



MENTIRAS #7 - OV

J

Around 10 years ago, when I encountered your work for the first time, i only saw your drawings, and few small publications. When I look at your recent book *You've got beautiful stairs, you know*, I read something which looks like a layered scenario for objects. It is full of references to design, furnitures seem to appear as characters, and it ends with a glass jacket. Has there been an expansion of scope of your projects or were you already working on a scale that large?

O

I think when we met, I had just graduated from the arts academy and I graduated actually in digital media, I was making videos, mostly animations at that time. Those were quite primitive animations and those drawings I was making – those were particles for the animations. I never saw them sufficient enough or precious enough to stand by themselves or be seen as artworks. For some reason however they got some fans, someone asked me to design a cover for a cassette or an LP and then I would make drawings. Yet this medium by itself was not communicating or expressing enough for me, I missed one more dimension which was not even a storyline or time, but a pace perhaps. And at that time I felt that video could communicate it better. But if you ask about scale, it was not large scale at all, I would just work at home, in my room. With time I started to notice however that there is some sort of dissonance taking place between making the piece and watching it in my room and it being screened elsewhere – at a festival or some gallery space. A tv screen or a projection in a white room or even a cinema often did not make much sense to me anymore. I started to become more and more specific in where and how the videos are shown, I would seek spaces or adjust these environments in a way, so that they contribute and intermingle with the video work. The experience of watching was becoming more interesting for me than the piece that is watched, so somewhere at this point my work started to expand to some degree, there was more paraphernalia and fetish growing around it and the video itself was moving more to the background. Some sort of hierarchy was dissolving then, found things, tools, furniture pieces, dust in the corner started to play just as important or non-important role as the video piece.

In 2008 I was selected for a two year residency program at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, which opened a huge amount of

opportunities for my work to develop. Mostly thanks to the incredible facilities, studio and technical support. I embraced pretty much everything that the facilities had to offer, I experimented with variety of media and techniques and this helped me to further adorn these environments I was interested in. And the practice was becoming more sculptural too.

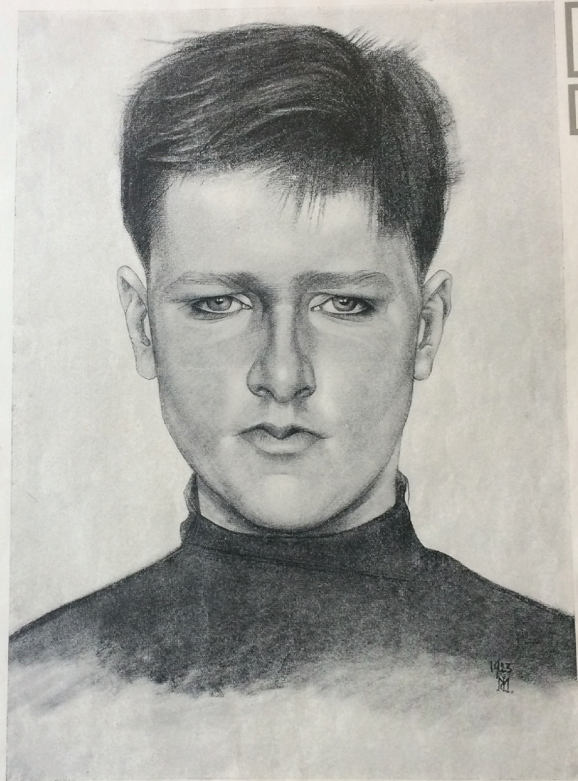
J

I have another question regarding the timeline of such projects. This book is a companion to an exhibition, but it does also compile many different things, sometimes from previous shows or publications. How do you work, regarding this? Do you set a goal, a large project which will host many smaller pieces, or is it more like a flux, only sequenced in books and shows, but not in the studio, nor in your mind?

