

# ***I am not quite sure. This is an arduous terrain.***

Malin Arnell

For the three-day action ***I am not quite sure. This is an arduous terrain*** (2013) Malin Arnell invited nine lives to spend an hour in silence with her in the foyer of the Swiss Institute.

Invited were: Vanessa Anspaugh, Jess Arndt, Fia Backström, Paula Garcia, Robyn Hillman-Harrigan, Katie Hubbard, Clara López Menéndez, Ulrike Müller and Jen Rosenblit.

On the evening of the third day all lives came together for the first time to share another hour - the tenth hour.

On the following pages you can read the documentation text based on the ten-minute free writing that took place after every hour we each spent together. This documentation text was read out aloud by Piper Marshall during the tenth hour. Piper was invited to invent her own order and to read what and how she preferred during that hour.

The documentation text includes excerpts of writings by Malin Arnell, Vanessa Anspaugh, Jess Arndt, Fia Backström, Paula Garcia, Robyn Hillman-Harrigan, Katie Hubbard, Clara López Menéndez, Lia Lowenthal, Ulrike Müller and Jen Rosenblit and is presented as written by each performer.

Artist Lia Lowenthal documented the action with a still camera. Malin Arnell put the documentation text together with the help of Clara López Menéndez.

***I am not quite sure. This is an arduous terrain*** (2013) was part of the group show *Descartes' Daughter* at the Swiss Institute Contemporary Art, New York City. Curated by Piper Marshall.

I wonder what it must feel like to have someone in your immediate perimeter, at every movement, circulating on your axis, sort of counterbalancing you. Counterbalancing your physical space but also counterbalancing your presence, anticipating your direction, responding to the space you're occupying in relation to the space that you're not.

The wall has cracks. Many cracks. So many cracks you can't tell what separates one from the other and they are deep when you stare like a ripple or water but all in the same direction, all vertical. The wall is slanted so I lean in a sort of involuntary lean as if my body is correction for some perceived imbalance. My body can tell that the wall and I are not perpendicular and my body wants it to be. Longs for the mirrored verticality. Finding it perhaps in cracks. The white turning pink green violet blue and the focus blurring. The white turns into a scape a blur of color so much color it isn't white anymore.

I wanted to stand on your feet. To feel your feet under my feet. Your soles pressed against mine.

You on the concrete floor, I on the pavement.  
Outside Inside  
Above Below

My knees on the sand I let myself sink into it as far as I could and then I found the beach underneath where we had been digging that late afternoon with plate instead of shovels

objectification/gaze – plan to use eyes/looking morphs into mirroring and imperfect symmetries. I'm connecting this back to the paintings. Our minds have aligned and our breath is synchronized now too in this very lesbian dance.

And oh, Leah, and the shutter sounds —  
Woman of body cold of floor  
Borders form busting a rhythm  
A softness resistance of the body contact connect  
No action. Engaging in absorption of touch and being and  
Become  
Contact through letting go. My body your  
The joints connections  
My consciousness is no longer body entered.  
Our consciousness  
the conscious

A prolonging of our bodies  
A mirroring  
Through the window

Pressed my soles towards the iron frame. The window.  
Needed you there.

The pressure from the pavement was stronger. The cold entering into my body. My butt tense against the cold ground.

Fingers flickering by the side.

This could have been a day or a minute and oh yeah the vertigo of climbing up on the top of her each time changed massively depending on where we dragged the bag

Sounds of water. Water been thrown out of a large bucket. Water pouring down the street. Street cleaner talking to the people passing by.

Suddenly someone walks very close to my head.  
I think: That man was angry.

Above. The light blue sky. The white bricks on the facade. The window structure.

- Tai Chi

- That's Tai Chi

- Is it?

- No

- It's art.

- Yea, everything is art.

Voices belong to the street.

Standing up.

For me.

- What do you call that?

Walk back in.

Feeling her warm body next to me again. Her hand on my stomach.

Walking in a circle. Leaning tight towards each other.

There we are.

I have to pee and it burns. The hold is long and she comes in and out of focus she feels far away and I can tell she is looking at me. She is looking at me in my direction but perhaps she sees me through the blur of recognition by which I see her.

Now leaning against the wall. Writing.

Empty space.

I love Ulrike's dark painting. I wish we had looked at it longer.

