

Interview for an artist book by Qi Peng
Questions by Albert Wang, Director of the IAO PROJECTS, July 2008
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Cool beans, let's begin.

1) You were born in Bonn. What was your childhood like over there? Did you have any powerful, resonating memories of your childhood which influenced your artwork or style?

many. of course, more then many and all of them having an incredible impact on my life and work ever since. see below. and another, growing up with and in nature. that was a more then big influence. spending as much as can time in nature, outdoors, in the forests and woods, making endless hiking tours with my parents, later with the dog of a friend of mine, a cocker spaniel I walked for nearly 10 years, most of the time along the Rhine (when it was not overcrowded as it is now) from Bad Godesberg, where I grew up near Bonn, to the Rheinaue and back. reading was a big factor, too - my mother later told me, I taught me how to read (and write) with 2 or 3 and from that moment on I read like crazy. which was normal in our generation. I surely read more then 20000 books, and spent many years in my childhood, snuggled up somewhere, reading. when we travelled, the first thing, find the public library for me, inscribe and get me books. I would spent 1000s of hours, loving to read all the stories, snuggle up in all those other worlds and was the total miss grouchy, when I had to leave them. I would take books everywhere, and read, indoors, outdoors, everywhere.

and I grew up as well in the church quior of our evangelic church, yeah, we had many many gigs, specially around xmas... I stepped out of any churches and never intend any re-entry - apart from intending till the end of my life in all our Buddhist " church" of rock 'n'n roll, but that what many years of singing with an incredible repertoire we had, but alot of different music, styles, songs and many you would not necessarily connect to any churches...

later in school, there was a great teacher, who had an evening circle for all interested ones, singing songs in all possible languages, she could find, teaching us them, strumming guitar along... which was pretty cool...

and I played later many years of theatre, studied improvised theatre and lived in all that worlds, too, as well being film extra for more then 20 years, in all kinds of cinema films, soaps (... better then donating blood, as I am anaemic), other TV productions and actress in art films, docu films of friends etx...

but another more then big factor in my childhood was, that the world for me and many other friends - was never a minute the same after having being confronted with the German history (apart from I felt born into the wrong place ever since) - that-s why I always say, my generation grew up kind of Jewish in Germany, as in kindergarten and school, this was a more then main issue in all subjects. and of course, we all grew up antifa, leftwing, liberal, humanistic, wide horized and were insanely horrified by all that happened before. that-s what I always loved about our generation, too - there was hardly ANYONE, being any kind of nationalist or German nationalist, most of my friends and I were plain shocked and horrified and as well went into all kinds of exiles already from early childhood on. specially, when we were kids - all were happy to leave

the country, anyway and the more - to any other place. when we were kids, you took this looks at elder people and of course, there were millions of them every day around us, and were often enough scared to pieces, which part they might have played in that history, either more then deliberately, or to put it nicely "accidentally".

we all had good and bad childhoods, included all whatever family situations and all connected to that - but we never got over this - this all happened RIGHT HERE. - ... I was insofar lucky, that my grandparents were all as much as can against Hitler and his regime terror, my one grandfather never joined the nsdap, my other was a preacher and part of the "bekennende kirche" in Germany from it-s very beginning on. later, they all fled, had to flee, my parents as kids along - this is the short version, but of course, that and all stories told and memories shared affected me deeply, too. (and we were very young, when we saw all the documentary films about all concentration camps, the war, and everything connected in school, which affected me deeply, too.)

another factor I am very happy about, shrinks did not exist in our kid-s universe and our parent-s. neither the concept of psychopharmaca for kids and many other horrible things, imagine there was not even TV. when I was around 10 I think, we had the first black and white TV, with 3 channels and they broadcasted from noon to midnight.

my parents had their first second hand car, when I was 18 and made my drivers licence. but everyone always cycled. and of course, there were friends with cars existing.

important was radio, rock n roll radio, john peel and bfbs, world receivers, snuggle up in bed with little radios, pretending to sleep and listen to music. and especially elder brothers of friends and their record or tape collections. of course, we all grew up on tapes and tape recorders, which as well left an incredible impact for all our musical work and approach. no cell phones of course either.

my father was travelling due to his job all the time and I loved it (not his absence of course) because he always came back with super 8 films he shot of all the countries he travelled, mainly Africa, south America, Indonesia, the Caribbean's, but many other countries, too - and then he would tell stories about the countries and his encounters there, he would bring beautiful objects and presents along, and this was of course always more then inspiring and thrilling, likewise all postcards and letters and stamps, which I collected.

and you could be the total loner but as social as you wanted to, depending on how you felt. we were a big circle of kids and all parents were friends and most still are, so we could at a very early age visit each other and sleep over - that was good for the parents to have free weekends and days, and for us great, to "do our thing" - we just lived in our kid-s world - and could visit each other after school, call up our parents and say, hey, I come back home in 3 days... (figure how happy they were...) and parents had a lot of free time and space - as they could easily park their kids at any given friend-s for weekends or longer, and travel or just have their own time ... which of course was easy, as nearly all friends and places where within walking distance, it was a small town, not alot of traffic, many friends had gardens - houses, tree houses, space, cellars, attics, and everyone had a lot of spare toothbrushes and you could just "walk over" in a sec. and mostly we grew up playing altogether in bunches, when we felt like it - you-d not have this

playgrounds full of kids and tons of parents playing with them - and not they with each other, in our childhood, there was only kids and luckily without any educational tutoring, entertainers, monitoring or supervision at all existing.. parents were there to run to if needed, and that was of course good, or parents and kids played, too, but then more table games when the weather was really too nasty - but it was a completely different area. maybe little more like cats and their can-openers style wise and living in total different worlds - but when feeling like it, then sharing another one.

which I think, led to us all loving "to do our things" - having had that early childhood context and freedom to do so... (this did not mean, we would not have to fight hard for many other things, but there was this overall - ok, go for it - laissez faire attitude, while providing the essentials to get along.)

of course, we all had our personal family stories, too - but that-s of course our personal family stories.

but seen from now, I think, we all lived in a kind of not even classified or thematized kind of open intellectual artist families collective, without ever naming or thinking about it.

