



*FASCIARIUM*  
(lat. for connective tissue)



*Fasciarium* is a participatory performative, visual and auditory landscape of the human body's internal and external anatomy; a field that is attractive in a visual, spiritual and kinky way. It premiered on February 13<sup>th</sup> 2022, at DISK theater in DAMU, Prague.

A fiction of an open laboratory where research about rethinking human identity by triggering one's fascia is experimented. The interest is to find narratives through bodies: the audience's own bodies, other individual bodies and a group of bodies that have seemingly homogenous appearances. These narratives are told through textile surfaces —costumes which are a technology to modify the body. The audiences are able to temporarily transform their physical appearance during the length of the performance by wearing a variety of curated pieces or by putting together their own apparels with the material given, producing new theatrical appearances.



*Fasciarium* is a space to live different experiences for several «body steps», which I termed «departments». There is a space to have intimate reflections and emotional experiences on the participants' bodies on an individual as well as a collective level. The way we are aware of the self and the other's bodies is the way we connect to the world.

The costumes are characters, they heal, dance, beautify or disfigure, make someone laugh or feel embarrassed. During the visit, the audience can walk around seven research departments to get skin observation, talk to other human creatures, transform their organs, improve their bodies and mirror their new appearance. The new identity will transfigure them into new human creatures.

Imagine a place with human creatures that are made of fragments with different appearances and functions. When the fragments are assembled together each human creature is identifiable by a name and by a particular physical appearance. In some cases, the physical features are repeated from one to another, maybe because the fragments have a similar pattern or material. But each human creature is different in their own way.

Body in my practice is altogether a device to build costumes, a source of imagery and of stories, a stand or canvas to intervene and a character with agency to talk through its appearance. It is the concept, the frame and the tool. In performing arts the human body is an important (perhaps the main) expressive material.

Bodies, bodies in movement, bodies sewing, bodies making bodies, gestural bodies, bodies being, bodies sharing and hating, bodies in pain, bodies healing, beautiful and ugly bodies, bodies wearing, bodies working, bodies behaving, rebel bodies.

The body is a complete apparatus that is efficient for the reason that it is composed of many parts which have different biological functions as well as particular somatic relations or social associations. For instance the heart is the organ that pumps blood that carries oxygen and nutrients to the body. It is also the organ that metaphorically is related to feelings, emotions, to the center of the being, to the core of life and rhythm. Each part is important, and the way organs (internal or external) look like or

function distinguish us from the others (biologically and socially). The performance pretends to deconstruct the anatomy of the body, to break it in parts in order to be studied separately and find singular performative narratives in the assemblage of new corporeal systems and organs. When the anatomy is reassembled or mixed between many species (like in transplant of organs) the pure essence of each body is transformed. What images and actions in time do I get by rethinking human body parts?

Our bodies are connected with tissues. The skin is one.

Skin is an effective mechanism for mediation with the world. Notice that your skin literally faces the environment ... and the human creatures around you.

Since we are born we are getting old. Our body is continuously adjusting and aging. Skin is an archive of experiences, of life. The more we live, the more layers we have.



After the skin .....what we have is imagination.

The two body entities (social and biological) are contained and mediated by the skin; the integumentary system which is the natural coverture of an organism or an organ. It's functions are to retain body fluids, protect against disease, eliminate waste products, and regulate body

temperature as it acts as a receptor for touch, pressure, pain, heat, and cold. The skin tissue is the first layer that determines how people interact with the world; with other humans and with the environment. The older the skin the more experiences, accumulated stories and relations are impressed upon it. The skin gives a sense of the self.

In the project the skin is related to the fascia which is a connective tissue that is around the body and holds everything together (the organs, bones, nerves, blood vessels...). The fascia is brought out of the body as a metaphor and exposed as a second skin, with materials that act as a second tissue. The new materials have physical features (composition, color, sound, smell) that give new meanings to the first skin, which is not in any way ignored in the project. The project plays with human and non-human surfaces. The materiality of the second skin pretends to give individual as well as a collective sharing to the sensory system of touch (the integumentary system). It gives a different layer of mediation between people and space, with symbolic values.

