

A hand reaches out from the right side of the frame, touching a large, glowing yellow sphere. The background is dark with some blue light sources. The text is overlaid on the image.

Notes from the Desert

The making of a performance by post

Text: Chiara Bersani

1.

F, at the wheel, suddenly asked me one day
– But did you feel it coming?

By 'you', F was referring to the artists, by it to the pandemic.

– I don't know, but we were already talking about the end of the world. About extinction.

– But that was because of Greta.

– No, it was before. Greta brought the anger and the action. We were paralyzed. We looked up at the sky terrified, as the clouds grew dense.

F believes that artists must anticipate history.

F expects it of artists.

The day we were locked in the house, the day my body emptied itself of everything, F told me

– You have to find a method.

That was about work. F is strict with artists, saying

– It's too easy to wait for the end. You have to talk about this time now.

Talk about the tornado while sitting in the middle of its eye. The still air below me, the catastrophe walling us in. What a strange position, what a distorted perspective. How can one analyze events from here?

2.

Maybe now we are at the end of the demise, or at least it seems that way since we started to say to each other, upon meeting in the street

– I am vaccinated, are you? Do you think we can hug each other now?

Last week I returned to a rehearsal space and thought the following: there is too much movement inside me now. Everything is hectic and unrestrained. All I can do is stand still in the space, feel the temperature as it rises and allow my light to come out of the explosion.

This is my somatic practice of 2021: feed the explosion and reverberate with it. Be a dying star.

– Yes, F, we felt it coming. It was 2017 when M and I first used this definition for ourselves. Dying stars.

Yet at the time we were so alive.

3.

During the months locked in my house, my body became immobile.



As if I had broken a bone.

As if I had pneumonia.

– You've never talked so much about osteogenesis and yourself as a disabled woman as you have since the beginning of the pandemic.

I don't remember who said it anymore, or if there was a hint of criticism in that remark, but it's true. Before 2019 I always talked about my body as a fact among others, food for political thought and little more.

There was shyness in me, and also a desire to shift one's gaze elsewhere, to be free also not to talk about it.

Or perhaps my fear and my anger were only well organized in an aquarium.

Maybe I needed the images of the Tennessee anti-lockdown protesters as they marched under the slogan "Sacrifice the Weak / Reopen Tennessee". I needed to read aloud, in a rough voice on an independent trans-feminist radio station, the guidelines disseminated by SIAARTI – Società Italiana Anestesia, Analgesia, Rianimazione e Terapia Intensiva – on how



Since 2005 she has always called me Sirena.

It was nice to watch each other grow. To witness our mutual entry into the world. Choosing paths, and also deviating from them. And then finding each other again, talking from different and connecting positions. Derailing each other occasionally. Leaving, returning, giving each other pieces of the world, bringing shells with us.

Eva Neklyaeva is one of those shells that you put to your ear looking for the sea, but then you find a secret sound that you cannot describe with words.

Lisa introduced me to Eva when they came to see my performance "Good-night, Peeping Tom" together. It was 2016, she was laughing, leaning against the wall of that desecrated

to choose who took priority in case of a lack of intensive care beds.

Maybe I needed to first sense how the propaganda attacked my body, took possession of the term fragile, deprived it of all the pride with which I had always defined it, and turned it into a weapon for blackmail. Maybe I needed to witness the transformation of my body into something to be protected, something I had to make sacrifices for (not because there were flaws in the health system, nor because everyone could actually get sick and die ...) but at the same time, into something dispensable, in case that choice were necessary.

Maybe I needed to hear people close to me respond to my desperate anger with embarrassment – Chiara, this is hard, but you need to understand too.

Maybe I needed this and everything that revolved around it for something inside me to break for good.

A dyke, I believe. A dam.

And now, at least in this time, I can't talk about anything else.

4.

