













at first

i thought  
you've  
figured it all  
out





just like a true woman







a woman

that has

not

lost her  
way home

a woman  
that knows

the woman

my  
mother  
wants me  
to be







A close-up photograph of a person dressed as Santa Claus, lying on their back with their head tilted back and mouth wide open in a joyful expression. They have a blonde beard and mustache, and their eyes are closed. The person is wearing a black and white striped shirt and white socks. The background is a dark, textured surface.

so i wanted to  
become like  
you




and i found

you

in

me



i went  
inside  
you

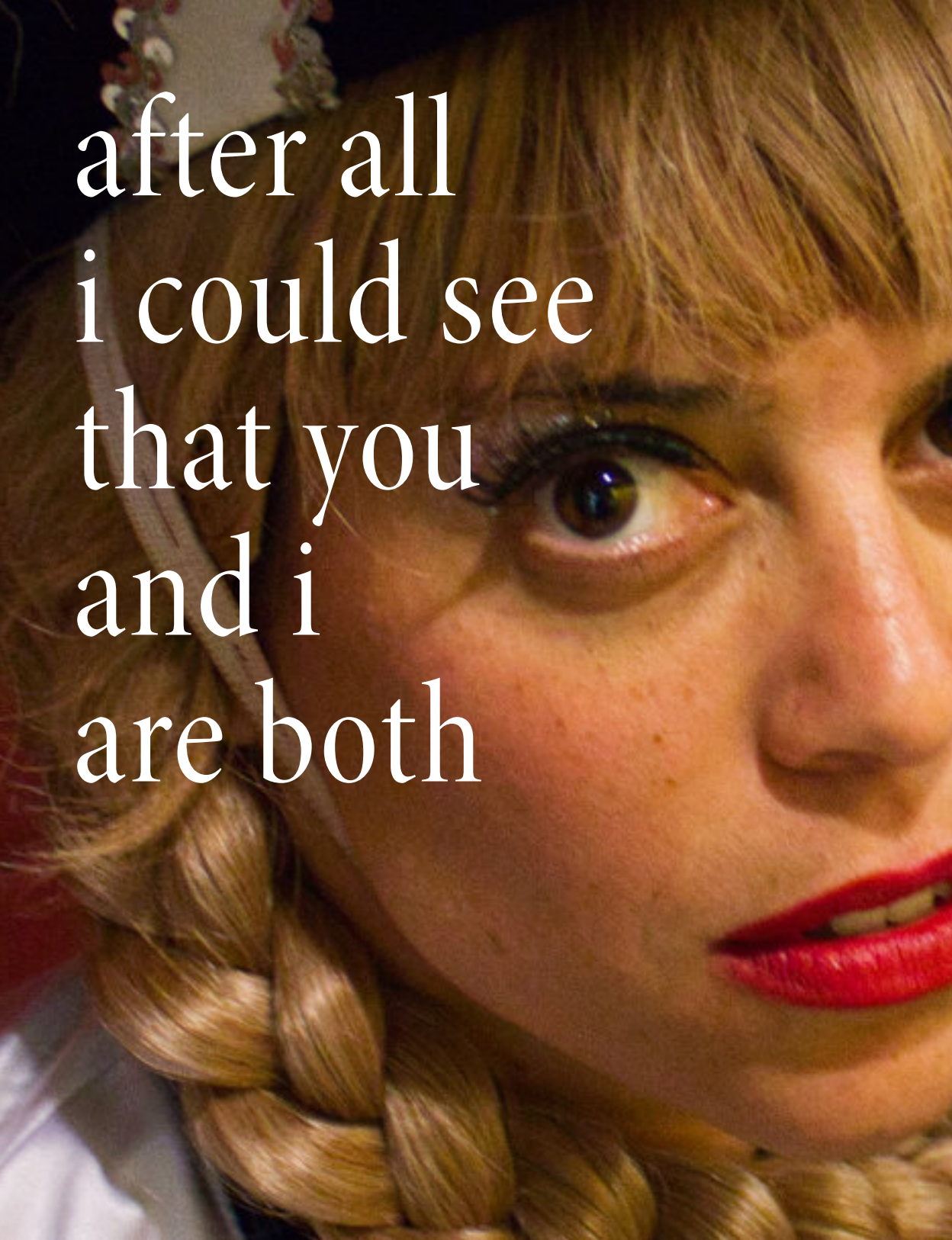




it was mostly very silent







after all  
i could see  
that you  
and i  
are both

haunted by something big

you happened to be  
more complex than  
i





so i asked

you why



and you said

cause my  
mother  
is not the  
woman  
she wanted  
to be





COBRA BLONDE is a result of a dialog with the aesthetic of Gardetanz, through the study of Gardetanz movement repertoire and the custom of its practice. It is a melange of Gardetanz and contemporary art, motivated by the desire to develop a common movement language.

The project is manifested across several mediums: photography, text, interviews, and a performance.

The celebration of Carnival is a custom taking place every winter in the region of North Rhein-Westphalia (as well as several other cities in Germany and around the world). The Catholic origin of this tradition focuses on individual liberation, festivity, and togetherness. Many of the carnival traditions and costumes were created as a platform for satire, initially mocking military institutions in the 1800s. Today's Tanzgarde troupes draw inspiration from twentieth-century cabarets.

The dance group 'Tanzgarde der Karnevalsfreunde der katholischen Jugend' is part of the association Kakaju, which was founded in 1952. Based in Düsseldorf, the group consists of about forty female dancers between the ages of 15 to 45. Some of the dancers have been members of the group for over thirty years. The group performs in venues and events, mostly related to the Carnival tradition.

During the process of this project, I found myself fluctuating from the encounter with the group members. Their strong desire to dance and perform; the submission into established gender formation; the representation of the dolly corporate identity which I found seductive, and the fine symmetric aesthetics of the choreography fascinated me. I felt some of the women have found something I am still searching for: a type of stability and comfort in respect to their female identity, combined with the joy of togetherness. I became uncertain about my role. The contrast between a 'ready-made' and a 'handmade' personality reflected a conflict within me, as did the contradiction of my background and physical appearance.

The Tanzgarde's pleasure, uniformity, culture, dance, sensuality, and entertainment form an impressive, powerful collective entity on stage. It is an aesthetic that I would like to include in my own artistic research. This book responds to the open-ended question about the creation of the self. It looks at the tension between formality and the abnormal, and the attempt to perform an authentic personality if such can even exist.

COBRA BLONDE started In January 2018 by invitation of tanzhaus nrw. The research for the project, under the title 'WITNESS,' originally started as a photography project and was later developed into a staged performance piece.

# COBRA BLONDE





I would like to thank the dancers of the Tanzgarde der Karnevalsfreunde der katholischen Jugend for sharing your knowledge and experiences with me, and for inviting me to be part of your community.

Special thanks to Ulla Gerling who opened the door for an artistic dialog and sharing with me her creative resources and interest in dance and choreography; to Mijke Harmsen and the tanzhaus nrw team for facilitating this project.

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