

VICTOR EN ME

JANICE ROWES IN CONVERSATION WITH VICTOR YUDAEV

Anybody invited to realize a project in 1646 is asked to engage in conversation with a previously unknown correspondent.

This conversation takes place via e-mail and stretches through the whole period during which the artists develop their initial idea into final results. 1646 invites the correspondent at the other end of this contact to figure his/her way through this actual process.

In trying to picture what result the artists' work is going to, such exchange can become a reflection on the amount of otherwise untraceable choices of the moment which make up to the artists' practice.

This issue is part of the exhibition by Victor Yudaev, *Victor en Me*, February 3 2017 in 1646.

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28 JANUARY: Janice Rowes [JR] - Victor Yudaev [VY]

Hello Victor,

and nice to meet you, so to speak.

I was asked by the staff at 1646 to begin this contact with you. The time of the opening of your show at 1646 is approaching fast, so I'd like to start with the most basic of questions:

What are you planning and/or working on?

Hoping to hear from you soon,

Hello Janice,

Nice to encounter you too. My plans are quite modest: build up the show that I have worked on for the last few months. It is mostly about putting things in certain order and mask all the mistakes in a way that it looks intentional. I'm also working on myself, but that takes time.

Be well, Victor.

29 JAN: VY - JR

Hello again Victor,

It's funny how your answer seems to be quite brief while opening many doors ...

I have no familiarity with your work, so, I'd like to take a step back, to begin with.

What can I expect from 'build up the show' or 'putting things in a certain order'?

Is it objects you've been working on for some time that will come together in 1646?

That also makes me wonder: (I assume you're already at work in 1646 these days) how did you start to work in the space? Did you have an idea of it beforehand? Or do I have to read your 'putting things in certain order and mask all the mistakes so it looks intentional' in your previous message as improvising in (or with) the space?

Also, I read your masking the mistakes (to look intentional) as completing or assembling a work into its final form. Am I correct? Or is it the order you are trying to get that should look intentional?

How does 'intentionality' for you relate to the accomplishment of a piece?

VY - JR

Hello Janice,
that will be a very precise description of my practice – to open the doors, I am a doorman.
For me a show is a kind of invitation from a literature magazine ‘hey Victor, we have two pages; Do you have anything to share with us?’ ‘Sure!’.
Generally speaking it is always one long work, assembled for an occasion, one chapter, or synopsis, or a love poem. So I work independently everyday : on my characters, scenery, punctuation and style. So for a show I have to go through it and to edit it.
Surprisingly, I improvise a bit while being in the space; I just have to correlate my mental images and reality, and make it look like my studio.
I have been there (in an improvisation) for such a long time so it is time to play some ‘standards’.

As I work in length and volume, there are sort of rhythms, or patterns or colours that hold the thing together. So if, occasionally, I break something on one side of a room, I might do it also on the other side; intentionality of the gesture.
I like to think the accomplishment of a work is into being ‘self-evident’.

30 JAN: JR - VY

Ok, that is interesting. When you say that ‘generally speaking it is always one work’ do you mean to say that your work can be seen as one work altogether? As a whole?

And that you assemble it from time to time – editing, as you said – for a specific purpose, project or occasion? That brings me back to what you said in your first mail when you said that you had been working for the show already for a few months.

Do you mean, then, that the work in this show finds its origin in the last few months of your production (rather than having been working ‘specifically’ for this show for that period of time)?

I am still pretty far from knowing what the material of your work is, though. Is it objects that you can combine together? (paintings, sculptures, installations..?) Or interventions in the space of another nature? Digital media of any kind, possibly..?

And, if it is objects, how do they come to be, in the months before an exhibition project like the one you are busy working on at 1646?

With that I mean to say: if your work on the show is a fully new endeavour in itself, what brings you to making of the individual pieces, in the months prior to that? And how do they end up/interfere with the show you are building?

Also: what do you mean that ‘you have to make it look like your studio’?

Another intriguing aspect you seem to stress is your working in length and volume. Could you tell me a little more about that?

VY - JR

Yes, even more, it has to look like as a whole. Like a long, beautiful phrase, with a variety of characters, scenes, it has its stops and ‘next goes next’ (punctuation).
Also in a larger sense one sculpture on the size of an exhibition needs to be folded in a larger narrative [of possible future exhibitions]. I am thinking about my practice in comparison to something like *Human comedy* by Balzac. For every occasion I assemble one chapter, or two. Even though a chapter can be presented several times, there will be modifications, like a theater play will be interpreted differently in different places (interpretation of a text as well as a decor). In this sense for the show, I was going through own, everyday growing material, and composing a coherent line. I have in mind one image of Nabokov, where he lies in his bed with a cigarette lit up and glass of Martini, looking through his cards (he is known for writing all different cards, and later assembling them together).

The Martini is not actually on the picture, I imagine it, otherwise it would have been hard to go through his notes, actually.

In regard to materials, I incline to declare particular attachments. In the show there are a number objects in baked clay and porcelain. There will be a lot of MDF (it might be known as ‘MDF show’). But found objects as well, drawings and photos, animation. I think that it is important for the artist to be flexible but demanding; to be able to work with whatever material is at hand.

