

## FABRICATE (FABRIC OF) ART

In 2018, **TRIMUKHI PLATFORM** celebrates ten years. On this occasion, the present issue of **FABRICATE** (**FABRIC OF)** ART (designated double issue n°3/4 because to go to ten is to move to two digits) offers analyses, testimonies, conversations, reflections, images that give a lively account of this singular and joyous adventure which started in West Bengal with a few Santhal dance steps, one morning of August 2008, in the village of Borotalpada.

En 2018, TRIMUKHI PLATFORM fête ses dix ans. À cette occasion, la revue FABRIQUE DE L'ART (dans un numéro baptisé 3/4 car, passer à la dizaine, c'est passer à deux chiffres) rassemble des analyses, des témoignages des conversations, des réflexions, des images rendant compte de cette aventure singulière et joyeuse qui débuta au Bengale Occidental par quelques pas de danse, un matin d'août 2008, dans le village tribal de Borotalpada.

ÉDITEUR | PUBLISHER TRIMUKHI PLATFORM ART AND CUITURAL ORGANIZATION

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DISTRIBUTION ET VENTE | DISTRIBUTION AND MARKETING AOPALA BANERJEE

ISSN | 2395 - 7131 | FABRICATE (FABRIC OF) ART - FABRIQUE DE L'ART

© TRIMUKHI PLATFORM ART AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION | 2017-2018 99 SARAT PALLY | KOLKATA 700070 | INDIA trimukhiplafform.org/fabriquedelart | fabriquedelart@trimukhiplafform.org

printed by CDC PRINTERS Pvt. Ltd. | Kolkata | December 2018

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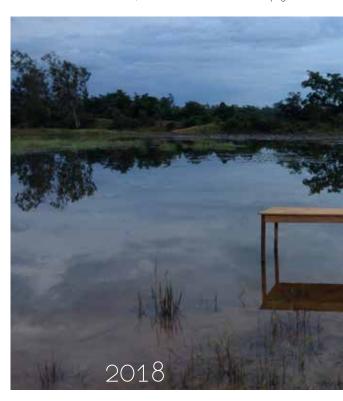
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thouse relations. From a tilbal village in india

The theatre is badly thought of, the word "theatre" at least.1 Nowadays, when one tries to give a definition of it, one comes up against a problem: negation. It will be said, sometimes with nostalgia, that the characteristics of theatre are no longer dialogue, conflict, character, story and the message they convey. Or, to escape the negation, one chooses other terms: "performance art" for example. Or, to encourage the invention of hybrid art forms, less compartmentalised, the substantive "theatre" will be evacuated: one will talk about "transdisciplinarity." It is not wrong to do this, because what is at stake is to dust off the concepts and put them to the test of the practices, in dialogue with what we actually do experience.

Still, in view of these practices and our ways of experiencing them, we can also proceed in reverse: not by evacuating the term "theatre" or by considering it only as pure negation, but by placing it at the heart of the reflection on the performing arts.

Let's take the beginning of Essay on Seasonal Variation in Santhal Society, the theatre performance we premiered in January 2017 in the tribal village of Borotalpada, India, on the occasion of our Night of Theatre n°9 • La Nuit des idées.2 The following elements appear: four young Santhals, three boys and a girl, are eating; there are chopsticks, forks, Chinese noodles, a wooden table, seven placards with names of various types of meat, a video projection of a woman eating and dancing, the audio recording of a man sharing memories he has of a woman from the village (which, as it is in French, hardly anyone understands), a song with a catchy rhythm, a red earthen platform, dust smoked out by dance steps, water a young man pours over his head, trees, shrubs, etc. (Because everything happens outside, in the open, on the edge of the village.)

other, but they are also distant: if young people from Borotalpada eat on the stage, they do not eat as they are used to. In the village, you do not eat with a fork or with chopsticks, but with your right hand. This is a characteristic feature of what I call a Contemporary Theatre Gesture<sup>3</sup>: it is about combining differences. There is a conjunction, a combination of differences.

