

INKLUSIEF DICK VERDULT

FLORENCIA PORTOCARRERO *IN CONVERSATION WITH* DICK VERDULT

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 Dick Verdult, *Inklusief Dick Verdult*, May 30 2014 in 1646.

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MAY 20: Florencia Portocarrero [FP] to Dick Verdult [DV]
Dear Dick,
How is everything going?

I found refreshing the invitation of 1646 to initiate an informal dialogue with you. It is difficult to find this kind of non codified exchange spaces nowadays. I am curious to know how do you feel about it? I can imagine that since your show at the gallery opens in almost one week, these must be really busy and intense days.

I know you are Dutch and that Latin America has been an important and constant reference in your work. I am from Perú and I have lived in the Netherlands. I think it's a good point of departure that both of us know and understand each other contexts...

...I am really interested in knowing more about your upcoming project for 1646, and more broadly, the questions and ideas that this process has raised.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon,
Best Regards,
Florencia

DV - FP
Hey Florencia, muy bien !
nice, yes, it is a good and fresh idea of 1646.
Are you living in Peru now ?

I enjoy answering questions, this happens mostly in the context of my music, but in arts I like it as platform for ideas too, the written interviews or dialogues can lift the level up.

I understand somehow we are expected to discover what the show will be, in what direction it goes. It COULD be that i know !

I can't say more, that would be spoiling it all, I mean, our writing. Yes, It will be busy days, there is a second reason for it: I am mostly outside of the Netherlands, so I am "on tour" now, in a rush/executive mode.

Bueno, te dejo, let's not forget we should cc these mails to 1646 !
chaaau
Dick

MAY 23: FP - DV - FP
Hola Dick,
It's nice to hear from you!

Hola Florencia, váááamos !

The fact that you are not in the Netherlands intrigues me.

Except for some brief 30 years, I was never really in the Netherlands ! I mean, I have always been external to the surroundings, a child from internal peripheries, although succeeding in blending in. At 1,5 years me moved from a small town in Brabant (southern province of the Netherlands) to Guatemala City. From there on it has been one big "carambole". It sounds intriguing, and it is. The city I was born is Eindhoven, hometown of the Philips company, which in those glorydays of the 60's etc was big-shot in latina america too. And it was thanks to their expansion that I got to live a life of uprooted and make friends all over so much.

What kind of "tour" are you doing?

Working now from Calanda, a small town in the middle of the dry lands of Spain (although fertile and...green!), birthplace of Buñuel and known for it's drumming, a trip to the Netherlands has acquired a certain mercenary feel. There is a lot to be done in a few days, giving it a feel of being on tour. Those days are always very diverse in emotions and decisions.

So the word tour was being used in my former mail as a comparison. The real coming "tour" with my music will be in August, 3 weeks Japan.

Is it related to your music? Or maybe is some sort of research trip for your upcoming show? Or perhaps both? I know that your work can take many forms (drawing, collage, installation, etc), so I wouldn't be surprised if you are preparing something in between different domains. Am I right? Give me some clues!

Regards from Lima

Between my works of visual/plastic arts and my music I regularly have a dialogue. I have been harvesting a lot of knowledge on the popular phenomena of concerts, fandom, dialogue with audience and I try to give it an important place in my artwork. Of course, art is an ambivalent word if you assign it to a discipline. We all know music is art, but somehow "artist" has more to do with galleries and musea... a confusing idiom.

My show in The Hague will have music, but I still don't know how. More exactly I like to approach my shows either very surgically, which means a lot of thinking beforehand, or on the contrary, go for it with whatever comes at hand. One is a composition and the other is a soul-thing. On the cover of my laptop is written: we do it what we wanna do it, exactly like that, in that awkward broken english. When I am having musical performances alone (without a band) this laptop is open and I always notice twisted thoughts as people from the front rows read the sentence.

I hope this helps you further and creates questions, this steno of life.

All the best to you and to the wonderful colourful peruvian cumbia-posters !
saludos, now from Bergeijk, where all my work is stocked in the wonderful halls of Rietveld's factory De Ploeg

MAY 24: DV - FP

buenos dias.

te van mis respuestas, te ayudan o dan ideas ?

es curioso esto, pero puede salir lindo y tener sentido.

