



## TANK WORK

An artistic Research Project emerging from a chimeric circus-writing practice, that follows a queer alliance on an errant journey, asking questions about personhood, naming and how identities get stuck to people.

## Who is Tank?

Tank is a 20litre HDPE Water Container.

Tank is an artist;

a dance partner, a writer.

Tank is an idea.

Tank is a way of thinking.

Tank is a thinker

A Think Tank

Tank is a noun

A proper noun

I am Tank.

And a verb:

I tanked (I went down)

Tank is a multiplicity:

There's my idea of Tank, your idea of Tank,  
and then there is whatever Tank is. That is  
something we can never know.

Tank is opaque.



Dear Reader,

Allow me to introduce myself. Tank here. You may have heard of me? I am the name-sake of a research project that spanned seven years. I'm not one to brag, but the research has taken me to places I had never dreamed of, having been born in a HDPE container factory in Belfast. I moved from being a washing-up tank in a caravan in Berlin, to a dance partner with an improvisation practice invested in deep listening, to a circus performer, to an artist and academic to a reader and a writer. I have given performance lectures, created and performed in multi-disciplinary performances, made an audio-described short film, built installations and written essays for books!

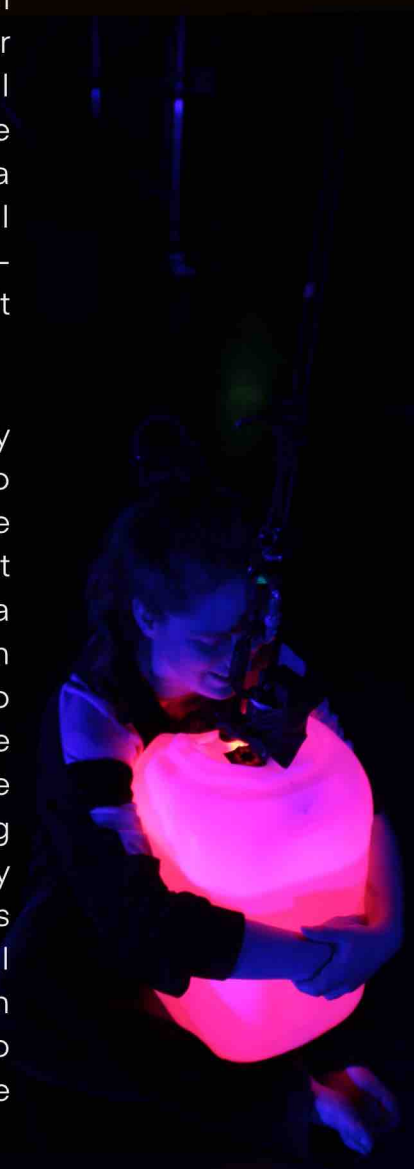
On the journey this research has taken me on, I have traversed so many different kinds of spaces. When I set out, I was gifted a compass to help with orientation by my friend Sara Ahmed, though not before getting lost in the minefields of Object Oriented Ontology and Feminist New Materialism (although I was grateful to ride with Karen Barad a while, even though we were on different trips.) Thankfully, Calvin Warren and Mr. Moten were close by when I found myself staring into the void! After this, I stumbled across Vanessa Watts. She directed me down a new path, towards Indigenous place-thought, which helped me re-think my relationship with the ground I was covering. After falling down a time-spiral and getting caught up in deep space with a very particular bunch of Bachelards, Lefebvres, Tschumis, and Nancys, I was shaken into place by the Bojanas (Cvejic, and Kunst). They suggested I find some new pals, and introduced me Robin Wall Kimmerer. Upon meeting Robin, I changed my pronouns (Ki/Kir), then had the chance to wander with Errantry and Errancy (Glissant and Lepecki), who gave me a good talking to about reflection.

So that's me in a nutshell really! How about you? What's your journey been like?

