

## Imprisoned sun

Wednesday, March 12, 2015 in Lagos/Portugal. My name is Birdman Hans Langner and I am for 6 weeks artist in residence at LAC - Laboratorio Actividades Criativas. Their working space is a closed prison. For a long time I wanted to have the experience of being locked up in a cell in jail, because freedom has been the main theme of my work for many years.

I decide that I will go to jail for 48 hours. What is a good time? How will I know when the 48 hours are over?

Sunset. I decide to go at sunset. It's 12 o'clock, that means that I have got about 6 hours left. What do I need? I like to take the minimum. Water and bread, paper and pen, bedsheets and a heater if I am too cold. Furthermore an empty bottle, plastic bags and toilet paper to relieve oneself. I am going to the supermarket to buy water and paper. At the bakery I get bread. All other things I have got at home. I pack everything so that I am ready to leave in time to meet Jorge who is going to lock me in.

Every step made in freedom feels so precious. I can walk wherever I want to. I decide to go to the ocean and just sit there for a long time.

I am a free man. Still. A free man with a free will

For the first time in my life I experience what a great gift that is. I have been living like that since I am an adult. And it has always been normal for me. It is not normal at all. So many humans and animals haven't got the free will to do and go where they want. I am not even in jail yet, having already experienced freedom, that I always had. I realize that freedom is the most important thing to have.

What else is important? Relatives and friends. What else is important? Health. What else is important? My work - to paint. My work is so important for me that I am painting my last hours of freedom. Enjoying every brushstroke, until my alarm clock tells me to leave. I take my things and I am leaving towards jail. My last steps as a free man. Nothing seems real anymore. It is like walking in a dream. I am moving towards my destiny - jail. Arriving at jail they already expect me, taking photographs of me and my poor belongings. I am making my bed and taking a seat on it. Jorge is locking the bars with chains before he is leaving and locking the door from outside.

I haven't got a key, no watch and no phone.

I am realizing that I am locked in now. Definitely.

Time stands still. It seems like the whole world has stopped. I left my freedom outside. My world has suddenly become very small. 4 square meters to walk and a bed to sit and lay in. In front of the big strong black bars there are two more square meters of unreachable territory with a wooden door to the world outside. The sun is shining through the window as it's going down, reflecting an image of an imprisoned sun. In my world even the sun is imprisoned. Is there anything that is not imprisoned? The window is locked, the door is locked - the air is imprisoned too. I am a prisoner in an imprisoned world. I climb up the bars to see what kind of view I've got. I got an imprisoned view, because the window has bars too. I see an imprisoned tree with hardly any leaves yet, an imprisoned street, imprisoned houses and a imprisoned sky above. I realize that in my world there is nothing other than imprisoned. That's it. This is going to be my world for the next 48 hours.

## NO MORE FREEDOM AT ALL - NO MORE RIGHTS

It's quite cold. I check my belongings incase I have forgotten anything. The heater is working, luckily, because I didn't check it before. Are the water and the bread, the plastic bags and the toilet paper going to be enough? Suddenly everthing is very precious. I am starting to explore my small world. Counting the distances between the bars. I am testing with one leg to see if I am skinny enough to squeeze through the bars. How naive! But I had to try it at least. I'm checking the bars to see if they are alright. May be another prisoner has tried to destroy them before. They are all perfect as if they were put in yesterday.

## NO WAY TO ESCAPE

The floor is covered with spots of paint and I notice three little things that I haven't seen before. A stone about the size of my hand. If something goes wrong in here I could try to smash the window with it and scream for help. The second is a round piece of glass. Very easy to kill myself with it, what I am for sure not going to do. It's about 5 cm wide and it looks like a glass that has fallen out of glasses. I am looking through it and still see an imprisoned world. The third piece is an old bended rawlplug, that has been taken out of the wall.

Outside my cell I here music playing. I have no influence on that, no influence on what is going to happen to me from now on. I can only surrender to this situation. The sun has now gone down. At least the sun is free now, because there is no more imprisoned reflection. It's not completely dark, because the lights from my street shine into my world. The music still keeps playing. I am laying on my bed because I have no idea what other thing to do. Now my latest favourite song is playing. Jorge knows that I like this song. My first treat since I am in here. Thank you Jorge. I am happy. The song brings back memories from the last couple of days, which seem already so so far away. We were playing "Bejing" from the band "Sequin" nonstop. Desi found it on the internet searching for Portuguese music.

Usually I do not think and talk much about the past, but since I am in here it seems all I have got, because my life is empty. It makes me sentimental. I wish I could turn back time....

Eating some bread, drinking water, pee in the bottle and go early to sleep.

