

October 1.–10.
2015

Mette Edvardsen
Retrospective

Black Box teater
Oslo

There is a strange logic to the work of choreographer Mette Edvardsen. Being present at one of her performances feels like witnessing a volume slowly unfolding, something that began long before the doors were closed and the lights were dimmed, and which will go on long after. It just goes on, this work. And in a certain sense, it was always there already. The there and then of that which is not present is always just as important as the here and now. Every appearance in the theater is accompanied by something which does not appear and never will – something which nonetheless, and precisely therefore, comes alive. To me, this is the essence of theater, this

negotiation between what is and what is not. And in this negotiation, Mette Edvardsen is a true master.

Presenting her work sequentially in this retrospective is our attempt to approach the logic that governs these works, to take part in the investigation that lies behind them. I am not sure what we will find, but I have a hunch that it may be essential.

Jon Refsdal Moe
Artistic director
Black Box teater



“Time as fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine of Norwegian Mette Edvardsen is a project that provokes profound reflections on the essence of theater and the future of culture”

DELTEATRO.IT ON “TIME HAS FALLEN ASLEEP..”

“Private collection may well become a classic”

BERGENS TIDENDE ON “PRIVATE COLLECTION”

“The piece is a silent roar towards an era that is about to forget about the value of the accurate and demanding.”

MORGENBLADET ON “TIME HAS FALLEN ASLEEP..”

“It is a curious experience;
not the same as being read
to, but similarly pleasurable.”

THE GUARDIAN ON “TIME HAS FALLEN ASLEEP..”

“simple and deep at the
same time, like a Shakespearian
to be or not to be.”

RADIO NOVA ON “PRIVATE COLLECTION”

“The convergence of
Edvardsen’s words and actions
carried more weight than
physical presence. This was
not a world of absences;
things were defined by their
changeability, not their stasis.”

EXEUNT MAGAZINE ON “BLACK”

Retrospective

When I made the performance *Black* (2011) I had the feeling of completing a circle, that it was the end of something. After ten years of making pieces, from *Private collection* (2002) where I started out handling objects in space, to then finally making them disappear in *Black* (2011), I found myself in an empty space with nothing. With *No Title* (2014) I picked up from where I had left, and I soon realized that rather than being an end, *Black* (2011) was a beginning of something new. Objects were gone and were now replaced by words, speech and voice. Having been obsessed with what is here, I wanted to look into what is not as a way of activating and producing thoughts and imaginations.

So I continue to continue and I have come to realize that you can only look at something from a distance – from a distance – and that each piece is an end point in itself, several end points. In fact, I think that a real turning point in my works came with the piece *every now and then* (2009) where we made a performance in a book. The entrance of the book challenged the notion of performance and the material reality. I would like to use this occasion to ask the same question as the piece asked back then,

and to see – what remains? As a reflection on what it means to go back, a late evening in the future.

Until this moment my pieces had been rather mute and all involving objects in an extensive way. I thought of the objects as ‘collaborators’ (silent, yet they speak to us). Questions of media, of writing, of material continued. Tracing the development of the different pieces is a way to show that ideas are not isolated, but that they come out of a process and exist in tension with each other. Even if this development might not be linear, but more threads that are crossing and connecting, I do have a sense of one thing leading to the next. To me the retrospective is an invitation to see the work as a whole. From the theatre, I see it as an acknowledgment that our work is more than pieces we produce and a gesture towards continuity, process and the ongoing.

I will begin with the beginning. With the first piece, *Private collection* (2002), I go back to the piece how it was, using all the original elements (well, the plant will have grown but I am pretty much myself.) The second piece, *Time will show* (2004), is always recreated in the space it is performed, so doing it again now is a continuation of all the previ-

ous times and spaces. In these early pieces a special attention to the space is established, not with an interest to the space from an architectural point of view, but rather as presence and performative potential. The empty space, rather than being about absence brings an awareness of the existence of something else.

In the foyer a collection of traces, details and artefacts that form part of the work as a whole are on display. There is a selection of small films (research for *or else nobody will know*, 2007), writings (*Opening*, 2006), books and publications made from the other works, and some objects.

The objects! The piece *Black* (2011) did not come out of an interest in language or speech, but in response to the previous works, and specifically my relation to objects. I wanted to make something with nothing, with no thing. And with the removal of objects came language. I painted all my objects black, in order to make them disappear. And in parallel I tried to make things appear by naming them and relating them in space.

I have continued the work with the limits and possibilities of language and how it extends into real space. From affirming things in *Black* (2011), I became interested in negation as a specific feature or aspect of language. Negation and what is not. In *No Title* (2014) negating connected me to the outside world and to far far away. The writing extended, the emptiness as well, and the use of the tenses past and future in the next piece completed what became for me a trilogy, with the pieces *Black* (2011), *No Title* (2014) and the play *We to be* (2015). The tenses was a way to work with the projection of language in the theatre, to be able to evoke the imagination, not only by asking the audience to ‘fill in the gaps’ and ‘see’ what is not there, but perhaps – and hopefully – opening other (unknown) spaces. You can write the past, and you can write the future, but you cannot write the present.

