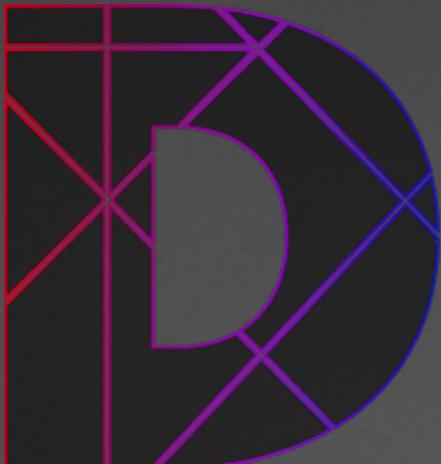


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# NO SHORTCUTS

TOTAL ANASTROPHES, STROMBOLI, VOLCANO EXTRAVAGANZA. AND THE 2019 VENICE BIENNALE

"If influence is the flow of matter, ethereal fluid – of thoughts, sounds, meanings, bodies, and objects – and influence has become imperceptible or indirect action exerted to cause changes; then to influence migration is a tautological concept. It occurs between cause and effect: each incision, intervention, expedition, treaty, concession, exploit and extraction..." This statement from Sharmeen Inayat is a perfect synthesis of the emotions visitors to the Volcano Extravaganza contemporary art festival experience. "Total Anastrophes," the title of the 2018 edition, refers to a rhetorical figure identifiable in the inversion of the standard order of two contiguous words: an alteration of the typical order of vocabulary that may at first appear as an error, a mistaken transmutation. But the anastrophe has the gift of transforming a normal sentence, giving it greater emphasis, elevating its value. Volcano Extravaganza began last February at the Dhaka Art Summit in Bangladesh, and concluded in Stromboli, in Italy, on 30 July 2018. Participating artists were invited to rethink the value of pre-existing things, investigating both collective and individual memory. We met with Milovan Farronato, curator and director of the Fiorucci Art Trust Foundation, as well as the upcoming curator of the Italy pavilion at the 2019 Venice Biennale, to learn more about the energy and power of this unique endeavor and the island that hosts it.

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Three intense days of performances, films, volcanic theaters, sunsets, exhibitions, conviviality and more... What are your impressions of this edition of Volcano Extravaganza?

Collaboration has always been a key characteristic of Volcano Extravaganza. But I believe that the Whatsapp group (Anastrophes) will continue to survive long after the festival has come to a close. This year collaboration reached its peak. It was epic. Everyone danced for Cecilia Bengolea, and Cecilia danced to Haroon Mirza's rhythms in front of Runa Islam's film. Alec Curtis composed soundscapes while Anna Franceschini edited the footage Runa recorded of our Dhaka rehearsal. We all sang an improvised chorus for Alex Cecchetti's Cetaceans piece, and Tobias Putrih was everywhere – not only on the set but as a constant performer, giving a little of himself to every piece.

This is the eighth edition of the festival. How did it get started? Why Stromboli?

Stromboli is the perfect background and provides ideal scenery for performances, presentations and exhibits. The island can be condensed into the image that Runa Islam, this year's artistic leader, proposed as the edition's leitmotif: the theater below or within an active volcano. A curtain of darkness falls and everything is illuminated by a blood moon and Mars even as the audience and participants can feel volcanic eruptions and vibrations beneath their feet... Could anyone wish for better scenography?

This island's wild nature, and especially its explosive volcanic force, have attracted artists like Nan Goldin, Cindy Sherman, Mimmo Jodice and Marina Abramovic. What role did the volcano play in this edition of the festival? Were there any differences compared to previous editions?

I met Cindy Sherman in Stromboli, but I've never met the others you mentioned. They've all produced work inspired by Stromboli and a few, like Abramovic, Paladino and Anselmo, even decided to

buy property and stay. The house Marina Abramovic bought became our first venue on the island.

Every edition has its own character, determined by the artistic leader in dialogue with me. I am always surprised how the island's wild nature, as you call it, is capable of stimulating such different responses from each artist. In 2013, with Lucy McKenzie, we had the malevolence of Evil Under the Sun. For Haroon Mirza, it was the low frequencies of forgetfulness (Forget Amnesia). For Runa Islam it was the emotional body and mind as a volcano capable of creating Total Anastrophes.

