

# EMBODIED LIVES

*Reflections on the Influence of  
Suprpto Suryodarmo and Amerta Movement*



*Edited by: Katya Bloom, Margit Galanter and Sandra Reeve*

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Suprpto Suryodarmo and Amerta Movement

**OPEN ACCESS**

***Chapter 27***

***Joy***

**Anita Lüdke**

Edited by:

Katya Bloom, Margit Galanter and Sandra Reeve

Taken from the book *Embodied Lives*,  
published by:

Triarchy Press  
Axminster  
UK

[info@triarchypress.net](mailto:info@triarchypress.net)

[www.triarchypress.net](http://www.triarchypress.net)

First published in 2014.

Second edition published in 2025.

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Paperback ISBN: 978-1-909470-32-3

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## A Balinese Saying

*Ilmu Padi* (a lesson from the rice plant)

*semakin tua semakin berisi, dan semakin merunduk*  
(the older, the fuller, and the more it bows)



# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	x
INTRODUCTION	1
1. PRESENCE	9
Beate Stühm (Germany)	
2. AMERTA MOVEMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY	18
Keith Miller (UK)	
3. CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE MOVEMENT WORK	28
Christina Stelzer (Germany)	
4. AMERTA AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM	35
Monika Förster (Germany/Holland)	
5. THE EYE OF THE HAND	43
Steve Hopkins (UK)	
6. A DOG PRACTICING ‘TALKING BODY’	55
José Mulder van de Graaf (Bolivia)	
7. “MAKE LESS THE HOPING”	64
Sandra Reeve (UK)	
8. TOUCHING FORGOTTEN REALITIES	72
Bettina Mainz (Germany)	
9. THE ECHO OF LIFE	83
Daniela Coronelli (Italy/UK)	
10. I ALWAYS DO THREE THINGS	92
Shantam Zohar (Israel)	

11. A PRESENCING DIAL	98
Margit Galanter (USA)	
12. AMERTA MOVEMENT AND SOMATICCOSTUME	108
Sally E. Dean (USA/UK)	
13. CRYSTALLIZATION-PERFORMANCE	122
Lise Lavelle (Denmark)	
14. BEING AND DOING IN THE WILD GARDEN	132
Susanne Tümpel (Germany)	
15. 'MANTRA GERAK' / MOVEMENT MANTRA	142
Agus Bima Prayitna (Indonesia)	
16. THE MUSICAL PORTAL	152
Tim Jones (UK)	
17. NEAR THE UNKNOWN	160
Franca Fubini (Italy)	
18. FAMILY	170
Una Nicholson (UK)	
19. THE INFANT'S LANGUAGE	179
Katya Bloom (USA/UK)	
20. "GOING OUT OF THE SITUATION" AND "STOP, DON'T FOLLOW THAT, WALK!"	189
Regula Nell (Switzerland)	
21. AMERTA MOVEMENT AND AUTISM	201
Sean Williams (UK)	

22. "FIND YOUR POSITION"	211
Susan Bauer (USA)	
23. "BODY BODY"	221
Helen Poynor (UK)	
24. EVER-SPEAKING BEING	231
Michael Dick (Germany)	
25. MOVING IN THE LAW	241
Simon Slidders (UK)	
26. THE BREATHING EYE	249
Andrea Morein (Germany)	
27. JOY	263
Anita Lüdke (Germany/Bolivia)	
28. "RE-MEMBERING" BUTTERFLY BEACH	276
Melinda Buckwalter (USA)	
29. I WILL TRACE THE CONSTELLATION OF MY STARS WITH MY FINGERS	283
Ellin Krinsly (USA/Australia/Mexico/Ethiopia)	
30. AWAKENING ART AND DHARMA NATURE TIME	295
Diane Butler (USA/Indonesia)	
AFTERWORD: A PRAPTO COMPANION	306

## 27. JOY

### The Stony Way

Anita Lüdke (Germany/Bolivia)

A deep love and passion for space inspired me to study architecture. Years later I discovered within movement the same laws of creativity and inspiration that I knew from my process of creating a design for space. In this relived discovery I could reflect on these laws with renewed attention and could widen the area of their validity for my growth as a human being.

From then on, a general exploration and understanding about the growth of human beings began to develop.

