ON CHAT:
This is a structural experiment. / About presentation and re-presentation./ we are 5 people living in different places and that are, starting from their own interests, willing to discuss and create something. / This is a conference paper, / but it is also an attempt not to do a conference paper. Instead of showing you our aesthetic and performance results, / we decided to look back at our rehearsal archives and share re-enacted bits of this oh so fragile material to generate discussion.

/ Performing ethos and digital behavior: the genealogy of WEEP

/(or: performing in liquid times)

/Lino:

(Adri is looking to the audience.)

Lino (camera on, peels a fruit):
A young man in the US announced on the anonymous 4chan website that he wanted to commit suicide in front of the camera. 200 people signed up to watch it online. He swallowed a handful of pills, drank vodka and lit a fire in the corner of his room. The camera rolled, the fire got bigger and he crawled under the bed to type: 
"#imdead #omgimonfire" and "I'm f*ck3d."  (Aline camera on) Some viewers encouraged him during his suicide attempt. The victim was rushed to hospital with "serious but non-life-threatening injuries" caused by smoke inhalation.

(Lino tries the knife on his neck)

Aline (Camera on)
Hi, my name is Aline and I’m single...no, I’m going to start it again… I’m Aline, I have a dog, I’m 36 and I’m single and I was married once but it was over and i made a whole post about this last month and i don’t want to talk about this anymore ok?!... again...I’m Aline, I have a dog, 36, I’m an actress, I’m fucking single and I trying to kill myself during the last 3 years...so, this is my death strategie… I ate all my nails, half of my hair, four spoons, three knives, 5 forks, 3 pieces of glass, a cell phone, 7 apps, 3 love netflix series, 14 love songs and 54 fucking love poems

...at this very moment I thought about writing a suicide letter...(Ivan camera on) a huge suicide post about my act... a huge suicide post conference letter before i die...but for whom? who cares?.. shit! i’m going to start it again… hi, i’m aline… (leaves camera)
‘The Werther’s Effect e-Project’ puts together a group of international artists living in different cities, to discuss suicide and copycat phenomena influenced by online events. Having as first inspiration the classic “The Sorrows of the Young Werther” by Goethe, we want to approach the mysterious ways an event, or a product, or anything else influences suicide in contemporary times, leading to, sometimes, the extreme cases of copycat suicide chains, phenomenon known as the “Werther’s Effect”. Zygmunt Bauman’s notion of liquid modernity, liquid love, liquid times guides our process. His notion is based on the idea that the contemporary man lives in a nomad condition, shifting from one position to another, flowing like a tourist through its own life. Individualism becomes the word of order, excluding from our routine any traditional network of support, where sharing became a synonym for posting. By tackling this theme, we intend to raise questions about contemporary affects and ways of dealing with the ephemeral aspects of the digital life, tracing the propagation of information and the influences in our analogical and online behavior.

My practice based research looks at contemporary training methodologies for performance and theatre training.

In a nutshell, I am reconsidering the grounds of what Eugenio Barba denominated Theatre Anthropology by questioning what he called the pré-expressive recurring principles. These ‘recurring principles’ (in essence: altered balance, dynamic opposition, consistent inconsistency, reduction and equivalence) are investigated with precise reference to the metaphors and technical vocabulary of several world performance traditions. As Nigel Stewart notes, “Barba’s argument is that the principles of pre-expressivity enable one to find one’s kraft (power in Norwegian) in one’s craft, to negotiate and articulate that experience, forming a performer’s professional identity.”

This understanding of theatre based on a strong relation with training is also what encircles my practice background, which was filled with never ending hours of physical work locked in studios, sweating, creating this body of bent kneed presence, of resonators, of yoga and martial arts, very much in the now almost romantic style masters like Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba himself helped to promote. Training
has always been this sacred space, where we could put our guts out and transform them into expressive material.

now I'm looking at you interfaced by a computer, trying to understand what do I do with all this physical training, with this analogue notion of presence, when I throw it in a digital space.

