

The many layers of dialogue

Transcript

Iris Yi Po Chan, Mia Quimpo Gourlay, Emilyn Claid in conversation with Madalena Miles

[00:00:05]

Madalena Miles (Mady):

Hello. My name is Madalena Miles, or just Mady. I am a white female calling in from London. And my pronouns are she/her. I come from a performance background, which is focused mainly on embodiment practices, movement and dance, and just exploring how we are in our bodies.

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I'm currently studying an MA in Applied Theatre, so looking at performance practices in community arts and social settings. I'm also the co-director of a developing community arts organisation with Mia. If you'd like to introduce yourself, Mia.

Mia Quimpo Gourlay:

Hello. I'm Mia Quimpo Gourlay. My pronouns are she/her. I am a mixed British-Philippino woman and I'm 23 years old. And I'm calling in from North London.

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As Mady said, I am a co-collaborator for a developing exhibition platform for young creatives. My practice tends to explore narratives of identity, particularly the mixed race British-Asian experience, as well as movement and dance from the perspective of the untrained body. Yeah. That's me. And Iris, would you like to introduce yourself?

[00:01:24]

Iris Chan:

Hello. My name is Iris -- Iris Yi Po Chan. I am from Hong Kong. And I was born in London; grew up in Hong Kong until I was a teenager and then I have been in the UK since then. I'm in my mid-thirties, also based in London. And I am a freelance dance artist and producer.

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And for the last about 12 years I've mostly been working in various different dance organisations and also performing in mostly visual art gallery/museum contexts. And my practice is mostly influenced by improvisation, somatic practices, and interdisciplinary contexts as well. And I'm here as a co-worker of Satelliser.

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And I'd like to invite Emilyn. Would you like to introduce yourself next?

Emilyn Claid:

Hi. I'm Emilyn Claid. And I'm a white British she/her person. And I live in London. And I've been around for over seven decades. I've had a long history in dance, way back from the age of 16, doing all the traditional stuff.

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And then was very involved in the New Dance movement in Britain. I then, later, went into academia. And then, again, retrained as a psychotherapist. So, now, I kind of move between psychotherapy world and dance world. I'm here because I was invited to take part in Satelliser. And I'm really looking forward to what we're going to talk about.

[00:03:25]

Mady:

Thank you, everybody. Really happy to be here. So just for the listeners: I'm coming in with probably quite a similar position to some of the listeners, who, especially, haven't watched Satelliser live. I haven't been able to see it myself yet. So I'm here just in a position of being open to learning and listening and kind of teasing out what Satelliser is.

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And this episode is going to be a journey into a conversation about the process and understanding Satelliser from a performance perspective. So I'm here with three co-workers: Emilyn, Mia and Iris. So if you would just like to touch on your entry into the work. When did you first come into contact with it? And what was your particular connection or understanding with it at that time?

[00:04:27]

Iris:

I can start. I have been working with Janine for a very long time, since, I think, about 2009. So I have been a dancer and a collaborator in some of her previous works already, before I had contact with Satelliser.

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And the work was created in 2015 or 16 -- between 2015/2016. And I don't think I was in the very first ever performance of Satelliser, but there was a second one that I was invited to be part of. And my understanding at the time was that it was a durational performance involving all female-identifying performers.

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And they would perform a short movement phrase in a gallery. And, whilst performing this phrase, they would have a conversation. And that was my understanding of the work. And I think we had maybe a few days of rehearsal. And I performed it in Copeland Gallery in Peckham, in London, for one day, I think.

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And I remember it being a mostly concrete, windowless space. And there were people trickling in through the space throughout the day. And there were some really wonderful conversations afterwards from the responses from them. So that was my first encounter with the work.

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And then I knew that Janine wanted to bring this back into her practice and to her work, I guess, to make it public again in 2020 as part of the CONTINUOUS Network. And she invited me again but with many more people who are new to this work.

[00:06:51]

So there's been different satellites or constellations -- yeah, constellations -- of people around this work that has transformed over a long period of time. Yeah. And in this iteration of Satelliser, I performed at Baltic, in Gateshead, in October. And about two weeks ago, when it was on at the Turner Contemporary in Margate, I went to see it as a visitor.

