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Psychiatrist

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New York, New York 10022

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I remember of thinking, I was going into a psychiatrist's office, I had never been in a psychiatric office, immediately the preconceived ideas about the profession came into my mind as I was suddenly rushing into an egocentric trip-- I started to read about his field of expertise and I remember thinking about my own mood disorders.

We— me, Inês (cameraman) and Maria (assistant photographer) went to a café around 50th street near his office, Maria, the person that had set up the interview had a good sense of humor and by talking with her and Inês, I had the opportunity to relax.

I was calm and he made me feel relaxed as well, I could sense his professional attitude and curiosity in relation to the project, his tone of voice was soft and he was extremely calm and focused.

I realized that I am perhaps playing some part of his everyday activity by sitting and asking some questions, and by doing that I could reveal his way of thinking, that to me was an interesting aspect of the project. I wanted to know more about his activity as a psychiatrist and at the same time I wished he could ask me some questions as well.

Half way into the interview I realized that I was working in his office space, it became mine for a period of time and I was comfortable and very much alive, much more than when I am in my own studio when I have one, I was enjoying every minute of it and I found myself thinking that part of it is because I am having a psychiatrist as my raw material, my source of knowledge and he is engaged in my own ideas.

Later in the conversation he mentioned the fact that he would be only an accessory inside my own work, this made me think of the degree of his collaboration.

For this interview I gave him information that represented three different possible ways in which his field of expertise would merge with mine.

The following particular segment of his discourse made me think about building a self portrait — “I think that in terms of how art and creativity overlaps with psychiatric disorders or madness like sometimes is referred to, is actually through the artist pain, their art is the expression of their creativity and also of their psychological pain.”

So I proposed to him to realize a self-portrait made of several public sessions in his office where my self portrait would be presented through layers of information about my professional and my private life.

I thought that the degree of his collaboration was very significant; he could be an active producer just by acting as a lens for the person he would be interviewing, in this case myself. He would be pointing out aspects of my behavior and help me to understand it and possibly change it and by doing that, change would be part of his role as well as mine, he would share with me the responsibility of the art project production—together we would be artists.

Does change comes from just being a lens? If he plays the role of a lens that allows people to see themselves, would that work for the video audience as well? Maybe by engaging with me in a conversation, the two of us would be acting as a lens for other people and therefore the audience would change because of that, they would see their own problems reflected in us— if they wanted they would be able to act upon it. It was fascinating to think about this during the interview.

Gianni: *If I were to work with you, I would probably [begin] by asking some questions, maybe pointing your attention to certain things. I might help you looking at things differently once you leave this office, and that will not change your past but it will change the way you relate to it, the way you understand it and the way you think about yourself overtime, so, I don't know if that is the type of collaboration you are looking for...*

At the end of the interview he was interested in collaborating with me, realizing the project that I had proposed to him during the interview, which was to conceive a live self-portrait with recorded sessions in order to observe my transformation in the course of it.

He made me feel the responsibility and the power of a possible collaboration in conceiving an art project--the responsibility of sharing the production and development of ideas within the whole Studio Socialis.

This moment was important for me.

Danny McDonald

Bar Owner

Stone Street, Financial District

July/August 2012



Danny is a friend of my brother in law, Colum McCann, Colum is a successful fiction writer living in the New York City. When he mentioned Danny as a potential candidate for the project I remember some sort of conversation between the two of us about events taking place at these bars— cultural events, such as readings. Danny came from Ireland many years ago, perhaps 25, I can't recall the precise number of years, although I do remember well is his gestures and his voice walking us through a whole street of bars, pubs and restaurants that one way or another he helped to modify. The street where the interview took place was near Pier One, in downtown Manhattan, it was pretty much like a Dutch street during the eighteen hundreds. I do remember a mural, painted on one of the walls, I believe of Harry's.

Showing us the transformed street, he mentioned that homeless people used to live there; they used to occupy the street. He mentioned having to deal with the situation, evacuating these people in order to transform it into a pedestrian commercial space. During our conversation I couldn't help but thinking about the previous life of the places, the street.