There is no question of combining the elements any old how. It is necessary both to choose the different elements to be arranged together and to determine the distance between them. The philosopher Gilles Deleuze insisted on the fact that "theatre is real movement, and, from all the arts it employs, it extracts real movement."4 It is important to integrate into the composition only what actually and really produces movement.

These operations of extraction, selection and integration are realised during the rehearsals. With Surujmoni Hansda, a 15-year-old Santhal villager who co-directed the theatre performance with me, we wondered, for example, what activities could succeed the dance and the repeated crossing of the red earthen platform. By elimination, we came to change space. We turned to the trees. Surujmoni suggested using a small clay pitcher she had seen hidden between the roots. I tried putting water in it. Then another member of our team took over the same action. We compared: his presence was bringing a consistency that mine did not have. I tried to add a cigarette: it was uninteresting. Surujmoni held out a tight towel: something was taking place, provided the towel was used with only one hand - with two, an unconvincing symmetry was setting in and the flow was fading.

To work on differences requires making each difference become more different. In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze proposed that difference be converted into an element referring to other differences that do not identify it, nor fix it, but differentiate it even more. He added: "Each term of a series, being already a difference, must be put into a variable relation with other terms, thereby constituting other series devoid of center and convergence."5 For example, in Essay on Seasonal Variation, when a young man pours water on his head, the arrival of a

- I first published this short essay in French: "Relations théâtrales: un récit-analyse depuis un village en Inde", TicArtToc, n°9, Montréal, Diversité Artistique Montréal (DAM), 2017, p. 66-71.
- <sup>2</sup> I strongly recommend to watch first an extract of the performance: <youtu. be/zVr\_6btUvZg>; and then to proceed with the reading. See also: < trimukhiplatform.org/ essayonseasonalvariation insanthalsociety/>.
- <sup>3</sup> I have given details in French in "Le geste théâtral contemporain: entre présentation et symbole", (L'Annuaire théâtral : revue québécoise d'études théâtrales, n° 36, Montréal, SQET/ UQAM, 2004, p. 27-43) and in 'La crise est finie (introduction)"(Registres, n°14, Paris, Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2010, p. 38-41).
- 4 Gilles Deleuze, Différence et répétition, Paris, PUF, 1969, p. 18. In English: Difference and Repetition, tr. P. Auton, New York, Colombia University Press, 1994, p. 10.
- <sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Différence et répétition, op. cit., p. 79. In English: Difference and Repetition, op. cit., p. 56.

Not only are these elements distinct from each

little girl who seeks to get hold of the pitcher introduces an "other term", keeping active the "variable relation" within the same series and working to make the latter diverge until it is transformed into another series. It is also the case with the arrival of a second boy to lift up the little one: his gesture ensures that, while finding how to continue, the movement diverges again and thus escapes fixity.

Gilles Deleuze defended the idea that when a work of art succeeds in showing the "difference (going) differing", "it becomes a veritable theatre". He added immediately: "A theatre where nothing is fixed [...]. The work of art leaves the domain of representation in order to become 'experience', [...] or science of the sensible."7 There is radicalism in this statement: it is not that the theatre is like the other arts; on the contrary, any artwork, insofar that it shows difference becoming still more different, participates in the art of theatre, it is theatre. (And, to push the reasoning to its end, we could say that the theatre thus becomes a kind of paragon of the arts.8)

Another important point: this theatre is a "theatre where nothing is fixed". This statement must be understood in two complementary ways. On the one hand, it is about the non-fixity that I evoked before: a young man pours water on his head, a little girl tries to catch the pitcher, another boy carries her in his arms for her to sprinkle the water easily, etc. On the other hand, it is about the fact that the theatre has nothing of its own. Eating Chinese noodles or pouring water over the head are not theatre-specific activities. They do not belong to it. The projected video of a Santhal lady dancing or the broadcasted music track by French band Louise Attaque are not theatre properties either: one can watch the video at home on the web, listen to the song in the bus in Paris. And, after a dry rehearsal, we twice used the table from the play to celebrate a birthday - proof that this table was not, either, a specific element of the theatre. That is to say, the game being played is a 'combinatorial' game where the elements coming into play in the combination are extracted from other fields than theatre: from video art, from music, from carpentry, from daily life, etc. The game is "extensive,"9

Pouring water over the head carrying a pitcher with hands was the first series, carrying a pitcher with hands is the second series and carrying with hands is the third series. When a fourth partner slides behind the other three to put a towel on the shoulders of the first, a fourth series begins: the series of the hands.

