

**EFVA LILJA**

Danseatelier Rotterdam, October 8-9, 2018

## Gaining New Perspective: exercises for body and mind

- Introducing my self + [www.efvalilja.se](http://www.efvalilja.se)
- Introducing Dansehallerne + [www.dansehallerne.dk](http://www.dansehallerne.dk)



### Exercise no 13

Explain to someone why you are doing what you do. And how.

Do it.

Keynote:

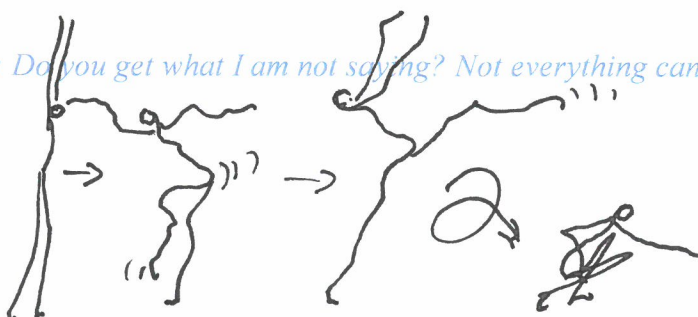
## Sing a Song or Scream out Loud

*What gives life its meaning? To me, art is not the meaning, but it is a means to reach a state of meaningfulness. This becomes ever more important when politics and our societies are in flux. There is a wind of right wing populism blowing, a wind that demands sure feet if you do not want to be blown away. We must help each other. It is not just about making resistance – the key is to create strong, credible and engaging alternatives. We must create the imagery and the narratives that will be perceived as meaningful, despite all the incomprehensibilities. Art is debate, dialogue and social interaction; a place to meet.*

Together we can make wonders. That is harder when you are alone. To work together we must dare to face each other, share and give up most egoistic ideas about ownership and exclusiveness. The old romantic idea about the artist as the singular genius is best forgotten and buried as a relict in art history. As societies change, so does the role of art and also the artist; the market changes. Today art operates in the public domain, where we as artists must take part as citizens, as fellow humans as well as specialist in our profession. And we must do it without being limited by perceived utility or bowing to populism.

*Whisper: Do you get what I am not saying? Not everything can be said out loud*

Dance



Culture is what we develop together by living and working alongside each other. Culture is our social capital. In this respect every one of us is a creator of culture. With this in mind, imagine the enormous potential of the European nations, which today consist of people with the most diverse cultural backgrounds, skills and references. Take Sweden as an example, a country with just over 10 million inhabitants<sup>1</sup>. Almost one quarter come from the outside, from over 160 different countries<sup>2</sup>. This figure is just for those who are born abroad or have two parents born outside of Sweden. We speak more than 200 different languages<sup>3</sup>. This juxtaposition of cultures and languages is now in the process of forming a new cultural foundation for a future of deeper understanding between groups and individuals. The future of the European Union and its constituent nations is highly dependent on how we tackle this diversity, how we guard our democratic values, our languages, our creativity and innovative capacities. The future of art markets is dependent on this, on how we create and develop our culture.

In this world of ours, some of us choose to work with art. There are artists that investigate, cross borders, add new perspectives, images and stories. There are of course also those who work reproductively, conservatively and stay within a set framework. But I prefer to focus on those of us who produce art, processes, actions and events that contribute alternative realities; works that provoke new emotions and thoughts. There are of course also conservative and extreme nationalist forces that use culture and the arts as limiting, demarcating and exclusive force. But I prefer to focus on those who are looking for extension, expansion and inclusion. I focus on cultural activities and art that stimulates a critical reflection and the kind of creativity that contributes progress both on an individual and public level.

Sometimes it is important to remind oneself of the complex foundations of our Western artistic discourse; particularly today when art is so far ahead of the cumbersome political world. There is a lot to be said on this subject, particularly since we are often faced with instrumental arguments based on the utility of our endeavours. Many scientists see the use

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> <http://www.scb.se/om-scb/nyheter-och-pressmeddelanden/nu-ar-vi-10-miljoner-invanare-i-sverige/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.migrationsinfo.se/fragor-och-svar/hur-manga-utrikes-fodda-sverige/>

<sup>3</sup> svenska är vårt huvudspråk men vi har också fem nationella minoritetsspråk: finska, samiska, meänkieli, romska, jiddisch samt svenskt teckenspråk

of art for society's progress; art as art, art as a local stimulus, art as an innovative force, art as an economic trigger, art as an element of entrepreneurship, art as a way to find new work forms – and so on and so forth.

