound in meiner Arbeit immer wichtiger geworden. So wichtig, dass ich in letzter Zeit die Bilder immer mehr weglasse und vor allem Hörstücke produziere.

Der Titel meines PhD-in-art Projekts ist „staging the white elephant, that remains overlooked". Die Präsentation heute habe ich ja ursprünglich mit "Unsichtbare Elefanten unter dem Mikroskop" übertitelt.

Hier steht jetzt: Das Fliegende Fleuchende Schwebende Kreuchende Wendende Klingende Flüsternde Tastende Summende Hoffende Hörende Hüpfende Hin[...] Ich halte mich jetzt hier an diesen Text, um nicht verloren zu gehen:

Ist die Nachtigall im Käfig eingesperrt, hört sie auf zu singen. Der registrierte, erlauschte, erinnerte, beschriebene, notierte und mit unterschiedlichstem Instrumentarium wiederaufgeführte Gesang bleibt Übersetzung und wird Interpretation. Deswegen geht die Arbeit nie zu Ende – und das ist (IMHO) der Idealfall für die künstlerische Forschung.

Henke et al. schreiben in ihrem Manifest der Künstlerischen Forschung über das „ästhetische Denken":

„In Opposition zur kausalen Verifikation, zum Ableiten oder Verallgemeinern verhält es sich seinen Gegenständen gegenüber tastend und berührend. Es gewährt und wägt ab, nicht um sie zu überfallen und auf sie zuzugreifen, sondern um sie anzuerkennen, zuzulassen und damit zur Erscheinung zu bringen, was an ihnen unvergleichbar, verletzlich und auch durch Kunst unabgegolten bleibt." (Henke et al., 2020b: 62)

Wohl nicht intendiert, aber die Autor*innen scheinen damit das Werk des Entomologen Jean-Henri Fabre (1823-1915) zu inaugurieren. Fabre schreibt in seinen umfangreichen Erinnerungen eines Insektenforschers, dass er schon als kleines Kind den noch kleineren Lebewesen sehr zugetan war. Von der Insektenforschung zu leben, war ihm aber lange nicht möglich. So wurde er Lehrer und verfasste Schulbücher. Erst im Alter von 56 Jahren konnte sich Fabre ein Stück insektenfreundliches Brachland inklusive Haus in Sérignan-du-Comtat kaufen. Diesen Fleck, seinen

„Harmas“, verließ er kaum noch und widmete sich bis zu seinem Tod als Privatforscher ganz der Beobachtung und Beschreibung seiner entomonischen Mitbewohner.

Hier ein Ausschnitt über den Kokon der Gelbflügeligen Grabwespe:

„Nur wenige Kokons sind so kompliziert wie ihrer. Außer einem groben äußeren Schlingenwerk gibt es drei deutliche Schichten, die drei ineinandersteckende Kokons darstellen. Untersuchen wir nun die einzelnen Lagen in diesem Bauwerk aus Seide. Da gibt es ein gitterartiges Gerüst, grob und einem Spinnennetz ähnlich, auf das sich die Larve begibt und dort wie in einer Hängematte liegt, um besser am eigentlichen Kokon arbeiten zu können. Dieses unfertige Netz, das hastig gewebt wurde, um als Gerüst zu dienen, besteht aus nachlässig ausgestoßenen Fäden und enthält Sandkörner, Erdkrümel und die Reste des Larvenfestmahls – Grillenschenkel, noch rotgeringelt, Beine, Schädel-Kalotten. Die nächste Hülle, die erste des eigentlichen Kokons, besteht aus einer filzigen Tunika, hellrot, hauchzart, elastisch und knittrig. Hierhin und dorthin gespannte Fäden verbinden sie mit dem Gerüst davor und mit der nächsten Hülle. Sie bildet einen zylindrischen Beutel ohne Öffnung, der zu groß für den Inhalt ist und daher oben Falten wirft. Es folgt ein plastisches Etui, […] ebenfalls hellrot, bis auf den unteren, dunkleren Kegel, und sehr fest, wenngleich es mäßigem Druck nachgibt, außer an der konischen Partie, welche dem Fingerdruck widersteht und offenbar einen harten Körper enthält. […]“ (Fabre, 1879/2010: 98f.)

Als erster Naturwissenschaftler beobachtet Fabre lebende Insekten. Er versucht mit den Tieren zu sprechen und nicht nur über sie. Dabei behauptet er nicht, auf übermenschliche oder geniale Weise einer besonderen Sprache mächtig zu sein. Aber er investiert Zeit und Aufmerksamkeit. Um den Leser*innen die Übersetzung seiner Betrachtungen in eigene Vorstellungen zu erleichtern, trifft er anthropomorphisierende Zuschreibungen und spekuliert „über den Instinkt und die Sitten der Insekten“ (Französischer Originaltitel seiner Erinnerungen: „Souvenirs Entomologiques. Études sur l‘instinct et les mœurs des insectes“). Seine Anschauung gewinnt Schärfe durch Faszination, seine Sprache hilft, sehen zu können. Trotzdem berücksichtigt er die perspektivische Verzerrung seines menschlichen Blicks, wahrt Transparenz darüber, wo er fiktionalisiert und versucht, die Effekte seiner Präsenz zu reflektieren.

Mit dieser forschenden Haltung, die weniger auf Welt zugreift, sondern vielmehr aufmerksam lauschend und schauend nach Begegnung sucht, ist mir Jean-Henri Fabre ein Vorbild für meine eigene Arbeit.

Im Fokus meiner künstlerischen Forschung liegt aber nicht die Entomologie, sondern die Zusammenarbeit mit Kindern und Jugendlichen. Im Rahmen meines PhD in art-Projekts möchte ich herausfinden, wie es möglich ist, tatsächliche Augenhöhe zwischen Kind und Erwachsener in der künstlerischen Kollaboration zu erreichen und welches Erkenntnispotenzial bzw. welche Abgründe solche Zusammenarbeit birgt.

Zu dieser Frage arbeite ich als externe Künstlerin in freien Filmprojekten mit Schulklassen und als Workshopleiterin im Trickfilmstudio des ZOOM Kindermuseums. In Gesprächen mit anderen Künstler*innen aus dem Team versuche ich als Teil meiner Forschung zu ergründen, wann und warum ihren Erfahrungen nach die Begegnung mit den Kindern zu „leuchten“ beginnt.

Seit längerem ist aber mein wichtigster Forschungs-Partner mein jetzt sechsjähriger Neffe L.. In unserem

Gespräch ist naturgemäß Sprache noch nicht selbstverständlich, Klang- und Wortbedeutung werden experimentell erprobt, die Deckungs-Ungleichheit von Gesagtem, Gemeintem, Gehörtem ist offensichtlich, aber nicht beunruhigend. Vielmehr öffnet sich ein phantastischer Möglichkeitsraum für Erkenntnisse – wenn der gemeinsam er-spekulierten Welt mit der gleichen Präzision und Ernsthaftigkeit begegnet wird, wie anderen wissenschaftlich zu beforschenden Untersuchungsgegenständen.

Hauptsächlich erfolgt unsere Zusammenarbeit über Videocalls – unsere Wohnorte trennen 600 Kilometer. Wir erfinden Geschichten und entdecken Welten im Kopf, die wir dann ebenso genau untersuchen und zu beschreiben versuchen, wie Jean-Henri Fabre die Insekten, die er in seinem Harmas beobachtet. Auch im „Dschungelmeer“ – zum Beispiel – gibt es Insekten:

„Die Bienen sind unsterbliche Freunde vom Bär und so klein wie ein Bakter, aber ihr Stachel ist so lang wie ein Haar von mir und so hart wie Granit. Bloß der Bär kann sie sehen. [… Sie] haben […] ein ganz dünnes Haus, das aber einmal um den ganzen Wald geht. Um das ganze Dschungelmeer. Und da sind oben ganz viele Löcher drin und jede Biene darf in ein Loch den Honig rein. […] Um den ganzen Wald geht nochmal ein runder Kreis mit winzig kleinen Bäumchen und genau über diesen Bäumchen schwebt das minikleine Bienenhaus und dreht sich immer so ganz ganz ganz ganz ganz langsam. Die Bienen fliegen mit im Kreis herum und lassen den Honig im Fliegen fallen. Also die fliegen dann ungefähr so schnell, wie eine Hummel während sie schläft. Aber das ist bloß ihr Lager. Die Bienen wohnen in einem winzig kleinen Ball. Die können sich nämlich nochmal viel viel kleiner machen, ungefähr so groß wie ein Achtel Atom. Damit sie sich dabei nicht gegenseitig stechen, machen sie das immer so: Hier ist ein Stachel und hier ist der Körper. Dann kommt wieder hier ein Stachel hin und berührt den Körper, liegt quasi auf dem Körper und immer so weiter. Bis es so groß wie der Ball ist. Und die äußersten Bienen, die ganz am Rand vom Ball sind, die stecken ihre Stacheln immer nebeneinander aus dem Ball raus, weil sonst wär’s zu wenig Platz. Ein Stachelball.“ (Ausschnitt aus Nirual Kenabru und Verena Faißt: Der Bär aus dem Dschungelmeer, Hörstück 2020)

Zuhören, nachvollziehen, Sprache finden, Verstandenes neu artikulieren, Missverständnisse aufgreifen und produktiv machen – so wird aus dem Raum, der uns trennt, weil immer Unsagbares bleibt, ein Ort, an dem wir einander nahe sein und den wir gestalten können. Raum ist Klang und Klang ist Berührung. Unser Werkzeug ist nicht nur die gesprochene Sprache, sondern alles, was man zum Klingen bringen kann.

Charles Darwin hat angeblich in sein Notizbuch geschrieben: „das Leben eines Naturforschers würde glücklich sein, wenn er nur zu beobachten hätte, ohne schreiben zu müssen.“ (Darwin nach Lepenies 2008: 1125)

Vermutlich erwächst Darwins „Unglück“ vor allem aus der Frustration darüber, dass Beobachtung und Beschreibung eben nie ganz zur Deckung zu bringen sind. Aber ein wissenschaftlicher Anspruch erfordert, es trotzdem zu versuchen. Und die Chance der künstlerischen Forschung ist meiner Erfahrung nach, sich vor dem Spalt zwischen Sprache und Welt nicht fürchten zu müssen. In diesem Sinn kann Jean-Henri Fabre als „künstlerischer Forscher avant la lettre“ verstanden werden.

Und so versuchen auch L. und ich die Räume, die wir gemeinsam erkunden, sprachlich zu erfassen und akustisch zu skizzieren – in der Hoffnung sie damit öffnen und teilen zu können.

Await What the Stars Will Bring or Moulding the Gap

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Trying to translate L.'s neologism 'versehnt' (adj.), I looked up the etymology of the probably related noun 'Sehnsucht' and its English translation 'desire'. Sehnsucht comes from MHG 'senen' – something like 'painfully longing for'. Desire seems to come from the Latin phrase 'de sidere' – 'await what the stars will bring'. It apparently doesn't have much to do with the German word 'Sehne' for 'sinew', but versehnt sounds like a participle derived from a verbal form of Sehne, with the prefix 'ver-', like in 'verbunden' (bound) or 'verloren' (lost). Rebuilt in English, it would be something like 'for-sinewed'. 'Ich bin versehnt' could be taken literal as: longing has strained criss-crossing sinews tearing and holding my chest together and apart.

0. Disclaimer

I would like to invite you to a walk through my artistic research. I'm indwelling the field of the betwixt, the not-yet or the long-gone. Knowledge can assume unusual shapes. Questions can remain a longing. Findings can be ephemeral relations. The projected outcome is situated in the realm of the ungraspable, where 'aesthetic thinking' fosters agency:

„In opposition to causal verification, to deduction or generalization, it behaves in a tangible, touching way towards its objects. It accords and considers, not to ambush these objects but to acknowledge and accept them, and thus to show their incomparability and vulnerability, and to show what remains unsatisfied by art." (Henke et al. 2020a, p. 62)

With this following text, I built a path for us, tracing back my longing. Please do not expect me to tell you exactly what you will see on the way. Feel free to choose your gaze's direction. It might be helpful to activate your mesopic vision; to consider what the words do show, if you make them shiver, if you see through or only remember them in your back. Convoy me to my findings' habitat; let's await what the stars will bring.

1. What I want

One has to be oneself all alone – I've always found that hard to accept. Researching how many people we are currently living on this planet, the internet spits out the number 7.918.159.736. Asking for a number of how many creatures we are in total, including all animals and plants, not even the internet dares to predicate a number. But obviously, "alone" does not exist. Donna Haraway says: "The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present" (Haraway 2016, p. 18).

