



**GUIDED TOUR
PUBLICATION**

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INTRODUCTION

THIS PUBLICATION IS BASED ON A GUIDED TOUR I DESIGNED FOR MY WEBSITE. THOUGH I FELT LIKE MY WRITINGS AND THOUGHTS MIGHT ALSO BE INTERESTING TO READ INDEPENDANTLY.

I DECIDED TO SKIP THE TOUR INTRODUCTION IN THIS PUBLICATION, AS IT MAKES NO SENSE TO READ IT APART FROM THE TOUR OR WEBSITE. THE OTHER CHAPTERS ARE THE SAME AS THE TOUR. SOMETIMES THERE MIGHT BE A REFERENCE TO THE WEBSITE, THOUGH THE MAJORITY OF THE WRITING CAN BE UNDERSTOOD WITHOUT THIS CONTEXT.

I YOU ARE INTERESTED, YOU CAN ALWAYS TAKE A LOOK AT MY WEBSITE OR MY INSTAGRAM. (WWW.JEJEWHO.BE / @CLAERBOUTSEPPE)



TIME AS TECHNIQUE

THIS WHOLE WEBSITE IS BASED ON TIME. IT IS A KIND OF DIARY, EXCEPT NOT WITH WORDS. IMAGES FUNCTION AS THOUGHTS. THESE THOUGHTS HAPPEN TO EVOLVE, WHILE BEING STUCK IN A TIMELINE, THEY SERVE AS A MEMORY.

OFTEN I THINK WHETHER THIS WEBSITE IS USEFULL ONLY FOR MYSELF OR ALSO FOR YOU. I FEEL LIKE THIS GUIDE EXCISTS AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN YOU AND ME, ALSO BETWEEN WORD AND IMAGE; BUT MOST OF ALL BETWEEN TIMES.

I HAVE ALWAYS HAD THIS IDEALIZATION OF HISTORIC TIMES. THESE GO FROM YESTERDAY UNTIL ANCIENT HISTORY. I THINK THIS FASCINATION IS A HUMAN THING TO HAVE, I FEEL LIKE WE ARE OBSESSED WITH HISTORY AND THE STORIES IT SERVES. I HAVE THIS STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE IMPORTANCE OF ARCHIVING AND THE UNNATURAL URGE OF MAINTAINING POWER OVER TIME. OFTEN I FEEL

LIKE THESE TWO THOUGHTS CAN'T LIVE TOGETHER; EITHER YOU DECIDE TO ARCHIVE AND COLLECT TIME AND HISTORY OR YOU DECIDE TO LET GO. BUT, THE OLDER I GET, THE MORE I FEEL LIKE BOTH COULD HAPPEN AT THE SAME TIME. I THINK DIGITAL ARCHIVING IS GREAT, YOU COLLECT TEXT AND IMAGES FOR OTHER PEOPLE TO READ AND LOOK AT IN THE FUTURE. I FEEL THIS URGE, I HAVE TO ARCHIVE. THOUGH I THINK THE PHYSICAL OBJECTS CAPTURED WITHIN THE ARCHIVE, ARE FREE TO EXIST AND MAYBE DISSAPEAR.

I'LL GIVE AN EXAMPLE: THIS SUMMER I WAS IN THE HISTORICAL LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA. WE WERE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE BUILDING, BUT WE COULD NOT TOUCH ANY OF THE BOOKS. I UNDERSTAND THESE BOOKS ARE OF GREAT HISTORICAL VALUE, THOUGH I FEEL LIKE IT IS AN UNNATURAL THING TO KEEP THESE THINGS AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE. I GUESS THESE BOOKS WERE ONCE MADE FOR PEOPLE TO READ. NOW, ALL OF SUDDEN, IT BECOMES THIS HISTORICAL TREASURE, WHICH SHOULD BE PROTECTED FROM THE PEOPLE. ALMOST LIKE THE INTENTION OF THE OBJECT DISSAPEARS. I FEEL LIKE THE SAME THING HAPPENS TO ART, WE PROTECT HISTORICAL WORKS METICULOUSLY FROM AIR, HUMIDITY AND EVEN HUMAN BREATH. I THINK THIS AGAIN IS THE RESULT OF CAPITALIST SOCIETY, WHERE EVERYTHING IS BASED ON THE MONETARY VALUE OF AN OBJECT. MAYBE THESE WORKS AND BOOKS WERE NOT MADE TO LAST, MAYBE THEY WERE CREATED IN A SPECIFIC TIME FOR A SPECIFIC REASON. IT IS A MIRACLE THESE WORKS STILL EXIST. WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR THAT, THOUGH I DO NOT THINK IT IS OUR PURPOSE TO MAINTAIN ALL THESE THINGS FOR FURTHER GENERATIONS. WE SHOULD TOUCH THEM, SMELL THEM AND USE THEM.

FOR ME, MY DIGITAL TIME-BASED ARCHIVING HELPS ME TO LET GO OF OVERVALUING WORKS AND OBJECTS. IT IS NOT MY GOAL TO SUSTAIN THESE WORKS FOR DECADES, BECAUSE I THINK THEIR RELEVANCE WILL VANISH. I WANT TO GIVE THE WORK A KIND OF FREEDOM, A FREEDOM TO EXPERIENCE THE RAVAGES OF TIME, WHATEVER THAT MAY BRING. OF COURSE, THIS IS MY POINT OF VIEW, I CAN'T DECIDE THIS FOR OTHER ARTISTS OR MAKERS IN GENERAL.

