

I LOVE YOU is a performance that I made for the 10th OPEN International Performance Festival in Beijing in 2009. In one corner of the OPEN Performance Space (where some performances took place) I installed 3 mirrors. In the middle of my little space, which had a “stage” feeling to it, I had a microphone with a stand. I experimented with the phrase ‘I LOVE YOU’, repeating it in different moods and voices, and saying it sometimes directly to the public or people who were passing by and also at times looking at myself or catching somebody else’s eyes in the mirror. With minimal changes in my position, mood and voice intonation; receiving very different reactions or no reactions at all from the public, the performance took on a very unpredictable dynamic. I really loved it and felt that I had been performing for many, many hours. But after approximately two and a half hours something happened: I was repeating “I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU” when a wonderful young Chinese girl stood beside me, held my hand and started telling me “I LOVE YOU TOO, I LOVE YOU TOO, I LOVE YOU TOO...”

I was really surprised and I felt such a strong energy, such a powerful moment. Aristotle would have called it ‘the climax’. Intuitively, I knew the performance was done. The moment she went, I left the space. It was one of the most minimalistic and at the same time one of the most powerful and unpredictable performances I have ever done.

Three years later I repeated this performance in the frame of RAPID PULSE International Performance Art Festival in Chicago. I was standing in the gallery window and addressing people who were passing or driving by. The reactions were very different from those of the public in Beijing. The public in Beijing was rather quiet, standing still in front of me, with almost no reactions. But in Chicago saying to somebody I LOVE YOU was like saying “Hello”... and most of the passersby reacted with something like “Hey baby, I love you too.” That intrigued me. And I decided to do this performance again.

It turned out that every new city has its own reaction to this very simple, but important sentence. When I did it in São Paulo, the first person I said I LOVE YOU to was an older lady. The moment I told her I LOVE YOU she started to cry. After less than half an hour almost everybody in the gallery was crying. I interrupted the performance, struggling with tears too.

In summer 2015 I tried to say ‘I LOVE YOU’ again. I did it in Gallery DITS which was located in the Red Light district in Amsterdam, on one of the most famous and “busy” streets

in this area. The window of the gallery was situated between 'red light windows'. The performance, which started very well as far as I felt, was interrupted after less than one hour by a huge verbal fight on the street between a prostitute from the neighboring window, a local pimp and the gallery owner. There was also a person who introduced himself as a representative of the Association for Sex Worker Rights, who started to film the performance, screaming from the other side of the window and provoking me with some aggressive and impolite questions, which I of course I did not react too. I tried to continue the performance. But once it started to get insane the gallerist came to me and asked me to stop the performance, which I did, because I did not want to cause her any trouble, and it was obvious that she was already in trouble.

I learned my lesson: It is not allowed - you are not allowed to say I LOVE YOU where there is no LOVE.

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