

How to talk with birds, trees, fish, shells, snakes, bulls and lions

A conversation between Abdouleye Ba, Agnieszka Brzeżańska, Carolina Caycedo, Ewa Ciepielewska, Alioune Diouf, Paweł Freisler, Olivier Gesselé-Garai, Aleksandra Jach, Tamás Kaszás, Antje Majewski, Luciana de Oliveira, Hervé Yamguen, Xu Tan.

INVITATION

Tamás: When Antje first told me the title, I was touched because it is like folk poetics—like the tales where certain animals present the world of the animals or plants. To me it means, “How can a human, an individual, relate to everything that they are not?”

Agnieszka: If we want to endeavor to communicate with other beings, especially nonhuman beings, then we have to get out of language. So we start with the linguistic question—which, if we take it seriously, is about effective, two-sided communication. But this can only happen beyond words. We as human beings can only verbalize this process afterwards. This is especially difficult for us, because we’re not trained to participate in that kind of communication. Our educational and civilizational process guides us into being stuck in the prison of the verbal. Communication could alternatively take place through body language, smell, sense of direction and the other senses, and extend into consciousness-to-consciousness communication—which is to say communication between beings that we unconsciously participate in, but might not have the words to talk about or consider happening.

Luciana: I love the title for two reasons. First, because it seems to be an unfinished list, and it stirs in me a desire to understand the grouping [of animals in the title]. The criteria for this grouping seems unpredictable, which is good and poetic. But I see the title more as a question than an affirmative phrase. *How to talk*: it’s a question. A question because I think we’ve lost the capacity to talk with animals and plants in general.

Carolina: I like it a lot. It’s very poetic, but the fact that the human is still the central point is something that I myself am questioning and trying to shift in my personal process... Of course it’s very difficult, but how could we move perception away from human epistemology and imagine nonhuman epistemologies or other entities as the starting point for the conversation?

Paweł: *How to talk with*, for example, *birds, trees, fish, snails, bulls and lions*? Yes, the question disturbs me as it should, but it’s correct, there’s nothing wrong with it. It’s true. It’s an imagined level of conversation (for a human being). What we are actually talking about is how a few billion people coexist with nature.

Is it about how *I* talk with... or how I think others should?

I do not talk with nature. *W każdym razie nie po ludzku* = In any case, not humanly.

Tan: How do you in the West think humans perceive the world—with how many senses?

Tamás: It’s five, no?

Aleksandra: Sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste. Five.

Agnieszka: But scientifically, it’s six. There’s proprioception. That’s another sense.¹

Tan: It’s always believed that we have six senses, not more. But in the Buddhist tradition, we have eight.² So if Buddhism is reasonable, then we have two more. Sometimes I wonder if we don’t have more senses that we can’t consciously be aware of. Maybe we use them, but we don’t know that we use them. They allow us to reach the birds. We can get in touch with plants. What do you think—are there more senses than just six?

Olivier: Sure, why not. If there is a sense that could really allow us to talk with animals—maybe it exists, maybe it’s rare.

¹ Western Science (as represented by Wikipedia) asserts that there are at least four more senses: balance and acceleration, temperature, proprioception and pain.

² The **Eight Consciousnesses** (Skt. *aṣṭa-vijñāna-kāya*) classification was developed in the Yogacara philosophical branch of Mahayana Buddhism. They include the five sense consciousness, mental consciousness (*mano-vijñāna*), the “defiled mental consciousness” or emotional consciousness (*kliṣṭa-manas*), and finally the “storehouse consciousness” (*ālaya-vijñāna*), which is the basis of the other seven. This eighth consciousness is said to store the impressions (*vasanas*) of previous experiences, which form the seeds (*bija*) of future karma in this life and the next after rebirth. (Source: Wikipedia)

Antje: Maybe the meeting point between humans and other beings would not be in the same time and space described with the other senses. What do you think?

Aleksandra: We could talk about intuition, which can be an umbrella concept for knowledge about the world that we have, but are not really conscious of. It's really complex. Intuition is based on the senses, not just the ones that are listed, something more. Being in a situation deeply...

