



Interview with Nanna Lysholt Hansen

10 June 2020, Zoom

Interview conducted by Lena Šimić

Interview edited by Georgina Biggs and Lena Šimić

Figure 1: Nanna Lysholt Hansen, 2019 (photo: Nanna Lysholt Hansen)

Nanna Lysholt Hansen (b. 1980, DK) is visual artist based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Her artwork can be experienced as live performance or as the body manifests itself through hybrid technological forms. In her work concerns around the body, voice, actions and recorded mediation, constitute an elemental interrogation of physicality often in juxtaposition with architecture and/or recording and playback technologies. Aspects of history, memory, gender, technology, language and narratives are challenged in relation to the gaze on the body over time. By using her own personal experiences of the female body, sexuality, pregnancy, birth and motherhood she draws attention to the body as a technological and biological intergenerational mediator of knowledge, voice and memory. Nanna Lysholt Hansen holds an MFA degree from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen, Denmark (2011) and a BFA degree from Kingston University, Faculty of Art Design & Music, London, UK (2005). In 2009/2010 she studied at The Central Academy of Fine Art in Beijing, P.R. China. Recent exhibitions, performances and screenings: Copenhagen Contemporary, SMK – National Gallery of Denmark, The Women’s Museum, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Galleri Image (DK), Gallerie Tanit (LB), Maison du Danemark (FR), CCA 107th Annual Conference, Poor Farm (US)

www.nannalysholthansen.com

Lena Šimić: Thank you for agreeing to do this interview, which is about your identity as an artist, moreover a mother/artist. We are particularly interested in speaking to you about performance as an artform in relation to this topic. Do you even identify as a mother/artist or not, and how has working around maternal themes affected your performance practice and your identity as an artist?

Nanna Lysholt Hansen: I will start with how I came to work with this theme. It's interesting how the identity of mother/artist comes to you immediately. Also, from outside, how your identity is shaped from what people see. People expected me to stop doing art once they saw me pregnant. This set expectations for my future identity as both a mother and an artist. I was really surprised because for me it was, of course, a bodily experience and I knew that there was a lot of material there that I can learn so much from. So, in myself, I felt very positive but from others I experienced this kind of closedness.

So there were negative things from my surroundings but also within the art world. For example, I performed when five months pregnant in a public space. The work was not really about my pregnant body, but you could notice the pregnancy a bit. There was someone in the audience who got really upset understanding that I was pregnant and using my body physically for performance art in public space. They felt that I was damaging the child, or to her the work came to symbolise some kind of trauma, but this was obviously her own interpretation, probably informed by that person's background.

Lena: Did they come and tell you something then?

Nanna: No, it was in a public space so I had some assistance there, someone from the Sculpture by the Sea festival (2013) in Aarhus. They dealt with people who wanted to talk or ask questions because obviously I could not do that in the middle of my work. I was told about this afterwards.

Lena: How interesting.

Nanna: In my next performance I was really pregnant. I met with a curator and when I said, “Look I am like this now” it was a little bit awkward, a little bit like they were thinking “Oh, wait. Can you do it with that?” I think the curator was afraid that I was going to go into some essentialist stereotypes or clichés. I felt again an attitude of “This is something personal and not interesting to the world”. But there was another artist there who was really interested in this aspect. She encouraged me to make a performance work about my pregnant state and invited me to present it in an artist run space she was curating at the time.¹ So this became my first maternal work in the *Dear Daughter* series.

Suddenly I thought again about all these ideas around essentialism and the natural pregnant body, and all these clichés around it, and wondered how I work around that. Of course, it's a very biological thing to be pregnant but at the same time, I felt so much like a machine. This was so prevalent in the hospital appointments. Almost like being in a factory, I was being treated as a production machine somehow. The way they took care of me was in a way very mechanical. I wanted to use that in my art practice.

So I reread Donna Haraway's *The Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) because I was really feeling like that cyborg, a hybrid of machine and organism, and this was so intense. I was so physically out of control.² The body and my biology were just doing things. I really had that feeling of being this machine or some mediated reality. When I read *The Cyborg Manifesto*, I felt it was almost like, I could change the words when Donna Haraway describes her concept of the cyborg figure and I could insert myself into it: “I am a cybernetic organism”. Of course, with my body saying these words, the cyborg became the pregnant body - the ultimate cyborg fantasy.

