PYL:REALITY SURFING

The project was created in cooperation MOTUS ALFREDVEDVOŘE & ΣΈRʌ'ß

Reality Surfing

Reality Surfing is a hybrid project that combines elements of artistic research, performance, installation, participatory playground, and is open to any kind of visitor – from humans to insects. In it, the authors of PYL collective create conditions under which things 'speak' to us in their own way, thus activating attention towards nonhuman worlds. They discover new relations between daily objects through their materiality and presence in one space where their value is equivalent to the presence of a human body. Scenography of the piece creates a system which exists and functions in accordance to its own rules. It serves and requires a service; it absorbs and triggers; it's geometry is meaningless just like feelings of destruction.

We move objects from one contextual frame to another, revealing their hidden or inconspicuous qualities. Part of this process is rethinking the primary function of technologies, which we perceive as one of the forms of a tool error. For humans, a dysfunction of a thing could mean a factual loss of control over it and the impossibility of its further usage. However, the origins of this concept are consumer-oriented, so we can perceive it only in relation to the established sociocultural codes. Error as such does not exist beyond human reality. Intentional 'misuse' of the 'tool 'may reveal features that are usually overshadowed by its conventional utility. Therefore, within the process of creation of Reality Surfing, we assign an important role to accidents, failures, and intentional mistakes. We consider them as performative manifestations of objects as well as potential forms of emancipation of the nonhuman world.

Reality Surfing invites a spectator to forget about rational logic and surf into a new reality composed in collaboration with sponges,

oranges machines, ghosts, and other unexpected species.

Each of us assembles their own small world with the available things and knowledge, using random fragments of reality as stones for building the wall against the wind. When the wall falls, we find ourselves in a vapour landscape which unites collapsed pieces into new creatures. There, we can surf from the cardboard box to the dolphin's fin by accepting the terms and conditions. There are moments of entropy and freedom, no matter if we are locked up, locked down or just among ourselves and our surroundings.

PYL is an international collective of artists working together since 2018 in the field of postdramatic theatre, visual arts, sound and intermedia. Their practice explores the borders of anthropocentric perception in a dialogue with objects and ironic attempts to grasp nonhuman agency. Through application of DIY methods, recycling and compilation principles, the group develops its own visual language which extends the meanings of scenography far beyond the theatre stage. Their works shift cultural codes, contexts and origins of regular things, while transforming objects to beings and beings to objects. Sensitivity towards the dailiness, sharing moments and personal experiences in non-linear and playful ways transmit to the group's associative approach to a coworking process.

Descriptions of non-human actors from Reality Surfing and manual on how to perceive the space while being a part of it

Playground

you are now entering the territory of scenography without borders.
well…we put a frame around it for you, for a start.
be aware that you are a part of it. you are a color. you are a shape. you are a movement.
you are not the center of this universe.
be aware of how you connect to the entities around you.
feel free to join this Playground.
here you can play, move, plunge, roll, watch, listen, lay, sleep or do nothing.
here you can treat Bags, Sponges, Oranges and other actors with tenderness.
here you can be silent, make a quiet noise or sing songs with Talking puddles.
here you cannot: harm each other or the objects.
our motto is to stabilize the world, not to destroy it.
here you cannot: eat Slime or steal actors in any other way. they will miss us, and we will miss them.
here you cannot: touch live wires or electronics – they can bite or die. we need them alive.

We call it Slime

Slime is a plastic substance. it can be of any color.
it can flop, stick, take any form and spread or flow for quite a long time.
it is mesmerizing.
from time to time, it may look like a chewing gum, a jellyfish or a spiderweb.
it can appear in unexpected circumstances.
it can be, among other ways, prepared with the following proportions:
shaving foam – 3 servings
slime activator – half a serving
PVA glue – 3 servings
two tablespoons of baking soda
pinch of (any) color

We call it Ghost

Ghost is a liminal creature; a creature of transition.
sometimes it can walk through the walls. oftentimes it cannot.
Ghost is in itself an unexpected circumstance.
don't be afraid of Ghosts. usually, they themselves feel very confused, awkward and even scared.
there are various ways to summon a Ghost: for example, it can arise out of a piece of white sheet covering a human body.
it may look very funny with shoes on.