another strong impact, as we had no garden, we had a piece of land since I was a small kid, where I loved to spend endless time, either alone, or with my parents or friends. it was rented for 60 German marks per year, farmer-s land, the contract renewed every "Nikolaus" per handclap and just by saying "I take another year", in a farmers area a 30 min bicycle ride away. and I had my own piece of land, and we grew all there, flowers, herbs, fruits, vegetables - all in the wildest style, but I loved it and I think, this as well left a very deep impact on me. and it was always an escape place, too - ... you could always take your cycle, books, drawing material, sketchbooks and or my guinea pig along and escape...

other escapes were indoor sports places, I grew up being in a very intense sports group, 3 or 4 times a week with a lot of hardcore training and acrobatix included, other escapes were outdoor pools, later lakes, and what I loved deeply - were stables, as I loved horses, acrobatix on horses, horse riding, of course the wilder and the more rodeo the better, and I loved to spend many many hours with horses, always dreaming of my own, the wild black stallion, that only I could ride -

I think, this escapes, either mentally or physically and have various options to escape, not to mention endless hours spent thinking or daydreaming the time away or while doing other things, was always very important for me as a child and for my friends, too - and you could always pack your bundle and leave - and we all did all the time, and then come back and have the freedom to do so, too. leaving, either to "explore the world" (no wonder, that me and so many of my friends were their own travellers since early childhood) or to flee from trouble often enough, too - or just spend some good times somewhere else and all in between, was very important in my childhood, too.

another place I grew up, was my grandparent-s place right across the street, where I spent many many hours as a kid, or over weekends, I grew up there as much as in my parent-s apartment. and of course, I loved it there, and learned alot from my grandparents, who were both great storytellers and I loved them incredibly.

our family holiday place for many years was a little hotel in the forest, with simple rooms and we would go there in all possible constellations for many years, as we all were not rich, we-d pack up, order a taxi or two and then within an hours drive was the "Einkehrhäuschen" in the siebengebirge,

across the Rhine and we'd then spend weeks there - smack in the forest, which of course was more than great, too...

in a way, we all were and lived like a kind of nomadic art*n*roll and kind of little intellectual gypsies all our lives from early childhood on, too.

and luckily, you did not have to razor your legs, either - when we grew up....

2) Germany has such a strong history in contemporary art. As a gallery director, I was touched by your work with strong parallels to the versatile media which Dieter Roth, the Swiss artist, had done during the 1950's to 1990's. What factors account for your ability to communicate in different types of media of music, art, writing, and even graphic design?

I would say, the amount of time invested or spend exploring and developing the various means of expression, that are in a way all one for me, only of course with different characteristics. I spent gazillions of hours drawing from early childhood on, likewise loving all other techniques and to explore them, maybe as well connected to good kindergartens and options - where a big variety of techniques were offered or taught. and of course, in my generation, computers did not exist, we tore our pants on roller-skates, with out security pads, we climbed trees, dug mud baths, made open fires, worked with all highly dangerous means, like knives for "borkenschiffchen" - ships made out of bark, we cut our own "bows and arrows" and even used many dangerous scissors in schools with out having conferences in the board about it, in my generation all those things were taught and offered in a very natural style and so of course - everyone with an interest absorbed as much as can and spent many hours in developing or practising various techniques and skills. and it was all one, art, music, theatre, dance, writing and went hand in hand.

as well, as being always on co-ed schools, everyone learned everything, maybe with different emphasis sometimes, but basically it was a very good and healthy open-minded time - the boys learned knitting, too and the girl to use hammers and saws, it was very natural and not even any big deal issue, to simplify it, but a matter of personal interest and to respond to given options.

and of course, when you really have a love and passion for all those arts, then you keep on pursuing them as best as can from that on ever since. I think, it-s no coincidence, that so many friends of mine became artists of all genres ever since, some more specialized, but many working in all fields of the arts, as they did not experience any separation of the various art forms.
ala " I grew up interdisciplinary - and did not notice it.... "

and in our childhood, the arts had a high standing, where I grew up, as most of the "grownups" were totally art crazy, and you absorbed all that in a natural style without even noticing it either. most parents were kids in the war and experiences it more than intense, and of course when the war was over there was a very special climate in Germany and an incredible "hunger for the art" - a hunger for intellectual issues and topics, a hunger for all what was classified and murdered for being "entartete kunst" in the Third Reich, a hunger for music, pictures, theatre, literature, uncensored culture - to get back, where Germany was culturally before the war and to all it-s high, international and open minded cultural standards - that were once natural, before systematically eliminated.

and we being kids, probably absorbed all that along as well, likewise a very

intelligent nearly hardcore leftwing or liberal cultural standing and openness. which as well protected the "art for the sake of art" and not necessarily connected to millions of units sold or any approach like that - in those days approaches like that did not and could not exist in Germany, nearly everyone was poor, half of the country was smoking ruins - how could you have commercial arts then - ... and alot of that was still left, when we grew up. as well the incredible desire, to understand "what happened and how" - and that history could never repeat itself in any style like that.

when I was older, I spent many holidays alone or with friends in the "rheinische landesmuseum" in Bonn, as they offered courses, we discover the xoxo time, means, every holiday was dedicated to a certain historic period and you would learn all about it, as well all techniques they used in that given time, which was of course more then thrilling and adds to being versatile.

and when you grow up in contexts like that, then of course it a more then intensive part of you, that you rather die for, then give up.

3) Why do you think that American artists tend to specialize in one type of style and galleries over there tend to want to pigeonhole a particular artist into a certain "look"? Does it have to do with the fact that American galleries tend to be more commercial/capitalist than German ones?

please see above and I would guess, the whole phenomenon of superstars cultivated and celebrity cults and all connected to that could be more then super cultivated in USA, due to it-s being the winner in world war II, as the country was not bombed flat, there was money, there was the superstar industries, there was different approaches on the arts and it-s impacts and a complete different approach to a hollywoodian lifestyle - and that as well affected much of the other fields of the arts. and for all marketing strategy crazy image ridden media processes it-s of course much easier to handle any artist, as long as they correspond to the images they represent or that are created or forced on them and easier to sell and commercialize, then any versatile artists that do not correspond or live up to the expectations of any audience and their clichés (how strange, how many artists "die", when they don-t) and of course it-s easier to introduce and sell them, too.

