

MARC VILANOVA



Hello Marc and welcome to NotRandomArt. The current issue is revolving around the problem of identity. Is there any particular way you would describe your identity as an artist but also as a human being in dynamically changing, unstable times? In particular, does your cultural substratum/identity form your aesthetics?

Nowadays, with contemporary/experimental music we are urged to find new identities. The classical division between composer-interpreter-audience doesn't really work any more in that scenario. When I perform I feel myself as a composer, because I do "make" the music, but I also am the interpreter, because I perform the music. Finally, I also feel like I am part of the audience – I am sensitive to the space and the energy of where I am performing, and that impacts my music.

Yet, from the traditional institutional perspective, I cannot identify as a composer because my music is not formally written. I also improvise and do not work on music that has been previously composed. Therefore, I cannot identify formally as an interpreter, either.

The task of finding the necessary crossover identities becomes even harder when you start working on multidisciplinary levels, adding movement, electronics, visuals and light design in your performance. We end up calling ourselves performance artists. I understand that your question was equally directed at the shifting cultures that encompass experimental music and global cultural identities. I come from a small village in Catalonia. Our history expresses a pride in innovative attitudes. I believe this history influences my relationship to music. The progressive, experimental, non-traditional dynamic of my music emerges from my cultural history.

Would you like to tell us something about your background? Could you talk a little about experiences that has influence the way you currently relate yourself to your artworks?

I have been travelling quite a lot all my life. At the age of 17 I had already moved out of my family home and since then I have been studying and working in different countries.

For example, I have lived in Helsinki and Basel, Switzerland, cities where I don't know the language. When you cannot understand a language, you are able to hear the sound of syllables as they are pronounced, but as soon as you understand the language, your focus shifts to decoding meaning. My musical decisions are also inspired by this early focus on the sounds of the language. Experimentation with extended techniques emerges from this deep thinking about these sounds, some of which are not typically associated with the saxophone. The audience as well is not primarily focused on meaning, and therefore free to identify with

the imaginative possibilities that nurture my music.

Could you identify a specific artwork that has influenced your artistic practice or has impacted the way you think about race and ethnic identity in visual culture?

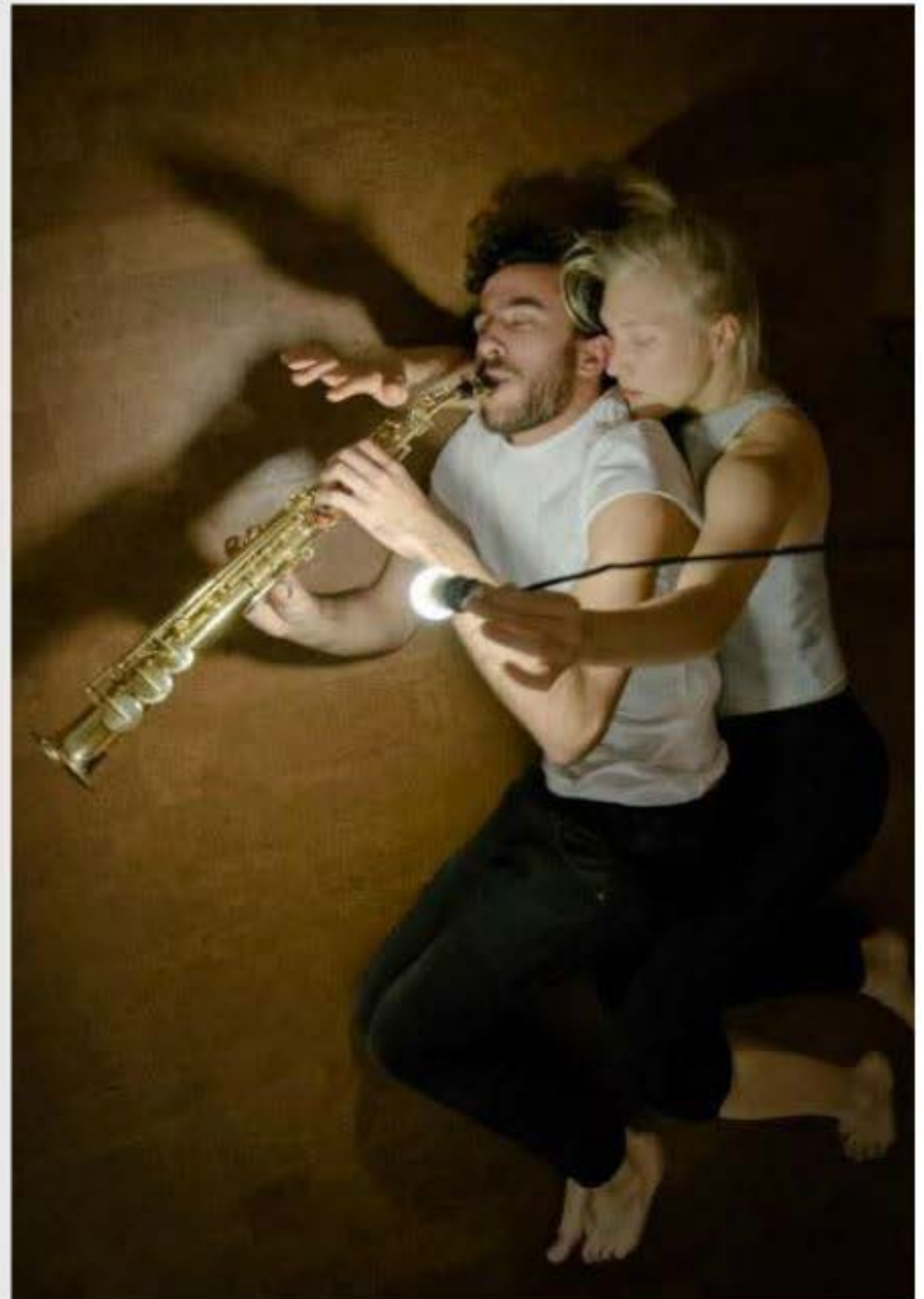
Social justice-oriented activism has functioned for me as a kind of inspiring visual text that has, in fact, generated artwork. In February of 2016 a group of friends settled in the Matthäus Church in Basel, Switzerland, starting the project *Wir bleiben*. The project's purpose was to give protection to unofficial refugees, typically African, who come from countries that are not in a current war, although their situations are dire. I joined that project in order to contribute my energies to protest actions and the sharing of music. We recorded a song written by a friend from Gambia, creating percussion instruments from kitchenware. The priority wasn't the quality of the music produced, but rather, the empowering social impact of the process. Music has this almost magical potential of bringing people together in a deeper sharing of their democratic intentions.

