

Interview avec REUT Zohar

Van Mol Mariem : Hello, Reut. Welcome today to our interview. You are an artist from Israel, and you are living here in Paris. And we want to know a lot of your artistic experience here. Can you represent yourself what you do as your art work? What is the specific side of your artworks when you start art?

Reut Zohar : So hi, yes, I'm from Israel. My name is Reut, which means friendship in Hebrew. Okay, so you know another word now ? Yes. So I came here to Paris to study at the end of program. And what my intention was to develop this year as an artistic path is to try to put into words and give form to a lot of thoughts that I've had about organisations, because I feel that most humans spend a lot of their time at work in some sort of organisation, also communities. But my focus is more the business companies. So I wanted to find words to articulate some sort of different outlook as to how the life at work can be. If there can and should be changes to the life at work, the way we work. I think that a lot of companies work in old fashioned ways. They are very still. I don't know if the word is inspired, but the ways of work were created in the last century, not this century. And we're still working by the same rules. And I think that moving forward into the future, I think that nowadays is a good time to start to think about new ways to work, how organisations should treat their employees and how organisations should treat the world.

V. M. M. : So you need to do this through art ?

R. Z. : And yes, I believe that art can be a good medium to explore because it has no rules, it has no boundaries, and from this open state of mind, then I think new ideas that are efficient and useful can be created.

V. M. M. : Okay, cool. How many times we've been here in Paris.

R. Z. : This is my second time.

V. M. M. : This is your second time. So now you are a resident here in Paris ?

R. Z. : Yes. I'm just trying to become a resident to finalise these things.

V. M. M. : So you said you came from Israel as an artist. Did you start now practice art or before you have started art in your country ?

R. Z. : So I don't really define myself an artist, but I think that I've always done creative, artistic things that have an artistic aspect.

V. M. M. : Can you give us an example ?

R. Z. : Yes, of course. So I was a DJ. I still am a little bit.

V. M. M. : Can you just you do you have done DJ as an artwork ?

R. Z. : Um, so I'm not really I didn't understand the question.

V. M. M. : I said you, you have your artistic way of using music before because you are DJ.

R. Z. : Yes. Yes. It's intuitive. Yeah.

V. M. M. : Okay. I try to translate the question.

R. Z. : You want to say it in French ?

V. M. M. : Yes. Décrivez-moi la discipline que vous avez pratiquée. Can you explain for us your artistic discipline that you have practised before ?

R. Z. : So for me, like I said, I don't really define myself an artist, but I think that for me, my artistic path has always and this is why I came here to end, to try to make my artistic path a bit more concrete. But I've always had thoughts about how things can and should be different in social aspects and political aspects. I always try to think as profoundly as I can about any subject that bothers me.

V. M. M. : Which bothers you some ?

R. Z. : What bothers me ?

V. M. M. : Yes.

R. Z. : So this is how I came about, trying to look at organisations and companies. I think that what bothers me is that we have this state of mind, a global state of mind or the western state of mind that people should work hard and earn whatever good they have in their life and they come to work and they're always expected to perform. And I think from my opinion that most people aren't happy at work. They go to work and they're like, they wake up in the morning and they're like, oh, yes, another day. Well, so what bothers me is that most people in the world work in some sort of company and they're not happy.

V. M. M. : Okay, I have this question too. What is the origin of your interesting to art as a discipline in your in your life ? So it's in French. Quelle est l'origine de l'intérêt pour l'art et cette discipline en particulier ?

R. Z. : Why am I interested in what I just said?

V. M. M. : Yes. In art and in this discipline, you are. You have.

R. Z. : Like how ? I'm not sure. Like, how do I create the connection between my...

V. M. M. : Your work about work and stuff and organisation and your way of thinking about this.

R. Z. : I'm trying to It's two parts of the question. I'm trying to.

V. M. M. : It can maybe because you are in ENDA. So you are thinking about this in this school. Maybe your families, they encourage you to do this stuff. Maybe you're how to say maybe your path you have done from you've been working a lot of time, so you've been thinking like.

