

playbill

ACT I II III IV

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Mayra A. Rodríguez Castro

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March 22, 2022

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ARTIST COMMISSION:
ANNUAL BUDGET
Allison Parrish

ON OUR DESK:
THOUGHTS FOR 2024

COLOPHON

EDITORIAL

Martha Jager and Isabelle Sully

playbill began in March 2022 largely incidentally and by sheer force of need. Having first met when students at a Dutch academic institution in 2015, the two of us kept in loose contact, whereby our relationship mostly took form through sharing excitement about each other's projects and research, a kind of affirmation aided by Instagram. Towards the end of 2021, again aided by Instagram, we learnt that we were both looking at the work of filmmaker, poet and conceptual artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. In the midst of this research, and while working as an artist-in-residence within the archive of De Appel, Amsterdam, Martha had found a letter written by Cha in 1978. This letter went on to form the basis for an event that would become the first playbill act, and its supplemental nature—being an archival document standing as ancillary to a practice, rather than as the work itself—was a key contributor to how we came to frame our approach to the program.

Initially, we contacted a number of institutional spaces, varying in size and scale, with a proposal for a film screening, for which we would show the three films Cha mentioned in her letter, presenting them in the Netherlands both according to her wishes and for the first time. This seemed simple enough: three films of no more than eight minutes each, an important artist then largely unknown in the Netherlands, half an evening of their time. When we did receive replies to the emails we sent out they were of the usual variety: 'our program is full', 'we don't have the budget for this', 'nor the space'. Neither of us had seen these films previously, and so the series of 'nos', though road-

blocks, weren't endings to our desire to simply have access to the work.

In the process of trying to get this event up—for which we successfully applied for a small bundle of funding—it became evident that if we wanted to do it we had to organise it ourselves in its entirety. Here entered Torpedo Theater, the smallest theatre in the Netherlands, built as a puppet theatre and later reimagined as the 'Parool Theatre' by the national newspaper *Het Parool*. Now, cared for by director Carel Helder, the theatre continues to seat thirty people a night across programming that spans literature, comedy, the performing arts and, with the addition of playbill, the visual arts. When we decided somewhere along the way that our plans would shift from a one-off event into a four-act series a year, the history of Torpedo became central to our program focus and graphic identity, designed by Maud Vervenne. We noted a lack of platforms in the Netherlands that were specifically committed to text- and language-based artistic practices and in taking cue from the theatre's history of being owned by a newspaper, acts of publishing, translation and editing became key approaches to recontextualising the works we were wanting to present from the vantage point of the (small) stage.

When it came to announcing the first act with Cha, it felt a cruel irony to see this event sold out almost immediately, given that the driving desire was to bring wider access to Cha's work. But it also made clear the kinds of spaces that ultimately end up presenting work that sits to the side of the mainstream—ones that are smaller, off the beaten track, not rendered risk-averse

by the accretion of policy, operating procedures and red tape. Scale was and remains integral to playbill and our desires to build a platform that is sustainable, intimate and conducive to experimentation (on all levels of organising). Published midway through our second series, this annual report marks the end of our first cycle of acts. As the format of the annual report prompts, this moment begs reflection on how things have gone so far, and where they are heading. In offering up aspects of our structural runnings transparently through artistic intervention, welcoming in audience perspectives, commissioning adjacent voices and foreshadowing the program that is to come, we hope to present an image of playbill as a platform intent on growing and evolving without sacrificing a commitment to the small-scale. Aware of the near impossibility of working in a way that is financially liveable when starting out as an 'institution', keeping playbill 'small' is not just an artistic curiosity around intimacy but an ethical commitment to operating within our means, breaking the mould of continually practising beyond them and expecting others to do the same.

