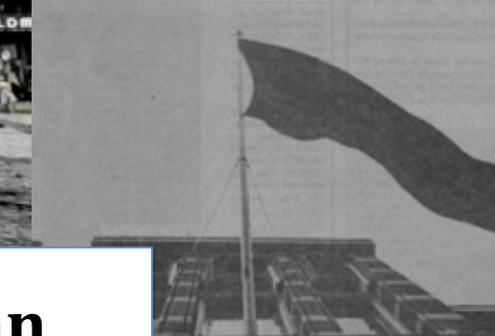
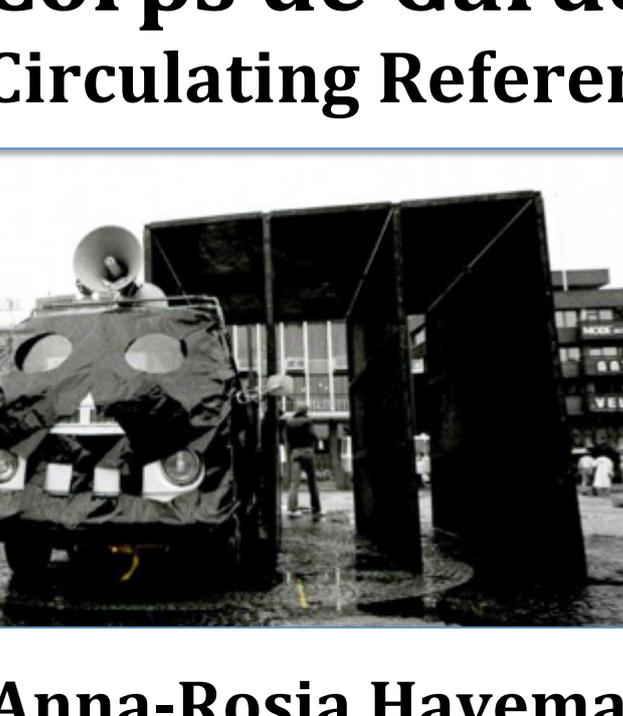




Corps de Garde's 'Circulating Reference'



Anna-Rosja Haveman



titel	auteur	datum productie
Vito Acconci	copyr. gl	opname
inhoud	copyright	datum opname
Registratie van The people mobile van de projectkunstenaar Vito Acconci, gehouden op de Grote Markt in Groningen.	copyr. gl	'79
<p>De afbeelding en openbaar verspreiden van deze band wordt door de wet beperkt.</p>		duur in minuten
		20 min.
		taal
		mono-stereo
		mono-stereo
		kanal 1-2
		zwart/wit-kleur

Art History
Research Master Thesis

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Introduction

For the celebration of their 100th anniversary, 2018 is announced as the year of De Ploeg, the expressionist group of painters known for their ties with the German Expressionists. As an Art History student in Groningen one quickly gets acquainted and in my case a bit weary with De Ploeg's heritage, the best-established group of Groninger artists thus far. Has nothing happened since De Ploeg? As a student interested in installation and performance art, those histories of the New York art scene or De Appel in the Netherlands appealed to me. The many sources available about these histories granted me the opportunity to learn about the artists aiming to operate outside of the mainstream (at the time) or commercial circuit (as we now know did not always succeed) in dematerialized art forms (paradoxically since they were manifested in a material form as well). Meanwhile another more local history waited to be excavated, but it was not until the surfacing of a collection of U-Matic tapes at the Art History Department that the existence of an alternative art circuit in Groningen came to my attention. Among the collection of U-Matic tapes are registrations of installations, performances and interviews with artists conducted by art history students in the late 1970s.¹ Even though the tapes were not cleaned and could not be watched yet, their existence lured me into the history of Corps de Garde (1976-1984), an alternative art space in Groningen.² The previous introduction to the main topic of this thesis, the underexposed history of Corps de Garde, might seem too anecdotal to some. However in line with the theoretical method of inquiry, my aim is to acknowledge and reflect on these personal encounters with certain actors that form and steer our knowledge and investigation into the past.

The aim of this thesis is twofold, the starting intention was to retrace the history of Corps de Garde that has remained little exposed. Many of the artworks that were exhibited by Corps de Garde were shown in public space and were of an ephemeral nature (installations and performances).³ Therefore they depend on archival documentation and personal memory for their remembrance in the present. Related to this inevitable methodological complexity, the second point of focus is the analysis of the way the archival documents and personal memories influence their remembrance in the present. To obtain the information about the partially neglected history brought forward

¹ The students Nina Knaak and Hester Hazenberg made a first inventory of the collection supervised by drs. Linda Nijenhof.

² The U-Matic tapes were cleaned by LIMA of the dust they had collected over the years. Due to a lack of funding the tapes have not yet been digitized. Because of the decreasing quality of the footage it is urgent that films are found as soon as possible to enable further research. This thesis is only related to two of the tapes, many more incredibly interesting footage is among the collection of U-Matic tapes.

³ I will use the term "ephemeral" to denote both installation and performance art.

in this thesis I consulted multiple public and private archives.⁴ In addition to visiting archives and interviewing people involved in the organization of Corps de Garde, I travelled and visited exhibitions in the Netherlands and abroad (New York and London) to gain insights into the curatorial approaches and complexities involved in exhibiting comparable ephemeral histories.

The Actor-network theory (ANT) is used as theoretical method of inquiry to approach the history of Corps de Garde that is dependent on remaining documents and memories for the circulation in the present. Appropriating ANT shifts the focus from the artwork as a stable entity towards an understanding of art in relational processes, in which each actor affects the way the artwork is remembered over the course of time. The theoretical implications of ANT are outlined in the first chapter, alongside an inquiry into the way art historians have utilized ANT with regard to ephemeral artworks in the discipline of art history. Especially for installation and performance art, ANT proves an insightful approach because besides the artwork itself, the related actors (human and non-human) are considered to be important as well, such as the location, the preparatory documents and sketches, the interacting viewers and so on. Additionally the concept of 'circulating reference' as described by Bruno Latour is adopted.⁵ I introduce the term of 'circulating reference' in art historical research to analyze and focus on the transformations that different actors might undergo through the course of *time*. Thereby I depart from Latour's use of the term that was introduced by him to analyze the transformations of actors that enable the crossing of essentially *ontological* gaps from matter to form during the process of scientific research.

The premise to follow the actors and map the actor-network underlies all the following chapters of this thesis, although from different perspectives. The second, third and fourth chapter mainly consist of an historical investigation of an actor-network in the past, while the fifth chapter revolves around curatorial approaches in contemporary exhibitions that bring certain actor-networks forward in the present. ANT structures the thought in all chapters, as the interrelations between archival documents and personal experiences in the process of remembrance guide the research. In other words, the actors that extend the 'circulating reference' in the present determine and stimulate what can be retraced, mapped and thus remembered.

The second chapter sketches a broad outline of Corps de Garde's program and its institutional objectives and developments. This chapter provides a more detailed overview of artists' activities at Corps de Garde in 1979. Because of the myriad of interesting yet uncovered projects and the time consuming research that is required to trace the actor-network, two projects of which new video footage was 're-discovered'

⁴ All the interviews I took (Leendert van Lagestein, Fred Wagemans, Vito Acconci) and archives that I consulted are listed in the bibliography (131-133) and referred to with the following abbreviations in the notes: Corps de Garde archive of Leendert van Lagestein Amsterdam [ACDG], Archive of De Appel Amsterdam [ADAA], Forum Middelburg archive of Maria-Rosa Boezem [AFM], archive of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Rotterdam [ABVB], archive of the Museum of Modern Art, New York [AMoMA], archive of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam [ASMA], archive of the Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven [AVAE].

⁵ Latour 1999.

are discussed in greater detail. Chapter 3 draws on the research I conducted for two earlier tutorials about Vito Acconci's *The Peoplemobile* (1979), supervised by drs. Linda Nijenhof.⁶ Besides the outlined process from creation to remembrance, this thesis significantly adds to the earlier work by reflecting on the way Vito Acconci's work circulates in the present. The thesis embeds and extends the earlier research in the context of Corps de Garde, and thereby brings the work of Vito Acconci in relation to the work of James Lee Byars, which is analyzed in chapter 4. While Acconci provides insights into his conceptual considerations, following the actor-network around James Lee Byars proved more challenging, as the references remained more opaque and intentionally mysterious. The two projects James Lee Byars realized in Groningen, *The 5 Continent documenta 7* (1979) and *The Flag of Perfect* (1979) are reconstructed in the fourth chapter. Both the audio footage in the installations of Acconci and the intended tactility of the materials used by Byars bring questions forward regarding the circulation these artists work in the present. The fifth chapter analyses the challenges contemporary curators face in presenting such ephemeral work that is mainly known through archival documents.

Instead of reflecting on the presentation of individual artists, the fifth chapter investigates the representation of past exhibitions within exhibitions that include archival documents. Related to the so-called archival turn in both artist practices and art theory, the fifth chapter brings forward a critical evaluation of a contemporary phenomenon: the 'remembering exhibition' in general and the 'archival remembering exhibition' in particular.⁷ With two case studies the spectrum of possibilities for remembering ephemeral artworks in an exhibition format are investigated, ranging from the inclusion of archival documentation in exhibition display to re-creations of artworks. The first case study is the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, which has recently shown many exhibitions that elaborated on the institutions own history and included numerous archival documents, balancing between a critical reflection and a glorification of the past. The second case study in this chapter is the exhibition *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* at Raven Row London, remembering Gallery House London (1972-1973). Gallery House was an alternative art space with a program comparable to Corps de Garde in Groningen. For the exhibition Raven Row had invited many artists to re-perform, re-create or talk about their work that was shown at Gallery House. The different curatorial approaches show how exhibitions might take on various roles in the 'circulating reference' to exhibition histories. In addition the final chapter functions as a critical reflection on the main objectives underlying the examined remembering exhibitions, and in extension resonate with the issues around retracing and reviving the history of the alternative art space Corps de Garde.

⁶ Haveman, Anna-Rosja. "The Peoplemobile in the oeuvre of Vito Acconci," and "Reconstruction of The Peoplemobile, from creation to remembrance." Research Master Tutorial 1 & 2, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (unpublished), 2016.

⁷ The terms "remembering exhibition" and "archival remembering exhibition" are adapted from Reesa Greenberg. See Greenberg 2009 and Greenberg 2012.

1. Retracing past events *following the actor-network*

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1. Retracing past events, following the actor-network

1.1 Towards an art historical Actor-network theory

The method of inquiry used in this thesis is The Actor-network theory (ANT), chiefly developed by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour and John Law. In this thesis I will focus on Bruno Latour's writing on the ANT. Originally developed for the field of sociology, the Actor-network theory has since been introduced in many other disciplines, among which art history. The media and art theorists Jens Schröter and Thomas Hensel bring forward in the article "Die Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie als Herausforderung der Kunstwissenschaft" that many questions dealt with in ANT are connected with theoretical issues, such as the opposition between subject and object, or the relation between context and form, previously posed in art historical context.⁸ Multiple art historians, covering a broad range of topics, have turned to the ANT and utilized its concepts in many different ways.⁹ However, not much has been written about the overall benefit art historians might have from working with the ANT. Therefore an important methodological question underlying this thesis: 'what does ANT contribute to the discipline of art history with respect to ephemeral artworks?'¹⁰

One of the key assumptions of ANT, which makes it theoretically attractive for art historians, is the fact that it acknowledges that objects possess agency as much as humans do. An actor can be understood as anything that makes a difference. Actors make others do things: people, organizations, animals or objects.¹¹ If we relate this premise to the intrinsic dynamics in an artwork, it allows us to open up the artwork not as a stable entity, but as something that exists in the form of continual evolving processes. To understand the world by means of processes Latour proposes that we speak of a 'worknet' instead of a network.¹² Instead of fixing a network (it is not a thing out there), we constantly have to work the net to be able to follow it (it is a tool). Since the net is constantly evolving, extending Latour's line of thought, it might also be preferable to speak of 'work-arts' instead of artworks. Processes begin with the creation of the artwork, in which materials, the artist affect one another and therefore influence the outcome and the meaning of the work. For example, Ann-Sophie Lehmann brings ANT forward as one of the theories relevant for an interpretation of materials, aiming for a theoretical approach that bypasses the binary between ideas and materials and instead stresses the interactions between them.¹³ Changes of the artwork do not merely occur during the artist's process of making. The network, in constant flux in and around the artwork, continues to affect the meanings of the work after it has been finished. Think about the different associations that can emerge in different exhibition contexts,

⁸ Schröter and Hensel 2012.

⁹ See the diverse range of topics covered by authors using ANT compiled in Schröter and Hensel 2012.

¹⁰ And vice versa what does art history add to ANT, although I am not sure whether I will be able to cover this this question.

¹¹ Van Maanen 2009, 87.

¹² Latour 2005.

¹³ Lehmann 2015.

or the changes in society that can effect interpretations in different historical periods. An example that sheds light on the interaction between transforming materials and theoretical concepts that are associated with an artwork is the gloomy darkness that T.J. Clark theorized about Nicolas Poussin's *Landscape with a man killed by a snake* (1648). The art historian Paul Taylor questions whether this darkness was Poussin's intention, since it is largely the result from darkening of the paint, which radically changed the appearance of the work. Indeed a print made after the painting in 1701 shows that parts of the picture that to the contemporary eye are illegibly dark, seem to have been clearly visible then. "It is not a question of nighttime, it is a question of condition" Taylor concludes.¹⁴ This example not only illuminates the changing appearance due to chemical changes of the paint, but also provides an example of a researcher 'working the net' (scrutinizing older prints and texts related to the artwork), which can point to insights otherwise overlooked. A stable art form, like painting, turns out to be not as unchangeable as it appears, and to make things a bit more complicated, most artworks discussed in this thesis do not even exist in their 'original' material.

ANT and Installation Art

Installations have been de-assembled and performances are inherently characterized by their temporal limitations.¹⁵ ANT is also relevant to approach more ephemeral artworks since artworks are not seen as static entities, but as a dynamic set of relations in a network between actors. In two articles on installation art in the context of the museum Albena Yaneva illustrates how ANT can be especially useful for an analysis of "the process of becoming installation art."¹⁶ How the process of installing an installation involves many actors is demonstrated in her "story of the encounter of a bus and a museum in the process of becoming art."¹⁷ Transformations occurred in the confrontations between and among artist's intentions, technical limitations, properties of the museum space, anticipation of viewer's interaction, safety concerns, etc. Yaneva writes this story based on her ethnographical observations in the museum while witnessing the actors at the time of their interaction. Vivian van Saaze used a similar approach as Yaneva, namely an ethnographical observation of installation art in the context of the museum. Instead of limiting the observation in the present of the unfolding process of installation in the museum, Van Saaze shows through her research how the remains and memories of the original artwork might also be studied as a part of the network of actors in retrospect.¹⁸ She uses ANT as a tool to study other ephemeral artworks such as installation, site-specific or performance art, where the 'original'

¹⁴ Taylor 2015, 16-17. See this publication for an extended introduction to the ways paintings mutate over time.

¹⁵ One can think of many contemporary artist who are intentionally trying to challenge this characteristic of performance art, such as Tino Sehgal. See Claire Bishop. "Delegated Performances". *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Verso, 2014.

¹⁶ Yaneva 2003a and 2003b.

¹⁷ Yaneva 2003a, 127.

¹⁸ Van Saaze 2013.

matter of the artwork is often not available anymore, and where research is dependent on the documents available.¹⁹ These ephemeral artworks undergo different changes that result from the interactions between actors, ranging from the museum director, the artist, the material to the viewer. In addition to the fact that the network evolves and the artwork might be said to remain in a constant state of becoming, each actor contributes to the remembrance in a unique way.

How to follow the actors

Yet how exactly should the processes between the actors be approached? With regard to the discipline of sociology, Latour has argued that ANT aims to “trace connections” between actors in the network.²⁰ In an imaginary dialogue with a student Latour explains that ANT is not a theory, which provides explanations, nor is it necessarily applicable to anything.²¹ ANT should be understood instead as a theory “about *how* to study things, or rather how *not* to study them - or rather how to let the actors have some room to express themselves.”²² Using ANT means not to impose a grand theory on the actors, but to simply follow the actors and the processes between them.²³ ANT aspires thus to be a tool rather than a theory. This description is of course only adequate when the user realizes that a tool is not neutral but instead transforms the outcomes of the research; comparable to the way an artist knows a lead pencil creates a different artwork than the same image drawn with charcoal.²⁴ This corresponds to another assumption important in ANT; actors should be “treated not as intermediaries but as mediators.”²⁵ A mediator’s input leads to changes, opposed to intermediaries that transport meaning without altering it. In this respect, photography might be said to be a good example of a mediator. While the analogue photograph is an indexical medium related through an imprint of light to the occurrence of the referred image, the photo itself is a translation with its own characteristics and functions.

When the Actor-network theory is followed as method of inquiry the artwork itself is not approached as a static object, but as a dynamic set of relations between actors. This dynamic set of relations not only influences the artwork’s ontology at the time of its initial creation, but subsequently remains in a constant movement of becoming in an unfolding present. The artworks that are scrutinized in this paper have ceased to exist and are therefore necessarily dependent on documentation to remain historically and artistically relevant. In this sense the traces the artworks have left behind become actors that play a crucial role in our understanding and knowledge of the artwork today. ANT is used as a theoretical framework to examine the particular

¹⁹ Van Saaze 2013.

²⁰ Latour 2005, 1.

²¹ Latour 2005, 141.

²² Ibid. original italics, 142.

²³ “to learn from the actors without imposing on them an a priori definition of their world-building capacities,” Latour 2004, cited in Van Maanen 2009, 85.

²⁴ Ibid. 143.

²⁵ Latour 2005, 128.

relation between both human and non-human actors in the remembrance of artworks shown in Groningen by Corps de Garde.

Equal agency of human and non-human actors, different properties

Latour uses the words human and non-human actors, to avoid a “reconciliation’ of the famous object/subject dichotomy,” and he claims that separating the two to dialectically overcome the opposition makes no sense.²⁶ His assertion that non-human agents possess equal agency as humans do is repeatedly emphasized, as in the chapter “Third Source of Uncertainty: Objects too Have Agency” in *Reassembling the Social*²⁷ However, this should not lead to the implication that human and non-human actors are equal; apart from the fact that they both possess agency, they do essentially act on their own terms. Latour addresses this point in the following paragraph:

ANT is not, I repeat is not, the establishment of some absurd ‘symmetry between humans and non-humans’. To be symmetric, for us, simply means not to impose a priori some spurious asymmetry among human intentional action and a material world of causal relations. There are divisions one should never try to bypass, to go beyond, to try to overcome dialectically. They should rather be ignored and left to their own devices, like a once formidable castle now in ruins.²⁸

In other words, one should not try to overcome the differences between humans and non-humans, but simply investigate how they act without imposing an a priori theory on them.

In this thesis both the human and non-human actors are mapped that played a role in the network around Corps de Garde in the city of Groningen. To outline the different actors connected to Corps de Garde, a division is made between the actors that were involved in the production, the distribution and the reception phases.²⁹ The distinction of the different domains is helpful in order to systematically identify actors and their relationships.³⁰ The succession in time of the different domains illuminates broad ranging changes as well. The alteration and creation of the artworks are formed not only in the process of making (production) but also by the way the artwork is made available to a public (distribution) and how it is received by an audience (reception). As the approaches to art of the previously cited authors illustrate, it seems that ANT has been adopted more often to shed light on the process of *making* in relation to the *distribution* of artworks. Nevertheless the process of *becoming* also transforms in the process of *reception*; the way the event is experienced by an audience will also be accounted for in this thesis. The reconstruction of a network in the past is dependent both on the documents that are available in archives and the details recalled in people’s memory. The events are reconstructed by a combination of archival research and in-depth personal interviews with people involved in the projects, both in the organization

²⁶ Latour 2005, 75.

²⁷ Ibid. 63-86.

²⁸ Ibid. 76.

²⁹ In reality these phases are inseparable and many links between the different phases can be stipulated.

³⁰ Van Maanen 2009, 13.

and in the reception of the artworks. Following Latour, how can we empirically study actors equally, while not forgetting about their different properties?

Without imposing an a-priori theory on the differences between human and non-human actors, their different properties did come forward in the first case-study of actors in this thesis, that is the research following the actor-network around Vito Acconci's *The Peoplemobile* (Chapter 3). These were the different properties of photos, written documents and personal memories, with particular regard to their different transformations over time. Several incidents may illustrate the degree to which mnemonic devices can affect memory. The first was a poignant moment when I met the artist Vito Acconci in New York. I had hoped he might be able to answer my many questions regarding *The Peoplemobile* (1979).³¹ However it soon became apparent that the artist could barely recall details about the project, while ironically I was able to talk with him about the project in great detail. It was only when we looked at some photographs of the project that some of the details came back to the artist, such as the three different constructions of the installation. The curator Antony Hudek recounted a similar anecdote; when he met Victor Burgin and had asked about the work he had shown at Gallery House in London in 1972, Burgin was at first not able to remember the work in question. Only after looking at photo documentation the artist was able to recognize his own work in retrospect.³² These two anecdotes serve to illustrate both the significant fact of the dependence of personal memories on other documentation materials. Also important differences of the way actors transform over time came to light. While the photograph remains fairly stable, personal memories can change or even be forgotten and as illustrated become dependent on the remaining references. The specific exhibition of Burgin's work at Gallery House would most likely have been forgotten, even by the artist himself, if the curator hadn't inquired about it.

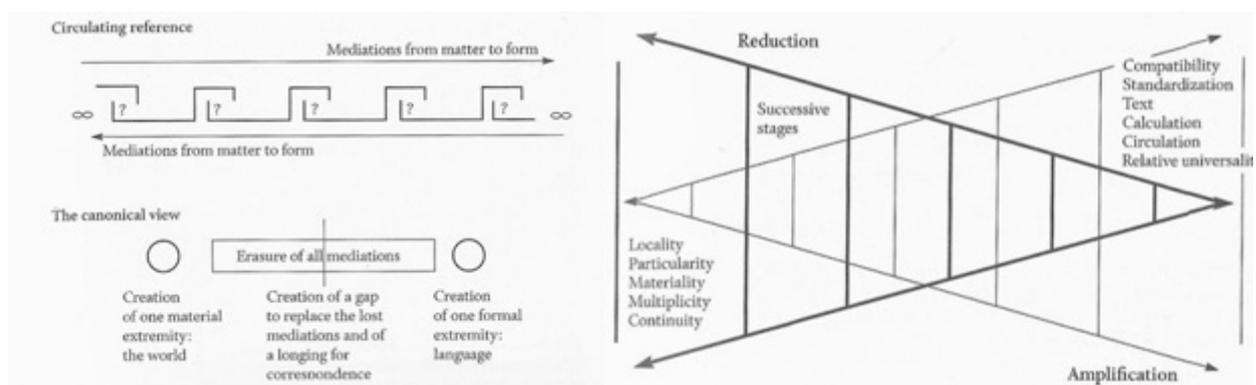
Latour's term 'circulating reference' is used in this thesis to analyze how actors relate to the past from the present in both academic and curatorial research. This term is relevant since the aim of this thesis is not only to map the actor-network around Corps de Garde, but also to shed light on the manner in which this actor-network is remembered and therefore how and why knowledge of it has transformed over time.

³¹ Interview Acconci 2016.

³² Burgin, Victor. *Now and Then*, a discussion with Antony Hudek and Alex Sainsbury, Friday 3 March, 6.30pm at Raven Row London.

1.2 'Circulating reference' the chain of transformations

The phenomenon that Latour describes as 'circulating reference' is explained in the second essay of *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*.³³ In the essay "Circulating Reference, Sampling Soil in the Amazon Forest" Latour looks closely at details of scientific processes in order to undermine the idea that science navigates between two ontologically different domains, language and nature, traditionally considered to be separated by a large gap.³⁴ He proposes the concept of 'circulating reference' in order to grasp the relation between things existing in the world themselves and how these things are referred to in research. Through close observation of botanists and pedologists studying the forest of Boa Vista in the Brazilian Amazon, Latour describes how he observed the chain of transformations that enabled the forest and its soil to evolve into a written article. This transformation chain includes the many steps that form a bridge across the abyss between the world and its representation. An example of one of the steps is the collection of soil samples in a so called "pedocomparator," a device that enables the transportation of soil in a gridded form and that makes the samples of dirt simultaneously visible. By using the pedocomparator the forest becomes in a sense "abstracted" when the soil is separated from its original context. The subsequent abstraction enables the comparison of colors as the instrument synoptically brings together different samples from distinct sites.³⁵ In the process of transformation from forest to a scholarly written article, the pedocomparator is merely one of the chains, or mediators, that forms a connection between the two. The forest undergoes several successive stages with different operators; the chain of transformation gradually becomes more abstract while becoming more concrete. The chain does not end when a text is written; the entire transformation is a potentially endless sequence of mediators that could possibly be expanded by future researchers. The transformation chain does not even start in the forest, since most of the instruments used, such as the pedocomparator, draw on older traditions and previously established knowledge in the disciplines.



[1,2] Circulating Reference.

³³ Latour 1999.

³⁴ Ibid. 24.

³⁵ Ibid. 48.

The phenomenon of 'circulating reference' is illustrated by Latour with an image showing an abstract form that hooks into a new form [fig. 1, 2]. Each operator, or mediator, enables the next actor to hinge onto the previous one. The canonical abyss between the world and language hereby become interrelated through a process of multiple transformations. According to Latour an essential property of the chain is that it must remain *reversible*. This means that the "succession of stages must be traceable, allowing for travel in both directions. If the chain is interrupted at any point, it ceases to transport truth - ceases, that is, to produce, to construct, to trace, and to conduct it."³⁶ With regard to his own text, Latour writes about the difference between the hard and soft sciences, that it "does not re-represent its evidence in the manner of my pedologist friends."³⁷ However, pedology and art history not that different since both are material-based and the concept of reversibility can also be of relevance for art history. One of the first skills a historian acquires is the ability to judge whether or not a source is trustworthy, and to accurately refer to other authors cited in texts in order to enable the reversibility. In addition art historians vouch for authenticity of objects themselves as well. This becomes more difficult with ephemeral art when the work itself ceases to exist, but even then the remaining documentation and memories act as elements in the chain of references, keeping the 'circulating reference' intact. Therefore it is even more urgent to reflect on which descriptions/interpretations the chain of transformation is based on.

As Latour has illustrated in his text, certain actors are quite helpful in crossing the spatial and temporal gaps. Photographs in particular function not only as a mnemonic device, but also as a 'proof' that the event took place. To that extent the photograph is a mediator that can transport the presence of a past event within it. "And if I lose all my negatives at the photo shop, how will anyone know whether I have lied?"³⁸ To extend this question: what if there is no photo to begin with, how can we know whether or not something has occurred? Knowledge of the past is always mediated and dependent on the interaction between human and non-human actors in order to trace a chain back into the past. The fact that we as humans are able to connect, and associate ourselves with non-human actors enables us to "interact at a distance," bridging spatial and temporal distances.³⁹

In the following I will examine how documents such as photography and language mediate as actors on the one hand, and the mediation of memory through interviews on the other hand, since these are the two methods combined in this research to map the actor-network.

³⁶ Ibid. 69.

³⁷ Ibid. 78.

³⁸ Ibid. 76.

³⁹ Latour 1996, 239.

1.3 Transformations over time, documents and interviews as mediators of memory

Photography as 'punctum'

Let us return first to Latour's use of photographs in his essay. The photos are not only proof that he witnessed the field trip into the Amazon, they are important actors in his analysis as well. When Latour writes in his essay about the manner in which a pedologist carefully studies the soil brought together in the pedocomparator and accompanies a photo in the text, it is easy to imagine that Latour in his turn carefully studied the photos before writing his own article about the field trip and his observations. In fact when visiting exhibitions I proceeded in the same manner: when intending to write about an exhibition, I have made sure to take photos to accompany my arguments and to aid my personal memory during the process of writing.

When reflecting on photographs as archival objects it is worth considering how the archive operates as a material object, mediating between the past and present. The performance and new media scholar Gabriella Giannachi, in her book *Archive Everything: mapping the everyday*, suggests treating materials in the archive as *puncta*: "what have been, which are no longer, but whose trace somehow persist in the present."⁴⁰ This term is derived from Roland Barthes' investigation of photography in *Camera Lucida*, in which he describes what to him is the essence of photography: "to ratify what it represents."⁴¹ The *punctum* is a detail that pierces time and as such indicates a superimposition of reality and of the past.⁴² The emphasis is not on what the photograph, or the document, was in the past, but on "what it affords in the present."⁴³ Giannachi describes that "what the *punctum* denotes that *has been*, still is, in some ways, now, either as an action or as an effect of a past action."⁴⁴ Thus the archive can be understood as formed by multiple *puncta*, remediating past realities and affecting the present.

The performativity of language and photography

Despite the indexicality of analogue photography that ontologically indicates the true occurrence of a past event, documentation is not always a straightforward registration of a past event. With regard to performance documentation Philip Auslander describes in the article "The performativity of performance documentation" how artistic documentation might create its own reality.⁴⁵ To describe the performativity of photography he distinguished two types of performance documentation, *documentary*

⁴⁰ Giannachi 2016, 32.

⁴¹ Barthes 2000 [1981], 85.

⁴² Ibid. 76.

⁴³ Giannachi 2016, 32.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Auslander 2006.

and *theatrical*.⁴⁶ While the documentary category suggests that the documentary materials provide a record and evidence of a past event through which it can be reconstructed (as in the concept of the index), the theatrical category describes how “the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such.”⁴⁷ The difference between these two categories is however not as rigid as it might seem: work belonging to the documentary category always remains a fragmentary representation of the past while the theatrical category derives its affect through the suggestion of being a “truthful” documentation.

The concept of performativity, as used by Auslander, was first described by the philosopher John L. Austin.⁴⁸ Writing about language, Austin posited that there was a difference between constative language, which describes the world and can be evaluated as true or false, and performative language, which does something in the world.⁴⁹ The classic example of the performativity of language are marriage vows, the utterance “I do” not only describes what you are doing and refers to a reality, it also constitutes an action in itself which creates a reality. Bringing these ideas back to the agency of documents within the archive, establishes an important insight to keep in mind: photographs and text not only refer to a reality, they also possess the agency to create the way we perceive that world.

Transformations over time, the interview and people as mediators of memory

Complementary to the archival research of documents the method of interviewing is chosen because it provides a way to take into account the personal experiences; even though as Richard Candida Smith has pointed out: “interviews involve a translation from one level of experience to another.”⁵⁰ Artworks also manifest in a way that resists the translation of direct experience into words. Moreover Candida argues that the translation of experience into words is an ambiguous, but necessary process in order for experience to be memorized through time: “The need to throw immediate sensual experiences off into words underscores the ambiguous if necessary relation of word, gesture and object in the consolidation of experience and memory.”⁵¹ Human actors hereby become mediators, since personal experiences of the artwork are individual translations influenced by each person’s own point of view, on the world in general and on art in particular. However when a person and their memory are both considered as actors, it is also important to note that views change over the years and that the memories of their firsthand experiences fade, are forgotten, or otherwise change inevitably throughout the years.

Memory might be considered as a mediator that is influenced by external actors through time. On the one hand external actors that influence memory could be texts or

⁴⁶ Ibid. 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 5.

⁴⁸ Austin 1962.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Smith 2002, 2.

⁵¹ Ibid.

pictures that affect certain aspects of the event being remembered. On the other hand broader cultural or political changes tend to influence a person's experience of the world and remembrance of the past event. In the process of remembering the past in the present, it becomes difficult or even impossible to separate the intertwined memories that are a reflection on the past from the present context. Nevertheless this research intends to show how memory is both a result of both the non-human and the human actors, and possibly how the two types of actors influence each other in the process of remembering and interpretation.⁵²

If people are mediators of their own memories, the interview form itself mediates what is brought forward from the interview, as a result of the dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewee.

The researcher as actor

If each actor constitutes a translation, then also this thesis itself and my actions as a researcher, become an actor within the network. It has to be acknowledged that this thesis, the chain of investigation, is led by my personal interests, which are formed and evolved in relation to the artworks I have encountered and the books and articles that I have read. In extension the network that I am immersed in has helped to form my train of thought: from the teachers at the University of Groningen who lectured and transmitted knowledge about particular artworks to the exhibitions I have visited. In addition to the sum of my personal experiences, the choices made regarding this thesis topic have also been the result of recent 're-discovery' I described in the introduction of a collection of U-matic tapes, produced and kept, in the Art History department of the University of Groningen.

⁵² See McTighe 2012, for an analysis how installation art, photography and memory are intertwined with one another.

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2. Corps de Garde in retrospect

2.1 Corps de Garde 1976-1984

Corps de Garde, currently a hotel, is only a couple of steps away from the Art History department located in the same street, the Oude Boteringestraat in Groningen. The hotel owes its name to its original function as a guardhouse protecting the northern border of Groningen: 'Nije Corps de Garde.' Since its construction in 1633 the building, now a national monument, has housed many different types of organizations and people: soldiers, university students, municipal firemen (who used the building to practice putting out fires) and last but not least, artists. From 1975 to 1984 the building functioned as an alternative art space named Corps de Garde. The director of this art space, Leendert van Lagestein, kept the original name of the building and its association with 'avant-garde,' the 19th and 20th century term for innovative and experimental art.⁵³ Presently, the only indication of the building's history as an art space is a small plaque in front stating its use as the Institute of Art History before the building was privatized in 1989.⁵⁴

Yet, as with the plaque on the building, neither the staff of the current hotel inside nor most people involved in the contemporary Groningen art world seem to be aware of the short but vibrant artistic history and projects of the Corps de Garde. A history seemingly as quickly extinguished as the small fires put out by the fireman who once occupied the building. Except for the many articles in the local newspaper published at the time and a master thesis by Debbie Broekers, not much has been written about Corps de Garde since its demise.⁵⁵ In this chapter the history and program of Corps de Garde is outlined first.⁵⁶ Then, in order to provide an in-depth analysis the projects executed in the year 1979 are examined.



[3] Corps de Garde, Oude Boteringestraat 74, Groningen.

⁵³ Interview Van Lagestein 2016.

⁵⁴ Plaquet on façade of Hotel Corps de Garde, 2017.

⁵⁵ Broekers 2012 and articles about Corps de Garde in the Groninger *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* [CDGD], nowadays called *Dagblad van het Noorden*.

⁵⁶ In the 2.1 outline of Corps de Garde's overall program it is a conscious choice not to mention any artists, since the process of selection, and the consequent participation in canonization, is one of the aspects reflected on critically in this thesis. All names of participating artists in Corps de Garde's activities are listed in the appendix (as far as possible to reconstruct).

