



MENTIRAS #5 - RS

J

During several periods of times, you sent me and a few others some group emails with your digital collages, or with some sort of assemblages made directly on top of a scanner. The feeling I got from those is that your artistic activity was taking place in your office, your work place, or anywhere you could be, actually. Was that the case?

To follow on that question, what comes first: is it your art work (drawings, collages, ephemeral constructions) which is coloured by the location where you make it? Or is it the other way around: you make art about the office life because that's something you're interested in?

R

It goes both ways: from the administrative work toward what can look like an artistic activity and back. I was making some collages before having a job. I don't have a job anymore and I still make some.

Still, the working place context is what stimulates me. And its unbelievable dreariness/mediocrity triggers, on a daily basis, some esthetic reactions. It is a fascinating soil: the paper reams, the xerox machine, a never ending meeting, cabinets filled with folders, the office trashcans, a stapler, stamps... heavy stuff.

The ball pen keeps being the favorite tool among all that allows adaptation or escape from the laborious surroundings.

J

You also take a lot of photographs that you post on blogs: people walking in the street, urban landscapes. Is this another way to capture those esthetic reactions you just mentioned? Or is there some sort of writing already, does it fit in a narrative that you build? For instance, we can see a recurring interest for waste, industrial materials, etc.

R

Taking those pictures is a real disease. I take between 52 and 103 each day. I don't know if that saves much, but it's practical for the memory. It also evokes tourism, an activity I did a lot, and with passion. Airports, train stations and unknown cities. Boredom and ecstasy which mix so easily.

I like very much watching people moving, especially old ones, and since I bike quite a lot, taking pics with your phone camera comes as perfect for all that stuff.

I always enjoyed digging in trashcans. That's another fertile pathology. Taking a picture of an old guy digging in the trash in the industrial area of an unknown city, that would top everything for me. I remember it happening to me once, in Gdansk...

J

When hanging out with you, one can notice in your jokes, in your love of word plays, in your intuitive combinations of ideas, a specific tone very similar to the one in your artistic work. From a general point of view, do you separate your work from your way to be, or is one an extension of the other?

To ask the same question another way, do you spend some time specifically focused on your artist work, a time that you plan and define as such? Or do you consider your artist work as a permanent activity, and your collages and performances would only be its visible manifestation?

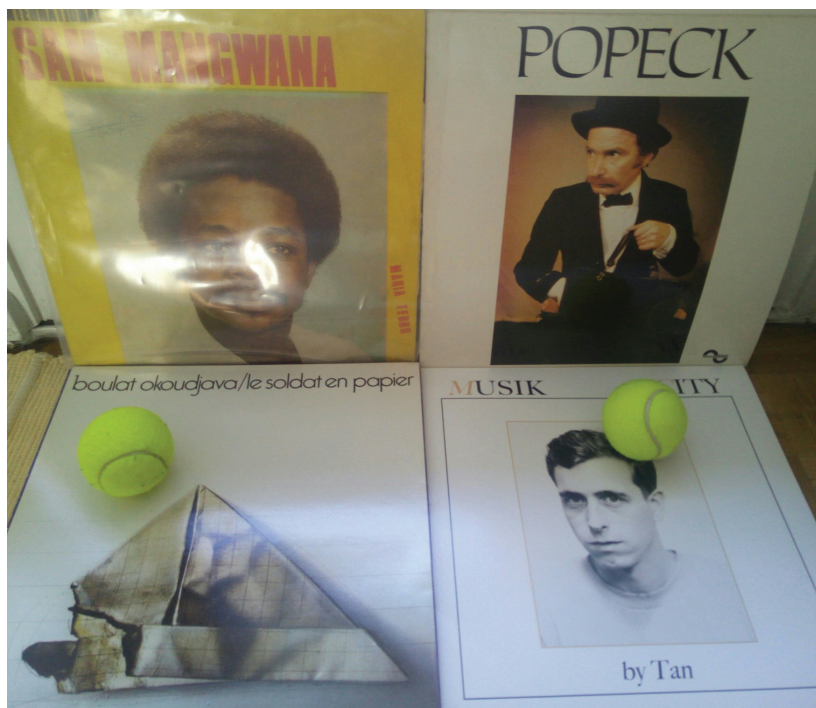
R

Yesterday, I saw a friend and she told me that I used to do more jokes. It is complicated to separate things, or they got separated by themselves. If you're on stage, acting silly, there isn't much decision making involved anymore, you go with it.

When I had a job, I was taking some time during the morning to do some doodles on paper or on the internet. Now that I am jobless, I have got much more free time, but I don't plan anything.

