The Performance Agency Fiction Pimping at a business meeting with Lennart Ginman, artistic director at Copenhagen Jazzhouse.
The Performance Agency, Fiction Pimps, has a vision of opening the aesthetic experience space for everyone. “It must be democratized,” as Gryn Worre Hallberg, one of the three women behind Fiction Pimps, puts it. The playful space where fiction can play freely is not just for artists. It should be for the joy and benefit of all – and, not least, must be a far bigger part of our working lives. Therefore, Gryn and her partners, Inga Gerner Nielsen and Madeleine Kate McGowan, pimp their fiction in nightclubs, panel discussions, conferences and festivals. Meet Gryn Worre Hallberg and read her thoughts about the philosophy behind it and why we need, in our time, to be able to also acknowledge the language of sense, body, heart, play and magic.

Q: Where do you find your stories? Gryn: Fiction is a collective product. We sit down together and begin to compose. One of us asks a question like: “Could we say three women live in the laboratory we are creating now, and that they know each other really well and go around from place to place building laboratories?” Then another asks, “Yes, but why do they do it?” What we are doing is letting our imaginations run away with us and building on each other’s questions and answers. It is extremely important that we create the stories collectively, because they are much more nuanced. The collective element means that we have filled in all the cracks in the story. It becomes sustainable and serves as a parallel reality. The story must be “thick” so that we can create the genuine sensual experience.

Q: What does it do to the audience if your story is not authentic? Gryn: “If the audience is in doubt, they find it hard to go in there. In Fiction Pimps, we want to seduce people and begin to compose. One of us asks a question like: “Could we say three women live in the laboratory we are building now, and that they know each other really well and go around from place to place building laboratories?” Then another asks, “Yes, but why do they do it?” What we are doing is letting our imaginations run away with us and building on each other’s questions and answers. It is extremely important that we create the stories collectively, because they are much more nuanced. The collective element means that we have filled in all the cracks in the story. It becomes sustainable and serves as a parallel reality. The story must be “thick” so that we can create the genuine sensual experience.

Q: What do I get from entering your room or parallel reality? Gryn: Fiction Pimps creates a concentrated space that effectively opens the sensuous sphere. Over time, we should not need the space – it should be a natural part of everyday life. Right now, there is an imbalance between things, and there is a need for concentrated sensuous being. “The sensuous space” was formerly reserved for artists, and I think the space must be democratized. The sensuous must be for all. If we all could also use our senses, and did it every day, we would not go amok at Christmas parties. It might be hard not to glorify the past, but what I am talking about is not a return to what was. It is something different today. Here and now in our world.

Q: Why is it relevant to work with fictions in business? Gryn: Because we need greater coherence between the aesthetic and economic spheres. Western society is dominated by economic premises: we must work before we can enjoy, and duty, needs-postponement, rationality, efficiency and discipline all come before the sensuous and especially the joyful and feeling-oriented. All of what I call “the aesthetic experience space.” For me, there is an entirely different type of quality in the aesthetic sphere. Our sensuous recognition mode is also essentially different from the mental, which we use very much as employees and citizens in the knowledge society. If the sensory room was easier for us to delve into every day, we would discover the quality of being there. Some will criticize the sensuous experience and say that it does not belong in public and we must have confidence in the framework. Good frameworks are, for example, rock festivals, Christmas parties or a panel discussion. At events like these, we have already put daily life on standby. It is something else. But if you feel unsure of the framework, you won’t want to go in there. In Fiction Pimps, we want to seduce people into a room. For me there is big difference between manipulation and seduction, and what we want is that others to give it a chance, surrender and indulge. And we want that, because we have learned that there is dormant potential and other dimensions of experience open up.
WE ARE LOOKING FOR THE PRESENT. FOR COOPERATION WITH THE SITUATION. WHEN I AM IN A FICTION, I AM THERE AND WORK WITH THE WHOLE, WITH THE SITUATION. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO BE “IN TUNE.” IT’S ABOUT “TUNING” INTO THE SITUATION AND BEING PREPARED TO HANDLE IT. YOU CAN ONLY DO THAT IF YOU ARE PRESENT AND CLOSE. THEREFORE, WE NEED A DEFINED FRAMEWORK WITH LOTS OF ROOM FOR IMPROVISATION. OUR FICTIONAL FRAMEWORK IS VERY LOOSE, IF YOU COMPARE IT TO A PLAY. WE HAVE NO SCRIPT.