Aline (rush back to camera)

...and i don't know what to do with my dog, he is sick and his name is otto sorrow...who is going to take care of him after my disappearance?... i’m a mess, i need to disappear, i can't handle this anymore i started to hear some voices again and i can't work and i can't concentrate anymore, i can’t sleep, i can’t disconnect myself anymore… the problem is i met this guy on tinder his tinder name is guilherme… we dated for a couple of times and i’m crazy about him but he is married and he has this kind of fucking open relationship and he has already a fucking dog called goethe and a fucking house and a fucking wife called charlotte who has 8 fucking little brothers and a fucking mother in law named ofelia who is dead by the way i saw the fucking pics on instagram and a fucking best friend called albert and a fucking silverware drawer… oh my god! who else has a fucking silverware drawer! … this is insane!

Ivan: Stop. Stop. Stop.

Adri cuts Aline's camera and sound.

Adri: Aline? Aline? (Aline brings back her camera and sound.) So what we're going to do is to try to to use your insanity in our favour, I'm going to start reading Werther's final letter and you see what you can do with it.

(lino with the big knife)

Adri reads:

"Past eleven o'clock! All is silent around me, and my soul is calm. I thank thee, O God, that thou bestowest strength and courage upon me in these last moments! I approach the window, I behold the stars which illumine the eternal heavens. No, you will not fall, celestial bodies: the hand of the Almighty supports both you and me! I have looked for the last time upon the constellation of the Greater Bear: it is my favourite star; for when I bade you farewell at night, Charlotte, and turned my steps from your door, it always shone upon me. With what rapture have I at times beheld it! How often have I implored
it with uplifted hands to witness my felicity! and even still -- But what object is there, Charlotte, which fails to summon up your image before me? Do you not surround me on all sides? and have I not, like a child, treasured up every trifle which you have consecrated by your touch? "Your profile, which was so dear to me, I return to you; and I pray you to preserve it. Thousands of kisses have I imprinted upon it, and a thousand times has it gladdened my heart on departing from and returning to my home.

(Aline interrupts Dri shifting her testimony in a decision to kill herself)  
(a big mess of conversations and discussions between us to see how we go on)

Adri + Ivan- talk about interruption in the process. Talk about the process.
References.

Ivan: The conditions set by the international composition of the group led us to begin to experiment with rehearsals online, specially Skype. After going trying a lot of different softwares, we have found this very business-like tool called gotoameeting which has resolved our rehearsals so far, before we all learn to work with more complex softwares.

Dri: Within my research work, I am looking for new possible recurring principles, which will dialogue better with hybrid creative processes. By means: processes that incorporate the digital space as creative platform as well. Through the rehearsals of the Werther's project, we saw ourselves dealing intensively with the notion of interruption. In a very outspoken way, interruption became part of our rehearsals routine, always disrupted by connection problems, by the fact it seems much harder to talk in a group when you do not have their physical presence mediating the conversation. Interruptions of 5 different environments we are participating at the same time. No more sweaty dark rehearsing rooms but instead, cyber cafes, living rooms, kitchens, offices, that constrain our bodies in an ordinary presence, in an ordinary relation with each other.

Ivan: The work of creating in these very ordinary spaces is, one must note, very different of working in hi-tech creative labs that many artistic spaces in Europe begin to open up for residencies. Questioning the possibilities of a highly interrupted process made us choose to invest on it, even though we know it makes it much harder.

Adri: The notion of interruption is of course no novelty in theatre. As a practice already defended by Brecht's epic theatre, it is a technique that helps theatre to unfold repressed content within representation. It allows the immanent potential of disruption to flourish. It questions the here and now, allowing the present moment to unfold its potentialities.
Walter Benjamin for example argues that “the purpose of interruption is to enable the theatre to [discover] rather than ‘reproduce’ situations, to represent them by uncovering the materiality of social conditions” introducing “consciousness of the present into the theatre experience” (Kear: 2004-99)

Now, what he was not considering at that time is the impact technology could have on this process. That interruption could potentially become a much more fragile technique (and because of that, much more powerful), because of the still so uncertain connection we have with the virtual world. Besides, that is this very concrete point of understanding interruption as an embodied experience, a technique based on chance which affects our experience of encounter, our experience of creating. The media we are dealing with, even though they are already an inevitable part of our routines, disrupted our very notion of presence.