Another possible translation: "The modern work of art tends to fulfil these conditions [to show the difference (going) differing]: it becomes in this sense a real theatre, made of metamorphoses and permutations. Theatre without anything fixed (or stable), a labyrinth without any thread [...]. The work of art leaves the field of representation to become "experience", transcendental empiricism or the science of the sensible." Gilles Deleuze, Différence et répétition, op. cit., p. 79. In English: Difference and Repetition, op. cit., p. 56. It's Deleuze himself who put emphasis on the word "theatre".

<sup>8</sup> I have developed this idea of the theatre becoming a sort of paragon of the arts in the conclusion of my book Deleuze et le théâtre. Rompre avec la représentation (Besançon, Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2015, p. 132-143).

The "extensive unity of the arts forms a universal theatre".

Gilles Deleuze, *Le pli. Leibniz et le baroque*, Paris, Minuit,
1988, p. 168. In English: *The Fold. Leibniz and the*Baroque, tr. T. Conley, London, The Athlone Press, 1993,
p. 123.

Deleuze will say later, because one can create relations between elements belonging to domains far apart one from the other. This is only possible because this combinatorial game is of extreme variability. It is a game played without any *a priori* idea regarding the nature of the relationship which, perhaps, in the mind of one or the other spectators, will finally be built.

To emphasise the singularity of such links, I propose to speak about *theatre relations*. (And we would call "theatre" any artwork that involves *theatre relations*.)

At the beginning of Essay on Seasonal Variation appear some obvious relationships, some obvious links between certain elements of the combination. When, in the projection, a woman eats, around the table, the young people also eat. When she dances, two of them also dance. But these trivial links (here mimetic relationships) are weak – formal, rhythmic links. They are transparent. They do not decrease the degree of heterogeneity of the composition.

On the placards that the performers show to the audience are written names of animals to eat, in two languages so that all the spectators (anglophones and santhalophones) can read them. But none of what these placards say ("beef", "rat", "ant", "pork", "chemical chicken", "tiny bird hunted with slingshot in the morning") is present on stage: the young people are eating Chinese egg noodles. Nevertheless these weak links have a function: they help the audience to watch with tranquility the heterogeneity of the theatre relations. They are signals that do not signal anything, indications that indicate nothing, but that, because of their presence, help the spectators not to worry about what is happening to them.

9

Let's become audience. What happens to us when, with a relaxed mind, we look at these theatre relations? We see young people of different heights eating, young girls who slip behind them and caress them, then take away the table so that two of them, a tiny girl and a tall boy dance; we see all of them crossing

Cf. in this issue:
Samantak Das,
"Conversation after the
Night: Wine-Inspired
Thinking", p. 93. See
also in this issue: Patrice
Maniglier, "What
Global Art Might Look
Like", p. 100-103;
Ariane Mnouchkine,
Samantak Das, "Theatre
Today",
p. 154-171.

Cf. See my short essay in the second issue of Fabricate (Fabric of) Art: "From Senses to Sense: the Arts of Presenting", p. 27-41.

12 I suggest, before continuing reading, to watch the following extract of a dry rehearsal where the washing feet ritual was combined with a quadriphonic sound art set up: <youtu.be/vapl/OmAuK4>. See also: < trimukhiplatform. org/ifeachdayiloveyou moreonedaywill iexplode/>.

About the Nights of Theatre, see: <trimukhiplatform.org/menu/not/>.

14 Cf. Jean-Frédéric Chevallier, "Le geste théâtral contemporain", Frictions, n°10, Paris, Association Friction, 2006, p. 38-45; "Teatro del presentar", Citru.doc - Cuadernos de investigación teatral, n° 1, México, CITRU/ INBA, 2005, p. 176-185.

