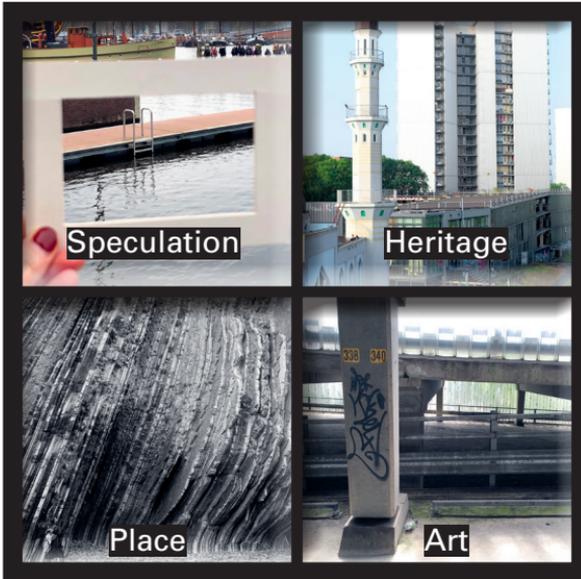


Ways of Knowing



How can a combination of anthropology, arts, heritage, and design help us better understand our daily life in the city? To answer this question, this booklet collects articles from thinkers and doers, all of whom look at the city and urbanity in their own way; they are connected by their social involvement and historical sensitivity. Their social involvement comprises the urgency they feel to actively contribute to making our society more livable, sustainable, and inclusive. Their historical sensitivity translates into a fascination with history and the way in which the past still affects the present.

WAYS OF KNOWING

Based on the Reinwardt Academy's Artist in Residence programme 2019 curated by Marit van Dijk with the participation of

VYJAYANTHI V. RAO

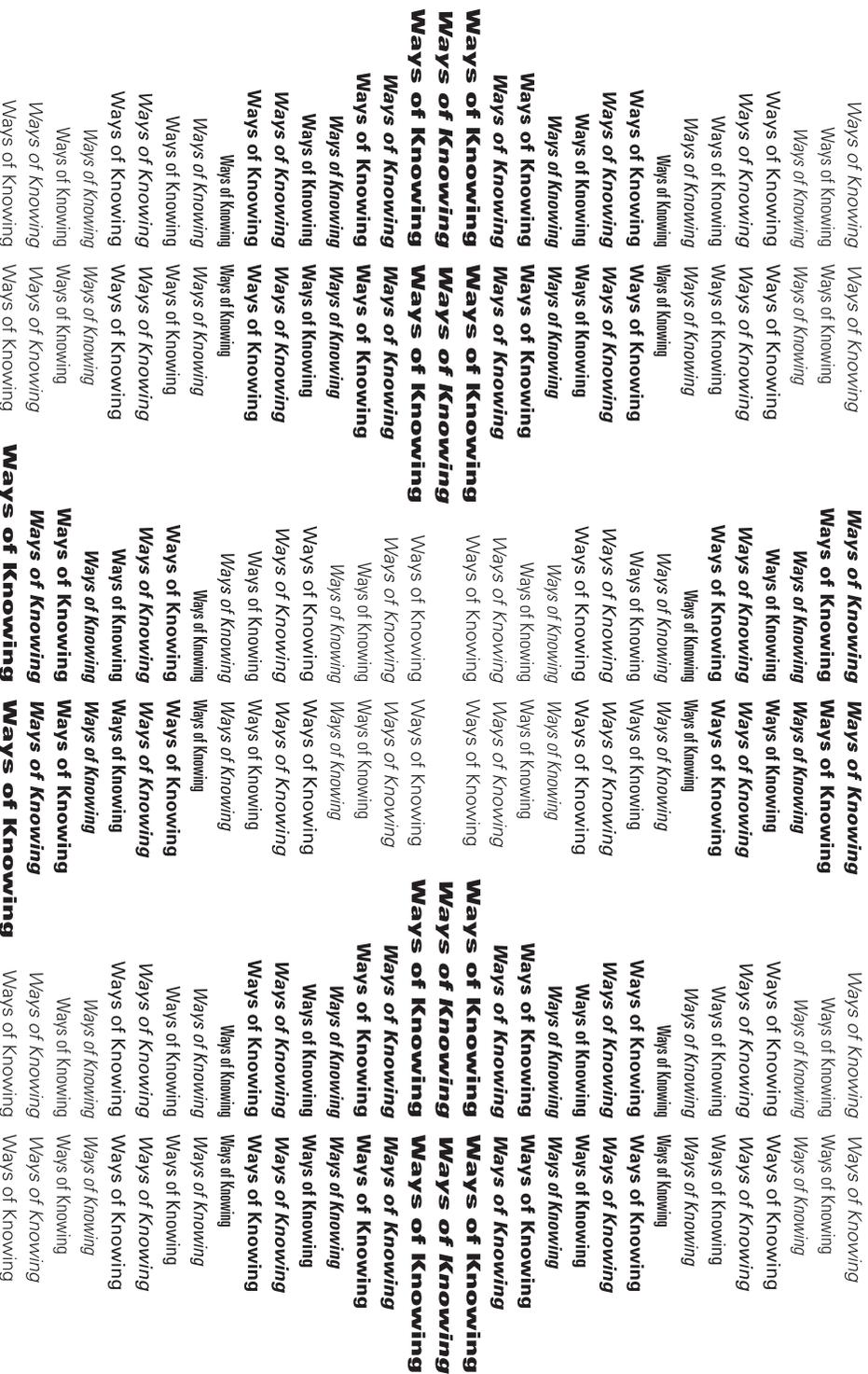


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1

Introduction

Hester Dibbits

How can a combination of anthropology, arts, heritage, and design help us better understand our daily life in the city? To answer this question, this booklet collects articles from thinkers and doers, all of whom look at the city and urbanity in their own way; they are connected by their social involvement and historical sensitivity. Their social involvement comprises the urgency they feel to actively contribute to making our society more livable, sustainable, and inclusive. Their historical sensitivity translates into a fascination with history and the way in which the past still affects the present.

This booklet is a spin-off from the work of Artist in Residence (AIR) Vyjayanthi V. Rao at the Amsterdam University of Arts (AHK). The AIR programme took place in 2019: a time when education and research on location were still widely possible. Invited to do so by the Reinwardt Academy, she stayed in Amsterdam for a month during which she explored

the city and had discussions about it with students and teachers of the AHK and many others.

Vyjayanthi Rao studies the intersections between urban planning, art, and design in contemporary cities. She combines ethnographic field work with mapping, film, and other forms of visual research. We learned of Vyjayanthi and her work in 2018, when she gave a lecture at Imagine IC: she explained how she had gradually started to feel uncomfortable producing her work as an anthropologist in a purely written way and how she had started to collaborate with architects and artists.

For applied universities such as the AHK, the combination of theory and practice is natural, but in the context of this AIR programme, lecturers and students had the opportunity to rethink this combination by speaking with an expert in anthropological conceptual thinking who is used to working in settings different from their own.

Speculation

One of the core concepts that Vyjayanthi chose to discuss and elaborate upon during her residency, is the concept of speculation. This has become increasingly popular in the arts over the last decade, partly thanks to Vyjayanthi Rao. In talks based on her publication 'Speculation Now: Essays and Artworks' (Duke University Press, 2015) during her stay in Amsterdam, Vyjayanthi showed how important it is

for heritage professionals to continue to think about speculation: giving attention to how we deal with 'the impossible' creates an opening to research different scenarios for the future, by asking the question 'what if...'

A perspective like that suits the Reinwardt Academy: we view heritage as the result of a negotiation that looks ahead to the future, but also deals with how we view our interaction with the past. We could view labelling things as 'heritage' as a type of quest for something to hold onto during uncertain times. With the concept of speculation however, the focus shifts to experimentation and design; it invites critical thinking about the way we treat heritage as a set of interventions in the now that give us direction toward how the future will look. More than enough reason to keep reflecting critically and carefully on the choices that we make. Methods from disciplines like anthropology and ethnology can offer concrete tools for this reflection.

To put her insights into practice, Vyjayanthi went to the Marineterrein and Amsterdam South East. She visited a large number of artists and organisations to study their impact on the local social connections. During the first week of her stay, she worked with Sudarshan Shetty, one of India's foremost contemporary artists. He shares her fascination with the creative solutions that people come up with to overcome the challenges they are confronted with in their daily lives. His work tries to uncover what it means to give everyday objects and practices the aura of a work of art through the act of curation.

Core research questions

The choice for Shetty – an artist who ‘curates’ the common into art through conscious interventions – fits seamlessly into the central theme of the residency: the interaction between big social dilemmas and individual artistic projects. That interaction forms the basis of Vyjayanthi’s urban anthropology. She examines the city like an artistic space where artistic interventions visualise links between socio-cultural systems and political forces. In a series of three masterclasses, Vyjayanthi elaborated on the relation between spatial and social changes: how does the city change? And how do city dwellers navigate around those dynamics? And more specifically: how do artists get inspiration from their urban surroundings? And how do their interventions carry the potential to influence places and social relations?

In the first masterclass, Vyjayanthi showed how the development of cities across the world is connected to ‘speculative finance capital’.

The second masterclass similarly examined the transformations across artistic practices in both the visual and performing arts over the late 20th and early 21st century as global institutional networks have gained hegemonic control over ideas of artistic value.

Vyjayanthi situates the simultaneous rise of research-based practices, participatory artworks

and the understanding of art as a tool for social justice in the context of these hegemonic institutions of creative practice, as counter-propositions that produce different kinds of archives and dynamic understandings of heritage. Special attention was to be paid to the various disciplines and research methods from the social sciences and the humanities that are currently influencing research-based art – including archival research and ethnography.

The third masterclass brought together the ideas explored in the first two masterclasses to explore the interconnections between the rise of virtual, speculative networks in urban worlds and hegemonic understandings of creative practice. Vyjayanthi showed through examples that an experimental, artistic focus on everyday life and experience as a site of creativity can refer to sources beyond the immediate present and thus beyond notions of ‘failure’ that tend to form the basis for paradigm shifts and creative innovation in urban practice and other spheres of life.

The masterclasses also formed the basis for the elective course Urban Practice as Art Form. Ten students participated in the masterclasses, read articles, and discussed the contents with Vyjayanthi. They concluded the course with an assignment that made them look for a location and an ‘opposite location’. Second year students could complement their research course by participating in a mapping session. Thirteen students made use of this opportunity. Students were sent out to map the Reinwardt Academy in one hour. The goal was to get an impression of the possibilities

of creative research and spatial understanding. You can find examples of the results of both second and third year students in this publication.