ON THIS PAGE, YOU CAN SEE MY FIRST ATTEMPT AT TRYING TO CAPTURE MY WORK AND LIFE IN A TIME-BASED ARCHIVE. THIS WAS DONE WEEK BY WEEK, AS I WAS TRYING TO GET A VIEW ON WHAT I WAS DOING AT THE TIME. I JUST MOVED TO MEDIA ART, I WAS TRYING TO DISCOVER WHAT THIS DEPARTMENT MEANT TO ME. I THINK THE IDEA OF ARCHIVING BECAME THE WORK ITSELF BACK THEN. IT HELPED ME TO JUST CREATE AND COMBINE THESE RANDOM PIECES AS IF THEY WERE ONE WORK.

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ART AND ME

I REMEMBER THIS TIME AS A PERIOD OF THINKING WHAT MY WORK WAS ABOUT. I SAID (AND THOUGHT) FOR A VERY LONG TIME THAT MY WORK WAS BASED ON COINCIDENCES. AS IF I, AS AN INDIVIDUAL, WAS ENOUGH OF AN EXPLANATION. MY WORK AS A PURELY PERSONAL GIVEN. MY BRAIN AS A KIND OF UNCONSCIOUS MACHINE, FILTERING NOTABLE EVENTS USED AS INSPIRATION.

I FEEL LIKE SELF-DENIAL HAS BEEN SUCH A MAJOR PART OF MY LIFE. MEANWHILE MAKING AND EXPLAINING ART FOR ME FEELS LIKE PLACING YOURSELF SO CLEARLY IN A SPOTLIGHT. I GUESS IT WAS NECESSARY FOR ME TO WITNESS THIS RADICAL CHANGE IN THINKING ABOUT MYSELF, AS CARING ABOUT YOUR WORK MEANS CARING ABOUT YOURSELF.

HOW IT IS BEAUTIFUL, THIS LINEARITY BETWEEN ART AND 'THE SELF'. I AM STILL CONVINCED THAT A LARGE PART OF WHAT I DO AS AN ARTIST, ORIGINATED IN MY DAILY LIFE. I FEEL LIKE I CAN'T CALL MYSELF A RESEARCHER, AS I DON'T DELIBERATELY LOOK FOR REASON OR ANSWER. I CONSIDER MYSELF AN EXPERIENCE-INTERPRETER.

AND HERE COMES MY CHANGE IN SELF-REFLEXIVITY: MY WORK IS NOT BASED ON COINCIDENCE, HOW BEAUTIFUL THAT MAY SOUND, IT IS BASED ON THE HARSH REALITY THAT HAPPENS TO BE MY LIFE. IT IS PERSONAL, THOUGH IS NOT PURELY PERSONAL. IT IS FUELLED BY MEMORIES AND REINFORCED BY THE PRESENT. IT IS POLITICAL, IN A SENSE THAT THE PERSONAL BECOMES POLITICAL.

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THE LACK OF A DAD

WHEN I WAS FOUR YEARS OLD, MY DAD PASSED AWAY UNEXPECTEDLY. I WAS NOT AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENCES. I RECALL MYSELF COMFORTING MY MOTHER, AS I DID NOT UNDERSTAND HER GRIEF. I LOST A LOVED ONE, ALTHOUGH I DID NOT REALLY KNOW HIM.

YOU CAN IMAGINE THE LOSS OF A PARENT BEING VIOLENT. HOWEVER, WHAT I PARTICULARLY REMEMBER, IS THE CHANGE IN BEHAVIOUR OF MY SURROUNDINGS. THIS SUDDEN LOSS FIRST RESULTS IN SYMPATHY. LATER ON, AS THE SHOCK VANISHES, PEOPLE EXPECT YOU TO MOVE ON. FOR ME, MOVING ON WAS IMPOSSIBLE, AS I DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO MOVE ON FROM. AS TIME PASSES, PEOPLES UNDERSTANDING DECREASES. PEOPLE TEND TO REFLECT THEIR MEMORIES ON ME, AS I WOULD BE THE EMBODIMENT OF MY FATHER. THIS HAS LED TO DISSAPOINTMENT AND MISUNDERSTANDING.

I WANT TO EMPHASISE I SEE THE LOSS OF MY FATHER AS AN ABSENCE OF HIM AS A PERSON, NOT OF HIM BEING A MAN. NEVERTHELESS, I DO STRUGGLE WITH THE IDEA OF MASCULINITY. I THINK, AS UNREALISTIC THIS MAY SOUND, THE WORLD IS A FEMALE DRIVEN THING. I HAVE VERY DELIBERATELY REFUSED MASCULINITY FROM MY LIFE, BECAUSE I SIMPLY HAD NO NEED FOR IT. THUS BEING A MAN MEANS NOTHING TO ME. IT IS SOCIETY FORCING ME TO THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS.

IN MY PRACTICE, I CAN DELIBERATELY CUT OFF A DIRECT LINK WITH SOCIETY. I CAN CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR MYSELF TO DISCOVER WHO I AM, WITHOUT CONSIDERING SOCIETAL NORMS. OBVIOUSLY THIS INFLUENCES MY PERSONAL LIFE AND THUS CAN'T BE SEEN SEPARATE FROM SOCIETY. I GUESS I TRY TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS IN A PARTICULAR WAY: REFLECT ON THEM OUTSIDE OF REALITY, ALLOWING ME TO LATER MIX THEM WITH EXPERIENCE. IN A SENSE, I HAVE CREATED A KIND OF PERSONAL MECHANISM TO DEAL WITH MYSELF IN RELATION TO SOCIETY.

