

Raúl Hott: You have said several times you don't want people writing PhD's about what your practice with refugees –and activism in general– implying basically that we need action, that is not a matter of just reading theory, and instead is matter of basically put your hands on the work.

Jouliia Strauss: Yes. And experience shows that in many cases when people are truly curious and honest about approaching Athens, they are still replicating the class society we live in. And it becomes a "lackmuspapper." The landscape becomes a lackmuspapper immediately indicating the problems of the class society we live in and also the sadomasochistic relationship between Greece and Germany, or Northern Europe and Southern Europe, on the example of academics who are actually activists. For example, when anthropologists come to Athens, what do they do? What tools do they have? What approaches can they offer when they come to Athens? First of all, they offer the approaches they have been preconditioned to, and these are the approaches to write about. These ethnological approaches of the traveller scientists who goes somewhere to have holidays in someone else's misery. This is why the most plausible reaction to things that are happening in Athens is to write about them. I'm trying to break this frame with Avtonomi Akademia. When you change the format and you create a different format, you can create platforms that confront people as a community, rather than keep perpetuating the academic culture. In that framework, is ridiculous and ethically irresponsible to behave top down and to behave as an observer. And in that way, then people get involved.

RH: I'm interested in that new form of offering and providing help. Today, I was thinking about Rachel Clarke's practice with the storytelling and also about your practice. You know each other, you are friends, and there are so many patterns between these two practices. It's really interesting for me the way Rachel is thinking of integration, and preparing the refugees to integrate them but at the same time refusing to loose their own heritage and values. In that way, how would you describe your own set of tools?

JS: The set of tools is not as professionalized as a theatre director can offer them. In the case of artist, there is always a certain degree of anarchy. And there is always a certain degree of devastating lack of any kind of professionalism. Because our only professionalism is to loose professionalism. You know this approach very well: the anti-discipline and emancipatory approach of an artist beyond the modernity is to loose this professional and sub-systemic competence. For instance, of using brushes, or the using the set of tools of NGO's when it comes to help. That's why my set of tools is my hands, legs, cat brain, and some kind of particular dance. You are dancing when you are getting into a refugee camp. And, I cannot say that approaching immigration as an issue this dance is in any way different than approaching, let's say, for example the highest level of academy in Germany I work with. It's exactly the same dance. It's a Cat Dance. And, while you are dancing you are encountering certain living beings in this space. And there are relations that are being created within the context of you putting yourself into it, visiting a camp, or visiting a university.

My approach comes from the very politicized angle of the global revolution. So in every experiment you already know what you're looking for. And that is why for example in 'Universitas' project, which we did, I was looking for the relations between people I know from Berlin and how they are connected to Athens. For example, one could think that you enter the camp and the refugees are just jumping and participating in your workshops, but this is how it looks like to public when you are communicating this project. But in fact it's the relations that have been created are for me the result of a cat dance. For example, Mohammad Abu Hajar whom I've met in an extremely cold demonstration in Berlin has connected me with Ahmad

Alkhatieb who was staying at Skaramagas when we, by coincidence, came there to do the workshops. This background is irrelevant for the public but these are the actual undercurrents that make this community. In this community there are no nations. These people who are part of a community, they would never think that they are currently being integrated into something. It's a different language. People reduce it to some kind of subculture, to some sub-language or to grassroots' initiatives. The answer to this question can be also the answer to a question about the PhD's. It's all one.

RH: Today it is obvious how we are surrounded by choreographies of help that are performed by the authorities and different institutions and NGO's coming from Europe and the US. There is a tendency to replicate, in an unconscious way, different forms of violence. It's a loop. And it feels at the same time that despite all the help that is being provided, at the end nothing changes. Which is also the case of Daniyal; he and his family have spent their whole life in the condition of refugees. How difficult is to think about a different option for their lives? And I'm wondering, what would need to happen to provoke a real change within this situation?

JS: There is nothing that is really civil in our society; everything is military. And when an NGO's enters the camp, there are many of interests that are related to that. And the same can be said about individuals replicating the structure of the society they live in. In which, obviously the person without any legal status is situated far below of a person who is coming to help. Because of course, automatically, the person starts replicating the structures of violence because the person is inscribed into a certain social political behavioral pattern. And we can face the situation, we can see this truth about ourselves, and we can recognize our privileges if we dare to go into that world.

The camp is a completely different world, where the law of the jungle is ruling and where the people look at you and just ask themselves: Can they use you? Did you bring any drugs? Can they have sex you? Can you take them to Germany? Can you give them some money? Do you have connections with somebody in the Ministry of Migration? Nobody sees you as a human being. And, do you have you have a problem with that? If you have a problem with people seeing you like this, then you don't realize in what kind of situation they are. So you experience a completely different type of relations to human beings in the camps. And it's totally fine. But you have to be ready for that.

