

Personality Disorders

A conversation with Nina Rhode about her Fantomas at Gallerie Sandra Buergel
by Luis Rafael Berríos-Negrón



'My heart is a shark' says Gerald Uhlig. I always think of Pleasure when I think of sharks; sudden, fearless, stealthy, and in your face when you most expect it... only to fade out again into the deep blue sea, right where she came from. And, she wants you in, in the joke, on tempo, off clock. She bends time, shamanistic, soft and epileptic, deafening, and simply not giving in. Fantomas proves her integrity, like Aby Warburg's & Joan Jonas' Snake Dances. If we can't corral her, then so be it. We love to do that to artists, to exhibits, find a thread, a fucking narrative. No, this work is a dicey endeavor. I try to kink out the risks, the surfacing, if she's still feathering and playfully infantile. Yes, we pictured a moon shinning in the sky.

LBN: aren't you happy with the show?

NR: it was fast spontaneous. About a year ago right after she left Gitti Nourbakhsh, where she met all of us, she (Buergel) was like – “do a show in between my other shows...”. i was against galleries. I told her that. I was into theaters, i was into miracles, magicians, fairy god mothers. A cube like a white gallery is like a few plaques, not like the theater.

Does it matter to you what happens in these spaces?

i worked with Gonzalez, the musician...

yeah, but Honey-Suckle had done shows in galleries...

yeah but not so much in galleries, more in museums. Galleries are not so much like museums, galleries are about selling I guess. Museums are like art forums, like foundations... different because u have lots of time to create something. also always to make it dark. It's not that they have to be bright. museums take care a lot about the light.

so what is yr favorite museum.

i don't have one.

I make the question because i don't want to be different. i never saw yr show in Hamburg. and that place,

at least to me, is different form most large museum spaces.

you usually get money to create something... the museum gets it back usually by entrance. people who want to see the show pay. similar to what happens in theaters. people really go there because they want to see something. they have this time when they concentrate.

Do you care where the money comes from, public or private?

Well, if you get money from museum it is not about selling it. It's about that people want to see it.

tell me a little bit about Honey-Suckle.... is this yr first solo show?

i have been working with them, and this is my first, yes, in a long time... and gonzalez, and i did group shows in between..

Did you ever use your name Pleasure?

Nonono, with Gonzalez i would use Ninja Pleasure. people who call me Pleasure is just like friends. yeah there's is a bit confusion there because of...

because of what?

well, do you want to be Ninja Pleasure all your life? it's an internet name you know? like, you know, Easy Peasy, you know, come and go out with me.

because you like some anonymity?

it was a time when people said that if you have a different name, some sort of ananim.. anonomi... a different person a little bit back from yr personality. I am not so connected, I make it then i let into the world, I like to see it from the outside and let it find its way. i don't have this problem of feeling too close to the stuff or... that people can help me because of that... basically that's not why i choose ninja pleasure. It was more a moment from inside Honey Suckle when we all got crazy names... somehow pleasure stuck with me.

was it ever because of lovemaking?

no no. when i made my first video it was a bunch of clips... i focus on what is video what is photography... and this little video i called 'just for my pleasure'. Just to make it clear i do it for me, not for others. That time I got the name Ninja Pleasure Iceland...

was it given?

no we made our own names.

i just want to know its purpose, no that i care about purpose, but just to know... not that i think you are hiding, because i know you don't hide, but i am wondering if you are not interested in recognition as a way to elude the market...

yes..

well, because, you have yr show (Fantomas), you sold most of it, and that has Nina Rhode. are you changing your position? I mean, have you been in an artfair?