I DON'T WANT MY WORK TO EMBODY MY EXPERIENCE, I NEED MY EXPERIENCE TO ALLOW ME TO UNDERSTAND MY WORK, BY EXTENSION ALSO OTHER PEOPLE'S WORK AND EXPERIENCES. I GUESS THESE THOUGHTS WILL REMAIN THOUGHT-OUT MY TIME AS AN ARTIST AND A PERSON, MAYBE MY QUESTIONS WILL ALWAYS REMAIN UNANSWERED. I FEEL LIKE MY GOAL AS AN ARTIST IS NOT TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, BUT TO KEEP ASKING THEM TO MYSELF AND OTHERS.

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ART AS A TIME MACHINE

RECENTLY I LISTENED TO A PODCAST WITH AMANDA MONTELL ABOUT MAGICAL OVERTHINKING. MAGICAL THINKING IS A CONCEPT WHERE PEOPLE TEND TO LINK CERTAIN THOUGHTS, ALTHOUGH THESE THOUGHTS ARE UNRELATED. FOR EXAMPLE: YOU ARE AFRAID TO HOP ON AN AIRPLANE, SO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL RITUAL BEFORE DEPARTURE TO GUARD YOUR OWN SAFETY. THE ACT OF DOING YOUR RITUAL, HAS NO INFLUENCE ON THE SAFETY OF YOUR FLIGHT, THOUGH YOUR MIND CAN TRICK YOURSELF INTO THINKING IT HAS. IT IS A WAY FOR HUMANKIND TO DEAL WITH SITUATIONS WHERE WE ARE NOT IN CONTROL.

THE IDEA OF A MAGICAL THINKING SOUNDS AMAZING, BUT IN REALITY/MODERN TIMES, WE LEAN TO MAGICAL OVERTHINKING. SO MUCH IS HAPPENING, ON BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETAL LEVEL, THAT OUR BRAIN SIMPLY CANNOT PROCESS ALL THESE INCENTIVES. FOR US TO HOLD ON A FEELING OF CONTROL, WE END UP OVERTHINKING THINGS.

THIS WAY OF THINKING BRINGS A LOT OF PEOPLE TO NOSTALGIA, WHERE WE THINK BACK IN THE DAYS EVERYTHING WAS BETTER. A TIME WITHOUT SMART-PHONES FOR EXAMPLE, SEEMS LIKE AN EASIER WAY OF LIVING. IT IS PROVEN THAT WHEN WE FEEL NOSTALGIC, WE IDEALISE OUR MEMORIES OF THE PAST. YOU CAN THINK ABOUT THIS ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, MAYBE YOUR CHILDHOOD FEELS LIKE A BEAUTIFUL TIME. ALSO, ON A BIGGER HISTORICAL LEVEL, WE ARE OBSESSED WITH ANCIENT TIMES AND MIGHT FORGET THE HORROR THESE TIMES ALSO INCLUDED. IN A TIME WHERE TRAUMA, AS A PERSONAL AND SOCIETAL IDEA, IS CONSIDERED VALID, I DO THINK ABOUT THIS FOR MYSELF. I REMEMBER, IN WEEK SIX AND THE WEEKS FOLLOWING, I WAS LOOKING AT CHILDHOOD SERIES I WATCHED WHEN I WAS A KID. I TRIED TO CHANNEL MY YOUNGER SELF AND HOW I FELT BACK THEN. I ALSO NOTICED, WITHIN MY WORK, I WAS LOOKING FOR A KIND OF NOSTALGIC FORM. MAYBE I TOO WAS TRYING TO IDEALISE THESE TIMES, BECAUSE DEEP INSIDE THESE TIMES WERE NOT GOOD FOR ME. MAYBE I'M TRYING TO REWRITE THIS PART OF MY LIFE AND MAKE GOOD MEMORIES. I GUESS IT IS A WAY OF DEALING WITH THE PAST AND SECURING MYSELF FOR A BETTER FUTURE. I FEEL LIKE A BIG PART OF MY WORK IS BASED AROUND THIS.

ANOTHER INTERESTING THING MONTELL SAID, WAS THE CONCEPT OF NOSTALGIA FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE. HERE SHE TRIES TO FEEL THESE KINDS OF NOSTALGIC EMOTIONS FOR THE PRESENT. NOT TO IDEALISE THE PRESENT OR FUTURE, BUT JUST A WAY TO FEEL BLESSED AND OPTIMISTIC. I GUESS THIS AGAIN IS A HUMAN COPING MECHANISM, TRYING TO SEE THE GOOD TO AIM FOR A BETTER FUTURE. I GUESS ART IN GENERAL IS BOTH A GREAT RESOURCE TO PROCESS AND INFORM ABOUT OUR HISTORY AND AT THE SAME TIME A KIND OF GLANCE TO THE FUTURE. ART AS A TIME MACHINE.

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TOTAL ACCEPTANCE OF FAILURE

IT IS SO CLEAR THAT FROM THE SECOND SEMESTER IN 2023, THINGS WERE CHANGING FOR ME. YOU CAN EVEN SEE IN ON THE WEBSITE, INSTEAD OF HAVING A CLEAR STRUCTURE, THIS PAGE IS MORE OF A MESS. DURING THIS TIME, I WAS CONFRONTED WITH MYSELF. I EXPERIENCED ANXIETY FOR THE FIRST TIME. I WAS CONFRONTED WITH TRAUMA AND DEEP EMOTIONS, AND I WAS KIND OF LOSING TRACK OF MYSELF. I CAN NOW LOOK BACK AT THIS PERIOD AS A TIME OF CHANGE, DISCOVERING MYSELF ONCE AGAIN IN A WAY I HADN'T DONE BEFORE.

