



„All about people 2021“- Digital transformation in Science, Education & Arts “ Conference

Session: dance and dance Education in a digital environment.

All the world's a stage

Oral presentation by Tatjana Christelbauer on March 19th 2021:

"Žalike: Webscape"- virtual multimedia art project

Good afternoon from Vienna!

Dear Prof. Secak, distinguished attendees, dear colleagues

It is my great pleasure today to present my virtual dance project "**Žalike**" at this stage of the conference!

Allow me before starting my presentation to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Secak and his team for the invitation to join the conference and to contribute with my presentation to such a comprehensive program!

My academic background is in sociology, cultural studies and international relations, so as my art education and practice that roots in modern dance, fine arts, visual arts, and literature has been continuously developed in interface with Humanities and International Relations. Artworks are therefore crafted with a socio-political response within diverse societal and cultural contexts.

Within the last 28 years, I have been working as a consultant and lecturer for intercultural education, gender & diversity issues, children rights, conflict management, art education, a.o. topics at the Lower Austrian Government, education department.

I have studied and worked for the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy Berlin ICD, the place where I could bring my research on Dance arts as a form of cultural diplomacy into discussions and on relevant stage in the field of international relations. Since 2016 I am leading the ACD-Agency for Cultural Diplomacy international association based in Vienna, as its founder and president. Since 2018 I also work as a museum educator with cultural institutions in Vienna and with Austrian libraries abroad.

I was one of the youngest members of the Smiljana Mandukic modern dance company in Belgrade during my study of Sociology, then from 2004-2012 I have studied and completed professional winter and summer intensive programs at the Martha Graham Contemporary Dance School in NYC and finalized my research on intercultural communication in dance arts education with a performance lecture presentation and Libretto for dance production "Perun and Dodola" connects natural powers with Slavic and American mythology.

In my presentation today, I am going to briefly introduce my virtual dance project "**Žalike**" also connected with mythology. The project has generated in three project development stages and is still in the developing process.

Žalike is a part of the project series that I have started in 2019 in Rio de Janeiro at Panamerican Modern Dance Congress where I was invited to create a dance performance lecture and introduce the concept of Dance arts in Sustainable development, mainly spotlighting gender issues and environmental protection.

By applying on sustainability discourse-mythological approach and by spotlighting on our shared European cultural heritage, I have found inspiration in the Alpine mythology from Slovenia, Austria and the Swiss: the wise women from the alps, known as Salige (in German) or as "**Žalik**" in Slovenian.

Mythology offers a wide range of motives for the creation of art projects. The timeline-shift from nowadays and from the real world into past and imaginative space, allows us to found ourselves in a fully unknown space which can be perceived as *Lifeworld* in which one finds some sort of freedom, in term of freedom by movement and all other forms of the communicative acts and expressions as an imaginative community in, co-existence.

The first stage attempt of the **Žalike**-Project took part in late 2019 with 5 dance artists that have started to create their solo works inspired by wise women from the Alpine mythology **Žalike** and mindfully moving within the overall thematic scope that includes environmental protection, gender, and diversity issues.

Such Art response to the current global discourses has been envisioned as a multimedia production consisting of 30' video spots with solo dances, Augmented reality stage, music composition, and photography.

The project development was interrupted in its early stage in March 2020, due to the Covid pandemic and is still in an ongoing process in its original form.

Followed by questions, that came into my mind during the first week in lockdown, I was looking for some simple solution: “how can individual daily art practice help us in sustaining challenging times and how can our team continue its practice in isolation?”

Asking my colleagues about their current “state of the art” and suggestions for our further meetings, the project has been relocated into virtual space with the thematic shift, from environmental sustainability to self-sustainability in challenging times #sustainable me. In this regard, I have created a closed Fb group and have invited the team to meet within this virtual space and support each other by an exchange about how each of us masters our daily life under the current restrictions, considering its effects on dance arts practice and work within a societal context, reflecting on effects of the lockdown on emotional state, relations at home, but also the effects of lockdown on our real existential affection. The impact of the “stillness and isolation” has been identified as challenging in two dimensions: restrictive, with negative effects on emotional state, that has manifested tensions in the body, eating disorders, raised conflict potential in communication within a family at home, but on the other hand, some new imaginative spaces and activities have been created, found, constructed, as a safe space, some sort of exile, mostly outside within the natural environment.

