

«CONVERSAS DIVERSAS»

SECOND EPISODE: «SUSTAINABILITY, NATURE AND TERRITORIES»

SÉVERIN GUELPA: Wait, wait, wait, wait. No, I think... Yeah, it works great. Let's go back to Skype. Sorry guys, it's a bit...

FABIAN WAGMISTER: No problem. So, I wanted to make sure first to introduce you to my partner really, my main partner in all of the work I do these days, which is the bicycle. You know, for me the bike is part of an assemblage which is me, the bike and the environment, and the becoming of all of it together, I call it "becoming bike", in a way, right? So, this is the bike, behind me. It's not that I fetishize the object, it's not about the object, it's about what we become together, right? It's a very delusional kind of concept, the idea that the inanimate object and the human really ultimately becoming one system. So, I'm going to get on it and we can keep talking.

FW: All right, so what should we talk about?

SG: So, how long does it take? When you go with the bike, is it for the day or for two weeks or...

FW: I spend a lot of my time on the bicycle, I would say almost two thirds of my life are on the bicycle.

SG: Wow.

FW: Yeah. I also like the plasticity of riding on a bicycle. Suddenly I can say, "Oh, I want to go around this tree". And now I'm going around the tree. "Oh no, now I want to go over here." It is very ludic in a way. It reminds me a lot of how it was to be a child and your first explorations of space.

SG: Is your practice about meeting people as well or is it more about being by yourself, riding, randoming?

prohelvetia

FW: No, no. Sometimes in my practice I also do a character, I do a performance like in "Bicicletas blancas" / "White Bicycles".

SG: Yeah, I saw your video.

FW: You saw the video? Yes, people find that pretty weird, so they want to follow me. They want to know who am I and what am I doing.

SG: It's a bit what I've been experimenting, you know. Since, like, maybe 10 years I've been orientating my practice to really ecological sustainable aspects, a bit like you, but more like gathering people, making people work together. I don't know if you can see that, I'm going to make you a short visit if you like.

FW: OK.

SG: I was in Amazonas, Brazil, like a year ago and I got really impressed by the huge structure that the termites are able to do, it's kind of a collective genius. Let me go to the first design, the first drawing. So, the idea was to dig the ground, get the mud out of the ground and start to build something by making some bricks with the mud. We call that biomimetics. It's all architectural human beings getting inspired by what nature can teach us. And, well, I wanted to do my own termites with a great circulation of fresh air. Termites are a skill for building sustainable architectures. It's exactly what inspired me in my work, building stuff but directly connected to the nature and getting inspired by the nature. I don't know if you see something...

FW: I can see it.

SG: Yeah? You can see it?

FW: Yeah, yeah.

SG: It's like... it's going to be a 6-meter height, like 20 feet tall. And it's only made with blocks of earth, of mud we've found on the place, and you make these blocks, so there's no things added in the construction. And we still have to build it. At the end of the year, all the structures are going to go back to the ground. It's like a secular process.

prohelvetia

SG: I was always wondering the way I could share this wonderful collective experiment to my audience, to the public. How do you deal with it? Are you doing exhibitions? Are you writing about your practice?

FW: Right. That's an important part of what I do. For me, what's important is this becoming, this exploration, this moving being both research and production of exhibition all at once. So, what I do is, I use technology to instrument my bicycle with sensors, with cameras, with microphones, and then transmitting all of that in real time in a sort of interpretive cartography. That has to do with, again, losing my psychogeography. This situation has taught a lot about psychogeography and how geography having appeared preceding our experience. I have this special object that I brought that allows me to communicate my feelings, when I'm afraid, when I'm tired.

FW: The point of this technology is to give my sense of the "here and now" and turning it to performance. One of the dangers for this type of work is for you to become an explorer, as in like an 18th century explorer, where things are just curiosities for your discovery, or you become a 21st century tourist. So, I think the technology and this live performance element puts us in the artist consciousness on a constant basis.

SG: I mean, I think ... I got two kids, you know. And every time we share together and we talk, they say, "Papá, you're always travelling, you should stop travelling, it's not good to take the plane, why don't you just stay, not home but in the city, and do things differently?" We are travelers because we are curious. And once you're curious and you think you have stuff to say, you need to go on the road, and you need to go to the people, and you need to meet people, and you need to learn from other people. So, it's a kind of attitude, it's a real need, let's go back to the need, I think, for me, it's a need to go to the people, to travel, to see something else and to go outside my frontiers, in a way.

FW: It's very interesting. You call it a "need" and it's a very good word. The other kind of word to describe this kind of work is "becoming". It's a becoming. It's a constant process of becoming, of not thinking you already are, you're always becoming. That creates a distant relationship with everything around you because everything is becoming whether. It's not about discovery so much as relationship. And a lot of the time it has to be, "I'm not going anywhere. I'm moving but I have no destination". So, it's not like I'm passing through, I'm always where I want to be, each place I am is my destination, it's the only place I want to be. So, I'm not visiting, I'm not exploring, I'm just there.