

Sustainability is not Enough

Non-Conventional Organisations and Initiatives



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LODGERS



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IN

LODGERS

Sustainability is not Enough

Non-Conventional Organisations and Initiatives

**M HKA, AIR ANTWERPEN
& ONOMATOPEE PROJECTS**

LODGERS

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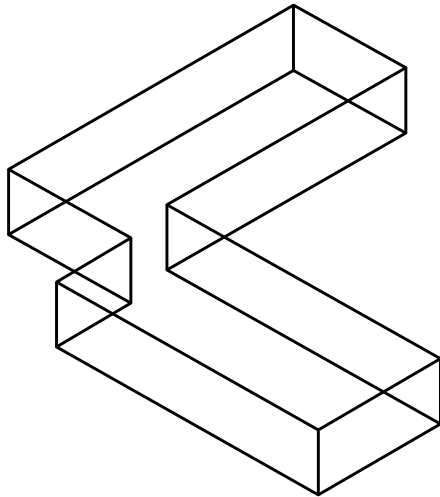
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Accomplices



The LODGERS programme was developed as a collaboration between M HKA and AIR Antwerpen Artists in Residence. From 2015 to 2018, we invited four artistic initiatives each year to spend time in Antwerp as part of a three-month residency. The principle idea was based on a broad observation of the ecology of visual art, and understanding that there were many organisations and initiatives doing important work in supporting artistic practice, but which were somehow beyond clear institutional definition. The invited initiatives stood out because of their experimental way of functioning. Each of them worked without a structural exhibition space, creating other ways of supporting contemporary visual art.

As a basic set-up, AIR Antwerpen offered the living space, and the 6th floor at M HKA was the working space. The sixteen LODGERS we hosted in total have used the space in very diverse and dynamic ways, ranging from being a space for re-enactments, workshops and experiments, as well as for publishing, as a party venue, an exhibition space and a meeting point. It has asked something different from the typical museum visitor, leading to some interesting reactions after visiting the larger, more typical exhibitions in the museum before eventually working their way up to the 6th floor and experiencing the more 'freeform' activities of the LODGERS. The openness of the LODGERS workspace has in turn challenged the different invited initiatives to relate to this audience that is normally less niche than the typical constituencies they may usually associate with.

As a geographical framework, we used Rem Koolhaas' 'Eurocore': the industrial area stretching between the Netherlands, Belgium, the German Rheinland (including Duisburg, Essen, Düsseldorf and Cologne) and Northern France. It is a region also considered historically significant for the post-War avant-garde. This framework allowed us to explore the diversity of practice in such a dense, anarchic region. Public institutions are typically expected to give clear definitions of who they are, together with their remit. Yet many

initiatives, which are often smaller in scale, clearly do not carry this burden of expectation, and work in more open and dynamic ways. The LODGERS programme was set up in recognition of the important work of these initiatives, and to offer a moment for collaboration and reflection.

Among them were publishers, commissioning agencies, research initiatives, record labels, discussion platforms and other organisations experimenting with artistic production. Most, however were characterized by the absence of any form of definition. Apparent Extent, run by Volker Zander since 2006 for example publishes new music, yet sits at the intersection with visual art by publishing records of audio work by visual artists and organising many events and activities. Whereas the activities of bolwerK sit at various times on the intersection of art, gender theory, music, food, broadcasting and hacking. The initiatives distinguished themselves by the use of different forms at the same time, according to the kind of research they did, the needs of the artists with whom they worked, or the changes in the context in which they appeared. Some were hybrid forms that changed shape - sometimes even during the residency. Rather than thinking within boundaries of sectors or definitions, the lodgers reacted to the situation and to feedback from participating artists and visitors. Despite their elusiveness - or rather, because of it - in this book, we took up the challenge to reflect the specificity of each organisation: how they see themselves and how they work.

These sixteen initiatives became temporary lodgers in the museum and in the residency. By providing both time and space, the LODGERS project went further than the typical rhythm of an exhibition situation, generating an extra dimension that allowed local initiatives to invite guests and international initiatives to be on site every day, for three months. The LODGERS project introduced a form of hospitality in the museum. Each lodger literally got a key, access to office, kitchen and workshop, as well as a discount in the museum café. Each lodger also disposed of a flexible studio in the residence, where several people from the initiative could stay. If other studios were free, they could be taken over by lodgers. Artists resided in the residence in periods ranging from one night to three months. Within the museum, the lodgers

created a place for more improvisation and ad-hoc planning, which went straight against the long-term planning of large exhibitions.

The motivation behind this project was curiosity. The curiosity of what could happen within these temporary alliances of museum, lodger and residence. The most obvious answer was to present an exhibition, but in reality, this was what happened the least: the space on the sixth floor at M HKA became headquarters, archive, rehearsal room, classroom, platform for performances, concerts, workshops, games, etc. The LODGERS project created an opening to publicly work with other forms of artistic production. It has been, informally-speaking, a means of researching initiatives that have a strong degree of autonomy, and with imminent connections to artistic practice. The programme initiated much reflection, both for the museum, the residency, and the invited lodger. As each partner has been so very different to all others, it has led each time to new three-way exchanges, where on every occasion each of the three partners has had to consider how exactly to form a collaboration, to which purpose, and what potential value it has for the lodger and the public. It has led to many projects and activities that would not be possible or conceivable for each organisation outside of such a collaboration, and offered insight for visitors into how organisations do their work.

The unusual collaboration between the museum for contemporary art and the artist's residence put more focus on the personal. During the residence, lodgers met other residents, which occasionally resulted in fruitful encounters and long-term collaborations. The LODGERS programme in the museum was open to regular museum visitors. This personal and public aspect created more attention, not only to the presentation and production of artworks, but also to the exchange of ideas and stories; it created inspiration that could be translated directly inside of the space. The visitor became active instead of staying passive. Rather than being a contemplating presence, he or she became an experiencing one, showing empathy, reacting. This way, the residency's personal approach was implemented inside the LODGERS space, and did not only take place among artists.

In various interviews, among others with bolwerK and ARIA, the visitor emerges as someone who experiences the result of an experiment or actively participates in discussions. This form of participation worked well. The exchange with the visitor included other forms of communication as well: people slinking away to the bar, shaking their heads; people who had the feeling of entering a building, or a situation, where they shouldn't be. But even these forms of alienation were instructive. The LODGERS project created a space where one was confronted with unprepared things – and this applied to both artists and visitors. Neither was ever prepared for the other's arrival. Artworks were made 'live' in the museum; visitors walked into the studio space with their hands on their backs, strolling and looking, searching for something hanging on the wall, or lying on the floor.

The LODGERS project was a meeting between different organisations, yet much more still between the different communities that these organisations are associated with (or from which they originate), the artists with whom they work, the people who follow them, and their visitors. Every LODGER was a cross-fertilisation. Lasting encounters arose and new communities emerged from it. In some cases, the LODGERS project was followed by a second chapter, e.g. Drop City in Düsseldorf, or baumusik in Cologne. These initiatives programmed new exhibition chapters with artists they met in Antwerp. Others used their participation in the LODGERS project as a link in a development stretching far into the future. In some cases, one's own initiative too was actively questioned – in the case of Hotel Charleroi, for example. Still others focused on the visibility of the museum and used it to promote their – often ephemeral – work. This happened not only by presenting new and existing works (Le Salon), but also by organising public workshops and lectures (ARIA), or using the LODGERS space as a laboratory (bolwerK), shop (Oushoorn & Milius) or workplace (MER Paper Kunsthalle). In a few cases, the invitation generated the ideal context to conduct research with international participants. Artists' organisation Jubilee, for example, actively conducted research around artists' contracts.

Another effect of this unusual collaboration between museum, residence and lodger was the room it created for a dialectics about the contemporary art institute. The nature of the project induced a reflective framework that contained its own institutional criticism. What could not be done within the structure of one organisation was continued within the structure of the other. Institutional boundaries were continuously challenged, from hacking practices to the introduction of animal residents in the museum, to the running of a shop. One of the most useful conversations with the lodgers, as reflected in this book, is the question of sustainability. It was rather startling to see how they dealt regularly with situations of precarity, often running their initiatives through a mind-set of improvisation, all the while expending much personal energy. Yet, it was also clear that this freedom from policy constraints was embraced in their work. The phrase "Sustainability is not enough" used by Volker Zander in his interview is particularly pertinent, and we felt it was meaningful to use it also for the title of this book.

As a residency programme, AIR Antwerpen questions different forms of borders continuously. It questions geographical frontiers by setting up exchanges with Columbia, Iran, Palestine, China – but also with Liège. Within the collaborations with artists and cultural organisations, AIR Antwerpen questions the boundaries of art forms and disciplines, as well as the concrete partition between the institution and the street. AIR Antwerpen supports visual artists who create new perspectives, by questioning existing boundaries incessantly, by crossing them, over and over again, however difficult that may be, until they no longer exist. The residence's 'essence' was also challenged several times by the LODGERS programme. For example, by a situation of temporary overpopulation, or the reduction of the residency period to an 'ultra-short stay'. Parameters of all participating organisations were interpreted in the freest ways, but always with respect and a good sense of humour.

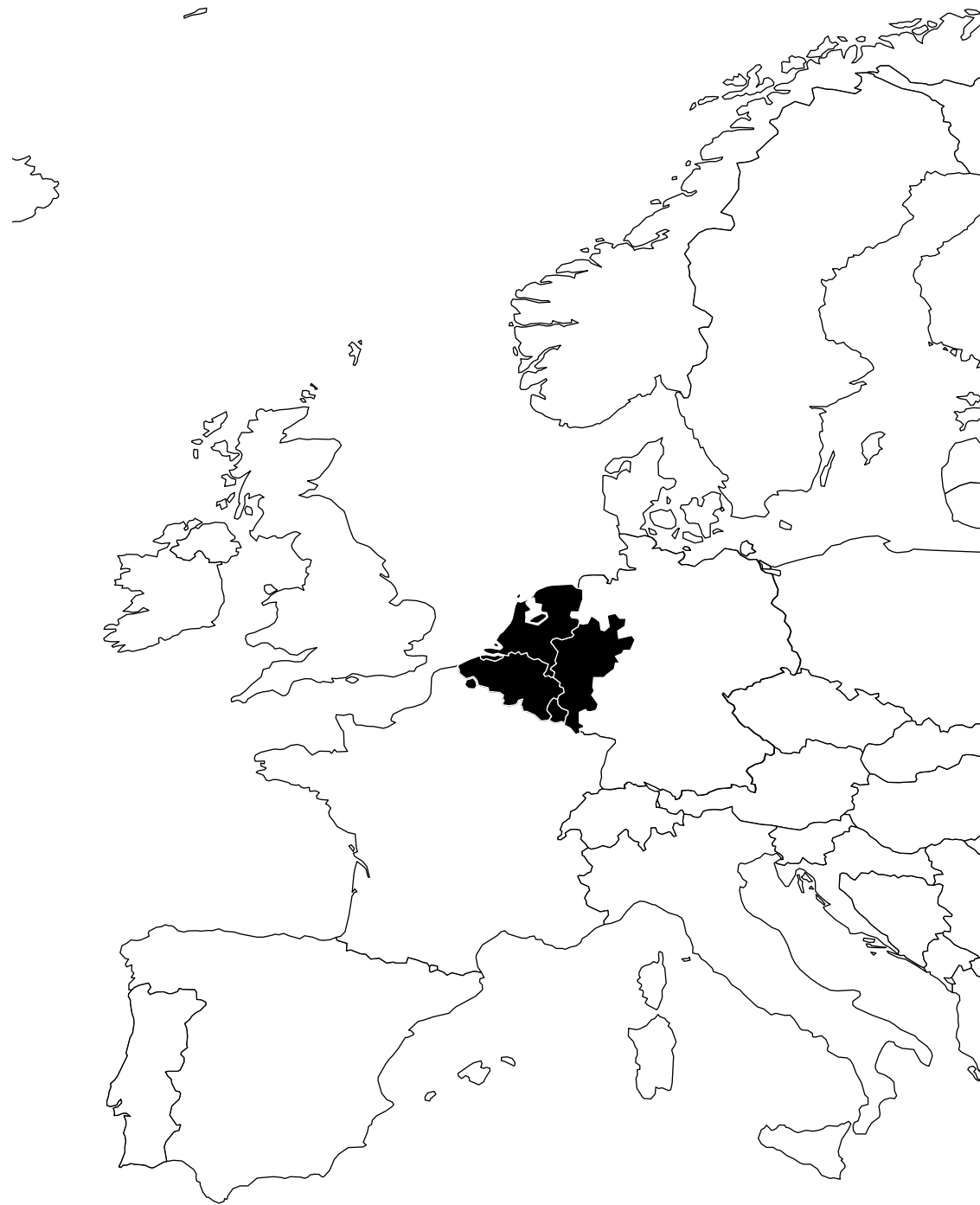
Art is not separated from society - it is part of it. It grows from it and always returns to it. Once the idea existed that the best way to show art was to place it in a neutral, white environment.

To shield it from everyday life on the streets. Artworks were shown as rarefied objects that we stared at incomprehensibly, inhibited by a cordon of regulations and security. The artist was nowhere to be seen, the sounds of the streets were only reproduced. With the first edition of the LODGERS programme, we opened the windows of the sixth floor again, bringing back daylight into a room that had been sealed off for several years. The LODGERS programme made steps towards a museum where artists and organisers not only display, but also live and work.

This book is a way to reflect on the important work of these particular initiatives, as well as considering the reasons they exist, their ways of working with artists and their means of survival. What we hope readers will appreciate from these examples is that there is no fixity or predetermination to the formats and modes created by different organisations, just as the practices of individual artists are similarly unique. We believe that initiatives such as these, along with the many others that can exist within any given region or place, form the underpinnings of our artistic ecology. We wish this book to be a resource for thinking about supporting and broadening the spectrum of organisations that provide artists with valuable spaces of opportunity, exchange and freedom.

Nav Haq
Senior Curator, M HKA

Alan Quireyns
Artistic Director, AIR Antwerpen





Reflecting on a Eurocore Art Policy

Bart De Baere

[...] il y a la règle et il y a l'exception. Il y a la culture qui est de la règle. Il y a l'exception qui est de l'art. Tous disent la règle : cigarette, ordinateur, t-shirt, télévision, tourisme guerre. Personne en dit l'exception. Cela ne se dit pas, cela s'écrit : Flaubert, Dostoïevski ; cela se compose : Gershwin, Mozart ; cela se peint : Cézanne, Vermeer ; cela s'enregistre : Antonioni, Vigo ou cela se vit et c'est alors l'art de vivre : Sbrenica, Mostar, Sarajevo. Il est de la règle de vouloir la mort de l'exception. Il sera donc de la règle de l'Europe de la culture d'organiser la mort de l'art de vivre qui fleurit encore à nos pieds. [...]

[...] there is the rule and there is the exception. There is culture which is the rule. There is the exception which is art. All speak of the rule: cigarette, computer, t-shirt, television, war tourism. Nobody speaks of the exception. It is not spoken, it is written: Flaubert, Dostoevsky; it is composed : Gershwin, Mozart; it is painted: Cezanne, Vermeer; it is recorded: Antonioni, Vigo or it is lived and then it is the art of living: Sbrenica, Mostar, Sarajevo. It is the rule to want the death of the exception. It will therefore be the rule of the Europe of culture to organize the death of the art of living which still flourishes at our feet. [...]

– Jean-Luc Godard, 1993

When reflecting on the cultural field, one quite rapidly drifts towards government cultural policy, certainly in former social-democratic countries such as those of north-western continental Europe. In such countries, state policy generated a broad public presence for culture and the arts, and also structured the perception of them. Government funding shaped both infrastructure and institutions, and the way of mapping out different fields, along with the notions used to define and qualify them. This was determining for the presence of culture up until the early 1990s and it still has considerable impact.

This is draconically clear in Flanders, for two different structural reasons. The first one is the 1973 Belgian law, the 'Cultural Pact Legislation', that was intended to protect the share of minority ideologies or philosophies in culture. Because of that law, aspects of cultural policy in the country can only be implemented

if there is a law pertaining to it. This makes formalisation quasi-absolute. The second reason is that when culture was federalised in the late 1960s, political responsibility for it went to the regions. The local spirit of the times believed in spreading culture across the territory, with Flanders actually being a confederation of towns and communities. Initially all attention went to socio-cultural endeavours. Local libraries were upgraded, getting funding in return for following detailed instructions, even up to the distance between library shelves. All over the country, huge cultural centres were built, combining state of the art theatre facilities with meeting rooms for local organisations. The arts only came in substantially in the late 1980s, when the performing arts won a landslide victory of legal formalisation. Visual art and cultural heritage completed the picture less than twenty years ago.

The basic grid of state cultural policymaking remains upright until today in all of the former social-democracies. Politicians want objectification, which is attained chiefly through policy instruments that coerce the capacities of organisations and individuals into public-oriented perspectives, and establishes norms on the basis of which funding is granted. The original logic behind this is, however, ever more weakened by an ever more fuzzy policymaking, opening up to creative industries and different commercial logics. Art policies are especially affected by this weakening; they remain a separate commonplace terminology in the shifting landscape of public pledges, but are continuously – implicitly or explicitly – geared towards the market.

The LODGERS programme M HKA has been running in a partnership with AIR Antwerpen for the last four years, demonstrates the deficiency of both the grid and of its shifts towards the market. The programme was geared at those organisations and initiatives whom M HKA and AIR Antwerpen feel to be references in the field of the audio-visual arts, even if they are less visible because they do not have presentation spaces of their own. They are organisations that, according to M HKA and AIR Antwerpen, make a vital difference in our landscape. M HKA at that point did not want to enact a policy motto of: ‘large institutions have to engage with smaller organisations’. Rather, it aimed to research the possibilities of relations to initiatives it feels to be its peers, however different in scale they are, and to learn from them.

These organisations often have economic dimensions but their middle name is not economy, it is art.

The larger visual art exhibition spaces that address traditional audiences in the same region identify with those audiences and become accountable for their numbers. They can be nationalised, so to speak, they can be given a position on a government cultural policy map on the base of standardised output. For the organisations the LODGERS programme focussed on, this is much harder. They seem to be the leftovers after government policy sketched its picture, at best becoming precariously visible at the border of smaller policy instruments. They have a hard time being normalised. They are idiosyncratic in a variety of ways, with unique ways of behaving, distribution modes, configurations of actors, participants and audiences. They are transnational in a natural way, linking up with organisations elsewhere through elective affinities.

If we change the perspective and focus on the real region we are existing in, and if we think from the art and from its culture as represented by its organisations, the picture shifts entirely. Then they are all of a sudden not fallout but instead prototypical for the capacity of the region. Our region, as we know, is Eurocore, also coined as *Hollocore* by Rem Koolhaas and OMA, a decentred urban area including the Dutch ‘Randstad’, the Flemish ‘Vlaamse Ruit’ and the German ‘Ruhrgebiet’. It is the logistical hub of Western Europe, containing 20% of its population. Koolhaas identifies it as a *loophole culture* with several legal systems combining to form *the most progressive legislative ecology in the world* and with a *culture of tolerance that balances on the verge of anarchy*, for the better and the worse. It is logically also a region in which the arts tend to find a place. Actually it is also the area in which the post Second World War avant-garde found its first sustainable public grounding, through a network of museums such as Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach or Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, or art centres such as the Antwerp ICC or De Appel in Amsterdam, and many galleries and collectors. From this perspective – the one adopted for the LODGERS project, turning Brussels and Düsseldorf once again into immediate proximity – the organisations invited to participate in LODGERS are more than the

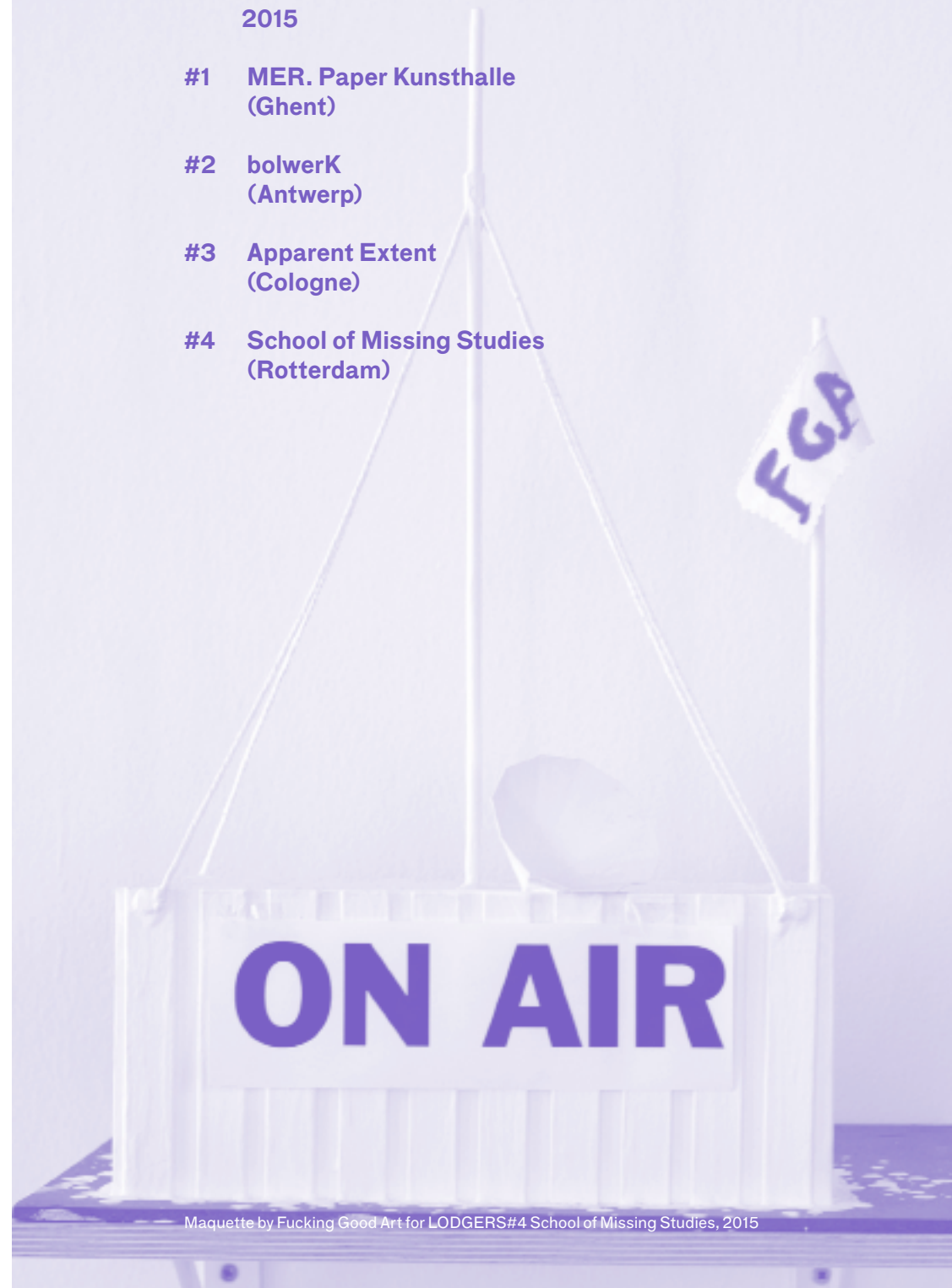
pepper and salt, they are constitutive of the core of the art potential of Eurocore.

They are close to art, not only in their actions, but also in their nature. In his amazing 1993 address to Sarajevo, Jean-Luc Godard opposes culture – which for him is the rule – to the exception – which is art. Art may also be the art of life. *It is proper to the rule*, he states, *to want the death of art*. If ever one of the regions that are part of Eurocore would think beyond the limit of their territory about the potential of their position in Europe and the world, and if they were therefore to focus on Eurocore as part of themselves, they would end up with the question of an art-centred policy as entirely different from a cultural policy, not merely a commonplace word within it. Eurocore deserves an art-centred policy because art is a core part of its constitutive capacity. As a true art-centred policy it would want to be grounded in vital exceptions. It would seem on the verge of being anarchistic for the traditional rank and file. It would replace generic objectivation through fixed choices, as well as comparability through the specifics of a referential index.

An art-centred policy would take into account what Peter Van den Eede said in the seminar *Time and Space to Create (and to be Human)* organised by ARIA in November 2018, comparing craftsmanship and art: *“the one is a finished product, the other an unfinished product, creating a lack, shaping with as few coordinates as possible as much world as possible”*. Art is an unfinished product by nature, and so are organisations close to art. If policy stays in its comfort zone of exercising control, as may be feared, in the process killing its access to the vitality of art, we may be lucky the relevant organisations will continue to generate spaces of heterodoxy and specificity. This will certainly be so in Eurocore, making use of its loophole culture, including when the state systems continue to rely on borders.

2015

- #1 **MER. Paper Kunsthalle (Ghent)**
- #2 **bolwerK (Antwerp)**
- #3 **Apparent Extent (Cologne)**
- #4 **School of Missing Studies (Rotterdam)**





Ania Soliman working in situ, as part of MER. Paper Kunsthalle's participation in LODGERS, 2015

◆ #1 **MER. Paper Kunsthalle** (Ghent)

Interview with Luc Derycke
11 July 2018, Nav Haq

NH Why did you decide to start MER?

LD I was a graphic designer. We had some experience in publishing, but I wanted to stay away from publishing, because let's say it takes money to publish. But artists came to me. I saw that they were not well served by the existing publishing solutions that were there. Of course, by nature or by conviction I'm always centring myself on the artist in any publication. I saw that their complaints were easy to overcome. That's how I started publishing with them, and of course after a while it started to be a burden on my professional situation. So, then I said: "Yeah, I should share it. I must find support, I must start some kind of organisation". I started talking to other people and quite a few were attracted by this mission statement, seeing books as mental space where artists installed their work. And at some point they gathered enough people around me to start this organisation. I could feel more secure. We took it from there and strangely enough it has had a kind of snow-ball effect; in the beginning it was very small but each year more and more things started to happen.

NH And when was this?

LD We started the organisation in 2004, and at the time we published maybe six or eight books. There have been a few important moments. One moment is when I met Frances Horn. She said: “You should be out in the world with what you do”. I said: “Okay, but we cannot afford to be out in the world. We put things in the world, but it’s for people to find”. She said: “But we can go to book fairs and stuff”. And she did it. But that brought labour into the equation – the promotion, the whole publication shabbang, and it’s also costly. So at some point we had to hire somebody to manage all that, which meant more costs, but then also more efficiency and more things coming in. At some point we almost became the stand-in organisation for a classical publisher. So it moved beyond sustainability.

NH You describe that the artists were coming to you because they felt a certain lack from other institutions. It seemed like at that time galleries and museums weren’t really interested in books as a sort of artistic space.

LD Yes. But somewhere in the ‘90s within institutions there came this shift. I remember in the ‘70s and ‘80s when a museum would do a catalogue, they would do a *catalogue*. And they would just ask the artist to cough up whatever they needed to make the catalogue. They would send a photographer to the studio, decide what sections to make and would assign writers or whatever. They would control and publish the discourse on this or any other artist, but somehow in the ‘90s this was not done anymore. What they started doing was give catalogue budgets to artists, and then artists were very eager to do something with it. But what? I saw that artists looked more at artists’ books than other catalogues to find their way. So in the ‘90s you had all kinds of hybrids – book publishing that was artist-driven but that was still institutional – very mixed up – where often

graphic designers were pushed into a kind of curatorial role, but never accredited. And it’s basically from this institutional crisis, artists started to set up their own publications and find the money for them. But then they needed a publisher. And of course, other classical publishers they are looking at, are looking to make money basically, right?

NH Are you talking about Belgium, or elsewhere?

LD Oh, Belgium. But the first time I had this situation, which I learnt a lot from, was for a Gabriel Orozco show at the Philadelphia Museum of Arts. They had a budget for a catalogue, but they didn’t know how to make one well. They made a budget available to Orozco, but he wasn’t sure what to do with it. I remember him calling me and saying: “There is this show in Philadelphia with this budget. Can we make a book?” And I said: “Okay, what would you like to do?” And he said: “Actually I would like to publish my notebooks”, which had basically nothing to do with the show. But I remember my reaction to him. I said: “Yeah, but in this context publishing your notebooks will be probably a fetishistic move. You know, a bit self-indulgent”. I then said: “But then maybe we could publish your notebooks through the lens of this show”, because the show was about photography. Very specifically, he used photos of the pre-Hispanic collection of the museum, mixed it with his own sculptures, and by including the medium of photography he put it all on the same plane. He made these little stand-ups, so they were like photographic sculptures in the space but you couldn’t easily tell the difference between what was his work or pre-Hispanic. There was a blurring. So I said: “That’s a lens, so if you want to elevate your notebooks, you want to bring them into the equation. We can do *that* in the book. You could mix text with imagery. But you will also have to take photographs like you did with the pre-Hispanic stuff”. He said: “Yeah!

Brilliant idea”. So he started to photograph fragments of his notebooks. I went to Mexico to work with him. Its details that he took from his notebooks, its work that he used for the show, and pre-Hispanic stuff that was used for the show, along with his other works. And then we started to weave these sequences of images. And that became the catalogue. It took us a week. Every day we did a few pages, and basically it was like installing a show on paper. I was there at that point more as a kind of curator. He was an artist – he would take all the decisions. I was just there as a sounding board. In the end it was approved by the museum. The curator of the show wrote a text at the end and so it was a project that was institutionalised in a way. It was published by the museum but I co-published it under my name with distribution in Europe. All of a sudden you felt that these old clear lines of institution, artist, graphic designer, publisher, curator, were all blurred. But looking at the book, it seemed like a perfect institutional book. So when I describe this organisation as a ‘paper kunst-halle’, it was based on this experience of operating as a kunsthalle but limited to paper.

NH Could you talk more about the name MER Paper Kunsthalle? There’s book publishing but there’s also now Audio MER. I’d be interested to hear more about how you give a definition to your project.

LD Well in the beginning it was very clear that books can have many faces. There is something like the art book canon. What the art book canon does is by reproducing photographs very often, they try to salvage the absence of reality. So, for example, typically in an art book, when you print a painting you will want it to be as close as possible to the original. While it never can be the original. It presents an absence as a kind of presence. They show art as a very logical thing basically. But when an artist approaches a book, when they install their work in these pages, first they’re discovering all

kind of opportunities. But classical art book publishing shies away from this because it’s costly, it’s unclear, it’s hard to organise, etc. But then of course a lot of problems emerge, because then you have these books that basically everybody is uncomfortable with. Because book lovers don’t see a book and art lovers don’t see an artwork. They see an almost-book. I think this has happened in post-modernism with many things. You get this hybrid, unclear situation. And, of course, like MER and many other organisations, we try to bring them into the world.

NH So, this institutionalisation keeps things in check?

LD Yes. So what has been holding my attention in the last year is how when art emerges and it’s in the public realm but outside of institutional lines, it doesn’t find its place.

NH That’s in a way answering the next question that I had, actually, which is about the relationship of MER to what you might describe as the mainstream. Because sometimes it’s going to be as a collaborator or maybe sometimes it’s a bit more parasitical. I think that your Gabriel Orozco example is maybe a bit like this?

LD I don’t think we ever took any kind of position. We never positioned ourselves as avant-garde or whatever. We were just there, you know, for whoever wanted to use us. I mean, it didn’t start from an egotistical view. It wasn’t: “That’s what we want to do and that’s all programmed”. It was more like: “Yeah, I’m here to help”. And by doing that, you’re being positioned rather than claiming the position. Maybe we should have done that, I don’t know, but this is not what’s happened.

NH But maybe the mainstream at least gives you a bit of creative friction?

LD When I started, museums would have an editorial staff, and it would always be the job of the curator to edit a publication. It was their intellectual right to control the process of cataloguing their shows. And under the pressure of a number of things, including cultural studies, you would shy away from being Eurocentric or authoritarian. But, there was a big shift in the '90s, so basically there wasn't that much friction. Actually, museum curators have also always appreciated my help making books. When you're in an institution of course, you absorb a lot of means and you have to legitimise these means on a political level. But there is a lot in the field you cannot really institutionalise. And basically, these attempts to institutionalise from bottom up rather than from top down are also about sustainability.