Antje: If you think about the woman [in a video by Paulo Nazareth] who's an expert on chickens, for example: her father taught her how to deal with them. We think with this linear sense of time, right? But her father probably accumulated all this knowledge about chickens by the way he moved with them. And she grew up seeing her father move with the chickens, which is also a form of talking. You can call it intuition, but it's actually knowledge she has learned by living with him. If she's now doing her own thing with the chickens, she can tap into all this knowledge that might be several generations old. That's also why it's so difficult for many of us to step across this boundary, because we don't have access to this kind of accumulated knowledge anymore. Our parents or grandparents were already cut off from direct connection to the land and animals, to handling them in an everyday kind of way.

Carolina: Yes, definitely. Embodied knowledge is very important for me in our work about the rivers. It isn't just land and common goods that are lost, but all of these gestures that represent embodied knowledge. I do want to believe that we have memory in our muscles, and we just have to learn how to tap into it. That's why I think that crouching is a very important gesture, getting close to the earth, or going underwater—just immersing yourself in water, this change to your normal spatial perception. Or just sitting or standing. You see submersion in all the rituals, in Colombia and maybe also in Africa, even in the Catholic baptism: because then you can go into another time-space.

Ewa: I feel it when I jump into the Wisła river; I feel it, this big entity when it goes over me. It's huge, it's over me... I feel much more than what my senses tell me. It's for sure something without a name in my language, but it's there! You can experience it!

Carolina: Western science would have us believe that we're the last link in the evolutionary chain from animals, but we are less evolutionized where I come from. We still have a step to go. So we all have animal spirits. It isn't that "animals don't have human spirits." We have animal spirits!

Agnieszka: I agree with you!

Luciana: Your point is a human perspective; it's not an animal perspective, because we've lost the ability to see things from an animal point of view. But there are people who have this ability. We can invite some of them to come here, to dialogue with us or to be in our videos, in our works and create a presence. But I think the start, the beginning is the human perspective—not the universal human, but specific humans.

Agnieszka: We're trapped inside human bodies. If you wanted to be a voice for other perspectives, the best way is probably to stop being human. To die as a body and to become...

Antje: ... a cyborg. Maybe it's better.

Carolina: No, there's technology for that! There are people who become jaguars. And jaguars that turn into people. And snakes that become rivers.

Antje: There are a lot of secret societies [for that] in Cameroon. But it's not for everyone. You've got to have the right kind of initiation. I, for example, could not decide from one day to the next that I will become a lion. It's also about the bloodlines. If I'm not born into this family of lions, then I will not be able to become a lion. It used to be that kings could turn into an animal at night and then even murder other people. You wouldn't want to run into them in the night. Also if the kings were lions, for example, then they had to be very careful when they went hunting because they could meet their own soul, their double—a lion. And if they were to shoot themselves, they would also be dead.

Olivier: I don't know if I believe this. But I respect it. I'm more questioning the role humanity plays: I would be more afraid of a human in real life. A lion can be afraid of a human, but if the human also wants to be a lion...

Hervé: There are so many stories here about people who are said to have totems. There are snakes, for example. And sometimes they turn into a snake, and do things to women in the night. It's a fable.

(Laughs)

Antje: So if a woman has an encounter like that with a snake, can she become pregnant?

Hervé: Not so sure. We don't know. *(Laughs)*

Antje: But if the husband finds out that his wife has been with someone else, she could always say, "It was a snake, there was nothing I could do." *(Laughs)*

Olivier: But then the husband could turn into a lion.

(All laugh)

Alioune: We have the same traditions here.

Abdou: But in Cameroon, for example, you talk about lions or bulls. Here we would talk to you about the hyena.

Antje: Why hyenas?

Abdou: Because it's a mythical animal!

Antje: But [Djibril Diop Mambéty's film, for example, speaks in contempt of hyenas.³

Abdou: Mambéty compared the mode in which so-called modern Senegalese society operates to a hyena mode.

Antje: But in a negative way.

Abdou: Yes. But if you look at the fables, on the other hand, it's a very clever animal—very very clever and brave...

Alioune: And with a lot of teeth.

Abdou: He never goes hunting, and never returns empty-handed. Mambéty believes we are much more like hyenas than lions. And before the hyena, he was into the horned bull. *Touki Bouki*⁴ is about horns, because this period was his period of combat. When he fought all conventions.

