

ARTIST'S TALK – SAFETY FIRST!

TRANSCRIPT - Roxana Donaldson, Valentin Boiangiu + Davian Vlad la Radio România Oltenia Craiova – Pulsul Zilei

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MODERATOR
DAVIAN VLAD

Invitați: Roxana
Donaldson, Valentin
Boiangiu

○ Davian Vlad: Tomorrow is just around the corner, dear friends, when the Dâlgart Gallery will premiere the artistic installation "Safety First" by Roxana Donaldson. She is here with me in the broadcasting booth of the regional public radio station in the capital of Oltenia. Along with her is our old friend Valentin Boiangiu, the initiator of this wonderful project called Dâlgart. Welcome to Radio Oltenia!

Valentin Boiangiu: Hello, thank you for the invitation!

Roxana Donaldson: It's a pleasure to be here, thank you as well for the invitation. I am very happy we are together today.

Davian Vlad: Valentin, interesting things are happening once again at Dâlgart. Tell us more about how you came to collaborate with Roxana.

Valentin Boiangiu: I've known Roxana for a few years, ever since she visited Dâlgart to see one of my exhibitions. She had the kindness and inspiration to write a very beautiful review of my show back then for *Mozaicul* magazine.

Davian Vlad: Atypical for a curator, you rarely exhibit your own work at Dâlgart, right?

Valentin Boiangiu: Well, it takes me a long time to make them... because I dedicate myself to others. The DalgART space is intended as a creative and dialogue hub—my dialogue with other artists. We are always waiting for new proposals and we want DalgART to be an inspirational space for exhibitions and debates. Sometimes, we even have more "cultural" parties, as befits a cultural hub.

Davian Vlad: Yes, of course. With music, as with this Stereophonics track playing in the background. It's a joke between me and Vali, who isn't necessarily a big fan of the band.

Valentin Boiangiu: You'd be surprised; I actually saw them live in England when they were young. Kelly Jones has an absolutely sensational voice. A good band, actually.

Davian Vlad: "Maybe the day after tomorrow" we will see this installation titled "Safety First". Vali, let me ask you: why this title, "safety first"?

Valentin Boianjiu: The title is a conceptual conclusion of Roxana's reasoning. Roxana came up with the rationale for the exhibition. Of course, it went through several phases of discussion and debate, because that's how a good exhibition happens. Roxana formulated this reasoning for the installation—we haven't built it yet, to be honest—today we start the layout and arrangement. "Safety First" came as an obvious and quite direct conclusion to Roxana's rationale. She will tell you more, but until then, here is what I know: she wanted to create an investigation into certain feelings and psychological states that are not necessarily soothing or on "safe" ground. And then you need a set of rules to put things in order.

Davian Vlad: So, will participants receive prior instruction before seeing this installation, Roxana?

Roxana Donaldson: Well, I don't think they'll need it. I think they will manage just fine. We are all in this situation from time to time, wanting to withdraw into a space that is safe, where we know no discomfort can reach us. Much like being in the radio booth right now. The problem is how long we stay there. And, in fact, the installation I'm proposing at Dâlgart asks this very question: how long do we stay in our "safe space"? Initially, this whole story was supposed to be called "Diagrams of Protection". When I first started talking with Vali, I was thinking of an installation about the body, about covering and uncovering the body simultaneously. I thought it would be called "batik". I wanted it to involve batik; Vali said no, under no circumstances, no batik.

Valentin Boianjiu: Dissensions...

Roxana Donaldson: I said yes, he said no! Eventually, I said okay, no batik; I won't fight with the curator, we'll do something else. If you hate batik so much (though you shouldn't, really, because I will fetch you a very conceptual batik to DalgArt), I'll make an installation so frightening it'll blow your mind. That's how I got into this zone, with a proposal he accepted instead of batik. That's how the "diagrams of protection" appeared, with schemes inspired by "blueprints"—schemes of engines, safety circuits, graphics through which people generally try to map the world around them. And I said: okay, this works great for physics, engineering, or chemistry. But what do we do inside ourselves, in our little souls? What would an X-ray of the states and emotions you feel when you are afraid, when you are in pain, and when you don't know where to retreat first to give yourself... an emotional MRI look like?

Davian Vlad: Who does the emotional MRI?! Roxana Donaldson will do it for us the day after tomorrow if we go to Dâlgart to see this installation which hasn't been installed yet, right?

