

The RAMI 14.0

MOULTAQAYAT ALEXANDRIA

6th June : Masterclass Renaud Vercey, multimedia director

*Audiovisual's creation with digital tools, soft cinema,
independant production and of working in a collaborative film.*

Guests: Mayye Zayed and Nermeen Salem, independant filmmakers, Rufy's members and Karim Shaaban, director and independant movie maker, Ahmed Nabil, documentary filmmaker.

Reflections (2)

Day 2 Multaqayat RAMI
6 June 2014

The master class for today was given by **Renaud Vercey**, filmmaker and director of multimedia and interactive arts. Renaud defined his practice as using new technologies to tell stories, to experience new possibilities that give us ideas about technique for creation and realizing different artistic propositions. He opted to explain his method and approach by allowing the work to speak for itself, and for the audience to get to experience the work first hand. The presentation started with screening excerpts from **Disposition** 2007, a project shot between three cities, Istanbul, Marseilles and Alexandria The interactive video is constructed based on memories, writings and the many relationships that we develop with cities. The city being of central importance in the work of Renaud. The work is available as DVD and presented through different chapters that the audience can select at will. Each sequence is related to the other, through one element or motif that the audience can identify.
<http://www.renaudvercey.com/Disposition.html#&panel1-4>

Renaud then moves on to present webdoc, or web documentary as a practice, that is perhaps more flexible and where audience are able to choose which sequence to follow and how much they would like to engage, in terms of time and attention. The webdoc screened, **Terres Communes** 2012 is the work of initiative in Paris and Marseilles that tries to honour the death of homeless people and give them a chance to be named and remembered, in lieu of the omission or absence they face after their death. The webdoc combined photographic work and filmed sequences that are both present, juxtaposed, in a split screen. A question was then asked on the issue of authorship and artistic control when it comes to webdoc or interactive works. Some of the audience saw that opening the work for audience intervention or ceding control over how a narrative or a work is constructed is at odds with the idea of the artist as the author of the work. And they further wondered what is the reward for such "loss" of artistic control. Renaud answered that a lot of the choices people make while watching a webdoc or an interactive piece, is very similar to the choices they make in real life. It is impossible to control everything one sees or experiences, the same goes with interactive works.
<http://www.renaudvercey.com/Terres-Communes.html#&panel1-1>

Another form of interactivity, was the multimedia opera **80 Millions Vues** 2013, written by Eli Commins, based on a Youtube video by Asmaa Mahfouz. The opera is performed all in real time, with the set being constructed live, in miniature form, shot by two webcams and projected on a screen against which the singers are performing. Renaud explained that to create in real time means that you have to respond to contingencies and events happening in real time, making it a form of interactive composition.
<http://www.renaudvercey.com/80-000-000-de-vues.html#&panel1-4>

Interactivity was not just exclusive to composing image, but also visualizing music. In the project **PACJAP 2003**, four artists from Japan and four artists from France collaborated to compose electronic music that was then fed into a computer that rendered it to an image, selected from an image library that Renaud created. The images are from both Japan and France, again highlighting the recurring theme of relationships between cities and our connections to them. And it also showed the possibility of translating musical notes into "images" through associating each note with an actual image.

<http://www.renaudvercey.com/PACJAP.html#&panel1-1>

The last excerpt was from a 'generative video', of the landscape of the South of France accompanied by an ever-changing sound track. The sound is created through the different intensities of three colors in each image. The work has no particular duration as the images are generated by a random process, so the audience can watch the video for 10 minutes or 10 hours depending on their capacity for contemplation. The experience then is one of "immersive" nature, a meditation on a visual and sonic landscape that is not bound by time or a linear structure.

www.renaudvercey.com/Paysage-MIDI-Marseille.html#panel1-5

Through these different formats of inter disciplinarily video, Renaud explored the possibilities of using video media in different mediums and with different approaches, whether video art, documentary, internet/digital art and so on. His diverse and sensitive understanding as well as artistic method helps highlight the possible potential of interactive and non-linear construction or composition in relation to different kinds of media.