Antje: So for me, the "bull" in our title is connected to Mambéty, to the installation that was in the courtyard⁵ with the bull's skull. The "birds" were always everywhere in the court. Whenever something important was happening, the birds were there to announce it.

Abdou: They spoke, talked, talked ... sometimes they came down and took...

Alioune: ...Alioune's hat! Wait, I want to tell it. I went up in the tree, and the bird came and took my hat from my head and left. And I said, "You took my hat!" And he said to me, "Yes, I'll give it back to you!" So I went down and he gave me the hat. But these birds talk to us too much ...

Antje: And the "trees"—it can of course refer to the trees in the courtyard. "Fish"—the fish that I saw in the sea when Issa made me listen to the shell in my first film with him.⁶ Fish are about being together. The "shells"—that's obvious. But finally there are animals that I don't understand: the snake and the lion. The "snake": Maybe there's something that El Hadji Sy told me. There's a snake coming out of the water...

Abdou: I'll tell you. The snake is Issa. The snake is the totem for Ouakam, the traditional village...⁷

Antje: (surprised) Oh really?

Abdou: ...that was under the charge of his grandmother. When the snake came out of the Mammelles⁸ to go to the water, this is *Saman*—the snake totem of the traditional Lebou village. And I call Issa *Saman*. I said, "You are going to find *Saman* below the Mamelles of Ouakam." He was going to join the sea. He is not dead. Issa was a commander of the Lebou. What is commonly called the coat of arms of a city, it is Issa who held it. The *Saman*.

Alioune: *Saman* is a snake. Normally, it's a boa. A boa that lives in the tide, measures itself on a sort of coconut tree, the Palmyra palm (*Borassus*). [The snake] goes up the palm. When it's the size of the trunk, it goes to sea. When the snake is the size of the palm, it means the palm can become a canoe.

Abdou: We cut the tree, we make a canoe, and when it goes into the water, the canoe does this (*imitates the movements of a snake*). So they say that it's *Saman* who returned to the sea.

Antje: When Alioune, Aleksandra and I were on top of the Mamelles yesterday, I asked him: These two breasts, they certainly occupy a very special place for the Lebou. How come they can build a super big monument of the African Renaissance on top of one of them, and a restaurant on the other? On those places that should normally be sacred! And Alioune told me that there is also the place between the two, which goes towards the sea—a place where the Lebou go to do rituals. Now it's a military base. All of these things should not be there. That's my feeling.

Abdou: If Issa Samb chose this title, then it's for a simple, good reason. Issa was a Lebou. The Lebus are a people of the water. And they are very, very, very, very respectful of nature. It is nature

³ Djibril Diop Mambéty, *Hyènes* (1992)

⁴ Djibril Diop Mambéty, *Touki Bouki* (1973)

⁵ Issa Samb's courtyard and Laboratoire Agit'Art at Rue Jules Ferry 17, Dakar.

⁶ Antje Majewski with Issa Samb, *La Coquille* (2010)

⁷ Issa Samb (1945–2017) was born in Ouakam, a Lebou village that is part of Dakar.

⁸ *Mammelles*: Two natural hills in Dakar, close to Ouakam, that look like two udders or breasts (French: *Mamelle*).

that gives them life, and they live with nature. So well that they have even mastered certain forces of nature, which they use in a mystical way. There is a space reserved for the immaterial in every Lebou concession. Something that is based on objects that are not supposed to speak, but with whom they speak. Like those that were in this courtyard...

Antje: And what are these objects?

Abdou: Shells... (*Both laugh*)

Antje: I'm not surprised!

Abdou: Kola and canaries—earthen pots. To put water into, to drink ...

Antje: Near the tree...?

Abdou: That's right. This is the fundamental reason why Issa gave us this title: to take a look—another look—at nature. Because if a human being hears “to talk with a snake,” he will be curious to know how to speak with a snake. And he will take a moment, take the time to look around him. This look is already a critique. In relation to the other, to this tree, to this snake. Doing this exercise will naturally lead a person to ask the right questions. And the good questions are those that give us the courage to say, “No! Yesterday we were wrong...”

I see it's a big project.

Antje: Yes, yes!

