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In November 2019, we had the possibility to research intensively on aesthetic performative rituals by questioning the following:

- What is a ritual?
- Where do we find rituals in everyday life? What rituals do we know from our culture and/or those from others?
- How is a ritual structured?

We aimed at tryouts both in nature and in an urban setting. A residency in the "Schützenhaus" in Wehlen (Germany) situated in the countryside of Saxonia provided us with nature and a studio house in Berlin Pankow with the city environment.

During our stay in Wehlen, we approached the subject from various perspectives. The remoteness and simplicity of the place allowed us to dive into the topic intensively, trying

out different arrangements together. Each of us sketched a 90-minute score, which invited the others to action, forms of movement and sensual experiences: a meditative walk in silence to observe the river Elbe, an imaginary bonfire to sit by and "tune in as a group" by using our voices.

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In the second week, we continued our performative and discursive research in the city, a studio house in Berlin Pankow. This "Plattenbau", a remnant from the GDR times was built as a diplomatic hotel in the 1980s but never used as such. Instead, it was handed over to the GDR Academy of Sciences. The scientists moved out in the early 1990s and in 2004 the property went to the real estate fund. This building is still in transformation to become a studio house, so it was a perfect place for our work.

Our focus was on the history of the building, its atmospheres and sounds. By using a performative score, we explored the space individually to discover its potential for an aesthetic performative ritual. The building complex consists of five interconnected blocks, the last block completely empty. Traces of the past could still be seen, the arrival of artists was





imminent. This atmosphere was ideal for a public ritual on "Letting go of the lost".

The performance we co-created combined our research results and findings from both Wehlen and Berlin Pankow. Its structure was based on the three stages of a ritual: separation, liminality and the incubation phase. Furthermore, we hoped to combine both, nature with its tranquility that we found in Wehlen and the modern urban life we faced in Berlin. We designed a mandala made of differently colored autumn leaves and for the technological component we included "Siri", the mobile app voice.

The studio was transformed into a room of silence and the rules of this shared space could be read on the wall. As an entrance to the ritual, we used voice and the group building techniques from Wehlen such as the imaginary bonfire. voice. Our intention was to invite the participants to find their personal topic to let go off. Following this first stage, we silently guided

the participants through the endless building corridors. Their attention was directed at the atmosphere, the smell and sound of the building. Every door we went through represented another threshold, emphasized by the live sound of a trumpet. In the last empty part of the building there was an encounter with an "oracle", a ghostly figure. The oracle marked the climax of the liminal phase by giving each participant a symbolic object. This edible token represented the personal topic each participant wanted to release. Everything was deliberately a bit puzzling before the situation changed into a more playful atmosphere. Simple music instruments were shared and everyone was invited to sing, play and dance on the way back to the room of silence. Here we ended the ritual by eating the token and dissolving the mandala all together. To linger out of the ritual we spent ten minutes of silence to integrate the experience.



The feedback we received in the subsequent conversation was very positive and productive. Some questions we asked ourselves in the research process also came up here. It

was noteworthy that three people shared their experiences of always having difficulties engaging in performances, but felt the ritual as a benevolent invitation and, despite the high level of participation, always felt safe.

This spring we are preparing a site-specific wandering performance in a part of Esbjerg, which is on the so-called "ghetto list". "Næste Station Stengårdsvej" is realized in the framework of "Statens Kunstfond+6705 Esbjerg". We are very thankful that we can use the experiences from the research laboratory as a common reservoir of knowledge. We will implement the structure of a ritual to deepen the experience of immersion in our performance and blur the division of the performer and the audience.

