

Take only what is given to you

If you are ever looking for inspiration, ask the universe. Call it “Karma”, “God”, “Serendipity” or “Hazard”, you will probably receive what you need but maybe not what you have expected.

Fresh rock but warm sun, the nature is already generous enough. She is generous in her diversity; in all the possibilities she offers.

Sometimes, you need come back to the simplicity. How would a 5-year-old child express his/her generosity toward others? Typically, they would create something with their tools and they will offer it. It would not matter if the results were esthetical or not, the important thing would be the intention.

Inspired by the various discussions we had in every stage of the process, I created 6 jewelers. They represent related notions of the concept of “generosity”: “Fertility”, “Diversity and Tolerance”, “Legacy”, “Protect and Respect”, “Freedom” and “Vulnerability”.

These are key words that kept coming to my mind when I was wondering in Labiomista and also topics of many of our discussions. They are human values you can actually find directly in nature.

These are present I want to give to people around me. Concepts that, as for me, help us understand the notion of generosity.

Credits:

- Realization of “Vulnerability” and “Freedom”: Elien
- Photo and artistic direction: Jade
- Modelling: Mohamed, Tuchila, Waso, Jade, Caro, Nathalie
- Inspiration: Group 2 and other participants

Fertility:

In order to make my jewelers, I initially thought of picking flowers and make flower necklace. But while looking for materials in the park, I remembered that nature was already generous enough and that I had no right to put an end to the (short) "*life*" of these beautiful plants. After all, I was the foreigner there. So I decided I will take only what was given to me, because that was already more than enough. Nature is fertile and this is what makes it so generous: without asking for anything, we receive from nature. You look for a orange? Maybe you'll get an apple. This is what generosity is about.

Nature offers us everything: light to warm us, water to drink, plants and creatures to feed us.

Nature has created humanity and it has also, and above all, offered us otherness: the benefit of having companions by our side in times of joy as well as pain. More importantly, it is this otherness that stimulates humanity's thinking: "fertility comes from the outside" (Koen Vanmechelen). I can only evolve my thinking by confronting it with that of the other.

Vulnerability

The '*vulnerability*' jewel is made of fragile things. But that makes them unique and precious.

This bracelet represents the vulnerability that exists in generosity being generous in who you are. Offer what makes you special. Your vulnerabilities are what makes you different and what makes you different is exactly what the society is missing. By sharing one's weaknesses, one offers the very essence of one's being, one's deepest authenticity. At Labiomista, I learned that generosity was also about sharing feelings, for example by smiling or by dancing.

On a more material note, this piece of jewelers broke regularly during the fitting of the models. I had to repair it between the different photo sessions. This reminded me that generosity is a very fragile thing that we must constantly take care of. At some point, that generosity breaks, but it's never too late to fix it.

Freedom:

For me, generosity differs from solidarity by freedom, free consent, free choice. During the Covid crisis, our politicians constantly asked us, especially young people, to be "solidary": let's protect the most fragile because one day we may become so too. Protecting was about complying. We didn't really try to identify how people could actually be generous in a spontaneous way.

Solidarity is also a very important value, but perhaps we need to think about how we can give people the opportunity to be generous out of their own free will and not because they can benefit from it one day.

Legacy:

At the end of the first part of the experiment, Koen Vanmechelen linked the work of our group to two works of art: '*Legacy*' and '*New Generation*'.

I think that it is indeed important to be aware of the legacy that we get from the old.

I was born in Charleroi, a mining area like Genk. And even though my parents chose to move away from the "terrils" and unemployment, it is a simple truth that will always be part of my history and that I must never forget: I was born in Charleroi and if it had been 100 years earlier, I would have been sent to the mines. So coal reminds me of where I come from and forces me to be humble about the generosity of my ancestors who fought to get children out of the mines and into school. The beads and golden ribbons therefore represent what I cherish and respect about this heritage. The cross is there to remind me of the values that were instilled in me during my religious upbringing and in particular the three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity.

I also feel grateful to have a very diverse heritage as I have been fortunate enough to incorporate various cultures into my life, which is why I have included different forms of the word legacy in the jewelry.

The necklace, however, is the heaviest of the jewels. Legacy is both precious and heavy to bear: we benefit from what our ancestors created but we are also forced to bear the consequences of their own failures.

"*Legacy*" is therefore an ambivalent work that shows both the generosity and the burden of the past that is bequeathed to my generation.

Diversity and Tolerance

"*Diversity and Tolerance*" is made up of different leaves. They are all different, but they are all leaves. It is the same in humanity: different people coming from different upbringing, backgrounds, languages with their own strength and weakness. In the society, we need everybody.

When we tried to grapple with the definition of generosity, we encountered an obvious difficulty: the concept of generosity is not universal. For some people, smiling is generous. For others, generosity is being present and listening to others. For others, it is about giving what you have. In Group 2, we had 7 different definitions of generosity and we concluded that we did not all need to have the same understanding. Generosity then becomes tolerance in diversity. Diversity is found in our backgrounds, in our differences, in our vulnerabilities but also in our thoughts.

Protect and Respect

"*Protect and Respect*" is the only work that is not named with a name but with an order. It is a key to understand all the other jewels.

While searching for materials in the park to create the works, I was forced to look properly at the ground. I was extremely surprised to find so much rubbish on such fertile land. I don't think that this rubbish comes from the current visitors of the park, but rather from ancient times or from other places, carried by the wind.

I tried to undertake a "clean walk": a walk where you pick up all the rubbish you see. I couldn't do it because I had to stop every 30 seconds to pick up human waste.

If we want nature to remain generous to us, then we must protect and respect it.

The same goes for humans. Being generous is, above all, being respectful of the vulnerability, freedom and diversity of others.

Respect is also about giving back what we don't need. At the end of the exhibition, the most of the natural elements used in the jewelries shall return directly to the ground.