

## THE UNIVERSITY OF LOVE

Texts performed by SOL at “What’s the matter with school festival” April 2017, BUDA Art Center, Kortrijk.

### INTRODUCTION

Maybe one day, love will no longer be considered a private endeavor or a slogan of hippies, but rather a public and a political mode of being. Imagine a time where schools will not merely be a protective incubator that prepares one to life outside of it, but an engaged environment that influences the world...

During 5 days prior to the festival, we a group of 17 students and teachers examined the notions of school and love.

Today, a smaller group quickly put the thoughts and material we processed during the workshop into a form of presentation to a broader public.

They could come across as incomplete or naive, but we mean them seriously and thoughtfully. As fictional, utopian, radical or ridiculous as this presentation might be – we count on it to shake, even if just a little, some fixed conceptions of what school and love could mean for society.

### STRUCTURE

- SONG - **“Momus - I want you, but I don't need you”**  
Even though the university appreciates and enjoys the cleverness of the song, it represents the opposite of the what the university stands for: a clear separation between the I and the other, and an affirmation of positions as opposed to their deconstruction.
- REGARDS LOVE AS A PUBLIC CONCERN and CAN BE TAUGHT AS A MODE OF EXISTENCE THAT CAN GENERATE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

FOCUSES ON RESEARCHING THE CODEPENDENCY BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND POLITICS

- MOTO – love is the willingness to become undone by and through the presence of the other. It acknowledges that other definition of love exist and being practiced, but these are not included in its official curriculum
- POLITICAL – Love is to be open for the other to change and strip you of what you thought you knew of yourself. Its the inhalation of fixed identities.
- SPIRITUAL – we are not individuals but rather transindividuals. We are chanel through which energy and communication flow, in order to take care of what between us, not whats in us.

- SOCIAL – every subject is made of many others. We are constructed in relation to our environment, there is no untouched core of true self.

### UNIVERSITY'S STRUCTURE

- No linear time (except for 1<sup>st</sup> phase)
- No faculties, but schools (scholé)
- Students, teachers and administrators take part in the maintenance
- 1<sup>st</sup> phase  
obligatory – recycled love – only here there is a relation to linear time (Students, teachers and administrators)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> phase  
choose a school – unpredictable, silent, romantic  
Obligatory – school of sol (Students, teachers and administrators)
- Therapeutic platform
- Cocoon
- Hospitality

q&a at the end

### THE SCHOOL OF RECYCLED LOVE

I will introduce you to the School Of Recycled Love, the first and obligatory phase of the university of Love.

But before I do that, I would kindly request you to put aside your phones, watches, wallets, car/house keys, bags and any other personal belongings you may be carrying with you right now and put them in a pile in the front of the stage.

BREAK

Don't worry, you will get them all back in half a year.

BREAK

Imagine this would be the first things you are asked once entering the school of recycled love.

Imagine experiencing the notion of love by just 'being'. Imagine a place where the other which is not you, becomes your guide. A place where students themselves explore the inner and outer world of knowledge that emerges from their way of being in this surrounding. Imagine that trough minimal(istic?) resources, allowing you to be part of everything you consume or you create.

How does the self/I/Ego be without the presence of the other

How do you identify yourself without the identity given by the others

Imagine a school facility which puts on the table the relation between the self and the other as the common object of research.

We are welcoming you to a residential program with shared living space and program for the duration of minimum six months.

Imagine a day in these six months would include activities such as

- taking a walk into the woods to observe and indulge
- taking part in the basic necessities toward communal living like cooking, sweeping, laundry, gardening, cleaning toilets, garbage recuperation
- Silence time without communicating with other sources or minds. Thus staying with you and your thoughts.
- Silent eating

These activities catering to our vision towards helping the individual to figure out the area of interest emerging from this way of being.

This strict regime which the program confronts oneself with the existential questions and the commitment towards exploring them further is the only criteria towards who can enter this school. This would be an obligatory course before one chooses further courses. One is welcomed to leave in-between if they are unable to relate to this. We would require one to complete this six months course to get a sense of what this school is facilitating. With this proposal and the following quote of Jiddu Krishnamurti we would like to welcome you to the school of recycled love.

*"I am sure you have often heard from politicians, from educators, from your parents and from the public that you are the coming generation. But when they talk about you as a new generation, they really do not mean it because they make sure that you conform to the older pattern of society. They really do not want you to be a new, different kind of human being. They want you to be mechanical, to fit in with tradition, to conform, to believe, to accept authority. In spite of this, if you can actually free yourself from fear, not theoretically, not ideally, not merely outwardly but actually, inwardly, deeply, then you can be a different human being. Then you can become the coming generation".*

from the introduction of 'on education' by Jiddu Krishnamurti

## **THE SCHOOL OF SILENT LOVE**

We will introduce you to the school of SILENT love.

