

On Dissolving

THE ACADEMY IN-BETWEEN

3rd to 8th of October 2019

Performing Arts Forum

St. Erme (F)



Though the term ›dissolving‹ suggests (and it can be used in that way) a kind of disappearance, **first and foremost a dissolution is a material transformation.** The solid can become liquid and vice versa, a substance can be dissolved in a solvent – neither chemists nor alchemists would understand this as a loss. But of course, matter has a much broader meaning. If »[a]ll that is solid melts into air«,

as the often-quoted Marx sentence states, that might not violate the first law of thermodynamics, but bases of the social, political and economic grounds we are standing on. They were shaking in times of the first wave of industrialization, and they do now. Labour, goods and money might seem to dissolve in the sense that we are witnessing a radical change in their state of aggregation, but we have to ask into what – into a higher political and ecological price we pay for their increased mobility?

Art has always been a seismograph of these developments, especially in the past 100 years, since several avantgarde groups connected the progress in ruling matter through technology with waves of euphoria around new forms of humanity. This was also the time when a fundamental transgression started, which has not stopped being a central motivation for artistic practices until today: **the dissolution of art in life**. We might have to see more than a metaphor here and understand new artistic materialities as a medium for several processes of dissolvings between art and its ›outside‹.

The technological development of modernity could be understood as a way to soften this inside/outside distinction. Probably to an extent, that **»there is just energy left, there is no material in the oldest sense of the word anymore, like an object which is constraining any attempt to change its original purpose«** as Jean-François Lyotard stated on the occasion of the exhibition *Les immatériels*. With the classical materialities, he presumed, the western European concept of a sovereign subject positioned in the centre of the world, which has the power to create and transform, would dissolve as well.

Regardless if this is true (or even possible), we could think subjectivity related to the ›other material‹ which can be a site of dissolving: **our very own body**. As long as the body (containing a subject) and the outer material world (containing objects) are under-

stood as an opposing construction we are confronted with the paradox that we are dependent on something which we want to rule and control. This might be a hint to the hidden side of all dissolving processes; to the (material) limits of our conceptions.

We therefore also have to ask ourselves when and how a dissolution is nothing else than a **phantasma**. We live in *environments* which become more and more virtual (and this term has to be questioned as well), but this ›we‹ does certainly not include Congolese tantalum-miners or assemblers in a Chinese Foxconn-factory. We shall not forget that all rhetoric of a dissolution of borders and identities are often not more than a pious hope.



If some of the ideas sketched above are resonating with you, feel welcomed to join the meeting. Lectures, presentations, text proposals or performances, any input is appreciated. We will start with dinner on Thursday night and end with a summarizing conversation on Tuesday morning. The schedule will be organized depending on what participants bring, but the rough scheme is to have lectures, readings and discussions in the morning while the afternoon and evening are for artists presentations, performances or screenings. Sunday's schedule will include a timeout to digest the input and/or get lost in the forest.

The concept of the *academy in-between* is to open a space which can include varying professions and non-professions for a concentrated balance of theory and practice. The aim is to not only organize a workshop but built up a collective body of thoughts, works and practices which lasts longer than our meeting, be it through production or future gatherings. This idea is deeply interwoven with its venue, the Performing Arts Forum (PAF), itself a place in bet-

ween several opposing forces and concepts. It is hosting practitioners and theorists, but is neither a residency nor a research-centre. It is self-organized by the people who are staying there, but with a member structure changing almost every day. Its feet are grounded in the rural periphery of France but its head levitates in a global sphere with its nomadic travellers passing by. PAF tries to be cheap but it still takes a lot to come there. It is an open space, but built inside the walls of old convent, with only the side-entrance being accessible. A vulnerable place but not without power, it tries not to find a fixed position on the conceptual map of institutions, but instead holding the tension between them. That undefined spot shall be the place of our *academy in-between*.



Hopefully many tongues will be in the room, our working language will be English though, but with respect to the different skills of native and non-native speakers.

Cooking, shopping and cleaning will be organized collectively. 12€/day/person should be enough for a proper supply of three meals a day plus the possibility for a little debauchery. Accommodation in PAF costs 18€ per night (20€ if you stay less than 4 nights) plus 12€ for a one-year membership. The basic rules of PAF and other important information are to be found under pa-f.net/basics. PAF is situated in the French village St. Erme Outre et Ramecourt, 160 km northeast of Paris.

In order to build up a common ground for concentrated and open exchange, the number of participants is limited to 30 people. *The academy in-between* is initiated by Nisaar Ulama. For booking (mandatory) or other questions, write to nisaar@ulama.net.

