

The Molyneux Problem

A project by Katharina Schmitt

November 01 - November 03, 2018

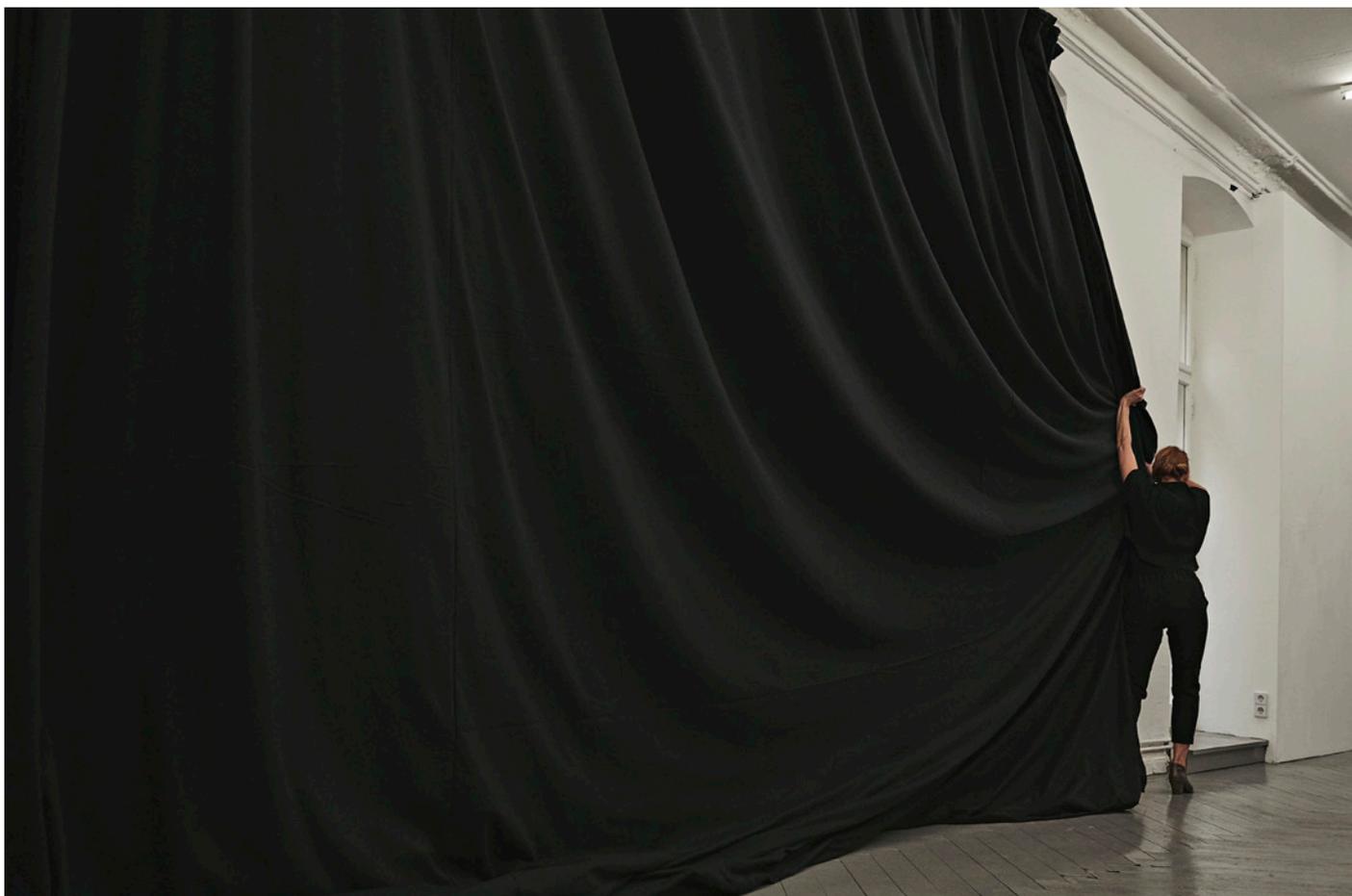


Installation view, *The Molyneux Problem*, 2018
a project by Katharina Schmitt with Jaschka Lämmert & Volker König and Music by Michal Rataj
Photo: Peter Fabo

A project by Katharina Schmitt
Text, concept, realisation: Katharina Schmitt
Music: Michal Rataj
Dramaturgic collaboration: Jakub Režný
Room: Pavel Svoboda
Performer: Jaschka Lämmert, Volker König
Co-organisation: Studio Hrdinu

The Molyneux Problem deals with dreams of blind-born people: do they relate to visually based imagination? How do they sound? And how do narrative structures form in the dreams of people who never had eyesight and whose subconscious mind does not express itself in images?

