



GIFT ME

A DAY OF YOUR LIFE

- BY HELEN E. BERTELS -





INTRODUCTION

It's clear that whether we want to or not, we need to know things about ourselves, about women. For me, this seeking is a stroll through the mystical, ancestral, through nature and the precious planet Earth we have the good fortune to inhabit. It causes me to reflect on the disconnected or connected that we live on the face of our earth. I want to know more about our ancestral heritage, about what we have been losing throughout our existence, about what was scorched in the witch burnings—this feminine knowledge that lies hidden following millennia of patriarchal societies. I want to know how to answer the question: What is a woman? What is her essence? I want to try to capture what it is that characterizes her, that thing we possess which so amazes me but which resists rational definition. All of this is what I wish to work on.

THE IDEA

Out of the aforementioned concerns and a trip to the other side of the world, to the antipodes of Galicia, to New Zealand and Rarotonga in the Cook Islands (a group of islands in the Pacific) comes *Gift me a day of your life*. I want to request this from women of different ages, cultures, geographic and social milieus. I want to travel the world in order to understand it as a whole of which we form a part, what we reflect, what we are made from. With my work I want to us to feel the beauty of what surrounds us and help us to be more conscious of this every day, and thus of ourselves as a part of this whole so that we can stop doing ourselves harm, doing harm to our world. For this reason I believe it is essential to discover this feminine knowledge. I want to research origins, meet women, use this gifted day to undertake a portrait of them that perhaps speaks of love, of where we come from, our heritage, our essence or whatever happens in these meetings.

In order to communicate all of this it is best to create artistic portraits. I am not interested in specializing in one discipline. I seek to acquire extremely varied abilities so as to have an ample range of freedom when it comes time express these discoveries, thereby offering the work to a wider audience.

What I want to tell strikes me as being more important, and choosing *how* to say it according to this need. What I like is creating images either with my body onstage, with a camera, with a brush, ink, pencil or through words.

WHICH WOMEN?

I will ask all kinds of women to participate, of all ages and backgrounds: geographic, cultural or social. They are women who know their own strength, women who remember their ancestors, who feel the earth's pulse. They are women committed to nature and to the work of making this world a more beautiful place; women who know the brightness they can acquire and the treasure they carry within themselves. Those who live inside that which moves eternally. I want to try to capture that place they inhabit, draw that treasure they care for, discover and describe a fragment of their path so that others—we—are able to realize when we come across something similar in our own lives.

I have a list of names and a book full of plans for these trips that have a gift as their goal.

WHERE?

Visits will be made around the entire globe: Galicia, Europe, Africa, Mongolia, Tibet, the Pacific Islands, North America, South America... *What matters to me are the people that live close to the earth* or those who still lived in this way until only recently. Examples of this are the Native Americans, both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, the inhabitants of the Pacific Islands or Mongolian nomads.

Another aspect that will guide me in the choice of places is the concept of *matriarchy* and the societies which correspond with this definition, having either lived in this way until relatively recently or those that currently exemplify it.

SUBJECT

This is an investigation about what might be called the essence of women. It is a search for our origins; perhaps a search for forgotten things, burned with the witches in the days of the Inquisition, or something to do with the oft-repeated, hackneyed and/or lauded “woman’s intuition. Surely it is related to darkness, to the underworld (as Clarissa Pinkola Estés describes it), to creativity, to maternal lineage, to old teachings and stories. Perhaps it is what we have been losing or hiding for millennia from living in a patriarchal society and over the last decades in which we have been turning our backs on nature.

I’m looking for female archetypes, for rituals, miracles, ghosts and other things that are not accepted as true in our hyper-scientific society. I’m looking for witches, healers, warriors, wives, shamans, the courageous, mothers, and homemakers. I’m looking for what we need so that our world can enter into a balance, so that we can stop harming ourselves by tapping into our nature again.

I am looking to convey what these women bring so that our world is moving towards peace and conscious life. I seek to share what is special each woman in a poetic way so that she can resonate in each one of us.

THE PORTRAITS

I want to create artistic portraits using ink, words, pencil, charcoal, camera, my own body, colors or in the way the experience suggests itself, and thus attempt to move towards what I am looking for and wish to convey. The way in which these portraits will be presented to the public will crystallize over time.

