

ELLA&FLORA.

Interviews with Inspiring People

INTERVIEW WITH JOHANNA KEIMEYER

April 17, 2017

Who are we? Yeah, BIG question... So we hustle and bustle through our daily lives, piling things on top of each other, adding the third extension to our to do list, have conversations with ah, so many people and still feel bad, because the little mean red circle on whatsapp just won't go away. We strive to be successful in our job unyieldingly climbing up the ladder, we want to have the perfect social circle, and of course also at some point a house and a tree with the perfect good looking man of our dreams. But what happens if we, for a moment, take all that away? Who are we then? What if there is just us. Just me. Me. Self-awareness? Reflection? Acceptance? Being? BIG questions again. But it is also a pretty big project **Johanna Keimeyer**, a multimedia artist from Berlin, came up with. "So imagine you could walk into your heart, what would it tell you? For what does it beat?"

Hers definitely beats for art, for creation, for expression and for asking questions and finding a way through art to pass them on, give impulses and a way to find answers. Carpenter & upholsterer, designer & digital media artist. Her path so far has crossed many countries and different artisanal approaches: from creations of lamps out of recycled materials, furniture, fashion, glass and porcelain work, video installations, photography to turning architectural highlights into emotional experiences. With that she has found a way to create something bigger, to create rooms, to reach people differently, and a way where she can bring in all the single parts and combine them into one live experience. And that is going to be some experience! When we heard about it, we wanted to grab a suitcase and fly to Basel, but since **Art Basel** hasn't started yet, we drilled Johanna with questions first;):

E&F: We found - while looking through your portfolio - water to be a recurring theme. What meaning does water have for you?

Johanna: When I am diving, or floating underwater, I can be free. I am weightless, breathless, and able to just enjoy being surrounded by this miraculous liquid that carries my body. For me the property of water to find its way around obstacles, resembles what happens when you connect to your most inner feelings. When you experience this feeling of being truly connected to all your internal emotions, ignoring all external stimuli, this 'room of silence', your ongoing breathing and heartbeat, that is the same music to me as being underwater. You devote yourself into being, without questioning it or trying to control it.



E&F: You create a new room inside an existing room and you play with the relation of the outer room and the inner room, bringing them together in new ways. What is your fascination with rooms and the relation between inwards and outwards?

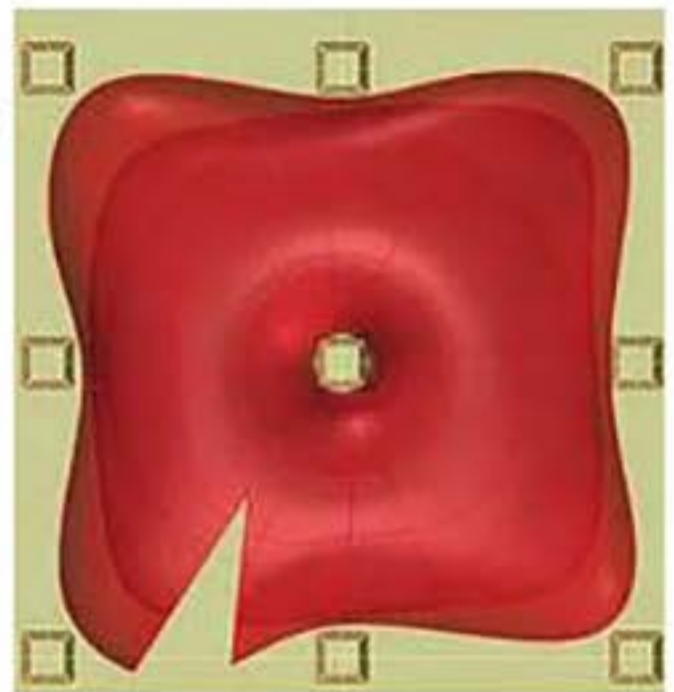
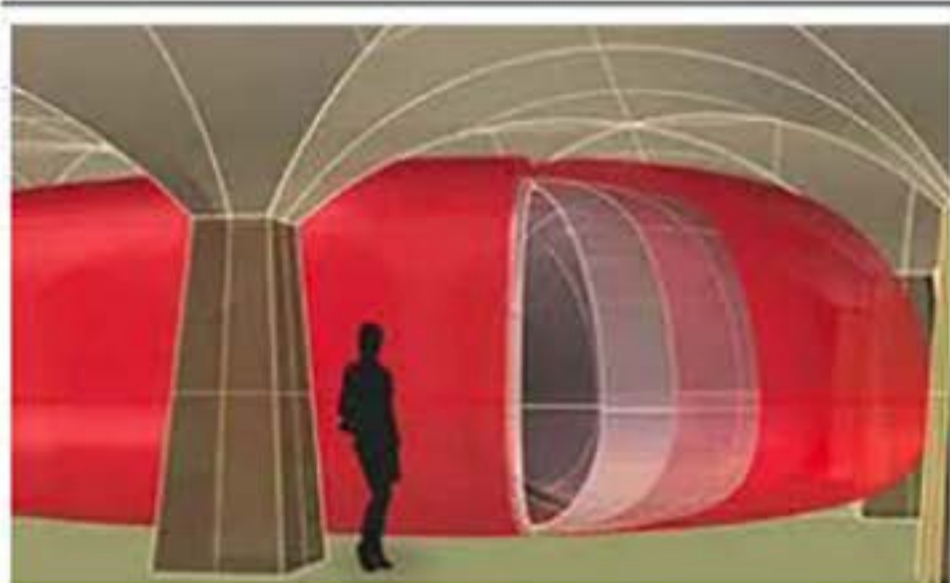
Johanna: In my research for the current project, I tried to find the border between the outside to the inside. Where do I end and where does the world start?

