

ENQUESTA eBENT – INTERVIEW WITH VESTANDPAGE

eBent: *What do you understand as performance today?*

VestAndPage: An action – that could be both collective and individual. An action aimed to determine through the process of its making new possible ways of comprehending the ordinary configuration of things, or simply to deconstruct it, in order to delineate some differences. Specifically, an interactive action, organized, capable to offer a variety of meanings, and characterized by the communication of some open-minded sense. Finally an action profoundly ingrained to the context- whatever it is, therefore spiritual, mental, social, political, poetic- in a sentence an action primarily real, without losing – in its approach and manifestation to the world – some aesthetic and ethical qualities such as personal growth and transformation.

eB: *What do you think that not is performance?*

VAP: What it does not derive from a real urgency or necessity. A performance is not “a mere story to tell” like it happens i.e. in classic representation (theatre or similar). Performance’s main task is to carry on and bring out meanings, expressions- something that must be certainly said as “emergency”. Like the metaphor in literature, the performance could be seen as a form of economic expression which is come to a definition during the process of its making, based on the constituent limits of a live action, as well as of movements, objects, images. However, in art performances virtuosity and pretentiousness must be banned as they cause distraction, boredom and non-sense.

eB: *Which main elements do you think that make up the performance?*

VAP: Necessarily at least one self-conscious person (the performer)- who is determined and capable to carry out, shape and give evidence (to an audience or even just to him/herself) the clues of his/her life experience, as well as visions, dreams, ideals, grief, feelings, emotions, and suffering. Then, what emerges out of it - what is manifested - is then simply configured by the performer’s personal perspective, style (ideas), poetics and decision.

eB: *What is performatic?*

VAP: Generically speaking the word “performatic” is an adjective that can be adopted to identify some “elements/tools” which in a performance enter to play a role (determinant) of “device or/and source of inspiration”. Some useful examples: the Hemispheric Institute in a meeting of Performance and Politics has recently proposed the development of a vigorous argument against the “regulatory” rules on identities, speaking of Performatic Borders, the Identity Trafficking and Sweatshops of Memory. A clear definition is also given by Juan Francisco Gàrate when he write about the “performatic relation of things”, pointing out that a performance today supposes the conversion of all the objects and places as new contexts.

eB: *Which importance do you think that has the body in the performance? Can you argue it?*

VAP: The human body is the essential presence in a performance.

He is the basic material of confrontation between humans and their surroundings, humans and their social interrelation and interactivity, humans and their definition of objects, space and time and art in itself.

eB: *Which importance do you think that has the live presence in the performance?*

VAP: As it has been said above, it is essential and determinant.

Without the human live presence, anything is reduced to an installation, or turned into a mere

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staged setting.

eB: *Do you consider fundamental that the own artist executes the work that he/she has created? In the case of negative answer, can you argue it?*

VAP: No, it is not fundamental, although of course the intensity can vary because of the different inner energy and different state of mind of “replica and re-player”.

Whatsoever human presence is the main point and necessary fundament- it can be whatsoever human person executing an action (or doing nothing).

Performers that present their actions by themselves often are related strongly to these actions and issues of theirs, but in case and artist wants to talk about topics that do not concern him personally but he needs however to talk about, it is completely lawful, permissible and honest that he gives this part to people he feels more appropriate to present that action (and this can be other artists, private people, or the visitors themselves that are requested to be active- being trained and prepared before, or even being thrown into the context abruptly).

eB: *Which role do you concede to the public in the performance?*

VAP: Even a private action, meditative, made just in solitude it may be defined as a performance. It could be that later one talks about it, or makes a verbal, photo, sound, material or video record of that experience to present it later, or even not.

That is very conceptual, but the basic understanding of Performance should be this- not always it is right and even possible to ask for an audience, although the energy that an audience has and give is surely determinant (both in a positive or negative way).

For our own actions, we often prefer to work “activating the audience”, involving and enrolling it to become a participant-companion of our actions, to achieve a collective shifting of energy and ideas. For that matter the contact, even intimate, with the public is very strong in these moments, it is an energetic surplus for both artists and spectators.

eB: *Which changes do you think that the use of the new technologies (video, internet, etc) have they produced in the current way of making and understanding performance?*

VAP: Making a performance- during the creative process, Internet is a vast database to get inspirations and collect materials.