Q: Is there anything you cannot ‘fiction pimp’?
GRY: No. Maybe we will find something one day that we cannot. I have been asked if I would fiction pimp a funeral. But it would be in advance, of course. The religious rituals do it already, and we go into a more sensuous space when we are in a church for a funeral, for example. In that space, we let go of the mental for a while and trust that we can experience with mind, heart, stomach and brain. I believe everything can be pimped – even a finance meeting. And there are many situations in our everyday life where we have more and more need to be able to open a sensual space to do something different than what we normally do, and expand our recognition and experience horizons. We need some new rituals.

Q: Can you name one of your challenges in working with this area?
GRY: It is an academic challenge that I understand it so broadly. Current systems cannot accommodate it. Art is a bouillon cube of aesthetic being – but I understand the aesthetic experience space very broadly: it can be the corporeal experience in the fitness center, avant-garde art, poetic activism at street level and a living marketing campaign. They are systems in opposition to each other, but for me it’s all aesthetic experience space, because they activate the aesthetic dimension – the sensuous and bodily being and togetherness.

Q: You’ve said magic is exclusive. Can you elaborate?
GRY: If our fiction is, let’s say, a B-movie called “Killer Brides,” I cannot suddenly choose to become a troll. If you break the framework, the fiction collapses. It is the only premise we cannot shake. I’ve thought about my character before I go in, but not what I will say or do. We build the characters, but we do not plan scenes. Some may be more dominant or involved in creating the frame than others, but we need to collectively surrender to the fictional frame, which we can later evaluate if we want. The situation depends very much on everyone surrendering to the situation. The set up is not what we talk about along the ways – there we are more composers. We work within a framework of co-creation, co-sharing and co-composition. When we go in, we give it all freely and it always works.

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I NEED MY SHOT OF FICTION!

AESTHETIC ENGAGEMENT IN AN ECONOMICALLY-PREMISED SOCIETY. BACKGROUND COMMENT.

— “I need my shot of fiction!” — “It’s like a drug, you get totally hooked … I’m a Junkie!” — “Give me my doses two times a year…” — “It’s about escaping from the restrictions of everyday life and freeing yourself!” — “The norms are gone – the ones that the society put upon you – and that enables you to express yourself more truly and fully – I also hope that that is what the audience is left with – that they can think: Why should we all be so normal?”

These are quotes from performers who have dwelled in the fictive and physical parallel universes of the perform -

area where the play happens. Questions like: Why do the certain performers and interactive audiences find this participation so attractive? And can the potential of the participation be open to more people than the relatively small group that find their way to perform or partici -

In Fiction Pumps, a central aim is to democratize aesthetic enrichment on the stages of everyday life. Not to make the aesthetic experience an exclusive experience, but something we aim for. We work at making the fictive landscape so attractive and inviting that people wouldn’t consider not participating to some degree.

Concept of "Fiction" and "aesthetic"

Within theatre and performance research, the concept of fiction can be understood as part of the concept of the-

Aesthetic critical philosophy (e.g. the Frankfurt School) has emphasized the liberating power of the aes -

To illustrate what I mean by fictive landscapes: enter -

Aesthetic critical philosophy (e.g. the Frankfurt School) has emphasized the liberating power of the aes -

one of the Three Fiction Pimps Gry Wore Halberg.

BY GRY WORE HALBERG

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Imagine you were all of a sudden there in, let’s say, Twin Peaks. You could go to the diner have a cup coffee, or to One Eyed Jack’s, or maybe you would be very puzzled and shy and hurry out again. That is also why the level of interaction varies a lot. Interaction is not a requirement, but something we aim for. We work at making the fictive landscapes so attractive and inviting that people wouldn’t consider not participating to some degree.