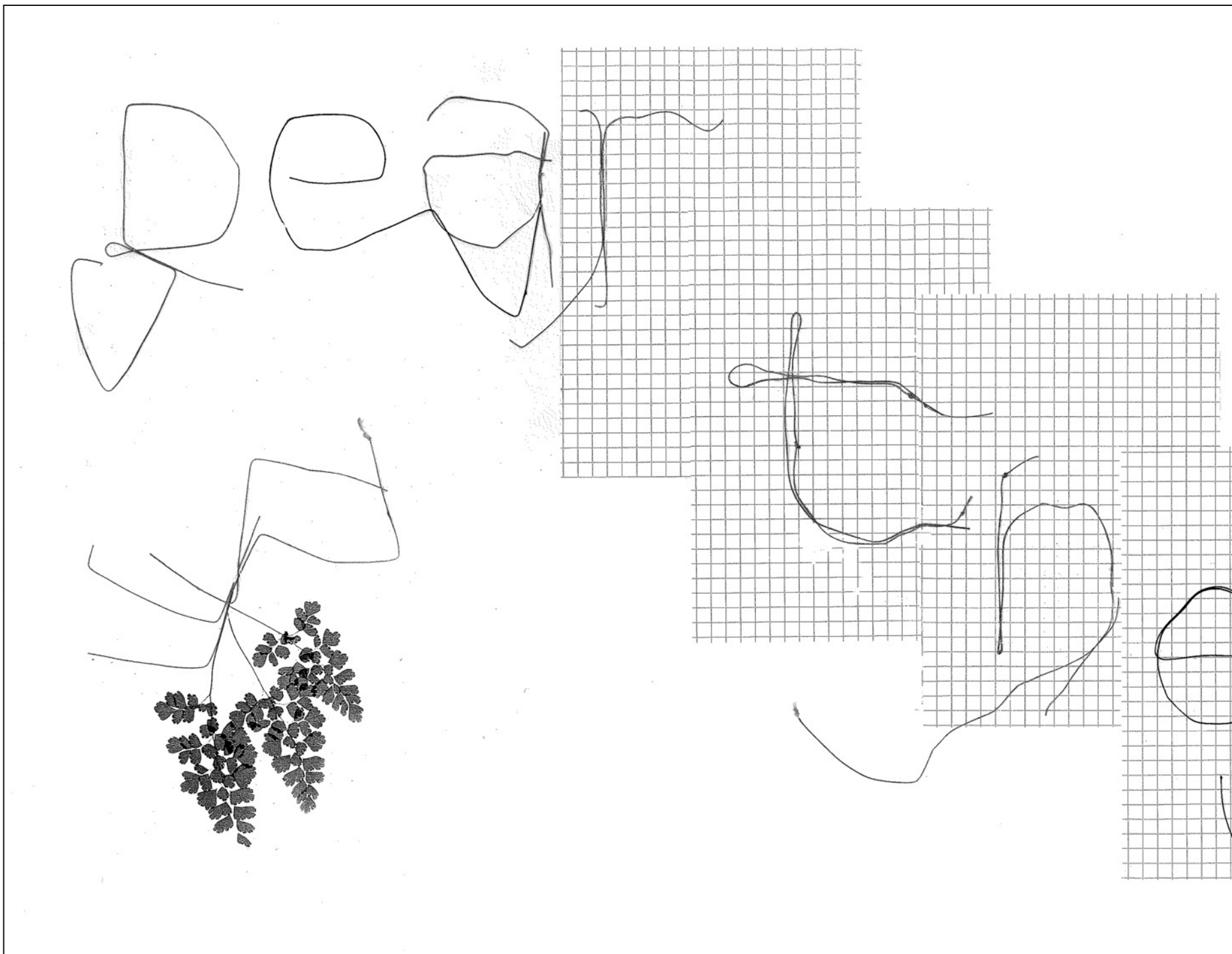
At the end of our first official year, our gratitude goes out to all the artists and estates of artists who have trusted us with their work in this rather particular context; to our team of Maud Vervenne, Silvia Ulloa and Baha Görkem Yalım; and to Carel Helder, who tolerates us every three months, amidst his otherwise relentlessly impressive commitment to literary and theatrical programming.

ON OUR DESK: THOUGHTS FOR 2024

1/5



Dolls and drawings by Greer Lankton, possibly from her first solo show at Civilian Warfare, New York, in 1983. Source: Greer Lankton Archive, Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh



Thursday: June 2, 1988

M.D. Reports

- 6:30 a.m. Dr. S. will take out stint when she's stronger.
- 10:00 a.m. Dr. F. will call in neurosurgeon to check leg.
- 11:00 a.m. Dr. P. took N.G. tube out.
- 11:30 a.m. Dr. M. (neurologist) checked her.
- 1:00 p.m. Pain starts.
- 2:30 p.m. Dr. W., neurologist.
- 3:30 p.m. Dr. F. said he, Dr. P. and Dr. W. decided to continue as is. If legs don't improve, they will try medication on them.
- 10:30 p.m. There is some discussion that her bladder needs to be irrigated.
- 10:40 p.m. 2nd colostomy (passed water and gas).
- 5:00 p.m. Pain in stomach. She is very nervous.
- 9:00 p.m. Pain in sides of feet and legs. Needles at 7 and 9.
- 12:30 a.m. Feet and legs are very painful. Don't touch them. Be careful.
- 1:00 a.m. Needle. Pain.
- 3:00 a.m. Bad sore throat from N.G. tube. Chloroseptic. Lips still black from scabs. Medication on them.
- 5:00 a.m. Bad sore throat. Legs very sore. Tell nurse to move legs gently.
- 7:00 a.m. She likes ice coffee. Make sure you save some from all her trays and put in icebox.
- 11:00 p.m. X-rays show blockage so they had to put tube back in Mill's nose. Not an easy thing, but Mill is much more comfortable now. Changed Depends. Mill hasn't been asking for bed pan lately. When she is too weak to drink from a cup, you can dunk pink sponges (for teeth) in water and let her suck on it. That keeps her mouth moist.
- 1:00 a.m. Changed IV. Pain shot.
- 2:00 a.m. Something for pain at Mill's request. Nurses check briefs, changed them and cleaned Mill up.
- 3:00 a.m. Nurses check in. Mill sleeping.
- 6:00 a.m. Mill up for water. Nurses in to change briefs and put ointment on her lips. Mill back to sleep. No pain.
- 7:45 a.m. Doctors in to say x-ray showed no block in intestine,

but bladder was distended. Nurses put in catheter to dispel urine from bladder (a lot of accumulation causing much discomfort). Dr. recommended irrigation of colostomy which nurse will do today, just to set things right.

Henry and Lynn,
Mill seems to have made a vast improvement since the other night. She was in and out of sleep all night. Pain shot at 1. Nurses are efficient and stop in each hour to check on her. Not too much to drink yesterday or this morning, but Mill ate some watermelon. Talked to Mill about phone as you asked, Lynn. She doesn't want one now.

Jennifer

FOOD INTAKE

June 4

- Breakfast--Broth, coffee, frozen yogurt
- Lunch--Ginger ale
- Dinner--1/2 milk, 1/2 wheat bread & turkey

June 5

- one bite of egg, roll, milk
- bite of chicken, potato, sherbet, milk
- liquids

June 6

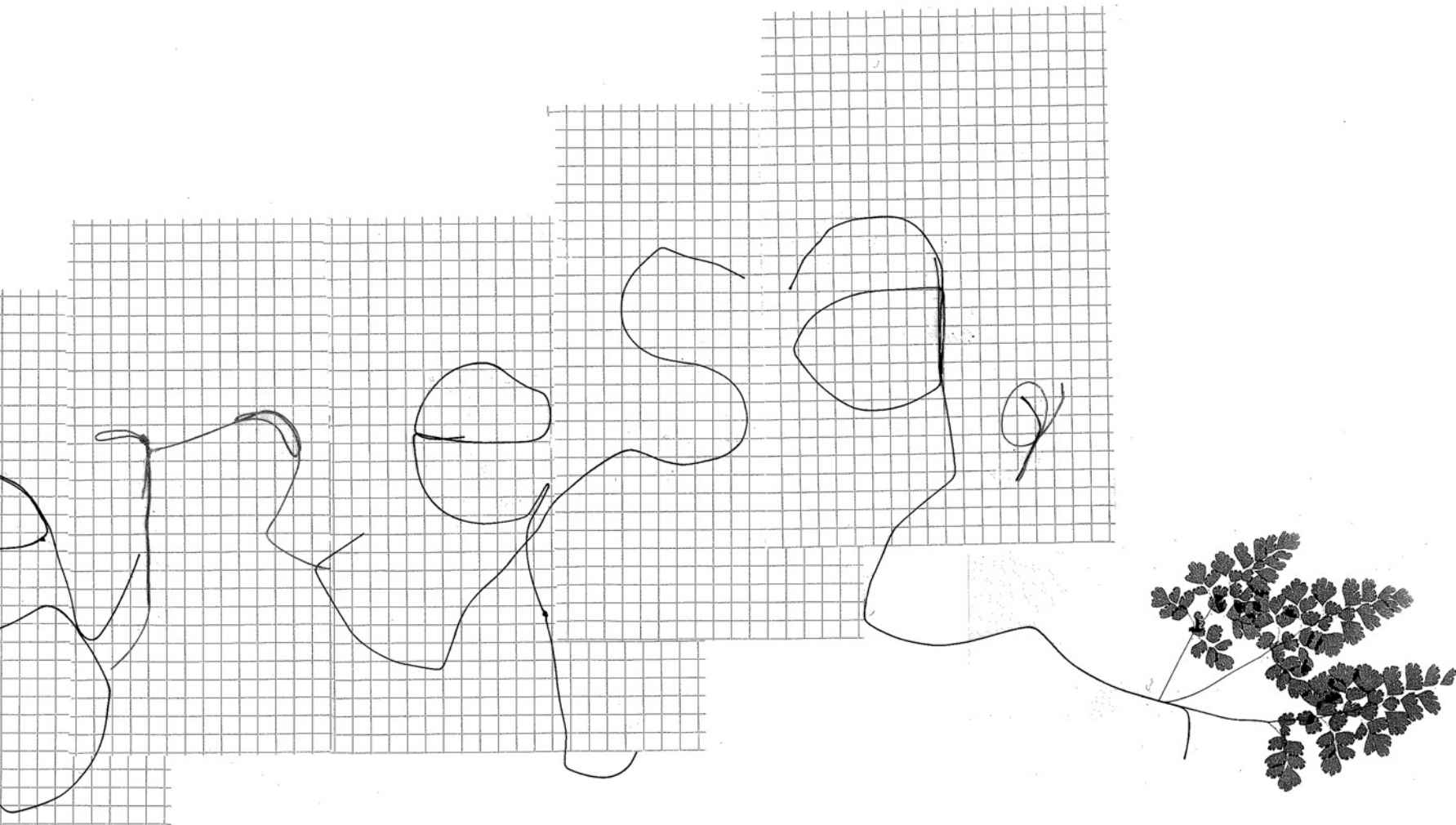
- 1/2 bite egg
- juice
- 1 bite chicken
- 1/2 glass Ensure