NH It takes us to this question of sustainability and so maybe it would be good to hear about how MER sustains itself, financially but also practically?

LD Well, in the beginning it was just amateur stuff. It's not a hobby, but basically we were a graphic design studio. And we had some time to spend and some money to spend. We were welcoming artists to share time and do something. That was the very beginning. But all of a sudden costs started to rise. So, there is an institutional effect, even if you're not an institution and you do not want to be one. People will want to perceive some kind of institution with its own DNA, behaviour, etc. So, it means that basically when you grow you need more means. The idea was to serve in the book trade, and have this art distributed in bookstores. But it's an illusion. I remember Peter Downsborough once telling me that, when he published artist's books in the '60s or early '70s, he would put them in supermarkets for two dollars thinking: "Uh people will be able to pick up good art in the supermarkets". Which is a wonderful idea but unsustainable. You will sell some, but not enough to make it sustainable. But, of course, books are now

considered as art projects and funded on a project basis. So, you don't need to sell them all; that's not the point. But still, the more you do, the more money you lose, basically. We've been trying to ask for subventions. We go to the government and they say: "Oh, you sell stuff. You have an income". So, if you don't have the money for a book or you don't make money with a book then don't publish, basically. And, of course, there is a lot of trade publishers still in existence. So, you're not in a good spot. What we did is organise a few benefits, art sales, which went fine. We were always able to raise enough money to make ends meet. But again, to organise a benefit, well, the problem is there has been a boom in benefits, which has brought this model also under pressure. And it's a heavy thing to do. You ask for a lot from artists and collectors.

NH So, most things are done in-house, including the design, and from the sound of it, distribution too?

LD How do you sustain organisations? You can have a business organisation that sustains itself with income from its business. But we cannot make enough business with what we do to sustain ourselves, that's clear. Other organisations are sustained with public money, because they are important, as they are necessary to sustain culture, but public money is public money. Morally laden funds. So, you really have to prove that you are institutions. To receive an approval from a domain that is not artistic, but moral, has not happened and maybe isn't bound to happen soon, because when people think of books they think of bookshops, they think of business. They don't think about art books. Somehow we're kept in a kind of hybrid zone which of course is extremely interesting because you touch many worlds at the same time. There're things happening that cannot happen in a business or in an institution.

NH There's a lot of dependence on generosity basically?

LD Yes, but we cannot sustain ourselves. Which is clear. Museum Dhont-Dhaenens do these benefits every year but it becomes a kind of format, which is a bit uncomfortable for artists and collectors. We could imagine doing that every year – the American model. It's what probably raises money, but then we would also institutionalise ourselves. But in our context here, I find it very difficult to do.

NH It seems like the precarity becomes part of the essence of what it is.

LD Well, true precarity gives you the moral right to raise money. You could also argue that we're existing and we're important, we need this money, so give it to us. But maybe that's really a mistake that I made.

NH How is your relationship to your locality, which would mean Ghent?

LD There's a local dynamic of institutions, but we're not really involved, because it requires a certain behaviour and attention that I don't find interesting. Maybe it has to do with the nature of what we do – books and vinyl records. There're things that disseminate everywhere. Almost anti-local. You don't make a book for your street or your neighbour.

NH Thinking about some of the books that you published, it does seem that there are artists based here, that interest you. I know that you did a book with Jerry Galle for example when you made the programme for LODGERS. There was also another artist from Ghent.

LD Yes. But in a way, it doesn't matter where an artist comes from, from Timbuktu or Ghent. It's not because you're from Ghent that we will make an extra effort,

but of course it makes things easier. What I also found with the arrival of the digital era was a boom of possibilities. All of a sudden as a graphic designer I could work with the American University Press because we went digital. But then because of the digital, the whole discipline and organisation has been caving in gradually, shifting attention to other places. There was this shared understanding of the Western world that through the interconnectivity there was an explosion of opportunities. In the '90s, I worked a lot around the world. It was that easy. Now it's almost impossible, unless you would go there, spend a lot of time there. It's like you cannot really connect outside, because making books is really underestimated. It's always a communal effort. It's pretty tense and high-level, because there is something out there and you fix it onto pages. This fixing is quite brutal and there's only a fraction you can capture and fix. Everything's related to this, the sequence, the text, but also graphic design.

NH It reminds me of the project that you did with the LODGERS programme – the idea of the 'book machines' and making the production of a book a performative exercise. When I say performative, not like a performance but where with the book that's eventually produced you get a sense of how you got there.

LD Lately in the field of artists' books there's a big discussion about whether one can exhibit books. Many people say *no* because, while you can show them as objects, you don't show a book by showing the object. But in a way, I see an artist's book as only a fixed state of an artistic process. Even an original artist book is one state, so you can always go back or from there into a state where you can present it in a space. Often when artists come here, I ask them the question: *"Okay you're making an artist's book, this is a work of art, right? Imagine a museum wants to purchase this work of art, like they do with paintings or sculptures. What do they purchase? One book?"*

But that's not the artwork, one book. So when you make an artist book you will also have to start taking responsibility for thinking about how this object is positioned in relation to the artwork. That is the artist book."

So maybe the museum must buy 200 books because the book has 200 pages and it must be able to show the whole book with 200 books open on different pages; or the museum buys the pure copyright of this book and has the obligation of putting piles that people can take with them; or you devise some exhibition modus of this artist book, and so on. There're many possibilities to solve this problem. To my surprise and admiration when you put that question to artists they solve it quite easily. And from there, we've been able to make artists' books in a more relevant way. So that's why this MER station became important for making exhibitions because there you can put it to the test.

NH What's next for MER?

LD

I think that if we are honest with ourselves, we must consider our mission statement. Focusing on the book as a mental exhibition space, breaking the art book canon into other modes as well. Keep doing what we do, but not burden ourselves with the publishing part. Focus on distribution. Gagarin became part of SMAK. This approach could also be an option, to be part of a bigger structure and do what you're good at. But it's also very much related to the kind of person I am. You also know Jeroen Wille who just wants to make super vinyl records. That's it. We'll make sure it's well-organised and so on but it's not my passion to be out and about. When you sell a book, you sell basically almost nothing. You only start to sell something when you sell 100 or 1000. Still the mass media can, but that probably will not last.

www.merpaperkunsthalle.org



MER. Paper Kunsthalle, installation view, 2015



Sigtryggur Berg Sigmarsson, installation view, 2015



Audience during audioMER festival, 2015



Aki Onda, performance during audioMER festival, 2015



Aki Onda, *Lost City*, 2007, exhibited during audioMER festival, 2015



Jack Allett, concert during audioMER festival, 2015



◇ #2 **bolwerK (ooooo)** (Antwerp)

Interview with Marthe Van Dessel and Shelbatra Jashari
4 July 2018, Alan Quireyns

AQ Why did you decide to start your project?

SJ I was asked to join the project by Marthe Van Dessel to give a different perspective on the ideas she had about ooooo's residency for LODGERS. Marthe was mostly interested to work together based on previous collaborations where she was a performer for the project *Brulesk* – a platform for art, entertainment and performance, a kind of nomadic cabaret that I was experimenting with in Brussels.

AQ How would you define your organisation?

MVD Usually we don't call ourselves an organisation. We do get organised which is an important dynamic of any kind of collaboration. We are more like a constellation. It's always interchangeable who's in that constellation. As the universe is big, and there are a lot of stars that we don't know yet, or planets, or dark matter. For the LODGERS we were saying we're 'non-exclusive temporal constellation', but lately we use 'transversal organisation' as it is something which is only happening in that time in that place with these people, the surrounding ecology, environment or habitat

(intra-actions). Mostly what we do is create social environments to resolve certain questions we have at that moment. What we do is facilitating, mediating, curating, these kinds of quests. What else defines it? A common 'author'.

Daemons and Shell Scripts was the answer to the invitation by Nav Haq and yourself. You came to ooooo, which is an email address/website, but you know me as that. But it means also all the collaborations, intentional contacts. You are inviting that too. I immediately invited Shelbatra. She has a similar practice. She develops platforms and strategies to meet and work with others. Thematically the praxis also intersects: she works on the representation of the self/body and performs character-based gender constructions. (Like Shelbatra's project Hello Shelly), ooooo constitutes project-based collective identities. Daemons and Shells Scripts allowed us to critically assess our practices and exchange experiences – between the physical and (audio)virtual, in a public performative interface.

AQ What is your relationship to mainstream organisations?

SJ Again – I function more as an individual. "Mainstream" or "settled" or "supported" organisations usually either come to me with a proposition towards a collaboration or I apply as an individual for a project or residency, and within this framework I create a collaborative platform where other artists are invited to plug their knowledge and practice – although lately my practice is shifting towards a service-oriented relationship with other organisations. I can't say I like this – it's just that when projects are bigger and demand more administration the concept of platform doesn't seem to make sense because as an artist you are also providing a service. In this sense, it feels more like delivering artistic services

supported by other artists or service-oriented and skill-providing organisations.

MVD I graduated with a thesis on when underground goes mainstream. What is a mainstream organisation? Do you mean M HKA?

AQ The mainstream here would be more relating to the museum, or the official 'presentation institution'.

MVD The general tactic of ooooo, it's dynamic, whether in a mainstream organisation or a small off-space or collective, is hacking. It is opening that specific machine, institution or administrative entity and looking at how it works, understanding its logics, its system, its organisational capacities, its content, its archives... and then to make a modification for the community or something that is in need of ooooo. It's not that we know, it's that we try to figure it out together.

Mainstream institutions create access and a platform for 'becoming'. They were once also underground, and they were also trying to struggle for their voice, their visions, their practices. They popularise.

In the LODGERS programme they give visibility to more peripheral, marginalised entities. And that visibility can be, in our case, exposure to non-binary, non hetero-normative, queer identities and mainly feed our activist intentions and praxis. We try to emancipate, but not as a singular individual, but as this constellation or collective body. Certainly, in relation to technology. If we can expand our critical horizon, and have time and focus to do so with its visitors, its public, we can develop common strategies for what is dear to us: techno-sovereignty.

If we consider 'mainstream' in technology we know the names of big corporations and all their

walled-garden services, which most people use daily. These tools and services are reducing our vision(s), they are providing a mirror of the 'self' and hence awoken the core and motor of neo-liberalism. With Daemons and Shell Scripts a lot of people didn't really allow the complexity which was generated. Most people work with visual interfaces, click icons all day long... but don't write the spells and scripts of their machines manually. Daemons are background processes and you can activate them, but any visual interface is a distraction or mirage from the core. Hello Shelly was pole dancing, boxing, reading, while a holocube and diverse instruments, wires, cables and devices were blinking 'ready' to activate in the next Shell Script.

And a mainstream institution means also bigger transmission. That's what we did: we put an antenna on that infrastructure, which has a fantastic location. We put one on the roof of AIR Antwerpen, and we put one here on the roof of S14 (Antwerp base of ooooo). We created a third space, which allowed us to transmit, retransmit and use 'our' network infrastructure.

In these institutions, there are certain access 'hours', keys, locks and entry protocols, but there are also ways to circumvent them: like what we did on a virtual level, we circumvented a complete virtual existence of the M HKA. And on the physical level, we were present. It was just meeting people, boxing, reading, pole dancing, test instruments, or just talking with people and being able to reformulate yourself/ourselves in intra-action. And that's the emancipatory effect of creating this public performative interface in what is one of the larger art institutions of Belgium. We literally were still underground in the media cave of S14 while being on the rooftop and in the museum. Is that a relationship?

AQ What is your relationship to your locality?

MVD Hello Shelly says that very well. But maybe the 'I' can be read as 'We'.

SJ I function as a digital nomad – I don't really like this word. It sounds so old and over-used within the art field. Maybe I could term it a seasonal gypsy, or even a migrating bird, an albatross. When my work demands this, I move. But also, when my personal life demands this or my passions that might have nothing to do with a current project (but maybe with a future project), I can migrate, move and work there. Maybe it could be called 'albatross flexibility' or 'featherweight migrancy'.

AQ How do you sustain it financially and logistically?

MVD Ooooo is just a constellation and doesn't have an administrative legal existence. We need a 'host'. In case of LODGERS, AIR Antwerpen and M HKA became that 'managing financial body'. They did the payments, reimbursements to different individuals. All the bookkeeping passed through their finance departments. To sustain ourselves, we for sure need money. We are also always many. Some people who were involved had already a practice supported by subsidies or by private funding.

SJ Usually I fund this myself (based on previous work or projects), or by relying on the goodwill of friends and family if I really can't find another solution (but this doesn't happen often). It's mostly a self-sustaining practice – either doing small jobs on the side, sometimes providing consulting or expertise for bigger projects. Sometimes I've had sponsors for certain projects or project funding.

Some people are struggling with survival on a daily basis, paying the rent or even the train tickets. And mostly we have to split the 'fee for one person'. We've existed for twenty years and for sure we don't want to be precarious and nor institutionalise this precarity.

We made a deal with this sandwich bar opposite the M HKA: we could collect everything they would otherwise throw away. In that way, we could provide food. We went there in an almost daily practice during LODGERS, so it was good to not always have to go and eat, but munch the scraps.

We do underline alternative economies a lot. It's about formalising the ways you're contributing or what you get out of certain projects. It doesn't need to always be money for everyone. There are also some other values we really need in our lives, like visibility, support, solidarity, trust. Others need time. Time is very important. Time and focus. So sustainability is not only money, eating, drinking but also having the peace of mind that each day you don't have to fight for your own ideas. Because that's the decadence of neo-liberalism: that you're trying to struggle with your own existence, being able to express your own creativity. If it's collective, that's already another dimension.

AQ In relation to that, what is ooooo doing next? Is there a continuation?

Now we go more centrifugal. Daemons and Shell Scripts was big, and just too precarious for some people in the constellation. It was on the edge. A lot of social responsibility. At that moment in time we were already only doing one big project a year. And we used to do similar projects – high technical setups and social hybrids – sometimes only for 10 days or 3 days or some hours. So the durational approach of LODGERS became part of the praxis of ooooo. 3 months is a really good period, like a season.

I'm going to San Francisco to join the Futurefarmers. And ooooo is there also. We will join the Futurefarmers for their survey show in the Yerba Buena Center. We continue with our *Crystelling* – our bio-chemical lab for cooking piezo electric crystals and work on the notion of the commons for seeds and frequencies, and their historic intertwinement.

Last year we initiated *PAN PAN PAN*, a durational programme to develop and implement public performative interface for trans-local radio telecommunication. We are still working on the emancipation of our collective body, mainly in the electro-magnetic field. We do all sorts of workshops, build instruments, make radio... to address the urgency to know more on radio telecommunication, any kind of frequency you can imagine. *PAN PAN PAN* is about signalling the space you don't really see – as our eye/brain is reduced to Theta Hertz.

We are also into boating. Techotsukumogami is a 42 ft. project boat to learn more about floating, orientating, navigating and communicating – fluidly. And on the water, radio telecommunication is an immediate necessity, because it is the only way of communicating. Anyway, oceans, seas, rivers, canals... It's a fantastic place to be grounded by the water. Actually, we are building a fleet with different boats to also be more 'collectively' present on the water, rather than on the land and to hack the very patriarchal hierarchies within maritime world. To get access and knowledge and create environments to share and shift perspectives.

Ah and not to forget our constant need to decolonise our technologies. We are working on a anarchaserver.org which is a feminist-autonomous server, initiated in Calafou, an eco-industrial post-capitalist colony in the North of Spain. And participating in various DIY autonomous tech-festivals/gatherings/meetings with outspoken identity politics.

SJ Working on Hello Shelly – what the hell happened to Hello Shelly since 2015 since she disappeared within the Daemons and Shell Scripts cover? Reflecting but mostly falling back on the archive and narratives of this project – that happened in some videos, reflections, photographs and 3D scans. I am also preparing a collaboration with a theatre-dance company in Brussels and writing for myself or others, related to film scripting rather than to the contemporary art field.

AQ You talked about it already briefly but one of the influences you said about the LODGERS programme was the continuation of certain meetings, introductions. Are there any other things that influenced you?

MVD It's all consecutive. During LODGERS we called it the performative public interface for audio virtual presences. It enabled us somehow to understand ooooo's practice more and redefine it. Interfaces, devices, protocols are what constitutes us and we don't have to fear generating complexities. I guess everybody who was involved will have remembrance. It had some importance. We changed. It put a sort of tattoo or imprint in our brain. Also on an emotional level, it was quite intense. We consolidated some previous encounters in more durational practices. Others you don't remember their names but you would like to meet again or you don't care. With Planete Concrète, we still play tracks we made at that time. *Pink Noise Carrier*, our hit (soon to be released). And funnily, recently, Shelbatra joined again, based on the contact provided by this interview.

SJ LODGERS provided time and space to experiment with Hello Shelly in a different space. At the time, I was shifting into becoming the character for a performance in Berlin – and it was psychologically not always easy to combine this work within a contemporary arts context and within a

confrontation with the practice of other artists. But I can say I met some really nice artists during this project and recently we had a reunion with Planète Concrète for a concert. Looking back, I can say the project clarified many questions but the answers didn't immediately open the doors I had hoped for. But it was a very rich project – with many layers, not so common within the museum-context. I was quite proud to see where we took the concept.

MVD And we still have all the documentation online. We use pirate pads (a collaborative online writing tool) to write down and that is a resource for a lot of projects we are still doing now. Because you did that specific research, you documented it, and it's published online. So you have your own resource and other people can also revisit that documentation. It's a point of retransmission that was somehow supported through the LODGERS project.

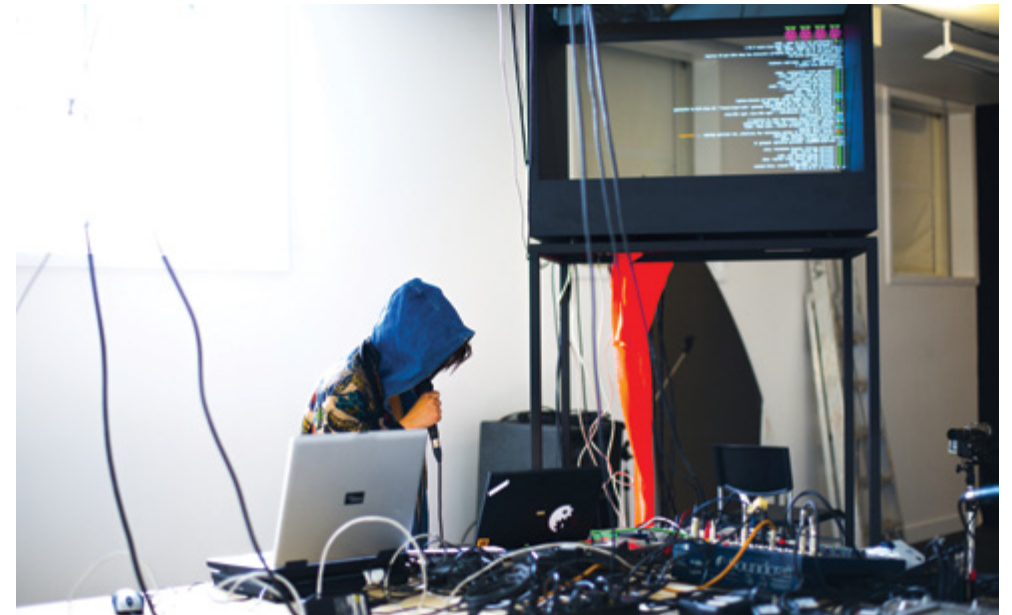
www.ooooo.be



Workshop by Skybox



aROOM, Live SkyBox cockpit - OUT OF CONTROL ROOM, Broadcasting streams of consciousness, gigs, poetry and soup, Human Organ Concert - Jo Caimo, 2015



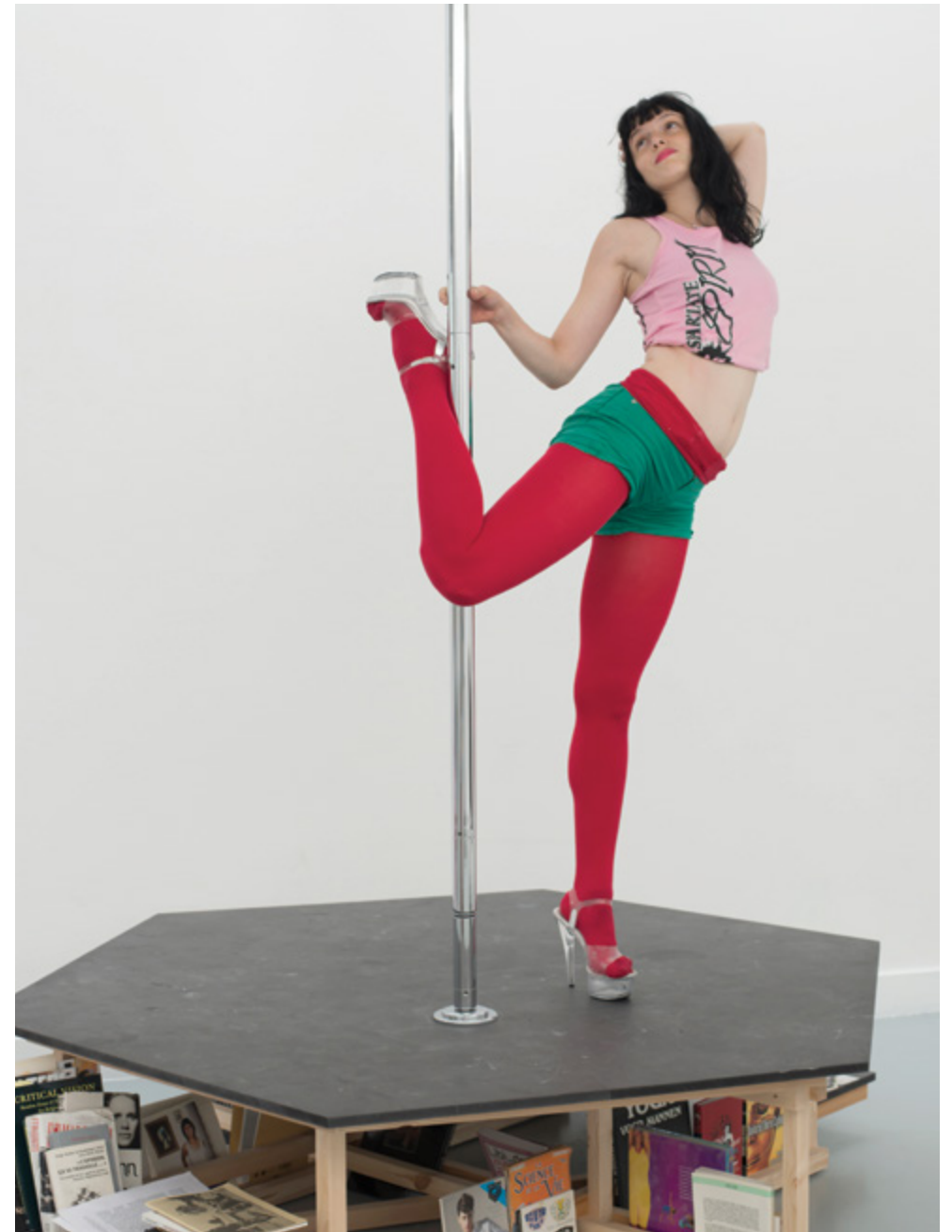
Marthe Van Dessel during concert by Planète Concrète, 2015



RRC rehearsal, Chantal Yzermans, MADMoisel, 2015



Planète Concrète, concert, 2015



Hello Shelley on pole boxing platform by Samyra Moumouh, 2015



Christian Jendreiko, *In Defense of Contradiction*, action and installation, invited as part of Apparent Extent's participation in LODGERS 2015

◆ #3 Apparent Extent (Cologne)

Interview with Volker Zander

17th April 2018, Nav Haq

NH First question – why did you decide to start Apparent Extent?

VZ I was bored (laughs). In 2005 I was travelling a lot as a touring musician and had the wish to start a label. I had two LPs in the making that I wanted to release. I was looking for a name and I found the term Apparent Extent in an old publication by Joost Meuwissen, a Dutch architect and theorist, and in fact my favourite writer in that field. That's how it started. Why did I start it? At that time it seemed like it was a good idea to start a small label, I guess. And I also liked the idea of releasing stuff, producing music and helping to bring things out, not mine but other peoples music. Things changed when my wife took me to see the works of the Swedish artist Johanna Billing at an exhibition in Frankfurt, at a public gallery called Basis – the original Basis place, at the back of Hotel Nizza. I saw it – Johanna's video works all related to the process of making music. I liked it, and her music stuck in my head for days. It was a true musical experience, and I thought I'd like to have that on a record. I found Johanna's website and I wrote her an email, telling her how much I liked her show and that I liked specifically two songs, and "how about we do an EP?". She responded with something like: "*this is an amazing idea, I could have come up with*

that idea myself because I run a label myself" (Make it Happen records, 1998-2010), we talked a bit and then she decided: "*I should try this with you*". So that's how it started. It was tough to finance the vinyl EP. The market for physical releases just started to crash dramatically, but still I wanted to release it. So Johanna said: "*I have two institutions. They'd want to do a publication with me and I think it's a good idea to do a record instead*". That's how it came together. My first artist's record. We pressed five hundred records. Johanna got a 125, I got a 125 and the two institutions who had financed the whole thing got the other hundreds. And so that became the model for Apparent Extent. And it took off from there. There was another Johanna Billing record, and then institutions like Arnolfini or Badischer Kunstverein under Anja Casser saw something in this and got in contact with me. It is difficult to distribute records, and I never made any PR except for a modest website. It's basically through word of mouth. And now, after 13 years I have a catalogue of 34 artist's records, covering music, performances, soundtracks, actions, conceptual pieces, sound lectures, field-recordings. It all developed slowly. That slowness is important. I publish, say, two records per year. I do other stuff for a living, but I can also release records.

NH I think it's quite interesting there's institutions to work with somebody like you producing records, because in a certain sense it's an alternative thing to a book or a catalogue, which sounds a little bit like how Johanna Billing was thinking about it in the first instance.

VZ Yes. Artist records are a weird medium. It started in the '60s and '70s. Maybe with Fluxus. Joseph Beuys later made records, Dieter Roth and many others. Back then vinyl was considered a first hand medium. There were not many other ways to distribute music or sound. Now it's the second, third or fourth wave of using vinyl as a medium. It's a different thing now I guess? The artist's

record sits in between an art edition, a publication, a catalogue and a sculpture.

NH I am also aware that as well as the publishing, there's also related things you're doing, like making small exhibitions, concerts and actions. So, I think the next question is about definition. Do you have a way to define Apparent Extent or is it even interesting for you to try to define that?

VZ Well it was really interesting to be a LODGER. I never really thought about what I was doing or had no theoretical concept for Apparent Extent, and then I thought, maybe it's a good time to think in depth about what it is. My background is in architecture, city planning and landscape architecture. Design for the public realm. Part of the way I make records is through the involvement of public institutions, and I think a lot of the art that I show comes from a public place. A record is an offer for the public, and it creates a public situation. A record is more than just a medium for sound. It has also always been about social ritual, for creating a social place too. It's a real object you need to learn to handle. You need a record player, and a record player always creates a certain setting. There's a private setting, or there is a deejay for a club or the radio, or some other public listening situation where more than two people can listen. The needle drops, and then it's just like: "*woah! what are we hearing right now?*". The sensation. These are all valuable aspects of vinyl. Of course there is the whole aspect of what comes before the record – the exhibition, the action, the film – and this became interesting. At a certain moment I got involved in helping Johanna produce her film *Pulheim Jam Session*. Or with Christian Jendreiko we became more proactive, seeing if we could find more possibilities to organise his actions outside of Düsseldorf. We went to the States and the UK, and travelled a bit. A little bit like touring almost.

Apparent Extent is definitely more than just a record label. Since I'm not a gallery space you could also say I'm a production platform. Because the production side of making the records is almost more interesting and more fun than selling or distributing records. From the very first idea to finally releasing something, making a record takes up to two years, sometimes longer. I enjoy that part of working with artists, meeting them, exchanging ideas, erasing ideas, coming up with new ideas, fixing things, changing, waiting for a good moment for the record to come out. I enjoy that part very much. The releasing part is always a sad moment because the joyful process of shaping something is over. It's the end of a party. The fun is in the making of a party.

The distribution part is something I haven't really figured out. What I mostly concentrate on is making sure that the artists have enough records for themselves. Artists talk to artists and they talk through their work with each other. Things are physically exchanged between artists. I like that idea. And so, yes, some of my records end up in record stores, but more importantly there is a real exchange of ideas.

NH What is your relationship to mainstream organisations?

VZ I'm a big fan of large institutions and the idea of mainstream. I love big crowded places, packed beaches in Oostende or Knokke, that's my thing. I grew up going to Documenta in Kassel every five years. It's one of the most important cultural resources we have in Europe. It was a big mainstream exhibition and it was always too much. I always liked that it was too much. It's the same with music. I enjoy mainstream music and its mass availability. I recently restarted my interest in Michael Jackson, Electric Light Orchestra, the Beatles and Fleetwood Mac. Every big mainstream event has to struggle with the questions: "*Who is headlining?*"

Are they relevant?". Today, in the age of streaming, there is no major relevance anymore in big names. That I think is very liberating. The ideas come first. But I also love small isolated places and small events. The best things for Apparent Extent happened in very small spaces, with small attendance. Big AND small is good. I remember these really packed openings at M HKA, with long speeches in a crowded lobby. I loved those.

NH I know you're publishing with international artists. I would like to ask, what's your relationship to your locality, specifically Cologne?

VZ Cologne became very important for me. I moved here eight years ago and took my retirement here from constantly touring as a musician. A-Musik, the record store here in Cologne is important for Apparent Extent. They distribute my records. I've been invited to become part of a group of curators organising a publicly-funded concert series for international experimental, electronic and electroacoustic music called reiheM. I also help organise Brückenmusik, a yearly sound art event inside one of the Rhine bridges. Cologne has quite a lot of nice galleries and off-spaces. It's also very important to me that Cologne is connected to Düsseldorf. An essential artist for Apparent Extent is Christian Jendreiko who I met around 2009 through Kathleen Rahn, back then director of the Kunstverein in Nuremberg. Jendreiko lives in Düsseldorf. For a while we met once a week, sat down over cake and coffee and talked about society, cultures, art and music. It was a vital discourse. Through Christian, I learnt about the philosophies of his artist group hobbypopMUSEUM, and met other painters and conceptual artists, musicians and activists in Düsseldorf – Angela Fette, Phillip Schulze, Detlef Weinrich, Markus Karstieß. So there is Cologne and Düsseldorf. I think I found a really good place here in what you call the Rhineland. and I really enjoy the close connection to Belgium. As I mentioned,

my background is in architecture, particularly region- and city-planning. So, I know how cities communicated through history, which was always through streams, rivers, streets, trains and all of this. I was always wondering how Cologne was connected to Belgium – to Brussels and especially to Antwerp. When I was in Antwerp I was really interested in this relationship, like how that maybe was important at certain times, especially in the '60s and '70s. Maybe also for avant-garde music. It's very interesting. Today I think of recent labels like Antwerp's Ultra Eczema and Entr'acte, run by Dennis Tyfus and Allon Kaye respectively. Both are really important for me. And then KRAAK is also very important. Certain venues in Brussels and Antwerp are always very, very interesting to look at too. Meakusma as a label and festival in Eupen is also growing on me.

NH How do you sustain Apparent Extent, financially and logistically?

