



In-Between: Children as Performers

MELISSA DA SILVA FERREIRA

LUCY-LOU MARINO

GOLD RAY MARTIN

TODD ROOSEVELT MARTIN

**Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article*

VIDEO ARTICLE



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ABSTRACT

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From the recordings of this “performative interview,” this video-article creates a fictional dialogue between the children performers, the artist, and the Martiniquan writer, poet, and philosopher Édouard Glissant, whose “Poétique de la Relation” is a major influence on Kiswanson’s artistic work.

Immigration, exile, relation, poetry, identity, and language emerge from the crossing of voices, images, and writings captured in New York City at different times and contexts.

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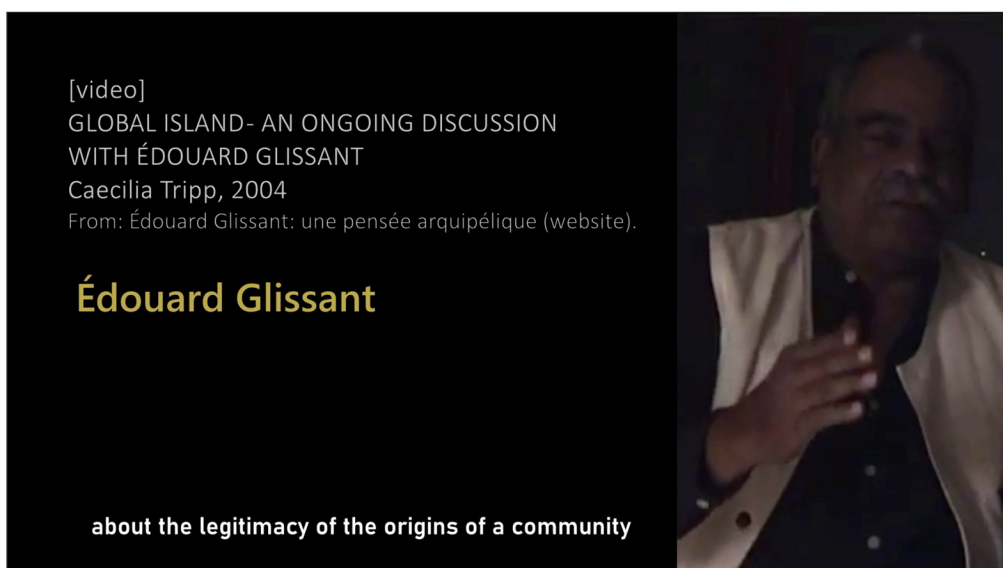
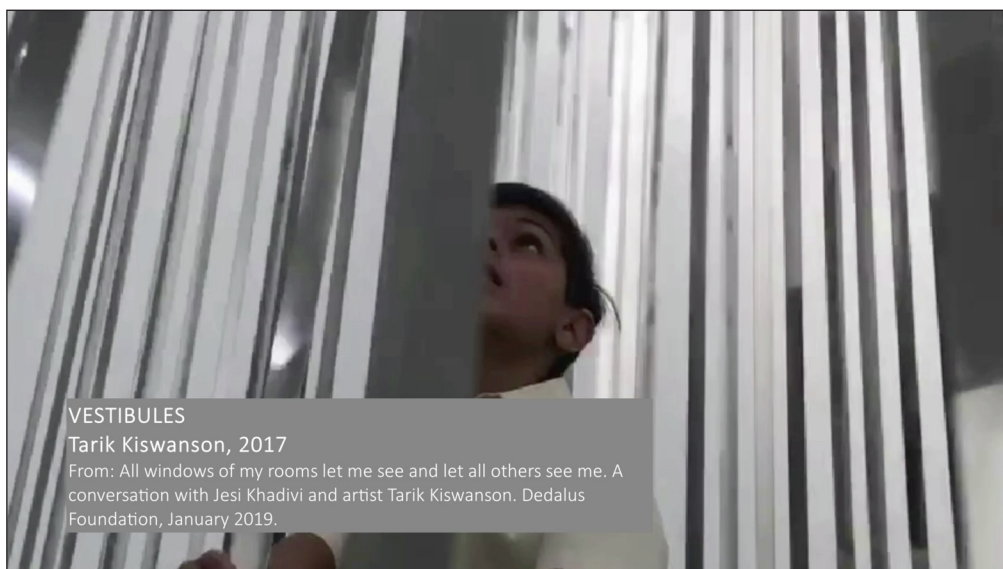
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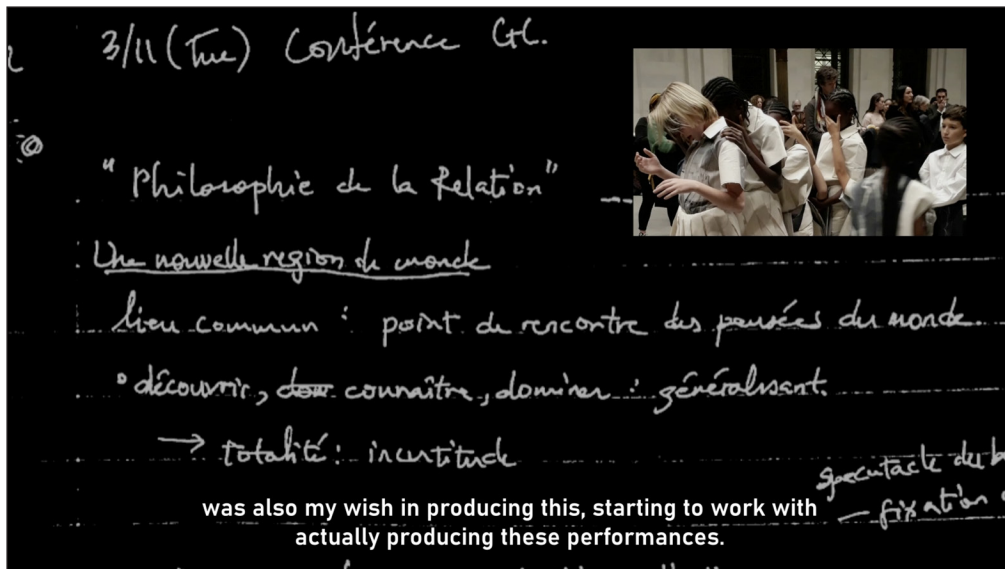
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VIDEO ARTICLE TRANSCRIPT

