

TEMPORALITY OF SUSPENSION

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NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

The context of our co-authored contribution to the 'Aesthetic Relations' conference-publication is a performance devised by Lucie in 2020 to which she invited Kiraṇ as a collaborator. Due to international travel restrictions however, our physical co-presence in a studio and on stage remained suspended throughout that year. Our exchanges nevertheless continued in adaptive turns both before and after that performance. It is this condition of, at once, compromised yet consistent relation with each other that we refer to as 'suspension'. For us this suspension was at first admittedly a source of disruption, even anxiety of interrupting our artistic flow. Yet there came a point during the year when this swelling tension ruptured, and a strange ease set in. Nothing had changed on the surface (travel restrictions were only extended), yet something had shifted under our skins. While still physically across continents, our online presentation at the conference was a joint essay at articulating, both textually and performatively, the unassuming complexity of this thing that is suspension. By the time of this publication in 2022, we have somewhat broken this suspension by physically meeting in Switzerland in August 2021. As such we have decided not to edit the text that was performed at the conference back in January 2021, and only append it with this contextual note. Here we must add that the text in one of the sections to follow (which begins with "*Please turn your head to your left..*") is intended as a score for action. Originally spoken in our voices, we now ask you to invite another person to read this section aloud to you at an unhurried pace, while you respond to the text's suggestions. As for us, we continue our collaborative artistic research of working in and with suspension as artistic strategy through our ongoing exchanges and upcoming projects.



When in April 2020 our conversations become more regular, we soon discover how we are developing new skills. As if our neuronal pathways started to immediately adapt to the changes in the environment, our capacities to think several things nearly at the same

time are continuously expanding. We are becoming excellent in mapping out alternate schemes. Consolidating a plan soon equals preparing Plan A, Plan B, Plan C and D, possibly Plan E with Options E1 and/or E2. Rehearsals are to start in August. Our weekly conversations from spring over summer deep into autumn take place under an ever so prolonged suspension of physical encounter. By May, I am convinced we will meet by mid-July. By mid-July, I am sure that the fact that all papers and visa are taken care of, that funding is plentiful, that apartments and rehearsal studios have been booked and that a handful of passionately sounding letters by Art institutions and City officials declaring urgency are sent off to corresponding officials in place—I am convinced that all of this combined with our genuine wish to finally meet will make it happen. It will be possible to travel and join the rehearsal process by the second week, the latest. We have been practicing 4 months of practicing suspended thinking and being together.

And then, the bubble bursts. It is sad yet also, it's felt like a relief. We give in. The production premieres with three dancers and one costume without a person placed on the side of the stage by the end of September. It's an indigo blue oversize t-shirt that may as well be serving as a pajamas, a sports uniform or a summer dress by a minimalist fashion designer with inclinations to pop culture. It wears the number 11. Into minute 52, a video is played, placed just above the intense indigo blue of the costume. "I am the messenger. I bring news from afar. The bell, the bell is broken." His voice sounds like from another planet, another time even.

Our weekly conversations are a means to stay in touch, to find ways how to deal with the volatile changes appearing around us. Practical questions and practical aspects anchor us on the ground of actuality. The multiplicity of possibilities force suspension upon us as an overarching structure. Possibilities never actualized. Virtuality out in the open, entering our bodies with each intake of breath, leaving unnoticed while breathing out, sending our neurological pathways into operations of speculative character. And soon we understand: It's what we always do anyways. Deal with the unpredictable, what is yet to come, that which we don't know yet, that which we don't see - futurity per se. What if—not yet. What about—maybe yes and also—indeed yes, what about—aha—what if what if, then—yes and also yes, indeed again—this reminds me—of course, and what about—what about—yes. And yes.

Producing knowledge about suspension, or suspending the production of knowledge?

This is not mere wordplay. While the former is the more positivist expectation of a conference presentation on the topic of ‘suspension’, the latter is perhaps paradoxically the aesthetic relation set in motion by said suspension.

And so, even as we begin, we find ourselves at an impasse. Or perhaps not, for an impasse is after all a suspension. Or perhaps more precisely, an impasse is a technique of suspension.

Method of suspension,
technique of suspension,
strategy for suspension,
tactic for suspension and
practice of suspension
these are not mutually exclusive things.

A conversation is also a technique of suspension; of suspending conclusion, prolonging listening; a field of intentionality that is sustained through exchange. Intention is exhausted through random exchange of utterances; that is no conversation.

Neither is this text a conversation, but it was born out of many conversations. And in one such conversation you said that a conversation is an archetype of suspension.