But we should not fall in the trap of defending. It is not for us to legitimize art. That is for others. That is for anyone who finds that our work carries importance and relevance. There is plenty of evidence to back up the economic significance of arts, as well as knowledge formation about creativity and how to support creative, innovative environments. We do represent a field of knowledge that is crucial to society. This must be brought home to our politicians for them to carry on. If they realize this and communicate accordingly, it will enhance the status of what we do. There has always been too much talk of the artist as a useless individual, dependent on alms. Too often we fall into the trap and start defending ourselves, turning backwards to put up resistance instead of keeping the forward perspective. Nevertheless, we must also deal with the question: What *is* the use of art? What *is* society and politics through the eyes of an artist?

*P.80 White book*

If enough people walk backwards  
walking backwards would be normal  
and those who insist on walking forwards  
would be considered strangely reactionary.

If enough people would speak softly, chantingly  
singing would be the normal way of communicating a  
thought or a wish  
and those who talked would be considered insufficient

*Whisper: It takes a measure of individual and institutional disobedience. Boundaries must be expanded and extended; conventions based on tradition exploded...*

With the *Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030*, the United Nation has recognized the importance of art, creativity and cultural diversity as factors of a sustainable society. How to live up to this agenda is described in a report from 2015 called *Re-shaping Cultural*



*Policies*<sup>4</sup>. 140 countries have backed this up in a UNESCO convention called the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression*<sup>5</sup>. This document offers a radically new concept of culture; of cultural and artistic products and services: "It provides in-depth analysis of current trends, advances and challenges faced by all relevant policy actors -- with examples of innovative policies and measures that address contemporary issues including: transnational mobility, artistic freedom, access to international marketplaces, the digital environment. It also provides – for the first time – an integrated monitoring framework in the field of culture with proposed indicators of change and progress."

Artists have always been strong entrepreneurs, always developed new modes of production, new organizational models, new business ideas and markets. Yes, I do know I am using the words of neo-liberal politics, but I re-claim them and use them according to our needs. As we are now living in a rapidly changing world with economic cut-downs, such talents and know-how are more challenged than ever. This takes us to new fields of knowledge, new knowledge formation that in turn becomes an important part of our societal capital. When people perceive that they have a voice, a cultural capital and a sense of belonging, there will be new economic paradigms.

As artists, we have no reason to wonder about whether art can be defined as important or an asset to society. Our focus must be to become as good as possible at what we do. Which is art. In this work we must often handle situations that demand a critical, exploratory attitude and the creation of creative solutions to complex problems. Hence we often become good leaders as well as researchers. Today artistic production and artistic research are often conducted within trans-disciplinary co-operations, within new technology, theoretic knowledge and/or business, in interactive dialogue with scientists in fields of research where artistic knowledge formation is respected – as well as in dialogues with the audience and the wider public. There are new platforms of interaction between art, science and business; a social participatory culture is spawned by demands within the sector. All of this can generate new forms of cooperation that go into competition with traditional, conventional work methods. The artist is in demand for her ability to use innovative work

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<sup>4</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/global-report-2018>

<sup>5</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=31038&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

methods, to think outside the box and for a different understanding what we perceive as a given reality. The work structure is part of what determines the work.

A precondition for interdisciplinary cooperation is mutual understanding and trust, which is possible only within an independent infrastructure. This in turn demands political recognition, funding and powerful research communities, with room for both the specific and the interdisciplinary. Success in this respect – demands our ability to cooperate. Hiding away knowledge, information or insights contributes to one thing only: mystification. An open import between different fields and institutions demystifies and generates sharing through transparency and an open dialogue.



Many artists have a high level of formal education. Many work with a type of knowledge production that is of direct use for society; either through the work itself, through interaction with the audience, or simply by the methods and theories generated in the artistic practice. Despite this fact, artistic research is not yet recognized in many European countries and higher education within the arts is often restricted to the MA level. Within dance sometimes just a BA.

Words make a difference. Since 2013, Chapter one, paragraph two in the Swedish Higher Ordinance<sup>6</sup> states that all education and research in Sweden shall be conducted on a scientific or artistic basis. This means that art and science are legally equivalent. This new law positive example of the result of artistic lobbyism and activism. Now the Swedish Riksteatern<sup>7</sup> (an idea based cultural organization with over 40,000 dedicated members, reaching an audience of over 1 miljon every year), has taken the initiative together with a group of artists to work for a change in the Constitution<sup>8</sup>. Today, the wording in Chapter two is as follows: *The individual's personal, economic and cultural wellbeing is a fundamental goal for public service. In particular, society must safeguard the right to work, housing and education, as well as contributing to social care, security and good conditions for health.* Those of us working for a change want to include culture: *In particular society must safeguard the right to work, housing and education, as well as contributing to **cultural inclusion**, social care,*

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/hogskolelag-19921434\\_sfs-1992-1434](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/hogskolelag-19921434_sfs-1992-1434)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.riksteatern.se/sekundar-meny/Languages/english/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/kungorelse-1974152-om-beslutad-ny-regeringsform\\_sfs-1974-152](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/kungorelse-1974152-om-beslutad-ny-regeringsform_sfs-1974-152)



*security and good conditions for health.* In Sweden, households spend 18 per cent of their disposable income on culture. This is more than the 14 per cent they spend on food<sup>9</sup>.