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And that was the first time I experienced it as an audience witness/person. So that was really great. I really, really, enjoyed that, yeah -- in which Mia and Emilyn were performing in. I really loved watching you both in the gallery. Yeah. Maybe Mia, would you like to say a bit about your relationship with Satelliser and how you encountered it?

Mia:

Yeah, sure.

[00:07:51]

So, as Iris said, I performed at the Margate Turner Contemporary performance a couple weeks ago. I first came into the project because -- through my contacts being shared from Arabella, who is also a co-worker under Satelliser, who was my tutor at Sussex University, doing drama, theatre and performance there. And, yeah -- she put me in contact with Janine.

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And told me that -- she kind of told me very little about the project and just told me to meet her and have a chat. So, yeah. I had this Zoom call with Janine, where she described this project about dancing and speaking and durational dance work that I haven't actually yet encountered yet in my studies or in my practice. So I was like -- I was very nervous to be involved, or nervous to be asked to be involved.

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Because there was a feeling of, I was underqualified for it. But then, I think that as we went on with the process, I think I realised that qualifications, actually, didn't mean anything for this process. And it was more about the people and how we choose to connect. And how we hold conversation with each other. So, yeah.

[00:09:22]

And then, sorry, this was towards the end of this year to 2021, so the latest iteration of the project. And my first experience of Satelliser -- for the first I think three or four weeks -- was purely on Zoom. And so I knew and anticipated that this was a dance project. But my first encounters with it were purely conversation.

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We held these long durational conversations -- with the same framework that we do when we perform it live -- over Zoom for several weeks to get to know each other and to understand a bit about how we communicate as a group. So, I think that when we came into the rehearsal studio for the first teaching of the dance phrase, I was so fascinated to pair the conversation part, which I became really familiar with to this incredibly, almost, daunting dance phrase.

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And put them together into what Satelliser is as a live performance. Yeah. So, yeah. That was my whole encounter with the piece. And then, obviously, came to perform it recently. But, yeah. I don't know whether that was similar for you, Emily.

Emily:

Yes. I feel, I kind of feel like I'm the newest one to the project.

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I didn't actually know anything about this until this autumn when I get a WhatsApp -- no, Instagram -- message from Janine saying, "Oh, there's a project here. I was wondering if you'd like to be involved?" So I contacted her back and said, "Oh yeah, love to know more about it." And the first meeting was we got coffees and went into Brockwell Park and sat on the grass. And she told me about this project which was taking part in galleries and they would involve the dance phrase.

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That we would just this -- we would do this phrase and we would have these conversations. So I said, "Ooh, like a dance phrase. What do you mean? Would you show me it?" So Janine very kindly, and very beautifully, got up and showed me this dance phrase dancing on the grass. And I was looking and thinking there's sort of legs and arms going around, and oh yes. OK: this is going to take me back to the time when I had to learn phrases. I could feel all that kind of nervousness coming up.

[00:11:56]

So what I think's been very interesting is noticing -- and I'm sure that maybe we'll talk about this as we go on, but -- the shift from what used to be the history of learning dance material, to how then this dance material gets performed in Satelliser. I think there's a big shift which I'm sure we'll come back to. So, yes. I performed at Baltic and at Margate. Although, I think that what's performance, I think, is that for question here as well?

[00:12:26]

What we mean by that -- that probably enough, like, yeah.

Mady:

It seems -- just from that introduction -- how many different timelines there have been, and experiences of this -- or constellations, as you called it, Iris. I really like that. And also the sense of shifting. Mia, you spoke about this kind of discursive period which was like pre-movement.

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Whereas you, Emilyn, came in straight with the movement, which is really interesting. But I'd like to touch on this experience of speaking -- or almost practising speaking -- in this discursive rehearsal space that you guys had. Because it seems to be really foundational to a lot of what Satelliser is or its philosophies. So, yeah. If you could speak about what your experience was or how it contributes to the nature of Satelliser.

[00:13:24]

Iris:

Yeah. I have very strong memory, actually, of the last -- well, in the last year -- when we had quite a long period of Zoom rehearsals. And this was before Mia and Emilyn had joined. This was when we were getting ready for what were supposed to be four shows, four performances, of Satelliser in the summer and autumn of last year, 2020.