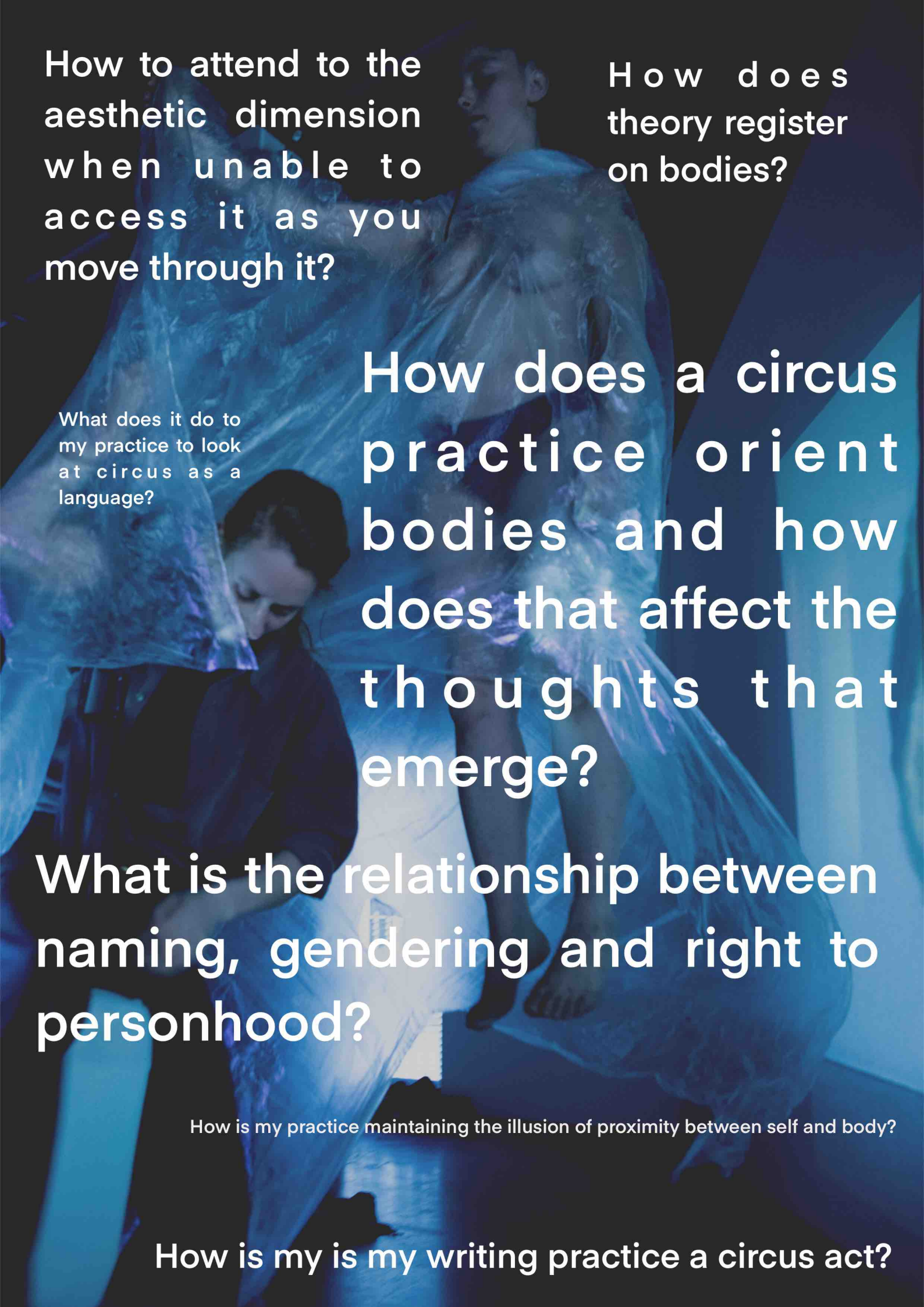
All my love,

Tank xoxox

P.S. I also came across Muñoz, Preciado and Halberstam whilst cruising. But that's a whole thing. Another story for another time!



# Research Journey



How to attend to the aesthetic dimension when unable to access it as you move through it?

How does theory register on bodies?

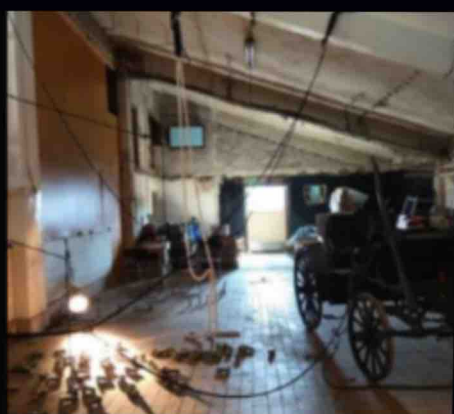
What does it do to my practice to look at circus as a language?