Mette Edvardsen
September 2015

Private collection
2002

Oct. 1 7 pm
Oct. 5 7 pm

In *Private collection* I enter the world of objects. Everyday objects and the human body are being handled in time and space, proposing a simultaneous subject/ objectification. I am interested in the nature of things, such as gravitation, weight, balance, stability, shape, and volume, and how we organise things which by classifying, collecting, and order relates the object in time and space. The sincerity of an object, and its chameleon like quality brings about transformation and disappearance. I try to explore my own capacities of presence/ absence and transformation, and expand the world of objects by entering inside.

Created and performed by:

Mette Edvardsen

Artistic assistance:

Philippe Beloul

Production:

Mette Edvardsen / Athome

Supported by:

Kulturrådet, Fond for Lyd og Bilde, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and together with P5; Stuk (Leuven) Vooruit (Gent) and Podewil (Berlin).

Thanks to:

P5: Alexandra Bachztetsis, Juan Dominguez, Cuqui Jerez and Eva Meyer-Keller



Time will show (detail)

2004

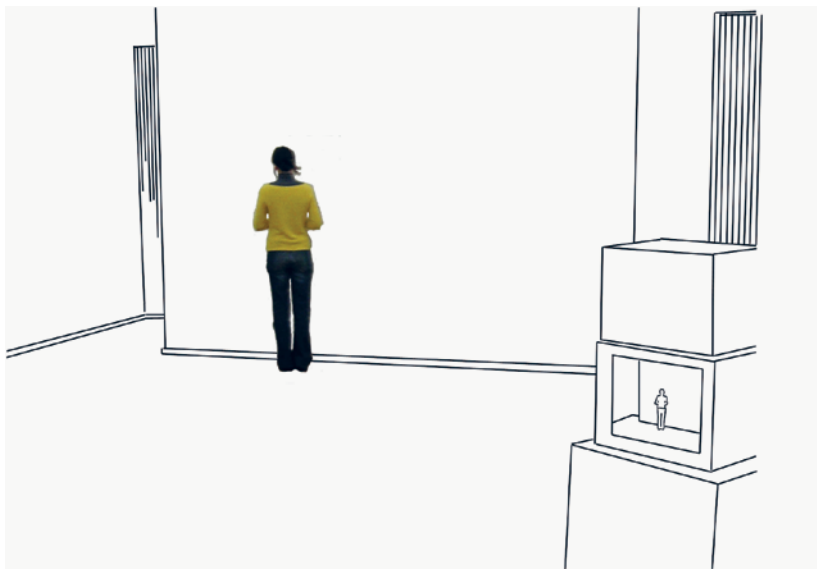
Oct. 2 6 pm

Oct. 5 8.30 pm

Time will show is about time, and collapsing causalities in respect of the directions of time. Next to being a piece, *Time will show* is also a process taking place each time in the space where it is performed. *Time will show* is specific to each specific space. I follow certain procedures and structures, and create a different version in each different space. I work with video, and apply technological possibilities of this media onto the body, and the choreography and writing of the piece.

Created and performed by:
Mette Edvardsen
Production:
Mette Edvardsen/Athome

Supported by: Kulturrådet,
Fond for Lyd og Bilde,
Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



every now and then
– a late evening in
the future
2009

Oct. 2 7.30 pm
Oct. 3 7 pm

In the piece *every now and then* Mette Edvardsen and Philippe Beloul invite the audience to read a book as a performance. The idea is to create a space and a time inside a book, like a piece in a theatre. For the whole duration of the piece the audience can read through the pages and the spaces of the book at the same time as they follow what is taking place on stage. The book is direct, tactile and persistent, giving the audience another access to the piece. The reader of a book can decide for him/herself the reading direction, the tempo and the space. With the book, *every now and then* is a piece to delve into, proposing an individual reading combined with a collective experience. How does the experience of reading a book merge with the experience watching a performance, how does the book read after the performance is over?



Concept:

Mette Edvardsen

Created & performed by:

Philippe Beloul and
Mette Edvardsen

Lights: Jan Van Gijssel

Sound: Charo Calvo

Graphic design:

Michaël Bussaer

Photos: Julien Lanoo

Production: Helga Duchamps/
duchamps vzw and
Mette Edvardsen/Athome

Co-produced by: Stuk (Leuven),
Workspace (Brussels)

In collaboration with: Kaai-
theater (Brussels) Vooruit (Gent),
Netwerk (Aalst), Les Brigittines
(Brussels), De Pianofabriek
(Brussels), Weld (Stockholm)

Supported by: Vlaamse
Gemeenschap, Kulturrådet,
Fond for Utøvende Kunstnere,
Norwegian Ministry of
Foreign Affairs

Laureate of the Fernand
Baudin Prize 2009 for
"The most beautiful book
made in Belgium 2009"

**Time has fallen asleep
in the afternoon
sunshine (re-writing)**
2010

Oct.10 4 pm



Idea and concept:

Mette Edvardsen

With: Aaron Virdee, Bruno de Wachter, Caroline Daish, Chloe Fisher, David Helbich, Dominik Smaruj, Elly Clarke, Ewa Chmielewska, Giota Bibli, Helena Polasik, Irena Radmanovic, Irini Tsava, Isadora Angelini, Jaanika Tammaru, Jan Kühling, Johan Sonnenschein, Kaarel Targo, Kamil Malecki, Kaija M. Kalvet, Katarzyna Stankiewicz, Katja Dreyer, Kristien Van den Brande, Kristine Øren, Kristo Veinberg, Laura Niils, Lilia Mestre, Luigi Pignati, Mari Matre Larsen, Marit Ødegaard, Maria

Psarologou, Marios
Kritikopoulos, Martin Slaatto,
Mette Edvardsen, Mihkel
Kallaste, Moqapi Selassie,
Muna Mussie, Philip Holyman,
Rauno Polman, Razan
Akramawy, Rosemary Lee,
Sarah Ludi, Sara Masotti,
Sébastien Hendrickx, Sonia Si
Ahmed, Staffan Eek, Tiziana
Penna, Ulf Nilseng, Usama
Zurba, Vincent Dunoyer,
Wouter Krokaert

Production: Natalie Gielen/
Manyone vzw and Mette
Edvardsen/ Athome

Co-production: Kunsten-
festivaldesarts (Brussels),
DanceUmbrella (London),

Dubbelspel (STUK Kunsten-
centrum & 30CC Leuven)

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Maya Wilsens, Helga Duchamps

The title *Time has fallen
asleep in the afternoon sun-
shine* is a sentence from a
book by Alexander Smith
appearing in *Fahrenheit 451*
by Ray Bradbury (1953).

For the project *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* a group of people dedicate themselves to memorizing a book of their choice. Together they form a library collection consisting of living books. The books pass their time in libraries; reading, memorizing, talking to each other, going for walks outside, prepared to be read by a visitor. The readings take place as intimate one-to-one encounters where the book recites its content for the visitor. Since the start in 2010 the project has already taken place in more than 20 different city libraries with a growing number of 'living books' counting by now 60 book titles in English, French, Arabic, Dutch, Norwegian, Greek, Polish, Italian, Estonian, German and Swedish.

After years of learning by heart and reciting for readers, some of the books have now been written down from memory to create new editions, versions resulting from this process. During the process of learning the books by heart and reciting them, the intention was to remain as close as possible to the originals. In the process of re-writing the intention was to bring this 'spoken' version of the books, now existing in our memory, back to paper.

Black is a solo performance about making things appear. The space is empty. There are no things. Through spoken words and movements in space a world will become visible, where the performer is the mediator between the audience and what is there. It is a play in time and space where only the body is physically present, performing actions and handling invisible objects, constantly trying to bridge the invincible gap between thought and experience, between here and there.

Created and performed by:

Mette Edvardsen

Production: Helga Duchamps/
duchamps vzw and Mette
Edvardsen/Athome

Co-produced by:

Black Box teater (Oslo), Work
Space (Brussels)

In collaboration with:

Kaaithheater (Brussels)
Vooruit (Gent), Netwerk (Aalst)

Supported by: Kulturrådet,

Fond for Utøvende Kunstnere,
Norwegian Ministry of
Foreign Affairs

Graphic design booklet:
Michaël Bussaer

We to be is a performance that is written as a play and read out loud by one performer sitting together with the audience, in front of an empty stage. Additionally, the performance is broadcast live on the radio. Thus, the piece works with three media presented simultaneously in three places: a performance in a theatre, a play in a book, and a live radio broadcast.

Created and performed by:
Mette Edvardsen
Light design: Bruno
Pocheron/ Claire Terrien
Sound design: Peter Lenaerts
Graphic design:
Michaël Bussaer

Production: Natalie Gielen/
Manyone vzw and Mette
Edvardsen/ Athome
Co-production: BUDA
(Kortrijk), Black Box teater (Oslo),
Teaterhuset Avant Garden
(Trondheim), BIT (Bergen)

With the kind support of:
workspacebrussels (Brussels),
Contour (Mechelen)
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Vlaamse Gemeenschap
Special thanks to:
Heiko Gölzer

No Title
2014

Oct. 3 6 pm
Oct. 6 8 pm

No Title is about how reality exists in language and how this extends into real space. It is about how memory and imagination blur. It is about things and how things can be there and gone at the same time, and that what defines this is various. It is about things that are gone and about things that remain. *No Title* is about the awareness that all things are impermanent and that nothing lasts forever. It is about things that have gone before their time and things that never quite disappear. It is about what the piece and its making is, what a piece can do, what it is for, what its power and limit could be. It is about the gap between a world and our ideas of it, the invincible gap between thought and experience, between here and there. *No Title* is a writing in space, a writing that is both additive and subtractive. It is a writing that traces and erases, that moves and halts, that looks at things that are not there and recovers that which is instead.

Created and performed by:
Mette Edvardsen
Production:
duchamps vzw and Mette Edvardsen/Athome

Co-production:
Kaaitheater (Brussels),
BUDA/NEXT Festival (Kortrijk),
Teaterhuset Avant Garden (Trondheim), BIT (Bergen),
Black Box teater (Oslo)

Supported by: Vlaamse
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Special thanks to: Heiko
Gölzer, Mari Matre Larsen
Graphic design cards:
Michael Bussaër



A Tale, By Mårten Spångberg

For Mette

This story is told. It is told by me or perhaps not as it unfolds before, during and after it happened and at the time it happened had not unfolded sufficiently in order to be told, by me or somebody else. However at the moment it had unfolded sufficiently what had happened could only have happened to somebody who wasn't me in the first place or now had ceased to me.

