

1. NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION



practicing social norms and
standardised forms
of contact

2. TWILIGHT ZONE



sensory perception

3. DREAMY WORLDS



when the world
around you
starts to move

4. HIDE & SEEK



attempts to make contact
wanting to see others
without being seen

5. EYELAND



unstable world conditions

7. NESTING



connecting
tactively
with the world

8. STIMMING



connecting through stimming

6. LONELY ISLANDS



tightness and discomfort

shutdown

meltdown

sensory overwhelm

stress, burnout, exhaustion

*No Man is an Island, they say.
But that was never my experience.
The world of Humans
seems to be connected
by strings I cannot see;
by codes I don't understand;
by structures I am no part of.*

destabilisation

calming the nervous system

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But that was never my experience.
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by codes I don't understand;
by structures I am no part of.*

*The world I live in is liquid,
permeable,
a body of water
that is everywhere and nowhere
at the same time.
A body of water that connects everything
through waves and vibrations.*

Maybe I am an Island after all.

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TEXT

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GLOSSARY

Neurodiversity / neurodivergent / neurotypical

The concept of neurodiversity was developed by the Autistic community. Its core idea is that humanity includes differently functioning brains and nervous systems so it includes neurodivergent as well as neurotypical individuals. Neurotypical is what individuals are called whose brains and nervous systems function according to the norm. Neurodivergent are individuals whose brains and nervous system function in an atypical way. This includes Autism, ADHD, Tourette, Synaesthesia, Dyslexia and more.

Neuronormativity

Neuronormativity is the concept that there is a normative idea around how human brains and nervous systems should function. This form of normativity creates a framework for how social, political, professional, educational, medical, institutional and public norms are set.

Normativity of Connection

The Normativity of Connection is part of neuronormativity but addresses specifically normative expectations around how human beings should connect to each other. Examples are how we show affection, customs regarding love, partnerships and sexuality, expectations regarding social behaviour (making eye contact, engaging in small talk, shaking hands, going to parties) and expectations regarding communication styles.

Sensory Approach

Neurodivergent brains deal differently with sensory input than neurotypical brains. It often comes with a neurologically caused, reduced ability to filter stimuli. Perhaps for this reason, many neurodivergent people are more strongly connected to the world of the senses than to human communication as a level of primary sense-making. This could mean that sensory needs are valued more highly than social needs, or that a violation of sensory boundaries is perceived as more hurtful than a violation of social expectations.

*Stimming

Stimming is a term for repetitive acts of self-stimulation that are used consciously or unconsciously to regulate the nervous system. Clicking a pen, twirling your hair, chewing gum, tapping your foot are some everyday examples. Neurodivergent people tend to stim more than neurotypical people, and it is also a much more important tool for self-regulation, as the nervous system of neurodivergent people is more sensitive and dysregulation occurs more frequently and to a greater extent. Stimming can address different levels of perception or sensory channels.

Double Empathy Problem

The 'Double Empathy Problem' is a term from autism research that aims at debunking the prejudice that Autistic people are less empathetic than neurotypical people. In social experiments, it became clear that autistic people feel just as much or more empathy for each other, but sometimes less for neurotypical people. Conversely, neurotypical people show less empathy towards Autistic people. These findings show that the world experience of both groups is so different that they find it more difficult to understand each other.

ISLANDS

dance performance by compagnie O.

ISLANDS is part of the four-year project *MULTIVERSE / atypical perspectives*. In it, the Zurich-based compagnie O. explores the topic of neurodiversity in various formats.

ISLANDS is dedicated to experiences of alienation of Autistic people and people with ADHD. The performance deals with the failure to accomodate normative behaviour and expectations in social interactions. *ISLANDS* takes the audience on a journey from isolation and alienation to an empathic connection that manifests itself through movement and goes beyond normative expectations. We see three dancers on stage. Initially isolated in their respective self-contained islands, they gradually begin to curiously explore the world around them. The first tentative contacts with the outside world are followed by overstimulation and destabilisation. Finally, they find peace and connection in a shared stimming*. Dramaturgically, the play follows the progressive excitement, overstimulation and eventual regulation of the nervous system.

NAVIGATION THROUGH ISLANDS

The performance oscillates between installative moments and more dynamic scenes that invites to play with closeness and distance. The audience is invited to move freely around the space, explore the spaces in between and venture close to the dancers or observe the action from the edges.

This map offers a navigation through the different phases of *ISLANDS*.

CREDITS

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