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@ FRANCESLASSERRE

GODMOTHER

iMagination week 2020

BBA ESSEC

Hello everyone, I hope you are in good shape after this week of reflection and creativity driven by enthusiasm of subjects and visions dealt with. Such a strong week with inspiring personalities, like M. Yunus Muhammad whom I deeply admire.

Let me first thank Pierre Clause and Xavier Pavie. When they offered me to be the godmother of this iMagination week BBA Essec, 2020, first of all: I felt old!

Once upon a time, this was 27 years ago!

But I immediately was honoured and very curious to know why they had asked me to participate to this event.

Despite the fact that this unique iMagination week would be online, I was interested in the experience.

All in all, this would be a great opportunity to follow up the relation with the group and in a way, meet all of you.

Being a godmother is a responsibility for which I appreciate the family value, but as far as we're concerned, in this particular situation, we are facing more a question of proximity. You, as individual of this group and I, have the opportunity to build a bond. I don't know what the continuity of it will be, that is up to us to decide. This relation is something that I believe in and I am grateful and delighted to have the chance to initiate new relationships with you today.

It will not surprise you if, to symbolize this sponsorship and to share my experience, I chose works from our art collection. For me these works represent a universal mode of communication, whatever our cultures, our languages or our origins, they provoke a dialogue, testify a period of art history, illustrate a technique, a gesture, intention of an artist in a specific environment. They are therefore the ideal tool to reflect the transformation of oneself and ecosystems. I assume all choices. Feel free to seek for more information about the art works and various projects websites and social media.

The offer accepted, I wondered what might interest you, what are the questions you are asking yourself today, according to your life experience. I then thought it would be relevant to talk to you about my own experience through its many transformations. As an example: "how and why did I get to Epsci, what are my inspirations, my values in life, the vision I believe in etc."

As a matter of fact, I had never shared these questions before, believe me it's quite moving.

Secondly, I do believe that transformation is guided by our environment and vice-versa.

To go straight to the point, we will start with a short description of my own transformation and the impact of the personal and professional environment in my career.

TRANSFORMATION OF ONESELF

Taking a look at the first parts of my life.

First of all, we evolved in a family context over which we had no control, and then progressively the threads were woven together

Fundamentals

My childhood is colourful, I lived in the Parisian suburbs with my parents, my brother and many friends, my mother ran artistic activities, the living room of our flat was a permanent workshop and a place of multiple debates, the walls were decorated with frescoes painted by my mother. I drew, listened to music, danced and laughed a lot.

Look at this phone, a relic, just imagine the speed of technological revolution then.

The videos I'm about to show you of the musical Hair and Big Bazaar are quite comparable to our lives then. It's the emulsion I observed and learned a lot without really realising it, my parents included us in their entire life, without putting any filter but always through a lot of respect.

(Video hair + big bazaar)

Like I said, I assume all choices and you can see that creation is the core of my mind

Transformation 1

1981-1987

(Illness)

As a teenager everything got complicated, a descent into hell. My father is struck down by a serious illness, I battled the situation through sport. I danced actively in front of my mirror. I also found strength through horses. Facing a powerless situation, it's my turn to fall into illness.

(Death)

My father died when I just turned 16.

I am entrusting you this story in order to point out the notion of rupture, fault, failure or powerlessness provoking deep down inside us the energy to surpass ourselves, to transform our suffering into strength and projection.

I am sure that some of you understand what I am expressing here, my case is not isolated.

Anger, rage, differences will forge our vision.

Sport and dreams are my way of fighting for recovery

To me, Iren Cara illustrates this feeling of reaching a specific goal through physical challenges.

(Video)

1983 What a feeling, Iren Cara

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzALZj0lx0g>

(1988-1993)

Transformation 2

Owing to these difficulties I was angry but determined to regain what I had lost: joy of life, ambition and lightness.

(Anger, determination and inspirations)

A deep transformation occurred subjecting a question of survival, surpassing oneself through aesthetic expression.

(Literature)

On the other hand, I read a lot, and I was looking for people whose lives, values and actions inspired me.

For instance, Future Shock from the writer, Alvin Tofler allowed me to affirm my choices of orientation: sociology, economy and psychology.

Given my experience, I wasn't afraid of changes, I was expecting them.

Simon Veil, Françoise Giroud, Gisèle Halimi for their social commitment and careers.

Nina Simone, Toni Morrison for their strength and perseverance

(Video S.Veil, T.Morrison, N.Simone)

(J.P Goude)

And the one, also called L'Enfant Terrible of the 80's, Jean Paul Goude. In 1989, he conceptualised a parade for the French Revolution's bicentenary in Paris. He represented cultures instead of power which was truly revolutionary.

(Quote)

As a consequence, I became aware that art transcends reality, crosses borders and moves us.

(the year it all began)

Transformation 3

1993, THE YEAR IT ALL BEGAN

Firstly, I integrate Epsci, including all values & prestige assimilated to it, something you are already familiar with. Meanwhile, I had different jobs in order to develop a professional network.

