

Dear all, who are here today!

Thank you for coming.

As I am writing this it is still a letter to the future ... to be read to you on Friday, December 12, 2014. So this will be in a couple of weeks, and if everything works well, I will stand in front of you and read it to you. I'm sure I'll have the jitters.

Why a letter?

I decided to write a letter, because it feels to be the easiest way to express what I want to share with you this evening, it feels private and public at the same time. And writing it now feels like being in a continuous dialog with you and myself over the next couple of weeks.

So.

I wanted to share some thoughts and experiences from my research on "wir sind unsere zeit", that I did together with Roland Schmidt, my friend and colleague. One of the questions we've been asking ourselves, was "Who am I in these times?". But I'd also like to share other, more personal thoughts, that have been popping up over the years.

The last years I had the longing to leave Europe, to leave a system I know; I grew up in. To try to experience myself in a different way. See myself more from a distance, and through this, perhaps more clear again.

I travelled a lot..... Now I am back.

Growing up and living in a system, which had and still has so much comfort, so much possibilities, access to a lot of information and knowledge, a lot of power, a lot of security and a lot of fear. Often I ask myself : Where is the joy?

I am working in performance for almost 20 years now. I always thought and still think that in Art and Performance we may create a "space for thought – a *Denkraum*" different versions of thinking to reveal a gap in time and space, a way of thinking out of the box. to open up possibilities of different approaches to the world. Art in this sense, not in the sense of representing the world, but Art as an act of creating a world. Perhaps even a better world.

But making a living from Art, by producing Art, is or has always been taking place "in the system" - at least the way I created it.

So there is this danger, that whatever I make or think I am making it simply could become just another form of expression of the system we are living in.

Focusing on achievement and career, on being seen, on being somebody. Etc.

In that sense we are all part of the Market. We are part of the *Art Market*. Selling ourselves constantly - even when we try to not sell out. Our work becomes a commodity, as well as we ourselves become commodities. We judge what we are doing as good or bad – whether it aesthetically *fits*, whether it's contemporary enough, critical enough, radical enough, cutting edge enough or not.

Our gaze is often informed by judgments or even fear, rather than curiosity, enthusiasm or an open gaze.

Why this is so, I really don't know...

For instance, why do we believe that bad news is more *real*, more *true*, more *normal* than good NEWS? There is no radio station that brings good news in their hourly news, not even Ö1.

Mmhm.

THE Yes men come to my mind.

THE Yes Men, an artist and activist group were joined by hundreds of independent writers, artists, and activists in an elaborate project, six months in the making, to release a "special edition" of the *New York Times* in cities across the U.S. The papers, dated July 4th of next year, were headlined with long-awaited news: "IRAQ WAR ENDS".

I loved the reactions, when people started to read this edition. It made them stop in the middle of the street. They started to laugh. Started to talk with others, reading it over and over again, looking around, puzzled.

I think that's a moment of a gap.

A DENKRAUM.

A couple of months ago, a young artist said this to me at a dinner:

It's not enough to be dancer, to call yourself a dancer, you need to be at least a choreographer as well, you need to create, and then you need to be crass, talking crass or doing crass things, if not, you do not have a chance.

I heard him.

I am thinking about my education, my time in school.

Values like compassion, generosity, sharing were assumed!

We did not need to consciously exercise or practice these values. They were a given, simply because we are born as human beings, and therefore we should know.

Be nice to each other!

But it turned out pretty soon: Helping each other in school during a test was undermining the school system. We needed to cheat, which was fun, too.

So we started practicing other values, we obviously needed more urgently to get a positive response:

To achieve something. Being Successful. Passing tests and exams in school. Getting good grades.

"You will need it for later."

Now - later - I ask myself:

Which space do we need to create, to allow curiosity and marvelling to happen?

I like the word *staunen* in German.

For me this is the *denkraum*, where learning, exploring and receiving becomes possible.

One early morning in July this year, I woke up in La Ronce, FRANCE on the permaculture farm of Isa Fremaux and John Jordan. I looked out of my trailer. Wide sky, the sun was rising, and I suddenly noticed: this is my time on earth. I am this time.

I grew up in this time. I was educated in this time. Would people call me a Capitalist at some point in the future? Am I a Capitalist?

When I think about what I had asked my parents or grandparents about *their* time, what they did or did not do, whether they had been members of a particular political party, what they had noticed, seen, how they had reacted, etc. What they had done or not against the currents of their time. The questions did not come out of pure curiosity or wanting to actually understand, I somehow assumed already they did something wrong, that they were already guilty, simply by growing up at the time. We knew better.

I think it takes courage to look at something. To really look.

To open a gap. And guilt and accusation does not make this happen.

In October I developed a project with a group of performers in ABQ, we started the process with a questionnaire and one of the questions was:

„What are you thankful for in your life?“

Love. Parents. Work. Partners, Husband. Humor. Pets. House. Money. Peace.

I suddenly noticed that none of us wrote food or water. It probably only came to my mind, because I had been at La Ronce before.

Wendel Berry - a farmer and poet from Kentucky, US, wrote:

"Educated minds, in the modern era, are unlikely to know anything about food and drink, clothing and shelter. I AM NOT SUGGESTING, of course, that everybody ought to be a farmer or a forester. I am suggesting that most people are fed, clothed and sheltered from sources toward which they feel no gratitude and exercise no responsibility. Most people now are living on the far side of a broken connection, and that is potentially catastrophic."

Probably my question boils down to this:

How can we be present?

In art as well as in daily life?

Be here.

In 1999 my ActingTeacher Steven Wangh told me: "You need an open body to receive, it's not about producing, it's about receiving, about listening.

At the time that was a scary concept for me. It felt like not being in control. I was much more used to producING. But what if I do not receive anything. Not trusting that there is something out there or within me. How can I get into a space of presence like this?

Alan Ginsberg:

To write secretly... so you can actually create a space to be free to say anything you want... It means to abandoning being a poet, abandoning your careerism, abandoning even the idea of writing any poetry, really abandoning, abandoning the possibility to really expressing yourself to the nations of the world. Abandoning the idea of being a prophet with honor and dignity, and abandoning the glory of poetry and just setting down in the muck of your own mind... You really have to make a resolution just to write for yourself... in the sense of not writing to impress yourself, but just writing what your self is saying.

Perhaps, creating spaces of presence, is also a version of reconnection.

And what would we like to reconnect to?