

Interview with Cynthia Odier

Founder and Creative Director of Flux Laboratory

*What is the origin and concept behind Flux Laboratory?*

As the name suggests, the concept is that nothing is static, everything is on the move. It was not something we just came up with one day but the result of a flow of ideas and experiences that brought us to this activity that is now in its 7th year. The idea is that art and culture can be a crossroads for people from many social groups: business people, art lovers, artists, institutions and philanthropists. Everyone is welcome. As a metaphor, we have assigned an idea, a concept, to each part of our building. The *kitchen* is an important place for discussion, a communication space. This is where all the multimedia is based, where we share food and discuss things. The *office* is the think tank where people think, work and produce. *Living art* is an apartment for guests, artists-in-residence or a random space. The *white room* is a space dedicated to the body, where the body is the centre of expression and the *black room* a space for performances of all kinds: photography, video, lectures, and concerts.

Flux is also a space we have imagined as a theatre of life. In a theatre you have the audience and you have the performers, and one of our goals is to strengthen the relationship between these two groups, encouraging interaction. On one hand, we invite artists from all disciplines to Flux, we schedule a programme like in a theatre; on the other hand we invite business people and the public to come and meet the artists. Of course, there is always a performance, but there is more than that, there is an encounter. And if they meet and want to continue a project together, it's a success for us.

Such a strong emphasis on human contact?

The human factor is always the most important, even if you try to pretend otherwise. As a result of modern technology and the repetitiveness of our lives – which is now omnipresent – our emotions have been distorted; we still don't know exactly what impact this will have on the younger generation. I would say that "luxuries" today are things like education and emotion. The more you have this facility to communicate through technology, the more you need to have "momentum". Momentum is now. Being in a certain place at a certain moment is going to become like a diamond you find on your path. Humanity is what remains.

Your approach is rather original, creating a link between the art community and the business world...

Culture, art, every kind of artistic expression can be a tool for communication and this is what we believe in here at Flux. Both for a company and for an individual. We are in the process of developing and redefining these values today in our consumer society. And artists need to belong to this society. They cannot live apart from it. This is especially true for the performing arts which are by their nature ephemeral. Artists have to adapt, they cannot live forever on sponsorship. They have to use some of their work for other purposes. I think this a natural evolution: how to use everything you have and remix it.

How is the program scheduled and what are your plans for the future?

Although we are very spontaneous compared to institutions which have to plan things long in advance, we have decided to have one theme each year in order to maintain a certain coherence. Last year's theme was *identity* and we worked on how and whether people's identities might have changed as a result of the economic crisis.

This year, we have chosen another subject which is not easy to address: *simplicity*. Under this theme, we have invited several different artists to take part. The first project will be by a clothes designer, Nicolas Musin, who will launch his first collection here. French visual artist Aurélie Mathigot will contribute the second project, with installations of knitted sculptures. The project will be a work in progress made for Flux Laboratory – it will start in Geneva and continue elsewhere. The exhibition performance will be called *Save me*. It's very simple, but simplicity itself can be complex...

In November, we will launch a large-scale project at the *Bâtiment des Forces Motrices* in Flux and also outside – we have invited the Merce Cunningham Dance Company to Geneva. Merce passed away several weeks ago but our programme was already fixed. The project will be a *constellation*, bringing together performances, photographs, drawings, films and conferences on Merce Cunningham, his huge talent and his works of genius over the last 90 years. It fits the theme of simplicity because he was a man who used everyday materials to create something extraordinary.