VZ Just yesterday, I heard someone saying: "sustainability is not enough". That's a nice challenge. I stick to my business plan and work closely with art institutions. The investment into a record or publication comes from a public place. I like the idea that I make public records. I'm not expecting to make any money from it. Apparent Extent has to operate as slow as possible and as nice and as happy as possible. If it would become stressful or created unhappiness, I think that would end the sustainability of it. Yes, sustainability is not enough. It's really important to think about this. It's about more. It's not about keeping something alive or just having the energy to move on. It's also about taking care of each other. We have to think about what affection is. we have to think about what art really is, what invention can be, what difference is and what interest is. In my LODGERS exhibition, I presented a vitrine about the Norwegian artist Erik Hesselberg (1914-1972) and his graphic novel about the Kon-Tiki expedition.

The Kon-Tiki is my metaphor for Apparent Extent. It's an experimental raft sitting on the Humboldt stream moving from Peru to the Polynesian atolls. The slowness creates its own ecological niche on an ocean of possibilities.

NH Did you feel like you gained anything from the LODGERS experience?

VZ For me it was a dream come true. I visited Antwerp in '93 when it was cultural capital. It was right after Jan Hoet's edition of Documenta. I remember thinking: "Oh, this guy comes from Belgium. Let's see where he comes from". I was living in Amsterdam at the time, and it was an overnight trip to Antwerp. I stayed somewhere and loved it. In '93 I had the idea that at some moment I would want to live in the city, and 22 years later your invitation came. But then, what I had never expected is the energy that came with the invitation. It was really energising. Not only for me, but also for everybody involved with Apparent Extent, including the artists. It was really making a lot of people happy. So, it really created a beautiful amount of energy and opportunity, but also the possibility to take a break. It felt, at that time, like I was a bit stuck in Cologne. So then came Antwerp and LODGERS, and I got a lot out of it. I think there should be more places and programmes like this. I definitely wish there would be one in Glasgow, because that's another dream place I would like to spend some time.

NH And very last question – what's next for Apparent Extent?

VZ To stay as slow as possible. And, no plans. Definitely no plans, and see where things are. There are three or four or more records in the making.

www.apparent-extent.com



Volker Zander and Michael Lembach, *Awnings Unlimited*, performance series, 2015



Apparent Extent back-catalogue listening point, 2015



hobbypopmuseum, installation view, 2015



Volker Zander, Erik Hesselberg Vitrine, various books and objects, 2007–2015



BEASTER, set for *Bankett* opera, 2015



Dirk van Lieshout drawing and Liesbeth Bik during LODGERS#4, School of Missing Studies, 2015

◆ #4 School of Missing Studies (Rotterdam)

Interview with Liesbeth Bik & Jos Van der Pol
4 June 2018, Nav Haq & Alan Quireyns

NH It would be great if you could tell us why you decided to start School of Missing Studies?

LB When we had a residency at PS1 in '99 – 2000, we set up a project called *Nomads and Residents*. While in New York we saw a lot of people arriving, leaving and passing by. Usually they came because they had a gallery or museum show, or a lecture, but rarely did they connect to people living there, people that potentially had practices similar to theirs, or people that could be interesting dialogue partners. We saw this as a lack, a missed opportunity, so we started *Nomads and Residents*, together with other artists, writers, architects, curators, partly residents in New York, and partly temporary residents like us. We were determined to keep *Nomads and Residents* very informal, very light and very simple; all of the initiators had a history of being part of, or starting up, artists' initiatives, so we were aware of the truckload of work that comes with that. So we all agreed that *Nomads and Residents* should be a light form of organising, not a burden. This was before digital media. We put together all our personal email contacts, and trusted we would reach who

needed to be reached. We also trusted that those who wanted to be reached would let us know. This was the same year that 16 Beaver, e-Flux and Rhizome started, and we were all building on similar networks. *Nomads and Residents* builds on tangible, physical encounters, not on digital presence. For our events, we knocked on the doors of galleries, artist-run spaces, PS1, a bar, or a museum to ask if we could use that space for one night to host an event. *Nomads and Residents* was always based on the people that we knew were coming to New York (though we did not always know them personally), and then organised an event to share their practice with people from New York. We usually had two or three guests, and the format developed through time. We asked people to talk about their work, through snippets and fragments in around 20 minutes. It had to be an open format and never to present a finished work. Each event brought a different public to different spaces and also a different public from these spaces to other spaces. Through time, the numbers of people attending accumulated wildly. Next to that *Nomads and Residents* was followed all over the world as people signed up to receive email announcements. In retrospect, you could say this was an early form of what we see today with Facebook and Airbnb. Only we were not geared towards making this an economic or profitable model. It was 'hit & run', light, with no space attached to maintain or keep going, no money involved, no fees. Nothing. Just: touching base, encounters, dialogue, and then move on. We felt, and still feel today, that it is important to generate encounter on other premises than capital.

During that time, we met architect Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss. He was from Novi Sad, and like many others at that time, had moved from Serbia to New York, escaping war and trying to find new opportunities. We also met Sabine Von Fischer, a Swiss architect, and they both attended a lot of the events. We shared

ideas about how knowledge is created, how to share information and by whom, how or if what you create can or should be continued, and at some point (we already returned to Europe by that time) they said: Why don't we get together and see if we can start something? We drove to Switzerland in winter and stayed in a log cabin together, and that was the start of the School of Missing Studies. We all found each other on the premise of how such activities can be part of an artistic practice when you are convinced that learning by doing is a valid and valuable artistic practice. We also knew that the School of Missing Studies should not be formalised, not become bureaucratic, nor be accredited. The School of Missing Studies is invested in what is missing, not in becoming an institution. This was also why *Nomads and Residents* became so successful in New York, because of its informality, but also because that was a city in transformation.

At that moment, we didn't consider New York as a city in transformation. We thought it was quite stuck at the time, but it was not. There were things happening in its underbelly. And that of course accelerated because of 9/11 and what Naomi Klein describes as 'shock doctrine'. There was Bush, Bloomberg, gentrification, New York's new bicycle paths, the upgrading of the meatpacking district through the arrival of the many galleries, and later, museums like the Whitney. It is interesting to witness these things evolve. So, this is how we wanted the School of Missing Studies to function: to create improvised, low-key programmes that would drill in, communicate, and connect to places where transformations take place and where we would involve different people with different types of knowledge and different types of experience. The programme could be walking, talking, reading, exhibiting, it could be with students of existing institutions or we would open calls for participants. Very fluid.

An example of an event in New York was *School of Shadows*. It was a one-day investigation of the shadows in New York City; you either live in the shadow or in the sun, and whatever the case, this defines the rental price of your apartment or the price of your property. The same is true for the height of a building. The higher and the wider the view, the more expensive. We also organised a workshop in Halle during the Werkleitz Biennale, on returning wildlife, in a situation (that was also a reality for Halle) of shrinking cities and borders opening up. After 1989, new areas and opportunities opened themselves. People started moving, between cities, and from cities in Eastern and Central Europe to cities in Western Europe. The disappearing borders also opened the original routes to wildlife. For example, wolves re-instated their old routes through Europe, routes that they could not migrate along for thirty years. The fact we have wolves now in Belgium and the Netherlands is a direct consequence of that. A lot was changing in Halle, and the absence was very present in the empty houses and vacant, left land.

The School of Missing Studies is very organic. It is not a fixed group. We started with the four of us, then other people joined. Anyone could start a School of Missing Studies if they want. You can just take it as a model and take the title and run with it. Not everybody does that of course. Too much work, they think, probably.

NH Like Beuys' idea of the 'free university'?

JVdP Some iterations of the School of Missing Studies we were not involved in, like the *Lost Highway Expedition*, along the Road of Brotherhood in former Yugoslavia.

LB Around 2012, Jos and I were invited by Jürgen Bey, director of the Sandberg Institute.

JVdP

Yes, but first we made *Teasing Minds* at Kunstverein Munich. That was the last exhibition by curator Maria Lind there. She asked us to compile a programme for two or three months, and we involved many other artists and initiatives like the Free University, Fucking Good Art, and Stealth group of architects.

LB

We considered that show as something that was always in transformation. In theory, this sounds better than it actually worked out. Stealth group of architects were one of the few that were creating workshops for a period of 3 or 4 weeks. But we still feel it's important to experiment with changes in time and to take that seriously.

JVdP

Then Jürgen Bey asked us to start a temporary masters programme for two years. Basically, this means that you write a programme and recruit students. We were thinking about how to do it, as we didn't really want to create a masters programme about our practice.

LB

It was complex to make an open call based on our practice, because how do you deal with issues such as authorship? What are students actually applying for? What is your responsibility? And how do you write a programme that has connections with topics invested in our practice?

JVdP

Enrolling is also not an informal thing: students have to pay tuition fees. They follow a programme. They want a masters diploma. They have to deal with tutors. It's much more formal than any of the other activities of the School of Missing Studies.

LB

We decided we would activate the School of Missing Studies inside the school. It is a good model. We wanted to learn together from forms of missing

knowledge, investigate what is missing from established forms of knowledge and – in conjunction with that – accessing the practices of others through dialogue with people engaging with the programme as tutors, students and practices.

JVdP

Alongside School of Missing Studies we continued our own work. We were invited by the São Paulo Bienal in 2014, and decided to bring the students for two months, to be part of the public programme we curated. We had a work in the exhibition, and we ran a public programme.

LB

When we were invited to participate in LODGERS, it was for us – or for me at least – important to ‘de-institutionalise’ after the Sandberg period, so we accepted your invitation full-heartedly. Because something may have started as quite marginal, but becomes established. Of course, School of Missing Studies had been active before the Sandberg period, and it will continue in whatever form, but we felt it was important to ‘unleash’ or liberate the School of Missing Studies and enable it to change again, and to free it up, as it was never intended to become a masters programme. Knowledge needs to be questioned continuously; that is very clear. School of Missing Studies is not just a temporary programme inside the Sandberg; it is actually something that entered that institution and went out again. School of Missing Studies is a continuum instead of a special occasion.

NH How would you define the School of Missing Studies?

LB

It is defined by doing, by activation. The context of the Sandberg had its limitations. But these limitations also have a potential to break down some walls here and there, almost as if defined by the invitation of doing something within an institutional context, a learning environment. What ‘learning’

and ‘knowledge’ are, was questioned during these two years, by ourselves, the students and guest tutors. In the end, something had to come out of all that questioning. I would say we succeeded in that this gave ourselves and the students an experience that we carry with us. If we look at what the former students do today, they have certainly unfolded as autonomous thinkers and makers. But, of course, they already entered the programme with an interest, curiosity and engagement that enabled such development. LODGERS gave us an opportunity to drop the institutional coat again. Where can you create new space where you suspect it is not there, such as in a museum? One can literally knock on the doors, but one can also ask people to come in, people that are otherwise not invited by the museum – opening up in that sense, to ask people to co-define the programme. That’s how we approached your invitation. We thought: “How can we turn this into something that we share with others who would totally benefit from this?” Who would benefit from the museum, and its public? We extended the invitation from the museum and the residency to others that we hoped would recognise themselves in the School of Missing Studies, to co-define what to study, what to research, and to cause cross-pollination to happen in such a situation.

JVdP

We did propose a site-specific research area: the harbour. Dirk van Lieshout and Sol Archer were both working with this subject, and they used the space as a studio and space for experimentation, together with artists Rob Hamelijnck and Nienke Terpsma (the initiators of Fucking Good Art), and architects Rachel Himmelfarb and Lars Fischer, both part of Common Room. We were ‘curating’ people together. Not works but people. At a later stage also we brought the students of the Piet Zwart Institute into the project for two weeks.

LB In the last two weeks, the School of Missing Studies consisted of Piet Zwart students, also curators Huib Haye van der Werf and Juha van't Zelfde, designer Maurits de Bruijn, art historian Jeroen Verbeeck, writer Ellen C. Feiss, filmmaker Kees Brouwer, artists Rachel O'Reilly, Christian Hansen, Kym Ward, Iffy Tillieu, Martin Schepers, journalist Gia Abrassart, and others. We walked, we talked, we explored and discussed. The harbour functioned as a site-specific 'binder', as something you can study as a method and way of working. What does a harbour mean in all its complexities? Its labour? Its automation? This site-specific research methodology is connecting to our own practice. Do you realise that 95 percent of the goods coming to Europe go through the harbours of Rotterdam and Antwerp? What does that mean for how we live? In relation to capital, to what we produce and consume?

We wanted relationships to build themselves in a different time, space and zone, and this accumulated towards the end of LODGERS. The people who arrived later were with those who came earlier. They functioned almost as guides for the new arrivals, their mentors somehow. We hoped for the group to embark on site-specific research, but also to think about how other artists (Alan Sekula is an excellent example) related to places of transfer and transformation. How these places also may transform work, and what this means for the use of text, documentation and speech. We organised discussions and readings. Ellen did an in-depth reading of Keller Easterling's texts on containers and free-trade-zones, and connected this to *The Undercommons*, a text by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten. Gia and Iffy brought international trade to the table by initiating discussions and a cycling tour focusing on historic sites related to the history of trade, slavery and wealth in Antwerp and its harbour; there is almost no historic building that's without connections to this past.

JVdP And a tour by activist Wiebe Eekman who has a past in the unions, took us to spaces of labour: union houses, canteens, and the village of Lilo from where you can see Doel, the nuclear powerplant. On the last day the students made performances in front and on the top floor of a museum, on bikes, on the waterfronts.

NH What is your relationship towards mainstream organisations?

LB We try to use them, surf with them, to open them up, shake hands and get things done together.

JVdP To see them as a possibility and as a potential.

LB We have no sense of hierarchy in relation to institutions. Our practice is rooted in artists' initiatives. There is no reason why anyone should feel less important or less valuable; one can actually do things through your practice.

NH It's quite pragmatic in a way.

LB Yes, sure. But pragmatic in a positive sense. You could also have said 'opportunistic' but I would understand that word in the sense of 'seeing opportunities'. Working collectively, you can actually move in a different way than when you would do things separately. That's why I think LODGERS is important. It allows use of the space of AIR Antwerpen and the museum. And I mean 'use' in a productive and interesting way than the usual use of that word would suggest; to create something that is more than the sum of its parts.

NH What is your relationship to your locality?

JVdP It is defined by where you are.

AQ I see locality as: where do you come from, who are your peers? Who do you relate to? For whom do you do it? In your practice, both as artists but also with School of Missing Studies, you engage other people in the framework of a certain topic or a certain site-specificity. You create a moment where all these people come together. In my opinion you create a sense of locality in that moment, but you don't create it out of a background or an origin.

LB A temporary community. Trying to find 'accomplices' or what we would call in Dutch 'handlangers', we connect other people around an issue. A harbour may also be understood as a big knot of interdependencies, creating content together, through the many different voices involved.

JVdP A temporary community functions as a micro-cosm. As outsiders, we connect to accomplices, informers, knowledge, discussion points, digging out existing complexities.

NH When we asked this to other LODGERS, it's really because they are based in a particular city and that's where they do their work, but I think for School of Missing Studies it's a bit different, because it's more nomadic.

LB If you think about the term LODGERS – we can also reflect on what this means. A form of hospitality. What do I bring to you and what do you give back? Locality has to do with engagement with where I am, and with reciprocity.

JVdP It is also a question you can ask: as someone working in a museum: what is your relationship to your locality?

NH Normally for a museum you get asked this question by the local authority, and they would want to know the result in terms of statistics.

LB Which would deny complexities.

NH I think it is about how to quantify things. It is easier to quantify things in that way than in how to quantify knowledge production. It's hard to do that in an easily understandable way.

LB How to quantify the affect, that we and you have created. What lives on with those involved? How can one measure that?

NH School of Missing Studies started in 2003. So that's fifteen years. Often a lot of smaller initiatives don't last so long. How do you manage to sustain it financially and logistically?

LB It doesn't have a house or any financial burden. It has our involvement. If we carry it forward, or if some others carry it, it's like an extra vehicle on the side. Waiting. Ready to go. We don't need to maintain it. It doesn't have an address that we pay for.

NH I guess a lot of it is determined through invitations?

LB Sometimes there is an invitation. But sometimes there is a question, from us, or others, that generates its next activation.

JVdP So, the financial side is easy in that sense. It's activated when necessary. Very sustainable.

LB In the context of LODGERS, we felt it was important to share things equally, including financially. It was important that the invitation had the possibility – for Dirk and Saul – to be able to stay and work somewhere, to feel at home in a museum, and not feel hindered by any real or fictive walls of an institution.

NH What's next for School of Missing Studies?

JVdP For now, there is no 'next'. We published our book with the Sandberg Institute and Sternberg. We are not waiting for something to happen.

LB The book unites important voices that were and continue to be involved in School of Missing Studies. Through this publication, these voices speak to others.

NH But obviously, you are also Bik Van der Pol with your artistic practice.

JVdP Yes, but it could also be that somebody else will do something with, or as, School of Missing Studies. It's not up to us really.

LB Sometimes an opportunity presents itself to do something together, and sometimes you have to force that opportunity a little bit more. The School of Missing Studies is not an ideological tool. It's about seeing the urgency of issues and unpacking these yet-undefined moments that are not institutionalised yet.

NH Is there any influence from the LODGERS programme on School of Missing Studies?

LB LODGERS offered a testing ground. What we tested out is: is it possible to involve others, to create co-scholars of missing studies for such a long period of time, and to delegate the responsibility? We think it's exciting to see how others can fly with it.

Many questions, in or outside the art world are based on: *what do you do tomorrow? What do you do next week? What do you do next month? What did you do yesterday?* But how valid is that, really? That is more like a continuous ticking of boxes. There is value in asking yourself: *how do you unpack things? How do you push things that you don't know yet?* That's what is really missing, and that is also the challenge. It can be risky;

sometimes expectations are high, and you cannot deliver. Or you don't want to.

JVdP What is the influence of LODGERS on the institutions?

AQ It has been a very specific project. It immediately stretched the limits of the organisation. It questioned every single thing we do. Because we deal with artists in a very specific way, we are very aware of the flexibility we try to offer, etc., but sometimes it was an amount of flexibility we could barely take. It is a very specific invitation, and it also had a very reflective character. *What are we doing? And how are we doing this? And how are people using the residency or not? Is it valid or not?* I would not call it institutional critique, but it definitely has this element.

NH I agree. Also, when you are in a more formalised institution, because of the way the system works, you always have to justify and give a definition to who you are. Because of that, it's interesting to invite these initiatives that don't work in that way. They are not about a fixed definition. This is what binds these initiatives, and also to work with them in a way that keeps the integrity of who and what they are. It has been an interesting reflection.

LB Does LODGERS have consequences if we speak about the museum as a model? Is there an aftermath? Did it influence your way of working as a curator, and for the museum at large?

NH Talking from M HKA's perspective, what I was interested in is the fact that what would typically be a display space becomes a space that is actually inhabited, for knowledge production, for different things. There is a completely different dynamic. Before the LODGERS programme, there was the celebration of 350 years of the Royal Academy in Antwerp, and the teaching staff used that space for different activities with the students. That dynamic was really

interesting. It planted the seed for LODGERS. Also, M HKA and AIR Antwerpen are quite radically different organisations. This collaboration allowed both of us to do things we can't do on our own. It was rewarding that radically different kinds of organisations can collaborate and whole new ways of working come out of that.

www.schoolofmissingstudies.nl



Installation view, School of Missing Studies, 2015



Installation view, School of Missing Studies, 2015



Harbour explorations by bike, 2015



School of Missing Studies, 2015



School of Missing Studies, Chapter 3: Rachel O'Reilly, *Contradictions of Harbour Imaginaries from Below* workshop, 2015

2016

- #5 Le Salon (Brussels)
- #6 Ultra Eczema (Antwerp)
- #7 Lonelyfingers (Düsseldorf)
- #8 Pages (Rotterdam)



Pages, Counting Opium Smoke, Opium pipe connected to an inhaler machine with a laser diffraction for analysing particle size and distribution, film still, 2016



#5



Le Salon (Brussels)

Interview with Devrim Bayar and Valerie Verhack

26 April 2018, Alan Quireyns

AQ Why did you decide to start Le Salon?

DB Le Salon started following a very informal gathering of friends. Many years ago, we used to go to the apartment of Virginie Devillez once a month on Sunday night to organise what we used to call a ciné-club among friends. Each month one of us presented a film to the others. We did that for almost a year. Around the same time, I was in charge of the artists-in-residency programme at WIELS and I was confronted by the fact that there were little online resources about the local art scene. I thus had the idea of a website for people who were interested in what was going on in Brussels and around. Things that were slightly off the radar and that were usually not presented in the more established media. The website would present, very informally, art events such as exhibitions, conferences or studio visits with artists. The ambition was to present a little overview, but very subjective, and I thought to call it 'Le Salon', because the living room is often the place where you exchange ideas with friends about things to do, watch and visit. It was normal for me to ask Virginie if she wanted to take part, and then Virginie proposed Valerie to join.

VV Virginie and I used to be colleagues. We both worked at the Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels. It was a job where I was working mostly in modern art, so Le Salon was a shift towards contemporary art. It's the same for Virginie, whose specialty was modern art. We shared that same background, but both of us had an interest in contemporary art.

AQ Which year was that?

DB The idea emerged in 2010 and the website was launched in 2011. It took some time. We had to find some graphic designers, and since we had no money it was based on who agreed to make a website for free. It was very organic and slow, and it was all in our spare time as we all had full-time jobs.

AQ You spoke about this already a little bit, but how would you define your organisation?

DB I have this readymade sentence that I use for subsidy applications: Le Salon is a curatorial and editorial platform dedicated to the Brussels art scene. That summarises it pretty well. It is both curatorial and editorial. We started publishing online content. We asked people to write reviews, to visit artist studios, have a conversation with an artist, a collector, a curator etc. We asked people who were taking pictures to visit a show or public art project and document it photographically. We invited artists to contribute with a specific artwork to be published online. But very quickly we felt that even if the internet is an incredible platform of exchange, everybody still wants to meet people in real life. And when you publish online you only have email exchanges with your contributors. You can spend all your time behind your screen and almost not have to meet anyone. Sometimes we were publishing content by people whom we had never met. So we thought we

should do something offline as well. And then Valerie started working for the collector Walter Vanhaerents.

VV He is actually a construction developer. In a central neighbourhood in Brussels, he had built a whole apartment block connected to an old factory building. Linked to that same block of buildings, he also had some other buildings that he transformed into stores, but those were actually empty and were still waiting to be fully developed.

DB It was in the city centre and at street level, with huge windows. It was empty and we knew of course the person who owned it. So, Valerie convinced him to lend us that space during the so-called Brussels Gallery Weekend. In September 2012, one year after Le Salon started, we opened our first show.

AQ How do you relate to your locality?

VV Le Salon refers to 19th century salons where different voices gather to discuss, debate, read... So, Le Salon always gave the liberty of different voices to be present on the platform. With our first exhibition, we also wanted to materialise it there. We invited different project spaces to come together.

DB What we did resonates with what you did with LODGERS: we invited other non-profit initiatives to curate a show or programme. We invited FormContent from London, 1m3 from Lausanne and SIC from Brussels, and basically, we told them: "we have a big space during the Brussels Gallery Weekend, we have no money but you are free to propose something, as long as it doesn't cost us anything". We shared the same energy because everybody was working a little bit in the same way: without any funds, but with a lot of motivation. So each of us organised a project and it all came together in the same space.

AQ And you continued to do that for a couple of years?

DB No, we didn't do the same thing afterwards. The next year we were invited to occupy a very tiny space in Brussels, which was called Island. It still exists but the place and the concept has changed. At that time, it was located on the ground floor of a house. We had the keys of the space for one month and we could do whatever we wanted. The space was not really appropriate for an exhibition. We felt it worked better for lectures. We thus invited people to speak, not about their art, but about a side practice, a passion or a hobby that informs what they are known for. We invited Vaast Colson to present his collection of Martin Kippenberger books; Benoit Platéus to talk about how dolphins communicate; Nicolas Tremblay to talk about his collection of German ceramics, which Virginie also collected at the time; Harold Ancart to present a documentary about Ayrton Senna, etc.

VV Audrey Cottin also talked about telepathy.

DB Every week we had presentations and there was a theme every time.

AQ Did it relate to the website?

DB We were very bad at that. We were never very good at documenting what we were doing. So there were some pictures, but we didn't record everything unfortunately.

VV I think on Facebook we sometimes published some pictures.

DB We were not professionals and we remained like this the whole way through. Maybe that's also the charm of Le Salon.

AQ I am just wondering, because one of the things I found interesting about Le Salon was also the fact that you had these digital studio visits: how you use a digital space in order to present something, give access to something that is supposed to be in a meeting or private. You actually used the digital space as an actual space.

DB We could have done it better. But then at least one person would have had to be employed by Le Salon. It always remained a side project. I realised after some years how important Le Salon was for some people, even more than for myself sometimes. It happened that we were in a strange position where some people were frustrated that we didn't publish a review about their show.

VV Exactly. We even received press packs of shows as if we were journalists.

DB Big shows! And I still receive invitations to press conferences.

VV We are not journalists, but maybe this was also instigated by the graphic design of the website, because our designers Donuts created a design inspired by newspapers. It became some kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

DB It created some expectations that we never intended to fill. So sometimes people didn't understand. But it was nice to see that Le Salon had a very good reputation.

AQ What is your relationship to mainstream organisations?

VV One of our focusses was to create a sort of mapping of what was going on at a certain time in Brussels.

DB It was the beginning of Brussels becoming an international art hub. Now it has grown even bigger and I don't follow all of what is going on. There are so many artist-run spaces, events, etc. I receive invitations all the time from places I've never even heard of. At that time we could still try to have an overview, although quite subjective, of what was going on. I think now, it would really require a lot of work and time. It would be fascinating but we can't do it anymore. It was connected to a special moment for Brussels and for ourselves.

AQ How do you sustain Le Salon?

VV In the beginning people did everything for free but after a little while we managed to receive a little subsidy from the French community to pay them.

DB We tried to get a bit more professional.

VV We are an official asbl/vzw in two languages with official statutes. We officialised our organisation and tried to get subventions in order to be able to pay the contributors, because we had the feeling that we could not sustain it like it was. Still, it remained very modest.

DB But what also happened is the three of us had kids. When we started, we were all without a family so we could spend our week nights and weekends proofreading, making phone calls, visiting shows and then of course life changes. It would have meant leave a part of my job at WIELS for Le Salon and I didn't want to do that, although I love Le Salon. I think it became more complicated to keep publishing interesting, meaningful content online at a very regular pace.

AQ What are you working on now? The website is still online...

DB It's online but we haven't published content for two years.

VV A turning point was when we realised that the website could not be preserved totally.

DB We worked with a very young and inexperienced webmaster who developed our website for free, but after some years, the website became problematic. There were bugs. And we realised that if we wanted to have a professional website we needed much more money and to work with someone who has more experience. It's not an easy website. There is a lot of content already, there are many categories. There are videos, photos, texts, gifs, sound pieces, and so on.

VV But then we tried to gather some money with the artist's edition we launched.

DB Even if we received some subsidies for the different projects, we were in debt. We were investing our own money into Le Salon, so after a while we decided to launch an artist's edition. We invited an artist to create a pillow. That was successful.

VV The idea of the pillows related to the theme of domesticity that was also present in the project we created for LODGERS. The first artist we invited was Aline Bouvy, and the second edition was made by Pierre Bismuth.

DB Now we are working on a book, but again with this loose way of working we always had. It takes a while. The thing is, we were a little unprofessional in distributing our content. In the beginning, we didn't even have a newsletter, so we were publishing something but nobody really knew who we were. Not everybody was on Facebook back then, and Instagram didn't exist. The visibility was very limited, but we did publish some really interesting things.

VV First, we thought about the option of maybe archiving the website. We know that the library of the Centre Pompidou is open to these kinds of archives. We were looking at the options. And then we quite quickly came to the idea of print.

DB And my partner is a book publisher, so...

VV He was also the graphic designer of the website. So there was a continuation that was evident.

DB Now we are translating everything into English. Also, we need to find all the illustrations we published online, in a higher definition. And again, because I am working with my partner, it's not like I am a regular client. So, deadlines are always a little bit loose. And it's a big book. It's 400 pages.

AQ What was the influence of LODGERS?

DB Almine Rech was the gallery who lent us the cat tree by John Armleder, which we absolutely adore, but which is a piece nobody wants to buy. I mean, which collector is crazy enough to buy a giant (and probably expensive) cat tree? And I think the gallery was happy that we were presenting this work in a museum. We were giving it the credit it deserved. A little after LODGERS, Almine Rech had reserved one of the largest booths of the Independent Art Fair, which was organising its first edition in Brussels. But...

VV The gallery had also reserved a booth at Art Brussels, but they didn't know that they couldn't participate in both fairs at the same time. They were in an awkward position so then they thought "let's ask Le Salon to curate our booth". So they gave us a 35,000 dollar booth at Independent. It was the biggest one. On the top floor.

DB We only had two months directly after LODGERS to create the project, and since we felt not so many people had come from Brussels to Antwerp, we did an extended version of the LODGERS exhibition at Independent. But there we went for the full 'Pop' display with a pink carpet and crazy works. Everybody came to our booth and we were selected as one of the six best booths by the New York Times.

AQ What is your relationship towards mainstream institutions? You want to comment on the institution but you are part of it at the same time.

VV We always used the opportunities that crossed our path, whether it's the space at Vanhaerents, Island or the booth of Almine Rech. With the booth, you could ask: *Why do you use the space of the art market?* We just presented a piece that we chose to show, and were not forced to show.

DB None of the exhibited artists were part of her gallery, except Armleder, but the gallery didn't mind at all. They really gave us 'carte blanche'.

VV It's interesting to be part of a shift from an institutional context to a market context. Within the art market context, all of a sudden we were in a listing of the best booths. It overcame us in way. And then within the institutional context we also presented a piece that we thought could work very well. This also provoked a debate, which is interesting as well.

DB I regularly think about *Le Chaquarium* (shown during LODGERS). This project reveals a lot about how the public deals with contemporary art and it confirmed how strong the work of François Curlet is. He is an artist who touches very sensitive things, with a lot of humour, and reveals a lot about society. That whole scandal with

Le Chaquarium (a real cat is part of the installations and is 'the resident' during the exhibition, but had to be removed after three weeks after a public outcry) happened at the same time as the Calais Jungle, which is not far from Antwerp. The refugee crisis was all over the news, but people in Antwerp and on social media were getting angry about the situation of a cat that was actually very well taken care of. We love animals and we always followed the recommendations of the veterinarian. There was absolutely no problem with the cat. Until this day, it shocks me to realise that people don't make a scandal of what is happening 150km from here, with hundreds of families and children living in a so-called 'jungle'.

AQ Did you show the François Curlet piece at Independent?

DB No, it was too complicated to present for four days only.

VV In that way, it was adapted for an institutional context. We had technicians who could prepare the installation because it necessitates a glass wall, white stones on the wall etc. It was really something that had to be prepared, and an institutional context lends itself very well to that. Because you can plan in advance.

www.welcometosalon.be



François Curlet, *Chaquarium*, 2003. Installation view: M HKA, 2016



François Curlet, *Chaquarium* (detail), 2003. Installation view: M HKA, 2016



Poesivski Poeselovski, *Untitled*, 2016



Eric Croes, *Cat tree with Chinese portraits*, concrete, wood, steel and ceramics, 2016, courtesy: Sorry We're Closed - Sébastien Janssen, Brussels



#6

◇ Ultra Eczema (Antwerp)

Interview with Dennis Tyfus

27 October 2018, Alan Quireyns

AQ Why did you decide to start Ultra Eczema?

DT Ultra Eczema started in 1997 as a fanzine, mostly covering punk, hardcore, grindcore and noise. It kind of looked like a collaged punk magazine, which is sort of what it was. I started it with a pal. Basically, we wanted to participate in an international network with like-minded people. That is still the case, though UE quickly changed from a fanzine into anything I was involved with as an artist. Issue three was an artist's book, with drawings overprinted onto an old leftover print; this way, it could pay for itself and I was able to put the money it made back into another release. Ultra Eczema still combines my interests and my own work. For example, I would invite other artists, musicians or poets that I like to work on something together, or I would work on an archival record of a person's or organisation's archives. Basically, UE can be anything: an edition, an event, a street sign or a tattoo. At some point, it was nearly someone's baby, though that did not fly for her husband.

