

DE BLOEMEN FONTEIN VAN WORPSWEIDE

FRANCESCO GARUTTI IN CONVERSATION WITH JOS DE GRUYTER & HARALD THYS

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 Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys, *De Bloemen Fontein van Worpsweide*, in 1646, The Hague.

These artists
Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys

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29 AUGUST: Francesco Garutti [FG] - Jos de Gruyter [JdG] and Harald Thys [HT]

Dear Jos, dear Harald, is the text you sent me translated by Google? I mean that one that starts with "There was a chicken..."

I'm glad to enter in your new film for 1646 through such a machine-translated text. It is full of gaps of sense.

Dots and comas sometimes have odd position in the phrase. The text is interestingly disconnected and uncannily misunderstand-able. Names of characters, animals and things blur. Or better sometimes you don't understand if some words are names (dutch, flemish?) or just words to identify animals or things or people turned into animals.

Translation and metamorphosis are of course different processes, but somehow related each other.

Maybe in the space between the two, there's some Surrealism. What is the new film about?

I'm looking to some of the stills you sent me during the editing process of the film.

Who are the two Canada-vs-UnitedStates friends looking the lady with the old porcelain face? They look like a couple. Twins or brothers, cousins or bad friends. Thieves or murderers in novels or old paintings are often depicted in two.

2 SEPTEMBER: JdG - FG

The Canada - US guys. The tall one is Evil, the smaller one is his stupid alter ego.

The tall one comes from a wooden head in the beginning of the film. In Dutch having a wooden head (houten kop) means you are having a very bad hangover.

Maybe the whole film is an hangover caused by very bad alcohol. Poison that eats your liver.

The tall one is like a merciless demon that haunts you in your dreams when you have a fever.

The small one likes to watch you suffering. They're never touching their victim; they're just staring at her.

They have another ego - the stick woman - to hurt, like a hangman. They are all evil.

I think some people might find them sexually attracting.

Do you remember Fritz in our video "Das Loch" (2010-2011)? His asshole behavior made him very attractive.

I know some girls who secretly have his picture on their iPhone. It excites them.

Do you think that is strange or perverted?

4 SEPTEMBER: FG - JdG

I don't think it is strange. Sex is in a way something very close to violence, and Fritz in the video "Das Loch"

seems to know it very well.

I can understand women having his pic in the iPhone. The telephone is the deepest and most opaque place we all have.

It's a machine containing all our secrets. And machines are organisms that are subjected to Darwinian processes like animals and people. So it's interesting to imagine machines and objects as living beings taking part to the cruel struggle to survive and evolve, between morality and a-morality, intelligence and stupidity. There're actually two characters in the film you define demented or stupid. The 'stupid alter ego' and the 'demented hedgehog'.

I'm interested in the relation between dumbness and immorality and, in this sense, to machines, robots and old tools. That's something that scares me in the possibility of thinking to a dumb artifact.

What's interesting for you in dumbness?

10 SEPTEMBER: JdG - FG

Dumbness leads to violence and to a-morality. I'm thinking to the beheadings of ISIS in Iraq for example.

When you behead someone you've killed, it seems clear that the act itself of "beheading" can be seen as a way of taking away someone's brain.

It's like making your victim dumb precluding to her/him the possibility to think, but of course the victim is already dead anyway. So it is a very radical-dumb way of thinking. Radical dumbness.

In this sense I'm thinking also to that Turkish politician who said woman shouldn't laugh, or to the Ukrainians rebels in favor of Russia who shot down a passenger plane with a very big rocket and claim they didn't do it because they say they haven't such a rocket, while internet is full of pictures where you can see that they do have these rockets.

I'm thinking to selfies too, another kind of dumbness that scares me a lot.

The whole film is a constellation of brainless beings in a brainless world that stare and look at each other without even noticing what they are looking at. They are staring each other to the death. There is no physical contact whatsoever. The only contact there, it is a wooden stick through which they poke each other now and then.

And the sound of the film is so dumb that it becomes almost abstract. Jokes that are meant to be jokes, actually don't result funny at all.

FG - JdG

[I understand what you mean. One of the strongest act of violence I've ever seen in my life was actually a scene of Pier Paolo Pasolini film. And it was an act of silent violence. No movement. Franco Citti in

"Accattone" (1961), together with a friend, both leaning to an old blue FIAT, staring at a woman in the outskirts of Rome].

JdG - FG

In a novel I read recently - "The Circle" (2013) by Dave Eggers - people share absolutely everything in a kind of super Facebook. If you don't share, you are guilty. That's the law. Doing so you feel how dumb people are becoming (like the people obsessed with selfies). In the end people become so dumb they start doing totally irrational things.

They start taking photos of their food before eating it or they start taking pictures of their own shit before they flush the toilet. That's totally insane. I think we are going back to the time of the Neanderthal.