Videos can be shot to be part of the performance, underline and highlight situations, intentions or helping to transform surroundings creating a certain climax.

Understanding a performance- Internet is a tool that spreads ideas into the World. Anybody who wants to inform about Performance Art nowadays has easy access to many portals that help to get closer to the intention of the works, as well as to get to know about the artists. Videos used during the performance have the described effect above- it can help the spectator to enter in a certain mood, or to feel part of a whole, or to understand special highlights that the artist feels to be important. Videos, used after the performance, can be a useful documentation of the work itself- they can be precious documentary material, witness, heritage, promotion, information or work of art in itself.

In our work we like to invite video-artists to document our performances and elaborate the material after. In this way we transform the experience that we have previously made into a cross-artistic union: the video-artist is glad to have the material to work with, and we are glad to have the video art work of the video artist later as “prolonging” of our action.

eB: *Which importance do you confer to the sense in a work of performance?*

VAP: Without looking for a sense, an action deprived or that doesn't look for it is a mere emptiness,

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pretentious vacuity or just an action used as an excuse.

Personally we like to work conceptually and elaborate meanings, signs, symbols and their possible influence on the action itself and spectator, because we have a certain defined “intention” with my actions (which is more a need, a necessity, an urgency) to arrive to stimulate a certain emotion or reaction.

But we accept also actions that just refer to themselves, to the “chance”, or to the nothing, as that the portray life as it is somehow, and if we consider life as it is, there are many possibilities.

eB: *In the current artistic practice, do you consider that the performance has a unified discourse?*

VAP: It has not, and that’s what makes it alive. There are so many movements and versions, so many artists working on specific thoughts, that the field is vast and various, just like life in itself. As for painting or any other artistic genre in general there are different schools and movements and groups, so the same is for Performance Art.

In the end it is all about us, our society, system, we as human beings with our plurality of perceptions and actions, our different backgrounds, our culture, education, and life experiences.

eB: *Do you consider positive the preparation and the previous essay in a performance? Which role does the improvisation play in live performance?*

VAP: Again we have to say that Performance Art is life in itself.

Although someone can prepare, rehearse, try and work it out, a performance will always consist of unexpected reactions, circumstances, therefore improvisation, errors, intuitions, failure, truth, sincerity and honesty.

Performance Art is absolutely not about virtuosity, it is not a theatre play that we can rehearse for some weeks before presenting it on stage, training to be a brave dancer, musician, story teller.

It is of course very important to be prepared, concentrated, self-conscious, which means that we know what we use and why by trying to get into a general mood of what we want to pursue consciously with one performance.

Nevertheless we can’t ever guarantee that during the contact with the two of us as partners, the space and the public there will not burst out something different or -mostly- much more than expected.

The topics chosen by performance artists are usually very current. This means that it is relevant to today because of the short time between conception (corruption) and performance.

Unlike conventional theatrical work, performance art doesn’t rely on a rigid script, demands spontaneous creativity, and seeks to make the audience think.

Interestingly, performance artists are often fiercely individual characters, though the subjects they pick usually center around compelling social issues and gloomy situations. Sexuality, gender, politics, human rights abuses, killing, tortures, forced labour, forced relocation, flagrant violations of religious and nationalistic icons (in short, all the “no-no’s”) are all perfectly legitimate subjects in performance art.

eB: *Do you agree with the affirmation: "The performance has become an artistic genre with its own language"? Can you argue it? If you have replied affirmatively, describe this language.*

VAP: We agree. Rules from other disciplines like theatre, dance, music or visual genres do count just partly within the code of Performance Art. It is good to know about basic techniques of these fields and surely helps to make the performer more conscious of what he is doing and what can be the possible sorted effect on the spectator/participant.

Performance Art combines these single words and expressions deriving from these different genres and cultures newly, it’s a sort of universal code grammar, an Esperanto that combined many artistic languages, that works with signs, symbols, actions adopting and evolving methods, an activation of

senses, emotions and memory lined up by traditions and backgrounds.