Integumentary system. Your skin. Think of the cosmos in your cells. Your skin is a structure that reproduces patterns of the cosmos. Or is your skin that gives shape and meaning to the cosmos?

These are your cells. Integumentary system. Your skin. The distribution of matter in the universe.

Inspired by the human body I design textile surfaces and devise with them to perform. Human anatomy exists ontologically in each being, but the biological body becomes social when comparisons are made between the physical appearances of people. The project merges metaphors of scientific dissection or clinical incision together with the making of clothes: sewing together, fragmenting, assembling and repeating parts. A combination of aesthetics, science and pathos.

I intend to reflect on the politics of the body's anatomy and produce emotions through a symbiosis between the body and the costumes (the artifact); between textile pieces, theatrical garments, interior anatomy, the naked and the skin stories. Bodies visiting the laboratory must accept diverse possibilities of themselves and deny normality. No one is «normal», everyone is special. When the anatomy of bodies is exhibited

no normalness is granted; assorted, and perhaps unfamiliar narratives arise over the new appearances.

Because of the fast pace of life and the overwhelming amount of information we receive pushing us to mold our bodies according to specific cultural models, we forget to stop and think of the body as a physical object that is fragile. This is when the energies and stories of the biological and social bodies are useful, when they are able to connect the bodies with pleasure and with a sense of being and to bring confidence to the body.



I scan different images of the human body to be inspired from. I imitate body anatomy through textiles techniques (for instance hand embroidering or patchwork) and make drawings of macro zoom photography to produce larger scales of tiny parts of internal or external anatomy such as: Organs, systems, muscles, skeleton; Elements under the skin: fluids, nerves, proteins (like hair), connective tissues (like visceral fascia, ligaments, blood vessels); Identity marks: pimples, wrinkles, birthmarks, stretchmarks, folds, scars, moles, clinical interventions; Shapes, textures, volumes, mobility and body processes: cells dying, loss of oxygen, dry skin, hormonal imbalance, involuntary physiologic processes, body prepared for stressful or emergency situations (heart rate, blood pressure, sweat, respiration, digestion and sexual arousal).



The visual process of dissecting bodies gives me a whole range of imagery to play with, a world of narratives. The illustrations of the body are figurative as well as abstract interpretations. Since my first visit to The Hunterian Museum<sup>1</sup> I was strongly attracted to the huge catalog of parts that are displayed in categories to be compared and studied: the digestive system of a whale to a dragonfly's, passing through different kinds of humans (ages and races). Also there is a section on diseases and pathology that makes me think about the social impact of the scientific examination practices of dissection (to separate into pieces) or

anatomize (minute detail analysis), vivisection (opening a living being), autopsy (examination of body after death) and dismemberment (extracting the limbs).

Textiles and costumes are a technology to give new layers for mediation to the original body, they work as a second skin. They help me to unveil the beauty below the clothes and the skin. Each piece of garment that the bodies use depicts a part of the body and together they form assemblages of different possibilities of the human anatomy. The fragments, the textile techniques and the color palette are curated in a way that the new costumes harmonize the aesthetic of the laboratory and create a notion of group between the new appearances; following the visual design concept of homogeneous composition.



The audience is invited to a space where the costumes are displayed out of the human body and are installed as objects and scenography. The textiles are treated as surfaces that have performative quality since their materiality and formal possibilities can be explored to many limits. They compose a landscape; a sort of jungle-laboratory-atelier like. If the textiles are put over an object then the object becomes the wearer. But they are inanimate, they are sculptural. In the laboratory, the textiles need the human body to be activated.