(though of course you find incredibly lots of artists in USA, too and in any other cultures, who never got bought up either, or who some when realized and then desperately tried to escape that mechanisms... excuse all generalizations anyways, they can per definitional never give any real justice in an appropriate style.) likewise I think, the mass culture concept and mass media, and mass culture and all related to that, originated in America in a different dimension or was more then deliberately created, then at all possible in Germany, therefore as well, different traditions and backgrounds lead to completely different outcomes in and on so called realities. but this as well creates of course the counterculture movements and their responses and reactions as well.

4) How does your gallery experience in Germany differ than that in America?

I think, you can make all kinds of experiences in every country or culture you work as an artist, and I would not like to generalize too much. my personal experience showed me, that it always depends on the context, the gallery, it's very own style, the gallererists who run it, the "audience" - and many other factors, like budgets or no budgets, the amount of enthusiasm. love and work

invested, which of course can more then differ from gallery to gallery. of course, the specific time and place and cultural paradigms play a big role as well, what is possible where, what's allowed, accepted, shocking, new, and of course socio-cultural and political paradigms play a more then big role as well, concerning the "zeitgeist", topics, trends, issues and movements.

maybe you can only generalize in so far, that there was always a very big freedom of expression in Germany after the war, as well of course - fought for by every artist and gallerist, and you could find more poetic, existential and freestyle approaches, compared to any commercial approaches, which of course existed, too - but for many exhibitions any market or business factors did not play that much a role, you could maybe for some years, specially after the war, find alot of "exhibitions for the sake of the exhibition" itself, as an expression of artistic freedom or need of artistic expression, that was never connected to any top number one artist made out of any sales numbers or sales Olympics.

there was incredibly free exhibitions, happenings, multi-disciplinary events in Germany, but not with the hip factor, not connected to any entertainment issues or business, but to much more radical expressions of socio cultural art issues and matters, in a way like squatting. squatting a position with the arts, via the arts, making statements often of a very radical nature, and much more in an arte povera style, self-exploiting and self-organized and many in alternative art places - and not connected to any markets, market strategies, or even the concept of any. way more the utopian concept of creating new realites via the arts and living and expressing them - not necessarily to promote the "starving artist style" but willingly accepting that lifeform or temporarily, as the need for artistic expression was stronger then to at all get close to any other fields of the arts that were based on well created images, couching meaningless artists to pseudo superstars, and the whole idea at all.

American galleries and artists as far as I can see, can tend to have maybe more a commercial approach, nevertheless I know so many independent projects there as well ever since - it-s more the question of so called independent or underground culture and in what way galleries wherever connect of relate to that, and how they position themselves.

5) Which artists (visual or musical) do you enjoy the best? Which artists (visual or musical) are your greatest influence?

it-s plain too many. and I love them all. for a little glimpse of my audiovisual pluriversum you could take a look at the top 40ies, friends and comments on my MySpace pages:

<http://myspace.com/sibyllk>
<http://myspace.com/mitchellrobert>
<http://myspace.com/projectstudiob>
<http://myspace.com/thehorsecockkids>
<http://www.myspace.com/spunxdistorted>
<http://www.myspace.com/thenottheshoes>

I love and appreciate the works of my collaborators and partners in crime on my main homepage: <http://sibyllkalf.com>

(but of course there is many more, that I was happy to come across in the whole art, theatre, dance literature and music history...)

" I need the night I need the experience" p.s.

and I more than love all of Peter Sarach's bands and musical projects (for example the legendary "rausch" and "the cowboys on dope" "sarach and friends" "sarach solo"...)
and his performance-, acting-, writing- and poetic work, since the first moment I met him, which was on a festival in the "bel air" more than 20 years ago.

6) What do you think about Joseph Beuys and his impact on German art?

I loved Beuys' work ever since I came across it, especially his drawings. I think, his drawings are incredibly oversensitive and beautiful and like for many other artists, the centre of his work, the basis from where he as well explored many other worlds, that he then manifested in other art forms and media. I love all his ideas, objects, installations and every part of his work and of course a lot of it is more than deeply poetic, a lot is heartbreaking, when you understand the context he lived and worked in - and a lot is misquoted and misunderstood and of course a lot of his work has an incredible humour and is more than tongue-in-cheek.

his work is incredibly unique of course and more than revolutionary, too - and more than socio-critical, utopian and political. In a way he always was and will be for me the counterpart to Andy Warhol... and together they sum something incredibly up, at least for the European, North American art world and life in general.

his work had and will always have an immense impact on the German art, apart from him being a provocateur, an enfant terrible as much as Andy Warhol got called one in USA. What I love about his work as well is, that I can maybe be compared to Leonardo da Vinci in a way, another artist who left an incredible impact in and beyond his time, as he refused to accept any limitation of the visual arts, too - they all referred and used and lived in any given medium, topic, issue, they as well created their utopias, but often based on scientific approaches, but they left science behind (or took it along) and dreamed themselves in drawings or other works to where they wanted to be or needed to be. Dreaming with a simple sheet of paper and a pencil - the most Zen reduced way of creating worlds, dreaming aloud and visualizing the dreams, that then often transformed reality to an extent, that was hardly understandable.

foreseeing, for dreaming, but as well naming. the alchemy of drawing, that constantly clashed hard with any given so-called other realities, daily.

he was an incredible teacher, and had a lot of Buddhism, Zen and Taoism in his work, explicitly or implicitly. apart from being a natural anarchist in the best sense of the meaning, too.

many friends of mine knew him personally, many studied in his classes and of course can tell more than good stories, too, he was in incredible personality to experience, and just to spend some hours in the same room with him could change your whole life, even without speaking a word.

he once met a student after some while and asked "and how do you get along with your visual work?" - the student answered "I gave up, I focus now on something else" - and Beuys was laughing happily and said "hey, great, how wonderful, then you are DONE with it now..." -

which represents for me this attitude of freedom of expression, too - which made him such an incredibly good teacher, as he could clearly see, that some students had no love or interest for what they did, they just thought so. they just wanted to be "artists" for complete other reasons, and he always tried his best to try to teach them, but as well - to get them to the point, where they understood it themselves, to focus on something else.