Beginnings of Corps de Garde

Before Leendert van Lagestein (born Leendert Geelhoed, 1944) started Corps de Garde, he was involved with Galerie de Mangelgang (housed in a spacious wing of the Harmonie building, one of the University of Groningen's locations) and run by his then partner Annemarie Kruijff. With money provided by the city council to help overcome the unemployment problem at the time, the building of the University, which housed the De Mangelgang was renovated and the gallery was forced to relocate.⁵⁷ The couple split up and Kruijff found a new location on the Kleine Kromme Elleboog 9 (Groningen), continuing as De Mangelgang.⁵⁸ Van Lagestein recalls that he had given up on Groningen and actually considered moving to New York, with his new New York girlfriend Barbara Bloom, but when the University offered him the use of the historical building on the corner of the Oude Boteringestraat, he started the non-profit foundation named Corps de Garde instead.⁵⁹ The first 'event' at Corps de Garde took place on the 6th of February in 1976.⁶⁰

Financial statements

Though Corps de Garde aimed to operate outside of the commercial circuit and, as Leendert van Lagestein recently explained, he acted as if money was not required at the time. The reality nevertheless was that Corps de Garde was not able to function without financial support, which made its existence inevitably dependent on private and public funding.⁶¹ In 1977 the artists themselves organized a funding auction to sell work in order to assure Corps de Garde's continuing existence.⁶² In the statement that accompanied the invitation to the auction, Corps de Garde's intention to operate on a minimal budget becomes clear: "Bij de opzet is rekening gehouden met beperkingen in tijd, ruimte en middelen. Funktioneren met een laag budget is als mogelijkheid, zeker niet als noodzakelijkheid voorzien."⁶³ To function with "a low budget is possible, but not necessarily" might seem an ambiguous and counter-productive statement for a fund raising action, and according to a newspaper article at the time, the artists' auction did not raise sufficient funds. In the article the author Erik Beenker described the noncommercial role of Corps de Garde and argued that the city of Groningen should support such institutes.⁶⁴ Subsequently in November 1977 the alderman Thewis Wits made an extra 6000 guilders available from an "experimenten pot," an extra source of

⁵⁷ Also the Groninger Museum was renovated because of the same funds made available. Anon. 3 September 1975, 15, [DCDG].

⁵⁸ Anon. 17 September 1975, 15, [DCDG].

⁵⁹ Interview Van Lagestein 2016. Anon. 4 February 1976, 15, [DCDG].

⁶⁰ Fokkens, 7 February 1976, [DCDG].

⁶¹ Interview Van Lagestein 2016.

⁶² The promotional campaign took place from June 12th to the 2nd of July. Corps de Garde, invitation art auction, June 1977, [GRA].

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Beenker, 24 June 1977, 29, [DCDG].

funding for experimental projects.⁶⁵ After some delay intermittent funding was provided until Corps de Garde got affirmation of structural subsidies in 1979.⁶⁶⁶⁷ It was one politician in the Groninger city council in particular, Thewis Wits (1947-2014), who promoted Corps de Garde's funding to a good effect, both from the city of Groningen and later the Dutch Ministry of Culture.⁶⁸

Artists-in-residence program

As stated in a policy plan written at the time Corps de Garde was a non-profit foundation with a studio that offered the contemporary artist a workspace for installations and projects.⁶⁹ The core of Corps de Garde's activities consisted of providing spaces for the artists through a program of residencies. The work periods for artists in all media from drawing and performance to video, were not oriented towards a final artwork necessarily as outcome but as partners in artistic development.⁷⁰ The policy plan of Corps de Garde stated its intention to operate outside of the commercial art circuit and to treat contemporary artists as equals: "de kunstenaar als tijdgenoot – niet schijndood in de schaduw van zijn werkstukken, maar aanwezig, aanspreekbaar, kommunikatief."⁷¹ Their aim was not to treat the artists necessarily in the shadow of their products, but as present and approachable partners in dialogue with each other and with the community. While artists were not obligated to exhibit, they often did, either on the first floor of Corps de Garde or during one of the events on other locations.

A particular feature of the Corps de Garde program was the orientation not only to Dutch but also American artists.⁷² During the period in which Van Lagestein ran Corps de Garde, he partly lived in New York and was well acquainted with the America art-scene. The contacts Van Lagestein had in the United States resonated in the program of the foundation. On the one hand Van Lagestein said he tried to use the decentralized location of Groningen in the international art circuit to his advantage, by operating outside of the popular circuit. On the other hand he introduced a small part of the international art scene to Groningen. Many of the alternative art spaces in New York functioned as an example for Van Lagestein when he was thinking about the type of space he imagined Corps de Garde to be: for example, 112 Greene Street, The Kitchen, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, Artists Space, Franklin Furnace, Printed Matter, Colab, Jaap Rietman Books, Paula Cooper and Castelli/Sonnabend.⁷³

⁶⁵ Anon. 11 November 1977, 23, [DCDG].

⁶⁶ An example of news about insufficient fund of Corps de Garde regards the Zomermanifestatie of 1978, which was delayed because of a short budget, see: Anon. 4 August 1978, 15, [DCDG].

⁶⁷ Anon, 16 January 1979, 7, [DCDG].

⁶⁸ The national Dutch Ministry of Culture was referred to as CRM (Ministerie van Cultuur, Recreatie en Maatschappelijk Werk).

⁶⁹ Corps de Garde, foundation policy plan, 1976, [GRA].

⁷⁰ Anon. 29 June 1976, 45, [DCDG].

⁷¹ Corps de Garde, 1976, [GRA].

⁷² Corps de Garde, Artist-in-residences, ca. 1983 [GRA].

⁷³ See Broekers 2012 for an elaborate discussion of these alternative art spaces in relation to Corps de Garde. Or Rosati 2012 for information on alternative art space in New York in general.

Zomermanifestaties

Besides an artist-in-residency space, Corps de Garde also hosted a visual arts program during the *Zomermanifestatie*, a summer festival with music, theatre and visual arts. Corps de Garde organized the 'visual arts' program that included installations, performances and screenings of videos. The first edition of Corps de Garde's collaboration with the *Zomermanifestatie* was in 1976. Under the name *Locations* Corps de Garde organized *5 Performances*, with performances in the Martinikerk (Martin's church) and the Prinsentuin (the garden nearby the church).

As the Groninger Museum was closed in 1977 for renovation and yet sought for different ways to still be visible in the city, they collaborated with the *Zomermanifestatie* that year.⁷⁴ Together with Corps de Garde and the department of Art History of the University of Groningen they presented *16 Dagen* (16 Days) as the performance, video and installation program of the *Zomermanifestatie*.⁷⁵ With more funding and more partners, the program was able to expand from 5 to 16 events that year. Most of these events were presented again in the Martinikerk, other locations included the Grote Markt (the town square in front of the Martinikerk), a parking garage, Albert Waalken's farm and the Institute of Art History presented a film program.⁷⁶ Some of the performances of *16 Dagen*, were documented by art history students and were screened at the Institute of Art History.⁷⁷ A small book, consisting of multiple postcards, was published with information about the artists' projects.

The following *Zomermanifestatie* in 1978, entitled *August* was organized by the Groninger Museum in collaboration with the Institute of Art History, as well as other exhibiting venues such as Galerie Magazijn and Galerie Waalkens.⁷⁸ Like the previous *Zomermanifestatie* the visual arts program was presented in many public locations in the city; however in contrast to the previous edition the Martinikerk was not as a prominent location as the previous year. Since the display of videos with explicit sexual content had caused a certain amount of scandal the previous year, the exhibitions in the church were somewhat limited in the following years.⁷⁹ In contrast to the programs of the previous *Zomermanifestaties*, *August 1978* featured more installations with sound.

The visual arts program of 1979, again named *August*, was programmed by Corps de Garde in collaboration with the Groninger Museum. As in previous years Corps de Garde organized many performances and installations in public locations. The contribution of the Groninger Museum consisted mainly of a film and video program, that year organized by the museum's new director, Frans Haks, together with Poul ter

⁷⁴ Simplon and Vera were partners responsible for the music program. *Zomermanifestatie 1977*, [GRA].

⁷⁵ Groninger Museum, Corps de Garde, *16 Dagen*, 1977, [GRA].

⁷⁶ Albert Waalkens was a patron of the arts by providing living and exhibition space for artists at his farm.

⁷⁷ These U-matic tapes are now kept in the archive of the Art History department of the University of Groningen. Anon. 28 September 1977, 5, [DCDG] [RUG].

⁷⁸ Corps de Garde, invitation *Augustus 1978*, 4 August 1978 [GRA].

⁷⁹ These were Carolee Schneeman's videos *Fuses* (1965-86), *Plumb Lime* (1968-71) and *Kitch's Last Meal* (1976). Also David Salle's work with pornographic references was relocated by Van Lagestein in 1977 because of the reactions to Schneeman's work. Van Lagestein 2017a.

Hofstede. This year's program seemed to maintain the standard despite the cuts in the funding of the *Zomermanifestatie* foundation.⁸⁰

After the cuts in funds the program during the *Zomermanifestaties* severely suffered. Corps de Garde's contribution to the *Zomermanifestatie* in 1980 was described as disappointing, because of the minor number of realized projects and the absence of international artists.⁸¹ After 1980 Corps de Garde's participation in the program was never as prevalent as in years before. In 1981 the visual arts program of the *Zomermanifestatie* was instead based on an open call, of which two out of the 14 accepted projects were introduced by Corps de Garde and the Groninger Museum.⁸²

Arts & Entertainment

The negative press reactions in 1980 about Corps de Garde's program were not only related to its participation in the *Zomermanifestatie*, commercial galleries in Groningen also attacked Corps de Garde's activities and its funding in general. When the commercial galleries were shortened on their subsidies, several gallery owners turned against Corps de Garde and the Artotheek and claimed that the funds would be better invested in their own galleries.⁸³ The main critique was regarding the intermittent activities and hermetic character of Corps de Garde. Leendert van Lagestein responded to these comments by announcing in 1981 that Corps de Garde intended to broaden its exposure to the public throughout the year and would not limit its public activities to the *Zomermanifestaties* as was previously done.⁸⁴ In an interview responding to the negative reactions Van Lagestein defended the reasons for Corps de Garde's limited exposure and the character of Corps de Garde's projects, as in for example their intention to assist artists' projects that did not necessarily lead to exhibitions. He admitted that Corps de Garde was not as visible as he had wished: his sensitivity to the criticism did lead to new plans to increase the public presence and to relocate the artist-in-residence program to a new building with a more private character.⁸⁵ This is referred to in multiple documents as a distinction between a "werkstudio," for the artist-in-residency program and the "publieksstudio" for public activities such as exhibitions or lectures.⁸⁶ Another change on the organizational level was the appointment of a business director, Noortje van Leeuwen, next to the artistic director Van Lagestein.⁸⁷ From 1981 onwards, the location program of Corps de Garde was renamed *Arts & Entertainment*, aiming to present artists who made interesting work falling between language, image and sound.⁸⁸

⁸⁰ Anon. 13 June 1979, 5, [DCDG].

⁸¹ Anon. 25 July 1980, [DCDG]. The decrease in the *Zomermanifestatie*'s quality was also ascribed to the decrease of the theatre program as well, see: Kunstredactie. 29 August 1980, 33, [DCDG].

⁸² Anon. 18 April 1981, 27, [DCDG].

⁸³ Anon. 2 December, 1980, 13, [DCDG]. The Artotheek was an art gallery where people could lend artworks and pay for them in terms.

⁸⁴ Wynia, Syp. "12 January 1981, 8, [DCDG].

⁸⁵ Anon. 28 August 1982, 27, [DCDG].

⁸⁶ Corps de Garde, activities in 1981, 28 April 1982 [GRA]. Corps de Garde/Arts & Entertainment, policy plan, ca. 1984. [GRA].

⁸⁷ Corps de Garde, activities in 1981, 28 April 1982 [GRA]

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Although these intentions were an extension of the program Corps de Garde had established in previous years, with *Arts & Entertainment* the emphasis in the program shifted towards further collaborations with performance venues, such as the then squatted Grand Theatre, where music concerts or installations could be hosted. These projects were described as being “live, repeatable and transportable.”⁸⁹ This shift was already apparent in the program of the *Zomermanifestatie* of 1980, and continued to resonate in the program of the following *Zomermanifestaties*. Furthermore, in the light of the general extension of outreach, the building on the Oude Boteringestraat was opened Thursday through Saturday during the fall of 1981.⁹⁰

Beginning in 1983 Corps de Garde started to operate from an office in Amsterdam and in 1984 Leendert van Lagestein set up a project for public billboards along highways in the Netherlands as a part of the *Arts & Entertainment* program.⁹¹ This particular project received national attention and was supposed to be the biggest project thus far and could be seen as a statement for the presence of art in society.⁹² The Billboard project was never executed and Corps de Garde officially ended in 1985 due to issues that arose after Corps de Garde relocated to Amsterdam, which caused a lack of funding and support.⁹³

⁸⁹ “Live, herhaalbaar, transportabel.” Corps de Garde/Arts & Entertainment, policy plan, ca. 1984 [GRA].

⁹⁰ Kunstredactie. 22 October 1981, 25. [DCdG].

⁹¹ Corps de Garde/Arts & Entertainment, policy plan, ca. 1984 [GRA].

⁹² Billboards Nederland, project description, ca. 1984, [GRA].

⁹³ Anon. 18 June 1985, 8. Anon. 23 October 1985. [DCdG].

2.2 Artists at Corps de Garde in 1979

In the previous paragraphs it has been a deliberate choice not to mention any of the artist's names in order to avoid the attendant problem of thereby creating a fragmented 'the best of Corps de Garde.'⁹⁴ In order to get a more detailed idea what Corps de Garde was, it is nevertheless incredibly insightful to know who the artists were and what they showed in Groningen. Therefore all artists that were involved with Corps de Garde's activities are listed in an oversight in the appendix. Those active in 1979 will be outlined, according to the information conveyed in the available documents. 1979 is an interesting year to investigate, since it features projects of many artist with whom Corps de Garde had previously collaborated, among whom Han Jansen, Raul Marroquin, Vito Acconci, Jack Goldstein, Michael Brewster and Charlemagne Palestine. On the other hand artists such as Peter Gordon, Michael Smith and John van 't Slot were featured in Corps de Garde's program for the first time in 1979 but would be collaborating with Corps de Garde in the following years. The artists who only presented work in 1979 were Maggie Bauer & Michel Sauer, Drewes de Wit, Michael McClard and James Lee Byars. Gerrit Dekker, was the only artist who was both featured in Corps de Garde's activities since its foundation, he was notably the first performer in Corps de Garde, and continued to work with Leendert van Lagestein in the subsequent years.

1979, an overview of Corps de Garde's activities

Maggie Bauer (1952) & Michel Sauer (1949), Artist in Residence, production *Film im Kopf*



[4] Corps de Garde postcard.

From February to March, the German artists Maggie Bauer and Michel Sauer were in residence at Corps de Garde Groningen. They worked on *Film im Kopf*, which was shown to the public on 11 and 12 March.⁹⁵ The same work would be projected on a building as a part of the Program of the Zomernamifestatie. The installation they created in Corps de Garde consisted of sounds (television voices, Kate Bush, classical music, jazz) with a DIA show (landscapes, cityscapes, interiors) projected in an empty space. The images were intended to be meaningless until the moment a viewer entered the room, and the narrative would emerge in the viewer's head, hence the title *Film im Kopf*.

⁹⁴ With exception of the names of two artists who affected Corps de Garde's policy.

⁹⁵ Bos, 9 March 1979, 17, [DCDG].

Elaine Hartnett lecture, workshop and performance

The American artist and coordinator of the New York Performance workshop gave a lecture at the Institute of Art History on 6 March and a workshop and performance at the Art Academy Minerva.

Drewes de Wit (1944), *Naden*, exhibition.



[5] Corps de Garde postcard.

With a very large brush, approximately his own length, the Dutch artist Drewes de Wit painted on a large piece of paper hung on the longest walls in the interior of Corps de Garde during his residency in 1978. For the exhibition from 13 to 18 March 1979 De Wit fragmented parts of the previously made large paper where the seams of the wall behind the large brushstroke were present. The process of making was documented in photographs, which were exhibited simultaneous with other remnants of the “deed of painting,” such as the large brush.⁹⁶ While the paint on paper showed the seams of the structures underneath the paper, other traces of structures were captured in “afwrijfsels”: De Wit used paper and graphite to capture the structures of the floor, created by the nails, cracks or other irregularities.



[6] Corps de Garde postcard.

Han Jansen (1931-1994), *Meerschop Paterswolde*, exhibition

The exhibition *Meerschop Paterswolde* displayed DIA's and pictures of the Dutch artist Han Jansen, mainly created by the artist himself, but also by John Stoel and Charles Wildevuur. These images were registrations of his interventions in nature: with white paint or colored pigments he aimed to accentuate nature's forces and the evolving changes in the landscapes.⁹⁷ Therefore Jansen describes his approach as painting *with nature*.⁹⁸ A year later, Jansen would undertake another project in collaboration with Corps de Garde near the Wadden Sea, which caused a lot of controversy due to protesting activists against his interventions in nature.⁹⁹ The exhibition that was in Groningen at Corps de Garde from 20 to 24 March and travelled to Artline Amsterdam, ICC Antwerpen and Palais de Beaux Arts Brussel.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Wessels, 16 March 1979, 21, [DCDG].

⁹⁷ Beenker, 19 March 1979, 6, [DCDG].

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Anon. 25 August 1980, 12, [DCDG].

¹⁰⁰ Anon. 23 March 1979, 21, [DCDG].



[7] Corps de Garde postcard.



[8] Superbman in *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*

Raul Marroquin (1948), *Superbman's Last Adventure*, 1976, exhibition

The Columbian artist Raul Marroquin exhibited his 5 hour long video, consisting of 11 episodes in Groningen at Corps de Garde from 27 to 31 March.¹⁰¹ *Superbman's Last Adventure* depicted a superman who is sent to Europe, in Europe he loses his heroism rather quickly and starts drinking, smoking, can't stop talking about himself while walking around in his superhero suit. The video's form a critique of "the American way of life" and combine footage of American films and advertisements with footage shot in Maastricht where Marroquin followed a postgraduate education at the Jan van Eyck Academy.¹⁰² Marroquin was also involved with the alternative art space Agora, and edited the artist magazine *Fandagos*.¹⁰³

Michael McClard (1947), Artist in Residence: production of *Axel Radius* (performance) and *Ipsa Facto* (video)



[9] Axel Radius advertisement: "discreet and efficient."

While staying in Groningen the American artist Michael McClard explored the persona of Axel Radius, a "private investigator".¹⁰⁴ He advertised in the Dutch Newspaper under the alias of Axel Radius, which was part of a larger project together with the films *Motive* and *Ipsa Facto*, in which McClard also acts. The latter Axel Radius follows an unknown trail that also led him to Groningen.¹⁰⁵ The project triggered several: one woman reported that she was swapped at birth in the hospital with another baby and requested Axel Radius get to the bottom of the situation. Another man actually requested to have someone assassinated.¹⁰⁶ Later in the same year Axel Radius also operated from an office at De Appel Amsterdam.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ The last episode of *Superbman's Last Adventures* was also produced with help of Wies Smals. Mechelen 2006, 286.

¹⁰² Wessels, 29 March 1979, 7, [DCDG].

¹⁰³ See Goethals 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Determeyer 1979, [ACDG].

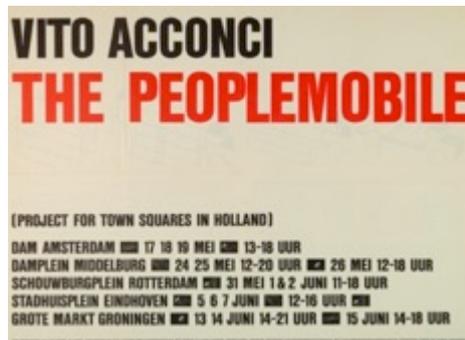
¹⁰⁵ Anon, 4 May 1979, 21, [DCDG].

¹⁰⁶ Interview Van Lagestein 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Determeyer 1979, [ACDG].

Jana Haimson, Guiseppe Chiari,
music performances.

Corps de Garde played a facilitating role in the production of two music performances in the Groninger Museum: Jana Haimson on 10 June 1979 and Guiseppe Chiari on 17 June.¹⁰⁸ Both events were part of the program of the Holland Festival and organized also in collaboration with De Appel Amsterdam.



[10] Poster/pamphlet *The Peplemobile*.

Vito Acconci (1940-2017), *The Peplemobile*
installation and lecture.

The Peplemobile, a mobile installation that travelled through Holland, ended its tour in Groningen where the installation stood on the Grote Markt on 13, 14 and 15 June 1979. The installation consisted of an audiotape that addressed the public as terrorist and was transmitted from a construction that was built into three different constellations each day. On the last day the American artist gave a lecture about his oeuvre in the Groninger Museum. The project was produced by Wies Smals, director of De Appel Amsterdam. See Chapter 3 for an elaborate description of the project.



[11] Program book, *Extra Dik*,
Zomermanifestatie Groningen 1979.

Zomermanifestatie August

De Zomermanifestatie was yearly collaborative summer festival, with music, theatre and exhibitions, performances and video and film screenings. The program spanned the whole month of August and was organized by multiple cultural institutes. Collaborators included Simplon and Vera, responsible for the music program. In 1979 the visual arts program was organized by Corps de Garde in collaboration with the Groninger Museum.

¹⁰⁸ Determeyer 1979 [ACDG].

James Lee Byars (1931-1997), *The Flag of Perfect*, (Zomermanifestatie)



[12] *The Flag of Perfect*, Groninger Museum.

The Flag of Perfect was the opening performance of the Zomermanifestatie on 28 July.¹⁰⁹ A black flag, with the word 'perfect' hung on the façade of the Groninger Museum until the end of the Zomermanifestatie on 1 September. During the Zomermanifestatie, the documentation of *The 5 Continent documenta 7* was also on display until September 30 at the Groninger Museum. This was a project that the American artist James Lee Byars had created during his residency in March, consisting of an announcement of *The 5 Continent documenta 7* in Groningen with a performance at the museum.¹¹⁰ See Chapter 4 for an elaborate description of the project.



[13] Poster *Two Boxers*.

Jack Goldstein (1945-2003), *The Jump*, - *A suite of nine records (sound effects)*, a lecture, *Two Boxers*, (Zomermanifestatie)

From 31 July to 4 August Jack Goldstein's film installation *The Jump* was on display at the Groninger Museum.¹¹¹ Also Goldstein's *Grammofoonplaten - A suite of nine records (sound effects)*(1976)- were on view during the month of August at the Groninger Museum.¹¹² On the 21st of August Goldstein gave a lecture at the Art History Department. During his residency in August at Corps de Garde the American artist worked on the production of *Two Boxer*, a performance directed by Goldstein in a sports venue in Selwerd, which took place on the 25 August. Two professional boxers (Johan Maille and Jacob Blancket) fought in a stroboscopic light first, which later turned in a constant red light, under Prussian 18th century music.¹¹³ Both actual sport fanatics as well as an art audience attended the event. The whole performance was filmed, where the footage remains is unclear.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Determeyer, 30 July 1979, 7, [DCDG].

¹¹⁰ Determeyer, 28 July 1979, 21, [DCDG].

¹¹¹ Determeyer, 4 August 1979, 25, [DCDG].

¹¹² The Groninger museum bought the collection of records and several of Goldstein's videos. Wessels, 20 Augustus 1979, 6, [DCDG].

¹¹³ Determeyer, 27 Augustus 1979, 12, [DCDG].

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Van Lagstein also recalls the video documentation and does not know where it is.

Maggie Bauer (1952) & Michel Sauer (1949), *Film im Kopf*, dia projection (Zomermanifestatie)



[14] Corps de Garde postcard.

From 3 August 1979 *Film im Kopf* (produced during their residence earlier that year) was projected in Gelkinge Straat Groningen from 10.30 to 12.30 pm: “... wo die Leute um 10 vor 12 nach dem Kino pinkeln gehen da laufen die Dia’s.”¹¹⁵ The idea behind the projections remained the same, although for this presentation they were projected in public space.¹¹⁶ On top of that the artist invited the public to submit slides to add to the projection the last day.¹¹⁷ Even though the artists received several contributions, only one was considered appropriate for use in the work.¹¹⁸

Michael Asher (1943-2012), artist in residence, lecture, project on Grote Markt, (Zomermanifestatie)



[15] Image of market stand in *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*.

On 14 August 1979 the American artist Michael Asher gave a lecture about his work at the Institute of Art History. The last 10 days of August he remained in residence at Corps de Garde while working on a new project which entailed a weekly sale of American T-shirts on the weekend market on the Grote Markt. At the stand people’s phone numbers could be printed vertically on these t-shirts. In an announcement by Corps de Garde it was advertised that the market sale would take place every Saturday until the end of September. A newspaper article published on September 17th referred to Asher’s work with a photo of the t-shirt stand, indicating that the work did take place at least once in September.¹¹⁹ In the annual rapport of 1979 it was stated however that the project was postponed to spring 1980 because of the bad weather in September.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Postcard/invitation [GRA].

¹¹⁶ Anon. 3 August 1979, 19, [DCDG].

¹¹⁷ Anon. 20 August 1979, 7, [DCDG].

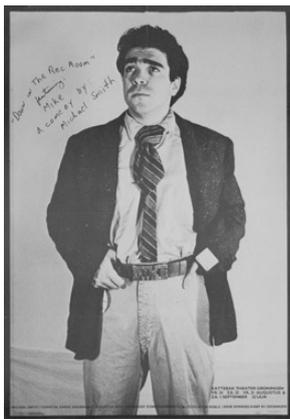
¹¹⁸ Wagemans 1979, 11.

¹¹⁹ Determeyer, 17 September 1979, 8, [DCDG].

¹²⁰ Determeyer 1979 [ACDG].

Silvia Steiger (1940), artist in residence, *Feathers fall around you* (Zomermanifestatie)

The Dutch artist Silvia Steiger stayed in residence at Corps de Garde during the last ten days of August. She arrived “blanco” in Groningen where she developed a work in situ, inspired by the feathers she saw lying around in the city.¹²¹ Steiger collected these feathers and copied them in photograms, which she returned to the places where she had found the original feathers during the next night. By the next afternoon most of the feathers had disappeared, suggesting that people had collected the photograms.¹²² Two postcards were distributed afterwards showing the feathers in the cityscape.



[16] Poster *Down in the Rec Room*.

Michael Smith (1951), *Down in the Rec Room*, comedy act, (Zomermanifestatie)

The American comedian Michael Smith, who also stayed as a resident at Corps de Garde, performed *Down in the Rec Room*, a comedy show consisting of several acts, such as *Baby Ikki*, *Minimal Message Movement and-or Minimal Movement Message* and *Boogie-oogie-oogie*. Smith performed several Friday nights (19, 24, 25, 31 August and 1 September 1979) at the Kattebaktheater, Zuiderdiep Groningen.

Michael Brewster (1946), artist in residence, *Hit and Run – a floating flasher drawing* (Zomermanifestatie)



[17] Poster *Hit and Run – a floating flasher drawing*.

The American “sound sculptor” Michael Brewster, also then in residence at Corps de Garde, participated in the Zomermanifestatie with a nightly excursion to the Lauwersmeer on the 25 August. At the lake, Brewster created a light show with floating flashlights that flickered in the water. In a review, however, a journalist wrote that the work was somewhat disappointing due to the distance from the shore and the interfering lights from the harbor nearby.¹²³ While Brewster resided in the Netherlands Leendert van Lagestein also helped with the production of an exhibition of an Acoustic Sculpture at Modern Art Gallerie Vienna, Austria.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Determeyer 1979 [ACDG].

¹²² Determeyer 1979 [ACDG].

¹²³ Determeyer, 27 Augustus 1979, 12, [DCDG].

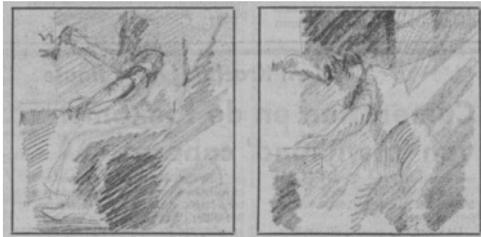
¹²⁴ This Acoustic Sculpture was a new version of *Concrete Two Tone*, which was installed during the Zomermanifestatie 1978 in an unrealistic object in the Netherlands landscape that was destined to become a highway overpass. Determeyer 1979, [ACDG].



[18] Peter Gordon in *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*.

Peter Gordon (1951) & Love of Life Orchestra, concert (Zomermanifestatie)

As the closing concert of the 1979 Zomermanifestatie Peter Gordon & Love of Life Orchestra performed as part of the music program “Sterren in het bos” on 26 August, and later on the same night in the Kattenbak theater. The American musician Peter Gordon was introduced to the program and invited to perform in Groningen by Corps de Garde. Initially the plan was to develop a new work during the residency, instead of presented concert. This plan turned out to be too ambitious for the limited time and funds available.¹²⁵

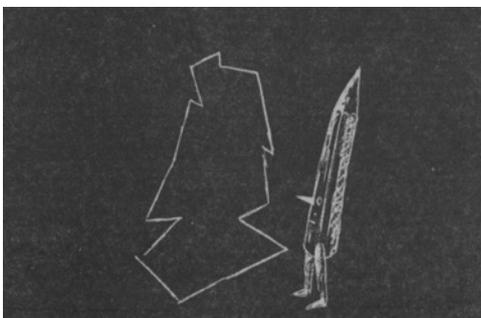


[19] Eric Bos, illustration of *Schlingen Blängen*, in *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*.

Charlemagne Palestine (1947), *Schlingen Blängen*, on Lohman Orgel, Farmsum.

On 27 October the American artist Charlemagne Palestine performed on the Lohman Organ in the N.H. Church in Farmsum. Transport by bus to Farmsum was facilitated by Corps de Garde from the Grote Markt in Groningen. Besides the movement needed to play the organ, Palestine performed through the physical movement of his body, as registered in drawings by Eric Bos. Palestine had performed more often in Groningen, for example on the Carillon of the Martini Church in Groningen during the Zomermanifestatie of 1977.¹²⁶

John van ‘t Slot (1949), *The Black Iceberg*



[20] *De Zwarte Ijsberg 4*, in *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*.

During his residency from November to December the Dutch artist John van ‘t slot worked on the series of chalk drawings on blackboard, which he photographed: *The Black Iceberg*. These works were presented every Friday in the local newspaper. The readers of the newspaper were asked to respond to the drawings, which led to diverse reactions. In the fourth week of the series publication one person wrote that the drawings did not invite a response because they were not exciting, while someone else appreciated them and wrote that the drawings triggered his imagination.¹²⁷ Comparable works to those featured in the “newspaper exhibition” were exhibited simultaneous at gallery Magazijn in Groningen.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Determeyer 1979 [ACDG].

¹²⁶ Bos, 23 Oktober 1979, 37, [DCDG].

¹²⁷ Slot, 2 November 1979; 9 November 1979; 16 November 1979; 23 November 1979; 30 November 1979; 7 December 1979; 21 December 1979; 28 December 1979, [DCDG].

¹²⁸ Bos, 26 November 1979, 13, [DCDG].

Gerrit Dekker (1943), Artist in Residence

In December the Dutch artist Gerrit Dekker, who was involved at Corps de Garde from its beginning, was in residence at Corps de Garde, where he started to work on his big project of building a boat in Sri Lanka. This project would be executed in 1982 in Sri Lanka.¹²⁹ Perhaps this project was the first step towards his complete withdraw from the mechanisms and structures of the art world in 1988.¹³⁰

Concluding remarks program 1979

Far from presenting a coherent program, Corps de Garde's collaboration with artists was instead perhaps most productive in its diversity. Participating artists worked in broad-ranging media, such as video, installations, letters, newspaper exhibitions, music concerts, comedy acts, performances and photography. Not only the media artists chose to work in were diverse. Also the locations where these artworks were presented were often disperse and not limited to Corps de Garde's building in De Oude Boteringestraat.

On the one hand work was presented in easy accessible public spaces such as the central town square of Groningen The Grote Markt (Acconci, Asher), in the street (Sauer & Bauer), or as series of drawings in the local newspaper (Van t' Slot). Some of the artists tried to use the public situation to their advantage by creating the possibility for public participation, for example when Sauer & Bauer asked for contributions for their Dia show, or Van t' Slot invited people to react on his newspaper drawings. The response of the public remained limited however, as the few reactions in the newspaper illustrated or as shown by the strict selection of Sauer and Bauer's slide projections, which led to the inclusion of merely one slide for their "participatory screening." On the other hand some locations were more remote: such as outside of the city of Groningen at a lake (Brewster), a performance in a church in a small village (Palestine), or a performance in a sport venue in the suburbs of Groningen (Goldstein). During the Zomermanifestatie in August 1979 Corps de Garde also collaborated with the Groninger Museum (Byars) and hosted two shows in the Kattenbak theatre (Smith, Gordon). The music and comedy performances were an indication of the later shift in 1981 towards Corps de Garde's focus on productions suitable for performance venues, which would be named under the new header of *Arts & Entertainment*.

Looking back at the artists-in-residencies, as reconstructed through documentation, it is remarkable how many artists were in residency during Corps de Garde's program in 1979. Many of these artists exhibited the work that they produced during their residency at the Zomermanifestatie in August (Maggie Bauer & Michel

¹²⁹ Determeyer, 8 March 1982, 9, [DCDG].

¹³⁰ Hlavajora 2005, 7.

Sauer; James Lee Byars). In retrospect it seems that the program was even too ambitious since not all plans were able to be executed to their fullest intentions (e.g. Peter Gordon or Michael Asher). Perhaps some of the artists were coincidentally staying in Groningen during their exhibition/performance, but did not produce new work in Groningen, were nevertheless included in a document listing the participating artists-in-residence (such as Michael Smith).¹³¹ On the other hand, it's was simply very crowded that year as Van Lagestein recalls, and as a consequence some artist were able to meet and connect with each other, such as Michael Smith and Michel Sauer.¹³²

Corps de Garde's 'Circulating reference'

The available information referring to Corps de Garde's activities is primarily in the form of newspaper articles published at the time. These newspaper articles were often descriptions announcing an event in advance and provided descriptive information of what the project entailed. Sometimes a more extensive report of the event or exhibition might be published in the newspaper, with a more extensive report of the artwork(s) and, quotes of the artists indicating that an interview had been conducted. In general the content of the reviews remained fairly descriptive and not critical of content. This might be explained by the fact that some of the writers of the *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* were also involved with Corps de Garde. For example, Eddy Determeyer wrote many reviews but also wrote Corps de Garde's annual report in 1979. Other written sources are the documents, such as posters, postcards and photos that have remained in archives or circulate in second hand bookstores. With regard to the artists not extensively written about, there are no further references in other literature about the artists that provide information on the projects at Corps de Garde. In this respect we can say the circulating reference seem to have come to a stop. Take for example Silvia Steiger's *Feathers fall around you*, which was not referred to in the local newspaper, apart from announcements of the Zomermanifestatie. The only document found referring to the work was the program description of Corps de Garde's activities in 1979, kept in the private Corps de Garde archive of Leendert van Lagestein.¹³³

Even when looking at Michael Asher, one of the more extensively written about artists of those who exhibited at Corps de Garde, nothing seems to have been included in books about the work executed in Groningen. For example in the book *Michael Asher Writings 1973 – 1983 on Works 1969 – 1979*, the artist did not write about the project in Groningen, and it is only referred to in the list of exhibitions in the bibliography.¹³⁴ This could be because the artist himself did not think that this particular work was a success,

¹³¹ List of artists-in-residence [GRA]. It must be noted that this document was written for a funding application, meaning that Corps de Garde aimed to present itself as 'productive' as possible.

