



video footage of the workshop (excerpt, 5min):
<https://youtu.be/BIbwPhd6uYM>



Duet of Lines (Side by Side)

2019

workshop + installation (pigment marker on glass, sound recording playback on stereo loudspeakers)

sound: ca. 40 min

as a part of the project *After-Ripening & Corruption: Paraphrasing Manners* at Kunsthalle Exnergasse in Vienna

After conducting social interventions *Right-Left* and *Visk-leken* (*Whisper game*) in a Swedish city Södertälje, where more than half of the residents have foreign backgrounds, I developed it further in the Austrian context: During the European migrant crisis, both countries were the top recipients of the asylum applications per capita, and comparing with the open-door policy in Sweden, Sebastian Kurz, then foreign minister in Austria, described its policy to invest more on location to solve the situation in the conflicted areas instead.

I invited two people I met in Vienna, who had never known each other and whose backgrounds evoked the intricate international relations, to my project, writing words in their languages on the window in my studio at the Kunsthalle.

THE MOST DISTANT & (UN)COMMON GROUNDS

Hasti is from Iran, briefly lived in Finland and now living in Vienna. Her mother tongue is Persian, and she is familiar with Kurdish, German, Russian and English. Irina is from Russia and lives in the Netherlands, staying in Vienna just for a month. Her mother tongue is Russian, and she is familiar with Hebrew, Dutch, Serbian and English. Inspired by Hasti saying “the most distant” person for her would be the Israeli, I looked for an Israeli as her counterpart. I could not find any so I chose Irina, who has Jewish origin and lived in Kibbutz in Israel.

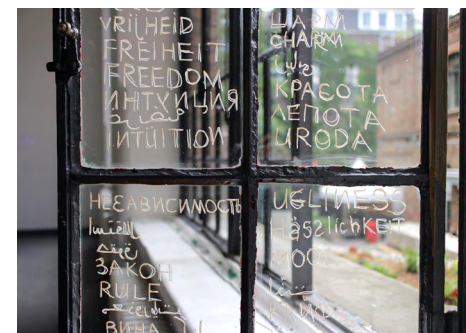
LEAD & FOLLOW ALTERNATELY

Hasti stood on one side, Irina on the other, facing each other through the window, which was half-opened inwards. With white pigment marker, they both write in mirrored letters so that it is readable for the other. Hasti writes a word that she translates from or associates with the word Irina has written. While Irina is writing it slowly in mirrored letters, Hasti is tracing the movement of Irina’s pen on the opposite side of the glass. They exchange the roles of leading and following alternately, and it continues. I stand by them to intervene occasionally, asking questions and suggesting, as well as to record the verbal exchange.

DUET & TRACE IN REPLAY

The sound recording captures how the duet started quietly and developed to sway to the rhythm - Irina struggled to write in mirror letters checking if written correctly, they translated a word in various languages, Irina praised the beauty of Persian writing, Hasti pronounced a word and shared little wisdom around it, Irina associated a Persian word with a Russian from their phonetical similarity and came to an auto-antonym in Polish and Russian.

By chance their dialogue came to an end with ‘kayf/kief’, an Arabic loanword in their respective mother tongue - Russian and Persian - that means ‘pleasure’. Since Arabic is usually written without vowels but only consonants (كيفية), the word in Arabic written on the window between two women can be also read as ‘Kiev/Kyiv’, the Ukrainian capital.



freedom (Russian)	sin (Russian)
freedom (Persian)	ashamed (Persian)
freedom (Dutch)	charm (Russian)
freedom (German)	charm (English)
intuition (Russian)	beauty (Persian)
intuition (Persian)	beauty (Russian)
intuition (English)	beauty (Serbian)
	beauty (Polish/ugly (Russian)
independency (Russian)	ugliness (English)
independency (Persian)	ugliness (German)
rights (Persian)	pretty (Dutch)
law (Russian)	pleasure (Persian)
rule (English)	pleasure (Russian slang)
obligation (Persian) guilt/sin (Persian)	borrowed from Arabic)
guilt (Russian)	pleasure (Arabic)
guilt (English)	pleasure (English)

(left page) traces of the jam left on the window. the writing appears more naive as Hasti and Irina need to write in mirrored letters (right page, from top to bottom) write & trace, facing each other through the window; transcript of the words written on the window, and the language written in brackets; Irina on the left writing in Russian in mirrored letters, and Hasti on the right tracing it