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And we met, about sometimes once or twice a week, in a configuration of co-workers, mostly who are still in the project now, but there have been some changes as well, I think. Yeah. What you're asking, Mady, is also quite individual to our own relationships to what Emilyn said about learning material, learning dance movement.

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And I just had a very strong memory, just now, of being in those Zoom rehearsals and having my own memory of performing Satelliser once. And the repetition and the relentless rhythm of this movement phrase that put me in a state in conversation from maybe what I'm doing right now, which is -- I can see all of you on Zoom.

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I can see your faces. I can hear you in my ears. But what actually happens in Satelliser -- in the conversation between co-workers, and sometimes with audience -- is that our bodies are engaged in the performing of this -- not even performing -- but just in the doing of this movement phrase that my head is not sometimes in the same orientation as where the person that I'm speaking to, or how I'm addressing them.

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And I remember speaking about this quite a bit in this autumn's phase of Zoom rehearsals as well. I remember Emilyn saying a bit about how the visual information is very important for some of us when having a conversation. And I think I felt quite strongly throughout all the Zoom conversations and practising of conversing that I had a desire to turn the video off.

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Or to try and be engaged in a physical activity whilst conversing. Because, for me, that was how I remembered Satelliser to be. So, when we came back into the studio, and we had rehearsals where we learnt the phrase and we did it together, it was kind of a relief for me to really practise that.

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Because, for me, that's what Satelliser is -- is to practise having a conversation that is a little bit different from sitting face-to-face to someone. But I know that's very different for each one of us, as well, involved in the project. So that's my relationship to it.

Mia:

Yeah. I remember doing that, actually, with one of the autumn Zoom calls.

[00:16:55]

I think maybe, Iris, you suggested to turn cameras off and everyone do an activity while we talk. And I remember when we turned our cameras back on, Emilyn was making a Thai chicken curry. [laughs] I don't know if you remember that. But it's so true. It's that act of -- for some reason moving and doing while you speak -- whether that "doing" is cooking or doing the dishes -- can almost be a catalyst or a reason to speak: a reason to keep conversation going.

[00:17:29]

Because this was my sense of what the work was doing is that, what usually is silence when we talk one-on-one, was filled with an action. And in the same way that cooking the Thai green curry was filling that silence for you, Emilyn, in the gallery space, the dance often fills that silence. And it doesn't feel as heavy as it sometimes does.

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But, yeah. What I was going to say was in the Margate performance, I remember a visitor asking whether anything in our conversation was set -- was scripted or was planned -- beforehand. And I think my answer to that was no: the conversation itself is not set or decided or scripted in any way, but it's the way that we communicate and the way that we talk was the thing that is set.

[00:18:29]

That's what Janine was so careful to put into practice -- was using thinking space as time to not be filled with someone trying to help you in any way. Or allowing -- it's funny that I'm having a little bit of trouble trying to put this sentence together because I think in the piece this would be a very silent piece of conversation.

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But, yeah. Janine really put in this framework of care in the way that we talk and the way that we hold space for each other and our ideas.

Iris:

I think a lot of listening. The practice was a lot about listening as well. That's what I heard from what you were saying just now.

[00:19:29]

Emilyn:

Yeah. Following on, Mia, what you're saying -- I kind of see the conversation as something what I would call a rhizomic pattern. So, it kind of goes horizontally through us, rather than like a hierarchy of conversation. So I felt it was never about me or you.

[00:19:59]

I felt Janine was very clear about suggesting to us that we keep a conversation going that kind of flows through us, rather than stops and starts and becomes fixed topics. We were moved in a much more fluid way, I think, through listening; responding.

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And things morphed from one subject to another without us having to stop and think and take on another subject. That's one thing I wanted to say. I was thinking about this conversation and the movement this morning, and -- if you don't mind -- I just want to tell this tiny story. Is that OK?

Iris:

Yes

Emilyn:

That I remember when I was 16/17/18 and I was in the ballet company, we used to repeat, every night, the same steps.

