

One of the last times we met, we started eating sushi and we ended up smoking a Hookah in Momo, a bar that makes you feel like you're in Marrakesh.

The conversation wandered from the actual Mexican art scene to the Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club with conceptual art in between.

It is impossible to describe such a paradigmatic person and all of these sentences could be used to describe Stefan Brüggenmann: an artist who is directing a movie. Someone who talks about pop music with the same easiness as he reflects about analytic philosophy. Who knows about conceptual art as well as about mtv's latest video-clips. He was born in Mexico, spent his child holidays in Munster and decided to live in a gorgeous loft in Farrington. Who projects a Hotel in Acapulco at the same time as he organizes a solo show in one of Europe's most prestigious contemporary art museums. Who never sleeps but who is a master in looking blasé. Who prefers having an interview with Malcom McLaren in his catalogue than some dull guy writing about art... Stefan Brüggenmann is, above all, a fantastic artist, one of those who is changing London's art scene. As the Talking heads say: This boy is in motion... and that is exactly why I wanted to know more about him...

**Filipa Ramos:** You're half Mexican, half German and you grew up between these two countries. How did you end up in London?

**Stefan Brüggemann:** The first time I came to London was in 1998 and I can't recall why I came here. Well, I do but I am not going to tell you!...

The first time I came to London I ended up staying here for one year and the first show I did here was in the Museum of Installation, in Deptford, and was run by the art critic Nicolas de Oliveira, who I met while I was in London. I liked the space because it was a simple shell and didn't have the aspect of a museum. The piece I created was named 'Opening': I removed the main glass of the gallery so that the space was opened 24hs a day!

My relationship with London started there, from that moment on I was always going back and forth and in 2002 it became stronger.

I still live between Mexico and London, half and half.

**FR:** And why London?

**SB:** The strongest motivation to come to London was my relation with music. I've always been very influenced by the British musical scene and this was an opportunity to understand another city and also to understand it through music. I was very keen on nightclubs and used to go out a lot. In 1998 I lived during the

night, I went to all the clubs, to check all the dj's... I remember that one of the first albums that I really listened to was David Holmes' Let's Get Killed, which I got in NY before coming to London!

Once here, the first job I got was working as a cashier for Virgin Records! Of course the artistic scene was interesting, all the YBA's were here and all of that but the most important thing was the mixture of a big town with a lot of musical activity, with a big cultural offer, an energetic town basically, which still is. I did all my contacts after I was here, I started going to openings and meeting people... I remember that one of the shows that most impressed me in that period was Jeff Koons' exhibition at Anthony d'Offay ('Encased') that had basketballs and soccer balls inside glasses. I was fascinated by it!

**FR:** And do you still maintain that same relation with London's musical scene?

**SB:** There is a moment in your life when you are like a sponge and absorb everything. After a while it becomes a generational thing and you retain those things that had a special meaning in your life. Of course I still go to concerts but I can't find anything new! The last concert I went to was The Horrors, a group of teenagers that sound like everything else! The public was between 13 and 18 and I felt I was kind of old!

**FR:** Being here for so long, I suppose you left behind some of the cultural activity you developed in Mexico. Don't you miss having a space where you invite artists to show and where you develop projects like you did in Mexico? (Stefan used to run the space Programa Centro de Arte in Mexico)

**SB:** Well I keep on doing my own things from here, I keep on creating projects that involve other artists. This has nothing to do with the city in which I am but more with the ideas I am developing. The motivations that lead me to have a space in Mexico were connected to certain apathy and a lack of relation with the international context that was felt. There was the need to create a different space in Mexico. Everyone complained about the lack of activity but no one did anything about it! In that period I had already done a show in NY and I was very influenced by the concept of the Dia Art Foundation, an institution with a different shape, and that's when I decided to create Programa, a space that intended to have a fresh - but professional - approach to art, a platform that proposed interesting critical reflections. All this happened before the big internationalization of Mexico during the 90's. Even if we were working with international artists, the shows were produced there, in Mexico, and it was a unique experience!

Right now I am doing other kinds of projects that also imply a great effort: I am projecting a Hotel in Acapulco, I am doing a film... things that also imply a massive concept of communication. I like to see myself as someone who adapts his working process to the projects I develop, not as a slave of his own creations!

**FR:** How are your personal relations in London? Are you very connected to the art world?

**SB:** I have friends from various backgrounds, people related to art, music, fashion, nightlife...

**FR:** Regarding the film you are doing....

**SB:** I am trying to bring my personal vision to cinema. It will work as any other material I create and it's pretty much connected to what I need to express right now. Experimentation is very important for me, it saves me from doing the same thing again and again. I decided to do this film because, looking at my neon works, I wanted to do something different but still expressing the same ideas, therefore I decided to create something that included a narrative and that would develop into another side of my work. I am an artist and it is impossible to define it, and it is as an artist that I am going to direct this film.

**FR:** What's your vision of the present artistic situation in London?

**SB:** Art in London is international, most of the people that are doing interesting things are foreigners. During the 90's the interest for British Art was dominant. The YBA were very strong and they captured all the attention from galleries, press and museums. Right now London is like an airport; people come from all over the place and come here to propose their ideas. Most of the interesting curators and galleries presently active in London aren't English. London is a place where certain ideas are being developed but they have nothing to do with a local expression. The same happens with my work that has nothing to do with a local context. I see myself as a result of globalization and of internationalization. There are many active people who are doing interesting things here in London! One thing that fascinates me in London is knowing that every time I wake up there are a million other artists who have exactly the same mission. I am not original and exclusive, I am in a world of constant competence! I dislike the Latin American clichè, it's very boring! That is why I want to disappear from that typical context. A country like Mexico is more than the common places of violence, contamination, literature, magic poetry, mushrooms...

**FR:** Your new show 'Obliteration Series' is exhibited at Blow de la Barra, your gallery in London, until the 12th of May. Can you tell us something about it?

**SB:** I am happy about the show! It develops a relationship with my first show there, in which I presented 5 neon texts. 'Obliteration Series' has 7 neon pieces made from scribbles, which develop an annihilation of the textual series. In the back of the gallery I showed a series of works made from previous paintings that I covered with silver aluminium ink. They are also connected with the idea of negation, expressed in a different way.

**FR:** What about new projects? What are you working at?

**SB:** Well, next year I will have a series of two solo shows in Switzerland, in Kunsthalle Bern, I am in a group show in Chicago, I am curating a group show in I-20, my gallery in NY and I am still developing the project of the Hotel in Acapulco.