AQ How would you define your organisation?

DT I wouldn't, or I just did.

AQ What is your relationship to your locality?

DT I like working from a home base, and to have a place where things can be made possible: events, lectures, concerts, presentations of all kinds. Ultra Eczema was involved in various spaces over the past 20 years, most recently with De Nor: a permanent pavilion on the grounds of the Middelheim museum that can be activated into a venue/space/theatre/bar/dancefloor/ etc. In the past, UE has shared spaces with Vaast Colson's Clean Press; Gunther, a small performance and concert venue next to Renaat Braem's ex-police tower in the centre of Antwerp; Stadslimiet, a tiny riverside shop front; and Pinkie Bowtie, an artist-run space which focuses less on music and performance and more on our own output as visual artists. Vaast and I run it together with Peter Fengler from Rotterdam. In many cases, the events or presentations UE organises are a part of an international chain. Often the artists we host and present are touring Europe and we provide them with a space to perform, so many people can experience new works.

AQ How do you sustain it - financially and logistically?

DT The publications get sold through a network of small distributors, and on our own website. This is simply how we survive. On the other hand, sometimes an organisation invites us to be part of something and there will be a budget. Logistically, we always get a little help from our friends.

AQ What's next?

DT Vol au vent, Red wine, an ongoing programme at De Nor. New records by Bazuingeschal, Kreemer, Joe McPhee, Agathocles, Vom Grill.

www.ultraeczema.com



Ultra Eczema poster for LODGERS, 2016



Albert Mayr, installation view, 2016



Peter Fengler & Dennis Tyfus, opening night, *Lakkers*, 2016



Caned I coda, installation view, 2016



Detail of exploded fat sack, from Peter Fengler & Dennis Tyfus, *Lakkers*, 2016



Albert Mayr, edition of silver foil crack pipes (ultra eczema 222), 2016

#7



lonelyfingers (Düsseldorf)

Interview with Diango Hernández and Anne Pöhlmann

12 July 2018, Nav Haq

NH Why did you decide to start lonelyfingers?

AP lonelyfingers started in 2012 out of some other activities that we had tried before. We wanted eventually to do something interactive, and especially more interactive with artists and colleagues, as a way to reflect on respective individual art practices. We met a lot of artist colleagues through shows, projects and residencies, but we never found the time to reconnect with them, especially the ones that we got along with more, to continue conversations. We needed some sort of space to facilitate that, and also to carve out a little bit of freedom and respect to that space not being institutional. We were at the time not really convinced about having a space, like an off-space, would be the way to go because a lot of people that we wanted to talk with about art were not based where we were based – here in Düsseldorf. So, we had the experience with our blog which was satisfying and it was a way to put ideas out there. But there was not so much coming back. On the other hand it was pretty practical because you could do it from wherever you were and people could eventually also respond from wherever they were. So we thought about having a platform online, and that's how lonelyfingers started in 2012. We invited colleagues



and friends, as well as people that we didn't know at that time, to participate in specific small projects that we would then showcase online.

It wasn't that easy to do something that would be really interactive. Of course we had the comment function activated, but we wanted to actually have participation and feedback. We wanted to have real-time interaction with artists, so that they could be responding to whatever we asked and then of course it didn't happen. We started with that format, which was basically a Wordpress template, with some pictures and portraits. We already decided that we wanted to ask artists for specific objects. We wanted to talk from the beginning about what inspires artists. We wanted to look at how artists at that moment in time were working, were conceiving their ideas, and how we live today, travelling a lot, undertaking a lot of institution-alised work like residencies, and having crazy lives because we'd been in different places, being really dislocated and nomadic as artists. We wanted to see how that influences the way we think about and create artworks. So we were thinking about what would be a framework for starting that conversation. We came up with this idea of asking other artists to send us objects like those we knew we had ourselves in the studio, such as found objects that for some reason we collect along the way, from places that we travelled to, and which become those companions, sometimes for years in the studio, but don't really become an artwork. We were not interested in the idea of *objets trouvés* or something like this. We were interested in how ideas can originate sometimes, from an object like this. There wasn't anybody talking about this. But that was one idea we thought to start with because then we have something visual also, and maybe a conversation starter in the best sense of the word. This then became the title of the first exhibition we did as lonelyfingers, *Konversationsstücke*.

What we organised was an investigation of how an object can start the conversation between people.

- DH** And historically, there was an 18th century European tradition that this refers to. Bringing one of those items to a table – to a dinner or what-ever – and then putting it on the table, would be a conversation starter.
- AP** Maybe it was also people that didn't know each other. Which can be like meeting at an opening of a gallery show talking about art.
- DH** Or like the invention of the camera. Think of people travelling, bringing something back and they say "guys, look at what I found!", and then that would be a sort of informal research moment and a really interesting conversation starter. So we decided to do that online, bringing together collections.
- NH** So basically you started online but felt after trying that out that there was some inadequacy to it and then you also decided to bring physical objects?
- AP** Well, we were really working on that online idea for quite a while, and then one and a half years later all of a sudden we got the invitation from Susanne Titz, Director of Museum Abteiberg, to do a show in Mönchengladbach, and at that point we hadn't even thought of doing anything like a show. When we started this, we were thinking more about creating this exchange platform where other friends or colleagues could present their articles. In former times there were more books but we thought - books nowadays are always involving money and funding. So with a platform you can reach a lot of people. But then we got asked to do that show.

DH It was all a surprise. Working on that show, we realised how little artists were active online at that moment.

AP It was crazy to think about it, because it's like six years ago, and in six years the idea of what you can do online and what is cool to do as an artist in that regard changed so profoundly. They were really suspicious at the beginning: *Why do you do that online? Is that commercial? Are you a gallery?* There was a lot of questioning. And we knew also that if you bring people together in a physical space, for an event, it always creates of course different energies and it reaches people in a different way. So we were willing to take that opportunity.

DH But it was also after realising that all these people we invited are artists, and that we were going to ask them to *not* display their artworks – that was actually the first time that we realised there was a conflict of interest. Because actually this museum is a very important museum – it's like a Holy Grail. It's one of those places that has an incredible collection. We would have to face artists; and ask about borrowing these objects, stating: *we're not using this opportunity to show your work.*

AP But we have to talk about that show, because for us that was the crucial transformation. We had to talk a lot with Susanne on how to shape it. Lonelyfingers is in that sense not only for artists. We also work with authors, philosophers and designers, and talk with them about their own processes of conceiving ideas. So actually we started a conversation with a designer, a conceptual designer friend of ours who had a lot of experience in interior design. We worked with him on how to shape the space of that exhibition, because we finally ended with the idea of showing these objects or 'finds' in a space that had certain conditions, where we

could showcase those objects in a way that was a little bit different to a normal art show. There was that set up where you could spend time comfortably, sitting, reading, listening to things, looking at things, having coffee and then also participating in or listening to conversations. That was the crucial second part of that project. Every second weekend, we had conversations with artists about the pieces that they lent us for the exhibition, which was super interesting. It was also an intense, time-consuming thing to do. The museum was very happy as it brought a lot of people there on a regular basis during that exhibition, and it put those objects into context.

DH I remember at that time there was this conversation going on about the art market. It was a very important topic at that moment, but it was only the beginning of artists reacting to it. We were this because we were having conversations with artists about this, and of course there were artists from all over the world. We had artists from Poland, Portugal, the States. We realised that we didn't want to have standard artist talks, because it was not like we were faking the conversation taking place in the bar.

AP In the end we did have a conversation with those guys like we would have in our studio, which was a little different than a normal artist talk.

NH How would you define what lonelyfingers is? I feel even the name lonelyfingers relates to this somehow.

AP Well it's a little bit difficult to say, because it's one thing where lonelyfingers the name came from and then there is this question of what lonelyfingers is right now. It's basically an ongoing question that we are asking ourselves all the time. It seems nowadays that we're in a period where people need a label:

What are you exactly? Are you an artist collective? Are you something commercial? Are you artist-curators? People want to have a clear answer and we're saying no to that. So, this makes it a little difficult for people to work with us sometimes. This is an artist initiative that is being conceived by the both of us and that tries to be collaborative as often as possible. We can't clearly say we're an online platform or an artist collective, because we started lonelyfingers exactly not to fit one mould but to have the freedom to do different things that we want to do or that we want to react to. Which maybe started with a very early collaboration in 2008. We did a project called 'Building Beyond Success' and that was our very first artist collaboration between Diango's practice and my own. The financial crisis hit really hard, and as an artist if you plan a show you can't really react to something that is happening here and now. You can make an art piece but you will only show that art piece months later somewhere.

DH

Which is basically the difference between what's happening to today's music. For example, an artist will go to the recording studio and say, oh shit I want to talk about what happened, and they will record directly and it will then be all over the world. In an exhibition there is this delay because everything takes time. We want to say, no, no, no. If we have a show now, we can talk about what happened even now.

AP

So the exhibition in Mönchengladbach became a kind of experience, as an artistic commentary of what was happening around us in that moment. So that was a first attempt to do something like that with lonelyfingers. Now it's very important to have that freedom to be able to take lonelyfingers any time in different directions, if we have an idea that we think needs addressing.

NH I understand there is one very central facet to lonelyfingers, which is a sort of forum function.

AP

In the end, I'm still okay when people describe us as a sort of artistic platform. I'm not sure we're an online platform any longer, but we're kind of trying. I mean, sometimes I also see ourselves as hosts. Depending on what sort of project we're working on, we can host someone within a collaborative art work, or whichever kind of work, we can host someone in a physical space or online.

NH It's interesting to hear about this experience in Mönchengladbach. The next question I have is, how do you see your relationship to mainstream organisations?

AP

When we started lonelyfingers, we got a lot of backlash for being seen as anti-institutional or something. We don't see it like that at all. We see ourselves as an addition. We're not interested in institutional critique. Having all those amazing institutions and modern art history in this area. It's super fascinating because we didn't grow up with that, so we're still discovering it.

I grew up in a monocultural society without contemporary art institutions entirely in former East Germany. So we're really just seeing ourselves as artists wanting to add something. We are looking at the artists' biography a lot. Artists' lives are funny. You're in a very collaborative and communicative situation as an art student or someone who is doing residencies. That very communicative part continues actually in your work with institutions or galleries. But in terms of your artistic exchange with colleagues, with artists, it becomes much odder the longer you work. If you are not really part of a collective or something similar, we see that artists are often very lonesome people. So we wanted to do something about that, and have more conversation going on.

- NH** The next question is about how you see your relationship to the locality? I might mean Düsseldorf in this case.
- AP** I would probably enlarge it to the Rhineland. The Rhineland is sort of an idea for me. We are not attached to a particular city here, and we see it more as this region that has been immensely supportive for our work both individually and as lonelyfingers. Also I think lonelyfingers grew out of this Rhineland idea a little bit. The Rhineland is a place where the mentality of the local people really enables arts and culture to thrive through their openness and their curious nature. There is an immense active network, and I think it's getting rediscovered now because of all those artists living here, the institutions, the off-spaces and so on.
- DH** Which is super rich. Obviously the academy is delivering many artists and they then sustain the art scene. There are also all the galleries here and in Cologne. Artists tend to go and build off-spaces, so there was already a tradition for that here.
- AP** And on the other hand you have all the international artists coming here because you have that density of institutions. You do not only have the locally produced artist talent but you have a lot of people from all over the world coming to exhibit. So this is of course, is the thing that we work with.
- DH** And also because in the region, writing about what's actually happening is so little. Writing criticism, reflecting on what's happening here is really bad. So who is talking about artists and their values?
- AP** Lonelyfingers has partly been conceived to work with people that are not here, realising that the general picture of an artist's reality is nomadic. The conditions

change, the places change, and we want to give continuity to certain exchanges and contacts with other artists. You can easily bring people in and you can offer a lot to people. When we made the show at Museum Abteiberg, we had all these artists staying with us. Depending on their focuses, ideas, research we could come up with an amazing place somewhere here in the region to go to, to basically also start or continue our organisation somehow in those other places, which was also nice to extend to Antwerp, actually, and seeing how close places can be and how different also.

- NH** Well the way I understand your project in Antwerp is that it extended from the 'conversation pieces' to talk about biography and that aspect of artists' lives as well.
- DH** Yes, we were conscious at that moment that we were here to talk about the life of artists and even the format of our CV. At a certain point having a CV with a structure was important for artists. People would look at your CV and say, *okay, where are the shows, what kind of residencies and grants, and in what collections?* etc. We thought, maybe that's not really important. When we came to you, what we can also not forget was that it was the beginning of the refugee crisis in Europe. There's the refugee crisis but there's political changes in Turkey happening in the last couple of years and we had a lot of friends there also trying to come to live in Germany in order to be able to work freely.
- AP** So that was also of course a period of time when certain shifts were happening. Privileged Western white artists have many possibilities to shape his or her life according to what they want to reach for, and then there are very different situations that we are aware of, of course – Diango's biography began in Cuba. That led us then towards a connection with history, researching

the history of Antwerp, and its colonial past, but also focused on artists' biography.

DH We started reading the biography of Wifredo Lam. He was one of those artists that left through Marseille, getting one of the Peggy Guggenheim funded ships out of Europe. They were fleeing from the Nazis. And then you realise actually the importance of, of course, historical events, but also the impact of these historical events on an artist's life and work.

AP Lam, for example, suffered for the rest of his life from not being able to work in Paris anymore. He had to leave as a non-white (part Chinese, part Afro-Cuban-Spanish) man and go back to Havana. But he basically tried for decades after to leave Havana and go and live in New York, but he didn't receive a visa. He couldn't. His wife went though, but then he went back to Paris after the war, then realised Paris after the war was not the Paris that he had worked in before. So that was how we were thinking about biography.

DH Yes, mapping those moments and then putting it together with historical events. But not of course becoming too didactic. There is also the motif we used of the hands. There is the whole history of reading hands, and we could define those lines on hands as sort of maps. Especially asking artists to portray the hands themselves. It's in one way looking at how particular each of the artists' hands are. Though in the end we realised that it's actually just hands. If you see the context of how the European economy is functioning nowadays, together with the artist's way of working and thinking, they become more of an island than ever.

AP Maybe what we have to say, that when we were researching in Antwerp, we also finally realised that

it was really interesting to think about how biography shapes the specific piece of art that an artist makes. It was really hard to visualize, so that's why we ended up also in Antwerp trying to do that ourselves first.

NH Well I think some of these things you're raising move to the next question about how receptive you are to money. How do you sustain lonelyfingers?

AP With a lot of personal engagement and being broke sometimes. Especially after the Abteiberg show where we put so much time in, we were eventually literally broke. This year we haven't done so much lonelyfingers stuff yet because basically we were both active in our own fields and lonelyfingers, in a way, exists in those in-between times. Which is really nice because you then have something to fall back on also. And there is always like some in-between time somewhere, you know. Even if it is only the time that you're travelling or something. But we've been thinking also about enlarging our structure, bringing in one or two people to work with us. But it's something that hasn't happened yet, it might happen at a certain point.

DH There are so many morals that you could apply to collaboration. So you really have to smart-choosing the morals before having a beautiful cooperation. It could be really beautiful, it could be really damaging.

AP We have to adjust the way we act as lonelyfingers in order to offer other people, to ask for their collaboration, but to offer them also a sort of structure that works. That no one says: *oh that was kinda bullshit, I put tons and tons of energy and money into it and I'm not happy about it*. It's very important for us because it's a collegial project, and we want to find ways for people to be happy with the outcome.

NH And then one last question: what's next for lonelyfingers?

AP Well, we're thinking about one or two things right now, but it's in the very early stages.

DH The thing is that we want to discuss how you get into this idea of crafting a model rather than an object and we're excited about that. It's not about solving your problems purely as an artist, because you have the same problems that every individual has in every society. But we look to find a way of doing things together, not as a single artist, but as a group of artists.

AP The funny thing is that it was a relatively small-scale project within the exhibition space at Museum Abteiburg. It created a lot of ripples outside of the institution. A lot of people talked about it, and we got feedback from people that were not even in it but who saw it or heard about it and talked to us. So there is this enhancement somehow for these projects now.

DH The most crazy thing for me to see that anxiety of success that increasingly artists are facing today. The idea that you have to be you, you need to produce something, and then it has to be of a certain standard. And with social media, people around the world can say: *wow, this is really great, this is really nice, etc.* Social media is not a gallery or a fair. But actually people, normal people on social media can say, *this is good*.

AP The other thing is that basically lonelyfingers is a parallel thing happening for us. We have this ongoing conversation with some of our oldest collaborators discussing how important it is as artists to find a language to go on the record about our ideas and practices. And I think that we also want to work with artists who are themselves writing in this region.

There is a certain focus nowadays in the art world on a few main centres like Berlin and New York, which are getting over-recorded in a way. But as you know yourself with Antwerp, there are certain amazing places that might find it very hard to get heard and visited nowadays, even if they have a very active scene. We're interested in documenting what is going on in some of those places, perhaps developing some actions in different places and building a project from that, inviting people to contribute works or texts regarding that issue of being outside a main centre.

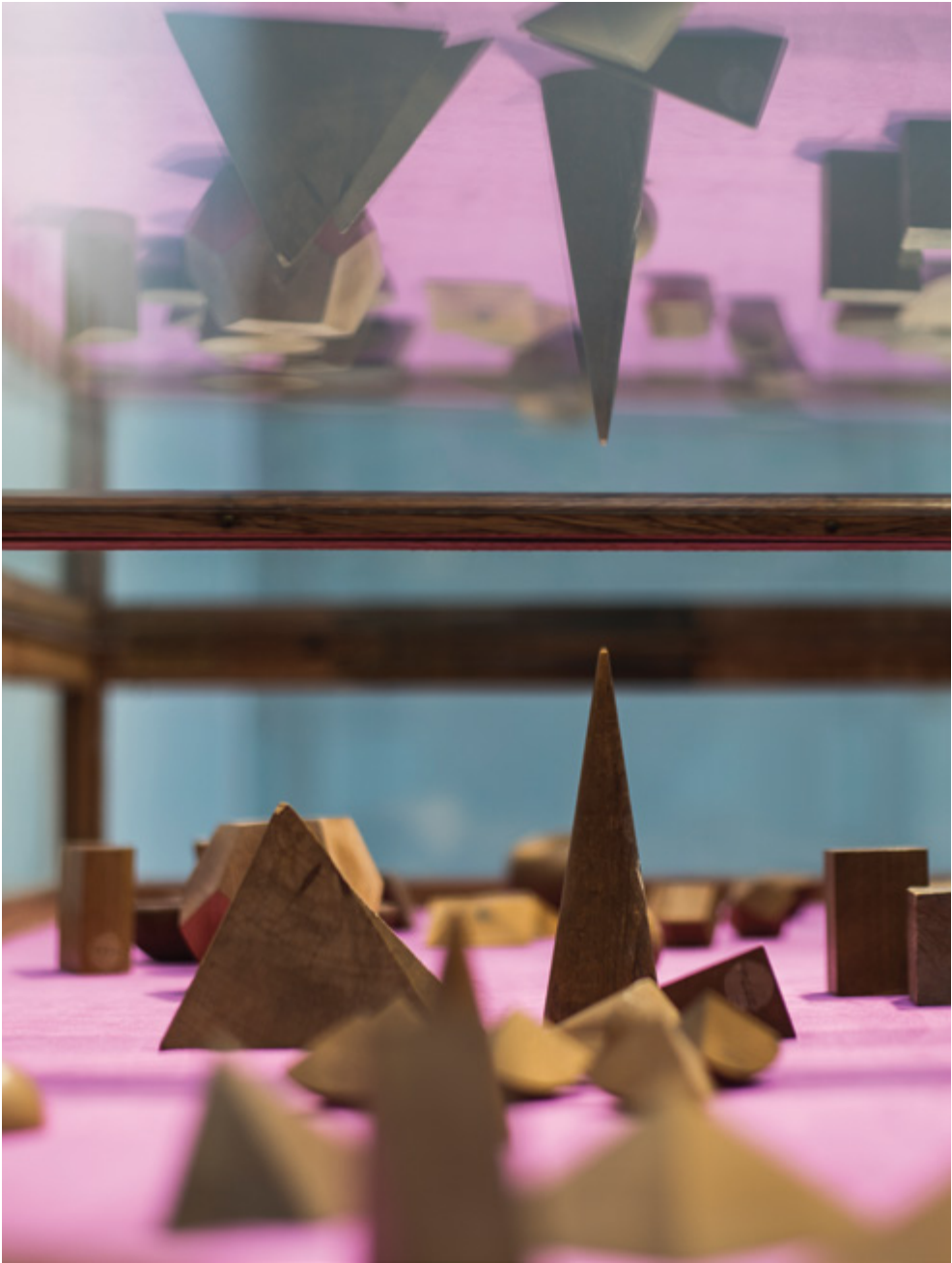
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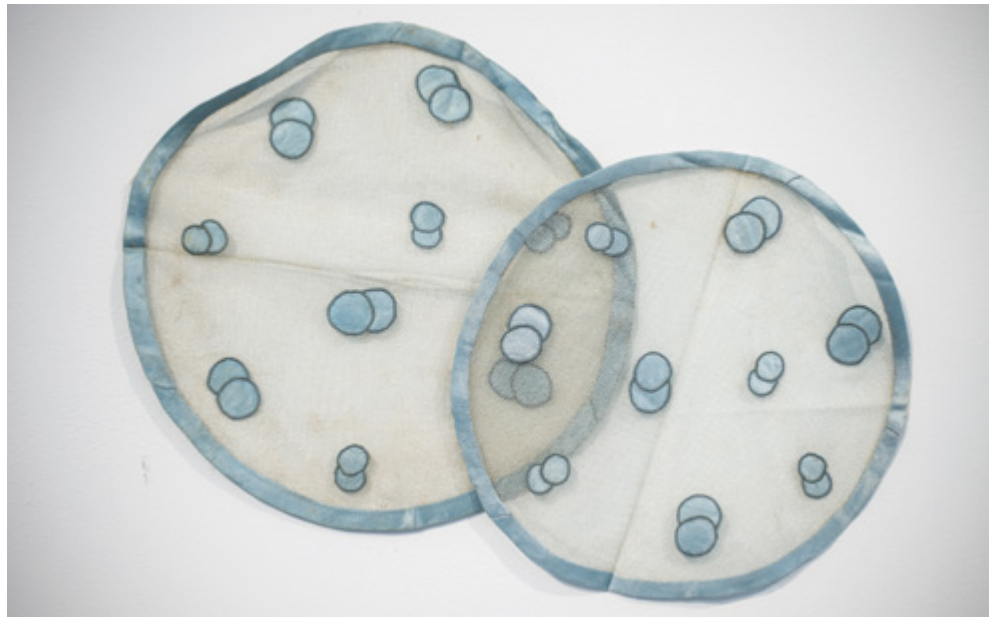
lonelyfingers, *Maps of You* (detail), 2016



lonelyfingers, *Maps of You* (detail), 2016



lonelyfingers, *Maps of You* (detail), 2016



lonelyfingers, *Maps of You* (detail), 2016



lonelyfingers, *Maps of You* (detail), 2016



lonelyfingers, *Maps of You* (detail), 2016



◆ #8 Pages (Rotterdam)

Interview with Babak Afrassiabi and Nasrin Tabatabai

4 June 2018, Nav Haq & Alan Quireyns

NH Why did you decide to start Pages?

BA We started Pages in 2004, initially as a response to how we were experiencing the contemporary art world, more specifically the representations of ‘non-Western’ practices and histories that were circulating at the time. What triggered the idea to start the magazine was the desire to deal with more layered and more complex questions regarding the historical conditions of these other practices, especially within Iran. Practices located outside of Western history were being contextualised by the art world in ways we found problematic. In fact, we found the whole question of context here to be problematic. So, for us, the magazine at that time became a tool with which we could understand the different historical and socio-political factors that play a role in defining art practice, also our own. An earlier example could perhaps be the third issue which was edited around the idea of a search for a suitable location for an independent art space in Tehran. Of course, here the search was a pretext for addressing some historical and political issues regarding the space of art.

NT It has also changed a lot since then. From one issue to the next, Pages went through a transformation, responding to how our views on

art practice developed. It gradually became a research tool closer to our own work, or, better to say, more specific to the subject of a particular project we were doing at the time. And the collaboration and contribution of other cultural practitioners whether in Iran or outside allowed us to look at the topics of each issue in a broader perspective.

BA Yes. We started the project fourteen years ago with a certain idea. But then those ideas became more defined. For example, already from the first issue we realised that working with authors that are based in Iran and with us being based here, having to deal with translation, we were suddenly confronted with other questions, which were much more complicated than what we had expected. How would you give space to such questions and the kind of practices they engage in?

NT The topics we dealt with in early issues of *Pages* were directly the result of our encounter with the issues that were in that particular moment engaging different writers, artists and intellectuals in Iran. The very first issue with the title 'public and private' addressed the conflict of the public and private spaces and lives in Iran at the time, which was a subject among Iranian intellectuals. This conflict was widely discussed in relation to architecture, photography, cinema, etc. To look at extreme differences between public life and private life in the social context of Iran in that moment was interesting, but then how artists, film-makers and different authors dealt with it and adapted their practices to it, was something we were interested to address in the first issue. Generally, *Pages* has always hosted different encounters from different localities either from Europe or the West and the East, but always with a specific focus on Iran.

NH Just to understand, around 2004 you were in Rotterdam?

BA & NT Yes.

NH How would you define your organisation?

NT Pages is an artist-run magazine. That's why I don't know if we can call it an organisation. Maybe I don't understand the word organisation here.

NH I guess we kept it quite open. Organisation in the sense that you are coordinating something and it manifests in something. I think we ask the question because we know there are other things that you do.

NT Yes. Let's say it is an artist-run magazine that goes beyond what we understand as artist-run magazine. Because our own projects often overlap with issues dealt with in the magazine.

BA I agree. Already the editorial approach we were developing since the third issue was following our own artistic concerns, but also influencing our practice. The magazine became a platform where we could engage other people to collaborate and discuss those concerns with us. Now it has become more an integral part of our artistic practice. That's also why the numbers have decreased. The time we spend on each issue has increased. In order to publish one issue, we have to travel more than once to Iran and generally have long-term conversations with our contributors. And the contributions may evolve from several ongoing email conversations, engagements, sitting in coffee bars, visiting homes, WhatsApp, Skype. Now we are working on the tenth issue, it's following again the same process.

NH What is your relationship to mainstream organisations?

NT I think the boundaries between mainstream and so-called 'alternative' organisations are very vague these days. And that I say is a lot defined by economic dependency that affects both kinds of organisations. We have been collaborating with different institutions as artists, and some of these institutions also supported the publication of the magazine.

BA It is also a relationship that is productive in the sense that we retain our autonomy. The first issue of Pages was published by Witte de With. That was how it started. It was parallel to an exhibition that we had put together there. Catherine David, the director of Witte de With at that time, was concerned with similar questions. It was important that there was a kind of mutual understanding between us and WdW, which is not completely a mainstream institution either. As we said we were lucky we were able to collaborate with institutions that were willing to engage with Pages. It's a kind of support that requires a lot of patience. Like I said making an issue of Pages is always a long-term process. So, it's always amazing when institutions are open to that.

NT The magazine often was produced in parallel to our exhibitions, and the organisations we have worked with always agreed that it is published even a year after the exhibition. With Pages 9 we had the show in 2011 at Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, but the magazine was only published at the end of 2013. This was the only way we could make the issue.

AQ What is your relationship to your locality? In your case it is very interesting, because how would you define your locality, being in Rotterdam, moving to Brussels and having this connection with Iran?

BA It's an interesting question. If we understand locality as a kind of context where you work, then I would say we

understand locality not as a predefined context, but rather as a situation that is constantly changing. Especially in relation to our magazine. The question of locality is a complex one and I think from our perspective we cannot define it as one place, but maybe several shifting places at once. While we are here, and our practice is based here in Rotterdam so far, at the same time a lot of the engagements and processes happen in several other places. The question of locality is something that is very fragile too. It's a fragile experience. For instance, I would say the question of locality that is dealt with in our issue about translation is dealing with it from a different perspective than the ninth issue titled "Seep". On a purely practical level the magazine has been communicating in a contemporary art context in Europe, within institutions. In Iran, it hasn't been engaging with art institutions. There is no such infrastructure for these kinds of practices, and there is also the censorship issue. So in Iran the engagement and distribution of the magazine, but also the discussions, were happening first hand with our direct collaborators. It is a kind of one-on-one distribution.

NT In terms of collaboration or contribution, whether in Iran or elsewhere, it is always a working process that is more or less the same with all of our authors. Maybe in Iran there is more intense engagement, perhaps because sometimes the topics are felt closer to the everyday experience and more is at stake.

AQ How would you define your readers? Is that a specific group? Is that also the locality you're looking for, or is it more open than that?

NT A magazine is a medium for engaging with a place, not only the one you live in. With Pages, the readers were always very diverse, and not necessarily from the Netherlands or Iran. I think there will always be people who connect one way or another to its content. It is imaginable that an

article written in response to one locality resonates with a totally different one. Last December in a symposium at MOCAA, South Africa, the moderator interestingly paraphrased Saleh Najafi's paper 'Hope Against Hope', published in Pages Issue 8, in relation to the topic of the symposium, which was about the significance of archives from the perspective of apartheid and its abolition in 1994 and through trauma of displacement, dehumanisation, oppression and guilt. When you reflect on a particular history and its archives in the magazine, you are indirectly speaking about other localities as well, which share aspects of this historical experience, though in completely different ways. I also think that a magazine in this way can establish a sense of location and locality that is not bound to a geography.

BA Exactly. The idea of locality is something you recreate each time, by setting up an arrangement of elements. Either they are texts, different voices or different images, and then you create a certain notion or experience of locality. Locality is something defined by history. By historical experiences so complex that the idea of locality we understand here in this place is very different than the idea of locality in a place like Iran. So, it makes it very complicated to talk about locality as something that is concrete. I think locality is something that is constantly created and is constantly initiated and regenerated, by setting up certain forms, certain energies, certain voices together. And then at that moment, maybe for a brief moment in time, something of locality could be experienced. It is also quite fluid. Like music. Music in terms of the jam session, which is actually something that is very introvert. You don't have an audience. You have a group of people coming together and making music for each other's sake at that moment. And when they are gone, that locality is gone also. Maybe there is a recording of it, maybe not, usually not. The relationship in each project rethinks this question again.

NH How do you sustain Pages financially and logistically?

NT It has been divided between applying for funding but also receiving support from institutions with whom we worked for an exhibition parallel to the publication. And sometimes we have to choose to have a catalogue or the magazine, so we chose the second.

NH Do you do the distribution yourself?

BA We had a distributor, but it has always been difficult. Now we do the distribution ourselves. Plus, we have recently launched an online platform next to the print version where most of the material is available online.

NT The future print versions will be distributed through this platform as well, and it can also be printed on demand. This is what we thought was the best solution to continue working.

NH What's next?

NT We started the idea for the online platform a while ago but its production went through an exhausting process. It's just been recently launched. This was a necessary shift for us. From now on, each print version will be edited around a specific singular topic. We discussed that it could be field research, completely derived from a location. But then at the same time the online platform is hosting a variety of different materials. Not based on finished articles but more as ongoing projects. With the online platform, invited authors can publish their contributions in different stages through a period of time. I can give an example of Mehdi Navid, a writer based in Iran. Before we launched the platform, we approached him for a contribution. For a long time, he had an idea in mind for a

serial text that he found suitable for the platform, and started to write it. His writing is a form of fiction, a series of short texts based on confessions written during interrogation. When you are interrogated by authorities, one way is they take your mobile and they go alphabetically through your contact list and ask you to write down how you know them one by one. Like small portraits. The author took this as an idea for his writing and started alphabetically from A and wrote a series of short fictional texts about fictional characters. Nine of these texts are online and translated into English. There are several other ongoing projects on the platform. We thought it to be good if these different authors come together and discuss their contributions during a series of meetings in Tehran. These conversations interestingly went beyond their own contributions and resulted in a series of conversations about writing and translation and their relationship to power.