¹³² Interview Van Lagestein 2017.

¹³³ Silvia Steiger was not contacted during this research, but would be an essential contact person for further research who might have more references and memories of the project.

¹³⁴ Asher 1996, 223. Nothing is written Michael Asher's *Writings 1973-1983 on Works 1969-1979* about the work in Groningen, with the exception of one reference in the list of exhibitions on 30 August Groningen.

or it might be the consequence of the better appraised status of other works Asher produced in Chicago at the time, which were picked up and written about extensively.¹³⁵ One of the works that was produced in collaboration with Corps de Garde for its first iteration, and did remain in circulation after 1979 is Jack Goldstein's *Two Boxers*, a performance of two professional boxers in a sports venue in Selwerd. Jack Goldstein did not perform, but directed the fight and made sure all elements were perfect. More than thirty years after the initial iteration in Groningen the artist took up the work for an exhibition in New York at an art venue. On the 26th of June 2002 *Two Boxers* was re-performed under Goldstein's direction at Angel Orensanz Center for the Arts on the Lower East Side, New York. The performance was part of a retrospective exhibition of Goldstein's films, curated by Chrissie Iles at the Whitney Museum New York. One essential difference between the first performance and the re-performance was that the latter was hosted in an art venue, while the initial performance took place at an actual sports venue where both art as well as sport audiences attended the event. *Two Boxers* was performed again, after Goldstein's death in 2003, at the Centre for Contemporary Art in Nottingham in 2011.

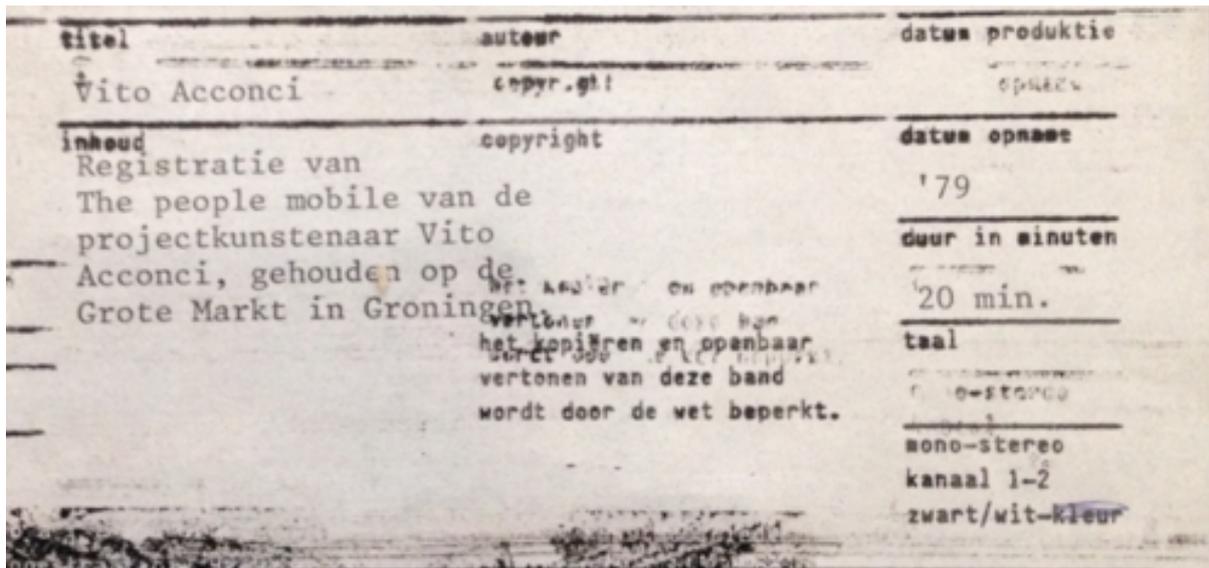
The method of inquiry, following the Actor-network, might not seem very prevalent in the previously described history of Corps de Garde. Indeed a classical art historical investigation asks for the consultance of different sources brought together by the researcher. When analyzing a past history through an ANT lens, by analyzing how actors circulate and enable the knowledge of the past art projects in the present, it does contribute an important understanding that our knowledge of these past and often ephemeral artworks is not self-evident. What we perceive about the past depends on a heterogeneous variety of actors involved in multiple decisions during multiple phases. Evidently, most circulating references originate in the time of their making. The artist themselves as well as the amount of attention for the art projects by others determine the amount of existing references, such as newspaper articles or photography. The extension and 'circulating reference' in the present is also not evident, but depends again on the attention paid to the work either by the artist or others as well. Furthermore the 'circulating reference' may be enhanced when these are available on an accessible platform, such as the digitized newspaper database Delpher.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ See Rorimer 1980 or Buchloh 1983.

¹³⁶ See the extended bibliography of newspaper articles about Corps de Garde [DCDG].

In focus Vito Acconci and James Lee Byars in 1979

The remoteness of the sources and locations of the archives made it more difficult to investigate Jack Goldstein's work further while the presence of two actors in Groningen prompted the research to follow another direction. These actors were two obsolete U-matic tapes that were kept at the Institute of Art History at the University of Groningen: one containing documentation of *The Peoplemobile* Vito Acconci on the Grote Markt (1979) and the other an interview of James Lee Byars conducted by Art History students at the time. Not even the content but just the fact of their presence gave the impetus for me to start looking deeper into the projects, even though the tapes were not cleaned and could not be watched at the start of the research. Both art projects could be described as events that left a trail of unique references behind (of which the tape remains merely one). Both case studies show how different sources convey different perspectives on the form and content of the artwork. With regard to Vito Acconci the process of production, distribution and reception can be closely followed due to the large amount of his written project descriptions, practical sketches, personal notes and reviews.¹³⁷ In contrast, the reconstruction of the work of James Lee Byars proves more challenging as he has carefully selected and limited the information that has been circulating about him. The process of retracing the occurrence of events therefore becomes more complicated as actors become performative entities not merely describing the events, but constitute them as events as well.



[21] Label U-Matic tape, title: Vito Acconci, content: registration of The people mobile of the project artist Vito Acconci, on the Grote Markt in Groningen, date recording: 1979, duration: 20 min (actual footage 8 min.), mono-stereo channel 1-2, black/white. Art History Collection, University of Groningen.

¹³⁷ The extensive writing of Acconci is not surprising knowing he studied English literature in Massachusetts and followed the University of Iowa's Writer's Workshop. When Acconci moved to New York in 1965 he was primarily focused on poetry until the end of the 60s, when he moved his work from a writing context into an art context. Whilst moving into an art context Acconci kept writing, either incorporated in the artwork itself or in the shape of notes, reflections, descriptive texts for catalogues or publications in magazines. See Ward 2002.

3. Vito Acconci

The Peplemobile

1979 in focus

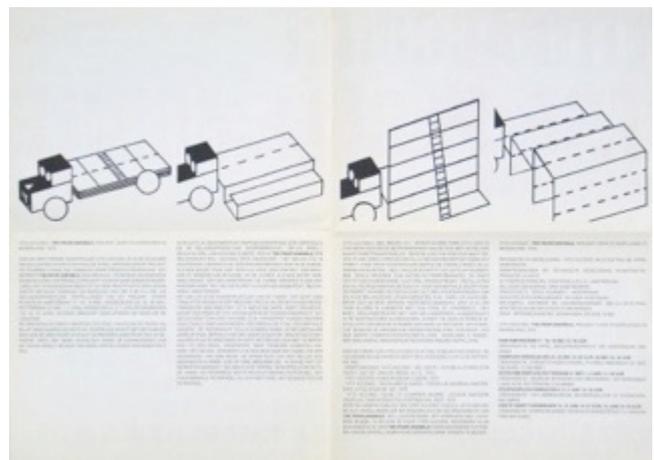
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3. Vito Acconci's *Peplemobile* a reconstruction from creation to remembrance

The Peplemobile was a mobile installation created by Vito Acconci in 1979, in collaboration with engineer Frans de la Haye and produced by Wies Smals of De Appel with four other institutes, among them Corps de Garde.¹³⁸ In the following *The Peplemobile* (1979) is reconstructed based on the different documents and personal memories of people involved with the installation. In May and June of 1979 The Peplemobile installation travelled to five cities, where it stood in each central town-square for three days. A flatbed truck transported several steel panels built into three different constructions that were connected to the truck each day: a wall supported by stairs, a shelter, and a table with two benches. On the front of the truck black plastic with cutout holes was installed forming a stylized face. Once installed in the town-squares, speakers on top of the truck transmitted an audio recording of the artist addressing the crowd both as terrorists and as normal people. In contrast with Acconci's more rough vocal delivery a Dutch woman's voice (Josine van Droffelaar) translated the text in a monotone, polite voice. To guide and inform the visitors a poster was handed out on the square. While conveying information about the installation, the poster itself remains merely one actor among many referring to the past event and therefore presents a somewhat fragmented representation of what the event actually entailed, specifically since a description of the content of the audio is left out. In order to present the multiple perspectives involved in the project, the myriad actors referring to *The Peplemobile* are listed in the following sections.



[22] Vito Acconci, Poster *The Peplemobile*, 1979, design Barbara Bloom and Leendert van Lagestein, front.



[23] Backside poster.

¹³⁸ Wies Smals was director of De Appel Amsterdam from 1974 until 1983.

3.1 Production, creating *The Peoplemobile*

Through letters, correspondence and sketches, we can trace the first formulations of the project and Acconci's intentions regarding the final installation as it stood on the town-squares. The formation of Acconci's ideas for new artworks are the result of a continuous reflection on the artworks and notions in his own practice. In addition numerous other connections are highlighted showing the agency of other different actors in the process: people, materials, legislation and finance.

Pre-production phase: project proposals and conversations

It is difficult to pin down the exact first draft for *The Peoplemobile*, since the installation shares similarities with other installations Acconci produced at the time. He did several contemporaneous projects in Europe with audiotapes that dealt with an awareness of cultural space, with the artist speaking in English combined with the native language.¹³⁹ Two project proposals that Vito Acconci wrote around 1977 seem to be the first drafts that led to *The Peoplemobile*. These two project proposals were both produced in cooperation with the group Art Performances, New York. Art Performances was an organization devoted to "non-object art such as performances, installations, outdoor projects, video and film."¹⁴⁰ Jane Crawford assisted/managed artist projects and lectures and negotiated for their fees.¹⁴¹ Crawford worked with many artists in order to help them professionalize, Acconci himself said: "Until I worked with Jane I never worked with fees."¹⁴² Crawford was also involved in the arrangements of a retrospective exhibition of Acconci's work in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.¹⁴³ In letters from the archive of the Stedelijk Museum the "outdoor sound installations" for several locations in the Netherlands are mentioned, indicating that practical arrangements for *The Peoplemobile* were already being made by the end of 1977. Initially the Stedelijk Museum was involved in the project and the installation was to be installed in the area around the museum, simultaneous to the exhibition that took place from 30 November 1978 - 14 January 1979.¹⁴⁴

Already demonstrating his characteristic schematic style of thinking, the catalogue *Headlines and Images* (1978), created by Acconci for his retrospective at The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, described his entire oeuvre down to the last detail, which aided the reflection on his artistic process: "With regard to our plan for the show: I'm

¹³⁹ Ibid. 4p. 16-17.

¹⁴⁰ The Foundation of Art Performances and Projects Inc, New York, folder ca. 1977, [AVAE].

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Among the artists supported by Art Performances were for instance Laurie Anderson, Allan Kaprow, Dennis Oppenheim and Joan Jonas, as well as art historians like RoseLee Goldberg, who was writing a history of performance art at that time.

¹⁴² Acconci, Smals and Van Lagestein, recorded conversation, 19 May 1978. [ADAA].

¹⁴³ Arrangements for this exhibition were made by Jane Crawford, under the name of Art Performances, until her husband Gordon Matta-Clark got sick and passed away in August 1978, [ASMA].

¹⁴⁴ Crawford, letter to Mignot, 23 December 1977 [ASMA]. Crawford, letter to Mignot, 28 March 1978, [ASMA].

having some reconsiderations -- these are becoming clearer as I work on the catalogue."¹⁴⁵

In the catalogue, created for the retrospective, the artworks are structured into six periods. The categorizations give an insight into the intentions of the artists. According to Michael Gibbs "it is an excellent book which can bring the reader into an understanding of the works more successfully than the show itself, because in the book there is less hurry, and no hindrances or distractions."¹⁴⁶ The catalogue does not give a comprehensive idea of the Stedelijk exhibition, which according to Gibbs was disappointing, because it was "cramped and dense."¹⁴⁷ That the book does not fully resonate with the exhibition is affirmed by the fact that the installation created for the exhibition on the stairs of the museum, *Monument to the Dead Children* (1978), was not included in the catalogue. Instead of referring to the exhibition itself, the catalogue illuminates reflections of the artist, such as his thoughts on the relation between the artwork, the artist and the viewer or the relation between the artwork and space. For example through the descriptions of the artworks a shift can be traced: from the actual presence of the artist in performances, to the artist being present behind the scenes in the installations. The presence of the viewer consequently becomes more prominent, from being a voyeur in performances to being a participant in the installations. Another notable shift entails Acconci's changing interest in the location of display, aiming to leave the gallery space.

VITO ACCONCI

My plans are: make installations designed to fit a specific physical space that, then is tied into an over all geographical/historical/political space that, in turn, becomes the occasion for revealing myself and my (cultural) origins as instigator. The means, for the most part, are audio-tape and wooden construction, a kind of furniture installed in the space--- an attempt to treat the space as a potential community meeting place. Up to now, the pieces have made use of museum/gallery spaces; my intention for the future is to start to use city spaces, town squares ready-made peopled spaces.

Available for installations, special projects, lectures and residences, film and video presentations.

[24] Fragment of The Foundation of Art Performances and Projects Inc., New York, folder, ca. 1977.

¹⁴⁵ Acconci, letter to Mignot and Bloem, 7 August 1978, [ASMA].

¹⁴⁶ Gibbs, 1978, unpaginated, [ADAA].

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

In a folder of Art Performance Acconci proposes his intentions to make a project for “town-squares.”¹⁴⁸ This proposal indicates his intentions resulting in *The Peoplemobile* project, along with some notes, such as the estimated costs of a “\$1500 fee.”¹⁴⁹ Another project proposal, found in several archives of institutions involved in the project, is longer and a more detailed proposition.¹⁵⁰ Some of the same concepts are mentioned in different formulations like “installations that fit into, grow out of, particular space situations” and “use gallery/museum space as a potential community-meeting place.”¹⁵¹ The location of the proposed project in a gallery/museum space points to the discrepancy between the two project proposals, since the short proposal clearly focuses on the artist’s intention to move away from the gallery/museum space and into public space, while the latter describes the gallery as a possible site as well.

In the longer project proposal, however, other intentions are formulated and the town square is mentioned again: “My hope is: use gallery/museum as a starting point, launching point -- use it, possibly, as a place to leave behind. (Instead if using gallery/museum as a meeting place, as an analogue for a town-square: the gallery/museum space, then, might remain as a home-base, a base of operations.)”¹⁵² This contradiction within the same project proposal emphasizes the difficulties of working in a public space, i.e. wanting to move away from gallery space, whilst depending on the institutions that produce and distribute the project. Although the previous discussed projects seem closely related to *The Peoplemobile* and possibly functioned as a starting point they are not explicitly written for *The Peoplemobile*.

The first concrete account specifically about *The Peoplemobile* in the Netherlands, then referred to as the “town-square project”, is recorded in a conversation on the 19 May 1978 in Groningen, between Vito Acconci, Wies Smals and Leendert van Lagestein.¹⁵³ In the recording they spoke about the preparations for Acconci’s exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in conjunction with a project for town squares. The plans were still in a brainstorming phase, in which the possibilities were discussed. The intention of Acconci was to do a piece for a square as a logical step after creating pieces “treating gallery space as a kind of potential community meeting place.”¹⁵⁴ In the conversation several aspects that were realized in *The Peoplemobile* were mentioned, such as the three different constructions that could change each day. Furthermore the five cities where the project took place were proposed by Smals, and were visited by the pair in the following days.

Some practical issues were also discussed such as dates, budget and division of tasks. Acconci and Van Lagestein agreed that a week would be the optimum length of

¹⁴⁸ In the folder the artist represented by Art Performances are listed with short project proposals or possible subjects for lectures, [AVAE].

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Acconci. Project Proposal via Art Performances New York with CV, ca. fall 1977 [ADAA].

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Acconci, Smals and Van Lagestein, recorded conversation, 19 May 1978. [ADAA]. Smals, who founded the Appel Amsterdam was leading the production of “town-square project” and Van Lagestein was involved in the project as the director of Corps de Garde in Groningen.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

time, whereas Smals had only a weekend in mind. Although Acconci thought “a weekend has too much of a kind of performance feeling, some time for settlement” would be preferred, it turned out to be three days instead of a week. The influence of Smals as a producer becomes clear in practical issues such as efficiency and cost sharing. It was for instance her suggestion to make the installation transportable, to keep the costs down: they would pay for the material and the sound installation only once, and the costs could be split among the five collaborating institutions. Of course from Smals’ perspective the conjunction of the project with the show at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam was also financially practical, since among other things the museum could pay for Acconci’s airline ticket. Furthermore other practical tasks could be delegated to the museum: “if you start a little bit around the exhibition in the Stedelijk you can for example give some instructions for the city you have no time for.”¹⁵⁵

Other ideas for the constructions of the steel panels that are mentioned in the conversation were not realized in the final project. Acconci had several ideas in mind: “Not sure what kind of construction... idea three basic kind of constructions: table like construction, rope ladder like construction, machine like resembling the kitchen slingshot, machine using cable, springs, ladder. How used dependent of particular square. Obviously there will be sounds, construction with audiotape.”¹⁵⁶ Of the different types of construction the only the table-like form was carried out in the project. The description of the other constructions are reminiscent of other installations that Acconci created before *The Peoplemobile*: “rope ladder like construction” sounds like *Middle of the World* (1976) or *Tonight we escape from New York* (1977); “machine using cable, springs” could describe *The People Machine* (1979) and Acconci himself refers to an installation he did in The Kitchen, a performance space in New York.¹⁵⁷ Some of the ideas that changed throughout the process were dependent on the connected technical, regulatory and financial possibilities that are examined in the next paragraphs.

Technical production, material, legislative and financial agency

The Peoplemobile started out as a planned project separate from, but in conjunction with the show in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam: “This project is different, not totally connected to the show in Stedelijk.”¹⁵⁸ In a letter send to Smals in August 1978 Acconci suggests to postponing *The Peoplemobile*. Acconci realized that it would not be feasible to work on the town-square project in conjunction with the oeuvre show in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam at the same time.¹⁵⁹ The main reason was that the project required a degree of technical expertise in order to build the different constructions. “The town-square project is more complicated than I thought. There are too many things I don’t know: I don’t know engineering. I don’t know materials. [...] We can arrange for help

¹⁵⁵ Idid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Transcription of the recording, not spoken in full sentences.

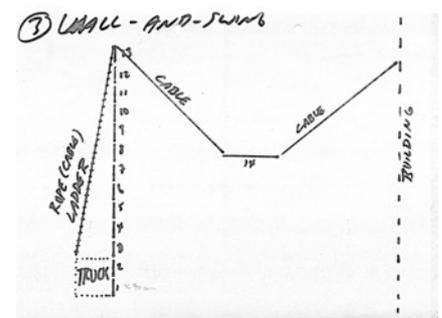
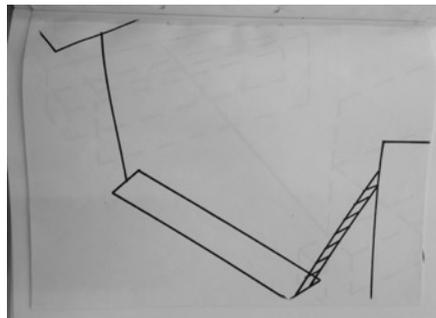
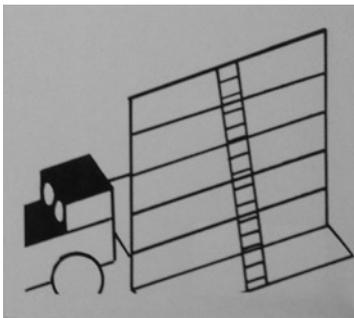
¹⁵⁷ For more information about other pieces of Vito Acconci see: Acconci and Dávila 2004.

¹⁵⁸ Acconci, Smals and Van Lagestein, recorded conversation, 19 May 1978. [ADAA].

¹⁵⁹ Acconci, letter to Mignot and Bloem, 7 August 1978. Mignot, letter to Acconci, 8 August 1978 [ASMA].

(e.g., I might need a kind of collaborator -- someone who knows materials and building techniques).¹⁶⁰ In the same letter Acconci send the project proposal with “a basic scheme for the piece. It is comprehensive, but nonspecific with regard to details of fabrication. The piece might change a bit of course, both beforehand and while doing it -- but in general it should stand like this. I have to say: I’m really excited by it -- more than I was before, now that I see what it can be.”¹⁶¹

The collaborator who was asked to help with the technical engineering was the designer Frans de la Haye (1943).¹⁶² Descriptions in the letter that Acconci wrote to Smals in August 1978 most likely served as a guideline for the engineering plans as well as drawings. Smals mentions these in a letter: “Acconci had promised that he would send a drawing this week for each city, these drawings should be discussed with Frans de la Hey, so everything is clear for everyone.”¹⁶³ Several drawings have been found in archives. Because these drawings are not dated it is not easy to find out in retrospect when the drawings were sent and by whom. These first drawings might be the same as the drawings that are published in *Vito Acconci Talks to Louwrien Wijers* and that are also depicted on the poster of *The Peplemobile*.¹⁶⁴ Some of these drawings are at odds with the final design, as there is one drawing with a ladder [fig. 25] and one with a swing [fig. 26]. Another possibility is that the first drawings are some more technical construction drawings, in which Acconci drew technical possibilities [fig. 27].



[25] Vito Acconci, drawing wall with ladder. Drawing publicized on pamphlet *The Peplemobile* and in Wijers 1979.

[26] Vito Acconci, drawing swing, [AMBVB].

[27] Vito Acconci, sketch construction wall-and-swing [ADAA].¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Acconci, letter to Smals, 23 August 1978, [ADAA].

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Poster *The Peplemobile* 1979. De la Haye had previously worked on the interior of The Mickey Art House (1960-1971), which was founded by Ritsaert ten Cate and was located in a farm in Loenersloot, together with Mickery Theatre, Mickerey Books and Mickery Design. Kok 2009, 27.

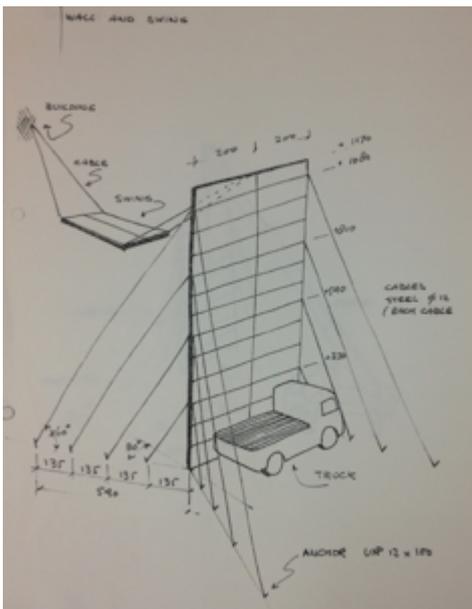
¹⁶³ Smals, letter to Debbaut (at the time conservator at the Van Abbemuseum), 14 March 1979, [AVAE].

¹⁶⁴ At first it seems a bit dubious that the drawings that are publicized near the project’s end would also be the first drawings. However, taking in consideration that some of these drawings also depict aspects that are mentioned in the first accounts of the concept as discussed in the conversation with Smals and Van Lagestein, it seems likely that these drawings also were made early in the run-up to the project.

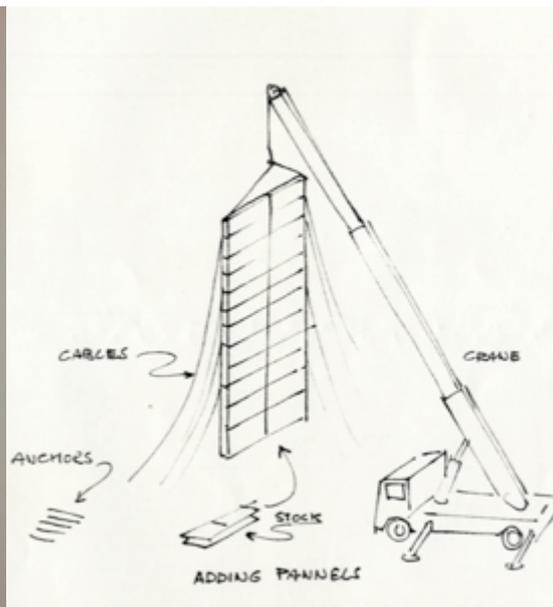
¹⁶⁵ The ascription is based on Vito Acconci’s handwriting. However this was difficult to determine, because the handwriting of Frans de la Haye seems very similar.

The “wall-swing construction”

The first sketches of designs by Frans de la Haye are dated 3 April 1979. The most difficult task was to create the wall-swing construction. The development of the design for the wall was most altered from the starting point throughout the process; from a tall wall with a swing possibly connected via cables to the surroundings, to a wall supported by stairs. In sketches for the construction of the wall both the imagined construction by Acconci [fig. 27] and the practical execution of these ideas are considered by Frans de la Haye [fig. 28]. In an undated letter Acconci expressed his concerns regarding the wall/swing structure: “To me the trickiest shape is the wall-and-swing. Can a wall so high stand? If not, it can be doubled over and be half the size. Is it possible to connect the swing to a neighboring building, or other structure in the square?”¹⁶⁶



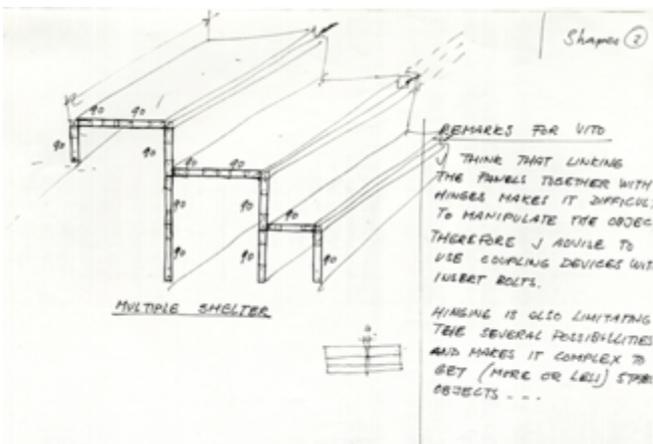
[28] Frans de la Haye, sketch wall with swing attached to building, [ADAA].



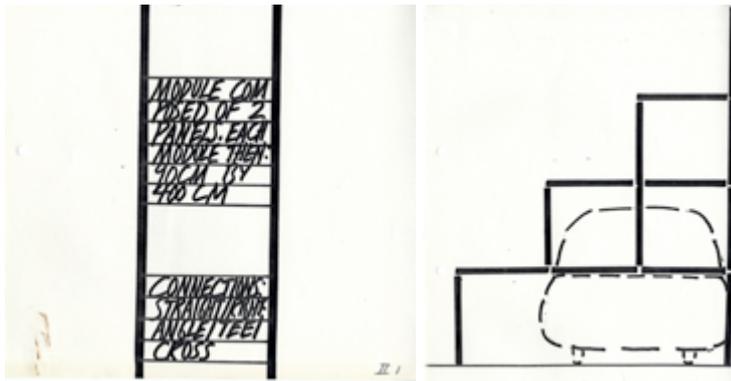
[29] Frans de la Haye, sketch wall built with crane, [ADAA].

[30] Frans de la Haye, sketch wall supported by stairs, [ADAA].

[31] The Peplemobile, installed on the Dam, Amsterdam, 17-05-1979. Photographer: Cathrien van Ommen, [ADAA].



¹⁶⁶ Acconci, considerations town-square project. Date unknown, [ADAA].



[32] Vito Acconci, final construction plans, [ADAA].

[33] Vito Acconci, final construction plans, [ADAA].

In a letter to Smals, De la Haye stated his concerns: “The standing wall is a risky affair, and only safe with a great number of cables.”¹⁶⁷ While the materials, as the steel panels Acconci used are relatively cheap, to realize a wall construction the use of a crane would be necessary, which would be a big expense [fig. 29]. Smals in her turn passes this information on to Acconci in a letter send on 11 April 1979, asking him to propose an alternative plan. The explanation is twofold, on the one hand the extra cables connected to the pavement and the construction with a crane is too costly. On the other hand the permissions are difficult because “the authorities believes that it is too dangerous and also they do not want to have it connected to the building and the floor.”¹⁶⁸ In the letter Smals suggests to either make only two “different sculptures,” or preferably that Acconci gives an alternative idea. The alternative idea became a self-supporting wall by means of stairs, so the construction would not be connected to the surroundings [fig. 30,31].

It is not clear whether Smals actually requested authorization to attach cables to the surrounding buildings.¹⁶⁹ It could be possible that she approached them and informed whether the connections to surrounding buildings would be allowed, or she might know from experience what the authorities would or would not allow it. Furthermore Smals might not have bothered to investigate the possibilities, as she knew that it would raise the costs and complications of the project significantly, and could have used the argument that the authorities would not allow it to prevent discussions. These underlying motivations are difficult to excavate, although it should be taken into account and mentioned that probably many personal unknown motives influence the actions of actors. This underscores how documents are performative, and able to construct the reality they refer to. The underlying personal motivations of the people involved are impossible to excavate in retrospect. In addition his shows how legislation, even though possibly not consulted directly, has an impact by simply existing. The approvals by the towns were issued in May and had positive outcome, but did not request for any connections to the public space.¹⁷⁰ The final constructions consisted of

¹⁶⁷ De la Haye, letter to Smals, 3 April 1979, [ADAA]. Translated from Dutch to English “De staande muur is een riskante affaire en alleen verantwoord bij een groot aantal scheer lijnen.”

¹⁶⁸ Smals, letter to Acconci. 11 April 1979, [AVAE].

¹⁶⁹ No record is found that a request was officially declined when Smals replied to Acconci that it would not be possible because of the authorities.

¹⁷⁰ Mayor and aldermen Eindhoven, 9 May 1979, [AVAE]. Mayor and aldermen Rotterdam, 25 May 1979, [ABVB]. Mayor and aldermen Groningen, 12 June 1979, [ACDG].

three constructions of twenty-eight panels that could be built into three different forms: a wall construction supported by stairs, a shelter and a table with benches. These final construction plans were again illustrated by Acconci [32,33]. A.R.C.O. Amsterdam, a rehabilitation center for former TB-patients, built the steel panels.

The audiotope, conceptual reconsiderations

The technical feasibilities, considered by Frans de la Haye, had an impact on the forms of the steel panels, but effected conceptual changes to the audio-elements of the installation as well. Vito Acconci had expressed his intentions clearly to change the sounds according to the particular circumstances in the first conversation with Smals and Van Lagestein in May 1978: "The text will be different for each place, hopefully it will have a lot to do with the particular time, whatever happens to be going on at that time, I want this to use even more particular time, particular cultural space."¹⁷¹ This initial idea is repeated in the project concept sent to Smals by Acconci in August 1978:

"The sound should maintain the basic structure of the piece: this is, after all, like a travelling circus, a travelling medicine-show. The medicine show has a message, a product to sell: the sound, then, should be changeable, should adapt to local conditions (particular city, particular time): the message should connect with, should almost establish particular news. At the same time, since this truck has no need to stay in one place, the sound has no need to confine itself to a single history: this travelling show should have the feel of travelling toward the end of a decade, end of a century: the sound might have a texture that comes from three sources (that, at least for purposes of the piece, are presumed to be the sources, the signs, of the seventies) -- the potentially criminal (and/or revolutionary), the potentially psychic (and/or fake), the potentially science-fiction."¹⁷²

This citation brings another seemingly contradictory idea forward about the sound: that the sound can maintain its own structure.¹⁷³ The description seems paradoxical, since adjusting sound to each location contradicts the idea that the sound "has no need to confine itself to a single history," implying a more fictional approach. In the end the sound that was transmitted at each location remained the same and was not adjusted to local circumstances.¹⁷⁴ The only changing element of the audiotope were different parts in which the text corresponded with the construction of the steel panels.¹⁷⁵ On the first day the panels formed a wall and Acconci's voice instructed the audience: "Bang your heads against the wall." Whereas on the third day when the panels formed a table with two benches Acconci proclaimed: "Presenting: free food for terrorist [...] I promise you: no terrorist will ever go hungry."¹⁷⁶ The opposition between the piece as a friendly

¹⁷¹ Acconci, Smals and Van Lagestein, recorded conversation, 19 May 1978. [ADAA].

¹⁷² Acconci, project proposal for town-squares in Holland, 23 August 1978, [ADAA].

¹⁷³ This description is translated into Dutch and is also mentioned on the poster, the information that was handed out on the square, Poster Vito Acconci *The Peoplemobile*, designed by Leendert van Lagestein and Barbara Bloom, 1979.

¹⁷⁴ Acconci, audiotope *The Peoplemobile*, 1979, [ADAA].

¹⁷⁵ Acconci, interview White 1979, 42.