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We did the same ballets night, after night, after night. So, what we all did -- us corps de ballet, the lot of them dance around in the back behind the soloists -- is that we talked to each other. [speaking through closed teeth] And we would talk to each other like this, so we could hear. But we'd still be smiling. Still smiling to the audience so they couldn't actually hear. But we would be discussing who's going out with who; what we're going to have for supper.

[00:21:29]

Constant conversations about stuff. And I was thinking about that this morning and thinking here I am, 50 years later, involved in a project which is exposing that. Making that work, where we have a repetitive movement, which is labour, which is work, which is constant, which is tedious, in many ways.

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And that thing that was kept really quiet and silent and between our teeth has become focus. I'll leave it there. But I just really like that switch.

Mady:

That's full circle. I can see how happy that makes you, as well, of how synchronistic that is. Everything that you've all said collectively, it really just seems this foundation of communication which you've built as an ensemble.

[00:22:27]

You know, communication which is caring. It seems honest. It seems paced in the sense that there seems to be this understanding that you're not trying to rush something to reach a conclusion. And it seems that that kind of communication is made possible by the movement and dance. It's impossible for you to talk about this conversation without talking about the movement.

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It seems that the movement allows for access, whether that be for access in memories or whatnot. So, just for context -- please correct me if I'm wrong, but -- in this performance you are performing a repeated movement phrase whilst flowing in and out of topics and conversations that are constantly evolving, but the phrase itself is constant.

Iris:

Yes.

Mady:

My question is -- or if you'd like to jump in there.

[00:23:26]

But I can ask my question. How does the ebb and flow, and also the unpredictability of conversation, affect your synchronicity or your synergy as a group? Both physically and beyond that.

[00:23:58]

Emilyn:

I'm not quite sure I understand. Or perhaps, Iris, perhaps you understand.

Iris:

Maybe I can try and say what I understood Mady's question to be. How does the ebb and flow of the conversation that we are having affect how in unison or how in synchrony we are with each other in the movement? Is that what you're asking?

Mady:

Yes.

[00:24:28]

Iris:

Cool. Yeah. I really love thinking about this because it's making me think about being in the work, which I really love. I remember there is, maybe, an important aspect of the movement phrase that we haven't mentioned yet, which is the orientation.

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So, in the gallery, we are doing this movement phrase, as much as we can, at the same time as each other, in unison. But the facing or the orientation that we are in can be different. And that is actually in relation to an audience member. So, if someone is entering the space, we might choose to sort of bring them into the space, or invite them in, by directing the dance towards them.

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And that is through sometimes very direct eye contact or just the way that our bodies are facing towards them. And that can change depending on who we choose to address in the space. And it's sometimes with each other as well. So I just thought I would bring that in. Yeah.

[00:25:54]

Mia:

It's funny, because I think, again, when I first heard about the project, I was looking at it from an angle of this is going to be such intense, durational, rigorous performance that's going to hurt our bodies. And that's the point. Is that it's going to -- because I think that's what I was taught in my BA of studying theatre and performance. Every time we studied durational performance; it was about human resistance. Like, how long can you last and how exhausted can you get?

[00:26:25]

And I think that's something that I was surprised and, actually, really glad to hear Janine clarify at the start of this process is that this isn't about that. There is space for when you feel like you can't hold the dance while you hold conversation. There's space to step out and not be dancing and just be speaking or just be resting. But still be engaged in the piece in the performance.

[00:26:55]

So in terms of how that connects to the way that we are in sync -- I don't know. I felt urges if I was trying to think out what I wanted to say, sometimes the movement really felt necessary in my body, to help me think and help me -- like I said -- fill that silence, fill my thinking time with movement and an action.

[00:27:29]

But sometimes it really felt necessary to step away and just be standing and thinking. Yeah. I don't know whether that says anything about our synergy or our synchronicity. But I really appreciated the option of being in a dancing state or a standing state or a sitting or a resting state kind of thing.

[00:27:57]

I think that really helped with the feeling that this isn't going to be a really exhausting performance of human resistance. Yeah.

Emilyn:

I think one thing that supported the unison is that the movement phrase is slow. And that's also interesting.

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Because there were times when someone would suggest, "I really would like to do this phrase fast now." And a few of us would start to speed it up, and when we speeded it up, it was much more challenging to continue a conversation. So there was a kind of speed where conversation worked really well. And the other thing, I think, is that we're in a space, and we're scattered in the space.

