

EVERYTHING IS

DOKUMENTATION



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Leaving the Comfort Zone. On Improvisation was a series of events, part of *Everything is a Living Object*. This one year long project, organised by the UdK chairs of Prof. Norbert Palz and Prof. Jean-Philippe Vassal, is an attempt to investigate the relevance of the architectural pioneer Yona Friedman under contemporary economical, sociological, political, artistic and architectural conditions. Friedman's approach reevaluates the role of the architect in the planning process and grants the individual inhabitant the key role in the development of its own habitat. The various events addressed the potentials and challenges of an architectural practice that aims to provide many degrees of spatial freedom to its inhabitants, while also requiring contemplation on the individual conditions of a contemporary human existence.

The roundtable discussion was framed by a workshop which focused on the *Iconostase en Gribouilli* — a Yona Friedman work which was first built and installed at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. Between September 2013 and January 2014 Jean-Baptiste Decavèle and Nico Dockx conducted a series of workshops with artists and students interacting with and improvising on the structure. *Iconostase en Gribouilli* then travelled to Berlin and was subject of an exercise in which a group of students reinterpreted it through its careful observation, drawing, manipulation, movement around and within. A new version of *Iconostase en Gribouilli* was then installed in one of the UdK's staircases and functioned as the stage for a performance led by

Corinna Didjurgeit and Sebastian Kurth. Together they have composed the following essays which reflect upon our journey through the written word, in their textual ways mirroring much of Yona Friedman's concerns and thus presenting the ideal intermezzo to this continuous experiment.

Leaving the Comfort Zone. On Improvisation
Roundtable discussion, workshop, exhibition and performance, April-May 2014



EVERYTHING IS A LIVING OBJECT

A LIVING OBJECT

FROM GRIBOUILLI TO MY BODY [...]

I am still. We are still. Not moving. And yet I am moving.
We are moving.

Our bodies are never still. Breathing, circulating, pumping, reacting, sensing, telling. Always changing. I am always changing. Our relationship is changing.

Each moment is different. I am trying to bring together experience and perception, knowledge and spontaneity. I try to accept that maybe the only constant is change. Right here. In me, with you, in-between us. Listening, observing, reacting, expressing.

I offer something to you. We move on. We look at the models and the drawings. You let me know. Points and lines. Some lighter, some forceful. Others timid. A sudden twist. Emptiness. You move your arms gently while I take a deep breath and fall. The energy of the drop spills over to you. You release the tension in your thighs. Your knee touches my head. Crossing, resting, resisting or just sensing. We are not sure. I follow the wire model with my eyes and observe the turns it takes, what parts are coming towards me and where does it escape my perception. holes and gaps, in the drawing, in the model, and between us. We don't fill them out. We let them be. I throw my head, it takes my whole body out of balance.

I stumble, search for a direction and follow where the energy takes me. We bump into each other. You catch me and immediately release me again, spinning me away from you.

I always respect our bodies. Their ability to respond, change and communicate. I look at the drawing. I am not sure why, but it provokes me. I wait. A bit longer. Ignoring expectations of both of us. Then I see the conflict of two wires, the conflict of two bodies. I decide to interfere, with the wire, with your body. I let the information enter my eyes and my skin. Images come to my mind and to my body. I transform my sense of gravity, of density, of motion and shape and offer it to you. What do you do? You analyse, questions and test what I gave you. You take it apart and put it somewhat differently back together. You offer me a new perspective, making me discover patterns, recognising ways of reacting. In this very moment I become aware of all the notions that appear inside me. It's overwhelming.

You leave me for a split second only to come back more direct, more decisive. I now see the different qualities the space in between us conveys. I see how you embody some of my kinaesthetic thoughts I was embodying from the wire, but you immediately make them your own. You draw in space. I see dots, lines, leaps, turns, up and down, away and again towards me. I see the drawings, the models, you, the others, the room, the sunlight on the wall. The smell of your hair, the texture of my skin, the sounds from the street. I am somewhere in this continuum. Moving inside. Moving through it. The dot, the line of the drawing becomes the wire of the model, which becomes your forearm reaching for me. I gather myself. I make a point. An idea has been there, structures have been built, we experienced and changed them. We are probably somewhere else. And you make your point. The next point for me to relate to, to take a moment and breathe. Stillness. Now. You talk about how architecture can embody different qualities. And that we perceive these qualities with our body. So what can we embody ourselves? The potential of our bodies is the potential of architecture of space.

[...] AND FROM OUR BODIES TO THE SPACE.

Stillness. Hardly any words. Everything seems to be wide awake.

Everyone is waiting for the first move. The distant observers remain outsiders. We begin. Slow and gentle, almost silent. I am waiting. Trying to notice the movement in my body. Still obscure where it will take me. I try to remember what you had drawn yesterday. I try to remember where our movements had taken us. In our muscle memory, still, lies the power and energy we generated by shaping the »Gribouilli« into the space. My articulation is getting more defined now, the direction I

take more decisive. Softly the movements of my body invade my consciousness.

Your hand moves, almost detached from your body. It seems free, away from what you know or from what you experienced. Your focus touches me. Your hand is slightly hovering over the paper. Looking, searching. You firmly set your charcoal on to the paper and this nearly pulls me to the floor. Your weight rests in between your legs, your torso and your drawing hand. You use your entire body to bring to paper what you see. Then again, you lift off your hand as if to breathe with it. You place your next stroke. The stroke seems to be infinite. Your body gives way to your drawing hand. It takes you out of balance and makes you lean backwards. Still focused and concentrated. Your movement, the stroke, still not ending.

We are curious. We are still. I am lying some distance away from you. We look at each other, waiting to see who is taking the next decision. Two others take this moment to shift in space. A new place. A new position. A new stroke. The space is starting to open up and now spans across all of us. Observers don't remain outsiders. Everyone is taking part. Everyone is taking responsibility for what is happening. The movement of all of us is present.

My upper body is launching me forward. You are close by my side. On the stairs. Both of us upside down. The weight we share is pulling us down the stairs. One after the other and together. Gravity seems to help us. The steps challenge the way we balance our bodies. You are interlacing your body with my limbs without disturbing our flow, our journey downwards. Your movements and your energy, so different to mine, create new boundaries and possibilities.

It appears unexpected. Hasty and fragile. The moment we embody a genuine togetherness something is created beyond, that is neither you nor me.

Right now. Irreproducible. For a few seconds visible to everyone.