The meeting space in the Fb-group became a new landscape that could be “seeded” by exchanging daily practices documented in a form of short videos or photo images taken by a smartphone, adding comments on particular practice in German as our common language, but also used in English, Slovenian, Croatian by writing poems, using quotes of scientists that relate to particular individual activity, short stories, and mindful comments to shared works.

My suggestion for such a form of cooperation and creation of a virtual *Lifeworld* is connected with a scientific theory and concept of the philosopher Jürgen Habermas on *Lebenswelt* (Lifeworld).

Daily art practice has been perceived as an act of individual freedom and “Art of life” that have emancipatory effects on our individual, but also on our collective practice of art in challenging times. Here is a link to Michel Foucault’s concept of freedom as “art of life” explored by self- care-leading practices.

Our team have also followed and participated in the actual political dialogues and interventions initiated by representatives from art and cultural communities, to raise awareness about the necessity to open political stage for dialogue and ensure support for practitioners, communities and institutions from arts and culture as extremely affected in their existential status.

Our team have signed the petitions that have resulted in an effective support from the Austrian state by providing emerging funds and by ensuring further dialogues and interventions.

Our virtual project ended after a month of intensive daily communication, in agreement with all team members, to focus on their individual family life during the summer break. Our created, documented and exchanged practices have been documented in a short video done by smartphone and in a poster format that is composed of photo images taken by art practices, drawings, and mindful quotes, all connected in a multilingual landscape.

As a final act of our project, we have created and signed our C-19 ArtManifesto and shared this document via our social media pages and forwarded per email to governmental institutions and organizations in Austria, calling for action by suggesting capacity building among business sector, formal education, health-care, and all other sectors to connect with professionals from arts and create joint-efforts, open perspectives and create opportunities for engagement for mutual prosperity. In this regard, the initiative KuBiPa-COOPS for decent work has been announced via ACD-association media pages.

In the fall of 2020, our team have met again within a virtual space reflecting on summer, individual developments and we exchanged our further perspectives. My suggestion was to summarize our individual “best-off” practices that could have positive effects on emotional state and wellbeing during the first months in the lockdown, and to connect them in a bound to be practiced by wider audiences for diverse groups or individuals.

In a mutual agreement, individual contributions have been composed into Zalike -e-sessions, containing movement sequences, voice exercises and Talk sessions in diverse languages, depending on individual language heritage of our team members.

We are planning strategic cooperations with public institutions and health organizations but also with education communities and with private companies, to support their activities with our holistic practices. The program can be learned in 1-or two sessions and then applied for self-practice in daily life.

The program is currently on-demand within the ACD-association platform Art*Health and can be applied via ACD-media pages and our partners.

To summarize, all three developments of the initial project Zalike are crafted with two key terms: peaceful co-existence and sustainability, that our team has explored by enhancing the individual freedom due to the art practice and connecting in a variety of expressions within the one socio-political context.

On the first project stage, we have spotlighted on environmental sustainability connotated with gender roles, inspired by wise women from the Alpine mythology for the creation of the artistic expressions.

On the second development stage was a shift from environmental sustainability toward self-sustainability in challenging time and turn of the objective into the subject: environment as the previous objective became subjective, in its protective “role” and safe space for humans affected in their existence at all stages, including the creation of the virtual *Lifeworld* as a space for meeting and communicative acts of an imaginative community by exchange of individual practices that have been explored as acts of freedom of action by movement and

variety of expressions, with emancipatory effects on sustainable individuals in challenging times in a “real world”, that have restricted and affected individual and collective life arts practice and wellbeing.

Due to my personal life circumstances, such as war experience, migration, and starting new life within a new cultural landscape, I am used to acting in an emergency. Such an approach enables me currently to manage my personal but also my professional life. Applying on that concept means to learn to act “out of the structural societal frame and individually familiar context”, to “pick up some meaningful bricks from all around, even connecting controversial theories and concepts, opinions and actions and creating new frames, finding new self-contexts within diverse realities”.

Such challenging endeavor allows me to compose a space for transversal interferences among controversial theories, concepts, opinions that results in fluidity, its exchangeability and multiple functionalities.

Therefore, I am going to end my presentation with a “borrowed”, “picked-up”- and applied quote of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek to emphasize the point of my presentation as follows:

Meeting in a virtual Lifeworld and moving free across its multilingual landscape, (applied quote)^[1] “we feel free because, as art practitioners, we do not lack the very language to articulate our freedom.”

All the world is a stage, each movement is a language of freedom, svaki (plesni) pokret je zrnice slobode!

Thank you! Hvala Vam! Vielen Dank!