I discovered the answer at the physical level. Exactly where the membrane of the lungs' alveoli is so thin that only oxygen and carbon dioxide can pass through, the outer world meets the inner world. This border gained my attention and I realized how delicate and fragile the separation between my body and the outside world is. How much am I my outer world?

In my **BREATH ing HEART** installation I strive to create a room for people to find their answers to these questions. Where is your border between you and the outside world? Where do you end? Where does the world begin?

Ella&Flora: Wow, those are quite some existential questions. How do you plan to give the audience this experience?

Johanna: Well, imagine a magical building, beating with a heart, breathing like a human, pulsing in its own rhythm... **BREATH ing HEART** is going to be an art installation of a walk-in heart, in which up to 40 people can lay and sit at the same time. It will be located in a historical water filter building in Basel and will be part of Art Basel. The heart itself will fill with air and pulse in a breathing rhythm, so that the visitor will perceive it as being inside their body. You basically walk into your own heart. What does it say? The entire experience will be a synthesis of architecture, light, video, scent, and sound.



Ella&Flora: You are basically creating a new form for an old concept - a way to reach your inner being by approaching it from the outside. For example, the church also created rooms of quietness and safety - an outward - to be able to connect better with ones inside. Why do you think we now need a new approach to this old method?

Johanna: In our daily life, we are very busy with our tasks and don't take time to feel inside. I believe it is substantial to feel inside and ask yourself how do you feel? Even when you are stressed or at work you can pause and ask yourself how you feel. This is my goal, I would like to emphasize and show others the meaning of their heart and give them this experience with all their senses. Actually I recently discovered that there is a Room of Silence at the Brandenburg Gate, which was opened in 1994 and taken up by people adhering to different religions and of different cultural backgrounds. It is a place where you can pause and get away from the city noise. It is an oasis of peace inside the monument that represented the divide between East and West Berlin. This room was established with the model of NY United Nations meditation room and I thought it is a great concept.

E&F: What is your inspiration regarding the formation process?

Johanna: How it all started: I went into the old water filter building in Base where the exhibition will take place in June and I sat down to meditate. As I got in touch with my most inner feelings many tears came up and I hardly knew what was happening. I simply accepted it and felt everything that was there and it felt good. When I opened my eyes I saw this giant heart in the center of the rigid columns. The heart was beating rhythmically. There was nothing else just the silence within me, my breathing rhythm, and two hearts beating. All that mattered was that moment.

But then I started wondering, who is really beating my heart? Who breathes me? For as much as I try I can stop neither my heartbeat nor my breath with my own willpower. It is like music that flows through my body whether I perceive it or not. It was given to me. In that moment I perceived the music. That's when I knew what my next project would be ;)



Water filter building. Base © Johanna Keimeyer

E&F: Nelson Goodmann outlines in "Language of Art" a cognitive aesthetic in which the worth of an art piece is estimated by its contribution to epistemology - How do you think your art can contribute to more insight/cognition and is that a goal of yours or your art at all?

Johanna: Yes, I believe art can change and contribute to your insight. There are many forms of and approaches to insight that should go hand in hand. I strive to create living intimate connections. Live immersions of architecture, light, video, sound, and the viewer's own inner universe for I find that this aspect of insight has been neglected in recent times. I believe that if you allow yourself to truly experience your feelings, really let them run freely, you can be free. In the sense that when you are able to perceive your most rudimentary essence - breath and heartbeat - you also have a chance to perceive your other elementary essence: emotions. In this state of emotional awareness. I now would like to ask you: What does your heart really beat for?



A journey to a calm pulsing island in the storm. Away from everything and yet towards everything. Maybe there will be union. Maybe there will be confusion. Definitely there will be many questions. The exact destination? To be found out ;)

Curiously looking forward to Art Basel to question our hearts
BämBäm or rather BoomBoomi
(haha sorry that one had to be ;)

Ella&F ora

More Infos?

Donate to step into your heart **Kickstarter**
Project website: www.breathingheart.in
Artist's website: www.keimeyer.com
Video: <https://vimeo.com/202312497>