The grand finale of the AIR programme took place on the Marineterrein, where Vyjayanthi presented her findings to a broader audience, which consisted of people associated with the AIR: designers from creative studio Vinger.nl, artists of Soundtrackcity, and employees of the Reinwardt Academy, the AHK, the Marineterrein, and museums in the area. In Vyjayanthi's research into the interaction between big social dilemmas and individual artistic projects, she had already written down her initial findings. "I see the Marineterrein and the Bijlmer as places where a new, informal infrastructure has been created by artists, scientists, and heritage professionals, and where the future is considered with creativity and imagination. These places form a new infrastructure that can eventually become a new legacy, a new inheritance, a new heritage."

It is not about random artistic interventions. It is about interventions that come from a sensitive approach to the existing local context. It is that combination of creativity and sensitivity that makes them especially valuable to heritage professionals, because they show how that combination is fuelled by (or emerges from) a desire to attentively and inquisitively 'get acquainted' with a place where people live and the interactions that take place there.

This booklet offers inspiration for heritage professionals and others who want to get to know the

world around them in a different way. We motivate you to take the notions and ideas from this booklet back into daily life and see if you can know, sense, look or feel from a different perspective.

Contents

The contributions from participants in this booklet have been compiled by AIR curator Marit van Dijk. As a collection they invite us to think about the question how the combination of anthropology, arts, heritage, and design can help us better understand daily life in the city. The leading motto is: look carefully, in various ways, using all your senses.

A major source of inspiration for this booklet was John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*. This classic read has been a source of inspiration to people around the world and was part of his TV-series with the same title that revolutionised the relation between the broad public and art history. Both the accessibility and the function inspired us to offer information that you take back in the real world and that changes your perspective. We took this idea and changed it into a collection of essays by everyone that was involved in the AIR programme. With this booklet, we offer combined explorations and showcase different ways of seeing. It includes essays about the Marineterrein, the museum in a hat, and ethnographic practices by students, professionals, and artists from all over the world. Below, we will briefly set out the contents of this booklet in order to clarify the different ways of knowing that were part of this programme.

We present the essays as different kinds of lessons: in ways of seeing, learning, and knowing. That does not imply this is the way in which such a text must be interpreted or that there are not several ways. We do this in the aspiration to present a kind of toolbox: a set of possible interpretations that stimulate the senses that help us observe everyday life.

Nancy van Asseldonk, lecturer at Reinwardt Academy, asks designer and guest lecturer Anika Ohlerich how pre-existing knowledge matters if we start looking at a site in many different ways. They focus on the Marineterrein: one of the research sites of this residence and part of their course Designing Heritage.

Mieke Bernink, head of research at Film Academy, reflects on what you experience and what is omitted from an experience. Through the lens of film and filmmaking, she discusses ways of understanding the world from the scope of a (visual) story. Bernink: “[Art] can appeal to forms or instruments or methods of knowledge generation beyond those of rational thought as integrated in written language, such as perception and the different senses.”

As an anthropologist, Jule Forth shows how images are sustained by those who want to be seen in a certain way as well as by those who want to see what is shown. In her visual observations of Indian monks, she confronts the persistent imagery – targeted at tourists – and tries to break through this imagery with a camera in hand.

Danielle Kuijten encourages us to keep an open mind to alternative views on what is worth preserving and to take those alternative views into account in our decision-making process. People negotiate lived space. Give people the opportunity to gather and research their divergent positions. Her message is: see the other person by carefully listening to each other.

Marit van Dijk establishes how difficult it is to denormalise your own observations and argues in favour of awareness of your own view. She explains this through a reflection on the phenomenon of zoos. By creating barriers, both literally and figuratively, physically and in our mind, we cannot see what is truly happening and we persist in dealing with animals in an unnatural way.

Reinwardt alumna Sari Bekker lets us look through her eyes at the complexity of the locality of everyday life. As an example, she uses a sticker that was seen throughout Eindhoven some time ago. Voted a ‘typically Eindhoven’ object, the sticker became an icon of the city and it started a second life in dozens of other places, even abroad.

The visual essay by Martin la Roche shows how the concept of the museum – taking everyday things and placing them outside their context – can help us denormalise. La Roche asks artists to contribute an item to his Musée Légitime, which is small enough to carry in a hat. He makes a selection and on occasion shows the collection to his public.

Roos Vreman, now an alumna of the Reinwardt Academy, researched art in the public space as part of the elective course of the AIR programme. Based on an examination of a graffiti text, she shows the kind of new perspectives you are offered if you look at the ordinary as something extraordinary.

Carefully mapping out everyday activities and routines spatially: that was the assignment given to second year students as part of the AIR programme. A selection of their maps has been included in this publication, hoping that future students of the Reinwardt Academy will repeat these exercises and add their own maps to the collection.

In her closing essay Vyjayanthi places her experiences during her stay in Amsterdam in a broader context. She reflects upon how her residency built upon her earlier stay in Amsterdam, and how she gained new perspectives on the role of heritage in places where – as Vyjayanthi writes - a diversity of creative practices were unfolding. Approaching the urban as both a set and a setting, she offers us different possible lenses to explore these places as infrastructures where people meet to speculate on the future by creatively combining heritage, art and design. In her master classes..

Looking attentively while using all your senses is a crucial skill for anyone who wants to understand the complexity of everyday life and to stay well informed when dealing with the big challenges of our time. We take that insight as well as the practical tools and exercises with us in preparing the next AIR,

with the primary question: if different forms of knowledge should be seen and respected equally, how do we then speak from all these different types of knowledge as equals at the same table?

2

Designing Heritage

Nancy van Asseldonk
in conversation with
Anika Ohlerich

In 2015 the gates of the Marineterrein opened after having been closed for over 350 years. A secret, gated place in the midst of the city center of Amsterdam. Nowadays, the area is partially developed; it is being transformed step by step into a new urban quarter. In the course Designing Heritage, students were asked to roam around the Marineterrein, question the meaning of this place, and to depict that meaning on the spot. Nancy van Asseldonk, coordinator, lecturer, and researcher, discusses 'looking differently' with designer and guest lecturer Anika Ohlerich.

NA: According to John Berger, the way in which we look at art depends upon our experiences and how we position ourselves in the world. What we see is less spontaneous and natural than we might think. What we see relies on our habits and conventions. He compares this phenomenon with how children see art. They are still unbiased and thereby unhindered by knowledge of art history; instead children relate art

to their own knowledge and experience. At the same time, we explain the world around us with words. “The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. [...] The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.” How do you view the Marineterrein?

AO: When you enter the terrain for the first time, you are not sure what places you are allowed to enter. It’s an uncanny feeling. “Am I allowed to be here?” A student phrased it very well: “You feel as if you are in your neighbor’s garden.” You immediately sense that this is not an ordinary place, because it does not fit the familiar typology of streets, squares, parks, and courtyards. You feel as if you are not allowed to sit on a bench, even though you cannot determine the origin of that feeling. There are still markers on the terrain that refer to the navy, such as the high fences and signs that prohibit entrance. But if you are not familiar with the space, you do not understand the signs.

NA: If the Marineterrein could talk, what would it tell us? What do we see when we try to look without prejudice? On the first day of the course you let the students discover the terrain while looking through a passe-partout. Why?

AO: Unconsciously, people make pictures in their mind. The passe-partout forces you to take a more critical look at your own perspective. In many



Opdracht
Passe-partout,
Nov. 21, 2020.

Photo:
Camilla Bollen

ways, a photo is already a framework, but nowadays everybody takes pictures with their mobile phones. Because those lack a viewfinder, a conscious framework is also missing. With a passe-partout you learn to be more conscious of how you view and frame things.

NA: Berger was inspired by Walter Benjamin. “The invention of the camera has changed not only what we see, but how we see it.” At that time, the avant-garde was experimenting with photography and film, with perspective and tempo. The camera showed unknown places and reproduction techniques brought art within everyone’s reach, freed from the limitations of time and space. First through cinema, later on through television, and nowadays everywhere through our digital screens. The Marineterrein was closed off for centuries, accessible only to the few who were allowed to enter. How does this affect our view of it?

AO: It makes the terrain feel even more exclusive. It is like insider knowledge. In a short period of time, this place has become so popular that the gates sometimes close when it is too crowded. The reproducibility of images has made the Marineterrein very visible in little time. When you enter #marineterrein on Instagram, thousands of images will show up, mostly selfies. Taking a selfie in front of a certain object or at a certain place is an act of claiming ownership. It is the physical presence that counts. You claim ownership of public space by capturing your presence in that place and reproducing the image.



Instagram,
@mytraveltricks,
August 18, 2018.

NA: For students, the Marineterrein was the most popular swimming spot last summer: it was the place to be. I remember my first time at the Marineterrein well, just after the opening in 2015, still quite dilapidated and mysterious. Seen like that, every experience and every look is unique. Isn't that

what everybody does? Creating unique memories and perhaps sending these out into the world through selfies? According to Berger, an original artwork that is no longer visible in just one place but in every living room and on every screen, as a result of reproduction, is still unique, because every environment creates a unique framework, a different background. Isn't the Marineterrein unique for everyone because it forms new backgrounds and frameworks for new discoveries?

AO: It feels unique, but everybody takes the same pictures. You see many interchangeable cliché images, creating a stereotype of the way the Marineterrein is seen. A new period of time, a new function awaits the Marineterrein. But to what degree will everyone be free to discover this place for themselves? How long can these dynamics continue to exist? Or will new meanings be placed on the Marineterrein, removing that unbiased look? Today, the Marineterrein is being developed into a future-proof urban quarter focused on innovation. Its slogan is 'always moving'. Isn't that already directing your perception?

NA: The change of meaning can be manipulated according to Berger. Meanings change and can be changed. "The meaning of an image can be changed according to what you see beside it of what comes after it." (Berger, 1972). It is the silence, the standstill of a work that can move you to a time long forgotten. Silence can function as a corridor, as the frozen time that can generate a sense of history. Has that silence broken?



Exploring the terrain.

Photo:
Nancy
van Asseldonk

AO: In her workshop, Vyjayanthi encouraged her students to look at the city without any pre-existing knowledge and from their personal experience by asking questions such as 'Why am I here?' That is how we explored the terrain in different ways, not by transferring knowledge, but in other, more unexpected ways: running and dancing.

NA: Indeed, we have asked the students to explore the terrain in many different ways. To what degree does pre-existing knowledge still matter then?

AO: That is an interesting question. We are inclined to transfer knowledge in order to better understand an art piece or place and to feel in control of the indefinability of the terrain. In fact, we usually start with a knowledge transfer. This was actually an important dilemma for us: should we share the cultural history of this place with the students? And if so, at what stage? And when do you let students do their

own research? And will that make them view things differently? Is it relevant to know why a certain wall is curved and that this is also why the road is not entirely straight? Should you know what structure was once beneath here? Will that make you experience the place differently? Or do you only see these things when you already know? We have not figured that out yet. However, next year we will first focus even more on seeing and experiencing for yourself; the researching and gathering knowledge will come after that. This course, for us as much as for the students, is a study into the interactions between what we know of a place and how we see and experience it.

Workshop Designing Heritage, elective 2019-2020

Teachers and lecturers:

Nancy van Asseldonk, Jerzy Gawronski, Cecilia Hendriks, Liesbeth Jansen, Martin la Roche, Anika Ohlerich, Vyjayanthi Rao, Jacqueline Verheugen, Barbara Visser

Participants:

Melina Boersma, Carmilla Bollen, Maaïke Brink, Joes Hamelink, Sam Hooghoudt, Jacky van Leeuwen, Eline Postma, Olaf Sandvoort, Mischa Schoof, Jana Sevenhuijsen, Ayunda Stel, Lolita Storm, Dunja Vis, Lisa Witte, Stephanie van Zetten

3

Looking at film – Imagination as a Research Tool

Mieke Bernink

This text is based on a conversation with Mieke Bernink, head of research (lector) and head Master of Film at the Amsterdam University of the Arts. She is also the manager of the AIR programme. During the interview, we talked about the relation between speculation and filmmaking. We discussed how film can use different sensorial instruments, how positioning oneself as a maker is essential, and how uncertainty is an integral part of research.

Speaking to the senses / Mars

One of the differences between artistic research and the kind of research that is customarily done in universities or academic institutions is a dominance of the spoken or written word. In terms of the various instruments that we have to understand the world, academic research has a tendency to privilege the word, whilst art has many more modes of expression at its disposal. It can appeal to forms

or instruments or methods of knowledge generation beyond those of rational thought as integrated in written language, such as perception and the different senses.

Film, as an interdisciplinary medium, can draw from many different fields and use a multitude of instruments to design the stories it wants to tell. This is where artistic research differs from other types of research.

To illustrate this co-existing multiplicity, just look at the image above. It is made by one of our alumni, Maria Molina Peiró. She is doing a project on Río Tinto, a visually stunning area of Spain. The mining industry has hollowed out entire mountains, forming toxic mountain ranges



Photos:
Pipo Fernandez

and resulting in a Martian landscape with amazing colours and a red river. You look at it and you think “this is pure imagination, pure fantasy”, but it is also the area where Columbus started his journey to the Americas and the origin of a specific kind of fado music. Nowadays the landscape is used by NASA to test robots for use on Martian terrain. So, all these different timelines visibly and invisibly co-exist in the same place and because film allows the use of different media it can blend all these things together: you can have the visuals of the mining, the robots, and the fado playing in the background. That way, the film can address, better and more efficiently than writing can, the many and complex layers of the story of this area.



From where you speak / strata of stone

When making a film or when approaching a research subject, you need to know from where you speak. That is: you need to know why you have chosen a subject matter, how it relates to you, your background, your position, and how that relation to the subject affects your approach. Knowing from where you speak and also to whom you speak, makes it easier for a filmmaker to choose what to film, how to film it, and — through editing the material — how to address the spectator and create space for them. Because you do not want to prescribe how a viewer should 'read' a film, you want the spectator to ask questions, to use their imagination. Through the position you take with your work, you set the stage for a dialogue with your audience.

In the image above you can see a still from a film by Juan Palacios. He has filmed this area in the Basque country where you have strata of sheets of rock. It is not very big, a couple of kilometres, but it is an amazing reservoir of data about the earth. In his film, Juan sets in a fiction story that tries to speculatively



stills from
Permanent Being
by Juan Palacios

span the entire history of the earth. He questions anthropocentrism. The film dehumanizes the landscape as it shows how small the part is that we humans play. Can we give agency to the stones in the landscape? And how can you do that in cinema? In the image you can see the layers, but also how the scale of the image is related to the rock, not the human body.

Speculation / cult

Documentary filmmaking tends to stick to what it calls reality in the sense that a situation is analysed for how it came to be. It looks backwards rather than forwards. But you can also take a situation, moment, or place, take it into the future and try to understand the dynamics of that situation and its potentialities.



You see, speculation is not just part of sci-fi movies. It is an important part of filmmaking itself: it is part of cinematic storytelling. You could safely say that all fiction films start from asking the question 'what if' and then use that question to investigate possible answers.

In this 'what if'-attitude imagination is of great importance. Imagination has many different levels and occurs in many different ways. Obviously, academic studies also use the 'what if'-approach and one's imagination, but there it is much more boxed in. In art and artistic research, it is also seen as a source of knowledge, or a way to gather knowledge, again by investigating or trying out different options in one's head. With imagination also comes the notion of uncertainty. How do we deal with uncertainty? Can uncertainty have a space and a place within research?

One of the film master students is working on a film about his mother, who has been a cult follower all her life. He tries to see this continuous searching as a strength rather than a weakness. To depict this, he circumvents the topic: he does not deal with the question directly, but circles around it. He looks at the outside to say something about the inside. This is something we also do in our daily lives, if only we project meaning on the way other people dress.

Simultaneously, in film, there is a certain desire for the more speculative to be integrated into the documentary and for the everyday reality to become

part of fiction. Because let's face it: our reality is like sci-fi. As somebody once said: "What is fiction today will be documentary tomorrow."

4

Seeing Buddhist Monks

Jule Forth

In the midst of the Indian Himalayas, there is a small village called Spituk. Overlooking the village at 3307 meters altitude, stands Spituk Monastery. Surrounded by snowy mountain peaks and colourful prayer flags, it is currently home to a hundred Buddhist monks. They are part of the Gelug Order, one of the five main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Every January, they are joined by monks from branch monasteries – Stok, Sankar and Saboo – to celebrate the birthday of their orders' founder. Spituk Gustor, as this two-day festival is called, celebrates the victory of the good through meditative dances called chams. In addition to its religious meaning, Spituk Gustor is also a holiday for participating monks, their families, local visitors, and (inter)national tourists.

This (photo) essay centers around three monks who are affiliated with Spituk Monastery and Saboo Monastery; Stanzin Dumbag (32), Sonam Khangchen (36), and Thupstan Dorjay (23). In two visits

(2019 and 2020), I set out to document their daily life before, during, and after the festivities. I wondered in particular what monk life entails when moving away from the often romanticized and idealised views of Buddhism.

A romantic gaze?

When searching on Google Images for 'Buddhist monk India', the majority of images depict men dressed in orange-red robes, who are either studying or praying. These photographs are in harmony with the imagery of sober monks who dedicate their whole life to Buddha. The corresponding vast landscape, also referred to as distant 'unspoiled' locations, triggers a lonely contemplation which is often desired by visitors, foreign and local alike. Unsurprisingly, many of these images are, or have been, part of news articles and travel reports, constantly (re-)affirming this particular side of Buddhism. According to Urry (2011: 19), notions of this so-called 'romantic gaze' are often used in (Western) marketing and advertising.

On the other hand, Stanzin, Sonam, and Thupstan know exactly how they want to be seen. Cohen described this in an article on local-stranger interaction in photography: "locals often stage themselves in response to perceived touristic demands for authenticity" (Cohen 1992: 227). Monks I have encountered in Spituk are very much aware of how both foreign and domestic tourists perceive Buddhism and how they are supposed to behave. Let's have a



Photo 1

closer look at photo 2 and 3. I consider photo 2 to be a much more interesting photograph, because it shows the heaviness of the clothing and how they need each other to get dressed, etc. However, Stanzin specifically asked me to take photo 3, in which they are fully dressed and pose just before the start of the festivities.



Photo 2



Photo 3

During the festival, all monks are assigned different duties in and around the monastery. Some are dancing *chams*, while others collect donations at the entrance. At the end of the day, all the money is counted and part of it is divided among the monks. In 2019, I happened to be photographing in the main prayer hall – with permission – when a senior monk started to distribute money to all monks. When I viewed these images with Stanzin, he told me: “You can’t use this photograph where a monk is counting his received money. People will think bad about us when they see this”. The next year I stumbled upon the financial department in a backroom of the monastery (see photo 4). Nobody objected to these photographs, presumably because the context was not religious unlike the prayer hall in the photo from the previous year.



Photo 4

After the festivities, I stayed in touch with many monks via Instagram. When I shared images of Thupstan on my Instagram page, he replied to a gambling image of himself with a crying smiley; to a portrait of himself he replied “Wow”; and about a more traditional image of him cham dancing he said “Wow photo of the day... thanks”.



Photo 5

Photo 6

Photo 7

These examples imply that both money and gambling are very much part of the monks’ daily lives, even though they do not necessarily fit their orchestrated images of Buddhism. The same applies to other activities and/or duties, such as visiting relatives, doing leisurely activities including ice-skating, and monitoring visitors to the monastery. So tourists, photographers, and monks themselves consciously and unconsciously cultivate a certain imagery of Buddhist monks.



Photo 8



Photo 9

A critical visual approach

In the winter of 2019, I entered Spituk Monastery as a friend, rather than a researcher/photographer. In the winter of 2020, I entered Spituk Monastery as a friend and a researcher/photographer. Building on the previous visit, I now entered the monastery and the festival with a particular view of Buddhist monks. This focus on the mundane aspects of Buddhist's life instead of the festival itself is also seen in the images presented here. To put it in John Berger's words: "We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice". By using a camera, there is an even greater emphasis on framing and the choices you made. This constantly forces you to think about: what do I want to tell (or not tell) the people who will see these images.

5

Ways of Listening - in Search for Complexity

Danielle Kuijten

Imagine IC, a pioneering institution on heritage of daily urban life, was an important part of Vyjayanthi Rao's AIR, both as a personal liaison and as part of the network of creative industries that Rao observed for her research into the Bijlmermeer neighbourhood of Amsterdam, colloquially known as the Bijlmer. This text, based on an interview with the acting director and co-curator of Imagine IC, Danielle Kuijten, focuses on her perspectives on heritage. Whilst looking through the lens of the Bijlmer we talk about activism, gentrification, and finding nuance through an old parking garage.

Complexity

Heritage processes play an important role in understanding the dynamics of living and belonging. They are often aimed at finding commonalities, creating cohesion, and realising a sense of togetherness. According to Kuijten however, heritage should not be

about a consensus of, and for, the majority, but about a deep democratic approach where everybody has a voice. Even more so, this focus on consensus becomes problematic in what is called polyphony or polyphonic spaces. When using a multiculturalist approach, you focus on a cultural pluriformity, which creates situations where things are being reduced to tick boxes or labels. It is an exercise in finding commonalities and celebrating the differences but not putting these differences at the core of really trying to understand each other. Instead, Kuijten proposes a process that uses complexity to present nuanced images of our positions. She suggests approaching topics around heritage not from a community but a network perspective: a process that challenges deep listening, where the process of heritage-making is a dynamic flux that constantly denies and (re)affirms.

In practice this means that finding commonalities is good, but the differences within these commonalities can be even more important. In heritage processes, where everyone should have a voice, the complexity of emotions, of meaning making, is an essential ingredient.

Bridging

Imagine IC has been located in the Bijlmer, a neighbourhood in the Zuidoost borough of Amsterdam, for over 20 years. From the early years on, during the heydays of multiculturalism, Imagine IC focused on urban questions from a heritage

perspective, which they translated into projects around collecting, documenting, and presenting urban living. Today this approach is still present in their work, though they adopted a more local/glocal focus, using the Bijlmer as a lens to look at these questions.

The location of the Bijlmer in relation to the city centre is an interesting aspect to Kuijten when looking at the social archaeology. If you take the metro to the Bijlmer, you first leave Amsterdam before you get to enter it again. This is part of why government and residents alike experience a feeling of distance. That positionality was created through years of tensions between citizens and politics but is also a result of a great sense of self-sustainability and resilience. In some ways, the Bijlmer can appear like a parallel universe. And within these parallel universes, Imagine IC tries to address and identify urgencies from the Bijlmer to make them negotiable and visible and to share them as heritage of the city and the country.

For example, a few years ago Imagine IC ran a project about the 'Bijlmerramp', a horrible aviation disaster in which an airplane crashed into a residential high-rise, killing at least 43 people. Not only lives were lost, but also physical and social structures. Imagine IC looked for, found, and discussed the tensions and it supported better ways of listening, offering nuance to a dividing story. Kuijten explains that they were able to put political decisions about national mourning next to personal experiences, bringing them closer together.

Fabric

The Zuidoost borough hosts a variety of dynamics and differences. Most often when talking about Zuidoost, its hyper diversity is mentioned. But Zuidoost contains many more interesting angles to look at diversity. For instance the dichotomy between the neighbourhoods of Driemond and Bijlmer: both are administratively part of the borough Zuidoost. Driemond was a small village that was once usurped by Amsterdam, however, it still has its own sense of place that is the complete opposite of the very urban heart of the Bijlmer. The Bijlmer was newly developed as a modernist dream. Some of the older inhabitants in Driemond used to live in the polder Bijlmermeer before they were pushed out of their farms for the creation of this new neighbourhood. To this day, they still hold resentment towards the city of Amsterdam. The merging of this urban and culturally diverse Bijlmer and the village of Driemond with their own traditions shows how contradictory emotions coincide in this district. Take for instance the celebration of Sinterklaas with the contested figure of Zwarte Piet ('Black Pete'). In Driemond people feel strongly that the holiday should be celebrated unchanged with the figure of Zwarte Piet, whilst in the Bijlmer demonstrations against Zwarte Piet date back to the sixties. These people are different in many ways, but also share commonalities. They all have their own history which feeds into different ways of activism, but are also bonded by the fight for their living spaces against the central city government.

This pro-active civil participation has always inspired Kuijten, as many people in Zuidoost actively engage themselves with what they believe in. One of these examples of this engagement is Hart voor de K-buurt ('Heart for the K-neighbourhood'). This organisation has been involved in civil participation for many years. Kuijten clarifies that for her, civil participation is not just inviting citizens to be engaged as a mandatory tick box for your project, it is about making sure they have a seat at the table at different stages of the project and that they are actually listened to. This becomes apparent in something that happened a few years ago. At a certain point, local governments would frequently call for participatory moments where people could voice their opinions, but nothing was really done with this input. In response, Hart voor de K-buurt said: If we do not get a real seat at the table, to vote and actively think with the others, we will abstain from participating. We call for a participation strike. Finally, the local government caved and agreed to new and better practices. Kuijten also had to find and work on her approach to participatory practices. And it is still an ongoing process. She explains how in the beginning she arrived at gatherings with a clear outline of what she thought the project should be about. She had done her research and prepared questions she wanted to have answered by the participants. By doing that she learned that her mind was not open to really listen to the conversations and she would only hear what could connect to her questions. As soon as she stopped doing that, the meetings became so much richer. Now the conversations are open-ended. Answers should not need to fit set expectations, they are considered as moments that are part of an ongoing conversation.

This approach is really valuable especially in a changing and vibrant urban environment where people negotiate their lived space daily, with each other, with developers, and with local governments.

Modern monument

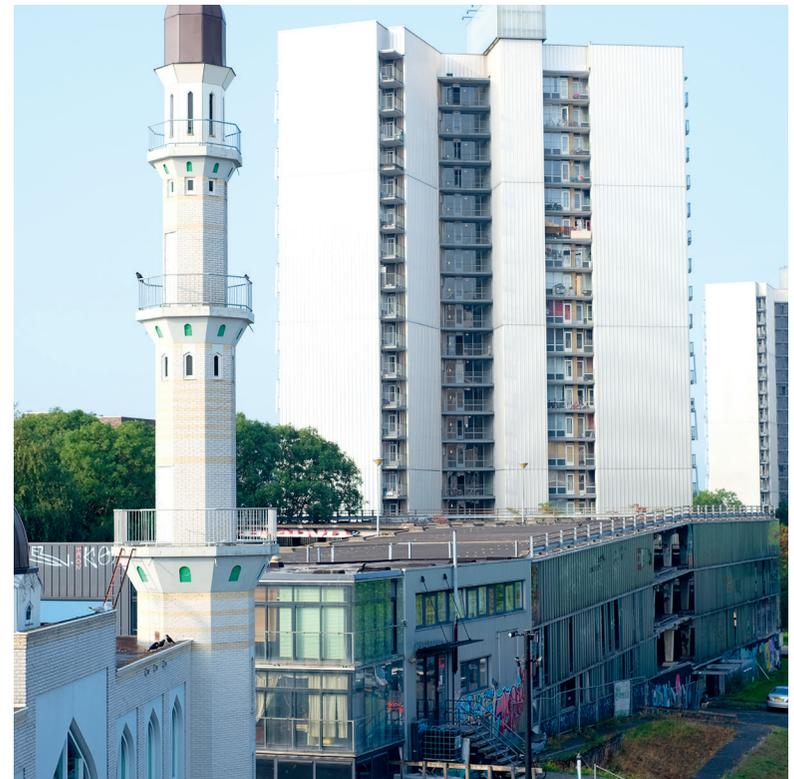
This value is exemplified in the case of Collection Kempering. A story about an abandoned parking garage that was eventually demolished in 2020, after almost four years of collective discussions about its meaning and relevance to the neighbourhood. The Kempering seemed like a regular parking garage, but in the minds of some people it carried many stories. Others were very happy to hear of the plans for its demolition. For them the empty garage was polluting their living environment. The municipal government on the other hand imagined that the decision to replace the garage with new housing would both please the local residents and fit the city's growth strategy. This tableau of perspectives with sometimes conflicting emotions was the start of the participation proces.

With the Kempering case, the question was: if we use participation in a different way, can we achieve more together? At first, people from the borough office were hesitant. But along the way, they noticed that if you take people seriously, they bring different things to the table that influence your perception on the value of something.

The parking garage is now gone, but people have reached that point together, in a process

where the different voices had equal value. Some people just needed the time to say goodbye, or for their hurt to be recognised, to be listened to and for their complaints not to be put aside. Even now that the parking garage is gone, we are still talking about the Kempering.

Photo:
Danielle Kuijten



6

About not Looking at Animals

Marit van Dijk

'Why look at animals' is one of the essays from John Berger's book *About Looking*. In this essay he briefly sets out how the absence of animals in Western everyday life has changed the way we look at animals. Within two centuries, he explains, animals have been expelled from our society. "This historic loss [our bond with animals], to which zoos are a monument, is now irredeemable for the culture of capitalism." Berger's understanding of looking at animals is fundamental in explaining how we, human animals, no longer associate a steak with a dead cow. Simultaneously he sets out how the absence of contact with livestock has been replaced by special institutions: zoos, circuses, nature reserves, pets, or their representation in children's toys, animation films, and games. In fact, this only exacerbates our nostalgia of real interaction with the animal world. Both pets and animals in zoos are kept in an unnatural environment: castrated, fed artificial foods, limited in

space and in sex. By repressing animals while using their images Berger writes, capitalism reproduces Europe's old colonial practices. We remove something from everyday life and replace it with imagery or orchestrated events, creating a show of sorts, that disguises a harsh reality.

A disappointing monument

A school trip to London, organised by the Reinwardt Academy in 2013, marked the starting point of my journey with John Berger's *Looking at Animals*. A year later, unrelated to his essay, I went vegan and have been ever since. On a more recent basis, Vyjayanthi Rao's Artist in Residence inspired me to reread *Looking at Animals*. John Berger has helped me to look differently at the city, its citizens and its structures. How do they react to each other, over what is seen and what should not be seen? Let's have a closer look at the zoo.

To Berger, a zoo is a monument that remembers the bond we once had with animals. It's a place animals are held to be looked at, not for them to look at us. How can we bond with animals when we remove ourselves from their look in return? When we remove them from our habitat because they do not comply with our modern day lives? Animals do not get to choose how they want to be portrayed. Animals on products are 'happy', pets are 'cute' or 'funny', animals in the zoo are 'exotic' and animals in stables are 'void and mindless'. Most animal lives in the western

world do not take place in the same spaces as that of humans. Animal farms and stables are located in rural areas, slaughterhouses or animal testing sites are usually found in industrial areas. The animals we see, in (petting) zoos, cat cafes, a meadow or at home, are visible and framed within a human context.

This division is necessary, as it allows us to simultaneously have a bond with our pets as to use others for production. Since food, and thus produce, is cultural, sometimes these lines between pets/livestock are contested across cultures. Europeans find the dog eating festival in Yulin, Guangxi, China cruel or are horrified by dolphin and whale hunting. Vice versa, European cows and pigs are treated in a less than holy matter in Europe, which other cultures take offense to. So, if us seeing animals as individuals is related to how we use them, a division; both spatially and culturally – between pets and livestock is necessary. When not looking at animals, it's easy to dismiss how our relation with killing millions of animals per day is also killing humankind.

While humans destroy the lungs of this planet, the Amazon, for soy., 95% of those plants are meant for livestock (Friends of the Earth Europe 2018). We are still able to not look at animals.

Even when Covid-19 affects the whole world and kills millions, while we know that 75% of all existing viral diseases stem from the animal world.

Even when we know that the perfect environment for these viruses to develop is by moving, trapping and killing animals, in a density and at a rate that is hard to imagine. Even then, we are still able to not look at animals.

When heart failure and high cholesterol is the #1 killer in the world, and a plantbased diet is according to the who the #1 solution..we are still able to not look at animals (PETA 2021), (Barnard, Leroy 2020).

If the zoo is a monument to the bond we once had with animals, it is a disappointing monument. The animal here is no more part of human life than the crowds that pass by on a daily basis. The zoo showcases concepts of nature and animals like a museum showcases the struggles of a local artist. The sort of show that is produced in front of us helps us look away from what is really happening.

Speculative empathy

Berger also elaborates on the look of a dog and how it is not accurately answered by humans. He claims that it is not answered, but solely interpreted. In other words: we see in the eyes of the dog what we want to see, not what the dog wants us to see (as he can neither confirm nor deny). As humans shape the world of non-human animals according to their needs, we get acquainted with our human gaze and become ignorant of the other.

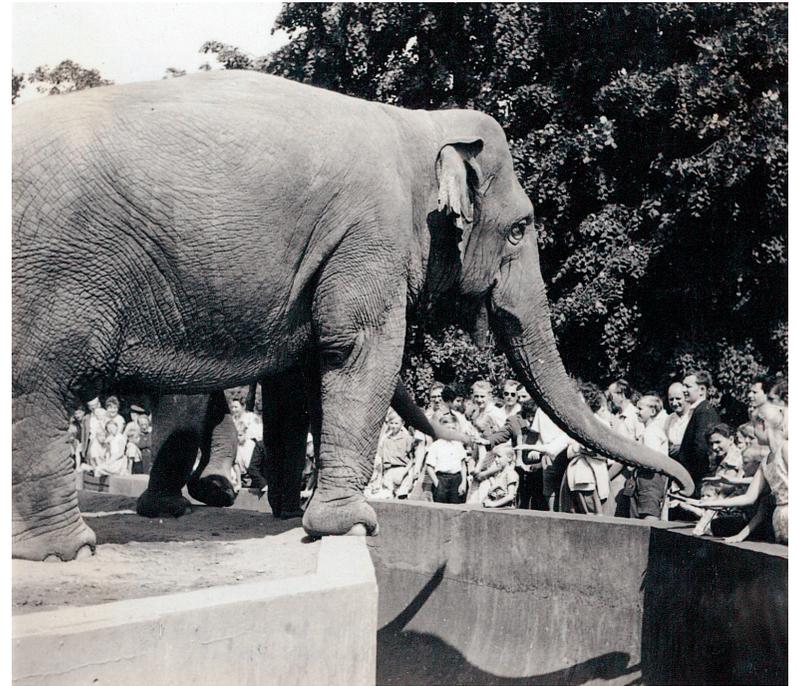
With the changing function of many breeds of dogs from guard dog to indoor pet, they have developed a new muscle just above their eyes that gives them that pleasing look we like so much. So the body of the dog has complied to our changing needs, and is now not just doing what we want to see, but also looking like we want to see it. But how can we see what the dog wants us to see?

This process between humans and animals is still ongoing. We shape the animal world for our purposes, the animal has to comply, and the norm has shifted again. When we look at zoos we can see that small cages that used to exhibit animals, have been replaced with larger lands that recreate a more natural-looking environment. However, most animals live without ever seeing daylight. So how do we engage with the animal that we do not see? As we are still limited to our own gaze, we can only criticize our gaze, our look at the animal.

About not-looking

So what happens when we finally start looking at animals? The world will definitely be a lot better for our health, the environment, and our ethical conscience possibly. There will be fewer animals than there are now, so that all will have a sufficient amount of space and food. Using animals will be looked upon as barbaric, a derivative of the survival of the fittest

that, through cultural habit, outlasted its function. Simultaneously there is plenty left to imagine: how can you engage non-human animals in a democracy? What will our future food strategies look like? Without doubt, it will be a radically different world. And we'll probably have a monument to commemorate this loss, but it will definitely not be a zoo.



Indischer Elefant im Zoologischen Garten Dresden

7

Stickers as Spatial Identity

Sarie Bekker

STREETART/ STICKER

THE VALUE OF A STICKER

In 2014, the GLOWfestival asked New Zealand company Storybox to capture the identity of Eindhoven through a series of images of the city. This sticker of a beaten-up Jerry Springer with 'Immobilize' written underneath was one of them. The image is familiar to locals, as it can be found plastered on walls, poles, and doors throughout Eindhoven. By claiming this sticker as part of the identity of Eindhoven, Storybox gave this object, by most considered worthless at best, value. Simultaneously, this sticker has now spread internationally throughout the digital realm whilst its primary value is still local. These tensions inspired my research on the speculative value of this sticker.



**IMMOBILIZE:
FIXED IN PLACE.
PREVENT USE OR MOVEMENT**

**MOVEMENT:
ACT OF MOVING.
CHANGE OR DEVELOPMENT**

'SPECULATION IS ABOUT WORTH AND VALUE'



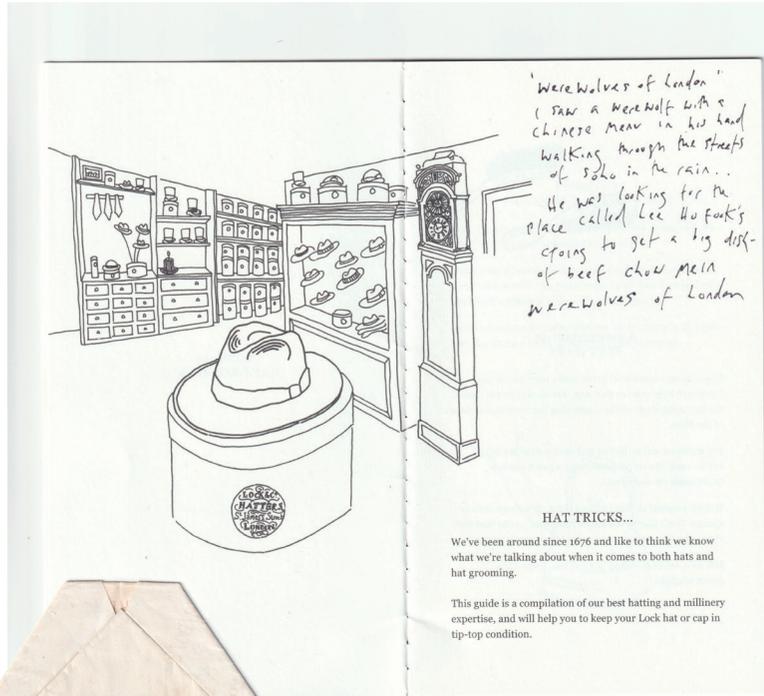


Contribution Musée Légitime

Musée Légitime

All these artworks belong to the Musée Légitime, a museum inside a hat, initiated by Martín La Roche in 2017. Artists are invited to contribute with an artwork small enough or intangible so it fits inside a hat. On different moments, Martín selects several pieces and tucks them inside one of the hats of this institution, which he then wears while he goes for a walk. At a certain point, he takes the hat off and presents its contents one by one. For this publication, a special selection of flat pieces from the collection have been scanned and reproduced:

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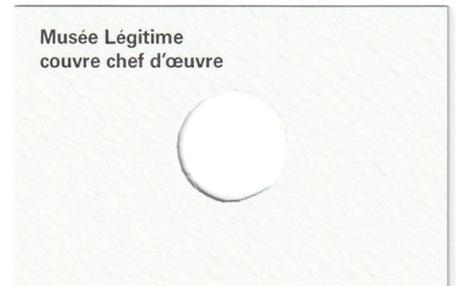
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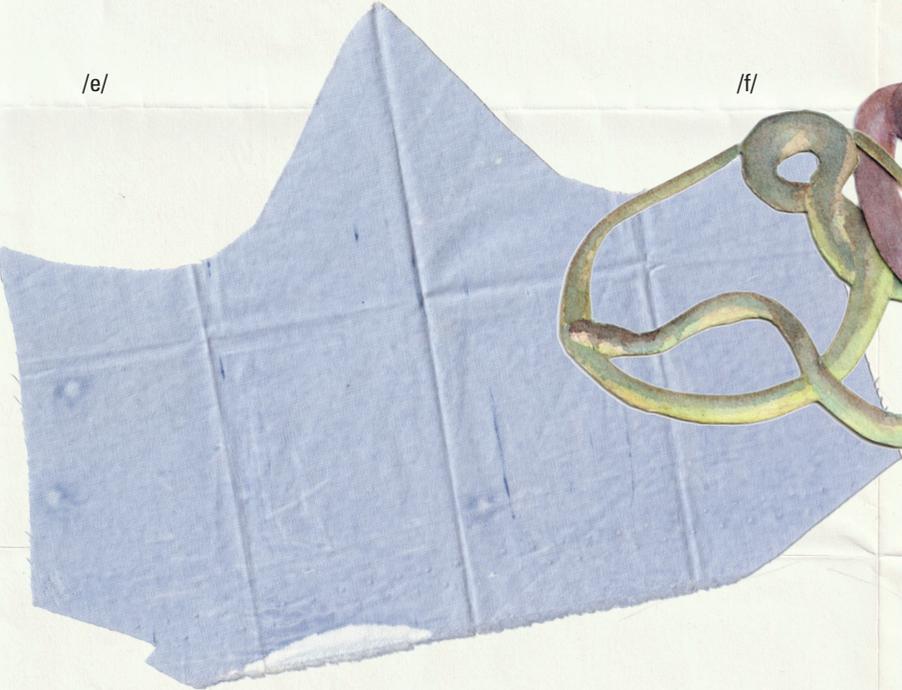
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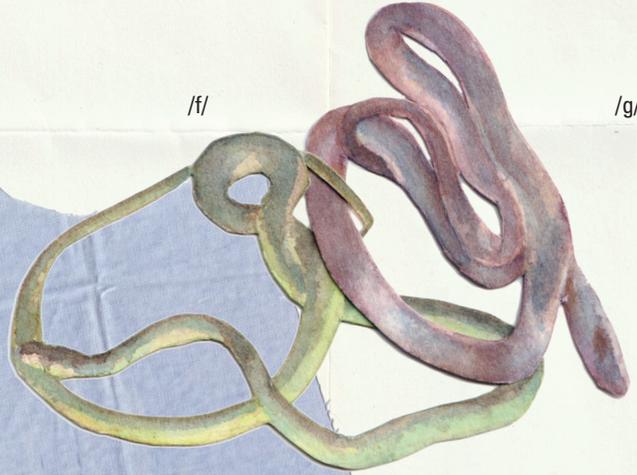
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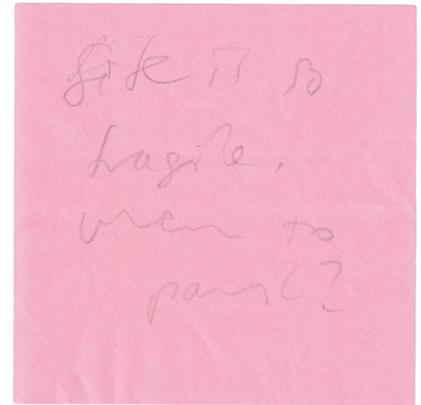
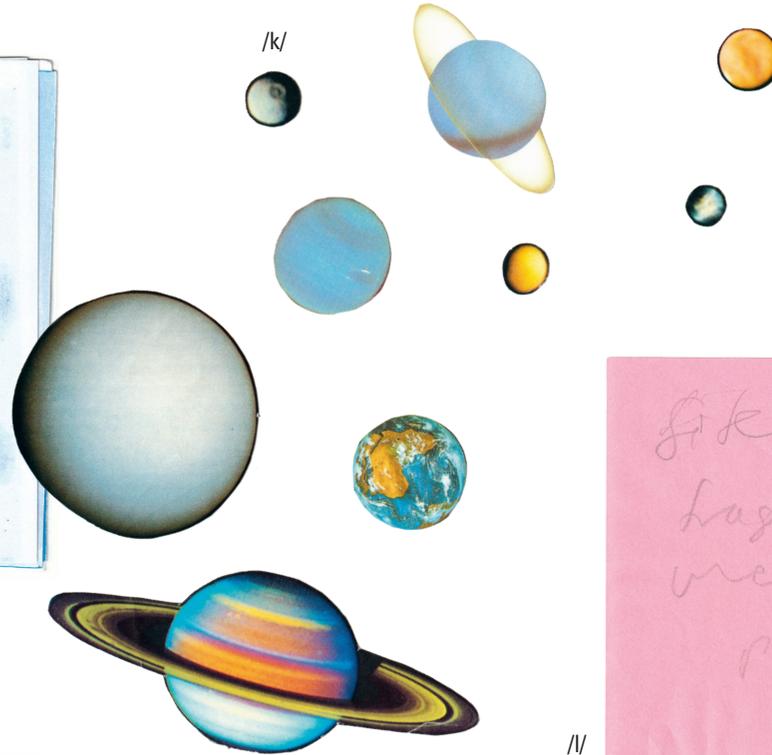


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Matching hats

/p/



/a/ *Werewolves of London*, 2018 by Cedar Lewisohn

/b/ *A folded doodle*, 2017 by Lune Bernstein

/c/ *Untitled*, 2017 by Francisco Rodríguez Pino

/d/ *Business card Musée Légitime*, 2017 by Astrid Seme

/e/ *Pattern, Negative*, 2016 by Maartje Fliervoet

/f/ *Untitled*, 2017 by Sunette Viljoen

/g/ *Spirit Money*, 2019 by Am alia Barros & Maritza Téllez

/h/ *Portraits*, 2010 by Deysi Cruz

/i/ *Sufferin' Succotash*, 2020 by Enric Farres Duran

/j/ *Today*, by Ersi Varveri

/k/ *Satellites*, 2019 by Javier González Pesce

/l/ *Life is so fragile, when to panic?*, by Sands Murray-Wassink

/m/ *Business Card*, 2014 by Suat Ogut

/n/ *Ritual*, 2018 by Tim Onderbeke

/o/ One card from *The Bergman Tarot*, by Rodrigo Téllez Repetto

/p/ *Gracias Puta*, 2019 by Alejandría Cinque

9

A Change of Rhythm

Roos Vreman

The first time I noticed it, I stopped abruptly. How had I not seen this before? You can see it from the platform, looking down. Just above the train track, written on the dirty brown stone. One simple question: “What do you live for?” My peaceful, quite boring commute was never the same again.

What is art exactly? And when does something become ‘urban art’ instead of meaningless vandalism? This sloppy graffiti is art to me and the person who wrote this, an urban artist. The placement of the work can be interpreted as quite disconcerting. At first I associated it with suicide. As if the artist wants to shock the onlooker and remind them of their own mortality. That one question disrupts a normal pattern of use of space, a routine. And maybe this is what urban art is supposed to do. I speculated and gave it value or meaning based on my own experiences, needs, and observations. Wondering if other people noticed or even looked at the work, I began watching the visitors of that train station in Hoofddorp.

Everyone is either hurried, worried, or way too early on their way to somewhere that is *not* Hoofddorp station. Each individual seems focused on their own routine. Reading a book, headphones on, alone. Or chatting quietly, but only if they belong to the same group of travellers. You can roughly divide the visitors into four categories. First, students: high school students walking in groups of four or more, with backpacks on, talking just a little too loudly; or older college students, mostly alone or in pairs. Second, airport workers: a composed stewardess wearing her iconic blue uniform or an airport security guard. Third, tourists: mostly families or couples with big suitcases, all looking mildly confused. Fourth, 'office commuters': a very generalized group of people wearing suits or pencil skirts, carrying trollies. There is not much room for interaction, even if you try (I tried): people are either slightly annoyed or flustered and polite. Real social interaction only happens if a train is late or cancelled.

Looking at the artwork in a broader context, contextualizing it in the space around Hoofddorp station, it seems to belong. Everything around Hoofddorp station gives me the same feeling of having to go or to be somewhere. The offices around the station are busy. The streets are empty during office hours, except for people with business-like attire hurrying to the office buildings, near hotels or the train station. Everything and everyone is moving, constantly. The contradicting question asks you to stop moving. To break your normal routine and think about what you are doing with your life and why. Maybe this artwork is about awareness of habit and routine.

Thinking of the artwork while observing the place, the space, and the people, gave a new layer of meaning to everything around me. What would happen to my perception of space if I took the artwork with me? This artwork, bound to its original context, changed my view of this spot in my hometown and the people there. With the question in mind, I visited a place that, to me, was the complete opposite of Hoofddorp station. *Toolenburgerplas*, a recreation park in Hoofddorp, is surrounded by green grass, trees, and water. This is a place where people go with a clear purpose: to enjoy their free time or to think maybe, I know I do. Generations mix: young families, small kids, and older couples. This was one of the big differences from Hoofddorp station where most people were old enough to go to school and young enough to work. Another big difference was the atmosphere. Here people seemed everything but hurried. Some were even up for a short talk and friendly nods were exchanged. One woman told me, "I come here to unwind and reflect during a busy day or week at work."

People come here to stop before they venture back into their busy urban lives. After my observations, I concluded that this is what makes something urban art: when the artwork disrupts existing patterns of moving, thinking, and acting; when it stimulates self-awareness and makes people stop, reconsider, maybe even feel a little uncomfortable, and reflect on the fast (urban) life they're living.

10

Mapping - an Exercise

An exercise in mapping
by Vyjayanthi Rao

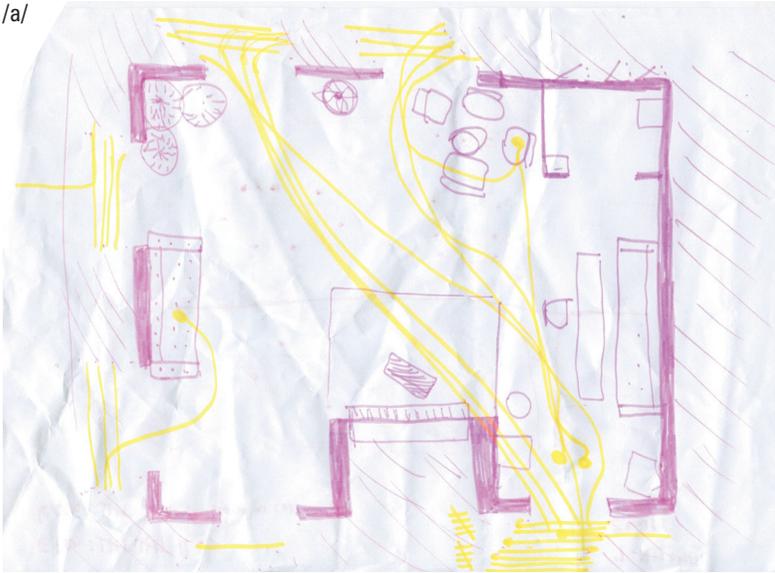
During Vyjayanthi Rao's stay at the Reinwardt Academy, she did an exercise with the second-year students. With the following quote of Michael Fischer in mind, students turned their attention to the Reinwardt Academy and imagined it as a scene. They put down what caught their attention and mapped the activities of their teachers and fellow students. This was the exercise:

"Anthropology often operates like the theater: putting characters and plots on stage that illustrate competing interests, affects, emotions, idioms, strategic ploys, conflicts, and temporary tragedies and resolutions."

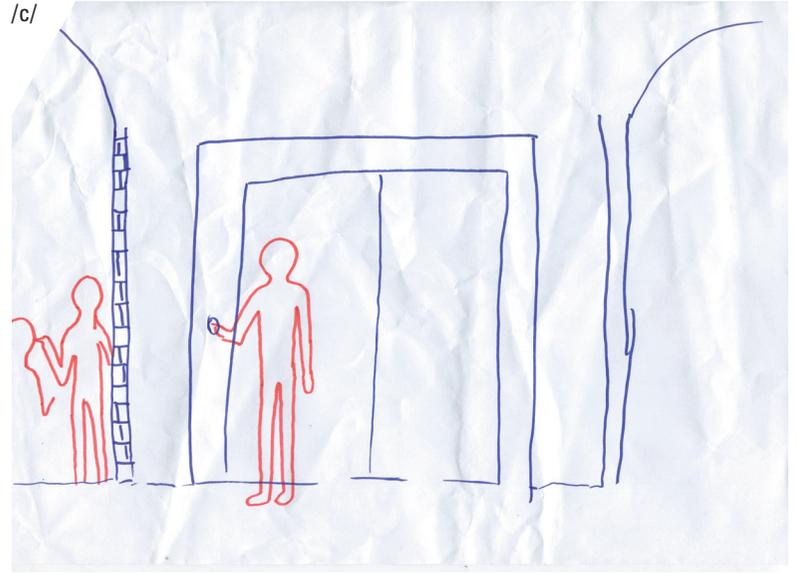
1. Map the activities you observe with the idea of understanding who the users of the place are.

