

Anne-Mareike Hess

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Dreamer

Sketches of an artistic process

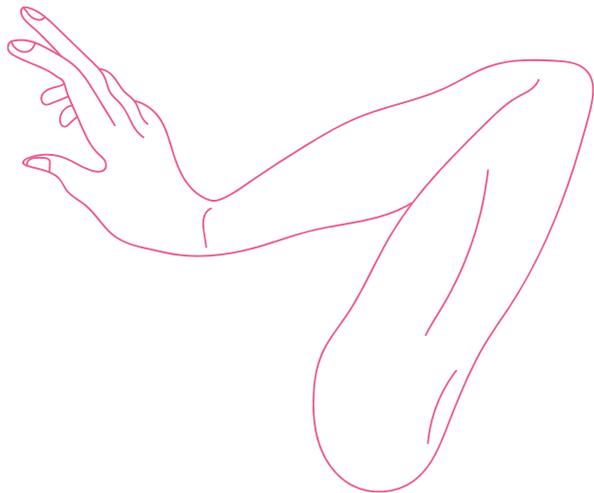
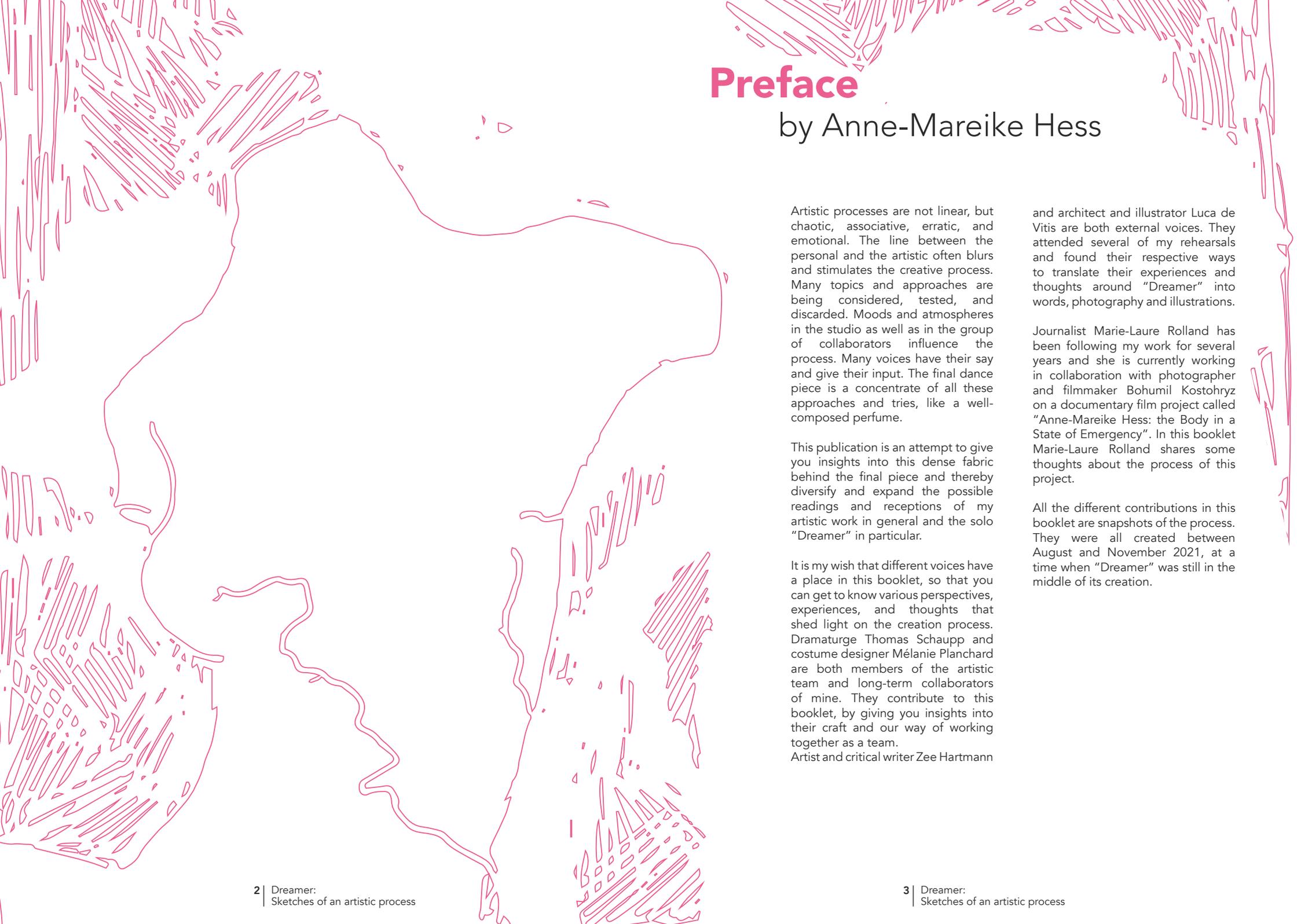


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Preface

by Anne-Mareike Hess

Artistic processes are not linear, but chaotic, associative, erratic, and emotional. The line between the personal and the artistic often blurs and stimulates the creative process. Many topics and approaches are being considered, tested, and discarded. Moods and atmospheres in the studio as well as in the group of collaborators influence the process. Many voices have their say and give their input. The final dance piece is a concentrate of all these approaches and tries, like a well-composed perfume.

This publication is an attempt to give you insights into this dense fabric behind the final piece and thereby diversify and expand the possible readings and receptions of my artistic work in general and the solo "Dreamer" in particular.

It is my wish that different voices have a place in this booklet, so that you can get to know various perspectives, experiences, and thoughts that shed light on the creation process. Dramaturge Thomas Schaupp and costume designer Mélanie Planchard are both members of the artistic team and long-term collaborators of mine. They contribute to this booklet, by giving you insights into their craft and our way of working together as a team.

Artist and critical writer Zee Hartmann

and architect and illustrator Luca de Vitis are both external voices. They attended several of my rehearsals and found their respective ways to translate their experiences and thoughts around "Dreamer" into words, photography and illustrations.

Journalist Marie-Laure Rolland has been following my work for several years and she is currently working in collaboration with photographer and filmmaker Bohumil Kostohryz on a documentary film project called "Anne-Mareike Hess: the Body in a State of Emergency". In this booklet Marie-Laure Rolland shares some thoughts about the process of this project.

All the different contributions in this booklet are snapshots of the process. They were all created between August and November 2021, at a time when "Dreamer" was still in the middle of its creation.

Dreaming the Dreamer

The research for the creation of the solo "Dreamer" began in 2019. Initially the premiere was planned for December 2020, but the pandemic interrupted the creation process and the entire production was postponed to 2021. Now finally, on December 17th 2021 "Dreamer" will be presented to the audience.

After the solo "Warrior", created in 2018, "Dreamer" is the second dance piece in a series of three in which I am interested in untangling prevailing stereotypical notions of womanhood.

My idea for this piece is to create a female character on stage, the dreamer, who draws the audience into a surreal world and explores the twilight zone between the real and imagined, the felt and the fantasised. Her ever-changing figure oscillates between near and far, approachable and unreachable, gradually unveiling to us her innermost dreams, hopes, fears and longings.

My interest in dreams started a few years ago when realizing that I could rarely remember my dreams. I love to sleep, and especially in emotionally challenging times sleeping feels like a place of refuge for me. I started to practice becoming more aware of my dreams and experimented with the twilight zone between awake and asleep, between the real and imaginary. A whole new world opened up. Since ancient times, dreams have

been regarded as inspiring and creativity-stimulating spaces of experience. In them our innermost longings and desires become visible. But they can also reveal our inner conflicts, fears, repressed and suppressed memories. At the same time, they offer us the chance to process and dissolve some of these feelings and to set profound changes in motion. Maybe this is also why in today's society, which is striving for productivity and perfection, dreams are not really talked about unless they can be commercialised in one form or another. They are considered as mysterious and non-rational. Therefore, they are often perceived as unproductive and disruptive and thus pushed to the private.

In order to create the dreamer, I intentionally directed my research towards female figures that are somehow connected to the dream

world and the mystical or who can move between the worlds. I studied Greek Mythology as well as local folk tales and found numerous examples of these female figures: Seers, healers, witches, mermaids, sirens, nymphs, goddesses and half-goddesses, queens and princesses...the list is long. These female figures often stand for magical transformation and rebirth, for the helpful impulse, the secret, the hidden, the dark, the abyss, the world of the dead, but also for the seductive, the poisoning, the terrifying and the inescapable. Light and darkness, beauty and horror all united in one person.