No menu made out for Monday. Find out from Mill and Dr. what she wants and get it for her from the hospital cafeteria. She **must eat** so that we can remove the intravenous.

Sunday: June 5, 1988

PAIN SHOTS

- 3:00 a.m. 2:00 a.m.
- 9:00 a.m. 3:30 a.m.
- 3:00 p.m. 7:00 a.m.
- 8:30 p.m.



ESSAY

Chrysalides—Mayra A. Rodríguez Castro

The philosopher admits, 'I only have one language; it is not mine.' Derrida, as if vowing, begins his *Monolingualism of the Other* with this sentence. I read the pages at night, my fingers stretched across translations. They recount his severance from the mother tongue. In this case the mother, the tongue, has sealed herself away. He recites the alienation that follows, almost mystical, which separates him from any language of origin. His words are foreign in the end. They are held by a secret force.

Monolingualism of the Other was commissioned by Édouard Glissant for the conference *Echoes from Elsewhere/Renvois d'ailleurs*, held at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, in 1992. This detail, like a tattoo, alters the skin of the text. It invokes a lasting correspondence between the two philosophers across France and Martinique. I saw the two minds weave an inimitable theory of language. Until that night, I had not listened to Derrida closely. Suddenly, he spoke of citizenship and origin, both tied in endless historical exclusions. From this moment on, I read a defence of the Other wherever his name appeared. The Other, not as a physical or national entity but much more profound. A right to spiritual existence beyond the One.

The friendship between Jacques Derrida and Édouard Glissant refreshed my reading of *Monolingualism*. The text was preserved in print, yet its syllables rearranged before me. This possibility, of a text morphing through the act of reading, is akin to alchemy and the heart of theatre. In an interview with jazz musician Ornette Coleman, Derrida compared textual analysis to musical interpretation. In both cases, the page produces a sound, each time

new and delicate. He believed all instants of improvisation to be destroyed by the witness, who calcifies them again in language. He warned: if you are ever in love, don't tell the story.

In theatre, the score is brought to life. The plot unfurls on the stage. The play is an act of interpretation through self and audience. Theatre invites such possibility, of the individual being enacted by many. Of the person as a habitable form, entered and reconstituted. To say that in essence, there is an essence. That all people and events carry *some-thing* that may be reenacted in time. This force heats up the stage beyond its lights and microphones. The philosopher called it dissemination, whenever an utterance punctures several dimensions. This is what he wrote in *Tympan*. That the ear is a drum made of taut fibres, which mitigates the heterogenous percussion of time, objects and spaces. All in one enclosure, the tympanum. In this case, the theatre.