[00:28:55]

We're amongst art objects. There are audience. Some of us are facing one direction; some of us are facing another direction, but there's always someone else you can see. And that also supports us to stay in sync, in unison, with each other. Because we're always got an eye out; and then that person has got an eye out for someone else. So that, actually, supports the group to stay in a similar timing.

[00:29:24]

I want to just go back a bit to Iris, when you explained what Mady -- Mady's question. And that reminds me, also, of the work. Because what would happen quite often is that someone would say something, and, particularly, from the audience, and others would not hear it. So, for instance, I don't think I ever said it, but let's say Mia would be listening to someone -- something from the audience.

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And then Mia would say to that audience member, "Do you mind if I now repeat that to the group so everybody can hear it?" And I was just thinking that reminded me, Iris, of how you actually performed with the words: making sure we all were understanding and had a sort of sense of it. It was nice.

Iris:

Yes. I enjoyed doing that just now. And, yeah.

[00:30:25]

It gives me a lot of joy, actually, just thinking about the skills that I've been able to practice and acquire through Satelliser. This way of listening to someone speak without -- quite often, in our brains, we're just trying to think of the next thing to say. Or trying to think of something that is -- sometimes, conversation can be so performative.

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And I think the challenge of Satelliser for me is to be attending to different layers of attention, that I am in my thoughts. But I'm also in a very physical presence with -- where is my weight at this moment? How is my hamstring feeling?

[00:31:25]

Should I do the bit where I go all the way to the floor? Or do I do the bit where I balance? Every time we repeat the phrase, there is still these micro choices that I make in my body, whilst I'm also listening and thinking; do I have something to say about this? What do I think about this? What did that person say? Can I hear them OK? There's so many layers and that, for me, is what I find so satisfying in performing and in sharing a space with others.

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It really brings me into this heightened kind of state of attention, both within what my internal experience is, and also very much what's happening in the room.

Emilyn:

I like very much what you're saying. I really recognise the many layers of conversation or dialogue and monologue that are going on within me and with others at the same time.

[00:32:26]

Yeah.

Mady:

Sounds like a -- sorry. Sorry, Emilyn. No, carry on, please.

Emilyn:

Just one thing I want to say. I said earlier that we were amongst art objects. And I realise that actually we were the art objects as well. We were the art. And I just kind of forget that sometimes [laughs].

Mia:

It was easy to forget. I think specifically in the Margate Turner Contemporary context.

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It was a much smaller room than the Baltic performance. And the nature of the Turner gallery is that it's all very -- they tried not to make the galleries too sterile like a lot of galleries are. So the walls were really busy. They were so colourful.

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And then the actual artwork itself was like so many different textures, colours and shapes that it was easy to forget that we're just a part of that as well. Especially, we were also wearing these very loud -- what would you call them -- worker jacket -- high-vis kind of jackets, that Janine had actually sewn herself with the help of a few other co-workers.

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With neon tassels and frills on it. So we actually really matched the room that we were performing in. But, at the same time, it was easy to forget that we are also members of this art-object world.

Mady:

I'm just taking all that in. That was so rich; everything you guys just said.

[00:34:24]

From talking about exhaustion, Mia, which I think I'd like to pick up on. But also, just reflecting on your audience interactions and how that is going to -- it feels like you guys are this ensemble and you hold each other and yourselves within this conversation. But then you have this other layer, which is this audience interaction.

[00:34:53]

And they are coming and going as they please. How does that affect the conversation or the tone or the atmosphere of the performance? Something which can't be predicted in a rehearsal space.

Emilyn:

Do you mean, how was our work affected by people coming and going?

Mady:

Yes. How did you experience it differently?

[00:35:20]

Emilyn:

I would start this responding to you, Mady, by bringing up this word "performing". What does "performing" mean in this context? I don't remember there being very many moments when there weren't audience -- there weren't people -- in the gallery.

[00:35:46]

So, in a sense, for me, there's a kind of a state of working which is always in -- there's an element of performing "out" to whoever is there.

