

Come together in death, an interview with Lebanon Hanover

Somewhere on the *Information Super Highway* I met with Larissa Iceglass. She is one half of the goth/wave band Lebanon Hanover and currently residing in das Ruhrgebiet with the other half of the duo William Maybelline. I asked Larissa questions about technology, art, the (non)-future of humanity and of course: death.

Who are you? Where are you from? Where are you now? And where are you going?

I am Larissa Iceglass and am making one half of Lebanon Hanover. It was in Newcastle. England, William's birthplace where we first crossed paths but I was living in Berlin at the time. Since then we have been moving backwhere to go next so we will just see where the wind takes us.

What did you do this morning?

Oh...We got up at 3:30 to catch plane back to Germany from Portugal. It was a rather tiring Sunday morning and I hope to catch some sleep today.

If you could pick a place and a time at will. Where would you reside?

That would be Los Angeles. Our flat is full of photos of it as we are hopeless dreamers. But since visiting this Spring we have never stopped talking about it. I don't know what it is but we find that place magical.

What question do you often ask yourself? (no answer to that said question is needed)

Why must all choices I do always be so radical?

There are thousands of books and movies about the end of the world. How will the end of the world, according to you, look like?

I am sadly a bit of a pessimist when it comes to future of humankind and our planet. I never really had an exact image in my head but one thought that I find pretty powerful is that possibly in a couple of decades, once sea level has vanished several countries there will be another war and that war most likely will include nuclear bombs and it will all be an armageddon like ending. But maybe that's just my own hopes as I find a fast and sudden ending more romantic than a silent long one.

What is your relation to art?

Dreaming of becoming a cartoon drawer at the age of four I have kind of been living a life in art since then. I studied fine arts in Berlin but I found music and lyrics the most truthful and touching art form and gave up everything for it..William too has stopped his design studies for music but we are both still doing photos, videos, designs for the band, reading art critiques and architecture books and all of that. Our lives have shaped us to view the world as aesthetes and to truly care for art.

I read in several other interviews that literature plays an important role in your lives. What is your favourite book?

That's a very difficult question as it is so absolute. If I would chose one I would probably change my mind next year. At the moment I am deeply impressed by Hertha Mueller's, 'Land of the Green Plums'. She combines the most delicate symbols with the most darksome thoughts which gave me shivers reading it. Its usually those books that one can read for several times I would consider as a 'favorite' but if I think about one essay I probably read over and over again and still find new inspiration in it it is Oscar Wilde's, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'.

In other interviews I read that you want others to be more critical about the use of technology. Could you elaborate on that? Who are these people and what do they need to be critical of?

I often worry about the detachment of humankind. It obviously has been foreseen by many authors many years ago but when I look around the cities right now I feel it has never been as present as now. In any western city I am certain to find most people on their smart phones and if they are together they most likely pull out a phone and connect to someone else as well. It doesn't mean I don't cherish those new inventions but it's the way majority uses them that is kind of frightening and dehumanizing. I have never felt connected to a person that was also talking on a phone to a third person located somewhere completely different. I worry mostly about the value of friendship and I would hope to see more people that consequently don't switch to a parallel world whilst being with a real human being and cherish the moment of togetherness in its whole beauty.

You recently posted Sherry Turkle's* famous TED talk about being alone together on your Facebook page. This talk deals with the pressure of never really being alone. We are always connected, through social networks and our smartphone, with other people. What is your relation to new technologies? And how important is it for you to be alone and not rely on these smartphones and social media?

That talk was very inspiring and heartfelt and pointed out many aspects I agree on. At times like these I find it extremely important to lose my digital life for a while and meet real friends or have a solitary walk alone somewhere. It makes me wind down and realize how fast time slips away being occupied with technology. But as musicians, we kind of, have to connect to the Internet every other day to promote

update and communicate with people from other countries. If I could, I would like to lose that part of our duty.

I am personally not against those new technologies as I really think they speed up things in our rather stressful lives and I cherish to be able to write for free to everyone around the world. It just frightens me at the same time. I notice that I spend more time occupied online than I would like to.

New technologies hold new promises. They promise a simpler life, they make life easier. Oscar Wilde foresees in his essay 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' a future where all tedious jobs are done by machines, so man can focus more on self development and art. Do you think these new technologies like smartphones social networks and the Internet make room for these important aspects of life?

Theoretically it is all perfectly true and to a certain degree. We have of course much more time than generations before us.

The most difficult thing about an invention like the Internet is to learn how to use it, so it does not eat up all your artistic powers. Since William and me have had a time where we consequently did not have the Internet and lived alone at the seaside in England for some time. We really noticed on what we missed out on, and also how it could speed up processes. It just needed time for us to realize how to use these technologies, not let them use us, so we could still be creative.

I believe people are far less creative since the arrival of the smart phone, the world has become terribly inactive through their constant availability online. We were terrified a smartphone would do this to us; what happens to society right now, being absent minded staring on a screen and not using the brain at all.

These new inventions in itself are amazingly helpful and could theoretically make room for art they could make you research everything you want to know in a minute and even help self development but many people let these inventions kill their creativity and their ability of self reflection.

Your lyrics are a lot about failing humans. Humans that do not understand each other, humans that can't connect. humans that grow colder. Are there any good people left? And what makes a good person in the 21st century?

In this world I feel mostly very alone with my views and I can't help to sing about all the things humanity fails as it is making me feel cold inside too. It's the way I feel alienated in this world. Many things, I suppose, can not even be actively changed as it is completely out of our hands as normal citizens to even change something. I believe there are many good people, but not a big chance for us to actually do something. We are so powerless these days and this creates all the great sorrow and sad music.

I think good people are sensitive and are aware, think for themselves and follow their hearts and unconditionally cares.

Is there something like the perfect human?

Anyone that still has sensitivity and love in them is perfect. Its the sense patriarchy wants to kill and we just have to keep on loving. Perfection is a strange word, but I think we are all born perfectly pure and just learn to be brutal.

Sadness is rebellion, phrase often recurring in your work, is a very strong idea in a world full of products that trade happiness for money. Are you a rebel? And is happiness wrong per se?

I don't know how one can be a rebel and not being active politicaly, but somehow I also believe the individual can change society. And if that's true at least we are full of revolt inside. But rebelling has become so difficult, I couldn't really name a single real rebel. It is a strange time we are living in but what we all share is the sadness for it all. It is a capitulating hopeless call of rebellion. A whimper.

If you really want to know, I think William and me are fairly happy human right now. We are not at all as suicidal as our music. I guess it is our outlet, our desperation, that we sing about what makes us feel like we can survive in this life.

You sing about death.. alot.In your video for gallowdance you even wear a noose around your neck while dancing. What does death and dying mean for your work?

It is the romanticism of death that will always be by my side. To love and live as intensely as we do. We are ultimately hopeless, and the end of it all is our greatest fear.

But to be honest we live in very dark times. Times where suicide rates are at its highest and we are all just victims of a very confusing and unsafe time. The noose was originally a necklace design I thought would be most suitable representing our confusion and desperation in the 21st century. I wouldn't mind having a crowd all wearing nooses in the future. It's the most brutally honest neck decoration.

With all this doom, gloom, death and decay in this magazine, do you have a positive note to end the interview? Any personal hopes for the future?

I hope those dark times will bring people together. Like dark times have always did in the end. And if its doesn't, at least we are together in death.

by Max Laane