

Katia Interview

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So I came to Indonesia 2004 that's already 9 years ago, before I actually lived in the US. But now I'm based in Europe, originally from Germany and since 2004 I'm like have to

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So I'm based in Europe Berlin, Germany and I'm spending around half of the time in Indonesia and working on pieces of dance and visual arts. So basically actually my work in Indonesia, a very important sector is the collaborations I'm doing with a visual artist my husband Pao.... And like dancers. So currently I just did a piece called In Between with 2 dancers with David and Bennie last names.

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OK so the production I just did with the 2 dancers, the production I just did with the 2 dancers and the musician um, I basically gave them the part of the choreography and I by myself focused on being the artistic director and working on the concept. Um so the basic um interest for me to work with them I think the value what they are bringing their traditional dance techniques like we working based on pencat silat minnekabow. This is like a dance technique from their area in West Sumatra. It's like a martial art form. And um so I think I'm finding something there I'm not finding that I definitely cannot find in Europe. Because in Europe we don't have that tradition any more established in the contemporary dance. So for me it's it's a real value what I... Ya it's just not there. So it gives just a potential um to work together in a collaboration which, for me it's endless like I can I could continue in many productions with them. Ya.

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So in the process for me, like the work, the way I'm working is to first look what is there. And I'm not so interested to change the basis of the movements. Um and So I'm the process is usually like that that and especially in that project like I was I first I think almost 2 weeks just watching the movements.

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Ya, so I think I'm working in a different way because I'm integrating what I'm seeing into a visual idea. And then this is basic for the concept of the work and from there we develop the work together. So basically for me um I like the role as a director because I feel it is more like kind of uh carving out what's there and putting it together in a new way. And us ya adding my visual ideas, rather than like changing things from the core of what is there. And maybe that's why these collaborations I feel are quite smooth because it's just it's just it's just work along each other in that way.

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I think it's both probably, so I think both of all of my work in performance but also visual art when it's video has a lot of stillness, and when I'm creating like a stage work, somehow I always end up with researching on stillness, because like for me it's always a research about what is movement and where does movement start, and instead of just always thinking about the outside shape, ya that is just one of the focus of my interests. And then actually for the dancers in the process what is interesting for me they realized the spiritual tradition.....

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Ya, in the tradition of pencat silat minekabow that we are working, it's very spiritual, like all traditional dance techniques in Indonesia. And the dancers by themselves realized that because they are professional dancers working since many years in Jakarta. And they might use pencat silat, but they kind of cut it from that spiritual context. Because in most works it's not so integrated anymore. And like in the process of this work I tried to respect like the original movement not what they used to do on stage. And what was quite interesting, but also um uh like difficult and we still deal with that um one of the dancers who is highly trained in pencat silat minekabow, he really had an like empathic problem like. He felt something is coming in his body. Which like some energy is entering his body. He felt like he had actually to call his teacher which he didn't talk to many years ago from his own home country to ask for advise how if he should continue to put that kind of pure dance technique pencat silat on the stage, like that or not if it's ok or not. Because usually they are more used to cut that off, that part. But for me it was interesting of course to to especially try to develop that because and to put that and to integrate it on the stage, um so in the process we still we still work on that the question of how far of they can go to to let that energy be happen, how long far Bennie can go to still feel safe. That's now very... that's something you definitely in Europe you are not dealing, but this is something in Indonesia it's just a reality to deal with uh that kind of situation and ya it's a part of the process of our work ya.