I WAS ALSO FORCED TO LET ALL THESE THINGS HAPPEN, WHILST BEING OBLIGATED TO CERTAIN THINGS BEING AN ART STUDENT. I WAS FORCED TO DEAL WITH THIS, WHICH HAPPENED TO BE A GOOD THING FOR MYSELF. LIFE FEELS LIKE A CONSTANT SEARCH FOR IDENTITY AND MEANING. THERAPY TAUGHT ME THAT YOUR PAST IS AUTOMATICALLY LINKED TO YOUR FUTURE, EVEN ON A TRANSGENERATIONAL LEVEL. SO, WE, AS PEOPLE AND ARTIST, CAN FIND A PURPOSE IN DISCOVERING AND ACCEPTING THESE IDEAS. IT FEELS LIKE A GIVEN THING YOU MUST ACCEPT. LIKEWISE, I HAD TO ACCEPT THE FAILURE OF MY BODY AND MIND DURING THIS PERIOD.

THOUGH BEING HARSH, HERE I ALSO DISCOVERED THAT MY WORK COULD HELP TO PROCESS THESE THINGS, EVEN FOR OTHER PEOPLE. BESIDES TOTALLY ACCEPTING FAILURE, I'M DOOMED TO TOTALLY ACCEPT LIFE AS IT IS. I AM CONVINCED I CANNOT CHANGE MY LIFE OR OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES THROUGH MY WORK, BUT I CAN HELP TO ACCEPT THE BURDEN OF IT.

I DO NOT TRY TO BECOME A ROLE MODEL, AS I AM CLEARLY NOT, BUT I AND OTHERS CAN START CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LIFE AND TRAUMA. I HAVEN'T DONE THIS FOR TOO LONG, AS I WAS NOT READY FOR IT, BUT ART FEELS LIKE A SUITABLE PLATFORM TO DO SO.

THE REALITY OF THE INTERNET SHOWS THAT WE ARE FORMING A MORE INDIVIDUALISTIC SOCIETY. THERE IS THIS IDEA OF A SOCIAL LIFE ON THE INTERNET, BUT WE AS HUMANS DON'T GET THE SAME SATISFACTION FROM IT. MAYBE THESE RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT FAKE, BUT I FEEL LIKE THEY LET GO OF ALL THESE HUMAN ASPECTS OF LOVE, TENDERNESS, AND ACTUAL CARE. I HOPE FOR ART TO REMAIN A PLATFORM WHERE PEOPLE COME TOGETHER, WATCH, AND DISCUSS. ALL OF THIS DOESN'T INCLUDE A TOTAL REJECTION OF TECHNOLOGY, SIMPLY A HEALTHIER WAY OF DEALING AND WORKING WITH IT.

THERE IS A BEAUTIFUL BOOK CALLED DIARY OF A HUMAN LIE DETECTOR BY ANNIE SÄRNBLAD, AUTHOR AND ANTHROPOLOGIST. SHE STUDIES THE IMPORTANCE AND POWER OF FACIAL EXPRESSION IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PEOPLE. AS A KID, WE SIMPLY RELY ON THESE MINOR EXPRESSIONS TO FULLY COMPREHEND A MESSAGE OR EMOTION. IN ADULthood, WE UNCONSCIOUSLY INTERPRET THEM TOO. THROUGH DIGITAL AND ONLINE COMMUNICATION, THESE NUANCES TOTALLY DISAPPEAR. THAT'S WHY, I THINK, THESE DAYS IT IS SO EASY TO MISCOMMUNICATE AND SPREAD FAKE NEWS.

AND ONCE AGAIN, MAYBE HERE WE SHOULD ACCEPT THE REALITY. BUT THAT DOESN'T HOLD US FROM MAKING THE BEST FROM IT, AND REALLY THINK ABOUT ALL THESE CHANGES CAN BENEFIT US IN THE FUTURE.

AS A LAST ADDITION TO THIS, I WOULD LIKE TO INVITE MYSELF AND OTHERS TO TALK OPEN ABOUT OUR IDEAS AND CONCERNS, ALSO THROUGH ART. LATELY I TRY TO WATCH AND LISTEN TO PEOPLE WHO TRY TO IGNORE THEIR SHAME AND JUST SPEAK UP. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VERY OPINIONATED MYSELF, OFTEN TO MY OWN DETRIMENT. I TEND TO GENERALISE A PERSON BASED ON ONE IDEA I DO NOT AGREE WITH. I GUESS MY TEENAGE YEARS MADE ME BELIEVE THIS WAS A HEALTHY WAY OF PROTECTING MYSELF OR OTHERS.

NOWADAYS, WHILST GROWING UP AND REALIZING THINGS, I ACTIVELY TRY TO KEEP CONVERSATIONS OPEN AND TRY TO LEARN FROM OTHER. I GUESS BEING AN ARTIST, THIS ALSO INCLUDES GETTING TO KNOW OTHER ARTISTS AND LEARN FROM EACH OTHER. MAYBE THERE IS NO NEED TO INDIVIDUALIZE MY CAREER. I MUST LET GO OF THE IDEA I SHOULD DO EVERYTHING MYSELF, AS WITH OTHER THINGS AND WORKS CAN BECOME MUCH RICHER.