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[00:10]

in-between

CHILDREN AS PERFORMERS

By

Melissa Ferreira

with

Lucy-Lou Marino

Gold Ray Martin

Todd Roosevelt Martin

ABSTRACT

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[1:37]

[Todd and Gold playing “rock, paper, scissors.”]

[Gold:] It’s me. I go first.

[Lucy:] Okay. So, you decide. Do you want to go first?

[Gold:] Yes!

[Gold:] Three, two, one, action.

[Todd:] Hi, my name is Todd Martin. I’m ten years old. I came from Haiti. That is where I’m born.

[Lucy:] My name is Lucy-Lou Marino. My family comes from France and I’m born here.

[Gold:] My name is Gold. I’m eleven years old. We are from... my family is from Haiti.

[Todd:] I understand what my mom sings like in Haitian... but I don’t understand what she is saying in French.

[Gold:] I understand French and Haitian Creole. I’m also learning how to speak French and Haitian Creole. My mom is teaching me.

[Lucy:] I speak French, English, learning Spanish...

[2:29]

audio

TARIK KISWANSON’S VOICE

From: All windows of my rooms let me see and let all others see me. A conversation with Jesi Khadivi and artist Tarik Kiswanson. Dedalus Foundation, January 2019.

video

AS DEEP AS I COULD REMEMBER, AS DEEP AS I COULD SEE

Tarik Kiswanson, 2019

Performa 19, New York.

