

## Gernot Wieland

*“ I am incredibly happy not to be spending the fall in a big city... ”*

By **Fabien Danesi, director of Frac Corsica** - photos and reproductions **DR**

The work of Gernot Wieland (born 1968 in Horn, Austria), whether in the form of films, drawings, photographs, installations or lecture-performances, addresses a number of universal and no less difficult questions – language, education, otherness, domination, control, social, political and psychological contexts – by mixing psychoanalysis with the artist's childhood memories in stories told in the first person. The artist, while multiplying the modes of narration, opens up a space for reflection that suggests the possibility of personal change despite the restrictions and limits of society. In residence in Corsica, Wieland confides in particular about his creative process. Conversation.

**You have been in residence at Casa Conti - Ange Leccia in the village of Oletta since mid-September. What are your first impressions? How are you experiencing this residency?**

It's hard to answer this question without resorting to clichés about the beauty of nature. On the one hand. On the other hand, and in order to find an answer, I threw myself into these clichés, with the usual little initial hiccups. What I mean by that is that residencies are actually a strange thing. You're paid to be somewhere else. You have to live your "normal life" in another environment, and I find it hard enough to live my "normal life" in my usual environment. (Laughs.) Now, I'm incredibly happy not to spend the fall in a big city and I'm stoically devoting myself to my work, and, speaking of clichés, I'm enjoying each day.

**I know you walk a lot along coastal paths. Can this practice be linked to your art, to your work as an experimental filmmaker?**

When I work on my scripts, it is important for me to walk between sessions. While I walk, I continue to write in my head, the text repeats and changes. I don't know why, and it is not important to know why, but I can't just sit down and write, I need to get out of my studio to experience a reality other than that of a closed room. In this respect, it is linked to my work.

**Your films incorporate other mediums, including drawings that appear repeatedly. These are often drawings that you made during your childhood, aren't they ? Do you remember the intuition behind this choice, and can you remind us of the context?**

As a child, I drew obsessively. As an adult, I came to see the psychological dimension and monstrosity of a child who has made hundreds of thousands of drawings.

Literally all the time, at breakfast, at school, but as a child I thought it was normal. I was trying, as often happens with children, to create a parallel world through these drawings that contrasted with

the reality I was facing. It was not a decision, but a necessity to make these drawings, to create this world. My parents kept a lot of drawings and now they appear in my films. I mean, all my films look like drawings made by a four-year-old and sculptures made of plasticine, and so on. The fact that my drawings today are reminiscent of children's drawings is also a reference to the time in which one is shaped. On the one hand, on the other hand, I simply do not know how to draw better. (Laughs.) The drawings function as spotlights on the story, bringing another light, sometimes another perspective, sometimes more revealing than the text, sometimes they are simply hermetic, resisting any integration into a story – in this case, they are almost like facts, a kind of strange documents documenting nothing other than their own existence. I need the images to tell the absurd, because language is too exclusive and tends to abolish the truly absurd. The drawings or images are sometimes more real than the narration, but they come from the narration or are a product of it. This is the paradox: a lesser degree of truth can produce a greater degree of truth, by itself. This is the greatness of art .

**In your works, you often combine a subjective, even autobiographical, dimension with a more historical dimension, which allows you to create tangible links between your personal experiences and the events and objects that shape society. Is this a way for you to reconfigure, in your own way, the world that imposes itself on us?**

Maybe not so much to reconfigure, that's too big a word for me, but it's a way of moving more safely in the world because we know the abysses, the lack of reality in this world.

**What role does psychoanalysis play ? does she play in your work ?**

Well, psychoanalysis doesn't really play a role, it's become more of a term where everyone, upon hearing it, nods in understanding. I mean, I'm also impressed by catathymic-imaginative psychotherapy or systemic family constellation therapy, but if one of my characters said that in my films, apart from the fact that there are no characters who speak directly, it would be necessary to explain everything first, and that would be tedious. My recourse to psychoanalysis or Freud comes from the fact that he began to analyze the (invisible) power structures that constitute reality through and through. Discovering and describing this structure and its effects is a constant in my work.

**Humor is an important aspect of your approach, but I find it a bit difficult to define. It seems to be based mainly on a desire to distance oneself from reality and its forms of conditioning. Would you agree with this interpretation?**

No, I think humor means something else to me. Humor creates distance, so you have to step back to see the whole picture. Distance is important, otherwise you end up in this delighted self-satisfaction, which I find really problematic in contemporary literature and art. By using humor, something paradoxical happens : through distance, you get closer to things and their structures, they become clearer. All things, even the most terrible ones. I realized that humor has also become a space for me to grieve .

**Mistakes, failures, and discomfort are often part of the situations you describe. How do these types of uncomfortable moments or imperfections become essential elements in your artistic practice?**

I think I realized that they are simply good sources based on my own experiences, that mistakes often have a psychological background that breaks the linear image that one has of the world, of people, of oneself. I have a constant feeling of not belonging, of being outside, looking at a world that I have not made and where I look at things with a painful nudity .

**You often refer to animals in your works. For what reasons? Why are they important to you?**

I have always been interested in the analogy between the white cube and the therapy room or a zoo. We can use our relationship with animals to visualize the reality and symptoms of a society, such as fear, projection and domination. And the best stories can be derived from this, from cave paintings to Oedipus to The Town Musicians of Bremen .

**Can you describe your creative and production process? Do you follow a traditional path, from scriptwriting to editing and post-production with a single shoot? Or do you go back and forth between these different stages? Is there a particular moment in this long development process that stands out as most important to you?**

It's an incredible world of self-optimization that we operate in as artists, and part of me wishes I could be part of that world, with a regular schedule. All I can say is that any process of creating a new work is also painful, full of doubts, which are then covered with pleasure, humor and laughter as the image becomes clearer. For films, there is always the script at the beginning, but while I am writing, I have ideas for images, so I draw or paint or photograph images, and during this time, I often have an idea for text, so I go back to the text, to have another idea for images. It's like playing ping-pong. I can't operate a camera myself, let alone an editing program, I have an attention span of about 5 seconds for technical things (laughs), but I'm lucky enough to make my films with another filmmaker, Konstantin von Sichart. What I described above is really true, we laugh a lot, sometimes we're on the floor laughing, especially when we make the clay figurines, I mean, you've seen my films, you know what they look like. (The interviewer and the artist burst out laughing.) But as I said, it all starts with the script, and it's a lonely and painful process but TRUE .

**How do you see the rest of your residency in Corsica? What are you currently working on?**

I have been researching landscapes for a long time, for the simple reason that I come from Austria and Austria is very landscape-oriented. For me, landscapes are loaded with politics, social relations, etc. So landscapes can be seen as psychological spaces, and these spaces have structures.