Abdou: Because at a given moment you might stop with what is you, what is already in you. If you only feel what's already in you, you haven't done the job yet. You have to voluntarily put yourself in crisis. In any case, that's the way we work at Agit'Art; we voluntarily put ourselves in crisis. Voluntarily! To get more out of it than we have. We have to unlearn all the conventions and be able to return to ourselves now, in the simplest way. And we will pollute less. And we need less liters of kerosene, less of everything, and it becomes very simple.

Pawel: The title is a password. If the title is a question and the answer is not only culture as a whole (what is culture, where to look for it and what are its best traditions), then an imperative appears. In that situation, one has to indicate the moments that are individually important, and possibly take care of them. We are not only talking about the title but also about the content, quality and creative power of this question. About the process of creation.

FREEDOM

Antje: Tan, could you please tell us how the farmers you interviewed describe their sense of freedom?

Tan: The farmers might mention two conditions. First they say, “We work freely now. You're a citizen in the city where everyone has to go to an office at nine o'clock. I can follow my own schedule.” But they might also say, “You can have all the freedom in the world, but can you feel it if you live in a very terrible environment?” You can have political rights, but if you stay in polluted areas, you feel no freedom.

Carolina: In my experience working with peasants and people who work the land and the rivers, and in mining, too, freedom always has to do with future generations. Many of the people fighting to free the river, or to have free access to the land, understand that the freedom they aspire to might not happen in their lifetime. But if they stop, future generations will have a tougher time.

Tan: When I was visiting my friend in Silicon Valley, an engineer, I asked him if he feels free or not. He said, “Freedom can be about your faith, your political ideas and your religion.” I said, “You are in Silicon Valley, of course you can vote.” He said, “Yes, we have the right to vote, but we work really hard from morning to night in everyday life and sometimes don't even go home; we stay at the company. Because a Silicon Valley company is like heaven; you have everything there. Inside it's really beautiful. You can eat there; everything is for free.” So that's capitalism. The capitalist strategy. They just want to stay in the company. They don't want to know anything about the outside world. You can get a very fine payment. So more and more people live like that now. Is that still a kind of freedom? I say yes, because we're from China—we have no idea about this world. (*Laughs*)

Antje: Brazil, Europe, China and Africa are seeing similar problems in agriculture. Agriculture is such an effective means of control: individual types that are useful for humans will be cloned and made into varieties, and everything else has no right to live. Even all the wild plants and species are classified and controlled, because they're all owned by governments now. There's no freedom in that sense.

Tan: I did some investigating in supermarkets. You can find apples that are all the same size and shape. It's not like in a garden, just growing a peach. They say the market refuses their peaches because they are different sizes. Different colors. Nobody wants that kind of fruit on the market. It's very difficult. How can you find fruits that are all the same if you're growing peaches? They say, "Our peaches are from another country." Everything is international. In Hong Kong, all the fruits come from Austria, from South America, because fruit grown in China is not so safe right now. I think this goes beyond just one city or one country. It's all over the world. This way is destroying local farming. In China, we have some really old villages just growing onions. Another village is growing garlic. All of this will disappear.

Antje: Paweł Freisler, Aleksandra and I worked on this apple project where we planted old, local varieties of apple trees. At the mention of freedom for animals you immediately think of an industrialized chicken farm with enslaved chickens, but you don't have the same image in your head when you think about fruit trees. But it's the same! If you think about liberating an animal farm, you might imagine flinging open the gates so that the animals can run out, but fruit trees can't walk. To liberate fruit trees is to unleash their genetic diversity, restore their right to reproduce sexually.⁹

Carolina: Science can also carry a message: heavy layers of industrialization, colonialization, neo-extractivism. It's amazing how the most effective struggles are sometimes located there. How we can look into communities that have been facing this, that are coming out of it and resurrecting themselves after centuries and generations of layers bringing them down.

Antje: Questions of decolonizing people and decolonizing other beings are really closely linked.

Ewa: It's also about territories. We're really struggling with our Polish government now because they want to change our river into a highway—something completely stupid, made by people who have never been on the water! I'm now thinking about kidnapping some of them and taking them to the river to look at it.¹⁰

Antje: I hope you won't be using a machine gun.

