

besides,

Reflections after the three first performances.

Why is it so difficult to write something about the three performances I did with Martina Ruhsam ?

It was a turbulence commission and so had to be done before the end of June 2015. We planned to do them in April 2015 and were both looking for local partners when in December I heard I would have surgery in January 2015.

Everything changed. I could not take up a big organisational burden. There would be no local partners and we changed the dates. It had to be intimate, small scale and close to my concerns.

I am healthy again, but thinking about what exactly happened is still mingled with thoughts about me being sick.

I know I would never have done a performance on aging (*besides, Dear Body,*), showing myself naked if I hadn't been confronted to my own possible ending. It felt soothing to connect my nude body to the image of Martina's much younger body. It felt as if we created **a continuum in difference** and made **a statement that said „don't worry, this is life“**. I wanted it to be a gift.

Afterwards there was a big shock when I looked at the recording of the performance, at my naked body. I see this body every day in a mirror, but the video image is not the same as a mirror image - there was no head, no action going on, just the body to look at. It took time to overcome my personal aversion to my own aging body, to accept the breathing image, to accept its reality, to let the video live as an independant object showing aging, **a tender connexion, and a crack**.

Martine Neddham : *C'était curieux, sans chichis, très simple, pas spectaculaire, comme d'arriver à l'improviste chez des copains qui sont encore au lit, pas encore habillés... Enfin quelque chose comme ça...*

Before we started I said I wanted to learn something more about the relation between the body and the screen. What I feel as my body is not what I see on the video.

In front of (behind?) the screen in a live performance situation I don't have difficulties to reveal my nakedness. I feel my body when sharing a performance space, but as soon as

the other is gone, my body becomes an object and trouble starts.

For a probably quit similar reason Martina and I decided to change the image in the video of the second performance (*besides, moved by some thing.*) where we discussed death and illness.

We eliminated all the skype-like footage and replaced that with an infinite loop of us dancing together on our chairs. Away from the skype view, from the close-up face framing, from the voyeur, peeping Tom position and more room for the sound, the intimate exchange of words.

Turning around en around, happy, smiling.

Speaking about death and illness isn't necessarily making sad.

My friend **Cor van der Weele** : *it was beautiful also because of the differences between you two*

This conversation isn't finished, we hardly touched upon the subject, we exchanged experiences, that's all, that's a lot.

It is the first performance (*besides, the person I am becoming.*), the one on Object Agency that was the least influenced by my condition. It is also the one that will have follow-ups, that we will continue to experiment with. (*besides, the city is not a tree* is the second of a series) And it is also the one where we didn't touch the footage for the video.

Igor Stromajer described it as a *theory - meditation*

I think it is the one that came closest to my initial desire. I learned something about choreography and about Martina's theoretical interests. It was exciting to work together on a text, to think about the selection of the objects to use and to work with a layering of sound and image content.

Should the voice be neutral or conversational? The objects ordinary or personal? Should the text tell a story or be random. And what did it mean that we showed our hands delicately handling the objects?

There were **three performances**, three very different performances. They belong together. Do they? I think you can watch them independently and get something out of it, but

together they tell another story.

Annie Abrahams, September 2015.

More information : <http://turbulence.org/commissions/besides>