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***Why did you opt for collaboration?***

It wasn't like a decision, it came more like an experience. When I first collaborated with Teresa and Lukas, when I was still studying video-art in Basel, it felt like a liberation because before I had this problem of not really knowing what to do in between so many interests and different questions, and when we started collaborating all of those things found their space and their time. So, I was like growing into that. I felt just much better collaborating than treating things alone.

***Since how long have you been doing it?***

For about 20 years now. You know, in the beginning we were doing little projects but since then we were touching things together, with those two persons, and more.

***Have you had individual practice besides the collaboration?***

Yes I had a lot and also have it, I mean it is also important to retire a bit, to deepen your doubts, to sketch things that are very fuzzy, but somehow – I was thinking of it reading your questions – somehow it is always regarding things we have in the air together.

***Is the creativity that you apply when doing your own things is anyhow different from what is generated in the collaboration?***

I don't know. To think of it from my experience, ideas are somehow always the product of collaborative or dialogical processes or energies. With other words I would say: 'We are real but I am not'. Like, I only can see myself in others. And that's also how we generate new information or new ideas. So, I don't know this difference between an individual or collective creativity, because when I think about it, I never can tell who had a specific idea, but I can remember the dynamic that brought it up. Even when I'm alone, because then I have a silent dialog or just remember – you know what I mean.

***Sure.***

So that's actually why I like not to read my name but the group's name.

***What happens if the group dissolves?***

I don't know. Now I'm in three groups, so I have some in reserve (laughing). I mean, I feel so fine with that. I'm also very grateful in the sense that there is always some trust in others if I'm losing it. It's mainly about close friendships and then comes art.

***So far you already answered the question why collaboration attracts you. Could you attempt to formulate it from a negative point of view?***

Like what?

***I can make an example. One of the persons I interviewed said the he prefers collaboration because there he feels safer. So, by negatively I mean that collaboration can be a solution to a problem that you have with yourself.***

Aha. I never thought about it. In the sense it can be, that I make decisions easier if I can put my doubts on the table. So I can answer the same as the other guy you talked to, that I feel more quickly to be sure of something that it is good or it is bad. Just because of having this feedback. But I don't consider it as something negative. Actually, that wasn't so much of a problem to me. Even, I would say, in our case, what CALC has been trying to do, it's the other extreme. That we feel stronger to touch certain subjects that nobody wants to talk about not because they are so aggressive and radical but because they are so subtle, so much taboo.

***What do you think in your character favors collaborative work and what's that doesn't?***

I think that art as well as love is about the wish to give something, right? And not so much about the wish to receive. And that favors it very strongly as I strongly feel the wish to express myself, to put even stupid things on the table just because I wonder what will happen with them. I mean, it can be a nice breakfast but also a good idea. Or a good question. Now after all these years I got also experienced, also because it's always the same people around in Calc, in how to listen, how to be more open and to be easier with critique and opinions that counter my ideas. So I think that favors, that I'm able to listen and have the wish to give.

***This ability of your to listen, did that develop during these 22 years? It wasn't present at the beginning?***

No. When I look back, I always thought I was good at it, but it wasn't true. I remember that we even talked about what we then called 'condividuality', you remember?

***Yeah.***

Because that was something that I was always wondering about, like 'Where do ideas come from?', 'How gets new information generated?', and that time I might have thought and said stupid things, but in the meantime I learned that they are generated in dialogue. I'm convinced of that. Also it makes me very much surprised that there are not much more still active groups. Because I understand it as people are all the time fall back into their individual images, instead of keeping the possibility of collaboration alive in all kinds of processes. To me to do collaboration is much more about touching my insecurities – because it might be easier to construct my individual image, my individual Omi, you know, to construct my individual security. That's why I said before that for me it's somehow the opposite. I need the group to risk more the things that we don't know than to find the strength in it that then allows us to be radical.