I

Back to wall. Heart fluttering like a captured bird. Breathe breathe skin contact, shoulders to elbow, surprisingly cool to the touch, light. Symmetrical but not synchronized. The breath is communicated through micro movements but never matches. We're both good at holding still. Building something together, or rather

next to but with each other. Vision blurs, the floor line moves up and touches my neck.

Can we be one body / can we see together? Everyday movements and transactions in the space become the action, the performance, you and I "the spectator."  
Motionless + simultaneously spaced out and hyper-aware. But wait I'm making assumptions, there's no way of telling what's going on for you, or is there? Until the end our breaths don't match, but can we become one object?

First my head heavy against your breathing stomach.  
My back on the concrete floor.

We are arrows crossing arrows  
Making marks  
Lines through the space.  
Turning around.

Changing direction. Putting my stomach against the floor. My feet on top of your belly. You breathing in through my feet, through my black boots.  
Breathing.

pushing and pulling the sand then pouring it out to remember – sandy – hurricane – 1 year ago. but we did not need it in the end. because we of course remember – and we find healing through receiving new rituals – spaces – sequences of time - not by going back to other modes – pasts – ways to show we can remember.

A leaning wall.  
Leaning against another wall.

Now I feel like something has moved around in me maybe something I gave to the gray pink sand (actually its beige) or the matte gallery wall or the cement floor. Some thing that my body through exertion needed to release being quiet with someone for an hour is also not quiet at all

We became three sacks of sand on top of each other.  
Moving the bag over the floor. Changing position. Always the bag on the floor. Then me and then you on top of my rounded back, or the other way around, my knees finding a position on your back. Heavy.

Hands up against the wall. The feet finding their place away from the wall. Body leaning. Maybe in a 40 % angle.  
You try to lean in from the side. Pushing from the right side. Shoulders too broad. Arms hanging down. Feet pressing down

Taking a position.

Breathing against your upper arm.  
Pushing through. My face gets stuck on your skin, breathing.  
Feeling your breath.

On the top of the sack, between the leaning wall and the wall.  
A pile of left overs. A pile of gray and blue.

- Can we pass?

There is a breathing object under my knees. No vision. Turn my vision around.  
Feeling tension.

An arrow of feelings.

Leaning against the leaning wall. Closed eyes.  
Crossed legs. Head up straight. Feeling you on the other side of the room.  
By the door.

The alarm goes off. One hour has already passed.  
Lost in time.  
Rolling, side by side. Pressing against the wall. Standing. Rolling. Hands under our  
cheeks. First boxing position. Feeling you. Pressing.  
I needed you to be there.  
Closed eyes.  
My head reaching out for you. Your hair in my face. Eyes closed.

Introducing black circle.  
A beginning.  
No shoes.

Back to back.  
Breathing, through back to back, breathing.  
Hips in tension. Lower back in tension.  
Balancing the position.  
Trying.  
The point of stability.  
Trying the trust of touch.  
The pressure. Hands in front of eyes. Pressing. Making dark.  
Elbows leaning against the knees.

I was thinking. Something.

Brought me out of that moment. Brought me in to the future.  
What would make the present stay?  
What would make it move?

Voices  
Voices that tried not to be heard.

Darkness. Outside.

Inside the same light  
bright light.  
Vibrations in space.

Bright light inside.

Som kroppens gränser upplöses - gränser - borders

as the border's of the body dissolve

borders from breathing out of rhythm, different kinds of softness, resistances of the body - contact, connect - dissolution of the regular - awareness of the irregular, of surface of connection, other places where the body builds connection and surfaces that I don't use, strengths & muscles actualization through relaxation

actualization

breathing -> relaxation

-> connection

using usage in another way beyond a purported potential action

No action - engaging in abstraction of touch & being & becoming

Creation through letting go

My borders Your breath

My tension the floor

The smell of plastic

The working up of sweat and heat

Warmth of body

Cold of floor

the hardness of the floor & the bones

The body as points/aces and a lever to bend/bend over/bend to the any direction

Lightly gunga, swing, back and forth

The joints & the connections

Two bodies art The inner skin

The hair tangling & yellow plastic

Qualities of hair & tactile qualities of plastic

What is a being?

