

Summer Open Reading Group, 7 July 2018
Visitor report by Anik Fournier

On Saturday 7 July 2018, If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution hosted its Summer Open Reading group, the second session of programme VII dedicated to the field of inquiry Social Movement. This Open Reading Group was led by Myriam Lefkowitz, one of the four commissioned artists of the current programme, and was titled *The Book Club: A Space for Collective Study and Experimentation*.

The workshop began with a bike ride to a cabin in the Amsterdamse Bos, where we settled and got to work for the afternoon. Myriam introduced *The Book Club* as an ongoing research project that she developed together with philosopher Cécile Lavergne and that explores what role bodily experience plays in modes of study, understanding, and knowledge production. Lefkowitz has developed exercises to experiment in being attentive to the affects, emotions, sensations, and imaginaries that are triggered and that partake in collective study, and the practice of reading in particular. She asked us at the beginning of the workshop to keep in mind what future modes of reading we could imagine if the legibility of bodily idioms would come to expand our understanding of forms of reading in the present.

The afternoon was divided into a series of experiments that began with her having us become aware of our body's energy and behavior through modes of touch. Connecting beating hearts with sensing hands, we worked to feel how the heart pumps energy outward to the body's extremities. This haptic way of connecting became the basis for several acts of reading of our own bodies, that of others, and that of a written text: the first few pages of Donna Haraway's *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, And Significant Otherness*. Some exercises involved working and reading in pairs, for instance, by connecting heart and hand with text; while others engaged the entire group, for example, by listening and moving together as a response to one person's reading of the text out loud. Myriam stressed that the point was not to come to a better understanding of Haraway's manifesto, but rather to gain insight on how the text moves us, how our bodily experience informs our interpretation of the text, and how the collective desire for understanding and meaning-making connects us to each other.

Participants shared how reading through touch provoked vivid images that combined what is sensed with the written word. Others spoke of how the experience fragmented the reading of both the text and the body, as their attention slipped from one register to the other. What became clear is that the production of meaning revealed itself to be complex, operating between different orders of what can be defined as text. "We make each other up in the flesh" to borrow a fragment of Haraway's manifesto. Flesh in this workshop expanded to include, not only the touching bodies in their acts of communication, but also, the rich semantics of the written word when engaged through the senses.

The session built on the previous Open Reading Group by focussing on collective study as an important site of emergent social relations. A collective desire for understanding generates movement, it mobilizes bodies, affects, concepts, and language in a search for meaning. *The Book Club* proposes a biosociality, to borrow another term from Haraway's text, mapped in an

expanded field of idioms, whereby experimenting with modes of reading, communication, and understanding are at the core of an aesthetics and politics of becoming together.