

Dear Veronika,

In answer to your invitation to participate in a special printed issue of *Nowiswere* on the occasion of your exhibition as part of fig. 2 at the ICA, I like to propose to you to engage in a 'correspondence'. As you know from my previous contribution to *Nowiswere*, a dialogical practice is at the core of my own creative practice as a dance dramaturge and I am more and more convinced that practicing our dialogical skills is essential to reconnect with the larger environment we are part of in order to tune in and to develop ourselves.

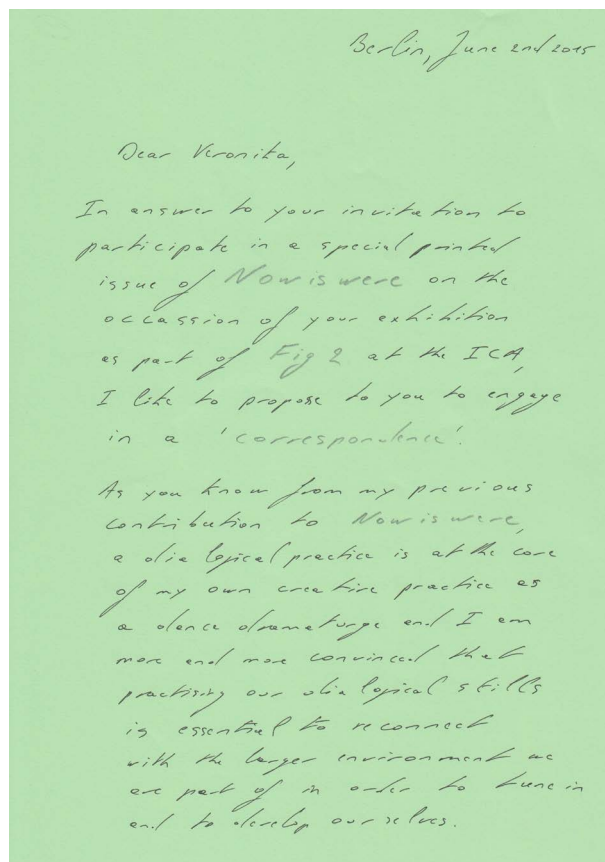
Letter writing is one particular form of dialogue. In *Making, Anthropology, Archeology, Art and Architecture*, the Scottish anthropologist Tim Ingold uses 'correspondence' as an alternative for 'dialogue'. (...) "The lines of correspondence are lines of feeling, of sentience, evinced not – or not only – in the choice of words but in the manual gesture of writing and their traces on the page. To read a letter is not just to read about one's respondent, but to read with him or her. It is as though the writer was speaking from the page, and you – the reader were there listening." (Ingold 2013, p. 105) I like to write letters by hand because it slows me down and it establishes an intimacy between the two of us. It might take you an effort to read me.

We originally met at the exhibition you curated at Forum Stadtpark Graz, *A Buddy for A Text* – on the performance of text and speech in visual arts, choreography and dance – to which you invited a number of artists/friends, whom we admire and share, amongst others Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment and my wife, Stephanie Cumming. This exhibition revealed our shared interest in finding ways to embody language, in particular written language. Your video, *speech is to be looked at*, which builds further on *Semaphore Dance*, reminds me of some of my own experiments to physicalize and visualize language; to reconnect the writing to drawing and to reconnect the hand-eye combination – which I am now doing as well, copying as a scribe part of this letter. (...) Your pictograms and my performance practice *Rewriting Distance* are both attempts to rewrite and to reconnect language with an embodied and sensorial experience. To conclude, I include a couple of writings/drawings made inside *Rewriting Distance* and maybe they inspire you to dialogue with. Looking forward to our 'correspondence'.

Warm greetings,
Guy

PS: Copying part of a text by hand, is also a way to understand and to know if the writing is embodied. Your hand will know.

Berlin, June 2nd 2015



Dear Guy,

Thank you for your first letter which I received last week. When Adeena Mey, Margit Neuhold and I first spoke about printing an issue of *Nowiswere* in relation and on the occasion of my show at fig. 2 at the ICA this August, I immediately thought of inviting you to talk about and in accordance with my art practice. Your essay in *Nowiswere* 14 on the art of listening and the *Body:Language talks* influenced both my work as an artist and as a teacher. Your argumentation ensured me that listening was as important a part of a dialogical practice as speaking – yet to ‘only’ listen to the other often remained in the realm of the unnoticed, the calm and maybe unimportant, passive response to speech. Yet the question remains: what makes a dialogue? To me there are many different forms of dialogical practice: involving two persons, a dialogue can be held in its most obvious appearance as a fluid conversation that ends with a full stop. But a dialogue can also be interrupted and strengthened by times of silences, yet picked up again where our words last faded to now focus on a present point of attention. Perceived from such a perspective my life bares uncountable dialogues, depending on the people I encounter and dialogue with. Some on a very regular basis, some only once in a life. I move in a multitude. I speak. I listen. I watch a multitude of dialogues of different durations and depths.

