

A VISION FOR PERFORMING ARTS BASED ON ECOLOGICAL DYNAMICS

Our home, the earth, Planet Earth, is calling out to us. If we succeed in activating our senses and reflect on our inherent connectedness with each other, with other species and with everything, we will create the radical social transformation, so needed for our mutual survival as creatures inhabiting the earth - for all living beings and entities.

We, who have initiated this writing, all operate and critically engage in the sphere of artistic practices termed 'performing arts'. We call for a new take on performing arts – radically – for the common good. Previous strategies rooted in dysfunctional structures based on economic rationality have reached a deadlock. To solve the problems of today and move into a more sustainable future we must allow new approaches rooted in ecological connectedness to emerge. This includes the sphere of performing arts.

REPA

We - as artists and other workers within the performing arts - call for and commit to performing arts based on ecological dynamics. By ecological dynamics we refer to knowledge of, respect for, and fertile co-existence with the dynamic relationship between all living organisms – from the smallest microbes to animals, humans, oceans, weather systems, and cosmic entities.

Ecological performing arts are conscious of and in resonance with the ecology of the living world (environmental ecology), the ecology of the human mind (mental ecology) and social ecology (human relations).

We want to engage in and commit to performing arts with regenerative effects on the state of the planet and with respect for the shared life conditions that all species and life forms inhabiting earth share.

We want to engage in and commit to performing arts that play an active role in society through exploring alternative ways of being and being together in the world, and through shaping visions for a society based on ecological principles.

We want to engage in and commit to performing arts that evolve organically and in close proximity to the life forms and conditions of our shared planet. That, rather than growth, focuses on the manifestation of a deep sense of connectedness, mutual well-being and the creation of criteria and possibilities for habitability on earth – for all species, all living entities.

We want to engage in and commit to performing arts that are sensuous, bodily present, challenging, caring and generous, developing and unfolding formats for artistic practice through aesthetic realization and immersion.

This means that:

We focus our efforts on understanding and exploring deeper relations with all living entities on earth through caring exchanges between humans and the living world which we depend upon. We commit to our mutual dependency.

We understand performing arts as a radically inclusive space for creating experiences and realizations of ecological connectedness. We move towards the creation of mutual caring relations and generosity towards and with everyone and everything that is in touch with the artistic work and creation.

We actively explore the relationship between art and society. We wish to meet people in new spaces, places and in new ways; in equal, diverse, and non-hierarchical relations. We ask who ‘the audience’ is and wish to challenge the positions of creation and participation through augmented awareness. Do the recipients and participants also include the origins, the surroundings, the place, which is involved and affected? In which ways is the surrounding living world a co-creating partner?

We want to challenge traditional notions of what an artwork is and point towards new ways of creating, showing and sharing performing arts: for instance through expanded notions of locations and temporalities. We are curious about vertical movements; what are the deeper levels and layers of place? How much should we interact with it? How long in time does ‘a piece’ last? What is necessary to create transformation? How can we work with different temporalities as an active element in the creation and experience of ‘a piece’? How deep can we go?

We wish to draw more attention to the potential of the fact that the life of ‘a piece’ always stretches beyond the moment of manifestation. How far can we go?

We want to do away with over-production, hyper-production, instrumentalization, competition and logics of growth in the performing arts systems. We want to continuously insist on well-being and regeneration and dialogue towards more mutual understanding of both our shared and different conditions for work in the sector and beyond. We long for regeneration in our own work situations and relations, and in society and the world at large. We see that this requires for art to be perceived as an ongoing and durational investigation/exploration and the concept of ‘a piece’ to be challenged so that the work of the artists is also supported, in a challenge of the more narrow focus on the (hyper)production of ‘pieces’.

We wish to support a shift from witnessing arts to participating in arts and onwards to inhabiting arts. We are curious to explore the sensuous and perceptual potentials of this expanded life.

Through this ecological perspective we want to challenge the way institutions perceive ‘a piece’ and ‘production’ so they too can develop ways of meeting artists and other art workers in equal relations based on a mutual interest in artistic development, new formats, experimental processes and ongoing artistic work processes.

We are working towards recognition of and respect for the artistic work and are curious to see what could happen within the performing arts sector if the resources were radically re-distributed between institutions and artists. We are curious to witness how ecological performing arts can partake in creating a better life for humans and all living beings on Planet Earth.

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This text was written in a response to a series of conversations that took place in the autumn and winter of 2022/2023 in what we have now termed *RØSK*: ‘Refleksionsrum for Økologisk SceneKunst (Ed. Danish) – or in English: REPA: Reflection-space for Ecological Performing Arts. *RØSK* is a gathering of artists, organizers, and researchers. This text embraces and unfolds our reflections and responses to performing arts based on ecological dynamics, and as a space for the creation of experiences and visions towards a more sustainable society and future through the arts. Together we have read relevant literature and reflected on the state of the world and the conditions of performing art. We have found inspiration, learning and knowledge from many sources in what we perceive to be a large interconnected movement, or sensuous revolution, that critiques and challenges the existing societal structures based on exploitation, growth, climate injustice, humans as the dominant species, etc. Instead, both traditional and new value systems are explored and re-learned with a focus on dialogue with the entire living world and its inhabitants – Ecological dynamics. The writing process has been collective, and the text includes several voices. It is our hope that this text can inspire conversations within the performing arts sector and instigate curiosity towards new positions and possibilities.

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