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Scalable Skeletal Escalator

24 September – 8 November 2020

Opening 23 September 2020, 6 pm

Press conference and preview 23 September 2020, 11 am

Isabel Lewis and Kunsthalle Zürich Director Daniel Baumann will be present

How might a dancer pause – or interrupt – the history of how we conceive of and live our embodiment? *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* is a live art work and a shared research site, within which the complexity of the concept of the body and its history is parsed. The exhibition space offers a field for experimentation, reflection, speculation and transformation of the body.

Within *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* is a scalable concept: from the entirety of the labyrinthine building as a body we are inhabiting, or the physicality of a dancer or viewer, right down to the micro-organisms we host. *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* occupies three levels of Kunsthalle Zürich and different atmospheres can be encountered on each. The work's visual, aural and smell elements can be experienced in a manner customary to the context of art exhibitions, though visitors will also meet dancers that respond to the circumstances and the population of the spaces. The dancers invite visitors to engage with an alternative circulation across the Löwenbräukunst building, leading them through a number of scenes. Rather than carrying out a fixed choreography, dancers will adapt a number of scenarios as they respond to the emergent situation. They are active agents that adapt a series of gestures and dances, they work with cues, switch roles and offer a variety of forms of encounter with the public. Meanwhile, algorithmic sound compositions occupy the spaces on an aural level; this music appears and disappears, evolving over time. Like a weather system, it affects all around it, but does not determine actions.

Scalable Skeletal Escalator is an experimental live art work conceived by Isabel Lewis in the form of a holobiont, a multi-organismic assemblage, like the human body itself, shuddering and shaking into being. This mode of exhibition-making draws inspiration from evolutionary biologist Dr. Lynn Margulis' emphasis on cooperative and symbiotic relationships between species as the driving force of evolution. The themes of the work are continuous with its form reflecting on potential human futures. Continuing in the vein of Isabel Lewis' practice of questioning the disembodied thought systems of the West which deny the body of «livingness» in the deadlock of idealism/materialism, this work invites collaborators and visitors on a participatory epistemological quest to re(dis)cover the body by rehabilitating our human sensorium in order that we might enhance living rather than alienate ourselves from life.

Scalable Skeletal Escalator is made possible through collaborative efforts by artists operating in multiple fields. Dirk Bell and Mo Stern created a custom-made speaker system, Lara Dâmaso, The Field (a cooperation with Tanzhaus Zürich), Rafał Pierzyński, Mathias Ringgenberg and Juliette Uzor are the dancers inhabiting the spaces. The music that weaves through the building is by LABOUR and Matthew Lutz-Kinoy created the paintings on canvas. Smells produced by artist and researcher Sissel Tolaas are most evident in the basement of Löwenbräukunst, while the dancers' costumes are from Marcelo Alcaide and Yolanda Zobel.

The work is created with the support of Callie's Berlin and Tanzhaus Zürich.

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Isabel Lewis biography:

Isabel Lewis (b.1981, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic) is a Berlin-based artist whose career began in the context of contemporary dance. An erstwhile resident of New York, her dance works have been shown at The Kitchen, Dance Theater Workshop, New Museum Movement Research at Judson Church, Dancespace Project at St. Mark's Church, PS 122 and Dia Foundation among others. In recent years her works have broken with the limitations of a single mode of presentation and are hybrid forms involving lecture, movement, music, food, smell and more. These have been experienced at venues and events including the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Liverpool Biennial, the Institute of Contemporary Arts London (ICA), Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Turin, Tanz im August, Berlin, Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Palais de Tokyo, Tate Modern London, Ming Contemporary Art Museum Shanghai, Gropius Bau, Berlin, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, and Philadelphia Art Alliance. Lewis' practice includes long-standing collaborations with smell researcher and artist Sissel Tolaas, Berlin-based musical entity LABOUR, painter and ceramicist Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, visual artist Dirk Bell, theorist and classics scholar Brooke Holmes and Juan Chacón of the architecture collective Zuloark.

Scalable Skeletal Escalator moves through four levels of Löwenbräukunst, where Kunsthalle Zürich is located. *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* will be open from 24 September – 8 November 2020. Dancers will be present every day of the exhibition.

Please contact Aoife Rosenmeyer for further information, press images or to arrange an interview:
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Opening hours: Tuesday–Sunday 11am–6pm, Thursday 11am–8pm
Closed Monday