In the end, most of these stories end fatally for women. Even though many of these stories are fictional, they are embedded in our culture and paint a disturbing picture of our society. Many of these characters continue to live today in the female stereotypes and gender roles that we still keep cultivating.

Through this research I became painfully aware of how many of these stereotypes are unconsciously inscribed in my own body, colouring my dreams and longings and defining my possibilities.

One of the biggest challenges of this process was navigating between the

personal and artistic perspectives and finding a way where these two can meet in a creative way. I spent many weeks in the studio, digging deeper and deeper into the matter and into my body. At times I was confused, went around in circles, and eventually even got lost, but in the end I always found my way back to the surface.

I wish that this publication can give you some interesting insights into this creative process of the past months and I am looking forward to finally be sharing «Dreamer» with you.

Enjoy

Excerpts from a

Conceptual conversation

during rehearsals in October 2021 between choreographer
Anne-Mareike Hess and dance dramaturge Thomas Schaupp

T: Are you a dreamer?

AM: Yes, I would say so.

T: And to what extent does that play a role for you?

AM: First of all, I'm someone who likes to sit somewhere or walk around and let my mind wander – daydream – and imagine things. And I am also someone who likes to sleep. I think it has something to do with the fact that I like to be in this state of dreaming. I like being in this in-between space, and when the body falls asleep or is waking up. I love to snooze, because then I have these short dreams. I celebrate that. And at the same time I also have the feeling that I'm a very idealistic person somehow which also has to do with dreaming, I think.

T: And what exactly is it that you celebrate in this space between sleep and wakefulness?

AM: Well, celebrating in the sense that I intentionally set the alarm clock extra early in the morning to snooze for another hour. When you're in a light sleep like that, there's a certain body sensation that emerges. It's still dull and at the same time there's an activity in it. Then suddenly you're just somewhere, at a place or in a situation. And in that moment, of

course, you don't ask yourself where this comes from. One simply deals with it and with all the things that happen – sometimes quite obvious absurd things, even so they might emerge from everyday life. Sometimes it is also frightening or astonishing. There are all these processes that take place in the body. I just like that very much.

T: Yes, it is interesting. I ask that because, thinking back now to your earlier dance works, a line that seems to run through all the works are bodies that are in an in-between space in a way. So they're never quite here, but they're also not quite gone.

AM: Yes, in different ways. The bodies are definitely drifting. Or trapped. Kind of caught somewhere.

“When you're in a light sleep like that, there's a certain body sensation that emerges.” AM

T: Well, I would even say that it partly seems like a kind of trip, e.g. «Synchronization in process». And then «Tanzwut», where you really dance yourself into a frenzy. So these trance states, in which the body loses itself and thereby perhaps gains «other» possibilities that seems to me to be a motif that runs through all your works. I find it remarkable that «Dreamer» is the first time that such a state is clearly named in the title of the work, even if it has perhaps always played a role.

AM: Yes, that could be. I haven't thought about it yet in this way. I've always been very focused on physical states. But I haven't taken it to that «dream level» yet. But now that you mention it, I don't know exactly, but somehow I think there's a connection. These in-between states, these physical experiences, have always been the motivation why I dance in the first place. This longing for a certain physical state that's either already in me and that has to come out at that certain moment in my life. Or a physical state I long for. In “Warrior” I yearned to become strong and to get out of a passivity or out of a certain state of shock.

T: Yes. And now you invest into a state that you obviously like as well. A state that makes you press the snooze button several times. What's exciting here is that the body is actually immobile in this state. Dreaming happens very internally. So, how does dreaming move? Or how does dreaming move you?

AM: I think there are a several answers to that. How do you move in your dreams? Or how does the dreamer move?... Yes, those are maybe the two perspectives for me right now. And in this long process, extended by a year due to the pandemic, I have also been exploring these two perspectives. But it's not that simple, and I think that's what I'm still chewing on as well. What do I actually want to represent or share with the audience? It's not a narrative of someone lying down and falling asleep and then we start dreaming together. Rather, I'm interested in physically exploring what becomes possible in dreams that is not possible elsewhere. For instance these time jumps we have in dreams. Well, and then you're not just in one state, but in several. And they can change. For example from a state of anxiety into a state of pleasure and so on. Dreams are very much connected with emotions. And they are always immediate.

T: Yes, and that is also always something physical. If you were to connect a feeling or an emotion for previous dance works. Which ones would they be?

AM: There was «I believe we are having a dialogue,» a collaboration with Sandra Lolax, for example. There was this feeling of simply not understanding each other. So the limit of being two people who always remain two and can never be one. In «Synchronization in process», a work for three dancers, it was rather a paralysis. A paralysis of the body - a kind of rigidity of shock. This moment after a shock, but immediately afterwards, when one cannot yet speak of processing. «Give me a reason to feel», also a trio, was actually a certain continuation of that. It was also maybe the search for dealing with a deep wound. The first shock is over and the pain is gradually sinking into the body. And then there was also the common search for tenderness with each other. But there was still no way out or anything. More like an attempt. «Warrior» then was the deep breathing and the search for being active again, feeling alive. And yeah, now we're on «Dreamer.»

T: Those are interesting bridges. If before it was more about translating a state physically, now it seems to be in focus itself. Well, given that we understand dreaming as a state. And in this context, perhaps your work «Through the wire» is also interesting to mention. Because here, for the first time, you no longer actually sought the movement taking place in space, but only evoked it in thought and through language. Constructed together in a one-to-one phone conversation with a spectator in each case. Thinking about this, the provocative question comes to me, whether the body as such is perhaps no longer enough for you for the moment?

AM: I don't think it has reached its limit. «Through the wire» was simply another offer to the audience. In a way, those phone calls are about imagining body and movements. Now that I've already done more than forty of these conversations, with such a variety of people... what is always fascinating are these moments when we manage to bring the imagined dancer into life together, this moment when we both feel the movement and its sensation in the body. That's magical.

So if you ask if the body no longer suffices, I would answer, no, it does. I would rather say that „Through the wire» is perhaps the first timid attempt - or maybe it is not timid at all - for also trying out other formats of art creation. Which ones, however, is not yet clear to me.

T: The interesting thing is that in «Through the wire» we actually take a step away from the moving body in order to find it anew. And that also brings me back to „Dreamer“ and the question of how do dreams move or all these questions that you can now ask around it? Along the dreaming, the body is at its limit as such. And what is it then that can move? Or, hmm, how do I formulate that now....

AM: ...Yes, so, it may be that the body cannot do various things on its own, either that's because of the nature of dreaming or it's because you're at the limits of the body. I don't think I know yet.

“What is always fascinating are these moments when we manage to bring the imagined dancer into life together, this moment when we both feel the movement and its sensation in the body. That's magical.” AM

T: Right now I am thinking of the experiences of having nightmares. They are partly very extreme. Also physically. One might literally scream oneself awake. Interesting is this meaning of the German term of «Alptraum», nightmare. It has the word «alp» in it. This being that lies heavy and oppressive on the chest. Well, not sure where I want to head with that right now. I have to think about it.

Anyway, what also seems to play a very important role for you in the process now is the examination of female figures or the representation of womanhood, being a woman, being female, femininity in society, and so on. At the latest since the solo «Warrior» this plays, I would say, more and more a quite concrete role in your work...

AM: That's right. In the works before I explicitly said it's about these people who are on stage, and of course they have a gender, but that didn't play a particular role. But it's not that simple, and I increasingly realize that. I can create these utopias on stage, but in reality it's not so easy and these people on stage are also looked at by people who also live in our reality and for them it's also not so easy to just see people.

At the same time it probably also has to do with the fact that the works are rooted in my personal live. What moves me finds its way onto the stage through many translation processes. That is also a kind of wanting to understand or comprehend myself within the outside world. And yes, at the moment these themes you mention definitely play more of a role for me. For «Warrior» I was looking for an active character at the beginning and

then I came to this stereotype. Then came the question, okay, but that's so male-dominant and how does this relate to me? And why do we as a society seem to be attracted to that? And how crazy it is to realize all the strong images and perceptions of it and how strongly they also affect me.

The more I deal with it, the more aware I become. And with that comes also this need to deal more with the female representation. I think that in the past I simply did my thing in my privileged position. At one point I realised: no, I'm not just doing my thing, but I'm behaving this way because I think I should be here and that's where this comes from and so on. How much you are conditioned and how much you also limit yourself or are limited in your expression.

“Even in dreams, we are stuck in the reality that we're in.” AM

T: Is that then what the dreamer is looking for? That she can express what she is not able to express in society? The dreamer as your ideal of a woman of your dreams, so to speak?