BA The platform is in a way also an approach to publishing and archiving itself. It will host these ongoing projects, with authors being able to publish their own writings or any form of contribution without us intervening. They can upload their material directly and can continuously edit it. In this sense, the platform becomes a collaborative publishing platform, without us taking a strong editorial position. What we do is basically translate the writings. At the other end, readers can gather different materials together and generate a pdf for themselves but also publish it as a unique compilation online or have it printed on demand. At the same time, if it happens that the site is down (because of technical problems or some outside blocking), readers can still request and receive the online content through email. There is an automated email system that sends out the requested material.

NT One of the motivations for making this platform was to tackle all the issues we had faced since the start of Pages – printing, distributing and editing

in a more direct and practical way. But it's a new platform. We just launched it and now the work starts. We have to experience it and see how it works. It's just the beginning.

AQ If you look at your time in the LODGERS now, what was the influence for your project?

BA The residency came at a very interesting moment, precisely when we were thinking about a new project. At the same time, we were also working on this platform. It was a transition moment, where we had to figure out a lot of things in terms of how we want to approach the project both conceptually and formally. The project is about opium. During the residency, we came into contact with people from the university of Antwerp who we now continue to collaborate with. In fact, we usually never go to residencies. We've been to two or three residencies, but this time being free of obligations was really important. Key decisions were made during the residency for this project on opium. The tenth issue will be very much tied to the opium project which involved putting together an archive of fictions from the past hundred years that dealt with scenes of opium smoking. First, in Iranian literature and now from places that have a history in opium trade.

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Selection from *Inhale*, Pages magazine issue 10 (upcoming), 2016, installation view, photo: Nasrin Tabatabai & Babak Afrassiabi



Research for *Inhale*, Pages magazine issue 10 (upcoming), installation view, 2016-2017, photo: Nasrin Tabatabai & Babak Afrassiabi



Pages, *Counting Opium Smoke*, Opium pipe connected to an inhaler machine with a laser diffraction for analysing particle size and distribution, film still, 2016



Research for *Inhale*, Pages magazine issue 10 (upcoming), 2016–2017, installation view, photo: Nasrin Tabatabai & Babak Afrassiabi

lonelyfingers, *Maps of You*
(Diango Hernández and Anne Pöhlmann)





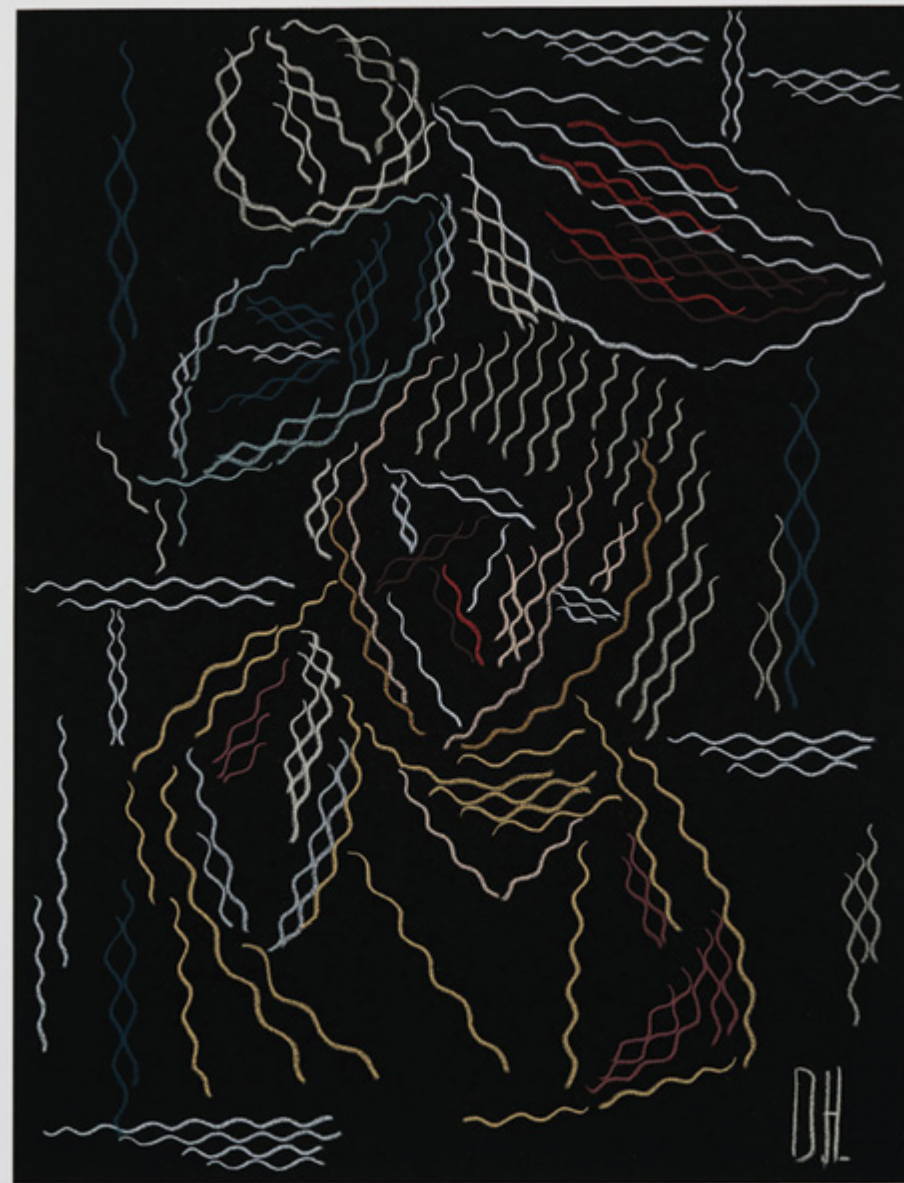
Diango Hernández (lonelyfingers), *La embajada del Perú*, 2016, ink on paper



Diango Hernández (lonelyfingers), *La embajada del Perú*, 2016, ink on paper



Diango Hernández (lonelyfingers), *La embajada del Perú*, 2016, pencil on paper



Diango Hernández (lonelyfingers), *La embajada del Perú*, 2016, pencil on paper



Diango Hernández (lonelyfingers), *La embajada del Perú*, 2016, pencil on paper



Anne Pöhlmann (lonelyfingers), *M HKA*, 2016, direct print on cotton





Anne Pöhlmann (lonelyfingers), *M HKA*, 2016, direct print on cotton

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Baptiste Elbaz & Antoine Turillon, *Nouveaux lieux, Nouvelles chances*, 2011/2017, mobile bar, fitting in the M HKA's smallest lift, photo: Antoine Turillon / Hotel Charleroi, 2017



#9



Hotel Charleroi (Charleroi)

Interview with Adrien Tirtiaux

2 July 2018, Nav Haq

NH You're just one of the Hotel Charleroi group, but I guess it'd be good to start with hearing a bit about why you started Hotel Charleroi in the beginning. What was the reason?

AT It's quite simple really. I used to study in Vienna, and then when I came back to Belgium, I didn't know anybody in Belgium and nor did people know me. So, I thought it would be nice to start something over here.

NH How many years were you away for?

AT Eight years. After returning to Belgium, I was thinking about where would be an interesting place to work, and to do site specific things. I work with site specificity. I came to Charleroi a few times and I thought it was an interesting place. And the network I had was of people in Vienna. So, I started with inviting these Austrian friends over here, and showing them Charleroi. We decided that actually what we wanted is to have a residency there, and to be able to live and work in Charleroi. And that's what we did. Hotel Charleroi is like a residency for us at the beginning. Then we invited a few friends to come over, and of course we then thought, OK it's nice to be here, but we also want to exhibit. So, we started to organise projects there, and it became

this structure where we always invited artists for residencies and then made one project every year. I think we had the will to do something on our own, but in a location where there was something special. Antwerp, Brussels – without knowing anybody it's rather difficult to exist. But then it appeared that there were a lot of people who were curious about Charleroi. So, we had a lot of people from Antwerp and Brussels coming to Charleroi. It started like that.

NH But were you living in Charleroi, or you were just interested in the place but based somewhere else?

AT Myself, I was living in Antwerp already. My parents live not far from Charleroi, but they have no real connection with the city personally.

NH And were the three of you involved together from the beginning?

AT Yes, I think first I invited Hannes Zebedin to join, then I invited Antoine Turillon. They both came for a week and we hung out around Charleroi. Both were up for trying something there. So that's how we started.

NH I'm curious about that decision actually. About Charleroi. I'd be interested in hearing more about that, because it's a bit outside of what people see as the main centres for contemporary art in Belgium. But what was it that attracted you?

AT The main impression when we got there 10 years ago was like if time stood still. It was still in the '70s somehow. You had these industries only partially still running, and even in the centre you didn't have a single street with any sign of gentrification, where you would see for example an organic shop or a nice terrace where people would sit. It was just like a place out of time. At that time, it was maybe a bit naive, but I think the things we were interested in were the art of

the '70s basically, and then trying to invent conceptual art for public space. We thought our generation didn't know that art, but we referred to it a lot as being a very idealistic period where artists would be part of a political discourse and societal engagement. And so, in some ways going back to a place which was like being in the '70s was a way to refer again to these movements and just see what you can do. In the first year, we did some 'land art', but in the urban context. That was our artistic motivation. But, on the other hand, there is also a lot of free space – space ready to take – including in the centre. You can just appropriate anything you want. For one show we did, it was purely illegal. It was in the old city centre and there were artworks everywhere. You could do anything. As long as you didn't bother people, everybody left you in peace. That feeling of freedom was also very motivational and inspiring. We noticed that all the artists that we invited became fascinated in this derelict place, but there is also a certain aesthetic that comes out of the structures of things there. It's just a very inspiring context.

NH So, it's not that you felt there was something sort of missing. You didn't think there was a sort of lack that it could be filled with some kind of initiative?

AT I think, if there was a lack, it was that there was no artist-in-residence organisation. So, we had to organise a residency ourselves. There is actually a Centre for Contemporary Art in Charleroi and some other initiatives. So, there was not really a lack in that sense, but everything felt dysfunctional. There was nobody going to see exhibitions outside of the openings. The initiatives were addressing a public that was not really there. We were more surprised to realise that there were a lot of things existing, but that they didn't really connect with the city in a way that seemed relevant or fruitful. I think what Hotel Charleroi started to do is to

collaborate with all these institutions and tried to create connections, links, between them and some other things in the city, and those areas between the city and outside.

NH This also could be what I mean by a lack. You're right, there are cultural institutions there but it doesn't necessarily mean that there's a support structure for artists necessarily. Maybe there is an institution and it's making its programming, but actually it's slightly separate to a scene. And actually, what you guys have been doing was working with artists. Something quite different, I think.

AT Yes, because you could say there is a small cultural scene. There are people that are into culture in Charleroi, and of course they were our first public and we were working with them. The more contemporary art public came from all over Belgium, or even further away. But we also didn't necessarily want to address ourselves purely to a contemporary art public. For us it was very interesting that the main public was still people from Charleroi because we were working in public space. And it turned out that it was a balance between the local public and the contemporary art public. It was really interesting that we could make it work on two levels. That was I think for me the most interesting aspect.

NH How would you define what Hotel Charleroi is?

AT I will speak in the past tense because Hotel Charleroi basically ended the projects in Charleroi in 2014. We met at the beginning of each year and focused on one aspect of the city – one neighbourhood, or one place in the city – where we thought it would be interesting to do something. Then we invited between 10 and 50 artists to come over and see that neighbourhood as part of a residency. They would come and make a proposal for a project, and then at the end of the summer there was one month where everybody came back to set up the

exhibition. The last year it was more like a festival or a public event, but in many different locations. So, that was the format.

NH You've effectively answered this question already, but maybe could you talk more about the relationship of the project to Charleroi itself. How do you define that relationship?

AT It was the most important thing because the way we saw it was really site specific. We would address the sites and deal with something we were interested in. In its first year, this was clearly the more modern industrial past. The second year, it was the modernist structures in the centre and the non-space that it creates. Basically, the leftovers of modernity in terms of spaces that you encounter in the city. Then in the third year we focused more on the political aspects. There were all these political crises, and we wanted to ask how an artist can have some kind of relevance in a political discourse. There was also a year when we went into some socially 'crushed' neighbourhoods, where it was more about addressing the social role of the artist. In the last edition, it was focused on the construction site of a shopping mall, and was about questioning the economics of the situation. So, I think we had a very large spectrum. We would focus on different aspects each time.

NH So, most of the artists you invited made new artworks responding to these aspects?

AT I think it was only new works, yes. We always set up a kind of context by choosing a building or a neighbourhood out of dialogue with artists in the residencies. Sometimes ideas were naturally in the air, sometimes artists took on other research. But it was always through works that the best ideas related to the context of Charleroi came out. Sometimes the work was very abstract. We could always explain to people that you

can relate a work to one issue or another, but at the same time they also have their own existence as contemporary artworks.

NH And of course, the new initiative was called Hotel Charleroi as well, in reference to the overarching city context.

AT When we invited the artists, especially at the beginning, there was really no budget at all. We were mostly counting on the enthusiasm of the artists to come to Charleroi and produce work there. We had no other motivation. But it turned out to be perfect, because a lot of the local initiatives in Charleroi only fight about who gets so much money and from whom. We just made sure that the people would have a place to sleep, would be able to travel, and the rest we could try and fix. I think a lot of the works that were produced in Charleroi were somehow sketches or prototypes for things that could be made much bigger or more precisely if there was a bigger budget. But, sometimes, most of the time, the essence was there.

NH It ran for a four- or five-year period basically. So how did you sustain it financially and logistically over this time?

AT The logistics were super interesting. It's really a story of starting from nothing and increasing from year to year. The first year was financed by ourselves. We just rented a house where we could invite people, and then do things. The second year, it was financed by Austrian funding, because Hannes and Antoine were based there; and so we had I think 5,000 euros from Austria. We could ask foreign artists to do something in Charleroi. Then the third year we started to receive money from the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. We received that in the last years. In the very last year, we got 2,000 euros from the City of Charleroi. That was like an achievement in itself. We were not asking for huge budgets. But we always got money we needed

to organise sub-projects too. It was not huge and probably if we had continued, we could have turned it into structural funding. I think for this kind of scale of interventions, it's possible to find the budget, but we really had to ask every year. Though, once people know you, then they see what you do.

Hosting was important. There were artists that came maybe three times or four times, but there were always new artists. There was also some kind of artists' family growing that would come again and again and develop further what they were working on the year before. We like to say that a hotel is a place where you come and go, but you can also always come again. And I think that made a difference for our presence in Charleroi. So if we speak of the five years we were there, the sustainability really came from the fact of always coming back and proposing something new in different neighbourhoods. Every summer we spent in Charleroi. It was a bit like the summer project.

NH So, in your eyes the project has more or less come to an end, would you say?

AT For me, the project really made sense as long as we were in Charleroi. Hotel Charleroi is this project where we do things in Charleroi and bring people to Charleroi. And then of course next to that we had some participation in institutional things elsewhere, like we did for LODGERS, but it's not as interesting as what happened in Charleroi. If you reach a point where you want to continue, then you must institutionalise yourself and have a fixed base. That was not our purpose.

NH So you are always at a point in a way where you have to make a decision whether to formalise the structure.

AT We also talked about becoming small again. In the last festival, there were I think 60 artists involved and we

were totally overwhelmed. And then we thought that maybe next year we can make something again with just the three of us or with a much smaller group. But to me the dynamic of the project was really this growth – a new challenge every year, even more ambitious. It was complicated to think of getting smaller again, and breaking expectations. We put it on hold. If we make something again in Charleroi, then it will not be from this off-position, but it would be by being invited by an institution or something like that.

NH This relates to my next question. How would you see the relationship of something like Hotel Charleroi to the mainstream?

AT Certainly, it's an off-programme. It's not directed to the mainstream. In terms of contemporary art, it was directed mostly at people interested in alternative projects. Not saying that we wouldn't make it mainstream, but it was important that the works are not 'complete' when we address public space. It was more about what can be offered on the side. We were not against institutions because we were working with them. We were implementing connections between institutions and the city basically. There are really a lot of interesting cultural institutions in Charleroi but very little dialogue. I think we were always trying to mediate between institutions, art and public space, looking to create completely different relationships.

NH When you took part in the LODGERS programme, it was a little bit after the latter stages of the big projects that you did, so what did that mean to you? Was it just a moment to reflect on what you've done over the previous years?

AT I think basically it was a moment for the three of us together to be here in Belgium again, and reflect on the five years we've been working in Charleroi. We asked ourselves what can we now do elsewhere.

And that's how we came to that concept of re-enacting actions that happened in Charleroi in the context of the institution. It was what we could offer when we thought about being there in institutions. It's nice but it's not the original place where Hotel Charleroi happened. Re-enactment is probably one of the things that seemed the most meaningful to do, although to really understand what happened at M HKA, you needed to know the performances that happened in Charleroi and be in the museum at the right moment and the right spot.

NH The future of Hotel Charleroi is a question mark, but you've left it open.

AT At M HKA it became more and more clear that Hotel Charleroi really only makes sense in Charleroi. People have to come to Charleroi to discover the city. That's 60 percent of the job. In a context like M HKA, you always have to explain first: *What is Charleroi?* before: *What is Hotel Charleroi?* It's already a lot of explanation. There can be a need for translation. For me, it was very obvious at the M HKA actually, that to move something from Charleroi somewhere else needed a sort of translation. It becomes different and I think we lost a bit the focus that was our strength. But otherwise, we work individually as we already did.

www.hotelcharleroi.com



Claude Cattelain, *Colonne empirique en ligne*, 2008/2017, performance in Skyspace as a re-enactment of *Where do I go from here*, Adrien Tirtiaux, invited by Hotel Charleroi



Serge Stephan, *Charleroi Nails*, 2012/2017, Performance during the build-up of the exhibition A Temporary Futures Institute, photo: Antoine Turillon/ HOTEL CHARLEROI



Baptiste Elbaz & Antoine Turillon, *Nouveaux lieux, nouvelles chances*, 2011/2017, Mobile bar, fitting in the M HKA's smallest lift, photo: Antoine Turillon/HOTEL CHARLEROI



The Mental Masonry Lab (Mira Sanders & Cédric Noël), Substance Data Workshop, 2017



Stijn Van Dorpe, *Being Together Apart*, 2017, performance in glasshouse, M HKA terrace,
photo: Antoine Turillon / HOTEL CHARLEROI



◆ #10 Jubilee (Brussels)

Interview with Ronny Heiremans and Florence Cheval
24 July 2018, Nav Haq

RH Jubilee is about creating an environment in which we can enrich each other and come up with shared solutions and resources. That's the pragmatic version, but of course the moment you start thinking about that, you need to figure out with whom are we going to do this. You start looking at finding practices that really resonate with each other, and in that way, not only on a pragmatic level but which also connect on an artistic level. So basically, we came up with the idea to set up a platform that focuses on artistic research as one of our prime interests.

The artistic challenge finds itself on two levels basically. On the one hand, there is the individual practices of the artists. On the other hand, the members of Jubilee also have shared interests, which is the sustainability of our practice – how can we find the ability to survive as artists in an environment that is not necessarily very helpful, neither commercially nor institutionally? So, from that perspective, we set up a number of programmes that address this question. That's also what we did for our LODGERS residency.

NH So in the beginning, it started as being about artistic peers, and that's how you gravitated towards becoming a small organisation?

RH Most of the artists in Jubilee actually knew each other already. At a certain point, we decided to open it up a bit more because we were only three. As a Brussels-based organisation from the beginning, we tried to reflect the international composition of the local art scene, opening up to an international art community in terms of supporting research.

FC You mean the idea is to reach a second level, which would open it up to other artists, including from abroad also?

RH Yes, but trying to focus on the research part, because usually that is the hardest part for any artist to find support for. We thought that would be a very relevant profile for the organisation. First of all because it connects to what we do ourselves. And secondly, because we see there's very little out there except for institutionalised research – PhD in the arts. We apply for funding from the Flemish government to develop projects, but from our experience that's a rather complicated thing, and if we can offer support on the research level, including to a wider community of artists, that would be a worthwhile challenge to take up.

NH One thing we noticed was that often, when we were telling people about LODGERS, we struggled to describe most of the organisations that we had invited. We thought that there's something quite interesting about that. They are all quite hard to give a definition. How would you define what Jubilee is?

RH We are a platform for artistic research and production. Maybe it's also interesting to elaborate on the name Jubilee. It sounds festive – Jubilee – but also its etymology is fascinating. Jubilee refers to a pre-Biblical, Sumerian concept, in which the Jubilee law was actually a reset of debts. Every seven years, Sumerian rulers organised a debt event, Jubilee years, when

debts of citizens of the city-state were cancelled. Every 49 years, land was redistributed to the original owners. Basically, it was a mechanism for releasing social tension through a reset. It implied the destruction of an accounting system; the clay tablets on which debts were inscribed were brought together and were then thrown in the river where the clay – and the debt – would dissolve. We thought that was a strong image, and a strong statement to stand by.

Referencing David Graeber in *Debt: The first 5,000 Years*, where he describes how today we're living in an inversed Jubilee. It's not the rich bailing out the poor, but it is the poor bailing out the rich. We thought of that name as maybe something relevant in the context of our field of practice, for which we have this shared concern about developing a sustainable practice. How do you survive as an artist when a lot of things in the art world today strike us as being the inverse of what they should be? We thought the name Jubilee would cover these complex questions.

NH Still, there's a central ethos – a desire to reset certain operational modes that exist in the art world.

RH Well, for our practice specifically, which requires quite a lot of production – audio-visual production is expensive and very technical – it's hard to see the current economic model based on commercial representation via galleries and the art market, as a way to make a living. Just raising the question in itself is already a challenge. And of course, that's one of the things that guides us when we discuss programmes and ideas: *how can we bring this question to the table without sounding like we're complaining?* It's actually about questioning the place of contemporary art in our society. How you define these research-based practices, which hardly suit the economic models that are out there?

NH I would like to ask a little bit about the actual set up, because you're in a certain sense institutionalised – you have some financial support through public funds. Maybe there is this kind of setup that is typical of Belgium, in the sense that there are similar structures that exist, where a group of practitioners coming together to create their own support structure. I never really came across this anywhere else.

RH That's only recent. The only group that I know of that's been around for longer are August Orts in Brussels, who actually set an example that was very inspiring for a lot of practitioners. The question is of course how to bring together people that empathise with each other's problems and solutions. So, there needs to be a readiness to share and to open up towards each other, first of all. And then of course there is this legal environment that you can use, in terms of how to structure things. At the time that we were initiating Jubilee, we investigated co-operative structures. Basically, more like alternative structures to begin with. The problem was that co-operative structures would exclude any possibility of structural subsidies from the organisation. You could never include your overhead costs in a cultural grant from the government. I think this has changed. Today you can set up a co-operative structure, but at the time it was not possible. So we chose to be a non-profit structure, but we work in a co-operative spirit. We try to implement certain aspects of this shared economic environment into our non-profit structure. So that means mutualisation of risk, mutualisation of a certain set of resources, and of course discussing how to solve problems that at first sight seem insolvable, but you could solve them together. By providing liquidity when a project needs it, for instance. We can mobilise the necessary resources for a project, and balance the books later. All of these things are possible in this structure, which allows for moments that you recalibrate, where you reset the accounts basically.

NH What is the relationship of Jubilee to mainstream organisations? I suppose in this case that might be for example a kunsthalle or a museum.

RH We have a professional relationship with the landscape in which we work. We're not looking for controversy or provocation, but I think we clearly establish our position and then it's up to us to decide whether we engage in a collaboration or not.

FC I think in a way, you manage to create your own tools to have the power to be in discussion one-to-one with other institutions, especially when they're big. So, this gives a lot of autonomy let's say.

RH Returning to your first question, one of the reasons for initiating Jubilee was to empower the individual artist. If you have a strong position yourself then you have a more constructive dialogue, and I think the research that we initiated for LODGERS was fundamental in that respect.

NH Maybe that's a cue to move on to that question actually. Could you describe the project you developed for LODGERS, which is in a certain sense the beginning of a longer research trajectory.

RH For LODGERS we started working on *Caveat*, a project focusing on the sustainability of artist's practices, and the question if contracts could be an emancipatory tool for that. Jubilee initiated this project in collaboration with the young art historian Steyn Berghs, and with curator Florence Cheval.

FC The connection was made because I had started a PhD on representations of trials in contemporary art, which I had to give up at a certain moment because I had a full-time job and didn't

have the time to continue. But then, I think there were some echoes in our discussions that spontaneously made it eventually clear that it would make sense to participate. So, that's how we started discussing all this.

What became interesting was that having this opportunity at M HKA was also a means for us to reflect on the institution that invited us, and to reflect on its collection. M HKA became a case study, which was very helpful and very interesting and challenging.

RH

A number of artists and art workers were invited for discussions around specific legal topics, and also a number of specific organisations, one of which was M HKA. How can we establish a research group? What would be the key ideas? We ended up with a number of ways to formulate what a contract is through bottom-up, participative methods, and using the artist's experiential knowledge invested in the research, rather than a top-down approach. This is Jubilee in effect, trying to start from the practice itself and figure out what we need. In that way, it is very much starting from the artist's concerns and practices. But of course they're not operating in a void, and are constantly in contact with other players in the field – agents, institutions, producers, etc. *Caveat* is very much about the whole landscape, mobilising as many players as possible in this research, in order to figure out a way to address these questions of fair practice, sustainability, economic models and the general paradigm in which we operate. It's very ambitious to be honest, but we think *Caveat* asks the right questions.

NH

The next question I have here is about what comes next? Maybe this can be a question about both things, about *Caveat* and generally for Jubilee.

FC

Regarding *Caveat*, we recently reached another level because Jubilee managed to find some funding to have three people employed, not full-time but nearly full-time, to work on the project. Plus a number of artists' commissions and a number of experts have been invited to add to their reflection, again on the subject of the contract. Keeping in mind the fact that the main concern we have is sustainability of practice and ecology of artistic practices. We want to go further into all these notions that are not easy to define, but which we need to keep in mind in order to elaborate on these concrete problematics of how to make a living. And not only artists, other art workers as well, curators, writers, producers... It's a programme that will be developed over a number of years. Now we have the opportunity to do this for one year which will hopefully be prolonged. Well, over the next two years we are going to work with a number of institutions, especially in a Brussels-focused programme. It will help us address the Brussels art scene in the wider sense, which means that if it's the Brussels scene, it's the Belgian art scene which is also opening up to the international scene. We focus on the practice of artists. Which means they are the ones that are initiating the topics. In that respect, we're talking to a number of artists that use the basic notions of research as artistic material – people that investigate economics, law and all of these things. This way, their research becomes productive on two levels, as their practice, but in a certain way also as feeding into the more pragmatic aspects of our research. It also means we gain interest from the field itself, because when you talk to many artists about contracts, their answer is: "Well, I'm not interested in these things. It's not my thing. It's too abstract, too difficult to grasp", etc.

- RH** You can feel that in the educational environment that you're working in now also.
- FC** Yes. We are going to collaborate with a number of art schools to develop consciousness-raising.
- RH** Awareness-raising from the artist's position, but then inviting a guest-lawyer who can elaborate on the technical details. In that way we think it's much more mobilising, because then they understand better what it can mean for them. On that level, *Caveat* can contribute towards an educational environment, as for example at the Academy in Brussels (ARBA).
- NH** And Jubilee? What's next for Jubilee?
- RH** Jubilee is a very small structure. We have very modest structural support, which is fine to a certain extent, but of course for what we want to attain – developing research-based practices as well as being a supportive platform for that – I think there's a need to grow a bit. We have the ambition to grow, but it's not necessarily possible, because of course funding from the government has limited possibilities. So, next to that government money, we're also looking into other ways of finding funding to use for structural costs. But it's more like trying to figure out if there's basic shifts possible in terms of financing art, and that is an interesting topic to go into.
- NH** You more or less answered this, but what is your relationship to your locality? I suppose in this instance that might mean in Brussels, but maybe it could also mean in Belgium.
- RH** Locality is a question of course because most of the funding comes from Flanders. Most of us in the organisation are based in Brussels. The nice thing about Brussels these days is that it has become a magnet for a lot of international agents, not only practically

speaking because of the transport connection, but it's also increasingly become an artistic hub. So for us it made sense to connect to that locality. Vincent Meessen is a French-speaking artist, we're (Katleen Vermeir & Ronny Heiremans) Flemish. But from the beginning, we said we can't just be a Flemish organisation, we need to be more open and as complete as possible, mirroring our societies today.

- FC** But I like this question on locality. I was reading yesterday some material on situated knowledge and how it's not enough to situate something. Of course, it's very important, but also there is the fact that we're always shifting, we're moving from one city to another. We are connected through the internet of course, and so there is this back and forth that we cannot reduce. But then, connecting to the locality of Brussels is also very interesting because it's a hub for many artists coming and going.

- RH** Something like 'act local and think global'? Because this is your environment for reflecting on *Caveat*. We're working on Belgian law of course, because we're here. But at the same time, we reflect a wider community in which we're active. When we make an exhibition abroad, there is a reflection on the contract that we will sign from this local perspective, I guess.

- FC** But also the other way around. An artist coming from abroad, from anywhere to Belgium. That's a back and forth movement. It's also a discussion I had with Vincent. When he's going to Africa to make a film, how does he relate to people there? That's also something that is a reflection point for Jubilee.

- RH** What's nice about a project like *Caveat* is that we learn by doing. Because you can think about these things a lot, but actually the moment that you engage with

an artist, then, only then can you learn really from the practice and from the concrete problems that are interfering with his/her ambitions. And that's one of the goals of practice-based research, as opposed to theoretical research.

NH And the last question – again, you more or less answered it, but how do you sustain Jubilee financially and logistically?

RH First of all, we've been sustaining it with our benevolent work as we've only been structurally supported since January 2017, although we've been around since the end of 2012. Katrien Reist is worth mentioning here; she invested a lot of time to set it up with us, invested a lot of time and energy. Basically, it's been just our own time in the first instance. The structural funding that we have now, none of it, or almost none of it returns directly to us. It's used for employment of staff. Apart from that, Jubilee is project-based, so there's little overhead funding from this for staff and other costs. Beyond this, there can be co-productions. All the possibilities are there, and it's dependent on the project invitation. The question is: is the institution more of a collaborative co-producer? So, there's two levels. One is the project funding. The other is structural funding, and then of course the research. There are shared projects if we do stuff together, in which case we look for additional funding together as Jubilee. That is the case for *Caveat*. So again, it's project-based money.

Jubilee is still running on beneficial work or free labour. All of the artists that now engage with the team, all of their efforts, as far as it's not connected to their projects, is free. It's personal energy. But we are trying to raise Jubilee to the next level of really being an artist-run organisation, and trying to figure out what that means. What does it mean for the activity, for the agenda? How available are you for the organisation? What can your function be?



Katleen Vermeir and Florence Cheval



Workshop with Agency, 2017, photo: Jubilee



Jubilee, *Caveat* (installation view), 2017



Ronny Heiremans, Jesse van Winden and Jasper Rigole, 2017



Jubilee, *Caveat* (installation view), 2017



Caveat workshop: Artists & Curators, 2017



Jani Ruscica with Suzanna Pezo, *Felt the Moonlight on My Feet*, 2017, as part of Drop City's participation in LODGERS, 2017

#11



Drop City (Düsseldorf)

Interview with Sam Watson and Eleanor Wright

1 June 2018, Alan Quireyans

AA Why did you decide to start your project?

