

everybodys self interviews

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Thanks to Geoffrey Garrison and Eleanor Bauer for proofreading, to Nicolas Couturier for teaching us indesign, and to PAF for stimulating the development of everybody.

This book was supported by the Danish Arts Council



KUNSTRÅDET
Danish Arts Council

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 2008

ISBN 978-1-4092-5669-4

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NETO MACHADO

On INFILTRATION TECHNIQUES

November 2008

Here, in this interview, we will talk about the project that you are working on in the environment of 6m11/ex.e.r.ce08.¹ The first and second questions are: where does this project come from? And why did you choose to work on it here?

Well, since my fellowship term at Casa Hoffmann (Curitiba – Brazil – 2004), I've been interested in implicit games of power and thinking of manners to destabilize structural patterns in power relationships. Or how I could give visibility for some rules, or parameters, that guide our relationship with time, space, history, and reality. How could I make something visible that is already here but we don't give attention to? How can I bring visibility to the relation, to the between?

I was attracted by actions that may seem peripheral, but are able to destabilize our daily life somehow. For instance, street art forms, such as graffiti, stickers, things written on public restroom doors, the visual confusion caused by all the posters glued to the walls of big cities. Peripheral things that could make changes in the way we see our actual experiences.

In 2007, I thought that with these interests I should try something in the streets, or outside of scenic spaces. I work with an artistic collective in Curitiba called *CauliFlower mini worldwide artistic community*. And, with two artists from this collective, Elisabete Finger and Ricardo Marinelli, I created a project that proposed actions in the public sphere.

This project also came because, at that point, we were really interested in the relation between visual arts and dance, and it was developed in Brazil within a context of a visual art program. So we worked on it together until March of 2008, when I came to France to be part of ex.e.r.ce08 in Montpellier.

I thought one year before, at the time of the selections for ex.e.r.ce, that it was better to develop a new project here because we already planned to work on this one in Brazil. Then I started ex.e.r.ce, dealing with almost the same interests, but with another proposal.

The proposal was very related to Japanese manga: the way they are organized on the paper and how the movement is represented. But after three weeks, I realized that it was interesting, but was not moving me to questions or putting in

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action the questions that I had in mind.

So I realized that it was not a bad idea to change the work to the streets and to include the project that was started in Curitiba with my colleagues from Cauliflower. It would be another thing here with the involvement of these people and, of course, with this specific public environment that is completely different from Brazil's.

And now I am really glad that I made this choice. I think this is a project that brings my actual questions to action. And this environment of 6m1/ex.e.r.ce08 is perfect because then I am able to question my previous questions.

So, what are your actual questions?

It is funny for me to put them in words, to write them down, because I always think that they are more interesting in my head. When I write them, I always think: "but this is not interesting, in my head it was really better." But I will try to do it here. Some of my questions now are:

How do I work with something that is a proposition of an experience and not something that I perform for you to see?

How can the performance be not just in the figure of the performer, but in the things in between? In the relationships?

How could we propose different visibilities of something? How could we propose something subtle, but at the same time radical or/and intense?

How can we change the parameters of seeing and being seen? How can we propose something that plays with the edge of reality and fiction? Could the proposal make it go farther to one side or the other or blur this border?

How could we make people question reality beyond a fiction?

How could we create doubt and/or uncertainty?

How can we activate these questions with actions and/or instructions?

Could you give an example of how these questions are being put into action now?

We are working in the street. We had chosen first a café that was in a square named Marché aux Fleurs. We started to go every day to this café and sit in the same spot or almost in the same spot. We spent three hours there each day. And with this action of observing we were already activating some things in the space.

We did exercises about registering things. These could vary from registers that

tried to reproduce real facts or ones that were completely fictional. For us, it didn't matter what you register on the paper, you were already creating fiction anyway.

And with this exercise, we discovered actions, situations and propositions that could be in between. In between fiction and reality, in between public and performer, in between choosing something and being chosen for something. These were interesting for us.

For these observations, the procedure was: you stay twenty minutes or thirty, observing the space and creating your fiction. After reading your notes, you choose how you want to share it with the others. Maybe you create a fiction that asks to be read or to be seen or listened to. Then, we start to put these propositions into practice. They start to create a shape, an organization.

That was interesting for me because the performance/action started to be developed in action, in the doing. So it was something that we observed, that we planned, but in the doing we discovered how it would work. That was a wish of mine also: to work and find things in the action of doing it.

I don't know if I gave a clear example, but this way of working is somehow putting into action many of my questions.

How do you deal with audience in the public space?

For us, how we want to proceed with the audience is still a question because, for us, it was not enough to use the stage-audience relation in the public space. That was not what we were looking for.