What we associate to Gold is maybe not what a Peruvian Indio associates with it, so fixed western symbols do count only partially in Performance Art, and are to be re-evaluated and tested in each new context, action and place. But as always with languages, first we have to know a language precisely in its structure, grammar and with all its lexical references, to then be able to de-construct it and create civil poetry.

eB: The language of Performance art for you is:

VAP: Compelling. Challenging. Beautiful.

eB: *Would you like to add anything more?*

VAP: It often seems that today artists (and particularly action artists) are all doing a complete useless job, but in all times people have always had “a manifested need to make art”. Therefore the task of an artist is – and will always be - to question the presence of Man in this world, which is always more than a condition.

Art is a constant, continuous research on Man and to perform arises from the need to reflect on our problems, on the relationship with ourselves and with the others. When we have competence on humanity (which means Poetry), then we can also approach and use technology in a right way. To understand technology (its use and meaning) is a pure creative act as well. However it is also important to remind that we are not mere “machines”, but that we can only relate them to us, and vice-versa. To understand and comprehend the external world (what is around us) is always part of an analogical process- we are not software’s- we indicate many different similitude, and then we try to translate them in many other different terms, always with our body language.

When technology enters to be part of our artistic and creative work, it is not mainly to transform it into something spectacular or particular (here is the mistake), but mostly to ingrain into different and more various metaphors, which are always other ways of economic expression, in the sense of quickness and synthesis.

Being contemporary means “to bare and tune our own Self into something”, and to deal at the same time with one and the others’ own economical being and creative one.

We still believe that today has still more and more a sense to talk about (and re-consider) the concept of *social sculpture* formulated by Joseph Beuys, in which society as a whole has to be regarded as one great work of art (the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*) to which each person can contribute creatively.

Whoever produces something, s/he does it with an aim, a goal, and the production it is never a mere end in itself- it is always related to an object, that is “production of something”. On the contrary, an ethic action (or moral too) is always an end in itself, because to act ethically is a goal, and the desire is desire of reaching that goal. The goal of the production is something else from the production itself, while the goal of the action matches with it: to act ethically for good is an end in itself.

It has been Aristotle the first to distinguish the actions of Man in two different forms (*Ethica Nicomachea, Book VI*)- the *poiësis*, which is the direct action aimed to produce an object that is autonomous and extraneous to the producer him/herself; the *praxis*, which is related to actions that have sense of themselves inside themselves. All moral actions, positive or negative, which are not aimed to a whatsoever specific production of objects, fall within the idea of praxis, which has been the predominant concept of the meaning of the term action in all European languages. To act as practice, which in this case is the equivalent term of *morale*.

“Poïesis is a word that etymologically derived from the ancient Greek term ποιέω, and actually it means to make. This word, the root of our modern “poetry”, was first a verb, an action that transforms and continues the world. Neither technical production nor creation in the romantic sense, poietic work reconciles thought with matter and time, and man

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with the world... In the Symposium (a Socratic dialogue written by Plato), Diotima describes how mortals strive for immortality in relation to poieses. In all begetting and bringing forth upon the beautiful there is a kind of making/creating or poiesis. In this genesis there is a movement beyond the temporal cycle of birth and decay. "Such a movement can occur in three kinds of poiesis: natural poiesis through sexual procreation; poiesis in the city through the attainment of heroic fame and finally, and poiesis in the soul through the cultivation of virtue and knowledge... Martin Heidegger refers to it as a 'bringing-forth', using this term in its widest sense. He explained poiesis as the blooming of the blossom, the coming-out of a butterfly from a cocoon, the plummeting of a waterfall when the snow begins to melt. The last two analogies underline Heidegger's example of a threshold occasion: a moment of ecstasy when something moves away from its standing as one thing to become another. (Cavalier, Robert. The Nature of Eros: Plato's Symposium. CMU Philosophy Department Web Server. Carnegie Mellon, n.d. Web. 6 Aug. 2009).

Finally, we do not have to forget the importance to determine a style, as “carrier” of precise qualities with specific meanings within themselves- a style that enables to define social, cultural, spiritual values, that belongs to an individual as well as to an entire society.

Emotion: Imagination = Thought: Idea.

In and Out = Acknowledgment and Knowledge.

Expression.

Meanings.

What else?

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