I am doing art in order to relate – and to this mission statement, I could relate very well. Although trying to act accordingly, I became doubtful about how one can be ‚made kin' to another. Would this not always be intrusive and presumptuous? Having been raised in a capitalistic, post-modern society, I have learned to praise "individual freedom" based on the autonomy of the subject for as long as I can remember as the most precious good I was given; a privilege that I must savour and never compromise. Trying to create relations while upholding my own as well as the others'

autonomy, my aim slowly shifted to finding already existing, ubiquitous entanglements shine, more and more understanding and cherishing my interdependency:

„There are 'ties that free': the more the individual depends, the less free [she] is; the more the person depends, the more scope [she] has for action. When [she] seeks to spread [her] wings, the individual constantly comes up against [her] limits, moans and groans, overwhelmed by forlorn passions, there's scarcely anything left for [her] to do but feel indignation and resentment; when the person stretches out, repopulates [herself], gets some distance, [she] scatters, in the strict sense of the word, [she] shares [herself], mixes, and step by step recovers powers to act that [she] never imagined." (Latour, 2021: 88)

Maybe I should clarify: This is not a literature review about, i.e. Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour. But I find a longing akin to mine glimmering through their words; they help to trace and phrase what it makes me do: I try to be present – because if we all are, the present becomes "thick" (cf. Haraway, 2016: 18); I try to "stretch out" (cf. Latour, 2021: 88) – to look, listen, sense considerately, and offer some fringes to hold on. I actively, attentively wait, sometimes longer than the moment we share. I let myself be carried along. I try to adopt or at least imagine other perspectives, share choices, find language to express experience. I try to co-create – whether 'you' are very young, an old soul, or maybe not even human. I use the term co-creation instead of collaboration or cooperation because it emphasises the co-active making or tending of common world-bits, of meaning and therewith of relations. I presume one always cares for what one is related to; thus, co-creation supports careful handling of the world and all its critters.

„Relationship among all things appears to be complex and reciprocal – always at least two-way, back and forth. It seems that nothing is single in this universe, and nothing goes one way. In this view, we humans appear as particularly lively, intense, aware nodes of relation in an infinite network of connections, simple or complicated, direct or hidden, strong or delicate, temporary or very long-lasting. A web of connections, infinite but locally fragile, with and among everything – all beings – including what we generally class as things, objects. [...] Poetry is the human language that can try to say what a tree or a rock or a river is, that is, to speak humanly for it, in both senses of the word "for." A poem can do so by relating the quality of an individual human relationship to a thing, a rock or river or tree, or simply by describing the thing as truthfully as possible. Science describes accurately from outside; poetry describes accurately from inside. Science explicates; poetry implicates. Both celebrate what they describe. We need the languages of both science and poetry to save us from merely stockpiling endless 'information' that fails to inform our ignorance or our irresponsibility." (Le Guin, 2016b: 6f)

If science helps to understand what things are, poetry helps to understand how to relate to them. The insight one can gain through artistic or poetic research is always intersubjective. Thus, if a poem is "relating the quality of an individual human relationship to a thing, a rock or river or tree" (Le Guin, 2017: 16), I would suggest that poetry always is co-creation.

"Poetry" in that sense, can imply all sorts of means, tools and media – it is not bound to words. A melody, an image, a conversation, a moment can be poetic as well. Therefore, the term "poiesis" (in the simplified sense of "making something" as opposed to "doing something") might seem more appropriate for my purposes. But something "poietic", creative and formative, is not necessarily poetic. A poem, whatever it consists of, actively relates different actors to each other. It becomes an actor itself, continuously transforming and being transformed. Poetry makes humankind a little bit more like the "Oankali" in Octavia Butler's science fiction trilogy "Xenogenesis": The Oankali dispose of sensory tentacles, through which they can connect to each other as well as to any other living being and can communicate and perceive directly without the need of signs or translations. They just become one nervous system sharing pleasure and pain. (cf. e.g. Butler 2022) As long as we don't develop such organs, we need poetry to be able to understand all our complex interdependencies.

But coping with such entanglement is quite challenging:

„No, really, he [the hero in a novel] can only ease his anxieties by resting his eyes on the moon: for its circling, for its phases, at least, he in no way feels responsible; it's the last spectacle he has left. If its brightness moves you (tu) so much, that's because, well, you know you're innocent of its movement. As you once were when you looked at the fields, lakes, trees, rivers and mountains, the scenery, without giving a thought to the effect your every move might have, however slight." (Latour, 2021: 12)

It is a paradox: Realising how dependent we are and how responsible we are for everything that goes wrong on this planet makes being alone even harder to take. Losing our (illusive) independence does precisely not mean getting rid of inconvenient responsibilities:

„And yet, what an evasion it would be to abandon anthropocentrism at the very moment when modernised humans, in their number, in their injustices, in their well and truly universal expansion, are starting to weigh up the fate of other lifeforms – to the point of being seen, in certain calculations, as the agents of a sixth extinction." (Latour, 2021: 106f)

We must remain capable of acting and consciously responsible instead of feeling tangled up in self-pity. But I think experts can help us to work out new ways to relate to the world, and all there is day by day: Children are used to be depending, fearlessly loving and fragile, constantly on the heels of terms and consciousness, yet courageous and almighty. Adults know they are not almighty and have never been, so they hide their fragility, focus on the unambiguous, try to show endurance and resilience.

Obviously, it is beneficial if adults secure daily survival through being adult and caring for the fragile ones. And they can do some things that children can't do yet. But – and this is the hypothesis my work is based on – it can be agency-expanding to understand children not only as the ones to be taught, educated, and tamed – but as co-creators of present realities. Answering Donna Haraway's prompt "Make kin, not babies!", I'd say: "More ooze, less order!"

2. How I try

<u>The Books (prequel to my current endeavours)</u>

Ten years ago, I spent one year in Iceland. After six rather dark and lonesome months, I moved into an Artist Residency in Reykjavik. The days became longer, and I was blessed with some very particular encounters. Among those were Abdolreeza Aminlari and Nico Economidis, an artist couple from the U.S. We spent most of the four weeks together. Walking along the seaside through ever-changing snow and sun, I photographed the two of them countless times while Abdi was taking pictures of Nico. It hurt incredibly when they left. I had

been sipping some of their overflowing gracious love, but they took it all back to New York and left me alone again in the northern cold. To milden my heartache, I made two copies of a booklet with the pictures I had taken, titled so good to see you. I sent one to New York, and kept the other one. It was a gift to them as well as to myself; and a tribute to photography performing a tender gaze.

Following this, I produced a rather extensive series of such two-copied little books. All of them "for" (that is "through" and "to") other artists, for short-term encounters, for places, for a dead whale, for other versions of myself. They all were materialised relations, co-creations objecting to time, space, and loneliness.

Invisible Elephants

I have always earned my living by doing animated film- and sound workshops and working in art education as a museum guide. This is part of my artistic practice, but I also perform a service. People pay to be entertained, educated, occupied. Many of my amazingly talented and inspirational colleagues are seen as and understand themselves as student-workers (no matter what age) – actually pursuing a different career.

That got me frustrated. I am bored being asked, after having held a workshop and leaving a group of people, including myself, glowing, inspired, thrilled: So – what do you actually do? Or: What is your own artistic practice? I decided to search for or create spaces where workshop situations and collaborations with kids and artists would realise the potential I presumed was left unseized. To stage the sometimes mesmerising collective artistic emanations. And to understand and grasp my role in the process better and better – not least in order to make its quality be seen and appreciated.

The Austrian school system is not particularly known for being an institutionalised cradle of artistic freedom, but I decided to occupy as much space as possible and use infrastructure that often lay fallow. The idea was to produce video experiments with school classes that would be radical co-creations, thoroughly woven and coherent but without a script or given topic. Movies like birch tree forests with one big, invisible root system of a collective process, giving as much agency to each individual as possible.

I realised eight such projects. In each case, the starting point was a collectively produced sound piece, afterwards becoming the film's audio. Every kid would add at least some rustle or knock or bumble or buzz. The sound-artist Werner Moebius and the musician Oliver Stotz helped to make these sound-pieces enthralling and therewith abiding the rest of the process. The visual part then offered almost unlimited possibilities to get involved – which is inherent in the medium of video: Everything visual can become part of the collective piece; even the void, be it resulting from individual opposition and withdrawal or consciously applied as black gaps on the video timeline. Rooted in the sound and supported by me and sometimes other artists involved, the kids developed pictures, performances, choreographies, texts, stage- and light designs, costumes, scouted locations and so on and so forth. All fell into place, as the editing was defined by the previously produced soundtrack.

The projects went incredibly well. The films grew organically and became traces of particular constellations of people, space and time. Everybody involved was amazed seeing the videos on the big cinema screen in the end. But the birch trees grew so well that I got lost in the woods: More than 125 students, around ten other artists, even more teachers – but I felt lonesome. The videos became quite eerie, featuring often violent pictures the adolescents found foreign and uncanny, although they had made them up themselves. Was it good to stage these films publicly? Would anybody not involved recognise the traces of relation that I saw? Would even the kids perceive the films as glowing collective emanation? Or rather as something merely unsettling? Was it ok to leave them alone with what they/we had done after the end of the project? By being willing to stage and appraise the kids, wasn't I hiding behind them, pushing them on stage while patronising them? Whatever one does will eventually loop back to oneself – thus choosing to act means accepting to be vulnerable in a certain way. By trying to "give agency", didn't I coerce the adolescents to act in systems unfamiliar and conceivably upsetting to them?

If someone gave me money, time, and space, I would (still) love to continue doing and developing similar projects forever because it was so inspiring and exciting to me, and I hope for most of the participants involved. But things did not clarify, rather revealed their twisted and twirled complexity.

Welcome to my aviary

I had planned to build my PhD endeavour on those video projects, but I realised that just going on doing video projects with school classes wouldn't help to proceed. I decided to take a step back and sort things out. The little books I had made in Iceland had proven helpful to find hold through relating to moments, encounters, glimpses of insight. So, I tried to use a similar procedure, sleuthing red lines to find my way through my dizzying woods: Following resonating moments or terms or references, I produced such booklets again, each dedicated to singular threads of thought, not yet arranged or ranked; incomplete.

On my desktop, I organise files (texts, sounds, pictures, videos) of yet nondirectional interest in folders I call 'Voliere' – the French/German word for 'aviary'. I imagine them flying around in there, and each time I pry inside, another snippet will flit by and whisper something new.

Therefrom, presenting my new series of booklets in our group of PhD candidates, I titled this loose collection Welcome to my aviary. I was hoping to enable the others to peer through some window into my fluttering space of thoughts, grasp some thread and relate. To enable this, I dedicated one book to each of my colleagues, taking up some image or idea I had grasped from their presentations. I thought of them as little gifts that would give an idea of how I try to relate. But unasked gifts aren't always happily received.

Within my short presentation, I had to pull all my yet unsorted red lines together, creating a rather unresolvable knot. And my colleagues found themselves more or less successfully knotted within, caged in my aviary. One of them said – at least – she was touched by my courage to show where I found myself trapped. That was not exactly what I had imagined.

Creeping With

I was puzzled. I liked sitting in my aviary. I liked what I did with the kids, and I knew I did a good job, but the how, the what, and the why were so hard to explain and seemed hardly comprehensible.

For quite a while, I had been looking for references in the work of nature writers and scientists, for example, in the work of Jean Henri Fabre. Fabre spent most of his 19th-century-life crawling through his rocky fallow land, following beetles, bees, bugs and everything creeping and crawling around him – instead of

spiking them on needles. His extensive Souvenirs Entomologiques became very influential for the development of behavioural science, although during his lifetime, Fabre was struggling with the reproach of being a writer rather than a scientist (cf. Auer 1995: 99f). Instead of taxonomising, he anthropomorphised the insects; not to abuse them as metaphors but to be able to relate to them as a condition to perception and understanding.

Despite my admiration for Fabre – explaining what my work with children has to do with his research could seem a bit farfetched. But:

„Aesthetic practices map out non-scientific epistemologies by drawing their form of knowledge not from syntheses but rather from the sensuous relations of non-predicative conjunctions in which their insights merge and coincide. […] Compositions are combinations, montages, or “splices” without specific rules, not focused on identities but instead co-presenting the incompatibility of the elements, their nonsense.“ (Henke et al., 2020a: 39)

Jointing Fabre’s commonality with the insects and my take on co-creation, I realise that Fabre, to me, is an exemplary artistic researcher of co-creation (“avant la lettre”, of course). He sincerely tried to picture being the other – while always being conscious of necessarily failing, as in his case, the Other was not even human. Still, he invested inconceivable amounts of time, close attention, and effort to converge to other perspectives (even in a bodily manner by crawling with the bugs and beetles he observed) and of imagination, working unremittingly on conveying his insights through his writing.

I feel very drawn to his way of working, with his effort to go where the beetles are instead of collecting them in his drawer, waiting hours for some critter’s decision to show up and interact. But working as a teacher or educator, just waiting for kids to show up and interact is a bit difficult. However open and dialogical my concept is, I remain responsible for the bigger scope, for clarifying what can be expected and, at least to some extent, for making things work out. The children’s personal development, their learning, and their agency are what I feel obliged to aim for, regardless of who they are. My personal learnings and insights, if relevant at all, are always related to this prior aim of supporting the ones entrusted to my care.

I must admit, though, that I am constantly looking for moments when my young partners nor I need to fulfil such a given role or task; when I don’t need to define any goal and we can roam side by side through unforeseen places, enabling insights none of us could gain alone.

Artistic research, therefore, appeared as a luxurious space: “The potential of artistic research consists in asserting undisciplinarity, allowing for uncertainty, integrating negativity, and searching for clarity” (Henke et al., 2020a: 18).

But artistic research as fundamental research is risky: You cannot know if all endeavours will yield something useful, insightful, enchanting, or maybe even something disorienting, shattering and dangerous.

Of course, I do not want to lure children or any other collaborator into possibly harmful situations. Therefore, I try to create something like a mobile safe space, which as a professional artist, I can carry, while together advancing to unpredictable grounds. The farther we get, the more we move into unknown fields and the more power it needs to hold such a trustful space lively and open. I anticipate what could possibly happen next, afterwards and in between and offer protection or guidance in time, if necessary, in a well-dosed manner, without demolishing what has already been achieved.

The most vigorous resource to endure such tension is unconditioned and undetermined relatedness, love. Such bias should be avoided under most circumstances in other sciences and possibly endangers equal treatment in educational contexts. But it constitutes my artistic research superpower.