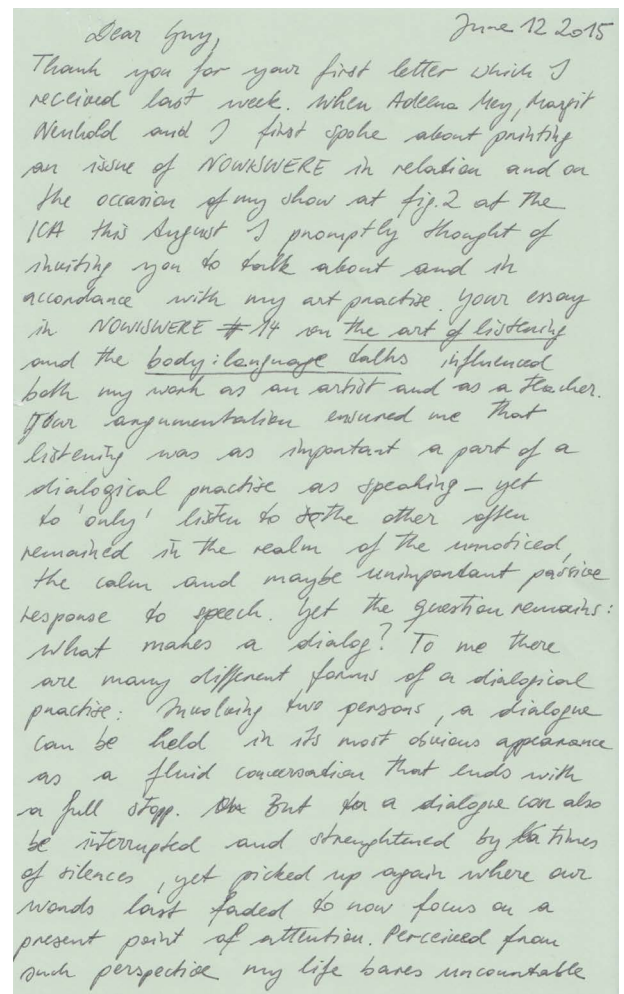
You proposed to start a correspondence between us. An exchange of letters. Handwritten. I am very glad about this idea, in theory. In practice that means I spend hours reading your letter and responding to it. I meanwhile appreciate those hours. Writing a letter reveals both the presence of its reader and its writer. (...) This is pure concentration on just one thing! (...)

I am trying to formulate my thoughts as clearly as possible and to write readably but not too properly. If the written, if writing, if a handwritten text can be thought of as ‘manual gestures’ this page is surely just a visual representation of what is at stake here – gestural-wise whilst writing this letter. What cannot be tracked from the ‘traces on the page’ are the (pauses) between words. The gaze that wanders around the room unfocused, the voices outside in the courtyard talking about dinner, the coughing, the children’s sing song, my neighbor’s steps upstairs, the pauses in between words, thoughts; the silences that inform a ‘manual gesture’ (Tim Ingold) to take this or that form and expression. Writing this letter – that is me gesturing with a pen on green paper. It is me reading again parts of your letter and responding, stepping into dialogue with your ideas. Therefore I have to imagine my reader listening.

For my video work *speech is to be looked at*, I imagine the spectator watching, reading, listening to the words formed by the different letters and pictographs held by me feet into the camera. You sent a photograph of a letter/drawing, lines crossing out words, fragments of meaning. At the side of the image a foot has stepped upon the page. A sensual experience. I will end here for now taking the text of your drawing as an inspiration to send you some drawings from my series *Music & Movement are my friend* from 2009. Looking forward to reading from you.

Warmest greetings to Berlin,
Veronika

Vienna, June 12th 2015



Dear Guy, June 12 2015
Thank you for your first letter which I received last week. When Adeena Mey, Margit Neuhold and I first spoke about printing an issue of NOWISWERE in relation and on the occasion of my show at fig.2 at the ICA this August I promptly thought of inviting you to talk about and in accordance with my art practice. Your essay in NOWISWERE #14 on the art of listening and the body:language talks influenced both my work as an artist and as a teacher. Your argumentation ensured me that listening was as important a part of a dialogical practice as speaking – yet to ‘only’ listen to the other often remained in the realm of the unnoticed, the calm and maybe unimportant passive response to speech. Yet the question remains: what makes a dialog? To me there are many different forms of a dialogical practice: involving two persons, a dialogue can be held in its most obvious appearance as a fluid conversation that ends with a full stop. But a dialogue can also be interrupted and strengthened by the times of silences, yet picked up again where our words last faded to now focus on a present point of attention. Perceived from such perspective my life bares uncountable

Dear Veronika,

I found your letter in the mail box when I came home from a short trip to Prague. I read it once before going to bed and a second time this morning before replying. I was touched by the risk you took and the concentration it requires to write the letter directly in one gestural movement including its hesitations and mistakes, so I decide to do the same instead of copying my first draft as I did last time. (...) The first thing which struck me in your letter is the heightened sense of time. The time it takes to write and read. But also the pauses in between the letters or the words.

