

## **Hey you amazing people in *Europa Europa* – an (antinationalistic) cabaret about European migration policies!**

Soon we will all share space, hopefully.

I know that many of you have been expecting words from me. Words to describe what will happen, what will be told, what will be felt. Words to embody what we will do, how we will form the language, how we will twist and touch. Many of you have put the words next to the images, examined how the stories meet reality, some of you have travelled. And waited.

So here I come. A beginning. See it as a declaration of love rather than an artistic concept. Because what we are about to do together demands just that. When the hate mail start to pour in, the racist descriptions (the reviews), the overwhelming bureaucratic language, growing high like walls. Then, we must all demand love.

When I have been quiet, it is because I have been treading water in an abyss that each day murders, tortures, or as our Bahareh so wisely put it "eliminates" some people in order for others to live materially extravagant lives. In order for goods to travel freely in Europe, the outer borders must be kept closed to those who just want to use their natural rights to move freely in areas that we all share together. Right now, an extermination is taking place at the borders of Europe, of bodies that Europe does not consider worthy European citizens. Those who are not left do die are imprisoned, sent to transit countries that are paid by Europe to detain people, or left to get by in a limbo without knowing what is to come, what is planned for them. Those who are lucky will meet the European migration system in the form of police interrogations designed to break down criminals, rather than communicating with people who seek protection from traumas, natural disasters, torture, war – realities that the same Europe once caused.

In the midst of this sea of knowledge about inhumane behaviour, it has been a paralyzing task to try to formulate art that describes, analyzes, resists and creates alternatives. I have questioned the credibility and the potential results of my work, but I have also been caught in my own trauma. And there is nothing that justifies me connecting my own privileged 80's fugitive body with what refugees experience today, yet every report reminds me of my own traumatic displacement. I would like to call it flight, but the word implies something that will end one day – a journey or movement that will eventually reach its final destination.

But the exile never ends. Neither does the flight. It is embodied before me but by others through my body every day. We should know our place. We should know our no place.

Despite the shamefulness of comparing, the video recordings of people getting showered by white, gloved hands suddenly make me conscious of memories of my own naked body in an early physical examination (don't you usually get examined by a physician when you're ill?). When we are talking about inhumane police interrogations I sit there reliving the hunger I felt when the police interrogated every member of my family after they had us wait in a cold

reception hall for hours and hours. A hunger that was really nothing in comparison to the fear that my parents hid, but that beat in their bodies like a warning that I was too small to give the right answers to the questions I was asked about our adult planned flight route. You must be an adult in order to flee. Even if way too many are children, often travelling without adult company. I live with a long list of questions about shame, about survival, about fear, about longing, about the lack of humanity, about the desire for democracy, about prison and about tiny tiny rooms where you are kept instead of taken care of. I am slowly asking them from people who are becoming capable of answering.

But since the flight never ends it is hard to have insight. To have hindsight.

*"I brought something today that I usually only carry when I leave Sweden, and I haven't done that now. I rode a short distance in a cab to get here. I brought this (holds up his passport). I usually only have it, as I said, when I leave Sweden, to remind all the other places I go to where I'm from. This means a whole lot to me, this bundle of paper. Not everyone who lives in Sweden has one of these. I brought it today as proof that I am not a stranger. Any enmity directed towards me because of my skin colour isn't really xenophobia – it is, and always has been, racism.*

*You don't have to be tolerant with me. I'm not asking to be tolerated, and your mercy isn't something I demand. However, I do demand, with all the power I can muster, to be judged by my actions and my personality. I demand that this doctrine that sets one person above another because of the colour of their skin, their religion, their gender or their sexual preferences is immediately and for all eternity discredited, erased and abandoned.*

*I demand the right to feel safe in Sweden. I demand the right to carry out the work that my experience meets, and live in a house that my income allows. I demand the right to pray to whichever God I want, and to love whichever person I want. I demand the freedom to speak, even from those who do not agree with what I say. And I demand to be seen as a part of this society.*