AM: The dreamer is probably not that figure, no. Even in dreams, we are stuck in the reality that we're in. And I personally can't even imagine what “she” would be like, this ideal dream woman of mine. I think what I am doing here in “Dreamer” is more always a trial, a little bit of pushing towards that maybe, to experience short reliefs or openings. But the woman of my dreams, no. I think I am far away from that. I can't even dream of it. And maybe those are the limits we were just talking about.

T: What do you mean by that?

AM: I mean all the things that hold this dreamer captive. Or simply everything that limits her or holds her back. And also all the things she is trying to deal with. All of that maybe gives more of an idea of where she's going. I don't think we can paint the dream woman that way, so to speak. mhm... Maybe more as a foreboding.

T: So the dream maybe more as a kind of negotiation space between you and the audience?

AM: Yes, «Dreamer» as a space for possibilities!

Thoughts on the

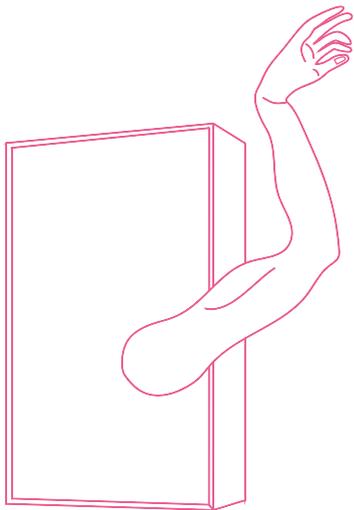
Costume

and set design by Mélanie Planchard*

There are many ways of imagining and creating a set and costumes for a dance piece. What I particularly enjoy in the collaborations with Anne-Mareike is being involved in the creation process from a very early stage on, as we usually start to meet long before we start rehearsing. Those meetings often result in an interesting exchange of thoughts and ideas on the topic of the future piece and are essential to me, as they help me understand Anne-Mareike's motivation and intentions. After engaging into further readings on the topic and doing extensive research on how we can visually convey the message of the piece to the audience, I start gathering different materials with a variety of textures and colours that I bring to the rehearsals. While experimenting with the materials Anne-Mareike instinctively decides quite quickly about the material she wants to work with, basing her choice on the haptic quality of the material and its response to her movements. I truly enjoy those first rehearsal moments as something quite magical happens every time the right material or object comes to life through her interaction with it.

Anne-Mareike and I often chose to reduce the costumes and sets to one very simple, material. For "Dreamer" we chose to work with an abundance of tulle fabric. The light and sheer fabric became a helpful tool that allowed us to explore the themes of womanhood and dreams, and proved to be an effective medium to help us dive into the Dreamer's world. When she is performing inside the tulle, she produces images of mythical creatures that appear and disappear in it, discovering metaphorical universes in each one of them. Anne-Mareike uses this simple insignificant material and creates a setting for her performance which she fills with inner emotional energy. The prerequisites for a relationship that appears to be lifelike between the performer and the material are fulfilled. The ephemeral sculptures that Anne-Mareike creates inside and outside of the material ignite an idea and gives us time to observe the worlds that emerge from it associatively. We let ourselves drift and dive in.

For the costume, Anne-Mareike and I both felt that we had to strip it down to its bare essentials. There was not much need for a costume in this performance and inspired by the works of French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu on the "Skin Ego" we chose to work with skin-like materials and colours. Anzieu sees the body's surface – its skin – as a crucial constituent of the mind's structures and functions. It is the first narcissistic envelope on which the feeling of well-being is based. The skin has the functions of containment, protection and inscription. In further works he relates to an artist's artwork as having the same functions as the skin. It can sort out time and space and build a frontier between the self and the non-self. Rather than having a naked body on stage, we chose to create a skin-emphasizing costume which symbolises the "interface" function of the skin, allowing the Dreamer, through its extrasensory perception, to find its identity.



*** Melanie Planchard**

is a Luxemburgish costume and stage designer based in Berlin. Since graduating in "Costume Design for Performance" from the University of the Arts in London in 2013, she has been working as a freelancer designer in the fields of film, theatre and dance. Recently she has been collaborating on costume and stage designs with Simone Mousset and Lewys Holt, Larissa Faber, Jean-Guillaume Weiss and the Spellbound Company and Elisabeth Schilling. "Dreamer" is Melanie's fourth collaboration with choreographer Anne-Mareike Hess.

Deep as the Ocean.

Fragments of thoughts

on a Dramaturgy for „Dreamer“. by Thomas Schaupp*

Sinking

into the depths

One of the exciting questions that accompanied Anne-Mareike and me since the first conversations about the new project "Dreamer" was how a dramaturgy for this dance solo could be designed. Is there a dramaturgy of dreaming? And how could this be transferred to a dance piece?

An image that Anne-Mareike repeatedly took up for herself in this context was the descent into a depth - the depth of the ocean, in which an unexpected world full of fantastic beings opens up. A world in which, among others, the Oneirodidae lure around - the "Dreamers," a family of eerie-looking deep-sea frogfishes in which, interestingly, the female is ten times as large as the male. A scarcely explored world in which the power relations between men and women seem to be different for once - perhaps not irrelevant for a work

that also wants to deal strongly with the representation of femininity in society. And with the dream images of womanhood, the cliché of the dream woman.

A descent into the unfathomable depths possibly also requires a different way of thinking about dramaturgy. Not so much ordered in the linear progression of time, but perhaps rather a fanning out in the moment, that is, a spreading out and breaking down of time, some sort of vertical dramaturgy maybe?

Classical dramaturgical Structures

Classical linear storytelling has been known since Aristotle noted the rules of dramatic storytelling in the *Poetics*. His writings have defined the path of a story and its characters. And to this day, people invoke this structure of drama, into which any comic or tragic narrative can be cast. In the *Poetics*, six essential elements of drama are mentioned: *mythos* (plot), *ethos* (characters), *lexis* (speech), *diánoia* (thought, intention), *opsis* (show, scenery) and *melopoiía* (song, music).

This more or less fixed architecture of a conventional narrative is needed to unfold an individual story successively, in parts and excitingly, until at the end everything is spread out before the audience and can be discussed in retrospect. In this sense it is used above all in classical theater, opera, ballet, in film and television and so on - but in an abstracted or reduced form often also in contemporary dance, for example in the tendency to ritual transformations. In any case, this classical approach does not necessarily allow some sort of vertical dramaturgy.

However, narrative forms have found other ways also meanwhile. If in former times a story was predominantly in the foreground, today one thinks rather from the „person“. The character itself creates the narrative. And the development of the character is then also the motor that sets the „story“ in motion. This approach, which has increasingly come to the fore

since the 1990s, offers possibilities to contrast the familiar linear narrative with a narrative structure of interconnectedness. Anne-Mareike's latest solo „Warrior“ could be an example of how a progression is told through such a development of a defined character.

And then, of course, to name just one other rather classical form of dramaturgy, there is also the non-linearly. It does not follow a defined path at all. Instead, the spectator has to actively work out a way, walk, play, explore, or maybe invent. As there is no story with a defined goal, but parts, set pieces, symbols, objects, images, texts and sounds, hints, options, tasks and so on, the „whole“ is created with this bits and pieces, and the viewer wanders through it on its own.

And isn't that how dreams work, too? A mostly non-linear stringing together of parts, symbols, temporal sequences, images. People who appear as if from nowhere and also disappear again? Fantastic stories or constant repetitions? An endless fall? Non-linear or temporally completely detached from any context?

The Dramaturgy of falling asleep

To approach the feeling of sinking from a structural point of view, it would maybe also be helpful to devote less attention to the state of dreaming as such, but rather to the process of sleeping? What kind of dramaturgical strategies might be inherent in the processes between falling asleep and waking up, for example? This period, in which one at least sinks into the bed mattress?

Tobias Hürter, a German journalist and deputy editor-in-chief of the philosophical magazine „Hohe Luft“ described the processes of falling asleep in 2011 in a very readable article in the weekly magazine „Zeit“:

It starts with the prelude of sleeping, namely with the onset of drowsiness. Typically, it begins approximately with the change of light around us such as the onset of darkness. On the biological level, it is the light-emitting cells in the retina of the eye that signal to the brain that it is bedtime now. Those cells do not serve the purpose of vision. They rather register the red of the sunset, while a Blue screen light confuses them. Which, by the way, prevents us from falling asleep. Gradually, the effect of the hormone melatonin becomes stronger. And as

a result, thoughts flow more slowly and our reaction time becomes longer. One tends to shiver also, as the body temperature is half a degree Celsius below its average. And with that temperature drop, the mood seems to drop as well. Melatonin makes us melancholic and colors everything around us in a gloomy blur. However, at one point we turn off the light and sink slowly into sleep. The brain is now busy with itself.

