

Dance is my language. It is what moves me. I am one of these persons who has always identified herself with Humanities and Literature. In my parents' house I was always surrounded by newspapers, books, and Brazilian music. I am also one of those who could not choose at the "right" age which career to embrace. So, while almost everyone in "my generation" studied, with dreams of an academic life and a post in a public university, I wandered from job to job... until I decided to follow the footsteps of my father, and to start studying Social Sciences at the University of São Paulo (USP).

Then, when I was 20, and an undergrad, I discovered that I had a body living in me. I drifted in multiple directions, looking for paths for expression and ways to act on the world... capoeira, anthropology, folk dances, weaving, fine arts, education. What sprouted from that was a steady, even if sometimes fragmented and truncated, search — for a body, techniques, dances. And in parallel with that I started a research project, in Political Anthropology, at USP and at the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP), which prepared me for my MsC in Urban Anthropology, on Ethnic Identity.

I come from a country where we do not have plenty of opportunities, and where dreams, even when possible, rarely become true. Every day we are contaminated by the pessimism, immobilism and resignation from almost everyone around us. Even so, we continue to dream with how life, or our lives, could be different. My "generation" is older than 30 now, and we are trying to assess what happened, asking what we have done with our youth, and where are our dreams. Everyone talks about projects that we would like to take forward, but that never would be finished. And everyone longs for London, Berlin, Paris or New York, as one hundred of years ago Tchekov's "three sisters" longed for Moscow.

To talk about a "generation" is to ignore diversity. I somehow avoided here mentioning those of my age and my city who had no choices available; those who I am referring to as "my generation" are urban, middle-class, qualified, restless, individualist, consumerist. A generation who dreams a lot, but concretizes little. A generation who is only now realizing the contradictions between what it dreamed to be and what it really is. A generation who is now asking what to do with all those dreams.

It's been 14 years in the path towards here, in which I lost my father, wrote a thesis, went to Africa and China. My studies in Anthropology, my contact with the "Mangubeat" (a musical movement which started in the Brazilian Northeast in the 90's) and with the works and methods of Klauss Vianna, Laban and Pina Bausch, constituted key references to me as I developed a way of thinking about the body, the scene, and the analysis of the movement.

My intent is to work on the *need for expressing* and the *need for moving*. My language is dance, and I consider very important the interplay between theory and practice. My interests are manifold; going from general to particular, I'd point: creation of contemporary dance, and performance in public spaces, art galleries, and on stage; practices for spatial investigation, for example the Situationist "dérive"; creative processes, solo and in groups, and collaborative

processes; sensory and psychic states that lead to enhanced presence, in which the *signifier* takes precedence over the *signified*, especially when relating with objects; ways of using the space and time; silence and musicality; the gestural and the textual; video-dance.

I am also especially interested in questioning our understanding of what can be a work of performance dance. In dance, which is something that only exists while it is being performed by a dancer, the question of what is left with the spectators when the piece is over is vital.

My motivations are the result of a plurality of somatic approaches to dance; a multi-interdisciplinarity, several knowledges that I carry in me, and which the course seems to propose. I see the program as preparing a space in which the student can act as an agent and an artist, and follow the leading threads: int it art and contemporary dance are venue for a multiplicity of techniques and knowledges. There is a learning process, that passes through appropriation, autonomy, and joins theory, practice, and research.

My aim is *creation*. I am not afraid of going to the “darkroom”, to develop the interests listed above, and to work on giving clear form to an identity in my creations, shaping ideas and themes, sensibility, sensations, intuitions, imaginary and poetic, that I’d like to communicate. I want to reach a movement-body that is also an “attained expression”. But how?

I have also been a teacher, a performer, and a researcher. As I learned with Alito Alessi, the creator of “Danceability”, dance can unite people; I am interested in “inclusive dance”, and how it can bring together people with very different bodies, and from very different social classes.

I came to Germany in 2009 moved by my need to find those forgotten dreams, and to leave my frontiers — that were not only physical, but also artistic ones. When I found the HZT programs I got immediately interested, but I needed a time to orient myself, and to experience the city and the German language. So, after one year of experiments, of mainly small performances in small places, workshops, and open classes in the Laborgras studio (Arthur Stäldi e Renate Graziadei), it comes the moment for a new direction. And, besides, the University has always been the locus of construction of knowledge, research and outreach; it has been essential in my path, and it continues to be.

Returning to the University would not be for me to restart from scratch — I believe that in art there is no restarting from scratch. I see, instead, the possibility of starting new dreams and new paths, and revisiting, deepening and continuing others. I intend to use this opportunity to develop an (authoral) identity through artistic research and creations, and, through the contact with other researchers and artists, working in several different contexts, to clarify the role of *investigation* in what I do — to learn how to do it more solidly, more consistently, and in a more *contagious* way.

Reação ao texto “Doing Art Politically: What does this means?”
(Thomas Hirschhorn, 2008)
Maíra Santos

Thomas Hirschhorn is an artist who uses his art to answer to the world. However, he goes beyond social, religious and cultural conventions, beyond analyses and theories. His work, in which he uses techniques from collage, is overflowing with questions about the world's problems, from the slaughtering of animals and people to alienation and objectification. He is also known by his huge installations, the use of alternative venues to present his works, the interplay between architecture and sculpture, micro and macro, art and non-art.

