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Heidi Salaverría: Doubt

My main focus lies in the intersection of aesthetics, politics, and everyday life. Currently, I am writing a book on the Aesthetics of Doubts.

My agenda could be described as follows:

Denying doubts and denying the value of doubts is disastrous, because unchanging and indubitable identity is a fiction, which can only be established and maintained through structural, indirect, or direct violence. Instead, it seems less violent, more realistic and more fruitful to acknowledge that subjects are living organisms, as much as political systems, economy, science, language, and relations are. These living organisms constantly alter. Trying to fix them into a static position is like cutting off every branch a tree grows. If not shaped in a friendly and very skillful manner – as in the bonsai art – the result will be a crippled plant with very low life expectancy. Also the question would remain: Who should be the bonsai artist cutting our tree?

For too long uncertainty, and for that matter doubting, has had a bad reputation in western thought. Warding off doubts means warding off key experiences and paradigm chances of any sort. Put the other way around: The more we cultivate fertile doubts, the more we allow the emergence of new perspectives on oneself, on others, and the world. We seem to have lost sight on the fact that doubts not only broaden the range of problem solving, but also the range of experiences, enabling thereby deeper fulfillment. And the serious seeking of joy and fulfillment is far from being a luxury theme. Taking seriously the uncertain joy of doubting means, on the contrary, finding the courage of seriously listening to the inkling of one's own orientation and judgments – and those of others, which are the base of any responsible posture, and which represent the core of Kant's political philosophy of enlightenment. "Dare to know! Have the courage to use your own understanding."