Mady:

Well, it's interesting you say working, because I know that kind of labour, even symbolised by these high-vis jackets that you were speaking about, Mia, that labour, in particularly, gendered labour is a part of Satelliser.

[00:36:19]

Satelliser is made up of a female ensemble -- or bodies socialised as female. And there seems to be a commentary on labour through this kind of multi-tasking or this sustainability of work that you guys are doing. And Mia, you spoke about exhaustion, or non-exhaustion before, but how does duration sit in your body?

[00:36:49]

Does it feel like labour? Or does it manifest as something completely different?

Mia:

I think this would be a good place to mention the structure of how we performed on each of the days. We had a very specific timetable for each of us to be performing in.

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So, I, for example, would be on, on -- I realise I'm doing air quotes and this is a podcast [laughs]. We would be performing for an hour on and then have an hour off. And then maybe an hour and a half on

and then an hour and a half off. And this was also regimented through us wearing these watches that would beep on the hour. So there was like this almost -- it was a shift pattern, basically.

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And it felt -- in the same way that I know that Janine has mentioned this before, but -- doing work that is often like going to the pub or working in a café or working through a shift pattern, where you're going to be "on" on the hour and then "off" on an hour. And you know your tasks that you must complete during that time.

[00:38:17]

And with the addition of the watches, with us being in and out of the room in these time slots, it kind of removed, for me, at least, it kind of removed this feeling of duration. It was work. It was work to do. My job was to come upstairs, dance, listen, speak, rest. And then my job was also to leave the room, and remove myself from the space. And come back to it when I'm back "on".

[00:38:50]

So, whilst it was exhausting in some senses, I think the durational element -- I think, like I said before -- wasn't as intimidating as I thought it would have been. I don't know if that's everybody else's experience. But, yeah.

Iris:

Yes. I really enjoyed just remembering the putting on of the costume, which is the high-vis ornamented jackets.

[00:39:25]

And that underneath we are wearing our own clothes. So, we have our own identities, but we put on this jacket to then enter the space. And the jackets are all on display as well. They're seen: they're on a clothing rail in the space. And it's kind of symbolic of, "I'm now putting on a work uniform to enter a mindset of work and labour."

[00:39:54]

And it's actually just making me think about how different this is from a freelance artist way of life. And, I guess, maybe even more so for artists who make their own work or who drive their own projects and are often the initiators of their own work, which maybe some of you here identify with.

[00:40:23]

I mostly am a collaborator or a producer. I work in relation to other people's projects a lot of the time. And, yeah. I'm bringing this up because it's so clear in Satelliser what the parameters are and what is asked of me as a co-worker.

[00:40:48]

And what I have really learnt and understood throughout this time of practising conversations is we all bring what we bring. We bring our experiences and our backgrounds and that is enough and plenty. And there are a lot of resources, articles, readings, books, podcasts that we can share with each other.

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But also what we bring as individuals is really valued. And I'm comparing this with, sometimes in the freelance working context, where I feel like I have to look up things or have to find things out or have to read up on stuff or subscribe to newsletters. Or feeling like I don't have enough, maybe. Or that there isn't a structure.

[00:41:51]

It quite often has to be self-imposed. Or where the boundaries are between, when am I working? And when am I resting? Or, when am I off? What is the "off" as a freelance artist I find a bit blurry sometimes. And, yeah. It's just that's what is coming up for me listening to you, Mia, talk about, maybe, how clear it is what is being asked of us as co-workers in this performance.

[00:42:23]

Emilyn:

I think, what comes up for me with this idea of labour, for me, the movement was the labour. The movement was the hard work. Mia, I know you're saying that you didn't find it exhausting --

Mia:

-- Oh, no. I did find it very exhausting. [laughter]

[00:42:54]

Emilyn:

I was going to say there may be the difference of our years. But, for me, that was the labour. And the reason I'm calling it labour is because I think of that time of clocking in on my shift. I know what I'm going to do. It's going to be repetitive. I'm going to do it every day. And I'm going to do the same thing. And, somehow, the movement took that role, while the conversation was always new. It was always fresh.

[00:43:23]

So that, for me, was more of the performance than the movement was. And I found that an interesting shift for me, because I'm used to making movement the thing that I'm totally present in. And I'm going to put all my thinking, my intelligence, my sensing, my awareness into how I do the movement. When I first learnt the movement, I thought, "Yeah. That's what I've got to do."

