

chance to meet with her in Paris in April 2021 to ask about this fascinating yet enigmatic performance. It was an opportunity to understand better how, though her insistence on the collective experience, politics and aesthetics are closely intertwined in her art. "The Musical Train" consists of three performances. The one Ferrer concentrated on in this interview is "the Musical Thread".

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Lucia Sendagorta: In June 1978, you participated to a collective event called *Il treno di John Cage*. How did you conceive your contribution to the event?

Esther Ferrer: I elaborated these pieces specifically for Cage's train, and everything was organized according to it

this score, but what for? So people could say: "Oh, look at this score by Esther Ferrer!"... In the end, they checked in Cage's archives, and they contacted me directly to tell me that they hadn't found anything... That's all... Anyhow, I am not very fetishistic about keeping everything... When it's done, it's done! I have thrown away a lot, I have lost a lot... and sometimes, I think it's good!

LS: What do you mean?

EF: In the end, I give very little importance to the fact of doing the performance, what matters is the experience itself and being in contact with very diverse people. And it was great: we stopped at the stations, we got off, we drank, we sang to each other... This was a festive, artistic environment, and there were many artists who did things during the journey and even at the stops. They were three very intense days to live. It is not a theoretical issue: you are really living it. And for me, it was important in this sense. What it was, mostly, was a unique moment, a perfect experience, a moment of ecstasy, there are some moments like that that I remember with absolute clarity.

LS: In this regard, what do you think of the role of photography in keeping or creating a memory of

creates. The performance is life happening at a certain moment in a certain place, and we are all together and we are living it together. For better or worse, that's how it is.

LS: But don't you care about documentation at all?

Documentation doesn't matter much to me. I have done so many performances of which there are no trace! I'm ok with documents being made, and that performances are discussed a lot in newspapers, in

the performance, it was rather like assisting, if you will. It was a participation in the sense of collaborating with me to make my life easier because there were some cars that were full of people, and it was difficult to move around. For example, when I wanted to fix the thread by the window because there was a hook, a man sitting there took the thread and secured it. Sometimes, they would ask about what I was doing. The participation was like this, it was very friendly. Nobody came to intentionally disrupt the event. It was about this kind of freedom of movement, the freedom of doing or not doing something... and this sense of responsibility of the people -everybody- that's what it was about! You know, when I was on the floor nobody tried to step on me as it could have happened. Sometimes, I have experienced very annoying and violent situations. But there, people were moving out of the way to make room for me. Nobody tried to cause trouble; or if it happened, I did not notice. If there were people causing trouble, getting drunk -there was drinking in the stations!-, I don't have any memory of it, which means I didn't see it. Then again, it's normal because when I'm in a performance I'm doing what I'm doing and I don't worry about people who are rude, who leave, or who hit each other. I mean, if I have to see it, I notice it, but if I don't, I don't know about it.

LS: Did you have any expectations about what it was going to be like?

EF: No. When I do a performance, I never think about the audience. I know perfectly well what a train is, and that people were going to do things. I already had the idea, I knew what it was going to be... but it was very different from what I could have anticipated. I don't think the people who were there knew much about performance. Probably nothing. They were probably thinking something like: "this girl is doing something, and she really wants to do it, so I'm going to help her"... It was this kind of participation. After the fact, as it happens many times, you can wonder if some of them were artists or became artists... Maybe it helped someone in their work, in their reflection on their art, you never know. When you perform an ephemeral action, you never know what is going to happen or how it is going to impact the person who is present at that moment. Including me. For instance, another piece I did on the train was called "The Musical Body", and I remember I was measuring the train with my body, on the floor, and writing the measurements down. It was very strange because when you're lying on the floor, you hear the sounds in a completely different way than when you're standing up. You hear the floor, the wheels... all of this. The train was filled with sounds, and then the audience, who talked, laughed, sang etc. I realized this when I was doing it and not before. This happens in a lot in

