

Mira Hirtz

**"I claim part of your imagination and you claim part of mine." <sup>1</sup>**

## An Interview with Marcos Lutyens

21. Juni 2012

*Reflection Room*, Karlsaue Park Kassel

Marcos Lutyens wurde 1964 in London geboren und lebt heute in Los Angeles. Er verknüpft in seiner künstlerischen Arbeit Technologie, kognitive Wissenschaft und performative Interaktion. International auf Ausstellungen vertreten nimmt er nun an der *dOCU-MENTA(13)* teil: In einem Holzhaus im Karlsaue Park Kassel bietet er die *Hypnotic Show in the Reflection Room* an – eine Hypnosesitzung, die nicht als Therapie gedacht ist, sondern vielmehr eine innere sensuelle Erfahrung ermöglichen soll. Der Raum besteht aus zwei gleichen Fertigteilhäusern, die, indem das untere auf dem Kopf steht, sich gegenseitig in der Senkrechten spiegeln; diese Konstruktion soll den Zustand der Hypnose visualisieren.

Um das Projekt in der Gänze seines Konzepts erfahren zu können, entschloss ich mich neben der Durchführung eines Interviews zur Teilnahme an einer *Hypnotic Show*. Das Interview ist ein etabliertes Instrument innerhalb der Kunstwissenschaft, das genutzt wird, um Informationen zu gewinnen, eine Quelle zu produzieren und so einen Anhaltspunkt zur Reflektion über Werk und Künstler zu erhalten. Beachtet man, dass der Begriff von seinen Ursprüngen her einen visuellen Charakter betont, erweitert ein Interview mit Marcos Lutyens in diesem Rahmen der Hypnosesitzung das Format des Interviews um mehrere Ebenen: Zwischen dem gesprochenen Dialog, der vor und nach der Sitzung stattfand, wurde eine Zeitspanne hinzugefügt, in der Imagination und Bilder die größte Rolle spielten.

Inwieweit würde diese intime, persönliche halbe Stunde Einfluss ausüben auf die Interview-Partner, ihre Rollen, Intentionen und Herangehensweisen, die von Kunstkritik bis zur Vermittlung einer nach innen gerichteten Praxis reichen?

*Mira Hirtz:*

*You studied social sciences, right, in Edinburgh? And then I read that you went to South America. (...) You lived there with a tribe. Did that influence you in what you are doing today?*

Marcos Lutyens:

Yes. Actually I don't talk about it much, but yes. I've never been fully convinced about metropolitan living, big city living, and so I've always been interested in other alternatives and the way different societies work and interact, and in contrast to see what's missing in the way we go about things in our contemporary modern society.

*MH:*

*Is this also a point when your interest for cognitive techniques came into play? Because later you went back and you started to do hypnosis lessons in Los Angeles. You became certified as a hypnotherapist. Is this practice connected to that search for a different way of life?*

ML:

Yes, definitely. As an artist I was tired by this continuous quest for originality - trying to be contemporary. What a lot of artists do is strategize about what the zeitgeist is and how they can fit in and how their voice can be accepted and heard and be successful. I just saw this as a kind of 'chasing your tail' exercise. I thought it would be good to avoid that endless process - you know if you're *following* the zeitgeist you're going to be late. The new approach for me was to look within and work with the unconscious and then I could find something more permanent, something more anchored to these impressions; so I didn't have to look outside or look at the media, or respond to peer pressure, I could just look within and find all the answers to a lot of these questions that I have within

myself and also within other people.

I studied hypnosis at the American Institute of Hypno-therapy so that I would be able to use hypnosis as a tool, as one of the tools as an artist that I have access to.

*MH:*

*When was your first exhibition? How was it take place that these methods were acknowledged as an artwork, how did this work come to be situated within the art field? Because maybe some would not agree that you can use it as art...*

*ML:*

Well, the first exhibition that I did using hypnosis was at a gallery called New Space Gallery in Los Angeles and I think in Los Angeles people are relatively open to different systems and methods of doing things. Los Angeles, for all its superficiality also has an incredible history of esoteric thinking and ground breaking, collaborations - for instance Aldous Huxley lived there and he worked in a circle with people that were interested in religion, philosophy, science such as Swami Prabhavanada, Christopher Isherwood and others in which many different points of view coalesced.

When I did this first show, which was essentially about my first memory that was retrieved through hypnosis, it was, I think, quite well received.

