

Huis Clos / No Exit – On Translation

Ruth is understood by all, but doesn't understand any one of the others.

Nicolas is understood by Annie, Ursula and Igor. He only understands Ruth.

Igor isn't understood by anyone. He understands us all.

Ursula is understood by Annie and Igor, maybe also Paolo? She understands all but Igor.

Paolo is understood by Igor and maybe Ursula. He understands all but Igor and Annie?

Annie is understood by Igor and Ursula. She understands Nicolas, Ruth and Ursula.

Selection of reactions via mail on the performance of 29 05 2010 at NIMk Amsterdam.

Performers

Annie

When I first wanted to do this performance I thought , that “we” “netartists”, would have so much in common, that we could easily bypass the language problem, which is in principle a code problem.

Hypothesis denied.

I still feel a bit uncomfortable, I had the feeling we were 6 very very lonely people stuck in a situation we had not chosen. Strangely enough this shared awkwardness brought the others closer to me.

The whole performance brought me back to my first day in high school, to my confusion and alarm when I noticed I didn't speak the same language as the others and to the painful three days I waited before daring to pronounce my first word in official Dutch. (I spoke a dialect)

Ursula

No alienation, actually the opposite:

I thought we developed our language -- on the fly. The language of the 6 of us, as artists, net artists, language speaking, visual language "speaking" selves...

It felt like touching upon and establishing an early grammar of this new – our – language... and improvising on it.

When communicating within partial understanding one of course seems to associate and jump to conclusions in the answers, picking up on the one word that's understood and responding to just that one... very strange experience... somewhat dada!

Igor

I didn't feel lonely/alone/confused/bad at all. I was watching you all, and I had a great time. In my opinion, you were interesting, beautiful, all different (and each one was different in a different way), dynamic, fragile and patient enough.

Also the colors were beautiful, and we didn't exaggerate with Manycam effects.

I also had a privilege to understand all of you, all you were saying, so it was practically like we would all be speaking the same language. There was no language problem for me. I did not experience any problems in the "code".

Paolo

It was an experiment about communication and its negation, so inside this context anything was somehow allowed as a process in becoming, unexpected things included. This is how I interpreted our performance. It may be a question of taste, however I liked the aesthetic of colours/shapes/noise etc, as well as, when we were apparently stuck in front of our webcams,

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thinking about our condition of net artists performing a miscommunication and realising how it was actually so real.

Ruth

I was entirely unsure. I think, by attempting to be properly sensual and sociable we performed network discomfort and uncertainty. It felt like an intense vacuum.

My words are understood by all but don't I understand anyone else's words.

I am excluded from future conversations with the others by my own mono-cultural being and perspective. It is not the same as being deaf though, more like aphasia. The fact that I don't understand the others' words sensitises me to the tone and timbre of their voices- taps into a more emotional part of me. I feel like a teenager.

Nicolas

I can not separate the performance to which Annie invited me from One the puppet of the other ... I have in mind our telephone conversations while preparing this performance to its completion on the stage of the Centre Pompidou. A few years later Annie appears to thrive in this research and it is with pleasure that I followed the development of her new projects.

To participate in a performance in another context, with not one known-unknown person but 6 ... why not! I liked the preparations, the online appointments with Annie or with my new virtual friends. I did not like having technical problems, losing connexion ... regularly disconnected. So this instability of the flux defined my participation in this huis clos ... I would be "disconnected"! D Day arrives, I place my camera in order to collect a documentary trace, a witness of this work seen from the other side. I'm at home, there's nobody in the room. I pay attention to the settings, I respect the protocol as good as possible and then I try to "be" with the others ... not easily won and besides, I don't feel with them. I would like to be in the place of the spectator. I like to watch them. I try to play with the screen, I draw a heart. I feel desperately alone. I wonder how other people define themselves in this performance, who are they? The body is not present, we are faces, we are not exhibiting ourselves on Chatroulette. We reveal a big spectacle of loneliness ... of misunderstanding, poetic situations conditioned or not, failed attempts, frustrated desires ... what I call a connected world finally disconnected!

Nicolas's video http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xdhow4_performance-huis-clos-no-exit-on-tra_creation

Public at NIMk

Martine Neddham

Webcams are narcissistic devices, they always present you with your own image while you're talking to someone else.

In your performance you have 6 persons looking at themselves through their webcam and looking at the others who are looking at themselves...

Where narcissism becomes kaleidoscopic....

Sophie Valero

The communication didn't work, but somewhere, that was most interesting to see you try to be together, to create a common situation in an insuperable mode of communication.

Ienke Kastelein:

Lost in space and time, on a true tower of Babel.

I hesitate about "on" a tower of Babel or "in" a tower; the English may not be correct, but "in" translates better that I felt myself, as part of the audience, inside the (virtual) Tower of Babel: this tower doesn't go up but fans out in all possible directions.

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Boris Bezemer

The stop-motion-like lo-fi worked well as a metaphor for human communication.

Lola Bezemer

I found it interesting to see how you react to each other. Some things were immediately understood, sometimes the performance almost broke apart through language problems. You also saw that the communication not always worked, but this made it stronger. (because of a language barrier, because someone fell away or was otherwise occupied).

The collective "no", the drawing on the screen and the masks are my most memorable moments. And also Annie saying several times "I love .." ... candies, wine, Jan: unsuccessful attempts to have the others say what they loved.

On line public

Pascale Gustin

I liked it when a sort of archetypical conversation was established around the word "normal". Without doubt, that word is understandable (similar) in all languages "spoken" by the performers of "on translation. "What is normal" ... "Was ist normal"???? An impression of a moment of exchange around just one word full of questionings. Indeed, what is normal??? Is this situation normal??? Am I normal to be here in front of my screen watching people talking together without really speaking to the others, faking or pretending or ... playing with some normalization rules for a particular situation (abnormal situation or increasingly common ???... I do not know ????)

The performers sometimes seem to transform into an animal and draw and play on their screens. This form of animality (playful transforming of faces using software based mirror games) makes me wondering afterwards. The animality of humanity in this context is both disturbing, brutal and uncompromising on humanity and its claim of technological progress.

Robin Nicolas

The beginning was quite startling, when you count everyone in your own language ... a bit like an introduction (the trailer) of a certain dissolution of the couple space / time.

Then, I confess, that I felt lost ... let's say that I didn't perceive anymore what was at stake.

I remember Nicolas Frespech who battled with his connection. At one point he said something like: "I feel isolated," I could say the same ...

Bérénice Belpaire

I had before me a model of our civilization as it is: 6 people very individuated, identifiable by their language, their faces, their sex, all in their private space with the desire to create something together using their differences. In a way I found this performance very political: it showed us all the tensions of being both unique and multiple, the difficulties both technical and relational that entails having to invent a common ground that does not erase any particularities.

Francesco Buonaiuto

Their languages are different and their lips and their mouths have different colors.

They are separate but together.

What are their glasses reflecting?

Are they webcams or mirrors?

How much masks are they wearing?

Why is online audience so shy?