(everybody looks at the quotes)

*It may seem like a betrayal to speak of silence, to break an unspoken pact. Silence is interwoven into the fabric of our lives, it exists in the gaps between our words, and encounters with the natural world. In fact, silence is a platform from which we observe and interrogate ourselves and the world. Contemplatives, poets and thinkers alike, have long hinted at the wisdom beyond words, straining at the limits of language and sense, to describe the ineffable.*

*Rather than being defined negatively – as the absence or perhaps failure of words – silence may instead be viewed positively as somehow existing before and beyond representation, a primordial essence that lurks beneath our constructed world.*

*Cultivating silence can also mean cultivating attention so we are present to ourselves and deeper life that is continually unfolding within and around us. A poet Rainer Maria Rilke confesses: ‘Things aren’t so tangible and sayable as people would usually have us believe; most experiences are unsayable, they happen in a space that no word has ever entered.’*

From the essay of Yahia Lababidi, On silence

Mission statement:

In the School of Silent Love, We are in the pursuit of not knowledge as in information or data but of wisdom. Silence is the best channel to respond and live our most profound experiences : Awe , Love, death. We love the silence in ways to allow it to change us and teach us.

In the School of Silent Love we may use language and transmitting knowledge but Silence is our medium for learning and internalizing wisdom in the stillness of being. We are investigating Silence in its many guises, different aspects and socio-cultural differences. In our courses we investigate silence with its different aspects as a space, as a time, in sound and in language. With its inseparable relation to sound and words the School of Silent Love puts a lot of attention to really learn and understand them.

In the School of Silent Love we have a central home for cultivating our silences but we follow the spaces of silence and forms of it all around the world and claim those places as our learning spaces.

Our courses of Silence are various approaches to the many layer of Silences and their forms, mainly in two learning modes; in solitude and in togetherness. Students perform practices that focus on silence, mostly in a workshop-like setting. People from different backgrounds, but with a strong personal relation to silence will be invited, like a deaf person or a monk, to share their experiences.

We study the cultural approaches and their practices and behavior in different social groups, not only in a theoretical way but also by being there, enjoining with the people in their moments.

Our motto is “ you cannot rush silence” so we don’t pre-assume a time schedule or pressure for our practices or learning process. As the School of Silence our only request from the student, except for their

presence and dedication, is that they leave a memory of their process in any form they prefer to our Archive which is also an open source for all the students and the public.

How would you love if you learned it from silence? How would you communicate if you mastered the silence? How would it change the mode of living? How would it change your interactions with your environment? How would you create if you got more woven with the silence in which everything emerges? What kind of wisdom of the self and life would we acquire by learning from silence?

How will this change the future?

In this moment of silence lets project 30 years ahead and place ourselves in the future. The University of Love was established in 2017 as a response to the political climate of that time with the purpose to catalyse a movement of change in which love, in the sense of radical dedication, is used as a political instrument. The University of love has now existed for over three decades, multiple generations have graduated. Imagine how these alumni, with their collective dedication influenced the political climate of the future.

## **THE SCHOOL OF UNPREDICTABLE LOVE**

Mission statement: the only knowledge we need is to know how to deal with the unknown

The School of Unpredictable Love believes the most important thing for a student to learn is openness towards the unexpected. This can be a source or a situation outside the familiar structure, but most importantly this takes place inside the student. How can we deal with feelings that tend to close us in front of the other. How can the student include all that life entails and deal with both feelings of joy and happiness, but on the same time with fear, vulnerability or insecurity. By exploring these questions students develop tools to Engage in the society through opposing the new liberal approach to define goals that are conditioned by accuaird skills and masteries. Instead they implement an attitude that responds to the moment and welcomes unpredictability as a necessary force to build healthy communities.

The school does not make distinctions between different forms of knowledge and how it is applied.

It works as the following:

- Out of a personal interest the student places itself in an unknown situation. This can be anywhere in the world.
- Here it chooses a teacher. The teacher can be a person, a group, an institution in itself or a thing. For exemplaar a tree, an online forum, a group of sheeps, a prisoner, a bottle, or a breast cancer research. And learn from it by developping a relation with it.
- The class is everyone the student encounters during the experience.

- The course endures as long as the situation is considered unknown and still confronts the student with unexpected situations.
- The unknown is the curriculum, the curriculum is unknown.

The structure which is for every student the same is as following:

- Once per month the student has a meeting at the university of Love, in which the student reflects with the mentor on the confrontation with the unknown. How is the student working with things that don't have a representation yet.
- The relation with the outside environment is very important. It is not only about taking, but also about giving. The student works every day three hours, which could be anything, from code writing, sweeping a floor, combing a sheep, teaching a language or operating a body. anything that serves the thing, institution or community where you are learning from.

The School of Unpredictable love is not about the anthropological observation, but the real encounter and learning from anyone or anything without making hierarchical distinctions.