The issue stayed in my mind as I kept thinking about the murals I was seeing on the restaurant walls and the legendary people I was being introduced to, like Harry himself, while we walked through the bars that sometimes had secret passages in between each other.

In this interview when suggesting a collaboration, I also determined most of the conditions for it's execution; it would be a one time event, where homeless people would be invited to return to the street and have a luxurious meal for free within Harris.

As we were talking, I could feel that I was being too much the artist imposing her own ideas and desires, still, I decided to carry on with it trying to work with Danny's questions and concerns in relation to the situations that were being proposed.

Danny: *What are these places? They are institutions. I try to create institutions, places where culture and commerce come together*

I remember of thinking that the intersection of culture and commerce within the context of these bars, restaurants and pubs was a situation where culture was not determining any kind of friction in relation to the commercial purposes of the places, it was adapted to it's characteristics. I wanted to propose a situation where the artwork creates a conflict within the cultural milieu of these spaces, therefore creating the necessary friction and awareness in its audience. I wanted to create a

collaborative project were we could introduce elements of the transformations Danny went through in these spaces, questioning social and political aspects of it, in particular the one related with the previous existence of homeless people and the reasons why they had to move out.

Although Danny was demonstrating a desire for a possible interaction with the project in a collaborative way, I think that he was also feeling some insecurity, that he was probably risking his own project.

I wanted him to think about his life project as a possible art project, so now after one year, I think that I shouldn't have been as specific as I was in relation to determining a content for the project, therefore imposing a sort of a theme, therefore not giving him enough space to come up with a different one.

I see now that I was too involved in the preliminary discussion, setting up all the coordinates, details etc, controlling and imposing the conceptual framework for our collaborative efforts.

Danny: *So maybe art needs to be hospitality free?*

I started to think about Santiago Serra's projects among others where people are being paid to perform and the questions involved in it, so I was trying to make him feel the necessity of the confrontation in order to engage people in it and the consequences of it.

I think that I became a different artist during our collaborative efforts, as I was willing to perform in every interview in order to discuss on camera the possibilities of work created in collaboration.

During our interview I also remember of thinking that I wanted him to understand that my projects as an artist do not imply introducing decorative elements, and I remember of thinking that at that moment I had to confront him with what I think my role is and some of the implications of being an artist.

At some point thinking how a public place is determined by its function, if I had proposed such situation to a gallery owner, she or he wouldn't probably tell me that the health department could be a problem.

It made me think that we might be depending on the idea that there is a correct function that we are suppose to perform in a certain space.

What I really wanted was to hear him setting up the conditions, coming up with the ideas, in that regard the interview didn't bring us together as I thought it could and I regret that.

Izzi Ruiz

Ex-NYPD Undercover Police Officer

Precinct in the Bronx (meeting at Central Park)

November 2011/January 2012



Izzi is a retired police officer; these days he does some acting jobs in small plays in the city. We met for the first time on the east side of Central Park; I remember we had decided to go for a walk with the disadvantages of having the camera on the shoulder.

We spoke for a long time about his activity as an undercover police officer, he was involved with narcotics; his job consisted in playing the role of the drug addict needing to buy, so he could infiltrate himself into the drug gangs.

By the time we met there was a vibrant activity going on at Zuccotti park because of the Occupy movement and I tried to find out what was his opinion in relation to this public occupation, in part because some art projects were being built on the issue at the time and that was interesting to me. I tried to understand what was his position in relation to the occupation of public spaces by artists and artist's projects that involve an investigation into social causes.

