MDT Life Long Burning Residency Evaluation

It was really helpful to have a paid residency where I could dedicate full time to understanding the career shift I am currently navigating while still depending economically on the way I use to work to sustain myself. The post-pandemic times plus the current state of war between Russia and the Western countries have significantly affected the cultural networks I am part of. This subsequent economic recession plus the burn-out experienced by cultural workers and artists who had to work double or three times more during the pandemia time has brought up important questions about sustainability, ways of working and the growing uncertainty in which the independent art scene works.

So rather than jumping into the next production oriented project and letting the anxiety of the shifting moment take over, I took the residency to dig deeper into the sources of anxiety. Having a closer look into the ways I have worked so far and reassess what gives me pleasure and what are the core reasons why I do what I do. This is the first time I have done a residency to research *anti-productivity and waste*, and I'm incredibly surprised and grateful for what unraveled and came to light during this time.

Oftentimes our modes of working are dictated by the production modes set in place by funding systems and institutions and not by our capacity to choose and design how we want to work. Having time to sit with how you work and process what you have done it's incredibly important to keep on moving further and integrating the learnings and experiences acquired on the way. We will never get to transform society if we don't have time to reflect and understand how we work. Our capitalist society encourages us to eat, consume, take in as much as we can but gives us little insight into the importance of digesting, processing, reflecting, integrating, letting go. These are fundamental practices if we are working towards societal transformation in any way.

During these 2 weeks I pulled out my artistic research tool box: revisited artistic interest I have, had conversations with peers who I have common interest with, mapped the projects I am involved in at the moment as well as reorient where I want to put my attention in, I played with performance scores I have created for pieces. This zoom in moment into the ways I have worked gave me perspective and helped me connect dots between performance making practices, workshop facilitation and theoretical research. Some clearer red lines started appearing between my different artistic practices and with it my working methodology got a different type of consistency, providing me with guidelines for what's next to come.

With Zwoisy -Cologne based choreographer and good friend and dance colleague- we got deeper into circular and solidar economies, sharing strategies of how to share the institutional support we have with our own communities and how to escape/hack the individualist focus on artistic development that institutions/funding systems tend to have. This studio visit and retrospective moment gave us a lot of clarity of the intersections each of our own artistic practice

is built upon as well the importance of having these type of residencies where artist meet to share, practice and discuss the behind the scenes of artistic practice as a way to understand more profoundly our own structures and modes of work. Through getting to know the ways of working of another artist you don't only learn other possible ways of weaving art practice but you also get a deeper understanding of your own modes of work and why they are important to you.

Safe/brave spaces where we get to meet ourselves outside of the constraints of the funding systems -where we are set to compete against each other- are unfortunately extremely rare. There is a lot of power we can get back by organizing platforms and exchanges where we can share with each other in a more honest and horizontal way. Setting this *cross pollination and hanging out* as a baseline practice of solidarity, strategy and practice sharing so that our labor and the development of our artistic research and forms don't depend solely on the schemes that the system offers us but can also have a more independent self-sustaining thread.

Having the power and agency as artists to decide how we want to work is not something you can easily do at the beginning of your career -when you are starting to get supported- but nevertheless something we as young artists should invest in as soon as we can -have the resource capacity-. Creating this independent baseline will give our role as story-tellers, disruptors and visionaries of society the capacity to imagine possibilities and solutions beyond the current structures of the institutions and reclaim our agency as cultural workers who have the capacity to ignite and design cultural transformation.

Contrary to what the widespread conservative politics said during the pandemia about Art 'not being useful to society', the work of cultural workers is extremely important in our societies because Culture is ultimately what we believe in, what are the collective narratives/guidelines set in place for us to move within, how we relate to ourselves, to each other and to the environment around us. Culture is at the very roots of us working together as a society and the suspiciousness of the role it plays in our society might be the alarm for us to recognise that the ideologies behind these conservative ideas are not democratic, inclusive, and neither striving for the interest of us all. Redirectioning this widespread belief system might be the anchoring point for designing a more egalitarian and pluriversal society, where different ways of living are possible, encouraged, protected and respected.

Thanks to Life Long Burning and the MDT staff for the trust, encouragement and opportunity to do this residency under my own terms, for giving me the space to unravel all these treasures, the time to reconnect to the power of imagination, transformation and our gift for *world building* as artists and cultural workers.