[00:43:51]

And I've got to get every gesture completely full. And I've got to feel it. And I've got to bring all my history in. And I've got to do all that. And, of course, as I got into the project and started to work with her, what I realised, that's not actually where the -- that wasn't the important thing. The movement was

there, I felt, to serve this other collective -- collectivity, in a sense -- which was a lot to do more with the conversation.

[00:44:20]

Yeah. I just think it's very interesting, this conversation of labour, isn't it? What is labour? What is work? What is it to be an artist? What does dance mean now? What does it mean to perform dance? What's it mean to have an individual project? What does it mean to work collectively? I think these are -- what you're saying, Iris, I think this is all really important to this project.

[00:44:48]

Mady:

I'm just thinking about how many nuanced experiences you're having individually, despite the fact that there is this sense that you are a collective -- or a constellation -- of bodies. And I really want to take it in one of two ways because, I think, I would like to honour the intergenerational aspect that seems to be really important.

[00:45:18]

And how Satelliser seems to really work to address the disarming of hierarchy. And I see that in labour. And I see that in intergenerationality. So, if you'd like to talk about that -- however that resonates.

Mia:

For me, one of the first things that was said to me was just to "come as you are".

[00:45:47]

I think that maybe Janine got a little sense of my nervousness to be part of my first professional arts performance and that feeling of being underqualified. Or that my past experiences of performance have been in a different root, and not been rooted in gallery performance or dance, necessarily. And she just said, "Come as you are," to me, which I think was really good for me to hear, personally.

[00:46:19]

Because I think that, when you're a post-grad and you're -- I had a year of filling out job applications, where I had to embellish every experience that I had to fit some kind of job description that -- yeah -- or that didn't necessarily align with me or who I felt that I am right now.

[00:46:45]

To hear that as a principle of a work of "coming as you are": it was really inviting. And I think very comfortable. And then I just got that sense of that throughout the process of -- especially with the different generations of people that we have involved. And different experiences. It was a really wonderful collection of thoughts and ideas that came from so many different places.

[00:47:18]

Emilyn:

Mia, I had no idea that this was your first professional -- did you say your sort of first professional...?

Mia:

Yeah. [laughs] Yeah. Literally.

Emilyn:

So, that's really interesting, is it? Because I had so many lovely moments with you. I felt I had lovely moments with you moving in the space and catching each other's eyes and gesture and movement.

Mia:

Yeah. I loved that.

Emilyn:

Where that must be -- we couldn't be further apart in terms of ages in dance, you know?

[00:47:49]

It's really --

Mia:

-- But I think that's what this dance phrase does is that it is for us all, even to the point where a seven-year-old visitor got herself involved. And she danced on the Saturday with us and we gave her a costume. She learnt the phrase. And then she actually came back the next day to come and perform with us. As soon as she walked in the door, I think, we all oriented towards her.

[00:48:19]

And someone stopped dancing and gave her a jacket straight away. So it was -- yeah, you, Emilyn. So I don't know. I think it says so much about the work is that it can exist in a seven-year-old's body. And it can exist in a dancer's body that has a huge history of traditional training. And then, in my body, where I've kind of gone in and out of that, or never had an experience of professionalism, in that sense.

[00:48:48]

Yeah. It's magical to me.

Mady:

Sounds really heart-warming. That moment with the child. How beautiful.

Mia:

It was really great.

Mady:

Would anyone like to share anything else? I have one more point of curiosity, but please take your time. Yeah?

[00:49:19]

OK. Well, I'm just interested in bodies and these female bodies and -- why? Why a female body collective? And in what ways does performing as a collective -- does that have any impact on your construction of femininity? Does it reorient it?

[00:49:49]

Does it emphasise it? What impact does that have on the feeling of Satelliser?

Emilyn:

I'd start this conversation by saying that, for me, the fact that they were -- we were -- we are female bodies actually allowed us to explore our difference. And how incredibly different all of us are.