¹ *Incision #6: Ghosts and Alter Egos*, performances by Imri Sandström, Nanna Lysholt Hansen, Trine Mee Sook Glerup, curated by Jane Jin Kaisen and Guston Sondin-Kung, *itinerant_sends_for_itinerant*, Copenhagen, 28 September, 2013. For more information see https://cargocollective.com/itinerant_sends_for_itinerant.

² Haraway, D. (1985) 'Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s'. *Socialist Review* 80: 65-108.

Lena: Fantastic. We are already touching on the question of maternal aesthetics, and a description of your maternal aesthetics. What are they like in relation to your series of performances *Dear Daughter* (2013-2020)? You have moved through various interpretations of this piece. Was its beginning a Cyborg?

Nanna: Yes, that was the beginning. It was also, for me, a way to place theory and philosophy around the maternal and mothering into my art practice, using post-human theory to investigate the techno-biological aspect of reproduction, reproductive labour and kin-making. This is also supported in the way that I collage voices and text, weave in texts from our feminist foremothers to create assemblages of historical, feminist and technological narratives. So, for me, this Cyborg mother that I'm developing is like a medium. She's a medium through which I can practice the sharing of intergenerational feminist knowledge. It is a way to filter these theories through the mother body.

The Dear Daughter project began with the cyborg figuration, the mother as the ultimate cyborg, a political dissent performing speeches to all the daughters of the future. I first performed *Dear Daughter/Organic Cyborg Stories (After Donna Haraway)* eight months pregnant at itinerant_sends_for_itinerant in Copenhagen in September 2013.³

Lena: When Emily and I saw your performance in Copenhagen in 2017 it was an iteration of *Dear Daughter*, from Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* (2016).⁴ I was watching your body in the space and at the same time I was with all these other sweaty bodies in the space. It was almost reminiscent of how Haraway writes about compost because we were so very hot and yet you were removed from us all. You were very visceral but then,

³ For more information see https://cargocollective.com/itinerant_sends_for_itinerant.

⁴ *Dear Daughter/Anatomy of the Chthulucene (O'Connell Oh Oh Haraway)#4*, 30 minutes live performance at the International symposium *The Mothernists II: Who Cares for the 21st Century?* Astrid Noack's Atelier, Copenhagen, 14 Oct 2017 <https://www.mothervoices.org/news/2017/9/3/the-mothernists-ii-who-cares-for-the-21st-century> ; see also Haraway, D. (2016) *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

at the same time, you were very technological. It was almost like, as you said, you were a cyborg, removed from us. It was very interesting in terms of how we, the audience, found ourselves to be so intimate together, all these strangers with hot bodies. It was so hot. I don't know if you even know how hot it was for us! We were like this oddkin, some kind of organism, and you were over there with lots of space. It was such a powerful experience of the performance, engaging in that visceral perspective of seeing the show. How was that particular piece for you?

Nanna: Thank you very much for your description. It's always really nice for me to hear how people experience it. This performance you saw is the third in the series. In the first one *Dear Daughter/Organic Cyborg Stories (After Donna Haraway)* (2013) I was eight months pregnant, in the second *Dear Daughter/Motherboard*

Theories of Evolution

(w/Braidotti, Plant et aliae)

(2014) I was wearing a baby carrier while performing a

speech to the newborn child and in the third one, *Dear Daughter/Anatomy of the*

Chthulucene (O'Connell Oh Oh Haraway) (2016), that one

that you experienced, the

speech is written to a three-year-old child starting to develop gender identity and sexuality. So all of the performances are drawing from the experiences of the transitory periods that both the child and the mother are going through. Each of the *Dear Daughter* works were performed in various versions in different forms and formats. I think it was the fourth time I performed the performance you saw. I wouldn't say that I re-enact the performance but rather that I re-visit the same text and material in each iteration to explore aspects of repetition and difference. I pay so much attention to what the new context is, the space, the audience, and what I have to work with. Instead of controlling how the stage is going to be set, I



Figure 2: Nanna Lysholt Hansen, *Dear Daughter/Organic Cyborg Stories (After Donna Haraway) #1*, 2013, 14'58" HDV, sound (videostill)

work with what is there. Also, in the version that you experienced in 2017 it was the first time that I was painting on my body while talking. Do you remember that?

Lena: I remember that you were over there in white.

