

Round Table Dance Berlin

Working Group 1: Infrastructure

PROTOCOL

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HAU 3

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ABSTRACT

The first meeting of Working Group 1: Infrastructure was primarily concerned with the potential instantiation of a new Tanzhaus. With various interpretations of the Tanzhaus at hand, the central discussion revolved around the foundation of a single, concrete space versus the need for a more fluid understanding of structure. The attendants were split into two groups, one party pro 'Tanzhaus' and one party pro 'Structure'. The 'Tanzhaus' party gave a concrete overview of what the Tanzhaus would look like, how it would function and what its benefits and drawbacks would be. The 'Structure' party was occupied with imagining other modes of creating (a) space(s) for dance and, in the attempt to align with the changing needs of the scene, explored the possibilities of an alternative infrastructure.

Introduction & Explanation

The purpose of these meetings is to address the structural needs for dance in Berlin. The goal is to find sustainable solutions to the problems currently faced by the dance scene. The working group 'Infrastructure' focuses on the availability of spaces for dance production and presentation and the potential instantiation of a new 'Tanzhaus' in Berlin. It is important to note that the term 'Tanzhaus' is subject to different interpretations. Over the course of these meetings further analysis, clarification and development of the term will be sought.

The creation of a new dance institution initially raises the following questions:

- Would the new Tanzhaus create a monopoly over the already existing de-centralised system?
- If we put all of our energy into the Tanzhaus we might lose what we have now. How would the Tanzhaus co-operate with existing spaces rather than cause damage to them?
- How should this space/these spaces be run?
- How can we make the newly created space affordable to artists without funding?
- What kind of audiences would this new space attract?

Historical Background of the Tanzhaus

The idea of a new Tanzhaus was conceived of in 1992, which is 26 years ago now. Twenty years ago, dance was not yet established as an independent art form. We need to ask ourselves:

- What does Berlin's dance scene need now?

Architecture

It is important to consider the architectural needs for dance in the proposal for the Tanzhaus. An example is PACT. PACT is made for dance. Its design is based on what the body needs.

- What should the Tanzhaus look like?

Direction & Visibility

We know how to operate dance as an educational system. New questions arise:

- How do we run a system that is dedicated to the artistic development and research of dance?
- What can we offer to the next generation?
- Could the Tanzhaus take the form of different spaces spread out across the city?
- Or would a single Tanzhaus be the most effective way to create visibility for dance?

Audience

The audience could be a good resource to discover what is needed, or in other words 'lobby'. It is important to develop a curatorial practice in which the audience is included in the decision making process.

- What does it mean to take care of dance in Berlin?

Visual Arts

Firstly, we can look for allies in the visual art field. Secondly, in seeking validity and growth, we can take an example from the fine art world. After the instantiation of a big institution (in Finland), more initiatives followed and the sector grew. In this way, the creation of a new institution provokes the sector to take a stand and allows it to prosper. It is time for the professionalisation of our sector. We need a higher profile in order to be able to enter the debate. We need the institutional labels in order to be able to sit at the table.

Political Imagination

Maybe the failure of this scene is due to its low self-esteem. The contemporary dance scene needs to be revitalised. It needs to be performative, in the sense of creating action.

- How are we going to make this political imagination happen?
- What kind of shape can this imagination take?
- Can we also incorporate exercises to imagine what the space could be?
A physical exercise was proposed as an alternative approach to the questions at hand.

Managerial Team

The managerial team of the Tanzhaus could consist of artists or people with a background in dance. The Tanzhaus could give a new generation a new structure to work with. The institution needs to be reimagined. The fantastic, impossible institution can be conceived of by means of considering experimental systems of power.

- Could it be artist-led or could artists run studios that function inside the institution?
- Or could the audience run the institution?

Artist's Needs

Artists could be supported not directly through money, but for example by offering rehearsal space and stage opportunities. But further questions arise:

- Would a big dance house mean something for a young artist?
- Would it be accessible to emerging artists alongside the programmed established artists?

Concern: Totalisation

The Tanzhaus might end up swallowing the rest of the spaces in the scene. But Uferstudios and Tanzfabrik are not disappearing. Taking the examples of PACT and the Pina Bausch centre in Nord Rhein Wesfahlen, it is clear that no institution can unify or totalise everything. Artists are running for funding as activity has been increasing. New resources of space and time are needed and can be generated with the creation of a new institution.

Experimentation

The big and sexy thing (the Tanzhaus) would not necessarily help artists to do what they want.

- What do artists need and what about spaces for experimentation?
- In the ideas propagated for a new institution, where is the experimental side?

Defining the terms 'Tanzhaus' and 'Structure'

There is a need for further definition of the terms.

- What is meant by 'Tanzhaus'?
- What is meant by 'structure'?

Central Discussion

The creation of a Tanzhaus, a physical place, an 'Ort' versus the need for a more fluid structure, for example a networking office or an alternative way of envisaging a structure.

The Working Group was split into two smaller groups, one pro 'Tanzhaus' and one pro 'Structure'.

1. TANZHAUS

- Enhances the exposure and visibility of dance
- Simultaneously functions on a large, middle and small scale, so that both mainstream and experimental dance forms can benefit from it
- Offers the opportunity for many artists to take part
- A place for discourse in Berlin
- Instead of providing project-based funding to independent artists the Tanzhaus would offer funding collectively, to be divided in between projects
- Enhances the growing of audiences
- Enhances the transfer of knowledge

What is lacking?

- Autonomy of artists as they are no longer entrepreneurs
- May take away from already existing dance spaces in Berlin
- A single space will not cover all the needs of the industry

Architecture

The building is imagined to have many entrances, offering many different openings to the space.

Management

Who will curate or lead the Tanzhaus?

2. STRUCTURE

- Proposing the creation of multiple spaces
- The infrastructure is imagined to exist of different houses. The houses offer spaces that serve different needs, such as research, archiving, mediation.
- Includes spaces to dance, whereby dance is considered as a societal practice rather than an art form. This opens a space that is not directly connected to production.
- A way to create common visibility across different locations
- Addresses the wealth disparity between pre-existing spaces

Management

Who will have the production means and how will they be distributed?