I WANT TO REFERENCE NATALIE WYNN, ALSO KNOWN AS CONTRAPOINTS. ON HER YOUTUBE-CHANNEL, SHE MAKES THESE KIND OF VIDEO ESSAYS ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES SUCH AS GENDER, CANCEL-CULTURE AND INCEL SUBCULTURE. I LEARNED SO MUCH FROM HER, BUT ESPECIALLY SHE TAUGHT ME TO THINK FOR MYSELF AND DISCUSS THESE THINGS IN REAL LIFE. ONLY THROUGH DEBATE AND DISAGREEMENT, WE CAN GROW AND IMPROVE.

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THE SUPREME GOAL

LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW. THIS YEAR I STARTED WITH A NEW VERSION OF MYSELF. THANKS TO THERAPY AND MEDICATION, I CAN NOW HANDLE MY ANXIETY AND EMOTIONS BETTER. I NOW HAVE THE MENTAL SPACE TO REFLECT ON THE PAST YEARS, WHILST ALSO DREAMING ABOUT A POSSIBLE FUTURE WITH A FUTURE VERSION OF MYSELF AND THUS MY WORK. IN NOVEMBER, I WAS WORKING ON AN UNTITLED PERFORMANCE. IT ALL STARTED FROM A VIDEO FROM WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, DANCING TOGETHER WITH MY FRIENDS ON A SCHOOL FESTIVAL. WHEN I SEE THIS VIDEO, I SEE A YOUNGER AND HAPPIER VERSION OF MYSELF. THIS DANCE WAS PERFORMED IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BEFORE THINGS STARTED TO GET BAD.

IT MAKES ME EMOTIONAL, TO SEE THIS VERSION OF MYSELF THAT I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO FIND FOR ALL THESE YEARS. HE WAS THERE, BUT HE GOT BURIED DEEP INSIDE MY IMAGINATION. I HAD A NEW GOAL: TRYING TO REGAIN THE POWER TO EMBRACE THIS ECCENTRIC PERSONA. LOTS OF THIS POWER FOR ME LIES IN ACCEPTANCE. I MUST ACCEPT MYSELF, MY EXPERIENCES AND ESPECIALLY MY FEAR.

I FEEL LIKE FROM NOW ON, THIS TOUR HAS A DIFFERENT APPROACH. IN THE FOLLOWING TEXTS, I WOULD LIKE TO BE OPTIMISTIC AND GENEROUS TOWARDS WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN. I'M GETTING OLDER, OR RATHER, I AM GROWING AS A PERSON. NOW THAT MY PHYSICAL GROWTH HAS COME TO A LIMIT, I FEEL LIKE IT'S FINALLY TIME FOR MY MIND TO GROW.

THIS UNTITLED PERFORMANCE WAS A FIRST APPROACH AT USING ELEMENTS OF THE PAST, ACCEPTING THEM AND TRYING TO REDIRECT THEM. IT WAS ALSO THE FIRST TIME MY WORK WAS CRITICAL ABOUT THIS FUTURE VERSION OF MYSELF. INSTEAD OF THE 'I DON'T CARE' OR THE 'I SHALL SEE' APPROACH, I AM NOW MORE INVESTED IN HOW I AM PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT LIFE AND WORK CAN BE FOR ME AND HOW MY ACTIONS CAN INTERFERE WITH OTHER'S NEEDS OR IDEAS. THIS RESEARCH ALSO TAUGHT ME A LOT ABOUT PERFORMANCE AS A MEDIUM, ON HOW TO APPROACH IT, HOW TO DEAL WITH IT. THIS WAS MOSTLY BASED ON A MISUNDERSTANDING. I SHOWED A VERSION OF THE PIECE ON A JURY, AND I INVITED A LOT OF PEOPLE. AS A RESULT, PEOPLE PERCEIVED IT AS A FINISHED THING, AS IF THERE WAS NO SPACE FOR FEEDBACK OR REFLECTION. THE FEW MINUTES AFTER THE PERFORMANCE, I WAS SO VULNERABLE, BECAUSE MAYBE I ALSO PERFORMED IT WITH THE WRONG MINDSET. RIGHT THERE I REALIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF REHEARSAL, ON DELIBERATELY ASKING FOR FEEDBACK AND THOUGHTS. IT IS PLACING MYSELF IN A VULNERABLE POSITION: INSTEAD OF BEING JUDGED ON THE STREET BEYOND MY OWN CONTROL, I NOW ASK PEOPLE TO SIT, WATCH AND JUDGE ME AND MY WORK. IT IS NECESSARY, BUT IT IS AN APPROACH I HAD TO LEARN TO DEAL WITH.

EVENTUALLY, I NEVER PERFORMED OR REHEARSED THE PIECE AGAIN, BUT I MUST CONSIDER IT ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WORKS IN MY LIMITED CAREER. INSTEAD OF PUTTING ALL THE PRESSURE ON THE RESULT, I LEARNED TO APPRECIATE THE PROCESS. I LEARNED TO ASK CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO MYSELF, TRYING TO WATCH MY WORK AS AN OUTSIDER. ONCE AGAIN: IT IS ABOUT ME, BUT HOW IMPORTANT AM I? COULD SOMEBODY ELSE PERFORM THE PIECE AND WOULD IT THEN STILL BE CONSIDERED MY WORK OR MY STORY? ALL SUDDEN, EVERYTHING FELT LIKE A SERIOUS DECISION. I MUST DELIBERATELY MAKE THEM, BECAUSE THE CHOICES I MAKE SAY SOMETHING ABOUT MY INTENTION. THEY INFLUENCE THE WORK, BUT ALSO ME AS AN ARTIST AND HOW I REFLECT IN OTHER PEOPLE'S MINDS. ALL THESE REALIZATIONS LED TO ME APPLYING FOR DIFFERENT PROJECTS AND OPEN CALLS, AS IF THIS SEMESTER WAS A NECESSARY STEP TO TAKE. I START TO PREPARE MYSELF TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE SAFE ENVIRONMENT THAT SCHOOL OFFERS ME. I FEEL LIKE I AM READY TO ENTER THE REAL WORLD.