Several years ago, I received eight compositions by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. She concealed her voice in each of the recordings by layering echoes. Every time, her words were doubled. As if refraction were inseparable from her message. As if meaning were carried, not through clean utterances but in dispersal. As if one could not speak without being scattered, propagated and retraced. She laced whispers and punctuations. At times, a clear sentence is heard. Only when her voice coincides with itself. In this set of recorded poems, a few words appear round and complete. Like chrysalides, where butterflies turn blue and freeze.

I find her alive in each recording. Muffled, her voice awaits interpretation. She might have admitted like

the philosopher, 'my language is not mine'. Then added, 'it is of the listener'. In *Audience Distant Relative* from 1977, she describes this spectral refraction, which feels proper to the task of theatre. 'To be anyone in particular, specially, no one—no one in particular, specially, anyone.' The audience is a distant relative, who comes to speak and listen from another time. The script makes the substance of blood. It binds the writer, actor and reader into one present. However temporary, and however fragile.

I consider whether this account should be given in the first or third person. If I go with the first, it's likely readers will assume that I've chosen something akin to self-portraiture. But there is always artifice, even in the making of self-portraiture. If I go with the third, it's assumed I'm making a portrait of another. Of course, it's never as definitive as this.

*

She is lightly clad, a porous dress. The weather is warm and close. You can imagine the light. Golden, pouring between the buildings as she rushes down Plantage Middenlaan. She's late. A little flustered. In the centre of Amsterdam, she gets lost. She stops to check her maps. Tourists stream past her. She resigns herself to lateness.

Her lateness gives you an idea of a quality she possesses. Also, perhaps, her sentences give you a sense that she enjoys warm weather.

It's cool inside the theater, and this is pleasing to her but she worries she'll be cold later on. The lights are dim. She finds a seat beside a friend.

The event is introduced. The drawn curtains open. A woman sits to the right of the stage and reads Toebosch's words. Projected on stage, the photographic self-portraits and to the right, paintings from the collection.

Toebosch's poems, paired with the paintings, strike her. It occurs to her how beautifully Toebosch writes a painting. She writes with lushness and restraint in equal measure, filling in detail where it's asked for.

She writes The Occult Revival by Marlene Dumas. She writes Girl with Clock and Cherry by Co Westerik. She writes Portrait of a Woman by unknown painter (circa 1950). She writes Seated Girl by Karel Appel. She writes Self-portrait With Hat by Charley Toorop. She writes The Old Gardener by Louis Goudman. She writes Self-portrait by Anneke van de Feer.

After the event, she drinks many glasses of white wine with friends. She steps out into the heat of the night, realising that she's forgotten where she parked her bike. It takes her awhile to retrace her footsteps but it's pleasant to wander around, searching for something, feeling like she's not quite the same person as she was before the event.



Duman, Itziar's Framed Score, Sands Robe and Cat Bed (Performatist Self-Portrait with Robin)

A budget is priorities made concrete.

From "Dear Friend of the Arts." In *Art Matters: How the Culture Wars Changed America*. Ed. Brian Wallis, Marianne Weems, and Philip Yenawine, p. 33. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

ARTIST COMMISSION: ANNUAL BUDGET

Speculative Act #1234702855	Cost	94.41
Speculative Act #1729440314 Expense	Cost	103.95
Engage Bratislava implementation p	Cost	381.13
Reserved Which - Focusing	Cost	44.07
Daniil exclusive	Cost	274.69
People temporarily	Cost	275.13
Unfold Photography	Cost	162.51
Laurenz emma Furniture	Cost	372.05
Art Installment 2	Cost	62.88
Yulia	Cost	388.99
	Cost	60.76
	Cost	96.12
	Cost	280.09
	Cost	177.39
	Total	1600.79

Speculative Act #1208642562 Expense	Cost	94.41
Fee Leaflet	Cost	103.95
Rent Completed	Cost	381.13
Fee Centre	Cost	44.07
Location wrong joined	Cost	274.69
	Total	1173.39

Speculative Act #1205033 Expense	Cost	344.41
Heavy Addict fee	Cost	354.95
Photographs moment Pat	Cost	264.76
Fee Martha	Cost	91.30
Provide these	Cost	-22.73
P Martha	Cost	134.06
Fee Stay	Cost	344.41
Tickets: maruyama ren	Cost	354.95
Me days inside resto	Cost	264.76
Surpassing of unites	Cost	91.30
Fee Show	Cost	-22.73
Theater's Request a	Cost	134.06
	Total	2701