DC Drop City was initiated in Newcastle Upon Tyne, England, in 2014 on a basis of responsivity and exchange. We drew on our existing relationships within the city and beyond to present an ambitious international programme of solo/dual exhibitions over a one-year period in a small 'white cube' space within the centrally-located Stephenson Works building – the world's first purpose-built locomotion factory – ahead of the site's regeneration. At the time there were no independent initiatives in the area which sought to produce this kind of reciprocal, regionally-located programming with an international (rather than London-orientated) outlook and network. It was our intention from the start to look beyond London or Glasgow to what kind of fluid dialogue could be had with regional centres in mainland Europe. Initially this was reflected in the artists we worked with, all of whom we each had some kind of personal relationship to. We endeavoured to keep this approach completely transparent. It was not so much about showing the work of friends but about (re)presenting the intricacies of these relationships and the effect they have on our practices, careers and perspectives. We were mapping

a network. After our first year, the space we were renting was to be redeveloped so we took the opportunity to take stock and respond to each of our personal activities and the momentum we had felt from our first year together. In 2015 Drop City aimed to create firmer networks between the north-east of England and our collaborators in the Rhineland, Austria and Benelux in particular, through a programme which happened simultaneously in Newcastle and elsewhere, eventually turning towards mainland Europe as a whole.

AQ How would you define your organisation?

DC Drop City takes a variety of forms. It was always intended to be an organic, responsive platform, rather than an *organisation* with a single set of objectives or a mission statement. It is important that it remains flexible and reflects upon changes to its (our) social and geographic situations and the concerns which inform our practices and those we work with. In general, although certain programmes take a particular form suitable to the time and place we find ourselves in. We are always trying to produce work with artists in the most appropriate format, including exhibitions, events, residencies, as well as publishing, providing a forum for interaction and dialogue between all the current and future actors – including audiences – involved in the projects.

With the aim of returning to the essence of art and constantly reshaping its creative tools, Drop City promotes plasticity in relations between disciplines, networks and regions. Whether online, in Newcastle, Düsseldorf or at large, Drop City continues to aim to harmonise multiple cultural and business models, combining their sensibilities.

AQ What is your relationship to mainstream organisations?

DC

The idea of the ‘mainstream’ is completely tied up with the ethos of Drop City. In the spirit of the “utopian” community with which we share the name ‘Drop City’, created by four art and film students in southern Colorado who were influenced by the ‘happenings’ of Allan Kaprow and the impromptu performances of John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, and Buckminster Fuller, at Black Mountain College, it is always our idea that our own Drop City encourages the novel use and power of the ‘brand’ or ‘organisation’ to explore the gaps between the ‘artist-run’ or ‘off-space’ model and ‘commercial’ or ‘non-profit’ organisations. With the original Drop City, the group had attended a lecture by the architect Buckminster Fuller who was advocating alternative forms of building and living by presenting the theories of his now infamous geodesic structure. Fed up with the mainstream and status quo, within politics and in society, they set off to the desert to build their own community. Using Fuller’s designs they salvaged car bonnets and anything they could get their hands on to erect a series of colourful geodesic domes: a place where they could make their own future, free from the corruption of the mainstream. Drop City only lasted a few years before personal grievances and power structures began to take hold, corroding and eventually mimicking the very vices that they were trying to rid themselves of. To us, the name Drop City symbolises an ambitious, utopian vision, yet one that is mired by the pitfalls of human nature and the very real potential for failure. We regard this as a true representation of what it means to be an artist. It is only a coincidence that our tendency towards geographical programming has led to people’s assumption that we are literally ‘dropping into cities’... although this reading is not unwelcome.

Despite the loss of our permanent gallery space in Newcastle at the end of 2015 we had already initiated a couple of partnerships with mainland European

spaces, including the exhibition “SO” at MAUVE, Vienna, with the individuals behind MAUVE making a reciprocal show in Newcastle. We were then invited to present an exhibition at the municipal museum Laing Art Gallery, which marked Drop City’s first public institutional relationship. In 2017 we were invited to the curated section of ARCO Madrid as well as LODGERS at M HKA and AIR Antwerpen. Throughout 2017 we also made group exhibitions at the commercial galleries ARCADE, London, and Petra Rinck, Düsseldorf. It was a very interesting and challenging period in which the parameters of what Drop City actually was, was being tested out.

As already outlined, our model is responsive, as much as any artist’s practice is responsive to their circumstances and ambitions. The connecting thread is locality, but what came more and more relevant was the impact of artist mobility on individual/ collective practice. A locality can be lived, or entered into, but what can this shifting perspective engender in artistic programming? And what relationship can this approach have with the localised institution?

AQ What is your relationship to your locality?

DC We have always wanted Drop City to be a platform which enables us to consider how artists and curators are engaging with and being shaped by 21st century global conditions of mobility and communication, by asking how artistic and curatorial practices are interacting with new, often online, networked practices to create transnational networks of global association and diverse collectivities. How this fits with producing physical programmes in regional contexts is a core question for us. Coming together in a ‘regional’ city like Newcastle and with our diverse, national and international networks, we were keen to explore the potential of new relationships opened up by online presence in

combination with long-time working relationships with artists from those wider networks.

Our programming and outward facing organisational structure responds to our local context. So far our activities have brought to light the ways in which networks create new forms of transnational cultural value through a detailed examination of the innovative working relationships between international artists, curators and art organisations working within embedded urban geographies and online. The aim of the project working like this is to support us individually and collectively along with the artists we work with to achieve a greater understanding of our present practices and to inform the other work we do independently. Each project or programme greatly informs present trajectories and future strategies, with regular reflection being really important to us.

When we moved from Newcastle to Düsseldorf, we had an understanding of the art scene and cultural situation we were entering into. We decided it wasn’t necessary to carry on with our model from Newcastle: which very much followed a traditional gallery structure, both in its organisational and communication strategies but also its physical representation. Instead we took our time, and partnered up with a great supporter of the arts who operates a small business hotel in the city. The Hotel Ufer was already very well-known amongst the art crowd of the city, but not as a venue as such, rather as a place where artists exhibiting in the city’s institutions and galleries or teaching at the Kunstakademie often stay. We were really interested in this situation. The art scene was familiar with the hotel but in a more peripheral manner, only from a certain perspective: it wasn’t on the art or social map as a place to go or to consider. We worked closely with the hotelier to find an interesting balance for a programme which introduced a new cultural venue locally, whilst

also not alienating the daily guests of the hotel. It was, and this applies to everything we do actually, really important for us to be able to create a whole situation in which an unfamiliar perspective could be considered within a local and familiar context. People thought making an artistic programme in a hotel was somehow 'exclusive'. For us it was the opposite. The guests of the hotel (it is not a luxury hotel, but instead fills up with people on overnight trips or staying for trade fairs) were as equally important 'publics' as the traditional art crowd and collectors. For us it was far more interesting to try and make something that really spoke to a much broader public – with diverse viewpoints and perspectives on their time in the city, let alone on the topic of contemporary art – than it was to go out to the suburbs and open up a space for the typical crowd in which we would just be another voice amongst many.

AQ How do you sustain it financially and logistically?

DC We have a lot of experience with fundraising for the purpose of sustaining our own practices. Alongside art sales as well as running other arts organisations, Drop City is not the only thing that we do. We use this skill to fundraise for Drop City on an ad hoc basis. In our first year, as well as negotiating a very nominal rent for our gallery space, we ran the year-long programme on £5000, which was funded by Newcastle University on the basis of Drop City benefitting the city's cultural scene, in turn supporting their students experiences outside of the studio. Once we had established ourselves as an ambitious and viable initiative we made a successful bid to Arts Council England. It was important to us that we are able to run a great programme even if we had little funds initially. We always prioritize the relevance of each project or opportunity that we seek out or comes our way in relation to the artists we decide to work with, working together to pursue new ways of working with unprescribed results.

Early on we also struck a deal with a local institution that was in the early stages of establishing a new collection. This supported the artist we brought to the city and also provided a legacy for the project. Our approach regarding profit is that once artist percentages and production costs covered by Drop City are taken off, the remaining amount is reserved for working with that same artist in the future. In this way the model is non-profit yet we are open to commercial opportunities, whether these be through taking part in art fairs or direct sales. The ambition is that no-one is out of pocket and profit generates future programming, and development of our relationship with that artist, without the need for constant fundraising. Our time is split up already between various projects. Drop City is another element of our schedule to which we commit more or less time depending on our general commitments. As stated on our website "Drop City is an occasional space..." but in reality, it is a constant commitment as it really is about bringing together our shared interests and conversations with others. If one of those conversations leads to an idea to make a show, an edition or a whole programme, then we'll find the most appropriate way to make that happen.

AQ What's next?

DC In 2014 we made the decision to extend our individual studio practices to develop together the production of exhibitions and projects through collaboration with other artists. Now, for the first time, we actually also share a studio space. It is also our home. By committing parts of our studio and home over to Drop City, we have created an intimate yet public space for the incubation of new curatorial and shared artistic frameworks. The curatorial frame allows for new interdisciplinary collaborations, the commissioning of new solo exhibitions and installations, and a public context for testing new ideas and projects. All of this is set

against the shifting backdrop of our individual studio work and shared living space, and all the objects that go with those things. This is the current iteration of Drop City, which will no doubt shift again in due course. This September we go to Helsinki on a joint residency to work on our independent projects but there may be an opportunity for Drop City to offer a different voice there, we'll find out... We are also currently in discussion about a co-publishing project, focusing on the magazine format as an exhibition site.

AQ What was the influence of LODGERS on your project?

DC The invitation to do Lodgers came at a very good time. We had just been invited to ARCOMadrid and ARCADE, London, and as well as being open to further opportunities that subsequently arose, we were keen to find a way of consolidating our ideas within a single framework. An institution inviting us to devise a public programme as part of a public residency was a very interesting concept for us, not least for the obvious correlation and potential conflicts regarding experimental curatorial models and institutional critique. We treated LODGERS as an opportunity to really test out the potentials of locality and mobility. One of the ways in which we addressed this was to shift part of our programme to both art and non-art spaces outside of the museum, with performances in the back rooms of cafés and suburban public spaces, and a series of events at The Pinkhouse – a local off-space and home with a curious institutional aura around its long 17 year history: it had recently been handed over to new proprietors and we instantly felt an affinity, all grappling with this idea of living and working in public through the central idea of hospitality as an artistic or curatorial concern. It felt like it related to the idea of a museum like M HKA inviting outsiders to make a public programme, independent of the curatorial programme in the other galleries. These activities took place over

a condensed period with a dedicated group of artists, writers, theorists and members of the public leading and participating in each iteration. The form of this aspect of the programme was forged in Antwerp, with new people we met through staying at AIR Antwerpen as well as their acquaintances. Many events also took place within LODGERS space and throughout the museum. LODGERS was a rare opportunity to really experiment with the model we had devised within a single context. We treated the public aspect of the project as an opportunity to open up our own uncertainties, and work through those in a transparent way, rather than turn up and role-play an institutional programme. This all led to a dynamic programme that was responsive to our gradual familiarity and exploration of the city and people there. We were not looking to present a clear cut theme, but rather a diversity of relationships in a given context, steered by a willingness to change direction if the opportunity should arise.

www.drop-city.net



Workshop with Christian Jendreiko at Pink House, 2017



Eleanor Wright, *A Gradual Stiffening* (installation view), 2017



Christian Jendreiko, *RIDDLE & LUST* Action for voice, electronics & words in the installation of Eleanor Wright, 2017



Nadia Hebson, *Alpha Adieu*, digital print, gesso, acrylic, oil and linen, dimensions variable, 2017



Metaphysics VR, Virtual Reality workshop, 2017



Francesco Pedraglio reads 'In Retrospect You Will Find This Beautiful', *Kink in the Arc*, 2017, photo: Alan Quireyns



Art Paper Editions, installation view, 2018

◆ #12 **Art Paper Editions** (Ghent)

Interview with Jurgen Maelfeyt

11 July 2018, Nav Haq

NH Why did you decide to start Art Paper Editions?

JM Well, I don't think we actually started by accident but it felt a bit like that. We began in 2010, designing a few publications for institutions that couldn't find a publisher and were just doing the publishing themselves. But the books weren't being distributed. At the same time, I was working on some zines. And then Be-Part in Waregem approached us because they were having a show with international artists and wanted an accompanying book. Since Be-Part is funded by West Flanders, it was only possible for it to be in Dutch. They were looking for a publisher, and as I was the one making the book, we came up with the idea that I would also be the publisher. That was the beginning of Art Paper Editions.

It wasn't intended to be a business. I'd been invited to take part in the Offprint publishing fair in Paris the same year. That was really a crucial event for me. I took two big suitcases full of books and they came back empty. So that was the start. The following year, I went to the NY Art Book Fair and it was the same story. This has become the most important thing for us as a studio. Last year and the year before, we published around 15 books; this year there will be nearly 30. It's a huge turnaround. So that's where we are now.

NH In a certain sense, it seems almost like a strategic way to help a collaborator.

JM Yes, and because I was making my own zines at that stage, I was also self-publishing. So I bought a Risograph machine [digital duplicator] and worked with our design-studio clients, and it all came together.

NH How would you define Art Paper Editions?

JM That's difficult, but basically it's a publishing house run by a typical graphic design studio. In an artistic sense, this means that we pay a lot of attention to the design of the book. The printing is important too. How we choose the artists is also important, although we try to make our range as wide as possible because our books are very visual. But in the last couple of years, we also made some books containing only text. I think these differences can be strengthening. We are going a little bit broader – and I don't mean commercially but in terms of content. And now we're also publishing books on design and architecture. If we did only artist's books we would become the 'artist's book publisher', which is a niche market. By narrowing it down so much, we would be too small, I think. And it's good for the artists to be in a network that's broader than just their own. So, if you're an artist and you're in the artist's book scene and you're with us, you can have a bigger audience, but one that is still interested. We're not in stores like FNAC, but people who buy our books don't go searching in FNAC. Sometime I see our books popping up in strange places, which is nice. In the US we were only in Printed Matter in New York at first, and now you can find our books in many shops there.

NH And are you dealing with the distribution yourselves or do you collaborate?

JM

At first we did it ourselves, but now we work with Idea Books from Holland, which is international. They are very good in New York and in Europe. But we've since decided to divide it up. So for Belgium we have Exhibitions International and for the UK we have Athena Books. We try to get the best distributor in each country. As a publisher, our main task is distribution. We can easily manage to make good books, but if they don't make it into the shops it's very difficult. We are looking at the US at the moment because we're working on projects with American-based artists. And, those artists see it as an opportunity to get to know Europe better. But we also find this a good opportunity to get more into the bookstores in the US. What I find very pleasing is that we can make a book with a young local artist here and find their book a few months later on the other side of the world. There are some Belgian art publishers that focus on selling as many copies as possible but are only in the Belgium network. For an artist, that's not so interesting. We look at Belgium too, of course, but we first look at what's outside.

NH How do you see your relationship to mainstream organisations?

JM

Ten to 15 years ago, the reason for a person to make a book was because they had an exhibition. We see it the other way round. We see the book as a sort of exhibition. It's maybe strange to call it that, but I don't think there is a better word. And now we're trying to find a way to occasionally get away from the book and make exhibitions. That's what we tried to do at M HKA. The works of Hana Miletić are a good example of this. Some of her pieces could be viewed as pages of a book. *Tenir paroles* started off as a poetry book and then became a performance. That makes us different from other organisations. When the book is actually part of the artist's work and not just a visualisation or representation.

NH That's a good example. And it's how I first came across your work. I'd met Hana Miletić at the Jan Van Eyck Academie – which is when I first learned about her work – and she explained the *Molem Collective* project. There is a level of social engagement there that's not necessarily intended for presentation in an exhibition space.

JM Yes. We have something we call The APE Family. It began in Paris last year. At the Offprint fair, we invited artists to join us and do book signings, etc. at one large table, and everybody was there. Like one big family. With Hana, it started very early – in 2011 – and we're still working together. People or artists don't see us as a commercial organisation. We see them as partners, and I think they see us as partners. We're all working together.

NH You touched on this already, but I wanted to ask about your relationship to your locality, and I suppose this means Ghent.

JM When we first started, we were already focusing internationally – we didn't pay attention to the Belgian market at all. But we were representing Belgian artists. The first thought was, if you work internationally and only represent Belgian artists, there is a barrier unless they're big names. This is why we started working with international artists. If you are working with an artist from New York, for example, the publications get a lot more attention there. But it also felt like we needed more visibility in Belgium, and that's why we opened this space in Ghent. It was a little larger than expected, so we added the bookshop.

NH And how does Art Paper Editions sustain itself financially and logistically?

JM Financially, every book is different. The easiest projects are when the institution pays for the printing and design. The most difficult ones are when the artist

needs to pay. Established artists can get money from the government, etc., so that's okay. But young artists have a harder time. For them, we offer support in different ways. We do pre-sales, special editions, crowdfunding. All these methods combined can make it work. But it's difficult every time.

We constantly have meetings about how to fund a book, and for Belgian artists it's a challenge because here it takes a lot of time and there's no money. A book with 500 copies or even a 1000 copies – you cannot make it break even, because 60 percent goes to distribution and the vendor. That's a lot of money. So we have to try and find surer methods. In the Netherlands and Switzerland, for instance, the government is more supportive of artist books.

NH And other things like design and print management, is that all done in-house?

JM Yes. And that also makes it easier to get funding. For example, sometimes we have money for printing but not for design. So then we have to choose whether to go ahead with the project and wait for the income to come with the sales. If you are a publisher and you have to pay for printing, design and whatever else, then you're faced with figures that don't allow you to turn a profit. This is different for us – as a design studio we can wait and go to print once there's money for it and let the income arrive later.

NH I'm thinking about what you made for the LODGERS programme at M HKA. Would you say that that was a way to bring together and display projects by what you call The APE Family?

JM Indeed, and it was a sort of test for us because we hadn't been thinking about the shift from making a book to arranging a space. Until then, we only worked

in one way. Some of our M HKA projects were very good and some were a sort of hybrid or in-between. Each time, it was not only an experiment for us but also for the artists. And it was a way to think about what we've been doing the last couple of years. We are always reflecting on what we do and watching it evolve. When I look back, I see the smaller publications we made at the beginning, which I still like very much, the zine stuff. Now it's like we've become bigger so we are making bigger books. But sometimes I feel like drawing on some of the basic stuff that we started with.

NH What's next for APE?

JM We are facing the fact that bookstores are closing. I think online sales will become more and more important. That's why we have updated our website. It was just finished two months ago. We've lowered the shipping charges for several countries. For example, in Belgium we now offer free shipping. And for the Netherlands, France and Germany, shipping costs are minimal. In order to make the books accessible, we want to focus more on online distribution. There are also projects coming in that are a mix between making books, art direction, and graphic design – those are bigger projects, the kind that we like very much. I hope these keep rolling in.

www.artpapereditions.org



Art Paper Editions, *Performing the Book*, installation view, 2017



Art Paper Editions, *Performing the Book*, detail, 2017



Art Paper Editions, *Performing the Book*, installation view, 2017

Pages

Nasrin Tabatabai and Babak Afraassiabi

The Baboon's Flight

Prelude to *INHALE*, Pages Magazine issue # 10
(Forthcoming 2019)

Nasrin Tabatabai & Babak Afrassiabi

Recollection # 7, The Baboon Whose Master Had Died

From the series of written delineations of instances of opium smoking in modern to contemporary Persian fictions, 2016

2

Counting Opium Smoke

Opium pipe connected to an inhaler machine with a laser diffraction for analysing particle size and distribution, 2018

3, 4

Recollection # 8, The Baboon Whose Master Had Died 2016

5

The Baboon's Flight Over Opium Infused Human Airways 2018

6, 7

Algorithmic Opium Writing

Snapshots of the algorithmically calculated progression of opium smoke deposition inside the human airways, 2016

8, 9, 10

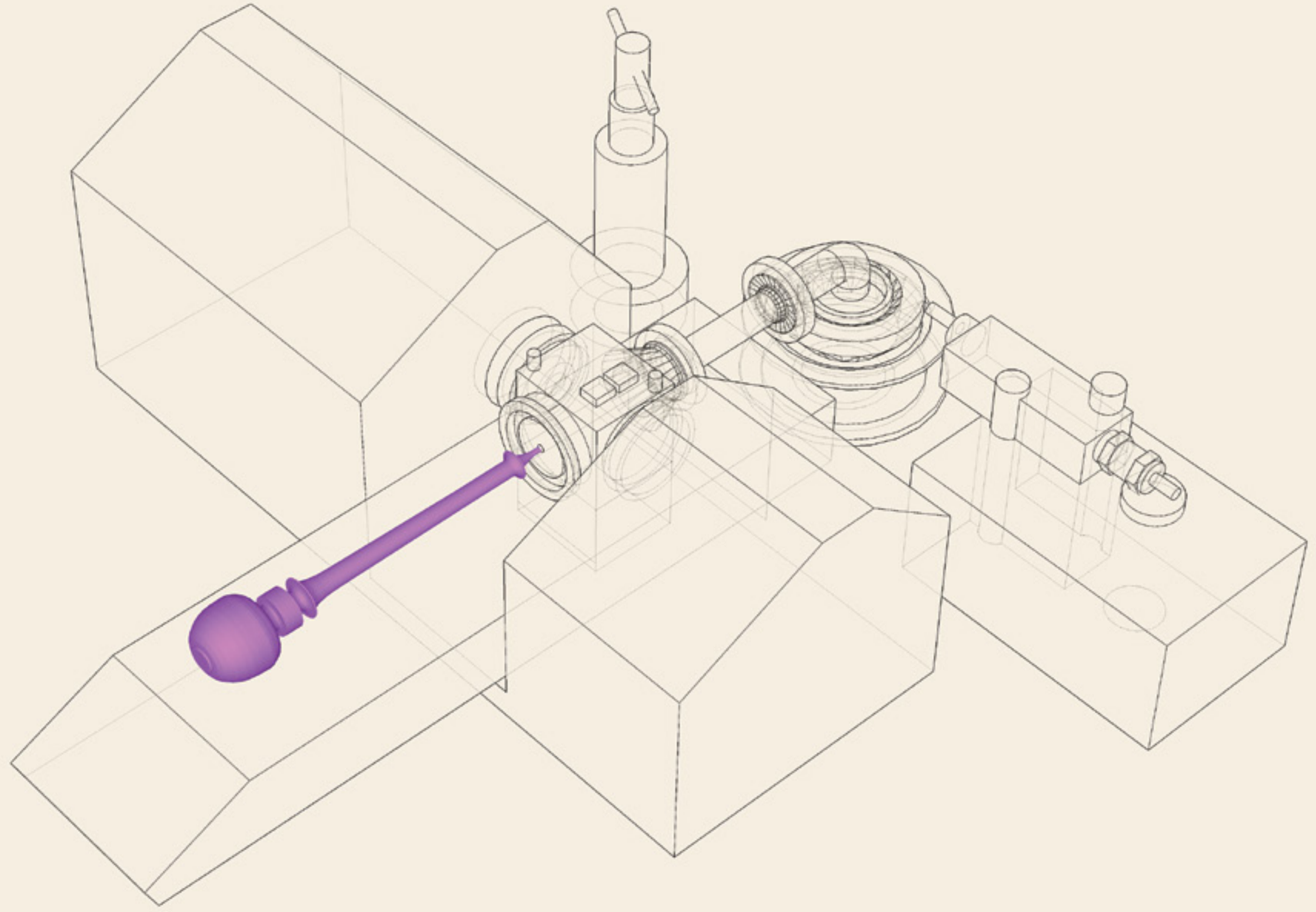
Recollection # 7

From: The baboon whose master had died

Written by: Sadegh Choubak

Year of publication: 1949

Night has fallen, and the baboon and his master arrive on the open plains. They settle under an old hollow oak tree; the master drops the baboon's chain onto the ground and hastily builds a fire. He takes a teapot, a cup, some opium and an opium pipe from his sack and lays them beside the fire. From the same sack, he takes some fried sparrows wrapped in bread and they start to eat. Halfway through their meal, the master picks up the opium pipe and smokes several rounds of opium; the baboon watches him. The master holds the thick smoke in his lungs, depleting it of the rich opium, eventually exhaling the thin smoke toward the monkey. The baboon swallows the smoke hungrily -- its nostrils drawing in every last particle. Once he is finished smoking, the master stands up, picks up the baboon's chain, and walks it to the other side of the stream. There, under a pistachio tree, he rams the spike at the end of the chain deep into the ground and walks back, to sleep inside the oak tree.



Recollection # 8

From: The baboon whose master had died

Written by: Sadegh Choubak

Year of publication: 1949

The baboon lifts its chain into the air, following the links all the way down to the spike. With both hands, the baboon grabs the last link of the chain and pulls the spike out of the ground. The chain comes loose and the baboon jumps up and down, walks towards his master, and sits down in front of him. The master's body, wrapped in a worn felt cloak, is leaning against an old oak tree. He isn't moving. Spread in front of him are the ashes from the now-cold fire, a teapot, a chibouk, an opium pipe, a sack, and a bowl. The baboon moves closer to the master's body, slowly pulling the felt away to reveal his shrunken face. Short raspy noises escaping its throat, the baboon picks up the opium pipe and holds it under its nose -- its broad nostrils are scratched and torn. The baboon handles the pipe with its dark greasy fingers and puts it into its mouth, chewing at the pipe's bit, crushing it between its teeth -- releasing the bitter taste of opium sediment from inside the pipe. The strong odor of this bitter sediment hits the baboon's nasal passages; provoked, it spits out the broken pieces of the pipe and smashes it against the stone next to the fireplace. In a panic it pulls at its master's cloak. It slowly stands up, turns its back and walks away.







Algorithmic opium writing: 128 draws



Algorithmic opium writing: 278 draws

2018

#13 Oushoorn & Milius
(Brussels)

#14 ARIA
(Antwerp)

#15 baumusik
(Cologne)

#16 Heterotropics
(Amsterdam)



ARIA: Karina Beumer, Katinka de Jonge & Liesje De Laet for CCQO, *Open Quest: Field of Equivocations*, Silent Discussion, 2018, courtesy of CCQO, photo: Karina Beumer



#13



Oushoorn & Milius (Brussels)

Interview with Gauthier Oushoorn & Gijs Milius

28 August 2018, Alan Quireyns

AQ Why did you decide to start your project?

GO Because we got invited to LODGERS and we were doing collaborations together and so actually we started like that. The first thing we did for LODGERS was the *Goal Shop*. First we made the shop together, and after that we started to invite artists we appreciated.

GM Yes and provide these artists with a scenography and sometimes with more than that, and combine them. But that's not really an answer to the question maybe. Why did you decide to do this project?: To deepen our working relationship. To see what could come from working together other than building, making objects and shows, but do something more curatorial, more organising than only making work ourselves.

GO I agree.

GM We were curious. The answer is curiosity.

AQ How would you define your activities?

- GO** It comes back to the first answer.
- GM** Curating, but not exactly, maybe.
- GO** Facilitating.
- GM** Facilitating, yes.
- GO** We had our own perspective, like for instance with the boats by Sam Weerdmeester where we decided that they are such huge, very big pictures, that we enclosed them. So you force the viewer to have a detailed look at the pictures.
- GM** Intimate, yes. We intervened quite a lot with all the work. More than with curating. Directing a film but more like a documentary. You make scenes but also you use what happens. You leave it open and interfere a little bit and then let things go.
- AQ** What is your relationship to mainstream organisations?
- GM** I don't think this really plays a role at all for us. In terms of being opposed to anything.
- GO** As a statement, you mean?
- GM** We are just an organisation because we work together. It can take any form. We're not really an organisation that was made from some kind of idea or ideal.
- AQ** Like for example the way you worked didn't include a curator, right?
- GM** Yes, that is kind of what we did.
- GO** We made a different show every week. So it was constantly shifting.

- AQ** So for you the museum offered that platform to try this out as a sort of laboratory.
- GM** It keeps you off the streets.
- AQ** What is your relationship towards your locality? For example, I remember one of the projects you did in Sarajevo. You are a loose group of artists collaborating regularly. That could be considered as your locality. And then there is the question also: for whom did you do that?
- GM** It's very organic, it's not really one group. It's very sociable and we work together. It doesn't feel like there are any limits of boundaries that define it, to me at least, in a non-abstract way.
- GO** The limits are the people that we know. Sarajevo was different. That was just the idea to do something in another country. We managed to do something, but it's different. There, it was really a group of friends. Here it went much further than that group. We would go to a studio and pick things up but also from our own collective, for instance Gijs has these feet by Nicolas Bourthoumieux. That is something that he has and decided also in the end to show it with other shoes, by other artists, which included our own shoes.
- GM** It started by wanting to show the work of this artist, because it is never shown or the artist himself doesn't really care to show. We decided to do something with that. He allowed us. And then combine that with other artists. As Gauthier says: a shoe, and then another one, just some shoes.
- GO** We didn't want to show just the work of a friend every time, or just our own idea of what we want. How we want to have a piece in the show? It was not an individual part of it.

GM Also, keeping in mind it's a museum space and to do something intuitive, and to try and do something nice for the public. Something to see and to do, changing every week.

AQ And the shop?

GM The shop for goals is not art, let's say.

AQ Were there people reacting to this shop?

GM Bart De Baere reacted by buying the whole shop practically.

GO He was also emotional.

GM He wept a little bit.

GO He said: "This is why we do it". I even got emotional.

AQ How do you sustain it financially and logistically? Does it still exist?

GM Still without defining it. Without definition, but then we still collaborate.

GO I mean the climax was LODGERS.

GM Yeah and the most intense for our collaboration.

GO Right now we have no plans.

GM Apart from Spain.

GO There we are actually making something together. We are doing a residency in Spain.

AQ Where?

GM Andalucia.

GO Some new space.

GM It is called Arteventura.

AQ It's the one where Michèle Matyn was.

GO It's new.

GM For a year.

AQ When?

GO March 3 to 4 weeks. Right now the plan is to facilitate. There is an immense amount of land there. It would be nice to make a forum.

GM A place where you go to talk.

AQ So, it's a scenography basically?

GO To an extent, that's the idea.

GM The beginning of a sculpture garden. Where other people can add things to them.

AQ You practically answered all the questions. The last one would be: what was the influence of LODGERS on your project? You just said it was the most intensive moment of your collaboration. That could count as an answer.

GO We did that especially for the thing.

We made up something to do together. A new shape of working together and that was a very intense one. We will continue to work in different ways but I don't think similarly, because that is not our regular work. It was an exceptional project.



Oushoorn & Milius, *Doelenshop (Goal Shop)*, installation view, 2018



Sam Weerdmeester, *Sam's Pleasure Boats*, 2018



Alexis Gautier, *Stairs, Zebra, Bees and light purple jacket in Alexi's carpets* (installation view) with *Shoes off*, Nicolas Bourthoumieux, Sarah Caillard, Douglas Eynon, Gijs Milius and Gauthier Oushoorn, 2018



Jacques Andre, *MAC's - M HKA - MAC's KIPPENBERGERRUPPERSBERG (Arters no. 200 + Arters no. 201)*, 2018



Oushoorn & Milius, *Doelenshop (Goal Shop)*, installation view, 2018



◇ #14 **ARIA** (Antwerp)

Interview with Pascal Gielen
22 August 2018, Alan Quireyns

AQ How did ARIA start?

PG ARIA, which stands for Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts, started three years ago, and it is an institutional response by the art schools to the Bologna decree of 1999, when it was decided that art schools needed to become more research-oriented and more linked to universities. That's what they call the 'academicisation' of the academy. So it started there. You had already one research institute in Leuven, one at LUCA, the VUB in Brussels and Ghent University, and we were the last structure in Flanders. And basically, ARIA could be, but is not only, an administrative organ to make it possible to do PhD's in the arts for teachers at art schools, professors at art schools, artists, etc. Most of the time it is organised like an administrative unit to make those PhD's possible to stay officially in line with the Bologna decree.