Izzi: *I would always defend an artist when he is not causing a danger or a hazardous situation. Again a hazardous situation like I explained to you is when you attract so much attention that everything stops around you, all it takes is... Like those protests downtown, I agree with them 100% but what they are doing is not right because you are causing... Do you know how many millions of dollars are going to be wasted there? Just in police and ambulances, millions of dollars are going down the tube, that's a waste of money, they think they are attacking Wall Street, they are not, they are attacking the City of New York, so, that's a no no. Fine, I understand, you want to protest? You know what? Go online, go on television, do interviews. There's this guy on television all the time attacking these people and I listen to him and he is on the internet. I listen to him but people want to do this... And then criminals sneak in, they start committing crimes, there's rapes going on, homicide, there's a lot of things going on.*

After the first interview I realized that I was missing a fundamental aspect, the collaboration between the artist and the police officer. So the second time we met I specifically addressed the collaboration aspect. I proposed to investigate death penalty, I proposed a search for situations in a specific community in the US where death penalty is an issue; the project would involve interviews with lawyers and other people directly involved.

Izzi refused to think of it as an art project. For him it was investigative journalism. For me it was almost like he was describing my own project, just by saying that the fact that bringing people's opinions together and showing it does not matter, it does not bring us to a conclusion he would say and that for me was extremely interesting.

Izzi: *That's news, that's journalism, is it art? I guess it could be. I don't see it as art, that's investigative journalism, that's a job, you are trying to get information and again if you are trying to get information about a crime or something like that, now you are becoming a witness, just because when you start investigating you are going to discover stuff and the detectives if they see that video they are going to come and ask you in. Again, I don't know if you can call that art, the only way I can see it being art is showing an objective view on it, basically you record me talking about it and you show somebody else talking about it, that's art but what does that bring to you? Doesn't bring a conclusion to it, it doesn't bring a result to it.*

The fact of not presenting a conclusion constituted a problem for him, that was something for me to think about.

I felt incapable of progressing towards the direction of a possible collaboration between us. Later in the interview I proposed yet another project; to analyze the fragile barrier that separates a police officer from a citizen, in a specific situation of a demonstration; to analyze what causes a situation to escalate into violence. Again Izzi characterized the project as investigative journalism and not as art.

Nancy Greenwald

Bed and Breakfast Owner

The Arbor Bed and Breakfast

44 Mohonk Rd., High Falls, NY 12440

August 2012

It was summer and we had to travel a few hours for this interview, we had scheduled an interview in the morning in a Farm near by, and after a fish burrito lunch in New Paltz, we headed up to a nearby village to meet with Nancy, the owner of the B&B.

Nancy was very welcoming— the place was luxuriously green.

It was an interview where I felt that the person in front of me was producing an art project in a more interesting way than I was and I felt so lucky for being with her—after some 15 minutes into the conversation I presented myself as a failure, let's just say that I recognized that the idea behind the project that I was proposing for us to collaborate was not adequate to the situation, I think that aspect of the conversation gave her an opportunity to express her ideas without fear, the fear of not being an artist but still deciding what to do within an art project.

Demonstrating my dissatisfaction with my own ideas, gave Nancy an insight of how sometimes artists don't know what or how to go forward, the idea of a imperfect artist, one that fails, as a natural part of the creative process gave Nancy reason to freely express her ideas and allow herself to share them. This way she was able to conceive the project herself. Of course this is how I see it, I never had the opportunity of discussing further with her this aspect of our conversation.

In fact I intended to give this opportunity to everyone in all the interviews, I wanted them to feel comfortable enough to initiate and possibly produce an art project that combines both our fields of expertise. It made me think about the degree of collaboration of each one of us depending whether I am the one initiating it, creating the parameters or main structure of the project or, on the other hand, when that comes from them.

Nancy: I don't know if that is art, or if that's steering art or creating art, a little thought...

Another aspect of the conversation made me think that most people try to combine the profitable aspect of their profession with the artist activity and often that does not work, my projects do not contemplate a commercial side and often that causes a problem within their activity, as it is reflected in Lea's interview as well.

Nancy: I can't think of it because most of my business, and I need to make money, comes from outside and not local. It comes from people coming from distances to my place, so it's hard to use, I mean, I could use it not as my business space but I could definitely use it or give it or rent it or you know, let somebody use it, but as far as it being part of my money making end of it, I am not quite sure how that would work.

We are probably so distant from the commercial side of our activity when we are producing it.

