

RESIDENCY AT RIKSTEATERN hosted by Cullberg Ballet Oct 29th to Nov 19th 2017

Malika Fankha & Maureen Kaegi working on "SAUNA"

Thinking back on our time at Riksteatern, we recently re-watched Miranda July's 3 minute how-to video "A Handy Tip For The Easily Distracted" – in which she provides various tricks how to resist the temptation of engaging with all the device that keep us from being productive. It was to us a very apt metaphor for how hard it can be to entirely commit to one's artistic practices in a familiar environment. From the first day at Riksteatern we felt that this residency will provide us the luxury of fully diving into our own process, leaving our routines behind, surrender to our intuition and enjoy playing around with nothing but our ideas in space.

Our research – which we started in the course of the Huggy Bears program curated by theatre collective SUPERAMAS - evolved around notions of identity, cohabitation and future survival strategies that we wanted to tell from the perspective of an unborn child inside a womb. We fictionalized personal and societal fears, desires and addictions and shaped an obsessive character whose driving force is the promiscuity of our lifestyle: the radically intimate and radically superficial.

The morning training session with the Cullberg Ballet Company was a perfect way to start our day. Moving together with a group is so much more invigorating and inspiring and helped to set the tone for the rest of our day. During the first week we mainly worked on text bits that we had already prepared and tried out different ways of bringing them away from the written form into the body and eventually into space. We improvised with voice, rhymes and movements on topics such as isolation, dependence and the constant craving for connection. We got sidetracked, carried away and eventually lost in our own microcosm, which was a crucial part of the starting process. The second week we spent more time working individually and shared the outcome with one another at the end of the day. Drafts of a possible staging and set design started to take shape, ideas for songs and lyrics became clearer. The workshop with Eleanor Bauer in week three ignited a great deal of inspiration and allowed us to re-think our methods and apply some of the interesting tools she proposed to approach our own work from a different angle. Besides that, it was a great way to have this intimate insight into the company's everyday life and get to know the dancers and the staff personally. It meant a lot to us that almost the entire team showed up for our first informal sharing! We felt very welcome and supported throughout the whole residency by a group of warm-hearted individuals that gave us way more than we asked for. We thoroughly indulged in Scandinavian lifestyle and pleasures during our free time, attended exhibitions and seminars that were thematically related to our research, went to see shows of ex-fellow students and made new friends and let the sea breeze clear our minds. Our apartment in central Stockholm was super cosy, spacious and well equipped, a real home we looked forward to coming back to after long and hard working hours and that we left almost reluctantly in the mornings... The 40 minutes train ride to Riksteatern initially felt a bit long but in the end was exactly the time our brains needed to digest and reflect upon all the new input. In any event, we are endlessly grateful for this experience that Life Long Burning rendered possible and are proud to announce that the piece "SAUNA" premiered on January 12th, 2018 at WUK performing arts center in Vienna.

Please find some more information about the work here: <http://www.malikafankha.com/sauna/>

And a review by European Cultural News (in German): <https://www.european-cultural-news.com/ein-abend-drei-vorstellungen/28782/>