his often misunderstood "everyone is an artist" stands for something completely different for me - he was an incarnation of Zen art for me, too - it-s not necessarily WHAT you do, it-s HOW you do it.

the art of sweeping the streets is as much art as - to be a "painter" or better said, to pretend to be one, without any feel, just for commercial, social, or other pseudo reasons.

it-s like many musicians in in a certain field of improvised music - they get mocked for using screwdrivers on guitars - but - you HEAR IT, as you can-t lie in art or music, you can easily make out the fakes and pretenders, and you HEAR - that this one played using screwdrivers for 50 years - and that makes a universal difference.

you feel it in abstract paintings, whether someone studied all techniques of drawing or just one day started to make "abstract paintings" claiming to be an artist...

of course, you cannot separate Beuys from the German context and time he lived and worked in either. of course there are many rumours about him, and many stories that might or not be true, but you feel his incredibly integrity in his person and that is what he manifests in all possible artworks, art worlds and techniques. and his integrity of course included being allowed to make mistakes and be wrong as well. he would not have been expelled from the university he was teaching art, without that integrity. and of course he turned that into a performance, too.

I love all shamanistic approaches of his work as well, but he just lived and performed them. others made the theories about him and his work in that field, that he sometimes referred to, but that was secondary. he was a "real" shaman, in all his work, but without ever being cliché or esoteric in any commercial spiritual supermarket style, all attitudes he detested. he was real.

he was as real as the coyote he spent days with in an American gallery - both deliberately displaced and out of context - displayed and encaged, or specially brought together to meet, like a symposiums, a conference, but both in a new temporary context - trying to as well, establish a communication, a life, a friendship, an understanding, a temporary utopia for themselves, in a way, it is the enlivenment of the chapter of the "petit prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, where the little prince meets the little fox. and the fox explains the little prince, how to tame him. which of course is a theme as old as mankind. how to become friends, day by day. closer, more understanding and loving and caring.

this performance of course opened up a wide field of discussion or interpretations. but it was not (only) about that. it was about - I am here now, and this coyote is here now - we are equal, and this is a real situation for both of us. full stop.

a line is a line. full stop.

7) Do you believe in an idea of a utopia? That there is a place of ultimate happiness which everyone can share?

I absolutely believe in the idea of an utopia, and the need for all of them to stay alive. the dreaming yourself where you belong, the dreamhome, in a world, where you do not have any. the tent in the sky, the utopia you die for and therefore live. there is a saying "you cannot live under an empty sky". and without the idea of an utopia, it-s senseless to live and work. because, you would have nothing to die for and therefore cannot live at all.

I think, there are many personal utopias, and some you can share and many you cannot even make understandable, and it-s a question of realizing them

in any given reality/context either for yourself and/or for others.

moments can be lived utopias, and you live, because you can feel them.
you have a song, an open fire, you love it, but then there is silence,
then there are the ashes, but you know, you were there. but you have
to hear the song again, and you have to light the fire again.
- over and over and over - . without that, you cannot live.

"you have to die every moment - to live."

I think, it is possible to share utopias and to realize them or to come
close to them, it-s like being on a quest, a journey, but they are not eternal
- you have to live them over and over - but you can come very close inspire
to long(er) lasting ones as well. and of course, you cannot force utopias
on anyone, it-s a free willing based experience.

I think, it-s basically the moments, that represent and stand for lived utopias,
that a greater number of people can share, I-d not go as far as saying -
there is any place in general at all possible. (or yet).

the character of the clown in Heinrich Böll's "Ansichten eines Clowns"/"the Clown"
"I am a clown and collecting moments...."

Charles Mingus "I am always playing the truth of the moment. the reason
it is so difficult, it is changing all the time."

8) What types of food do you enjoy best?

I love many different cooking styles worldwide, but I will always love Indian food the
most, I guess...

and Asian food, African food, pure food, organic health food, salads and fruits, and I really love cheese...

(ok, and from time to time some junk food along can be nice as well, but it-s like meat in
the last 40 years, a rather small percentage in my life, and there was many times in my
life on and off, where I was more then happy to have ANY food at all...)

and apart from many friends said, I should open up a little restaurant myself -
I-d call it "the little restaurant at the end of the world..."

9) Travel is a dominating theme throughout your work. What are some of your favourite places to travel to? How do you incorporate the social/cultural imagery from the area into your work? Do you have any specific examples?

I would name my passport-series in the first place, you find texts, interviews, and a radio feature
about the history and background of the passport and selected images about it on my homepage.

and second my "little book series", but allow my just to copy and paste in this text of a cologne artist friend
and colleague, one of my favourite associate professor, when I studied fine arts, a great performer, artist,
well know art critique and writer:

Little Books

exercise-books for Indian school kids are sibyll kalff's raw material for a project alignment, that ranges between a (travel) diary, sketchbook and artist book. about 50 such objects originated in the last two years, during travels or at home. within the individually artistic work of sibyll kalff, they tie up to earlier editions and hand sewn books. but this "little books" are intended to be sculptural and installative objects. they are not shown in the typical traditional style - either presented to leaf through or being shown in display cabinets, but they are represented dangling with opened pages from the walls. consequently the book objects do not appear as bibliophile information carriers, but as art-objects to invite the visitor of the exhibition to contemplate.

each one of the "little books" contains collages, drawings, paintings, texts, among other quotes as well quotes from her own song texts, photos, letters, notes, sales slips and baggage quittances from flights. the blotters are stored in times between exhibitions convincingly in an old suitcase. some "books" focus on a specific person, for example jimmi hendrix and are meant to be homage books, other books are homage books to countries, others document and reflect with historic photos taken from a photo album with family pictures very personal life circumstances and the memories of them. the "little books" are to be understood as an archive, displaying relicts from time-travels through real and imaginary worlds. real existing places can experience a mythical charge in retrospect, only understandable for someone who shares the same emotional feelings towards that place. but we know it for sure: not only the outer world changes, but as well the impact that a place represented.

