

A CONVERSATION WITH THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF HEAR! HERE!

An abstract line drawing in yellow and light blue on a pink background. It depicts two figures in profile, facing each other as if in conversation. The lines are fluid and overlapping, creating a sense of movement and interaction. The figure on the left has a more defined head and neck, while the figure on the right is more integrated with the surrounding lines. The overall composition is dynamic and expressive.

# “Making the road by walking”

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I also became more aware of group dynamics. It's been powerful to learn about different perspectives, not just of teachers, but also of a head, a coordinator, or whoever, a staff member. How to hold space for everybody and create access?

**BECKET** How to structure discourse and create space where it can happen; bringing things out more explicitly, putting them on the table, whether it's questions of privilege, position, or just because there are so many ways in which we either fall into certain roles or because of habits we have been socially prescribed. To lay these things out explicitly in a way where people feel, not comfortable, but at least feel safe to address them in a respectful way. I always think about how to do it, but somehow these workshops and events have given me a lot more confidence to do that, and it has also given me more faith in other students and staff to do that with me. In my daily teaching I am focused on artworks and exams and things like that, but of course these issues are never outside of that space. The traditional method has been to pretend that these issues don't exist, and not to talk about them at the Rietveld.

**PHIL** Through this process I have learned to hold my own positions of privilege in my thinking

a little better than I had done. It was also good to learn to call certain arguments 'bad faith', or 'the devil's advocate' – “This person is not trying to have a conversation”. It was also great to spend some time thinking about using very different forms, games, or the stuff that Geo did with us in the [Moving Together] workshop to find different ways to get into a conversation or maybe rupture those bad faith arguments. A different way of looking at what is being talked about.

**ELOISE** Simone's [Rethinking Dialogue] workshop helped me remember that checking in on students whether they 'appear' to be handling a situation or an experience or not. It is important to honour every person's experience and the simple act of asking how one is and if they need anything goes a long way.

**SEKAI** What are your thoughts on the main question of the project; how can we learn to talk across difference?

**ISKRA** Like many things, it's a muscle that you need to keep using, practising. We can only do this by doing and by reflecting on it. Flexing the muscle. Practice.

**SIMONE** It taught me to be a better listener. Talking across difference is also about listening to

different perspectives. Being quiet a little bit more and taking it in a little bit more.

**ELIF** To be able to switch from active listening and active interacting and being more aware of what I am saying. I am talking about talking. Understanding certain topics a bit better.

**PHIL** I thought a bit about the way in which Édouard Glissant uses the concept of 'opacity'. 'Transparency' is a problem because you sort of relate your norm to this difference in front of you. Instead, we should try to understand 'difference' through opacity: understanding and accepting while not knowing the difference. Certain forms that we spoke about are all about keeping 'speculativeness' involved and allow you to break bad faith arguments. The forms that we spent time thinking about that were more speculative were useful in relation to speaking across

difference, because they had room for opacity.

**BECKET** A lot of the difference across which we're trying to talk about is not a difference that the classroom can resolve; but it has a responsibility to acknowledge it. The impulse to try to resolve difference becomes a way of people trying to ignore it or pretend it doesn't exist. It's actually much more important to acknowledge it and not necessarily try to resolve it.

**ELOISE** I think that 'talk' is not enough and the different workshops show us that action is what helps us understand our difference and the differences between our students, colleagues, disciplines, abilities, and experiences.

**ROSA** What has the feel been of the workshops across the year? What was your favourite moment?

**PHIL** It felt good! That always means more than people tend to think. I often find that workshops start with a profound nervousness and mellow into a general low-grade unease, when educative spaces actually feel good it means that something important is happening.

**BECKET** One of the most productive moments was thinking about the problematics



of the second workshop we had: the nonviolent communication workshop. There was something there; what is this perspective which is not really working for our platform? That was a moment that was really educational. It demonstrated the limitations of assuming a universal position, even when well-intentioned, as the source of communication. Real differences do exist between points of view, and they can't be subsumed under a presumed relatability or human condition.

**SIMONE** Yes, I liked everyone's reaction to the nonviolent communication workshop. It offered an insight into how critical the group was.

**ISKRA** What struck me in some of the schoolwide workshops was the atmosphere. Some were packed, but some had small numbers. Those smaller events gave people the opportunity to speak about things they otherwise wouldn't be speaking about, for example during the fourth schoolwide event [Movement & Sonics in Dialogue].

**ELIF** I enjoyed the workshops that started with movement exercises, for example Joy's workshop on consent. There is this sense of awkwardness at the beginning. But also, immediately there is this bond with everyone

in the group; you can be honest and share ideas. That has been the feel for me for most of the sessions. The first step to physically introduce everyone to the space and make everyone feel okay and then continue the workshop. From awkwardness to comfort. It's challenging and nice.

**SEKAI** How to make sure we don't fall into the trap amongst ourselves of being critical for the sake of being critical? How to avoid the performativity of criticality, 'wokeness' or of progressiveness?

**BECKET** A distinction that is important is that we have a focus on a collective criticality, we have a criticality together. Whereas the performance of that is individual signalling. To me the distinction is being in a productive common project, instead of gathering for oneself a kind of moral, ethical or intellectual capital. As long as the situations we are discussing are real situations, we're dealing with that together. That's how we can avoid both the abstraction of signalling criticality as well as the egoistic aspects of it.

**ISKRA** You're cultivating a certain dynamic as a group, and it can become difficult to be critical of your own position. But there were so many people coming from the outside, which always set up