Ewa: For strawberries! (*Laughs*) I have also this internal battle with activism. How can we do it using the most peaceful method? How can we change the situation now into one in which we could live. If I don't want the Wisła river turned into a canal, for example, and I'm trying to picture a method to keep that from happening, how do I react? What method could I use to prevent it? First step: to visualize a method. To not stop, not surrender.

Luciana: I'm thinking about the Kaiowa people and their struggle for land.¹¹ It's not just a struggle for land. It's a struggle for freedom, because what they want is to live a simple life. To live a life that's different from ours, different from the universal form of life we have to live. I think this is freedom for them: the ability to talk with their ancestors, to talk with spirits, to talk with animals, to stay on that land—because that is the land, the specific land where they can create that life, have this communication.

Antje: It has to be that specific land because it's connected to their ancestors?

Luciana: Yes.

Carolina: That's the struggle for Ríos Vivos,¹² for example: [they want] the freedom to stay in the countryside. The freedom to stay close to the river. To that river. To that part of the river because the river is huge, and one part is different from the other. So it's not the freedom to have a whole variety of options, which capitalism offers. The illusion of freedom is *brujería*—because capitalism also has its own way of witchcraft. It can blind us. So we also need witchcraft to bring that veil down. It's the

⁹ *Apples. Over and over and once again / Apfel. Wieder und wieder und immer wieder.* Edited by Aleksandra Jach, Joanna Sokolowska, Antje Majewski, Amy Patton, Susanne Titz, exhibition catalogue for the same-titled exhibition at Museum Abteiberg Mönchengladbach and Muzeum Sztuki Łódź (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016).

¹⁰ The **Vistula** (Polish: *Wisła*; German: *Weichsel*) is the longest and largest river in Poland, at 1,047 kilometres (651 miles) in length. The Vistula is the last large wild European river.

¹¹ **Guarani-Kaiowa** are an indigenous people of Paraguay, the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul and northeastern Argentina. Starting in the early 1980s, the Guarani-Kaiowa tribe has gradually been forced to leave their traditional settlements as a consequence of deforestation by soy, corn and cane plantations. This eviction process has worsened the Guarani-Kaiowa's living conditions, and decades of unsafe and underpaid work on plantations has resulted in many deaths, even of young children. Attacks on this community are rooted in the high profitability of lands they inhabit for growing agri-businesses and the biofuel industry.

¹² <http://riosvivos.org>

freedom to stay. The freedom of *permancia*. And when you stay, you are together—not only with living people but also those before you, and those who are coming after you. It's real; it's there.

Aleksandra: I think staying in one place is a really luxurious position nowadays. I'm lucky to live in the same country as my parents, but my grandparents were forced to leave Ukraine, which was Poland then, because of the war. Displacement, migration—it really is the story for most people.

Luciana: Land is a commodity on the global market. It's very difficult for these minority groups to stay. They can be removed anytime. In Brazil, we had reservation politics when it came to indigenous people. They were removed from these traditional territories in the name of a better life—a life of energy, health care, and beautiful houses—but that's not the life they want. Now they're returning to their traditional territories to reconstruct, to reactivate the life that they believe in. It's a direct action. They have no guns. All they have is praying and coverage. And their traditional territories have become big monoculture plantations. It's very difficult to live there, but they resist in the name of the freedom that they want.

Antje: When I was talking to Getulio Krahô, the old *pajé* I met in Brazil, I was very impressed to hear about the seed exchange he established within villages to resist forced hybrid corn from the government, for example. Monoculture fields also make the water level go down in the Cerrado,¹³ so the land quickly goes arid and you cannot plant anymore. He said, "We know what plants to plant to bring the water back, and with the water, the wild animals also come back." The Krahô would bring back agriculture of course, not wilderness—but a culture that knows how important it is to have biodiversity around to make it work. He is a real expert from which we can learn.

Luciana: You can see plantations in the film we did with the Kaiowa. It's impressive. They are very very big and just empty. And we have few parts of the Cerrado left.

Antje: Tamás, you decided to gradually replace your artistic activities with farming and foraging activities. When you work in the garden, or build something useful, do you also experience a sense of freedom like the farmers that Tan interviewed?

