



Sisters Academy as a space and time for experimentation and healing¹

I attended Sisters Academy – The Boarding School at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2017. Contrary to my good friend who checked out early, I experienced The Boarding School as a space and time of experimentation and healing.

Exiting the school, I went straight to pick up my daughter at her kindergarten. In the movement of returning to my everyday life, I noticed that I felt slightly different. Lighter and more connected. My poetic self had manifested out of the blue with such evidence.

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Sisters Academy² is a project initiated by my performance group, Sisters Hope,³ in response to the Sensuous Society Manifesto⁴.

Sensuous Society Manifesto

The Sensuous Society Manifesto envisions a potential future world governed by aesthetic premises, and I wrote it as a response to the financial crash in 2008 and to the ongoing ecological crisis. One could argue that in the current times of the COVID-19 crisis, the need for sense-stimulation becomes apparent to the vast majority of people as we struggle to stay close and connected even though we are apart. The Sensuous Society Manifesto calls out for a “democratization of the aesthetic,” by which I mean facilitating access to the sensuous and the poetic in order to carve a path towards a more

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Writing in the Sisters Academy notebook on a couch by The Dining Hall, *Sisters Academy – The Boarding School*, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2017. Photo: I diana lindhardt.

sustainable future. The intentions presented in the Manifesto are currently at the root of the experimentation unfolded in the Sisters Academy project.

Sisters Academy—Actualizing the Manifesto

Sisters Academy is an exploration of what the school of a Sensuous Society could be, and it takes place as an ongoing series of manifestations that experiment with new modes of learning, which I call *Sensuous Learning*. This is a kind of learning entrenched in more sensuous and poetic modes of being—and being together—than those typically offered to us by everyday life. It currently manifests in two different large-scale formats: *Sisters Academy—The Takeover*, a radical intervention at an actual youth school, and *Sisters Academy—The Boarding School*,⁵ referred to in the opening quote of this article.

Sisters Academy—The Boarding School

In *Sisters Academy—The Boarding School*, an art institution is transformed into a sensuous boarding school executed through a large-scale interactive and immersive performance-installation in which the general public can enroll as students for at least twenty-four hours in order to explore modes of Sensuous Learning. Upon arrival, as part of an “enrollment package” that is carefully designed in resonance with the overall visual expression of the academy, the students receive a notebook and a pen for putting down expressions and reflections during their stay. The first page of the notebook includes an instruction explaining that this is a book in which the students could share their “dreams, streams of consciousness, reflections, explorations, drawings, homework, longings, visions and intimate in-between during Sisters Academy.” Besides that, they receive no further general instructions in regard to their use of the notebooks. However, some performers at the school encourage the students to reflect in their books after they have, for example, taken their sensuous class; and I encourage them to do it after facilitating *The Poetic Self exercise* in the morning gathering at the school on the second day of their visit. Everything they write, draw and do in the notebooks is generated while they are immersed in the sensuous universe of Sisters Academy, so these are reflections that arise while they are in the experience rather than before or after.

The notebooks are archived together with other donations given to the Academy by the students upon their departure. The number of student notebooks generated at the different manifestations of Sisters Academy amounts to 1,248 in total. In collaboration with members of a reading group,⁶ I have read 844 of these, here within all the notebooks from the manifestation at Den Frie, which

will be the material I will explore and analyze subtractions from in this article. I will introduce the methodological and theoretical backdrop to the exploration and analysis of the notebooks in the first part of this article, and then move on to the excerpts themselves in the second and last part. In my reading and analysis of the material, I am interested in how a sense of interconnectivity is stimulated through the sensuous landscapes of Sisters Academy, and furthermore how this sense expresses a transformative process.

Sisters Performance Method—Sensuous Learning

The *Sisters Performance Method* enables, among other things, the exploration of Sensuous Learning. Central to this method is *The Poetic Self*.

