

CONVERSATION WITH ARTISTS #8

Guest: Barbara Philipp

14 April 2015

I live in The Netherlands, in a surrounding which does not know a natural echo. The voice disappears in the distance, the landscape swallows it. I hear water, wind. After a while I stop shouting. I gradually forget my own voice. And suddenly I found it again, the echo, in the Swiss village Wald. Who is the owner of this voice? Where does it come from? What does it tell me and why am I touched by it? ' Barbara Philipp

For their 8th edition, **MBASSY UNLIMITED**, an independent contemporary art & culture platform, invited Austrian visual artist **Barbara Philipp** to talk about her artistic vision and creative process behind the ECHOWALK project, developed during her residency in Wald/Switzerland, in 2014.

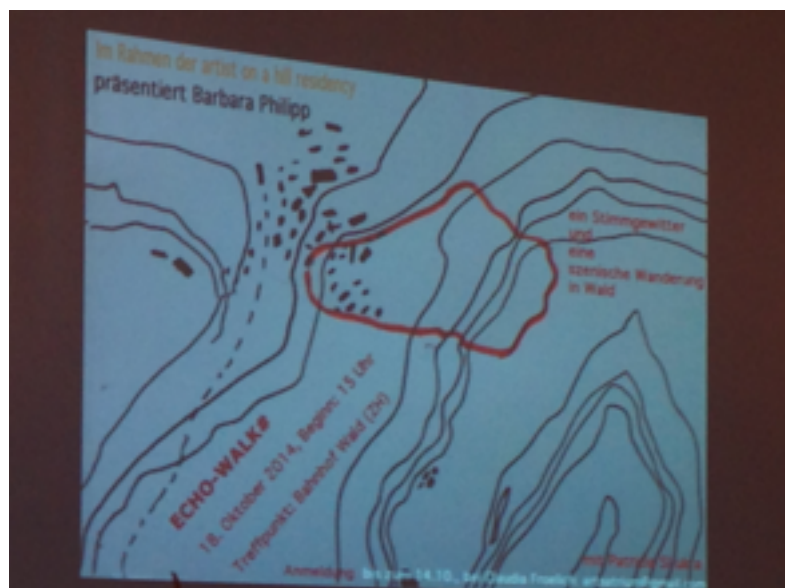
Barbara Philipp has always been interested in language, relationships and interaction. Her residency, nested in the Swiss German Alps, was supposed to be a perfect time to reflect upon these themes. At least that what she thought before she landed in Wald.

She was staying in a hotel, where in two months she never met anybody. Her studio was 1h30 away and she had to walk through the beautiful woods and groomed Swiss paths to get there. Alone. Language isolated her even more as she couldn't speak it. It was surely overwhelming, feeling alone in these majestic mountains with no one to talk to. It became the starting point of her new quest: searching for the echo.

The echo can be apprehended in many different ways. It is a physical phenomenon where sound is reflected and time delay depends on the distance. It is a Greek myth where love and revenge condemned the nymph ECHO to lose her voice and only be able to repeat what others were saying. Her love affair with Narcissus, who couldn't stand to hear his own voice in someone else's mouth didn't end well. It is a reflection about identity and the perception of loneliness.

Barbara Philipp had first to override the shyness about her voice: how come that over the years she had become the one who listens? How come that mothers and women are often cornered in that position and put up with it? How come she had become more silent? She ultimately let it go and shouted, louder and louder. Until she found it. The echo. She wondered who was shouting back at her. Was it herself or someone else? Was it courage or loneliness?

With the implicit collaboration of the mountain, Barbara Philipp developed her new artistic vision that would combine all her interests about collaboration, relationship, language and identity: the ECHOWALK.



At first, Barbara Philipp worked on a path, with signs, that anybody could follow on their own. She finally turned it into an experience that she would share with a group of people. During the walk, participants' perception was challenged at these spots. First, they were greeted by ECHO, impersonated by an actress. They asked her: who are you? *I'm the Echo*. Why do you answer back? *Because I'm your voice*,... And so it went.



The second stop was at an observatory where the group had to share their impressions and feelings about texts chosen by the artist. They became her own echo. The last stop was about meeting their own echo: participants had to read a text and decide how to say it: the echo, somewhere down the mountain, would bring it back to them. The walk was concluded by sharing the experience and was translated in a video that Barbara Philipp presented to us, thanks to MBASSY UNLIMITED.



Barbara Philipp will carry on with her investigations about identity, connecting people and the role of women as artists, among others with **Other Voices**, a research collective based in Rotterdam. It seems that the echo brought her back where she belongs.

About Barbara Philipp

Barbara Philipp is a visual artist, working in the Netherlands and in Austria.

The human body in transition in our times and its abstractions are key to her work, she explores the relationship of different formal and contextual languages.

The artistic translation is located between words, images and the imagination that point to an allegedly perfect world.

She studied in Vienna, Paris and Frankfurt and finished the master program of the Dutch Art Institute (DAI). *Source: Alena Alexandrova*

About MBASSY UNLIMITED

MBASSY UNLIMITED is an initiative from artist Margret Wibmer, is an independent alliance for contemporary art & culture that initiates cross-cultural and trans-disciplinary collaboration. Their mission is to communicate and to ignite a new dialogue from the artists perspective relating to a broadening audience in light of an increasing global interconnection.

Special thank to the Austrian Embassy for their warm welcome.

Valerie Reinhold

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