

# CONTINGENCY OF THE NOW #1

June 2014

In addition to the performances presented for *Contingency of the Now* each artist is asked to participate in an interview that aims to share some of the thoughts and ideas behind the performance and their practice.

**Rie Hovmann Rasmussen:** To begin with, could you tell me a bit about your performance for *Contingency of the Now #1*?

Trine Mee Sook Glerup: When you invited me to develop a performance about presence, I instantly started thinking about mindfulness. I believe that the notion of presence in performance and theater is such a fundamental part of them that often times presence is not even questioned, not even thought about, and not even, well, present.

The absolute core of mindfulness and meditation is presence: how one can learn to be more present, and how one can refine that presence. Thus, my performance *OHM: a meditative performance lecture & how our mind and body are practically commercialized* will include physical and mental exercises on mindfulness, as well as moving deeper into the apparatus of mindfulness as we know it in a Western context. Through the performance I would like to discuss how mindfulness – and not least the mindfulness business – is in fact stressing us out!

**RHR:** An interesting aspect of your performance is this intertwining of physical practices of yoga and mindfulness and critical theory. Why this combination?

TMSG: On a slightly ironic level you could say that what constitutes a human being is the physical body and the critical and reflective mind. It is this complexity that I insist on taking a somewhat ambivalent position towards in my practice.

I have been working with this ambivalence in earlier performances, and I would like to see it as a method and tension that adds certain vitality to the performance. In this performance the starting point is ambiguous in nature: meaning my intention is to simultaneously present the upsides and the downsides of mindfulness as we know it in a Western context. To present the upsides of mindfulness I can find no other way than to invite the audience (or the participants as you could call them) to participate in actual exercises. Having said that, and being at the same time deeply invested in yoga and mindfulness (I even teach yoga), I can't help but notice how mindfulness has become this must-have, or more precisely must-do, that we need to practice in order to fit into the Western norm of civilized, successful, and achieving human beings.

**RHR: With your critique or comment on the way we inscribe ourselves into dominating social and political structures, in this case with a focus on mindfulness, I wonder how, if so, it reflects back on your way of working with performance?**

TMSG: There is this experience economy going on right now – and it influences not only the yoga and mindfulness business (which *is* a massive money making business), but also the entire business apparatus in general, including education, entertainment, and art. One would think that the experience economy would have a positive effect on performance art, and I guess the demand on performance art has somehow increased. It seems almost impossible to attend an opening at an art museum or gallery without a live-performance attached to it. Whilst I definitely applaud the idea of putting more performance art on the art agenda, I'm not so sure that this is what is really happening. Turning performance art into some kind of colourful sidekick does not change the perception of performance art – as mere entertainment - very much.

I've been working with text-based performances and performance lectures for quite a long time, and what I find, at the same time both liberating and demanding with this kind of format, is the notion of potential boredom. I do not want to bore people who attend my performance, however I do not want to *entertain* them either! I want to share and spend time with them, and I want to express some things that are on my mind, but I don't go out of my way to do that in a particularly entertaining or colourful way.

**RHR: Mindfulness' relation to the present as well as a tool to avoid stress, connects it strongly to notions of time and how we use it. Likewise, time becomes a factor in your performance when it stretches over a couple of hours and hence exceeds the 'normal' length of a performance. What potential lies in this awareness of time and how we use it? And how do you think about notions of time in your performance practice?**

TMSG: The notion of time in mindfulness - and in performance - is closely related to the present, to the here and now. In researching for this performance I came across this quote: "We have one life. And what is most important is that we are awake for it". This, I believe captures the essence of mindfulness very well.

Thus mindfulness is not only about feeling and being present within our body and mind; it does at the same time come with a huge responsibility as of how we want to be present in and live our lives. The present, one could say, is the somewhat abstract time between the past and the future. Regardless of how long or how short this particular presence – or presences - are, they are definitely liminal.

The performance too is liminal, taking place in the now, in the time-slot between the before and the after of the performance. There is something existential and extremely basic about working within this particular timeframe of a performance – or within the timeframe of the present. In this notion I play with the duration of the present. If my performance lasts for 20 – 25 minutes, which I guess is the average duration of a performance, the present is somehow frameset to 20 – 25 minutes, and if I do a performance that lasts two hours I have set the present to last two hours. In these specific amounts of time, the performer and the participants are gathered in some kind of collective present.

**Thank you.**