“What time is it?” I asked.

“Too early,” was the response.

At the time when it happened nothing appeared remarkable, unusual or frightening. It is first in retrospect that what happened seems utterly unlikely, abnormal and terrifying. There is just one difficulty, for the one that possess the opportunity to rewind what happened, that can recreate what unfolded in retrograde, what was strange, irregular or disturbing can not be identified since what happened irreversibly transformed the mind of the individuals involved.

Previous to what unfolded, what happened could by no means have occurred. It was in fact an absolute anomaly, something that was so unusual or horrifying that it simply couldn't happen. No, in fact it was even worse, because something that couldn't happen was still something. A negative and this was worse. It could perhaps easiest be described as a negative negative, not exactly but almost and for now a double negation. Before it happened, what happened was something that couldn't couldn't happen, but after it indeed had happened it could of course not look like anything else then the most ordinary thing in the world. After all it could and had happened and how could that possibly be weird.

“Is it time yet?”

“Almost,”

A young person has more future in front of herself than an older one. To announce “I'm too old”, is to mourn one's vanishing future. At some point the past catches up with your future. To live with the experience that one's future lies behind is to cope with loneliness.

It is therefore a story that however I tell it cannot tell, as I have no overview but can gain access to what happened only from the future of the past and what indeed did unfold is something

entirely different from the perspective of the past of the future. Yet, I am in no doubt that what happened before it unfolded was unimaginable to the degree that as it happened it seized me with a power so terrifying it was unnamable. At the same time looking back at the event it definitely happened and how could it possibly be terrifying, it wasn't even necessary.

“Now?”

“Already over,”

From the point of view of the past since what happened occurred as a double negative, if we could rewind the future nothing happened. It is only from the angle of the future that something happened and from there what occurred could not be absolutely normal.

The story and the story that is told is therefore not the identical. The story cannot be told although it is being told by me, but that is obviously not the story. Although it is me who tells the story, it is not same identity as the one that experienced that which would become the story. Still, there is no second person here or there, in the past of the future or in the future of the past. What happened always unfold backwards, as the last instance is the past closest to the future. The moment with the least past is the one that will begin the story as it unfolds backwards. But from the future whatever happened evidently must appear fully conventional as it otherwise would produce some kind of anomaly or curvature on the continuum of time and space. Time can have no holes or breaks, the future arranges that with unimaginable accuracy. It is the impossibility to not acknowledge that one's identity has transformed independently of one self, that remains in the body as terrifying. Because, if my identity can be transformed it can equally easily be annihilated, for no reason without reason. As that is a transformation as much as any other. There is nothing that says that I cannot disappear in the next moment or at any other point in time. But as if that is not dreadful enough, the moment after the moment I suddenly vanish nobody can or must be able to remember me, because that would be to acknowledge a power that is independent of our world, a contingent power that is indifferent to life and existence and that is the most cruel nightmare of all.

If universe came to be because of an accident, it is equally possible that it accidentally would cease to exist. What necessarily must have been in the beginning cannot have been nothing as nothing also is something, it must have been the negation of nothing. Nothing can precede the negation of nothing and yet it is precisely from this negation of nothing that universe must have emerged and with it everything within it. Nothing cannot have made an accident appear and an accident cannot unfold within nothing, especially not within, which is neither with or in the negation of nothing. What was necessarily in the beginning must

have been contingency – in other words the condition that something or not must by necessity happen.

It is haunting to consider that contingency is still active, consequently the only necessity is that something or not must happen and what that is is contingent. It is even more horrific to acknowledge that contingency is absolutely equal and makes no exceptions. In other words it is equally contingent that the world, humanity, universe will remain absolutely static as it is that it is being annihilated, transformed to something absolutely unimaginable or anything else. There is no grounding stability and hence there can be absolutely nothing that grounds ones identity. There can neither be anything that verifies transformation or stability, yet if there was something grounding the universe, something static and defined the result would be the annihilation of change. It is our lucky day that nothing can be verified but it is equally the deepest terror of life to really acknowledge this truth. There is no ground to nothing, only the nothing of nothing is grounded and only in itself as one.

“How do you know?” I asked trying to sound innocent.

“Time passed after all,” the reply was said with the head turned away.