En todo caso nos conoceremos un poco quizas.

no se si la idea es que preguntas mientras que quedas a ciegas sobre mis trabajos. lo que a vos te convenga o te facilite, de acuerdo?

un saludo desde por aqui,

Dick

MAY 25: FP - DV - FP

Hello Dick,

I am writing while watching you perform as "Dick, El Demasiado" (Dick, The Excessive) - a cumbia DJ- which I understand is your alter ego; imagining -at the same time- that I will be able to find the precise moment when someone in the audience gets close enough to encounter the phrase in your lap top. An image from your last email that I liked.

That's nice, that you precisely want to encounter that image.

I will put you some links down here. A start of a show in Kyoto, a performance for russian tv and a trashy show with my band in some countryside venue of Rosario, Argentina. I must precise I am not a dj. Since a faraway summer-hit has hit the world ("God is a dj") there is a lot of confusion who is God, what is a Dj and what they really can and do.

I have made 80 songs, of which 60 with lyrics (in spanish). I have a band too, very wild. Social media tend to think that when you stand alone, and high on a platform and you stare at a laptop you are a dj.and so give you that description. But when I perform alone I am working on the spot with roughly prepared tracks and electronics. When I am with my band, I am the singer.

I am one of the pioneers who developed the whole new platform of the cumbia. We were in al some 5, 6 people. Of "locals" I know of the work of Toy Hernandez did, Gonzalez from Chile and Tazz from Bs As, but, together with two other non-latinos (Uwe Schmidt/Señor Coconut and Richard Blair) El Pais wrote an article describing the different sources of the new movement, headlining us: The Holy Trinity of the cumbia (and it was written not by a BBCman or a New Yorker, nor Spaniard but by Yumber Veras, a Venezolano).

I have never really wanted to become a musician, it just happened as a side-effect to a whole big art- and media-work I did with my former artgroup IBW.

But to come back to your detail of the audience and how they absorb your presence. It is one of the beautiful things of performing on stage, having the backup of your own music and watching the faces as the performance develops. It is very gratifying to see how you can nourish people from minute to minute. And as you know, during concerts people are less inhibited so they are ready to SHOW what your work does to them. It is good counter-weight to the inhibited experience of gallery-shows and musea.

japanumbia:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3udfMNpbtkM>

rusia tv:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=si42GtjEoQI>

rosario en vivo, con banda:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFyLW58IDJK>

It seems that Phillips changed the course of your life. I mean, apparently, this first displacement and the ones that came after deeply marked your life style and your artistic practice. This is something that I can relate to. When I was 5, I moved to UK. My mother studied her Master at a university in Brighton. We left Peru in times of economical crisis and terrorism. So living in a university campus in a relatively small city was a surreal but in many forms significant experience for me... anyways...maybe I can tell you about this later.

Yes, maybe it has comparable parts. At least we both know what it is to live in surroundings that are obviously not our natural ones, but still, with autosuggestion helping us, and a a lot, it makes magic possible.

From what I understand your parents HAD to rush out of Peru. I am very aware about the schizofrenia created within the victims who have suffered expulsion from their own country, having to jump off towards Europe or maybe Mexico.

It must be a continuous disbalance of having the pride of your origin and, oddly enough, having to go for refuge in those countries that are flagged as civilisation whereas at the same time have been important actors in world-machiaveli.

And then, with time you get used to that new environment, and confusion and comfort become one, and get a new status within you.

I am curious about how did you got interested in cumbia? It's a genre that has the capacity to cannibalized multiple music sources -both vernacular sound as well as the music coming from the international popular culture, such as rock, jazz and electronic music- to transform them and propose new sounds. In Latin America, nowadays, cumbia is really popular, part of the hybrid cultural identity of this part of the world (best parties ever, I am a big fan!) However, it wasn't always like this. Not so many years ago, it was a genre reserved for the lower classes. How does a dutch guy living or travelling around Latin America (and other regions of the world) gets involved in this circuit?

Through interviews this is the most described part, so I will refer you to one of the "note's", I'll find an english-written one, and so will copy-and-paste, please forgive me.

