

# PART ONE



Interview with Uri Tzaig  
by Oscar van den Boogaard  
Grand Hotel Cravat, Luxembourg

photo : Paulette Frankel

*OK, Let's start somewhere... when did you, for the first time, feel that you could be an artist, or decide to be an artist?*

I remember one minute, after already doing two exhibitions, when I realized I wanted to be an artist. I remember that it was very much about responsibility, the responsibility of the role of the artist and taking responsibility for myself - that I could and have to make a living out of this... Before those two exhibitions I studied in a theater school.

*Why art after graduating from a theater school?*

I didn't grew up around art, I almost never went to museums, art was not something that was visible or

accessible for me, it was not a language which I knew how to speak, and not a model to fulfill, but... I was creative. So I heard of a very special school, a very intimate one in Jerusalem, the School of Visual Theater, which mainly focused on performance art. There were very few students and very few teachers. It was really great to study all in one day, body movements, directing, play writing and design. When I was asked to make the graduation theater project, I felt I didn't know a lot of things in order to make a good work, I didn't feel ready yet, though there was a lot of pressure to make one. I felt I knew all the gestures needed to manipulate the audience or to create dramatic images, visual metaphors, but something very deep was missing. I considered seriously leaving the school, but instead of which I got a studio and started to play

with materials.

*Is it the deep "truth" that was missing?*

Will it be OK to say that I don't search for the truth, but for a partner whose movements affect my own movements, so there's an equal communal dance, no one on top, no one on the bottom, and theater was probably not the right partner at that time.

*What were your problems with theater?*

The main problem I had was that the notion of time was totally unknown to me, and theater is something that happens in time. I really felt too young to understand the meaning of time, and work with it. I was also questioning a lot the stage

idea, the fourth wall, directing others and the need to control. So I entered the studio alone and made, surprisingly, some strange objects, which turned later into a gallery exhibition.

*And then?*

And then I moved to San Francisco, and because of being bored, or lost, in big America, I started to touch materials again, translating my daily experience into handmade creatures: it was really therapeutic for me, and somehow, almost by chance, I came out with a new exhibition which pushed me to realize that this medium was a great possibility for me to express myself. It was a really big step to accept this, and commit myself to it.



*From a certain moment on, you started to combine the written and the visual?*

I always combined them, since I always expressed myself in both mediums. But now it is clearer to me that I am not interested in "writing" and "visual" as if they were some kind of opposites, but in reading, different ways of reading. The way we read a situation that has two centers or more existing in the same time (*The Universal Square, Desert*) or situations that really exist somewhere, which we can see, but not recognize by name (*Play*).

*In your work you move between many mediums, given your fascination with printed matter and layout, literature, installations, and now videos.*

I guess they are all possibilities to check things, and there are different things one can check in each medium. Coming to video is, in a way, very natural for me, combining the "visual" and the "writing" through time. I am interested in real time - so I create real situations for real new moments to occur. I am not directing in a classic way. I have no way, and no need, to control the situation. In the mass media and in the arts we usually represent things by the gesture, it's enough to hold a lit cigarette to show that you are really smoking. I think we lose a lot of important information by not viewing the real smoking, in real time. It is the need of art, rooted in it's history, to show strong logo-like symbols, effective in short moments, readable. It is economical and fits the system of the art world (monumental museums, white galleries,



chromo magazines).

*Is this interest in 'reading' something particular to your culture... always reading the same text, and discovering new things?*

You can say it's Jewish culture, which definitely puts a lot of emphasis on text rather than the visual, but I never experienced other cultures enough to be able to compare them. The simple fact is that most of my writing was published first in translation. This means that I experienced the need of translating my writing while traveling or while exhibiting outside Israel. This idea of translation is very present for me, so in a way, when I start to write, I know already that the text will be translated. Because of the very big difference between the

Hebrew language and other languages, a very essential difference, I take it, sometimes unconsciously, into consideration. I am aware of it and accept it.

*You travel a lot...*

I think it teaches me not to be anecdotal on one hand while on the other not to compare. I have to be always present, always aware, taking notes. I think it also taught me the importance of randomness and chance. This is what I called the autistic privilege, not to need to understand everything and not always need to be understood... Paradoxically, traveling becomes a way for me to un-map the world, breaking the known structure in order to build a new one. I'm very happy about the

new narration that accrues to me, based on the need to forget - not to remember - in order to experience a new "writing", a net and not a linear chain.... The desert, where I spent 6 years of my life, has become the best metaphor for it, a place where you can walk in many directions without a pathway or to confirm your gaze. In Hebrew one can divide the word for desert (MIDBAR) into two words: a gauge (mad) of the wild (bar), as a net comprising everything which is not yet a culture.

*But isn't the opposite also true - you choose to live your life through traveling or according to the desert metaphor because of the things you already know about yourself, your fragmentary experience, for example.*

I guess I chose to base my art upon traveling because I try to escape the Own-Culture trap or the tackiness of custom and tradition, which is ready to kill you once you sit in the one place. For those who walk a lot, it is very important to change shoes every now and then - since our body is changing and so then is our movement. I'm interested in movement no matter what uniform holds it. Actually I'm interested in tearing up the uniform. The reason for being so scared of the one voice, the one truth, the one story with the one end is something that should be debated and trashed out later, probably in another context.

*Talking about tearing up the uniform...*

Yes, I'm about to work soon on a porno film.

*From looking at your work I started thinking that it has an optimistic or positive note. Can you relate to this in a way?*

I guess it is not because I show colorful flowers or some kind of religious hope... the thing that comes to my mind now is that once the work creates its own context, it becomes full, like the shape of a ball, so you no longer see the artist's gesture against - or in relation to - reality, this is no longer a mirror standing in front of me, nor a window, but a playground... maybe it relates also to the strategy I use to state my beliefs - I prefer to offer only the minimalistic structure which you can fill with your own mind, as if it has the form of a question rather than an answer.







Galerie Mot & Van den Boogaard

# Uri Tzaig

9/10-8/11

vernissage 8/10 18-21 uur/heures

donderdag-vrijdag-zaterdag 12.00 tot 18.30 uur  
jeudi-vendredi-samedi 12.00 à 18.30 heures  
en op afspraak / et sur rendez-vous

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