So concerning the problems of what NGO's are doing in the camps, it's a big generalization because many people use the structures called NGO's in order to really help people. And also many people who are refugees are hired by the NGO's, so for many people who is longing for status and looking for a job, it's a great opportunity to establish themselves within this society by going step by step. It is a structure that can be heavily abused for the purposes that are so urgent. And we are not in a luxury position of choosing between options. We only have extremely bureaucratized and de-personified structures of NGO's and they have dark interests of being there and also some bright interests of being there. And again, you navigate within this reality that is fragmented within the entire structure up and down for the whole society.

They're all living beings that are ghosts in the shell. They are exceptions as human beings. And this specific reality will take Daniyal's family to meet a lot of those exceptions to get out of this status they are currently unfortunately in. But I really believe in Daniyal and he's making very strong steps towards that. And he will trigger humanity in all the people. Yesterday he promised me 3 things, that no matter what he will: 1. Not break. 2. Not let his heart become stone, and 3. Not lose fire and curiosity for his education.

RH: Have you met in the past other refugees with the same strength as Daniyal?

JS: If it's about strength, no, I have never experienced anyone like this. He is struggling alone. He is struggling with a military camp. This is Elephsina. It's isolated from the city, there are not acceptable hygienic conditions in it, there are no walls, there is just moist, which is very dangerous and it damages the body of the human beings. These camps are so dysfunctional, because many generations are thrown into one very small environment, which has a psychoactive acoustics, so everybody suffers strong headaches. Because if you are constantly exposed to enormous cacophonous environments, these voices at some point have very strong influence in your psyche, and you can't learn, you can't think. So these are dehumanizing conditions. They live with their big families within very small rooms, there are drug dealers in the camp, and there's alcoholism. So what kind of camp is this? Why is still supposedly regulated by the military, if this is just a disaster, which is even worse than maybe living in the street? But that's what Daniyal has struggled with. For being just a 15-year-old teenager, he has made a revolution in the camp. It's his own personal revolution for obtaining his education. The way he acts inside and outside of this camp, all the relationship he created with everybody who has ever passed that camp, it makes him a unique human being for showing to others what is possible. I'm sure he will struggle for justice, not just in theory, but also from the experience.

I also met other ones, maybe they didn't experience these spectacular versions, but throughout the entire life they have to deal with having to create an exception. Having a system to make an exception. Change the system by forcing it to make an exception even if the regulations are such and such. They just changed them all the time. This it is actually at the end, beyond any heroism, what we are doing all the time: to change this status quo of our existence in our society, which is CAMP. We need to open the spaces of freedom, and protect them, no matter if it's Documenta, and no matter if it's outside of Documenta. The human being has issues to solve, if it wants to continue. Chelsea Manning was one of these great people, of course, who created exceptions for himself.

RH: From the interviews I read on the Universita's book, in many cases you can feel that these people have a tremendous inner force that pushes themselves to seek not only help for them as individuals, but also for the rest of their people. They have something else that I could describe as a drive for triggering changes in a bigger scale.

JS: Yes. It's definitely not focused on their own problems. The ones speaking in the book are pointing at some problems and making some problems public.

RH: I have the feeling that they know that even if they have the chance of losing the status of refugee, their battle is not over, and they need to continue fighting and working for more changes.

JS: Right, they have seen the impossibility of help, the failure of any successful and positive intervention. The situation in Syria shows that we live in a financial dictatorship, it shows that we cannot actually help and points to the real reason and truth about the reality we live in. It had shed lights on something we were hoping doesn't exist, onto something we thought we simply shouldn't look at because it's too complex. But, it shed lights on the facts of involvement of Europeans, for instance, in the interest in which the war was conducted in the Middle East. The migration situation shows that Europe is complicit with the war in Syria. Everybody needs these conflicts. Nobody wants to accept the truth, because if they would accept the truth, we

would lose our identity as these nice Europeans. There are no nice Europeans, and yesterday, for example, the car industry of Germany just decided not to change. I'm sorry to jump to another subject but it's all interconnected because the car industry is the war industry, which exports weapons to Syria. The impossibility of help is showing something tremendously important and something that is horrendous and devastating. Europe doesn't exist the way it pretends it exists. It's not democracy at all, and this was clear to us, but now people who thought differently at some point are starting to see and discover this reality.

