



POOL STORIES

*WHAT THE HELL
HAPPENED IN THAT
POOL?*



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LIVING INSIDE A POOL

It had been living in this wet environment since the 12th of August. The residents, both hosts and the guests, had left this place since late July. They never met. The day it was born, was a sunny warm day. The day after, it rained between 16:12 and 17:03. It was usual for this period of the year to have short, daily 4 o'clock showers. The falling drops, filled the pool with approximately one millimeter more water. The turbulence caused on the surface by them and the pleasant breeze, were producing multiple light currents, moving masses of water down, pushing others up, and creating palindromic and circular vibrations. It was mostly floating between 11.2 and 11.6 centimeters above the bottom of the plastic surface and could intensively "feel" all the alternations in its surroundings. After 51 minutes, this was the most interesting "experience" of its lifetime. But only that far.

In the evening of August 14, something unusual happened. The hole in the ground in which the plastic fabric was submerged, started transmitting vibrations of a different kind. The ground was receiving signals coming from the west and from a distance of around 50 meters. The sound though, was a totally different story. Being inside the water, it couldn't tell where sound was coming from. The higher frequencies of the violin and clarinet were more intense, while the lower ones were getting lost. The sound waves were rhythmically hitting the surface of the water. It was music. It couldn't hear the music, but it was responsive to the vibration patterns in it, and that was the reason it grew faster during those three days of the traditional festivities of the fifty locals of the village and their guests.

By the end of the month it was subjected to "stress", and responded with chemical reactions in an attempt to survive and regain control of its environment. The acidity, the pressure, the temperature, were



violently affected by two neighbor girls playing in the pool before school vacation would end. Another incident involved a technician that rinsed a tool inside the pool water. Others of its kind, managed to produce the adhesin that anchored them on its surface, and like that, they colonised it.

Winter came and the drop of temperature was definitely something to adjust to, but not the real threat. One cloudy February day, someone came and pulled the pool fabric out of the hole in the ground. All the water splashed inside the round formation and started getting absorbed by the soil. Luckily (?), it recognised the surface of the plastic pool with its flagellum that provides it with a 'sense of touch', and managed to adhere to it. Water, soil, dirt and leaves, offered the hospitable environment for its survival and transportation.

When the petroleum based fabric was unwrapped on a overheated city terrace it "felt" differently. Suddenly, a big amount of water was flashed on the surface. It started propelling around in the liquid with its flagellum. Its movement on the plastic membrane was enabled by energy generated by the transfer of protons down the cell membrane. Every time its cells came into contact with the pool, the motor that drives the flagellum was interrupted and this in turn interrupted the proton flow. Even though it did not possess any kind of molecular mechanisms enabling it to feel "emotions", nor any kind of nociception, the process with which an organism protects itself from harmful stimuli, one could argue that this was an "experience" that rocked its world like a tornado.

After the plastic pool that was hosting it, was cleaned, wrapped and packed, it was shipped to an other country. The residents, hosts and guests, had arranged for it to be part of an exhibition. So did it.

Words produce the adhesive that anchors them in a word pool, and like that, they colonised it. Others, float on the surface or in liquid obscurity. The users of this language can pick words from inside this pool and this guarantees a big communication success and satisfaction for both those who speak or write it and those who listen to or read it. Favorite topics on artists residencies: *space, time, money, qualities, people, very important people*. Internet environments are ideal for the development of such processes where word sequences like the following, can be fished.

7 Artist Residencies With Career-Launching Power

Eight Artist in Residence Programs to Launch Your Career

TOP 10 + LOWEST RATED

2016 TOP 10 RATED RMAR ARTIST RESIDENCY

15 Global Residencies That'll Make You Wish You Were an Artist

10 Career-Boosting Artist Residencies to Know

Emerging Artists: Top 10 Residency Programs Around the Globe

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funded notable alumni experimentation stipend for food and travel clear a
young artist's head tuition fee inspiration career-launching power resources
take a break creative focus on processes experimentation next level most
emerging artist would kill to attend heavyweight artist collaboration renovated
industrial buildings meeting with advisers \$26,602.20 2 weeks tuition: \$6,000
put their money where their mouth is ambitious aspects 350-acre farm one
year community engagement over 42 artists 1-6 weeks idyllic over 150
international artists \$875 fee business innovation culture-based economy for
the town hosted Bob Dylan \$2.6 million expansion foundation application
process is highly competitive 36 residencies each year 6,500 square feet of project
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ON LOOPS AND DERAILS

How do we do it without doing it?

I am somewhere else. I am a guest. I am away. I am here to develop a project based on my research on artist residencies.

I am here because I needed Space.