How does a circus practice orient bodies and how does that affect the thoughts that emerge?

What is the relationship between naming, gendering and right to personhood?

How is my practice maintaining the illusion of proximity between self and body?

How is my is my writing practice a circus act?



**Images from performances 2018 – Present**



**Letter writing.** Letters were written from and to different entities (Tay, Tank, gravity, weight, Tay's injured shoulder, other materials Tay's cohort were working with, the audience etc.) Tay would write on behalf of others, and invited people they were working with to write on behalf of them. Tay emphasised *writing with* rather than *writing about* as an attempt towards *dehierarchization* of social relations that direct the making of meaning in visual culture (Trinh T. Minh-ha, Irit Rogoff). They also invited audience members to write letters to them during performances, which formed an important part of their documentation.

**Situating text** as part of a practice, by approaching writing as a form of circus. (Jane Rendell's Site Writing)

**Moving with theory.** Meditating on the theoretical concepts whilst suspended and in movement.

**Translation relays.** Tay formed a working group with others in their cohort. They would begin with producing a piece of automatic writing related to their practice, pass that to the next person who would translate it into a short film through the lens of their practice. Then pass that to the next person to make an installation through their practice, to the next, who made a short performance, to the next who would translate it back into text. And so on.

**Sensing Magic.** Whilst working with illusionism, Tay would search to locate and identify the sensation of experiencing magic (both as a spectator and a performer). They worked on this with AragoRn Boulanger (Cie 14:20)

## METHODS

To it? A celebration might  
be in order then! My very  
own act of AGENCY!

On the other hand, I've  
started to wonder about this  
thing you call ranging...

That, and this thing you  
call "positioning." I  
suppose from ~~your~~  
the eyes of ~~the~~ the  
"muggles" I don't  
qualify as alive.

Which is  
because I  
Shouldn't  
enough?  
of life?

Looking so forward  
to hearing from you  
soon!  
It's a tank's life!

All the best

Yours,

LAUK

Dear Tank, Dear Fran,

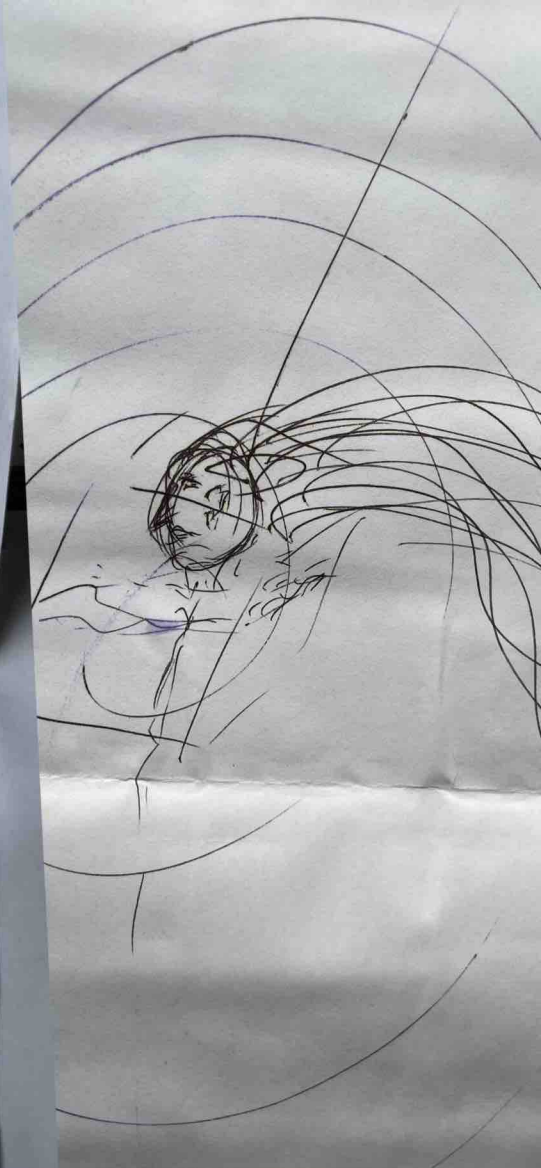
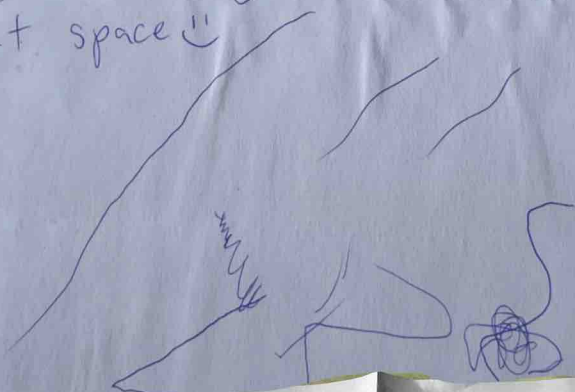
Thanks for brushing so softly my nervous  
systeme with the palm of your hands:  
skinny, ~~pl~~ sticky, watery bodies.