***What is your strategy in the creative processes in the group? I suppose it's different than it used to be, as you mentioned that now you are more able to listen...***

It's not only about listening to the others and understanding better the fine tones of what they are telling me, but also, and therefore being also able to feedback better, but also to listening better to my own feelings and my subtle perceptions. So the strategy changed in that we have it easier to make decisions. That changed a lot. I remember we were writing a lot of papers, we were moving texts a lot around among us, and that somehow disappeared. We still need texts, and we still like to write concepts and stuff, but we don't need them that much anymore to imagine something together and then to make decisions towards a realization.

***This sounds more to be a community, not like a collaboration-based group.***

You can maybe say that because we are based on friendship and not that much on interests. It started that we cultivated trust and not a name, you know what I mean.

***What's your role in it? Suppose, every person has a specific role in a group...***

In practical terms everybody is everybody. But of course everybody has his or her strength. And if it is stressful and we have to decide who takes which direction or responsibility, I'm always the visual guy, just because I really like to visualize – if you were here you would see all these clipboards around, big sheets of paper – systems that allow us to visualize together things – I also call it 'out-casting' our imagination, so that we empty to go on imagining again. And I like a lot to work on these systems to improve collective imagination, long before we bring something to the stage (of realization). So I have this role, I'm a bit the inventor. And Lukas is a bit like the housekeeper, to go on with these simple clichés, and Teresa is simply the mamma, the lady who strikes on the table if there's too much of craziness, because she can feel in which direction we shouldn't go, where not to invest more energy, mainly because she is the most critical of us.

***That was you more like from the point of view of the distribution of tasks. How is it in more psychological terms? If we consider Teresa to be the mamma...***

I'm the child. I mean, the player. You now, when there is an invitation and we decide to go for it, just for you to imagine, Teresa goes to lay on a sofa for some weeks. She has to read, to dream, to sleep, to cook – and that's it. She doesn't even talk that time. It can seem very weird from outside. And I'm the opposite, I need to touch, I need to turn, to make models, you know. To find things by playing, by touching things. And Lukas in the meantime is with the manuals. Because as soon as we touch something, he needs to know what could

technologically enrich that, so he always needs to learn something new, and therefore spends his time with the manuals.

***Have you ever had frustrations related to collaborations? Like more long-term crises?***

Not in this constellation. There were always these very specific point-like problems that we had to go through and we had to learn to understand them. And by the way I think those problems are very similar even when you work alone, you just don't have or you don't want so many feedbacks.

***What kind of rules or practical instances had you established in order to preserve the integrity of the group?***

It's a good question but I'm afraid my answer will sound quite hippy-like. In the beginning we had these rules, we had all kinds of rules, trying to intensify our collaboration – just to increase the potentiality, not to lose time, not to fool around too much, formulating rules about language, about rhythm, about everything, but all of them failed. The only rule that left – it sounds weird but it's true – it's trust. I can illustrate it with what I said before, like when Teresa goes to lay down on the sofa, I have to trust the sofa and Teresa on it. And I know that I have all trust when I have to play or to buy some stupid stuff that nobody needs but I do. So, all have been minimized to this almost religious category. Because what is trust, in the end? So, we were growing in that but through trying every kind of rules before. Now, when we rented the studio, the only rule was that we have to show up every day between ten and twelve o'clock in the morning.

***You see, that's a rule!***

Yeah, but also very ridiculous.

***I'm very much interested in little ridiculous things, too.***

I mean, we are very straight within our group. Which means that every 'yes' has to be meant. I don't even remember when it happened the last time that a 'yes' later on became a 'maybe' or an 'I forgot'. So it is encouraging to know that I can be hundred percent sure, and can hundred percent trusted in every decision we make. Is this a rule? I don't know, but it's something that works. Maybe we had these kinds of mistakes, but than we told each-other: 'Look!', If we say yes, then that has to be something that we will bring to an end, and not to lose energy in doing things half-way. But we don't have a list of rules that would function as a guideline.