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THE FAGGOT IN ME

FROM ALL THESE OPEN CALLS, I IMAGINED FOR ONE TO BE SUCCESSFUL, AT LEAST IF I WAS LUCKY. ALL SUDDEN I GET THESE MAILS, WITH POSITIVE NEWS. FROM A CLEAR SCHEDULE TO QUITE A BUSY SCHEDULE IN SOME WEEKS. I WAS SO HAPPY TO BE GRANTED ALL THESE OPPORTUNITIES, THEY ALL HELP ME TO GROW AS AN ARTIST, BUT ALSO TO REALIZE THE HARSH REALITY OF THIS FUTURE. IT IS NOT THE EASY WAY OUT; IT IS THE TOUGH, NO TIME TO REST, NO TIME TO COOK, NO TIME FOR FRIENDS, NO ENERGY TO CLEAN, NO ENERGY TO READ WAY OUT. I AM CONSTANTLY BUSY WITH ALL THESE THINGS I WANT TO ACHIEVE, AND GUESS WHAT, I LOVE IT. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I CAN GET SOME SATISFACTION FROM SOMETHING I 'MUST' DO.

TOGETHER WITH MY FRIEND FLOOR, I PERFORMED AT CLUB CHURCH IN AMSTERDAM. WE HAD NO LIMITATIONS; WE ONLY KNEW ONE THING; THE PERFORMANCE WOULD HAPPEN DURING ONE OF THEIR PARTIES. I AM NOW PERFORMING IN A QUEER CLUB, WITH THE MOST LOVING CROWD, IN THE MOST INTERESTING ENVIRONMENT I HAVE EVER BEEN, AND I GET PAID FOR IT. I AM STUNNED.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, I GOT TO EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF THE QUEER COMMUNITY. FOR ALL THESE YEARS, I HAVE FELT LIKE AN OUTCAST WITHIN THIS COMMUNITY. ALMOST AS IF I WAS NOT QUEER ENOUGH TO JOIN IT, OR I WAS NOT PRETTY ENOUGH OR NOT WHATEVER ENOUGH. I HAVE EMBRACED MY SEXUALITY FOR A FEW YEARS NOW, BUT I AM EXPRESSING IT MORE AND MORE. MY WORK HELPS ME WITH THIS EVOLUTION: MY WORK IS A SAFE SPACE TO EXPERIMENT; SOME ELEMENTS ALSO GET TO JOIN ME IN MY DAILY LIFE.

SOME YEARS AGO, I WOULD HAVE SAID THAT SOCIETY HATES ME, THAT EVERYBODY HATED ME AND THAT I'M A NOBODY WHO WILL NEVER EXPERIENCE A FEELING OF SELF-WORTH. I AM EXTREMELY AMAZED BY HOW CREATING AND WORKING HAS BEEN SUCH A GREAT MEDIUM FOR PERSONAL ACCEPTANCE.

IT FEELS LIKE A PARADOX TO ME. THE MORE PERSONAL MY WORK BECOMES, THE MORE I CAN BE PART OF MY WORLD, OR THE MORE PEOPLE GET TO JOIN IT. IT FEELS LIKE I AM ACCEPTING MY INTROVERT PERSONA, WHILST SHOWING THIS PERSONA TO PEOPLE AND THUS GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM. A TURNING INSIDE OF MYSELF, WHICH LEADS TO TURNING MYSELF TO OTHERS OR SOCIETY.

THIS ALSO RESULTED IN PERSONAL RESEARCH INTO QUEER HISTORY. DIFFERENT BOOKS AND PODCASTS HAVE INFORMED ME ABOUT THIS FUTURE, WHICH I MIGHT BE A PART OF. OR AT LEAST, THIS HISTORY INFLUENCES MY LIFE IN DIFFERENT WAYS. IT HURTS MY HEART TO LOOK AT THE PAST AND ALL THE ENERGY PEOPLE USED TO FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS AND EXISTENCE. TODAY, WE ARE STILL OBLIGED TO FIGHT FOR OURSELVES AND ESPECIALLY OTHERS. HERE AGAIN COMES AN INTEREST IN TIME OR HISTORY AND THE MORAL LINEARITY IT INHABITS. LOOKING BACK, MAYBE WE DON'T LIVE IN THE BEST TIME FOR QUEER PEOPLE RIGHT NOW. BUT THEN AGAIN, MAYBE THE BEST TIME FOR QUEER PEOPLE WAS ON ITS OWN NOT THE BEST TIME FOR OTHER PEOPLE ETC. MAYBE THE WORLD WILL FOREVER BE AN INEQUAL THING THAT WE CAN'T FIX. I THINK MY RECENT INTEREST IN POLITICS AND THE INFLUENCE IT CAN OR CAN'T HAVE ORIGINATES FROM THESE THOUGHTS.

