

January 15, 2024

Dear Leandro,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Maedy, and we met during the studio visit at DAS with Konstantina. With this personal letter, I would like to share my thoughts and ideas regarding your questions upon your artistic research and creative process.

To begin, the visit provided a good overview of your work. The pieces you have already completed and those you are currently working on all seem to revolve around the theme of representation and the white gaze towards the black body. You mentioned psychology, philosophy, and critical theory as inspirations to blend theory with the practice of performance, challenging the traditional (European) concept of art and movement creation. Strategies you mentioned were pure movement, elements like spoken words, voice possibilities, and sometimes objects/materials. In your work, these elements were clearly visible as ingredients. For your new work, you also mentioned the concepts of 'fugitivity', and along with this, the idea of 'escape' and 'trying to disappear'.

You posed some interesting philosophical and dramaturgical research questions for the work you are currently involved in:

- How to escape from the traps of Western representation.
- Escape as a way of addressing or making (self)critique: how to make an event of seeing and doing.
- How this expanded choreography can be "strategies of escape" in itself.

Also, you posed some practical, concrete questions about your choreography:

- Spectatorship: How to position the audience in the space and what size of the performance space will be most suitable in relation to the 'gaze'.
- Dance: What kind of movement in relation to the words and in relation to the trajectory in space.
- Language: Can you follow the narrative with the mix of Portuguese and English?
- Sound: What kind of sound can be used beside the own voice.

Before delving into addressing your questions with thoughts and ideas, I'd like to offer a brief glimpse into my background. This will provide context to the perspectives from which I approach this feedback. With over two decades of experience as a performer (specializing in dance and singing), a creator (working as a choreographer and songwriter), and an educator in dance and art, my journey led me to pursue a master's in Contemporary Theatre, Dance, and Dramaturgy at the University of Utrecht, a journey I anticipate concluding this summer.

My artistic endeavours have encompassed a spectrum, ranging from intimate local projects to expansive international collaborations, spanning the realms of "artsy independent" to more commercially oriented works. Some of these projects, such as the EP "I'm With You" and collaborations with Viktor & Rolf for "Flowerbomb", along with choreographic work involving teenagers in a museum setting, are available online.

Rather than confining myself to a singular artistic category, I've embraced diverse art forms and the associated dramaturgical roles that accompany them. While my repertoire encompasses various artistic expressions, my primary expertise lies in dance and music. Armed with this understanding of my background, let's now delve into your work and the questions at hand. I do this to connect the more practical questions to your philosophical dramaturgical research questions.

Let's start with the spectatorship. The way you presented it in the studio, with a 'U' shape positioned chairs for the audience, was effective and felt up close and personal. Due to the small studio size and the audience setup, it gave a certain 'affect' to me as a spectator. I also believe that this way, the idea of trying to escape the traps of Western representation and the way to make an event of seeing and doing is established this way. Still, I can imagine that if you want to invite a larger group of audience, the performance space upstairs will be more suitable. It also has an impressive skyline and light from the big windows that you could use as a scenographic element during the daytime. Close the curtains during your performance and open them by the end to enter the light to 'blind' the audience with their own gaze. A dramatic gesture that can be understood in many layers. Still, the risk is, though, that the personal and 'in your face' aspect of the performance might be brought to the background in this big performance space. The medium-sized wooden-walled studio might be a good option if you'd like a bit more space

to expand your choreography and the number of spectators. You could pass the chairs as you dance or walk, making your place out of sight or challenging the gaze as you stand, speak, or dance between the chairs in a way it can be felt even more up close.

For the dance movements, I would like to invite you to explore dynamic and space. There are certain moments when it is like you are in some kind of 'glitch' in a loop. I find this very captivating and interesting, almost like you open the door a little to a parallel world. Maybe something you can escape or disappear into, or maybe the struggle of the inner and outer world for the spectator to see. These glitches can be your strategies of escape and confrontation for the spectator's gaze at the same time, which is interesting. The repetition of the movement with the words in this glitch is very interesting. I think you can expand on this by making the movements bigger (maybe gradually throughout the performance). This makes a great contrast with the steady walk you do across the floor. You could also explore the idea of the 'glitches' with somatic experiencing to make the movement bigger and more intense. I remember you made a shaking "*trêmulo*" movement at some point, which you could intensify. Through the interaction of experience and movement itself, the audience might see a peak of your inner world, as traces of the past, and the implications it has today.

As for the Portuguese and English language, this may not be understood by everyone, also by its fragmentation, but I would consider it understandable enough to get the idea. Also, I think it is strong to use because both languages are layers of many layers you are that may be seen and heard.

Regarding sound, I would recommend a soundscape that supports the layered sphere and dynamic of your movements. I believe this will give a more immersive experience for the audience. Maybe you can find a music producer who can make a score that consist of an ambient, spheric basis which alternately is layered with electronic glitches, city like snippets and forces of nature or other elements that support your signature dance movements like the shaking and glitching. In this manner it can build up a tension that can resonate between you and the spectators.

To conclude my letter, I would like to give you an explorational dance idea to try out in your research and a quote that may give you inspiration.

I would like to propose the idea of Body Mapping, a somatic approach to exploration, with the intention of deepening your understanding of the metaphorical concept of "fugitivity." With body mapping, you aim to recall and articulate the sensations you experienced in your body during a specific event. You can express these sensations through drawing or writing on a visual representation. Subsequently, you can translate these expressions into dance. Furthermore, you can also view this body mapping as positionality. In a place, setting, or a zone where you are a stakeholder in. By mapping the events, scars, and historical traces of your own life or your ancestors, this physical indication serves as a powerful portrayal of affected parts. However, it's not just about revealing vulnerabilities; it also involves identifying sources of strength, akin to possessing a superpower gained through overcoming experiences.

This concept aligns with the notion of escape as a superpower—one that allows you to transcend the limitations imposed by societal challenges. The act of moving into, through, and disappearing within this 'body map' becomes a form of storytelling in an embodied manner. It mirrors the complexities of fugitivity, offering a tangible representation of the struggles, strengths, and resilience that are woven into you. I believe that integrating this 'body mapping' into your choreography can provide a multi-dimensional narrative, intertwining personal history with the broader theme of escaping the confines of Western representation. It not only adds depth to your performance but also aligns with the concepts you're currently exploring in your work.

I leave you with a quote, freely edited and combined as originally from Isadora Duncan and Anaïs Nin, to inspire your continued exploration of your work:

*"If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it. The role of a dancer is not to say what we all can say, but what we are unable to say."*

Thank you for welcoming us into your studio and sharing your artistic world. Feel free to contact me if you want to elaborate further or have any questions upon my letter. Wishing you a beautiful journey as you craft your latest choreography.

Kind regards,

Maedy de Miranda-Tol