¹⁷⁶ Acconci, audiotope transcript, [ADAA].

gathering place with the hostile provoking character of the installation was intended to be further carried out through the form of the speakers: both “public-address-system-like” combined with “more intimate: face to face sound, sound for a ‘friendly-acquaintance’ distance.”¹⁷⁷ If this actually happened is not clear, on pictures two megaphones can be distinguished on top of the truck, no third or fourth speakers. This seems to indicate that the ideal situation in which “the sound should be quadrophonic (4-channel)” was not realized.¹⁷⁸ In the archive of De Appel only one final audio-tape remains, in which the different texts follow each other on the same tape.¹⁷⁹ The audio was arranged and recorded by Erik Gastkemper.¹⁸⁰ Also the idea for the “face” of the truck was meant to be adjusted and changed in each city according to the initial concept: “at each stop, at each town-square, the cab is painted over, a ‘face’ (literal or not) is applied to the front of the cab -- in the background is the notion of making the truck up to look like the traditional mechanical monster (with, all the while, all the potential transformations that a machine like this can bring about).”¹⁸¹ But eventually the black piece of plastic that formed the “face” on the truck remained the same at all five locations.¹⁸² In notes written in retrospect Acconci explained these conceptual changes, and described that the piece became self-contained when the authorities would not allow the installation to tie into physical points in space [34]. Therefore Acconci decided “the sound, too, could be contained.”¹⁸³

'INSERTION' RATHER THAN 'RE-SETTLEMENT' WAS CONFIRMED FOR ME, THEN, BY PRACTICAL CIRCUMSTANCES. AT FIRST I HAD PLANNED THAT THE PIECE WOULD TIE INTO PARTICULAR PHYSICAL POINTS IN THE SPACE (THE WALL, SAY, COULD INCLUDE A LADDER THAT WOULD HOOK ON TO A NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING, A STREET-LIGHT...); BUT MOST OF THE CITIES THAT WOULD SPONSOR THE PIECE REFUSED TO ALLOW THIS. SO, RATHER THAN SPREAD OUT THROUGH A SPACE, THE PIECE WOULD HAVE TO BE A SELF-CONTAINED UNIT THAT MOVED FROM SPACE TO SPACE.

SINCE THE PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE PIECE HAD TO BE CONTAINED WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE TRUCK, THEN THE SOUND, TOO, COULD BE CONTAINED, THE TRUCK WOULD CARRY THE SAME SOUND WITH IT WHEREVER IT WENT (WHEREAS, AT FIRST, I THOUGHT THE SOUND WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE FROM CITY TO CITY). I COULD SAY TO MYSELF: THIS IS ALL FOR THE BEST--SINCE I COULDN'T PRETEND THAT I COULD LEARN ENOUGH ABOUT EACH CITY TO ADAPT A TEXT TO ITS PARTICULAR HISTORY, ITS PARTICULAR NEWS.

[34] Acconci, *The Peoplemobile*: note #3.

[35] Acconci, *The Peoplemobile*: note #4.

¹⁷⁷ Acconci, project proposal for town-squares in Holland, 23 August 1978, [ADAA].

¹⁷⁸ Acconci, concept and instructions for *The Peoplemobile*, undated, [ADAA].

¹⁷⁹ Two tapes contain material of *The Peoplemobile*: one tape contains the final audio record, including a male voice (Acconci), a woman's voice (Droffelear), honking car horns and bells ringing. A second tape contains, the rough material: studio recordings of Acconci's voice together with some ringing bells that were probably edited into the final version.

¹⁸⁰ Erik Gastkemper (1942) has not been contacted. He might be an interesting person to answer further questions.

¹⁸¹ Acconci, project proposal for town-squares in Holland, 23 August 1978, [ADAA].

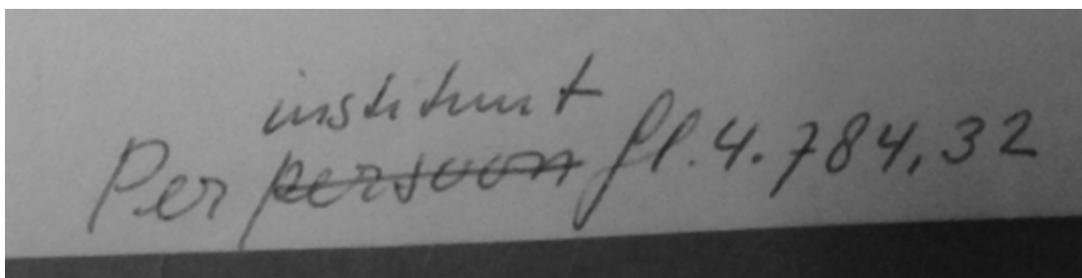
¹⁸² This observation is based on comparison of photographs of the installation at the different locations.

¹⁸³ Acconci, *The Peoplemobile*: note #4, undated, [ADAA].

In note #4 Acconci admitted his inability to learn enough about the culture and history of the places to relate to it accurately, which led to his motivation to posit himself as an outsider in his use of language in the piece [35].¹⁸⁴

In the previous paragraphs about the technical construction, it is shown that both legislative but also financial actors caused the technical constructions and the concept to change. It is striking that Acconci only mentioned that “most of the cities that would sponsor the piece refused to allow this.” It is typical for art practices that financial matters are left unspoken, because the concepts and artistic values are considered more important. Nevertheless it is undeniable that finance is an important agent that determines whether a project can be executed or not, and the way in which it will be done. The financing of the project was equally split between the five participating institutions. The total cost of the project was 24.172,30 Dutch guilders, divided by five institutions is 4.834,44 for each participant.¹⁸⁵ Besides supporting the project financially the institutions were also responsible for other preparatory practical aspects to facilitate the exhibition on the public squares. These production tasks included arranging a place to store the technical equipment in a safe place during the night and arranging an accommodation for Rutger Versteegh, the chauffeur and construction chief.¹⁸⁶

The institution as an actor is a broad overarching structure that consists of multiple individual actors within it; and the tension and often fluid boundaries between institute and individuals who operate within the structure of the institute are important actors in the realization of an art project such as *The Peplemobile*. This becomes clear for example in a note of Wies Smals, calculating the cost per person and realizing that it was in fact the institute that was financing the project [36]. These relations between individuals, the institutions and *The Peplemobile* are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs that are focused on the distribution.



[36] Wies Smals, fragment of note for calculation of costs: “per ~~person~~ institute: fl. 4.784,32.”

¹⁸⁴ Acconci, *The Peplemobile*: note #5, [ADAA].

¹⁸⁵ Smals, financial calculation, 19 July 1979, [ADAA].

¹⁸⁶ Acconci, poster *The Peplemobile*, 1979.

3.2 Distribution, the network of institutions enabling *The Peplemobile*

Five collaborating institutions organized the distribution of *The Peplemobile*: De Appel, Amsterdam; Forum 79 audio-visueel, Middelburg; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and Corps de Garde, Groningen.¹⁸⁷ The distributors are the key element in the process of accommodating the reception of the artwork. Distributors may be institutions, but in reality it is the individual operating within them who realizes the project. Wies Smals (De Appel) led and coordinated the production and communicated with Vito Acconci. One contact person was responsible for the execution of the project in each connected to a collaborating institution: Wies Smals for De Appel, Maria-Rosa Boezem for Forum 79 Audio-Visueel, first Wim Beeren and later Titia Berlage for Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Jan Debbaut for Van Abbemuseum and Leendert van Lagestein for Corps de Garde.¹⁸⁸ These people were responsible for the practical arrangements necessary in each city, such as the funding, local permissions, storage of the car, accommodation for the chauffeur and the recruitment of two people who would hand out posters with information.

The Peplemobile in public space

In addition to the focus on the distribution of *The Peplemobile* by each institution, several additional activities are highlighted in the following; a publication by Louwrien Wijers and an exhibition in Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen and the accompanying lecture Vito Acconci gave at multiple locations. Before focusing on the separate institutions however, some implications of the general place of the mobile installation on town-squares are relevant to the discussion.

The Peplemobile was a mobile installation that could transport its own components from one location to the next. These included twenty-eight steel panels, two speakers that transmitted audio, a black piece of plastic creating a monstrous face on the truck and a generator. Smals recruited a chauffeur, Rutger Versteegh, who drove the flatbed VW truck and was responsible for the construction each day.¹⁸⁹ This seems to indicate that *The Peplemobile* functioned autonomous once set up on the town-squares. This was in line with Acconci's intentions: "My hope is: use gallery/museum as a starting point, launching point -- use it, possibly, as a place to leave behind."¹⁹⁰

The spaces in which the installations were installed were public town squares. These squares were all centrally located, well-know landmarks. When Acconci originally thought of the project for town squares he was in Italy, where plazas traditionally function as a place where people come together.¹⁹¹ In contrast a plein in the Netherlands is not necessarily a place where people gather with friends. Of course this depends on

¹⁸⁷ Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, was spelled "Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen" in 1979, in the following I will refer to the museum according to the contemporary spelling.

¹⁸⁸ De Appel, press release, names and contact information of the contact persons are listed, [ADAA].

¹⁸⁹ Interview Van Lagestein, 4 May 2016.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Acconci, *The Peplemobile*: note #1, [ADAA].

the particular square, some being entertainment areas, while others function primarily as crossroads. The location and the characteristics of squares in The Netherlands is one of the elements that Acconci explicitly wanted to use as a starting-point for the installation, and affected the projects content: "I had to shift my notion of 'town-square,' then, from meeting-place, gathering-place, to pass-through place, walk-through place. Rather than blend into a space already set apart for grouping, the piece would have to push itself into a place in order to force grouping, with the assumption that the piece would have engendered 'grouping' as a standard that could in turn be rejected."¹⁹²

Daily circumstances on the square also had an impact on the installation. Each individual square has its own characteristics which could change on a daily basis as well, for example by the day of the week (weekend of weekday) or weather (sunny or rainy). Some squares, for instance the Grote Markt in Groningen, function as a "pass-through place" during the week; but on the weekend, especially with nice weather, lots of people come together to sit and occupy the terrace restaurants, and the square takes on a "gathering-place" character.¹⁹³ The three days of *The Peoplemobile* took place from Thursday to Saturday in some cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Middelburg) whereas in Eindhoven the three days took place from Tuesday to Thursday.¹⁹⁴ Besides the influence of the daily situation on the public squares, the particular qualities of the town squares, the reactions of the viewers, and the number of visitors all had an impact the reception of the work.

Although the installation stood on town-squares, each institution provided a physical space for a lecture given by Acconci on the last day of the project in each city. In these lectures Acconci spoke about several artworks and provided a context for *The Peoplemobile* in his oeuvre.¹⁹⁵

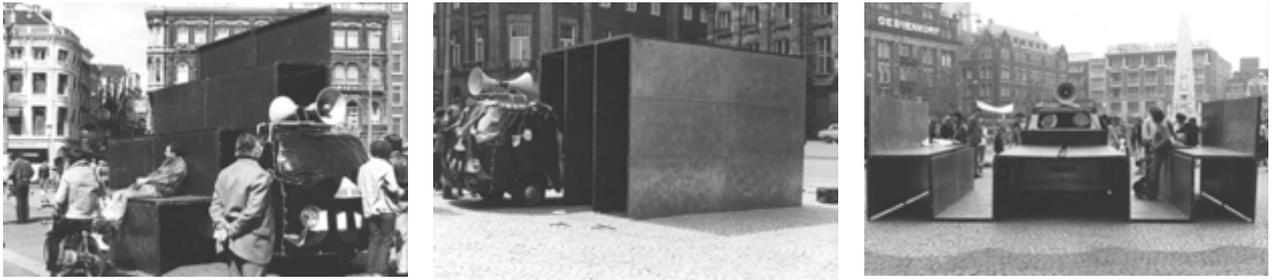
¹⁹² Acconci, *The Peoplemobile*: note #2, [ADAA].

¹⁹³ One letter in the archive of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen provides information about the daily circumstances around the installation in Groningen. In this letter, accompanied by photos of *The Peoplemobile* in Groningen, Philippe van Lagestein describes the weather and how many pamphlets were handed out. Philippe van Lagestein, letter to Titia Berlage, undated, [ABVB].

¹⁹⁴ Exact dates of the project: Dam Amsterdam, Thursday 17th - Saturday 19th of May (19th cancelled rescheduled to Sunday 20th); Damplein Middelburg, Thursday 24th - Saturday 26th of May; Schouwburgplein Rotterdam, Thursday 31st of May - Saturday 2nd of June; Stadhuisplein Eindhoven, Tuesday 5th to Thursday 7th of June; Grote Markt, Groningen, Wednesday 13th to Friday 15th of June.

¹⁹⁵ Two of these lectures were recorded: see ADAA and AFM.

De Dam, Amsterdam - 17, 18, and (19) 20 May, 1979 - De Appel Amsterdam - Wies Smals



The Peplemobile installed on the Dam, Amsterdam, photography Catherien van Ommen, Archive De Appel, Amsterdam. [37] Wall-stairs construction, [38] shelter-like construction, [39] table with benches.

De Appel was an organization founded by Wies Smals (1939-1983) in 1974, devoted to ephemeral art practices. It was a well-known center and internationally respected within the artist community.¹⁹⁶ Smals was the person responsible for Vito Acconci's project, and communicated with Acconci and the other parties involved in the project. The press release and other important information concerning the project, like letters, were partly written and forwarded to the others by Smals (or possibly colleagues from De Appel). For example the first project proposal send to Smals by Acconci on the 23rd of August is converted into a letter to inform the other institutions, with an added planning written in Dutch.¹⁹⁷ De Appel also issued the press releases.

On the date of the kickoff on May 17th Acconci gave a lecture in De Appel, which was recorded.¹⁹⁸ At the end of the lecture Smals announced that Jan Brand would publish a booklet with an interview with Vito Acconci about his work by Louwrien Wijers.¹⁹⁹ Smals also announced at the lecture that the third day of *The Peplemobile* would not take place on the 19th but on the 20th of May. In the mentioned publication an interview with Acconci by Wijers is transcribed. From the recorded interview a lot can be learned about the artist's vision regarding his oeuvre and his artistic process.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Mechelen 2006.

¹⁹⁷ De Appel Amsterdam, project description, 9 December 1978 [ADAA].

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Wijers and Acconci 1979.

²⁰⁰ The interview took place on the second of December 1979, during Acconci's exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, which was a half year earlier than the exhibition of *The Peplemobile*. This explains why some of the elements in this publication are not "up to date" with the installation as it stood on the town-squares. For example in the booklet a drawings of the wall construction with a ladder are shown, that was not realized [see fig. 25].

Damplein Middelburg - May 24, 25 and 26, 1979 - Forum 79 Audio-Visueel Middelburg - Maria Boezem

Forum was an interdisciplinary art festival, organized by Marinus and Maria-Rosa Boezem, taking place at several locations throughout the city of Middelburg each spring and fall between 1977 and 1987.²⁰¹ Forum invited artists to produce art *in situ* and organized workshops and lectures by both artists and theorists in order to create a place for intellectual and artistic exchange.²⁰² After the first edition *Forum 1977*, each edition would be structured according to themes, such as ‘dance’ (1980) or ‘sculpture/architecture’ (1980). Both the spring and the fall festival of the 1979 were named ‘Audio-visueel.’

At Forum *The Peoplemobile* stood on the Damplein for three days and Acconci gave a lecture, as part of the first edition of the *Forum Audio-Visueel 1979* program. Two booklets were published at the time guiding and referring to Acconci’s project. In the first program book about the spring Forum, two sketches for *The Peoplemobile* are printed next to an unedited copy of De Appel’s press release.²⁰³ In a second publication, created in retrospect about both the spring and the fall Forum of 1979, a handwritten transcript of the audio is printed together with pictures of *The Peoplemobile* in Middelburg and a picture of Acconci giving a lecture [fig. 40].²⁰⁴ Josine van Droffelaar, working for De Appel in Amsterdam at the time, gave a lecture about audiovisual art.²⁰⁵ She was the female voice in Acconci’s audiotape.²⁰⁶ Apparently the volume of this audiotape disturbed some inhabitants of Middelburg, who filed a complaint with the local police, to which a report in Maria-Rosa Boezem’s archive refers.²⁰⁷



[40] Photography and transcript of audiotape of *The Peoplemobile* in *Forum Audio-Visueel 1&2*, 1979.

²⁰¹ See Boezem et al. 1994 for an oversight of Forum’s program.

²⁰² Ibid. 13.

²⁰³ Program book *Forum Audio-Visueel 1*, Middelburg, 1979, [AFM].

²⁰⁴ Program book *Forum Audio-Visueel 1&2*, Middelburg, 1979, [AFM].

²⁰⁵ Boezem et al. 1994, 82-87.

²⁰⁶ *De Kabinetten van De Vleeshal, 10 jaar Forum, kunst in de luwte*, 2015 [AFM].

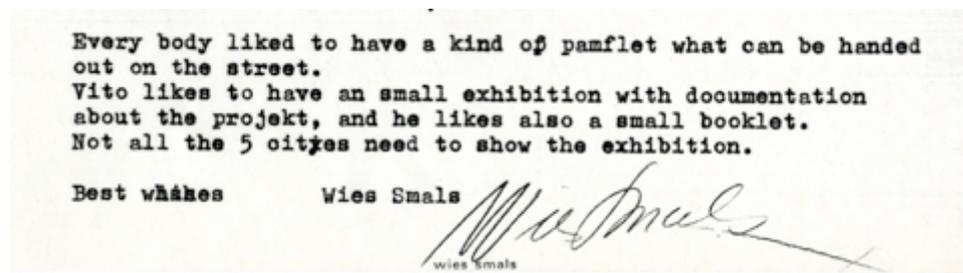
²⁰⁷ Ibid. [AFM].

Schouwburgplein, Rotterdam - May 31, June 2 and 3, 1979 - Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Rotterdam - Wim Beeren and Titia Berlage



The Peplemobile, 1979, installed on the Schouwburgplein, Rotterdam. Photographer unknown. Archive Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. [41] Wall-stairs construction, [42] shelter-like construction, [43] table with benches.

Wim Beeren (1928-2000) then director of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, was the original contact person for the project in Rotterdam, but due to unknown circumstances his tasks were taken over by Titia Berlage, a conservator at the museum. In the museum a small exhibition was held with documentation of the project: “Working-drawings and Documentation Acconci” which could be seen from the 26th of May till July 9th 1979.



[44] Wies Smals, Fragment of letter to Vito Acconci, 3 December 1978.

In the archive of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen not much can be found about the exhibition. Only one actor testifies that the exhibition took place: a flyer of the museum. This is a flyer with the announcement of an exhibition of Michael Snow and Michael Hefti on the cover, in which the “project for town squares in Holland” is announced with some information about the project and the artist.²⁰⁸ Other than the found flyer, nothing is known about the contents of this supposed exhibition. In the archive a scrapbook with the poster, drawings of Acconci, drawings of De la Haye, first written concepts, the press release, photos of the project in several cities and texts about Acconci are compiled. The existence of this book suggests that these drawings and texts were exhibited. The fact that there was an exhibition showing the work-drawing for the project, means that the process of the production of the installation was made public and of interest to the artist as well. Viewers of the exhibition would have been able to look into the documents that illustrate the production process that is described in the previous chapter.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Flyer Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen 1979, [ABVB].

²⁰⁹ Many of the documents compiled in this scrapbook were also found in [ADAA] and [AVAE].

Stadhuisplein Eindhoven - 5, 6 and 7 June, 1979 - Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven - Rudi Fuchs and Jan Debbaut

Jan Debbaut (1949) was responsible for the project in Eindhoven. At the time he was conservator at the Van Abbemuseum under the directorship of Rudi Fuchs. In the Van Abbe archives a portfolio with many documents about the preparation of the project even contains letters of Wies Smals not even kept in the archive of De Appel. Yet there remains no documentation referring to the project itself or the installation on the square in Eindhoven.²¹⁰ Furthermore Acconci gave a lecture on the last day of the project in each city, except in Eindhoven.²¹¹ This raises the question: what has limited *The Peplemobile* 'circulating reference' in Eindhoven?

A correspondence from the archive sheds light on the possible difficulties with the project from within the institution. In a letter Vito Acconci asked Rudi Fuchs why he disliked his works and had "grudgingly" sponsored *The Peplemobile*, and Acconci sends documentation, drawings and notes to help Fuchs understand his work better.²¹² In response Fuchs answered that he does not dislike the piece, but "does not know how to judge and how to deal with it."²¹³ He explained that it was true that he reluctantly sponsored the piece because he had unease with projects that try to establish a "suddenness and anecdotalness within a particular community."²¹⁴ Acconci's effort to connect with Fuchs seems to have been ultimately successful, since Acconci was featured in the seventh documenta in 1982 curated by Fuchs.²¹⁵

P.S. The 'grudgingly sponsoring' the People Mobile is more or less true; it had nothing to do with what I think of your work, but general uneasiness with projects like this, which usually fall flat because of suddenness and anecdotalness within a particular community. We put it up in Eindhoven because Wiesje Smals needed the support to do the piece at all and I was not inclined to spoil the enjoyment.

[45] Fragment of letter from Rudi Fuchs addressed to Vito Acconci, 12 June 1979, [AVAE].

With regard to Eindhoven, we can see that several aspects of the national actor-network of *The Peplemobile* become clear. "Wiesje" Smals and her influence were pivotal in realizing the project. Even though Fuchs seemed not to be explicitly enthusiastic about the project of Acconci, he was willing to support a project of Wies Smals. Furthermore, was Fuchs' hesitance towards Acconci's work at the time the cause of the curious lack of documentation of *The Peplemobile*? While Jan Debbaut was the contact-person and responsible for the Eindhoven project it seems that Fuchs left a characteristically distinct mark on the policy of the institute.

²¹⁰ There are no photographs found during the research of *The Peplemobile* in Eindhoven.

²¹¹ Van Ginneken, 1979.

²¹² Acconci, letter to Fuchs, 10 June 1979, [AVAE].

²¹³ Fuchs, letter to Acconci, 12 June 1979, [AVAE].

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Bos 1982 II, 174-176.

Grote Markt, Groningen - June 13, 14 and 15 - Corps de Garde Groningen - Leendert van Lagestein



The Peplemobile, 1979, installed on the Grote Markt, Groningen, photography Leendert van Lagestein, archive Corps de Garde Amsterdam. [46] Wall-stairs construction, [47] Shelter-like construction, [48] Table with benches.

The last location where *The Peplemobile* was installed was the Grote Markt in Groningen. *The Peplemobile* was not the first work of Acconci to be shown in Groningen by Corps de Garde. In 1977 during the summer manifestation “16 Dagen,” *Theme Song* (1973), a video of Acconci was shown in the Martinikerk (Martin’s church) in Groningen. The exhibition of *Theme Song* was organized in collaboration with De Appel Amsterdam. In the following year, 1977 Vito Acconci participated again in the Zomermanifestatie, with *Cry Baby* (1977), an installation originally created for the clock tower of the Institute of Art and Urban Resources in New York [fig. 49].²¹⁶ In Groningen the installation was shown in the stairway of the Martinikerk in August of 1978. Leendert van Lagestein proposed to show the installation in Groningen and adjusted the installation to suit the location in the church [fig. 50]. The idea to show *Cry Baby* in Groningen developed during the conversation between Acconci, Smals and Van Lagestein in May 1978, while discussing the project for town squares in Holland.²¹⁷ In the conversation Acconci says that it will not be possible to realize the project for the Zomermanifestatie in August, after which Van Lagestein tries to arrange to show another work of Acconci successfully, as they agree to show *Cry Baby*.



[49] *Cry Baby*, 1977, Clocktower, Institute of Art and Urban Resources (PS1), New York.

[50] *Cry Baby*, 1978, Martinikerk, Groningen.

²¹⁶ Institute of Art and Urban Resources was founded in 1971 by Alanna Heiss. In 1997 it reopened as P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center. Currently the institute is named MoMA PS1 after a merge with The Museum of Modern Art in 2000.

²¹⁷ Acconci, Smals and Van Lagestein. 19 May 1978, [ADAA].

Although *The Peoplemobile* was organized in the summer of 1979 it did not take place during the Zomermanifestatie *August*, but earlier in June. Besides contextualizing *The Peoplemobile* in a broader program, Corps de Garde also produced the pamphlet that was handed out on the squares during the installation. The idea for the pamphlet that could be folded out into a poster was thought of by several of the project's organizers. In a letter to Vito Acconci, Wies Smals wrote that all the organizers would like to have a poster for the project.²¹⁸ This poster was produced and designed by Leendert van Lagestein and Barbara Bloom. Moreover there was a plan for another publication (not related to the aforementioned interview with Louwrien Wijers), which was not realized due to budgetary restrictions. In the archive of De Appel remains a compilation package with several drawings, descriptions and notes written by Acconci about *The Peoplemobile* which appears to be something designed to be published.²¹⁹ Accompanying the package is a letter of Leendert van Lagestein to Wim Beeren wherein he wrote that he had informed Vito Acconci about "the distribution problems" for a publication about *The Peoplemobile* as well as other difficulties, creating the impression that the publication could not be realized.²²⁰

In another letter of Vito Acconci addressed to Wies Smals the "town-square book" is mentioned again:

"I have worked on the town-square book, but I need photo's of the piece installed in Eindhoven, Groningen, and Middelburg (days 2 and 3 in Middleburg). Are these available? I could, of course, do the book without them -- but it would be a better book with them. Also are there any photos of the truck carrying the metal -- before installation (before the face is put on, before the metal planks fold put into specific structures) I have written Leendert, asking him the same questions. About the money: if there's any available, please sent it directly to my bank: [...]. I'm going to California August 14, for one week. If you can arrange to have photos sent to me by the time I come back (August 22, then I can have the book done and sent to Rotterdam by the beginning of September. Please try, okay? And then I'll try too."²²¹

The book was never created, even though the rich documentation and descriptions are available.²²² The poster was a key instrument in guiding the viewers experience of the installation, as it contextualized who the artist was, what the project consisted of, some of the intentions of the artist and also named the involved organizers of the project.

²¹⁸ This was decided during the opening of the exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1978. At the opening of the exhibition all the organizers got together. Smals, letter to Acconci [AVAE].

²¹⁹ According to Nell Donkers these documents were given to De Appel by Leendert van Lagestein.

²²⁰ Van Lagestein, letter to Beeren, 18 June 1979 [ADAA].

²²¹ Acconci, letter to Smals, 31 July 1979, [ADAA].

²²² Van Lagestein vaguely remembers that there were plans for a publication, although the fact that his documents were not neatly ordered testified that this was never pursued. Interview Van Lagestein 2016.

Both the public space and the institution that helped to organize the project impacted the way the project was received. Since all the extra activities framed the mobile installation within an 'art' context from which a viewer could interpret the work, Acconci's intentions to move away from gallery spaces and into public space paradoxically depended on the support of the institutions themselves both as financial and contextual framework.

The extra activities or documents that were organized or created - lecture, poster and publication (the interview with Wijers as well as the intended but unrealized publication) become important actors that mediate the reception of the project at the time, but also determine what aspects become important later. The poster for example is an important actor in the way the project is remembered, since many copies (10.000) were handed out and are still kept in many archives. Other more ephemeral events, as the lectures only become an actor valuable for research when recorded. However the absence of certain documentation, or actors, become meaningful as well. The lack of documentation from the Van Abbemuseum for instance could perhaps point to a less positive connection between Fuchs and the work of Acconci.



[51] Portrait of Vito Acconci on the Grote Markt looking at *The Peplemobile*, photography Frank Straatemeier.

3.3 Reception, experiencing *The Peplemobile*

Vito Acconci said that in his pieces toward the end of the 1970s the focus on the viewer became more important than the focus on the artist and artwork itself: “‘me’ and ‘thing’, are more means towards a situation for people. And I think that situation for people is important...”²²³ Who were the people that experienced the installation, how did they experience the situation that Acconci created and how do they remember this? In the following description three different types of ‘documentations’ are examined to provide an insight in the reception of the work at the time: written reviews, personal memories and video documentation.

Reviews about The Peplemobile

Several articles were written in Dutch newspapers. Some texts are more of an informative nature, simply repeating the press release sent out by De Appel, while other reviews were more critical.²²⁴ Three reviews will be considered which describe the mobile installation, but also judge the character of and reactions to the piece. Paul de Groot wrote the first critical review about “the mechanical monster” in the Netherlands in *NRC Handelsblad*.²²⁵ He criticized the artist and described the project as “a proof of the incapability of the artist who passionately tries to connect with a broader audience, but totally fails.”²²⁶ According to De Groot the whole project was naïve and the artist and the institutions were to blame for this poor expression of modern art. In addition the female voice in the audiotape has “no sense for diction or phrasing.”²²⁷ De Groot found this is incomprehensible since Acconci’s expressive voice played a central role in his more recent works. De Groot concluded that neither the content, nor the form of *The Peplemobile* was capable of involving the general public in the project. He believed that as long as Acconci tried to connect with such impersonal matters, without direct confrontation, the audience would indifferently walk past it.²²⁸

Hezy Leskly reviewing for *Artzien* also did not find the installation successful.²²⁹ However Leskly did not see the piece itself as the cause of it’s failure, but the fact that it did not suit the Dutch context and the Dutch public: “It was the right product in the wrong place.”²³⁰ In his review in *Artzien* Leskly described his personal interpretations and associations to *The Peplemobile*:

²²³ Acconci in Wijers 1979, 88.

²²⁴ Articles that are not discussed because of their informative nature repeating content of the press-report are: [anon.] “Kunstcircus op de Dam” *Telegraaf*, 07 May 1979; Van Ginneken, Lily. “Middelburg blijft voorhoederol vervullen, Audio-visuele vertakkingen,” *Volkskrant*, 15 May 1979; [anon.] announcement *Trouw*, 18 May 1979; [anon.] “Acconci’s peplemobile trekt door Nederland,” *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 18 May 1979.

²²⁵ De Groot 1979.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Leskly 1979.

²³⁰ Ibid.

“From a loudspeaker one could hear the tobacco-voice of Vito Acconci spreading his spells over the Square. It sounded like spells, suggestive, trying to touch things with words, move things with words. In my case it succeeded. I jumped and turned my head nervously to my side when the voice says, ‘There are terrorist in the crowd.’ But the Dutch passers-by seemed untouched, or at the very least slightly amused. Terrorists, terrorists, which terrorists? The little cute Dutch terrorists?”²³¹

Although some individuals, like Leskly himself were affected by the piece, Leskly wrote that the general crowd was disinterested in the piece, though this was not necessarily a downside since it was Acconci’s intention to isolate the work from the environment: “All of it was strong (trying, and succeeding, to isolate itself from the environment). But it didn’t work. It would work in New York, Belfast, Jerusalem, Rome, but in Amsterdam it looked like a freckle, a curiosity.”²³²

In contrast to Leskly who described a certain disinterest towards *The Peoplemobile* in Amsterdam, Jan Wessels described a more active aversion towards the installation in a review about the mobile installation in Groningen, especially from the market trader’s perspective.²³³ In his review Wessels contextualized the meaning of the term “terrorist” in the Dutch historical situation. Wessels wrote that in the eyes of Acconci, terrorism was a particular phenomenon in Western societies which was not often discussed. Wessels found that the subject of terrorism was raised in a provocative manner: Acconci pointing out that there are terrorists in the crowd; saying the terrorists were welcome; then that their heads should be hung on the wall; and finally that the viewers were invited to have dinner with the terrorists. According to Wessels the installation was perceived as threatening, provoking aggressive behavior and reactions of incomprehension. Wessel points out that this was not only the result of the female voice and the taboo subject discussed, but also the appearance of the frightening rusty steel construction, which provoked negative reactions. In Wessel’s article, the most extensive of the three reviews, he imbeds the content and form of the installation to Acconci’s entire oeuvre. In this respect Wessel explains the meaning and intentions of Acconci’s concept of ‘cultural space’ and consequently questions whether Acconci’s analysis of the Dutch cultural space is correct. Nevertheless Wessels admits that Acconci is capable of shocking the audience and in that respect potentially raises an awareness of cultural space that could possibly be shared with terrorists. So whereas Leskly and De Groot indicated the atmosphere of *The Peoplemobile* as misplaced and criticized the incapability of the installation to connect with the general public (although Leskly sees this as the artist’s intention), Wessels elaborates on the content to explain the provoking character and the aggressive reactions to the installation related to the cultural space.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Wessels, 22 June 1979 [DCDG]. Jan Wessels also wrote an article in which he contextualized *The Peoplemobile* in the oeuvre of Vito Acconci, see Wessels, 11 June 1979 [DCDG].

Between documentation and memory

In order to take into account how other people who attended *The Peoplemobile* experienced and remember it, I interviewed two people involved in the project through Corps de Garde: Leendert van Lagestein and Fred Wagemans.²³⁴ Through conversations they reflected on their personal experiences as far as their memories allowed. In addition a relationship between documents and personal memories is examined.²³⁵

Leendert van Lagestein attended *The Peoplemobile* installation at several locations and was involved in the distribution in Groningen as director of Corps de Garde. He designed the pamphlet together with Barbara Bloom and also photographed the installation. During my conversation with him he mentioned that he chiefly remembered the 'atmosphere' rather than the content of the work. Furthermore his memory of the installation was primarily visual and his memory of the audio had totally faded. His strongest memory and example for the atmosphere on the square was the fact that especially older people living on the Grote Markt complained and found the installation very disturbing. According to Van Lagestein the public address speakers recalled memories of the Second World War for them, and they requested that the sound would be turned down. Van Lagestein noted that it was remarkable that he did not remember the content so much as specific details connected to his responsibilities as the distributor. Van Lagestein explained that his responsibilities were much more of an organizational character and that the content was something that was agreed upon earlier in the process, and once committed to the project he was more involved in practical matters: the content was not something discussed during the execution.

Fred Wagemans was an art history student at the University of Groningen and worked for Corps de Garde at the time. He was one of the two people handing out the poster/pamphlets and was present during the three days that *The Peoplemobile* stood on the Grote Markt. The role of Wagemans during the project was, as he himself described, a serving one. He stood alongside the installation on the Grote Markt all three days and witnessed and experienced the installation in its entirety. Wagemans describes that his role as employee was not to interfere much with the installation except to explain general information; for example, that the truck was an artwork of Acconci and that it was sponsored by an institution, as well as to hand out pamphlets as reference for further information. Wagemans recalls that most of the people interested in the project were already informed about it, but that the people who were on the square for different purposes occasionally turned to notice *The Peoplemobile* but generally walked by indifferently. Wagemans' strongest memory was of the last day on the square, with nice weather, when a peculiar woman came by who was very interested in the installation. He invited her to Acconci's lecture in the Groningen Museum, in which she unexpectedly intervened in the middle for over ten minutes, until Wagemans interrupted and suggested letting the artist continue. Both van Lagestein and Wagemans' recollection of

²³⁴ Interview Van Lagestein and interview Wagemans 2016.

²³⁵ In the conversations I asked the interviewees to speak about their personal memories before looking at material remains. Often, new memories surfaced after seeing visual images.

the installation and the reactions of others are closely connected to their own particular roles in the project, as well as their personal reactions.