Space. Having space or the opportunity to take up space as openness of social, political, physical area of action and thinking, is considered to be a very important precondition for creativity. Which makes allocation of space, a key resource of hospitality, and puts the one that possesses the space in a power state.¹ Space is offered to the guest, and appears to be the first and most important element of an artist residency. “Peripheral” locations are quite popular with artists looking for residencies that offer remoteness and different settings, input and inspiration, even a cheaper basis for their work and living. The artist is “situated” in this context of a residency, and has this “other place” as a starting point to work in and with. This experience of the “otherness” often serves as the basis of processes that is reinterpreted and translated into artistic outcomes that may address a “global” art scene or even market. Artist-in residence programmes are often perceived as being located in the margins² of the contemporary art system, as they provide a temporary living space and a place to work away from the everyday life of the artist and the professional arena. As a break. Nevertheless, it is often that artists visit these

places, to find the space to actually deal with an already work in progress, staying disconnected from the context of their hosting place. They use this temporary locality as an insulated box to work on projects that are addressing the outside art world. That means that they are making the work THERE that they will eventually exhibit or present SOMEWHERE ELSE.

I am here because I needed Time.

Time. Or the 'luxury' of concentration, disconnection and undistracted work.

I notice this artwork hanging on the wall in the atelier³ where I am writing from, NOW. On it, it is written:

"Now, as I do this: now as the light here goes out, for instance. What is the now? Is now my disposal? Am I the now? Is every other person the now? Then time would instead be myself, and every other person would be time. And in our being with one another we would be time-everyone and no one. Am I the now, or only the one who is saying this? On a philosophical level, I feel that the place is not meaning an end. It is just that we are tied to each other psychologically. When we die it ends. Until then we are tied up. One of the first things that everybody should understand, is that every creature in the universe, that is in any way sensitive and in any matter of speaking conscious, regards itself as human

being. It knows and is aware of a hierarchy of beings above it and a hierarchy of below it. That is to say that wherever you are and whoever you are and whatever you are, you're in middle. The middle. That's the game. Your senses extend certain direction: and therefore give you the impression being in the middle. Because the definition of a person is where you look from.⁴ I read this twice.

I am here as a guest, even if my hosts call me an 'intern' as a joke that refers to contemporary aspects of the economy of labour. One is by default a guest only in temporality. I am reminded of a 1991 lecture by John Cleese (Monty Python) on creativity and how to get oneself into the "open mode", in which two of the five required factors he lists are time.

1. Space
2. Time
3. Time
4. Confidence
5. A 22 inch waist Humor⁵

I am a tourist and a nomad. With a routine of transit. "While moving, I learn" I tell myself, "while standing still, doing nothing, I listen" I think. I am Exhausted.

At my point of Exhaustion, my capacity "interrupts the economy of expectations and throws its workings into relief, producing an empty moment of full... awareness"?⁶ I

am imagining post apocalyptic scenes after a moment of economical collapse due to an epidemic burst of collective exhaustion of the creative world, while at the same moment my body is literally falling apart due to deprivation of sleep, stress and... mobility! My Locus Ceruleus neurons (LCNs), active neurones in the brain that are essential for alertness, increase their firing rates over prolonged tiredness and eventually... die. My brain burns through glucose, the sugary chemical it uses as fuel. As glucose levels drop, levels of adenosine rise, and that blocks the release of the neurotransmitter dopamine. Dopamine, a feel-good brain chemical that plays a big role in goal-seeking behaviour fails me and I end up feeling not only worse overall, but also less motivated to continue the task at hand. My brain wants me to stop what I am doing and go to sleep so it can recharge. My cognitive throughput slows down, my brain creates false memories, loses its filters, shrinks, doesn't adequately regulate my feelings, hallucinates.

I feel that, for a while, I would like to Do Nothing.

“Do something! Just do it!”, he said.

“What is wrong with doing nothing?” I wondered.

That day I went out looking for someone to do nothing with, in the broader area of Epen. Someone responded: “What an extraordinary suggestion! I have been asked to

do many things, but never “nothing”! I usually do nothing though, between 9 and 10 in the morning. ALONE. I am sorry but I have to decline. I have a full schedule and NO time”. After multiple rejections and long, lone walks in the woods with no plan, I found myself There. Sitting on a bench on the boarders. Beside me, the Plastic Man. Finally, we were doing nothing together! We would JUST be sitting there. “What a relief to have nothing to say, the right to say nothing, because only then is there a chance of framing the rare, and ever rarer, thing that might be worth saying”⁷ ?

