

## **Interview with ELLE FIERCE**

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Speakers: Silvia De Teresa and ELLE FIERCE.

**Silvia:** How do you think your artistic process would have differed between a collective residency and working on it alone? What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing a collective one?

**ELLE:** That's actually interesting, because although we were all in a collective residence, our performances and processes were individual. In the end, because we are working on individual pieces, yet in a collective environment, the collective aspect brought a detrimental side of sharing resources, time, feedback, attention, budget, etc. I find it was not the best solution. If we had been collaborating on a single piece, then a collective approach would have made more sense. But since we were working as individuals within a collective structure, it felt like a lot had to be compromised.

**Silvia:** How would you describe your artistic process and/or method during the residency? Which aspects came first in the development of ideas, which later? Which didn't bother you, which ones challenged you?

**ELLE:** What came first, as actually always within my work, is an image. Having a visual image of something, which in this instance was Venus, and just seeing Venus seemingly around for months before that. So, it is kind of like: I have this thing that's already in my head and then thoughts that are dissecting them. Then, it was definitely about how to apply the theme of choreomania to that, rather than using choreomania as a start to then disperse outwardly.

I don't have a very set process. When working within the parameters of a host or an institution or the residency provider, that automatically shapes my process, because I have to follow a certain structure.

Normally, I would dive right into my project, but in the process of this residency specifically, I was slower in, which wasn't a bad thing. It was more just about getting more context of the work or the theme with lectures, and how that would come together.

What is difficult for me in my process is when I don't have knowledge of details, like when are we doing this? Where are we doing this? What money do I have access to, what equipment, do we have access to? [...] Also, I think that the location really did affect my process. I didn't connect with the working space, the studio. [...] For this reason, my process was a lot more conceptual rather than physical. But, because it was more conceptual, my process then evolved into things like drawing and visual image research, which I don't normally include in my process.

Also, I felt my process was at one moment divided into three parts. I had a conceptual film, a site-specific performance, and then a larger Amsterdam performance. But then that was not possible, so [...] that was quite difficult to comprehend, that I'd put effort and time into developing this idea of a bigger work and then I couldn't do it.

However, they did all stem from this original starting point of Venus.

**Silvia:** What about Venus interests you so much?

**ELLE:** Venus' relevance in terms of iconography and femininity, as well as its intertextuality. [...] Also, all this marketing and imagery that has just been around for so much of my life, that could just draw me to it. Something put Venus a few months ago back into my head. I believe I was thinking about Western femininity, but also Western trans femininity, and its accessibility. As a black trans person, I don't have access to that in the same way, but I'm expected somehow to perform in the same way. But, even if I do, I'm still relatively excluded from it. Yet, Venus is this icon of perfection, she's not really that contested in the social realm. She's just an image that people admire for its beauty. Why is that? How did she get there? Why does one really question her too much in the public sphere? Then I wanted to dive into that. Its roots are in fascism, and as we return to fascism across Europe, I felt it was also a quite interesting timing for her image. [...]

**Silvia:** Has your stay at the residency shaped the way you create art? Has your artistic process changed since encountering the concept of choreomania?

**ELLE:** If we talk about how choreomania has shaped the way I create art, well, it's really interesting, and I do think about it often. I think there are elements of choreomania that will stay with me. [...] As a former dancer, coming from choreographic life, it's super interesting, and I think there's no way I can disregard this information. It will always inform whatever happens next with me.

In my own practice, I don't work with choreography, because I come from such a choreographed world, I chose to never choreograph again. Choreomania provided a gateway for me to be able to do that in a more considered way. That's something that will definitely sit with me. I think anything that I do, it will continue to inform me.

**Silvia:** What role did choreomania play in your process? Was it a starting point, or did you integrate it later?

**ELLE:** Well, sometimes what I said seemed silly or a bit of a joke, but it was also serious in a way... I tried to also apply choreomania to my practice, rather than how I do things. So, not that the outcome itself is a display of choreomania, but rather the way I went about it was already thinking it as choreomania, never doing anything linear. Not only in the performance, but in anything about the creative process was trying to embody choreomania. [In other words,] take the theme into my process or practice, rather than use my practice to show the theme. That was also quite an interesting way of working.