***What do you think of compromises?***

I love them and hate them, it depends on which context or problem they appear. I do like very much the kind of compromise from which I learn that – like when the feedback was better than the idea expressed, I like to learn to be honest facing that, and then to take a compromise saying 'yes, you're right. That's more apt to express what we are trying to find.' On the other hand, like now we had this invitation from the new art center here, where they want to do this inauguration thing with us, and then we were asked to do a compromise after we had been invited with an idea, so they asked us, after everything seemed to be clarified, to put everything on the table and then to decide about what we can do and what we cannot do. And of course nobody liked that idea and now we are trying to write a pare in which we say, 'Listen, this is the content and these are the people that will work on it – as you always knew – and add a curriculum to tell them that we are not children...

***Except for you...***

..(laughing) so: yes or no, that's what it is about. So compromises always depend on the context.

***I would be curious about compromises within the group and not necessarily with the outside world.***

I'm completely fine with that – that was what the first part of my answer referred to. Compromises are never just *per se*. It's always about the quality of an idea or of a decision. As I also said, that I'm finer at listening and more fine tuned to what the other is right or more precise about. And then I can say, 'Yes! You're right'. But that's always integrated in the process, because the decisions we always have to take together. And a lot of them are made of compromises. But normally, right, we understand compromise as something that is going against your decision. It is something that takes something off of what you originally wanted to do. But it's not like that, it is a compromise that enriches the project. And just to finish with this question, these punctual crises that I had mentioned were always brought about by compromises that felt to take off something from the original idea of one of the persons. So we had to go on talk and to draw and to project until we got it.

***Have you ever felt exploited in the group?***

Yes.

***How did you solve that?***

By expressing it. And.. I'm not sure... but I think by finding out that I was wrong. You remember what I had said about the sofa and the child? You know, I felt I was working, and they were not. They were laying around and reading books. Of course that's stupid but in a moment when you are not so sure about what you were doing, you are trying so many things and you feel a bit alone with that. You want to play together, no? And then I put out several times that I felt exploited. And then we spoke, we looked at things together and then I saw that it was not like that. I felt exploited but in reality I wasn't exploited.

***What would be the point when you'd decide to quit a collaborative relation?***

I don't know. Now I'm in a new relationship which is going really well. And we are playing a bit with the idea to travel, to live a bit here, a bit there – it's like dreams. And I would consider that a step that would bring such a consideration close. But remembering this there's no reason to quite because we always went on even when we were far, so I don't know, I can't imagine abusing so much trust. We are too far into it... Maybe if one of them would kill my mother? (laughing)

***What kinds of traps do you perceive in individual proceedings that collective work can be a solution to? And vice versa: what kinds of danger collectivity can bring about, that individual art-making can be a solution to?***

The first part: for me the whole – I'm a bit exaggerated and radical now, but someone has to be so, I guess – so: I think the whole art world, since the emancipation from the popes, the kings and all the representations of power, after which we conceived a certain autonomy as individuals, is but one big trap. Because this identification, and nowadays a see it very reactionary going back to all these painters and other geniuses. For me it's all about a big illusion. It is in philosophical terms. It's not true that the basis for art is the individual. It's bullshit. It was important theoretically and politically to demonstrate that but just as a concept of liberation. Since this has been understood, I don't know why people fall back again and again So the trap is that we cultivate an illusion with that. Of course it's legitimate to do anything, and you learn what you learn, but what they sell, what in this stage of art is being cultivated again so strongly by that, is cultivating an illusion than morally doesn't change anything in society. They are just reactionary assholes. You know, on the other side, we got so much criticized in a very banal and also very hysterical way, from the part of even interesting artists, who called us cyber-hippies and all this bullshit, just because they didn't want to talk about how ideas come up. These things are much more open secrets in scientific circles, for example. That's why those guys generate much more ... have much more effect on the world – I don't say it's a good or a bad effect, but it's much more relevant in terms of transformation. Because they have the culture of exchanging ideas, of giving, of passing things on. Of course they have vanity and all these stuff, but it is another consciousness about the individual and about the collective. I'm sure that 'we' are more real than 'I' am. So that's the trap – that we are boxing with our shadows.