O

The *You've got beautiful stairs you know* exhibition was very unusual for my practice. This was a show that brought together pretty much everything I made in the last 8-9 years and also without much division or selection. We literally brought the entire storage to Kunstverein and I just let it unfold in its own way there. So these were many different installations, projects, ideas overlapping in one pile and this made it a different kind of an exhibition. Many of the pieces have been hidden in boxes for years, I forgot so much of it and it was an eerie experience to see them all together, as if raised from a grave and come to hang out all together in one room. In a similar way we treated the publication. Over the years I have been producing zines or other printed matter that was somehow dissolving and disappearing with time too and we decided it would be nice to just bring it all together. The show brought in all the physical work I created, while the book mostly focused on the printed matter.

But this show was atypical to how I usually work. Usually I have some sort of theme or topic that interests me, I think about it, read and it starts to form these first anchors. So these images or ideas start to shape-up and I would look for a way to realize them, knowing that these few anchors will be articulating the entire environment. I go to visit the space which will host the work and this adds new layers. When I start to install, it all happens very intuitively and spontaneously. I source local materials and found objects, I often borrow building's own interior objects and that is



Bascoulard Tape 09-01-2017

Etant Donnes - S'envole

Shest Miortvih Bolgar - Apap 1

People In Sorrow - Exploit KC

Pseudo Code - Keep Smiling!

Two Daughters - So I

Fall of Saigon - On the Beach at Fontana

Smersh - Armored Man Dub

Tools You Can Trust - Working and Shopping

Throbbing Gristle - What a Day

MasterSlave Relationship - Sadomasochism

Bourbonese Qualk - Untitled 1

Nouvelles Lectures Cosmopolites - Ethan 8

Etant Donnes - S'envole

Laboratorija zvuka - Još ovaj put

what shapes the installation at the end. I can never show the exact set-up twice in different places, it morphs.

J

From your presence on social media, I have the impression that you travel a lot. Is it mostly work related or is it the other way around: you work mostly in one place and travel is a break from working?

O

I travel mostly for work yes. I have a dog and I also mostly travel as far as a train can take me with a dog. If I am invited for a show I go to do a site visit first and then I come for a minimum of 2 weeks to build up.

J

Do you work in a studio? For example that glass piece on the backcover of your book, where was it made?

O

At the moment I don't have a studio and there have been only a few years when I had one. In those times the studio was basically a stuffed storage. I work in various media, which does not allow me to produce all the work in the studio: I work in ceramics, glass, metal, silkscreen, wood – all this I cannot facilitate myself, so I am using outside workshops to produce. And in terms of installations – these always happen in situ. I never pre-build anything in the studio to see how it works, because I do not believe it works this way at all. I do not build maquettes for the exhibitions or anything like this, because I know it all is unpredictable and can only unfold in a certain way in the exhibition place itself. Then it all is directed by the mood of the room, the light and all the rest. So in that way – I am not really a studio artist. I have a room at home which accommodates all that which I need to think and come up with things, where I can draw too or sew something and I need a storage room. But I do enjoy greatly working in the workshops. To work with glass one needs minimum of a 10 year experience, so I cannot do it myself, but I have a great master who helps me. I come to him with clay sculptures that show what I would like to have and then together we make it. But glass is of course an absolutely magical substance anyway – it all moves and happens very fast. So I would stand by and direct its shaping. For the large scale metal pieces, I go to an industrial factory in Lithuania,

those guys build trains and cranes and then I come to them with my silly drawings, they laugh and giggle but build them. For silkscreen and ceramics I use local workshops. Inspiration also does not come in a studio for me, but from the outside: books or travels, cities, dreams.

J

Do you know exactly where you're heading when you work with a craft specialist?

O

I set out with some idea of what I want, but I also totally rely on the moment and intuition and chance. So I would come to the master with a sketch or a clumsy model, but it is never precise and I am open to see what happens during the process. Sometimes some colors or materials are not achievable, but there would come other colors and textures and I almost always welcome it. I am not as happy with all that comes out of these experiments, some things become a great surprise, others less, but I always know for sure there will be something fruitful coming out. Because I never have a very specific plan, but rather follow the flow of where the production leads, then I also adapt, new ideas come from mistakes or misinterpretations.

J

Coming back your online activity, I noticed it had multiple shapes: you used to have a blog, or more than one, you did post some music somewhere as well. Most of the pictures of you online seem carefully chosen and they appear as some extracts of a larger stream. I was wondering if you consider it all a part of your artistic activity? Or is it just an attention to detail that you have when you use social medias?

