

A Metaphorical Institute – From one world to others :
Questioning metaphors, drawing openings, making new connections within and between
artistic and scientific research practices

Second workshop, Jerusalem, Beit Hagat, October 15 – 20th, 2017

A Metaphorical Institute is a research group, of varying size, bringing together artists, scientists, researchers willing to question the words of science and art, and particularly the use of metaphors within research practices.

Through workshops and public events, *A Metaphorical Institute* works on language and research practices. By combining different ways of questioning, exploring and experimenting in the world (such as theoretical, experimental, plastic, somatic approaches, etc), it intends to set thoughts in motion, build and share tools for critical thinking, to be used by scientists, artists and researchers from all stripes of life.

“From one world to others”: this project was initiated following a preliminary workshop in 2015, dedicated to questioning the metaphors used in immunology, such as the war metaphor or the self & non-self metaphor. The current project, funded by the Daniel & Nina Carasso Foundation, extend this work through a series of 3 workshops, gathering researchers in arts and sciences, to work on the use of metaphors in their research practices. It takes place from Spring 2016 to Spring 2018. The workshop presented below is the second workshop of the trilogy.

Through the previous workshops, by sharing artistic and scientific research practices, disagreeing and misunderstanding each other, we have identified not only a diversity of metaphors, but also a diversity of *uses* of metaphors, and even of *meanings* of the term “metaphor”. Metaphors can be used to explore, teach, create new perspectives, describe, argue, question, etc... Metaphors can be restricted to a linguistic form that relies on analogy, but more broadly, they can also be visual, plastic, etc. As put by Gray & Macready (2004), “the metaphor borrows language, symbols, logic, and associations from one field and imposes them upon another to which they do not properly belong.” Some meanings of “metaphor” are even more extended, such as the “root metaphor” that refers to the “underlying view that shapes an individual's understanding of a situation” (wikipedia). In this case, “[the] metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action.” (Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors we live by. 1980). It also governs our concepts structure, what we perceive, how we get around the world, how we relate to other people, how we conceive our research. As such, metaphors carry a sort of ideology – though to very different extents –, including values, economical, social and political structures, expectations, etc. This ideology itself depends on the cultural context in which metaphors are used.

In the upcoming workshop, we aim to prolong this work, both in terms of exploring new metaphors, and questioning how existing metaphors influence our practices. The previous workshop addressed the topic of collective behaviors. This led us in the current workshop to question the notion of process, and more specifically how our notions of time, the metaphors we use to describe time, impact our practice of research and creativity: when does a process, an action, a behavior begin or end ? What do we consider as the beginning or the end?

When do I start to throw a ball? When it leaves my hand? When I hear my sister say, “you’ll never hit that!” When I aim? When does it hit? To some degree we are still living the moment that the Duke

Ferdinand was hit, that Kennedy, that Rabin. Or is it the moment after? This underlies a more general issue with all the moments in a process, with our metaphorical Now. What is now? I am here now, writing this sentence now, this essay now. How long does now take? When does it start and end? In Hebrew when asked how long something will take you can say “rega” a moment and one person’s *rega* can quite often be another person’s lifetime. For the living, two nows are more defined than others moments: birth and death. There was clearly a moment before I existed (or you, or your cat or a bacteria) and there will be a moment when you are no more (or I or Castro or Prince). But there too mostly they are ill defined in reality. When were you born? At conception? And your twin? When you left the womb? Did you die when you stopped dancing? When the bullet left the gun? When your body cooled? When the famous story became unknown?

Living processes, especially cognitive ones, seem different from processes of inanimate objects. A rock rolls down the hill, a gas diffuses in the room moving predictably without any history beyond the moment before or after. In a living system not only are the different “nows” interspersed, they are also influenced by memory and context. Living processes are cushioned by metaphors of past images and future possibilities.

To ascertain when an aesthetic experience begins or ends is another unsolvable question, especially since the definition of art enlarged itself so much that it’s no longer distinguishable from life itself. Applying not only to a wide range of mediums, the notion of process also defines each and every steps of the artwork existence from the original explorations to its reception by the public. It has thus turned to be such a diffuse notion that it has apparently become inefficient to properly describe what it intends to qualify; to such an extent that one can wonder whether the goal of the process has become the process itself.

To investigate further these questions, the workshop will make room for sharing, experiencing and experimenting our respective research practices.

Practical information

About fifteen participants, researchers, artists and scientists from all disciplines, are invited based on their work and research practices, and how these can resonate with the topic of the workshop. Everyone is invited to contribute to this workshop in their own way, without any hierarchical position, but with a strong commitment. The willingness to share and adapt their practices is also a necessary condition for their participation.

Transportation to Beit Hagat, food and accommodation are provided, as long as participation is confirmed by September 1st.

At the end of this week we will organize a happening in which we will activate an audience from the wider public with the insight we have achieved during the workshop. The event will be hosted and advertised by Beit Hagat and will include the performance of Mu & Shasha a duo of musicians from Ghana and Russia combine cello guitar and vocals in unique heartfelt blend. <http://www.balaioproducciones.com/artists/mu-sasha>

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