And on the other hand, about getting lost in collective work, when you asked me, I thought of a phrase I liked very much when I was young and desperately seeking for my things, and then I read this sentence from an American psychologist (forgot his name), and he was saying: 'Before you can be nobody, you have to be somebody'. That means, before you can collaborate, you have to be someone. And that's what the danger is, that you are nobody when you start to collaborate and then you become even more nobody – just like TV makes clever people more clever and stupid people more stupid.

***How did that work in your case?***

In think it was kind of on the edge. Because when I expressed in the video class my doubts about how we are going, like for example we were studying in this fantastic school with so much technology and so much money, in Basel, and it was the first or the second year when I came, and then they gave us this 'diploma year', and I thought, nice, now we are going to do a nice diploma with all this technology and then we will go out and we don't have anything. And then I wanted to talk about how a group could build up things, how we could transform the diploma into a problem from an art piece, and through those questions I met Teresa and Lukas, as they expressed them almost simultaneously, so we shared much related to these questions. So, in a way I think, to start it – I told you we started with friendship, not with 'artship' – we were like growing into it, but having tried a lot of things before. For me it was clear that I want to do art. But it was not clear what it means for me. And we developed that together.

***In aesthetical terms, art produced collectively is any different from art produced individually?***

I have the feeling, it does. To be black and white about it, when I look at collective works I like a lot, then they are less kitsch, they are more complex, full of information, just by the fact that more people's work is present in them.

***I have the feeling that a difference can be that individual art is less controlled on a theoretical level. It doesn't need so much justification as when you collaborate and discuss in all stages of the creative process – so there can be more 'mistakes' in them that in cases can also enrich them.***

Yes... I know what you mean, but considering ourselves as the best ever collective, and knowing how we are working, I think we are aware of this importance of the mistake, so that we don't erase mistakes and even communicate them.

***This means that you have to respect the mistake in the others...***

Yes, in the others and also in what we bring up all together. To get back to what you said, I think this danger presents itself when language is put above everything. If things are more visual, or even I would say more poetic, like as we used to say, it's the quality of a relation that makes the quality of the art piece, then even from that point of view is very important that mistakes remain part of it. Because they make it beautiful, they make it stronger – they make it accessible. We are aware of that, we don't look for that intentionally, but we try not to erase them, and foremost we try not to let everything through a language-filter the way we did in the beginning.

***What do you think of political activism, which – in art – is very often linked to collectives, groups?***

What I told you in the beginning about this book project I'm doing, was that I'm going so much into these circles now. Even some people that we had so much problems at *Big Torino*, if you remember, are now part of this book. At the beginning for it was only about helping them with the layout, proposing something for these four hundred pages, and then learning more and more about the content and the archive that these people had put together, which was a huge and also very interesting work from the point of view how they proceeded in doing it with their methods, so in the meantime I was also growing into the city, so that the book I have been editing became like a city-guide for me. And I respected very much... for the first time, for myself, for ourselves, I felt that we could do interesting collaborations because there's one super big lack- that was also the problem we had in Torino and other occasions, with people, and that is exactly what I meant before: language beyond everything. And that makes it very difficult in terms of aesthetics. You know, I'm not talking about beauty...

***Could you elaborate on this concept of language being above everything?***

I'm criticizing it, I think it's a problem that they put language above everything. That it gets very fast an ideology, which is the 'right' one, and a project which is developed against the 'bad' one. And I don't think this thing works. I don't think reality is made of right and wrong. And what I saw in the book, what was also very nice, in this South Spanish context, is that these people are incredibly open to let us give form to their content. Not just like not taking care about it, but learning and giving us more in-depth information – it's nice doing it. And through this experience we just decided, about activism and art, that we, Pam (Omi's girlfriend) and me, we want to do a series of works on the streets of Seville, which is very much of a postcard city with a lot of empty beauty – so we want to do with wallpaper and writings, giving like transparency to the walls. Half a year ago if anyone had told me to something like that it would have been impossible, but it came through learning about how these people try to do creative proposals or provocative answers to political problems.

***Hey man, you are becoming an activist and will put language above everything...***

(laughing) Yes, but you should see what kind of language.  
Language that is playful; it's not a message, rather a provocation.