Textiles have the potential to be «living textures» and communicate images or meanings. Prior to designing a final costume I delve into the aesthetic and conceptual possibilities of the foundation element of a garment: the textiles that compound it. I delegate to the fabric —or to any material that can be treated as a textile surface, the power to speak to the bodies that are wearing them. The communication happens through the weight of the material, the composition (the fibers in which fabrics are made), the effects (washes, dye, printing, embroidery) or accessories added to the textiles. The qualities of textiles are employed to create volumes and images of human creatures.

Accumulated actions, spontaneous and evocative structures are created and dominated by the changes and manifold possibilities that each audience chooses. In this process error is seen as an opportunity because, despite the end result being unconscious, it does have a starting point: a playful aesthetic of the human body's anatomy.







Costumes are a tool for display and expression, and the clothes –or the unclothed– make a body visible and interesting to look at. The work travels between the symbolic of dressing to be undressed and the dressing to open up (showing one self from the inside anatomy and emotions),





The performers are finding relations between the fabric and the body's anatomy, visual or function. The relations can be haptic (how does it feel to touch the material), optical (by the drawings or patterns that the materials have) or emotional.



Look for a human creature...



What does this human creature look like?  
Do you like it?  
Would you dance with it?



soft, yellow, long, *bubble shaped*, flexible, amorous, *pointing head*, suspicious, sweet shape, timid or eccentric, overlapped tissues, *ear beating*, liquid shoulders, *2 feet 4 shoes*... soft, yellow, long, bubble shaped, flexible, amorous, pointing head, suspicious, sweet shape, timid or eccentric, overlapped tissues, ear beating, liquid shoulders, 2 feet 4 shoes...

In the Laboratory there is space for narcissism, self-love, vanity, joy and voyeurism. The project aims to make people aware or even repair (heal) emotions on their bodies, by mirroring themselves through other bodies or by interacting with unknown bodies.

The costumes worn by a person can not be understood without the reference to the original body. There are dresses that completely exclude the human body and eliminate the biological and social existence of the person. But I am interested in costumes that amplify the human essence of each person. Something like amplifying identity by transforming people into new human creatures.



Costumes are a technology to transform the body and create a new one. They can affect the psychology (ways of thinking and feeling), the gestures (ways of speaking, walking, performing) and the appearances (ways of exhibiting). Additionally, textiles give to the original body new layers for mediation. Therefore they act like second skins that cover and restrict or provide movement. A costume is a new body that works as a visual tool to create narratives.





Feel attracted by the materials and shapes of other creature.

Is this human creature soft? Is it breathing?

What do you think is its name?

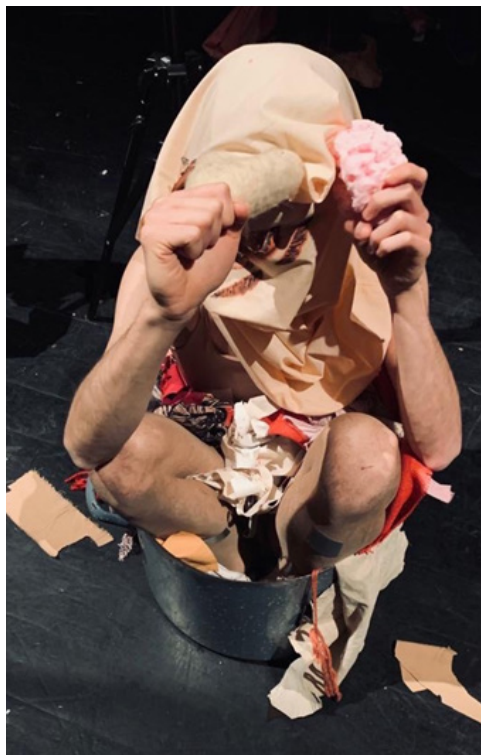
Do you think it is a good-looking creature?

Would you have baby creatures with it?



