

# Experience report

Baba Karam, a participatory performance and dance party

The art collective Ful (Nasim Aghili, Malin Holgersson & Rani Nair) at MDT residency Nov 2020

[www.fulkonst.se](http://www.fulkonst.se)

Due to the wide spread of covid-19 in Sweden and elsewhere and because we live in three different parts of the country, we had to re-plan our two weeks of residency at MDT in November and move our work from the physical (irl) to the digital. But even so we were able to keep most of our work practices – for example our daily common morning routine which consisted of danceoke on the video communication platform zoom. Every day we each chose a music video whose choreography we tried to follow as best we could. Of course we danced a lot of baba karam but also other dance styles and music that inspire us. We also invited the performers and artists we wish to work with to our danceoke-gatherings and other kinds of digital meetings.

## **A covid-safe performing situation room for the future**

During our residency we decided to change the plans for our upcoming participatory performance Baba Karam and make it covid-safe from the start. So parts of our time were spent rethinking and sketching an outdoor alternative.

## **Different layers of research & creating methods**

Together we have examined and analyzed our own collective working practices and/or methods and our different roles within the artistic team. We have asked ourselves questions such as what is collective work? What is a choreographer? What is a director? What is a performer? How can we create a working method that counts

everyone's artistic agency equally? What is participatory art? What kind of working process and methods do our performance Baba Karam need? Etc.

Then we continued to create and define methods and strategies for our work with Baba Karam: how to create a safe space so that the audience can be comfortable enough to participate and go all-in and have fun? What strategies can we use to make people want to participate? What is a welcoming, safe and at the same time semi-transparent space?

We are exploring knowledge and how to share knowledge, in this case about the dance style baba karam and masculine drag: what is knowledge? Whose knowledge counts? How do we learn about Baba Karam? How to understand Baba Karam in a cultural, societal, dance, historical and contemporary perspective? How do people "learn" Baba Karam? What counts as Baba Karam? What is masculine drag? What makes something queer? Etc.

We have also been doing a research interview online with Robyn Friend, an American-Iranian scholar and dancer about baba karam and Persian dance, a Helsinki based performance artist about their drag persona Vamp Master Brown and also personal interviews with people within the Iranian diaspora in Sweden about queer dance memories and memories of separatist\* parties and/or spaces. We will continue to gather these memories/personal stories during our work process and incorporate them in the performance.

\*as in women-only, queers-only, black-only etc.

[Click here to experience our Baba Karam MDT youtube playlist](#)