sibyll kalff collects moments. she makes impressions and sentiences of very specific moments coagulate in this books. therefore the "little books" radiate an atmosphere and show artistically a contiguousness not only to the beat poesia of a william burroughs or jack kerouac with his spontaneous prose, but as well to the situationists living in the fifties of the 20th century. the image-text combinations are settled in a neo-dadaistic tradition, that bramabased painter sovereigns of the 20th century always treated with suspiciousness. in this dadaistic style pasted into bus tickets of the American greyhound line experience an artistic recycling and together with photos as a snap-reading method and short diary-stylish notes, those collaged mementos in the books are outspread, being kaleidoscope like splinters, that are above all one thing: authentic.

text (c) jürgen raap, 2006

I will never stop to feel NY being my hometown, though as well referring to the old NY, I was always drawn to southern countries, desert countries, hot countries, islands, I loved to spend alot of time in Spain, specially the Extremadura, I loved Portugal, morocco, I loved many European countries I travelled, I loved London, I loved Nepal, I always dreamt of going cross-country in usa, but I there is so many more countries I have never been to and would love to travel to - I always dreamt of travelling the whole world of course. basically.

but as well, I loved the old school travelling, the poetic travelling, the real journeys and travels, the real experiences, the smells, the dust under you feet, the colours, the lost places, the off beat areas, my travels or ours were always more then real, it was like an art form, or an expression of it, you could smoke on places, trains and everywhere, you had the old planes and trains, you had the old busses, hitchhiking , this travels were not clean, they were not insured, they were not "all included" - they were walking 1000s of miles, till your shoes fell apart, they were sweat and dirt and insanely beautiful, though of course, you could end up in all places, often kind of accidentally, from sharing a single bed for a night for more then special price in a five star hotel to sleeping for months in the Extremadura under 1000s of stars, in little fucked up dumps or at travel friends places, on beaches, in the woods, in given up houses along the road or little pensions, traveller lodges - ...

but there is many other works of mine thematizing this love for travelling, to name one more "the 1000 opunzien"

10) Do you have any favourite movies or directors? If so, how does cinema influence your artistic endeavours?

my life as a road movie and sometimes the road is easy and sweetcattin' and sometimes it-s more then rough. the journey from alpha to omega....

of course cinema, like all other art forms ever since left a big impact on my life, and is an integral part of it (and not only due working as an actress, film extra since more then 20 years, too) . it-s really too many to name, but I love and got inspired or deeply touched by many.

but always the ones impersonating/directing the I call the "real cinema" - alot of directors from the novelle vague, of course andy worhol films, many of the old school European directors, Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, Godard, Tarantino, Jim Jarmusch, Kaurismaki, Polanski, Benini, many Japanese ones, bertolucci,

beat generation films, (in many cases I love single films, without necessarily knowing their whole filmic oeuvre) I was deeply influenced by many documentary films, ever love films about artists, music in a documentary style, more then international underground and experimental filmmakers, that the e.g. filmmaker Wilhelm Hein showed for years in the 90ies in the hafensalon in Cologne, the "old Cologne" that we loved and were. (which stood for a different world, life and climate, too...)

many independent contemporary filmmakers, like Dennis Schwartz, Charles Hobson, and Stefan Bohnenberger, Michael Bryntrup, Scorsese, of course gazillions of concert/band videos, performance films, surely filmmakers like Bunuel, Fellini, Passolini, Arnaud, films like "performance", "seven years in Tibet", "the one who dances with wolves" - "tampopo" "rashomoon" I loved alot of old cartoon films, well made art films, Chandler films, some real old Hollywood films, film noire, - I could fill pages... but maybe this gives a little outline or frame.

and I am disgusted by big brothers shows, container shows, enforced or embedded real life docu soaps, most of all talk and game shows, desinfortainment TV, people looking for superstars, psychotherapy shows, enforced spychothereapies, shrink TV, most mainstream cinema, etx - but I guess, you can figure that anyways, I am old school and grew up as well with German leftwing "hardcore" political black and white TV and journalism, humanism and old school international diplomacy ... and xcuse my moods pt xoxox but we all did not live with witch hunts, artist persecution, economical murder, electromagnetic weapons, chips implantations, "legalized" death squats and many other things either...

(you -d find the more elaborate version about "my universe and life" in my more then 20 years of "art*n*roll* diaries and sketchbooks, and excuse me for all I forgot to mention here... you did not ask me about dancing and dancers and dance companies and dancers yet... or literature... and of my love for gypsy and nomadic cultures and artists worldwide, street musicians, acrobats, circuses, bus people etx)

and please let me close with this, a friend and band mate that meant the world for me and many friends
"... and never will be good..."

robert mitchell. poet. singer. philosopher.

the eight year old robert mitchell arrived in NY City in 1938 and has lived and worked there ever since.

he died June 27th, 2008 in NY City.

“my story”

I came to a circle of monolithic stone
and dwelt there, in two rooms,
all the rest of my days on earth.

at times I go to explore
but I always return to the space of my own
silence, the balm of my own thought.

angels visit me.
I walk everywhere.

Robert Mitchell, 1995

<http://www.myspace.com/mitchellrobert>

Here are 10 more questions finally for the interview for the book!

1) What is your opinion about technology and its influence on both humanity and art?

what was humanity again? i feel so more then much of that got lost...

i think, as many philosophers and artists and scientists express it since thousands of years, it-s hard for humanoids, humans or people pretending to be humans, to catch up with anything... specially any responsible handling of - often enough insane - technologies (>from atomic bombs down to everything else). basically, they all love to play music and dance around fires, having enough to eat and a good warm dry place to sleep, make love and be with their friends...

i surely love all intellectual issues and matters, but i think, most and many of them can hardly never cope or catch up either... often enough so called technical improvements lead to an insane barbarism and cruelty and therefore are more then difficult/impossible to handle. and furthermore, get totally out of hand easily (see gen-manipulation etx) of course, there is incredible inspiring options and potentials, and often i think, artists at least try to handle them in a humanistic and playful way, and not in any devastating... i mean, they at least try, whereas you can find an incredible number of the most unscrupulous and sick people handling or applying technologies, that could not even spell the word humanity, leave alone knowing at all what that is. and they should have never any authorization for it.