We call it Orange

Orange is round and attractive.
you can make up a game with it.
it can roll and it can stay in its place.
it can break or move other objects.
it can change colors.
but – it cannot be eaten.

We call it Stick

Stick is a long thin object.
it can be carried somewhere or be left alone.
it can be bare, hollow or sharp.
it can become a straw, an ikebana or a spear: therefore, it can be supplemented with additional elements, such as plastic pieces, organic peels or strings and wires.
you may plant it in soil or use it for pricking sponges and other objects.

We call it Plastic Bag

it can be influenced by unexpected circumstances such as dogs or moving air (breath of unexpected passengers without facemasks or wind).
Plastic Bag can contain various things.
it can help you move your things, stuff that you consider your temporary belongings.
combined with a Stick, it might serve as a flag.
combined with a foot or a shoe, it might serve as footwear.
while drifting in space, it can be seen as a jellyfish, trash or ghostly appearance.
it can make a sound.

We call it Zen Garden

Zen Garden is an assemblage of sand, outdoors or indoors.
it allows objects to be seen in a special way.
for example, you can put a bag or anything in Zen Garden and look at it.
you should be aware of yourself and your surroundings before moving something in Zen Garden.
here you need to act slowly and not to rush anywhere; you should connect to our friend – silence – when looking at it.

We call it Island

Island is a ground, differing from the ground around it.
it gives firmly grounded meanings to things, which might not be noticed in other places.
you can take something to the Island, even something you like, and leave it there.
you can rest there.
it can be a smaller world that you can easily see as a whole, a holiday from the bigger world.

Descriptions of human participants of Reality Surfing

We call her Sveta

Sveta can teach children and branches how to draw (even) a dolphin or a dolphin how to draw a branch. She can manage to perform only with a box on her head or hiding behind the branch. Sveta has a 7th sense in her teeth and supports cats in a country of dogs. If she laughs, it is sincere, if she is worried, it is deeply. Also, she is a ghost by profession.

We call her Anichka

Anichka is fragile but strong. She is tiny but the world inside her is huge. She loves a lot of things. She loves cakes, hot wine and coffee, but cannot have them as a new mum. She loves toys, especially the talking ones, but only has them for her son or for work. She likes glitters and parents. She can explain the darkest essence of dark philosophy even to the youngest ones.

We call her Masha

She was learning Czech by the book History of the Theatre and now she paints her nose in brilliant green. She is a lord of soldering, once she even almost soldered something to her own finger. She can also make objects shake (from fear?) and she is shaking with them. If the world is shaking, she can hold it. Masha rolls short cigarettes and loves long rehearsals.