This focus on collective strength becomes a habit of mind that influences my musical decision-making.

Your music can be perceived like you transform your experiences into your artwork, we are curious, what is the role of memory in your artistic productions? We are particularly interested if you try to achieve a faithful translation of your previous experiences or if you rather use memory as starting point to create.

Freud helped us understand that nothing ever leaves the mind. Like all artists, my intelligence is constructed by my continuing interpretation and re-interpretation of the experiences of my life. Because memories are under constant reinterpretation, they can only ever be a starting point for the process of specific creation.

Multidisciplinarity seems to be a crucial aspect of your art practice and you seem to be in an incessant search of an intimate symbiosis between different disciplines: painting, music, design, photography....While crossing the borders of different artistic fields have you ever happened to realize that a symbiosis between disciplines is the only way to achieve fullness of your expression? Have you noticed yourself patterns or motives that echoes in your artworks regardless the discipline?







I don't think of a concert as an experience where you close your eyes and just listen. I think today people are used to stimuli from multiple sources, and to fully experience what I want to convey, I have to use a variety of sources that stimulate multiple senses. I would not be communicating my ideas fully if my performance was one-dimensional.

If I start a creative process in collaboration with someone, I begin by improvising—experimenting in order to determine what our boundaries are and at which frequencies we can most productively connect. From such experimentation, deeper collaboration develops organically. Similarly, in solo work, a seed growing in my head surfaces as an idea and develops organically in practice.

Your music refer to the world that wants to be hidden by many, to strangeness, violence, melancholy, loneliness and desire. We are wondering if one of the hidden aims of Art could be to search the missing significance to a non-place... We are convinced that some information and ideas are hidden or even encrypted in the environment we live in, so we need to find a way to decipher them. I wonder if you agree with a statement that one of the Artists role would be to reveal unexpected sides of Nature, especially of our inner Nature?

Your question is getting at the haunted nature of contemporary reality, where passive consumerism dominates our sense of what living is. My music intends to bypass the superficial passive experience of consumption, resonating with the deeper experiences of what it means to be human that you address.

Thanks a lot for your time and for sharing your thoughts, Marc. Finally, would you like to tell us readers something about your future projects? How do you see your work evolving?

I'm currently working on a book about extended techniques for the saxophone. This idea came after performing several workshops in different universities and realizing from some students the need for more literal instruction on extended techniques. The goal is to encourage future saxophonists to explore new ways of relating to their instrument.

Nowadays I'm focusing on the visual aspects of my music by finding new ways to present the experimental language. I'm working on programming and designing lights for my solo, and producing a new video derived from ideas about how we perform on the internet.