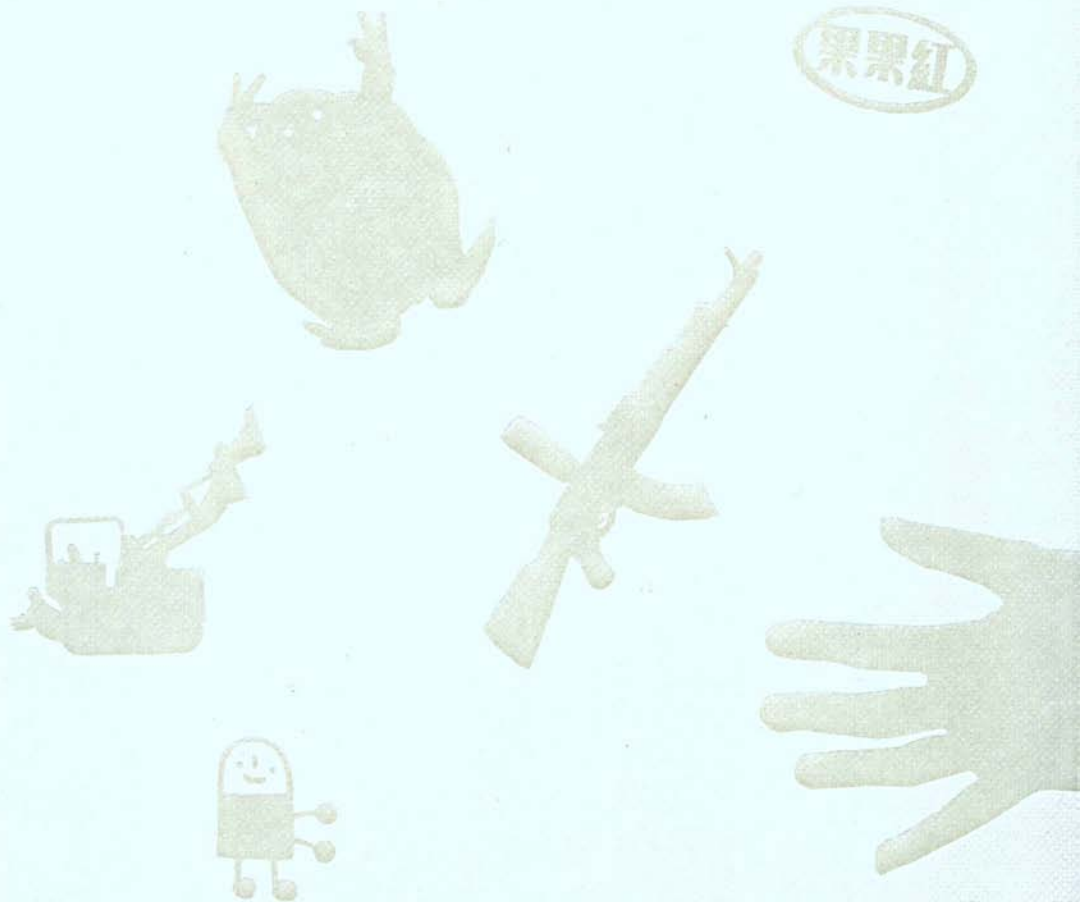


Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway

111 Artists Reveal Their Obsessions



EDITED BY CORNELIA ERDMANN & MICHAEL LEE HONG HWEE

Conversation

SUSANNE BOSCH & JULIA DRAGANOVIC

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This text, by the nature of its content, was written collaboratively because it deals with conversation as a preoccupation. We chose to write to each other with a personal statement to express for a readership and ourselves the quality of conversations that drives this preoccupation.

May 2008: Dear Julia, after spending 10 days together lately, we discovered again our deep need of and satisfaction in talking to each other. After a hard day's work, we were never too tired to invite each other for dinner, to then spend another half a day in conversation. Conversations about art, what drives us, problems, or things we desperately want to change; talks about our relationships, dreams, desires, the books we read... Since we first got to know each other in 2002, we have been in the mood for conversation whenever we meet. I realised at some point in my life that I clarify things by talking about them. And I am learning more by listening to others than by reading books. I feel very connected to other people through communication.

Once I read in a book about love relationships that one should imagine a relationship as the willingness and desire to have a lifelong conversation. I have been having ongoing conversations with some friends for years. My longest conversation is around 25 years old.

When we meet, we have an intense, deep connection that is based on an interest to hear what the other has to share about a topic. You, my conversation partner, give me real answers to serious questions, constructive criticism that help me change, detach and understand, and you give me observations that I usually wouldn't hear or see. I come out of conversations with you feeling very focused,

my thoughts clarified and happy – emotionally, intellectually and spiritually well fed.

May 2008: Dear Susanne, indeed, I feel that I gain focus and clarity with our conversations and am uplifted by them. Some time ago I read Heinrich von Kleist's essay "On the Gradual Production of Thoughts Whilst Speaking." In the beginning I thought it to be very funny, but Kleist is right: You have to listen to yourself to know what you want, feel and think. And listening to somebody else who is engaged in the same issue as yourself, on top of listening to yourself, is enormously fruitful. For a good conversation you need an interlocutor whom you trust and feel at ease with and who gives you the feeling that he or she is interested in what you say. You need to ask the right questions to make a conversation go on and on. Susanne, you have that fantastic ability to make people feel important with the attention you pay to your conversation partner. And this skill of yours is necessary to make your participatory art pieces work.

Of course, the surroundings, the ambience and the atmosphere are also important for a conversation – but these, strangely for the two of us, don't count too much. I remember some telephone calls between Ireland and Italy that lasted for hours; we started with a professional purpose and then we found ourselves talking about everything else that we were wondering and reflecting about in general. And after some years, during which we had hardly seen each other and had never lived in the same city, we already share a history – of conversations – which will hopefully go on forever.

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Conversation