Speculative Act #387218945 Expense	Cost	344.41
Appearing: writer evolved, george bar	Cost	354.95
Conducted research given	Cost	264.76
Isabelle August fee	Cost	91.30
Hosted Inherent fee	Cost	-22.73
Photography Görkem	Cost	134.06
Fee performance Waiting Conceived	Cost	344.41
Maud july p for previously	Cost	354.95
	Total	1332.54

Speculative Act #1696543196 Expense	Cost	344.41
Theater's implementation 2	Cost	354.95
0 Mind Blank	Cost	264.76
Fee Remit	Cost	91.30
	Total	447.69

Speculative Act #3227155868 Expense	Cost	344.41
Location group city	Cost	354.95
Likely & move restoration	Cost	264.76
Used travelling	Cost	91.30
P Coming	Cost	-22.73
Awareness playwright 1 remnant p	Cost	134.06
	Total	699.97

Speculative Act #2323989548 Expense	Cost	344.41
Inding Poster	Cost	354.95
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Inding editorial	Cost	-22.73
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Notably wrong these	Cost	264.76
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Varying More - Amsterdam	Cost	-22.73
Given Editorial	Cost	134.06
Fee White	Cost	344.41
	Total	927.78

Speculative Act #3005326516 Expense	Cost	344.41
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May Intentions 2	Cost	264.76
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Went please administration	Cost	134.06
Emphasises Sold up Space	Cost	344.41
These Including Court	Cost	354.95
	Total	1332.54

Speculative Act #422441454 Expense	Cost	344.41
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P Special	Cost	354.95
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ven Outside	Cost	91.30
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	Total	1332.54

Speculative Act #16339351 Expense	Cost	344.41
Performance	Cost	354.95
at 1 evolved fee	Cost	264.76
	Total	927.78

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Total 1588.72

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Speculative Act #3427896545
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Speculative Act #3828800788
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Speculative Act #1494520093
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Speculative Act #2601824612
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Speculative Act #614019387
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For each annual report we commission an artist to make a centrefold work reflecting on or inspired by playbill's Excel budget of that year. Parrish wrote a 'Speculative Act Generator', a program that picks a line item from the budget and then replaces each word in that line item with another word that has the same numerical sum (i.e. a = 1, b = 2, c = 3, so 'cat' = 3 + 1 + 20 = 24). The numerical amounts are generated randomly, based on a mixed Gaussian model of the amounts in the original budget, and replacement words are drawn from playbill publications, Instagram posts and found articles.





2/3255
 HAYES
 COLLECTION
 UNIVERSITY
 OF QUEENSLAND
 LIBRARY

358 Waterworks Rd,
 Ashgrove,
 Brisbane
 15th July '44.

Dear Mr. Grano,

I'm sending along nine poems (as I dare call them) in the hope that one or two may meet with your approval. When I read my own puerile work, I feel horrified to think I dare criticise anyone else's. However I really would appreciate your opinion — as scathing as you like, because I do want to learn wherein to improve.

Sincerely,
 Thea Astley.

