

HIGHWAY

JOÃO LAIA IN CONVERSATION WITH MOMU & NO ES

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 *Highway* by Momu & No Es on September 4 2015 in 1646.

This artist
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AUGUST 3: João Laia [JL] to Momu & No Es [M&NE]

Dear Lucia and Eva,
Nice to e-meet you. Sorry about my delay in getting in touch, I've actually been wanting to do so for a while now... I must admit I'm on a bit of a holiday mood at this stage, enjoying some nice southern European sea breezes.

Anyway I'm digressing...

So as a starting point for our conversation I would like to begin with a simple question: how did you choose your name - Momu & No Es - and in which way does it echo your practice?

Enjoy the sun and talk soon,
J

AUG 6: M&NE - JL

Hi João, nice to meet you,
Oh So Lucky!

We are preparing a show for 1646, looks like there is not going to be many holidays for us!

Eva was first Eva No Es then we took both double surnames. Those names are the ones which appear on the public health care card in Catalonia.

Our surnames are Moreno Murillo and Noguera Escudero therefore our cards are Lucia MOMU plus number and Eva NOES plus number.

We wanted to use the family names of both our father and mother without making our name too long. Then we figured out to combine them in that way.

We think that the fact that they are our family names reflects a historical tradition but that it, at times, can sound like a brand name. That seems to us very interesting because it gave us the feeling that the project Momu & No Es could go beyond ourselves. In the future somebody who is not us might keep on producing as Momu & No Es. We would love for something like that to happen and it seems to us to be a very unsettling and interesting possibility.

Well we have always to keep an eye to double check if it's well written every time the name is published. Besides this, it does not affect directly our practice, but maybe can give some information like the fact that we are two or that there is something more behind the name, at least more than one artist. I dunno. Why? what does it evoke for you?

Your name is nice João Laia.

AUG 9: JL - M&NE

Hi Lucia and Eva,
Thanks for your thoughtful answer to my question.

It was very interesting to know the somewhat accidental origin of your name alongside more specific reasons such as the clear aim to reference both your parents, rather than the customary use of the father's surname.

After getting to know the reasons that lead to your collective naming, I would argue that it could be read as an echo of your practice in the sense that you've appropriated an abstract state mechanism of identification and made it your own personal brand, subverting a bureaucratic tool in favour of a much more layered intimate and slightly humorous gesture. This could be linked to your interest in the blurred boundaries between fiction and reality (which one would be that is open to discussion ...) Would this make any sense to you?

Hope you find some time to relax while preparing the show.

Talk very soon and good work,
J

AUG 16: M&NE - JL

Hi João,

Well, more than to the limits between fiction and reality, we can link this question to how we deal with fiction and with reality, because at the end (being simplistic) reality and fiction are the same thing. In that sense it is more the result of how you play rules and roles, how you stand still and what is the mechanism that you use to find or build a place to act.

Today we just found that Gmail change all our emoticons and the new ones make us sad.

Without being indiscreet, Where does your interest in art lay? and how did you decide to become a curator?
Imagine no limits ... what would be the exhibition you always wished to do?

Hope you still enjoying the sun,

xoxo
MN

AUG 20: JL - M&NE

Dear Lucia and Eva,

Hope all is well.

I found intriguing your statement regarding the rules and roles, standing still and acting. Could you expand a bit on this maybe giving some examples related to your work, maybe even to the pieces you've been working on now for the show at 1646?

Generally speaking I'm interested in the relationship between representation and social structuring, meaning the analysis of a society and it's correspondent representational system.

Working as a curator was a process. I was lucky to grow up with a group of friends that were very curious (not only about art but also music, cinema, literature) and we stimulated each other simply by hanging out. On a more individual level I started out with cinema, social theory in a cinematic context, and then through experimental and artist film and video ended up working with contemporary art.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Jx

PS: What's the matter with the new Gmail emoticons ?!