The board decided immediately to appoint me as coordinator to give it a real identity. We started to search for a good profile. What do we stand for? What does Antwerp stand for? What is the history of Antwerp and art? The outcome was to focus on the singular subjectivity of the artist as a research basis and not to aim for a kind of objective academic format or methodology. Because

a lot of artists and art schools are afraid of an academisation in the wrong way, for example. by formalising this kind of research. This means also that every artist, or designer, or applied artist brings with her/himself his own methodology, her/his own research questions and every research question of an artist is a relevant question. It's not formatted. That is for us very important. For example. the result could be only visual, could be an exhibition, etc. The only criterion is that it is reflexive on your own practice and that you use the research to develop your artistic work in the first place, not your academic skills. It started up as an institutional and administrative obligation, but we give it our own twist.

That's one pillar, and another one is CCQO (Cultural Commons Quest Office). I had a research grant, which added the institutional context of the arts as a research object to the identity of ARIA. What is the institutional context artists work in nowadays? What are the problems with this institutional context, etc? And that's CCQO, who do this research with an interdisciplinary team of an economist, a policy expert, two sociologists, a social scientist, a musicologist, a culture manager and a philosopher. They all look at how to make creative labour more sustainable nowadays. To do creative labour in the broadest sense. Not only arts, also commercial creative labour, architecture etc. And we do this in cities. And this forms in fact the identity of ARIA at this moment, and how it is crystalised. We do research IN and ABOUT the arts.

AQ What is your relationship to mainstream organisations?

PG It's a relationship on the one hand decided consciously. On the other hand, it's also a position we are given. But let's first start with the one we chose. We see that ARIA and the whole system of research and PhD's in the arts, is making a new field in the arts. So, it's not the commercial artists who are in the art market. It is also

not the institutional, but it can be artists who are at the M HKA or in biennials. It is somebody in-between all those systems and it's a really new field. The profile of these artists is that they are also very much interested in education, in research and who can make this link with their art practice.

The position we have deals with two kinds of institutions. On the one hand university institutions or art schools and on the other hand the classical institutions like museums, biennials, festivals, orchestras, theatres, etc. This relationship with the first one is safeguarding the position of the arts as a specific identity and a specific praxis in the academic world of the university. The specificity of art and its own autonomous space in an institution like a university is very important.

For other art institutions such as museums we try to develop some kind of service. We are focussing for example on archiving. What is the archive? What can the archive be? As a research institution we can give a lot of information about that to a museum. We see also that a lot of institutions cannot undertake all their own functions anymore, for example research and development, archiving. Because they also have to look at the public to get income and governments are pushing on this public function more and more. So the question of ARIA is also: can we join forces, for example to do research tasks together?

And then there is the other way around, for example now with the exhibition of Haseeb Ahmed at M HKA. That's a service by M HKA for us. At the same time of the exhibition he has his PhD defense and the exhibition is the result of his research. It gives us enormous exposure, which is nice. It's also for me a way to redefine the possibility of what an exhibition can be. It can be also a presentation of research results and a continuation of discussions about the research.

AQ What is your relationship to your locality?

PG For ARIA the locality is of course Antwerp. It includes the Antwerp School of Arts, the Antwerp University etc., but I see it more in circles. It is also all the relationships those schools have through exchanges with other schools across Europe, all over the world even. It's a cliché, but we do work 'glocal'. We search for local embedded content-wise motivation. We ask for local engagement from international artists when they come to make a PhD in Antwerp. We request for example, that they engage in local education or develop workshops, seminars for students or other artists.

The research of CCQO is everywhere. It focusses on six cities, that are in that case the 'localities'. Some of the researchers are living in those cities and working there. It's also our locality: Barcelona, Naples, Berlin, Amsterdam, London and Antwerp. Those are the main cities in which we work or willing to work. That is CCQO, ARIA is broader than that.

Discussions of locality are for us very interesting. We worked together with Recetas Urbanas, a Spanish architecture collective. We invited them through ARIA to do a research seminar. Then they were picked up by the Middelheim museum. They are doing a project on the Conickxplein and now we have the question from them again: How can we embed this work in Antwerp in the long term? So questions of locality come in and they ask us as a mediator. To go to speak with several partners in the art world, but also in the social field in Antwerp, to find this a long-term vision. In that sense locality becomes international – somebody from Seville can call us in Antwerp to give a project local roots.

AQ How do you sustain it financially and logistically?

PG

For us it's very luxurious. We work with officially by decree of Flemish Law-defined budgets. So every school, the three art schools, have their own budgets. They have to invest this by law in the research of the arts. They are obliged to do this and we are obliged to organise this. Together we organise grants for artists with that, but also research. The university itself pays only for the functioning and they pay my salary. It is really institutionally framed and it needs to come also from the art schools, that's official. You cannot change that.

And then we get CCQO grants from FWO research council, temporary grants. We now also have a new Creative Europe project and also one with Transeurope Halls based in Lund. Also a new researcher we applied for from Naples. So, again, this for me means working 'glocal'. Making connections with different localities, doing research, collecting knowledge and then trying to share the knowledge again with local players in Antwerp and in the cities we work.

AQ What's next for ARIA?

PG

In the last two years we made a lot of big steps in the institutional embedding of our system. Very stupid, but we got a huge office. But that's important. It's a kind of a residence. We formalised and professionalised the whole procedure to get a PhD programme. In the beginning, it was really ad hoc and when you asked as an artist to want to make a PhD, you had too big a chance. We formalised the procedure, and we needed to do this, because we get more and more questions from artists who want to make a PhD. We needed to make a selection. These are steps which are done now. The bureaucratic thing is over now for me.

What we have to do now is to develop a position in the field, relationships with museums and other art institutions etc. And that needs to be the next step. Also the

relationship with Kunstenpunt for cultural policy is very important for me. These kind of institutions are also international, like the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam for example. They need to know well what we can offer to them. A lot of those kind of institutions just see us as an administrative body who do PhDs and not as some kind of content-wise based entity. We need to make that much more clear. This question has to be clear for all the members – what are we standing for and what are the services we can offer?

AQ What was the influence of the LODGERS programme on ARIA?

PG I can only speak for CCQO and so for one of the four partners. I cannot speak even for the artists we worked with on behalf of CCQO. So, I cannot speak for the experience of the other three schools of arts that were also involved. First of all I liked the way the negotiations worked. It gave me a good feeling, especially about ARIA itself, that all the schools were so cooperative and involved and also made deals with each other. Very practical, but good. There was a good understanding, so it gave me the feeling it unifies them. That was the effect. It gave the feeling of a common ground to stand on and a common identity and even a common will. They appreciated getting this opportunity enormously. For them it was fantastic to do.

What it didn't do was give CCQO exposure. For that we have other channels, including within M HKA itself. It brought no new or big public to the CCQO, but some. What's interesting is the effect on the CCQO members themselves. We made some collective meetings and gatherings there. Once a month we have research meetings and they are always in groups. Some people speak and others don't dare to speak. They are maybe intimidated by others, their knowledge, their experience. And now, because we were in LODGERS, and

because there was a public 'layman', the artists dared to speak immediately about our subjects. Also, public who came in and participated, and it became a more democratic way to discuss things. That effect stayed with the group. I am exaggerating a little bit, but they really made a step there. It was also for example by using the mode of 'silent discussion', introduced by the artists Karina, Katinka and Liesje. Not that we always have to do it like that, but it made a shift. We had a book discussion in the LODGERS and there were people who didn't read the book, because they came in at that moment and it made it much easier for our members to talk in a daring way. I liked this. It was an effect I didn't expect at all.

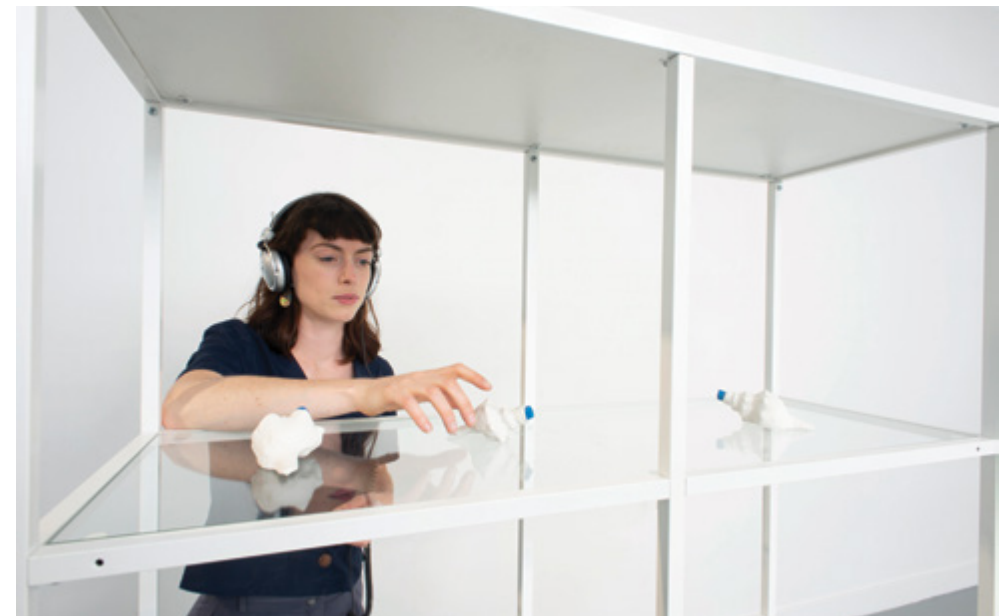
Internal it gave a lot. To the world? I don't know. That's something else. We have a summer school in Venice, which is also partly public. We experiment with the format there also, and this inspiration from LODGERS. It was inspiring to open up.

You hear only my view, because for example the artists maybe experienced this in a different way. Maybe for them it was exposure. It was at least, and I say this bluntly, good on their CV that they were in the M HKA. That plays a role for them, much more than for us, because for me it does not mean much to be in a museum for the academic world or the university, or for the FWO it means nothing. It has a bit of symbolic value, it has a dissemination value, it means that you have to communicate your research to a broader public than academics. So we put it in there. We were in the M HKA and we made an exhibition about our research. But it's not credited in that way. Again, for me the 'profit' came much more for our internal function. And again, this counts for the CCQO. I think the artists and PhD students of the Schools of Arts, could have had a complete other experience.

www.uantwerpen.be/nl/onderzoeksgroep/aria



Presentation by Sint Lucas School of Arts Antwerpen, 2018



Culture Commons Quest Office presentation: Katinka de Jonge participating in *Wellness Centre Future Proof*, 2018



Koninklijk Conservatorium Antwerpen presentation by Erwin Jans on Tone Brulin, 2018



Koninklijk Academie voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, display by Vijai Patchineelam, *Samba Shiva*, 2018



Karina Beumer, Katinka de Jonge & Liesje De Laet for CCQO, *Open Quest: Field of Equivocations - Cartography of Floating Signifiers*, 2018, courtesy of CCQO, photo: Karina Beumer



Karina Beumer, Katinka de Jonge & Liesje De Laet for CCQO, *The Open Source* (installation view), 2018, courtesy of the artists, photo: Karina Beumer



Karina Beumer, Katinka de Jonge & Liesje De Laet for CCQO, *The Open Source & The Open Quest* (installation view), courtesy of the artists



Workshop by ARIA, 2019



◆ #15 **baumusik** (Cologne)

Interview with Meryem Erkus

29 August 2018, Nav Haq

NH I know you're running several initiatives, but can you tell me why you decided to start baumusik?

ME It was a combination of different ideas from different people in a way. There was one friend Sebastian Ingenhoff who was circling around our friends who were making music and endorsing the idea of a new label. I was one of those people who, like everyone, gave the same feedback: *yeah you're right we need that*. He came to me and I said, "yeah you're right but I can't have any more new projects". So I'm saying: I don't know, I'm going to be supportive but I can't be a central part of it. Then I realised, okay everyone you ask has a connection to my place Baustelle Kalk, and I make a compromise by saying – *yeah okay I can play a central role in it if we can somehow connect it with Baustelle Kalk and if everybody liked the idea too*, — because that's what brought most of us together... this place. Everyone played there and for some time it was really a safe space for a lot of people who didn't have a cultural homebase, or anything like that. So that was the development of baumusik. The reason why something like this was needed was because those artists that we normally worked with all had no real label in Cologne. They maybe published stuff here or there on different

labels nationally or internationally, but none have their home base here, and so we tried to change that fact.

NH So basically, there are some interesting musicians in Cologne but they were unable to publish their music there.

ME Yes, I mean you help yourself of course. They all published their music but not under one roof, not with joint forces.

NH How would you define what baumusk is?

ME We are more like a collective. Everybody does everything, but also nobody does nothing. We make our own rules that we can break occasionally. We meet regularly and discuss what's going to happen. There are constantly new ideas. Sooner or later bigger things show up like going to Antwerp or going to China, or compilations we want to do together. But somehow, it's also just an arbitrary gathering of individuals. Some of them come organised in bands, but often in solo acts and duos, and a lot of visual artists and writers. It's also about friendship of course and different kinds of relationships. We don't have business relations. But we are not a collective where there has to be an aesthetic standing over it. Everyone has individual freedom.

NH So you're like-minded, but have different interests, in terms of aesthetics and creativity.

ME Yes, totally. No one would tell someone else who should do their poster or their new record. But we all support each other in publishing, etc.

NH Can you remind me when you started baumusk?

ME That was almost exactly two years ago. It was when Baustelle Kalk still existed and we had several meetings there, with between 10 and 12 people at the beginning.

NH So basically, there was a different initiative called Baustelle Kalk, and baumusk grew out of this. Because Baustelle Kalk was doing something different?

ME Well, Baustelle Kalk was a very unique spot. It was doing something else, that no-one else in the world did - in a way (laughter). We really had something special. It was in the backyard of a residential house that used to be a roofer's workshop. So everything was crooked and open, but for us it was just a beautiful thing and it gave us a lot of warmth and inspiration. And it was our sister, muse, shelter, our everything. Myself and my sister Fatma and our friend Nicole, the three of us founded it. We saw it as a responsibility to give space for example to music acts that could not find their own spot in Cologne, because no-one else makes this specific music and there was a big lack of this certain experimental noisy music. But that's the music we like. And it was very special to have it somewhere in Cologne, because there were only certain select spots where it happened. But it was seven years ago. So now it has all changed with the times of course. Now there's a lot more on offer, even if we don't exist anymore. But yes, we just opened it, we ran it, and it was something between a DIY space and a community space. But it could also be an exhibition space.

NH So there was a transition from that to baumusk? In one sense, it was a move away from a physical space to something that was a bit more of a free format.

ME Unfortunately, yes.

NH It wasn't a preference?

ME That wasn't the plan two years ago. It was really planned that our label house would be Baustelle Kalk. But ten months later we had to shut down for different reasons. We actually decided without any grudge

to close down the project. Of course, it's very emotional. But it's okay because now there is a heritage of Baustelle Kalk. And it's somehow still with us, still everyone who was ever there, will remember that place.

NH What's your relationship to mainstream organisations?

ME Well, sometimes you're lucky and find one organisation that still understands whatever you want to work on. There's always a difference when you have collaborations with institutions or mainstream programmes. There's something very different when you have to sell the stuff you're doing, you know what I mean? You have to change your vocabulary even though the subject matter itself is still the same. You have to change the way you promote your work, even though you don't want to, just because they wouldn't understand it otherwise. So, if you have it as a strategy it can be possible to work with certain organisations. But in general, we identify 100% with everything besides the mainstream – not necessarily style-wise – but more because of our ideology. It's not the approach we want to pursue. I don't know if they would speak the same language as us if we had to apply ourselves to certain policies that we don't really identify with. I would say it's not our thing. It's easy to completely ignore radio stations, television or whatever also. You can just ignore it by filling your life with good stuff. That's what I choose to do. I know it's not necessarily good to only stay in your comfort zone and in your own filter bubble, but if that bubble is not limited, if it goes further and further and wider and wider, then I don't feel like I'm only scratching the surface of something. It's vice versa: the different surfaces just get bigger and find each other sooner or later.

NH This brings me to the next question, because obviously you're based in Cologne, and the question is about what your relationship is to your locality. Cologne is known to have

quite an established scene going back decades for visual art and music. We can go back to the 80s generation, and then in the 90s there is also a different generation. But, of course, baumusik is more recent, relatively speaking. Most of your collaborators are Cologne-based, but I think that's sort of the core of what you do. So could you say a little bit more about the situation of being in Cologne?

ME Yes. I always like to point out that I am in Cologne out of my own will. I want to be there at the moment. It's very chic to complain about the city you live in I think. Everywhere is the same in that sense. But in Cologne I think it might be a bit more clear because it has a lot of issues that you can totally hate. But I really have a problem with people constantly complaining and then not addressing their own problems. So I really do still enjoy it there, and I always say I'm not finished with it yet. I still see that I have not reached its limits yet and I can get more out of it. It works for me, and it also gives a lot back to others. If you think in the larger scale about the history of artists, the art scene, the market and Cologne – I don't know, it's a little bit complicated and not so much my world. I would say being post all these scenes in Cologne, there is a really bad habit to fall back on stuff that once happened – to continue to pretend to think in terms of their own historical identity. Cologne is still called the 'media city' and still called an 'art city', but in both of these contexts, my initial response would be "no, sorry". Do you know what I mean? A big part of the important art scene went to Berlin. Nowadays Art Cologne has a lot of competition on the international market. Seeing which galleries go to Berlin fairs and which go to Art Cologne, people can become complacent and feel "yeah, we still have this kind of city", but then again, Cologne used to have 3 major annual art fairs, but the Art Fair moved to Düsseldorf and the Cologne Fine Art called off their whole Contemporary Section – and all this happened within 2 years. So, I personally don't really feel it that

much. You have of course the older generations, which are cool and fun and crazy, artists and gallerists and stuff. But this is not something you should get soaked in to completely. So there's a new creative identity at the moment in Cologne, and it's more for alternative spaces, initiatives, self-made exhibition rooms and other things. I always like to point out the fact that we don't have an exhibition hall. There is no Kunsthalle in Cologne and it's ridiculous. So that sums it up. This is one of the reasons we have over 30 different smaller art spaces.

NH You are doing so many things. So how do you sustain yourself financially and logistically?

ME I had a conversation yesterday with my friend about how artists don't like to talk about their works. I mean besides their art, they don't talk about the money-making jobs. I don't think it's a good habit because you present to others that it's very easy to be an artist, and that somehow you are as successful as one must be in order to live on your art. I never make a big secret out of my low living standards, because I live in a house that belongs to my father and I take care of the house together with my sister. We find the new tenants, fix something if it's broken etc. We take care of the maintenance of the house and therefore we don't pay rent. I see it as my responsibility to give this privileged position back in my work, which means I give it back to the community. Because I do as much as I can in a way – as much as I want and can for the public. Meaning these are my own passion projects, as with Baustelle Kalk and GOLD+BETON. And then there are other projects, of course, that bring you money. At the end of the month, there's not an end of a month, you know? There's not a weekend. You also don't have a weekend because every day is the same. If I want to do something, I do something. If you work on projects and events or shows there is no end of the month

because I don't sit there and write my invoices at the end of the month. I write it when I need the money. So it's also my own personal strategy. But I think it's very important always to point out that I don't have to fear my existence, meaning I always have my apartment. I don't have to work three or four days a week in a job I don't like, or in a job that leaves me no time to do more important work. Logistically it's me and my chaos. So sometimes it's just me, sometimes it's me plus five others, etc.

NH Given your position, did you think you would gain anything from the LODGERS experience in Antwerp?

ME Well, yes, of course. I had some connections to Antwerp before, and I think finding a real connection to the city and to a lot of people here was the most important outcome. When I came back from London directly to Antwerp I thought it was so nice here. I'm really attached to it at the moment and I already know that two weeks after I leave that I have to be back. And then three weeks later I have to be back again. So I completely promote the proximity to Cologne. 80 percent of the people who were here for our anniversary weren't visiting us for the first time. So maybe in Cologne it clicked that Antwerp is so close. You just need a car, put five people in it and it's not such an expensive voyage. Or if you have a student ticket then you only pay 12 euros from Düsseldorf. It's ridiculously cheap. It's cheaper to go from Düsseldorf to Antwerp than getting a train from Cologne to Düsseldorf.

NH Yes, and I think there's a lot of like-minded approaches. It seems like you've definitely made some connections here for this, and probably for other things as well. Last question, what's next for baumusik?

ME We just have a couple of releases. That's of course our everyday work, and now we're just talking about touring

through France because one of our newest members is from France and she likes to check on all her relations over there. It's approaching the end of the year already, so I think we've got to put out another compilation. I'm not sure if there are bigger projects planned at the moment, but it makes sense that there's nothing yet planned because we're still in the middle of a big project, meaning the project here in Antwerp of course. The luxury of making your own rules is that you can do it whenever you feel comfortable with it, and now it's mainly individual releases. But I think once I'm back in Cologne and the summer is over, we will all gather together again and come up with the next big project for the next year. There was at least one big project every year. But it happened without really chasing them. It was often that the opportunities found us.

www.baumusik.de



Janina Warnk (installation) / Echo Ho (video), 2018



Janina Warnk, (installation view), 2018



Zo-on slows, live performance for Museumnight, 2018



Front: Benjamin Adams + Timothy Shearer, back: Timothy Shearer, 2018



Eliza Ballesteros and David Lichter, *Window Piece_01*, 2018



Zo-on slows, live performane on stage installation by Philipp Höning and Timothy Shearer, 2018



#16 ◇ **Heterotropics** (Amsterdam)

Interview with Sara Giannini
27 September 2018, Alan Quireyans

AQ Why did you decide to start your project?

SG I started to think about what later became Heterotropics in 2015, after I moved to a neighbourhood called 'Indische buurt' in the east of Amsterdam. All the streets there are named after the former Dutch colonies in Indonesia. However, they do not refer to contemporary Indonesian cities but after geographical formations of the Dutch East Indies, including the fictional notion of 'Insulinde'. At first I was just very puzzled by the kind of projection in time and space that these names provoke when you're there. But soon I started to notice the impact of these words, their agency in producing space, symbols and signs. The neighbourhood became heavily gentrified in the last few years and many of the newcomers used the history of colonisation present in the area as a semiotic tool of gentrification. For instance, the Walter Woodbury Bar in the main Javastraat boulevard is named after the British photographer who was amongst the first to document life in the Dutch East Indies. His photos, which can be found in the collection of the Tropenmuseum (the former colonial museum and main ethnographic institution of the city) adorn the space, together with stereotypical colonial/tropical décor. On their website one can read: 'As Walter was a

pioneer in Java, we are pioneers in Javastraat'. Colonial history is a pre-text and motivational ground for new types of settlements. I started to document this process, gather materials and think about curating an exhibition on the afterlives of colonial desire at the former premises of the organisation TAAK in Amsterdam East, with the possibility of interventions in the neighbourhood. As TAAK had to relocate, the exhibition never happened and I reformulated the project into a long-term, open-ended curatorial and research platform.

Heterotropics as we know it started in September 2016 with an itinerant performance and exhibition programme in 'de Indische buurt', with artists Alex 2000, Pauline Curnier Jardin, David Bernstein, Jokūbas Čižikas, and Jacopo Miliari. The programme included private apartments, public spaces, a boat trip, and the tiny Museum Perron Oost. For the second iteration in 2017, I collaborated with the Research Center for Material Culture and invited KUNCI Cultural Studies Center from Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to be Researchers in Residence at the Tropenmuseum. I was very interested in working with KUNCI for their very special blend of research and art. Most KUNCI members travelled to Amsterdam from different parts of the world and worked at the Tropenmuseum for six weeks. They mainly focused on the Dutch East Indies permanent exhibition and the narratives that are constructed around the objects on display. The research was also done through radio shows both at the museum and elsewhere. Through the broadcasts, KUNCI 'performed' the idea of re-connecting the inside to the outside. At the end of the residency they also organised a symposium approaching the idea of researching ethnographic archives through the different senses, and launched an alternative audio guide of the permanent Dutch East Indies Exhibition.

All the materials produced, from the broadcasts to the audioguide, are available on Heterotropics' website, which functions as a research resource as well.

After that, I invited Luisa Ungar and Milena Bonilla to develop a new version of their ongoing performance *Pavilion*. *Pavilion* investigates the entangled genealogy of modern museum displays and colonial exhibitions. For this particular iteration, the performance tackled the ghostly history of The Amsterdam Colonial and Export Exhibition of 1883, and was realised on the same sites of its materialisation, Museumplein and the Rijksmuseum. Having a site-specific intention, the performance made us sense the invisible and subliminal connections between the past and the present of the area. Museumplein, which as such is a direct consequence of the big success of the fair, is still a place of gazing, a place of spectacles and collections.

Actually, the research behind *Pavilion* is what led to the project we are presenting here in Antwerp. Luisa was a resident at AIR Antwerpen at the time, and a group of Indonesian artists (Lifepatch) who were in the residency with her, told her that during the fair, where Indonesia was being exposed as a tamed paradise, the Krakatoa volcano erupted in Indonesia. It was the most destructive volcanic eruption in recorded history and according to some historians, this eruption is one of the early causes of the disintegration of the Dutch colonial empire. We were very intrigued by how this coincidence, that is not part of history books, can actually be thought of as something meaningful. From there, a lot of other impressive coincidences happened, one after the other, striking me as being worthy of further investigation. The project presented here is not curated by me, but via me, by all these coincidences.

AQ How would you define Heterotropics?

SG I would define it as a research question which thrives and mutates through different dialogues with artists and cultural institutions in Amsterdam, and now, starting with LODGERS, also outside of Amsterdam. Something which I would like to explain is that even

though colonial history is an essential framework for the project, I am not directly or literally engaging with post-colonial concerns. I try to facilitate thinking around symbolic and imagined landscapes and how they inform geo-politics on a macro and micro level. Colonialism and exoticism are extreme instances of the embeddedness of language and space.

AQ What is your relationship towards mainstream organisations'?

SG I am very aware of how the standards of exhibition-making are a by-product of colonial collecting and display. I am attempting, I am not saying that I'm succeeding, but I am attempting to operate in another way, to disturb, interrupt, and delay. I would like Heterotropics to be a syncope to the routinised pace of an art organisation or a city. I am also very interested in drawing linkages across longer periods of time. I see the whole project as one long durational programme connecting different urban spaces, ethnographic collections and art museums, through a variety of artistic and scholarly approaches.

AQ How would you relate to your locality?

SG Locality is a tricky notion. I have always been working with a great awareness of locality. Using an artistic vocabulary, Heterotropics is very site-specific. But at the same time, the main drive behind Heterotropics is exactly to shift our understanding of locality from an immediate, unconstructed given to something mediated, constructed, fictionalised. So locality is really important, but not in a sense of an immediacy. For the first chapter of Heterotropics in the Indische Buurt for instance, I was not thematising the people living there. I was not focusing on the concerns of the residents or daily life issues. All the art projects were engaging with the voyeurisms that the place induces.

Some people questioned the fact I didn't involve the residents, referring to the communities who arrived there mainly from Turkey and Morocco in the 1960s and 1970s. I would never thematise, or worse, capitalise on people. For me this is a twisted version of human zoos. I am working against neo-colonial attitudes of display. The residents of de Indische Buurt, my lovely neighbours, were our audience, not our material.

AQ For whom do you do the projects? Who do you address?

SG It depends on each chapter. Of course, when something takes place in public space a lot of neighbourhood people or passers-by form our audience. But besides this accidental audience, I would say that the main audience comes from the many facets of the art world and academia. For the project at the Tropenmuseum there was quite a core group of followers and interlocutors coming from cultural studies, architecture and anthropology, people committed to rethinking ethnographic collections.

AQ How do you sustain Heterotropics, financially and logistically?

SG As it's not an organisation, I don't have structural funding. It is project-based.

AQ But if it is not registered as an organisation, how can you apply for funding then?

SG I apply under my own name. I have a company as a freelance curator in the Netherlands. The partners I work with also play an important role both in co-funding and fundraising.

AQ What are your plans for the future?

SG

Well, for now, a big plan is the project at M HKA! It will go on for three months and is going to be quite important in terms of the energies that will be deployed.

And I would like to work on a book. A lot of knowledge has been generated along the way. A large part of it is already on the website but it would be great to have a more in-depth publication.

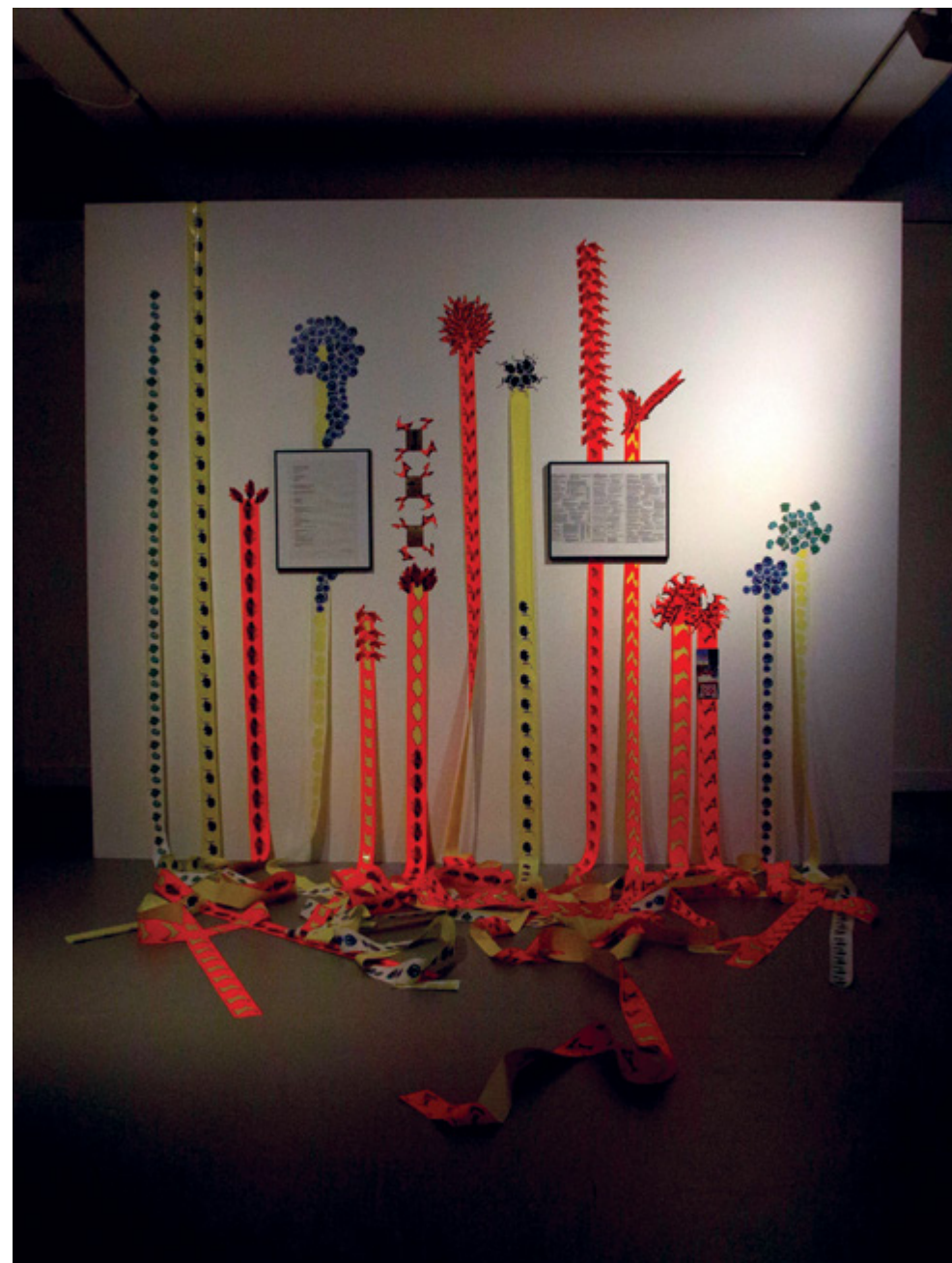
AQ

The last question for you is a bit strange. Maybe we should ask it again when the project is finished: What was the influence of the LODGERS?