Concept of “Fiction” and “aesthetic”

Within theatre and performance research, the concept of fiction can be understood as part of the concept of the-

areas, and within that area you have theatricality, because it is staged in a way that differs from the surrounding place – ‘The surrounding place of everyday life’.
The business organization appears to be an obvious context to be fiction pimped – a territory full of potential to be explored and unfolded. Using art in a business organizational context can be understood under the term and concept arts-in-business. Bringing arts into a business organizational context is, though, not without challenges – both practical and value oriented: one could ask if the employees are able to live “their aesthetic, sense, emotion and delight-oriented, self” while being at their working place. Especially since the day is full with tasks and expectations. And, if you work with managers, one can ask if they are able to take off their “manager-mask” and be their “aesthetic self.” Or one could ask if this is really for the people, as we propose and wish, or for the sake of the profit, as many might suspect once business is involved.

Unfolding new potential

Movements like arts-in-business, fiction pimping and new ideas about companies being more of a movement instead of a fixed “industrial” organization, are currently challenging the economic/capital system. As Lazzarato suggest: now it is not only the crafts labor that is being exploited, but also the emotions of the workers. But this is only true if the only purpose of the capitalist system is profit.

However, many argue that those times have passed. With parameters such as CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and CSI (Corporate Social Innovation), other values and bottom lines are introduced in the business organizational context. And with a capital system that is opening itself towards the art and aesthetics as in arts-in-business a whole new approach is on its way. As the prominent business consultant, Margaret Wheatley, argues:

“Well capitalism is in deep trouble … Global capitalism is all about the flow of money and about the complete disconnection of people … Decisions are made only on behalf of very short-term profit, or how we can make money this instant … it is not about sustainability, it is not about building for the long term, and it has been completely disruptive and destructive for human communities everywhere … I do not see any future for capitalism in its current form … We really have got to focus on the human side of it now, if we are going to make any changes.”

"I Need My Shot of Fiction!":

"I need my shot of fiction!" In 2006, Theatre-in-Business is working with the decoding and translation of the theater’s many potentials for business organizational contexts. Currently, Theatre-in-Business is compiling parallel universes and has recently been presented their recent performance Villa Solå at Teater Republiques. (www.villa-solo.dk) Theatre-in-Business is a member of the research forum Theatre-in-business, which she helped establish in 2006. Theatre-in-Business is working with the decoding and translation of the theater’s many potentials for business organizational contexts. Currently, Theatre-in-Business is compiling an anthology; theatre-in-business - udfordringer og potetabler. find more here: http://kunstighusheridenskab.ku.dk/forskn ing/forskerfora/t_in_b/"

# Signa (www.signa.dk) The partners in Fiction Pimpes have been performers and are inspired by the art group SIGNA. SIGNA is a pioneer in building vibrant performance-installation parallel universes and has recently been presented their recent performance Villa Solå at Teater Republiques (www.villa-solo.dk)

# Theatre-in-Business Gry Wore Helberg is a member of the research forum Theatre-in-business, which she helped establish in 2006. Theatre-in-Business is working with the decoding and translation of the theater’s many potentials for business organizational contexts. Currently, Theatre-in-Business is compiling an anthology; theatre-in-business - udfordringer og potetabler. find more here: http://kunstighusheridenskab.ku.dk/forskn ing/forskerfora/t_in_b/"

# Club de la Faye (clubdelafaye.blogspot.com) The partners in Fiction Pimpes are all active members in the artist collective, Club de la Faye, which also works actively with the enrichment of everyday life through the activation of the aesthetic dimension.

# Gry Wore Helberg has a Master of Arts in Theatre and Performance Studies, with a minor in Cultural Economy and Aesthetic Leadership, from Copenhagen Business School. She is a Working Member in House of Futures. gyw@houseoffutures.dk

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