

TEXT BY JESUS PALOMINO

Group Show "COSMOPOLITAN STRANGER"

Open University of Diversity. Hasselt, Belgium. May 2012.

I was not supposed to participate. Not even I was invited to be there. Everything happened in a curious and unexpected manner from the beginning.

The title of the show was *Hotel de Inmigrantes* and I really felt related to the whole experience as a such, as an immigrant: not invited in advance, my unexpected presence and my name not on the list.

Anyhow, the title itself of the Group Show "*Cosmopolitan Stranger*" connected to the event *Hotel de Inmigrantes* became very meaningful to me. I was a *Stranger* and in a way an *Immigrant worker* because I arrived in *Open University of Diversity* just to help Charles Citron to install his art works at the show.

But I like *Hotels* and I enjoy *cosmopolitanism*. Probably that was the reason for me to fit easily at that environment of artists working and living together during 10 days.

Indeed, the experience became for me a very interesting chance to meet artist from all around the world while showing and the perfect opportunity to demonstrate cooking skills. One afternoon, Charles Citron from Amsterdam, Arun Khumar from Delhi and me from Spain, spent at least 2 hours preparing meat balls for 40 persons. The experience became very intense and full of joyful energy. I had not cooked never ever for such a group of people before. It really became a party of good feelings afterwards during the dinner because everyone there, as hungry immigrants, felt grateful to our cooking.

All those small and discreet domestic details of our time at Hasselt could be considered unimportant issues. Personally, I think genuine communication and human effective interchange are the most important ingredients when you invite such a group of individuals to live and work for a period of time at the same place. I do not say that other aspects such as *art production*, *mediatic presence*, *criticism*, *agency*, and so on so forth, could not be considered, but, I take the risk to acknowledge that any artistic event of this nature (for instance *Hotel de Inmigrantes*) taking not into account the essential reality of human communication could fail easily repeating the same uncritical patterns maintained by other established art events around the world.

The *differential space of human intersubjectivity* at work was displayed at Open University of Diversity as a natural ingredient of our days there. Maybe because I was not invited and I felt at the beginning impressed by the stuffed animals around us; the dislocated location itself and the communal living conditions helped to assure that the *human* became the clearest and most present issue at the place.

One afternoon while walking on the city with Charles Citron and Arun Khumar, the bells of the main church in Hasselt were used to play music, a beautiful and generous public open air concert of bells played by an anonymous and invisible musician located at the bell tower and its carillon. We seated down to listen while chatting. It was a brilliant

moment. The bells played "*I just called to say I love you*" by Stevie Wonder and at that moment I realized that I was at the perfect spot with the precise persons in the most open art event that I have never joined.

I know that sounds bombastic and my impressions on HDI could be considered as a fantastic uncritical narration of the event... Well, that's true but that's the way it happens to immigrants: the most unmeaningful and humble domestic everyday life events make the difference because when anyone is exposed to survival conditions of displacement and social integration, as immigrants do, life glitters and whispers in a different and clear way. That was the serious game that we faced as artists in HDI and that is the lesson I got from there.

J E S U S   P A L O M I N O

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