

## Deconstructing Suffering with Cecilia Lagerström

September 22, 2017



In recent years, descriptions and images of human suffering have become an increasingly common part of the everyday media flow in our global society. The images are often taken from a distance and lack the sufferer's own voice. These were observations that led to the project *Suffering* that our current resident Cecilia Lagerström now seeks to develop further in collaboration with Mertcan Semerci. We asked her to tell us more about the working process and how the project was first initiated.

– We are just starting a process of deconstructing material from the performance *Suffering* that we presented this Spring. The performance explored suffering as well as images and public display of human suffering in our time. In the working process many questions dealing with representation and reproduction came up. How can we discuss images of suffering without just reproducing them? How to create complex images and ambiguous situations on stage? This is where we start this new work. We are diving into questions around complexity, ambiguity and meaning making on stage. I believe that by highlighting complexity we can create a counter-movement to the polarization that in many ways characterizes the society of today.

This current work is a further development of the earlier project *Suffering* which was born as a reaction on two tendencies in the society: on the one hand on the fact that mental suffering was much discussed in the public debate but often in terms of medication and diagnosis, and on the other on the media flow of images of suffering

people that poured over us at this time. How can we handle suffering in our society – our own suffering and other's? We came to the conclusion that there is a lack of language for suffering in our society. Where there is suffering there is also silence. Images of suffering are largely taken at a distance and lack the sufferer's own voice. Expressions of suffering are medically answered. In the performance we tried to create a multitude of expressions for the suffering, with the help of movement, actions, words and images. After the production I started to reflect even more on this silence, but also on issues such as polarization and generalization. Today, it is discussed how the increasingly polarized debate poses a problem in society, even a threat to democracy in the long run. Nuances and more complex situations are rarely presented. So how can we go in the opposite direction, on a very concrete level? What happens if we start with ourselves, on the studio floor?

*The working process also involves Mertcan Semerci, a performer based in Poland, we were curious of how the collaboration first started.*

– Since several years, me and the artistic director of Studio Matejka in Wroclaw (Poland) planned a collaboration as we were curious on each others work in the field of physical theatre. In *Suffering* I found the opportunity of inviting Matej Matejka and one of his performers to Gothenburg for an exchange. We shared work experiences and in the end of the rehearsal process Mertcan Semerci came along to join the performance. It was an extremely intense work, we didn't know each other at all until one week before the opening. But the work went really well and now we will continue our work under somewhat calmer conditions.

*This time they will work with deconstruction as a starting point.*

– It means that we will revisit the performance material, but isolated from it's context and signification in the original performance. It also means that we will disassemble the performance material down to the smallest components to listen to what happens in the smallest parts, the smallest details. How is meaning created in the smallest actions, how does it transform and change, and when do we experience meaning in different ways? How is the performer's micro-level relating to the macro-level of the dramaturgy as a whole? And – how much complexity can we stand?

The plan for this two week period is to try out ways of working and to develop a working strategy for the new project *The Precision of Meaning* that will take place next year. This Autumn, I am trying out the ideas and working methods with two of the three performers from the team. The second performer Michael Norlind will also come and work with us at c.off during some days in the end of the period.

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24th of September the working Cecilia and Mertcan's working process will be the starting point for our very first bransch\_brunch.

More info about [bransch\\_brunch](#) and [facebook event](#)