So we tried not to define who our audience was in the first period. But then, we had a development about a concept that we called personal specific performance (instead of site specific). We thought it could be interesting for us to establish a pact of visibility with one person and make things specifically for her.

Just this person would be inside of this pact. It would be something done for her, like a gift dedicated to her. And the action would cause a strange feeling in the place that would be noticed by the others, but they would relate with this in a different way because they would not have the key to the visibility that was exclusively to one person.

We tried this for a while. We developed a net of instructions and actions that would make this person perceive things as performance and be part of it at the same time. She would unchain actions, respond to them, relate to them, and be part of them.

One day, we called one person to take the place of one performer, which was not part of our process before. We were six at that point. By doing this, we thought that we would be able to get feedback from him about the performance, but what happened was that we got feedback on the experience of the performer, rather than on the event as a whole. Because he was part of the thing, but not in the role of the unique audience member, he had a completely different reference to deal with the performance.

And then we started to think about this position as a possible position for the public also. How could we do many personal specific performances at the same time? They could inhabit different places at the same time and have personal experiences at once. It is in this direction that we are working now, creating different roles to inhabit the experience. Each one has their specificities, each one has their different experiences, but they are linked by the same performative act, choreography or organization.

The things that we are doing are on the edge of what could be perceived as a performative act or fiction and something that could normally happen in the street. So the public that are already in the street that are not part of the visibility pact wouldn't know about the performance, but might have a strange feeling about the environment. They would notice that there is something going on, but they wouldn't know what it is. There is a strange tension in the air; there is something happening or close to happening.

We are thinking now how we could develop strategies to spread out the visibility pact in different ways, even if it is just to observe something really fast. How could we open new doors and make it possible for people to have access to the performance in different degrees?

So, the relationship with the audience is still a question for us. We are searching for the more efficient relationship with different kinds and degrees of audience.

You are doing this here; you worked with two artists in Brazil; and after, maybe, you would like to work on this project in other places. Why would you say all these situations are part of the same project? Will you define actions that will be repeated? Will you adapt scores or tasks? What will you bring with you from this experience?

We had a great experience here in Montpellier because we worked on this project in separated weeks that are not periodically divided. For example, we had two weeks of work and then one month without working.

At first, this looked like a difficult way of working, but an interesting thing happened. We developed a whole structure for a first try of the performance in a beautiful place in the summer. We tried a lot of times with different people on different days, changing things that we thought were not efficient.

But then we didn't work for four weeks, and when we went back there to start again, the place was not the same. It was winter. The tables that we used outside of the café were not there anymore. It was raining. We could not do in the rain what we had planned. In that week, it rained from Monday to Friday, non-stop.

At that point we really were thinking that we would adapt or change some details and adjust it for the winter season. It was not possible. It would not have the same effect; it would not produce what we wanted. So, after this shock, we decided that we should find another place to act.

It meant that we would have to do it all over again. At that point, it seemed to

be the worst thing that could happen, but now I feel that it was really helpful. Because then we had to find out what were the principles that we were looking for, what were the basics that we would carry with us to this new place.

It helped us to define what we defined as strategies, which, for us, are principles that we look for that we want to activate. And in the new location, we would have to find the tactics, the specific ways of putting the strategies into action in that specific environment.

It was not enough to do the same score in a different place because it would be useless for our proposal. The tactics must be different to make the strategies valid in different contexts.

So, I think this period was really helpful to define what these strategies are that we will be able to carry with the project wherever it goes.

So, to finish, what would be a "good comment" by an audience member who experiences what you are doing in this project now?

If someone goes out of it with a sensation that she was part of something that she couldn't define but that made her feel some tensions in the space, doubts and unsettledness, and at the same time was not uncomfortable, it is already something good. I think the performance should make her, somehow, proud of being part of it, happy with it. It should be something subtle, but that puts the person in a kind of relationship with time, space, and fiction/reality, in which she was not used to being.

So, after this explanation, I think the comment could be something like this: "Well, I don't know. I was experiencing things that I already did, but in a different way. I was in control of something. It made me think that I was part of a system, that I had the opportunity to make choices, but these choices would interfere with something that I can't define. It was a fiction bubble inside of the reality, a little space for me to create my fictions inside of an experience that I was going through. It was little, but intense."

- 1 6M1L is a project initiated by Xavier Le Roy in the frame of the Centre Chorégraphique National de Montpellier. In collaboration with nine other artists working within the field of performance, the project questions modes of production, artistic research, organization and education. With the participants of e.x.er.ce08 the entire group experiments with different ways of working together, participating in each other's projects, sharing time and space for a duration of 6 Months in 1 Location.