

ȘTEFANIA BECHEANU

INTERVIEW BY: NATHALIE FILSER

Nathalie Filser : Stefania, you gladly say that you feel you come from Timisoara, even though you were born in another romanian city, why this sense of belonging ?

Stefania Becheanu : It's a feeling, of a non-rational kind, I am linked to Timisoara, to her rhythm. The city center seems always moving, alive, it's energy shines and spreads in all the city, in the parks, streets, suburbs, it touches also the inhabitants. I remember a city in full sun, Timisoara is a magnet towards which I tend.

NF : What was the most important while studying pictorial images at Timisoara University ?

SB : Beyond a firm pictorial technique learned during my studies, I coordinated a festival in 2010, the StudentFest. I met important actors of the artistic and cultural contemporary life in Romania, such as Dan Perjovschi whom I had the chance to meet. This artist inspired and impressed me, his graphic works, ephemeral and fragile, contrasted with the strength of his message and the commitment he shows. I discovered a power emerging from a great simplicity full of political and social convictions. I realize today, as I answer to this question, that the gesture of Dan Perjovschi's work touches me and echoes with my drawings in which the outline, the frontier between space and the line are essential elements.

NF : How did you move from the practice of painting to that of sound ?

SB : As an artist, I search for the medium which allows me to express myself the best and I discovered that sound is a form of expression that suits me well. In the Atelier de recherche Sonore (Sound Research Workshop) (ARS) in the École supérieure d'art de Lorraine, in Metz, I was initiated to sound art as a medium by Eléonore Bak, sound artist who gave me her passion and skills. The universe of sound art is vast and rich, I had many opportunities to meet and collaborate with artists, but also engineers, architects, sound researchers in laboratories. All these contacts were stimulating, thanks to them I have developed my practice and built my own experience, based on my perception of images which is sound. Sound generates a feeling, it is direct, palpable, it is material. This sound material is linked to the body. Sounds generate vibrations, I can feel, almost touch those vibrations - material that I feel in my body. It is his listening that causes this state of perception, listening that conditions the sensed vibration.

NF : Could you talk about your artistic collaborations with engineers ?

SB : I can talk at first, about my meeting with researchers from the Cresson laboratory, in Grenoble. It is a research center on soundspace and urban environment. The laboratory is based in the National Superior School of Architecture. The questions of architectural atmosphere and urbanity touch me particularly since I pick up my sounds in cities or in nature, raw and direct sounds taken out from my environment. My exchanges and workshops with them were fundamental for my listening and practice. The second experience I would talk about is the one with engineers from Supelec, a great French school, partner of the ARS (Sound Research Workshop), and whose campus in Metz conducts a research on holophonic sounds. The spacialization of sound was fundamental regarding the diffusion of my sounds. In their laboratory, I could experience my soundscapes spread by 78 loudspeakers. Also, as

went this collaboration, I had to elaborate a common language, and revise my maths to communicate around a common project !

NF : Are the culture of visual artists and a musicians getting closer ? What would you say about your collaborations with a pianist and a percussionist ?

SB : A project opened in 2013, combining my soundscapes and two musician's improvisations after two workshops, a travel from West to East of France and a residency. More than a collaboration, it is a complicity we cannot describe. We shared a long journey and very different working processes in a mutual respect and curiosity. We finally gave a public performance in a 4th century Church with a good acoustic for our sound work. The difficulty that appeared to me, is that we, musician and visual artist, use the same words but they don't always have all the time the same meaning. It is the teamwork, the creating process which made the mutual understanding of our art easier. I have besides further projects with the pianist.

NF : Which artists are you interested in ?

SB : First, I would like to mention Eléonore Bak, sound artist, researcher and teacher in the École supérieure d'art de Lorraine, in Metz. She made me discover soundscapes and sound as an artistic material. Our encounters are rich of talks and discussions about the sound universe. Eleonore's works and researches are fascinating, and to be followed absolutely ! The poetic work of Janet Cardiff interests me very much : a universe nearly psychological which takes the listener into a labyrinthine world of sounds. In Madrid, I was impressed by her minutely detailed staging, the theatrical side of her work makes me shiver, she gives a lesson on detailed listening, I have the impression that she is sharing some secret. And then, I've already talked about Dan Perjovschi, his drawings are made wright on the wall, on the floor or on a glass surface, and can disappear with a simple wipe with a sponge... For me, his work is a reference of which I measure the remarkable strength. What stays in my mind is the importance of his socially engaged observation. Then I could mention the choreographer and dancer Pina Bausch, the artist Tania Mouraud with whom I collaborated last summer, Sophie Calle, Eliane Radigue, Bernhard Leitner...

NF : Could you describe the place where you work, your studio ?

SB : My studio is Travel ! I started my sound work in the Atelier de Recherche Sonore (Sound Research Workshop), in the École supérieure d'art de Lorraine, and after my degree I got a grant to equip my own studio. I could name this place editing or realization studio, but my creation happens in motion, on a journey.

NF : When does the journey start ? As soon as there's travel, movement ?

SB : Absolutely. The journey starts in the car, the bus, the train, the plane... My concentration to space, to listening, starts with movement. All it needs is sometimes a ride on the bicycle to sharpen my hearing. The displacement inspires a sort of meditation. The movement is part of my work, it is important to explain that the journey is the heart of my work. I look for sounds to live a listening to the world, to deliverer a sensibility.

NF : Does everybody know how to listen ? What do you wish for the visitor in your exhibition called « Ecoute, Listen, ascultă » ?

SB : I wish to make the visitor sensitive to listening in general, while the accent is usually put on picture. The sound space given to the visitor in the exhibition arouses a sound attention, he will be able to recognize familiar sounds, be surprised by their use. I would like to offer a poetic way for a daily life embellished by all our senses. For example, the noise of cars could be perceived through their rhythm instead of being considered as noise pollution. I suggest to cultivate a listening attitude that could

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generate this daily poetry, this music for everyone. In the exhibition, one only needs to let himself be carried by the sounds.

NF : What are your future projects ?

SB : Express myself all my life ! Travel as much is possible to collect my sounds, go round the world !