It was my first yoga teacher, Eric Gomes, who made me aware of the importance of the pauses in between the exercises where the body continues to absorb and transform the information it receives. This has also been one of the most rewarding experiences in the *Repeating/Rewriting Distance* practice I developed with Lin Snelling over more than 10 years. We mostly revisit/ repeat it only a couple of times every year, often during summer when we both have more time. And each time it surprises us that we not only recognize immediately where we left it the last time but also seem to have jumped to a next level of understanding in the time that has passed in between: the pause. I like the pauses between sending and receiving a letter. To give time for our exchange to travel physically and the effort it takes from us and other people involved. (...)

I also want to explore today a bit more our shared fascination with 'manual gestures' as a way to embody language and I will start practicing – copying some of the drawings you sent me of *Music & Movement are my friend*. (...) I didn't attempt an exact copy, but even this approximation made me realize how each of us has a unique way to connect the letters and uses very different distances between them. (...)

There was a sudden pause in both my writing and reflection as I was caught by the visual composition that had formed itself organically on the wooden desk I am sitting at, including the books, your letter and my letters and on the wall some of Anna's drawings, whose apartment I rent. I took a photo – interrupting my writing – which I will send you again by email. (...)

I took a very long pause of a day (...) This time the pause seemed to have interrupted the flow and I look for a starting point to reconnect. (...) It feels I need another pause first: to take a shower, to practice my yoganidra, to find the breath and the right gesture to conclude this letter. (...) During the yoganidra I have an insight to finish this letter with my drawings of the creative process. (...)

I have a sense today of being temporarily lost in our 'correspondence' but I trust you will pick up the thread and weave it together with your labyrinth. (...) *The signs we create are invitations to be interpreted.* (Charles Sanders Peirce). (which you misread as 'interrupted' and which makes a lot of sense too)

I am looking forward to reading you again.

Guy

Berlin, June 22nd 2015, 7.30am



Dear Guy!

I am writing this letter on a train, on a bus, on a bike traveling from one place to the other. I am writing this letter in many different situations. Days have passed since I first read your letter and I have made several attempts to send a response to it. This letter – in contrast to the last one – has not been written in one timely and manual gesture, in one go – it is pieced together from several other letters and idea/lines of thought I want to share with you. It was very inspiring to receive the photo of your Berlin desk, your drawings of the different creative processes, the copying of my drawing. (...)

Reading and writing, two terms too abstract to describe what they trigger: thinking about what you wrote, absorbing the words, matching them with my experiences, selecting from many thoughts running through my head those of interest to you (might be), writing – drawing words on white/green pages.

Pauses are the 'time the body continues to absorb and transform the information received' (Guy Cools). I have paused several days since reading your letter for the first time. These pauses signify or reflect my listening to your remarks and ideas. Pausing/reading/writing, I feel I have become 'temporarily lost in our correspondence' too. As if that feeling had taken over ever since I opened the envelope and first saw your postcard. A photograph of a cat, laying her paws upon an open book, apparently looking into the book. On close inspection I noticed she is actually looking far away from the page. What is in her mind?

I see my thoughts colliding with your thoughts in many aspects, yet you asked me to find the threads and weave them into my labyrinth. I found some anchor points to do so:

* The pauses within a dialogic practice cannot be heard in a 'correspondence' – hence have to be introduced by textual vehicles or signs such as
: / PAUSE : ... or barely an (empty) space!

* Writing as a gesture of drawing. Drawing being a gesture of writing. Drawing being transformed into language whilst writing.

* (...)

* Writing as movement. In my work *Semaphore Dance* – which in its title refers to Loie Fuller's wonderful *Serpentine Dance* – I use semaphore signals to wave messages towards the camera. It is a silent, merely visual form of communication and a form of correspondence as it includes writing. The choreography of this performance originates in the necessity to move/wave both flags into the right/readable position. In *Semaphore Dance* artist Lauren Printy Currie, with whom I collaborated on the exhibition *Baldachini* in Glasgow 2014 received the video and decoded my message letter per letter.

I am looking forward to talking to you,
Veronika

July 2015

