

RWR CHAPTER 2 - OPEN QUESTIONS - AN ODE TO RUTH'S METHOD

Original music - Billie Holiday - Ain't Nobody's Business If I Do (1949)

Female voice

Psst... hey you... can you hear me? Maybe you should turn the music down a bit so you can hear me better, so we can communicate! Have you ever asked yourself why we actually do it?

Male voice

Why we talk to each other? Why we communicate? Right now? And in general?

Sound collage

For information on risks and side effects, please read the package insert and ask your doctor or pharmacist.

The museum is closing in a few minutes.

Attention! This is the police. This demonstration is being dispersed!

The first debate on the proposed bill on the establishment of the German language as the national language ...

F

Without communication, it's unlikely that we humans would have got much done. It's a powerful tool for making miracles and causing catastrophes - every single day! Communication also means becoming aware of ourselves.

M

So who are we? And how do we want to be in this world?

Original archive Sound Ruth Wolf Rehfeldt

*I want what I want / but what I want I cannot /
I can what I can / but what I can I should not /
I should what I should / but what I should I must not /
I must what I must / but what I must I may not /
I may what I may / but what I may I do not want.*

F

Some people like Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt communicate their thoughts and feelings with the concise power of poetry. Others, like her husband Robert, transform them into catchy slogans.

M

Dear Artists, if you live in your own country – it is best to remain unknown!

F

Others, like their mutual friend Wolf Biermann, wrote protest songs.

Original archive Sound Wolf Biermann Song

What is forbidden is all the more exciting.

F

And others joined forces to form a movement at the end of the 60s:

Original archive sound

Dubcek, Dubcek

F

It's all about communication and finding an answer to the questions:

M

Where is my inner self? Where does it end? And where is there a disconnect between the inner self and the 'us' out there?

Original archive Sound Ruth Wolf Rehfeldt

They always had strange ideas about what socialist realism was. But my art wasn't part of that. And when you make art, you don't usually do what other people want. No matter who it is. No, you try to do what you believe in.

F

Surprisingly, Wolf-Rehfeldt has devoted herself to the medium that surrounds us day in day out: our language! It seems to make everything possible, but it can also close doors. And what about those thoughts for which we don't have any words at all yet? For which Ruth wasn't even allowed to have words for in your country back then?

M

Is our language at all suitable for saying what we want to say? Is it not sometimes even a blind spot of human beings?

Original archive Sound Ruth Wolf Rehfeldt

And then I realised that you can do all sorts of things with a typewriter. You don't always have to write nonsense. Well, and then it worked. I started off doing it mainly with words, with language.

M

introverse - extroverse /
walking - wandering - flowing /
going - blowing - flying far /
feeling within limits / idiocy /

Original archive Sound Ruth Wolf Rehfeldt

And as time went by, I moved away from words and used all the characters available on the typewriter. And I only added words occasionally.

M

Collection - Scatter /
Victory of Signs /
Structure Sheets /
Typewriter Character

F

Whether modulated, broken, layered or overlapped, networked or deformed, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt challenges our regulatory system of language. She dissects it and puts it back together again. She looks at what falls through the net of words and letters. And she gives a new shape to that which lies in-between, unspoken. This inquisitive woman would have loved to study linguistics to find the definitive answer:

M

What gets lost in the transmission between sender and recipient? And how do we name what cannot be named?

Original archive Sound Ruth Wolf Rehfeldt

It actually began with these ... spaces for signs, or Zeichenräume as I called them in German. Another name I gave them at first was - in German - 'cubes, boxes and cages'. But that was a bit too long. And then later I used Cases and Cages in my mail art in English. Obviously it had something to do with the fact that it was like sitting in a cage. I mean, the way you live, the society shapes you, whether you like it or not.

F

East Germany, language, the Cold War - all of them shaped Ruth Wolf-Rehlfeldt. And she wanted to get to the bottom of it all. She typed meticulously on her Erika brand typewriter to get it off her chest. Marshall McLuhan once said that using a typewriter was like flying a kite.

M

And what about her technique?

F

Somewhere between writing and drawing. A mixture of deconstruction and reconstruction. An act of resistance against everything that claims to have meaning and to be a sign. An inventory of pros and cons on a sheet of paper. A symbolic protest against propaganda, against the grand answers of competing systems.

M

And what was the result?

F

A catalogue of questions transformed into art, about all the problems Ruth sees for herself and our world. But also an A-Z of her own, sincere emotional world. The tiniest of fantastical creatures and structural forms made of letters that often say more than a thousand words. Like her Cagy Beings - geometric, massive beings that will never fall, patched together from the sign-like forms of a questionable system that needs to be defeated.

Original Sound Marie Gerbaulet, curator DAS MINSK

By the way, there is a wall installation called 'Cagy Being, Käfigwesen three'. It has been installed on the flight of stairs to the Brauhausberg since the opening of DAS MINSK.

Original Sound Paola Malavassi, director DAS MINSK

It is a tile work, it existed - so far - only as a draft on paper, it was planned for a kita, a children's day-care centre in East Berlin and it never came to realisation directly after the fall of the Wall. now, we have installed it for very the first time in the public space, as it was originally intended. 30 years later.

M

And what do we all learn from this? Do we finally find ourselves standing before magnificent yet modest art, the typewriter closed, but all questions unanswered?

F

Exactly: that is the bold and liberating motto of Ruth Wolf Rehfeldt: Talk less, ask more!