2. Do you observe any rituals or activities that are regularly taking place? What can you conclude from these ritual or habitual activities?

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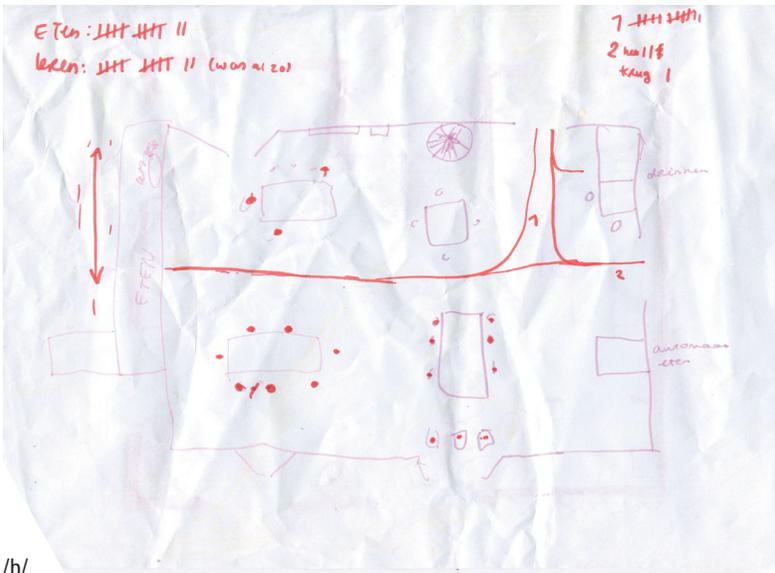


/a/ Reinwardt Academie, 'Het Lichthof'

/b/ Reinwardt Academie, 'De Kantine'

/c/ Reinwardt Academie, 'Gang derde verdieping'

/b/



1 1

Speculating on Heritage - An Anthropologist Journeys to Amsterdam

Vjayanthi Rao

A long pause:

November 2019 was my very last trip outside the United States, travelling from New York to Amsterdam for the AIR programme. It feels strange writing this, during what feels like an indefinite pause in an activity that has been vital to most of my adult life. Having left my home in Mumbai after high school to pursue the rest of my education in the United States, I made the journey back and forth between India and the US practically every year since. My perspective has therefore been one of a traveler for most of my life. That means that home is a quintessentially diasporic condition for me. The residency at the Reinwardt

Academie welcomed me to pivot that traveler's sense of home towards a different city to consider my long standing interests in cities, heritage, art and other speculative, imaginative practices.

Arriving in Amsterdam in November 2019, I already knew that this perspective of being a traveler was vital to the ways in which I approached questions of change and heritage. I was eager to test out my approach to the heritage of contemporary urbanism in the context of Amsterdam, a city whose spirit is closely aligned to both Mumbai and New York, the cities that I am most familiar with, as my two homes. The year before, I was the guest of the heritage institution, Imagine IC, dedicated to curating and presenting the heritage of the Bijlmer, in Amsterdam South East. Their invitation opened my eyes to a vision of Amsterdam far removed from the theme park city of canals, canal houses, museums and coffee shops, raising questions about how one would narrate the complex present of this city and to what ends.

My talk, delivered to a diverse audience in Imagine IC's beautiful space which they share with the public library, explored my own anthropological journey through questions of heritage and memory. My initial fieldwork as an anthropologist explored ruins, monuments and loss in a south Indian village that had become the site of a temple museum complex after its own physical setting was submerged by the reservoir of a mega-dam. In that context, questions of heritage were heavily mediated by the state and its apparatus for producing monumental narratives. What I learned from

villagers was the persistence of other forms of memory in ephemeral and non-monumental forms. From there my research journey took me to the newly transforming contexts of the city of Mumbai, as global capital was pouring investments into the Indian economy. From the late 1990s to the present, millions of square feet of new building have been developed through the active destruction of a rich legacy of self-building and owner developed cooperative housing. My work documented memory in the context of displacement and my eye was drawn towards the speculative energies of Mumbai's self-built and improvised neighborhoods as well as a newly emerging coterie of artists who were questioning the worth of urban transformation. Each of these groups were exposing new ways of approaching loss, change and the future. In more recent years, I have collaborated with a group of Mumbai based artists, architects and activists from the self-built neighborhoods. Here I have been practicing as an anthropologist to create a setting in which these residents are able to document and articulate their legacies and their sense of belonging in a volatile city, through performance and media artifacts.

These three research projects revealed different approaches to memory, heritage and legacy. Each has an associated set of methods for actively creating and/or resisting narratives of change and transformations imposed on them through dominant state and cultural institutions. In Amsterdam, at Imagine IC, I found a similar set of imperatives at work, resisting a narrative of Amsterdam's 'golden age' with the largely invisible narratives of the city's

newer groups of residents. The larger questions that the institution was raising through its archival collecting and exhibitions was how to situate the multiple temporalities and legacies that converged to produce Amsterdam's urban energy. Moving beyond the city center vs. city periphery dynamic, organisations like Imagine IC were asking what it would mean to bring hitherto absent voices to the stage of an urban territory in flux.

The initial invitation to share my work with Imagine IC also opened new ways for me to connect different pieces of my own research interests in cities and urban neighborhoods, in heritage, art, design, each an area of practice that is intimately tied to speculation, in its cognition register as an exercise of imagination. In my reflection on the work of Imagine IC in the Bijlmer and subsequently with the other organisations and individuals that I interacted with in Amsterdam during my residency, I found that the past could be considered as much a territory for speculation as the future. Heritage had to connect as much to the intentional practices reflected in the work of artists and designers in a context of relentless urban change, as it was no longer a product of clear consensus. Histories actively rendered invisible and stories actively disregarded were bubbling up for citizens, both old and new, of Amsterdam, just as they were in many other parts of the world.

Learning from experience, from participating in and sharing in the places and the presence of others, through a commitment to 'learning

by doing' marks the anthropological field of practice. As part of my residency, I proposed to share this form of learning, this particular quest, with those engaged in crafting an infrastructure for the robust inclusion of diverse imaginations in making the city by provoking and emphasizing encounters with unfamiliar worlds and scenarios. For heritage, in its broadest sense, signals the past as a foreign territory, as an absence made present through preserved traces and as a speculation that informs our relation to our futures. In exchange I was richly rewarded through the connections that the Reinwardt Academie helped me forge with numerous institutions and individual artists and academics that furthered my own learning.

In this brief rumination on my tenure as AIR, I reflect upon my sharing in the many cultures of Amsterdam through the generosity of my hosts. I offer this writing as a piece of theatre, bringing characters and ploys on stage to illuminate the role that speculation and imagination play in knitting the multiple temporalities of the urban life. These reflections weave through both my teaching and my participant observation, in my own encounters with heritage in localities that lie outside and beyond dominant narratives of Amsterdam's heritage and the legacy it leaves as a trace that will inform both its own future and the future of urbanism at large. Commuting between the Bijlmer in Amsterdam South East and the Marineterrein, the former naval settlement turned into an incubator for experiments into the future of urban technologies, I became a traveler between worlds where a diversity of creative practices were unfolding.

To aid my own quest, I sought help from an old friend and comrade, the contemporary Indian artist Sudarshan Shetty and invited him to share his work with the AHK as part of my residency. During his week-long visit, we explored his curatorial practice, focusing specifically on a major exhibition he was curating at the time for the Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa, India, due to open a week after his visit to Amsterdam. In his exhibition, Shetty was especially showcasing the work of inventors across India who are not normally considered artists. In so doing, the question his exhibition posed was what is specific about material production that can be considered art and how we might consider artworks outside established formal and aesthetic considerations. These questions became especially relevant in exploring the re-organisation of the Marineterrein from a naval base to an experimental station and laboratory, where technologies relevant to the future are being incubated. How can the future, in this case represented by technologies and practices being nurtured in the Marineterrein which resemble the everyday innovators in Shetty's exhibition, become a presence in the contemporary life to guide the direction we take and the paths we follow?

To make these ideas and connections a bit clearer in this reflection, I follow the path that I set up in the three masterclasses that I gave at the Reinwardt to students in the bachelor's programme. I began my residency with a conversation about anthropology and curation, focusing on the role of methodology in influencing our views about what counts as a significant material trace of heritage and

cultural meaning. The first masterclass focused on speculation as a "total social fact" or "an activity that has implications throughout society, in the economic, legal, political and religious sphere," as defined by the French anthropologist, Marcel Mauss in his monumental work, *The Gift*. I traced the rise of speculation as an economic and as a cognitive practice across the domains of contemporary finance, science, design and the arts. The second masterclass focused on contemporary urbanization, its role as an engine of capital accumulation and the implications of financialized urbanism in the daily lives of city-dwellers. Finally, the third masterclass focused on transformations in contemporary art practices from formal detachment and object orientation to process and research driven interventions with the potential to create public awareness through imaginative engagement. The thread running through each class was the connection between cities, speculation, art, design and the ways in which we understand heritage. I explore that thread in the following sections which draw from the classes but also digress into interludes informed by some of my encounters in the field.

Speculative City: The Urban as Set and Setting

The last decades of the 20th century heralded the advent of an urban century in more ways than one. Apart from the oft-quoted statistic comparing urban and non-urban populations, contemporary urbanism, writ large, has become a source of value and knowledge production in ways that are both similar

to and different from the early 20th century. Many scholars and analysts now agree that the urban is no longer confined to a specific geography but may be thought of beyond the envelope of the city as such. What is clearer now is that the urban is the conceptual locus of uncertainty in contemporary life, serving as a circulatory medium for the global flows of people, money and technologies.

Across this urban century, beginning in the early 20th century, we might track the heightened and deepened sense of speculation that informs contemporary social and cultural practices. The making of urban territory itself may be seen as a site that draws speculative practices in different spheres into a tangible network of material effects. Financialized and digital capital today depends heavily upon urban land and real estate transactions as well as on urban mobility and sociality to create derivative products and values. The city is also a stage upon which a different sense of speculation is played out, as experiments in conviviality and artistic and creative interventions into place-making and cultural transformation. As such, contemporary urban settings are saturated with speculative energies that respond to and catalyze social and material conditions profoundly marked by instability, turbulence, volatility and uncertainty.