As a kid there was this recurrent dream. Some would call it a nightmare but as it returned with some frequency it might just be called something else. A certain thrill knowing that the dream might come back, perhaps losing my mind might have made the dream return more often. In the dream I am standing on the top of a staircase absolutely terrified knowing that behind me is a force so powerful it would eliminate me in no time, indeed in no time because this force is the very capacity making my existence possible. It could simply wipe out any trace of me in less than an instance, in no time. It would have been more comforting if my annihilation had taken some time even if just a second or two, because it would at least imply some sort of effort. In no time instead felt as if my existence was absolutely indifferent, not even without significance but rather beyond signification itself. And, the force would eliminate me if I didn't descend the stairs. The only problem was that the staircase ended in an absolute void that could not do otherwise than swallow me in my entirety as if I had never existed. What was in the lower end of the staircase was not something, yet it was not nothing neither. It was at the same time less tangible than nothing and a nothing so palpable it was completely impenetrable. It was not nothing it was something in reverse or a double negation and being such it could with certainty be nothing else than an endless stability, an absolute immobility. Standing on the top of the staircase I was torn between two forms of certain annihilation, both beyond time yet divided by time. The effect is undeniable and it could not be otherwise, I am made increasingly immobile as the danger escalates from two directions

each second becoming, if possible more and more omnipresent until they form, what I would, which however in the experience is made completely impossible, describe as a double horizon, or perhaps more accurately as the dreadful encounter with two incompatible yet simultaneously present horizons.

“But look around?” was the next thing that was said.

“There is nothing there. No, there is something. Even if there is I can’t distinguish it from what isn’t. It is everywhere.”

“What is that?”

“It is nothing more or less than that.”

The emergence of horizon implies the gradual dissolution of perspective. In other words, what is experienced there on top to the staircase is that with the same slow lava like pace as the two horizons expand my sense of existing as a distinct entity fades away. This is where horror strike my innermost being, where my bones freeze, knowing that when the horizons are completed, when every entities of the horizon is identical yet singular it will also have invaded me to the extent where neither me or the horizon can distinguish any difference. I will become that which I fear and that becoming implies to be extinct. What I fear is obviously not something but an all encompassing nothing that will devour me.

I’m still there on the top of the staircase. The horizon has still not and will never complete itself. I am addicted to my suffering, to the sustained moment between being something that is nothing or being nothing that is something, or being born and dying simultaneously, or being alive without existence or existing without being alive.

*

This story is told. It is told by me, but a me that is not enough me to tell the story nor little enough to not tell it. I must tell the story that I cannot tell in order not to complete the horizon. Nothing has happened or will happen, nothing has unfolded and consequently there is no past or future, no past to the future nor any future to the past. There is only an endless presence; a suspense without resolution. There is no escape nor proper imprisonment. I’m in time, coinciding with time which simultaneously is an instance outside time. Caught in an instance so infinitesimal it is undividable – if it wasn’t how could it be an instance in the first place – so brief it is nothing and simultaneously unfolds as horizon.

“Time will tell,” she said.

“No it won’t, nothing will be told because nothing has occurred.”

Afterwards, if afterwards exists? After what? What unfolded was so limitlessly weird that it could absolutely not exist. Yet it

was undeniably there. I was convinced that if I were to comprehend what happened the result would be that I would lose my senses. It could only be grasped by somebody or thing that wasn't human any more. Maybe this something would still look like a human but its existence would necessarily be all together different. A human different in kind or a different kind of human. There we are again, at this moment relations between time, space and location appear to reverse because how can something be understood in the sense of after if the result of what happened were such that the very understanding of comprehension transformed. Not probabilistically like how it happens daily – that my understanding of something or the universe changes gradually, a gradual and reactive transformation. No, I'm speaking about a deeply violent change, a transformation from something known, so to say familiar territory, to an unknown to which the previous familiar suddenly is absolutely foreign. Perhaps even worse, it is so foreign it could absolutely not have existed.

What is the afterwards of that that must not have existed? Similarly, from where must that that is now have appeared? It cannot and at the same time must have appeared from nowhere or nothing. This is where horror opens its jaws, because as if nothing was not enough, you as well as me know, that something cannot and must, like a slimy, unnamable, detestable darkness, so incredibly abominable it is beyond any kind of representation, have crawled over the fence of double negation, out of the nothing of nothing.

“What time is it?” I asked.

“It's just time,” was the response.

Was there an alternative. Yes, I could deny it all. Whatever it was that had unfolded, whatever it was that I had encountered I could deny it, also to myself. It's entire existence, it's very being.

“What time is it?” I asked again.

“It's that time,” was the response.

But it had happened to me. Even if I could deny what had unfolded, completely negate it, what could not be undone, what could not be denied was the experience that what happened had transformed me irreversibly. Hence, to reject what had happened would implicitly mean to deny myself. I would have to live as the ghost of my previous self however without grounds, since the transformation that was forced upon me was irreversible. As I come on these thoughts I am again shaken by convulsions of fear. I would be haunted by myself as a ghost without representation, to deny what happened would mean to exist in the endless abyss of nothing.

The cradle of fear, is not something it is always nothing. It is not restricted to children or dark nights. Fear comes up on us when we stand in front of the dreadfulness of nothing. It is pure fear just because it offers no character, no criteria to which I can hold on. It is, but it's being is undisclosed, not as in not revealed

but in the horrifying reality that there is nothing to reveal. That was what I was standing in front of, that is what I'm still standing in front of until the horizon closes and until then the I that I am familiar with is fading. I am fading, I am disappearing in front of my own eyes. This is central to where fear escalates and becomes utterly terrifying, I'm disappearing because nothing, in its doubled form looks back at me without eyes, without character, without criteria but as pure and essential being.

"What is that?" I asked.

"It's just some shadows, maybe the old garden furniture."