Roxana Donaldson: It hasn't, because part of the installation consists of canvases, drawings, and objects—many constructed objects, a lot of *assemblage art* that comes to extend the canvas into the three-

dimensional. These "objects" are several hundred black spheres of variable sizes, which we have to mount together today, and we still don't know how we're going to do it... I told you it's something frightening; I never exaggerate...

Davian Vlad: You will start the setup immediately after our show. Unfortunately at the radio—or fortunately, t the radio—it is cool, but outside it is 38 degrees. You will be working at DalgART at almost 40 degrees, arranging several hundred objects, and tomorrow, for the opening, we will reach the psychological threshold of 40+!

Valentin Boiangiu: Dâlga is a valley... I don't want to be a tourist office for Dâlga, but come and see, you'll be very surprised. The vegetation is very bizarre for this area of Dolj and it's a bit cooler. But there is a dress code: I'd like you to come with white shirts, open at the neck. And with espadrilles.

Davian Vlad: Good. How did you conceive this artistic installation, Roxana Donaldson? How did the idea come to you, where did the inspiration come from?

Roxana Donaldson: With great emotional difficulty. Where did it come from? Well, generally all my works—whether they are paintings, independent objects, or installations—all start from my personal experiences. And then I try to eliminate myself from them so that others can find themselves in them; I try not to be egocentric. For "Safety First!", I investigated my relationship with fleeing from discomfort in various ways. Vali liked the idea and here we are today, preparing to face a new discomfort and a new uncertainty: installing several hundred items at 40 degrees. It's going to be beautiful, I can't wait!

Valentin Boiangiu: I liked her proposal because it enters the spirit of the Dâlgart concept, where we don't necessarily host "pretty" exhibitions—I've said this before. We don't aim for that. These are concepts, questions are asked, things are not necessarily resolved. Dâlgart tries to align itself with the universal concepts of contemporary art, which don't necessarily solve or explain things, but propose... Of course, the installation, as Roxana said, looks very good, but the staging—or "in situ" or "site specific" as others call it—is a puzzle and quite a difficult curatorial task. But we are not going to solve it with a concrete explanation. We want to solve it, as I said earlier, with more questions.

Davian Vlad: Meaning you leave with more questions than answers?

Valentin Boiangiu: Yes, because that is a sign of good art after all. Answers are a "dead end". If you found the answer, it's solved and you're bored; you don't have to search or research anything anymore. And I love that the installation isn't done yet, as Roxana said...

Davian Vlad: Speaking of viewing, since we are on the radio, we have no graphic support; we can't show photos of the installation or other works by Roxana Donaldson. That's why I ask the author: what will the final installation look like in a radio description?

Roxana Donaldson: We don't know! I hope those who hear us and are interested in contemporary art will come to Dâlgart on Friday, even if just out of curiosity. And I hope they leave with many questions. If we manage to make it look in such a way that we achieve this result, it will be wonderful. So we don't know, not yet.

Valentin Boiangiu: We can guarantee one thing right now: on Friday evening in the village of Dâlga de Jos, this will be the best contemporary art exhibition—that we can guarantee.

Davian Vlad: Roxana Donaldson, regarding the discomfort you mentioned—the anxieties of modernity and postmodernity—how can these be avoided or somewhat silenced through art?

Roxana Donaldson: Well, I don't know if art will reduce them; I think it will rather amplify them or invite contemplation and maybe an analysis. I think the time has passed when art came to just bring something "pretty" on the wall to offer beauty. I think we are on the right track when we are open to accepting all our thoughts and ideas, and putting everything under a question mark. At least as an exercise.

Davian Vlad: Valentin Boiangiu, do we also question natural intelligence with the rise of artificial intelligence?

Valentin Boiangiu: Dâlgart is not a space that started out to be against anyone/anything. Technology will inevitably change things, just as photography and video did in their time. Now, much more video art is made, but with other, much more sophisticated vehicles and tools. But thanks to technology, we have more art today than we have ever had in our history.

Davian Vlad: Roxana Donaldson, Valentin Boiangiu, a final message for art lovers?

Roxana Donaldson: Dâlgart for me is an artist-run space that Vali thinks through very well, with a lot of versatility. The exhibitions and events at Dâlgart are places where we don't just talk about art, where people who need to communicate across broad social-cultural areas come into contact. For me, this event is a joy; it's my way of returning home.

Valentin Boiangiu: What happens at Dâlga doesn't stay at Dâlga. We want to open some new gates toward the future with this show.

Davian Vlad: Thank you very much. Success on Friday at Dâlgart starting at 18:00! Up next is Pink Floyd with "Another Brick in the Wall," because on Friday, you two will add another brick to the reputation of Dâlgart.