Cf. Jean-Frédéric Chevallier, "Teatro del presentar y resistencia al neoliberalismo", Líneas de fuga, n°20, Mexico, Casa Refugiuo Citllatépetl, 2006, p. 6-22. See also: Jean-François Lyotard, "La dent, la paume" in Des dispositifs pulsionnels, Paris, Galilée, 1994, p. 91-98.

the platform running; then we see in another place, in between trees, someone pouring water on himself, and another, back on the red earthen platform, starting to eat Chinese noodles again. We also see that, according to common sense, the first activity (eating) has nothing to do with the second (stroking), nor that one with the third (dancing), nor with the fourth (running), nor the fifth (pouring water on the head), etc. However, although we feel that these elements have apparently nothing to do with each other, we feel something while looking at them together. (This is the criterion we had with Surujmoni for selecting elements, measuring differences, evaluating possibilities that their combinations would produce inner movements.)

At a public meeting after a dry rehearsal, Samantak Das, professor of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, Calcutta, explained what he, personally, had felt while seeing these elements that apparently had nothing to do with each other: he spoke about love, he insisted on the depth of this love he had experienced. 10 What theatre relations produce, their aesthetic effect, is that we, spectators, feel. The theatre gesture as a combinatory gesture arranging different presences tends to produce sensations. If there is then a production of sense, it is from this awakening of the senses.11 For to speak of love is not only to name one or more sensations, it is also to give them meaning, and thereby give meaning to the relations and relationships that inspired these sensations.

8

It is because the spectator is anchored in the here and now of his or her sensible and sensitive experience that an inner experience of this kind is unfolding. Orchestrating new connections, and being carried away by what the connections produce, demands attention to and availability for the present, that is to say, towards both what is obviously present and what may arise unexpectedly from the present. And it is probably not trivial that our theatre performance was preceded by a gesture of welcome: Atang Daram. According to the Santhal tradition, when guests come in, their feet must be washed by the hostesses, dried and then anointed with oil.<sup>12</sup> This is

what we offer each year to city-dwellers who, after a long journey from Calcutta (by train, then bus, then on foot), reach our village – before they sit on plastic sheets mingling with the villagers and watching together the performing arts works showcased during our *Night of Theatre*. The extent to which each spectator is fully *present* (available) in the *present* (the here and now) determines how much the *present* opens up for him or her as a *present* (gift).

If formally, to describe such a dynamic, proposed the expression "theatre of presenting", 14 one can as well speak today of "contemporary theatre", on the condition however, that one can play with the redundancy of the adjective: a person who is con-temporary with me, con-temporal to me, is a person who is with (con-) me, here, who accompanies me, now, while what is here and now takes place; who accompanies me without complacency; who is attentive and critical, loving and demanding. A theatre is contemporary for the same two reasons: loving attention and vigilant criticism. Not trying to communicate anything to the audience, given that we live in over-the-top communication societies, demands a lot. It is also an amorous disposition because to operate in this way means to consider each spectator as a person in his or her own right and not as a consumer to be convinced that he/she will be happier if his/her bottle of shampoo has green stripes. Likewise, working on arranging elements distant from one another without prescribing pre-established rules for the relation between them is a strong position: in our globalised world, all relations should function on the single axis of capitalist exchange - this in exchange for that, this is worth that which is worth money.

In fact, some ten years ago, while analysing in the footsteps of Jean-François Lyotard what the audience has to do facing a "theatre drama representation", I came out with a pleasant joke. To decipher a drama representation, I said, is to train oneself to be an efficient agent of neoliberalism. Indeed, if the red colour is worth (stands for) blood, if the tension in the right hand of the actor is worth (stands for) the memory of this fateful moment where his character discovered that his uncle

was an assassin, in both cases the diversity of possible connections has been reduced to only one: "this is worth that".

I now offer another provocative idea, based on a definition by Gilles Deleuze:

How to define what is it to be "from the left", I would say [...] it's firstly a problem of perception. [...]

