

**Involve Yourself:  
A Review<sup>1</sup> on the Next GENDERation Performance held at the Bologna  
Conference**

*Rutvica Andrijasevic and Natascha Unkart*

*How will they define/ our generation/ in the counting decades/ who will tell the story/ and  
what will they say (...) our actions will define us/ before a single definition/ can be said<sup>2</sup>*

Ani DiFranco

“How will they define *our* generation?” Maybe that is what it is all about, why we got and get involved in projects to *perform* as a new generation. When the Next Generation Network was founded, it was for the wish to establish a platform for younger feminists. A space that allows different perspectives from women and men on current events, issues, that produce our historical framework.

And *maybe* it is about a daring attempt to “tell the story”, to set our actions before “a single definition” can be placed on “our generation”, without a clear concept of what this generation may be. When this network was given the chance to present itself as a new generation at the Bologna Conference in September this year, a small group of feminists all located in the same town in Holland grabbed the opportunity - - hoping to find another way of communicating ideas and ideals by making use of various media and by stimulating various senses and creativities. Being a group that does not aim to speak with one voice, each of us verbalised some thoughts or visualised some ideas.

And *probably* because of the above question “how will they define our generation” we pulled our spirits together in order to create a performance to present what our issues, concerns, and/or passions are. “We” and “our” is a fragment -of course- of a fragmented generation that is performing as a generation.

And *certainly* it is a bit unfortunate to talk within these categories of which we are never quite sure if they actually bring more confusion than some sort of explanation, but let’s just work within this framework for now and listen to Ani DiFranco one more time and keep thinking these terms anew.

*I think we need new responses /every question is a revolving door/ and she said yeah, my  
life may not be something special/ but it’s never been lived before<sup>3</sup>*

Let us take you back to the day of the performance itself. Setting: Sala dei Notai. Mood: nervous and exciting. Bodies running in and running out (keep in mind: the conference was going on while we were rehearsing). Going over the texts, running the images, seeing the performance for the first time. Until then, our texts and pictures had been fragments of the imaginary whole. And now it was taking shape, the performance was formed. But, was it interesting enough? Will the

---

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks goes to Diana Anders for her involvement

<sup>2</sup> Ani DiFranco, *on every corner*

<sup>3</sup> Ani DiFranco, *brief bus stop*

‘women’ come and see us? How will they react to what we have to say? Those were some of the questions that were running through my head while standing there, in the room still empty, in the room that in short time would have more audience than it could fit.

Then the lights went off and we were on stage. The only source of light in the renaissance hall came from the screen behind us that reflected our images—dark enough to see the images clearly, but not enough for any of us to also read our texts, as we discovered at the moment the room darkened! Thanks to Elena and Fabiana of the Italian organising team, this technical detail was solved without any notice from the public.

Our words and images filled the room. Speaking our passions, getting our concerns through, raising questions. That is what the performance was about, wasn't it? To pay tribute to the women who were sitting in front of us, to recognize their work, to show the transmission of knowledge between and among ‘generations’ of feminists has occurred. To initiate and invite discussions with “young feminists” by showing what we care about and implicitly asking “and what do you care about?”. Yet, it was also about problematising these very premises and categorizations: who produces the knowledge and for whom, what is the framework in which it happens, and how to break the categories open?

The format of the performance was created for the Bologna conference setting. As such, it aimed to disrupt the ‘traditional’ conference format of a speaker/listener and the gap in between. To avoid these gaps, and others in the performance our words had to be powerful and passionate as to open up spaces where ‘others’ can participate and reflect. To involve oneself. That is what mattered in the performance: each of us brought forward the topic she found relevant (for herself, for the others) and inscribed meaning into it.

Each of us had a voice and a vision. Each piece was located where activism and academia, practice and theory come together. How many times have we heard that feminists in the university/academia are not political enough? Or that the ‘next generation’ is consumerism crazy and not politically involved? This performance attempted to disprove this. It captures our political engagement concerning the issues of globalization, war, immigration, sexuality, body, capitalism, technologies and power in the university. And it does this in such a way that the above mentioned binaries do not hold any longer.

Did they ever hold, anyway?