Small ones yeah, like underground ones... no not on the commercial side, like i have been in a thing called FotoTriennale that happens in Hamburg, but otherwise, no. When I came out of university, i didn't look for galleries, Honey-Suckle had bigger more fun projects that was more what i wanted. And now things make more sense, in a normal way of doing art, and selling art, i wanted to do a little bit more, i guess since last year... the selling is not the main part, i decided i don't want to work so much with Gonzalez, because i want to work more for my own... and therefore i think its crazy that i get asked so fast to do a soloshow. And because i was not looking for it, i was more sitting on the couch not knowing what to do.

so how then do you make ends meet...? wait, i want to ask two questions at the same time... how do you work in this anonymity, because to me you confounded yourself in these personalities, honey, suckle, ninja, pleasure, iceland, nina, rhode, gonzalez, its a multiple personality thing, no? making money in this society...

the money thing happened with Gonzalez and making documentary videos. yes, as ninja pleasure and now more i take Nina Rhode. yeah sometimes is like - 'this feels more like Ninja Pleasure..' and so on. but i rarely know the difference.

I keep asking because, for me, like you asked, 'where was i last week,' well, i was in Sweden giving a public art and urbanism workshop. there i was, wearing my urbanist hat, because i change hats, not names, because in that instance, i do consult on matters of urbanism that are well-embedded in social ethics, which is totally the opposite with art, or at least that's what the artworld claims, purposefully useless. So, i am curious as to how you wear your names.

yeah, well its because Ninja Pleasure has more to do with collaborating, or doing something for other people, but it is also a name that came from certain time, like 97, when this name got created, now maybe i slowly grow out of this name, but my friends will always probably call me pleasure. i will not use this name anymore in public. it comes and goes i guess. and of course, you find more stuff in the internet about Ninja Pleasure i guess.

So, if i where to say something about Fantomas, it is that it is kinetic... but then you have some of the performative things you have done like the photos with the feather up yr ass with the baby boy on yr back.

it's honey, it's funny that you come up with the feather in the ass.

was it in the ass?

the feather in the ass, because, how it is in groups, it is in a way that i really wanted to make a foto with me with a feather in the ass. So i asked Simone if she can do the foto. Then her son was there and he said - "I want to be in the foto too!", so I said - "Ok, but you have to get naked", so he got naked and jumped on my back, and then of course, Simone is also in Honey-Suckle. Sometimes you start doing something and you don't know why, just have this idea, suddenly you wake up and you have this image in your head, and you don't know what it is for. The next thing is a Honey-Suckle show, and this gets into the Honey-Suckle world. That's how it comes with a lot of things. That's the way Honey-Suckle is. Of course, i am a part of Honey-Suckle, and my part, i have ideas, sometimes for Honey-Suckle sometimes for myself, but they end up in the Honey-Suckle. We start using them in the Honey-Suckle even if not everyone did something in it. So there's a bunch of things that now i look at them as my own personal idea but, once they are in, it's

impossible to bring them back to my world. When your ego starts to be a little bit weird, because you start to think - "oh, I need that now, for my own... yeah, but are Honey-Suckle", and you showed it already, so, leave it where it is, you know? So, I don't know that would have happened if i had the feather in the ass...

And that's Honey-Suckle, no?

It is Honey-Suckle, and it is Honey-Suckle probably because Simone made the foto. But in general it was my idea. Not the kid in the back, but Bo, the kid, happened to be there and he wanted to be in the foto, so, by making the foto it turned out to get to be on some other level.

Where did the foto show?

Totally in the Honey-Suckle context. In Kunstlerhaus Stuttgart.

That's why they freaked out, because it's a Catholic town?

Ah, well, uh; it also got shown in a magazine, it's called *Freier*. It's a magazine that Simone invented. I was working in the 'redaction' and when this magazine went for printing the copy shop thought we were doing pornography with kids. So Simone had to meet the police so they check all the negatives and all these things, it was a big scandal. In the end it was ok, because there was no dick shown, and they decided that it was not child pornography. Other fotos in the same issue Hans Peter Knese who made picture of his sisters just when they were starting to get tits, they were in this age where you are a woman or not, plus some other pictures with kids and women, very erotic fotos, for the police this was...

so they said it was illegal...

well, the copy shop called the cops.

Ah.

And then the police went to Simone's house and check everything.

Did someone come out in your defense?

Simone later had the fotos on another show... it is also funny you know, because the pictures get into her show, where she's more acting solo, but still with some Honey-Suckle in there, and, I don't know, I don't know where this foto ended up. I don't know who has it or not.