*MH:*

*You are also doing a lot of things in technology. I mean for example your project CO2omorrow – it's a lot about science and technology which uses different methods than a cognitive approach. How does that relate to the Hypnotic Show?*

*ML:*

The technology is a sensing technology. And you could say that for instance things like telescopes exist for looking far away - that's a kind of old technology that you can see in the Orangerie (a science museum in the same park as the Hypnotic Show takes place) - and hypnosis would be an eso-scope, a scope for looking inwards, and then additionally there are other types of scopes that involve sensing. There are a lot of things in our world that aren't perceived in the array

of senses that we have, like the colour spectrum or the sound spectrum that we can perceive. (...) So CO2omorrow is a way of drawing awareness to the sensing of our atmosphere (...). But in this case what I'm interested in is extending the nervous system outwards away from the body and linking ourselves to the world around us, as well as, through studying the brain and the mind and the unconscious, linking to the worlds inside us. What I'm ultimately interested in is the migration of consciousness that is happening right now - these huge changes that are happening in our world, not just environmental degradation and climate change, but also social and political changes, such as the Arab Spring and the massive number of six billion people on the planet, huge population growth. Added to this is the electronic revolution, what they call the Singularity, when human intelligence has been superseded by electronic and artificial intelligence. I'm interested in that bigger picture, in exploring and examining how we're moving through these times and ideally, if possible, if there's some way of influencing people to be more aware of what's going on so that this migration of consciousness can follow the changes as transparently and fluently as possible. Darwin said that it's not the strongest or the most intelligent that survive, it's the most adaptable, so in that sense the study of the migration of consciousness is something that maybe encourages that adaptability.

*MH:*

*The curator of dOCUMENTA13, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, talks a lot about widening our knowledge in a different way than just through information and she talks about the possibility of the art of healing or changing things for the better. Would you see a connection to her concept?*

*ML:*

I think so. I think that idea of Art as healing goes in and out of fashion; I think it goes in and out of fashion depending on the economic circle. When there is an economic boom it seems kind of hippy-like and embarrassing as people are focused on dog-eat-dog commerce, and then during these tough times and the economic recession, people begin to listen to that

other kind of humanistic approach. Obviously there is a tradition here in Kassel, especially Joseph Beuys' imprint on Kassel and the documenta –thousands of trees planted that you can't help seeing and almost bumping into (laughs). Maybe we are picking up on that kind of approach of the artist answering to the environment and to the community.

*MH:*

*I want to use a word again that you also said: it's esoteric. I just read an interview with the curator and she said she does not want to use that word because her dOCUMENTA wouldn't be esoteric, she said that you are really experiencing it with your body. So would you use the term esoteric for your work?*

*ML:*

On my website I change the quotes around from time and the one right now says:

"You created a sort of geometry in the conversation which framed some of the ethereal ideas into practical forms", a quote by Corazon del Sol. So in that sense I guess I'm doing what Carolyn would be aligned with. I wouldn't call my work esoteric, but I think a lot of things that are intangible or difficult to talk about, that seem something that you can't quite get your mind around, I think the work that I do tries to bring them down into concrete form that people understand.

*MH:*

*In other projects I saw that for example the volunteers have to draw something, they are creating something, so there is an output. There is something that you can have in your hands or you can see. It seems that here it is a little bit different; you don't really have an object afterwards or...*

*ML:*

Yes, well, in this particular case the output is inside. (laughs)

*MH:*

*It's inside - well that's what I wanted to ask you.*

*ML:*

Basically there is no production by the volunteers or

people who come to experience the session. But that output really is an experience. And I suppose the experience in itself has a body like a shape or a way to texture... Everything you have ever lived through experienced, even this conversation in this room, just doesn't exist except as something in your mind, and so in that sense that's the output, the output of this project is equivalent to anything that you have ever experienced in your whole life. (laughs)

*MH:*

*Can I ask you what you see as your role? For me it's like you are doing a service. I just wondered what is your authority - it's a little bit like you are mixing the roles up. Because you are the one who is providing the service, but still the volunteers are the ones who are creative in that moment. As I understood it, they have to be the creative ones because it's happening in their mind. So how is that relation?*

*ML:*

I think this is the idea of the artist as a conduit instead of just this provider of product. A lot of art – you know I'm not saying it's bad, but basically a lot of art arrives crystallized or calculated or formed, fully formed, and then it's up to the visitors to take it or leave it. There's no argument, it's just there, take it or leave it. It's finished. The artist finished it in the studio, shipped it off and there it is, whereas with the hypnotic show it's very much an evolving process where certain words that were written by Raimundas Malasauskas in that book (points to a book hanging on the shelf upside down) – which he wrote, but even those words are kind of shared, some of them are interviews, some of them are passages that were co-written by friends of his, so there is a whole bundle of texts there, and that comes through me. I'm like a conduit or a filter or a gate mechanism, like an old computer (laughs) that kind of switched things back and forth in a certain way. And then you, the visitor, can meet me half way, and I offer these different possibilities. We engage in this switching mechanism and then at that point the story begins to coagulate, I suppose, or crystallize. That point before you are going into trance and then after when you begin to go into trance, then this story begins to grow and merge and evolve in your own