The plan is to publish them in exhibitions in a blog and in a multilingual book: Galician, Spanish, German and English. There will be a sample with travel material, and photographic, audiovisual and plastic art work as well as in each showing of the show **AMOR**.

AMOR

On a trip, the show **AMOR** will be in the luggage; a show that will change with each day that it is gifted, enriching itself with the experiences already lived, and therefore a piece in growth and continuous change.

The show will be seen in each one of the visits and, of course, in addition to these in theatrical and non-theatrical spaces, festivals, shows or wherever it can be shown publicly.

For all of these reasons **AMOR** is designed to be represented in any space, from the living room of a house, to an intimate city corner, even—obviously—in a theater.



Photography by
Yoshimura Ramon.

ARTISTIC DESCRIPTION

Creation and interpretation: ..Helen Bertels

Direction assistant:Gena Baamonde

Movement assistant:Nuria Sotelo

Lighting:.....Laura Iturralde

Wardrobe:.....Vaello

Production:Belém Brandido

Collaborating organizations: ..CDG,
Festival ALT,
A Regadeira de Adela



Photography by
Yoshimura Ramon.

SYNOPSIS

What is the essence of women? What makes us ourselves? What do we know about the mystery we carry inside us?

What I want to share in this show are the brushstrokes of a search. A search which has been lost or hidden through centuries of patriarchy but still lies dormant, waiting to help us rediscover and live a full life.

I will try to talk with the bearers of this knowledge within the project, *Gift me a day of your life* that **AMOR** forms a part of and in which I visit women from various geographic, cultural and social origins that I think will shed some light into the darkness that envelops the question. From the experience of that shared day I elaborate a portrait in words and images that will materialize in works of plastic, stage, literary and audiovisual arts.

AMOR is a continuously changing show that will draw from the experience of these days and will transform and grow through the trips made to visit the women.

Gift me a day of your life and **AMOR** started in 2014 with a visit to Marina Alzugaray in Irún. In that same year **AMOR** received the attention and support of ALT.procrea within the ALT Festival of Vigo.

THE ACTUAL DAY ITSELF

The gifted day is the basis which serves as inspiration for all subsequent work. It must be a normal, everyday day in which I accompany the woman willing to share it with me from the moment she awakes to the time she goes to sleep. I will take photos and ask questions. We will talk about love, life, us, the divine and the human. I might ask her to show me a song and ask me a question that she often asks herself, and we can ponder the answer together. I hope we laugh together; we may cry and who knows what else...

According to their wishes women may remain anonymous or appear with their true name in the work.

LENGTH

Gift me a day of your life is a long-term project. I count on working on it over the next 10 or 15 years.

START DATE

Gift me a day of your life began with a trip/visit to Marina Alzugaray in Irún in March of 2014.

Helen E. Bertels

actress | creative | writer | artist

www.helenbertels.com

Helen Bertels is an actress, creator, author and German artist residing in Santiago de Compostela since 1999. For more than 10 years she has devoted herself almost exclusively to the performing arts, working and training with the *Matarile Teatro* company, the *Teatro Galán*, the international festival *En Pé de Pedra* and at the *CECC (Centro d'Estudis Cinematogràfics de Catalunya)*. Logo decide ampliar horizontes e diversificar a súa actividade artística priorizando o que quere expresar, que desde sempre tivo unha estreita relación co mundo da muller.

Later she decides to broaden horizons and diversify her artistic activity, prioritizing what she wishes to express: from early on she has maintained a close relationship with the feminine world. Standing out among her stage works are *Wir Frauen* (show co-produced with La Tía Mardalina), *AMOR* (show accompanied and supported by ALTprocrea—a program pertaining to the ALT Festival of Vigo—where she was the 2014 artist), *poemas para levar* (an action in which she reads from her book *Diario de Nimiedades* to passersby) and *Nimiedades* (13 stage actions working alongside Mónica de Nut and Marta Pérez). Currently she is working on *poemas visuais* (collage series in mixed technique), as author in various projects, in *Agasállame un día da túa vida* [Gift me a day of your life] (a project in which she accompanies women throughout one day and creates an artistic portrait of them), and in *AMOR*, a show which is constantly changing.



Helen E. Bertels

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