

ANNA RAIMONDO – BRUSSELS

What do you want to share about your current living and working conditions?

I have been an artist for ten years – I realised this yesterday (May 4) when updating my portfolio. You who are reading this right now, yes you, could you send me a smile to celebrate it?

Confinement and this kind of anniversary offer the right conditions to set up a precious moment of reflection, to step back and share the questions that are most important to me: about what I did, produced, provoked, generated (or not) through my work. And I'm glad I can do that with you now.

During these ten years, I learned a lot about my way of working: I don't really need a studio, nor advanced technologies.

What remains central in my practice is meeting in the flesh, curiosity, the desire to listen. The main thing is to be able to ask questions that touch me and to engage in dialogue with people who live very different experiences from mine, and who are coming from horizons very far from mine. To situate these exchanges in the uniqueness of moment, location and context.

I wonder about the forms participation can take, about the role and the forms of power that I can use as an artist in relational processes. I wonder about my responsibility to formalise the anecdotes, ideas, dreams, concerns that people communicate with me during our meetings. My intention is always to keep the uniqueness and the preciousness of each voice and to try to create resonances, dissonances, counterpoints with others, in order to form listening spaces that are sometimes unexpected. Finally, I try to carry on my listening as an aesthetic, political, and always gendered experience – therefore, as a possible feminist tool.

How to do this in a time of confinement? Where is the body confined right now? How to transform the body? Is it possible to become radio creatures? Electronic bodies? Of course, we lose smell and touch, among other things, but thanks to the Internet, virtual meetings, voice messages, microphones and audio editing programmes, I was able to continue to connect and to continue my research from home. I was able to produce listening as an artist, feminist, friend, daughter, etc.

In this way, I created for example a new series of podcasts titled *New genders of listening*, to explore what 'gendered listening' could be, through conversations with artists from other geographical locations and from practices different from mine, but with an emphasis on performative and sound practices (Brazilian artist Mariana Carvalho and Canadian artist Erin Gee). These podcasts were streamed during the Oscillation—Mayday Radio Marathon,

organised by Q02 sound workspace for experimental music and sound art, and they are now available on my [sound cloud](#).

I continued to work remotely, to prepare a new participative and feminist project here in Brussels: *Q(ee)r Codes*.

I made radio surprises for my father, for the friends who celebrated their birthdays during this period...

And I read, I think, I write a lot. In a sense, I didn't stop working, but my work took new forms and, especially, a slower pace.

What can you share about the general situation of the city or country you are based in?

I find that, as always, Brussels turns out to be a city of solidarity, full of initiatives that have arisen in a state of urgency.

For example, I would like to mention the tool created by the Belgian artists platform State of the Arts (SOTA), the SOS RELIEF tool: <http://state-of-the-arts.net/sosrelief>, to encourage donations to people who need it, in a trust-based exchange.

Or the initiative of non-profit organisation Anneessens 25, started by a group of young people who wanted to deliver food to people in difficulty.

At the political level, however, I am very critical of the way the pandemic has been managed with regard to the measures taken, the times in which they were taken, the lack of information, and above all the poor management of retirement homes.

I believe that in Belgium, as in many other countries, we have once again been confronted – in an even more brutal manner – with second, third and fourth rank citizenship (elderly, women, refugees, undocumented and homeless people, incarcerated people, etc.).

What is the impact of the pandemic on the production and presentation of your work?

A series of exhibitions were postponed until September or October, residences became virtual, I did more research and produced less.

As an artist, how do you see the future today?

I wonder what forms the exchanges will take. What place and what shape will the body have ? I hope that we can find a certain serenity during meetings in the flesh...

I believe that radio (web radio, podcasts, FM radio and pirate radios) will continue to play an important role in ensuring a space for cooperation, exchange and artistic experiment, as well as various forms of activism.

Are there any ideas, thoughts, quotes, works of art or books you would like to share?

I hope that this confinement can also constitute a resource, an opportunity to rethink the future and not only to return to 'normality' or to reach a 'new normality', an appellation that scares me even more.

Because I believe that this pause allowed us to step back and to realise, more clearly even, that 'normality' is sexist, racist, transphobic and that it makes a significant part of the population invisible.

This 'normality' that allows that every day women are victims of violence, rape, murder, at home, in their homes.

This 'normality' that ensures that access to health and housing is still, and always, the privilege of only a part of the population.

This 'normality' that ensures that the elderly, that refugees and homeless are citizens of minor importance, who have no right to live a decent life.

This 'normality' that turns artists into professionals in a sector that is too precarious.

This 'normality' that still believes in borders, but still not in the reality of the pollution problem.

I believe that all this becomes more and more inadmissible from an ethical point of view and less and less sustainable too. And I hope that artists and philosophers will be challenged at this time of crisis to activate radical and new imaginations.

In general, I wonder if this experience will make us more or less human than before...

In this regard, I would like to cite as an example, even if it's not in Belgium, but in Italy, my country of origin, the *Nuovo Forno del Pane* (New Bread Oven) project at the MAMBo/Bologna Museum of Modern Art, directed by Lorenzo Balbi.

The project, following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, consists of converting the museum into a production space, a residence and workshop for local artists, selected by a call for projects.

For me, this is a real example of the conception of new possible futures from a humanist perspective: just like bread, the arts are everyday goods.