



Translation of Wolf's statement into French

Action artistique pour un changement culturel - du contentement au remerciement (de s'il te plaît à merci).

De toute part, le monde nous demande de faire preuve d'une nouvelle conscience. Bien sûr, moi aussi j'ai réfléchi à cela depuis longtemps et je me suis demandé comment je pouvais contribuer en tant qu'artiste.

Au fin fond de ma perception, je crois que nous avons une attitude préconsciente envers le monde, aussi bien individuellement que collectivement: je vois que nous regardons plus ce que nous n'avons pas que ce que nous avons. Avec 7 millions d'habitants, cela conduit inévitablement à l'exploitation des ressources de la terre.

Comment pouvez-vous changer vos habitudes et regarder ce que vous avez ? L'air pour respirer, suffisamment et des aliments pour nous nourrir, un corps souple, une maison chaude, des amis, des voisins, la paix... La liste pourrait continuer à l'infini.

Peut-être le temps est venu de dire merci. Quotidiennement, toujours : c'est tout mais cela va de soi.

Sur ce principe, je développe le projet "MERCİ" – action artistique pour un changement culturel du contentement au merci, de telle façon à se souvenir de cette richesse incommensurable. A suivre.

My thoughts

Merci

How do I say thank you in my artistic acts ?

First, I had to question myself. Do I say thank you ?

Talking of my intentions when I sketch, paint or write: would it require to distance myself from the work and to distinguish it from life itself. While painting, I act as I breathe, as I eat and drink, walk and sleep every day. It's an organic activity. It's life.

To me mostly, painting, writing, is a primal aspect of expression. There is no deliberate decisions nor intentions in my act.

Yet, saying thank you has also to do paradoxically with our own acceptance of lost, deposal, and finitude. What we take is not inexhaustible.

Maybe, I am able to tell about how we see what we have with anecdotes.

With Waya probably, it was the only time I saw someone being thankful for the food given by the earth.

Waya lived in a sub-Sahara bambara village near the river Niger. In my late twenties, I lived intermitently in a small flat in Paris and there, where I spent long months during a few years. In that place different ethnies were remaining with their ancestral and animist habits. They were Touaregs, Dogons, Bozos, Bambaras.

They didn't use money. Their values were found in what was surrounding them, in the bush and the desert.

One day, Waya's father brought a hen from the bush. Before preparing it for dinner, Waya sang a kind of lullaby. Doing so, she tapped her hand on the ground around the hen's body. When I asked her what she was doing, she responded she was thanking the earth for giving her a hen.

She was five years old. Any kid, even of that age, in the bush were able to prepare a chicken, to cut wood, with an axe, for cooking it, without producing any waste. Her act was perfectly commonplace, according to the expression on her face.

I don't have any religion. Animism is not a religion. It gathers the ways primitive civilisations would define the earth's connections and live within this. It tells them how they belong to it, how they accept, thank, celebrate and cultivate the world presence.

We lost our habit to see what we have, to say thank you because we don't have any longer a link with our ground.

What I try to find, when I act, is that link.



I ni cè is thank you in Bambara.

Looking at what we have vs seeing what we don't have

A few month ago, in the Gropius Bau museum, I sat in front of the Garden of Earthly Delights and had a conversation with Jerome Bosch. Of course, as many painters, he didn't have to tell much about his retable in the shape of a triptych.

He didn't even answer to the question why there was only the central part of it: the garden. Both sides were missing. None could see where and when the situation started and nor how it would end.

Any way, the central part of the triptych shows people like us, in the obscene and reckless position of picking up fruits which seemingly come from exotic distances, grow in abundance and for ever. They can pick them up voluntarily.



When I write

One of my routines is to write every day. I start with a haiku. It's a modus, a posture rather than a rule.

I need this as a sort of ritual. That is the only spiritual side I can develop so far. It is convenient for me. What I mean by spiritual is a dialogue with what surrounds me, what is supposed to be silent or made of intangible words.

The purpose is not to be productive. Instead, it is a process of recreation, of seeing things in their newness as if we were noticing them for the first time. Through this process, a multitude of events happens, while the cyclical dimension of time and the impermanence of things can be appreciated: a breath of air, a last breath, a sodden symphony from the wind in the leaves, a lasting drop of dew. It is a powerful evocation of any detail, or of the world itself, in a few words' particles.

It is also a way to cultivate memory, our link to the earth, to thank, to sit next to our sadness for listening to it, to tell our joy, to greet a soul...