That is what distinguishes the artist from a craftsmen. Let’s put it this way: if a craftsman thinks about materials, with dedication and respect; the artist has to be a material. R. Ryman said that a question is not what to paint, but rather what to do with a paint. So myself I am pile of different materials, and I’m becoming something, in a constant state of metamorphosis.

There is a difference between the painter and the artist who paints, the sculptor and the artist who sculpts, film director and artists who films.

Every show is a fully new endeavour, but it has to start somewhere, it is a continuation of what has been already done, even some elements are nomads that appear in several presentations, they don’t appear in the same way. They can easily swap their main role to a secondary, complementary position. There is no hierarchy though, as they serve all together the whole

As everything is done in my studio, it is a natural environment for them. I am not bringing my studio with myself, but there are crucial features that I try to integrate in the show; to make a sort of artificial zoo for a wild captive animals. And again there are always parts that are designed specially for a show.

A limitation for a sculptor (not for a sculpture) would be the idea to work with a volume, that a work has to come out of a block, even a very large block is a limited space, unless it is drawn in the time. If it pretends to be a cinematic sequence (or rather a stop-motion movie). I mean that it is not necessary to have all the ‘features’ in a single piece; I disperse it in space and time.

31 JAN: JR - VY

I understand that – and correct me if I’m wrong – you refer Balzac’s work (*the Human Comedy*) as a parallel

to your way of producing that goes beyond the single work. An all-embracing oeuvre – a space and a time, if you want – where possible characters and their stories evolve, interact, meet. But also a space for the author to let more or less narrative output come together – in the case of a writer – without bonds of genre or borders to one's interests.

At the same time, what do you think would be the case in other kind of exhibitions? The ones that, for instance, might have NOT been assembled the way you are working on yours?

Do you think an individual would, in any case, see in those a variety of scenes and a punctuation as well? Wouldn't we all always see a linearity, a narrative, inside of things – even if it is not there – just by our own projection on them..?

How much do you think one's own 'phrasing' – as an author – manages to stay independent from another's interpretation, from the projection of another narrative? (and ... does it need to..?)

I see that the choice of material – if not irrelevant – is somehow secondary. 'if craftsmen think about materials ... the artist has to be a material', you write. Yet at the same time you mention clay and porcelain objects as being part of your show. Both are materials that require some dedication – even the simple amount of time required to 'work' them; not to mention the availability of proper tools for modelling and baking them.

That brings me to think that in your practice dedication to a material is, indeed, not secondary but dedication to material is. It seems to me that the result is that, if I understand correctly, those pieces (in clay and porcelain, in this case) stay as notes in a diary, or as the cards of Nabokov, if you prefer, worthy of the moment they were made in. And always at the point of potentially signifying something again – but not according to the nature of what they are, rather according to the way or moment they came into being.

I do absolutely agree to the fact that, as you say 'there is a difference between the painter and the artist who paints, the sculptor and the artist who sculpts, the film director and the artist who films'. So, let's imagine for a moment I were just unaware of those differences, how would you explain them to me?

VY – JR

You are correct, as a reader, and every author imagines his perfect reader or viewer, I think it is also an invitation for an adventure.

One has to have the courage to take a first volume, and one knows that it is gonna be painful sometimes, sometimes pleasurable and always sensually rewarding in the end of every chapter.

There is something that I appreciate in a work: infinity. Works like 2666 by R. Bolano or Infinite Jest by D.F. Wallace, gave me a kind of constant sensation that I miss something.

I would go back to it all the time, and in fact you I would read it differently. I am sensitive to this both emotional and intellectual addiction, so I would read it on

the level of technique as well.

In this sense I don't see much difference between a book and an exposition (furthermore I find a book to be a more complicated space). As first comes the emotional response, firstly it is about invitation: some exhibitions propose more space, freedom to a viewer, and some are extremely authoritarian.

Indeed we always see a linearity, a narrative, personal connections, anecdotes between things, and works of arts have to embrace it, so as an author I see myself making a stage, a playground where personal can be celebrated. I don't see phrasing as a problem, there are a lot of underestimated phrases that are delicious, one has to change a sauce.

In the musical grammar slight differences in interpretation, in the way notes are read can have a large impact. I wouldn't distinguish ceramics as a medium that consumes more time than painting (building a frame, stretching and preparing a canvas) require as well dedication and tools. Different but still...

There are parts that are appropriate (aesthetically, practically) to be executed in clay, some require few lines on a paper, just as notes, indeed.

A painter stays focused on the medium and looks inside of it, and might discover something new in it.

An artist who paints will stay outside and question, firstly, the medium itself: 'Why bother?'

In this sense artists are sort of outsiders. To give one example: S. Kubrick is a great director, a genius; JL. Godard is a great artist, and I love both.

1 FEB: JR - VY

Good evening Victor,
sorry for the late reply.