We call her Theresa

Everyone falls in love with her at first sight. But she is a rare beast, often in forests and elusive. She understands invisible scenography more than the visible one. If she commits to material, it can be roots, food or plugs, easily container something that you can songs in find in any garden, to things or wall. She composes which she pays attention that are not evident. Theresa has a special skill in training with oranges.
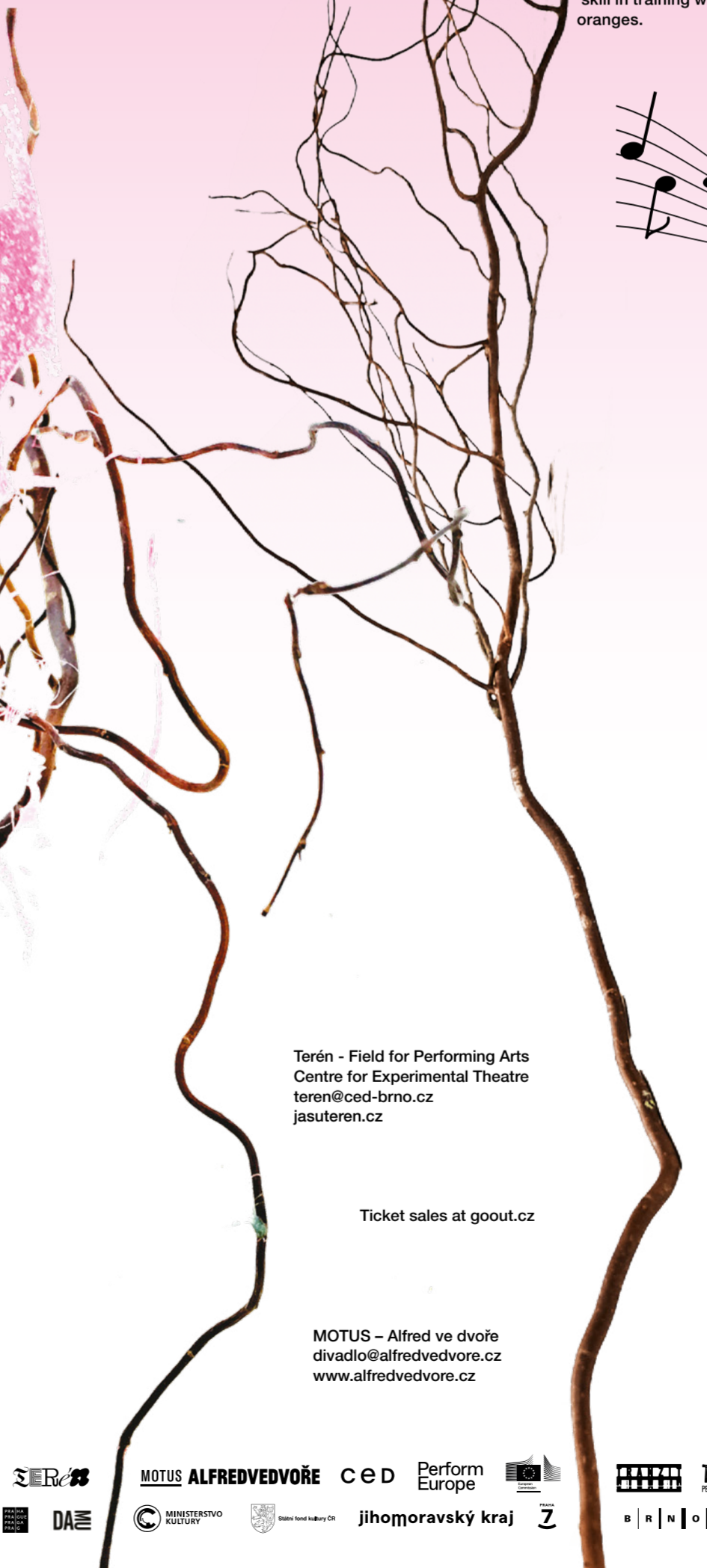
Terén - Field for Performing Arts
Centre for Experimental Theatre
teren@ced-brno.cz
jasuteren.cz

Ticket sales at goout.cz

MOTUS – Alfred ve dvoře
divadlo@alfredvedvore.cz
www.alfredvedvore.cz

Dolphins in Venice

The water in Venice is clear.
Dolphins appear,
dolphins appear.
The water in Venice is clear.
Dolphins appear,
dolphins appear.
Nature cleans itself,
clean my shelf.
You clean your shelf.
Nature cleans itself,
I clean my shelf.
You clean your shelf.

Dialogue:
One dolphin is asking the other dolphin: *"Did you clean your shelf yesterday?"*
The other dolphin says: *"No, no. I will clean it tomorrow."*
The first dolphin says: *"Ah okay. But anyway – your shelf, it's under the water – it should be clean, always. Because water is the liquid for cleaning, anyhow."*
The other dolphin says: *"Well…"*

Am I Wireless Enough?
(Can be performed by a device or a human)

The moon is sinking in
I open my eye
A new day begins
With a sigh:

Am I wireless enough?

Language is a virus (Laurie)
Cables are our ties
The world is for us
And we are eating fries.

Am I wireless enough?