## Thursday morning

I fell asleep very fast and I slept deep and good. I can remember my dream: I am living in my cell in jail. My little white dog is with me to give me company that I am not alone. Two friends are trying to help me. One puts slices of cheese on my bread and the other one is making hot tea for me, that I am not too cold. I thank them both and I am very happy that I have got friends trying to help me. But I refuse their help with the words:

## Water and bread is enough

I am still laying in bed looking at the beautiful artwork on the ceiling. It has been painted with the flames of candles and shows a person looking out of the window with no bars infront. For a moment I think this could be the window to escape from the cell, until I realize that the painting is locked in as well. But still no bars. My mind can escape through this painted window. I realize theat only my body is looked up, my mind is still free to go....

I do admire that person in the painting who's mind is not only free to go, the body is too. I have got instead three layers of bars in front of my view. The big black ones that are on one side of the room from the floor to the ceiling. The wooden ones of the window and the metal ones outside the window. Definitely no way to escape ever from this cell. The sun is shining today, but the sky is not blue. It looks hazy as much as I can see, because the window is quite dirty. I miss going to the beach reading my favorite book about Ramana Maharshi. That's what I usually do in the morning to start my day with. Jorge just has arrived, because my favourite song is playing outside again. Thank you Jorge. I am again so happy for this treat, because there is not much happening in my world. I am dancing to the music, trying to fly for a while. Trying to be free like a bird. After the song is finished I use the bars for a workout, climbing up on them, letting myself hanging back and pulling myself against them.

Breakfast: water and bread. Afterwards filling a bottle and using a plastic bag. There is not much else to do, so I go back to bed falling asleep again. Awake again. I have lost time completely, because I don't know how long I slept just now. A couple of minutes or a couple of hours? Drinking water, eating bread and continue to fill the bottle. This becomes like a routine. And that is basically all I do all day long, except writing now and then and laying in bed gazing at the ceiling or starring out of the window, dreaming to be free again. Falling asleep now and then. Wake up. Too lazy to get up. Falling asleep again and so on and so on...

Usually I am a very active man. Something has changed within these last hours. It seems that the body has realized it has been looked up and that there is nothing to do. It feels like my body has given up and is closing down. I have become like a snail, pulling itself back into the house, not wanting to do anything else then being left alone.

It seems anyway that the whole world has forgotten about me.

Life continues outside as usual. Artists come and make some music and leave after a while. Seagulls fly by my window with their typical scream and I hear some noise from outside of construction work. Cars are also passing by now and then.

I feel more and more tired, My body has been locked up. The body has given up and finally doesn't do anything anymore. The day goes by...

Suddenly there is a change. The sun is entering my world. There is a very small triangle reflecting on the right side of the cell. Is it already that late? I am very surprised. I would have thought it would be much earlier. It feels like something from the outside world is entering my world and is curious about me. I feel connected. The reflection becomes like a movie sliding down my wall towards me on my bed. It is moving very slow and on the other hand also very fast. I close my eyes for a couple minutes - it has come much closer to reach me, to touch me. Someone likes to touch me. It feels like I haven't been touched for a long time. My heart is beating faster. I close my eyes because I want to feel the touch. The sun is reaching my face. I can feel a very gentle warm touch, and as the sun is reaching my eyes everything is changing colours. My room is getting bright and yellow. The sun is moving fast across, the brightness disappears and my face is untouched again. The imprisoned sun is rising at the wall again like it did 24 hours ago. Within a very short time it has reached the position from yesterday when I got locked in.

24 hours have passed. Wow - this was very fast!

I have finished by now one whole loaf of bread and two bottles of water. It seems that I made the right calculation. I also filled two empty bottles. Nothing is happening. Just bars around myself, black bars and white walls. I feel limited. I am limited. What else to do? I didn't bring any materials to work with. But I have got an idea. I could draw on the three little objects that I have found in my world. That's what I am going to do before it's too dark. This gives me some energy and brings me back to life again. I have got a reason to get up. I am excited. After a few minutes I am already finished. The result is that I have got three little friends now.

No more alone.

I realize when I have got almost nothing, that little things can mean a lot. As a band starts to play outside I use the opportunity having another workout at the bars with music. I move to the rhythm. The workout turns into dancing, but after a while I loose interest because it's not the music I usually dance to.

Freedom. What is freedom?

**FREEDOM IS THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT THAT EVERY CREATURE ON THIS PLANET DESERVES.**

There are millions and millions and more millions of creatures who never experience freedom in their entire life. Not even for one minute. I can only ask why? Why do we do this to others? Why can't we see that we are all brothers and sisters? And not only all humans are our brothers and sisters, all animals and plants are too.

It is getting too dark now. I can't continue writing. I will go to bed. Before that I follow my daily routine. Drinking water, eating bread, filling bottles. Within minutes I fall asleep...