I find such an approach resonating in Olga Tokarczuk’s acceptance speech for the Nobel prize in literature:

„[…] Tenderness personalizes everything to which it relates, making it possible to give it a voice, to give it the space and the time to come into existence, and to be expressed. It is thanks to tenderness that the teapot starts to talk. Tenderness is spontaneous and disinterested; it goes far beyond empathetic fellow feeling. Instead it is the conscious, though perhaps slightly melancholy, common sharing of fate. Tenderness is deep emotional concern about another being, its fragility, its unique nature, and its lack of immunity to suffering and the effects of time. […] It appears wherever we take a close and careful look at another being, at something that is not our ‘self’.“ (Tokarczuk, 2018)

<u>Being a friend</u>

Trying to grasp and to make understandable, what it is that I am seeking in co-creating with children, I find it helpful to talk to myself as a child. I was not a particularly lonesome child. I’ve had a loving mother, an absent father, caring grandparents, my dear sister, some peers and many trees around.

But I always longed for an adult friend of a different kind. I got furious when I realised that some adults were only pretending to be interested in my endeavours. I was longing for some sort of Peter Pan, joining my childhood adventures, taking them as seriously as I did, but being capable of doing things a child cannot do. Helping to realise fantastic plans, building stuff, or just assisting with endurance if I lost track.

When my first nephew L. was born eight years ago, I decided to try the best I could to be such a friend to him. But I did not expect what a close friend and artistic companion he would become to me.

When he was three, he sent this poem to me:

Ich wünsche Dir schöne Geschenke im Winter.
/ I wish you beautiful gifts in winter.
Und schöne Schmetterlinge und Hasen in tot, die man anlangen kann.
/ And beautiful butterflies and rabbits in dead, which one can touch.
Sonst die ganze Welt in ganz ganz schön blau.
/ Else all the world in all all-beautiful blue.

I was moved to tears. Since then, we have written a book about a sea-sick pirate, a knight who specialised in spinning fabric for tunics with a curly-haired horse, a lonesome pink dragon, a wolf that longs to be a dragon and miniature omniscient mole-dwarfs digging themselves from story to story. All of them fragile hero*ines, overcoming what Ursula K. Le Guin named the “killer story” (Le Guin, 1996: 152) and finding affirmation of different kinds.

We made audio pieces about the jungle-sea and its dwellers, with oceans walking over shady grounds and crabs becoming secret letters when they die; about wobbering, spinning, hovering, floating creatures and

critters from other galaxies; bacteria as big as a blue whale, monsters hollowing out the sun, firedogs dying paw on paw; there were trees full of honey and water grounds gloopy like ice; dancing houses with secret mechanics, always close but never touching and a moon made of stardust.

We made animated films that took us to outer space in rockets made of wizened leaves. We've been turning L.'s room into the sparkling kingdom of a jellyfish. We read The sea around us by Rachel Carson, examined the sun's surface, recorded mud puddle music and spoke to a fish. Dear L., you gave treasures to me no kingdom could pay, and I tried to find things as precious to give them back to you.

Implying our relation, what we did together, the gifts I made for L. and even more what he gave to me, to my artistic research, to my PhD endeavour, at first seemed to yield clarification: It was just the two of us – not 125 foreign kids, no institution intercalated, no labour contract, no debts and duties.

But I soon realised my dilemmas followed wherever I went: L. and I were just two, but what we did was never clearly framed as a workshop, as something partly public. It had no defined beginning and will – hopefully – have no end. It is always intimate, private, and surprising. Plus, I am not only his aunt, his co-artist, and his friend, but also the sister of his mother, the daughter of his grandmother, the aunt of his younger brother, the sister-in-law of his father and so on and so forth. With all those people and, of course, many more, we both have relations that couldn't be more differing.

If I try to reflect on what L. and I do, the relations to all those people play immense roles. How did I communicate with and involve my sister, making it possible she would trustfully let her young one join me, going to places that she wouldn't? How do I not lose sight of my dear other nephew, whom I want to be a good aunt for just as well? How do I, often inexplicitly and from afar, anticipate the familiar situation L. finds himself in? Is it helpful for the whole family if L. is occupied for a while or is it rather stressful to set up a skype call for us?

These are rather truisms, but I realised that if I wanted to go deeper reflecting on what I do with L., what we do together, I find myself lost again in birch wood forests of relations even vaster than before. And: There is hardly any thought worse than the apprehension that L. could one day resent me for having published or "used" what we've had together.

Thus firstly, I am working on finding artistic forms with L. that we both agree on and want to share. But it is rather absurd to ask L. for such decisions, so in the end, deciding on what to publish in what way is part of my risk and responsibility. I have to approach imagining L.'s present and future perspectives as well as I can.

Secondly, as a researcher, I am trying to find language and form to make my/our birch tree forest accessible, offering walkable paths, observation decks, ways in and ways out – keeping some areas restricted for privacy reasons or for the danger of getting irredeemably lost.

Artists and children

Sitting in my woods again, I tend to still feel lonesome. I am L.'s adult friend, but adult friends joining my adventures are still rare. There is hardly anyone stumbling over the same roots and trunks, having the same boles blocking sight, hardly anyone limping with me. Relating being my foremost aim, I'm struggling with the fact that seldomly within academic contexts, someone seems to be willing to relate. Or is it me, in fact, who can't relate?

When getting lost, lifting one's gaze can help. The stars are far away – and pulling them too close would even be counterproductive because only in constellation with others can they offer orientation. At ZOOM Children's Museum in Vienna, where I have been working for more than 12 years, dozens of inspiring artists have worked with children, mostly throughout their professional biographies. Unimaginable, they wouldn't know at least parts of my woods.

Hence, I now started a book project. My aim is to provide a stage for the amazing artists who have shaped the Children's Museum. I did interviews with 12 colleagues so far, but we did not primarily speak about the museum. To start with, I asked them: What would you do if you would get to spend time with yourself as a child for one afternoon? Where would you take yourself? What would you ask or tell or show yourself?

In all the conversations, we got to some sort of initial art moment in childhood that, in diverse manners, related to what my colleagues pursued as professionals and what they thought and sought. For example, one would build spaces to hide and protect his peers, another collaborates with the sea by drawing in the sand, another was thrilled by a painting of flowers that flies mistook for real, yet another would build little bombs in order to create holes.

I am fascinated by how a person becomes visible through its individual and gradual creation of thoughts while speaking (thinking of "Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden", the famous essay by Heinrich von Kleist). Thus, I would like to just publish those conversations in full length. But of course, no one would ever read, and my colleagues wouldn't be very pleased either.

Instead, I need to find a narrating voice, retelling those stories, that will grasp the particular voices of my colleagues and open up this sparkling spectrum of kinship between art making and relating to the world as a child or with a child. As I am also rather an amateur in writing, I might do what amateurs (people who love) can do best: I want to write letters to my colleagues, mirroring the spaces our talks opened up for me.

3. Misleading list of learnings:

I am convinced that the knowledge gained in artistic research cannot be named and listed. It lies in the process, its fluid methodologies, and in the making that can obtain and provide agency. Its strength is rather showing than telling. But if I tell, maybe some will look, so I can show, and what is seen might be handled with care. So here is my doubtful list of certain learnings:

1. Misunderstanding something means understanding something else.
2. Co-creation means standing next to each other, not one behind the other.
3. Be vulnerable and confident.
4. Wisdom is not bound to age or species.
5. The good ones have stone collections (but know, one can never own a stone).
6. Love is my superpower.
7. If you cannot see, listen and hum.
8. If you cannot hear, borrow someone's ear.
9. Always finish your fear up to the last drop as long as it is liquid.
10. The gap between you and me is the reason why we're not alone.

0. Post Scriptum

Publishing a text is like writing a letter into the blue, leaving me waiting for your answer. Unfortunately, I don't even know your mailing address, but I hope my words will still be well received.

REPOSITION is an anonymously peer-reviewed publication – so to my great delight, I have already been provided with two densely filled pages of review text, one in German, the other in English. The idea of a peer review is to consider the reviewer's critique to improve the text before publishing. I am very thankful for the considerate feedback and would like to answer those letters. But I am not allowed to get in touch.

Therefore, I couldn't resist starting imagining the persons behind the text. Please excuse my wild attributions in the following – any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental:

In my mind, the German reviewer is a woman working as a philosopher in an academic context. She is a very considerate and empathetic person, with a cabin on some ocean's shore, who, in between reading and writing, likes going for long walks, incorporating the ever-changing colour of the sky into her thinking. Somehow, I imagine she could have written those lines by Rachel Carson:

„One stormy autumn night when my nephew Roger was about twenty months old I wrapped him in a blanket and carried him down to the beach in the rainy darkness. Out there, just at the edge of where-we-couldn't-see, big waves were thundering in, dimly seen white shapes that boomed and shouted and threw great handfuls of froth at us. Together we laughed for pure joy – he a baby meeting for the first time the wild tumult Oceanus, I with salt of half a lifetime of sea love in me. But I think we felt the same spine-tingling response to the vast, roaring ocean and the wild night around us." (Carson, 2017: 15)

Obviously, I feel very kin to her and also well received when she writes:

„Bearing on life and revealing of realities through 'making art' positions the world of aesthetics at the right point: Inside of the art-creating human entity, within social encounter, intersubjective spaces… instead of within art 'itself'. A beautiful project. [thank you!, note VMF]. The project's premise lies in the tension between experiencing contingency ('One has to be oneself all alone') and an articulatory interpretation of the animal social, which is to be resolved through active making kin (Haraway). The focus lies on infantine competences, that refer in a fully positive way to the Anthropinon, namely the human capability to actively create one's relation to reality – in the scope of the presented project, the author is looking for means and ways to uncover and maieuticly foster such abilities." (Excerpt from review, translation, E. & O.E.)

I would also like to thank her for suggesting the reference to Nietzsches 'Holy Yea!' as an existentialist-anthropological grounding for my appraisal of working with children:

„Innocence is the child, and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a game, a self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea. Aye, for the game of creating, my brethren, there is needed a holy Yea unto life: ITS OWN will, willeth now the spirit; HIS OWN world winneth the world's outcast." (Nietzsche 1999)

I am no philosopher, and for the time being, I can just use this as a beautiful poetic reference. But going further, I think I would tackle "Innocence is the child, and forgetfulness" (ibid.). In my experience, adults still tend to deny that children's souls can be abyssal – and to abuse them as a screen for their lost and romanticised insouciance. I try not to do so.

As she suggested, I also peeked into Helmuth Plessner's Levels of Organic Life and his Law of Mediated Immediacy. I totally agree that I am struggling with shifting from the individual observation to the general and with the question of how my insights can and why they should be made accessible for anyone out of reach. Akin to this, the question is whether any structured way of finding new young co-creators exists, not only relying on serendipity and young wise souls appearing in my life. Plessner's thinking is therefore added to my shelf of yet unread but already inspiring books.

The English reviewer feels a bit more distant. I imagine him to be a city dweller, either baldheaded or, if available, wearing a curly and well-trimmed crown of hair. He is very established and cross-linked within academia. He has an artistic background but is very sceptical if the term 'artistic' is used as an excuse for not meeting scientific criteria. He is very good at writing proposals.

Summarising my approach, he endowed me with the term 'methodical vulnerability/uncertainty'. This sounds good, although 'vulnerability' by itself is not what I aspire to. But I am convinced that the admittance of being fallible, doubting and courageously in love is the necessary condition for methodically finding ways to relate.

0. Post Post Scriptum

I must admit, meanwhile, I have learned that the excerpts I received had been written by three reviewers – two male, one female. But I have become so fond of my imaginary responders that I decided to keep hold of them for the time being.

Right before giving this text out of hand, I have been talking it all through with L.; fortunately, he is no imaginary nephew but a very focused and thoughtful reviewer as well. He said this is now ready to be published.

Thank you for reading, and all the best to you!

Verena

Kunstbande

Reflexionen im Rahmen meines PhD in Art zur Begegnung mit Kindern als Freundin, Künstlerin, Lehrerin, Forscherin und Lebewesen.

in: Barbara Putz-Plecko: Heterotopien des Künstlerischen: Lehren als künstlerische Praxis.

Da ist ein schwarzes Loch, das ist ein See.
Der See ist nicht flüssig. Ringsum sind Lavafälle.
Der See wird immer höher.
Irgendwann läuft der See über die Lavafälle
und ist weg.

Da ist ein Monster aus hartem Licht.
Licht, das man spüren kann.
Die Tentakeln sind am heißesten.
Auf jeden Fall ist es böse.
Es ist ungefähr so groß wie die halbe Welt.

Nicht erst seitdem ich Lehrerin bin, frage ich mich, wie das andere machen: Mit unverbrüchlicher Gewissheit und in Windeseile beurteilen, was richtig und was falsch ist. Was zu tun ist. Was immer schon war, was bleiben oder gehen soll, was anzustreben, was abzulehnen ist. Wenn ich nur einen kurzen Blick in die Nachrichten oder auch nur aus dem Fenster werfe, glaube ich nicht, dass irgendjemandem zu trauen ist, der solche Sicherheit behauptet. Allzu klaren Wahrheiten, Zuschreibungen, Erklärungen, Urteilen haftet oft der betäubende Geruch von Populismus, Manipulation und Gewalt an.

