

THE AWARD WINNING SHOW

LYNNE VAN RHIJN IN CONVERSATION WITH DAFNA MAIMON

Anybody invited to realize a project in 1646 is asked to engage in conversation with a previously unknown correspondent.

This conversation takes place via e-mail and stretches through the whole period during which the artists develop their initial idea into final results. 1646 invites the correspondent at the other end of this contact to figure his/her way through this actual process.

In trying to picture what result the artists' work is going to, such exchange can become a reflection on the amount of otherwise untraceable choices of the moment which make up to the artists' practice.

This issue is part of the exhibition by Dafna Maimon *The Award Winning Show*, March 13 2009 till April 4 2009 in 1646.

This artist
Dafna Maimon

This correspondent
Lynne van Rhijn

Concept and design
Nico Feragnoli

1646.

Boekhorststraat 125, 2512 cn, The Hague
The Netherlands

<http://1646.nl> - info@1646.nl

3 Mar: Lynne van Rhijn (LvR) to Dafna Maimon (DM)

Hi Dafna, as you have undoubtedly heard we were matched for having an e-mail conversation about your work and the upcoming show at 1646. I had a look at your website and saw your work at Kunstvlaai A.P.I., so I know you a little, but perhaps you'd like to know something about me as well.

Well, apart from writing texts about art I work at the RKD in Den Haag, an institute for art history, for which I collect books, images, texts, videos - all kinds of documentation about art from 1960 to now. I have a toad as a pet and uhm well, I live in Den Haag.

I think I will start simply by asking: what are you planning to show at 1646? Will it be an extension of what you did before or will you be trying something new?

4 Mar: DM - LvR

Hi Lynne, I am actually really busy these last days hardly having a moment to sit down, so this e-mail conversation is a nice excuse to sit for a moment and think about things.

Ok, so, what I am showing:

As a first note I can say this is my first solo show, so it is quite exciting as I get a chance to think more about presentation and atmosphere than in group shows where you are usually just designated a small part of a wall where you are asked to project on...

I am showing 5 recent videos, three of them made in the States where I spent the past half year every two/three months. These videos have never been shown before.

I am also attempting to build a sculpture or object that's been in my mind for quite a while, first as a prop for a video and then it started to feel like it could just be an object on its own. It's a kind of billboard that has a fleshy hole in it, a hole that could be an anus... Or I think of it as that.

I originally started with sculpture when I first went to art school nine years ago but I haven't made any sculptures for at least the past three years so I am excited about doing something 3-D again.

I am also covering one of the spaces I show a video in with post it notes, this was kind of a late idea I had a few days ago cause I wanted to do something that would give the viewers a more visual experience than just one projection after another on empty walls. I've also anyway been obsessed with post it notes for a long time, and they are my main way of sketching and I was working on a piece with

post-it's this summer that I never finished, so I decided to do something with them again.

So I guess in a sense what I am showing is a little bit different than usual as there will be a bit 3-D, and even a few drawings which I normally never show.

Also my way of working has changed quite a lot since the work that's on my website.

For instance, I made a video (Discipline Aid Attempt No 1, Confessions of a Video Artist) in New York with a Dominatrix [a dominating woman, especially. one who takes the sadistic role in sadomasochistic sexual activities] which I shot in a very unstylized and unaesthetic way because the content itself needed material that would just look as real and untheatrical as possible, whilst normally the visuals and the 'filmicness' of the video is a main concern for me. Also this video really involved an almost anthropological research process which was new too. And by that I mean I really researched and somewhat entered the world of S/M [sadomasochism] to make the video and dove in to the life of my actors who were an actual Dominatrix and Master.

Also the two other videos made in the States, were not fully scripted which differs from my normal way of working. The piece Reception I made together with a friend artist, Liz Magic Laser, and we also collaborated partly with another artist, Ben Fain, on this video.

So, for instance, in Reception we thought of a setting (Limousine) and an action (Drooling) and then we got actors/props together and started shooting, we were directing it as we went along, there was no one specific set script, so we shot an abundance of material and then in the edit really created the work.