“Doing Art Politically: What does this means?” is his answer about the politics and the poetics of his work. He wants to make clear his understanding about the relationship between art and politics. He analyzes the difference between “doing art politically” and “making political art”, refuting the ideas of political art as propaganda, of using the particular pretending that it is universal, of showing inclusion in place of exclusion, and of using democratic proposals to conceive and bring out art works. His aim is to (re)turn to a political art built behind political conventions.

His horizon is the sphere of human relationships in a precarious world. In his work it is possible to see the new paradigms of the contemporary art in the 90's. They were drawn in the 60's, but the questions have changed: the focus is no longer the urgency of breaking rigid moral, social and political patterns. (???) Brazil, where artistic movements had an important role, bringing together political forces that opposed the military regime that had taken power in the country. (???) speaks now of an horizon, practical and theoretical, in which the art works expose the spheres of “human interactions”, and their social contexts, through the aesthetical experience, (???) communication process being the tool that unites individuals and groups¹.

Hirschhorn, through his works and his text, denounces and announces the precariousness and the fragility of human being, yet he recognizes that the main responsibility of the artist is toward his work of art, not with politics. For him there is no other possibility besides the total engagement of the artist with his artwork — a truth that applies to all arts. Politics, to him, be it with a capital or a lowercase ‘P’, is defined by questions of desire, and of creation without losing sight of the role of the other. Its questions are also not of the order of the “what”. Doing art politically, according to Hirschhorn is giving form. Being so, which form, and which position to take? This, for him, is the main question that the artist must face.

In matters of form I am reminded of the Italian philosopher Luigi Pareyson² about the form of a work of art as an “attained expression”. Form is “[...] an organism that lives by its own and contains all that it has to contain [...]”. To that philosopher, the act of creating, inventing, discovering, producing, organizing, that gives origin and place to a work of art, is an act of giving form. In that way, Thomas Hirschhorn is no more nor less engaged politically than other artists, as what he looks for is a search for a form that would resist facing facts

¹Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon, France: Presses du Réel, 1998). For this author “art is a state of togetherness”.

²Pareyson, Luigi, *Os Problemas da Estética*, (São Paulo, Brasil: Martins Fontes, 2001), p. 30.

and that can take a position.

The author distinguishes *making political art* from *doing art politically*. However, art and politics are autonomous spheres, and only when they intersect we can understand their interactions. Among the components involved in the genesis of Art, we cannot find Ethics and Politics. The association between Art and Politics seems to obliterate that characteristic way of functioning of Art, that is different from all other human productions. We can not consider that Art and Politics have the same meaning, just as we cannot consider that the public and the critics perceive things in the same manner. The artist also shows that by speaking of Art as if it were Politics we leave out the spheres in which Art relates to the Social, to the therapeutic, etc.

Hirschhorn establishes some pre-conditions to make Art, which are: taking risks, having joy in the work process, and to be positive. For him, only by being positive the artist can create something that really comes from the inside. In that point his discourse has something curious — the artist has to have a positive look on reality to be able to talk about reality. And in result, what exists that is more critical, chaotic, complex and revealing comes to the surface. Hirschhorn talks of having a positive attitude towards creation, and a necessary distancing, as a method to reach what he calls the *negative*: the incomprehension of our times, death and destruction — using big spaces and ephemeral materials like paper and chipboard, and taking sides.

I am not totally comfortable with his idea of fixing pre-requisites for the artist and his work, even if those pre-requisites are happiness, being positive, etc. We do Art because there is no other choice. And, in this way, Art does not constitute a tool for giving answers to the world — it simply is, it is not a means for an end. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke, when giving advice to an aspiring young poet, went to the kernel of the matter: would you die if you could not make your art? The poet puts Art as a necessity of the being, and so it is not done for others, but for oneself — and so no rigid pre-requisites can be made.

I feel the need to point other important things in the artist's point of view, like how he sees the connections between pain and art, and death and creation, and being necessary to the creative process. No matter if these deaths are internal, or multiple, they reveal births lived by the artist in his creative process. On pain, I refer to that that gets transmuted into art, and also of that one that does not need to be exposed, and that is often only revealed in the biography of the artist; Virginia Woolf, for example, expressed her anguish and her despair about her bouts of depression through her writing. Positive or negative, João Frayze³ points to us that the poetic act is a painful act: “it is the pain of the loneliness of someone who reaches the new without knowing how, or why. It is the pain intrinsic to art”. But I agree when Hirschhorn says that to be positive is to not judge while doing, and to be active. Frida Kahlo, with her painting,

³ João Pereira Frayze, *Arte e dor. Inquietudes Entre Estética e Psicanálise* (roughly: “Art and pain: Restlessness Between Aesthetics and Psychoanalysis”), (São Paulo, Brasil: Ateliê Editorial, 2006) p. 268. Frayze is a psychoanalyst and a professor at the University of São Paulo, and one of his themes is the relationship between art and pain.

just like Virginia Woolf with her writing, never stopped producing her work, not even in moments of great physical pain, which kept her to her bed. Frida's creation was permeated by her pain. And she transformed that pain into colors, names, and places.

Hirschhorn defines "doing art politically" as the act of creating boldly, without leaving aside passions, hopes, and dreams. In my view the artist, besides that, can take risks, courageously, and risk being a "user of the forms" — with freedom, not dogmatically.