

We, the Three of Us: Repertoire of Objects

In the summer of 2023, I created a testing round of a performance situation for one visitor and two artists. Titled “We, the three of us”, the situation aimed to connect most of the objects we created (including a few extra, and excluding one) into a 20-minute-long experience of being physically lost in the body of research. The objects included belly extensions, heavy pillows, a collective costume, iPads with recordings of situations, a yoga mat, a tea set, a painful tool, an MP3 player with sound, and a scaled-down map. The objects were placed on a map with the 4.5m x 5m dimensions, where instructions in the form of stories were printed. Each performance invited one visitor to the situation of two artists explaining their research project, and visitors were allowed to enter the field of this research represented by the map and the objects. Here, they could navigate themselves as they wished - they could decide to follow the stories, they could interact with the objects, they could ask us more questions and further guidelines. We were present on the map with them and after the introduction was done, we tried to interact as little as possible to give all agency to the visitor. After the first three performances and their visitors’ feedback, we decided to emphasize the role of the visitor and give them more power. They were asked to place the bodies of artists (of us) on the map as they wish.

In the previous stages of *Becoming Monika*, we used and created objects to emphasise one’s body or one’s own materiality, with a view to bring the abstract topic of “we” back to a human scale. We wanted to perform a practice of becoming we, and to do this we had to act as “we”, not as “I”. For workshops in the framework of *It’s All About Education... Again* (2022), we created a concrete object—The Grater—to trigger a personal flow of association while listening to short utterances. The objects in the installations *The Summer School of We* (2022) and *Monica’s Training Room* (2022) were situated in order to stress the physical presence of the visitor inside the museum/art space. Here, the conventions of recognition of the object follow the “whitecube” corpus of knowledge: isolated from reality by the white walls of whitecube, whatever is placed there loses function and becomes an object of art (O’Doherty 1986: 14), which we tried to disturb through attention to placement and form. In the videos or performances, objects were used rather as props or as costumes in a conventional sense—to be used to illustrate the narrative, to aesthetically and materially support situations and actions, with no agency when not in use.

In *We, The Three Of Us*, the bodies of two artists and one visitor entered the map, where texts, things, and other humans were positioned and were invited to delve into conversation with the research topic. With time limited to 20 minutes and space defined by the map, an artist’s body became equal to objects made by them. This performative situation still needs to be developed more with a focus on precise instructions and atmosphere yet its first five iterations explored the potential for objects to be used as keystones of the world of Monika. Again, this changed my initial approach to the object as such: regardless of latent role or prescribed use, the object created rules in the world of the research. In other words, the objects generated their own agency.