

Project description for the Forgiveness Project - Timo Kica

*"Only through this constant mutual release
from their actions, can men remain free agents,
only by constant willingness to change their minds
and start again can they be trusted with
so great a power as that to begin something
new". -Hannah Arendt*

Introduction

This project is about setting up an art work, an installation, in Northern Uganda, and exploring new research methods. It is a collaboration between Danish artist and researcher Tove Nyholm, the ENRECA-Gulu University Project, and Moesgård Museum in Aarhus, Denmark.

An installation has been created by Tove Nyholm; shaped as a maze, with voices inside. The voices are from Denmark and USA, and each person, each voice brings an account of forgiveness, of one specific incidence from her or his life.

The voices have been edited into an essence of 2-3 minutes, and then monitored in this architectural structure, the maze. Closed with a ceiling, with dimmed light and sound absorbing texture on the floor – you move attentively around, and you meet voices at different places where you can stand and listen.

This installation was set up in Gulu, Northern Uganda, and in villages in the area. After the first set up at Gulu University, voices from Northern Uganda joined in. Researchers from the ENRECA-Gulu University project participated in collecting and creating the accounts.

Why this project?

There are two aims:

- One is ***sharing accounts of forgiveness:***

Because every person, every society needs new beginnings. Because letting go of the past - creating possibilities for something new to develop into the future - is essential. In Denmark, in USA, in Uganda. Because the quest for forgiveness is universal and we can be inspired by listening to other people, other stories.

- The second is to carry out ***a joint exploration between art and research:***

In order to create new methods and new ways of communicating research results to people. Language is important; the way we talk about things matter and it can potentially change things. We wish to nourish and inspire an extended and differentiated language. We wish to create a room for reflection about letting go of the past and moving on to something new.

Hannah Arendt Project

The maze-installations are inspired by the thinking of the philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). Her Jewish background forced her to leave Germany in the 1930's whereafter she settled down in the USA. Arendt's thinking is about the individual and the community in which we live. In the context of two world wars she asked herself, whether and how it would be possible to make and maintain a common open public space – a place for individuality and spontaneity on one hand, and preservation of stable institutions and common traditions on the other. She spent her life exploring and deepening this political challenge.

Arendt took her point of departure in real people, historic characters, because she thought concrete examples were important, and her solid foundation in practice makes her philosophy useful and viable.

On the basis of Arendt's philosophy, [Tove Nyholm](http://www.tovenyholm.dk) has established a *Hannah Arendt Project*, (www.tovenyholm.dk) in which she explores these five concepts:

Natality, Action, Plurality, Forgiveness, and Promise.

Natality, to be born - is common for all - but it is also Natality which happens to us throughout life when we reveal ourselves to one another in action.

Arendt applies the word **Action**, not in the sense of action by will, but action where you appear as a person who wants to deal with others.

Plurality, dissimilarity, is for Arendt the community of unique individuals, who are the basis of action, i.e. for speech. And action is dependent on a community.

Forgiveness is action in its most intensified form; it is the possibility of a new beginning. As humans we need forgiveness in order for something new to happen, to let go of things from the past. With the **Promise** we establish - in community, in plurality - something which ties us together in the future. This creates relations to others founded in reciprocity and respect.

In the present, the conversation, i.e. action, it all comes together: the individual with community, the past with future. To Arendt, these concepts together formed a fundamental moral base for human beings to interact in a decent society.

Forgiveness is the first theme to be explored in the Hannah Arendt Project. In February 2010 VOICES FROM WITHIN was exhibited in Denmark, containing voices from 6 persons of different age, sex and occupation. The installation was set up in collaboration with VIA University College in Aarhus and lectures about Hannah Arendt were given. In November 2010 these voices, translated into English, could be heard in a smaller sound-installation in New York. From there, new talks about forgiveness was collected.

Strategy

I. In September 2010 Lotte Meinert and Tove Nyholm come to Gulu. Together with Prof. Emilio Ovuga and Grace Akello from GU they make contacts and inquiries for the project, to look for persons who are interested in participating in either the scientific, the artistic or the practical part of the project: researchers who will conduct talks about forgiveness, find places and people who can edit the talks, materials for setting up the maze. (Only the floor plan - painted on a huge piece of plastic - and loudspeakers/MP3 will be brought to Uganda, the rest will be constructed on the spot.). *This first visit is to evaluate if at all there is basis for the project: practically and regarding to interest, resource persons etc.*

II. In November/ December 2010 - Setting up the installation in Gulu University , with Danish and American voices.

- Workshop with researchers about carrying out forgiveness talks, and more generally about a philosophic/reflective way of having individual talks in research work.

- Technical-dramaturgic workshop about sound-editing, with the same researchers. Just as important and challenging as making the talks.

III. In January 2011 Tove Nyholm monitors the editing of the voice-material made by researchers.

- The maze is prepared for village tour, and starts off. Now including the Ugandan voices.

IV. More voices may be recorded.

In 2011 VOICES FROM WITHIN is shown at Moesgaard, Aarhus. With voices from Uganda, USA and Denmark. Part of the exhibition will present the artistic-scientific process and methods that have been explored.