Do relevant strategies for a dramaturgy of sinking in perhaps lie in these biological „regularities“? For instance, in the use of certain lighting conditions within the theatrical black box? Lighting moods that influence the body? Even if certainly no falling asleep of the spectators and probably also no melancholy wants to be provoked?

Dream

Interpretation

A very different approach towards the sinking into the ocean depths could perhaps also be found in the interpretation of dream motifs. Dream interpretation is probably as old as we are dreaming. And many of us have woken up and wondered about a strange dream - What might it mean? Dream interpretation seems to be a way to read dreams as some kind of mediators of messages.

A „sinking into the sea“, for example, seems to be widely interpreted with a request to reflect on oneself. Perhaps a message to the figure of the dreamer in the dance solo „Dreamer“? Does the figure want to reflect on something in her own paths or development? And if so, how could this be made legible and perceivable?

And then, there is also the motif of “swimming in the sea”... Dreaming about it seems to be linked with a state of serenity and the perception or feeling of quietness. Does here perhaps lie a hint for how the atmosphere of the dance solo should be thought of? A hint for certain scenographic choices? For the sound even?

When we try to remember a dream, the formerly vivid dreamscape recedes into the distance. We try to work toward a conceivable structure of the dream. And therefore we focus on details and certain motifs to give it a tangible meaning. However, the dream itself is more of a sculpture and hardly a classical narrative. In a dream, the whole is given at once. Once awakened from it, it disintegrates into the incomprehensible...

The Unfinished

At the moment of writing this text, many questions remain unanswered and others have been found. And this text does not want to be much more than a sharing of a few chains of thoughts towards and around the dramaturgy for „Dreamer“. Questions that have been dealt with in the course of the process. Some may be concluded and some may remain. But it is precisely this incompleteness and the scattering of thoughts that may help to gain new perspectives and find other approaches, along which decisions can then be made. And there perhaps lies the most exciting connection between dream and dramaturgy also - in the openness to the (yet) unknown, the spontaneous and the illogical. It is always the basis for the creation of some sort of order.



© Martine Pinnel

* Thomas Schaupp

(he/him) is a dance dramaturge and curator. Shortly after his state examination as a medical laboratory assistant in Frankfurt am Main, he embarked on new paths and completed a bachelor's degree in theater studies and art history in Berlin. Since then he has worked internationally with choreographers. Thomas is an associate dramaturg for the guest artist program at Dansearena Nord in Hammerfest and the residency program 'Dramaturgie et danse (EU Version)' at Théâtre Sévelin 36 in Lausanne. He is also a regular advisor in mentoring programs at institutions such as ŻfinMalta, Bærum Kulturhus and Festival Tanztage Berlin, as well as a guest lecturer at the Icelandic University of the Arts in Reykjavik. Together with Arnbjörg María Danielsen he is currently curating the Pop Up Goethe Iceland 2022. Thomas lives in Berlin.

A thousand

eyes by Luca De Vitis / The Holy Garbage*

Dreamer enters a place
separated from space and time,
where there is only us.
It is a temple. It is a prison.

Fear and desire,
rage and grace,
misery and majesty coexist in this place.
They look at us, because we built it.

But these structures are heavy,
so Dreamer moves, it is necessary.

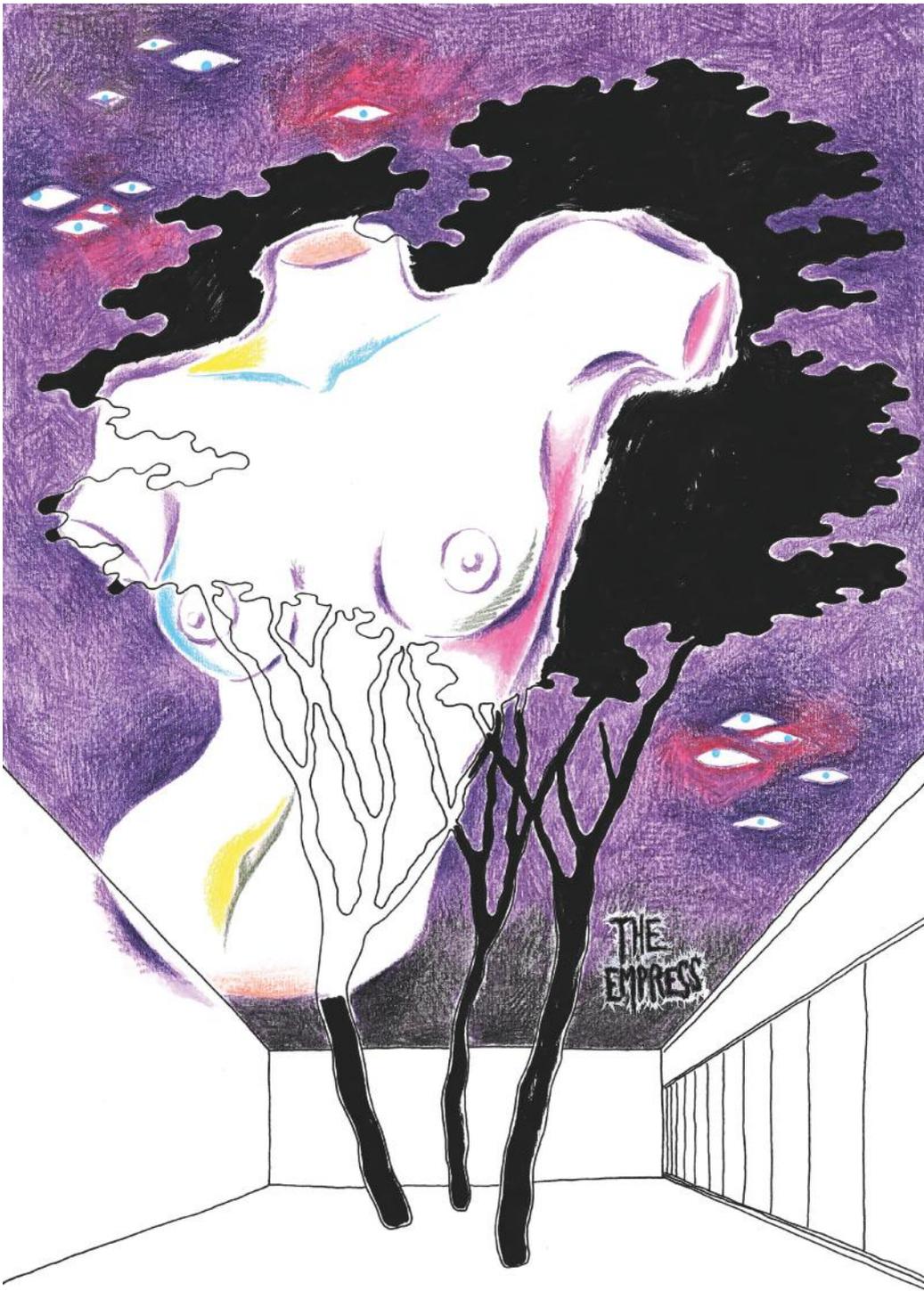
Moves to collect the pieces
of a broken self.
Moves towards freedom,
moves away from those eyes.

It is the only way,
so we can start to see.