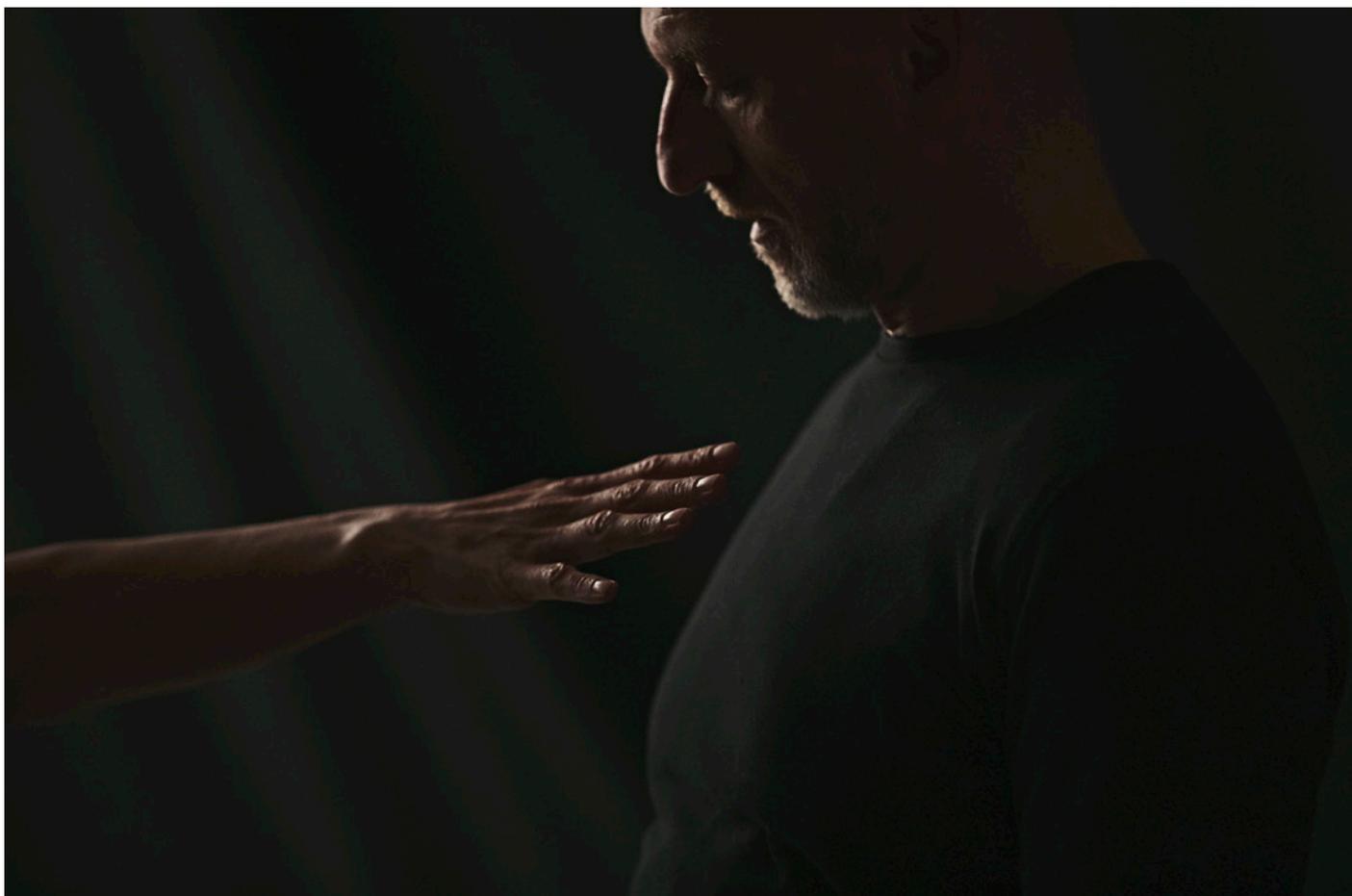
The title of the project is based on a philosophical question raised by the British natural philosopher William Molyneux from 1688 that addresses the issue of human cognition on the basis of sightlessness: would a blind-born person, given the ability to see through surgery, be able to distinguish a cube from a sphere just by sight alone? Or must they be felt in order to be assigned correctly? Molyneux's problem is one of the central questions of perception theory and remains unsolved until today.



Installation view, *The Molyneux Problem*, 2018
a project by Katharina Schmitt with Jaschka Lämmert & Volker König and Music by Michal Rataj
Photo: Peter Fabo

The starting point of the project was a series of interviews which Katharina Schmitt conducted with people who were born without eyesight in 2016 in Vienna and in Prague. Based on this series of interviews and the resulting audio material, Katharina Schmitt wrote a text, whilst Michal Rataj created a composition, describing a darkroom in which a blind woman meets a man who is able to see.

The Molyneux Problem deals with the confrontation between visuality and haptics, in a performance that initially denies its viewers visuality in a completely darkened space. The focus on haptics, sound and spatial tension enables us to question the superiority of the visual. How much does one see, when one sees? How much does one see, when one doesn't see anything?



Installation view, *The Molyneux Problem*, 2018
a project by Katharina Schmitt with Jaschka Lämmert & Volker König and Music by Michal Rataj
Photo: Peter Fabo

The Molyneux Problem is a “work in progress” based on a series of interviews made in 2016 with people who were born blind in Vienna and in Prague. A text written by Katharina Schmitt and a composition by Michal Rataj were created in 2017, which were turned in a radio play for the ORF and the Czech Radio under the direction of Katharina Schmitt. It is the first time that *The Molyneux Problem* will be presented as a performance at EIGEN + ART Lab, as well as a staging in the Studio Hrdinu in Prague from December onwards.

Katharina Schmitt studied theatre directing at the Prague Academy of Arts and works as a director and playwright. She has collaborated with many international theatres and festivals, such as the Prague National Theatre, the Thalia Theater Hamburg, the Schauspiel Leipzig, the Schauspiel Stuttgart, the Watermill Center New York, NODO Ostrava and the Munich Biennale for musical theatre among others. In her work as director, Katharina Schmitt focuses on immersive forms that oscillate between visual arts and theatre. Since 2012, she is an associate director at the theatre Studio Hrdinu, based in the Prague National Gallery and specialising in interdisciplinary formats. She also regularly works in opera and music theatre.

Supported by the Trustee-program EHF 2010 by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Deutsch-Tschechischer Zukunftsfonds:

