

CAHIER ON ART
AND THE PUBLIC
DOMAIN

open

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(NO) MEMORY

Storing and recalling in
contemporary art and culture

editorial

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(NO)MEMORY

The subtitle of the new Open reads, 'cahier on art and the public domain'. A cahier on art and the public domain is not necessarily or exclusively about art in public space. The physical interpretation often associated with 'art in public space' is often too limited. In the new Open public space is seen as a component of the larger arena of public opinion-making and public life, an arena that can take multiple forms. Within this Open sees art not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a participant bearing joint responsibility, as well as in relation to other signification disciplines and developments. This does not imply that Open is an interdisciplinary cahier, but it does imply that it includes room for themes, visions and viewpoints that sometimes criss-cross these various areas. Something like this seems urgent in a time when all notions of publicness are being reappraised.

From this perspective Open 7 explores the current status of memory within art and the public domain. Public and collective forms of remembrance are definitely not static or neutral, but

rather subject to socio-cultural, historical, political and technological forces, which continually redefine their conditions and limits and continually reconfigure memory. The current culture seems equally dominated by safe-keeping and remembering as by discarding and forgetting. Cultural heritage is a topic of interest, as is the search for workable memorials and contemporary monuments. Technology guarantees unlimited storage space for information and data. But at the same time the media and consumer culture contribute to a 'memorylessness' and transience that make it seem as though everything were beginning all over again.

The present pluriform and post-ideological public domain is not shored up by one single binding collective memory, but by countless material and immaterial memories. These short and long-term memories oppose or overlap one another. The current organization and experience of the public domain is defined in part by the tension that exists between individual and collective, between old and new, between autochthonous and allochthonous memories. Within the public domain, memory (its content, control or place) has an impact on the way in which we view each other, ourselves, our past

and our future. He who controls the memories and archives of a society controls time and space. It is precisely for this reason that keeping them accessible and sharing them is something that concerns everyone.

How can active use be made of the information and the memories stored in the current 'memory places'? What is the role of art in this? Is such a thing as collective remembrance still possible? How can the cultural heritage be made accessible without turning city and country into one big open-air museum? And what are the implications of new media and digital storage technologies for the social and historical process of safe-keeping and remembering?

In Open 7 Rudi Laermans analyses the current 'heritage regime', while Frank van Vree examines the political significance of the contemporary monument. Cor Wagenaar argues for the use of time as an instrument in the Belvedere policy, in which the cultural history serves as a source of inspiration in the spatial planning of the Netherlands. The German media theorist Wolfgang Ernst demonstrates how the archive, in a digital culture, literally becomes metaphor. Jorinde Seijdel subjects Bill Gates's image archive to closer inspection, while Sven Lütticken writes on the 'conspiracy of publicness' at work in the mass media. Geert Lovink inter-

viewed artist and archivist Tjebbe van Tijen about his project Unbombing the World 1911–2011, which aims to document air bombardments all over the world.

This Open includes a separate supplement, designed by Lonnie van Brummelen, with a text on identity and local memory, entitled 'Wij' ('We'), by artist Arnoud Holleman, written for the Proeftuin Twente. In addition Open 7 includes shorter texts taken directly from actual practice or linked to (art) projects, and the books section has been expanded. There is a story by the photographer and writer Hans Aarsman, and the column on art as public space was written by philosopher Henk Oosterling. Nico Bick photographed several archives for Open, including the Amsterdam Municipal Archives and the National Archives in The Hague. This issue also includes a letter by Barbara Visser, written under the aegis of Sternet, the network of twelve distribution buildings of the former PTT designated as 'recent urban heritage'. Artists Joke Robaard and Nico Dockx produced contributions for Open based on their own preoccupations with the archive.

Rudi Laermans

Paradoxes of
Patrimonialization

Using several historical lines, the Belgian sociologist Rudi Laermans analyses the present 'heritage regime'. Actualism, which so dominates the modern era, is characterized by an emphasis on forgetting. The present focus on heritage seems to contradict this. Yet stressing the autonomous value of the past in fact rein-

forces the division between past and present. According to Laermans they are two sides of the same coin. The often expressed criticism of Disneyfication merely diverts attention.

*A lot changes in a man's life.
The gentleman regularly went to look at
the landscape marred by motorways, because
he knew how it had looked in the past.
A curious habit.*
(Armando, De haperende schepping /
'The Faltering Creation', 2003)

In Cologne the famed Dom is merely a good stone's throw from the train station. In something like five minutes you walk from the station to the majestic church building the Cologne tourism office likes to pride itself on. Those five minutes on foot bridge a huge gap in time, as Boris Groys rightly notes in 'Die Stadt auf Durchreise' ('Travelling Through the City'), one of the essays in *Logik der Sammlung* ('The Logic of Collecting'). While the architecture of the Cologne train station cannot really be termed contemporary, it is nevertheless vaguely recognizable as 'of our time'. Moreover, we would not be surprised if the station building were to be partially demolished or if an entirely new station were to be built somewhere else. The Dom, on the other hand, seems timeless, indeed eternal, and alludes to an era other than our own. 'The monumental in the city is thus for us the other, the inaccessible, the displaced in time – and therefore the invariable in space', writes Groys. 'The Dom of Cologne can be destroyed, like a utopian city, but it cannot be altered.'

The difference between, in Groys's imagery, the monumental and the changeable city is not factually given but rather actively produced. Over the last decades the gap between old and new urbanity, the historic city centre and the rest of the public space has increased, by the generalization of what is officially known as patrimony or heritage policy. We know that a portion of the built environment is quite often designated as historical patrimony in order to

increase the tourist appeal of a city. In the essay quoted above, Groys goes one step further. Rather than the urban patrimony awaiting the tourist gaze, it is the reverse that takes place, according to Groys: 'it is only tourism that creates these monuments, it is only because of tourism that a city is monumentalized, it is only in passing through the city that the ever-flowing, constantly changing everyday urban environment is turned into a monumental image of eternity'. This stimulating premise by Groys is rather arbitrary. It ignores, after all, the whole heritage or patrimony machine, the dynamic network of legal regulations, government subsidies and divergent interests, that each time selects specific artefacts from the past, transforms them into workable political and administrative dossiers, with official protection and preservation as the final result. Without these the tourist gaze would simply have a lot less to look at. This gaze, in quite a few cases of patrimony policy, serves as an implicit premise and indirectly contributes to it. But in any case heritage production and heritage tourism are two different things, even if one undeniably implies the other.

The usual patrimony or heritage practice has very direct effects on how time and history presently manifest themselves within the urban environment. For the time being, along with the officially commemorated city area, a usually far larger section of the city emerged, without a 'stone memory', often even without a past as such. Particularly in new-build districts, as in post-war suburbia, there are few if any architectural signs that refer to the past. Nor does one find many symbols from the present intended for the long run, with a view to creating something like a spatial memory. The public space is all provisional; it exudes no supratemporality or monumentality – and when it exceptionally does so, the constructions seem

contrived and rhetorical. In short, designating a small portion of the urban space as patrimony underscores the manifest lack of memory of the greater part of the built environment of the twentieth century, especially that of the post-war era. Is the visit to the 'monumental city' supposed to compensate for, if not legitimize, living and working in the 'changeable city'?

There is another paradox: the monumental city is made to stand outside historical time; it is made to be invariable. Buildings, squares or monuments are, as it were, temporally frozen, usually after a thorough cleaning (which rejuvenates them) and often after restoration (which amounts somewhat to artificial aging). Future interventions are unacceptable and are made almost legally impossible as soon as a relic is designated as official patrimony. It is precisely this temporal conservation that is the clearest indication of the active transformation of an artefact from the past, whether material or not, into a piece of heritage or patrimony (I will use the two words henceforth as synonyms). It literally becomes something else; it becomes trapped as a 'witness to the past' in an autonomous zone outside of time, strictly guarded professionally as well as legally. This is in fact probably the basic operation of every form of 'patrimonialization', or to use an even uglier neologism, 'heritaging'. The advantage of these verb forms is that they immediately dispel the illusion that the heritage character of an artefact from the past is simply something observed. This is manifestly not the case. Something is designed as declared heritage, and that is undeniably a performative act of language and not a neutral observation.

A third paradox is that the practice of patrimonialization continually appeals to 'the importance of the past to the present'. But nothing and no one can guarantee that the officially commemorated city area can count

on a living community of remembrance. It is one thing to preserve and restore; it is another to remember – in the sense of 'think of' – the past through relics. The inventoried and classified, often legally protected monumental city is of course never completely without memory. It has at minimum a memory of use, which probably has a collective character to a significant degree. Striking structures from the past function as shared landmarks in the otherwise entirely singular memories of all who live, work or regularly consumes in, for example, a historic city centre.

This memory of use, however, is like any normally functioning individual memory. It mostly does not remember reflexively or consciously; it pays little if any attention to its surroundings to the extent that this is familiar and seems normal. The user of a familiar environment acts without thinking, if not distractingly 'Nothing more invisible in the world', an ironic Musil once observed of monuments that are meant to make the living remember the dead – and he was speaking, of course, of the average city user. This user is inattentive and a few stereotypical images are enough for him to be going on with. Active city users concentrate on their own current affairs; they constantly *forget*, therefore, any monumentality or supratemporality in the built environment. They want a coffee or a beer, are hurrying to their work or home. Everyday chores turn the much-vaunted splendour of the historic city centre into at most a fleetingly perceived scenery (or into a source of traffic irritation ...). Anyone who finds a monument or building worth seeing, admiringly gazes up and down a street or takes in a square is perhaps an elderly resident *flâneur*, but more probably a passing tourist.

We now find it self-evident that a building, square or monument be immovable heritage (there is even such a thing as world heritage). However, this self-evidence has a history inextricably linked to the more general process of modernization. Two lines can be more or less discerned in this history, as Françoise Choay shows in *L'allégorie du patrimoine* ('The Allegory of Patrimony'). The first and older line, involves, at first glance, an unusual stake: how to deal with the relics of a past that has been emphatically rejected? This question was faced soon after 1789 by the heirs of the French Revolution. What to do with the seized churches and their contents? What to do with the mansions, castles, artworks, furniture of the royal family and the countless nobles in exile? The revolutionaries wanted to consciously forget – but the public, material traces of the officially abolished past, among other things, served as the well-known 'return of the repressed', as insistent symptoms of a rejected historical reality. This led, predictably, to an attack on the symptoms: some seized properties were destroyed, including during the officially sanctioned wave of vandalism that followed the arrest of the former king during his attempt flight in 1792. This is not the whole story, however, for a significant part of the symbolically contaminated legacy of movable objects ended up in the Louvre, perhaps the first museum in the modern sense of the word (the idea of turning the Louvre into a public museum, incidentally, was already circulating during the last years of the *Ancien Régime*). For buildings, monuments and other immovable artefacts, rules were drawn up for separating the important from the unimportant, to distinguish what was worth preserving from what might fall in the cracks of history.

The post-revolutionary French state inaugurated, under the flag of the notion of patrimony, a centralist policy with a strong nationalistic stamp. 'The rich past' was politically and socially wrong, yet this was not necessarily reflected in the preserved patrimony. The material relics of the past could be subsumed into a different genealogy, that of the people, nation and nation-state. Their historical or documentary value was of course not denied, but as pieces of heritage they were part of a discourse different from scientific historiography (at the same time, this in itself during the nineteenth century very often tended to legitimize the mythical genealogy of a nation-state). The official patrimony lent the nation-state, in the first place, an imaginary family tree, and in addition aesthetic grandeur. It could therefore contribute to a sense of citizenship and public responsibility: it was to elicit respect for their nation-state among 'the people'. 'All these precious objects that were kept far from the people or were displayed only to impress or command respect; all these riches belong to the people. Henceforth they shall be used for public development; they shall serve the education of lawmaker-philosophers, of enlightened magistrates, of evolved farmers, of artists whose genius shall be fruitfully devoted to celebrating the successes of a great people in an appropriate manner', as it was described in the *Instruction sur la manière d'inventorier et de conserver* ('Instructions on inventory and conservation') of 1793.

The French Revolution was not a one-off political event. Modernity and political revolution, as we know, are two sides of the same coin. Sometimes an uprising was driven by the utopian possibility of a total political upheaval, other times the struggle for political independence took priority, and still other times both motives were combined. But whatever its

stakes, every revolution was inevitably followed by the moment of 'the return of the repressed'. Political institutions could be profoundly modified from one day to the next; this was not possible for the material past, nor for the customs, traditions and other forms of what is termed immaterial heritage. The public material traces of the past were just there, as simultaneously eloquent and silenced remnants of the officially abolished 'old days'. Their former symbolic value was no longer recognized, but in a post-revolutionary patrimony regime they usually acquire two new dominant meanings. Patrimonialization, in this context, as noted, was primarily a process of nationalization, literally and figuratively, on the one hand, and the aestheticization of the inherited material past, on the other. This relationship with 'the past tense' is hardly a past perfect tense, rather the opposite.

Ruskin

The second line in the treatment of relics from the past emerged in England and is inextricably linked to the names of John Ruskin and William Morris. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a broad response to the erosion, if not the destruction of landscapes – deemed picturesque –, buildings and monuments in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. The process of industrialization, however, created, in a broader sense, a rupture between past and present that was perceived as fundamental. On the one hand, the industrial capital production methods created a new architectural reality: factories, industrial towns, proletarianization and concentration of workers in urban ghettos. On the other hand they strongly undermined the value of manual labour and the skills of artisans, of tradition and community life. The 'new civilization', a term widely used

at the time, in turn created a crisis of remembrance. Unlike a revolutionary regime, it did not consciously reject the pre-industrial past, however. Instead it sufficed to ignore it and push it aside: what was useless was by definition economically valueless, and 'therefore' the past deserved neither attention nor acknowledgment; 'therefore' it could be undermined, transformed, even destroyed, without nostalgia or regret. It was precisely this ostensibly neutral, but in fact brutal showing together of instrumental rationality, market value and social worth that the romantically inspired cultural criticism was to keep fighting, in the name of an elevated concept of art as well as of a historical awareness presented as inescapable.

'We can live without architecture, worship our God without her, but without her we could not remember', Ruskin remarks somewhere in 'The Lamp of Memory', the famed sixth chapter of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). The idea that the built environment plays a crucial role in the collective memory was certainly not new in the mid-nineteenth century; it was a commonly accepted notion in architectural history. Ruskin, however, takes it quite literally, which partly explains his committed campaign for the preservation – but without restorations! – of sites or buildings. For in Ruskin's vision the built environment safeguards a quasi-direct contact between past and present. Through statues and monuments, simple houses and showy palaces, intact landscapes and city centres, the past would thus speak to us quasi-directly, often with multiple voices but always forcefully. Ruskin coins a neologism for this, 'voicefulness'. In short, architectural relics are always more than purely material artefacts from the past. Along with their presence in the present, one or more meanings from the past are represented as well. Churches tell how

people used to worship God, dwellings tell how our ancestors decorated their houses, city districts show how earlier generations shaped social distinctions.

According to Ruskin the built environment speaks out loud, and for this very reason it must be treated with care: a conversation partner is owed at least this much respect. But why could he hear the 'voice of the past' in a collection of stones when so many were deaf to it? Why did he have to convince his contemporaries that there was anything to listen to at all and that this was why old country houses or cottages were worth preserving? Ruskin naturally was well aware that the indifference to the language of the past he condemned was closely related to the new industrial context. Modernity produced practical and future-oriented people, who had neither time nor inclination for past conditions and their sedimentation in stone or wood. They did not mind a hitherto untouched landscape being covered in the soot of a factory, or an elegant country estate making way for a profitable mine operation. Ruskin and his allies would not accept this basic oblivion motivated not by political rejection but by indifference and profit. To them respecting the relicts of the past was less a matter of nationalism or aesthetics – although the latter was of course involved – and more a *moral* question in and of itself.

In Ruskin's wide-ranging observations one can indeed detect a basic attitude that leavens thinking on heritage and patrimony – which is incidentally primarily a question of action – to this day. It acknowledges that the past is over and done with, and that it offers neither lessons nor identities to modern or contemporary people. Unlike the nationalistically inspired forms of patrimonialization, this second line is neither didactic nor pedagogical. Relicts of the past are instead valuable in themselves, in fact

good in a moral sense. They deserve regard and respect purely because of their temporal origins, and therefore an acknowledgement of their preservation is a moral minimum. In short, the cultural or symbolic distance between past and present is duly recognized, but at the same time moralized. This produces a genuine paradox: current living circumstances tend to favour forgetting, but this should not be allowed to define our general living condition; there must be a domain in which we emphatically remember, in fact *honour*, traces of the past. In this regard heritage production and heritage tourism are evidence, in the first place, of the existence of a specific morality with quasi-sacred traits, one that attempts to counter the dominant oblivion by asking for a minimum of respect, even piety, toward relicts of the past. This patrimonial morality, as is often the case in moral communication, has been propagated as self-evident and forms one of the cornerstones of the official heritage discourse. Arguments are lacking – but the entire heritage sector has always suffered from a remarkable lack of theorization and reflection.

Distanced past

The patrimony or heritage exposition reduces the past to an autonomous object of moral valuation, with no direct links to the present and with a denial of the always specific historical context in which the preserved artefacts originate. It is in fact not about the individual objects, although, for example, every preservation dossier likes to set out the historical particularity of the defended artefact. The deciding factor is the positive and morally charged valuation of the Past, with a capital P – and this can, in essence, be directed toward any era. A heritage tourist in fact admires the past as such and looks at all architectural relicts in an

old city centre without any discrimination; nor does he find it odd that a museum route starts in Ancient Egypt and suddenly ends somewhere halfway through the nineteenth century. It is precisely this general nature of the patrimonial regime, reflected by the breadth of the heritage sector, that differentiates it from the scientific treatment of the past. Historiography studies, if possible value-free, in essence all that has ever been the case. It views the past as an immense history, as an unfathomable sea of temporal events among which connections may exist, but which in any case are datable and locatable. Place and date form the two basic co-ordinates of any form of scientific historiography; it is simply inconceivable without them. The heritage regime, on the other hand, produces its own object out of an isolated positive valuation of the past. Usually this refers in part to the time of history and historiography, but both the production and the reception of heritage artefacts are ruled by the simultaneously homogeneous and abstract, non-event time of the past as pure *pastness*.

The heritage regime has another salient characteristic, to which I have already alluded several times. It places the past at a distance, and literally: it makes it worth showing and seeing; it creates a gigantic collection of visual attractions. In this collection, periodization or dating is far less important than the simple fact that it contains relicts of the past. No direct connection is made, on the contrary. The placing of old objects behind glass, the all-to-familiar signs in museums admonishing ‘do not touch!’ or the temporal freezing, in fact, immortalizing of buildings illustrate that the past, in the patrimony regime, is literally and figuratively placed at a distance. Neither city residents nor heritage visitors have any direct connection with this *distanced past*. They live among the sanitized traces of a general ‘past-

ness’ or they admire them, without and outside built spaces – but usually without their acquiring a place in the present, without their being woven into individual biographies and thereby made current. Patrimonialization creates its own object, ‘pastness’, and simultaneously a huge archive that remains a dead past. The preserved past is given the utmost care, it receives a great deal of visual attention and is widely admired, even celebrated and honoured. But it usually does not function as a social or cultural memory within which remembering is synonymous with commemorating.

The Viennese art historian Alois Riegl was undoubtedly the first to see that patrimonialization amounts to both an isolated, non-historical valuation and a great distancing of the preserved past. In *Der moderne Denkmalkultus* (1903) Riegl draws a distinction between monuments, in the strict sense, and historical monuments. The former are explicitly intended as memorials, erected by a collective to remember an event, rite or conviction for itself and/or to remind coming generations of it. Historical monuments, on the other hand, are a specific invention of the Renaissance, which began to revalue highly diverse artefacts, because it saw a historical golden age reflected in them. Unlike actual monuments, these artefacts were not intended as memorials. Their value as memory value – a notion, incidentally, that Riegl expressly employs – has in fact a predominantly cognitive character. Historical monuments, Riegl argues, can presently still be evocative in purely aesthetic terms, but they derive their value as memory value primarily from the fact that they enrich the general historic knowledge or present art-historical insights. The historical monument, however, can be enjoyed, aside from purely aesthetically or cognitively, in yet another way. *This* memory value is the ‘*Altertumswert*’, the age value of a

relic of the past. This may be of little cultural or art-historical importance, but it can elicit a ‘vaguely aesthetic’ sensation in everyone because it has stood the test of time and yet bears its traces.

Riegl offers at first glance no explicit value judgement on the admiration for ‘the old’ he observes. At the same time, the title as well as the general tone of Riegl’s essay indicates that the author, who held key positions within the Austrian historical preservation circles and thus probably expressed himself somewhat carefully, was duly aware of the moral, even quasi-sacred aspect of the phenomenon he described. Although Riegl does not emphasize it in so many words, it is logically the age value in particular that installs an unprecedented cult status on historical monuments. Riegl classifies this, among other things, in terms of a ‘*Stimmungswirkung*’ that requires no historical knowledge and makes a complete abstraction of the historicity of the concrete object. Even the object itself ‘evaporates in this third class of monuments into a necessary evil’, says Riegl. ‘The monument remains nothing more than an unavoidable sensory substrate to elicit in its spectator that sentimental effect that arouses in modern people the idea of the systematic cycle of creation and decay, of the emergence of the individual out of the universal and its slow naturally imperative reabsorption into the universal.’

Riegl’s age value, let there be no doubt about it, does not coincide with what I earlier called ‘pastness’. Riegl’s characterizations make it clear that in his view the age value cannot be separate from the patina of an artefact of the past, the presence of visible traces of aging. ‘Pastness’, on the other hand, is that supratemporal and non-historical zone in which material objects – whatever state they may be in – end up after being declared to be heritage. It is the

specific temporality of museums as well as of buildings that, paradoxically enough, is regarded as historic. For that matter, it is anything but original to separate ‘pastness’ and historicity, heritage and history or historiography. Since the large-scale public access to built and other patrimony starting in the late 1970s, there have been endless complaints about the staging of the past as spectacle, about inauthenticity and ‘fakelore’, about historical simulacra. But is it useful to oppose the heritage regime and its reductionist valuation of ‘the old’ to the scientific historiography and its neutral concept of history? What do we achieve by continually setting the ‘pastness’ of the patrimonial discourse against the past? Such a basic cognitive critique unmasks the homogeneous time of ‘pastness’ as false, but ignores the underlying act of valuation. The specific nature of this act has a great deal, if not everything, to do with the modern regime of historicity. This last expression – coined by the French historian François Hartog – alludes to the way in which a group or culture deals with its own past from the standpoint of the present, and more generally, to its relationship with time and temporality.

With modernity emerged a new regime of historicity. In some social contexts, especially those of the intimate and family relationships, the premodern regime based on the possibility of a direct symbolic exchange between present and past, still reigns. A dead parent or deceased partner is actively remembered; he or she often continues to structure or give meaning to everyday activities and is therefore never entirely dead, as long a living memory links the remembered with feelings, actions or objects. In almost all other spheres of life, on the other hand, forgetting, intentional or unintentional, dominates, with or without revolutionary credos (it has been the latter for

some time, which partly legitimizes the diagnosis of postmodernism). Economics and education still count in terms of one year – the annual account, the school year, the academic year – but the news coverage of the mass media on, for instance, the radio has a duration of at most one hour. Between these two extremes are located the operational or functional times of most other macrosystems (this is sometimes different for their archives – but that is why it is a matter of archiving). Forgetting quickly is in short the societal rule, including in organizations, for example. To be perfectly clear: I am not arguing that a modern (or a postmodern) society undergoes something like a memory crisis. This often-cited diagnosis applies a literally one-sided and therefore questionable outlook on memory work. A memory remembers as well as forgets, and modern social memories simply have a structural tendency to forget. This is probably nowhere as clear as in the sphere of fashion and consumption.

With its emphasis on forgetting and thus the limited importance of reminders and other traces of the past for the actual functioning of the economy, science, art, politics..., the modern regime of historicity tended from the outset toward a watershed between past and present. Perhaps the moment of postmodernity, already an archaic-sounding expression, precisely signifies exactly the semi-completion of this evolution? In any event, symbolic exchange relationships hardly exist anymore between 'then' and 'now' in our society; economic or social, cultural or technological changes have simply been happening too fast for that for some time. This temporal non-communication results in two completely opposite value regimes. That of *actualism* parallels the de facto dominance of forgetting in our society. It values change in the present, true to the motto 'to stand still is to go backward'; it

praises renewal and a flexible attitude, until recently from a future-oriented faith in progress – but it is possible even without this metalegitimization: 'postmodernity = modernity minus futurism'. In actualism, at all events, change is a value in and of itself. 'New = good' and 'old = out' – this is the defiant basic morality of actualism as a value regime. The second value regime, that of patrimony and heritage, emphasizes on the contrary the autonomous value of the past. 'Old = good', and therefore it is worthwhile to preserve and protect old artefacts on the one hand and to visit and admire them on the other. Not only does our relationship to the past acquire an autonomy that often merely reinforces the dominance of forgetting and of actualism, but the moralized past also becomes an object of care and piety; it is isolated and therefore set a distance.

On the one side the present, the time of news, fashion, bank records, internet information – in short, the transient. True to the morality of actualism, it can never change fast enough, for changes are good in and of themselves. At the other end of the spectrum is the past, in the form of a massive pastness inhabited by countless artefacts 'from before'. They are carefully preserved and managed, and they are there to be looked at. The gaze of the museum visitor or heritage tourist does not bridge the gap between past and present, nor is it structured by much historical knowledge or imaginative power. But in its sheer focus on the seen, this gaze does express a specific valuation: 'that which has come to us from the past deserves respect'. This does not mean the past is also actively memorialized, remembered or made current. On the contrary, by respecting it within the isolated domain of heritage and patrimonial preservation, it is all the more easily ignored in the daily *train de vie*. Actualism

and patrimonialization form two sides of the same coin – and yet another complaint about the Disneyfication of the past within the heritage regime will do nothing to change that.

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Frank van Vree

The Art of
Commemoration &
the Politics of Memory

Monuments never exist in isolation. Either they are overrun with visitors or languishing in some dead-end street – in either case they are part of the historical culture in which we live, as the legacy of preceding generations, as a product as well as a formative element of the collective memory. But that is not all. Monuments are not only expressions of

sentiments, memories and thoughts that are – or were – present among the population, but also political instruments, in the sense that they promote or support particular representations of history. The way in which a society has shaped its past, in monuments and other public anchoring points of memory, in fact says more about that society than about the history itself.

On Saturday 29 May 2004, with much fanfare, the National World War II Memorial was dedicated in Washington. Public interest was massive. More than 100,000 people attended the ceremony, including President Bush, flanked by his predecessors, Bill Clinton and Bush's father, a decorated Navy pilot who had served during the war. This monument acknowledged a debt of long standing, said Bush, to a whole generation of Americans. 'Those who died, those who fought and worked and grieved and went on. They saved our country, and thereby saved the liberty of mankind.' The war veterans listened; they had come in their tens of thousands for the celebration of the World War II Reunion and the dedication of the monument, a sea of baseball caps with old uniforms underneath, many in wheelchairs, armed with canes, while elsewhere across the country many thousands followed the ceremony on giant screens via satellite.¹

1. Report by *The New York Times* (text, video) 30 May 2004; for a complete description of the memorial, with illustrations, see the official site <http://www.wwiimemorial.com>.

For the U.S. administration, grappling with bitter international criticism and a deep national divide over the war in Iraq, this celebratory 'Tribute to a Generation' was not inopportune. In the American public consciousness the Second World War lives on, after all, as 'The Good War', as the war in which the spirit of the nation fully flourished, not only in defending its own country but also in the interest of peace and freedom in the rest of the world. The festivities in this extraordinary memorial year (the ceremonial dedication of the monument, the reunion of the veterans and the 60th anniversary of D-Day in early June) provided the beleaguered president a perfect opportunity to place his war on terrorism in a historical perspective – an opportunity that fell into his lap by coincidence, incidentally, for the plans for the monument date back to 1987, while the definitive decision was taken under Clinton in 1993.

The Good War – in the collective memory the Second World War is not only a symbol of the values upon which the United States is based, but also of the achievement of its historical destiny. An analysis of half a century of Hollywood films could hardly be more clear. The war is said to have healed the old, deep wounds of the Civil War and bridged the wide gap between classes and ethnic groups, and to have given women the opportunity to develop socially – and all for an unquestionably pure ideal, as demonstrated by the repeatedly displayed pictures of the crowds cheering their liberation by Allied armies. In the Second World War evil was vanquished; the war delivered the historical proof of the power of American democracy and in addition gave the country technological, cultural and political supremacy over the world.

The central place of The Good War in the American collective memory is expressed in all manner of ways in the National World War II Memorial, starting with its size and – above all – its location, on the National Mall in Washington, on the axis that connects the Lincoln Memorial with the Washington Monument and continues to the Capitol.

The heart of the memorial, designed by Friedrich St. Florian, is formed by two galleries of pillars, interrupted by a stone wall decorated with thousands of gold stars, in the shape of a circle around an existing pool, the Rainbow Pool. Each row totals 28 granite pillars more than five metres high, bearing a laurel wreath and the name of one of the U.S. states and territories, including Samoa and the Virgin Islands. In the centre of the pillar galleries stand the Atlantic Arch and the Pacific Arch, each 13 metres high, above bronze sculptures symbolising victory on the two fronts of the war. The semi-circular wall of 4,100 gold stars, the Freedom Wall, nearly 26 metres long and

National World War II Memorial in Washington, 2004.



The Freedom Wall is part of the National World War II Memorial. Each star represents 100 fallen soldiers who died for freedom, to which the text 'Here we mark the price of freedom' also alludes.



2.7 metres high, evokes a huge altar: each star represents 100 soldiers who were killed, who died for freedom, as the large inscription *Here we mark the price of freedom* also attests.

In the centre of the circular plaza encircled by the pillars and the Freedom Wall is the Rainbow Pool, a pool excavated in 1912 along with the neighbouring Reflecting Pool, as a spectacular open space between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. By incorporating this open space the new monument marked its central space in U.S. history. The Mall and the adjacent area on the banks of the Potomac, stretching from Capitol Hill to Arlington National Cemetery, can be seen as a single, imposing, well-nigh imperial field of honour, as a Forum Americanum, with along the edges the White House, the buildings of the Senate and House of Representatives, the great national Smithsonian museums, the Botanical Gardens, the National Archives, the National Academy of Sciences and, tellingly, the Holocaust Memorial Museum. Inside this area are located memorials to the great leaders of the nation, Lincoln, Washington, Roosevelt, Grant and Jefferson, while further on, at Arlington, are the graves of Kennedy and Johnson; closer to the centre – but somewhat pushed out of the way by the advent of the new monument to the Second World War – are the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the famous Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Vietnam Women’s’ Memorial. The location of the National World War II Memorial in the heart of this field of glory and remembrance is a statement that is patently clear: the Second World War lives on in the public consciousness as an event that formed the country – America as a world power – and from which it derives its identity to a significant degree.

The texture of national memory

A closer inspection of the war monument likely begs the question of whether something similar should be erected in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Europe today. Not that its establishment in the United States did not encounter opposition: there was criticism – of the design, but particularly of the location.² Opponents of the monument held that the historic Mall would irremediably undermined by the annexation of the two pools and the open space, which had functioned for almost a century as a place to cool off and relax, and moreover as the site of memorable cultural and political demonstrations, such as the famous demonstration of 28 August 1963, when Martin Luther King electrified 250,000 people with his visionary ‘I have a dream...’ speech.

The design also met with resistance: some saw in the monument ‘an echo of the Nazi Fascist architectural language of triumph and public spectacle’; others called the style and visual idiom kitsch. A columnist from *The Washington Post*, the day before the dedication, wrote that the monument was a signal failure. The concept was of revolting banality, the symbolism – the pillars with the laurel wreaths and the names of the states, and the gold stars, one for every 100 killed – hollow and evidence of laziness.³

There can be doubt, however, that both the design and its execution could count on a warm reception from the public. The huge attendance numbers at the Reunion, but also the great success of the fundraising – more donations were received than had been budgeted: \$195 million in total – are an indication of this. The Second World War occupies a central

2. See for instance the site of the National Coalition to Save Our Mall, <http://www.savethemall.org>, as well as for example Daniel Honan, ‘Military: Is the New World War II Monument Fascist?’, *History News Network*, 7 June 2001, <http://hnn.us>.

3. Ch. Krauthammer, ‘Parenthesis to History’, *The Washington Post*, 28 May 2004.

place in the national self-image, in the culture and in politics, in the American 'civil religion' – that odd mix of patriotism, Enlightenment ideals, Christian values and Old Testament religiosity – as do the many Holocaust memorials and museums that have proliferated around the country: they refer to the same period of terror and horror that was ended by American action, as is made immediately clear to the visitor upon entering the permanent exhibition at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

In Western Europe, such pontifical, optimistic monuments have not been made for years. For decades the Second World War is instead remembered as a period of horror, which should not be forgotten solely for that reason. In the first years after the Liberation, it was still a different matter. A characteristic of what James Young, in an analogy to the inner structure of matter, has called 'the texture of memory', was the 'weaving in' of the remembrances of the war into the traditional national political and religious discourse: well into the 1960s – and in some countries even later – most monuments, popular novels, films, remembrance rituals and scientific studies fit in directly with existing historical and political notions, with the 'great stories', with nationalism, belief in progress, the traditional religious and political ideologies.⁴

An important aspect of this 'weaving in' of war memories in the prevailing worldview was the emphasis on continuity. The National Monument on the Dam in Amsterdam, which was dedicated in 1956 but had already become the site of the annual national commemoration of the dead, was to tell posterity about the suffering, the courage, the sacrifice and (above all) 'the perseverance that led to the future'.⁵ This quest was

4. Frank van Vree, *In de schaduw van Auschwitz. Herinneringen, beelden, geschiedenis*, Groningen 1995; James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven/London 1993.

5. Warno Oosterbaan et al., *Het Nationaal Monument op de Dam*, Amsterdam 1998.

reflected not only in the sculptures themselves, but also in the story of the creation, the location of the monument and the rituals centred round it. To emphasize that this was not a city, but a national monument, the land on which the creation of the sculptor John Raedecker and the architect J.J.P. Oud was erected was sold by the square centimetre to the public. The soil also played a role in another way: in the white wall on the rear side urns were placed, filled with 'earth, drenched with the blood of martyrs', from firing-squad sites and burial grounds for the honoured dead.

It was much the same for other commissions for monuments, documentaries and commemorative books, in the Netherlands as well as in other countries. Artists, directors and writers were expected to connect themes like grief and comfort with the idea of patriotic sacrifice, spiritual strength and victory, and in a recognizable, evocative and nevertheless aesthetically appealing way, inspiring and expressive for years to come.

In practice, however, these requirements proved scarcely unifiable, if at all, as can be seen from the difficult process involved in putting up many a memorial. The artist usually got the short end of the stick, for artistically speaking the 'flood of monuments' that swept over the Netherlands immediately after the Liberation left little room for less conventional forms – aside from the rare example of Zadkine's *The Destroyed City* in Rotterdam, but that was only, all things considered, because the city was offered it as a gift. In most instances the commissioners and the sculptors resorted to the classical and Christian repertoire, with a familiar symbolism in which usually no more than a handful of aspects of the experiences, feelings and reflections were expressed: doves of peace, crosses, phoenixes, lions, broken chains, flags, swords, hands, flowers, crushed swastikas and

Monument by Nathan Rapoport in commemoration of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, 1948.



The Destroyed City by Zadkine. This piece was presented to the city of Rotterdam in 1953.



eagles brought to earth. Equally unsurprising were the victory columns, the statues of the man facing the firing squad, the falling soldier, the protective shepherd, the Christ figure and the Corpus Christi, the merciful mother figure, St George and the Dragon, the Good Samaritan, the victims cast to the ground and the victorious male and female figures, Judith and Holofernes, David and Goliath. And the same held for the inscriptions, which were usually taken straight from the Bible or the religious bits of the national anthem – ‘Steadfast my heart remaineth in my adversity’ – and the standard patriotic repertoire: ‘for their country’, ‘may we never forget’, ‘in thanks and remembrance’, ‘not in vain’, ‘to those who fell’.⁶

6. B. van Bohemen and W. Ramaker, *Sto een ogenblik stil... Monumentenboek 1940/1945*, Kampen 1980.

The hegemony of the conventional and highly idealized idiom of form of the memorial culture extend throughout Europe, from East to West. A striking illustration of this is Nathan Rapoport’s monument to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, erected in 1948, out of stone that had been prepared – an irony of history – for Arno Breker, Hitler’s favourite sculptor, who was to have made a ‘Victory Monument’ from it in Berlin.⁷ Rapoport’s memorial was a clear expression of the dominant socialist-communist politics of remembrance, in which martyrdom and solidarity were the focus. The racist aspect of the mass murder was not addressed.

7. James Young, *op. cit.*, p. 155 onwards.

Broken sculptures

From the 1960s onward, historical culture, which had been the basis of the conventional and idealized memorials, began to erode all across Europe. This change naturally did not occur on its own: it was a product of social,

religious and political developments, of decolonization, the rise of the consumer society and the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. In some countries this process unfolded rapidly and radically, such as in the Netherlands and Germany, and in some countries more slowly, such as in France, where a difficult and sometimes intense battle was fought over the legacies of De Gaulle and Pétain.

In essence this turnaround came down to an undermining of the traditional exclusivist notions of history, based on national, religious and political values that had been imposed, as it were, onto the experiences of the past. In their place came a pluralistic historical culture, in many ways less coercive, hierarchical and moralistic. This trend has even become visible in Eastern Europe in recent years, while ultra-nationalist voices, which rose in many countries right after the fall of communism, are getting weaker.

At the heart of this transformation process, another movement unfolded: growing attention to Auschwitz, considered the symbol of the systematic persecution and annihilation of the Jews, Gypsies, mentally ill people and others viewed as inferior by the Nazis. This development was partly spurred by the Eichmann trial, the publication of important scientific studies and the questions of a new, younger generation – but also by the open nature of the new historical consciousness, which became more many-voiced as a result.

This resulted in a remembrance culture that had – and has – virtually nothing more in common with the nationalistic and ideological remembrance culture of the first years following the war. Whereas the traditional representation then were ruled by the idea of historical continuity, from now on the experiences were described in terms of an irreparable *break* in history. Jean-François Lyotard spoke of Auschwitz

as an earthquake, the strength of which we cannot measure because we do not have an adequate set of instruments at our disposal: it was lost with the lives, buildings and objects, so that we can only be silent – a silence that for every mortal will serve as a sign.⁸

8. J.-F. Lyotard, *Le différend*, Paris 1983, p. 91.

We find the same thinking in the monument *Nooit Meer Auschwitz* ('Never Again Auschwitz'), by the writer and sculptor Jan Wolkers by commission of the Dutch Auschwitz Committee, on the spot where in the early 1950s an urn had been interred containing ashes from the camp. At its dedication in 1977 Wolkers said: 'How can you devise a form to mark a crime of such horrendous proportions, that you know in your heart that it cannot ever be forgiven. To attempt to find an image to reflect the ignominy and the suffering transcends the limit of your comprehension. When you look up at the sky, it is impossible to imagine the same sun shining over that destruction as indifferently and peacefully as over a meadow filled with flowers. In a vision of justice, the blue sky above you cracks apart as if the horrors that took place on earth below have desecrated eternity for ever.'⁹

9. *Auschwitz Bulletin*, 3 (1985), p. 16.

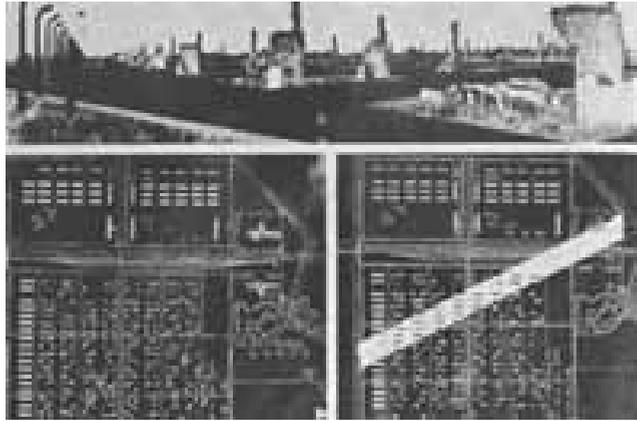
This is in fact exactly what the monument shows: the sky, reflected in broken mirrors, covered by a layer of glass, through which we gaze at a sky that is irreparably damaged.

Jan Wolkers's monument was exemplary for the turnaround in the monument culture in more than one regard. Not only did the monument aim to say something substantially different from the many hundreds of memorials from the 1940s and 1950s, but the idiom of form was also radically different. In the pluralistic remembrance culture, the first rank was reserved for individuals and individual groups, for the senselessness of the horrors and inadequacies of the traditional forms of expression.

The previously mentioned tension between modern art and tradition, between artist and public, was after all not purely a question of taste; it was also rooted in deeper issues: how could this war be commemorated? It was a theme that was addressed immediately after the war by Theodor Adorno, in his often quoted – and often misunderstood – words, 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric'. The philosopher, in fact, did not mean to say that no poetry should be written, but rather that the traditional aesthetic criteria of Western culture were no longer adequate and that the idea of 'beauty' has been irreversibly altered by the experience of the Final Solution.

It was a struggle from which few found a way out in that first decade after the war. But some did. In literature – often a refuge for dissident voices – in poems and prose, writers such as Celan and Camus, but also Lucebert, Van het Reve and Hermans demonstrated a new consciousness. Even the cinema, though because of high production costs and the attendant orientation on the mass audience a quintessentially conformist medium, occasionally showed signs, in the hands of a new generation of directors in the 1950s, of dissent toward the prevailing remembrance culture. An illustration of this is Alain Resnais's memorable documentary, *Nuit et Brouillard* ('Night and Fog') (1956), in which the memory of the camp ('l'univers concentrationnaire', the perverse universe in which everyday words and actions acquire a demonic, through-the-looking-glass significance) was presented not as a finished but an ongoing story. And the same happened on the other side of the Iron Curtain, where not only writers and artists, but also directors took advantage of the unrest and power shifts that followed the death of Stalin. This movement, now known as 'the Polish school', searched for new strategies from 1956 to 1963, varying from a clownish

Design for a monument in Auschwitz by Oskar and Zofia Hansen, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz and Julian Palka, 1957-1958. Not executed.



Nooit meer Auschwitz ('Never again Auschwitz') by Jan Wolkers, Amsterdam, 1977.



approach to the 'strategy of psychotherapy', in order to give shape to the experiences of the recent past. Subsequently well-known directors like Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk and Wojciech Has confronted the public with highly unconventional and unedifying images of painful episodes from the nation's history, the traumas and deeply damaging consequences of the political and social tragedies of the preceding decade.¹⁰

But, as we noted, seeking and finding alternative forms, away from the traditional remembrance culture, was limited to the few. Competitions for monuments often ended with embarrassing results, as demonstrated by the rejection of the abstract designs of Willem Reijers and Wessel Couzijn for a national monument to the merchant marine in Rotterdam (1950) or the desperation of the international jury chaired by the British sculptor Henry Moore, which in 1957-1958 had to select a design out of 426 entries that would immortalize the suffering of the victims of racist policy. In both affairs the controversy centred on the abstract character of the design. Whereas in the Rotterdam competition it was decreed that an abstract monument 'cannot speak to the sailor's wife', representatives of the International Auschwitz Committee pointed out that 'we were not tortured and our families were not murdered in the abstract'.¹¹

The jury for the monument in Auschwitz did initially succeed in selecting three proposals. One was clearly the favourite: the design by the Polish architects and artists Oskar and Zofia Hansen, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz and Julian Palka. Their design consisted of a tar roadway 1,000 metres long and 70 metres

wide, which would run diagonally across the camp, from the rail line to the crematoriums, where it would abruptly end in the fields and the woods. Everything that still stood along the way – the remains of the barracks, the latrines, the barbed wire, the foundations and pieces of walls, the chimneys – would be included and immortalized in this strip. The designers wanted, as it were, to fix a portion of the camp for all eternity, as a sort of 'petrified past', right across the horrors of history, while the surroundings, the rest of the camp, would be left to the ravages of time, to slow decay and be overrun by vegetation. The diagonal roadway would be display the mechanism of the camp – but at the same time the road was an Open Form: a setting that left the viewer free, as it were, to let his thought wander or to leave behind letters. The road monument would elicit the same sensation as the ruins of Pompeii. Starting from the present, from life, the line of death would be crossed.

The proposals ultimately led to nothing. The jury dared not force a decision, leading Moore to wonder doubtfully whether 'it is in fact possible to create a work of art that can express the emotions associated with Auschwitz'.¹²

The process was illustrative for this period in more than one regard – although there were significant exceptions from a memorial point of view, such as the impressive memorials by the sculptor Franciszek Duszenko and the architect Adam Haupt, erected between 1960 and 1964 at Treblinka, the death camp in which between 23 July 1942 and the autumn of 1943 800,000 people were killed, the vast majority of them Polish Jews. It is an unusual memorial, not only because of its expanse and location in the woods, but also because of the way Duszenko and Haupt managed to link abstraction and tradition: the monument can be seen as an

10. Frank van Vree, 'Auschwitz liegt im Polen: Krieg, Verfolgung und Vernichtung in polnischen Kino 1945–1963', in W. Wende (ed.), *Geschichte im Film. Mediale Inszenierungen des Holocaust und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, Stuttgart/Weimar 2002, pp. 44–66; Cf. Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows. Film and the Holocaust*, Cambridge 2003; Ilan Avisar, *Screening the Holocaust. Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable*, Bloomington 1988.

11. Van Vree, op. cit., p. 33 onwards.; Katarzyna Murwaska-Muthesius, 'Oskar Hansen and the Auschwitz "Counter Memorial", 1958–1959', *Artmargins* 2001, www.artmargins.com.

12. James Young, op. cit., p. 24.

immense cemetery, consisting of three huge concrete tombstones, studded with countless smaller stones, which recall the tombstones of old Jewish cemeteries. This evokes a motif that is traditionally highly prevalent in the East European Jewish culture – that of disturbance and fracture. Like Hansen et al. with their design for the Auschwitz Monument, Duszenko and Haupt developed an idiom of form that a decade later would still be praised as relevant and worthy of imitation – as demonstrated not only by the earlier-cited words of Wolkers, but also the recent debate about the Berlin ‘Holocaust monument’ and many other memorials that have been erected in Europe since the 1970s.

Monuments/Counter-monuments

Most of the monuments erected before 1970 seem to have little left to say to us today. They leave us unmoved or fulfil only a purely ritualistic function; sometimes they are amusing, more often we look past them. They refer to a remembrance culture, a patriotic and Christian-inspired philosophy to which we scarcely respond any longer, if at all – when they don’t offend us altogether, like the *Van Heutsz Monument* (1935) in Amsterdam, symbol of a violent colonial past.

The monuments that are the subject of debate today, those that create excitement, that spontaneously evolve into gathering places and to which a political significance relevant to our times is still ascribed, are entirely different in nature, in the Netherlands as well in the rest of Europe. There may be great differences, measured by aesthetic, political and historical criteria, but these new monuments are virtually without exception connected with the shadowy sides of our history, with war and destruction, slavery and injustice. Contemporary memorials

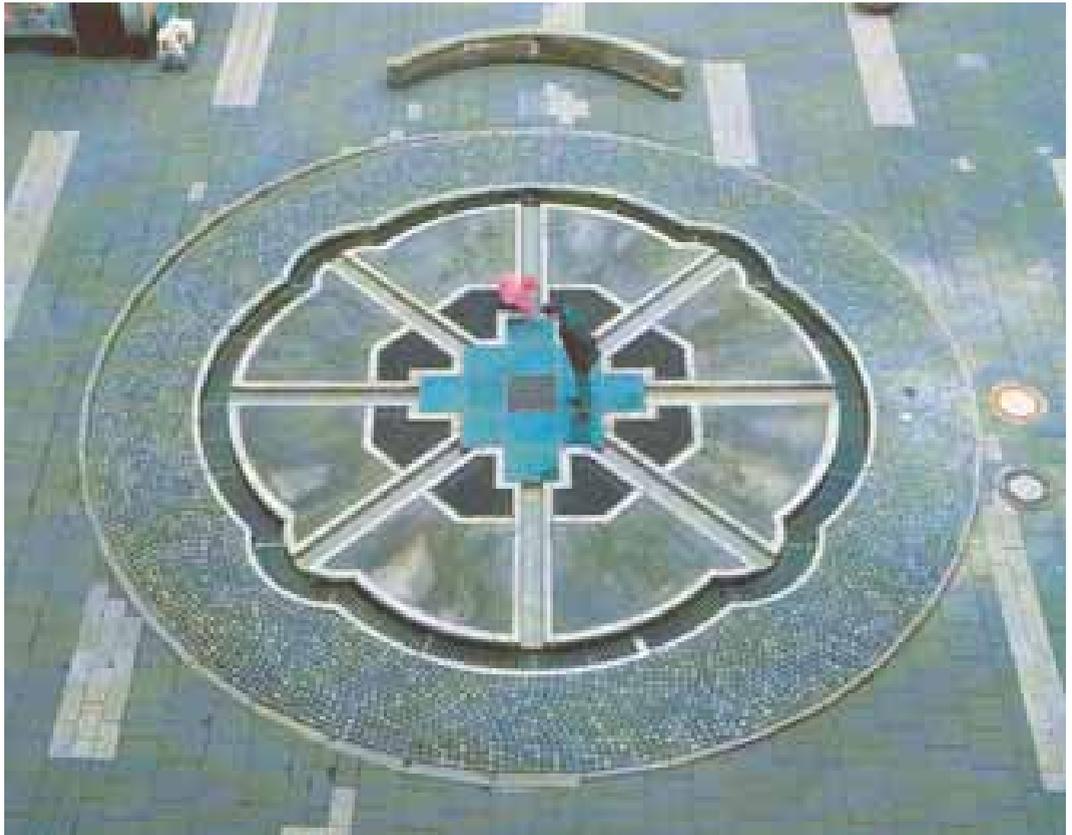
are primarily linked to victimhood, not only of disasters, atrocities and persecutions of the past, but also exploding factories, random violence and everyday racism. In many cases this has resulted in projects that have the character of a counter-monument, like Wolkers’s monument (1977), Horst Hoheisel’s inward-facing, mirrored fountain in Kassel, on the spot where until 1938 a fountain donated by a Jewish resident that was destroyed by the Nazis (1987), the Holocaust-Mahnmal in Vienna, an impenetrable cube by Rachel Whiteread (2001), of the *Digitaal Monument voor de Joodse Gemeenschap* (‘Digital Memorial to the Jewish Community’), which will be open shortly and which will bring to life the Jewish community of the Netherlands decimated by the Nazis.

If the enthusiasm of Americans for the World War II Reunion and the new memorial in Washington is an expression of the American ‘civil religion’, which combines patriotism, the ideals of the Enlightenment, Christian values and Old Testament religiosity, it seems obvious to conclude that the experience of history in Western Europe since the 1970s has followed quite a different pattern. The relatively one-dimensional, ideological and collectivist historical culture, so characteristic of the first decade after the war, has had to make way for a pluralistic (and simultaneously personal) culture of remembrance, apparently devoid of political or social dimension, a culture of remembrance that according to some critics is even arbitrary. The evolution of the monument culture since the 1980s, however, shows a different picture: the fact that many monuments refer primarily to the most negative episodes of modern history makes clear how deeply anchored in the collective consciousness is the awareness of human shortcomings, the shortcomings of our culture and society.

Monument in Treblinka by Franciszek Duszenko and Adam Haupt, 1960-1964.



The 1987 inward-facing, mirrored fountain by Horst Hoheisel in Kassel is located on the spot where a fountain donated by a Jewish resident stood until the Nazis destroyed it in 1938.



Rachel Whiteread, Monument in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, Vienna, 2001.

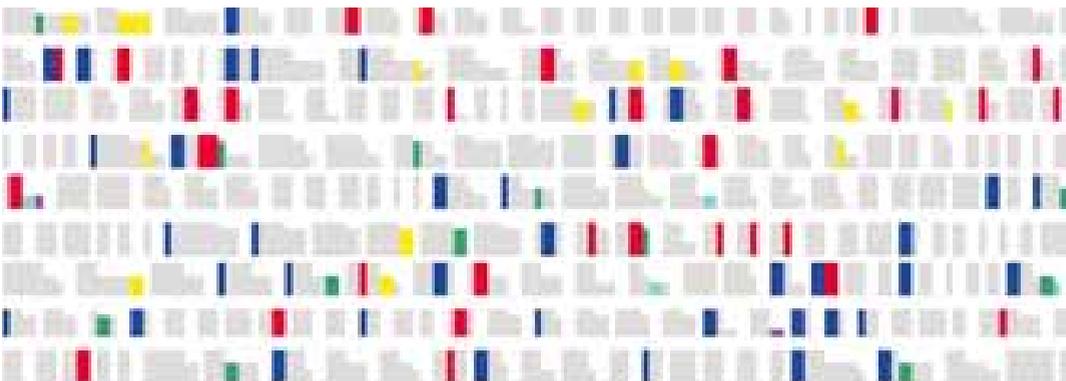




Preliminary design for the Digitaal Monument voor de Joodse Gemeenschap ('Digital Memorial to the Jewish Community'), design, concept and engineering: Mediamatic Amsterdam. The coloured blocks all show murdered Dutch Jews. From each block you look through to a family. With a click on a block you get background information and personal data on each family. The screen is generated from the database with special software. The memorial goes online in late 2004.



Detail



Cor Wagenaar

The Magic Mountain
of Belvedere

The Belvedere policy, based on the Dutch government's 1999 Belvedere Policy Document on the relationship of heritage preservation and spatial planning, strives to make the past operational. The concept of time and its perception are central to this. If Belvedere intends to be more than a glorified preservation society,

it must not limit itself to concrete object-oriented research. A more theoretical approach, involving other design and experience-oriented disciplines, is essential to identify the various conceptions of time.

'What then is time? (...) Space we perceive with our organs, with our senses of sight and touch. Good. But which is our organ of time? (...) How can we possibly measure anything about which we actually know nothing, not even a single one of its properties? We say of time that it passes. Very good, let it pass. But to be able to measure it – wait a minute: to be susceptible of being measured, time must flow evenly, but who ever said it did that? As far as our consciousness is concerned it doesn't, we only assume that it does, for the sake of convenience; and our units of measurement are purely arbitrary, sheer conventions...'

Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (1924)

This article contains no cavalcade of case studies, reflections on conservation or renewal, no in-depth examination of the utility and necessity of liberating heritage policy from the established frameworks of historic preservation.¹ What distinguishes Belvedere from other, traditionally institutionalized forms of devising a *modus vivendi* with the built past is that the focus is not on the object, but on its significance (apart from its artistic value), and the role it plays in the everyday living and working environment of people today. In Belvedere everything revolves around the perception of time. But what is time? That is the subject of *The Magic Mountain*, Thomas Mann's literary monument. *The Magic Mountain* is a treasure trove of obsessions, thoughts and sentiments that have played a fundamental yet forgotten role in the emergence of modern architecture. J.J.P. Oud, for instance, would reflect on it his entire life. Themes such as classicism versus romanticism, the union of classicism with the urge to destroy (the 'Bösheit'

1. Two earlier articles dealt, respectively, with the undesirability of reducing Belvedere to environmental decoration, and the necessity of basing the new policy in proper research: 'Vlucht uit de werkelijkheid?', *Stedenbouw & Ruimtelijke Ordening*, NIROV, no. 3, 2003, p. 22-27, and 'Het veranderbare monument', in *Cultuur en stedelijke vernieuwing*. Denkboek voor de cultuurimpuls ISV, Netherlands Ministries of Education, Culture & Science and of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, 2004, 96-127. The public domain as a (historical) medium is the theme of the partly Belvedere-funded *Cities and the Pursuit of Public Happiness*, to be published in the autumn by NAI Publishers, Rotterdam.

of Settembrini, one of the most remarkable figures in the novel), the passionate belief in technology as the vehicle for a blissful future, and the bewilderment of the main character, Hans Castorp, at the unexpected blending of technology and morality, in which technology and science point the way to a better society. Difficult questions with which Oud grappled for a lifetime, while to the militaristic supreme commander of the modern movement, Sigfried Giedion, they were elements from a far-off past, the stuff of 'nineteenth-century' novels. 'I always wonder why you want to be associated, through your predilections (Thomas Mann, classicism, etc.), with a generation that is so much older than you.'²

Those who were modern read the work

2. Letter from S. Giedion to J.J.P. Oud, 3 December 1928, NAI, J.J.P. Oud archive.

of Paul van Ostaïjen or the 'new word images' of Theo van Doesburg. Why reflect on defeated standpoints, the relics of a dead past? The answer is as simple as it is, for Giedion, disconcerting: because, to Oud, they were anything but obsolete.

Time, in spite of the multitude of subjects that come up in the endless, timeless *Magic Mountain*, is the main theme of Thomas Mann's magnum opus. Oud did not believe in 'time' as a scientific, technical phenomenon that creates new realities while erasing the old ones. His reflections on tradition, on the evolution of the profession, on monuments, all reflect his mental struggle with the phenomenon of time. If time cannot be measured, if it cannot be unequivocally experienced, if it can be different for each person, if it defies our sensory perception – what is it really? Whatever it is, it is in any event the bridge between the past and the future. And if that is so, then the present marks the current position along this route. We prefer to evade questions about the duration of this present – infinitely short, or as long as the time perceived as the present. In human experience the present has a certain duration, however nonsensical that may be from a

scientific point of view; it surpasses the instant, for experience is a time-consuming activity that constantly refers to earlier experiences – and thus integrates a part of the past into the experience of the present. Perceived time is something entirely different from physical time. The world of the natural sciences, to which technology belongs, and that of human activity, to which the creation of better social circumstances belongs, are of different orders – no wonder then that Hans Castorp was just as unable to see the connection between the two as was Oud. The physical world has not history; the social world consists of perhaps nothing but history. For the natural scientist time is actually nothing, or nothing more than a quantity, as indispensable as it is elusive, in any physical and biological transformation process, be it the acceleration of a speeding train or the chemical reaction of the human body after the administration of medication. What counts is these transformations and processes; time itself is not worth thinking about. Time determines nothing; it is not an element from which the physical world derives its identity. (No wonder that the doctors in *The Magic Mountain* pay no attention to time: what matters is the murmurs inside the chest and the X-rays and the endless rest cures on the balconies and in the open air, nothing more. Whether someone must spend a few months or half a lifetime ‘up there’ is of no consequence to them.)

Time and sign

Oud’s fascination with *The Magic Mountain* is understandable. In his eyes Mann had struck the Achilles’ heel of modernism. As the last offshoot of an architecture rooted in classic antiquity, modernism was a part of civilization, art and culture. At the same time modernism was highly intrigued by science, technology and (political) ideals of a better society. Modernism was caught

in an awkward split, precipitated by opposing views about time. These views prove to be closely related to the amalgam of highly divergent ideas Hans Castorp encountered on the magic mountain. The doctors there think only of thermometers (‘columns of mercury’), noise in the lungs, and rest cures. The patients are primarily concerned with their own personal affairs, which are of another order. Settembrini has set himself the task of documenting human suffering, in order

to subsequently put an end to it – a revolutionary ambition he bases on the scientific discoveries of Darwin. Settembrini plays a major role in Mann’s book, two separate worlds come in contact because of his ideas, and the moment this happens, difficulties can be expected. In physics everything is reproducible; everything is the same everywhere; everything plays out according to the same scenario over and over again, now and in a million years. In human events everything is completely unique and one-off. Nothing ever happens the same way twice. There is no instrument for a value-free description and/or interpretation; everything has a subjective component. Both individual and social evolution, moreover, consist of making choices – something entirely alien to the phenomena described by the scientist.

Why would an architect concern himself with this sort of philosophically tinged considerations? It is more evident that it might seem. His task, after all, is to fulfil the wishes and needs of users. The history of architecture reflects the evolution of society. The ‘social programme’ becomes more extensive and more specialized, new typologies emerge, the consumer sets higher and higher demands, technology develops, and all that can be seen in architecture and urban planning. But that is not all: architecture and urban planning are also used as instruments to steer society in a particular direction. That direction is virtually always set by politicians and usually ideologically

determined. Architecture and urban planning mark political and moral choices. History books are full of representative buildings housing institutions upon which the regime is based, urban-planning ensembles defining the public space according to the symbols of the establishment, examples of ideological doctrines adorned with as specific a house style as possible. Even more telling are the icons with which architects and urban planners seduce the public: the propaganda image of the new residential district, the beach spa, the roadside restaurant, the department store; images adapted to the imaginative powers of today's city dweller, but pointing the way ahead to the better society of tomorrow. They are created by the interaction of clients (the regime) and designers, and even if they do not always represent artistic high points, they are part of the most interesting things architecture has produced. Not just representative buildings but also the icons serve as media that broadcast an unmistakable message. The city serves as a billboard for these messages, the public space as a grandstand. In addition the city contains buildings that add to the silence; they are in the majority and represent nothing more than the vicissitudes of the economy, the level of construction technology and the way in which it is thought most adequate to provide for their material function. The progress of time historicizes both the mediating as well as the silent buildings. The expressive ones are soon controversial and their popularity often runs parallel to that of the regime that has erected them. The silent ones gradually become curious, inverted signs of the progress of technology, money and the way in which they fulfil their purpose; they are seldom controversial. All these buildings together mark the built environment as the domain of historical experience. Science and technology may leave their traces in the public domain, but what its identity defines is historical time. No wonder, therefore, that Oud wanted

nothing to do with modernism as a materialistic and 'scientific' design method: other motivations had more weight for him. And each of these too seem borrowed from the image of time of *The Magic Mountain*.

The city

Wherever villages, landscapes and cities have been created, they express the ambitions of the initiators, but nowhere is more historical experience stored than in the city. The city is timeless, literally: the great European metropolises have outlasted all the regimes that have tinkered with them, and derived their identity for the visible history stamped into their buildings and street plans. 'A genuinely living city', argues the writer Péter Nádas in his *Book of Memories*, 'is more than the fossil of an unprocessed past; it is an unstoppable river continually overflowing the stone banks of tradition, solidifying, year after year, century after century, from the past to the future, a petrified progress and pulsation, a lifeless continuity that knows not where it is going, although it has an "inner nature" or "soul"'.³

3. Peter Nadas, *Het boek der herinneringen*, Van Gennep, 1994, p. 515.

His famed colleague and compatriot György Konrád feels the same way and even sees the city as a constant victory over the whims of even the most ambitious planners and politicians. 'I want a city that is like a gift to its inhabitants, made to talk in and make love in, and keep pace with mankind, simply by being. In the language of their objects they have come to an agreement with their dead on what they should pass on to their posterity, and with their door handles they give their departed forefathers a hand without grief or despair.'⁴

4. György Konrád, *De Stedebouwer*, Amsterdam 1995, pp. 132-133.

A portion of the urban built environment, and especially the representative institutes and the

mediating ensembles, projects that bear the stamp of the regime that built them, do not invite such friendly handshakes, however. They still elicit strong emotions, however much they have been absorbed by the city and by time. Potentially, just about everything from after 1920 is controversial, everything that is part of what Robert Musil, to quote yet another author from Kakania, called the 'Strecke des Schreckens'.⁵ The monuments from this period are symbols of events which, even if the city dwellers of today did not cause them, call out for one to take a stand, which are not neutral, of which the way in which they were originally received elicits shame years later, or pride. Throughout the former Eastern Europe, for example, the grappling with the socialist past shows to what extent the city is tied to the historical experience. It becomes clear how 'historical experience' is created in the present and therefore is a product of our time, of our (individual or collective) fascinations, foreknowledge, preconceptions, and sometimes of various forms of conscious influence as well: from politics, ideology, commerce and fashion. Even when they are not controversial, the monuments that contain and elicit these experiences highlight a characteristic facet of the condition humaine: the present builds on the past and does not replace it. The city represents continuity, however marked by caesurae it may be.

S. Robert Musil, *Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1978 (first edition 1936), p. 81.

The Marshalkovska

On 21 July 1952 the 'Marshalkovska Dzielnica Mieszkaniova', the Marshalkovska or the MDM for short, was opened in Warsaw. This was marked with great festivities, and this is no surprise. The brand-new Socialist-Realist boulevard had made a dream reality: it had built palaces for the working class, the political power that would carry the historical process to its inevitable end

stage. The opening coincided with the celebration of an anniversary, a favoured activity in the former Eastern Block: that same day six years earlier the Lublin committee had laid the basis for the communist take-over of Poland. Part of the strategy to reconcile the Poles to this new regime had been the promise, made by Krutschev in 1945, that the Soviet Union would provide for the reconstruction of the virtually annihilated city (ultimately this gift would be limited to the famous palace of culture). When the new regime was well established, the need arose to use the reconstruction of the capital to turn the city into a model of socialism. Edmund Goldzamt, a Russian architect-apparatchik, came to Warsaw in 1949 to indoctrinate his colleagues in the art of Socialist Realism; a study trip to Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Stalingrad and Tiflis provided inspiration. Shortly thereafter construction of the Marshalkovska began, primarily derived from the Kretchatik in Kiev, and the direct forerunner of the Stalinallee in Berlin. The Marshalkovska serves as a central boulevard dominating a new district in which 45,000 dwellings were completed in a short period of time. In order to finish on time, 70,000 volunteers were set to work to complete the 'central axis in the urban organism', the climax of 'metropolitan socialist life' and the actual 'centre of socialist Warsaw'. The new boulevard – 'Magistrale' in socialist jargon – was a quintessentially socialist monument, a milestone along the inevitable fulfilment of historical materialism, which would lead to paradise with scientific clarity. The luxury apartments on the new boulevard were certainly heavenly, but the style in which they were executed turned out not to be a harbinger of Utopia after all: in December 1954 a speech by Krutschev, now promoted to the leadership of the entire Eastern Bloc, put an end to Socialist Realism (which was later seen as a premature form of postmodernism). Large-scale industrial construction was now the motto,

Meeting on the design and construction of the Marshalkovska Dzielnica Mieskaniova in Warsaw, early 1950s.



Informational billboard on the Marshalkovska Dzielnica Mieskaniova in Warsaw.



Marshalkovska Dzielnica Mieskaniova in Warsaw.



The Marshalkovska Dzielnica Mieskaniova in Warsaw was opened in 1952.



a wave of 'Platten' the result. Plattenbauten modernism, the Central and Eastern European variant of the International Style, made the Marshalkovska a one-off incident. The way in which the people of Warsaw value its 'Magistrale' mirrors the popularity of the communist regime. Many of those who had cheered at the opening were later embarrassed to have done so. Ultimately the (collective) experience therefore did not run parallel with the linear development of socialism, and so long as the Marshalkovska remains among the 'Strecke des Schreckens' it will continue to elicit strong emotions. Yet it seems that Warsaw will ultimately follow the example of Berlin: when soon after unification it considered demolishing the Stalinallee, hated symbol of socialism, the international jet set of architects, with Aldo Rossi and Philip Johnson in the front rank, were immediately up in arms, and this boulevard now ranks, in terms of size, as the grandest monument of the German capital.

Pendrecht

Whereas the Marshalkovska still unleashes strong emotions, Pendrecht quietly babbles on in the memory of everyone who had anything to do with it. This renowned model district in Rotterdam was imitated throughout Europe but no longer meets current demands, unlike the Marshalkovska, and is now facing large-scale reconstruction. Other than a few critical noises from the professional world, the current renovation is cause for little emotion as well. Is Pendrecht perhaps less of an anchoring point for historical experience than the Marshalkovska? Apparently so. What is certain is that when this basic module for urban planning in the modern welfare state was presented, any reference to political ideology was studiously avoided. Pendrecht implies the victory of a value-free, 'scientific' modernism. The Marshalkovska did this in its

way, but whereas Marxist-Leninism developed as a combative ideology that was to lead the bearers of the historical process, the farmers and the workers, in the class struggle, Pendrecht suggests a level of 'objectivity' that surpassed all ideological differences – a myth that is firmly anchored in historical literature. These were precisely the pretensions that Oud abhorred and that made him reach for *The Magic Mountain*. The personal stamp of the designer was to be replaced by the objective survey work of sociologists, geographers and planners; the intrinsic connection with the 'body of knowledge' of architecture and urban planning were to be jettisoned, in order to be better able to give shape, unhindered by historical ballast, to a new society in which the past was as rigorously renounced as in the industrial urban expansion in Plattenbau. The layout of the district was not determined by the aesthetics of the architectonic and urban-planning composition, but by the combination of the construction technology, the organization of the construction process and the scientifically derived scale of the basic social modules of neighbourhood and district. The result was well thought-out buildings and districts, which nevertheless existed in a vacuum. They were not anchored in the profession, the craftsmanship of the designer, his personal art and expertise, not in experiences, but merely in ostensibly value-free survey data. It was quite possible to make buildings and city districts in this way, but architecture as art – no, to Oud that seemed impossible. As soon as new objective values appear, previous outcomes are obsolete, just as passé as outdated technology or conventions made obsolete by the progress of science. Architecture that aims only to be objective and scientific does not last. Unlike the tests in the laboratory, the experiment is not repeated: society evolves, the residents set new

6. Of course it is a provocation to use the example of Pendrecht here; it would also have been conceivable to use the Presikhaaf district in Arnhem, stripped to the technical minimum through budget cutbacks, from the maestro himself. Having attained fame with his public housing projects, Oud was driven by the experience of Presikhaaf to abandon public housing construction altogether.

Street in Pendrecht, Rotterdam.



Bird's-eye view.



demands, reality overtakes the theoretical premises. The results slip away in time.⁶

Belvedere

The Marshalkovska and Pendrecht have been presented in this essay as polar opposites, each marking time in its own way. The Warsaw 'Magistrale' still elicits emotions, because it symbolizes a period that has marked the personal destinies of the residents. Pendrecht does not have such a legacy, and although the district does have a lot to tell, the public is not moved by it. While placing such two totally different projects side by side is provocative enough, it gets even worse when the Marshalkovska is seen as part of historical time and Pendrecht as a demonstration of timeless, scientific thinking. A gross simplification, we freely admit, but not without reason. The Marshalkovska and Pendrecht represent two extremes in the world of *The Magic Mountain*, Mann's great novel of time. They are answers to the question of which direction contemporary architecture should adopt around 1950 – Oud's thinking on this crucial question was not inspired by this literature for nothing.

The two polar opposites represents conceptual directions that go back to classic antiquity. For the most part they respect each other's domain and co-exist peacefully. Sometimes they fight to the death. This was certainly the case in the twentieth century, the era of mechanistic ideologies in every field. Sometimes it seems as though they aim to put an end to time as an irreproducible process propelled by subjective choices. Historical materialism, for instance, which saw the evolution of society as a necessary process with an inevitable outcome. Or modernism as an ostensibly objective vision of society, inspired by everything that escapes coincidence and subjectivity: science, technology – and sometimes historical materialism as well. An entirely different modernism than that of Oud, who saw it as a

component of the architectonic culture and did not want to bid farewell to tradition, because that would mean, in his eyes, bidding farewell to all of architecture. And what are we to make of those social sciences that first try to understand social processes through universal laws, only to rationalize them with the same laws. How, for instance, do we

deal with psychologically inspired perception research into the effects of architecture and urban planning (expressed in purely physical terms: size, colour, access, etc.):? When this leads to a sort of 'scientifically' based indirect participation, defined in rules and guidelines, it seems to turn into a scientifically based environmental design that takes no heed of the cultural and mediating aspects of architecture and urban planning. No more architecture as culture, back to architecture as nature – never again cheering

or weeping over the Marshalkovska, the whole environment one big cuddly wall – the final victory over historical time.⁷

Time is the central theme of Belvedere. Whereas traditional historical preservation mainly conserves, Belvedere aims to make the past operational. What is the great challenge of Belvedere? Not the cutting of the Gordian knot of intertwined concepts of time. (Hans Castorp's conclusion, somewhere in the middle of the book, is that time is actually nothing more than a 'column of mercury', a thermometer, but one without graduations and numbers – you can read something from it, but you never know exactly what.) Belvedere will have to look over the entire field, address projects of all scales and of all times, representing the most contradictory attitudes and turn the results into an arrangement of the city and the country that surpasses all those indivi-

7. This approach, Evidence Based Design, plays a noteworthy role in recent American hospital architecture in particular. The founder of Evidence Based Design, Roger Ulrich, argues that this approach can eventually replace traditional architecture and urban planning, although this would require a great deal of additional research.

dual viewpoints – as does the city in the views of Konrád and Nádás.

If Belvedere intends to be more than a glorified (or vilified) preservation strategy, it must meet a number of criteria. The subject is rather complex and its management entails a willingness to step outside the frameworks of the design disciplines. Architecture and urban planning are part of great planning and decision-making machines that set out numerous fundamental characteristics before the designers even get to work; many an interesting innovation has had its origin here. Belvedere can only succeed if this context moves along with it. Other design or ‘experience’ disciplines – in addition to visual arts, film and literature as well – belong in this context.

Some messages that have been dropped into the public domain are controversial, and Belvedere will have to accept this; it is perhaps precisely the controversial projects that deserve to be cherished. The vast majority of the Dutch urban and rural landscape has been created within the ‘*Strecke des Schreckens*’, and the vast majority of the design challenges of the future consist of reconstructing and renovation the heritage of the twentieth century, the era of the great political and ideological conflicts and the dominance of building for the masses. In an extension of this, Belvedere will have to find a connection to the wave of renovation now sweeping post-war residential districts. Perhaps a portion of this task will have to be reconsidered in the light of Belvedere and taken away from the regimes of public housing and developers.

Above all, however, Belvedere presupposes research on a large number of overlapping territories, and although the Belvedere policy seems a typically Dutch phenomenon, reference to international architecture and urban planning is unavoidable in order to better identify what is actually specific to the Netherlands. The field

of study is contained between the two poles of concrete research into urban history and a more theoretical approach; a reappraisal of modernism should be a component of the latter. What is the relationship between the production modernism of the 1950s and 1960s and the design modernism of the pioneers around 1920? Is this not an example of the same tension that emerges in the various conceptions of time in *The Magic Mountain*? Belvedere has, in other words, the potential of evolving into a treasure house of projects, knowledge, experiences and all possible media to represent these experiences – Belvedere itself is a magic mountain.

Wolfgang Ernst

The Archive as
Metaphor

*From Archival Space to
Archival Time*

The archive has become a universal metaphor for all conceivable forms of storage and memory. Seen from the media-archaeological perspective of the German theorist Wolfgang Ernst, however, the archive is not dedicated to memory but to the purely technical practice of data storage:

any story we add to the archive comes from outside. The archive has no narrative memory, only a calculating one. In a digital culture, Ernst says, the archive in fact changes from an archival space into an archival time, in which the key is the dynamics of the permanent transmission of data. The archive then become literally a ‘metaphor’, with all the possibilities this entails.

First of all, let us take the archive in its non-metaphorical use, as a memorizing practice of administrative power. Let us then face the digital challenge to traditional archives: residential, static memories are being replaced by dynamic, temporal forms of storage in streaming media. Ironically, when the predominance of cultural storage is being replaced by the emphasis on transfer, we return to the literal ‘metaphorization’ of the archive.¹

1. The Ancient Greek word ‘*metaphorein*’ means ‘transfer’.

The ‘archive’ has become one of the most popular metaphors for all kinds of memory and storage agencies. But let us not forget, first of all, that the archive is a very precise (and thus limited) institution. The archivist knows that he operates in the *arcana imperii*, the hidden realms of power. There is a well-defined juridical purpose in keeping spatially and temporally away from public inspection documents which are relevant in administrative contexts; everything else being subject to discourse. The archive literally started by administrative definition – as *archeion* in ancient Athens once it became alphabetized, related to the new forms of commandment.

Archival space is based on hardware, not a metaphorical body of memories. Its operating system is administrative; upon its stored data narratives (history, ideology and other kinds of discursive software) are being applied only from outside. Non-discursive practices are the reality of archives under a given set of rules – thus somewhat analogous to the transfer protocols in the Internet or the codes behind computer software.

The silence of the archive: a media-archaeological point of view

The archive is not the place of collective memories in a given society² but rather the

place of classifying, sorting (out) and storing data resulting from administrative acts, representing a kind of cybernetic feed-back option of data back to present procedures. Archived data are not meant for historical or cultural but for organizational memory (such as the state, business or media); real archives link authority to a data storage apparatus.

2. See Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres Sociaux de la mémoire*, Librairie Félix Alcan, Paris 1925, Les Presses universitaires de France, Paris 1952.

Starting out from the theory of cultural semiotics developed by Jurij Lotman, culture is a function of its memory agencies. Lotman has defined culture as a function of its inherent media, institutions and practices of storing and transferring cultural knowledge. Media archaeology looks in a non-anthropocentric way at memory culture; it takes the presence of the archive, not narrative history as its model of processing ‘past’ data. Media archaeology – being concerned with signal processing rather than with semiotics – directs attention to the technological addressability of memory, discovering an archival stratum in cultural memory sedimentation which is neither purely human nor purely technological, but literally in between: symbolic operations which analyse the phantasms of cultural memory as memory machine.

In the sense of the ancient notion of *katechon* (deferral), the archive suspends the merciless thermodynamic law of physics that all things tend to dissolve into disorder until death occurs. The archive manages to maintain order through a heavy investment of organizational energy. One function of the cultural archive is to ensure that improbable (that is, seemingly useless) data is preserved for future possible information (according to information theory, such as Claude Shannon’s). What remains from the past in archives is the physical trace of symbolically

coded matter, which in its materiality is simply present in space. The more cultural data are processed in electronic, fugitive form, the more the traditional archive gains authority from the very materiality of its artefacts (parchment, paper, tapes) – an archival retro-effect.

Counting by numbers: media, memory and the archive

The archive does not tell stories; only secondary narratives give meaningful coherence to its discontinuous elements. In its very discreteness the archive mirrors the operative level of the present, calculating rather than telling. In the archive, nothing and nobody ‘speaks’ to us – neither the dead nor anything else. The archive is a storage agency in spatial architecture. Let us not confuse public discourse (which turns data into narratives) with the silence of discrete archival files. There is no necessary coherent connection between archival data and documents, but rather gaps in between: holes and silence. It is this which makes the archive an object of media-archaeological aesthetics: like archaeologists, media archaeologists are confronted with artefacts which do not speak but operate. This silence is power at work, unnoticed by narrative discourse. This power is analogous to the power of media, which depends on the fact that media hide and dissimulate their technological apparatus through their content, which is an effect of their interface. The syntactical power of the archive becomes visible only from a perspective which resists the desire for semantics.

Archival memory is monumental; it contains forms, not people. Whatever is left of a person is a collection of papers or recorded sound and images. Here the emphatic subjects

dissolves into a text of discrete bits. Whoever reads personal coherence into archival papers performs fiction, figuring dead letters in the mode of rhetorical prosopopoeitics (naming dead things ‘alive’). Historical imagination, applied to archival readings, mistakes hallucinations for absence. Against the phantasmatic desire to speak with the dead, archival awareness faces the past as data.

Counting is related to telling, but in an antagonistic way. When it comes to the question of memory in the age of digital computing, I refer to Lev Manovich’s essay on ‘Database as a symbolic form’:³ data models become dominant, dictating the narrative; databases invert the traditional relation between the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic. The non-narrative belongs to the archival regime. Archival information corresponds to the media archaeological mode, whereas narrative corresponds to discourse.

Literary narrative (according to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s 1766 treatise *Laokoon*) is an art of organizing temporal experience; Henri Bergson insisted on human perception of time (conscience) as against chrono-photographic registering of temporal processes. Time itself is now being organized by technologies.⁴

The spatial metaphor of the archive transforms into a temporal dimension; the dynamization of the archive involves time-based procedures.

Walter Benjamin, in his 1936 essay ‘Der Erzähler’, states that experience, when cut off from epic traditions, can no longer be communicated in a narrative way.⁵ In contrast to this we can argue that information has

3. Lev Manovich, ‘Database as a symbolic form’, 1998.

4. See Dieter Thoma, ‘Zeit, Erzählung, Neue Medien’, in Mike Sandbothe/Walther Ch. Zimmerli (ed.), *Zeit – Medien – Wahrnehmung*, Wiss. Buchges., Darmstadt 1994, pp. 89–110.

5. Walter Benjamin, ‘Der Erzähler’, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Frankfurt 1972, p. 439 onwards.

to be immediately consumed through real-time analysis – which belongs to computing and signal processing, and is no longer narratable. From a media-archaeological view, instead of ‘narrative memory’, a digital culture deals with calculating memory. The evidence of files in archives knew it already: data-based memory cannot tell but only count, in accordance with the administrative logic which produces such files. Narrative may be the medium of social memory; the medium of archives, though, is the alphanumerical mode in conjunction with materialities (of data support) and logistical programs (symbolic operators). Power is the area where narratives don’t take place; the rest is interpretation. The archive registers, it does not tell. Only metaphorically can it be compared to human memory – unless taken neurologically.

If there are pieces missing in the archive, these gaps are filled by human imagination⁶.

The desire of historiography stems from a sense of loss.⁷ The archive is not the basis for historical memory, but its

alternative form of knowledge. If all that is left from the past is paper (*scripta manent*), then reading should be taken as an act of recollection in its most literal sense – as a symbolic cultural technology, resulting in a paratactical form of presentation. Let us not write on the basis of archives or about archives, but *write the archive* (transitively).

Archive versus collective memory

To mistake the archive for a place of social memory is to divert attention from becoming aware of its real memory power: the mechan-

ics of storage media which operates asymmetrically compared to human remembrance. In Halbwachs’s writings on the social framework of individual memory the archive significantly does not figure. The (hidden) power of the archive relies on its materialities (the physical storage engineering) and its symbolic operations, resulting in a non-organic body of evidence. This systemic *read only memory* fundamentally differs from what Marcel Proust described as involuntary memory in the human subconscious (*mémoire involontaire*). The archive starts with acts of crystallisation, with reducing the disorder of processes into coded, grammatological structures – a mediatic in-between of loose coupling and rigid form. Here, the real takes place.

The archive is not about memory but storage practices, a functional *lieu de mémoire*.⁸

Remembrance is external to the

8. Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, Gallimard, Paris 1984.

archive. But having become a universal metaphor for all kinds of storage and memory in the meantime, the ‘archive’ is defaced; its memory technology is being dissimulated in favour of discursive effects, just as multimedia interfaces dissimulate the internal, operative procedures of computing. What is required is a media-critical theory of the archive, pointing at its definition as coded storage.

From spatial to time-based archives

From a media-archaeological point of view, the traditional archive (as indicated above) becomes deconstructed by the implications of digital techniques. Since antiquity and the Renaissance, mnemotechnical storage has linked memory to space. But nowadays the static residential archive as permanent storage is being replaced by dynamic temporal

storage, the time-based archive as a topological place of permanent data transfer. Critically the archive transforms from storage space to storage time; it can deal with streaming *data in electronic systems* only in a transitory way. The archival data lose their spatial immobility the moment they are provided with a purely temporal index ('data', literally). In closed circuits of networks, the ultimate criterion for the archive – its separateness from actual operativeness – is no longer given. The essential feature of networked computing is its dynamic operativeness. Cyberspace is an intersection of mobile elements, which can be transferred by a series of algorithmic operations. In electronic, digital media, the classical practice of quasi-eternal storage is being replaced by dynamical movements 'on the fly' as a new quality. Classical archival memory has never been interactive, whereas documents in networked space become time-critical to user feed-back.

The traditional spatial, that is, archival order which still continues in institutionally and physically remote places is thus being accompanied by a dynamic archival practice of data mapping, by temporal, dynamic, process operations which differentiate traditional from electronic archives. Trace routers are not spatial, but temporal scouts. With the archive itself being transformed from an agency for spatialization of time into an in-between ordering (arresting) of dynamic processes (deferring change by a momentary arrest), spatial architectures of the archive transform into sequentializing, time-critical, synchronous communication.

From location to addressability

Conservatively considered as an 'archive', the Internet has not yet even arrived the media-

tion of its own past. Cyberspace is a transverse performance of communication; thus 'cyberspace has no memory'.⁹ Only data which are provided

9. Christoph Drosser, 'Ein verhängnisvolles Erbe', in *Die Zeit*, 23 June 1995, p. 66

with addressable meta-data can be accessed in the cultural archive; in the case of the Internet, this archival infrastructure itself becomes temporally dynamic with the need for *access* data at a given moment in a virtual text. Memorial space is being replaced by a limited series of temporal entities. Space becomes temporalized, with the archival paradigm being replaced by permanent transfer, recycling memory.

Only what can be addressed can be located. In this sense the Internet generates a 'new culture of memory, in which memory is no longer located in specific sites or accessible according to traditional mnemonics, and is no longer a stock to which it is necessary to gain access, with all the hierarchical controls that this entails.'¹⁰

10. Howard Caygill, 'Meno and the Internet: Between Memory and the Archive', in *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1999), pp. 1-11 (10)

Addressability remains crucial for mediated memory.

In Plato's dialogue *Meno* it appears as if the matter of memory is but an effect of the application of techniques of recall. When the indication of temporal 'access' data becomes the dominant feature in Internet research, the traditional archival order liquefies: 'Informational goods require access, not possession.'¹¹

The *networked storage model* turns electronic archives into a generative agency; the traditional classificatory indexing (by meta-data) is replaced by dynamic (though still rule-governed, protocol-governed) sorting.¹²

11. N. Katherine Hayles, 'Coding the Signifier: Rethinking Processes of Signification in Digital Media', Lecture at Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 11 May 2001.

12. See Elena Esposito, *Soziales Vergessen. Formen und Medien des Gedächtnis der Gesellschaft*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 2002, p.43

The archival does not reside in the content of its files, but in logistic cybernetics (the cyberarchive which is the object of ‘media archivology’). When *parallel distributed processing* in computers replaces traditional *computer memory*, data become temporally rather than spatially locatable. Considered as ‘*une opération technique*’, the archive becomes a cybernetic memory machine, a play of data latency and data actualization, retentions and protentions of the present. As long as documents remain within the reach of actual administrations, they are part of a powerful regime. Within the digital regime, all data become subject to realtime processing. Under data processing conditions in realtime, the past itself becomes a delusion; the residual time delay of archival information shrinks to null.

In cyber ‘space’ the notion of the archive has already become an anachronistic, hindering metaphor; it should rather be described in topological, mathematical or geometrical terms, replacing emphatic memory by transfer (data migration) in permanence. The old rule that only what has been stored can be located is no longer applicable.¹³ Beyond the archive in its old ‘archontic’ quality,¹⁴ the Internet generates, in this sense, a new memory culture. Digitalization of analogous stored material means trans-archivization. Linked to the Internet rather than to traditional state bureaucracies, there is no organizational memory any more but a definition by circulating states, constructive rather than re-constructive. Assuming that the matter of memory is really only an effect of the application of techniques of recall, *there is no memory*. The networked data bases mark the beginning of a relationship to knowledge

13. Harriet Bradley, ‘The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found’ in *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 12, no.2 (1999), pp. 107-122 (113)

14. Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, Gallimard Paris 1985

that dissolves the hierarchy associated with the classical archive.

Data migration

The archive – while institutionally ongoing as an administrative and juridical memory of state or other corporations – on an epistemological level is transformed from a mechanism of addressability (read-only memory) into an *arché* in Foucault’s sense: a generative, algorithmic, protocol-like agency, literally *programmatic*. The digital (instead of analogue) archive is related to sampling in that respect. Already the traditional, text-based archive consists of digital elements, elementary letters of the alphabet. But in the digital age, the alphabet is reduced to a binary code which, in the Von Neumann architecture of the computer, no longer separates stored data and processing rules (as in traditional archives, where the files are kept in depots while the archival rules of procedures are kept in books or administrative meta-documents). When both data and procedures are located in one and the same operative field, the classical documentary difference between data and meta-data (as in libraries, where books and signatures are considered as two different data sets) implodes.

Digitalized memory undoes the traditional supremacy of letters in paper-based archives; instead, sound and images enter as well which can be addressed in their own medium: melodies can be retrieved by similar melodies, images by images, patterns by patterns. Thus a new type of cultural-technological memory is being generated. What can be digitally ‘excavated’ by the computer is a genuinely media-generated archive. This opens new horizons for search operations in the Internet: digital images and texts can not only be linked to

alphabetical addresses, once again subjecting images and sound to words and external meta-data (the archival classification paradigm), but they can now be addressed down to the single pixel from within, in their own medium, allowing for random search – literally ‘bit-mapping’, mapping (by) bits.

Images and sounds thus become calculable and capable of being subjected to pattern recognition algorithms. Such procedures will not only media-archaeologically ‘excavate’ but also *generate* unexpected optical statements and perspectives from an audio-visual archive that can, for the first time, organize itself not just according to meta-data but according to its proper criteria – visual memory in its own medium (endogenic). The generative archive, the archival paradigm, in genuinely digital culture, is being replaced by sampling – direct random access to signals.

From storage to transmission

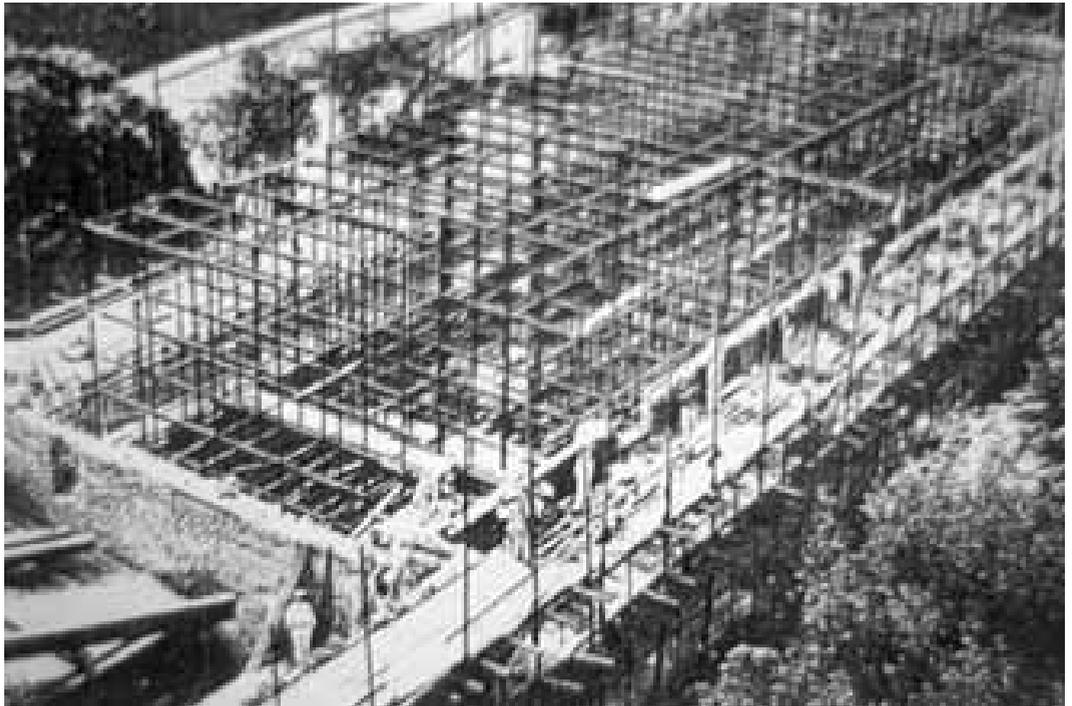
There are different media memory cultures. European cultural memory is traditionally archive-centred, with resident material values (libraries, museums, 2500-year-old architecture), whereas the trans-Atlantic media culture is transfer-based. This is what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri appropriately called *Empire*.¹⁵ In a media-archaeological analysis of power today, we (re-)turn from a territorial notion of empire to the original meaning of the Latin word *imperium* which means reaching out, extension, a dynamic transfer. When it comes to heritage, the archives of the US federal government do not simply store documents that according to the old archival tendency should preferably be kept secret, but instead ensure a memory imperative,

a very mobile offering of its contents to the public, even advertising to make this memory circulate. If there were no copyright, every online user might take advantage of the fact that in digital networks the separation between archival latency and present actualization of information has already collapsed.

There will be two bodies of memory in the future: analogue, material storage and digital information memories – translucent technologies of permanent data transfer. The archive is no longer the message of multi-media memory.

15. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 2000

1. The German Military Archive under construction (Potsdam, 1939)
from: Archivalische Zeitschrift, vol. 45 (1939).



Nico Bick

The Archive

A Pictorial Essay by Nico Bick

The editors of Open invited the photographer Nico Bick (Arnhem, 1964) to produce a pictorial essay, especially for this issue, about archives, the places in which the tangible proofs of the past are collected and stored. Nico Bick lives and works in Amsterdam. His work is characterized by a penchant for the ostensibly unremarkable, the ordinary aspect of a place. For this assignment he photographed the archives of the International Institute for Social History, the National Institute for War

Documentation and the Municipal Archives in Amsterdam as well as the National Archives in The Hague. He focused on the storage space and not on the content of the archives of its users. He aims to 'make the structure of the storage clear, as well as making visible the collective memory, which is contained in places that are public, but at the same time hidden'.





















Jorinde Seijdel

Cold Storage

Bill Gates's Image

Archive

Corbis Corporation, a private company owned by Bill Gates, owns the electronic reproduction rights to more than 80 million images, of which a portion are made available for purchase via www.corbis.com. Corbis also owns a large number of photo archives. In 2001 the company stored millions of original

photographs, negatives, prints, and slides in Iron Mountain, a hermetically sealed, underground storage facility in Pennsylvania. Its 'cold storage' stops the chemical deterioration of the images. Is Gates the saviour of the visual memory of the modern era, or a megalomaniac claiming a monopoly over this memory in an unprecedented way? What is the nature of his archive, and what are the implications for art and culture?

In this age of 'frictionless capitalism', there is actually never much publicity about the large-scale transactions that Bill Gates performs with historical and contemporary images (documentary photos, news photos, art photos, fashion photos, advertising photos, illustrations, digital representations of museum art, etc.). He buys them by the millions, originals and/or digital reproduction rights, stores them, makes digital versions of a selection, and then sells them via the website of his private company Corbis Corporation, an image copyright company, image bank and photo agency all rolled into one. Of the about 80 million images in the Corbis archive, about 3.5 million digital reproductions are currently available on www.corbis.com. Corbis is also one of the largest news photo agencies and has its own photographers working all over the world to add to the image catalogues of the company.

One illustrious component of Gates's mega-archive is the Bettmann collection, to which Corbis owns the copyrights. The German Otto Bettmann (1903-1998), inventor of the 'image resource business', escaped the Nazi regime in 1935 and fled to the United States, taking his news and documentary photos, engravings, drawings and art reproductions. There he expanded his archive to more than 11 million images, including many 'icons' of the twentieth century, such as Einstein sticking out his tongue, Winston Churchill giving the V sign, Marilyn Monroe with her dress billowing up and Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock. Bettmann's archive was housed in New York and grew into one of the most important sources of images for researchers and media. In 1995 Gates bought the entire archive. Subsequently he became the owner of 10 million news photos from United Press International, the photo agencies Sygma

(30 million images) and Saba Press (1 million images), and owner of the digital reproduction rights of 25 million works of art from institutions including the Smithsonian, the National Gallery, the Hermitage, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Russian State Museum, the Seattle Art Museum, the Kimbell Art Museum and The Barnes Foundation. And this is but a portion of a '*chronique scandaleuse*' of which the end is not yet in sight. The goal of the Corbis enterprise is in fact 'to capture the entire human experience throughout history', as a spokesperson for the company put it.

In 2001 Gates transferred a number of his archives, including the Bettman archive, to Iron Mountain, a climate-controlled depository 70 metres underground in Pennsylvania. One of the reasons for the massive transfer of the images to Iron Mountain, a transaction that took place in secret for the most part, was the fact that the original photos, prints, negatives and glass plates, for instance in the offices of the Bettmann archive, were deteriorating due to all manner of chemical processes. Iron Mountain Incorporated, the market leader in records and information management, provides 'cold storage' in its vaults, which can stop the process of deterioration and rotting. Iron Mountain is housed in what was once a limestone mine; it later served as an atomic shelter and in the 1960s the US government stored secret information there. The Iron Mountain Incorporated company eventually bought the mine to hire it out as storage, conservation and security facilities to the US Defense Department, the US national archives, big corporations and film studios.

Gates is not the only one to amass images on such a scale; Getty Images (owner of more than 70 million images and 30,000 hours of film) is another big player in this

Allan Sekula, Dear Bill Gates, 1999, installation.

Three photos, a reproduction of Lost on the Grand Banks by Winslow Homer and a letter.

Sekula photographed himself swimming near Gates's 'dream house'. The letter concerns Gates's purchase of the painting Lost on the Grand Banks by Winslow Homer.

November 30, 1999

Dear Bill Gates,

I swam past your dream house the other day,
but didn't stop to knock. Frankly, your
underwater camera had me worried. I would
have liked to take a look at Winslow Homer's
Lost on the Grand Banks. It's a great painting,
but, speaking as a friend and fellow citizen,
at \$30 million you paid too much.

HIGHEST PRICE EVER PAID FOR AN AMERICAN
PAINTING!!!

So why are you so interested in a picture
of two poor lost Cory fishermen, momentarily
high on a swell, peering into a wall of fog?
They're about as high as they're ever going
to be, unless the sea gets wilder. They are
going to die you know, and it won't be a pretty
death.

And as for you Bill, when you're on the net,
are you lost? Or found?

And the rest of us--lost or found--are we on it,
or in it?

Your friend



cunning game for the visual 'content' of the world. Corbis, however, exhibits a number of characteristics and paradoxes that make Gates's enterprise all the more attractive as a cultural case study. To begin with, there is the economic and cultural conflict of interest, on a worldwide level. Corbis, after all, is the private property of a man who, through Microsoft, dominates another area of the world market as well. This man is also an influential private art collector, for instance purchasing Leonardo da Vinci's *Codex Leicester* for \$30 million. With Gates, private and public interests intertwine in a truly post-modern way.

Then there is the James Bondesque Iron Mountain, stirring the imagination as a specific posthumanist archive facility selected and designed to outlast mankind by 'thousands of years'. In this high-security underground depository, with a previous history with a military tinge, a portion of the Corbis archive is stored that can be visited only under very special conditions. The website *corbis.com*, on the other hand, on which a small but steadily growing percentage of the images are made available, aims to be as accessible as possible, for the benefit of commerce. *Corbis.com* celebrates e-commerce and the digital reproduction culture, while Iron Mountain precisely underscores the literal and figurative weight of the originals. This creates a new kind of tension between original and copy, between visibility and invisibility. *Corbis.com* wants to feed the visual culture endlessly, keep images, 'hot images', in circulation, but at the same time the company keeps back images, hides images, 'cold images'. (For example, it will apparently take 25 years to scan all the Bettmann images and make them digitally available; something like 2 percent is now online.)

All of this raises questions about in whose hands the power over the public and the collective memory lies, and about the outlook for the future of the (artistic) image. For what does it mean when a large portion of the public and visual domain ends up in the hands of private entrepreneurs?

Corbis as archive; Gates as archivist

What kind of archive is this? What is its nature? And what kind of archivist is Bill Gates? You can evade these questions by arguing that it mainly concerns a business enterprise, and a shrewd businessman. Yet based on the argument that Corbis represents a new Faustian bargain between market and culture, it may be productive to subject Corbis, as an archive, to a more theoretical examination and to highlight a few of its characteristics.

In the traditional discipline of archiving, the archivist, as keeper of fundamental rights and duties, is placed between the people and the law. And in the classical archive, what is archived, as testimony and for verification, is kept for a governmental institution, or for a public official. Naturally the Corbis archive is a deviation in this regard and Gates appears as an extraordinary archivist. Gates's archive is private: in spite of its public implications, it is Gates who decides what is included in it. In doing so he does not act as a go-between between the law and the people, but as a 'broker' between Corbis and the people. Gates is not keeping archive documents, he *owns* them and uses them for commerce. In this sense the Corbis archive is a corporate 'stock', a stock that remains inactive 'pending further orders'.

Some archive experts draw a distinction between 'records' and 'archives'.¹ 'Records' are archive documents in an inactive, stored

1. See for example Eric Ketelaar, 'Waarde(n) van archieven', *Archiefblad* 108/2, March 2004, pp. 16-19. [http://cf.hum.uva.nl/bai/home/eketelaar/Waarde\(n\)vanarchieven.doc](http://cf.hum.uva.nl/bai/home/eketelaar/Waarde(n)vanarchieven.doc).

form, process-linked information, that belong to a completed past; records become 'archives' the moment they are used for historical research or cultural reflection. Within the Corbis enterprise at Iron Mountain such cultural dynamics are sabotaged as a possibility, living visual culture is turned into passive past, the 'archive' value of which can no longer prove itself. Corbis freezes the 'records', literally. Their transformation into active 'archives' is postponed, so that the significance and symbolic value of the Corbis archive as cultural heritage or public memory remains speculative, and only the trade value is left. The Corbis archive seems to be an archive without promise, in which the originals are reduced to relics for an uncertain future.

Are the images in the Corbis archive indeed 'content' stolen from the public domain, as some would have it? Is this formerly public property, in a symbolic sense or not? The public domain, as based on the belief that there should be no private ownership of certain things in the world, such as air, stars, ideas, words and cultural heritage, is more than ever under attack. Private ownership of culture, for example, was formally made possible in 1993 by TRIPs accords (Trade Related Intellectual Properties), signed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). These accords provide for the possibility of unlimited purchase of the rights to cultural commodities, anywhere in the world, for commercial exploitation.

The fact is that, for instance, the Bettmann archive is now a closed private collection, of which the images of public interest are only available insofar as they already exist in other collections. Corbis makes reproductions of the originals stored at Iron Mountain, thereby underscoring its ownership of the images, as well as the 'right' to ask payment for their use.

The firm withdraws images from the public domain in order to offer them again later, through financial transactions and in the form of copies. In doing so Gates claims control over large sections of the visual memory and has the power to decide what is visible and how much this costs. He is therefore converting symbolic capital into literal capital. By making digital versions of the images for which there is the greatest demand, an adjusted, corporate memory is created, from which coincidence and counterimage have been eliminated. This memory seems primarily a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Original and copy

In the current culture theory discourse on the archive, various notions of the archive exist, of which those of Boris Groys, Jacques Derrida and Wolfgang Ernst are especially authoritative. They view the archive from the standpoints of, respectively, art philosophy, deconstructivism and media archaeology. What are the implications of their ideas for the Corbis project, as a quintessential current archive, and vice versa?

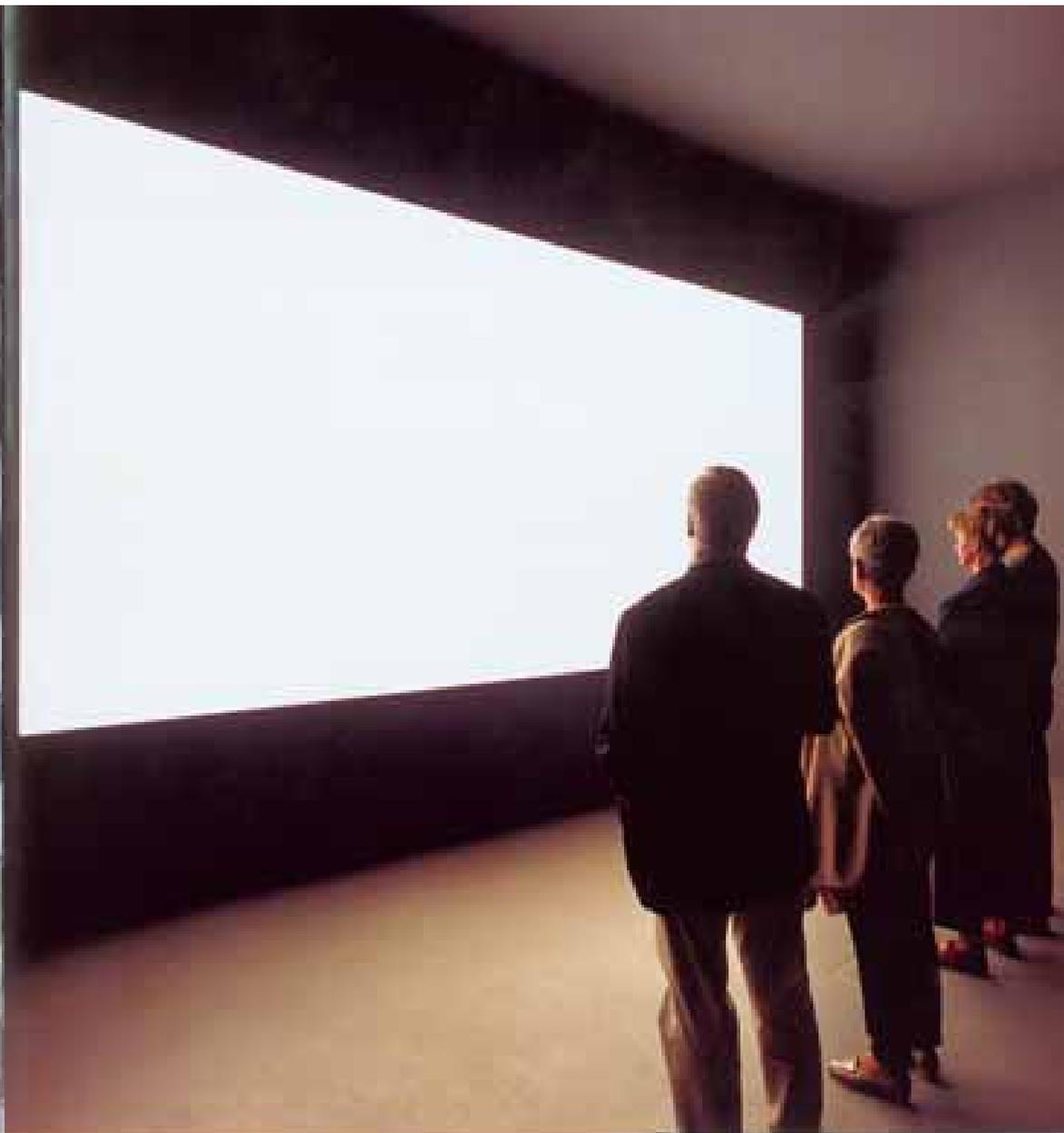
Groys views the archive as a collection of historical, material artefacts whose goal is to legitimize the present: the archive makes comparison possible and one can determine what is genuinely new and what is not. *'Der Kanon produziert Identität, das Archiv produziert Differenz. Solange das Archiv existiert, wird die Innovation sowohl möglich als auch notwendig sein. Die Frage stellt sich aber: wie lange?'*²

You could argue that Gates is sabotaging this idea of culture with his non-public and this 'non-comparable' archive at Iron Mountain. But Groys is specifically talking

2. Boris Groys, 'Die Zukunft gehört der Tautologie' (1995), in *Logik der Sammlung. Am Ende des Muscalen Zeitalters*, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich/Vienna 1997, pp. 81-92, p. 86.

Alfredo Jaar, Lament of the Images, 2002, installation.
Three luminous texts in a darkened room; a room with blinding light.
Photo from cat. Documenta 11, Kassel, 2002





Alfredo Jaar, Lament of the Images, 2002, installation (detail).
The other two texts concern, respectively, Nelson Mandela, who was forced to work in a limestone mine, and the Bettmann archive in the limestone mine in Pennsylvania.

Kabul, Afghanistan, October 7, 2001.

As darkness falls over Kabul, the U.S. launches its first airstrikes against Afghanistan, including carpet bombing from B-52s flying at 40,000 feet, and more than 50 cruise missiles. President Bush describes the attacks as "carefully targeted" to avoid civilian casualties.

Just before launching the airstrikes, the U.S. Defense Department purchased exclusive rights to all available satellite images of Afghanistan and neighboring countries. The National Imagery and Mapping Agency, a top-secret Defense Department intelligence unit, entered into an exclusive contract with the private company Space Imaging Inc. to purchase images from their Ikonos satellite.

Although it has its own spy satellites that are ten times as powerful as any commercial ones, the Pentagon defended its purchase of the Ikonos images as a business decision that "provided it with excess capacity."

The agreement also produced an effective white-out of the operation, preventing western media from seeing the effects of the bombing, and eliminating the possibility of independent verification or refutation of government claims. News organizations in the U.S. and Europe were reduced to using archive images to accompany their reports.

The CEO of Space Imaging Inc. said, "They are buying all the imagery that is available." There is nothing left to see.

about the artistic and intellectual domain – his archives are primarily museums – not about the current media culture, in which he sees the urge to innovate degenerate into a loss of memory. His ‘how long?’, however, indicates that he nevertheless finds the distinction between media space and museum space problematic. The global culture is increasingly being determined by the identical, says Groys: ‘the future belongs to tautology’.³ When the distribution and reproduction of museum originals ends up in the hands of private individuals like Gates, who determine through fashion, market and media what is relevant and therefore visible, the tautology has in fact already become reality. The tautology shows what everyone everywhere wants to see: this has to have an impact on the system of cultural memory, on the politics of storing, displaying and remembering.

In *The Topology of Art* Groys argues that the difference between original and reproduction – the aura, to echo Walter Benjamin – is defined by the connection of artefacts to a place.⁴ According to Groys that difference is therefore topologically determined and the museum is the obvious topos of the original. This relatively circular argument breaks down with the post-museum Corbis archive at Iron Mountain: if the originals at Iron Mountain have auras, they are at the very least frozen auras. Perhaps the ultimate consequence of Groys’s reasoning is that images in the mine have been definitively stripped of their original status: the digital Corbis archive has a destructive effect on the originals. It may be time for a ‘topology of reproduction’.

In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, a psychoanalytic deconstruction of the archive, of its concept and structure, Derrida also

speaks of topology, but then of the topology of the archive itself.⁵ In an etymological explanation he emphasizes the topological principle of the archive, by arguing that ‘(...) the meaning of “archive,” its basic meaning, comes to it from the Greek word *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded.’⁶ From a domestic positioning of authority Derrida views the archive as situated between the private and the public, between the law and the home, between home and museum. He also identifies the archivist, the ‘archon’, as the keeper of what is archived, who has also been given the power to interpret the archive.

Iron Mountain as the ‘home’ of the neo-capitalist archon Bill Gates, the keeper of the Corbis archive, who guarantees the security of what is archived. But does this archon also have the power to interpret it? He certainly has power, ‘earned’ power, but the interpretation of his archive is set on ‘hold’: Gates relies on the silent perfection and timelessness of his ‘cold storage’. In Gates’s hand the Iron Mountain archive is a domain of the power of the private over the public. The intermediary space that Derrida alludes to has been eliminated. Derrida argues that the archive is never closed, that it is an expectation of the future. Only in times to come, and perhaps never, can we know what the archive had meant to say. Perhaps never! The post-humanist archon Gates is infected by a fatal archive fever, ‘by an irrepressible yearning to return to the absolute beginning’.⁷

In *Archive Fever*, published in 1994, Derrida also focused on the implications of the electronic medium of e-mail for the archive, as

5. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London 1998 (originally published as *Mal d'archive: une impression freudienne*).

3. Idem, pp. 81–92.

6. Idem, p. 2.

4. Boris Groys, *Topologie der Kunst*, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich/Vienna 2003.

7. Idem.

a writing and storage technology that can completely transform the public and private space, and therefore the archive, that will have an impact on rights concerning ownership, publication and reproduction.⁸ More recently media theorist

8. Idem, p. 17.

Wolfgang Ernst made an extensive inquiry into the transformations of the archive by digital media. Ernst views the interactive potential of documents in dynamic networks as a new opportunity for the digital archive and identifies a new topology: '(...)nowadays the static residential archive as permanent storage is being replaced by dynamic temporal storage, the time-based archive as a topological place of permanent data transfer. Critically the archive transforms from storage-space to storage-time.'⁹

9. See the essay by Wolfgang Ernst, 'The Archive as Metaphor', in this issue. See also Wolfgang Ernst, *Das Rumoren der Archive. Ordnung aus Unordnung*, Merve, Berlin 2002.

In this regard Corbis.com appears more as a webshop than as a living archive, a shop operating on registered licences and copyrights, a 'visual solutions provider', licensing images 'seen by millions of people daily in advertising, books, newspapers, magazines, on TV and in films', all with 'maximum power, creativity, and emotion', according to the site. There is little room for feedback here.

Ernst analyses the archive from a media archaeology standpoint, by means of an examination of its technological conditions, concerning not the narrative memory of the archive, but non-discursive practices. 'Power is the area where narratives don't take place; the rest is interpretation. The archive registers, it does not tell.'¹⁰

10. Idem.

In this perspective archived data are not intended for historical or cultural memory, but for the memory of organizations, such as the state, corporations or the media. This seems literally the case with Corbis, although the company claims to be serving our memory. The Corbis

archive is not dedicated to memory, but to the practice of storage in and of itself. In 'cold storage' conservation is the priority. In this sense it is indeed an archaeological archive *avant la lettre*, an ice-cold, artificial, archaeological site, an ultimate dystopian place.

Image control

Corbis is out for 'image control': the company does battle for and with the images of the world. On the one hand with images as digital copies, which continually 'reel' reality, and are supplemented according to the workings of the market. On the other hand with images as originals, which are set aside for an indefinite time, *kaltgestellt*. But for whom? Corbis, in Latin, means a 'woven basket' and is an allusion to the 'basket of images' that the company 'offers' to the world. To a large extent, however, Corbis is a black hole, a vanishing point for images. Gates has created a necropolis for visual memory, a repressed memory and an 'underworld' in which faith in representation through the image has disappeared forever. On top of this he is creating an empty universe, a substitute culture in his image, in which the image no longer has any meaning.

The public domain, the cultural and intellectual heritage, is in anger, in copyright terms, of falling into the hands of a select few, who can undermine it completely. Power over distribution of the image then becomes a purely economic and financial transaction, in which no account is taken of the location, with those that are linked to the reality that preceded the image, with as a result a total cultural homogenization and a unilateral hegemony over the money flows that now seem to define culture and heritage policy

Some people are calling for culture to be taken out of the WTO, and within UNESCO

an effort is underway to come up with a binding convention for the preservation of cultural diversity. In any event, these new shadow economics and politics of the image require engagement, involving a renewed awareness of ownership, exchange and place in relation to the public domain and memory. Certainly art, as a discipline quintessentially linked to the visual and the public, will have to provide an account of this. There is a lot at stake. Who owns this image? For whom is this image intended? In whose behalf is this image made? Where does this image come from? Where is this image?

Sven Lütticken

The Conspiracy of
Publicness

The concealing effect of the mass media is often seen as a conspiracy, in which everything is a plot to erase historical consciousness. In the 1960s William Burroughs, with his cut-up trilogy, created a literary mythology that managed to appropriate and manipulate the myths of the mass media, so that a sort of counter-publicness could emerge. Now

that many subcultural myths have been co-opted by the media, Sven Lütticken argues it is time for a new Burroughs: the myths must once again be unmasked and deployed in a new form as an instrument of criticism against the conspiracy of publicness.

Reality is defined by the needs of the media. History is rewritten faster than it can happen. Culture is a weapon that's used against us.
(Pere Ubu, 'Woolie Bullie')

In his late writings, Guy Debord analysed contemporary society in terms of conspiracies. For this penchant he was severely criticised – surely conspiracy theory was a reactionary, outmoded phenomenon incompatible with a progressive, leftist analysis of the true forces (means of production, mass movements) that shape history? Debord conceded that this conception of history ‘was a reactionary and ridiculous explanation in the nineteenth century, when so many forceful social movements agitated the masses.’¹

However, the intellectual dupes who presume that this is true for all times

could not be more wrong, Debord argued. Today, the state itself has become conspiratorial; conspiring in favour of (rather than against) the established social order has become a booming business.² His claim that there were never conspiracies in favour of an existing order in the past is rather dubious, but Debord clearly wants to emphasise what is new.

Essential for the new culture of conspiracy, in his view, is terrorism: ‘This perfect democracy itself produces its own inconceivable enemy, terrorism. It wants to be *judged by its enemies rather than by its results.*’³

One should bear in mind that

1. ‘La conception policière de l’histoire était au XIXe siècle une explication réactionnaire, et ridicule, alors que tant de puissants mouvements sociaux agitaient les masses.’ Guy Debord, *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle* (1988), Paris, Gallimard, 1992, p. 82.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100

3. ‘Cette démocratie si parfaite fabrique elle-même son inconcevable ennemi, le terrorisme. Elle veut, en effet, être jugée sur ses ennemis plutôt que sur ses résultats.’ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Debord based his analysis on the terrorism of the 1970s, but his remarks obviously ring a bell in the current situation. Is George W. Bush not the very model of a politician who thrives on terrorism, on his enemies? The attacks of 9-11 were the result of a conspiracy against the (American) state, but the former contacts of the CIA with bin Laden soon led to wilder conspiracy theories: it was the White House or the CIA that was ‘really’ behind the attacks, or at least they had prior knowledge. On a more probable note, it was observed that the Bush administration immediately tried to implicate Iraq in the attacks, and went on to attack Iraq even though there was no proof. Apparently the attacks provided the perfect alibi to realize a dream dear to neo-conservatives in the Bush administration: the toppling of Saddam Hussein. The interests of the Bush clan and a number of Bush ministers and advisers in the oil industry have of course done much to fuel speculation about the ‘true motives’ behind this war, whose public legitimisation (which changed all the time, from 9-11 to weapons of mass destruction and the need to bring democracy to Iraq) was so flimsy and spurious. Perhaps Debord was exaggerating only mildly when he claimed that the society of advanced spectacle, which is seemingly so focused on making things public, is in fact based on a ‘total victory of the secret’.⁴

4. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Where does this leave the notion of the public sphere as constituted – above all – by the mass media? Every medium is based on selection, and in the case of mass media there are immense interests

at stake in this selection process. It can well be argued that the mass media's most important function is *to hide and erase*; to keep things from being said, written, or shown; to prevent or pervert the formation of historical consciousness and thus of a public, collective memory of a non-trivial nature. With progressing concentration this mechanism becomes more dangerous, all the more so if the media tycoon is also a politician (Berlusconi). Groups that attempt to establish an alternative publicness in opposition to that of the mass media, and thus form 'counter-publics' revolving around 'counter-media', are of course not inherently good or saintly – or sane. They can be racist, fascist, or occult, and utterly devoid of control mechanisms. Those who participate in counter-publics should be aware of this, and not retreat into the self-congratulatory celebration of sexual, ethnic or lifestyle-related identities.⁵ Counter-media should emphasise the dialectical relationship with mass media, their *Doppelgänger*. They should work at establishing public forums for voices that cannot function within the mass media, yet they should be wary of Habermasian idealism, of presuming that an ideal sphere of transparent communications and rational discussion can be realised.⁶

It would be foolish to suggest

5. See Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York, Zone Books, 2002. The 'public space' with which the art world is preoccupied is only in some cases part of the public sphere – for instance in the case of political demonstrations or other gatherings, or if a work of art manages to overcome the 'white noise' of the everyday urban experience. Generally speaking, art in galleries or museums is more public, that is: visible to an interested public rather than to random passers-by, and more intensely discussed. Of course, the specialist nature of this public is one of the reasons for attempts to break out of the white cube.

6. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie*

that we are living among the ruins of what was once a public sphere of blissful perfection.

The early bourgeois public sphere too was built on exclusions and ideological smokescreens; what has become more obvious since the late nineteenth century is the way in which financial and political interests control the mechanism of exclusion and illusion. These are not merely imperfections that will be swept away by the progress of Enlightenment; they are integral to the system. But this should not lead to apathy and defeatism: it is possible to make a difference. The travesty that passes for publicness must be criticised and confronted with its aporias and taboos, without presuming that an ideal sphere of transparent, rational communication existed in the past or will exist in the future. Perhaps in a sense the mass media actually *are* such a perfectly functioning public sphere, but their rationality is mere instrumental reason, a *Zweckrationalität* in the service of certain interests. Following the authors of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* rather than Habermas, the perversion of reason and its reversal into myth must be criticised by focusing on what is subjected and damaged by this one-sided form of rationality.⁷ Such an approach may use quite dubious material and exploit its latent potential. If instrumental reason becomes myth, artificial or second-degree mythologies can reveal the irrational logic of this culture.

rie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft (1962), Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1990. Habermas's strong analysis of the transformation of the public sphere by the rise of twentieth-century mass media is marred by his all too ideal image of the early bourgeois, 'literary' public sphere.

7. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (1947), Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 1988.

Memories Are Made of This

Since Debord's remarks on conspiracy in the 1980s, the lure of conspiracy theory has become ever more pronounced. Activist Chip Berlet has condemned this booming production of conspiracy theories as a waste of time, as a placebo for a true leftist analysis of power structures. Conspiracies may exist, but their life span and influence are limited; they do not shape history. Rather than analysing how financial and political institutions and networks function, conspiracy theory posits the existence of a small group that controls everything, and manipulates events from sheer diabolical malice. It assumes that the (US) political system 'contains a democratic 'essence' blocked by outside forces', and that 'oppression is basically a matter of subjective actions by individuals or groups, not objective structures of power.'⁸ This is indeed a classic characteristic of conspiracy theories (the Jews rule the world and oppress innocent people through their devious doings because they are inherently evil). Michael Barkun has noted that conspiracy theories proper imply a world in which nothing happens by accident, in which nothing is as it seems, and in which everything is connected.⁹ Clearly, such assumptions lead to delusional totalising fictions rather than to anything compatible with a critical historical or social analysis. And yet, is

8. Chip Berlet, 'Conspiracy Theory as a Waste of Time' (2000), <http://squawk.ca/lbo-talk/0001/0945.html>.

9. Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy. Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 2003, pp. 3-4.

there no place for conspiracies within such an analysis? Could one not speak of *structural conspiracies*, which need not be the intentional result of some sinister cabal? These structural conspiracies are *as-if conspiracies*, functioning (to a certain extent) *as if* they were conscious, actual conspiracies. They may also, at various points, involve real conspiracies, but these do not determine the overall structure. For instance: a presidential candidate and a group of financiers may conspire for their mutual benefit (the financiers will help the candidate in exchange for legislation that is in their interest), but such a conspiracy is an effect of a particular political system rather than a foreign intervention in it. Similarly, media moguls may at certain moments actively intervene to ensure that their newspapers and TV stations do not act against their interests, but in general a culture of conformity will ensure the same result. There is no actual conspiracy needed to keep, for example, a political activist or a certain subject matter outside most people's awareness if it is a pretty safe bet that there would be no large audience for such 'content'. Of course, this can be taken to mean that audiences have been conditioned by the media, and to some extent this is true. But, as Adorno noted in the late 1940s: 'Even the belief that people today react like insects and are degenerating into mere centers of socially conditioned reflexes, still belongs to the façade. Too well does it serve the purpose of those who prate about the New Mythos and the irrational powers of community', in

other words: the Nazis.¹⁰ Conformist, consumerist preferences by the public are not as passive as they seem; it takes an effort to accept what is enforced upon one self by the media, enjoy it and ask for more. This ensures that psychic energy that might otherwise be used for change, is used for the maintenance of the status quo: 'To become transformed into an insect, man needs that energy which might possibly achieve his transformation into a man.'¹¹

10. T.W. Adorno, 'On Popular Music', in: *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* IX (1941), no. 1, pp. 47-48.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

In his recent study, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, Michael Barkun seems to presuppose that the mass media actually function as instruments of enlightenment, as neat Habermasian media whose status is undermined by the jungle that is the Internet: 'One effect of the Internet is to obscure the distinction between mainstream and fringe sources; another is to bind together individuals who hold fringe views. [...] The bizarre, eccentric, and obscene appear on the same screen that might display *The Times* of London or CNN.com.'¹²

12. Barkun, op. cit. (note 9), p. 20.

Barkun seems unwilling to ponder the question if *The Times*, as the highbrow part of Rupert Murdoch's media empire, will ever act against its owner's interests and political agenda. And CNN, like other American corporate media, was remarkably averse to paying attention to widespread demonstrations and other forms of dissent against the war on Iraq, and not at all eager to investigate the reasons presented for the war and possible alterna-

tive motives. Are lunatic conspiracy theories on fringe websites (Al-Qaida was merely a pawn used by the secret rulers to impose the New World Order) not mirrored by an equally dubious 'conspiracy' of silence and selectiveness in the mass media? What about the CIA's conspiratorial activities with bin Laden in the past? Why the aversion to investigating the neo-conservatives' plan to wage war on Iraq, which existed even before 9-11? Were journalists afraid of discovering actual conspiracies, or at least social structures teeming with conflicts of interest and hidden agendas? Did 9-11 not effectively work *as if* it was actually the result of a conspiracy perpetrated by the Bush administration and allied business/military interests, giving them unprecedented powers?

The transformation of history into an endless procession of nostalgic items is instructive of the ways in which the current mainstream media hide and erase. History becomes formatted as *I Love the 80s* and similar shows in which soap stars and TV presenters reminisce about trends and hypes. A decade is identified with certain clothes, hair-styles, TV shows and rock groups. All of these may or may not be important, but they become mere interchangeable material for the great nostalgia machine. Typical of the interviewees is a mixture of fondness and embarrassment: they often cannot believe that they once thought a certain hairstyle looked good, or were addicted to some silly TV show. This recycling of fashions and styles is the exact opposite of Benjaminian now-time: it is a no-time,

inaccessible, quaint and nostalgic and fun for half an hour, but fundamentally dead. The executives, writers and celebs are part of a structure that creates a void in the place of historical consciousness. Here we see an as-if conspiracy in perfect working order: everything (rather than *everyone*) conspires to erase historical consciousness and replace it with interchangeable pop memories. The result in the case of George W. Bush's war on Iraq was, generally speaking, a bemused sense that history was repeating itself, that once again a Bush was waging war on Saddam, with some of the same personnel; for large parts of the American media this was at first – before the hangover kicked in – another kind of nostalgia show, a return to Operation Desert Storm. Any sense of the uncanny, deadly mechanism of repetition was blocked, as was an investigation of its underlying logic – whether structurally or actually conspiratorial. It is doubtful whether a contemporary version of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* could appear on CNN.com.¹³

Attempts at establishing a counter-publicness must address the secrecy at the heart of mass media publicity – its conspiracy of silence and amnesia.

Fictions and Myths

The thesis of the public sphere as a structural conspiracy highlights a fundamental conundrum: are conspi-

racies actual or fictional? Are they genuine conspiracies, or just the product of overactive imaginations? Oddly, conspiracy theorists themselves, who passionately believe in the reality of the conspiracies they 'expose', often refer to works of fiction as evidence. In his book, Michael Barkun investigates how right-wing conspiracy theories about the so-called 'New World Order' imposed by a sinister elite have since the late 1980s merged with the UFO subculture. There is a thriving cottage industry of theories about secret cabals of politicians and (Jewish) financiers undermining (American) democracy for their own seedy purposes, all the while keeping their knowledge of and contacts with aliens secret from the unsuspecting public – to prevent a panic, or because they have made some kind of seedy deal with the ETs. The latter might include permission for the aliens to use human beings for experimentation or other purposes, in exchange for extraterrestrial technology for the human elite. On the other hand, UFOs might be vessels with which the elite (the secret rulers of the world) plan to leave earth, leaving the rest of the population behind, exposed to imminent global disaster. Often these theorists freely use elements that were fictional in the first place – novels, stories and films that are considered to contain coded knowledge of conspiracies. In turn, their theories have also been influential on pop culture, in TV series like *The X-Files* and films such as *Independence Day* and *Men in Black* – the men in black being not the invention of the writers of the film or of the comic strip on which it is based, but an

13. To prevent nostalgia from creeping in, one should note that Marx's essay was not exactly mainstream either. See Karl Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (1852), in: Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels, *Studienausgabe Band IV: Geschichte und Politik 2* (ed. Iring Fetscher), Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 1990, pp. 33-119.

element of UFO folklore that has been around for decades. Of course, when elements from conspiracy theory move into mainstream spectacle, they are sanitised and treated as fictions, whereas they are very serious for the conspiracy theorists. On the other hand, the penetration of these elements into mass culture has increased the prestige of conspiracy theories.¹⁴

14. Barkun, op. cit. (note 9), a.o. pp. 33-34.

Counter-media

can be of a discursive and political nature, but they can also have an artistic character, although the artistic of course does not exclude the discursive (no art could exist without the support of a specific discourse). In a literary or other artistic context, conspiracies could be treated as fictions or as ambiguous phenomena that cannot easily be called either fact or fiction. A poetics of conspiracy has been proposed by Hakim Bey, who suggests that the erosion of the distinction between factual and fictional conspiracies can be used for critical purposes. From an anarchist perspective, Bey argues for 'a non-authoritarian theory of conspiracy theory which neither denies it altogether nor elevates it to the status of an ideology.'¹⁵ He notes

that one cannot explain certain

15. Hakim Bey, 'The Ontological Status of Conspiracy Theory', <http://hermetic.com/bey/conspirc.html>

phenomena with-

out recourse to conspiracy theories; in the terms used here, one could characterise the examples given by him as intentional conspiracies within wider structural (pseudo or as-if) conspiracies in the political and military domain. 'To take one example, anyone who denies the reality of conspiracy must face a difficult task indeed when attempting to

explain away the activities of certain elements within Intelligence and the Republican Party in the USA over the last few decades.' Bey notes that a sophisticated conspiracy theory posits 'no single, all-powerful, over-riding cabal in charge of 'History'. That would indeed be a form of stupid paranoia, whether of the Left or the Right.'¹⁶ Bey pro-

16. Ibid.

poses to treat a conspiracy 'like an aesthetic construct, or a language-construct, and could be analysed like a text.' Bey refers to the *Illuminati* books by Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea, which use conspiracy theories concerning the Illuminati sect for the creation of an extravagant fiction.¹⁷

Whereas the thesis

17. Ibid.

of structural conspiracies does not presume an actual, intentional conspiracy, fictional conspiracy theory does just that. However, in this case the assumption that there is an actual conspiracy is *itself* part of a fiction. It is another type of 'as-if' conspiracy.

Going a little bit back in history, one could think of the works of a man whom one is not likely to encounter in nostalgia shows about the 1950s or 1960s: William S. Burroughs. In his cut-up trilogy from the 1960s, Burroughs created a 'mythology for the space age' which in many ways prefigures contemporary conspiracy theories of the type investigated by Barkun.¹⁸ He used some of the impulses

that propel conspiracy theories: his world is a paranoid universe of aliens and of

18. Barry Miles, *William Burroughs: El hombre invisible*, London, Virgin Books, 2002, p. 126. See also William S. Burroughs, 'The Future of the Novel' (1984), in: James Grauerholz and Ira Silverberg (eds.), *Word Virus. The William S. Burroughs Reader*, New York, Grove Press, 1998, pp. 272-273.

elites in league with aliens, of deception and lies. Burroughs's use of the term 'mythology' deserves to be examined in some detail. In antiquity, 'mythos' came to stand for untrue stories, stories about gods and heroes that were believed by former, more gullible generations, but not by philosophical minds. A myth, then, is something recognised as a fiction by the person who calls it a myth, yet it is a special type of fiction – one that is believed in by people who do not recognise its status as a myth. Since romanticism, many writers and artists have longed for a 'return of myth', passionately wanting to believe in what had been exposed as a lie.¹⁹ In the twentieth century, the term myth was increasingly used in a wider sense, referring not only to stories about gods or distant times. It has become common to criticise 'myths' that are perpetuated by the media or by a certain type of discourse; in an author such as Roland Barthes, 'myth' becomes all but synonymous with 'ideology'.

However, Burroughs uses not 'myth' but '*mythology*'. This term can refer to a body of myths or myth in general, and hence be more or less synonymous with 'myth' if the latter is used in a generic sense. This could be called 'first-degree mythology'. On the other hand, 'mythology' can also stand for a scholarly or scientific study and examination of 'myth'; one could call this *second-degree mythology*. Barthes called for the 'theft' of bourgeois mass-media myths in order to create a critical second-degree

19. For the history of the terms myth and mythology, see for instance A. Horstmann, 'Mythos, Mythologie' in: Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 6: Mo-O, Darmstadt/Basel, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft/Schwalbe & Co., 1984, pp. 281-318.

mythology – a 'true mythology'.²⁰

Burroughs thus chose a highly ambiguous term. He may have used it in the more common first sense and regarded himself as a myth-maker who would give the 'space age' its cosmological mythology, but this mythology was in fact a reworking of half-hidden readymade myths that were unacceptable to the mass media. Rather than steal bourgeois myths from *Paris-Match* or other major media, as Barthes advocated, Burroughs appropriated strange myths from the fringes and reworked them into a bizarre counter-mythology.

The Reality Studio

With Burroughs, science-fiction becomes a provider of readymade myths for the avant-garde. During the 1950s, the science-fiction topics of space travel and alien civilisations had become – for many – a living reality: since World War II numerous UFO sightings received massive media coverage. Carl Gustav Jung concluded that UFOs had become a 'living myth'.²¹

While also infiltrating the mass media as spectacular news, UFOs belonged to a subcultural group obsessed with plots and secrecy. For some years Burroughs was a member of the Scientology cult, founded by the sci-fi author L. Ron Hubbard, which jealously guarded the secret documents that detailed its space-opera cosmology. Hubbard restyled the spirit as 'thetan'; four quadrillion years ago the immortal, immaterial thetans became entrapped in

20. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957), Paris, Seuil, 1970, p. 209.

21. Carl Gustav Jung, *Flying Saucers. A modern myth of things seen in the sky* (1958), London/New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 11.

time and matter through ‘implants’, and lost any sense of their true nature. Human beings ‘host’ thetans from other planets that were transported to earth ages ago by an evil ruler called Xenu.²²

Like Hubbard, Burroughs was fundamentally a gnostic, and he too saw time and space as illusions in which mankind is trapped – in his view they are generated by language, itself conceived as an evil alien phenomenon. Whereas normal conspiracy authors try to outline their theory in an orderly, persuasive discourse (even though they often fail miserably), Burroughs considered language to be a virus and discursive reason to be a fatal outcome of this disease. Contrary to Debord, who sided with discourse and decried the commodity-images of spectacle (although not, generally speaking, images as such), Burroughs considered the introduction of language a fall from grace, and discursive reason to be a pest that had also corrupted images and reduced them to stereotypes. ‘What scared you all into time? Into body? Into shit? I will tell you: *‘the word.’* Alien Word *‘the.’* *‘The’ word* of Alien Enemy imprisons *‘thee’* in Time. In Body. In Shit. Prisoner, come out. The great skies are open.’²³ But

Burroughs’ favourite metaphor for the illusory world people take for reality was film; so-called reality is a biological movie, implanted in the human mind.²⁴

For Burroughs, the mass media had little to do with a Habermasian

public sphere; they were control mechanisms. As he noted concerning one of his favourite bogeymen, Henry Luce’s media organisation: ‘It’s a control system. It has nothing to do with reporting. Time/Life/Fortune is some sort of police investigation.’²⁵

In his cut-up novels *The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket that Exploded* and *Nova Express*, Burroughs aimed to ‘break down the police organisation of words and images’ by using the cut-up technique – cutting through printed texts and reassembling them in order to create new literary montages. With his cut-ups and use of genres as science-fiction, Burroughs steals language and types of language, creating a literary of (post)modern myths that makes more sense of the post-war world than sociological analyses. In Burroughs’s sci-fi mythology, the ‘nova police’ fights the nova mob, a bunch of human criminals in league with aliens who feed like parasites on the earth’s resources, and in the end will blow up the used earth, creating a supernova. The aliens sometimes use humans as hosts or disguises; it is the task of the nova police to track them down as ‘they move cross the wounded galaxies always a few years ahead of the Nova Heat’.²⁶

Meanwhile, the industrial-military-political elite collaborates in the hope of being allowed to leave earth before the big bang on board some spaceship. ‘Collaborators with Insect People with Vegetable People. With any people anywhere who offer you a body forever,’ as inspector Lee of the Nova Police – Burroughs’ alter ego – rants,

22. See the summary of Scientology’s secret ‘OT III’ course by John Atack, www.xs4all.nl/~kspaink/cos/essays/attack_ot3.html

25. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

23. William S. Burroughs, *Nova Express* (1964), New York, Grove Press, 1992, p. 4.

24. Quoted in Miles, *op. cit.* (note 18), p. 148.

26. Burroughs, *op. cit.* (note 23), p. 75.

also exhorting the reader: 'With your help we can occupy The Reality Studio and retake their universe of Fear Death and Monopoly.'²⁷

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 7.

Burroughs creates confusion about the degree to which he is serious about the cosmic conspiracy hinted at obsessively in his works. That he used the term *mythology* suggests that he was concerned with creating something whose epistemological status was ambiguous. Burroughs' novels have an uncanny sense of urgency, but they would be of little interest if they were merely attempts by some loon to convince us of the reality of an Insect Trust. His writing constantly deconstructs the status of his theories as theories; they are so 'writerly', so much entangled in language, undoing its conventions and codes, that they throw doubt on the possibility of any 'theory' fitting 'the facts'. A frequent contributor to the underground magazines of the 1960s and '70s, Burroughs could be used as a model – however dysfunctional and problematical – for artistic strategies of counter-publicness. Barthes called for a 'true mythology' that would steal and manipulate the myths of the mass media, which are themselves stolen and 'mythified' language; by contrast, Burroughs availed himself of alternative myths from a half-hidden subculture of pulp and cults.

However, these subcultural myths have by now become part of the mainstream in the sanitised form of TV shows and films such as *X-Files*, *Men in Black*, and *Independence Day*, while also proliferating on the fringes in the form of right wing/UFO conspiracy theories.

The basis for this culture are the myths that Burroughs used, not his outrageous mythology; the raw material, not his reprocessing. Our conspiracy mythology is a first-degree mythology in need of creative theft. In a mythical mode, Burroughs analysed the military-industrial complex and the media by using material that was rejected by the mass media and kept out of the mainstream cultural memory. Now that these media have incorporated much of this material, they use it to create a general atmosphere of secrecy and conspiracy which is more titillating than illuminating; who needs journalistic investigation when you have *The X-Files*? This mass culture of conspiracy could use a new Burroughs, someone who once more cuts up these myths and turns them against the conspiracy of publicness that has absorbed them.

Unbombing & Ars Memoria

An Interview with Tjebbe van Tijen

Visual artist and archivist Tjebbe van Tijen (1944) is interested in the functioning and the creation of collective memory. He concentrates on the gathering of data that generate meanings which deviate from official interpretations. This can lead to a more differentiated picture of the past and of the way in which we remember it. To this end Van Tijen makes use of material as well as virtual media and regards them as an inseparable whole. This interview by media theorist Geert Lovink focuses extensively, among other things, on Van Tijen's project *Unbombing the World 1911-2011*.

For many, Tjebbe van Tijen embodies the Will to Archive. For years he was not only an activist, but at the same time worked on archiving material for the Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt and similar groups who were fighting against the construction of the metro, motorways and office buildings and for the preservation of housing and work spaces for all in the Amsterdam city centre. Collecting journals, pamphlets, posters and meeting minutes, however trivial, was regarded by this generation as an essential component of their struggle. History was not just something far off in time and space, Marx and Bakunin or the Spanish Civil War, but above all the 'collective memory' of one's own local squatters group or the neighbourhood committee fighting demolition and urban developments and highway plans. You could make history; you yourself were history. It is thanks to Tjebbe van Tijen that the post-war housing battle in Amsterdam has been so well documented, and archives dating from the 1960s to the 1980s of the squatter and neighbourhood movement are now housed at the International Institute for Social History (www.iisg.nl), where Van Tijen, after many years as contemporary social movements archivist at the library of the University of Amsterdam, worked in the early 1990s.

For those in the (media) art sector, Van Tijen, who had started out in the 1960s as a sculptor, happening and expanded-cinema artist, re-emerged in the late 1980s as a media artist, doing projects with Jeffrey Shaw such as the *Imaginary Museum of Revolution*, in which memorial monument to revolutions, from around the world, were collected and formed the entry point to wander through time, space and ideology. In an

interview I conducted with Van Tijen in 1994 for the journal *Mediamatic*, the focus was mainly on social movements, technology and the writing of one's own history.¹

This time I decided to concentrate on

Unbombing the

world 1911–2011, a project that is still in development and aims to document aerial bombardments, however small or devastating, anywhere in the world. In addition, we discussed Van Tijen's use of the scroll, a continuous roll of images and text, which frequently appears in his recent projects.

In his house, which looks out over what remains of the Waterlooplein, we're sitting in front of computer screens looking at the Ars Memoria System, an extraordinary database for what its maker calls 'info objects': books, journals, articles, photographs, maps, archives (paper or digital), objects, places, events, biographies, and so forth. Before us we see the *Mapping Human Violence* project. This is an expansion of the *Unbombing* project, which we later discuss. On the screen are data on George Elliot's 1972 book, *The Twentieth Century Book of the Dead*, which speaks of a 'nation of the dead' through violence (at the time, 150 million), a book that was a turning point, 30 years ago, for Van Tijen's thinking about death and destruction. The database is intended to generate content for the Internet, but is not (yet) online. The system records not only biographical data, but also related contextual websites and (scanned) images and text quotations from books or other information objects. Van Tijen's system provides longer quotations that stand on their own. The quotations can be documented in detail, and the essential meaning is summed up in a

1. See also Geert Lovink, *Uncanny Networks*, collection of interviews, Cambridge, Mass. 2002

single short sentence, like a headline. The collection of such 'monads' then provides a (frequently) poetic and associative 'entry' into the substance of a full quotation. Van Tijen attaches great importance to the physical form of the original information object, such as a book jacket. 'Book jackets say a great deal about the context. They are often lost. Academic libraries tend to throw them away to cut binding costs. This is also an expression of contempt toward the image and of the supremacy of the text in the academic environment.'

For Van Tijen, working with databases dates back to the 1970s, when he could only slavishly input data on the university's heavily secured mainframe computer. He saw the advent of the personal computer in the 1980s as a personal liberation, and it led to databases he designed himself using DOS, dBase and Clipper. For some time now, Tjebbe has been using Apple Macs with Filemaker software surrounded by special plug-ins and scripts.

Is there a biographical side to the Unbombing project?

The immediate inspiration came from my first visit to Japan, in 1995. I was picked up at the Narita airport by a hostess, an attractive lady who accompanied me to the campus of Keio University on the other side of Tokyo. As we drove through the city, I didn't see a single old building. You know about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but you don't realize that Tokyo was bombarded and burned to the ground. I was overwhelmed by a sense of shame because I had not known this. It reminded me of my travels through Germany after the war, in the early 1960s, and how those cities

had been stripped of their soul. Often they had been set ablaze from the air – Hamburg, Berlin, Dortmund. Take Würzburg or Nuremberg, cities that were reconstructed, with concrete structures covered in authentic cladding and topped with wooden roofs as a result. Another detail is that during my early childhood I stayed with my grandmother, who lived on the Laan van Nieuw Oost-Indië in The Hague. Across the street lay the Bezuidehout, which the RAF had bombarded by mistake; it remained in ruins for years and I used to play there. This is precisely where all those new office buildings now stand. And naturally you can also draw a connection to my later involvement with urban activism.

The *tabula rasa* that bombardments provide mostly coincides with the modernist approach to urban planning of CIAM/Charte d'Athènes and architects like Le Corbusier, who thought it was marvellous that entire cities had been razed, because they could come up with projects that would not otherwise have been possible. Just think of Mainz, where Marcel Lods, during the first years of post-war French occupation, comes up with a plan in the spirit of the Charte d'Athènes that virtually rewrites the entire pre-existing urban planning structure – the plan is ultimately not implemented – but also of Rotterdam, with its Lijnbaan, where nothing recalls the past and the high-rise housing estates are arranged in orderly formation to catch the maximum amount of light (following the adage 'light, air and space'). Amsterdam is a separate case – it was hardly bombarded from the air, but it is often said that a bombardment from within took place. If you look at the map of the demolition of houses during the famine winter

of '44-'45 due to the firewood shortage, you can see that it coincides exactly with the Jewish quarter and with later reconstruction plans involving motorways, office buildings and the metro; at the time there was no talk of restoring old structures yet. The battle against the construction of the metro through the Nieuwmarkt quarter came in the wake of the deportation of the Jewish population.

When you're building a database like this, are you also trying to evade the moral distinctions between bombardments in a 'good' or 'bad' cause?

Their greatest common denominator is remoteness, literally and figuratively. These days you can trace a Hamas leader using a mobile phone and take him out – a matter of transmitting spatial co-ordinates to a guided missile. Before, however, it was primarily a question of remoteness in terms of height. The higher you could fly, the smaller the chance that you would be shot down, since from the very beginning air attacks and anti-aircraft artillery were in competition.

I collect eyewitness accounts from victims as well as attackers. I just read a pilot's report from World War I which notes that during certain missions in bad weather, above the clouds, bombs were dropped blindly. You can imagine the sort of 'collateral damage' this must have caused, or how terrorized the cows must have been.

The aim of *Unbombing* is to show that compassion for victims has vanished, and to give them a voice once again. This violence especially emerges in the language. All this equipment, all those permits –

contracts have to be signed, factories built to make planes and missiles; there have to be explosives, maps, targets – in short a whole carry-on to make bombing possible. What actually happens has to be camouflaged within all of this organization. The fact that it is about attacking people and their living environment, that military and civilian targets are barely, if at all, distinguishable, is buried under a layer of military jargon. In consultations with politicians and at press briefings the potential and the eventual victims of this are hardly visible, if at all. To this very day, at the Imperial War Museum in London, only a single display notes the thousands of bombardments of German cities, and then only in terms of 'economic targets', while the Blitz on London and other cities is dramatized with a genuine civilian air-raid shelter, which shakes and rattles and in which – thanks to an ingenious device – you can even smell fire. And we're talking about at least half a million bombing fatalities on the German side and forty to fifty thousand on the British side. I recently found photos of air force operations during the Suez crisis in 1956. In the entire book there was not a single word about civilian casualties. If you look more closely at some aerial photos, you can see that people lived right next to that railroad station, airport or military encampment.

World War I is often seen as a trench war, but at the same time the first experiments with air warfare were carried out then; cities like Cologne, Trier, Saarbrücken and Mainz were regularly bombarded – an eye for an eye – after all, the Germans flew over London, Antwerp, Liège and Paris with their Zeppelins, and when this proved ineffective, with the feared first

heavy 'bombers', the Gothas.

The conquest 'of' the airspace from the very beginning also means a battle 'for' the airspace, and by extension for those that rule the land. It was about a lot more than 'dogfights' by heroic 'aces'. The old battlefield with forts and trenches was obsolete. The age of armies fighting each other was over. The entire population would be turned into 'combatants'.

Military strategists, like the Italian general Douhet (1869-1930) in 1923, called for striking the vital centres of a nation, 'exposing the soft core', breaking the will of the people by conquering the enemy airspace and bombarding cities. If a government refused to capitulate, the populace would at the very least revolt against their government, in order to make the terror bombardments – 'strategic bombardments' in military jargon – stop. This doctrine was adopted by, among others, Mitchell (1879-1936), the father of the US Air Force, and also influenced RAF pioneer Trenchard (1873-1956) and continues to apply to this day. The city can turn into a battlefield at any moment. Whether this works is another matter. There was no rebellion by Japanese workers or the middle class against the Hirohito regime during the heavy bombardments of cities in 1945 – preceding Hiroshima and Nagasaki – and we saw the same thing in Yugoslavia in 1999, when the NATO bombardments in fact created solidarity around Milosevic. Bombardments of civilians has an adverse effect, and yet they are still carried out – every day you can see the reverse psychological effect of air attacks, be it in Iraq, Afghanistan or Palestine.

America's imperial power, the 'big stick policy', once based on gunships, is now

primarily based on the air force. Practising terrorism in the name of anti-terrorism is wholly accepted. I am trying to offer a humanist point of view, to balance ends and means. Ultimately it is always about people. I recently found a contemporary protest book about large-scale Japanese bombardments of Chinese cities in 1937. Some people also still remember the Italian incendiary and gas bombs dropped on Ethiopia in this period. The Americans, at the time – before they entered World War II – found this 'barbaric', but a few years later they would be doing the same, and worse.

Unbombing is a project that essentially can never be finished. Nor can I do this project alone – it's too wide-ranging. I am developing a methodology – not just for this project, incidentally – by which participants can collect, input, classify and comment on data. The medium of the Internet seems the obvious solution. I would prefer to see it as a growing process, in which *Unbombing* can travel from city to city, with the 'virtual' component balanced by very material aspects.

For other projects you developed very tactile interactive interfaces. Do you intend to do the same for Unbombing?

I want to use traditional steel desks with empty sliding drawers (although now, with computers, drawers under desks are disappearing). The whole desk surface is a screen, and as the drawers glide from shut to open you can see the many thousands of bombardments since 1911 unfold. The desk as interface symbolizes the remoteness of war planning. In my *Unbombing the World* database, I've recorded over a

thousand cities, villages and areas – this is just the number of places, not the number of air raids. In this tally of a thousand I count London only once, although it has been attacked many times, both in the First and Second World Wars, starting with Zeppelins and finally with V2 rockets. The inhabitants of Kabul have known air attacks since 1919, when the British were trying to bring the area under control, and subsequently it has been bombarded by Russians, warlords fighting one another, and the Americans and their partners from 1978 to 2001. My current rough estimate of the total number of fatalities from air bombardments and rocket attacks now stands at more than a million deaths (see full bombardment overview at <http://imaginary-museum.org/UBW/UBWdatabase.pdf>), including the fact that fatality figures from bombardments during the Korea and Indochina wars are still difficult to estimate.

It is important to put the fatality figures in the right perspective. I recently found a book from the 1950s on the psychological effects of atomic warfare. It includes statistics from German and Japanese cities during World War II and how relative the reduction in population numbers actually was. There is a temporary dip in the statistics line, but it is quickly corrected. An influenza epidemic or SARS can have a much graver effect, it seems. And yet we feel much greater revulsion toward military violence.

It took a long time for the military to recognize the limited effect of bombing with only heavy explosives and move to systematically setting cities on fire. The Americans first built a mock-up of a portion of a Japanese city in order to test how it could best be set ablaze. Outrage about

the Italian, German and Japanese air bombardments could and can be expressed without difficulty. Only a few during the war dared to condemn the fire bombing of German and Japanese cities. The Anglican bishop of Chichester, George Bell, spoke out in Parliament against 'indiscriminate bombing' and the American writer Lewis Mumford spoke of an 'unconditional moral surrender to Hitler'. If you look into the literature you find lawyers, ethicists, historians and sociologists who did indeed put the mass bombardments of cities during World War II and later in Korea and Indochina under the label of genocide, such as Leo Kuper (1908-1994), a South African lawyer and sociologist who fled to the United States. This brings you to the ongoing discussion on the International Criminal Court and recent proposals for the creation of a court not only for 'winners' but also for the 'losers'.

When you read the details on Indochina and what was dropped there in the 1960s and 1970s... I did demonstrate against the bombardments in Cambodia, in the early 1970s, but I had really no idea how extensive, dirty and vicious that was. This is untouched history. Statistics are important in this regard, in order to draw comparisons. There will be never be exact numbers, a precise body count, and the estimates of 'the historical camp' can vary widely, but the order of magnitude can be determined. Japanese and German casualties are on the order of hundreds of thousands of deaths. The Netherlands during World War II, in contrast, was on the order of thousands. Many still see aerial bombardments as a necessary evil and certainly not as 'genocide', because in their estimation there was no intention to kill entire populations

based on religion or race. Others criticize the limitations of the definition and seek new terms to describe these acts of terror, like the political scientist and statistician Rummel with his term 'democide'...

How would you create a non-official memorial and what constitutes the need for this, in your view?

You could erect a stone engraved with the most evocative panoramic photo of a bombed city. Next to this would stand a cauldron with glowing charcoal (symbolizing the burning city), from which you would take a piece of coal. You could take a sheet of paper and make an impression, a rubbing of this stone. You could also combine several cities or fragments. Then there would be a washbasin in which you could wash your hands 'in innocence'. A stone would be erected in every city to which the exhibition travels.

This idea comes from the tradition of public monuments, which often originated from temporary memorials temporarily erected by survivors and relatives, some of which later received official status and evolved into local and sometimes national memorials. Think of the Ossuarium in Verdun, which is a memorial to the victims of trench warfare. In the small Vietnamese city of Dien Bien Phu, where the French were defeated, they are now reconstructing the trenches of the time in order to attract tourists. Therefore there will also be a heroes' monument to the people who died there. I see this sort of monuments as a cartography of human violence. This also includes the absent monuments, as in the case of Tokyo, which in fact has no public monument for the more than one

hundred thousand dead that fell during the American bombardments in 1945.

We make choices as to which monuments have meaning for us or not – and we even make new ones. The important thing is how monuments can be explicated. What interests me is whether you can make a monument in which you make room for opposing views of what happened. Until now monuments have been mostly national stories that provide only one viewpoint. What surprises me is the huge number of monuments and statues that were designed but never built, memorials that were made but never erected, or erected only to be taken down again. In the Netherlands, for instance, you find no monuments to the Batavian Republic that emerged from the Patriot Movement at the end of the eighteenth century. Yet there was an Italian sculptor who made one. A remnant of that monument represents one of the leaders, Joan Derk van der Cappelen tot den Pol, and still stands in a garden in Rome. So after the fall of the Dutch monarchy, a lorry can be dispatched to Rome to pick up that statue and put it up after all.

How do you see the relationship between virtual and material monuments? Am I right in thinking that you want to add a stone portal to the Internet?

There are already thousands of books on bombardments. So that's not the reason for doing this. You always make choices. Everything is turned into fiction; you can't avoid that. It always gets documented and preserved, romanticized and dramatized, even if you think, like Adorno, that it should not be made into poetry.

I want to make monuments that exist

beyond the unity of a single viewpoint. Just look at Iraq – you see it happening there already. There are websites from prominent news media on which you can read about and see how many and which American soldiers have been killed. Fortunately there are now also groups trying to do the same in terms of Iraqi civilians (<http://www.iraqbodycount.net>). You can be tempted to think that as such documentation efforts are made, the number of victims is also shrinking. But then you suddenly get the genocide in Ruanda and this is no longer the case. This was killing with kitchen knives, facilitated by interactive radio. These were active listeners indeed, and we can expect more of the same. It begs the question whether genocide is something that is only initiated and committed by evil politicians and statesmen, as some academics claim.

What my projects can bring about is placing data in a better perspective. People often have a moral problem at the start. They cannot or refuse to make a distinction between 5,000 and 500,000 dead; some numbers seem to be beyond comprehension. I say you have to try. Huge numbers can always be broken down into smaller units in which a multitude of stories lie. Unlike the Spielberg archive (<http://www.vhf.org>), in which everything is cast in a single format, I place a high value on a variety of viewpoints and opinions, and a variety of sources. The *Unbombing* project includes texts by military planners, pilots' logbooks, attackers as well as defenders, memories of those who were bombarded, in the form of autobiographies, letters, interviews, schoolchildren's essays, and so forth, with links to original documents and the places where these can be found.

The Spielberg archive contains set questionnaires, video interviews with Holocaust survivors conducted according to a set protocol – a sort of 'Legoization' of history. I do not question the therapeutic effect of the Spielberg method – it is primarily useful for the survivors and relatives. My approach looks more at the planners, the attackers and the victims of bombardments, the response of urban planners, and lets divergent and opposing viewpoints stand alongside one another, without drawing conclusions. Of course there is also a process of selection, but I hope that methods can be found to permit the choosing of material by many participants from differing positions and viewpoints. If you just search on the Internet for the words Dresden and Hiroshima, you find numerous pages filled with lively debates and highly divergent views. The visitor or user of the *Unbombing* project is not confronted with certainties, but rather made to doubt things. They are stimulated to come to their own insights.

In many of your projects you use the roll as a medium, in which the user, on paper or on a screen, scrolls back and forth along a panorama of Photoshopped images flowing into one another.

When the Internet started out the idea of vertical scrolling, the *rotulus*, played a significant role. Many web designs are based on pages, yet a lot of information is presented by flipping through windows. Horizontal scrolling never caught on, because it was considered awkward and the software seemed unsuited for it. This does play a role for text in our writing, because your eye has to jump from the

end of a horizontal line to the beginning of a new one, but this is not true of images. You should not break up text in columns that are too wide, but images have hardly any such restrictions. Sadly images are still treated as illustrations for text – the other way round is also possible.

These days I mostly use digital scrolls in lectures, but I have also used paper scrolls with a camera set up above. In an installation on shamanism for the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam in 1997 there are physical scrolls with handles in a wooden cabinet as well as digital scrolls projected onto a drumhead. They were already in the *Museum of Revolution* in 1989 as well. At the time they were film projectors with a roll of images in a loop showing a series of revolutionary monuments.

The use of scrolls as information carriers is as old as humanity itself; natural materials, like tree bark, cactus leaves or papyrus, were hammered and pasted together and served as bearers of images and writing characters. This is one of the things I show in my *Panorama of Pre-Cinematic Principles* for the 'Future Cinema' exhibition (<http://imaginarymuseum.org/PCP/>). The moral of this story is that 'new media' are not all that new and have a long history. I also want to show that inventions do not appear out of thin air, but often consist of new combinations of existing principles. Cinema, for instance, is the result of a combination of scientific discoveries and 'bricolage'. A few years ago, during the 'Next Five Minutes' media conference, I tried to sum up 4,000 years of multimedia forms in a 40-minute performance lecture, which sadly failed due to a lack of preparation and available resources, but to this day I am interested in shadow play,

spinning tops, fireflies and spinning fire pots. People have known for a long time that the eye is slow and makes up its own story out of the movement of light. It's important to show the simplicity in learning processes, how high tech and low tech relate to each other.

A historic example of the scroll is Trajan's Column in Rome, which tells of the Romans' conquest and plundering of Dacia, the present-day Romania. This is, as it were, a pole around which a scroll with a story in pictures is wrapped. This pillar used to stand between two libraries, one of which contained scrolls, *volumina*, and the other bound, paginated books, *codices*. You can also think of rock paintings, murals and frescoes, from Mayan frescoes in Bonampak to medieval church frescoes in Italy, Greek and Cambodian temple friezes, the Parthenon and Angkor Wat. There are endless art history debates about how you should read these. The viewer animates the image during his stroll, just as the paintings on Greek or Mayan plates, vases and bowls can be brought to life by turning them. Thinking in separate pages, leafing through quickly, is a modern phenomenon. The continuous surface of image and text was shattered at a certain point, in part because in the Western printing process type and image had to be mounted separately. The zigzag books still produced in Asia, based on wooden blocks onto which both text and images are carved, offer a nice middle course between bounded pages and scroll. In unrolling and rolling up a scroll a panoramic surface comes into view, offering an overview and assisting short-term memory. You can see where you're coming from and where you're going. Both in the Roman picture

story on Trajan's Column and in East Asian scrolls, you see separate scenes made to flow into one another by their creators. The way we still speak of 'a scene unfolding'. The scroll is a quintessential narrative medium. The beauty of making scrolls is that you often start from the image, which conjures up new associations through all sorts of combinations. You might only later go looking for text to fit the image, and by 'making arguments with images' you also arrive at insights other than from the study of text alone.

When one thinks of new media one often thinks of virtuality. In your work, by contrast, you put the emphasis on media and memory as matter.

The eye and the ear are being privileged over the senses of smell and touch. In the ZKM in Karlsruhe you can see that during an exhibition like 'The Future of Cinema', attention is devoted to the material and historical aspects of media. Yet this does not happen as often as you would like. At the Waag in Amsterdam, which calls itself the Society for Old and New Media, I have yet to see old media represented, and that also applies to V2 in Rotterdam, which is primarily imbued with a futurist-oriented technophilia. It is a short-sighted view of what 'new media' can be. You often see museums, when they want to appear modern, resort to Disney-like or futuristic installations. They fail to see how older principles, older forms of interface could be integrated. In order to look forward, you have to be prepared to look back.

My database, *Ars Memoria System*, comes from the long tradition of the 'commonplace books', *florilegia*, anthologies in which interesting fragments from other

books and writings were copied and arranged. These collections of quotations, collections of 'commonplaces', '*loci communi*', were a collective preservation and classification system of knowledge. University libraries are now beginning to see the value of such 'commonplace books'. Until recently they were not taken seriously, because they were not original works, but seemed to consist merely of copies. I had an argument about this at the Institute for Social History. It concerned whether certain newspaper-clipping collections should be kept or not. These days these are often discarded because the newspapers themselves are archived anyway. The value of newspaper-clipping collections is not the information in the clippings itself, but the connections a particular collector has made among all these clippings, the personal way of arranging them and the insights derived from this. What I now make are idiosyncratic bibliographies and documentation collections; the standardized descriptions and links need only be done by a small number of competent libraries, and anyone can obtain this easily in this or that format from the Internet. The important thing is the freedom to make fresh selections and combinations out of the same sources – the '*ars combinatoria*' along with the '*ars memoria*'. Many different pancakes can be made from flour, eggs, milk and a pinch of salt.

Links

Text archive: <http://www.iisg.nl/~tvt/>
Website with project overview: <http://imaginarymuseum.org/Unbombing>,
proposal: <http://imaginarymuseum.org/UBW/ubw01a.html>
Mapping Human Violence: <http://imaginarymuseum.org/MHV/>
Ars Memoria System scroll: <http://imaginarymuseum.org/AMS/>
Earlier interview with Tjebbe van Tijen from 1994:
<http://www.mediamatic.net/cwolk/view/7287>



power from the air ~ flying shaman ~ Cyrano's trip to the moon ~ Zeus casting thunderbolts ~ Inra striking vajras with lightning ~ an archaeological hot-air fantasy imagines Nazca Indians (Peru, 500 BCE - 500 CE) flying



in 2004 war fatalities - civilian and military - are tallied publicly on the Internet - they have names (Iraq Bodycount 11/11,3000 civilians) ~ but we still do not know whether we should count the victims of the war in Indochina - 40 years ago - in the tens or hundreds of thousands



the mythical Chinese dragon becomes a kite, a windsock with a smoking torch for the Dacians and Romans, then a two-stage gunpowder rocket setting cities ablaze ~ Samurai borne aloft by giant Wan-Wan kite



the Boeings B-29s of WWII are replaced by the B-52s of the Cold War, warriors in the third dimension, dropping death for more than half a century: dumb bombs, fire bombs, smart bombs and twice an atom bomb, as on the heart of Hiroshima, where only white lines now mark where streets once ran



'will Thou sweep away the righteous with the wicked?' asks Abraham ~ only Lot and his daughters escape God's judgement of fire and brimstone that devastates Sodom ~ the monkey Hanuman similarly destroys the corrupt city of King Ravana on Lanka with his lashing tail of fire



'water water!' cries the girl, until she stops breathing (1945) ~ a US study 20 years later claims a total of 70,000 dead; the Japanese total is double that ~ the assembled core for the first atomic bomb test - the only colour photos of the Trinity explosion and uranium cubes show



'the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind' ~ the Revelations of St. John become an apocalyptic human judgement when Catholic troops bombard Protestant Magdeburg in 1631: 20,000 dead



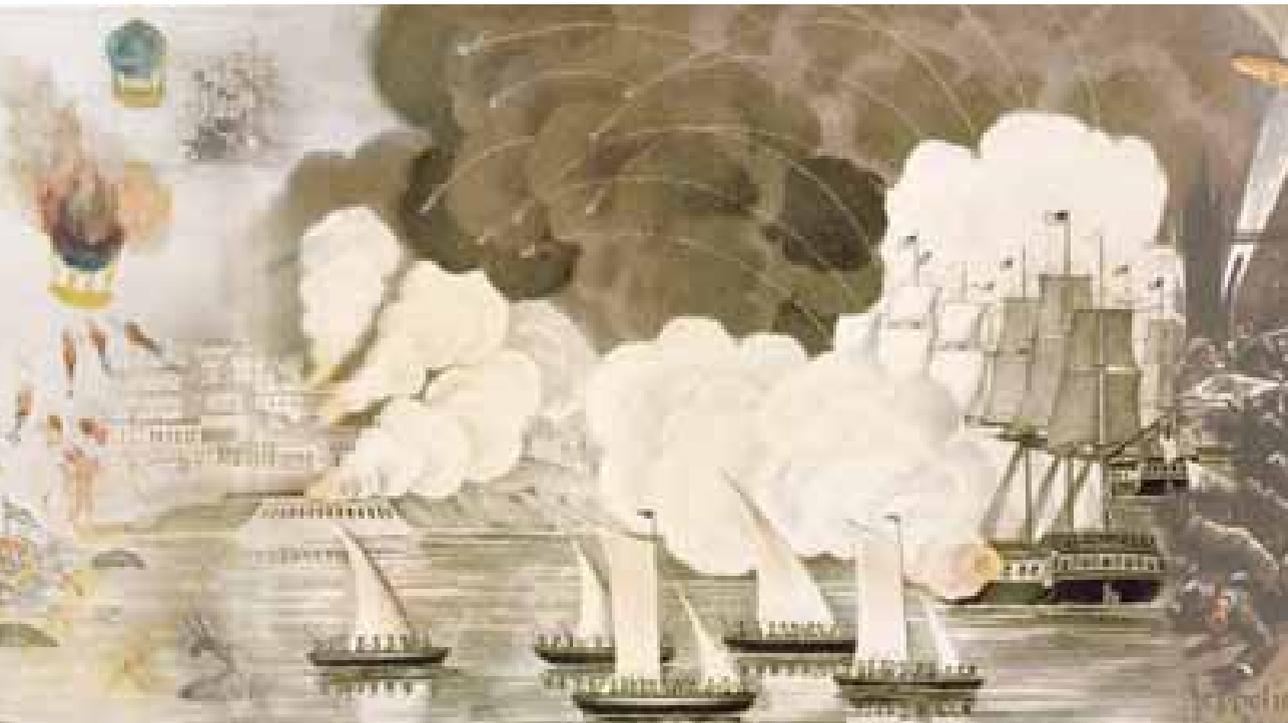
the compact power of this apocalyptic niggling-work ~ the Underground proved the best shelter during the Blitz on London ~ platforms, rails, corridors and escalators were full night after night ~ 60% of Londoners preferred their own risky beds



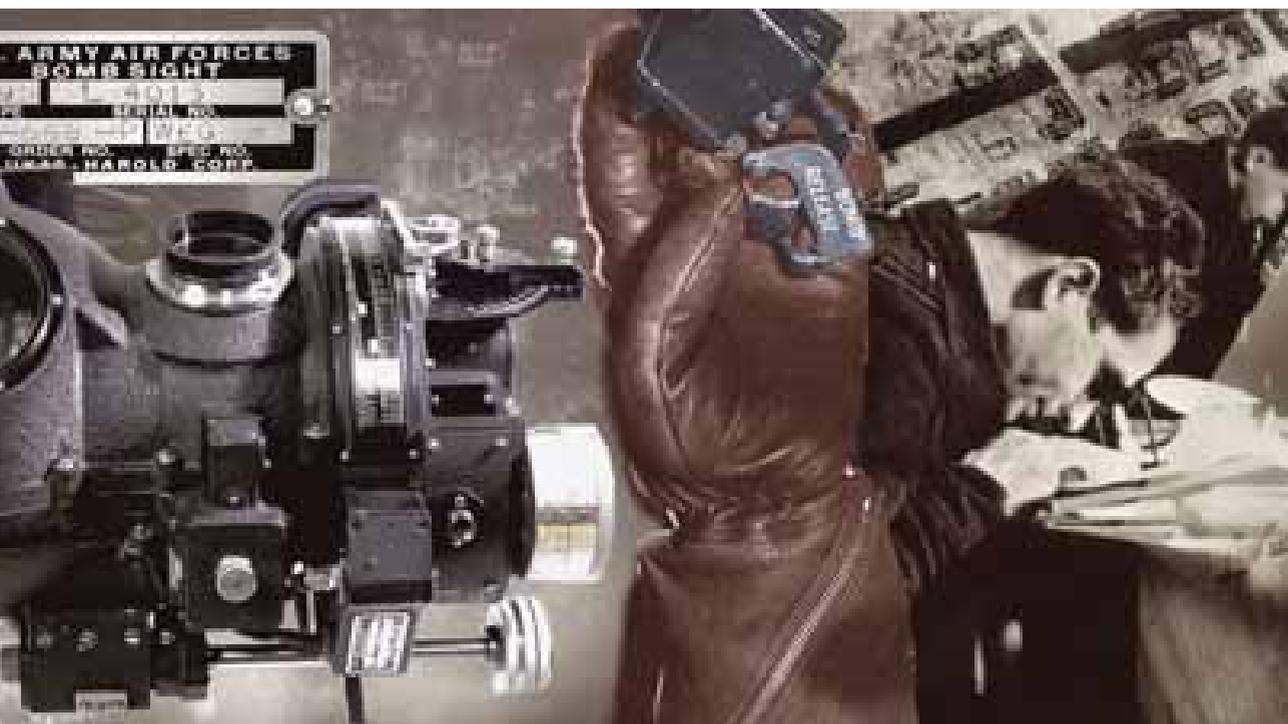
Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), painter of the Mona Lisa and undiscovered inventor of war machines and flying vessels ~ Swift's flying island of Laputa (1727) casts stones or crushes earthly rebels ~ Jesuit Lana Terzi (1631-1687) decides against an airship capable of bombing ships and cities



'to this day I am still afraid of airplanes - for me an airplane means something evil that comes out of the sky' (German woman, 1992) ~ 'There it is, skipper - straight ahead. Keep her steady', Lawrence called, watching the indicators as they crawled up his sword-sight. 'Eight seconds to go.'



the hot-air balloon not just as for pleasure cruises or research but also as a war machine, as in this British plan (1799) for the annihilation of the French fleet ~ Jules Verne's airship, the Albatross (1886) as intervention force against barbarians ~ US fleet bombards the pirate city of Tripoli (1810)



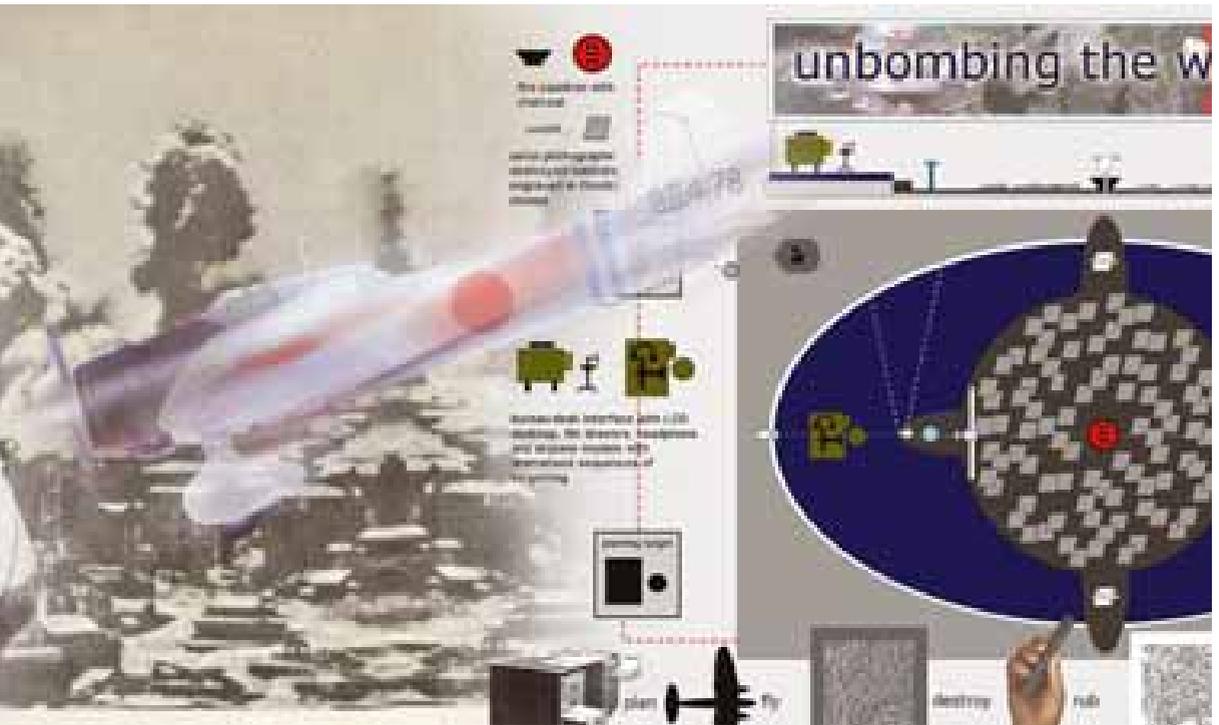
there was often no visibility at all and bomb loads were pretty much dropped blindly, or a vague contour on a flickering radar screen was the only indication ~ looking through a magnifying glass at an aerial photo in order to find and mark targets ~ to analyse the damage done



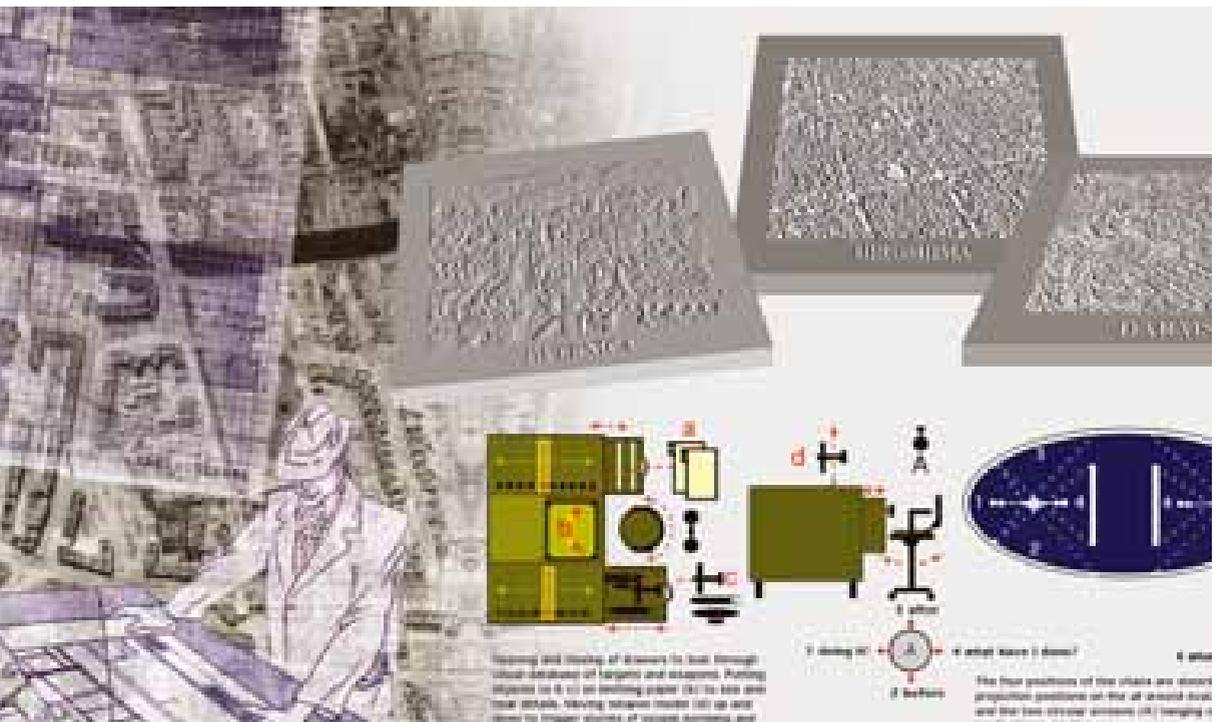
Graf General Von Zeppelin (1838-1917) perseveres in his plan for an invincible imperial air fleet and sows terror in Antwerp, Paris and London ~ the Italian general Douhet (1869-1930) calls for bombardments on the 'will of a nation' (Il dominio dell'area, 1921)



double planning: destruction and construction ~ flight paths, signal points, incendiary zones, transport and industrial locations versus fire lanes, spreading, rearrangement of city structures that were virtually annihilated ~ rationalization, grids ~ a violent mirror image



Douhet finds supporters among strategists from emerging air-power nations ~ the Japanese bombardments of Chinese cities like Shanghai (1937) are still condemned as barbaric, but the world war that soon breaks out takes the bounds of barbarity even further.



a reconciliation process between bombarded communities and their attackers is still necessary ~ making room for more than one truth, gaining insight into the strengths and weaknesses of social structures which made this possible, being more than a winner or a loser.

column

HENK OOSTERLING

GROOTSTEDELIJKE INTERESSE: KUNST
ALS OPENBARE RUIMTE

Iedereen heeft wel eens een Proust-ervaring gehad: een geur triggert zonder dat je het doorhebt een gevoel van geborgenheid of ontheemding. Je wordt beroerd: door of van iets. Diep in onze hersenstam raakt iets los wat we vergeten waren. Pas na enige tijd lukt het de geur te herinneren en via beelden te identificeren. De verloren tijd wordt deel van onze biografie.

Werkt het geheugen van de res publica, van publieke zaken en de daarbijbehorende ruimte als een individueel geheugen? Kent het openbare geheugen ook zoiets als een hersenstam, waar onze evolutionair verankerde instincten sluimeren? Of een door emoties en affecten beroerd limbisch systeem?

De analogie is verleidelijk. Stad en land herinneren zich immers hun verleden periodiek. Veelal om hun identiteit te bevestigen. Soms wordt die urbi et orbi afgekondigd. De katholieke folklore kent een nationalistische pendant in de herdenkingen. Instinctmatig en ingehouden emotioneel verzamelt het volk zich jaarlijks fysiek of televisieel rond monumentale zuilen, kolossale standbeelden of

ingetogen torso's om zijn roemrijke of tragische verleden te herdenken. Deze pseudo-rituele herhalingsdwang is ook eigen aan familie en vrienden van verkeersslachtoffers, voormalige kampbewoners of Fortuyn-aanhangers. Allen staan ze periodiek stil bij de raison d'être van hun nabestaan.

In het jaar van het culturele erfgoed reiken we over onze instincten en emoties heen. Cultureel erfgoed draait vooral om de ratio, om de nationale neocortex waarin 's lands hogere vormen van bewustzijn en reflectie liggen opgeslagen. Als een expansieve wetware tekent de Nederlandse culturele identiteit zich af als waterstaat: in grachten, kanalen, door sluizen en bruggen getemde rivieren en met molens, dijken en Deltawerken afgeschermd polders. In de steden completeren kerken, cultuurpaleizen, grachtenpanden, postindustriële ruïnes en (post)moderne architectonische hoogstandjes dit nationale lange-termijngeheugen.

Maar waar zetelt ons kortetermijngeheugen? In jaarlijks terugkerende festiviteiten, zoals danceparades, zomercarnavals of theaterfestivals. In deze grootstedelijke vieringen wordt een diversiteit aan levensstijlen medegedeeld. Deze grootstedelijke cultuur representeert niet langer een gedeelde

identiteit, maar reflecteert (op) een wereld van verschil. Urban culture draait om de mix en de remix.

In onze omgang met de openbare ruimte is de aandacht van identiteit naar verschil en van verleden naar heden verschoven.

Op nauwelijks zichtbare wijze is in deze verschuivingen de kwaliteit van de openbare ruimte veranderd. Door de nieuwe media is deze exponentieel vergroot én verdicht. Al sms'ent en e-mailend houden we elkaar in de virtuele stad continu op de hoogte van de beweeglijkheid (mobiliteit) van ons zelf (autos), van onze automobiliteit in de meest brede zin. Deze virtuele interacties mogen dan het meest vluchtige element van het urbane kortetermijngeheugen lijken, ze beklijven niettemin langer dan de analoge telefoontjes van weleer. Een sms-bericht is zelfs duurzamer dan de analoge herinnering van het antwoordapparaat. Omdat digitale interacties en transacties door het Global Positioning System getraceerd en door servers opgeslagen worden, maken ze zelfs al potentieel deel uit van de wereldgeschiedenis. Zeker in tijden van terreur.

Privé staat hierbij allang niet meer tegenover openbaar. Ieder virtueel privé-gesprek is publiek bezit en republiceerbaar. Er is tegelijkertijd sprake van een toenemende privatisering van de openbare ruimte. Daarbij denk ik niet aan bewakingscamera's, stadswachten

of private beveiligingsdiensten. Ik doel op de fragmentering en atomisering ervan. Bewegen we ons bij voorkeur door de openbare ruimte met headphones op in auto's of lopend met de gsm in de aanslag? Is daardoor de openbare ruimte niet ongemerkt getransformeerd: van verblijfsruimte in een doorganggebied? We zijn door deze in fysiek en virtueel opzicht weerstandsloze automobiliteit autonome capsules geworden, die niettemin elk moment beschikbaar zijn.

Wat heeft in zo'n ruimte kunst nog te betekenen? Is er nog wel ruimte voor kunst in de openbare ruimte? Of ligt het in een wereld waarin de openbare ruimte steeds meer verdwijnt niet meer voor de hand om kunst juist als het creëren van een weerbarstige openbare ruimte op te vatten, variërend van Lozano-Hemmers interactieve Body Movies-projecties en Jeanne van Heeswijks Vlaardinger Strip tot Martijn Engelbrechts illegalenformulieren en Marc Bijls urbane interventies. Misschien wordt het tijd te spreken over kunst van de openbare ruimte of zelfs over kunst als openbare ruimte. Kunst als engagement in tijden van terreur waardoor we ons herinneren wat er tussen mensen gebeurt. Simpel gezegd: kunst als interesse.

Joke Robaard

Sixty-five Situations

*What's the 'archive'? You say that for
Foucault the archive is 'audiovisual'?*

Why speak in terms of ‘archive’? We use the concept of ‘archive’ these days to come to grips with the rapid proliferation of images. Archive is a key word, like the words ‘postmodern’ and ‘digital’. It implies the processing of actions and ways of thinking, a way of imposing some order and of generating a consciousness that deals with ‘production’ in a different way, that manages to slow it down. You do not start an archive. Only in the course of time does it become clear that you are assembling one. First (1977) you collect images in order to create a ‘counterlanguage’ – a series of images and texts intended to supply the over-exploited concept of ‘fashion’ with different arguments. You want to show that an infinite quantity of language and knowledge has developed concerning the body, concerning clothing. What you find lacking in fashion books and magazines is precisely what you start collecting. When does a collection become an archive? You create a precedent with the selection of a single picture: you need more in order to demonstrate differences or similarities. Contexts, names, notes, selections. Dates suddenly become important. Gradually the folder with the collection of images is transferred to a box, which starts to look like an archive box. It is not a question of quantity or completeness. It is more that the material leads you to speak. The images you collect lead to conversations, discussions. It is not important to collect everything on a certain subject. That you make you a bookkeeper. Only the images that interest you may go into the archive.¹ Sometimes you refuse an image. You collect only what intrigues you, what stands at the juncture of a position, at the breaking point of traditions, on the cutting edge of the period and at a specific moment, identified by you.

1. Institutes can gather all information and data on a certain subject. In doing so they create volume, quantity, power and ostensible objectivity. An individual can later uncover something specific within and make new cross-connections.

Examples of turning points

1. Katherine Hamnett ushers in a new era to follow the punk period, in which designers become associated with business and at the same time do not shy away from engagement. The photograph from my archive shows Hamnett being received by Margaret Thatcher. With a great sense of publicity she wears a T-shirt under her coat bearing the slogan ‘58% Don’t Want Pershing’. There could be no better conjunction of clothing, body and message. (from the folders: <Text on clothing and skin>, <British designers after 1980>).

2. In the early 1990s Helmut Lang associated his archetypal, modern clothes with publicity campaigns that systematically challenged the management of photography. Like Benetton and Comme des Garçons he uses photographs from Robert Mapplethorpe’s archive in his ads. The photo is displayed like a ‘postage stamp’, flanked by a painstaking colophon. In doing so he reintroduces Mapplethorpe’s work in the media as well as in the campaign running in parallel with his clothing collection. The controversy attached to Mapplethorpe’s work in the United States fades because of this uncensored advertising version, distributed without hindrance under Lang’s label. (from the folders: <Helmut Lang>, <Photography>, <Advertising>, <Models and visual art as background >, <Military clothing>)

What's the 'archive'? You say that for Foucault the archive is 'audiovisual'?

Archeology, genealogy, is also a geology. Archeology doesn't have to dig into the past, there's an archeology of the present – in a way it's always working in the present. Archeology is to do with archives, and an archive has two aspects; it's audiovisual. A language lesson and an object lesson.

It's not a matter of words and things. We have to take things and find visibilities in them. And what is visible at a given period corresponds to its system of lighting and the scintillations, mirrorings, flashes produced by the contact of light and things. We have to break open words or sentences, too, and find what's uttered in them. And what can be uttered at a given period corresponds to its system of language and the inherent variations it's constantly undergoing, jumping from one homogeneous scheme to another. Foucault's key historical principle is that any historical formation says all it can say and sees all it can see.

from 'Life as a Work of Art', Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, p. 96
Columbia University Press, New York, 1995. (originally from *Pourparlers*,
1990) interview with Didier Eribon *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 23 August 1986.



A / ARCHETYPES (CLOTHING)

1. white shirts / 2. t-shirts /
3. polo shirts / 4. jeans / 5. overalls /
6. aprons / 7. military clothing, uniforms / 8. duffel coats / 9. PLO scarves / 10. waders / 11. socks

C / CREATORS

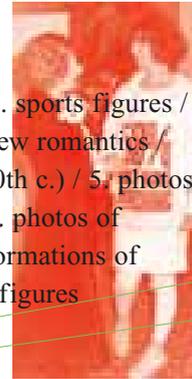
1. Helmut Lang / 2. Margiela /
3. Alaïa ('80s) / 4. Mugler /
5. Miyake / 6. Yamamoto / 7. Comme des Garçons / 8. Westwood /
9. Katherine Hammett / 10. Gaultier /
11. Girbaud / 12. Watanabe et al. /
13. YSL / 14. Sybilla, Gigli ('80s)

F / PHOTOGRAPHY

1. people who do not want to be photographed. / 2. camerapeople in action / 3. *media events* / 4. economic consequences, sponsoring / 5. photo camera ads (20th c.) / 6. affections with photos (burning)

G / GROUPS

1. cowboy, indian / 2. sports figures /
3. punk, postpunk, new romantics /
4. images of men (20th c.) / 5. photos of women (idem) / 6. photos of famous people / 7. formations of people / 8. religious figures



M / FASHION PHOTOGRAPHERS

1. Sheila Metzner, Deborah Turbeville (1980–present) / 2. Arthur Elgor /
3. Bruce Weber ('80s) / 4. Steven Meisel (1985–present) / 5. Fabrizio Ferri (early '80s)

M / MODELS

1. models and visual art as background / 2. models and animals /
3. models and babies / 4. models and work setting / 5. models and people from other cultures / 6. children as models / 7. horses and photography

O / OBJECTS

1. people and bottles, glasses, water coolers / 2. people and dolls /
3. people and computers

O / COMPONENTS

1. headgear / 2. masks, balaclavas /
3. hairstyles and subculture /
4. veils and headscarves / 5. the veil (from 2000) / 6. décolletés (front, back) / 7. holes in clothing / 8. slits

O / ENVIRONMENT (TEXTILE)

1. tents, huts / 2. coverings (people in rags, blankets) / 3. slipcovers /
4. patchwork / 5. fabrics / 6. flags

P / PRINTS

1. dots, flowers / 2. checks, tartans /
3. stripes / 4. tiger motifs / 5. text on clothing and skin

R / ADVERTISING

1. perfume ads (1978–present) /
2. fashion brand ads, general (20th c.) /
3. campaigns by Benetton, Lang, Gucci, Klein, Prada, GAP, etc.

T / TEXTS

1. philosophers, writers on clothing and fashion (Barthes, Sloterdijk, Eco, Coupland, etc.) / 2. press articles (clothing and technology) / 3. idem (clothing and economics, business) /
4. interviews with creators and designers (Westwood, Hamnett, V+R, Helmut Lang, etc.)

T / SITUATIONS

1. people: wet, sweaty, besmirched /
2. nude, semi-nude / 3. people lying down / 4. people falling / 5. various positions

Nico Dockx

Curious

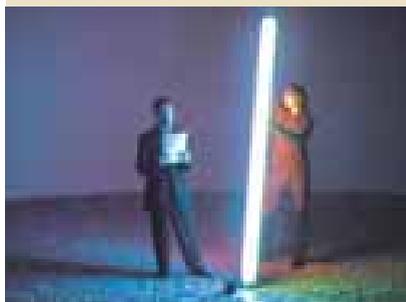
The Belgian artist Nico Dockx (1974) works out of a fundamental preoccupation with the archive, with structural processes like inventory, memory, information, distribution and management. His multimedia work comes into being through co-operative projects, and nestles in continually different settings. In 2003–2004 he took part, among other things, in Utopia Station at the Biennale in Venice and performed an intervention at the MuHKA (Museum of Contemporary Art) in Antwerp. CURIIOUS is his own independent label.

Date:
Thu, 18 Mar 2004 11:44:59 +0100
From:
"Dieter Roelstraete"
To:
"Bart De Baere"
CC:
nicodockx@yahoo.com
Subject:
RE: post nico dockx

OK voor vrijdag 2 april, 10u00, **muhka!**
ddieter.

Date:
Wed, 24 Mar 2004 02:08:24 -0500
From:
"HUO"
Subject:
nico 4 hans ulrich
To:
"NICO DOCKX"

Dear Nico
many thanks for your message.
Sadly I could not make it to Belgium on the 10th



03/01/2004
"Televator" reading/performance by Douglas Park & Nico Dockx
(in dialogue with a work by Dan Flavin and Ann Veronica Janssens),
as part of a series of collection interventions
by Kris Delacourt, Nico Dockx, Michelle Naismith & Douglas Park,
M HKA Museum for Contemporary Art Antwerpen,
December 2003 – February 2004.

I was hoping to ask you about your unrealized projects - projects you have not yet had the time to realize, or projects which will be realized soon, or even projects which are too big or too small, which have been censored, ... there are all kinds of reasons for unrealized projects. I wanted to ask about the unbuilt roads of Nico Dockx. And, let me tell you why this question emerged: well, last time, when I was visiting Brussels, in terms of the roads, I kept on seeing cars - with the logo 'Dockx' - all over Belgium.

First of all, I want to mention to you that my work is a kind of slow realization process, ... so, for most of the time and almost invisible, the work operates as a possible instrument for exploring communication, cooperation, and friendship... perhaps, a catalyst for rethinking and reworking all the accumulated information streams that are spontaneously growing within the architecture of my personal archives. Through my personal experiences and work, I know, that it takes a lot of time to constantly revision one's stored data in a more flexible and precise way, to sometimes delete information... and, to free yourself and your archives from the many layers of dust (and cobwebs). Perhaps, to create a sort of organic and self-organizing archive structure from which you can learn through its multiple feedback loops and modes of hesitation... - a dynamic learning system and mutual understanding in between both 'object' and 'subject'. I learned a lot from my archives... they are my personal luggage - a portable laboratory... a virtual university? I believe, that it is really necessary and important to take a very personal and radical position in relation to time, to create your own rhythm, maybe even to be invisible, ... but, it is sometimes very difficult to realize, I feel, within the context of this ongoing instrumentalization, spectacularization, and globalization of our visual culture, where branded group shows and art markets fluctuate with the same speeds and statistics as the stock market. But, then again, the question is always... how to change, within the given parameters, the rules of the game?

So It's a form of resistance to exhibiting?

It's not really a mode of creative resistance. As you will have noticed, if you look and listen carefully to my work it never really ends...; all the work is a 'work in progress', a kind of interior development/ rhythm that grows over time like a crystalline structure: to add, to subtract, to change, to translate, to edit, ... to transform. I suppose, that means that the making of the work, for me personally, represents a form of (re-)search. Perhaps, it is very similar to Hakim Bey's essays, articulating small reflections that will last whole life times because they went unnoticed, because they never intersected with the spectacle, never appeared outside that real life which is invisible to the agents of simulation. I think, the strength of such a temporary autonomous zone lies in its invisibility and its will to power as disappearance - a simple act of realization and spontaneity. I believe in integrity as a whole life style... to live in the most simple but deeply felt way - the richness of your life depends on your playful sensitivity. I think, it is important to sometimes say 'no, I can't do it'... and maybe the work itself will let you know how, when, and where to resist.

So, It's this notion of rhythm, where it is about imposing your own rhythm on the world and, not letting the world impose its rhythm onto you. Any thoughts about the idea of utopia? I'm doing a research together with Molly Nesbit on the notion of 'utopia' - we are working on a book in relation to Bloch and Adorno... something is missing; so... what is missing?

What is missing? Perhaps, this idea of 'utopia'?... or this notion of unproductivity (slowness?) as a possible parameter for aesthetical production and circulation of ideas? To leave a fake name in order to freely operate within the art world, ... trying to avoid that other people categorize and cut out your imagination? Or, even this idea... to go and live on a mountain - doing nothing! Not so long ago... when I was working at the museum in Rotterdam, I had a short conversation with Chris Dercon... when he asked me: 'how is everything going? I replied: 'sometimes, I would like to take a break, ... maybe, to live closer to 'nature', and just do nothing or something different'. Today, it seems we are just living from day to day and, ... it is really hard to believe in something. Maybe, utopian endeavours are disappearing? But, let's talk more about this later...

I think we are finished for the moment. Is there anything missing from this interview? If you would like to add something to the transcription you can.

but I hope we see each other very soon
and I am also very excited about the new interview
2nd interview, it has only just begun
all best regards
Hans Ulrich

From:
"luc demeyer"
To:
"NICO DOCKX"
Subject:
werf bredastraat
Date:
Fri, 2 Apr 2004 10:52:07 +0200

Nico en Helena,
Ik kom zaterdag 3 april rond 12h00 naar de
Bredastraat. Ik ben benieuwd naar de toestand.
groeten
Luc Demeyer



Antwerpen, Summer 1998.

So, that's the first part – to be continued soon – it has just begun!

an excerpt from *A New Slowness*
Hans Ulrich Obrist interviews Nico Dockx,
ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris 15/03/2002
published in *Curious 003*, Antwerpen/Nantes 2002,
contact/info/orders: nicodockx@yahoo.com

Bredastraat 24, 2060 Antwerpen Noord, Spring 2004



yet, unrealized model designed by Luc Demeyer in collaboration with Nico Dockx & Helena Sidiropoulos, Antwerpen Spring 2003 – ongoing: a long-term, ever-changing architecture of time -perhaps even like Cedric Price's Fun Palace (1961), a laboratory of fun- as a possible responsive proposal/catalyst for growing an alternative, self-structuring economy and open network questioning the ongoing instrumentalisation of our communication and this non-stop managerialism of our visual culture. For building this architecture on the move and its potential multitude of performances, invisible designs and curious programs, we would like to start organizing, from Spring 2006, a series of meetings and discussions bringing together people from different disciplines interested to intellectually and/or financially participate within the realization of this project, doing it together. Developing a sort of DIY (do-it-yourself) label format for both the production and circulation of more personally engaged thoughts and radical aesthetics of which their energy generates a dynamic gesture of friendship replacing isolation. This idea of a compassionate economy where all imaginable profits of one project support the realization of the next -involving many different creative actors, sharing many 'transdisciplinary' experiences and rendering visible, just for a small moment in time, this notion of temporary autonomous zones of poetic terrorism and fresh spiritual life.
Nico Dockx, Summer 2003

Excerpt from my contribution 'Special Archive Project (anarchives)' to Octavio Zaya's editorial project 'FILES', www.musac.org 2004



From my personal library,
a list of books I have been reading during April-May 2004:

1. Rhythm Science, Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky that subliminal kid, Mediawork/ The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts/ London, England and the artist, 2004. (1st reading)
2. Through the 'net, studies in Jochen Gerz "Anthology of Art", The Anthology of Art Research Project, School of Art Braunschweig, University of Rennes 2- Upper Brittany, University of Craft and Design Budapest, edited by H. Fassbinder, Salon Verlag, the authors & artists, Cologne, 2003. (1st reading)
3. Kazunari Sakamoto, House: Poetics in the ordinary, translated by J.Montag, published by TOTO and the artist, Tokyo 2001. (2nd reading)
4. Anri Sala, 'A Thousand Windows/ 'The World of the Insane', Artist Books No. 28, edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König and Anri Sala, Köln 2003. (1st reading)
5. Une petite maison -1923, Le Corbusier, Birkhäuser publishers for architecture Basel-Boston-Berlin (english version appended) & Fondation Le Corbusier Paris 2001 (1st edition published in 1954). (2nd reading)
6. Eva Hesse, Transformations – The Sojourn in Germany 1964/65 – Datebooks 1964/65, Kunststhalie Wien, The Estate of Eva Hesse, Hauser & Wirth Zürich/London, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, and the authors, Köln 2004 –edited by S.Folie. (1st reading)
7. Hans Ulrich Obrist Interviews –Volume 1, edited by T. Boutoux, text/essay by M.Diers, a project by Fondazione Pitti Immagine Discovery (for La Biennale di Venezia 2003), Charta Editions Milano, Hans Ulrich Obrist and the authors/artists, 2003. (2nd reading)
8. Area Kollaborativa- Reader02, edited and published by Dunja Kukovec and Natasa Petresin, Galerija SKUC, the authors and artists, Ljubljana 2004. (2nd reading)
9. Content, (AM)OMA/ Rem Koolhaas &&& (Perverted Architecture), edited by R. Koolhaas, S.Brown and J.Link, published by Taschen, the authors and OMA, Köln/Rotterdam 2004. (2nd reading)
10. Komplex berlin/ complex berlin, 3rd Berlin biennial for contemporary art 14/02-18/04/2004, KW institute for contemporary art – Martin Gropius Bau and Kino Arsenal, edited by Ute Meta Bauer, the authors and artists, Berlin 2004. (1st reading)
11. Alighiero e Boetti, Shaman/Showman, by Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König and the author, Köln 2001. (1st reading)
12. Mere Movement, A Collection of Poems, by Naowarat Pongpaiboon, KKpublishing and the author, Bangkok 2001. (1st reading)
13. Roth Time, A Dieter Roth Retrospective, edited by T.Vischer and B.Walter, Laurenz-Stiftung Schaulager Basel/ Lars Müller Publishers Baden Switzerland, The Estate Dieter Roth and the authors, 2004. (1st reading)

From:
"Catherine David"
To:
nicodockx
CC:
office@wdw.nl
Subject:
RE: nico4catherine
Date:
Sun, 11 Apr 2004 18:33:13 +0000

Dear Nico,

Thanks for the (good) news.
I had a very hectic time last month having to move from my apartment in Paris (with about 8000 books, catalogues and dossiers accumulated for more than 20 years!). And april and may are very busy with too many travels.
But of course I will be in Rdam (for the Smithson symposium, Underfire discussions etc).
The best is probably to check with my secretary Karin when you know your dates;
Hope to hear from you soon.
Kind regards
Catherine

Date:
Tue 13 Apr 2004 17:30:25 -0400
From:
"HUO"
Subject:
Re: nico4hansulrich
To:
"NICO DOCKX"

My name is Nico
I am a **revolution**

Date:
Mon, 19 Apr 2004 03:39:14 -0700 (PDT)
From:
"helena sidiropoulos"
Subject:
Re: Fwd: FW: flyer
To:
"NICO DOCKX"

heb jij zin om daarheen te gaan?

From:
Akiko
Date:
Tue, 4 May 2004 12:12:04 EDT
Subject:
Re: nico4akiko
To:
nicodockx

(J
(B (JHi Nico!
(B (J
(B (Jit's ontime but also different time - i am always
thinking about this day/night different situation which
is really after late 20th century phenomena. But, we
also sometimes connected telepathically !
(B (JIn fact, the best is, always the multiple numbers of
8. So, 96 pp, 106 pp, 114 pp, 122pp.
(B (JSo, you have a choice. And, if necessary, we can
add, extra 1 or 2 sheet (2 pages each) for title page or



27/03 – 08/06/2003,
Nico Dockx & Christophe Terlinden,
Revolution/ Restoration, part 1: Paranoid Critical Transformation Method
Palais des Beaux Arts/ Paleis voor Schone Kunsten Bruxelles
a recycled/ responsive architecture as a sort of experimental and
reflective display for hosting a series of lectures, readings, performances
& video-screenings by Multitudes, Dieter Lesage, Rem Koolhaas/ AMO,
Douglas Park, Lieven De Cauter ...

an experimental multi-disciplinary programme of contemporary art
organized by Barabara Vanderlinden and Dirk Snauwaert, and which
started in 2003 and goes on for 3 years. Throughout the different seasons,
young artists have a blank cheque to reflect their vision of this
Centre for Fine Arts as a building and as an institution: how was it
designed and arranged, what is its place in the urban landscape and in
the cultural and socio-economic fabric of Bruxelles, and how will it work in
the future?



photographic excerpt from
'day by day by day' Taking Pictures, Sharing Cameras
January 2001 – ongoing / Nico Dockx & Mark Luyten
a series of collaborative book objects & audio-visual installations

cryptic, crystal, cloud



Topography, Establishing a discipline of research in science is bound to the invention of a topographical place (the laboratory) which provides the perspective for a set of procedures or gestures (the methods, the experiments). Once these two poles are articulated in their specificity, a new discipline of knowledge can be born. The last in line in the West was the invention of experimental psychology at the turn of the century. Let us now invert this description, and point it inwards, as it were. Human beings in their embedded, situated life, constitute a de facto topographical place (the body, the self) where procedures and gestures can be carried out to directly explore human experience itself (the quest). As in other laboratories, the procedures present: following the shape and bringing forth the content of what can and will become manifest.

Gestures In the traditions of human wisdom (most notably Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism), this portable self-laboratory is the place for human discovery and transformation. In Buddhism it has been cultivated and refined for centuries in the practice and art of sitting meditation (samatha-vipasyana). It is also a self-laboratory in the sense that the practice changes and transforms who the subject is taken to be, as if the laboratory space were a moving perspective. Fainter echoes of such widely distributed and cultivated portable laboratories arose independently three times in Europe at the turn of the century. First, this is partly what Sigmund Freud inaugurated with the tradition of psychoanalysis. Second, in modern science, portable laboratories were introduced early in the century under the name of Introspectionism (the Wurzburg school), taken to be the main road to the understanding of the mind. Introspectionism, however, became a road not taken in the West, and these portable laboratories were discarded in favor of the fixed laboratories of experimental psychology. Finally, in philosophy, Edmund Husserl introduced the new lineage of phenomenology, based on the practice of reduction that seeks consciousness and its constitution.

Do it Become the laboratory by standing still, or sitting on the cushion provided. Proceed to do nothing. Relax your posture and attitude, and lightly observe whatever comes into experience. That's the experiment. Note the specific manifestations of the mind as if they were data. Repeat this gesture of full presence, of mindfulness, as many times as you can. The laboratory is now portable and you may carry it with you whenever you go. Keep track of your findings!

The Portable Laboratory, Francisco J. Varela (Chile 1946 - Paris 2001), *Laboratorium Exhibition* curated by Barbara Vanderlinden & Hans Ulrich Obrist, Fotografie Museum, Antwerpen 1999.

colophon. Basically, we arrange the colophon page due to our format as you can find in most of the books. So, you can be precise, but also it can be flexible !

(B (J) Thanks for *curious* cover ! i like the design, and look forward to seeing it on my return to CCA in the next week !

(B (Jxx akiko

(B (J (B

To:

"NICO DOCKX"

From:

"Jan Mast"

Subject:

attachment

Date:

Tue, 4 May 2004 19:18:01 +0200

hello Nico, deze mail als kleine aanvulling op de vorige

ben overtuigd dat er ontzettend veel mogelijk is met *archieffproject*.

maar ik herlees net een mail van je en zie dat ik vraag 1 bewust heb

genegeerd: als je nog eens in gent bent, want ik ben niet meer in

antwerpen, en je *laptop* mee hebt, dan kan ik die wel wat fixen.

heb je nog nieuws eigenlijk over dat psk ding?

oki, i continue doing niks.

liefs en groetjes aan Helena..

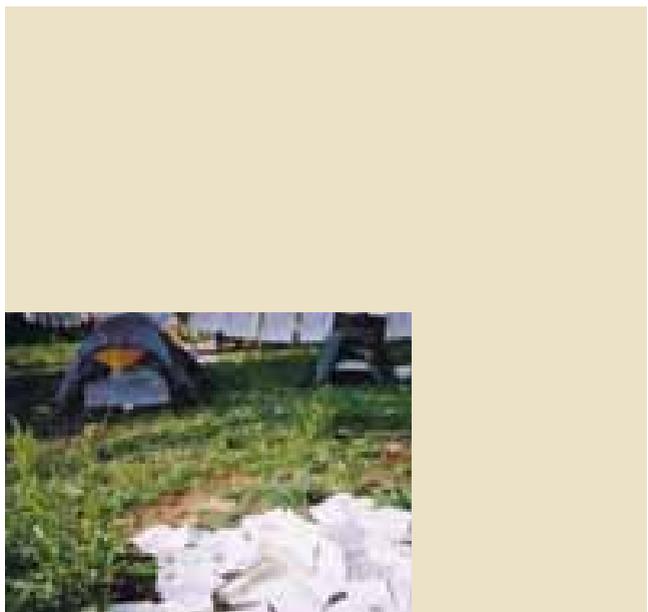
Jan

Date:
Thu, 06 May 2004 12:47:37 -0400
From:
"Molly Nesbit"
To:
"NICO DOCKX"
Subject:
Re: nico4molly

6 may
dear N,
tonight the flight to Dakar
so this will be brief.
am meeting Rirkrit this afternoon
and will communicate your messages to him.
yes yes let's talk about it all.
I'll be able to focus again on books
once I'm back in New York in late May.
August in NY could be good although
mid-month (16-22nd) is not great
since I'll be on Long Island then.
But you could also come there?
silver wings for all,
now that's utopia,
xxxxM

Date:
Fri, 14 May 2004 17:19:48 +0200
Top of Form 1
&&
Subject:
firenze / projects
&&&&&
From:
"Maurizio Nannucci"
To:
"NICO DOCKX"

dear nico,
it was nice to come back yesterday from london and
to find a very special package with your new edition
of the "bastard remix". thanks!
sure i'll enjoy to participate at your next project with
a flexible texts sequence, please let me know some
details for the contribution... but i am looking also at
a co-project with zona archives editions. will be nice
to see you soon, i am in firenze & basel, enjoy
istanbul....
saluti
mn



camping in the Utopia Station,
a project organized by Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist
& Rirkrit Tiravanija and presented at the 50th Venice Biennial
14/06 – 02/11/2003
(travelling soon to Haus der Kunst in Munich)



01/11/2002,
THE **BASTARD**^{Remix} event, a series of live sound
performances, lectures and readings by Stefan Beck,
Building Transmissions, Catherine David, Clémentine Deliss
& Douglas Park, organized by Nico Dockx (in collaboration
with Philip Huyghe) at HAL Antwerpen.

cure007, THE **BASTARD**^{Remix}
publication date: 03/2004
edition : 300 (numbered)
concept : Building Transmissions
(in collaboration with Clémentine Deliss)
editing : Kris Delacourt & Nico Dockx
production/distribution: Curious/ nicodockx@yahoo.com
graphic design: Jean-Michel Meyers & Liam Gillick
silkscreen printing: Kris Delacourt & Nico Dockx

sounds by: Stefan Beck, Building Transmissions,
Kris Delacourt, Nico Dockx, Douglas Park, Samon Takahashi,
Aaron Turner & Peter Verwimp (Antwerpen, Boston,
Frankfurt, Nantes & Paris -September 2001 – March 2003)



' 2 hands grab the pillow, place it against the window
of a moving train, a face pressed in it,- sleep '

excerpt from a text by Helena Sidiropoulos
for a collaborative postcard project with Nico Dockx,
Xiamen/ China, November 2003.

Archives: Nico Dockx
Graphic Design: Brenda Massenhof & Nico Dockx
Antwerpen 20, 23 & 26/05/2004

Hans Aarsman

The Days when Everything was Possible

Is the Amsterdammer where he really wants to be? There are whole tribes living in Amsterdam who would rather be somewhere else: somewhere in the past.

There are people who have come from faraway countries. They have difficulty adapting. They find Amsterdam difficult, they think, and they simply cannot get used to Western society. But that's not it. They have difficulty with the present-day. They dream of their youth, when they still had a grip on their lives. That was in a country far away, with a different culture and a different climate.

Born and bred Amsterdammers also have a youth that they reminisce about. They also want to turn back the clock. They have it no easier adapting than do immigrants. The present takes a bite out of the city of their youth every day: all the things that disappear and all the things that are added. There are poignant memories around every corner.

I am one of these Amsterdammers: I was born and raised here. Every time I try to negotiate the traffic chaos known as the Leidseplein, my compassionate thoughts turn to the Leidsebosje. Until the 1980s this little copse was nothing more than a few trees and some shrubs in the middle of a roundabout. The roundabout used to stand in front of the modern-day Marriott, and you could ride around it until you reached the right exit. I've never actually been into the Leidsebosje, merely peered at it from my father's car.

It's best to be a tourist in Amsterdam: then you have least trouble adapting. Tourists have no memories of the past. For them, everything is fresh. In the same way parents are much more easygoing with someone else's children, they cruise around in the knowledge that they will be leaving again. Four million of them come here every year to look at the canals, visit the coffeeshops and the museums. Tourists are a serious issue for the city council. In order to please them, the city centre has been designated a protected cityscape. They just have to tunnel the new North/South Line metro through beneath it and then they can set up a ticket booth for the city centre: the centre of Amsterdam as an open-air museum.

But isn't that what the born and bred Amsterdammer wants as well? Then everything continues just like it was?

No, that's not what I want. You don't gain anything by stopping the clock. And certainly not by turning back the clock. For me, the Leidsebosje doesn't need to be replanted. The filled-in canals don't have to be excavated again either. And please let the Paleis van Volkslijft (Amsterdam's 19th-century 'Palace of Industry' that was destroyed by fire in the 1930s) rest in peace as a stack of photos.

The size of two big classrooms filled with chests of drawers, with people nosing around among them, is more or less how you can best imagine

what was, until recently, the *Beeldbank* ('Image Bank') of the *Gemeente-archief*, the Amsterdam Municipal Archives. In the drawers there were photographs of Amsterdam from the seminal years of photography, the middle of the 19th century, up to the present. Subdivided by street. Every Amsterdammer could go and search in those drawers for evidence of his or her past. So there they were, usually huddled in pairs, with a photo of the street where they were born in their hands. Look at this! Just look at that! Do you remember? Or the street where they live now, but then as it used to be. The air was filled with 'ohs' and 'ahs'. At the counter they could order a little print of their find, almost as big as an A4. That cost a couple of guilders at the time, and took a couple of weeks. You can find them in a great many staircases of Amsterdam homes, those photos of how the street used to be. Set in a simple frame. You could also hang them up inside, but then you couldn't share them with the neighbours.

The room full of drawers has disappeared now. The 100,000 photos have been scanned and placed on a server the size of a fridge. Go to www.gaaweb.nl and click on the 'Beeldbank' button. You can search by street, by photographer, by neighbourhood. The photos appear on your screen. You can even print them out, for free and without waiting, in a format slightly bigger than a postcard. Slightly too small for the staircase, that's true. However, there is no municipality in the Netherlands, in the whole world, where the archives are as accessible as in Amsterdam. I miss that room with chests of drawers all the same. I miss the delighted exclamations of people who have dug up something from their past. One day, when the windows are wide open on a summer's day, I will go onto the street at dinnertime. According to statistics collected by the Amsterdam Municipal Archives, it's at this hour that the Image Bank gets the most visitors (120 per hour). You never know, I might catch an 'oh' or an 'ah' through the open windows.

I visited the Image Bank for the last time a fortnight ago. Via via I had heard there was a garage with living space above it for sale in the Bellamystraat. On the corner with the Ten Catemarkt, the city's cheapest and most pleasant market, according to insiders. I just wanted to take a look first. It turned out to be a real immigrant neighbourhood, but completely unlike Bos en Lommer. Whether it's because of the monotony of the architecture there, or because of the utter listlessness that hangs in the air, I think Bos en Lommer is the saddest part of Amsterdam. I can't see a headscarf there without thinking: throw off that hopeless thing, participate, don't let yourself be boxed in by those men. There are so many women walking around there with their hair shielded from the glances of men that you can only get those ideas out of your head after you've left the neighbourhood. In the Bellamystraat and on the Ten

Catemarkt there are also a lot of headscarves, but more cheerful, more varied, perhaps even more exotic. By the look of it more than half of them don't speak any Dutch, but you don't feel like a stranger in your own city there. In the garage there was a Volvo on the ramp which looked like new. It had a sports exhaust that two men wearing winter jackets were pulling around to check whether it was attached properly. Most of the tinkering was done, the garage owner told me, sitting in the little office right at the back. He had Parkinson's disease, and would be leaving the place within a month. A friendly man with big hands, and he offered one in a handshake, firm without gripping. He stood up to show me the property. I hardly noticed he was ill, except that it seemed like he had to force every word out of his throat. That didn't stop him talking nineteen to the dozen. Did I remember *Stiefbeen en Zoon*? Sure, that television series about that scrap-metal dealer (based on the English series *Steptoe and Son*). His little dealership was just opposite, and the scenes were shot from that place on the corner. Crikey! Was that here? Wasn't it Rien van Nunen who played the father? And the son was played by ... what was his name again? Now he's a Chief Constable in that police series ... what's it called again? He also acted in that ... but that was even longer ago ... that children's series about a sailor 'To sail is more fine than you think...,' I piped up, and the garage owner chimed in with the second half of the couplet: '... come sail along with me.'

'Piet,' it suddenly came to me, 'his first name was Piet ...'

'...Römer,' the proprietor added.

'Piet Römer!' we chimed in unison.

He shook my hand for the second time.

'And that police series was called ...*Baantjer*.'

Our memories, pleased with their success, picked up steam.

'Do you remember how Stiefbeen senior dragged kettle after kettle of hot water to the bathtub in the garden, stripped off down to his underwear and took a bath, right in the middle of the garden! The dirty git would keep his filthy black feet out of the water. He would have a jar of pickled onions in his hand, and a couple always ended up in the bathwater, then he fished them out and stuck in his mouth. That Rien van Nunen played the mayor in *Swiebertje* later on. And then he became seriously ill. What was it he had? He was in a wheelchair.'

'...Parkinson's,' the garage owner finished.

'I didn't know it was infectious,' I splurged out before I could stop myself. The garage owner burst out laughing.

When I returned home I found 20 photos of the Bellamystraat on www.gaaweb.nl, including one showing the garage and the cinema next door, the Olympia, which is now a Turkish Cultural Centre. There had

been a flood, and the cars were standing up to their axles in water.

There used to be floods often, the garage owner told me. The Bellamystraat was the lowest point in Amsterdam. If anything went wrong with the draining of the polder then they would be up to their knees in water. Then they would go surfing on old doors. The photo was taken in 1951, the year I was born.

I printed it out and took it along to the garage. He wasn't there. The letterbox was so small, a type you hardly ever see now. A slit only 10 centimetres wide. I had to fold the photo double in order to get it through.

What can the past do for you? It used to be like that, now it's like this, and later it will be like something else. There's hardly anything to be learned from the past. Results from the past don't provide any guarantee for the future. On photos the past looks so rosy. Meaningful and acceptable, like the present never is. Perhaps in 30 years, when the present has itself become the past. You would prefer it if that gap wasn't there. That you could look at the present with the same acceptance as you look to the past. Photos from the past can't help you here. Sooner the opposite. They make the gap even greater. It's best to accept that there's a gap and that it will never be bridged. Let the present and the past co-exist like two different versions of the same world. One slightly easier to understand than the other. You can dig up Amsterdam's past in the archives. But where do you find the present?

If you want to understand the present then stop harrying the tourists from the cycle path, step off your bike and walk along behind them. Tourists, with their innocent gaze, understand Amsterdam better than the Amsterdammers. Tourists know why they have come here. Amsterdammers have forgotten, because we've been here so long already.

Follow them into the souvenir shop and look over their shoulder at the stand of picture postcards. Amsterdam is what the tourists send home to show where they've been. An image of a bright yellow bike against a bright green bridge railing, locked with three chains. Wherever that card falls on the mat they will understand immediately: that card comes from Amsterdam. There is only one city in the world where 100,000 bikes are stolen every year. A man's backside in tight jeans astride an Amsterdammertje. Ten naked guys dancing on a boat in the canals. It could only be Amsterdam. Walhalla for homosexual love. The window of a coffeeshop with a man-high symbol of the marijuana plant painted on it. Everything's possible: that's Amsterdam. A sanctuary for tourists. And for terrorists. For everyone who has the prospect of being somewhere else sooner or later.

Fifty years from now, the generation that is currently growing up will look back to this present on www.gaaweb.nl with a hint of melancholy. The days when everything was possible. Or will they perceive it as the era when everything was supposed to be possible.

Bellamystraat 45A, 49-69, Amsterdam, 1951.

Bureau of Monuments & Archeology Collection, Amsterdam



Arnoud Holleman

WE

Arnoud Holleman wrote a text for the project Proeftuin Twente¹ in which he examines what forces are at play in the longing for a regional identity. This examination was a prelude to Proeftuin Twente, the central question of which is what the specific character of Twente is and how this can play a role in the development of a perspective on the future of the area. The text is based on conversations with a large number of people who, whether professionally or as a hobby or because of their background, are concerned with Twente culture.

1. Proeftuin Twente ('Twente experimental garden') is an initiative by the Diepenheim art association and SKOR. The concept for this project was developed by Sjoerd Cusveller (S@M) and consists of various components to which artists, writers, historians, photographers and designers contributed (see www.proeftuintwente.nl).

WE



- 1 We.
- 2 We are.
- 3 We have arrived in the era in which we ourselves live.
- 4 The definition of the word definition is: 'the description of the essence of something in one or two highly precise and succinctly formulated sentences.' That is by no means easy, and we certainly don't pretend to be able to do so. Nevertheless, there are a lot of characteristics that we find interesting and that we come up against in wondering about what might be typical of the region known as Twente. But those things aren't so much absolute as they are relative.
- 5 We live in Twente.
- 6 We have been here, century in, century out.
- 7 We lived in the kitchen, counted the money in the backroom, kept yellowed papers in the walnut cabinet and saw the familiar old landscape when we looked out through the panes of the high windows. The farmhouse stood there with its side facing the road, a brick-paved lane. No one could pass by without being observed and discussed at the dinner table. The family around the table was seated on rush-seated chairs, leaning forward slightly since the front chair legs were worn down from having been pulled over the fire-hardened tiles that for generations had been sprinkled with white scouring sand. The evenings were short, but long due to the paucity of words spoken.
- 8 We keep our coffee cups in the kitchen drawer.
- 9 Although new generations replaced the old and names and faces and ideas all changed, the farmhouse remained forever the same. Old, hunched, and curving under a protective thatched roof, with tiny windows like smiling eyes. Stacked above the recessed entrance to the barn, the *onderschoer*, were the oak boards from which the coffins for the farm's inhabitants would be made. Whoever went inside through the doors of the *onderschoer* had to bend forwards and would thus make a gesture of greeting that was deeply respected. Death was part of life. *As t oew tied is, mu j goan. Doar doo j niks an* (If it's your time, you have to go. There's nothing you can do about it). That's what life was like.
- 10 You don't need to tell us about the lamp above the table.
- 11 *Poj, poj.*
- 12 *Joa* is yes.
Joa joa is no.
Nao joa is maybe.
- 13 Following the success of the past few years, it is with great pleasure that we inform you about our midwinter-horn evenings. Together with the midwinter-horn blowers we are once again organising this enjoyable midwinter event. In the darkest weeks of winter everyone has a need for light, good cheer and tasty food. In good weather, the horn blowers will receive you on the bridge by the watermill with a glass of homebrewed firewater. Afterwards we will serve you a fixed menu of homemade farm-style pâté with candied pearl onions and raisins, leg of rabbit smothered in Trappist beer served with red cabbage and mashed potatoes, and a mousse of mocha with mocha parfait. The midwinter-horn evenings will take place on 7, 14 and 28 December at 7 p.m. The fixed menu costs 50 euros, including the aperitif.
- 14 We don't do Halloween.
- 15 We have completely decorated our café for Halloween. There are plastic rats biting each other's tails on the bar; frames with monsters creeping out are hanging on the wall; branches with dry leaves are hanging from the ceiling, and there is a toilet against the wall with a blinking lamp, a skull, snakes and a fake turd, all of which we bought at the wholesaler's. So we're all set.
- 16 In Twente there is a strong desire to make things more Twentish than they are. These days we are building more houses with a wooden *voorschot* than were ever built in the previous century. Those gable tops are made with unplanned timber, so you can still

- recognize the form of the tree. And then they are all given a coat of clear varnish, because it is oak and the neighbours need to be able to see that it is oak.
- 17 A hundred years ago, we would have scratched our heads a dozen times before we would have put clear varnish on anything, due to the maintenance involved.
- 18 We have replaced the small windows with larger ones. The outside walls have been plastered white and we have built a sauna in the vegetable garden. The sauna was finished even before our kitchen was.
- 19 The farms now lie like lepers throughout our countryside. In renovations lasting only a few weeks we have spoiled what the centuries had invested in beauty.
- 20 Yes indeed, we are an industrious people.
- 21 When we visit Münster and Ahaus, just across the border in Germany, with their intimate monumentality and harmonious town squares that rival the beauty of Bruges, we realise with regret that we no longer enjoy such admiration in Twenthe.
- 22 We have always tackled everything.
- 23 The farm where my family had lived for centuries has been torn down, and in its place, we built a Saxon-style house.
- 24 We refer to that as the 'made-old' category, where the new house looks older than the old house, raised from neo-styles. This process can also happen in regional languages or regional customs.
- 25 You have to look at it as a bit of recreation and relaxation. If the weather is okay, we hike the midwinter-horn route with friends. It is fun to see and hear all the different horns. Some are as long as one and a half metres. We walk, we listen and we watch that ancient custom. We have a drink, or once in a while someone will make split-pea soup. It takes place in traditional costumes but you shouldn't expect too much of that. The costume for men is rather cheerless. They wear a kind of cap that you would never see in Amsterdam. The women stand beside them, wearing a goffered bonnet or *knipmuts*. But they don't blow the horns.
- 26 With regard to blowing the midwinter-horn, to *vlöggelen*, to *klootschieten* and to *katknijpen*, it is only of *vlöggelen* - the annual Easter processions of eight unmarried Catholic men through the town of Ootmarsum - that we can say that it derives from a tradition that goes way back. *Klootschieten*, a game with weighted wooden balls, and *katknijpen*, where you throw sticks at a barrel containing a cat until the barrel bursts and the cat runs off in terror, as well as the blowing of the midwinter-horn, were revived by the local tourist promotion board. All three stem from the same era in which a few Shrovetide customs were transformed in Brabant into the 'age-old' Carnival. In Twente, those customs were all described in the early twentieth century by people like Elderink and Ter Kuile, writers who highly idealised Twentish life.
- 27 With all the changes that are taking place, we feel the need to record something of the past and of those things that are so characteristic of the people of this region. In doing so, we hope to preserve the memory of the old population, its customs and aristocratic simplicity. Our way of life was sober and modest, due in part to the largely infertile soil here. Great stretches of heath, on which the shepherd drove his sheep, characterise the landscape of our countryside. Perseverance, hard work, a tremendous reserve but also a steadfast loyalty were the characteristics of our population.
- 28 A hundred years ago, weaving by hand was still practiced in many farmers' homes, and in passing, one could hear the rattling of the loom in the weaving rooms. This sound has faded away, just like we no longer hear the merry sound of flails hitting the mud threshing-floor of the barns.
- 29 When we read this old stuff these days, it is unreadable. That slaver of 'Oh, oh, the elderly grandmother is sitting by the blazing hearth and the rest is out working in the fields.' In reality, it wasn't so marvellous. The stork had flat feet from overwork, but twelve of the sixteen children drowned in the well. The horrors were utterly denied.

- 30 Twenthe, our past, our soil conditions, nature and inhabitants differ significantly from the western part of the country, and from Holland in particular. Until recently, our Saxon origin and racial features had left their mark on us as a population, and they continue to do that to a lesser extent today. That is not widely understood, so visitors from outside find it somewhat difficult to project themselves into Twenthe and to adjust to us.
- 31 When did we take the h out of Twente?
- 32 We not only have a long history, we also have a long history of historical consciousness about our cultural heritage.
- 33 In dealing with history, we always find it interesting that people in Twente consider monuments to be tremendously important, as long as they are on someone else's property. On one's own property, they are merely seen as junk that's in the way. Things that are truly old are often nothing but a hindrance, but what people make themselves must be made to seem old. There are more things in Twente that seem old, but that have merely been made to look old, than there are things that are really old, and they are often considered more interesting than the truly old things. We also find this expressed in budgets. More money is invested in reconstructing things that no longer exist than in maintaining things that are still there but in danger of disappearing. More seventeenth-century mills were built in Twente in the twentieth century than had existed there in all preceding centuries combined.
- 34 We wonder what the specific character of Twente is, or what her salient features are, and how that character and those features can play a role in the development of a beckoning future perspective.
- 35 In the first place, we consider ourselves to be Twentish, and directly after that, Dutch. Twentish is the language of our feelings. When we are emotional, we immediately switch over to our dialect. We can express intimacies better in Twentish. Not only with words, but also in terms of intonation.
- 36 There are no fewer than seven variations of the word 'girl' in Twentish. If one of our children has done something wrong, we say '*deerne*', since *deerne* is negative, but if she has fallen, we say '*wieffe* come on over here', since *wieffe* is warm.
- 37 In recent years, there has been a tremendous revaluation for Twentish. It has been officially recognised as a regional dialect and practically the entire bible has already been translated into Twentish, as well as children's classics like *Jip & Janneke*, *Asterix and Obelix* and *Suske & Wiske*.
- 38 *En hier krieg wie kunnigheid an oonzn heald, den strieder Asterix, den juust gangs wil met ziene leefheberrieje: de jach.* (And here we get to know our held, the warrior Asterix, who is about to get back to his hobby: hunting.)
- 39 Our children are called Celine and Melisse.
- 40 Our Education teacher said: 'You must disguise your accent or you won't get a job'. So we began practicing standard Dutch by means of a tape recorder. We forgot that the voice is the most characteristic thing about ourselves that we have. We forgot that all of the great textile barons like the Van Heeks and the Janninks all spoke in dialect. The announcements at church were done in Twentish as well. We have forgotten all that.
- 41 There are six different ways of writing the word 'church' in our Twentish dialect: *kaark*, *kerk*, *keark*, *koarke*, *kark*, *koaike*.
- 42 Until 1200 there wasn't a single church building in our parts. Back in the days when Twente was inhabited by the Saxons, our ancestors were heathens. The spiritual realm was limited to explanations for natural phenomena like thunder and lightning, with Wodan serving as a sort of supreme deity.
- 43 The church is not doing so well in Twente these days. And yet the church is still alive. What is more: despite the slump, we are still doing considerably better than the rest of the Netherlands. And there are but few regions in the Netherlands where the menu of faiths and philosophies of life reveals so many different variations as we have in Twente.

- 44 We worked in Almelo at the Nijverdal ten Cate textile factory. We went to the Head of Personnel in those days, a Mr Slettenhaar, to ask if he could help us with the expansion of our small prayer space in our living quarters. Mr Slettenhaar was a man of action and got the company's architect involved and thus was born the idea of building a real mosque. On January 27th 1975, the Netherlands' first new Muslim house of prayer was brought into use here in Almelo.
- 45 It was in our city of Enschede that the greatest number of Jews returned after the War. More than half - in fact 53% - of its Jewish citizens survived the War. Even before the War, we already had a refugee council, because all those German Jews who came across the border needed to apply for asylum. Later, when the War broke out, there was that large Jewish Council in Amsterdam. Sieg Menko, the textile manufacturer, went there, and when he came back, he said to his wife: 'They'll never see me again. We are going to do things differently here.' We started hiding people much earlier. They had a kind of scheme. No one knew exactly what the other did, but they had a friend at the police department and he would say if a raid was about to happen. And the minister from the local church would see to it that there were addresses where people could hide. We also have one of the most beautiful synagogues in the Netherlands.
- 46 Our home is open to everyone.
- 47 We know of a minister who had helped Jews during the War but who later defended those who had been in the Dutch Nazi Party.
- 48 We were Protestant and my mother had a Catholic friend whose name we were not allowed to mention inside the house.
- 49 In Enschede, we speak of *Hengeler weend*, meaning 'hot air from Hengelo', since they are real posers over there. They are not the way they seem. They go to work in a suit, but once in the factory, they simply put on their overalls.
- 50 It's too bad for you that you came all the way from Amsterdam, but you better understand that we can't do anything for you today. You are apparently one of those people who race through grace but want piles of meat. So you better not bother us right now. Please leave immediately, just turn around.
- 51 We are distrustful of those we don't know, hardly exuberant in our behaviour, sparing with money and words and fatalistic.
- 52 We are a bit slow in thought and curt in speech, probably because of our innate character trait that we have difficulty expressing ourselves.
- 53 We are small and tawny, with big ears and a look of suspicion in our eyes.
- 54 We always say: 'Never sit in the front row, that way you won't fall off.'
- 55 We danced the *Driekusman*, the *Pierewiet*, the *Peerdesprong* and the *Haokseberger*.
- 56 We often use picturesque buildings for our wedding pictures.
- 57 We cannot avoid generalisations.
- 58 We have arrived in the era in which we ourselves live.
- 59 But our romanticizing of the past has already been going on for a hundred years, so that's something else we can call typically Twentish.
- 60 We cannot say that the goffered bonnet or *knipmuts* is typically Twentish. It was worn from Groningen all the way to Brabant. And yet the *knipmuts* has developed into the head covering most closely associated with the regional dress of Twente.
- 61 Sometimes it simply depended on the quality of the maker. There is a story of a bonnet maker who could not get the crimp flat. They all stood upright and the women said, 'We don't like it that way.' but they couldn't do anything about it since there wasn't any other bonnet maker, and so the entire village went around wearing failed bonnets.
- 62 Our jewelry could not be compared with what was worn in terms of gold, silver and lace in Zeeland and Friesland. Ours was that very thin kind of gold filigree that you could easily

pulverize in your hands. Nor did we ever have large head brooches like the Frisians wore in those fishing villages around the Zuyderzee that were so extremely wealthy, those gigantic gold things they'd even stretch their bonnets over. It has everything to do with geography and with the social circumstances that stem from that. We have sandy soil, and sandy soil is poor soil. The neighbouring region of Salland lies on the other side of the ridges and there you have the rivers, so that is already different.

- 63 These days we can tell from a woman's clothing which group she wants to belong to. In the past, we didn't have that choice. It wasn't something that people either lied about or toyed with. For half mourning, one was to wear black crêpe and black wooden beads. They weren't allowed to shine. People could tell that you were in mourning from what you were wearing. When we put on our leather bomber jackets today, we look tough, but tomorrow we will be feminine again in our sprightly heels and our cute little jacket-and-skirt combination.
- 64 In Rijssen they'd even wear the traditional costume in the factories. They used to have six or eight different aprons that women wore depending on their situation: being in deep mourning or in half mourning, being engaged, or whatever else you could think of. That had already disappeared in the rest of Twente. In those days you had a tremendous contrast between the city and the countryside. In the city things had long since disappeared that were still in use twenty kilometres up the road. That distinction arose in part because huge population groups descended at once upon the Twentish industry as a result of the high unemployment rates in the northern provinces. That was a gigantic migration of Frisians, Drentish and Groningers, and nearly all of them were Socialists. As a result, secularisation began much earlier. Enschede has always been a Labour Party city.
- 65 That the blessing of God, also in the coming period, might rest on all those who live, work and suffer in our town of Rijssen.
- 66 Working in the factory was nothing to be ashamed of. You had the eldest son, and he always inherited the farm. The rest of the children had to do something as well, so they naturally went to work in the factory. Here was money, and that meant that we could earn our money in a respectable way.
- 67 We figured that the textile industry was as solid as the Bank of England. It would never go under. We were wrong. We went on unemployment, thousands of us all at once.
- 68 We are only just now getting a Bijenkorf. For years, the department store chain had had a wait-and-see attitude, since Enschede had had insufficient purchasing power for such a luxurious store.
- 69 Just as the rise of the textile industry in the second half of the nineteenth century had had such a devastating effect on the Twentish way of life that had developed over generations, this industry itself was in shambles over a century later. Industry grew because labour was cheap in the east of the Netherlands, but it later went into decline because labour became cheaper in the Far East. In a sense, the east simply moved further east.
- 70 We were called here regularly and told: 'All the files are in the rubbish skip. If you are interested, come retrieve them now', or: 'We are getting rid of some of the looms, so if you want to have them, pick them up now, because otherwise they will be turned into scrap.' In that way, in great haste and with few guidelines, a collection came about that we are now still trying to sort out. And as soon as you include all that stuff, the objects all gain the status of a museum piece, which means you can't simply throw them away again. We have a hundred executive chairs, for example, and we need to ask ourselves if it is worth keeping all of them.
- 71 What surprises us about the emphasis on the textile industry is that it only concerns a period of a hundred and fifty years, while Twente has a four-thousand-year-old history of habitation. Its inhabitants have all left their traces behind. A good example of such traces are the *essen*. An *es* is an elevated field that originated during one of the Ice Ages, and over the course of time, an agricultural foundation grew over that geological basis. We call this the *esdek*. It not only formed the basis for how the landscape was organised, but also society, land use and land reclamation. This has been going on for four thousand

years already. In the course of those four thousand years, the textile industry is merely a burp of nothing. Other things have come and gone, but since this happens to be quite recent, it gets a lot of emphasis, while it is really nothing at all in a geological timetable. Shark teeth have been found in the ground, which indicates that Twente was once under water. The introduction of such a time scale is very interesting in terms of developing criteria for the future.

- 72 What we consider to be so beautiful about the Twentish landscape is for the most part no older than two hundred years, but in terms of all the changes that took place back then, the characteristics of the soil, high, low, water, dry, sand, clay, peat and so on, have always formed the starting point for development. You wouldn't dream of building something in a wet area. Okay, watermills maybe, but nothing else. We used low areas for meadows, while agriculture took place on the higher places. Altitude is therefore incredibly important. Earlier, no one would ever build on top of an *es*; that simply never happened. But that is different now. We couldn't care less these days.
- 73 The Usseler Es near the village of Usselo is the largest *es* in Europe. It has always been a legendary site in the history of Enschede and Twente. But it is naturally an open space. You only notice an *es* because you sometimes go down a little hill on your bicycle and sometimes have to pedal your way up. And now the municipality of Enschede is in a tight spot, since the textile barons laid out so very many country estates just outside the city, with what we call 'nature' but which is nevertheless essentially also cultivated land. As a result, Enschede is unable to expand, because things were created in its past that we now consider worth saving. The current city boundaries come up against the old country estates, and now everyone is suddenly crying: 'Nature! Don't touch it!' So obviously, if you find 'nature' on every side of Enschede and the *es* is the only open space left, the options will have to be weighed. What is considered more important in society at this moment: culture or 'nature'? The answer is then: we consider the latter to be more important. That scores higher in the Netherlands, which means the Usseler Es loses as a geological and cultural-historical element is threatened with development. While in fact the natural value of the *es* is greater than that of the cultivated nature one would rather preserve. The idea of nature is more successful than nature itself. That is a paradox we encounter more often in Twente.
- 74 All those manors of the textile barons began with a domed tea pavilion. From there, the most beautiful site was sought on which the house could be built. For the immediate vicinity of the house, a landscape architect was brought in, but for the broader area surrounding the house, it was the character of the landscape itself that served as the point of departure. The landscape was often chosen precisely because of that typically Twentish landscape. At the 'Eekhof' estate in Enschede, a line of sight was created, starting from the house, along the boundary between two medieval marks, with a stand of oaks, a wooded bank. The member of the Van Heek family who settled there saw those as typical elements of the landscape. Then he also had a patch of heath with a frog pond behind the house, and in front of the house there was a meadow, followed by a small *es* and then another meadow. And at the end of the line of sight he had the farm 'De Broeierd', which has now become a large restaurant where we recently had a delicious meal. So those textile barons had a clear idea of what Twente was, of what was characteristic of the Twentish culture, and they looked for sites where they could bring all those elements together and cultivate them. They also outfitted the museums. The museum Natura Docet in Denekamp is about the history of land reclamation in Twente and was paid for by a Van Heek. Just like the Rijksmuseum Twenthe in Enschede, which not surprisingly happens to have a *los hoes* in its collection, an old style farmhouse in which the farmers lived together with their cattle. Van Heek bought a *los hoes* in Losser and had it removed to the grounds of the museum. In other words, so much of what the Twentish now claim to be emphatically Twentish culture was therefore constructed in such a way with money and ideas from the textile barons. They brought about enormous changes, but also had a keen eye for what their industry was destroying. They played a decisive role in the historiography and that is how it has always been. Historiographers like Dingeldein who recorded the history of Twente were largely paid to do so by the textile men. If you have the money, you can write history however you want.

- 75 We often go on excursions to the Escher industry park in the Ruhrgebiet. It is a good example of an economically motivated project in an attempt to bring employment and new sectors to the area after the steel industry had disappeared. For ten years, it has been quite an intensive project for attracting new economic motors, like the ICT and service sectors, but also solar energy, and they are primarily located in those old, industrial buildings. The starting point was the reuse of old complexes. And in Twente, most of the industrial buildings were demolished before their unique features and qualities could be appreciated.
- 76 There are two reasons why we have a relatively large number of new buildings in the city centres. First, there was the demolition fever that swept through the entire Netherlands in the 1960s, and secondly, we were bombed quite heavily a couple of times during the War when the Allies thought they were already flying over Germany.
- 77 In Rijssen, we have advocated the preservation of the Ter Horst jute factories. They used to make burlap sacks, and the tragedy was that they continued to do that even when it was already being done cheaper in the Philippines. There was no chance of even discussing the possibility of keeping that building standing or striving for a new use for it. They demolished what was a beautiful factory with skylights and cast iron columns and built in its place an Albert Heijn supermarket, a market hall with the same amount of space as the hall they had just demolished, but then without the skylights. Supermarkets don't need skylights; they simply install fluorescent lighting. If Albert Heijn had reused that old factory, they would have had a covered car park to boot, for free. That's the way we think about it now, but in those days we were crying in the wilderness.
- 78 The collapse of the textile industry left us with massive unemployment for years. The University of Twente was established, but while that provided work for the highly qualified, it meant little for the average unemployed Twentish person. This, along with the problem of unoccupied homes and the government-funded schemes to purchase the old factory buildings, led to the city of Enschede's being given the so-called Article 12 status in the 1970s, which meant in effect that it had become bankrupt.
- 79 We recently had a lady here from Groningen with a thick accent asking: 'Is this where the firework factory blew up?' We told her: 'No, this is urban renewal.' No one has ever really spent any time thinking about the construction of new buildings. It's always done for the short term: new construction, demolition, new construction, demolition. It's one gigantic mess.
- 80 Time and again we have aldermen who use Enschede as a springboard for positions in the western part of the country. We are just a nice, large municipality that serves as preparation for the real thing in Amsterdam or Utrecht or for a bench in parliament in The Hague.
- 81 In hindsight, we haven't done badly. Twente has been quite resilient. Most of us have found work elsewhere and we made a rapid transition to the service industry, the transport sector and new technologies.
- 82 We are an example of how the social structure of the world is radically changing as a result of the possibilities that information technology offers. An important consequence of this advance is the formation of an economy on a global scale, that is constantly grazing the world bare in search of new opportunities for production and consumption - an economy in which flexible chains of companies and institutions continually change. The links in the chain complement each other, farm out work to each other and, are quick to take leave of each other once again. It is an arrangement in which everything can be made, anywhere in the world.
- 83 Those smaller and flexible companies are now very practical. If we consider the major developments taking place in the world, our textile industry collapsed at the right moment. In the network society, it would have been a millstone around our collective neck.
- 84 In the network economy, old regional connections are losing ground to lucrative international alliances. It is a system that has little respect for national boundaries, reputations and traditions and that has a deep impact on the daily life of people. We have

a large group of followers of Manuel Castells at the University of Twente. He's the one who said: 'In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity - collective or individual, ascribed or constructed - becomes the fundamental source of social meaning. It's an irony of how globalized flows on the one hand lead to a redefinition, a reassertion of identity in localities.'

- 85 We are used to living with a continuous ambivalence about our identity.
- 86 It seems historically inevitable that we will leave behind the nostalgic notion of a site and identity as essentially bound to the physical actualities of a place. Such a notion, if not ideologically suspect, is at least out of sync with the prevalent description of contemporary life as a network of unanchored flows.
- 87 We are aware that every view about the past and the cultural identity that goes with it are representations that are not made to recreate the past in all accuracy, but as an image to function in the age that we call our own. They are representations, like allegories, for the much more complex and obscure whole that passes by with time.
- 88 We refer to this kind of pamphlet as 'growing documents'.
- 89 We assume that we are composed of twenty, thirty, forty identities, among which we can switch as often as we like. So why shouldn't we take on a Twentish identity? And you don't need to be from Twente to do that. Van Deirse was from the province of Zeeland, but he still wrote the Twentish anthem.
- 90 *There's a land between the Dinkel and the Regge
Our beautiful and industrious Twente
The land of labour, the land of nature
The ever-unsurpassed Twente
Where gold-yellow grain waves atop the essen
Where the fast rushing brook spins the mill's grinding wheel
Where stretches of heath are cloaked in purple
That is our Twente so dear (2x)*
- 91 If you come here to the suburbs of Enschede around the Christmas season, you will hear the midwinter-horns everywhere around you, loads of them, but if we ask our parents about it, they just shake their heads and say, 'Those weren't around in our days'.
- 92 *The pall of smoke rising on the horizon
Leads us to the hard-working cities
Inhabited by diligent and reliable people
The centres of our vigorous present
And outside in farmland on heath and in field
Where legends and folktales are still being told
Where the ancient Tubanter lies in his hilly grave
The past beside the present of Twente (2x)*
- 93 In Rotterdam the hooligans sing:
Feyenoord is our glory! Feyenoord is our club!
Feyenoord is our glory! Feyenoord is our club, yeah, yeah, yeah!
And on New Year's Eve, there's no party in Twente
They don't have any fireworks because they all blew up!
- 94 Feyenoord is our glory! Feyenoord is our club!
Feyenoord is our glory! Feyenoord is our club, yeah, yeah, yeah!
Deutschland! Deutschland! Twente is part of it!
Twente is part of it! Twente is part of it!
- 95 We wrote a letter to Ajax to apply for a position on the team, saying that we can't play football in Twente either, but that we are willing to do it for half the money.
- 96 If we feel like sitting in a car for two hours, we'd rather drive to Cologne than to Amsterdam.
- 97 If we want to know how it used to be in Twente, we should walk around in the county of Bentheim, just across the German border.

- 98 Here in Twente, we designate the German border area with the words '*achter 'n paol*' (behind the marker).
- 99 We go for hikes here in the area and cross over the German border without even noticing it. We have *Kaffee mit Strudel*, talk in the same dialect and then go back home. Twentish family names are found as far away as the other side of Münster. Hotel rooms have maps of the 'Euregio'. A former railway was just rebuilt, so as from two weeks ago, there is once again a train that goes from Enschede to Gronau.
- 100 Obviously we have Twente Airport here, but they only fly to Faro, Barcelona, Heraklion, Las Palmas, Lourdes and Palma de Mallorca and not to Ibiza. But in Münster, we also have an airport that does have flights to Ibiza. We access the motorway here via Oldenzaal and can drive there in half an hour. It is a really lovely airport and you can check in a day in advance and you can still smoke on board the plane.
- 101 We also think German stewardesses are much nicer.
- 102 Following the firework disaster in Enschede, we received more money from Germany than from the neighbouring cities of Hengelo or Almelo. In the German cities of Gronau and Ahaus, the aid was tremendous. One D-mark of the price of every bread sold went to the Enschede disaster relief fund. And there were little boxes for donations of coins everywhere. The German fire brigade was at the scene even before the relief forces from Zwolle.
- 103 We were subject to the bishop of Münster. It was only after the Napoleonic era, because we were required to pay import duties, that Twente started trading with the western part of the Netherlands. The two world wars and the animosity towards Germany afterwards disrupted the earlier situation. But now it is coming back. National boundaries don't really count any more. The restoration of the regional relations between Twente and the German *hinterland* is much more authentic than all the midwinter-horn blowing and *klootschieten* combined.
- 104 If we work together with Amsterdammers and we meet in Amsterdam, then we begin at nine o'clock in the morning. It means we have to get up very early, but we simply do. But if we agree to meet here, it will be at ten o'clock at the earliest. The distance from Amsterdam to Twente is apparently much further than from Twente to Amsterdam. If they think that everything behind the IJssel river is sealed off with newspapers, then let them think so. We are happy with things the way they are.
- 105 God created from golden ears of grain the folks from Drenthe en Twente and from the chaff and the rest, the people from the West!
- 106 God created from golden ears of grain the people of Twente and from the rubbish and the rest, the people from the West!
- 107 From the wheat and the golden ears God created the folks from Twente.
From the chaff and the rest, He threw together the people from the West!
- 108 The Wise Men came from the East and from the rest God created the people from the West!
- 109 And then we walk with them through the Amsterdam Forest and they say: 'Gee, isn't it beautiful?' while half of Amsterdam is out there going for a walk, with jumbo jets flying overhead and three motorways roaring beside you. Then we think: 'If only it was less pretty but quiet.'
- 110 We just want peace and quiet.
- 111 Folklorisation is part of progress. No one can survive as an unguided missile or a buoy adrift. And if nothing is certain, we will just have to find that out for ourselves.
- 112 We don't need to show a midwinter-horn, a wooden roof ornament, or a weaver's shuttle any more in order to make the contemporary Twentish identity visible. When walking around this kind of exhibition, we want to be able to see things that make us say: 'Hey, we've never looked at it that way.' How about the producers of chicory in Borne, for example. Make sure that there's a chicory mill, because everybody has forgotten those. There are so many things that have to be included.

- 113 In the old days, history and an interest for your roots were things for old, pipe-smoking men who were waiting to die, but that is no longer the case. We have a young visitor here, about twenty years old, who is an ardent genealogist.
- 114 We have a suitcase with a number of objects, in case educational institutions invite us to come visit. It includes some clothing, some prints, some documentation - a bit of everything.
- 115 We think our schools need to look at our own environment, as that would enrich the teaching material more than you can imagine. By placing abstract ideas in a concrete environment, you arouse curiosity. If you hear in history class that people were burned at the stake for their beliefs and we mention explicitly that two such women were burned to death in Delden, this will immediately produce a clearer image in your mind.
- 116 Nowhere in the Netherlands did people put symbols on just about everything they could get their hands on as much as we did here in Twente. The incorporation of Christian symbols in waffle irons, for example. You could tell from the waffles whether the owner was Catholic or Protestant.
- 117 We saw a fashion show last week put on by young students with clothing they made from the fabrics and with the techniques of yesteryear.
- 118 In fact, we have only just begun to put ourselves on the map.
- 119 No doubt, people in Twente have also been bitten by the separatist bug, though not exactly like the people in the Balkan or in Catalunya. For the Twentish people, 'Zwolle' refers to the provincial political government, which is located outside of the region of Twente. This has always been a little painful. 'Zwolle' can mean the province of Overijssel, but also the departments of the Environment, or Spatial Planning, or Culture. That is all 'Zwolle'. But it could also refer to the inspector in charge of enforcing the regulations regarding the external appearance of buildings, who has nothing to do with the provincial government and could just as easily have been based in Enschede or Hengelo. Everything is summed up in an oft-heard reaction: 'Zwolle doesn't approve, as usual.'
- 120 We've had two political operations in the past fifteen years aimed at turning Twente into an independent province. This has to do with the idea that Twente is an entity of its own and that therefore wants to manage its own affairs rather than being dependent on Zwolle. The funny thing is that a large number of the members of provincial parliament come from Twente. The real deals concerning the province are made in the train, somewhere between Enschede and Zwolle. They all travel first class and that is where they informally concoct their plans.
- 121 In general, the split between the Protestants and the Catholics means that on the left-hand side of Overijssel the government is appointed by God to reign over you, which means you obey the government. On the right-hand side, especially in Twente, the government is seen as something to evade. We also see that in the way people treat monuments. In Twente, it costs approximately two thousand guilders each year for every monument. That is the money we have to give the building's owner to cover maintenance costs. In Genemuiden, near Zwolle, the same kind of monument costs us one hundred and fifty guilders. They feel honoured that the government wants to consider their house as a monument and they will declare the cost of a can of paint for the maintenance that they do themselves, while the average homeowner in Twente will hire a painter with the idea that the government is going to pay after all, so why not?
- 122 We dial a number but usually we are not among the first hundred candidates. You have to be one of the first five in order to have any chance at a house. And if you get one, it doesn't matter so much whether you take a room for 850 or 1250 guilders, since we get so much rent subsidy for the expensive house that it costs just as much as the cheaper one.
- 123 We have been together for one year now, so we organized a dinner so that our parents could meet each other. It turns out they already knew each other from poaching. My grandfather did that too, and he even went to jail for it. He had snared roe deer. Those animals don't die an easy death.

- 124 Our dear lord knows everything, but not what we put in our *Mettwurst*.
- 125 We had a freezer that was no less than three and a half or four meters wide.
- 126 My uncle has a piece of land, fifty by one hundred and fifty meters, where the whole family plants potatoes. We ourselves have one row, one hundred and fifty meters long, because we are just the two of us, but my cousin has three children and they have three rows. That way, you'll have potatoes for the entire winter by September. And when you grub them up, you will often come across pieces of flint or potshards. Potatoes that we get from our own gardens have a better taste than the anonymous potatoes from the supermarket.
- 127 The problem is: my girlfriend isn't religious. That can be a problem later too, if we decide to have children. Not that my children necessarily have to be baptised, but religious schools really are qualitatively better than public schools.
- 128 We are against the fact that people are always serving *krentewegge* these days, while this local raisin bread was traditionally meant for special occasions.
- 129 For us, serving *krentewegge* is an age-old tradition, especially in the event of a firstborn child. The entire neighbourhood is involved. Rhyming poems are composed for the new mother, the new father and their newborn *borelingske*. On the appointed day and time, the men pick up the bread at the baker. The loaves are often so large that they need to be carried on a ladder. A little cask of brandy often hangs from the back-end, which is meant for the midwife or *wieze moer* so that she can wash the *borelingske* with it, according to ancient tradition, though she often drinks the liquor herself. The bread, which includes all kinds of herbs like caraway and anise that are known to ward off spirits, prevents bewitchment. When we arrive at the *kroamhoes*, where the *borelingske* was born, the proud new father lifts his *borelingske* high. In doing so, he acknowledges the child before our eyes as his own, and we accept the child into the intimate circle of the *noaberschap*, the tight traditional network of immediate neighbours.
- 130 Our home is part of a new development built in the late 1960s. Although we are the original inhabitants, in all those 40 years we have never been accepted into the *noaberschap* of farms across the road. We do have a fair amount of contact with the widow who lives on the farm just across the road to the left, but that is because we also speak Twentish ourselves, and she speaks Dutch poorly. When she recently had problems in her family, she told us: 'I only told the first *noabers* about it, but I'll tell you two as well. The rest don't need to know about it.'
- 131 This past summer there was the funeral of a very old farmer who was buried in Usselo and the *noabers* carried the coffin. The *noabers* stood in a half circle alongside the coffin behind the grave. The minister said a few words, and those who wanted to could walk past the coffin. First his widow did so, then his children. We were among the last to leave the graveyard, and when we looked back, we saw the *noabers* still standing there, their caps in their hands. They may have said nothing, but they had lived there for generations, and the man was put to rest in the place in which he had lived and where he had shared love, suffering and struggle, and to the very last, the *noabers* surrounded him. Even the family had left the site by then; the widow was already having coffee and cake.
- 132 Naturally, babies were not bathed in brandy. When their teeth and molars appeared, we gave them a wad of cotton wool soaked in brandy.
- 133 Old cookbooks from this region have no recipes with chicken or eggs. That was trade; we didn't eat them. 'If a farmer kills a hen, either his wife or the hen is sick'. A chicken was only killed when it had a thousand hours of flying time. It would be too old and too tough to sell.
- 134 Our smoked sausage is as snug as a bug in the rug.
- 135 *Bedientjes*? That is something we have never come across in all those years we have been interested in regional dishes.
- 136 We were buying cream slices in the centre of town when panic suddenly broke out because the ceiling modules came down. We drove home and put the cream slices in the

refrigerator before we went back to have a look. The whole neighbourhood Roombeek had been wiped off the map. There were lots of people with birdcages or house pets or household items and bloody faces. Some of them were being laid out in the park. The worst thing we saw was an ambulance that rode over the foot of a young girl with its siren blaring.

- 137 If the firework disaster would have occurred on this side of the museum, we could have demolished the 'new' wing and build a brand new one.
- 138 There are hardly any items left in this museum that were produced in this region. In 1994, we were able to buy an early painting by Mondriaan, a Twentish landscape. We don't know where Mondriaan painted this farm. The matter was researched, but the location was never found.
- 139 Whatever was considered to be of value was put in the museum, which was to house not only the Van Heek art collection but also what was then still known as the Oudheidkamer Twente, the local chamber of antiquities. In those days, no distinction was made between art and folk art. We do make that distinction now.
- 140 No art of any real calibre has ever been produced here, in contrast to cities like Dordrecht or Delft, which have a rich painter's tradition. We have nothing of a tradition to follow up. Whatever we have comes from somewhere else. That has been the case for as long as the museum exists, and since we have never been regional in terms of our collection or our points of departure, there was an increasing incompatibility with the Oudheidkamer Twente. One could see that as a deficiency, and we sometimes do, but in fact we shared nothing in common.
- 141 What good to us is an artist who throws mud from a river in France against our walls here? What relation does that have with our lives?
- 142 The Oudheidkamer Twente moved out of Rijksmuseum Twenthe in 1991 and merged with the Twente Akademie to form the Van Deinse Instituut. We regret that it no longer has an exhibition space of its own. Of course they deserve such a place, but not with us. Now there are plans for merging the Van Deinse Instituut with the Jannink Museum and the Natuurmuseum. The new museum would be called Environ. Environ should be a strongly regionally oriented museum in which cultural history and geological history are presented in one museum. The only problem is that the plans are just collecting dust in a bureaucrat's desk in The Hague.
- 143 If there is prosperity, people have time and money to consider the cultural past. If prosperity is lacking, people will lose interest. Three or four years ago, the then Minister of State for Culture, Rick van der Ploeg, proposed all kinds of measures to give people more access to culture. Now that it is not going well, these are the first things to go. Jobs disappear, working hours are being reduced, etc. The reasons are no more profound than these. Prosperity is money and money is attention for the preservation of the past. Only when rich do we have time for Twente.
- 144 The feeling that we are there for each other is very strong in Twente. We forgot to mention that.

© Arnoud Holleman, 2004

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Back to Fiction

A Letter from Barbara Visser

In the 1970s and '80s, the then PTT (the Dutch Post Office, now TPG) established 12 major distribution hubs (known by the Dutch acronym EKP) close to railway stations. Together they form a network covering the whole of the Netherlands, the 'Sternet' ('Star Network'). Just a decade later, these hubs are already obsolete, thanks to changing insights and changing postal systems. They stand vacant, are threatened with demolition, or are being put to temporary uses, such as accommodation for the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. It seems like their destiny has primarily been

decided by economic considerations. Artists and architects were commissioned by the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI) and the Foundation for Art in Public Space (SKOR) to develop a vision for the buildings and the network, to consider the cultural value of the Sternet, and to think more generally about whether or not to conserve this young cultural heritage.¹ Barbara Visser was one member of this group. She wrote a letter to the artists and architects who were involved in designing the EKPs (Sternet) and creating the accompanying art projects, asking them to reconsider their designs or work of art based on what they know now.

1. The other artists were Sean Snyder and Gerard Holthuis. The participating architecture bureaus were United Architect, One Architecture and SeArch. The results were on display until 3 October, 2004, at the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam, and were also published in *de Architect*, no. 8, 2004.

Barbara Visser

Dear Mr/Ms X,
Street, house number
Postcode, Place

And in future

Amsterdam, 14 April 2004

Dear Mr/Ms X,

This letter contains an annual report.

For a research project and an exhibition about the 'Stroom' ('Star Network') built by the then PTT (the Dutch Post Office, now TK) that is being organized by the Netherlands Architecture Institute in association with the Foundation for Art in Public Space (NOOR), I and a number of fellow artists and architects were invited to cast some light on the present state and possible future for these combined writing offices and distribution hubs (EKP), which the PTT had built close by 12 railway stations in the Netherlands from the 1950's on. As you may be aware, these buildings are now partly vacated, thanks to intensive conversion; a new use has been found for them – no simple task because of their highly specific designs. The works of art attached to the buildings are an important feature. I am writing this letter to you because of your involvement with the EKP in X.

We were asked to consider the Stroom as a whole and the EKP buildings individually, and to draw up a report in the form of a work of art.

The first thing that sprung to mind for me was what it means to reflect on something created so recently that insufficient time has passed to be able to place it, never mind judge it.

The parts of the Stroom have not yet found to be useful, and I therefore sense the desire to accelerate that process somewhat in the organization of the *Stroom Gebruiksaanpak* ('The Star Network Transformation', working title).

As an artist I can permit myself the liberty of a subjective approach, but the subject is and remains totally concrete, no matter how I look at it. A much more important reason for my reluctance to publicly sharing my 'views' about the Stroom is the fact that you – and many of the other artists and architects – are still alive. This means that a statement from me about the quality, the functionality and the future of the EKP's would not only be presumptuous, but probably even insulting.

Since the artists involved in this project have considerable freedom in how they approach this material, I have taken the liberty of allowing the facts to speak for themselves – a series of buildings with a highly specific architecture that have partially fallen into disuse, occupying works of art which are various in nature and quality – and to concentrate on a different point in time.

Barbara Vissering 11-18
1071 ZJ Amsterdam
barbarav



I wish to focus on the period when that building and work of art existed only in the minds of the creators: the time when the idea was still changing daily and you perhaps had visions of radically new forms, the time when negotiations and a sense of reality, enthusiasm and loss, inspiration and outright depression alternated in rapid succession.

Imagine: what would it be like to go from the concrete to the visionary instead of vice versa. I want to give the participants and the artworks they contain a new role, and in so doing to focus on what I personally consider the most interesting and most beautiful stage: the research and design phase. This phase also encompasses an important aspect of the Network, namely the Utopian vision that inspired it: grandiose yet simultaneously almost naive in the way it focused on an imagined future.

My request is this:

If you were given the chance to change, improve, completely rethink, eradicate or add something to what you created for this EKP, then what would that be? Would you kindly explain how and why in text and/or image?

Since we are dealing with the imaginary, the budget, the volume and gravity play no role: you can propose ANYTHING. You are also welcome to submit your original ideas, designs and any inquiries relating to Network, even if they were not realized because they were too unusual, too ugly, too impractical or too costly.

I am emphatically asking that you and the other architects and artists do not look back, but that you look ahead, starting from that original point in time but with the knowledge that you have today, and to present this with the means that are available to you now.

Nobody likes to admit that they want to alter something in a design which was obviously destined to endure for a very long time. Nevertheless, I think it is a legitimate question here in view of the somewhat embarrassing situation around these buildings and artworks. It is a question that might present an opening for a new lease of life for an artwork or building that has perhaps already been written off, a question that looks forward to a future into which we have in fact already stepped, an era when artworks no longer consist of 11 massive and immovable millstones, but of structures which are transformable, virtual and flexible. That sounds fashionable, and it is. Whether we like it or not, we have arrived in the era when the insurmountable chains shall no longer arrive via the kitchen but via the Internet, and just as pervasively as before.

I sincerely hope that you will want to participate in the exhibition around this topic. We intend to display the contributions during the exhibition *Art Space Göttingenland* ('The New Network Transformation', working title, from June 18 to October 3 at the NAI in Rotterdam).

I very much look forward to receiving your contribution.

Yours sincerely,

Partners

Ydessa Hendeles's Holocaust Memorial

In last year's exhibition 'Partners' at the Haus der Kunst in Munich the Canadian curator and collector Ydessa Hendeles broke the tacit laws of Holocaust memorials.

Grouping objects of different natures and placing them in a single context, created all manner of fascinating cross-connections among the objects and with the building, laden by the Nazi past.

**THE RESPONSE OF AN OBJECT TO
CONTACT SUFFICIENT TO LEAD TO
A CHANGE IN INHERENT QUALITY
(VIS INERTIAE)**

**LA RÉACTION D'UN OBJET AU
CONTACT SUFFISANT À ENTRAINER
UN CHANGEMENT DE QUALITÉ
INHÉRENTE (VIS INERTIAE)¹**

1. Lawrence Weiner, Cat. #471, 1980, in the exhibition 'Partners'.

What do international contemporary art, popular and historical icons, press photographs, family snapshots, teddy bears and other antique toys have in common? They are collected and presented in continually new configurations in exhibitions by Ydessa Hendeles. Last November the exhibition 'Partners'² opened with a selection from the collection at the Haus der Kunst in Munich, which has recently come under Chris Dercon's directorship.

2. Ydessa Hendeles, 'Partners', Haus der Kunst, Munich, 7 November 2003-15 February 2004, exhibition catalogue published by Walther König, Cologne.

Hendeles, an internationally renowned Canadian collector and curator, was born in 1948 in Marburg, the only child of two Jewish concentration-camp survivors. In 1950 the family moved to Toronto, where Hendeles ran a gallery from 1980 to 1989 and introduced artists like Jeff Wall, Jana Sterbak and Ken Lum. In 1988 she opened her Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation with the installation *Canada* by Christian Boltanski: 6000 second-hand pieces of clothing, covering the walls of the room in the former uniform factory.

Amid the modest hype in war exhibitions in the last two years, 'Partners' is a breath of fresh air. In contrast to, for instance, 'No one ever dies there, no one has a head' in Dortmund in 2002 and 'Mars. Kunst und Krieg' in Graz in 2003, 'Partners' is not literally about war or its representation in the media and the arts, but rather alludes to it in an indirect and subtle way. Hendeles violates the moral laws that have applied since Auschwitz on the representation of the Holocaust: she does not limit herself to collecting, organizing and testifying; she presents all the parts within a narrative structure, with its own, namely Hendeles's own, logic.³

3. See in the catalogue Ernst van Alphen, 'Exhibition as Narrative Work of Art', pp. 166-186, and by the same author, *Schaduw en spel. Herbeleving, historisering en verbeelding van de Holocaust*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2004.

The location itself has a startling history, when you realize that the name Haus der Kunst ('House of Art') included the adjective 'Deutschen' ('German') until 1949. The museum, built at Hitler's orders, opened on 18 July 1937 with the Nazi-sanctioned 'Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung' ('Great German Art Exhibition'), one day before the opening of the 'Entartete Kunst' ('Degenerate Art') exhibition elsewhere in the city. An ideal location for Hendeles, who had a number of later additions to the architecture removed for the exhibition, so that the building was once more visible in its laden but original form.

The exhibition is divided into three passages, which compel the visitor to walk past the works in a specific order and sometimes to turn back. A small self-portrait of the Jewish-American photographer Diane Arbus from February 1945 opens the show, flanked by a unique studio portrait of the famous Wild Bunch gang, including Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. The third opening object is an antique toy, *Minnie Mouse Carrying Felix in Cages*, circa 1926-1936. From there Hendeles leads the visitor to her own project, *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)*, a collection of 3,000 photographs of all imaginable and unimaginable scenes of people with teddy bears: pin-ups, soldiers, children in sailor suits, sports figures, film stars, families.⁴ All sorted according to the classical art-history method of teddy-bear iconography. Absurd and hilarious, were it not for two dissonant notes: a cuddly sleeping dog by Maurizio Cattelan, which turns out to be stuffed, and several stories of Jewish children whose teddy bears were taken away when they were deported. After the suddenly oppressive quantity of cheerful pictures of teddy bears, the visitor enters an empty room, in which a little boy, seen from behind, kneels in front of a bare wall, also a work by Maurizio Cattelan. It's a great shock to find that the little boy's face is that of Hitler. The first passage ends here; the visitor must turn back and look at all he has just seen with new eyes.

4. A selection of 1,500 teddy-bear photos from the collection is included in the three-part publication Hendeles – *The Teddy Bear Project*, Walther König, Cologne 2004.

Cross-connections

In 'Partners', Hendeles applies the rhetorical figure of the synecdoche: using a part to represent the whole and using the whole to represent a part. The portrait of Arbus, for example, refers, in its subject and its date, to the fate of the Jews of Europe, and the studio portrait of the Wild Bunch to the ambiguity of popular icons, but also to the power of images.⁵ The teddy bear, initially a symbol of comfort and protection, loses its innocence after seeing Hitler, a comforter and protector for a large portion of the German people, after all, and turns once more into the dangerous beast it originally was. Minnie was, along with her partner Mickey Mouse, not only a popular icon in America, but also in Germany, until Hitler outlawed their images. She bears a catalogue number on her cheek – it's a quick leap to the tattooed numbers on the arms of Hendeles's parents and other Auschwitz survivors, as well as to Art Spiegelman's comic-strip version of the Holocaust, *Maus*, in which cats were Nazis and mice Jews. Except that the mouse now holds the cat prisoner, in an analogy to Hendeles who holds the Germans 'prisoner', or a Jew a Nazi. In the accompanying catalogue the endless cross-connections among the works and the world beyond are identified at length, sometimes even to the point of fatigue, by various authors, including Ernst van Alphen, Carol Squiers and Hendeles herself. But Hendeles's faith in the power of imagination, which can bring these lifeless objects within a greater narrative, shines through the exhibition. It is not the naïve faith of a reclusive collector, but the stinging, confrontational and keen faith of a provocateur.

5. The portrait stripped the Wild Bunch of their anonymity and led to the eventual capture and death of the gang members.

Maurizio Cattelan, Him, 2001.

Photo Robert Keziere



Ydessa Hendeles, Partners (The Teddy Bear Project), 2002.
Installation at the Haus der Kunst, Munich.
Photo Robert Keziere



Typical of Hendeles's way of collecting and thinking is the inclusion in 'Partners' of the world-famous photograph by Eddy Adams of the execution of a Viet Cong suspect. The impact of this one photo on public opinion was enormous: for the first time the American people saw on every newspaper's front page the cold-blooded murder of an apparently innocent victim by the South Vietnamese general Loan, a great friend of the Americans. The public was shocked; until that moment people had steadfastly believed that only the enemy committed atrocities. The fact that afterwards the suspect did turn out to be guilty of murdering a family, that the 'spontaneous' execution was a staged event for a group of photographers and journalists, that Adams himself later regretted having ever taken the photograph, because he had not foreseen its effect and had not wanted it,⁶ no longer mattered. The photograph ultimately turned the tide of the war and this gave it mythical proportions.

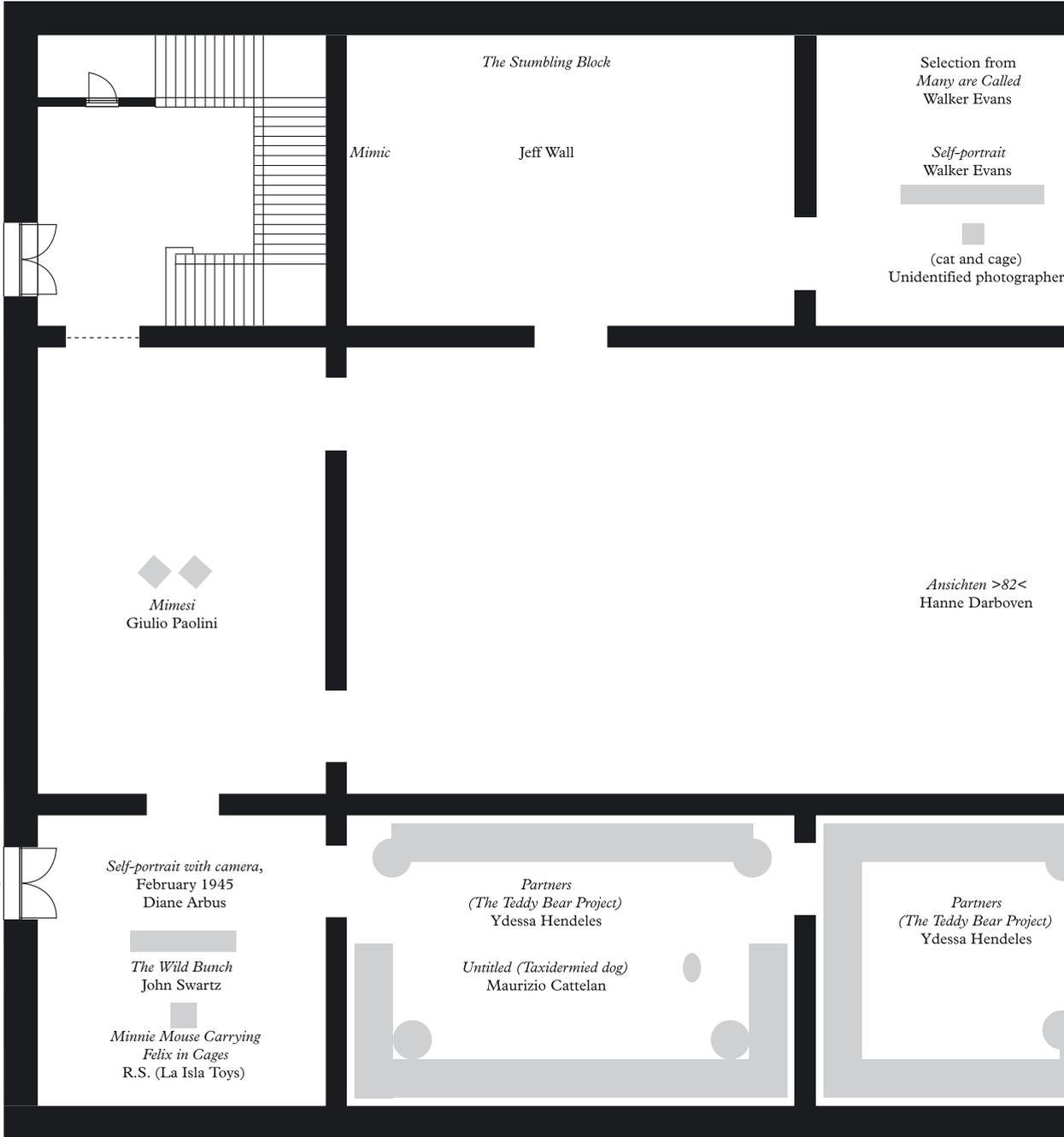
6. General Loan's life was devastated as a result, as he was reviled both in Vietnam and in America. And this for something that, in Adams's words, was only unusual because it was photographed. A comparison with the photos from Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq is obvious.

What makes 'Partners' so special is that Hendeles does not simply show this icon, but, quite essentially, the photos that came before and after it as well. They restore a context to the photo, allow the viewer to 'fill in' the now empty icon with a new meaning and to re-experience the horror of the execution as the series unfolds. And however shocking this may be, Hendeles places the responsibility for interpreting, for being able to interpret pictures once more on the viewer. No ready-made bite-size pieces, no short-lived spectacle, Think, make connections, strip icons bare, think, assign new content, experience and think again.

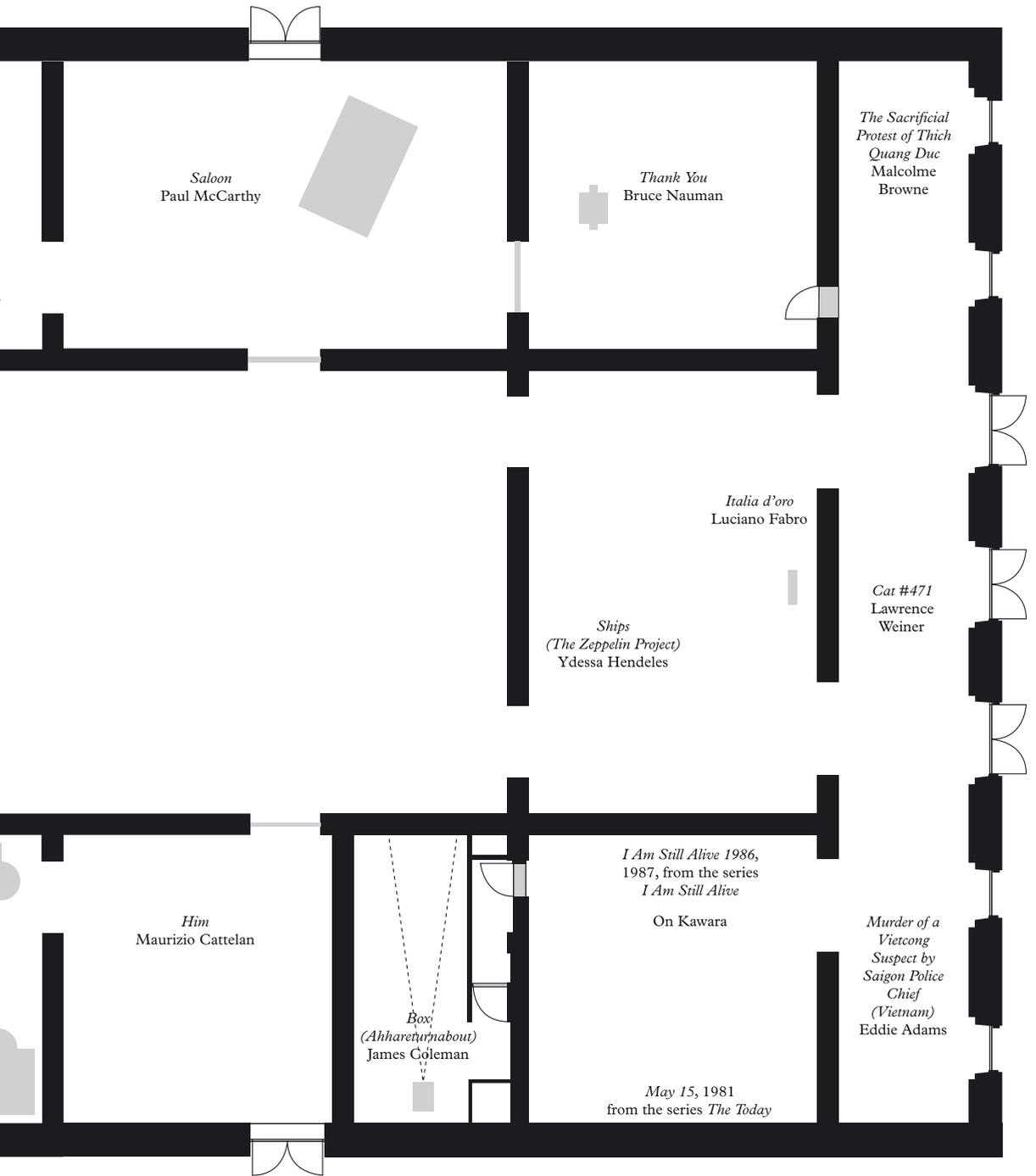
And along with Bruce Nauman you shout furiously at Hendeles: Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

7. The title of a 1992 work by Bruce Nauman, given by the artist to Hendeles and included in an adapted form as the exhibition's closing piece.

Floor plan of the exhibition 'Partners' at the Haus der Kunst in Munich.



1m 5m 10m



Memorial Strategies in a Multicultural
Society

Two recent initiatives are illustrative of the desire to make the Dutch commemoration of the Second World War fit into the frame of reference of immigrants to the Netherlands. Demographic changes and the importance of this war to our national identity make a course change imperative. An exchange of perspectives in the commemoration culture goes hand in hand with social integration and education.

Imagine what a marvellous mental archive we would have at our disposal, if we could have installed a mindreader in the monument on the Dam from the very first wreath-laying on 4 May 1956, that would have registered all the thoughts, memories and associations of passers-by in the last 50 years. It would be the ideal source to study the impact of demographic changes on the culture of commemoration.

In the Netherlands, the culture of commemoration has always been inextricably linked to our own recent 'honourable' war: the Second World War. But because the number of people with authentic war experiences decreases every year and the percentage of Dutch citizens with a different cultural background is increasing, the national commemoration ceremony has acquired an increasingly stage-managed character. This stage-management is necessary because the commemoration of the Second World War not only has value for the people involved but is also supposed to serve as a moral lesson for society as a whole. The war is a terrifying example of what can happen when people abandon vigilance toward racism and intolerance. In its efforts to involve younger generations in the remembrances of 4 and 5 May, the political establishment has in fact repeatedly made the connection between remembering the war, particularly the persecution of the Jews, and the importance of solidarity with victims of persecution and repression. The monument is now officially dedicated to 'all armed conflicts and peacekeeping missions in which people have been killed'.

This marketing strategy creates problems, however, when it comes to New Dutch with a Muslim background. The second and third generation, especially, have not only grown up with Anne Frank but also with the Intifada. They rightly wonder how it is possible to remember the fate of the Jews without relating it to the situation of the Palestinians. The relative socio-economic lag of this group of immigrants, the anti-Islam atmosphere following 11 September and the great ignorance about the German occupation of the Netherlands have also contributed to a total lack of understanding for the Dutch fixation on the period 1940-1945. In its most crude form, this was expressed in disturbances at 4 May commemoration ceremonies in Amsterdam.

The ominous escalation of anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism has created a great stir. City councils, mosques, schools and immigrant organizations have come up with many initiatives in the past year to bridge the gap in the culture of commemoration between immigrants and native Dutch people.

Immigrants and the war

A bright green booklet with Arabic-like lettering has recently been circulated among Moroccan youngsters, entitled *MO 40/45 – Marokkaanse soldaten in de 2e Wereldoorlog* ('MO 40/45 – Moroccan soldiers in the 2nd World War'). This visually attractive and accessible publication reveals how Moroccan soldiers tried in vain to defend the Zeeland town of Kapelle in 1940, outnumbered by the Germans. They were part of

the French army, which was stationed in northern France and Belgium in 1939 in preparation for a German invasion. It turns out we have one of the most painful aspects of Dutch history, the humiliating defeat against the German invasion in 1940, in common with a Moroccan military unit. A mass grave was discovered in Kapelle, containing 63 Moroccans, of whom 19 were identified and buried in the local French military cemetery. There are 19 grave markers in the shape of a mosque, alongside Jewish markers in the shape of a Star of David and Christian markers in the form of a cross. This arrangement is symbolic for the equalizing effect of the army and of death. But it is also a powerfully evocative image for people who are in search of anchors for their identity. In fact the history of the commemoration of these soldiers is a striking demonstration of how personal mourning demonstrated by people directly involved gradually develops into symbolic grief as a means of identification for an entire group. Until 1985 the site was only visited by widows and their children, who quietly came each year to Kapelle to honour their dead. That year, for the first time, they found a group of Dutch Moroccans, who were looking for the French military cemetery. They had heard stories in Morocco about thousands of Moroccans who had been killed in the European war. The place has since become a true 'lieu de mémoire' for a small group of Moroccans. The events of the last two years have meant a marked increase in the number of visitors. Kapelle has entered the national canon of memorial places precisely because of society's need for symbols that can unite different groups.

Less symbolic but more scientific is the joint publication by NIOD, the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, and FORUM, the Institute for Multicultural Development, entitled *Allochtonen van nu & en de oorlog van toen. Marokko, de Nederlandse Antillen, Suriname en Turkije in WO II* ("Today's immigrants and yesterday's war: Morocco, the Netherlands Antilles, Suriname and Turkey in WWII").

The publication, which focuses on the role of colonized countries during World War II, is an attempt to counter the ethnocentric view of this war, which has left little space for their memories at commemoration ceremonies. The book relates, among other things, how Moroccan soldiers were held captive in prisoner-of-war camps in Zeeland, Antilleans and Surinamese joined the Dutch resistance and how Turkey, although neutral, played a role as a port of access for Jews who were trying to flee to Palestine. The book is intended as a reference point for immigrants who wish to know more about the role of their native country during the war. But its aim is above all for educators, policy makers and leaders to bring a new view of the war legacy to the attention of young people. At the moment a lesson package is being developed in connection with the book, in order to circulate the information among schools as well.

French military cemetery in Kapelle.
Photo MO-Paul Fleming



How long does a commemoration last?

Both initiatives show how stories about war, education and social integration go hand in hand. But the extent to which a commemoration can be manufactured is limited. Among the group doing the remembering there must always be a percentage of 'rememberers' with authentic experiences. They provide, after all, the link between the photo albums and the family stories at home and the formal national commemoration ceremony at a symbolic place. The fact that this group is steadily declining can be seen in the number of cars on the road on 4 May at two minutes to eight. In this development, it is significant that younger generations, when 'the war' is mentioned, think more of the First and Second Gulf Wars than of the Second World War. If the commemoration of the Second World War is to retain a central place in the national identity, an increasingly prominent stage-management by the government and political establishment will be necessary as years pass.

One may have doubts about the sincerity of feelings at commemoration ceremonies that seem to be part of a civilizing offensive, the fact remains that young jobs did not play football with memorial wreaths in Amsterdam this year. The attempts to involve the New Dutch in the National Commemoration ceremony can therefore be considered relatively successful. What should be kept in mind, however, is that the life expectancy of a memorial is ultimately determined more by the age distribution of the population than by its cultural orientation.

The smaller the number of directly involved participants becomes, the more the 'Comité 4 en 5 mei', the Dutch national commemoration organization, will have to use its imagination.

Memory under Fire

*The Importance of a Counter-Memory
in the Representation of Violence*

Visual artist and media theorist Jordan Crandall, in the project *Under Fire*, which was recently exhibited at the Witte de With centre in Rotterdam,¹

examines the significance of the representation of armed conflicts.

According to Crandall, it is imperative that attention be shifted from

what an image means to what an image does. By developing a sort of counter-memory, it may be possible to expand our outlook and acquire more insight into the political and cultural dimensions of the representation of war in a globalized world.

1. *Under Fire* is a project by Jordan Crandall and was organized by the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, in association with the V2 Institute for the Unstable Media, both located in Rotterdam. A publication accompanies the project, entitled *Under Fire. Jordan Crandall, The Organization and Representation of Violence*, Witte de With, Rotterdam 2004 (see also <http://www.wdw.nl/>, under 'archive')

MOSCOW, Feb. 17 – It was a campaign manager's dream visual: A president weeks away from an election stands on the bridge of a nuclear submarine out at sea, watching the test launch of two intercontinental missiles capable of destroying an enemy city. President Vladimir Putin took his position aboard the Arkhangelsk on Tuesday afternoon, television cameras dutifully recording the moment. And he waited. And waited and waited.

Finally, after 25 minutes, naval officers announced what had become painfully obvious, that the launch had not taken place, and they shuffled the guests and journalists below deck, according to Russian reporters on the scene. Putin disappeared without a word. Russian news organizations promptly reported that a malfunction had scuttled the launch. Then, a few hours later, the navy's top admiral denied that any launch had been planned. A 'virtual launch' had been intended from the start, he explained, and it had been a success. 'The work was carried out according to the plan,' Adm. Vladimir Kuroyedov said at a televised briefing Tuesday. 'And to make things completely clear, I'll say that the ballistic exercises were designed as a virtual launch, which was done twice, first in one spot, then in another.'

(Peter Baker, Washington Post Foreign Service)

REPORT ANY SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR

(Generic airport announcement)

I am at waiting for my flight at Ronald Reagan airport in Washington DC, thinking about the production of suspicion. We all know the drill: Agitated by the general belligerence of air travel, we hear the familiar intonations over the public address system, which compel us to report any suspicious personage. Eyes narrowed, I play the game and scan the concourse, wondering whom I might deem suspicious, and what could possibly compel me, were I to locate some such person, to scurry over to Security in order to 'report' them. I wonder how many people are actually reported each day. I wonder what kind of suspicious behavior I should be looking for.

Suddenly, I realize the most insidious part of the drill: What about *me*? With this realization, I am transformed. I am the person at Sartre's keyhole, caught in the act, who knows that he is seen at the moment he sees. I have now become an object for the gaze of another. Looked at, I look at myself. I wonder, if I stand this way, or walk this way, do I look suspicious? I become intensely aware of my actions and their possible misreadings, and I modify my actions accordingly.

Increasingly, it seems, we are all potential suspects, and we cannot but help to internalize this potentiality. It is a sculpting force, in terms of both our subjectivity and our actions. In a monitored and hyper-mediated

culture, we are increasingly second-guessing ourselves. We say to ourselves: if I do this, how will my actions be represented and interpreted? Could it be taken the wrong way? There is a heightened awareness of how one's actions intersect with systems of signification, and of how they could be read, and this line of thinking shapes one's action in the here-and-now. Such an orientation colonizes the future. It generates a present that is always ahead of itself. It is a vector that pulls us ever forward, as it vanquishes the past. It instills a sense of incipient crime: a sense of danger just around the corner. New morphologies of desire, fear, and latent or unconscious transgression appear – what Baudrillard would call 'an unconscious form of potential, veiled, carefully repressed criminality.' Since it is always capable of surfacing, one is left 'thrilling secretly' to the potential spectacle of criminal eruption.

Accompanying the construction of suspicion and the choreographies of security is a concomitant evacuation of memory, a thrilling and dangerous 'ever-present-ness' that opens out always to the proximate moment, even as it absorbs it.

History

It is now the summer of 2004. The funeral of Ronald Reagan has just passed. A nation remembers. I am reflecting on the Cold War period that largely defined his presidency. I am thinking about his legacy, his role in the contemporary expansion of the military through the private sector, and the subsequent emergence of the private military and intelligence industry. Scanning the newspaper whose headlines speculate on the spread of nuclear weapons and the emergence of a new nuclear age, I think of the legacy of 'Star Wars.' Twenty years after Reagan created an international furor by proposing to weaponize space with the Strategic Defense Initiative, the Pentagon is back with a new plan. In Delta Junction, Alaska, silos are now being readied for the installation of three-stage interceptors, each topped with thrusters and optical sensors that, within a few months, will give the US its first operating missile defense system. No matter that this is a system whose early tests have repeatedly failed to live up to expectations – the mission lives on. Rather than admit any failure, the Pentagon has simply rewritten the standards for success. In the culture of 'spin,' there is no event that is not subject to perpetual revision. In a militarized culture of potential suspicion, we are led to think that we cannot *afford* to look back. Remembering is a form of vulnerability. It is a risk. It leaves you open to attack.

What kind of enemy was an antimissile defense system thought to address, then and now? In the late 1940s, communism was positioned as a

kind of global terrorism whose spread must be contained. Metaphors and ideologies of moral leadership were linked to the development of technology, military might, and policy, and projected across the globe. The Cold War ran on a productive economy of fear: the fear of an omnipresent enemy who could be anywhere, strike at any time, and who in fact could be 'among us.' As economies of fear are symbiotic with those of desire, the Cold War also ran on a desiring system oriented around consumer products, convenience, moral good, and freedom itself. To talk about suspicion necessitates a conversation about seduction: the war economy feeds on both.

The war on terror and the logic of so-called pre-emptive warfare – with its omnipresent, unspecified enemies and its generalized locations of threat – arise from a common platform. We can benefit by taking the longer view, looking at historical constructions of the enemy. The doctrine of pre-emptive warfare arose out of the doctrine of containment and its logic of deterrence, and can best be seen in terms of its embeddedness within the history of the past fifty years. By drawing on its history, we are compelled to look at the bigger picture: the larger environment in which military development and security technology have arisen during the latter half of the 20th century.

Counter-memory

Military development and security technology arise within economies of fear and desire and an ontology of enemy and ally. Fear and desire for the enemy-ally drive the development of technology and military capacity – yet at the same time, the latter provide the processing environments in which fears and desires, *attractions and protections*, coalesce. Looking at economies of fear and desire provide a different way of looking at warfare and business economies, which have become nearly useless category distinctions, especially as warfare has become increasingly privatized. We need to link war and business together in one mutually-reinforcing system. We say that business is war, but we do not recognize the role that desire plays in warfare, other than referring to it in terms of spectacle or entertainment. This focus, in turn, provides a way to look at a neglected psychological and symbolic dimension, rather than relying primarily on a logistics of production.

Such an orientation might be helpful in developing a counter-memory, a counter-semantics, which might have a political potential within the psychologically-charged and affective spaces of contemporary militarized culture. In order to develop ways of exploring how identifications and friend/enemy distinctions are determined in the present post-Cold War

period, when we no longer have the same kinds of territorial and ideological divisions, we need to probe into the realm of the unconscious, and into the realms of fantasy and myth, and into the complex re-negotiations of cultural memory. In so doing, we can emphasize the extent to which reality is an agglomeration of multiple registers of meaning. As critics, we trap ourselves in dealing with ideology as if it were the only register. It is important to explore the role that desire, suspicion, and fear play in the contemporary ordering of reality, and the ways in which – through acquiescence and resistance – we identify and form ourselves within a culture of preventive war and presumptive suspicion. As always, identity and embodiment are about processes of incipience or becoming, as much as they are about categorical distinction, and hostility arises as much out of the fear of our own dissolution as it does out of a fear of the other. As the German writer and philosopher Klaus Theweleit would say, the ‘front’ is not only the place of violent contestation, but also the site of the body’s resistance to the threat of its self-disintegration.

Such an orientation requires a shift toward the affective dimension of image reception – that is, a shift in focus from what an image *means* to what it *does*. It requires new theories of representation that can build on a semiotic-based media theory, but which focus on issues of intensity and the motivating power of images. Instead of asking what this image *signifies* (how the image represents the actuality, as open to interpretation), one could ask how it negotiates *significance* (relevance within a given situation). At the same time, we need to understand representation in all of its specificity: how it replicates and travels, how it substitutes for event, how it is a cluster of changing codes and orientations, how it is relayed by technologies of detection and deception. Moreover, we need to understand the deceptively common space that media images seem to generate. Following an event of universal import, such as torture at Abu Ghraib, images appear on the screens of televisions and computers worldwide nearly simultaneously. There seems to be a global space of perception that is nearly simultaneously focused on a single image or set of images, but this seemingly unified space is continually fractured along lines of difference and re-sorted along lines of affiliation, through a variety of means that are often very informal. It appears that something like a common space of images, which, having coalesced through transmission and replication, now forms a public space or archive from which all can draw. But this is an illusion.

Worldwide conversations

How do we speak about these issues? What structures our conversations?
How do we insure that we are not only speaking to ourselves? How do we

insure that we are not purporting to simply speak for others who have no voice? In other words: How can we develop more inclusive global conversations? This is a challenge that confronts us all. And it requires self-reflection as to our means and conditions of communication. Rather than engaging participation solely from the critical and academic cultures of the West, we need to engage participation from individuals and groups that we can consider as having taken a different path to modernity, and thus who don't necessarily work from the historical narratives of Western modern culture. To open up such a space is to open up a discursive terrain whose frames have to be continually negotiated. It is a way of exploring the political dimension of representation in a globalized world while avoiding, as we find with much discourse around the 'war on terror,' of miming the frames of reference that are part of the problem. For example, you find the widespread use of the nebulous term 'terrorism' without its deconstruction. Edward Said preferred to abandon the term and focus on forms of violence that are produced by a politics of identity, for example, in a way that requires an active translation among political languages and the development of a historical counter-semantics.

It is urgent to find ways of exploring the organization and representation of armed conflicts today. To look at the forces that give rise to violence, while looking at the ways in which such violence gets instantiated in specific acts of representation. To account for the ways in which images and acts enter into the field of the symbolic imaginary, intersecting with the Real and the encodings of cultural memory. To understand armed violence in systemic terms – that is, to understand violence as a product of the modalities of a global system, not simply as aberration. To understand the forces that contribute to the emergence of militarized agencies, and the acts of resistance to them. To look at conflicts in terms of emergent systems of decentralized control and global dynamics of power, moving between system and element, infrastructure and occurrence, backdrop and act. Such are the concerns of *Under Fire*.





Segregated but United

Memory in the City of Tomorrow

The history represented by Delfshaven in Rotterdam is its role as a storage depot for the VOC (the Dutch East Indies Company), a heritage to which the present-day population no longer relates. It is illustrative of the general tendency to preserve and grasp at cultural heritage, without the slightest notion of a structuring framework, in order to create 'identity'. Paul Meurs makes an appeal for selective choices, so that it will once again be possible to add new substance to the collective memory of the Netherlands.

Delfshaven is one of the best preserved historic quarters in Rotterdam. The area around the port is a cityscape with protected status. The Dutch Admiral Piet Hein stands there on a pedestal. The distilleries, port basin and warehouses form the backdrop for the story of Dutch expansion during the Golden Age and the wealth and civilization that generated. The American Pilgrim Fathers who travelled to the New World via Delfshaven are part of the myth of ‘*Hollands Glorie*’ – ‘Dutch Glory’. The heart of Delfshaven is a tourist attraction where everything pivots on the VOC, Piet Hein and the Pilgrims. The rich history of this city quarter contrasts sharply with the present-day poverty: Delfshaven is a deprived area. There are hardly any descendants of the Dutch sailors of the Golden Age living there now, sooner immigrants from all corners of the world. If the world cultures of the quarter have anything to do with the privateering Admiral Piet Hein then it is in a negative sense: whole tribes were robbed, murdered or forced into slavery by ‘Delfshaven’s terror of the seas’.¹ There is also little affinity with the Founding Fathers of the United States. The inhabitants of Delfshaven live in an attractive setting, without being able to identify with its glorious past or feel any pride in it. ‘De Distillekerketel’ windmill is the only place where past and present coincide: many local residents come here to have small quantities of exotic grain milled for traditional dishes from all corners of the globe.²

1. Piet Hein (1577-1629) was Vice-Admiral and later Admiral in the service of the *Westindische Compagnie* (West Indies Company), which primarily focused on ‘privateering’, i.e. predatory expeditions and ransacking. He was involved in capturing the Brazilian city of Salvador (1624), and the plundering of the Spanish fleet in the Bay of Mantanzas (1628). Dr. M.G. de Boer, *Piet Heyn en de zilveren vloot*, Amsterdam 1946.

2. The millers brought together the recipes and life stories of their customers in: Gerard Keijsers and Peter Paul Klapwijk, *Uit alle windstrekken*, Rotterdam 2001.

National heritage

Delfshaven underscores how utterly outdated the notion of ‘traditional’ patrimony has become. That is hardly surprising, since in outline it dates from the end of the 19th century. At that time, important facts and things worth knowing which had taken place prior to 1850 were organized into a logical narrative. A common origin and shared solidarity could be derived from this. Thus a collective memory was created, which lent an identity to the Netherlands as a nation and the Dutch as a people. As with all kinds of memory, collective memory was also selective: a cut-out from history full of exaggeration, simplification and under-exposed aspects. The Dutch national identity had hardly anything to do with the folk culture of the countryside, for example, the more with the ‘*haute couture*’ of the arts and sciences in the cities.³

3. Ad de Jong, *De dirigenten van de herinnering. Musealisering en nationalisering van de volkscultuur in Nederland 1815-1940*, Nijmegen 2001.

The Golden Age came to occupy prime position in the nation’s history, though it had endured for but a relatively short flourish, affecting only a limited number of cities and relatively few people. The period entered the annals of history as a moment of great triumph, which undisguisedly boasted about how a small country could be great. Thanks to the Golden Age it was possible for a nation that consisted for 90 per cent of farmers to present itself as a middle-class civilization. History formed a perfect mirror to the cultural and scientific ambitions of the 19th century.

The national identity has of old been symbolized by national heritage, an imaginative collection of objects spread over museums, archives and historical collections. Monuments

are also part of the national heritage, being the communal aids to memory that render national history visible and being something which people can experience in everyday life. Even before the 19th century drew to its end, a start was made on drawing up a systematic inventory of important buildings, such as castles, churches and patricians' houses. The list of monuments swelled by the hundreds. In town and country planning there was still no brief to design 'identity', since spatial identity was self-evident. However, with restorations the past was often painted more beautifully and 'more Golden Agey' than it had ever actually been.

Over the years, the national heritage has been expanded with objects from later periods and other kinds of collections. *Monumentenzorg*, the department for conservation, started to take an interest in cityscapes and 'everyday' monuments, such as factories, working-class housing, social housing and infrastructural projects. Architecture from the period 1850-1940 was explored in a comprehensive inventory and a start has now been made on the period of post-war reconstruction. The many supplements and additions have rendered the national heritage top-heavy. All old buildings and antiquated city quarters seem to be worth preserving a priori. For every square metre of the Netherlands it is possible to provide a detailed history, but the structuring framework has become blurred. Without such a framework there is no longer the distinction between main and subsidiary issues, and everything that is old acquires historic importance.

Loss of cohesion

The national heritage no longer represents a collective memory and it is also incapable of representing an unambiguous national identity. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, the explosive growth in national heritage outlined above resulted in the collective memory losing a crucial quality, namely being selective. Without clear-cut choices, the national heritage degenerates into a whimsical warehouse full of meaningless objects and obscure intentions. The collective memory becomes hazy. From the heritage, in all its diversity, it is no longer possible to deduce what kind of people the Dutch are, except that they display a strong conservatism.

Secondly, as is apparent in Delfshaven, society has changed so radically in recent decades that the old, familiar patrimony has become an anachronism. Besides this being a result of changing demographics it also due to individualization, mental and physical mobility, internationalization and changing lifestyles. The loss of cohesion sometimes leads to attempts to shift accents in history in order to serve cultural 'marginal groups', which is not really proving successful. For example, some Moroccan war victims were 'discovered' in Zeeland and employed to turn the Remembrance Day ceremonies in Amsterdam on May 4 into a multicultural happening. (See elsewhere in this publication.) Instead of fully integrating minorities, this means they remain a footnote in the canonic history.

The third reason why the national heritage can no longer generate a collective memory or national identity has to do with the altered profile of the Netherlands. The link between

Delfshaven (residential district in Rotterdam) is actually a deprived area; hardly any native Dutch people live there anymore, but rather many immigrants. Photo Wilfried Lentz



In the heart of Delfshaven everything is centred on the Dutch East India Company, Piet Hein and the Pilgrims, a past in stark contrast with the present. Photo Rob 't Hart



Largo do Pelourinho in Salvador. The former slave market is now the focal point of Afro-Brazilian music and a symbol of the emancipation of slaves in Brazil.

Photo Paul Meurs



Each of the ethnic groups in Curitiba has placed elements of its own culture in monuments on themed squares and in parks.

Photo Paul Meurs



‘traditional’ history and the physical appearance of the Netherlands has become obscured and only visible to the practiced eye. The spatial development of the 20th century was large-scale and dominant, involving urban expansion projects, the construction of infrastructure, suburbanization and the formation of metropolitan regions. The upshot of that predominant renewal is that it has become difficult or even impossible to recognize the underlying layers. The collective memory, as it was essentially formed during the 19th century, has largely literally disappeared from view. An additional complication is that in present-day building projects historical identity is also designed anew, without any connection with the background, underlying functions or regional characteristics. Thanks to neo-*tabula rasa* planning (designing historical layers after the fact), spatial identity is no longer something to conserve, but something artificially man-made. The historic fragments also cause us confusion, because they sometimes belong to the national heritage and sometimes blankly contradict the logic of history.