### *Pens and instructions*

In general, people in Europe live under democracy. A prerequisite for democracy is participation. And it demands trust. People participate when they trust in themselves and live in dialogue with the outside world. This in turn demands a voice. You have a voice when you learn to listen, to think, to reflect critically and express yourself. All of these skills are stimulated by art. When you train these abilities, you start trusting yourself and others. A recent report from the University of Gothenburg<sup>10</sup> put this question to a number of people: "How much, in your opinion, can you trust other people?" Scandinavians in general show a higher level of trust than in other parts of the world. As a rule more than 60 per cent of our population will answer that they trust other people. In some countries the figure is as low as ten per cent. Trust in one another has to do with both welfare and culture. When we trust each other, we can venture into risks that give us new experiences and insights. We are able to accept even a stranger – or a strangeness.

*elabourate on responsibilities - what is at stake?*

People who experience a sense of belonging and sharing in their own culture develop openness, optimism and the ability to take action. They develop trust. Cultural co-creation will enhance your ability to communicate and make it possible to develop into people with a drive, with what in German is called *Bildung*. Being an educated person in this sense is something more than just having a degree of some kind; it means the ability to apply knowledge together with experience, with your senses and intuition; to *live* as a cultural being. A person with this baggage will see the importance of understanding and critically appraising a situation, in order to change what is not satisfactory by offering a way out instead of criticising symptoms. This person will be seen as wise, because she is able to listen, see, feel, know – and intuitively understand how best to express herself in the context, to conduct a dialogue and work proactively. She will know about forgiveness, being her own history and her future at one and the same time. She will know about trust.

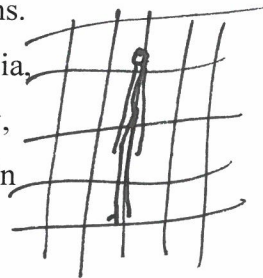
### *Sing a song*

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik>

<sup>10</sup> [https://som.gu.se/digitalAssets/1693/1693442\\_sprickor-i-fasaden.pdf](https://som.gu.se/digitalAssets/1693/1693442_sprickor-i-fasaden.pdf)

Freedom of expression is another prerequisite for democracy. Artistic creativity and action demand artistic freedom. We who live in democratic countries often take freedom of expression and artistic freedom for granted. But the right to freely express one self is now under threat even in democratic countries. This is strongly felt by those artists, who criticize political ideologies or religious movements as well as old cultural and social conventions. Sometimes it is enough just to be contemporary. Earlier this year, UNESCO/Freemuse presented a report called *The State of Artistic Freedom*<sup>11</sup>. It lists 553 cases of breach against artistic freedom in 78 different countries. The report also contains an analysis of the political, judicial and social trends that are the root cause and the motivations behind these cases. On the average, one artist a week was charged with a crime for something expressed and presented as art. 70 per cent of the cases against women focused on perceived indecency. This happened in 15 countries. Egypt, Russia and Israel are behind one third of all the cases based on conflicts over the rights for LGBT persons. The countries most often guilty of breach against artistic freedom are China, Cuba, India, Iran, Israel, Mexico, Poland, Spain, Venezuela and the USA; as well as Russia, Turkey, Bangladesh, Indonesia and a number of African countries. Four of these countries are in Europe! In the report there are twelve documented cases concerning dance – in six different countries.



The UNESCO report clearly shows that the ultimate responsibility for this situation rests with the respective governments. It's all about politics. As artists we must understand politics and act accordingly. You can have impact on a system; systems can change. It can happen through art, by artistic activism, lobbying or traditional political participation. We all have different interests, competences and opportunities. And we must act.

### Exercise no 80

Seek out a political debate. Stand up when everyone else is sitting. When you are asked why – answer with a dance.

Do it.