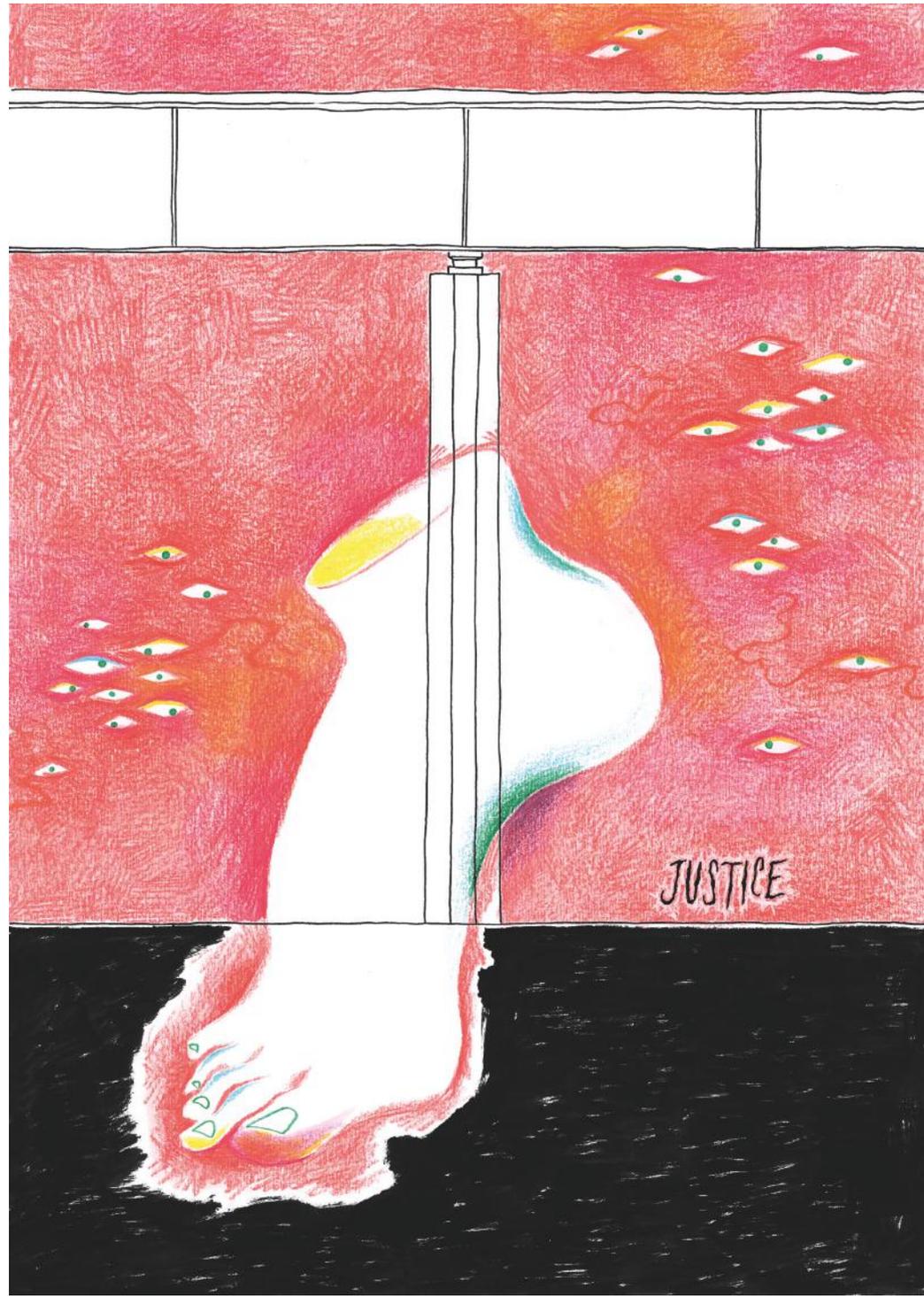
* **Luca De Vitis**
(1985, he/him) Architect and illustrator, lives in Berlin. After graduating in 2010 works as architect and teaching assistant in design classes in Rome and Milan, takes part in international contests. In 2015 earns the doctoral degree in architectural theory with a work about transgression in the construction of the form. In 2019 starts working alongside as illustrator under the name The Holy Garbage. In his drawings joins his interests for space, cities, the extraordinary in the ordinary, with an inclination for comics and caricature.

Ink, brush pen, colored pencils on paper. Original size each 297x420 mm

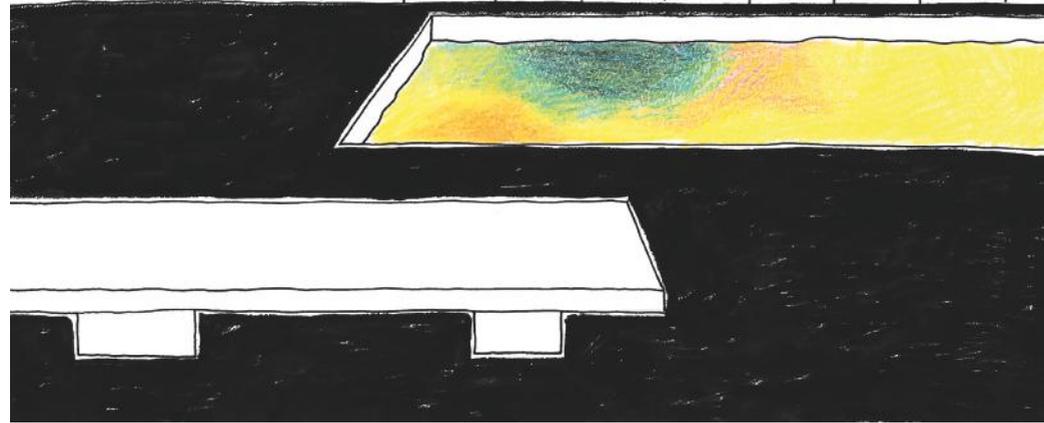
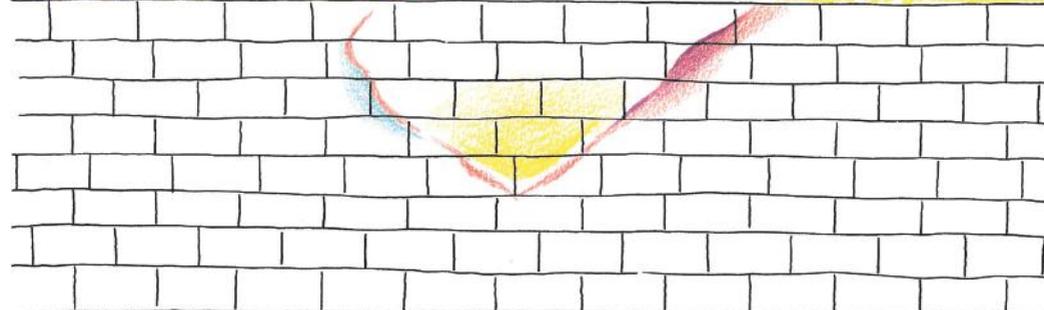
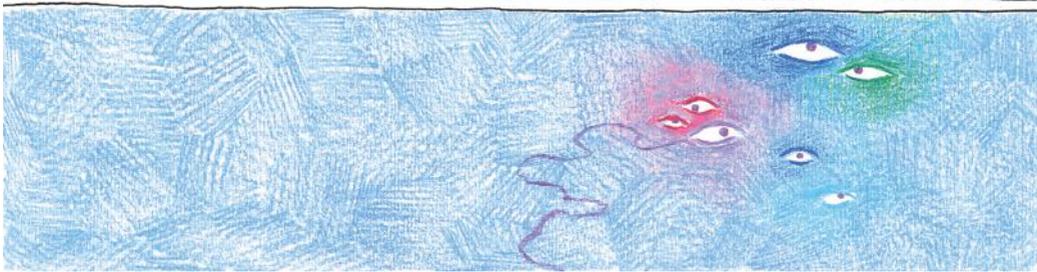
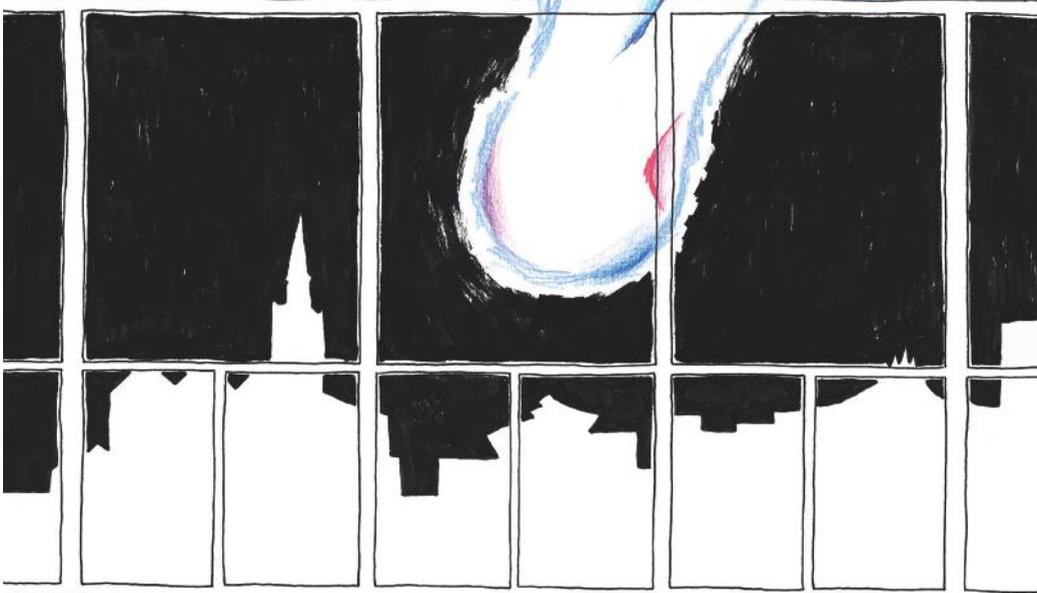