[00:50:21]

Which, I guess -- yeah. So, in a sense, it wasn't about our sameness. We were exploring our differences as "female bodies". And I put quotation marks around that, because obviously this is a very hot topic right now as to what is a female body and what does that mean. And I think that was very much part of our conversation, as well. I find it really quite difficult to use this word, female body.

[00:50:50]

Mady:

Well, bodies socialised as female. So it doesn't necessarily mean that our gender identity is female or feminine. But we are bodies that have experienced -- I mean, I'm including myself in your collective now. But obviously I resonate. But, yeah. I really hear you on this aspect of difference. It allows you to explore that. There's difference in the intergenerationality in the way that you experience labour.

[00:51:21]

I know that the three of you come in with a background of dance, but I'm sure there are other people, perhaps, that isn't their practice. So, yeah. Just in the sense of how you felt as a group -- did that have an impact, or not so much?

Iris:

I'd love to bring in some of my thoughts from watching and being an audience member when I was at Margate.

[00:51:54]

And it made me think of a session that we had last year when Arabella, one of the co-workers, talked about gossip. And she gave a sharing -- and reading -- of some research that she had been doing about gossip. And it was a thread that had started in some of the Zoom conversations last year.

[00:52:27]

And how it's very related to women's work in practices that come from craft or activities, like weaving or knitting. Or where it could be a group of women doing something together, and whilst they're doing that, conversation or gossip, kind of, happens.

[00:52:57]

And it's something we actually explored a bit last year, where would join the Zoom conversation whilst someone would be weaving a basket and someone would be doing some embroidery or some doodling or writing, note-taking, which is kind of similar to being engaged in a physical activity.

[00:53:27]

Yeah. It just made me think when I walked into the gallery and hearing the conversation, it is very intimate. It's almost like -- it is kind of like listening to a podcast that's live. And it can be very personal and intimate, depending on how much we individually want to share at that point in time. But I just was very struck that this isn't normal everyday conversation you overhear in a restaurant or a bar.

[00:54:00]

It's between -- and not necessarily between people who know each other very well, but it has a deeper level of engagement that maybe only happens when we're also engaged in another activity. I'm kind of thinking about this whilst speaking, so it's also slightly forming as I speak. Yeah.

[00:54:29]

I wonder if that makes any sense to you both when you were performing.

Iris:

Definitely does. I think I had a real sense of support, I think, for the whole duration of performing, even outside of the room. I think I got the sense that Satelliser wasn't just existing within the gallery space, not just for us, but for the visitors as well.

[00:54:57]

What I heard as feedback was that people would continue the conversations that we were having in the room on and on to the Margate beach or on their journeys home. And I know that we had the same feeling when we went and had a drink after our first day. And, yeah. I think that in the nature of the work that it feels incredibly supportive in where we -- how we -- dance.

[00:55:27]

And the way that we hold our conversation. And I think that that was really possible with our specific collective group. And kind of was made possible by our different approaches to this performance. I think it might have been different if it was all coming from the same experience of dance training, for example.

[00:55:59]

The same experience of study or XYZ. Our difference was a huge importance to the way that we support each other. Yeah. Again, that was something that I just thought about now as I was speaking. But that seems to be coming up a lot for me.

Emilyn:

I think I just want to say how much I enjoyed and appreciated working with such a diverse group of people.

[00:56:29]

So rich and exciting and learning. Lovely to learn.

Mia:

Yeah. It's so nice to be -- often when you're performing, I think that you're supposed to be the person that's showing other people either what you've learnt in rehearsals, or whatever performance of study that you've done for this period of time.

[00:56:58]

But, this work, I felt like I learned so much in doing and in being in the room and in performing it. And I still am learning from it. And I feel like that's something that's really unique to this performance, to this work, is that we're also the learners. And none of us are teachers, as well, in any way.

Mady:

Thank you for those reflections. I feel like that's a wonderful way to just leave space for what you guys are individually taking away from this experience as well.

[00:57:31]

Everyone has such different trajectories. It seems like it's very, very personal. And I'm personally very excited to come and experience it, seeing it in the future when you guys next perform. And, yeah. And to let this continue developing. So, thank you so much, everybody, for this conversation.

Mia:

Thank you, Mady.

Emilyn:

Thank you.

Iris:

Thank you. Thank you. Really appreciate your questions and your reflections too.