

Hobart, May 19 2015

Dear Xenia,

Nine years have gone by since our encounter in Chile. I hope you haven't forgotten an old friend, 'the restless rat' as you sympathetically referred to me. You will be surprised to hear that the rat has finally found its home. I live in Hobart- a city 10.682km away from your home- in an island called Tasmania. Like Valparaiso, Hobart is a port at the end of the world and this common ground is what brings back the memories of you.

I still remember how we met: it was a cold August night in Valparaiso; you were sitting at the counter of the Cinzano Bar sipping a glass of 'vino tinto casero' and talking to Manuel, the bar attendant; it was 2am and I was at a nearby table humming the notes of Valparaiso mi amor that was playing on the radio. As I approached the bar to settle the bill you turned and invited me for a last drink with just a glance. We drank until the shutters were closed and it was then, with Manuel in the background, that we disclosed our secrets: you said you were a prostitute, I confessed that Salvador Allende was my great-uncle. Neither of us sojourned on details and we conveyed that night with simplicity and honour. So today I will tell you a story, confident that your friendship will appraise it.

On the morning of the 22nd of April I went to work. I was then employed in a small museum and at 9:30am two tradesmen came to install a security door. To my surprise the door resembled prison bars and what a shock that was! The museum suddenly turned into a detention cell and I had to run, run as fast as I could out of the building. Air was no longer reaching my lungs, my heartbeat was pounding louder than I had ever noticed before and my eyes just burst into tears. I was in panic. Highly distressed, I crossed the road in seek of shelter but to my misfortune, that same day an imposing grey navy ship had docked nearby. This couldn't be happening! Why was it happening?! I was instantly projected back to 1973 and was there and now vividly living the fear that seized Valparaiso and Santiago.

Then came Aziz from the café next door. He gave me a camomile tea. 'It's ok Kika. You are safe. I understand'- he said. Like Manuel, Aziz was not judging, nor he was commenting. He was just there, present.

Since that day my life has turned: I have left my job and Aziz's café is now home to my paintings. Hobart has healed my embedded trauma and finally all that now echoes with my native Chile is this island's ancestral history and its beautiful landscape.

With this letter I invite you to resume our conversation and pursue that dialogue that was always meant to begin, continue and persist. Because despite our physical distance, I feel you are closer than ever.

*Sincerely,
Kika*

About the writer:

Kika Moen (aka Francisca Moenne) is interested in curatorial projects that promote international exchange and stimulate thought around our contemporary era. Her exhibitions are reflections of her artwork, engaging in metalinguistic dialogues around social and environmental matters. Abroad, Kika has worked in shows with Fondazione Merz, Museo de la Solidaridad Allende and Centre Artistique Caravanserail and has collaborated with major galleries and art institutions in Italy, Chile and Australia.