Nancy's interview doesn't have a picture with it, some of the photos were taken on a cell phone and erased by accident. At this point I couldn't afford having Maria, the photographer with me any more.

Anastasia Liapis

Scientist

Department of Molecular Pathogenesis
Institute of Biomolecular Medicine – NYU Medical Center
(Dustin Lab)
530 1st Ave, Murray Hill, New York City



Anastasia came from Greece to work as a scientist in New York. There's a passage on our first recording (we met twice) that I particularly like;

“The routine I would say, most of the time, you come in in the morning and you have experiments that you need to do, so there's a planning phase always, so you have to sort of sit down and plan the architecture of your week or your month or whatever it is, because we work with living things, so, and living things have requirements for how they like to be taken care off, so, first it's like laying out a plan of what's going to happen and then there's a phase where you prepare, what we call reagents so, it's like the ingredients for when you cook a meal, I would compare it to that, like trying to cook a giant meal everyday, so, you have to order, organize, identify what you need, plan the thing out and get them ready and then there's the actual physical procedure of doing the experiment which involves handling things, and more than that there's a, you know, a craft to it, because so much of it is so technical and there's so few people will know to do a specific thing,”

As she was describing her method, her working process, I kept associating it with mine, it was inevitable; yes, I was in fact dealing with living things, and yes, these living “things” have requirements, case by case they demand particular attention in relation to the specificities of their jobs, and yes, there is a craft that I meticulously perform with the materials I collect from them, the text.

The unpredictability, the search, all was there in my method, I just wish she could be here today at the opening.

I could talk about my planning, my failures when searching for engagement with people, the testing, the editing.

The second time we met she mentioned the inversion of roles, to apply a certain method to my work.

Ray Bradley

Farmer

Bradley Farm

317 Springtown Road, New Paltz, NY 12561

August 2012

When John and I moved to Prospect Heights in Brooklyn, 12 years ago, I used to go to the Prospect Park farmers market and buy my vegetables at the Bradley Farm stand almost every weekend, Ray was capturing my imagination in relation to what a farmer is supposed to be, growing organic, not making a big fuss out of it and having a close enough relationship with the customers. One day during the winter we felt compelled to travel to the farm and participate in an event celebrating seasonal food and friendship, we traveled that year with our daughter Amélia, she was one year old at the time.

When I initiated this project and the interview phase arrived I thought that it would be very interesting to go up to New Paltz in order to have a conversation with Ray, so I did, August last year.

Food is a dear subject to me and I try to understand the politics surrounding it's production and consumption, so I suggested to initiate a project where the two of us would work directly with the local community making Ray's farm a potential supplier for local schools, this way we would help change food habits, creating a chain of events that would potentially change young children's health and ways of thinking about food.

This project's idea was taken from a documentary I saw when doing my "homework" in relation to his profession. In this documentary a local mayor in a small village in France was able to implement it successfully.

Besides the fact that he preferred to realize it in a small town like Rosendale, Ray agreed on the starting conditions for the project and I thought that would be a great idea to do it for real, having the time and proper conditions. But really, what are the right conditions to do it? What are the right conditions to do an art project? What is the difference between doing it within the art context and as a social worker or as a politician.

With the project, I as an artist would be part of a broader situation, where social, economical and political questions would be raised and I would also have to assume the consequences of such participation.

I felt that this project was possible to execute for real and that I should take some time planning it.

A few months after we came back to Portugal to live.

Ray's interview doesn't have a picture with it— some of the photos were taken on a cell phone and erased by accident. At this point I couldn't afford having Maria, the photographer with me any more.

Frank Rivera, artistic name; Frankie Flo

Professional wrestler

Daro' Gym

1123 Close Ave, Bronx, NY



It was a long trip from Brooklyn to the Bronx that afternoon, we took the car and as usually I confused some signs and it took us some time to get there. The street of the gym was located on a street, that kind that you see in a road movie, empty, grey, low buildings, a few cars. The place itself was an old factory building transformed into a gym, there were some young women and guys at the door, we decided to park close by.