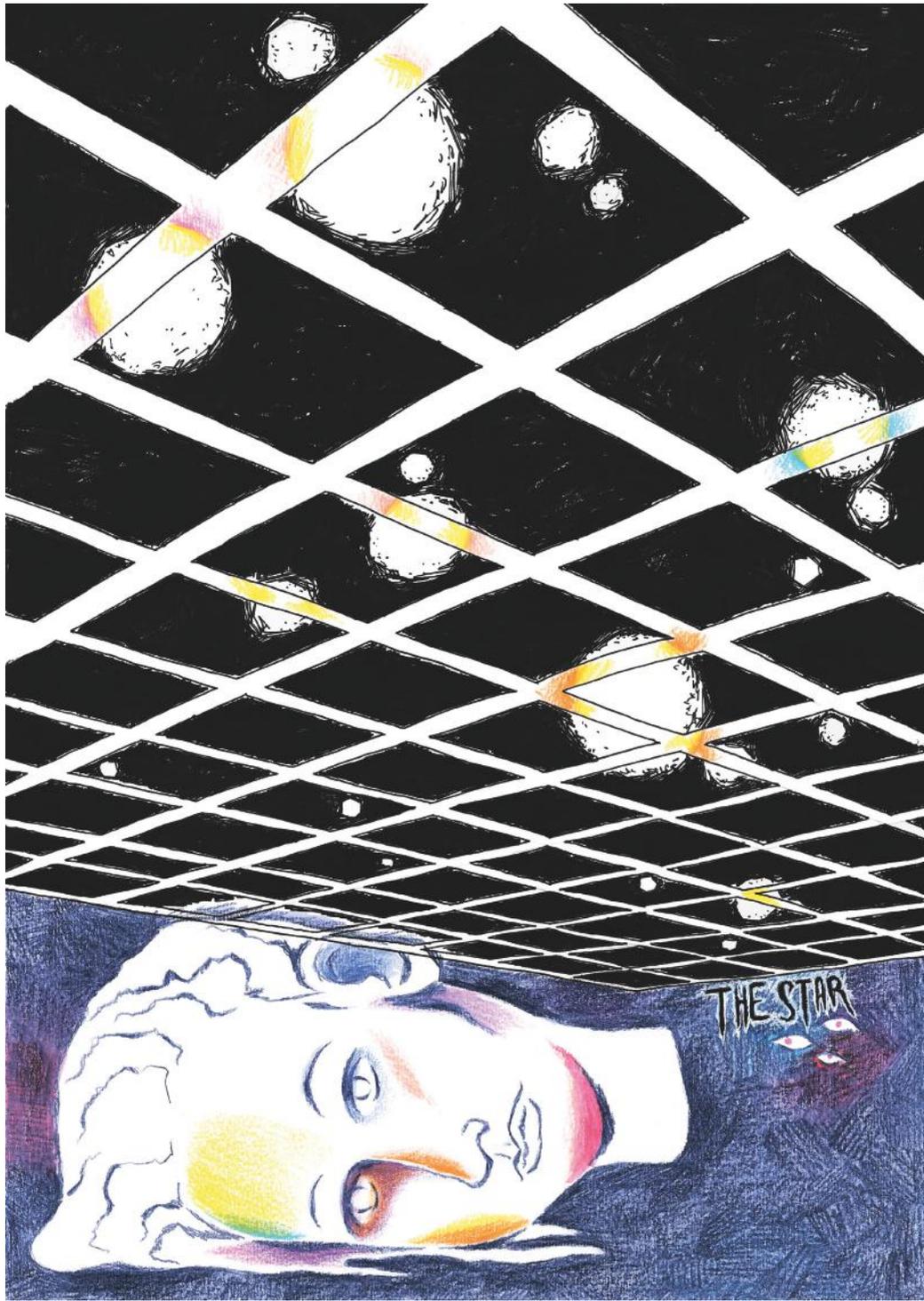


22 | Dreamer:
Sketches of an artistic process

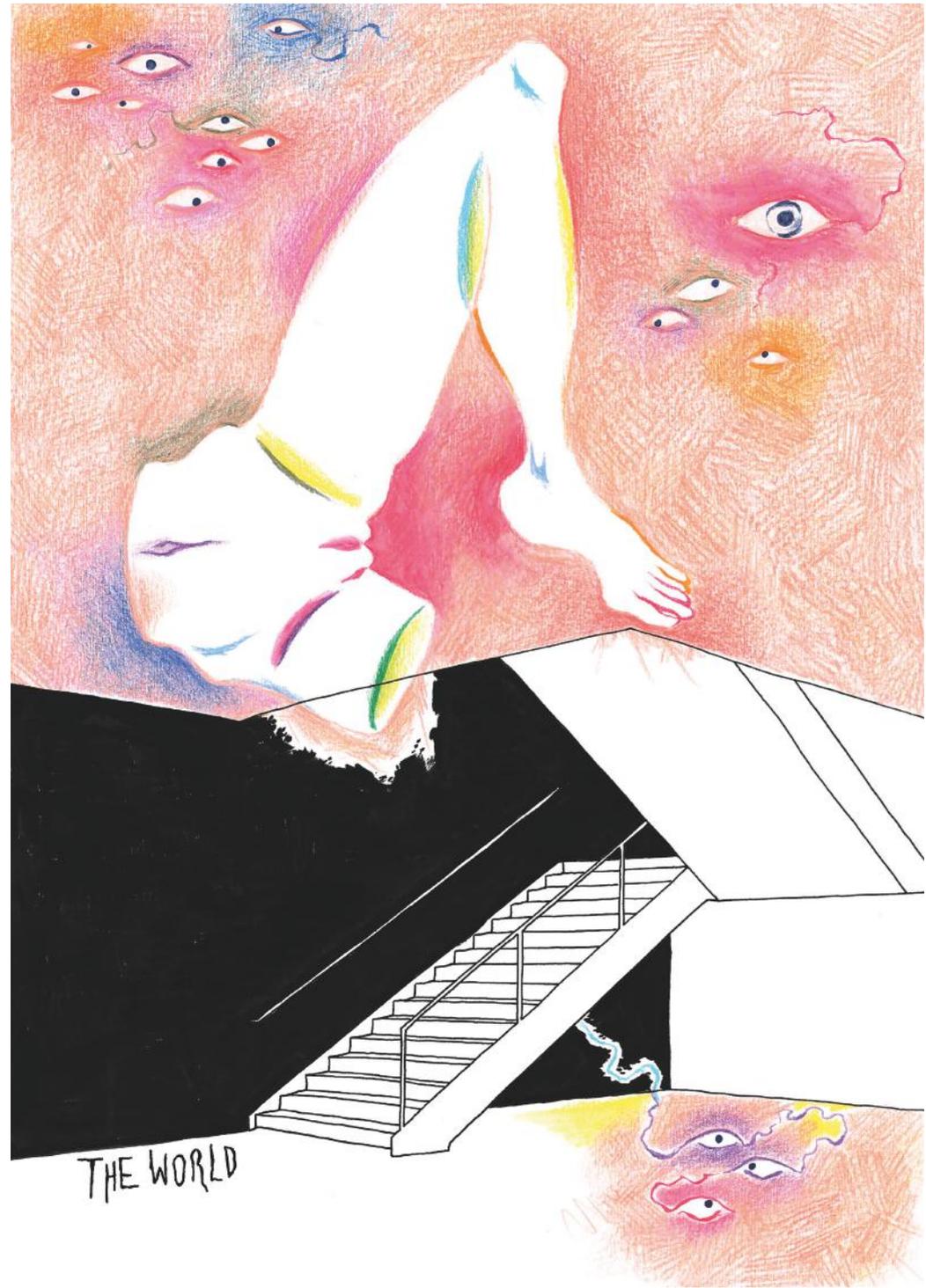


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Dreamer:

Process in Two Parts

by Zee Hartmann*

October 27

I walk into rehearsal in the middle of Anne-Mareike and her dramaturg Thomas' conversation. AM's cheeks are flushed and drops of sweat have tangled her hair just slightly, so I've obviously caught them in a moment of feedback right after AM has been dancing. There's an enormous pile of tulle on the floor in the center of the space –blues and creams and whites all scrunched up. AM is wearing thin beige tights cut mid-calf, cream leggings and an oversized grey T-shirt with black sneakers. She and Thomas are speaking German to each other, but I'm too busy unfurling my autumn layers to really hear what they are saying. One of them says "sensuality" in English and I hold onto that word as AM gets up to press play on the video camera.