I started learning from Prapto 27 years ago, because of my contemplations about how to teach architecture students. Working as a university tutor, I experienced from the very beginning that most of the students were drawing decorative patterns out of lines without apparently feeling the line as a wall or feeling that a meeting of lines makes a corner, or how light enters and affects the atmosphere of the space created between the lines. I knew that they needed to experience existing architectural spaces by moving through them with their senses open and then to reflect on their experience. So I improvised learning situations for them but I always felt that I was missing something. Amerta Movement work, as I got to know it from Prapto, inspired me to integrate this way of practice into my teaching. It helped to open up consciousness and the recognition of the density of space and of the play of light. Besides this, the movement work gave students the experience of how it feels when their creative source is flowing.

Right now I am about to finish a book with the cover title *Seemingly Nothing Special* and the inside subtitle *and yet it has changed*

*my life*.... It contains a retrospective account of how all this process came about. Parts I and II below are excerpts from this text. The poetic word-installations in Part I stand alone, independent from their original context, which includes accompanying paintings.<sup>1</sup>

This transcript is also an homage to Prapto the teacher as thanks for his in-devotion-offered, wonderful gift to the world in the form of Amerta Movement.

### **Part I: The Fulfilment**

Here I express, what this kind of movement without a given form means to me, which to me is the essence. The words were allowed to move all over the sheet and in different ways they found their distance and location or their connection.

'Space of Being' (used below) is translated from the German '*Raum des Seins*'. The German language allows a more complete expression. In '*Raum des Seins*', Ra is the goddess of the sun and aum understood as the basic sound of infinity and unity leading into stillness.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://bit.ly/ELtp24>

*In the essence  
reduced to one sentence  
this kind of movement practice means to me  
to experience myself in being*  
**in the Space of Being**

*which exists independent of time  
and independent  
of functionally and emotionally oriented thinking*

*on the following pages I tell about the most fundamental  
discoveries, experiences and recognitions*

**in this Space of Being**

*on the way to this Space of Being*

...

*this discovery*

*which*

*when I was first allowed to feel it  
exploded chains  
triggered astonishment and euphoria in me  
I felt light as a butterfly and  
free like a bird*

*that through me*

*can happen*

*what is appropriate*

*for this moment*

*in this context*

*for me*

*for the whole and*

*for any element of being within it*

...

*recognition*

*that*

*this adventure*

*is even richer*

*the less I intervene*

*the less inhibited I allow*

*my thinking as well as my bodily and psychical capability*

*always with a fuller consciousness*

*to be*

*as living tool*

*of something much superior*

...

.....

.....

...

**this Space of Being**

*is the place*

*where*

*life feeds from the source*

*where*

*creativity arises*

*as its purest and most original impulse*

*to find*

*through us*

*its expression*

*be it in word, in matter, in dance, in gesture, in songs, in music,  
in healing .....*

*or*

*in everyday life*

...

.....

.....

...

*and*

*once I am opened  
to be guided through life  
then*

*as*

*I feel my being*

*rhythmically flowing*

*rhythmically dancing*

*with always new surprises*

*as adventure*

*as joy*

*as deep touch*

*as gratitude*

*as melting towards*

*the enchantment*

*life*

*...*

EMBODIED LIVES

*this freedom for risk*

*being shared with others*

*fulfils a dream*

*which started  
when I many years ago – suddenly –  
the first time being in movement  
was allowed to enter*

**this Space of Being**

*beyond my thinking  
and beyond my emotional 'I'*

*to experience*

*the guidance of*

*something superior*

*which since then*

*I call the jazz of movement*

*and to this  
belongs a wide swinging*

*red dress*

*...*

## Part II: Fruit Along the Way

In this section I give an overview of the structure of my own teaching in this practice, as I offered it to students of architecture and of graphic and product design.

Everybody has seen dance or martial arts. Recalling those skills immediately shapes and develops our internal criteria of how movement should be and what it should look like. These ideas may initially prevent us from getting involved with our own impulse towards movement and with following that as it really is. But that very impulse, when it is realized with honesty and with an acceptance of the limits of its own potential, creates beauty, which deeply touches the heart of whoever is there. This is a beauty beyond form, which nevertheless needs embodied expression to manifest itself. If someone in their movement sequence reaches this quality of being for just one moment, the entire room is changed. It is like a miracle, like something magical; all those present are suddenly very awake, alert and involved.

