

## FOREWORD

This book-piece was born from the artistic residency *BeHave* – Public Art Experience in Belval, Luxembourg, to which I participated between October 2015 and January 2016. In my view, it constitutes at once a work in its own right and a document, or better a unity in which I gathered the documentation of the majority of the activities I carried out during my residency.

Belval is a geographic area which featured, from the Industrial Revolution until the 1990s, a metallurgical site with blast furnaces among the biggest in Europe. At the end of this period, a redevelopment project started, which is still ongoing. Belval contains today the main campus of the University of Luxembourg, several banks and an increasing amount of shops, services and living areas.

When I was invited, like the other selected artists, to participate to this crucial phase in Belval's history, I rapidly realised that Belval could be experienced and observed as a microcosm not only of Luxembourg as a country, but also of Europe, and even of the whole Western society as the continuously changing organism we know today.

My intervention in this context aimed at raising, from the site of Belval, wider – not to say universal – issues, that might call to mind everyone who will look at this book, even those who never heard about Belval.

*Three Poetic Engines* is both a book and an artistic operation questioning the industrial past and the present of services, the political role of work and money, the conditions of living and of existence of the human and in particular of the workers in the past and in the present, the modalities of data archiving and of narration of individual and collective stories, and parallel issues such as immigration, communication, linguistic, social and cultural differences among people.

*Three Poetic Engines* is an object putting in relation the human and the language, and these two poles constitute, in the wake of all my artistic practice, the main plastic material of my intervention.

As the title suggests, *Three Poetic Engines* is made of three sections, to be read and looked at precisely as the motors of the gestures and actions performed in Belval.

The first section, taking up more than the half of the book, is composed of – truthful although incomplete –

transcriptions of dialogues with people who live and/or work in Belval. These sorts of interviews lasted between more or less 30 minutes and one hour and they have been based on two main criteria: to meet people as heterogeneous as possible in terms of gender, age, occupation and social status; and to ask questions allowing my interlocutors to realise this passage from the story of their experience of Belval towards wider spaces of existence in life and society.

At the same time, all my interlocutors perfectly understood that they did not need to respect the traditional Q&A format and that on the contrary I was inviting them to start a real dialogue, to experience a real encounter with themselves and with myself during the allotted time. The result, I believe, is outstanding: a narration of the human poured out of this experience, a narration which is at once moving, accurate and sincere. The precise identities of the people I met, hidden also for privacy reasons, aren't pertinent since they result in a dissolving of the individual towards collective forms of verbal expression and of social, psychological, emotional and vital content.

The transcriptions are in Courier font, also used for scientific linguistic transcriptions, and they succeed one another in a unique body, precisely a collective body, a verbal and social body, without distinctions of identity.

The voices of the interviewed people were also recorded, treated and often rendered unrecognisable through sound processing software, in preparation for a sound installation – that I prefer to call, like all my projects based on spoken language, a “reading environment” – conceived with the composer Paolo Ingrosso, which will emanate from the vestiges of the blast furnaces in Belval.

The second section of this book is made of verbal-visual works created through my method of writing and archiving called *Augmented Writing* (a website is dedicated to it: [www.augmentedwriting.com](http://www.augmentedwriting.com)). Like all other *Augmented Writing* objects, these works are not only thought for a book, but also for exhibitions where they are printed in bigger format on special paper and framed as floating images. Just like the first part, there is the book and there is, at the same time, a complementary movement of way out.

The 22 *Augmented Writing* pieces that I generated during my residency are entirely based on heterogeneous Belval-related materials that I found in the Luxembourg National Archives and in various books,

to which I added extracts of the transcriptions of the interviews and of the texts composing the third section of this book. These texts are original poetry written in Belval during my stay, which was inspired, so to speak (although I don't like this term), by the contradictions that drove me to consider this place as a microcosm of the world.

The six final poetry compositions (five in French and one in English, this one being also a script for a performance which was realised twice in Belval, once filmed by Michael Pinsky and the other time live, before a public, in a different version) summarise the experience of individual and collective life which resulted from the observations and the encounters occurred during the three months of my residency.

Those patient enough to decipher the informational stratification featured by the objects contained in the second section will find plans of houses and maps, notarised agreements, legal documents, schemes of different sorts. These objects, just like the whole book, try to produce an artistic reading of history and of society aiming in particular at problematising, when not at suggesting a language-based paradigm of subversion of hierarchies and power structures in human relationships.

If, on the one hand, my intervention in Belval inscribed itself in the wake of recurring preoccupations and practices in my work, on the other hand the experience I lived during my residency was so intense that my artistic work has been in some way redefined by it, and I hope that this book will be able to show such a joyful encounter between already existing and rather novel ways of creating.

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