The Poetic Self

The Poetic Self is not a character, it is not a fiction; it is our inner inherent poetic potential. We might not unfold it in our everyday lives, but we discover, give shape, and donate our flesh to it through performance. When Sisters Hope perform, the Sisters staff live in their Poetic Self, and this Self is offered as a framework to the enrolled students as well. Through The Poetic Self, it is possible to experience an expanding spectrum of possibilities conveyed, among other things, through an expansion of what can be sensed, perceived and expressed, and of how relations can take shape based on the sensuous and poetic aspects of our being. The Poetic Self can be understood as the self of a Sensuous Society. As the project is based on the intention to unfold the aesthetic dimension, it opens the possibility to be with others in new and more absorbed ways, stimulating interconnected exchange with self, others, and the environment. The Poetic Self is not a static method, it is a method of a body becoming.

At the intersection

Sisters Academy unfolds at the intersection of four approaches: performance art, activism, pedagogy and research. From its beginnings I have conceived of it as research-based.

Artistic research

For those who operate at the transdisciplinary intersection of art and academia, the emerging and continuously becoming field of artistic research offers a unifying terminology and methodological foundation, enabling the bringing together of research and theory with realizations harvested through artistic practices. The fields of art and academia are both undergoing changes, and the

rigidness of their boundaries is softening. Artistic research expands the sphere of maneuverability within and between both fields, in celebration of transdisciplinary engagements and oscillations at the transcending intersection.⁷ To artists, artistic research can be perceived as an invitation to expand and deepen the understanding and potentiality of their practices in response to their environment and, as part of this response, to build up a vocabulary to better articulate the aesthetic and activist potentiality of their work. To academics, artistic research can be perceived as an invitation to be more unified with, for one, their own practices, and to break the boundaries of a potentially limiting, singular academic identity (relevant here is arts-based researcher and sociologist Patricia Leavy's expressed longing to be "unified and resonate with who I am within and beyond academia" (Leavy 2009, viii)) and thus to allow for research questions in which theory and practice are intertwined, and in which "the heart" (2009, 2; with reference to Ronald Pelias [2004]) is present. Leavy expresses how the carving out of this artistic research method came out of this desire:

In my own research ... I often felt that the "scraps" of data left strewn across my office floor were part of my heart – the heart of my work and even more so the heart of my relationship with my work. As researchers, we are often trained to hide our relationship to our work; this is problematic for some, impossible for others. Arts-based research practices allow researchers to share this relationship. (Leavy 2009, 2)

Thus, this new transdisciplinary field of artistic research provides certain methodological benefits. The artistic research approach allows the artistic researcher who is operating within both the art world and academia to challenge the distinction between the artist's "embodied knowledge" and "the scientist's purely research-based knowledge" (Tygstrup and Bogh 2011, 103), which, although convenient, is problematic in relation to the way research is conceived at the intersection where it feeds from both practical and theoretical sources. Artistic research is also not so concerned with discussing subjectivity and objectivity in relation to research, as the artistic researcher is always inevitably central to their field of investigation.

I highlight this distinction between subjectivity and objectivity here since I have always found it problematic. This is due to the nature of both my artistic practices and my academic endeavors, which have led me to continuously emphasize how I am always in the process of reflecting, even while enacting my practice, through which I question objective distance as *the* parameter of

validity. Inspired by philosopher Richard Rorty's pragmatism, theatre and performance scholar Niels Overgaard Lehmann suggests the position of a *pragmatic dualist* for the study of one's own practice. He argues that it is possible to be both an "experiencing practitioner" and an "analyzing researcher," though not simultaneously, because the two modes of perception cannot co-exist—you cannot reflect on "the trance" while you are in it (Lehmann 2002, 266). However, I do not find this accurate, as I do reflect while performing my artistic practice. Furthermore, the experiences within these inhabited artistic spaces, as well as the subsequent analyses of these experience, are also based on in-situ reflections. I am even tempted to go as far as to argue that my reflections are deeper in the lived situation, since my entire body—my whole being—co-reflects with my mind in these particular situations.