Like most historical cities, Amsterdam is deeply enmeshed in the circulatory medium of global flows of money, migration and material change. In this context, archives and collections can become vital agents of change as they choose to

preserve and present traces of the present that may exert an active influence on how the future unfolds. Movements demanding equal voice and reparative justice such as BLM and the Arab Spring are anchored and complemented by such archives which preserve the stories and memories of the silent majorities. At the same time, modern urbanism is predicated upon relentless innovation and formal experimentation, driven by a sense of urgency surrounding the imminent demise of an urbanized planet which contributes to rising inequality and injustice. This urgency expresses itself in the languages of innovation that may, at first glance seem to stand in opposition to the languages of heritage, memory and monument in terms of their dynamism and direction. Yet each practice has a deeply speculative vision at its core – both past and future are fundamentally temporal expressions of absence, they are different plays upon absence.

Interlude: Sonic West

To this point, I was reminded of a conversation I had with Michiel Huisman, an artist and co-founder of the cultural organisation Soundtrackcity, dedicated to promoting the concept of sound as a vital medium of the urban experience. Neglected and relegated to the unconscious, sound is often an object of passive hearing but not of active listening. Michiel and I had two meetings, the first in Soundtrackcity's studio and the second in a library in another part of the city, where one of their works, which they call 'Listening Object' was installed for public use as part of their project Sonic West. In our first conversation, we noted

the transformation of Amsterdam's housing policies in recent years with the rise of the money culture and a corresponding decrease in social housing investments, making it difficult for newly arrived residents to find housing, as well as displacing longer term residents. In this story, the sound of construction is a window into the culture of money and its influence upon the city.

If the built environment is a vehicle of speculative investment, active listening to that environment can retrieve a range of its effects in a way that academic analysis and explanation cannot. In this case, the visual perception of the city only provides one perspective upon the legacy of money culture or finance. Its circulations must also be affectively grasped, as Huisman pointed out to me on our walk to and from the library in De Hallen. The Sonic West project is thus a speculation about speculation, counteracting the transactional aspects of money culture and its objects with a range of affective, sonic perceptions. The project's legacy is to put this intangible heritage of affect at the service of a future in which the city is equitably shared.

In this sense the city resembles a stage set upon which significant contemporary practices that influence the links between space, materiality and cultural reproduction are played out and a setting in which their significance is discovered. The city itself can thus be read as an archive within which space, materiality and cultural meaning are linked, both intentionally and by chance thus rendering heritage an open-ended field of affective play upon which projects like Sonic West build public consensus.

The Design of Heritage: Incubating the Future at the Marineterrein

When I told some of my old friends in Amsterdam that I was going to spend a few weeks there, their first question was: Where would I stay? It was surprisingly difficult to find a short-term rental at a reasonable price, even with platforms like Airbnb and other search tools. The Marineterrein, the place that became my home for a few weeks, was unknown to most of my friends in Amsterdam and some only knew it as the naval base behind the Maritme museum. Its proximity to some of the oldest neighborhoods in Amsterdam such as Kattenburg and Wittenburg was practically invisible. Those neighborhoods were known for their social housing and fabled working-class histories of dock workers and ship builders who had lived there since the 'golden age' of the Dutch Empire. Hidden by a high wall, right across the street, the Marineterrein was being cultivated as a spatial incubator of the future. Some of the decommissioned naval buildings were housing the city's urban archaeology laboratory, others were put to use as office spaces and laboratories for youth coders and designers testing new agricultural and waste disposal technologies. One might say that the road is literally separated by space, by centuries.

The group charged with running the Marineterrein was making conscious decisions about what kinds of businesses and experiments would be incubated in this space. Here, a calibrated shift was taking place, from empire and nation as the locus of

heritage-making practices, to the urban as the site and object of heritage-making, specifically with an eye to making our urban planet more sustainable and equitable. For after all incubating the future is the flip side of heritage-making – the vision for the future becomes a legacy as it fades and is superseded by the emergence of other realities. This relationship is particularly evident in the current programming of the Marineterrein, which infuses a historical consciousness even as it extends The Netherlands' imperial pasts and maritime technologies into the future with a difference. Students of the Designing Heritage course taught by Reinwardt faculty member Nancy van Asseldonk and Anika Ohlerich, which was taking place during my residency, explored these connections in creative ways, using different media technologies, not only to investigate on site but also the ways in which the Marineterrein's legacy extended beyond the walls of the naval establishment itself.

Interlude: The Bijlmer

If the programming of the Marineterrein foregrounds the role of The Netherlands in the world through its technologies, the Bijlmer presents a different connection with the world. The Bijlmer was where many migrants of the late 20th century had settled or been settled after its modernist architectural dream had faded. While celebrated in the mythology and history of architects, the Bijlmer's contemporary communities remained relatively obscure until more recently.

The incongruous mix of modernist futurism and ghettoization in the Bijlmer was punctured by a vibrant art scene which developed around the art studios offered to an intergeneration cohort of artists by the city of Amsterdam. Attracted by the well-priced studio space and newly developed transport connections to the center, a number of already well-known artists as well as younger artists began to gravitate to the Bijlmer in the 21st century. Drawn to this once marginal neighborhood due to my previous connection with Imagine IC, I discovered a world of artists incubating different visions of the urban future through exhibitions, performances, open studios and the formation of creative collectives from within the locality who play with its architectural futurism in entirely new ways, suggesting that even futurism has a future when claimed as legacy.

As I write this, I recall attending a reading by the novelist Murat Isik organized by Imagine IC in an abandoned garage, which was imagined as a vital piece of architecture by the designers of the Bijlmer. Listening to Isik read from his novel set in the Bijlmer, in the same garage where he and his friends played as children, it was evident that even a seemingly functional and mundane modernist structure such as the garage is imbued with affect, capable of bringing different worlds together.

In the course of my journeys into the Bijlmer, I discovered a rich vein of artistic activism,

supported by an organic community of local organisations such as Imagine IC and CBK Zuidoost raising questions about the future of Amsterdam as a whole. Sara Mattens and Jeffrey Croese, the founders of the creative studio Vinger.nl generously brought me up to speed on the activities of their contemporaries, artists with immigrant roots in various parts of the post-colonial world and their own work in supporting the organic growth of artistic collectivity. I found myself captivated by Vinger.nl's MOB (Mobiele Omroep Bijlmer). Vinger.nl describes them as a 'kinda big band' mobile radio/podcast/talk show format, a collaborative venture involving radio artist Jesper Buursink, a larger group of hosts and DJ's and the sculptural radio stations custom made by visual artist Bert Jacobs. MOB's are a testament to the legacy of the Bijlmer and the kind of creative collectives engendered there. Customized to the occasion – they are spaces to record stories within the context of special occasions and thus serve an infrastructural function – to gather stories, people and events into a potential mobile archive. Soundtrackcity's Sonic West Listening Object is a similarly connecting object, with some content already produced and new content being actively generated. The difference perhaps is in the image of the object itself and how it activates the imagination. The MOB does it specifically through the invocation of the Bijlmer itself. Each of these objects is a conduit for creating and mobilizing the imaginary, specifically of the city as a place of life, play and of the commons. They are the infrastructure through which heritage is actively being produced through popular participation.

If the Marineterrein can be thought of as a museum of unintentional art, where solutions that benefit the city as a whole are being created through experiment and testing, the artists from Vinger.nl, Soundtrackcity and the heritage professionals from Imagine IC have created an infrastructure that serves as an open invitation to those who encounter them to create their own stories and to imagine their stories within the city.

The Infrastructure of Heritage, or Thinking of Heritage through Anthropology

This reflection began with the long pause that Covid-19 introduced into the global circulations, which have been shaping our worlds from the last decades of the 20th century to the present. This pause has prompted much introspection over the spaces and places for the cultivation of heritage and our engagement with objects signifying heritage. In this context the artful objects emerging from the studios of Bijlmer and the innovation incubated at the Marineterrein become ever more vital to the ways in which we imagine the future of heritage, of that which is worth interacting with as inheritance. This generous residency gave me the opportunity to situate, through observation and engagement, cities, art, design in conversation with each other to push my own thinking about heritage and the multitude of absences that it enfolds. Each of these conceptual and material objects and processes – cities, art and designing – has an irreducibly speculative element but because they are products of a socialized imaginary seeking to actively

presence something specific of that imaginary in a moment of flux and uncertainty, they become carriers of the spectral traces of habit, memory and social conditions or, in other words, carriers of heritage as much as they are harbingers of the future.

If there is one thread that ties my many encounters, it is the proliferation of creativity and imagination in the ways in which we live now, in the ways in which cities grow and in the ways we make connections to the world around us and indeed to the ways in which we experience the multiplicity of worlds. As an anthropologist, my engagement with these disparate worlds within Amsterdam was navigated through the lens of speculation and organizing my observations around the speculative elements in an uncertain social world. Through this conceptual lens, numerous practices that we attribute to the imagination such as art, design and planning are revealed in their practical dimensions, with the power to influence and shape the direction of an intertwined world without a clear trajectory. Living through the Covid-19 pandemic has been, for many, living through the pages of a science fiction novel, lurching from one uncertain situation to the next. On the other hand, even beyond pandemic conditions, our everyday lives were already mired in uncertainty and volatility generated by design and our approach to change, heritage, legacies and inheritance already conditions our responses to these conditions, rendering them legible and governable. Our challenge then is to foster even more creative speculations to include a plurality of voices and visions.

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Colophon

This publication is based on the outcomes of the Artist in Residence programme of Vyjayanthi V. Rao in 2019, organised by the Reinwardt Academy, faculty of the Amsterdam University of the Arts. A major source of inspiration for this booklet was modern classic John Berger's book and TV-series Ways of Seeing.

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Thank You!

for writing / reading Ways of Knowing.



Ways of Knowing **Vyjayanthi V. Rao & Reinwardt Academy**

Ways of Knowing is a spin-off from the work of 2019 Artist in Residence Vyjayanthi Rao at the Amsterdam University of the Arts. All contributions have been compiled by AIR curator Marit van Dijk. The guiding motto is: look carefully, in various ways, using all your senses. John Berger's Ways of Seeing, a classic read and TV-series from the 70's that revolutionised the way we look at art and the world, was a major source of inspiration. This booklet offers essays as different kinds of lessons in ways of seeing, learning, and knowing.

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