This law of the effect of truth and presence applies not only in the context of movement practice; it is visible in every form of human expression: architecture, graphic and product design and, of course, in daily life.

Suggestions and commands in movement practice will help us to experience what prevents us from being in this state of simplicity, as well as to explore the creative aspect of this state. Over time and by practicing movement in a variety of situations, so that we can experience this state again and again, our being learns to find the way by itself towards this quality of being. And through teaching others I myself have learnt more about the practice of movement.

For example, given the enormous power that lies within intention, I start every course and every day with the intention that whatever I put into the room should be good and should encourage the personal growth of participants. Without much thought, that intention has always helped me swiftly to find myself in the ‘Space of Being’ (described above) from where I could follow my impulses in guiding others. I speak of ‘guiding’ because of perceiving within myself an absence of thinking (although I am also not necessarily in a condition of intuition or inspiration). Thinking becomes important in retrospect, in the reflection and classification.

I can call this condition ‘the condition of the open heart and dedication,’ the condition of love for all lives, love beyond all need,

love for the being in my body, for the being in the body of others, for the being in the plants, animals, mountains, wind, water, fire, earth, clouds, rain, sun, the air, the being that permeates everything and unifies us with everything.

Those words can easily be understood as being romantic and kitsch. To avoid this I shall describe the above-mentioned condition once more but now from a different point of view. I can also call it the inner place of neutrality, in which there is no emotion at all, just receiving and acting; in which there is a bright light (immaterial white with a bit of coloured grey in it) floating through the whole of my body and what's more flowing through all forms and beings in my surroundings. It is not at all comparable with any artificial light and is not even like the light of the sun or the moon, it is something peculiar to itself with its own characteristics.

The sensation of depth, purity, truth and clarity in this quality of being has given me the confidence to express it or to act, simply to do what in my spontaneous perception needed to be done, without doubting, without questioning. It has not always been enjoyable, and even to me not always immediately understandable or comprehensible. But I learned to stay in that condition, even if it was clear to me that it would probably cause an unpleasant reaction, I learned to accept, to respect and to do it anyway without falling into an emotional pattern of self-protection or self-assertion. I started to recognize and distinguish whether my impulse came from this 'Space of Being' or came from an emotional condition – at least for the space-time of a workshop in this practice. The latter is very important! It makes a big difference whether I am with a wholesome intention in a guiding role in the space-time practice, or if I am in the challenge of daily life. This experience and recognition I have felt to be essential and valuable as at least during the time of my courses I was spared the condition of persistent arrogance.

While being in the 'Space of Being', and accompanying others I was also aware that all the beneficial things that happened – and which participants expressed gratitude for – were due to the guidance that we were given together, and not to my personal skills and knowledge.

This recognition has changed my attitude again and again into one of necessary humility and tolerance. The guidance does work through my personal skills and knowledge and by this becomes

visible and gets body, but its basic existence is not attributable to me – nevertheless I accept the responsibility that is attached to the role of teacher.

Through and especially in the movement practice, I find my way into the freedom of being able to look with wonder and compassionate respect at another human being in their own way of living. Daily life with myself and others does, however, as already mentioned, still have abundant emotional difficulties and re-entering the ‘Space of Being’ in daily life is a permanent practice.

### **Part III: The Art of Daily Life**

In 2007 my life changed as the result of an illness. Since then and because of this I got the chance to concentrate on my daily-life practice while living mainly in Bolivia.

In my movement practice as I had got to know it, my inner awareness was trained to be very detailed and accurate, which fitted well with my own mentality. This was a big help in ‘guiding’ the students who were discovering the unique creativity present in each one of them.

And now this quality is supporting my intention to be fulfilled by finding my way into the ‘Space of Being’ in daily life. Whatever action gives me the impulse to move, with the luck of grace more or less immediately after having started it I find myself sensitive to not just the function of the action itself, but to being in the objects, the forms, the colours, and the textures.

So, for example, I feel my hand going deep down into the dry white rice, the little long grains, one beside the other slipping through my hands, as if they were made of silk, sinking into a measuring cup; from there like raindrops falling into the pot and then changing their whole consistency just by me adding some water. All at once they are heavily stacked one on top of the other...

Thus I find a little pleasure here, another little pleasure there; my inner chemise is changing and in this my ‘looking at’ is changing into seeing, my hearing is changing into listening and my touching is changing into feeling.