When looking back at the different types of documentation with both van Lagestein and Wagemans it is striking how familiar they are with many photos and how strong their memories of the physical constructions were. Van Lagestein, who kept many of the photographs that he took himself in his archive, confirms that he mostly remembers the visual appearance of the installation. When speaking about the text of *The Peoplemobile* and the audio, Van Lagestein could not remember what the audiotape consisted of, except that it created a tense atmosphere, and was very loud. While realizing that it was the voice of Vito Acconci that was transmitted, he did not recall the female voice that was also incorporated in the audiotape. It is worth noting that in contrast Wagemans could describe Acconci's voice in the piece as well as the content, namely the actual text spoken about terrorism. Wagemans specifically mentions the line "the terrorist loves you," which indicates a transformation of his memory, since this line does not appear in the transcriptions of *The Peoplemobile*. It is also remarkable that he did not recall any female voice, even though, in the audiotape kept in the archive of the Appel as well as in the video footage of the installation in Groningen, the female voice is clearer than Acconci's voice in the audiotape. However several reviews (De Groot and Wessels) do mention the female voice, although Leskly does not. More over, Van Lagestein when hearing the audiotape recognized the female voice and concludes that it must have been someone he knew. The fact that both men did not remember the female voice could possibly be related to the way people strongly think about the artwork in retrospect as an artwork of Vito Acconci, whose voice is very recognizable. The artist, who is surrounded by many documents through which he is remembered, then becomes not only a key actor in the production and distribution, but also influences the way in which the artwork is remembered in relation to the reputation of the artist.

Through this chapter the way *The Peoplemobile* was received is recreated. The reviews and personal accounts provide an insight into the way people reacted to the installation. Both a certain disinterestedness and a more aversive reaction to the installation are described in reviews and through personal memories. The previous described restrained viewer participation is recorded on a U-Matic tape, containing approximately eight minutes of footage in total. The U-Matic tape shows moving images of the table and bench construction of *The Peoplemobile* in Groningen. Two young guys are handing out the posters and speak to the interested people who have gathered around the installation. No particular interaction with artwork is visible, except for a moment where one of the guys sits down on the bench of the installation during a quiet moment. Furthermore video footage shows the public space around the installation, with busses passing by, which are intentionally not documented on the more aestheticized photographs made by Van Lagestein.

3.4 *The Peplemobile's 'circulating reference'*

The Peplemobile in the oeuvre of Vito Acconci

In this case study the process of becoming of “The town-square project” to *The Peplemobile* has been outlined, as it developed from project proposals into a safe, stable, affordable and legal construction that was experienced by an audience. Actors in all three domains (production, distribution, reception) each had their own influence and impact on the installation, and on the manner in which it is currently remembered. Apart from an audio recording and the black piece of plastic creating a “face” on the truck kept in the archive of De Appel in Amsterdam, most components of the installation (panels and the VW-truck) were most likely discarded.²³⁶ Instead of the artwork itself, it is the sum of all the actors involved that form the perception of what *The Peplemobile* entailed in retrospect. Certainly Acconci’s extensive writings on the project provide an insight in his intentions, besides all the actors referring to the installation that remain scattered over several institutions. Also non-existing actors, such as the unrealized publication, became an important actor in the gathering and ordering of the documentation that enabled the circulation and retraceability of the ephemeral project.

From my personal conversations with Van Lagestein and Wagemans it seems as if in the case of *The Peplemobile* the audiotape was the most forgotten aspect of the work, even though it is a key actor in carrying the content and transmitting the meaning of the work. The audiotape can only be listened to in the archives of De Appel or the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, which does not easily facilitate accessibility of the project, except for people actively looking for it. Especially since audio is not as common a carrier of art historical information as text and images are in printed matter.²³⁷

Another aspect that might not facilitate the remembrance of *The Peplemobile* and the installations featuring audio-elements is the general neglect of attention for Acconci’s work created after his performance period around 1970 (e.g. *Following Piece* 1969, *Seedbed* 1972). Between 1974 and 1979 Acconci created installations, often accompanied by audio elements, that Acconci called “cultural space pieces”.²³⁸ Compared to his performance art, these installations are relatively under-represented in the literature on Acconci’s oeuvre, and are often considered a transition period between his performance art and architectural practice.²³⁹ The neglect of these first installation pieces is not as surprising since Acconci himself has referred to his early installations as “in-between pieces.”²⁴⁰ However, in *Vito Hannibal Acconci Studio* Lilian Pfaff specifically mentions *The Peplemobile* as a key turning point in Vito Acconci’s oeuvre: “The

²³⁶ The audio, with an accompanying transcript of the text is kept in both the Archive of De Appel Amsterdam and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. The black piece of plastic is kept in the archive of De Appel, Amsterdam.

²³⁷ The text was transcribed and published in twice shortly after *The Peplemobile's* creation: Acconci, Kirshner 1980 and *Forum Audio-Visueel 1&2* 1979 [AFM].

²³⁸ Acconci, Kunz 1978, unpaginated.

²³⁹ See for example Ward 2002.

²⁴⁰ “’73... ’74 and ’75 [...] they all seem like in-between pieces,” Acconci in Wijers 1978, 17.

Peplemobile of 1979 is in this respect a definite turning point that represents the transition to the furniture, the houses of the early 1980s and the transportable works of the 1980s.”²⁴¹

The way that Acconci is perceived as an artist to this day remains paradoxical; he is still best known for his performance work, while clearly intending since the early 70s to steer away from a role which he felt depended on creating a ‘star-cult’ around himself.²⁴² Instead Acconci intended to focus, through the creation of ‘cultural space pieces,’ on the locations of the artworks. *The Peplemobile* (1979) functioned as an interesting turning point especially with regard to the space it was located and the consequent implications on the relation between the viewer and the artwork. *The Peplemobile* was “the first outside piece” that Acconci realized in a public space.²⁴³ The fact that the piece was done in public space also meant a shift in the relation with the viewer, instead of being within the confined art context like a gallery, the piece was located on a public square. *The Peplemobile* being both mobile and in a public space meant that people were not going to art, but art was going to the people.²⁴⁴ This shift in focus from relating to a specific place, to the installation being mobile and in public space, meant that the notion of “insertion” rather than “re-settlement” became more relevant for the mobile installation.²⁴⁵ Acconci uses metaphors like a “medicine show” or a “guerrilla fighter” to describe the nature of the mobile installation.²⁴⁶ Reflecting on the development of his oeuvre Acconci describes and categorizes *The Peplemobile* in 1982 as follows:

VEHICLE. From this point on, the pieces are no longer dependent on a specific space. A piece can travel from place to place, carrying its own space with it; a piece can be like a turtle, carrying its own home on its back. On the one hand, this is the situation of traditional “studio art” (the artist makes a work, in the privacy of the studio, and displays it later in public, destroying the context); on the other hand, this is the situation of “guerrilla warfare” (guerrilla fighter makes a bomb, in the secrecy of the basement, and “displays” it later in public, destroying the context). Example: *The Peplemobile* (1979).²⁴⁷

A key to the provocative nature of *The Peplemobile* as “guerrilla warfare” is the text spoken in the audiotape which addresses viewers as terrorists. As previously described the sound had an ambiguous nature: relating to local circumstances while at the same time “carrying its own history.” Or it could be considered as a truck “out of space altogether: a truck like a time-machine, traveling through time, toward the end of a decade or the end of a century. The sound might take its texture then from what might

²⁴¹ Pfaff, 2006, 396.

²⁴² Almost identical explanations, each time differently phrased, are expressed by Acconci, Kunz 1978, unpaginated; White 1979, 11 and Acconci, lecture 17 May 1979 [ADAA].

²⁴³ Acconci, interview White 1979, 41.

²⁴⁴ The intention to make his art more public and accessible for everyone could be named as one of the aspects that eventually led Acconci leave the art field altogether: “you don’t want art to be for a limited art-crowd; you want it to be for everybody,” Acconci in Wijers 1979, 96.

²⁴⁵ Acconci, *The Peplemobile*: note #3, [ADAA].

²⁴⁶ Acconci, Poster *The Peplemobile*, 1979.

²⁴⁷ Acconci, “Biography of Work 1969-1981,” in Bos 1982 I, 174-176.

be considered, at least for the purpose of this piece, the ‘signs of the 70s’; the potentially criminal (and or revolutionary) the potential science-fiction (and/or archeology).”²⁴⁸

This relation to a particular news event, but at the same time a fictional relation to the “signs of the 70s,” seems most strongly manifested in the text spoken both by Acconci himself in English and by a woman in Dutch, as they speak about the potential terrorist among the passersby on the square, or those coming together around the artwork. This political context and the meaning of the content is an aspect however that Acconci does not address in his texts or interviews. What were the signs of the 70s that Acconci was referring to? Was there a particular news item in The Netherlands that Acconci reacted to, or was the term ‘terrorist’ more broadly related to terrorist attacks in the 1970s in Germany by the Rote Armee Fraktion or the Provisional Irish Republican Army in England, or was the term terrorist totally fictional? These were some of the details that the ‘circulating references’ not answer.

Where are we now (who are we anyway?) (1976/2016)

While writing about *The Peoplemobile*, an exhibition of Vito Acconci’s work at MoMA PS1 was announced in New York.²⁴⁹ Intent on visiting the exhibition and meeting Vito Acconci, I went to New York and was fortunate enough to be able to walk through the exhibition with Vito Acconci personally and speak to him about *The Peoplemobile* afterwards.²⁵⁰ Hoping to find answers to the previously mentioned questions, I found that the artist’s memory of the projects in The Netherlands remained sketchy, and it turned out to be more interesting to speak about the project’s current relevance instead of the historical contexts that have faded. Acconci did express his interest and his wish that *The Peoplemobile* had been able to travel further, which he never pursued.²⁵¹

With regard to the difficulties of circulating the references of Acconci’s oeuvre, it is remarkable that one installation *Where are we now (who are we anyway?) (1976)*, one of the ‘cultural space pieces,’ was recreated in collaboration with Acconci at MoMA PS1 in 2016.²⁵² One of the goals regarding Acconci’s installations in this period was for “viewers to have more to do in a piece.”²⁵³ Acconci intended to create community space, a place for people to gather around. The viewer becomes a participant and is not seen as an individual but as a part of a community. *Where are we now (Who are we anyway?)* was originally created for the space of the Sonnabend Gallery, New York. For the recreation at MoMA PS1 the installation was slightly adjusted, as the table formed a cross and was tilted, so the table extended through the window, accompanied with the original sounds. The audiotape of the installation sounded like a group gathering together, Acconci’s voice asks the others for their opinions: “my voice almost like calling

²⁴⁸ Acconci in Wijers, 84.

²⁴⁹ VITO ACCONCI: *WHERE WE ARE NOW (WHO ARE WE ANYWAY?)*, 1976, 19 June – 18 September 2016.

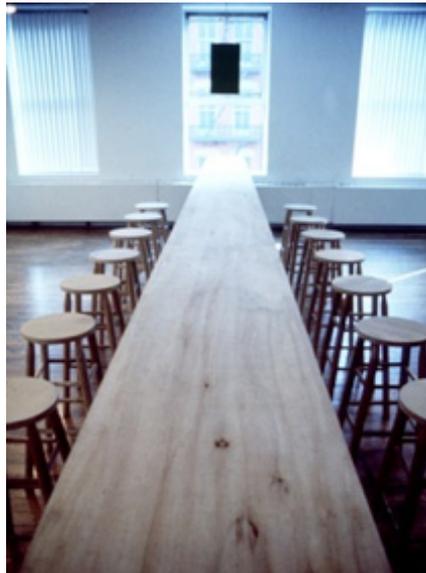
²⁵⁰ Interview Acconci, 2 September 2016 at MoMA PS1, New York.

²⁵¹ Interview Acconci 2016.

²⁵² Acconci, Kunz, 1978.

²⁵³ Acconci, Lecture de Appel, 17 May 1979.

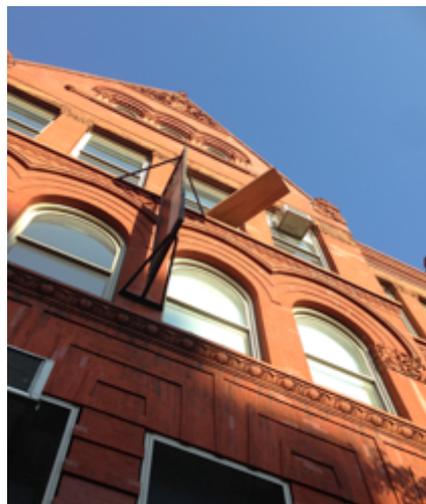
a kind of meeting to order.”²⁵⁴ In this piece however, Acconci’s role is still very prominent by nature of his recognizable voice. Acconci intentions were to create a community space. What bothered him though, about his other installations using audiotape as well, was that the viewers could not talk back to the disembodied voice.²⁵⁵ Using this characteristic of audio-tapes, language comes to function as an oppressor in the cultural space pieces: “I think that I could almost say in general that any audio-taped voice is an insulting, aggressive voice, no matter what it is saying, since it can’t be answered.”²⁵⁶



[52,53] Vito Acconci, *Where are we now (Who are we anyway?)*, 1976, Installation (32-foot-long wooden table, stools, painted wall, 4 channel audiotape), Sonnabend Gallery, New York.

[54,55] Vito Acconci, *Where are we now (Who are we anyway?)*, 1976/2016 reconstructed installation at MoMA PS1, New York.

[56] Vito Acconci reading the transcript of *The Peoplemobile*, 2016, MoMA PS1 New York.



²⁵⁴ Acconci in Wijers, 32.

²⁵⁵ Acconci, interview White, 1979, 24

²⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 31

Besides this recreated installation other artworks were on display through documents that were attached with magnets to an architectural construction. On these structures an abundance of archival materials were mounted, such as photos or project descriptions written by Acconci. The display of all the printed materials (facsimiles) amplified the discrepancies between the displayed documents and the demounted spatial installations to which these documents referred. Opposite to the display of archival materials, the recreated installation could be seen as an option to challenge and overcome the difficulties of displaying past demounted installations. The installation showed a different side of Acconci's oeuvre, perhaps not known to the general public, although some involved in the New York art world might have personal memories of the installation. *Where are we now (Who are we anyway?)* (1976/2016) illustrated the possibility of bringing a previously underexposed artwork back in circulation. Still we must keep in mind how the process of selection inevitably contributes to a partial representation of the past, and is merely one fragment of a long chain of transformations.

4. James Lee Byars at Corps de Garde - 1979 in focus

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4 James Lee Byars at Corps de Garde

4.1. Encounters with James Lee Byars' letters, from a visual to a tactile experience

While in the process of conducting research on Acconci's *Peoplemobile* and the history of the Corps de Garde in Groningen, I first encountered the work of James Lee Byars on display in an exhibition at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam.²⁵⁷ Various shaped letters written on fragile tissue paper with golden letters, some in his characteristic five-pointed star handwriting were mounted in many vitrines. The letters from the personal collection of Flor Bex (Internationaal Cultureel Centrum Antwerpen) and Wies Smals (De Appel Amsterdam) displayed the personal and mysterious messages Byars sent to his patrons/friends in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Some letters formed larger shapes when unfolded and were mounted on the walls revealing the status of the letters as artworks. Most letters were displayed in vitrines and ordered neatly, in combination with personal video's of Flor and Lieve Bex-De Deyne's sharing their personal memories of Byars. Several small screens showing fragments of this interview were mounted on a wall or laid next to the letters in the vitrines, where one could listen to their stories through headphones. The beautiful letters, with the myriad executions in consistent red, black and golden styles spoke to the imagination and the joy it must have brought to open such a delicate letter in anticipation of the unfolding artwork which contained a message, or even perhaps no message at all. While the Byars exhibition spoke to the imagination of a tactile experience the viewing experience remained merely visual and distanced.



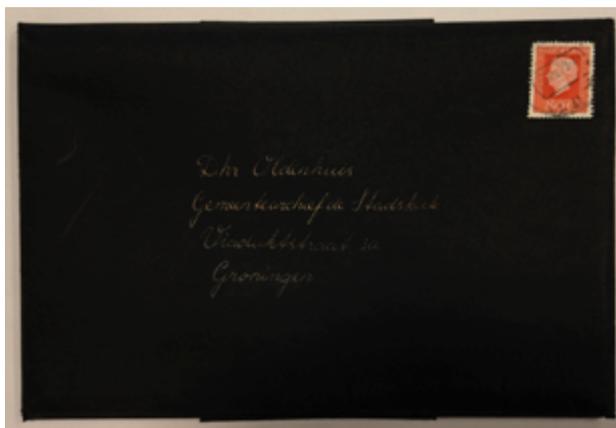
[56,57] Exhibition view *James Lee Byars I* at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Rotterdam.

²⁵⁷ The exhibition displayed artworks and letters of James Lee Byars from the collections of Flor Bex en Wies Smals, I & II (5 March 2016 – 29 May 2016) and Carlos Becerra, III (18 June 2016 – 25 September 2016).

While this exhibition of Byars' letters resulted in a calculated and visual experience, the second time I encountered the artist's work turned out to be the complete opposite: unexpected and tactile. In a file of documents about Corps de Garde, kept in the Groninger Archives, I discovered a letter addressed to Dhr. Oldenhuis at the Gemeentearchief de Stadskiste, sent on 20 August 1979 by James Lee Byars. Oldenhuis was the director of the Groninger city archive at the time, located on the Viaduktstraat 3a in Groningen. Despite my excitement of finding the letter in the first place, I was primarily curious about its content: anticipating some kind of written message as one would expect from a letter, especially in light of comparable documents kept in the Corps de Garde folder. Upon opening the black paper which functioned as an envelope, I was slightly disappointed merely to find a package of folded black paper with the text "THE 5 CONTINENT DOCUMENTA 7" written on it.

However as I unfolded the paper, which kept growing larger and larger into an unorthodox shape, I started to realize that it was a letter of a different nature, similar to the ones I had seen in the exhibition in Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. My excitement while unfolding it slowly turned into worry that I might damage the fragile paper, or be unable to fold it back into its original form. Multiple thoughts ran through my mind: why was this letter so easily accessible, should I inform the archive staff, should I have even opened it at all?

This quandary I found myself in eventually led to reflections not only about the artist and possibilities and restrictions in exhibiting his work, but also about the encounters with artworks, expected or unexpected. My personal encounter with the letter stimulated my research interest and the following history that I consequently began to uncover, indicating the affect of 'circulating references' in public archives.



[58] James Lee Byars, *The 5 Continent documenta 7*, letter, addressed to Dhr. Oldenhuis, Gemeentearchief de Stadskiste, Viaduktstraat 3a, Groningen, from Byars/Corps de Garde Groningen, 20.VIII.79.



[59] Unfolded *The 5 Continent documenta 7* letter in the Groninger Archives.

4.2 *The 5 Continent documenta 7*

During several periods in 1979 James Lee Byars stayed in Groningen where he presented two works: *The 5 Continent documenta 7* and *The Flag of Perfect*. As opposed to an artist like Acconci, who left a detailed trail of descriptive references behind, the actors referring to James Lee Byars are relatively rare: most extant documents, such as invitations, are rather mysterious. In line with his interest in the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, Byars, extremely aware of the enigmatic power and the affect of language, consciously kept his mysterious persona alive by rarely giving away personal details.²⁵⁸ In the following description of *The 5 Continent documenta 7*, the processes of production distribution and reception are retraced through remaining documents. In relation to *The Flag of Perfect* special attention is paid to the U-Matic tape containing an interview with James Lee Byars conducted by students of the Institute of Art History at the University of Groningen.

The 5 Continent documenta 7 announcement and performance

During the period in which Byars was in residence at Corps de Garde in March 1979 it was announced that Rudi Fuchs would be the curator of the seventh documenta in 1982.²⁵⁹ In response Byars came up with *The 5 Continent documenta*, both as a protest against the documenta's Euro and American centric perspective and as a fictional proposal to include artists from all five continents. The project entailed several related aspects: a telegram invitation for a performance and a black number seven made of folded tissue paper sent around the world.

The 'thought' of *The 5 continent documenta* was actualized in the form of an announcement of a performance at the Groninger Museum on March 19th 1979 at 5pm. Acquaintances of Byars were invited by telegram for the "announcement of the 5 continent documenta 7."²⁶⁰ The thought of announcing a large event like the documenta in a relatively small place like Groningen appealed to Byars, not least because he was conveniently able to realize the project on a short notice.²⁶¹ After the first iteration in Groningen the performance would travel to Köln, London, Paris, Brussels, Bern and Florence.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ For instance in Byars 1983, unpaginated, several references are made to Wittgenstein's philosophy.

²⁵⁹ Van Lagestein 2017b.

²⁶⁰ Telegram: "Invitation to the 5 continent documenta 7." 17 March 1979, [ADA].

²⁶¹ Haks, 22 March 1979, [ACDG].

²⁶² The names of these cities were mentioned by Frans Haks in a press statement of the Groninger Museum: Haks, 22 March 1979, [ACDG]. In other secondary sources *The 5 Continent documenta 7*'s other venues are mentioned, although fragmented: "Action presented at Spoerri's residence in Bern and several other locations throughout Europe, including versions in Köln and Paris. Arranged by Jürgen Glaesemer in a private residence with Francesca Pia, and one at the Groninger Museum." Byars et al. 1995, *James Lee Byars: The perfect moment*, 299. The chronology presented in this publication is an extension and correction of the one published in Elliot 1990. Whether the performance did take place at all the announced locations, including London and Köln, remains unclear due to the limited amount of references, for further research it would be interesting to find out if and where Byars exactly performed *The 5 Continent documenta 7*.

As reviews of the performance described, a large piece of black tissue paper in the shape of a seven with the miniscule inscription “THE 5 CONTINENT DOCUMENTA 7” was pasted to the wall in the hallway of the Groninger Museum.²⁶³ Byars did not attach the seven to the wall himself; instead a neatly-dressed person dampened the paper with a sponge in order to glue the thin paper to the wall with water.²⁶⁴ During the performance Byars himself wore a golden costume, a black hat, black gloves and covered his face with a black veil.²⁶⁵ One photo documents the performance at the Groninger Museum, showing a man watering the seven and Byars walking in front of the action. When speaking to Leendert van Lagestein about the performance in Groningen he described that it was an “elegant person” who sponged the seven onto the wall, but he was unable to recall who it was.²⁶⁶ However, after I showed him a photo of the performance he surprisingly recognized himself in retrospect.²⁶⁷ Together with Poul ter Hofstede he attached the seven to the wall in the foyer of the Groninger Museum [fig. 60, 61].²⁶⁸



[60] Poul ter Hofstede and James Lee Byars, *The 5 Continent documenta 7*, performance, at Groninger Museum. Photography Frank Straatemeier.



[61] James Lee Byars, Leendert van Lagestein and Poul ter Hofstede, *The 5 Continent documenta 7*, performance, at Groninger Museum. Photography Frank Straatemeier.

After the ritual of wetting the seven, Byars would remain in costume but was evidently approachable from a photo of Byars speaking to others drinking champagne while remaining veiled [fig. 62].

²⁶³ Determeyer 28 July 1979, 21, [DCDG].

²⁶⁴ E.v.S. 31 March 1979, [ASMA].

²⁶⁵ Anon. 23 March 1979, 21, [DCDG].

²⁶⁶ Interview Van Lagestein 2017b. In another article it is stated that Poul ter Hofstede wetted the black tissue seven. E.v.S. 31 March 1979, [ASMA].

²⁶⁷ The fact that such memories returned to Van Lagestein illustrated yet again the importance of the interrelation of memory and ‘circulating references’ as described in chapter 1.

²⁶⁸ In another photo of *The 5 Continent documenta 7* a woman is holding up a sponge against the seven, along with the collector Herman Daled looking at the Brussels performance. Byars 1983, unpaginated.

The broadcast of The 5 Continent documenta 7 in China

On one photograph capturing the public in attendance at *The 5 Continent documenta 7* performance, a video camera filming the event is visible indicating that the whole event was filmed [fig. 62]. This is confirmed by a newspaper article written by Eddy Determeyer in March 1979 that the *Announcement of The 5 Continent documenta 7* performance in Groningen was not only filmed, but that the video footage would be edited into a short 90 second impression to be broadcast on Chinese television.²⁶⁹ This information seems to have been derived from a press statement by Frank Haks: “The film which has just been made will be offered to the Chinese Republic using the facility of hiring 15 seconds of broadcasting of the Chinese Republic.”²⁷⁰ Determeyer wrote later in 1979 about the “flash” documentation of the performance and the Chinese broadcast to be distributed in the course of the year.²⁷¹ In an interview also Van Lagestein mentioned the broadcast of *The 5 Continent documenta 7* in China that was spreading already, and would reach China in a couple of months and had been on some desks by that time.²⁷² Where this footage remains is unclear, and whether it was actually broadcasted or not and if it was pure the “announcement” of this broadcast that sufficed as a statement remains the question. Yet among the aforementioned circulating references, one booklet kept in the Corps de Garde archive contains photo’s of a television with an image of *The 5 Continent documenta 7* suggests that the video footage might indeed exist.



[62] James Lee Byars speaking to Lon Robbé during *The 5 Continent documenta 7* performance at the Groninger Museum, with video camera's in the background. Photography Frank Straatemeier.



[63] Groningsch Museum, Praediniussingel 59, Groningen. Photography Frank Straatemeier.

²⁶⁹ Anon. 23 March 1979, 21 [DCDG].

²⁷⁰ Haks, 22 March 1979, [ACDG].

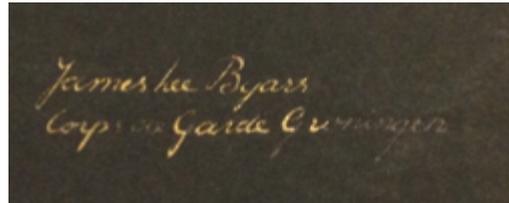
²⁷¹ Determeyer, 28 July 1979, 21, [DCDG].

²⁷² Van Lagestein in interview Byars 1979, tape I, [RUG].

Production of the 5 Continent documenta Letters



[64] Label of Zwart verduisteringspapier, material used to make the *5 Continent documenta 7* letters.



[65] Handwriting of Gerrie Andela on James Lee Byars' *5 Continent documenta 7* letter.

In addition to the performance of *The 5 Continent documenta 7* with its black tissue paper seven, many of these 'sevens' were sent as letters to Byars' acquaintances and friends all over the world. Approximately 300 letters were sent in August 1979 from Corps de Garde in Groningen and have ended up in different locations around the world. The letters were produced in collaboration with several people: Jouke Kleerebezem was responsible for the selection of materials and practical making of the paper sevens, and a local student of art history, Gerrie Andela, inscribed the golden text with her neat handwriting.²⁷³ Several specifics refer to the attention paid to the materials and details. A set of samples of paper indicate a delicate selection process in choosing the right paper materials, which eventually resulted in the use of "verduisteringspapier," normally used to cover windows in order to create a darkroom.²⁷⁴

In the interview recorded in Groningen Byars mentioned the importance of all the details, including the stamp: "I do mind about the stamp very much and often overpay to get the beautiful stamps, the queen stamps do seem to be the most beautiful stamps."²⁷⁵ Besides mentioning a perfectionist approach to the production process, he also mentioned and reflected on the way different people might encounter the letter, such as the mailmen who might experience a slight shift of handling in their daily work.²⁷⁶ It interested Byars to change people's perspectives by slightly changing the focus: "most things have this sort of tendency as tomorrow night I hope" he said in the interview referring to the upcoming event at the Groninger Museum.²⁷⁷ About the collaboration with Corps de Garde Byars noted: "Leendert pays extraordinary attention to mailing."²⁷⁸

²⁷³ Interview Van Lagestein 2017b.

²⁷⁴ Both from [ACDG].

²⁷⁵ Interview Byars 1979, tape I, [RUG].

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

Distribution of The 5 Continent documenta 7 letters

The letters were sent to people abroad through Byars' personal contact lists, as well as to the many Dutch contacts through Corps de Garde.²⁷⁹ While one of the *5 Continent documenta 7* letters remains in the Groningen city archive, others have ended up in the collections of museums such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York.²⁸⁰ Many more letters have circulated on the art market as well; to give an example Antiquarian André Swartz in Utrecht is currently selling *The 5 Continent documenta 7* letter which was addressed to Frans Haks, the former director of the Groninger Museum, for 1750 euros.²⁸¹ Swartz has previously sold *The 5 Continent documenta 7* letter addressed to the artist Henk Peeters and Frits Keers, who worked for the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.²⁸² In the description of Haks letter, Swartz promotes that the letter is "Addressed in gilt handwriting (HIS OWN!)." ²⁸³ Considering the neat handwriting, however, it is more likely that it is Andela's handwriting. Many more letters probably remain in the private collections of Byars' acquaintances and friends.

In addition to the golden black tissue sevens sent out by Byars with assistance of Corps de Garde, he also sent a series of letters related to *The 5 Continent documenta 7* to Joseph Beuys, of which the provenance remains unknown since the envelopes were discarded.²⁸⁴ Byars maintained a one-sided correspondence relation with Joseph Beuys until Beuys' death, to whom he sent little over 150 letters.²⁸⁵ In several of these letters, written by Byars himself "the Ghost of documenta" in a cryptic language and eccentric style, he proposed his alternative documenta 7 plans. These letters, of variable sizes representing a black seven when unfolded, Byars tried to persuade Beuys to join him in his documenta 7 plans. He saw the documenta as one of the art world's most influential events and thought of Beuys as the perfect associate to protest against the Euro-American-centric exhibition. Although the messages are rather fragmented and poetic some messages can be deciphered from the letters. In one letter Byars invites Beuys to *The 5 Continent documenta 7* and writes about visiting continents and mentions China.²⁸⁶ In other letters Byars asks Beuys to hang the black sevens in public space, with a touch of spit or a wet kiss.²⁸⁷ Elsewhere Byars writes about the idea to create a new all black German postage stamps.²⁸⁸

²⁷⁹ James Lee Byars - "Black 7's" mailing list, 1979, [ACDG].

²⁸⁰ James Lee Byars Correspondence, [Series II: Cora Rosevear Gift] [AMoMA]. The letter was originally sent to Cora Rosvear and gifted to the museum archives in 2012

²⁸¹ E-mail correspondence with Andre Swartz, 18-20 June 2017.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Website Andre Swartz, available at: <http://andreswartz.com/aanbiedingen/1146838569..HTM>.

²⁸⁴ Michely 2000, 156-169.

²⁸⁵ Ibid. 16.

²⁸⁶ Ibid. 156.

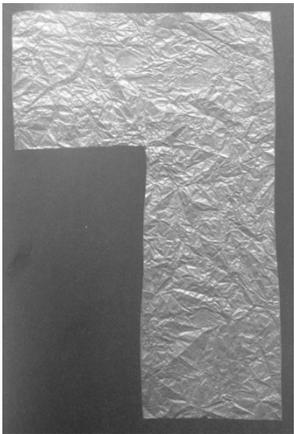
²⁸⁷ Ibid. 158-160.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. 164.

Reception of *The 5 Continent documenta 7*

With exception of two reactions, that of Rudi Fuchs personally as well as the official reaction of the documenta organization, it remains difficult to determine how most people responded to *The 5 Continent documenta 7*. From several documents and later events it becomes clear that Rudi Fuchs was not offended by Byars critique of the documenta. He for instance sent a telegram with the message “good luck, until we meet again” to Byars on the day of the performance in the Groninger Museum.²⁸⁹ Unlike Fuchs who seemed to take the announcement of *The 5 Continent documenta 7* lightheartedly, the organization of the documenta in Kassel responded with a serious letter denouncing the appropriation of the documenta name: “Ich kann der Einladung nicht folgen, entnehme ihr aber, daß in dem Titel unser rechtlich reschützter Name “documenta 7” angeführt sind. Die documenta 7 findet mit diesem Namen in der documenta-Stadt Kassel 1982 statt. Darf ich Sie höflich bitten, mich über den Inhalt der Veranstaltung zu unterrichten.”²⁹⁰ In response to this letter Frans Haks explained that they were ignorant of the fact that the documenta name was legally protected and that they were not organizing an exhibition with the documenta name, but presenting an announcement of James Lee Byars’ *5 Continent Documenta*: “Es handelt sich hier nicht nur um die Documenta aber um ‘Announcement of the five continents documenta of James Lee Byars’, was nicht genau dasselbe ist.”²⁹¹

Despite the official documenta’s negative reaction to Byars’ project, he was included in Fuchs’ edition. In the first volume of the *documenta 7* catalogue the text “I’m the ghost of the documenta invitation” is written, with a “7” and other cryptic sentences printed on the same page such as “James Lee Byars Autobiography” with a very tiny white figure besides it or “The perfect sentence.”²⁹² In the second volume of the catalogue a crumpled version of the black seven is printed next to a picture of *Hear the first totally interrogative philosophy around this chair* (1978) [fig. 66].²⁹³ Besides the depiction of the images of the sevens in the documenta catalogue, Byars exhibited with *The World’s Tallest Golden Tower* (1982-1983), which was installed at the entry hallway to the documenta. During several preview days and some days after the exhibition had opened to the public Byars stood around the sculpture to welcome the visitors.²⁹⁴ The documenta 7 was not the last collaboration between Fuchs and Byars; Rudi Fuchs organized both exhibitions of Byars during his time as director of the Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven (1983) and while he was the director of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (1995).



[66] *The 5 Continent documenta 7* in documenta 7 catalogue.

²⁸⁹ Fuchs, 19 March 1979, [ACDG].

²⁹⁰ documenta GmbH, letter to Groninger Museum, 20 March 1979, [ACDG].

²⁹¹ Haks, letter to Herr Lukas (documenta GmbH), 15 May 1979 [ACDG].

²⁹² Bos 1982, I: 86-87.

²⁹³ Bos 1982, II: 72-73.

²⁹⁴ Elliot 1990, 126.

4.3 *The Flag of Perfect* at the Groninger Museum

The Flag Perfect was the opening performance of the 1979 August Zomermanifestatie, at the Groninger Museum. For the opening the museum visitors were welcomed at midnight of July 29th in the entry hall decorated with white gladioli where black champagne was served with perfectly decorated snacks, such as black berries and chocolates in golden hand painted bowls.²⁹⁵ A Black flag with the word “perfect” written in a small golden dot, was hung on the façade of the museum. Alongside the flag, a selection of documentation of *The 5 Continent documenta 7* performance was on view at the Groninger Museum.

The Groninger Museum was located on the Praediniussingel 59 at the time, before the postmodern Mendini building was built in 1994.²⁹⁶ Frans Haks, who was appointed as new director of the museum after the museum’s three-year renovation, gave talk as introduction to Byars’ situation during the opening. The opening ritual took place in the entrance area of the museum, where it was part of the “Aulaprogramma” in the museum dedicated to performances, video- and film-screenings and music performances.²⁹⁷ For Byars the context of the museum was an important aspect for the perception of the work, as it contributed certain seriousness to the project.²⁹⁸



[67] *The Flag of Perfect*, flag on the façade of the Groninger Museum, Praediniussingel 59.

THE FLAG OF PERFECT

BLACK IS USED AS THE COLOR OF HIGH CEREMONY

PERFECT IS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FLAG

PERFECT IS ONE WORD PHILOSOPHY

PERFECT IS ITS OWN QUESTION

[68] James Lee Byars, description *The flag of Perfect*, 1979.