(from http://www.whatsupbuenosaires.com/interview/ALL_HAIL_THE_CUMBIA_KING)

W: At what point did you discover cumbia?

D: From age 6 to 12 I lived in Argentina. Traveling a lot, moving all the time, you can suffer or be aware of your situation. I was fortunate enough to be aware of my situation. I knew very well that I was on the wealthy side...I had a judgement for that as

a small child already. Cumbia was the music of the maids. We had a maid too. She was always nice to me, I had nothing against maids and that was her music. All my friends were in white, well-to-do schools and they would look down on it. I never got to that level because I left at 12 years old. If I would have left at 16 maybe I would have looked down on it, going through (a phase) thinking (I was) a "cool guy". I just stayed with a very good impression of the maid and so I did not have any misconception about what the values of the stuff were. I liked it and it had nothing to do with class.

PERO TODA LA ENTREVISTA ESTA BUENA, SI PODES, LEELA. DA UNA AMPLIA IMAGEN DESDE ESE LADO.

This takes me back to your work. You told me that you are interested in creating a dialogue between your plastic art projects and your music. Translating the physical experience or even only the atmosphere of a concert to the generally restrictive formats of visual arts must be complicated. Perhaps is a similar to the process of incorporating different cultural references...

I mostly mean that through my touring (I like the peripheral activities of everything i fall in or generate), touring mostly through latin america, I slide in other worlds through a special social door, meet people of all levels in a very candid and intense way, drunks with teeth missing, luxury-dolls, writer's that are jealous (yes, many writer's are jealous of musicians :-), in a sweet way, of course), drugged sons of politicians and even some normal people. This brings up a lot of information and that is the harvest I am transmitting somehow, cannibalizing it and replacing the chopped-off heads by smiling ones. I believe in distortion of popular language and demagogy.

I'd like to link you to a video I made some months ago to warm up the youth in Mexico City, for my artshow "Poemas feos para todos", ugly poems for everybody.

<http://www.cassetteblog.com/2014/03/dick-el-demasiado-y-silverio/>

it has the video below.

CHAAU FLORENCIA y gracias

MAY 28: FP - DV - FP

Hello Dick,

Thanks for the links, it's fun to watch your performances. I really would like to be in one of your concert slash parties...

I have noticed that when performing you always use this black outfit with a white skeleton printed in the chest area. Is it part of some kind of personal ritual? Really curious...

The shirt is the only one I have. I originally had it made for when I went to Russia just after Perestrojka. Then it got forgotten. But when I had to perform my songs (which I had till then never expected to do) I thought, because of my age (I was 48 when I first did sing on stage), well, let's make it the most awkward possible sight. People will step back from such an uncomfortable first impact: a man of nearly 50 in a skeleton shirt. But in those few minutes of re-judgement I can take advantage of their

defenselessness (in terms of not being able, exceptionally, to make an immediate classification). And in those very first minutes I had a free ball to enter without preconceptions.

So the shirt is strategy and a red herring.

I have only one shirt, of course I am fond of it. But it's no fetiche.

I can imagine that there must be a big difference between PLAYING SOLO and BEING part of your band. And yes, people tend to think that SOLO, you stand-alone. Personally I think that, on the contrary, it's always about a big choreography with the audience. Don't you think so? On the other hand, I have to say that your way of singing reminds me a lot of Lucca Prodan -leader of SUMO- a cult band in South America...

I do agree about the choreography: The man on stage pushes, the audience walks back. The audience walks forward, the man on the stage does a step back.

I have been compared a lot with Luca Prodan, for more than one reason. Even by his brother, Andrea, who approached and became a friend.

But I don't have any feel of emulation. My stuff is completely different, but somehow we both opened a certain door that was closed. Luca was also "a man from the other side of the Atlantic" (Europe).

The "rediscovery" and popularization of cumbia has been an important social phenomena in Latin America. I am glad to know that you are part of this movement. Here some links to two incredible bands from the Peruvian Amazon that were active during the 70. "Los Destellos" y Juaneco y su Combo".

