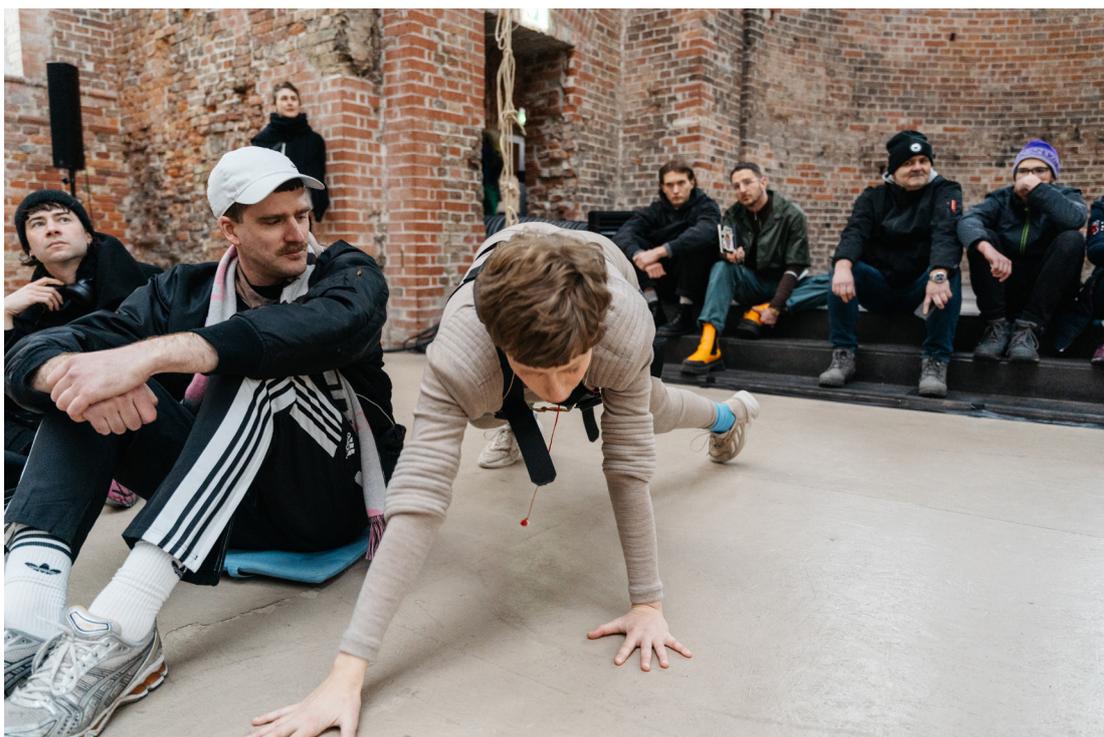


Hybrid Offsprings

'Oiseau' by La Cage company foretells a possible future after the disappearance of birds. I joined to see the performance on the 25th of February and experienced a transformative journey of human-bird hybrids. I felt as if I as well underwent a certain surgical procedure under the performance's knife, and upon starting to write I am at once faced with the challenge of how to write from my new and altered body. The text that I write intends to plait my reflections and the performance into one legible braid that hopefully manages to contain all the multi-faceted complexity of 'Oiseau'.

To begin simply, the performance took place at the St. Elisabeth church in Berlin, with an all-around sound system surrounding the audience with a cacophonous, yet harmonious, soundscape of birds. Ropes are dangling from the ceiling like entangled branches of trees, and the audience is free to roam around the performance venue. There are three performers, Jessica Gadani, Josefine Müller, and Antoine Sarrazin, moving around and in between the audience: their movements gesticulated, articulated, and un-normative. Giving me an impression of a game played by the involuntary movements of the body mixed with a curiosity of getting to know one's habitat. When one performer is tapping the wall next to me with her elbows, I am reminded of Donna Haraway's cyborgs, namely Camille: a human and non-human symbiont. For Haraway, Camille is a keeper of memories in her flesh by becoming one of the actively threatened species. The curious physicality of the performers at times seemingly exaggerated sends me off to a bird-humanoid world, where the performers are carrying in their bodies the knowledge of the already extinct or threatened birds.

Watching these three bird-like critters explore the space with movement and sound, the space begins to feel full of life and joy. With a child-like curiosity, they treat the audience the same as the space – I notice being engraved as part of this ecosystem that is being brought to life through their exploration. And how this exploration of getting to know shifts into the feeling of being home, of living in a place.