From: Melissa Ferreira’s personal archive.

writing image

HIROSHI MATSUI’S NOTEBOOK – COURS D’ÉDOUARD GLISSANT À CUNY, FALL 2005 – SPRING 2008

Hiroshi Matsui, 2008

From: Edouard Glissant.World, December 2018.

one-world

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

My parents had exiled [to] Sweden in the eighties from Jerusalem. A lot of people don’t know this, but, actually, a lot of Europe was experiencing its first kind of flux of immigration at that point, especially small cities. So, for example, Halmstad, where my dad settled down, was actually a city that hadn’t... had not yet had a lot of immigration, almost none.

When my dad actually went to kind of register his name, which is Kiswani, he got transformed into Kiswanson, which is basically a Swedish suffix. So, it’s a very strange and hybrid name between an Arabic and a Palestinian name.

[3:09]

[Gold:] What do you do for a living?

[Lucy:] For a living? I’m not even like eighteen yet.

[Gold:] Modern hip-hop.

[Todd:] Are you sure?

[Gold:] I like modern hip-hop, modern ballet, and contemporary.

[Todd:] You don't do ballet.

[Gold:] Yeah, I do! In school.

[Gold:] I've done plays about racism and stuff like that.

[Todd:] So, what I like to do is mostly have fun...

[Lucy:] I like theater, I like dance, ballet more...

[Gold:] I hate ballet. I hate ballet.

[Todd:] ...play with my friends, like enjoy my time.

[Gold:] I don't want to do ballet anymore or contemporary.

[Lucy:] I love speaking. [Laughter]. No, I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I'm kidding.

[3:46]

audio

VADIM

Tarik Kiswanson, 2018

From: All windows of my rooms let me see and let all others see me. A conversation with Jesi Khadivi and artist Tarik Kiswanson. Dedalus Foundation, January 2019.

A heart started to beat when no one expected it.
Ici je l'écoute arrived through red light down the most tenderness.
Ici je l'écoute. It hit you open ouch wiped your memory blank.
It released all your beliefs and made you drift in open ocean.
It flushed you out against your will and projected you on bright screens.

Open the windows.

Open the windows.

The windows.

Open the windows.

The windows open.

Open the windows.

The windows open.

Open the windows.

Without them open I can't breathe.

Without them open no air can pass in these rooms.

I know you feel cold. Colder. Coldest you have ever felt.

But right here right now.

There is no option.

There never were any options.

It's a question of life and death.

drawing

RESURRECTION PLANT

Pearson Scott Foresman, 2020

From: Wikimedia Commons.

photo

FIRST VIEW OF JERUSALEM FROM THE NORTH, BETWEEN 1998 AND 1914

From: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington.

video background

PETIT ANIMAUX, MIRACLES DE LA NATURE

Lucy Smith, 2016

From: Grandeurs Nature, France 2, TV France.

*The "resurrection plant", or "rose of Jericho", is one of the elements that compose Kiswanson's installation "Mother form" (2018). The Jericho Desert, in Palestine, is close to Jerusalem, hometown of Kiswanson's family.

[4:41]

[Gold:] Everyone literally grows every year, every day.

[Lucy:] Like, if I was nine or eight, it would be the same thing for me.

[Todd:] I don't really feel anything about my age.

[Lucy:] I don't consider myself a child or a teenager, I'm just between both. But I'm not an adult, that I know.

I'M JUST BETWEEN BOTH

[Gold:] I wouldn't consider myself as a teen...

[5:05]

photo

AS DEEP AS I COULD REMEMBER, AS DEEP AS I COULD SEE

Tarik Kiswanson, 2019

Performa 19, New York.

From: Melissa Ferreira's personal archive.

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Lucy Smith, 2016

From: Grandeurs Nature, France 2, TV France.