The Critical Gaze and The Devoted Body

To create a conceptual framework for observed modes of participation, I coined the theoretical pair *The Critical Gaze and The Devoted Body*⁸ during the large-scale immersive performance-installation *Sisters Academy—The Boarding School* at the performance venue Inkonst in Malmö, Sweden, in 2015 (e.g. see Hallberg 2017). These terms are my response to and way of thinking about the excesses of different modes of audience-participant engagement in *Sisters Academy* that I observed there. Whereas *The Critical Gaze* refers to the participatory position of watching from a critical distance, *The Devoted Body* refers to participation through embodied engagement. In my experience, *The Critical Gaze* sometimes seems to inhibit and limit the movements and liberties of *The Devoted Body*. Moreover, *The Critical Gaze* often seems to be unaware of this "violation" because it operates from a self-understanding of heroically exposing unhealthy structures in order to liberate those held hostage by them. *The Critical Gaze* often has strong verbal skills and is able to compose a strong critical argument, whereas *The Devoted Body* is sometimes in the process of *losing language* in the attentiveness to another, more sensuous and poetic mode of perception, and thus is not prepared to enter into an argument constructed from the premises of *The Critical Gaze*.

This furthermore translates into the validation of the danger, for *The Critical Gaze*, of immersing in affective engagement, which relates to the critique of immersive strategies as manipulative, and of *totally immersed* (Machon 2013, 9) participants as naïve, or even helpless, in the face of the seductive pull of immersion – a claim put forward, for instance, by Adam Alston (Alston 2016). In her response to Alston, theatre and performance scholar Doris Kolesch suggests

The entrance from The Hallway to The Dining Hall in *Sisters Academy*, *Sisters Academy – The Boarding School*, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2017. Photo: I diana lindhardt.



instead that the affective encounter trains a new skillset that encompasses dual reflectivity and embeddedness in the experience, through which a rich thickness of response is stimulated (Kolesch 2019).

In their article “The critique of critique,” theatre and performance scholars Solveig Gade and Laura Luise Schultz illustrate how the role of critique is currently undergoing a transformation (2016). Thus, as artistic researcher Irit Rogoff shows us, both modernity’s *Criticism*, with its claim of being a disinterested, non-affected, critically distanced authority; and post-modernism’s *Critique*, which understands itself as revealing of the true course of the matter through a discursive analysis of the hidden—but inherent—power structures prevailing underneath that which is presented, are now challenged (Rogoff 2003). This understanding of post-modernist critique very much resonates with the participatory position of *The Critical Gaze*. With reference to Rogoff and to art historian Gavin Butt, Gade and Schultz clarify how this position, paradoxically, has become a dominating, legitimizing meta-discourse that blocks out the

emergence of new critical approaches (Gade and Schultz 2016, 24). This again resonates with my experience of the “violating impact” of *The Critical Gaze* on the sensuous explorations of *The Devoted Body*, and thus on the development of their critical and activist potential. Including the inherent hope for change in affective practices, as queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues in her analyses of how critics can be so engaged in not appearing naive that their “revealing” approach completely compromises the activist potentiality for alternatives to appear (Sedgwick 2003 referenced in Gade and Schultz 2016, 24). In resonance with this viewpoint, philosopher and social theorist Brian Massumi also finds hope in the affective (Massumi 2015) and, in response to the shortcomings of the post-modernist critique paradigm, Rogoff suggests *Criticality* as a subsequent paradigm that maintains the insights of the previous paradigms, but simultaneously dares to inhabit and practice alternatives through embodied processes (Gade and Schultz 2016, 25). By which the criticality and potentiality that is also inherent in *The Devoted Body* is seen and respected. Ultimately, my interest lies in a fruitful and constructive alliance between reflective cognitive processes and in the sensuous and devoted moves of the immersed affective body (Hallberg 2017, 45).