Nanna: The thing is that it was a small and intimate space. I was also wearing a facemask, which makes me more like an object because you don't know who is in there. My body is naked and you can see my skin colour. I'm applying UV paint, fluorescent colours, in a very childlike and playful way, and I'm touching myself while I speak. So there's something very physical happening. I guess there is something also in the voice, authentic and emotional, which creates this experience. But at the same time, there's something distant and too perfect in the way that I recite a lot of heavy theory. In the live performance I am using playback, dubbing and loose synchronization to investigate how the voice can be both constitutive but also destabilizing when you experience the body.

Lena: Yes, a disembodied voice. Because of technology, it is present but also removed.

Nanna: Did you believe this was an authentic voice, a live reciting? Did you think about that?

Lena: It felt live and it felt intimate and distant at the same time. But for me the experience was also very embodied in the hotness of it. It was at the Astrid Noacks Atelier and it was so small and so full. Every time we would open the door we would gasp for the fresh air coming in. This was our bodily experience. You were struggling in the space, you were really working, labouring. It didn't seem like an easy thing to do. So, in that sense, it felt authentic.

Nanna: There is definitely an aspect of endurance in these pieces. Definitely for me to be reciting all these texts and be there with the body, but also for

the audience. It is quite long and dense. The text is very dense and full of theoretical references. I guess, being a part of the audience, your mind is working a lot, but it's also, as you say, very physical for you. You are seeing a naked body moving/struggling with the text and the technology, but also, as you experienced it, you were sitting so close to one another, so it is almost like being in a pile of compost or, in the biological sense, you were all these microbes.

Lena: Absolutely.

Nanna: You go inside the body somehow.

Lena: It felt very much in tune with Haraway's book. But the performance also provoked a bit of **abjection** in me. Because obviously you are talking to your daughter, and there is a love there and a rhythm to it, a kind of a symbiosis between a mother and a child, love and tenderness, whilst we have to manage this kind of intimacy with strangers in space. This very much links in with Haraway's proposition of "Make Kin Not Babies". It's a very provocative proposition, and it's a very provocative performance from you to take this idea of "Make Kin Not Babies" and make it into a maternal *Dear Daughter* performance. Can you tell me a bit about that provocation that Haraway has and how you took it?

Nanna: It's such an important provocation. Sometimes you really must do it. Because for me, of course, it's a very personal speech to my specific daughter, but it's also really for all the daughters of the future. It's about expanding what is important through the generations. First of all, for me, doing these speeches to my daughter was really about passing on a heritage of feminist theory, thinking, and philosophy. I was saying to her that women can do art, can think, and need to use language, to tell where they come from, and take their body into that speech as well as encouraging technology in that process. Furthermore, it's not only about me being a mother. It's almost like Haraway is my mother too. The piece was there to expand my daughter's mothers and my children as well. As you sit there in the audience,

maybe you are also my daughter. It is blurring the lines slightly, which I believe is really important.

I have been to Athens in Greece a lot recently, because my daughter's father is Greek. When I compare Denmark to Greece, in terms of families, I think that in Denmark there's this tendency to make family in biological sense. This kind of goes, "Once we make the family, we close". It is like "We are here in our family and we protect ourselves from everything outside", whereas in Greece I felt a different kind of solidarity. For example, in public space when you walk around, it was easier to find people to play or talk with. Our daughter is an only child. We don't have a little brother or a little sister for her and for us, of course, it's important to socialize. This was very easy in Greece. Just to take an example, I think in the North, or maybe I can just speak for Denmark, it felt that if we approached people in the playground in order to meet them, they were immediately rejecting us. They were like, "Oh, now we go over here" to some other area of the playground, some slide or something. In the end I felt we were chasing people to make connections, whereas in Greece this was much easier. I don't know if it has to do with empathy and social solidarity or what.

Lena: There is a saying, "It takes a village to raise a child". What you are describing now is quite interesting in terms of the situation that we are in with coronavirus, and how we will be even more closed in terms of physical touch and contact, and especially at the playgrounds.

Nanna: When I was writing this text about kinships outside the biological and these experiences from Greece, this was also during the refugee crisis. The refugees were starting to come from Syria and there was all this rejection from the Danish borders. Yet, at the same time, there were these campaigns initiated by the Danish Government in the form of posters hung in public space saying "Have you counted your eggs?" about how women should hurry up having children, So there were these two...

Lena: Conflicting narratives.