Two days prior to the opening of the event at the Groninger Museum Eddy Determeyer wrote an article in the local newspaper in which he announced Byars’ project, explained his artistic interest, his affinity with Japanese culture and the intentions and thoughts behind *The Flag of Perfect*.²⁹⁹ Regarding the flag, Byars only wished to explain that he intended to use black as a positive and ceremonial color and that perfect was written in

²⁹⁵ Determeyer, 30 July 1979, 7, [DCDG].

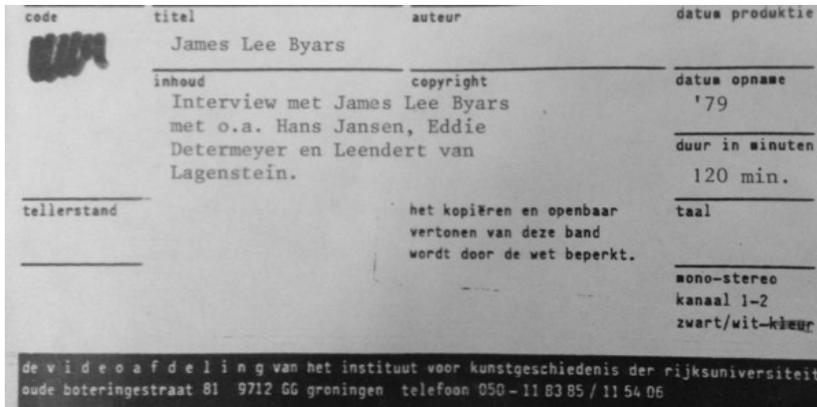
²⁹⁶ The building on the Praediniussingel now houses the Masters program of the Art Academy Minera: The Frank Mohr Institute.

²⁹⁷ Beenker, 20 September 1979, 35, [DCDG].

²⁹⁸ Interview Byars 1979, [RUG].

²⁹⁹ Determeyer, 28 July 1979, 21, [DCDG].

the middle, creating an “elegant conceptual situation.”³⁰⁰ For Byars the word “perfect” was a one-word philosophy, that poses its own question, as formulated on a minimal statement [fig. 66].³⁰¹ In an article published the day after the event, Determeyer reported about the course of the event, and mentioned that it was a pity that the art history students did not have time to document the event itself, but that at least they could record an extensive interview with the artist.³⁰²



[69] Label U-Matic tape I, title: James Lee Byars, content: Interview with James Less Byars with i.e. Hans Janssen, Eddie Determeyer en Leendert van Lagestein, date recording: 1979, duration: 120 min (tape I & tape II), mono-stereo channel 1-2, black/white.



[70] James Lee Byars on U-Matic tape II footage.

An interview with James Lee Byars, 1979

The day before the opening of *The Flag Perfect* at the Groninger Museum, art history students of the University of Groningen interviewed and filmed Byars in the basement of the Institute of Art History. As described on the label, the material on the U-matic tape contains a group interview with James Lee Byars and conducted by Eddy Determeyer (a music journalist), Hans Janssen (art history student) and Leendert van Lagestein (director Corps de Garde). What is not mentioned on the label is the presence of two other people at the interview, who remained at Corps de Garde in August as well: the German artists Maggie Bauer and Michel Sauer.³⁰³

Many of the topics related to Byars’ fascinations were discussed in the interview, for example his interest in the act of asking questions. With regard to *The Flag of Perfect* Byars’ discussion of the topic of questions is particularly relevant. By way of illustration of his fascination with questions Byars told the students what his idea of an interesting question is. For Byars the most interesting questions at the time were those that “question themselves interrogatively, questions that would make them question their own structure.”³⁰⁴ An example of one of his favorite questions was: “I can repeat the

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Determeyer, 30 July 1979, 7, [DCdG].

³⁰³ Besides the mentioned people present at the interview, one unidentified female (perhaps also a student art history) and one older male sat around the table during the interview.

³⁰⁴ Interview Byars 1979, [RUG].

question but am I bright enough to ask it?" In some of his projects, Byars invited other people to share the questions that intrigued them. In his discussion of such questions that people posed he does reveal himself to be somewhat elitist: "everyone seemed to think that they had a question, quite fascinating," even though he thought some questions were "terrible." At the Groninger Museum with *The Flag of Perfect* Byars intended "to pose perfect as the perfect question." Because "most people have a stable idea what perfect is," the word 'perfect' was interesting as a question in itself according to him, since it is capable of prompting new questions.

The process of identifying one's own perception of what perfect might mean fascinated Byars. He explained his own matured intuitive selection process, what has become known as his personal style. Even though he wished he could work in another style, he always comes to the same attraction to certain forms (spheres or squares) and materials (such as silk, stone, tissue paper), or colors (gold, black). He also describes his own use of language as a "clear style of language" and how he always selects simple traditional words.³⁰⁵ Byars furthermore states that his "style is primarily mental, I take them [ideas] as real objects," thus stating that "content as well as the form are part of the style."³⁰⁶

During the second half of the interview (tape II) something remarkable happens; the roles turn and Byars starts asking the other artists and students about their personal style or if they have found their criteria of selection. In the conversation between the three artists present (Byars, Bauer, Sauer) their different approaches and thoughts regarding personal style crystalize (as well as perhaps a difference of generations). Even though Byars works in diverse media, he works in a consistent style, similar to other artists he admires such as Joseph Beuys. Michel Sauer expresses his interest in the ability to shift styles several times within a lifetime; rather than prioritizing perfection in the process of selection towards an overall style as Byars process might be described.



[71] Image of the U-Matic tape II footage: Eddy Determeyer, Maggie Bauer, Michel Sauer (back), James Lee Byars.



[72] Image of the U-Matic tape II footage: James Lee Byars, Hans Janssen (back), Leendert van Lagestein, unknown female.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

4.4 The 'circulating reference' of James Lee Byars

With regard to the 'circulating references' of *The 5 Continent documenta 7* performances and letters or *The Flag of Perfect*, the fact that few documents remain, and those that do are scattered in personal archives, is presumably not something Byars would have regretted. On the contrary he intentionally limited the amount of references to his practice, contributing to his self-mythologizing. In retrospect this makes it more difficult to trace the actor-network and reconstruct it in order to understand what the artworks entailed. On the other hand, it is precisely the elusiveness and the mystery that Byars strived to maintain as part of his practice. In retrospect, the effort one must make to retrace the past events when researching Byars artistic practice reflects the inevitable partiality of access to a past event. Moreover, the elusiveness seems to be exactly Byars intention.

One telling example of Byars perpetuating fragmented references is the story told by Flor Bex in an interview conducted by Els Hoek, which was also on display in the exhibition of Byars at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in 2016.³⁰⁷ Flor Bex recalled the preparation process of a show at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Antwerp, and how they planned to make a catalogue raisonné, with an overview of all his work thus far. After months of preparation, however, when Flor and Lieve Bex-De Deyne showed Byars all the collected documents he told them that he wished to create a one-page catalogue. Comparable, the fifteen-second footage of *The 5 Continent Documenta 7*, if it would be rediscovered, would only reflect a partial fragment of the entire project.

As illustrated by the discussion of Byars' fascination with 'perfect,' limiting and summarizing had interested Byars as a philosophical approach earlier on. In 1975 he had performed *The Perfect Epitaph*, a performance in Bern for which he strolled through the city with a large ball of lava, which would be performed at De Appel Amsterdam on queens day as well. Alongside the walk with the round stone, Byars handed out envelopes with the word "epitaph" on it.³⁰⁸ The ability to formulate an "epitaph," a single-sentence biography, was according to Byars the perfect analysis of one's own style.³⁰⁹ Another interesting practical aspect of *The Perfect Epitaph* in Amsterdam is the letter sent by Toni Gerber to Wies Smals on Byars' request, wherein Gerber described the performance and it is mentioned that Byars intentionally asked Gerber to write it.³¹⁰

This letter is one example of Byars active promotion of his own work. Byars' insistence on a collaboration with Beuys for *The 5 Continent documenta 7* can also be considered in the light of these "networking" skills. Furthermore his self-promotional skills are reflected in the choice of addressees of the *5 Continent documenta 7* letters, as well as in the deliberate choice to send one letter to the city archive of Groningen to have it documented. In addition to the personal communicative aspects of letters, Byars described another practical consideration for working with paper as material, namely

³⁰⁷ The interview is also available online on ARTtube: <http://www.arttube.nl/videos/james-lee-byars-interview-met-flor-lieve-bex-de-deyne>.

³⁰⁸ Mechelen 2006, 106-107.

³⁰⁹ Interview Byars 1979, [RUG].

³¹⁰ Gerber, 26 March 1975, [ADAA].

the fact that these works were the most easy to accept, for instance in museum collections.³¹¹ In this respect Byars was undeniably successful considering all the museum collections where the correspondence currently resides relatively publicly, and in private archives such as that of Leendert van Lagestein's collection of the Corps de Garde.

4.5. Acconci's abundant and Byars' elusive 'circulating references'

By following the actor-network of Corps de Garde's program in 1979, the two artists' activities can be reconstructed through the presence of actors, which continue to contribute to the circulation of past performative events. The actors remaining and referring to Vito Acconci on the one hand and James Lee Byars on the other, reveal two very distinct ways of orchestrating access to the artists' ideas through the archival materials that they produced or enabled. While the actors of *The Peoplemobile* gave insights into all of Acconci's conceptual and practical considerations in the process of becoming an installation, Byars written expressions and the sheer but calculated documentation produced a more stylized and mysterious insight into his practice.

The previous research shows how the different actors, ranging from letters to photographs enabled the concept's conveyance. Instead of being divided, the concept and the material traces are interrelated and enforce one another. With regard to both Acconci and Byars, who created ephemeral events leaving material traces, the manner in which the artists handled and fostered the 'circulating reference' to their own work cannot be regarded as distinct from their oeuvre. Acconci's and Byars' approach to art might be described as opposites: while the execution of Byars work was intended to result in a 'perfect' work, in Acconci's approach failure was not only accepted but was embraced as an integral part of the unfolding process. Nevertheless some of the revelations about Byars' production process demystified the artist's persona, such as the fact that an art history student wrote the golden letters of *The 5 Continent Documenta 7*.

The focus on single artists in the previous chapters illuminated the manner in which different types of artists leave behind broad range of materials. Even though the emphasis in the third and fourth chapter has been largely historical, the investigations into the past works and events of these artists and institutions have intermingled and influenced my thoughts regarding the contemporary exhibitions that I visited while conducting the research. The neglect of audio with regard to *The Peoplemobile* or the contrast between public and private archives with regard to *The 5 Continent documenta 7* letters are just two examples of the many curatorial challenges that the artists' work might evoke in the making of an exhibition.

The two exhibitions mentioned in relation to Acconci and Byars were solo retrospectives. One of the most interesting aspects of Corps de Garde was the diversity of different artists who came together in Groningen. Therefore it is necessarily to look at group exhibitions in order to reveal the rich possibilities and challenges in revealing a fluid network of artists in the form of an exhibition.

³¹¹ Interview Byars 1979, [RUG].

5. The Archive on display

from showing documents to re-creations of documents

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5. The archive on display, from showing documents to re-creations of documents

What are the curatorial strategies by which past exhibitions are remembered and brought into the present? This question is posed in the first place to reflect on the way we might encounter archival materials outside of the ‘closed’ folders of the archive. Second the reflection on exhibitions displaying archival documents sheds light on the challenges the objective of bringing the exhibition history of Corps de Garde back in circulation might bring with it. Archival materials can be drawn on and illuminated by different curatorial approaches, from simply showing the documents to different strategies of recreation. Through the examination of these curatorial approaches, this chapter also uncovers the agency of the archival materials, such as photography and descriptive texts, in ‘circulating reference’ of ephemeral artworks.

Before focusing on the specifics of strategies related to archival materials, it is worth reflecting on a contemporary phenomenon, the recreation of past exhibitions in general. This chapter pursues the research by means of case studies of archival exhibitions at two institutions, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and at Raven Row London, in order to illustrate several different approaches in dealing with archival materials.

5.1 ‘Remembering Exhibition’

The Canadian art historian Reesa Greenberg uses the term ‘remembering exhibitions’ to describe the phenomena of contemporary exhibitions that refer back to past exhibitions.³¹² She identifies three different types of remembering exhibitions: the replica, the riff and the reprise. Summarizing the different approaches, she writes:

“The replica attempts to recreate, either partially or in entirety, the contents and form of a past exhibition; the riff uses an historic exhibition as take-off point, often privileging a contemporary connection or interpretation; and the reprise re-presents or remembers exhibitions in the form of catalogues or online manifestations with visual and verbal information [...]”³¹³

Like most categorizations, these three types clarify and simultaneously shed light on overlapping and complementary qualities.

The most common of these exhibition forms is the *replica*, which attempts to re-assemble as much of the artworks displayed at the initial show as possible, either original artworks or their reproductions. An example Greenberg brings forward is the recreation of Robert Morris’ sensational exhibition *Bodyspacemotionthings*, which initially only lasted four days at Tate Gallery (now Tate Britain) in 1971 and was cancelled due to safety issues.³¹⁴ In 2009 this exhibition reopened in the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, with new versions of the interactive sculptures that were adjusted to meet with contemporary safety requirements. While writing the previous sentences I could

³¹² Greenberg 2009.

³¹³ Greenberg 2012, 159.

³¹⁴ Westerman 2016.

not help noticing my word choice, “sensational”, and question whether the exhibition would be known and remembered as sensational without the remembering edition, and what Greenberg would name the *reprise*, which is the online spread of information and attention that came along with the exhibition?³¹⁵ More recently the remembrance of *Bodyspacemotionthings* has been enhanced after a two-year research project about the performance history at Tate from 1960 to 2016, the reference through which I became familiar with the exhibition in the first place.³¹⁶

During a research trip to Raven Row in London, one of the case studies in this chapter, I encountered another example of a *replicating* exhibition, namely the rehanging of Malevich paintings in the exhibition *Revolution: Russian Art 1917–1932* at the Royal Academy, London.³¹⁷ Based on a photograph, the original display designed by Malevich was entirely rehanged in London with the original oil paintings (although *Black Square* is a later version than the notorious 1915 painting). Henry Milner, a specialist in “Reconstructivism” as he calls his practice, recreated the architectural plaster models in 2016, *Architectons and Figurine* (dated late 20s).³¹⁸ Rehanging Malevich paintings is not an uncommon practice, perhaps because it amplifies the original intentions and preferences of the artist. For example when his *Black Square* is hung very high (at the Royal Academy) or in the corner intersection of two walls (at the Stedelijk Museum) this can evoke an association with Russian Orthodox icons.³¹⁹ In the exhibition *Revolution: Russian Art* the ‘Malevich corner’ referred to the past exhibition *Fifteen Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic* at the State Russian Museum in Leningrad in 1932-1933. As in the 1932 iteration, only one room in the 2017 exhibition was dedicated to Malevich’s sculptures and paintings.



[73] The remembered exhibition: *Fifteen Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic* at the State Russian Museum in Leningrad 1932.



[74] The remembering exhibition: *Revolution: Russian Art 1917–1932* at the Royal Academy, London 2017.

³¹⁵ See for example the review “Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall recreates a 1971 art sensation” in the *Guardian*, 6 April 2009, by Charlotte Higgins.

³¹⁶ Westerman 2016.

³¹⁷ Website Royal Academy 2017.

³¹⁸ Website Henry Milner.

³¹⁹ Malevich’s black square was hung in the corner of two walls in the exhibit “Kazimir Malevich and the Russian avant-garde” that was shown in: the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (19 October 2013 - 2 February 2014); Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn (11 March t/m 22 June 2014); Tate Modern, Londen (17 July 2014 t/m 26 October 2014).

This is what Greenberg might describe as the *mise en abyme* device of curating, when “some remembering exhibitions are found within another, usually historical, exhibition.”³²⁰ In addition the 1932 exhibit inspired not only the Malevich space itself, but the entire exhibition as well.³²¹ By taking the past exhibit as a historical starting point, with a *mise en abyme* ‘replica’ within it, it also seems to allude as well to Greenberg’s definition of a *riff*: “the riff uses an historic exhibition as take-off point, often privileging a contemporary connection or interpretation.”³²² The contemporary scholarship was documented and presented in a catalogue of the exhibition as well.

The previous example illustrated how the ‘replica,’ ‘riff’ and ‘reprise’ are more often complementary hybrid forms: for example when the Russian Revolution exhibition relates to a specific historical display of Malevich paintings (replica), integrated in a larger exhibition that aims to reflect from a new perspective on the past exhibition (riff) accompanied by a catalogue (reprise).³²³ Despite the overlap, “each of the curatorial modes acknowledges and activates different types of memories” according to Greenberg.³²⁴ The ‘replica’ is designed to isolate, promote research and underscore the singularity of a given exhibition; the ‘riff’ also recognizes the importance of an exhibition but self-reflexively intends to conceptualize its relevance in the present; the ‘reprise’ enables the remembrance beyond the temporal exhibition, by making the remains physically or digitally accessible.³²⁵ While not necessarily divided exclusively, these proposed different categories are helpful to reflect on the possible motivations behind the organization of a ‘remembering exhibition.’

It is important to note that there is a large contrast, conceptually and practically, between rehangings paintings and recreating the artworks. Yet these two ontologically different approaches are both combined in examples of replica exhibitions by Greenberg, and are also combined within exhibitions themselves, like the Malevich display. Keeping the changeability of seemingly static artworks in mind, I would like to stress the chain of transformations that are inevitable in order to enable the recreation of an artwork. We can imagine how the choice to recreate Malevich’s plaster models was dependent on many actors, among which for example: the documentation verifying its existence and presence; the curators and their choice to remember the past exhibition; and the maker of the sculptures, Henry Milner.

Beside the apparent difference between the original artwork and the recreated artwork, there is another comparable distinction that can be made between the original artwork and the archival documents. While the original artworks could be described as *authentic* objects, archival documents might be considered by some as *secondary* objects, and merely references to the original. Instead of emphasizing these types of

³²⁰ Greenberg 2009.

³²¹ Website Royal Academy 2017.

³²² Greenberg 2012, 159.

³²³ It must be noted that the reprise in which Greenberg is interested is not only the standard catalogue, but a reprise might also be created in more advanced formats, like online extensions of exhibits. Greenberg 2009.

³²⁴ Greenberg 2009.

³²⁵ Ibid.

hierarchical relations between original and remake, or artworks and documents, the interrelations between those actors will be the point of focus in the following paragraphs.

In the subsequent article “Archival Remembering Exhibitions” Greenberg recalls that she was interested in questions related to memory of the original exhibition and its specialization in the present. Therefore she “did not discuss important developments in exhibitions of archival material and the revival of intellectual interest in the archive as a vehicle for constructing knowledge and remembering the past.”³²⁶ The scholarly and artistic interest in the archive, also referred to as ‘the archival turn’, is currently prevalent in the art world and can be discussed from many different viewpoints.³²⁷ The seminal studies brought forward by Greenberg (Foucault, Derrida Foster) are not analyzed in this thesis; instead this chapter maintains an ANT approach by emphasizing and following the actors.³²⁸

The emphasis on the archival documents is related to the temporal nature of the artworks that were exhibited at Corps de Garde. The documents naturally gain more importance when the original artworks cease to exist; for example in the reconstruction of Robert Morris’ interactive sculptures in the aforementioned exhibition. How could the objects be recreated were it not for their documentation? Particularly with regard to exhibitions of the less-enduring art forms, like the so-called “dematerialized” art forms, the absence of original artworks or the changeable character of them present curators and conservators with challenging tasks.³²⁹ As mentioned in the first chapter, text photography or texts can be seen as actors that extend the ‘circulating reference’ of an artworks or an institution, and importantly, this extension can also be manifested in an exhibition format. The latter is the subject of this particular chapter.

³²⁶ Greenberg 2012, 161.

³²⁷ For a broad range of articles on the archive, from traditional archivist perspectives to art related reflections, see: *Archives and Records: The Journal of the Archives and Records Association* (2013 - current), that was formerly known as *Journal of the Society of Archivists* (1955 - 2012), published by Taylor & Francis Online.

³²⁸ Michel Foucault *The Archeology of Knowledge*, 1969; Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 1995; Hal Foster “An Archival Impulse” 2004.

³²⁹ See Stigter 2011, Stigter reflects on the role of the art conservator in the interpretation and display of conceptual art.

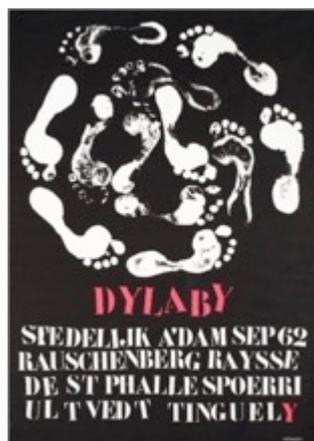
5.2 'Archival remembering exhibitions'

The archival remembering exhibition does not place an emphasis on reassembling works from a past exhibitions or replicating the installation and its spatial flow or making a contemporary interpretation, though these aspects may be present to some degree. Instead, the focus is on presenting an exhibition of various forms of documentation related to a past exhibition or exhibitions: correspondence about loans, logistics or legal implications; instructions about transpiration or placement; financial records; exhibition plans or models; photographs of artworks, artists, installations or audiences; press reviews; posters; catalogues or exhibitions brochures; video and film documents and, sometimes, artwork. Archival remembering exhibitions remember through documents and artifacts culled from institutions and individuals associated with the remembered exhibition(s).³³⁰

To reflect on the characteristics of 'the archival remembering exhibition', as described by Greenberg, the role of archival documents in exhibitions of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam is examined. In the first part I will follow Greenberg's analysis of the 2011 *Recollections I & II* exhibitions, but deviate from these characteristics by relating them to the more recent exhibitions, *Zero: let us return to the stars* (2015) and *Jean Tinguely, Machinespektakel* (2016-2017).³³¹ In 2010, before the grand opening of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam's new wing in 2012, the old building re-opened with the project *Temporary Stedelijk* to make the then-closed museum available to the public.³³² One of the projects of *Temporary Stedelijk* in 2011 was to re-visit some of the institute's most well known exhibitions in two sequential exhibitions *Recollections I* and *Recollections II*.³³³



[75] Poster *Bewogen Beweging*, 1961.



[76] Poster *DyLaby*, 1962.



[77] Exhibition view *Recollections I* in *Temporary Stedelijk 2*, 2011.

³³⁰ Greenberg 2012, 161.

³³¹ Other exhibitions like *Stedelijk and the Second World War* (27 February - 31 May 2015) could have been case-studies, however the choice for these two exhibitions is based on a practical consideration, namely my own attendance at the exhibits. Second the ephemeral nature of the installations that were dismantled (*Zero*) or the interactive nature of the sculptures (*Tinguely*) relate to specific curatorial challenges that can be related to possible challenges in remembering Corps de Garde.

³³² An interesting online counter exhibition was created on the domain name temporystedelijk.com as a critique on *Temporary Stedelijk*'s focus on the past instead of an investigation into new online artforms.

³³³ *Recollections I* (March 2011–July 2011). *Recollections II* (August 2011–October 2011).

Recollections (2011) at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

Recollections I referred to two exhibitions, *Bewogen Beweging* (1961) and *Dylaby* (1962).³³⁴ These paired exhibitions were organized during Willem Sandberg's period as a director at the Stedelijk Museum and are known not only because they were co-curated by the artists Daniel Spoerri and Jean Tinguely but as well for the challenge they presented to the static status of the art object.³³⁵ The collaboration with artists at the time led to bold installations that resulted in controversial reactions from the public, exemplary for the experimental nature of Sandberg's policy, for which he has been praised.³³⁶ *Bewogen Beweging* and *Dylaby* were both remembered in *Recollections I* through the display of numerous documents (photographs, letters, etc.) from the museum's archive. In addition to the archival documents, artworks of the participating artists were displayed, such as Alexander Calder, Robert Rauschenberg and Jean Tinguely. These artists exhibited previously together in *Bewogen Beweging* (moved movement), an exhibition bringing together kinetic artworks of over seventy artists, who left their traces in the Stedelijk Museum's collection. On the contrary, *Dylaby* (dynamic labyrinth), consisted of six environments built up from cheap materials, which were discarded afterwards. As a reference to the dismantled installations, leftovers were shown in *Recollections I*, such as the head of a mannequin splashed with paint. This head and a rifle were mounted in a vitrine, referring to Niki de Saint-Phalle's installation in *Dylaby*. She staged a shooting wherein visitors tried to hit bags of paint mounted in a room with white painted objects. The choice for an archival exhibition was partly due to the ephemeral nature of the artworks, the availability of extensive documentation and the desire to demonstrate links between the Stedelijk Museums exhibition history and their collection.³³⁷



[78] Niki de Saint-Phalle, installation in room 5 of *Dylaby*, 1962, photography by Ed van der Elsken.

³³⁴ Since I did not visit *Recollections I* and *Recollections II*, the following information is drawn from descriptions by Greenberg 2012, Fotiadi 2011 and 2014 and Schavemaker 2017.

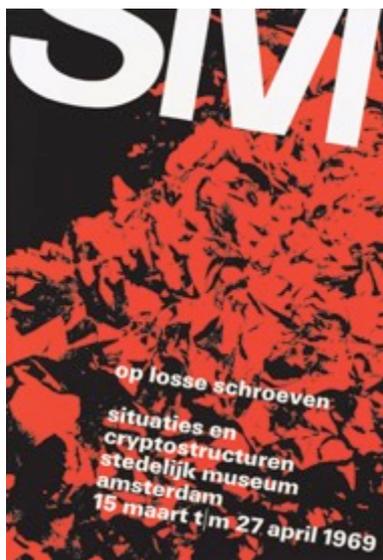
³³⁵ Altshuler 2013, 27.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Greenberg, 163.

The second edition of the Recollection exhibition, *Recollections II*, was connected to the exhibition *Op Losse Schroeven: Situations and Cryptostructures* (1969), curated by Wim Beeren, who would become the director of the Stedelijk Museum in 1985.³³⁸ One of the aspects taken up in *Recollections II* was Beeren's curatorial interest in new materials used in art, such as air, electricity and soil. Like *Bewogen Beweging* and *Dylaby*, the ephemeral nature of the artworks in *Op Losse Schroeven* made the remembrance of the artworks dependent on archival documentation.³³⁹ However, besides showing archival documents, *Recollection II* included more artworks from the museum's collection in order to illustrate the influence that the exhibition had on the acquisition policy. Many of these artworks were from the same artists that exhibited in *Op Losse Schroeven*, although the acquired works were of more durable and collectable nature.³⁴⁰

Compared to the first iteration of the Recollections exhibitions, *Recollection II* shifted its focus from the archival documents referring to an exhibition in the past and the absence of artworks, towards the inclusion of later acquired artworks that refer to the past exhibitions from the present. Still, even today when visiting the Stedelijk, one can view Mario Merz's *Città irreale* (1968) from the *Op Losse Schroeven* exhibition, a permanent reference to the institution's exhibition history.



[79] Poster *Op Losse Schroeven, situaties en cryptostructures*, 1969.

[80] Mario Merz, *Città Irreale*, 1968, collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

³³⁸ See Rattemeyer 2010 for an extensive analysis of the exhibition. Rattemeyer's publication brings together *Op Losse Schroeven* with its "twin" exhibition, namely Harold Szeeman's *When Attitude Become Form* (1969).

³³⁹ Fotiadi 2014, 93.

³⁴⁰ A total of 306 works by 24 of the participating artists have been acquired (12 of which directly derive from *Op Losse Schroeven*). Schavemaker 2017, 40.

Why exhibit archival documents?

If artworks themselves can be considered as references to specific histories, then what is the added value of exhibiting the archival documents, such as letters and newspaper-reviews? Besides the previously mentioned problem of lost artworks, 'archival remembering exhibitions also construct different types of meanings and experiential modes. "The intent of an archival remembering exhibition is to place the historical exhibition or exhibitions in a nexus of period documents."³⁴¹ Through the use of documents the display creates a spatial historical portrait, which admittedly might overwhelm the viewer in his/her incapacity to take it all in. However, this abundance of materials according to Greenberg seems to both signify the "very existence of the event and its importance."³⁴² Besides the fact that the documents indicate proof of the past's occurrence, the 'archival exhibition' highlights past processes of productions and reception as a relevant part of history.

The preparatory notes and letters give the viewer a look into the production process and might function as a peek into the creative process that led to the final outcome of the exhibition. The specific roles of the curators of *Bewogen Beweging* only become clear when one reads the correspondence between Willem Sandberg, Daniel Spoerri and Pontus Hultén in *Recollections I: Bewogen Beweging* was a joint project organized in collaboration with Pontus Hultén, director of Moderna Museet, Stockholm. After Sandberg invited Spoerri to curate an exhibition with mobile art, the artist introduced Sandberg to Hultén who was working on a similar show, which led to the joint project. While Sandberg had already established his position as an innovative museum director, Hultén still had to establish his credentials since he was more recently appointed as director in 1960. This possibly explains why "in the history of art exhibitions, *Bewogen Beweging* now comes across much more as a Stedelijk museum project, perhaps more so than is suggested by its own archive documents."³⁴³ With the archival materials on display the viewer is able to figure out the crucial role that Hultén played by reading the letter for example in which he writes that he had been working on organizing the exhibition since 1954.³⁴⁴ Thus the archival remembering exhibition offers an opportunity to nuance certain assumptions about preciously established narratives.

Newspaper articles covering the reactions of the visitors can also provide insights into an exhibition's reception by the viewers and critics. Showing the reviews shifts the viewers' attention towards the controversies and debates around the exhibition, which might be nuanced or amplified. *Bewogen Beweging* and *Dylaby* certainly made their marks as spectacular exhibitions, a historical awareness that comes even more to the fore when reviews are displayed. Another perspective on the reception came through the photography of Ed van der Elsken, who captured people interacting with the sculptures or immersed in the exhibition's installations. One of the unmentioned actors

³⁴¹ Greenberg 2012, 161-162.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Fotiadi 2014, 86.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 91.

that should not be forgotten in the consideration of processes from production to reception of the exhibition is the distributing institute, connecting the domains of production and reception. It is the institution that connects and mediates all the artworks and archives the documents. In the case of *Bewogen Beweging* it was not the museum, however, but the photographer Ed van der Elsken who documented the exhibition, because he hoped the museum would purchase his photographs as press material.³⁴⁵ His initiative was rewarded; the photo and films capturing *Dylaby* were officially commissioned by the museum as promotion material. It was only later that the photographer achieved the status as an autonomous artist, and the museum acquired his photos in 1990 (and in 2004 his films of both exhibitions) for their art collection.³⁴⁶

In an 'archival remembering exhibition' the role of the distributor is twofold. First the distributor, here the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, plays a central role in the creation of the initial exhibition and producing relevant documents. Second, the same distributor makes a conscious choice to return to this first exhibition. In this second phase a selection has to be made, and thus expresses the past exhibition's particular importance for remembrance in the present. Of course the distributor of the remembering exhibition might be the same as the original one (this example will be discussed later). What are the other motivations for remembering exhibitions, or to be precise, these exhibitions in particular? One of the motivations has been indicated in the introduction to *Bewogen Beweging*, *Dylaby* and *Op Losse Schroeven*, namely their status as important moments in exhibition histories stimulating artistic innovation. The curator of *Recollections*, Margriet Schavemaker head of collections and research of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, writes about her motivation for organizing exhibitions that include the institutions history:

"I became increasingly convinced that these kinds of histories [exhibition histories] are crucial components of museum collections deserving a life beyond the archive. Better yet, to understand the meaning of the institutional histories of museums, we should experiment with ways to exhibit these histories precisely in the places where they were originally produced."

In addition to a museum's traditional role of caring for their collections, disclosing the archival documents could foster their exhibition histories. In other words the 'archival remembering exhibition' brings exhibition histories back into circulation.

³⁴⁵ Schravemaker 2016, 157.

³⁴⁶ Ibid. 158.

Celebrating the past or critical reflections?

Another motivation for hosting an archival remembering exhibition has to do with the intended institutional identity. *Recollections I & II* were organized in the Museum shortly after Ann Goldstein took up her new position as director of the Stedelijk Museum and before the museum reopened the new wing, designed by Bentham Crowell Architects. It is at such a moment of transformation, that a reflection onto the past offers an opportunity not only to solidify the past history of the institution, but also to show the alignments intended for future aspirations. In Schavemaker's words: "the museum remained in a twilight zone between past, present, and future, pondering which kind of museum it would become once the new additions to the building were completed." The risk of self-referring remembering exhibitions is that the institute might stick to merely celebrating its history. Because the remembering exhibitions were organized by the same institution as the 'remembered exhibition', there "was a great potential for nostalgia for a more robust era in the museum's history."³⁴⁷ Reesa Greenberg argues that the danger of the exhibition turning into a "greatest hits" show was countered in *Recollections* by the *sequential* mode. Since the remembered exhibitions were grouped chronologically, and mimicked the original temporal sequence this "allowed for the focus on the specific exhibitions, and their individual characteristics," according to Greenberg.³⁴⁸ To what extent temporal phrasing can undermine a glorification of the past is a question, to which I will return in the discussion of the more extensive temporal phrasing in the exhibition at Raven Row.

Apart from the risk of repetitively overpraising the past exhibitions, the art historian Eva Fotiadi has expressed another point of criticism regarding the 'archival remembering exhibition', namely the unadventurous viewer experience. While Greenberg describes the abundance of documents as a positive feature, Fotiadi favors a display that achieves a new take on the past and accordingly creates new modes of experience for the viewers. For Greenberg a more spatialized archive provides an environment in which the viewer is free to relate him/herself to the past with historical distance. "Traditionally the archival remembering exhibition purposely avoids the theatricality of many reconstructions and riffs. It demands close study but typically keeps viewers at a distance from materials placed behind glass or presented in facsimile form."³⁴⁹ But for Fotiadi it is precisely this distance, the static arrangement of materials that is one of the chief downsides of the *Recollections*. In contrast to the more active and experiential viewer's mode that interactive artworks instigated in the past, the archival exhibition, referring to these past interactions, keeps the viewer at a historical distance and does not create an environment in which the viewer can re-experiencing the artworks. For Greenberg, viewing the video footage and hearing the sounds of the original artworks is as close as the viewer can get to a re-experience of the moving sculptures referred to in the *Recollections*.

³⁴⁷ Greenberg 2012, 170.

³⁴⁸ Ibid. 171.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.162.

The curator Margriet Schavemaker stresses how exhibitions that include archival documents and introduce contextual references “offer alternative options for presenting modern art to the conventional model of ‘presentism.’”³⁵⁰ As described by Claire Bishop in *Radical Museology*, “presentism” denotes an obsession with the present in the museum of contemporary art.³⁵¹ Bishop writes: “the permanent collection can be a museum’s greatest weapon in breaking the stasis of presentism. This is because it requires us to think in multiple tenses simultaneously: the *past perfect* and the *future anterior*.”³⁵² Bishop proposes to think in terms of a dialectical contemporary, in which multiple temporalities are navigated within a more political horizon. While some of the examples that Bishop discusses do include the display of archival documents as an alternative to the model of presentism, the musicological practices brought forward by Bishop are more explicitly political. Yet the interrelation between different temporalities can be critical also without being derived from a permanent collection, as illustrated by the following two examples.