Not to be from the left means starting with myself, my street, my city, my country, the other countries further and further. We start with us, and as we are privileged, we live in a rich country, we wonder how we can sustain this situation. [...] To be from the left is the opposite. It is to perceive, as it is said, the Japanese people perceive. They don't perceive like us, they primarily perceive the periphery. So, they would say: the world, the Continent Europe, France, etc., etc., the street of Bizerte [where I live], Me. It is a phenomenon of perception. We first perceive the horizon. We perceive at the horizon level. 16

In other words: by looking at theatre relations, and in doing so, by letting oneself feel, the spectators train themselves to be from the left... because they practise – and take pleasure in practising – putting in relation, in touch, one difference with another far away. And from there, they marvel at what differentiates us from each other, our distances, our singularities. Perhaps sometimes they come to realise that it is precisely because we are different that we enter into relations, that it is our distances that make us closer to each other, that what today brings us together is exactly that which takes us away.

Using in this manner the notion of theatre characterise relations to contemporary stage practices leads to reintroducing the possibility of a visionary dimension for the theatre. Theatron designates in ancient Greek the place from which one looks, one sees, one sights.<sup>17</sup> Now, if what we are looking at from the theatron are singularly singular relations, and if what we see while looking at them is the actuality of the relation between our differences, its strength, its power of creation, it is because an imperious invitation, a summons almost, has been launched at us, a call to look further and deeper at our reasons to exist: a call "to be able not only to fix the glance on the obscurity of the time, but also to perceive in this darkness a light". 18 In any case, the art of theatre relations enjoins those who look at them and see them to become without further delay - visionaries of life.

- Deleuze, "G pour Gauche" [L for Left], L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze, ed. C. Parnet, P-A. Boutang, Paris, Editions Montparnasse, 2004 (DVD).
- <sup>17</sup> Cf., in this issue: Patrice Maniglier, Samantak Das, Jean-Frédéric Chevallier, "Art and Thougth", p. 54.
- <sup>18</sup> Giorgio Agamben, Qu'est-ce que le contemporain ?, trad. Maxime Rovere, Paris, Rivages poche, 2008, p. 24-25.



fr.trimukhiplafform.org/10ans/

2008 Borotalpada village	
First assembly meeting	
Monsoon Night Dream (theatre of presenting)	
2009 Ahmedabad Darpana Academy of Performing Arts	
Drowning Princess (film-essay)	
Calcutta Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre + Jadavpur University	
Monsoon Night Dream (theatre of presenting)	
Mexico city Mexican National University (UNAM)	
Drowning Princess (film-essay)	
2010 Bogota Teatro Occidente + Adra + Colombian National University	
Drowning Princess (film-essay)	
Borotalpada village	
An assembly takes the decision of building Trimukhi Cultural Centre (= TCC)	
2011 Calcutta MACE	
International Internal Trimukhi Platform Seminar: the 3 Faces of Trimukhi	
Borotalpada village	
Starting of the construction of Trimukhi Cultural Centre (= TCC)	
Calcutta MACE + ON THE FOOTPATHS	
Light & Sight n°1 (creative photography workshop)	
2012 Borotalpada TCC	
Light & Sight n°1 (creative photography workshop)	
Night of Theatre n°5 (France, India, Mexico):	
Guignol's দল (theatre of presenting)	
Paris Studio Dupleix	
What Does To Build Mean? (film-essay)	
Calcutta Indian Council for Cultural Relations	
Lecture about Trimukhi Platform: Building Relations in a Space of Diversity	
Guayaquil National Performing Arts Institute of Ecuador	
What Does To Build Mean? (film-essay)	
Lecture about Trimukhi Platform: Transdisciplinarity in Arts and Social Diversity	,
Borotalpada Government Primary School	
Creatures of Flesh & Paper n°1 (double workshop)	
2013 Borotalpada TCC	
Light & Sight n°2 (creative photography workshop)	
Night of Theatre n°6 (France, India, Mexico, Ecuador):	
The Thing that Exists When We Aren't There (theatre of presenting)	
What Does To Build Mean? (film-essay)	
2014 Borotalpada TCC	
Night of Theatre n°7 (France, India, Mexico, Colombia):	
Per Ruptam Silvam (theatre of presenting)	
Crash Courses in Arts Production n°I	
La Habana Casa de las Américas + French Embassy in Cuba	
Lecture about Trimukhi Platform: Contemporary Arts and Community Dynamics	
Borotalpada TCC	
Crash Courses in Arts Production n°2	
2015 Borotalpada TCC	
Night of Theatre n°8 (France, India, Mexico, Colombia):	
Bachchader Experimentum (theatre of presenting)	
Pollir Shobдo Remix x 2 (sound installation)	
Calcutta JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY	
Lecture about Trimukhi Platform: Contemporary Theatre What It Is?	
Calcutta GOETHE INSTITUTE	
Drowning Princess (film-essay)	
Borotalpada TCC	