I'd like to stop for a moment on that idea of 'infinity' you describe. I take the liberty to translate that as the constant attraction some works can have on us – seems to me – that rewards us with an ever changing experience of the work.

One could compare that to the experience of the first minutes of a movie seen in a cinema. That time when you can't make sense yet of what is happening on the screen (one's still missing something) and the story – by its being full of any potential development still – is drenched in an overwhelming mysterious fascination.

Do you think that experience – that 'addiction' as you put it – is inherent in a work? Or does it relate to the gaze of the viewer? (with that I mean to say: don't you think certain works, even of little quality, could have the same kind of relevance – produce the same 'addictive' experience – to the right viewer? Because if, as you say about certain works, one could 'go back to it all the time, and in fact you I would read it differently,' does that not also mean that the one going back to it is he/she him/herself different every time?

Is that multiplicity of ways of reading in the work itself or in the reader? Isn't, eventually, that 'addiction' the only element to stay constant?

Your comparison of Godard and Kubrick seems quite fitting the differences between the two – an opinion about

them that I share with you. That also exemplifies quite clearly the definition of artist as an outsider you provide. Somebody who stands outside the entanglements of the medium. Yet, as you put it, if 'in the musical grammar slight differences in interpretation, in the way notes are read, have large impactThere', cannot also a painter who 'stays focused on the medium and looks inside of it' be equally an outsider in his/her own respect?

Lastly, I assume you have been going further in your work of 'putting things in a certain order' in these days. Has working in the actual space changed any of the ideas you had arrived to The Hague with, about the plans you had for your show?

Have a good night and hope to hear from you soon,

VY - JR

It is a reward, for a patient and attentive reader. Although I would see it as a much more transcendental space, than the simple scope of a movie (there is, at least, a promise of action, there). I imagine a space of a poem, empty. It is proper to a good poem to make nothing happen. To be suspended, in a way. With loose or no punctuation where language becomes weightless. It is like an empty vessel, you can fill it yourself (with yourself). There are a few lines, that are very dear to me that I came back to a lot of times. I was reading them over and over, and the poem was my shelter.

*In the reading room of Hell In the club
for science-fiction fans
On the frosted patios In the bedrooms
of passage
On the iced-over paths Where everything
finally seems clearer
and each instant is better and less important
With cigarette in mouth and with fear
Sometimes
green eyes And 26 years old Yours truly*

Indeed this kind of no-space experience can be quite addictive.

It is addictive as a kind of thirst, on the morning after a splendid night; you want to know, like a detective looking for evidence. And there are a lot of things to be found, since we change all the time, every person we meet, every music we listen to, every dance we dance transforms us constantly and there are works of art that are sort of fluid, that are a perfect company.

I generally don't see hierarchy between 'interpreter' and 'composer'. It is just very rare that the one becomes the other, at the same level, at least (a lot of composers were quite clumsy players).

He can be an outsider, in the sense of 'art brut', yet the advantage of an outsider is to be able to see a larger picture from far, otherwise you see a hand pointing at the sky.

The exhibition is going ok, in constant correlation between imagined and real (the question of gravity, for example, has little importance in the imagination). I feel

also a challenge to have a 'store window' on the street with such a diversity of sex shops, carpet shops, vintage shops. But I try! As they say 'ohne fleiss kein preis'!

2 FEB: JR - VY

Sex, carpet and vintage shops seems to be an odd mixture of commercial categories to fit next to each other..! Is that diversity influencing your perspective about the show at all..?

I agree with your remark about the scope of a movie, I just intended to describe an experience as if one could extrapolate such a time (the very beginning of a motion picture) and extend it indefinitely (depending on the kind of movie, of course). Godard here comes to the rescue, when it comes to expecting action in a moving picture, have you happened to watch his 'Adieu au Langage'? A most recommended title, when it comes to suspended space.

The issue between interpreter and composer shouldn't be seen in terms of hierarchy. One can imagine, though, that an interpreter 'locked inside the medium', as you say, might be busy at a microscopic level in the same way a composer busy from 'the outside'. Going back to that idea of infinity you had raised first, can't we just imagine a similar, ever-extending dimension for both viewer and maker? Like the endless repetition of forms in a fractal structure at the moment we observe it in its most microscopic and minute details? After all, calling back on the quote by Ryman you have used in this email exchange, wouldn't only one who has been immersing long enough in paint itself be capable of questioning not what to paint but what to do with paint?

You're by now, probably, finishing the last touches to your show and I hope you are satisfied with the result you have come to, so I'd like to wrap our conversation with a last question:

How much influence and importance does it have, for your work, according to your affinity to Balzac's Human Comedy, the experience of one show? If it turns out to be satisfactory or not for you, for instance? And how does that all contributes to, or deviates from, that work on yourself that seems to be your long time project?

3 FEB: VY - JR

Sex, carpet and vintage shops influence my perspective on life!

I think the show is fine, and turning the last pages (going through notes and remarks) was quite an experience, rich in diversity; ups-and-downs. Also sharp and sweet, and sweet&sour like the sauce plenty of sambal too – that is the best!