Nanna: Yes! It was horrible. So that's why saying "Make Kin Not Babies" is not provocative. It's provocative to say "Oh, we cannot take these children, but white children should be produced now". For me this was provoking.

Lena: Interesting. I do still think it's a provocative point for you as an artist to work with that slogan "Make Kin Not Babies" and address it to your *Dear Daughter*.

Nanna: Of course, that goes back to what I said before about my experience with the first piece, that women artists should not have children if they want a career. So, yes, it's really provocative and, for me, that just became the starting point: "I'm going to show you that this is a rich experience and that we need to make art from this experience."

Lena: Emily and I are writing about your performance *Dear Daughter* in the last chapter of our book and we are calling it "Futures". It will be followed by a conclusion. I have some thoughts about placing your performance towards the ending for the book, but I'm particularly interested in your ending of the performance. You say: "Dear daughter, here is no mother. Here is mothering here is caring for others, caring for the chthonic, for the self-with-others. Care. Dear Daughter. The future is female. Now you take over."



Figure 3: Nanna Lysholt Hansen, *Dear Daughter/Anatomy of the Chthulucene (O'Connell Oh Oh Haraway) #4*, 2017, 30 minutes live performance at Astrid Noack's Atelier, Copenhagen (photo: Thea von der Maase)

Nanna: *Staying with the Trouble*

is the most prominent voice in the text, I link Donna Haraway's concept of the chthulucene with urologist Helen O'Connell's anatomic descriptions of the clitoris.⁵ There are some other references, but these are the two main ones. In the end where I say, "Here is no mother, here is mothering" it's

⁵ O'Connell, Helen et al. (2005) 'Anatomy of the Clitoris'. *The Journal of Urology* 174: 1189-1195.

again to challenge this essentialist and authentic idea of the mother. This exists even in language when you say, “My mother tongue is my real me, my authentic me” and instead it's about paying attention to the doing, the mothering.

Lena: The practice.

Nanna: It's referencing, of course, Sara Ruddick's writing about mothering.⁶ But most people, will hear this word ‘mothering’ for the first time, and wonder “Oh, what? What does mothering mean?” So this is about putting attention to the gesture, the act of doing, and how we constantly perform care.

Lena: The labour of it.

Nanna: Yes. The labour.

Lena: What about the future though? Is it female? What do you think?

Nanna: Yes, I want to hope so. I want to say it so that this is what we can go for. The past is about patriarchy and it's male. When we start to look into it, you realize how women are othered, and the objective style is male. The future is female in the sense that we pay attention to differences. It is not that the male is not going to exist but the female has to be written more profoundly into what we do and what we say. There are so many voices that have been silenced. We have to dig in the archives and find those who were not written about, because as a starting point the neutral or the objective/scientific facts are written from a male point of view. So when I say the future is female, it's actually about plurality and an approach towards subjectivity that is broader.

⁶ Ruddick, S. (1989) *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, Beacon Press.

Lena: Obviously there is the idea of being genderfluid as well. I'm just wondering and thinking about the future, gender and birth, existence and climate change. The whole idea around "staying with the Trouble" and also now the Virus. To what degree does plurality contribute to, or play a role in these set differences of male and female?

Nanna: This text is specific. When I say the future is female it is because this text is very specifically about becoming a sexed gender, about sexuality or a sex agenda. This piece was also about the transition of my daughter from being just a baby to being a baby girl. You know, she's three years old and becoming a baby girl. So, of course, in this one, it's really like, "Ok, I'm going to tell you about female sexuality and gender."

Lena: Yes, it was the *Dear Daughter* address. There was a moment when I felt there was an attempt, maybe, to make your daughter your kin.

Nanna: Yes.

Lena: That there is this transference from a biological, purely biological daughter to kin. Those were some of the thoughts that I was having watching it. What is this attempt at framing the future as female about? Is it about symbiosis? Is it about making-with your daughter, thinking your future together, taking responsibility for the current state of ecological affairs, remaking one's own baby as kin? You talked about this, that sometimes you see the audience, or the theorists, as your mothers, or your audience as your daughters. So, in a way, it's making them as if biological in language, but then at the same time, do we make our biological children our kin?

Nanna: Yes, definitely. What I also want to do with performance is to really play with these subject relations, and explore how they can be interchangeable and fluid.

Lena: Can I ask you about performance as an art form? That's something that we are quite interested in. We are writing about maternal performance.