Crash Courses in Arts Production n°3

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Worldwide Online
         Visions of the land in India and elsewhere (online workshop)
         Borotalpada TCC
         Crash Courses in Arts Production n°4
         Bachchader Experimentum (theatre of presenting)
         Pollir Shobdo Remix (sound installation)
2016 Calcutta Jadavpur University + Modern High School for Girls + Minto Park + Bangur Park + Magic Hour Garden
         Bachchader Experimentum (theatre of presenting)
         Borotalpada TCC
         If Each Day I Love You More, One Day Will I Explode? (sound installation)
         Essay on Seasonal Variation in Santhal Society (theatre of presenting)
         Try Me Under Water (night wandering)
        Calcutta JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY
         Lecture about Trimukhi Platform: Fabricating Texts for Theatre from a Santhal Village
        A Coruña Theatre Rosalía Castro + Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture
         Lecture about Trimukhi Platform: Contemporary Theatre Practices and Tribal Community Practices
         Paris La Maisons des Indes
         Launch of Fabricate (Fabric of) Art • Fabrique de l'Art n°1
        Calcutta Alliance Française du Bengale
         Launch of Fabricate (Fabric of) Art • Fabrique de l'Art n°1
         Chicoutimi Université du Québec
         Lectures about Trimukhi Platform: : Fabricating Texts for Theatre from a Santhal Village
         Try Me Under Water (video installation)
        Montréal Librairie Le Port de tête
         Launch of Fabricate (Fabric of) Art • Fabrique de l'Art n°1
2017 | Borotalpada TCC
         Night of Theatre n°9 • La Nuit des idées (France, India, Spain, Canada):
         Essay on Seasonal Variation in Santhal Society (theatre of presenting)
         Try Me Under Water (video installation + night wandering)
         Birpara Government College
         Lecture about Trimukhi Platform: Globalisation or Mondialisation?
        Paris Université de Paris Nanterre
         Lecture about Trimukhi Platform: Contemporary Theatre and Tribal Community
         Calcutta Oxford Bookstore + Alliance Française du Bengale
         Launch of Fabricate (Fabric of) Art • Fabrique de l'Art n°2
         Try Me Under Water (video installation + night wandering)
         Khorika + Borotalpada Government School Hostel for Girls
         Creatures of Flesh & Paper n°2 (double workshop)
2018 Borotalpada TCC
         Night of Theatre n°10 • La Nuit des idées (France, India, Canada, Japan):
         জল ই জীবন। La Vie dans l'Eau (theatre of presenting)
         Calcutta JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY
         Conversation about Trimukhi Platform: Theatre Today with Ariane Mnouchkine
         Essay on Seasonal Variation in Santhal Society (theatre of presenting)
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         Lecture about Trimukhi Platform: Theatre of Presenting as a Combination of Differences
         Borotalpada TCC
         Trimukhi Platform 10 years anniversary celebration:
         জল ই জীবন । La Vie dans l'Eau (theatre of presenting)
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this issue is published with the support of the Publication Assistance Programmes of the Institut français TAGORE ce numéro a bénéficié du soutien des Programmes d'aide à la publication de l'Institut français

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ISSN 2395 - 7131