BLUEBERRIES



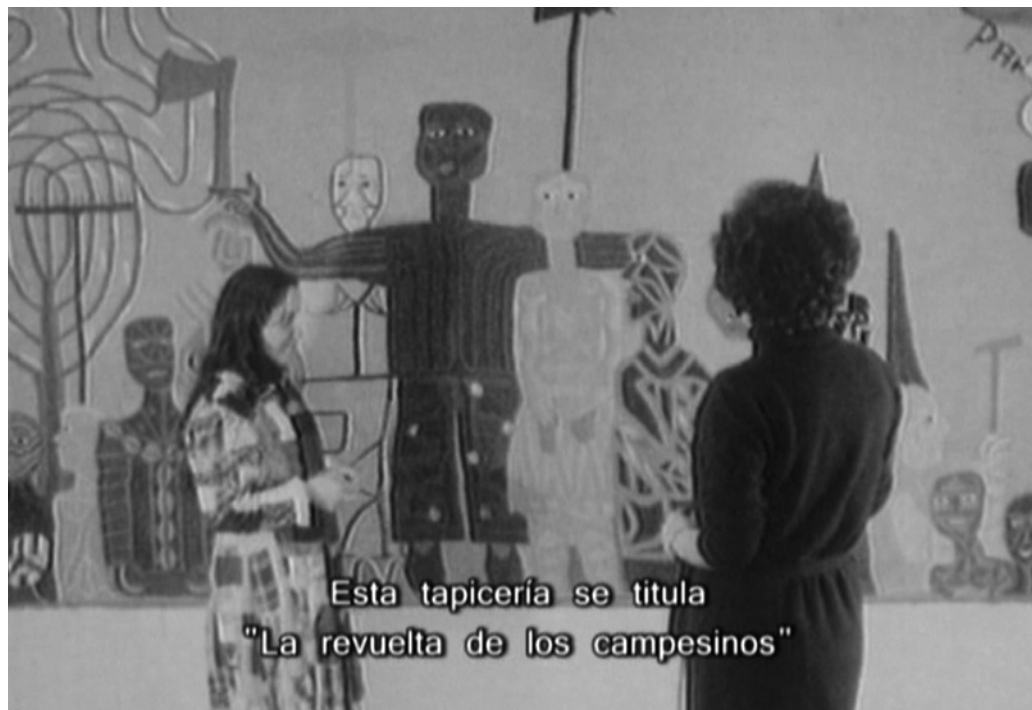
*essays concerning
understanding*

**ELLENA
SAVAGE**

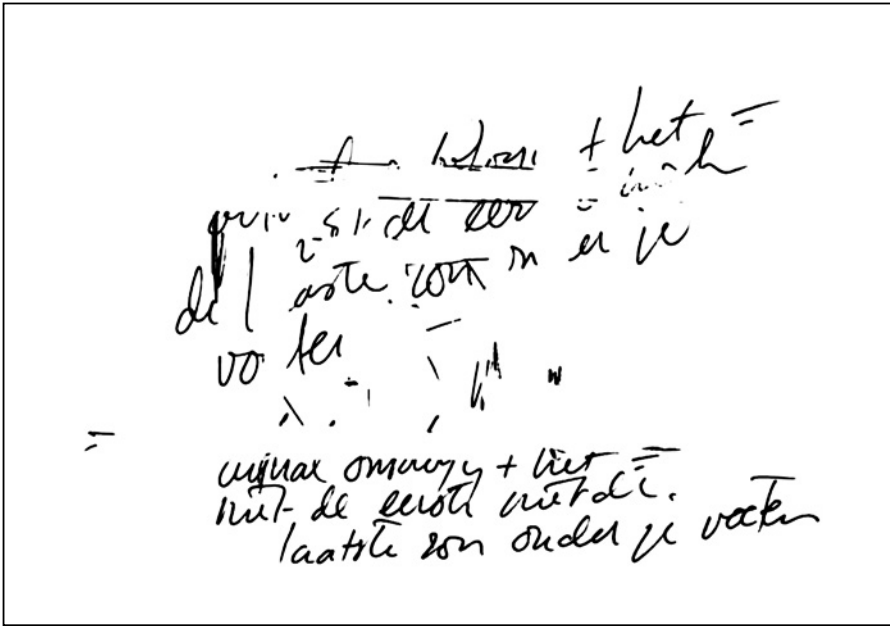
Cover of Ellena Savage's essay collection Blueberries, published by Scribe, Melbourne/London, in 2020