i think of not only all psycho-sociological warfare applied on you in your daily life in the meantime, more then closing in on you, all bionics and biotechnologies, astro-turfing, gen-manipulations in the sickest degree, food poison, chip implantations, and endless other things, that make you loose the feel and context and exactly that playful use of technologies for the sake of something coming close to a humane universe on this planet.

talk about utopias again, i think, all art forms can be the widest field for a human utopia including technical improvements and technologies, in general - apart from being the hardest critical mirror of all it-s abuse and everything going wrong... and often enough, technologies get enforced for the sheer purpose of moneymaking in the most scrupulous way, ala - "hey, we need a new war somewhere to earn some milliards and test our new weapon-technology - where can we trigger one?" killing millions, and not care five seconds. and this is going on ever since and has nothing to do with any humanity. neither with art.

of course, there can be improvements via technologies surely, and really great ones, but as always, it depends on who creates them for what purpose and how it/they are generally handled. and much is just diabolical, more then plain sick or cruel. as those people do not know, how to write and spell ethics or what that means at all either.

basically it-s the old "you can use a hammer as a tool and you can kill with it and all in between." in endless variations through the last 1000s of years. it depends who uses it where and when and how and why and what for.

what i love is of course, when all those means are playfully juggled around with in a responsible style and outcome for good. and i think, artists are very good in those matters, like kids...

but as well, going along with economic circumstances, that enable a good lifestyle and form for everyone, however defined, but possible.

(of course i could write up some 100 page essay on that, too and always did in the last 20 years, but for now: short version, ya?)

2) You desire to enter into America permanently. What makes you believe firmly that America is a utopian state?

i think, there is and was and ever will be millions of Americas existing every day at the same time, and the one i was dying to live in, does not exist no more, en contraire... or just some leftover fragments of moments. another reason for an insane homesickness.... to be homesick for a home that got burned down... but the overall america in my utopian reality and many others is that we all would love to live in an internationally well adjusted and humanitarian and social country as millions of americans, too - and not in a terror-police state ala:

"The United States Department of Justice has been spying on citizens with sophisticated satellite transmitted electronic surveillance and than based on the reactionary, ignorant, whims of its agents moving to label citizens as being mentally ill based on everyday legal activities of normal people. The agents than have been ridiculing citizens over their normal sexual needs and activities among other interests than hitting their brains with intense electromagnetic waves while insisting their pained responses are manifestations of mental illness. The targets of this barbarism are than railroaded into emergency rooms and mental hospitals, or concentration camps, where the psychiatrists work with the criminal US Department of Justice to intentionally misdiagnose these targets of American government styled barbarism with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. These generally sane liberals are than placed on highly toxic psychiatric drugs which cripple and kill them. If they survive this ordeal they are than railroaded into the nation's concentration camps, or mental hospitals, to be drugged, beaten, raped, and often murdered. Fixed, cursory civil court proceedings with no juries and no sworn in testimony before sadistic and ignorant county judges are used to legalize this tyranny."

Dr Harold Mandel, Reporter
H Mandel Enterprises News Service
<http://www.mandelnews.com>

since long it-s feels more then "would you like to immigrate in the third reich in germany, being jewish?" - ... (excuse me... but i hope you know, what i mean) and of course - there would only very special life circumstances make anyone do that. apart from of course, this all is a worldwide problem in various variations of the same theme, that no one wants to live through or handle in the first place, that i know - and therefore, it-s all very difficult to say. of course i would love to live in an America, that i and we all loved to live in, without being at all blind or numbed down, and of course, like millions of us expats, i am insanely homesick ever since, i had to leave and am stranded in germany again, (and of course, our old germany does not exist no longer either) but you might imagine, how much nerves that no one has no more since long, it already took in the past years, to live through all that, that-d be the short version... it-s still a miracle, that many friends and i could live through all that, in the first place i guess...

3) What are some of your favourite places to visit in the world? Any specific examples that influenced your work?

basically, i still would more than love to travel the whole world, but somehow i always preferred hot countries, as i really do not like to put up with too much cold in general.... i'd love to travel to india, africa, see much more of america - i always wanted to go cross country in a beat up car or bus.. - i always love to go "south" ... you find many places i loved to travel or lived temporarily in my artist biography

and of course "bury my heart in the old lower east side, around thompkins square, where i insanely loved to live in 149 allen street, the storefront with friends, e7th, e6th, avenue C, ... and never wanted to leave but permanently live..." or certain places in tribeca...

i loved to live in berlin 20 years ago, rome, some times in london, leeds, i loved all many many moons spent in portugal and spain, specially the extremadura, marocco, the sahara, but i nearly loved all other european countries, places i travelled of course, too...

an incredibly impact left my journey to nepal...

..." with 19 i was the happiest girl to travel cross country in nepal on the back of a honda xo 500 cross mc (they had not that many harleys there), and it was so insanely beautiful... but that-s another story.... i worked in a cantina in a factory, all loved me for my strong coffee, as they only had really lousy before, and when i had enough money, i flew to katmandu, and visited friends, who worked in nepal, and spent nearly 2 months there and of course more than loved it... from katmandu, patan, bodnath, etx via pokhara and then hiking for weeks totally off-trails in the wild mountains, and dschungels, while climbing over landslides, wading through little rivers when there was no roads, always direction anapona while staying in tiny little lodges, eating huge portions of dhal bhaat and watching the water buffalos having their well earned "schnufftage" in their mud pools, always stopping at all the "holy trees" and little temples, smoking our favourite brand of "YAK" cigarettes, and discussing astrophysics in the nights under millions of stars... "stars belong into the night skies" ... "

4) How does German history factor into your personal pieces? German culture too?

allow me to answer with this essay below, and i think, i summed up some in part I as well, and of course, "germany" more than changed over the last years and well, we had a very different kind of culture here, too - this ol german liberal or leftwing, autonomous, intellectual culture i am always referring to, conc. all fields of the arts. now, due to all economical and other decline i see germany having civil wars in some years the latest and of course, right now, there are all kinds of cultural wars and the real war for culture/s at all going on and everything else at the same time. and germany had always different problems to handle or integrate or let be other cultures as far as i could feel it ever since, then other countries, to put it nicely... you can find the endless repetition of the same ward and problems anywhere in the world to various degrees, but the coexistence of many many different cultures can be more happening or easygoing in some other countries, that have either a much more relaxed and open attitude, or a way longer tradition to handle the "phenomenon stranger"... or a different acceptance or interest in "the stranger". what i mean is simple things like "traditional dresses" that so can way more casually wear in an open culture or country when wanted, without getting persecuted. just as an example, you could wear a traditional buddhist dress (climate permitting) in other countries feeling "normal" - whereas - try that here... you need quite some nerves... (this as a metaphor). like you could find 100s of different ways to dress in the old lower east side - and everyone felt as normal as possibly can - but that-s a very city or location related matter.

