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QUESTIONS FROM NICOLÁS DUMIT ESTÉVEZ RAFUL TO LINDA MARY MONTANO, 2018

1. **NICOLÁS:** Dear Linda, I thank you for agreeing to do this Q&A. I just came across the Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (S.L.A.A.) book at Esalen Institute's free library, and I thought immediately about your 12 steps. Last year I was reading from the AA's *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*. I was not surprised about you being ahead of the times, and so I am eager to ask about art and addiction before anyone else does?

LINDA: first I want to post the 12 STEPS right here, right now.

12 STEPS OF PERFORMANCE ARTISTS ANONYMOUS by LINDA MARY MONTANO

(All steps to be read in a whisper or slurred voice.)

1. We admitted that we are powerless over Performance Art and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that an art greater than ours could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and loves over to the care of the Higher Artist as we understood that artist.
4. We made a searching and fearless inventory of our past performances.
5. We admitted to the Higher Artist, ourselves and another person the exact nature of our past performances.
6. We were ready to have the Higher Artist remove all of the defects of our art/life.
7. We humbly asked the Higher Artist to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of audiences we had offended and critics we had outraged and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made amends and apologies except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we had foolish performance ideas/concepts, we promptly admitted it and didn't do that performance.
11. We sought through silence to improve our contact with the Higher Artist as we understood this Artist and asked to know this Artist's will. We also asked for the opportunity to do their Concept, not ours.
12. We tried to tell other performance artists about these principles and practiced them in every aspect of our art/life.

NICOLÁS: Can one get addicted to art the same one can get addicted to sex, love, alcohol, gambling, shopping, and cell phones? The list is endless.

LINDA: When art is not a call from the heart and soul to the hands and mind, it becomes a commodity and game of one up-woman-ship. And what follows is an addiction. What is an addiction? Let's see what Wikipedia says:

Addiction is a brain disorder characterized by compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequences. Despite the involvement of a number of psychosocial factors, a biological process – one which is induced by repeated exposure to an addictive stimulus – is the core pathology that drives the development and maintenance of an addiction. The two properties that characterize all addictive stimuli are that they are reinforcing (i.e., they increase the likelihood that a person will seek repeated exposure to them) and intrinsically rewarding (i.e., they are perceived as being inherently positive, desirable, and pleasurable). Addiction is a disorder of the brain's reward system which arises through transcriptional and epigenetic mechanisms and occurs over time from chronically high levels of exposure to an addictive stimulus (e.g., eating food, the use of cocaine, engagement in sexual activity, participation in high-thrill cultural activities such as gambling, etc.).

And may I add, exposure to the 'high thrill cultural activity " of making PERFORMANCE ART??? High thrill events produce chemicals like dopamine and tons of other good inner juices because the artist does and does and does these high thrill performances not for ART'S-SAKE but for the pleasure that comes from the dopamine and good-feeling other chemicals. So art becomes not a language via culture *BUT A DRUG.*

2. **NICOLÁS:** What was in your mind and heart at the moment of developing the 12 Steps of Performance Artist Anonymous?

LINDA: Why not? There is alcoholism in most families, mine included and I found this a transforming "way" to address the shame of that. Plus, I always loved the economy of the AA-12 Steps and how related they are to the 10 Commandments and the fact that the meetings are FREE and HIGHER POWER centered PLUS they have a very high success rate. I belong to a prayer group that meets in a 12 STEP meeting room and their rules and regs are 12 STEP based so that might be a reason? Not sure, but I do know that I was becoming a PERFORMANCE ARTAHOLIC and needed some self correction, some art commandments, some bridles on my art-greed and inclination to do more, perform more, publish more, Facebook my successes more, be liked by other artists more, be more and more art-brilliant on a daily/hourly basis.

3. **NICOLÁS:** Can you talk about your use of the term Higher Artist in your steps? I know that AA and S.L.A.A. talk about a Higher Power, whom I understand as God.

LINDA: How totally self centered/conceited/filled with pride: how arrogant we can become as artists, as miniature GODDESS/GODS parading around Performance Art festivals and Documentas and Museums, having been sent pre-paid plane tickets and given hotel suites (not really suites) for a week or more!! How tempting it is to become self-satisfied and arrogantly privileged JUST because Performance Art is a language of the Divine and the/me artists sometimes think they/I am/ are Divine!!!! (We are, but that's a whole other theological chapbook, not meant for here.) So by talking about Higher

Power in my 12 STEPS, I am reminding myself to be careful because Performance Art is SO, SO, SO hot and global and wanted and thirsted after and commodified and taught in Universities and Instagrammed to ad nauseam...that it is easy to get into and under the spell of POWER AND HOW GREAT NOT THOU BUT HOW GREAT I ART!!! (AM)!!!!

4. **NICOLÁS:** When you talk about performance in your 12 steps, does this term refer to life, as in performing life itself or does this refer specifically to performance art?

LINDA: They spill over into each other. Right now staged performance art is the sought after *must have*. When life becomes enough, we will find a way to commodify and conquer "life." We are carnivores and conquerors of all we think, do say, dream, create. We muscle through. Plus we will find ways to make lots of \$\$\$\$\$\$\$ from it. From life, that is.