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

I was about twelve years old, I mean, I was a preadolescent, when I became conscious, I think, of the fact that I was double.

And this is actually the age where you become more conscious of the world, you start understanding what a political part is, what justice means, what privilege means. And I really want to go back to that age that was so specific for me.

[5:27]

[Gold:] Some teenagers can just act like savages.

[Lucy:] I just consider the age I am. I'm just eleven and I'm eleven.

[5:34]

video

VESTIBULES

Tarik Kiswanson, 2017

From: All windows of my rooms let me see and let all others see me. A conversation with Jesi Khadivi and artist Tarik Kiswanson. Dedalus Foundation, January 2019.

[5:45]

[Todd:] The first time I met Tarik, he told us that it wasn't gonna really be an actual play. It was like, it was like a type of movement type of play. Like a type of silent movement play. Concentration, a lot of focusing, a lot of work doing.

LIKE A TYPE OF SILENT MOVEMENT PLAY

[Gold:] Do you remember the words you used to say in the performance? Invite other players to say the words with you.

[Lucy:] I remember everything, but I do not know the order.

[Todd:] I do not know words.

[6:17]

audio

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HIROSHI MATSUI'S NOTEBOOK - COURS D'ÉDOUARD GLISSANT À CUNY, FALL 2005 – SPRING 2008

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audio background

AS DEEP AS I COULD REMEMBER, AS DEEP AS I COULD SEE

Tarik Kiswanson, 2019

Performa 19, New York.

From: Melissa Ferreira's personal archive.

poetry

[Tarik Kiswanson:] I started writing when I was very young. So, for me it is maybe something where, for me that has always been kind of essential in my practice even as a sculptor.

[6:29]

Gold and Todd reciting an excerpt of Tarik Kiswanson's poem "As deep as I could remember, as far as I could see".

Fifteen Marys is still so blind.

Thirty stickers on bed divine.

[Gold:] Lucy.

[Lucy:] I don't know the words.

Thirty stickers on bed divine.

Words are leaving us.

He loses sight.

Panic spreading.

Looking at me saying.

Where exactly are we heading.

Close close closest you could ever be.

Stare into something you could never see.

Close to dead but still alive.

Raise your arm up but continue to drive.

Still so thirsty, yes, curse me.

Language will not save you.

Language cannot save you.

Language will not forgive you.

Language cannot forgive you.

Language will not forget you.

Language cannot forget you.

Bad breaths don't deserve us.

We are not done yet.

There still so much to say.

THERE'S STILL SO MUCH TO SAY

[7:10]

video

TARIK KISWANSON

From: All windows of my rooms let me see and let all others see me. A conversation with Jesi Khadivi and artist Tarik Kiswanson. Dedalus Foundation, January 2019.

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

The mirror or the reflection has always been a sort of essential, essential part in everything I do and in my writing as well.

[7:21]

[Lucy:] Wait, wait, wait.

[Gold:] You don't remember.

[Lucy:] I do!

[7:26]

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

The text becomes a material. Well, it's not just a text on a wall, but it is incarnated.

[7:33]

[Lucy:] Oh!

Lucy reciting an excerpt of Takik Kiswanson's poem "As deep as I could remember, as far as I could see".

Thinnest green densist world ever been.

If you can't get closer, make them come closer.

Make them get, come closest they can ever be.

[Lucy:] Ummmm...

[Gold:] There is no "ums" in the text.

[Laughter]

[7:54]

[Gold:] Whoever gets the highest number in the sum of the three dices can ask to the other players a random question.

[8:03]

The research project "Presence of Childhood in Contemporary Theatre" aims to analyze the political, aesthetic, and ethical implications of participation of children as performers and collaborators in contemporary performing arts.

One of the biggest challenges in the research is establishing effective methodological approach to bring the children's point of view to this study.

Historically speaking, in social sciences, children are among the social groups considered as "voiceless" (Quinteiro, 2002; Abramowicz, 2006), as their knowledge, their culture, and their ways of living are usually not included in historical reports and research.