„Der Druck des herrschenden Allgemeinen auf alles Besondere, die einzelnen Menschen und die einzelnen Institutionen, hat eine Tendenz, das Besondere und Einzelne samt seiner Widerstandskraft zu zertrümmern. Mit ihrer Identität und mit ihrer Widerstandskraft büßen die Menschen auch die Qualitäten ein, kraft deren sie es vermöchten, dem sich entgegenzustemmen, was zu irgendeiner Zeit wieder zur Untat lockt. Vielleicht sind sie kaum noch fähig zu widerstehen, wenn ihnen von etablierten Mächten befohlen wird, daß sie es abermals tun, solange es nur im Namen irgendwelcher halb oder gar nicht geglaubter Ideale geschieht (...) Die einzig wahrhafte Kraft gegen das Prinzip von Auschwitz wäre Autonomie, wenn ich den Kantischen Ausdruck verwenden darf; die Kraft zur Reflexion, zur Selbstbestimmung, zum Nicht-Mitmachen.“ (Adorno, 1970: 95f)

„Das Prinzip von Auschwitz“ ist der Abgrund aller Menschlichkeit. Dieser Abgrund ist nicht Geschichte, ist nicht vergangen, ist weder zuzuschütten noch aufzulösen. Wer die fragilen Demokratien schützen will, wer möchte, dass Menschenrechte mehr sind als eine schöne Utopie, wer sich wünscht, dass Menschen in guter Beziehung zu Mitmenschen und Mitwelt leben, der muss die Widerstandskräfte gegen diesen Sog trainieren. Es ist die damit wichtigste Aufgabe der Schule, als demokratisch legitimierte Erziehungsinstitution, den Kindern und Jugendlichen genügend Kraft und Urvertrauen zu vermitteln, um die Komplexitäten, die Widersprüchlichkeiten und Widerstände in der Welt auszuhalten, damit umzugehen und darin trotzdem handlungs- und gestaltungsfähig bleiben. Gefühlte Ohnmacht lässt verzweifeln, erkalten und die eigene destruktive Macht unterschätzen.

Dass konformistische Dressur nicht zu solcher Autonomie führt, ist in aktuellen kompetenzorientierten Rahmenlehrplänen angekommen. Aber dennoch bedeutet institutionalisierte Erziehung – selbst im besten Falle – zwangsläufig eine Reduktion von Kom-

plexität und bringt das Besondere, das Einzelne, das Andere unter Druck.

Darin sehe ich die große, vielleicht unlösbare Aufgabe aller pädagogischen Berufe: Wie kann ich als Lehrerin, Künstlerin, Wissenschaftlerin oder einfach nur als Erwachsene, zugleich meiner Verantwortung gegenüber der Gesellschaft, mir selbst und den individuell mir anvertrauten Kindern gerecht werden? Wie soll man Kinder vorbereiten auf eine Welt im Wanken? Wie unterrichtet man den Kantischen Mut, sich des eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen und die Fähigkeit, Konflikte auszuhalten und auszuverhandeln? Wie vermittelt man Vertrauen in demokratische Prozesse und gleichzeitig ein Bewusstsein für die Fragilität derselben? Wie das Vertrauen in die eigene Urteilskraft und Kritikfähigkeit? Wie soll man weder schockstarrend resignieren noch in rasendem Pragmatismus Augen und Seele verschließen?

Donna Haraway schlägt mit einigermaßen glaubwürdiger Überzeugung vor: “The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present”. (Haraway, 2016: 18) Die Fähigkeit, „sich verwandt zu machen“, kann man nicht unterrichten, so wie sich „Liebe nicht predigen lässt“. Aber über gemeinsam gemachte sinnliche Erfahrungen, über gemeinsames Denken, Ausdruck- und Sprache-finden, das vorsichtige Abtasten von Ambiguitäten können Verbindungen aufgezeigt und damit eine bewegliche, aber sichere Verortung im Weltgefüge begünstigt werden. Eine solche Form des Abgleichens von Wahrnehmungen, bei der Rezeption, Reflexion und Produktion fließend ineinander übergehen, liegt auch der Künstlerischen Forschung zugrunde. Dieses „ästhetische Denken“ erfordert besondere Methoden, die sich zu denen anderer Fachbereiche grundlegend unterscheiden:

„In Opposition zur kausalen Verifikation, zum Ableiten oder Verallgemeinern verhält es sich seinen Gegenständen gegenüber tastend und berührend. Es [das ästhetische Denken] gewährt und wägt ab, nicht um sie zu überfallen und auf sie zuzugreifen, sondern um sie anzuerkennen, zuzulassen und damit zur Erscheinung zu bringen, was an ihnen unvergleichbar, verletzlich und auch durch Kunst unabgegolten bleibt.“ (Henke et al., 2020b: 62)

In unterschiedlichen pädagogischen Konstellationen und Kontexten habe ich versucht, Kindern in solcher Weise als künstlerischen Forschungspartner*innen zu begegnen.

Ob ich dadurch eine bessere Lehrerin im Möglichkeitsfeld des Schulsystems geworden bin, sollen andere beurteilen. Aber ich glaube, eine bessere Spielgefährtin und Freundin für Kinder, Künstler*innen, Wissenschaftler*innen und manchmal auch nicht-menschliche Mitwesen geworden zu sein. Und ich bin überzeugt, dass das für Schule als Miteinander-Leben-Lernen in diesen ‚unruhigen, verstörenden Zeiten‘ (Haraway) eigentlich die entscheidendste Qualität ist.

Im Rahmen meines PhD in Art versuche ich, meine Einsichten nachvollziehbar zu machen. Der Fokus liegt auf der Analyse meiner sehr persönlichen Beweggründe, Wünsche und Fallhöhen. Ich denke, auch wenn das unpraktisch und schwer kompatibel mit einem auf Objektivität und Allgemeingültigkeit ausgerichteten pädagogischen Ausbildungssystem ist: Verantwortliche pädagogische Arbeit ist immer Beziehungsarbeit mit zumeist überfordernd vielen Anderen. Die einzige Konstante, an der ich arbeiten kann, bin ich selbst. Das zu exponieren ist manchmal unangenehm, nicht immer hilfreich und vielleicht schwierig zu rezipieren. Aber eine Pädagogik, die dem Allgemeinen, dem Einzelnen und dem Besonderen gerecht werden soll, muss in genau dieser Weise herausfordern.

Das Monster ist auf die Sonne gezogen,
um sie auszuhöhlen.

Um innen drin kaltes Wasser herzuschleppen,
damit die Sonne kalt wird
und wir sie nicht mehr auf der Erde haben.“

Es muss den Eingang zu seiner Höhle
möglichst klein machen.
Es schüttet Wasser in seine Höhle
und will sich durch die ganze Sonne graben,
so dass nur noch außen eine dünne Schicht ist.

Wenn es den Eingang versehentlich vergrößert,
läuft das Wasser wieder raus.

Am Beginn meiner PhD-Reise rief ich für mich selbst das Ziel aus, den hierarchischen und patriarchalen Strukturen, die Schule wie Kunstbetrieb prägen, zu begegnen, indem ich eine radikal kollektive Autor*innenschaft mit Schüler*innen anstrebte. Als externe Künstlerin arbeitete ich mit Schulklassen an Videoexperimenten ohne Regie und Drehbuch. Wir entwickelten Soundstücke zu denen bewegte Bilder wie düstere Mosaike wuchsen. Es entstanden aufregende, unheimliche Filme, die anders kaum zu erdenken gewesen wären und es war mir ein Anliegen, diese Werke auch außerhalb der Schulnische sichtbar zu machen: Im Rahmen von Screenings in unterschiedlichen Programmkinos in Wien wurden die Filme öffentlich präsentiert. Die Schüler*innen waren gleichzeitig stolz und irritiert vom Ergebnis: Sie hatten diesen Klängen ihre Stimme gegeben, hatten die Bilder erfunden – trotzdem waren die Filme für sie fremdartig und teilweise erschreckend. So sehr ich versucht habe, mich gestalterisch zurückzuhalten, keine Inhalte vorzugeben, nur zu „ermöglichen“: Ich habe eine Struktur und eine Bühne bereitet, auf die ich die Jugendlichen nicht gerade sanft gestoßen habe. Sie hatten – wie so oft in schulischen Zusammenhängen – keine Wahl: Selbst der totale Boykott einzelner beeinflusste die Gesamtdynamik, nahm damit Einfluss auf das gemeinsame Werk und alle freiwillig oder unfreiwillig Beteiligten scheinen – sofern sie sich dagegen nicht aktiv gewehrt haben – als Urheber*innen in den credits auf.

Was die Jugendlichen im Rahmen dieser Projekte erlebt haben, ist glaube ich sehr unterschiedlich, teilweise hoffentlich inspirierend und selbst im Falle einer für einzelne ärgerlichen Erfahrung gar nicht so relevant, wie ich befürchtet oder vielleicht gehofft hätte. Aber ich habe gelernt: Kinder und Jugendliche als Ko-Kreateur*innen ernst zu nehmen funktioniert nicht, indem ich alle gestalterische Verantwortung abgebe, sondern im Gegenteil. Geteilte Autor*innenschaft bedeutet, auch auf der künstlerischen Ebene selbst teilzunehmen, sich zu exponieren, verletzbar zu machen. Selbst zuerst auf die Bühne zu steigen, die man gerne teilen möchte. Als Künstler*in, die mit Kindern arbeitet oder als Lehrer*in kann ich das Risiko der Autor*innenschaft nur sehr behutsam abgeben und nur dann, wenn meine Co-Autor*innen das überhaupt wollen.

Immer, wenn das Monster aus Licht Wasser
aus dem Buchenlaub-Universum holen möchte,
bespuckt es der Blauwasser-Fritz
mit seiner Wasserseite.
Die Feuerseite bringt ihm natürlich nichts.
Dann kann das Monster für eine Weile
nicht auf die Sonne.

Nach den monströsen, aufregenden und verwirrenden Videoprojekten versuchte ich ein anderes Extrem. Die

ersten Lockdowns hielten mich und meinen damals noch sehr kleinen Neffen in unseren Wohnungen gefangen. Dank Videocall und einer Bettdecke über dem Laptop trafen wir uns flüsternd in phantastischen Welten von so philosophischer und poetischer Kraft, wie sie nur in genau diesem Moment der verhinderten Nähe möglich waren. Zurückgeworfen auf gerade erst ge- und manchmal erfundene Sprache als einzig verfügbarem Medium, waren unsere stundenlangen Gespräche ein Parforceritt auf der Suche nach Ausdruck, gegenseitigem Verstehen, der Erschaffung einer gemeinsamen Welt und damit Nähe.

Warum ist da dieser tiefe Wunsch, mit Kindern in Verbindung zu sein? Für Kinder da zu sein und gebraucht zu werden? Ich wünsche mir eigene Kinder, seit ich denken kann. Leider konnte ich bisher keine bekommen und die Wahrscheinlichkeit sinkt naturgemäß rapide. Genauer betrachtet ist der Wunsch doch ohnehin egoistisch – make kin, not babies (Haraway). Die Welt steht am Abgrund, es gibt viel zu viele Menschen und mein kleines Leben ist sowieso mehr als ausgefüllt. Trotzdem klafft da eine schmerzliche Lücke. An der Oberfläche gibt es gesellschaftliche Normen, denen ich bei aller Reflexion nur schwer entkomme. Meine Mutter hat mir vermittelt, dass meine Schwester und ich das Wichtigste, Größte, Beste, eigentlich einzig Relevante in ihrem Leben sind. Das war zwar schön, aber eine Steilvorlage für ein Leben und eine Identitätsfindung ohne eigene Kinder.

Ich denke aber, der Sehnsucht dieser besonderen Verbindung mit einem anderen Lebewesen liegt etwas noch Fundamentaleres zugrunde: Ich bin hier und bald wieder weg und das muss ich ganz alleine sein. Die einzige Möglichkeit dieser existenziellen Einsamkeit ein Schnippchen zu schlagen ist es, Verbindungen zu anderem und anderen zu suchen, die die Grenzen des Ichs aufzuweichen vermögen:

„There are ‘ties that free’: the more the individual depends, the less free [she] is; the more the person depends, the more scope [she] has for action. When [she] seeks to spread [her] wings, the individual constantly comes up against [her] limits, moans and groans, overwhelmed by forlorn passions, there’s scarcely anything left for [her] to do but feel indignation and resentment; when the person stretches out, repopulates [herself], gets some distance, [she] scatters, in the strict sense of the word, [she] shares [herself], mixes, and step by step recovers powers to act that [she] never imagined.“ (Latour, 2021: 88)

Ich glaube, ich suche solche Verbindungen in der Begegnung mit Kindern. Auch wenn es keine Nabelschnur ist, die uns verbindet oder je verbunden hat – Kinder sind daran gewohnt, von anderen abhängig zu sein. Das ist aber kein Problem, sondern eher Grundlage ihrer Allmacht: Im bestenfalls vorhandenen Urvertrauen, umsorgt und geborgen zu sein, ist das kindliche Hier und Jetzt offen dafür, in die Ferne zu schweifen, sich zu zerstreuen, sich mit der Welt und anderen Wesen zu vermischen und darüber immer mehr Handlungsfähigkeit und Vorstellungsvermögen zu gewinnen. In Zeiten großer Ratlosigkeit in Anbetracht der Katastrophen des Anthropozäns gibt es wenig Heilsameres als ein resilientes Vorstellungsvermögen: Ich mache mir ein Bild, ich handle entsprechend dieser Vorstellung, gelange aber zwangsläufig immer zu einem zumindest abweichenden Ergebnis, was den Raum des Vorstellbaren aber nur erweitert und mir erlaubt, dem neuen Standpunkt entsprechend, wieder zu handeln:

„Was uns in solchen Momenten erhält, die sich in all den Proben und Improvisationen ereignen, ist letztlich, dass es Momente der Offenbarung sind, Momente, in denen wir plötzlich die Möglichkeit einer Verbindung sehen.“ (Kentridge, 2017: 67)

Das ist glücklicherweise lange her.
Man kann sehen,
wie Keulen über die Höhle gestülpt wurden.

