

Helga Wretman**ARTIST**

My background is in dance and performance. I guess in stage related art. That influences how and why I make my stuff quite a lot, actually. Because that's where I get my tools. I have always been fascinated with film and the way of creating films and experiences for people in a broader context maybe... But I was also definitely drawn to just the action of being a stunt person. It's a really great job. It's very inspiring for me and I take a lot of influences. So most of the time it's more like 80 percent artist and 20 percent stunt woman. I think most people think of me as a performance artist which is not bad. I mean, it is close to the truth I would say. My starting point is often a performative way of thinking... But I make other things as well. It doesn't mean that it has to turn out to be a performance in the end. The starting point for me is often the body because movement and the physical presence of the character are very important for me because of my background as a dancer and so on. I love to collaborate with people. I think it's very interesting to have another person's perspective. So there are different ways of collaborating if you think of the aspect of the authorship. Sometimes I work together with people to help me in a kind of technical way and sometimes I work together with people as a collaboration where we then share authorship. It's really great to have both! It's important for me to have the possibility to collaborate with people and to have a more like, let's just say, something that's just mine but it doesn't have to do so much with authorship. I don't know, if I even think that authorship is that important and I even don't think that it has to be a good thing. Because authorship to me it means... Maybe it sounds negative, but it really means that you stand alone with all the responsibility. Which is good but it is also good to have a break from that sometimes and to explore other ways of working. I do collaborate regular with Baby Darwin, which is - I wouldn't say an artist collective, they have a very fluid function but it's Lindsay Lawson (USA) and Dafna Maimon (FI/IL) and there are also two Berlin based artists and we do the fitness for this TV show together, which started as a project of mine and then we developed the concept and made it into something that was something from all of us. And otherwise I have partners that I work with maybe not all the time but once in a while.

ARTWORK

One of my recent pieces, I made in 2014, is called Bosom Act and it's basically a concert played live by percussionists and Foley artists. They recreate the sound from certain movements and certain happenings in movies. This happens in almost every film, that they need to recreate certain sounds to make extra tension. To make it extra emotional. And the word Bosom, it means, for example Bosom friend is your best friend, two people that you can't take away from each other, but it also means boobs and it also means an imitated feeling, yeah. And the acting is also... This was inspired by my work as a stunt person because we also thrive on the act of making illusions for other people and this is kind of a synonym of what I do as a double for another actor or something like that. A lot of my stuff is inspired by things that happen around me or that I have an interest in anyways and also the will to research further. In 2013 I started to make this work called "Dave" which is a video performance. It started out kind of as a theater play and developed into being this very poetic video work about a young man who gets very popular on the internet. He can't separate his own ego from the ego that he represents on the internet or that his avatar represents. So, he falls in love with himself and then the avatar falls in love with another avatar and then he has to commit virtual suicide. That's basically the story line... but it's kind of abstract.... It turned out very abstract and quite dark. It's a video and a video performance. With video performance I mean that there is a video, but it also has a performative element. I have shown it with live action too (breathing). I think that's the beauty of art. I think that it doesn't really have to be put into a box of like, "that is what art has to be". I think it's really fluid and I think that's also a nice thing about being an artist in a way. That there is a lot of freedom. Why classify what an artwork is and what not? I don't know. I guess I just think it's an artwork and I guess most people think that it's an art work. I think that's cool. I describe it as an art work, yeah. I don't know if I'm that much of a free spirit to say that everything I touch is an artwork. That's also not true. But when I do an exhibition I think of the work as artwork, yeah. I don't know if

there has to be such a big difference from other things that I do in life. But... Such as going to the gym everyday or being a stunt woman or...it's just a different context. It's a really difficult question. I think if the artist wants it to be an artwork, it's an artwork! But if not, it's probably not. That's also a really nice thing, that you can choose, you know? I would rather choose that when I go to the sauna, that's not an artwork.

PRODUCTION

So, the inspiration usually comes from something that interests me in everyday life anyways and also it's kind of an urge to research more but usually the real starting point is when I kind of actually already have a pretty clear vision of what it is I want it to be. And then, the travel to get to that point of course changes everything.

I don't have a studio. I think the work is... because it's so fluid, the medium is so fluid and also because of working in a performative way it's kind of not really necessary for me to have a studio. I stay at home a lot and read stuff on the internet and I speak with people which I think is much more important actually and I live my life and then ideas pop into my brain. Sometimes I think: okay, now it's finished, whatever. But most of the time I just know like, this is what it was supposed to be, somehow.

I think for me, success, if it's succeeding, I don't think about it so much. I think about if I'm happy with the work or not and I like when people say nice things about it but that's not so important. I think, I'm more happy when people don't like it - and some people like it and others don't like it - than when people automatically are positive, yeah.

When I'm not satisfied or where I feel like it doesn't reach my ambitions, then first I freak out and then I try to fix it. And it also happened that I said, 'No, I can't. This is not finished. I can't deliver to this specific date or so on. And most of the things that I do, they develop naturally like that. You show it somewhere and you speak with people or you see that there is something missing maybe when it's showing. I mean, that's also another way of seeing the work in sort of a live situation maybe.

MATERIAL

The starting point is usually performative and I use my own body quite a lot for several different reasons but, that could be called also part of the material maybe. I don't limit myself to one certain thing. My body represents usually something... Me, certainly. Because it represents me! But it also represents something else always. It can represent the artist, it can represent the actor, it can represent the character, it can represent the way of seeing something, maybe. It's not only me, maybe. When I put the image of myself or my own body into the work.

Usually, I direct myself but if I do a collaborative project, for example with Dafna and Lindsay, with Baby Darwin, then I prefer to have one of them tell me what to do. Because I can't be behind and in front of the camera at the same time.