<sup>11</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/files/freemuse-2018-report-state-artistic-freedom>

*Whisper:*

*I am so fucking angry*

*Soft, think softly. Lovely, think lovely*

*If I were a big mouth, I would eat up all the ugliness*

*A man walking past is furious too*

*His body is shrieking out loud but he smiles doggedly*

*His right hand clenched and knuckle-dustered*

*If I let him go in front, he can clear the way*

*All the rest will meekly turn aside*

*Cowardly perhaps? If only he could stop smiling*

*I've got such a small mouth*

*Soft, my tongue is soft. My sex is lovely*

*The ugliness is too vast and the man is smiling, still furious*

*I get so fucking angry!*

*The ground sways under my feet*

*Everything is moving*

*Stone, earth and grass that should keep still*

*Aren't doing so*

*Slowly the perspectives shift*

*Suddenly I find myself walking on the sky*

*The ground is lying above me*

*Like a protective veil*

*The furious man may be shielding a flower*

*Pebbles become hail, earth and grass turn into rain*

*Falling quietly*

*It's just glorious and stirring*



*Running across the sky without gravity or mass  
I keep going as fast and as far as I want, bloody furious*

*I'm on my way to somewhere I haven't been yet  
Do you want to join me?  
In this strange upside-down landscape you're not even out of breath*

*You've got to run, I am not going to walk slowly  
It'll all be turning back soon  
You have to watch out, the furious man is catching up*

*So wonderful to be covered in grass and have soil in your nose and ears  
If I were a big mouth, I would take it inside  
I am thinking soft thoughts, lovely thoughts, still fucking angry*

Even in a democratic and egalitarian society like Sweden, there are problems with the freedom of expression. A report by the Swedish Arts Grant Committee<sup>12</sup> shows that in 2017, nine per cent of the artists questioned had been subject to sexual harassment, threats or violence in connection with their artistic work. As a result 34 per cent of those harassed had stopped their artistic activities. This is despite a constitution and a government that give strong support to art and artists, this in a country where 95 per cent of the adult population are cultural active. Maybe there is an element of self-censorship in these statistics. The right to express one self freely can only be restricted by laws and regulations, but the effect of self-censorship is also a loss of freedom of expression.

When governments in many countries have cut their budgets for culture, Sweden is in an investment phase. The stated ambition for the Swedish culture policy<sup>13</sup> (2018 with the Social Democrats in government) is: *to support every individual's ability to enjoy cultural events, widened learning and development of creative skills; to promote quality and artistic innovation; to protect the cultural heritage so that it is preserved, used and extended; to engage in international and intra-cultural exchange and cooperation; to emphasize access to culture for children and youth.* The public sector is supportive of

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.konstnarsnamnden.se/default.aspx?id=20210>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2018/06/regeringens-politik-for-kultur-i-hela-landet/>

freedom of speech and freedom of expression. The opposition comes from certain individuals, from religious fundamentalism and certain political parties.

We all need to be provoked in our way of seeing the world, in our attitude to art. We need to talk about it – talk to one another. In order to talk about art and what art does, we must find a common definition of how we use the concept of culture. In my mind there is a lot to be gained from using an anthropological, inclusive definition. In many countries, culture policies provide exclusion, by mixing up general cultural issues with art and reducing art to” just another budget expense”. This is a devastating tendency that will forever relegate culture policies to the lowest ranks in the political hierarchy. I fight for the opposite. All political decisions should be measured against their affect on our culture. Art should be awarded a specific art policy; art should be a vital knowledge field within education and research, as well as in other political sectors like business, infrastructure, integration. Then we can talk about cultural impact!

*Ask everyone to write down a political initiative they feel is important in their sector*

As artists we become political catalysts. Through our work we expand the cultural norm and the formal structures of society. Most artists that I know work hard, have a family to sustain, vote in elections, go to PTA-meetings – like everybody else. You find us in our studios and ateliers, but you also meet us on the bus, in the grocery store and outside the school. It is our choice of profession that places us in the margins. Whoever calls herself an artist can be that, but at the same time you know that anyone else can take the right to question, to criticize and place a value on your work. So we write, sing, lie, dance, create images, break down things, build up things, construct houses, braid hair, compose, go flying; as long as we can relate to the idea of meaningfulness.

#### **P.110 White book**

Who are you to heckle my deed?

Who are you to love my art?

Who are you to consider me mad?

Who are you to think you know my song?

You are the one I'm afraid to meet.  
You are the one I want to pass by.  
You are the one I long for most.  
You are the one who forces me to sing.

Just right is what frightens me most.  
Rather too low or too high than good.  
Life goes on and must be done.  
In accordance with meetings and madly singing deeds in art?

I laugh with and at and in.

