

Adopting the gestures of others or how to invent a bodily language

Lecture-Performance/ NSU Winter Symposium¹

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I inhabit a white middle-aged and sensitive body. *This body* hasn't been always in its best shape, but it has gone through a multitude of trainings: from the more sports-oriented ones such as tennis, swimming, gymnastics, surfing and sailing, to the more expressive ones such as dancing, acrobatics and acting and finally to the more spiritual ones such as yoga and the 5 rhythms. The motto of all these trainings was always: overcome your limitations, express your most inner self and keep moving, no matter how and where! Now, *this body* is so enriched with so many somatic experiences, so many moments of glory, but also of despair and pain (how do yogues say: "pain is your best teacher") and with so many stories to tell! (long exhale...) But there is one story, that *this body* would like to tell you.

It happened on a sunny day during winter; one of these days where you could stay at least for an hour outside without freezing. On this day, *this body* gave me a clear sign that it wanted to leave the university building. As I had already committed to do some observations at the so called *Götaplatsen*, I decided to follow its sign. For those who doesn't know the *Götaplatsen* (images of the postcards); follows a quote from Wikipedia: 'it is a public square in Gothenburg, Sweden, at the southern end of Avenyn, the city's main boulevard. The square was inaugurated when Gothenburg held a major international industrial exhibition (*Jubileumsutställningen*) in 1923, celebrating the city's 300th anniversary. *Götaplatsen* is Gothenburg's cultural hub, enclosed by the *Konserthuset*, *Stadtsteater*, *Göteborgs Konstmuseum* and *Stadtsbibliothek*. At the center of the square presides the Poseidon statue by Carl Milles – the statue has become one of the symbols of the city'.

This body was standing in front of Poseidon who according to the observations that I had made so far, instigates mainly two kinds of behaviors: either the people want to take a

¹ This lecture-performance is inspired on the format of a [TED Talk \(https://www.ted.com\)](https://www.ted.com). This is the reason why I have decided to keep it here in its original version and full length.

picture with him by incorporating his grace and presence or they want to climb on him. Either way, Poseidon never stays alone for a long time and on this day, he was almost jostled by a bunch of people rushing to the *Konserthuset*. These people were quite different than as usual, younger and apparently coming from all different places. Also, the overall rhythm of *Götaplatsen* seemed different and maybe more like 'staccato' (in the 5 rhythms, staccato stands for decisive, precise and clear movements like these ones – short demonstration). So, *this body* had no idea what was going on and after a while, I decided again to follow its sign.

While *this body* was trying to find the best spot to continue the observations, it started to hear a variety of intriguing ideas like:

- Do you live the life of your dreams?
- The importance of failure and of NOT GETTING IT!
- Life is a one-way ticket.
- How are you going to talk about porn?
- Magic is the only honest profession
- Sweden is the most individualistic society in the world

All these ideas, provoked some interesting reactions in this *this body*. Sometimes, it felt a 'tingle in the belly', sometimes a deep sense of communion or of compassion towards the body on stage and sometimes a strong wish for standing up and for leaving the room..., but wait: what was again the reason for being here? Which were again my research questions? (they appear on the screen)

After hearing all that, you might wonder what is the purpose of this talk? What is *this body* trying to say or even, to change? Definitely it isn't trying to change the powerful ability of perceiving and seeing an environment. Nor, it isn't trying to change the ways in which we encounter the wonders of life. But, when it comes to the question of how can the body locate, position and embed itself in an environment, it might be that new skills are required. *This body* would claim that a more attentive, open and responsive state is needed when engaging with an environment. The training of such a state would not only enhance the sensorimotor capabilities of the body, but also its ways of affecting and responding to the manifestations

of an environment. Thus, this type of psychophysical engagement can be seen as a site-specific practice in which the space is explored through a rather somatic approach.

For *this body*, this would mean that the internal and subtle layers of the body start to speak by activating an essential ability which unfortunately, has been increasingly forgotten: the instinct. Although, we as humans know what this word means, we often don't know how to access it and this has probably to do with the tendency of rationalizing everything we do. But before thinking about the allures and perils of this ability, *this body* would like to disclose this talk by referring to an act which can be considered as highly instinctive: documenting the nature, specifically certain species. This act doesn't entail only the endeavor of leaving one's own comfort zone by staying for example, for days and hours observing the behavior of a certain species in nature. It also demands that one knows exactly when and where to be so that the memorable picture can be taken. In this sense, follows here one of such pictures or one performative moment that enabled this talk.

Thank you very much for your attention!