³⁵⁰ Schavemaker 2017, 63.

³⁵¹ Bishop 2014.

³⁵² Bishop 2014, 24.

Zero: let us return to the stars, reconstructions and archival documents

One of the group exhibitions at The Stedelijk Museum that extensively incorporated information and presented archival documents on display was *Zero let us return to the stars* (2015). It displayed the international network of artists related to ZERO and specifically embedded this history in the Stedelijk Museum's own history, with references to two exhibitions of ZERO artists organized by the Stedelijk Museum in 1962 and in 1965. The Zero Foundation in Düsseldorf, funded in 2008, initiated a joint research project, undertaken by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the ZERO Foundation in Düsseldorf, and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam which led to exhibitions in Amsterdam, New York and Berlin.³⁵³ What is interesting about these three different venues is that they all told a slightly diverging story. For example in Berlin the exhibition focused more explicitly on the three German artists, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker, considered the most famous of Zero's founding artists. The Stedelijk Museum on the contrary emphasized their role in the overall narrative of the movement.³⁵⁴ Schavemaker explains in an interview that the times of static exhibitions are over, and that the geographic and therefore cultural location of the exhibition matters.³⁵⁵ When the histories are connected to the space and place where past and present converge it provides an opportunity to connect with the personal memories of those citizens of Amsterdam who had visited the past exhibitions.



[81] Jan Henderikse, *Untitled*, 1962 (reconstructed 2011) in *Zero let us return to the stars* 2015.



[82] Blow up photo of Jan Henderikse, *Untitled*, 1962, in *Zero let us return to the stars* 2015.

In order to relate the 2015 exhibition to the two earlier exhibitions in the Stedelijk, certain works were recreated. For example Armando's *Autobanden* (1962) and Jan Henderikse's installation using beer crates were reconstructed in 2011 [fig. 81]. These installations tell an interesting story related to the first production of the Stedelijk Museum's *Nul* exhibition (as Zero is called in Dutch). Correspondence from the

³⁵³ *ZERO: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s–60s* at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (10 October 2014 – 7 January 2015); *ZERO The international art movement of the 50s and 60s* at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (21 March to 8 June 2015); *Zero: Let Us Explore the Stars* at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (4 July – 8 November 2015).

³⁵⁴ Schavemaker 2014, 23-24.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

museum's archive illuminate the important role the artist Hendrik Peeters played in the realization of the exhibition. The museum did not provide any financial backing, so in order to realize the exhibition Peeters promised that the artists would arrange all the finances by themselves. As a consequence participating artists cleverly sought for sponsorships for their materials, like the car tires and the beer crates from which installations were built. The lack of funding from both the museum's part and the artists' to ship the artworks back to the US after the exhibit, led to the donation of Yayoi Kusama's *Aggregation: One Thousand Boats Show*.³⁵⁶ A canonical work now in the Stedelijk Museum's collection turns out to be not accumulated in the most respectable manner. By including the archival documents on display, the museum intentionally enables a critical reflection on such practices in its past.

In the exhibition, the archival materials that testify to these stories were shown in a separate space, with correspondence displayed in vitrines, along with blow-ups photos documenting the 1962 and 1965 exhibitions; a *mise en abyme* remembering exhibition. Newspaper articles were shown in the vitrines, calling attention to the controversial reactions of the public to the art. Besides the replicas and original artworks that were exhibited in 1962 and 1965, the exhibition also included many other artworks in order to illustrate a broader narrative of the Zero artists and the works they produced. While ZERO is most often celebrated for the three German founding artists or the monochrome white paintings, the exhibition and the underlying research focused on the multimedial and performative roots of the international network instead. By including the display of documentary materials in the exhibition a shift was possible from a narrative based on the stable artworks that were kept in the museum collections, to a narrative in which performative practices were included as an important element of the movement.³⁵⁷ The museum was also able to illuminate unrealized art projects with archival materials. The presentation of project proposals, including sketches and plans for an unrealized project on the pier of Scheveningen, were included in *Zero: let us return to the stars*.



[83] Yayoi Kusama, *Aggregation: one thousand boats show*, 1963 in *Zero: let us return to the stars* 2015.



[84] Network of artists at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in front of Karel Appel wall painting 1965.

³⁵⁶ Schavemaker 2017, 54.

³⁵⁷ Schavemaker 2017, 49.

Jean Tinguely, interaction on display

The more recent retrospective *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel* made a number of references to two earlier group exhibitions at the Stedelijk in which Tinguely was featured: *Bewogen Beweging* (1961) and *Dylaby* (1962).³⁵⁸ These archival remembering displays were imbedded in a broader exhibition which featured, in combination with video's, a great number of Tinguely's art objects. Considering that Margriet Schavemaker also curated the Tinguely exhibition it is not surprising that the exhibition continues in the trend of remembering exhibitions in the Stedelijk Museum. In addition to the rooms dedicated to *Bewogen Beweging* and *Dylaby*, the connection between the artist and the Stedelijk Museum was anchored in various ways throughout *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel*. The fountains that stood in a pond behind the Stedelijk Museum were shown and the artist's colorful drawings as correspondence between Tinguely and Eddy de Wilde were on display. Yet these references illustrating Tinguely's exhibition history were not limited to the history of the Stedelijk Museum, many photographs illuminated the international network of institutions where Tinguely exhibited. In contrast to the group exhibitions discussed earlier which illuminated the network of artists involved with the Zero movement, *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel* centered mainly around Jean Tinguely, though with some space dedicated to Niki de Saint Phalle.

The key challenge in exhibiting Tinguely's sculptures at present has to do with the discrepancy between the original interactive character of the sculptures and the more sterile and distanced viewer's experience to which the sculptures are suspected nowadays. Even though the sculptures are physically conserved their character has aged immensely: time has imposed the irreversible increase in fragility, in value and distanced viewer interaction, on the artworks. In light of these limitations it was a remarkable achievement that most works in *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel* were able to move at all, if only a second or two every fifteen minutes. Within the retrospective the two smaller spaces that are dedicated to archival documents of *Bewogen Beweging* and *Dylaby* illustrate this paradox – interaction versus distance – in further detail. As Schavemaker points out, these two earlier exhibitions were characterized by the sculptures dynamic interaction with viewers without barriers between them and the works, in stark contrast to the largely static and protected role the artworks have in museum's today. While Tinguely consciously opted for the ephemeral, temporary and transitory, these artworks are now "buried under the seemingly irrepressible urge of museums to conserve."³⁵⁹ In order to convey the sense of interaction that characterized the past exhibitions, the display of archival documents were included in *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel*.

³⁵⁸ Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1 October 2016 to 5 March 2017. Both *Bewogen Beweging* (1961) and *Dylaby* (1962) were co-organized by Tinguely.

³⁵⁹ Schavemaker 2016, 159.



[85] Jean Tinguely collecting materials during *Dylaby*, 1962, Ed van der Elsken.



[86] Archival display of *Dylaby's* reception in *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel*, 2017.



As was the case in the *Recollections* exhibition the rooms dedicated to *Bewogen Beweging* and *Dylaby* within the Tinguely retrospective also provided a look into the creation, the distribution and the reception processes. The preparation for the exhibition itself was presented through photos, letters and receipts. In an Ed van der Elsken photo the viewer could see how Tinguely collected scrap materials to build his sculptures. Visitors could read letters showing how the organizers of *Bewogen Beweging* discussed preparatory aspects, for instance the actual title for the exhibition. As the curators *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel* probably realized, most visitors do not take the time to read all the letters displayed in the vitrines. Therefore the curators highlighted excerpts from the letters on wall texts. In addition to being captured in photography and film, the exhibition's reception at the time was also described through newspaper articles mounted in vitrines. The display of the media's reception of past exhibitions reiterates the reappraisal of avant-gardist notion of controversial exhibitions that received negative reactions initially. The depiction of Sandberg's picture alongside newspaper articles about the "Kermis in het Stedelijk" ('circus in the Stedelijk') were in this respect striking. Partly as a result of the edited selection of newspaper clippings and accompanying wall texts, the inclusion of archival documents of *Bewogen Beweging* and *Dylaby* throughout *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel* served to demonstrate an affirmation of art historical narratives themselves rather than a critical evaluation.

In response to criticisms of the archival exhibition as "uncritical repetition," Schavemaker argues that "the partially archive-based exhibitions discussed here did not only offer inspiration and pay homage to individual and public memories of the Stedelijk, they also functioned as critical practices that disproved art-historical assumptions, scrutinized museum practices, added depth to current situations, and created a future for unfinished stories and underappreciated collection items."³⁶⁰ However in the quotation above, since Schavemaker does refer to the more extensive archival displays in *Recollections* and *Zero*, the materials displayed in *Tinguely* seem not to disprove art-historical assumptions as such. Since the archival remembering displays were situated within the Tinguely retrospective the materials were obviously chiefly

³⁶⁰ Schavemaker 2017, 63.

related to the artist. Therefore some of the critical notes highlighted in *Recollections* (such as the role of Hultén) seem to have been neglected in *Tinguely Machinespektakel*. Consider for example the focus in the following press release emphasizing the historical role the Stedelijk Museum played in the artistic developments:

Amsterdam has enjoyed a dynamic history with Tinguely. The exhibitions *Bewogen Beweging* (1961) and *Dylaby* (1962), for which Tinguely was (co)curator, particularly underline the extraordinarily close relationship that sprang up between the museum and the artist. Not only did he bring his kinetic Méta machines to the Netherlands, he also brought his international, avant-garde network, leaving an enduring impression on museumgoers who flocked to see these experimental exhibitions. Close relationships with Willem Sandberg, then director of the Stedelijk Museum, and curator Ad Petersen prompted various retrospectives and acquisitions for the collection: thirteen sculptures, including his famous drawing machine, Méta-Matic No. 10 (1959), Gismo (1960), and the enormous Méta II (1971).³⁶¹

A similar focus on the role of the museum, with a self-glorifying undercurrent, can be found in the press release of *Zero let us return to the stars*:

The Stedelijk plays a key role in the history of the ZERO movement. In 1962, when the network was barely two years old, the museum offered the fresh, playful, adventurous, and gently subversive artists a platform for their radical artistic strategies. And in 1965, shortly before the network disbanded, the Stedelijk mounted a large survey of its work, this time highlighting figures from the Japanese Gutai movement, alongside the largely European contingent. The Stedelijk Museum owns 75 ZERO artworks and unique archival material originating from both exhibitions.³⁶²

Alongside the apparent professional intention of a grounded curating that stresses the relation between the hosting institution and its past exhibitions, another agenda becomes clear here: the fact that these press releases were evidently written for promotion and marketing purposes. Even though this might be a somewhat obvious observation, it does highlight the fact that the distributing institution operates according to different and sometimes contradicting motives. While the curators might aim to create an exhibition that could be seen as a critical reflection, say an institutional critique from within, the staff responsible for the promotion of the exhibitions aim for high visitor numbers. The realization of the marketing goals calls for a different, more self-promoting use of text than the nuanced language curators might use. And indeed it is the press release which is often a crucial factor in the 'circulating of references,' since many journalists unfortunately simply copy the information stated in them; similar narratives thereby tend to circulate and get stuck in rotation.³⁶³ The more complex and nuanced narratives discussed in symposia are generally confined to a specialist crowd.³⁶⁴ While one of the chief characteristics of an 'archival remembering exhibition' is the overload of information, only a rare few of the visitors are able take it all in.

³⁶¹ Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, press release Jean Tinguely, 2016.

³⁶² Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, press release *Zero: let us explore the stars*, 2015.

³⁶³ The same can be said about quick repetitions of the program of *Corps de Garde*, such as the summaries of artist projects that I presented in Chapter 2. To avoid such repetitions two projects are described in more detail (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 4).

³⁶⁴ Such as the symposium *Lose Yourself – A Symposium on Labyrinthine Exhibitions as Curatorial Model*, 3-4 February 2017.

5.3 *This way out of England: Gallery House in retrospect at Raven Row London*

From the high-profile Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam to a smaller scale non-profit art space, Raven Row in London. The two institutions are hardly equals and it might seem that the two case studies in this chapter are irreconcilable. Nevertheless with regard to the subject of archival remembering exhibitions they highlight vastly different approaches, and it is from these clear distinctions that valuable insights emerge. As has been described in the discussion of *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel* and *Zero: let us return to the stars* in the previous paragraphs, the Stedelijk Museum installed its own archival materials within larger exhibitions in order to highlight the institution's own involvement with important artistic developments, while simultaneously including archival documents that nuanced some of the larger art historical narratives. In contrast, as a relatively new institution founded in 2009, Raven Row does not have a specific art-historic history or collection at its disposal, apart from the specific history of the building and its location. Instead, through the exhibition *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* (9 February to 26 March 2017), Raven Row brought the history of another exhibition space Gallery House (1972-1973), back into circulation and elaborated on its importance.

In line with Raven Row's mission statement to exhibition artworks from artists who have somehow escaped London's attention, Antony Hudek and Alex Sainsbury curated an exhibition in which the history of Gallery House was remembered.³⁶⁵ Comparable to the history of Corps de Garde mentioned earlier, the history of Gallery House was not extensively documented and many of the artists exhibited there produced ephemeral artworks. For the remembering exhibition about Gallery House, Raven Row took a different direction than the aforementioned exhibitions and invited a number of the original artists to re-create, re-perform, or talk about their work shown at Gallery House. *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* featured an episodic program with a weekly changing gallery display related to the performative events organized each week, in order to mirror the diversity of the program of Gallery House.



[87] Gallery House London.

[88] Raven Row London.

³⁶⁵ Raven Row website, about: "It will exhibit diverse work of the highest quality, often by established international artists, or those from the recent past, who have somehow escaped London's attention."

Raven Row and Gallery House

The non-profit contemporary art exhibition center Raven Row is located on 56 and 58 Artillery Lane, until 1895 known as the Raven Row, in Spitalfields London. The building that houses Raven Row consists of a combination of two eighteenth century mercers' houses and a concrete-framed office building built in 1972. These distinct and historical buildings were combined and renovated by 6a architects, whose aim was to "make each piece of this evolving puzzle oscillate between past and present. Rather than fixing history in the past, we have allowed for contemporary narratives to be drawn across time and space."³⁶⁶ This interrelation between old and new resulted in exhibitions spaces that combine the domestic with the familiar white cube style of contemporary galleries. According to the website text, Raven Row is open free to the public and "led by a desire to test art's purpose outside the market place."³⁶⁷ Raven Row is actually able to do so because Alex Sainsbury, who is an heir of the supermarket chain Sainsbury's, privately, funds Raven Row. On the one hand this financial independence enables Raven Row to run an exhibition program without the more direct market connection of commercial galleries. On the other hand it also affords an independent position towards popular public taste, as Raven Row does not need to achieve a certain number of visitors to accumulate funding. This opens up the opportunity to create exhibitions about somewhat forgotten histories. Raven Row pays attention to artists, who have perhaps been neglected by other publicly funded institutions, due to the lack of popular appeal to bring in broad audience, or else have been neglected by galleries due to a lack of marketable interests.

The exhibition space Gallery House could itself be described as such a place, where many artists have exhibited, who have not received a lot of attention.³⁶⁸ Gallery House was an art space that existed shortly from 1972 to 1973. The art space was located in a vacant mansion in Kensington, provided by the German government, which nowadays houses the Goethe Institute. The director of the German Institute, Klaus Schulz, "turned to the London-based German framer and gallerist Sigi Krauss to organize an exhibition and event program until construction plans were confirmed."³⁶⁹ The director Sigi Krauss and assistant director Rosetta Brooks hosted and exhibited the work of many artists who operated outside the mainstream art market. Gallery House hosted exhibitions, residencies, performances and events as well as pioneering 'expanded cinema' and much new film and video work. Most of the involved artists were British and German for whom "Gallery House would prove a formative experience" at

³⁶⁶ 6a architects (Tom Emerson and Stephanie MacDonald) 2009.

³⁶⁷ Website Raven Row.

³⁶⁸ An online Gallery House Archive is created by the The Gallery House Archive Project, which was a research group founded in 2014 by a group of then students of the MA Culture Criticism and Curation at Central Saint Martins. On the online archive an interview with Sigi Krauss and few pictures of projects and exhibitions. This online archive, however, is far from complete.

³⁶⁹ This way out of England *Newsheet* 1, 3.

the start of their careers.³⁷⁰ The often experimental and radical program was uncensored, which eventually might have led to the end of the art venue in 1973.

Raven Row is an art space with striking similar affiliations to Gallery House: both were free to the public, with a somewhat domestic exhibition space, intent on operating outside of marketable interest in order to provide space for artists that moved outside of the mainstream. Besides the similarities between the two institutions, Gallery House was also the sort of place that Raven Row currently seems to aspire to. In fact Raven Row was in the midst of a transition period during *This way out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* changing from an exhibition space with a more stable display, towards a more event-based and performative program:

This year marks a transition in Raven Row's twenty-year life, from 2009 to 2029. During 2017 projects will be based as much around events as formal exhibitions. Reflecting this the gallery will be open only from Friday to Sunday. From January 2018, Raven Row's buildings will be used by artists and organizations for projects without exhibition outcomes.³⁷¹

The addition to the event-based and performative program indicates that Raven Row in the future will also be deployed as a project space without concrete exhibitions as necessary outcome.

This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect referring to Gallery House

Although the exhibition ran for an overall period of seven weeks, there was a subdivision within the program, duplicating the original sequence of the exhibitions at Gallery House. The displays in the galleries congruent with the events program were connected to one or more of the original exhibitions. This way the program of *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* not only referred chronologically to Gallery House's exhibitions but did so in a dense and compact manner in order to refer to multiple historical moments within seven weekends.³⁷²

The first iteration of *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* focused on the inaugural exhibition *3 Life Situations* that opened on 20 March 1972, with work of Stuart Brisley, Marc Camille Chaimowicz and Gustav Metzger. All three artists occupied one floor in Gallery House. At Raven Row a similar combination was inferred by having Chaimowicz on the ground floor, Brisley mainly on the first floor (also one additional space was occupied by Brisley on the ground floor) and Metzger on the second floor.³⁷³

The second weekend at Raven Row turned to *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain*, a trilogy of exhibitions curated at Gallery House by Rosetta Brooks from 18 August to 14 October 1972. Raven Row chose to highlight Gallery House's involvement with the expatriate artists David Medalla, John Drugger, Jun Terra and Darcy Lange, who

³⁷⁰ Website Raven Row London *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect*.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² See for a complete list of events and list of artworks that were displayed in the galleries the website of Raven Row at: http://www.ravenrow.org/exhibition/this_way_out_of_england_gallery_house_2/

³⁷³ Raven Row *Newsheet 1*, 2017.

were all part of *A Survey*, and host a film program based on Part 3 of the exhibition. Works of George Brecht and Robert Filliou were also included in the exhibition at Raven Row, because they were shown in Gallery House in the summer of 1972 as well.³⁷⁴

The overlap between art and science at Gallery House was the point of focus in the third weekend at Raven Row. For example the Centre for Behavioral Art, an interdisciplinary center for exhibitions and discussions around behavioral art founded by Stephen Willats, was housed in Gallery House, and featured in the display and discussions at Raven Row. Other artist appearing in the Galleries of Raven Row that weekend were Graham Stevens, an artist connected to the Dusseldorf Film Group, Ian Breakwell, Gerard Hemsworth and Susan Hiller.³⁷⁵

The fourth weekend of *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* at Raven Row remembered the expanded cinema group Filmaktion, which was curated by Mark Webber. Besides the rescreening and the re-performances of Filmaktion's installations and film, the work of David Lamelas enhanced the exhibition display and Victor Burgin presented his reflections on Gallery House.³⁷⁶

For the fifth weekend at Raven Row Anthony McCall and Carlyle Reedy were invited to perform works relating to their contributions to Gallery House in 1972. This week's program at Raven Row brought forward how Gallery House could be seen as a prime site of reflection on what it means to show work in a given space and time both for the artist and the viewer.³⁷⁷

The sixth weekend of *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* reflected on the scope and potential of the term "avant-garde," cited by Rosetta Brooks in the title of her three-part 1972 exhibition at Gallery House. This was mainly done during discursive events, as a round table discussion with Susan Hiller and Alexandra Kokoli, a screening of Stephen Dwoskin's narrative films followed up by a panel discussion and a Skype conversation with Lisa Renée Newman and Sigi Krauss.³⁷⁸

The last week of *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* reflected on the last days of the institution. The final months of Gallery House were tumultuous, with many impromptu initiatives, such as *Three friends* by Susan Hiller, Carla Liss and Barbara Schwartz; a performance work by John Blandy; John Latham's *Big Breather* (which caused a flood in Gallery House's building). While John Latham was working at Gallery House in 1973 he wrote *Lectures*, which were performed at Raven Row by four different performers. After a screening of Ken McMullen's film *Resistance* from 1976 *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* closed with a panel discussion with the artists and writers Maya Balcioglu, Stuart Brisley, Michael Newman and Sanja Perovic, who reflected on issues of historical closure and archival afterlives, with special regard to the partial regeneration of Gallery House at Raven Row.

³⁷⁴ Raven Row Newsheet 2, 2017.

³⁷⁵ Raven Row Newsheet 3, 2017.

³⁷⁶ Raven Row Newsheet 4, 2017. While Victor Burgin's talk took place in the fourth weekend at Raven Row, he re-installed the artworks that were shown in Gallery House for display the following week.

³⁷⁷ Raven Row Newsheet 5, 2017.

³⁷⁸ Raven Row Newsheet 6, 2017.

Episodic Remembering Exhibition

While the display of the artworks varied, artworks were added and removed on a weekly basis, not all works were rehung and removed immediately. Most artworks stayed on display for several weeks and others, like Gustav Metzger's *Mass Media: Today and Yesterday* (1972/2017), for the entire exhibition. Still the evolving exhibition display resulted in diverse constellations, in which the opportunity for the discovery of new interrelationships occurred each time new work was installed.

Since the rotating display of artworks in the galleries during *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* included an events program with film screenings, performances and panel discussions, merely a single visit to the exhibition could not provide a complete picture of Gallery House's history. With regard to my own experience I can say that this resulted in a somewhat frustrating viewing experience; as a student living in Groningen I was only able to visit London twice and was left with a feeling of incompleteness after leaving the exhibition and events.³⁷⁹ As is often said about ephemeral art forms like temporary installations and performances, one simply has to be there to truly experience the artwork.³⁸⁰ Only after reflecting on the difficulties involved in fully understanding ephemeral artworks in general one begins to understand that the aim to provide a total picture in an exhibition is largely impossible anyway. Many transformations are required in order to enable references to ephemeral practices from the past. This was acknowledged as such in Raven Row's own introduction to *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect*: "The episodic nature of this project acknowledges the impossibility of framing what was an ephemeral experiment."

As the curator Leigh Markopoulos writes, duration is one of the curatorial strategies in exhibitions of contemporary art that possesses a critical potential.³⁸¹ In the article "The Accidental Exhibition: Chance as Curatorial Critique and Opportunity" she explores chance and indeterminacy as a critique of temporary, circumscribed and static exhibition formats in pursuit of more vital structures for the production of knowledge through display. Markopoulos points out that a common critique on episodic exhibitions is that the intention lying behind the changing display is merely to increase attendance and ticket sales.³⁸² At Raven Row this obviously was not the case, since the entrance to exhibitions and the events was free. The strategy of an evolving exhibition might be chosen otherwise to privilege the working methods of an artist, or as in the case of *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect*, "to emulate the spirit of Gallery House." While several visits to the exhibition might give one a reasonable picture of Gallery House's history, even if one were to visit all the changing iterations of the exhibition and events, complete knowledge nevertheless remains difficult. An exhibition, albeit

³⁷⁹ I visited the fourth (3-5 March) and the last weekend (24-26 March) of *This way out of England*. The examples that are described in more detail are interrelated with these two visits and the artworks I personally encountered and the screenings, performances and discussions I attended.

³⁸⁰ See Phelan 1993 (with regard to performance art) or Bishop 2012, 10 (with regard to installation art).

³⁸¹ Markopoulos 2012.

³⁸² Markopoulos 2012, 11-12.

presenting diverse angles, remains basically an interpretation of its curators as well as, in the case of Raven Row, the many artists' interpretations of their own work. With the episodic form of *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* it is apparent that the curators rose to the challenge of reflecting the myriad possibilities in remembering an ephemeral history. In this respect they made the choice to regard the 'duration function' as a reflective tool to take into account the fragmented processes of the way knowledge is produced through exhibitions. Yet notwithstanding the certainly sophisticated result, the exhibition at Raven Row includes the caveat that it ultimately remains the product of just one perspective among the many possible, especially when dealing with the history of an institution like Gallery House.

Re-installations, re-performances and re-interpretations

With the knowledge that an exhibition can only present a partial reference to the past, there are many different ways to bring ephemeral artworks from the past back into circulation. For their part Raven Row's curators chose several different approaches to the different types of artworks. Besides showing more "durable" artworks like photography and film that could be simply shown again, some artworks were re-printed, re-installed or re-performed by the artists themselves or interpreted by others. In addition to the artists creating something related to the work they created at Gallery House, several artists were invited to participate in Raven Row's discursive program of panel discussions. Based on my personal and partial visit to *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect* several approaches will be described.

Gustav Metzger's *Mass Media: Today and Yesterday* (1972/2017) was one of the artworks that was on display during the entire duration of *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect*. This installation was based on one of Metzger's installations created during *3 Situations* at Gallery House, which was titled *Controlling information from below* in 1972. It consisted of a space where viewers could cut out fragments from newspapers and pin them on a wall, where next to clippings the slogan "SMASH IT" was written on a wall along with a portrait of Lenin on a magazine.³⁸³ Metzger re-installed and renamed the installation *Mass Media: Today and Yesterday* for the presentation at Raven Row. Shortly after the re-installation, Metzger passed away and a newspaper article commemorating the artist was attached to the wall as well.

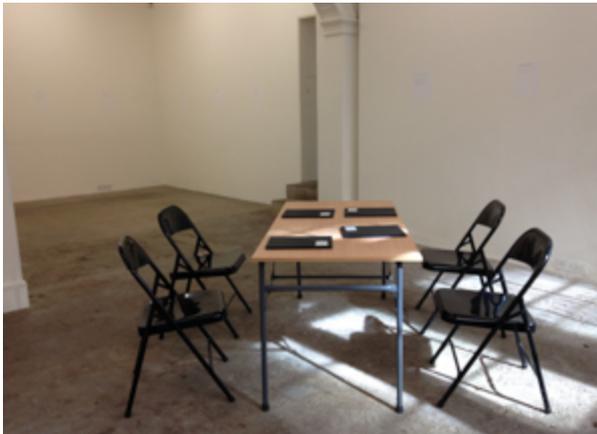


[89] Gustav Metzger, *Mass Media: Today and Yesterday*, 1972/2017, as presented at Raven Row London.

³⁸³ Raven Row *Newsheet* 2017.

Other artists, such as Victor Burgin and Gerald Hemsworth, also recreated their own artworks. Gerald Hemsworth created a faithful facsimile of *Characteristically a work of art* and *In particular a work of art*, both published by Gallery House in 1972 and reprinted by Raven Row in 2017.³⁸⁴ The 2017 facsimile's of the booklet were enclosed in a plain board folder and placed on a pedestal. Since the work was printed again, visitors were allowed and able to take the work in their hands, similar to the 1972 texts.

Victor Burgin installed several artworks he showed in *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain, Part 2* at Gallery House in a similar manner, as a simple black plastic folder with conceptual texts inside for the viewers to read. While on the photo from 1972 only one map had been mounted on a table, at Raven Row four of them were displayed on a table with chairs. *Room* (1970) consisted of texts on the wall of the room, which “could be said to be site-specific and ‘in real time’, in so far as the sentences on the wall relate directly to the viewer’s physical experience within, and of the space where it is displayed.”³⁸⁵ Victor Burgin emphasized the effect of the artworks, as being made in the past but most importantly could be experienced in the present, in line with the approach he chose for his presentation.³⁸⁶



[90] Victor Burgin, textual works, as presented at *This Way Out of England* Gallery House in *Retrospect*, Raven Row London 2017.



[91] Victor Burgin, textual works, as presented in *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain Part 2*, Gallery House, 1972.

³⁸⁴ Raven Row *Newsheet* 7 2017, 13.

³⁸⁵ Raven Row *Newsheet* 5 2017, 3. In the *Newsheet* of *This way out of England* his artwork is not dated with its original date, while the re-creation and re-installation dates of Metzger's and Hemsworth's works were.

³⁸⁶ Burgin, Victor. *Now and Then*, a discussion with Antony Hudek and Alex Sainsbury, Friday 3 March, 6.30pm at Raven Row London.

Most videos and films in *This way out of England: Gallery House in retrospect*, for example the films of the Düsseldorf Film Group, whose digitalized films were on view in the third and fourth iteration in Raven Row, were relatively simple to screen again.³⁸⁷ Yet the work of the Filmaktion group was not as easy to screen, since their work incorporated improvisation, multiple screens, live performance and looped projections.³⁸⁸ Due to the difficulty of orchestrating the display of Filmaktion's work they can rarely be seen, even though the group is widely recognized as central to the history of expanded cinema in Britain.³⁸⁹ At Raven Row the artists of Filmaktion were invited to restage their works, which often involved 8mm, 16mm projectors and performances of the makers themselves, or sometimes collaborative performances with multiple people. Some works were staged for the first time since 1973, like Malcolm Le Grice's shadow play *Horror Film 2*. The artists' presence during these hybrid works (between film screenings, installations and performances) as well as the good attendance of the event, with people sitting on the floors created an intimate setting. This was accentuated when the electricity fell out and Le Grice took the opportunity to tell an anecdotal story, creating a slightly awkward, but also friendly and somewhat nostalgic atmosphere, which to me, seemed to evoke the kind of place I would imagine Gallery House to be like.



[92] Filmaktion performance at Gallery House, London, March 1973. At the projectors: Malcolm Le Grice, Gill Eatherley, William Raban.



[93] Malcolm Le Grice's shadow play *Horror Film 2*, at Raven Row 2017.

³⁸⁷ Of course film and video have their own implications and undergo changes after emulation, etc. See for example: Noordgraaf, Julia, Cosetta Saba, Barabara Le Maitre and Vinzenz Hediger. *Preserving and exhibiting media art: challenges and perspectives*, Amsterdam: University Press, 2013.

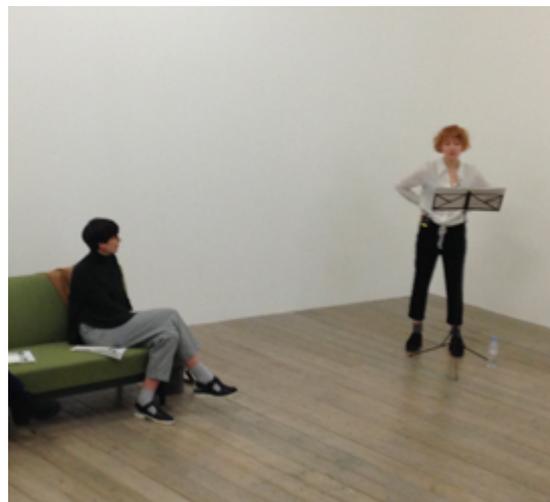
³⁸⁸ The Filmaktion group was an informal collective of Malcolm Le Grice, David Crosswaite, Gill Eatherley and William Raban. At the time when the collective exhibited at Gallery House they were all colleagues at the London Film-Makers' Co-operative and did not name themselves Filmaktion. Curators and writers have adopted the name Filmaktion in the course of time to refer to the group of filmmakers. See Mark Webber in Raven Row *Newsheet 4* 2017.

³⁸⁹ Balsom 2017.

A different type of performance was organized at Raven Row on Saturday 25 March 2017, during the last weekend. The artist himself did not perform, which would not have been possible since the artist had passed away, instead the script of *Lectures* of John Latham was interpreted by others. John Latham was one of the artists more often featured in exhibitions at Gallery House.³⁹⁰ Besides showing *Me/You* at Part 2 of *A Survey at the Avant-Garde in Britain* and other work at Part 3 of the survey series at Gallery House, Latham was also part of the OHO Project, with Andrew Dripper and Jeffrey Shaw.³⁹¹ Their creation of the *Big Breather*, a water pumping structure, led to the flooding of Gallery House's basement. As the director Sigi Krauss recalled, *Big Breather* was first installed outside of Gallery House approximately in November of 1972 and inside in May 1973.³⁹² While working on his OHO project at Gallery House, Latham wrote a series of scores, of which *Lectures* was one. The *Lectures* were performed twice in the past: first at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford and in the group exhibition *Critic's Choice* (in this case the choice of Richard Cork, art critic of the *Evening Standard*) at Arthur Tooth's Gallery in London. In 2017 the *Lectures* were interpreted and re-performed by four artists at Raven Row, based on the same scores. Holly Pester, Patrick Goddard, Carlyle Reedy and Sue Tompkins performed their interpretations, in a program devised by Gareth Bell-Jones. The score was also handed out to the audience. It merely stated the text and duration for the lectures, whereas the movement, intonation, expression and so on were individually interpreted in the wide variety of performances. While Holly Pester lectured from behind the reading stand, Patrick Goddard walked, sat and moved through the audience. The enormous range in vocal intonations varied from subtle to extremely expressive. Carly Reedy, who was involved in Gallery House's activities as well introduced herself and spoke about her personal memories before presenting her interpretation.



[94] Performance Patrick Goddard, *Lectures* by John Latham, 1972/2017 Raven Row London.



[95] Performance Holly Pester, *Lectures* by John Latham, 1972/2017, Raven Row London.

³⁹⁰ Raven Row *Newsheet* 7 2017, 16.

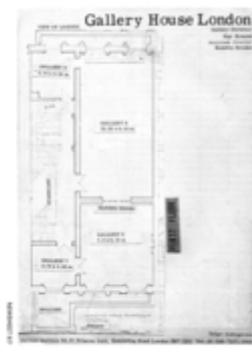
³⁹¹ It is not mentioned in the *Newsheet* which artwork was exhibited at Part 3 of *A Survey at the Avant-Garde in Britain* at Gallery House, Raven Row *Newsheet* 7 2017, 15-16.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

Role of archival materials in This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect

Returning to the overarching question underlying this chapter, what exactly was the role of the archival documents in this exhibition? In spite of the importance of archival material as reference to Gallery House's history, its presence was primarily limited to a *Newsheet* for the exhibition.³⁹³ This *Newsheet* conveyed information about Gallery House and the particular point of view presented in each week's exhibition- and event program, as well as texts about the artworks. These *Newsheets* also included archival documents, such as those describing the mission statement of Gallery House, photo's of the directors, images of the original installations at Gallery House, or invitations to the exhibitions and process notes written or sketched by the artists. With the depiction of documents printed in the *Newsheet*, it played an important role in communicating the original contexts. Thus by reading the *Newsheet* the viewer of the exhibition at Raven Row not only received background information, but was also able to view and read the archival documents which served to contextualize the tribute to Gallery. Nevertheless this particular depiction of the archival documents, with information limited to the *Newsheet*, meant there were barely any sources of information visible in the galleries themselves. The letters or photos of Gallery House that were mounted in vitrines were often not on view in the same space as the works, meaning that viewers could experience the artworks directly in an unmediated manner. Of course the viewers could have simultaneously been reading the accompanying information in the *Newsheet*, or given the large body of information, the viewer had the opportunity to take the *Newsheet* home to read it later.