Granted the gift of awareness my daily walking along the snail footpath (which leads through trees and flora and connects our different rooms) results in an experience of rhythm itself, giving

me a massage through my body from toe to top.<sup>2</sup> My hands pulling up weeds destroy those so-called bad plants but in this same act I also feel the joy of the surviving plants and the suffering of other plants that are unhealthy. Slowly, slowly, through all this, something very fundamental is changing in me; a shift which is supported by hearing, morning and evening, the symphonies of birds, insects, crickets, frogs and wind, which at this moment in my life can't be topped by any symphony in a concert hall.

Equally I can experience that same path through the same nature-temple with the same light falling through the leaves as dry and grey only because of my heart not being open and, as a consequence, my eyes and ears which are physically open, being closed. It is the touch of my own (personal) sense of beauty that lets me jump into the 'Space of Being.' It is not even jumping – it is an instant change of all that I am.

I used to be utterly convinced in my mind and in my feeling that living in town was the very best thing for me – the bigger the urban jungle and chaos the better. Nothing else was worthwhile. That was my home, the place I identified with. Now I live in the jungle of nature. It is not that I jumped from there to here in one step. There was quite a long path in between, where I had not really let go of the one and had not really landed in the other. But now after just a few years, especially during the jungle concerts mentioned above, I can feel nature entering my cells and my cells changing into tentacles that are moving deep into the green surroundings and my body dissolving and widening into the infinite space. This is like my most precious jewel. If ever I felt something holy from the deepest part of my heart then it is this feeling of unity. I also could say my whole situation at the moment, this opportunity of being in every sense free for this extraordinary experience, is holy. And of course there are a lot of obstacles, both internal and external, that can easily throw me out of this smooth condition, so this is how I am in my day-to-day movement practice.

These obstacles are the stones, which are mentioned above in my subtitle. In my writing here I describe just the joy. The joy, even in its details, appears to be more of a shared, similar experience for one person or for the other. The stones are much more individual; they are the result of the bunch of gifts we bring with us from wherever in being born and, as we all know, we complete this bunch mainly with the experiences we have during our first years in this world. I like the word Gift because it has in my German-English a double meaning, which fits

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://bit.ly/ELtp24>

well in this context: in German the word *Gift* means poison. What happens in life is that one or another of the Gifts, in the English meaning, turns out to be a Gift in the German meaning. It is these stones that provoke unpleasant and emotionally complicated situations within us and in our contact with others, which have to be revealed for what they are, respected and accepted and, in this way, hopefully transformed.

Often at the beginning of a practice session there is a lot of movement because of all the impressions and emotions that have been gathered during the day and need attention. Then suddenly every impulse in the body stops and there is only going down to the earth and staying there in silence. For me, this is always an astonishing moment. I don't know how long it will last but it is the point zero from where at its exact time a new movement will arise like the phoenix out of the ashes. Sometimes it takes quite a long time. To end it by choice is hard, nearly impossible if you are no longer a beginner in movement work, because that would mean cutting or breaking and then whatever comes next will be, for sure, a frustration. So one has to wait for the right moment. It is also always astonishing to me that sometimes I even fall into something like sleep, but in a second I am again totally awake in a new movement with a much deeper quality and sometimes entering directly in the so-called 'Space of Being'. This moment in my life I am living just now here on our land in Bolivia feels a bit like this point zero.

There are periods of great activity with a lot of movement beside the daily necessities, but most of this is happening in my inner world. Meanwhile the outside world is shrinking and my inner space is expanding. I need all my strength, force and creativity for this internal journey.

None of the professional activities I undertook in my former life continue, except for my love and creative fire for architectural space. Until now this creative fire has remained without manifestation in the outer world: but I can smell the possibility. I do not know how long the outer stillness of my moment will stay and toward what it will, if ever, lead me. This is the dance of adventure one can experience in movement practice surrendering to the inner guidance by listening and seeing, by just being, and now it is my life.

~ ~ ~

**Anita Lüdke** is an architect and freelance artist. She has 20 years experience of teaching in the field of space and form (Raum und Gestalt), including 12 years as a professor at the University of Düsseldorf in Applied Sciences. In 1985 she began the practice of Amerta Movement; in 1995 Prapto invited her to be on his list of teachers; currently she lives in Germany and Bolivia. [anita\\_luedke@gmx.de](mailto:anita_luedke@gmx.de)

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