When I paint

„The relation between absence of use and the sentiment of freedom is fundamental for understanding all the evocating and paradoxical power of a wasteland in the perception of the contemporary city. Emptiness is absence but also, the space of possibilities... Uncertainty is absence of limits, the expectative of mobility and errance. The presence of power invites to flee from its totalizing grip. Sedentary comfort calls for unprotected nomadism. Finally urban order calls for the infinity of vacant land, a true territorial index of aesthetic and ethical questioning raised by the issue of contemporary life.“

Ignasi De Solà Morales, *Interstitial Urbanity*, 1995

As a child, I grew up in a city. Next to my parents house, there was a „terrain vague“, a wasteland (but I like better the French word to designate this part of land that is left as a hole, a vague zone, in an urban area.

As many kids, I liked playing in these vague zones. They were a particular place that has been destroyed, will become a particular place again or won't. They are a „in-between“, a manifold field of possibilities, the wild - as a small kid can conceive it... In this abandonment, nature takes its rights back very quickly.

Today, I am still attracted by these places. Uncertain areas, the traces time, air, water, humans leave over them have a bigger reality to me. The spaces which we pretend to define precisely according to their usefulness don't help me finding a ground. In this images that I produce, I try to tell this uncertainty within a space. I try to find an opportunity to feel a link to the earth. Berlin, more than any other cities, is an inspiring place for this same reason. Its boundaries were frozen in 1961, so the urban growth stopped. Therefore, void spaces were not used inside and around the city. May be more than a decade ago, many projects were

They are not forbidden. No creature tells them not to do so. They don't look like they feel ashamed and don't care about the consequences. All is meant in this garden for encouraging them to continue their practices. They have a lot.

And no one was saying thank you.

Considering the picture, I asked again Jerome Bosch: and what if you would have painted a wasteland on the third panel (we all know or guess you already painted hell, there, after all)?

He said nothing.

Then, given the circumstances, I continued to talk to myself:

As most of the persons of my generation living in a western country, I grew up in a climat of abundance, along with the conception that our democratic political structures fulfill equally anyone's material needs, as long as we allow our economical growth, as long as we participate to the increasing production of goods, of energy, as long as we can buy with money which we make by working. That is a kind of pact between growth and democracy. Before democratic governments could rule our countries, only a few people were allowed to enter into this garden of delights.

Nowadays, we hear the alarming tone of various voices : our stubborn race for the economical growth changed our planet's natural balance. In other words, we can be blamed for the consequences of the way we act. Ppm values replaced money. We must count how many ppm we throw into the sky before or instead of buying and consuming things blindly. Through a critical examination of the human attempt to control nature, of the idea that human and nature are separate from each other, we must renounce to our dreams of abundance.

born out of this. Different groups of people's ideas redefined their link to the ground, and in extension to the Earth, rather than expecting a product out of a free land.

As a painter, remembering to see what we have sounds obvious: how the earth talks to us everywhere, alive, or surviving, sick, damaged, destroyed or reconstituted, in its perpetual movement, in our ever transitional time, in its vague zones, between the different layers of time cycles, of water and air. The earth breathes with us. We are not separate from nature: we are a part of it, either we live in a city or at the country side.

With my archaic spontaneity and tools, I try to express my recognition to what I am given to breath, to be with, to interact with, to die with.

I keep looking for this ground. It is a „terrain vague”.

In conclusion, even though the way I act has not a big impact on the process of solving problems, I believe that yes, to see „what we have” is a first step to stop feeling helpless and irresponsible, to understand that we are in a phase of transition, despite we unconsciously believe that we can freeze our perceptions of the world.