I want to land. A third option is substitution, the introduction of something known and reliable where nothing rules. As perspective melts away and the dark intensity of the double horizon arises, an escape route is enabled, it opens through an additive gesture implanting an artificial supplementary narrative like a wedge between the two horizons. This is not a deviation, a refusal or blockage which would rather associate with denial, but indicates an impossibility to withdraw or possibly an attraction to a darker pattern, a form of *jouissance*, superimposed with a desperate need to secure a territory.

"Are you sure, really sure?"

"Of course I'm sure, I'm after all your mother."

This story is told. It is told by me, and in order to make it possible to say the story I will explain it. However I know it is not accurate I will convince myself that what unfolded can be explained and I will make it imaginable to live with what happened through the introduction of a substitute, a wedge that disables the dark impatience of the double horizon. I will cover the tracks of the impossible, the track of fear with the artificial light of reason.

Like my mother when me and my brother were small, convincing us that it was just the shadows created by the moonlight falling through the old oak trees, when all the three of us knew something was out there, something that didn't belong to this world then and still doesn't. Or convincing us that something was there that wasn't that would explain the occurrence or simpler create enough stability for reason to construct something that could be put away and forgotten in the windings of our minds.

"Let's go out and check, don't you think?"

"No, we'd better stay inside, it's already late and it's probably raining too."

This was another kind of shadow. Not that kind, the result of reflections or the lack of light, something that could rationally be explained using physics and common sense. No, these shadows were not the result of something, they or it was something in itself. In retrospect it seems as if it for many years existed in the shadows, biding its time disguised as any other shadow but always in the darkest corners. At moments you might experience

those shadows more intensely. A sense of nausea, a sudden move, dark fleeting moments when a shadow suddenly is traversed by a deeper opacity. Perhaps you withdraw a little experiencing a slight unease in the upper part of your spine, or the other way around, you suddenly experience a slight tingle of anxiety realizing that you have to put down your foot a few centimeters to either side but not where it was supposed to end up. Nothing is there to be stepped upon except the usual linoleum carpet and yet something gave clear indication not to be stepped up on. You just don't put your foot there.

Nobody was particularly bothered. We could coincide, live superimposed belonging to different kinds of realities. After all the shadows didn't gossip or weren't intimidated if we forgot to invite them to a BBQ or like a pet that you forget to give food being pissed off for a few days. Anyway, it was probably the dog that first reacted on how the shadows started to exist more and more independently. They didn't hide anymore, didn't camouflage but hanged out like the dark circles under somebody's eyes where you'd least expect to find them. On a mirror in the hallway, occupying a corner of a table in the extra room we never really used or simply lying around one part in the sofa, the other leaning – if that's what shadows do – against a wall.

Our dog's reactions were rational, based on trial and error. She simply stayed away from darker corner, avoiding murkier parts of the house and moved her basket to the middle of the living room. No matter how many times we moved it back to what we called "her corner" it was soon moved into the middle again. After another few months the dog stopped spending time in the garden. The moment it left the house it was immediately heading for the street connecting the house with civilization. She was still happy about our long walks in the forest behind the house but the garden was off limits. As you can understand at this moment the shadow had also conquered the garden. Towards the end she wouldn't move from the basket and we had to carry her to and through the house as she refused to take a single step on the lawn or drive way. It lasted forever, or that was our experience. The dog was so annoying our attempts to make it accept the shadow was fruitless.

One day she was gone. We didn't particularly discuss the matter as we knew that the shadows had taken the dog. We simply let her basket stay where it had always been, we just stopped feeding it and the leach started to collect dust on its hook in the hallway. Initially it was a bit awkward but as much as we had gotten used to the shadows we got used to this too.

At some point my brother proposed that one pet was enough. Now we had the shadows. Without noticing we had started to somehow care for it or them. No, it was only one even though it didn't articulate itself as one contained entity. Instead

it could spread out, divide itself and expand and contract more or less independently. There were moments, a few times days when we thought it had vanished but we always knew it was there. It's presence was poignant even when invisible.

The shadow was one but contrary to a human or a tree, it was more like a culture or some weird kind of mushroom that in a very subtle way occupied space. Symbiotic rather than competitive, it didn't need to claim territory on its trajectory to omnipresence.

It was nothing except that slightly deeper shade of absence of light. We tried to smell it, but nothing. We tried to capture smaller parts in a jar and it obviously didn't work. We tried all kinds of strategies but it was nothing else than that slight murkiness. Nothing more.

The first sign was the blinds left down, first the spaces facing away from the street but it didn't take many weeks before we just left all the blinds down. Well, actually there were moments when brought them up. Just before and after midnight when the moon was new and left that particular blue tinted light. It was as if the shadow liked to play with the new moon's light.

Then came candles and from there on it escalated step by step until the shadow was all we cared for. We all rushed home as soon as we could to serve the shadow. Friends weren't welcome anymore and we rarely left the house except for necessary shopping. In the beginning we used excuses of all kinds but also excuses faded and we became shadows of the folks we once were.