Love is like cables
They connect and transmit
They do not fix you
They send and commit (but-)

Am I wireless enough?

Our love is our interface
It creates new space
You're doing what you can
I care for where I am.

Am I wireless enough?

My anger is a fountain
plugged into a pattern
of plastic ancestors
combined with weather.

Am I wireless enough?

Slime Always Wins

with all our arms
and all our legs
we move and grab
we walk and clap
we're using shoes
and buying gloves
horses have hooves
wings have doves

but

future has no prince
slime always wins
you lost your key
you hurt your knee
having a fight
with your fridge at night
about your fluid gender
and your agenda
to find your way
to make your day

but

future has no prince
slime always wins
with all our eyes
and all our ears
we see and hear
we breathe and fear
we're wearing hats
and buying stuff
dogs have teeth
and hearts have love

but

our future has no prince
slime always wins

Comments:
A asks: *Do you think our future has princesses? Or will rhizomatic structures take over?*
B says: *I don't know. But, there is a lot of 'BUT' in between the lines. Often the word AND is more helpful. E.g. I am eating fries AND our future might have no prince AND you are wearing green shoes. It's not a problem, it all fits in one world.*

Fragments from the Manifesto of Scenography without borders

Scenography is not just about settings for beauty, but somehow, if a setting mirrors absurdity, pain, decay, growth and processes of living, we call it beautiful [...].

Living Scenography

A dog which suddenly appears on a stage during a performance can easily be considered as Living Scenography. It's liveliness is evident because it moves and sometimes produces sounds. A plastic bag which suddenly falls down to the side because of the blow of the wind can also become an actor. Two things which have a similar quality and are lying next to each other can 'speak' to you about their (e.g. visual) similarity, just like two totally different things can 'be silent' about their common background [...].
A thing is not obliged to keep human secrets and its value is not based on this.
It has the right to be lonely and independent.
When I was 12 years old, I made a list of things dear to my heart. The list was very diverse and included such things as a New Year holiday, a red tape recorder which I got for my birthday, a yarn, as well as both my parents, and glitters. Glitters I remember the best because my mother was horrified and asked: "How can parents be on the same list with glitters?" Of course, I would never trade glitters for my parents. But even now that list still seems good to me.

Sensitive Scenography

Technology is commonly being used in theatre but is often taken for granted. Technical equipment is not just a bunch of tools – they all belong to Sensitive Scenography. Usually, such Scenography contains various interdependent entities which perform together in order to achieve a specific goal which usually serves our needs. For example, they all perform and react to each other in order to turn on the light. It might seem easy to you – turning on the light – but try to think: How many nonhuman actors participate in this act

in your room?

in the backstage?

in the supermarket?

Fucking Scenography

There are two types of Fucking Scenography: a) Annoying and b) Pairing

A. Annoying Scenography = broken / fragile / stupid

It is any kind of Scenography which leads you to swear FUCK.

For example, when you build a beautiful ikebana out of rubbish and need to fix it after every rehearsal. Or, when you are cooking slime for a very long time and it does not want to get ready, so you spend half of the rehearsal with a sticky substance on your hands, swearing and getting depressed.

B. Pairing Scenography = when two (or more) scenographic entities merge and create a new one. For example, when the finally cooked slime spills all over the space and sticks to the orange. So the slime and the orange create a unique object – orange-in-slime. Or when oranges are hanging out with round bluetooth speakers which, after turning on, are announcing that they are ready to pair.

Entropic Scenography

All objects take up space. If you like using them as Scenography and want them to perform, you need to give them even more space and not to freak out because of the ostensible 'mess' they produce. If after a long day of working in the theatre (or long lockdown in your own room) you find yourself disappointed by such a 'mess', no need to clean it! Just sit down, relax and observe: Entropic Scenography is performing for you.

mess is not a mess

mess is a message

Demonization of concepts of disorder, decay or entropy is meaningless because they are too relative and accessible only to the logic of those who invented things such as fences, French formal gardens, or border guards. Scenography without borders has a tendency to spread into space and that is normal (as it has no borders). Entropy is a manifestation of thing-power.