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Um the piece has 3 parts. Uh the first part is very defined through the video where there is movement, which which shows actually the movement from the dancer itself. This is not the part where they are dealing with spiritual element so much. The second part is the “cracking” is the part where the movement is not sharply defined only in some parts. So this is the part, which for is the the part which has the highest energy, energetically the highest and also the most, it’s like the center core of the piece. Um and uh David tried to to carve out the sense of the energy of pencat silat “harimau,” because harimau is like a special technique. Harimau means tiger so basically it’s referring to the movement of tiger. Which makes it like kind of scary. So the movement vocabulary is really taken from that and what I’m looking for is uh that’s also why I chose that technique is the way how they working this type um because I was looking for a style ---**I’m always interested in how animals move, (SEE ANIMAL POP JECKO)** because I think like a cat, I mean tigers we don’t observe them, like a cat is sitting, suddenly standing up and going, and we don’t why it’s standing up and going. Often it’s kind of not so clear, the timing. And I was interested in that work kind of finding that that uh uh timing which is not uh which not predictable to for us from the outside, there is something happening inside and I found in that pencat silat harimau I can I can trace that back. And so it means like we can going back to of course we also think about the actual movement. But my main focus in that part the timing and the phrasing. So that makes it ...so there’s a lot of tension in between. Maybe nothing happening. We don’t know maybe the next moment there’s a jump. Uh and I think that creates kind of power, which is really close to the original of harimau. Actually the dancers also they’re not used to perform that on stage. They’re used to just perform choreography based on the movement vocabulary. And in that part like because of the energetic situation and kind of more uncontrolled, ya there’s just spiritually more happening, ya which is more difficult for the dancers to do this.

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Um and um I have I spent some time to think back and forth if it’s good to include it. Because actually I very often work with video shot in the nature, so it’s kind of something I’m used to do. In that particular piece, ya I still felt it’s important to have a third part. Um because in connection to the part with the ? that I just explained, where we are dealing with all that energy, I felt actually it’s very necessary to bring the t energy back.

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Um ya so I felt in the context of the part before which is very tense, and very intense, that it's nice continuation of the work. It's like bringing the energy back to the earth. It's about grounding also. And I felt it's very important to include that. So um, I basically asked the dancers to dance in an area which has a lot of sand close to the beach. And I basically asked them to move through that. Um and that's the last part for me. And for me it can't stand by itself. But I felt ya it's very much standing in context of course to what happens before.

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Um ya so basically I asked when we did the video it was already in the end of our toward the end of our rehearsal time before the performance, I felt it was a good moment because everything was already settled. I didn't give much instruction I just asked them to move through the image and told them like a path they are taking. Because for me the core is the path they are taking through the nature. And I set up the framing in a way that's just not cropping ---like there's a small like a slope, a hill? And it's like the framing is kind of sharp, not cropping the tip of the hill, so when they moving through, they're already cropped and then they disappear and that's ya and that gives a link also to the first part, which is everything about framing and the cropping. So I felt like in a way I set up the framing in a different way, in a similar way sorry. Ya so that was basically ya. So just continuing the visual idea of that. Because there's some where we still see them, but they are cropped like the first part of the work. So it's also showing some details of the movement.

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..... I think the core of my work is to always move through all the disciplines of photography and performance and my themes I think always move along the theme of what is movement? Where does movement start. In the visual arts in photography there is movement too. Nothing can happen without movement. Um and um I think this and from that the question of stillness is coming. If you don't see movement there is still movement. So where is it. Ya I think this is how my art work has been framed in video, photography and performance. So that's ya.

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The challenges actually in this production, we have been very challenged. The beautiful thing for me is like there has been no problem at all with the artistic process, like how we move along, and how we develop the work. I found that extremely smooth and malleable, I mean for me it cannot be better. The challenge we struggle with dealing with is like

time, because like my dancers they also work in more projects at the same time. Jakarta is a very big city. They're living outside of the city with their families. It means for them a minimum of 2 hours to get to the place where we rehearse and there'd always a lot of traffic and so there is always a very high potential of different kind of distraction. Why we can't rehearse, or our rehearsal time's shorter, or we have reschedule. Um a issue was also space of course. We kind of have been very depending on space in the Goethe institute, which was very nice that we can rehearse there but like it's not always available so we kind of matched the times when we have time and we can go in.