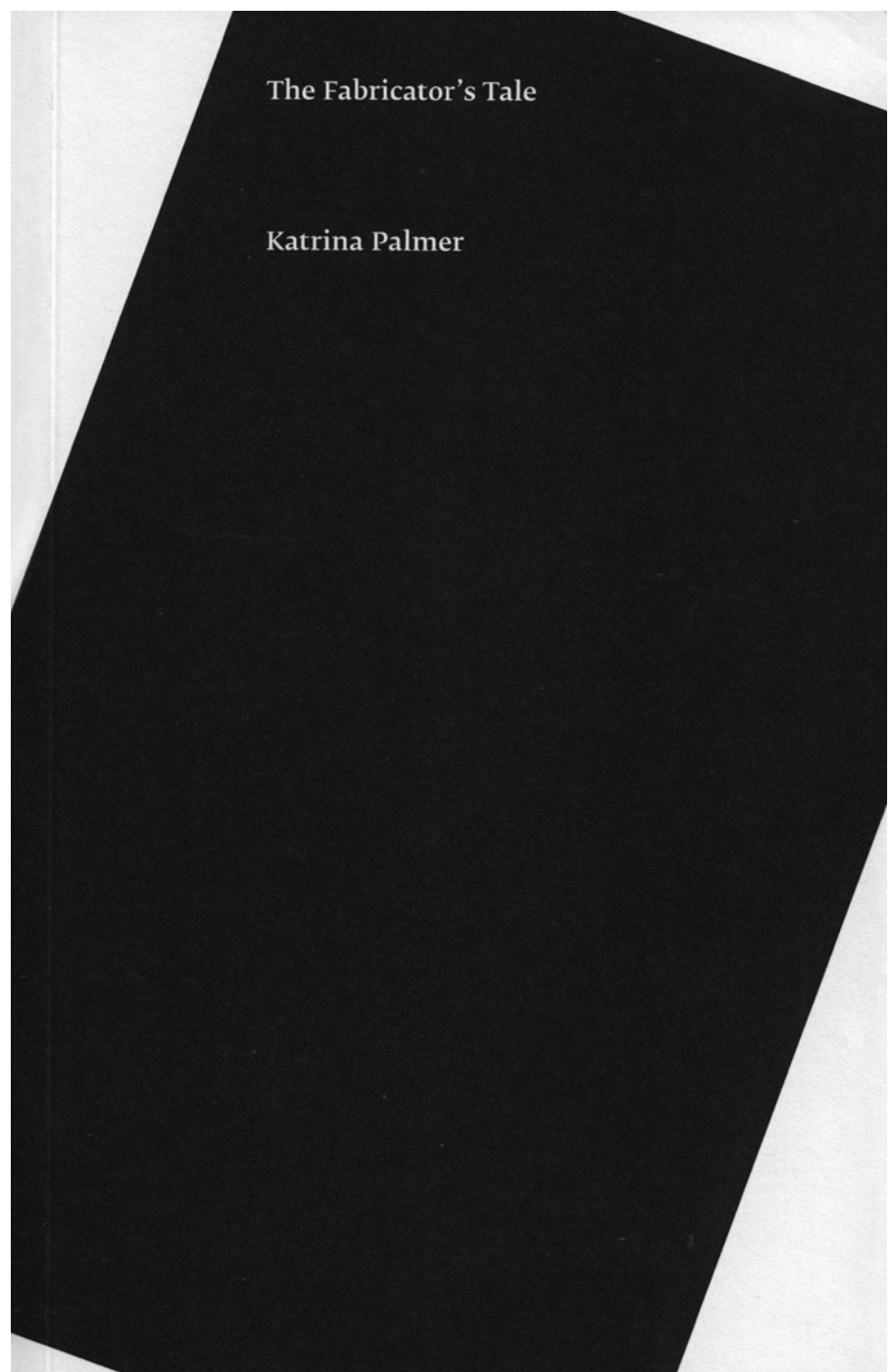
Free Palestine button, purchased at a protest in Den Haag, 2023



Interview for French television with Violeta Parra on the occasion of her exhibition Les Tapisseries Chiliennes de Violeta Parra at the Louvre, Paris, 1964



Hetty Huisman, Een brief aan Pyth, dus niet aan Jan en Klaas, postcard and postal stamp, published by Other Books and So, Amsterdam, 1984



Cover of Katrina Palmer's novel The Fabricators Tale, published by Book Works, London, in 2014

COLOPHON Edited by Martha Jager and Isabelle Sully with contributions by Mayra A. Rodríguez Castro, Jacquine van Elsberg, Samantha McCulloch, Sands Murray-Wassink, Allison Parrish and Zazie Stevens. The Annual Report is designed by Maud Vervenne, and printed by Knust Press, Nijmegen. Published in December 2023 in an edition of 150 by playbill, Amsterdam. Torpedo Theater is a long-running, thirty-seat theatre in the heart of Amsterdam's city centre. Originally founded by *Het Parool*, a Dutch national newspaper, the theatre has been committed to the spoken, written and performed word from the beginning. playbill is an event-based project invested in the presentation of experimental language and text-based artistic works on the (small) stage. playbill is curated by Martha Jager and Isabelle Sully, and designed by Maud Vervenne. For our first series of acts, we would like to thank Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst; Nell Donkers and De Appel, Amsterdam; Electronic Arts Intermix; Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Centrum; Marielle Groven; Hansje van Halem; Karin van Ringen Fonds, Amsterdam; Jean Bernard Koeman; Adeline van Lier, Rudy Luijters of Stichting Moniek Toebosch; Marianna Maruyama; Koen Nutters; Itziar Okariz; Daniil Pilchen; Mieko Shiomi; Stedelijk Museum Library, Amsterdam; Terry Bleu, Amsterdam; and Judith Vrancken.