(Poker)

I started to have all cards in my hands, a reference to poker which means having the right cards in your deck to ensure your win, also used by Robert De Niro in the iconic movie, The Godfather.

In addition to my degree, I had a long-term job with Renault and finally on a rail track with targeted jobs and raising wages. It's also the moment I started a long-lasting relationship with Hervé Francès, whom I met for the first time at Epsci, where he was a lecturer in communication.

No comment.

In the summer of 1995, Hervé mailed me a record of the famous song: "It could be magic" by Take That

(Video Take That)

I do think it's magic.

Mark Rothko exhibited in Paris Museum of Modern Art in 1999.

A shock, an indefinable emotion, moreover I didn't understand how this abstraction could have such an impact on me. How could a work be so far away from my bearings and touch me in such a way?

For people like me who have studied consumerist behaviour and expectations, this situation was disturbing.

The work once again shows me its outstanding efficiency and penetrates my life

To sum up this part, before I entered Epsci, I had already undergone major personal changes. Life had asked me to take steps aside in order to anticipate the many starts coming ahead.

(Many starts)

2003-2009

To begin this period, I had my first child with Hervé (Matthieu in 2003) and 3 children followed Baptiste (in 2005), Diane (in 2007) and Adrien (in 2010).

Actually, Matthieu's birth made it urgent to carry out my own project, to be in harmony with my priorities and struggles, especially those close to artists and women.

The industry in which I had worked for almost 10 years could not match with that.

Moreover, I was about to complete the creation of a cultural foundation for the French subsidiary of Volkswagen Group on the themes of music, live performances, contemporary art and design, when the group's Chairman was dismissed the project was thrown out as well.

I created ARROI in 2004

And continued working for AUDI, contributed to building the contemporary art axis of the AUDI Talents Awards, a programme that is still relevant today.

At the same time, I started building together with Hervé, the Art Collection. Which was exhibited in our office along with a mediation I would write.

We always made choices together, interestingly enough, we never debated about the selection of the art. The works have always been acquired only through our own private fund. We didn't inherit anything, which links our professional commitments to the challenges of raising children.

The collection which has for theme "humanity's excess" is a body of works from various technics such as painting, photography, installations, performances etc. The major names of the art world are included in this collection: Diane Arbus, Robert Mapplethorpe, Annie Leibovitz, Adrian Ghenie, Kader Attia, Hans Peter Feldmann, Pascale Marthine Tayou...

TRANSFORMATION OF OUR ECO-SYSTEMS

FRANCÈS FOUNDATION

Despite the fact that the co-founders are OKO, the communication agency built by Hervé in 1993, and ARROI that I built in 2004, we named this corporate foundation: Francès, because we wanted to distance the image of our companies from the non-profit organisation filling the gap of art in this specific area when contemporary art was inexistent.

– 2013

3 major events happened in this past decade:

We need more than words to describe the collection, let's watch the first retrospective we had in Gent, Belgium in 2013 at the Ghislain Museum dedicated to psychiatry.

(Film Ghislain Museum)

(3 Major events)

Everything we do in our respective life is designed to trigger reactions. The collection is indeed one of those things. No one is intact at 20, 30, 40 years of age. Life knocks you about and cracks you open. We are all damaged beings repaired to a greater or lesser degree. The foundation puts this out on the table, creating space and introducing conversations.

In ten years, the foundation gained recognition through radical choices we made and systematic mediation giving access to a story, creating proximity with audiences.

Almost 23 exhibitions in situ, 15 "hors les murs" and around 100 works lent each year with an average of 30000 viewers per year.

– 2019

First auction was with Sotheby's and it was a true steppingstone in the perspective of international visibility

– 2020

In January 2020, we officialised the movement we built over the last decade, conceptualised into a conversation between renowned artist Kader Attia and well-known art critic Philippe Dagen.

(Hunger)

But all of this history has not been built without adjustments and innovations.

2013 was a turning point, a year where you felt a violent atmosphere which was pervasive in France. I concluded that it was a deep problem linked to cultural and educational matter. As a consequence, I decided to create "La Fabrique de l'Esprit" an association whose educational programs are approved by the national Ministry of education which enable us to exist among schools, pupils and their parents. Thus, the communes and regions also identify us and enhance our visibility. Furthermore, we initiate experimental artist residencies and stimulate collaborations with local craftsmanship.

As the art collection came to be established, the education and experimental programs anchored us to the territory and the question was how to extend the support to artists?

(Elza)

As a member of the jury for both the Marcel Duchamp Prize, the Salon de Montrouge, and also the national commissions, I am thinking more closely about how to support the emergence. I created francoiseartmemo.fr, a non-profit association whose mission is to link the artist to a support but also to stimulate interactions through an international prize.

On the other hand, within the framework of regions merging and the difficulty of finding balance, the association is mandated to create and animate a network with cultural actors of the territory to promote their specific identity and develop an ecosystem between cultural actors, artists, institutions, companies etc.