You see, when you use virtual/ digital tools to engage with a creative process, you do end up becoming dependant on it. Different of in Brecht's epic theatre strategies, interruption in this case is an agent I do not control.

If, as Benjamin argues, interruption is a tool to uncover the present's truth on stage, what sort of repressed content are we disclosing when we face interruption as a tool working against the creative process? What sort of consequences these interruptions produce in our embodied experience of the artistic process?

Lino introduces his project ‘The affectionate love life in Norway’ - Lino with rope, strangles himself.
(Aline walks and reads some papers)

In 2012, I began a project called The Affectionate Life In Norway. It consists on a series of 54 handwritten letters with three pages each, addressed to Norwegians I don't know. About 4 years ago I was single and feeling really lonely. Meeting people who I felt connected with was quite hard and every possibility I found was through apps of social networks - Grindr, Tinder, Hornet, Facebook and so on. But I just did not fit in. It was very hard for me to open myself to people in a virtual platform where I could not feel the body and the chemical connection to the other. I, then, decided to ask people in Norway if they were going through the same issues. The country always sounded very much ahead of the rest of the World in many human issues. But no one on facebook ever answered. For that I thought I should be more personal. So I decided to write letters. I selected 54 names on a online address book and I've been, since then, writing the letters and making presents to my potentially future friends. As I advanced on the
writing I discovered new ways to express myself. My research led me to a type of performance where the letters are in series and do not end in themselves, interrupting the feeling that a letter should have an end. These letters are stimulating the receivers to look for other receivers to complete the stories they get. The performance won't be completed unless they meet.

(Lino Off Screen)

Aline continue reading the letter (google translate)

Adri is crushing the papers on her hands.

"I have implored your father to protect my remains. At the corner of the churchyard, looking toward the fields, there are two lime-trees -- there I wish to lie. Your father can, and doubtless will, do this much for his friend. Implore it of him. But perhaps pious Christians will not choose that their bodies should be buried near the corpse of a poor, unhappy wretch like me. Then let me be laid in some remote valley, or near the highway, where the priest and Levite may bless themselves as they pass by my tomb, whilst the Samaritan will shed a tear for my fate.

"See, Charlotte, I do not shudder to take the cold and fatal cup, from which I shall drink the draught of death. Your hand presents it to me, and I do not tremble. All, all is now concluded: the wishes and the hopes of my existence are fulfilled. With cold, unflinching hand I knock at the brazen portals of Death. Oh, that I had enjoyed the bliss of dying for you! how gladly would I have sacrificed myself for you; Charlotte! And could I but restore peace and joy to your bosom, with what resolution, with what joy, would I not meet my fate! But it is the lot of only a chosen few to shed their blood for their friends, and by their death to augment, a thousand times, the happiness of those by whom they are beloved.

Escrevi um bilhete ao seu pai, pedindo-lhe que proteja meu corpo. No cemitério, bem ao fundo, no canto que dá para o campo, há duas tiliás: é lá que desejo repousar. Ele poderá fazer isso, há de fazê-lo pelo seu amigo. Peça-lho também! Não exigirei dos piedosos cristãos que deixem depositar seus corpos ao lado de um infeliz! Ah! eu queria que me enterrassem à beira da estrada, ou no vale solitário! Ao passar, o sacrificador e o levita haveriam de persignar-se diante da pedra que marcaria o meu túmulo, e o Samaritano me concederia uma lagrima. -

Veja, Carlota, que não tremo ao pegar a fria e terrível taça por onde quero beber a embriaguez da morte! É você quem ma apresenta e eu não hesito um só momento. É
assim que se consumam todos os votos, todas as esperanças da minha vida, todas! Quero bater, gelado e rígido, à porta de bronze da morte!