Human Scenography

Let's shift our attention from nonhuman entities to people as Scenography. Human bodies in theatre are also often being taken for granted (as technical equipment but the other way round). Their presence is used as an essential part of the performance (without which theatre would not usually exist), but is often too dominant. Since this manifesto is partly inspired by basic concepts of object oriented ontology[1], we would like to quote the first principle of this philosophical school:
"ALL OBJECTS MUST BE GIVEN EQUAL ATTENTION, WHETHER THEY BE HUMAN, NONHUMAN, NATURAL, CULTURAL, REAL OR FICTIONAL"[2]

In Scenography without borders, the appearance of a human body must have the same value as all the other appearances. That is why we want to refer to its presence as Scenography and look for new modes of harmonic coexistence of human and nonhuman actors in (not only) theatre context.

Several field notes on Reality Surfing research

We, as an art collective, have been studying the performative potential of objects for some time now. We want to know whether it is, even partially, possible to base the creative process on the language of inanimate entities. What is the right setting in which objects gain the ability to perform and speak to us in their own tongue? How do we frame their existence into a performative context and draw the attention of the audience to the nonhuman world?

The reality of objects is inaccessible and avoids direct contact. We can establish this contact through our senses but it still remains a mere awkward translation of the reality of things into a literality of human language which describes phenomena solely from a reductionist/materialistic point of view. Our perception is largely based on our needs and the nonhuman world represents a variety of potential tools and stabilizers of our own existence. The reality we experience consists of simplified models of the far more complex objects that continue to exist when [we] turn [our] head[s] away from them. Similar to the way we furnish our rooms with available things, we also build our reality on available social pillars and personal experience.

Metaphor is one of the crucial means of expression in our artistic practice and it is mainly used in the art production of a performance. In the Reality Surfing project, we directly work with the principle of similarity among various things and we connect them to form a peculiar family. Each family has its own distinctive feature. For example, an orange, a portable speaker, a helmet or a bean bag chair belong to a family of round objects, whereas a fishing net, a willow branch, a thin cable and slime belong to a family of long objects with strong visual qualities. Their relationship may not be apparent at first sight and it is only revealed through a performative act working with the visual characteristic of the objects. The hierarchy of the objects is not predetermined. It stems from the performance itself and it changes continually.

"Once during an online meeting, I couldn't remember the English word for petroleum so I asked: "What is black and expensive and everyone wants it?" to which Theresa replied: "Gaffa tape". We gave this riddle to the rest and their answers were: an iPhone, a limousine, an exclusive CD. And so this simple impulse generated a candid collage of associations." Maria

The best way to discover a performative potential of an object is an experimental one which requires patience and certain tenderness in handling the individual things. If we want to let objects speak, we have to give them space and abandon our own (human) logic and rationality. We have to play with them, improvise and make space for accidents in the process because these are usually the most interesting displays of the object's nature. We cannot invent them in advance. In this type of theatre, it is difficult to predict what will happen. Expectations and preliminary certainty in the structure of the forthcoming work might be deceptive.