AUG 26: M&NE - JL

Dear João,

Was really a pity ... for a long period we collected (downloaded) amazing emoticons in our mail account. This emoticons were like amazing donuts 🍩🍩 for us.

We love them because with them we felt our mails to be more our mails. We made special compositions with them and they were the most super emoticons ever...

Now all of them have been replaced because of some update and we just got this shit emoticons ... 🍩 ...

Today also Facebook imposed on us that we cannot use our Facebook account ever again if we (Momu No Es) don't use a real name for the account... it's hard to explain to Facebook that it *is* our real name ... and that we are a person ... this reminds us that we have a song (<https://soundcloud.com/momu-no-es/im-sick-of-thinking-that-my>) that we used in one of our previous works that we will share with you.

In this new project the rules and roles are really present, there is a main figure called Highway Agency that is constructed around a group of elements: stickers in the space and 3 characters in the video that remind us all the time that we have to behave on the road, telling us which are the rules and giving us advice and recommendations.

About the roles, roles are a really interesting issue, out of the work we are really interested in what happens when you are involved in an *artistic experience* and what is the role that the artist assumes or pretends when passing this charged material to the audience. And also what is the role that the audience is playing during that moment.

In previous works the audience had an ultimate paper, let's say that they determine the course of the performance according to their decisions.

For instance, in *Apocalyptic Visions* one random person in the audience ends up in a limo that brings she/him back home. So in a way we wanted an active and physical participation of the audience in the work and the artist also assuming an important role of power in that action. As a blaster.

For the project in 1646, the audience will take another kind of role, less based on actions and more based on the fact of being in a place.

In the installation the stickers are placed facing inside. It is a simple gesture, but only when you are *in* you can see the work, not through the enormous glass window of the entrance, and only if you attend the performance you can have the total experience of the project.

And now, you: tell us more about the importance of this group, and what it means for you the community you are talking about.

Have a lovely day
here is raining...

M&N

SEP 2: JL - M&NE

Hi Lucia and Eva,

sorry for my recent period of silence. if its worth of anything, I'm on the other side of the equator at the moment, maybe that can work as some sort of justification ... ?

anyway, while thinking about your take on rules and roles somehow the concept of checks and balances came to my mind, the idea that for a *proper* social functioning / development the state should be organized in different areas each with specific duties that would control each other so that none would abuse their powers. maybe I'm digressing a bit from your conception of rules and roles in the art context but there are some similarities that could be explored? for example the different actors - lets say artist, curators, space / institution, audience etc. - do you think the checks and balances work in the art field as well?

or putting it in another way: how do you think the activity of each of the players defines, limits and influences each other?

Following from this you seem to give a big importance to the audience in your practice but in a way the visitor is limited by the specific choreography you predefine, or at least that's how it looked like to me, which is somehow different from what you stated "... the audience has an ultimate paper, let say that they determine the way of the course of the performance according their decisions." The case of the limousine for example, you had predefined that, so in which way in this particular case and more generally regarding your work do you consider the audience to have the ultimate role? And what's your aim with this focus on the audience? Are you looking to somehow loosing control or inversely is your point to demonstrate the rules and roles inherent to an art show / art context?

Last questions still on this topic what is your aim behind the decision to shift the focus from actions to location / place?

What do you consider to change with this gesture in comparison to previous works? I'm asking this as in a way one could say the same about any art show: that it would not be fully engaged with unless one enters the space of display. Are you actually considering the space itself as part of your show?

We will soon need to wrap up our conversation (at least the section that will be included in 1646's publication) so in case there is some other topic you would like to discuss, please make it heard!

regarding my teen / early adulthood peers, I can't / don't want to rationalize it too much. I think it's not an uncommon situation. what I hold more dear now looking back was the curiosity we shared, and the excitement we felt together whenever we discovered something for the first time, or when one would introduce something the others did not know. I remember seeing *Stalker* by Tarkovskij or attending *Les Ballet C de La B*, there was pure electricity among us at the end, and this feeling was really great.

hope all is well and talk soon,
J