In the Netherlands of the 21st century it is hardly realistic to dream of a true collectivity. But a memory more collective than what presently exists must surely be possible. The question is what kind of past the cities and landscapes of the future will have, and how that can contribute to the spatial cohesion and characterfulness. Given the interest for identity and history, in spatial planning a lot is expected of the past. There is far too little of the Golden Age that survives in the modern-day Netherlands on which to build further. Other structures which might imbue identity are primarily sought at spots that the 20th century flew past almost without noticing them: marshy meadows and military areas. In the same way as Delfshaven and other VOC cities lent identity to the renewal of Dutch cities a century ago, this is currently being attempted with, for example, the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie (the 200-year-old New Dutch Waterline, an 85-kilometre-long defensive line of 70 forts) and the Roman Limes (the remains of the fortified borders of the Roman Empire). Both involve landscape structures which might retain something of their landscape-related quality in a process of urbanization.

It is a challenge to search for new historic identity at the core of the present-day living space and not just at its periphery. This requires a new reading of the places where everyday life has amassed, such as the urban, suburban and infrastructural areas of the 20th century. Only with this revival of the collective memory is it possible to uncover cohesion in the apparent chaos and once again facilitate attachment and engagement.

The New World

How history can be used to bind random groups of humans into a people or a nation is readily apparent in the New World. In the United States, the vastness of the land mass is the connecting factor. The population was given the chance to realize an American dream in the land of limitless possibilities. Since then, the US has represented a communal territory to be defended and a common market (the world) to be conquered. Brazil developed a different kind of national identity, based on a cultural symbiosis. In 1933, the sociologist Gilberto Freyre described how all the children on the sugar plantations, regardless of

status or race, were raised in both the (Catholic) European and the (polytheistic) African traditions. Because of the specific context of the country and the open-minded interaction between the imported cultures, he argued that this resulted in a new and unique culture. Freyre was the protagonist of the myth about the creation of the Brazilian people.⁴

The author Oswald de Andrade even styled the Brazilian identity as anthropophagism (cannibalism).⁵ In music, football, literature and architecture, this attitude has led to everything but a sense of cultural inferiority.

During its pioneer phase in the 1930s, the Brazilian department for the conservation of cultural patrimony sought ways to use the national heritage as a building block of a modern society.⁶ Conservation was not seen as a (moral) goal per se, but as a means to be able to imbue modern Brazil with a memory and a conscience. The true power of tradition had nothing to do with the conservation or reconstruction of an 'authentic' form, but was linked to a symbolic, contemporary meaning of the monuments. The consequences of this approach can be seen in the former capital city of Salvador, where the Portuguese elite had grandiose houses built. The old city centre has now been 'confiscated' by the Afro-Brazilian population and is cherished as the cradle of black culture. The monuments are not a reference to the morality of the age of slavery in terms of 'right' and 'wrong', but to the origins of a free and emancipated Brazil.

Another example of the free interpretation of heritage can be found in Curitiba, in the south of the country. The city's cultural heritage is minimal, certainly in comparison to Europe. Nonetheless, this is the 'personal history' of the local population and the humble houses in the old centre of this city of millions are therefore preserved as if they were palaces. The city also provides space for the memories of all the migrants who have settled in Curitiba over the last century. Each population group has accommodated elements of its own culture in monuments on thematic squares and in parks. The Italians, Germans, Portuguese, Japanese, Ukrainians and Arabs tell their story of migration and integration here. As a city of migrants, Curitiba remains devoid of 'minorities', since the identity of the city is built up from all the imported cultures together. Curitiba strives to be a fertile medium in which all the cultures of the world can take root, and history fulfils a key role in this.

Material for new history

If the Netherlands of today were to be invented and go in search of its history, then the Golden Age would probably not be set in the period of Rembrandt and Piet Hein, but in the age of Willem Drees, the politician who introduced the welfare state, and the artist Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). The true Golden Age of the Netherlands dawned with the founding of the welfare state and the myth of the socially engineered, 'makeable' society. From that perspective, the most important monuments are not to be found in the old city

4. Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala, Formação da Família Brasileira sob o Regime de Economia Patriarcal* (trans. as *The Masters and the Slaves*), 1933.

5. Oswald de Andrade, 'Manifesto antropófago', 1928.

6. Paul Meurs, 'Modernisme en traditie, monumentenzorg in Brazilië', *Archis*, 6, 1994, pp. 70-80, or see: www.urbanfabric.nl.

centres but around them. Who we are, where we live and how we relate to the outside world can be seen in the suburbs and along the motorways. Whether someone is Turkish or from Twente, a block of gallery flats is more resonant to him or her than a canalside mansion. The collective memory of the future was largely shaped in the 20th century: it is the story of the Netherlands as the cultural delta of Europe, a man-made landscape with new nature.

By viewing things through the spectacles of the new history, the historic Delfshaven acquires a meaning different to that of merely being a warehouse for the VOC. The city quarter has grown along with the Port of Rotterdam and was a 20th-century testing ground for social experiments. Besides the modern port facilities along the Nieuwe Maas, the residents of Delfshaven can be proud of the many examples of social housing, such as the block of gallery-access flats designed by Michel Brinkman in Spangen and the world-renowned Van Nelle factory on the Delfshavense Schie. In the light of recent history, the old Delfshaven is still important, as an upbeat to internationalization. The many layers of history connect past, present and future generations to the universal ports of the city.

How can recent history provide the cohesion that old history does not? By placing less emphasis on isolated monuments, as in the traditional sense of preservation of cultural heritage, and all the more on big structures and space, the cities of the future will be more easily 'readable' and understandable. The much-needed selectivity can also be achieved by shifting the emphasis in history onto the brief periods that structurally altered the appearance of the country: post-war reconstruction and the welfare state. The myth of a 'makeable' society could bind together all the colours and faiths to be found in the Netherlands. This does not mean that the makeable society should be rebuilt retroactively. The act of committing the period to the history books and integrating it in the collective memory actually creates a framework to which the Dutch of today can relate, and from which future generations can dissociate themselves. Thanks to the history of the 20th century, the Netherlands can imbue terms that have traditionally belonged to its pillarized social structure, such as tolerance, autonomy and respect, with new meaning. That history also provides anchoring points for further integration within Europe, making it possible to cope with the tensions between different cultures, internationalization, individualization and worldwide coalitions. The motto 'segregated but united' is calling for new substance.

bookreviews

The New Euro-Citizen

Dirk van den Heuvel

The architecture periodical *Forum* takes both friend and foe by surprise whenever it rises like a Phoenix from the ashes – yet again. *Forum* – for those not in the know – is the darling of the Genootschap Architectura et Amicitia, ActA, a Dutch society for architecture professionals. This wonderful company of hard-working architects who hold their profession dear is, as publisher and financier, responsible for the continuation of – to put it mildly – the inimitable life of this periodical. The formula is as simple as it is brilliant, even though it is also mildly disastrous for any continuity. Bring together a young editorial team, entrust the publication to it – members of the ActA have no time for it themselves, after all – allow the whole thing to get out of hand financially, put a stop to it – briefly – and then re-boot: try again, but with yet another new editorial team.

Forum has become world-renowned for this, though that was a while back already, namely with the editorial team of Bakema, Boon, Van Eyck, Hertzberger and Schrofer that was assembled by Dick Apon. The two most recent editorial teams were idealists of similar stature, with equally radical designers at the helm (Roelof Mulder and Jop van Bennekom), but this time it has resulted in the

Euroscapes - Forum, volume 41, 2003. MUST Publishers and the Genootschap Architectura et Amicitia.
ISBN 908063512X, €25,-

publication of a handsome cahier with the slightly hip title 'Euroscapes'. To get straight down to the nitty-gritty: that slight hipness is also where the problem lies. The theme – the landscape of the new Europe – hits the bull's-eye, but its elaboration is exasperatingly safe and respectable, while the subject calls for old-fashioned, critically paranoid analyses and the glowing exposé of blood-curdling prospects (read the 'Hollocore' chapter in Koolhaas's *Content*).

The editing of *Euroscapes* was in the hands of Robert Broesi and Wouter Veldhuis of the MUST bureau, complemented by colleague designers and researchers. Six essays bring together what the editors consider the most urgent or fascinating dimensions of this new European landscape. In his introductory essay, Broesi sketches out this issue's framework with broad strokes of the pen. He describes a Europe of constant transformation. He touches briefly on aspects of the economy, trade, knowledge and science, but places most emphasis on the Europe of prosperous and independent consumers. These consumers constitute a new class, each member of which pieces together a personal Europe. That is facilitated by the new networks of, among other things, no-frills airlines and the tourist industry. *En masse*, these



new Euro-citizens are causing a transformation of the landscape that is without precedent, because of its sheer scale. The other essays examine highly diverse and more specific themes. Mathis Güller writes about the new task for national museums prompted by a transformation of national identities. Ivan Nio, Angelika Fuchs and Wouter Veldhuis consider flows of migration and transnational networks, planning issues along national borders are mapped out by Arjan Harbers, and a concluding essay by Florian Boer and Christine Dijkstra addresses the consequences of recreation on an international scale.

One of the nagging questions after reading the bundle is what is in fact so typically European in the new *Euroscapes* presented. Much of what is described is, in its generality, applicable to the ongoing internationalization processes and transcends the European dimension. It seems as if *Euroscapes* is not so much an analysis but rather a means of looking at the world. In many respects the bundle presents an old-fashioned, Eurocentric perspective on global problems – it does deviate from that of the Eurocrats, but is Eurocentric nevertheless. What holds the whole thing together is a single point of order that the authors mention in the introduction: the

new European landscape cannot be uniform, but must offer a variety of spaces and cultures. According to the authors, uniform thinking within Europe cannot equate to wanting the same thing everywhere.

The fact that *Euroscapes* presents no analysis of the new Europe, but a view, is immediately obvious from the otherwise stunning photo-reportage by Bas Princen and Raymond Wouda. And just like every other view, it can set only a limited part of the new Europe in the spotlight. Even the added series of maps from the *Bosatlas* (the standard Dutch atlas), with a range of themes like history, climate and transport, Internet providers and flows of EU expenditure, does not usher in a searching analysis but serves only as an illustration in support of advocating a Europe of differences.

If you think about what actually distinguishes Europe from, say, the United States, Asia or Africa, then it is factors like the welfare state, the mixed economy with both market- and state-controlled aspects, and secularization. Another interesting aspect that draws attention in the series of maps is Europe's greatest common denominator. It is not security (NATO or Schengen countries), nor economics (EU or Euro-zone), but humanism that seems (to my

own surprise) to draw together most European countries, including Turkey and Russia. All the countries, with the exception of Belarus, are members of the Council of Europe, proponent of democracy, pluralism, human rights and fundamental liberties. There is, however, no evidence of any of this to be found in the dynamic world of *Euroscapes*. At the same time, it is notable that the argument of the authors for variety implicitly fits within this humanistic tradition.

This rather obligatory argument demands, in my view, a radicalization in order to be credible. In a certain sense, *Euroscapes* itself provides the means for doing this, and the essay by Nio demonstrates an initial step. The text by Fuchs and Veldhuis concurs to some extent. Both of these texts are about flows of migration and how these are possible. Nio focuses on the 'ethnoscapes' of the low-wage immigrant workers from outside Europe, while Fuchs and Veldhuis consider the new colonies of well-heeled northern Europeans who go in search of a pleasant living environment in the deserted countryside of southern Europe. Nio provides the most astute analysis. He uses the concept of multiple identities to describe the position of migrants and their way of life. This concept of an individual,

plural identity (you are Turkish *and* European) is much more radical and modern than the idea of a variety of singular identities (you are Turkish *or* Dutch).

Using the example of life in migrant neighbourhoods like Amsterdam's Baarsjes or London's Brixton, Nio describes a reality that seems unreal against the backdrop of today's xenophobic politics in the Netherlands, but it is certainly an issue. Proceeding from his analysis, the Muslim migrant is an extremely modern world citizen despite his 'backward' culture. This migrant lives in different worlds simultaneously: his homeland where his family lives, his neighbourhood with mosque, his workplace and his children's school, the other migrant cities in Europe where compatriots live, and so on. This is all supported by the most advanced networks of Internet, mobile telephony, Al Jazeera and cheap flights. Nio demonstrates that this reality of a plural identity does not stand in the way of integration, but is in fact the very basis for it. A Europe of plural identities with mutually overlapping worlds offers more hope for a shared future than a Europe of differences.

Art without Exchange

Arjen Mulder

Boris Groys (1947) emerged as one of the most significant art theorists of our time with his books *Über das Neue* ('Confronting the New') (Munich 1992) en *Unter Verdacht*

Boris Groys, *Topologie der Kunst* ('The Topology of Art'), Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich/Vienna 2003. ISBN 3446203680, €19,90

('Under Suspicion') (Munich 2000). Groys's subject is avant-garde art from the East and West (he is of Russian origin, lives in Vienna and teaches in Karlsruhe).



His central thesis is that the cult of the new, which typifies the twentieth century, is in fact a cult of the archive. After all, something can only be recognized and

acknowledged as new if it distinguishes itself from all that is old, and the question of whether it does so can only be answered if an archive exists in which the old is to be found comprehensively and accessibly. In order to set itself out as new, avant-garde art rebels against this archive (the museum), but at the same time attempts to be included in the archive, for if it is not, it will be forgotten. In order to be allowed into the archive, new art must create the impression that it is the symbol of a completely unknown cultural domain existing outside the archive. This symbolic reference to a profane world of infinite possibilities outside the archive guarantees the new artwork its sacred position within the museum.

In his new collection of essays, *Topologie der Kunst* ('The Topology of Art') (2003), Groys examines how the dialectic of old and new is functioning at the start of the twenty-first century. The 'topology' in the title refers to the place of art in the archive: it is only recognizable as art if it stands in an art context; outside of this is often literally refuse. The essays rather overlap one another, are sometimes a little too clever and in effect contain the material out of which Groys should have written a nice coherent dissertation. He evidently did not have the time. I shall try to supply a summary of this unwritten book.

Twentieth-century art was about the media with which this art was made: the poem was a monument to language, the painting a monument to paint and canvas, music a monument to a system of notes. The artist wanted to make his medium speak, show, ring. He was no longer interested in communicating something he had only discovered within him-

self and yearned to share with others, or in something he had discovered in others and wanted to bring to light via himself; no, the twentieth-century (post)modernist artist wanted to be the medium of his medium.

But, to quote Groys, 'when the avant-garde artist forgoes his own, particular, individual message, he abandons the domain of everyday, peaceful communication.' To express an opinion means to acknowledge that other opinions, in principle, have an equal right to exist, but he who instead represents the medium that makes it possible to have opinions in the first place, who speaks in the name of his medium *itself*, is no longer capable of an exchange of views. Such a person cannot exchange his medium for another, better or more practical medium, for then he would be left with nothing. This type of artist can only remain true to his medium or betray it. Anything and anyone who did not agree with a twentieth-century artist must, in his view, be annihilated. As a consequence, twentieth-century avant-garde art was aggressive, destructive, implacable and totalitarian in nature, both in its manifestation and in its dealings with art forms that wanted to be about something else.

Now that the twentieth century is behind us and that it is slowly but surely becoming a puzzle what people got so excited over in that period, we are left with museums full of stultifying, myopic, uninteresting art: the glorious legacy that has become the permanent collection of museums of contemporary art. However, a counter-movement of artists has emerged, who want to introduce something cheerful and lively into the museum again, and therefore present

photographs, films and videos, which almost by definition are about something other than themselves. Once allowed into the museum (as a collective term for the whole art world, including galleries, biennales, temporary exhibitions, art journals, press reviews, etc.) this counter-movement is faced with the disconcerting fact that it cannot function any differently within the museum than did the twentieth-century art that preceded it: it can only be about itself.

If films and videos are only about themselves, what sort of new insights do they generate? This: classical visual art does not move, but it sets its audience in motion, while technical visual art moves, but brings its audience to a standstill. You view paintings walking around; you view films sitting down. But because in the museum you do not have to stay seated, as in the cinema, you never watch the art films and videos all the way through, and so you never know whether you have genuinely and completely seen the work. You might have missed the essential moment, or you were unlucky enough to have caught a dull passage. In the museum, the only interesting videos and films are those that address the theme of this dialectic of seeing and non-seeing.

To us humans, something is only real when we not only receive it or purchase it, but also give something in return. The 'symbolic exchange' Marcel Mauss wrote of in his essay *Sur le don* ('The Gift') (1924) forms the basis of our perception of reality. In the domain of the museum the exchange between artwork and audience has been severed by the avant-garde for a century. Autonomous art is art that can

only be viewed, admired and possibly internalized; it is complete in itself; it does not need the gaze of the audience but does demand the total dedication of its spectators. Because no symbolic exchange with autonomous art is possible, it cannot become real for the viewer. For this reason, contemporary works of art in the last 30 or 40 years came increasingly to be experienced as 'simulations', as objects that had lost their real value and could only be consumed.

Consumption is a one-sided appropriation. The symbol of this artistic consumerism was ready-made art, which Marcel Duchamp first presented with his urinal. According to Groys, art, from that point on, operates in this way: the artist consumes reality, because he picks out what he likes and presents this as his work. The curator then consumes the artists' supply and picks out what he likes. The art public finally consumes the curators' exhibitions and picks out what it finds pleasing, exciting or interesting. Nothing more is at stake. There's no accounting for taste: exit art criticism.

Now, photographs, film and video are quintessentially ready-mades: just turn the camera on and your work of art is almost complete (Duchamp's ready-made is familiar to us because he had it photographed). Artists who still work with traditional methods and create something drawn from within themselves are considered, if not pathetic, at least a little suspect. Why fuss so long with it? Did they not know what they wanted? Groys: 'The first word that comes to mind when you think of culture at the moment is the word "financing".' This is how you make art these days: you write a research proposal; if this is deemed worthy of sponsoring or

subsidy, you go ahead with it; if it is not approved you abandon it. The only standard by which the quality of art can be expressed anymore is money: how much does it cost, how much will it make? You cannot tell from the artwork itself whether it is worth anything, since anything can be art once it has entered the museum.

Art lovers have developed the amazing capacity to say that they would not mind having a work at 2000 Euro, but not at 2500 Euro (even when they are not planning to buy it). The subjective, inner perception of art has also become an inner, subjective perception of money. The dividing line between low and high art is that the former is meant for the mass market and the latter for specific niche markets. Money is not a medium like language: now that language is at a loss for words when it comes to art, the medium of money still works fine.

The tone of Groys's new collection of essays is grumbling. I cannot escape the impression that contemporary art has not managed to reach the level of its most astute theorist, who therefore must turn out lesser work than he is capable of. Which elicits resentment in him, as he frankly admits in the last pages of the book. At one point he sighs, after yet another remark about something tiresome about art: '*Es ist, wie es ist.*' ('It is the way it is.') When Groys describes his reaction to foreign cities and observes that the tourist gaze makes everything in a city monumental, he summarizes the experience thus: 'Even when you go to New York and drive through the South Bronx and see drug dealers shooting each other or at least looking like they might shoot each other at any moment, such a scene attains the rank of the

monumental. You think: "Yes, it has always been this way and it will always be this way".' This leads to a disappointment when, during a subsequent visit, the neighbourhood turns out to have been cleaned up and the drug dealers have disappeared: you perceive this as though a piece of authentic, unique, different life had been destroyed. This tourist gaze of 'it has always been this way and will always be this way' is characteristic of Groys's view of contemporary art. It cannot be changed. You can only enjoy it as a tourist or be irritated by it.

Robbert Roos

The Dutch State Buildings Department (*Rijksgebouwendienst* (RGD)) has a long tradition of art in open (not always public) space in and around government buildings. The percentage formula in place since the 1950s has since become well-known: 0.5 to 2 percent of the construction budget is spent on an art project. This government policy has not only always been stimulating for artists, it has also had an effect on other commissioning clients. In the Netherlands this kind of initiative has maintained the approach to art in the open (and public) space at a high level, even in comparison with other countries. Following the lead of the RGD, more and more organizations took an interest in art around buildings. The ambitions for commissioned art increased accordingly throughout the intervening decades: from wall reliefs in the 1950s through monumental interventions that encompassed whole ceilings and squares in the 1970s to the current conceptual projects, which do not always have an evident visual form by any means. This shows how the discipline has matured, but also the courage the departments and organizations involved have shown in dealing with this sort of commissions. It also shows that the state – in spite of budgets under pressure – still plays an important role as a commissioning client in the development of new ideas in the visual arts. This is demonstrat-

Kunst bij Rijksgebouwen 2000–2003 ('Art and State Buildings 2000–2003'), Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment/State Buildings Department and Episode Publishers, Rotterdam 2004, ISBN 9059730062, €21,50

ed in the book *Kunst bij Rijksgebouwen 2000–2003* ('Art and State Buildings 2000–2003'), which summarizes the most recent projects.

This is not the first time the RGD has published a collection of completed projects. Various formats have been used, from dry encyclopaedic books to smaller *cahiers* with articles about five or six projects. The edition on the 2000–2003 period is quite heterogeneous in its organization. There is no clear line in content. There is an amalgam of projects, which immediately shows that a dictating vision from the top no longer applies. Projects are elaborated very specifically and autonomously per building. Chief Government Architect Jo Coenen, in his introduction, views this with some regret. He does not say so explicitly, but he seems to be favour of a more co-operative role for artist and architect in the conception of a building. He cherishes the memory of the collective artworks of the past. Margo Slomp, in her article, also notes a conceptualization of the project brief by the artists, resulting in artworks having more connection with the social context of the building than with its architectural conditions.

The book documents dozens of artworks, varying from architectonic constructions, glass panels, video projections and photographs to murals, text fragments, contemporary stained glass and traditional sculptures. For a number of



large projects a clear programme has been devised, as at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, for which a group of well-known non-Western artists – including Andries Botha, Mechac Gaba, Moshekwa Langa, Cildo Meireles and Chen Zhen (along with Dutch artists Roy Villevoey and Remy Jungerman) – contributed a work. Another programmatic example was twelve artists and designers filling in display-style windows at the Doggershoek youth correctional facility in Den Helder.

A demonstration of how experimental the RGD would like to be is a project by Stan Lewkowicz, a implementation of which was attempted in The Hague: a pink cloud over the Bruggebouw West building spanning the Utrechtse Baan thoroughfare. The high winds so close to the sea made the design unfeasible, but author Hans van den Ban celebrates it as 'one of the high points of our collection'. RGD commissions often involves buildings that are not freely accessible, with a clearly defined group of users. This challenges the artists into emphatically playing on the context of the building and seeking interaction with its users. In this process they do not shy away from a critical attitude toward the function or nature of the building. This attitude sometimes leads to projects that are more sociological than artistic in nature. For the prison in Zwolle, the available

budget was even split in two: one portion was spent on an identity-giving sculpture at the entrance of the institution and the other went to buy materials and equipment for printing T-shirts in the prison's creative department (partly in the form of workshops run by artists). In this way the RGD continues to try to expand and explore the boundaries of art commissions.

Artist 'by chance'

Sophie Berrebi

Considering both the impact of Sophie Calle's work on emerging artists and the success of her recent retrospective at the Pompidou Centre, *Sophie Calle M'as-tu-vue?* comes at the right moment and seems destined to live on beyond the exhibition as an essential compilation of Calle's projects since 1978. In hoping to meet these different demands, it is at once an artist's book, a critical overview and a catalogue. This makes for its breadth but also explains certain weaknesses.

The padded cover, small format and soft pink paper have a diaristic intimacy, and the inside resembles a scrapbook displaying an accumulation of documents printed on paper of various qualities and sizes. These range from facsimiles of diary pages to postcard-sized installations shots printed on glossy paper. Calle's works are presented each on a few pages and arranged chronologically and thematically. This cannot fail to disappoint those who remember the original formats and the elegant layouts of the artist's early books, such as *L'Hotel*, (Les Editions de l'Etoile, 1984) whose

The book attractively demonstrates the breadth of the art policy of the State Buildings Department, but one must be prepared to flip through a great many pages to find a specific project or a particular artist. The book is frankly a mess to navigate because of an excess of numberings, totally incomprehensible project indices and impenetrable references. The

Sophie Calle M'as-tu-vue?

Prestel verlag, Munich/Berlin/
London, New York, 2003
ISBN 3791330357, €72,25

peculiarity made them sit somewhere between art and literature. *Sophie Calle M'as-tu-vue?* instead contains mostly extracts of her pieces arranged differently from previous publications. Sections on projects are interspersed with installation views, and both contribute to trace a genealogy of the displacement of her work from the book to the exhibition form, while also emphasising the conceptual aspect of a body of work that is largely context-specific and in a sense only exists through its reproduction.

The multi-layered layout enables the reader to browse and accumulate clues towards a constantly shifting portrait of the artist. The enigmatic quality of the image documentation accounts for the fascination exerted by the extensive biographical interview of Sophie Calle by Christine Macel, and the clinical psychological portrait commissioned by Damien Hirst. Next to these, the other texts range from the anecdotal (by the novelist and friend Olivier Rolin) to the unnecessarily complex: an essay by Christine Macel that counterpoints, with little

cover turns out to be a poster, which may be meant to serve as a navigation aid, but when a poster is needed to find one's way in a book, the damage has been done. Perhaps its design (by Richard Niessen) is an example of an artwork in itself, with a more experimental approach, but then it is one of the few projects in which the experiment is a failure.



notable results, the theme of the death of the author with Calle's use of authorship. More intriguing is Yve-Alain Bois' contribution, which follows a previous essay published on the occasion of Calle's first Parisian retrospective in 1991. Here, Bois skips from one topic to another, toying briefly with an idea before remarking upon a set of coincidences. As such, his essay pleasantly evokes Calle's working process but is a disappointment inasmuch as it refuses to engage with Calle's work on an art-critical or historical level. Whereas the installation views emphasise the visual in Calle's work, none of the texts strives to discuss and position her work in relation to conceptual art, performance, or narrative fictions. Instead, most of the texts follow the artist's personal mythology, presenting her through many anecdotes as an accidental artist, an outsider who candidly goes to ask Vito Acconci if he doesn't think her 'following pieces' resemble too closely his own. One could have hoped for a more in-depth pondering of such questions on the occasion of a mid-career retrospective.

Arnoud Holleman

Hans Aarsman, *Onzichtbaar Gent, foto's en diagrammen van de stad / Invisible Ghent: Photos and Diagrams of the City*
Published by Gent Cultuurstad
vzw, 2004
ISBN 9080672238, €9,50



There is less can be said about the quality of the photos in the book *Onzichtbaar Gent / Invisible Ghent* by photographer and writer Hans Aarsman than about the context in which they are set. Aarsman is a photographer who works from the conviction that photography today is hardly in a position to produce meaningful images, if at all. With him there is no fuss about rigidly styled compositions or jargon about photographic technicalities and difficult lenses. His photos are always pretty close to snapshots. The focus is not so much on what the photo shows, but more that it is actually noticed. The photo is the corpse that you have to turn your back on in order to grasp something of the cause of death or the motives of the murderer. The photos only make sense when placed in context. Watch Aarsman click away. See how it is seen by him and how the image is assumed into Aarsman's personal view of the world, which he propagates in books, columns and theatre monologues as well as in his photos. And observe how in that fragmentation it is about just one thing: the discrepancy between human intentions and their actual effect, the world as a dumping ground for dashed good intentions.

In the case of *Onzichtbaar Gent / Invisible Ghent* you therefore have to look further. Notice also how the commissioner, Gent Cultuurstad ('Ghent, City of

Culture'), peers over the shoulder of the photographer with its own good intentions. It is remarkable that Aarsman should have been commissioned to capture the urban identity of Ghent. Aarsman, as a Dutchman foreign to this city, fits in the tradition of creating identities, in which the outsider is needed in order to recognize specific qualities. The fact that Ghent is preoccupied with its own identity is also part of a widespread renewed interest in 'the local' as a counterweight to ever-sprawling globalization. In Belgium, all the major cities have received funds specifically intended for this purpose from central government. It therefore speaks volumes about the kind of identity mentality of the commissioners when they choose a photographer who works from the paradox of the 'unchosen' image, who gives a wide berth to the pitfalls of representation, someone who in the introduction to his book does not even consider himself capable of finding anything typical of Ghent amidst '... leaflets that come through the letterbox, the curlers, the ugly buildings, the beautiful buildings, the ashtrays ...', in short '... the endless procession that passes by us every day.' Besides his photos, Aarsman does present us with graphics about, among other things, dishes on restaurant menus and the number of patches of chewing gum per square metre

on the pavements in front of eight buildings in Ghent, but that doesn't provide any sublime characterization either. Everything about *Onzichtbaar Gent / Invisible Ghent* exudes a lack of faith in making generalities specific and in the pronouncement of definitive statements. In this way, *Onzichtbaar Gent / Invisible Ghent* betrays – deliberately or accidentally – the commissioner's ambivalence towards its own 'good' intentions. The organization therefore seems to recognize the Sisyphean quality of the whole problem surrounding the shaping of identity: the quest for identity only arises when there is awareness of a shortcoming. Someone who knows who he is simply doesn't ask the question. Yet the instant the issue is raised, as a modern human being or as a city in search of a self-image one can do nothing but repeat the question ad infinitum. Every answer is as worthy as it is temporary, until the day that you simply forget the question. Only then can you be reconciled with what you are and, *bien étonné*, feel yourself connected with Deleuze – a thinker who categorically refused to view the world based on a notion of identity – and ascertain in unison with him that it is not about the answer, but about sidestepping the issue.

Arie Altena

In May 2004 the winners of the Prix Ars Electronica 2004 were announced: the Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>) and Creative Commons (<http://www.creativecommons.org>). Both websites look rather unspectacular at first glance. The Wikipedia has the appearance of a portal site circa 1996 and Creative Commons exclusively discusses intellectual property law, licensing and copyright. Boring. Is this what Internet culture is all about these days? If one didn't know any better one would think it's definitely run out of steam. But appearances can be deceiving. Creative Commons is a successful initiative to provide a legal foundation to new attitudes on intellectual property, re-use and components of information that have been created on the Internet. The Wikipedia is an online encyclopaedia, the content of which consisting of contributions from users. It runs on a *wiki*, software that enables anyone to add content directly and correct or expand on contributions, without logging in and without registration. Wikis guarantee, technologically speaking, as high a level of freedom for all users as possible, but apparently human decisions are still necessary, and users are excluded.

What must be sorted out in order that as much freedom as possible is guaranteed on the Internet and moreover that a proper exchange of thoughts and ideas is established, is the central subject of *My First Recession*, by Geert Lovink, one of the Netherlands' earliest Internet critics. Lovink is known for his involvement with the DDS, Nettime and Next Five Minutes, among others.

Geert Lovink, *My First Recession: Critical Internet Culture in Transition*, NAI Publishers in association with V2_Organisatie, Rotterdam 2004, ISBN 9056623532, €22,50



He has been writing about (and on) the Internet for more than 10 years. *My First Recession*, Lovink's Ph.D. thesis, is his third book in a short time. It was preceded by *Uncanny Networks*, a collection of interviews conducted by Lovink over the years with prominent figures in the field of media theory and the development of the Internet as a political and cultural space, and *Dark Fiber* (essays dating from 1996 to 2001). After years of online writing and after the end of the Internet hype, it was evidently time for a critical survey. How did it happen? What have we learned? How does it work in practice? What must we do to guarantee democratic and meaningful communication on the Internet in the future?

In *My First Recession* Lovink analyses the way communities function as social networks. The book consists primarily of case studies on projects in which Lovink himself has been involved: discussion lists on net criticism, net art and free software, an experiment with streaming media, art education and new media, and 'open publishing' projects like the collaborative weblog Discordia.us. These are put in perspective by a chapter in which the ideas of legal expert Lawrence Lessig, philosopher Hubert Dreyfus and sociologist Manuel Castells are briefly examined in relation to the Internet. Wikis and Creative Commons are not explicitly discussed, though they are both perfect illustrations of Lovink's pragmatic vision of the Internet.

In *My First Recession* we get an insider's view from an activist immersed in theory and tried and

tested by practice. The book is a 'call to engagement and responsibility' spurred by concern about freedom on the Internet in an era of spam filters, copyright battles, bureaucracy, firewalls and the demand for security. The battle that must be fought for the freedom of the Internet, according to Lovink, is a social battle, not a technological one. Lovink concretely asks in the case studies about the boundaries you run into in 'dirty' practice – boundaries that any webmaster, discussion leader or moderator has to deal with. How do you guarantee that everyone's voice is heard? And how do you make sure one individual does not ruin it for everyone else? (In Internetspeak: how do you handle *trolls*?) Lovink is a radical pragmatist; he always reasons based on the situation as it presents itself and looks for practical solutions. A practical solution is not the solution that an ideal theory would require; it is not the ideal solution of a technocrat, but instead a solution that works for people and, within the given circumstances, guarantees as free an exchange of ideas as possible, in the knowledge that you cannot please everybody and that someone will always be left out. This, after all, is what the practice of anything from mailing lists to wikis shows. Lovink rightly states: 'I have never seen 100% "free" projects, there are always limitations, whether of knowledge, race and gender boundaries, or other cultural factors such as language.' (p. 242) Moreover, survival and durability are more important for a community than any one definition of absolute freedom, for 'it

takes years to build up a social network – and only days to destroy it'. Lovink, himself a product of leftist activism, here shows himself to be critical of the call for unlimited freedom propagated by both libertines and activists.

Lovink views social networks as actors that play a part in shaping technology. He calls in Linus Thorvalds, the man behind Linux, to back him up: 'It is society that changes technology, not the other way round'. That may well be, but Lovink also recognizes the effects of technology on the functioning of social networks. Technology is not an alien power assailing democracy; Lovink rightly asserts that democratic rules are imbedded in technological systems and software. It is, after all, software that partly regulates how we can and may communicate.

According to Lovink, democracy is an 'agonistic culture', a culture of actions, of doing – not a collection of laws and procedures arrived at by consensus. He subscribes to Chantal Mouffe's idea of a radical democracy, in which the various voices in the public space are mobilised to shape democracy and consensus is viewed as a 'temporary result of provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power that always entails some form of exclusion' (p. 23). Lovink may have borrowed this view of democracy from Mouffe, but it is also based on 10 years of writing net criticism, initiating and moderating discussions. If this book teaches us anything, it is that concept-oriented communication on the Internet is only possible thanks to social and political as well as technological factors. Moreover, decisions on technology are made by people, not always at a level where the Internet citizen has influence. People willing to take action, keep a finger on the pulse and provide criticism are

constantly needed; they provide democracy.

Lovink blames the fact that, for instance, no workable economic model has been found for publishing text or music on the Internet (a micro-payment system is in fact feasible) in part on the neoliberal *zeitgeist*, typified by the right to be left alone – don't like this site? build one yourself! – and a blind faith in technicians – they'll solve the problems.

Laissez-faire, says Lovink, offers no solutions. We must act politically. It is clear why Wikipedia and the Creative Commons are important projects within the context of Lovink's vision. They both show that we may still cherish hope for open publishing. They also show that it does not just happen. We have to roll up our sleeves in the world of 'dirty politics'. We must design and support Creative Commons licences. Democracy and communication do not happen by themselves.

Lovink's radical pragmatism is winsome, as is his realistic view of freedom on the Internet. One might fault him for not sketching grand new vistas and not presenting things in a better light. But the reason for that is that Lovink as sought out practice for the last 15 years, instead of, let's say, letting his imagination run wild in writing. Coming up with a critique of Lovink's findings is in fact no simple matter. I think there are two possibilities. A fundamental criticism of his vision could address the clinging to an old definition of democracy and politics – for although technologies change and with them society, in Lovink's thinking the idea of a negotiative democracy as an ideal remains intact. Isn't a different radical vision needed in this regard? A sharper theorization of the relationship between technology and social dimensions would also be

welcome. At the moment, amidst all the examples of practice, it remains somewhat underexposed. In addition, it is possible to offer criticism based on empirical observation, by looking at how the parts of the Internet outside Lovink's field of vision function, such as commercial chat sites, instant messaging, web forums, Kazaa and Bittorrent. But one might well arrive at conclusions that are quite close to what Lovink says. It may not all be spectacular and may even seem a bit boring, but the age of speculation is long past.

How Big is Your Monograph?

Sven Lütticken

Size matters: it would be absurd to maintain that the dimensions of catalogues and other books devoted to artists are irrelevant. The books usually get bigger as an artist gets older and his or her career proceeds successfully; the kids have to make do with less. The self-published work *Denkmal* ISBN 9080842419 by Jan De Cock is therefore something of a provocation: three sections, of which one is very thick, in a sturdy box. The whole thing is about the size of a phonebook. For an artist his age this is remarkable, but it is not an isolated phenomenon: Jan De Cock's whole practice as an installation artist is expansive. His geometric yet densely packed, at times almost Escherian constructions of chipboard and timber (with such titles as *Randschade* ('Collateral Damage') and *Denkmal* have engendered a kind of doubling and fragmentation of the exhibition space in many an art institution. What this expansive nature of De Cock's work ultimately signifies, what its artistic gains are, remains to be seen.

Aside from a section of large colour photos of De Cock's installation (*Denkmal 9*) in the library of the University of Ghent, the publication consists of a thick section of illustrations of De Cock's own work and pictures the size of postage stamps, arranged in 'modules', which serve as reference material, as well as English translations of essays by various authors. A notably thinner section contains the Dutch versions of these texts and the same pictorial material, but in black and white

Jan De Cock – Denkmal

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Auguste Gevaertstraat 15, 1070
Brussels, €79,00



and often smaller. Not just the format but the authors underscore De Cock's ambition: Luk Lambrecht seems to be here less as a critic than as an exhibition curator who has given De Cock commissions, while Wouter Davidts and Marc De Kesel serve to provide substantive depth and Chris Dercon more or less connects the two sides (curatorship and analysis). Both Dercon and Lambrecht mention their experiences with De Cock ('I first met Jan De Cock when he was working as an assistant cameraman'), while Davidts and De Kesel opt for a more detached analysis.

In his text, Dercon threads together Derconian references that mainly revolve around 'Cinema': Deleuze, Straub/Huillet, Badiou, Damisch. His suggestion that De Cock has ideas that are 'like films', and that the large cibrachrome slides in light boxes on which De Cock records his installations can be related to the '*image-temps*' of the *nouvelle vague* (in which movement is made subordinate to the direct experience of time), remains rather vague and therefore facile. In the clusters of small pictures De Cock has included various film references, particularly a lot of Godard, but whether and to what extent it makes sense to analyse his installations in cinematic terms remains a question after reading Dercon's text. Whereas one can assume that the film references in De Cock's pictorial material come from a long fascination on the artist's part, the inclusion of Giotto paintings seems rather a short-term decision based on Marc De

Kesel's essay: De Kesel places De Cock's work within the history of the Western representational paradigm that began to manifest itself with Giotto. Before that the image was an icon intended to take the viewer away from earthly reality, toward God. With the Renaissance, art became the representation of earthly reality, in which God was incarnated as Christ. Eventually this produced a completely secular representation space; when only visible presences can be re-presented, there is no place left for the divine. De Kesel's argument is largely identical to an earlier text, a lecture he once gave, but now he places De Cock's work against this backdrop. In the process, he uses historical terms in a rather elastic manner: the space of representation is suddenly labelled 'modernist', and this is effortlessly linked to the 'modernist' forms De Cock uses in his installations. But modernism in the stricter sense of the term was often critical toward representation, and aimed to replace representation with the presence of pure colour and form. One can question whether this attempt succeeded and whether modernism did not in fact remain trapped in the representational paradigm, but De Kesel bypasses this issue entirely.

Wouter Davidts, in a text that is brilliant but ultimately not always convincing, focuses particularly on the *Denkmal* that De Cock exhibited at Victor Horta's Palais des Beaux-Arts (now Bozar) in Brussels for the Prix de la Jeune Peinture Belge:

a sort of abstract model of the building's central hall, the so-called 'Sculpture Hall'. Davidts uses this work to analyse the relationship between Marcel Broodthaers and De Cock and to polemicize against contemporary neo-avant-gardists who wish to erase the line between art and life or between art and politics. Scornfully Davidts recalls how after 1968 the central hall was transformed into a cosy, multi-functional 'animation hall', and how Broodthaers always resisted this sort of attempt at livening up and humanizing the museum space. Broodthaers was sceptical about attempts to reconcile and merge art and life, and Davidts is right in criticizing their present-day equivalents. He also takes aim at artists who too easily base their work on a clear-cut message and use art and the museum as substitutes for activism. This has devalued the museum 'and turned it into a kind of "sheltered workshop", the only place where well-intentioned and subversive "social proposals" can be put forward.' In response to this one could argue that while the content-focused politicians and social workers neglect the artistic context and merely use it pragmatically in order to propagate their message, De Cock's work betrays a fetishist fixation on that context, which is just as much of an impoverishment in relation to Broodthaers. Broodthaers recognized that the museum was a place of alienation, displacement, re-presentation, and that art cannot be subsumed in 'life', but that does not mean that he was completely fixated on the museum and isolated it from the rest of society. In Davidts's interpretation Broodthaers the dialectician is reduced to an acquiescent citizen.

De Kesel also polemicizes

against content-fixated political art, and argues that representation is now the business of visual culture, while art, within the overwhelming visibility of this visual culture, should in fact be showing the invisible. This is no longer God, who used to be the support for representation, but rather 'the frame of what is visible'. Art must 'fold the representation in on itself', the way a painted angel does in Giotto's *Last Judgment* in Padua. But must this, in contemporary art, really take the form of a virtuoso play with the container of the museum? Might it not also lead to working with concrete representations, by which the work might even – the horror – acquire a political dimension, however indirect and ineffectual? This certainly applied to Broodthaers and his poetic analysis of the ideology of the eagle in art and visual culture. Whereas Broodthaers and others of his generation (Smithson, Buren, Haacke) elaborated the dialectic between artistic space and the 'outside world' – for example the relationship between the museum and advertising, between artistic place and urban space, between museum trustees and their business interests – De Cock focuses much more exclusively on the museum space. This space is abstracted, mirrored, fragmented, yet he seldom directs his gaze – as Broodthaers did with his meta-museum – on the representational aspect of the museum. Jan Vercruyse and kindred artists from the 1980s actually seem to me to form the true (repressed) model for De Cock's work. They too made rarefied meta-representations of the museum container, albeit with an emphatic melancholy that has been exchanged in De Cock's work for an unrestrained use of the more utopian

moments of modern art – which are, however, employed in a museological fashion, stripped of their rough political edges. The photo series *Tempus mortis* is nevertheless interesting, showing mainly deserted, monumental places in Eastern Europe. Integrating such images into the installations might – as with Günther Förg in the 1980s – open up the work on to other contexts.

Perhaps De Cock's work is indeed a necessary counterpoint to artists who emphasize content in a naive way, but it is merely the other side of the coin – that is to say, equally one-sided. It focuses on the art world as an ultimately unstable, empty place without foundations, in which representations have to turn in upon themselves, but leaves it at that. Working with the void in the heart of the representation turns into a complacent – albeit virtuoso – representation of the void. This void is then mass-produced and increasingly blown out of proportion, as an expansive marginal note on the state of art in the McGuggenheim era. It is at the very least an interesting spectacle, compellingly staged in this book – but perhaps it is not much more than that.