mind. It's almost like a seed basically. A seed is planted in your mind and evolves into an experience. In the sense of something like CO2morrow, the process is like a conduit. The atmosphere is out there and the people are seeing this strange changing moving sculpture, which is like a connector that links factors that people are not usually aware of in the atmosphere. And it's similar with this Sensory Familiar Project that I did as well, which is exhibited in the Wordly House...

MH:

*...it's also here at the dOCUMENTA...?*

ML:

...yes, it's in an archive relating to work to do with inter species communication at the Donna Haraway cabin. Sensory familiar works as a kind of conduit between technology and animals. It's like a sounding board, the artist is like a mirror, a kind of echo chamber that translated body responses into signals that control mapping robots. So it figures noises and sounds, and hopefully sounds into some kind of meaning.

MH:

*Just one more thing: You also worked together with Sissel Tolaas. She made a scent.*

ML:

Yes, she is a celebrated artist and chemist that made some scents especially for the project.

MH:

*Could you say what the function is or how it works?*

ML:

Ahm...Maybe it's best to talk about it after the experience. (smiles)

MH:

After, ok, all right. Then I would say...

ML:

...you are ready? (laughs)

SESSION

ML:

The tension?

MH:

The tension...it's a little bit like I can tense the air inside. Also when I'm leaning against the wood, everything just feels more intensive.

ML:

So like when before when you came in first to now, or...?

MH:

Yes. Now it feels more intensive. And a little wider, maybe.

ML:

Wider, in this direction or that direction or...?

MH:

Wider, just all around my head. Especially in that direction up. It feels like it's wider than before.

(pause)

ML:

Any other feelings?

(pause)

MH:

It feels more fresh than before inside, or maybe I just notice it more. Not cold, but fresh. The room looks really pale, I think, but maybe that is because there were a lot of colours in my mind. In the contrast it seems a little bit pale and like "Is the world still existing outside". (laughs)

ML:

Yes, good question. (laughs)

MH:

And I notice the steps, because you talked about the steps all the time, I see now that the room actually

consists of steps. (laughter) It's like I already took a step down when I came here and will take them up again so...

ML:

Yes, when you get up to the top you will be wide awake. (laughs)

MH:

So...it's a little bit like I'm still inside.

ML:

How about the spaces that you visited inside, any feelings about?

MH:

Should I just describe them, or...?

ML:

Yes, I mean for you and also the recorder, but for me too.

MH:

The steps which I was taking down, there were really old and made out of stone, with some plants around and I think I know them from a house where I used to live.

ML:

Yes

MH:

There were really clear shaped and rough – tensions I could connect with them. And these rooms, we have talked about these rooms, the gap in between, it then started to be really different...I couldn't figure out what it looked like, I couldn't say that's a wall or that's an object. A little bit like a tunnel that I was moving through but also the tunnel was moving somehow, it was floating. It was really plane and also full of colours.

ML:

What kind of colours?

MH:

Every colour. I remember especially red and yellow. And white; floating in this tunnel beside me. And I could walk through that.

(pause)

MH

I liked that it was no problem for me when you said that now we are taking again the steps down suddenly there were steps again, they just could come in the middle of that tunnel, these stone-like steps. It was no problem, it just worked. And then suddenly I was in the park and I got in that cabin, which was..no there was that room with the twelve...no, when was it? First it was that room with the smell.

ML:

Yes.

MH:

It was a real small cabin. And...that scent was really intense, I liked that. When you talked about the first thing that you smelled when you were born, that was the picture that came to my mind, this little innocent soft thing, born, sensing itself – that was a really good image. It was really nice. When you were talking about the perfumes, there was the colour of gold, which was also really intensive together with that smell. It was kind of filling me.

And then again down the steps and into that room, that chamber. First it felt a little awkward to stand in the middle of these twelve people sitting around me, or it was a little frightening, also when you talked about these voices which were all questioning, they're all talking to me in the middle and for me it was a little bit like I have to defend myself. First it felt like that. I also couldn't quite understand a question or an answer or there wasn't really a sentence popping up. But then I felt like I'm growing bigger than they are and when you said open the directions it was going above them...

ML:

...yes...

MH:

...and again then these colours were coming, these floating colours.