In-situ

In response to the potential of experiencing practitioner’s reflection, an *in-situ* reflective material, as I term it, has been generated in Sisters Academy. By *in-situ*, I refer to reflective material generated *during* the artistic manifestations and thus *out of* the sensuous and poetic experience, while the body is immersed. This material is not only generated by me, but also by all other participants in Sisters Academy. In Sisters Academy, all reflective material is donated to, kept, and protected in the open-source archive termed *The Archive*.¹⁰ Together with pre- and post-reflective blogposts and other material, it allows for special insights into the endeavors of Sisters Academy and the potentiality of affective, immersive experiences.

Insights through The Archive

As Sisters Academy deliberately applies the three-phased ritual process (van Gennep [1909] 2013; Turner [1967] 2014; 1974) in its interactivity design, each participant’s meeting with Sisters Academy is also informed by these. The three-phased ritual process—comprised of a preparatory pre-liminal phase, a liminal transformative phase, and a post-liminal reintegration phase—responds to the intention to give access to the sensuous and poetic in the project: everyday life,

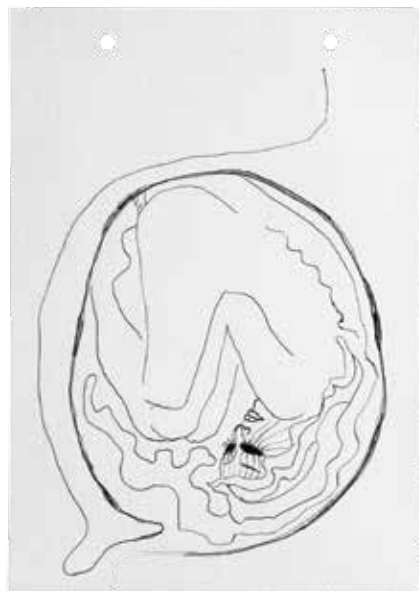
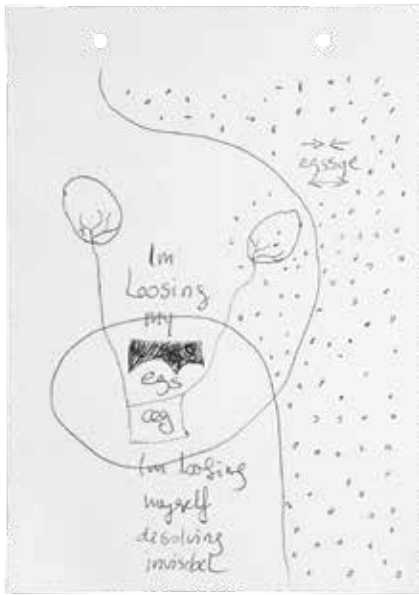
which is primarily informed by premises other than the aesthetic, is “preliminarily” left behind as the participant “liminally” enters into a world that places the aesthetic dimension at the center, and thus allows for what one might call a “sensuous transformation,” which “postliminally” stimulates an aesthetic mode of being together and being with the world.

I find this process so crucial in our time of intense economic and ecological crisis on account of the hypothesis that access to this mode of being in the world will support the transition towards a more sustainable future, not only for those operating within the art system, but for all people.

My interest in how the sensuous might support a more sustainable future has led me to study Sisters Academy’s archival material within the framework of ecological theory, in combination with the theoretical framework of the three-phased ritual process.

According to biologist, anthropologist, and cyberneticist Gregory Bateson, the ecological crisis is rooted in three causes: population increase, technological progress, and human hubris, with the latter defined as certain errors in the thinking and attitudes of humans rooted in the Western Enlightenment and Industrialization (Bateson [1972] 2000). Since these causes are completely interconnected, the correction of one of them will implement “anti-clockwise-structures,” wherein the causes’ processes turn around and begin to create the necessary change. The entry point into this reversal – both the only one possible and the most viable, according to Bateson—is challenging human hubris and ultimately transforming human thinking and attitudes towards the environment. Otherwise put, it involves the nurturing of an ecology of mind in humans, which is defined by its awareness of interconnectivity, and thus by the inherent understanding that the destruction of the surroundings is ultimately also a form of self-destruction (Bateson [1972] 2000, 496ff). In response to Bateson, psychoanalytical philosopher and ecosophist Félix Guattari develops a three-leveled understanding of ecology: *environmental ecology* is shaped by the activities and practices of people and their *mental ecology*, which again is shaped in groups of *social ecology*, and vice versa (Guattari [1989] 2008, 43ff).

