

Redovisning för internationalt kulturutbyte I teater

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The Handstand Forest



Photo credit: Einar Kling-Odenkrantz, www.einarklingodencrants.com

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The Handstand Forest artistic research workshop within the circus discipline of handbalancing was conducted in the Cirkör Lab between the 26th of October to the 1st of November 2015. We were in total 9 artists that worked for 5 hours a day, experimenting with different ways of developing group dynamics while using our handbalancing skills.

The participants of the workshop had to be changed due to conflicting schedules. Instead of Yuval Ayalon, another Israeli handbalancer named Yuval Oz was invited, and Adil Khan was not able to make it. The participation of artists based in Sweden was also changed, but ended up at a higher number than originally planned. The participants were in total: Mikael Kristiansen, Yuval Oz, Quim Giron, Lisa Matilda Angberg, Oscar Karlsson, Matt Pasquet, Imogen Huzel, Sunniva Løvland Byvard and Toubab Holmes



The process and its results:

Monday and Tuesday we worked around the discipline to see what sort of group constellations we could create. We were looking into ways of tactile communication through sensing each others balance and how to assist entries and exits with different handstand positions. We played with different "architectures" to support each other to create shapes that normally is not doable with only 1 person. We also created different rhythm games and explored what could be done with our handbalancing props, the blocks and the canes. Monday we also did a photoshoot with Einar Kling-Odenkrantz, who is an experienced handbalancer himself.

Each day we also had a discussion topic to start the day. We spoke about the technical aspects of the discipline, what has and hasn't been done, its history, what is "interesting" for us as artists and which way we would like for it do develop. We also spent a significant amount of time looking into the more internal parts of the practice such as the mental state it requires, the body schema and proprioception it produces. Through referencing John Paul Zacharinis "Cirkoanalysis" we also discussed the ways our practices has changed us as people.

From Wednesday we were working to find a "congruent" movement language to fit with the idea of the handstand forest. The "4 leg" creature was a starting point of this, as all the participants were as able on their arms as on their feet. We from there developed an impro structure with different group constellations from duos, to the entire group, where we laid the foundation for what became our presentation friday the 30th of october.

The idea was to nurture group understanding and communication through improvisation so we could be responsive and reactive as we worked close together with movement and balance. We were assisted with additional choreographic tools by Nefeli Oikonomou who has an MA from DOCH in choreography.

We worked very associatively with mental imagery to create our sensation of the "forest". Architecture, mold, decay, compost, growth, roots, symbiosis and emergence, were among our metaphors for generating both movement and atmosphere. Thursday, musician and dance acrobat Jonathan Krogh came to do some improvised music as we were doing our practice. He immediately caught the atmosphere of the work and added a totally new depth and atmosphere.

For the presentation on Friday we created an impro score with parts named after our "forest metaphors". We had certain tools and cues, but the substance of our practice was to be able to sense the group and the development and "mutation" of one part of the score into another. We presented the score which turned out to be a 16 minutes long performance with Jonathan Krogh playing music for about 60 people in the Cirkör Lab.(the link to the performance is included below) We then had a session with feedback and discussions.

Saturday we spent wrapping up the workshop with training more of our traditional technique together as we all agreed strongly that it is also worthy in itself. We also then experimented with several more balancing concepts where we could use bodies as our balancing props rather than the blocks and canes. We finished up with discussing the future of "The Forest" and shared thoughts on how the process had been.

Link to the presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SCs4E1Ahhc>



My experiences and their contribution to my future artistic practice:

First off, I would have to say that I am very overwhelmed by what happened during this week. I had many images in mind from what could come of this, but I did not know what to expect. Initially I thought that we would discover some new constellations for tricks and balances and perhaps play around with certain movement qualities. I find it very safe to say that what happened went far above any hopes I could have had for the week.

First of all, everyone that was gathered was extremely active, concentrated, creative, had an excellent sense of community and had a lot of fun together. As I mentioned in the description of the project, handbalancing is a very solitary and discipline. In the time we had together everyone agreed that we really found a common ground to play on where the tricks and the success or failure of holding a difficult

balance had very little relevance. We all were very aware of our love for the regular practice, but it was clear that everyone had been longing for an atmosphere where we could forget the rules. Any competitive spirit was left outside in favor of cooperation. The rigid, lonely and static nature of the balancing was respectfully loosened and molded into beautiful symbiotic relationships.

As far as the material that emerged through the week, I am speechless. We worked on our impro score for approximately 7 hours in total and we ended up with 16 minutes of material which felt closer to a performance than to a showing of a weeks work. We got very good feedback from the ones watching and many urged us to continue this endeavour and create a full length show. On top of that we had loads of new tricks, games and balancing material and concepts that can be further developed.

As a circus artist I have mainly been working in 2 big productions since I finished my education in 2012, PSY by 7 Doigts and Knitting Peace by Cirkus Cirkör. This week of work made my creativity explode in meeting with everyone participating. However, what for me is the biggest success of the week, is the fact that everyone in the group expressed their interest in continuing this to create something more substantial. We have already discussed many ways we can add dynamics, dramaturgy and depth to what so far has grown from the seeds we planted and it will most definitely be one of my primary goals as an artist to explore this further in the future.



Budget:

Flight Quim Giron:	3294 kr
Flight Yuval Oz:	3539 kr
Acomodation:	2000 kr
Subway:	700 kr
Flight buses:	400 kr
Per diems:	1000 kr
Food for workshop	1931 kr
Materials:	1500 kr
Total:	14664 kr