Im Jahr 2022 begann ich, tatsächlich als Lehrerin im Schuldienst zu arbeiten. Meine erste Stelle fand ich an einem großen „Elite-Gymnasium“ in wohlhabender Gegend. Mit einer halben Lehrverpflichtung unterrichtete ich gut 200 Schüler*innen – dreimal die fünfte, zweimal die siebte, einmal die achte und einmal die neunte Schulstufe in „Bildnerischer Erziehung“. Innerhalb weniger Wochen kannte ich sie alle beim Namen. Manche der Kinder verwechselten mich dagegen bis zum Schluss mit anderen Lehrerinnen.

Ich war es gewohnt, im Team zu arbeiten – daher ahnte ich, dass mir der Frontalunterricht im Klassenzimmer nicht gerade liegen würde. Ich organisierte entsprechend für jede der sieben Klassen eine ganze Reihe an Sonderprojekten in Kooperation mit verschiedenen Institutionen und Künstler*innen – in erster Linie, um nicht allein zu sein. Die großteils aus reichen, konservativen Familien stammenden Kinder hatten Idealvorstellungen von Leistung, Effizienz und Selbstdarstellung derart internalisiert, dass sie all meine künstlerischen Spiel- und Beziehungsangebote sprichwörtlich und manchmal tatsächlich in die Ecke pfefferten. Waren noch andere Künstler*innen im Raum, konnten wir ihnen zumindest Vorleben, wie man freundschaftlich und wertschätzend miteinander arbeiten kann. Um die zwei größten Projekte kurz zum umreißen:

Im symbuddy-project, einem künstlerischen Forschungsprojekt im Auftrag des ZOOM Kindermuseums, haben wir versucht, neue Fäden zu spinnen, um sich mit der Welt in Verbindung zu setzen. Zusammen mit Künstler*innen und Wissenschaftler*innen bildeten die Kinder der ersten Klassen (5. Schulstufe) Forschungsteams und (er-)fanden nicht-Menschliche Teammitglieder – die symbuddies. Ähnlich Donna Haraways Symbionten vereinen symbuddies unterschiedliche Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen der irdischen Flora und Fauna. Mit derart posthumanem Support suchten wir nach fantastischen, möglichen, lebbaren Welten und stellten in einer Online-Ausstellung im Research Catalogue der Society for Artistic Research Modelle des Zusammenlebens in planetarer Solidarität vor. (symbuddy-project.org, Miedl-Faißt & Simku, 2023)

A Museum for Métlaoui war eine Kooperation mit der tunesischen Künstlerin Bochra Taboubi. Im Rahmen einer eigens organisierten Residency bei philomena+ (Wien) arbeitete Taboubi mit den beiden siebten Schulstufen. Métlaoui im Süden Tunesiens ist der Fundort einer riesigen Sammlung paläontologischer Schätze. Heutzutage prägt verheerender Phosphatabbau Leben und Landschaft in der Region. Der fossile Reichtum ist in Vergessenheit geraten. Bochra Taboubi möchte das ändern und dafür ein unabhängiges, hybrides Museum errichten. Aber wie baut man ein Museum für eine verlorene Sammlung, ohne Standort und Unterstützung? Schüler*innen aus Tunis und meine beiden Klassen der siebten Schulstufe arbeiteten als künstlerischer Thinktank an einer gemeinsamen Utopie. (a-museum-for-metlaoui.site, Miedl-Faißt & Taboubi, 2023)

Die Ergebnisse des Projekts wurden im Rahmen von philomena+@the Belvedere 21 präsentiert. Zu dieser prominenten Ausstellung kam ein einziger Kollege aus der Schule. Das symbuddy project hatte seinen Höhepunkt im Rahmen einer gut besuchten panel discussion im ZOOM Kindermuseum. Der Evolutionsbiologe und Wissenschaftsphilosoph Johannes Jäger diskutierte mit den Kindern ihre evolutionären Spekulationen. Zu dieser über ein halbes Jahr hinweg ange-

kündigten Veranstaltung kam gar niemand aus der Schule.

Mit den anderen Klassen erarbeitete ich ähnlich aufwendige Projekte. Die intensive Arbeit mit den Kindern war aber aus Sicht der Direktion und Kolleg*innenschaft offensichtlich bloß schmückendes Beiwerk. Das übertrug sich natürlich auf die Kinder und erschwerte mir die Arbeit ungemein: Was nicht mit Druck und Drohgebärde eingefordert und als klar umrissener Task effizient zu erledigen war, war für viele Kinder kaum vorstellbar. Sich auf einen offenen kreativen Prozess einzulassen, Arbeit zu investieren, ohne das Ergebnis exakt vorhersehen zu können, Ideen gemeinsam zu entwickeln anstatt nur „in den Ring zu werfen“, Schönes im Unerwarteten, im Fremden zu entdecken, ein kreatives Risiko einzugehen – das schienen für viele unmögliche und – fast noch schlimmer – sinnlose Anforderungen zu sein, die nicht einmal im Nachhinein als Erfolg oder schlicht Erfahrung anerkannt wurden. Diese Kinder haben vermutlich nur qua ihrer Geburt schon heute und noch viel mehr in Zukunft ungeheuerliche Gestaltungsmacht – und verweigern es, aktiv zu gestalten, sich ein eigenes Bild zu machen. Noch viel mehr verweigern sie die gemeinsame Gestaltung eines Prozesses und verwechseln „Abstimmen“ mit Demokratie. Das macht mir Angst.

Natürlich wäre es ehrbar und nachhaltig, diese Kinder ästhetisch, sozial und in ihrer Beziehung zur Welt zu erziehen. Ein Jahr lang habe ich mein Bestes gegeben. Länger hätte ich nicht durchgehalten.

Aus dem Monster aus Licht, wurde Glut.
Wie wenn wir sterben aus uns Erde wird.
Es könnte sein, dass die Sonne mal
einen kalten Kreis macht. Dann geht die Glut aus.

Seit dem Herbst 2023 bin ich Lehrerin an einer eher kleinen, weitgehend inklusiven Mittelschule in der niederösterreichischen Peripherie. Die Berufswünsche der Kinder in der vorigen Schule waren Kampfjetpilot, Anwältin, Architekt oder Ärztin. Die Kinder an meiner jetzigen Schule träumen davon, Friseurin, Kindergärtnerin, Floristin, Bauer oder Automechaniker, ganz selten Bäuerin oder Automechanikerin zu werden. In fast jeder Klasse findet sich mindestens ein Kind, das aufgrund grauenvoller Vorkommnisse nicht mehr bei seinen Eltern leben kann.

Die Schule hat insgesamt knapp 200 Schüler*innen. Es begrüßen mich alle – auch jene, die ich gar nicht unterrichte – mit meinem vollen Namen. Im Gegensatz zu meiner vorherigen Schule begegnen mir diese Kinder als Person, nicht nur als austauschbare „Frau Professor“. Und sie lassen zu, dass ich ihnen ebenso als Individuen begegne, nicht als anonyme Masse mit Störfaktoren. Das klingt so selbstverständlich – ich hätte gedacht, jeder*jede wünscht sich, als einzigartiger Mensch wahrgenommen zu werden. Die Kinder am Gymnasium schienen sich dadurch eher bedroht zu fühlen.

Keine*r meiner neuen Kolleg*innen hat eine künstlerische Biografie. Sie unterrichten vor allem je ein „Hauptfach“, die „Kreativfächer“ laufen nebenher und es wird sehr gerne auf Bau- und Bastelsätze zurückgegriffen. Erfreulicherweise hat aber (bisher) niemand etwas dagegen, wenn ich das anders mache. Zuallererst habe ich die über Jahre angesammelten Überreste frustriert aufgegebener Bausätze eingesammelt und in einen möglichst anregend sortierten Materialfundus verwandelt. Meine Arbeitsaufträge an die Kinder sind so offen wie möglich gehalten – sie dürfen auf diesen Fundus zugreifen und eigene Ideen verwirklichen. Das eingesammelte Werkgeld verwende ich, um individuell notwendige Materialien zuzukaufen. Ich versuche

zu beobachten, zu verstehen was die individuellen Pläne sind und wenn notwendig unterstützend einzugreifen. Die Kinder wissen dann, dass es sich um ihren eigenen, für mich nicht vorhersehbaren Plan handelt und erwarten nicht, dass ich die perfekte Lösung parat habe. Im gemeinsamen Tun sammeln wir Erfahrungen und tasten uns voran. Auch wenn das manchen zu Beginn schwerfällt, im Endeffekt sind die meisten mit großer Begeisterung dabei. Die Kinder entwickeln im direktesten Sinn Mut, sich des eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen. Sie erdenken eigene Lösungsansätze und vielleicht das Wichtigste: Sie machen die Erfahrung, dass die Ergebnisse nie dem ursprünglichen Plan entsprechen, aber so individuell, einzigartig und gleich an Würde und Wert sind wie die Kinder selbst.

120 000 Sonnenhunde haben das Monster besiegt.
Mit einer Keule aus kaltem Sand.
Der Sand kam von der Erde.
Man kann die Sonnenhunde heimlich beobachten,
wie sie Sand aus Sandkästen klauen.

Auch wenn ich von sehr konkreten Erfahrungen berichtet habe – dieser Text ist natürlich keine klar umrissene Zusammenfassung eines PhD Projekts, auch keine umfassende Auflistung von best-practice Beispielen künstlerischer Pädagogik oder Portfolio meiner abgesicherten Werke und Erfolge.

Das Fruchtbare an der künstlerischen Forschung ist für mich, dass ich Zweifel, Irritation, Bedauern und Angst, aber auch persönliche Beweggründe, Affekte und Begierden nicht verstecken muss. Das bedeutet natürlich ein persönliches Risiko – aber was habe ich schon zu verlieren. Die fransigen, brüchigen Ränder meiner Gedanken sind Beziehungsangebote. Schlimmstenfalls bleiben diese unbeantwortet. Aber treffe ich auf ein Gegenüber, das den Mut aufbringt, mir seine eigenen Fransen entgegenzustrecken, entsteht eine Verbindung, die unsere Bruchstellen zu dem werden lässt, was uns zusammenhält und weiter bringt. Dann sind wir weniger allein.

Abbildungen 1-3: Verena Miedl-Faißt, Ohne Titel © Verena Miedl-Faißt 2024

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Jean-Henri Fabre

The following text formed part of my Bachelor thesis for the teaching degree and was supervised by Univ.-Prof. Dr. phil. Ernst Strouhal at the University of Applied Arts Vienna in 2020. Between 2017 and 2020, I completed the teacher training program in parallel with my PhD in artistic research, with both courses of study fruitfully enriching one another.

I have chosen to include this work in the present reader, as it elucidates my approach to artistic research and sheds light on the – at first sight perhaps enigmatic – reference to an entomologist in the context of artistic research with children.

Originally written in German, the text has been translated into English (with some AI assistance). Literature available in published English translations is cited accordingly. German-language works without an official English edition have been translated by me, as indicated.

Abstract:
„Fleuchende Erkenntnis. Über Jean-Henri Fabre (1823-1915) als künstlerischen Forscher“ showcases the entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre (1823-1915) as exemplary artistic researcher avant la lettre. Fabre’s oeuvre is positioned within the modern antagonism of science and art/literature, approached through the reception history of Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon’s Histoire Naturelle and Carl von Linné’s taxonomy. The text aims at a historiography of the debates circling around artistic research.

Note (2025): The approach presented here is clearly Eurocentric and informed by a predominantly male historiographic perspective. Within this limited framework, however, Jean-Henri Fabre appears as a modest figure who challenged the hegemonic positions of his time. This should become evident in the text.

Elusive Knowledge

Jean-Henri Fabre (1823–1915) as an Artistic Researcher

1. Extinction Is Boring

Amid the raging catastrophes of the Anthropocene, identifying with the human species no longer seems particularly appealing. But in Staying with the Trouble, Donna Haraway urges us not to despair – but also by no means to become indifferent:

“We – all of us on Terra – live in disturbing times, mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times. The task is to become capable, with each other in all of our bumptious kinds, of response. Mixed-up times are overflowing with both pain and joy – with vastly unjust patterns of pain and joy, with unnecessary killing of ongoingness but also with necessary resurgence. The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present.” (Haraway 2016: 1)

Fig. 1

In other words: there are things a human being can neither understand nor change; it seems necessary, despite all non-availability, to take responsibility and to find a better way of being in the world and with the world. Quite simply because we have no other chance – except perhaps to go extinct. But at least Peter Licht suspects: “Aussterben ist langweilig/sowas, das macht man nicht/damit kommt man weiter nicht.“ (Licht 2003) [Translated by the author: „Extinction is boring/That’s not the kind of thing one does/That won’t get you anywhere!”]

Haraway suggests that we should preferably „symbiontically“ link up with other species (cf. Haraway 2016: 8). In „The Camille Stories“, the last chapter of Staying with the Trouble, she sketches the utopia of such a symbiosis of human and insect.