Although I have categorized the archival material into the categories of preliminary, liminal and postliminal expressions, some cases clearly contain all three phases in one notebook, which I have found interesting for the purposes of analysis. Furthermore, I have chosen to present three different cases in which postliminal expressions differ in that they can be understood to relate to social, mental or environmental ecology.



First case: Extracts from one in-situ notebook, student, *Sisters Academy—The Boarding School*, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2017.

First case: Losing my eggs and social ecology

The first two pages display the leaving of something behind, something that is lost. And this something is as central as “myself” and “my eggs.” It is losing what this student is, as well as the student’s ability to reproduce, as the eggs are lost too. This process of leaving something continues into the description of “melting,” which is a process of dissolving, though softly, since melting is not an abrupt process. The size of the word as the student wrote it differs from the top of

the page, where it is small, through the middle of the page, where it grows larger, to the bottom of the page, where it gets slightly smaller again. All words are conjoined, so that they become one long word without pauses, which instigates a flow state, or associations to what we know as automatic writing. The words also become a drawing. According to scholar of performance design and psychology Henriette Christrup, drawings contain the ability to move beyond words and into the more unknown aspects of being (Christrup 2001, 25). This is especially true when expressed in a time and space with a special atmosphere, such as the one created in Sisters Academy, where the sensuous and poetic set the tone for the mode of being and being together.

Losing language

The phenomenon of words dissolving into other forms of expression is seen repeatedly in the reflective archival material of Sisters Academy. Likewise, many students express that they cannot write, or that writing compromises the depth of their experiences. One student thus writes, “[d]oes it [make] sense to try to capture these experiences in words if what I experience is so bodily?” Another student writes, “I am without words ... The trip was filled with senses, touches ... I don’t even think words in any language would justify the state and feelings inside of me ... Something has released beyond the controlling mind. I want to stay in this void.” The students articulate that they would prefer to express themselves through means of communication other than writing, such as through taste, touch, movement and drawing: “I allow you to taste the words;” “I could write it with the delivery of my touch;” or “I’ll throw all my notes on dancing. I’ll throw all my words on dancing ... Movements.” Other students go so far as to invent new languages:

I found another (forgotten) language. This language takes its starting point in the inside universe of the human being. It has it’s [sic] center in core of what it means to be, to exist in the world + in relation to other people. A magnificent root of systems containing new language, new thoughts, new perspectives for explaining existing. This school teaches you to listen, see, smell, taste, feel before you relate to others and the rest.

Thus, students find ways to use language and express themselves, ways that originate and move from another mode of their being. They find another place from which to write and draw and express themselves: the sensuous and poetic aspects of their being. The examples of “losing and finding language” presented

here are closely related to the conceptual framework of *The Critical Gaze* and *The Devoted Body*, since the students losing language and choosing to lose language are often devoted bodies, and at the same time the devoted bodies also choose to write and reflect. They do so either in a poetic language, or because they feel the desire to write down new realizations that they have in situ. The ones who are devoted bodies who choose to write also indirectly debate with *The Critical Gaze* as they argue for the necessity of a “language of the body,” the sensuous and the poetic, to be taken seriously, and they display the realization of non-dualistic connectivity between mind and body.