Tamás: I was thinking a lot about this recently. If you have skills or what I call "folk science"—if you know how to solve problems or how to survive, how to make food—then it gives you some kind of power or pride, even if you live in poverty...

Aleksandra: Feeling of agency...

Tamás: Yes. That you are really able to handle this, and that is quite close to freedom. If you are able to survive, then you are more autonomous relative to the system, to the world in general, to society. I believe that when you have a farm, or any kind of microeconomic unit, and you deal with it—it can also be a company or a little workshop or anything else—then you can use so much creativity, the same creativity as in art. And you have to face so many unexpected situations in gardening that you really have to use this sense, or this skill, that we call creativity.

Agnieszka: There's a nice word in English: "sovereign." Which actually means that kind of freedom: that you are independent. Your existence is sort of self-sustained. It can also apply to countries. Freedom should have many words.

Antje: Ewa and Agnieszka, do you feel free when you go on the river?

Agnieszka: Yes, that is a very important part of it. That we have a place where we can really live and feel that freedom.

Ewa: It's like a long ritual that is not prepared beforehand. It takes a moment, which is a long time and lasts for days and nights and we are there, now...

Agnieszka: And that's freedom. First of all, we very much disconnect from anything that is not present with us.

¹³ The **Cerrado** is the second largest biome in South America and the most biodiverse savanna in the world, but it is not currently recognized by the Brazilian Constitution as a National Heritage. This biome has been increasingly threatened by industrial single-crop monoculture farming over the past 25 years. In particular soybeans, the unregulated expansion of industrial agriculture, the burning of vegetation for charcoal and the development of dams to provide irrigation have been identified as potential threats to several Brazilian rivers. (Source: Wikipedia)

Antje: And why is it important that there are more people on the boat? It could also be only you two. You wouldn't have to take care of anyone else...

Agnieszka: I think it's a very important part! Human beings have this need to share, to communicate—we're sad to be alone! I've traveled all over the world by myself. And I enjoy it, but I really prefer to be with friends and to do it together, to share it. You have this feeling of flow. This flow doesn't really know where to go when you're alone ...

Ewa: Being with people on a boat and sharing the space at night really creates a small, close society.

Agnieszka: It's our collective need just to know that we're in the presence of like-minded beings. That we're not alone and that our ideas and intuitions and choices are valid. And when we link our minds, we probably have access to some kind of superpower. We just don't have the instructions for how to do it. We'll figure it out, I guess! That's my hope—that we'll figure out as a group how to actually create the reality we want.

Ewa: Completely for free, you know!

Tamás: A boat is a very nice metaphor, because it has a limitation. How many people can be on the same boat? How many people can make decisions together? How many people can share things...

Ewa: We can make another boat!

Tamás: Of course, there can be many boats.

Aleksandra: This is the question of the scale of agency: what will you choose, escapism or political engagement and activism... On what scale can you be this active agent?

Agnieszka: It can't be more people than the number here in this room, around twelve. I can't deal with bigger groups psychologically. It would require a different sort of planning, a different sort of structure and intention.

Carolina: I need to operate in the world as an artist, and not only in the art world. I need to participate in other processes: political, agricultural... It's funny how we as artists or cultural workers are all here to discuss it, but I need other spaces where I can discuss it with not only cultural workers, but also indigenous people, with farmers... with politicians maybe, if I can trust them. I think escapism is necessary. You have to go to the studio, or on a boat, or go and work in a garden...

Agnieszka: But we have to get involved with everything that's going on.

Carolina: Exactly.

Tan: Last time, I stayed outside in the countryside for a long while. I feel so beautiful there! So sometimes I ask myself, "Why do you still want to go back to the city?" I am so happy there; I just talk to farmers, so happy. They are also happy. I think that talking is a kind of performance art! But I still think that the museum is a very important public space, because there are a lot of people there. You can do your performance piece and be happy if you just stay in the mountains—but you should go back. It's your responsibility to do that.

Tamás: When I was an activist in Budapest, we sought to convince the masses to grow, to be big, to change things. And now I see it a bit differently; I'm thinking it's better to stay small. I don't have to save everyone. I don't have to save the faceless masses, mostly because they support our fascist government...