right now there is for my feel more than incredible things going on in germany or parts of it, that are really more a flashback to the middle ages, then anything else, and everyone who knows the times before, goes mental. at the same time you have of course all new internationality and the www. life, globalism and everything - so it-s all a more than wild clashing right now. (the other 50 pages later, ya?) but you know, we all know and loved and lived and grew up in the area of liberal and leftwing thinking, and have a more

then contraire government since many years here, too... which of course more then effects everything in this country and all socio-cultural-economic politics, to put it nicely.

for the historic aspect:

Death Dances

the pentamerous cyclus, is part of a workgroup of drawings, paintings and sculptures, all sharing the same subject matter, death, and they all originated in the space of time between 1997 (when sibyll kalff started to study fine arts at the "Fachhochschule Köln") and 1990, representing the first self-contained group of works of her artistic production.

as predominant figurative and abstract styled variations of the theme, that abandon any storytelling that could frame the drawings, they are completely focused on the encounter of the human being and death. their imaginary verbalisation can be settled between the outmost intimate embrace "in the midth of life we are surrounded by death"and completely unleashed dances.

apart from anthropomorphic figures, we find continuously emerging imaginary animals, animal skeletons or enigmatic phantazised hybrid creatures (the artist named them "human taurus" beings). the initial point of the death figuration was the "sheer zest of drawing", likewise the very intense studies of nude painting and nude drawing since 1986, when she started to study at the "Sommerakademie Trier" after achieving her high school diploma (German Abitur).

in equal measure of importance she felt her travelling to and around nepal in 1987, "where she spontaneously made lots of drawings", landscapes and figures, but as well "hybrids, mutilations and nightmare visions", when she returned to germany. likewise spontaneously emerged the always new variations of the death and death dance theme, original and continuous in drawings (graphite, wax crayon, shellac or indian ink) and since 1989 as well in numerous larger-then-life acrylic paintings as well as cast and wire sculptures. the artist named "severe illness and deaths in her family, childhood in germany in the consciousness of it-s horrifying past, the fascination for prehistory and early history, bhuddism, taoism, literature, travels, the bone ornaments in the catacombs of Roma, (...) as a background of her being drawn to that subject matter. the creative examination of death was connected to an increased zest for life and meant for her " the pure being, the beauty of the moment, the now, to experience each and every moment as intense as can be" (Sibyll Kalff in a letter to the curator of the graphic collection).

the motive of "the dance" is emphazised in the five drawings from the "death dance" series from 1989, where you find more abstract structures of lines instead of the most of the time stylized man-animal-hybrids. the suggestive power of the wildly moving and into each other devoured strokes of the brush, evoking middle-aged round dances, shows the absolute mastering of the attempt to find completely new forms of expression for the old motive by the use of a very reduced and abstract language.

apparent is the approach to show death in it-s abstraction and commonality. the cycle belongs to a group of works, formulating the death theme, that leaves the path of the consacred depiction and "transcends the old idea of the death imagery only via the title associations" (box page 251). with the gestus and the inspiring character of the powerful and expressive strokes of the brush, that the visual effectiveness of the drawings derive from, the artist was able to realize her personal sentiment in her work as "movement and ecstasy, the dance of the brush" or the "moments danced by the brush".

Eva Schuster, curator of the graphic collection "Man and Death"

from: "Death dances from the late middle ages up to the present" - an exhibition of selected works from the graphic collection "Man and Death", Heinrich-Heine-Universität, Düsseldorf, 2001 (German and Japanese version of the catalogue)

5) What is the spiritual nexus and healing powers that music, particularly the blues, provides to people?

i would say, it makes you forget everything and transforms. alternates and creates any given so called reality you are in or into something else, apart from being an exact mirror of the state of consciousness or feeling you are in this very second or moment, not even to define it as the language music always was and is and will be and a means of communication and information and the transfer of it. apart from all cultural contexts of all kinds, where it is worldwide performed. not to mention, the simple and more then spiritual happiness of dancing to it and it-s celebrations, to get "lost in music" and of course, the spiritual consciousness and the access to it. and it-s absolutely quantum physics again. as it all deals with waves, nanowaves and molecular-biology (talk about endormorphine etx) and particle-physics all the time (i wrote books about that...) not only the transfer or sharing of moods, vibes, sounds and emotions.

of course alot is connected to the "why do wolves howl?" (and i love wolves!) they howl all together to manifest and experience their togetherness and tune into/manifesting in their being the whole pack - more then the sum of their single beings and achieving a state of experiencing the exact more or less nano-tuning of mood or getting there. it-s like with the phantastic book by w.s. borroughs and brian gysin "the third mind" and their theories about it.

in many ways it-s more then the "you can only really laugh and be happy, when you can really cry." - all else is a modified and a for me wrongly cultivated or enforced way of something, that i would not even call feelings. (my art n roll essays n diaries of the last 20 years and it-s kilos, of course all deal with all this issues and topics, that you ask for, in a way more 1000s of pages style and they are nearly 90% in english, as i since many many years feel home in the english language and not in the german. that-s personal, and of course there is phantastic literature in german and i read 1000s of german books with pleasure, too. but it might of course more then be related to my generation and how i/we grew up, too. and having been that close to the german history, that we hated, that more then traumatized us, too and wanted to escape from as far as can, mentally or physically.

of course music is like a country or millions of different ones. and you love to travel there (or not).

alot of course has to do was alternating states of physicality and bio-physical consciousness and -perceptions, various form of hypnosis or de-hypnosis, and again quantum physics... and energy-manifestations or -transfers. not in any spiritual supermarket esoterix-style, that i cannot stand, but in a bio-physical universe or pluriverse. in a way, it can be like wind, storms, massages or kill. specially in those days, lately.