This relates both to Kolesch’ suggestion that the affective encounters of immersive performance spaces train a new skillset that encompasses dual reflectivity and embeddedness in the experience, through which a rich thickness of response is stimulated (Kolesch 2019); and to Rogoff’s criticality as a subsequent paradigm of critique that, although critical, dares to inhabit and practice alternatives through embodied processes (Gade and Schultz 2016, 25), which again links to the activist potential of affective responses to the sensuous and the ability to evoke change that it contains. As articulated by Massumi: “[t]o affect and to be affected is to be open to the world, to be active in it and to be patient for its return activity. This openness is also taken as primary. It is the cutting edge of change” (Massumi 2015, ix).

Return to first case: Losing my eggs and social ecology

The continuity of the process also resembles the lines that strike through every page of the notebook and connect the parts of the process to each other. The image of the body in the womb can quite literally be associated with a process of rebirth: not with starting over as a fetus, but rather with taking the form of a fully-grown body, slightly changed, as the lines of the face indicate something new is coming forth. The last image of two embracing bodies, in an empty space, outside the womb (given that they are dressed), dissolves, however, any distinct features. The embrace and the tender connectivity between these two human shapes is the focal point. The focus is no longer on the potentially painful process of losing or rebirthing, but on the potential to relive in interconnectivity. Of the three ecologies, the social ecology is displayed in the embracing bodies of people connecting beyond their singularity to other bodies, and with these bodies they conduct activities and practices—in this case, the activity of intimacy and embrace. As Guattari argues, an end must be put to the “isolated and repressed singularities that are just turning in circles,” which are still being cultivated. Instead, spaces must be created and practices evolved for affective cathexis

—*investissement*—in human groups of all sizes ([1989] 2008, 34 and 38). This Guattari conceives of as the nurturing of a social ecology in which mental ecology can evolve (Guattari [1989] 2008, 39ff). In the social ecology of Sisters Academy the awareness of interconnectivity is actualized through the transformative process of connecting with the sensuous and the poetic. For many students this process is linked to the emergence of The Poetic Self.

Second case: The Poetic Self: Blue and mental ecology

In this case, the student first describes how something is left behind: “I forget my outside me. I forget I have an outside life. I’m taken over. I’m taking IN.” Here, the leaving something behind is associated with space, since there is an outside space of everyday life, based on the premises of economic rationality, that is left behind, and a new space, based on the sensuous and poetic principles of the aesthetic dimension, which is entered into. And entering this new space—being taken IN, in capital letters—connotes a journey into the inner landscapes (as can be seen in the aforementioned associations to the womb) and, in this case, into the inner landscapes of and through The Poetic Self. On the next page the student reflects on “Blue:”

Blue can be little drops of tears running down my cheek. Welling up inside me. Tying a knot in my chest. Suffocating me. Blue can be materialization of a love so big it overflows. Running from the corner of my eye down my cheek, all the way to my jawline where it lets go and falls on my lover as a symbol of my complete surrender. The blue can be dark and stormy—Impossible to penetrate—Suffocating. The blue can also be very light and clear. Invites you in with its salty smell. The Promise of its soft touch. The clear blue will absorb you completely. Make time unnecessary [sic]. As an abstract concept very far away.

While the student has just made time unnecessary in the elaborations on “blue,” it is revealed to us on the following page that The Blue is the student’s Poetic Self, as the student signs the drawings on these pages “– The Blue”. Thus, the signature is not only an association to the color blue, but also an insight into the student’s Poetic Self—that is, into the student’s inner inherent poetic potential – or into the self of a Sensuous Society. It is a self that takes into consideration the sensuous, poetic and affective aspects of life, as Guattari argues: “[r]ather than remaining subject, in periphery, to the seductive efficiency of economic competition, we must reappropriate Universes of value, so that processes of singulariza-

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BLUE (AIR ±)

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CHEEK.
WELLING UP INSIDE ME, TYING A KNOT IN MY CHEST.
SUFFOCATING ME.

BLUE CAN BE MATERIALIZATIONS OF LOVE SO BIG IT
OVERFLOWS, RUNNING FROM THE CORNER OF MY
EYE
DOWN MY CHEEK, ALL THE WAY TO MY JAWLINE
WHERE IT LETS GO AND FALLS ON MY
LOVER AS A SYMBOL OF MY COMPLETE
SURRENDER.