I’m not sure whether the point is more to strengthen appreciation for “the Other” through identification with other species; or rather to lighten the burden of responsibility for the catastrophes of the Anthropocene a little by, for example, wrapping oneself in a bit of the white vest of the endangered monarch butterfly (cf. ibid.: 141). In any case, the “becoming-with” of human and insect remains speculative. But there is a role model, someone who came quite close to a “chthonic being” – Haraway’s ideal of an entirely earthly becoming and passing away: For Jean-Henri Fabre, the “beings of the earth, both ancient and up-to-the minute,” lavishly equipped “with tentacles, feelers, digits, cords, whiptails, spider legs, and very unruly hair” (ibid.: 2), were perhaps as near and as foreign as his fellow human beings. It seems to me that he came quite close to a “symbiontic” way of life:

Fig. 2

"In your company, my crickets, I feel the life, the soul of our clod of clay, quiver within me." (Fabre in Auer 1995: 211, translated from German by the author.)

Of course, that sounds somewhat high-flown at first. But if, like Fabre, you have spent the greater part of your life lying on your belly in the dust, patiently seeking exchange with hymenopterans, spiders, beetles, and all the other crawling and creeping things, then – so I think – you're allowed to say so.

2. Entomology and Literature

Jean-Henri Fabre was born on December 21, 1823 in Saint-Léons – a small place on the southern edge of the French Massif Central – into poor circumstances. In his extensive Memories of an Entomologist he writes that even as a small child he was very much devoted to even smaller living beings. But initially it was not possible to make a living from entomology. So he became a teacher and wrote schoolbooks. Only at the age of 56 could he purchase a patch of insect-friendly wasteland, including a house, in Sérignan-du-Comtat. He hardly ever left this spot – his "Harmas[1]" – and, as a private researcher, devoted himself entirely to observing and describing his entomonic co-inhabitants until his death on October 11, 1915.

He did not retreat solely into an intimate dialogue with "his" insects, however, but also sought to put his subjective observations into words and to share them:

"Others reproach me for my manner of writing, which is not solemn enough – let us say, not academically dry. They worry that a page that can be read without fatigue is not always the expression of truth. If one were to believe them, it would be impossible to be thorough without being obscure. You, all you insects, armed with stings and armored with elytra, take up my defense and bear witness to the intimacy in which I

1 Jean-Henri Fabre called his land "Harmas." According to Wiktionary, the term harmas derives from the Occitan ermás and the Latin eremus (wilderness, fallow land). Beyond that, the term appears – at least online – only as the proper name for Jean-Henri Fabre's estate.

live with you, the patience with which I observe you, and the conscientiousness with which I record your actions. I give no learned formulas, but report exactly the facts observed, neither more nor less, and whoever questions you after me will receive the same answers." (Fabre quoted in Auer 1995: 99f., translated from German by the author.)

Observing closely is one thing; finding precise language for what has been observed is another challenge. Charles Darwin was an admirer of Jean-Henri Fabre[2]. Perhaps, alongside his own experiences, he even had Fabre in mind when he noted: "the life of a naturalist would be happy if he had only to observe, and not to write." (Darwin after Lepenies 1976: 1125, translated from German by the author.).

Jean-Henri Fabre was confronted not only with the hurdle of a research object long judged rather unattractive, but as a scientist he was also forced to defend his style of writing. His texts seem to satisfy literary rather than scientific standards – but why describe with fine words what only a scientifically cold eye can behold without horror?

The twentieth century posthumously provided Fabre with company among entomologically versed literati: Ernst Jünger kept a collection of around 40,000 beetles he had caught himself (cf. Kußmann 2018) and

2 Darwin cites Fabre's findings on the digger wasp in „On the Origin of Species", in the fourteenth chapter on development and embryology (Darwin 1899, online version). Fabre, in turn, wrote about Darwin after his death: "This chapter should be dedicated, in the form of a letter, to the famous English naturalist who now rests in Westminster Abbey, a few steps from Newton's grave: Charles Darwin. I was obliged to report to him on the results of some experiments which he had prompted me to undertake in our correspondence; this obligation was most agreeable to me. And although the facts, as I observe them, diverge from his theories, I nevertheless feel a deep veneration for the nobility of his character and his sincerity as a scholar." (Auer 1995, ebook edition, Chapter V "Magnet," final paragraph, translated from German by the author.)

Vladimir Nabokov also made a name for himself as a lepidopterist – he worked in the entomology department of the American Museum of Natural History in New York and himself discovered twenty butterfly species (cf. Ingold 2001).

For the two hunter-researchers mentioned, the fascination of hunted, impaled, prepared, ordered, and named insects arises from their function as quarry: Nabokov found "in nature […] the gratuitous delights that [he] sought in art" (ibid., translated from German by the author.) and drew satisfaction from the "triumphal act of naming" (ibid.) when discovering previously unknown species. "Jünger interprets [the] decision to hunt beetles … as a sign of sovereignty, through which the hunter simultaneously enters a different order of time, compensating 'time loss' with a gain in 'duration'. […] Yet the duration, as Jünger sees and pursues it, cannot be had without death. It is the price that must not be named." (Penke 2018, translated from German by the author.) Neither Jünger's beetles nor Nabokov's butterflies survive their examinations. They become passive (because dead) objects of investigation for the artist-scientists. Fabre, by contrast, dissolves the differentiation between subject and object. He tries to interact with his subjects of study in their specific temporality, to speak with the insects rather than about them.

This difference in investigative approach to the world manifests itself not only in direct dealings with the living beings studied – but also in the literary result. For Nabokov, the beguiling lepidoptera are not least an inspiration for metaphors and imagery. Thus "the 'nymphet' Lolita is equipped with various butterfly features and is implicitly associated with the 'nymphalids', one of the most widespread families of butterflies" (Ingold 2001, translated from German by the author.). Ernst Jünger even sees direct parallels bet-

ween specimen and collector, corresponding to his primarily aesthetic judgment of insects. The beetle hunter, he says, is more steadfast, less temptable, and harder than the easily seduced, flighty butterfly collector (cf. Rüdenauer 2020).

And with Jünger too, the entomological inclination leads to imagery. In his war-glorifying novel „Storm of Steel“ (1920), for example, tanks are said to move like clumsy giant beetles (cf. Rüdenauer 2020).

By contrast, insects assume a more emancipated role for Jean-Henri Fabre: instead of hunting them, Fabre follows the animals. He sets fewer traps than he offers the insects lodgings where he can observe them well. They seem to decide for themselves whether to reveal themselves to him or not. In transcribing his entomological insights, Jean-Henri Fabre draws on all his literary resources, working at language in order to describe the insects. In comparison with Ernst Jünger and Vladimir Nabokov, Fabre even much more clearly makes anthropomorphizing attributions. He voices subjective reflections and sometimes fantastic-seeming hypotheses. But Fabre does not process the results of his investigating gaze into allegorizing prose; rather, his images are tools to enable an aesthetic (sensory) imagination of his en-tomological observations. In doing so, he reflects on his perspective and makes it transparent.

“And then, my dear insects, if you cannot persuade these good people, because you do not have the weight of the boring, then I will tell them: You cut the animal to pieces, and I study it while it is alive; you make of it an object of horror and pity, and I make it something to grow fond of; you work in a torture chamber, I observe under the blue sky, to the song of the cicadas; you subject the cell and the protoplasm to reagents, I study instinct in its highest manifestations; you research death, I research life.” (Fabre in Auer 1995: 100, translated from German by the author.)

3. Jean-Henri Fabre as Artistic Researcher

Fabre’s descriptions are so precise, and proved so relevant for the development of behavioral research, that they can hardly be dismissed as “unscientific.”

Science, literature, and art (in my view) ideally share a common interest: They attempt to understand and explain the world better – in order thereby to enable a better being-with-the-world as a human, in Donna Haraway’s sense. Of course, very different means and methods are employed, which accordingly have very different possibilities, potentials, and limits. But even if the connection between art and science may sound to some ears about as possible and probable as a symbiosis of human and butterfly, there does seem to be potential in it.

What this potential might be is hard to grasp – probably because it is located exactly where experience remains fleeting, intangible, and unavailable.

Fabre was not the first naturalist who, in the search for knowledge-giving verbalization, struggled with the supposed incompatibility of literature and science: the work and reception history of the Histoire Naturelle of Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, and the classification system of Carl Linnaeus can be seen as the x- and y-axis – or perhaps rather the zero point – of this antagonism.

The spectrum of discussions has not become any smaller since then. However, since the early 1990s – arising more from the visual arts than from literature or the natural sciences – artistic research has established itself as an independent field of research.

What artistic research can or should be is highly disputed. What, in the current, in many respects aporetic debate, hardly appears is a historicization of the problem. I would therefore like to propose understanding and describing Jean-Henri Fabre as an exemplary hands-on artistic researcher avant la lettre, and thus to attempt an approach to the potential of a connection between science and art.

4. Jean-Henri Fabre between Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, and Carl Linnaeus

4.1. Less Eternity, More World

Paul Valéry captured with great elegance the “pickle” Fabre labored over all his life: „Was man nicht festhält, ist nicht. Was man festhält, ist tot.“ (Valéry 2017: 80) [Translated by the author:“What one does not capture does not exist. What one captures is dead.”] The butterfly sits on the blossom only for a moment. To grasp it in detail in that second seems nearly impossible. A photograph, as well as the prepared corpse of a butterfly, makes it possible to contemplate and describe its form at leisure and with precision – but only its dead form. The essence of a butterfly, however, is characterized primarily by its fluttering. In the end, an immobilized butterfly perhaps functions better as a Rorschach test than as the object of lepidopterological study.

And perhaps the best thing that can happen to a research subject is, in any case, to find out something about oneself through the study of “the Other”:

Fig. 3: Jean-Henri Fabre in: Auer, 1995: 64

“‘Studies on the instinct and manners of insects’ is how Fabre subtitled his ‘Memories’. How wonderfully old-fashioned ‘manners’ sounds and at the same time how ‘human’. For the description of these beings so fundamentally different from us, as if they were merely unknown peoples whose manners and customs are not entirely foreign to us after all, constitutes much of the charm of his Souvenirs entomologiques. His studies are sustained by an unflagging amazement at the miracle of life that these winged, armored, or furred beings reveal to him, the entomologist: ‘The insect shows us life in its inexhaustible variety. It helps us to

decipher a little the darkest of all books: the book of our self.'" (Nettling 2020, translated from German by the author) So writes Astrid Nettling in a review of the tenth and final volume of „Erinnerungen eines Insektenforschers", published in German for the first time in July 2020. The undertaking of getting to grips with life in its elusiveness is doomed to fail – or as the phenomenologist Max van Manen says: "You're always too late in grasping the now." (van Manen 2014) Ernst Jünger's beetles are as dead as Vladimir Nabokov's butterfly specimens. They move only through the ordering, grouping, sorting hand in the collector's sense. The nightingale in the cage ceases to sing. The recorded, overheard, remembered, described, and re-performed song, using all manner of instruments, remains a translation with an unavoidable translation error. If one possesses faith in a Creator who stands above all errors, who had something in mind in creation and – be it vengeful or benevolent – acts infallibly, then one can probably live quite contentedly with such human inadequacy without becoming overly nervous.

With the Enlightenment, however, these unquestioned convictions were lost. Maturity rather than pious fear of God was required in order to explain the world and to locate human beings – or increasingly the individual – within it:

"How do we acquire knowledge? What is right, what is wrong? Are we nothing but machines, programmed by genetics and chemistry? Or do we have free will? Or do we perhaps only think we have free will? Where do we come from? Where are we going? These questions were posed again and again, sometimes playfully, sometimes philosophically. There is no doubt that this path, begun by the Enlightenment, of pressing and endless questioning about the nature of the human being and the motive forces of human action meant a radical rejection, or at least a distancing from the classical doctrines about the human being, his duties, and his destiny that had been preached for centuries as the only truth in the confessions and catechisms of all Christian churches." (Porter 1990: 89f., translated from German by the author.) Essential to this 'new' encounter with the world is precise observation, one's own experience as a prerequisite for gaining knowledge – empiricism – which presupposes a strict separation of observing subject and observed object. If, however, one lives only in the waiting room of a hopefully better – or at least not much worse – afterlife, it may be advantageous not to perceive the here and now too precisely.

If the hope for or fear of an afterlife increasingly falls away, there is nothing left but to take a close look at what is there – quite literally under the magnifying glass. And the closer one looks, the nearer, but also more diverse and unfathomable, appears what is to be seen. Thus the claim to be a "universal scholar" was soon unmasked, in the bright light of the Enlightenment, as a pious wish. Since the eighteenth century, the different possibilities of gaining knowledge have differen-tiated more and more into highly specialized branches of science. For the researching mind it seems difficult to accept that it is indeed possible to explain (parts of) the world, to map it, to measure it, to construct systems, to describe, to admire – but that the "ultimate cause of nature and its properties" (Kirchner, Michaelis: 442, translated from German by the author.) remains beyond reach. Hence in the great encyclopedias of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries one finds a whole series of descriptions of "physico-theologies" that sought, through the observation and study of birds („Ornithotheologie"/"ornitho-theology"), stars („Astrotheologie"/"astro-theology"), thunder („Brontotheologie"/"bronto-theology"), or fishes („Ichthyotheologie"/"ichthyo-theology") – that is, by means of the developing natural sciences,

which made the existence of God ever more improbable – to prove that very existence after all (cf. e.g. Pierer's Universal-Lexikon 1857).

This longing for a power that has everything under control and can somehow deal with the unfathomable for humans seems to have something to do with the relationship of science and art – their incompatibility as well as their mutual attraction.