This opening of the directions was especially...it was like I'm growing and I'm more in my head now, more situated in my head and it's opening up. And that's what I can still feel a little bit.

ML:  
Yes.

(pause, then laughter)

ML:  
It's great.

MH:  
Yes, it was great yes.

ML:  
That's a nice narrative that you chose as well.

MH:  
So, how does it work, what did I choose?

ML:  
Well, what I wanted to do was a menu where you could choose which paragraph you can do. What I did was I chopped the book up into beginning pieces, which have more to do with situations, and then middle pieces which have to do with sensing something, like smelling, or touching, tasting...

MH:  
So it was smelling?

ML:  
Yes. And then sixteen excerpts from the book that have to do with ideas, like a mental construct. And so I made a menu for each part. (...) I wanted the menu to have a correspondence to the passages, but not as directly as just putting the first phrase of each passage on the menu because then you would already start to think about it at a conscious level. I have a friend who sees words in colour, and so I got the first phrase like 'a question of multiple entry points' – how he sees each colour, so 'A' he sees yellow and then 'a

question' is grey, brown grey and etc. Then I just transcribed all of them into colour equivalences and in this way you make the choice of story but you are not latching onto a specific idea...so that's that.

(...)

MH:  
Wow. (laughs) It's great to see what you've actually done.

ML:  
You are the first person I believe talked through what's going on. The other thing is the smell component of Sissel Tolaas. Basically there are four different smells that are prescribed for this hypnotic show. We just went through the sixteen passages and we said OK, this passage would be this smell, this passage would be this smell...

MH:  
(smelling) It's like...smells fresh.

(...)

ML:  
So now you know everything. (laughter)

*MH:*  
*No, I don't know one thing. It's about that room actually. I read that you've been to Breitenau concentration camp and that you're referring to that with the term Reflection Room. But it has been a room where you were forced to reflect about your wrongdoings.*

ML:  
Yes, after Breitenau has been a concentration camp, it became a woman's correctional facility. Ulrike Meinhof went there and conducted an interview and was so impressed by the way they were treating the women that this may have provoked her to become a terrorist or so the story goes. (...) Up on the top floor there was this relatively nice part which was this woman's correctional facility, that had been upgraded in the 60's (...), but at the end of the space there was this one room that was called Reflecting Room, which is

where they were placed in solitary confinement. There was a wooden bed that didn't look really comfortable. It wasn't a really nice place. The windows were frosted - you know, the one thing you could have there in the woman's correctional facility was a nice view of these rolling hills and nature and trees but that room had frosted windows, so you couldn't see outside. I just came away from that feeling that what we would be going to do here, which is the Hypnotic Show, is about reflection, is about inward reflection. Even without building a space like this, the reflection that we would be doing hopefully would be a positive reflection, would be a reflecting into positive worlds and exchanging positive ideas and expansive ideas, but then I also thought it would be interesting to do a room that explores the idea of reflection inside but also physical reflection. In that sense, the space becomes a cue, becomes a landing strip for consciousness into this world of reflections and reflecting, where the two things come together. (...)

*MH:*

*OK, maybe just one more thing. What I like about the idea now and what I also find a little bit strange is: I wonder if I'm now talking like a part of your artwork; I'm wondering what your artwork is. Is it the whole installation or is it the process, the show or is it also me now because I took part in it?*

*ML:*

The ideal, the proper answer really is that it is you now.

*MH:*

It's me now.

*ML:*

That you are the artwork.

*MH:*

OK. I'm the artwork. (laughs)

*ML:*

The artwork is you. You are the artwork, it's in you, it's you, it's part of you. That what it really is. Because: This space is a really beautiful installation

space, and I say beautiful not just showing off because I like it and because I designed it, but also because Raimundas handed some touches, also it's beautiful because the craftsmen that made it really put a lot of energy and work into, and the *dOCUMENTA* people as well, they pushed hard to get the funding and stuff, so that's great. And then the book is great and hopefully my process is – enjoyable. But the real transformation is in your mind and that's where the experience happened, the experience being in those spaces with those feelings, that's the artwork. And the ideal thing about the smell, possibly what we're hoping for is that perhaps some time, in a year or two or three years, some people who came by the hypnotic show may come to another hypnotic show somewhere else and maybe expose to that smell and that might is going to trigger the same ideas or feelings.

*MH:*

*It's really different. You said something like a lot of other artworks are these closed entities where you stand in front of, but then you have this gap between the subject and this object. You have this surface, a picture or even in an installation you have this kind of surface where your reflection can manifest itself. And now it's a little bit like a loss of distance, which I have - I'm becoming it myself. Would you say that this loss of distance is a thing that you would generally like art to be perceived? Am I now maybe going outside and seeing the show differently, the whole *dOCUMENTA*?*

*ML:*

I think you might see the show differently now, perhaps. Because you have a different lens.