She grabs the tulle and pulls it over her head, kneeling at first, then standing up and dragging the whole pile behind her as she walks. She rubs her cheeks and forehead with a flat palm. It is deadly silent in the room. She walks slowly, each joint-action exaggerated yet somehow still soft. The tulle opens and closes around her torso, at once a coat, a scarf, a ballgown. There's a delicate tension in her hands, a tremor, a regality. Each new step brings extraordinary new detail, as though she's flipping through a Rolodex of characters. AM sighs audibly as she twists the fabric around her like a soft-serve swirl. She collapses, gasping, trapped, slowly disappearing into the wild mess of

fabric. She coughs. She's knotted her body into the tulle, wrapping it tightly around her neck and stuffing it into her mouth. She starts to choke. Then she releases everything and glances quickly at Thomas. She disentangles herself, pushes the fabric away, looks at it, and then walks to stop the camera. It continues to be silent. AM takes a sip of water and no one says a word, no one looks at each other or utters so much as a single word, all of us letting her performance hang heavy in the air.

The two of them begin to speak in low tones and whispers, pausing, then staring at the pile of tulle. AM speaks in German about her sensory and emotional experience, explaining how things are shifting and merging. What is visible? What is invisible? She opens the windows and makes a comment about the rehearsal going on downstairs. Is it Forsythe?
No. It's *Sacre du Printemps*.

But in Berlin it's October and the sky is wrought with cloud-cover. There's no real brightness anymore, it's all just reflections of filtered light through vast grey skies. (We are at Dock 11 Eden, I should mention, in the new-ish studios in the back of the property. The space feels fresh and modern and sleek.)

“... no one looks at each other or utters so much as a single word, all of us letting her performance hang heavy in the air.” Zee Hartmann

Before I came into rehearsal today, Anne-Mareike and Thomas were playing around with different snippets of music. Will she sing? AM and Thomas want to experiment with voice but they need to ask the sound designer about the possibilities when he comes to rehearsal next week. I ask to hear what they were using, and AM presses play on her laptop. “It's just to set the tone”, she says. Long, simple notes of an organ boom through the studio's wall-mounted speakers. It's a modern composition, devoid of religiosity, slow and sad.

As the track plays Anne-Mareike walks to the tulle, pulls out the peach colour and drapes it over her head. She starts to improvise, trying different ideas. She's kneeling, her face smashed against the netting as she pulls and twists the tulle around her neck. She stops. She thinks. Every action is so deliberate, every movement so controlled. Does the fabric signal comfort? Discomfort? AM wrestles, struggles discontentedly. She stuffs the fabric into her mouth. She's an animal, biting, eating, panting, choking often, puking, feeling everything.

She breaks focus and gets up to stop the music. She takes a sip of water, still trying to get the taste and texture of the tulle out of her mouth.

“This moment is a contemplation between control and emotion” says Thomas. “There is a strength in the sound and a hesitation in the movement. The music adds clarity in moments when the movement might not be so clear.” Anne-Mareike likes the contrast. They have both switched to English now. She agrees: “It creates an undertone of aggression. There is something being done to a body, in a flickering world.” Thomas says the worlds just create a different *kind* of flickering.

I don't understand the flickering, nor the worlds. I notice a ladybug on my pants. How did it get here?

“What is Dreamer?” Thomas asks.

November 4th

Anne-Mareike greets me at the door in a transparent mesh shirt stuffed to the seams with tulle like a turtle shell on her back, pink shiny latex underpants over beige tights and a long-sleeved cream shirt, and cream legwarmers over the same black sneakers from before. Today in rehearsal there are three of us besides Anne-Mareike. Marc, the sound designer, and Mélanie, the costume designer, tell me that they were all speaking Luxembourgish before I arrived, and now that I am here I watch while they debate what language to use. I assure them that I don't need to understand everything, but for the moment they continue on in a mix of German and English.

Outside it's absolutely pouring with rain. Wiesenburg Tanzhalle, where AM is rehearsing today, is gorgeous and hidden and overgrown and the courtyards surrounding the old building are littered with junk furniture.

I am an enthusiastic tourist of dance studios in Berlin.

AM and Marc turn away to discuss the potential of breath and vocalisations in creating a dreamscape. She gestures to him then says: "I drop the seeds, but you need to make them grow". He grabs a cable and takes the stairs to the mezzanine level where he tinkers with something that doesn't appear to be working the way he wants it to. AM walks to the tulle, stuffs her cheeks with it and disappears underneath the pile of fabric. It seems to have multiplied since the last time I saw it. Mélanie

asks AM a question and she mumbles an inaudible response through her teeth. We laugh.

There's a pause, then the room fills with sound. Marc's score buzzes and zooms. We listen to electronic noise and techno and a faint melody, but everything sounds like it's underwater or far away, as though there's a party in the building next door. The tulle starts moving, pushing, pulsing too, rife now with ontological resonance. AM emerges briefly before quickly diving back in. She vibrates. Her gestures are broken. There's a birth, or a metamorphosis. There's repetition into escalation, distorted angles, bent elbows, her wrists brushing against her throat. Every now and then there is a recognisable human emotion, a recognisable human gesture, for a second, then it's gone.

And now she's a butterfly with butterfly wings. Does she want back in, or out? Her technique is rooted in classicism, but her lines are fragmented. She's cat-like, has a flirtatious gaze, a feminine caricature disintegrating, failing. And now she's a flower and releases the tulle from her jaws, licking her lips unselfconsciously. She wipes her mouth with a wayward piece of tulle before continuing.

The mood changes, and her body is softer now. She gathers up the tulle and attempts to stand up, but the action is laboured. She hates this. She loves this! She's a bride. She expands her chest to the ceiling with outstretched arms and slowly her spine curves, undulating, becoming more and more dynamic as she rides the rhythm of the soundscape. Is she free? She smiles. She turns and the tulle wraps around her ankles. She tries to get out, tries to be free, but she's frantic, panicked, heavy,

trapped. She steps backwards, touching her body, uncertain of freedom, looking around, aimless.

She breaks focus and indicates to Marc that she's done. He increases the volume and then cuts it suddenly. Everyone laughs. Each one of us in the room seems focused on different aspects of what she is doing. AM asks if she should keep her eyes open or closed. Marc says "keep them closed". AM says "it's too long". Marc smiles and says "well there's nothing to see".

We talk about the cosmic body. Mélanie says that the tulle is moving slower than Anne-Mareike and it's making it seem dreamy, like light trails in the night. We stare at the wild messy heap, waiting for answers. "How long was that?" Silence as AM checks the camera. "21 minutes". We laugh. "The piece will be 50 to 60 minutes".

Mélanie and I go outside to smoke. We talk about *Warrior*, the sibling piece to *Dreamer* that premiered three years ago, and the specific texture of the costume of that piece. Mélanie made and designed that costume too, and when I saw it in Ljubljana in May I loved the structure of the foam armour, the pastel colour palette, how the whole thing bounces. And how Anne-Mareike involves her costume designer right from the beginning, even before any other element is set. When we walk back into the studio AM is standing with the pink latex panties pulled down just a little, around the tops of her thighs. They make her ass sweat, she says. "Don't put this in your text". Everyone laughs.

*Zee Hartmann

holds Masters degrees from Sarah Lawrence College in New York, as well as from the University of Cape Town in South Africa. She is a multi-disciplinary artist specializing in dance and dance dramaturgy, fashion design, photography and academic and critical writing. In 2018 Zee co-authored *Choreographic Journal: seeing/vidjeti* with Croatian choreographer, Marjana Krajač. She currently lives in Berlin, working on a freelance basis with both local and internationally-situated artists focusing on feminist, queer and politically radical subject matter.

“She’s an animal, biting, eating, panting, choking often, puking, feeling everything.”

Zee Hartmann

It's getting dark outside because suddenly the fluorescent light in the studio seems very bright, but I look at my phone and see that it's only 16h25. I realize that I've been here for two-and-a-half hours and I'm late for an appointment. I hurriedly say my goodbyes and as I fumble to close the studio door behind me while opening my umbrella, my eyes blink in a subconscious attempt to adjust to the new landscape.

Maybe I'm the dreamer, I think before accidentally stepping into a large puddle of rainwater. I walk into the night, laughing, a little tired.

Thoughts around the documentary film project:

"Anne-Mareike Hess: the Body in a State of Emergency"

by Marie-Laure Rolland *

There is no substitute for the live performing arts experience, that alchemy which arises from the face-to-face encounter between the dancer on stage and the spectator. You have to live it with your guts - body, heart and mind intertwined - to fully grasp it.