MEDIUM

My medium is definitely open. I don't want to say, "okay, I'm making performance." Which is partly true, but I make other things too and I don't know, it turns out what it wants to be, kind of. Or how I want it to be. Maybe it's a sculpture, maybe it's a performance, maybe it's painting, I don't know. I think that the people that I direct myself towards are usually normal people. I am not looking to be specifically political or specifically feminist or specifically talking to the art crowd. I think also mainstream is interesting... yeah. Depends. Maybe I also try to communicate with myself in some weird way. (laughing).

PROCESS

That's the process I think. That's also something different from the production because the process

doesn't really end in that sense, I think. The production does, for sure. But the process... there is always, when the work is seen or when something happens to the work it adds another layer of concept, maybe. And then, the process continues... maybe if it stays in a dark storage for 50 years. That definitely adds a lot of content to the work. As the performance is happening there can definitely be a part of the process of developing in that moment, which I find really interesting. I often aim to have a kind of personal development for the people participating and I often don't choose to work with performers per say but to include the audience or, to perform it solemnly myself. Which brings me further and hopefully the people participating as well. I think time plays a big role in the work. Especially because a lot of it is processed based. So it's maybe a comment or continuation of something that might happen or are happening with you and something that is going on in society but it is constantly changing. So, the time is definitely very much there in the work, yeah.

PRESENTATION

Okay. My work is presented in different contexts. In different art contexts and also in other contexts. My audience is definitely an art audience which is completely okay, but I don't necessarily make the work for art people or a specific group. I think I make it for people in general. I show my work in different kinds of places. On the internet, on my website, but also in galleries or institutions and project spaces etc. Also, one of my works is shown in an internet TV format which I find very interesting, fun and new. Not new... But fun format to experiment with. I think most of the work I can show it in more than one context or one channel. The internet TV show is shown on internet TV. Maybe that's the hardest one to kind of take in and out of context. But definitely I can show EVERYTHING that I do on my website in some kind of exhibition context. Sometimes I produce new work for a new show, or for a new space that I am exhibiting. But it can also happen that I feel that an old work is held fit for that place or maybe a curator asks me to show a specific work that I have done before.

INTENTION

I make art because I want to learn something new and sometimes I also want to show people or maybe even teach people something that I found out. I think the initial reason why I choose to follow this kind of path was because I thought, this is the only way that I can do exactly whatever I want. I think this is still true in some ways. Maybe not entirely but yeah, I like to live a life that gives room for experimenting and maybe researching a little bit deeper into certain things. Sometimes there is even a message that I want to deliver, I guess that's what I meant when I was talking about wanting to teach something. But maybe message is a better word. I think maybe message is a better word because the intention is bigger than just teaching somebody how to kick like this (heavy breathing). I make my art work for humans and sometimes I even hope that the humans will change the way they think about stuff when they see what I do.

METHOD

Yeah, I mean it's very intuitive. Which is also a method, obviously. Last year I made this work about being dyslexic, for example. Because I have very funny and profound dyslexia. I think, it's a good way to describe some sort of method because it's something that's very personal for me. It's something that also I am not proud of and used it to change my own vision of it.

I made this lenticular thing. On one side it was one word and on the other side is another word and these correspond with each other. Either in a phonetic way or in a conceptual way. And then, I took this newspaper that I made myself when I was 6 years old. Unfortunately in Swedish but it's a newspaper that I made where you can very clearly see how this dyslexia manifests and how funny and creative it is. I always start with something that is really important to me or that I deal with every day in my life. It can be something that I read about everyday or it can be something that I am just

interested in, or something that I maybe do everyday just like brushing my teeth. It always has a personal connection with me. That's where it starts! The way that I do things and also the way that I want to live my life is very intuitive and very like... yeah, what interests me is also what I want to get deeper into and keep doing. It doesn't mean that I take it lightly or that there is no thought process behind it. It just means that I have the best experience while I am making the work if I do it on something that I really care about and that's really close to me.

ART

What is art? Art is what? I think art is maybe a constant questioning... or mirroring. I like that...The idea, of answering the question: What is art? With: Art is what? Because it's a mirror of itself and it also implies that art is unknown or that art is actually a question. Art is a reflection of something. Not always, but for me it is. It's a way of questioning the world around you, maybe.(laughing), I don't know.

BIO *

Swedish artist based in Berlin. She completed her training at the Royal Swedish Ballet School in Stockholm for Modern and Contemporary Dance and explores the fake and real, possibilities and limitations of the body and technology. As an Artist and Stunt double, Wretman thrives on pushing her limits and improving the state of her surrounding. Her persona and image become like design elements in works that toy with the tropes of performed actions. In her works she also takes on the role of a marionette in a metaphorical sense. She uses these performative investigations to probe at the instrumentalization of a world of products and consumptive coercion. Wretman has performed at the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt (2014), the Palais de Tokyo (2012), Bergen Kunsthall (2011), Darsa Comfort in Zurich (2010), Kunsthalle Athena in Athens (2010) and NADA art fair in Miami (2009). Her video performance Dave was shown at the 12th Biennale of Lyon in 2013 and her television series Fitness For Artists is shown on Arte Creative TV. She also performs as a stuntwoman in numerous tv shows and cinema.
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Credits:

The interview was conducted on Januar 11 2014 at Studio Nihil Baxter Berlin.

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Filmed and recorded by: Paul Barsch

Edited by: Paul Barsch

Transcript by: Lea Hoßbach, Ella Tetrault

Produced by: University of Cologne (Cologne), Institut für Kunst&Kunsttheorie