The world around us will judge what is presented as art, from a historical, cultural and political perspective. Innovation and progress in art is under threat from ignorance and prejudice, which is why many artists do not trust the system or abdicate from possible actions for change. This problem is underscored by irrelevant and out-dated models of financing art, a lack of infrastructure and a systemic ignorance among policy makers and dated bureaucracy. Why not fund the artists instead of the project? Fund the continuity, the process, the research and not the result, the object. There are examples around... Invite artists to decision making bodies and change the systems.

Cultural politics must leave behind old-fashioned thinking of art and artists as a "burden" and a "cost" and focus on the values art creates in and of itself. With more knowledge you could widen, redefine and make key concepts more contemporary. I'm referring to "audience participation", "sharing", "production", "market", "innovation" and similar concepts. We must leave behind the idea of the audience as a passive group of consumers and work for audience sharing in its fundamental meaning. We have to re-claim the concepts and re-define them according to our needs to maintain a forward movement. Words make a difference. As artists, we need recognition for what we represent in terms of know-how and experts on the arts. As artists, we need to conquer established concepts and reformulate them to best serve our needs.



*Whisper: I just say DADA, DADA, DADA...*

To make art a regular feature in everyday life, there is a need for action. There is a need for *new* policies to secure and develop cultural spaces; policies that do not refer to markets, utilitarian perspectives or ideas of exclusiveness, nor to exclusion. Politicians should have enough understanding to be able to develop policies that stand up for the availability, credibility and urgency of art. It is their duty to stand up for the importance of art as part of our culture! To stand up for the importance of our labour. Successful policies for art must include a sustainable, long-term art policy, which cares for freedom of expression, access and sharing, as well as the conditions for the artists themselves. Policies for culture are the tools that give us the best possible conditions for a democratic, egalitarian, cultural and artistic development of society. A society that supports art will have many strong, innovative people and daring artists with a diversity of ideas, values and vantage points. The artist is a good force in the multicultural society that needs creative strategies to not just to survive but to develop. When systems are faulty, they have to be changed.

I guess we all carry around a well-packaged load of conventions from the past. Art is a progressive way of moving forward, of developing art and the political context, so that these conventions are questioned and new traditions established. Innovative art has a focus on the contemporary and in its brightest moments has something to say about the future. The more we as artists and researchers know about the human condition and what affects it, the more we can stretch and change the boundaries we live within; the more we can learn to face resistance and limitations; the more we can learn how to strengthen cooperation. We need to identify one another, identify the system we are a part of and we need to redefine the hierarchies of power. As we try to live, unable to know what awaits us in the future, yet prepared for what ever, we must be able to formulate demands and actions. Our culture is the source; art is an intrinsic part of it.

### Exercise 88

Convince yourself that you can manage everything you want to do if you just do it one thing at a time. One thing at a time.

Do it.



Sometimes we want to act as guerrilla fighters, which automatically puts us in a subordinate position. But I do not think that this is the general case in art, it is more inside the gender order, in economic and social structures. You have to look through the occasional fog bank or the futile search for a golden average. Trust in art and what art represents is tested in public presentations and discussions, sometimes through provocation, sometimes just for fun. But nothing is a given. Neither the space afforded to art in society, nor the multicultural context we inhabit, nor in education, financing or formats for presentation. We must stand up for our work, take power in our hands and be a strategic partner in developing the future. We can do that through art, through politics or artistic activism, through professional organizations, as teachers, in peer fora – anything, anywhere - we just have to do it! One example to learn by The Brooklyn Commune Project<sup>14</sup>, a collaboration between artists, who identified problems and goals and found the best strategies for change. And there are other initiatives. We have no one to blame. A critical perspective is best supported by action. A market in flux demands peace and new strategies for our work in a social, cultural or political context.

All this talk about politics doesn't mean that I want you all to join the debate, enter into politics or scream out loud. There's some sense in just humming a little or singing a song. Every one of us should do what we are best at, but we must help and support one another and be aware of our various needs, our complementary assets. If art is our goal in life, politics is what sets the conditions – and we can see to it that they change!

Over and over again we make the impossible possible. We continue to work with the development of new meeting places and markets, with what can provide our lives a meaning. In this we will focus on the only radical – to wake up hope, build trust and stimulate the curiosity that will be needed to move on. *Art is debate, dialogue and social interaction; a place to meet.* So, let us re-imagining the system and propose what is needed in favour of establishing sustainable working conditions. This we can do together!

#### Exercise 99

Look everyone you meet in the eye and smile.

Do it.



Discussion!  
Sharings!

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<sup>14</sup> <https://brooklyncommune.org/the-bkcp-report/>