Science and art make different mistakes in attempting to grasp the world – and avoid different mistakes. The hope of achieving something by bringing both "dimensions into a common cultural space" (Lethen 2013: 42, translated from German by the author) that remains hidden to each alone was and is close at hand.

But since the origins of the modern concepts of science and art in the "saddle period" ("the phase of transformation from Old Europe to the 'modern world'," Langewiesche 2016, translated from German by the author) in the eighteenth century (thus named by the German historian Reinhart Koselleck), it has apparently been rather rare to actually unlock the potentials of bringing the two "dimensions" together.

Rather, they seem to weaken or almost exclude each other. In „Erweiterung des Atemvolumens. Über die notwendige Reibung von Kunst und Wissenschaft", Helmut Lethen even argues for a strict separation:

"Without separation of the arts from the sciences and the standards of their institutions, there can be no friction. Art and science are not separate domains but rather two dimensions in a common cultural space. The field of tension between these dimensions must be maintained with all our might. For in every contact between the two spheres one arrives at the certainty of their great difference." (Lethen 2013: 42, translated

Fig. 4: The peacock from Buffon's Histoire naturelle des oiseaux

from German by the author.) And yet, time and again, there have been and are artists/scholars who can be assigned to neither one "dimension" nor the other.

4.2. Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, and Carl Linnaeus

Wolf Lepenies describes the genesis of the antagonism between literature and science by means of the career and reception history of a handful of paradigmatic authors and scientists of the eighteenth century in his book of the same name (1988). The following sketch of the two ur-protagonists of the dilemma, Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, and Carl Linnaeus, follows Lepenies' argument.

Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, was a star author of the eighteenth century; his Histoire Naturelle was an absolute bestseller for many decades. In the process "he belonged to the last naturalists who could increase their scientific reputation because they also found recognition as authors; he is the first whose standing declined because he was allegedly too much a man of letters and too little a scholar." (Lepenies 1988: 63, translated from German by the author.) Buffon was an aristocrat, favorite of Louis XV, member of the Académie française, a self-confident naturalist – and a remarkable stay-at-home:

"Fifty years of his life, he wrote proudly, he had spent in his study, in a tower of the Burgundian Montbard, where he dictated his extensive work." (ibid.) For Buffon, the description of natural phenomena, not their systematic classification, was paramount. "Style" played an outstanding role: "Le style est l'homme même," he formulated in his inaugural address to the Académie française:

"To have style is not a question of talent, but rather of effort; style is the order and movement one knows how to give one's thoughts. To write well requires important subjects and compelling reasons to occupy oneself with them; there is no acceptable style that is independent of the insights and opinions it expresses. The style of a writer and scientist becomes beautiful only through the truths it proclaims." (Buffon after Lepenies 1988: 65, translated from German by the author.) Buffon thus emphasized the challenge not only to gain "insights" but also to "express" them, to find language, to understand, and to explain. This reflection on what today would be called the "presentation of scientific findings" (cf. Lepenies 1988: 66) seems up-to-date – but his critics accused him of confusing style with truth. The "style buffon" was, they said, pompous, garrulous, and actually boring because it brought no new insights, only hymnically overwhelmed (cf. ibid.: 67, 72). On the contrary, it was even dangerous and harmed science, for Buffon wrote in a style "that cannot be imitated without identifying with the thoughts and convictions of its author. Impressed by Buffon's periods, one will strive to write as he does, and in the effort at stylistic mimicry will not advance natural history as a field by a single step." (Condorcet after Lepenies 1988: 69, translated from German by the author.) The eulogy to Buffon by the French philosopher and politician Marquis de Condorcet in 1790 was obviously no longer very laudatory. His habitus as a noble scholar, who put on golden cufflinks to write, was still en vogue under the Ancien Régime – but with the French Revolution at the latest, reverence for such gestures was lost (cf. Lepenies 1988: 76). "The naturalists of the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary epoch" (ibid.: 71, translated from German by the author) saw in the simple pastor's son Carl Nilsson Linnaeus "a more suitable patron of natural history" (ibid.). Actually, after his elevation to the nobility in 1756, his name was Carl von Linné, but an aristocratic title was no longer a desirable distinction for an upright scientist – thus his

adherents stuck with the bourgeois form "Linnaeus" (cf. ibid.: 71). Linnaeus/Linné spent his life (1707 to 1778) mainly in Sweden, whose provinces he explored on several expeditions. He became famous for his taxonomic classification system, which continues to shape biology and botany today.

Buffon regarded the "nomenclateur du nord" (ibid.: 71) and his fixed systems as his antipode and adversary. At the latest with the founding of the Société d'Histoire naturelle in 1790, whose goal was "the enforcement and dissemination of the Linnaean method" (ibid.: 70, translated from German by the author), "the results of natural history were measured only against Linnaeus," as Lepenies writes: "his classifications supposedly corresponded to reality so exactly as if he himself had been present at creation." (ibid.: 70, translated from German by the author.) His style was considered "natural," in contrast to Buffon's "artificial" manner of writing. The Marquis de Condorcet also wrote a eulogy for Linnaeus, and praise evidently came more easily to him here than with Buffon. In Linnaeus's work "many ideas [are] expressed in few words" and "significant truths in a style at once noble and simple" (ibid.: 72). The greatest hallmark of quality was that one could not "read" his work at all, but only "study" it – thus it must be of particular scientific importance. His language did no violence to nature; it was expressive, precise, rich in images, and rhythmic (cf. ibid.). Linnaeus was a model ur-empiricist: he did not sit only in the study, but conducted investigations, observed closely, and thus developed his strict classification system. Only: the closer he looked, the more clearly, bit by bit, emerged what Darwin later wrote in his notebook: "Man is no exception." (Darwin in Lepenies 1988: 50, translated from German by the author)

[I imagine it like this: humans are nothing better than, for example, a beetle. Yet God created humans – and

Fig. 5: Sketch from Linnaeus's diary: Lapp carrying his boat.

then, presumably, everything else – in his image. So perhaps there is a beetle sitting on the cloud and not a bearded old man. That must be hard to accept for believers of any denomination.]

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg took this in stride in the eighteenth century: "God created man in his own image – that probably means man created God in his." (Lichtenberg 2000: 73, translated from German by the author) – but Linnaeus, for all his worldliness, secretly struggled with the theodicy problem. Judging by the unpublished letters to his son, including a collection of cases adduced as evidence of divine retribution (Nemesis Divina), he did not have a cheerful life:

"If you wish to be happy, then know that God sees you ubique. […] Trust no one in the world; tomorrow he is your enemy. […] Listen, say nothing; injure no man's name nor honor." (Linnaeus after Lepenies 1988: 13f., translated from German by the author.)

While Buffon did not waste much time actually experiencing "phenomena," dictating in his study, Linnaeus was always in search of experiences that confirmed his system – and thus perhaps experienced only what

Fig. 6: Linnaeus on the Swedish 100-krona banknote

fell within the (more or less consciously) set bounds. Both seem to have preferred to avoid experiences that could have called their models of explaining the world into question. That, however, is not something one can accuse Jean-Henri Fabre of. Questions to which he could find no clear answers seemed to interest him most of all.

5. The Memories of an Entomologist as a School of Perception

Fabre's Memories of an Entomologist are too extensive to do them justice here. In what follows I will concentrate, by way of example, on a chapter about the yellow-winged digger wasp. From it I wish to draw out individual aspects and relate them to the positions of Buffon and Linnaeus.

Jean-Henri Fabre would probably also have been a good filmmaker – no surprise, given the mobility of his subjects. In any case, his capacity for empathy benefits not only his investigations but also his readers when he leads up to the protagonists of the chapter with a humming, warm, honey-scented "establishing shot":

"It is at the end of July that the Yellow-winged Sphex tears the cocoon that has protected her until then and flies out of her subterranean cradle. During the whole of August she is frequently seen flitting, in search of some drop of honey, around the spiked heads of the field eryngo, the commonest of the hardy plants that brave the heat of the dog-days in this month. But this careless life does not last long, for by the beginning of September the Sphex is at her arduous task as a sapper and huntress." (Fabre 1879/1916: 59)

The carefree but alas so quickly passed youth of the wasp, who exchanges the security of her cocoon for the glittering, sweet heat of life – these attributed states of a tiny insect during the dog-days are not sober scientific hard facts. Nor are the commonalities of her nest with a cradle, and her identity as miner and hunter, unproblematic; but Fabre helps the entomologically uninitiated reader to perceive his subject at all, creating empathy and thus interest. On soil thus prepared, he demands time and attention:

"One must observe such a settlement for several days to form an idea of the restless busyness, the hecticness and jerky movements of these industrious miners." (Fabre 1879/2010: 75)

To translate a sensory impression into an idea requires experiences on which one can draw, impressions that can be activated. As a human being, unfortunately, one possesses only the experiences of a human. Seeing insects as if they were "merely unknown peoples" (Nettling 2020) – in this case "industrious miners" – thus simply serves as an exhortation to look (to learn to look).

"But here, with a loud buzz, comes a Sphex who, returning from the chase, stops on a neighbouring bush, holding in her mandibles, by one antenna, a large Cricket, several times her own weight. Exhausted by the burden, she takes a moment's rest. Then she once more grips her captive between her feet and, with a supreme effort, covers in one flight the width of the ravine that separates her from her home. She alights heavily on the level ground where I am watching, in the very middle of a Sphex village. The rest of the journey is performed on foot. The Wasp, not at all intimidated by my presence, bestrides her victim and advances, bearing her head proudly aloft and hauling the Cricket, who trails between her legs, by an antenna held in her mandibles. If the ground be bare, it is easy to drag the victim along; but, should some grass-tuft spread the network of its shoots across the road, it is curious to observe the amazement of the Sphex when one of these little ropes suddenly thwarts her efforts; it is curious to witness her marches and countermarches, her reiterated attempts, until the obstacle is overcome, either with the aid of the wings or by means of a clever deviation. The Cricket is at last conveyed to his destination and is so placed that his antennæ exactly touch the mouth of the burrow. The Sphex then abandons her prey and descends hurriedly to the bottom of the cave. A few seconds later we see her reappear, showing her head out of doors and giving a little cry of delight. The Cricket's antennæ are within her reach ; she seizes them and the game is brought quickly down to the lair." (Fabre 1879/1916: 66f.)

She is exhausted, she lands clumsily, her work is difficult, she is disconcerted, she tries and fails, she solves her task cleverly, she emits a cry of joy. That is a story one gladly follows, a protagonist with whom anyone can identify. But as much as the wasp's state may be mere speculation that holds the reader's attention – Fabre observes precisely and describes the insect's behavior objectively and accurately.

In the process he reflects on the effects of his presence and the perspectival nature of his report (unlike some ethnologists). The limits of facticity remain transparent; speculation serves the graspability of an image.

"(...) at the moment when the Sphex is making her domiciliary visit, I take the Cricket left at the entrance to the dwelling and place her a few inches farther away. The Sphex comes up, utters her usual cry, looks here and there in astonishment, and, seeing the game too far off, comes out of her hole to seize it and bring it back to its right place. Having done this, she goes down again, but alone. I play the same trick upon her; and the Sphex has the same disappointment on her arrival at the entrance. The victim is once more dragged back to the edge of the hole, but the Wasp always goes down alone; and this goes on as long as my patience is not exhausted. Time after time, forty times over, did I repeat the same experiment on the same Wasp; her persistency vanquished mine and her tactics never varied. Having demonstrated the same inflexible obstinacy which I have just described in the case of all the Sphex-wasps on whom I cared to experiment in the same colony, I continued to worry my head over it for some time. What I asked myself was this: Does the insect obey a fatal tendency, which no circumstances can ever modify? Are its actions all performed by rule; and has it no power of acquiring the least experience on its own account? Some additional observations modified this too absolute view." (Fabre 1879/1916: 72f.)

Fabre records an interaction, a game: sometimes he acts and the insect reacts, sometimes he reacts to the behavior of the wasp. He tries to speak with the insects and not only about them. In doing so, he does not claim, in a magically superhuman or ingenious way, to command a special language. He invests only time, attention, and – as far as possible – empathy. He uses his hypotheses, fictions, and attributions to give

his observations a frame, in order to be able to see at all – not to prove that he is "right." Even if the active exchange, the communication with the insect, is to a large extent fiction, this fiction, in my view, is nonetheless an expression of respect for life, for the other species, in the Harawayan ideal.