What started as elementary shadow play, creating forms with our hands and similar had become a compulsion that family members spend hour and hours doing. But most of the time, especially our parents were just looking at how the shadow moved and took new shapes. Not because they resembled anything but simply because it moved. Sometime so slow it was imperceptible, sometimes rapidly like the ocean during a storm.

Initially my father took note and made some attempts to organize its movement statistically but after some time all those attempts faded and we just observed it. Hour and hours, day after day we were absolutely mesmerized as the shadow filled the house's every corner. It was everywhere, on the floor and on walls and furniture, on our bodies, inside cupboards and drawers, between books lying around and enveloping flowers my mother had arranged on the living room table. It was everywhere and it was nothing. But at least it was nothing and that was enough for us, we could talk about it, discuss how it changed in correlation to the weather or whatever we found inspiring. We were absolutely obsessed, possessed by nothing. Perhaps we were a bit paler than other people but it wasn't worth mentioning. It might be that we avoided certain groceries but not more than somebody intolerant to gluten or just aware about organic and ecology. Which we also were.

At some point conversation ended. The house fell silent. It wasn't that we had nothing to say it was just that it appeared so futile in comparison to spending time with the shadow. It didn't prevent us from anything but then again it didn't inspire us to verbal exchange neither. I liked to sit on the floor, like a mermaid, just letting my fingertips overlap with it. From time to time letting it invade me, other times moving out of its way as its expanded into the space I occupied.

We didn't do shadows anymore, it was a long time since we had stopped giving the shadow names or recalling its small yet comic talent. It was just us and the shadow.

At some point also the candles faded. The shadow had exterminated everything except the four of us, even shadows. It was only it and it slowly consumed us. Without haste, it took its time, without any grand gestures, until one day when it left.

I might have been in April or October who knows. It didn't matter and for the shadow it certainly didn't. It had taken what it wanted, it had consumed what it needed and it appeared absolutely indifferent to whatever it left behind. It had produced an excessively abstract kind of life and suddenly when it withdrew, when it suddenly took away all those liberties that it had given us, that was when fear struck us, it was only in retrospective that the shadow produced the unbearable sensation of having been robbed or tortured – not something physical but of your self, of having been determined by something that can not be negotiated, something that is but is nothing.

Horror has no function it is pure form, it is unreserved abstraction. In ways it is black and white, endlessly close to bliss and yet pure darkness. It is a pure sign of affect. Horror can only mean a sign whose sense is inseparable from its content. Horror in its pure form refers to nothing outside its own enactment that is one with the enactment of its meaning. Pure signs and hence horror are pure events, simultaneously reflexive and relational. Horror is, denotation, highly artificial and constructively stuck with paradox. Horror is eminently suspect and equally sublime. However, this does not prevent it from being true – affectively true. The truth of horror is of an affective order.

“Don't you agree, it was like living with a pet?” I said. “Something like that, and it didn't eat neither, until it ate us;” somebody answered.

“Devoured us” I thought but didn't mention it.

But it did matter because something about it had to do with eroticism. In the midst of darkness the entire body turns into an erogenous capacity and eroticism turns into combat. A combat that include ludic elements, an orgasmic existence that because of opacity of darkness, the absence of angle or absence has exchange survival with devouring.

Charles Darwin has too quickly been understood to unconditionally equate animal behavior with instinct. The beast follows its instincts and all its behavior is derivative there of. The animal doesn't develop culture but is destined to live in accordance with its instincts, no matter what.

If so my cat is not an animal or it must be understood that the animal indeed superimposed on its instinct have the ability to improvise. My cat plays with plastic toys and other cats. The play tends to replicate combat but isn't. The cats aim for vulnerable parts of the body but don't bite. The cat nibbles, it represents the bite. A series of movements, even a strategy might be that of combat. It is the gesture of combat but is not fulfilled. My cat, as most cats mime that fighting and it does it with style. Play is conducted in the style of combat. With this in mind it goes without saying that the cat, and most probably all animals, has the ability to improvise, using gesture, be creative.

So much for instinct, but why is Darwin's theories even today powerful and generously applied.

The result of devaluing the animal to follow instinct is practical and offers some solutions. As long as the animal is acting on givens, i.e. instinct, as long as it doesn't use or develop consciousness humans don't need to consider what it is thinking, whether it is suffering or not, whether it is conspiring against the human race or not. An animal whose ability to improvise and play, use gesture and produce some sort of meta-language is one in respect of which humans need to consider a different kind of ethics.

"What time is it?" I said.

"Too late," was the response.

An animal, or many, especially small ones consisting perhaps only of one cell, that are degraded to the sole function of instinct might be a threat but it is a threat that is easily dealt with since we can know it will not suddenly change its strategy, it will not surprise with a countermove that we are not able to predict. An animal, however, that carries the possibility for improvisation, an animal or many especially those that reproduce through division that does not have strong prediction or determination is an all together different story. This is the moment when the cuteness of animals, the helplessness of animals turn against us in the form of fear or terror. Not just because the animal or many at this point possess the ability to produce counter strategies, but because the animals' modes of improvisation or creativity is contingent relative human strategies whatever they might be.

"What time is it?" I asked.

"That is not for us to know," proposed a distant voice.