(Memory and cultural inheritance)

Regarding social commitment, Francoise develops international residency programs. This is a platform to question cultural inheritance. For example, from the perspective of First Nations. In 2021, our residency, in collaboration with Institut français, will host Kowspi Raymond Marek and his two sons from Papua New Guinea.

The latest residency was with DWMC "dead white men clothes" a stylist who creates clothes from second-hand clothing that were given to humanitarian associations. He develops a critic on the subject of global trade and mass consumerism. Social reaction translates the individual matter to the collective cause.

Adjusting our strategies and conceptualising new projects is a never-ending story.

This plan here sums up what I have previously explained about our organisations. Make sure to take a look at our websites for any further information.

(Banksy)

At this stage of the talk, I definitively turn to works in order to ask the question of transformation. I think Banksy could best illustrate our proposal. To symbolise this, I suggest we look at Banksy's works.

Born in 1974 in Bristol, England, he lives and works in London. Banksy is a very committed artist defined as a social agitator moreover, like Basquiat, who brought street art into galleries, Banksy denounces the system, hijacks it and exposes its abuses.

His works combine humor and shock with powerful or hopeful slogans. He seeks to challenge citizens on the human condition. He evokes the deprivation of liberty, denounces consumerist societies,

Banksy challenges the way we perceive art and artists. We can say that he embodies transformation as the fluidity he owns is created through his anonymity. Through this power, he has gained international recognition and is free to develop criticism in his artworks by a multiplicity of subject exhibited on chosen public walls.

(Questioning)

Banksy has his audience and practices, but we can question how is this new generation of artists facing, for instance Covid-19?

(Before lockdown)

To be placed in a previous context, we first look at three examples of works done just before the crisis, who point out the subject of transformation

- One is transforming classical aesthetics with digital and create landscapes, panoramas. Lucas Seguy (1990-
- The other transformed a historic site with an antinomic practice. Julien Colombier (1972- (Forerunner)
- And above all, as premonitory confinement, a duo of artists Fleuryfontaine created a 3D game called *Angel*. Recreating the life of a marginal reclus.

Lockdown 2020

(Absence, creativity, confusion)

Suddenly everything stops but the implementation of the distancing methods occupies until, the temporary extends and generates the installation of a very confusing vision

Meanwhile 3 categories of transformation were done by the artists

- first of all, **transforming the practice** as Coline Dupuis did, this video artist inspired by the worlds of work has necessarily had to experiment with new practices, especially painting
- Transforming **the practice and including a community** as Damien FRAGON (1987-) with its installations
- Transforming **the visual perception by creating situations from scratch** Sandrine Eldber affected by insomnia during the Covid-19, took in the meantime unreal images.

All in all, the artists kept going and continued to be creative, they created many images that all audience could watch online...

On the health crisis, I'd like to evoke awareness through 4 points. These 4 different points are not new. These subjects have already been raised but the pandemic has strengthened them onto a new light and perspective.

AWARENESS

1. First, the economy falls as soon as we stop selling useless things to people in debt.
2. Secondly, there is a strong potential to significantly reduce pollution
3. Third, the lowest-paid people in our society are the most essential to its functioning
4. By contrast the physical isolation has led to strong social commitment through associations for the most vulnerable and the elderly but also simply between neighbours

(Search for meaning)

As a result, when everything comes to an abrupt stop everyone is struck by a search for meaning. Major crisis impose transformations and artists can truly and sensitively help building a humanist vision.

(Transformation pillars)

To sum up this presentation I would suggest pillars of the transformation
First

PILLARS OF TRANSFORMATION OF ONESELF

- seek out who you are deeply
 - identify your significant difference and your core values
- find the significant personal innovation
- being curious and generous, keep learning & imagining
- following your instinct and keep going
- experiment and let yourself be surprised
- passion & authenticity leads to enjoyment
- be aware that your failures are your significant successes
do not erase their traces

Secondly

PILLARS OF TRANSFORMATION OF ECOSYSTEMS

- Learn from the others
- Share experiences / interact
- Stimulate a responsible economic community

In conclusion, the artists reflect society, build memory and help in everyday life.

We need them and have to support and preserve the memory and heritage they bring with them. By the way some of them also play a very lucrative economic role. Hybridization which I believe corresponds to an uncertain but very exciting time.

From my desk

After having done this presentation let me show you what I see from my desk

In 5 images you have the story and the most significant commitment of my life

Illness / fight a disease

knowledge / democratizing & decentralized of culture

migration / breaking borders

multiculturalism / difference is a value

fragility / know your weaknesses

enjoyment / importance of instinctivity, passion and seek for pleasure

I hope I haven't bored you but, on the contrary, fed your thoughts and imagination with art.

Be passionate and always favour your freedom your independence.

Never take your life too seriously and act collectively!

As I've tried and still continue on my personal scale, never stop thinking about your next contribution to the world.

I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you one day but in the meantime, I suggest to those who wish, to keep contact. Do not forget that change stimulates and gives birth to beautiful ideas.

Thank you.

<https://www.fondationfrances.com/>

<https://francoiseartmemo.fr/>

<https://www.lafabriquedelesprit.fr/>