"The murderess soon makes her arrangements. She places herself belly to belly with her adver¬ sary, but in the opposite direction, grasps one of the threads at the tip of the Cricket's abdo¬ men with her mandibles and masters with her fore-legs the convulsive efforts of his thick hinder thighs. At the same time, her middle-legs hug the heaving sides of the beaten insect ; and her hind-legs, pressing like two levers on the front of the head, force the joint of the neck to open wide. The Sphex then curves her abdomen vertically, so as to offer only an unattackable convex surface to the Cricket's mandibles ; and we see, not without emotion, its poisoned lancet drive once into the victim's neck, next into the joint of the front two seg¬ ments of the thorax, and lastly towards the abdomen. In less time than it takes to relate, the murder is consummated ; and the Sphex, after adjusting the disorder of her toilet, makes ready to haul home the victim, whose limbs are still quivering in the throes of death.[...] No, if a fertile imagination had allowed itself free scope to invent a plan of attack at will, it could not have contrived anything better ; and it is open to doubt whether the athletes of the classic palestrce, when grappling with an adver¬ sary, boasted more scientific attitudes." (Fabre 1879/1916: 77ff)

Murderesses with cruelly perfect plans of attack, the faces of opponents twitching in the throes of death, straightened clothes, a venomous stiletto, and gladiatorial schools: in Fabre, insects are not only romantic heroines but also fearsome warriors with terrifying murder techniques. Not only in the description of the peaceful flower meadow but also in the description of deadly combat one could, for all the precision in describing bodies, processes, forms, and movements, forget that Fabre is not speaking of humans here. Unlike an "apology of crime," such as the Marquis de Sade derived from a naturalistic social doctrine (cf. Lepenies 1988: 39, translated from German by the author), it seems here as if Fabre's Memories of an Entomologist were rather holding up to humans an entomological mirror: gladiators were forced to perfect killing – for the amusement of the rulers. The digger wasp kills better – but not for entertainment; rather for provisioning her brood:

"With her, the dirk is not a show weapon, unsheathed to satisfy revenge : revenge, the so-called pleasure of the gods, but a very costly pleasure, for the vindictive Bee sometimes pays for it with her life ; it is an implement for use, a tool, on which the future of the grubs depends. It must therefore be one easy to wield in the struggle with the captured prey; it must be capable of being inserted in the flesh and with-drawn without the least hesitation, a condition much better fulfilled by a smooth than by a barbed blade." (Fabre 1879/2010: 83f)

"To produce this paralysis the Hunting Wasps employ precisely the process which the advanced science of our own day might suggest to the experimental physiologists, that is to say, they injure, by means of their poisoned sting, the nerve-centres that control the locomotory organs. [...] Despite the appearances that might make us think otherwise, the Crickets immolated by the Yellow-winged Sphex are no more dead than the Weevils pierced by the Cerceris' dart. [...] the Sphex-grubs, which live for less than a fortnight before shrouding themselves in their cocoons, are certa" (Fabre 1879/1916: 80f)

The deciphering of the paralyzing procedure of the pemphredon would likely have been hard to achieve with Buffon's desk method. Whether Linnaeus could have made such an observation can only be speculated about – but the suspicion suggests itself that his fear of God would have clouded his gaze when contemplating such monstrosities.

Fabre, however, (mostly) succeeds in allowing himself to be neither deterred by horror and disgust nor carried away by the magic of wonder. Rather, his gaze gains sharpness through fascination; his language helps one to see. Like a brilliant art mediator he describes the cocoon of the digger wasp:

"The egg hatches after three or four days. A very delicate wrapper tears asunder; and there lies before our eyes a feeble grub, transparent as crystal, a little attenuated and as it were compressed in front, slightly swollen at the back and adorned on either side with a narrow white thread formed of the principal trachean ducts. The frail creature occupies the same position as the egg. Its head is, so to speak, planted at the very spot where the upper end of the egg was fixed; and all the remainder simply rests upon the victim, with-out being fastened to it. The grub's transparency enables us readily to distinguish rapid undulations inside it, ripples which follow one upon the other with mathematical regularity and which, beginning in the middle of the body, spread some forward and some backward. These fluctuating movements are due to the digestive canal, which takes long draughts of the juices drawn from the victim's body." (Fabre 1879/2010: 86f)

Buffon and Linnaeus do recognize that contempt for insects might be worth reconsidering. For Linnaeus, in keeping with his time and logic, nature is divine revelation for humans:

"To the maintenance of the natural equilibrium all species contribute, including low and despised ranks of living beings such as insects, in which the perfect mechanism of God-created nature perhaps reveals itself most clearly." (Linnaeus after Lepenies 1988: 31, translated from German by the author)

Thus what makes the despised insects a bit more worthy of esteem is their perfect submission to God's plan. And Linnaeus attempted with his system to decipher the divine plan – in the end he credits the insects with the fact that they follow his classification system correctly. Perhaps, though, they do so only because he does not look more closely. Buffon's entomological gaze, by contrast, is thoroughly worldly and, above all, anthropocentric:

"Many of the [insects], indeed, are venomous and harmful; most of them appear to us, at first sight, unclean and repulsive. All this instills in us a kind of disgust. But are there not countless families of insects that serve the human race to the most obvious advantage? And how many benefits could we not still derive from a host of other genera if we took more careful interest in their manner of life and their natural constitution? – The knowledge of insects? [emphasis in original] – What entitles us to deny it to them?" (Buffon 2008/1749-1803: 1082, translated from German by the author)

But it does not bespeak deep interest when "the insects" get not quite three pages in the whole Histoire Naturelle.

To this day insects are perceived as those living beings that are most foreign to humans and thus uncanny. The designation of a person as a "parasite," "freeloader," or "tick" is an expression of deep contempt. Such linguistic dehumanization of groups of people often

leads to horrific genocides.

Fabre achieved what Buffon merely claimed: he presents the larva of a digger wasp, otherwise perceived only with disgust – or not at all – as a living gem – sensitive, sentient, graceful, and sublime. But he does not confuse style with truth; language and style are not ends but teaching aids in the school of perception:

“After devouring the last Cricket the larva sets about weaving its cocoon. The work is finished well within forty-eight hours. Henceforth the skilful worker, safe within her impenetrable shelter, can yield to the irresistible lethargy that invades her, to that nameless mode of existence, neither sleep nor waking, neither death nor life, from which she will emerge, ten months from now, transfigured. Very few cocoons are so complicated as hers. It consists, in fact, in addition to a coarse outer network, of three distinct layers, presenting the appearance of three cocoons one inside the other. Let us examine in detail these several courses of the silken edifice. There is first an open woof, of a rough cobweb texture, whereon the larva begins by isolating itself, hanging as in a hammock, to work more easily at the cocoon proper. This unfinished net, hastily woven to serve as a builder‘s scaffolding, is made of threads flung out at random, which hold together grains of sand, bits of earth and the leavings of the larva‘s feast: the Cricket‘s thighs, still braided with red, his shanks and pieces of his skull. The next covering, which is the first covering of the cocoon proper, consists of a much creased felted tunic, light-red in colour, very fine and very flexible. A few threads flung out here and there join it to the previous scaffolding and to the second wrapper. It forms a cylindrical wallet, closed on every side and too large for its contents, thus causing the surface to wrinkle. Next comes an elastic sheath, distinctly smaller than the wallet that contains it, almost cylindrical, rounded at the upper end, towards which the larva‘s head is turned, and finishing in a blunt cone at the lower end. Its colour is still light-red, save towards the cone at the bottom, where the shade is darker. Its consistency is pretty firm; nevertheless, it yields to moderate squeezing, except in its conical part, which resists the pressure of the fingers and seems to contain a hard substance. On opening this sheath, we see that it is formed of two layers closely applied one to the other, but easily separated. The outer layer is a silk felt, exactly like that of the wallet which comes before; the inner layer, the third layer of the cocoon, is a sort of shellac, a shiny wash of a dark violet-brown, brittle, very soft to the touch, and of a nature apparently quite different from the rest of the cocoon. We see, in fact, under the microscope that, instead of being a felt of silky threads like the previous wrapper, it is a homogeneous coating of a peculiar varnish, whose origin is rather singular, as we shall see. As for the resistance of the cone-shaped end of the cocoon, we discover that this is due to a plug of crumbly matter, violet-black and sparkling with a number of black particles.” (Fabre 1879/1916: 94f.)

A structure of silk, a spider-web-like scaffolding like a hammock, then a delicate tunic, connecting threads to the next envelope, a case of compressed layers of silky felt and dark-violet, brittle lacquer, rounded and ending in a blunt cone: Fabre’s admiration for his object of study tends (mostly) not toward narcissistic flights of language, but toward sensuously precise poetry. His description of the three-layered construction, the forms, the different degrees of elasticity, the various surfaces and coloration, the functional modes of the digger-wasp cocoon sound like a gospel of bionics. But Fabre was also a child of his time, and at times his description slides into preaching:

“You pretty Sphex-wasps hatched before my eyes, brought up by my hand, ration by ration, on a bed of sand in an old quill-box; you whose transformations I have followed step by step, starting up from my sleep in alarm lest I should have missed the moment when the nymph is bursting its swaddling-bands or the wing leaving its case; you who have taught me so much and learned nothing yourselves, knowing with-out teachers all that you have to know: O my pretty Sphex-wasps, fly away without fear of my tubes, my boxes, my bottles, or any of my receptacles, through this warm sunlight beloved of the Cicadæ; go, but beware of the Praying Mantis, who is plotting your ruin on the flowering heads of the thistles, and mind the Lizard, who is lying in wait for you on the sunny slopes ; go in peace, dig your burrows, stab your Crickets scientifically and continue your kind, to procure one day for others what you have given me: the few moments of happiness in my life!” (Fabre 1879/1916: 105)

He speaks like a divine creator to his flock, as if he had created the insects in his harmas, his Garden of Eden – merely to please him. With people he perhaps had a harder time. The insects could not defend themselves against his affection or – in my imagination – responded with a pleasant indifference.

Nevertheless his work bears witness to an honest respect for all life. “You have taught me so much and learned nothing yourselves, for you know without a teacher everything you need to know!” For all his anthropomorphizing of “his insects,” Fabre is perhaps one of the first naturalists at least to try to adopt another perspective and to overcome anthropocentrism – not by denying that he is human, but by attempting, from a human vantage point, to see, interpret, and understand the non-human for its own sake – and to share what he has discovered. What I have once observed so closely, what I have perceived, whom I have listened to, what I have shared and with which I have identified myself – I cannot meet with indifference. That this was also Fabre’s conviction is evident from his dealings with children and his teaching methods, which he applied both as a schoolteacher and later as the teacher of his own children. “He trusted their curiosity, their natural spirit of research, answered their questions, made them his collaborators” (Auer 1995: 221). For example, he writes about his little son Paul:

“My diligent hunting companion knows like no other at his age the secrets of the cicada, the grasshopper, the cricket, and above all the dung beetle, his great joy. At a distance of twenty paces, his sharp eye distinguishes the burrow of an insect from accidental mounds of earth. His sensitive ear hears the fine chirping of the grasshopper, which for me is only silence. He lends me his eyesight, he lends me his hearing; in return I give him the ideas, which he attentively gathers, looking up at me with his big blue eyes. Oh, what a marvelous thing is the first blossoming of the intellect; that beautiful age in which guileless curiosity unfolds, investigating everything! And so little Paul has his aviary, where the scarab shapes his brood balls; his little garden, the size of a handkerchief, where beans sprout, often pulled from the earth to see how the root lengthens; his small forest plantation, where four oaks rise just a hand’s breadth high, still armed at the side with their nourishing acorns. That brings variety after the dry grammar, with which he also manages quite well.” (Fabre quoted in Auer 1995: 221, translated from German by the author.)

Fabre rarely derived moral insights from his observations. Rather, he applied his own moral convictions in order to enable and expand for himself, for his children, and of course for his readers a perception and imagination of the non-human. It can, of course, only be benevolently assumed that after the horrors of the genocides of the 20th century he would no longer have written sentences like “stab your crickets

Fig. 7: Digger wasp on our balcony

scientifically, and preserve your kind" (see above) so casually. But the attitude expressed in Fabre's oeuvre seems hardly susceptible to ideological misuse in the sense of an unrestrained Social Darwinism: Jean-Henri Fabre's writings enable empathy with "the Other." He is a teacher of listening, perceiving, remaining curious – and thus his Memoirs of an Entomologist become a lesson in respect for all that is not "I."

6. Conclusion – Bringing the Incomparable and the Vulnerable to Appearance

The starting point of this work was the question of where Jean-Henri Fabre is to be located in the spectrum between art and science, and what the potential of artistic research in his sense might be. My aim was to historicize the current debate in this way. The difficulties in attempting to "symbiontize" the advantages of scientific and artistic work have changed little since Buffon's first critics – yet the risk is once again being taken more often. Since the early 1990s, "artistic research" has tried, at least partly successfully, to establish itself as an independent field of research.

The field, however, remains disputed and contested – as always. Silvia Henke, Dieter Mersch, Thomas Strässle, Nicolaj van der Meulen, and Jörg Wiesel describe in their Manifesto of Artistic Research. A Defense Against its Advocates, published in spring 2020, the dilemma of the relationship between art and science, and the difficulties of positioning artistic research from a contemporary perspective.

Buffon and Linné are not mentioned, nor Jean-Henri Fabre and his insects. Yet Henke et al. seem unconsciously to inaugurate Fabre's work when they write about "aesthetic thinking":

„In opposition to causal verification, to deduction or generalization, it behaves in a tangible, touching way towards its objects. It accords and considers, not to ambush these objects but to acknowledge and accept them, and thus to show their incomparability and vulnerability, and to show what remains unsatisfied by art." (Henke et al. 2020a: 62)

Scientific thinking seems incompatible with such a claim: a strict separation of subject and object is, in the sense of scientific integrity, not to be questioned. Yet with Heisenberg's uncertainty principle – insofar as that can be understood by a non-physicist – the impossibility of such a separation of subject and object seems even scientifically proven. Still, the illusion is upheld that the researching subject must stand above and independent of its object. That this illusion is fatal is becoming clear at breakneck speed: humans over- and underestimate themselves at the same time, both individually and in globally networked societies, when they still fail to recognize that their access to the

world has grave and irreversible consequences – for the world, and therefore also for humans as part of this world.

Jean-Henri Fabre demonstrates a different attitude toward his object of study – very much in the sense of Henke et al. If "artistic research" succeeds in functioning as a corrective in the attitude of the sciences toward their objects, and thus in humans' approach to the world, then its perhaps most important potential becomes evident. Life escapes in every moment. Whoever wants to discover something about it must learn to fly along.

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Figures:

Figure 1,2,7:
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Figure 3:
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Figure 4:
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Figure 5:
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Figure 6:
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