Closer

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I think as I already mentioned, the process is very smooth. For the challenge, is like that more something I reflect by myself. Because I think Asia is like a country which is not so used to have conflict on the outside. So often situations are maybe smooth, but you have to think also by yourself and read between the lines how situations are and if it's ok like that so I think the challenge for me in that collaboration is to constantly reflect by myself like the way we are working, if I feel it's ok for everyone. If it's ok for me, if it's ok for them. Because and ya read between the lines if there is something which is might not ok. And even I'm living quite long here, it's still a challenge. Um I think we are doing quite well, because these people I'm working with they are comparable for Indonesia quite open, they like to talk, but also still they won't give critique openly. So they're always very supportive. And sometimes only later when I resolve something they telling me oh ya it's better like that, before it was not, they wouldn't have told me at that time, which kind of makes it smooth, but it's just a very different kind of dynamic than what I'm used to in Europe and I'm working with dancers then I more often deal with situations like of not rejection, but like they struggle to deal with my idea and they try to adjust and I think that element of adjusting to my idea is in Indonesia like the potential um or the willingness of the people to adjust to another idea. It is for my experience very big, and that can create a challenge because um ya in terms of input they can give me. Because for me it's a collaboration, I don't want to be like I want to have their input, and also I think there is also something between in that situation of like Western person like me working with in a country like Indonesia. It's a country which had been colonized and the structure is ya you're supposed to be for a long time like that the Western people running the country and they decide which direction to go. And I feel that's still in the air. Like and we cannot, we cannot avoid that and why colla.. from my experience that's kind of also that automatic, automatically it's working well, that structure, that I as a Western person comes with the concept, an idea and there is that willingness to adjust. But it can also be a trap, because I don't want actually to be stuck in that dynamic. I want that it's like we're really working together, so that's the challenge.

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I mean the idea, I think the approach of the work is quite abstract.

(COMPARE TO HELLY AND STORYTELLING)

It's more abstract than I used to work. Like the work before, I did was called "Heimat" which means homeland. And I felt that was more clearly framed around emotions of longing and what it means to be home. And to leave and the process of leaving and coming home. Uh so in this project I think it's more abstract. It's not, I think it's really not an emotional piece. Maybe the the last part I think brings some emotions together without being able to really describe that's probably up to the viewer. But it's probably I think for the viewer like when you watch the piece, because the first part is the most abstract when you watch it, the least emotional; the second has that high energy and I think the third part allows like you kind of let emotions appear out of from as a result of From what was there before from the dramaturgy of the piece.

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MS wider

Um when I'm creating a work I'm not thinking about which audience, I create a work which I think is interesting, but of course at the same time, I am facing the question of what audience. Because you have to promote and you have think that you want to show it. And that's usually happening while we create it. Especially with that work I ...like I was discussing with Helly, the dramaturg, about that the dance world in Europe is very abstract and like what we are facing if want to show work in Europe is that uh like most work Indonesian productions,[HAMMER] which here are considered contemporary for really the contemporary dance world in Germany or in Europe just not abstract. It's just too much movement. It become just ya. It's much more intellectual, conceptual ...

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In the creation I'm not thinking so much about the audience, but at the same time I'm facing the question when planning and thinking where to show it. I actually think that this work might be too abstract for an Indonesian audience. And for Europe it's just ok--- in that way. I mean ya, so um, ya it's um ya I created the work the way I think it makes sense. At the same time I felt in the performance, the Indonesian audience in the premiere might mostly not be able to really connect to it. I think for them it was too conceptual, I think even it's meditative, I think it still has an element of abstract ya abstract, which probably for them is too heavy.

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I think in Europe um there is since since many years, and I think it now shifts, but until some years ago there was um just that like visual art also, just very much based on a concept. So we actually when we see work also on stage we don't really see dancers move anymore, it's all about the concept. So it's almost like, it's almost been like you felt when you start to dance in Europe it's already old fashioned. And now I think it's shifting again. And it's shifting in a way that because you cannot continue, I mean it has always to continue and now they look more again into the history and where's the roots of movement and so now it's

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The Indonesian I think is is very interesting in the terms of that there so much value, because of the tradition uh because in Europe they just have ballet. Here they have depending on the region each region has their own specific dance techniques and forms. And usually dancers have professional dancers, they first bring this technique and then they learn others. So it's very rich. I mean compared to what we have in Europe, ya it's so much more value. I think what the Indonesian dance scene is facing like what is for me as a European is like the the potential of putting a piece together in a clear way and to kind of frame it around a concept is sometimes, ya that's the part which is sometimes weak. As I think in Europe the other, it's the other way we are too conceptual and the movement is weak. I think here the movement is very rich and sometimes the concept is just the question like what do you want to say or even if it's not usually you cannot really answer it. But it's it's I feel sometimes the direction or the core is not clear. They have so much fun in moving and trying out that in the end ya it's sometimes a little bit unbalanced in that direction as in Europe we are unbalanced in the other direction.