Lisa Gilardino was wearing a green skirt the first time I saw her. I was nineteen, it was 2004, I was a student in the theatre where she worked, and I remember thinking how beautiful she was, and how I liked the way she placed her feet on the ground. Slowly we became friends, the two of us, smiling at each other from a distance and drinking espresso at the vending machines.

church, and I never stopped looking at her as, in that moment, I couldn't imagine making even the slightest sound.

Eva presented herself with all her clear lightness and I learned from her to soften my facial muscles.

When they watched me together, Eva and Lisa, I completely let go. Losing myself in their currents seemed the only thing I wanted.

I shared a long time with them full of words, travel and encounters scattered all over Europe, which seemed to be our garden. I felt my thinking become more complex thanks to them, and in this continuous exchange of fragments of the world, they introduced me to Marco Cendron, got me wearing a pink T-shirt created by him and dancing together until dawn, in a farmhouse shrouded in fog ... When we wanted to reorganize ourselves into a new constellation, 2019 came along.

5.

The first time Lisa, Eva and Marco told me they had founded Samara Editions and proposed that I create a performance for them to be mailed to the audience, I thought of all the people locked in their houses continuing to fall in love, miss each other, desire each other, lose each other, find each other and to say their goodbyes, even though they were stood in the eye of the tornado.

– Even during the end of the world, you hunger for love – I and four Swedish dancers said to each other one day.

I said yes to Samara and we decided to make a box.

6.

Ilaria Lemmo and I met in Central Italy in the late summer of 2020. Since the start of the pandemic, it was the first time I had accepted a job that would get me out of the house, and as always, I was late that time too. After six months, I was getting to know the world anew, after two bereavements and a lost body, just as the pandemic began to howl wildly again.

The first time we spoke, we told each other about a nightmare. Then came the memories, and finally the secrets.

We chose each other, I believe, because of the turmoil in our eyes.

I don't know if we ever really believed that farewell on the square, when we said – See you again in January – and I ordered an espresso, watching her disappear in the crowd.

Maybe in the world of before, the lost one, it would have really ended like that, but the time we met could only exist at the edge of an abyss, and that October afternoon our movement already resembled those of divers taking in air before the jump.

7.

Listening.
I spent this winter with Lemmo listening.
A lot.
Everything.
Through headphones, earbuds, bluetooth speakers, computer speakers.
Listening with my defenseless body.
Listening at the window or lying on the bed.
Listening again as well.
And then saying what was going on, in the body, in the heart, in the gaze.

- This sound scares me
- Here I laughed
- At this moment I saw all my ghosts again
- This tastes like iron
- Lunar
- I was alone, traveling
- I missed the planes
- ...

Lemmo filled the time with sounds, me with words. And in between the life that always intertwines with everything, even when you think you're facing your death. Even when you're sure that this winter will never pass.

We didn't believe that farewell on the square, and when we met again in January we already had the sparks of "Fionde" (Slings) in our hands, and all the pain and joy we wanted to ignite with this work.

8.

– You have to find a method. It's too easy to wait for the end. You have to talk about this time now.

Notes for a method:

- 1) Make the disappearance of bodies a poetic and political gesture
- 2) Don't look for ways to return, but demand that new paths be taken
- 3) Keep the body vigilant, the gaze open
- 4) Transform the lost spatial movement into an internal uprising
- 5) Feed nostalgia for all possible missed encounters
- 6) Fall in love with encounters that wouldn't have happened in other times
- 7) Listen to everything
- 8) Take notes without shame
- 9) Chase life where it still flows
- 10) Remain attentive, vigilant, don't get lazy

That's how "Fionde" was born.

Translated from Italian by Ellen Gallagher.

"Fionde" is a performance by Chiara Bersani with Ilaria Lemmo produced by Samara Editions delivered to you by post. After buying a ticket online, you will receive a box containing everything you need to experience the performance at home.

**Chiara Bersani
mit Ilaria Lemmo
Fionde**

Individuell (per Postversand) | 6.–22.8. | Deutschlandpremiere