THE BLUE CAN BE DARK AND STORMY - IMPOSSIBLE
TO PENETRATE - SUFFOCATING

THE BLUE CAN ALSO
BE VERY LIGHT AND CLEAR. IT INVITES YOU IN
WITH ITS SALTY SMELL, THE PROMISE OF
ITS SOFT GARB TALK.

THE CLEAR BLUE WILL ABSORB YOU COMPLETELY,
MAKE TIME UNNECESSARY. AS AN ABSTRACT
CONCEPT
REMOVING YOU VERY FAR AWAY.



tion can rediscover their consistency. We need new social and aesthetic practices, new practices of the Self ..." (Guattari [1989] 2008, 45).

The Poetic Self can be perceived as a new practice of self that potentially shapes a new mental ecology, similarly to how The Blue emerges in the following drawings. The Blue is also a body with non-human features (Braidotti 2013; Haraway 2016). In the first drawing, the stripes resemble branches from a tree, or blood veins, which is in itself a reminder of how different natural elements also connect in their visuality—as do tree branches and blood veins. Everyday life does not allow much awareness to this connectivity between the body and both the inner landscapes (veins) and outer landscapes (branches). Thus, in this case, the postliminal is related to the environmental ecology of realizing the connectivity to the environment that we call nature, evoked through the mental

Second case: Extracts from one in-situ notebook, student, *Sisters Academy—The Boarding School*, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2017.

ecology of The Poetic Self. This echoes Guattari's argument that environmental ecology is shaped by the activities and practices of people and their mental ecology, which, in turn, are shaped in groups of social ecology (Guattari [1989] 2008, 43ff). Such a postliminal, environmental-ecological awareness is present under different expressions in the vast majority of the Sister Academy's reflective in-situ archival material, and it is often associated with a dissolution of the human body as it had been known.

Third case: I consist of water and environmental ecology

Having gone through the phase of leaving something behind, the student here dwells into tenderness and enters the postliminal realization that "I consist of water". The focus is no longer on the potentially painful process of losing or reshaping, but, again, on the potential postliminal reliving in interconnectivity, which in this case is linked very clearly to an environmental ecological and post-human (Braidotti 2013) or com-post (Haraway 2016) connectivity to water.

It becomes apparent here that the framework of the three-phased ritual process and the three ecologies intertwine. Thus, the liminal process, which is evoked by the sensuous and poetic nature of the aesthetic dimension, and in which new modes of being and of being together emerge (as opposed to those preliminarily left behind), responds respectively to the mental ecology as a new practice of self and to the social ecology as a new practice of community, in resonance with Guattari's encouragement to create "new social and aesthetic practices" as "Universes of value" (Guattari [1989] 2008, 45). The postliminal expressions reveal an emerging environmental ecology evolving from these new mental and social ecologies, informed by the sensuous. The expressions indicate how an activation of a more sensuous mode of being, and being together in the world, could stimulate an ecological awareness of interconnectivity, which is why the sensuous is a very important, though often overlooked, element of the carving of a path towards a more sustainable future. This would be a future that moves beyond the dominance of economic rationality, paralyzing critique and, not least, a border of separation that is unfavorable as we confront both the looming ecological crisis and the current biological crisis that face us. As the feminist philosopher and curator Paul Beatriz Preciado writes in response to the COVID-19 crisis: "[c]ontrary to what one might imagine, our health will not come from a border or separation, but only from a new understanding of community with all living creatures, a new sharing with other beings on the planet" (Preciado 2020). The deep sense of interconnectivity is a healing experience to the vast majority of people who have engaged in the experiments at Sisters Academy, and



many express their longing to reenter and immerse themselves in the sensuous and poetic. Thus, a question for further explorations is how to create permanent spaces for “constant belonging,” in which the sensuous and the poetic can always be accessed and inhabited, and remind us of such inherent potential in all life, including our own—a reminder that would stimulate the ecological sense of interconnectivity, and ultimately transport us into a more sustainable future.