Inês made a phone call to let Frank know that we had arrived, he came downstairs and took us upstairs. I remember entering a huge room with body building machines all over the place, there was a big red ring, lot's of hanging red cloth and a disco ball. It was a noisy place and we noticed that right way, we asked for a quieter place for the interview and ended up in a men's dressing room (locker room?). A man was dressing himself inside and Frank asked him to leave, he himself went to another room in order to dress up for the interview because we asked him to be faithful to his working clothes.

I found myself thinking that I should be preparing myself for the interview and that sometimes I see it as a performance; there I was, ready and about to execute it, so I glimpsed at my own clothes, I thought they were okay, a striped shirt without sleeves, a pair of shorts and some kind of tennis shoes, and the best of all I could show my developed leg muscles, it's always good to have muscles in this situations, I thought.

I felt inclined to contradict the appearance of violence that the place inspired; I proposed to change the narrative that exists at the core of the wrestling activity, from violent action to a peaceful engagement between the adversaries in the ring, using poetry as the subject. I felt an immediate resistance to the idea of poetry and peace as I observed tension in Frankie's gestures, he was worried with the audience's reaction.

Frank: *Sometimes it can be words with each other's for months without even touching each other, the great ones can do it, the great ones can get a match and right there get the fans to hate me and love him just by words.*

For him wrestling, performance and visual arts were all tied together, in a way that they were the same, although he couldn't come up with a project for the two of us and by the end of the interview I started to feel tired,

Frank: *It's a performance, so visual arts, performance, I don't see how that could not merge, but finding a way to make them meet...*

For me they were the same in relation to a culture of the spectacular and not to the way I produce art— investigating social relations beyond the appearance. So I started to think that I had to talk about what was so important to both of us, the role of the audience.

Once I mentioned the audience in relation to his performance, he seemed to think that a collaboration was possible in this way, he liked the idea very much, I realized that the behavior of the audience and the way it influences the outcome of performance was always present in his mind, I then proposed a collaborative project where both of us were engaged in a search for the true meaning of the love that the fans had for Frank— the way this aspect is able to change his behavior.

At that point I was tired and thought that it was about time to end the conversation.

Erik Osol
Chef De Cuisine

Restaurant Ilii's
236 5th Avenue, New York City
February 2012/ August 2012



I find Erik Osol's interview quite special. He produced an art project in such a detailed manner, everything was there, all you learn in art school; the subject matter formally transformed into a visual product, the language of art was there, even the author's name was there. I didn't have to do anything, my share in the collaborative event was simply lending my credentials, saying, I am a visual artist. He perfectly combined both concepts of work; being a visual artist and a restaurant chef. He came up with a whole finished project, incorporating elements of his job as a chef and elements of a conceptual art installation piece; another interesting fact is that the piece also integrates a metaphorical aspect in relation to his experience as a chef.

He had left the job after the first interview, so when we visited him at his home for the second time he had left already and he was showing clear signs of the pressure that the job created on him over the years— I remember thinking that his role as a producer for Studio Socialis came from an interior need to express some of the emotions that his job as a restaurant chef brought up during a 5-year period.

During the interview he was tense, it was visible as Erik described the details of the project, a Giant Hummus Ball, which was unusual in relation to the rest of the interviewees, materials were fully described, as were dimensions as well.

Authorship was fully assumed to the extreme:

Erik: *You would feel the weight the closer you got to it, so then you maybe put a little plaque on a stand that would say 'my name is Erik Osol, I was a chef at an eastern Mediterranean restaurant for 5 years, this is what I created.*

Erik also established all the conditions for the audience to observe the piece and determined the possible sponsors and the local for the presentation.

It was quite interesting to me the fact that he did not engage into my specific art practice but with a general concept of a conceptual art practice— he never adapts the project to my particular interest in social investigation, interview and media based projects. He produces an art project and determines what kind of art he is going to produce and the conditions for it. He operates independently and assumes both roles, as a chef and as an artist, combining them.

At the end of the interview he relates to film, and social aspects etc and proposes a documentary on a chef's life but I thought that wasn't as nearly as interesting for the Studio Socialis project.