Se eu tivesse alcançado a ventura de morrer, de sacrificar-me por você, Carlota! Eu morreria corajosamente, e com que alegria, se pudesse restituir-lhe o repouso e a felicidade! Mas, ai de mim, a muito poucas e nobres criaturas é dado derramar o sangue pelos seus e, com a morte, iluminar uma vida nova e centuplicada para aqueles que amam!

(Aline disappears)
(Ivan pauses before going on)

**Ivan:** Through interfaces, the computer converts electrical pulses in a complex symbolic system, a kind of mediation that has been modifying our sensibility, our perception and our cognition.

The “Interface Culture” allows the co-existence in hybrid spaces, artists can freely explore the relationship between human and computer.

We started asking ourselves about the theater presence in this context and then we confronted a more problematic question: what is the ethos of the performer, driven by different creative and corporeal models, rooted in a digital environment?

**Adriana:** We want to conclude being honest about the experience. We are not producing here a formal academic paper, but trying to bring concrete the problems we are facing and our findings, bringing in debate also the possibilities for practice-based researchers to address conferences.

**Ivan:** Despite the distances, the digital space is allowing us to engage in a creative project. On one hand, we notice a new way of understanding creative fruition, an interrupted fruition of communication, where much can be said with few words. Our encounters and our very notion of performative encounter has been shaped by a very concrete understanding of what a Deleuzian assemblage means. We encounter each other through windows of time and space that do not correspond with the linearity of our routines.

**Adri:** Besides, we have chosen to face this investigation as a bold non-edited experience of our relation with the platforms we are using. Which brings an interesting discussion about to the notion of mimesis in the digital space. These apparatuses interfaced by camera, sound, live chatting and so on try make us believe in a high-
fidelity capturing of reality. It is pertinent to say that, in relation to mimesis, the standard of authenticity these technologies are trying to sell puts in question the assumption of construction of verisimilitude created from the texture of the performer's actions, transferring this responsibility to the electronic instruments that reproduce them and to the edition of the same.

For this reason, we decided also to structure a non-edited notation system, that would reflect the interruptive and disruptive nature of our process. The good old notebook became useless, we went after contemporary notation studies, mostly in dance. Studies like the Willian Forsythe's motion bank initiative, but the notion of movement and creation we are dealing with does not fit dance notation. In a very natural way, we started to create a collaborative chat structure, which is a flow of thoughts, emojis and references that are, in consequence, being assimilated as part of our dramaturgy strategy.

On the other hand, Ivan, our director, feels blind directing us, there is never a clear understanding of the final mise-en-scene while rehearsing and we only manage to understand what we are doing when we finally manage to meet in the same space. We performers feel handicap without the real contact with each other, out of our technical comfort zone; Kleoni our digital artist/ scriptwriter can't sleep properly because of all the dreaming about live streaming she's been experiencing.

(Lino returns)

Ivan: So we are indeed discovering many new things, a whole new way of working which, going a bit against the performative education we've had, seems much more in agreement with contemporary mass behaviour.
Aline: So this is in a way a sort of experiment on mass behaviour.
Adri: On mass love behaviour.
Ivan: On what Zygmunt Bauman calls liquid love.
Lino: This is a liquid performance.
Adri: This is a liquid rehearsal. (camera off)
Ivan: This is a liquid paper. (camera off)

Lino:

These are my last wishes.
I wish, Charlotte, to be buried in the dress I wear at present: it has been rendered sacred by your touch. I do not wish my pockets to be searched. I wish I can use the knot of pink ribbon which you wore on your bosom the first time I saw you, surrounded by the
children -- I wish I could kiss them a thousand times and tell them the fate of their unhappy friend! I wish I could see them playing around me. The dear children! How warmly have I been attached to you, Charlotte! I wish, since the first hour I saw you, I was strong to leave you. The pink ribbon must be buried with me: it was a present from you on my birthday. How confused it all appears! I wish I did more. I wish I was greater. I wish I had more peace. I wish you pray for me. I wish peace. I wish peace.

I wish I had a loaded gun. I wish the clock was striking twelve. I wish you were saying amen. Say Amen. Amen.

(Aline throws the cutlery)  
(telephone rings for Lino, he pick up)  
(Aline turns camera off)  

on chat: Thank you