Lack of method. The time spent in public transports was also a favorite spot to work « fast and poorly ». And the free newspapers that I was given entering these transports in Paris (or in the big provincial cities) helped me to keep my hands and eyes busy. Now I am in a city without almost any public transportation. With a fully open space on the sea. So, those are totally different « means of production ». You depart from the free newspapers and get some rocks or some pieces of broken beer bottles gathered on the beach. The bike is an important element, and walking is still as pivotal as ever for everything, but with much more diffused noises. I didn't answer the question but that will make sense later...





J

You often bring up tennis or biking. There might be some connexions between tennis and your way of doing performances: the ability to improvise while being unbalanced, or at the end of a sprint. But I am missing the link with biking. Is it only about perspective, a sort of urban travelling, or are there other possible similarities between your art activity and biking, or other sports?

R

Tennis is extraordinary. Everything with tennis does fascinate me: its shape, its color, the sound of the ball. I have two of those in front of my eyes right now (permanently available). I was 10 years old when a French tennis player won Roland Garros. Sometimes I play in a non-jazz trio named *Black Henri Leconte*. I also spent a lot of time in gymnasiums, which are enthralling places. I worship those brave gymnasiums caretakers, who often look like fat drunks, bitter, yelling on the kids who didn't sort out the equipment.

Biking is less of a passion affair, because it is a mechanical sport, bluntly brutal. But the daily reading of the Tour de France's ranking had a good impact on me, and as you know, there is a ranking of contemporary artists, quite similar to the one for tennis players. I like rankings, there are the ones going up, there are the ones going down...

I love biking, but as a way of going as slowly as possible, as a way of going nowhere, if that is possible, and definitely not as a way to climb mountains in groups. Falling from a bike (alone or with someone) is still one of the top performances.

J

You talk about acting silly on stage. We played together a few times. Without informing anyone from the band in advance, what you were usually doing is to bring an impressive amount of props, objects, or even costumes that you would distribute, use, scatter or even destroy during the performance. I often wondered how much planned is it? The elements were too specific and recurring for them to be just random improvisation and found objects.

R

Ideally, I prepare the show a couple of days beforehand, thinking about using one prop or another, one way or another. During the show, nothing happens as planned, I have got way too much material so I am doing random stuff, while trying to stick on a rythm, or anything else that I can follow to last the whole set. The goal would be to act as the guy who displays kitchen tools on the market in Aubervilliers, as much as the jazz pianist in a Miami bar, or anywhere else for that matters.

J

During the live shows, your involvement creates a sort of chaotic intensity. For the other band members, this is something you can build on, but it can be disturbing or disruptive as well. How do you see this kind of collaboration?

R

I don't play amplified music, nor any music at all, so I rely on the other musicians volume to find a direction. I enjoy seeing the others doing their balances and seting up. I am very much influenced by jazz music, even the worst one (fusion, jazz rock, piano bar, and free jazz, of course). But as they say in the magazines talking about current art events, it is often the viewer who does a large part of the job. I don't think that a band of any improvised music can be good or bad, if you don't take the venue or the audience in consideration. The weirdest thing is that sometimes, it goes well... We should not make it a big issue if we fail, because that is part of the game. But it is a better idea to make it short anyway, wether the music is good or not...

J

In some chain mail discussions, you often mention bass players. Is it a question of technical performance or not at all ?

R

I collect pictures of electric bass players. The bass player is the pillar of the band, the one working in the background while the guitar hero shows off with his shitty solos. Special big up to Rick James, « super freak », hero of the bass and mega loser in the history of music... and to all the female bass players who have a hard time playing a heavy and manly instrument. I never played a single note on a bass and I don't think I will ever try.

J

Coming back to these pictures sent by email. How do you choose the recipients? I was talking with a mutual friend and we were realizing we wouldn't actually receive the same messages, with the same pics.

R

Very interesting question: who are we talking to? Is it a personal or a collective address?

Very very complex business that we have here: for me, postal mail is the most sacred thing. To get some or to send some, like the presents, even shitty presents, that you can offer to someone, that is always a gift of self... And so I think that postal mail is my reason for living. There is a book by Jacques Derrida called « *The Postcard, from Socrates to Freud and beyond* » that I am trying to read for the last 25 years, even though I know I will never finish it. And the activity of having some neverending email discussion with a few individuals took the most part of my working days. I don't do that anymore. So there are less jokes.