SG

I can talk about the impact it had already. For sure it enabled me to fully express my take on space and language in a more radical and non-site-specific way. I have been already pursuing research on the embeddedness of nature and culture since the beginning of the project but with *On Acausal Connecting Principles* I am really going for that thinking about the interplay of meaning and matter across different scales of visibility. Using the coincidence as methodology, this iteration of Heterotropics is structured as a durational programme in five acts by Adam Bobbette, Mehraneh Atashi, Milena Bonilla & Luisa Ungar, Ivan Cheng and myself. Different interventions and performances will consecutively inhabit the space leaving traces behind towards a final accumulation. Also, the fact I won't be able to physically follow the entire project generated an interesting way of curating *in absentia*, questioning the modes of knowing, transmitting, and controlling that are part of curatorial labour. And, for some reasons, my curatorial remoteness opened a place for me as a maker, which I've enjoyed immensely. I worked on a spatial installation and it is something I never did before. It was great to materialise something as a curatorial proxy or prop.

www.heterotropics.com



Sara Giannini, in collaboration with Raoul Audouin, *ACT I - Take Away Diary (Something More than Mere Chance)*, 2018, photo: Heterotropics



Adam Bobette, *ACT II – Synchronizing the Future*, transmitted by Ivan Cheng, 2018, video still, photo: Heterotropics



Milena Bonilla & Luisa Ungar, *ACT IV – All Signal, No Message*, 2018, photo: Heterotropics



Mehraneh Atashi, *ACT III – Entropy Pump*, 2018, photo: Heterotropics



Milena Bonilla & Luisa Ungar, *ACT IV – All Signal, No Message*, 2018, photo: Heterotropics



Ivan Cheng, *Act V – INTERMEZZO'S, sunset blister*, with the participation of Ivey Wawn, 2018, photo: Heterotropics



Ivan Cheng, *Act V – INTERMEZZO'S, jan's grave nod to travis or d (HAUNTED HOUSE sunset blister)*, 2018, photo: Heterotropics

Artist's pages

ARIA (Karina Beumer)

CAN YOU WORK
OUTSIDE YOUR
OWN LOCALITY?

WHO GIVES
THE ASSIGNMENT?

MEDIATOR
AND
FACILITATOR?

THERE IS SOMETHING LACKING

HOW ALLEGAL CAN
BE A SITUATION?

PEOPLE
SHOULD
GET
PAID



NON-HUMAN AS NATURAL
RESOURCES
FOR THE USE OF HUMANS

YOU WON'T UNDER
STAND EVERYTHING
THAT I TELL YOU

MULTINATURALISM

Spiritual unity
(corporeal diversity)

amerindian cosmology

CHTHULUSCENE?

There is no linearity in time

THE BODILY APPEARANCE
ETHNOGRAPHIC PRESENT

A SOCIETY OF SOCIETIES

BEHIND AN ANIMAL MASK

(NEO-)EXTRACTIVISM

IDENTITIES

HAVE YOU SEEN A POTATO
PLANT PULLING
ITSELF OUT?



When did
we start
believe that
we are the
center of
the world?



animality

ANIMALS TRAPPED IN THE PRESENT

MULTICUL
TURALIS
M

unity of
nature

multiplicity
of cultures

WESTERN
COSMOLOGY

ANTHROPO-NOT-SEE



TO SEE US

PART 3: THE SPILL

THE WAVE IN REVERSE

SO WHEN I
LEFT THE
INTER
NET

IT CAN JUST START RAINING
AND NEVER STOP

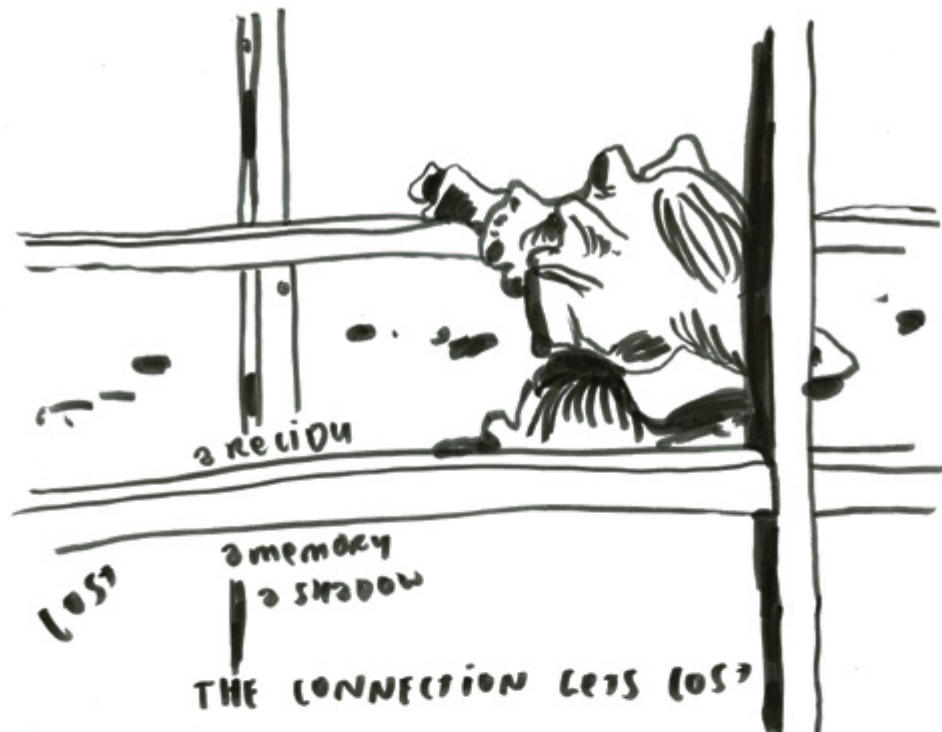
FEEL OVERBOSS TO
IS MET & EVOLVED
RECHTSRECHTS IN WARM
ING VAN DE
Pieper Rechter

THE ONLY WAY TO CATCH THE STORY IS TO MAKE AN OTHER STORY
WITH YOUR OWN OF NOTHING, KNOWN THINGS, AND UNKNOWNS
THAT IS THE POWER



MY
SUBSISTANCE
IS A
BUSINESS

YOU ARE
MORE THAN
JUST IMM
ATERIALI
TY



a religion

lost

a memory
a shadow

THE CONNECTION LETS LOS?



TRY TO BE AS EMPTY AS POSSIBLE

you silly snail you always
THE WAVE IN REVERSE

TELL HALF
OF THESE

you are still in the same space
they like to see your face from close by



LODGERS programme 2015–2018

| | | |
|--|-------------------|--|
| MER. Paper Kunsthal 31 Jan – 19 Apr 2015 | | |
| Residency Jan – Apr 2015 | | Ania Soliman |
| Activities 31 Jan – 19 Apr 2015 | | |
| 26 Feb 2015, 7-9pm | CD launch | ‘book machines’ by Sigtryggur Berg Sigmarsson, Ania Soliman, Emi Kodama and Jerry Galle Sigtryggur Berg Sigmarsson, <i>So Long</i> Emi Kodama, <i>Is it the scenic route or just the long way round?</i> Emi Kodama, <i>Is it the scenic route or just the long way round?</i> Emi Kodama, <i>Is it the scenic route or just the long way round?</i> Anne-Mie Van Kerkhoven, Aki Onda, Sigtryggur Berg Sigmarsson & Mauro Pawlowski and Jack Allett Emi Kodama, <i>Is it the scenic route or just the long way round?</i> Ania Soliman in conversation with Nav Haq Sigtryggur Berg Sigmarsson, <i>Today is Not Happening – ps. we’ll find ways to make things work in the morning</i> |
| 14 Mar 2015, 2-6pm | Performance | |
| 21 Mar 2015, 2-6pm | Performance | |
| 28 Mar 2015, 2-6pm | Performance | |
| 29 Mar 2015, 1-6pm | AudioMER Festival | |
| 4 Apr 2015, 2-6pm | Performance | |
| 9 Apr 2015, 6.30-7.30pm | Talk | |
| 9 Apr 2015, 7.30-9pm | Book launch | |
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| bolwerk 2 May – 19 Jul 2015 | | Project title: | <i>Daemons & Shell Scripts</i> |
| Residency May – July 2015 | | | Shelbatra Jashari |
| Activities 7 May 2015, 4-9pm 8 May 2015, 11am | | Concert Performances | Planète Concrète Sophie Anson, Johanna Kirsch, Samyra Moumouh, Isabel Tesfazghi, Borger with Connecting Infrastructure: Sophie Anson, Johanna Kirsch, Samyra Moumouh, Isabel Tesfazghi at S14 |
| 10 May 2015, 11am-5pm | Performance | | aROOM*, Live Skybox Cockpit – OUT OF CONTROL ROOM |
| 14 May 2015, 4-9pm 16 May 2015, 11am-6pm 19 – 22 May | Performance Workshop Workshop | | Open audio-virtual improvisation at S14 <i>Phantom chips meet Future Primitive</i> Contributing to ‘Zen and the art of making tech work for you’, including gender into privacy & security |
| 28 May 2015, 9-11pm 28 June 2015, 4-6pm | Performance Workshops | | Shelbatra Jashari, <i>Hello Shelly: Sh(ad)ows Make Human Bug Report</i> and <i>The Particular Unity of Same and Other</i> |
| 2 June 2015, 4-9pm 11 June 2015, 2-5pm 20 June 2015, 11am-5pm | Workshop Workshop Performance | | Domestic Science Club Shelbatra Jashari, Brulesque character design Dr. Petra Vanlommel, Pepa Ivanova and Špela Petric, <i>Solar Data</i> |
| 2 July 2015, 4-9pm 9 July 2015, 4-9pm 11 July 2015, 4-12pm | Workshop Concert Festival | | Domestic Science Club Planète Concrète Strangelove festival of queer cinema + Happy Crappy Party (at M HKA and AIR Antwerpen) |

| SMS | | School of Missing Studies |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| 31 Oct 2015 – 17 Jan 2016 | | |
| Residency | | |
| Oct – Jan 2016 | | Kym Ward |
| Oct – Jan 2016 | | Dirk Van Lieshout |
| Oct – Jan 2016 | | Sol Archer |
| Activities | | |
| 17 Nov 2018, 6-10pm | Screening | Canvasconnectie |
| 11 Dec 2015, 7-9pm | Presentations and discussions at AIR Antwerpen | Maurits de Bruijn, Juha van't Zelfde, Shppr, Christian Hansen and Jeroen Verbeeck |
| 11 Dec 2015, 9-11pm | Screening | Allan Sekula and Noël Burch, <i>The Forgotten Space</i> (2010) |
| 13 Dec 2015, 11am-8pm | Drawing session | Martin Schepers and Dirk van Lieshout, <i>I can only understand what I draw</i> |
| 20 Dec 2015, 10am-5pm | | Antwerp Harbour tour |
| 4 Jan 2016, 1pm | | Harbour explorations by bike, beginning from AIR Antwerpen |
| 5 Jan 2016, 10am-1pm | Workshop | Jeroen Verbeeck and Anja Isabel Schneider, <i>Alan Sekula's Ship of Fools/Docker's Museum</i> |
| 5 Jan 2016, 2-5pm | Workshop | Ellen Feiss |
| 5 Jan 2016, 1-5pm | Michel de Sadeleer | Bike tour on the colonial history of Antwerp |
| 6 Jan 2016, 10am-1pm | Discussions | Kym Ward and Huib Haye van der Werf, Gia Abrassart/Iffy Tillieu |
| 7 Jan 2016, 10am-5pm | Wiebe Eekman | Harbour tour |
| 7 Jan 2016, 7-9pm | Talk | Rachel O'Reilly, <i>Contradictions of Harbour Imaginaries from Below</i> |
| 8 Jan 2016, 10am-5pm | Workshop | Gia Abrassart and Iffy Tillieu, <i>1. script, 2. visual, 3. strategy for dissemination</i> |
| 8 Jan 2016, 6-9pm | Discussion at AIR Antwerpen | Sol Archer and Dirk van Lieshout |

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| <p>Ultra Eczema 30 Apr – 24 Jul 2016</p> <p>Residency May 2016</p> <p>May – June 2016</p> <p>Apr – Jul 2016 Apr – Jul 2016</p> <p>Activities 5 May – 14 June 2016 16 June 2016, 9pm 17 June 2016, 4-6pm 30 June 2016, 6-9pm 5 July 2016, 6-9pm</p> | <p>Giovanni Donadini (Caned Icada) Oren Ambarchi & Nik Kamvissis (Menstruation Sisters) Peter Fengler Albert Mayr</p> <p><i>Caned Icada</i> Menstruation Sisters Dennis Tyfus, <i>Summer Whine</i> Albert Mayr Peter Fengler & Dennis Tyfus, <i>Lakkers</i></p> |
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| Hotel Charleroi 4 Feb – 30 Apr 2017 | Project title: | <i>From Here to There</i> |
| Residency Feb – Apr 2017 Feb – Apr 2017 | | Hannes Zebedin Antoine Turrillon |

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| Activities 2 Apr 2017 | Performance | Johanna Tinzl & Philippe, S3 BelGenion, <i>THIS IS THE PEOPLE</i> v.02.04.17 |
| 2 Apr 2017, 2pm | Presentation | Càcilia Brown, <i>Intercity Stahlwelt</i> |
| 2 Apr 2017, 3pm | Performance | Serge Stephan, Charleroi Nails |
| 2 Apr 2017, 4pm | Performance | Claude Cattelain, <i>Colonne empirique en ligne</i> |
| 25 Apr 2017 | Screening and performance | Hannes Zebedin, <i>Highlights</i> |
| 26 Apr 2017 | Video / performance | Hannes Zebedin, <i>Highlights</i> |
| 27 Apr 2017, 10pm | Performance | Antoine Boute, Daniel Dariel and Alexandre Kouklia, <i>Le Combat de Carnaval et Carême</i> |
| 27 Apr 2018 | Presentation | Baptiste Elbaz & Antoine Turillon, <i>Nouveaux lieux, nouvelles chances</i> |
| 27 Apr 2017, 9-12pm | Performance | Stijn Van Dorpe, <i>Being Together Apart</i> |
| 27 Apr 2017, 11pm | Performance | Anna Witt, <i>Beat House</i> |
| 28 Apr 2017, 2-6pm | Workshop | Mira Sanders & Cédric Noël, <i>The Mental Masonry Lab</i> |
| 30 Apr 2017, 2-6pm | Workshop | Mira Sanders & Cédric Noël, <i>The Mental Masonry Lab</i> |
| 30 Apr 2017, 2pm | Performance | Maria-Giovanna Drago & Sophie Thun, <i>Taverne de la Gare</i> |
| 30 Apr 2017, 4pm | Performance | Annabel Lange, <i>Not on Top</i> |
| 30 Apr 2017, 8pm | Performance | Maria-Giovanna Drago & Sophie Thun, <i>Taverne de la Gare</i> |

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| Jubilee 19 May – 23 Jul 2017 | Project title: | <i>CAVEAT!!!</i> |
| Residency May – June 2017 | | Scott Raby |
| Activities 19 May 2017, 3-6pm | Presentation | Steyn Berghs & Florence Cheval, introduction to <i>CAVEAT!!!</i> |
| | | Sari Depreeuw (<i>CAVEAT!!!</i> legal advisor): keynote on <i>CAVEAT!!!</i> 's legal paradigm |
| 20 May 2017, 3-6pm | Presentation | Scott Raby: <i>the artist's contract</i> |
| | Presentation | Sara Martinetti: <i>Seth Siegelau's artist's contracts</i> |
| 21 May 2017, 3-6pm | Presentation | Carey Young |
| 26 May 2017, 3-6pm | Workshop | <i>CAVEAT!!!, Multiple Authorship & Collaboration</i> |
| 2 June 2017, 3-6pm | Workshop | <i>CAVEAT!!!, Artists and Curators</i> |
| 9 June 2017, 3-6pm | Workshop | <i>CAVEAT!!!, Distributing Art</i> |
| 16 June 2017, 3-6pm | Workshop | <i>CAVEAT!!!, The Artist's Signature</i> |
| 22 June 2017, 6-9pm | Presentation | Agency, Antony Hudek, Judith Ickowicz, Sven Lütticken, Daniel McClean, Julia Wielgus, <i>Debates on the work of Philippe Thomas</i> |
| 23 June 2017, 3-6pm | Presentation | Agency, Antony Hudek, Judith Ickowicz, Sven Lütticken, Daniel McClean, Julia Wielgus, <i>Debates on the work of Philippe Thomas</i> |

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| Drop City 5 Aug – 15 Oct 2017 | Project title: | <i>Drop City – Antwerp</i> |
| | | Paul Becker, <i>The Kink in the Arc: A Novel</i> |
| | | Nadia Hebson, <i>Alpha Adieu</i> |
| | | Sam Watson, <i>The Studio for Arousing Tools</i> |
| | | Eleanor Wright, <i>A Gradual Stiffening</i> |

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| Residency Aug – Oct 2017 Aug – Oct 2017 Aug – Oct 2017 Aug – Oct 2017 | | Paul Becker Nadia Hebson Sam Watson Eleanor Wright |
| Activities 5 Aug 2017, 8pm 11 Aug 2017, 4pm 17 Aug 2017, 6-7.30pm 18 Aug 2017, 3pm 19 Aug 2017, 3-5pm | Video Performance Presentation Reading Talk | <i>A Primer</i> Videos selection for Museumnacht Francesco Pedraglio, <i>The Spoken Word Gallery</i> Nadia Hebson: <i>Alpha Adieu</i> Natasha Soobramanien & Luke Williams. Hana Leaper, <i>Vanessa Bell, Angelic Garnett, Making Women's Art Matter</i> Luke Mc Creadie, <i>The Kink in the Arc: A Novel</i> |
| 24 Aug 2017, 3-5pm | Presentation, reading and performance | |
| 9 Sept 2017, 3-5pm | Performance lecture | Tess Denman-Cleaver, <i>Time Passes: Performing Virginia Woolf's Landscapes</i> |
| 16 Sept 2017, 6-7.30pm | Talk | Titania Seidl and Nadia Hebson, <i>How to be a Painter</i> |
| 21 Sept 2017, 6-7.30pm | Talk | Ellen Lesperance and Nadia Hebson |
| 28 Sept 2017, 11am-5pm | Workshop | <i>Metaphysics VR, Virtual Reality</i> |
| 28 Sept 2017, 6.30pm | Performance | Jani Ruscica with Suzanna Pezo <i>Felt the Moonlight on My Feet</i> |
| 1 Oct 2017, 6pm | Performance | Daniela Cascella: Adriana Cavarero and Ingeborg Bachmann |
| 4 Oct 2017, 11am-5pm | Workshop | <i>Metaphysics VR, Virtual Reality</i> |
| 5 Oct 2017, 11am-5pm | Workshop | <i>Metaphysics VR, Virtual Reality</i> |
| 5 Oct 2017, 6.30pm | Performance | Jani Ruscica with Suzanna Pezo <i>Felt the Moonlight on My Feet</i> |
| 6 Oct 2017, 7-9pm | Performance at Pink House | Christian Jendreiko, <i>RIDDLE & LUST Action for voice, electronics & words</i> |
| 12 Oct 2017, 9pm | Performance at Pink House | Jani Ruscica with Suzanna Pezo <i>Felt the Moonlight on My Feet</i> |
| 14 Oct 2017, 4-6pm | Talk | Giovanna Zapperi, Carla Lonzi, <i>The Art of Life</i> |
| 2017 | Artist's book | Eleanor Wright, <i>An Athens City Reader</i> |

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|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Art Paper Editions 26 Oct 2017 – 7 Jan 2018 | Project title: | <i>Performing the Book</i> |
| Activities 26 Oct 17, 7pm | Performance | Hana Miletić, <i>Little Blues Booklet</i> with Virginie Honvoh |
| | Performance | Hana Miletić, <i>Tenir Paroles</i> with Ibrahim Khayar |
| | Performance | Camille Piquot, <i>Alluviums</i> |
| | Book launch | Camille Piquot, <i>Domestic Flight</i> |
| 16 Nov 17, 7pm | Performance | Pieterjan Gincckels, <i>Solar Safari</i> |
| | | Performance and book launch: Manor Grunewald, <i>External Hard Disk</i> |
| | | Michiel De Cleene: <i>F#1-13</i> |
| 14 Dec 17, 7pm | Performance and book launch | |
| | Performance and book launch | Hannelore Van Dijck |
| | Performance | Thomas Nolf |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| Oushoorn & Milius 20 Jan – 18 Mar 2018 | | | 31 May 2018, 1.30pm 3 June 2018, 2-4pm 11 – 25 June 2018 14 June 2018, 7pm 19 June 2018, 3pm 20 June 2018, 11am 21 June 2018, 4pm 21 June 2018, 4.30pm 21 June 2018, 5.30pm 21 June 2018, 7pm | Presentation Workshop Presentation Performance Talk Presentation Book presentation and discussion Presentation Screening | <i>The Infinite Conversations</i> with Wesley Meuris, Pieter Vermeulen and Ward Heirwegh Ludivine Lechat, <i>Image, imagination & relaxation</i> Culture Common Quest Office Pascal Gielen, opening of <i>Wellness Centre Future Proof</i> <i>Silent Discussion on Commons & Sustainability</i> Massimo De Angelis, <i>All in Common</i> Louis Volont, <i>The Open Narrations</i> Arne Herman, <i>E.T.A. Hoffmann's Undine, or how the water granted the artwork its soul'</i> Lara Garcia Diaz and Juan Canela, <i>Field of Equivocations – Embodied Uncommons</i> Fabricio Terranova, <i>Donna Haraway, Storytelling for Earthly Survival</i> |
| Activities 23 Jan – 15 Feb 2018 8 – 15 Feb 2018 16 Feb – 8 Mar 2018 24 Feb – 08 Mar 2018 9 – 15 Mar 2018 16 – 18 Mar 2018 | Exhibition Exhibition Exhibition Exhibition Exhibition Exhibition | <i>Doelenshop (Goal Shop)</i> , Oushoorn & Milius <i>A selection of early 20th century photographs taken in Belgian Congo</i> , from Bence Bakker's photograph collection Sam Weerdmeester, <i>Sam's Pleasure Boats</i> Harald Thys & Jos de Gruyter, <i>Het Bruin van Mechelen (The Brown of Mechelen)</i> , 2013 Jacques André, <i>MAC's - MHKA - MAC's KIPPENBERGERRUPPERSBERG (Arters n°200 + Arters n°201)</i> , 2018 <i>Alexi's tapijten with Shoes off</i> , Nicolas Bourthoumieux, Sarah Caillard, Douglas Eynon, Gijs Milius and Gauthier Oushoorn | | | |
| ARIA 31 Mar – 24 Jun 2018 | | Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts | baumusik 7 Jul – 2 Sept 2018 | Project title: | <i>[BAU034] – baumusik & friends</i> |
| Residency May – June 2018 | | Hemant Sareen | | | Installations by Timothy Shearer & Janina Warnk feat. works by: Benjamin Adams, Jonas Bruns, Meryem Erkus, Lukas Goersmeyer, Echo Ho, Sebastian Ingenhoff, Caroline Kox+Antonio de Luca, Malo, Jan-Ole Schiemann, Britta Tekotte, Roland Kaiser Wilhelm and Cologne based artists Eliza Ballesteros & David Lichter, Pia Bergerbusch, Julia Bünnagel, Berta Valin Escofet, Sebastian Fritzscht, Miriam Gossing/ Lina Sieckmann/Nicole Wegner, Philipp Hoening, Julia König & Thomas Lambertz, Florian Kuhlmann, Carmen Lenhart and Finn Wagner. |
| Activities 31 Mar – 21 Apr 2018 | | Koninklijk Conservatorium Antwerpen | Residency July – Sept 2018 July – Sept 2018 July – Sept 2018 | | Timothy Shearer Janina Warnk Meryem Erkus |
| 5 Apr 2018, 6-7pm 12 Apr 2018, 6-7pm 12 Apr 2018, 7pm | Guided tour Guided tour Performance | Erwin Jans, Tone Brulin Erwin Jans, Tone Brulin Katharina Smets, Inne Eysermans and Ingrid Leonard, <i>The Space Between</i> | Activities 2 Aug 2018, 11am-9pm 4 Aug 2018, 8-12pm | Welcome Reception Antwerp Museumnight | <i>[BAU034] – baumusik & friends</i> BritKat, Marie-Claire Delarber, with live performances zo-on slows, UMMN and reading |
| 15 Apr 2018, 3-4pm 18 Apr 2018, 9-11am 19 Apr 2018, 7-8pm | Guided tour Lecture Performance | Erwin Jans, Tone Brulin Erwin Jans to KCA drama students Katharina Smets, Inne Eysermans and Ingrid Leonard, <i>The Space Between</i> | 16 Aug 2018, 8pm 17 Aug 2018 | Concert Performances and DJ set at AIR Antwerpen | Hall&Rauch <i>2 YEARS baumusik</i> , with CAMP INC/Jeandado and baumusik DJ-programme |
| 20 Apr 2018, 10.30am-1pm | Lecture | Erwin Jans to KCA drama students | 1 Sept 2018, 5pm | Finissage, performance and T-shirt launch | Koxette |
| 23 – 28 Apr 2018 | | Sint Lucas School of Arts Antwerpen | | | |
| 24 Apr 2018, 1-4.15pm | Symposium | <i>TRANSFORM TRANSLATE TRANSMISSION</i> , with Esther Venrooy, Timo van Grinsven, Bart Lodewijks, Laetitia Gendre | | | |
| 30 Apr – 20 May 2018 | | Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen | | | |
| 30 Apr – 20 May 2018 | Exhibition | Geert Goiris, Mashid Mohadjerin and Vijai Patchineelam | | | |
| 3 May 2018, 7pm 10 May 2018, 5-6pm 17 May 2018, 7.30pm | Reading Screening / reading Reading / performance | Vijai Patchineelam, <i>Samba Shiva</i> Marcelline Delbecq & Geert Goiris, <i>Whiteout</i> Mashid Mohadjerin, <i>Lipstick & Gas Mask</i> | | | |
| 21 May – 09 June 2018 | | Sint Lucas School of Arts Antwerpen | | | |
| 24 May 2018, 7-9pm 27 May 2018, 2-4pm | Lecture / projection Workshop | The Ring by Common Room Ludivine Lechat, <i>Image, imagination & relaxation</i> | | | |

Heterotropics

15 Sept – 16 Dec 2018

Residency

Sept 2018

Sept – Dec 2018

Oct – Nov 2018

Nov – Dec 2018

Nov – Dec 2018

Activities

27 Sept 2018

3 – 5 Oct 2018

18 – 27 Oct 2018

25 Oct 2018

28 Oct – 08 Dec 2018

6 Dec 2018, 6.30pm

1 – 8 Dec 2018

8 – 16 Dec 2018

6 Dec 2018, 7.30pm

Project title:

HETEROTROPICS #4 – On Acausal Connecting Principles

Sara Giannini

Ivan Cheng

Mehraneh Atashi

Milena Bonilla

Luisa Ungar

Presentation

ACT I – TAKEAWAY DIARY (SOMETHING MORE THAN MERE CHANCE), Sara Giannini in collaboration with designer Raoul Audouin

Presentation

ACT II – Synchronising the Future, Adam Bobbette. Transmitted by Ivan Cheng with Zachary Schoenhut

Presentation

ACT III – ENTROPY PUMP, Mehraneh Atashi

Performance

Mehraneh Atashi and Geo Wyeth, *Hole Water*

Presentation

ACT IV – ALL SIGNAL, NO MESSAGE, Milena Bonilla & Luisa Ungar, *ALL SIGNAL, NO MESSAGE*

Performance

Milena Bonilla & Luisa Ungar, *ALL SIGNAL, NO MESSAGE*

Presentation

ACT V – INTERMEZZO'S POST-FINALE

Performance

ACCUMULATION, Ivan ChengIvan Cheng with Ivey Wawn, *Sunset Blister*

Colophon

Onomatopee Z0013
cabinet project

SUSTAINABILITY IS NOT ENOUGH
**Non-Conventional Organisations
and Initiatives**

This book has been published
to accompany the LODGERS
programme, 2015–2018.

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Nav Haq & Alan Quireyns

Production:
Giulia Bellinetti, Leen Bosch,
Lode Geens, Georges Uittenhout,
Frederiek Weda

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Onomatopée Projects is a curating and editorially-led public gallery and publisher. Taking the hub of Eindhoven as a starting point to mount globally relevant programmes of various sizes and interests, Onomatopée produces visual criticality and advocates progressive culture: all to inspire in-depth experiences and to provide critical nourishment. They both self-initiate projects, often transdisciplinary, and host projects of progressive individuals as well as artist-run and institutional organisations.

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2018 Antwerpen
Belgium
www.airantwerpen.be

M HKA

M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp
Leuvenstraat 32,
2000 Antwerp
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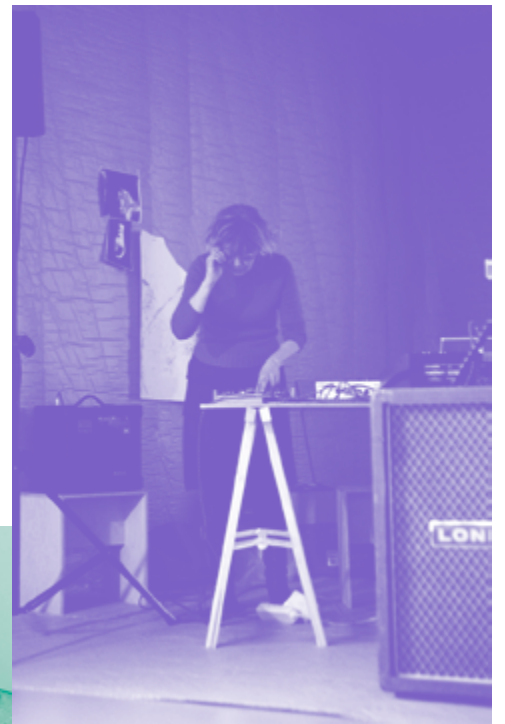
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LODGERS

OUT



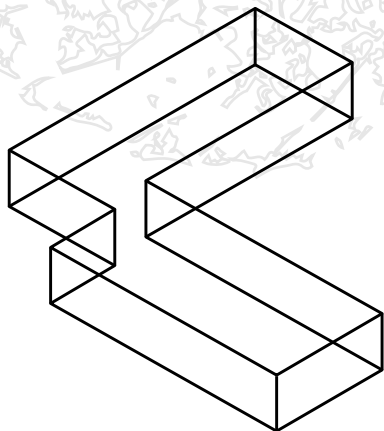
#6



#9

Sustainability is not Enough reflects on the many organisations and initiatives that sit beyond conventional definition – organisations who play important roles in supporting the work of artists, and who often form the underpinnings of our artistic ecology. Taking its cue from the LODGERS programme organised collaboratively by M HKA and AIR ANTWERPEN from 2015 to 2018, the book provides the case studies of sixteen initiatives from the Eurocore region, considering the reasons they exist, their ways of working with artists and their means of survival.

Sustainability is not Enough offers itself as a resource for thinking about the possibilities of a broader spectrum of organisational models for providing artists with valuable spaces of opportunity, exchange and freedom.



**M HKA, AIR ANTWERPEN
& ONOMATOPEE PROJECTS**

#1–4

**MER. Paper
Kunsthalle**

(Ghent)

bolwerkK

(Antwerp)

Apparent Extent

(Cologne)

School of

Missing Studies

(Rotterdam)

#5–8

Le Salon

(Brussels)

Ultra Eczema

(Antwerp)

lonelyfingers

(Düsseldorf)

Pages

(Rotterdam)

#9–12

Hotel Charleroi

(Charleroi)

Jubilee

(Brussels)

Drop City

(Düsseldorf)

Art Paper Editions

(Ghent)

#13–16

**Oushoorn &
Milius**

(Brussels)

ARIA

(Antwerp)

baumusik

(Cologne)

Heterotropics

(Amsterdam)