NOTES

- 1 This article introduces thoughts generated as part of my on-going PhD studies. My dissertation is intended to be submitted in December 2020.
- 2 www.sistersacademy.dk. Accessed 10 October 2020.
- 3 www.sistershope.dk. Accessed 10 October 2020.
- 4 www.sensuousociety.org. Accessed 10 October 2020.
- 5 There have been seven manifestations of Sisters Academy. *Sisters Academy—The Takeover* has manifested as Sisters Academy at HF & VUC, FYN, FLOW, Odense, Denmark (Winter 2014); Sisters Academy at Nova Academy, Simrishamn, Sweden (Spring 2016); Sisters Academy at Myndlistaskólinn, Reykjavík, Iceland (Fall 2016); and Sisters Academy at Fremtidslinjen, Køge, Denmark (Spring 2017). *Sisters Academy – The Boarding School* has manifested as Sisters Academy at Inkunst, Malmö, Sweden (Fall 2015); and Sisters Academy at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark (Fall 2017).
- 6 The process of reading the notebooks’ expansive reflective material, and thus subtracting it as data, has taken place continuously over the past half a year. The following people have supported me in this process by engaging in the reading over the span of between one and three months in, dedicating between eight to thirty hours a week to the process: Tania Maria Henneberg, Krisztina Toth, Emma Sofie Brandon and Bogumiła Majchrzycka.
- 7 E.g. see Andrea Braidt’s presentation “On transdisciplinary disciplines” (2019), as well as Anette Arlander’s *Artistic Research and/as Interdisciplinarity* (2016), both of which argue that inter- and transdisciplinary approaches are at the heart of, and one of the defining factors for, artistic research. Do also see Erin Manning (Manning 2015).
- 8 The critical gaze has been used in different contexts to describe the position of watching from a critical distance. See, for instance, the journalist and cultural critic Anthony Oliver Scott’s 2003 critical journalistic essay, which he titles after Susan Sontag’s *The Critical Gaze*, given that he views Sontag as the embodiment of critical distance. In this context I apply it to describe a participatory position.
- 9 With reference to Machon’s three categories of immersion in immersive performances, compares these definitions to Machon’s three immersive participation categories, which are: *absorption*—full engagement in the experience—transition—when the experience creates otherworldliness—and *total immersion*, which combines the first two categories and thus opens the participant’s complete engagement with the immersion artwork. This is sketched out in *Immersive Theatres. Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance* (Machon 2013), which is one of the first books dedicated entirely to an exploration of the theatre and performance art genre of the immersive.
- 10 All material is handled according to the guidelines provided by The Faculty of Humanities’ Research Ethics Committee. Accessed 10 October 2020. https://humanities.ku.dk/research/ethic_committee/Guidelines.pdf.

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The staircase leading down to The Grand Hall in Sisters Academy, *Sisters Academy – The Boarding School*, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2017. Photo: I diana lindhardt.

- 11 The posthumanist hydro-feminism spearheaded by cultural gender scholar and environmentalist Astrida Neimanis focuses on the notion that everything inhabiting the planet earth is primarily made up of water and thus, through water, we are all connected: “Blood, bile, intracellular fluid; a small ocean swallowed, a wild wetland in our gut; rivulets forsaken making their way from our insides to out, from watery womb to watery world: we are bodies of water.” (Neimanis 2016, 1). With reference to both Braidotti and Haraway, Neimanis ceases to nurture the sense of interconnectivity through underpinning the ‘watery facts’ of life (Neimanis 2016, 1–15).
- 12 “Constant Belonging” is conceptualized by musician Sam Andrea as part of the composition *Sudden bursts—Constant belonging*, and it came to my awareness through Andreas Dzialocha, who together with Sarrita Hunn have invited Sisters Hope into their “distributed festival coordination” project from 2020 onwards.

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Gry Worre Hallberg's contribution has been peer reviewed.