(All laugh)

Olivier: I consider myself opposed to and in confrontation with the institution—like all the other artists, like an NGO. The institution is governmental, and we are nongovernmental. Not every institution is the same. It's like politics, like administration, and we all know what it means for a citizen to work for the administration. It's hierarchical. We are included in this hierarchy. But it seems that we are not compatible with this hierarchy. We are linked to freedom.

I think it can be interesting sometimes when you decide to work in an institution as an artist. The institutions work with the public, public space, society, to open up a way and encourage different kinds of people to go inside the institution, and also to see how an audience can understand what's inside. But what opportunities does an institution have? I'm thinking about hierarchy, administration—what do you curators have to procure for the hierarchy: for the director, for the government... it's this kind of responsibility.

Luciana: I think a solution with a strong response to processes is to promote the meeting of knowledges. That's a keyword for me—the meeting of worlds. The meetings are not easy. It's not always harmonious, but it's very necessary for building another idea of how to create a life together, no? I think it would be good to have more indigenous artists, more indigenous curators, more black

curators, Afro-intellectuals in these positions, because maybe they can come up with great concepts, great questions. We can respond together.

Ewa: Maybe art has a quality of healing, of trying to find a solution for what's wrong, to which we don't agree. I don't want to speak for the others. I would love to speak for myself, without making anyone but myself responsible. At the same time, as a human, I feel ashamed of what is happening. And I represent the group, the species.

There is a lack of balance. The fear that we will lose something. That I will lose something. This is egoistic, but if we want to engage, there is first me—the ego, myself—that worries about what will happen.

Tan: Inviting others to our consciousness, I would like to say, "That's me." I think this is a very important position. If you don't think others are another thing. I think consciousness can include everything we see. Everything is very close in our consciousness, and we cannot work on a relationship, we cannot cut! So that's why I want to do something for others—because that's me. I think the object world exists, but what we're talking about now is not an object. It's a kind of thinking or consciousness. Also the knowledge, scientific knowledge, is not a fact; it's *about* facts. So everything is changing in our consciousness. Every day it's changing. Every day you discover something new. All the things in our consciousness.

Agnieszka: I personally am not into education or activism as an artist's tool. I think we should use it as decent human beings or decent citizens of this Earth, and this is one of the things we do, like cooking and being nice—it's part of being human. But as an artist, we also have very developed feelings, minds, articulations. We have a very important service to provide: to create a new world. Imagine a new world. To go somewhere when we don't know what's there. To experiment with it, play with it, and bring it back. It has to be done freely, with the vocation of our hearts. We often forget that we should use our consciousness to make human consciousness grow, to be the laboratory in our own mind. Our first goal is to venture in there. Not as colonialists, not as explorers, but to create it, to give birth to it, to make it real.

Pawel: For me, the title of the Hamburger Bahnhof exhibition is and will be:

INVITATION: How to talk with birds, trees, fish, shells, snakes, bulls and lions

As you remember, I already decided that my participation in this exhibition will remain on the margins.

So my presence is without my personal presence.

Now I will try to explain why I've added INVITATION to the sentence.

Human beings as a species have been developing for over 300,000 years (according to the latest paleontological findings).

I believe that this process, which would not have happened without the Sun, is one basis for the exhibition.

Without our Sun, there is no life on our most beautiful of worlds.

Without the Sun there is no place for **consonance**.

One need only exist (be alive) to be inside the reality. This is where the art is.

Homo sapiens have an ancient past, the closest past (counted in thousands of years of cultural development) and the current past.

The sentence: **How to talk with birds, trees, fish, shells, snakes, bulls and lions** lies entirely in the past. In front of us is the future. The current future... etc. etc. etc.

We know that the human brain in each individual life has its own value and adds one (we are now billions of people, we will be more, if...). It seems to us that we know how the common human brain functions and how it compares, integrates with life on Earth. Meanwhile, we (human beings) live day by day, step by step (so long as we do not have an aching knee), limited by ourselves in life and after death.

Parallel to the past, the distant future for *Homo sapiens* is not imagined ... the end of the Sun will come.

This time and this or that moment... this is the Invitation.

So before the end of our common world comes, before we deal with the given time, before we die, I propose that we all accept the Invitation...