



TIPS & TRICKS

2012 | audio and video installation | video 29' | sound in FR with HE or EN subtitles

ABOUT

CREDITS

TEXT (sound) – EN translation

INSTALLATION PLAN

ABOUT

In Tips& Trick, our noses are being gradually transformed into a stereotypical "Jewish noses". Identity is a construction, be it imposed or chosen. It is a fluid and ever-changing, not something fixed of either-or. The ever-changing borders and definition of identity is echoed in the changing shape of the projection itself. The title, Tips & Tricks, is a reference both to the fake-ness (of clear definitions and pre-conceptions) and to the Freudian "tip of the iceberg". In the sound, we hear excerpts from interviews we made with young Belgians of Jewish origin, who talked about their identity and the importance of the minority position.

CREDITS

Make up: Florence Thonet

Camera: Katrien Vermeire

Mix: Maxime Coton

Hebrew translation: Anytext

English translation: Cinematip

Editing: Effi & Amir

Monologue excerpt: Youri Vertongen

TEXT – translated from French

Can one claim something which is natural?

How can I claim being Belgian, Jewish, a man, twenty-five years old?

It's not that I take credit for it or not, support it or not. It's just the way it is.

I can assume responsibility for wearing a striped sweater, for voting for a certain party, for taking a certain action, But something that is an inherent part of me... For that I can take neither credit nor blame. It can only be indicated by someone else out of their desire to pigeonhole you. It's actually saying: "He's a Jew and based on that we'll evaluate his Jewishness". Or something like that.

What is the Jewish spirit? What connects us, when we say we are Jews? I don't know you. You don't know me... It's this Chosen People thing. There's a romantic value to it that I carry with me and find attractive for a while, and then, it becomes pedantic, completely arrogant. I don't need to be "chosen" more than someone else. On the other hand, it's true. The image of the Wandering Jew has power, and even nowadays they say: You're always somebody's Jew. I think that's true. You're always someone else's minority, Jewish or not.

I don't know... There's a strong romantic aspect, even a strong political one, in embracing the image of the Jew as the ultimate minority. And I feel that the establishment of Israel is quite the contrary of that. But in a certain way I totally understand it. I understand there comes a time when you want to stop. A time when you're fed up with being a minority. But it doesn't appeal to me. Not at all. This was something I understood long before I started reading about it. that I wasn't meant to live in Israel, because the very concept doesn't interest me.

You can react to any situation as a majority would, reinforcing the existing institutions, reinforcing the world as it is, or as a minority, undermining the world as it is, or criticizing it. That is, never to be where they expect you to be. This is the minority position. Therefore, The State of Israel, defined as the Jewish State, seems not only... undesirable in itself, but an aberration. Because I feel that being a Jew always means, somehow, "becoming minority", so the claim of a Jewish Israel, a hundred percent Jewish, is something I never found attractive. 'Becoming' is escaping the established order. The notion of "becoming" is typical of Deleuze's theory. Meaning, there is no "being", only "becoming". It is an infinite process, it means "constantly becoming". A notion of fluidity rather than something fixed, or binary.

In fact, I think this is what being a Jew means. Being a Jew is constantly questioning your identity. The search itself. This is, in fact, the Jewish culture. All the Biblical interpretations, endlessly interpreting word after word. My feeling is that that's what it's about. It's not about being indicated or not, if there is anti-Semitism or not, What concerns you, as a Jew, may be this perpetual questioning: What does it mean, to be a Jew? What is my "becoming Jew"? It's rather... 'Becoming Jew' is precisely this: to wonder about these questions of identity, and this quest is never over.

At a certain point I asked myself: Why must I take a stand towards the State of Israel? Why must I tag myself as Zionist, or anti-Zionist or as a Diasporist? Why can't I simply skip this question? Why must I have anything to do with the Israeli question, or the State of Israel, even if I don't want to? One day someone said to me, "because the State of Israel speaks for you." The state of Israel, or some of its leaders, in speeches of a megalomaniac nature, say: "We are the Jewish State and we speak for the Jews." And the dominant belief is, as you said, that "someday all the Jews will come to us, "and if they don't, they won't be Jews anymore."

So this brings up the question: If the state of Israel speaks for the Jews, and I see myself as a Jew, I have to say "No, you don't speak for me," or "No, I'm not a Jew." So this is the only tie I maintain with this State. I try to dissociate myself from it so that it can't speak for me, as a Jew. In other words, to assert myself not as an assimilated Jew, because I'm not in favor of assimilation or integration, whether it be Jewish, North African or other. I am strongly attached to the cultural heritage of my family, as much as anyone is attached to theirs. But of course, it hurts. It's as though there were a "motherland" who awaits me or speaks for me, of whom I know nothing. I feel related to it by negation only... But apparently, I'm a potential citizen.

- It doesn't mean anything to you?

- Not at all.

In fact, I find it quite offensive. Because I didn't choose it. The idea that there's a state that wants me even though it doesn't know me, or know who I am... I could be more subversive than someone else, who isn't Jewish! It actually makes me a little sick. I don't believe one can take credit for something that isn't a matter of choice.

What doesn't make sense to me is... that the condition for being Israeli is being a Jew, But if you're already a Jew, why become Israeli? It doesn't make sense... Who benefits from it? Just the Israeli capital? Why do they do that? I ask you seriously. That would mean... I think the Jewish identity draws its power from the possibility of being Jewish without necessarily being observant. That means there's a joining of religious and national identity. And Israel is more a political project than a religious one, right? And the characteristic of the Jewish identity as national-religious, or let's say, cultural rather than religious, straddling both the national and the religious, is the singularity of being Jewish.

They want to forge it into a purely national identity. It's a shame! It's incredible! I think it's a great pity. I immediately change my position. I think it's so simplistic! The idea of turning all Jews into Israelis is totally simplistic, because it would take away the singularity of being Jewish. And Jewishness would not be derived from religion anymore, It's no longer: you can be a Jew without being religious But rather: you can't be a Jew without being Israeli... So you could no longer be a Belgian Jew... No, no... no way! Now I understand why I can't accept it. Because it would destroy... the Jewish myth, the whole Jewish question, the not-knowing to define "Jew". If everyone were to be an Israeli Jew, there'd be no question anymore. You'd be Israeli like you're Belgian, or anything else. If everyone went to Israel, it really would be a way of doing away with the Jews in the world! It would be the only way. It's terrible, they're out of their minds! We must not accept this project.