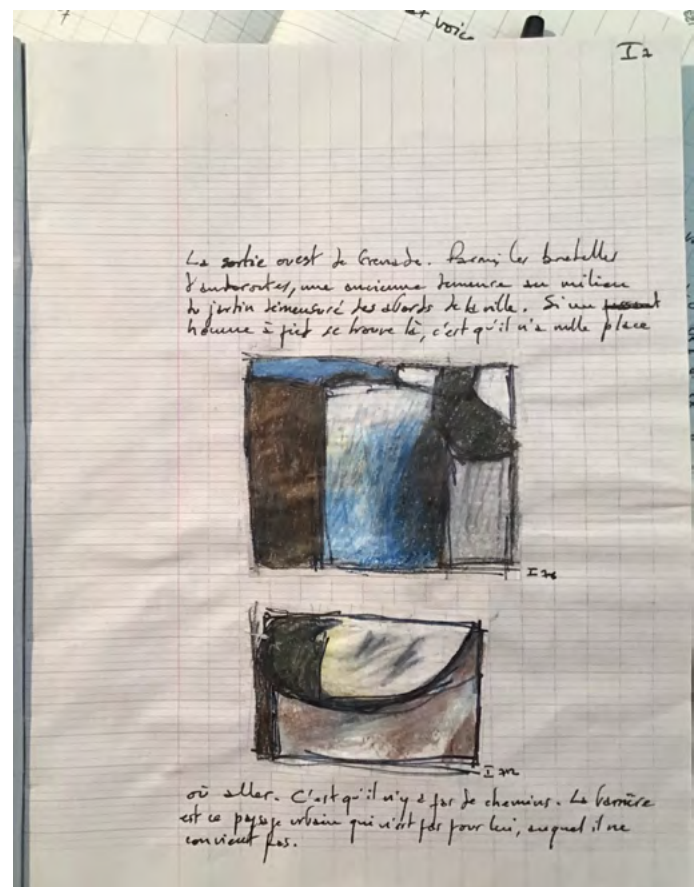
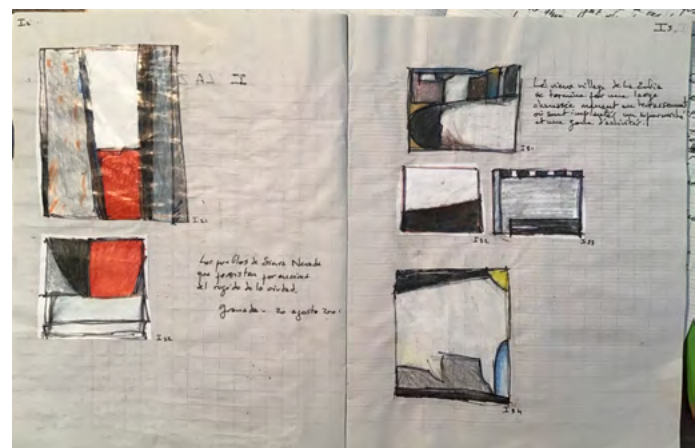
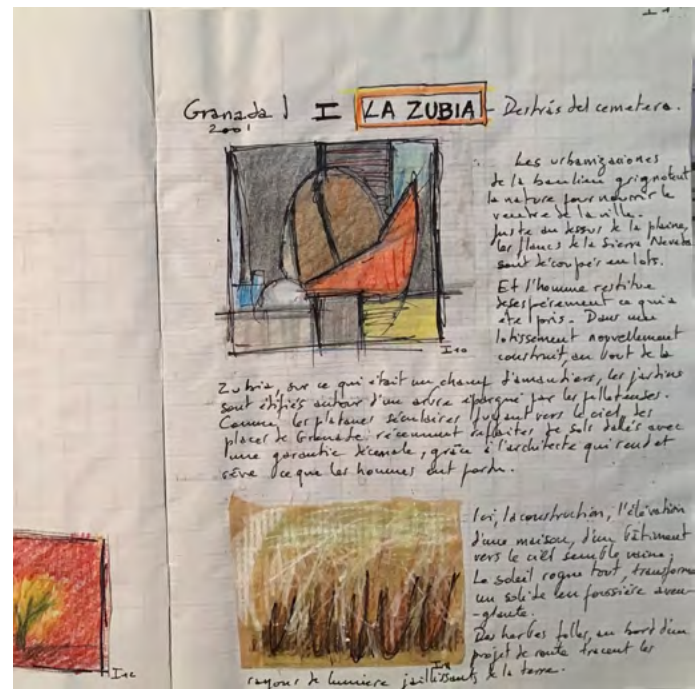
However, saying thank you is a spontaneous attitude, a posture, rather than a list of circumstances during which we must be grateful. I don't really know a convenient and precise position otherwise. How do we say it? It remains a permanent questioning and we cannot expect an identical answer for each of us along our life.

When I thought about answering to your so large question, last Sunday, I went through my notebooks. I rarely do this, but it was an opportunity to realise that where I would be and travel didn't matter: the question was always the same. Where do we find our link to the earth?

I found many pages about this. It was in Spain, years ago (!), where I made some sketches and notes about what they call „urbanización” (the allotment) - about this „terrains vagues” around Grenada where architects are desperately trying to restore the idea of nature in their project, while the peasants are deprived of their lands. Since how long are we aware of our lost? It has always been a question, hasn't it?

I try to forward you some pictures of these, and a sketch and a photo I found of Waya, the small girl I spoke about and who lives in Banankoroni near Segou.

The feeling of guilt and hopelessness inherently rises when we hear how bad is what THEY did. „They” are „we”. Eight years ago, I travelled in the Middle East, and rented a car. I drove toward Iraq. Along the road, there was nothing except oil trucks and plastic bags covering the stony surface of the desert. The plastic bags were caught in the small bushes' claws.



First, I was very judgmental. Later, I made a painting out of this. The plastic bags were growing like these fruits in the Garden of Earth Delight. Some one bought the painting indeed, thinking it was very aesthetic – despite I told him it was about a plastic bags field.

We need new eyes, to question our perspective every time we do something. For me, this is a most challenging place, as for every one I guess.

Keep me tuned!

Warm greetings from our hill in sunny rain drop,

Catherine