R. Z. : What inspired me to this approach?

V. M. M. : Yes.

R. Z. : Okay. So I'm I've never really handled them like proper jobs. Like every time I try to work at some sort of company, whether it's a small company with like mostly not more than ten employees or 20 employees and then I've always felt frustrated that there is like this common, common practice of how we behave in this place. And I just never felt like I could fit in these places. And I really wanted to fit in these places. But I felt that in order for me to fit in, I had to change myself and become a little more to fit into the mode. But because I'm a person thinking outside the boxes then I always want to make suggestions about how a place can improve, the work can improve, the customer's service can improve or whatever. But I didn't really have a place to express these.

V. M. M. : Why you didn't find a place to express this?

R. Z. : Well, I have two examples in my head right now. I just feel like there is this desire, like there is a mentality in a work place, but it's like a subconscious mentality. You don't talk about it, people don't talk about it. But we're humans, so we feel it and we understand : okay, this is how you should behave in this place. And in most places, at least the ones I've worked in, there was like this subconscious message of we need to progress, we need to move forward. There is no time to speak about how things can change. There is no time to make changes or to improve something, because what matters is to get the most things done in the least amount of time. Because we need to make more money. But I think that for humans that's counterintuitive because we need to be present in order to bring the best results that the workplace might expect from us.

V. M. M. : So you as an artist, I would say that you are an artist because sometimes we don't define us as an artist. But now how do you think that you can give a proposition to think as you, to not be in rush, to not be in this area of to say distresses stuff to all the time we need to do works ? What do you think that will be better for us to do ?

R. Z. : How I suggest to change this mentality ?

V. M. M. : Yes, as an artist.

R. Z. : Um, so this is exactly what I'm trying to understand with myself. And look at this. It's exactly the question I'm asking myself. I don't really know the answer yet. I think, like in general, I think it's too general. But this is what I know now, that we just need to learn how to talk with each other in the workplace. And I think that the executives, the CEOs, the people who are in charge, they need to understand that the way we worked before, especially after COVID.

V. M. M. : Yes.

R. Z. : It's better if we start to open up to new approaches. So it needs to come from obviously, the people in charge to start to realize that there could be other ways to work that are more human, that can still provide results, but maybe to measure results in a different way. How we define what is a good outcome in the workplace. Just to change how we we measure.

V. M. M. : Okay. Now we have another question. Can you tell us about how continue you artistic career ? Can you tell us your artistic path from the beginning, after and now ? What are you doing now ?

R. Z. : From the past to now ?

V. M. M. : Yes.

R. Z. : Like how I....?

V. M. M. : You start thinking about art and now when you start thinking about art.

R. Z. : Okay. So I think I understand. But if I'm going in the wrong direction, then stop me, okay ?

V. M. M. : No, there is no wrong.

R. Z. : No, I'm just trying to understand the question. So it's for me, it's a little embarrassing.

So for me in high school, I started to develop independent thinking. And I was you know, you have to I don't know if it was like for you in high school, but we had to pick like two subjects that we want to make them more enhanced. Like I chose art and biology. But when I studied art, I just felt like, okay, I like painting, but this is boring. Like, I'm not engaged. Like, okay, I become a better painter, but to what end ? Like, what's the purpose ultimately to just paint ? I don't know. It wasn't enough for me. So I started to change majors, I think it's called. So I moved from art to literature and from literature to geography, and I left biology.

But what my point is from this. Is that I started to understand that. I told myself, okay, I'm not an artist. Like this is really not for me. But I had to really examine my interests. This is why I moved from one major to another. I think that I'm trying to connect this to now. I think that what I'm trying to say is that I have this need to try different things and to arrive at my own conclusion. And at that time I felt good. That I changed a lot of things and I ended up with geography, which was very interesting for me. But like my parents and society was like a little bit judging me and saying : "Oh, you move around too much, you need to stick with one thing. It's not serious."

V. M. M. : But your parents, your relatives or your family, they didn't encourage you to look for what you want.

R. Z. : They were okay with it. But I could feel the subtext message again that I'm not mainstream. I'm not doing what everybody is doing. It's more appropriate if I did it in the conventional way and going on to my 20s. And now 30s, this has been my defining characteristic that I do things that are interesting to me. And then I arrive at some conclusion and then I can move on to something else. And having what I told you in the beginning, these experiences that I try to work as just like to have a contract and to be an employee. And that made me understand that. Because I couldn't fit in, there, that maybe there wasn't something wrong with me. Maybe there was something wrong with the system and it made me want to start imagining, okay, what would be a good place for me to work. Because I imagine that maybe I'm not a typical person, but maybe more typical people have feel in similar ways to me that they want to be more authentic at work, to express themselves, to have ideas about maybe how to change some work related issue. And they want to feel that their opinion matters and that there is an impact. And I just feel like now after COVID, it's more relevant than ever to start changing this hierarchic dynamic and try to be more horizontal in regards to having more opinions heard in order to arrive collectively to a better solution.