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**CAN I TELL AN ENTIRE
STORY ABOUT MYSELF WITHOUT
LOOKING LIKE A COMPLETE
SELF-OBSSESSED IDIOT WHO
THINKS HE CAN DO WHATEVER
AND STAY RELEVANT?**

MY CURRENT PROJECT: IT EXISTS OF MULTIPLE LAYERS, MEDIUMS AND APPROACHES. PETITE DIVA AND XL BIG BOY ARE THE CHARACTERS THAT STARTED THE WHOLE PROJECT: TWO INFLATABLE TENTS. THEY CAN PERFORM WHILST ALSO FUNCTION AS AN INSTALLATION. I LIKE TO CONSIDER THEM COSTUMES, COSTUMES WITH NO NEED TO BE WORN. THEY WEAR THEMSELVES AND PLAY THEIR ROLE INDEPENDENTLY. WHEN SHOWN UNDER THEIR OWN NAMES, THIS IS HOW THEY EXIST.

I ALSO PERFORM WITH THEM. THE PERFORMANCE IS CALLED 'CHARRETTE ET JANET'. I AM THE 'JANET', A BELGIAN INSULT FOR GAY MEN. THE 'CHARRETTE' IS THE MOVING HOUSE/WARDROBE I MADE. THIS ELEMENT FUNCTIONS AS A WAY TO CHANGE CHARACTERS ON STAGE. THE PERFORMANCE ALSO STARS PETITE DIVA AND XL BIG BOY. MOST OF THE TIME THEY JUST LIE THERE, ONLY FOR A FEW MINUTES THEY INFLATE. I ASK THE PUBLIC TO THINK ABOUT THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THESE CHARACTERS. MOST OF THE TIME THEY ARE NOT ASKING YOUR ATTENTION, BUT MAYBE YOU DO GIVE THEM SOME.

LASTLY, I AM ALSO WORKING ON YET ANOTHER APPROACH TO THE WHOLE PROJECT. IN 'PETITE DIVA ET LE JANET', I TRY TO INTERACT WITH PETITE DIVA THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF VIDEO. THE WHOLE THING LOOKS LIKE AN INSTALLATION BUT COULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED A PERFORMANCE. THIS VERSION OF THE PROJECT WILL TRY TO COMBINE ALL THE ELEMENTS IN ONE THING.

CAN I TELL AN ENTIRE STORY ABOUT MYSELF WITHOUT LOOKING LIKE A COMPLETE SELF-OBSSESSED IDIOT WHO THINKS HE CAN DO WHATEVER AND STAY RELEVANT?

THAT IS THE QUESTION I HAVE BEEN ASKING MYSELF THE LAST FEW WEEKS. THROUGH ALL THESE DIFFERENT VARIETIES, IT IS STILL MY STORY. IT IS ABOUT ME, BUT HOW CAN YOU AS A SPECTATOR RELATE TO IT THEN? THIS IS THE STRUGGLE I HAVE BEEN FACING, BUT I FEEL LIKE IT IS AN IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY ONE. HOW CAN I MAKE WORK THAT IS MORE THAN THERAPY FOR MYSELF? AT WHAT POINT DOES AN OUTSIDER CONSIDERS IT ARROGANCE OR SELF-OBSSESSION. I DON'T WANT TO PUSH MYSELF ONTO OTHER PEOPLE, THOUGH MAYBE THIS IS PART OF BEING AN ARTIST. YOU ASK PEOPLE TO PERCEIVE THE THINGS YOU DO. MOST OF THE TIME IT IS NOT A MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP, YOU DON'T NECESSARILY ASK YOUR SPECTATOR TO SHOW SOMETHING OF THEMSELVES TO YOU.

I ALSO DON'T KNOW WHETHER MY STORY (= GAY MAN GROWING UP IN A CONSERVATIVE SMALL TOWN, BEING BULLIED FOR HOW I AM AND STRUGGLING WITH ALL OF THIS THROUGHOUT ADOLESCENCE AND GROWN-UP LIFE) IS STILL RELEVANT FOR OTHERS, MAYBE WE FACE DIFFERENT PROBLEMS THAT ARE MORE URGENT. I DON'T WANT TO DIMINISH MYSELF OR MY FEELINGS, BUT I ALSO DON'T WANT TO PRETEND I AM THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM IN THE WORLD. I AM PRIVILEGED ON A LOT OF THINGS, SO I MUST FIGURE OUT HOW MY PRIVILEGE COMMUNICATES WITH PARTS OF MY STORY THAT ARE TRULY HURTFUL TO MYSELF OR TO OTHERS. I DO BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM OR INTERSECTIONAL ACTIVISM. MAYBE MY WORK OR MY STORY COULD ALSO INHABIT PARTS OF OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES OR FEELINGS. MAYBE TWO DIFFERENT STORIES OF DISCRIMINATION HAVE SIMILAR ELEMENTS THAT TOGETHER COULD FUNCTION AS A MORE GENERAL APPROACH TO THESE ISSUES.