My consciousness is no longer body centered

Our consciousness - THE consciousness

- A consciousness

Joints, levers, bending, touching

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breathing, tension, softness, sweat

-----  
strength, fear, stakes, timidity

circular motion, no repetition, a base to come back to, a place to rest, a safe place, a place of tension

Where a unit of a body, a body is larger involving two units, floor and plastic and sounds

Arteries of the space, passages, recognition of existence, the support from the larger structure, the support from the smaller structure

micro macro and in-between

fluidity and breathing and being non-(can't tell the last word)

Intense

Feel my face burning

Upside down

Long arms. Back of hands touching the concrete floor.

Body turns up the heat

Concrete floor. Wobbly.

What is it to be steady?

What is it to be stabile?

Not moving?

The concrete floor moves me, it's breathing it's cold.

You lay down on top of me. The first time as a cross next time we form a line. Your stomach on my back. Head leaning on shoulder. Leg between legs.

We came closer and then silence.

The speaking voices turn in to whispering sounds.

Only one thing can happen at the same time. Which mean than one is all and all is one.

Intervention within.

We make contact. Surface to surface. Heat meets heat. Breath.

Something in between, within. Yellow plastic.

Protection material

Trying to find balance on one leg. You are giving the other one support, shaking it.

Letting go.

Heaviness.

Trust.

And you wrote two instructions down. I want to read them out loud in the room.

Now.

Imagining this space.

Eyes closed.

Can I feel where it ends?

How many people spend time in the space this hour?  
I heard the door opening and closing a few times.  
Gray.

You decide to take your shoes off. To be able to feel the ground. Grounded, in white socks.

Right next to, still in black boots.  
Feeling weight.

Someone says: I felt like a voyeur. I really felt such a creep watching you.

III

Fan. Back to back touching, swaying. Cannot seem to slow it down rather building up into some kind of dance.

Reading (mirrored)

CONTEMPORARY ART

And also the names of banks on the window. This puts us in a decidedly capitalist reality  
CREDIT SWISS INSTITUTE

empty empty empty  
It's getting fuller and we hold it heavy.

And then we drink. We drink as much water as we can and it floods me overloads my already saturated body. I am drowning in water and the weight of it. Pushing past buttons towards the point of popping and a swelling inability to swallow more. I see the two circles on the wall. See how the large one meets the outer frame, meets the white of the wall and bleeds into the environment. She is standing next to me, her back at my front but side by side and we hold hands loosely as we drink. Cheers to circles, cheers to bleeding, cheers to burning vagina's soothed by the flood of water! The gray full small circle, cheers to you as well smaller friend.

The sound of the leaning wall moving over the floor.  
How it got stuck and then suddenly decides to move again. Little by little.  
Across the room.  
Diagonal.  
Heavy. Hard.

Opened my eyes.  
Letting the room in. the light.  
The wooden structure pressing towards my left upper leg. Then change of position.  
The right upper leg pushing the wood structure.

We added a chair.  
You wanted to hold me, to be support. To hold a position for a long time.

I sat in your lap. A childish feeling.

The position as comforting.

My neck in a strange angle from my shoulder. My cheek on your shoulder.

This body so much larger than that body. Long limbs getting lost. Drawl on your neck. Trying to stay in the pain.

Breathing together. Head move a bit. Finding release.

The stool moves, finds another position. Closer to the window.

Now the other way around.

I'm on the chair you in my lap.

I feel I can hold you for ever. This is comfortable.

Comforting is comfortable.

Holding arms around. Pressing hips closer to me.

Someone says: A lot of artists are afraid of the current situation on the market.

Holding on, harder. Eyes closed.

Leaning against the leaning wall. We all need a construction. We all have a construction. We.

As we know what that ends or even begins.

It's about time.

This is easy.

I'm most vulnerable on top of you.

The last thing I did was to put you down on the pile of yellow material.  
to listen, to feel and to press the air out.

Holding your hands.

Cold hands.

In the beginning. Now still cold, folding around the yellow.

I hugged you and you hugged me. The window was close. It was as if it was looking at us.

Cold hands around my back. Sharing warm breath through stomachs.

Hugging

Trusting you

Could not really put my weight in your hands.

Felt too heavy. Too much for your hands.

Instead an arm, two fingers, a head. Tried the shoulder. Your hands were calm.

And then I put my ass in your hands, pressing down. Letting go.

Elbow down into waist. Stronger that way. Could hold you forever.