12 SEPTEMBER: FG - HT

Many topics flow together at this point. In fact staring - obsessively - is in psychological terms something about the idea of 'objectifying' the subject of the gaze. Metamorphosis, dumbness, depression are all conditions and status related to reduction and objectification too.

All these processes related to objectification are scary, because are somehow implying a loss of control or at least a new and unknown form of conscience. We're talking of parallel worlds.

Seen from outside a world parallel to ours, is hardly understandable. Everything there can suddenly change in a second without a clear explanation. From silent apathy to furious madness.

It seems to me that your work and this film among many other issues, explores and inhabits a space on the edge of the black hole, close to the sea bottom of deprecation, where we all are, maybe without knowing that. The border, the edge where to stay in precarious equilibrium, is very thin.

What do you think?

HT - FG

I'm already scared when I read your question. I have a book at home about the life deep down the sea. I have it in my library but I've never been able to open it because it was too much for me. But it also has a possible beauty of course. There you can find all these things that are behind this border.

When we 'direct' our 'actors' we want them to hold their breath as long as they can during filming (and we do the same). This helps to cross the border toward something which, as you mention, is unknown and therefore interesting.

It destroys continuity and set everything up in another time and with different types of space relations, like the plankton at the bottom of the sea.

FG - HT

Where do the Neanderthal and the selfie-people will live?

I think at the end they will end up with the plankton at the bottom of the sea.

How would you describe the set where you shoot your films? Here in this case it just seems to be simply a corner made out of white plasterboards. A corner is a place to hide and be ashamed, or the existence minimum, a space of potentialities or the locus of oppression.

HT - FG

A new woman has arrived in Brussels. She is a drug addicted smoking crack. She walks up and down the streets begging for money and cigarettes. She walks very quickly. She is very scaring and very scared.

You can depict that she is from the human species but she crossed the border since a long time. As long as she started working she is lost. Like an insect on a clean surface trying to find a cozy dark space where she can relax.

Like homeless people or bad people hiding in a corner and waiting for their victims to pass by and then attack them. This woman has found a cozy corner where she can smoke and hide after a day of working. She installed herself there with some cardboard plates and an umbrella.

That's what is so scary about zombies. They don't know and don't care about the signification of corners anymore. They operate during broad daylight and inhabit public spaces in a revolutionary way, without understanding or considering at all the architecture of the city. That's the way ISIS also operates among the architectures and the spaces of the cities.

The Dutch are very happy with the invention of Internet. They occupy and fill up all the gaps in the cyber space Sculpting and framing it into their own world. On tripadvisor.nl if you want you can book a hotel in Mosul, in Iraq.

http://www.tripadvisor.nl/Hotel_Review-g303963-d4324823-Reviews-Ninawa_International_Hotel-Mosul_Ninawa_Province.html

The hotel is featured by a typical modern export architecture, built with the finest materials. A kind of resort in the Nirvana. In the pictures of the hotel you can find no human beings. They are all away.

This place will be slowly inhabited by the zombies.

[the hotel is rated with 5 stars]

"Ninawa international hotel is one of the best hotels in Iraq, you can enjoy the luxury life with very affordable room rate which is about 100 \$ per night.

Ninawa international hotel have 262 rooms and suites, there are two ballrooms, two restaurants, a GYM, a swimming pool, tennis courts and many other facilities.

Most of the services, which any guest is looking for, are available in the hotel: laundry, Internet, security, 24hr front desk and so on. The hotel location is directly on the coast of the Tigers river and two minutes walking from the

famous forest of Mosul called Ghabat.

3 minutes driving from the commercial area called University Street, 60 minutes driving from Erbil city, 40 minutes driving from Dahouk city, 4 hours driving from Baghdad city".

We could maybe visit the Ghabat forest one day if you want.

FG - HT

Yes, but only if together. Maybe one day. One day.

We talked of corners and architecture, but I'd love to ask you something about an issue surely complementary to that, that is light.

Light to me is really a crucial topic in this film and in many other works of yours (films and pictures of the "Objects as Friends" series (2011).

Dumb & brainless people look like objects on the set of the story. The corner seems to be invaded by a precise type of light, in between that one suffused of the Giorgio Morandi paintings, that one of a stolid halogen lamp or the brilliance of a powerful flash. How would you describe the light you use here? In which way is it important for you?

The light illuminating characters and objects is inhuman, like the immoral light in porno films. It objectifies and flattens everything. It's the light of a severe fight between two insects in an empty herbarium in a research space at a university.

I'm thinking to the blazing sunlight of a very bad hang-over in a protected resort in the afternoon; at an artificial beach with retarded English blokes that slowly get drunk again.

What do you like of surf-shoes? The two Canada-US guys are wearing them and that's to me is one of the details/object that will probably immediately set the atmosphere of the film. I'm curious to watch it on a huge HD screen.

HT - FG

Yes. They are like a second high tech skin.

They were designed with a cad program. Sometimes they disappear in the plankton 10.000 meter lower.

conversation continues ---