Some philosopher might have proposed something in the direction of: "If lions would speak English we wouldn't under-

stand anything.” Why, because the lion’s access to the world is through a mind that is incompatible with ours. What invokes fear in humans is the fact that motivation of animals, big or small, many or really many, are completely improbable, they are indeterminable at least at some point and humans can have no idea when this some point occur. The moment when humans at some point concur to the necessity that animals do improvise, play, strategize and possess creativity, humans will have to live with the terrifying knowledge that animals might revenge us at any moment without notice and without any noticeable sign of regret, guilt or recognition of suffering.

“What time is it?” I whispered.

“It is their time,” said nobody in particular.

It was not the darkness that made my bones shiver, nor that endlessly opaque blackness. It was black, it was called black and its name was black. The reasons for why fear was leaking out of my inner most core infesting every molecule of my body was the undeniable experience that the blackness was alive. That it however imperceptibly moved, changed shape and transformed as if it was observing, even calculating the behavior of its environment. It was an organism that inhabited the world with a form of consciousness and as it transformed it emitted a dim light. Perhaps not a light but over its blackness drifted a vibrant lumination, a black glow that appeared to oscillate between an infinite heat and a coldness beyond human measure. As if this was not enough the black mass discharged a kind of mute sound created by thousands of singular creatures buried within its black depth. It was at the same time the songs of mermaids luring sailors into the abyss, the silenced screams of soldiers left to die on the battlefield. It was the imploded cries of parents losing their children, the ice-cold roar of revenge, the quivering regret of failure and that was only the beginning of the pain that this disorganized symphony radiated. The blackness was no longer over there, it was space itself, the positive and the negative, it was both that most tangible black and its obverse and it invaded me at the same time as my bones, my flesh, my blood froze into a night of a thousand years. It was not the blackness, it was not even the undeniable fact that it was alive, not even the pain it emitted or the sensation that it was ancient – so old that it ventured beyond the limits of time, it was the truth that what this life was was not of this world.

This illuminated blackness appeared to grow in all directions yet the experience was that it simultaneously withdraw into itself. Like Sisyphus it was engaged in an eternal cycle of rebirth but here because it was devouring itself as it grew with a stronger and stronger intensity. The blackness without doubt exists but is not alive, as it moves autonomously it must

be undead. The undead has no life and therefore no identity. The undead that exists amongst us implicitly inform us of the vulnerability of life, about the possibility that life does not exist but is only a figment of our minds.

*

This story is told. It is told by me. Me beside times, caught in between past and future, hit by the irreversible arrow of times passing, in the crosshair of the two emerging horizons, chained to a void next to the shadows, illuminated only by a living negative of life, pure existence. And yet it is my story and I who has been irreversibly transformed by that that unfolded into something that happened that could not happen and when it did must always have been capable of happening. That's where I am, sinking into the abyss of an absolutely sublime horror. Absolute form unconditionally liberated from function.

It is not the humans, nor the remains of humans like Egyptian mummies. Not even ghosts, monsters or animals. If this was what happened it could have been described.

“What time is it?” for the last time.

“Time is”

Things or objects have their place in the world. They exist and they secure forms of stability. But as the sun is setting and darkness cover our planet, as night arrives and a black darkness dissolves the contours of things. It is then, when the darkness is so dense that it erases time, obliterates recognition and familiarity, dissolves distance and builds a fatal bridge between life and existence, between being and nothing that things are released from their prisons of stability, from the staticness of their existence and build capacities of improvisation, play and creativity. The withdrawal, evidenced as a crackling over the radio. It is in a black so bright nothing cannot even be determined that things coincide with themselves to form a universe of endless equality, forming a circuit of reciprocal potentialization enabled by the creation of a mutually inclusive zone of indiscernibility that double the affirmation of every existence's difference with an included middle. This is the one in the last instance, a limitless existential territory where thought and creation folds in on itself, and the sublime horror experienced, that by necessity transform us irreversibly, nebulously explodes into an endless presence.

Performance schedule

Thursday	Oct. 1
7 pm	Private collection
8 pm	Black

Friday	Oct. 2
6 pm	Time will show (detail)
7:30 pm	every now and then – a late evening in the future

Saturday	Oct. 3
6 pm	No Title
7 pm	every now and then – a late evening in the future

Monday	Oct. 5
7 pm	Private collection
8:30 pm	Time will show (detail)

Tuesday	Oct. 6
7 pm	Black
8 pm	No Title

Friday	Oct. 9
7 pm	We to be

Saturday	Oct. 10
4 pm	Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine (re-writing)
7 pm	We to be

Chronology

2002

Private collection

2004

Time will show (detail)

2005/2006

Opening

2007

or else nobody will know

2009

every now and then

2010

Time has fallen asleep in
the afternoon sunshine

2011

Black

2014

No Title

2015

We to be

“A fascinating illustration of our difficulty to distinguish between the world and our perception of it.”

DAGENS NYHETER ON “BLACK”

“one of the real highlights of the festival.”

SCENEKUNST.NO. ON “TIME HAS FALLEN ASLEEP..”

“It makes you look at books as living things, and is a good reminder that when you learn a book by heart, it is not just a feat of memory, but an act of love.”

THE GUARDIAN ON “TIME HAS FALLEN ASLEEP..”