

”We need to meet as people”, Mother Tessa Bialecki says. Well, let me introduce myself then. I live in a city, I earn less than the average, half of which I pay for a room that I do not call my home, I will struggle continuously for the next five years, I will never reach the prestige of a Rauschenberg or the genius of a John Cage, I go through the hassle of finding just another, and really any other, roof over my head on a regular basis. Between scams and restrictions of my own privacy and freedom, I am discriminated against because of my gender, my sexuality, my age, my profession, as well as because of my nationality on a daily basis. Someone runs into me on my bike, I fall. The other person does not even look at me.

At the same time, I am indeed surprised by the complexity of thought and the urgency that applies today just like after the fall of the Berlin wall, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, towards the end of the cold war. In times of the immediate threat of a nuclear war. “Economy knows no geographical borders anymore”. The idea of the end of the nation state, the declaration of politics as dead and the destruction of the ecological system. The panelist’s discussion on decolonization, their consideration of changes in technology just at the beginning of the world wide web, the awareness that the East and the West are coming together, the shift of power in the world. An incredibly preliminary outlook on a future that I indeed grew up and still find myself in.

I can’t help but think of Russia’s military strikes in Syria and the Ukrainian crisis, the EU sanctions, the relationship to Germany and the role of Turkey between both countries. I’m thinking of the shift of power structures in the Middle East after the Iraq invasion and later the Arab Spring, the EU’s growing cooperation with China and a meme becoming president of the United States of America. Of course I’m thinking of the Financial Crisis, the situation of southern Europe’s youth, the wave of refugees stranding on coasts and fences and the rise of right-wing sentiments, the exponentially propagandistic role of fear and anxiety after 9/11, the Smartwatch and Virtual Reality, Troll Armies, Data abuse, the Brexit, left-wing extremism and just today: Trump leaving the Paris climate agreement at the end of the G20 summit in Hamburg. While fake news about fake news and the manipulation and distribution of the image is as much my concern as a Creator, Maker, Designer, Artist or whatever you want to call it, as it was the concern of these outstanding conceptual artists and thinkers. It should be the concern of each one of us regardless of how we position ourselves in this world.

**“A global village is a place where everyone cleans up their own shit” Lawrence Weiner says.**

J. and E. prepare food for the group. A small cooking station within one of the two yurts. Miso soup. Rice and vegetable curry with pumpkin. Stir-fried Pak Choi. So. Damn. Good.

Modernity has collapsed and has been replaced by an amorphous, post-modern and shapeless mind, the next discussions tell us. It results in a lack of attention in society. ”How can you live a real human life if everything you touch is plastic?” The panelists ask in the 90s and speak about “the superficial” and work as an addiction. While “The business of business is business” as Mother Tessa Bialecki states, there actually is no evidence to prove or measure success, David Bohm explains. He says that “evidence” literally means “to make something visible outwardly”. But he emphasizes that we also have ”insight”, which he describes as “to be visible inwardly”. “The word “invidence” would be better”, he says. “We have an insight into this whole, without being able to grasp it. While he explains that “Self-delusion arises when you try to get a hold of it and grasp it.”

**“This world has its own limitations. It’s not heaven, it’s not hell—but it’s not heaven. We fake our own conscience.” Rauschenberg says.**

I grew up in times in which the dematerialization of the economy has already reached a level of abstraction that lies beyond my current understanding. While on an interpersonal level, I am surrounded by the constant complaint about boredom and the fear of missing out, #fomo. Between abuse, self-destruction, a greed for the social, indeterminateness and non-commitment lies the pure narcissism and self-loathing of a generation. And a present and future full of opportunity and stagnation.

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I soften towards the topic and slowly accept that I too, crave what one of the panelists calls “Spiritual Aspirin” and Mother Tessa Bialecki calls a non-committed “Supermarket Spirituality”. A few months ago I confessed to a friend that I have done something terribly, egoistically, wrong. “Whatever”, she says.

**“So I guess it’s all about sex and violence” John Chamberlain throws in.**

V. holds L’s foot. She kneads each muscles part strategically moving her angular, vigorous hands in waves along the footbed, the mid-foot, the toes. C. and C. take time for a yoga session out in the open field. The grass now smells like sun.

My mind is scattered. I have to battle the fickleness of my own mind and judgement. I do enjoy it. It is not like my generation is oblivious to thought, to the struggle with oneself, to emotion or compassion. There is the desire, the strong longing, for it. And forms of protest, too. I find them both in extreme and violent subcultures as well as in peaceful movements and private choices. Like foreseen by the panelists, today everything is much more fragmented, much more polarized but as well much more diverse in a positive sense. The German government just approved same-sex marriages while voters practice “Issue-voting” according to what fits their interests not according to a gridlocked party program anymore.

It seems to me as if there is something in the air that makes today unique and urgent. It might be that we are back at what the scientist Ilya Prigogine called a “Turning point of civilization” .

“What would you like to accomplish in your life?” Brian Redhead asked at the end of the personal interviews that took place before the symposium at the Stedelijk. I always thought that history was something that is written down in books. The thought of my just recently deceased grandmother who was one individual of the last generation that has experienced the second world war. While in my teenage years I wanted to write history, and listened to Indie Rock. A few years later I decided to experience what I thought of as writing history “live” in Cairo during the year after the January 25th Revolution. The transition towards the Muslim Brotherhood and onwards to the return of the military regime. Today I understand that we are constantly writing history, our own individual and thus our collective history. As temporal beings in a non-temporal “multi-verse”.

**“Time is as essential as being” Ilya Prigogine.**

At some point a long discussion between the panelists and their audience catches fire. One man from the audience asks whether or not one should put a child into this world. It is a long discussion about life and death, temporality, meaning, the uniqueness of each life given and each life taken. What kind of a society does it make us to even pose this question? Who is who to judge such an essential part of human nature, whether by decision or by chance? Whether justified by numbers or simply by being real?

**“The nature of reality is an unobjective one. And being alive is something very immediate”**

Evil exists because there is goodness, which means we live in the concept of Dualism. Dualism means that there is Integrity which again means Wholeness. Within this mesh there are things that money can’t buy. Love, compassion and creativity. 2017, we do have the chance to redefine what is supposed to be reality once again. May it be in small or in greater gestures. To do so we need to ask ourselves not “What should I do?” But “What should I be?”. And finally move from fragmentation to wholeness, from quantity to quality, from domination to partnership, from overproduction to sustainability. Merging the economic, the social, the corporate and the cultural into one way of living. It might find its equivalent in a market economy that is decentralized, benevolent, international and healthy. Or simply a correlation in how we deal with each other as human beings on a daily basis. Taking time to listen and to keep silent, to share thoughts, words, comfort just as food or an open door. Creating space for discussion and a shift of our societies paradigms toward cooperation. Creating a “living sculpture” as Joseph Beuys would say.