This assumption is particularly important in Anne-Mareike Hess's work, who explores through her creations what she calls "the emotional body". I experienced it in the most vivid way in autumn 2016, while attending her piece entitled 'Synchronization in process'. I was stuck in the middle of a row of spectators with a furious urge to leave the room. Following this, questions arose that haunted me for a long time: "Why did this piece shake me up so much?", "Where does the emotional power of Anne-Mareike's work come from?" and "To what extent does she keep control of it in front of the audience?"

The choreographer's personality, the quality and uniqueness of her approach are powerful driving forces that pushed me to launch this film writing project, in collaboration with the photographer and filmmaker Bohumil Kostohryz. We wanted to open Anne-Mareike's creative box and try to find out its engine. The creation of her solo, "Dreamer", gave

us the opportunity to construct this film as an investigation, by following her step by step in her work.

Coming back to the initial assumption though: wasn't there a risk that this project would lead us to a dead end?

The filmmaker and dance critic André S. Labarthe said that he did not film "the dance" but "an idea of the dance". His approach underlies ours. We don't want to show the singularity of Anne-Mareike Hess's dance. Our aim is rather to track down the issue of energy transfer at the heart of her choreographic approach.

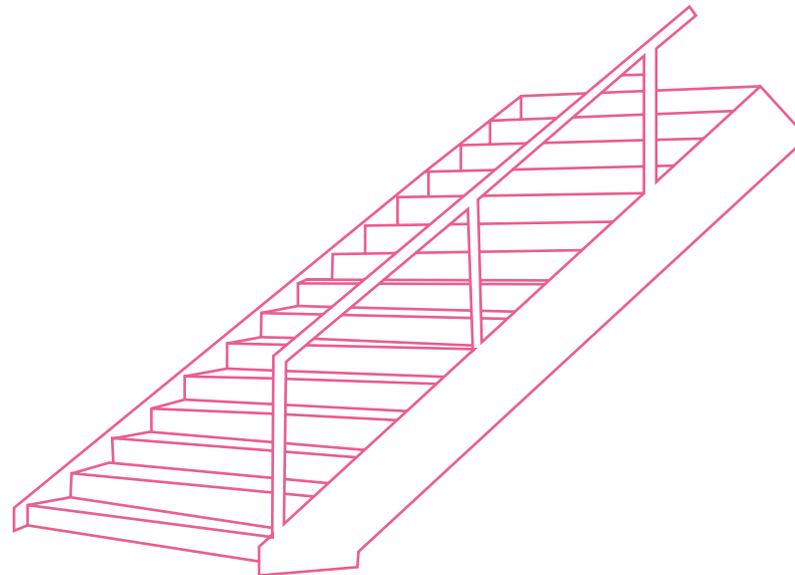
I presented a proposal for this project to the artist in February 2020. She had just been chosen as an associate artist for three years at the Neimënster Cultural Centre in Luxembourg. Back then, little did we imagine that the Covid-19 pandemic would hit us one month later.

The implementation of the project raised a wealth of questions for Bohumil and myself, who had never made a documentary film before. For Anne-Mareike the experience was a first too. Long email exchanges allowed us to refine the film's objective, our respective places in the story and the key stages we were going to document. Her trust, her listening skills and her high quality

standards are clearly evidenced throughout those epistolary exchanges between Luxembourg and Berlin, where she mainly lives.

I would say that, during this process, we've tamed each other. For Anne-Mareike, it was about accepting the fact that this film is not hers, although she is the main subject. She clearly defined her boundaries, especially with regards to the intimacy of her private life. She accepted the presence of the camera during her research phase, a particularly sensitive moment for her as she could not yet hide behind her character and bares herself through her improvisations.

For our part, we had to learn to decipher clues, to ask questions without being intrusive, to be present while remaining discrete, to stay our course while remaining open to Anne-Mareike's proposals. I thus sketched out the first draft of the film's scenario, which would mature as our meetings progressed, along with the twists and turns linked to the pandemic.



The story is structured around the three main stages of her creative process, starting with the collection of information that feeds her inspiration.

Then we examine how the information is processed to allow emotions to emerge, which constitute the raw material of her work. This is the keystone of her choreographic work. She draws on them to give birth to movement, using her body as a sounding box that she explores until she finds the right tone.

This gradually gives birth to the silhouette of the "Dreamer", a character that will be highlighted by other protagonists (the dramaturge, musician, costume designer and lighting designer), before being confronted with the audience. The viewer is caught off-guard into the heart of an alchemy of multiple elements fused over many months before crystallizing. It's this contrast that can in my view lead to violent explosions. In this story, we sought to understand how far the choreographer wants to - or can - control this process.

The first shooting session took place on the 3rd and 4th of August 2020. We were due to meet again in November when a dramatic development occurred on the 31st of October.

Anne-Mareike announced, in an audio message recorded in a calm tone, letting her contained emotion filter out, that she was interrupting the creation and cancelling the premiere of « Dreamer », initially planned for December 4th 2020 at Neimënster.

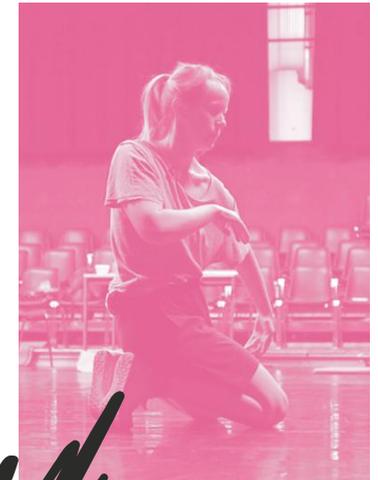
It was to be postponed to the 17th of December, 2021.

Under what conditions? A new blank page opened for Anne-Mareike and for us.

Past this shock, our plans got back on track. And I have to say that for our investigation film, this is an excellent cliffhanger...

***Marie-Laure Rolland**

is a dance critic, editor of the webzine *laglanceuse.lu*, scriptwriter and producer of the film "Anne-Mareike Hess: The Body in a State of Emergency"



images - film ANNE MAREIKE HESS - le corps en état d'urgence
© Bohumil Kostohryz & Marie - Laure Rolland

About

utopic productions

was founded in 2018 by choreographer Anne-Mareike Hess as a structure to support and develop artistic projects that create and strengthen awareness of the body and its role in society through dance. The focus is on the dancing body and its inherent potential for transformation, as a mirror of our society.

A continuous artistic research and movement practice gives birth to projects that bring together an international team of artists from different fields (music, light and costume and stage design). Together they create intense and sensual stage experiences that tour internationally thanks to the established network and the loyal partners.

In addition to developing the individual projects, the focus is on contextualizing the work and finding different ways to invite and share with the audience: For each production we develop an accompanying program for different target groups, from specially designed audience discussions after the performance to accompanying workshops or school projects.

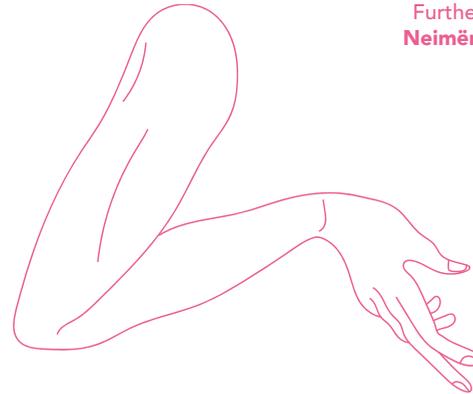
Since 2020, utopic productions has been funded by the Ministry of Culture, Luxembourg.

Anne-Mareike Hess

is based in Luxembourg and Berlin and works as a choreographer and performer in the field of contemporary dance. She received her education at the Conservatory de la Ville and at TROIS C-L in Luxembourg and continued her studies at the HfMDK in Frankfurt/Main and at HZT Inter-University Center for Dance in Berlin (Master in Choreography). She was awarded with emerging artists prize "Stiftung zur Förderung junger Talente" (2012) and the "Danzpreis" (2015) from the Ministry of Culture in Luxembourg. She has been an associate artist at Weld (SE) since 2016, and at Neimënster (LU) since 2020. Her first evening-long solo "Warrior" premiered at the end of 2018 and has been selected by AEROWAVES Twenty20.

List of works

- 2012 - I believe we are having a dialogue (in collaboration with Sandra Lolax)
- 2014 - Tanzwut
- 2016 - Synchronization in process
- 2017 - Give me a reason to feel
- 2018 - Warrior
- 2021 - Through the wire
- 2021 - Dreamer



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Dreamer: Sketches of an artistic process

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Light design	Brice Durand
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