I never really set up any « groups » in my emailings. It can be 3 persons, up to 14, roughly, chosen in relation to my current mood and relationship with each one. I was trying to address people with a sensibility to my mail, while forgetting some of them, more or less willingly.

J

The gift, or the mail, this is an important point I think. We don't see each other very frequently, but on several occasions you had a present with my name on it, as you do for other mutual friends. If I follow up on what you just said, this intimate and friendly loop of pictures and objects is the ideal artistic transaction?

For instance, could you be satisfied of having an exhibition being open while you're away, which would then be a sort of less personal thing? Or you would look for a way to personalize it?

R

We should calculate the true frequency of our encounters, every 17 months I think. Exhibitions are a weird world that I don't really know, so I haven't any strong landmark on that topic.

I had one in Orléans a few years ago, and I got my car impounded right in front of me. I hadn't my driver's license with me, and the technical control was not up to date, but apart from that, everything went well. I don't think you should personalize things too much. Anonymous productions are quite fascinating indeed, so long live the pseudonyms and initials and everything a bit depersonalizing!

J

Let's go back to mail and gifts: there is also a notion of being free of charge and surprising at play here. Your mail is unsolicited. We can't really subscribe to your newsletter. Are those questions important for you?

R

I like the term « courrier indésirable » [spam] that you get in your mailbox. Really free stuff, I quite don't believe in it, but it is a beautiful idea. Surprise, yes, it is important. We are back to tennis and to the shots that your opponent is not expecting, especially crappy ones...





J

Speaking of initials, you also make a recurring use of the initials, names or pictures of some people you know, which leads me to see this collage practice as meant to travel mostly inside a limited circle of friends. Is it true?

On the other hand, the large book published by TG [*Sobac Memories Volume 1*, published by les éditions de l'Oubli], which was collecting many of your collages, could be read by anyone.

R

I was counting on them to promote myself. I have got very famous friends in Paris, so I should take advantage of their fame. I think it worked out quite well. They did a good job. TG's book is an absolute weirdness which terrifies me everytime I have it in my hands. TG is a monster who doesn't even live in Paris! (we love TG)

I don't know the proper methods to distribute my productions. I don't really care but it is still an issue. To give it to the ones who are interested is still the easiest way to make this whole pile of paper travel, so it doesn't catch the dust on my shelves.

J

Why does TG's book terrifies you? Is it because it is a kind of archive, out of your control? Or is it because it's a massive work, which doesn't fit so well with your logic of flux and instant circulation of pictures (emails, postal mail, gifts, blog, etc)?

R

It is the second of your hypothesis: the gap between what you throw inside the web's tubes and its transformation into a printed volume. That should be forbidden. We just want to clog the world's network's tubes. I loved printing emails or anything really, when I could use an office printer. I ask for forgiveness to the Planet for my abuses!

J

I know you used to have different administrative jobs for a long time. Do you enjoy this split: a job to eat on one side and your artist work on the other? Or am I getting it all wrong and you loved your jobs? Did you ever make money with your artist work?

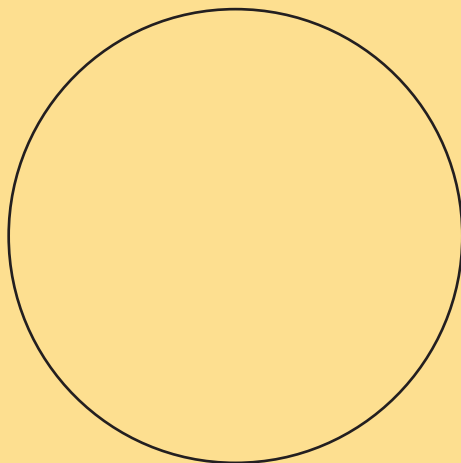
R

No I don't enjoy it all. I'm proud to be a civil servant even though there isn't any glory in that, especially for the last few years. I hate artists and their addiction to money, wether public (grants) or private (sponsors). Artists piss me off. We always have to pay for their drinks. Of course, artists are nice (but prison officers as well). So no, I am not happy with this situation.

I remember earning some money sometimes, which I obviously rarely reported to the public finances. I made more when I did the artist than when I played tennis or bowling. So there is some hope.

MENTIRAS (2014-)

#1	HP	2014	#14	AM	2020
#2	HH	2014	#15	AB	2021
#5	RS	2017			
#6	JW	2018			
#7	OV	2017			
#8	P*S	2017			
#9	AB	2017		cancelled	
#10	LS	2018	#4	IT	
#11	JH	2019	#?	JC	
#13	PB	2020	#12	CF	



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