

VERY GOOD GOOD NOT SO GOOD BAD

DAVID SHERRY IN CONVERSATION WITH VAAST COLSON

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 Vaast Colson, *Very Good / Good / Not So Good / Bad*, May 15 2015 in 1646.

This artist
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APRIL 1: David Sherry [DS] to Vaast Colson [VC]

Hi Vaast

You use different elements in your work like performance, painting, sculpture, installation, music, photography and more.

I am interested in how you work - your process and where you work? Is there a Structure / Chaos ratio you adhere to?

David Sherry

APR 9: VC - DS

Hello David,

Good to hear from you. I hope you are well.

To answer your question, I think that on the one hand the heterogeneity of the work is the result of my reacting to different circumstances. Each situation, condition has its specific elements that ask for specific treatment and positioning.

Maybe one could compare it to a board game.

On the other hand I like the experience of not completely knowing what I'm doing but finding out using different approaches.

It heightens the level of alertness and concentration. A sensation I find rewarding but doesn't come easy. It reminds me of the alertness I used to enjoy as a skateboarder when I was younger. I would look at things in the street differently; I'd see tons of possibilities. Obstacles you could challenge with different tricks. Then try out different combinations, create multiple lines.

I would sometimes enjoy the same feeling in the drawing and painting classes at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp.

My process is to try to forget or deny the idea of a specific goal or result for a while. This of course does not mean that result isn't important to me. On the contrary. If it works the result functions as a conclusion of some sort.

Of course it doesn't always work, here and there I use the experience I gained in previous projects.

Also I like to choose different starting points. On the one hand reacting to an invitation to do something in or for an institution, for example: a museum, a gallery, a school, all with their own specifics. And on the other hand by taking initiative myself to come up with a circumstance: an expedition, actions in the public space, activities in 'Stadslimiet' a space in Antwerp I run with Dennis Tyfus, again all with their own particular qualities. I adjust the working space, the studio to the specific situation. I must point out the difference between the day to day practice let's call it 'just hanging around' and the more concrete production with its specific

deadlines. In that sense the starting point is often fluid. I wouldn't really call it chaos but it is less structured for sure.

I think structure comes in to the game when you start thinking about putting something in the world. The process of making visible takes place in a different constellation than fiddling around.

I hope I touched some of the elements in your question. Maybe you can react to my answers using the experience you have from your artistic practice.

Are there similarities?

All my best,

Vaast

APR 13: DS - VC

Yes I recognize many similarities, mostly I find my process is playing around and every now and then it can spiral out of control to a very loose approach at this point I'll push myself towards something committed. Having a deadline is always really important and a formal conversation about a project, structures my process for sure. I like to try and let several different elements influence my production so at the end it is more of a ballpark idea than a central theme. Things like a conversation, a book, a song, a radio program, recently it was a Tarot Card I found outside my house, also I changed dentist and she was a lot better than my old dentist who it transpired had drilled into my nervous system. 'Change is good I thought - always change'. I like to impose these banal occurrences as symbolic elements into my artistic philosophy. Once you start to distrust your dentist it's the beginning of the end? Do you think this is the same for the artist? Maybe the opposite? People generally love a well-told lie. Once I told someone I made a lot of my work up and they were furious. It was great to visit you in Antwerp and meet your pals at the Gunther, like Denis and Lieven, it seemed like you all have a vibrant connection doing interesting things, and I enjoyed the conversations that carried on to the pub after. I ended up chatting on the Radio Station the next day as a result - it was excellent. Could you tell me a little about your social network and its impact on your work? I can remember it all got very political in the pub. I think that's a good thing for an arts scene, recently it got super political here in Glasgow over the North/South vote and the new possibilities were exciting.

Best,

Dave

MAY 1: VC - DS

Hey David,

Sorry for the delay. I'm in Zagreb at the moment. I'm invited to do a residency here in the MSU with a special focus on the work of the seminal figure Ivan Kozari. The museum has the complete Kozaric studio in its collection. It's a treat getting to know more about the interesting art scene that developed here from the late 50ties

up to now. I enjoyed reading your reply and must say it sounds familiar. The question you put forward is a very important one indeed. Since I left the academy connections and relationships with different people, both artists and non-artists make up the core of my practice. I always had the feeling that in general without 'the other' there was no point in doing things, being here. In a day-to-day sense the other made it possible to do things together. You mention Lieven and Dennis, these are both artists I've been working with in different constellations since the beginning of my modest career. There are a ton of activities and works that would never have seen the light of day without the fruitful energy I share with these guys. I'm obliged to mention that there are a lot of people I've collaborated with in that sense. It seems that the other is always part of my art practice in one way or another. It brings me back to what I think I wrote you in my first mail, that I have the feeling art and life are a collective effort. In that sense my social network keeps me grounded and partly informs my day-to-day activities. I'm lovin' the local.

By the way Gunther has now been replaced with Stadslimiet that means something like City Limit. Dennis and I have hosted about 92 events in our new space close to Radio Centraal at the waterfront. Please let us know if you are ever in the neighborhood we would love to invite you to come and 'take it to the limit' so to speak.

All my best,

Vaast

MAY 8: DS - VC

Hi Vaast, That sounds great

Yes it would be great to visit; I would like to take it to the limit.

Once I was giving a talk on my work and I was asked a question: Where is this all going? - And it really pissed me off and it shouldn't have, I answered it badly, I think I said its goes on until I die. That taught me that a question can have any answer. Maybe I should have a stock answer for my work but also the stock answer gets tiring after a while. From looking at your work I like the way you represent your actions and performance works. Sometimes I see performances as a kind of research that informs the background of the ideas. In many cases you make performances in what seems like an extension of your everyday life? You always look like you are enjoying your work. Also one of the ideas I get from your practice is a boundless creativity - is this something you think about? That creativity in itself is part of the meaning, or even a sense of freedom as an artist. Freedom leads onto reason and onto sanity and onto humour and onto action and onto society. It becomes abstracted and meaningful.

I like the idea of an unconscious ascetic that implies that works of art appear.

Best wishes Dave.

MAY 14: VC - DS

Dear David,

Thanks for your reaction. So please do feel free to let me know whenever you're passing through or by Antwerp. It would be great to have you there. At the bottom of your mail you sum it up nicely. The answer to that question is definitely

Yes! Let me quote you: "creativity in itself is part of the meaning, or even a sense of freedom as an artist. Freedom leads onto reason and onto sanity and onto humour and onto action and onto society. It becomes abstracted and meaningful."

Tonight we have the preview of the Very Good / Good / Not so good / Bad show at 1646. I will send you some images of the presentation. This concludes our Email conversation as part of the 1646 project all though I sincerely hope we keep in contact.

It's good to know you are out there somewhere doing your thing. Thank you for this enjoyable e-chat.

All my best,

Vaast

MAY 14: DS - VC

Hi Vaast

It was great to chat and hear your thoughts, super. I have been looking through your book and its fab - It has a good spot in my studio. We never got onto Whisky but I'm sure we will do that at some point. Have a great show, best wishes, Dave.

David Sherry