

The Master Presentation

The performance happens in an exhibition space with an installation on display. The presentation takes place within the context of a diploma jury, it is the continuation of a dance performance where the performer ends up in a Brazilian thong.

(JM) Hi everybody, thank you for being here at this presentation. I might start by introducing a bit the context of the research and give you some key elements to understand it.

As some of you may know, Harvey Sacks is an American sociologist born in 1935. He contributed to the development of a sociological trend called ethnomethodology. It is concerned with the methods used by members of a given social community to act in a concerted manner. Sacks is also known for having founded conversational analysis.

Conversational analysis is a discipline close to ethnomethodology which studies conversation as a prototypical form of social activity, governed by a set of tacit and shared rules. Sacks then specialized in the study of varied materials like proverbs, dirty jokes or children's stories. He considered these elements as so many manifestations of the ingenious organisation of our social activities.

From his approach and relationship to data, Sacks once said: Once it is out, it is anybody's.

Harvey Sacks died prematurely in 1975 in a car accident. He left a large number of articles collected in a book; *Lectures on Conversation*. This book shows the consistency of an original reflection on the relations between language, culture, identities and social activities.

Talking about the work of an American sociologist from the 60s, might seem disconnected to introduce the practice of a contemporary artist. The comparison is not random though.

While studying at the Work.Master, I started to be aware of the importance of the discourse and the forms of organization it takes. With an initial training in visual communication, this program has been to me an introduction to a certain system of contemporary art, its dynamics and power relationships.

I started doing art as a kid. I am the first boy after five sisters. Arriving a little later, I was very much integrated into their games, but always a bit off. Very quickly, I became their favourite doll. With golden hair, dark eyes and transparent eyebrows, I was very tiny and easily transportable. In many ways, I was not only listening to their stories; I was living them. Through their gaze, I started to perform my own reality by being both actor and spectator to the scene. This has remained a characteristic of mine, I always end up being part of a group, without belonging. This lack of consistency and its narcissistic aspect gave my sisters my nickname, Petite fleur, the one who doesn't wake up in the morning, vain and disconnected. It comes from the movie *Sister Act* with Whoopi Goldberg. Studying art thus seemed to be a perfect match for me, at least at first sight.

In this Master, I discovered the necessity I had to learn a specific language in order to exist within this context. Those three years at HEAD gave me the conversational tools and understanding to situate my work and explain it, potentially also to say that I have nothing to say about the different pieces presented here.

As Sacks said, once it's out there, it belongs to anyone.

Translating elements and contexts to new ones, the methodology the artist used is similar independently from the medium he chooses. It is a collage system that builds up sequences and inserts autobiographical and personal facts as narration tools. The artist becomes then a subject of studies and a protagonist, underlying what is common and shared.

The set of works presented by the artist is focused on a research on Brazilian carnival and the body as a tool of emancipation. The audio piece is a bit more than thirty minutes long and is constituted of one text, simultaneously played in French and Portuguese. It explains the relationship of the author with Brazil, situating himself within the context of the two languages, and tells his fascination with a lost island he might be from but doesn't really belong to. It integrates different popular Brazilian songs from various genres, also known outside of Brazil, that illustrate a cultural use of entertainment as a space of protest or critics. The works use the grammatical logic of carnival, using a defined classical vocabulary, but perverting it. There might have nothing to add about the pieces. You may ask what to say about it and for what purpose?

In his Writings, Donald Judd recalls the words of Barnett Newman, according to whom art theory is to artists what ornithology is to birds. Judd is right to point out that these are two distinct contexts of activity within the field: the one of art and the one of discourse on art.

To illustrate that, we can take up the example invented by Sacks of the *commentary machine* exhibited at a fair and composed of two parts. One part that makes, and the other that describes what is made. The metaphor serves here the purpose of a reflection on the relationship between saying and doing. Smashed by the machine, the artist work can only exist under the conjunction of those two different aspects, the discourse been the main card in the speculative game of representation it belongs to.

The main question is thus what is real and what is artificial, and how the conjunct of the two creates a narration on artists identities. I never read Donald Judd, please note that this presentation is thus mainly appropriated and adapted from the text of sociologist Yaël Kreplak, « Once it is out, it is anybody's », *Quelques remarques sur les méthodes de Leibovici*.

(LILI) Élisabeth Lebovici?

(JM) No Frank Leibovici. Actually the full text is in the book, I had to cut some part as it was too long. You have the pages on the back. You have also the full text of the audio piece with a short chapter that situated myself as an individual. I'm Swiss-Irish and my dad is married to a Brazilian. I started learning Portuguese with 13.

(LILI) Ha, ok and... (she asks another question, to be defined)

(JM) (He answers)

(Jury, normal continuation, random questions)