Games have appeared in this project as a pertinent procedure to conduct performative interviews with children. In addition to bringing their voices to the project, games stimulate the production of non-discursive forms of language and enable the inclusion of non-adult-centric practices in research.

The inspiration for creating these games comes from multidisciplinary sources, such as the theatre productions *100% City* and *Home Visit Europe* by German theatre collective Rimini Protokoll, theater games (Spolin, 2008), game theories (Huizinga, 2007; Callois, 1990), performance studies (Schechner, 2013; Fabião, 2013) process drama (Cabral, 2006), and child plays and games.

Instead of importing techniques from other fields, this project seeks to investigate the specificities of research in the arts and explore procedures from practice as research and embodied research methodologies. Games, creative processes, and performances allow the sharing of embodied knowledge with children.

[9:05]

[Lucy:] I like when we lay down Omolara. So, we walk, and we lay her down...

[Gold:] Yeah.

[9:12]

video background

PETIT ANIMAUX, MIRACLES DE LA NATURE

Lucy Smith, 2016

From: Grandeurs Nature, France 2, TV France.

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

So, it's all about this kind of small and very subtle ideas of touch that produces a sort of tension in the space.

All by this kind of minimal gestures that produce highly, highly big effectful kind of experiences.

[9:32]

[Gold:] We lay down next...around her.

[Lucy:] But on her.

[Lucy:] Yeah, because we lay here, or here, or here, or here...

[Gold:] We just lay around her.

[Lucy:] Around her, whatever!

[Lucy:] So, we were like this. But we have to be able to see other people.

[Todd:] I'm recording.

[Lucy:] And we lay her down. But I can't do it by myself so, you are gonna lay down.

[Gold:] I know!

[Lucy:] And we go down.

[Todd:] Close your eyes.

CLOSE YOUR EYES.

[Lucy:] And then we go back up.

[Gold:] I don't know. I literally...

[Lucy:] What's make you happy? That's an easy question.

[Gold:] I literally don't know.

[10:28]

Édouard Glissant

video

GLOBAL ISLAND - AN ONGOING DISCUSSION WITH ÉDOUARD GLISSANT

Caecilia Tripp, 2004

From: Édouard Glissant: une pensée arquipélique (website).

video

IN THE STREET. NEW YORK, 1948

James Agee, Helen Levitt, and Janice Loeb, 1948

From: Library of Congress.

[Édouard Glissant:]

La question ne se pose plus de la propriété de la terre. La question ne se pose plus de la légitimité de l'origine d'une communauté, de préserver la pureté ou l'intégrité

culturelle etcetera... de la communauté. Plus le monde avance dans sa relation...
Bon ! on a toujours, bien sûr, des peuples qui en oppriment d'autres, des peuples
qui en massacrent d'autres, mais on a des plus un plus la notion de peuples qui en
contaminent d'autres. Ça devient un devoir de considérer que mon identité en tant
qu'identité n'est pas une identité close. Et que ce n'est pas une identité que j'essaierai
d'imposer aux autres.

[Subtitles:] It is no longer about land ownership. It is no longer about the legitimacy of the
origins of a community, about the defense of purity, or about cultural integrity etcetera... of the
community. The more the world moves forward in its relations... Well! Of course, we still have
peoples oppressing other peoples, peoples murdering other peoples, but more and more it's
about the idea of peoples contaminating other ones. It is now a moral obligation to consider
that my identity as identity is no longer a closed identity. And that's an identity that I will try
not to impose on others.

[11:39]

[Gold:] I'm always laughing or smiling. I'm never that concentrated.

[Todd:] I felt I was also about to laugh too.

[Lucy:] I felt happy.

[Gold:] Are you?

[Lucy:] I enjoyed myself.