The same thing I did with the video Unnamed, the action was name dropping and the setting was a couples living room, and after that I just shot during one night a lot of material coming up with things for them to do or say whilst shooting rather than following a written script from a to z.

I used to be very controlling in making videos and leave almost no space for improvisation and now that has actually become a very important part of the working process for me.

So next to these three videos, which are a bit more narrative, I am also showing two video loops that are not narrative at all. Those two are on my website so I think you probably saw them: Disaster and Seeking Adam.

Ah, I could go on telling you more but I think maybe it's better to let you react on this first. Anyway, as for pets I had a dog, who died of cancer three years ago and then I had a step-dog, Andy.

When I grew up we always had cats and horses and dogs, I love animals and would like to meet your toad one day. I am a vegetarian and spend a lot of time thinking about the relation we humans have to animals, this doesn't really have anything to do with my work but a lot to do with

me as a person...

5 MAR: LvR - DM

I am curious to see what will happen to your videos when you make a surrounding for them, since it seems that looking at them is stepping into a world quite different from our normal surroundings: the opera, a disaster, the studio of a news reader, et cetera. It seems to me as though in your videos you often take these rather unnatural surroundings or situations, and juxtapose them to a sense of longing in the characters for something more 'real'. The kind of feelings or experiences that are so in-your-face that they are unmistakably real, like deep heartfelt love, sickness, sadness. Am I right in pointing this out as something you have been interested in your work, and continue exploring in your new films and billboard? An S/M situation also seems to me like a weird mixture of 'real' and fabricated experiences and emotions.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but could this also be something that explains your interest in animals vs humans? I mean: animals do not know how to fake emotions, they are always, in a way, 'honest', and perhaps that is partly why we like them. Look forward to hearing if I'm on the right track here!

9 MAR: DM - LvR

Hi Lynne, I was just talking about the deadline, actually. Anyhow, I think indeed you are very much on the right track. A teacher of mine once told me that it seems like my works are always screaming in some way, asking for reaction. So I guess one could call it a search for a realness, all though real can be quite hard to define. I am somehow trying to reveal our actual condition, trying to show what's under our constant attempts to seem like something we are not, or something more than we are. I am definitely interested in what is actually going on (referring to the characters in my videos) emotionally under the surface.

I think there is an increasing alienation that people feel, our lives get more and more filled with entertainment, products, experiences and possibilities, but that is all 'superficial' as people are just trying to fill the void, instead of having to face themselves and so all of that becomes one big blur.

Maybe another thing that is central to the 'behavior or condition' of my characters is a kind of self obsessive-ness, a kind of egocentric approach where we all sometimes behave as we were Truman in The Truman show. The world evolving around ourselves, like in the first video I showed here at 1646 three years ago (After All, the piece where 5 women cry on the stairs) or in the performance I work here (also on my website). This applies also to the new videos Reception (which I am showing now) where 10 people are dolled up fancy in a luxurious festive setting (a limousine) but all they can do is drool, or in the video Unnamed where a couple is spending time together in their apartment but they don't even look at each other they just have a conversation through naming other artists names (namedropping) and in that way they are

busier sizing up their egos than listening to each other.

With the anus I think it functions a bit differently there it's like stating an embarrassing fact which is right in your face and you can't escape it, it might be shocking or just ridiculous. As far as connecting this to my love for animals, maybe you are right, I never thought of it that way, I just always felt an immense empathy for animals as I feel they give us so much and we control their destinies. They have no way of rebelling, demonstrating, suing us etc... They are left to our sense of empathy, ethics or moral.

Phoof, ok I hope this gives you something...