What do you think is specific about maternal performance as opposed to other art forms? You mentioned you did sculpture as well. So how is it in any way different? Is performance as an art form more suitable for maternal matters? How is it different when you are trying to represent mothering?

Nanna: How is performance different from ...

Lena: ... other art forms in relation to the maternal?

Nanna: Well, I do work with performance in various mediums. It can be live performance but it can also be a mediated hybrid form of performance. So this thing I talked about before, about technology, can also be there without the physical body. With the first *Dear Daughter*, when I was pregnant, I was going to do this performance at the Kunsthall Charlottenborg in Copenhagen.⁷ It was going to happen on the 1st November and my due date was the 5th November. I was sure it was going to be fine but, of course, I gave birth two weeks prior to the due date. So I arrived there with my ten-day-old daughter. I wasn't this pregnant body anymore.

This is why I'm interested in performance art. The work I do does not dictate a specific body, a specific space, a specific situation, it is more fluid and flexible and can adapt to different situations and contexts and with technology the work can take many hybrid forms. It fits really with mothering as well because there are all these things you cannot control. I do different versions of the same work. I don't say "Here's my stage and I'm going to go and do this and that etc." I avoid this element of control. Each performance really has so much to do with who and what the space, the situation, the context and the audience are, and how many people are going to be there as well. Like the performance you saw in 2017, at Astrid Noack's Atelier the small room was packed, you couldn't move around the space. Imagine if there had only been five people there. Maybe I would have moved closer to

⁷ Show & Tell, performances by Olof Olsson, Pernille With Madsen, Emil Alenius, Andrés Galeano, Kasper Vang & Mads Forsby, Nanna Lysholt Hansen, Molly & Me (Molly Haslund & Catherine Hoffmann, curated by Sanne Krogh Groth og Judith Schwarzbart, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, 1 November 2013.

these five people during the performance. It would have been a very different experience.

But ok, so back to the situation of planning to present a live performance with my pregnant body only five days before due date and then giving birth before that calculated date, it was a matter of working with that specific situation of uncertainty in a creative and flexible way.

For the performance I projected a blue monochrome colour into a corner of the room, creating a space or a stage for my pregnant body. Because I was no longer actually in a pregnant body I placed instead two very big loudspeakers. This was otherwise a dark black room and I was sitting in the darkness with my newborn sleeping daughter together with the audience. They probably didn't even know that I was going to be the performer. What I did was press play and the speakers performed the speech. I chose to do it this way because I didn't want to put me and my newborn child on stage.

Nevertheless, the performance was still a very physical experience because the way I recorded my voice was purposely done as a bad recording. So intentionally I make all this interference, like hitting microphone or my saliva or the audible breath. Already in the piece there were breathing exercises. I was preparing for birth and this speech was for the unborn daughter. It was essentially about my experience and how I'm preparing for this birth. You had these speakers breathing and talking. In a way these speakers became humanised because the voice that was coming through them was so embodied.

Lena: So it was a really intense connection between technology and the body in that version?

Nanna: Yes. Again, it's also about the body in the absence of the body. So there's the presence and the absence of the body. There is the question of who is speaking, how and when you expect that human body to appear. But

you are also asking, is there going to be a body onstage? In that we are really asking, what is the human body?

I have done this kind of voice-based audio installation in other sculptural forms since then. The next work in the series was performed with a baby carrier. The text was very much about language, and technology in relation

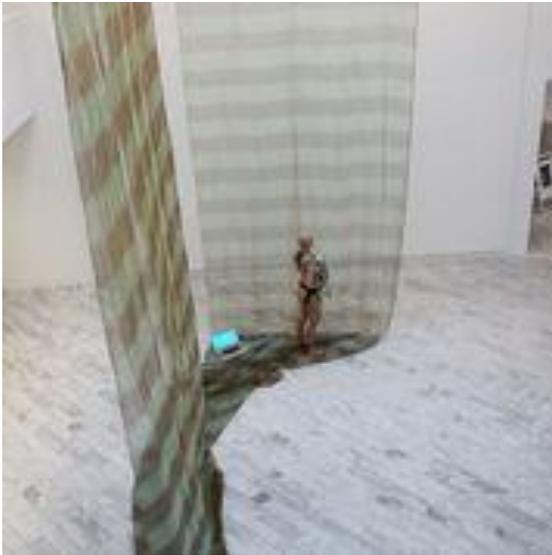


Figure 4: Nanna Lysholt Hansen, *Dear Daughter/Motherboard Theories of Evolution (W/ Braidotti, Plant, et aliae) #11*, 2016, 30 minutes live performance at Tranen, Copenhagen (photo: Nanna Lysholt Hansen/Ann-Kathrine Myrvang Skjødt)