V. M. M. : But all the time you said after COVID, after COVID. What's make COVID as for you as a main state of how to change your way from before COVID and after COVID ?

R. Z. : So I was thinking about it in the sense that because of COVID, organizations saw that they can change the way they work overnight, that these processes that they hold up so dearly and they say : " Oh, this is how we work ". Then if you want, you can change the way you work. That's it. It's simpler.

V. M. M. : Now you are studying art, I guess. And I was asking if you are joining the artistic way. How research are you enjoying ? The artistic research ? Are you happy with doing art?

R. Z. : Yes. I feel like this is just a frame for me to have the time and reflect. It's enhancing what I am thinking within myself. So I don't know if I can say that the program itself is what is interesting for me. What's interesting for me is that my thoughts are changing through art, through the ideas that the program brings.

V. M. M. : I'm talking about art because we are talking about artists, but I try to adapt the question on your personality. And it's very interesting. You took me from way to another school. I'm traveling with you. In your art do you try to convince people of some ideas you have ? Do you try to convince them to stop or to give up some stuff through your through your state of mind ? You try to change to give some ideas through your art. I guess you have some message to give it through your art.

R. Z. : I think I just want to be a good, compassionate mirror to people to help them see themselves in a good positive way that gives them back their belief that change is possible.

V. M. M. : Can you give us maybe an example of how they can do that?

R. Z. : So again, it just goes back for me to this idea of just talking.

V. M. M. : Communication.

R. Z. : Yes, because I think that if, for example, in some sort of ...I'm imagining this really big tech company, okay, so if some team manager would be able to create more meaningful conversations with his team. And not just dictate what they should do and dictate the timetable. But if you were to open up a different conversation, then it could change the direction.

V. M. M. : Have you faced some discrimination against you as a woman in the society, in your country, here in Paris? Have you ever faced some sort of discrimination?

R. Z. : No. I think that as women, we all have some sort of. But no, not personally.

V. M. M. : What are you waiting from the French institution here and from the citizen of France ? What are you waiting for them to give for women who want to do art ? What do you think about how the French institution could help women who want to do art ?

R. Z. : It's a tough question because I don't really believe that. The change is really okay. Wait a minute. Let me think about it.

V. M. M. : Okay? Take your time.

R. Z. : I think that maybe if there are French women who are concerned with the status of women and how many opportunities women receive. Then maybe for me, I know it could be nice that if I

had some communal places, if there were little communities. Just sort of private initiatives of private people to invite women and to invite foreigner women who live in Paris to be like...

V. M. M. : To be a community ?

R. Z. : To be a community but like I can see like French women could help these women to like mediate because there are a lot of rules here. And there is a lot of also help from the government. That's what I know in general. But for me, because I don't really understand French, then it would be nice if someone could explain it to me, could show me what opportunities there are, maybe how to get funding for things. And that's like one option and another option is just to really have these little communities that are organised by common interests.

V. M. M. : OK so do you have some advice to give it to women who try to do art in the future or for the future generation ? Do you have some advice for them ? What do you advise women to do to be a good artist or to do their art?

R. Z. : I think that for women the issue is that we tend to underappreciate ourselves. So I think my first advice is take the time to heal. And also to incorporate this sort of little things that can be done like 5, 10, 20 minutes every day to say OK right now I'm meditating, right now I'm just like coming back to my own body. Another advice is to, after a little bit of healing, to convince yourself that you believe in yourself and to take the time to be as creative as possible. Take the time in the day to just you know express the ideas without judging them and after you have some sense of what could be your direction, what would be the project, your next project or a completely new project to ask for help.

V. M. M. : Last question : are you interested to participate platform that gathering a lot of women's to have dialogue, to discuss together ? A platform that could help women's to be together, to discuss their problem, what they think, what they don't think ? Are you interested to participate in something like that ?

R. Z. : Yeah.

V. M. M. : OK that's cool. Thank you.