This proposal is a mode of listening
This proposal is a mode of attention



Cultivating conversations, pro-active suspension serves as a means to suspend an otherwise involuntary suspension. Just as Michel would say, Foucault that is, the double bind in power lies in its capacity to both subjugate and empower. We’re hanging out on Zoom, our agencies to enact possibilities of IRL encounter suspended, to say the least. Suspension becomes a common place to dwell and live in, a place where we are turning around and turning about with each other, bending to the rhythm of pro-longued synaptical percepts. Affirming. Accumulating. Turning around and

about with horizons of wonder ahead.

Conversation (n.)

mid-14c.,

Sense of “informal interchange of thoughts and sentiments by spoken words” is from 1570s. Used as a synonym for “sexual intercourse” from at least late 14c., hence criminal conversation, a legal term for adultery from late 18c.

Place where one lives or dwells,” also “general course of actions or habits, manner of conducting oneself in the world,” both senses now obsolete; from Latin conversare “to turn about, turn about with,” from assimilated form of com “with, together” (see con-) + versare, frequentative of vertere “to turn”



“Please turn your head to your left.

Breathe in as deeply as you can, into your lower belly, then slowly breathe out and turn your head back to the space in front of you.

Then breathe in again, into your lower belly while turning your head to your right side.

As if your nose wants to reach into the space above your right shoulder, slowly breathing out you turn your head back to the space in front of you.

Now keep breathing deeply into your lower belly, make it a round nice soft, empty place, giving attention to the exhales just as much as to the inhales, giving way to breath.

Turn your gaze inwards and if you want, you can close your eyes, keep going.

Now shift your attention to your left hand. Visualize it, lying wherever it is, soft round fingertips at the interface of skin and air.

Now take your left hand and place it softly on your upper leg, let it rest for a moment while sensing the texture of the material of your clothing.

Keep breathing.

Turn your gaze inwards and if you want, you can close your eyes,

open your ears and sit for a moment, resting your left hand on your leg, feeling the air around you, letting the breath go in and out in whatever way feels pleasant to you right now.

Please open your eyes, take a nice inhale, place your hands on a surface in front of you, on your leg, on a table or arm rest, activate your fingertips and fingers, and turn your attention back to the space in front of you.”



Happy new year Happy new year

Which year are you talking about? How can I assume we both mean the same year, that we refer to the same calendar, the same metric of time? Three calendar times seemingly autonomous of each other seem to have moved closer to each other. There has always been a proximity between the solar Gregorian calendar and the solar-lunar year of the Pinyin or Yin Calendar. The lunar-solar calendars of Indic times appear to have slowly snaked around what is happening in January - February as the beginning of a New Year. Where do you start to count? How do you make a distinction?

There are twelve nights between the 25th of December until the 6th of January. They mark the end of one year as a passage into the new one. Their allocation to either the former or the latter is only formally valid. They are neither nor. Not the old one anymore, not the new one yet, dangling between the years out of time in suspension. We call them rough nights. Rauhnächte. Their roughness invites contingent events, spectres, haunted narratives of lost souls howling on the porch, steam rising from forgotten air holes in frozen lakes up north, winds telling tales of time windows gaping wide open into the other other side. Roughness invited by metaphysics, non-modern contemporaneity at the heart of what is called Europe. We never hang clothes up on Christmas. It invites a death in the family for the next calendar year.



Do you remember when you told me about how there was this interview with Bill Viola that impressed you so? He, Bill that is, was describing an occurrence of pregnancy which you sensed had quite a lot to do with suspension. In this particular case of

pregnancy, Bill describes an image of a woman sitting and facing us, the audience. She gazes in front of her, one hand gently hovering above her belly. And there it is, a suspended instance of knowledge - a knowledge which has not yet articulated itself, hovering just like her hand in an intuition before confirmation or conclusion, sensing-knowing in a Whiteheadian pre-hension rather than a regular comprehension: She is pregnant. There is another figure just behind her, about to speak: Gabriel, the archangel in the instance of annunciation. He will tell her what her hand indicates she already knows, touching-sensing as an underlying constitutive layer of existence orienting her before cognition makes her understand: Her womb carries life, an alien life that her material body generates, miraculously.



Alien, non-alien. Mother, child. Distinguishing one thing from another implies the labor of differentiation. We imagine this labor carried out as a series of small sized acts involving affective, sensory and cognitive capacities. These acts of labor like to present themselves as neat children of necessity. And in doing so they hide their affectively messy processes of production: of things sticking to each other, maternal, marsupial, withdrawing into each other or even simply resisting separation, eternally gestating. Maybe this messy and contingent character inherent to the poetics of distinction isn't welcome on any site of production, not least on sites of knowledge production.

We can ask ourselves, epistemologically speaking, where such a labor of distinction takes place, by whom it is carried out, by what means it is regulated and authorized.