to language, gender in relation to technology. I used Sadie Plant's *Zeros + ones: digital women + the new technoculture* (1997) and Rosie Braidotti's nomadic theory.⁸ This was about carrying, with a reference to Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (1986), it was about carrying the body, carrying the baby on the outside of the body, and carrying history and carrying language with the body and with technology. So, in one performance of this text, I made the computer perform it through a text to voice speech program. The title of this performance is *Dear*

Daughter/Motherboard Theories of Evolution and was first performed at NLHspace in Copenhagen in 2014.⁹ In the text I wrote for this performance work I am comparing the mother not to the cyborg, well, she is the cyborg still, but it's also playing with the motherboard as in the motherboard in the computer, which we are so dependent on. It is only when she doesn't work that we freak out and realize how much work she's doing for us. So there's that comparison.

⁸ See Braidotti, R. (1994) *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press and Braidotti, R. (2012) *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press

⁹ *Contingency of the Now #1*, performances by Nanna Lysholt Hansen, Trine Mee Sook Gleerup, Maline Casta, curated by Rie Hovmann Rasmussen, NLHspace, Copenhagen, 16-29 June, 2014. For more information see <https://contingencyofthenow.com/>.

At that time, I was breastfeeding my child. So I also became more dependent on working with the computer. This is how you become a hybrid, together with a computer. One version of this performance would be the computer just standing in a sculptural installation and then performing the text with its synthetic voice. I would be present in the space nearby the computer and the small speaker on the floor playing meditative underwater sounds, I was moving around the space slowly and carefully, wearing a baby carrier but there is the question, is the baby inside or not? Who is inside? I'm still wearing that mask and carrying the microphone, but who is speaking? Through this hybrid media the work is questioning what is authentic, who is the author, who is behind this, what's the authorship? It's really about destabilizing all these things whilst always questioning the relationship between the performer and the audience, the mother and the child, the voice and the body, language, women and technology.

Lena: How fascinating. The way you use technology gets us further and further away from the idea of an essentialist mother, a biological mother.

Nanna: Yes, because our relationship to technology is both like a mother relationship, she performs a kind of service in our everyday life, a constant, rather unnoticed, labour, but also a child relationship. We have to care for it. It is fragile and we feed it with our own personality, like how you bring up a child. If your computer dies, you're really upset.

Lena: So, there are three iterations of *Dear Daughter*?

Nanna: Last year I wrote a fourth performance in the *Dear Daughter* series. It's called *Dear Daughter/Sen_sing_inannainanna (Russ, Shiva, Klein)*. This one credits Joanna Russ, the feminist sci-fi author, Vandana Shiva, environmental activist and Naomi Klein, political analyst but it also contains voices from other sources such as the ancient Sumerian poet Enheduanna and my own five year old daughter.

Lena: Fantastic. So what is that one about? Because that's the future now.

Nanna: Yes, exactly. It's again a collage with many voices. It takes the starting point of now. In-the text and in the performance I embody this figure of a cyborg mother goddess. It's really going into some ancient past of Sumerian archaeology and literature. I found out this amazing thing, that the first-ever recorded author was a woman. She was Sumerian and her name is Enheduanna. So in the text I assembled for this new performance I used fragments of Enheduanna's love poems in which she's writing hymns to the goddess Inanna.¹⁰ I should try to not get too much into the various different references I have in there, but the idea about this piece is that this goddess, the cyborg mother Inanna, is travelling from the ancient past and interplanetary futures. I found some forums on the internet where people really dig ancient alien astronaut theories, with archaeological findings depicting the goddess Inanna wearing a flight suit and resembling a reptile. So here's also a link to women in space and a link to time travelling and space travelling. Then, of course, that links to climate change as well, which I will get back to.

Inanna is the goddess who later becomes Aphrodite and Venus, ones you maybe know better. So Inanna is the older version. She has a lot of chthonic forces. She's not only a goddess of sexuality and reproduction but also is a strong warrior. She's actually a goddess of warfare, equality and justice.

Lena: A bit like Athena then.