*In exchange, I give you my life, Sweden. My children and I will forever help build you. I give you my inventiveness. I give you my creative ability and my energy. I will love in Sweden, I will live in Sweden, and I will die in Sweden. Thank you."*

A part of me breaks every time I hear Jason Diakité's famous speech. I agree with what he describes and demands of Sweden. Many of us share the grief of having to legitimize our belonging with a passport. But the fear? I am Jason but I am also the one who wants to be able to scream I will hate Sweden I will live in Sweden and I will most probably leave Sweden as soon as I get the chance, to maybe come back and expect a welcoming worthy of every citizen (note not Swedish citizen!!). I am the one who will not consider it an anti-racist achievement of Zlatan to be able to run on ice with a rifle in his hand. I love Loreen and wish I had grown up with him instead of with Carola, but it is because he is brave enough to stand up for human rights, not because he wags a Swedish flag, even though many want to take it from him. It is so easy to be nationalistic. To run the errands of nationalism. It is so easy to use symbols that create identification and belonging, but they have been created from borders that I can't possibly understand or justify, however much I try. At the same time as we want to reject

the violence that nationalism creates, we want to hold hands with its enjoyable moments. Perhaps because we long to be included in something, anything. Be included in that which has constantly excluded us. Finally we're allowed to take part, we can even demand it. Finally the image of Sweden is changing and black hair can be decorated with a midsummer wreath. Could this mean that the flight can come to an end? That the exile will soon be over?

We just want to come home. But homelessness is, just like Shahram Khosravi so wisely puts it, the only solution to a global disaster, the great tragedy of our time. Because nationalism can never be the way through which human value is maintained. It is by refusing ones home that everyone can be welcome, that everyone can be included. And it is worth mentioning that all of us are already included. We share. We share together. National borders are an illusion. Exclusion is an illusion. It is not possible to reserve the right to exclude someone else. What gives me the right to exclude? What gives me the right to own a border? How can I own a piece of land?

I don't have to remind you of the mechanisms of nationalism. You are all much wiser than I am. By this, I simply want to suggest that we should clearly distance ourselves from nationalism and call our show antinationalistic. We have been using words like queer-feminist and anti-racist, and even if those definitions are all true, I suggest that we meet the racist migration policies with a queer-feminist attack on its closest ally and refuse nationalism. This includes refusing borders, refusing definitions built upon so-called cultures/territories, and a clear statement that we live in a nationalistic time, a neo-nationalistic time.

To refuse inclusion or exclusion, to refuse recognizable symbols, to refuse bordered areas or the gates/walls that mark them, to refuse categorization of people, to refuse ONE language, to refuse ONE body. An antinationalistic resistance embodied as performance art has to be:

- \* Without walls (outdoors)
- \* Free of charge
- \* Borderless (in relation to stage and audience)
- \* Cross-border
- \* Prejudice free (in its way of thinking about its visitors/participants)
- \* Expressed in different languages
- \* Staged by different bodies
- \* Welcoming (but not limiting by recognition)
- \* Springing from human experience, not from inhumane ideology

I imagine a cabaret that is maximalist and uncompromising. That is:

- camp/queer
- glitter/gold
- courage/strength
- strange/welcoming
- embracing/difficult
- many/much
- naive/defiant
- communicative/with integrity
- assertive/inconsequent

- poetic/human
- big/round
- informative/close
- sensitive/sentimental
- funny/heartbreaking

To be able to enter a staged reality that plays with and through stagings of borders nations violence restrictions solidarity a different reality wounds human value boat trips kindness collective and the fight and many bodies at the same time categorisations and refusing them surveillance flights movements detention camps freedom rights abuse criminalisation vindication

I imagine several emcees and lots of divas! Music, costume changes, cakes, fireworks, conversations with the audience, sing-along, synchronised and yet in different directions displaced dance, theatrical rooms as situation or happening, costume with duration, light as compass, sound that reaches the heart without the detour via recognition, mobile text, a big fat book as program, questions that are asked differently, genders that are expressed as many, bodies that move in and out of community/communities but that are always common.

A declaration of love.

What we demand.