Nothingness. The void. An absence of matter. The blank page. Emptiness. Utter silence. No thing, no thought, no awareness. Complete ontological insensibility.⁸ Or... The ultimate topos “within which” all reality takes place. Rather than a mere absence of being, meaning, or function, maybe absolute nothingness is active and creative in forming the actual world; and it manifests or awakens to itself through self-awareness. It is the foundation of the world and of the self which is a focal point of the world; but it is an uncommon kind of foundation in that it functions through self-negation.⁹

“The idea of getting something for doing nothing is possibly the most radical proposition I can think of”,¹⁰ I remember someone proposing. My brain turns inward, the activity in the visual area basically shuts down for some milliseconds, yes, it is a brain blink, I am having an idea! “This is great!

Maybe from now on I go out in parks or something, sit next to people and transmit this bodily felt energy of “awareness”. This could activate people, I will feel like a power ranger, and I could even get compensated for my services”. And like that I situate myself inside the production world. Again.

But “You cannot Perform nothingness if you have expectations” I remind myself.

Perform. “It feels like we experience a culture where we no longer just work, we perform”.¹¹ In this High Performance culture in which the work becomes a continues performing,¹² I need to catch deadlines, I need to guarantee myself sustainability, I need to be visible, I need to be ready, I need to be confident, I need to follow - the word means to move behind someone or something and go where he, she, or it goes. Most popular concepts to follow: a strategy, a link, a suggestion, a goal, a line, a trend, a person... the life of an idea, in public, with others?¹³ -...or at least I need to contribute to the production of some kind of social and intellectual capital!

I know I am expected to follow. But what if I Can't?

I Can't.

“What can make us utter the magic words I Can't? Does it take a breakdown to stop us? Does the utterance of the

words I Can't already constitute or confirm a breakdown? A failure to perform, justifiable only if our body authenticates our incapacity by refusing to function? How could we restore dignity to the I Can't? How could we avoid becoming backed into a corner where the I Can't would merely be perceived as a passive-aggressive stance of denial? May uncooperativeness as well be the revenge that uncreative people take on creative society by willfully stopping it in its tracks? In other words: How can we embrace the I Can't without depriving ourselves of our potential to act? Could we unlock the I Can't as a form of agency?"¹⁴

In the Rise of the Planet of the Apes "Caesar's No is a No conditioned by his being an institutional animal"¹⁵ I read. I have lately been thinking a lot about institutional (-ised?) language, and I Can't! I often feel: confused, with no Agency and disappointed. Or maybe this is the path to follow in order to "move beyond cynicism and embrace a radical optimism that exceeds the petty dialectics of expectation and disappointment"¹⁶.

I need to take Care.

I read about the notion of 'care' as an antidote against consumerism, automatism or indifference in institutionalised art practices¹⁷ and my suprachiasmatic nucleus, knock the door of my hypothalamus asking it to 'take care' and signals

are sent back from my eyes to tell my brain to let them shut.
Is this the care I need? Maybe I simply need a good sleep!

Am I too nihilistic? Am I back to Zero (0)?

Zero is a hole with nothing in it. It was actually chosen by the Indians to reflect the eternal circle of the faces of heaven. The Greeks, the Romans and the Jews didn't have a zero. Everything started at 1 because, maybe, we are kind of afraid of the void? The way they decided to represent nothing was that they took a little piece of nothing and they drew a little circle around it, which turned the nothing into something. It is a loop.¹⁸ *Capital* also starts with a C which is a hole in the shape of a circle, with nothing in it and a crack on the middle right side.

It is a loop.

Once again...

How do we do it without doing it?

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- ⁵ Jenny Odell, Jenny, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*, Brooklyn, Melville House, 2019, p. 11
and: <https://genius.com/John-cleese-lecture-on-creativity-annotated>
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- ⁸ Karen Barad, Karen, *What Is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity; Virtuality; Justice*, Documenta 13, 2012, p. 4
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- ¹² Van den Berg, Mariska, p. 52
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- ¹⁶ Referring to Nietzsche.
- ¹⁷ van den Berg, Mariska, p. 52
- ¹⁸ <https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/radiolab-loops>

*INSTRUCTIONS
FOR BUILDING
A POOL
OUT OF
A POOL COVER*







"YOU CAN'T MAKE A POOL OUT OF A POOL COVER." **THEY** SAID.

WE ASKED OURSELVES:
"HOW DO WE WORK TOGETHER?
HOW DO WE LIVE TOGETHER?"



INSTRUCTIONS FOR BUILDING A POOL OUT OF A POOL COVER:

- 1. Intend to buy a plastic pool but accidentally buy a plastic pool cover.*
- 2. Realise it when you are at least 1 hour away, or 45 kilometers, or after you have opened the box.*
- 3. Laugh.*
- 4. Decide to still do it!*
- 5. Improvise against the odds.*
- 6. Collaborate without having to.*
- 7. Have fun. Collectively.*
- 8. Close any holes*



IMAGES

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