

Two voices and a third one about *bi-* in PARADISE (and the fourth!)

bi- is about encounters, plurality,
makes use of private spaces, secluded rural houses that someone knows well
puts people together in a group and hoping that relationships will build up
that threads will develop.

In a previous residency, I've been asked: *Do you aim at creating a safe space?* My answer has been something like *No, that's impossible, because we don't really know most of the people we invite. Surprisingly it does happen that people feel safe, but we cannot plan it beforehand.*

bi-PARADISE has been an exponential challenge to this notion of the artist residency as a safe space.

Paradoxically, the architecture of PARADISE AIR pushes the idea of private space—the kind that usually *bi-* inhabits—to its utter limits. For PARADISE was a love hotel. The doors of the rooms are heavy but don't slam: they produce a cushioned sound that whispers “private.” The hallways are big but do not echo, its red carpet absorbs the loudest high-heeled footsteps. The elevators are still and silent, and the architecture allows you to avoid any unwanted encounter. Only the planned one, in soundproof rooms, are encouraged by the architecture. How safe can I feel in a space dedicated to secrecy? It only allows the safety of secrecy, the privilege of anonymity.

bi- then had to embrace the unrewarding¹ task of turning this silent architecture, twenty minutes by train from Tokyo and its thirty-eight million beings moving around, into a relational space². We made use of what PARADISE started: the incredible resource made of the act of tearing down a wall, a lounge with the door always open.

Before its beginning, we said that at bi-PARADISE there would always be a spare plate and chair for whoever wanted to join our ritual dinners. This invitation was a wish, that wasn't very much publicised—as any of our in-activities. But it was heard: some days, the dinner hour approaching we witnessed the lounge getting populated by faces we didn't know, until we sat with them and shared a meal. Once, the additional hosts were so many that we were scared we wouldn't have enough food for everyone. Many times, we did not understand how the rumor traveled until the ears of our guests, that a bunch of lazy artists took over, doing a lot of not much.

Just one week after I came back from Matsudo I happened to visit Antwerp, to attend one of the Assemblies of the DAI Roaming Academy. This post-graduate art programme decided to quit having a fixed place in Arnhem to move around, and the assemblies *take place*, literally, according to collaborations with other structures. The artistic director of the school, Gabriëlle Schleijsen, summerized it by the following assertion: “*We land in places where our friends are.*”

1 Unrewarding? Maybe, but also exciting, trying, tiring, joyous, and as you said in a previous version of this text, ungraspable. I still now discover what mingling of difficulties, joys and emotions I experienced during this period. Another sentence you wrote: “*as part of the organisers, I also had the feeling that I wasn't able to understand what was going on. After a week trying, I gave up. I noticed that my efforts could have been appreciated but they were utterly useless: people did with or without me. Many questions slipped away, I had more brain room to listen to people.*”

We had to let go, indeed, and maybe once again we stumble upon this quote from Derrida, in some unread book, stored in the fridge of a shared house near Paris: the hospitality that was granted by Paradise, which we tried to pass on through *bi-*, required the vulnerability of being “prepared to be unprepared”.

2 Our task was indeed to turn the whole space inside-out: from of a public space dedicated to secrecy, *bi-* had to create an intimate space open to encounters, to passersby taking care of each other.

Should the quote from Derrida be cited properly?

This echoed really loud in my mind, feeling very familiar. The very same night I walked alone in the city until I reached an old house. I rang the bell, and a smiley person opened the doors: ~~Ersi Varveri~~, a friend of a longtime friend from Athens. She lives in *The Pink House*, where she runs together with ~~Gijs Waterschoot~~ a residency, a publishing house, or maybe just a *periptero* (typical greek invading mini-architecture that stands as a reference point for the daily dramaturgy of greek residents). They hosted me for the night. The shortest artist-residency ever: our late night conversation opened up new infinite series of discussions and questions about our practices, survival methods, inheritance of properties, real estate, abandoned houses. Then ~~Ersi~~ showed me the way to my room. The entrance was through a cupboard and the walls were built with clothes: she collected dresses from old ladies telling stories, bought backpacks worn by schoolgirls, inherited (or stole) coats and shirts from her mum and aunts. In this attic, surrounded by so many stories, I started thinking back at these two months *bi-* spent in Matsudo. As probably many other small-scale art initiatives, *bi-* is based a lot on friendships. *bi-* aims at strengthening them, looking at them differently by sharing houses, open-calls, parties through rumors, chats among friends, of friends, of friends³.

As an example, one of the selected participants for the second residency in PARADISE was a complete mystery to us. Having no information available online (which is something hard to achieve), she applied with a blank email. She was selected nonetheless. Upon arrival, ~~Emily Roope~~ gave me a postcard depicting the tiniest hotel in the world. On the back, a message written in Greek, without a name. A common friend, connecting us, had created this synergy.

Boldly or not, explicitly encouraged or discreetly motivated, we move and land where someone will be waiting for us. If not in the tiniest hotel in the world, then above a pachinko parlor, or in a house full of DIY frames at the foothills of an active volcano, someone will be waiting for us and put us to bed at night⁴.

- 3 How to call this kind of bind between not-unrelated-yet-strangers?
- 4 You were writing earlier that ~~Paradise~~ was impossible to understand. Maybe the only way to describe *bi-* when in ~~Paradise~~, is to embrace the multiple, subjective, shifty nature of what happened. Reading your text, I remembered this computer poem created in 1967 by Alison Knowles and James Tenney, called *the House of Dust*. I browsed these thousands of computations for stanzas that could describe what kind of space was created — knowing that *bi-* lays in between all the individual experiences that occurred in ~~Paradise AIR~~:

a house of plastic
in an overpopulated area
using electricity
inhabited by friends

or,

a house of broken dishes
in japan
using all available lighting
inhabited by people who enjoy eating together

or,

a house of paper
in a place with both heavy rain and bright sun
using candles
inhabited by people who love to read

or,

a house of brick
among other houses
using electricity
inhabited by people speaking many languages wearing little or no clothing

or,

a house of glass
on an island
using natural light
inhabited by people from many walks of life

PARADISE (all caps)

PARADISE AIR

↑
em dash should
be longer
without space.