Whenever something happens in Europe, people start blaming the dictators, criticizing some powers that have been those problematic regions. Now, everybody wonders about the situation in Syria, but the NGO's that go to Syria make a lot of harm because they make people pacify. They quiet the people down, and they have to rise up against Assad, instead of being satisfied with the work of NGO's feeling the gaps in the Syrian society, and not saying anything against the regime, which remains the same. The realization of necessity of help is not the realization about having to act because of compassion. It's a maternal discourse to act out of compassion. I don't give a shit about these maternal discourse actions. To clean the shit after the children – called presidents of the complicit corrupt governments– by treating the side effects like a social worker. I refuse to become this social worker as a type of an artist who is even in the damage of the financial dictatorship. Of course, it's because our struggles are bounded with the struggles of refugees for the borders. And at the same time, they are totally bounded with struggles of artists against the separation of the world and parasitic behavior of capitalist countries. It's us helping particular cases, and that's also why these representatives of the particular cases are hanging out with us. They are helping us to help them. And they are helping us to get united in our help to them out of reason of necessity of breaking the borders from both directions.

RH: I'm wondering about the way you describe this whole picture, and I ask myself, then what? Where do you see this mess going? Is there any path for someone who would like to provoke some bigger scale displacement or transformation? Basically, what can we do?

JS: This displacement, movement, transformation, change is kind of an expectation of something that should go in a good direction, which means that now it's a bad direction.

RH: Exactly.

JS: I don't think that Homo sapiens will ever get better. The consciousness' jump will never jump. It's about the amount of those Homo sapiens that have already jumped, and about they're interconnectedness. It's like measuring powers. There will be always visitors of McDonalds. They will not vanish, unless there will be a catastrophe, and then in that case we will vanish with them. But the jump of consciousness for everybody that will stop all wars forever, according to probability calculations, is not going to occur unless Homo sapiens die. But the form of death of the Homo sapiens is still a question. What would it be? What kind of form? The best jump I would imagine for the Homo sapiens now is actually to finally exit. To exit itself as Homo sapiens. I think that's the best jump that Homo sapiens could do. The only jump I can imagine is that it stops existing in this form. Because it has compromised this form. This form doesn't work anymore.

RH: I'm aware of how much criticism has received the idea of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene.

JS: Finally yes.

RH: Yes. But what I like about them is that somehow they are pushing everyone to think of these possibly exits.

JS: Is not necessarily those discourses that pushes humanity to think what we can do. I think that, unfortunately, in most of the cases, it's not these people who propose these terms, and it's also not us, and not me, who actually cause some things. We totally overestimate our role in everything that is going on. It is this situation that forced us to think about we to do. The fact that we live in a gas condom has caused the discussion about what we do, and not the Anthropocene or Capitolocene. It's just a lie that we have suddenly started to think about what are we going to do, because we realized that we are confronted with the questions of survival. And therefore, we have to think about Anthropocene and Capitalocene, and also in the context of Art. "We have invented a new form of art which are workshops in the refugee's camp". No! Art in the 21st century is not claiming any kind of unique inventions; it's doing what is needed to be done. Is making art, in this world, by reacting to things. And of course automatically the question of migration occurs on the way. There is nothing unique, there is nothing bad, there is nothing good in it, it just occurs. Because the phenomenon of immigration is obviously very difficult to oversee.

So if you're an artist, you are not necessarily a vampire who is trying to divert some Foundations' attention to the issue of migration by doing refugee's projects. You are per se just a person who lives in this society where immigration has become an omnipresent issue, and you as an artist are encountering it. So the form of art that emerges, is not thanks to the super artist of the 21th century, but the situation has caused a new type of art to emerge. And of course, there were refugee's workshops in the camps before we did it. But I have a crazy assumption and feeling that it has not occurred until now in this specific space, time and geopolitical context during the Documenta, in a contrast to the normal Documenta program. So there is some specific constellations to this form of which is called "workshops in refugee camps", that has its own "Athens-2017-Scaramanga" kind of thing.

But talking about this jump, it's fine if Homo sapiens will exit. It's really fine. We always are afraid of something, and if we completely lose fear then we can easily accept the idea that Homo sapiens will die. I don't care; I don't like Homo sapiens that much. And so, if it dies, I mean, we are worse than cockroaches, and if one cockroach dies, I don't care. The Homo sapiens has been an experiment. Homo sapiens is not what it always has been. We are an experiment, which failed, and it's fine. Experiments fail; it's not a problem. But if you're talking about the lives, where will we find them? We all as homo sapiens we carry elements of some energetic phenomenons that are causing amazement in us. They are a little of a compass for us, and we all have this inner compass. When you help, you recognize yourself in everything that you encounter. Because you feel connected to it, and you really feel pain for it, you feel uncomfortable if you see the suffering of somebody else. There is inner this fire telling you something about equality, and there is an instinct of this inner fire to connect to others because the inner fire feels that the 'Oneness' is gorgeous. So when we hang out together we are gorgeous because we are together. I think when people come together with refugees they become gorgeous. That's why they want to have refugees, is because they want to become gorgeous.

RH: This is the way of understanding the basic configuration of being together.

JS: Yes, and sharing status, sharing privileges. So there is a lot of optimism. There is an ecstatic, orgiastic, enthusiastic, optimistic chance for a new homo sapiens. Meow.