LvR - DM

Hi Dafna, I was handed the invitation or flyer for your show at 1646 last weekend and it says that you find 'the often solipsist nature affiliated with art practice discouraging, pathetic and foremost unproductive'. Indeed, it seems odd that most artists work alone whilst their aim is to show what they make, to communicate their thoughts. You mention collaborating with the artists Liz Magic Laser and Ben Fain and also you worked with non-artists like choir singers and actors. Could you elaborate on what collaboration means to you? Do you see a link between your tendency to share your practice with others and the 'increasing alienation' and egocentrism you see in society? In the meanwhile: good luck on the anus!

11 MAR: DM - LvR

Collaboration is very important to my work, I feel like in some way through collaboration one becomes even clearer about your own practice, since when you collaborate you keep having to define what you really mean or want, so there is an increased sharpness and responsibility in your actions. Also it's more of a risk, since not everything is in your control. In fact it's similar to having a child, when it is born you can't tell anymore what exactly is your gene and which is your partners, it has fused.

It is also beautiful to see how some times you can really as a team begin to have a joined evolving process. That's what happened when I started working with Liz, the works we did started to have a clear relation or growth to each other which was different from the growth we experienced in our individual work. It was as if we together formed another new artist.

What I meant though by the solipsist nature of the artist is not necessarily that it is strange that artists produce their works alone but that artists are often still clinging on to the importance of this myth of the artist ego, thus being very protective of their contacts for instance, or putting too much emphasis on the credits of the work. If the actual emphasis for most people is to make great 'things' or experiences whatever the medium is, artists could and would benefit by working in groups creating movements rather than just everyone trying to become famous or successful on their own.

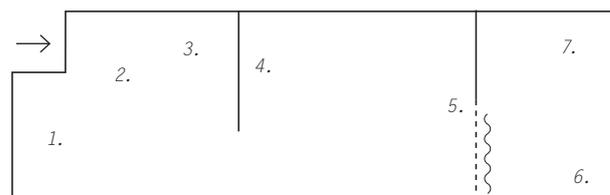
I still have a lot of doubts of how effective art is today or what we are really achieving with it, and sometimes I feel like if it would reach a broader public, something that would really be in between the extremely almost anthropological social acts of, for instance, Jeanna van Heeswijk and the minimal somewhat elitist practice of artists like Donald Judd it could benefit people in general more. If artists would work together more in creating events or shows or whatever they would be creating, they could have more power than everyone trying to stand in the spotlight on their own. Great examples of people working like this is for instance Improv Everywhere, a group from New York that organizes amazing monumental acts of improvisation in public, where hundreds of people can collaborate without one person taking the credit, anyone can suggest a project and it is always published just under the name of the group not the people who run it.

And to answer your question about the relation between collaboration and alienation in society now, yes there is a relation in the sense that when I or people (in this case artists) in general just focus on filling the void or only on their own egos they forget what is actually valuable or important (making good relevant work). For me it is more important to create a good 'piece' or for a good piece to come into existence than it having to be my name in capitals next to the piece.

Ok that's it for the moment, the ass is standing now. A lot of work, thank God my friends and the 1646 crew is amazing and lending me a lot of hands.

LvR - DM

Ok, that's clear, thank you! Good luck on the last bits, I'm looking forward to seeing it all on Friday and meeting you in person.



Dafna Maimon : Award Winning Show

1.Reception by Liz Magic Laser and Dafna Maimon in collaboration with Ben Fain (starring John Houck, Mary Kate Maher, Kurt Muller, Kristin Wanek, Molly Lowe, Ben Fain, Alexander Kantarovsky, Dafna Maimon) Cinematography Javier Bosques and Liz Magic Laser, realized thanks to Fonds BKVB

2. Assential (sculpture)

3. Disaster (starring Oscar Peters and Frederik Gruyaerts)

4. Live Drawings from Humiliation anal suspension session with Mistress Clarissa, Master Virage and anonymous client

5. Discipline Aid Attempt No 1 (confessions of a video artist) starring Mistress Clarissa and Master Virage
6. Seeking Adam (starring Constant Dullaart and Dafna Maimon)
7. Unnamed (starring Spencer Wolff and Liz Magic Laser)