

# QUEERSCAPES - THE FLOW OF DUNES AND THE GREEN SHIMMER OF THE OASIS ON THE HORIZON

5/6/7 JUNE 2009 CABARET VOLTAIRE | PERLA MODE | ARCHIVES | ZURICH

An ephemeral collective exhibition spanning three days on a walk all in one breath across two spaces and more. Do-it-yourself from archives to everyday life art practices, providing a dense web of insights, approaches, positions, views, perspectives. More than that; and a library, movie program, live performances, talks, discussions, art pieces.

The exhibition does not have the ambition to provide a specific discursive field, to raise manifestos, nor to take them down. Rather, it provides a platform of polyphonic, queerly transgressive voices beyond gender categories, an imaginary, utopian, green space beyond the bloody mass spectacle, «a range of imaginary relations to dominant culture» avoiding mirroring images of mass culture discourses. The exhibition proposes a journey to ourselves in an imagined real space, in which we are not forced to imitate the role behaviors, stereotypes and gestures of dominant culture. A space in which we can realize our desire to be ourselves, outside any exoticizing, projecting and victimizing. Because what makes us our selves in the social context is dominated by the values of that society. «What makes us a particular sort of person in a particular kind of social, economic and political context?»

*«Sights exalted him – the birds and the trees; and made him in love with death – the evening sky, the homing rooks; and so, mounting up the spiral stairway into his brain – which was a roomy one – all these sights, and the garden sounds too, the hammer beating, the wood chopping, began that riot and confusion of the passions and emotions which every good biographer detests.»*

*«Orlando», Virginia Woolf*

A constellation of artists generating the dissemination of variegated «social agents», carriers of messages of different 'wavelengths' of humor, irony,

masquerade, eroticism, arouses turbulent tempests in the landscape, dizzying, disorienting, upsetting the cardinal points, seeking appropriate ground to grow frail roots so that the green utopian spaces, colonies, rhizomatic structures in whimsical shapes may come into leaf, small isles of respite, without fences.

The exhibition is a survey of the interaction between the inner and the outer, the public and the private. In these archives you will find things of a kind that is difficult to archive, such as emotions, feelings, passions. This is why the «good biographer,» as Virginia Woolf calls him, the good collector of factual material and good archivist detests these archives of feelings. Shapeless, abstract things, amorphous, shapeshifting, woven in the fabric of memory are too awkward, rather impossible to index, label and file in the appropriate folders, boxes, drawers, closets, structures. The system of power is just as abstract, ghostly, web-shaped and implicated in chains of mutually interacting communicating agents. The law operates in this territory, attempting to translate things into the language of legislation and to impart on them an acceptable shape. A look at the link between the archive and recollection and the function of memory reveals the relation between individual and collective memory. This is a subversive use in a personal multiple sense of the idea of the archive. On the one hand we want to throw overboard the received categories, do away with fictional values, to stop being prisoners of our own library or archive. On the other, the value of the archive paradoxically leads to feedback in a dual sense, bringing us back from a collective identity to everyday life, to our selves.

Do not expect in this art event to hear «words of confession» – this is not a confessional. You will also look in vain for a spectacle. Rather, look at the exhi-

bition «like an Art Party where everyone's invited.» Indeed, we propose a charming metaphorical journey through the melancholic spaces of your own troubles. Get rid of the tension! Follow the principles of pleasure alone, just and only your own desires! Think about it! It is entirely within your reach. We all have means of moving on. We are all nomads, migrate without end. Our identity is in constant movement, incessant transformation – the metamorphoses of time. Indeed this is the only thing we know for sure. Step by step some crawl, others jump, from moment to moment, day after day, up and down, left and right, walking, making use of various devices, their own feet, a bicycle, motorcycle, car, plane, horse, prostheses. Find your own path, change perspectives, and you'll find unknown views. Speed is not important, nor is the distance covered! Some will get to the corner of the neighboring street, where they can find displacement, appropriating the technologies of disappearance, a gender fading away, transformation, gender-as-neither. «The wind!' he cried.» (Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*) The wind is that which forms the trunks of the trees and makes them rounded. It plays with the sands and molds the dunes, which in the next moment fortuitously disperse without conquest, ownership, colonizing, and chaotically reshape from one wave to the next. We live in a world in fusion, under the heat of the sun, seeking its shape. Consider the attractiveness of «being seen without make-up» (Claude Cahun), the bliss of being 'your real self', make sense of yourself in an 'adorable world' of manifold realities. Timeless. Take a deep breath! Breathe! And no fear whatsoever! If you make a mistake, if you slip, or your plane makes a forced landing, the best recipe for survival is: «Don't be alarmed!» The snake will not strike its poisonous fangs into you. Only morality may urge you to hate yourself. «Do not believe in a right and a wrong way of thinking!» Some may be tempted to call this journey an Odyssey. Let us call it an inverted Odyssey.

The protagonist can be any one of us. Their name varies, because there is no main protagonist, but rather a multitude of characters. There is not one narrative – there are lots of them, which multiply, elastically stretch, convolute, interweave. History is full of combinations, floors, entrances and exits, beginnings and ends. A hullabaloo of voices speaking in different timbres, registers and flows, from different perspectives. Take a walk in this green area of yourself. Memory is fragmented, not linearly constructed, past, future, present blend in all shades. How do you bear living in binaries?

Claude Cahun proposes to mix it all up. In Hans Scheirl's words: «*Another word-game I play is with s/hit: she+he+its/hit!*»

As Hans Scheirl points out, in the German and English languages gender happens, as in many other languages, when you are speaking of or attempting to describe the other. The Other. Slow down to appreciate once again, there, the effect of the mirror, your own face! The mirror that renders your own traits, which stiffen you with horror. Otherness. «*A new verb, a new object and same subject. Always the same chain of complaints.*» (Claude Cahun)

«*These selves of which we are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own, call them what you will (and for many of these things there is no name) so that one will only come if it is raining, another in a room with green curtains, another when Mrs Jones is not there, another if you can promise it a glass of wine – and so on; for everybody can multiply from his own experience the different terms which his different selves have made with him--and some are too wildly ridiculous to be mentioned in print at all.*» «*Orlando*», Virginia Woolf

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We want to overcome the limitations in the structure of language and our cognitive sensitivity, to widen our perception beyond a bio-polar system and a cultural world declined in binaries, which produces hierarchies and opposites, by seeking dynamic links of unrelenting communication and a metamorphosis of the transmission of relations. Because gender is one of the zones we know well from inside and outside. A place where these binary notions most critically cross, and where they are most unstable. This can be viewed in the tension between private and public, visible and invisible, where repression is produced. Against this, we use political disruption, public and private, relying on self-reflective strategies and charming tactics of resistance, against the fetishism of a collectiveness in need of control – a politics of chaos, the queer movement.

*Dimitrina Sevova*

*\*The «green» in the title of the event is a reference to Walt Whitman's «Leaves of Grass», in which he compares people to leaves of grass, growing in all sorts of directions, each leaf entirely different in the general green space, directed towards the sun, shaking in the wind and soaked in the rain. There is no formula, no two genders, just a space without privilege and hierarchy and dominating.*