Friday morning

At night I wake up, because some people come making loud music. I feel disturbed. I am tired and I want to sleep. They keep me awake for a long time. As a prisoner you have got no rights. Anything that is happening to me now, I have to accept. Finally the leave. I fall asleep again. I dream that I am in a winter forest with a lot of snow and it's freezing cold and very unpleasant. The trees are big strong black bars. I am alone and don't know where to go. I am walking anyway until I come to a frozen river. Time stands still.

Suddenly a huge crocodile jumps out of the river breaking the ice. It is trying to kill me. I am running as fast as I can through the black forest, trying to climb up the bars, but I keep sliding down. The crocodile is very fast and close behind me. I keep running. Just before it is catching me, I manage to climb somehow one of the bars. The crocodile is very angry about that and tries to climb the bar too. But it is sliding down. After a while it is giving up and leaves. The bars are very cold. I can't hold on to them any longer and slowly sliding down as well, starting to run again. The crocodile is following me. On the other side of the river there is a truck driving. I scream for help. Help! Help! The truck stops. I run across the frozen river, get into the truck and drive away...

It's another beautiful sunny day with imprisoned clouds. Daily routine again and some workout at the bars.

Freedom. What is freedom?

Freedom is the right to go where I want, to do what I want, to say what I want and to think what I want, without hurting anyone in any possible way. Freedom on earth only works if there is freedom for everyone. Why do we need wars? Why do we abuse, torture, rape, prison and kill others? Because they are different, think different, come from different countries or have different religions. Who gives us the right to do this? Why do we put others in prison, even if they haven't done anything else than being different. Aren't we all unique? Aren't we all different?

#### HAVE WE LOST EMPATHY COMPLETELY?

Why don't we think about how others feel? Why don't we put ourselves in the position of others and try to think how they feel? We prison birds because they look prettily. How many birds will never ever fly for one day in their entire life, because they are born in prison? Who gives us the right to do this?

I can hear my favourite song again. Thank you Jorge. I am dancing to the song being so happy that I am going to be free this evening at sunset. I am already very thankful for these 48 hours of prison, even if they haven't finished yet. Something fundamental changed in my life. I realize how fortunate I am to live a free life, and I am so thankful for that, realizing how precious freedom is. And that it is not normal at all on this planet to live a free life. After being imprisoned myself I can empathise with all imprisoned creatures. And I can tell you it is not pleasant at all.

#### IT HURTS. IT REALLY HURTS....

How many animals never see and feel the sun, the wind, the rain, the grass neither the soil. Never see and feel nature. They live all their lives in prison. How can we do this to them? Who gives us the right to do this?

What can I do? You know, we always say: "But what can I do to change the world?" And we think that we are too small to change anything. If I am looking at the history of this planet there were many people as small as we are, but they have changed a lot. From now on I am going to do things for freedom for all creatures on earth. Because that's what we are all born for, to enjoy and explore freedom.

Tired again. Going back to sleep. Get up again. Routine again. Have no clue what time it is. Looking forward to the first sunbeam appearing as a small triangle. Because that means that I am going to be free in about an hour. Getting a little excited. Bread is almost finished, just one slice left. Water is also almost finished too, just half a bottle left. All other bottles filled. Plastic bags full as well, toilet paper finished. I decide to lay down looking towards the window until the sign for freedom is showing up. I don't have to wait very long, may be half an hour. And here we go - the sign appears. It is exciting how the patterns are changing on the wall. I can feel the gentle touch again moving across my face. The imprisoned sun is rising on the wall again. It has reached the final position, like it had when I entered 48 hours ago. I hear my favourite song again. The key is entering the keyhole. Jorge enters with the words:

You are free to go...

I still sit for a while, feeling very quiet and relaxed. I get up after a while, open the chains, step through the bars and through the opened door. There are a couple people clapping and Nuno plays the drums to welcome me. It feels like my old friends have come to pick

me up at prison. Jorge takes fotos of the situation in my cell. I hug the guys and leave. I just want to be alone at the ocean for a while. Walking there feels like being new born. I was just 48 hours away, but everything has changed. It's like a wonder that I can walk where ever I want to. No more limitations. The wind on my skin feels like a gentle touch from a mother. Everything I see is like a gift for me. Every meter the situation changes - so much information...

Just 48 hours and I see the world with different eyes. Arriving at the beach I watch the seagulls flying above my head. Freedom. They are free and I am free too. I sit down. Feeling the sand on my hands and on my feet. It's like sitting on velvet. It feels like the waves are flowing through my body. The sound of the ocean is crawling gently into my ears. Everything is so much more intense.

One more time in my life I have made the same experience as before. I only know how precious something is until I have lost it. I have lost my brother, my oldest friend from childhood, my dog who appeared two nights ago in my dream and I lost my health. And this time I lost my freedom and I have got it back. And therefore I am very thankful.

I AM A FREE MAN - LOVING MY FREE LIFE

These 48 hours have been one of my strongest experiences in my entire life. I am also very thankful to the crew of LAC, who are so generous making this project possible.