

# I, only a question

by Eitan Buganim 20/11/2009

I had an interview with Branko Miliskovic to find out his real reason for coming to Israel:

**EB :** So, whats the plan?

**BM:** I have submitted my proposal to The Glasshouse to Interview 24 Israelis in 24 hours, but as it seems to be impossible to conduct, I decided to divide my performance in three parts, eight people per day, each interview of an our in length. Before I arrived in Tel Aviv, Lital Dotan, who is the owner of The Glasshouse, told me that my plan would be very difficult to manage because Israelis would only come at an appointed time if they must come, if there is somebody famous or someone important to them.

**EB :** You can offer them payment !?

**BM:** True, but the project is not about money. I wasn't payed, also.

**EB:** What's the purpose?

**BM:** I will try to execute this project in several countries, Israel is actually my pioneer! The idea is to see how people from different regions engage within a dialogue. The title is "Ingression" and that is a term for psychological penetration- drilling to the bottom of the things, to the stomach of the interviewee.

**EB:** So that means you are basically testing your own limits?

**BM:** The main premise of this performance is to examine the mental capabilities of listening to the people. Most of the time we can see two monologues instead of dialogue, in which, one is talking and the other is not listening but thinking about what next to say. I was born in Yugoslavia and I can admit certainly that our temperament and way of engaging into a dialogue is almost identical as here in Israel. Unlike the Netherlands , for instance, where I have my residence for the past 3 years, many people there are much more ready to take participation, but generally thinking, they also hardly listen to each other. Here I want to prove it, to see how this principle can be materialised.

**EB:** It's basically a brief description of the situation here, in the Middle East ?!

**BM:** Yes, the idea of cooperation between two countries is based on two monologues. Each country separately talks about itself , without listening to the other side. This is perhaps the main reason for any war.

**EB:** Can something extreme happen during the interview? violence, sex?

**BM:** No, possibly not. Maybe someone will get angry or a little bit problematic if I ask some sensitive questions, but from my past experience, violence or sex will not happen.

**EB:** The result will be a 24 hours film?

**BM:** Perhaps only for my own archive or for a multi-screen video installation in the future; but here in Tel Aviv I am going to select the most essential parts of the dialogues and it will be about seven minutes in length.

EB: And you are still looking for volunteers?

BM: Absolutely, all the time. Anyone who enters the Glasshouse we simply attack by asking them to participate.

EB: Are you looking for people with specific characteristics?

BM: Israeli of any kind. Do you want?

EB: I would have loved to, but I'm quite busy lately, which questions do you ask?

BM: I never know in advance. First of all I ask who you are, what's your name, then you begin explaining to me and during that time I find something else, then I dig deeper and deeper until finally I can ask you something very sensitive. You can refuse to respond if you find yourself being offended. People usually respond. We sit at the table, facing each other with nothing on the table but two glasses and one water pot. Without computers, pencils, papers... I'll try to find a way to remember everything that happened at the time of the interview without recording or writing. However, all will be filmed by the main camera. Also, when two persons sit and talk, I am curious myself what will happen.

EB: Do you have any special skills or instincts for that?

BM: You see, working as an artist in the fields of performance has taught me I can take all the professions and turn it to my advantage. I can be a psychologist, a scientist, an artist, musician etc. Spoken language in performance can also be a non-existing language or some dead language. I am interested to find out what will happen after "penetrating" into each single person in front of me.

EB: To loosen up?

BM: Well, at least to try. It is very difficult to sit in front of a stranger and talk. After a while you get to know him/her much better, you become friends. It happens all the time, because every stranger, after all, can become your partner.

EB: I assume that your aim for a dialogue is connected to your biographical-political background?

BM: When I was 7, Yugoslavia broke up. All borders were closed and we could hardly leave the state. I may say, that for 20 years I was kind of "political detainee" in Serbia. So yes, you must develop your own defenses otherwise you may get sick. I also do believe that your childhood must be screwed up to be able to work on radical projects. If I was born in Holland or Norway, I wouldn't be able to do what I am doing now, because these people haven't had any problems since the Vikings' invasion ( laughing ).

EB: Wouldn't you rather be alone?

BM: I'd rather be alone and isolated, but just sometimes; when you live within the community you have to learn how to respect others not matter what race or ethnicity. We, in Serbia, didn't have a multi ethnic society, so no strangers at all. But once I went to Amsterdam I found myself surrounded by all types of people. You, being completely isolated over the years, get scared, feeling uncomfortable, everybody seems to look like potential murderers, but when you live together you are searching for the correct methods to be less selfish and more human.