



Photo: Diana Blok

.whatdowefinallyshare. or three performers, Rihanna, Wagner, body paint, saliva. And a white elephant.

Fernando Belfiore is a maker with a background in theater, dance and choreography among other things. **Zeynep Gündüz** has studied classical ballet and modern dance and is currently a Ph.D candidate at the University of Amsterdam, department of Media Studies, researching the role of digital technology in dance.

This interview was conducted on the 29th of September 2012.

.whatdowefinallyshare. premieres at PUNCH! Festival, October 10th in Theater Bellevue.

ZG: Fernando, in your new piece, you seem to make comments on your practice and societal issues via the notion of sharing. Can you tell me about your ideas, starting point and influences for your new piece, .whatdowefinallyshare.?

FB: It's important to know that I see this piece as an extension of the research of my previous two works 'The miserable thing' and 'You Must'. So, there is a continuation among these performances; they can be seen as a trilogy in terms of the way I work and present a certain idea. As a maker, I am intrigued by re-discovering possibilities of looking, experiencing and perceiving things. In my work, I question conventions that we learn in society and what is taken for granted or normal.

ZG: Can you elaborate on how you work as a maker?

FB: When creating, I try to keep an open space to allow the audience to make connections to certain things that I find important to make visible within a performance. In the case of *.whatdowefinallyshare.*, I focus on the concept of sharing and what this could mean.

ZG: In *.whatdowefinallyshare.* you present various aspects of 'sharing'. Yet, I would say that the connections between these aspects are not plainly exposed. In what ways do you invite the audience to make connections to what they see?

FB: As I have said, in general, I try to invite the audience to take on other ways of experiencing and other ways of looking through engaging with the sensorial aspect of things. I am very interested in presenting a logic that is not based on narrative. I guess, in my work, 'telling' is done through the body and its relation to other bodies, space, time and so on. For example, in *.whatdowefinallyshare.* we (among other issues) tried to 'tell' how the performers deal with tension, resistance, and intensity and how they transform or affect the space through their bodies. But we didn't 'tell' this through a logic of linearity but through a different kind of logic.

ZG: So, in *.whatdowefinallyshare.* (and your previous work) you deliberately avoid narrative?

FB: Yes, I try not to connect things on a rational, linear level. Instead, I place different elements next to each other in a non-hierarchical way. It is very important for me that the elements I use do not close down the meaning of things I present. In *.whatdowefinallyshare.*, the elements I worked with (sound, body, objects, etc.) and the way I positioned them are not helpful at all to achieve a clarity of meaning. On the opposite, the presentation of these elements is made precisely to maintain a certain complexity. In this complexity, things keep on making *sense*, which is different from *sense*, in terms of being rational and logical. For me, *sense*, is a *direction* that affects one's way of dealing with what is presented onstage.

ZG: You mean one does not make *sense*, as in making rational connections, but one *senses*, how the elements could be related to each other. In other words, the way the elements are presented leads to an affective engagement, which prevents the closure of meaning?

FB: Yes, during the creation of *.whatdowefinallyshare.* I have made many choices on what I present and how I make visible what I present, which allow different ways of reading of meaning.

ZG: I see. Fernando, I also see that we have drifted away from the first question...Could we be "linear" (!) and go back to your starting ideas for *.whatdowefinallyshare.?*

FB: To start? So many things...to start is easy. To finish is difficult. Hmm...I don't remember exactly actually; there were many points of departure. When I wrote the first proposal for this piece, the main focus was *happiness*. I was thinking about what it is that makes people happy, the importance we give to happiness, and the search for pleasure and meaning in our lives. Facebook was another influence that made me think about new ways with which people deal with their lives, for example, through the *like* and *share* options. We, in the end, share so many things - like information and time in front of the computer. But who is this *we* and what are we *sharing* in the end? What do I give to the other that is mine or that I possess? Do I possess more than the other? How do we, in the end, share space or draw the attention to the realities that we produce? How do we choose (or can we even choose) the experiences that frame our lives? I also often question the meaning of "having a good time". What is the *good*? And what is this *time* for us?

ZG: These are a lot of questions indeed. Was there anything else besides questions that played a role in the starting point in *.whatdowefinallyshare.?*

FB: Yes, things. In general, before the actual creation process, I collect things that intrigue me; things that I may want to use in a certain performance. There are no rules; the collected item can be an object, text, song, or a physical task. I collect these things without knowing how I will use them in the performance (because I don't know what the performance is by then!) but I know that I would like to work with them.

ZG: Which objects do you use in *whatdowefinallyshare.?*

FB: I use a dental mouth prop, color pills, water, body paint, and a mini-statue of a white elephant.

ZG: The elephant seems to play a central role in your performance. Can you tell me how you ended up with the elephant and in what way you incorporated it in this piece?

FB: I found it on the street. I liked it and took it with me to the rehearsals during Dansmakers Makers Intensive in March. Valentina Parlato, one of the performers, broke the top part (the leg was already broken) during rehearsals, which made the elephant turn into an even more mysterious and weird object. In *.whatdowefinallyshare.*, everything we use comes out of the elephant: the dental mouth prop, the color pills, water, and the body paint. The elephant can be understood as a kind of mysterious source of the things

we use in this piece. But it may also be seen as just a broken porcelain elephant standing in the middle of the stage.

ZG: I see...you prefer to keep its meaning open for the audience?

FB: Yes. The elephant, of course, has a particular meaning for me. But when making the piece, I try to make choices with which I can go beyond the symbolic aspect of the elephant. Or, at least, I try to give the object an additional layer.

ZG: And what about movement? How do you work with movement in general and, in *.whatdowefinallyshare.* in specific?

FB: When I work with movement, I usually select a theme or principle. I work with set movements; they have a form. But this is not a form based on the exploration of movement as such. The form is the result of a research based on how the performer can embody the chosen theme/principle in order to achieve (or make visible) affect. For example, during the Makers Intensive, we worked with simple tasks, such as jumping. Through jumping we explored certain questions: how close do we get to each other, how intense is the relationship between bodies, and what are the effects of adding other materials such as voice. We also focused a lot on the gaze and, then, affect: how do we use our gaze? Do we create imaginary or actual spaces by it? How can we create distance through gaze while fully engaging with a physical task? How can the performer split between what s/he is physically doing while allowing the body's movement to produce a more sensorial/affective perspective? During the rehearsals, we took the time to reflect on what we have produced and what there is left to continue (re)searching in terms of movement, form, and affect.

ZG: And did you find an answer to what it is that we do finally share?

FB: In the piece, I do not try to find a solution. I consider the practice of being an artist similar to the writing of poetry; it is a way to bring the mind to unknown places...to places where being affected (by the artwork) can lead to different perceptions and different ways of relating to things.

ZG: Can you give an example of what you *mean*?

FB: In the piece, there is a moment in which we deal with our bodies in a soft or permeable way. This scene contradicts how the body has been exposed to the audience until that moment, which differs from conventional aesthetics of beauty. In fact, I often work with the idea of transforming something 'ugly' into something beautiful. I try to give *sense*, to something that is sense-less as a means to potentialize -not necessarily a solution- but to open a new window to deal with a problem. For me, we have to find our

sense, in things. We have to produce more poetry, hopefully to find what we finally share - not our identities or who we are supposed to be but what it means to be 'you' or 'we'. I don't know if I have solutions but, for me, we have to keep on trying. Similar to an economist that tries to save the system or keep it running, we have to find ways to create poetical spaces, not only to survive, but also to rescue important things that are lost, massacred, or oppressed in everyday life and onstage.