Considering the previously mentioned role of the archival materials in the *Newsheets*, and the more prevalent presence of the artist within *This way out of England: Gallery House in retrospect*, the description of an 'archival remembering exhibition' is not accurate. The displays and recreation of artworks were both steered by the documents, besides the artists' own interpretations. Perhaps the Raven Row exhibition would be best described as falling in between an 'archival remembering exhibition' and an 'artistic remembering exhibition,' wherein the artists are invited to express their memories and re-create their own work along, and in relation to the archival documents.



[96] This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect, *Newsheet* 1/7, London: Raven Row, 2017.

[97] Gallery House London, *Newsheet* 6/7, London: Raven Row, 2017.

³⁹³ There were several occasions when documents were mounted in vitrines, however these most often stood in the entrance hall, and not besides the artworks in the exhibition.

5.4 Documents as artworks or as means for re-interpretations

In the comparison of a collecting, subsidized museum of modern and contemporary art in Amsterdam with a non-collecting, non-commercial art space in London, one can observe vast different curatorial strategies in order to bring a specific history back in rotation. Obviously an overarching motivation for organizing an 'archival remembering exhibition' is, to shed light on forgotten histories from the past and the consequent necessity for archival documents and materials that can accompany or in some cases replace the ephemeral artworks in these histories. In this respect 'archival remembering exhibitions' can enable a shift from the presentation of physical present artwork-oriented practices to the investigation of collective processes and performative histories. In both cases the choices regarding the uncovered history tied in with the preferred contemporary vision, identity and character of the institutions and the curators in question.³⁹⁴ The self-reflective curators in the institutions chose and had to face different challenges. In the case of the Stedelijk Museum, the largest risk of returning to earlier exhibitions was the uncritical self-appraisal that had to be avoided. In case of Raven Row the choices regarding a selection from the history of Gallery House were possibly even more pressing, since these choices illustrated a less publicized and documented history. It is important to note that the unique position Raven Row has posited in the art world, of being neither a museum nor a commercial and collecting institute, argues against the presumption that an institution without a permanent collection might not be able to engage with the past in a meaningful way.³⁹⁵

The inclusion of documents, in either the display or in the *Newsheet* of the exhibitions, created space for the institutional contexts that characterized the exhibitions to be included. These contexts ranged from the processes of production and distribution to the reception by viewers and the press. The emphasis on the networks around the individual artists not only illuminated the organizational contexts, but also the nexus of artists' influence on each other came forward in the groups exhibitions, such as the Zero and Gallery House retrospectives. A scholar specialized in the moving image Erika Balsom wrote about the Filmaktion weekend at Raven Row: "The event made a case for the importance of considering the networks of support, whether interpersonal or institutional, that undergird artistic practice."³⁹⁶

While the network of artists and support was conveyed to the viewers through the display of archival materials in the exhibition display at the Stedelijk Museum

³⁹⁴ In both cases the circumstances enabling the exhibitions do not remain entirely disconnected with marketable interest. Consider the coinciding rise of Zero artists' prices in the art market with the creation of the Zero foundation, or the fact that an earlier exhibition about Gallery House was financed by Lisson Gallery, the gallery representing John Latham. While John Latham's lectures were interpreted at Raven Row, a two part exhibition also took place at the Serpentine Gallery, creating a certain John Latham momentum in London around March 2017.

³⁹⁵ Claire Bishop formulates such a presumption: "Without a permanent collection, is it hard for a museum to stake any meaningful claim to an engagement with the past – but also, I would wager, with the future." Bishop 2014, 24.

³⁹⁶ Balsom 2017.

Amsterdam the archival documents were present primarily in the *Newsheet* at Raven Row. The artists themselves were invited as important actors as well in the remembrance of Gallery House. Therefore we might, as mentioned before, describe the Gallery House retrospective not only as an ‘archival remembering exhibition,’ but as an ‘artistic remembering exhibition’. The involvement of living artists in the process of remembering results in a more dynamic approach to documents, which became a means aiding the re-creations at *This way out of England: Gallery House in retrospect*. Even though the Stedelijk Museum seemed to maintain more historical distance, some installations that were recreated in *Zero let us return to the stars* also involved collaborations with living artists. At Raven Row the artists’ involvement through discussions were much more foregrounded. Despite the matrices of different possibilities, the agency of the documents in both cases turned out to be essential, albeit with distinct roles within the chain of translations.

Conclusion

Remembering Corps de Garde

By bringing past histories into circulation in the present by means of exhibitions, not only the past artworks are scrutinized, but as we have seen, also the organizing structures around the artworks became involved and were therefore examined. Who might choose to reach into the archives and present the past exhibition histories anew varied as much as the manner they chose to do so: from showing the remaining documents to inviting the artist or others artists to recreate the ephemeral artworks. In some cases the artist themselves took the initiative to revisit their own work (Goldstein's *Two Boxers*), or more often the curators took it upon themselves to excavate underexposed histories (Gallery House) or present known histories in a new light (Stedelijk Museum). The analysis of the way these histories circulate in the present, by following the Actor-network, underscores that *how* the past is remembered and *what* is remembered involves many translations in processes of selection.

How and what histories are remembered are always entangled with multiple motives. With regard to the history of Corps de Garde, my own motives to research this particular history are probably as layered as the motivations of other people/institutes in taking the initiative to bring a particular history forward. In my case, certain pragmatic motives in the context of completing a Master thesis underlie the entire project, such as the aspiration to constitute an original contribution to the knowledge in the field of Art History. Furthermore the presence of the collection of U-Matic tapes at the University of Groningen evoked an interest in the history of Corps de Garde in the first place, pointing out yet again the importance of collections to enable a meaningful engagement with the past. Although Raven Row proved that this does not necessarily have to be the case, since the institution engages with various under examined histories. In addition to these practical considerations other more artistic affects inspired the examination of certain projects, such as the appeal and relevance of *The Peplemobile* and *The 5 Continent documenta 7* from a contemporary perspective. Both artworks stroke me as especially topical in current political as well as artistic debates: for example when Acconci introduced and provoked people in public space with the term "terrorists" or when Byars questions the Euro and American centric perspective of the documenta.

Comparable to the practice of curating an exhibition, I had to tackle issues and make choices in order to write and be able to finish the thesis within the prescribed period. Certain choices, such as the focus on 1979 and particularly the choice to focus on the work of Acconci and Byars were, besides based on my personal interest, determined

and influenced by the available sources, such as the recently cleaned and soon to be digitized U-Matic tapes. Inevitable this did result in a thesis that presents a partial perspective on Corps de Garde with many more sub-networks worthwhile for further research. The stories brought forward are narratives of merely two of the better-known male American artist that exhibited in Groningen, and more interesting artworks remain undiscussed. Nevertheless I do feel that this particular history is of importance and bringing it back into circulation in the present would enrich both an artistic and historical awareness of the Groninger past.

One of the reasons why the 'circulating reference' of Corps de Garde has not extended as far into the present, as for example the history of De Appel, can be easily explained by the fact that Corps de Garde was forced to quit in 1984. Even though De Appel as institute has changed over the course of time, its archive remains accessible with people actively taking care of the archive. In contrast, the archive of Leendert van Lagestein remains in his personal care. He is approachable, nevertheless consulting his archive requires a demand on his personal time. Furthermore, the program of Corps de Garde was led by his interests in art, which resulted in an exceptional diverse group of artists exhibiting in Groningen. The program of Corps de Garde unavoidably became intertwined with his personal relations when friendships and relationships emerged. Thus the documents he accumulated through Corps de Garde are both personal as well as professional in nature. Leendert van Lagestein *was* Corps de Garde, and the institute and the person cannot be separated, this does not easily facilitate an unbiased relation with the documents in his archive. For example the private correspondence with James Lee Byars are indeed sent as private letters, Van Lagestein regards them as personal and private, even though he admits and knows the historical value these documents have gained over the course of time. Nevertheless, he eschews a self-appraising mode as being involved in these histories, and takes a critical stance towards distanced-viewing contexts, such as the aforementioned archival exhibitions.

What might be an appropriate form for a 'remembering exhibition' of Corps de Garde? Learning from the aforementioned exhibitions it would be interesting to think what it would mean to organize an exhibition in the spirit of Corps de Garde. One of the first formulated statements of Corps de Garde was to treat artists as collaborators and as equals; "De kunstenaar als tijdgenoot – niet schijn dood in de schaduw van zijn werkstukken, maar aanwezig, aanspreekbaar, kommunikatief."³⁹⁷ To work with the history of Corps de Garde therefore would mean to approach the artists first, which could bring forward interesting and new reflections on the past. I was lucky to meet Vito Acconci and discuss *The Peoplemobile* with him and learn that he regretted that the installation never toured outside of The Netherlands.³⁹⁸ In addition he was enthusiastic about the idea to develop a new artwork related to *The Peoplemobile* by other artists. Besides a collaboration with the initial artists, as curatorial strategy, it could also be interesting to work with some younger artists (especially when collaboration with the

³⁹⁷ Corps de Garde, 1976, [GRA].

³⁹⁸ Interview Acconci 2016.

initial artist is impossible). This would furthermore bring the past projects in dialogue with the present cultural context, in order to prevent a too nostalgic take on the past.

Another distinct feature of the 1979 program of Corps de Garde was the utilization of public locations that extended in the explorations of different platforms and media through which to show art. From these given features general thematic approaches can be formulated, such as the exploration of different platforms to present art. Such themes could form a possible starting point to begin collaborations with artists from different generations (initial artist as well as contemporary artist). An interesting approach might be to establish a new program bringing together different generations of artists in the diverse locations. Also the collaboration with other institutions was a feature of Corps de Garde, applicable for an event in the present, as happened during the Zomermanifestatie, when the Groninger Museum, the Art History Department, and the Zomermanifestatie collaborated. Furthermore, as the research of Acconci and Byars shows, these artists were not exclusively featured in Europe at Corps de Garde, instead the institute was imbedded and connected to a national and international network of institutes where such projects were realized and circulated.

Considering all the mentioned curatorial strategies, certain challenges remain unavoidable. Each choice in both the process of writing or curating bears fruit regarding certain insights, while the same choice consequently neglects and leaves out other perspectives.

Corps de Garde's 'circulating reference'

The Actor-network theory as method of inquiry proved to be productive as an approach to ephemeral exhibition history, since it allows for an investigation of demounted installations or performative events through the remaining actors. By considering all the different references, both-human and non-human, these actors proved to be valuable fragments and agents on their own terms that refer to an ephemeral artwork or exhibition. The actor-network around Acconci's and Byars' work at Corps de Garde illustrates how idiosyncratic the trail of material references of the ephemeral artworks can be. The sum of all the material references can be seen as integral to the artist ephemeral practices, as they carry out the style of the artist. By following the 'circulating reference' of these artworks, insights about the production process come to light, illustrating the myriad of connections and the interplay between matter and form in the process of making. Instead of regarding the different stages and related actors as separate entities divided by a large gap, the translations occur through and in relation to the myriad of actors.

In addition to the insights an analysis of the artwork-network provides with regard to ephemeral artworks themselves, the actor-network also reveals the nexus of relations in the art world. The artists with whom Van Lagestein collaborated moved through a broad range of institutions in The Netherlands (see *The Peoplemobile*) and/or in an international network (*The 5 Continent documenta 7*). Van Lagestein, who travelled back and forth between The Netherlands and New York, became one of the actors fostering this international artistic network. Furthermore, correspondences between both the artists (Acconci and Byars) and Rudi Fuchs illustrate the active role the artists themselves played in the successful promotion of their own careers.

With regard to the 'remembering exhibitions' the processes of the production, the distribution and the reception do not merely unfold in the past, rather this cycle of ephemeral artworks can be possibly repeated with each new exhibition. Throughout the thesis exhibitions came to the fore as important actors that foster the potentially endless sequence of mediators in the chains of transformation. Not only ephemeral artworks are suspected to continuous processes of change when a new reference is added to the chain of 'circulating references.' Multiple meanings arise from the evolving actor-network around an artwork. With 'traditional' artworks, however, the artwork itself often remains accessible as the main carrier that ties all other actors together and enables a direct affect. For ephemeral artworks this agency disperses to all the remaining references, thus complicating a predictable continuity in the present. Each time an artwork is presented again, new transformations are unavoidable, affecting the meaning of the artwork. Therefore what we believe an artwork is turns out to be not as stable as we might think, especially when time passes and memories become intertwined with the available documentation. By opening up the 'black box' and simply following the actor-network such processes of the internal functioning of art historical knowledge become apparent, illustrating that what we know is not neutral but the affect of an evolving and heterogeneous network of actors.

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57. Exhibition view *James Lee Byars I* (5 March 2016 – 29 May 2016) at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Rotterdam. Photography Anna-Rosja Haveman.
58. James Lee Byars, *The 5 Continent documenta 7*, letter, addressed to Dhr. Oldenhaus, Gemeentearchief de Stadskiste, Viaduktstraat 3a, Groningen, from Byars/Corps de Garde Groningen, 20.VIII.79. Groninger Archives. Photography Anna-Rosja Haveman.
59. James Lee Byars, *The 5 Continent documenta*, unfolded letter in the Groninger Archives, 7 June 2017. Photography Anna-Rosja Haveman
60. Poul ter Hofstede and James Lee Byars, *The 5 Continent documenta 7*, performance, at Groninger Museum. Photography Frank Straatemeier.
61. James Lee Byars, Leendert van Lagestein and Poul ter Hofstede, *The 5 Continent documenta 7*, performance, at Groninger Museum. Photography Frank Straatemeier.
62. James Lee Byars speaking to Lon Robbé during *The 5 Continent documenta 7 performance* at the Groninger Museum, with video cameras in the background. Photography Frank Straatemeier.
63. Groningsch Museum, Praediniussingel 59, Groningen. Photography Frank Straatemeier.
64. Label of “Zwart verduisteringspapier”, material used to make James Lee Byars’ *The 5 Continent documenta 7* letters, Archive Corps de Garde.
65. Handwriting of Gerrie Andela on *5 Continent documenta 7 letter*, Groninger Archives.
66. James Lee Byars, *The 5 Continent documenta 7* in *documenta 7 catalogue* (Bos 1982).
67. James Lee Byars, *The Flag of Perfect*, flag on the façade of the Groninger Museum, photography from *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, Groningen, 30 July 1979, 7. Delpher.
68. James Lee Byars, description *The Flag of Perfect*, Archive Corps de Garde.

69. Label U-Matic tape I, title: James Lee Byars, content: Interview with James Less Byars with i.e. Hans Janssen, Eddie Determeyer en Leendert van Lagestein, date recording: 1979, duration: 120 min (tape I & tape II), mono-stereo channel 1-2, black/white. Collection Art History department of the University of Groningen.
70. Image of James Lee Byars on U-Matic Tape footage, containing Interview with James Less Byars. Collection Art History department of the University of Groningen.
71. Image of Eddy Determeyer, Maggie Bauer, Michel Sauer (back), James Lee Byars on U-Matic Tape II footage, containing Interview with James Less Byars. Collection Art History department of the University of Groningen.
72. Image of James Lee Byars, Hans Janssen (back), Leendert van Lagestein, unknown female, on U-Matic Tape II footage, containing Interview with James Less Byars. Collection Art History department of the University of Groningen.
73. Kazimir Malevich, exhibition view *Fifteen Years of Artists of the Russian Soviet Republic* at the State Russian Museum in Leningrad, 1932, photographer unknown. Collection State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.
74. Kazimir Malevich, exhibition view *Revolution: Russian Art 1917–1932* at the Royal Academy, London 2017. Photographer unknown.
75. Dieter Roth, poster *Bewogen Beweging*, 1961, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.
76. Piet van der Have, poster *DyLaby*, 1962, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.
77. Exhibition view *Recollections I* in *Temporary Stedelijk 2*, 2011, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.
78. Niki de Saint-Phalle, installation in room 5 of *Dylaby*, 1962, photography by Ed van der Elskén.
79. Wim Crouwel/Total Design, poster *Op Losse Schroeven, situaties en cryptostructuren*, 1969, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.
80. Mario Merz, *Città Irreale*, 1968, collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.
81. Jan Henderikse, *Untitled*, 1962 (reconstructed 2011) in *Zero let us return to the stars* 2015.
82. Blow up photo of Jan Henderikse, *Untitled*, 1962 in *Zero let us return to the stars* 2015.
83. Yayoi Kusama, *Aggregation: one thousand boats show*, 1963 in *Zero: let us return to the stars* 2015, collections Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.
84. Jiro Yoshihara, Hans Haacke, Henk Peeters, Rotraut Klein, Jan J. Schoonhoven, Lucio Fontana, Pol Bury, Gianni Colombo, Teresita Fontana, Edy de Wilde, Nono Reinhold-de Wilde, Yayoi Kusama, George Rickey, Jesús Rafael Soto [montage], Otto Piene, Nanda Vigo, Alfred Schmela, Heinz Mack, Emile Soestbergen, Günther Uecker in front of the wall painting by Karel Appel in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1965.
85. Jean Tinguely collecting materials during *Dylaby*, 1962, photography Ed van der Elskén.
86. Archival display of *Dylaby's* reception in *Jean Tinguely: Machinespektakel*, 2017, photography Anna-Rosja Haveman.
87. Gallery House London.
88. Raven Row London.
89. Gustav Metzger, *Mass Media: Today and Yesterday*, 1972/2017, as presented at Raven Row London.
90. Victir Burgin, textual works, as presented at *This Way Out of England Gallery House in Retrospect*, Raven Row London 2017, photography Anna-Rosja Haveman.

91. Victor Burgin, textual works, as presented in *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain Part 2*, Gallery House, 1972. Photography unknown.
92. Filmaktion performance at Gallery House, London, March 1973. At the projectors: Malcolm Le Grice, Gill Eatherley, William Raban.
93. Malcolm Le Grice's shadow play *Horror Film 2*, at Raven Row 2017. Photograph by Eva Roelfs.
94. Performance Patrick Goddard, *Lectures* by John Latham, 1972/2017, during *This Way Out of England Gallery House in Retrospect*, Raven Row London 2017, photography Anna-Rosja Haveman.
95. Performance Holly Pester, *Lectures* by John Latham, 1972/2017, during *This Way Out of England Gallery House in Retrospect*, Raven Row London 2017, photography Anna-Rosja Haveman.
96. *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect*, *Newsheet 1/7*, London: Raven Row, 2017, frontpage.
97. *This Way Out of England: Gallery House in Retrospect*, *Newsheet 6/7*, London: Raven Row, 2017, frontpage.

Appendix

List of artist activities produced in collaboration with Corps de Garde

Date	Artist	Title/project
January - February 1976	Gerrit Dekker	Artist in residence
6, 7 January 1976	Gerrit Dekker	Open studio
21 February – 27 March 1976	Pieter Holstein	Exhibition of Installation
6 April – 7 May 1976	Ben d'Armagnac, Besson, Gerrit Dekker, Barbara and Michael Leisgen, Lesak, and Hans de Vries	Exhibition titled <i>Editions</i>
May 1976	Alison Knowles	Artist in residence
	Alison Knowles	
11 May – 3 July (initially 12 June) 1976	David Salle	Exhibition
July	Gerrit Dekker	Artist in residence
7 August 1976	Gerrit Dekker	Performance during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>5 Performances</i>
15 August 1976	Barbara Bloom	Performance during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>5 Performances</i>
20 August 1976	Misha Mengelberg	Performance during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>5 Performances</i>
23 August 1976	Tony Morgan	Performance during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>5 Performances</i>
31 August 1976	Ben d'Armagnac	Performance during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>5 Performances</i>
September 1976	Hans de Vries	Artist in residence
October 1976	Silvia Steiger	Exhibition of <i>Muschel Kiefernzapfen Mutter</i>
5 – 18 October 1976	Tony Morgan	Exhibition of <i>Night Club</i> at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in collaboration with Corps de Garde
November 1976	Barbara Bloom	Artist in residence
November 1976	Ben d'Armagnac	Artist in residence
November 1976	Silvia Steiger	Artist in residence

December 1976 - January 1977	Han Jansen	Artist in residence
February 1977	Ton Mars	Artist in residence
February 1977	Tony Morgan	Artist in residence
March 1977	Henk Donker	Artist in residence
April 1977	David Salle	Exhibition of installation titled <i>Bearding the Lion in his Den</i>
May 1977	Charlemagne Palestine	Artist in residence
May 1977	Silvia Steiger	Artist in residence
June 1977	Jack Goldstein	Artist in residence
12 June - July	13 artists	Auction exhibition titled <i>13 Artists</i>
July 1977	Colen Fitzfibbon & Robin Winters	Artist in residence
5 August 1977	Colen Fitzfibbon & Robin Winters	<i>Rondleiding</i> s a performance during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
6 August 1977	Gerrit Dekker	<i>Photo of Tokyo</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
11 August 1977	Michel Waisvisz	<i>Kraakdozen</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
12 August 1977	David Salle	<i>To Mention the Noose in the House of the Man who is Hanged</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
13 August 1977	Jack Goldstein	<i>Murder</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
14 August 1977	Paul Sharits	A project produced in collaboration with studio A in Amsterdam during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
16 August 1977	Pieter Holstein	<i>Silvery Clouds</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
17 August 1977	Nan Hoover	<i>Light Composition</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
18 August 1977	Barbara Bloom	A film project presented during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
20 August 1977	Charlemagne Palestine	Concert on carillon during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16</i>

		<i>Dagen</i>
August	Films exhibited by: Yvonne Rainer, Corolee Schneeman, Vito Acconci, Chris Langdon	During the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>16 Dagen</i>
29 September 1977	Barabara Bloom, Colen Fitzgibbon, Jack Goldstein, Chris Langdon, David Salle and Robin Winters (videos) Michel Waisvisz, Charlemagne Palestine, Nan Hoover and Fitzgibbon & Winters (documentation materials)	Film screening of documentation of exhibited videos at <i>16 Dagen</i> and documentation of performances of <i>16 Dagen</i> .
October 1977	Barbara Bloom	Artist in residence Movie night
October 1977	Colen Fitzgibbon & Robin Winters	Artist in residence
14 – 20 November 1977	Colen Fitzgibbon & Robin Winters	The installation <i>X & Y Offer</i> and multiple performances.
December 1977	Han Jansen	Artist in residence
January 1978	Drewes de Wit	Artist in residence
February 1978	Wisse Scheper	Artist in residence
March 1978	Reindeerwerk	performance
15-25 April 1978	Han Jansen	Exhibition of <i>Stroombeelden</i> pictures
April 1978	Raul Marroquin	Exhibition video pieces
May 1978	David Salle	Artist in residence
26 June – 1 July 1978	David Salle	Exhibition of installation
21 June 1978	David Salle	Lecture at Institute of Art History at University of Groningen
10 June 1978	Pieter Holstein	Performance
August 1978	Zomermanifestatie	
August 1978	Vito Acconci	<i>Cry Baby</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
August 1978	Maryanne Amacher	Sound installation during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
12 August – 30 September 1978	Jon Borofsky	Artist in residence <i>I dreamed I found a red ruby</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
August 1978	Michael Brewster	<i>Two Tone</i> a sound sculpture in a tunnel near Marum during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
August 1978	Jack Goldstein	Installation <i>Burning Window</i>

		during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
August 1978	Dan Graham	Installation in two shopping windows during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
August 1978	Wisse Scheper	<i>Intermission/Pause</i>
August 1978	Bart Thrall	Short thriller presented during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
February – March 1979	Maggie Bauer & Michel Sauer	Artist in residence
March 1979	James Lee Byars	Artist in residence
6 March 1979	Elaine Hartnett	Lecture, workshop and performance
13 – 18 March 1979	Drewes de Wit	Exhibition <i>Naden</i>
20 – 24 March 1979	Han Jansen	Exhibition <i>Meerschap Paterswolde,</i>
27 – 31 March 1979	Raul Marroquin	Exhibition <i>Superbman's Last Adventure</i>
April – May 1979	Michael McClard	Artist in Residence: production of <i>Axel Radius</i> (performance) and <i>Ipsa Facto</i> (video)
10 June 1979	Jana Haimson	Holland Festival program
17 June 1979	Guiseppe Chiari	Holland Festival program
13, 14, 15 June 1979	Vito Acconci	<i>The Peoplemobile</i> installation and lecture
28 July – 1 September	James Lee Byars	<i>The Flag of Perfect</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
August 1979	Jack Goldstein	<i>Jump, - A suite of nine records (sound effects),</i> a lecture, <i>Two Boxers</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
3 August 1979	Maggie Bauer & Michel Sauer	<i>Film im Kopf</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
August 1979	Michael Asher	Artist in residence, lecture, project on Grote Markt during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
August 1979	Silvia Steiger	Artist in residence, <i>Feathers fall around you</i> during the Zomermanifestatie titled

		<i>August</i>
19 August – 1 September 1979	Michael Smith	<i>Down in the Rec Room</i> , comedy act during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
25 August 1979	Michael Brewster	Artist in residence, <i>Hit and Run – a floating flasher drawing</i>
26 August 1979	Peter Gordon & Love of Life Orchestra	Closing concert of during the Zomermanifestatie titled <i>August</i>
27 October 1979	Charlemagne Palestine	<i>Schlingen Blängen</i> , on Lohman Orgel, Farmsum
November – December 1979	John van 't Slot	<i>The Black Iceberg</i>
December 1979 – January 1980	Gerrit Dekker	Artist in Residence
January	Barbara Bloom	Artist in Residence
January	John van 't Slot	Artist in Residence
March	Donald Newman	Artist in Residence
May	Michael Smith	Artist in Residence
June	David Salle	Artist in Residence
June	Lon Robbé	Artist in Residence
July	Gerrit Dekker	Artist in Residence
August 1980	Marieke Verheyen	Presentation
August 1980	Jalau Klavert Nelson	Presentation
August 1980	Han Jansen	Artist in Residence
September 1980	Lon Robbé	Artist in Residence
October 1980	Gerrit Dekker	Artist in Residence
October – November 1980	John van 't Slot	Artist in Residence
November 1980	Barbara Bloom	Artist in Residence
November 1980	Eric Bogosian	Presentation
December 1980	Michael Smith & Social Climbers	Presentation
January	Michael Smith & Social Climbers	Several concerts on different locations
January – February 1981	Barbara Bloom	<i>The Diamond Lane</i>
February 1981	John van t' Slot	Poster production
February 1981	Gerrit Dekker	Artist in Residence
12 February 1981	Love of Life Orchestra	concert
7 – 29 March 1981	John van t' Slot	Exhibition at the public studio.
19 March 1981	Glenn Branca Band	Concert
April 1981	Andrzej Duda	Production poster
10 April 1981	Morgan Thomas	Lecture
April - May 1981	Han Jansen	Presentation of <i>Stroombeelden Groninger Wad</i> at several locations

8 – 31 May 1981	Andrej Duda	Exhibition of installation
May 1981	Leeny Sack	Artist in Residence
May – June 1981	Paul McMahon & Nancy Ratlof	Artist in Residence and several concerts
12 June 7 July	Bert Mebius	Exhibition of installation at the public studio
June 1981	Robin Winters	Artist in Residence
September 1981	Bert Mebius	Production of postcards
September 1981	Han Jansen	Production of <i>Ommelander Zeedijk</i>
October 1981	Z'EV	Performance
October 1981	Remko Scha & The Machines	Concert
15, 16, 17 October 1981	Rob Nypels	Installation at the public studio
22 – 24 October 1981	Remko Scha & The Machines	Installation at the public studio
27 October 1981	ROVA Saxophone Quartet	Concert at Grand Theatre
28 October - 7 November 1981	Felix Hess	Installation at the public studio
November 1981	Robin Winters	Artist in Residence
5 November 1981	Rebecca Horn	<i>La Ferdinanda</i> film screening
11 November 1981	Peter Gordon	Concert at Grand Theatre
11 – 14 November 1981	Peter Gordon	Installation of tapes at the public studio
19, 20 November 1981	Michel Waisvisz	<i>Puntkop</i> installation at public studio
25 November – 5 December 1981	Robin Winters	Installation at public studio
November 1981	Gerrit Dekker	Artist in residence in Sri Lanka
10 – 19 December 1981	Han Jansen	Installation at the public studio
28 January 1982	Dan Graham	Lecture at the public studio
11 – 13 February 1982	Floor van Keulen	Performance at the public studio
25 February – 6 March 1982	Rob Nypels	Photo installation at public studio
4 March 1982	Gerrit Dekker and Leendert van Lagestein	A talk titled <i>Message from Kolonnawa</i>
11 - 21 March 1982	Gerrit Dekker and Leendert van Lagestein	Screening of recorded talk <i>Message from Kolonnawa</i>
25 March 1982	Gilbert & George	Screening of <i>The World</i>
April 1982	Gerrit Dekker	Installation <i>Photo of Tokyo</i>
15 April 1982	Scott Johnson	Concert at the public studio
22 April – 24 May 1982	Eric Bogosian	Artist in residence

28 April – 15 May 1982	Joanne Bonney	Artist in residence
29 April 1982	Ned Rothenberg	Concert at the public studio
1 May 1982	Eric Bogosian	Try out performance
6 – 15 May 1982	Barbara Pyle	<i>Permutations</i> installation at the public studio
7 May 1982	Djibrill Ndoy	<i>Balafon</i> concert in public studio
20 – 29 May 1982	Jan de Bruin and Bert Mebius	Exhibition at the public studio
21 - 23 May 1982	Eric Bogosian	<i>Voices of America</i>
1 June 1982	Fred Frith	Concert at Grand theatre
3 – 6 June 1982	Felix Hess	<i>Paper Structures</i> at the public studio
1 June – 6 July 1982	John Blake	Artist in residence
10 June – 13 July 1982	John Blake	Exhibition with <i>In the Seeing Seen</i> and <i>seen seeing</i>
7 July – 30 August 1982	Leeny Sack	Artist in residence, workshops
4 – 25 August 1982	Maria Nordman	<i>Tjoba</i> a ship in verbindingskanaal Groningen (27 August – 5 September in Windschoten)
September 1982	Remko Scha	Production of audiocassette of Guitar Mural 1
12 November 1982	Lawrence Weiner	Screening <i>Plowman's Lunch</i> at Grand Theatre
13 November 1982	Eric Bogosian The Rhys Chatman Band	Concert in Grand Theatre
19 November 1982	Will Offermans	Concert at the public studio
17 February 1983	Ned Rothenberg Remko Scha & The Machines	Concert at Grand Theatre
17 February 1983	Europa	Buffet at the public studio
18 February 1983	Europa	Dinner at Groninger Museum and the public studio
1 – 4 April 1983	Z'EV	Artist in residence
8 – 26 March 1983	Sjouke Schaafsma	<i>Make a Landscape</i> installation at the public studio
9, 10 March 1983	Z'EV	Concert at Grand Theatre
16 March 1983	Andrzej Duda	Performance at Grand Theatre
23 March 1983	Klaas Koetje	<i>Hertziade</i> audio installation at Grand Theatre
24 March 1983	Phil Niblock & Jon English	Concert at Grand Theatre
April 1983	Z'EV	Artist in residence
7 April 1983	Michel Waisvisz	<i>The Michel Waisvisz Synthesizer Show</i> at Grand Theatre

15 April – 26 June 1983	Dorit Cypis	Artist in residence
21 April 1983	Wil Offermans and Schott Johnson	Concert at Grand Theatre
5 May 1983	Livia Polanyi	<i>Nederlands Worden</i> at Grand Theatre
5 May 1983	Floor van Keulen	<i>Zero, Comma, Zero</i> at Grand Theatre
19 May 1983	Chinese Puzzle	Concert at Grand Theatre
20 – 22 May 1983	Chinese Puzzle	Concert at De Kattebak Groningen
29 May – 11 June 1983	Tom Puckey	Artist in residence
3 June – 31 July 1983	David Rosenbloom	Artist in residence
2 June 1983	Dorit Cypis	<i>Still Cinema</i> and <i>Talking Pictures</i> at Grand Theatre
2 June 1983	Felix Hess	Concert for electronic bugs at Grand Theatre
11 - 19 June 1983	June Tom Puckey	Installation at the public studio <i>Five Houses Five Cities - The Fifth Phase The House in Groningen Salt and Copper.</i>
12 June 1983	Leendert van Lagestein, David Rosenbloom, Dorit Cypis, Gerrit Dekker and Paul McMahon	Arts&Entertainment radio show
17 June 1983	Leendert van Lagestein and Z'EV	Arts&Entertainment radio show
18 June 1983	Gerrit Dekker	Slide presentation at work studio
19 June 1983	Leendert van Lagestein, David Rosenbloom and Scott Johnson	Arts&Entertainment radio show
24 June 1983	Leendert van Lagestein, Wil Offermans, Dorit Cypis and the ROVA Saxophone Quartet	Arts&Entertainment radio show
26 June 1983	Leendert van Lagestein and Remko Scha	Arts&Entertainment radio show
July 1983	David Rosenbloom	Artist in residence
October –November 1983	Z'EV	Artist in residence
5 November 1983	Z'EV	Performance at the work studio
16 November 1983 – January 1984	Robin Winters	Artist in residence
10 – 12 Januray 1984	Barbara Pyle ft. Jan de Jong	<i>The History of the Continents</i> at the work studio
24 January 1984	Michael Smith	<i>Down the Rec Room, It Starts at Home</i> in Simplon

26 -28 January 1984	Michael Smith	<i>The Dirty Show</i>
6 February – 18 March 1984	Tony Morgan	Artist in residence
March 1984	Tim Wright, Z'EV and Rudolph Grey	Production of tapes
17 March 1984	Tony Morgan	Presentation at work studio
5 – 30 April 1984	Wil Offermans	Artist in residence
22 May – 1 August 1984	Tim Wright and Maryanne Livchak	Artist in residence
30 May 1984	Jan de Jong and the Skeleton Crew	Concerts at Grand Theatre
June 1984	Robin Winters	Production of poster
May 1985	The ROVA Saxophone Quartet, Esmerelda, Toshinori Kondo & Z'EV, Scott Johnson, Maryanne Amacher, Jan de Jong & Han Bennink and Wil Offermans.	Arts&Entertainment program of Musica'85