5. **NICOLÁS:** From my own personal experience I can say that art can get out of hand. Evidence of this manifests in one's health or dis-ease, relationships or breakups, and state of mind and heart. Are your steps a reminder of the imbalance in which art can thrust us?

LINDA: Why not? Why not burn out? And worse, health-wise? We performance artists deal with and "court" danger, self-mutilation, stress, ritual, storytelling, social sculpture, art-life, endurance, androgyny, objectification, consciousness, body politics, exaggeration, fear, chance, the unpredictable, vulnerability, audience interaction, autobiographical disclosure, self-harm, chaos, risk, subversion, shamanism, magic and beauty. Wouldn't that stress out the best of us?

6. **NICOLÁS:** I am trying to close my eyes and see how humbleness and art can come together. There is so much emphasis on competition and might in the arts, at least in the art market, which is certainly a pyramid. Only a handful are meant to make it to the top. Can art and humbleness coexist?

LINDA: Even if we were to fly to a desert hut, a hidden cave, a private hovel, a solitary cellar, a storage container with the door locked we would still COMPETE! Only then it would be with ourselves. How many prayers did I do today? Oh SHIT!! I only meditated 18 hours, I guess I will have to stay up all night and I know that.....(fill in the blank) has probably meditated (made more art) than me, so I better up my game. Human nature. Art nature. And don't get me started on art magazines/grants/ money/exclusion-inclusion and performance art!!

7. **NICOLÁS:** Can you tell me about a performance that you did in the past for the College Art Association and for which you publicly apologized to another person?

LINDA: I'm going to be 77 years old in January 2019 and for the love of God, I have NO IDEA what you are talking about, Nicolás. Plus my website is untranslatable so I couldn't find that reference even if you paid me for doing this interview!!!!!!!!!!!!!! ((Now that we are talking freely and transparently about \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$. LOL).

8. **NICOLÁS:** Sanity. After two decades of working in the arts, the word sanity sounds like a balm. Where do you find sanity? You have been working for more than four decades, so I can only imagine all of the experiences that you must have had, good and not so good ones.

LINDA: Age is a great healer. I have developed a **NO BUTTON** because I just don't have the energy or interest or ability to **DO, DO** and more **DO**. I say **NO** to lots of things and I do what I can, not what I think will bring me a stand up audience response! As a result, a new level of appreciation has set in. That is, I am soooooooo happy I can do the little that I can do that I am appreciating art-life **MORE!** It is now **TANTRA -ART-TIME** for me. That is I **DO** it slow, do it easy, am nurtured by it and **ENJOY!** It is **NOT** about the limelight or the power that comes with recognition or the applause from the world of art. Aging and art are a good combo. Plus once you really look old, people stop vibe-ing competition because they know I am going to die sooner than them so they are more respectful!!!!

9. **NICOLÁS:** Artists as creators. This is a concept that I am struggling with. If everything in the multiverse has been created, what is our role as artists? I keep thinking about the Higher Artist, the one from whom all has emerged or emanated. I have recently come to understand of my role as a mere conduit for this Higher Artist or Power. What are your thoughts about this?

LINDA: Maybe we will open that monastery some day???? Get us a grant, find the building????

10. **NICOLÁS:** I want to return to the concept of art and addiction. Seriously. Sometimes I ponder about this and think about how art can be a cover up for some of the situations we have to face in life: illness, aging, older parents, financial issues, mental health, depression. Art, like work or alcohol, can become an escape to coming face to face with some of the challenges just mentioned. Can you please help me see through this question?

LINDA: Anything that keeps me focused on the **PRESENT MOMENT** and out of the prison of my totally messy/harmfully vile/dangerous/sad/toxic past, is a good thing. A good escape. That's why I love art. It does that. It provides a **HERE-NOW** focus. Just be careful so that the escape doesn't become a prison too. More of us should go and live in India and Japan where **PRESENCE** is honored. Where art and life are **ONE**. We are western trained into pushing and conquering!!!! There, there is not the same kind of **PUSH**. More of a non-muscled melting.

11. **NICOLÁS:** I wonder what happens when we have a healthy relationship with art? How does this art look? How does it feel?

LINDA: It looks like when someone moves to a small town and isn't recognized for the *ARTISTE* that they are!!!!!! It is a hoot!

12. **NICOLÁS:** I thank you so very much for your teachings, your love, your visions. You have been a source of inspiration for me as well as for generations of artists. You have taken so many risks and you continue to reinvent yourself over and over in ways that talk about healing. I was wondering if you can end this Q&A with an art prayer? Much love to you, Nicolás.

LINDA: *"The main function of the shaman is to restore balance in their community. Shamans conduct blessings, rituals of protection, hunting magic, rain making divination. They also cure sicknesses that have spiritual causes. Shamans are also the caretakers of traditional culture, with their knowledge of ancient traditions. Their counsel has been sought throughout ages."* AMEN.

From a source I forgot to note.

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