So, does Honey-Suckle still meet?

If Honey-Suckle had made a lot of money, it would probably not exist anymore. It is still underground and we are in no position to divide who did what when and how much. If you sell a piece, how do you do it? do you split the money equally? It is very hard, and we always ask us this question. How we should do it if somebody all of the sudden wants to by up all the work or something, or whatever, we have no idea what would happen.

Are they upset at you for showing your head a bit above water with Fantomas?

No no, everybody in Honey-Suckle is doing their own solo shows.

How many in Honey-Suckle?

Five. Five or six, I don't know.

I like more wondering: if each of us do a soloshow, then if you see a Honey-Suckle show, if you can see the influences. Because we have worked so long together its more like its own taste, we learned to create it. If I do Honey-Suckle i do things directly in the language of Honey-Suckle. If I think something new for Gonzalez I think in the language of Gonzalez. If I think of my own work I also think in another language, so like Honey-Suckle we use certain materials and we don't use other materials. For my work i use other materials, so you already smell different. And, of course, you don't have the layers. With Honey-Suckle you have so many people, the work in the end has more layers. I mean, for Honey-Suckle i usually do the basic skelet, the skeleton. The other people come and work on top of it. And then I jump in to also do something on top of it but not like the others. So, my work is done, now you continue.

I am not so sure that you need collaboration to create layers. Speaking of layers, why did you want me to give a speech in your opening dinner party?

As I told you before, I am not a big fan of galleries, shows in galleries, because they are not very sympatic in the moment. And when I was a child, when my mother use to take me to things, openings and others, I remember speeches, some kind of celebration moment, where we can say we are together to celebrate that moment. It's like in a theater when the lights go down. This is one of the things I hate about the galleries, that now people come on the first night and they show up, or show up two hours later and there is something about this posture that ignores the work, no beginning. So a speech is something that always brings people together. I was wishing I could do it, and I am too shy or something.

Well, i did it because you let me do it Spanish. Something I would have never done in front of a Spanish speaking audience.

Why?

Because it reveals my mediocrity. I am miserable most of the time, and i talk about the Secret Miracle (Borges) because the story is about stretching and compacting time, and that's my deal, only when there's pleasure i can deal with life, so i find me trying to do that. And that's what I saw in Fantomas, because to me it was all about time. Why does movement get you pumped up?

Because everything is moving. i don't know. It's like "why round?" Because something round has to move i guess. Even if i make a work that is not officially moving, i try to make your eye move inside the work.

is it recent?

it always comes back. Because i like that technical part. i think i get it from the theater, 'Inszenierung', it has a beginning and an end, and that i can play with it. I can change it, the order, they are all test objects for me. I get the idea and I want to see it. I get one thousand ideas, and sometimes it takes me ten years to do one. It comes from curiosity, comes from physical intention. Because colors and sounds are both waves. i like going to the source of... whatever, red, sound, gravity, whatever.

but do you care if this contemporary?

of course. in the end it matters. but when i start i don't care, i just want to see it. its in my head, i have not seen it somewhere else, and i want to see it. if i do this with it or if i do that with it. this is what makes me work.

you think that berlin's contemporary problem is making babies?

i don't know. i think Berlin is making babies for the rest of Germany. I mean, what kind of problems do we have here? If you watch TV its a total disaster. I am not interested.

In what? what is it that yr not interested in? in the luxury problems of Berlin.

Berlin of course has a thousand problems. The point is that we lost. We completely lost. There was a chance, the opportunity was there to deal with this east/west thing. We lost already, it's done, its over. Berlin has no money, the rest of the world comes here and buys space and houses, then you see how they knock it down, the Palace der Republik, for millions of money. If they would have kept it as it was and then show it as a museum, it would have been the best museum in Berlin. Now you see tourists running around looking for a wall that is not there, they are totally confused, they don't know what east was, time passes very fast, and this Palast would have been perfect to show what was going on. It has very crazy design, crazy taste, this eastern style... even the best houses of that time are also knocked down.