*Memories, beginning, babies, delusions, waste time, breath, childhood, mindful writing, food, wake up, dream, hallucinations, the good and the bad days, work, die, end. Memories, beginning, babies, delusions, waste time, breath, childhood, mindful writing, food, wake up, dream, hallucinations, the good and the bad days, work, die, end.*





I am intrigued by the temporal and diverse identities that humans can acquire by wearing a variety of costume pieces, producing new theatrical appearances. The adornments that embellish or deform people's bodies represent a theme, a concept, a situation. The structures and the textures of these garments are an evidence of the environment where the bodies are performing. The biologist Brigitte Baptiste states that «diversity is the way in which life expresses itself in a given environment. It's the exploration of different ways of existing» and she also claims «the world was created for us to be different and for us to find our way in this field of op-

portunity» ¿How do events and environments affect our bodies, transform it and give space to clothing?





Costumes activate both the viewer and the wearer. The viewer is seduced by the aesthetics of the new identity; by the shapes, the colors, the textures, the movement of the material. For the wearer on the other side, the textiles and costumes are actors, they heal, beautify or disfigure, make someone laugh or feel embarrassed. When these performative textile experiences are made in groups, a collective dynamic is also activated because the participants enjoy being together while watching—and comparing—the appearances of others in a ritualistic state.



Offer the image of your body to the bodies in the group. A whole corpus of images from body to body. Fragments, grains, aureoles, fascia, nails, hairs, sweat glands, bellies, tears, teeth, necks, tongues, tissues, volumes, cells, legs and ankles.

The associations made among bodies explain our image, justify our being. When the matter below the skin and the exterior body parts are exposed, the body becomes subject of social discussion. It is compared, judged; it becomes political. Individual expressions of these bodies trigger a collective whole by giving meanings to the multiple social interactions between them. By exposing the biological body I create a visual connection between the audiences.



These performative textiles activate a group dynamic because the participants enjoy being together while watching the appearances of others or of themselves in mirrors. The textiles are a tool for display and they make the body visible and interesting to look at. The number of participants during the experience is therefore a determining factor; the more participants the more variety of human creatures' presences will appear. Moreover, the results are different each time the performance happens.



The human creatures interact with other human creatures that they choose because of their good smell or their displeasure. They feel attracted by the material and shape of the other creature. They make sounds when the other human creatures talk to them, they move when music sounds, they combine to build new human creatures and they react violently when they don't like other human creatures.

In the laboratory the researchers believe that human creatures that feel sexy, honest and experimental are happier and more tolerant creatures.

*Fasciarium* is a group, performative workshop where audiences are able to use the body as a conceptual field, transform it as a subject and work with it as a canvas that performs when gestures and emotions are activated.



The biological and social body coexist in the project by creating a small interval between curiosity and discomfort with seductive, poetical, childish and joyful representations of the human anatomy. Through a visual exploration of this anatomy I find corporeal narratives that I transfer to costumed bodies by designing and wearing textiles and garments. I use these designs as performative tools to create dramaturgy.

The costumes operate as decorative second skin bringing life to new appearances and to performative characters with living and moving bodies, that find pleasure in being seen and in seeing new appearances.

Remove the new skin or parts that you have. One by one...

Remember how these tools worked on your body. Your body remembers. Take the memory with you. You don't need the tools anymore. Your body is smart. Today our organs and fascia were re-distributed to make a possibility for a more joyful human identity.

You can find imaginative ways of approaching this world. Of creating it. Be more colorful, explore the potentials of your body, amplify yourself and create a fluid, vibrant you.



There is no difference between the world and ourselves.  
While we change as humans the world also changes.

Now... you can leave the room and enjoy the new possibilities of your body.

Susana Botero Santos

## REFERENCE:

BRIGITTE BAPTISTE. *Nada más querer que la naturaleza*.

Accessed from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJC1fsaCbnI&t=28s>>

## CREDITS FROM THE PERFORMANCE

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons of England includes an anatomy and pathology collection of the eighteenth-century surgeon and anatomist John Hunter. It is located in London.