What is black and expensive and everyone wants it?
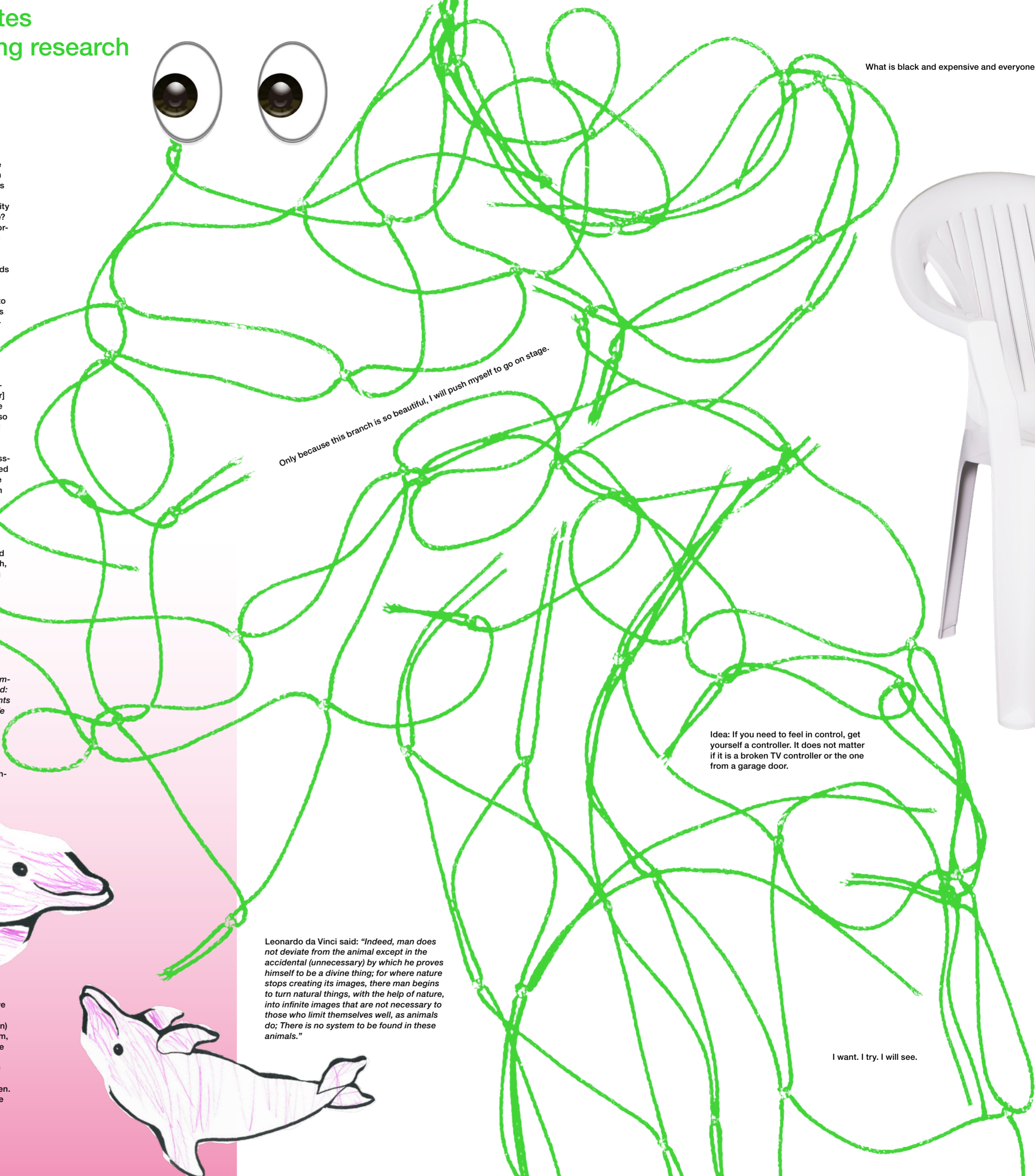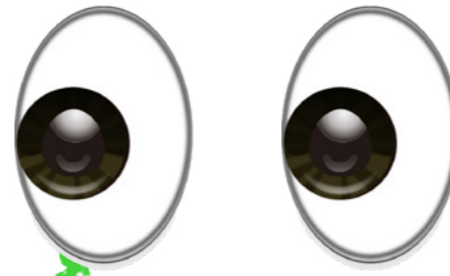
Only because this branch is so beautiful, I will push myself to go on stage.

Idea: If you need to feel in control, get yourself a controller. It does not matter if it is a broken TV controller or the one from a garage door.

Leonardo da Vinci said: *"Indeed, man does not deviate from the animal except in the accidental (unnecessary) by which he proves himself to be a divine thing; for where nature stops creating its images, there man begins to turn natural things, with the help of nature, into infinite images that are not necessary to those who limit themselves well, as animals do; There is no system to be found in these animals."*

I want. I try. I will see.

1. GRAHAM Harman. *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything.* Pelican books, 2018
2. Ibid., p. 43