The second session was for a group of young artists to represent their work and artistic practices. The presentations were started by two of the film crew, **The Mice Room**. **Nermeen Salem** and **Mayye Zayed** discussed their involvement in filmmaking and how they both started to work with film as a medium and the process of making their first feature film, *The Mice Room*. As artists based in Alexandria they explained the evident lack of any infrastructure, pedagogical, production, institutional for those interested to study filmmaking and would like to use the medium as an artistic practice. Both studied at the Jesuit Cultural Center, in their one year workshop program teaching filmmaking. And along with the other colleagues decided to work on a series of segments that evolved over time into one long feature film. Of interest to the process is the fact that they had almost no support of any kind, relied on the talents and energies of several artists, some that were not even based in Egypt and that they had never met (their music composer is a Russian composer working in the US who agreed to compose for the film pro bono). They also stressed the collaborative aspect of their work as six artists who collectively worked and decided how the final film would look like and who dispensed with the idea and the practice of rigid hierarchy of filmmaking process. A detailed account of this process and the obstacles and solutions they came up with to produce their film is available on the film's blog.

[Http://themicerofilm.blogspot.com](http://themicerofilm.blogspot.com)

As there is sever lack of any kind of support to aspiring filmmakers, the two artists along with their colleagues decided to create their own production company **Rufy's**, in Alexandria. And to offer their services and expertise to other filmmakers, in the hope that such initiative would inspire others to do the same. Several questions were raised as to how the company sustains itself and what financial model does it follow, and the answer was that only technicians and working staff actually get paid while the founders share whatever earnings they make in order to pay others or invest in further projects.

[Http://Rufy-s.wix.com](http://Rufy-s.wix.com)

From the same collective, another filmmaker, **Ahmed Nabil** presented his own artistic process and how he became a filmmaker. He too studied at the Jesuit Cultural Center, and took their filmmaking workshops. He outlined the same grievances in the independent film scene in Alexandria. His documentary **17 Fouad Street** was screened after the session.

[Http://vimeo.com/m/83879567](http://vimeo.com/m/83879567)

The last artist to represent his work and artistic practice was **Karim Shaaban**. He also started by taking workshops and assisting other filmmakers in their film projects. His initial experimentation took him to all kinds of genres, music video, advertising, documentaries,...etc. Having worked with advertising and graphics for a while, the works he represented showed this familiar polish and technical seamlessness of commercial filmmaking. He started by showing an episode of a series of films shot in one day during everyday of the month of Ramadan, **Ramadan 29**.

[Http://karimshaaban.net/portfolio/ramadan-29-ep-28/](http://karimshaaban.net/portfolio/ramadan-29-ep-28/)

The experiment with short filmmaking resulted in his short film, **What's Going on? 2012**, which was his first short film. Like his fellow filmmakers and artists, the film was made with almost no budget and despite having some stars, in front and behind the camera, none of them were paid as stars. The film is a reaction to the events of the last three years and the many questions that cannot be answered with any clear cut answers.

<http://karimshaaban.net/portfolio/ehh-el-ebara/>

Karim is currently working on his first long feature film, a process he started in 2011 through writing an initial script and then deciding two years later to discard the script and let the image be the guide for the concept and the work. After screening his short film, an intense debate arose as to what can be defined as a truly 'independent' filmmaking - in reference to Karim using the talents of established artists or directors of photography- and how can the term be understood. Those who argued against using celebrities or established technicians did not see eye to eye to a position like Karim's, that pointed out that having almost no budget and no recourse to the existing structures of commercial filmmaking renders such attempts as 'independent' even if celebrities volunteered to participate. The question echoed with the question of what and how can we understand an interactive practice and in relation to the question of authorship and control and whether it is possible to truly have a collaborative process (as in **The Mice Room**) in a medium that is famous for its 'auteur' sensibilities. The questions loomed large and were definitely unresolvable just in one session. To be continued...

Ismail Fayed

Alexandria June 2014

<http://ramimed.com/Moultaqayat-RAMI-14-0-Alexandrie.html>

