

Katerina Valdivia Bruch
bangaloREsident @ Natya & STEM Dance Kampni

6. November 2016 – 24. Januar 2017

India was not new to me. I visited the South of India in 2015, rented a flat in Mysore and spent the time working remotely and taking lots of Yoga lessons. I also went to Kochi to the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, enjoyed the sea in Gokarna and made a short trip to Bangalore. I already knew some local artists I had met in Berlin, and made new friends while in India. It was also not my first international project and not the first residency programme I had been involved in. What was new was the chance to develop a creative project in India, which offered me a great opportunity to explore dance and the use of the public space.

The public space as a stage



Video dance workshop participants at National Military Memorial Park. Photo: Pranab Patel

The focus of my residency was dance in public spaces. And, in order to get in touch with the local artist community, I organised a [video dance workshop in the public space](#), which was run in collaboration with Natya Institute of Kathak & Choreography and Jaaga DNA, supported by Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan, Bangalore. The workshop took place in three locations: National Military Memorial Park, the campus of Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath College of Arts and Cubbon Park.



Chethan P. und Adrika Subhash tanzen im Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath Campus
Video Still © Katerina Valdivia Bruch

Over the space of three days, 18 workshop participants from the fields of visual arts, photography, film, video and dance, shot dance videos in public spaces in Bangalore. While we were on the streets, people stopped, took selfies or just watched what was going on. We even did a flash mob that took some guards, passers-by and bus drivers by surprise.



Flashmob close to Cubbon Park. Performers from top left to bottom right:
Yonitha Jain, Chethan P., Abhilekha Renuka Erubothu, Adrika Subhash, Nidhi Shah
Video still © Katerina Valdivia Bruch

At the beginning, the dancers were not sure about what they could do in the spaces available to them. Some of them even counted their movements, as if it were a proper choreography. Little by little, they started to enjoy the space, performing and exploring the architectural structures. For the video makers, it was also their first time working in such a setting. They all shot the same dancer, instead of working in different groups. But, after a while, they started to focus on one or two dancers and develop their own visual stories. The results were really amazing for the short time they had! After three days, the participants created a video that was shown to the public on the last day of the workshop.

Here you can see the final works by the workshop participants:

<https://vimeo.com/channels/1171201>



Editing the videos at Natya Institute of Kathak & Choreography
From left to right: Karthikeyan Gopinathan and Katerina Valdivia Bruch
Photo © Katerina Valdivia Bruch

My experience at Natya Institute of Kathak & Choreography

Madhu Nataraj, director of Natya Institute of Kathak & Choreography and Natya & STEM Dance Kampni, opened both the doors of her institution and her home. From the moment I arrived, we had long and interesting talks and not just on dance, but also on life, being an artist, a performer and a woman in a particular context, such as India or Germany. She was always keen to introduce me to both Indian contemporary and traditional dances, took me to some local performances and gave me some books about the contemporary dance scene in India and its protagonists.

Teaching Modern Dance technique

During my residency at Natya, I taught Modern Dance to the B.A. and the Diploma in Choreography students. After a short introduction on the history of Modern Dance, I gave classes based on Limón technique, which included some sequences that were developed over a period of time. The focus was on technique and less on choreography, but I wanted the dancers to improvise on the material they learned in class. The idea was to understand the exercises and make them their own. This meant that they embodied the movement and not only copied or reproduced what they saw in class, but also did their own choreography. In order to achieve this, I gave them 10 to 15 minutes before finishing the lesson to let them create their own piece with what we had been working on that day. The group was enthusiastic and very engaged. Some of them took notes, others asked about the music I was using for the class. Some even invited their parents to come and see the class demonstration we organised for the teachers at Natya.



Students creating their own choreography based on what they learned in class.
Video stills © Katerina Valdivia Bruch

Kampni Kutcheri “Creating new audiences for dance”

Each month, Natya STEM Studio organises Kampni Kutcheri, a chamber concert series with performances and talks. I was invited to be part of the session on 7th January 2017. The evening, a sharing with Bharatanatyam dancer Keerthana Ravi, explored the topic of creating new audiences for dance. In my case, I referred to the use of public spaces in order to attract an audience that might not be familiar with contemporary dance, and spoke about my previous interdisciplinary collaborations with experimental musicians, dancers and visual artists.