Nanna: Yes, exactly. Because what I think happened is that when she came to Greece she split into Aphrodite and Athena. So in Inanna you have both of these qualities and what I am seeing with Aphrodite are still some chthonic connections to Demeter and Persephone. But when she turns into Venus in Rome, all the imagery we have is really just of a helpless beauty. All of the chthonic power was just slowly washed out over time.

¹⁰ English translations of Enheduanna's poems in the book Wolkstein, D. and Kramer, S. N. (1983) *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer*. New York, Cambridge, Philadelphia, San Francisco, London, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Sidney: Harper and Row.

Lena: Except for her many lovers. With Aphrodite, definitely.

Nanna: I wanted to go back to prehistory, and imagine her in the future, jumping in time.

Lena: What a fascinating thing to mix the past with the future in terms of time travel and reinvent our mythology.

Nanna: Also there is a link to the planet Venus in relation to climate change. We can use the planet Venus to make comparisons in an exaggerated way. Venus once had life. It had water, but then it all boiled up and now it is just fire and scientists say you can use this to compare it to what could happen to Earth. It's very exaggerated but also a powerful image.

Lena: Absolutely.

Nanna: In the new performance text I basically imagined myself as this embodied cyborg mother goddess living on Venus and visiting Earth. I interwove the text fragments from various literary sources with my five-year old daughter's oral utterances on subjects such as climate change, planets, family, nature and bodily fluids.

Lena: Where did you perform it?

Nanna: I had an invitation to perform on a public bus, bus number 9a, circulating between Copenhagen Contemporary, a centre of contemporary art, and Glyptoteket, a museum which has a lot of archaeological and prehistoric art. So there's all this travelling between times, but also just being in and travelling through a physical space. The work was inserted into everyday life, on a bus.

It was during Copenhagen Art Week festival in May 2019. The performance was on public transport, which, of course, meant that the work was mostly

experienced in fragments by travellers going from a to b in their everyday life. This circulating, getting off the bus at one institution, and taking the next to go back was very site-specific. I knew that I wanted to write a piece that was exactly about these journeys, very specific, but the work could also travel to other locations in the future. On the bus I was wearing this tight full body suit. I was at the same time naked but also totally covered. This bodysuit makes you very vulnerable but it is also frightening for people because they wonder who is in there. Then around my waist I was wearing this small speaker amplifying playback audio material from Planet Venus and my voice through a microphone headset. This way I could perform my text in this noisy space, still not too loud, becoming this technological creature.

Recently I rewrote the text into a new performative text to be published in an academic journal.¹¹

Lena: So it is still a living thing? Do you feel you will do it live sometime again?

Nanna: Yes. Also, I made a video version of the performance in collaboration with the artist Stathis Tsemberlidis.¹² We did a recording inside a green screen studio and created audio-visual planetary landscapes and symbolic imagery related to the themes. So it's really becoming what I would call an experimental ecofeminist sci-fi video. In this performance, in the video version, as well as in the performance on the public bus, I'm singing the text to a playback of ambient sounds of planet Venus. It gets you into a kind of a trance, a lullaby state. So it's about space travelling, time travelling but also mind travelling.-At the moment I'm working with this audio-video material to be presented in more hybrid performative and sculptural forms in the future.

¹¹ *Dear Daughter* has been published as performance text in a limited edition artist book, and rewritten into a new performative text for academic journals:

Lysholt Hansen, N. (2019) *Dear Daughter*. Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology. See at <http://www.labae.org/publications/dear-daughter>

¹² See at <https://vimeo.com/355939140>.

Lena: I think that this is probably a good point for us to come to a close because we have travelled to Venus in the future, and the past, so it seems like a really good end.

Nanna: In the end I also want to mention how I draw inspiration from interaction with my daughter to create new work. It was my daughter who was starting to tell me about planet Earth, other planets and climate justice, about taking care, probably the Greta Thunberg effect. My daughter was around five years old and I began to collect what she said. I always wrote things down on my phone when she said something really beautiful or poetic. You know how five-year-old kids speak.

Lena: Yes, I do that with my son as well, writing on my phone all these sayings he does.

Nanna: It is good to do because there are always some really nice ones.

Lena: And they escape. You forget it otherwise.

Nanna: They're gold these things. They're so clever.

Lena: She's five?

Nanna: Now she is six. Six and a half. So this was during last year. Now she starts school...