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ART WORLD DISILLUSIONS

LET'S END THE TOUR ON MY CURRICULUM VITAE. TO MY SURPRISE, IT IS QUIT AN IMPORTANT DOCUMENT FOR AN ARTIST. THEY ALWAYS ASK FOR IT, IT MAKES THE IDEA OF BEING AN ARTIST VERY FORMAL FOR ME. AT THIS MOMENT, THE DOCUMENT STILL FEELS AS SOMETHING I NEED TO FILL, LIKE I HAVE TO PROVE I AM DOING SOMETHING. I DID THIS PROJECT, I COLLABORATED WITH THIS PERSON, OR I AM AN INTERN THERE. IT FEELS LIKE PROVING YOURSELF THE WHOLE TIME, ON A PIECE OF PAPER. THOUGH I MUST SAY I HOPE TO FILL IT PROPERLY AND BE CONSIDERED REAL. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I MEAN WITH REAL, GUESS I STILL HAVE TO FIGURE IT OUT.

IN THEORY CLASSES, THEY OFTEN TALK ABOUT 'THE ART WORLD'. THIS INSTITUTIONAL IDEA OF PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT FORM A KIND OF SECLUDED PART OF SOCIETY. A PLACE WHERE YOU MUST BELONG FOR SPECIFIC REASONS. IT SCARES ME, AND I THINK OTHERS, TO THINK ABOUT WHAT WE SHOULD DO TO BELONG, HOW CAN I GET ACCESS TO THIS WORLD. DO I WANT TO BELONG TO THIS WORLD? ISN'T IT A VERY ELITIST WORLD? IN HIS BOOK 'HET STREVEN', HANS DEN HARTOG JAGER STATES (LOOSELY TRANSLATED):

'CONTEMPORARY ART IS ALL ABOUT FREEDOM, BUT AN ARTIST WHO WISHES TO USE THIS FREEDOM OUTSIDE OF THE INSTITUTIONALIZED ART WORLD, HAS TO LET GO OF ANY POWER AND THEREFORE CAN'T MEAN ANYTHING IN THIS ART WORLD AND BY EXTENSION THE REAL WORLD OR SOCIETY.'

SO AS AN ARTIST, YOU MUST RELY ON THE SYSTEM TO DO AND MEAN SOMETHING. I DON'T KNOW YET WHETHER I AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT, BUT I DO FEEL THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS IDEA OF AN ART WORLD. THERE IS THE MONEY AND THEREBY THE OPPORTUNITIES. AS MUCH AS I CAN SPEAK UP ABOUT THE HORRORS OF THIS CAPITALIST SOCIETY, WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, I WILL HAVE TO BE PART OF IT IN ORDER TO DO WHAT I WANT TO DO. SOMETIMES I WONDER IF A POSSIBLE CAREER AS AN ARTIST IS A SELFISH DECISION. SHOULD I DO SOMETHING MORE USEFUL, SOMETHING WHERE I CAN HELP PEOPLE ONE ON ONE? I JUST HOPE I CAN ACHIEVE SOMETHING WITHIN THIS CAREER, SOMETHING NOT PURELY PERSONAL. DON'T GET ME WRONG, I DON'T WANT TO BE WORSHIPPED, I JUST WANT TO DO SOMETHING VALUABLE TO MYSELF AND ESPECIALLY OTHERS.

I DO FEEL THAT A LOT OF THE INSTITUTIONS THAT OFFER OPPORTUNITIES TO YOUNG ARTIST, ARE AWARE OF THE PROBLEMATIC AND INDIVIDUALISTIC DOWNSIDE OF OUR SOMETIMES NAÏVE GOALS OR DREAMS. THEY OFTEN WANT TO CREATE A MORE DIVERSE, COLLABORATIVE AND CONSCIOUS SPACE FOR US TO GROW AS PEOPLE AND ARTISTS. THIS ALSO MEANS NETWORKING AND SOCIALIZING IS IMPORTANT. THIS FOR ME FEELS LIKE A STRUGGLE, BUT I HOPE BY DOING IT I CAN FIND A WAY TO DEAL WITH IT IN MY OWN MAY. I THINK ABOUT THE HISTORIC CLICHÉ OF AN ARTIST AS THIS WEIRD OUTSIDER THAT JUST DOES ITS THING WITHOUT BEING BOTHERED BY OTHER PEOPLE'S BURDEN. SOMETIMES I WISH IT COULD BE LIKE THIS, BUT THEN I REMEMBER RIGHT NOW IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO BE CLOSED OFF FROM SOCIETY, THAT WOULD BE A SELFISH ACT.

SO, I WILL MAKE MY CURRICULUM VITAE, I WILL APPLY WITH A CLEAN PORTFOLIO, AND I WILL WRITE AND REWRITE MY MOTIVATION LETTERS EACH TIME IT IS NECESSARY. I WILL TRY TO NETWORK AND SEEK FOR OPPORTUNITIES. I WILL BULLSHIT A LOT ABOUT MYSELF, BECAUSE I FEEL I HAVE TO, ALTHOUGH I AM QUITE AN INTROVERT. I WILL ADMIT TO THE RIGID ART WORLD AND ALL ITS SYSTEMATIC PROBLEMS. BUT I HOPE I CAN DO IT WITHOUT GUILT, SO I GUESS, TOGETHER WITH OTHER PEOPLE, WE WILL HAVE TO TRY TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM. AND IF DOESN'T WORK OUT, I CAN STILL PURSUE ONE OF THE OTHER CAREERS I ALREADY HAD: SCANNING PRODUCTS IN A SUPERMARKET OWNED BY A HOMOPHOBIC, SERVING DONUTS IN A MESSED UP MULTINATIONAL COMPANY OR SELLING UNNECESSARY INSURANCE TO PEOPLE WHO CAN'T AFFORD THEM.

THANKS FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ OR LISTEN TO MY THOUGHTS. I HOPE IT DOES WORK OUT IN THE END.



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