This rediscovery of the cumbia by a new generation was exactly my intention when I came up with twisting at it's context's and hidden laws (more or less in 2000). More even, I wanted to use it as a very playful platform for many other types of expressions, video, visual imagery. That's why I created the fictional bands, the fictional festival (Festicumex), the fictional antropological study (La lenta pero incesante degradacion de las cumbias lunaticas), etc..... just watch for instance the very old portal we made with my art group in 2003, Canalcumex. It is very bizar, much is still functioning and there were a lot of small videos (this was before the existence of youtube, etc...).

www.canalcumex.com

here is the pdf of the fictional antropological study that I wrote:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/205642025/La-lenta-pero-incesante-degradacion-de-las-cumbias-lunaticas-por-Ariel-Goldsinger-2002>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H44SItnad1s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cym9HVyMPO>

Although I know many people that were obliged to leave Peru, that was not my case. Fortunately, we left because my parents decided to study abroad. However, as I told you, those were really difficult times in the country and of course the displacement can generate ambivalent feelings.

In the interview with "whatsupbuenosaires" you say that

cumbia was the music of the maids. And that you left the country before you started looking down on it, as your friends did. This make me think of two things:

- Recently I was in Sao Paulo for a seminar and I had the chance to hear an Israeli curator talking about the situation in her country. To sum up, she said that in Israel people are raised with the schizophrenic fantasy of belonging to Europe, denying they Middle East heritage. Beside the evident differences between Israels and the Latin American context, one could say that some countries in this part of the world also share this fantasy. For a long time we have been denying our indigenous past trying to reproduce a conservative version of the western modernity. From my point of view, the popularizations of Cumbia is related to the acceptance of our hybrid circumstances, which are far away from the european modern ideal...anyways...

Yes, hybrid hybrid hybrid. This can be an asset, in stead of a problem, as was seen before.

- The other thought that crossed my mind is that this nomadic life has allow you to know from the inside many social contexts, but without being completely absorbed or marked by them. Situation that finally implies a lot of freedom... But this is just me hypothesizing...

Yes, that is the case. You blend in but don't inherit the past of the situation. This is a very ludic trayectory. There aren't rules for the one that knows he will be leaving soon.

The video of your show in Mexico is demasiado (excessive). Gives me a much more clear idea of how your visual work looks like. I like the irreverence and sense of humour in your approach. It seems that you understand the popular culture as an archive of images, subjectivities, and even social and political agenda, to be renegotiated, deconstructed, distorted and so on.

I am working on popular distortion, yes, thanks for appreciating that. It is a wonderful territory. Easy to maintain dialogue with your audience, it is sweet somehow, and at the same time culturally as venomous as hell.

How are things going for your show in 1646 going? Do you feel like telling me more about it?

If I would have to choose between "some more ideas" and "some more days", I would choose the last !

But we are working beautifully, the people of 1646 are very concentrated. I like the space and the neighbourhood. I think I brought too much material, so I will have to re-comb. Today we might be placing things. For the moment we are trying to solve some aspects of a low-budget "1.5 on the scale of Richter"- thing.

Chau Florencia, buen dia.

FP - DV

Hi Dick, how is everything going?

I've been reminded by 1646 that your show opens in just two days! This means that we must close a conversation

that this more open than ever, and could potentially take many directions: Cumbia and your music, Latin America and the Netherlands, your visual work and your political beliefs, etc. It's a pity that we can't continue, but deadlines wait for no man

After all our exchange, I still have very little information about your show (I don't even know what the title is or will be!). I guess that you didn't want to get so specific and I have to confess really appreciate that gesture. It was a challenging/stimulating exercise to communicate without thinking in meeting any specific goal, besides making our dialogue grow.

Before saying goodbye, I wanted to let you know that I read your fictional anthropological study- *La lenta pero incesante degradación de las cumbias lunáticas* (the slow but relentless degradation the lunatic cumbias). I like the feeling of not knowing when you were referring to actual facts and when it was just a big distortion of reality... Distortion, as you said, is a powerful strategy

Espero que la inauguración sea un éxito. Please keep me posted!

Chau Dick, espero que hasta muy pronto...

Florencia

PS: thank for the links. It's always great to discover new music