[Gold:] When my dad was at the performance, I had to a little bit speed walk so I
could get him out of my sight. So, I wouldn't laugh and gag and ruin the show.

[Todd:] At the end, I felt like confident.

[Lucy:] Proud. That is the word. Not extremely proud, just proud.

[Todd:] No. I do not want to create a performance. I don't know how to dance.

[12:13]

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

My artistic practice isn't just writing and sculpture, but I have also worked in many
different kind of places that are all art or art related... as to working with dancers, or
costume design, or fashion, or making garment. This idea of finally making a work
where all of these things come together was also my, my wish in producing this,
starting to work with actually producing these performances.

Philosophy of Relation

[12:42]

[Todd:] It doesn't have to be about dancing, but I can't create a performance.

[Lucy:] Like, if you made a performance...

[Todd:] No, I won't.

[Gold:] No, if you want to...

[Todd:] Either way, nope.

[Lucy:] But if you made one, what it would be about?

[Todd:] I don't even know what it would be about.

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT WOULD BE ABOUT.

[12:56]

BEHIND THE SCENES OF TARIK KISWANSON
From: Performa (Facebook). Paris, May 2018.

[13:08]

[Lucy:] Meaning of the performance...that's a lot!

[Gold:] I don't even think we had a conversation with Tarik.

[Lucy:] No, I don't think so we had. I don't even remember.

[Lucy:] I don't know. I don't really know... Like concentration maybe. But concentration is what you apply to the performance.

CONCENTRATION

[Gold:] It was just focus.

FOCUS

[Lucy:] I mean yeah, but we're focused during the performance. We can say the performance like is beautiful, but how can we say what it's about?

BEAUTIFUL

[Gold:] If an author writes a book, and then, continuously repeats, shows this one idea, and its focus, then the whole thing is going to be about focus.

[Todd:] It is not about focusing.

[Lucy:] Exactly. It's not about focus.

[Gold:] In our play, we constantly were focused and... What's the other word? Concentrated.

[Lucy:] But that's what we do for the performance. But the performance is about...

[Todd:] It needs to be about something.

[Lucy:] It's the story. Like if you have a theater play... What's the story about? It's the same thing, except it's not a play.

IT'S NOT A PLAY.

[14:13]

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

For me it is speaking about what happened after diaspora. And by that, I mean, what happened with those identities after exile.

You're born into a confusion of where you belong, and I have chosen to call that confusion post-diaspora, in a way. It's a sort of, you know, it's actually not a word that exists but it's...

And my work speaks about that confusion through this kind of, you know, shattered and kind of troubling works that I produce.

[14:52]

[Gold:] Would you say, "I don't know"? Focused or concentrated? Or both?

[Lucy:] None!

[Gold:] None is the answer! We finally got to an explanation.

NONE IS THE ANSWER!

[Gold:] My relationship with the audience was...

[Todd:] Scary?

SCARY

[Gold:] Unknown.

[Lucy:] But no, but you went up to them.

[Gold:] Actually, I didn't. I went to architecture. Was really what I expected because I am reading the architectures and not people, so...

ARCHITECTURES AND NOT PEOPLE

[15:14]

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

At some point child is in his sort of sphere, not acknowledging anything that is happening around him, but then for just a second he will look you straight in the eye as a spectator and you'll feel highly uncomfortable because you are not ready for that.

The body has always been very present as well because the body is basically what appears within my works as a spectator becomes a part of the work, even when he's just looking at the work. I have always kind of seeked to address these questions of displacement, of the double, of this idea of hybridity, through a lens which is not, which is mine but becomes something that is also, something others can relate to, in a way.

description of landscapes

[16:04]

[Lucy:] For us it's different, because we don't know them, but...

[Gold:] We know some of them.

[Lucy:] They feel we're here. And we're literally next them.

[Todd:] "Talk about the performance rehearsals." I mean, the rehearsals were kind of fun... It was about like imagining something. You know what they do to bubble?