You put my finger down the crack. A wood crack by the stairs. It felt like an open wound, like a scar, like an opening to another body, wounded

Took your hand and lead you, moved you, showed you the way to the next opening.

A crack, to fill or and to feel.

Different voices.

Different focus

In this space.

It hold us all.

Invited.

Invitations.

What about those other bodies that needs to be touched, hugged, that need to be moved around

Hard floor making marks

From outside: FUCK!

Inside silence.

And, go! We decide fast

I had to stop.

Could not continue for another minute

Sweat, pain,

What's going to happen

The concrete floor punching me on my  
elbowes.

Pressing it hardness against my skin, bouncing  
rolling over

the

vicious keys in my

pocket willing to

stick themselves into

your leg,

ll

wall /skin/ contact/vibration. More active here. Communicating, building energy, at  
some point even anger. At what? Not wanting to be trapped in touchy-feely space.

Enjoying the resistance at the wall, but also knowing that it can be challenged in its  
solidity.

Playful, but perhaps also too simple. Too direct as institutional critique and as I end  
up fell like dropping out. This part felt most limited and most staged – a photo shoot

you on top of me, holding me in your arms  
gently.

and then with tension so we could continue  
to roll around each other

rolling until we hit something, the wall,

the other wall or the door.

I feel  
I could have rolled  
forever. I  
I closed my eyes  
and followed the  
movements of our

limbs, intertwined,  
amongst each other  
So easy not to care  
where we are going.

I could not hold it any longer  
I don't want it to be over but I  
said now it's over.

Is it that bad? Is it that  
we are going so fast? Or  
that we understand it.  
Our combined efficacy seems  
very impressive.

had to move closer to you  
have to sit next to you when I  
write.

I lost the control, I could not continue  
I let go and I had to stop.  
We moved the wall, we pushed it, leaning  
against it.

The wall was supposed to be  
slow but it went so fast,  
all the way down until  
it didn't have  
any  
where  
else  
to go.

Everything went so fast, too fast.

I want us to start over  
I want us to continue

Lost in space, I got lost in space  
and I got afraid

and your heavy  
breathing  
TAMTAMTAM  
running by my side

I got afraid of the cold wind from out side  
I got afraid that my body would  
not hold me up any more

Spaceships must feel different in terms of air quality  
My mom. I am a combination of her and myself. The things I am made up of are a  
percentage of me, not simply a combination of other things.

It can be hard to pace your breath when you are responsible for someone else's  
mass. Determined to be present, not just respond. Determination fades.

I started to think about the time after  
this moment  
I got afraid.  
I whispered in your ears, this is the end  
we stood up.

The fan still making the air move  
making sound.

and your body around  
mine a warm  
wet  
blanket that  
smells of skin  
and sage

It's four o'clock  
It's almost four o'clock

Then it will be much later  
Then we will be somewhere else.

Back to a numerical timeline; compression yields must, sweaty, generated heat. this  
helps over time. this makes the heart steady. weights the body inside air.

Smelling rubber, hard cement and generous bodies.

We found each others heads – bulls. not fighting. not playing. Serious and  
easy. Everyone finds it serious, I find it easy.

Attention is holding, and filling is another matter. Filling in the cracks or feelings.  
Everything felt like stuffing through contact. meeting. What was the difference  
between filling a crack and feeling a crack? Cracks in the moment, cracks in between

us, underneath.

I just hold you in my arms. your arms holding me  
Two fans. Now by the door

I don't know where to start  
I'm so tired  
It happened and it will happen again

I let my body release in your arms. you put me down on the floor  
slowly  
your hands supporting different part of my body  
leaning slowly  
the head lays down last  
this is an arduous terrain

I wanted her to feel held. I wanted to pay attention to holding and in holding I. I am  
also being held, held by this space. Different dimension of support happening all of  
the time a healing ritual. Hold my hair. Itt me hold your butt. My legs are so heavy  
together and you hold them outstretched. How do we ask to be held? If the holding  
just offers one position

we where slow dancing  
lost in time/space. some one passed by  
us

The fans felt important. Cooling the body is important.

Now I think this is to intense  
This evening has already happen

everything I wanted to happen has already happen

I have touched nine bodies, nine lives  
close to me  
something shared. they all shared me  
I shared them all

breath  
now, I forgot the present

there is something about  
this/that  
art that entered today  
a critical gaze  
a critical notion, something confusing

