

Voices that tell a story and words that help to cure

by Mario Francesco Simeone

AN INTERVIEW WITH **AYA BEN RON** ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARIES AND AESTHETICS IN HER PAVILION

Powerful, loud voices to tell a story but also that help to cure. FHX-Field Hospital X is about personal dramas, collective events and stories of hope. Aya Ben Ron presents artwork curated by Avi Lubin at the Israel Pavilion at the 58th edition of the Venice Biennale. Aya Ben Ron is a multi-disciplinary artist and lecturer at Haifa University and the Hadassah Academic College in Jerusalem. She works with documentaries and aesthetic tactics: in her video *No Body* (2017) describes the stages of a learning experience of a childhood trauma, inspired by a one of Grimm's fairytales. She will transform the Pavilion in the Giardini into a kind of field camp, a nomadic no-man's land, ready to move wherever it is needed and predominantly made up of relationships and experiences to be lived in person. Each guest will be invited to make their own contribution, to put themselves out there, just like the artist who explains some of the details of her project in this interview.

In the artwork that you are going to present at the Venice Biennale, the individual experience is very important, and dealing with the work face to face. What is behind the fruition of this project?

«I wanted to create the circumstances, the special viewing conditions, that will enable visitors to concentrate on the content of the videos that are presented to them without distractions. To let them be confronted with issues that normally, we might choose to ignore. I wanted to truly get their attention».

FHX is about a tough part of your life. Was it difficult to talk about? What kind of emotions are you going to feel, when other people (completely unknown I mean) listen your story?

«In 2017, I created *No Body*, a video about abuse in the family, that tells my personal story after many years of silence. I originally created this video so that I will never forget what happened to me. It took me a long time to find a way through which I can tell it in my own words and on my own terms. It is not easy to screen it in public, but I wanted to break the silence around this subject which is often surrounded by speechlessness and the inability to speak».

Field Hospital is split in two parts: Safe Unit and Care Chair. On one side the immediacy of the scream, on the other the slow time of the observation. What is the relationship between these two moments?

«These are two separate facilities that were developed by Field Hospital X. While both deal with silenced voices, they are independent of each other. In the Safe-Units, visitors have 3 minutes to learn how to shout a Self-Contained shout. If they do not shout, they have this time to think about why they chose not to. In the Care-Chairs, visitors can view one of the FHX Care-Kits. Care-Chairs are about listening to somebody else's voice. Both facilities create a very personal and intimate experience».

At the end of the videos, we will be able to listen to opinions collected from philosophers, doctors, psychoanalysts, lawyers. Will this dialogue with other areas of knowledge give us hope?

«After the short video, visitors may watch *Second-Opinions* by FHX experts. *Second-Opinions* have two different roles: visitors can open up to a new perspective, get more information and hear a different point of view about what they just saw. In addition, *Second-Opinions* help to break the speechlessness and the silence that often surround stories about personal trauma, giving words to what is usually unarticulated, and helping the visitors to speak out».

Because of his structure, your project seems to be open to future collaborations with other artists. Is that true? Have you already scheduled your next steps after Venice?

«In each new venue, the hospital will support and produce new Care-Kits in collaboration with local artists. We are starting to think about next optional venues, but right now, we are concentrating on Venice. In addition, we are taking steps to establish the FHX Research & Development Center at Haifa University in Israel. Our goal is to create collaborations with different institutions, to continue developing the content and facilities of FHX».

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Up:

FHX, Reception, 2019, ph. Elad Sarig

FHX, Aya Ben Ron, 'No Body', 2017, still from video, ph. Oded Kimhi