The politicality of these questions lies in the ways how exactly this entanglement between sensory, affective and cognitive capacities is given space to organize itself. Thinking, as anything else, takes place in ecologies dense with more-than-human materializations. The relational and processual character of the aesthetic at the core of distinguishing, thinking and understanding may allow to alter not only what, but also how we think, how thought happens to us and makes us happen as a result. Indicated by tempi, tonus and overall timing, saturation and color, frequencies and volume, ecologies of thought are a site of production for subjectivities. We invoke suspension as a practice into the dynamics of shaping the

ecologies we are shaped by, proposing a degree of self-regulation, maybe self-abolishment by suspending conclusions. Calling it simply a somatic approach would be enforcing the dichotomies inherent at what such practices of suspension are looking to stretch away from.

Speaking of knowledge and postponing knowing, when you propose postponing figures of thought, the figure in figure of thought makes me think of the ground;

of the somatic act of grounding, of pressing my feet into the ground as I stand, rather as I am stand-ing

Standing is simply continuously not falling. It was Steve who said that, Paxton I believe—standing as a resistance to falling. Modes of suspension are intrinsically weaved into existence. Living suspends death, after all. “I am standing up” because the inevitable force of gravity onto the bones, skin, fascia, liquids and tissue of what I call my body is suspended.

Pro-active suspension serves as a means to continue a former involuntary suspension and taking up the movement of hovering, floating, drifting, not yet standing nor laying down, neither. Let’s say, suspension leaves an empty space. It’s hanging, hanging out. It also opens up to a temporality in which the future has not been imagined and the past has not been memorialized, yet.

I attend to latency.



Grounding is an infinitesimal thing;
Or perhaps I should just say: Grounding is an infinitesimal ing;
the space of the ground always allowing for just a little bit more sinking, a little more grounding. In this way, grounding, standing and indeed understanding are never quite complete things, they are always in the process of (be)ing.

In the tradition of Haṭha yoga, *nāsa* is just such a thing. *Ñāsa* is an ever-approaching touch; my two palms almost touching, tingling, finding a sensory sea (to swim in) within a cuticular crevice. Expanding awareness itself by way of expanding the haptic sense. A sensory isolation that is not sensory fragmentation, for in the

touch I sense everything intensely. It occurs so close to the skin, yet ñāsa is far from perfunctory.

Curiously, the artificially intelligent algorithm that performs spellchecks in my writing program (that is generically dubbed by many as ‘auto-correct’) has suggested that I replace the word ñāsa with NASA. Notwithstanding the unfamiliarity of this (and such) algorithm(s) with the International Alphabet for Sanskrit Transliteration, this suggestion for “correction” remains a thought-provoking one. The thought of ñāsa being a sort of ‘space program’, perhaps ‘a program for infinitesimal space’ piques my interest. (Decolonising space travel is perhaps another topic altogether, or perhaps not).

Space is full of potentiality,
a place empty of any particular thing
makes space for the zero of no something,
of nothing
A technique:
to pluralise understanding
To question singularity
To stay in potentiality
To keep latency active
(Is the latent also always virtual?)



Please close your eyes. That is what she did. Gandhari. On the day of her marriage to a prince, Gandhari learnt that he was born blind. She shut her eyes then and swore never to open them again. Some say it was act of solidarity, others say she did it out of vengeance to match the offer of betrayal. On this matter her lips remained as shut as her eyes.

Some time passed, and Gandhari was pregnant. Some more time passed, and she was still pregnant. The blind-folded queen was pregnant for the longest time. The narrative plot remained awkwardly suspended, and this demanded intervention. Temporarily the poet stepped into his own poem to coax the queen into ending the suspension. Gandhari’s emotions were illegible even to the poet’s eye; he wondered if he had blinded her too soon.

At the end of their hidden conversation, Gandhari birthed a large

mass of dark throbbing flesh, which she had cut into a hundred pieces and placed each in an earthen pot with fresh water. Some time passed and a hundred sons were born. From within the narrative, the poet declares an era of doom, that resounds well beyond the verse.

Some suspensions are perhaps better left suspended.



An aesthetic relation is something between cognitive and sensual modes of perception.

We stand before each other, let's say by the sea, let's say an idyllic beach. We each re-cognize the other standing before us. Yet rather than taking the cognitively shortest route towards each other, one of us begins to walk backwards while still facing the other, who remains still. The image at first seems like one of walking away, one of us walking away from the other. But with time, and a suspended time at that, the image reveals itself as one of us walking backwards around the earth only to meet the other's back at the very same idyllic beach, at about the same time in the day as when the suspended walking backwards began. You still look ahead, but you now sense me through your back. And so we meet after all, not face to face but back to back; we meet not quite cognitively nor sensually but aesthetically. Yes, it was a long circular walk back here, but it was certainly not for nothing.