LIKE IMAGINING SOMETHING

[Lucy:] Yeah.

[Todd:] It's like you're imagining...

[Lucy:] Just bring it like that. Like that, like that. No, bigger, bigger... Like on that, on that side.

[Gold:] Three, two, one.

[16:38]

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

I made this big text that is called "As deep as I could remember, as far as I could see" and I decided the piece should be played for eleven eleven-year-olds who are playing eleven chapters, and these eleven chapters contain twenty different paragraphs. Within each paragraph exists a word, but that word is the same in all eleven chapters even if the context is different. So, let's say if polyphony, you know, runs through the whole text. So, if one child is talking about breathing, the ten other children are talking about breathing as well, but in ten different, in eleven different ways. So, it's again this idea of breaking down the word and kind of shattering it.

[17:31]

[Todd:] You move each other's like body instead of them moving. We did it with Tarik...

[Gold:] Like this... Stand up! Like this... He's talking about this... Walk!

[Lucy:] Oh, that one. That was the sleepwalker.

[Todd:] We start with a little marble.

MARBLE

[Lucy:] Oh, yeah, yeah. We took the marble out from the floor. That was important. And we put it in our hand.

[Gold:] We looked at it first.

[Lucy:] Yeah, we looked at it first and then we put it in our hand. And then, it grows.

[Todd:] Kept on growing. Gold's is too big!

[Gold:] I already started before you guys.

[Lucy:] And you have to make it round. You're not making it round.

[Todd:] We get every single dirty part of it. Until it grows more.

[Lucy:] If we're holding each other and stuff like that, obviously, you have to have a good relationship. I mean, for me it's obvious.

[Gold:] No, you don't have to. We're just forced to hold each other and touch them.

[Lucy:] Yes, but it's better if you have a good relationship. Or then, it's weird.

[18:40]

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

I think this idea of touching, and reaching out, and to not touch, becomes a sort of tension within my performances and I really play on that.

[18:50]

[Todd:] It was like a good relationship, but it also felt weird inside. You're touching people like this... It just feels weird when you like...

WEIRD INSIDE

[Lucy:] You're not used to it.

[Todd:] Yeah, yeah.

[Lucy:] But then you get used to it.

[Todd:] Yeah, seems that is what really happened.

[Gold:] We did a lot of fun stuff like TikTok to table chairs... That was hilarious. Tag in the dark, run around... I went outside the window because Simon allowed me to...

[Gold:] Let's take a selfie.

LET'S TAKE A SELFIE

[19:21]

video background

PETIT ANIMAUX, MIRACLES DE LA NATURE

Lucy Smith, 2016

From: Grandeurs Nature, France 2, TV France.

[Tarik Kiswanson:]

They don't have any problem touching each other even on breaks or like sitting on each other's laps or like jumping around. And I realized how much as well we lose that as you go into adolescence... And how, obviously because you've become conscious of your own body, and when you become conscious of your own body, you become conscious of the bodies of others. And I think that yet... throughout the performances I also wanted to embrace that closeness that the children constantly have between each other, you know?

[19:50]

[Lucy, Todd and Gold:] Oh, there!

[Gold:] Serious?

[Lucy:] Oh, I love this. This was super hard. This was when we did dispersion.

[Todd:] The best part of this performance for me is like the bonding.

IS LIKE THE BONDING

[Lucy:] We passed from random people to knowing each other really well.

[Todd:] Uh-huh.

[Lucy:] Yeah.

[20:10]

video

AS DEEP AS I COULD REMEMBER, AS FAR AS I COULD SEE

Tarik Kiswanson, 2019

From: Performa 19 (website). New York, November 2019.

[20:44]

IN BETWEEN

Children as Performers

CONCEPT, WRITING AND EDITING

Melissa Ferreira

WITH

Lucy-Lou Marino

Gold Ray Martin

Todd Roosevelt Martin

CAMERA

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[21:25]

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The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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