but of course, it-s as nano biotic as organic health food is nothing more or less but applied bio-physical energy theories and the knowledge about it. chlorophyll cell therapies to restore damaged body cells with all necessary vitamins and minerals are as scientific as music. that-s why can live on music, or die for or without it (or due to it).

and of course music is always the incarnation of the very special energies of places, mentally, physical or spiritual, apart from any epochs or cultural contexts, and the music is experienced and lived.

that-s why you can get so insanely homesick not only for smells, touch, sceneries, food, but as well for all sounds capes, that make you feel home or happy and or know where you are (from) and "who" you (temporarily) were/are. (no, i do not write 10 paragraphs on all for me wrong theories about the "i/ego" that i detest... but of course, that-s practical applied molecular-particle n quantum science as well.)

the whole musical memory is another complex in the personal or cultural bio physiography of anthological memory.

"it-s all waves" ...

for sure, specially the blues is related to endure and suffer incredible hardships and pains but to survive and transform them by singing and playing (ok, leaving e.g. all secret drum-codices out here and everything else, which functions like the old secret ink. you make the best secret ink out of simple lemon

juice, write with it, and then you can only read it, when you hold the "empty" sheet of paper against a burning candle flame. but of course, a lot of music works in that way, too)

but at the same time, the blues can be as well the expression of ultimate happiness, of still (at all) being alive, to sing and play it.

6) How does the gallery system function in Germany compared to that within America?

did i not already answer that in pt 1? i think, many structures are more then similar, and it's more a question, whether you refer for example to small independent galleries, or museums - their structures are worldwide similar, but i guess, the German system is altogether maybe still a little less commercial and ever was... and i think - en contraire to years ago, with all international networking in an even more complex, more connected and faster communication style, the differences will even vanish more slowly but steady as well.

7) With the artists' books, what is your method to create those from scratch?

i just assemble my pencils, ink, glue and a collection of other material/s, get (a) sketchbook/s and start to work, in the best case, listening to music i love and spending endless hours undisturbed just filling them... (which can of course totally include, being in the middle of any given total chaos going on, as long as you feel good... or sharing workspaces... i worked on my books in so many different places, but that's another reason, i really really love that size and format, AS you can always take a bunch along or have any and work, wherever you are.) and i work on them while thinking, daydreaming, reflecting and drifting in a different state of unilingual being. has been ages, and i more then miss it... sometimes i work for some hour on one artist book, but of course, in the best situation you just have endless time at hand and can get totally lost in this book-art world. most of the time i work/ed on many at the same time (when ink has to dry, you can work on all the others or shift them around) of course, it depends where i am and what i find, or what finds me, or what i "recycle" from older works or phases. but of course it's place and context related and another way of the improvised charles mingus "i play the truth of the moment, the reason it is so difficult, as it's changing all the time" - of course, you find different colours, fragments, photos, material for collages, drawings, topics, issues and everything in different places. a lot is theme or topic books and it always depends where i am, (quantum) physically, mentally, feel wise etc i made many in friends places, on ny rooftops, that i turned into my artist studio, in my parent's apartment, in all places i lived during this last year's "10 box journey" - in parks, in various countries and always everywhere i was in the last more then 20 years.

i think, i started being a little kid, always having some sketchbooks, and work material along with me and filling books everywhere.

beautiful text:

Little Books

exercise-books for indian school kids are sibyll kalff's raw material for a project alignment, that ranges between a (travel) diary, sketchbook and artist book. about 50 such objects originated in the last two years, during travels or at home. within the individually artistic work of sibyll kalff, they tie up to earlier editions and hand sewn books. but this "little books" are intended to be sculptural and installative objects. they are not shown in the typical traditional style - either presented to leaf through or being shown in display cabinets, but they are represented dangling with opened pages from the walls. consequently the book objects do not appear as bibliophile information carriers, but as art-objects to invite the visitor of the exhibition to contemplate.

each one of the "little books" contains collages, drawings, paintings, texts, among other quotes as well quotes from her own song texts, photos, letters, notes, sales slips and baggage quittances from flights. the blotters are stored in times between exhibitions convincingly in an old suitcase. some "books" focus on a specific person, for example jimi hendrix and are meant to be homage books, other books are homage

books to countries, others document and reflect with historic photos taken from a photo album with family pictures very personal life circumstances and the memories of them. the "little books" are to be understood as an archive, displaying relicts from time-travels through real and imaginary worlds. real existing places can experience a mythical charge in retrospect, only understandable for someone who shares the same emotional feelings towards that place. but we know it for sure: not only has the outer world changed, but as well the impact that a place represented.

sibyll kalff collects moments. she makes impressions and sentences of very specific moments coagulate in these books. there fore the "little books" radiate an atmosphere and show artistically a contiguousness not only to the beat poesia of a william burroughs or jack kerouac with his spontaneous prose, but as well to the situationists living in the fifties of the 20th century. the image-text combinations are settled in a neo-dadaistic tradition, that bramabased painter sovereigns of the 20th century always treated with suspiciousness. in this dadaistic style pasted into bus tickets of the american greyhound line experience an artistic recycling and together with photos as a snap-reading method and short diary-stylish notes, those collaged momentos in the books are outspread, being kaleidoscope like splinters, that are above all one thing: authentic.

text (c) jürgen raap, 2006

8) What do people in Europe think about Utah, a faraway piece of land?

honestly, i do not know ... (and please save me from asking them all...)
i would just guess, alot would connect it with old western movies....

9) You enjoy paper boats. What do you think of origami?

it-s is a very highly cultivated and complex zen - art form full of beauty. and what i love about it, the simplicity of means.

10) What aspects do you enjoy of cinema?

the very short version would be, as for example all good books, all daydreaming, theatre, concerts and performances in general, or all inspiring encounters, they immediately trans-beam, translocates or transfer you into another reality. and of course this is a very good time out to forget everything else that you have to live or cope or are forced to handle... i really always loved the totally old school cinemas - small ones (like the old film palette in cologne) and their special smell, the old red plush seats, the sound of old projectors and i loved many events including films, shown in that kind of style...