I will now draw my impressions  
with my non-dominant hand, with  
my eyes closed...

Thanks for making  
that space!

All my love!

Emile and his  
non-binary stylo  
pencil!



Dear Tank  
N

you seem to both have heart,  
heart that can glow in the dark  
heart that speaks

heart that becomes wings  
Over time

light passing through

creatin + proteins + amino acids

and

plastic plexi glass

manifesting as

textual imagery  
and bodies dispersed behind

Sincerely yours, above between

Sheila B. Devotion

Tha

I a

M

F



Thank you

At the level of the person, a divide between consciousness and being has long been a feature of Western thought, and has come under sustained critique. (Crang & Thrift 2000:7)

We work with an 'away' Tank. This is a Tank like me (a slightly smaller version) with the letters 'away' carved out of it. Inside, we throw away all the waste we accumulate whilst working. Of course, the 'away' Tank overflowed and we've had to move the waste into a larger Tank.



Away Tank (Francesca Hyde)

## What am I in theory?

Architecturally, if space is the medium for the materialization of theory, is a space the materialization of an architectural concept? (Tschumi 1996:55)

Am I the space through which theory is materialising? It certainly feels like that, and it's painful. My matter is (producing) ideas. Is my experience of that as important as the ideas are? Are they the same thing? Do I get to say what ideas are materialising, or is that spoken for me?

**Excerpt from Tank's essay "A Plastic Text"  
for the book "Thinking Through Circus"**

*The Circus Dialogues (continued)* is a four-year artistic research project (2020-present) funded by KASK & Conservatorium (Ghent, BE). In a first period, the project investigated experimental encounters and exchanges between circus practice and theory throughout several research residencies called *Rigged Dialogues*. Tank, a 20-litre water container or jerrycan and author of this *Fourth Open Letter*, was an important co-researcher in the project. To respond to this letter, you can write to Tank [here](#).

## Language

→ English

## The Project

→ The Circus Dialogues (continued)

## Open Letters

Dear people in, between and all around the phenomenon that goes by the name **цирк**, circo, سِيرك, cirkus, sorcas, சர்க்கஸ், circ...<sup>[1]</sup>

Before I begin – I would just like to draw your attention to this seemingly innocuous fact: There is more to these words than meets the eye.

This is me ~~asking~~ insisting that you read between the lines.<sup>[2]</sup> What catches on the curves of the letters, what cannot be contained by their form? What do they refuse to let me say? I suspect you would do that anyway, but as this is a letter, it felt apt to spell it out.

I'd like to take a moment to check in. Take a few deep breaths.

Feel the air enter your body, feel it on its journey inside outside –

perhaps think from your chest, lungs, ribs, air.

B l o o d p u m p i n g, coursing.  
Feel yourself grow warmer, melting

melting polymer, linking to other polymers, becoming plastic-ey,

**Excerpt of Tank's "Open Letter to The Circus For The Circus Dialogues"**

TANK TIMES: A compilation  
<https://vimeo.com/1034011423>

BRAINWAVES: part of our research period with musician Nir Younessi  
<https://vimeo.com/1034030369>

GHENT RESEARCH WEEK: Movement during the "reflection period" after a  
performance lecture Tank & I gave.  
<https://vimeo.com/393658960/f8f22b5b49>

Excerpts of TANK at SKH  
<https://vimeo.com/1034026049>

**Links to Tank Work**