*MH:*

*What I wondered before and wanted to ask you: I've joined the project and I can say now that it was intense. Would you say that it comes with hypnosis that people are convinced of your art? Because they are so deep inside...*

*ML:*

I think that brings in the authorship-thing. Which is also a kind of dubious trap, contagious in the art

world, a kind of melody of the art world, this author-ship issue...

*MH:*

*I mean, you are turning it completely.*

*ML:*

Yes, basically yes. You may be carrying our artwork - because it's a collaborative project - but at the same time we're sharing together within this collective space. I don't know. We'll see (smiles). It's an emergent process. But there is actually a passage here from the book that has even more to do with this... OK, here it is. This is even stronger and I don't transmit this in such a strong way cause I think it's invasive. The way I transmit this idea of you experiencing this exhibition or this artwork or this experience in your mind, is an invitation more than a kind of throwing you into the Reflecting Room at Breitenau. It says: "I claim part of your imagination and you claim part of mine, where I expand my creativity and install my project there".<sup>1</sup> It does say "you claim a part of mine" (...) so there is a kind of two way claiming. (...) I find the passage a little bit too strong in terms of how the process works, but I do think that I claim part of your imagination and you claim part of mine. That's how I feel this process. I feel that, yes, there is an exchange, but I think that that happens anyway in life perhaps less intimately or intensely with any conversations, any meetings with people, otherwise we'd have to go with felt around our heads so nothing gets into us.

*MH:*

*That's what art should be like for you, like conversations?*

*ML:*

Well, it accesses a contrast to a lot of art that just often doesn't sink in, it doesn't sink, it doesn't connect. I think what we are trying to do here is really connected at a deeper level than just conversations or story telling. We need to keep in mind that this is an exploration that is growing and merging and evolving.

(pause, sound of singing birds outside)

*MH:*

*Yes, thank you.*

*ML:*

Thank you!

## Endnoten

1. Raimundas Malasauskas, Paper Exhibition – Selected Writing by Raimundas Malasauskas, Sternberg Press 2012 [= 1. Auflage], Seite 77
2. Malasauskas 2012, Paper Exhibition, Seite 77

## Zusammenfassung

Das Interview von Mira Hirtz mit Marcos Lutyens ermöglicht dem Leser einen Einblick in die Arbeitsweise und Intentionen des Künstlers, die vordergründig anhand seines Beitrags zur dOCUMENTA (13) *Hypnotic Show in the Reflection Room* diskutiert werden. Mira Hirtz fragt nach der Möglichkeit einer Einordnung seines Werks und seiner Vorhaben in ein Gesamtkonzept der Weltausstellung.

Das Interview mit Marcos Lutyens dient jedoch nicht nur der Hinterfragung und Reflektion im Sinne der Kunstkritik, sondern auch der Hinterfragung des Formats des Interviews selbst: Es werden nicht nur Informationen preisgegeben und kunstkritisch besprochen, wobei die Funktionsweise der *Hypnotic Shows* als zwischenmenschlich und unmittelbar erscheint, auch die Aufteilung der Interviewpartner in Fragenden und Antwortenden wird – vor allem durch die Hypnoseseitzung und die darauf folgende Schilderung des Erlebten – undeutlich und teilweise aufgehoben. Es entsteht ein Dialog, der auf persönlich Erlebtes und eine intime Situation hindeutet, die die Distanz zwischen den Gesprächspartnern verändert hat. Das Interview stellt die Frage, inwiefern diese entstandene Nähe beeinflusst und es selbst als Kunstkritik noch zulässig ist; es thematisiert somit das Paradox, zum kritischen Gespräch über Marcos Lutyens Kunst diese erleben und zudem distanziert reflektieren zu müssen und verdeutlicht eine grundsätzliche Unmöglichkeit der Objektivität innerhalb des Interviews.



**Autorin**

Mira Hirtz, wurde 1991 in Hagen geboren und wuchs in der Eifel auf. 2010 begann sie das Studium „Kunstwissenschaft und Medientheorie“ an der Staatlichen Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe mit den Nebenfächern „Philosophie und Ästhetik“ und „Ausstellungsdesign und kuratorische Praxis“ und studiert nun im vierten Semester.

**Titel**

Mira Hirtz, *"I claim part of your imagination and you claim part of mine."* – *An Interview with Marcos Lutyens* in: kunsttexte.de, Nr. 3, 2012 (9 Seiten), [www.kunsttexte.de](http://www.kunsttexte.de).