Presentation during Kampni Kutcheri | Photo: Ramya Nagaraj

Shooting the dance video (in)visible

Another main focus of my residency was developing a dance video in the public space. Once again, I prepared myself to deal with the local bureaucracy (or is it maybe *bureaucrazy?*) in Bangalore, as I had already asked for several permits to shoot in public spaces for the video dance workshop. However, this was a particular case. Freedom Park, now a place of leisure, used to be Bangalore's Central Jail and it is a space full of painful stories. Our video also needed an aerial shot with a drone, which made it all the more complicated. It took several letters, but in the end we got permission to shoot for three days, early in the morning.

We had a few rehearsals with the dancers of Natya & STEM Dance Kampni. We improvised on the following topics: habits, childhood memories, carrying objects and restriction and/or discipline of the body in public spaces, on the streets, at school and at home. Although we did not have much time to rehearse, we had enough material to create a video and explore the space through movement during the video shoots.



Video still of *(in)visible*. Performer: Tejesh Kumar M | © Katerina Valdivia Bruch

Final presentation and premiere of the video (in)visible at Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore

My final presentation on 24th January 2017 was an event dedicated to the discipline of the body, the use of the public space and architecture. It was also the premiere of the dance video [\(in\)visible](#) and included a screening with a selection of videos created by my students during the workshop. I also gave a talk on the discipline of the body and how my research on this issue led to the creation of the dance video.



Images of the final presentation | Photos: Lars Meese © Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore

During my talk, I presented some examples of the discipline of the body through punishment, control and/or restriction of movement at home, in public institutions, on the streets and in the workplace. The basis for this was Michel Foucault's book "Discipline and Punish", which is about the birth of the penal system.

Part of the evening's programme included putting the audience in a situation involving the kind of discipline they face in daily life. The audience had to perform various tasks that have become 'normal' in public spaces, such as having their personal belongings checked before entering a shopping mall, the metro or a public institution, being divided into two groups according to their gender in a heteronormative way – the binary male or female, excluding other options – in airports or on public transportation, switching off their digital devices, or not being allowed to smoke or use their mobile phones throughout the whole event. And, to really emphasise the point, the audience had to stand up and sing the Indian national anthem before the video screening started, in line with current law that applies to all cinemas in India.

Final remarks

It was quite a productive and intense time. And time is a factor that is very important to me. Residencies allow you to use time in a creative way, which is a gift nowadays. After the residency, I had some time to see Natya & STEM Dance Kampni performing, take a dance workshop at Shoonya – Centre for Art and Somatic Practices, and was also able to take a

master class, listen to conferences on dance, and watch some dance films and performances during the Attakalari India Biennial. And in December 2016 I went to the opening of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. The outcome was an article, entitled [The Kochi-Muziris Biennale: In the Eye of the Beholder](#), for Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Delhi.



Natya & STEM Dance Kampni performing at Ravindra Kalakshetra
Photo © Katerina Valdivia Bruch

Residencies are for creating and expanding networks and horizons, but also for making new friends. The residency period ended, but during that time I met wonderful people with whom I am still in touch. The visual artist Priyadarshini John, for instance, whom I met during the video dance workshop. We are organising the project CorresponDances, a life performance with visuals, which will take place in Berlin this summer. We already collaborated with her on three dance videos in Bangalore. The video [this dream I had about being a tree](#) was screened twice already, at Natya Institute of Kathak & Choreography (7.1. 2017) and at Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore (24.1.2017).

Rajesh TK, another workshop participant (who is also a Bharatanatyam performer) and one of the camera team members during the shoot at Freedom Park, is also creating a new dance video that we will present in Berlin during CorresponDances.

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Katerina Valdivia Bruch
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