The School of Unpredictable Love believes love is a mode of existence in which the student learns to be open in and for unknown situations.

To bring to discussion such cases to the school of SOL is helping the entity of the school to remain grounded but also in a constant flux.

## **AN INSTITUTION, COURSE: ROMANTIC LOVE (IDEOLOGICAL/POLITICAL/FICTIONAL)**

-In the dark-

Romanticism is a creation of fiction, fiction creates reality.

-lights on-

Therefore romanticism is a political gesture.

Being political is being involved and concerned in the public and the private matter, since the public is the private, and vice versa. Being romantic is being dedicated towards the fiction, therefore the romantic can be understood as a speculation, in search for the "better".

~~Through a sort of 'common love', a collective dedication, with the aim of realizing ideological mechanisms. Collective dedication can be a radical political gesture.~~

STRUCTURE / Mission statement::

*the school of Romantic love acts like a phantom [dark shadow] in the school.*

*Its practice is revolving around dedication: dedication not only to what one loves and believes in, but also to finding the origin of love in the ideology of the component.*

*the school of Romantic love develops collective and individual practices that expose destructive mechanisms in different movements and groups and embrace them, in order to point out their existence in each and everyone of us, no matter what our political and social stands are.*

*The attendances can participating to every other schools of the university [from the cocoon to the recycling love] and are voluntary involved. There is no hierarchy and the classes are having the form of an assembly. Participants need to see romantic love as a dedication towards the counter. It is not a structured course, but a singing up on a movement.*

During the full length of the university membership the romantic lovers will be the counterpoint and take in a critical position towards any activity in the university.

Here a free-zone of presupposed morals is created, there is space for political in-correctness, resisting attitudes and humor. Observing the frictions within the self, not order to suppress them, but to get familiar with, love, express and elaborate on them. Letting this frictions exist within the university serve as a sort of vaccination, helping to deal with attitudes that could be otherwise unacceptable.

There is no actual space dedicated to romantic love, romantic lovers have to be moved to spaces that are in the center of their attention.

The city or the general environment [social/political] surrounding the campus of the university is their first concern. What is happening there, what new thoughts and identification can emerge through encounters with people, cultures, and institutions with ideologies that are opposed [sometimes to an extreme level] to the ones of the University of Love. How these outsiders perceive the school. What is their critical stance?

Romantic lovers, fall in love with the other who they don't agree with, as a mode of being of try dedication to analyze, understand and some times even end up embrace or BE that other.

Students of the school of romantic love bring in and expose marginal thoughts, that are not aligned with the university.

The school of Romantic love is a back door that brings in people and attitudes that do not confirm to follow the structure of the institution.

## **THE PLATFORM OF THERAPEUTIC LOVE**

The therapeutic platform of the university of love, is a place where we contemplate on the self and observe it explicitly. It is a space and mode of togetherness where personal feelings are used as the base from which to question the separation between the self and the other, redefine, reconstruct and at times even deconstruct subjectivities. Through the collective process, one's feelings, emotions and

thoughts belong to the group as much as they are to the individual and address everybody's concern. It is also an openness to transcend the limitations in the experience of the self and find the means to bring it into a sense of commonness where it can be discovered that even the body and self is made of the others.

Here is the possibility of dealing with diverse personal feelings and go through a collective process with these personal experiences. The practice of this platform counterbalances the conceptualization of the notion of love taught in the all the other schools of the university.

## **THE COCOON**

The cocoon is a combination of a safe and challenging place for not yet self-directed human beings, including the kids of the University of Love members. It helps to orientate within the jungle of possible ways of relating to life. Teaching in the cocoon is a part of the curriculum of the university of love, therefore the teachers are also students. Besides the base camp, the cocoon has a nomadic nature. It participates in the different activities of the university, as every school within, has developed an adjusted program for the cocoon members. Here, they participate together with their teachers. In this way, it embraces generation and capability conflicts.

The cocoon hosts members from their new-born age to their mature state. According to their different ages and possibilities, be it psychological, physical or intellectual, people who are not ready yet to join the university are welcome.

Coming in and leaving the cocoon is always an option at any time. Within this unlimited but protected environment, the cocoon hopes to be the place for developing an individual understanding of ones capabilities and pathways that leads them to life.

The students learn the basic pedagogical needs, like for example fine motor skills or vocal training. Parallel to this, it also engages them with their own aspirations and interests. Students are given the possibility of endless experiences, to reach their personal mature state. They can leave the cocoon when they feel ready. They decide themselves when they are ready graduate.

When a cocoon graduates, she or he is asked to leave the context of the university for a period of minimum two years.

### **EVERYBODY LEAVES THE STAGE, SONJA AND LOUISE STAY**

At the end of these 2 years, the cocoon graduate has the possibility to return, but is obliged to motivate its reasons. Any other sort of choice of pathway (like conventional practices or education programs) is also encouraged.