O

There is a part of my life that I only want to share with my family (who lives far) or friends and do not need to share with the art world who might be interested in my practice however.

I have had so many blogs that I kept on being bored with and giving up and then finding another reason to put something out there. There is something about the internet that really fascinates me, maybe its endlessness, that it hosts so many dead ends and corridors and sometimes it is nice to bury something in there. But there was one

project that actually turned out into something and that was the *Oceans Academy of Arts* (OAOA) which initially also started as this fictional website of an academy that I created. But then it took off and it became such an important and fun project for me.

J

Would you say that you are always involved in an artistic activity? Even when taking a picture of your dog and posting it on Instagram? Or do you make clear separations between different moments of your schedule?

O

No I don't think I am always involved in an artistic activity, but I also believe that all that we are and do, sieves through our work anyway. I do not have a schedule either. I am the person who can roll all day on the beach with my dog and I am the same person who makes phallic asses from glass. I come from a working class non-artistic family and when I go to visit my mum, sometimes I spend weeks just watching movies or tv programs my mum likes. Or listening to the village gossips. But without a doubt these weeks inspire me and recharge in a weird way, help to crystalize so much. I also need to be in nature a lot. There need to be descends, I don't believe it's possible to stay in the same frequency all the time, it is not the 'activity' that shapes one's creativity, I think this all happens in a very different dimension.

I draw a lot of ideas or impressions which feed my work from dreams, I dream a lot. And I believe this is a territory that makes this division of artistic or non-artistic activity somewhat irrelevant.

J

How would that make this division irrelevant? Is it that using your personal dreams or daily experiences as source material does make the artistic creation somehow less specific? Or do you mean that there is no clear difference between dreaming and making art?

O

I mean that the inspirations and ideas often come from the subconscious and that is not an area which you can schedule as active or non active. I believe it is fed by other kind of sources, often independent of daily activities. Work in a studio or library or travels help it develop, they support and unfold the ideas, but those alone do not make one an artist.

J

I wanted to know if there is a context more suitable for your work. Often, exhibitions don't bring me much satisfaction as a viewer, not as books do. Do you think that the context of a show allows you the amount of layers and paths created in your last book? Publications also address different people than shows in my experience. Do you have a specific viewer in mind, or a reader, when you work?

O

Yes, I know what you mean with the dissatisfaction with exhibitions. Books require a different kind of immersion too. Books offer more intimacy, while exhibitions by definition are there to expose everything. The presentation language of most exhibitions is unfortunately set to these quite straightforward spaces, especially commercial galleries are not easy to deal with for my kind of work at least.

I have been having difficulties with showing my work within group shows, because it often felt like just a piece is torn out of the whole and placed in some alien environment. I was never too satisfied with those presentations, yet as an artist you deal with group shows too. This was the impulse for me to set up this fictional *OAOA* website in 2008. I had a need to place my work in a different kind of context – one that I believed fitted it better. So I created this platform, which was some sort of ambiguous vessel acting like a gallery or an artist collective or a school. I threw in some fictional artists in there too, some of my own work, some found material, some dead people, some inspiration material. There was a list of faculties and a list of obscure events which would suggest some sort of history. In a way I treated it as a zine, I made it one evening and I just thought it was fun to do. Then I actually decided to make an *OAOA* zine, which started with n°3. It was very surprising at that time to see how much curiosity that project rose, despite its absolute obscurity and lack of background. I was even receiving requests from artists who wanted to apply for the academy, while there was basically no information explaining what *OAOA* was about. This however started series of nice collaborations with other artists, friends that we did anonymously under the umbrella of *OAOA*. And this was such a refreshing and liberating way at that point to make and show work. Because it was independent of any institutions or budgets, we could make as mad and as bad projects as we wanted. While all over the place there was such pressure to justify the work, the intentions, give descriptions, give a name, shine a light,





OAOA could remain as vague and elusive as it wanted and it was such fun. I organized a few one night events in random places and spaces which felt more suitable for the work than white cubes. And those were really random places, like a gym in a kindergarten in Latvia, a market stall, cafes, post office. So those were very short interventions but they were so suitable for the nature of the works we showed. Since then I decided to make an annual OAOA zine, sometimes it is a publication, sometimes other kind of a printed matter.