How did the project develop out of Dhaka, in Bangladesh, during the Dhaka Art Summit?

Diana Campbell Betancourt, Director of the Samdani Art Foundation, invited me to take part in the curatorial team of the Dhaka Art Summit. Diana has been visiting the festival for many years, and we thought it might be interesting to migrate our knowledge to Bangladesh and then back to Stromboli.

This wasn't the first time the project was divided between two locations. Last year, with Eddie Peake, we started in several venues in Naples and then moved to Stromboli. This year the journey was transcontinental.

Dhaka and Stromboli seem vastly distant from one another... What was the connection?

Runa Islam, our artistic leader. She was the first artist to come to Stromboli in 2008 and the first to produce a film, in 2009. She was also the reason I initiated a dialogue with the Samdani Art Foundation, who are the most important supporters and promoters of contemporary visual culture in Bangladesh.

Dhaka is the city where Runa was born, a city she left when she was three and which she has visited a few times in her adult life. Dhaka holds bloodlines and memories under the influence of deep emotive frequencies, all of which she tried to encapsulate in a new



film produced during our days in Dhaka that premiered during our closing event in Stromboli. Condensation, crying eyes, emotions and liquidness are all contained in that film. Malala Andrialavidrazana formed another connection between the two locations, and was included in Cosmic Costinas's exhibition 'A Beast, a God, and a Line' in this year's Dhaka Art Summit. After seeing Malala's work in Bangladesh, we decided to commission her to create a 'bridge' between Dhaka and Stromboli, neither of which she had ever visited. Malala included literary references to the Eolian islands, Bangladeshi myths, stories of migration and narratives suggested by the dialogue between myself and Runa in her map.

How would you explain the idea of 'theater-cum-volcano'?

The idea is one of a place full of distorted sounds, altered images and projections that run away from the screen. It is a magmatic place of energy yet to be defined, all outside our comfort zone. It's an echo chamber.

You conceived an idea of group and collaboration in creating a total artwork that developed over three days. How did you manage to create this orchestra?

That's one of my peculiar talents! (Smiles)

The place is certainly the element that made this fusion possible. Over the course of the three-day event, was there a moment when this sensation reached an emotional peak?

The place, of course, made this fusion possible. Nevertheless, the five days we spent performing together in Dhaka helped merge our bodies and structures as a group. For our visitors, I think one particular moment on the first night in Stromboli comes to mind: when Haroon Mirza incorporated Chiara Fumai's sound piece while Runa Islam's video played on multiple screens and Erika Miyauchi moved amid Tobias's structures and Haroon's Volcano Diaries as if executing a ritualistic dance around a small bonfire.

For me personally, the key moment came on the last day when, due to Runa's absence for family reasons, we all had to interpret her final intervention and make it possible. I participated in the evening, holding a small projector and wearing Osman's cape draped over one shoulder. I felt quite emotional as I walked over Runa's drawing of the volcano, beamed into the sky. It was a presence that transformed with time, from the yellow of day to the blue of night. The room was hot and the screen showed steam and a crying eye. Maybe it was sweat, maybe it was tears, I am not sure. The most cathartic moment came when Nicoletta Fiorucci played the singing bowls at the end of our evening. The vibrations and sounds changed our states of mind, and even though we'd planned a DJ set and party later that night, our emotions were first lifted and then lowered again, leading us to the festival's necessary and inescapable conclusion.

Interpretation of the anastrophe as an idea of moving the order of our perceptions so that we might achieve unexpected collective memories and experience new emotions; as an internal catastrophe that leads to spiritual vibrations... How did your guests, drawn to the island from all over the world, perceive this concept?

Even though the number of people in the audience increased suddenly this year, most of them always visit during our festival. From what I've heard, this was their favorite edition. I think the anastrophe was perceived loud and clear: distorted to perfection and not overdone.

Are you already thinking about next year's edition?

When festival was over I stayed in Naples with Maria Loboda to discuss what we had started talking about in October. She will be overseeing the Volcano Extravaganza's ninth edition.

What elements have you already eliminated from your list?

We're definitely not contemplating repetition, symmetry, balance or the middle ground: no shortcuts!