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The performance takes me on a cyclical journey of perhaps what it is to be a bird-like critter for one day and night. Starting from the explorative movement of the performers, the performance then shifts to a fashion show of garments exaggerating the bird's outer features. Reminding me of the game mix and match and mating displays. Now, it is not only human-bird symbionts, but different birds becoming symbionts with one another and the human, existing in multitude. After the display, the performers teach the audience how to imitate bird sounds. The light dims outside through the windows and my eyes relax. It feels like we have come full circle. Starting from the morning, from "waking up" (getting to know), parading and mating (becoming interspecies), passing on knowledge (learning and growing), and now at nightfall we restart but changed. The night of the performance runs faster than the day, the previous events inter-lapping, tangling, and weaving onto one another. The fashion elements, singing, and dancing come back to co-existing. Like in a dream, my perception is different: the lack of light blurs the sameness of what I already saw into a difference and so into something else. At the end the performers lie on the floor, breathing and spreading their arms, up and down like waves in the ocean. This simultaneity of the verticality and horizontality in a bird's flight arrives to me as a release, rest, and liberation.

The end weaves an intricate tapestry of connections and experiences. Birds perhaps symbolically blur our limits of understanding by literally gliding beyond, using the air currents. Co-existing in the vertical and the horizontal planes.

I'd like to perceive 'Oiseau' as a current fable. I learned not only how to imitate the sounds of birds, but a deeper lesson that conjoins with Bruno Latour's understanding of living in the Anthropocene. A shift, where nature becomes the protagonist, not us, not humans as we are. The soundscape of 'Oiseau' made by Michael Rauter, became the protagonist of the work and the central figure from where possible interconnections and -meanings can freely spiral inside to take form. The choreography of Aliénor Dauchez manifested how these connections can form into fluid hybrids.



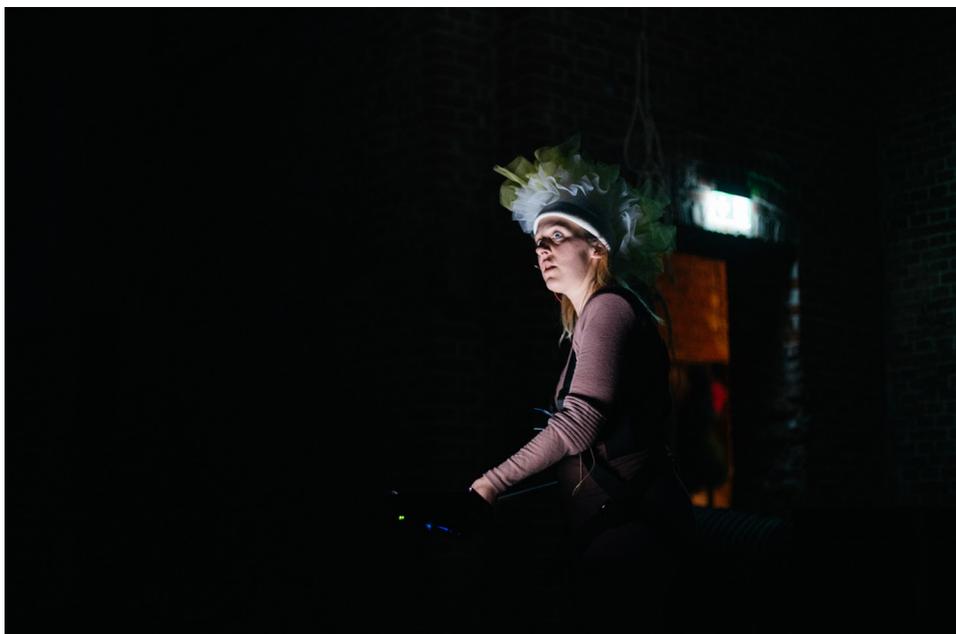
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Though the work handled the issues of extinction, I didn't experience the performance as a slaughterhouse of death, but rather as a joyful playground of disappearance. Latour's anthropogenic policies urge us to return to earth and to become "earthlings". The cyborg birds brought to the ground- and to my eye level opened the question: How do we keep on remembering these extinct birds? 'Oiseau' by revealing embodied hybrids, gave a suggestion of the body being an archive. A line of thought to transform our bodies and the endangered bodies so that they, and we, can keep on surviving in the memory of the flesh.

Knotting down the finishing of this text, I am reminded of one of the scenes. One of the performers was standing on the altar of the church, the vertical and the horizontal lines of the cross as her backdrop, wearing a feathery crown, singing:

"As days pass, your humanity is melting away.
As days pass, your humanity is burning away."
"The empty world is full of people"

The placement of extinction to a church, to the house of God, provided me with the last needed threads. Being a non-Christian myself, I associate church as a place of collective practice to remember one's connection to God. In the context of the performance, I'd like to suggest that in an earthling society, this house of God becomes a house of remembrance, where belief and hope are cultivated by critters. In Christianity bird is the symbol of the holy spirit: the creative force and giver of life. In 'Oiseau' the cyborg-bird becomes the holy spirit – and reassuringly the unconventional, fluid, transformative, hybrid, and symbiont bodies become the creative force and givers of life.



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