So I would say this kind of context which is very free and can get messy or elusive – is the most favorable for my kind of work. But if my work gets appreciated and I get invited to show in institutions or galleries – I cannot escape dealing with spaces or rules that are very far from the OAOA style. And I grew to appreciate these situations as well. Some of them allow more freedom than others, but I feel I can always add a layer to my work which helps to keep the sensibility that I am looking for. I never have a specific viewer in mind, but I have an idea of where I would like to leave the viewer, and that it is some sort of liminal space, threshold moment, intermission moment. To be faced not with the whole picture, but with traces of something that has either happened or a premonition of something to happen.

J

Can you tell me more about the two courses programmes you created for a show you did in Amsterdam in 2015? I like very much their titles (*The Course in Lying & The Course in Doubt*). It seems obvious that they can stand as statements related to what you want to do as an artist, and what you want the viewer or reader of your work to do as well.

O

These two courses were part of the disobedience program I proposed for the museum's (Vleeshal) educational program. I was working on the exhibition called *En Rachâchant*, which borrows its title from the short film by Straub and Huillet based on the children's story by Marguerite Duras. It takes a humorous look at de-hierarchising the educational process through the character of a 7 year old Ernesto, who insistently refuses to go to school because it teaches things he doesn't know. He proposes his own « nouvelle methode » to learn which he ambiguously names « en rachâchant ».

So the courses strategically yet playfully approached negation and

disobedience. In a time when the market logic dominates all fields of education and dictates that knowledge must be rentable in economic terms, this « nouvelle methode » of Ernesto mounts a playful assault on this ideology. The course in doubt was designed to introduce a possibility of child's own view to develop, for children to have an idea that they actually have a right to question the information that is being fed to them, to filter it or even ignore. To appreciate nonsense.

The course in lying was based on a poem called *Liar* by the Russian absurdist D. Kharms. In the poem we hear a child making up fantastic wonderful surreal lies and those being repeatedly and quite mockingly dismissed and by the rational adult voice. So the course was designed to celebrate the absurdity and let the imagination triumph above the rigid austere logic.

And yes I do believe that regardless of the age it is important to celebrate one's own imagination. Sometimes it's good to forget the guidelines. Since *En Rachâchant* I have been working with children a lot, letting them participate pretty much in all the projects I was busy with.

J

You use plenty of references to artists and designers, but somehow I have the impression that you mention them as persons, or characters, more than you mention their creations. Is it a way to create the conditions of a fantasy dialogue with peers? That also resonates with *OAOA*, and the fictional nature of the artists you created there. Then, you brought up how important it has been to have fun, and to share the fun with real friends involved in collaborations. How does all of that play together?

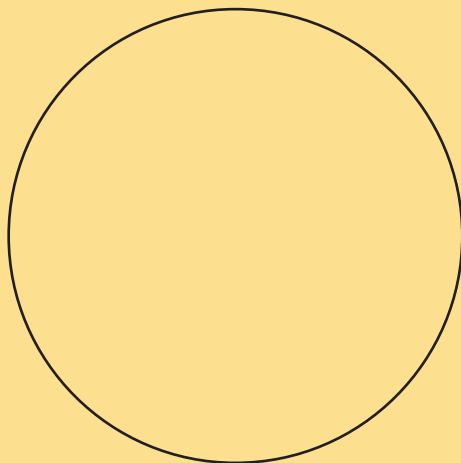
O

Yes I guess you are right, usually those characters I mention impress me first of all as characters. I find the inventory list of the objects Jean Genet stole in his lifetime perhaps more fascinating than the things he wrote. Recently, thanks to you, I discovered M. Bascouard: I guess it is not possible to be fascinated by him as an artist without being fascinated by the character and his story.

I guess my definition of « fun » while making work is freedom and spontaneity, effortlessness maybe, absence of professionalism. And this lives very much in collaborations with friends. These are then not forced scenarios choreographed by a curator, but a much more organic way of making work.

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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